

Children and technology-facilitated abuse in domestic and family violence situations

Summary report

December 2020



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eSafety recognises the numbers and details reported here represent lived experiences. We would like to thank the research participants, especially the adult victims and professionals, and appreciate the generosity of their shared experiences. We acknowledge the damaging effects of technology-facilitated abuse on families and communities.

This report discusses issues that some people may find distressing.

If you or someone you know is at risk of immediate harm, please call Triple Zero (000).

For counselling and support, please contact:

[Lifeline](#) 13 11 14

[Kids Helpline](#) 1800 55 1800

[1800Respect](#) 1800 737 732

[Beyond Blue](#) 1300 22 4636

[MensLine Australia](#) 1300 789 978

eSafety research program

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) supports, encourages, conducts and evaluates research about online safety for Australians. The eSafety research program tracks trends, collects, analyses and interprets data and uses this to provide an evidence base for the development of eSafety resources and programs. eSafety also works closely across agencies and internationally so that its research program can proactively identify and explore online safety issues.

eSafety research is available at esafety.gov.au/about-us/research

About eSafety

eSafety is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. It is the first government agency in the world dedicated specifically to online safety. It leads, coordinates, educates and advises on online safety issues and aims to empower all Australians to have safer, more positive online experiences.

eSafety operates a number of reporting schemes. These include a cyberbullying scheme for Australian children aged under 18, an image-based abuse scheme for Australians of all ages and the Online Content Scheme, which relates to illegal and harmful online content including child sexual exploitation material.

eSafety works closely with the domestic and family violence sector, including crisis workers, counsellors, law enforcement and the legal profession, to ensure all institutions, services and people understand the seriousness of technology-facilitated abuse and the harms it causes.

eSafety Women

Launched in 2016 with funding under the Women's Safety Package, eSafety Women aims to empower all Australian women to manage technology risks and abuse by:

- providing practical tools and information to equip women to protect themselves and their families against all forms of online abuse
- training frontline, specialist and support staff in the domestic and family violence sector, giving them the knowledge, skills and resources to effectively support women and their families
- actively raising awareness and understanding of technology-facilitated abuse.

The eSafety Women program includes delivery of intensive face-to-face workshops and customised presentations, as well as webinars and an online learning program for domestic and family violence frontline workers. It provides web-based information and resources, as well as fact sheets and 'top tip' postcards in 12 community languages. As at 30 June 2020, more than 12,000 domestic and family violence frontline workers have participated in face-to-face workshops or webinar sessions and nearly 3000 frontline workers have registered for the online training.

Overview

This research investigates the role of technology in children's exposure to family and domestic violence, the impact of technology-facilitated abuse, and protective and intervention strategies. To our knowledge, this is the first study designed to investigate children's involvement in technology-facilitated coercive control. Insights are drawn from a survey of over 500 professionals offering a range of services to victims, and interviews with young people, mothers and perpetrators. This research focuses on adult victims who are mothers, as women are far more likely than men to experience intimate partner violence.

eSafety commissioned Griffith University to undertake this research as part of a series of new initiatives funded under the Australian Government's Technology Trials in 2019, as a component of the Women's Safety Package of measures to help keep women and children safe online. This report provides a summary of the research, which is available in full on the eSafety website.

The research provides clear evidence of the harmful effect of technology-facilitated abuse on children, including the impact on their mental health, education, and their relationship with the non-abusive parent, as well as their everyday lives. It shows that children are directly abused via digital technology, as well as used by domestic violence perpetrators as a conduit in the technology-facilitated abuse of their mothers.

Common reasons for involving the child include wanting to threaten or manipulate, disparage or harass the adult victim, or get information about the activities or location of the child or the adult victim. Monitoring and stalking via technology occurs in close to half of domestic violence cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children. In some cases, this is a precursor to physical stalking and assault of adult victims.

Technology-facilitated abuse is typically perpetrated using common, commercially available devices and platforms – mobile phones, texting and social media – that do not require sophisticated technical expertise. It can even involve gaming devices such as Xbox or PlayStation. Perpetrators typically lack awareness that their misuse of these technologies is abusive or part of domestic violence.

The issues raised by this research have become even more pressing during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen a significant increase in domestic and family violence globally. At the same time, there has been greater reliance on technology. This has increased the opportunity for abuse, as reflected by the dramatic increase in image-based abuse and adult cyber abuse reports to eSafety this year. The connection between technology-facilitated abuse and domestic violence has recently been reinforced by data from the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council which highlights that 54% of sentenced image-based abuse cases were linked to family violence.¹

Children are caught in these situations with limited agency and are particularly vulnerable given their dependency on their parents. This research highlights that the needs of children must be factored into the development of responses through intervention services. Simply switching off technology is not a viable response and will only serve to isolate the child further. What is needed is a clear understanding of children's experiences of technology-facilitated abuse to ensure that intervention services are identifying it and developing appropriate responses to help victims. This includes investigating this abuse, collecting evidence of it, development of court orders which consider the potential for misuse of technology to continue abuse, or providing hands-on technology support to the non-offending parents.

Key highlights

Extent of children's involvement in technology-facilitated abuse

- Children are involved in technology-facilitated abuse in about a quarter (27%) of domestic violence cases. There are two key ways in which they are involved:
 1. perpetrators directly abusing children
 2. perpetrators involving children in technology-facilitated abuse that is directed at their mothers.
- Technology-facilitated abuse is part of a broader pattern of abusive and controlling behaviours that impact on children, as well as their mothers.

Types of technology-facilitated abuse and technologies used

- Of domestic violence cases where professionals had knowledge of technology-facilitated abuse involving children, the most common forms of technology-facilitated abuse experienced by children are:
 - Monitoring and stalking – close to half of cases (45%).
 - Threats and intimidation – 4 in 10 cases (38%).
 - Blocking communication – a third of cases (33%).
- For young people, abusive texts and harassing phone calls were the most common types of abuse they experienced. They described persistent abusive, controlling, threatening and manipulative technology-facilitated communication.
- Bypassing cybersecurity, such as by installing spyware, was said to be present in up to a fifth of cases, although qualitative data suggests that practitioners' references to 'spyware' may in fact be misuse of everyday technologies rather than true spyware.
- Impersonation directly targeted at children, using technology, was estimated to occur in less than 1 in 10 cases.
- Financial abuse directed at adult victims was noted as the most common type of abuse occurring alongside technology-facilitated abuse of children (6 in 10 cases). This was followed by interfering with parental communication in close to half of the cases.
- Most of the reported abuse involved the misuse of common devices, services and functions that have a legitimate use. Mobile phones were the most frequently used technology (79% of cases). The most common services used for technology-facilitated abuse were texting (75%) as well as social media services like Facebook (59%) and Snapchat (43%). Cases involving other GPS tracking-enabled devices (36%) and spyware (28%) were reported in about a third of cases – though as noted above, these this may not all be cases involving actual spyware.

Dynamics of technology-facilitated abuse

- Technology-facilitated abuse continues and even escalates as couples separate given that avenues for control and physical violence change.
- Post-separation co-parenting arrangements provide ample opportunities for technology-facilitated abuse. Perpetrators' contact with children via technology, whether mandated by court order or voluntarily enabled by adult victims, could expose children to abusive behaviour.
- Adult victims in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as those living with disability and those in rural and remote areas, face additional challenges relating to technology-facilitated abuse in domestic violence situations. This suggests that children in these communities are also likely to face additional difficulties.

Impact of technology-facilitated abuse on children

- Professionals reported that technology facilitated abuse contributed to harmful impacts on children's mental health (67% of cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children), on the child's relationship with the non-abusive parent (59%) and on children's routine activities (59%). Children felt fear (63%), guilt for disclosing information (59%) and a sense of being constantly watched (52%).
- Young people reported that the abuse negatively affected their education and strained relationships with both parents.
- Serious impacts on children, as discussed by professionals, included depression, suicidal thoughts, school absenteeism and social isolation.

Current responses to technology-facilitated abuse

- Adult victims and professionals responded to technology-facilitated abuse by blocking mobile numbers and accounts, monitoring children’s communication, changing passwords and device settings, replacing devices, seeking police and court intervention, and discussing the abuse with children.
- However, post-separation parenting arrangements often precluded the blocking of numbers and accounts.
- Young people responded to technology-facilitated abuse by withholding information from perpetrators, monitoring their communications and being vigilant in order to protect their own and other family members’ safety. They also adjusted privacy settings, collected evidence of technology-facilitated abuse and saw owning their own devices as a protective measure. They usually did not seek formal or informal assistance to deal with technology-facilitated abuse.
- Adult victims and practitioners used a wide range of resources when dealing with technology-facilitated abuse. For adult victims, legal measures were useful in reducing technology-facilitated abuse, particularly well-written intervention orders.

