

VOICES UNHEARD

Survey Findings on Online
Gender-Based Violence
in the Workplace



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PUBLISHER



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



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More about CIPE: www.cipe.org.

DEFINITION

Online gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) refer to harmful behaviors and actions directed at individuals based on their gender or gender identity within **digital environment**.

This type of violence can occur through various online platforms, such as **social media, forums, messaging apps**, and other **digital communication channels**.

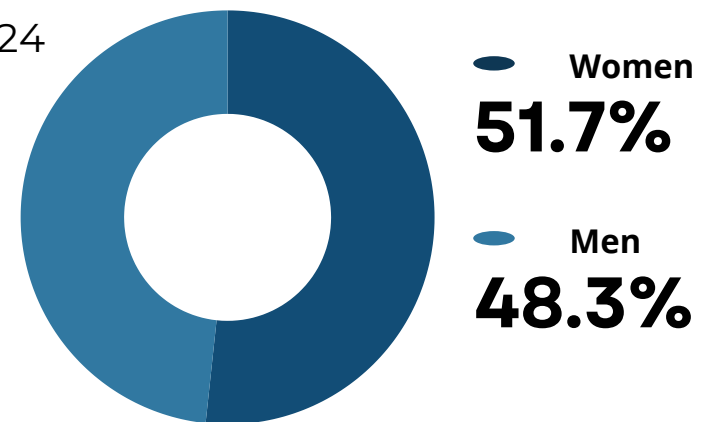
These issues have also increasingly **affected professional environments** as remote work and digital communication have become more prevalent.

Online gender-based violence and harassment can take many forms, often reflecting broader patterns of discrimination and abuse. Here are some common types:

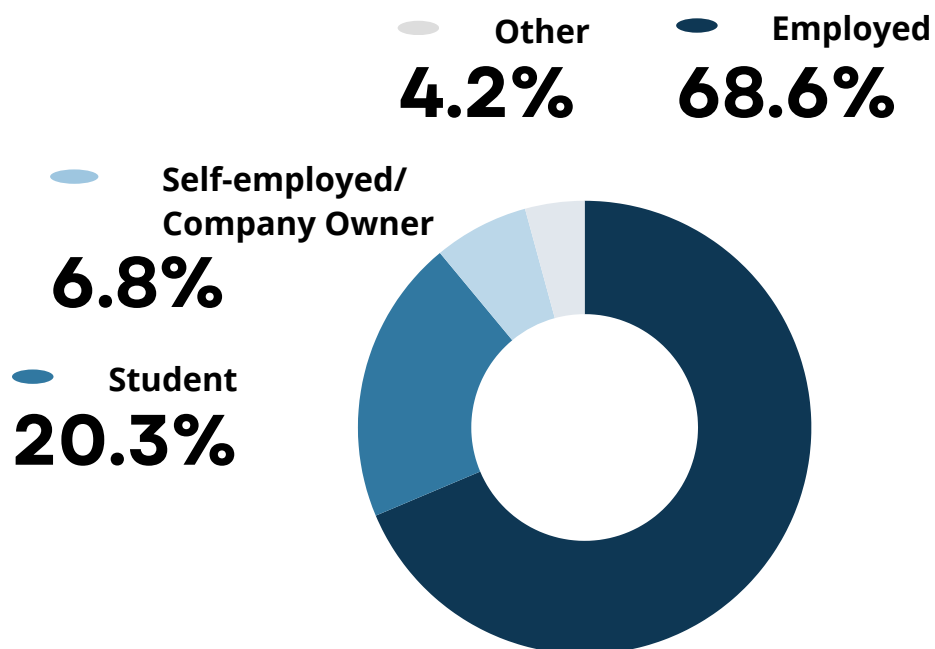


SURVEY

DATA COLLECTION: February 1 – February 19, 2024
METHODOLOGY: CAWI
RESPONSES: 118
RESPONSE RATE: 20.1%
LOCATION: Eastern Slovakia



The sample of respondents was gender-representative, reflecting the population distribution in Slovakia as of December 31, 2023, among individuals aged 18 and over. The survey was anonymous and primarily distributed to people working in IT or those known to be pursuing a career in IT.



