

# ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH  
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ***"I needed to retain hold of that life, and that control of that person": Perpetrators of technology-facilitated abuse share their motivations and experiences***

One in two Australians will be victims of technology-facilitated abuse in their lifetimes, and one in four Australians will perpetrate technology-facilitated abuse<sup>1</sup>.

Two new research reports from ANROWS complete a national study examining the extent and nature of, and responses to, technology-facilitated abuse in Australia.

[\*Technology-facilitated abuse: Interviews with victims and survivors and perpetrators\*](#) and [\*Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences\*](#) present the lived experiences of victims and survivors of technology-facilitated abuse, the nature of perpetration, and national prevalence rates for the victimisation and perpetration of various types of technology-facilitated abuse.

The research, led by Dr Asher Flynn (Monash University) and Dr Anastasia Powell (RMIT University), found that gaining and/or maintaining control over the victim and survivor was the primary motivation of perpetrators of technology-facilitated abuse.

*"It was just this sense of control of being able to know where they were, what they were doing, who they were with, you know what I mean?" (Study participant)*

While technology-facilitated abuse occurs in a range of contexts, approximately one in three victims and survivors reported that their most recent experience of victimisation occurred in a current or former intimate partner relationship.

Perpetrators primarily identified feeling angry and upset as their main motivators for engaging in technology-facilitated abuse in the context of intimate partner relationships. They attributed this anger to a loss of control at the end of a relationship and losing daily contact with the victim and survivor.

*"I needed to retain hold of that life, and that control of that person I guess, and I felt like if I could just track all that stuff, I could do that somehow." (Study participant)*

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<sup>1</sup> Technology-facilitated abuse is the use of mobile and digital technologies in interpersonal harms such as online sexual harassment, stalking or image-based abuse.

Methods of abuse varied and included behaviours such as sending abusive or threatening messages and surreptitiously installing malicious software on a victim's and survivor's mobile device to monitor their communications with others.

"I wanted an answer from her, and so I just called her about 150 times in, I don't know, a two-hour period. And she didn't pick up, but I just kept doing that." (Study participant)

Some perpetrators minimised the abusive behaviour, with almost one in three saying that they thought the victim would be "okay with it". One in six considered it was "funny" and one in 10 believed the victim would be "flattered" by their behaviour.

ANROWS CEO Padma Raman PSM noted that the range of harms experienced by victims and survivors of technology-facilitated abuse was lasting, complex and wide-ranging.

"The impacts of technology-facilitated abuse can include physical, emotional and mental health harms, as well as feelings of fear, paranoia and hypervigilance. Victims and survivors explained that their experiences affected their ability to have personal and professional relationships with others, creating a sense of isolation."

The research reveals that police, internet platforms and other basic service providers (such as banks, telecommunication companies and gas/electricity providers) have inconsistent approaches to addressing abuse and can be highly ineffective in meeting the needs of victims and survivors.

"It is vitally important that essential services have a proactive, policy-driven approach to preventing and responding to technology-facilitated abuse. It is also crucial, for the purposes of risk assessment, that technology-facilitated abuse by a current or former partner is understood as a potential risk indicator for multiple forms of domestic and family violence," Ms Raman said.

Through its eSafety Women team, the eSafety Commissioner was represented on the ANROWS Project Advisory Group.

"This research reinforces what our eSafety Women team has been hearing from frontline services about the real-life impacts of online harms and the importance of providing targeted support to women experiencing intimate partner abuse," said eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant.

"The crucial insights about the motivations and methods of those enacting this kind of abuse will improve the programs, training and outreach we provide to frontline services supporting people experiencing technology-facilitated abuse."

**To further unpack the findings of this research, you are invited to attend an ANROWS webinar, "Technology-facilitated abuse: Extent, nature and responses in the Australian community", on Thursday 28 July at 1pm: <https://www.anrows.org.au/event/webinar-technology-facilitated-abuse-extent-nature-and-responses-in-the-australian-community/>**

**Journalists are also invited to request embargoed copies of these reports.**

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**Editor's Note:**

ANROWS suggests the following support information is included to assist readers who might be experiencing technology-facilitated abuse:

*If you or someone you know is experiencing technology-facilitated abuse you can access support at 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732), Lifeline (13 11 14) and, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 13YARN (13 92 76). You can also report online harm to eSafety: [esafety.gov.au/report](https://esafety.gov.au/report)*

**About ANROWS**

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited ([ANROWS](#)) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS is an initiative of Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children. ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.