



Office on the Economic Status of Women

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Split Rock Lighthouse via Adobe Images, by [Yan](#)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Artificial intelligence, gender-based violence, and women in the public eye
- Spotlight issues of the month: Human Rights Day & women's human rights protections
- Women in Business 2025 Report Highlights
- Small Business Spotlight
- Reading List

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AND WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC EYE

As our world has evolved into an increasingly digital one, violence against women has evolved alongside it, taking on new forms assisted by digital tools and presenting new challenges for how to respond, prevent, and protect women and girls. Online, digital, or technological violence refers to acts that use technology to harm women and girls that is:

1. Committed, assisted, aggravated and/or amplified in part or fully using information and communication technologies or digital media
2. Disproportionately affects women and girls
3. Causes physical, psychological, economic, and/or sexual harm.

Common examples include acts such as spyware-assisted stalking, non-consensual video sharing, threats of sexual violence on social media, and more.

December 6th marked **National Day of Remembrance for Violence Against Women**, coinciding with United Nations Women's 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence Campaign with this year's theme being online abuse. As of 2020, the Economist reported that **45%** of women ages 13-42 have experienced digital online violence, while **85%** of all women have witnessed digital violence occur towards women in some form. These numbers may underestimate the true prevalence of online violence against women due to difficulties reporting.

One in four reported the violence they experienced, while 14% reported it to an offline agency, such as the local authorities. Though under-reported, online violence against women is happening all the time. According to [a report by UN Women](#), a woman politician or journalist is harassed on X (formerly known as Twitter) every 30 seconds in the US and UK. And while online gender-based violence has existed as long as the internet has, the 2020s have seen the emergence of a new kind of violence facilitated by artificial intelligence: deepfakes.

"Deepfakes" are fake images and videos created by AI tools that are completely indistinguishable from real ones. These AI tools blend video and image footage together, putting one person's face on another's body in a way that looks completely real. Since the popularization of this technology in the past few years, deepfakes have been used to impersonate politicians, orchestrate online financial fraud, and disseminate misinformation. Despite their broad use, the majority of deepfakes are sexually explicit. The [2023 State of Deepfakes](#) report by cybersecurity company Security Hero found that **98% of deepfake videos online were pornographic**, and **99% of the individuals targeted with them were women**. **99.6% of explicit AI-generated imagery of children is of girls.**

Deepfakes fall under the broader category of AI-facilitated violence against women, which refers to ["acts of digital abuse generated and spread by AI technology, resulting in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political or economic harm, or other infringements of women's rights and freedoms."](#) AI tools accelerate the ease, anonymity, and efficiency with which digital violence can inflict real-life harm. These deepfake videos are simple, easy, and free to make. With just a single clear image of someone's face, anyone with access to a computer can take less than 25 minutes to create a one-minute long, explicit deepfake video of an event that did not happen, and with another few clicks, it can be shared to millions and impossible to erase.

As a result, deepfake videos are frequently used as a targeted tool of harassment and blackmail against women in the public eye, namely journalists and politicians. Nicole Martin, an Australian political activist targeted by one such campaign, told an [MIT study](#) that *"It affects your interpersonal relations; it affects you with getting jobs. Every single job interview you ever go for, this might be brought up. Potential romantic relationships. To this day, I've never been successful fully in getting any of the images taken down. Forever, that will be out there. No matter what I do."* In the United Kingdom, a local helpline reported a case they received where a teacher had lost her job after deepfake pornographic images of her were circulated on social media. In December of 2024, the [American Sunlight Project](#) found tens of thousands of deepfake images and videos depicting 26 Senators and members of Congress. 25 of those featured were women, and one was a man.

Women politicians in both parties were equally likely to be targeted by deepfakes, but women members were 70 times more likely to appear in this content than male members. Overall, this study indicates that **16%** of all women serving in Congress as of December 2024 were victims of AI-generated nonconsensual explicit imagery.

