

THIRD NATIONAL SURVEY OF
**Technology
Abuse and
Domestic
Violence
in Australia**



Curtin University



Wesnet acknowledgement

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Acknowledgement of Country

The authors would like to acknowledge and pay respects to all First Nations people, and the Traditional and only Custodians of this country we call Australia. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the people of the lands of the: Dja Dja Wurrung where the Wesnet main office stands; Nyungar Peoples where Curtin University stands; and the Bidjigal Peoples where University New South Wales is sited. We recognise First Nations peoples' culture, wisdom, and connection to these lands and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future. We recognise the loss of land and culture, acknowledging the consequences of dispossession and colonisation on First Nations peoples. We acknowledge that sovereignty over this land was never ceded. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land. First Nations women have multiple roles and identities relating to their culture, community, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nations women, particularly those who have experienced domestic and family violence, and those who support and advocate for victim survivors of domestic and family violence. We pay our deepest respects to those who have lost loved ones as a result of domestic and family violence.

Acknowledgement of victim-survivors

The authors acknowledge all victim-survivors of gender-based violence. We pay our respects to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends.

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Abbreviations

ACT: Australian Capital Territory
ADVO: Apprehended Domestic Violence Order
AI: Artificial Intelligence
CALD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CC: Coercive Control
CSAM: Child Sexual Abuse Material
CSV: Comma-Separated Values (file format)
DFV: Domestic and Family Violence
DVIO: Domestic Violence Intervention Order
DVO: Domestic Violence Order
DVRCV: Domestic Violence Research Centre Victoria
(now Safe and Equal)
FVIO: Family Violence Intervention Order
FVO: Family Violence Order
FVRO: Family Violence Restraining Order
GPS: Global Positioning System
HREC: Human Research Ethics Committee
IoT: Internet of Things
IVO: Intervention Order
LGBTIQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer
NSW: New South Wales
NT: Northern Territory
PUV: Persons Using Violence
QLD: Queensland
SA: South Australia
TAS: Tasmania
TFA: Technology-Facilitated Abuse
VIC: Victoria
WA: Western Australia
WESNET: Women's Services Network



01



Executive Summary

Domestic and family violence (DFV) perpetrators have adopted technology as a multifaceted tool to control, isolate, and terrorise women and children.

The findings of our 2025 Third National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia offer a unique opportunity to track technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) as technology evolves.

Looking back to our first survey in 2015, and second one in 2020, we can observe dramatic shifts in some areas and limited movement in others, enabling us to trace changes alongside policy development, funding priorities, and legislative impacts. The origins of these surveys date back to 2012, with a state-wide survey in Victoria led by what was then DVRCV (now Safe and Equal). Practitioners were increasingly reporting perpetrator use of technology and highlighting gaps in recognition by the justice system, as well as limited support for women and frontline workers. The survey was developed in close consultation with the sector, including site visits to numerous refuges across Victoria. Critically, the roots of this work are embedded within the DFV sector, ensuring that practice-based knowledge has shaped both the questions asked and insights generated.



Building on this practice-led foundation, this report provides detailed insights from 307 frontline practitioner survey responses into DFV perpetrator use of TFA in Australia. It highlights emerging patterns of perpetrator behaviour and the ongoing support needs of women and frontline practitioners. Several additions were made to the survey, such as questions about perpetrators' use of online

Major findings

Prevalence of TFA

Almost all practitioners have witnessed TFA in their work. An overwhelming majority of respondents (99.7%) reported that they had supported clients who had been abused, stalked or threatened via technology. This was a slight increase from 99.3% in 2020 and 98.3% in 2015. There is also increasing integration of technological tools into the arsenals of DV perpetrators. Half of respondents (51.5%) indicated that they see TFA more frequently than non-TFA.

Most common types of technology used in TFA

The most common types of technology used by perpetrators were smartphones and messaging apps, social media and online platforms, and GPS tracking and location tools. Across all three survey iterations, there were significant increases in the frequency with which practitioners were seeing these

pornography, dating apps, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), and resources that practitioners use to support women and children experiencing TFA. Responses revealed insights into women's concerns about their partner/ex-partner's pornography viewing, perpetrator uptake of emerging technologies and most and least useful resources for practitioners.

technologies being utilised to facilitate abuse, signalling their growing uptake by perpetrators.

- **Smartphones and messaging apps:** In 2025, 96.1% of respondents reported witnessing abuse using smartphones and messaging apps either 'Often' or 'All the time', compared to and 66.0% in 2020 and 26.4% in 2015.
- **Social media and online platforms:** Similarly, while less than half of practitioners reported seeing abuse via social media and online platforms 'Often' or 'All the time' in 2015 and 2020 (37.6% and 48.6% respectively),¹ this proportion had surged to 94.1% by 2025.
- **GPS tracking and location tools:** In 2025, over two-thirds of respondents (68.1%) saw abuse via GPS tracking and location tools 'Often' or 'All the time'. This was a considerable increase from 33.6% in 2020 and 23.6% in 2015.²



96.1%

of respondents reported witnessing abuse using smartphones and messaging apps either 'Often' or 'All the time'.

94.1%

reported seeing abuse via social media and online platforms 'Often' or 'All the time'.

68.1%

saw abuse via GPS tracking and location tools 'Often' or 'All the time'.

¹ 2020 and 2015 statistics by averaging scores from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat items.

² 2020 and 2015 statistics obtained by averaging scores from three GPS items.



Three out of four practitioners reported seeing perpetrators use AI tools to abuse women.



Emerging Technology

Additional technologies were added to the 2025 survey, showing that online banking and financial accounts emerged as the technology that practitioners most frequently witnessed being used to enable TFA. Just over two-thirds of respondents (67.4%) reported seeing it being used either ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’.

Additionally, the findings highlight perpetrators’ uptake of emerging technologies. Of note is the use of AI to facilitate abuse. Overall, three out of four practitioners (74.3%) reported seeing perpetrators use AI-generated threats and impersonation tools to abuse women. The dangers posed by this technology should not be underestimated. Practitioners also noted that AI is also used by perpetrators to falsify legal correspondence to increase victim-survivors’ fear. In light of the ongoing fast-paced developments around AI, and its increasing integration into our everyday lives, this technology has the potential to create new risks for women and children. As has been common with other new and emerging technologies, it is highly likely that perpetrators will continue to find new ways to misuse the technologies to further abuse women and children and we anticipate this will continue with AI.

How technology is used as part of TFA

The survey examined three specific categories of TFA tactics –

abusive tactics, threatening tactics, and monitoring and tracking tactics. However, it is important to recognise that perpetrators seldom rely on a single set of strategies. Instead, they often combine multiple tactics and technologies to create a broader dynamic of coercive control intended to inflict considerable and lasting harms for victim-survivors.

The results highlight perpetrators’ continued reliance on abusive phone calls and texts, emails or message applications to perpetrate TFA. Additionally, there was a significant increase in how often practitioners were witnessing social media being used as part of abusive tactics.

The use of social media as a tool employed by perpetrators to threaten victim-survivors continues to increase over time. There were significant increases across all three survey waves in relation to how often practitioners were seeing social media being used to threaten victim-survivors. Text, email and instant messages, as well as phone calls, also emerged as technologies that continue to be commonly exploited by perpetrators to threaten victim-survivors.

Monitoring and surveillance of victim-survivors by checking their text messages and phones without permission, and buying them phones to keep track of them, have declined. From 2020 to 2025, the frequency with which practitioners reported seeing these tactics fell significantly.

In 2020, the proportions of respondents who saw perpetrators checking women's text messages and phones without permission, and buying them phones to track them, were 91.8% and 72.0%, respectively. By 2025, these figures had fallen to 87.9% and 49.3%. These declines likely reflect a shift in perpetrator tactics rather than a reduction in surveillance, with perpetrators increasingly exploiting more subtle and sophisticated forms of monitoring and capitalising on the existing technologies that women already use.

Notably, the results underscore the growing use of social media and spyware by perpetrators to monitor and track victim-survivors. There were significant increases across all three waves in relation to how often practitioners were seeing these technologies being utilised for this purpose. In 2025, 82.1% of respondents reported witnessing social media being used for surveillance and to check on women 'Often' or 'All the time'.

This was compared to 62.7% in 2020 and 60.0% in 2015. Similarly, in 2025, the proportion of respondents seeing the installation of spyware on phones to monitor women's email, text messages and phone calls, 'Often' or 'All the time' was 44.6% – an increase from 25.4% in 2020 and 23.5% in 2015.

The results also highlight the risk of perpetrators leveraging negative or personal information about victim-survivors to

humiliate, shame and/or punish them. Around three-quarters of respondents (74.5%) were seeing negative information about women being posted by perpetrators on social media sites, such as Facebook, 'Often' or 'All the time'. Practitioners underscored the emotional and psychological harms that can stem from perpetrators' use of humiliating, shaming and punishing tactics. A respondent specifically described how it can be *'terrifying and debilitating for women to have the threat of exposure of intimate images and personal information'*. Perpetrators' engagement in these tactics exemplifies how they exploit knowledge of or possession of victim-survivors' personal or intimate information, and exercise ongoing control over them and their lives. The very nature of online environments amplifies this fear, as the personal and professional often merge, enabling perpetrators not only to damage women's reputations with their families but also to harm their reputations with work colleagues and the broader community (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

Use and targeting of children as part of TFA

Although results suggest that the use of children in TFA has dropped, the figures nevertheless demonstrate that this continues to be a serious issue that affects victim-survivors and their children. The 2025 survey was the first time that practitioners



74.5%

of respondents were seeing negative information about women being posted by perpetrators on social media sites, such as Facebook, 'Often' or 'All the time'.

56.6%

of respondents reported observing perpetrator gifting technology to children as a tactic to undermine the mother-child relationship.

62.5%

total percentage of respondents indicated that they had at some point supported women who were concerned that their child was being sexually abused and filmed/photographed by their partner/ex-partner.



Almost all practitioners (96.9%) identified coercive control as co-occurring with the use of technology in DV.



were asked how often they were seeing perpetrator gifting technology to children as a tactic to undermine the mother-child relationship. The results indicate that this is a common tactic, with over half (56.6%) of respondents reporting they observed it ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’.

In the 2025 survey, additional questions on the use of technology to target children shed important light on perpetrators’ use of technology to gain access to and groom children.

Concerningly, over a third of respondents (35.7%) reported seeing the online grooming or coercion of children through digital platforms ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’, while 15.6% saw dating apps being used to target women to gain access to their children at the same frequency.

Online pornography use

The 2025 survey also included new questions on perpetrators’ online pornography use, providing insights into women’s concerns about their partner/ex-partner’s pornography viewing. The most frequently seen concern related to excessive or compulsive use of pornography, with close to a third (32.7%) of respondents supporting women who had this concern ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. Other concerns that were examined included viewing pornography involving violence/coercion, and concerns about the age of individuals in the pornography being viewed. The proportion of respondents who saw women with these concerns about

their partner/ex-partner ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ were 29.0% and 16.0% respectively.

The results also drew attention to the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). When asked how often they supported women who were concerned that their child was being sexually abused and filmed/photographed by their partner/ex-partner, 5.6% of respondents reported that they did so ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. While this figure is small, it is important to note that the total percentage of respondents who indicated that they had at some point supported women with this concern was close to two-thirds (62.5%), highlighting the issue of CSAM.

Co-occurring abuse

The most common co-occurring abuse identified by practitioners was sexual abuse. An overwhelming majority of respondents (97.6%) reported this as co-occurring with the use of technology in DFV – a rise from 68.1% in 2020.

Emotional abuse (94.9%), stalking (87.1%), and financial abuse (86.3%) were also commonly observed by respondents as co-occurring with the use of technology in DV. The proportion of respondents who identified these in the 2025 survey were all higher than that from 2020. The 2025 survey question on co-occurring abuse included a new item on coercive control. Almost all practitioners (96.9%) identified coercive control as co-occurring with the use of technology in DV.

Key insights from practitioners

Particular risks for people from different cohorts

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities were commonly identified by practitioners as facing particular issues with regards to TFA. Just over half (51.4%) of respondents perceived women from non-English speaking countries as facing particular risks – a rise from 43.0% in 2020 and 24.4% in 2015. Additionally, almost a third (32.5%) of respondents indicated that they noticed specific issues encountered by women who are recent migrants. This was an increase from 23.5% in 2020 and 18.7% in 2015. The 2025 survey also incorporated an additional item on forcibly displaced persons. A tenth (10.6%) of respondents identified this cohort as facing particular issues with respect to TFA. These findings should be viewed with reference to research that highlights how factors such as limited awareness of the serious nature of TFA (including the fact that it is a crime in Australia), language barriers, and precarious immigration status can impede help-seeking for victim-survivors from CALD backgrounds (Zamora et al., 2023).

Over a third (37.6%) and a quarter (28.2%) of respondents identified women with disabilities and First Nations women respectively as cohorts particularly at risk. The 2025 survey was the first time that practitioners were asked if they noticed particular issues faced by LGBTIQ people.



4.7%

of practitioners reported that police always take technology-facilitated abuse seriously.



51.4%

of practitioners identified women from non-English speaking backgrounds as facing particular risk.



75.0%

of respondents had seen technology commonly used to collect evidence for the purpose of getting an order granted.



27.9%

of respondents had seen examples where courts did not accept evidence of TFA as admissible.



88.4%

of respondents had used the Wesnet Safe Connections program.



94.9%

of respondents who used the Wesnet Safe Connections program indicated the program was 'Helpful' or 'Very Helpful'.

The results show that 16.5% of respondents perceived LGBTIQ people as facing specific risks with respect to TFA. While limited research has focused on LGBTIQ people's experiences of TFA, literature suggests that they may be disproportionately affected by such abuse (see eSafety Commissioner, 2020; Henry et al., 2020).

Additionally, the survey asked practitioners to reflect on their experience to identify what age of women are most affected by TFA. The 25–34 years old age group emerged as having the highest perceived risk for women, with almost half (48.2%) of respondents indicating that women in that age group are most impacted by TFA.

Decreasing practitioner confidence in police responses to TFA

The findings highlight a lack of consistent responses to TFA by police. Only a small percentage of practitioners (4.7%) reported that in their experience working with clients, police always take TFA seriously. This was a significant drop from previous years (8.7% in 2020; and 13.1% in 2015), highlighting potentially decreasing confidence in police responses to TFA.