The distribution suggests that the survey primarily reflects the views of the employed population, with a significant representation from students and a smaller but still relevant input from self-employed individuals and company owners. The "Other" category is minimal but important for completeness. Since our focus is on the working population, these results are well aligned to provide valuable insights.

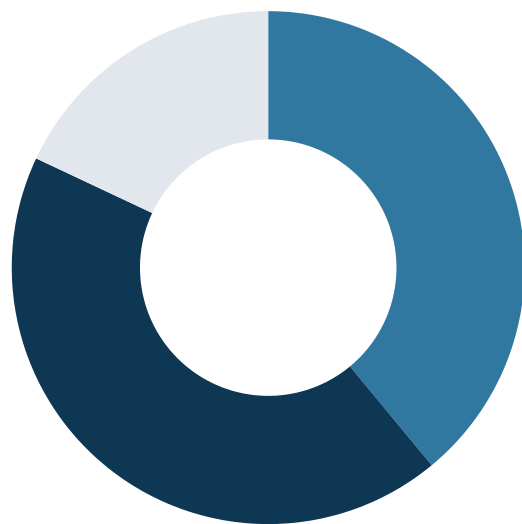
61%

of people are **not sufficiently informed** about online GBVH.

7%

of people are **well informed** about online GBVH.

How informed do respondents consider themselves?



● Sufficiently and very informed

39%

● Uncertain

43%

● Insufficiently or not informed at all

18%

“

I did not know that tracking someone's online activities is a form of online harassment. I think many people do it, especially to their exes.

Respondent from a survey

34% OF WOMEN

consider themselves **well informed** about online GBVH.

12%

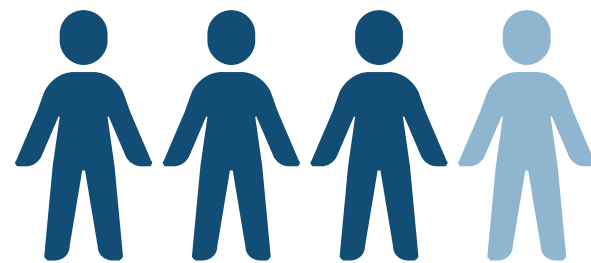
of individuals **acknowledge** that they **have committed**, or are unsure if they have committed, online GBVH against someone. Of these individuals, half are certain they have done so.

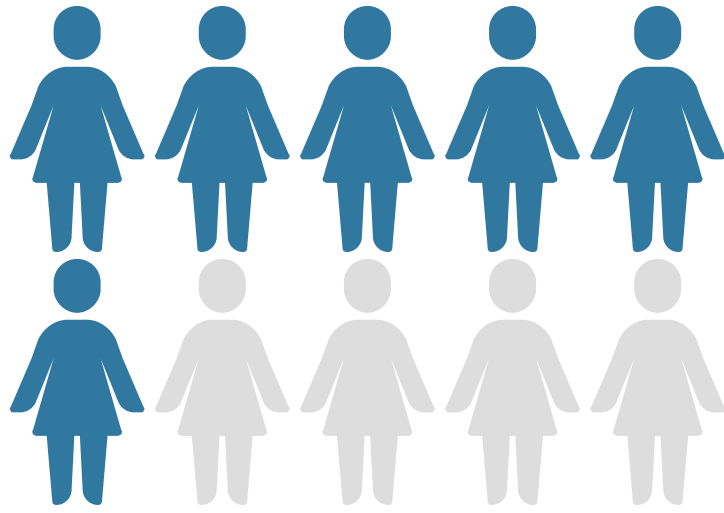
44% OF MEN

consider themselves **well informed** about online GBVH.

75%

of individuals **witnessed** online GBVH **against women**.



