



# CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS (CVAWG)

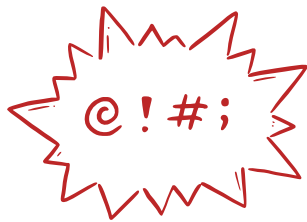
## Gender-Based Hate Speech



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# ONLINE GENDER-BASED HATE SPEECH (O-GBHS) DEFINITION



What is Online Gender-Based Hate Speech?



Do you know what Online Gender-Based Hate Speech is?

Have you heard this term before?

What do you think it means?

Can you imagine what it looks like or how someone might say or do it?

# ONLINE GENDER-BASED HATE SPEECH (O-GBHS) DEFINITION



Online Gender-Based Hate Speech (O-GBHS) refers to any form of gender-based hate speech that is created, disseminated, or amplified through digital technologies and online platforms and incites, promotes, or justifies hatred, discrimination, or violence against individuals or groups based on their gender, gender identity, or gender expression.



Let's explore what online gender-based hate speech (often abbreviated as O-GBHS) truly entails.

O-GBHS is a form of hate speech that specifically targets individuals or groups based on their gender, gender identity, or gender expression. It is not just about the words themselves, but how they are created, shared, and amplified through digital platforms.

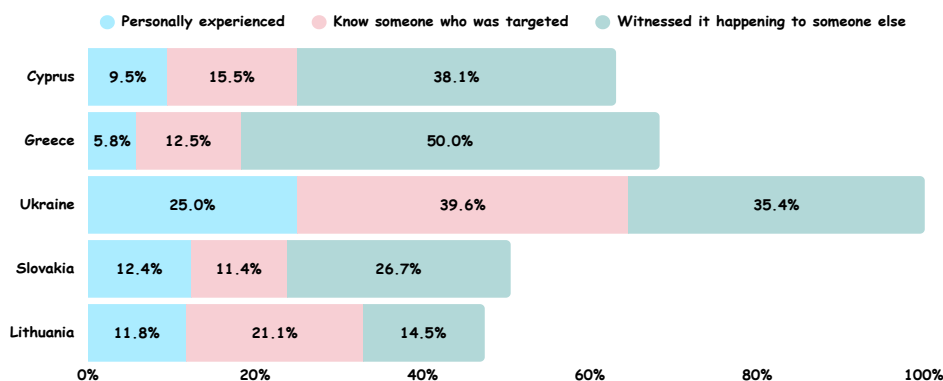
The core issue here is that such speech can incite, promote, or even justify hatred, discrimination, or violence. It is a profound societal challenge that we must address collectively.

As we move forward, we'll delve into the prevalence of O-GBHS and the legal frameworks surrounding it, including insights from the CyberEqual Survey and key legislative measures in Europe.

# PREVALENCE OF O-GBHS



## CyberEqual Survey



According to recent studies, nearly 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced some form of gender-based violence.

