TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

AGAINST TLGBIQA+ PEOPLE IN PARAGUAY

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH



Technology & Human Rights

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This publication has been funded by the **European Union** and **Brot für die Welt** (Bread for the World).

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TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST TLGBIQA+ PEOPLE IN PARAGUAY

SEPTEMBER 2026

AUTHOR
Airym Sarta

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE
Celeste Vargas

COORDINATION
Jazmín Ruiz Díaz

PROJECT ASSISTANCE
Maricel Achucarro
Priscila Manfredi

EDITING AND PROOFREADING
Maricarmen Sequera

COMMUNICATIONS
Camila Rolón

LAYOUT
Horacio Oteiza

TRANSLATION
Alejandra González

ILLUSTRATION
Adriana Peralta

Funded by the European Union

With the support of
La gente cambia el mundo Diakonia

Technology & Human Rights TEDIC

Brot für die Welt

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ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

AIRYM SARTA

A Colombian-Paraguayan social researcher and activist for the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community. She holds a Ph.D. in *Development Studies: Latin American Issues and Perspectives* from the Dr. José María Luis Mora Institute in Mexico and is a member of the Paraguayan Association of Feminist Researchers (APIF).

INTRODUCTION

This research addresses technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) directed at TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay[1], a phenomenon that lies at the intersection of gender-based violence, digital technologies and diverse sexual and gender identities. The research focused not only on identifying experiences of violence but also on providing an overview of the forms of resistance and the collective care and content moderation strategies developed by sexual and gender diversity organizations and collectives in Paraguay.

Within the digital space, there are various forms of violence, shaped by the multiple forms of social interaction that come with everyday use of platforms for work, socializing and documenting individual activities such as education, sports, recreation and leisure. For this research, it was essential to recognize that TLGBIQA+ people are not a homogeneous group and that their experiences of TFGBV are shaped by multiple intersecting axes of inequality. For this reason, the objectives were exploratory, and the findings include numerous open lines of inquiry.

This document presents the main findings from in-depth interviews, focus groups and surveys. All of the interviewees reported using at least two social media apps on their phones every day, including for essential interactions (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and X, in order of frequency), as well as messaging apps, with WhatsApp the most frequently used, followed by Telegram and, to a lesser extent, Signal. The average daily Internet use among those interviewed was 12 hours, and throughout the study, they reiterated that the time they spend online is equivalent to all of their waking hours. Their responses also revealed that digital violence continues to be perceived as a parallel form of violence that coexists with violence in the physical world, affecting the daily lives of TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay.

Fabricated content aimed at exposing public figures as gay, lesbian or in relationships with trans people, with the goal of damaging their reputations, is frequent. Between April and July, more than ten such posts were identified on Facebook, Instagram and X. In June, coinciding with commemorations of the Stonewall anniversary on the 28th—a date internationally recognized as Pride Day—there was an increase in posts mocking the existence of TLGBIQA+ people through misogynistic content that violates their dignity, whether by questioning the masculinity of gay men or parodying their behavior to ridicule women.

For all these reasons, this study documents care and resistance strategies in the face of the various forms of digital gender-based violence affecting people and organizations that defend TLGBIQA+ rights. Based on the testimonies collected, it examines the impacts that digital violence has on those who experience it, their family and work environments, and their social interactions. One of the most notable findings on resistance is that the first form of resistance among TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay is to live their lives (both online and offline) freely and to develop their personalities despite the hate.

At the collective level, organizations implement care strategies such as rotating spokespeople and protecting their members from individual exposure, while at the individual level each person manages their own digital security according to their level of exposure to digital attacks. The listening and support spaces that organizations create also stand out, as does the development of counter-narratives against violence without reproducing content in revictimizing ways. Critical literacy and training in digital skills, understood as pedagogy of resistance, also appear as strategies that have helped reduce the emotional impact of digital violence and prevent some of its consequences at the individual level.

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1 Trans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, queer and asexual people, as well as other identities not explicitly included in the preceding letters that may be considered part of sexual and gender diversity.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Paraguayan context

International bodies such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) have recognized the obligation of States to guarantee conditions of substantive equality by adopting measures to prevent, investigate, sanction and provide reparations for violence based on prejudice (IACHR, 2015). However, in Paraguay a significant gap persists between the international legal framework and institutional and social practices. Over the past decade, this has allowed an anti-gender public discourse to take hold, along with the denial of sexual diversity and the restriction of academic freedom to incorporate content on gender and equality into the classroom (Moragas, 2025). The denial of the existence of trans people and of the formation of families by people with diverse sexual and gender identities constitutes direct violence by the State against TLGBIQA+ people.

Paraguay's legal and cultural framework is markedly conservative on sexual and reproductive rights and on sexual and gender diversity. The country has no laws recognizing gender identity, marriage equality or same-sex civil unions. In addition, numerous laws and regulations do not address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which creates significant gaps in the protection of TLGBIQA+ people and reflects their limited institutional recognition (Marecos et al., 2025).

Legal framework

The recognition of the rights of TLGBIQA+ people is grounded in fundamental human rights principles: universality, inalienability, indivisibility and interdependence. The *Yogyakarta Principles* (2006), updated in the *Yogyakarta Principles plus 10* (YP+10) (2017), establish international standards on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

However, in Paraguay the treatment of content related to sexual and gender diversity is particularly problematic. Numerous TLGBIQA+ organizations and activists have reported that their educational, artistic or advocacy content is censored on the grounds of "explicit sexual content," while overt hate speech against these communities remains available (Ambulante et al., 2020). This discriminatory content moderation constitutes a form of structural TFGBV that limits freedom of expression and the right to information of TLGBIQA+ people.

According to the report by the Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay (CODEHUPY; Marecos et al., 2025), this results in limited availability of population statistics disaggregated by gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as a lack of attention to the needs of TLGBIQA+ people. Among the main obstacles to accessing services are misinformation and the forms of discrimination this population faces both online and offline.

Institutional invisibility is reflected in the near-total absence of official disaggregated data on the TLGBIQA+ population. This lack of information is not accidental but is driven by logics of systematic denial of the existence and needs of these communities. Civil society organizations have historically taken on the role of documenting violence, providing support and coordinating advocacy strategies (González et al., 2017).

In November 2025, a new resolution by the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC) reiterated the ban on the word "gender" in all educational materials (ABC, 2025) and mandated its replacement with other terms when referring to gender equality or equity. The measure also restricted the term "inclusion" to refer exclusively to people with disabilities and, on religious grounds, promoted a single family model made up of a man and a woman, thereby failing to recognize the diversity of family structures that exist in Paraguayan society.

Regarding access to justice, the report by the Ministry of Public Defense indicates that, between June 2024 and April 2025, only 42 of the 119,298 people assisted were TLGBIQA+. This marked difference suggests a significant underreporting of this population in official figures. In contrast, just one of the listening and support channels run by Paraguayan civil society organizations[2] records approximately 200 complaints of discrimination per year (Robledo, 2024).

TLGBIQA+ people face a double vulnerability in this context: on the one hand, the lack of effective guarantees for their fundamental human rights and, on the other, their exposure to specific risks in the digital sphere. The main threats to digital rights include indiscriminate state surveillance, various forms of digital violence and the proliferation of technologies that operate without adequate regulatory frameworks (Ruiz Díaz, 2025).

This convergence of factors places the TLGBIQA+ population in a position of particular vulnerability: the lack of legal and social protection they already experience offline is amplified in the digital space, where violence, harassment and the non-consensual exposure of personal information add to state surveillance practices and the absence of regulatory mechanisms to protect their fundamental rights.

Recent studies on TFGBV as a means of political persecution of TLGBIQA+ people in political roles in the Southern Cone show that hate speech has increased and attacks against them online have become more sophisticated amid the current strengthening of conservative forces (Bacci et al., 2025). Among the cases documented in 2025 is that of Argentine legislator Esteban Paulón, who experienced coordinated harassment on social media after filing a criminal complaint against President Javier Milei for incitement to hatred. After he shared the complaint on X, a libertarian influencer with a large following publicly called for "unmasking" those who hide behind "multicolored sexual diversity," which triggered a cascade of 158 replies filled with homophobic threats directed at the lawmaker (Bacci et al., 2025, p. 66). This pattern of orchestrated attacks illustrates how TFGBV manifests through dynamics of harassment that reveal a *continuum* between online and offline violence, one that disproportionately affects TLGBIQA+ people in the region.

2 At least four organizations run permanent helplines that provide support in situations of discrimination: Aireana, It Gets Better, Repadis and Somos Gay.

Conceptual framework

This research adopts a perspective that does not focus exclusively on the victims/survivors of VGFT, but rather on structures of domination through technology, the responsibility of Internet intermediaries and the actors who perpetrate the violence. This approach is consistent with feminist methodological proposals that seek to de-center victimization and understand the structural mechanisms that enable and perpetuate violence (Blazquez & Castañeda, 2016).

Latin American decolonial feminism provides critical tools for understanding the relationship between technology, power and gender in peripheral contexts (Castañeda Salgado, 2019; Espinosa et al., 2014), as well as the intersection between social structures and technology-facilitated violence. From this perspective, digital technologies are not neutral but rather reproduce and amplify colonial and patriarchal power relations. In turn, dominant technology platforms, controlled by transnational corporations (Big Tech), impose logics, norms and values that frequently come into tension with the realities, needs and worldviews of communities in the Global South.

For this reason, an intersectional approach was adopted, which made it possible to identify and highlight how people who experience simultaneous discrimination based on class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender face more severe institutional barriers during reparation processes. This perspective reveals that these groups not only have less access to adequate assistance but are also more exposed to stigmatization, trauma resulting from workplace and sexual harassment, and a heightened risk of revictimization throughout the process (Ambulante et al., 2020).

Another factor to consider in the analysis is that the digital divide is not limited to access to technology, but also involves differences in connection quality, devices, digital literacy and the ability to take advantage of digital opportunities (Ambrosi et al., 2005). In Paraguay, significant inequalities in Internet access persist between urban and rural areas and among different socioeconomic groups. According to Ruiz Díaz (2025), the precarious state of digital rights in Paraguay creates a critical tension between access to connectivity and processes of social exclusion. In recent years, there have been incidents in which the State has violated citizens' digital rights, revealing a systematic pattern of unprotected digital rights.

This report uses the acronym TLGBIQA+, which represents the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations. The order of the letters within the acronym may vary depending on each community's usage (Acción Triángulo, 2022). The T stands for trans people, whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth; the L stands for lesbians, women who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other women; the G stands for gay men, men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to other men; the B stands for bisexuals, people who are attracted to more than one gender. The I stands for intersex people, whose biological characteristics do not conform to the binary definitions of "male" or "female" derived from clinical categories; the Q stands for queer people, those who do not identify with traditional categories of sexuality or gender; and the A stands for asexual people, individuals who do not experience sexual attraction or desire sexual contact. Finally, the "+" sign is included so that the acronym encompasses other identities and orientations not explicitly included in the preceding letters. In the context of this research, priority was given to using the order of the acronym employed by the Coalición TLGBI de Paraguay[3], adding certain identities and symbols (QA+) so as not to exclude anyone from the study, given the importance of gender identities and sexualities for the analysis of this topic.

3 A network made up of numerous civil society organizations and independent activists. It was established in 2009 and works to promote the visibility and social mobilization of the human rights of TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay (Coalición TLGBI Paraguay, 2024).

For TLGBIQA+ people, access to digital technologies can have a dual dimension: on the one hand, they represent spaces for meeting, identity formation, political organization and community building; on the other hand, they constitute environments of exposure to specific forms of violence (Hinduja & Patchin, 2020). This ambivalence requires situated analyses that take specific contexts into account.

The global mapping of terminologies conducted by TEDIC and Women's Rights Online (2024) identifies more than fifteen different terms used to describe this phenomenon, including online gender-based violence (GBV), online violence against women (VAW), online abuse, cyberviolence against women, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), among others. This terminological diversity reflects both the complexity of the phenomenon and the need for contextualized approaches. protocols for accompaniment in cases of TFGBV (Ambulante et al., 2020) align with the TEDIC typology presented below:

- **Digital harassment and intimidation:** intimidating messages, direct threats, sustained attacks through social media comments, coordinated hate campaigns (cyberbullying, trolling).
- **Non-consensual distribution of intimate images:** publication or threat of publication of sexual or intimate content without consent.
- **Impersonation:** creation of fake profiles to damage a person's reputation, obtain private information, or commit fraud, such as catfishing[4].
- **Doxing:** unauthorized publication of personal information (address, phone number, workplace, family details) with the intent to expose the victim to additional risks.
- **Non-consensual surveillance and monitoring:** use of stalkerware, geolocation and unauthorized access to accounts and devices.
- **Hate speech and symbolic violence:** statements that incite discrimination, dehumanization or violence against people based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- **Digital economic violence:** sabotage of digital livelihoods, unauthorized access to bank accounts and destruction of professional reputation online.