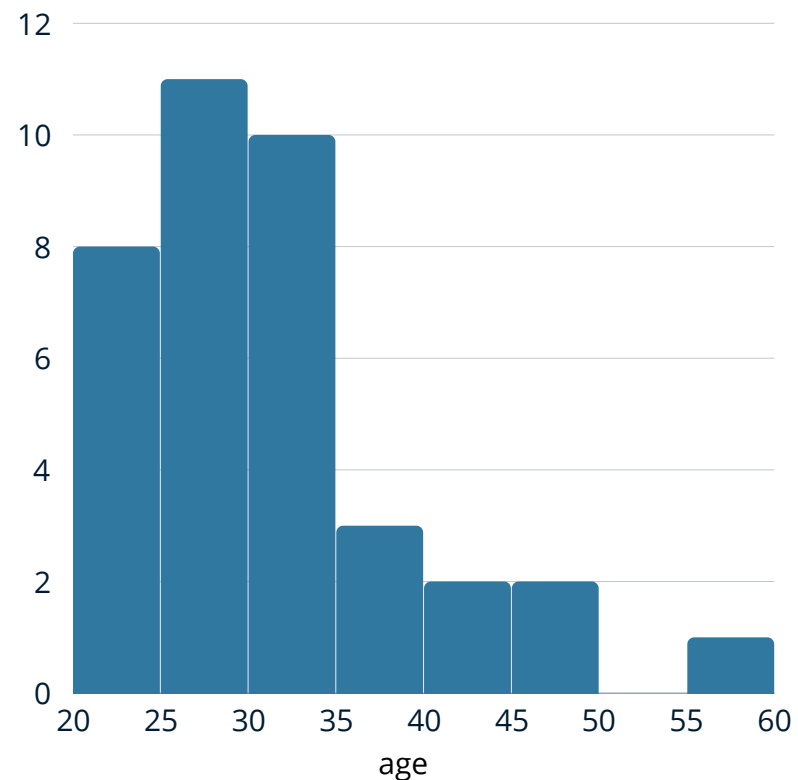


**6 OUT
OF 10**

women have been targets of online gender-based violence in the past.