Similar to previous years, the most common reasons that practitioners identified for why police may not take TFA seriously were a lack of understanding of the role of technology in DV (77.9%), a lack of resources to investigate TFA (77.9%), and a lack of understanding about DV in general (70.8%). The figures for all three of these reasons were higher than that from 2015 and 2020.

Collection and use of TFA evidence

Three quarters of respondents (75.0%) had seen technology being utilised to collect evidence for the purpose of getting an order granted, while 85.0% had seen it used to collect evidence for breaches of such orders. However, the value of evidence lies in whether it is admitted and accepted by the criminal legal system. The results suggest that this may not be happening consistently, with just over a quarter of respondents (27.9%) stating that they had seen examples where courts did not accept evidence of TFA as admissible.

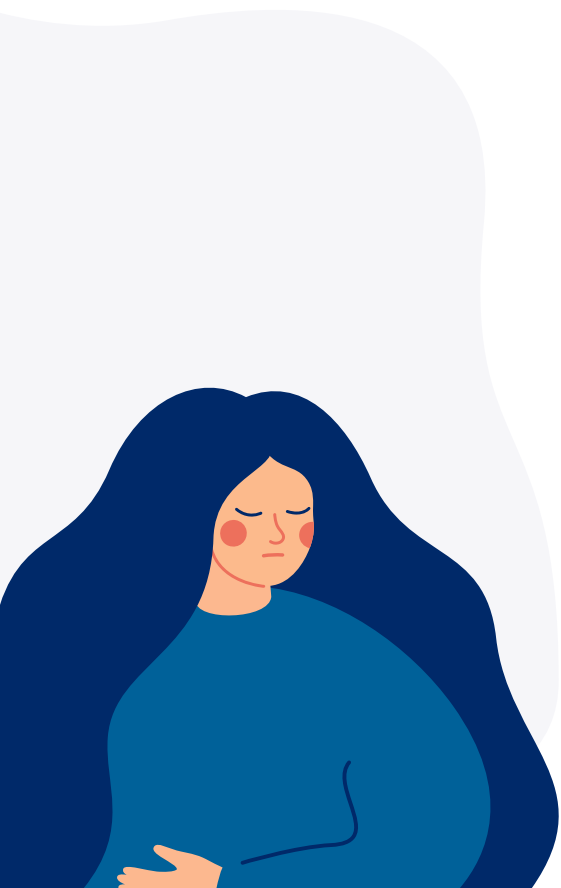
Resources and support for victim-survivors

There was a new question about specific resources and support practitioners have used in their work supporting women and children experiencing TFA, and how helpful practitioners found them. Practitioners most commonly used police as a type of resource and support, with 97.1% of respondents indicating that they had used this, with mixed views on their helpfulness.

Financial abuse advice, and CCTV installation and other services that assist with securing victim-survivors' properties also emerged as resources that were commonly used by practitioners in their work with women and children experiencing TFA, with 91.1% and 89.6% of respondents indicating that they had utilised these respectively. Both of these resources had high levels of perceived helpfulness.

Overall, the support that respondents found most helpful was Wesnet Safe Connections. The program had high uptake, with 88.4% of respondents having used it with most (94.9%) indicating that the program was 'Helpful' or 'Very Helpful', highlighting high levels of satisfaction.

The three most common topics that practitioners indicated they wanted training on were how to best support women and children (92.2%), safety planning and risk assessment around technology (80.6%), and information about legal options for women and children (69.8%).



02



Introduction

The rapid growth and integration of digital technologies into Australian households have transformed how people communicate, work, and access services. In 2024, almost all adults (98%) had home internet access, and 99% used at least one device to go online, most commonly mobile phones (ACMA, 2024). Device use is frequent, with 92% of users accessing the internet multiple times per day. Laptops, smart TVs, wearables, voice-controlled speakers, and smart home devices are increasingly widespread, including among older Australians (ACMA, 2024). While these technologies provide essential tools for daily life, they also present opportunities for misuse and abuse.

Domestic violence perpetrators have adopted technology as a multifaceted tool to control, isolate, and terrorise women and children (Wesnet, 2026).

Everyday interactions with technology create multiple points of vulnerability, from repeated unwanted messages and calls to more complex forms of interference, such as smart-car vehicle tracking. The routine and pervasive nature of this abuse means it can be experienced as continuous and inescapable, extending control beyond physical proximity.

This form of abuse is now recognised within Australian national policy as a specific and escalating manifestation of domestic and family violence, emphasising both its prevalence and its capacity to compound harm across multiple domains of women's lives. This recognition is reflected in The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

“

**Almost all
frontline workers
now witness
technology-
facilitated abuse.**



(Commonwealth of Australia, 2022), which identifies technology-facilitated abuse as an increasingly common and complex feature of domestic and family violence. The National Plan acknowledges the disproportionate impacts of this abuse on women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It highlights the role of workforce capability, training, and safety by design in strengthening responses. While the National Plan provides an important policy framework, it also underscores the need for ongoing, practice-informed evidence to understand how technology-facilitated abuse is experienced, how it is changing over time, and where system responses continue to fall short.

The findings of our 2025 Third National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia offer a unique opportunity to track this form of abuse as technology evolves. Looking back to our first survey in 2015, we can observe dramatic shifts in some areas and limited movement in others, enabling us to trace changes alongside policy development, funding priorities, and legislative impacts. The origins of these surveys in Australia date back to 2012, with a state-wide survey in Victoria led by what was then the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (now Safe and Equal). Practitioners were increasingly reporting the use of technology by perpetrators and highlighting gaps in recognition

by the justice system, as well as limited support for women and frontline workers. The survey was developed in close consultation with the sector, including site visits to numerous refuges across Victoria. In other words, the roots of this work are embedded within the domestic and family violence sector, ensuring that practice-based knowledge has shaped both the questions asked and the insights generated.

Building on this practice-led foundation, the 2025 survey provides detailed insights into how technology-facilitated abuse is currently experienced in Australia, highlighting emerging patterns of perpetrator behaviour and the ongoing support needs of women and frontline practitioners. Almost all frontline workers now witness technology-facilitated abuse, with the 2025 survey showing nearly universal exposure among practitioners. Abuse occurs across multiple platforms, including text messaging, phone calls, social media, and increasingly through smart home technologies and GPS tracking. While image-based abuse has remained at a relatively stable level over time, emerging threats such as AI-generated abuse and concerns about child sexual abuse material highlight the evolving and complex nature of this form of violence.

Before presenting the findings in detail, we next detail the methodology, including how the data was collected and analysed.

03



Methodology

The 2025 survey provides detailed insights into how technology-facilitated abuse is currently experienced in Australia.

National Practitioner Survey

This online survey is the third national study we have conducted into the use of technology by perpetrators of domestic violence. Our first survey, the ReCharge study, was conducted in 2015 and was a partnership among the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, Women's Legal Services NSW, and Wesnet. The second was conducted in 2020 and included Curtin University and Wesnet. The purpose of this third follow-up survey in 2025 is to document the types of technology-facilitated abuse being perpetrated, their frequency, and changes over time.

Several additions were made to the survey in 2025 to reflect developments in technology and increasing knowledge about how perpetrators of DFV misuse it. Any new question will be indicated in the results.

Alongside the closed questions in the survey, participants had opportunities to add comments, including an open-ended question regarding the impacts of the abuse on women. These comments are included in this report to enhance the depth of the statistics used and add context to the findings.

Respondents could skip questions; the findings will indicate where the sample size differs from the total number of respondents. We have also indicated where comparative findings are available relative to 2020 and 2015.

Ethics

An ethics application was submitted to Curtin Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and approval was received on 8 August 2025 (HRE2025-0273).

Recruitment

Wesnet shared the survey through its network of members, mostly specialist women's domestic and family violence services, and through its large network of agencies that provide Safe Connections phones to women and children.³ The survey was also advertised through emails, training events, webinars, newsletters, and social media channels. The survey was hosted on Qualtrics and open for 132 days (15 June 2025 – 25 October 2025).

Quantitative data analysis

Surveys were extracted directly from Qualtrics into CSV format. Three hundred and sixty surveys were returned; we excluded 24 which contained no responses and 11 which were completed by individuals who did not support women and children experiencing domestic violence. Of the remaining 325 surveys, 18 were also removed because they contained no responses beyond demographic questions. The final survey comprised 307 respondents, 80.5% of whom completed the entire survey. Survey responses were converted from string to numeric responses where appropriate. Data are presented as frequencies and valid percentages (percentages based on non-missing data). Analyses and data cleaning were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software (IBM, 2019).

³ The Safe Connections Program was launched in November 2014 as a partnership between Telstra and Wesnet (the national peak body for Australian Domestic and Family Violence Services). The Safe Connections Program provides mobile phones to women who experience domestic and family violence, along with a SIM card and pre-paid credit. Women receiving a new mobile phone can remain connected to key supports. The Safe Connections Program involves frontline agencies that work with women who experience domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault to distribute the phones.

04



Findings

The results of the Third National Survey provide a comprehensive look at the current state of technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) in Australia, drawing on the practice-based expertise of over 300 frontline practitioners.



The data confirms that TFA is a near-universal feature of domestic and family violence. The findings also reveal the evolving nature of perpetrator behaviour adapting to the technological landscape as it evolves. Perpetrators are increasingly integrating sophisticated tools ranging from smartphones and GPS tracking to emerging artificial intelligence

into their repertoires of coercive control tactics. The following sections detail the prevalence of these tactics, the specific technologies weaponised to monitor and terrorise women and children, the unique risks faced by diverse cohorts, and the critical gaps remaining in systemic and police responses.

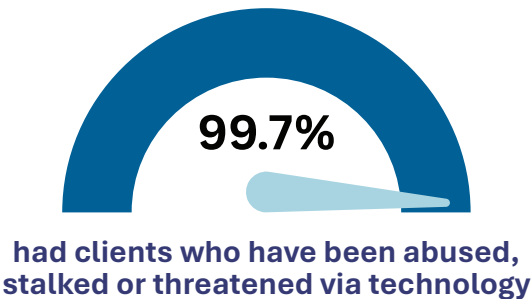
Prevalence and frequency of TFA

Almost all practitioners have witnessed TFA in their work.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (99.7%) reported that they had supported clients who had been abused, stalked or threatened via technology (see Figure 1). This was a slight increase from 99.3% in 2020 and 98.3% in 2015.

Additionally, half of respondents (51.5%) indicated that they see TFA more frequently than non-TFA, whereas only 17.3% reported that non-TFA was more frequent; one-third (31.2%) of participants indicated they were equally frequent.⁴ **These findings highlight the increasing integration of technological tools into the arsenals of DFV perpetrators.**

Figure 1. Proportion of respondents who had worked with clients who have been abused, stalked or threatened via technology.



⁴ Data on this is only available for 2025.

“

“...[technology] related abuse is definitely, in my opinion, growing. AirTags on cars, security breaches and accessing emails, social media, and then hurling abuse at victims around who they’re talking to [and] what they’re talking about, hacking and tracking phones, sometimes with the sole purpose of cutting survivors off [from] their contacts and support networks, or locating the service they’ve entered or engaged with...”

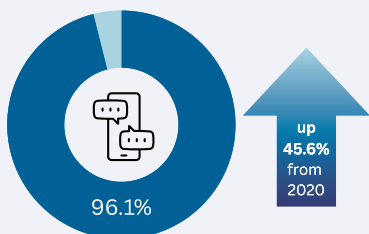
DFV practitioner, Western Australia, 1–5 years’ experience



Figure 2. Top three technologies identified by respondents as being used ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ by perpetrators (n = 307)

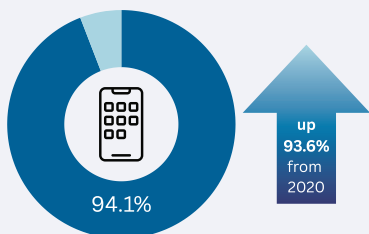
Smartphones and messaging apps

In 2025, 96.1% of respondents reported witnessing abuse using smartphones and messaging apps either ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’, compared to 26.4% in 2015 and 66.0% in 2020.



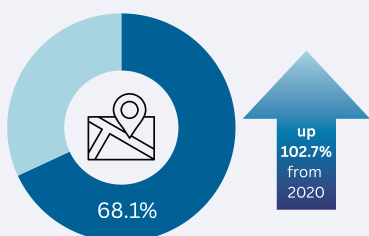
Social media and online platforms

Similarly, while less than half of practitioners reported seeing abuse via social media and online platforms ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2015 and 2020 (37.6% and 48.6% respectively),⁶ this proportion had surged to 94.1% by 2025.



GPS tracking and location tools

In 2025, over two-thirds of respondents (68.1%) saw abuse via GPS tracking and location tools ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. This was a considerable increase from 33.6% in 2020 and 23.6% in 2015.⁷



Types and frequency of technology used

“[Technology-facilitated] abuse seems to be on a steady increase with PUVs finding new ways to track and stalk as technology develops and changes. Women report that they fear PUVs will stop at nothing to find them and despite changing passwords, creating new online accounts, having a new phone, they feel very vulnerable to other means of being located.”

DFV practitioner, Queensland, 21+ years’ experience

The longitudinal results of this survey demonstrate changing patterns in the types of technology weaponised by perpetrators over the years. These shifts likely reflect broader societal changes in the popularity of and reliance on different technologies over time. They also demonstrate the tactics of perpetrators to adapt to the changing technological landscape to further their control, surveillance and abuse of victim-survivors. This creates challenges for the prevention of and responses to TFA. As one participant noted, ‘the

*means and methods of [TFA] is changing frequently and it’s hard for practitioners to keep up and ensure our understanding is current and relevant in order to support victim-survivors’.*⁵

In practitioners’ experience, the most common types of technology used by perpetrators were smartphones and messaging apps, social media and online platforms, and GPS tracking and location tools (see Figure 2).

Across all three survey periods, there were significant increases in the frequency with which practitioners were seeing these technologies being utilised to facilitate abuse, signalling their growing uptake by perpetrators.

The results suggest that cloud accounts and remote access tools,⁸ smart home and IoT, and vehicle tracking and transport services⁹ are also being increasingly exploited by perpetrators to facilitate abuse. From 2020 to 2025, the frequencies with which respondents were seeing these technologies being used significantly increased.¹⁰

⁵ DFV practitioner, Queensland, 6–10 years’ experience.