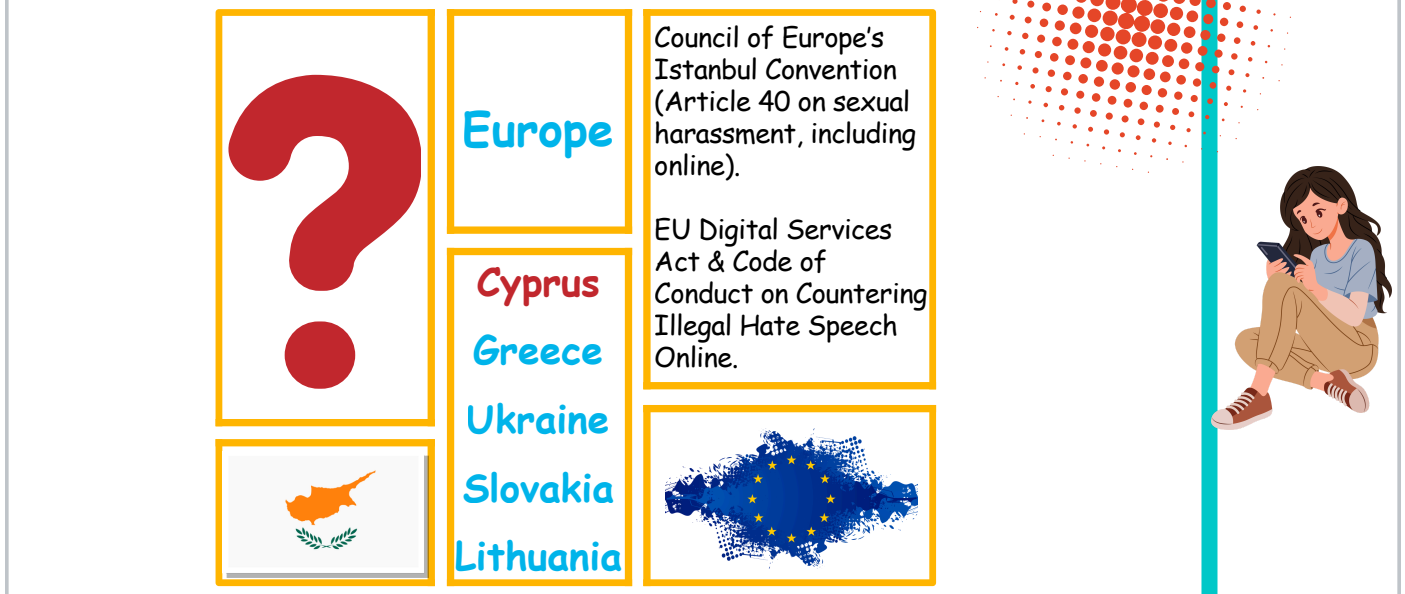
And with the rise of digital technology, many face violence online too, from harmful messages to threats.

The CVAWG survey was implemented in the context of the 'CyberEqual' project, a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, aiming to map the prevalence of Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls in Cyprus, Greece, Ukraine, Slovakia and Lithuania. 467 women, aged 15 to 35 years old, participated in the study 76% of them reporting having experienced, witnessed, or knowing someone who experienced CVAWG.

In terms of Gender-Based Hate Speech the prevalence per country is shown in the current figure.

These numbers show that CVAWG isn't just happening in one place; it's a global problem affecting millions across different countries and communities.

# LEGAL FRAMEWORK



**Europe**

Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention (Article 40 on sexual harassment, including online).

**Cyprus**

EU Digital Services Act & Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online.

**Greece**

**Ukraine**

**Slovakia**

**Lithuania**

\*\*Partners should include their country's legislation on the threat addressed (replace the question mark, the flag and keep their country's name on the box). Another slide maybe added if necessary.\*\*

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding European treaty on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Article 40: Specifically addresses sexual harassment, which includes unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that violates dignity or creates a hostile environment.

Relevance to Cyber Gender-Based Hate Speech:

- \*Extends to online environments, recognizing that sexual harassment can occur digitally (e.g., degrading messages, unsolicited sexualized content, gendered slurs).
- \*Provides a legal obligation for states to criminalize such conduct and protect victims.
- \*Frames cyber hate speech not only as a freedom of expression issue but also as gender-based violence.

EU Digital Services Act (DSA) & Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online

What it is:

- \* DSA (2022): A comprehensive EU regulation for safer digital spaces.
- \* Code of Conduct (2016, voluntary): Agreement between the EU and major tech companies (Meta, Twitter/X, YouTube, TikTok, etc.) to tackle online hate speech.

## Relevance to Cyber Gender-Based Hate Speech:

\*Platforms must act quickly to remove illegal hate speech, including when gender is the basis of attack.

\*The Code encourages content moderation standards, reporting tools, and cooperation with civil society.

\*The DSA adds accountability and transparency obligations for large platforms (e.g., risk assessments on gender-based harms, independent audits).