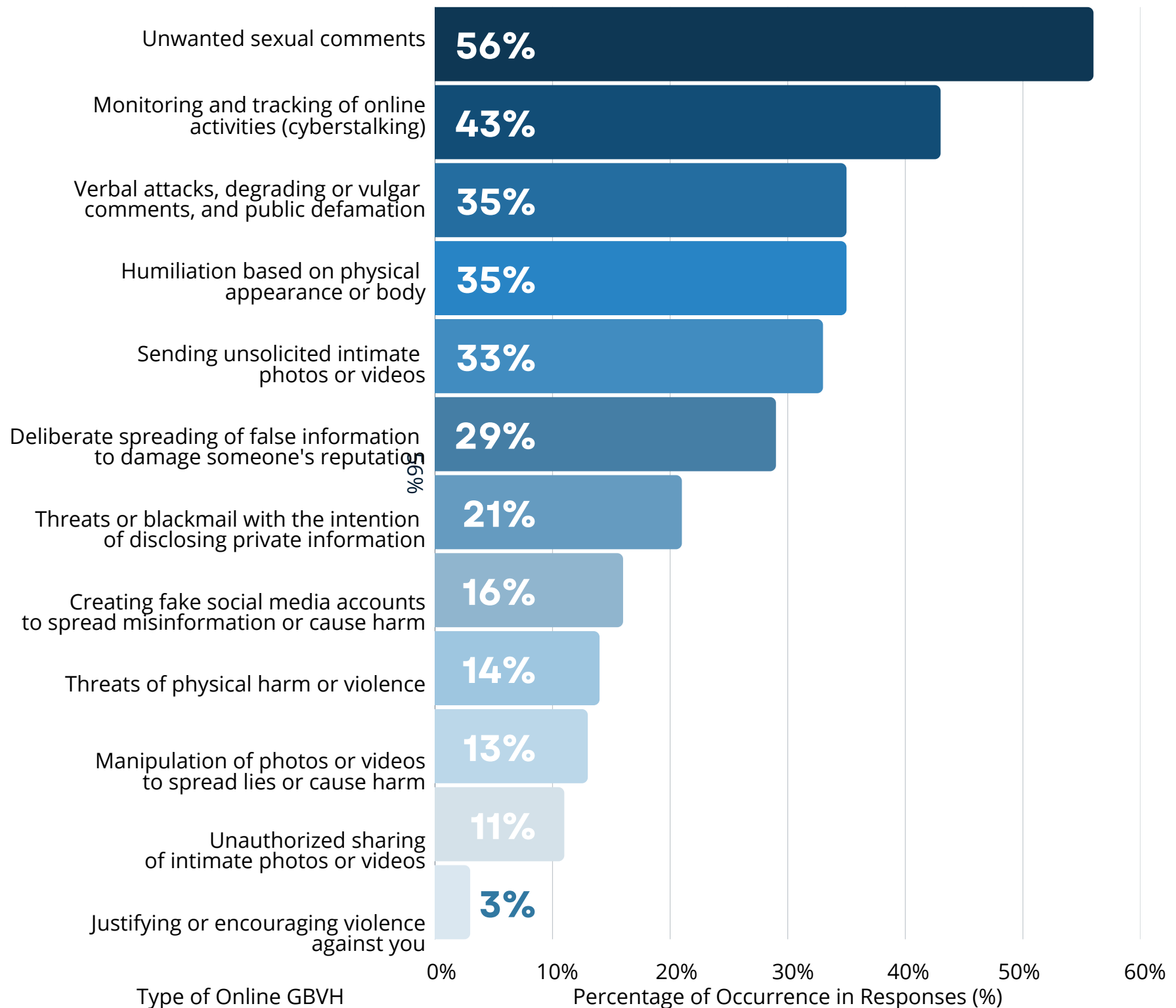
**25-35
YEARS**

is the age range in which women face online GBVH the most, with the highest number of reported incidents occurring among women in this category.

