

Experiences of Online Abuse

1.



Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey, which should take around 15 minutes to complete. You can save your answers and return to the survey at another time.

Who we are and why we are asking you to respond to this request for information

The Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales acts independently of the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts to champion the rights of victims and make sure they are treated fairly and correctly by the criminal justice system. When we say victims, we mean victims as a group. Unfortunately, the Commissioner does not have the power in law or the resource to examine and champion individual cases.

You may be aware that the government is currently introducing a bill before parliament on online harms; the Online Safety Bill. The Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales would like to hear about your experience of online abuse and, if relevant, your experience of reporting this abuse. We would also like to hear from you if you did not report the abuse, and the reasons for this decision.

We will analyse the information you provide and publish a report on it, which we hope will add victims' voices to the debate. We would like to hear from anyone who has experienced the following types of abuse, in particular: intimate image abuse, online harassment and stalking, coercive behaviour, cyberbullying and trolling and any form of online hate. You will be anonymous (not able to be identified) in our reporting, whether or not you choose to give us your contact details at the end of this set of questions.

We are keen to hear from everyone who wants to complete this survey, including parents or carers of children who have been a victim. If you support someone who has been a victim who would like to respond but can't do so because of language, age, lack of internet access or other barrier, you are welcome to fill in the survey with them (or in the case of children, for them). Alternatively, you can contact us at victims.commissioner@victimscommissioner.org.uk if you would like to request the survey in a different format. At the end of the survey we ask a question about these barriers. Your answers will help us improve future surveys.

We will be publishing the findings. The survey is anonymous, but at the end we ask if you would be willing to give an email address to be contacted for future research by the Victims' Commissioner e.g. an interview.

Please see this [Privacy Policy](#) which explains how the Office of the Victims' Commissioner collects, uses and shares personal information.

If you have any questions, please get in touch:

victims.commissioner@victimscommissioner.org.uk

2. Personal Characteristics

We want to understand your experience of online abuse, how the abuse is or was perpetrated against you, how it was reported (if you reported it) and to who, and how you have coped with this abuse. At the end of the survey, there is space for you to tell us anything else that you might want to.

Firstly, we would like to ask a few questions about you and your circumstances. As with almost all the questions, please feel free to skip them if you do not wish to answer them. Do be assured that this part, as well as the other questions, will be held and used in the strictest confidence.

1. What is your age?

- 16 or younger
- 17-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your sex? A question about gender will follow.

If you are not sure how to answer, use the sex registered on your official documents, such as passport or driving licence, or whichever answer best describes your sex. (* Please note the phrasing of this question is in line with ONS guidance)

- Male

- Female
- Prefer not to say

3. Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth? This question is voluntary. (* Please note the phrasing of this question is in line with ONS guidance)

- Yes
- Prefer not to say
- No
- Please write in the gender you identify with, if you wish to do so

4. What is your ethnic group? Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

- White
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Prefer not to say
- Other ethnic group

5. What is your religion?

- No religion
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist

- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Prefer not to say
- Any other religion, please describe:

6. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight/Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say
- Other sexual orientation, please write in:

3. Online Abuse

Here we would like to find out about the type(s) of online abuse you have experienced. We recognise that online abuse usually includes multiple instances of abuse. If you have experienced more than one series of abusive incidents please tell us about the one that felt most significant to you.

We want to make sure that we only ask questions that are relevant to your experience, so the next question is compulsory.

7. Which types of online abuse have you experienced? (Please select all that apply and add any other forms not included in 'other'): *

- Accounts hacked or controlled
- Brigading - encouraging others to harass you, the victim

- Cyber bullying - sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about you with the intent to embarrass or humiliate you
- Cyber flashing - where you are sent unsolicited obscene images
- Cyber stalking - a form of harassment which can involve persistent and frequent unwanted contact, or interference in your life
- Doxing - the publishing of private or identifying information about you without your consent
- Grooming - building an emotional connection with a child / vulnerable person to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation
- Image based sexual abuse - the sharing of intimate images without your consent (often referred to as 'revenge porn')
- Online coercive behaviour - monitoring you via online communication tools or spyware
- Online harassment - repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications or contact in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear
- Online hate crime motivated by disability
- Online hate crime motivated by gender
- Online hate crime motivated by gender identity
- Online hate crime motivated by race or ethnicity
- Online hate crime motivated by religion
- Online hate crime motivated by sexual orientation
- Online impersonation - where someone creates a fake profile pretending to be you, with the intent to cause you distress
- Online threats of physical and / or sexual violence
- Trolling - a form of baiting online which involves sending abusive and hurtful comments across all social media platforms
- Virtual mobbing - when a number of individuals use social media or messaging to make comments to or about you
- Other (please specify):

8. How old were you when the abuse took place? If the abuse occurred for a number of years please give the closest answer.

- 16 or younger
- 17-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

9. Approximately how long has the abuse been going on for, or did it go on for?

- Less than 1 month
- 1 - 3 months
- 4 - 6 months
- 7 - 12 months
- 1 - 2 years
- More than 2 years (please specify):

10. Have you experienced multiple sets of instances of online abuse? (for example online abuse from different people at different times)

- No
- Yes
- If yes - how many times have you experienced online abuse?

11. Where does or did the online abuse occur? (Select all that apply)

- Via text
- Via email
- Reddit
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Twitter
- TikTok
- Whatsapp
- Tumblr
- Facebook
- Other (please specify):

12. If you would like to, please use this space to describe to us, in your own words, the online abuse you have been subjected to?

13. Does or did the abuse only occur online?

- Yes

- No, please tell us how the abuse is or was perpetrated other than online (offline)

4. Reporting the abuse

So that you are only asked questions that are relevant to your experience the next question is compulsory.

14. Did you report this online abuse to anyone? *

- Yes - to the police and internet companies
- Yes - just to the police
- Yes - just to the internet companies
- No

5. Reporting of Online Abuse to the Police

15. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the response you received from the police?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Mixed response (e.g. from different police professionals)

Please could you say why you gave that response?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
The police investigated the abuse thoroughly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was advised to remove myself from social media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was given all the information I needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. What was the outcome of you reporting the abuse to the police? Please choose the answer that shows the latest progress of your case

- Police did not investigate
- Police did not investigate but offered advice
- Police investigated the abuse but no action was taken
- Police arrested someone
- Police charged someone
- Investigation not yet concluded
- CPS declined to prosecute
- Case is awaiting prosecution by the CPS
- I am not sure
- Other (please specify):

18. Thinking about when you reported the online abuse to the police, what was the most important outcome you were hoping would happen? Please rate the answers you felt were most important from 1 - 7, with 1 being the most important, 2 the second most important and so on.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The abusive post(s) would be removed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Someone would believe me and help me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The abusers(s) would be prosecuted by the police	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The internet companies would disclose who was committing the abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The police would investigate the abuse(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The abuse would stop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The abuser(s) would be prevented from continuing the abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Reporting to Internet Companies

19. What company did you report the abuse to?

20. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the response you received from the internet company when you reported the abuse to them?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

1 2 3 4 5 6

The abuser(s) would be prevented from continuing the abuse

23. How long had the abuse been going on for before you reported it? *

- Less than 1 month
- 1 - 3 months
- 4 - 6 months
- 7 - 12 months
- 1 - 2 years
- More than 2 years (please specify):

8. Reason for not Reporting

24. We understand that the decision to report or not report the abuse may be complicated and may be difficult to summarise into a few clear factors.

Below is a selection of factors that other victims have said were important to them.