According to the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) report by Paraguay's National Institute of Statistics (INE)[5], 81.6% of the population aged 10 and older used the Internet in 2024 (approximately 4,017,828 people), compared to 61.1% in 2017. This represents a 21-percentage-point increase over seven years. This increase is proportional across residential areas, with 86.2% in urban areas and 73.7% in rural areas (National Institute of Statistics of Paraguay, 2025).

The absence of non-binary categories and disaggregation by the TLGBIQA+ population in Paraguay's official statistics, coupled with the methodological exclusion of Indigenous communities, collective living quarters, and the departments with the largest Indigenous populations (Boquerón and Alto Paraguay), reveals significant information gaps for research on the TLGBIQA+ population. Given these limitations, the only available gender indicator, which is binary, reports that 82.1% of women access the Internet, compared to 81.0% of men (National Institute of Statistics of Paraguay, 2025).

4 TEDIC (202). TLGBIQA+ catfishing case documented by TEDIC. Podcast series "Fracasitos digitales" – Episode 3: *Para qué me llaman si saben cómo fracaso.* The case of Sonia Moura, a cultural manager, artist, activist and lesbian, who shares a personal story about discovering a relationship between a man and someone impersonating her. Available at: https://cyborgfeminista.tedic.org/fracasitos-digitales-episodio-3-para-que-me-llaman-si-saben-como-fracaso/ (accessed August 6, 2026).

5 Based on data from the *Continuous Permanent Household Survey* (EPHC) 2017–2024, published in 2025. Available at: https://www.ine.gov.py/Publicaciones/Biblioteca/documento/280/Tics%202024_INE.pdf (accessed August 6, 2026).

With regard to age, according to the survey, young people lead in Internet use: among those aged 20 to 34, nearly 9 out of 10 people have access to this service, while in the 10- to 14-year-old age group, the proportion drops to 5 out of 10 people[6].

Regarding Internet access in Paraguay, data from 2024 show a strong correlation between educational attainment and Internet use: while Internet use reaches 98.1% among those with 13 to 18 years of schooling and 91.8% among those with 7 to 12 years of schooling, this percentage drops considerably among people with 1 to 6 years of schooling, where only 60.3% use the internet. Regarding the device and location of access, 9 out of 10 users connect via mobile phone at "another location," 7 out of 10 do so from home, and 3 out of 10 from someone else's home. The most frequently reported uses are instant messaging, social media and phone calls (National Institute of Statistics of Paraguay, 2025).

Situated definitions

This report documents experiences related to various forms of violence, including referring to trans people by their former name, a practice known as deadnaming, and denying or restricting access to employment, education, healthcare, recreation, public services or the exercise of electoral rights based on a person's gender identity or sexual orientation. These practices hinder the full exercise of their fundamental rights.

The National Constitution of Paraguay recognizes fundamental rights applicable to all people; among them are freedom, security, equality in dignity and rights, personal privacy, the right to work under fair conditions and the right to a life free from discrimination. These principles guide the analysis conducted in this research and establish the Paraguayan State's obligation to guarantee these rights to all citizens.

The testimonies were included because violence that occurs offline is closely linked to digital violence: it can spill over into online interactions and is often amplified there. This continuity between digital and offline environments also runs through the narratives of those who have experienced this violence. For this reason, and in order to respect the integrity of their testimonies, both scenarios are intertwined in the cases presented.

One such scenario is the defense of trans women's rights, which involves activism exposed to a continuity between physical and online violence. A specific issue mentioned by some of the trans people interviewed is sex work. In this regard, it is important to understand the legal status of sex work in Paraguay, specifically the rights situation in the cities where the cases originated: Asunción and Ciudad del Este.

According to the organization Unidas en la Esperanza (UNES, 2025), Asunción has had Ordinance No. 573/15 in place for ten years, which recognizes sex work as a form of employment and regulates its practice in enclosed spaces through licensing mechanisms and administrative controls. Although its scope is limited, it represents progress in the face of the institutional stigma affecting sex workers.

6 The EPHC methodology establishes that, preferably, each household member over the age of 15 answers for themselves, while information about people under 15 (including the 10-to-14 age bracket reported in the ICT module) is provided by adult household members considered to be "better informed" (National Institute of Statistics of Paraguay, 2021). Given this, data on Internet use among children is not self-reported, but rather mediated by the perceptions of adult reference figures, which constitutes a limitation to consider when using these results.

In contrast, Ciudad del Este has maintained a repressive approach for thirty-five years, established by Ordinance No. 10/90. This regulation imposes mandatory HIV testing without guaranteeing confidentiality, which violates the human rights, privacy and informed consent of sex workers and constitutes a form of institutional violence. Likewise, in parts of the country where their movement in public spaces is restricted, there is increased police surveillance and heightened stigma (UNES, 2025). These conditions limit their access to health services and state protection, particularly regarding safety and access to justice. This pattern of surveillance, stigmatization and lack of state protection toward marginalized women took concrete form during the data collection process for this research, in a case that gained significant visibility on TikTok. During that period, news broke of the death of a trans woman living in Asunción who, according to various accounts, was homeless. Following her death, several news videos in which she had been interviewed went viral on social media.

The comments posted in response to the news revealed the intersection of poverty, exclusion from the labor market, lack of access to services and prejudices related to her living conditions, such as substance abuse. Thus, the circulation of this case on digital platforms not only reproduced the stigma that had marked her life offline but also amplified it after her death.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research took on an exploratory nature due to the limited specific academic literature on TFGBV targeting TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay, coupled with the lack of systematic statistics on this population's digital experiences.

Exploratory studies are appropriate when addressing an issue about which there is little systematic knowledge, and their objective is to identify trends, formulate preliminary hypotheses and detect emerging patterns (Boniolo et al., 2005). Therefore, this report presents exploratory findings that in no way intend to make generalizations regarding the problem of digital violence. As existing publications point out, the intersections and *continuum* of gender-based violence require segmented statistical monitoring (by age and socioeconomic status, among other variables) to deeply understand gender-based violence facilitated or amplified by technology.

The exploratory approach does not imply less methodological rigor, but rather an epistemological stance that acknowledges the openness necessary for unanticipated dimensions of the studied phenomenon to emerge. This openness is particularly relevant when investigating the experiences of populations historically marginalized from the production of academic knowledge (Espinosa et al., 2014).

Given the exposure of TLGBIQA+ people to digital violence and the absence of State guarantees for their fundamental rights, this research adopts a rigorous ethical framework that prioritizes the protection and dignity of the participants. To this end, informed consent regarding the study's objectives, scope and risks was secured, and this document ensures confidentiality and anonymity through digital security protocols that protect data and identities, recognizing that the disclosure of information could increase the risks they face. The research instruments were also designed to avoid retraumatization and not to reproduce the forms of violence under investigation. However, this decision led to changes in what we expected to capture through the survey, as will be explained later.

Given that previous reports in the region have highlighted this reality[7], the questionnaire included a specific question about participation or activism in political, social or collective organizations, aimed at determining whether public visibility acts as a differential risk factor. The findings show that in Paraguay, people who are publicly active (TLGBTIQA+ rights activists and advocates with visibility in the digital sphere) are more exposed to digital gender-based violence.

Another important methodological decision was to acknowledge and reciprocate the time, knowledge and experiences shared by the participants, and to maintain a constant reflective stance regarding positionality, biases and power relations that permeate the research process (Saffon & Marchese, 2022), recognizing that the research team actively forms part of the dynamics under study.

Who participated?

For this study, a data collection instrument was developed that includes individual, organizational and community dimensions. Across these three dimensions, the questionnaire posed questions related to the participants' digital lives and presented a typology of technology-facilitated gender-based violence to help them identify whether they were aware of cases that could be analyzed within this framework.

Questions were also included regarding the perpetrators of violence, as well as the forms of resistance and care that have been implemented at the personal and group levels in response to this violence, regardless of how closely the participants were affected or the impact it has had on them and their organizations. This matrix was used (with variations in wording) for the survey, focus groups and structured interviews with 10 individuals, including trans and cisgender people, lesbians, and gay men.

Based on this matrix, group dynamics were also implemented to discuss these same dimensions in the focus groups: incidents and perpetrators of technology-facilitated gender-based violence; its individual, organizational and community impacts; and the responses to these impacts.

Efforts were made to cover the full range of identities through targeted invitations to the focus groups held in Asunción, Ciudad del Este and Encarnación. A total of 28 TLGBIQA+ people participated in these groups. The focus groups were held in the departmental capitals with the highest Internet usage in the country: Asunción, Ciudad del Este (Alto Paraná) and Encarnación (Itapúa). The sample of participants was designed to reflect the experiences of the population living in the main areas with Internet connectivity, thereby broadening the range of experiences among Internet users. These areas are Asunción (88.9%), Central (87.6%), Alto Paraná (87.1%) and Itapúa (78.2%); the departments with the least Internet access are San Pedro and Caaguazú, with approximately 70% (National Institute of Statistics of Paraguay, 2025).

In terms of age, participants in the three data collection strategies were between 21 and 40 years old, with 27 being the most common age. Consequently, the findings have limitations in capturing the experiences of people under 21, as well as older adults.

7 See: M. García, (2026). *Silencios digitales, mapeando la violencia digital de género en Argentina*. Report available at: https://datagenero.org/silenciosdigitales/ (accessed August 6, 2026).

Methodological lessons learned

It is paradoxical to ask people who have experienced online violence to open up about their vulnerabilities stemming from digital violence through an online form. The survey was aimed at TLGBIQA+ individuals who responded voluntarily, and even so, a significant portion chose "prefer not to say" in response to questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. This tension between the need to name the violence and the reluctance to expose oneself again in doing so became a methodological finding in itself and led to a rethinking of the data collection tools.

Even with these limitations, the diversity of identities among respondents remains a relevant finding: reflecting this diversity in the survey instruments allows us to study how different forms of technology-facilitated violence are distributed according to gender identity and sexual orientation, dimensions that the literature identifies as key to understanding differential exposure to risk. However, given the climate of fear observed in 2026 among activists and human rights organizations in the face of constant state surveillance, we revised the initial strategy and chose to structure the study around cases that would allow for in-person reflection with participants within the framework of focus groups.

FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS OF DIGITAL VIOLENCE

All participants believed that TFGBV has increased in Paraguay in recent years. One survey respondent explained their perception as follows: "Because of the current context: the government is right-wing and anti-rights, and the general rise in anti-TLGBIQA+ discourse." This perception is consistent with specialized regional reports. GLAAD's *Social Media Safety Index* (SMSI) (2026a), now in its sixth consecutive year, maintains that the major platforms—TikTok, X, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Threads—continue to fail to provide safe environments for TLGBIQA+ users. Its 2026 findings indicate that these spaces continue to be marked by hate speech, harassment and disinformation targeting this population. Such content and conduct frequently cause tangible harm offline, as described above. In addition, platforms disproportionately restrict TLGBIQA+ accounts and voices without providing sufficient transparency about their content moderation processes or adequate safeguards for personal data protection.

Recurring racist and classist elements were also identified in online attacks. Participants noted that attacks are more intense against feminized bodies that are "non-white" and "non-hegemonic," particularly in content featuring racialized, fat, Indigenous and Afro-Paraguayan people. These findings show the intersectional nature of TFGBV, whose manifestations become more severe when gender and sexual orientation intersect with racialization, ethnic origin, social class and body type.

"Virality of hate": lesbophobia and media amplification in the Tatucada case

One interviewee recounted the case of the Tatucada, whose viral spread took on the characteristics of an organized digital attack. The Tatucada is a feminist drumming group formed within the organization Aireana and made up primarily of lesbian women. Its main chant, "*tatu con tatu, se puede katu*"[8], is repeated continuously during marches like a mantra. The video of this song was produced shortly after the pandemic and, in the absence of in-person mobilization, was posted online.

8 The phrase, in *jopará*, a mix of Guaraní and Spanish, can be translated as: "vulva to vulva, of course it can be done."

Although the group initially shared the video on its own social media accounts, it was later picked up by "a well-known X troll," who reposted it with disparaging comments. From there, the content "went super-viral," not as an amusing or affectionate expression but within a dynamic charged with hostility toward the lesbians and women in the images. In the interviewee's words, it was "a virality of hate," as the comments were predominantly lesbophobic and included misogynistic insults from the real profiles of strangers.

The case moved beyond social media and reached the news media. The interviewee recalled that it was published by ABC Color[9]. In her view, the media coverage did not take an explicit position for or against the group but presented the incident "ambiguously": it described the organization's video as something to which "the Internet reacted." This framing nevertheless amplified the hate speech, as people who had not seen the original post on X encountered the content through the news story and reproduced the hateful comments on that new platform.

The episode also invites broader reflection on how violence intensifies and takes different forms depending on lesbian women's gender expression and bodies. The interviewee noted that "non-hegemonic lesbians" face openly lesbophobic and misogynistic attacks. By contrast, when a woman perceived as closer to hegemonic standards of femininity publicly identifies as a lesbian, the hostility more often takes on a sexual connotation through comments such as "I'm going to cure you"—that is, make you heterosexual—or "what a pretty dyke." Far from being compliments, these expressions are forms of harassment that sexualize lesbian women under the guise of a "compliment" and operate as mechanisms of gender discipline.

Regarding the response of the organization and the women featured in the video, the interviewee said: "We didn't delete the video. I mean, we weren't going to undo what we'd done either. We just left it there." The decision to keep it online can be interpreted as a form of resistance to the attempt to silence or discipline their collective expression through digital harassment.

This case also demonstrates the continuity between violence occurring online and offline. Practices such as street harassment are reproduced in digital environments and may intensify because of the anonymity or distance these environments allow. Furthermore, treating the Internet in the media as a neutral space prevents critical examination of the risks that exposure may create for the people featured in posts. This is related to traditional media's tendency to treat virality itself as news.

Fabricated images, extortion and the stigmatization of TLGBIQA+ identities

One of the best-known forms of TFGBV is the non-consensual distribution of sexual content. As an aggravating factor, the circulation of intimate images of TLGBIQA+ people is often accompanied by discourse intended to ridicule, pathologize or stigmatize their identities. An example was shared in one focus group, where a participant recounted the case of a gay co-worker who received a message from a fake profile.

The message included an image described as "really badly cropped," which had been manipulated to pass as authentic, and accused the person targeted of having "chats with a minor." It also threatened to air the accusation on television unless he paid money in exchange for silence. When he refused, the profile repeatedly insisted, threatening that the case was "about to be shown" on the programme, a famous gossip show that often repeats social media controversies. This account shows how threatening to make an accusation go viral without verifying the facts operates as a mechanism of extortion and attack against members of TLGBIQA+ communities. The purpose is not to determine whether the allegation is true but to discredit the person through a manipulated image and fabricated accusation.

9 The traditional media outlet with the widest reach in the country.

Fabricated images are also used to discredit people in electoral contexts. During the period researched, numerous posts were found on Facebook and messaging apps portraying male political candidates as gay men and women candidates as lesbians. The aim was to undermine their political work by appealing to moral panic during the election campaign. In attacks both on private individuals and public figures, a fabricated association with an TLGBIQA+ identity is used as a weapon of social discredit. Mere suspicion or the false attribution of a dissident sexual orientation or gender identity continues to operate as an effective means of delegitimization in both personal and political spheres.

In these cases, silence and secrecy are the social norm. If a person belongs to an TLGBIQA+ community, the aim is to establish the idea that they cannot represent a community's political interests. If they do not, they are forced to take a position, generally for or against the rights of the rights of sexual and gender diversity. In either case, identities and orientations are stigmatized and people face public scrutiny based on negative prejudices associated with TLGBIQA+ communities, undermining their dignity and freedom to exercise their citizenship.

Media exposure and compulsory heterosexuality

In late February 2026, two men posted a photograph on TikTok taken outside the Civil Registry office in Ypacaraí. They appeared holding a Family Record Book under the title "First gay wedding in Paraguay." One wrote, "At last, thank you for existing and for our paths crossing," with ring emojis, while the other posted, "Happily married." The post received many congratulatory comments from people close to the two men. Diario Extra republished[10] it under the headline: "Controversy: Civil Registry investigates alleged first gay marriage in Paraguay" (Diario Extra, 2026). A post that had initially reached a limited audience gained greater exposure after being picked up by a news outlet, intensifying debate and hostile comments in digital spaces. The Civil Registry opened an investigation and issued a statement clarifying that the two men had been witnesses at a heterosexual marriage and that marriage between people of the same sex is not legally recognized in Paraguay.

These forms of gender-based violence identified online reflect established gender hierarchies rooted in social structures. On the one hand, patriarchy imposes rules about how men and women should be. On the other, colonialism determines which bodies are publicly sexualized and which are rejected. These structures produce narratives that legitimize some identities before social institutions and exclude others.

Their effects can also be seen in the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality, which denies trans existence and restricts the opening of necessary dialogue within the community. A trans man explained that transmasculine people are fetishized during hateful attacks on social media. This dynamic extends to offline interactions: "We are put in the position of a man who has to be perfect and perform the entire standard of the traditional boyfriend," with demands that, he said, "aren't healthy at all" and in the face of which other people "don't set any boundaries."

The same participant identifies, within this contradiction, a difference between cis people who need to educate themselves and those who take advantage of the need for approval that a transmasculine person may experience during gender affirmation. This dynamic is summed up in the idea that "the only dissident thing is being trans, but after that you have to meet every requirement that a good man is expected to meet."

10 (Diario Extra, 2026). Polémica: Registro Civil investiga supuesto primer matrimonio gay de Paraguay. Available at: https://www.extra.com.py/actualidad/polemica-registro-civil-investiga-supuesto-primer-matrimonio-gay-de-paraguay (accessed August 7, 2026).

Among the most serious cases arising from this dynamic, he recounted the experience of a trans man in a relationship with a trans woman. The trans man became pregnant and decided to have an abortion, while his partner insisted that he continue the pregnancy, despite his poor physical health: "I could barely take testosterone because I was so anaemic."

The trans men interviewed repeatedly expressed frustration at the limits the Internet places on enabling conversations that, in their words, "can save lives." Having the support of someone knowledgeable on the subject, who can offer guidance and understand people through their transitions, can help make that process safer.

Surveillance and disinformation targeting trans activists

Another form of violence identified is scams and extortion resulting from the disclosure of information about people's sexual orientation and, to a lesser extent, their gender identity. Technology amplifies this violence because personal content going viral through social media may provide the basis for extortion, a form of violence also linked to using a public accusation to discredit visible members of the TLGBIQA+ community.

This political use of digital exposure also took the form of surveillance targeting activists and becomes more severe for TLGBIQA+ people, as in the case of Yren Rotela[11], which participants identified as an example of "violence through digital surveillance." According to their accounts, a video went viral over the past year falsely claiming that she "received millions of guaraníes" and was linked to another activist. The post included photographs presented as "evidence" of these accusations.

Participants described this type of attack as part of the constant surveillance of the activist, which consists of taking visual material in which she appears and presenting it "out of context" to construct false narratives against her. In response, the activist chose to make "a public statement." Like the previous cases, this one shows how surveillance and the decontextualization of images are used as tools to publicly discredit trans people with political or media influence. This reinforces a pattern of digital harassment specifically targeting visible figures in the TLGBIQA+ community.

Escalation of violence around dates of mobilization

Some participants also said that gender-based violence on social media intensifies during certain periods. One such escalation occurs around commemorative dates when TLGBIQA+ communities mobilize. Some participants described their experiences as follows:

> Even before the date we were receiving threats because of the publicity for the TLGBIQA+ mobilization. First they tried to ban it and that same week the Municipality of Asunción declared it prohibited. At the same time, an organized church group was also threatening us, saying they wouldn't allow the march because it went against their religious and family values.
>
> There were death threats and they said they would bring stones. And they followed through: they came with stones, screws, eggs and tomatoes. A knife was even seen. We have evidence and photos. They also brought sheets to cover the children, as though what we were doing was some kind of perversion, as though we were going to the parade naked.

11 Yren Rotela is a Paraguayan trans activist who has gained significant visibility through her advocacy for a trans identity law, the establishment of the Casa Arcoíris shelter for trans adolescents, and her regional spokesperson role. In recent years, she has faced technology-facilitated gender-based violence on her social media profiles. You can read more in this article: https://agenciapresentes.org/2017/02/22/yren-rotela-la-portavoz-de-las-personas-trans-que-convoca-al-8m/(accessed: 5 August 2026).

> They stood there with their sheets and crosses, attacking us and shouting at us the whole time. Some people were deeply affected. We had to hire a bus to leave safely because if we had stayed it would probably have ended in a confrontation and someone could have died."

In the wake of this act of physical violence, activities organized by TLGBIQA+ groups in the area are under constant online surveillance, leading members of these groups to restrict their social media posts:

> When we post a flyer inviting people to an activity, these organized groups spot it online and show up in the public space. This happened to us two years ago, when a church group arrived with the police, arguing that they also wanted to pray in the same place where we were holding our activity.

Profile censorship and self-censorship

Participants reported that activist and organizational accounts had been deleted or hacked. They consider the censorship of these profiles a form of violence connected to the defence of the human rights of TLGBIQA+ people. One testimony stated:

> We've already seen a great deal of valuable information get lost. The group contacted Facebook, obviously with TEDIC's support, and after several days and several steps we managed to recover it.

According to participants, organizations' most frequent response was to consider reducing their public exposure or digital participation. This was followed by reporting the attacks on the relevant platforms and blocking the attacking accounts. The survey and interview findings point to a pattern of self-censorship as the predominant response to violence, repeated across all three levels of the study: individual, organizational and community. One participant said: "I don't use social media as much anymore for several reasons, one of which is that they are a hostile environment for mental health." Referring to digital life and restrictions on freedom of expression on platforms, another survey respondent wrote: "There is censorship and deletion of posts about sexual freedom and call-outs of problems such as genocide and the rise of authoritarianism."

This quotation helps us understand TFGBV as an expression of the censorship of the political positions held by individuals and social groups. The analysis therefore cannot focus exclusively on individual harm. It must also account for its collective political effects. For civil society organizations that defend TLGBIQA+ people, public attacks affect not only their members but also the communities they represent and support. TFGBV thus operates as a tool intended to discourage these organizations' visibility, limit their participation in public debate and obstruct the processes of social transformation needed to advance greater equality and the full recognition of rights.

Organizational and community impacts

The most frequently cited obstacle to combating TFGBV at the organizational level in the survey was the lack of institutional or state support. Among the types of support organizations consider priorities, specific public policies topped the list, followed by legal and psychosocial support, digital security training and solidarity networks among organizations.

The focus groups identified several impacts of gender-based violence facilitated or amplified by technology against organizations. These included declining participation in workshops and activities due to disinformation and demobilization campaigns that, in some cases, are promoted by municipal authorities

TFGBV against organizations that defend the human rights of women and TLGBIQA+ people forces these groups to redesign projects, change the municipalities where they work or broaden their target population so they can reach beneficiaries without exposing them to adverse impacts. This is because harassment by public institutions on social media and surveillance practices frequently expose the personal information and images of those who work with the organizations, leaving them vulnerable to comments and attacks circulating on platforms.

These situations have direct impacts on civil society projects and on their ability to gain entry to and access the areas where organizations work to strengthen local capacities and support vulnerable or historically stigmatized populations, such as people living with HIV. In this connection, another impact identified in the face of state hypersurveillance is the risk to confidentiality and community trust from leaks of sensitive data, for example health data and medical check-up records.

Finally, the accounts recorded for this report's analysis show that digital violence intensifies when factors such as racialization, socioeconomic status and gender converge intersectionally. However, the groups most affected are also those with the least time connected to the Internet. The offline violence experienced by people from historically marginalized populations also creates a perception that digital violence is less significant. The survey results presented below reinforce these reflections.

Findings from the online survey

As part of the data collection process, an online survey was developed using the LimeSurvey platform. Given the small sample of 34 people, the high rates of nonresponse and the use of branching logic—which results in a different respondent base for each question—it is important to note that the figures in this section are neither comparable to one another nor statistically representative. The responses are therefore presented as an exploratory, qualitative approximation of TFGBV based on the perceptions of the TLGBIQA+ people who responded to the survey. The following table summarizes the number of people who answered each question cited in this section, so that every figure can be read in relation to its appropriate respondent base.

Question	Number of respondents	Main result
Consent to the processing of personal data	28	Yes: 28 (100%)
Country of residence	27	Paraguay: 25 Other: 2 (1 Uruguay, 1 Argentina)
Membership in an LGBTIQA+ organization	25	Not affiliated: 15 Affiliated: 10
Has the organization experienced TFGBV?	13	No: 11 Yes: 2
Have you personally experienced TFGBV?	14	No: 11 Yes: 3
Completed the form through page 5	14 out of 34	41% of the total sample

Of the 34 respondents, only 14 completed all five pages of the form. The question on country of residence, which appeared before the point at which respondents began to drop out, was answered by 27 people: 25 said they lived in Paraguay, and 2 selected "Other." Of the latter, one specified Uruguay in the form's open-text field. The other did not complete that field but was identified as residing in Argentina through the study's purposive sampling strategy. The main findings indicate a high perceived prevalence of TFGBV in respondents' circles: the vast majority believe that TFGBV has increased in recent years, and nearly everyone familiar with their immediate activist circles knows someone who has experienced this type of violence, either directly or indirectly.

Digital platforms are widely perceived as spaces that do not actively moderate hate speech or online violence, particularly Instagram and Facebook. Among those who reported having been attacked, the most frequently cited grounds were gender identity and/or sexual orientation, followed by feminist activism.

