

RESEARCH REPORT

Online violence against women in politics

What shapes political party responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?



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About this report

This report is part of the ODI Global ALIGN project Political Parties' Responses to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) and builds on research conducted in partnership with dRPC (2025) in Nigeria and Data-Pop Alliance (Ricard et al., 2025) in Brazil.

Drawing on interviews with 22 gender and politics professionals and practitioners who work with women in politics and political parties, it complements country case studies with an analysis of the ways gender norms interact with the socio-political environment and internal party practices to shape responses to TFGBV. The report offers insights to consider when designing strategies to tackle TFGBV, which threatens democratic governance around the world.

The report is accompanied by a practical toolkit for gender professionals and others interested in applying the findings to design interventions to address TFGBV against women in politics (Michalko and Jiménez Thomas Rodriguez, 2026).

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Executive summary

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) experienced by women in politics has become a major threat to democracy worldwide (Bergia and Weinberg, 2026). TFGBV undermines the representation of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people and contributes to the weakening of rights-based protections of all people. Political institutions have been slow to respond to this threat. Governments have only recently been seeking to regulate online spaces and technology companies – for example, in Australia, the United Kingdom and the European Union (Akiwowo, 2022; An et al., 2025; Ofcom, 2025; UN Women and SVRI, 2025). Other political institutions such as parliaments are adopting codes of conduct and setting up reporting mechanisms and other safety measures to support victims-survivors. The actions of political parties, however, have received less focus in scholarship as well as among practitioners working on TFGBV in politics. Yet, many party members, affiliates and elected representatives directly or indirectly perpetuate TFGBV against women in their own parties as well as against their competitors. As key democratic actors in women's political participation, parties have a key role to play in addressing TFGBV within their own structures (Poskitt, 2025).

This report identifies how professionals working on democracy-strengthening interventions and programmes can be more effective in supporting political parties to respond to TFGBV. This is especially crucial as funding for gender equality is being cut and threats to democratic governance are rising, including from anti-gender and gender-restrictive actors (Harper et al., 2025).

TFGBV and its impacts

Enabled by the largely unregulated rise of new digital technologies, social media and artificial intelligence, TFGBV negatively impacts all people in politics (Bates, 2025). However, women experience political violence in different ways from men, as they are more often targets of sexualised harassment and identity-based abuse that weaponise unequal gender norms (Koch et al., 2025). All over the world – from New Zealand to Nigeria to Brazil – women politicians report doxxing (sharing of personal information), pornographic deepfakes, extortion, rape threats and threats to their families, as well as smear campaigns that challenge their competencies and legitimacy and police their bodies and behaviours. This is especially the case for women marginalised and disadvantaged due to their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and other intersecting identities and systems of power and oppression.

TFGBV in its diverse forms has chilling and silencing effects on women. While some women leave politics or change their behaviour online, others opt out of politics altogether. Their physical and mental well-being suffer as do their families and social networks. Women are thus systematically disadvantaged, as they are unable to reap the benefits of social media and other technologies to fundraise or reach their constituents and voters. They spend their often-limited resources, including emotional labour, to keep themselves safe. These increasingly hostile and violent political landscapes lead to political institutions that are less representative and inclusive, and to states losing out on talents and skills that women and LGBTQI+ people have to offer.

Methodology

This study is part of the ALIGN project Political Parties' Responses to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, conducted in partnership with research teams in Nigeria and Brazil (dRPC, 2025; Ricard et al., 2025). In addition to interviews with 22 gender and politics professionals from diverse socio-political contexts, the study draws on academic and grey literature.

The report explores what political parties are doing in response to TFGBV and what factors shape their action. While prevalence and impact of TFGBV are well documented, many gender professionals and parties are still building their knowledge on effective responses. Therefore, many proposed solutions draw on experience with addressing offline gendered political violence and efforts to transform unequal gender norms within political institutions. These strategies need further adaptations to the unique nature of TFGBV. However, many useful steps are captured in toolkits and guides, some of which are overviewed in the ODI Global toolkit that accompanies this report (Michalko and Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez, 2026).

Factors shaping party responses

Research findings point to three groups of interconnected factors that ought to be considered by professionals working with political parties: (1) gender norms, (2) socio-political environment and (3) internal party practices.

(1) Gender norms

Unequal gender norms are ubiquitous in politics, reflecting the historical and continued over-representation of men in public life. Gendered societal expectations are first manifested in political leadership norms, which continue to be associated with qualities and behaviours that are coded as masculine, including strength and aggression. While feminist movements and women politicians have tackled these expectations, women continue to experience the double bind of not being able to appear as weak or victims, while also needing to meet feminine norms such as being caring or subservient (Ehrlich and Riederer, 2025).

Gendered norms are also embedded in the culture and practices of political institutions, including parties (Kenny and Verge, 2016). This can be seen in procedures for candidate selection, campaigning and portfolio assignments. Parties tend to inculcate loyalty among their members, meaning that politicians are socialised into protecting the reputation of the party. This makes it difficult for women who are victims-survivors of TFGBV to report it internally and externally. Parties also operate on homosocial bonds: connections among men who promote people like them. In such normative environments, women can be hesitant to speak out about TFGBV due to the potential negative impacts on their political careers. Ultimately, this can lead to parties' limited engagement with TFGBV.

(2) Socio-political environment

The socio-political environment, including political and electoral systems, further shapes the incentive structures for parties to act on TFGBV. Activism by feminist civil society on one side and anti-gender actors on the other strives to mobilise public opinion on gender equality in both directions. Parties respond to, even weaponise, these social discourses, which ultimately also affects the parties' internal work on TFGBV. In some countries, other social issues and systems of power, such as ethnicity or religion, may further deprioritise gender equality debates and women politicians' efforts to tackle TFGBV in their parties.

The level of competition for votes can then shape parties' willingness to adopt TFGBV as their political agenda. Some use it to set themselves apart or gain new members. Domestic laws, especially related to gender quotas in politics or TFGBV, can push parties to address TFGBV to attract and maintain women candidates and politicians. This is, however, dependent on the quality of the rule of law. International normative frameworks, like the Istanbul Convention and international networks of parties with shared ideological positionalities, can encourage action on TFGBV.

(3) Internal party factors

Solutions to TFGBV may not be applicable in the same way across country contexts because internal practices, structures and operations differ. Research participants pointed to issues such as the lack of institutionalisation of some parties in regions such as Eastern Europe and West Africa. These parties can operate without regional structures or without dues-paying member bases, which shapes not only parties' access to funding to implement training and other measures, but also the ability to enforce codes of conduct for all party affiliates. While political ideology can play an enabling role in parties' willingness to respond to TFGBV, the alignment between values, policy commitments and internal actions is not universal.

The level of centralisation of leadership may also play a role. In some cases, parties serve as single-purpose vehicles for a leader or group. This can dampen interest in supporting the development of party structures and procedures. Codes of conduct or reporting mechanisms to address TFGBV may thus be deprioritised. Strengthening diverse women's voices, especially through women's wings or organisations, is a measure frequently advocated and utilised by gender professionals. While research shows the impact such initiatives can have on transforming norms in politics, they put the onus on women while depending on party leadership buy-in. Women politicians' dependencies on people with power and economic resources, in and around the party, can also disincentivise their calls for action on TFGBV and gender equality more broadly.

Types of party responses

As a result of the context-specific interplay of three sets of factors, parties' responses range from actively discouraging actions against TFGBV to transforming the unequal norms and practices within the party that contribute to TFGBV.

Party responses are often individual-focused, meaning they support women to keep themselves safe or respond to a specific case of TFGBV when it occurs. Such actions can include training, but also statements of condemnation and/or provision of legal and security support. However, fewer parties engage in preventive or reparative work, such as the adoption and implementation of codes of conduct, reporting mechanisms with meaningful sanctions for perpetrators, and the strengthening of women's participation in parties. Similar to individual women-focused actions, these approaches which try to transform underlying norms within parties also often rely on women's labour.

Conclusion

As more women and feminist civil society speak out against TFGBV and reject it as an acceptable part of political life, the global community is taking note. Initiatives such as the Global Digital Compact demonstrate a recognition that systemic changes need to take place, from regulation of the tech industry to social norm change. These initiatives, alongside carefully considered national and regional policies and laws, are essential pieces of the puzzle that political parties, especially in power, can pursue. However, this study highlights that most parties can further address the drivers and enablers of TFGBV within their own structures and contribute to addressing the violence that women in politics experience.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AI	artificial intelligence
CIR	Centre for Information Resilience
CSO	civil society organisation
dRPC	development Research and Project Center
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
GBV	gender-based violence
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KII	key informant interview
LGBTQI+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
MP	member of parliament
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
TFGBV	technology-facilitated gender-based violence
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
TFGBV	technology-facilitated gender-based violence
VAWIP	violence against women in politics

Glossary

Cisgender – A person whose gender identity is consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gendered disinformation – Deliberate spread of false or misleading information targeting individuals based on their gender, often women and gender nonconforming people, to silence their free expression and politically undermine their place in public life.

Gender norms – Informal, often invisible ‘rules’ in society that define socially acceptable behaviour, roles, appearance and gender expression based on a person’s (perceived) sex or gender. In politics, these rules shape expectations of what it means to be a political leader and also inform behaviours, policies and practices in institutions such as political parties and parliaments.

Gender stereotypes – Preconceived notions of what attributes or characteristics a person

should have on the basis of their perceived sex or gender.

TFGBV – Online and offline forms of violence which are enabled by technology – be it the internet, artificial intelligence, social media, digital messaging platforms, or TV and radio. Virtual reality technologies such as the metaverse further blur the line between online/offline violence. While there is no single universally accepted definition, it frequently includes non-consensual sharing of sexual images, online harassment and abuse, extortion or doxxing. Online, digital or cyber gendered violence are considered types of TFGBV.

Author’s note: This report focuses on online forms of TFGBV, and uses the term interchangeably with ‘online violence’ for ease of reading, while recognising their differences.

1 Introduction

Gendered political violence is a major threat for democracies worldwide. Widespread and systemic violence is used by a wide array of actors to prevent women's meaningful participation in politics and maintain their power (Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2016). These actors range from people in positions of political power, often the most privileged men, to ordinary citizens and foreign actors. Social media platforms, artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies have ushered in a new era of gendered political violence. While digital technologies have the potential to increase women's political power by creating direct access to potential voters and new modes of fundraising, they have enabled new forms of harm and violence, such as doxxing (sharing of personal details), non-consensual sharing of sexual images, such as deepfakes, and gender disinformation campaigns that some activists consider 'information warfare' because of its highly coordinated nature and threat to democracy (CIR, 2024; Wilfore, 2025). New technologies have also amplified the scale, speed and intensity of already existing violence against women (Koch et al., 2025; Lazard et al., 2025; Posetti et al., 2025; Wilfore, 2025).