⁶ 2020 and 2015 figures derived by averaging scores across separate Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat items. The 2025 survey used a single consolidated measure. See Limitations for discussion of comparability across waves.

⁷ 2020 and 2015 statistics obtained by averaging scores from three GPS items.

⁸ 2020 statistics obtained by averaging scores from iCloud and Google items.

⁹ 2020 statistics obtained from transport apps item.

¹⁰ Data on these technologies is only available from 2020 onwards.



Figure 3. Technologies that experienced a decrease in practitioners seeing them ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ (n = 307)

In contrast, practitioners were seeing the use of landline phones and government service accounts significantly less frequently (see Figure 3).

Although respondents in 2020 saw cameras and video cameras used significantly more often to facilitate abuse than in 2015, use of these technologies appears to have stabilised since. In 2025, around a third of respondents reported seeing cameras used frequently (often or all the time: 34.5%) and nearly 40% said the same for video cameras (39.7%).

Of the three technologies added to the 2025 survey,¹² online banking and financial accounts emerged as the technology that practitioners most frequently witnessed being used to enable TFA. Just over two-thirds of respondents (67.4%) reported seeing it being used either ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’.

Additionally, the findings highlight perpetrators’ uptake of emerging technologies. Of note is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to facilitate abuse. Overall, three out of four practitioners (74.3%) reported seeing perpetrators use AI-generated threats and impersonation tools to abuse women. Approximately a tenth of respondents (9.1%) reported seeing AI-generated

threats and impersonation tools used ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. While this figure suggests that perpetrators’ use of AI is currently limited, the dangers posed by this technology should not be underestimated. While much of the commentary about AI and technology abuse has focused on the generation of sexualised images, or “deepfakes”, practitioners noted that AI is also used by perpetrators to falsify legal correspondence to increase victim-survivors’ fear.

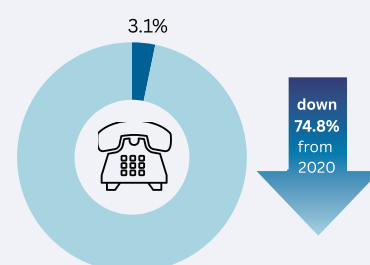
“... I also believe that AI is increasing [victim-survivors’] fear and anxiety as I have had experiences in which a [victim-survivor] receives a ‘professional’ sounding email, which the perpetrator indicates was supported by a lawyer; however, we have then since found out it was written by AI in order to intimidate the victim-survivor and make them believe the perpetrator has professional assistance.”

DFV practitioner, Western Australia, 1–5 years’ experience

In light of the ongoing fast-paced developments around AI, and its increasing integration into our everyday lives, this technology has the potential to create new risks for women and children.

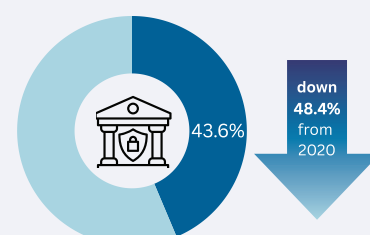
Landline phones

In 2025, only 3.2% of respondents saw landline phones being used to facilitate abuse ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. This was a large drop from 31.7% in 2015 and 12.7% in 2020. The change is consistent with the declining reliance on landline phones, as individuals move towards digital methods of communication (e.g., smartphones and messaging apps). However, this reduction does not mean that abusive phone calls have decreased. As subsequent findings presented in this report will show, abusive phone calls continue to be an issue that is commonly seen by practitioners.



Government and service accounts¹¹

In 2020, almost two-thirds of respondents (64.7%) saw government and service accounts being used ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. However, in 2025, this figure had fallen to less than half (43.6%). This could be a result of targeted campaigning over the past two years by victim-survivors and practitioners for government services, such as “myGov”, to increase their safety design to minimise the possibilities for perpetrators to access women’s accounts (Lyons, 2024).



¹¹ Data on this technology is only available from 2020 onwards.

¹² i.e., Dating and relationship apps, AI generated threats and impersonation tools, and online banking and financial accounts.

“

I’m seeing more comprehensive abuse using multiple tactics together i.e., email, phone calls, messaging apps, tracking, multiple social platforms, even websites done together – most done anonymously so there’s no way to prove who’s behind it. Each abuse [on] it’s own may also... seem to an outsider as relatively ‘low grade’ considering what people are capable of, but the combined intensity has a powerful impact on the victim.”

Health worker, Western Australia, 1–5 years’ experience

How technology is being used as part of domestic and family violence tactics

To better understand how technology is used by perpetrators as part of DFV, the survey examined three specific categories of TFA tactics – abusive tactics, threatening tactics, and monitoring and tracking tactics. Although the following sections present the results for each category separately, it is important to recognise that perpetrators seldom rely on a single set of strategies. Instead, they often combine multiple tactics and technologies to create a broader dynamic of coercive control intended to inflict considerable and lasting harms for victim-survivors. The tactics of TFA used can also change depending on whether the victim-survivor is living with the perpetrator or has separated and they are trying

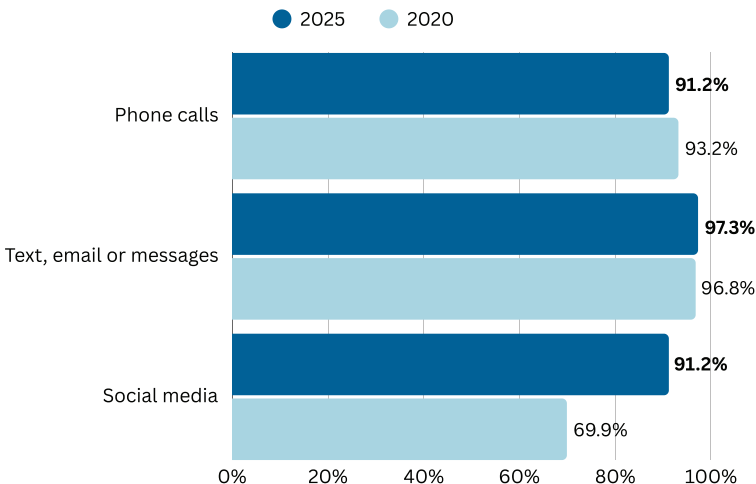
to control them solely through technology facilitated control and surveillance.

Abusive tactics

The results highlight perpetrators’ continued reliance on abusive phone calls as a tactic of TFA.

In 2025, 91.2% of practitioners reported seeing phone calls being used by perpetrators to verbally abuse women, put them down or call them names ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ – a slight decrease from 93.2% in 2020 (see Figure 4). Although this decrease was not significant, the high proportion of practitioners who indicated seeing abusive phone calls frequently underscores this as a tactic that is commonly employed by perpetrators.

Figure 4. Abusive tactics seen by respondents ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2025 (n = 296) and 2020 (n = 438 - 441)



The continuing use of phone calls to abuse victim-survivors despite the growth and availability of other means of communications (e.g., text messaging), could reflect perpetrators' attempts to engage in TFA without leaving an evidence trail. As one respondent noted, *'perpetrators are often careful to limit threats to ways that can't be used as evidence against them'*,¹³ relying on verbal rather than written methods of abuse, except where they are able to hide their identities behind anonymous or fake accounts.

The frequency that practitioners reported seeing text, email or messages being used as part of abusive tactics also remained high, with an overwhelming majority of respondents (97.3%) witnessing this 'All the time' or 'Often'. This figure was relatively stable compared to 2020 (96.8%; see Figure 4). Overall, however, there was a significant increase from 2015 to 2025 in how often practitioners saw text, emails or messages being used as part of abusive tactics (90.1% saw this 'Often' or 'All the time' in 2015).

Additionally, there was a significant increase in how often practitioners were witnessing social media being used as part of abusive tactics. In 2015 and 2020, the proportion of practitioners who reported seeing this 'All the time' or 'Often' was 80.3% and 69.9% respectively. By 2025, this had

risen to 91.2% (see Figure 4). This increase aligns with earlier findings in this report, which indicate a growing uptake of social media and online platforms by perpetrators. It should be noted that the 2025 figure reflects a consolidated measure of social media and online platforms, whereas earlier figures were derived by averaging across separate platform-specific items. This methodological difference means the comparison should be interpreted with some caution, though the direction of the trend is consistent with broader patterns observed across the survey.

Practitioners' qualitative responses shed further light on perpetrators' use of abusive tactics. One practitioner explained how TFA encompasses not only explicit and overt abusive tactics, but can also rely on more subtle approaches, such as posting a photo, quote or song that *'to everyone else looks like a "normal" post'*, but that *'the victim-survivor knows it has an alternative meaning'*. The combined use of both overt and covert tactics of TFA can cause victim-survivors to *'feel like there is "no escape"'*,¹⁴ underscoring the serious psychological impacts that the abuse can have. These impacts can persist long after the abuse has ended as victim-survivors have traumatic memories of such abuses and continue to remain vigilant about threats to their safety.



[TFA] really detrimentally impacts mental health of victim-survivors and I feel sits with victim-survivors for years afterwards. We often support victim-survivors in our long-term support program who are scared they are being monitored years after having no contact/known incidents of family violence with a particular perpetrator. This can lead to victim survivors being averse to using internet services/changes phones frequently which can sometimes be a barrier to seamless engagement with services..."

*DFV practitioner, Victoria,
1–5 years' experience*

¹³ DFV practitioner, Victoria, 1–5 years' experience

¹⁴ DFV practitioner, Western Australia, 1–5 years' experience

Threatening tactics

Social media was identified as a tool increasingly employed by perpetrators to facilitate abuse. In 2025, 80.3% of respondents reported seeing it used often or all the time (see Figure 5), a notable increase from 64.7% in 2020. This rate has changed little since 2015, when the figure was 62.0%, suggesting the sharp rise is a recent development.



“From what I have seen/heard, the effects of TFA are sometimes greater than the effects of non-TFA on victims’ mental health and recovery. Often threats to commit TFA (especially intimate image abuse) are seen as omnipresent and everlasting by victims, which perpetrators are using in their favour to manipulate and control victims, long after threats are made...”

Legal practitioner, Western Australia, 6–10 years’ experience

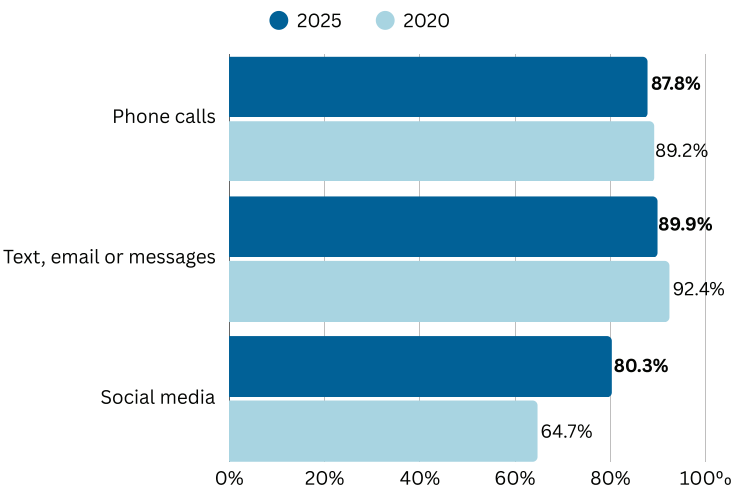
Text, email and instant messages, as well as phone calls, are technologies that continue to be commonly exploited by perpetrators to threaten victim-survivors. The frequency with which respondents were witnessing these technologies being used as part of threatening tactics did not change significantly from 2020 (see Figure 5). However, there were overall significant increases from 2015 to 2025. During this period, the proportion of respondents who saw text, email or instant messages being used ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ to threaten victim-survivors rose from 77.7% to 89.8%. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who reported seeing phone calls being used ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ to engage in threats, increased from 79.2% to 87.8% in this time.

It is important to recognise that threatening tactics may be deliberately subtle so that the

perpetrator can evade detection and accountability. For example, a practitioner highlighted how threats may be ‘veiled so that the survivor understands the threat, but it isn’t explicit enough to be used as evidence for an ADVO’.¹⁵

Perpetrators’ use of threatening tactics, ultimately reflect their efforts to create an environment of coercive control that is directed at victim-survivors. As one practitioner stated, *‘[threatening tactics are] regularly used to reinforce power and control imbalance, to make victim-survivor fearful of seeking support or defending themselves.’* The impacts of these tactics cannot be overstated, as they can create long-lasting harms for victim-survivors’ mental health and overall well-being (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022). TFA enables the long shadow of post separation abuse and surveillance to extend in its reach.

Figure 5. Threatening tactics seen by respondents ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2025 (n = 294) and 2020 (n = 434)



¹⁵ DFV practitioner, NSW, 6–10 years’ experience

Monitoring and tracking tactics

Monitoring and surveillance of victim-survivors by checking their text messages and phones without permission, and buying them phones to keep track of them, have declined. From 2020 to 2025, the frequency with which practitioners reported seeing these tactics fell significantly. In 2020, the proportions of respondents who reported perpetrators checking women’s text messages and phones without permission, and buying them phones to track them, were 91.8% and 72.0%, respectively. By 2025, these figures had fallen to 87.9% and 49.3% (see Figure 6). These declines likely reflect a shift in perpetrator tactics rather than a reduction in surveillance, with perpetrators increasingly exploiting more subtle and sophisticated forms of monitoring and capitalising on the existing technologies that women already use.

