Technology-facilitated abuse: family, domestic and sexual violence

Literature scan

October 2023

Australian Government | eSafetyCommissioner

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Contents

Content warning

This report discusses family, domestic and sexual violence and other material that some people may find distressing. Please consider if reading this report is right for you at this time. If you or someone you know is at risk of immediate harm, please call **Triple Zero (000)**. For counselling and support, please contact:

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The eSafety research program

The purpose of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is to help Australians have safer and more positive experiences online. The eSafety research program supports, encourages, conducts and evaluates research about online safety for Australians. We do this so that:

- our programs, policy and regulatory functions are evidence-informed
- robust, citizen-centred evidence on the prevalence and impact of online harms is available to stakeholders
- the evidence base on what works to prevent and remediate online harms continues to grow.

eSafety research is available at esafety.gov.au/research.

For enquiries about the eSafety research program, please contact research@esafety.gov.au.

Acknowledgements

eSafety acknowledges all First Nations peoples for their continuing care of everything Country encompasses — land, waters and community. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples, and to Elders past, present and future.

eSafety acknowledges the impacts that technology-facilitated abuse have on victim-survivors and pays respect to their strength and resilience.

Attribution and contribution

This is an extended version of a report commissioned by eSafety from KPMG. eSafety has engaged KPMG to undertake user-based research and services designed to inform eSafety's development of a support service for victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse in the context of family, domestic and sexual violence. eSafety acknowledges the contribution of KPMG in supporting the preparation of this report.

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Acronyms

Term	Acronym
Adult cyber abuse	ACA
Australian Human Rights Commission	AHRC
Australian Institute of Criminology	AIC
Culturally and linguistically diverse	CALD
Digital dating abuse	DDA
Domestic violence	DV
Family and domestic violence	FDV
Family, domestic and sexual violence	FDSV
Family violence	FV
Global positioning system	GPS
Image-based abuse	IBA
Internet of Things	IoT
Intimate partner violence	IPV
Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer and/or intersex people	LGBTQI+ **Some studies refer to this cohort as LGBTQ+ or LGB+, depending on the participants in their study.*
Multimedia messaging service	MMS
Non-consensual intimate image	NCII
Online sexual harassment	OSH
Personal Safety Survey	PSS
Post-traumatic stress disorder	PTSD
Sexual violence	SV
Short messaging service	SMS
Technology-facilitated abuse	TFA
Technology-facilitated abuse within the context of family, domestic and sexual violence	FDSV-TFA
Technology-facilitated coercive control	TFCC
Technology-facilitated gender-based violence	TFGBV
Technology-facilitated intimate partner violence	TFIPV
Technology-facilitated sexual assault	TFSA
Technology-facilitated sexual violence	TFSV
United Kingdom	UK
United States	US

Glossary

Term	Definition
Culturally and linguistically diverse	'Culturally and linguistically diverse' is a broad and inclusive descriptor of communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art and religious characteristics (eSafety Commissioner 2019a).
Cultural safety	'Cultural safety is about overcoming the power imbalances of places, people and policies that occur between the majority non-Indigenous position and the minority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person so that there is no assault, challenge or denial of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person's identity, of who they are and what they need. Cultural safety is met through actions from the majority position which recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is the recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe' (Closing the Gap 2020).
Deepfake	A 'deepfake' is an extremely realistic – though falsified – image or video that shows a real person doing or saying something that they did not actually do or say. Deepfakes are created using artificial intelligence software that draws on a large number of photographs or recordings of the person. Deepfakes have been used to create fake news, celebrity pornographic videos and malicious hoaxes (eSafety Commissioner n.d.-a).
Digital dating abuse	'Digital dating abuse' refers to the use of digital technologies, such as texting, dating apps and social media, to engage in threatening, monitoring, harassing, coercive and/or intimidating behaviour towards a (usually non-cohabiting) dating partner. It is often used to refer to dating and relationship abuse among younger populations, such as adolescents and young adults, who are typically not yet involved in cohabiting, married and/or de facto intimate partnerships (Brown et al. 2022; Reed et al. 2017, 2021).
Digital technology	'Digital technology' refers to digital tools, systems and devices that generate, store or process data. Examples include (but are not limited to) mobile phones, smartphones, computers, tablets, laptops, notepads and global positioning system devices, keyloggers (a type of monitoring software designed to log computer key strokes), hidden cameras, webcams, audio bugs, microphones, location-based dating apps, spyware, mobile stalker apps, email accounts, social media, reverse image search, 'find my devices' services and Bluetooth (Brown et al. 2021a).
Domestic violence	'Domestic violence' is a type of family violence that occurs between current or former intimate partners. (It is sometimes referred to as 'intimate partner violence'.) It can include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and other forms of abuse (AIHW 2023b). In this literature scan, domestic violence is considered a subset of family violence and the term typically refers to violent behaviour between current or previous intimate partners.

Term	Definition
Family, domestic and sexual violence	It is acknowledged that there is no universal definition for the term 'family, domestic and sexual violence'. It is used in this report as an umbrella term encompassing family violence, domestic violence and sexual violence. This distinction made between each type of abuse or act of violence accounts for the context in which it occurs.
Family violence	'Family violence' is a broad term referring to violence against people within familial relationships, de facto or intimate relationships, cohabiting relationships, relationships through culture or religion (including kinship ties), and relationships of dependency (including carers, and people with a financial or personal commitment). The term 'family violence' is often used to identify experiences of violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians because it includes a broad range of marital extended family and kin relationships in which violence may occur.
Image-based abuse	'Image-based abuse' refers to sharing, or threatening to share, an intimate image or video without the consent of the person shown. This includes images or videos that have been digitally altered (eSafety Commissioner n.d.-a).
Intersectionality	'Intersectionality' refers to the interconnected nature of various aspects of a person's identity (such as gender, race, religion, sexuality, and physical appearance) that may create overlapping discrimination or disadvantage and potentially compound it. [1] 'In the context of addressing violence against women and children, an intersectional approach recognises that the way women experience gender and inequality can be different based on a range of other cultural, individual, historical, environmental or structural factors including (but not limited to) race, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ability or class. This approach also recognises that the drivers, dynamics and impacts of violence women experience can be compounded and magnified by their experience of other forms of oppression and inequality, resulting in some groups of women experiencing higher rates and/or more severe forms of violence, or facing barriers to support and safety that other women do not experience' (Commonwealth of Australia 2022:129).
Intimate image	An image or video is usually classed as 'intimate' if it shows a person nude or partly naked, with private parts of their body in close-up (even if they have underwear on), during a private activity such as showering or having sex, or without the religious or cultural clothes or accessories they would normally wear in public (such as a hijab) (eSafety Commissioner n.d.-a). The images or videos can be real or fake (e.g. a photoshopped image or a deepfake, or a nude photo tagged with someone's name even though it is not them) (eSafety Commissioner n.d.-a).
Intimate partner cyberstalking	'Intimate partner cyberstalking' refers to cyberstalking behaviour towards current, former or potential intimate partners (Smoker and March 2017). 'Cyberstalking' involves repeated threats or harassment through digital technology, including gathering information, impersonation, computer hacking, false accusations, publishing content about the victim, or repeated contact to monitor, harass, intimidate or threaten the victim via mobile phone, email, internet sites, drone technology or other means (Henry et al. 2020a).

[1] Definition provided by the eSafety Commissioner.

Term	Definition
Intimate partner violence	'Intimate partner violence' is defined as any behaviour within an intimate relationship (including current or former cohabiting and/or non-cohabiting partners) that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship (Patra et al. 2018).
Online sexual harassment	'Online sexual harassment' includes offensive, humiliating or intimidating conduct facilitated by digital technologies that is unwanted or unwelcome and is of a sexual nature (Henry et al. 2020a). It can include a range of behaviours, such as unwanted sexual attention or requests for sex, image-based harassment, rape threats, sexual coercion, gender- or sexuality-based hate speech, and cyberstalking (Barak 2005; Henry et al. 2020a).
Sexual violence	'Sexual violence' refers to behaviours of a sexual nature carried out without a person's consent. It includes sexual assault, sexual threats, sexual harassment and image-based abuse. Sexual violence can occur in the context of family or domestic violence, or it can be perpetrated by other people known to the victim or by strangers (AIHW 2023b).
Social media service	'Social media service' is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, content sharing and collaboration. Examples include (but are not limited to) Facebook, Instagram, Twitter [now 'X'] and Snapchat (Cambridge Dictionary 2023). Social media services are also referred to as 'social media' in this report. While this literature scan uses the above definition of social media service, it should be noted that under the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth), which eSafety administers, 'social media service' means an electronic service that enables online social interaction between two or more end-users and that allows end-users to link to, and interact with, some or all end-users as well as to post material on the service.
Technology-facilitated abuse	'Technology-facilitated abuse' is any form of abuse that is enabled through digital technologies, including online.[2] The term 'technology-facilitated abuse' is wide ranging and is inclusive of many types of interpersonal violence and abuse utilising a range of digital technologies. These can include stalking and monitoring behaviours, psychological and emotional abuse (including threats), sexual violence and harassment and image-based abuse (Henry et al. 2020a). The term can also refer more broadly to forms of general online harassment and cyber abuse. However, Australian policy and emerging research has generally focused on gendered violence – in particular, the ways that technologies are used as a tool to enact family and domestic violence (Flynn et al. 2021b).
Technology-facilitated coercive control	Also sometimes referred to as digital coercive control, the term 'technology-facilitated coercive control' seeks to recognise the features of domestic violence as a pattern of coercive and controlling abuse, as distinct from isolated incidents of technology-facilitated abuse generally. 'Technology-facilitated coercive control' refers to violence and abuse by current or former intimate partners, facilitated by digital technologies, and can include harassment via social media, stalking, monitoring, audio and visual recording, threats, accessing accounts without permission,

[2] Definition provided by the eSafety Commissioner.

Term	Definition
	impersonating a person, and publishing private information (doxxing) or sexualised content without consent (see Dragiewicz et al. 2018a, 2018b).
Technology-facilitated gender-based violence	'Technology-facilitated gender-based violence' is a subset of technology-facilitated abuse. It captures all forms of violence and abuse that occur online or through other digital technologies and that are rooted in harmful gender norms, discrimination, modes of oppression and unequal structures. It is a multidimensional, systemic and intersectional form of violence that captures every type of violence and abuse.[3]
Technology-facilitated sexual assault	'Technology-facilitated sexual assault' refers to the use of digital technologies as a means of procuring rape or sexual assault (Henry and Powell 2018; Rowse 2023; Rowse et al. 2022).
Technology-facilitated sexual violence	'Technology-facilitated sexual violence' is a subset of technology-facilitated abuse and refers to a range of behaviours where digital technologies are used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms. Technology-facilitated sexual violence includes online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, image-based abuse and technology-facilitated sexual assault (Henry and Powell 2018).
Trauma-informed care and practice	'Trauma-informed care and practice' recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people and communities. 'Trauma-informed care and practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma in all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatising individuals and support safety, choice and control to promote healing' (Commonwealth of Australia 2023:76).
Victim-survivor	'Victim-survivor' is a term used in this report to refer to a person who has direct, first-hand experience of family, domestic or sexual violence within the context of technology-facilitated abuse. The term is understood to acknowledge the strength and resilience shown by people who have experienced, or are currently living with, violence (Commonwealth of Australia 2022).

[3] Definition provided by the eSafety Commissioner.

Overview

Key findings

99.3%

of Australian family, domestic and sexual violence practitioners had clients who experienced technology-facilitated family and domestic violence[a]

62.3%

of Australian adults surveyed online (aged 18-54) had experienced technology-facilitated sexual violence[b]

72%

of Australians who used a dating app or website experienced sexual violence[c]

Perpetrators of technology-facilitated sexual violence are more likely to be men than women[a]

9,060

image-based abuse reports handled by eSafety in 2022-23 – a 117% increase on the previous year[d]

Family, domestic and sexual violence practitioners reported seeing more video cameras and tracking apps being used since 2015[a]

2 in 3

Australian family, domestic and sexual violence practitioners reported seeing text messaging used 'all the time' to facilitate technology-facilitated abuse[a]

1 in 3

victim-survivors of image-based abuse experienced multiple forms of abuse perpetrated by a current or former partner[e]

People most at risk

People who are at greater risk of experiencing technology-facilitated abuse as part of family, domestic and sexual violence include:

- Women and girls
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Women with disability
- LGBTQI+ people
- Women in rural areas

Impacts

Technology enables perpetrators of abuse to **exert power and control** over victim-survivors in a variety of ways

Constant surveillance can **prevent victim-survivors from undertaking daily activities** or contacting support services

Victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse can experience **amplified levels of fear** as a result of control and harassment

Victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse can experience **mental health issues**, with hypervigilance and ongoing fear leading to anxiety and PTSD

[a]Woodlock D, Bentley K, Schulze D, Mahoney N, Chung D and Pracilio A (2020a) *Second national survey of technology abuse and domestic violence in Australia*, WESNET.
[b]Powell A and Henry N (2019) 'Technology-facilitated sexual violence victimization: results from an online survey of Australian adults', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(17):3637–3665.
[c]Wolbers H, Boxall H, Long C and Gunnoo, A (2022) *Sexual harassment, aggression and violence victimisation among mobile dating app and website users in Australia*, (Research report no. 25), Australian Institute of Criminology.
[d]eSafety Commissioner 2023a. Annual performance information 2022–23 provided by eSafety Commissioner, Australian Government, in September 2023.
[e]Powell A, Flynn A and Hindes S (2022a) *Technology-facilitated abuse: national survey of Australian adults' experiences*, (Research report, 12/2022), ANROWS.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is developing a support service to provide practical advice, guidance and support to victim-survivors of technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) in the context of family violence (FV), domestic violence (DV) and sexual violence (SV) (or FDSV-TFA) and the frontline workers who support them. A literature scan has been undertaken as part of a broader co-design process for the development of this proposed support service.

The purpose of the literature scan is to provide a robust summary of the nature, prevalence and impacts of, and responses to, FDSV-TFA. The document seeks to identify barriers to and enablers for responding to TFA, as well as current forms of support available for victim-survivors within Australia. This aligns with the scope of the proposed support service and will inform its development. It is important to note that some of the literature defines and examines technology-facilitated family and domestic violence (FDV) as distinct from technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). This report reflects this distinction.

Alongside findings from this literature scan, consultations with victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA and other stakeholders will be conducted to build an evidence base to inform the development of the new support service.

The literature scan has been guided by five key research questions and lines of inquiry regarding FDSV-TFA. The five research questions are:

1) What is the prevalence and nature of FDSV-TFA in Australia?
2) Are any groups disproportionately impacted by FDSV-TFA?
3) What responses are effective in addressing FDSV-TFA?
4) What are the enablers for and barriers to FDSV-TFA support services?
5) What types of programs and interventions are in operation, including delivery modes and settings?

Appendix A outlines the key research questions and lines of inquiry for which literature has been identified and explored in this literature scan. These questions were designed to help fill identified gaps in knowledge around best practice in terms of responding to FDSV-TFA and around how the new support service will meet the needs of victim-survivors. The literature scan presents findings from the research available in the public domain, including academic literature, grey literature and evaluations. The literature scan focuses on TFA that occurs within the context of FDV or of SV, noting that little research has been conducted within the broader context of FDSV-TFA.

1.2 Methodological approach

The key steps in conducting the literature scan were as follows:

1) Initial online searches were conducted based on identified terms related to the key research questions. These terms were used to determine the relevance of documents to the literature scan. Examples of key terms included 'digital dating abuse' and 'image-based abuse'. **Appendix B** outlines the search terms used to answer the key research questions and lines of inquiry.
2) A preliminary scan was conducted on titles and abstracts/summaries of a wide range of documents to identify those that were relevant to the key research questions.
3) Articles identified from the preliminary scan process were read in full for inclusion in the scan. Documents directly provided by eSafety were also reviewed in full.
4) By checking the reference lists of articles, a 'snowballing' process was used to locate additional sources.

Findings from the academic peer-reviewed literature and literature published within the past five years were prioritised for inclusion in the review. However, due to the relatively small volume of literature available, information from the grey literature and websites (hosted by governments or service providers), including information published more than five years previously, was also reviewed.

Key findings, including any emerging themes, were recorded against the key research questions in a concise and easily searchable format. This summary was then used to inform the writing of the full literature scan, with the original source articles being consulted and any additional research being conducted, as needed, throughout the writing process.

1.3 Background and context

Family, domestic and sexual violence is a pressing national policy priority within Australia. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey (PSS), one in four (27%) women and one in eight (12%) men have experienced violence from an intimate partner or a family member since the age of 15 (ABS 2023). Additionally, one in five (22%) women and one in 16 (6.1%) men have experienced sexual violence, and one in five (20%) women and one in 15 (6.8%) men have experienced stalking, since the age of 15 (ABS 2023). The *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032* identifies the disproportionate experiences and impacts of TFA on women; in particular, it identifies that women often experience TFA alongside multiple forms of abuse from a current or former intimate partner (Commonwealth of Australia 2022).

TFA in the context of FDSV is widely understood in the Australian policy context to be gendered in nature, with women over-represented as victim-survivors, and men over-represented as perpetrators of intimate partner abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment. TFA is increasingly also understood as being *intersectional*, with some communities who experience multiple forms of disadvantage or discrimination being at greater risk of experiencing TFA and/or its impacts (Commonwealth of Australia 2022; eSafety 2020b). Importantly, recognising the potential gendered

and intersectional nature of TFA in the context of FDSV does not mean that *only* women experience victimisation, nor that *only* men engage in perpetration. Rather, it calls to attention the varying ways in which different groups of women and men may experience different risks of TFA or experience the impacts of TFA differently.

The increased use of digital technology in both personal and professional lives has resulted in TFA becoming more widespread. This is particularly important within the context of FDSV, as digital technologies can be used to extend existing patterns and characteristics of abuse (Fernet et al. 2019). For example, digital technology use has provided an opportunity for perpetrators to obtain the power to exert greater control, and to monitor, stalk and harass victim-survivors beyond the physical space (Duerksen and Woodin 2019; Harris 2018; Harris and Woodlock 2022).

Perpetrators of FDSV-TFA can use a range of digital technologies, including mobile phones, social media services, global positioning system (GPS) tracking devices and online accounts (such as email), to control, abuse, track and intimidate victim-survivors. A national survey on the use of technology to facilitate family and domestic violence found that, according to FDSV practitioners, mobile phones are the most frequently used digital technology, and texting and social media (such as Facebook) are the most commonly used services, by which perpetrators make unwanted contact with or abuse a partner or ex-partner (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

By controlling digital technology in the home, perpetrators are able to cut off victim-survivors from family members and friends, as well as from vital pathways to access support (Douglas et al. 2019). This behaviour has led to further isolation of victim-survivors, who may rely on technology to remain connected to their family and friends or to access services (Louie 2021). These groups include women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and migrant and refugee women who rely on social media services to contact family and friends, and women with disability who may rely on technology for services and interactions (eSafety Commissioner 2021; Louie 2021).

In addition, digital technologies are used to facilitate both online and face-to-face sexual violence (Henry and Powell 2018). Individuals can use digital technologies to perpetrate online sexual harassment and image-based abuse, and a carriage service to coerce a victim-survivor into an unwanted sexual act (i.e. technology-facilitated sexual assault – TFSA) (Henry and Powell 2018).

The types of FDSV-TFA are expanding and diversifying with new and emerging developments in digital technologies. The full range of potential technological threats is challenging to track exhaustively, and FDSV-TFA is causing considerable problems for victim-survivors (Mandau 2021). Research suggests that support workers in FDSV organisations are struggling to respond to TFA (Freed et al. 2017). This is because FDSV-TFA can often outstrip the technological knowledge of those who work in the FDSV sector, with many of them not having the skills or abilities to diagnose and respond suitably to various forms of FDSV-TFA (Flynn et al. 2023a). Furthermore, some research suggests that criminal justice responses are insufficiently utilised in cases of FDSV-TFA, with an Australian study suggesting that some victim-survivors of TFA are still not taken seriously by police (Harris and Woodlock 2019).

1.4 Limitations

The limitations of this literature scan relate to three key areas.

1. Limited scope and coverage of findings

This literature scan is not an academic or systematic review of all existing materials and sources in the literature relating to FDSV-TFA. It is instead a targeted desktop scan and deep-dive analysis of the publicly available literature aimed at informing the development of a funded government service. As such, the findings of this scan do not represent an exhaustive search of all available literature. To answer the five key research questions, online searches were conducted based on identified search terms relating to those questions to determine the relevance of sources identified in the literature scan.

2. Difficulty in comparing findings across the literature

There is a wide range of methodologies and sample sizes within the literature, which makes direct comparisons difficult. In addition, there is no consistent or agreed-upon definition of FDSV-TFA across the literature.

Although the literature scan predominantly draws on studies within each setting (FDV and SV settings) to generate overarching findings that are applicable to FDSV-TFA, it is important to note that these contexts may not always be directly comparable. Where appropriate and to further inform understanding, some studies examining TFA more broadly have also been drawn upon.

3. Limited availability of relevant literature

The literature scan has been guided by five key research questions and lines of inquiry. The robustness of the findings under each key research question and line of inquiry is dependent on the availability of existing literature. As FDSV-TFA is an emerging form of abuse, there is limited available literature on effective responses for addressing FDSV-TFA, as well as on the types of programs and interventions currently in operation across Australia.

1.5 Report structure

The remainder of the document is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** outlines the common types of FDSV-TFA, its prevalence (including among at-risk groups) and its impact on victim-survivors.
- **Chapter 3** outlines the enablers and barriers in responding to FDSV-TFA and the forms of support currently available in Australia.
- **Chapter 4** provides a summary of the key insights arising from the literature scan.
- **Appendix A** outlines the key research questions and lines of inquiry.
- **Appendix B** outlines the key search terms used to identify relevant literature.
- **Appendix C** provides a complete reference list of sources used in the literature scan.

2 Understanding the problem

Summary

Technology-facilitated abuse is a growing issue within the context of family, domestic and sexual violence. It presents serious risks and implications for the safety of victim-survivors. Perpetrators of FDSV-TFA can enact abuse in a variety of ways using a range of digital technologies.

The literature reveals that FDSV-TFA is a gendered issue. Women, men and gender-diverse people experience different forms of FDSV-TFA, and the impact of the abuse can differ by gender. For many victim-survivors, FDSV-TFA is just one aspect of the complex pattern of FDSV abuse, as perpetrators use a broad range of tactics to exert power and control over them. The rapidly changing nature of technology gives rise to different means by which perpetrators can maintain control and cause harm. This has implications for the different ways and settings (extending beyond the physical space and time) in which victim-survivors can experience the impact of FDSV-TFA.

Certain cohorts of people are more at risk of experiencing FDSV-TFA, either because social modes of discrimination and oppression increase their risk or because their context may provide unique ways to facilitate abuse. These cohorts also face additional barriers to accessing support. The literature identifies some protective factors at the individual and community level; however, these factors are relatively scarce.

2.1 Types of FDSV-TFA and facilitating technologies

2.1.1 Types of FDSV-TFA

FDSV-TFA encompasses many subtypes of abuse enabled by digital technology, including (but not limited to) intimate partner cyberstalking, digital dating abuse (DDA), technology-facilitated sexual violence, technology-facilitated sexual assault, image-based abuse (IBA), online sexual harassment (OSH) and technology-facilitated coercive control (TFCC). As different forms of FDSV-TFA often overlap, it is important to note that the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Intimate partner cyberstalking

The term ‘cyberstalking’ (also referred to as ‘technology-facilitated stalking’) has been used to describe a variety of behaviours that involve repeated threats or harassment through digital technology (Henry et al. 2020a). Behaviours include gathering information, impersonation, computer hacking, false accusations, publishing content about the victim, or repeated contact to monitor, harass, intimidate or threaten the victim via mobile phone, email, internet sites, drone technology or

other means (Henry et al. 2020a). 'Intimate partner cyberstalking' refers to cyberstalking behaviour towards current, former or potential intimate partners (Smoker and March 2017). Stalking behaviours, including cyberstalking, can constitute criminal offences in all Australian states and territories where the behaviours are repeated (referred to as a *course of conduct*), and where they have the *intention of causing harm* (physical or psychological) to the victim and/or *arousing fear* for the victim's or another person's safety. Such behaviours may also constitute crimes under state and/or federal legislation, such as: *using a carriage service to make a threat* (*Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) s 474.15), or to *menace, harass or cause offence* (s 474.17); or other computer-specific crimes, such as unauthorised access, impairment or modification offences.

Digital dating abuse

DDA involves the use of digital technologies to perpetrate abuse in dating relationships. It is often used to refer to dating and relationship abuse among younger populations, such as adolescents and young adults, who are typically not yet involved in cohabiting, married and/or de facto intimate partnerships. While there is no definitive list of behaviours in the literature of what constitutes DDA, many studies refer to the use of digital technologies to monitor and control, threaten, humiliate, harass or sexually coerce a dating partner (Brown et al. 2022; Reed et al. 2017, 2021). DDA can therefore include criminal behaviours such as cyberstalking, criminal threats and image-based abuse, as well as other forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence perpetrated within the context of dating relationships.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence

TFSV is a subset of TFA and refers to a range of behaviours where digital technologies are used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms. TFSV includes online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, image-based abuse and sexual assault facilitated by technology (Powell and Henry 2014, 2017; Powell 2022). It can also include sexual coercion, whereby a perpetrator uses threats, pressure, blackmail or force to compel a person to perform unwanted sex acts. This might include where the coercion is communicated via digital technologies, and/or where the sex acts are recorded, broadcast or shared via digital technologies (Powell and Henry 2017). TFSV occurs in a range of relational contexts, including intimate relationships and dating relationships, as well as outside of these relationships. In the context of FDSV, TFSV can be used by perpetrators as part of a larger pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour (Powell 2021). Some forms of online TFSV can constitute a criminal offence – for example, using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence (*Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) s 474.17), or stalking, where the behaviours are repeated and intended to cause harm or fear.

Technology-facilitated sexual assault

TFSA is a form of TFSV and refers to the use of mobile phones, email, social networking sites, chat rooms, online dating sites and other digital technologies by sexual predators as a means of procuring rape or sexual assault (Henry and Powell 2018; Rowse 2023; Rowse et al. 2022). This might involve the befriending of the victim-survivor on an online dating site before arranging to meet them in person to carry out a sexual assault. Alternatively, it might involve 'rape by proxy', where the offender posts messages online calling on third parties to rape or sexually assault the victim-survivor (Henry and Powell 2016). Sexual assault is a criminal offence in each Australian state and territory,

including in circumstances where a victim-survivor did not 'freely agree' and a perpetrator took no active steps to ascertain consent or was reckless as to whether the person was consenting or not.

Image-based abuse

IBA is a form of TFSV and is also referred to as 'image-based sexual abuse' (McGlynn et al. 2021), 'non-consensual intimate image abuse' (NCII) (StopNCII 2023) and 'non-consensual pornography' (Citron and Franks 2014; Franks 2019; Maddocks 2018). It includes three key forms:

1) the non-consensual creation or taking of intimate images (i.e. photographs or videos)
2) the non-consensual sharing or distribution of intimate images
3) threats made to share intimate images (Henry et al. 2018; Powell et al. 2019).

Perpetrators may be motivated to engage in IBA for the purposes of revenge, sexual pleasure or power, or to seek enjoyment, entertainment, social status or monetary gain (Henry et al. 2018). Sexual extortion is another manifestation of IBA, where perpetrators may elicit private information or intimate image(s) and use this material to blackmail, bribe or threaten the victim-survivor (Henry et al. 2020b).

IBA can manifest in a variety of ways – for example, photographing or filming the victim-survivor without their knowledge, in either public or private settings, or recording consensual or non-consensual sexual encounters without the consent or knowledge of the victim-survivor (Henry et al. 2020b). It may involve the production of digitally altered images that appear to depict the victim-survivor in a sexual way, referred to as 'fake porn' (or 'deepfakes' when involving the use of artificial intelligence) (Chesney and Citron 2019; Flynn et al. 2021a, 2022c). Other examples of IBA include threats to share intimate images via mobile phone, email, social media and other internet sites without consent, including on what is referred to as 'revenge porn' or 'ex-girlfriend' websites, where personal details of victim-survivors are posted alongside their image or video (Henry et al. 2020a).

Research has also increasingly found that victim-survivors of domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV) often experience forms of IBA, including sexual images being recorded without their knowledge or consent, threats of distribution of images if the victim-survivor reports the abuse to police or leaves the relationship, and threats that sexual images will be shown to family members and/or children (Powell 2021). IBA is a specific criminal offence in most Australian states and territories, with additional laws also applying. For example, the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) includes offences for recording, distributing or threatening to distribute an intimate image without consent (ss 91P, 91Q, 91R), and for videoing or photographing a person's genital or anal area (s 91L).

Online sexual harassment

OSH is a form of TFSV and includes offensive, humiliating or intimidating conduct that is unwanted or unwelcome and is of a sexual nature (Henry et al. 2020a). OSH can include a range of behaviours such as unwanted sexual attention or requests for sex, image-based harassment (sending sexual content or pornography to another person without their consent), simulated rape,[4] rape threats,

[4] An unwanted, forced or non-consensual sexually explicit behaviour performed by virtual characters, to one another, acting through representations in a virtual environment (Danaher 2018).

sexual coercion, gender- or sexuality-based hate speech, and cyberstalking (Barak 2005; Henry et al. 2020a). Research suggests that women experience significantly greater frequency of sexual harassment in digital environments, and that when online abuse is directed at women it is often of a sexual nature (de Araújo et al. 2022). However, while sexually harassing behaviours can also occur in the contexts of both domestic and dating abuse, many experiences of OSH are perpetrated by strangers or acquaintances in online networks (Salerno-Ferraro et al. 2022). While some forms of OSH can constitute a criminal offence, such as using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence (*Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) s 474.17), often it can be difficult to pursue criminal charges where the perpetrator is unknown or outside of the victim's jurisdiction.

Technology-facilitated coercive control

TFCC seeks to recognise the features of domestic violence as a pattern of coercive and controlling abuse, as distinct from isolated incidents of TFA generally. The term *coercive control* more generally was originally coined by Evan Stark (1994, 2007) and can be defined as:

> … an offense to liberty that prevents women from freely developing their personhood, utilizing their capacities, or practising citizenship, consequences they experience as entrapment [Stark 2007:4].

An understanding of coercive control calls on service and justice responses to see the holistic pattern of a perpetrator's abusive behaviours, as opposed to the tendency of criminal justice to focus on discrete physical assault, sexual assault, threats or property damage – a 'violent incidents' model of domestic violence (Stark 2012). Rather, strategies of coercive control can include isolation, intimidation, threats, shaming, gaslighting, surveillance, stalking and degradation (Stark 2007). Each individual act might not necessarily be criminal, or it may be viewed by law enforcement as too minor to take action; however, the pattern of relentless control with little respite leaves a victim-survivor in a highly restrictive space in which they are constantly monitoring and adapting their behaviour in order to avoid abuse (Stark 2007, 2012).

Also sometimes referred to as 'digital coercive control', TFCC refers to such coercive and controlling behaviours towards current or former intimate partners, facilitated by digital technologies, and can therefore include many of the behaviours described above. What distinguishes TFCC from, for example, more general experiences of TFA is the *repeated pattern of behaviours* and the *impacts* that these have on victim-survivors – such that what may appear to a first responder (e.g. a support line, social worker or police) to be a relatively minor incident in isolation, may cause high levels of fear, anxiety and feelings of surveillance and unsafety, precisely due to a broader and ongoing set of abusive tactics. Much of the research literature into TFCC has highlighted its disproportionate occurrence and impacts on women as victim-survivors of domestic violence or intimate partner abuse (see e.g. Dragiewicz et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2022; Havard and Lefevre 2020; Woodlock et al. 2020a, 2020b). While some individual behaviours are already crimes under Australian laws, there has also been criminal legislation passed or proposed in some states specifically to recognise the harms of coercive control (whether by technologies or other means – e.g. *Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* (Qld); Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Bill 2022 (NSW)).

2.1.2 Technologies used to facilitate FDSV-TFA

There are a range of digital technologies used to perpetrate FDSV-TFA, including both online (internet-enabled) and other digital technologies (Grimani et al. 2022). These include (but are not limited to) tracking applications and spyware, personal devices including mobile phones and tablets, online accounts and social media services (Powell et al. 2019; Henry et al. 2020a; Harris and Woodlock 2022).

Tracking applications and spyware

Perpetrators of FDSV-TFA can install tracking applications and spyware apps, including GPS trackers, location-based apps, smart home speakers and parental tracking apps, to monitor and track victim-survivors, mainly without their awareness or consent (Powell and Henry 2018). Tracking apps provide an opportunity for perpetrators to monitor victim-survivors beyond physical boundaries, particularly post-separation and divorce (Douglas et al. 2019).

WESNET's 2020 Second National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia (2020 Second National Survey), which surveyed 442 Australian frontline FDSV practitioners, reported that practitioners were seeing GPS tracking apps (i.e. smartphones) used 'all the time' (16.2%) and 'often' (45.6%) to facilitate TFA (Woodlock et al. 2020a). This was a marked increase from 2015, when 7.1% of practitioners reported seeing GPS tracking apps used 'all the time' and 26.15% 'often'.

When considering the tactics used by perpetrators to facilitate TFA, practitioners observed that women were being tracked with GPS via apps or devices (28% 'all the time' and 37.5% 'often') (Woodlock et al. 2020a), which was an increase from that observed in 2015. In addition, 18.2% of practitioners reported that they 'often' see perpetrators installing spyware on phones to monitor women's email, text messages and phone.

In the same study, practitioners reported large increases in the frequency with which they are seeing video cameras being used in TFA, from 12.5% in 2015 to 35.4% in 2020. This could be due to the growth in accessibility and affordability of video technology (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Personal devices

Personal devices, including mobile phones and tablets, can be used to harass, manipulate, control and stalk victim-survivors and potentially to enhance surveillance (Havard and Lefevre 2020). Victim-survivors can receive very high numbers of messages (via voice calls, phone calls and text messages) from perpetrators (Harris and Woodlock 2022). While the content of the messages may not in and of itself be abusive, the constant and unrelenting frequency constitutes harm.

In the 2020 Second National Survey, smartphones were frequently observed by FDSV practitioners to facilitate TFA, with 36.1% seeing this 'all the time' and 49.1% seeing this 'often' (Woodlock et al. 2020a). In an earlier qualitative study conducted from 2014 to 2017 with 55 Australian women victim-survivors of FDV, 47 women (72%) who participated in the study reported that their mobile phones were used by abusers as a tool of abuse. The women reported that abusers sometimes controlled their use of phones, destroyed them, deactivated their accounts and added applications (e.g. a location-based tracking app) without their consent (Douglas et al. 2019).

In the 2020 Second National Survey, almost two-thirds (60.1%) of FDSV practitioners reported seeing text messages used to facilitate TFA 'all the time' and 36.5% saw this 'often'. Smartphone instant

messaging was also frequently observed (44.5% 'often'). FDSV practitioners reported that text messages were used in various ways to perpetrate TFA, including constantly sending messages to victim-survivors and sending carefully worded messages that would cause victim-survivors to be fearful (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

In addition, almost half of FDSV practitioners in the survey observed that perpetrators were coercing women to film and record intimate images 'often'. Practitioners stated that they felt this was likely to be under-reported by victim-survivors (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Online accounts

The nature of intimate relationships means that perpetrators are often able to gain access to victim-survivors' online accounts and/or devices, as couples might have shared passwords during a relationship (Leitão 2021). This may become problematic when the relationship ends, as some perpetrators still have access to the victim-survivor's accounts, including financial accounts (Havard and Lefevre 2020). The emergence of 'the cloud' and the possibility of automatically backing up devices to a central storage location (e.g. iCloud, Dropbox, Google Drive) means that perpetrators may only need a single password to access a great deal of the victim-survivor's personal information and communications (Leitão 2021). Perpetrators of abuse may also take advantage of the fact that they may be the legal owner of the victim-survivor's device or online account and remove the victim-survivor's access to their device or account as a form of control (Freed et al. 2018). When partners or ex-partners who exhibit controlling behaviours gain access to victim-survivors' social media accounts and other personal digital files, this contributes to feelings of the abuser being ever-present and controlling (Dunn 2021); sometimes referred to as an 'omnipresence' (Woodlock 2017).

FDSV practitioners who participated in the 2020 Second National Survey reported that the accessing of government accounts (e.g. Centrelink) by perpetrators has significantly increased since 2015, with almost one-third of practitioners in 2020 (27%) seeing this 'all the time' and 37.8% 'often' (Woodlock et al. 2020a). Participants also reported that iCloud was commonly used by perpetrators to stalk and place women under surveillance, with almost half (42.2%) observing this 'often' (Woodlock et al. 2020a). In a 2019 Australian qualitative study with 20 TFA victim-survivors and 10 DV service providers, victim-survivors reported that perpetrators had logged into their accounts (e.g. healthcare accounts and email) without authorisation (Dragiewicz et al. 2019).

Social media services

Social media services have also become a means for abusers to perpetrate FDSV-TFA, including continued surveillance, coercive control, stalking and harassment of victim-survivors (Douglas et al. 2019). Online messages and posts through social media are often used to harass and intimidate victim-survivors within the context of FDSV (Henry et al. 2019a; Leitão 2021). In a 2019 Australian qualitative study with 20 TFA DV victim-survivors and 10 DV service providers, victim-survivors reported that perpetrators logged into their social media accounts, contacted others in their name and created fake social media profiles under their name (Dragiewicz et al. 2019). Victim-survivors also reported fake accounts being set up on social media to harass and monitor them.

In the 2020 Second National Survey, FDSV practitioners reported that social media services were commonly used to 'abuse, call women names, or put women down', with 37.5% observing this happening 'all the time' and 32.6% 'often'. In addition, practitioners observed that social media

services were commonly used to threaten victim-survivors, with just over one-third (30.2%) of participating FDSV practitioners observing this happening 'all the time' and 34.6% 'often' (Woodlock et al. 2020a). Facebook was reported to be used frequently by perpetrators to facilitate TFA (35.1% noting this as occurring 'all the time' and 50.8% 'often').

Social media services are used by perpetrators of IBA to distribute intimate images without consent, alongside other forms of interpersonal communication methods such as mobile phones and email. The use of these interpersonal communication methods to perpetrate IBA also means that, despite social media services being a highly common mode of image distribution, it is possible that many victim-survivors never discover that images of them have been either created or distributed (Henry et al. 2019a). Dating websites and apps are also settings for sexual violence and abuse, including IBA, and as settings that facilitate TFSA (Filice et al. 2022).

The work of eSafety provides an indication of the extent of IBA being facilitated through social media services. In 2022–2023, eSafety notified social media services of more than 4,500 accounts used to elicit, share or threaten to share intimate content, with 81% of those accounts successful removed (eSafety Commissioner 2023a). In addition, a national survey (*n*=4,122) examining IBA in a sample of Australians aged over 15 years found that among online adults who experienced IBA, the most common channel through which the photos/videos were distributed was a Facebook service (53%), either Facebook directly (47%) or Messenger (10%). This was followed by SMS/MMS (30%), Snapchat (11%) and email (11%) for Australian dating app or website users aged 18 years or over.

Restricted access, device sabotage and account interference

While many examples of FDSV-TFA involve the active use or deployment of specific devices (such as location trackers, hidden cameras, spyware, or engagement in harmful communications), it is worth noting that abusive behaviours can also occur through restricting a victim-survivor's access to technologies, sabotaging their devices, and/or interfering with their devices and accounts. For example, perpetrators may set up and control household devices (including modems and shared devices) and/or the victim-survivor's mobile phone, to restrict access to content or applications, including social media networks, to further control and isolate them. Devices may also be deliberately sabotaged, or use of them controlled under supervisory circumstances, preventing victim-survivors from having independent means of communication. The victim-survivor's account may also be interfered with. In some studies, victim-survivors have described perpetrators logging into work devices and deleting or rescheduling their meetings to sabotage their employment (see e.g. Freed et al. 2018; Johnson et al. 2022).

2.2 Prevalence of FDSV-TFA

2.2.1 People experiencing FDSV-TFA

The prevalence of FDSV-TFA in Australia

The evidence indicates that while under-reported, there is a high prevalence rate of technology-facilitated abuse in Australia. For example, in a 2022 representative national survey of 4,562 Australian men and women aged 18 years and over, one in two (51%) had experienced at least one TFA behaviour (measured via 30 items describing unwanted, harassing and harmful behaviours that

they had ever experienced either online or via any digital device, such as a mobile phone, tablet or desktop computer, gaming console and/or telephone) in their lifetime (Powell et al. 2022a). Specifically, one in three (34%) Australians had experienced monitoring or controlling behaviours; one in three (31%) had experienced emotional abuse or threats; one in four (27%) had experienced harassing behaviours; and one in four (25%) had experienced IBA (Powell et al. 2022a).

Furthermore, research suggests that FDSV-TFA is a widespread issue in Australia, as demonstrated by the prevalence of people experiencing TFA within both FDV and SV contexts. In the 2022 national survey referred to above, one in three most recent TFA victimisation experiences occurred in a current or former intimate partner relationship, with women more likely to experience partner abuse TFA than men (Powell et al. 2022a) (discussed further below). Meanwhile, the 2020 Second National Survey of 442 FDSV practitioners found that almost all (99.3%) practitioners had clients who had experienced technology-facilitated DV (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

In a 2019 online survey of 2,956 Australian adults aged 18–54 years (50.1% women, 49.1% men and 0.8% transgender or non-binary people), 62.3% of participants reported having experienced at least one of four dimensions of TFSV behaviours (i.e. digital sexual harassment, IBA, sexual aggression and/or coercion, and gender- and/or sexuality-based hate speech) in their lifetime (Powell and Henry 2019). Meanwhile, in a 2017 survey, it was found that one in ten (11%) of Australians had specifically experienced the non-consensual distribution and/or posting online of an intimate image (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

Furthermore, an online survey conducted in 2021 by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) with 9,987 Australian users of dating apps or websites aged 18 years and over found that nearly three-quarters (72.3%) of participants had experienced online dating app–facilitated SV (i.e. online sexual harassment, abusive and threatening language, online IBA and online stalking) in the past five years (Wolbers et al. 2022).

The global prevalence of FDSV-TFA

A rapid review of the global prevalence and impact of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) reported that its global prevalence ranges from 16% to 58% across a wide range of studies in different countries, with prevalence depending on methodology and the demographic features of survey respondents, such as age and gender (Hicks 2021). Among the examples of prevalence rates reported in this global review, 52% of young women and girls (*n*=8,109) in 180 countries reported experiencing some form of online abuse, including threatening messages, OSH and IBA (Hicks 2021).

In a global systematic review of technology-facilitated intimate partner violence (TFIPV) that included 32 studies, the prevalence of TFA experienced by women in their intimate relationships varied significantly, from less than 1% to 78% (Fernet et al. 2019). OSH within intimate relationships was reported by from less than 1% to up to 70% of women in the reviewed studies, and two studies that examined cyberstalking within intimate relationships found prevalence rates of between 6% and 78%. In addition, a recent systematic review of digital dating abuse that included 16 studies provided an estimated global prevalence rate of 47%, with estimates ranging from 7% to 74% across studies (Martínez-Soto and Ibabe 2023).

In a global survey of women and girls (*n*=14,071) aged 15–25 years across 22 countries, 39% had experienced threats of sexual violence, and 37% sexual harassment, on social media (Plan International 2020). In addition, a systematic review of IBA provided pooled prevalence estimates

that indicated between 7% and 17% of participants across 16 studies (six countries) had experienced IBA (including non-consensual distribution of images, threats to share images, and non-consensual creation of images) (Patel and Roesch 2022).

The gendered nature of FDSV-TFA

Evidence suggests that both men and women experience TFA (Powell and Henry 2019; Powell et al. 2022a). For example, in the 2021 national TFA survey of Australian adults (*n*=4,562), 51.1% of women and 50.8% of men had experienced at least one TFA incident in their lifetime (Powell et al. 2022a). In FDSV, while it is clear from national data that face-to-face patterns of abuse are highly gendered, there are mixed findings in the research into TFA in these contexts (see Powell and Flynn 2023 for a discussion).

For example, the 2022 Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) Fifth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces (Fifth National Survey), conducted with a sample of 10,157 Australians aged 15 years or older, considered technology-facilitated sexual harassment (AHRC 2022). Overall, women were more likely than men to have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. There were also specific technology-facilitated behaviours that women experienced at higher rates than men, including being exposed to:

- sexually explicit images and videos, cartoons, drawings, photographs or jokes that made them feel offended (men: 21%, women: 34%)
- sexually explicit comments made in emails, SMS messages or on social media (men: 18%, women: 29%)
- repeated or inappropriate sexual advances on email, social networking websites, internet chat rooms or other online platforms (men: 12%, women: 22%)
- indecent phone calls, including someone leaving a sexually explicit message on voicemail or an answering machine (men: 10%, women: 20%).

However, some other behaviours were experienced at similar rates, and the AHRC reported that there were overall no gender differences in whether technology was used in other sexual harassment behaviours such as sexually suggestive comments or jokes, repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates, intrusive questions about a person's private life or physical appearance, and requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts (AHRC 2022).

Meanwhile, in the 2022 Australian national TFA survey, significantly more women (28.9%) had experienced sexual and image-based abuse (measured via digital sexual coercion and image-based sexual abuse items) compared to men (19.3%) (Powell et al. 2022a). As discussed above, women (40%) were more likely to experience partner abuse TFA than men (32%); additionally, women were more likely than men to experience fear for their safety (women: 26%, men: 13%) and repeated patterns of abuse (women: 31%, men: 19%), which are further indicative of IPV (Powell et al. 2022a). Similarly, in a 2017 national survey of non-consensual sexual image distribution, one in four young women aged 18–24 (24%) had experienced these harms, among those at the highest risk of victimisation (eSafety Commissioner 2017). Indeed, overall, the survey found that women (15%) were twice as likely as men (7%) to have experienced non-consensual sexual image distribution (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

In contrast, research suggests that men are more likely than women to be the victim of sexual extortion. In May 2023, eSafety reported that the number of sexual extortion reports received increased from 600 in the first quarter of 2022 to more than 1,700 in the first quarter of 2023, and that 90% of reports were from men (eSafety Commissioner 2023b). In a 2021 United States' (US) online survey with 2,006 adult men and women participants considering sexual extortion both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers found that men were more often victims of sexual extortion during the pandemic than women (Eaton et al. 2023). This finding supported another study by the same authors who found that among American middle- and high-school students, boys reported sexual extortion victimisation more frequently than girls (Eaton et al. 2023).

Furthermore, women who are in, or have been in, FDSV relationships may experience higher levels of TFA, as current and former partners are often the perpetrators of TFA (Woodlock 2017). Australian research has identified that the majority of TFA experienced by women is carried out by current or former partners. For example, in the 2021 national TFA survey, significantly more women than men who had experienced TFA reported that it was perpetrated by a partner (24.9% vs. 21.4%) or former partner (15.4% vs. 10.7%) (Powell et al. 2022a). In addition, in a 2019 online survey on IBA with 6,109 participants aged 16–64 years in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (UK), it was found that women (30.1%) were more likely than men (24.2%) to be targeted by an ex-intimate partner (Powell et al. 2020b).

The findings indicate that although both men and women experience TFA, their experiences of FDSV-TFA differ. Furthermore, while FDSV affects people of all ages and backgrounds, research demonstrates that women, girls and sexuality- and gender-diverse people (see Section 2.2.2) are disproportionately impacted by FDSV (Afrouz 2023; Powell and Henry 2019; Henry et al. 2019b; Powell et al. 2020b, 2022a). For example, results from an online TFSV survey of 2,956 Australian adults indicated that women (56.1%) were significantly more likely than men (36.6%) to report the TFSV experience as being moderately upsetting or more (Powell and Henry 2019). Similarly, in the 2022 national survey of TFA (not limited to FDSV-TFA), women victim-survivors were significantly more likely to report emotional impacts from their most recent experience of abuse, compared to men victim-survivors (Powell et al. 2022a). For example, women victim-survivors were more likely than men to report that they felt depressed (34.8% vs. 28%), humiliated (36% vs. 26.4%) or afraid (29.7% vs. 17.5%) after their most recent experience of TFA.

In the multi-country survey of 6,109 respondents across Australia, New Zealand and the UK, women were more likely to report experiencing negative feelings (92.1%) because of IBA, compared to men (75.9%) (Powell et al. 2020b). In addition, women were more likely than men to report negative health impacts (61% vs. 35.1%), and to report reputational concerns (74% vs. 59.1%) because of IBA (Powell et al. 2020b). Similarly, women were more likely than men to report that, in addition to IBA, the same perpetrator had attempted to limit or control them (22.1% vs. 15%), physically harmed them (10.1% vs. 6.1%) and/or caused them to fear for their safety (11.7% vs. 4.8%) (Powell et al. 2022b).

In addition, in a mixed methods research study of IBA that included 4,274 Australian respondents aged 16–49 years, women victim-survivors of IBA were more likely to report feeling afraid for their safety compared to men. For example, 32% of women who had an image taken without their consent reported fearing for their safety, compared to 23% of men, and 50% of women who had a

threat of distribution reported that they felt fearful for their safety, compared to 42% of men (Henry et al. 2019b).

Overall, what these data indicate is that while men and women may have similar overall rates of *any lifetime experience* of TFA, women are generally more likely than men to experience TFA from an intimate partner, a higher frequency of incidents, greater impacts, and co-occurring abuse (discussed further below). In addition, research repeatedly demonstrates that a majority of perpetrators of FDSV-TFA are men (Powell et al. 2019, 2022c; Gámez-Guadix et al. 2022).

Prevalence of co-occurring abuse

Victim-survivors of TFA often have experiences of co-occurring abuse. In the 2022 national survey of Australians' experiences of TFA, 46.4% of respondents who experienced TFA also reported that the same perpetrator of their most recent incident had engaged in at least one form of additional abuse against them (Powell et al. 2022a). In the literature, having multiple experiences of different kinds of victimisation and their cumulative impact is referred to as 'poly-victimisation' (Hamby et al. 2018; Daigle and Hawk 2022). Victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA can experience poly-victimisation, where multiple forms of abuse occur in conjunction with, or alongside, previous experiences of abuse (DeKeseredy et al. 2021).

The 2019 multi-country IBA study with respondents (*n*=6,109) in Australia, New Zealand and the UK reported that victim-survivors experienced IBA alongside multiple forms of other violence and abuse (Henry et al. 2020b). Participants reported not only multiple experiences of IBA by the same perpetrator or by multiple perpetrators, but also multiple experiences of SV, FDV, stalking and sexual harassment, in both online and offline settings (Henry et al. 2020b). For approximately one-third of the victim-survivors, IBA formed part of a broader, ongoing context of FDV perpetrated by an intimate partner (Henry et al. 2020b).

In addition, a 2017 survey with 46 Australian women victim-survivors of technology-facilitated intimate partner stalking indicated that respondents were also likely to experience other forms of FDV within the same relationship. The study found that 82% of participants had experienced emotional abuse, 58% sexual abuse, 39% physical violence and 37% financial abuse (Woodlock 2017).

Australian prevalence of types of FDSV-TFA

Intimate partner cyberstalking

There is limited Australian data available on the prevalence of intimate partner cyberstalking. However, in a 2020 survey of 3,737 Australian adults aged 18–65 years, 10% of participants reported being tracked electronically using technology to monitor their movements without consent in the past 12 months (eSafety Commissioner 2020b), providing an indication of the prevalence of any cyberstalking. Furthermore, the 2014 online survey of TFSV (*n*=2,956) examined the prevalence of intimate partner cyberstalking and found that 16% of Australian adults aged 18–54 years experienced a current or former partner accessing their emails or other online accounts without permission and 23.3% experienced a current or former partner checking up on them multiple times a day, either online or via mobile phone, to find out where they were, who they were with or what they were doing (Powell and Henry 2019).

Technology-facilitated sexual assault

The 2014 survey of TFSV (*n*=2,956) found that more than one in ten Australian adults aged 18–54 years reported experiencing sexual aggression and/or coercion, including having had an unwanted sexual experience with someone they first met online (11.1%) or via a dating app (10.5%) (Powell and Henry 2019).

Research indicates that TFSA is common among users of dating apps and websites (Wolbers et al. 2022). In the 2021 AIC online survey of Australian dating app or website users aged 18 years or over (*n*=9,987), one-third (34%) of users were subjected to in-person dating app–facilitated SV (i.e. sexual assault and coercion, reproductive and sexual health–related abuse, in-person image-based sexual abuse, and in-person stalking) perpetrated by someone they met on a dating app or website (Wolbers et al. 2022). Of respondents who experienced in-person dating app–facilitated SV, the most common type of abuse was sexual assault and coercion (27.3%). This included being verbally pressured to perform unwanted sexual acts (22%); someone attempting to engage in a sexual act with them when they could not consent (15.8%); someone using, or threatening to use, physical force to make them perform unwanted sexual acts (13%); and someone spiking their drink to try and coerce them into performing a sexual act (10%) (Wolbers et al. 2022).

Furthermore, a 2020 retrospective audit of a small forensic examination caseload from an Australian metropolitan clinical forensic medicine service identified that 14% (11 of 76) of reported sexual assaults where complainants underwent a forensic examination occurred following a dating app meeting. All victim-survivors who reported sexual assault from a dating app were female, and the alleged sexual assaults typically occurred during the first face-to-face meeting after having communicated online with someone through a dating app (Rowse et al. 2020).

Digital dating abuse

There is little quantitative data available on the prevalence of DDA in Australia. However, a recent meta-analysis found that the prevalence of DDA victimisation across 69 global studies was high, with a pooled prevalence estimate of 36.9% for adolescents and 43.4% for emerging adults[5] (Li et al. 2023; Mori et al. 2020). This included a recent Australian study on the emotional impacts of TFA in relationships among young people aged 16–24 years (*n*=527) who had been in a dating relationship in the past 12 months (Brown et al. 2021a). This study highlighted the need to examine multi-dimensional patterns of victimisation and impact among young women and young men (Brown et al. 2021a). Findings included that multi-dimensional humiliation was experienced by young men more than young women, and had the highest impact of the patterns, while the multi-dimensional sexual coercion pattern was experienced by young women more than young men and had a medium impact (Brown et al. 2021a).

Research suggests that users of dating apps and websites may be at increased risk of experiencing DDA. In a recent survey (*n*=9,987), nearly three-quarters (72.3%) of adults who had used a mobile dating app or website in the last five years had been subjected to OSH, aggression or violence by someone they had connected with through an online dating platform during this period (Wolbers et

[5] The meta-analysis included studies that assessed a sample with a mean age of between 12 and 29 to capture the developmental period of adolescents and emerging adults. 'Emerging adults' have been referred to in the literature as individuals aged 18–29 (Mori et al. 2020).

al. 2022). Behaviours reported by participants ranged from being continually contacted by someone after they told them they were not interested (47.2%), through to being threatened (18.9%) and having images or videos taken of them without their consent (12.7%) (Wolbers et al. 2022).

Image-based abuse

In 2022–2023, eSafety handled 9,060 reports of IBA. This was a 117% increase on the 4,169 reports received in the previous period, indicating that the reporting of IBA experiences in Australia is increasing. The type of harm most often experienced by people reporting IBA to eSafety was sexual extortion (eSafety Commissioner 2023a). There is limited recent Australian quantitative data available on IBA, making the current prevalence difficult to determine. Furthermore, prevalence estimates vary depending on the questions participants were asked, the sample and when the survey was conducted.

A 2014 online survey of TFSV (*n*=2,956) found that approximately 10.7% of Australians aged 18–54 years reported a lifetime experience of someone taking a nude or semi-nude image of them without permission, 9.3% reported that someone had posted such images online or sent them onto others, and 9.6% reported that someone had threatened to post such images online or to send them on to others (Powell and Henry 2019).

In the 2019 IBA survey, which included participants aged 16–64 years in Australia (*n*=2,054), New Zealand (*n*=2,027) and the UK (*n*=2,028), 37.7% of participants had a lifetime experience of IBA (Powell et al. 2020b). Similar prevalence rates were reported in Australia (35.2%), New Zealand (39%) and the UK (39%). More specifically, 33.2% of participants reported that someone had taken a nude or sexual image of them without their consent, 20.9% reported that someone had shared a nude or sexual image of them without their consent, and 18.7% reported that someone had threatened to share a nude or sexual image of them (Powell et al. 2020b).

A 2017 national IBA survey (*n*=4,122) commissioned by eSafety found that 11% of Australians aged 15 years and older had a lifetime experience of non-consensual distribution of a sexual image (eSafety Commissioner 2017). This finding was consistent with those of an IBA survey conducted in 2016 of 4,274 Australian adults. The 2016 study also included experiences of images being taken without consent (20%) or being sent or distributed without consent (11%), and threats to share or distribute an image without consent (9%), resulting in an overall lifetime IBA victimisation rate of 23% of respondents (Henry et al. 2017).

In the 2020 Second National Survey, FDSV practitioner reports of threats to share intimate images increased by 50% since 2015, from over one-third (35%) of practitioners stating in 2015 that this was seen ‘often’, to over one-half (53%) stating this in 2020 (Woodlock et al. 2020a). Practitioners reported that the threats were often effective in controlling women and making them afraid, even though women were not always certain that perpetrators actually possessed the images. In the same study, the number of practitioners reporting perpetrators publicly sharing and distributing images increased by 112%, from it being seen ‘often’ by just over one-fifth (22%) of practitioners in 2015 to almost one-half (46%) in 2020 (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Online sexual harassment

There are limited recent quantitative studies examining the prevalence of OSH in Australia. In addition, in quantitative studies specifically on OSH, there have been varied definitions, with some studies only asking participants whether they have been (or have felt) sexually harassed in an online

setting (Ballard and Welch 2017). This is likely to result in under-reporting, because many victim-survivors will not label their experiences as OSH even if they would have responded 'yes' had they been asked if they had experienced specific behaviours that constitute OSH (Gebicki et al. 2018).

However, in a 2018 online survey of 1,272 Australian participants (70% of whom were women) aged 15–29 years, 34% reported experiencing OSH through social media and 26% via phone in the past year (Douglass et al. 2018). Of participants who had used a dating app in the previous year, 57% stated they had experienced OSH. These findings are supported by the recent survey (*n*=9,987) of dating app and website users, which found that 69% of dating app/website users had experienced OSH perpetrated by someone they had met through an online dating platform (Wolbers et al. 2022). Specific OSH experiences included being continually contacted after saying they did not want a relationship with the person (47.3%), being sent an unwanted sexually explicit message (47.2%), and being pressured to send sexual messages (38.4%) or sexual images or videos of themselves (37.8%), and/or to meet someone in person when they did not want to (34.5%) (Wolbers et al. 2022).

In a 2014 study of TFSV with 2,956 Australians, 20% of participants (*n*=563) reported having experienced OSH[6] in their lifetime (Powell and Henry 2017). Women reported experiencing significantly higher rates of OSH than men (women: 21.8%, men: 17.7%). The study found that the most common types of OSH were receiving unwanted sexually explicit images, comments, emails or text messages (29%), followed by receiving repeated and/or unwanted sexual requests online or via email or text (21.3%) (Powell and Henry 2017).

OSH includes gender- and sexuality-based hate speech. In a 2019 survey of 3,737 Australians aged 18–65 years, 14% had experienced online hate speech in the past 12 months. Of those who had experienced online hate speech, 20% (24% of women) were targeted because of their gender and 12% were targeted because of their sexuality (eSafety Commissioner 2020a).

OSH is also prevalent within Australian workplaces. The AHRC's 2022 Fifth National Survey (*n*=10,157) identified nine sexual harassment behaviours as having the potential to occur through a form of technology (e.g. sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made a person feel offended) (AHRC 2022). The survey found that 41% of Australians aged 15 years and older had experienced at least one of these behaviours via the use of technology, most commonly through online messaging (38%), the use of social media (36%), or through SMS or MMS (31%) (AHRC 2022).

2.2.2 At-risk cohorts

While FDSV-TFA can impact anyone, there are some groups that are at heightened risk of experiencing violence, are disproportionately impacted by FDSV, and/or experience unique manifestations of abuse due to circumstantial and contextual factors (Flynn et al. 2023b). Furthermore, although gender is a critical factor for understanding FDSV, for some groups, structural inequality, discrimination and oppression further shape the risks, impacts and manifestations of FDSV. Recognising the compounding impacts of gender as well as other structural inequalities

[6] The authors defined online sexual-, gender- and sexuality-based harassment as including any of the following behaviours: unwanted sexually explicit images, comments, emails or text messages; repeated and/or unwanted sexual requests online or via email or text; gender-based offensive and/or degrading messages, comments or other content; publicly posted online offensive sexual comments; sexuality- or sexual identity–based offensive or degrading messages, comments or other content; and threats of sexual assault via comments, emails or text.

requires an *intersectional approach*. Intersectionality is a concept coined by US legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) to recognise that black women's experiences of violence are often the result of intersecting oppressions across both gender and race. The concept has since been widely applied within understandings of gender-based violence and other forms of abuse and discrimination in order to acknowledge that the experience of multiple oppressions often results not only in additional risks, impacts and barriers, but also in different harms that are not always recognised by system responses.

There are challenges in determining true prevalence rates of FDSV within at-risk cohorts; however, the following research provides indications:

- In the 2018–2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (*n*=10,579), 16% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over reported they experienced physical and/or threatened physical harm in the past year (ABS 2019; AIHW 2023a). For all experiences of physical harm in the last 12 months, a higher proportion of females (74%) than males (56%) identified an intimate partner/family member as at least one of the offenders (ABS 2019; AIHW 2023a).
- Findings from the 2016 Personal Safety Survey indicated that 2.5% of women with disability, compared to 1.3% of those without disability, experienced sexual and/or physical IPV in the last 12 months (ABS 2021). In addition, 20.8% of adults with disability experienced sexual and/or physical violence from an intimate partner after the age of 15, compared with 13.2% of adults without disability (AIHW 2022). One in four (26%) people with disability had experienced emotional abuse from an intimate partner since the age of 15 years, compared with 17% of people without disability (AIHW 2022).
- A study examining data from the 2019 Private Lives 3 survey of the health and wellbeing of Australian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTQI+) people, which included 6,835 adults (18 years and older), found that 60.7% reported ever experiencing IPV (Amos et al. 2023a). Furthermore, in the same survey, almost one-half (48.6%) of participants reported having ever been coerced or forced into sexual acts they did not want to engage in. For the most recent time in which it occurred, sexual assault was most commonly perpetrated by former (21.9%) and current (19.4%) intimate partners (Amos et al. 2023a). In the 2018 Australian Trans and Gender Diverse Sexual Health online survey, which included 1,613 participants (39.2% non-binary assigned female at birth, 24.6% trans women, 21.9% trans men and 14.3% non-binary assigned male at birth) across Australia aged 16–80 years (Callander et al. 2019), 53.2% of participants reported having ever experienced SV or coercion.
- There is a lack of research examining the experiences of FDSV in people from CALD backgrounds in Australia (AIHW 2019). At present, survey data indicates that there is a slightly higher rate of violence in the Australian-born population (ABS 2021). However, FDSV data obtained from large population surveys is likely to significantly under-estimate the extent of the problem within CALD communities, as perceptions of what constitutes FDSV differ, and language barriers may inhibit communication. A lack of use of interpreters and reduced accessibility to surveys for some communities is also a likely contributing factor. FDSV among women from CALD backgrounds has been examined more specifically within the

context of specific forms of FDSV, including visa abuse, forced marriages and female genital mutilation (AIHW 2019).

- The 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey (PSS) reported that 23% of women living outside major cities experienced IPV (sexual and/or physical) since the age of 15 years, compared with 15% of women living in major cities (AIHW 2019). In addition, police data has indicated that people living in rural and remote areas are more likely to experience higher rates of FDV (Crime Statistics Agency 2023; NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2023).

The same structural, circumstantial and contextual factors that underpin FDSV also underpin FDSV-TFA. As such, these factors can intersect to create an even greater risk of experiencing FDSV and FDSV-TFA. In particular, women, girls and gender-diverse people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, who live with disability, who are LGBTQI+, who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and who live in rural and remote areas are more likely to experience FDSV-TFA (Harris and Woodlock 2022).

This section describes how women from some communities are also at greater risk of FDSV-TFA (Harris and Woodlock 2022).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

There is limited empirical research examining the lived experiences of FDSV-TFA among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Therefore, the findings in this report (in particular, this section) that are related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences draw primarily upon the findings from a 2021 qualitative research study commissioned by eSafety (Brown et al. 2021b). This research was conducted with 15 frontline services and stakeholders, as well as through one-on-one yarning with 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from regional and remote areas (Brown et al. 2021b). Further lived experience research is needed to improve the knowledge and understanding of the FDSV-TFA experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Carlson and Day 2023).

The available evidence indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experience disproportionately higher rates of family violence than non-Indigenous communities (ABS 2020; AIHW 2023b) and emerging research has found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to experience TFA. For example, in the 2021 national TFA survey, 69.9% of survey respondents who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander reported at least one lifetime TFA victimisation experience, compared to 50.7% of those who did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Powell et al. 2022a).

A national survey of 3,737 Australian adults aged 18–65 years found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (and people identifying as LGBTQI+) were more likely to be the target of negative online experiences than any other group in Australia in the 12 months to August 2019 (eSafety Commissioner 2020b). When compared to other groups examined in the study, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recorded the highest response for 16 of the 17 negative online experiences identified in the survey (eSafety Commissioner 2020b).

Evidence also indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may be more likely to experience FDSV-TFA. For example, they have been reported to be twice as likely to experience

IBA than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Henry et al. 2017; eSafety Commissioner 2017). A 2017 national online survey conducted by RMIT University of 4,274 Australians (56% women, 44% men) aged 16–49 years reported that 50% of people who identified as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent experienced IBA victimisation, compared to 22% of participants who did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Henry et al. 2017). Similarly, a 2017 survey commissioned by eSafety of 4,122 people reported that one-quarter of the participants who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (25%) had experienced IBA, compared with 11% of people who did not so identify (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who use online dating apps may also experience 'sexual racism'. A mixed methods study consisting of 13 semi-structured, in-depth interviews and an online survey with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who use dating apps identified that they often experience sexism and misogyny accompanied by racism and threats of violence (Carlson 2020). This research noted that online violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women should be considered as an extension of offline gender and racial relations, which are marked by notable levels of violence and abuse (Carlson 2020).

In a 2018 survey research study conducted with 546 Australian FDV practitioners, participants observed that the way perpetrators used technology affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in specific ways because of the importance placed on community and connection within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (Woodlock et al. 2020b). One participant stated: '*Indigenous women may need to use technology to keep connected to their mob, culture and community but this can place their whereabouts/situation known to the perpetrator if they also have the same connections*.' This connection to community can make it easier to publicly humiliate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

To explore lived experiences of TFA among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, a 2021 qualitative research study was commissioned by eSafety and conducted with 15 frontline services and stakeholders and one-on-one yarning with 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from regional and remote areas. (The remainder of this section speaks to the findings from this study.) The research found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women often experienced TFA perpetrated by a current or former partner (Brown et al. 2021b). The most commonly reported forms of TFA experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in regional and remote Australia were threats, harassment, monitoring and stalking, followed by impersonation (Brown et al. 2021b). In addition, the TFA experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women was most often perpetrated through sending messages, making telephone calls, damaging mobile phones and the use of fake accounts (Brown et al. 2021b). Frontline workers reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women can receive a high volume of text messages, often from multiple telephone numbers, as perpetrators would message the woman from the telephones of family and friends. Messages were also used to threaten women, including threats to harm and kill (Brown et al. 2021b).

Frontline workers described the use of fake social media accounts to humiliate and harass Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Fake accounts were being used to impersonate those known to women or to befriend the women with the intention of perpetrating TFA (Brown et al. 2021b). In addition, fake accounts were used to facilitate IBA as well as to send threatening and harassing messages to victim-survivors (Brown et al. 2021b). Some participants described TFA occurring in the

form of lateral violence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Brown et al. 2021). This would often occur as a product of 'jealousing' or perceived sexual misconduct with a male partner. Impersonation and IBA were used to shame and humiliate other women, and to incite physical violence against them by other community members (Brown et al. 2021b).

Prior experiences of trauma and co-morbid vulnerabilities (including mental health) can place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at greater risk of experiencing FDSV-TFA and may also exacerbate the impacts of the abuse, such as high rates of depression and anxiety (Brown et al. 2021b). Frontline workers also described how some of the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (such as strong relationship and kinship networks) can be used by the perpetrator as an enabler of FDSV-TFA (Brown et al. 2021b). This is because the interconnected relationships can make it easier for perpetrators to locate victim-survivors, often by contacting family members to obtain new telephone numbers and addresses, which increases women's vulnerability to abuse from multiple perpetrators (Brown et al. 2021b).

Furthermore, this research demonstrated that within the context of FDSV, the location of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in remote and regional areas creates additional challenges for victim-survivors of TFA (Brown et al. 2021b). For example, lack of appropriate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in regional and remote areas creates complexity, as overcrowded living conditions mean that it is more likely that people will share mobile phones, and that it is more difficult for women to maintain privacy and a safe place to stay if they are experiencing abuse (Brown et al. 2021b).

In addition, the research indicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in remote and regional areas may be more easily located if perpetrators use technology to find victim-survivors' locations, due to the relatively small populations in these regions (Brown et al. 2021b). It can also be challenging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in remote and regional communities to respond to abuse by disconnecting themselves from technology, as they often rely on it for social networks. Furthermore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who live in remote and regional areas may experience further isolation due to their geographical location if they disconnect themselves from technology (Brown et al. 2021b). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disability who rely on online connections may also lose opportunities to access information or to communicate with their social networks if they disconnect themselves (Brown et al. 2021b).

Frontline workers identified protective factors which can prevent or minimise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences of FDSV-TFA. These included proficiency in the use of technology, having a close-knit social network and a good relationship with police, and having good role models and a good connection with support services (Brown et al. 2021b). These protective factors mean that women are more able to identify TFA and to have the tools and skills to respond to it with either good digital literacy and online safety or by reaching out for help (Brown et al. 2021b).

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

There is limited information available about the prevalence rates of FDSV-TFA among CALD women compared to non-CALD women, with most TFA-related research within this cohort being restricted to qualitative interviews (Douglas et al. 2019; eSafety Commissioner 2019a; Louie 2021; Henry et al. 2022; Leyton Zamora et al. 2022).

A 2022 scoping review on TFA against women from CALD backgrounds in the context of FDV concluded that, despite a thorough search of the literature, there were relatively few studies that included both TFA and CALD women (Leyton Zamora et al. 2022). The authors identified nine mainly qualitative studies for inclusion in their review and highlighted the need for research to better include minority voices and participation from diverse groups of people. Despite the limitations of the literature, the authors were able to conclude that technology is used at increasing levels to perpetrate FDV against CALD women (Leyton Zamora et al. 2022).

A qualitative research study was conducted in Australia with 29 CALD women who had experienced TFA and 20 stakeholders who provided support services to women experiencing TFA (such as domestic violence services, legal services and health services). The most common form of TFA reported in research interviews was harassing messages and threats being sent by intimate partners (eSafety Commissioner 2019a).

Research also indicates that restricting or limiting access to technology may be a form of FDSV-TFA experienced by CALD victim-survivors (eSafety Commissioner 2019a; Woodlock et al. 2020b; Leyton Zamora et al. 2022; Vasil and Seagrave 2023). The qualitative study conducted in Australia with 29 CALD victim-survivors and 20 stakeholders found that limiting access to technology, via the destruction or removal of devices, is a form of FDSV-TFA experienced by some CALD women (eSafety Commissioner 2019a). Limiting access to technology can restrict CALD women's access to their support networks and contribute to social isolation (Woodlock et al. 2020b). Another survey study conducted in 2020 with 546 Australian DV practitioners reported that isolation tactics used by perpetrators of FDSV-TFA were especially effective with women who may already be isolated, including CALD women (Woodlock et al. 2020b). Participants observed how perpetrators deliberately exploited women's social isolation and language barriers by restricting access to technologies they relied on to maintain contact with friends and family (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

The 2022 scoping review study on TFA against women from CALD backgrounds indicated that perpetrators may be more easily able to restrict access to technology for CALD women who are economically dependent on their partners/perpetrators (who are also their visa sponsors most of the time) (Leyton Zamora et al. 2022). Researchers noted that the 'connected migrant' phenomenon enables CALD women to remain connected with family and friends in their country of origin by means of digital technology, but that these technological developments have also led to the ability of perpetrators to facilitate abuse by controlling women's access to technology and the internet. By limiting their access to technology, perpetrators deprive CALD women of their right to maintain a connection with their families, friends, communities, culture, religion and spirituality (Leyton Zamora et al. 2022).

The research reflects that CALD women are not a homogenous group, and that sub-groups within this cohort have different experiences with FDSV-TFA. For example, a 2021 study on DV among Chinese immigrants living in Melbourne interviewed 13 DV practitioners and found that the most common form of technology-facilitated domestic abuse that participants experienced was tracking and monitoring through the use of digital communication media (Louie 2021). Furthermore, a 2017 national survey that examined IBA with 4,122 Australians aged 15 years and older found that almost one in five respondents (19%) who spoke a language other than English at home had ever experienced IBA (i.e. intimate images shared without consent), compared with just over one in ten respondents (11%) who only speak English at home (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

Research has found that some CALD women from refugee and migrant backgrounds may be at risk of experiencing FDSV-TFA. The 2020 Migrant and Refugee Women's Safety and Security Study, undertaken by Monash University, surveyed 1,392 participants from 125 countries. Of those who reported experiences of FDV (33%), 5% had experienced perpetrators accessing their devices to imitate them on their social media, email and/or phone, and 8% had their use of technology (phone, internet, social media) controlled or limited (Segrave et al. 2021).

A 2022 qualitative study consisted of 29 interviews with immigrant and refugee women aged 18 years and older in Australia who had experienced threats of abuse through technology, as well as interviews with 20 stakeholders from 12 different frontline organisations who support women experiencing technology-facilitated DV, including domestic violence, legal and health services. The study indicated that while many of the TFA experiences reported by participants did not necessarily have a specific cultural dimension, perpetrators used technology to amplify the multiple forms of abuse experienced by immigrant and refugee women by using their migration status, geographical isolation from families and friends, and their ethnic and religious backgrounds to engage in the abuse (Henry et al. 2022). In addition, the research indicated that immigrant and refugee women were particularly at risk of experiencing TFA as they often had less technological literacy (Henry et al. 2022). Perpetrators would often reinforce this by not allowing them to learn more about technology (Henry et al. 2022). Newly arrived migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds can also face profound consequences of TFA, as they need technology to connect with people in their country of origin (Henry et al. 2022).

Women with disability

Findings from the 2016 PSS indicate that people with disability are at a higher risk of experiencing FDSV (AIHW 2019). Furthermore, women with disability can be particularly at risk of experiencing TFA. Findings from the national survey of Australians' experiences of TFA found that almost three in five (57%, *n*=811) respondents with disability reported any lifetime TFA (Powell et al. 2022a). Women with disability were more likely than men with disability to report lifetime TFA victimisation (58.7% vs. 54.6%) (Powell et al. 2022a).

Research also indicates that women with disability may be at a higher risk of FDSV-TFA. A 2017 national Australian online survey conducted by RMIT University of 4,274 participants (56% women, 44% men) aged 16–49 years found that one in two (56.1%) Australians with disability reported being a victim-survivor of IBA (Henry et al. 2017). This was significantly higher than those without disability (17.6%). Of participants with disability who reported experiencing IBA, 53% experienced the taking of a nude or sexual image without their permission; 42% experienced the distribution of an image; and 41% had experienced threats relating to the distribution of nude or sexual images (Henry et al. 2017). As with other participants experiencing IBA, those with disability were most likely to experience it from people known to them, including acquaintances, friends and/or family. However, the patterns in a victim relationship to a known (non-partner) perpetrator were stronger for those participants with disability. For example, 63% of participants with disability who experienced the non-consensual taking of nude or sexual images stated that the perpetrator was a known (non-partner) person, compared with 41% of those participants without disability (Henry et al. 2017).

A qualitative research study conducted in 2020, comprising interviews and focus groups with six Australian women with intellectual or cognitive disability who have experienced FDSV-TFA, indicated that the tactics used to perpetrate FDSV-TFA on women with intellectual and cognitive disability are

similar to those used on women without disability. For example, participants reported experiences of harassment, coercion and manipulation (eSafety Commissioner 2021). The study also demonstrated that there are some unique differences in TFA experienced by women with disability. For example, perpetrators of FDSV-TFA could potentially extend to people beyond the FDV setting (i.e. intimate partners, ex-partners and other family members) to other relationship types, including carers, guardians and support workers in both home and institutional settings (Commonwealth of Australia 2022). In addition, perpetrators may use digital technology to exploit women's reliance on that technology (i.e. to communicate with family, support networks and service providers) (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

The 2020 qualitative study indicated that perpetrators of FDSV-TFA can also target a woman's disability in unique ways, such as by placing GPS tracking devices on wheelchairs, tampering with hearing aids and other assistive devices, making threats to disclose a woman's health information, or using information gleaned from the relationship to access bank accounts without a woman's authorisation (eSafety Commissioner 2021).

LGBTQI+ people

Research suggests that LGBTQI+ people are disproportionately affected by FDSV (Amos et al. 2023a). Individuals who are sexuality- and gender-diverse are also at an increased risk of experiencing TFA (Amos et al. 2023a; Vogler et al. 2023). In the 2022 national survey of Australians' experiences of TFA, almost 72.7% of sexuality-diverse populations identifying as LGB+ disclosed at least one TFA victimisation experience and 90.5% (*n*=19) of gender minority participants had experienced any lifetime TFA victimisation (Powell et al. 2022a).

Evidence from surveys indicates that individuals who are sexuality- and gender-diverse are at an increased risk of experiencing FDSV-TFA. The 2021 AIC online survey with 9,987 dating app or website users in Australia aged 18 years and over indicated that the sexual identities of respondents were positively associated with online and in-person dating app–facilitated SV (Wolbers et al. 2022). LGB+ women reported the highest prevalence of online dating app–facilitated SV (86.6%), then LGB+ men (79.2%), followed closely by heterosexual women (79.1%) and, finally, heterosexual men (61.5%) (Wolbers et al. 2022).

In a 2019 online survey with 6,109 respondents (52.1% women, 47.9% men) aged 16–64 years across Australia (*n*=2,054), New Zealand (*n*=2,027) and the UK (*n*=2,028), it was found that 56% of lesbian, gay, bisexual or another non-heterosexual orientation (LGB+) respondents had experienced one or more forms of IBA (i.e. an image taken without consent, shared without consent and/or threatened to be shared) compared to 35% of heterosexual respondents (Henry et al. 2020b). Similarly, in a 2017 national online survey of Australians (2,417 women aged 15–45 years, 1,505 women aged 46 years and older, and adult men, and a boost sample of 200 women aged 15–45 years who had experienced IBA), significantly higher rates of lifetime prevalence of IBA were reported among those who identify as LGB (19%) compared to heterosexual respondents (11%) (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

In addition, in eSafety's 2019 online safety survey of 3,737 adults aged 18–65 years, 61% of participants who identified as LGBTQI+ reported that their sexuality was the reason for being the target of online hate speech (compared to 12% of the total sample), and 35% reported that their gender was the reason (compared to 20% of the total sample) (eSafety Commissioner 2020a).

There is limited prevalence data available on gender FDSV-TFA among gender-diverse and transgender people in Australia. However, the 2021 AIC survey with 9,987 dating app or website users in Australia found that 84.5% of non-binary respondents had experienced online dating app–facilitated SV (Wolbers et al. 2022). In addition, the AHRC's 2022 Fifth National Survey revealed that non-binary people were over three times more likely to experience repeated or inappropriate sexual advances on email, social networking websites, internet chat rooms or other online platforms than the total population (56%, compared to 17%) (AHRC 2022). As the survey captured a small number of non-binary respondents (*n*=62), these results should be interpreted with caution (AHRC 2022).

A 2014 online survey of 2,956 Australian adults and 2,842 British adults aged 18–54 years about their experiences of TFSV found that transgender individuals experience higher rates of digital harassment and abuse overall, and higher rates of sexual, sexuality- and gender-based harassment and abuse, as compared with heterosexual cisgender individuals (Powell et al. 2020a).

Women in regional, rural and remote areas

Women in regional, rural and remote areas are at increased risk of experiencing FDSV (Harris and Woodlock 2022). There is some evidence to suggest that they may be at increased risk of experiencing FDSV-TFA. A 2022 qualitative study that included in-depth interviews and focus groups with 13 women victim-survivors of TFA within the context of FDV across regional, rural and remote Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland examined the impact of FDSV-TFA on victim-survivors who were geographically or socially isolated (Harris and Woodlock 2022). The victim-survivors who participated in the study reported that technology was used by perpetrators to monitor and track them, to abuse and threaten them and their families, and to shame and humiliate them. The abuse occurred both during relationships and post-separation (Harris and Woodlock 2022). The main way in which women were humiliated was through IBA, with perpetrators often threatening to distribute, or following through with distributing, images to family or friends and in online pornography communities. Six out of the 13 (46%) women in the research reported incidents of IBA (Harris and Woodlock 2022). In addition, victim-survivors in the study highlighted the specific consequences of FDSV-TFA for women in regional, rural and remote areas, particularly those who are geographically and socially isolated (Harris and Woodlock 2022). Perpetrators took advantage of geographically isolated locations to weaken and limit social networks and to extend their control and hide the perpetration of violence.

Age groups most at risk for FDSV-TFA

Several studies have reported younger people as being more at risk of TFA within an SV context. For example, a 2016 national Australian survey on IBA with 4,274 participants aged 16–49 years reported that young people aged 16–29 years were at higher risk of IBA compared to older cohorts, with one in three young people aged 16–19 years (30.9%) and one in four young people aged 20–29 years (27%) reporting at least one form of IBA (Henry et al. 2017). This study noted differences in broader patterns of technology use and image-sharing, with young people aged 20–29 years (61%) being the most likely to voluntarily send another person a sexual selfie, followed by 52% of young people aged 16–19 years, compared to 38% of people aged 40–49 years (Henry et al. 2017). The same research group also conducted a 2014 survey of 2,956 Australian adults about their experiences of TFSV and

found that younger adults aged 18–24 years were significantly more likely to report lifetime TFSV victimisation compared to older age groups (35–44 years, 45–54 years) (Powell and Henry 2019).

The impact of age on TFSV was also reported by a 2018 Australian online survey with 1,272 participants aged 15–29 years (70% women), which found that, within a participant cohort aged 15–29 years, older respondents aged 25–29 years were less likely to experience technology-facilitated sexual harassment (Douglass et al. 2018). However, a 2016 study found that young adults (20–29 years) experienced image-based SV at similar rates to younger people (16–19 years), noting that younger people may be more vulnerable to the impacts of victimisation (Henry et al. 2019a).

In contrast, 71.7% of FDSV practitioners in the 2020 Second National Survey reported that women aged 35–44 years were the age group most commonly affected by TFA within an FDV context (Woodlock et al. 2020a). In comparison, practitioners in the First National Survey, conducted five years earlier, reported that women aged 25–30 years were the most affected age group (Woodlock et al. 2020a). The authors suggested that this could be explained by younger women being more capable of managing their privacy settings, thereby being less affected by the use of technology, and/or that younger women are likely to seek support through formal services (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Research that has examined young people's experiences and understanding of FDV has highlighted differences between young people's and older people's relationships. These differences can impact their understanding of FDV (Morris et al. 2020; Noble-Carr et al. 2021; Carlisle et al. 2022; Loney-Howes et al. 2023) and, possibly, of FDSV-TFA. Young people's relationships are more likely to be 'ambiguous' and not necessarily a 'formal' relationship, meaning they may be perceived by young people as being less serious (Carlisle et al. 2022).

In addition, research suggests that while young people have experienced some forms of TFA within their relationships, they do not necessarily recognise them as forms of FDV (Aghtaie et al. 2018; Kirkman et al. 2021). Indeed, some Australian and international research on young people's experiences of violence has suggested that verbal abuse, surveillance and controlling behaviours are seen as normal in relationships (Senior et al. 2017; Aghtaie et al. 2018; Øverlien et al. 2020).

Consistent with this, research indicates that perpetrating and experiencing FDSV-TFA can start early in life. A 2021 US survey of 696 young adults aged 18–19 years found that the average age of using or experiencing digital dating abuse behaviours was 16 years, with respondents experiencing DDA behaviours as early as age 11 (Ellyson et al. 2021).

2.2.3 Perpetrators of FDSV-TFA

Self-reported perpetration studies

Most Australian studies of FDSV-TFA have focused on victimisation, with only a few surveys examining the prevalence of FDSV-TFA perpetration (Powell et al. 2019, 2022a, 2022c). As findings from these surveys are based on self-reported perpetration of TFA, they may be influenced by social desirability bias and the need to respond in a socially acceptable manner (Gámez-Guadix et al. 2022). For example, some participants may be reluctant to report that they have engaged in some types of TFA. Therefore, these studies may under-estimate the true prevalence of TFA perpetration in the Australian population.

Evidence suggests that the prevalence of TFA perpetration in the Australian population is relatively high. The 2021 national TFA study (*n*=4,562) found that, overall, one in four (23%, *n*=1,031) Australians self-reported engaging in at least one lifetime perpetration of TFA. The most common types of TFA perpetration were monitoring and controlling behaviours (19.4%), followed by harassing behaviours (8.1%), emotional abuse and threats (6%), and sexual and image-based abuse (4.2%) (Powell et al. 2022a). Almost one in two respondents (47.7%) who self-reported TFA perpetration stated that their victim-survivor was either an intimate partner at the time or a former intimate partner (Powell et al. 2022a).

Several studies have examined the prevalence of IBA perpetration (Powell et al. 2022a, 2022c). Although there is general agreement that IBA victimisation is increasingly common, the existing empirical literature for this form of abuse, inconsistent definitions and different sampling strategies have resulted in varied perpetration data (Powell et al. 2022a). For example, the multi-country IBA survey study of 6,109 general community members in the UK, Australia and New Zealand found that one in six respondents (17.5%) aged 16–64 years self-reported engaging in at least one form of IBA during their lifetime (Powell et al. 2022c). In comparison, in a 2016 IBA perpetration survey of 4,053 Australian adults aged 16–49 years, around one in ten (11.1%) participants self-reported engaging in at least one IBA perpetration behaviour during their lifetime (Powell et al. 2019). More specifically, 8.7% took a nude or sexual image without consent, 6.4% distributed a nude or sexual image without consent, and 4.9% had threatened to distribute a nude or sexual image without consent.

Studies that have examined the gender of perpetrators of FDSV-TFA indicate that men are more likely to perpetrate TFSV. In the 2021 national TFA study, there were no significant differences between women's and men's overall engagement in any lifetime TFA perpetration behaviours (Powell et al. 2022a). However, the study reported that men were more likely to self-report engaging in both harassing behaviours and sexual IBA, while women were more likely to self-report engaging in monitoring and controlling behaviours (Powell et al. 2022a). Consistent with this, several studies have reported significantly higher rates of IBA perpetration among men compared with women. For example, the multi-country IBA survey study of respondents in the UK, Australia and New Zealand found that men were 66% more likely to report perpetrating IBA compared to women (Powell et al. 2020b). In addition, the study reported that 22.3% of men engaged in one or more IBA behaviours, compared to 13.1% of women (Power et al. 2020b). Furthermore, in the 2019 IBA perpetration survey of 4,053 Australian adults, men were more likely than women to self-report ever taking (12% vs. 6.2%), distributing (9.1% vs. 4.4%) and/or threatening to distribute (7% vs. 3.3%) a nude or sexual image of another person without their consent (Powell et al. 2020b).

Some evidence suggests that younger adults may be more likely to perpetrate FDSV-TFA. Respondents aged 16–39 years (23.2%) in the multi-country IBA survey study of the UK, Australia and New Zealand were significantly more likely than those aged 40–64 years (10.6%) to have engaged in IBA (Powell et al. 2022c). Furthermore, the 2021 national TFA study also found that younger age, higher digital participation and TFA lifetime victimisation were significant predictors of self-reported TFA lifetime perpetration (Powell et al. 2022).

Some research has explored perpetrator motivations for engaging in FDSV-TFA. Recent research conducted using a story-completion method with 35 Australian self-identified perpetrators of TFA in relationships described motivations for the abuse as being related to a loss of trust and a desire for control, demonstrating that doubts about a relationship may be linked to using TFA to control the

relationship (Harris et al. 2023). Abusive behaviours and negative emotions related to anger, fear and/or sadness were also factors in informing a resolution by the perpetrators to use technology in harmful ways, with suspicions often leading perpetrators to search for 'evidence' to confirm the story they often believed to be true (Harris et al. 2023).

Similarly, a qualitative TFA study that included interviews with 10 perpetrators of TFA and 30 victim-survivors examined the motivations and aims of perpetrators in perpetrating the abuse they self-reported and as perceived by victim-survivors (Flynn et al. 2022b). Motivations reported by perpetrators included to express anger towards the person; annoy the person; hurt the person; humiliate the person; control the person; and frighten the person. The most common motivation perceived by perpetrators and victim-survivors was to gain or maintain control over the person. This was prevalent in both FDV contexts, but also in friend/acquaintance perpetration contexts.

Technology enables perpetrators of FDSV-TFA to use a variety of ways to exert power and control over victim-survivors (Fiolet et al. 2021). In a 2021 qualitative study with 15 (13 women and 2 men) Australian DV specialist practitioners, participants identified that the behaviours exhibited by people using technology to abuse partners or ex-partners were similar to 'traditional' methods of coercive control in face-to-face exchanges (Fiolet et al. 2021). The study suggested that FDSV-TFA may be grounded in the attainment of power and control; however, technology is offering new ways to facilitate the abuse to extend their power (Fiolet et al. 2021). Participants identified that perpetrators can use a multitude of channels to breach privacy, monitor or harass, and that harm is enacted at any time and from a distance.

Victim-survivor studies

Several victim-survivor quantitative studies have examined the characteristics of FDSV-TFA perpetrators, indicating that men are more likely to perpetrate FDSV-TFA. It is important to note that this overview does not take into account an array of qualitative studies examining TFA within FDSV settings that are predominantly comprised of women victim-survivor participants who have experienced FDSV-TFA from men (Douglas et al. 2019; Brown et al. 2021b; Henry et al. 2022), which also demonstrate the gendered nature of FDSV-TFA.

The prevalence of men as TFA perpetrators in FDSV settings was highlighted in qualitative data obtained in the 2020 Second National Survey, with FDSV practitioners observing that perpetrators of TFA were more likely to be men than women (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

The 2019 survey of TFSV (*n*=2,956) found that perpetrators of TFSV behaviours were twice as likely to be men than women (Powell and Henry 2019). One-half of respondents (50.4%) reported that the perpetrator/s were men only, 21.9% reported that the perpetrator/s were women only, and 15.2% reported that the perpetrator/s comprised a mixed group of both men and women. Women were significantly more likely than men to report TFSV from men only (women: 67.6%, men: 32.9%) and were twice as likely to have been targeted by a man than were men (Powell and Henry 2019). In contrast, men were likely to report experiencing victimisation similarly from either men or women (Powell and Henry 2019).

In addition, in the multi-country IBA survey study of 6,109 general community members in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, 61.1% of victim-survivors reported that the perpetrator was a man, while 34.6% reported that the perpetrator was a woman. The remaining respondents reported that the perpetrator/s included both women and men, or that they did not know the perpetrator's gender

(4.3%) (Powell et al. 2022b). Furthermore, men (50.3%) were more likely than women (21.1%) to report that the perpetrator was a woman, while women (76.8%) were more likely than men (42.9%) to report that the perpetrator was a man.

In eSafety's 2017 national survey on IBA (*n*=4,122), it was found that where the gender of the perpetrator was reported, in 49% of cases the person who shared the photograph or video was a man, and in 35% of cases the person was a woman (eSafety Commissioner 2017). The remaining respondents (15%) were unsure of the perpetrator's gender or preferred not to respond to the question (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

In addition, several studies have examined the relational contexts between victim-survivors and perpetrators, indicating that a great deal of TFA occurs in the context of FDV. In the 2021 national TFA survey, 36.7% of victim-survivors stated that the TFA (not limited to FDSV context) occurred in a current or former intimate partner relationship, 23.4% stated that the TFA was perpetrated by a person who was an intimate partner at the time, 13.3% stated that it was perpetrated by a former intimate partner, and 20% stated that the TFA was perpetrated by strangers or unknown people (Powell et al. 2022a). Furthermore, one in ten stated that the TFA was perpetrated by a family member or a friend.

The 2019 survey of TFSV also examined the relationships between victim-survivors and perpetrators. Of participants' most recent experience of TFSV, the most commonly reported perpetrators were strangers (28.2%), friends the victim-survivor knew face-to-face (21.8%), and people whose identities were unknown (16.6%) (Powell and Henry 2019). It is important to consider that TFSV included digital sexual harassment and gender- and/or sexuality-based harassment, which likely contribute to the high proportion of experiences perpetrated by strangers.

In comparison, in the multi-country IBA survey study of 6,109 general community members in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, 60.9% of IBA victim-survivors reported that the perpetrator had been a partner or former partner and 28.5% reported that they had been another known person (Powell et al. 2020b). Just 10.6% reported that the perpetrator had been a stranger or an unknown person. Women (30.1%) were more likely than men (24.2%) to report that the perpetrator was a former intimate partner, while men (17.9%) were more likely than women (13.2%) to report that the perpetrator was a friend (Powell et al. 2020b).

Similarly, eSafety's 2017 national survey on IBA found that 63% of adults aged 15 years and older who had experienced IBA indicated that the perpetrator was someone close to them, with the most common perpetrators being their current partner (83%) or an ex-partner (86%) (eSafety Commissioner 2017). In addition, for women respondents, the gender of the perpetrator who shared the photograph varied by their relationship to the victim-survivor. For most women, the perpetrator was identified as a man when it was a current partner (83%) or an ex-partner (86%). It is important to note that 86% of the women identified as heterosexual (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

2.3 Impacts

2.3.1 Impacts of FDSV-TFA on victim-survivors

The range of harms experienced by victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA can be lasting, complex and wide ranging. It can include physical, emotional and mental health harms, as well as feelings of fear,

paranoia and hypervigilance. FDSV-TFA can also affect victim-survivors' personal and professional relationships with others.

Omnipresence

A key consequence of FDSV-TFA is its pervasiveness. Most people rely on digital technologies in their day-to-day lives, including the use of mobile phones, access to the internet and social media. As a result, perpetrators of FDSV-TFA can utilise digital technologies for the perpetration of abuse on an almost continual basis, achieving the state of being everywhere and always present (Rogers et al. 2022). The impact of this feeling on victim-survivors has been described as 'omnipresent' (Rogers et al. 2022). In a study surveying victim-survivors and FDV advocates, the most common way perpetrators of TFA created a sense of omnipresence was by constantly texting or phoning victims (Woodlock 2017). In some cases, it is not just the continual nature of FDSV-TFA that is omnipresent. A scoping review of TFA in IPV found that some forms of TFA were omnipresent in their spread across time and social space. This includes, for example, images distributed without consent (i.e. IBA) that could not be erased from the internet or something posted on social media that could be accessed widely by others (Rogers et al. 2022).

Mental health outcomes

Research indicates that victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA can experience negative feelings, including fear, shame and distress, as a consequence of TFA (Hancock et al. 2017; eSafety Commissioner 2017; Brown and Hegarty 2021; Brown et al. 2022). For example, in the IBA survey of 6,109 respondents aged 16–64 years across Australia, New Zealand and the UK, 86.2% of those who experienced IBA reported experiencing many negative feelings as a consequence (Powell et al. 2020b).

In an IBA survey of 4,274 Australians aged 16–49 years, many survey respondents reported that they were fearful for their safety as a result of experiencing IBA (Henry et al. 2019b). More specifically, 46% of those who had experienced threats to distribute an image reported feeling highly fearful for their safety, while 39% of those who experienced images distributed without consent and 28% of those who had images taken without consent reported feeling highly fearful for their safety (Henry et al. 2019).

Victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA may experience amplified levels of fear as a result of control and harassment through technology (Douglas et al. 2019; Dragiewicz et al. 2019). In a 2021 qualitative study with 15 (13 women and 2 men) Australian DV specialist practitioners, participants highlighted the amplified level of fear experienced by victim-survivors of TFA caused by the constancy of control, as women can feel they have no space that is free from the perpetrator's invasive contact or monitoring (Woodlock et al. 2020b). In a study about TFA in the DV context, Australian DV practitioners observed that technology has infiltrated aspects of everyday life – including shopping, banking, and communication with friends, family and services – and that women fear that any of these avenues may expose them to the perpetrator's harassment (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

Research also suggests that FDSV-TFA has impacts on mental health, such as depression and anxiety (eSafety Commissioner 2017; Woodlock 2017; Dragiewicz et al. 2019; Henry et al. 2019b; Brown et al. 2022; Champion et al. 2022; O'Malley 2023). For example, in the IBA survey of 4,274 Australians aged 16–49 years, respondents who experienced IBA were almost twice as likely as those who did not experience IBA to report high levels of psychological distress (consistent with a diagnosis of

moderate to severe anxiety or depression) (Henry et al. 2019b). More specifically, 80% of those who had experienced threats to distribute an image reported moderate to severe depression or anxiety, while 75% of those who experienced images distributed without their consent and 67% of those who had images taken without their consent reported moderate to severe depression and/or anxiety.

In a 2021 online survey of 696 young adults (50.7% female, 43.7% male and 5.6% gender non-binary or transgender) aged 16–22 years in the United States, it was found that of respondents who had experienced DDA, 33.7% indicated that it negatively impacted their mental health and 15.7% reported that they were concerned about their safety (Ellyson et al. 2021).

Furthermore, in the 2020 Second National Survey, practitioners identified that victim-survivors may experience mental health issues directly due to TFA, with hypervigilance and prolonged feelings of fear contributing to those issues, including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Social impacts

Several studies have reported the social impacts that FDSV-TFA can have on victim-survivors, including reduced contact with others, reputational concerns and social isolation. For example, in the multi-country IBA survey of respondents across Australia, New Zealand and the UK, 55.7% of those who experienced IBA reported impacts on their relationships with others and 78.8% reported reputational concerns (Powell et al. 2020b).

A 2022 scoping review into TFA in intimate relationships found that the most frequently reported impact of TFA was social isolation (Rogers et al. 2022). Perpetrators of TFA can use technology to deliberately isolate women by hijacking or controlling their use of technology and by threatening to release private and personal material (Douglas et al. 2019). A study conducted with 546 Australian DV practitioners found that concerns about constant surveillance may result in victim-survivors retreating from going out, from going to work, from seeing other people, or from doing shopping or other daily activities (Woodlock et al. 2020b). Practitioners commented that the fear of being monitored also prevented women from contacting support services (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

Family impacts

It is also important to consider the impacts that FDSV-TFA has on family members, including children, and the role of victim-survivors as parents and/or carers. Research was commissioned by eSafety in 2020 to examine the impact of TFA involving children in the context of FDV. The study included 4 young people (aged 16–18 years) affected by TFA in the context of FDV, 11 mothers of children in this context, and 11 men who were participants in a men's behaviour change program for DV education and intervention (eSafety Commissioner 2020c). It also included a survey of 515 FDV professionals and focus groups with 13 practitioners. The study found that children within an FDV context experienced TFA themselves (including monitoring or stalking, threats, intimidation and blocking their communication), and were also involved by perpetrators in the TFA directed at their mothers (eSafety Commissioner 2020c). Participants in the study described the harmful impacts that TFA within FDV can have on children. These included mental health issues, feelings of fear and guilt, relationship problems, and isolation from family and friends. In addition, young people described how TFA negatively impacted upon their education and their relationships with their parents (eSafety Commissioner 2020c).

The 2020 Second National Survey found that children were often used in the perpetration of TFA (Woodlock et al. 2020a). For example, 33.5% of FDSV practitioners observed seeing 'all the time' children being given a telephone or other device to contact their father and it being used to monitor their mother's movements. In addition, 29.4% of practitioners observed seeing 'all the time' perpetrators using children's social media accounts to contact children's mothers (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Research has also indicated that, for victim-survivors who are parents or carers, FDSV-TFA can impact upon post-separation co-parenting (Dragiewicz et al. 2019; eSafety Commissioner 2020; Woodlock et al. 2020b). Co-parenting can provide opportunities for the perpetration of TFA, such as using text messages to engage in high-stakes negotiations while refusing to return the child to the other parent, giving children gifts with GPS tracking capabilities (Douglas et al. 2019; Woodlock et al. 2020b; Fiolet et al. 2021), having control over a child's digital technologies, or using children as a source of information post-separation (e.g. asking them for telephone numbers and account information/passwords) (Dragiewicz et al. 2019). Furthermore, victim-survivors who may otherwise disengage from a perpetrator may be required to balance retaining communication with TFA perpetrators with ensuring their children's safety. In the 2020 Second National Survey, when asked about court-ordered child contact and whether perpetrators were using this to abuse, threaten and intimidate women, 49.4% of practitioners reported seeing this 'all the time' (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Financial impacts

Victim-survivors can experience financial impacts due to FDSV-TFA (Douglas et al. 2019; Eaton et al. 2021). The 2022 scoping review into TFA in intimate relationships found that these impacts can include a lack of, or limited access to, finances and online banking, loss of employment, restrictions and prevention in securing employment, accrual of debt, payment of large fees to remove sexual images from social media and other web platforms, and the cost of replacing devices (Rogers et al. 2022).

Some of the above impacts are discussed further within the context of how enablers can mitigate against these impacts in Section 3.2.

2.3.2 Actions taken in response to FDSV-TFA

Victim-survivors report a range of actions taken in response to experiences of FDSV-TFA, including inaction, disclosure and help-seeking, as well as efforts to manage their own safety and technology.

The 2022 Australian national TFA study (*n*=4,562) found that one in three victim-survivors (34.3%) did not tell anyone about their most recent experience of TFA (noting that this included TFA outside of the FDSV context) (Powell et al. 2022a). However, one in nine (11.4%) contacted a support service for advice, one in ten (10.1%) reported the abuse to a technology provider, almost one in five (17.8%) searched online for information or advice, and one in three (35.3%) sought informal support or advice from family or friends (Powell et al. 2022a).

The 2019 survey of TFSV (*n*=2,956) found that just over half of all respondents (54.1%) reported that they ignored the TFSV behaviour (Powell and Henry 2019). The study found that female respondents were significantly more likely than males to report that they told the perpetrator to stop (42.6% of females vs. 33% of males), to change their online details or profile settings (23.8% of females vs.

15.8% of males), and/or to leave the site or turn off their device (23.4% of females vs. 17.3% of males) (Powell and Henry 2019).

In the recent AIC survey of dating app and website users (*n*=9,987) in Australia aged 18 years and over, 44.4% of respondents who had been subjected to online dating app–facilitated sexual violence in the last five years disclosed their experience to at least one source, with 21.6% disclosing it to multiple sources (Wolbers et al. 2022). This indicates that most respondents who had experienced online dating app–facilitated sexual violence in the last five years did not disclose their experience. Of those who did disclose, respondents who had experienced online sexual harassment were most likely to disclose to friends (24.5%) and to the platform (21.5%). Respondents who had experienced TFSA and/or coercion were most likely to disclose to friends (33.6%), the platform (19.2%), family members (18.2%) and/or the police (14.2%) (Wolbers et al. 2022).

Similarly, in the 2021 US survey of 696 young adults aged 16–22 years, 54.5% of respondents who reported experiencing a DDA behaviour disclosed their worst experience to someone. Of those who did disclose to someone, it was most often to friends (94.3%), parents (16.4%) and/or siblings (12.8%) (Ellyson et al. 2021).

eSafety's 2017 national IBA survey (*n*=4,122), which was commissioned prior to the establishment of eSafety's Image-Based Abuse Scheme (see Section 3.3.2), reported that one in four victim-survivors (24%) of IBA took action in response to the abuse (eSafety Commissioner 2017). The most common actions undertaken were confronting the perpetrator (47% of those who acted) and reporting the abuse (35%) (eSafety Commissioner 2017). Other actions included withdrawing from social activities (20%), talking to a friend or family member about the experience (17%), or seeking advice or information (17%) (eSafety Commissioner 2017). Almost one in ten respondents (9%) made a major life change in response to their experience with IBA, such as changing jobs or schools, or moving house (eSafety Commissioner 2017).

In addition, a 2017 study with 152 DV advocates and 46 victim-survivors who had experienced technology-facilitated stalking examined victim-survivors' help-seeking strategies. The survey found that 44% of participants had sought help, 77% had spoken with their family or friends, and 44% had spoken with DV services (Woodlock 2017).

A 2023 US survey of 1,215 young adults aged 18–35 years found that 70% of respondents had sought help from professional sources in relation to their TFA experiences (not limited to FDSV-TFA) (Mumford et al. 2023). Types of help that were sought included technology support, justice/legal assistance, and support from health services and victim services. Individuals who identified the perpetrator of their TFA experiences as a current or ex-intimate partner were less likely to turn to law enforcement or to seek other legal assistance, leading authors to recommend that healthcare and victim service providers should consider that clients may need support to determine the next steps (e.g. legal, technology-based) to enhance their safety (Mumford et al. 2023).

A 2019 qualitative study examined the help-seeking responses of 20 Australian women victim-survivors of TFA within the context of DV (Dragiewicz et al. 2019). Most victim-survivors in the study had experienced TFA via SMS, repeated calling, and surveillance via GPS on mobile phones. As a result, many participants sought assistance from telecommunications companies (i.e. mobile phone services and internet providers). The types of services participants requested included being released from family plans held with a perpetrator, changing their telephone numbers, making their telephone numbers private, regaining access to accounts, and having their mobile phones checked

for security risks. Victim-survivor participants also sought help from FDV services, friends and family, police and courts (Dragiewicz et al. 2019).

Many victim-survivors in the study also reported that they responded to TFA by managing their own safety on social media (e.g. Facebook) by using features such as blocking, privacy settings or pseudonyms, or by limiting their use of the platform. However, very few participants sought assistance directly from social media services, with participants suggesting that they thought it would not help (Dragiewicz et al. 2019).

A qualitative study with 55 Australian victim-survivors of TFA conducted in 2014–2017 found that many participants had taken action to manage their safety and address the TFA (Douglas et al. 2019). The actions taken to stop the abuse included blocking contacts on their social media, mobile phones or email, disconnecting from social media, changing their telephone number or email address, getting a new mobile phone or changing their security settings (Douglas et al. 2019). However, despite disconnecting from technology, some participants reported that they continued to be abused indirectly by the perpetrators, who overtly and covertly commissioned family and friend networks to facilitate the abuse (Douglas et al. 2019).

3 Responding to the problem

Summary

Victim-survivors face a range of barriers in reporting FDSV-TFA, including attitudes of law enforcement that blame them for the abuse, loss of privacy and fear of retribution, the pressure to disengage from technology, and the perceived inadequacy of the law to address the abuse. Women from CALD backgrounds and women with disability can face additional language and communication barriers to reporting and accessing mainstream FDSV services.

A dilemma faced by frontline workers in the FDSV sector is how to promote and facilitate the safety of victim-survivors while still enabling safe use of technology that allows them to remain connected to family, friends and their community. The increasing expansion of forms of FDSV-TFA poses a challenge to services staying abreast of the different ways perpetrators can use technology to facilitate the abuse.

There is an apparent need for specialised and targeted training for frontline workers to adequately respond to FDSV-TFA, such as training around the use of technology, privacy settings and online safety. The literature also highlights the value in investing in the creation of highly skilled professionals in the FDSV sector with expertise in TFA. Across Australia, a range of government and non-government programs, and interventions such as legislative and policy frameworks, are in place to address or provide support for TFA that could be expanded or enacted more consistently.

3.1 Barriers in responding to TFA

3.1.1 Barriers in reporting and seeking support for FDSV-TFA

The research indicates that a large proportion of victim-survivors do not report or seek support for FDSV-TFA (see Section 2.3.2). This is of particular concern given the potential harmful and negative impacts of such experiences (see Section 2.3.1). To provide support and respond to FDSV-TFA, it is important to understand and address the barriers to help-seeking. Available literature largely focuses on responses to FDSV-TFA from police and legal systems, with a paucity of information available about barriers for victim-survivors in accessing other support services.

Judgement or victim blaming

Fear of being blamed or of not being taken seriously are common barriers that prevent victim-survivors from reporting their experiences of TFA (Flynn et al. 2023a). A 2017 study with 152 DV advocates and 46 victim-survivors who had experienced intimate partner stalking examined victim-survivors' help-seeking strategies (Woodlock 2017). The study found that women experiencing TFA were unlikely to seek help (56% of victim-survivor participants had not sought help). The main reason

women gave for not seeking help was their embarrassment about the abuse, with 85% stating they were too embarrassed to seek assistance (Woodlock 2017).

In addition, some research suggests that perceived judgement from law enforcement can be a barrier to seeking and receiving support. In a 2019 multi-country study of IBA, interviews with 75 victim-survivors across Australia, New Zealand and the UK found that most victim-survivors who reported their experience were dissatisfied with the police response they received, describing it as 'disinterested', 'dismissive', 'cruel' and 'judgemental' (Henry et al. 2020b).

Similarly, the 2021 AIC survey of 9,987 dating app or websites users in Australia indicated that one in five participants did not believe that the police took their report of dating app–facilitated SV seriously, and one in three participants stated they would not report an incident to the police again (Lawler and Boxall 2023). Negative reporting experiences caused by victim blaming and judgemental attitudes can lead to low levels of confidence in the police and may reinforce victim-survivors' beliefs that engagement with the criminal justice system can be harmful and retraumatising (Flynn et al. 2023a; Lawler and Boxall 2023).

A 2020 survey study with 338 FDSV sector stakeholders across Australia indicated that police may be less likely to perceive TFA as a serious harm unless it is co-occurring with physical violence (Flynn et al. 2021). For example, participants reported that there were issues engrained in police culture around only physical violence being taken seriously, and workers reported that TFA cases would often only make it to court if they co-presented with physical or sexual abuse (Flynn et al. 2021b).

Perceived inadequacy of the law

Another barrier for some victim-survivors in reporting experiences of FDSV-TFA to the police and contributing to ineffective police responses upon reporting is the perceived inadequacy of law enforcement to respond to TFA. In a 2023 survey study with Australian workers from support and service sectors, including FDV, sexual assault and legal (*n*=242), qualitative interviews with adult victim-survivors (*n*=20) and perpetrators of TFA (*n*=10), and a subset of respondents from a nationally representative general population survey of victimisation and perpetration (*n*=2,352), 21% of participants indicated that laws are never inclusive of the different forms of TFA (Flynn et al. 2023a). Furthermore, one participant explained that because of the tactics used to perpetrate TFA, the police cannot do anything about it.

> [W]ith the increase of tech abuse, the laws aren't up to scratch … [T]here's a huge gap there … Because of the way that he's [the perpetrator] doing things, the legislation just doesn't allow them [the police] to actually do anything about it [Flynn et al. 2023a:582].

Another participant reported that even if they did report the abuse, the limits of the law meant that there was nothing the police could do (Flynn et al. 2023a). Findings from the study highlighted how rapid technological change has made it difficult for police and the court system to keep up with the changing landscape of technology being used to facilitate TFA (Flynn et al. 2023a).

Furthermore, other participants felt the police were either unaware of the relevant legislation or that they may use its perceived ineffectiveness as a justification for not taking reports of FDSV-TFA seriously. The notion that the police could not do anything for victim-survivors of TFA was a common theme that emerged in the victim-survivor interviews, a belief that led many victim-survivors to not report incidents of TFA (Flynn et al. 2023a).

Research has also indicated that there is limited knowledge in the Australian population of some laws relating to FDSV-TFA. For example, in a mixed methods study (survey *n*=245; focus groups *n*=219) of Australians aged 18–71 years, only 38.8% believed that it is a crime to threaten to share an intimate image (Flynn et al. 2022a). Furthermore, the multi-country IBA survey (*n*=6,109) of respondents in Australia, New Zealand and the UK reported that less than half of the respondents believed that it was a crime to take images without consent in their country, to share images without consent in their country, and to threaten to share images of a person in their country (Powell et al. 2020b). Consistent with the findings in that survey, responses of participants in a 2021 qualitative study with FDV stakeholder participants (*n*=15) and regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (*n*=12) who have experienced TFA[7] also indicated that there may be a lack of understanding among victim-survivors about what constitutes an offence according to the law (Brown et al. 2021b). A lack of awareness about what constitutes a criminal offence may reduce the likelihood that some victim-survivors would consider reporting their experience to the police. This indicates that the legal status of some digital behaviours needs to be clarified for victim-survivors.

Perpetrators' control over victim-survivors' use of technology

Technology can be used to extend perpetrators' control over victim-survivors and prevent them from accessing support. A qualitative study conducted from 2014 to 2017 with 55 Australian victim-survivors of TFA indicated that perpetrators' control over technology has implications for victim-survivors' help-seeking (Douglas et al. 2019). One victim-survivor explained that she tried to use her phone to call the police on one occasion, but her partner 'grabbed [my phone] out of my hand and he's hurled it across the room and restricted me from leaving the room'. Another victim-survivor explained that they were never allowed access to mobile phones (Douglas et al. 2019). Victim-survivors in the interview study also reported that the fear of being monitored prevented them from contacting support services (Douglas et al. 2019).

