



**Spotlight
Initiative**
*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM



APPLYING BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TO ADDRESS DIGITAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

SURVEY FINDINGS

2021



**Spotlight
Initiative**
To eliminate violence
against women and girls



THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM

APPLYING BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TO ADDRESS DIGITAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Survey Findings



APPLYING BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TO ADDRESS DIGITAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS
Survey Findings

—
© UN Women and The Behavioral Insights Team
July 2021

María Noel Vaeza, **Regional Director**
Cecilia Alemany, **Deputy Regional Director**
UN Women for the Americas and the Caribbean

BIT Coordination Team Marta Garnelo, Miguel Rosales, Tomás García y Jin Han Kim
UN Women Leah Tandeter, Michelle Mendes Meireles Silva, Carolina Ferracini

The preparation of this document was made possible with the collaboration and contribution of Emily Cardon, Chloe Bustin, Alexandra de Filippo and Mónica Wills Silva.

Edition and content revision Guadalupe Valdés Morales, Communication and Advocacy Specialist
Editorial design Emicel Guillén, Graphic Designer Consultant
UN Women's Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean

The content and information in this publication may be used as long as the source is acknowledged.

Citation García, T., Garnelo, M., Kim, J., Rosales, M. (2021), *Applying Behavioral Insights to Address Digital Violence Against Women and Girls. Survey Findings*. UN Women for the Americas and the Caribbean and The Behavioral Insights Team.

Executive Summary

- In an online randomized controlled trial with 5,077 men in Bolivia and Guatemala, we tested behaviorally informed messages **encouraging men to intervene against digital violence against women**.
- Three out of four messages **increased the intention to intervene to stop the perpetrators**.
- The **'Rules of thumb'** message delivered the highest impact (**71.2%** of respondents seeing the message reported being likely or very likely to stop the perpetrators vs. **56.2%** of respondents who did not see any message).
 - The **'Rules of thumb'** message consistently performed the best across various subgroups in Bolivia and Guatemala.
- Respondents **correctly identify about half of the instances of digital violence** presented to them. This was the case across all groups, independently of the message respondents saw or whether they saw no message.
- Respondents seeing the intervention messages reported **higher awareness, were less likely to believe their friends would accept digital violence, and reported higher levels of self-efficacy** in acting against digital violence than those who did not see any message.
- The impact of the intervention messages on attitudes was mixed.

Best Performer 'Rules of thumb' message

RECOGNIZING THAT IT IS VIOLENCE IS THE FIRST STEP YOU CAN STOP DIGITAL VIOLENCE		
If a friend shares intimate photos of a girl...	 DON'T SHARE. DON'T BLAME HER.	 DELETE THEM. ASK HIM TO STOP SHARING. 
If a relative calls a woman names or humiliates her on social media...	DON'T STAY SILENT.	TELL HIM TO STOP. 
If your friend's partner controls her cell phone...	DON'T DOWNPLAY THE SITUATION.	LISTEN TO HER. 

- Respondents who saw the intervention messages were **less likely to blame the victims or consider that women exaggerate their experience** related to digital violence.
- However, respondents who saw three variations of the messages reported being **more likely to believe that women could deter harassers online by simply telling them to stop**. We hypothesize that these messages may have led bystanders to project their increased sense of self-efficacy onto survivors.
- **Three in ten** survey participants voluntarily **exited the survey immediately after seeing digital violence against women and girls on the introduction page**. Such cases may signal that communication campaigns might not be able to engage some men effectively, and other strategies are needed.

Recommendations

1

- **We recommend that UN Women scales up the best performing message ‘Rules of thumb’.** UN Women can use all four messages without fear of a negative effect, and using all four messages may help mitigate the risk that impact decreases with repetition.

2

- **Providing men with rules of thumb on what to do against digital violence is a promising strategy to prompt them to action.** If UN Women programming allows implementing interventions incorporating this strategy, we suggest validating these findings through a field trial.

3

- Areas to target in future messaging and research include: improving identification of digital violence, **prompting men to support survivors** and investigating how to mitigate the risk that interventions increasing bystanders’ sense of self-efficacy lead them to project this onto women experiencing digital violence.

4

- **Interventions, such as communications campaigns that depend on men engaging with violence prevention content may not effectively reach the most reluctant men.** UN Women and its partners may need to implement more intensive and/or personalized interventions (i.e., deep canvassing), leverage different touchpoints or messengers to engage this group.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND METHODS

Context



Goal

UN Women and BIT developed and tested behaviorally-informed messages intending to encourage men to intervene when witnessing digital violence against women. We also explored potential mechanisms underlying the behavior change.



Exploration work

We ran 26 interviews with violence prevention experts and men who had taken part in programming aimed to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). We identified potential **barriers** that hinder bystanders from intervening against violence:

- Bystanders **do not recognize** VAWG;
- Bystanders think that **others do not take action** when witnessing VAWG;
- Bystanders worry about the consequences of taking action while **overlooking the results of their inaction**; and
- Bystanders **do not know how to intervene effectively** against VAWG.