Please tell us which, if any, of these factors were important to your own decision: Please tick all that apply

*

- Heard negative things about the police process
- Viewed the matter as too trivial
- Confused or unsure about the criminal justice process
- Past experiences of telling others have been negative
- Ashamed, embarrassed, or didn't want others to know
- Feared the impact on my family

- Feared for the safety of myself or my family
- Past experiences of discrimination, racism, sexism and/or bias
- Feared discrimination, racism, sexism and/or bias
- Did not want to get the perpetrator(s) into trouble
- Just wanted to move on
- Feared the consequences for me and my life
- Past experiences with police have been negative
- Concerned about retaliation from the perpetrator(s) or others
- Didn't realise the incident was a crime at the time
- Didn't feel it would be investigated and/or prosecuted successfully because of my personal characteristics (ie gender, sexuality, lifestyle or disability)
- Past experiences with social media companies have been negative
- Did not think I would be believed
- Other (please specify):

9. Perpetrators of Abuse

25. Who was the abuse usually from? Please tick all that apply.

- Partner / ex-partner(s)
- Family
- Stranger(s)
- Friend(s) / acquaintances
- Other (please specify):

10. Impact of the abuse

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
Worried about someone coming into the house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me feel isolated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It ruined my reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me lose my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me feel like harming myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me worry for other family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made me anxious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a detrimental impact on my work / business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

27. Is there anything else you would like to add about the impact the abuse has had on your or your family?

28. Have you found any way to cope with the abuse? If yes could you tell us how you manage to cope with this?

11. Getting Support

We would like to understand what support you were able to access and what support you think would be helpful to you or other people in your situation.

29. Did you attempt to gain support from anywhere? (please tick any that apply)

- Victim services e.g. Victim Support, Rape Crisis, Stop Hate UK, Tell MAMA
- Domestic abuse support services e.g. Refuge, Respect Men's Advice Line, Women's Aid
- Online harm helpline e.g. The Cyber Helpline, True Vision
- Stalking support services e.g. The Suzy Lanmplugh Trust
- School / College
- No, I was not able to access any support service help
- No, I did not need or want to access support service help
- Other (please specify):

If yes - Which,if any support services did you approach?

12. Support Services

30. What type of help and support were you offered?

31. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the help you received from the support organisations?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Mixed response (e.g. some individuals or organisations were more helpful than others)

Please could you say why you gave that response?

13. Online Safety Bill

The government is currently working on a new [Online Safety Bill](#). The aim of the bill is to hold online services responsible for the risks created by their design and operation.

32. To what extent do you agree or disagree that including these measures in the Online Safety Bill would help you or others in your situation?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Provide additional funding support for victims of online abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Directors of the internet companies should be held	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responsible for abuse posted on their sites					
Perpetrators of abuse should be held criminally responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Abusive content to be removed prior to investigation taking place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial penalties for the internet companies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swift removal of abusive content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More severe punishments for abusers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make the internet companies responsible for what is on their sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make it impossible for people to be anonymous online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make specific laws for online offences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

33. Is there anything else you would like to see done to help people who are abused online?

34. Is there anything else you would like to add, in relation to online abuse, that has not been covered elsewhere in the questionnaire?

35. If you have filled in someone else's answers or helped them to fill their answers (e.g. because English is not their first language) please tick this box:

Yes, I did this

Please tell us what their barrier to participation was

36. All of your answers will be made anonymous in our published report. Our reporting is likely to contain direct quotes from victims who have responded to this survey. Do you agree to your answers being used in anonymised quotes?

Yes

No

37. We may find it helpful to follow up on some of your answers and arrange a research interview with you.

Do you give consent to be contacted by the Victims' Commissioner's Office about participating in research?

Yes

No

Please provide your email address:

15.

Thank you for responding to the survey

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us. We will prepare a research report based on your responses and publish on our website later in the year.

For further information about our reviews and reports, please visit the following page on the Victims' Commissioner website: <https://victimscommissioner.org.uk/published-reviews/>

Victims Code

You can find out more information about your Victims Code rights through the following links:

[Your 12 Victims Code Rights](#)

[The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales \(Victims' Code\)](#)

[The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales - Welsh \(Victims' Code\)](#)

[Victims of crime: Understanding the support you can expect \(web version\)](#)

[The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime - easy read](#)

Sources of support

If you feel you want to speak to someone about what happened to you, or if you feel unsure of what to do, there are services who can listen, provide emotional support, and provide information.