Impact: Makes companies partly responsible for ensuring that cyber misogyny, transphobia, and other gender-based hate speech don't spread unchecked.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS

“Dressed like that,  
she is asking for it”

“Men are naturally better  
leaders than women”

“A woman's place is in the  
kitchen, not in politics”



Ask if participants have ever heard or read online such phrases (shown on the slide).

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS

## Hate Speech

Talking about a group like they are less than human, like calling them animals or saying they are genetically inferior.

“Dressed like that, she is asking for it”

“Men are naturally better leaders than women”

“A woman's place is in the kitchen, not in politics”

## GBHS

Saying things that hurt, diminish or blame someone because of their gender



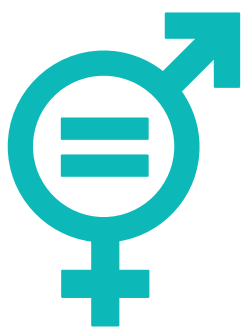
Remind them what hate speech and gender-based hate speech refer to.

Clarify that sexist hate speech is a form of gender-based hate speech.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



Is it Gender-Based Hate Speech?



~~YES~~ NO?

Why?



Run the activity to help participants learn to recognise O-GBHS.

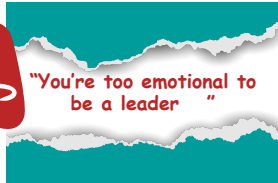
Set up the space: Mark a line in the middle of the room (with paper tape, thread, or an imaginary line).

- \* Right side = “Yes, this is online gender-based hate speech.”
- \* Left side = “No, this is not online gender-based violence.”
- \* Participants can also stand in the middle if they are unsure.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



Comment under a woman  
CEO's post



Read statements one by one.

Participants move to the side they agree with.

After each round, invite a few volunteers to explain why they chose that side.

Debrief: Emphasize the thin line between what is hate speech and what is freedom of speech — and how the interpretation of what is said depends on context, intent, and impact.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



Comment under a woman CEO's post

"You're too emotional to be a leader "



Reply to a female scientist's post explaining climate change

"I can't take you seriously with that haircut "



Read statements one by one.

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# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



Comment under a woman CEO's post

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Reply to a female scientist's post explaining climate change

"I can't take you seriously with that haircut "



DM to a woman streamer after she reports harassment

"It's a compliment! You should be happy men find you attractive online "



Read statements one by one.

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# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



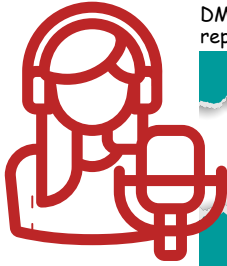
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"I can't take you seriously with that haircut "



DM to a woman streamer after she reports harassment

"It's a compliment! You should be happy men find you attractive online "



On a woman's selfie

"You should smile more — it would make you look sexier."



Read statements one by one.

Participants move to the side they agree with.

After each round, invite a few volunteers to explain why they chose that side.

Debrief: Emphasize the thin line between what is hate speech and what is freedom of expression — and how the interpretation of what is said depends on context, intent, and impact.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



## Freedom of Expression (Free Speech)

Freedom of expression encompasses the ability to hold opinions, receive and impart information, and express oneself without interference.



Hate Speech



Freedom of Expression allows individuals to promote other human rights, expose abuses, celebrate achievements, and communicate opinions and ideas freely. It's a cornerstone of democratic societies, enabling informed public participation and accountability of governing institutions.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS

## Freedom of Expression (Free Speech)

Article 10 of the **European Convention on Human Rights:**

- Protects your right to hold opinions and express them freely.
- Ensures no government interference with your free speech.



## Hate Speech

**BUT:**

- Freedom of expression comes with a responsibility.
- You must respect other people's rights and dignity.



European Convention on Human Rights includes the right to express your views aloud (for example through public protest and demonstrations) or through:

- \* published articles, books or leaflets
- \* television or radio
- \* broadcasting
- \* works of art
- \* the internet and social media

The law also protects your freedom to receive information from other people by, for example, being part of an audience or reading a magazine.