Method

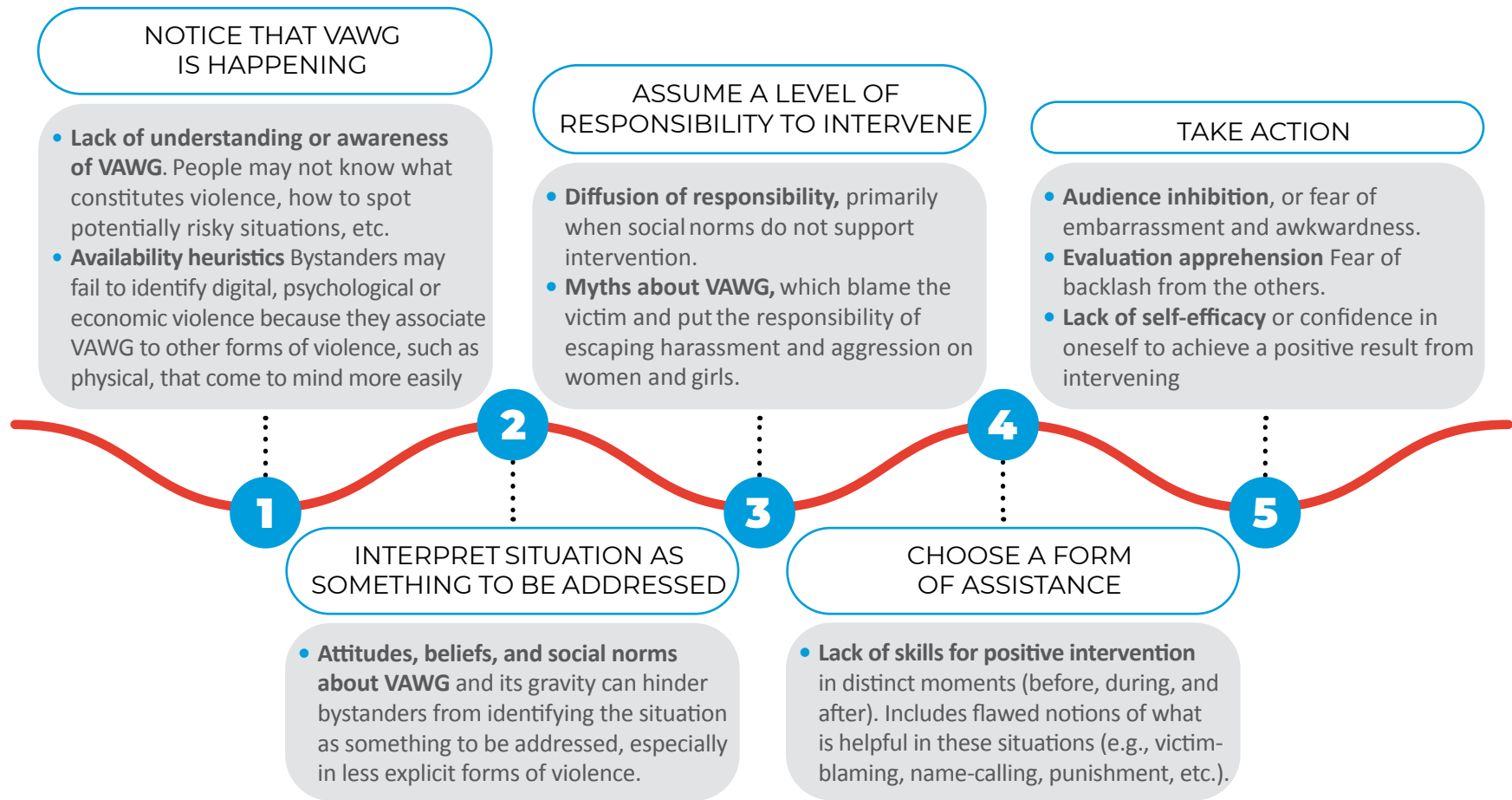
BIT used an online survey platform to **simulate three scenarios illustrating varying forms of digital violence**. We recruited over 5,000 male respondents from Bolivia and Guatemala and measured their likelihood of intervening in these situations.



Timeline

- Phase 1 (exploration work)
 - October 2020 - March 2021
- Phase 2 (online trial)
 - April-July 2021

Our messages address barriers along the bystander intervention model



Intervention messages

DIGITAL VIOLENCE TYPES

DYNAMIC SOCIAL NORMS

DELIBERATE CHOICE

RULES OF THUMB

Messages

Types of Digital Violence

GOAL

Provide examples of common types of digital violence to facilitate the identification

Hitting is not the only form of violence.
What happens online, IS ALSO VIOLENCE.

- Name-calling or threatening a girl on social media
- Controlling what your partner does on her cell phone
- Sending sexual images without consent

YOU CAN STOP DIGITAL VIOLENCE



Dynamic Social Norms

GOAL

Highlight that the majority adopts or views desirable behavior to encourage individuals' behavior

You feel uncomfortable when...

- a friend shares intimate photos of a girl he knows?
- a relative name-calls or controls their partner through social media?

You are not the only one.

MORE AND MORE MEN ARE STOPPING DIGITAL VIOLENCE. JOIN THEM.



Messages

Deliberate Choice

GOAL

Present inaction as a deliberate choice to not act

When a friend shares intimate photos of a girl in a group...

When a relative name-calls or controls their partner through social media...

You have two options:

STOP HIM.



LOOK THE OTHER WAY AND ALLOW THE VIOLENCE TO CONTINUE.

YOU DECIDE.

Rules of Thumb

GOAL

Provide a set of clear and actionable rules to respond to digital violence

RECOGNIZING THAT IT IS VIOLENCE IS THE FIRST STEP YOU CAN STOP DIGITAL VIOLENCE

If a friend shares intimate photos of a girl...



DON'T SHARE.
DON'T BLAME HER.



DELETE THEM. ASK HIM TO STOP SHARING.



If a relative calls a woman names or humiliates her on social media...

DON'T STAY SILENT.

TELL HIM TO STOP.



If your friend's partner controls her cell phone...

DON'T DOWNPLAY THE SITUATION.

LISTEN TO HER.



Main Outcomes



We asked respondents what they would do in **three hypothetical scenarios**. We asked respondents how likely they would be to perform the following (in)actions using a 5-point scale ranging from very unlikely to very likely:

- Intervene to stop the perpetrator
- Reach out to the victim
- Avoid focusing on the issue

Our **primary outcome** was an **intention to intervene in instances of digital violence**, coded as a binary outcome. To be marked as a ‘success,’ respondents needed to have reported being **likely or very likely to intervene to stop the perpetrators across all three scenarios**.

We also measured **recognition of digital violence** by asking respondents to read six statements and identify which ones represent a form of digital violence.

Three scenarios to measure intention to intervene



WhatsApp

In one of your male-only WhatsApp groups, your friend, Luis, tells the group he has an intimate picture of a woman with whom he has had sex.

The picture was taken without her consent.

Now, Luis says he plans to share the photos in the group.



Restaurant

You are in a restaurant with your friend, Marcelo, and his girlfriend, Maria. Maria goes to the restroom and Marcelo takes the opportunity to grab her phone and check her direct messages on social networks.



Soccer broadcast

You're watching a soccer match in your house. A female sports journalist is narrating the game. On social media, you read that your friend Pedro is posting that women don't know about soccer and they shouldn't be commenting on a men's match.

What would you do at this moment?

Exploratory Outcomes

We also collected the following survey data to explore possible mechanisms and mediators related to respondents' intention to intervene:



Comprehension of the intervention message



Attitudes towards digital violence*



Sense of readiness to intervene*



Interest in the topic is shown by clicking an end-of-survey hyperlink

* Survey questions used to collect the data are displayed in Appendix A.

Overview of participants

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS* (N = 5,077)

Age	
18 -29	57%
30 - 39	26%
40 - 49	13%
50 +	4%

Location	
Urban	65%
Suburban	23%
Rural	12%

Employment	
Employed	65%
Unemployed	9%
Other	23%

Education	
Less than HS	8%
High school	29%
Technical / College +	61%

Sexual orientation	
Bisexual	4%
Gay/Lesbian	2%
Heterosexual	76%
Other / No answer	18%

Relationship status	
In a relationship	56%

Children	
Have children	40%
Have daughter(s)	26%

We recruited a sample of **5,077 male adults** across **Bolivia (N=3,008)** and **Guatemala (N=2,069)**

We collected data on participants'

- age
- employment status
- education level
- location type
- sexual orientation
- relationship status
- children

Median time spent completing survey: 9.6 minutes.

* Demographic data includes missing responses. The percentage is calculated among respondents who provided their responses.

Three in ten respondents exited the survey right after seeing the introduction

Drop-out rates were consistent across the five groups

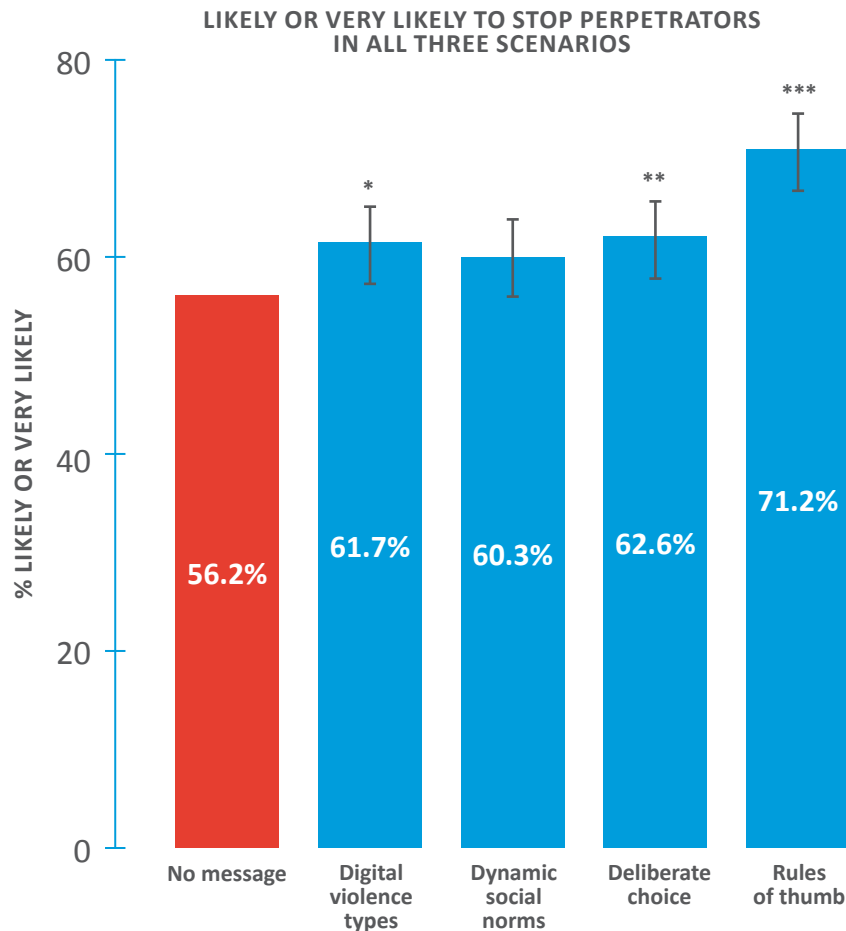
	COMPLETED THE PRIMARY QUESTION (N=5,077)	COMPLETED THE SECONDARY QUESTION (N=4,917)	COMPLETED THE DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONS (N=4,807)	
<p>8,253 Entered the Survey</p> <p>5,077 Eligible respondents were randomized</p> <p>RANDOM ASSIGNMENT</p>	No message Group	1,001	961	945
	Digital violence types Group	1,035	1,004	984
	Dynamic social norms Group	1,048	1,016	997
	Deliberate choice Group	1,005	974	950
	Rules of thumb Group	988	962	931



FINDINGS

Three out of four messages significantly increased the intention to intervene

'Rules of thumb' performed best



n = 4,709
 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001
 Primary analysis

RECOGNIZING THAT IT IS VIOLENCE IS THE FIRST STEP YOU CAN STOP DIGITAL VIOLENCE		
If a friend shares intimate photos of a girl...	✗ DON'T SHARE. DON'T BLAME HER.	✓ DELETE THEM. ASK HIM TO STOP SHARING.
If a relative calls a woman names or humiliates her on social media...	DON'T STAY SILENT.	TELL HIM TO STOP.
If your friend's partner controls her cell phone...	DON'T DOWNPLAY THE SITUATION.	LISTEN TO HER.

Respondents who saw the **'Intervention abilities'** message were **26%** more likely to report they would intervene to stop the perpetrator in cases of digital violence.

Three out of four messages increased intention to intervene. Even though the **'Dynamic social norm'** message was directionally positive, it was not statistically significant.

'Rules of thumb' was also the best performing message for each individual scenario

% "Likely" or "Very Likely" to tell the perpetrator to stop	NO MESSAGE (N=1,001)	DIGITAL VIOLENCE TYPES (N=1,035)	DYNAMIC SOCIAL NORMS (N=1,048)	DELIBERATE CHOICE (N=1,005)	RULES OF THUMB (N=988)
Scenario 1 WhatsApp	88%	89%	87%	90%	91%
Scenario 2 Restaurant	76%	81%	81%	82%	86%
Scenario 3 Soccer broadcast	69%	73%	72%	74%	79%

Note: The sample includes respondents who answered all three scenario-based questions (N=5,077), independently of whether they completed the rest of the survey. The highest outcome rate for each scenario is shaded in red.

Approximately **9 out of 10** respondents intended to stop the perpetrator from trying to publicly share a sexual photo, even without seeing any intervention message.

Only **7 in 10** respondents intended to intervene when seeing a friend controlling their partner's phone or posting a sexist insult on social media. The best performing message increased intention to intervene in these instances by as much as 10 p.p.

Results hold across countries and demographic groups

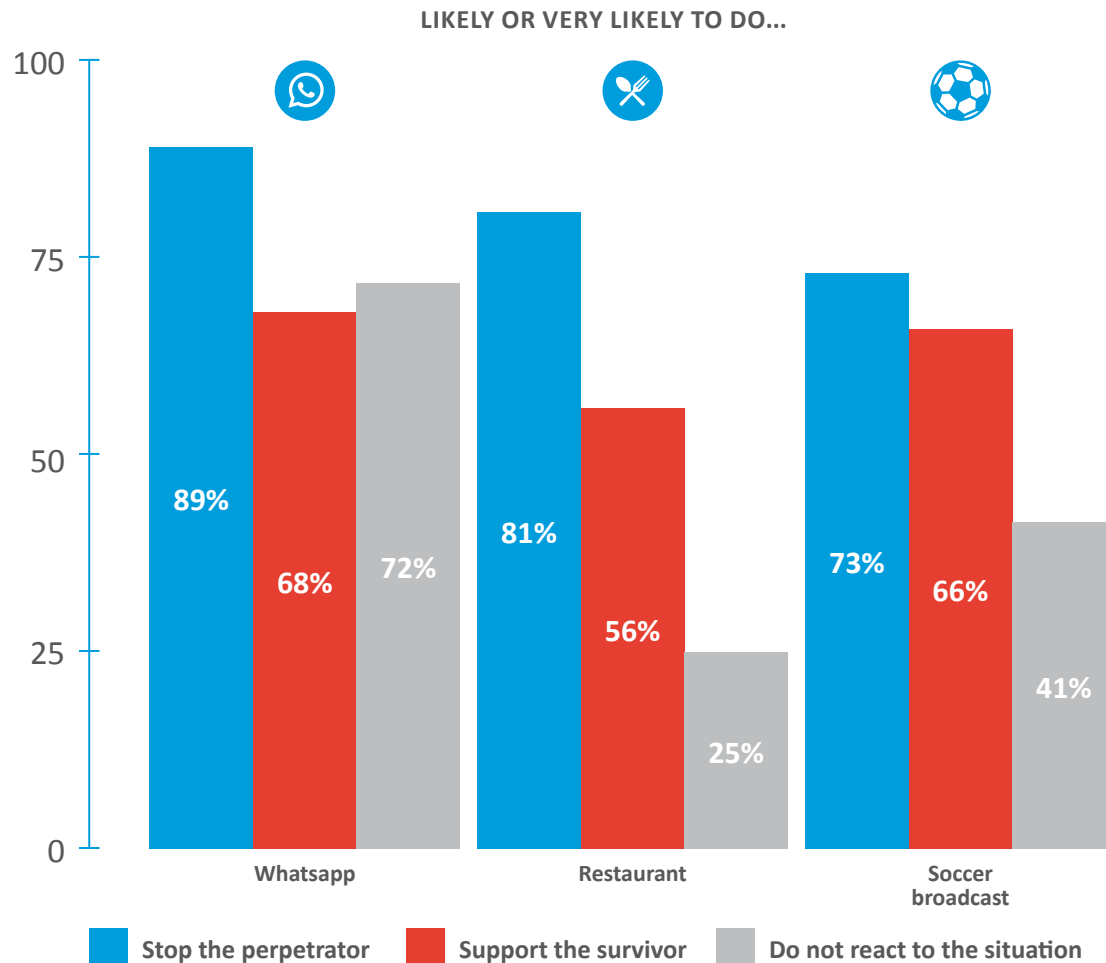
The overall likelihood to intervene is lower in Bolivia and higher for Gen Z

% “Likely” or “Very Likely” to tell the perpetrator to stop in all three scenarios	OVERALL (N=5,077)	HAVE DAUGHTER(S) (N=1,270)	GEN Z (N=2,007)	MILLENNIALS (N=2,440)	BOLIVIA (N=3,008)	GUATEMALA (N=2,069)
No Message	56%	58%	61%	56%	49%	65%
Digital violence types	61%	67%	63%	60%	56%	68%
Dynamic social norms	60%	62%	63%	62%	53%	70%
Deliberate choice	63%	63%	66%	63%	59%	67%
Rules of thumb	70%	75%	69%	74%	67%	74%

Note: The highest outcome rate for each subgroup is shaded in red.

We include subgroups with a big enough sample size to perform subgroup analysis (over or close to 1000 responded). We found consistent results across those subgroups. Other subgroups, such as educational level or sexual orientation, had a minimal number of respondents and did not allow a meaningful analysis.

Respondents were less willing to support the survivor than they were to stop the perpetrator across all scenarios



For instance, in the WhatsApp scenario, across all groups (total sample of respondents):

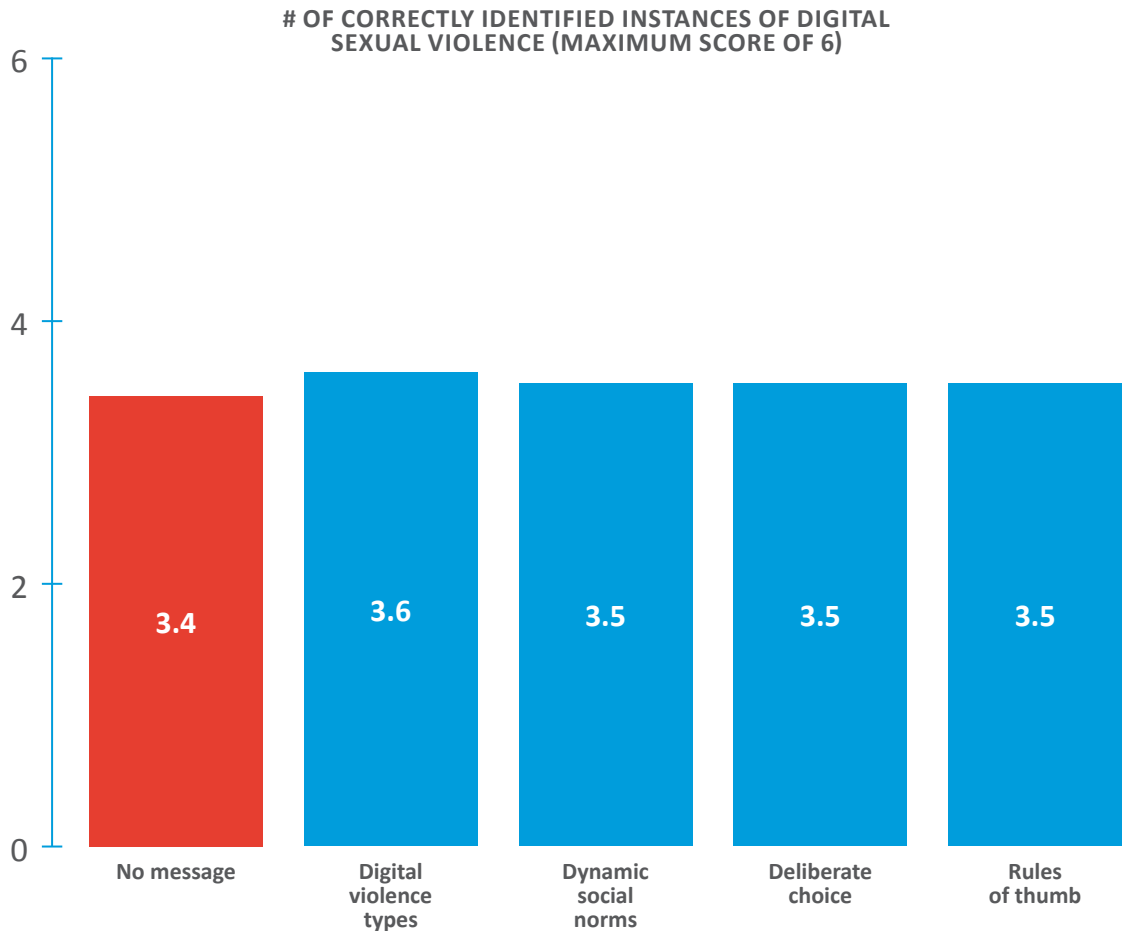
- **89%** of respondents intended to stop the perpetrator
- **68%** of respondents intended to support the survivor

Respondents seeing 'Rules of thumb' reported being most likely to support the survivor across all scenarios

% "Likely" or "Very Likely" to reach out to the victim	NO MESSAGE (N=1,001)	DIGITAL VIOLENCE TYPES (N=1,035)	DYNAMIC SOCIAL NORMS (N=1,048)	DELIBERATE CHOICE (N=1,005)	RULES OF THUMB (N=988)
Scenario 1 WhatsApp	61%	70%	69%	68%	70%
Scenario 2 Restaurant	46%	56%	56%	58%	64%
Scenario 3 Soccer broadcast	63%	66%	66%	67%	68%

Note: The highest outcome rate for each scenario is shaded in red.