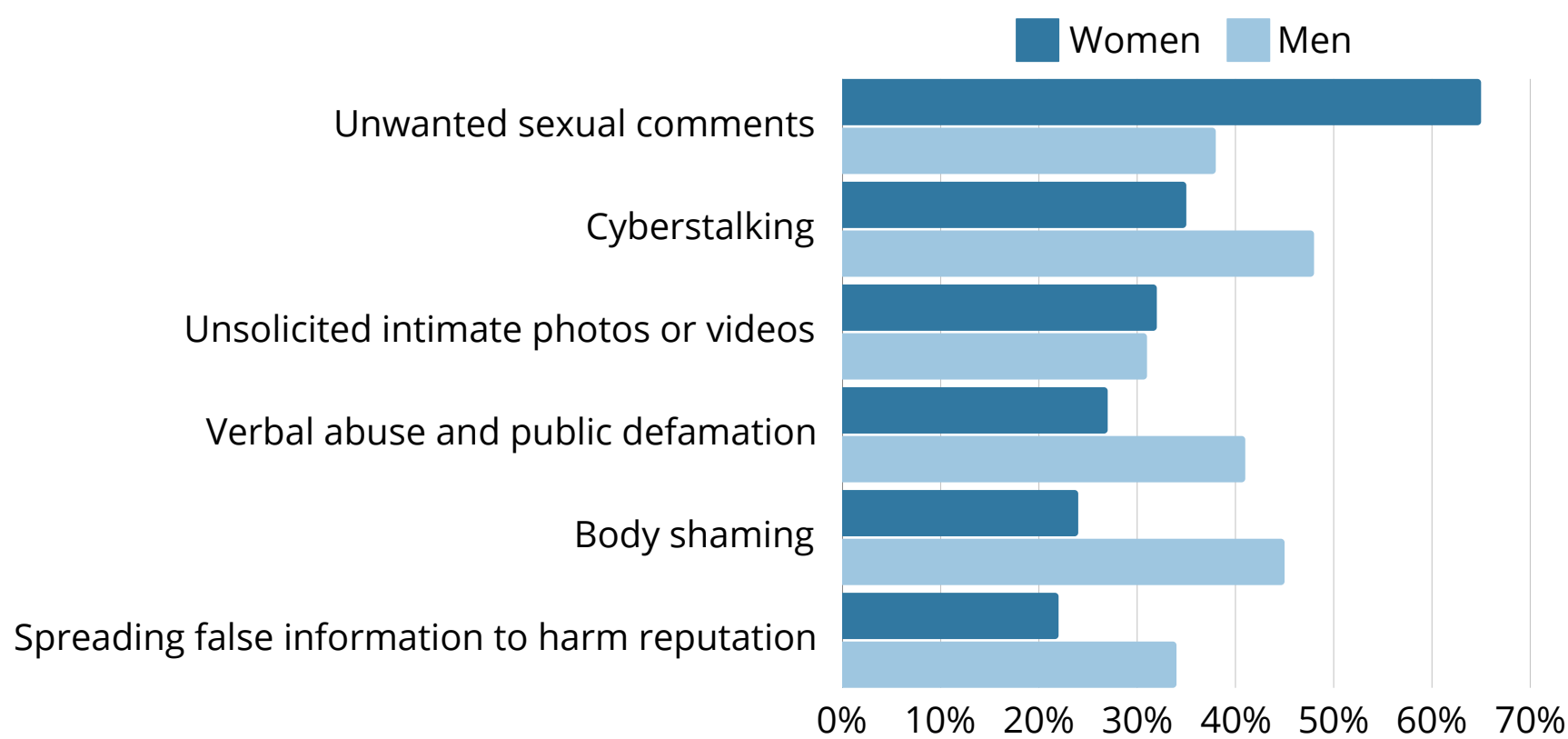


OCCURRENCE

PREVALENCE OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF ONLINE GBVH



According to the respondents' answers, men and women experience online GBVH at similar rates, with each person on average being targeted by nearly three different forms of this violence. However, the types of violence most frequently encountered differ by gender. Women most commonly face violence involving sexual comments, while men are more frequently subjected to verbal abuse. The six most common types of behavior encountered by respondents are broken down by gender, including the percentage of respondents who reported being victims of each type of behavior.



IN 76%

of cases where female respondents experienced online GBVH, at least one of the attacks was [sexual in nature](#).

People may engage in online gender-based violence due to a desire for power and control, exploiting the anonymity of the internet to avoid consequences. Social and cultural norms, such as gender stereotypes, can perpetuate and normalize harmful behaviors. Personal issues like insecurity or emotional distress might drive individuals to express their frustrations through online harassment.

Additionally, exposure to GBVH in online environments or peer pressure can further encourage such behavior. It's important to recognize that online GBVH can be perpetrated by individuals of any gender and that the focus should be on addressing and preventing such behavior regardless of who commits it.

WITNESSING ONLINE GBVH AGAINST WOMEN

75% of individuals reported witnessing online GBVH against women. The most common types of GBVH observed by respondents (in percentage share of occurrence in responses) included:

72% UNWANTED SEXUAL
COMMENTS

57% BODY SHAMING

64% VERBAL ABUSE AND PUBLIC
DEFAMATION

44% UNSOLICITED INTIMATE
PHOTOS OR VIDEOS

82%

of people have not undergone **any** workplace **training** regarding online GBVH.

78%

of incidents at the workplace are **not reported** by either the victims or the witnesses.

Online GBVH in the workplace is a serious issue that demands attention and action from both employers and society at large. This problem disproportionately affects female employees, who are often the primary targets of such behavior. As women continue to strive for equality and representation in the workforce, it is essential that they are provided with a safe and supportive work environment, free from the fear of online harassment.

“

I wasn't sure about the seriousness of the situation, therefore I didn't report it.

Respondent from a survey who witnessed an incident of workplace online GBVH.

ONLY 33%

of individuals, despite considering themselves **well-informed** about this type of violence, **reported** an incident to HR or a supervisor.

13%

of those who consider themselves **poorly informed** about online GBVH reported an incident whether they witnessed or experienced it.

This highlights a gap between awareness and action, indicating that many employees may still feel reluctant or unsure about reporting such incidents, due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in the reporting process, or concerns about being taken seriously.

Low reporting rate underscores the need for organizations to create more supportive and transparent reporting mechanisms, ensuring that employees feel safe and empowered to come forward when they experience or witness online GBVH. It also emphasizes the importance of ongoing education and communication about the available resources and the importance of addressing these issues proactively.