In addition, the 2021 qualitative research study conducted with frontline services and stakeholders (*n*=15) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (*n*=12) from regional and remote communities found that perpetrators of TFA would withhold or damage women's phones (Brown et al. 2021b). Phones were often reported as being a central element in the safety planning frontline workers conducted with the women with whom they worked, as they offer a way to contact support services, report to police and access help. Perpetrators would often damage phones to prevent the woman from reporting abuse, accessing help, or contacting friends and family (Brown et al. 2021b).

3.1.2 Specific barriers at-risk cohorts face in reporting FDSV-TFA and seeking support

While culture and identity are a source of strength and connection for individuals and communities, social factors, including discrimination and disadvantage, can also lead to increased barriers for some groups in seeking support or justice responses to FDSV-TFA. For example, research identifies that

[7] The range of respondents represented in the sample includes three women's services, two police officers, three legal services, one drug and alcohol service, one Aboriginal health service, one men's behaviour change program and one youth service.

CALD women, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, LGBTQI+ communities, and women in rural or remote areas can each face particular barriers in seeking or accessing support services in response to FDSV-TFA.

Barriers for CALD women

Research indicates that there are some predominant help-seeking barriers that affect CALD women to a greater extent than non-CALD women. First, for some CALD women, there may be a lack of awareness that FDSV-TFA can constitute a criminal offence in Australia. Some CALD women may not consider behaviours such as stalking, harassing or impersonating serious enough to warrant going to the police or seeking formal support, as in their home countries or in their communities FDV may be considered to be mostly physical (Leyton Zamora et al. 2022).

Second, for some CALD women, language and communication barriers may contribute to a lack of awareness of available supports for FDSV-TFA. In addition, language barriers may create challenges for CALD victim-survivors in communicating and reporting their personal experiences with FDSV-TFA (Freed et al. 2018). A 2021 Australian research study on the TFA experiences of CALD women found that language barriers were the most significant issue affecting participants' experience of reporting (Louie 2021). This study found that language barriers may prevent CALD victim-survivors from accessing, or being aware of, mainstream support services. In addition, potentially life-saving actions, such as calling emergency services or communicating with service staff, were daunting tasks when English was not a first language. Victim-survivors were more willing to disclose their experiences to a service practitioner who spoke the same language (Louie 2021). In addition, in situations where a victim-survivor belongs to a small community and an interpreter is needed, the victim-survivor might be hesitant or afraid to tell their story to a community member (eSafety Commissioner 2019a).

Third, for some CALD women, their visa status may create barriers to reporting and help-seeking for FDSV-TFA (Zaidi et al. 2015; eSafety Commissioner 2019a). A 2018 qualitative research study conducted with 29 CALD women who had experienced TFA and 20 stakeholders indicated that certain visas may increase the risk of FDSV-TFA for some CALD women and can also shape their help-seeking experiences as not all services are accessible for temporary visa holders (eSafety Commissioner 2019a). For example, perpetrators may use a woman's migration status to silence and control her, threatening her with deportation (Zaidi et al. 2015). Women on spousal visas experiencing FDSV-TFA may fear deportation and loss of their immigration status if they report the abuse (eSafety Commissioner 2019a).

Finally, for some CALD women, shame and traditional gender roles may prevent them from seeking support for FDSV-TFA. CALD participants in the same 2018 qualitative research study described feeling unable to seek support from friends and family for fear of being shamed by the perpetrator (eSafety Commissioner 2019a). Furthermore, many participants described how perpetrators of TFA threaten to shame CALD women publicly as a 'bad wife' if they disclose or seek help, resulting in discrediting her reputation with friends, family and the broader community. In addition, one stakeholder explained that the threat of divorce from women wanting to leave a perpetrator of FDSV-TFA would bring shame on their families (eSafety Commissioner 2019a).

Barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

In the 2021 qualitative research study conducted with frontline services and stakeholders (*n*=15) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (*n*=12) from regional and remote communities, it was observed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women primarily sought informal support from family members and friends (Brown et al. 2021b). In addition, the research found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women would seek support from support services once the abuse had escalated, and often only once it had become physical. Frontline workers reported that this may be because women did not know their rights or could not identify TFA as abuse or know that it is illegal (Brown et al. 2021b).

The research also identified that there were contextual barriers and obstacles to formal help-seeking among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in regional and remote areas. For example, access to support can be difficult due to the lack of support services available, long travel distances, extreme remoteness, and the lack of reliable phone network coverage (Brown et al. 2021b).

The qualitative research also indicated that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women may face additional help-seeking barriers as they are more likely to receive calls from perpetrators via private telephone numbers (compared to younger women who are more likely to experience TFA via text messages or social media) (Brown et al. 2021b). This was reported by workers to be problematic because many support services have private telephone numbers for operational and safety reasons, which made it more difficult for them to reach and support the woman (Brown et al. 2021b).

Barriers for women with disability

Research has indicated that women with disability may experience specific challenges to seeking help for FDSV-TFA. For example, the qualitative study commissioned by eSafety and conducted with six Australian women TFA victim-survivors with cognitive or intellectual disability and 15 disability service providers identified that most victim-survivors with disability did not seek formal support for TFA, and instead primarily sought assistance from family and/or friends (eSafety Commissioner 2021). The research indicated that women with disability may be unsure of who to contact for formal support (eSafety Commissioner 2021).

Fear was also identified as a primary barrier for women with disability to report and obtain support for TFA. This included the fear of having technology and internet access removed, or of not being believed, or of their experiences being dismissed (eSafety Commissioner 2021).

In addition, service providers described that it was common for women with children to be concerned that, in seeking formal assistance, their children might be removed by child protection services (eSafety Commissioner 2021). Service providers in the study indicated that removal of children from custody in FDV contexts was common among women with disability.

Barriers for LGBTQI+ people

There is a lack of research examining the barriers to help-seeking for LGBTQI+ people for FDSV-TFA specifically. However, research demonstrates that there are barriers to help-seeking for intimate partner violence and family violence, both of which may be considered in this context.

Some barriers to help-seeking within the context of IPV include low awareness of IPV within same-sex relationships, feelings of isolation and fear of discrimination (Scheer et al. 2020; Santoniccolo et al. 2023). Some LGBTQI+ individuals who experience IPV may understand it as an experience that only happens to cisgender women – not cisgender men, transgender women or transgender men (Scheer et al. 2020). A systematic review of the help-seeking process in lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) IPV found that low awareness of intimate partner violence within LGB relationships often prevented victim-survivors from recognising their experience as a problem (Santoniccolo et al. 2023). Research has also found that transgender victim-survivors are often unaware of what IPV looks like within transgender communities, and do not recognise their own experiences as abuse (Kurdyla 2017). In addition, mainstream resources and support services are often structured around a gendered understanding of FDSV and some LGBTQI+ victim-survivors may not be aware that services are available for them.

Evidence suggests that LGB victim-survivors are more likely to utilise informal support networks (e.g. friends and family) (Santoniccolo et al. 2023). However, feelings of isolation associated with being LGB may prevent some LGB IPV victim-survivors from accessing informal support, or they may not have access to an informal supportive network (Santoniccolo et al. 2023).

In addition, for many LGBTQI+ victim-survivors, help-seeking also requires being 'out' about their gender identity or their sexuality. LGBTQI+ IPV victim-survivors may be concerned that seeking help via formal services (e.g. police) could be met with discrimination, including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (Scheer et al. 2020; Santoniccolo et al. 2023). Research has indicated that a fear of discrimination can also extend to social networks. LGBTQI+ victim-survivors may fear that seeking help through formal services may reinforce negative stereotypes and cast a negative light on the broader LGBTQI+ community (Edwards et al. 2015; Ollen et al. 2017; Scheer et al. 2020; Santoniccolo et al. 2023). In addition, research has indicated that some LGBTQI+ respondents may be concerned about how a disclosure of IPV may be perceived by the LGBTQI+ community and may fear losing their social network by disclosing the violence (Ollen et al. 2017; Santoniccolo et al. 2023).

Within the context of family violence, an Australian survey of 6,835 LGBTQ adults in 2019 found that respondents who felt they were treated unfairly due to their gender or sexual orientation, and those who had not felt supported when they reported their most recent experience of violence, were more likely to prefer LGBTQ specific family violence services than mainstream services (Amos et al. 2023b). This research highlighted the need to improve the LGBTQ inclusivity of mainstream services and to adequately resource LGBTQ specific services to ensure that LGBTQ people feel supported and respected and that they are being treated fairly (Amos et al. 2023b).

Barriers for women living in regional, rural and remote areas

A 2022 qualitative study that included in-depth interviews and focus groups with 13 women victim-survivors of FDV across regional, rural and remote Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland found that all victim-survivors in the study faced barriers when seeking help and responding to technology-facilitated FDV (Harris and Woodlock 2022). In smaller communities, where the perpetrator may be well known and well liked, women reported feeling that they will not be believed or aided when disclosing the abuse (Harris and Woodlock 2022).

In addition, digital technology was regarded as an important tool for victim-survivors living in regional, rural and remote areas in seeking support and assistance (Harris and Woodlock 2022). The

ability to utilise digital technology to seek support was jeopardised when perpetrators controlled their access to technology and/or used technology to enact violence. Furthermore, some victim-survivors reported that knowing that the perpetrators were utilising technology to track and monitor them made them feel it was not safe to use it (Harris and Woodlock 2022).

3.1.3 Pressure to disengage from digital technologies

Disengaging from digital technologies can increase the risk of harm and of social isolation for some victim-survivors, and can limit their opportunities for building and developing support networks and for accessing education and career development opportunities (Douglas et al. 2019; eSafety Commissioner 2019a; Brown et al. 2021b). However, research with 20 women victim-survivors of TFA within the context of domestic violence, and 10 DV service providers, indicated that a lack of access to effective service provision or response to TFA may result in victim-survivors electing or being pressured to disengage from digital technologies (Dragiewicz et al. 2019). Furthermore, a 2018 survey research study conducted with 546 Australian FDV practitioners indicates that women who report their experience of TFA are often expected by society and the authorities to make changes to their use of technologies and communications devices to keep themselves safe, which can lead to a sense of being 'punished' for reporting the perpetrator (Woodlock et al. 2020b). FDV practitioners who participated in the survey research indicated that women who are reluctant to change their telephone, social media and other accounts are unfairly judged and 'revictimised' by police, courts, family law services and the broader community (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

Electing to or being advised to switch off or replace devices can be difficult and impractical for victim-survivors. A predominant theme in a 2018 study conducted with 546 Australian DV practitioners revealed that switching off devices or accounts does not necessarily improve safety (Woodlock et al. 2020b). Instead, participants reported that switching off from technology can increase the risk for some women and children. They noted that, for some women, although continuing to receive texts or other contacts from an abusive ex-partner increases their anxiety, staying in contact with the perpetrator provided useful information about their mental state, which could assist them to assess their level of risk and to stay safe (Woodlock et al. 2020b). Furthermore, not responding to messages or telephone calls may result in the perpetrator retaliating by using other channels (e.g. in person) to abuse or confront their partner or ex-partner. Therefore, shutting off communication may result in an increased sense of unpredictability (Woodlock et al. 2020b). Participants in the 2019 study with victim-survivors of TFA within the context of domestic violence and DV service providers indicated that disengaging from digital technology escalated the TFA, as perpetrators reacted to disengagement with aggression and intrusion (Dragiewicz et al. 2019).

3.1.4 Barriers support services face in responding to FDSV-TFA

Difficulties with investigating and prosecuting FDSV-TFA

Research suggests that police may face several operational challenges in responding to and investigating FDSV-TFA. For example, in a 2021 mixed methods research study with 338 FDSV sector stakeholders, participants discussed the barriers police face in investigating and prosecuting TFA. These included challenges faced in tracing blocked telephone numbers and accessing evidence from telephone and social media companies, resulting in an inability to collect sufficient evidence required by the courts (Flynn et al. 2021b, 2023a). This difficulty was reported to be exacerbated in remote

areas where police are also facing high crime rates and challenging barriers, resulting in TFA becoming a lower priority (Flynn et al. 2021b).

The 2021 study supported earlier findings from a qualitative study (*n*=20) in which many of the DV victim-survivor participants reported that the police indicated they could not prove the identity of the caller or user perpetrating the TFA, and therefore could not do anything about it (Dragiewicz et al. 2019).

Frontline worker confidence and knowledge gaps

The increasing expansion of forms of FDSV-TFA poses a challenge to services trying to stay abreast of the many forms of TFA and of ways to keep victim-survivors safe (Woodlock et al. 2020a). Participants in a 2021 interview study with seven Australian rural and regional social workers within FV services described TFA as a progressive form of abuse that is constantly changing in nature (Williams et al. 2023). This changeable nature of TFA can make it difficult to identify and respond effectively to FV incidents. In the 2021 mixed methods research study with 338 FDSV sector stakeholders, participants were most likely to have some confidence in their knowledge of and skills in recognising the signs of TFA, in understanding the new and emerging forms of TFA, and in developing a safety plan with those experiencing TFA. However, many participants were not at all confident of their skills in responding to perpetrators of TFA or in meeting the specific needs of diverse clients (Flynn et al. 2021b).

The research conducted with seven rural and regional Australian FV social workers indicated that advising women to disconnect themselves may be a core component of professional training for some FDSV workers, due to the unavailability of known alternative effective practice responses to TFA (Williams et al. 2023). Victim-survivors may be advised to 'switch off' or replace devices, alter device settings, close social media accounts, and change bank and other accounts accessed through digital technologies (Williams et al. 2023). Participants reported that they have advised women to disconnect themselves and delete their social media accounts and change their devices' settings and passwords. However, participants indicated that they felt uncomfortable with recommending this, as it puts the onus on the women and can result in them being further isolated (Williams et al. 2023) (see Section 3.1.3).

3.2 Enablers in responding to FDSV-TFA

3.2.1 Understanding and identification of FDSV-TFA

Victim-survivors report that police and legal responses frequently overlook and minimise FDSV-TFA or view it as distinct and disconnected from other forms of abuse (Harris and Woodlock 2022). Research shows that it is important that those responding to FDSV-TFA perceive the harms facilitated by digital technologies within the context of a person's broader experience of FDSV. Furthermore, it is important that there is awareness and understanding of TFA as an extension of existing FDSV behaviours, rather than as a unique set of behaviours (Fiolet et al. 2021). By shifting the focus of examination from each incident of abuse to the patterns of behaviour and the tactics used by perpetrators, insight can be gained into a person's experiences, the impacts they have experienced and the risks they face.

Increased understanding and awareness of the complexity and impacts of FDSV-TFA could also help to improve service provision for victim-survivors (Brown et al. 2021b). FDSV-TFA can have significant social, financial and mental health impacts on victim-survivors (see Section 2.3) (Powell and Henry 2018). While many of these impacts are evident in more traditional forms of FDSV, it is important to recognise the unique harms that can arise when technologies are used as a tool in facilitating abuse (e.g. the omnipresence of TFA) (Harris and Woodlock 2022).

Moreover, it is important that TFA be considered in FDSV safety planning and risk assessment (Flynn et al. 2021b; Harris and Woodlock 2022). The 2020 Second National Survey (*n*=442) found that 76.7% of FDSV practitioners indicated that if they were to undertake training, they would like to see it cover safety planning and risk assessment around technology (Woodlock et al. 2020a). By taking TFA seriously, adopting a survivor-led approach that asks women about their needs, working with them to assess the risks posed by the perpetrator, and creating a safety plan together, the impact of TFA can be minimised (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

3.2.2 Training and support for frontline workers

Training for frontline workers

A common finding across the literature is the need for specialised and targeted training for frontline workers such as FDSV practitioners and police to enable them to respond adequately to FDSV-TFA (Freed et al. 2017; Brown et al. 2021b; Harkin and Merkel 2023). Support services often struggle with a lack of the resources, funding, confidence, knowledge and skills required to comprehensively address the needs of victim-survivors (Freed et al. 2017). The technical complications regarding TFA experienced by victim-survivors are often beyond frontline workers' skillsets and knowledge (Freed et al. 2017).

There is a need for better information, training and education for frontline workers, as well as for legal and judicial professionals, to better equip them to recognise the harms of FDSV-TFA and to enhance their resources to enable them to respond effectively (Freed et al. 2017). For example, a 2023 survey study with FDSV support and service sectors (*n*=242), including DV, sexual assault, health, behaviour change, legal and specialist diversity services, as well as qualitative interviews with adult victim-survivors (*n*=20) and perpetrators (*n*=10) of TFA, indicated that frontline workers, including police, are generally not equipped with sufficient training, expertise and knowledge to keep up with the changing landscape of technology (Flynn et al. 2023a).

In a mixed methods study of 338 FDSV sector stakeholders, participants indicated that training is needed for frontline workers to understand the complexities of TFA, including regular updates on the types of abuse and types of technologies being used, as well as how to assist clients. Furthermore, participants suggested that there needs to be accessible, regularly updated resources available to frontline workers and victim-survivors. These would include information on how to report TFA, what legal avenues are available, how to access practical support, and how to check devices for spyware, safety planning, cyber security and safety apps (Flynn et al. 2021b).

Similarly, a UK study conducted in 2018–2020 with 34 voluntary and statutory sector representatives working within the FDSV sector highlighted their desire to receive 'really practical stuff' and information that is 'tangible', 'digestible' and communicated in a 'simple, accessible and clear way' (Tanczer et al. 2021). In addition to training, practitioners saw value in receiving regular updates on

emerging technologies, including having a 'checklist of things to look out for' as well as 'specific advice sheets for clients' (Tanczer et al. 2021).

Other research has highlighted the value of the FDSV sector in receiving more specialised TFA knowledge. For example, the 2021 qualitative research study conducted with frontline services and stakeholders (*n*=15) and regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (*n*=12) highlighted the importance of training around the use of technology, privacy settings and online safety to equip frontline workers to better understand the needs of the women with whom they work (Brown et al. 2021b). In addition, FDSV practitioners in the 2020 Second National Survey (*n*=442) indicated that if they were to undertake training, they would like it to cover 'how to best support women and children to minimise the impact of TFA' (49.5%), information about legal options for women and children (47.1%), how to identify TFA (41.6%), how TFA fits within the larger understanding of domestic violence (41.2%), information about types of technology (39.6%), and how TFA impacts women and children (39.4%) (Woodlock et al. 2020a).

Training (and further research) for service providers also needs to explore the unique and specific risks and issues that FDSV-TFA can pose for women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from CALD communities, as well as other groups of people whose reliance on digital technologies is closely associated with their social, emotional and/or physical wellbeing (Woodlock et al. 2020b).

Support for frontline workers

Some research has indicated that there may be ways in which FDSV providers and technology support experts could work collaboratively to provide support for TFA victim-survivors. For example, a 2021 US research study based on focus groups with professionals who work with IPV victim-survivors (*n*=17) and customer support practitioners from computer security companies (*n*=11) indicated that collaboration between IPV professionals and customer support workers may be beneficial in meeting the needs of victim-survivors within the real-world constraints of customer support (Zou et al. 2021). In particular, the authors emphasised the need for coordinated expert support. They recommended training those in customer support to assist with addressing technology-facilitated IPV and establishing partnerships with IPV advocates (Zou et al. 2021). These initiatives could enable IPV professionals to receive guidance on recognising in their work signs of technology being used to facilitate abuse and security professionals to learn and adopt protocols for interacting with victim-survivors.

A qualitative study in 2019 described a 'clinical computer security' approach to helping victim-survivors of technology-facilitated IPV. The approach involved a trained technology consultant working collaboratively with a victim-survivor/client and IPV professionals to help them navigate TFA (Freed et al. 2019). The research, which involved technology consultations with 31 victim-survivors and IPV professionals working on their behalf, found that the consultations enabled clients to acquire new security practices and knowledge (Freed et al. 2019). To meet the high demand for technological consultants from IPV professionals, the authors suggested a two-tier structure for technological interventions that includes:

1) improved frontline screening of clients for technological issues by non-technological IPV professionals
2) referral models for consultations with technological consultants (Freed et al. 2019).

In addition, in a 2021 mixed methods research study with 338 FDSV sector stakeholders, some stakeholders suggested that they would benefit from specialist services that they can refer to, such as an advice hotline for frontline workers and victim-survivors with current information, or a service for helping victim-survivors to assess their devices and provide them with education on how to keep safe (Flynn et al. 2021b).

The need for a centralised helpline has also emerged in consultation processes in other jurisdictions. In a written submission to the Online Harms White Paper Consultation in 2019, the 'Gender and Internet of Things' research team at University College London, which investigates the growing risk of FDSV-TFA, described how their engagement with DV support services has highlighted limitations in responding to TFA (Tanczer et al. 2018). The submission recommended the development of a centralised helpline in order to support FDSV services that may not have the capacity or knowledge to respond to TFA.

3.2.3 Technology-based responses to FDSV-TFA

As discussed in Section 3.1, traditional FDSV services face many challenges when responding to TFA, due to the rapid development of technology and difficulties with maintaining up-to-date skills within the sector. However, responsibility also falls on the technology industry to proactively prevent and safeguard users from risk of harm and to provide responses to address incidences of FDSV-TFA. Technology-based responses can include providing technology-supported information, developing and applying tailored technology-based solutions, and facilitating technology-supported reporting to or connection with services (eSafety Commissioner 2019c; Harkin and Merkel 2023).

Given the role that digital technologies can play in the facilitation of TFA, calls have been made for internet intermediaries (telecommunications providers, search engines, content host and social media services) to consider FDSV in their design and to proactively prevent and mitigate against FDSV-TFA through the development of policies, procedures and design choices (Suzor et al. 2019). This includes, for example:

- eSafety's *Safety by Design* initiative (discussed further below), which seeks to encourage the technology industry to design, develop and deploy platforms and services in a way that positions user safety rights as a fundamental consideration (eSafety Commissioner 2022)
- the United Nations' *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, which outlines the responsibilities of companies to design and operate their networks in a way that avoids infringing on the rights of those they affect, and to find effective remedies for online abuse (United Nations 2011)
- PenzeyMoog's *Framework for Inclusive Safety*, which has been recommended as a roadmap for building technology in a way that increases the safety of DV survivors (PenzeyMoog and Slakoff 2021) and which helps developers to identify ways that their product may be misused, to design against such misuse, and to uncover potential areas where support or intervention might be offered to the user (PenzeyMoog and Slakoff 2021).

The responsibility to ensure that services or products do not facilitate FDSV-FTFA extends to:

- technology companies providing other internet-based services (e.g. cloud-host providers) that may unintentionally support spyware companies

- video upload platforms that have been associated with abusive use
- Internet of Things (IoT) manufacturers, including developers and manufacturers of video game consoles, cars, smartphones, home surveillance systems, disability assistance tools, and telecommunications
- any company offering internet-connected products or internet-based services, such as online banking or online government services (PenzeyMoog and Slakoff 2021).