Perpetrators of gendered political violence weaponise gender norms and stereotypes that are prevalent in patriarchal societies to make politics a hostile space for women, especially those who are racialised, queer and from other marginalised groups, whose presence in the public sphere challenges the status quo (UN, 2024; CEDAW Working Group on GBV, 2025). The psychological and emotional toll of gendered political violence contributes to women withdrawing from politics or changing their behaviours to stay safe. The former Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern, the former President of Slovakia Zuzana Čaputová and the former First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon are just a few examples of women who left politics under the strain of the gendered political violence they experienced (Barker, 2024; Čaputová and Tabery, 2024; Every-Palmer et al., 2024; Ardern, 2025). Murders of the British Member of Parliament (MP) Jo Cox and Brazilian politician Marielle Franco show that radicalisation and hate in the digital space can even have deadly consequences (Phillips, 2023; Ricard et al., 2025). The threat of violence and fear that it instils are often sufficient to communicate to women that politics is not for them (Gqola, 2015). In other words, violence also has a chilling effect, as it deters women and gender diverse people from participating in politics, or dampens their interest in doing so, having seen the violence others face.



Former First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, left politics under the strain of the gendered political violence she experienced. UK, 2025. © Euan Cherry/Shutterstock

TFGBV is thus detrimental for democratic representation, inclusion and equality and directly violates women's human rights. Moreover, gendered violence against women is part of larger, intensifying anti-democratic politics. Anti-gender actors, aligned with governments and civil society organisations (CSOs) challenging the global liberal world order, weaponise gender equality and LGBTQI+ rights to strengthen authoritarian power of individual politicians and political parties. They undermine rights-based democratic protections of all people (Brechenmacher, 2024; Miller-Idriss, 2025; Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2026).

All democratic political actors should see online gendered political violence as an area of concern and responsibility. Yet, political responses have been slow and insufficient including among political parties. Parties play an essential role in enabling women's political participation in electoral democracies and therefore must be active stakeholders in addressing TFGBV (Kenny and Verge, 2016; Poskitt, 2025). They have a responsibility towards women in politics not least because, in many cases, it is politicians, party members and volunteers that perpetrate TFGBV against women politicians (dRPC, 2025; Kimathi, 2025; LGBTQ+ Victory Institute, 2025; Ricard et al., 2025; Højlund Madsen et al., 2025). Also, parties can be seen as workplaces for politicians. Therefore, they can address norms, rules and processes that enable TFGBV within their midst. Ultimately, they can help decrease violence in politics as a whole. However, political parties have received relatively little attention in the scholarship and activism on TFGBV in comparison to parliaments (Ahrens and Meier, 2024).

To better understand what political parties are doing regarding TFGBV and what factors shape their actions, ALIGN conducted a study with research partners in Nigeria and Brazil, focusing specifically on the role of gender norms in party responses (dRPC, 2025; Ricard et al., 2025). This report builds on the case studies and other reports on TFGBV in party politics (e.g. McGing and Lima, 2022; Mršo, 2025; Kimathi, 2025). It harnesses the practical experience of gender professionals who work with politicians and have an in-depth understanding of practical challenges and obstacles in effectively addressing TFGBV. Drawing on practitioners' experience, this research situates feminist institutional scholarship on political parties and gendered political violence (academic studies analysing political institutions with a feminist lens) into the real-life difficulties of mobilising political will to act.

This report consolidates feminist understanding of norms, systems and structures that serve as barriers and enablers to gender equality in politics and brings it into conversation with the latest research on TFGBV. This can help politicians, party representatives and gender professionals to propose better solutions and plans of action to address TFGBV. This is crucial in the current moment due to the confluence of two interrelated phenomena: the rise of global mobilisations against the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people, including the manosphere (Bates, 2025; Miller-Idriss, 2025; Posetti et al., 2025), and the de-funding of gender equality programming through official development assistance (Harper et al., 2025). With increasing funding pressures, effective and targeted action is essential.

Following this introduction, Section 2 overviews key concepts regarding gendered political violence and TFGBV, including their impact on women, parties and democracies. Following a brief outline of the methodology, in Section 3, Section 4 illuminates the role of gender norms, socio-political environmental factors and internal party-related factors shaping parties' responses to TFGBV. Section 5 summarises types of party responses according to their varied impact. A short conclusion, Section 6, recaps the report and offers some broad implications for funders, civil society actors and others interested in strengthening women's political participation and democratic governance.

The report is accompanied by a toolkit that translates research findings into an analytical framework of guiding questions and reflections prompts for practitioners who design and implement programmes for political parties (Michalko and Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez, 2026). The toolkit also offers suggestions of other toolkits that can be used for enhanced analysis.

2 Gendered political violence: a threat to democratic governance

Men, women and gender diverse people experience violence in politics. According to a 2026 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 71% of nearly 520 parliamentarians surveyed reported having experienced violence by the public, whether online, offline or both (Bergia and Weinberg, 2026: 6). In some contexts, as diverse as Sweden and Brazil, men do so more frequently than women (Erikson et al., 2023; Ricard et al., 2025). However, (cis) men's experiences of political violence differ from women's – they are less frequently sexualised or motivated by gender norms that seek to enforce women's exclusion from the public sphere (Every-Palmer et al., 2024; Stephenson et al., 2025). Violence against women in politics denotes actions against 'women in politics as women' with the ultimate objective to push them out of politics (Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2016). It can take various forms, including economic, psychological, sexual, emotional and semiotic (violence enacted through words or symbols) (Krook, 2017). Fundamentally, it seeks to undermine women's right to representation (Restrepo Sanín, 2022). Not all acts of violence against women in politics are motivated by gender; however, gender does influence what impact political violence has (Bardall et al., 2020). The concept of gendered violence against women in politics, which is used in this report, considers violence perpetrated against women that is not only motivated by gender, but also violence that is gendered in different ways. This can also include, for instance, attacks on women's political platforms.

The severity and extent of gendered political violence vary across countries (Bergia and Weinberg, 2026). It also affects women differently, based on their positionalities and characteristics, including race, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, political ideology or visibility (Bansal et al., 2024; Harmer and Southern, 2021; Højlund Madsen et al., 2025; Stephenson et al., 2025). Moreover, it also changes over time, with several studies noting peaks around key moments like elections (dRPC, 2025) or specific policy debates and events (Ricard et al., 2025). However, women also experience everyday sexism, patronising othering and microaggressions, as well as dismissals of their experiences of violence (Harmer and Southern, 2021).

In 2024, 29% of women across European municipalities who reported experiencing violence suffered cyberviolence, leading many to quit social media or keep silent during election periods (Coessens, 2024). Across Southeast Asia, 60% of women parliamentarians reported experiencing online attacks in 2022 (Hurriyah, 2025). In the United Kingdom (UK), 39% of MPs (both men and women) felt unsafe, primarily due to online abuse (Speaker's Conference, 2025). In New Zealand, 96% of surveyed MPs reported in 2022 that they had experienced online harassment. Women MPs reported sexualised comments as well as threats to their families. Eighty percent reported that their families and staff are fearful because of these experiences, increased from 20% eight years earlier (Every-Palmer et al., 2024). Even women outside of politics consider whether to participate politically online, due to the fear of harassment (Southern, 2024).

The widespread nature of gendered violence has for many years normalised its presence in politics. In Uganda, 95% of women candidates believe that violence is part of doing politics, while 90% of them have experienced either physical or psychological violence (including online) (Gichohi et al., 2025). However, increasingly global campaigns and programmes such as '#NotTheCost' by the National Democratic Institute (2021) have been challenging this normalisation.

Gendered violence online as a form of violence facilitated by technology has been a growing concern for more than a decade. Already in 2016, IPU (2016) made the case for national assemblies and elected representative bodies to tackle online harassment, based on studies from Australia, the United States (US) and the UK. Similarly, UN Women spotlighted the rise of psychological violence against women online during elections in 2017 (Ballington and Bardall, 2017). In 2019, the National Democratic Institute documented online violence against women politicians in Kenya, Indonesia and Colombia, including reputational risks and physical threats, based on a political lexicon in each of the countries' dominant language, be it Baha or Swahili (Zeiter et al., 2019). Some examples of TFGBV from around the world are showcased in Box 1.

Box 1 Examples of online violence against women in politics

In 2022–2023, Congresswoman Sigrid Bazán of **Peru** was the target of a smear campaign on Facebook alleging she led a luxurious lifestyle that she financed with deaths of protesters in the street. The attack was accompanied by sexualised images of the congresswoman (#ShePersisted and Fundación Multitudes, 2023).

In **Zimbabwe**, women leaders in national and local politics experience sexualised attacks on their Facebook and Twitter accounts (Nehanda Centre for Gender and Cultural Studies, 2023). There have also been less well-known incidents of hackers taking over politicians' accounts and impersonating women politicians, scamming supporters through calls to donate funds.

In **Brazil**, political allegiance to former President Jair Bolsonaro was a key motivator behind attacks against Congresswoman Maria do Rosário. Building on Bolsonaro's statement that she was not worth being raped, do Rosário faced a deluge of attacks by his supporters, including many falsehoods she chose to fact check on her website (Ricard et al., 2025; Wilfore, 2025: 53).

Michelle Obama, former First Lady of the **US**, and Brigitte Macron, the current First Lady of **France**, are two prominent examples of women facing online disinformation campaigns that have falsely claimed they are transgender. Jankowicz et al. (2021) explain that these attacks mobilise widespread transphobia and attack these women's trustworthiness by tapping into stereotypes of trans people being deceptive.

Since the mid-2010s, the impact of TFGBV has been well established. It has a significant impact on the political and personal lives of women already in politics. In addition to impacting women's behaviour online, many politicians suffer stress and anxiety and have developed related physical illnesses (Ricard et al., 2025). The Apolitical Foundation (2023) found that 41% of politicians surveyed (men and women) have low or very low mental well-being; yet, politicians are often unable to access or afford mental health support, especially when it is a social taboo. Moreover, responding to and coping with TFGBV adds emotional labour for women and requires them to use time and resources to stay safe that men do not require. This puts them at a systemic and structural disadvantage (Koch et al., 2025).

