
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Philipp Tanzer
Gender Parity UK
(by email)

2 August 2023

Dear Philipp,

Differences in online harassment by sex

Thank you for contacting us with your concerns about the claim that “women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online”. As you pointed out, this statistic has been used several times in the House of Commons and House of Lords in discussions about the Online Safety Bill.

The claim is based on an external research report rather than official statistics. While this falls outside our formal remit, we have investigated the claim because, as a general principle, we consider that high profile numerical statements should be supported by sound evidence and clearly identified sources.

The original source of the statistic is a 2015 UN Broadband Commission report, *Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls: A Worldwide Wake-Up Call*. However, the source most commonly cited is a 2017 report and resource pack, [Her Net Her Rights](#), produced by the European Women’s Lobby, which references the UN report.

We were not able to properly scrutinise the statistic because it is our understanding that the UN report was withdrawn by the UN Broadband Commission shortly after publication, due to concerns about the quality of the analysis in the report. The UN Broadband Commission replaced the report with a [short executive summary](#) with the key findings of the research, but this does not contain the ‘27 times’ claim.

Sex and gender based differences in online harassment are well-researched topics. A range of other data sources are available which can be scrutinised. In addition to the three research studies that you highlighted, we found two studies that are more specific to the UK context: Ofcom’s annual [Online Nation report](#), which contains the results of its Online Experiences Tracker survey, based on a nationally representative sample; and the Victim Commissioner’s 2022 [The Impact of Online Abuse: Hearing the Victims’ Voice report](#), which contains the results of a survey commissioned to contribute to the development of the Online Safety Bill, based on a self-selecting sample.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation