



PDF Download
3701716.3716877.pdf
07 January 2026
Total Citations: 0
Total Downloads: 898

 Latest updates: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3701716.3716877>

ABSTRACT

Foreword: Towards a Safer Web for Women - First International Workshop on Protecting Women Online

ÁNGEL PAVÓN PÉREZ, The Open University, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, U.K.

MIRIAM FERNÁNDEZ, The Open University, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, U.K.

TRACIE FARRELL, The Open University, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, U.K.

DEBORA NOZZA, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

CHRISTINE DE KOCK, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Open Access Support provided by:

University of Melbourne

The Open University

Bocconi University

Published: 08 May 2025

[Citation in BibTeX format](#)

WWW '25: The ACM Web Conference
2025

April 28 - May 2, 2025
Sydney NSW, Australia

Conference Sponsors:
SIGWEB

Foreword: Towards a Safer Web for Women - First International Workshop on Protecting Women Online

Ángel Pavón Pérez
angel.pavon-perez@open.ac.uk
The Open University
Milton Keynes, UK

Miriam Fernandez
miriam.fernandez@open.ac.uk
The Open University
Milton Keynes, UK

Tracie Farrell
tracie.farrell@open.ac.uk
The Open University
Milton Keynes, UK

Debora Nozza
debora.nozza@unibocconi.it
Bocconi University
Milan, Italy

Christine de Kock
christine.dekock@unimelb.edu.au
The University of Melbourne
Melbourne, Australia

Abstract

The first international workshop on protecting women online, Towards a Safer Web for Women (TSWW), was held in conjunction with the Web Conference 2025. The workshop addresses the urgent and growing issue of online violence against women and girls, identifying and addressing the current challenges. As online and digital environments become increasingly hostile due to the proliferation of hate speech, deepfake abuse, and algorithmic gender bias, there is an urgent need for international and interdisciplinary collaboration to develop effective solutions and mitigation strategies. This workshop brings together researchers primarily from the computer science domain (e.g. natural language processing and machine learning experts) alongside experts in other domains (e.g. legislation and human behaviour experts), recognising the critical role of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing this complex issue and encouraging knowledge exchange and innovation across fields. In this paper, we present an overview of the inaugural edition of the TSWW workshop.

CCS Concepts

• **Information systems** → **World Wide Web**; • **Computing methodologies** → *Artificial intelligence*; *Machine learning*; • **Applied computing** → *Law, social and behavioral sciences*.

Keywords

Online Violence Against Women and Girls, Women's Online Safety, Misogyny, Online Abuse, Hate Speech, Deepfake Prevention and Mitigation, Gender Bias in AI

ACM Reference Format:

Ángel Pavón Pérez, Miriam Fernandez, Tracie Farrell, Debora Nozza, and Christine de Kock. 2025. Foreword: Towards a Safer Web for Women - First International Workshop on Protecting Women Online. In *Companion Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2025 (WWW Companion '25)*, April

Permission to make digital or hard copies of all or part of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the owner/author(s).

WWW Companion '25, April 28-May 2, 2025, Sydney, NSW, Australia

© 2025 Copyright held by the owner/author(s).

ACM ISBN 979-8-4007-1331-6/2025/04

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3701716.3716877>

28-May 2, 2025, Sydney, NSW, Australia. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 3 pages.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3701716.3716877>

1 Introduction

The issue of online violence against women and girls on the web has reached critical levels globally. From hateful content to the misuse of emerging technologies, such as deepfakes, and the reinforcement of gender bias in AI systems, women continue to face significant risks in digital spaces. For example, 82% of women in the UK have experienced text-based online violence, and 33% have faced image-based online abuse [2]. South Korea is currently facing a deepfake pornography crisis affecting young women in schools, highlighting the severity of non-consensual content creation online.¹ Additionally, a study by the Berkeley Haas Center for Equity, Gender and Leadership found that 44% of AI systems exhibited gender bias, with 25% showing both gender and racial bias, further exacerbating the inequalities women face online.²

Online harms targeting women and girls are not just isolated or regional issues, they are global and multifaceted challenges requiring a broad, coordinated response. While technological solutions are necessary due to the nature and volume of the problem, the persistently high incidence of online violence calls for a diverse set of approaches, including collaboration across international borders and insights from other disciplines.

In fact, technological approaches have proven valuable in addressing online violence against women and girls, for example, through hate speech detection [1] or mitigation of gender bias in AI systems [3]. While these tools offer support, the prevalence of violence against women and girls remains alarmingly high [2], underscoring the need to collaborate with other disciplines and sectors to fully address these issues. The effectiveness of technological tools is greatly enhanced when integrated with complementary strategies from other disciplines, as the problem of online violence against women and girls spans legal, social, and psychological domains. For example, legal frameworks—such as the UK's 2023 Online Safety Act—are critical to ensuring accountability and deterring harmful online behaviours. Technology can play a pivotal role in

¹From spy cams to deepfake porn: fury in South Korea as women targeted again. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/13/from-spy-cams-to-deepfake-porn-fury-in-south-korea-as-women-targeted-again>

²When Good Algorithms Go Sexist: Why and How to Advance AI Gender Equity. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/when_good_algorithms_go_sexist_why_and_how_to_advance_ai_gender_equity

ensuring compliance with such regulations or help policymakers by analysing vast amounts of data to generate insights that guide future regulations. Similarly, strengthened policing resources are essential to create effective reporting and intervention mechanisms for online abuse. Beyond these legal and technical interventions, insights from social and behavioural sciences are crucial for understanding the underlying societal and psychological drivers of harmful behaviour and informing the development of more targeted technological strategies for creating safer digital environments. Ultimately, addressing the complexity of online violence demands collaboration across sectors, from academia to industry, with online service providers playing a key role in implementing and scaling these solutions to achieve widespread impact.