Online violence also impacts politicians' families and social networks. Women politicians frequently report attacks against their children, who are bullied or even threatened with rape or death. As will be discussed further in Section 4.2, women outside of politics are also affected as observers of the violence, shaping their decisions to participate, while other 'bystanders' grow to accept and normalise gendered violence in and out of politics. Overall, political parties, states and societies at large lose the diversity of skills and talent that women bring into politics (Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2016) and rights, freedoms and protections for all are weakened because of offline and online violence.

Growing evidence has, however, not resulted in any decisive responses from politicians and decision-makers (Jankowicz et al., 2021). Most governments have been haphazard in curbing the power and operations of technology companies, which enable the various manifestations of TFGBV. These companies create applications to generate nude and sexual images of women without their consent, and/or fail to enforce their own community rules of conduct and moderation that are meant to prevent harm (Schaaake, 2024; Amnesty International, 2025; Bates, 2025). Instead of operating under safety and equality by design principles, these companies operate on economic models that profit from hate

and outrage, and algorithms and large language models that are trained on racist and misogynist data (Akiwowo, 2022; Diepeveen, 2022; Di Meco, 2023; Schlachmuislder and Bonilla, 2025).¹ Even in cases where large language models are trained to identify and remove hateful content, or moderators are employed to do so, reports from several African countries and India indicate that individuals who conduct these reviews of harmful or misogynist content experience secondary harm (Booth, 2024; Behal, 2026).

This technology has fostered the growth of the manosphere – online communities and networks that engage in various forms of misogynist behaviours and promote content that is harmful to women as well as some men and gender diverse people (UN Women, 2025a, 2025b). The manosphere is closely linked with other harmful online and offline communities, including anti-immigrant, pro-natalist, white supremacist groups that contribute to the dismantling of rights-based democratic protections (Miller-Idriss, 2025).

Due to fast-evolving technologies, including AI, considerable gaps in knowledge of TFGBV in politics remain despite this sustained interest (Apolitical Foundation, 2024; Lazard et al., 2025). This is especially the case in countries from the Majority World (Sheikh and Rogers, 2024; Koch et al., 2025).²

Over the last several years, states have started to adopt legal and policy initiatives to regulate online spaces and to curb TFGBV. These include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, the UK and Zimbabwe, among others (Jankowicz et al., 2024; UN Secretary General, 2024). Regulatory actors, such as the Australian e-Safety Commissioner's Office or the UK's Ofcom, are increasingly trying to hold tech companies to account, while also providing guidance, research and support to victims-survivors (An et al., 2025; Ofcom, 2025; UN Women and SVRI, 2025). Yet, the implementation of the new laws has proven difficult, and the tangible impact of these efforts are yet to be seen.

Multilateral initiatives under the auspices of the UN, such as the Global Digital Compact, have also brought to the fore the importance of addressing TFGBV, including by increasing technology access and women's participation and leadership in tech (UN Women, 2024). The UN Cybercrime Convention of 2024, for instance, brings a gender perspective to various crimes, such as non-consensual sharing of intimate images (de Silva de Alwis, 2025). In 2024, the UN Secretary General (2024) issued a call to action on eliminating TFGBV, drawing attention to women in the public sphere (e.g. politicians, journalists and activists) and women discriminated against on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or race as bearing the brunt of this violence. The Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, launched in 2021, brought together dozens of states committed to investing in research and action to prevent and respond to TFGBV (Jankowicz et al., 2024: 6). Across the initiatives, experts and policy-makers alike highlight the need for multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder approaches, from governments through to the private sector and civil society. Therefore, the focus of this report on political parties represents only one piece of the puzzle.

The focus on political parties is salient because politicians have been slow to transform institutions where TFGBV occurs locally, nationally and regionally. Only in 2015 did the Canadian House of Commons become the first lower house to adopt a code of conduct on sexual harassment between

¹ Equality by design principles require tech companies to release and operate products that ensure safety and equality for their users before they are put on the market, rather than products and services that respond to or mitigate harm once it occurs. It puts the responsibility on companies rather than users and pushes them to do risk assessments and include safety controls (UN Women and SVRI, 2025). An example of a framework to enable such design principles is by Women at the Table. It integrates human rights throughout the AI life cycle, from objective setting to post-implementation monitoring (Kallina et al., 2024).

² 'Majority World' is a term increasingly used by scholars and activists to categorise countries around the world in ways that challenge western-centric framings. It is employed to refer to nations that have historically been exploited through colonisation, similarly to the term 'the Global South'. In using this term, the author acknowledges current debates that question whether generalising and binary frameworks are productive for reconstituting and challenging global power relations.

MPs (Raney and Collier, 2022). In 2017, the European Parliament (EP) started to adopt structural and procedural changes to address harassment and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), to become a more inclusive and safer employer (Berthet and Kantola, 2021). These changes came in response to feminist activism in and outside of the EP, especially the #MeToo movement, which brought sexual harassment experienced by EP staff and politicians to the fore.

2.1 Gender norms and TFGBV

Gendered political violence against women, including TFGBV, is built on unequal gender norms, which are ubiquitous to politics. Women and LGBTQI+ people who do not meet the gendered societal expectations that associate public office and political leadership with men and masculinities are at a disadvantage when running for or holding political office (Childs and Palmieri, 2023). Wilfore (2025) identifies four broad themes of gendered online violence where harmful norms and stereotypes are used against women. These are tied to women's competence, trustworthiness, emotional control, and socially acceptable behaviours. Similarly, research by Data-Pop Alliance and dRPC identifies six categories of TFGBV that emerged from their analysis of Telegram and X posts. These are summarised in Box 2.

Box 2 Typology of online attacks against women in politics

1. Identity-based attacks tied to women's ethnicity, nationality, class, disability or age.
2. Gender stereotype-based attacks, such as sexist clichés, criticism of individual women's mothering and personal relationships, or sex-related practices such as 'slut shaming'.
3. Attacks based on women's appearance, bodies, clothing, speech and behaviour, including accusations of women being too emotional, aggressive or hysterical.
4. Attacks on women's moral judgement, such as accusations of them being corrupt or not morally fit for office.
5. Attacks on women's competence and capacity, tied to perceptions of intelligence, experience or qualifications.
6. Attacks on policies and political and ideological alignments, often tied to political party affiliation, and stances on feminism, anti-racism, abortion or other political ideologies.

Source: Ricard et al. (2025: 18) and dRPC (2025: 18).

As Box 2 shows, women are often accused of being incompetent despite studies showing that women politicians are often more qualified than men (Besley et al., 2017; Hubner and Coker, 2026; Krook 2026). Women politicians are also accused of 'sleeping their way to the top' or otherwise gaining their positions without merit; judgements on their appearances or way of dressing feature prominently, making online violence sexualised and tied to their bodies. Similarly, normative expectations of women as primary carers and mother means that younger women are dismissed if unmarried or childless, as they are seen as lacking experience or male guidance, while mothers are attacked for failing in their duties towards their families and therefore breaching socially accepted behaviours (Michalko, 2023). The fact that men in most societies do not face these parental expectations and are not attacked on this basis makes this form of online violence gendered.

Social media narratives about women in politics, as well as reporting by traditional media, therefore, play a key role in perpetuating harmful stereotypes and norms. Some experimental studies establish a link between media representations that objectify and dehumanise women – for example, through sexualised images and social media posts – and people's negative perceptions of women's credibility or intellect, or people's support for pro-gender equality policies (e.g. Funk and Coker, 2016; Gothreau et al., 2024). While more research is needed in this area, these studies affirm the concern about

the negative impact that gendered disinformation, online smear campaigns and other forms of TFGBV mobilising gender norms and stereotypes will have on women's political representation and democracy.

Gender norms are also woven into the operations and practices of political institutions, such as parties and parliaments; these can be both formally codified in their rules or informally enforced and practised (Kenny and Verge, 2016). The fight of women parliamentarians in Japan and the first woman Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, to install more women's toilets in the Japanese Parliament is one of the most obvious examples that shows how political institutions were not set up for women's equal participation but have been operating on the assumption that men represent the ideal type of a politician (Ng, 2026). Similarly, the societal expectation and pressure for women to be primary carers can clash with the modus operandi of political life, such as late-night sessions of parliaments, which do not accommodate for many women's roles and responsibilities outside of politics (Erikson and Joseffson, 2022). These gender norms that operate internally within political parties, together with the norms mobilised in TFGBV, are the focus of this study, which also situates them within the broader socio-political environment in which they operate.



Former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, at a news conference with the European Commission President in Brussels, Belgium. Arden left politics and set up the Empathetic Leadership Fellowship at Harvard, which aims to transform norms of political leadership. 2019 © Alexandros Michailidis | Shutterstock

3 Methodology

The research aims to identify how political parties can better respond to TFGBV, based on the insights of experts and practitioners who work with parties and who seek to implement good practices in contexts of competing political priorities and various constraints. These experts include analysts, consultants and programme managers who provide training to politicians and political parties, design toolkits or run programmes for politicians with a focus on gender equality. These practitioners have unique perspectives on solutions to TFGBV for political parties that sit alongside other necessary responses targeting technology and social media companies or the legal and justice systems. The research thus supplements the existing studies that capture the experiences of women in politics and other people who are marginalised based on their identities and roles in public life.

The data stems from 22 key informant interviews (KIs) with professionals selected from the author's network and the KIs' publications, as well as through referrals by other experts and professionals. The informants work in diverse geographical and political settings, including some that have been experiencing a worrying weakening of rights and freedoms and are classified as occupying a grey zone between democracies and autocracies by the V-Dem Index (Nord et al., 2025: 14). One included an electoral autocracy. The importance and relevance of political parties vary across these political systems and it is this variance of contexts that is of interest for this study.

Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of KIs across regions based on interviewees' expertise and focus. While some participants focus on one country only, others work across regions and worldwide. Throughout the report, KIs are referred to by their regional focus. This is to protect informants' confidentiality, as their livelihoods and careers are tied to maintaining relationships of trust and confidentiality with politicians and political parties, and to allow them to critically assess their experiences.

Table 1 Geographical distribution of research participants

Region	Number of participants
Africa – East	2
Africa – West	3
America – Central and South	2
America – North	3
Asia – Southeast	1
Europe – East	3
Europe – East and West	2
Europe – West	1
Global	5
Total	22

The data collection took place between March and June 2025. The research design was reviewed by ODI Global's Research Ethics Committee. The interviews were transcribed and analysed with MaxQDA software, using an inductive approach based on key research questions and objectives. The interviews were supplemented by a non-systematic review of grey and academic literature.

3.1 Limitations

The research draws on a relatively small non-representative sample of respondents, the majority of whom come from countries of the Minority World. A similar imbalance in favour of established, western democracies is also reflected in the grey and academic literature on ways to transform political parties' norms. This literature, especially in political science, has tended to focus on harnessing good practices from established democracies based on the assumption that political parties are most institutionalised in these contexts.

