

# GENDER-BASED DIGITAL VIOLENCE

A flyer from the Koordinierungsstelle  
Chancengleichheit Sachsen

[www.kc-sachsen.de](http://www.kc-sachsen.de)

Für Vielfalt  
an sächsischen  
Hochschulen!

Online violence against women and girls should (...) be seen as a continuum of offline violence and as a means to maintain women in an inferior position in the digital sphere and in real life.<sup>1</sup>

## What is digital violence?

Digital violence contains actions of violence, which

- occur through technical tools and digital media
- occur in the digital space itself, e.g. via social media, forums, and through digital forms of communication like messenger, e-mail or chat

## What is digital gender-based violence?

- the attack and displacement of women, queer, trans\*, inter\*, and non-binary people from platforms or social media because of their gender
- therefore, the attacks can be classified as misogynistic and/or queer-/trans\*phobic. They are frequently sexualised

## Who is affected?

It is unclear how many women and queers are affected by gender-based digital vio-

lence. There is no current prevalence study including dark field study in Germany.

Cross-EU studies suggest that in Germany at least 13% of women over the age of 15 years are affected by stalking or "cyberharassment" (unwanted sending of sexualized content and unwanted contact).<sup>2</sup> Studies on genderqueer and t\*i\*n persons do not exist. Especially persons who are in the public eye are victims of gender-specific digital violence.

## What are the consequences for victims?

Possible physical and psychological complaints of digital violence are shame, insecurity, immediate feelings of threat, social isolation, sleeping problems, panic attacks and anxiety disorders.

7 out of 10 women who experience digital violence, are also affected by sexualized or physical violence.<sup>3</sup>

## How are digital and analogue violence connected?

- perpetrators of both forms of violence can be found in the victims' environment, e.g. (ex-)partners
- victims are often blamed for the use of violence by the perpetrators (victim blaming)
- violent acts like hate speech are more

likely to be practised by strangers

The acts of violence are not separated from an analogue space, but are entangled and interwoven with analogue violence.

### What forms exist?

There are various characteristics of digital gender-based violence in the social environment and in public spaces:<sup>4</sup>

- stalking, harassment, monitoring
- doxing, threatening
- image-based sexualized violence
- hate speech, defamation, insulting

### Offer of help and support

- \* [aktiv-gegen-digitale-gewalt.de](http://aktiv-gegen-digitale-gewalt.de)
- \* [mobilsicher.de](http://mobilsicher.de)
- \* [hateaid.org](http://hateaid.org)

Possible coping strategies could be:<sup>5</sup>

- \* naming/explaining the violence
- \* publicizing the experience of violence
- \* counter-speech/shared hashtags
- \* self-determined coping with the experience of violence

### How can peers help? What are possible prevention methods?

- listening, give credence
- list your online services and check (passwords)
- possibly set up new mailbox that no one else has access to
- set up secure passwords and don't share them with anyone
- document attacks and breaches
- strong passwords prevent attacks in the digital space, especially on one's own data and accounts

### What is the legal situation?

Prosecuting digital gender-based violence has been difficult so far, as law enforcement agencies are not yet adequately trained. Nevertheless, reporting the attacks is important to bring the issue to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

In most cases, it is not the attacks themselves that are punishable, but rather individual offenses, for example:

- Defamation (§§ 185 ff StGB)
- Threat (§ 241 StGB)
- Incitement of the people (§130 StGB)
- Public incitement to commit criminal acts (§ 111 StGB).

Thus, many aspects of digital gender-based

violence are relevant under criminal law.

Digital violence does not have to mean insulting or defaming a person. Also offensive messages, unsolicited contact and the sending of sexualized or pornographic images can also be a violent assault and thus digital violence.

### Quellen

1&2 Frey, Regina: „Geschlecht und Gewalt im digitalen Raum“. Eine qualitative Analyse der Erscheinungsformen, Betroffenheiten und Handlungsmöglichkeiten unter Berücksichtigung intersektionaler Aspekte. [Expertise für den Dritten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung.](#)

3&4 [Stellungnahme zum Fragenkatalog für die öffentliche Anhörung des Ausschusses digitale Agenda am 24. März 2021.](#) Bff, Frauen gegen Gewalt e.V.

5 Bff: Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe/Prasad, Nivedita (2021): [Geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt in Zeiten der Digitalisierung.](#) Formen und Interventionsstrategien. Transcript, Bielefeld.

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