Explain that even if freedom of expression is a basic human right protected by law, it is not absolute; it doesn't allow speech that harms others (like harassment or hate speech).

Mention how responsible speech helps create a safer, respectful online and offline environment.

Link this to why we need laws and guidelines to protect people from tech-facilitated gender violence.

Encourage participants to think about how they can express themselves respectfully and challenge harmful speech when they see it.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



## Key Criteria for Drawing the Boundary Free Speech vs Hate Speech

Intent

Content

Context

Impact

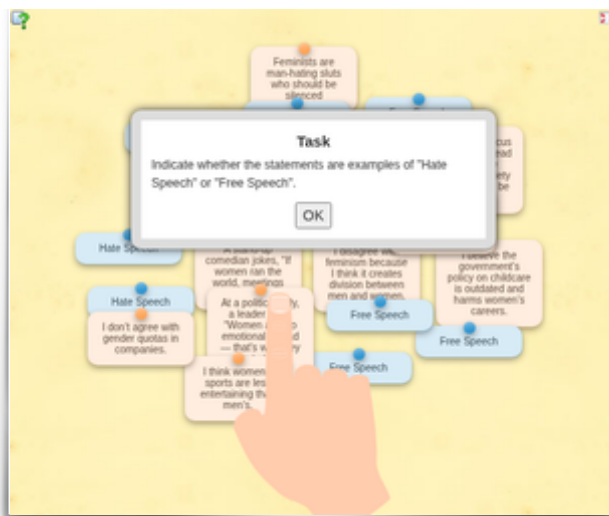
Imminence  
of Harm



Mention the key criteria for separating free expression and hate speech.

1. Intent
2. Content
3. Context
4. Impact
5. Imminence of Harm

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



Is it free or hate speech?



In this activity, participants explore the boundaries between free speech and hate speech. The task is to match the Statement Cards (orange) with the corresponding Speech Cards (blue) in order to correctly identify and understand the fine line between hate and free speech.

The activity takes place directly on the slide:

Drag a Statement Card onto a Speech Card after receiving input from the participants ensuring that they explain why this decision has been made.

If the match is correct, both cards will automatically disappear from the screen.

If the match is incorrect, the cards will turn red. The facilitator should then unlink them by clicking the space between the two cards, and try again.

Once all cards have been correctly matched, guide a group discussion (next slide), elaborating on each criterion.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



## Key Criteria for Drawing the Boundary Free Speech vs Hate Speech

### Intent

Was the speaker intending to inform/criticize, or to incite hatred/violence?

### Context

Same words may mean different things in different settings (e.g., satire vs. a rally to mobilize hate).

### Imminence of Harm

Does speech spread hatred (even without direct call to violence)?

### Content

Does the speech target ideas (protected) or people's identity (restricted)?

### Impact

Does the speech cause real harm, fear, or exclusion to individuals or groups?



Explain the key criteria for separating free expression or hate speech.

### 1. Intent

Was the speaker intending to inform/criticize, or to incite hatred/violence?

Example of Inform/Critique (Free Speech):

“I believe the government’s policy on childcare is outdated and harms women’s careers.”

→ Intent: policy critique, not an attack on women.

Example of Inciting Hatred (Hate Speech):

“Women who focus on careers instead of family are destroying society – they should be shunned.”

→ Intent: delegitimizing and excluding women based on identity.

### 2. Content

Does the speech target ideas (protected) or people’s identity (restricted)?

Example Targeting Ideas (Free Speech):

“I disagree with feminism because I think it creates division between men and women.”

→ Critique of an ideology, not people themselves.

Example Targeting Identity (Hate Speech):

“Feminists are man-hating sluts who should be silenced.”

→ Targets women/feminists directly, attacking identity.

### 3. Context

Same words may mean different things depending on setting.

Example in Satire (Free Speech):

A stand-up comedian jokes, "If women ran the world, meetings would never end!"

→ In context, intended as humor (though may still offend).

