

Boundless hate on the internet – Dramatic situation across Europe

For the first time, a representative survey commissioned by [HateAid](#) and [The Landecker Digital Justice Movement](#) asked 2,000 people between the ages of 18 and 80 from all EU countries about their experiences with digital violence. And the results could not be more alarming:

- 50% of young adults in the EU are affected by hate on the internet
- Women in particular withdraw from social media for fear of being attacked
- 80% of respondents give online platforms a poor report card

Hate on the Internet: Unfortunately not an isolated case

Digital violence can affect anyone. But the results show a particularly dramatic situation for young adults in the EU. 92 percent of men and 90 percent of women in the 18 to 35 age group have already witnessed digital violence on several occasions. Across all age groups, more than two-thirds of all respondents have been confronted with hate and incitement on the internet in their lifetime.

Every second person in the youngest age group (18-35 years) has even been personally affected by digital violence. Across the age groups, just under 30 percent of men and 27.5 percent of women have been personally affected by digital violence. For the younger generation, digital violence has therefore not only become a reality, but a sad normality.

Digital violence against women has many faces: from insults and misquotes, to threats and doxxing, to sexual harassment and revenge porn. The fear of stolen or faked nude pictures being published on the internet is particularly high among 30 percent of the women surveyed.

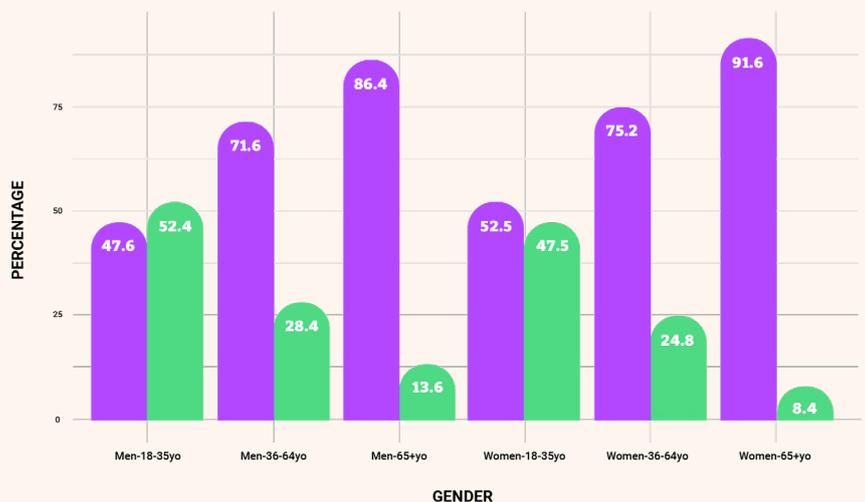
Every second person between the ages of 18 and 35 has already experienced digital violence.



Have you personally been affected by any form of digital violence?

ANSWER

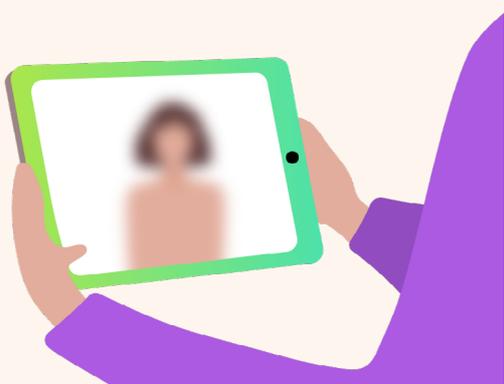
- YES
- NO





Women in particular are withdrawing from the Internet

30% of all women fear that fake nude or intimate images could be published online without consent.



More than 80% of the participants believe that platforms have a duty to better protect those affected.