Addressing online violence against women is a global issue, complicated by differences across regions in language, cultural norms, and legal frameworks among others. Harmful content like hate speech and deepfakes spreads rapidly across borders, often outpacing the capacity of individual nations to regulate it effectively. While technological tools, such as hate speech detection systems, have been developed, they must account for these global variations to be fully effective. Differences in language and cultural perceptions of harm can lead to gaps in protection, while uneven global legal frameworks create disparities in enforcement and support.

In essence, a coordinated international effort and interdisciplinary research is crucial for effectively combatting the rising tide of online violence against women. The *Towards a Safer Web for Women workshop* seeks to advance this effort by facilitating dialogue and developing actionable strategies to make the online world safer for women everywhere. Thus, the objectives of the full-day workshop are the following:

- (1) **Understand Recent Progress:** The workshop provides an opportunity to review and assess the progress made in combating online violence against women over the last recent years, determining what has been effective and where gaps still exist.
- (2) **Why Haven't We Solved the Problem Yet?:** Despite growing awareness and the introduction of measures to address online violence such as hateful content or biased AI, the levels of harm women experience online remain high. The workshop aims to explore the root causes of this persistence and identify the barriers – be they technological, societal, or legislative – that continue to hinder solutions.
- (3) **Identify Emerging Challenges and Propose Solutions:** The workshop serves as a platform for discussions aimed at identifying the key challenges that the field will face in the coming years in the effort to create a safer online environment for women. By fostering international collaboration, participants engage in discussion sessions to explore potential solutions and identify future research directions for addressing these evolving challenges.

2 Workshop Overview

The workshop received 12 submissions and 6 submissions were accepted (acceptance rate of 50%). Each paper received at least three reviews from the program committee. The first edition of the workshop attracted the interest of researchers from around the

world and from diverse disciplines. The workshop included paper, discussion and keynote sessions. Topics of interest included, but were not limited to:

- Detection and prevention of gender-based online violence (e.g., harassment, stalking, cyberbullying)
- Sentiment and emotion analysis in abusive or harmful online interactions towards women
- Gender bias identification and mitigation in AI
- Multilingual and multicultural approaches to identifying and addressing online harm towards women
- Human-centered approaches for online safety applications
- Intersectional approaches to understanding and mitigating online harms faced by women with multiple marginalised identities (e.g., misogynoir or LGBTQ+ women)
- Analysis of tracking devices, surveillance tools, and hidden cameras misused against women
- Principles and case studies for integrating safety by design in social platforms and online services
- Detection and mitigation of non-consensual deepfake generation and dissemination
- Legal and ethical frameworks for protecting women online
- Psychological, social, and legal impacts of technology when used for gender-based abuse

3 Program Committee List

The majority of our committee members brought a technology-focused perspective, complemented by expertise from related disciplines. The Program Committee is listed below:

- Joseph Kwarteng, The Open University, UK
- Paula Reyero Lobo, The Open University, UK
- Jing Zhao, California Institute of Integral Studies, USA
- Maria do Mar Vau, University College London, UK
- Sabrina Kirrane, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria
- Eirini Ntoutsis, Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany
- Xuemin Duan, Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven, Belgium
- Pieter Heyvaert, Ghent University, Belgium
- Emma Turley, Central Queensland University, Australia
- Karolina Stańczak, McGill University, Canada
- Daryna Dementieva, TUM School of Computation, Information and Technology, Germany
- Chiara Di Bonaventura, King's College London, UK
- María Estrella Vallecillo Rodríguez, Universidad de Jaén, Spain
- Francielle Vargas, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil
- Isar Nejadgholi, National Research Council Canada, Canada
- Camilla Casula, Fondazione Bruno Kessler, Italy
- Patricia Chiril, University of Chicago, USA
- Mikel K. Ngueajio, Howard University, USA
- Tanvi Dinkar, Heriot Watt University, UK
- Agostina Calabrese, The University of Edinburgh, UK
- Indira Sen, University of Mannheim, Germany
- Juan Manuel Pérez, Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina
- Amanda Cercas Curry, CENTAI Institute, Italy
- Flor Miriam Plaza-del-Arco, Bocconi University, Italy
- Arianna Muti, Bocconi University, Italy

- Ksenia Bakina, Centre for Protecting Women Online, UK
- Anastasia Karagianni, Vrije Universiteit Brussels, Belgium
- Emanuele Moscato, Bocconi University, Italy
- Em Dean, The Open University, UK
- Arosha Bandara, Centre for Protecting Women Online, UK

This workshop has also been supported by the UK-based Centre for Protecting Women Online³, funded through a £7.7 million grant from Research England.

References

- [1] Fatimah Alkumah and Xiaogang Ma. 2022. A literature review of textual hate speech detection methods and datasets. *Information* 13, 6 (2022), 273.
- [2] Olga Jurasz. 2024. Online violence against women: A Four Nations study. (2024).
- [3] Sinead O'Connor and Helen Liu. 2024. Gender bias perpetuation and mitigation in AI technologies: challenges and opportunities. *AI & SOCIETY* 39, 4 (2024), 2045–2057.

³Centre for Protecting Women Online. <https://www5.open.ac.uk/centres/protecting-women-online/>