Example in Rally (Hate Speech):

At a political rally, a leader says: "Women are too emotional to lead – that's why they must stay at home."

→ In context, it reinforces exclusion and could mobilize bias.

#### 4. Impact

Does the speech cause real harm, fear, or exclusion?

Low Harm (Free Speech):

"I think women's sports are less entertaining than men's."

→ May offend, but doesn't incite exclusion.

High Harm (Hate Speech):

"Women don't belong in sports – they're weak and ruin the game."

→ Creates exclusion, stigmatization, and delegitimization.

#### 5. Imminence of Harm

Does the speech spread hatred (even without a direct call to violence)?

No Imminence (Free Speech):

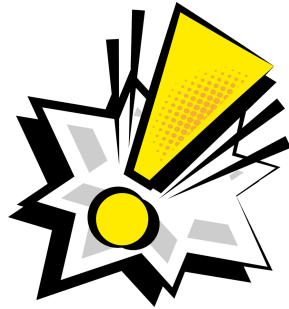
"I don't agree with gender quotas in companies."

→ A political position, not incitement.

Imminent Harm (Hate Speech):

"Women shouldn't be hired for top jobs – companies must stop giving them positions."

→ Not calling for violence, but directly spreading discrimination and exclusion.



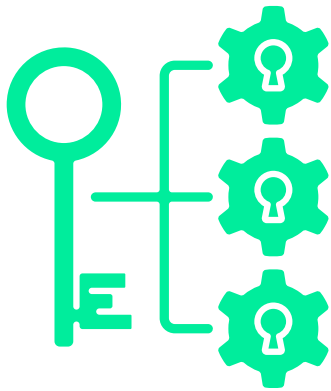
## WHY DO WE TALK ABOUT GBHS?



GBHS is a type of violence against women and girls.

It makes gender unfairness worse by normalising rape and sexual abuse, and by stopping them from getting jobs or healthcare.

# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS



Let's break down the  
Gender-Based Hate  
Speech's basic  
elements



# RECOGNIZING O-GBHS

## Basic elements of GBHS

- Gender-Based Targeting
- Degrading/Dehumanising Language or Content
- Intent to Harm or Silence
- Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes
- Cultural Stereotypic Inequalities



### Gender-Based Targeting

When someone is attacked or treated badly just because they are a woman, a girl or a non-binary individual.

**Degrading/Dehumanising** Using words or messages that insult, shame, or make people seem less valuable or less human.

### Intent to Harm or Silence

The purpose is not to share an opinion, but to hurt, embarrass, or stop someone from speaking.

### Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes

Repeating old, unfair ideas like “men are leaders” or “women should stay at home”.

### Cultural Stereotypic Inequalities

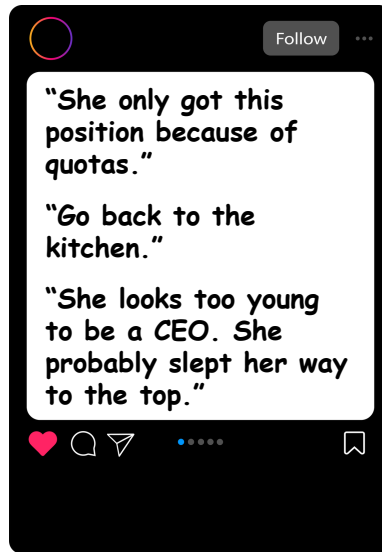
Hate speech is worse in cultures or communities where men already have more power than women, because it adds to the existing unfairness.

# O-GBHS IMPACT

Sofia, a 38-year-old CEO of a tech start-up, is active on social media and advocates for women in leadership.