At the organizational level, organizations that reported experiencing TFGBV described tangible impacts, including emotional overload among team members, mental health impacts, self-censorship and changes in communication strategies. The lack of institutional or state support emerged as the most frequently cited obstacle to addressing this type of violence. At the personal level, the most frequently mentioned forms of violence included attacks and insults, stigmatization and attacks targeting gender identity or sexual orientation. The most common response to TFGBV was to consider reducing public exposure or digital participation, suggesting a significant self-censorship effect among respondents, which will be discussed in depth in subsequent sections of the report.

Of the 25 people who answered the question on organizational membership, 15 said they were not members of a human rights organization engaged in activism, selecting "Other / I am not a member," while 10 reported belonging to an organization. These organizations' main areas of work involved serving young people, university students and professionals, people with disabilities, and Indigenous or Afro-descendant people, among others. Of these respondents, only 13 also answered whether their organization had experienced TFGBV: 11 said no, and 2 said yes. In the two affirmative responses, the forms of violence mentioned were the creation of synthetic or fake images or videos, stigmatization and hate speech. The reported impacts included emotional overload among team members and changes in communication strategies, followed by mental health impacts, self-censorship and impacts on members' safety. Since these are only two cases, the responses are presented as qualitative reference points and, combined with the interview responses, help establish thematic saturation, although they cannot be generalized.

In a separate question about personal experiences of TFGBV, answered by 14 people—who were not necessarily the same 14 who completed all five pages of the form—3 said they had experienced TFGBV, while 11 said they had not. This result shows that the respondent profile does not correspond to the population most affected by TFGBV. This is a key finding because it indicates that, in Paraguay, people who are not activists or members of organizations engaged in human rights advocacy fall outside the population segment receiving the highest volume of online attacks. It shows that online hate is directed at TLGBIQA+ people who publicly affirm their identity and becomes more severe when people publicly defend positions related to sexual and gender diversity.

This finding also supports a relevant hypothesis concerning TLGBIQA+ content creators: those who fit profiles valued by the market and display lives associated with privilege, without addressing social inequalities in their posts, are not exposed to online hate in the same way. This issue will be analyzed in greater depth later.

Secrecy and violence on dating apps

Although violence associated with encounters arranged through apps such as Grindr may affect both heterosexual and TLGBIQA+ people, the secrecy that often surrounds the relationships of the latter, as well as the barriers they face in reporting violence, make them more likely to experience it.

One participant recounted several cases involving people he knew who had arranged encounters through social media and ended up being robbed, beaten or abandoned. Among them, he mentioned a young man in Ciudad del Este who, after arranging to meet someone through Grindr[12], was taken first to another location and then to a remote area. There, he was forced off the motorcycle, robbed of his belongings, beaten, and left "lying there." According to the participant, this type of attack was mentioned quite frequently among gay people in both Ciudad del Este and Asunción.

When asked whether these attacks were motivated by the victims' sexual orientation or by other factors, he said that sexual orientation played a role. However, he believed that the main factor was the vulnerability of using an app to arrange sexual encounters. This is particularly true on Grindr, whose use retains a strong element of secrecy, reflected in profiles with no information or photographs, or with images showing only part of the body.

The gay men who participated in the research agreed that they are more exposed to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images they had consensually shared with casual partners through messaging apps—regardless of the app used—than they are when sexting[13] on dating platforms. They explained that dating platforms are such hostile environments for sexual diversity that they generally take greater precautions in these types of interactions.

TLGBIQA+ people face higher levels of digital violence than other groups, not only because of their presence on social media but also because of specific forms of violence directed at their gender identities and sexual orientations. In light of this, and recognizing that concealing one's sexual orientation on public platforms is a protective measure adopted by some TLGBIQA+ people, the survey included non-exclusive questions about gender identity and sexual orientation, together with a broad range of situations involving violence and harassment explicitly linked to these characteristics. Likewise, the sample sought to explore, through individual and group interviews, the experiences of people whose identities were not sufficiently represented in the survey results.

Content creators

While documenting cases for this research, it proved very difficult to reach online content creators who publicly identify as members of TLGBIQA+ communities. These digital media figures are commonly known as influencers. Although there is no official count or regionally agreed-upon definition, advertising industry practice shows that some brands, marketing agencies and platforms already consider people who create content for audiences of between one thousand and ten thousand people to be influencers.

Their defining feature is that their content reaches a broad audience on social media, meaning that they could provide a more precise quantitative picture of TFGBV. However, their participation in online or in-person activities, as well as any public mention of their collaboration, is mediated by commercial relationships that currently shape the indicators of economic success in their profession. For this reason, they often do not accept invitations or respond to requests unless they

12 Carrillo, E. (2018). Riesgos de amar en linea para la comunidad TLGBQI https://cyborgfeminista.tedic.org/los-riesgos-de-amar-en-linea-para-la-comunidad-tlgbqi/ (accessed August 5, 2026).

13 Sexting: Refers to the sending, receiving or exchange of sexually explicit or erotic messages, photographs, audio recordings, or videos through cell phones or other digital devices.

are approached by a brand, since they charge for their participation. It is also common for them to publish posts about their own reactions or responses to this kind of request, as happened in this case, when they were invited to take part in research on digital violence affecting TLGBIQA+ people.

The research was able to engage with two women and one man who create content and whose posts reflect strong political commitments to human rights. Their reflections on TFGBV inform every dimension of this report. Within their accounts, one testimony stands out: it concerns the social imaginary surrounding violence against sexually and gender-diverse people in Paraguay, which structures multiple forms of offline and online violence against these communities. A lesbian content creator, who is also an artist and arts educator, recounted the following.

> Something happened recently involving a case of racism on TV. People in the media are so lukewarm and ignorant. It's not that I'm trying to come off as smart, but I don't think trampling on people's rights is okay. And that seems to be the kind of profile you need to work in the media.
>
> One type of humor also goes much more viral. So when you know you're using that kind of humor, it's going to go much more viral than another kind. Anything harsher—sexist jokes, jokes about gay people—all of that carries over onto the Internet. What I find dangerous has to do with this: there is a deeply mistaken idea of what dark humor, inappropriate humor or politically incorrect humor is, or whatever they want to call it. Calling it "dark humor" is already wrong in itself.

This content creator's testimony suggests that humor in Paraguay, regardless of its format—whether through traditional or digital media—tends to turn toward belittling others. In this way, the morbid fascination currently generated by disputes among content creators is rooted in the models of humor that have become established.

> But there is a very mistaken idea: bullying is interpreted as that kind of humor, when it is not the same thing. We are venerating the guy who makes fun of fat people… And they call it dark humor because that kind of humor is supposedly more intelligent. When you complain that they are reinforcing stereotypes, they respond: "You're not ready for that level of humor."
>
> It is extremely appalling, and there is something I ask myself too: how far can I go in trying to educate people? And some people definitely do not want to learn or understand, because it does not benefit them; they stand to lose a lot. So it is an uphill battle.
>
> In my local professional community, I always feel like I am going against the current.

These last quotes reflect what TLGBIQA+ participants expressed in the interviews: violence and hateful comments appear to be "the rule" for online behavior. Participants also stated that, even when social media content creators are openly TLGBIQA+, it is uncommon for them to include a defense of sexual and gender diversity in Paraguay as part of their content. This can be understood in light of the association between taking political positions in support of human rights or non-discrimination and coordinated hate reactions. Among other consequences, these reactions can lead to lower view counts and brands withdrawing their financial sponsorship.

In this regard, it is important to note that part of the Paraguayan industry that hires content creators for advertising and awards them sponsorships worth millions also devotes large amounts of money[14] to campaigns, involving communications and political lobbying, against abortion, gender equality and other public policies aimed at women and people of diverse genders and sexualities in Paraguay.

By contrast, those who seek to reach a broader audience in Paraguay to promote human rights content on digital platforms and take critical positions on state policies face harassment, doxing and coordinated hate attacks, as noted above. This was the case of a lesbian artist and content creator who was attacked through digital media by a senator from the governing party. The artist recounted "my videos are humorous and lighthearted. They are not direct condemnations, but rather condemnations made through sarcasm and humor." The videos, which parodied political rhetoric, as content creators in other countries do, provoked a confrontational response from the legislator:

> The senator herself, who is also a Cartista within the Colorado Party, publicly exposed me on social media. She reposted one of the videos I made about her, which, on top of everything, was about discrimination against TLGBIQA+ people.

Regarding the doxing and incitement to attack, she said:

> She went as far as publicly exposing me on her social media, posting my handle and my photos. She also exposed my organization in a way that almost seemed to say, 'Go attack them.' She posted all the names, the members' handles, mine, my personal details, everything publicly on her social media.

These forms of violence, combined with attempts to censor voices critical of governing-party officials' conduct in office, are increasingly common in Paraguay. This is true not only with respect to women's rights, feminist struggles, and TLGBIQA+ people. Dissident voices in Paraguay have been censored since well before the Internet existed, so journalists and media workers have long had safety protocols for publicly reporting misconduct by authorities.

When asked about the immediate consequences and the protective measures she took, she said: "At that point, I kind of had to shut down my social media for a little while, just in case, as a precaution. I closed my Instagram for about a day, just to stop them from sending hate to my inbox too." Regarding the consequences in her life, she said she was afraid when she had to protect her family: "My family also told me to stop as a way of protecting me. I was very afraid that they would kill me. I mean, my mom's biggest fear was that someone would order my killing."

She decided to respond with more content, using the same humor as a tool:

> We actually made a video based on a specific case. It was a video where she censors the things I say and then buys me off so I'll say what she wants me to say.

The most recent highly public development was that the senator sought to introduce a kind of bill to control what people say about others on social media. "It was very much for her, very much about her own case, because she didn't like the nickname I gave the character I used to parody her, and she wanted to ban me from using it." It is essential to highlight that the participant who shared this account did not stop making videos, although she acknowledged a temporary period of self-silencing: "I took it easy for a little while, but then I quickly came back at full force. I mean, I didn't stop doing it."

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14 (La Mala Fe, 2019) *Los vínculos en Paraguay del lobby internacional cristiano.* Available at: https://lamalafe.lat/2019/09/18/los-vinculos-en-paraguay-del-lobby-internacional-cristiano/ (accessed August 7, 2026)

The report will later explore in greater depth the use of humor through art as a form of resistance to hate speech and mass calls to discredit those who publish content defending the rights of TLG-BIQA+ people online.

FROM THE SCREEN TO THE BODY: IMPACTS OF DIGITAL VIOLENCE ON TLGBIQA+ PEOPLE

This section brings together evidence on the impacts of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, drawn from concrete experiences shared by participants during focus groups and individual interviews. Direct quotations were anonymized, although perpetrators are described exactly as participants referred to them.

It is worth noting that the platforms on which TLGBIQA+ people most often reported experiencing violence were Instagram, followed by dating apps as the second most frequently mentioned option, then X/Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and groups on instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Threats of physical violence were also identified as a recurring pattern: digital violence against TLGBIQA+ people frequently includes threats of assault or death, demonstrating that the digital sphere is not disconnected from tangible risks in offline life, but rather that the two reinforce each other.

TFGBV targeting TLGBIQA+ people has specific characteristics arising from anti-TLGBIQA+, transphobic and heteronormative prejudice (IACHR, 2015; Ging & Siapera, 2018). Previous research, together with human rights reports produced by civil society in Paraguay (Robledo, 2024), has documented nonconsensual outing, meaning the disclosure of a person's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent, which may expose them to violence within their family, community or workplace. It has also documented organized hate campaigns, understood as coordinated attacks by groups opposed to TLGBIQA+ rights that mobilize narratives of moral, religious or pseudoscientific panic (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017). Information on this latter form of violence was provided in previous sections.

It is essential to recognize that the impacts of TFGBV on TLGBIQA+ people include mental health consequences such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress, social isolation due to stigmatization, constraints on public and political participation, and effects on educational and employment trajectories (Hinduja & Patchin, 2020). Digital violence operates as a mechanism of social control that seeks to keep TLGBIQA+ people on the margins, silence their voices and break up their organizations. Psychological and emotional effects were frequently mentioned among the impacts of violence identified in interviews and focus groups. One participant said: "I went into shock. It was the first time it had happened to me."

Other accounts of the impacts of experiencing TFGBV mentioned anxiety, including anxiety attacks in public places and the need for therapeutic support to address it; fear, apprehension, and a constant sense of insecurity; distress and a sense of isolation; stress, including traumatic stress that prevents people from leaving home; depressive episodes; trauma; and panic attacks when socializing.

Activists who had experienced attacks said that the impacts were felt more intensely when they affected their families or closest circles. They also described feelings of vulnerability, guilt and internalized shame because "it causes so much harm" and "it confronts you with that idea of guilt." Recounting the incident some time after it occurred, and having undergone therapy to address its effects, one participant said they had felt the need to "build a shell around themselves" or become emotionally desensitized as a defense mechanism against constant exposure.