Respondents had trouble in correctly identifying what *does not* constitute digital violence



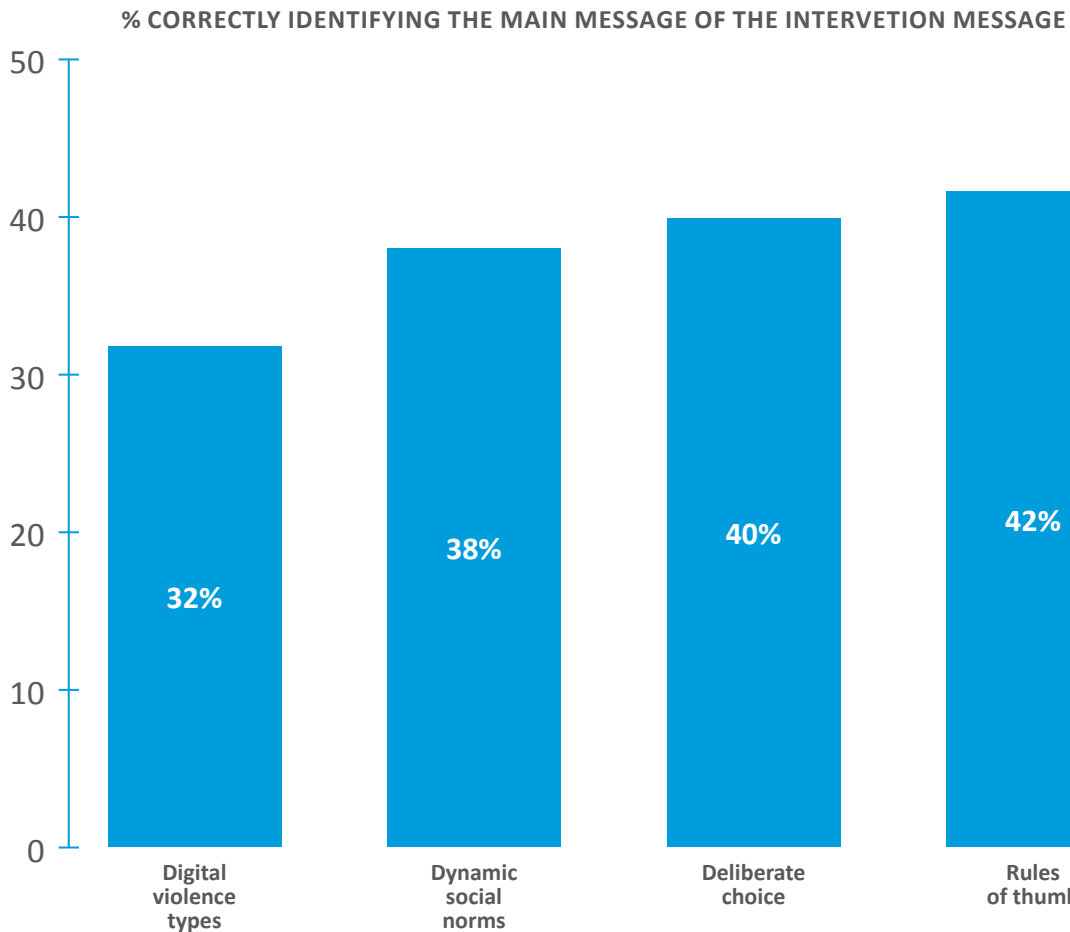
Note: Secondary analysis N = 4,917

Most respondents correctly identified 3-4 instances of digital violence out of a total of 6.

Respondents were not able to identify situations that *did not* entail digital violence as well. This was the case across all groups, including respondents who did not see any message.

This pattern was also consistent across subgroups of respondents.

Most respondents believe the messages aimed to raise awareness, rather than calling them to action



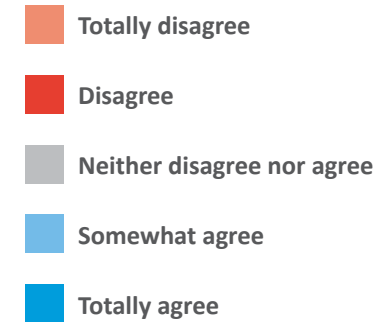
Note: Exploratory analysis N = 3,947

Across all conditions, more than half of respondents incorrectly selected “Digital violence is a severe issue” as the main message, as opposed to “I can do something to stop digital violence”.

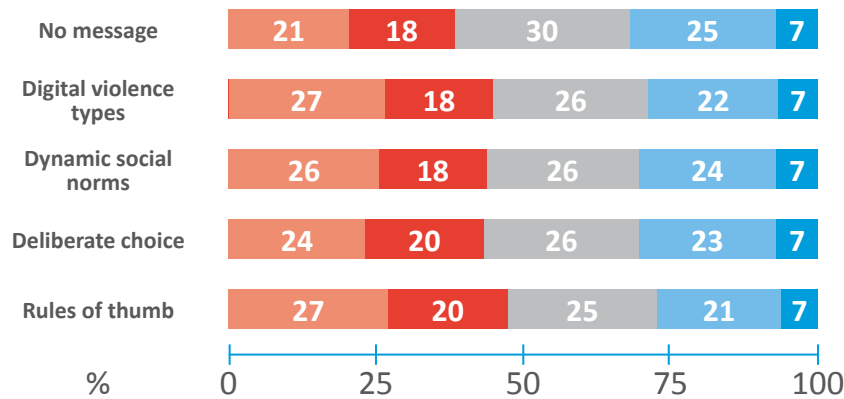
Respondents seeing the messages reported lower levels of victim-blaming (A)

The assumption that women have exaggerated perceptions of digital violence (B & C)

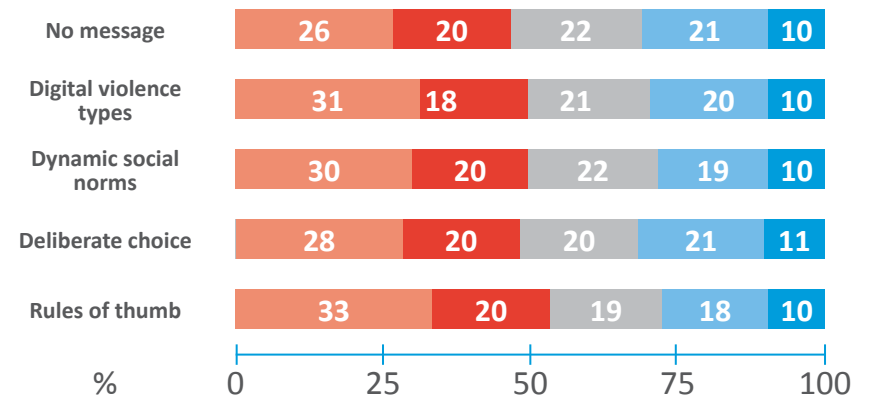
However, they were more likely to agree that online harassment would end if women told men to stop (D)