After posting an article on social media about gender equality in business, she faced a wave of online hate:

**How do you think Sophia felt when reading these comments?**



Read the scenario aloud and ask participants:

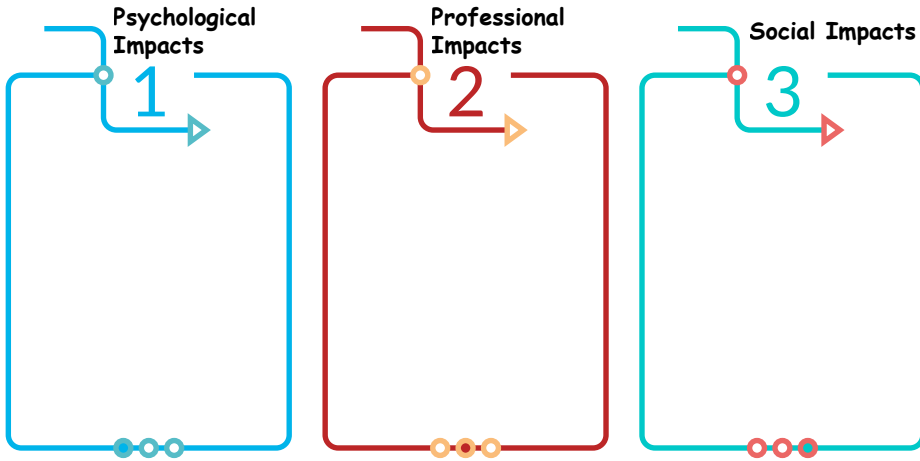
“What do you think Sofia’s first emotional reaction might have been after reading these comments?”

Write down words they mention (e.g., hurt, angry, shocked, humiliated, discouraged, unsafe).

# O-GBHS IMPACT



What are the psychological, professional, and social impacts of O-GBHS on Sophia?

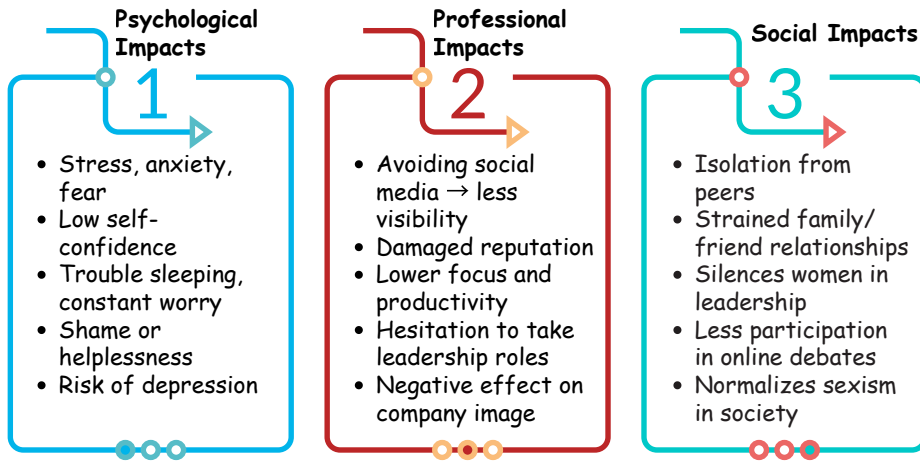


Ask participants to read the story again carefully in three groups.

Each group should further identify the consequences and categorize them as follows:

- Group 1: Psychological impact
- Group 2: Professional impact
- Group 3: Social impact

## What are the psychological, professional, and social impacts of C-GBHS on Sophia?



### Psychological Impacts

- Stress, anxiety, and fear of future attacks
- Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- Sleep problems and constant worry
- Feelings of humiliation, shame, or helplessness
- Risk of depression or PTSD