This idea of overexposure recurred in several activists' accounts and is heightened in cities outside Asunción, where there is less visibility and a smaller presence of locally based human rights organizations. This creates vulnerability because less support is available than in Asunción, where a stronger network of organizations is perceived to support those reporting violence.

Digital attacks directly affect socialization and the relationships that affected people maintain in different areas of their lives—whether professional, romantic, social or sexual—undermining how they relate to those around them. For trans men in particular, this situation can intensify dysphoria, especially when they lack the financial resources to cover the costs of their transition process. In many cases, this is compounded by the temporary breakdown of their immediate support network, leaving the affected person without the emotional and social support they need in a moment of crisis.

In economic and employment terms, the consequences include the loss of job opportunities or commercial relationships with clients and brands, directly affecting people's sources of income. There is also an impact on day-to-day work performance, reflected in difficulties meeting agreed-upon deadlines. In some cases, this is compounded by the need to achieve a certain level of financial independence before being able to begin transition processes, demonstrating how attacks and their effects can postpone fundamental personal decisions.

In terms of reputation and social perception, affected people face public discrediting intended as a form of punishment or to silence those who dare to speak out. Taking a public position on certain issues may lead to a loss of followers or support from peers who had previously stood by them. The sexualization of a person's image after a physical attack against them becomes public was also identified, adding another layer of harm to the person already affected.

Participants reported that, in the long term and after responding to experiences of TFGBV, the toll of having to defend their own existence generates a sense that they do not belong within their own activist or professional spaces.

Another type of impact recorded was on digital behavior. As noted above, the most common response among the TLGBIQA+ people interviewed is to avoid posting personal content on social media as a protective measure. This often stems from their own or others' experiences of TFGBV. Their digital behavior changes, and these changes give rise to strategies developed to resist in digital spaces. TLGBIQA+ people therefore most frequently listed the following responses: temporarily or permanently ceasing to post content, photos or videos; deleting photos and profiles or restricting public access to them; changing the type of content they post (creative self-censorship); blocking accounts, disabling notifications and deleting apps.

Another long-term impact they observed was developing an "addiction" to constantly monitoring comments and social media. They also withdraw from specific platforms, with X/Twitter mentioned most often in this regard.

What freedom of expression are we talking about?

The public visibility of the TLGBIQA+ community, whether in the streets or on the Internet, has always elicited polarized reactions. Its visibility often triggers threats of violence and criminalization by conservative groups and religious extremists. Examples of this kind of persecution or enforced concealment include the case of YouTuber Paul Lando[15], who married his partner in the United States, as well as misogynistic social media messages targeting blogger and journalist Karen Ovando[16] because of her sexual orientation.

15 Paul Landó's YouTube channel. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/@paul_lando (accessed August 7, 2026).

16 TEDIC. (2017). *Jueza ampara a Youtuber y ordena censurar contenido que evidencia violencia machista.* Available at: https://www.tedic.org/jueza-ampara-a-youtuber-y-ordena-censurar-contenido-que-evidencia-violencia-machista/ (accessed August 7, 2026).

The ongoing public condemnation, harassment, intimidation and threats directed at TLGBIQA+ community activities—such as the kiss-in[17] held every year in the public square opposite Congress—occur not only in the streets but also online. This results in censorship, self-censorship and the policing of our freedoms by other citizens. It also lays bare the absence of the State, which fails to promote public policies and, in some ways, contributes to discrimination by disregarding the guarantees and safeguards required for everyone to exercise their freedoms.

A rhetorical question was frequently heard in the interviews: What freedom of expression are we talking about? TLGBIQA+ people have stopped using social media for leisure or entertainment because, as they explained, being a trans person in Ciudad del Este means having to "go onto social media wearing a bulletproof vest":

> I've already built a shell around myself. I also stopped using Twitter because, from my perspective, it's much more violent. I had a lot of haters on Facebook too… Not long ago, I made a little video criticizing the World Cup. I said: "The World Cup and its contradictions." And that's when the comments started coming… So I know that every time I, as a woman, express an opinion, it's like going onto social media wearing a bulletproof vest. I mean, knowing they're going to shoot at you.

The most common experience of violence on social media involves messages and comments received from unknown profiles. Participants emphasized that, although several years ago these responses came from "real" people, they increasingly come from fake profiles today:

> When I was a teenager […] it happened to me more because of my sexual orientation, because I talked about it all the time. And I got messages like that from people in countries I can't even name.

The prevalence of offline violence against trans people was seen by the women interviewed as creating a context in which hateful messages on social media go unpunished:

> Those of us who are feminists, those of us who are part of the LGBT community, are always singled out as the main culprits, as though we threatened the family, as though we threatened children. It's a narrative that has been repeated for years. The way I deal with it now is by trying not to read too much, but I still know those comments exist. I know there are comments like: "You have to be careful with this one because her voice can fool you." They say: "Pay attention to the voice because she can fool you too." They always attack trans women over how they look, always that, always the physical.

For activists interviewed in the research, the impact of online hate speech targeting trans people is also reflected in the forms of digital socialization adopted by people under the age of 20. According to one trans activist, this generation noticeably avoids showing their bodies on social media: their profiles tend to feature anime images, avatars or photographs in which they hide their faces, rather than images of themselves.

This lack of direct visual representation also translates into reluctance to participate in visible group spaces such as WhatsApp groups. Those seeking to contact them must therefore verify their identity through other means: checking mutual friends, confirming whether they follow activist pages, or exchanging voice messages and personal questions, for example, about name-change procedures, before confirming that they are a real person rather than a fake profile. This verification is part of the

17 ABC Color. (2015). *Besatón contra la discriminación.* Available at: https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/besaton-contra-la-discriminacion-en-paraguay-1367822.html (accessed August 7, 2026).

digital safety protocol that organizations apply when establishing contact with new people. As an online safety measure incorporated into their everyday practices, they look for evidence of mutual acquaintances or other signs confirming that the person is real rather than a bot [18]or fake profile.

Viewed through a generational lens, but particularly prevalent among young people, this practice can be understood as a self-protection strategy in a hostile digital environment: concealing one's body and face serves as protection from exposure to violence and hate speech while also shaping and limiting the possibilities for genuine or "free" socialization on the Internet.

The pathologization of TLGBIQA+ people is a recurring form of gender-based violence on social media. One participant described a recent incident experienced by her organization. During a public activity for children and adolescents, representatives of an anti-rights group appeared and, although they did not engage in direct violence at the time, challenged the activity by claiming that "gender ideology is sexual abuse[19]." In one focus group, a participant explained that, although they initially chose to remain calm "so as not to cause a commotion," the conflict later escalated on social media. The group posted photographs of the activity and of prominent members of the organization, accusing them of "spreading gender ideology" and "manipulating" the children present. This prompted a wave of aggressive comments directed at them, calling the women identified at the activity "feminists," "sluts" and other insults. The participant concluded that, although they were not directly subjected to verbal attacks at the event, "merciless social media" reproduced and amplified the hostility they faced.

Across the region, diverse identities have been particularly singled out and used as the spearhead of a strategy that is not limited to restricting the rights of specific groups, but also seeks to progressively weaken the legal and cultural framework underpinning the legitimacy of TLGBIQA+ people's rights (Corporación Femm, 2025).

Doxing appears repeatedly in the testimonies collected as a form of violence against members of human rights organizations. In two cases recounted by participants, their personal data, including addresses and telephone numbers, were leaked and circulated. In one case, information about a member's workplace was made public, stating that she "works with 12-year-old children" and thereby linking her professional identity to the exposure of sensitive data. This information was disseminated through mass messages on messaging apps and Facebook posts, extending the reach of the attack. As in the previous cases, the participants noted that they did not file a formal complaint regarding the disclosure of personal data with any government agency.

A similar pattern of personal data exposure can be identified in the second case, involving Sonia Moura, a comedy content creator and activist with the organization Aireana. In this case, however, the perpetrator was not an anonymous actor but a figure with institutional power.

The case is particularly illustrative of reinforced impunity because, when a senator enjoys immunity from legal proceedings by virtue of her office, access to justice becomes doubly unattainable. The violence is also intended to make an example of her and silence a collective's criticism of the

18 Bot: a computer program that automatically carries out repetitive tasks online through a chain of pre-set commands or autonomous functions designed to fulfill an assigned role, and that has the capacity for interaction, changing state in response to a stimulus.

19 The notion of "gender ideology" functions as an umbrella term within the narratives used by anti-rights groups worldwide. Among other things, it has been used to limit gender-based approaches and human rights perspectives. It operates as a rhetorical device that brings together multiple social fears and channels them into the construction of internal enemies, particularly women and people of diverse genders and sexualities. Its influence and the regressive measures it has generated constitute a framework that normalizes exclusion and undermines democracy. The purpose of these strategies is not limited to restricting the rights of specific sectors; they also seek to progressively weaken the legal and cultural framework that supports the legitimacy of women's rights and the rights of LGBTIQ+ people (Corporación Femm, 2025).

senator's hate speech. This highlights strategies originating within the State itself, through its representatives, that endorse and support violence against the existence of certain people and groups in society. Along the same lines, one young woman recounted:

> Not long ago, I witnessed a very serious incident of hate firsthand. A classmate of mine took part in the May 14 parade [Paraguayan Independence Day] as a student at a beauty school. Because of the way he presents himself, people started calling him a *travesti*, and from that point on, he received a wave of hateful comments: asking what he was doing there, saying that it was not his place, that a body like his had no place at that kind of event, and questioning what kind of example he was setting for children. They even threatened to kill him
>
> When I found out, I called him right away and asked, 'What is really going on?'
>
> You can really feel the hate more now. When did this aggression toward the trans community become so permissible?

The persecution of women activists becomes particularly severe when they publicly defend both the rights of the TLGBIQA+ community and feminist causes, especially in cities outside Asunción, where public exposure often entails greater risk because people are more closely connected and visible within smaller communities. Previous research has shown that feminist women often face systematic harassment when filing or supporting complaints related to gender-based violence, femicides or harassment, with direct consequences for both their personal and professional lives (Cuevas & Sequera, 2024).

This pattern is confirmed by the testimony of an activist who described being confronted directly by a member of a Departmental Council. As she recalled, the official warned her, "You'll keep hearing this sweet little voice," in a tone she interpreted as a veiled threat in response to her activism. The activist reaffirmed her position in response: "They want us to be quiet. That's what they want, and we're not going to give them that." She also acknowledged that her voice and those of her fellow activists "are a nuisance" precisely because they actively defend human rights. This testimony demonstrates how being publicly known as a feminist and a TLGBIQA+ person intensifies hostility from figures with local political power. Far from guaranteeing protection, these officials actively participate in attempts to silence those who sustain these struggles outside the capital.

In survey and focus-group responses about protection practices agreed upon within organizations, no one directly confirmed the existence of a formal protocol, suggesting a significant gap in institutional preparedness to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This gap affects the support that organizations can provide to people experiencing online violence.

According to one participant, coordinated attacks against feminist activists and TLGBIQA+ organizations in Encarnación and Ciudad del Este began in 2017, when they started organizing mobilizations and were filmed so that the footage could later be posted on social media. She characterized the attacks as coordinated and organized because they did not involve just one person, but several Facebook pages simultaneously posting content attacking TLGBIQA+ and feminist organizations in the area, as well as fellow activists who are visible and speak out. For this reason, she explained, they have developed a comprehensive spokesperson strategy to protect people.

WHO PERPETRATES ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST TLGBIQA+ PEOPLE IN PARAGUAY?

In the cases analyzed involving attacks intended to discredit public figures—which, as discussed above, inflict violence on the TLGBIQA+ community as a whole—it is important to note that the press frequently covers them as news stories. For this reason, journalists, editors and writers can also become perpetrators of TFGBV in Paraguay. As an earlier TEDIC report (2025) noted, Paraguay needs to strengthen gender-sensitive protections for journalists. On the one hand, it is urgent to recognize the different types of violence faced by journalists and, on the other, to address gender-based violence as a structural problem that jeopardizes both their work and their personal safety[20].

Media coverage amplifies the reach of these attacks and, with it, the harm caused to people who feel represented by or identify with the situation portrayed. In this way, such cases operate as a form of punishment intended to make an example of someone, with an implicit message that could be summed up as: "You cannot be both gay and a politician, because this is what can happen to you." This reinforces a logic of exclusion and social discipline directed at members of the community.

As noted above, Instagram was the platform mentioned most often, followed by dating apps, X, Facebook and TikTok. People whose TLGBIQA+ relationships and sexualities must remain private because of the discrimination they face in public spaces are particularly exposed. This vulnerability is compounded by shortcomings in content moderation, impunity for attacks and a lack of support to address their mental health effects and prevent digital violence from extending beyond the Internet or intensifying offline.

Participants identified news outlets with social media pages, such as Facebook, as actors that perpetrate or facilitate violence against women and TLGBIQA+ people because of their ability to amplify discriminatory incidents or hate speech originating in specific events, such as a concert, a public statement or a complaint. When comment sections turn such events into a "space" for "public" discussion, they multiply the reach and intensity of the violence.

