

Cybersecurity & Violence Against Women

October 13, 2014/ Kaofeng Lee

In addition to being [Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#), this month is also [Cybersecurity Awareness Month](#). When we think about cybersecurity, we often think of security from identity theft, fraud, phishing, or hackers who steal passwords and information. But cyber – or online – security has a broader meaning for victims of domestic and sexual violence and stalking. Cybersecurity also means personal safety – safety from harm, harassment, and abuse while online.

For many survivors, being online can feel unsafe because the abuser or stalker is accessing their online accounts to monitor their activities; posting harmful and negative things about them, including sexually explicit images and personally identifying information; or using cyberspace to harass and make violent threats under the cover of “anonymity.” Abusers and stalkers often compromise the security of survivors’ technologies by [installing monitoring software on cell phones or computers](#) or forcing them to reveal passwords to online accounts.

In a [study conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence](#), victim service providers report that of the survivors they work with 75% have abusers who access their online accounts, 65% have abusers who monitor their online activities, and 68% have had their pictures posted online by the abuser without their consent. In a [survey by the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative](#), when abusers and stalkers distribute sexually explicit images of victims, 59% includes the full name of the victim, 49% include social media information, and 20% include the phone numbers of the victim. Online harassment, in the context of abuse and stalking, can have serious and dangerous consequences.

So this month, as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Cybersecurity Awareness Month coincides, let's think about cybersecurity and safety beyond safely making an online purchase but how we can create an environment where all can be personally safe from violence while online. How do we create a safe online space that doesn't tolerate abuse? How do we support those who are victimized online, whether their [ex is making threats via social networks](#), or someone is [distributing sexually explicit images of them online](#), or they're being threatened by a group of strangers online simply because they [have an opinion about gender](#) and dare to be in a male-dominated space? And how do we hold accountable those who are threatening, abusing, and harassing victims online?

This month—and all months—help us figure out the answers to these important questions. Comment below if you have thoughts or ideas.

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