There have also been calls for internet intermediaries to address abusive behaviours facilitated through their platforms, and to proactively mitigate and react to abusive use facilitated by their products (Brown et al. 2021b; Henry and Witt 2021; Harkin and Merkel 2023). In response to the increasing pressure on organisations to address FDSV-TFA, major social media companies (e.g. Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], Instagram and TikTok) have instituted abusive-use policies, with some companies having specific mechanisms for victim-survivors to notify or report abuse. IBM has also declared a commitment to *Five Technology Design Principles to Combat Domestic Abuse* (Harkin and Merkel 2023). In addition, some major social media companies have introduced tools to help detect non-consensually shared intimate images (i.e. Meta, TikTok, Reddit, Bumble, OnlyFans).

Although many technology companies and social media services have been working to address abuse facilitated through their platforms, improvement is still needed in complaints systems and mechanisms for due processes, as well as in content moderation processes that can effectively mitigate harm perpetrated through their services (Dragiewicz et al. 2019; Suzor et al. 2019; Henry and Witt 2021). A 2022 UK study that surveyed 89 victim-survivors of DV (37 of whom had reported TFA to social media services) and interviewed 17 victim-survivors of DV found that 95% of survivors responding to the survey were not satisfied with the support they received from the social media company to which they reported the DV content (Refuge 2022). Over half of the interviewed survivors (53%) reported that the response from the social media company was that the content they had reported did not breach the platform's safety guidelines, despite many platforms outlining their zero tolerance for abuse, threats and harassments (Refuge 2022).

In addition, qualitative research conducted with regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of TFA and service providers indicated that technology-based responses to FDSV-TFA could include better regulation of the content on their platforms, better and clearer codes of conduct for what constitutes acceptable behaviour, better enforcement of those codes of conduct and community guidelines, and the development of applications that enable victim-survivors to alert support or emergency services quickly and discreetly during an emergency (Brown et al. 2021b).

At the heart of eSafety's *Safety by Design* initiative are three principles that provide platforms and services with guidance as they incorporate, assess and enhance user safety. These are: service provider responsibility; user empowerment and autonomy; and transparency and accountability (eSafety Commissioner 2019c).

The principles are built around a human-centric approach that places the safety and rights of users at its core, while also taking into account their needs and expectations. The principles elevate user safety as the third pillar in the developmental process for all online and digital technologies, sitting alongside privacy and security.

Under each principle are realistic, actionable and achievable measures that providers of all sizes and stages of maturity can use to safeguard users from online risks and harms. The principles also

promote the technology industry's strengths in innovation, encouraging new thinking and investment that supports product development which prioritises online safety.

Research and consultation for Safety by Design began in 2018. In addition to its foundational principles, it now includes interactive risk-assessment tools for enterprise and start-up technology companies, resources for investors and financial entities, and engagement with the tertiary education sector to embed Safety by Design into curricula around the world.

3.3 Forms of support available to victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA in Australia

This section considers key sources of support available to victim-survivors of FDSV-TFA in Australia. They include legislation and policies that address TFA; sources of support that are explicitly focused on TFA within the context of FDSV; sources of support for FDSV that include TFA resources; support from social media services and digital technology companies; and commercially available sources of support. The section does not provide an exhaustive look at all sources of support available to victim-survivors (including overseas and general online sources) but provides an overview of key 'types' of support that victim-survivors (and frontline workers) currently engage with.

3.3.1 Legislation and policies across Australian jurisdictions to address FDSV-TFA

Within Australia, there are several agencies and organisations that provide support and resources to tackle FDSV-TFA. Additionally, there are policy and legislative frameworks that underpin national-, state- and territory-based responses.

National policy and legislation

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (the National Plan) recognises that technology creates better access to information, including referral to services for victim-survivors. However, technology also facilitates the perpetration of violence, such as online sexual harassment, stalking and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images (Commonwealth of Australia 2022). The National Plan highlights the importance of trauma-informed care and practice, and the ability of FDSV support services to recognise and respond to people with diverse experiences through an intersectional lens.

Also at the national level, eSafety was established in 2015 and is Australia's national independent regulator and educator for online safety. It provides national leadership and coordination in understanding and responding to TFA (see Section 3.3.2). This response is underpinned by the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) (the Act), which gives eSafety substantial powers to help keep Australians safer online and includes mechanisms for the removal of abusive and harmful online content. Providers of certain kinds of online services captured under the Act also adhere to a set of Basic Online Safety Expectations, set by the Government, which include taking reasonable steps to proactively minimise material or activity that is unlawful or harmful, ensuring that users can use a service in a safe manner, putting in place user-reporting mechanisms, clearly outlining providers' terms of service and enforcing penalties for people who breach these terms. The Act provides eSafety with powers to

require reporting from providers to improve transparency and accountability. It also includes complaints-based schemes for individuals who experience IBA, adult cyber abuse (ACA) and cyberbullying of children. If a complaint meets the regulatory threshold, eSafety has the authority to require technology platforms to remove seriously harmful content within 24 hours and to impose civil penalties on technology platforms that fail to comply. eSafety also has investigative powers and can take action against a person (end-user) who shares (or threatens to share) online an intimate image without the consent of the person shown (IBA), or who posts material that is intended to cause serious harm and is menacing, harassing or offensive (ACA), by issuing them with an end-user notice.

Again at the national level, the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth) further outlines specific criminal offences that may apply to incidents of TFA – for example: dealing in identification information (commonly known as 'identity fraud', s 372.1); using interception devices (s 474.4); using a carriage service to make a threat (s 474.15); and using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence (s 474.17). Additionally, the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979* (Cth) includes unlawful acts such as interception of telecommunications (s 7) and dealing in intercepted information (s 63), as well as civil remedies for unlawful interception or communication (s 107A).

Finally, at the national level, under the *Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022* (Cth), employees (including part-time and casual employees) are entitled to 10 days of paid FDV leave each year. Leave can be taken to deal with the impacts of FDV where it is not practical to do so outside of work hours. Under the *Fair Work Amendment Act 2022* (Cth), 'FDV' means violent, threatening or other abusive behaviour that seeks to coerce or control the employee and causes them harm or fear. This includes violence facilitated through technology (Fair Work Ombudsman 2023).

While the National Plan provides a framework for policy priorities to end violence against women, the majority of service delivery, including support and criminal justice responses, operates at the state and/or territory level.

State and territory legislation

At the state and territory level, there are four main areas of law that are most relevant to people experiencing FDSV-TFA. These are: civil protection or intervention orders; surveillance and listening devices offences; specific criminal offences concerning threats, stalking and computer misuse; and specific criminal offences concerning IBA and voyeurism (see Technology Safety Australia 2022 for a more comprehensive overview).

Civil protection or intervention orders

A family violence protection order, also known as a 'restraining order' or 'domestic violence protection order' in some jurisdictions, is a civil law document issued by a court to provide protection for individuals who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, family violence or domestic abuse. Family violence protection orders are intended to prevent further harm by setting specific legal restrictions and conditions on the behaviour of the person who has been identified as the perpetrator of the violence (often referred to as the 'respondent'). The exact terms of a family violence protection order can vary based on the laws of the specific jurisdiction. While these civil protections do not take action in relation to criminal behaviours, the breach of a protection order is a criminal offence. Examples of such offences in each jurisdiction are summarised below.

Australian Capital Territory	The *Family Violence Act 2016* (ACT) allows a person who is experiencing domestic or family violence to apply to the Magistrates Court for a family violence order (FVO) or to have an FVO made by the police which imposes restrictions on the respondent not to commit further acts of family violence, including: psychological abuse, threatening behaviour, harassment or coercion (ss 36, 37, 38).
New South Wales	The *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (NSW) allows courts to make orders protecting people from domestic or family violence, imposing restrictions on a person not to engage in future behaviours such as threats, stalking, intimidation or harassment.
Northern Territory	The *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* (NT) allows the courts to make orders imposing restrictions on a respondent not to commit further acts of domestic violence against the protected person, including: intimidation, harassment or conduct causing harm (including mental harm) (ss 18, 19).
Queensland	The *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* (Qld) allows a person who is experiencing domestic or family violence to apply to the Magistrates Court for a domestic violence order (DVO) or to have a DVO made by the police which imposes restrictions on the respondent not to commit further acts of domestic or family violence, including any emotionally or psychologically abusive, threatening, coercive, controlling or dominating behaviours that cause fear for safety or wellbeing (ss 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).
South Australia	The *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009* (SA) allows a person who is experiencing domestic or family violence to apply to the Magistrates Court for an intervention order (IO) or to apply to police for an interim order imposing restrictions on a respondent not to commit acts of domestic violence, including: emotional or psychological harm; unreasonable denial of a person's financial, social or personal autonomy; or damage to a person's property (ss 6, 8).
Tasmania	The *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) allows the courts to make orders protecting people from family violence, by imposing restrictions on a respondent not to engage in further acts such as threats, intimidation, stalking and emotional abuse (ss 7, 8, 9).
Victoria	The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) allows a court to impose an order, or police to issue a temporary Safety Notice, that imposes restrictions on a respondent not to engage in further acts of family violence, including (but not limited to): threats, harassment, stalking, and emotional or psychological abuse (ss 5, 7).
Western Australia	The *Restraining Orders Act 1997* (WA) allows a court to impose a family violence restraining order to restrain the respondent from 'stalking or cyber-stalking the person seeking to be protected' along with other threatening or abusive behaviours.

Surveillance and listening devices offences

In every state and territory, there are laws that impose different limitations on the utilisation of surveillance devices for listening, visual capturing, data acquisition and tracking purposes. These laws pertaining to surveillance devices establish criminal violations when such devices are employed to record or oversee confidential discussions or actions, to track an individual, or to monitor data within a computer system. Additionally, these laws governing surveillance devices impose constraints on the transmission of information obtained through the application of such surveillance devices. Examples of such offences in each jurisdiction are summarised below.

Australian Capital Territory	The *Listening Devices Act 1992* (ACT) regulates the use of 'listening devices'. It is an offence to use a listening device with the intention of listening to or recording a private conversation when a person is not a party to that private conversation, and it is an offence to communicate that private conversation (ss 4, 6).
New South Wales	The *Surveillance Devices Act 2007* (NSW) regulates the use of 'surveillance devices', which include listening devices, optical surveillance devices and tracking devices. It is an offence to knowingly install, use or maintain such devices to overhear, record, monitor or listen to a private conversation or activity (ss 4, 7, 8, 9).
Northern Territory	The *Surveillance Devices Act 2007* (NT) regulates the use of 'surveillance devices', which include listening devices, optical surveillance devices and tracking devices. It is an offence to knowingly install, use or maintain such devices to overhear, record, monitor or listen to a private conversation or activity (ss 4, 11, 12, 13, 14, 41, 43, 45). It is further an offence for a person to *communicate or publish* a record or report of a private conversation or private activity (s 15).
Queensland	The *Invasion of Privacy Act 1971* (Qld) regulates the use of 'listening devices'. It is an offence for a person to use a listening device to overhear, record, monitor or listen to a private conversation and to communicate or publish a private conversation to any other person (ss 4, 42, 43, 44, 45).
South Australia	The *Surveillance Devices Act 2016* (SA) regulates the use of listening devices, optical surveillance devices, tracking devices and data surveillance devices. It is an offence to knowingly install, use or maintain such devices to overhear, record, monitor or listen to a private conversation or activity. It is further an offence for a person to knowingly use, communicate or publish information or material derived from the use of a surveillance device (ss 3–12).
Tasmania	The *Listening Devices Act 1991* (Tas) regulates the use of listening devices and includes that it is an offence for a person to use, or cause or permit to be used, a listening device to record or listen to a private conversation, whether or not that person is a party to the conversation; and for a person to knowingly communicate or publish a private conversation, or a report of that conversation, that came to their knowledge as a direct or indirect result of the unlawful use of a listening device (ss 3, 5, 9, 12).
Victoria	The *Surveillance Devices Act 1999* (Vic) regulates the use of 'surveillance devices', which include listening devices, optical surveillance devices and tracking devices. It

	is an offence to knowingly install, use or maintain such devices to overhear, record, monitor or listen to a private conversation, private activity or a person's location (ss 3, 6). It is further an offence for a person to knowingly communicate or publish a record or report of a private conversation or private activity (s 11).
Western Australia	The *Surveillance Devices Act 1998* (WA) regulates the use of 'surveillance devices', which include listening devices, optical surveillance devices and tracking devices. It is an offence to install, use or maintain such devices to record, monitor, listen to or observe a private conversation, private activity or a person's location. It is further an offence for a person to knowingly publish or communicate a private conversation or activity (ss 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 24, 26, 27, 31, 34, 38).

Threats, stalking and computer misuse offences

Criminal legislation related to threats or stalking can apply to cases of technology-facilitated victimisation, where individuals experience threats, harassment or stalking through online platforms or digital communication. These laws can include behaviours such as: threats to kill or to inflict bodily harm, blackmail, unauthorised access to or modification of data held in a computer, and stalking behaviours (following, contacting, tracing, abusing, and other behaviours intended to cause fear or distress). Examples of such offences in each jurisdiction are summarised below.

Australian Capital Territory	The *Criminal Code Act 2002* (ACT) identifies several offences that may apply in instances of TFA, including (but not limited to): blackmail (s 342); threats to cause property damage – fear of death or serious harm (s 406); threats to cause property damage (s 407); unauthorised access, modification or impairment with intent to commit serious offence (s 415); unauthorised modification of data to cause impairment (s 416); unauthorised impairment of electronic communication (s 417); and unauthorised access to or modification of restricted data held in a computer (s 420). Additionally, the *Crimes Act 1900* (ACT) includes: threats to kill (s 30); threats to inflict grievous bodily harm (s 31); demands accompanied by threats (s 32); and stalking (s 35).
New South Wales	The *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) identifies TFA-relevant offences, including (but not limited to): documents containing threats (s 31); blackmail offences (s 249K); unauthorised access, modification or impairment with intent to commit a serious indictable offence (s 308C); unauthorised access to or modification of restricted data held in a computer (s 308H); and publishing indecent articles (s 578C). The *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (NSW) further outlines several specific 'domestic violence offences', including: stalking or intimidation, sending or delivering threats, threatening to or destroying/damaging property, and contravening an apprehended violence order (ss 13, 14, 31, 199).
Northern Territory	The *Criminal Code Act 1983* (NT) identifies several offences that may apply in instances of TFA, including (but not limited to): publishing indecent articles (s 125C); threats to kill (s 166); unlawful stalking (s 189); unlawful publication of defamatory matter (s 204); unlawfully obtaining confidential information (s 222); blackmail and extortion (s 228); dealing in identification information (s 228C); unlawful access to data (s 276B); unlawful modification of data (s 276C); and unlawful impairment of electronic communication (s 276D). The *Summary*

	Offences Act 1923 (NT) further includes offensive conduct (s 47) and threatening violence (s 47AB).
Queensland	The *Criminal Code 1899* (Qld) identifies TFA-relevant offences, including (but not limited to): observations or recordings in breach of privacy (s 227A); distributing prohibited visual recordings (s 227B); obscene publications and exhibitions (s 228); punishment of unlawful stalking (s 359E); computer hacking and misuse (s 408); and extortion (s 415).
South Australia	The *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* (SA) identifies several offences that may apply in instances of TFA, including (but not limited to): unlawful threats (s 19); unlawful stalking (s 19AA); assault (s 20); unauthorised modification of computer data (s 86G); unauthorised impairment of electronic communication (s 86H); misuse of personal identification information (s 144C); prohibited material (s 144D); blackmail (s 172); and criminal defamation (s 257). Additionally, the *Summary Offences Act 1953* (SA) includes indecent or offensive material (s 33).
Tasmania	The *Police Offences Act 1935* (Tas) identifies TFA-relevant offences, including (but not limited to): observation or recording in breach of privacy (s 13A); publishing or distributing prohibited visual recordings (s 13B); possession of prohibited visual recording (s 13C); damaging computer data (s 43B); unauthorised access to a computer (s 43C); and insertion of false information as data (s 43D). Further, the *Criminal Code Act 1924* (Tas) includes: written threats to murder (s 162); stalking (s 192); damaging computer data (s 257C); unauthorised access to a computer (s 257D); threats to destroy property (s 276); and false threats of danger (s 276AA).
Victoria	The *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) includes TFA-relevant offences, including (but not limited to): threats to kill (s 20); threats to inflict serious injury (s 21); stalking (s 21A); conduct endangering persons (s 23); extortion with threat to kill (s 27); extortion with threat to destroy property, etc. (s 28); threat to assault (s 31(1)); blackmail (s 87); making, using or supplying identification information (s 192B); threat to destroy or damage property (s 198); unauthorised modification of data to cause impairment (s 247C); unauthorised impairment of electronic communication (s 247D); and unauthorised access to or modification of restricted data (s 247G).
Western Australia	The *Criminal Code Act 1913* (WA) identifies several offences that may be relevant to TFA, including (but not limited to): threat with intent to gain, etc. (s 338A); threats (s 338B); statement or act creating false apprehension as to existence of threat or danger (s 338C); stalking (s 338E); criminal defamation (s 345); demanding property with threats with intent to extort or gain (s 397); threats, etc. with intent to extort, etc. (s 398); unlawful use of computer (s 440A); and making, using or supplying identification material with intent to commit indictable offence (s 490).

Image-based abuse and voyeurism offences

Criminal laws of the Australian states and territories, in varying ways, encompass violations connected to the use of photography for indecent motives, or the act of indecent recording without consent, as well as the distribution of intimate imagery without consent. In each scenario, these laws

are confined to particular content, such as material with a sexual or intimate context, an invasion of privacy (such as of a person's private areas or while engaged in a private activity), recording for explicit objectives such as gratification, or filming involving specific individuals, such as minors. Examples of such offences in each jurisdiction are summarised below.

Australian Capital Territory	The *Crimes Act 1900* (ACT) identifies offences for the non-consensual distribution of intimate images (including of a person engaged in a private act, or of a person's genital or anal region, or in a sexual manner or context) and for threatening to capture or distribute intimate images (ss 72C, 72D, 72E), with aggravated offences for situations involving family violence (s 48C).
New South Wales	The *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) includes offences for recording, distributing or threatening to distribute an intimate image without consent (ss 91P, 91Q, 91R) and for videoing or photographing a person's genital or anal area (this includes what is often referred to as 'upskirting' – s 91L).
Northern Territory	The *Criminal Code Act 1983* (NT) includes offences for distributing intimate images without consent and threatening to distribute intimate images (ss 208AB, 208AC).
Queensland	The *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld) includes offences for recording, distributing or threatening to distribute an intimate image without consent (ss 207A, 223, 227A, 227B, 229A), as well as where a person 'observes or visually records another person's genital or anal region, in circumstances where a reasonable adult would expect to be afforded privacy […] without the other person's consent' (s 227A).
South Australia	The *Summary Offences Act 1953* (SA) includes offences for 'humiliating or degrading filming', 'distribution of an invasive image of another person knowing or having reason to believe that the other person does not consent to the distribution of that image', 'engaging in indecent filming', 'distributing an image obtained by indecent filming', and 'threaten[ing] to distribute an invasive image of a person' (ss 26A–26E, Part 5A).
Tasmania	The *Police Offences Act 1935* (Tas) includes offences for making an 'observation or recording in breach of privacy' of another person and for possessing or distributing such a recording without their consent (ss 13A, 13B, 13C, Part II Division I).
Victoria	The *Summary Offences Act 1966* (Vic) includes offences for 'distributing an intimate image without consent' and 'threatening to distribute an intimate image without consent' (ss 40, 41A, 41B, 41C, 41DA, 41DB, Part I Division 4A). It further includes an offence to visually capture, or distribute, an image of a person's 'genital or anal region' (including 'upskirting' – ss 41B, 41C).
Western Australia	The *Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913* (WA) includes offences for distributing or threatening to distribute an intimate image without consent (ss 221BA–221BF, Chapter XXVA; and ss 338, 338B, 338C, Chapter XXXIIIA).

3.3.2 Sources of support, with an explicit focus on FDSV-TFA

In Australia, eSafety and WESNET are the two primary nationally focused organisations that provide resources explicitly dedicated to addressing TFA.

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety)

eSafety coordinates the online safety efforts of Australian Government departments, authorities and agencies, and promotes online safety for Australians with a wide range of stakeholders, including industry and the not-for-profit community. This includes education and awareness raising around FDSV-TFA.

eSafety approaches its work through the three lenses of prevention, protection, and proactive and systemic change. Its governing legislation is the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth), and its functions include:

- administering a complaints scheme for cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child
- administering a complaints scheme for cyber-abuse material targeted at an Australian adult
- administering a complaints and objections scheme for non-consensual sharing of intimate images
- administering the online content scheme covering illegal and restricted content, such as acts of terrorism or sexual abuse of children
- ensuring that online service providers take reasonable steps to keep Australians safe online through a set of Basic Online Safety Expectations
- overseeing the development of new mandatory codes by industry or the development of industry standards to apply to their online activities
- supporting, conducting and accrediting educational and community awareness programs relevant to online safety for Australians
- conducting and evaluating research about online safety for Australians to ensure that programs and resources are based on evidence (see Research| eSafety Commissioner).

Image-Based Abuse Scheme

eSafety has played a role in combating IBA since October 2017, when the Australian Government funded eSafety to establish a portal to provide tangible support for Australian IBA victims who have had their intimate images or videos shared without their consent. eSafety became the first statutory government body to provide a support-oriented response for victims of IBA that did not require engagement with law enforcement or the criminal law system. The portal was accessible via eSafety's website, a place when IBA victims could report IBA to seek its removal, and access practical advice and resources to help manage the impacts of IBA.

In September 2018, a civil penalties scheme commenced to address the non-consensual sharing, or threatened sharing, of intimate images. This gave eSafety formal powers to take action against websites, hosting providers, social media services and perpetrators (eSafety Commissioner 2019b).

In the financial year 2022–2023, eSafety received 9,060 reports. It requested removal of material from more than 6,500 locations (generally URLS) across 340 different platforms and services, the

majority from pornography sites hosted overseas, and it successfully removed 87% of the material through informal removal requests (eSafety Commissioner 2023a). eSafety issued 15 removal notices, with four complied with. It also issued two infringement notices (eSafety Commissioner 2023a).

Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme

The *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) introduced a new scheme, administered by eSafety, for the removal of cyber-abuse material targeted at an Australian adult from a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service or hosting service. The Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme came into effect in January 2022 and provides a safety net to be used when a complaint has been made to an online service provider, but the online service provider has not removed the material. The *Online Safety Act* defines adult cyber abuse as material targeting a particular Australian adult that is both intended to cause serious harm and is menacing, harassing or offensive in all circumstances.

In the financial year 2022–2023, eSafety received 2,516 valid complaints from adults. There were 601 informal notifications to online service providers seeking removal of adult cyber abuse material; eSafety was successful in facilitating removal of material in 466 of these cases (eSafety Commissioner 2023a). It also issued three removal notices, with material removed in all three cases (eSafety Commissioner 2023a).

