Partner with GIWL ANU to help prevent

tech-facilitated gender-based workplace abuse

Did you know that 4 in 10 Australian women have have experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last five years, and 1 in 7 Australian workers have perpetuated workplace sexual harassment facilitated by technology?

But, while technology can perpetuate gendered workplace abuse, it can also provide avenues for solutions. Our project, which is funded through the eSafety Commissioner's Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program – an Australian Government initiative, seeks to find these solutions.

We're looking for organisations to partner with us for this vital research to help us stop gendered tech-based abuse in the workplace before it begins. In your workplace, are you encountering...

- **Workplace gendered bullying** occurring on social media platforms and messaging services?

- Circulation of **sexist material or gender-based harassment** amongst workers over email or workplace tech platforms?

- **Unnecessary and intrusive monitoring** of women and gender minorities' productivity using technology?

- **Persistent intrusion** into women and gender minorities' personal life and time via messages, phone calls, or email?

- Other forms of **gendered bullying, harassment, or discrimination** via technology?

About the project

We aim to design and evaluate **technology-focused strategies to prevent workplace gendered abuse** by targeting how technology is used and implemented in workplaces.
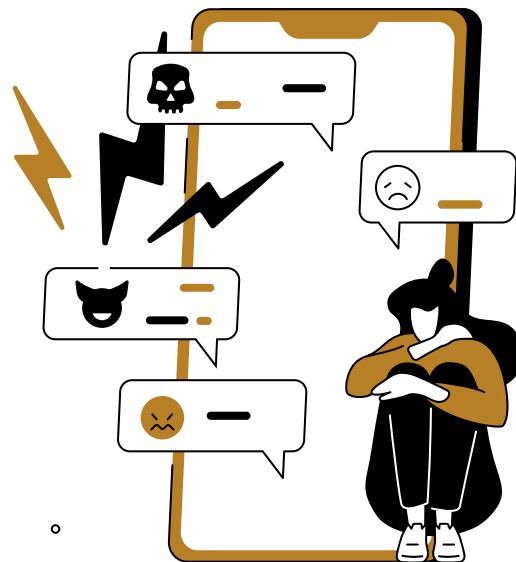
What is tech-based gendered abuse in the workplace?

Gendered abuse includes any form of physical, psychological or sexual harmful behaviours instigated against a person or group of people because of their gender. **Technology affords the ability to enact these behaviours with greater speed and across multiple avenues.**

Our project has explored trends in *workplace technology design* and *workplace context* that can create an environment for workplace gendered abuse to happen. Across technology platforms, **aspects of technology design can encourage patterns of behaviour that may lead to, or facilitate, gendered abuse.** For example, the capacity to edit or unsend messages can be used to hide or remove evidence of abusive content.

In addition, **the workplace context in which technology is used can contribute to incidents of gendered abuse**. For example, a norm of needing to be available outside of work hours (e.g., via email, phone calls, and messaging platforms) may facilitate perpetrators' intrusion into a target's personal time and personal space.

About GIWL ANU

Founded and Chaired by The Hon. Julia Gillard AC – the only woman to have served as Prime Minister of Australia – and based at the Australian National University, Canberra, The Global Institute for Women's Leadership is a multi-disciplinary research institute that brings together world-leading expertise on workplace gender equality and leadership.

THE GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Why does it matter?

Gendered workplace abuse can have significant impacts and individuals, including job stress and psychological harm, which in turn can have an impact on organisational productivity, staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge, and compensation costs paid by the organisation (Sojo & Roberts, 2023).

Forty-one percent of Australian working women had experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last five years, along with 26% of working men (AHRC, 2022). A recent report further found that 1 in 7 Australian workers had enacted workplace sexual harassment facilitated by technology (Flynn et al., 2023). Formal workplace technologies, (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Slack) and informal technology use (e.g., social WhatsApp chats, and social media) can be leveraged to perpetrate workplace gendered abuse

While technology can facilitate gendered abuse in the workplace, technology can also provide avenues for solutions. **Intervening in technology design and workplace context has the potential to prevent tech-facilitated gendered abuse in the workplace.**

References

1. Sojo & Roberts (2024). Public Sector Drivers of Sexual Harassment: A Rapid Systematic Review. Under Review.

2. Australian Human Rights Commission (2022). Time for respect: Fifth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. AHRC. https://humanrights.gov.au/time-for-respect-2022

3. Flynn, A., Powell, A., & Wheildon, L. (2024). Workplace technology-facilitated sexual harassment: Perpetration, responses and prevention (Research report, 03/2024). ANROWS.