Areas for consideration

- Education is needed to increase awareness of technology-facilitated abuse and how to mitigate and protect against it. In particular, tailored education is needed for children, adult victims who are parents of affected children, different groups of professionals who work with domestic and family violence cases, and schools. Education for perpetrators would also be useful as perpetrators do not recognise their misuse of technology as abusive or as part of domestic violence.
- Increasing knowledge among professionals is an important area for consideration, as it supports improved identification of and responses to technology-facilitated abuse within a range of organisations and formal systems. These responses include well-written intervention orders that explicitly address communication through children’s devices and accounts.
- Providing hands-on cybersecurity support to practitioners and adult survivors.
- Empowering child victims and taking their perspectives into account.
- Developing screening tools to help practitioners consider the range of technologies that might be involved in abuse and how to best mitigate the risks in that case.
- Providing older children with access to affordable technology.

Background and methodology

Children's access to technology

The majority of Australian children have ready access to the internet and digital technologies. Almost all (97%) households with children under 15 have internet access, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).² A 2017 child health poll estimated that almost all Australian teenagers (94%), two thirds of primary school aged children (67%), one third of pre-schoolers (36%) and 17% of infants/toddlers own their own tablet or smartphone.³ According to the poll, smartphones are the most commonly owned device among teenagers, while tablet ownership is dominant in younger age groups. Three quarters of teenagers and one in six primary school aged children have their own social media accounts.

Other internet-connected devices are commonly used by children. According to eSafety's 2018 survey of 3,520 parents, video game consoles are used by over half of pre-schoolers and primary school aged children to go online, rising to almost 8 in 10 for teenagers.⁴ A third of primary school aged children and teenagers have portable gaming devices, while one in 10 pre-schoolers have a portable gaming device or other internet-enabled toys such as a toy laptop or doll, animal or teddy.

Prevalence of domestic and family violence in Australia

According to the ABS Personal Safety Survey 2016 (the 2016 PSS),⁵ one in six women (16% or 1.5 million women) and one in 9 men (11% or 992,000 men) had experienced physical and/or sexual abuse before the age of 15. Parents were the most common perpetrators of physical abuse – 45% of adults experienced physical abuse before the age of 15 by a father or stepfather, and 24% by a mother or stepmother. The 2016 PSS also estimated that of those who had experienced violence from a previous partner and had children in their care when the violence occurred, 418,000 women (68%) and 92,200 men (60%) reported that the children had seen or heard the violence. We note, it is difficult to obtain complete and robust prevalence data on children's exposure to family violence due to the sensitivity of the subject.⁶

COVID-19 impact

The extent and severity of domestic and family violence increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) of 15,000 women during the three months to May 2020 found that 6.8% of women surveyed had experienced physical or sexual violence or coercive control. Of those, two thirds reported that the pandemic coincided with the onset of this abuse, or with an increase in the frequency or severity of ongoing violence or abuse.⁷

The AIC survey also found that 2.7% of the women surveyed were threatened or abused online or through the use of technology, while 2.6% were stalked online or in person and 2.6% had their use of the phone, internet or family car restricted.

'Coercive control' is defined as a pattern of domination that includes tactics to isolate, degrade, exploit and control victims, as well as to frighten them or hurt them physically.

It provides a framework for understanding domestic violence that emphasises the importance of non-physical forms of abuse and their enactment in the context of gendered inequality.

— Stark, E (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. Oxford University Press.

The increase in domestic and family violence during COVID-19 is also apparent from service provider data. Surveys of domestic violence specialist staff in Victoria,⁸ Queensland⁹ and NSW¹⁰ found that a majority of those surveyed had seen increases in client numbers or in first-time reports of violence, as well as an escalation of violence during this period. People who presented to Melbourne's St Vincent's Hospital citing family violence doubled in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same time the previous year.¹¹ One frontline domestic violence shelter in the Northern Territory reported a significant drop in calls, commenting that 'what we were hearing during the lockdown was abusive partners controlling women 24 hours a day, including their phone calls'.¹²

Technology-facilitated abuse in domestic and family violence situations

Technology-facilitated abuse is becoming more and more of a key feature of domestic and family violence. A 2015 survey of 546 domestic and family violence frontline workers found that 98% of respondents had clients who had experienced technology-facilitated abuse.¹³ Almost half of those surveyed noted that perpetrators used text, email or instant messaging to abuse women 'all the time'. Threatening phone calls and threats via social media, at 79% and 62% respectively, were common forms of abuse.

A separate study of technology-facilitated abuse survivors found that 13 out of 14 women with children reported technology-facilitated abuse occurring in post-separation co-parenting.¹⁴ Contact with children after separation provided opportunities to abuse mothers and children through phones, location-based services and online accounts.

'Technology-facilitated abuse' refers to abusive behaviours and activities that occur via internet-enabled devices and online platforms, for example using mobile phones, other devices, social media and online accounts including email or banking. The term covers four main behaviours:

1. *Harassment – sending threatening messages or images, or bombarding with calls, emails or texts.*
2. *Monitoring/stalking – covert GPS tracking or hacking into email, social media or bank accounts.*
3. *Impersonation – creating a false account that results in harassment or abusive messages being sent to the victim.*
4. *Threats/punishment – posting or threatening to post embarrassing content or intimate images.*

Research methodology

The ubiquity of internet-connected devices in children's lives and the fact that a significant number of children are exposed to domestic and family violence suggests that many children are vulnerable to technology-facilitated abuse. There has, to date, been little direct research into this.

To help fill this gap, eSafety commissioned Associate Professor Molly Dragiewicz and other scholars from the Griffith Criminology Institute to undertake primary research. The research involved:

1. A survey of 515 professionals who work with domestic violence cases, referred to as 'professionals' in this research. These include specialist domestic violence staff, as well as those from the broader workplace who have directly worked with victims or perpetrators of domestic violence.
2. Focus groups with 13 domestic violence specialist staff who work with children. In this report, the term 'domestic violence specialist staff' is used to refer to those who work in a specialist family violence service that provides frontline support for those experiencing family violence.
3. Interviews with four young people aged 16 to 18 who have been affected by technology-facilitated abuse in the context of domestic violence. The young people discussed abuse that had occurred while they were children.

4. Interviews with 11 mothers whose children had experienced technology-facilitated abuse and who themselves are survivors of domestic and family violence. Mothers were interviewed for this research because women are far more likely than men to experience violence by a partner, are most likely to experience physical assault in the home and more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner.¹⁵ In this research, all the perpetrators interviewed were men. The term 'adult victim' is used in this report to refer to a survivor of domestic and family violence who is also the parent of a child who has experienced domestic and family violence.
5. Interviews with 11 fathers identified as perpetrators of domestic violence and who were attending a men's behaviour change program (MBCP) at the time they were interviewed ('perpetrators'). Each perpetrator had been referred to the MBCP because of an intervention order or pending court appearance. In this report, the term 'intervention order' refers to a court order designed to protect a person by placing limits on the behaviour of another person and is used to cover equivalent orders used in other states/territories, such as domestic violence order and family violence order.

Findings

Extent of children's involvement in technology-facilitated abuse

According to professionals, children were involved in technology-facilitated abuse in 27% of domestic violence cases. As shown in Table 1, estimates differ across professional groups, with participants who work more closely with children and families reporting the highest proportion of domestic violence cases which involved this kind of abuse.

Table 1. Proportion of domestic violence cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children

Role	Number of participants	Domestic violence cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children
Child safety worker	13	48%
Community and youth services	59	46%
Victim support sexual assault and family support	37	38%
Midwife	3	37%
Lawyer	36	34%
Victim support information and other	60	31%
Other child safety	16	31%
Homelessness, housing, health	46	27%
Probation/parole	3	27%
Teacher or similar school employee	68	23%
Other law enforcement	13	22%
Other offender services	4	21%
Victim support counselling, refuge, shelter	69	16%
Doctor, nurse, other medical	5	15%
Immigrant and culturally diverse services	10	14%
Police	21	12%
Men's behavioural change	6	12%
Corrections	4	8%
Other domestic violence professional	42	21%
Total	515	27%

Children's involvement in technology-facilitated abuse

Adult victims reported how perpetrators use technology to make them feel guilty; denigrate them and their parenting directly, via the children, and via social media networks; threaten them, and interfere in the mother-child bond. Their accounts show how technology-facilitated abuse is one part of a broader pattern of abusive and controlling behaviours that affect children – and that children were more than just witnesses to this abuse.

The adult victims interviewed in this research reported that children were involved in technology-facilitated abuse in two key ways:

1. Where perpetrators directly abused children.
2. Where perpetrators involved children in technology-facilitated abuse directed at adult victims (their mothers). This included mining children for information, encouraging children to participate in abuse, giving GPS-enabled devices that pose cybersecurity risks to children and their families, sending abusive messages to children's devices and calling children's phones in order to verbally abuse their mothers.