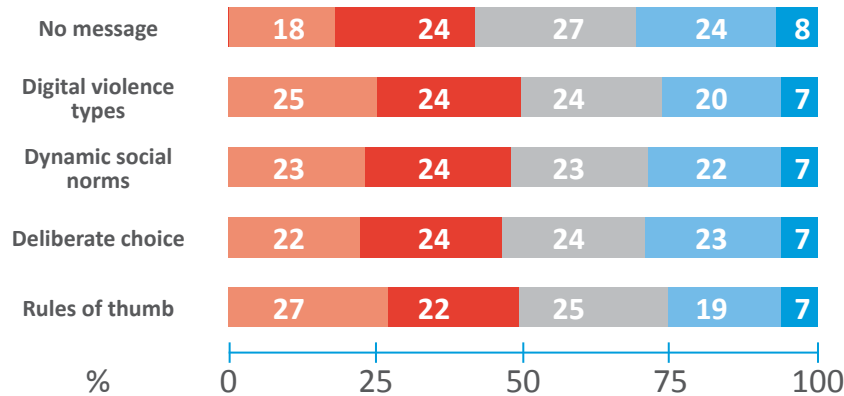
(A) WOMEN WHO CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE SUFFERED DIGITAL VIOLENCE HAVE USUALLY DONE SOMETHING TO CAUSE IT



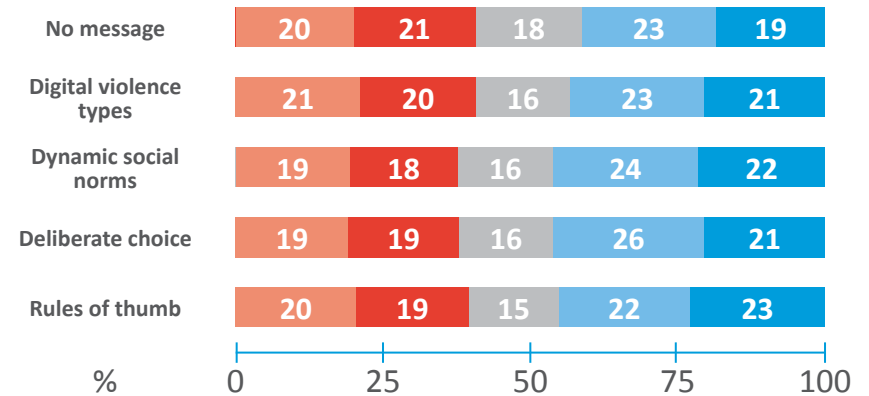
(B) WOMEN SHOULD NOT FEEL OFFENDED SO EASILY WHEN A MAN MAKES SEXUAL ADVANCES ON WHATSAPP



(C) WOMEN WHO CLAIM THAT THEY SUFFERED DIGITAL VIOLENCE ARE USUALLY EXAGGERATING



(D) NEARLY ALL INSTANCES OF HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA WOULD END IF THE WOMAN SIMPLY TOLD THE MAN TO STOP



Respondents seeing the messages reported higher awareness, self-efficacy and were less likely to believe their friends would be accepting of digital violence

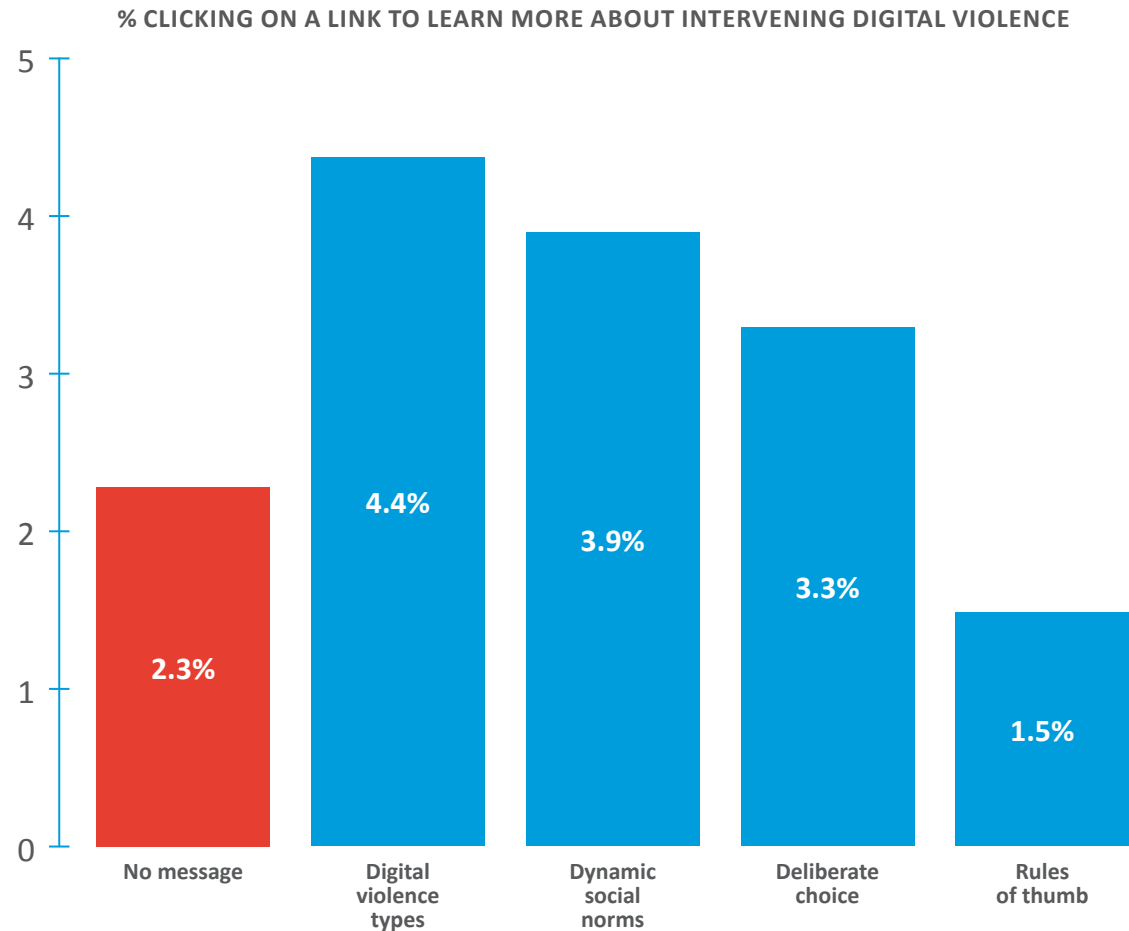
% “Somewhat agree” or “Totally agree”		NO MESSAGE (N=1,001)	DIGITAL VIOLENCE TYPES (N=1,035)	DYNAMIC SOCIAL NORMS (N=1,048)	DELIBERATE CHOICE (N=1,005)	RULES OF THUMB (N=988)
Awareness	I don’t think digital violence is a problem in my community*	56%	64%	63%	64%	66%
Perception of social norms	My close friends believe that it is OK to post sexual pictures of other people (that were sent to them) if the person in the picture doesn’t know about it*	75%	78%	78%	78%	80%
Self-efficacy	I think I can do something about digital violence	69%	74%	73%	74%	76%
	I would tell a friend who was posting sexist insults on social media to stop	78%	82%	79%	82%	85%
	I would reach out to the person who received sexist insults on social media and ask if I could help with anything	65%	75%	70%	73%	73%

*The proportion of “Somewhat disagree” or “Totally disagree” is computed instead such that higher numbers represent better outcomes.