How can you *be* involved?

We're looking for organisations that have **two or more distinct organisational departments or teams** and **use technology for work communication and activities** to help support us with this vital research.

Our objectives

We are seeking to design and evaluate technology-focused strategies to prevent workplace gendered abuse by **targeting how technology is used and implemented in workplaces.**

We plan to compare and contrast the efficacy of two or three strategies implemented in different teams. These prevention strategies will take a structural approach, focusing on areas such as:

- Choice of workplace technologies
- Specific features of the technology that can be used/disabled
- Norms of technology use
- Gender norms
- Reviewing technology related policies and procedures.

Our strategy

We are seeking engaged partner organisations to collaborate with. Working together with your organisation, our research team will help identify gendered and potentially abusive patterns in technology and **tailor a strategy that addresses the needs of your organisation**.

This research program will conducted across April – October 2025, and will be a random cluster experimental design, developed collaboratively with your organisation. The design will involve the implementation of different strategies in independent teams within your organisation so that we can then compare the effectiveness of these strategies. Following our evaluation, **we will provide guidelines to implement the most effective strategy across your organisation.**

Project timeline

1 Phase 1: Consultation

This phase will involve meetings with key stakeholders from your organisation, including managers, HR personnel, and IT staff. We will scope how your workplace uses technology and any gendered abuse patterns and collaboratively determine areas to target in the prevention strategies.

The GIWL team will then develop the design and resources for the intervention strategies. Implementation meetings will work with stakeholders to form an implementation plan.

2 Phase 2: Implementation

This phase will involve implementing the different strategies across your organisation's teams, supported by the GIWL team.

3 Phase 3: Evaluation

This phase will involve evaluation meetings with your stakeholders to assess the short-term impact of the strategies and plan for ongoing actions.
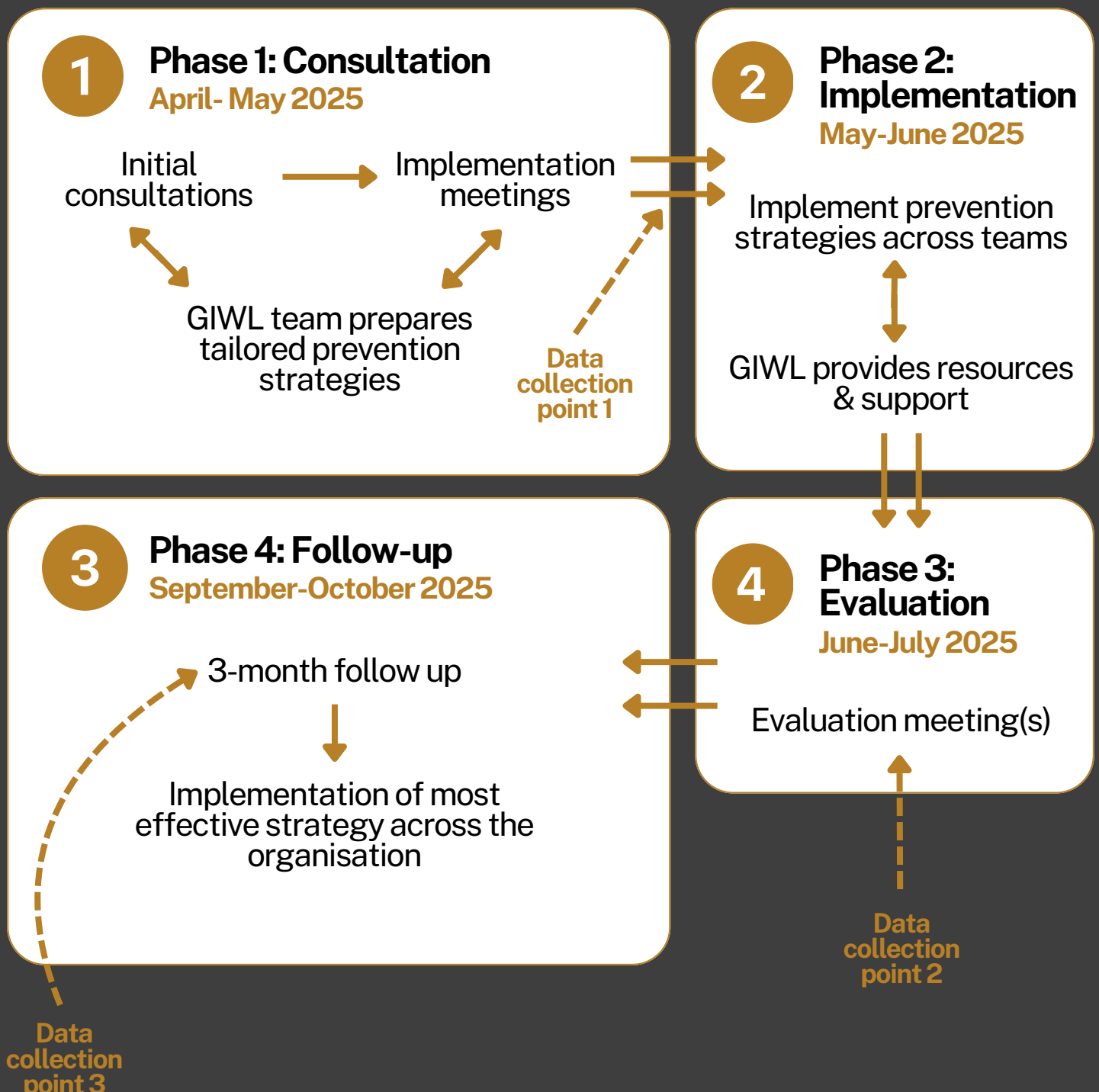
4 Phase 4: Follow-up

The final phase is a 3-month follow-up to assess the ongoing outcomes of each strategy and plan for rolling out the most effective strategy across your organisation.

Project timeline

Three data collection points (short online survey of workers) will be conducted to **provide feedback on the effectiveness of the strategies**. Participation in data collection will be voluntary and informed consent obtained prior to data collection.

See the diagram below for a visualisation of the program timeline.

1 **Phase 1: Consultation**
April- May 2025

Initial consultations → Implementation meetings

GIWL team prepares tailored prevention strategies

Data collection point 1

2 **Phase 2: Implementation**
May-June 2025

Implement prevention strategies across teams

GIWL provides resources & support

3 **Phase 4: Follow-up**
September-October 2025

3-month follow up

Implementation of most effective strategy across the organisation

Data collection point 3

4 **Phase 3: Evaluation**
June-July 2025

Evaluation meeting(s)

Data collection point 2

What are the benefits to your organisation?

Your organisation has the opportunity to be frontrunners in tackling tech-facilitated gendered abuse, a rapidly emerging issue that is becoming a critical focus within both workplace and societal contexts.

By addressing this growing concern, your organisation can set a standard for responsible action in an increasingly technology-driven world.

Your benefits

Benefits to your organisation will include a better understanding of how technology can facilitate gendered abuse broadly and a specific understanding of how technology is used in your workplace with steps you can take toward **fostering a foster a safer and more inclusive work environment in the long term**.

By integrating preventive strategies, you not only protect your workforce but also **position your organisation as a leader in promoting ethical practices** around digital technologies. Similarly, a prevention approach to gender-based abuse at work will also help you with positive duty efforts to comply with the legal obligations under the Respect at Work Act (2022).

As awareness and advocacy for gender equity grow, your organisation's commitment to combating this issue will resonate with both current and potential employees, clients, and stakeholders. Being at the forefront of this initiative will also allow you to **influence broader industry standards**, demonstrating your dedication to social responsibility and equality in the digital age.

Investing in the prevention of technology-enabled gendered abuse helps upskill employees in areas such as digital safety, conflict resolution, and respectful communication, **boosting their capabilities and enhancing workplace productivity**.

Your commitment

We require in-kind contribution of staff support to participate in consultation and implementation of research program. This will include consultation, implementation, and evaluation meetings, time spent to enact the prevention strategies, and participation in data collection surveys.

No monetary contribution is required from your organisation.

The project team

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If you have any questions about the project and how your organisation can get involved, please contact us at gtap.giwl@anu.edu.au