One participant illustrated this mechanism by noting that "these *ñembo* news pages on Facebook[21]" are spaces of "a tremendous amount of violence." She explained that when "something is published, it generally happens with cis women," as comments tend to "attack them because of their appearance or because they reported something." She added that this aggression does not come only from men, since "women also attack them a great deal," revealing a collective dynamic of harassment in digital spaces. As an example, she cited the case of a public figure who was attacked over her appearance after taking part in an event. According to the participant, an incident that occurred offline was subsequently turned into a topic of discussion in the pages' comment sections, and "a tremendous amount of violence was generated."

This same amplification mechanism also appears in violence against men perceived as departing from hegemonic masculinity. Another participant noted that, in these digital spaces, it is "completely normal" to call any man who "thinks differently or dresses differently" a "faggot." To illustrate this, she mentioned the attacks targeting members of the band Purahéi Soul after they performed at a concert. Although the band's other member, a young woman, also received some negative comments ("a little bit toward the girl too"), the main attack was clearly directed at the band's young male member. She recounted that most comments called him *"koa positivo"* and a

20 Cano & Berro. (2025). *¿Cómo visibilizar casos de violencias? Uso de casos emblemáticos en la promoción.* Available at: https://www.tedic.org/como-visibilizar-casos-de-violencias-uso-de-casos-emblematicos-en-la-promocion/ (accessed August 5, 2026).

21 A *jopará* expression—a blend of Guaraní and Spanish—which, in this context, means "alleged" or "pseudo-news."

"faggot." Here, *koa*, meaning "that one" in Guaraní, is used derogatorily to single him out on the basis of an attributed sexual orientation. The case shows how alleging that someone is gay is used as a mechanism of attack and disparagement in these spaces of "public" discussion.

During the documentation process, participants said that platforms allow violence against TLGBIQA+ people to escalate. These escalations respond to particular events, such as TLGBIQA+ mobilizations held at the municipal level, controversies over discriminatory statements or acts of discrimination that prompt mobilization and condemnation by organizations and people engaged in human rights work in the country.

In 2019, a politician from a border city attacked a TLGBIQA+ festival, physically and verbally assaulting members of the community. To this day, he uses his political power to harass the organizers of the annual parade. Local activists said: "He also mentioned us directly in a video he posted in response to a call for a therian[22] gathering, saying that he was going to beat us with a belt." They described this as threatening because he was glorifying violence and "if he says he is going to do it, then anyone else can do the same to us, for example, if they run into us in the street." The case shows how hateful narratives take hold against any expression of diversity and seek to homogenize public discourse. The public attack was not prompted by any action taken by the civil society organization involved. Yet, by glorifying violence against a particular identity group—in this case, therians—it extended the attack to TLGBIQA+ people through stereotyping. An aggravating factor is that, beyond the verbal attacks online, a local political figure was inciting physical violence against people exercising their right to public assembly.

Another significant precedent from the border region with Brazil occurred a few years ago, when conservative activist Sara Winter traveled to Ciudad del Este to give talks. Feminists were identified by name in Facebook groups, alongside calls for people to confront them, as part of an open campaign to harass feminists and human rights activists in the region. The campaign invoked Winter's narrative that she was no longer a feminist[23]. Winter was imprisoned in Brazil for coordinating disinformation campaigns promoted by conservative sectors and for supporting the Bolsonaro administration[24].

22 Therian refers to an Internet-born community that brings together people who identify with one or more nonhuman animals.

23 Disinformation campaigns led by public figures in Brazil have an impact in Paraguay, where Brazilian television channels, news, and entertainment are widely consumed. Just as content creators have considerable reach in the border region, so do disinformation campaigns or fake news initially directed at the Brazilian population.

24 Read more about this at: https://elsurti.com/oligarquia/reportaje/2020/06/23/especialistas-senalan-semejanzas-entre-los-300-de-brasil-y-los-grupos-fascistas-europeos/ (accessed August 5, 2026).

These references were identified through analysis of 12 written survey responses, 8 individual interviews, and 3 focus groups conducted in Asunción, Encarnación and Ciudad del Este. The ten most frequent terms used to refer to people who perpetrate digital violence were, in descending order:

Person perpetrating the violence	Number of mentions
Men / males	57
Police officer(s)	49
Guy(s)	44
Follower(s)	25
Client(s)	20
Council member(s)	17
Man	14
Evangelical(s) / evangelical group	13
Military personnel / soldier(s)	13
Harasser(s)	10

The range of terms shown in the table above indicates that interviewees did not describe a single perpetrator profile, but rather a diverse set of specific cases ranging from unknown men and clients of sex workers to police officers and military personnel. Trans women who engage in sex work are exposed to violence arising from the clandestine nature and stigmatization of this work, as explained in the conceptual framework. As a result, they identify as perpetrators men connected to the communication channels they use to sell their services[25].

Public figures such as Municipal Council members, members of organized evangelical groups, social media followers and individuals specifically identified as systematic harassers were also mentioned. This diversity shows that digital violence against TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay comes from multiple directions and contexts, rather than from a single or predictable actor.

Cases involving male perpetrators tend to be described more frequently as physical, sexual or coordinated group violence, including assaults arranged through dating apps, mass attacks on social media, and death threats. The prevalence of male terms does not mean that women do not perpetrate violence, but rather that the forms of violence attributed to them tend to be named differently. In at least six cases from individual interviews and focus groups, participants mentioned interpersonal or discourse-based situations, including doxing, harassment targeting political activism and disparaging comments perpetrated by women. A senator publicly exposed an activist's personal data on social media and reposted content intended to incite third parties to attack her. This case was mentioned several times because, according to participants, hate speech, speculation and disinformation generated "controversy throughout society."

25 References to "clients" refer to men who frequently purchase services from sex workers. They repeatedly interact with sex workers through messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram, as well as through Facebook.

Participants also singled out a Departmental Council member who sent a WhatsApp voice message discouraging people from attending an organization's violence-prevention workshops, claiming that "gender ideology would be taught" there. The message was widely circulated on WhatsApp and directly affected participation, as well as the public image of those who were going to lead the workshops.

Chasers were also specifically mentioned. These are cisgender men who fetishize trans men and are known for persistently messaging them, in some cases engaging in online harassment. They seek sexual contact or even pose as women in order to get trans men to engage with them. The transmasculine organization recognizes this pattern and responds by systematically blocking such profiles.

Religious actors and institutions

As noted above, Christians, Evangelicals and Catholics appear among the ten most frequently mentioned perpetrators of TFGBV. Their violence can also manifest within the family through messages seeking to correct or "cure" the very existence of TLGBIQA+ people, treating them as ill or as having deviated from a norm. One participant recounted that her brother-in-law, an "extremist, Christian, religious" man, tried to subject her to a process equivalent to "conversion therapy" by insistently sending her "Bible verses" to pressure her about her identity. Although she ignored the messages, she described how, even when mentally prepared, simply seeing "the message or the comment" caused her distress.

Another participant shared a similar experience during adolescence, when her "evangelical" stepfather sent her "videos of a pastor saying that you have to respect your parents," together with "a long Bible verse," to reprimand her during family conflicts. She challenged the messages by replying, "Why did you send me this? It makes no sense, as if that were going to solve anything," and described the profound distress caused by being "educated" that way. This shows that the messages did not seek to provide genuine support, but rather to impose correction based on the idea that her identity was an error or deviation to be remedied.

This type of violence, sustained over time within the home, significantly affects the mental health of TLGBIQA+ people, who grow up amid a constant message invalidating their identity. In the long term, this family dynamic often leads to expulsion from the family home, leaving trans adolescent girls in particular highly vulnerable, without a support network or care in the face of the many risks associated with exclusion from the family at an early age.

Trans people lack legal protection because they are excluded from the Comprehensive Protection of Women against All Forms of Violence Act (Law No. 5777/16), leaving them more exposed to revictimization if they report violence to the State. In one case, a participant described a breakup in which a woman went to her former partner's workplace, where he worked as a trans man who was not out, to "out him" to his colleagues. This constitutes doxing by a cisgender woman. The case prompted several testimonies about trans men's fear of this type of exposure, since in some workplaces they risk dismissal if their gender identity is revealed.

Hateful posts or comments about TLGBIQA+ identities are often an initial step toward undermining the political participation of people who publicly affirm their gender identity or sexual orientation. One participant described restrictions and efforts to boycott her candidacy for a representative and spokesperson position because she was publicly known as a lesbian content creator and posted about her sexual and romantic experiences in Paraguay.

In artistic and activist settings, participants described forms of violence that cross from the digital into the physical realm. A content creator recounted that a woman who followed her content kissed her without her consent. On another occasion, a follower repeatedly sent her unsolicited voice messages containing sexual content.

These cases show that the closeness between TLGBIQA+ content creators and their audiences can give rise to risk when the boundaries of consent are ignored or violated. This vulnerability is compounded by the absence of state reporting mechanisms capable of recognizing TFGBV as a real form of violence, one that can harm those subjected to it and therefore requires attention, accountability and measures to address the harm caused.

What about the platforms?

In 2018, TEDIC documented the case of Yren Rotela[26], then a candidate for the Senate representing the Kuña Pyrenda party. After she lost access to her Facebook account, presumably because of an attack by unidentified third parties, TEDIC supported her until she recovered it. The organization has since highlighted a structural problem. Because Paraguay does not provide for legal gender recognition, trans people cannot obtain identity documents that reflect their name and gender identity. When Facebook asks them to verify their identity, they must submit documents that do not match the name they currently use. According to a workshop held with Panambí, many members have become accustomed to opening a new account every three months because the platform blocks them after reports of "fake profiles." Each time, they lose contacts and information. This directly affects their freedom of expression and association, access to information and privacy.

When asked how digital platforms act in public debates related to feminism or human rights, 9 out of 10 people said that the platforms do not actively moderate content and allow violence to escalate, while only 1 considered that they provide relatively safe and moderated spaces. This is directly related to the platforms' algorithmic logic, which tends to show each user content that reinforces their own beliefs. Among religious people, for example, discourse becomes progressively more radicalized through the constant consumption of like-minded content. This dynamic directly affects family life, since sustained engagement with these networks takes up a substantial part of daily life at home and influences how religious people relate to those they live with, including TLGBIQA+ family members.

We asked study participants what companies could do to reduce technology-facilitated gender-based violence. The answer was unanimous: moderate content. TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay perceive platforms as increasingly hostile spaces and believe there is growing impunity when hate speech is reported. Some participants stated that digital platforms "do nothing about profiles reported as violent." This is also consistent with global studies on platform behavior.

Meta and YouTube have maintained policy changes that harm the TLGBIQA+ community, making digital environments even more toxic. Meta's reversals in early 2025 included amending its hate speech policy to permit anti-TLGBIQA+ rhetoric and remove key protections, particularly for trans people; using hostile language in its community standards; canceling diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs; removing options related to trans and nonbinary people from Messenger; and ending its U.S. fact-checking program (GLAAD, 2026a). This could mark the beginning of a global shift toward progressively less restrictive content moderation and safety measures.

26 TEDIC. (2018). *Censura en línea hacia colectivo LGTBIQ+: recuperar nuestra cuenta en Facebook.* Available at: https://cyborgfeminista.tedic.org/como-recuperar-nuestra-cuenta-en-facebook-censura-en-linea-hacia-colectivo-lgbtqi/(accessed August 7, 2026).

Some participants said it is becoming increasingly difficult for people with large social media audiences to express progressive views. As documented in the previous year's *Social Media Safety Index* (SMSI), this may be due to a trend toward weaker protections. For example, YouTube ceased to explicitly protect gender identity in its hate speech policies (GLAAD, 2026). Trans and gender-diverse people are therefore less protected against online attacks and hate speech precisely when their rights, dignity and even their lives are under constant political attack. This reversal sends a troubling signal: rather than strengthening protections for a particularly vulnerable community, the platform is reducing its safeguards. The company is also less transparent about diversity within its own workforce, reflecting a broader retreat from its commitment to these communities.

A trans participant explained that, faced with the risk of content going viral through TikTok's algorithm—which he sees as different from Instagram's—he has tried to keep his content "more casual or relaxed." He addresses human rights from a political perspective only when he considers it warranted. He finds it difficult to soften his message so as not to sound "annoying or arrogant," or as though he were "treating people in Paraguay as stupid." Regarding this constraint on contributing important content to debates within the TLGBIQA+ community, he said:

There are things you have to spell out for people. I mean, I try very hard to be pleasant on social media precisely so that people do not seize on any arrogant comment I might make, take offense, and give me hate for it. I mean, people generally give me hate because I'm trans.

This perception illustrates the impact of online gender-based violence on TLGBIQA+ people who, in addition to attacks based on their gender identity and sexual orientation, bear the additional burden, as activists, of "educating" others so that they do not go through situations the activists themselves have experienced. Increased digital violence therefore places an additional burden on activists' mental health and contributes to burnout among human rights organization spokespeople.