Note: The highest outcome rate for each scenario is shaded in red.

Click through to access more information was low overall

The results did not match the trends in our main outcomes

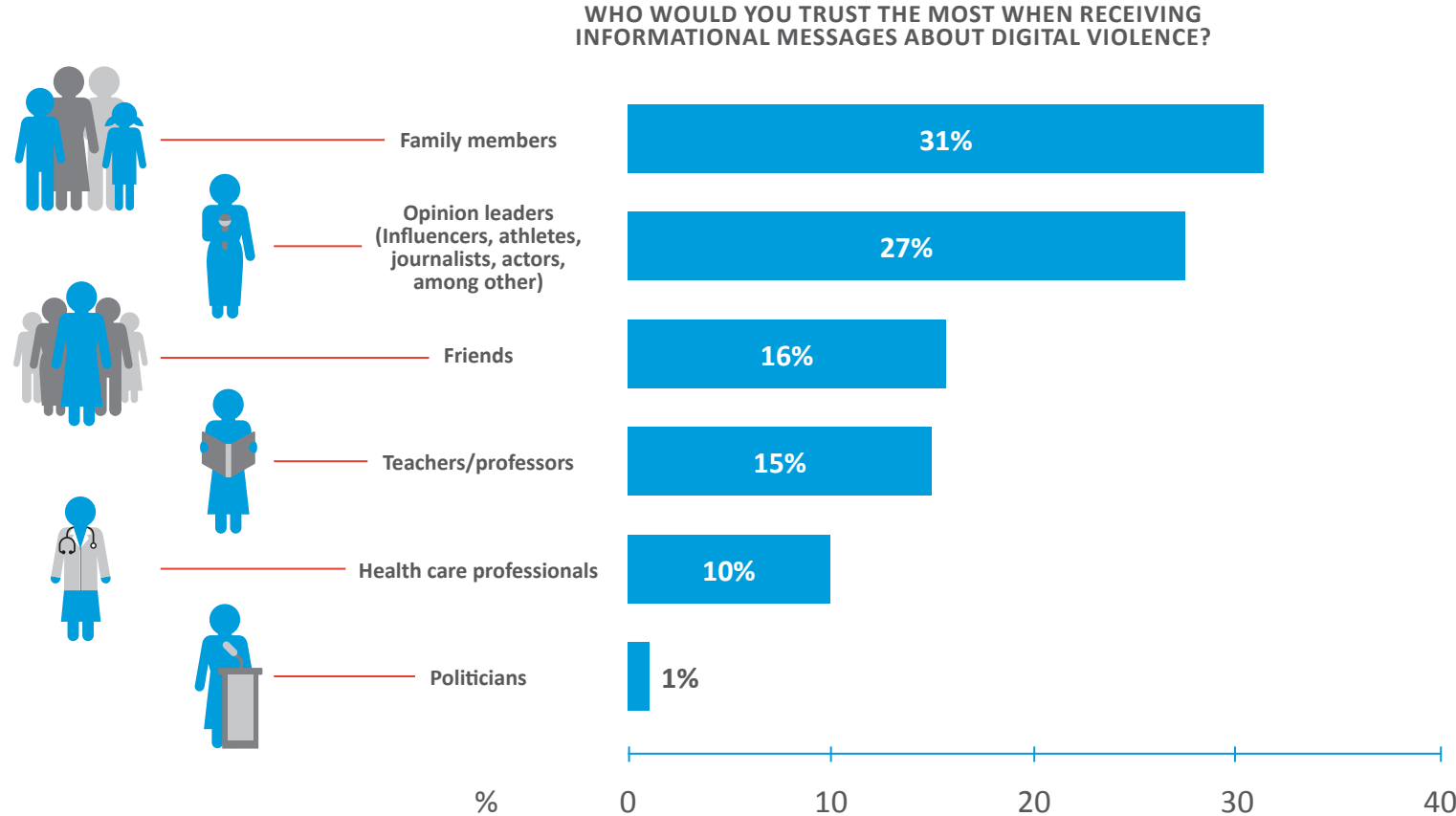


Note: Exploratory analysis N = 4,385



Men would trust family members the most to deliver violence prevention messages, followed by opinion leaders