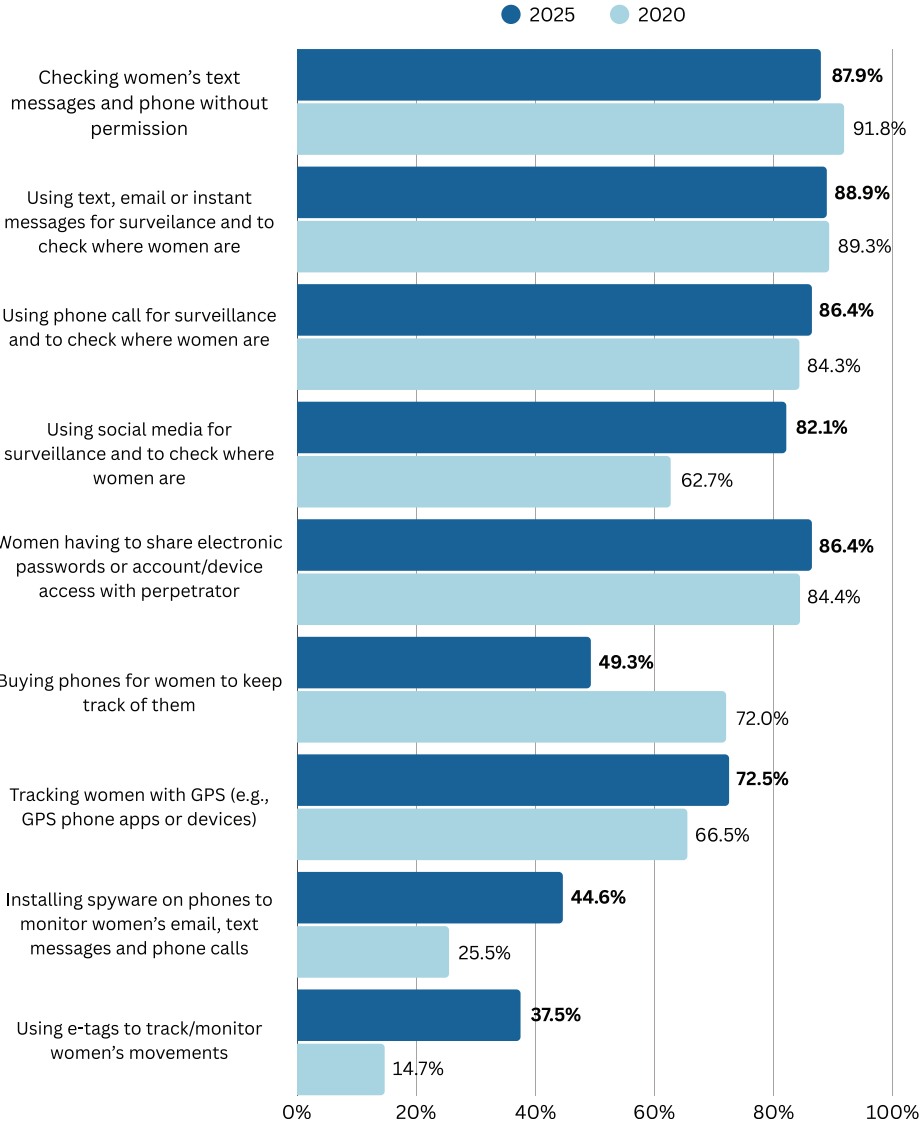
It is also worth noting that overall, the frequency that practitioners saw monitoring and surveillance via checking victim-survivors text messages and phones without permission, and buying victim-survivors phones was significantly higher for 2025 compared to 2015. The proportion of respondents who saw these tactics ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2015 was 73.7% and 41.2% respectively.

Notably, the results underscore the growing use of social media and spyware by perpetrators to monitor

and track victim-survivors. There were significant increases across all three survey iterations in relation to how often practitioners were seeing these technologies being utilised for this purpose. In 2025, 82.1% of respondents reported witnessing social media being used for surveillance and to check whether women were ‘Often’ or ‘All

the time’ (see Figure 6). This was compared to 62.7% in 2020 and 60.0% in 2015. Similarly, in 2025, the proportion of respondents seeing the installation of spyware on phones to monitor women’s email, text messages and phone calls, ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ was 44.6% – an increase from 25.4% in 2020 and 23.5% in 2015.

Figure 6. Monitoring and tracking tactics seen by respondents ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2025 (n = 284) and 2020 (n = 436 – 441)



“

There is an additional psychological consequence to ongoing technology facilitated abuse which persists well beyond the abuse. Especially where monitoring and surveillance are concerned. I see that this type of abuse can leave clients questioning their realities for a lot longer than the abuse may persist due to the psychological warfare imparted onto a person who is being watched without their consent 24/7.”

DFV practitioner, ACT, 6–10 years’ experience



The 2025 survey was the second time that practitioners were asked about the use of e-tags as a tool for tracking and monitoring women. The results suggest that e-tags are increasingly being exploited by perpetrators. While less than a fifth of respondents (14.7%) saw this technology being used ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2020, this figure had risen to over a third (37.5%) by 2025 (see Figure 6). Given how easily e-tags can be purchased and used it is likely that this TFA surveillance tactic will increase over time.

Practitioners emphasised the harmful impacts that perpetrators’ use of monitoring

and tracking tactics can have on victim-survivors. For example, one respondent described TFA as ‘insidious’ because of the difficulties associated with trying to determine how perpetrators are accessing information about victim-survivors’ lives (‘how does the [perpetrator] know where the client is planning to be? Has he hacked her phone, is there an air tag in the car?’¹⁶). They noted how this can have adverse consequences for victim-survivors’ perceptions of safety. The psychological toll of being constantly monitored, surveilled and tracked by perpetrators can affect victim-survivors for a long time.

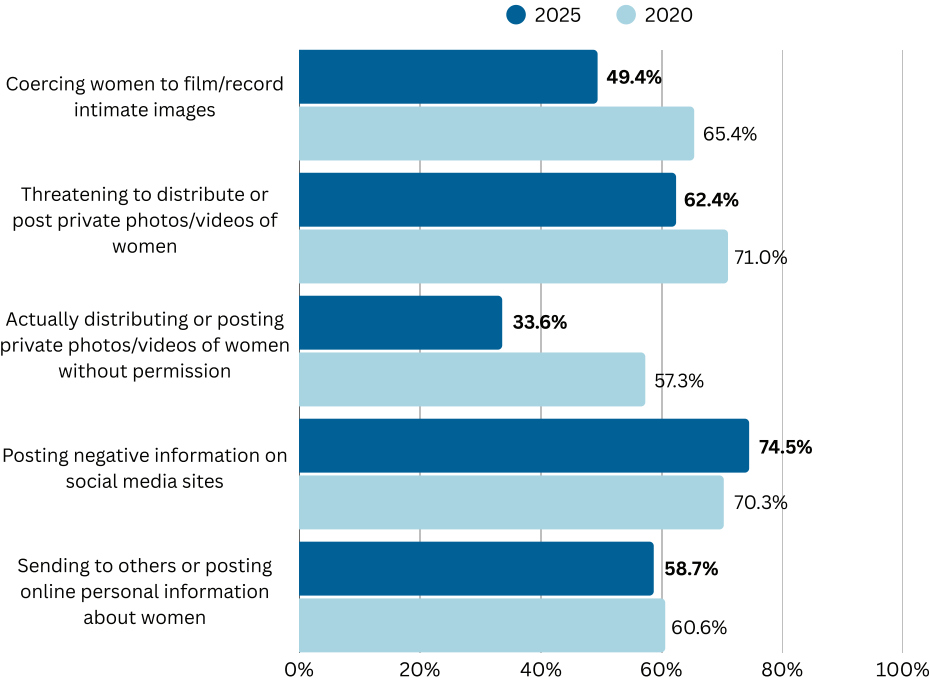
¹⁶ Housing worker, Victoria, 6–10 years’ experience

Humiliating, shaming and punishing tactics

Image-based abuse continues to affect women. Close to two-thirds of respondents (62.4%) stated they were seeing threats by perpetrators to distribute or post private photos/videos of women ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. Although this remained relatively stable compared to 2020 (see Figure 7), the results show that the frequency with which practitioners reported seeing this tactic in 2025

was significantly higher than that in 2015 (54.9% saw this ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2015). In contrast, the frequency that practitioners reported seeing perpetrators distribute or post private photos/videos of women without their permission ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ fell significantly from 2020. While over half of respondents (57.3%) saw this in 2020, the figure had dropped to around a third (33.6%) in 2025 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Humiliating, shaming and punishing tactics seen by respondents ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2025 (n = 284) and 2020 (n = 436 – 439)



... PUVs are good at managing impressions of themselves to the outside world and would lie to maintain that. They also capitalise on [victim-survivor’s] desire to contain her situation and keep it private, using the fear of her experience being exposed to continue to exert power and control over her.”

DFV practitioner, Queensland, 1–5 years’ experience



It can be terrifying and debilitating for women to have the threat of exposure of intimate images and personal information.”

DFV practitioner, Tasmania, 21+ years' experience

Similarly, practitioners were seeing the coercion of women to film/record intimate images significantly less frequently. In 2025, almost half of practitioners (49.4%) indicated this ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2025 – a decrease from 65.4% in 2020.¹⁷ In interpreting these findings, it is important to recognise the potential for underreporting of image-based sexual abuse to affect our understanding of the prevalence and extent of the issue. One respondent, for example, stated that they expected that the coercion of women to film/record intimate images was likely occurring more often than what they were seeing due to victim-survivors experiencing ‘shame/guilt around this and potentially not disclosing’. These barriers to disclosure are also well-documented by literature on IBSA (see Pijlman et al., 2025). Whilst there is underreporting, it is also possible that some reduction can be attributed to the deterrent effect

of legislation being introduced to criminalise the non-consensual distribution of intimate images in various jurisdictions.

The results also highlight the risk of perpetrators leveraging negative or personal information about victim-survivors to humiliate, shame and/or punish them. Around three-quarters of respondents (74.5%) were seeing negative information about women being posted by perpetrators on social media sites, such as Facebook, ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. Meanwhile, over half (58.7%) saw personal information about women being sent to others or posted online ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. Compared to 2020, there were no significant changes in how often practitioners were encountering these tactics. Nevertheless, the results underscore their persistence, exemplifying how perpetrators use both technology and information to wield control over victim-survivors.

Practitioners underscored the emotional and psychological harms that can stem from perpetrators’ use of humiliating, shaming and punishing tactics. A respondent specifically described how it can be *‘terrifying and debilitating for women to have the threat of exposure of intimate images and personal information’*.¹⁸ Perpetrators’ engagement in these tactics exemplifies how they exploit knowledge of or possession of victim-survivors’ personal or intimate information, and exercise ongoing control over them and their lives. The very nature of online environments amplifies this fear, as the personal and professional often merge, enabling perpetrators not only to damage women’s reputations with their families but also to harm their reputations with work colleagues and the broader community (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

¹⁷ Data for this tactic is only available from 2020 onwards.

¹⁸ DFV practitioner, Tasmania, 21+ years' experience

Other tactics

Use of children

The use of children in TFA to monitor, harass and abuse victim-survivors has fallen. Less than half (41.3%) of respondents reported seeing perpetrators giving children devices/toys with hidden GPS location monitoring (e.g., smart watches) to monitor or contact victim-survivors ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’. This was down from 68.1% in 2020 (see Figure 8).¹⁹

Similarly, 45% of respondents saw perpetrators using children’s social media accounts to track or intimidate victim-survivors ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ – a drop from 64.0% in 2020.²⁰ These

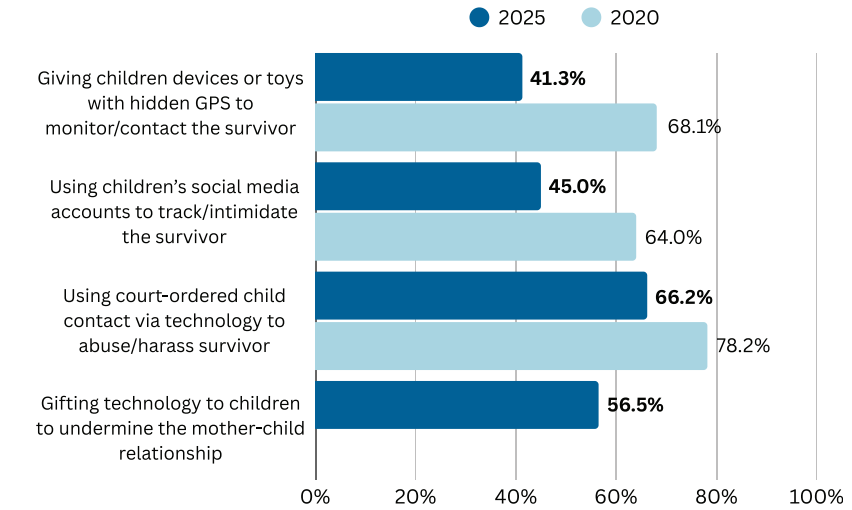
reductions may reflect a shift away from overt surveillance toward more covert forms of monitoring that rely on existing devices, shared accounts, or background location and data-sharing features. Overall, however, the frequency with which practitioners reported seeing perpetrators use children’s social media to track or intimidate victim-survivors was higher in 2025 compared to 2015 (30.2% saw this ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2015). This may continue to reduce in the future with the social media ban for children, alongside the increase in the use of the covert monitoring described above.



Men often go through technology to get to the women through the children. The women often feel like they have to accept the abuse given when talking to the children so that the children have a relationship with their fathers.”

DFV practitioner, Western Australia, 16–20 years’ experience

Figure 8. Tactics involving the use of children seen by respondents ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ in 2025 (n = 269) and 2020 (n = 435 – 436)



¹⁹ 2020 statistics obtained from item ‘Children given phone or other devices as a way for perpetrators to contact or monitor women’.

²⁰ 2020 statistics obtained from item ‘Children’s social media accounts, such as Facebook, used by perpetrator in an attempt to communicate with women’.



... In the context of post separation abuse, [TFA] allows perpetrators to continue to coerce and control, slows down recovery processes for women and extends the negative impacts of the family violence for years after the relationship has ended due [to a] continued sense of fear and lack of safety. It significantly impacts women's experience of parenting in managing ongoing impacts of manipulation and emotional abuse of children as well direct undermining of their role as a parent."

DFV practitioner, Tasmania, 21+ years' experience

The results also show that practitioners were encountering cases involving perpetrators using court-ordered child contact via technology to abuse or harass victim-survivors significantly less frequently. Over three-quarters (78.2%) of respondents reported seeing this 'Often' or 'All the time' in 2020.²¹ By 2025, this figure had fallen to 66.2%.²²

Although these results suggest that the use of children in TFA has dropped, the figures nevertheless demonstrate that this continues to be a serious issue that affects victim-survivors and their children. The

2025 survey was the first time that practitioners were asked how often they were seeing perpetrator gifting technology to children as a tactic to undermine the mother-child relationship. The results indicate that this is a common tactic, with over half (56.6%) of respondents reporting they observed it 'Often' or 'All the time' (see Figure 8).