Some of the findings on good practices relate to the prevention of GBV against women in politics rather than TFGBV or online violence specifically. This is because many expert practitioners interviewed find TFGBV to be a relatively new area for them and therefore their experience and expertise is informed by strategies on GBV in politics more broadly. The findings and recommendations presented in the report are neither exhaustive nor universal, and they may not be able to address some of the unique features of TFGBV that differentiates it from GBV, such as the scale of reach facilitated by social media platforms and algorithmic amplification. As Ricard et al. (2025) suggest in the case of political parties in Brazil, some 'analogue' solutions might be insufficient for the digital era. Therefore, strategies and approaches suggest general trends and themes that should be explored and situated within country and party contexts, as well as specific time periods.



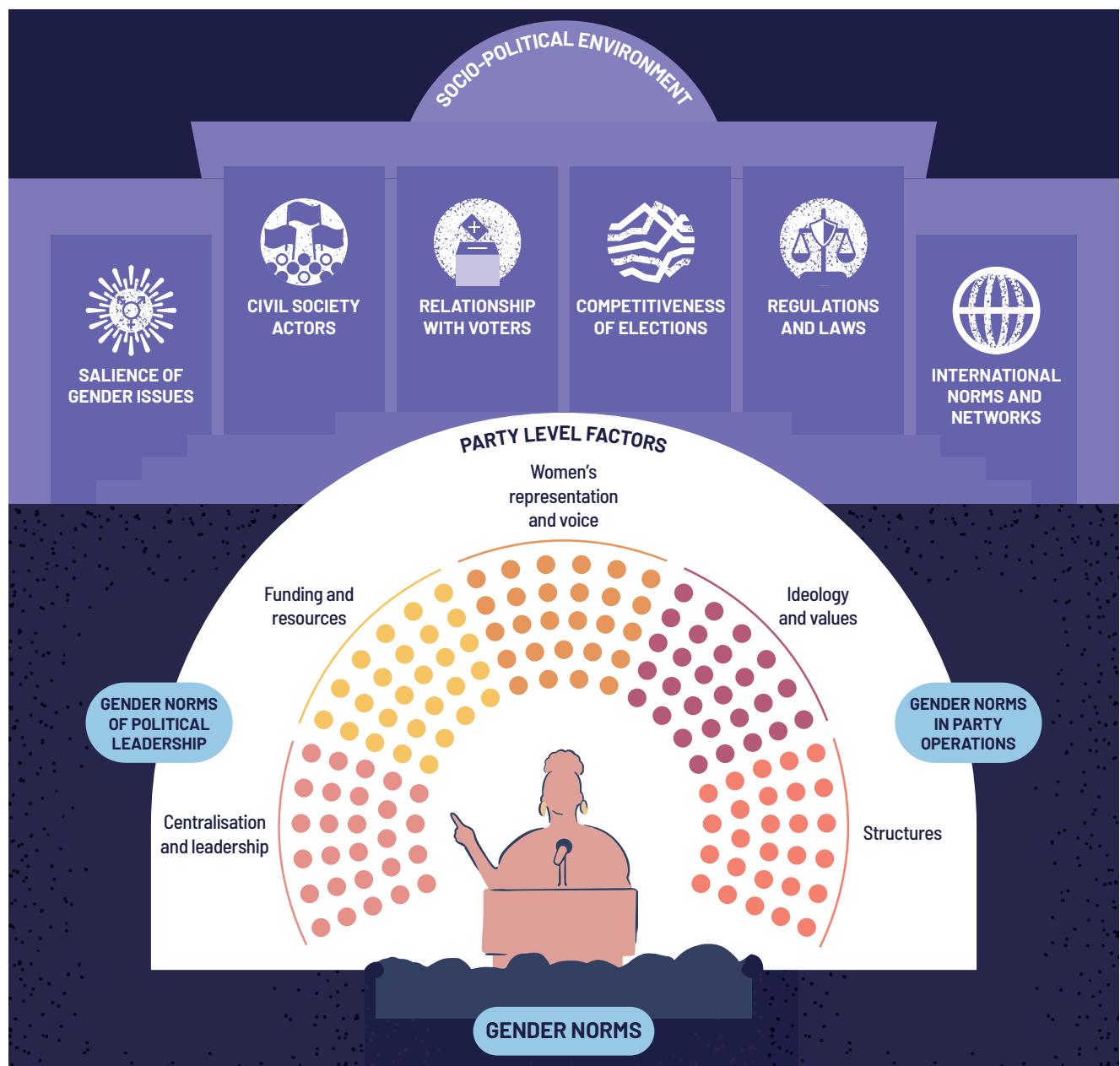
Flags of murdered Brazilian politician, Marielle Franco, waved during the Rio de Janeiro Carnival. Brazil, 2019.

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4 Factors influencing party responses to TFGBV

The probability, effectiveness and feasibility of political party responses to TFGBV are influenced by a diverse set of interrelated factors. Some are internal to the parties, such as their rules, reporting structures and centralisation of leadership, while others are external, meaning they are part of the socio-political environment in which parties operate, including types of electoral systems (Poguntke et al., 2016). All these factors are situated within and shaped by gender norms. Collectively, these three groups of factors – (1) gender norms, (2) the external socio-political environment and (3) internal party factors (see Figure 1) – can create incentives that either mobilise political will to act on TFGBV in politics, or hinder meaningful action and therefore need to be reconsidered.

Figure 1 Factors influencing party responses to TFGBV



Source: author, based on research data. Credit: Illustration by Steven Dickie

The factors discussed in this section represent some of the frequently mentioned examples by expert practitioners and associated literature. Their many permutations show that there is no one universal blueprint of response to TFGBV that will automatically work for all parties. Instead, the findings point towards the need to conduct in-depth assessments to ascertain what actions are more likely to work for a given party at a specific moment in time.

4.1 Gender norms-based obstacles to addressing TFGBV

As mentioned in Section 2, gender norms are weaponised against women in politics to make politics hostile for women and undermine their representation and voice. When women's skills and competencies are dismissed or undermined, their legitimacy and authority as viable political leaders questioned, and their multiple and intersecting identities attacked, this reflects widespread and persistent societal expectations that a 'good' politician and leader implicitly means a man or someone who can perform masculine characteristics, traits and behaviours (Ehrlich and Riederer, 2025). As Figure 1 shows, gender norms of political leadership further interact with other internal party norms that have gendered impacts, including formal and informal practices around recruitment, decisions on which portfolios politicians are allocated, and the internal 'homosocial' networks and bonds among men politicians (Lowndes, 2020; Erikson and Verge, 2022; Erikson and Josefsson, 2022).

Masculine norms of political leadership: strength and aggression

Activism and the increased representation of women have started to shift masculine norms attached to political leadership. Feminine-coded traits such as empathy and skills fostering inclusion and listening are now more embedded in politics in some countries (Erikson and Josefsson, 2023; Van Der Pas et al., 2024). However, masculine-coded agentic behaviours and characteristics, such as strength, decisiveness and assertiveness, still dominate voters' expectations of politicians (Daddow and Hertner, 2021; Ahrens and Meier, 2024; Ehrlich and Riederer, 2025). These norms can be clearly observed in adversarial styles of political debates (Childs and Palmieri, 2023), as well as in aggressive and negative styles of campaigning.

Women experience a 'double bind' regarding expected behaviours in politics (Verge 2020; Hubner and Coker, 2026). As gender stereotypes in many countries associate women with warmth, care, motherhood, softness and submissiveness, women politicians are punished for appearing too strong and aggressive and for transgressing gender norms of femininity, while at the same time being expected to meet the expectations of being a strong leader. US presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris, for example, were often confronted with this narrative, while Michelle Obama was accused of being an angry black woman, which is a racist stereotype (Lahey, 2014). Women in far right parties, such as the former leader of the French National Rally party Marine Le Pen and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni straddle both strong, even authoritarian, masculine performances on the one hand and traditional femininities on the other, due to the socially conservative, anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQI+ and anti-immigration positions of their political parties (Geva, 2020; Di Silvestro and Venuti, 2021; Indelicato and Magalhães Lopes, 2024).

A research participant pointed out that the feminisation of weakness in opposition to masculinised aggression and strength applies also to gender diverse people. As they argued:

Within the party, it's not your gender identity, but your gender expression what makes a difference. So, femininity ... if you're a cis-woman or you're a gay man or you're whatever identity, femininity in politics is perceived as soft, as weak, and masculinity as aggressive. That means you can win. So masculine lesbians, but not only, also heterosexual cis women tend to masculinise their appearance to have a better performance within the party.

(KII Central and South America 1)

The prevalence of violent, strong and aggressive norms of leadership – often described as ‘masculinist’ – help to sustain the over-representation of men in politics. In men-dominated, masculine environments, men politicians may be reluctant to change norms that underpin TFGBV in their parties because such changes would reduce their privileged access to power (KII East Europe 2). At the same time, many do not see the root causes of TFGBV in masculine norms and would not be interested, for example, in training on the topic. One practitioner suggested:

When you invite somebody to take part in a training on toxic masculinity, for them, it's almost like a bit of an attack.³ There is a bit of this hidden or underlying message, 'But am I toxic?' And so nobody would actually say 'OK, I need to go to that training because perhaps I'm concerned.

(KII East and West Europe 2)

Other men politicians position themselves as benevolent protectors of their colleagues. While seemingly caring about violence that women experience, their need to keep women protected and safe undermines women's authority and legitimacy and can even limit their ability to deliver their mandate (KII Southeast Asia 1).

As a result of this style of politics and norms, many women politicians believe they cannot afford to be seen as weak or as a victim of online violence. This leads them to not report TFGBV internally within parties or to speak out about it in public (KIIs Global 4; North America 1). While offline gendered political violence, especially physical and sexual violence, is also under-reported, the perception of online violence as being ‘merely’ virtual adds to the impression that those politicians speaking out are weak (KII Southeast Asia 1). As a participant from East Africa put it:

Women leaders don't speak about TFGBV because it tarnishes their brand; tarnishes their strength ... Very many don't want to be associated with it, speak about it, they don't want to be used as an example. They tell us, 'You can use other people, but not my brand'.

(KII East Africa 2)

A study of Swedish media reporting on politicians who speak out on harassment shows that concerns of women politicians in East Africa expressed in this quote can be well founded. The study shows that politicians face a ‘penalty’ for frequently speaking out on the issue, not least because it tends to be portrayed in the media in a language that is contradictory to the gendered leadership traits of strength and resilience (Håkansson and Grahn, 2025).