What about artificial intelligence or machine learning systems?

These dynamics are compounded by a particular use of artificial intelligence (AI) identified in the cases analyzed: the creation of AI-generated manipulated images that falsely attribute a TLGBIQA+ identity, without consent, to people who have not identified as such. Between May and July 2026, Facebook posts were found depicting political party candidates as gay men or lesbian women in order to discredit their political work by appealing to moral panic[27].

In contexts where the very existence of TLGBIQA+ people is marginalized and labeling someone as a member of the community is used as an insult, this practice becomes a strategy of delegitimization. It seeks not merely to ridicule or expose the person, but to invalidate their presence and credibility both on social media and in public life. The manipulated image instrumentalizes social stigma toward the TLGBIQA+ community to damage third parties' reputations while reinforcing the idea that belonging to this community is a source of shame or disrepute.

27 The concept of moral panic, originally formulated by Stanley Cohen (1972), refers to the process through which a group of people or certain behaviors associated with them are socially constructed as a threat to established values and social order. Within this logic, homosexuality—and later, trans identities—has repeatedly been turned into an object of moral panic: first pathologized by sexology and psychiatry, and later framed as a threat to social cohesion (Weeks, 1998). Today, the political use of moral panic is increasingly evident in disinformation campaigns.

AI is not a technology of the future: it is already integrated into products, platforms and systems that TLGBIQA+ people use daily. AI determines how people search for information, access education and health care, look for work and interact with the world. Yet the TLGBIQA+ community is already paying the price of AI systems designed without taking their needs into account[28]. From chatbots that suggest conversion "therapies" to moderation systems that silence their voices, the impacts documented in the GLAAD report (2026b) represent concrete, present and growing harms to people's lives.

In recent research on LAIA's *Trans Voices*[29]researchers analyzed how these large language models (LLMs) generate stereotypical images of the trans community: thinness, youth and whiteness as default norms, as well as the reduction of trans people to tattoos, pins, flags and other characteristics. The report suggests exploring questions such as: Is it possible for AI to represent trans people adequately? What are the consequences of being misrepresented?

Two ways in which AI appears in the findings must be distinguished. First, cases were documented in which AI is weaponized to fabricate a TLGBIQA+ identity and attribute it to someone without consent, such as the manipulated images targeting political candidates, regardless of whether the person belongs to a sexually and gender-diverse community. Second, the research examined whether people who identify as TLGBIQA+ had experienced AI-facilitated gender-based violence linked to activism or a public online presence. No direct testimonies of this second type of case were identified among participants. However, some interviewees perceive this phenomenon in educational settings, including schools and universities, not necessarily in public spaces, but in closed groups on messaging platforms used by young people and adolescents.

Beyond these forms of violence and the ways in which impunity perpetuates them on and off the Internet, this report examines how TLGBIQA+ people address digital violence, as well as the avenues for justice and safeguards for freedom that they expect from those who govern the Internet. Their responses are described below.

28 For a deeper discussion of AI and TLGBIQA+ people, see GLAAD's report, which synthesizes academic research, civil society documentation, and journalism, and includes its own monitoring of AI's effects in order to propose a roadmap toward more responsible systems: https://www.lgbttech.org/post/exploring-the-benefits-of-ai-technologies-for-the-lgbtq-community (accessed August 5, 2026).

29 LAIA. (2026). *Voces trans* en IA: usos críticos y justicia representacional*. https://www.laia.ar/2026/06/05/voces-trans-en-ia-usos-criticos-y-justicia-representacional/ (accessed August 5, 2026).

REPORTING: BETWEEN HOPELESSNESS AND THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE

According to the testimonies gathered in this investigation, TLGBIQA+ people do not report digital violence primarily because this type of violence is rarely recognized as such, unlike physical, psychological and sexual violence, which are widely identified. Furthermore, even when it is recognized and people want to report it, they do not know where to do so, since no one provides information about support services; this situation is exacerbated in border areas. Therefore, it is essential that the State recognize and define TFGBV, publicize support services and reporting channels, and work to raise awareness and provide education on the issue. One participant commented:

> I told her she could report the other attack, but see, the thing is, people know the judicial system doesn't work, so they feel hopeless and don't come forward. They just don't.

When people have filed complaints and their cases have been properly handled by the prosecutor's office, it has been in the context of complaints filed by cisgender people (men and women) and also in the case of a trans man, whose experience of violence and reporting occurred before he transitioned. For this reason, it is important to recognize that it is trans people who face the most barriers when reporting digital violence to the State. A trans woman's recommendation on this matter was:

> Education is the most effective tool for combating hate and eradicating discriminatory discourse. The State, as the guarantor of the right to education, must invest in educating the public about the rights of different communities, promoting tolerance and diversity as drivers of social progress. Second, it must raise awareness about whom people elect as political representatives.

From a civil society perspective, the testimony above identifies education as the primary means of preventing TFGBV, alongside raising public awareness regarding the selection of representatives. The latter is driven by evidence that many people who spread hate speech against the TLGBIQA+ population in Paraguay hold public office, which gives them greater visibility and, in turn, amplifies the impact of the violence they perpetrate.

Convictions for digital violence in Paraguay are still a very recent phenomenon. During the course of the research, the case of the longest sentence recorded to date for this type of violence came to light: 12 years in prison, imposed for acts of psychological violence committed through electronic means. It is worth noting that the sentence was handed down to a man who is already in prison serving a previous sentence. The case was handled by Prosecutor María Eusebia Segovia Cabrera, head of the Specialized Unit for Combating Family and Gender-Based Violence No. 4, based in Asunción. Upon announcing the sentence, and given that the case was classified as gender-based violence, the Public Prosecutor's Office emphasized its commitment to the comprehensive protection of victims and to fulfilling the obligations assumed by the Paraguayan State under the CEDAW and Belém do Pará Conventions, which aim to prevent, punish and eradicate all forms of violence against women, both in the public and private spheres (Ministerio Público, República del Paraguay, 2026).

We hope that this case sets a precedent so that reports of online violence begin to be taken seriously as acts of violence with real implications for people's lives, and that in the near future the legal system recognizes as an aggravating factor the fact that hate speech incites and amplifies TFGBV against populations whose rights have been violated online, such as TLGBIQA+ people.

Furthermore, one of the focus groups raised the case of a person who had reported an incident of violence and sought support from a civil society organization. Her mother subsequently harassed members of the organization on their personal and professional profiles. The organization's response was to set boundaries with her and warn her that her statements were subject to legal action. This reaction demonstrates how organizational protocols, depending on the severity of the attack, seek a fair resolution that mitigates the impact of the violence rather than a punitive response.

When asked whether they decided to report incidents of violence to specialized institutions, most trans people said they were afraid to approach these institutions. While in most cases they decide not to do so, when they do, they first turn to trans, feminist or TLGBIQA+ organizations for support. Here is the testimony of a trans lawyer who frequently accompanies complainants to police stations:

> I provide the initial counseling to the girls, but they always ask me to go with them. The last time, I went with five of them to the National Police. There, in addition to being treated appallingly, each one was called by her male name, her registered name, during the interview. That was the first instance of violence, right at the moment of filing the report.
>
> Faced with that kind of treatment, how can anyone possibly have the courage to continue with their case? It's a long, very long process. The women who work at the prosecutor's office always treated me well, I have no complaints there. But there are so many obstacles along the way that, when it comes down to it, no one wants to follow through with the complaint.

The account above highlights the main barrier that trans people face when accessing services or, in the specific case addressed by this investigation, when they decide to report violence to public institutions. Public institutions in Paraguay do not guarantee dignified treatment for trans people, frequently engaging in deadnaming and intentional misgendering, that is, the deliberate use of a trans person's former name or incorrect pronouns as a form of invalidation and symbolic violence (Marecos et al., 2025).

Japuka mba'e[30]

All participants in the research agreed that the moderation and regulatory systems of digital platforms and social media are insufficient to counteract the hate and gender-based violence affecting the TLGBIQA+ population. In the face of the violence described, organizations employ various strategies for collective and individual care.

At the organizational level, one participant explained that, since forming as a collective, they have established rules of care to protect their members and decide by consensus on each person's level of exposure:

> Whoever wants to be in the photo is in it; whoever wants to be featured is featured, and those who don't are respected. We also rotate spokespeople and have protective measures in place for public appearances in the press or on social media.

At the individual level, each person manages their digital security according to their level of exposure. Among the strategies mentioned are permanently blocking other users, unfollowing or hiding stories, blocking contacts on WhatsApp, and identifying and immediately blocking profiles recognized as harassers or aggressors, both online and in person.

30 An expression in Guaraní that can be translated as "you have to laugh," used in situations where laughing is all that's left.

However, organizations recognize different types of risk depending on the issues they address. Abortion, for example, is one of the riskiest topics to discuss publicly: many feminist organizations have not yet been able to hold that debate internally, for fear that it will be used against them or lead to search of their offices. Even identifying as feminist or using terms like "gender" carries risk, which points to a pattern of self-censorship that varies depending on how much hostility each issue provokes.

Resistance

In this context of surveillance over content related to gender and to sexual and gender diversity, humor on social media emerges as a platform for reaching people and facilitating public dialogue. It is included in this report as a primary strategy of resistance, in part because of the wide reach it enables through technology. This is how it was described by the artists and content creators who participated in the research. One of them, a comedian and lesbian, was asked why she considers humor to be her form of resistance. She said:

> I was able to come out on stage, with material that I used to tell in a heterosexual version because I didn't have the courage. I was afraid they wouldn't call me for work, that some people wouldn't include me in their group or their show. And I realized that there were many people who had identified with what I was saying, it's just that no one else is really talking about this right now.

In the face of directly calling things out, in a society that so strongly condemns dissenting views, humor favors the deliberate use of sarcasm. For this reason, it is a tool that helps address issues without resorting to direct political discourse. However, that does not mean that women who do comedy are spared from dealing with audiences, bosses and colleagues who reject overtly political content and, following deeply sexist norms, reject the women who dare to voice it. As another interviewee explains:

> Since my activism these days is quite intertwined with comedy, my videos feature a lot of this Paraguayan idiosyncrasy, but they take aim at the government. So sometimes even the audience gets a little confused—they might be homophobic, but they still enjoy the content.

In this regard, both noted that there is an ambiguous effect to mixing humor with social criticism, which becomes evident when reaching audiences that can even be hostile. One of them notes that their audiences expanded during the pandemic, when cultural activities at La Serafina—the venue where they used to perform in person—had to move online: "Virtual Cultural Fridays [...] sometimes featured a stand-up routine or a short theater sketch [...] or we'd present some kind of streaming content."

One of them is a teacher and acknowledges that consciously teaching the limits of humor at her stand-up school has drawn all kinds of comments from the entertainment industry, the field to which she belongs. In a way, this account echoes that of the trans activist who spoke about "educating" through his social media videos, since people seem to "hate what they don't know."

> I also have a school that includes a brief discussion of the limits of humor. We talked a little about what stereotypes are, about how—how humor can end up reinforcing certain stereotypes. No local school had ever offered that before.

In this environment of creating content for social media, artists must promote themselves on these platforms to reach audiences for their in-person performances. This financial aspect is often used as a justification for making content go viral—content that degrades others and even attacks fellow comedians and their work. Here is her account of a piece of content that concerned her because it was stigmatizing and came from a fellow comedian.

> I decided to post about it without mentioning them by name. I talked about my culture and the limits of humor, expressing myself as clearly as possible without stirring up controversy, from a very educational perspective, I believe. And then came an onslaught of direct messages from my colleagues, including one who asked me to take down the video. Do you think those who supported me were progressives? No. What was at stake there was the ability to speak my mind.

In addition to content that can go viral through artistic forms such as comedy, stand-up, theater or performance art, they also use forms of documentary video art that are valuable for preserving memory and, through reenactment, generating a collective analysis of activism.

Artistic content is a form of representation of TLGBIQA+ identities, and that symbolic value of visibility is a field for constructing narratives in a country that imposes secrecy on certain identities and sexual orientations. Despite this, professional associations in some artistic disciplines often fail to take a stand in favor of human rights or respect for the dignity of TLGBIQA+ people.

Finally, there were numerous responses related to doing a social media detox. An activist who experienced personal violence and saw it directed at their TLGBIQA+ organization shared:

> This led me to rethink my relationship with social media. As an activist, you carry this idea that you have to be aware of everything, all the time, and constantly take a stand. But I realized it doesn't have to be that way.
>
> I also accepted that some social media platforms are no longer what they used to be. I've had Twitter since I was 12—practically my entire adolescence is documented there—and today, X is a hostile place. It was really hard for me to let it go, just like TikTok, where so much misinformation circulates. Over the past two years, I've started prioritizing what I want to do on social media and when to use it.