Taken together, the findings on the use of children in TFA highlight the lengths that perpetrators will go to monitor, track and intimidate victim-survivors, even long after separation (Spearman et al., 2023).

²¹ 2020 statistics obtained from item 'Court-ordered child contact via phone/email used by perpetrator to abuse, threaten or intimidate women'.

²² Data on this tactic is only available from 2020 onwards.

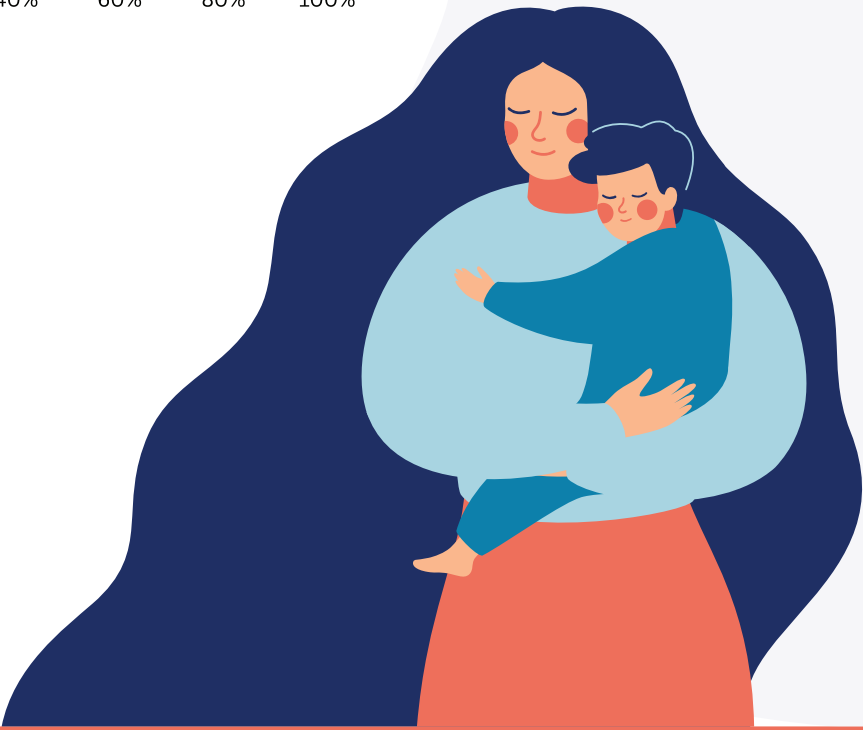
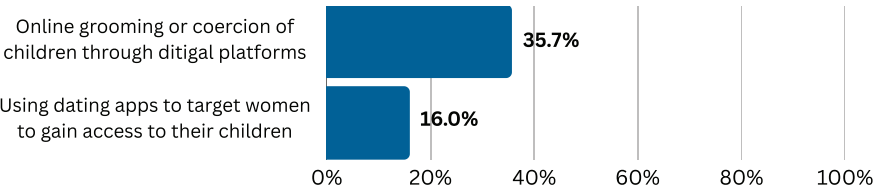
Targeting children

The 2025 survey incorporated additional questions on the use of technology to target children. The results shed important light on perpetrators’ use of technology to gain access to and groom children. Concerningly, over a third of respondents (35.7%) reported seeing the online grooming or coercion of children through digital platforms ‘Often’

or ‘All the time’, while 15.6% saw dating apps being used to target women to gain access to their children at the same frequency (see Figure 9).

The targeting of single women by child sex offenders on dating platforms is increasingly common, with offenders attempting to manipulate women to gain access to their children (Childlight, 2025).

Figure 9. Tactics targeting children seen by respondents ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ (n = 269)





Almost one-third (32.7%) of respondents supported women concerned about excessive or compulsive pornography use ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’.

Online pornography use

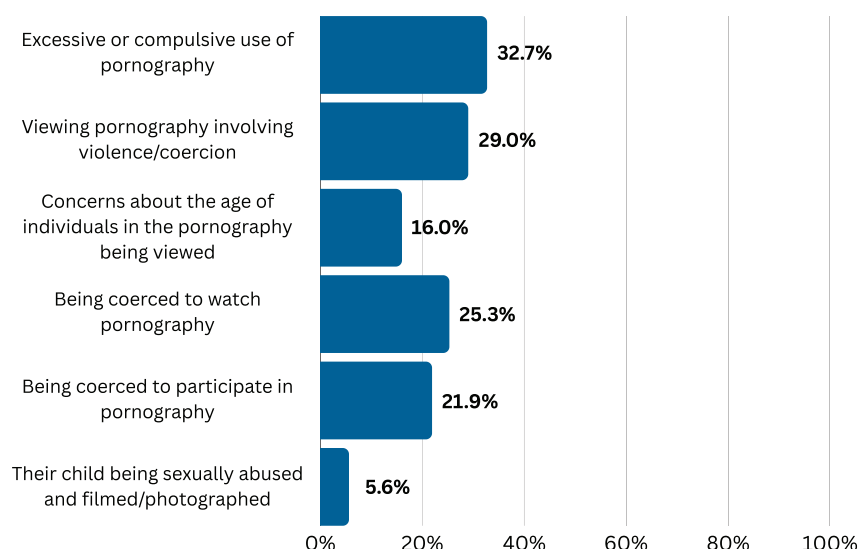
The 2025 survey also included new questions on perpetrators’ online pornography use, providing insights into women’s concerns about their partner/ex-partner’s pornography viewing. The most frequently reported concern related to excessive or compulsive use of pornography, with close to a third (32.7%) of respondents supporting women who had this concern ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ (see Figure 10). Other concerns that were examined included viewing pornography involving violence/coercion, and concerns about the age of individuals in the pornography being viewed. The proportion of respondents who saw women with these concerns about their partner/ex-partner ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ were 29.0% and 16.0% respectively.

Additionally, the findings highlight women’s concerns in relation to sexual abuse in the context of pornography. When asked how often they supported women who

had concerns about being coerced by their partner/ex-partner to watch pornography, a quarter of respondents (25.3%) indicated that they did so ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ (see Figure 10). A similar proportion of respondents (21.9%) reported that they supported women with concerns about being coerced to participate in pornography ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’.

The results also draw attention to the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). When asked how often they supported women who were concerned that their child was being sexually abused and filmed/photographed by their partner/ex-partner, 5.6% of respondents reported that they did so ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ (see Figure 10). While this figure is small, it is important to note that the total percentage of respondents who indicated that they had at some point supported women with this concern was close to two-thirds (62.5%), highlighting the issue of CSAM.

Figure 10. Respondents who reported supporting women who had concerns about their partner/ex-partner online pornography ‘Often’ or ‘All the time’ (n = 269)



Co-occurring abuse

Practitioners were asked about the various types of abuse which, in their experience, co-occur with perpetrators’ use of technology. The most common co-occurring abuse identified by practitioners was sexual abuse. An overwhelming majority of respondents (97.6%) reported this as co-occurring with the use of technology in DFV (see Figure 11) – a rise from 68.1% in 2020.

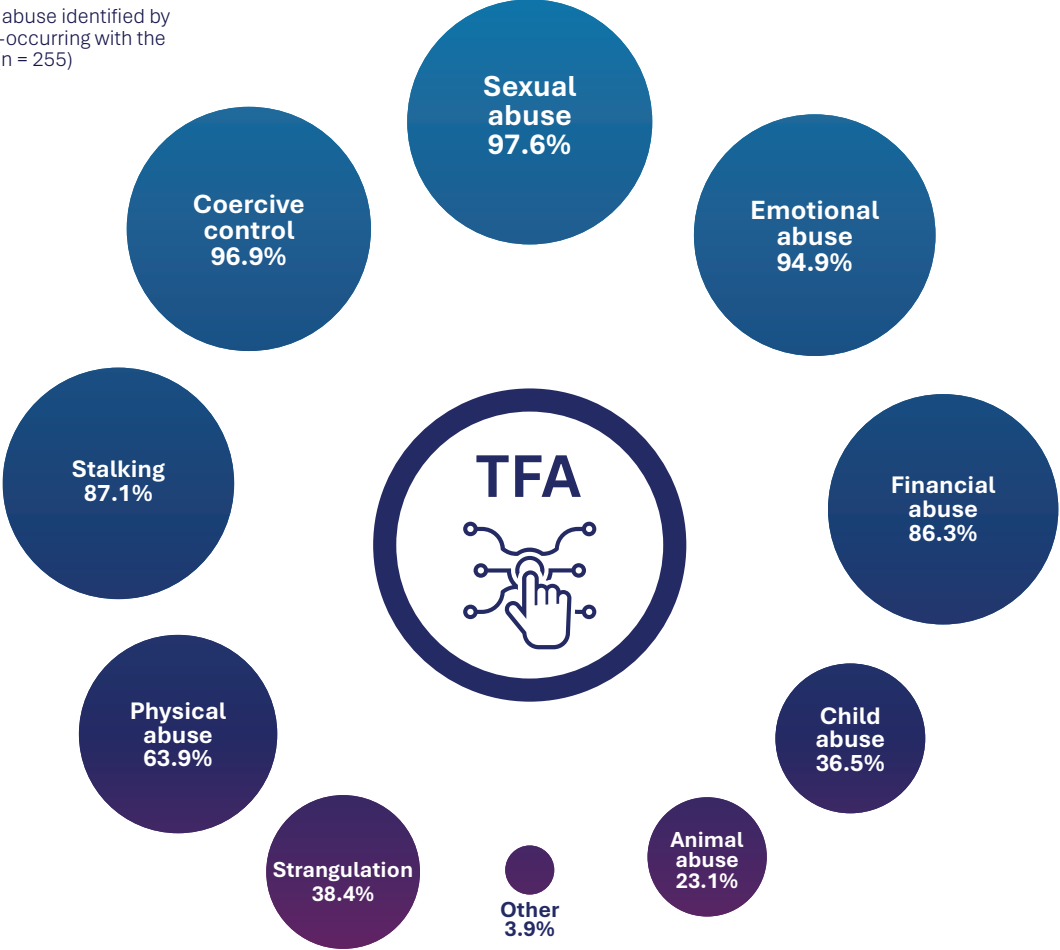
Emotional abuse (94.9%), stalking (87.1%), and financial abuse (86.3%) were also commonly

observed by respondents as co-occurring with the use of technology in DFV. The proportion of respondents who identified these in the 2025 survey were all higher than that from 2020.

The 2025 survey question on co-occurring abuse included a new item on coercive control. Almost all practitioners (96.9%) identified coercive control as co-occurring with the use of technology in DFV (see Figure 11). In interpreting these results, it is important to note that coercive control refers to a

patterned form of abuse in which a perpetrator deploys tactics of coercion with the intent to control victim-survivors, resulting in loss of freedom and entrapment (Stark, 2007). The reported co-occurrence of sexual, emotional, financial, physical and other forms of abuse with perpetrators’ use of technology highlights how TFA is frequently used in combination with multiple abuse tactics to produce an overarching coercive and controlling dynamic intended to harm victim-survivors.

Figure 11. Types of abuse identified by respondents as co-occurring with the use of technology (n = 255)





Many times, women who have fled poverty, war and civil unrest do not acknowledge technology perpetrated FDV as a type of violence as their understanding of violence is commonly linked to high levels of physical, sexual and societal violence experienced in their home countries.”

Multicultural DFV practitioner, Western Australia, 1–5 years’ experience

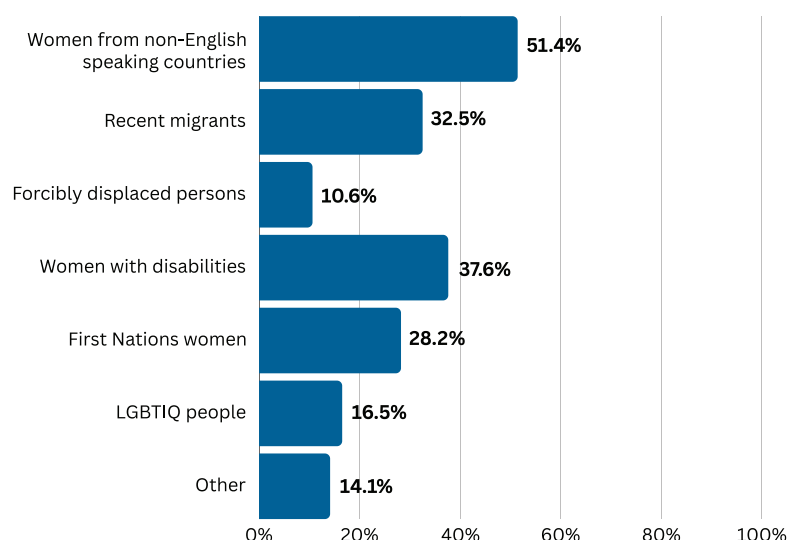
Particular risks for people from different cohorts

Practitioners were asked if they had noticed particular issues faced by different cultural and community groups. The findings demonstrate that people from specific cohorts may be at a higher risk of TFA and face unique barriers to accessing support and finding safety.

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities were commonly identified by practitioners as facing particular issues with regards to TFA. Just over half (51.4%) of respondents perceived women from non-English speaking countries as facing particular risks – a rise

from 43.0% in 2020 and 24.4% in 2015. Additionally, almost a third (32.5%) of respondents indicated that they noticed specific issues encountered by women who are recent migrants. This was an increase from 23.5% in 2020 and 18.7% in 2015. The 2025 survey also incorporated an additional item on forcibly displaced persons. A tenth (10.6%) of respondents identified this cohort as facing particular issues with respect to TFA. These findings should be viewed with reference to research that highlights how factors such as limited awareness of the serious nature of TFA (including the fact

Figure 12. Respondents who noticed particular issues faced by people from different cohorts with respect to TFA (n = 255)²³



²³ Respondents could select more than one cohort.

that it is a crime in Australia), language barriers, and precarious immigration status can impede help-seeking for victim-survivors from CALD backgrounds (Zamora et al., 2023).

Women with disabilities also face specific issues in relation to TFA. Over a third (37.6%) of respondents identified this cohort as particularly at risk. Although this was a decrease from 2020 (44.3%), the figure remains higher than in 2015 (20.6%). As women with disabilities often rely on technology, for example, to meet communication needs, there are more opportunities for perpetrators to capitalise on this (Woodlock & Harris, 2024).