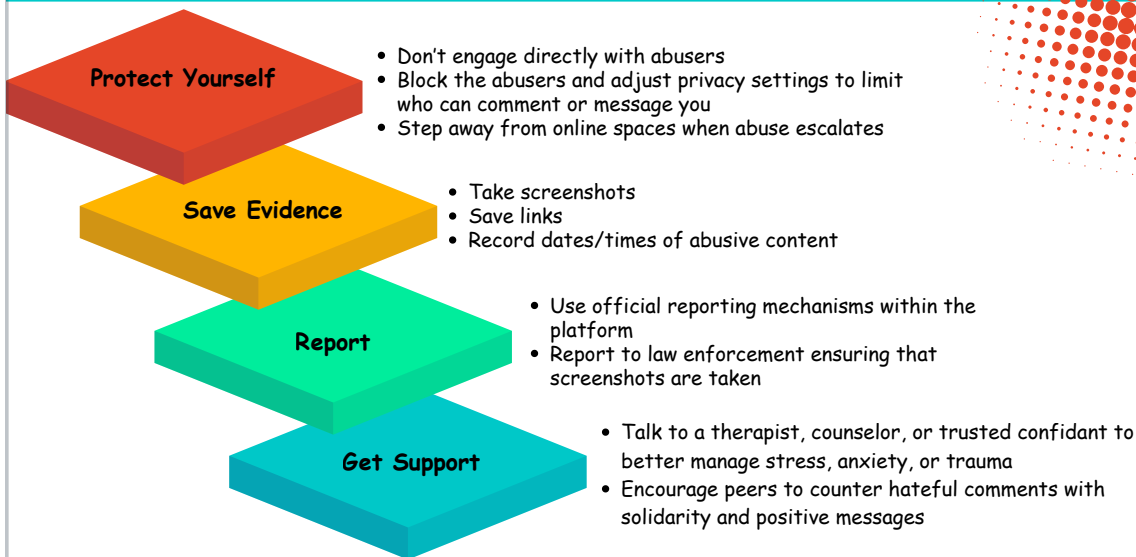
### Professional Impacts

- Considering withdrawal from social media → loss of visibility and networking
- Damage to professional reputation due to rumors and sexist narratives
- Reduced productivity or focus at work
- Hesitation to take on leadership opportunities or public roles
- Company/organization's image harmed by negative online attention

### Social Impacts

- Isolation from colleagues or peers who advise “staying quiet”
- Strained personal relationships (family/friends worrying about safety)
- Silencing effect: discourages other women from leadership or public life
- Reduced participation in online communities or public debates
- Normalization of misogyny, reinforcing gender inequality in society

# COPING WITH O-GBHS



**Remember:** Online hate reflects the abuser's prejudice, not the victim's worth.

Don't engage directly with abusers: Responding often fuels trolls. Disengagement and silence can protect emotional energy.

Block the abusers and adjust privacy settings: Reduces exposure and limits their access to your online space.

Step away from online spaces when abuse escalates: Taking breaks helps prevent emotional overwhelm and burnout.

Take screenshots, save links, and record dates/times of abusive content: Creates a record that can support reporting and legal action later.

Use official reporting mechanisms within the platform: Increases chances of abusive content being removed or accounts suspended.

Report to law enforcement ensuring that screenshots are taken: Essential when threats are severe, persistent, or involve personal safety.

Talk to a therapist, counselor, or trusted confidant: Provides emotional release, coping tools, and professional support if needed.

Encourage peers to counter hateful comments with solidarity and positive messages: Builds a protective community and reduces feelings of isolation.

# REPORTING OF O-GBHS



## Report to police

Report to the cybercrime unit, or national hotline.

**Cyprus**

Office for Combating Cybercrime (O.C.C.)



+357 22808200



Cyber-Crime Online Reporting Form



[cybercrime@police.gov.cy](mailto:cybercrime@police.gov.cy)

## Report to online platforms

Report to platforms such as Instagram, X, Tik Tok, Facebook etc.

On each platform, follow the instructions available for reporting the incident(s) and request the content to be removed.

*\* Remember to keep screenshots before requesting removal.*



**\*\* Each partner should replace the country, police unit and contact details.\*\***

It is important to know how to report Online Gender-Based Hate Speech (O-GBHS) if you ever encounter it.

One way is to report to the authorities. You can contact the cybercrime unit or national hotline.

Another way is to report to the online platforms themselves. Sites like Instagram, X, TikTok, and Facebook have reporting mechanisms. Be sure to follow their instructions carefully and request that harmful content be removed.