Education and awareness

eSafety offers a number of online safety education and capacity-building initiatives. These include a professional development program (through face-to-face and webinar sessions) and online training modules to upskill frontline workers who support victim-survivors experiencing TFA within FDSV situations. Topics include:

- TFA in FDV situations
- supporting children and young people experiencing TFA in FDV situations
- supporting women with intellectual or cognitive disability who experience TFA[8]
- supporting First Nations women to understand how the history and context of First Nations peoples affect experiences of TFA and online environments.

An evaluation of the eSafety Women Training Program found that almost all interview participants and survey respondents reported that they were satisfied with the training program content (97%) and delivery (97%) (ORIMA Research 2022). Furthermore, 74% of respondents reported they had a strong understanding of TFA, a significant increase from the 39% who stated they had a strong understanding before the training (ORIMA Research 2022).

The eSafety website also provides resources and information to help victim-survivors deal with FDSV-TFA (eSafety Commissioner n.d.-b). These resources include overviews of specific forms of TFA, followed by suggestions on how to mitigate the associated risk. The eSafety website provides checklists featuring advice on examining individual susceptibility to TFA, social media privacy settings,

[8] More information is available online at https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/domestic-family-violence/professional-development#online-learning-modules-for-frontline-workers

securing accounts and devices, establishing safe online practices, as well as guidance on finding support or assistance for TFA. The eSafety website also features a video library providing practical tutorials and demonstrations on how to carry out certain actions on devices or platforms (such as turning off location tracking). The eSafety Guide provides an index of commonly used apps, social media services and web browsers, and provides some details of the platforms' help centre (e.g. report/block processes).

eSafety grants

eSafety also offers grants of financial assistance for initiatives in relation to online safety for Australians, on behalf of the Australian Government. The most recent initiative was the Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program, which called for applications to fund innovative projects that help put a stop to technology-based abuse against women under a new $10 million grants program. Under the initiative, non-government organisations can apply for grants of up to $500,000 to develop primary prevention projects addressing the underlying drivers, attitudes and behaviours which lead some people to use technology to stalk, threaten, control or undermine women, or to carry out other violent or coercive behaviours. Applications opened 5 April 2023.[9]

Djirra

Djirra, an Aboriginal community–controlled organisation, received funding from eSafety to create culturally safe, self-determined solutions in response to the emergence of TFA in the context of family violence among Aboriginal peoples and communities across Victoria. Djirra's eSafety project provides culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal women who experience TFA in the context of FDSV. These resources are delivered in the form of videos and posters that are downloadable, which direct individuals to call Djirra to access support (Djirra 2023).

Djirra delivers a range of community education and early intervention and prevention programs focused on preventing family violence, such as the Young Luv program which aims to engage Aboriginal teenagers in a culturally safe space to reflect on cultural strength, social media safety and the warning signs of controlling behaviours in relationships that often lead to damaging experiences such as bullying and violence (Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service Victoria 2017). A 2017 evaluation of the Young Luv program identified that endorsement, approval and backing of the Aboriginal community were essential in influencing attitudes and behaviours of Aboriginal teenage girls (Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service Victoria 2017).

WESNET Safety Net

WESNET is the national peak body for FDV services and specialises in technology safety. The WESNET Safety Net Australia project was established in 2011 to provide Australian-specific tech safety information under a licensing agreement from the National Network to End Domestic Violence. Through the website https://techsafety.org.au/, Safety Net Australia provides educational resources and advice (e.g. on technology and safety, online safety and privacy, device privacy and hardware) for victim-survivors, as well as resources and training for support workers on safety.

[9] More information is available online at https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/applications-opening-for-10m-grants-fund-stop-tech-based-abuse-women

Safe Connections Project

The Safe Connections Project, launched in November 2014, is a project run in partnership with WESNET and Telstra which takes a multi-sector approach to helping victim-survivors who are experiencing TFA in the context of FDSV (Dorozenko and Chung 2018). In addition, WESNET has been funded by the Australian Government to provide training and resources to frontline workers so they can support women experiencing TFA. Through this project, over 34,000 smartphones loaded with $30 phone credits have been distributed to victim-survivors impacted by FDSV through a large network of FDSV providers nationwide (Dorozenko and Chung 2018). This initiative enables victim-survivors to access clean and untampered handsets to support them to safely navigate their abusive relationships (Dorozenko and Chung 2018).

The project is supported by WESNET Tech Safety Specialists, which provides Safer Technology for Women training and resources to frontline workers to enable them to support victim-survivors of TFA (Dorozenko and Chung 2018). The project includes building capability and awareness of how perpetrators use technology, including smartphones, and how to support women to safely use technology and to record abuse.

An evaluation of Safe Connections in 2018 identified that the program had been effective in reaching at-risk women from diverse backgrounds and geographies (Dorozenko and Chung 2018). The evaluators concluded that Safe Connections was an empowering program that contributes to real-life safety outcomes for women, through allowing them to stay connected to or re-establish connections with friends, family and formal services. The evaluation indicates that the program has been effective in reaching women who are particularly at risk. Almost half of the women who have received a Safe Connections smartphone and technology safety advice identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, as a refugee and/or from a CALD background, or as having a disability.

Frontline workers also reported that the Safer Technology for Women training was comprehensive and highly relevant, and increased workers' knowledge of the different forms of TFA, of how to collect evidence and document abuse, of practical strategies to improve the safety of women, and of the resources available for women on technology safety (Dorozenko and Chung 2018). Frontline workers and key stakeholders regarded Safe Connections as filling a gap in FDV responses and emphasised that the program was crucial to supporting women and their children impacted by violence to stay safely connected (Dorozenko and Chung 2018).

3.3.3 Sources of support for FDSV that include TFA resources

There is a range of FDSV support services in Australia that will provide advice to victim-survivors of TFA. As described in Section 3.1.4, FDSV service providers often struggle with a lack of resources, funding, confidence, knowledge and skills to comprehensively address the needs of TFA victim-survivors. This section considers a small sample of FDSV organisations that have online (or other) resources available on the topic of TFA.

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is Australia's national FDSV counselling service. It provides information, referrals and counselling 24 hours a day, every day of the year, to people across Australia who have experienced or are at risk of FDSV. The service acts as a key referral point by providing callers with information on local support services as well as online resources for recognising abuse, assessing risk, safety

planning and support disclosure. This service can be useful for women and children who are seeking help but do not want to engage the criminal justice system (1800RESPECT 2023).

The 1800RESPECT website contains a range of basic information on how to identify TFA (including IBA and stalking) and ideas for technology safety (1800RESPECT 2023). This includes information on general technology and safety, online accounts and app safety, device safety, and safety apps for mobile phones.

Safe Steps

This Victorian family violence crisis support service funded by the Victorian Government provides a generalist 24/7 phone line and live chat support. The Safe Steps website includes a section on TFA that provides examples of TFA, and links to eSafety's website for practical resources about staying safe online and to WESNET for safety tips for using a smartphone (Safe Steps n.d.).

It should be noted that there are equivalents to the Safe Steps service in other states, such as DV Connect in Queensland.

Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes (KWSITH)

Through the KWSITH initiative, the Australian Government funds state and territory governments, and select providers, to deliver services to improve the safety of women and their children who have experienced family and domestic violence.

KWSITH helps women and their children who have experienced FDV to remain in their homes, or in a home of their choosing, when it is safe and appropriate to do so.[10] It supports women through risk assessments, safety planning, home security audits and upgrades, and case management. The home security upgrades can vary across the different providers of KWSITH and can include the use of technologies such as monitored personal safety devices, surveillance cameras, dashboard cameras, and electronic sweeping and de-bugging of homes and cars.

3.3.4 Support from social media services and digital technology companies

Major technology companies and social media services are cognisant that their services are being used for FDSV-TFA. As described earlier, many platforms and companies provide mechanisms or methods for reporting abuse and often provide users with advice on how to stay safe on their platforms. This section provides a few examples of the support that victim-survivors can receive from technology companies on their platforms. It is not an examination of the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

Meta (Facebook and Instagram)

Facebook is a social media service that lets users create a page about themselves, an organisation or a group. Users can add friends, write on people's pages, and share photos and videos, including live videos. Instagram is a social media service designed for people to share photos and videos. Via their

[10] More information is available at https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/keeping-women-safe-in-their-homes

help centres, Facebook and Instagram provide users with a substantial amount of information and support on how to use social media services safely (Meta 2023a, 2023b). This includes:

- safety tips (e.g. how to report, unfollow or block someone, how to report something, and how to control privacy settings)
- resources and information for what to do if a user is experiencing abuse on the platform
- information and resources for what to do if someone is asking for or threatening to share intimate images online
- information about impersonation accounts and what to do if someone impersonates a user or hacks their account.

Google

Google is an internet search engine that allows users to search for a range of media, including websites, images, video, and locations using Google Maps. The Google help centre provides some information that may be helpful for victim-survivors of TFA, including:

- how to request the removal of personal information and intimate images (including deepfake pornography) from Google's search engine
- information relating to privacy controls (Google 2023).

Snapchat

Snapchat is a messaging app that lets a user send images, videos or instant text messages to friends. These images, videos and messages are only available for a short period of time once they are opened. Snapchat's support page provides safety and security information for users, including:

- information about privacy settings, such as how to manage location-sharing settings
- how to report abuse or another user's account
- information about what to do if an account is hacked (Snapchat n.d.).

TikTok

TikTok is a social media app for creating and sharing short videos. The support page enables users to report a problem, including comments, messages, impersonation accounts and other users. In addition, information is provided on:

- account and user safety
- how (in Australia) to report serious online abuse and illegal and restricted online content to the eSafety Commissioner (TikTok 2023).

Match Group (Tinder and Hinge)

Tinder is a dating app that matches users to others based on geographic proximity and uses a system where both users must 'like' each other before they can exchange messages. Hinge is a dating app that uses an algorithm to display potential matches, allowing the user to dismiss or attempt to match by responding to a specific piece of content on their profile. Tinder and Hinge's support pages provide users with:

- dating safety tips, including: information about online safety, such as how to protect personal information and to report all offensive and suspicious behaviour; information about meeting in person, such as meeting in public and telling others of your plans; information about sexual health and consent; and resources for help, support and advice
- how to report a safety concern or incident, including in-person physical harm and something that happened on the app
- how to block another user
- information about what to do if your account has been hacked (Hinge n.d.; Tinder n.d.).

3.3.5 Commercially available sources of support for FDSV-TFA

There are several private security providers available across Australia that provide 'cyber security advice' and claim to have methods of detecting hidden devices in homes, vehicles and devices. The quality of such services does not appear to be tested and cannot be guaranteed. In addition, an examination of the types of methods typically used by private security providers is beyond the scope of this review. However, the detection of hidden surveillance devices is complex, and the reliability of approaches used by private security providers may vary, as may their suitability for use with individual victim-survivors.

Nicholson Project

A number of FDV services in Australia are contracting private security providers (Harkin 2020; Protective Group n.d.). A recent example of this was the Nicholson Project, which was described in 2021 as a pilot initiative privately funded and delivered by Wayss (a specialist FDSV provider) in partnership with a private security provider in South Melbourne (Wayss n.d.). The Nicholson Project provided a response to women and children who were referred to Wayss by the police due to an episode of FV. The initiative included the provision of a remote assessment of digital vulnerability. This included the assessment of devices, practical advice and technical support (including removal of spyware, review of social media settings, reset of passwords and security questions, and a sweep for surveillance devices) (Wayss n.d.).

The pilot indicated that victim-survivor participants felt safer and more confident when they were not being tracked and abused via technology, and when they were better able to manage their use of technology and online platforms as a result of their participation in the Nicholson Project (Wayss n.d.).

4 Conclusion

This literature scan, based on available academic and grey literature, has identified contemporary understandings of the prevalence and impact of technology-facilitated abuse in the context of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia, as well as approaches for responding to the problem. The key insights from this literature scan are presented below.

What is the nature and prevalence of FDSV-TFA in Australia?

- It is difficult to establish the true prevalence of TFA in the Australian community, due to different sub-types of abuse and of measurement approaches across studies. However, the following statistics from representative national surveys provide a good approximation of the scale of the problem:
    - *Family and domestic violence:* One in four (27%) women and one in eight (12%) men have experienced violence from an intimate partner or a family member since the age of 15. Though these national prevalence statistics include both in-person and technology-facilitated behaviours, given the overlap of abuse types in FDSV, they provide some indication of the likelihood of TFA behaviours in these contexts.
    - *Stalking:* One in five (20%) women and one in 15 (6.8%) men have experienced stalking since the age of 15 (ABS 2023). Similar to the above, given the overlap of in-person and cyberstalking, these figures provide some indication of the likelihood of TFA behaviours in these contexts.
    - *Image-based abuse:* One in ten (11%) Australian adults have experienced the non-consensual distribution of an intimate image, with one in six (15%) women and one in 14 (7%) men experiencing this form of IBA (eSafety 2017). Further studies suggest that the extent could be higher (up to one in four Australians) when additional IBA behaviours of images taken without consent, and threats made to distribute, and/or coerced video or image-based sex acts are included (Powell et al. 2022a).
    - TFA more broadly has been measured by just one nationally representative survey to date, which found that one in two Australian adults had experienced at least one incident (Powell et al. 2022a). However, when only TFA in the context of intimate partner abuse was considered, it can be estimated that one in five (19%) Australian adults have experienced TFA in these contexts, with one in four (24%) experiencing co-occurring abuse that is indicative of a pattern of violence rather than a one-off incident (Powell et al. 2022a). Again, women are more likely than men to have experienced TFA either from a current or former intimate partner, or in the context of co-occurring abuse from the same perpetrator (Powell et al. 2022a).
- Overall, TFA is a complex and increasingly common phenomenon, which is a feature in many experiences of FDSV. TFA is experienced in conjunction with other forms of FDSV, as part of a multi-pronged pattern of abuse and harm. Therefore, any response to FDSV-TFA should have clear links with the broader service sector as part of an integrated response to ensure that victim-survivors' safety needs are considered at a holistic level. There may be a need to consider if and how initial risk assessment (depending on relevant local/state/territory

policies) and/or specific pathways to specialist support services will be undertaken if eSafety were to provide direct victim-survivor supports.

- FDSV-TFA should be recognised as a serious form of violence that poses serious risks to victim-survivors. Digital technology enables perpetrators to exert power and control over victim-survivors, akin to traditional face-to-face methods of coercive control, but in a context that amplifies levels of fear due to the unrelenting and ever-present threat. The rapid and continued evolution of digital technology means that understanding and addressing FDSV must include a targeted focus on TFA.
- Experiences of FDSV-TFA manifest differently between genders, with women and gender-diverse people more likely to be negatively impacted than men. Therefore, service responses need to be equitable and accessible for all people who experience FDSV-TFA, while being flexible enough to consider the nuanced experiences by people of different genders.

Are there any groups disproportionately impacted by FDSV-TFA?

- Some people from at-risk cohorts (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women from CALD backgrounds, LGBTQI+ people, people with disability, and women from regional or remote areas) have unique experiences of FDSV-TFA, with some groups of people at increased risk. Therefore, service responses to FDSV-TFA need to be designed to reflect the unique and differential experiences of FDSV-TFA. Any service response needs to be strengths-based, trauma-informed and culturally safe. Intersectionality and accessibility must be addressed, especially for at-risk groups.
- Particular at-risk cohorts have different experiences and impacts of FDSV-TFA. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women from CALD backgrounds, LGBTQI+ people, people with disability, and women from regional or remote areas face additional barriers to help-seeking when they experience FDSV-TFA. Therefore, responses to FDSV-TFA should be designed to be inclusive and accessible by all people. This includes people with unique needs, including cultural and communication needs. Furthermore, understanding the risk and protective factors for FDSV-TFA through an intersectional lens is critical for understanding the issue and informing intervention approaches.

What responses are effective in addressing FDSV-TFA?

- There are many different forms of FDSV-TFA, reflecting the vast array of platforms, services and technologies. Responses to addressing FDSV-TFA must be centred on the victim-survivor and be sufficiently flexible to respond to their different experiences. Those working with victim-survivors (including police) require a nuanced understanding of the different manifestations of TFA and the range of technologies that are used to perpetrate it.
- Victim-survivors may be advised to disengage from technology and from platforms that have been used to perpetrate FDSV-TFA against them, which is impractical and places the emphasis on the victim-survivor to modify their behaviours without perpetrators being held to account for their actions. Instead, responses must prioritise safety while supporting victim-survivors to retain safe and reliable access to digital technology.
- Victim-survivors who take action to remove or limit their online presence may be further isolated through removing connections to informal and formal supports. Short-term

reduction in digital presence may have immediate benefits but is not a sustainable response. A response should take into consideration the safety needs of the victim-survivor in combination with the protective factors of staying connected.

What are the enablers for and barriers to FDSV-TFA support services?

- Enablers to improve support services' responses to FDSV-TFA include increased awareness of and education about TFA, enhanced training and support for frontline workers, and improved technology-based responses. A multidisciplinary, whole of community, coordinated approach is needed. This includes education and awareness raising for people with lived experience to ensure they understand that what they are experiencing is FDSV-TFA, with information to be provided in many languages across different modalities. Organisations that support victim-survivors, and technology companies that operate platforms, services and devices that are used to perpetrate TFA, also need to be considered. Above all, perpetrators need to be held accountable for their actions.
- Victim-survivors face a range of barriers in reporting FDSV-TFA to police, including re-victimisation from the system and services which results in lack of engagement with the agencies that have been designed to help them. First responders, such as police, require capability uplift to develop a holistic understanding of FDSV-TFA and its impacts to help them support responses for victim-survivors. This should be rolled out consistently across other services, including specialist and mainstream frontline worker workforces.

What types of programs and interventions are in operation, including delivery modes and settings?

- The response to FDSV-TFA in Australia is governed by legislation and policies across jurisdictions which are continually evolving. The response and support available will depend on the specific form of FDSV-TFA. A range of organisations provide supports and resources to respond to FDSV-TFA, including at the national, state/territory and local levels. As a whole, the current needs of victim-survivors and family, domestic and sexual violence service providers are not being met. While some forms of FDSV-TFA are addressed through laws, the overall response to FDSV-TFA would benefit from a support service with coordinated and consistent oversight, information and guidance at the national level.

Appendix A: Key research questions and lines of inquiry

The following table outlines the key research questions and lines of inquiry from which literature has been identified and analysed for this literature scan.

Key research questions	Lines of inquiry
1. What is the prevalence and nature of TFA in Australia?	1.1 How many people have experienced TFA? 1.2 How many people have perpetrated TFA? 1.3 What is the prevalence of different types and forms of TFA? 1.4 How is TFA perpetrated? 1.5 What is the prevalence across different platforms and/or channels? 1.6 What is the level of impact/severity? 1.7 How do you define TFA in a family, domestic and sexual violence context?
2. Are any groups disproportionally impacted by TFA?	2.1 Are there clear sub-cohorts of victim-survivors? 2.2 Are there clear sub-cohorts of perpetrators? 2.3 What factors increase the risk of TFA? 2.4 What are some protective factors?
3. What responses are effective in addressing TFA?	3.1 What is effective after perpetration? 3.2 What interventions or responses are specific to technology-facilitated family, domestic and sexual violence? 3.3 What interventions demonstrate cultural safety and appropriateness? 3.4 What factors facilitate reporting of TFA, and what are the barriers to reporting? 3.5 What responses are effective for victim-survivors of TFA? 3.6 What responses create a better experience? 3.7 What responses create better outcomes for victim-survivors and informal supports? 3.8 Who are the different stakeholder groups that can help in providing a response?

Key research questions	Lines of inquiry
4. What are the enablers for and barriers to TFA support services?	4.1 What are the service/system barriers to responding to TFA? 4.2 What are the service/system enablers for responding to TFA? 4.3 What jurisdiction/responsibility do each of the parties have?
5. What types of programs and interventions are in operation, including delivery modes and settings?	5.1 What are effective interventions in TFA in operation in Australia and overseas? 5.2 What delivery modes are being used? 5.3 What responses are different platforms/channels using? 5.4 What FDSV programs include TFA (and vice versa)? 5.5 What jurisdiction/responsibility do each of the parties have? 5.6 What standalone responses to TFA exist? 5.7 What programs/responses include assessment for TFA?

Appendix B: Key search terms used

To answer the key research questions and lines of inquiry, the following search terms were used.

Key research questions	Key terms
1. What is the prevalence and nature of TFA in Australia?	Prevalence of technology facilitated abuse in Australia; extent of technology facilitated abuse in Australia; rate of technology facilitated abuse in Australia; types of technology facilitated abuse; forms of technology facilitated abuse; perpetration of technology facilitated abuse in Australia; victimisation of technology facilitated abuse in Australia; image based abuse; image based sexual violence; technology facilitated abuse in domestic, family and sexual violence; digital coercive control; cyber abuse; cyber harassment; technology-facilitated coercive control; cyberstalking; cyber violence; digital violence; doxxing/doxing; gender-based violence; online harassment; revenge pornography; trolling; surveillance; monitoring; covert filming; spyware; smart technology; smart home device; sexual coercion; sexual harassment; sexual violence; threats; mobile phones; smartphones; computers; tablets; laptops; internet; social media; GPS devices; software; apps; dating apps.
2. Are any groups disproportionately impacted by TFA?	Cohorts impacted by technology facilitated abuse; victims of technology facilitated abuse; perpetrators of technology facilitated abuse; risk factors of technology facilitated abuse; First Nations women; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; culturally and linguistically diverse women; migrant women; gender diverse individuals; older women; LGBTQI+ women; women with disability; young women; teenagers, protective factors; digital literacy; safeguard
3. What responses are effective in addressing TFA?	Effective responses to address technology facilitated abuse; interventions for technology facilitated abuse; interventions for technology facilitated abuse in domestic, family violence and sexual violence; culturally safe responses to technology facilitated abuse; needs of victim-survivors of technology facilitated abuse; police responses to technology facilitated abuse; judicial responses to technology facilitated abuse; support service responses to technology facilitated abuse; help seeking; barriers to reporting
4. What are the enablers for and barriers to TFA support services?	Technology facilitated abuse support service enablers; technology facilitated abuse support service barriers; enablers for support services to respond to technology facilitated abuse; barriers for support services to respond to technology facilitated abuse; challenges support services face in responding to technology facilitated abuse

Key research questions	Key terms
5. What types of programs and interventions are in operation, including delivery modes and settings?	Interventions for technology facilitated abuse; support services for technology facilitated abuse; interventions for technology facilitated abuse in New Zealand; interventions for technology facilitated abuse in Canada; interventions for technology facilitated abuse in America; interventions for technology facilitated abuse in Great Britain; responses to technology facilitated abuse in New Zealand; responses to technology facilitated abuse in Canada; responses to technology facilitated abuse in America; responses to technology facilitated abuse in Great Britain; programs to address technology facilitated abuse; education; training; training and support; frontline workers; assessment

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Legislation

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