First Nations women also face particular risks and barriers with regard to TFA. The proportion of respondents who, in 2025, noticed particular issues faced by First Nations women was relatively similar to that from 2020 (28.2% and 27.6%, respectively). These figures represent an increase from 12.9% in 2015. Qualitative responses provided further context around the risks faced by First Nations women. One practitioner, for example, spoke about the challenges faced by First Nations victim-survivors in trying to organise safe exits, particularly when perpetrators are monitoring their phones or preventing them from having access to phones. These challenges may be exacerbated for women living in remote

communities. Research highlights that First Nations women in remote and regional communities may be at heightened risk of TFA due to limited access to information about the issue and related topics, such as technology and digital literacy. While close community and kinship relationships represent some of the cultural strengths of First Nations communities, these relationships may also be used by perpetrators to facilitate their monitoring and abuse of women (Brown et al., 2021).

The 2025 survey was the first time that practitioners were asked if they noticed particular issues faced by LGBTIQ people. The results show that 16.5% of respondents perceived LGBTIQ people as facing specific risks with respect to TFA. While limited research has focused on LGBTIQ people's experiences of TFA, literature suggests that they may be disproportionately affected by such abuse (see eSafety Commissioner, 2020; Henry et al., 2020).

Additionally, the survey asked practitioners to reflect on their experience to identify what age of women are most affected by TFA. The 25-34 years old age group emerged as having the highest perceived risk for women, with almost half (48.2%) of respondents indicating that women in that age group are most impacted by TFA.

“

... women are worried to organise safe exits from perpetrators especially when they need confirmation over email etc of bus tickets etc. It is especially difficult to organise safe exits when women are in remote communities.”

DFV practitioner, Northern Territory, 1–5 years' experience



“

Police are often out of their depth, so their knowledge of technology influences how seriously they take women who report [TFA].”

DFV practitioner, Victoria, 1–5 years’ experience

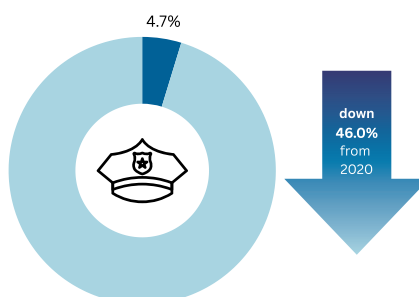


Responses to TFA

Police responses

The findings highlight a lack of consistent responses to TFA by police. Only a small percentage of practitioners (4.7%) reported that in their experience working with clients, police always take TFA seriously (see Figure 13). This was a significant drop from previous years (8.7% in 2020; and 13.1% in 2015), highlighting potentially decreasing confidence in police responses to TFA. The majority of respondents (62.2%) felt that TFA was taken seriously by police sometimes, depending on the officer.

Figure 13. Respondents who indicated that in their experience, police always take TFA seriously (n = 254)



Similar to previous years, the most common reasons that practitioners identified for why police may not take TFA seriously were a lack of understanding of the role of technology in DFV (77.9%), a lack of resources to investigate TFA (77.9%), and a lack of understanding about DFV in general (70.8%).²⁴ The figures for all three of these reasons were higher than that from 2015 and 2020. Other reasons that practitioners identified included police failure to ask women if technology was used

to abuse them (59.2%), a lack of recognition of TFA as constituting criminal conduct (37.5%), and failure to believe victim-survivors or to believe that what they are saying is possible (39.2% and 42.1% respectively).

Inconsistent police responses were also evidenced by the low proportion of respondents (10.8%) who indicated that in their experience over the last year, police have always taken action when clients have had their orders breached via technology. Once again, the majority of respondents felt that police responses to this varied depending on the officer (60.2%). These figures were relatively consistent compared with 2020.

Practitioners’ qualitative comments offered further context for their views on police responses. Their comments draw attention to how issues such as, police perceptions that investing time in TFA cases is not ‘worth it’ due to low rates of successful prosecutions, and downplaying technology-facilitated breaches of orders as ‘just a technical breach’²⁵ can impede effective police responses. Additionally, one practitioner observed how police ‘don’t fully understand severity and can’t connect multiple “small” incidents or [prolonged] patterns of control’, highlighting a gap in police knowledge on how TFA is part of broader patterns of coercive control.

TFA also presents particular evidentiary challenges, creating further barriers for victim-survivors seeking support from the police. To the extent that technology enables

²⁴ Respondents could select more than one reason.

²⁵ DFV practitioner, Western Australia, 1–5 years’ experience

perpetrators to keep their identities hidden, it complicates efforts to establish that they are responsible for the abuse.

Collection and use of TFA evidence

While technology can be exploited to perpetrate abuse, it can also facilitate the collection of evidence against perpetrators. Practitioners were asked whether they had seen evidence of abuse being obtained using technology (e.g., taking screenshots of text messages, recordings made using a smartphone). Three quarters of respondents (75.0%) had seen technology being utilised to collect evidence for the purpose of getting an order granted, while 85.3% had seen it used to collect evidence for breaches of such orders (see Figure 14). Less than half of respondents had seen technology being used to gather evidence for family court or criminal court proceedings (42.9% and 38.9% respectively).²⁶ This may increase in family court proceedings in

the future with the changes involving prescribed agencies (the police and child protection) providing reports to the Court where domestic and family violence has been identified as a concern. However, this is premised on such information being collected by police. With the increase in more subtle forms of TFA monitoring and surveillance described earlier in the report, this will pose a further challenge to ensuring appropriate evidence is consistently collected to demonstrate breaches of orders and the more widespread continuation of post separation violence and abuse.

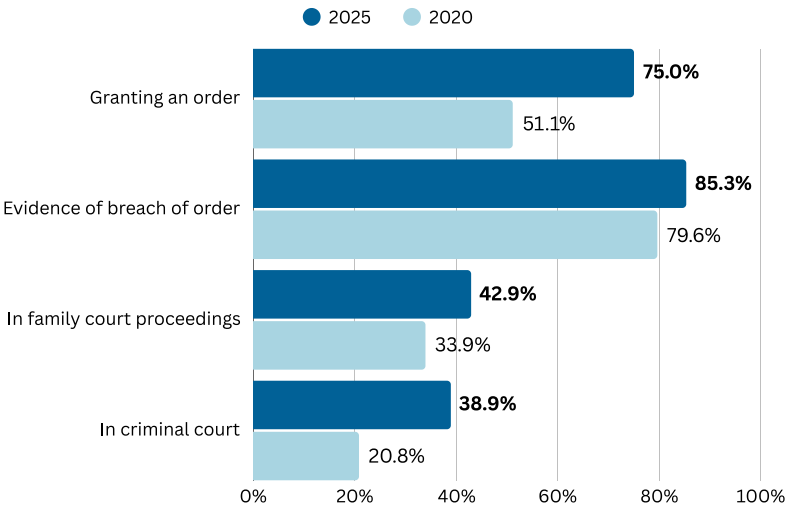
The collection of evidence alone, however, is not enough. The value of evidence lies in whether it is admitted and accepted by the criminal legal system. The results suggest that this may not be happening consistently, with just over a quarter of respondents (27.9%) stating that they had seen examples where courts did not accept evidence of TFA as admissible.



It can be difficult in general to have breaches of an IVO respected by police, especially when tech facilitated. There is often an inability to provide “evidence” that the PUV is the one behind a private call, for instance, which tends to immediately drop an officers interest in support or even just validating the situation.”

DFV practitioner, Victoria, 1–5 years’ experience

Figure 14. Respondents have seen evidence of abuse being obtained using technology in the course of their work in 2025 (n = 252) and 2020 (n = 442)



²⁶ Respondents could select more than one option.



Resources and support for victim-survivors

The 2025 survey incorporated a new question about specific resources and support practitioners have used in their work supporting women and children experiencing TFA, and how helpful practitioners found them.

Of the fourteen types of resources and support practitioners were asked about (see Figure 15), the most commonly used support was the police, with 97.1% of respondents indicating that they had used this. Although the uptake of police support was high, respondents' views on their helpfulness was mixed. Of the respondents who reported engaging with the police in TFA cases, only 57.9% found them 'Helpful' or 'Very helpful'.

Financial abuse advice, and CCTV installation and other services that assist with securing victim-survivors' properties also emerged as resources that were commonly used by practitioners in their work with women and children experiencing TFA, with 91.1% and 89.6% of respondents indicating that they had utilised these respectively (see Figure 15). Both of these resources also had high levels of perceived helpfulness. Among respondents who had used financial abuse advice, 89.4% found it to be 'Helpful' or 'Very helpful'. Similarly, 93.5% of respondents who had used CCTV

installation and other services aimed at securing victim-survivors properties reported that it was at least 'Helpful'.

Overall, the support that respondents found most helpful was Wesnet Safe Connections. The program had high uptake, with 88.4% of respondents having used it (see Figure 15). Of these respondents, most (94.9%) indicated that the program was 'Helpful' or 'Very Helpful', highlighting high levels of satisfaction.

Digital/technology safety audits and sweeps were also perceived as generally helpful. Although the proportion of practitioners who had used this resource was limited (76.7%; see Figure 15), a large majority of those who had used it found it to be at least 'Helpful' (94.6%). The disjuncture between the perceived helpfulness of safety audits and sweeps as a tool for supporting victim-survivors of TFA, and its use by practitioners in such cases suggests that the uptake of this tool can be improved. This is supported by some of the qualitative findings of the survey, which identify factors such as the high costs associated with safety audits and sweeps and their limited availability and accessibility (particularly in certain geographical areas) as barriers to its use. One participant even suggested offering training on digital/technology safety audits and sweeps *'directly to DFV services'*²⁷

or to local security systems businesses. Similarly, another participant, proposed providing *'more training for frontline workers in basic tech audits/sweeps that can be done virtually or in a short period of time'*. These suggestions highlight the potential for DFSV and other frontline workers to be upskilled to address some of the gaps in current availability and delivery of digital/technology safety audits and sweeps.

The least commonly used support was IDCare and other identity and reputation management services, with just under half (49.6%) of respondents indicating that they had used this resource (see Figure 15). Of the fourteen types of resources and support practitioners were asked about, IDCare and other identity and reputation management services also had the lowest level of perceived helpfulness. Among the respondents who had used such services, slightly over half (51.3%) found them to be at least 'Helpful'.

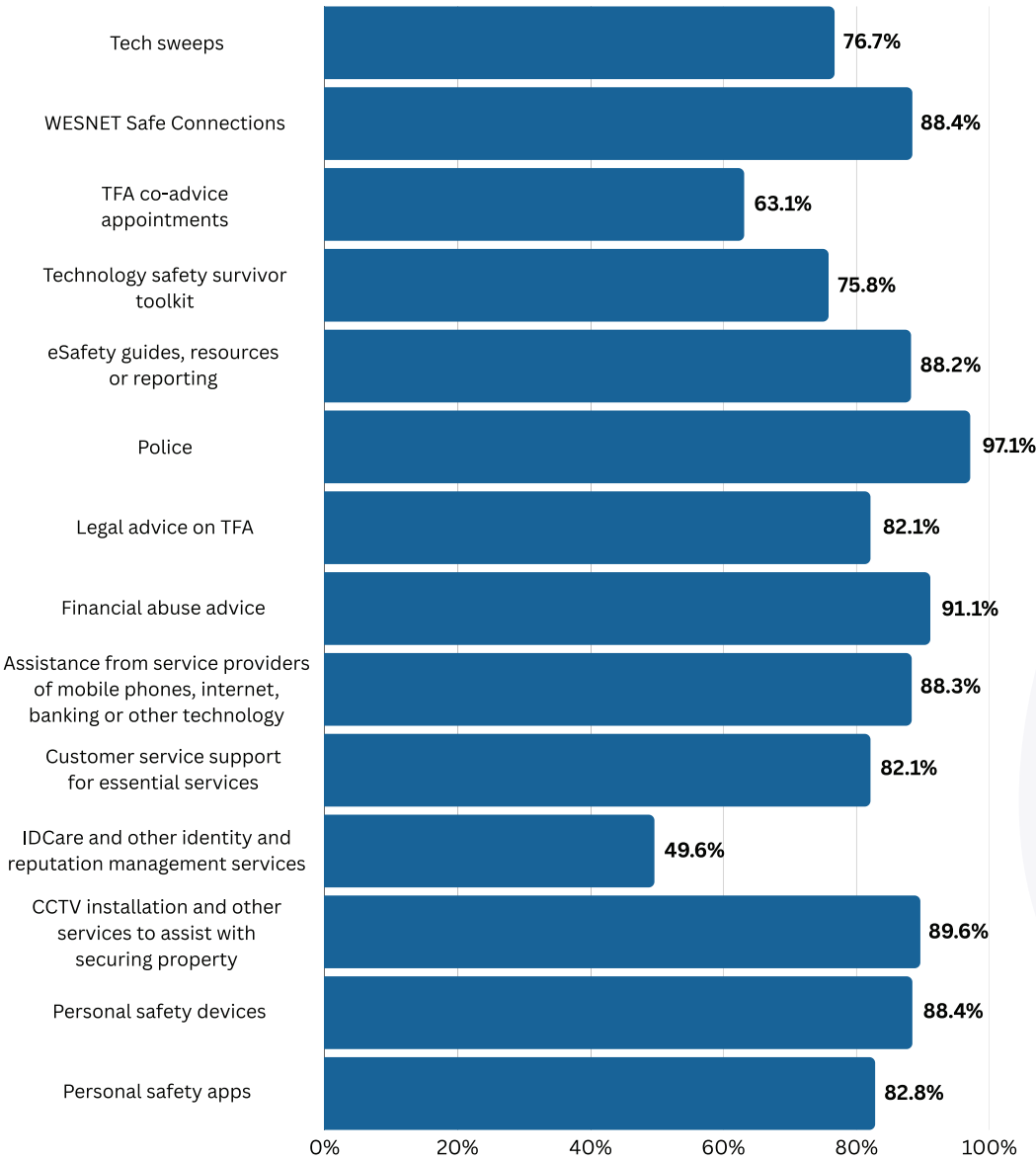
The uptake of TFA co-advice appointments for caseworkers and clients was also relatively limited, with only 63.1% of respondents reporting that they had used such appointments (see Figure 15). Nevertheless, most of those who had engaged in these appointments found them to be 'Helpful' or 'Very helpful' (89.3%), highlighting the potential for this resource to be used more widely by practitioners.