*\* Always remember to keep screenshots before making any removal requests.*

Reporting is a crucial step in combatting O-GBHS, and your actions could prevent further abuse.

# PREVENTION OF O-GBHS



## Prevention Measures Against Online Gender-Based Hate Speech

- 1 Learn to recognize Gender-Based Hate Speech**  
It can look like jokes, memes, comments, or threats that target someone based on gender, gender identity, or expression.
- 2 Understand the difference between free expression and hate speech.**  
Legitimate debate ≠ harassment
- 3 Stay updated on platform tools and safety settings.**  
Blocking, muting, filtering keywords
- 4 Avoid using gender stereotypes or "jokes" that can reinforce discrimination.**  
Encourage positive dialogue and respect diverse identities.

- 5 Support victims.**  
By leaving positive comments, reporting abusive content, or checking in privately.
- 6 Speak up when you witness online hate.**  
Even a simple "This is not OK" can make a difference.
- 7 Normalize respectful interactions**  
Discourage harmful "jokes."
- 8 Before posting or commenting, ask: Would I say this face-to-face?**



Now, let's look at prevention measures against O-GBHS. This is crucial because O-GBHS can manifest in various forms (jokes, memes, comments, or even threats targeting someone's gender, identity, or expression).

First, you need to learn to recognize what constitutes Gender-Based Hate Speech. It is important to understand the fine line between free expression and hate speech. Remember, legitimate debate should never be confused with harassment.

Before hitting "post" or "comment," ask yourself: "Would I say this face-to-face?" This simple reflection can prevent perpetuating harmful stereotypes or so-called "jokes" that reinforce discrimination.

Encourage positive dialogue and respect for diverse identities. Staying updated with platform tools and safety settings, like blocking, muting, or filtering keywords, can also help maintain a respectful online environment.

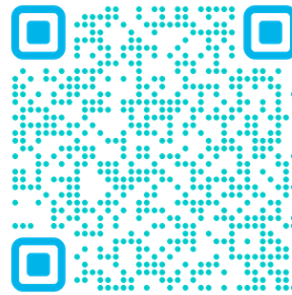
When you witness online hate, speak up. Even a simple "This is not OK" can make a significant impact. Support victims by leaving positive comments, reporting abusive content, or checking in with them privately.

Finally, normalize respectful interactions and consciously discourage harmful "jokes." Your actions can create a safer, more inclusive online space for everyone.



## Prevention Pledge Wall

**One action I commit to take to prevent Online Gender-Based Hate Speech.**



We've explored prevention strategies. Now, let's make it personal. Each of us will commit to one concrete action we can take to help prevent online gender-based hate speech in our own digital spaces.

\*Ask participants to scan the Slido QR Code (create your own Slido and add the respective QR Code on the slide)

\*\*Alternatively: Give sticky notes/markers (or small cards) and ask them to write their pledge there.

Prompt participants with examples:

"I will speak up when..."

"I will protect myself online by..."

"I will support others experiencing online abuse by..."

"I will use my voice to..."

"I will use platform tools to..."

"I will encourage my friends/community to..."

"I will not..." (e.g., "I will not share or laugh at sexist memes.")

Sample Participant Pledges

"I will speak up when I see sexist jokes in my group chat."

"I will protect myself online by checking my privacy settings monthly."

"I will support others by reporting abusive content on their posts."

"I will use my voice to share positive, respectful content."

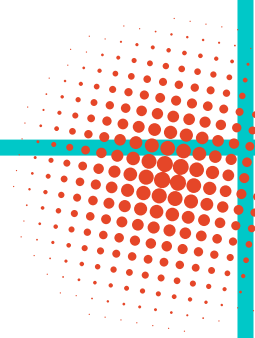
"I will not ignore online hate when I see it."

Display the “pledge wall” when completed or if offline ask some of the participants to read their pledge from the sticky note.



CYBEREQUAL

# THANK YOU!



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