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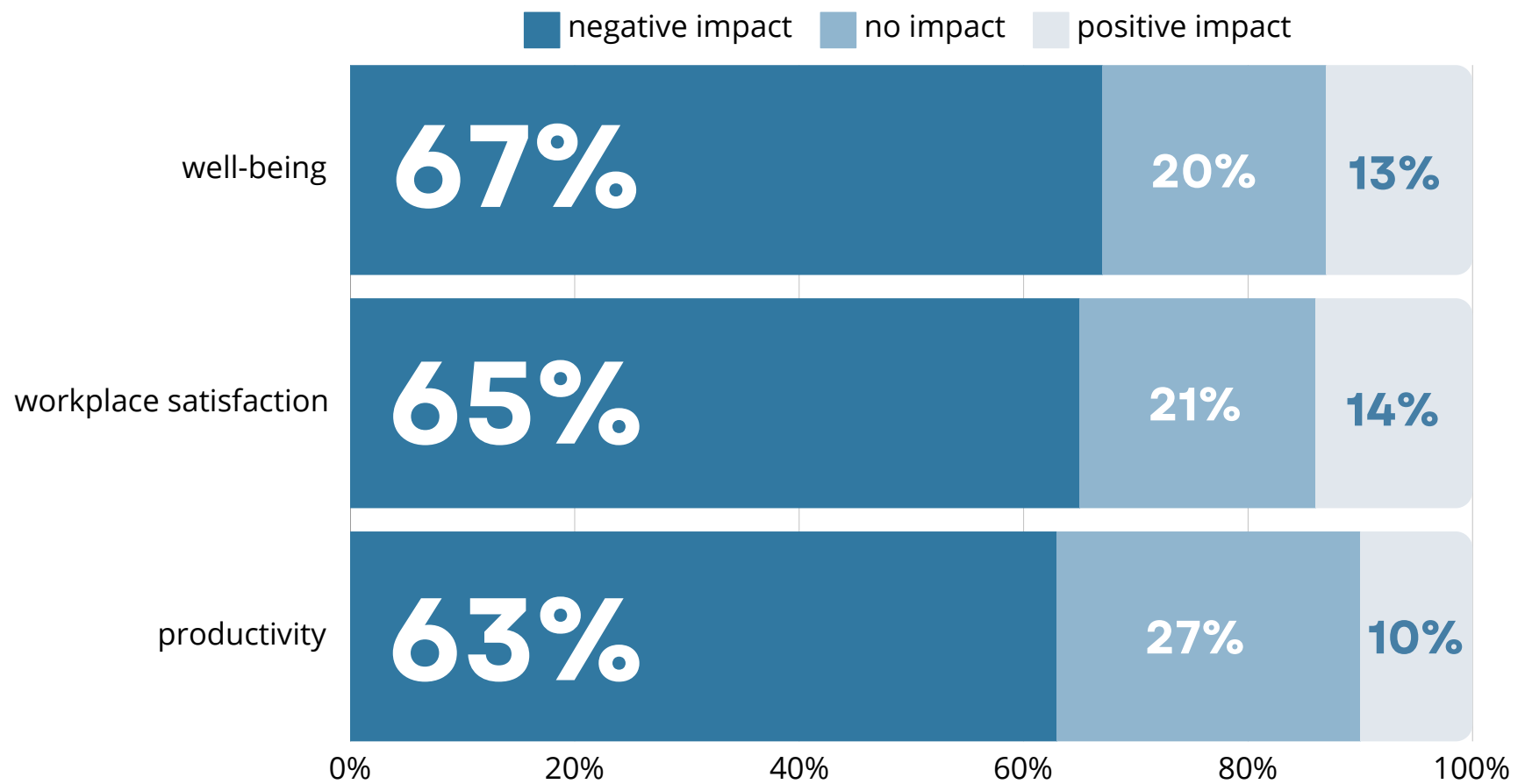
It was my boss, and only my colleague knew about it. I resigned, but even after 5 years, it still weighs on me. I eventually told my husband the reason for my sudden resignation, but maybe I should have stayed silent at home as well.

Female victim of online GBVH in the workplace

It's concerning that a few respondents reported not filing complaints because the incidents of online GBVH were perpetrated by superiors or bosses. This response highlights a significant issue in addressing workplace harassment – power dynamics often discourage individuals from coming forward.