²⁷ DFV practitioner, ACT, 1–5 years' experience.

The support that respondents found most helpful was Wesnet Safe Connections.



Figure 15. Resources and support respondents have used in their work with women and children experiencing TFA (n = 232 – 242)



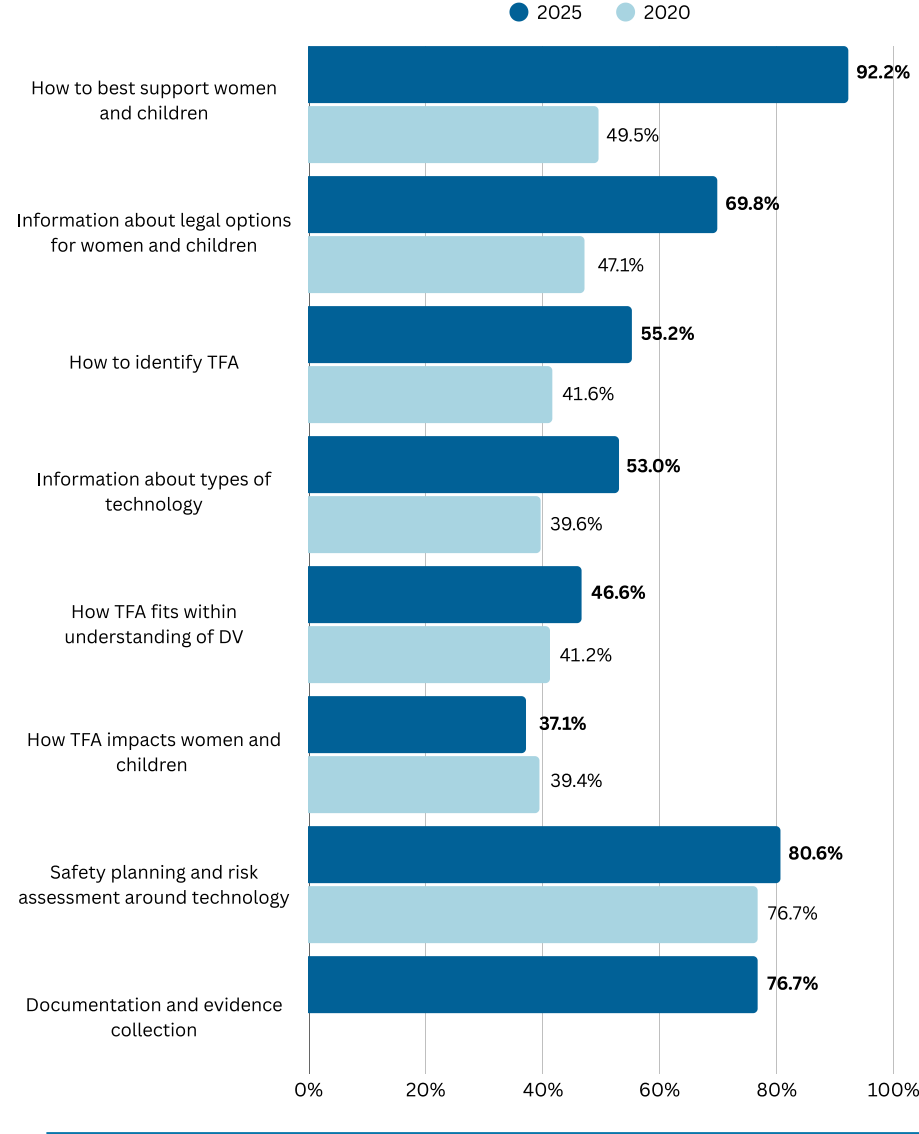
Practitioners training needs

Finally, the survey examined the types of topics that practitioners would like to see covered in training. Among the eight topics practitioners were asked about, the majority (six topics) experienced increased requests for training by practitioners compared to 2020 (see Figure 16). This finding potentially reflects the growing recognition of TFA as a serious issue that requires tailored responses.

Of the remaining two topics, one topic – documentation and evidence collection – was a new item that was introduced in the 2025 survey. Over three-quarters of respondents (76.7%) indicated that they wished to see information on this covered in training (Figure 16). The other remaining topic – how TFA impacts women and children – experienced a slight decrease in the percentage of respondents requesting it be included in training from 2020 (39.4% in 2020; 37.1% in 2025).

The three most common topics that practitioners indicated they wanted training on were how to best support women and children (92.2%), safety planning and risk assessment around technology (80.6%), and information about legal options for women and children (69.8%) (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Topics respondents would like to see covered in training on TFA in 2025 (n = 232) and 2020 (n = 442)²⁸



²⁸ Respondents could select more than one topic.

05



Limitations

DFV practitioners were sought as participants for this research because of their “practice-based knowledge”

that provides “a depth of knowledge and expertise which is often inaccessible to even the most skilled researchers” (Coy & Garner, 2012, p. 296). However, there are certain limitations to this approach. Practitioners’ recollections of events may be affected by observer bias, leading to over- or underestimation of the extent of technology abuse experienced by their clients.

It is also important to note that the 2025 survey consolidated previously separate questions about individual social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat) into a single item measuring social media and online platforms. Figures for 2020 and 2015 were derived by averaging scores across those separate items. This means comparisons across survey waves for this technology should be interpreted with some caution, as the change in question format may have influenced response patterns independently of real changes in perpetrator behaviour.



06



Profile of respondents

The 2025 survey was completed by 307 practitioners from across Australia.

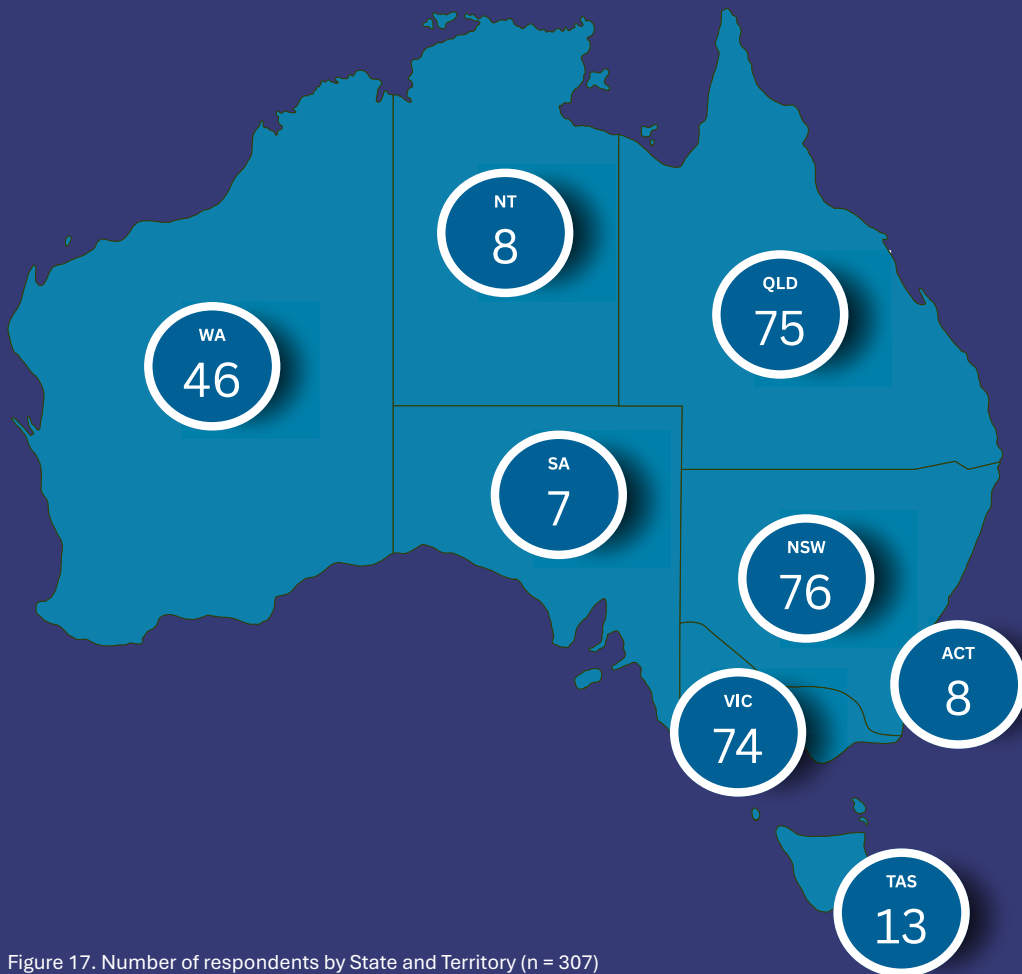


Figure 17. Number of respondents by State and Territory (n = 307)



As Figure 17 shows, practitioners were largely based in NSW (24.8%), Queensland (24.4%), and Victoria (24.1%), while the fewest operated in South Australia (2.3%). Half of respondents (52.6%) worked in major cities, and a further 36.9% in regional centres.²⁹

Respondents predominantly identified as female (95.5%), with a minority identifying as non-binary or transgender (3.2%) or male (1.3%). A relatively equal proportion of participants were 25–34 (28.3%), 35–44 (25.1%), and 45–54 (25.7%) years of age. Similar to previous survey iterations, most practitioners (84.4%) worked directly in DFV services. Other services in which practitioners reported working included legal services (9.4%), sexual assault services (8.5%), and health services (4.2%) (see Figure 18).³⁰

Almost all respondents (91.9%) indicated that supporting women and children experiencing DFV was their main role, with most (77.1%) having worked in this role for five years or less.

Consistent with findings from the 2020 survey, most practitioners noted that, in their experience, perpetrators of TFA are mostly men (98.0%), while victim-survivors are mostly women (95.0%) (see Figure 19).

²⁹ Respondents could select more than one organisation type.

³⁰ Respondents could select more than one organisation type.

Figure 18. Types of services respondents work in (n = 307)

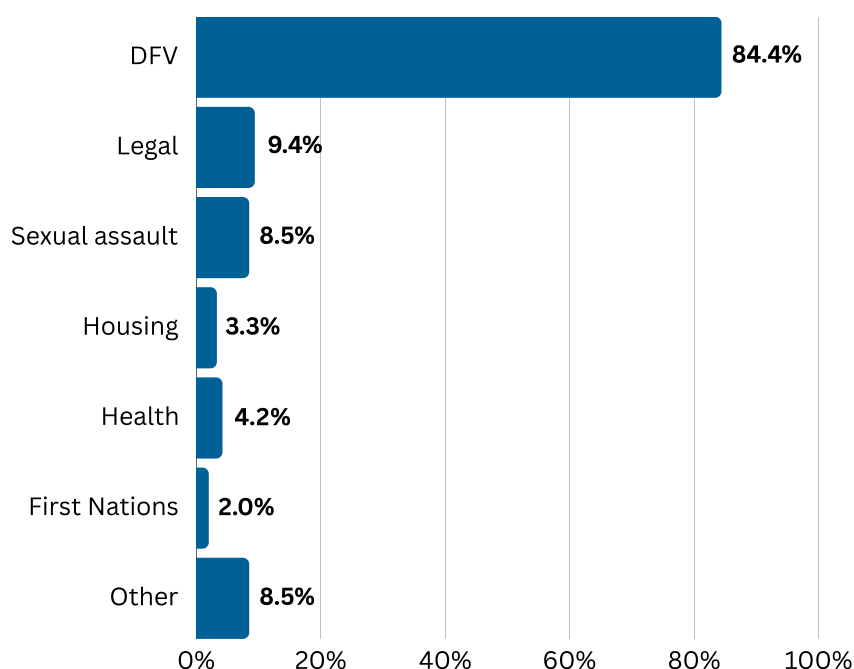
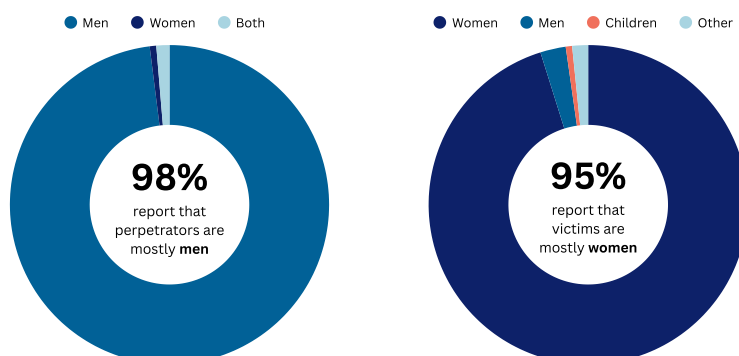


Figure 19. Respondents' experiences of who perpetrates (n = 302) and who experiences (n = 300) TFA



07



Conclusion

Across three survey waves spanning a decade, one finding has remained constant: almost every practitioner surveyed has supported a client experiencing technology-facilitated abuse.



The high regard practitioners showed for resources like Wesnet Safe Connections reflects what good, responsive support looks like in practice.

What has changed is that now over half of practitioners are seeing it more frequently than non-TFA tactics and the types of technology continue to evolve. Practitioners have reported that smartphones, social media, GPS tracking, spyware, AI-generated threats, financial account monitoring, and smart home devices have all been used by perpetrators. The pace of technological change means this list will continue to grow in ways that are difficult to anticipate. Consequently, perpetrators engaging in technology-facilitated abuse have access to a range of technologies that are also increasingly affordable and easy to use, increasing both the numbers involved and in many cases using multiple forms of technology in their surveillance and control of the victim-survivor.

At the same time, technology is increasingly an indispensable part of contemporary life which victim-survivors need to communicate and engage with essential and other services. This can include victim-survivors needing to use technology in their planning for a safe exit from their abusive partner, whilst managing the risk that the perpetrator will not become aware of their plans. Victim-survivors also

use technology for the collection of evidence to demonstrate coercive and abusive acts by the perpetrator. This highlights that alongside survivors being knowledgeable about how to identify if they may be subjected to technology-facilitated abuse they also need to be aware about how to collect evidence of it.

While the ways technology is weaponised are unpredictable, the behaviour behind them is not. Perpetrators use technology to control, isolate, monitor, and terrorise. That intent is consistent across platforms and devices. This is perhaps the most important insight that a decade of surveying frontline practitioners has produced. Because practitioners understand why perpetrators use technology, not just how, they are often able to anticipate the impacts on victim-survivors even when the specific tactics are new. Working closely with survivors and grounded in a deep understanding of coercive control, experienced practitioners can identify the patterns beneath the technology and respond accordingly.