One adult victim described how her perpetrator used Snapchat to abuse her children directly and used Facebook to stalk and abuse her using the children, as well as her friends.

'Snapchats ... abusing my son and saying, he's a pussy, and he's weak, and that he can't stand up for himself. And he's contacted my other children, that he isn't the father of, via Facebook and all of a sudden he wants to be their friend on Facebook to monitor where we are ... and saying, 'What are you doing there?' Abusive messages on Facebook ... he'll comment abusive stuff to other people that have commented to my children, to me.'

Diana, adult victim

She also reported how he used text messages to control her by refusing to return the children and blocking her communication with them when they are at his house:

Diana: 'I received many messages from him saying he's not bringing them home until they're finished doing their work at his work and blocking me to not answering messages when he's got the children. So, I've actually had him go and get separate sim cards with a different number and ring me up and abuse me and call me all sorts of names, pretending to be someone else, and the fake Facebook accounts, to all sorts of little things like that. ... Threatening to not bring them back until I've done this or until he's done this to them.'

Interviewer: 'What sort of things would he be expecting you to do?'

Diana: 'Either for me to run over and grab them and put myself at risk. That's generally what he's always asking; 'Well if you want them, you come and pick them up, and then I'll be here when you come,' in front of the kids.'

One adult victim described how her perpetrator used texts to her children to manipulate both her and the children, pushing for reconciliation. Another described how her perpetrator used technology-facilitated communication with their children to gather information about their location and activities, putting them at risk of physical harm:

'I ended up getting ... [my daughter] a little, cheap \$20 phone and I activated her own little SIM card and I sent a text message to him saying, 'This is [our daughter]'s phone,' and whereby the relationship between them could be facilitated.

For the first two days, he called her twice, two afternoons in a row ... on the first call that he spoke to her and she was somewhat hesitant to talk to him, he was trying to find out where we were while he was talking to her on the phone and she innocently said, 'We're at [name of town], we're swimming,' and he said, 'Oh. Can you put your mum on?' She put me on the phone and he went, 'Hey, are you guys at [name of town]?' and I said, 'We're going,' and he said, 'I'm just up the road. I'm in [street name] Road in [name of town] ... ' and I really had to quickly then click my fingers to [my daughter] to indicate we have to go now and got in the car and I said, 'We're leaving now,' and he then tried to call the phone three other times after that.

I answered the fourth time and he was going, 'Who are you in the car with? Who are you in the car with?' and I said, 'Hello, [our daughter] can talk to you later, okay?' because [our daughter] was listening to every word and then I just ended up hanging up. The second afternoon, he called again at night and I didn't talk to him that time. The third day ... when she was at school, he tried to ring ... numerous times.

I ended up answering it and was trying to engage in some kind of amicable conversation but he was under the influence of ice and as I was talking to him – we'd been on the phone for about half an hour and as I was talking on the phone to him, I walked up the hallway facing my lounge room and looked and he was peering in my lounge room window. I felt sick.'

Donna, adult victim

This quote illustrates the stress put on mothers as they attempt to shield children from abuse primarily directed at them and the indirect effects on children who have their activities interrupted to flee to safety and can perceive their mothers' fear.

The accounts of adult victims in this research also show how, after separating from perpetrators, ongoing parenting communications and arrangements provide opportunities for technology-facilitated abuse. This is discussed further below at page 22.

Interviews with adult victims illustrate how the technology-facilitated abuse of their children is at the centre of controlling and coercive behaviours. Young people's accounts situate technology-facilitated abuse within the broader context of domestic and family violence against themselves and other family members. Technology-facilitated abuse was one part of young people's overall experience of domestic violence, in particular perpetrators' patterns of control over their children and ex-partners.

Types of technology-facilitated abuse experienced by children

Of domestic violence cases where professionals had knowledge of technology-facilitated abuse involving children, the most common categories of technology-facilitated abuse directed at children were:

- monitoring and stalking – close to half the cases (45%)
- threats and intimidation – four in 10 cases (38%)
- blocking communication – a third of cases (33%).

Monitoring and stalking

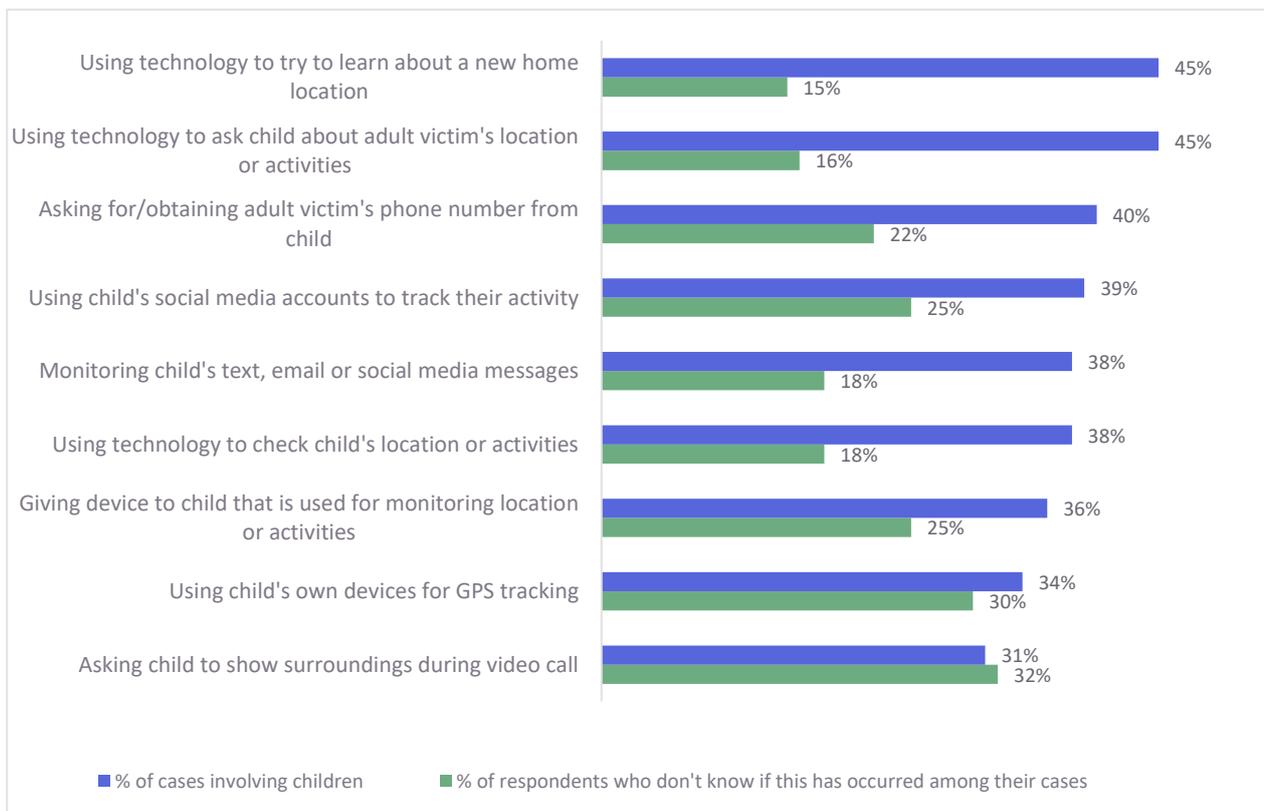
Almost half the cases reported in the survey involved perpetrators using technology to try to learn about children's residential locations, asking children about adult victims' locations or activities and asking children for adult victims' phone numbers (Figure 1). Two of the top three behaviours involved the child but were directed at the adult victim – where perpetrators used technology to try to learn about the adult victim's location/activities (45%) or asked the child for the adult victim's phone number (40%).

Professionals recounted how children were involved in stalking adult victims, monitoring their activities and identifying locations. They outlined how information about physical locations was then used to engage in physical assaults. Technology-facilitated stalking frequently resulted in the need for a family to relocate again. Many professionals also reported how perpetrators used Facebook or FaceTime calls to gather visual and audio information about their former partner's new location and activities.

Interviews with adult victims further highlighted how perpetrators used children and their devices to gather information about their estranged partners' location and activities, and to engage in coercive, controlling and abusive behaviours, post-separation. Some perpetrators gave children devices with built-in GPS functions, while one adult victim spoke of a toy that had been tampered with to conceal a GPS tracking device. Another adult victim spoke of her perpetrator enlisting their children to participate in monitoring her, by recording her conversations with her current partner and encouraging them to share the conversations with him using AirDrop.

Professionals had limited visibility of some forms of monitoring and stalking – Figure 1 shows the percentage of those who were unsure or didn't know¹ how frequently this type of behaviour occurred.