When the harasser is in a position of authority, victims might fear retaliation, damage to their careers, or a lack of support. It underscores the need for organizations to establish robust, confidential reporting mechanisms and ensure that all employees, regardless of rank, are held accountable for their actions.

IMPACT



The survey reveals a significant concern regarding the impact of online gender-based violence in the workplace, with 67% of respondents indicating it **negatively affects** employee **well-being**, 65% reporting a negative impact on **workplace satisfaction**, and 63% on **productivity**. These high percentages reflect the pervasive and harmful nature of such violence, suggesting that it not only deteriorates personal well-being and job satisfaction but also hampers overall productivity.

The relatively small percentage of respondents who perceive a positive impact across these areas underscore the critical need for organizations to address online gender-based violence seriously to maintain a healthy, satisfied, and productive workforce.

81%

of individuals believe that **more effort** should be made **to raise awareness** and understanding of online GBVH in the workplace, while only 1.7% believe that no additional effort is needed.

“

The primary issue is not online GBVH in the workplace but rather in public spaces. Awareness campaigns should be implemented in schools and made mandatory for all adults.

Comment from a survey respondent

STRATEGIES

Implementing **effective strategies** to prevent online GBVH in the workplace is crucial for several reasons:

- 1. protecting employee well-being,**
- 2. promoting a positive work culture,**
- 3. reducing legal risks,**
- 4. enhancing organizational reputation,**
- 5. improving productivity and performance,**
- 6. facilitating effective response and resolution.**

Adopting and enforcing effective strategies to prevent online GBVH is not just a matter of compliance but a fundamental aspect of creating a supportive and productive work environment. It reflects a company's commitment to its employees' safety and well-being, enhances its reputation, and supports long-term organizational success.

The most efficient and straightforward methods are those that employees can easily adapt to and incorporate into their daily workflows. To facilitate a smooth and successful transition, we recommend the formats that were most preferred by respondents. By focusing on these highly favored options, we aim to ensure that the methods are both practical and aligned with employee needs, thereby enhancing overall engagement and adoption.

Preferred methods and initiatives identified by respondents as most effective for enhancing awareness of online GBVH in the workplace (based on the percentage of respondents who prefer each method):

62% **ANONYMOUS REPORTING SYSTEMS**

52% **SEMINARS AND TRAINING**

49% **COLLABORATION WITH EXPERTS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

38% **REGULAR COMMUNICATION
FROM MANAGEMENT**

36% **COMPANY-WIDE CAMPAIGNS**

35% **INCLUSION OF THE TOPIC
IN EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING**

22% **EMPLOYEE SUPPORT GROUPS**

3% **OTHER**

CLOSING REMARKS

Online gender-based violence and harassment is a growing issue that affects both personal lives and professional environments. It's important to understand the deep impact these issues have on individuals and workplaces. Online GBVH occurs through various channels like social media, email, and other digital platforms. It includes behaviors such as harassment, threats, and the spread of harmful stereotypes and misinformation. The anonymity of the internet often makes these actions more severe, highlighting the need for a comprehensive response.

In the workplace, online harassment doesn't just cause individual distress; it also harms productivity, employee well-being, organizational culture, and morale. To tackle these issues, organizations need to implement clear policies, effective reporting systems, and provide ongoing education and support to promote a respectful and inclusive environment.

Our analysis has identified several strategies that respondents find most effective, including:

- Establishing anonymous reporting systems
- Conducting regular training programs
- Creating open communication channels
- Collaborating with external experts

These strategies are crucial for raising awareness, offering support, and ensuring a safer workplace.

Stakeholders – such as organizations, policymakers, and individuals – must embrace these findings and commit to taking effective action. By working together, we can create environments where everyone, both online and offline, feels respected, valued, and safe.

In summary, addressing online gender-based violence and harassment requires ongoing vigilance, commitment, and collective effort. Let's use the insights from this report to drive meaningful change and build environments free from gender-based violence and harassment.

CONTACT



www.kosiceitvalley.sk



info@itvalley.sk



+421 (55) 602 3653



UVP Technicom
Němcovej 5
Košice