Gender professionals also observed that some women engage in TFGBV themselves to demonstrate to voters that they can ‘engage in the boys’ game’ (KIIs West Africa 3; North America 1). As will be discussed in Section 5, parties are motivated to enable or tolerate TFGBV if it gives them competitive advantage.

³ ‘Toxic masculinity’ tends to refer to violent, dominating and overall harmful ways of being a man in a society (Flood, 2022).

There are various initiatives striving to transform political leadership norms, including Jacinda Ardern's (2025) Empathetic Leadership Fellowship at Harvard, which seeks to bring kindness and empathy as normative traits to leadership, based on her tenure in office. Organisations such as Future Elect, founded by former South African politician Lindiwe Mazibuko, and Mulheres Negras Decidem in Brazil seek to foster new generations of leaders who are able to collaborate with people with different views and ideas (Mazibuko et al., 2024).

Gendered norms in the inner life of a party

The historical dominance of men in public life has been facilitated by 'homosocial' bonds – connections among men politicians – and informal networks of men. These bonds operate on shared masculine norms and shape party life, from recruitment of members to nominations of candidates. The impact of these bonds is further influenced by the political and electoral system. Open party lists and nomination processes, for instance, can deepen women's dependency on party leadership and other selectors responsible for the candidate lists (KII Southeast Asia 1).

Moreover, norms also influence the perceptions of who 'fits' the profile of the party (who is an 'in-group' or 'out-group' member) and the preferences for politicians who are 'like' the others (men), which is often hidden behind seemingly gender-neutral rules such as those regarding experience (Kenny and Verge, 2016; Bjarnegård, 2018; Grahn and Thisell, 2025). As van Dijk (2023) has shown in the case of Dutch political parties, this can help incumbents and those who have 'earned their stripes' within a party, leading to gendered outcomes in representation. This is because women have been outsiders to these networks, bonds and institutions. Women can also be assigned portfolios and dockets with less visibility and perceived importance, including gender equality itself, which are perceived as 'soft' and therefore feminised and devalued (Krook, 2026).

The close-knit networks in politics are further strengthened by expectations of party loyalty and unity (Grahn and Thisell, 2025). Women and men are socialised in parties to demonstrate loyalty and unity for multiple reasons, such as to ensure group voting and a united front on a specific policy, or to protect the reputation of the party to ensure its continued electoral appeal and success.

As will be discussed further in Section 4.3, these informal norms in parties suppress the ability and desire for women to speak out against TFGBV. As one participant highlighted, someone who reports it is seen as 'a snitch' and not strong enough (KII East Africa 1). Other studies capture this behaviour. For example, Niklasson et al. (2025: 73) found that nearly half of Swedish politicians who did not blow the whistle on misconduct or other issues in their parties avoided doing so out of concern over personal repercussions; a quarter chose not to report out of 'fear of appearing disloyal'.

Silencing, however, contributes to the vicious cycle of TFGBV, as transparent investigations could contribute to public support for party action against online violence. A study of Canadian municipal elections in 2022 found relatively high voter support for some type of punishment of councillors accused of sexual harassment. This support, especially from men, increases if a formal investigation into sexual harassment finds misconduct (Raney et al., 2024). In their absence, the severity of any expected punishment – be it a verbal apology or removal from office – changes.

However, culture and norms in political institutions can be transformed and some men and women in positions of power are working towards establishing more equitable institutions (Michalko and Maycock, 2024). One such example is the Welsh Assembly, or Senedd, which has had more than 40% of women members since its creation and has adopted many family- and women-friendly policies (Jones et al., 2009; Hibbs, 2022). The Senedd, according to one participant, has developed a culture where women speak out about the online violence they experience (KII Global 5).

4.2 Societal debates, political systems and global influences

The factors that create the social and institutional environment of parties are summarised in Figure 2. They are interlinked rather than separate.

Figure 2 External socio-political factors shaping party responses to TFGBV



Credit: Illustration by Steven Dickie

Salience of gender issues and civil society actors

The participants reported the role of societal pressures on parties to either address or ignore TFGBV. This is partially influenced by civil society actors, who, in addition to collecting data and doing research on gendered political violence (KII Southeast Asia 1), do direct advocacy with the parties and indirectly influence voters' awareness of the issue and gender equality more broadly.

In many instances, political parties respond to TFGBV when there is a high-profile incident and feminist CSOs or activists mobilise online, which results in media attention and public discourse (KII West Africa 1; East Europe 3). It was the #MeToo movement, for example, that led to the extension of sexual harassment protections to all federal employees in Canada, including those in the House of Commons (Berthet and Kantola, 2021; Raney and Collier, 2022). Similarly, the Jo Cox Civility Commission (2026), spearheaded by the Jo Cox Foundation in the UK, mobilised parties to action by outlining steps to make politics safer and soliciting pledges and commitments. It warrants noting, however, that some women in politics choose not to speak out about their experiences of TFGBV out of a sense of responsibility to other women who are considering joining politics. As one participant noted, acutely aware of the chilling effect that such violence has, some women politicians committed to increasing women's representation may be cautious in their public narratives around the issue (KII Global 5).

CSOs and country-level UN bodies provide training and funding on the issue of online violence. These include safety and campaign training, among others (KII West Africa 1; East Africa 2). CSOs also conduct research on the issue for better advocacy and organise round tables for discussions. They produce toolkits and assessments to help parties identify and address GBV and unequal gender norms and practices (see Michalko and Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez (2026)). These include #ShePersisted, HateAid, Areto Labs, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, UN Women, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Association for Progressive

Communications and others. However, the mere availability of these guides does not automatically lead to their practical implementation (Palmieri and Ballington, 2023).

In some countries, violence against women can be a uniting factor across party lines (KII North America 1). Unlike other issues, such as reproductive rights, which are polarising across the party spectrum, violence can be an issue on which women unite. However, in contexts of high polarisation, party allegiances and political divides may trump women's ability and desire to collaborate despite the shared experience of political violence (KII West Africa 3).

Anti-gender mobilisations have the opposite effect. These mobilisations represent a loose, globally networked coalition of diverse actors, from conservative religious organisations, to think tanks, and the manosphere. Together, they seek to stop the advancement and expansion of gender equality, especially the rights of LGBTQI+ people, and the reproductive rights and bodily autonomy of women and girls (Khan et al., 2023; McEwen and Narayanaswamy, 2023). The increased funding for these actors, as well as their access to politicians and parties, enhances their political influence and pressure to evade discussions of gender equality (Datta, 2025). As Miller-Idriss (2025) emphasises, with the example of Christian nationalists in the US, these anti-gender actors play a key role in violent extremism and normalising GBV. This can also encourage more politicians to play into misogynist rhetoric to gain voters who are animated by polarising narratives around equality, diversity and inclusion, or fear-mongering around gender ideology.

The salience of gender issues in some countries has led parties to use TFGBV as a tool for attacking opponents. As one respondent mentioned:

Even addressing violence against women in public is used as an instrument for their populist rhetoric. It's not to condemn violence as such, but to attack their political opponents, since they were better than them, we don't do this. It's just for the sake of creating this 'us versus them' rhetoric.

(KII East Europe 2)

The relevance of GBV for political parties is further shaped by socio-political issues that compete for parties' attention. For example, two participants observed that, in their countries, ethnic identities are more important in politics than gender equality. As a result, some parties do not prioritise their limited resources and capital to ensure women's representation (and addressing TFGBV among their members), as they do not perceive gaining votes from women on the basis of their gender as politically relevant. Instead, they focus on ethnic or religious appeals (KIIs East Africa 1; Global 5). Ultimately, these parties invest in finding, supporting and protecting candidates of certain ethno-religious or racial identities regardless of their gender.

Lastly, the private sector, and the tech corporate lobby in particular, was largely absent in the interviewees' analysis of actors directly influencing party responses to TFGBV. While the industry was frequently discussed in the context of regulations and legal changes required to curb TFGBV, it was less present as a stakeholder seeking to influence parties and their approaches to TFGBV, including against women in political parties. Due to the considerable corporate power in policy-making in many countries, it is essential that further research into this line of influencing is conducted.

Relationships with voters and electoral competition

Electoral competition incentivises politicians to respond to voters' views on gender debates and civil society pressures, which shape responses to TFGBV. Some experts observed that parties that are inclined to address TFGBV tend to be newer or smaller parties that try to set themselves apart from well-established, larger parties. They use (TF)GBV issues to carve out an electoral segment, grow their membership and attract voters, especially if it intersects with their party ideology. This approach can be of interest if voter loyalty to parties is less set, meaning that voters change parties between elections, as is, for example, the case for many post-communist democracies in Eastern Europe. Here, voters, as well as politicians and parties, have shifted over the last decades. However, positions on TFGBV can also be merely performative for the electoral period.

High levels of political competition may prevent women from speaking out against TFGBV. As one expert observed, attacks within parties often remain hidden from public scrutiny (KII Global 1). Thus, out of concern for reputational damage and its impact on electoral results, efforts to tackle TFGBV are suppressed.

Laws and regulations

Legislative and regulatory contexts have also shaped party responses. Experts mentioned gender quotas or other affirmative action policies, which influence how parties approach the role of women in politics. In some instances, these regulations can motivate parties to address GBV, to incentivise women to join the party or run for office as their candidates. This is especially important for new or less established parties. Quotas, if well designed, can also contribute towards establishing a critical mass of women to demand internal changes, although this impact of quotas is not automatic and often relies on the presence of critical actors – men and women – who seek party transformation (Krook, 2026). Secondly, legislation on TFGBV, such as in Mexico (Hernández Oropa et al., 2024), or on political violence against women, such as in Bolivia, can also make the issue more salient for political parties (Phillips and George, 2023; UN Women and SVRI, 2025).

Legislation also regulates parties' funding, which affects the resources parties can devote to addressing TFGBV. Parties can receive state funding but also rely on membership dues, which is increasingly challenging due to declining membership numbers and new forms of party engagement (Poguntke et al., 2016; Gauja et al., 2025).

Political parties also act in conjunction with other political actors and state agencies that are mandated by law to address gender equality in politics, such as parliaments and rights or equality commissions. In Western Europe, in particular, participants reported that parliaments provide support to many women in politics. Some provide additional security or have changed institutional procedures so that MPs can use their parliamentary paid staff's time to manage their social media accounts (Bergia and Weinberg, 2026). The improved role of parliaments in GBV prevention and response reflects the long-term advocacy for assemblies to become gender sensitive (Childs and Palmieri, 2023), with support from organisations such as the IPU and the OSCE. For example, the UK Parliament adopted an independent complaints scheme in 2018, which includes an independent reporting helpline (Raney and Collier, 2022).