Figure 1: Monitoring and stalking behaviour involving children

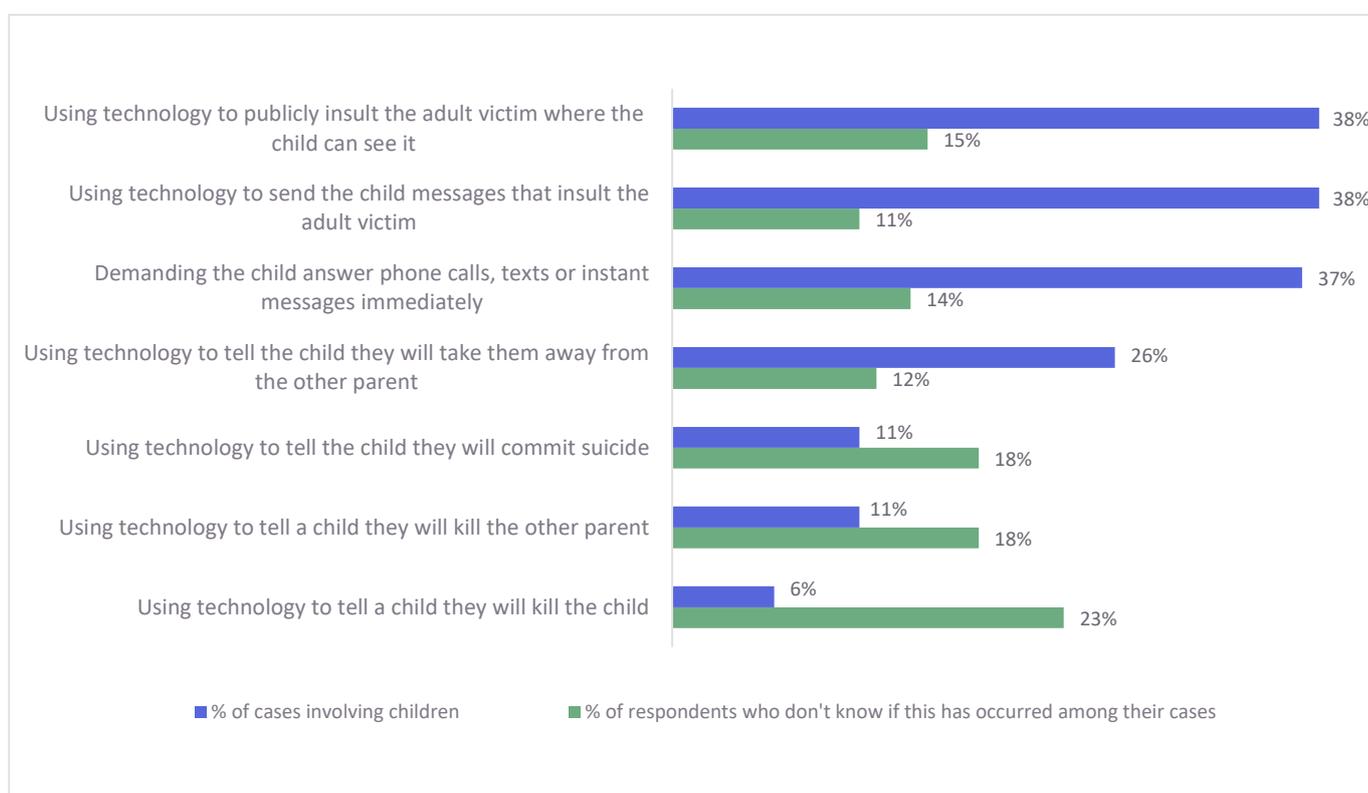


Threats and intimidation

Professionals reported threats and intimidation as being present in about 4 in 10 cases reported in the survey. The two most common behaviours involved the child but were aimed at denigrating the adult victim – insulting them publicly where the child can see it (38% of cases) or insulting them via messages sent to the child (38%). See Figure 2.

Around a third of cases involved demanding the child answer phone calls, texts or instant messages immediately (37%) and a quarter involved telling the child they will take them away from the other parent (26%). Other threats via technology, such as telling the child they will kill themselves, the child or the other parent, were less common (one in ten cases) with significant rates of professionals having no visibility of these forms of threat (18% and above).

Figure 2: Threats and intimidation involving children



The young people¹⁶ interviewed for this study (discussing their experiences during childhood) reported that abusive texts and harassing phone calls were the most common types of abuse they experienced. Abusive text messages contained threats to both themselves and others, such as their mother or their mother's family. The young people described the messages as abusive (name-calling), making orders and threats and being emotionally manipulative. The following quotes illustrate some of these messages:

'Like he'll call me the worst names you can think of ... And he'd say not to come home and threatens me and all that. And threatens my mum's side of the family and all that, because I'm really close with my cousins.'

Abby, young person

'Well to begin with it was like just asking how I was and telling me – ordering me – to contact him. And it steadily got more and more abusive toward me, so ... Things like 'Don't bother coming home. You're not welcome,' things like that.'

Charlie, young person

Young people interviewed described harassing calls as disruptive, annoying and abusive. Perpetrators made repeated calls over periods of hours, resulting in the young people turning their phones off or to aeroplane mode. One young person said if she picked up during one of these periods, her father would just scream down the phone line at her. The persistent, ongoing calls were disruptive to their social lives and education. While the calls could be temporarily stopped by turning off the phone, young people were fearful of the consequences of not picking up.

Young people also reported experiencing unwanted contact from others on behalf of their fathers as perpetrators used their friends and other family members to make contact.

Blocking communication

The most commonly reported form of blocking communication was prohibiting or blocking phone/online communication between an adult victim and their child, which was present in a third of cases (33%) as shown in Figure 3. Prohibiting/blocking children's phone/online communication with others was reported in over a quarter of cases (27%). Destroying children's devices was a less common behaviour, though it still occurred in about a fifth of cases (19%). In contrast, destroying adult victims' devices was reported in close to half of cases (47%).

Young people reported that their fathers had physically destroyed or disabled their devices.

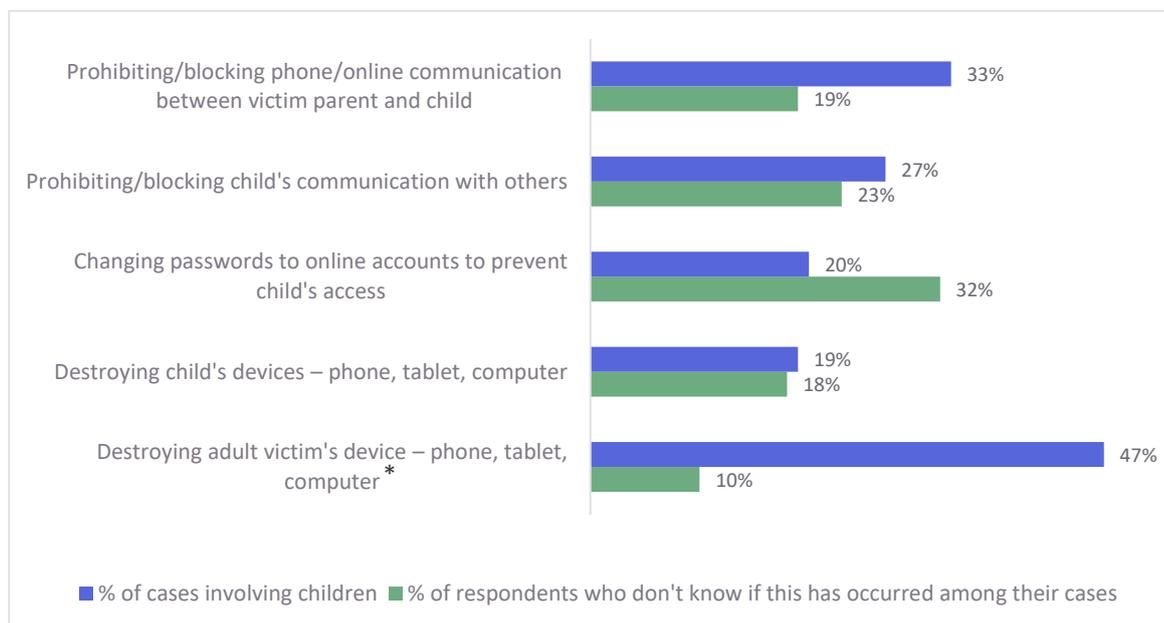
'So my father, in high school when I had all my assessment, all my tests and everything all studied up for, anytime he found me on the Xbox or PC he believed I was playing a game – which nine times out of ten [it] was true, but he basically threatened to destroy the technology and he did that a couple of times to certain pieces of technology I used to have as a child.'

Charlie, young person

Destroying devices was part of a broader pattern of control. The perpetrator would regularly intimidate his children by destroying household items, not just technology.

The interviews with perpetrators provide further context. A strong theme across the interviews was the men's assertions that they had a right and moral responsibility to restrict the use of technology in their household. The men interviewed were often critical of their partner (or ex-partner) for not controlling the children's use of technology and not modelling 'good' use of technology. This was sometimes the rationale given for violent outbursts such as pulling modems out of the wall and destroying devices.