Throughout findings there are multiple examples of the longer term mental health and trauma impacts of technology-facilitated

abuse. The growing accessibility of technologies that enable surveillance, monitoring, threats and coercive control has expanded both the scope and duration of perpetrators' abuse after separation. Greater recognition of post-separation abuse, alongside the inclusion of recovery and healing as a pillar in the National Plan, provides an important policy opportunity to strengthen responses to technology-facilitated abuse (TFA). Such responses need to extend beyond immediate crisis and risk management to address the longer-term impacts of insidious surveillance and control, and to better support women and children's safety, autonomy and freedom from ongoing monitoring.

The findings also have significant implications for how we build and sustain the specialist DFV workforce. Responses to technology-facilitated abuse cannot rely solely on keeping pace with the latest devices or platforms that DFV practitioners are reporting. That approach will always lag behind. What it requires instead is a workforce with strong foundations in understanding technology-facilitated abuse built into their existing practice frameworks, supported by ongoing training,



access to specialist resources, and the confidence to translate that knowledge into effective risk and safety planning. The high regard practitioners showed for resources like Wesnet Safe Connections reflects what good, responsive support looks like in practice. This is a particularly important contribution as the findings indicate practitioners on the frontline have limited avenues to support about responding to TFA.

The findings point to where the broader system is falling short. Declining practitioner confidence in police responses, inconsistent admission of technology-facilitated abuse evidence in courts, and the particular vulnerabilities facing women from CALD communities, women with disabilities, and First Nations women all signal that the response remains uneven. Technology-facilitated abuse does

not sit within a single sector, and neither can the response to it.

Since its inception in 2015, our national surveys have been guided by the principle that those working directly with victim-survivors are best positioned to identify emerging trends and necessary responses. Our 2025 findings confirm the enduring value of this practitioner-led approach. By capturing critical new data on emerging threats, such as perpetrator use of online pornography and the targeting of children, this survey underscores the vital need for future iterations to continue monitoring these rapidly evolving patterns of technology-facilitated abuse. As technology continues to shift, so too must our commitment to listening to practitioners and survivors, ensuring we build systems capable of responding to the full complexity of DFV.

08



Recommendations and future directions



Current responses to technology-facilitated abuse remain fragmented, inconsistent and unable to keep pace with the rapid development and everyday use of digital technologies.

Consolidating and bolstering valuable current responses

It is well over 15 years since the DFV sector and advocates identified and anticipated that technology-facilitated abuse was going to be a growing threat to the safety of victim-survivors. To this end responses included developing national approaches such as WESNET’s Safety Net Australia program which has a number of components that include training, information and advocacy and the Safe Connections Program which enables the safe use of technology for women. The findings show consistently the value of Safety Net’s component parts to frontline practitioners. One of the key strengths is its accessibility to practitioners and the support they can then offer survivors.

Changes to existing legislation and new legislation have been introduced to respond to technology-facilitated abuses. One role of such legislation is also to raise community awareness of its unacceptability and act as a deterrent. The 2025 results show a decrease in the non-consensual transmission of intimate images, whilst this cannot be attributed solely to legislation, it will be important to monitor in the future so the influence of legislation can be better understood.

It is recommended that:

- 1. National measures to support practitioners, victim-survivors and enhance community awareness such as those delivered by Wesnet and eSafety should be continued with funding support from the Australian government as they are accessible and the national approach enables consistent information and support which is critical is this rapidly changing form of abuse.
- 2. Consideration be given to how responses can be extended and expanded to support survivors with the longer term impacts of technology-facilitated abuse so that victim-survivors’ safety, financial security and recovery is not further impeded.
- 3. Legislative reforms and changes continue to be monitored to better understand deterrent effects as well as the groups that continue to offend and those prosecuted.

Expanding Access to Digital Safety Audits or Sweeps

Digital Safety Audits or sweeps (Tech Sweeps) were rated highly by practitioners who had used them, yet uptake was limited due to high costs and patchy availability,

particularly outside major cities. The Private Security sector that predominantly providing Tech Sweeps is currently unregulated, raising concerns about quality and accessibility. Expanding access through subsidised services, clearer standards for providers, and investment in upskilling frontline workers to conduct basic technology audits in house to would help more victim-survivors benefit from this support.

It is recommended that:

- 4. National programs to enable Tech Sweeps and similar are maintained and improved to address emerging concerns around quality, availability and pricing. The program requires national coordination and some form of regulation or quality assurance that is codesigned with and by specialist DFV sector to ensure that operators are delivering safe and trauma informed services. Simultaneously, training and workforce capability for specialist DFV services to be able to conduct in house basic technology audits and make informed assessments about selecting, purchasing or recommending external tech sweeps for clients needs to be implemented nationally.

Coordinated Systems Approaches to technology-facilitated abuse

Addressing the Weaponisation of Post-Separation Systems

Technology-facilitated abuse does not end at separation. The findings show that over two-thirds of practitioners surveyed reported seeing perpetrators use court-ordered child contact via technology to abuse or harass victim-survivors, highlighting how systems that victim-survivors are compelled to engage with can be used to control them. There is a need for family courts, child support agencies, and child protection systems to develop a stronger understanding of how technology-facilitated abuse operates within these contexts, and to ensure their processes do not inadvertently provide perpetrators with ongoing means of control and intimidation.

It is recommended that:

5. There be specific measures to raise awareness amongst family courts, child support agencies, and child protection systems of the frequent and long lasting forms of post separation violence and abuse to which victim-survivors are subjected, including how various system loopholes are exploited and weaponised by perpetrators over the longer term to further control victim-survivors and impeded their autonomy and recovery

Technology-facilitated abuse requires a whole-of-society response because perpetrators' misuse of technology extends across multiple systems and sectors. The findings show that digital platforms and devices, financial institutions, essential services and

government service systems can all be used to facilitate surveillance, control, threats and harm. These platforms and service systems therefore have both a responsibility and an opportunity to prevent their products and services from being misused as part of domestic and family violence, and to strengthen responses when abuse is identified.

Current responses to technology-facilitated abuse remain fragmented, inconsistent and unable to keep pace with the rapid development and everyday use of digital technologies. Stronger coordination is needed across government departments, non-government services, statutory agencies and the private sector to ensure more consistent and effective responses that improve victim-survivors' safety and freedom from ongoing abuse.

It is recommended that:

6. Along the lines of recommendation 28 of the Rickard report (Rickard 2024), the Government convene multi-stakeholder 'fusion cells' to analyse 'wicked problems' such as the weaponisation of various services and systems for the purposes of technology-facilitated abuse and gender-based violence and develop coordinated multi-stakeholder solutions. The inclusion of peak bodies with expertise in technology facilitated abuse should be a stakeholder. The outcomes would support the National Plan agenda and strengthen consistency, accountability and responsiveness across jurisdictions and sectors.



Workforce Training

Our findings point to a clear and ongoing need for training across multiple parts of the system. This includes police and legal professionals, such as judicial officers, who play a critical role in recognising, investigating, and prosecuting technology-facilitated abuse. The survey found that only 4.7% of practitioners reported that police always take technology-facilitated abuse seriously, a figure that has declined across all three survey waves. Practitioners identified a lack of understanding of both technology and domestic and family violence as key reasons for this, underscoring the urgency of targeted, specialist training for these groups.

With new coercive control legislation now in place across several jurisdictions, training for police and legal practitioners on how technology is used to enable and extend coercive control is also a priority. Understanding technology-facilitated abuse as part of a broader pattern of coercive control, rather than a

series of isolated incidents, is essential for effective responses across policing, legal, and support sectors and the general effectiveness of the new laws.

Training and information be developed for practitioners which can be shared with victim-survivors about the collection of credible evidence for demonstrating breaches of orders or other matters related to domestic violence because with the increase in TFA comes the potential to collect evidence of such abuses.

DFV practitioners identified clear areas where they want more training, including how to best support women and children, safety planning and risk assessment around technology, legal options for victim-survivors, and documentation and evidence collection. These should be directly addressed in future training design and funding.

It is recommended that:

Training that specifically addresses these aspects is developed with

an implementation plan with the training targeted to the roles and responsibilities of the various workforces. These include:

7. Police and legal professionals (including judicial officers) in the various courts include how technology-facilitated abuse forms part of a wider pattern of coercive control and the evidentiary requirements for demonstrating such patterns.
8. Domestic and family violence practitioners are provided with training and accessible practice guidance on technology-facilitated abuse that is sector-led and able to be embedded into existing practice frameworks for risk and safety and case management. Training should include practical information for practitioners and victim-survivors about the types of evidence that may be relevant to breaches of protection orders and other domestic and family violence-related matters.



Future research

As the use of emerging technologies by perpetrators grows, research must keep pace. Three-quarters of practitioners surveyed reported seeing perpetrators use AI-generated threats and impersonation tools, yet this is an area where evidence remains limited. There is a particular need for research focused on AI and other emerging technologies as tools for facilitating abuse, so that responses can be grounded in current evidence rather than catching up after the fact.

This survey included new questions about perpetrators’ online pornography use, sexual abuse in the context of pornography and the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) for the first time with findings linking this to abuse.

It is recommended that:

- 9. Future research is supported to examine the tactics and impacts of technology-facilitated abuse involving emerging and new technologies, particularly the

misuse of Large Language Models/Artificial Intelligence.

- 10. More research is needed on the role of perpetrators’ excessive or compulsive use of pornography, women being coerced into participating in pornography and the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).



Definition of terms



Domestic and family violence

Domestic violence - acts of violence that occur between people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship (Our Watch, 2021). It includes acts of – or fear of – physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and economic/financial abuse and coercive control by the perpetrator.

Family violence - a broader term that includes intimate partner violence as well as violence between other family members, such as a parent abusing their child, and in family-like relationships, such as carers of people with disability. Family violence includes patterns of coercive, controlling, abusive, violent, or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour, that coerces or controls a family member or causes them to be fearful for their own or someone else's safety and wellbeing.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, family violence is often the preferred term because it encompasses the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues (Our Watch, 2021).

There is considerable overlap between domestic and family violence, and both can include the following behaviours:

- **Physical abuse:** This includes physical violence that can cause pain, injury and/or fear. Examples: slapping, punching, choking, shaking, smashing things, sleep and food deprivation, denying medical support or medications.
- **Verbal abuse:** This may occur in private or in public (including through electronic means), designed to humiliate, degrade, demean, intimidate or subjugate and may include threats of physical violence. Examples: threats, put-downs, name-calling, insults, shouting.
- **Emotional/Psychological abuse:** This involves manipulative behaviour to coerce, control or harm. This can include verbal or non-verbal behaviours. Examples: undermining confidence, blaming for their behaviours, humiliation, intimidation, twisting reality.
- **Economic abuse:** This involves using finances and economic resources to gain power and control in the relationship. Examples: monitoring spending, restricting access to financial resources, hindering employment, and accruing debt.
- **Social abuse:** This includes isolation from family, friends or supports. Examples: restricting contact with family or friends, stopping attendance at social activities, monitoring location, reading messages on phones, smashing phones, using family and friends to intimidate.
- **Spiritual abuse:** This involves not letting someone follow their spirituality or religion. Examples: preventing the practice of personal beliefs, disrespecting individual values and beliefs, forcing a faith or spirituality, and misusing religious or spiritual traditions to justify abuse.
- **Sexual abuse:** This may include sexual assault and the sexual abuse of children. This may be a single incident or a series of incidents. Examples: rape, forcing unwanted sexual acts, and forcing pornography to be viewed.
- **Coercive control:** This is a pattern of behaviour a perpetrator uses over time with the effect of establishing and maintaining power and control over the victim-survivor. While coercive control often involves behaviours which are forms of abuse in themselves, coercive control refers to the overall pattern of cumulative harms that result in the deprivation of the victim-survivors' freedom and agency.

Image-based Sexual Abuse

- Nonconsensual creation or sharing of nude, semi-nude or sexual images (or videos), including threats to do so. It also includes taking and distributing images of a person without religious or cultural clothing they would normally wear in public, and making digital alterations of any of these types of images. It is one of several forms of technology-facilitated abuse.

Intervention Order

- Under legislation pertaining to domestic violence, survivors affected by domestic violence, persons authorised by survivors or police officers can apply for an intervention order (an ADVO: Apprehended Domestic Violence Order, in New South Wales; a DVO: Domestic Violence Order: Northern Territory and Tasmania; DVIO: Domestic Violence Intervention Order, in Queensland; FVIO: Family Violence Intervention Order in Victoria; FVO: Family Violence Order in Australian Capital Territory; FVRO: Family Violence Restraining Order, in Western Australia; Intervention Order in South Australia).

Perpetrator/Person Using Violence

A perpetrator refers to an adult who uses domestic and family violence. This term is used regardless of whether the person has ever been arrested, charged with a crime, or had an intervention order issued against them. 'People using violence' is also increasingly used because it focuses on actions rather than identity.

Technology-facilitated abuse

A form of controlling behaviour, particularly implicated in domestic and family violence. It involves a perpetrator misusing devices (like phones or computers), accounts (like email) and software or platforms (like social media) to abuse, threaten, coerce, stalk, harass or intimidate victim-survivor(s). This abuse can be individualised, such as the perpetrator using threats that have specific meaning for the victim-survivor(s) that may seem innocuous to others. Technology-facilitated abuse can include:

- posting or sending harassing, abusive or threatening messages
- stalking (tracking someone's activities, movements, communications)

- doxxing (publishing identifiable personal information)
- engaging in image-based sexual abuse (producing and/or sharing, or threatening to share, intimate images without the victim-survivor's consent)
- impersonating or stealing someone's identity
- accessing a victim-survivor's digital accounts, profiles or devices
- changing functions, impairing authorised functions or, causing an unauthorised function on a digital account, profile or device.

Victim-survivor

People who have experienced family and domestic violence or gender-based violence. This term is understood to acknowledge the strength and resilience shown by people who have experienced or are currently living with violence. People who have experienced violence have different preferences about how they would like to be identified and may choose to use 'victim' or 'survivor' separately, or another term altogether. Some people prefer to use 'people who experience, or are at risk of experiencing, violence'.

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