Through agitation, people are deliberately silenced and ousted from social media. This development can be seen - especially among women - in the study:

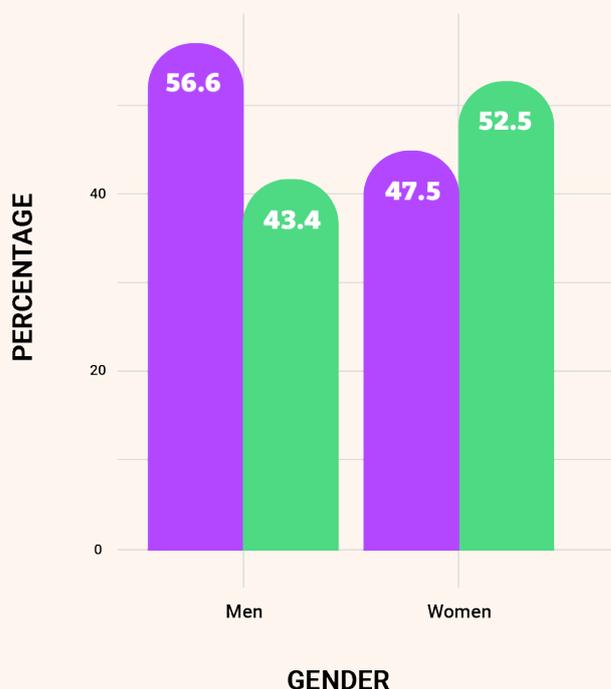
For fear of hate, 52 percent of women express their opinions on the Internet less often. Among the male respondents, around 43 percent said they express their opinions less.

Hate on the net leaves its mark. In view of the increasing brutalization on the Internet, many people are afraid to take a stand. 43 percent of women and 35 percent of men are generally more cautious and anonymous in social media because of possible attacks.

Have you ever been afraid to freely express your opinion on online platforms in the face of the threat of digital violence?

ANSWER

- YES
- NO





An indictment of Facebook, Twitter and Co.: Over 80% of Europeans demand more protection

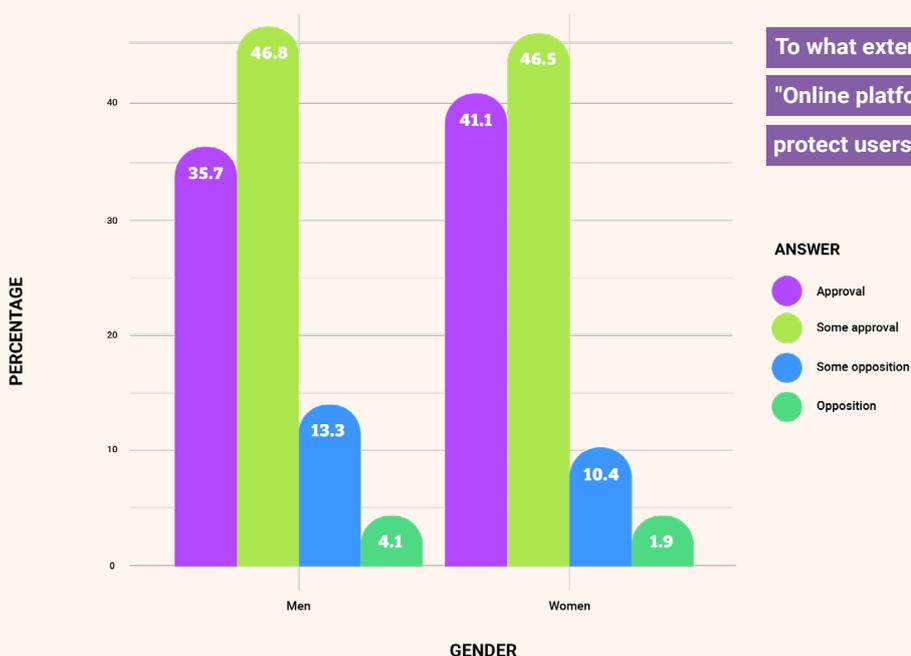
52% of women are less likely to express their opinions on the internet for fear of hatred.