Overall, perpetrators did not consider these behaviours and other misuses of technology as abuse, or as part of domestic violence. They showed low levels of responsibility for their violence, often blaming their partner or other circumstances for this behaviour. Perpetrators' inability to recognise their behaviour as technology-facilitated abuse poses a great challenge in addressing this abuse.

Figure 3: Blocking children's communication

* denotes type of blocking that may not have involved the child victim; this is discussed under 'co-occurring abuse' in the full report. Other forms of co-occurring abuse are discussed at page 19 of this report.

Impersonation

The research shows that impersonation is sometimes used to facilitate harassment of adult victims by third parties, humiliate victims, or manufacture content that appears to be created by the adult victim to make them look bad and reflect on their parenting, with the intention of impacting on Family Court proceedings.

'One perpetrator set up an account in the name of the child then used it to view pornography. He then claimed that the mother was allowing the child to do this as part of his custody battle.'

Professional

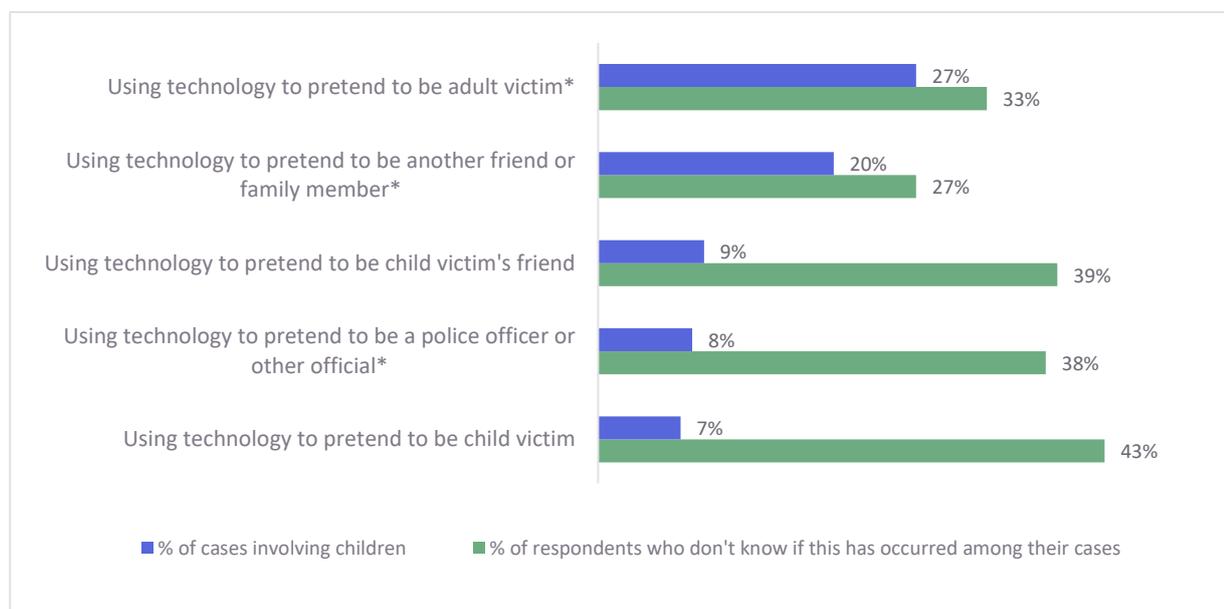
Professionals reported that pretending to be an adult victim occurred in more than a quarter of domestic and family violence cases where they had knowledge of technology-facilitated abuse of children (27%), as shown in Figure 4. Forms of impersonation that were directly targeted at children occurred in less than one in ten cases. Professionals had limited visibility of this type of abuse, with up to 43% responding that they didn't know or were unsure if this had occurred among their cases.

Another example of impersonation described by a professional:

'Child had access to gaming, and so did the father, the father pretended to be a [young] boy, the child assumed he was playing a game against his friend ... dad used the gaming time as a space to ask the child questions, used the time to find out when mum was going to be alone in the house, the child thought all was innocent and answered, dad got the info, when mum was alone, he went over to her house, and beat her up and left her very wounded.'

Professional

Figure 4: Impersonation



* denotes type of impersonation that may not have involved the child victim; these are discussed under 'co-occurring abuse' in the full report. Other forms of co-occurring abuse are discussed at page 19 of this report.

One young person reported that her father created fake accounts impersonating other people on social media services to contact her. At one point, he had created up to 50 fake accounts across social media services including Facebook.

Interviewer: Okay. And when you block him, does he get angry in a different way?

Abby: Yeah. He still does, but he makes fake accounts and all new accounts to message me [from]. And he's really – like he just finds any way to get in contact with me

Interviewer: ... And how can you tell that it's him?

Abby: Because I can just tell. And the way he talks, like sometimes he doesn't even try to hide that it's him. He'll just start screaming like from that account. So it gives it away.

Bypassing cybersecurity

Bypassing cybersecurity is a form of technology-facilitated abuse less frequently reported by the professionals surveyed (Figure 4). There was limited visibility of these types of behaviours among professionals – many of them (35% to 43%) didn't know if these had occurred in their domestic and family violence cases.

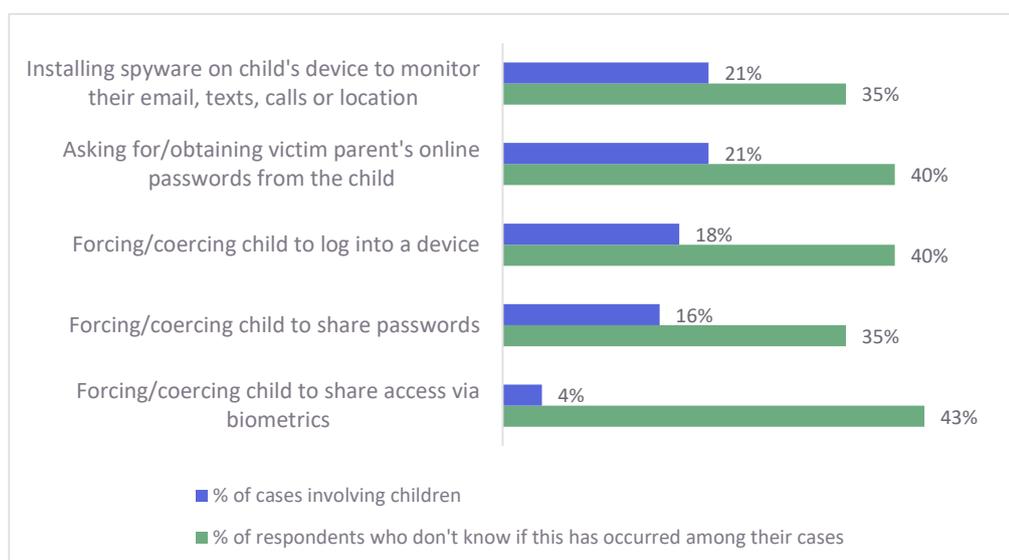
Those who were able to report on these behaviours indicated that perpetrators had installed spyware on a child's device in a fifth of cases. However, the interviews with young people, mothers and perpetrators did not identify specific spyware applications, suggesting that professionals are using the term 'spyware' to describe the misuse of commonly available, everyday technologies to stalk and monitor, rather than true spyware.

'Spyware' is designed to covertly monitor online communication, activities and location without permission and relay the information to a third party. Spyware is a form of malicious software or 'malware'. It can be used to provide even closer monitoring than devices with location tracking capabilities, such as mobile phones, fitness trackers or stand-alone GPS trackers. However, spyware usually requires physical access to a device and may require a higher level of technical skill to use.

The misuse of linked accounts by perpetrators was highlighted as another online security risk to children. Several research participants described how perpetrators were able to access or create linked accounts (generally without their ex-partner's knowledge) because of their familial links with children. According to research participants, some of these accounts included Australian Government accounts such as My Health Record, cloud services such as iCloud and Google and e-commerce accounts such as an e-toll account.

See the full report for a discussion about the cybersecurity risks present in domestic and family violence situations.

Figure 5: Bypassing cybersecurity



Co-occurring abuse

This research also looked at other forms of non-physical abuse that occur alongside technology-facilitated abuse of children in domestic and family violence situations, as well as technology-facilitated abuse that didn't involve children, both of which are referred to in this research as co-occurring abuse. This was considered because it is important to understand the overall context of technology-facilitated abuse.

The most commonly reported type of co-occurring abuse was financial abuse directed at an adult victim, with 59% of cases involving threats to withhold/withholding child support, while 46% included blocking adult victims' access to

online financial accounts. Other types of abuse, such as sexual abuse, were less frequently reported by professionals. See the full report for more details about other forms of co-occurring abuse of children and adult victims.