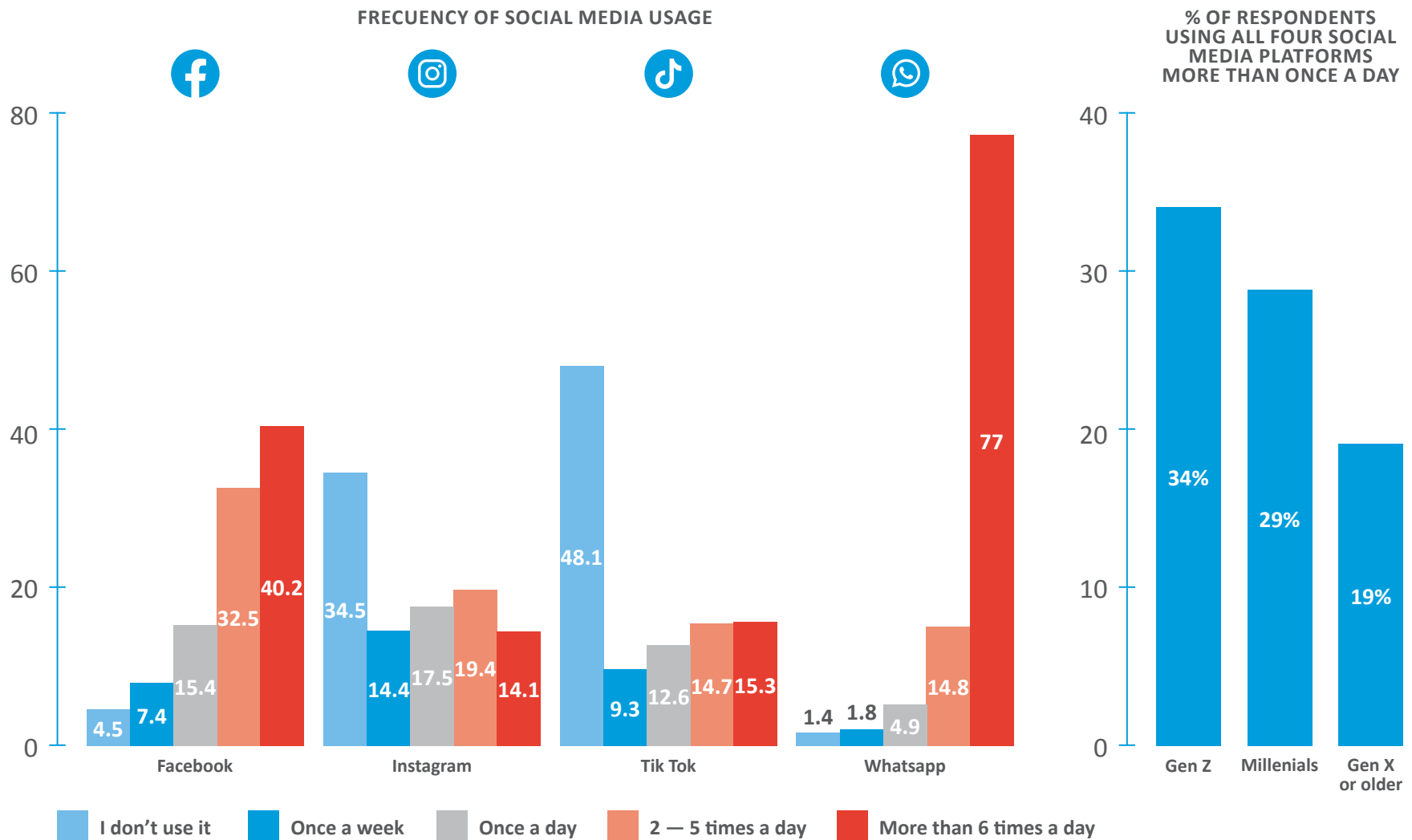
This is the case for all age groups



Note: Exploratory analysis N = 4,813

WhatsApp is the most used widely used platform, followed by Facebook

Social media use decreases with age



RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggested next steps

1

- **We recommend that UN Women scales up the best performing message ‘Rules of thumb’.** UN Women can use all four messages without fear of a negative effect, and using all four messages may help mitigate the risk that impact decreases with repetition.

2

- **Providing men with rules of thumb on what to do against digital violence is a promising strategy to prompt them to action.** If UN Women programming allows implementing interventions incorporating this strategy, we suggest validating these findings through a field trial.

3

- Areas to target in future messaging and research include: improving the identification of digital violence, **prompting men to support survivors**, and investigating how to mitigate the risk that interventions increasing bystanders’ sense of self-efficacy lead them to project this onto women experiencing digital violence.

4

- **Interventions**, such as communications campaigns **that depend on men engaging with violence prevention content may not effectively reach the most reluctant men.** UN Women and its partners may need to implement more intensive and/or personalized interventions (i.e., deep canvassing), leverage different touchpoints or messengers to engage this group.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Questions measuring recognition of sexual violence



Which of the following behaviors would you say is digital violence?

1. Messaging a photo of your nude to your partner after they asked you to send one **[No]**
2. Forwarding a picture of a naked woman whom you don't know to your friends' group on WhatsApp **[Yes]**
3. Texting someone constantly to ask her to date you, even when that person has told you that she is not interested **[Yes]**
4. Arguing with a woman in a Facebook thread when you think you are right **[No]**
5. Retweeting a post of your favorite singer, in which he insults his ex-partner in a sexist way **[Yes]**
6. Checking your partner's phone when they are not around **[Yes]**

SCALE: YES, NO OR I DON'T KNOW

"Yes" and "No" inside the bracket represent the correct answer.

Questions measuring attitudes toward digital sexual violence



Read the following statements carefully and select the answer that best reflects your personal opinion for each one of them:

1. Women who claim that have suffered digital violence have usually done something to cause it.
2. Women should not feel offended so easily when a man makes sexual advances on WhatsApp.
3. Women who claim that they have suffered digital violence are usually exaggerating.
4. Nearly all instances of harassment on social media would end if the woman simply told the man to stop.

SCALE 1 — 5: TOTALLY DISAGREE, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE, SOMEWHAT AGREE, TOTALLY AGREE

Note: These questions were adapted from the Illinois Rape Myth Scale. (See Lonsway, K.A., Cortina, L.M. & Magley, V.J. (2008). *Sexual Harassment Mythology: Definition, Conceptualization, and Measurement. Sex Roles* 58, 599–615.)

Questions measuring readiness to change



Read the following statements carefully and select the answer that best reflects your personal opinion for each one of them:

1. I don't think digital violence is a problem in my community
2. I think I can do something about digital violence
3. My close friends believe that it is OK to post sexual pictures of other people (that were sent to them) if the person in the picture doesn't know about it
4. I would tell a friend who was posting sexist insults on social media to stop
5. I would reach out to the person who received sexist insults on social media and ask if I could help them with anything

SCALE 1 — 5: TOTALLY DISAGREE, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE, SOMEWHAT AGREE, TOTALLY AGREE

*Note: These questions were adapted from Banyard et al. (2014) and Banyard (2008) (See Banyard, V. L., Moynihan, M. M., Cares, A. C., & Warner, R. A. (2014). How do we know if it works? Defining measurable outcomes in bystander-focused violence prevention. *Psychology of Violence* 4, 101-115.; Banyard, V. L. (2008). Measurement and correlates of pro-social bystander behavior: The case of interpersonal violence. *Violence and Victims*, 23, 83-97.)*

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS BY COUNTRY

Bolivia: Overview of participants



Respondents in Bolivia are more likely to live in urban areas and be college-educated compared to respondents in Guatemala

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (N = 3,008)

Age		Sexual orientation	
18 -29	55%	Bisexual	4%
30 - 39	27%	Gay/Lesbian	2%
40 - 49	14%	Heterosexual	80%
50 +	4%	Other / No answer	14%
Employment		Relationship status	
Employed	62%	In a relationship	56%
Unemployed	10%		
Other	28%		
Education		Children	
Less than HS	6%	Have children	39%
High school	24%	Have daughter(s)	26%
Technical / College +	70%		
Location			
Urban	71%		
Suburban	21%		
Rural	8%		

Guatemala: Overview of participants



We collected data on participants' gender, age, urbanicity, and education to enable demographic analysis

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (N = 2,069)

Age	
18 -29	58%
30 - 39	24%
40 - 49	12%
50 +	5%

Sexual orientation	
Bisexual	5%
Gay/Lesbian	3%
Heterosexual	72%
Other / No answer	20%

Employment	
Employed	70%
Unemployed	8%
Other	22%

Relationship status	
In a relationship	57%

Children	
Have children	42%
Have daughter(s)	28%

Education	
Less than HS	11%
High school	35%
Technical / College +	54%

Location	
Urban	56%
Suburban	25%
Rural	19%





**Spotlight
Initiative**
*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

lac.unwomen.org