



## WE NEED TO:

*Clarify legislation on violence and sexual violence, to incorporate online violence, to offer the police and judicial system tools to deal with this violence.*

*Change procedures and attitudes within the police force and make sure that survivors of online violence are taken seriously and the crimes against them are investigated.*

*Guarantee funding to combat online violence, both to public authorities to investigate these crimes and to independent actors to offer guidance and legal aid to survivors.*

*Educate the public, especially young people, about the seriousness of online violence and its outsize impact on women's participation in online spaces.*

Kvenréttindafélag Íslands has worked to increase women's participation in all levels of Icelandic society since its founding in 1907. Kvinderådet was established in Denmark in 1899 and is an umbrella organization of 44 organizations united to promote women's rights and gender equality. KUN centre for gender equality is a private non-profit foundation established in 1991, working for gender equality, diversity and democracy.

[kvenrettindafelag.is](http://kvenrettindafelag.is)  
[kvinderaad.dk](http://kvinderaad.dk)  
[kun.no](http://kun.no)

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## What is online violence?



**Online violence has increased in recent years, with the proliferation of new technologies and the rise of social media.**

### DID YOU KNOW?

Between 95–96% of young people (16-29 years old) in Iceland, Denmark and Norway are active on social media.

Violence or threats of violence online discourage people from using the internet. Online violence also affects how people live their lives offline. People targeted by harassment and threats also sometimes change their daily routines or withdraw from social activities.

One US study shows that 27% of all people practice self-censorship online out of fear of online harassment, and 41% of women 15-29 years old.

Survivors of online violence often report that they are not taken seriously by the police or authorities.

Online violence and digital harassment is a gendered phenomenon where sexism and misogyny, the hatred against women for just being women, is manifested online as offline.

Cyber-violence against women and girls is emerging as a global problem with serious implications for societies and economies around the world.

# Online Violence Against Women in the Nordic Countries

*Online violence includes harassment, stalking, blackmail, threats, identity theft, child pornography, accessing or disseminating private data, and uploading photos and videos without consent.*

Kvenréttindafélag Íslands, Kvinderådet and KUN conducted in-depth interviews with survivors of online violence, analysing their experience of the violence and their experiences seeking justice for and protection from that violence. The study also looked at police procedures in dealing with online violence and experiences of legal aides who have worked with survivors of online violence.

The report “*Online Violence Against Women in the Nordic Countries*” details the results of this study. The aim of the report is to shed light on the issue of online violence against women and to offer tools and information to Nordic organizations, police and legislators.

## **SURVIVORS’ EXPERIENCES**

The study showed a lack of faith in the justice system of Denmark, Iceland and Norway. The majority of women who had experienced online violence and were contacted had not sought justice for this violence. They claimed that they did not see the point in seeking help or pressing charges, since the system did not work.

*Participants in all three countries reported physical symptoms such as anxiety, unexplained pains, lack of energy and fatigue.*

In some cases, there were financial consequences to online violence, whether directly or indirectly. Indirect costs include survivors being forced to quit their job or school because of psychological issues. Direct costs include legal costs and expenses for psychological treatment.

Participants in the study who had experienced online sexual violence, whose images had been shared online without their consent, reported a fear that these images would materialize online over and over again.

*Most of the participants did not feel that justice was being done in their cases. They described feelings of not being heard by the police and felt that the police were uncertain about how to handle their cases.*

## **EXPERIENCES OF THE POLICE**

Police explain the lack of action in cases of online violence as a matter of priority. Terror alert or physical violence cases are being prioritized over cases of online violence.

Police describes seeing the cyber misogyny in their work and shared concerns about the sexism and the dehumanizing of women.

In Norway, one police department dealing with hate crimes raised awareness about how to handle online violence cases. They stressed the importance of survivors being seen and heard, and their experience can be a resource to other police departments investigating online violence.

This police department also stated that online crimes are not as hard to investigate nor to pursue legally as people would believe. However, to give this work priority does involve a fight for already scant resources that the “real world crimes” feel habitually entitled to.