While these deepfake images and videos may be literally fake, the consequences are real. [As the UN's Commission on the Status of Women describes it](#), "this type of disinformation is design to alter public understanding of female politicians' track records for immediate political gain, as well as discourage women from seeking political careers,". [New America](#) found in one study that women candidates are often targeted during critical political moments, like the weeks immediately prior to an election. Online harassment using deepfakes undermines support for women candidates by leveraging shame and humiliation as weapons of defamation, and serve what experts call a ["chilling effect"](#) of discouraging women for running for political office for fear of being targeted. This practice may also jeopardize victim's current or future careers in fields where "clean digital footprints" are a job requirement. These videos then become a tool of sexual violence on a massive, online scale, intimidating public figures into silence and obscurity.

A variety of governments across the globe have begun to explore how to fight against the proliferation of these new types of violence and harassment. In 2024, Congress passed the [Take it Down Act](#) at the federal level, which makes the creation and distribution of non-consensual deepfakes a criminal offense subject to fines and up to two years of imprisonment. It also requires internet platforms to establish procedures that allow for individuals to request the deepfake be removed and obligates them to make a reasonable effort to do so. The Take it Down Act is a landmark piece of bi-partisan legislation as the first in US history to tackle this issue federally with such specificity. As of late 2025, it remains to be seen what the prosecution of offenders can be effective due to the anonymous nature of deepfake creation online, and whether the promise of criminal penalty will have a deterrent effect.

In Minnesota, non-consensual deepfakes made with the intent to influence the result of an election and disseminated within a certain period of an upcoming election, according to [Sec 76, section 609.771 subd. 2](#), are illegal and punishable by fines and possibly imprisonment. [Minnesota statute 612.261](#) also prohibits the non-consensual dissemination of private intimate imagery. However, there is currently no legislation specific to the creation of AI generated non-consensual intimate imagery.

During the 2025 legislation session, [SF1119](#) was introduced, which aimed to prohibit access to nudification technology, but it did not make it into law.

Remaining potential avenues to discourage and prevent the creation and spread of deepfakes may include legislation that targets the legality of the tools and webpages that allow for their creation, safety-features built into AI tools during both active use and the model's training, introducing AI-literacy curricula into schools, [and more](#) according to a [variety](#) of recent [publications](#) exploring the topic.

Deepfakes pose a threat to the safety and well-being of many people, especially women in the public eye, whether in the entertainment industry, journalism, political activism, or public office. These evolutions in gender-based violence allow it to adapt and spread further than ever before through the digital world. As new methods of inflicting gender-based violence emerge, whether digitally or physically, our tools and strategies to counter it and support each other must evolve too.



SPOTLIGHT ISSUE: WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

December 10th was International Human Rights Day, celebrated yearly on the anniversary of the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The UDHR is a document that was written collaboratively with a variety of politicians, scholars and activists, many of whom were [women passionate about gender equality](#).

Eleanor Roosevelt, Hansa Mehta, Minerva Bernardino, Begum Shaista Ikramullah, Bodil Begtrup, Marie-Helene Lefaucheaux, Evdokia Uralova, and Lakshmi Menon were essential in shaping the UDHR to include the experiences of discrimination faced by women across the world.



Eleanor Roosevelt (right), with Minerva Bernadino and Ana Figueroa. Photo Credit: UN Photo

As a result of their advocacy, the UDHR specifies in its preamble that the fundamental human rights discussed apply equally to men and women and prioritizes equalizing language. Hansa Metha is credited with securing Article 1's statement of "all human beings are born free and equal" from the original draft's "all men", Begum Shaista Ikramullah championed Article 16's inclusion on equal rights within marriage, and Evdokia Uralova argued for the inclusion of Article 23's statement that "Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work."

