

# Half of all Australians will be victims of technology-facilitated abuse, new research finds

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One in two Australians will be victims of technology-facilitated abuse in their lifetimes, and one in four will be perpetrators of such abuse, new

research led by Monash University has revealed.

In the first ever nationally representative survey of both Australian adult victim-survivors and perpetrators, researchers from Monash and RMIT universities also found technology-facilitated [abuse](#) was experienced at higher levels for LGBTIQ+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those with disability.

The most common abuse takes place in a current or former intimate partner relationship and in this context, is most likely experienced by a woman and perpetrated by a man.

Across two reports—a [national survey](#) of 4,562 people and 30 interviews with both victim-survivors and perpetrators of technology-facilitated abuse—the researchers aimed to better understand the lived experiences of victims, as well as the characteristics of technology-facilitated abuse perpetration.

The research was funded by Australia's National Research Organization for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and the Department of Social Services and represents the final two stages of a project examining the extent, nature and contexts of technology-facilitated abuse in Australia, with stage one launched last year.

Researchers found the most common types of technology-facilitated abuse were, in order of prevalence, monitoring and controlling behaviors, [emotional abuse](#) and threats, harassing behaviors and sexual and image-based abuse.

Monash University criminologist and project lead Associate Professor Asher Flynn said gaining or maintaining control over a victim was the primary motivation that emerged in the research.

"Participants reported experiencing abusive, threatening or repetitive contact, having their communication and even movements monitored and [social media accounts](#) hacked," Associate Professor Flynn said.

"There was also a common theme of surveillance—a sense of always being watched and being unable to escape the gaze and control of the perpetrator."

One in three victim-survivors kept their experiences to themselves, and the absolute majority didn't report to police, seek [legal advice](#) or contact the eSafety Commissioner.

Researchers also found victims of technology-facilitated abuse experience [psychological distress](#) consistent with moderately severe mental ill health.

"Victim-survivors reported experiencing a range of harms including physical, emotional and mental health distress, as well as feelings of fear, paranoia and hypervigilance," said Associate Professor Flynn.

Participants who disclosed technology-facilitated abuse perpetration were almost twice as likely to have been victims of abuse at some stage themselves.

One in three stated their motivation for engaging in abuse was to express anger towards the victim and one in five said it was to hurt the person's feelings.

Researchers outlined a number of policy implications arising from the report including improving training and development for frontline responders and recommending service providers such as telecommunications, banks and internet platforms have better policies to allow users to delink accounts.

**More information:** The reports are available online:  
[www.anrows.org.au/project/tech ... australian-community/](http://www.anrows.org.au/project/tech...australian-community/)

Provided by Monash University

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