Europeans want to hold Facebook, Twitter and others accountable: 80% said that these online platforms are not doing enough to protect people from digital violence. Almost 80% of all respondents would therefore like to be able to better control the platforms' algorithm so that they can decide which system is used to show posts. 92% argue in full or in part that illegal content should be removed from the platforms. 84% of men and 92% of women even think that laws are essential or at least desirable to control online platforms.

A new EU law, the Digital Services Act (DSA), which is currently being negotiated, aims to create more security and responsibility in the digital space. With the DSA, our EU policymakers now have a historic opportunity to establish clear rules to stop digital violence. So far, they have failed to do so, leaving social media users systematically unprotected.

Together with an alliance of 17 European organizations, HateAid is therefore calling on the EU to intervene immediately with an [international petition](#): Stop digital violence now! #makeitsafe



To what extent do you agree with the statement?
"Online platforms are not doing enough to protect users from digital violence."

ANSWER

- Approval
- Some approval
- Some opposition
- Opposition



”

„The results show: Digital hate is not an isolated incident, but the rule across Europe. Citizens across Europe are now making clear demands from EU policymakers: They must finally act and lay down clear rules for platforms and fundamental rights for users in the Digital Services Act. Only in this way can we ensure the protection of people on the Internet.”

– Anna-Lena from Hodenberg,
Managing Director of HateAid

„Legal action against hate remained unsuccessful“

**Nezahat Baradari,
Member of the German Bundestag**

Ms. Baradari, you are repeatedly attacked on the net because of your political work. What do the attacks against you look like? Do they still relate to your political content or does it get outright personal?

Superficially and thus pretextually, the attacks refer to political content. However, these are often combined with humiliating comments and sexualized remarks.

From your perspective, what role does your gender play in these attacks and hate messages? Do you also receive explicit threats?

I can hardly imagine that a man also gets such insinuating remarks. They are swear words that are explicitly used towards women, such as bitch, whore, slut, etc. And yes, I have also received clear threats, against which I then tried to take legal action - unfortunately without success.

From your perspective, what would have to change for women to be safe online?

Criminal prosecution must be significantly strengthened and penalties increased so that existing laws are finally applied consistently and perpetrators punished. To this end, these people must be brought out of anonymity. Likewise, more support is needed for organizations like yours, so that those affected receive legal and emotional help in addition to professional care.



Nezahat Baradari
© Björn Bernhard Fotografie
(CC BY-SA 4.0)



Methodology

For the EU-representative survey by gender and age group, a total of 2,000 people aged 18 to 80 in all 27 EU member states were interviewed in September and October 2021 using Computer Assisted Web Interviews.

Definition

Digital violence includes various forms of belittling, harassment, discrimination, social isolation, and coercion of others on the Internet and using electronic communication tools. These include: Insult, defamation, slander, threats, blackmail, hate speech, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, or the unsolicited sending of dick pics or posting of private addresses online.¹

¹ Davey, Ebner: The Fringe Insurgency. Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right. Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2017. <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/The-Fringe-Insurgency-221017.pdf>; Kreißel, Philip/Ebner, Julia/ Urban, Alexander/ Guhl, Jakob: Hass auf Knopfdruck. Rechtsextreme Trollfabriken und das Ökosystem koordinierter Hasskampagnen im Netz. Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2018. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ISD_Ich_Bin_Hier_2.pdf



HateAid GmbH

The non-profit organization HateAid gGmbH was founded in 2018 and is headquartered in Berlin. HateAid offers support for victims of digital violence: legal cost funding, emotionally stabilising initial, safety, and communication counselling. The founding managing director is Anna-Lena von Hodenberg.

The study was commissioned by HateAid and funded by The Landecker Digital Justice Movement.



For more information about HateAid GmbH visit our website: <https://hateaid.org/>

Press contact: presse@hateaid.org
Tel. 030 / 252 088 37