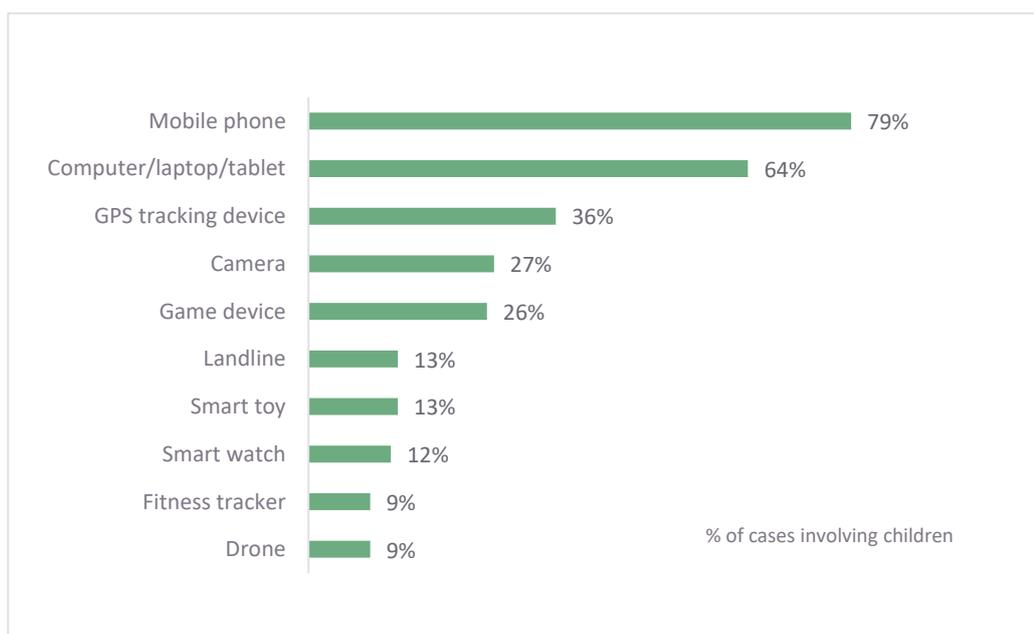
Technologies used to abuse children

Technology-facilitated abuse typically involves everyday technologies, as shown in the survey of professionals and participants' accounts. Most of the abuse involved perpetrators misusing common, commercially available, internet or GPS-connected devices like mobile phones and smart watches that don't require special technical skills or knowledge.

Mobile phones were the most frequently used technology to abuse children (79% of cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children), according to professionals' estimates, as seen in Figure 6. In some instances, perpetrators provided these devices to their children and retained control of the accounts. Computers, laptops or tablets were used in 64% of cases.

Abusive texts and harassing phone calls were described in the stories of young people, adult victims and perpetrators, with the survey also showing that texting was used in 75% of cases (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Devices used in technology-facilitated abuse cases affecting children



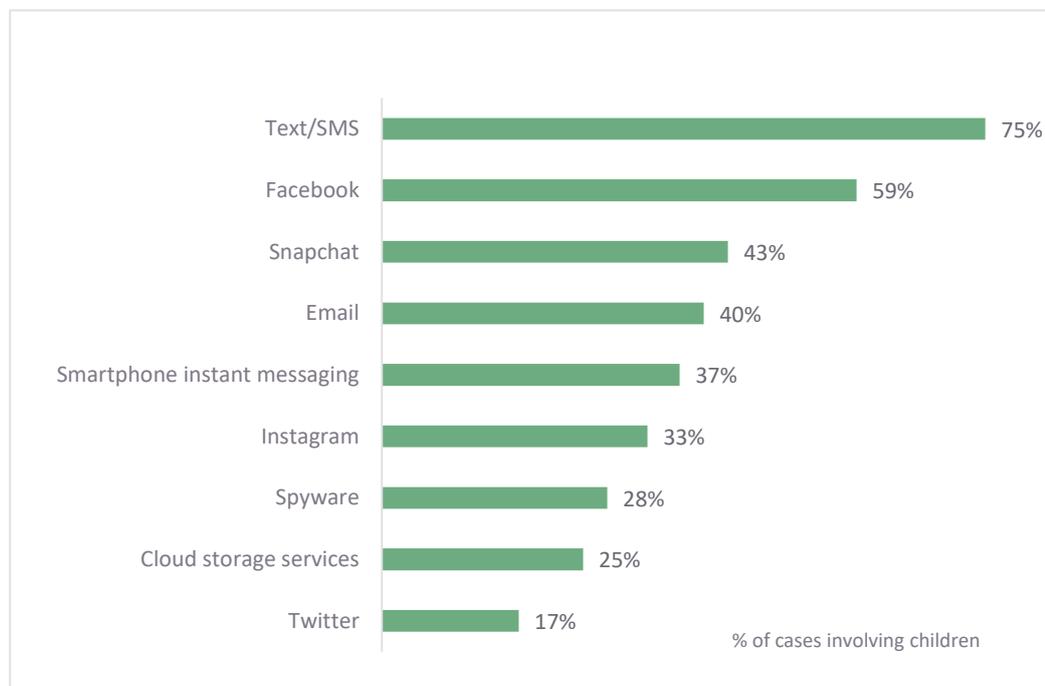
Other commercially available applications that were misused by perpetrators include social media services such as Facebook (59%) and Snapchat (43%), as well as email (40%), as shown in Figure 7. Perpetrators also abused services such as cloud-based storage, cross-device message syncing and 'find my device' applications.

Abuse involving other GPS tracking-enabled devices (36%) and spyware (28%) were reported in about a third of cases. We note that this estimate of spyware may not reflect true spyware, as professionals may have used the term to describe the misuse of everyday technologies such as GPS-tracking mechanisms shared across devices, as opposed to the technical definition of spyware as malicious software or 'malware', designed to covertly monitor online communication, activities and location.

Cameras and gaming devices were used for abusive purposes in a quarter of cases (27% and 26% respectively). While this suggests cameras could be an important tool for perpetrators, participants didn't discuss them, indicating that

further research is needed to understand their use. Internet-connected gaming devices provide opportunities for perpetrators to contact children via online chat and messaging functions and obtain information, with an example of this provided by a professional (see 'impersonation' section above). Interviews with perpetrators show that some used gaming devices such as PlayStation or Xbox to communicate with their children. The use of cameras and gaming devices to abuse children in domestic and family violence situations warrants further investigation.

Figure 7: Services used in technology-facilitated abuse cases affecting children



Dynamics of technology-facilitated abuse

Technology-facilitated abuse continues at separation

Adult victims reported that when they separated from abusive partners, technology-facilitated abuse replaced other types of control and opportunities for physical violence. Technology-facilitated communication took on an obsessive quality, with persistent, repetitive communication directed at adult victims and their social networks.

'On one occasion when [our daughter] was three weeks old and we were in a refuge, he would harass my family on the phone because ... when I'd had to flee, I left my phone there, he went right through it, got all my numbers out, got some guy who he reckoned was an expert at computers to have a look at all my coding on what I'd been looking at on the internet which was nothing ... and going, 'Oh my gosh, you've been doing so much shit,' ringing my sister a million times saying horrible things, ringing my mother, frightening her. He would just ring and ring and ring. He rang me once so many times that I put my phone at the door of the bedroom and the bed was right across the other side, he rang so many times the phone vibrated right across the room. I think I had 57 missed calls once.'

Donna, adult victim

This example shows how perpetrators can use unauthorised access to mobile devices to monitor adult victim's activities and contact their networks to extend the impact of their abuse when not in physical proximity.

Post-separation parenting and abuse

The research suggests that children may be especially vulnerable to technology-facilitated abuse post-separation, particularly in co-parenting situations. Children's dependency on technology owned by perpetrators contributed to ongoing risks. While technology appears to reduce some risks associated with post-separation physical contact, it creates new difficulties. Parents of young children, in particular, struggle to balance supporting communication with perpetrators with their children's safety.

Adult victims and professionals described emails with subject lines referencing a child but containing written abuse directed at the mother. Even when intervention orders were in place and were helpful in managing some forms of abuse, communications about parenting were frequently used as an avenue to continue abusive communication. When children moved back and forth between houses, their devices could be used to gather location information and other details. Perpetrators used children and their devices to gather information about their former partners' location and activities, for example by asking children to show them the surroundings during video calls. Post-separation, co-parenting arrangements were also an opportunity for perpetrators to engage in coercive and controlling behaviours using technology, for example using text messages to engage in high-stakes negotiations while refusing to return the child to the other parent.

Parenting arrangements could preclude adult victims from blocking or limiting perpetrators use of technology to contact children, as described in the following quote:

'It is difficult to stop a child and a parent (who is a perpetrator) from communicating through technology when that would be used against a victim in Family Court. A perpetrator would tell the court that the victim is not facilitating contact by blocking contact through technology.'