In several countries, electoral commissions have led the efforts (in collaboration with civil society) to prevent violence against women, especially during campaign and election periods. For example, prior to the 2023 elections in Liberia, the electoral commission, with partners, fostered the cross-party Farmington Declaration to reduce violence in politics, highlighting its specific effect on women (UN in Liberia, 2023). Similar initiatives took place in Nigeria, where the Independent National Electoral Commission has adopted a gender policy (dRPC, 2025). These efforts ought to

be accompanied with relevant and resourced monitoring during elections, as was the case with the Women's Situation Room in Liberia and Kenya, as well as follow up after the elections (Kimathi, 2025).

A smaller number of participants noted the changes in the police and the justice system over the last few years, which have positively contributed to supporting women politicians who have experienced TFGBV in some countries (KII West Europe 1; East Africa 1). In countries with the appropriate legal frameworks, these actors have been more frequently approached than, for example, social media companies or the parties (Palmieri and Ballington, 2023). However, the use of these pathways is curtailed by many factors, including the resources available to women politicians (KII West Africa 2) and the level of trust in the rule of law and the legal system.

International norms and networks

The integration of parties and their countries into global structures and multilateral institutions shapes the impact of international norms and laws as well as good practices regarding GBV. Several Eastern European respondents highlighted the role of European Union (EU) accession and the desire for parties, especially those in government, to signal alignment with the European gender agenda (KII East Europe 2).

However, these changes and commitments were seen with a dose of scepticism, as many parties seemed to be taking only performative measures rather than addressing deep-rooted issues in the parties, such as unequal gender norms and power relations. There is therefore a risk that top-down, international imposition of changes and regulations will not meaningfully transform practices and values. Similarly, some governments adopt gender equality policies to attract foreign donor funding, but fail to implement them to meaningfully transform power relations (Krook, 2026).

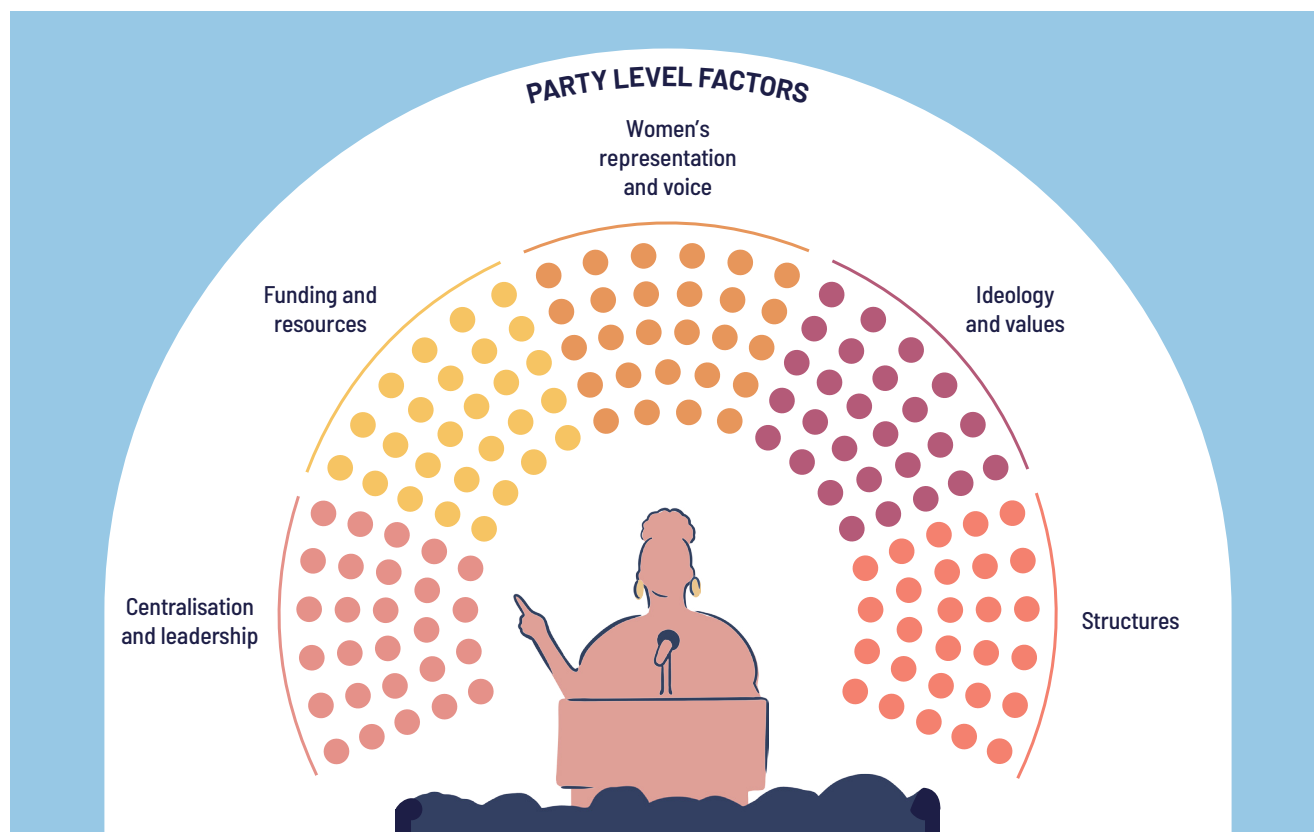
Other institutions mentioned by the research participants were the Council of Europe and its Istanbul Convention (the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence). These legal obligations create external pressures for pro-European and pro-western parties to promote gender equality, including addressing TFGBV.

Lastly, several respondents recognised the positive role of party networks, usually established based on shared ideology (KII East and West Europe 1 and 2). These networks or regional and global associations can help diffuse good practices and norms around TFGBV across country contexts. Other global bodies, such as the OSCE, also offer resources for parties to draw on, including funding for programmes and knowledge products for self-assessment.

4.3 Internal party considerations: structures, leadership and resourcing

The diverse historical evolutions of multi-party democracies have shaped the institutionalisation of political parties – the ways they are structured, financed, staffed and operationalised, and the amount of power and importance that is given to leaders, members or volunteers. Summarised in Figure 3, these party-related factors shape how parties deal with TFGBV, as well as other issues regarding ethics, conduct and operations. Similar to socio-political environmental factors, internal factors are interrelated and influence one another.

Figure 3 Party level factors affecting responses to TFGBV



Credit: Illustration by Steven Dickie

Structures

Lower levels of institutionalisation can weaken the ability of parties to enforce and mainstream codes of conduct and otherwise foster equitable culture and norms. This was raised especially by participants in Majority World countries with colonial histories, and in some Eastern European countries with recent transitions to democracy (Kills East Africa 1; East Europe 1). Parties in such political contexts may not have dues-paying memberships that would allow them to finance training or pay staff in charge of policy development. Others do not have a well-established network of regional and local branches to oversee the implementation of codes of conduct outside of the capitol.

The lack of consistent and meaningful implementation of codes of conduct was one of the key problems in addressing TFGBV, including the unwillingness of the parties to use 'harsh' forms of punishment against perpetrators, including expulsion. This can be difficult, as parties may have limited reach over politicians in office, as they do not have control over their mandates and cannot simply recall them (Raney and Collier, 2022). As one participant emphasised:

Parties put in these structures, but if they don't function? You might have a perfect statute, right? And then if you don't follow it – or not even necessary that you don't follow it – but it's made so loose that parties have a lot of escapes.

(KII East Europe 3).

Even in some mass membership parties in global minority countries, types of party affiliation are changing as membership declines (Poguntke et al., 2016). New forms of digital and online engagement are also changing how parties and their members (or sympathisers) understand their relationship. These technology-related changes, advanced especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, influence how rights and responsibilities of members and sympathisers are perceived, including in relation to codes of conduct (Gauja et al., 2025; Ziegler et al., 2025).

In under-resourced and less institutionalised parties, the dependence on external actors for support with (TF)GBV training and oversight is much higher. With the decimation of aid funding for gender equality programming and democratic strengthening, this technical support is bound to become scarcer and TFGBV in politics more difficult to address.

Ideology and values

Gender experts reflected on the difficulty in establishing the extent to which party ideology matters in addressing TFGBV. In many countries, practitioners said that parties that are either described as 'left' or 'liberal' tend to show more interest in TFGBV than 'right' or 'conservative' parties. This was explained by factors such as greater numerical representation of women, including in positions of leadership. Others noted that the political commitment to gender equality issues increases voters' expectations that parties will act both internally and externally on gender equality (KII East and West Europe 1). This is also confirmed in some studies, such as that by Andersson and Larue (2025) in Sweden, which found that policy programmes and ethics definitions are closely intertwined.

Another explanation could be the extent to which women on the left experience TFGBV. Studies, especially from the US and the UK, show that TFGBV has affected these women more, especially women from racial minorities, such as US representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar (KII North America 1; Jankowicz et al., 2021; Nee, 2023). Views on free speech are also intertwined with debates on TFGBV. While some politicians advocate for legal reforms, including social media and AI regulations, to address TFGBV, others resist such changes based on their political ideas about the freedom of speech (KII West Africa 1).⁴

However, left and liberal parties' greater interest in tackling TFGBV is far from universal. In some country contexts, experts argued that the entire political spectrum is skewed to the right (KII North America 3), while in other countries, the political programmes and policies do not follow social or economic policies that can be seen as left or right in the western, European conceptualisation (KII East Africa 1; West Africa 1). As one participant observed, some left parties can be 'arrogant' and feel they have gender equality figured out and do not engage in further explorations of how to address issues like TFGBV, which continue to evolve (KII Global 1).

⁴ Concerns over the impact of social media regulations on free speech or freedom of expression are raised by a broad range of actors. Some pro-democracy constituencies fear possible regulations because they have historically been abused by people in power to crack down on civic space and silence opposition – particularly in authoritarian contexts. Others frame regulation as a threat to silence and 'cancel' anti-progressive, feminist or queer critics. Yet, these same arguments are absent when anti-rights actors argue for laws that criminalise LGBTQI+ people, gender-equal educational content, or so-called 'LGBTQI+ propaganda' or 'promotion of gender ideology', as in Uganda, Russia and Hungary. However, the underlying fact remains that most democracies have never permitted absolute freedom of speech (Di Meco, 2023).