Victim Support

Victim Support is an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales.

Contact your nearest Victim Support office. You can get the main contact number for your area on the local page.

Contact our Supportline (24/7). We'll give you information and support in confidence over the phone and direct you to your nearest office. Call us for free on 08 08 16 89 111 or email now.

Contact us via live chat (24/7). This service is free and confidential. [Victim Support](#)

Online Abuse Support

Stop Hate UK

is one of the leading national organisations working to challenge all forms of Hate Crime and discrimination, based on any aspect of an individual's identity [StopHate UK](#)

24 hour Helpline is tel:08001381625

True Vision

Report online hate Stop Homophobic, Transphobic, Racial, Religious & Disability Hate Crime - True Vision (report-it.org.uk)

Report Harmful Content
We Help You Remove Content <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/>

TellMAMA
Report in Anti-Muslim Hate or Islamophobia (tellmamauk.org)

The Cyber Helpline
The Cyber Helpline is a national organisation that provides free, expert help for victims of cybercrime and online harm. They can support with all of the issues covered in this survey and more. You can get help from them here — [The Cyber Helpline](#)

National Stalking Helpline
National Stalking Helpline | [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

Domestic Abuse Support Services

Women's Aid provides support to victims of domestic abuse via its live chat service, see <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>. You can also find support near you via its directory, see: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/>.

Respect Men's advice line Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK
(mensadviceline.org.uk)

Refuge runs a freephone, 24 hour national domestic abuse helpline on 0808 2000 247.

Rape Crisis Helpline
The Rape Crisis National Helpline is provided by Rape Crisis South London. It offers free, confidential emotional support, information and referral details.

Telephone: 0808 802 9999

Opening hours: Every day 12:00-14:30 and 19:00-21:30

Rape Crisis Live Chat

Live Chat, run by Rape Crisis England & Wales is a free, text-based, confidential emotional support service for women and girls aged 16 and over who have experienced sexual violence.

For more information please go to www.rapecrisis.org.uk

The National Male Survivor Helpline

The National Male Survivor Helpline is a confidential helpline for male victims of sexual violence and abuse. They also provide emotional support via telephone, SMS (text) and email.

Telephone: 0808 800 5005

Email: support@safeline.org.uk

Text: 07860 027573

VictimsUK

VictimsUK supports men, boys, trans and nonbinary victims of sexual violence and anyone who feels this is the right service for them. They offer 1:1 counselling, ISVA services, Groupwork and an online helpline.

www.victimsuk.org

Email: help@victimsuk.org

Telephone: 0203 5983898

Office Hours Monday – Friday 09:30 – 17:00

Helpline Web Chat Monday – Sunday 12:00 – 20:00

The Victims Trust

The Victims Trust provides confidential information, advice and support for women, men and young people, their parents/carers or partners via a helpline or email.

Telephone: 08088 010818

Email: info@thevictimstrust.org

www.thevictimstrust.org

Helpline opening hours: Monday - Thursday: 10am-6pm, Friday: 10am-2pm.

Galop - for members of the LGBT+ community

If you are a member of the LGBT+ community and experienced sexual assault, abuse, or violence, Galop runs a specialist helpline.

Telephone: 0800 999 5428

Email: help@galop.org.uk

NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood)

NAPAC offers support to adult victims of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. NAPAC's website offers a large range of resources for victims, as well as those who care for and work with them. NAPAC also offer a support email service for those who feel more comfortable seeking support in writing

Private and confidential helpline: 0808 801 0331

Open 10am to 4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 2pm–9pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays

Email: support@napac.org.uk

Support for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women and girls

For a list of local specialist BME agencies supporting ending violence against women and girls agencies please go to www.imkaan.org.uk/get-help

Southall Black Sisters provide specialist frontline support for black and minority (BME) women and girls. Contact details: <https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/>

Thank you again for sharing your experiences with us.