Professional

Perpetrators' contact with children via technology, whether mandated by court order or voluntarily enabled by adult victims, could expose children to abusive behaviour.

'I often see examples of family violence where the adult victim is attempting to facilitate phone or FaceTime contact between the [child] and the perpetrator and the child is exposed to abusive behaviours directed towards the adult victim during the call. Perpetrators use their right to have contact with the child, or the adult victim's willingness to allow the perpetrator to have time with the child, to continue a relationship, to ask inappropriate questions or make comments about the adult victim to the child – and put the child in a difficult position between the parents. Often perpetrators also become abusive or make threats when there has been [a] delay in facilitating or taking a phone call/FaceTime between them and the [child].'

Professional

See pages 12 and 13 for other examples of technology-facilitated abuse in the context of post-separation parenting.

Unique dynamics of technology-facilitated abuse in underserved communities

Women in underserved communities face additional challenges relating to technology-facilitated abuse in domestic violence contexts, which suggests that children in these communities would face similar difficulties. Underserved communities are defined as those facing barriers in accessing and using victim services, and includes populations that are underserved because of language barriers, economic limitations, disabilities or geographic location.

This research shows that mobile phone sharing and the role of social media are particular issues within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Challenges faced by women in culturally and linguistically diverse communities include language barriers, limited resources, uncertain immigration status and separation from family and friends in their home countries.

According to research participants, adult victims in rural and remote areas are faced with a lack of affordable access to basic communications technology, a lack of privacy and expectations within their community that abuse is kept quiet. For adult victims with physical or mental disabilities, physical and social isolation can make it impossible for them to stop using technology. Relying on technology for daily assistance can also trap disabled women in abusive relationships and make blocking access to technology even more harmful.

The additional challenges faced by adult victims in underserved communities are likely to impact on their children, heightening the effects of technology-facilitated abuse.

Impact of technology-facilitated abuse on children

Young people, mothers and professionals all reported harmful effects of technology-facilitated abuse in the context of domestic and family violence. According to the survey of professionals, harmful impacts in cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children included:

- children's mental health being affected – 67%
- fear – 63%
- feeling guilty for disclosing information – 59%
- harm to the child's relationship with the non-abusive parent – 59%
- children's routine activities being negatively affected – 59%
- children having a sense of being constantly watched – 52%
- children becoming isolated from family and friends – 48%.

Technology-facilitated abuse negatively affected children's education. Young people reported that their fathers had destroyed or removed devices for several months, making it difficult for them to study, and persistent phone calls were disruptive in the classroom. Professionals spoke of school absenteeism as a result of the abuse.

Children experienced anxiety about contact with perpetrators and shame about being manipulated into participating in the abuse.

'It ... destroys them inside. And then they worry to go on there and every time they get a message, they're not sure if they should accept it. Or a friend request, they don't know – it's like me, you don't know if it's really the person or not? You get a phone call and you'd look at it and you go, 'Well I'm not going to answer that.' It's pretty much living in fear.'

Diana, adult victim

Young children were often confused by ongoing abusive and manipulative communication during post-separation parenting.

Adult victims reported that taking technology away from children in an effort to protect themselves could strain relationships, especially with older children.

'As soon as I took [her phone], I was the worst person in the world. I was a slut, a C U N T, you know, like all these things that her father has been driving into her head. That's what I was, all of a sudden once it was taken away from her.'

Mary, adult victim

Professionals provided details of serious impacts of the abuse on children such as depression, suicidal thoughts and social isolation, for example:

'All [of the] children were significantly impacted by the abuse. The oldest child was the easiest to quantify – he suffers from anxiety and depression, he was fearful every time he was required to talk with or visit his father (court-ordered contact). His behaviour often regressed to toddler-like behaviour, especially around contact with his father. He had angry outbursts at times.'

Professional

'Significant impact on the child's mental wellbeing (thoughts of suicide), high levels [of] school absenteeism, and disrupted attachment relationship, specifically when mum attempted to implement boundaries child would respond by telling mum that she would call dad (perpetrator) to come to the house.'

Professional

'They had to move to another state and the children were prohibited from using any devices. They became socially isolated at school as they could not keep up with the news after hours. Children became withdrawn. Mother tried not to be cross with kids but deep down blamed them as she had told them not to tell dad where they were.'

Professional

Current responses to technology-facilitated abuse

Young people and adult victims spoke of actively resisting and managing technology-facilitated abuse, while professionals discussed ways they currently support victims and their children. These responses fall into three categories: self-help strategies, using existing resources, and formal actions such as legal measures or reporting the abuse.

Self-help strategies

Young people did not seek formal or informal sources of support in most instances, preferring to deal with the abuse themselves. They spoke of withholding information about themselves or their mothers from perpetrators and helping their younger siblings to also do so. They described monitoring their communication with the perpetrator and the need to be vigilant, not just for their own safety but also for their mothers and siblings. Importantly, young people saw owning their own devices as a way to protect themselves, because perpetrators' ownership of devices or accounts could provide them with access to the young person's mother's phone number and stop young people from blocking contact with perpetrators.

Recognising young people's agency and empowering them to seek support, limit or end communication with perpetrators was discussed by professionals.

'Offering skills to understand why the parent is behaving that way. Ensuring the young person knows what is decent and not decent so they are empowered to recognise what abuse is and how to call it out as such. The more the young person feels like they can express what they actually know and that an adult is confirming that with them, they trust their own instinct and this is what an abuser wants to crush. Once you build this with the young person, then they decide if they want to change their contact details or block/remove. What they decide is then empowering. This works for teenagers.'

Professional

Simple technical approaches to preventing abuse were used by adult victims and young people and recommended by professionals. These included changing privacy settings and passwords, checking app settings and blocking numbers and accounts. Technical approaches were commonly used, with professionals estimating that adult victims blocked the abusive parent's access to a child's social media site in 55% of cases involving technology-facilitated abuse of children, and changed a child's phone number, email address or other account in 46% of cases. In some instances, blocking communications could lead to an escalation of the abuse so would not be appropriate. Further, as discussed earlier, post-separation co-parenting arrangements can make it difficult to block communications.

Adult victims used parenting communication platforms such as Our Children Australia and MyMob to effectively cut down abusive communications. Adult victims also spoke of using technology for safety purposes, for example one adult victim described how she used a dashcam to supervise changeovers with her perpetrator. They also actively monitored children's communications with perpetrators and used physical measures to limit children's access to devices.

Professionals recommended that adult victims check for GPS-enabled tracking devices in toys and other items given to children, and that they replace devices. They estimated that adult victims replaced a child's technology device in 46% of cases.

Switching off was another approach mentioned, with professionals reporting that adult victims stopped a child from using some technology in response to technology-facilitated abuse in 38% of cases. However, as with blocking perpetrators' numbers and accounts, switching off communications could result in greater abuse, so would not be a safe option in all instances.

These self-help strategies place a heavy burden on adult victims and young people to be vigilant, with significant labour involved in constantly monitoring devices, settings and children's communication with perpetrators.

Using existing resources and programs

Adult victims and professionals used a wide range of online and local resources to deal with technology-facilitated abuse, such as:

- online educational materials about how to check device settings and collect evidence and present it to the police or courts
- in-person training
- replacement phone programs
- hands-on technical assistance to check for devices in cars or homes and to check device settings.

In contrast, young people did not use specific resources to assist with technology-facilitated abuse.

Legal measures

Some participants found that legal measures were useful to limit technology-facilitated abuse. For example, several adult victims reported that intervention orders containing detailed language prohibiting specific types or all technology-facilitated communication were helpful. Well-written orders contributed to a significant reduction in technology-facilitated abuse.

'Yeah, well now he doesn't have private access to my kids to be able to, I guess, find out what I'm doing. And talk about silly things. Like they never just have a normal conversation. You know, how was your day? What have you been up to? All that kind of stuff. It has to be a normal conversation and that's not good enough for him. So now he doesn't speak to them at all ... Oh, it's made a huge difference. I actually have control now. I can actually monitor what my kids are being exposed to.'

Mary, adult victim

Reporting technology-facilitated abuse to police, courts or child protection could be effective strategies. Intervention orders were useful in addressing technology-facilitated abuse as long as they operated together and not in conflict with Family Court orders. Adult victims reported that the effectiveness of these orders was frequently undercut by Family Court orders that made exceptions to the contact and communication restrictions around parenting contained in intervention orders. Professionals recommended using technological evidence, such as texts and emails, to support requests for new intervention orders and assist in reporting breaches of existing orders.

Areas for consideration

Education about technology-facilitated abuse

Education is needed to increase awareness of technology-facilitated abuse and how to mitigate and protect against it, for example by linking people to existing resources and trusted sources of information.

