Technology and Sexual Violence

Technology has expanded our ability to stay connected to people across the world. However, that ability to stay constantly connected can also enable sexual violence. There are several ways technology is used to facilitate sexual violence, including:[1]

- Online Sexual Harassment
- Non-consensual sexting (sending sexual images, videos, or messages)
- Non-consensual image sharing of others (sharing sexual images or videos of someone else without their consent)
- Hacking an email or social media account and sharing sexual pictures or content
- Demanding or coercing sexual images and videos
- Creation and distribution of images and videos of sexual violence
- Misusing messages and online communities to groom victims
- Misusing access to databases to gain information or plan an attack
- Misusing surveillance or security cameras to track or monitor victims
- Limiting access to tech to keep a victim from seeking help
- Internet-based sex trafficking
- Rape by Proxy*

> * In 2014, the Maryland Senate passed a bill that would outlaw "**rape by proxy**." Rape by proxy is when someone posts personal identifying information about another person without their consent to invite, encourage, or solicit another to commit a sexual assault against them. This bill came after a Prince George's County woman had more than 50 strangers visit her home during a two-week period. The uninvited men claimed she had invited them to have violent sex with her in an online ad. It was the victim's ex-husband who had posted the ads, posing as the victim herself. [2]

According to the 2019 study, *Measuring #MeToo: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault*, **4 in 10** women and **1 in 5** men experienced cyber sexual harassment.[3]

In 2020 survey data, Pew Research Institute found that young women are particularly likely to have experienced sexual harassment online. **33% of women under 35 say they have been sexually harassed online.**[4] In addition, LGBTQ+ adults are more likely to face harassment online. Roughly **7 in 10 LGBTQ+ people have encountered any harassment online** and fully **51%** have been targeted for more severe forms of online abuse. [4]

Uber received **3,824** reports of sexual assault in the U.S. between 2019 and 2020.[5] Of these reports, **388** were reports of rape and **284** were reports of attempted rape.

[1] *Technology and Sexual Assault* (2017). Technology Safety. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from https://www.techsafety.org/technology-and-sa
[2] Frosh, B. *Solicitations of Proxy Rapists* (2014) Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Frontline Winter 2014 Issue. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from https://mcasa.org/newsletters/article/solicitations-of-proxy-rapists
[3] *Measuring #MeToo: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault.* (2019). UC San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health. Retrieved from https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-metoo-national-sexual-harassment-and-assault-report.pdf
[4] *The State of Online Harassment* (2021). Pew Research Center. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/
[5] *Uber's US Safety Report 2019-2020.* (2022). Uber. Retrieved October 31, 2022, from https://www.uber.com/us/en/about/reports/us-safety-report/

Lyft received **4,158** reports of sexual assault in the U.S. between 2017 and 2019.[6] Of these reports, **360** were reports of rape and **320** were reports of attempted rape.

In a 2013 Urban Institute study surveying **5,647** youth on cyber-dating abuse, the researchers found that:[7]

- **26%** of the students who had been, or were currently, in a relationship, had experienced some form of cyber-dating abuse in the past year
- Females reported perpetrating higher levels of non-sexual cyber dating abuse, and males were significantly more likely to report perpetrating sexual cyber dating abuse
- **84%** of cyber dating abuse victims also reported psychological dating abuse, **52%** reported physical dating violence, and **33%** reported sexual coercion.
- LGBTQ+ youth reported much higher rates of digital dating abuse

1 in 4 victims of stalking report being stalked by some form of technology (such as e-mail or instant messaging) and 10% of victims report being monitored with global positioning systems (GPS), and 8% report being monitored through video or digital cameras or listening devices.[8]

> In 2022, the Maryland Senate passed a bill to improve Maryland's stalking law by adding tracking without consent (for instance via stalkerware on a phone) and other electronic communication to the criminal stalking statute. Modifying the stalking statute will also permit peace and protective orders to be issued based on this conduct.[9]

To learn more about digital safety, and find resources, visit **Technical Safety** at
https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors and **End Tech Abuse** at https://endtab.org.
For more information about digital stalking, visit **SPARC Stalking Awareness** at
https://www.stalkingawareness.org and the **Coalition Against Stalkerware** at
https://stopstalkerware.org.

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[6] *Lyft Community Safety Report* (2021). Lyft. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from https://www.lyft.com/blog/posts/lyfts-community-safety-report
[7] *Technology, Teen Dating Violence and Abuse, and Bullying* (2013) Urban Institute. Retrieved October 28, 2022 from https://www.urban.org/research/publication/technology-teen-dating-violence-and-abuse-and-bullying
[8] *Stalking Fact Sheet* (n.d.). SPARC. Retrieved October 26, 2021, from https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SPARC_StalkngFactSheet_2018_FINAL.pdf
[9] HB0148: Criminal Law - Stalking – Definition. (July 8, 2022). Maryland General Assembly. Retrieved November 1, 2022, from
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0148?ys=2022RS