Women's representation and voice

Women's wings or similar internal organisations for women were often discussed as possible avenues to empower women in parties to advocate for and implement changes that address TFGBV. One successful example included parties in an Eastern European EU country, which invested in updating and strengthening women's wings with the support of CSOs and UN entities and which included TFGBV as part of their remit (KII East Europe 3).

Many studies stress the importance of women's organisations and groups in parties (e.g. Kantola, 2019; Verge, 2020). Representation matters not least because of the aforementioned differentiated, gendered impact of the violence and the perceptions of its severity and impact. As one study of 700 Danish politicians' views on online abuse found, men and women politicians across parties are averse to negative comments, but men politicians are generally less averse (Pedersen et al., 2025).

Yet, the mere presence of women's organisations does not automatically lead to positive changes in policies and practices, especially if they are sidelined, co-opted, divided or merely used for campaigning (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2026; KIIs East and West Europe 2; West Africa 1; Southeast Asia 1). The supportive role of (male) leadership, structures and other processes are therefore essential for women's empowered representation to come to fruition. As one participant said:

I think the difficulty with party internal structures, even something like women's wings, is that there is, even in the best case scenario, still a level of competition for power because you're in the same party structure and in the big majority of political parties, representation for women is still so limited and so fought over that this creates a big pressure on women to compete with each other rather than band together and fight for more space in total.

(KII Global 4)

An expert from East Africa witnessed this first hand, while working with a leading party in their country. They said:

One of the accusations that's being levelled, especially by young women entering into politics in the biggest political party, is that women within [the main party] act as gatekeepers. They don't want more women. Their claim is that they do not want more women in because it's going to lessen their pie.

(KII East Africa 1)

Similarly, most participants did not think that women-led parties are better at addressing TFGBV. This can potentially be explained by the fact that there are not enough women-led parties to assess patterns and by the prevalence of masculinist norms within the parties even if they are led by women. Some experts suggest that women-led parties shift the focus to a few elite women at the top, rather than all women throughout party structures. Participants mentioned cases in Mexico and Kenya, where parties nominated women as presidential and vice-presidential candidates, with a limited impact on the overall conduct of the party. One expert captured it clearly:

It has been very, very hard for women to try to do politics in a different way. I'm not sure if we have already had an achievement in that aspect because even if there are women, the logic and the structure [of the party] keep being very, very hierarchical and ... [we continue] in a traditional way of making politics not different.

(KII North America 3)

Lastly, the focus on strengthening women's representation in parties also puts the onus for change on women themselves, increasing their already high levels of gendered labour that men in politics often do not carry.

Centralisation and leadership

The power and centrality of party leaders is a facet of party institutionalisation. Some parties are single-purpose vehicles set up to fulfil the political ambition of one individual or a small group, including political family dynasties (KII East Europe 2, Southeast Asia 1). In many such cases, as well as others, leadership can be highly centralised and parties do not invest in building their infrastructure, including policies and codes of conduct, nor do they prioritise creating enabling conditions for members to succeed.

One participant shared their experience of running a workshop with a party where the dominance of the leaders meant that women politicians did not feel able to share their experiences, which they relayed to the expert in private:

This was our and my biggest challenge: when we would sit together with the larger group, with their party leaders, things seemed to be OK. Women didn't feel comfortable sharing how they actually felt, and then their party leader would be like, well, see, women feel fine. We don't really have to change anything, although we knew that was not the case.

(KII East Europe 2)

The focus on key figures is further intensified with political systems where individual candidates rather than parties are more important for winning in a constituency. Even in some proportional representation systems, however, personalities increasingly drive electoral success. As one participant observed:

I see a level of lethargy within political parties to invest in policies at all ... I somehow sense that political parties realise that it pays off more to invest in a leader, like in the public political presence of one leader, [rather] than to focus on developing a team or even developing a policy.

(KII East Europe 1)

Funding and resources

Many experts mentioned that insufficient resourcing, including staffing, can be a major obstacle to the effective operationalisation of codes of conduct, although many practitioners also argue that many transformative changes are not resource intensive. Parties may lack in-house staff capacities and skills to address TFGBV, including relevant data and awareness on the extent of TFGBV against women politicians.

Whether a party is in power (a ruling party) or an opposition party can shape the resources they can access. This includes the amount of funding available from the state, as discussed in Section 4.2, but also access to the media and exposure, which can drive membership and supporters. Government parties are also able to give out positions in the state bureaucracy to members.

Funding and resources are two elements that build relationships of dependency and loyalty within the party or between the party and elected representatives. These affect how much women feel they want to or can speak out on TFGBV. An analysis of 17 African legislatures found that women report

much more party discipline than men, leading them to speak less in debates (Clayton and Zetterberg, 2021). This silencing can happen even if there are internal structures for women's empowerment:

I don't even think that the women's organisations dare to open the subject, not to lose the little support that they have as finances and also as a possibility to negotiate some different positions in some state institutions for their members.

(KII East Europe 3)

Party funding policies and systems also shape how much parties become dependent on external benefactors, or what some experts called 'godfathers'. As women in many countries tend to have lower access to these social and business capital networks, their funding dependency on the parties and their leaders increases their tolerance for TFGBV or inability to speak out.

The ability to allocate resources internally also adds to dependency relationships within the party. Experts working in contexts with strong patronage networks and nepotism, as well as high competition among women (for example, for a small number of reserved seats), argued that parties may not have a genuine interest in creating a more inclusive environment for women politicians. Similarly, in countries where parties have not faced any repercussions for breaching the quota law, or for instances when their members have perpetrated GBV, parties are further disincentivised from transforming norms and practices.

5 Political party responses: from enabling TFGBV to transforming party norms

Based on the interplay of the factors discussed in Section 4, party actions in relation to TFGBV vary greatly and can be seen as a spectrum, from actions that enable TFGBV to thrive, to measures that seek to transform norms and embed gender equality and zero-tolerance for TFGBV (see Figure 4). While these are grouped into four broad categories or demonstrative types, parties adopt actions across the different categories concurrently.

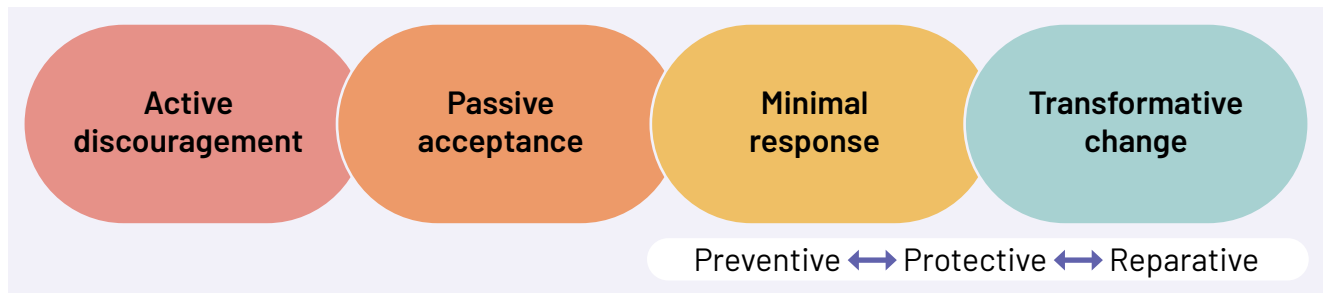
Party actions to tackle TFGBV can also be understood based on their relationship to acts of online violence, meaning that they can be either preventive (stopping TFGBV or its impact from happening), protective (in response to TFGBV as it is taking place) or reparative (in response after it occurred). Reparative measures in the form of financial compensation for the harm or damage done emerged rarely in the literature (CIR, 2024; OSCE ODIHR, 2024). They were not discussed in the interviews and are not very commonly explored. In the context of GBV responses writ large, reparative measures seek not only to prevent reoccurrence of violence, but also to reintegrate victims-survivors and otherwise rehabilitate or restore their lives (García Cores, 2020).



A voter checks for her name before going to a polling station during a local government election in Ibadan, Nigeria, 2024.

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Figure 4 TFGBV within political parties: a spectrum of responses



Type of response	Examples of party actions and behaviours
Active discouragement of addressing TFGBV	- Sustain culture in the party that considers women's speaking out as weakness. - Actively encourage secrecy to maintain public image and secure votes and create dependency among women for their political careers and funding. - Weaken position of women's organisations (e.g. just used to mobilise voters). - Support and actively participate in TFGBV against women in other parties and factions within their own party, including everyday 'benevolent misogyny' and microaggressions.
Passive acceptance of TFGBV	- Do not address TFGBV as part of violence against women agenda, seeing it as 'just' online or price of doing politics; focus on actions against 'offline' violence – especially sexual harassment. - Understand TFGBV as perpetuated by trolls or citizens and thus an issue of social media or AI regulation and outside of the scope of their action (nothing to see inside). - Tolerate forms of TFGBV, especially from members.
Minimal response to TFGBV	- Put in place women's party organisations but do not give them resources for action or integrate them into senior leadership and decision-making. - Adopt codes of conduct, including on social media use, but do not follow through with implementation and accountability; mostly issue statements of condemnation against prominent cases of TFGBV. - Support some women with paying for legal fees or providing security but only if the online violence has offline implications for safety. - Give training to women politicians to keep themselves safe. - Temporarily manage social media accounts of targeted women to reduce exposure to abuse and monitor threats. - Systematically track and report defamation campaigns or coordinated harassment.
Transformative change to address TFGBV	- Collaborate across parties for legislative and regulatory changes that adopt good practices. - Work with civil society, activists and academics to raise awareness of TFGBV against women in politics and design TFGBV responses. - Strengthen the work of other bodies, such as parliaments or electoral commissions, to oversee TFGBV. - Dedicate financial resource to train their staff, MPs and members across all levels, including candidates – making the training mandatory for all, including activists, youth wings and campaigners. - Run awareness-raising programmes within the party. - Develop processes with adequate staffing and competencies to enforce ethics expectations. - Conduct periodic audits and assessments of their policies, including periodic data collection on political violence, and put in place action plans.

Source: author, based on research data. Note: each category contains a non-exhaustive list of examples based on the practical experiences revealed in KIIs as well as grey literature.