Despite the risks and the constant forms of violence they experience, TLGBIQA+ people and organizations in Paraguay have developed sophisticated strategies of resistance in digital environments; some of these were mentioned in this section. These practices constitute forms of agency that challenge passive victimization and demonstrate the communities' political and creative capacity to take ownership of technologies and transform their living conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We have documented the key recommendations from the participants, with the conviction that it is still possible to establish best practices for security, privacy and freedom of expression on digital platforms, provided that companies, the State and organizations commit to listening to these voices and acting accordingly.

At the institutional level, incorporating a *Strategic Cybersecurity Plan*[31] with a gender perspective into the Digital Agenda is a pending task and represents a concrete opportunity to close the gender digital divide and transform the Internet into a safer space for girls, women and TLGBIQA+ people.

At the individual level, one of the most frequently mentioned care mechanisms is selective self-censorship: many TLGBIQA+ people choose which online spaces to engage with based on their needs, particularly work-related ones, by monitoring social media and avoiding exposure to content they anticipate will be hostile. One participant puts it this way:

> I don't bother reading the comments because I already know what I'm going to find. It's my way of taking care of myself: I simply avoid reading them, even though I know they exist. It's different when it's about me versus when it's about someone else in the community: in that case, I do go in to see the comments, even though I'd rather not do that when it comes to myself.

In the face of digital violence, organizations function as a front of resistance that combines individual support for those who report incidents with the sharing of accumulated experience and knowledge to fuel new collective initiatives. This strengthening is reflected in the testimony of an activist in a border area:

> Our organization also grew; we resisted and grew, and we started doing a lot of things, like gathering evidence of hate speech.

Indeed, one of the most important lessons from this process is the systematization of evidence: people belonging to organizations and those who consider themselves activists learned to save screenshots of messages, images or online posts, a resource that can later be used to file complaints with platforms or with the State. Added to this practice is the protection of the privacy of those they support: assistance to victims of violence is provided while safeguarding their confidentiality, a precaution that is especially important given the lack of a state registry. As a result, civil society itself has had to maintain a record of complaints year after year, generating comparative analyses that are useful for understanding patterns in this violence.

This documentation work has become particularly professionalized within feminist organizations, which, unlike other human rights organizations, have accumulated extensive experience in supporting victims in their dealings with the State. This trajectory translates into more robust protocols for responding to the digital violence faced by the populations with whom they work—such as rural women, children and young people—and has enabled the development of protocols for support, documentation and classification of cases, with ethical considerations refined over time. This body of work serves a dual purpose: it makes information available to academics and enables rigorous reporting on the human rights situation in Paraguay in response to periodic reviews by international organizations.

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31 Sequera (2025) Ciberseguridad en Paraguay: entre la urgencia y la improvisación legislativa. Disponible en https://www.tedic.org/ciberseguridad-en-paraguay-entre-la-urgencia-y-la-improvisacion-legislativa/ y TEDIC (2025) La evolución de la Ciberseguridad en Paraguay: MITIC como pilar estratégico. Available at: https://www.tedic.org/la-evolucion-de-la-ciberseguridad-en-paraguay-mitic-como-pilar-estrategico/ (accessed August 5, 2026).

A concrete example of this protocol in action can be seen in an organization's response to hateful comments it received following its statement on gender-based education reform: they activated a practice that had already become second nature, took "screenshots of everything" as evidence, and issued "a statement from the organization clarifying that this… was digital violence," in accordance with Law No. 5777/16, which criminalizes it. According to the participant, the organization systematically addresses violence in state coordination forums, such as the working group on preventing violence against women coordinated by the Ministry of Women. This is a recurring form of resistance among the interviewees: putting it into words, naming the violence in in-person settings where digital attacks (such as harassment, hateful comments targeting sexual and gender diversity) are often normalized.

However, this accumulated experience does not imply that filing a formal complaint is the first option or the expected outcome of the protocol. The organization itself notes that "institutionally, we have not filed a formal complaint so far," attributing this to "weariness" and "exhaustion" stemming from previous experience supporting other women through legal proceedings and observing that it is "a system that does not protect women." In other words, the strength of the protocol does not lie in the judicial route being the natural or priority course of action, but rather in the organizational capacity to document, name and bring digital violence into spaces for advocacy with the State, without necessarily filing a criminal complaint—a step that is sidelined or even ruled out in the face of a justice system perceived as offering little protection.

In the realm of digital self-care , activists recommended taking proactive measures against situations of harassment and stalking. Among these, a key recommendation is to permanently block profiles identified as aggressors or individuals recognized as harassers, whether for sending unwanted direct messages, invading private spaces or engaging in aggressive behavior, including in the physical realm. This means blocking their access to all social media platforms and contact channels, with no need to maintain any open digital connection. Added to this is the recommendation to hide sensitive information by disabling features such as the "story view" status or others that reveal personal activity, movements, or routines, especially when dealing with contacts considered high-risk.

The rise in online hate speech also led to concrete changes in behavior: TLGBIQA+ people reduced their social media posts and stopped sharing personal photos; to a lesser extent, they deleted social media apps from their phones and deactivated their profiles. One account summarizes the process that can lead to that decision:

> I decided not to expose myself so much to that content: when I see an aggressive or hateful comment, I immediately block or hide it, without giving it any more attention. I used to use the strategy of engaging with anti-rights comments to generate engagement and make my message land with more impact, but over time that becomes counterproductive, because you end up living more in the digital world than in the real one. It got to the point where it overwhelmed me so much that last year I quit Instagram, X and TikTok for almost a month and a half.

Another mitigation strategy is critical literacy: most of the activists interviewed place special emphasis on understanding the power dynamics within the Internet, the logic behind data extraction by markets and the available digital security strategies. This literacy also allows one to distinguish between isolated negative comments and real threats: it is acceptable to choose to ignore offensive comments that do not constitute a pattern of harassment, reserving blocking measures for profiles that exhibit sustained harassment or invasion of privacy. Finally, it is recommended that people maintain personal awareness of profiles that have repeatedly exhibited aggressive behavior, recognizing that digital violence can be an extension of violence perpetrated in public or physical spaces, which reinforces the need to sever all contact. Taken together, these practices constitute self-care strategies for dealing with digital violence and highlight the importance of recognizing online harassment as a form of violence with a real impact on people's safety.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Through the testimonies, patterns emerged in the differentiated experiences of the TLGBIQA+ community, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the issue that accounts for the group's internal diversity and the intersections of oppression that shape it. This is reflected, for example, in border regions, where the presence of the State feels more distant and the treatment of TLGBIQA+ identities is perceived as more hostile. Yet the neighboring countries, Argentina and Brazil, have legislation that offers greater protections for trans identities and the rest of the sexual and gender diversity population. In this regard, the study contributes to deepening the analysis—based on situated knowledge—of the issue of gender-based violence and to recognizing the capacities of organizations and movements to confront TFGBV and defend human rights in digital environments.

Regarding the distinct ways in which this violence affects the TLGBIQA+ population, it is important to note that all interviewees acknowledged that trans people, as well as those living in poverty and extreme poverty, are the most severely affected, because online hate is highly "classist." Similarly, a racist component was identified, associated with increased attacks against the feminized bodies of racialized, fat, Indigenous and Afro-Paraguayan people.

The theoretical framework developed throughout this report established some concepts for understanding TFGBV against TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay as a complex phenomenon that intertwines gender-based violence, heteronormativity, technological coloniality and structural exclusion. Adopting an intersectional feminist approach thus made it possible to capture the multiple dimensions of this issue and to recognize both the specific vulnerabilities and the capacities for resistance and agency of TLGBIQA+ communities.

It is worth noting that, among the findings, violence spills over between the offline and online worlds in both directions, and the moderation systems of digital platforms must continue to be debated, given that digital life today is shaped by whatever generates the most revenue online. Added to this is a false neutrality of the Internet that facilitates disinformation and sustains the illusion that information, as well as profiles, is organic. In this regard, the testimonies suggest that a critical examination of the Internet, through education and information campaigns that debunk these myths, will help expose how platforms, fake profiles and coordinated hate campaigns operate, so that it is first and foremost recognized that every digital structure is underpinned by an infrastructure of power.

During the data collection process, the most frequently mentioned perpetrators were individuals from anti-rights or conservative groups, trolls or troll farms, and unidentified individuals acting from anonymous profiles. This highlights, on the one hand, the organized and even institutionalized nature of some attacks, and on the other, the use of the platforms' anonymity tools to conceal identity and evade potential complaints.

However, in the case of TFGBV experienced by activists and activist organizations, the forms of violence with the greatest impact on their daily lives were linked to the amplification of violent incidents on digital platforms of mass media outlets, such as newspapers and television channels. When attacks are carried out or amplified by identifiable actors, such as journalists, influencers or public officials, it opens up the possibility of promoting accountability mechanisms from within their own professional associations and institutions.

Likewise, TFGBV reflects expressions of structural violence in the Paraguayan context, and the care practices that organizations develop as a result of having experienced some of this violence begin with questioning who designs and configures digital systems. When hate speech originates from public channels or from figures with a reputation in the offline world—such as journalists or politicians—it constitutes a form of invalidation. This becomes a direct form of aggression when the identity or sexual orientation of sexual and gender dissidents is used as part of attacks on a public figure's image, or in comments about people who are not necessarily content creators, such as activists. An opportunity to shift narratives lies in regulating these public "discussions" in digital spaces that are accessible without age restrictions, go viral and are even monetized by capitalizing on the audience's morbid fascination.

On the other hand, violence at the individual level primarily takes the form of cyber harassment and intimate partner violence, typically harassment following a breakup or rejection, where the dimension associated with femininity—understood as a strategic unit within the perception of those who perpetrate the violence—is a recurring factor in the testimonies. All interviewees agree that people of diverse sexual and gender identities experience violence in a stratified manner, with those who are perceived as trans, including non-binary people, suffering the most severe violence. Legislation related to gender-based violence and the visibility of trans identities in this struggle remain important, as does the support of their local communities so that responses to cases of violence can be effective and prevent larger-scale violence, such as hate crimes.

Regarding resistance, TFGBV undermines people's freedom because it affects their participation in public life. As the findings show, the first form of resistance among TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay consists of living their lives freely and developing their personalities despite the hate, a challenge made more difficult by the rise of anti-feminist and misogynistic public discourse, which in recent years has been perceived as a factor contributing to impunity in the face of reports of digital violence. The normalization of hatred against TLGBIQA+ people in Paraguay is, in this sense, enabling a rise in very serious forms of digital and physical violence, which are perceived as threats to the lives of hundreds of people in the country.

Some people pointed out that rejection of TLGBIQA+ identities is socially presented as ethical, correct or acceptable behavior. This legitimization has two consequences for group behavior. On the one hand, it makes it difficult for others to defend those under attack or to respond to violent messages online, due to the potential for retaliation against those who decide to intervene. On the other hand, in an environment that allows hate speech to circulate without adequate moderation, messages that deny the existence of sexual and gender diversity and include death threats are frequently reproduced.

According to the findings, the latter constitute one of the most frequent forms of threats against trans people in the comment sections of platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, particularly in content published by media outlets. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the moderation and regulation of this content, while ensuring respect for standards of freedom of expression and human rights.

This finding empirically supports the concept of "pedagogy of resistance" introduced at the beginning of this report: the testimonies collected show that it is not enough to name violence as an individual strategy; rather, it requires institutional support to reach beyond organized groups with a feminist perspective. In this regard, the spaces for listening and support created by organizations are also highlighted. Because their members have themselves experienced violence, these organizations generate counter-narratives to confront violence (Nuñez Puente & Fernández Romero, 2022) without reproducing content in ways that revictimize, such as through image ethics, the affirmation of bodily diversity and anti-racism. Transforming this pedagogy into a public digital literacy policy with a focus on gender and sexual diversity, as proposed in the recommendations of this report, would be a concrete step toward ensuring that this form of care no longer depends exclusively on civil society.

Dismissing the impact of hate speech disseminated by local and state authorities in the media and on social media is a cause for concern for the protection of rights and for democracy, as it leads to the neglect of the fundamental rights of a segment of the population. It is important to remember that Paraguay is a social State governed by the rule of law and that, therefore, no institution may act based on prejudices, personal beliefs or moral stances not provided for by law.

Finally, regarding the generational gap, interviewees over the age of 30 acknowledged that their online behaviors have changed as a result of hate speech, regardless of whether or not they have experienced acts of TFGBV. They also expressed particular concern for the generations that have been immersed in digital life since childhood and adolescence.

In this regard, it is worth noting that, according to a UN Women report, women experience their first forms of digital violence between the ages of 14 and 16. Furthermore, its prevalence is even higher in certain groups due to the complexity and inequalities surrounding these experiences (MESECVI, 2022). We therefore return to the question posed by the research participants: what does it mean to freely inhabit the Internet?

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

In compliance with academic transparency standards, the author declares the use of artificial intelligence tools (Claude.ai and Google Pinpoint) for: text translation and transcription, style review and correction, and assistance in identifying relevant sources during an updated literature review. All analytical content, paraphrasing of interviews and argumentative development are the direct result of the author's own intellectual work.

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