ICCPR & CEDAW

In addition to the Universal Declaration of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) passed in 1976. This document establishes a variety of civil and political rights historically denied to women such as the right to be free of forced or coerced marriage ([ICCPR Article 23](#)), the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs directly and have access to public service ([ICCPR Article 25](#)), the right to freely pursue ones social, economic and cultural development ([ICCPR Article 1](#)), and many more.

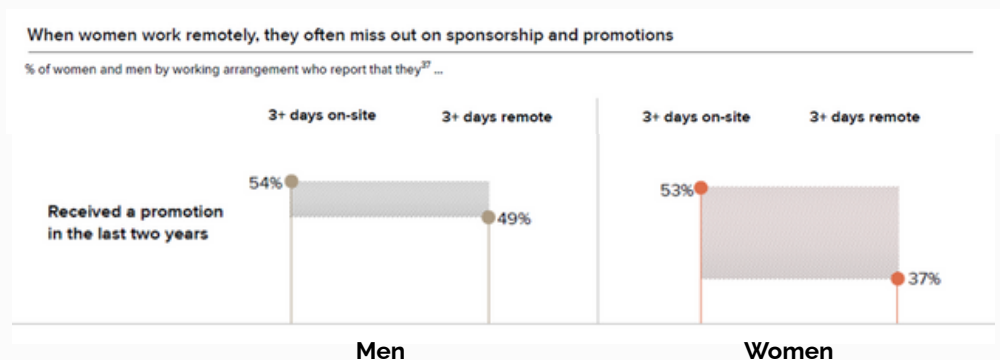
In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)) was created as a list of commitments undertaken by countries to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Examples include access to the same educational curricula ([CEDAW Article 10](#)), equal rights between spouses in the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, ([CEDAW Article 16](#)), the right to vote and participate in government policy and public functions at all levels, ([CEDAW Article 7](#)) and more. While the United States has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, many individual cities across the country have elected to adopt resolutions to CEDAW in their local communities, including Red Wing, Northfield, Richfield, Duluth, Edina, Minneapolis, and St. Paul.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS 2025 REPORT: HIGHLIGHTS

A collaboration between Lean In and McKinsey & Company, **Women in the Workplace** is an annual study on women in corporate America. The 2025 report features a survey of 9,500 individuals and overall data from 124 organizations employing 3 million.

Highlights of this year's report include new data on the effect that remote working specifically has on women. While we already know that remote work opportunities have a variety of benefits for many people, such as working parents, the report shows that there are potential drawbacks as well.

Flexibility stigma, "the unfounded belief that employees who make use of flexible work options are less committed to their jobs", has been shown to disproportionately affect women. According to the study, women who work remotely most of the time are significantly less likely to be promoted than women who work mostly on-site. Men's likeliness to be promoted is less likely to be influenced by whether they work remotely. For example, **54%** of men working mostly on-site received a promotion in the past two years, versus **49%** of men working mostly remote. However, while **53%** of women working mostly on-site were promoted in the past 2 years, only **37%** of those who work mostly remote received a promotion.



Remote work can have great benefits for both employees and employers, like increased productivity, geographic flexibility, reduced operating costs, and much more. This new research doesn't indicate a fundamental problem with remote work but rather highlights the way existing ideas about gender influence the way remote workers are viewed.

[Check out the rest of the report](#) for more insight into women in corporate America in 2025.

SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Macarons by Maddie Lu sits on the third floor of the Mall of America and serves some of the most incredible and creative macarons we've ever seen and tasted! Maddie Lu is an accomplished baker with her degree from Le Cordon Bleu, and established Something Sweet by Maddie Lu alongside her mother, Laurie, in 2015. Their cakes can be found online at [Something Sweet](#), while their macarons can be found just a few shops north of Macy's on the West side in the Mall of America, in-between Nordstrom Rack and Lovesac.



READING LIST

[Rural child care center on the brink receives cash lifeline](#)

[Child care capacity is growing for some Ninth District states but not others](#)

[Women in the Workplace 2025 Report](#)



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