It warrants emphasising that regardless of the party response, many women politicians exercise their agency and often look for solutions to their situation. Some withdraw from online platforms, avoid commentaries or otherwise change their online behaviours – for example, by handing management of their social media accounts to people they trust (KII North America 2; West Europe 1). Others form peer networks with other women in and across parties, which provide them with support and space to share strategies and experiences (KII East Europe 1; West Europe 1; North America 1 and 3). In still relatively rare instances, women politicians use AI and technology to keep themselves safe. For example, the application TrollWall can help filter harmful content on social media platforms which would not be possible by an individual politician or their team, due to the volume of the harmful content (Apolitical Foundation, 2024).⁵

Active discouragement of addressing TFGBV

A concerning aspect of TFGBV is that many perpetrators are politicians, who attack their colleagues and peers both directly and indirectly through proxies, both within their own parties and among competitors. Several participants reported that politicians, including women, hire young people, social media influencers or bot farms to attack their peers (KII East Africa 2; South and Central America 2; North America 3). One participant said:

Women politicians would rather hire... a man to be their social media manager to abuse other men who are abusing them on their accounts. That's the priority. We found many political candidates, both men and women, whoever they hired as their social media manager, was the one who was fighting the digital battles.

(KII East Africa 2)

Some parties recognise that there are other perpetrators or sources of TFGBV, such as members of the public or anonymous trolls deployed for coordinated disinformation campaigns and attacks to discredit their members (KII Global 1). However, focusing on actors outside their direct control can be an excuse for inaction towards their members. As a participant working across European countries said:

I think that [the responsibility to act] does lie within the political parties, especially if the violence is perpetuated by other members. If that's the case, then that lies within the organisation, within the party. But the problem of online violence as a whole is not specific to any one political party, right? That is actually a more societal issue, and, honestly, it's social media platforms who have designed their platforms in a way that is conducive to online violence.

(KII East and West Europe 2)

Passive acceptance

The most frequent response identified by experts was inaction and ignorance. TFGBV was either not discussed or dismissed as a non-priority issue for the parties and politicians. In some contexts, online violence is still not well understood, as one expert explained:

TFGBV is something that is still pretty new for everyone. I will say, it's like everyone was living it, but didn't realise that it was a type of violence. And I think they still don't realise it fully. I am really surprised actually, because now they're talking more and more about this topic, but still, they don't see that it's something urgent to address.

(KII Central and South America 2)

⁵ For other examples of technology-based solutions used by women in politics and other sectors, see UN Women and SVRI (2025).

Similarly, a participant from North America concurred, noting the lack of understanding of the gendered nature of political violence in their country:

There's a consciousness about political violence [among political parties], but I think it might not be analysed through a gender perspective, because it is not quite clear to people that women politicians that suffer gender-based violence in the political arena [do so] because they are women or in a logic of gender.

(KII North America 3)

In some instances, TFGBV is not even understood as violence by women politicians who are subjected to it. Many still accept it as part of political life. However, as more women are increasingly targeted and aware, the responses from parties and other actors can increase:

I think now TFGBV is seen as an issue, but it has taken high-profile cases, and it is happening so much that the parties realise it's a problem. It used to be so much 'Oh well, it's just online', but in tandem with the parties taking it more seriously, it does seem other institutions like the parliament and the police are taking it more seriously.

(KII West Europe 1)

These experiences of gender professionals echo findings of survey- and interview-based studies with women in politics who often report being abandoned and without sufficient support from their parties, including in Brazil, Germany, Nigeria and the UK (dRPC, 2025; HateAid, 2025; Ricard et al., 2025; Speaker's Conference, 2025). This is especially true for women in local politics, such as councilwomen, who can be far removed from the centres of power.

Minimal response

Many party actions are symbolic, such as statements from party leaders that recognise TFGBV or support individual women politicians who experienced it (KIIs East Europe 1; Central and South America 2). These statements are important as signals to the public, party members and other parties that TFGBV should not be acceptable. Their impact, however, can be limited without wider societal discussion or citizenship education towards a more civil political discourse online (KIIs Global 4 and 5) and if not followed by actions:

In some political statements that are coming out from politicians we do hear some positions against that but not in terms of the actual documentation to be able to demonstrate that, or even taking actions against their partisans or against other political leaders who commit or who wrongfully take actions against women.

(KII West Africa 3)

Other actions include the provision of immediate support to victims-survivors after TFGBV has occurred or to help them stay safe. These actions focus on supporting individual women to keep themselves safe or to respond to TFGBV if it occurs (KII North America 1). This includes the training mentioned in Section 4.2, which is most often delivered with or by CSOs. However, as one of the participants, who was herself a target of TFGBV, said, 'while women can receive all kinds of training and support, there are some elements of the experience that you cannot be prepared for' (KII North America 2).

Several respondents, especially in Europe and Central and South America, highlighted cases of women who turned to their parties for help with security and legal action as they worked with the police and the criminal justice system after they had faced TFGBV (KII Global 1). However, these cases

were rare and mostly involved high-profile women in life-threatening circumstances. A recent survey of young members of Swiss political parties found that women in particular want their parties to do more, especially to provide advice on legal action (Höhmman et al., 2025). In cases where action is taken, the level of TFGBV has usually passed the threshold of what many women politicians perceive as the ‘cost of doing politics’; most violence below this threshold, they tend not to report.

Individual-focused solutions mirror some of the offline GBV prevention approaches, which rely on women to modify their behaviours to keep themselves safe. As one participant said:

Many people put the responsibility not to expose themselves to harm to women and not to the abusers or to the platforms where they’re being abused or the government, which is supposed to be accountable.

(KII East Africa 2)

While individual-focused solutions are recognised as helpful and required, many expert practitioners argued for more systemic and structural solutions which take the onus from individual women, including those that change the norms in parties and in society.

Transformative change

Experts commonly mentioned two types of actions in political parties that are seen as potentially transformative, meaning that they can address unequal power relations and norms and make parties more gender sensitive.⁶ The first of these are codes of conduct or ethics together with procedures and mechanisms to report and address TFGBV (CIR, 2024). Parties and other political institutions have commonly adopted codes of conduct to tackle issues such as corruption or other integrity matters, to reverse crises of trust among citizens (Andersson and Larue, 2025). However, they have also been deployed to address GBV and inequalities more broadly. Adopting codes of conduct as part of gender action plans can add to existing rules in parties and improve them over time (Verge, 2020; Raney and Collier, 2022). These can be accompanied by reinforcing measures such as training courses. However, as a practitioner highlighted, these depend on the political will and interest, because ‘there will always be something more important to them’ (KII East and West Europe 2).

The second proposed strategy is the collective organising and empowerment of women in parties, including through structures such as women’s wings (Childs and Palmieri, 2023). Increased power and voice are important for women to advocate for the adoption and implementation of codes of conduct, which can address GBV, including TFGBV. According to research participants, transformative changes with specific awareness of TFGBV have been relatively rare. However, as discussed in Section 4.3, strengthening internal structures for women’s empowerment puts the responsibility for driving change on women themselves, and is also dependent on the presence of other factors, such as political leadership and supporting mechanisms for reporting and accountability.

⁶ Based on the definition of gender-sensitive parliamentary groups, which are formed by parties, a gender-sensitive party ‘values and prioritizes gender equality as a social, economic, and political objective, and reorients and transforms its party culture, practice, and outputs towards those objectives, thereby contributing to an overall gender-sensitive parliament’ (Ahrens and Meiers, 2024: 5).

6 Conclusion

This report contributes to the growing field of research and practice on addressing TFGBV in politics by focusing on political parties. It spotlights parties' responsibility and opportunity to act to safeguard and promote gender equality in democratic politics in a context where many women politicians and other women in public life are too often expected to fend for themselves as they experience various forms of gendered political violence, offline and online. While still underestimated and underappreciated, the impacts of TFGBV extend beyond the silencing of individual women. Gendered political violence impacts women's professional and personal lives, but it also diminishes the quality and representativeness of party politics and democracies as a whole.

There is greater urgency to act because of the growing anti-gender and anti-democratic mobilisations that seek to roll back women's rights and proactively dismantle national and global rights-based systems. As social media and technology companies have avoided regulation and the role of AI in politics and society grows, all actors in the political ecosystem should do more on TFGBV in politics in their spheres of influence and control.

The report draws on the expertise of gender and politics professionals – Klls with 22 analysts, programme managers and consultants – across different geographies and political systems. Together with a review of various bodies of academic and grey literature, it identifies key factors that shape party responses in practice. By analysing the issue across country boundaries and world regions, the report captures the multiplicity of factors – both external and internal to political parties – that actors working on democratic strengthening ought to consider when designing programmes to address TFGBV and women's political empowerment.

The report shows the central role gender norms play in political parties and the entire socio-political environment in which they operate. Albeit changing in many parts of the world, the masculine political leadership expectations that privilege strength and aggression put women in a double bind, where speaking out on TFGBV puts them at risk of appearing weak and not being good enough for politics; yet, at the same time, they are often punished for being too strong and for not meeting gendered expectations of femininity. These norms are further entangled with other gendered norms within party structures, including homosocial bonds. Understanding gender norms in specific contexts and political institutions is therefore essential for any meaningful interventions to address TFGBV.

The report further underscores the complex interplay of factors that shape the diverse outcomes of party responses. The socio-political environment matters greatly, be it the salience of gender issues and polarisation in public discourse, the relationship and competition over voters, or national regulations and international norms that can push parties to prioritise equality, inclusion and (TF)GBV action. The experts recognise the essential role of civil society, parliaments and other actors in supporting parties' efforts. The dependence on these actors is both a call to action for parties to do more, as well as evidence for the benefit of donors funding CSOs and UN entities in efforts to strengthen democratic governance. Yet, even in an enabling environment, the internal power structures, leadership and resources can foster loyalty and dependency relationships that disincentivise reporting TFGBV or dampen the willingness to act.

Lastly, there is evidence of the normalisation of violence and the lack of political will to act. Inaction and tacit enabling are common responses among many political parties, as is active enabling of TFGBV by politicians and party members who use it against their peers. The report spotlights other actions on a 'responses spectrum', including those that support women, either individually once TFGBV occurs or in prevention. Codes of conduct and strengthening of women's position and power in parties are seen as potentially the most impactful ways to transform norms in parties and address

TFGBV. However, many practitioners draw on their experience with GBV more generally; more research and insights on what works to address TFGBV against women in politics are still needed.

This exploratory study has shown that in-depth, gender-sensitive understanding of the inner lives of parties, including norms, needs to be at the heart of any meaningful action. Solutions, especially those piloted in western democracies of the Minority World, can be sources of inspiration rather than blueprints. Parties and other democratic actors need to further develop analytical tools and gather evidence of the nature and impact of TFGBV specifically, which continues to change as technology develops. Further research should also explore the role and impact of other actors in the ecosystem, from party staff to newly emerging political parties in the Majority World.

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ALiGN is a digital platform and programme of work that supports a global community of researchers, practitioners and activists, all committed to gender justice and equality. It provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – patriarchal gender norms.

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