This education should be tailored to the specific needs of those directly impacted by family violence (Table 2), and to different groups of professionals (Table 3). Increasing knowledge among professionals is an important area for consideration, as it supports improved identification of and responses to technology-facilitated abuse within a range of organisations and formal systems. These broader, system-wide responses to technology-facilitated abuse of children can support and extend the strategies being used by children and adult victims, relieving the burden they face in dealing with technology-facilitated abuse amidst the trauma of domestic violence.

Table 2: Education needs of those impacted by domestic and family violence

Group	Education needed
Children	Education about healthy and abusive technology use that includes discussion of domestic and family violence, as well as age-appropriate, practical education about safe technology use. Older children could be educated about available resources to help deal with technology-facilitated abuse.
Non-abusive parents of affected children	Information about existing technology safety programs and resources such as phone replacement programs, monitored and secure parenting communication platforms and where to get children's devices checked for cybersecurity risks. Easy-to-understand information about technology safety, such as how to check privacy and location settings on children's devices. Education about the cybersecurity risks associated with devices children use regularly (such as games, smart watches).
Domestic and family violence perpetrators	Education to clarify that controlling family communication and destroying devices is part of domestic and family violence. Also that intervention orders should include a statement that any technology-facilitated abuse, including via children's devices or accounts, is prohibited. Explanations should clearly describe what counts as technology-facilitated abuse.

Table 3: Education needs of professionals

Group	Education needed
Professionals who work with domestic and family violence cases	Education about the types of technology-facilitated abuse affecting children and its negative effects could raise the visibility of this issue for professionals. Professionals would benefit from knowing that most technology-facilitated abuse is conducted using commonly available, everyday devices rather than true spyware, as they may require less technical expertise to investigate and respond to this issue than they realise.
Legal professionals	Education about the dynamics, prevalence and effect of this issue on children. Legal professionals should be informed about the benefits of comprehensive, well-written domestic violence and child intervention orders that explicitly address communication through children's devices and accounts. Information about how they can effectively use evidence of technology-facilitated abuse could assist with securing legal orders and prosecuting breaches of existing orders.
Police officers	Education about the prevalence and harmful effects of this issue on children, which could help them recognise and investigate this type of abuse and could facilitate effective police responses to domestic and family violence cases. Cybersecurity training to help them advise crime victims about effectively collecting evidence to support applications for domestic violence orders and support reporting breaches of existing orders. Police could be informed about existing online safety resources, so they can refer victims for support.
Schools	Provide a location to share information about technology-facilitated abuse with children. Schools can be educated about the role of technology-facilitated abuse involving children in domestic and family violence and its impacts. This could prepare schools to identify and respond to this abuse.

Hands-on technology support for professionals and adult victims

Hands-on cybersecurity support is another valuable option to support adult victims and children experiencing technology-facilitated abuse and could take place at a number of locations. Computer stores could help with device settings, professionals could assist in identifying security risks and home security services could check for surveillance devices. Mechanics could scan cars for tracking devices and skilled IT support could detect and remove hidden spyware. Another avenue is emerging walk-in clinic tech support models which could be trialled in Australia.¹⁷ Any support should be informed by individualised safety-planning as domestic and family violence victims' needs differ from case to case.

Empowering victims

There is a need to take victims' perspectives into account. One-size-fits-all interventions, such as cutting off communication, may be impractical or unsafe in some cases. Victims are often in the best position to make decisions about the type and amount of technology-facilitated communication that is safe for them to have with perpetrators given their knowledge of perpetrators' behaviour and any likely escalation. Listening to victim input and providing them with resources could help to empower them. Victims need to be empowered to make full disclosures of the technology-facilitated abuse to their legal representatives and other professionals, as this is critical to ensuring that any remediation actions have the misuse of technology covered, for example in any court orders.

Developing screening tools

Screening tools could be developed to help professionals gather information about technology-facilitated abuse, to consider the range of technologies involved and how to best mitigate risks. For example, technographs¹⁸ can be used to systematically identify technologies and accounts used by each person in the household. Technology assessment questionnaires¹⁹ can help professionals to think through technology security risks and inform protective action.

A 'technograph' is a diagram for assessing a client's digital footprint. It is a visual map that helps support workers determine the relationships between devices, accounts and people, usually the client's family. Making this map provides a clearer picture of potential sources of problems. The technograph was developed by Cornell Tech as part of a new clinical model that aims to respond systematically to technology-facilitated forms of intimate partner violence. See ceta.tech.cornell.edu/resources

Providing access to affordable technology

Some children rely on devices and accounts that are owned by perpetrators. This poses challenges when they try to protect themselves from technology-facilitated abuse. Expanding existing phone and credit programs to include older children as well as adults, could help with this.

Conclusion

This research shows that children aren't just witnesses to family violence but experience it directly, as a primary target of technology-facilitated abuse and as pawns in the abuse of adult victims. The research suggests that children may be especially vulnerable to technology-facilitated abuse post-separation, particularly in co-parenting situations. Although perpetrators don't see their misuse of technology as a form of abuse, what the research does show is that this behaviour is extremely harmful to children.

Child and adult victims of domestic violence bear a substantial burden in dealing with technology-facilitated abuse. Significant labour is involved in constantly monitoring devices and communications with perpetrators. Measures such as blocking perpetrators from communication via technology are not possible or safe in all cases. Adult victims report that legal measures can be highly effective, with well-written intervention orders an important strategy for reducing technology-facilitated abuse in the context of co-parenting arrangements. While adult victims are making use of using existing resources and programs to deal with technology-facilitated abuse, the young people interviewed in this research did not use any of these, tending to deal with the abuse themselves. Older children are taking proactive steps to protect their siblings and mothers from technology-facilitated abuse, but more needs to be done to make sure that children don't bear this load.

To better protect and empower child and adult victims of technology-facilitated abuse, it is critical that work is done to improve knowledge of this abuse within the broader ecosystem of organisations and services supporting families affected by domestic and family violence. Tailored education is needed to improve system-wide recognition of, and responses to, technology-facilitated abuse of children in situations of domestic and family violence. Other areas for consideration highlighted in this research include the provision of hands-on technology support, the development of screening tools for professionals and extending existing phone replacement programs to older children. Actioning these will provide a clear pathway to mitigating and addressing the misuse of technology by perpetrators.

Endnotes

- ¹ Victorian Sentencing Council (2020). Sentencing Image-Based Sexual Abuse Offences in Victoria. [https://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Sentencing Image Based Sexual Abuse Offences in Victoria.pdf](https://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Sentencing_Image_Based_Sexual_Abuse_Offences_in_Victoria.pdf)
- ² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2016-17 ABS cat. no. 8146.0
- ³ Royal Children's Hospital (2017). Child health poll number 7 Screen time. rchpoll.org.au/polls/screen-time-whats-happening-in-our-homes/
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- ⁷ Australian Institute of Criminology (2020). The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistical Bulletin no. 28. aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf
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- ¹¹ Clayton, R. Family violence campaign launched as Melbourne's hospital's emergency presentations double. ABC News. abc.net.au/news/2020-05-09/victoria-family-violence-cases-double-at-melbourne-hospital/12227594
- ¹² Zwartz, H. Amid coronavirus lockdowns, use of domestic violence online reporting tool spikes. ABC website, 23 May 2020. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-23/coronavirus-lockdown-domestic-violence-spikes-in-australia/12238962>
- ¹³ Woodlock, Delanie (2015), Recharge: Women's Technology Safety, Legal Resources, Research and Training, Women's Legal Service NSW, Domestic Violence Resource Centre and WESNET.
- ¹⁴ Dragiewicz, M., Harris, B., Woodlock, D., Salter, M., Easton, H., Lynch, A., Campbell, H., Leach, J. & Milne, L. (2019) Domestic violence and communication technology: Survivor experiences of intrusion, surveillance, and identity crime, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney.
- ¹⁵ According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2016 PSS, women are almost three times more likely to have experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15. In the 2016 PSS, 574 000 men reported experiencing intimate partner violence since the age of 15, compared to 1.6 million women.
- ¹⁶ The term 'young people' rather than children is used when referring to these interview participants because they were 16 to 18 years old at the time of interview.
- ¹⁷ See for example Cornell Tech (2019), Cornell Tech opens computer security clinic for victims of tech-enabled intimate partner violence. Cornell Tech. <https://tech.cornell.edu/news/cornell-tech-opens-computer-security-clinic-for-victims-of-tech-enabled-intimate-partner-violence/>
- ¹⁸ See for example Cornell Tech, *Technograph v2*. https://9aa4dcb3-08e0-4365-9068-df09709ff0ca.filesusr.com/ugd/884c63_f2bd34d6268947daa6054aaab8528718.pdf
- ¹⁹ See for example Cornell Tech, *Technology Assessment Questionnaire v5*. https://9aa4dcb3-08e0-4365-9068-df09709ff0ca.filesusr.com/ugd/884c63_280fab3bd82e44348691bbc9b9038a7d.pdf

