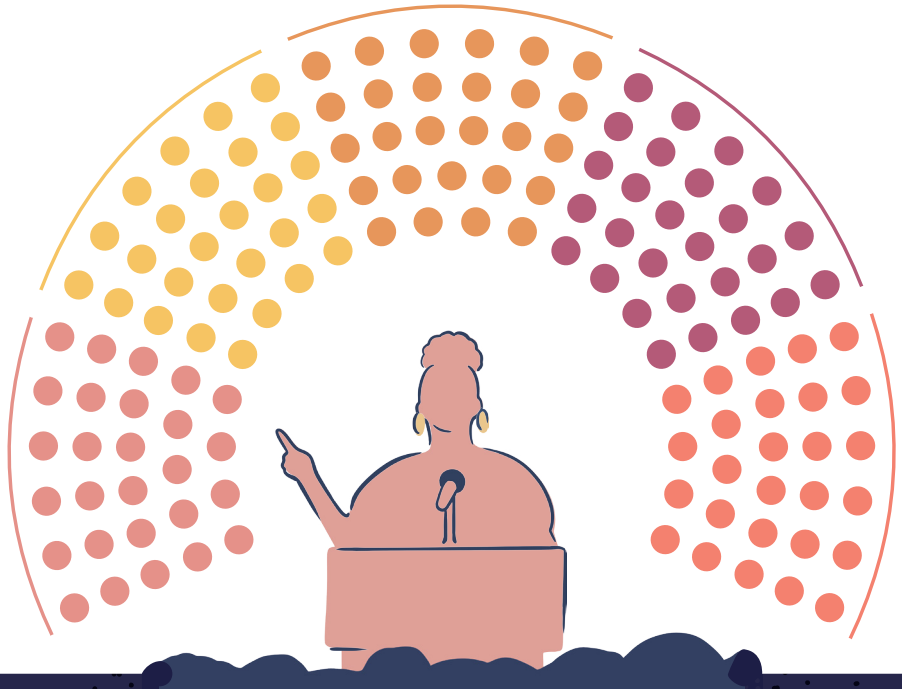
ALiGN | Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms

TOOLKIT

Online violence against women in politics

How to support political parties to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence



Ján Michalko and Diana Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez

April 2026

www.alignplatform.org

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the research participants for dedicating their time and sharing their insights, as well as the ALIGN partners, development Research and Project Center (dRPC) and Data-Pop Alliance, and the project advisory group, including Isata Kabia, Dr Juliana Restrepo Sanín and others, for their invaluable guidance and support.

Additional thanks go to our peer reviewer, Cecilia Makonyola, the ODI Global team, including Ayesha Khan, Caroline Harper, Emilie Tant and Emily Subden, and the production team, including editor Terese Jonsson, graphic designer Steven Dickie, typesetter Garth Stewart and proofreader Jane Lanigan.

About this publication

This toolkit is part of the ODI Global ALIGN project Political Parties' Responses to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV). It builds on research conducted in partnership with dRPC (2025) in Nigeria and Data-Pop Alliance (Ricard et al., 2025) in Brazil. It draws on a report by Michalko (2026) which analyses how gender norms, socio-political environment and party-level factors shape parties' responses to TFGBV. It translates these findings for gender professionals and others into a framework of analytical questions and reflection prompts that can support the design of programmes to address TFGBV.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AI	artificial intelligence
CSO	civil society organisation
EU	European Union
GBV	gender-based violence
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
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

Women around the world continue to be under-represented in politics due to structural and systemic barriers that prevent them from exercising their democratic rights (UN Secretary General, 2024). Globally, only 27% of elected members of parliaments (MPs) are women (IPU, 2026). Women are also under-represented in the executive, the judiciary, peace negotiations and multilateral institutions (UN Women, 2025; GWL Voices, 2026). Gendered political violence – offline and online – is one of the major obstacles to women meaningfully exercising their political power (Bardall et al., 2020). It often compels women to leave politics, silence their online engagement or avoid entering politics altogether. It impacts not only women's political careers, but their health and well-being, their families and their personal lives, and it has in extreme cases even contributed to politicians' deaths (Bergia and Weinberg, 2026).

Online violence and TFGBV

Online gendered violence: Type of violence enabled by technology, such as social media and messaging platforms.

TFGBV: While lacking a universally accepted definition, TFGBV commonly includes non-consensual sharing of sexual images, extortion and surveillance, among other phenomena (UN Secretary General, 2024). Some activists and scholars see gendered disinformation as a form of 'information warfare' and emphasise its broader political drivers and impacts, setting it apart from TFGBV (Martins, 2024; Wilfore,2025).

This toolkit uses 'online violence' and 'TFGBV' interchangeably for ease of reading, while recognising their differences.

The silencing and chilling effects of gendered political violence have reached new levels with the rise of social media, artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies (Koch et al., 2025). While technologies have the potential to aid women's political participation, they have also facilitated the emergence of new forms of gendered political violence, including through disinformation campaigns and doxxing (sharing of personal information) (Bates, 2025). Perpetrated by people in positions of political power, as well as by party volunteers, citizens, or trolls and bots in service of political actors, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) has intensified the speed and reach of existing forms of violence that weaponise unequal, patriarchal gender norms in society (Di Meco, 2023; Wilfore, 2025).

TFGBV should be a key concern for political parties – as democratic actors, they need to play a more central role in preventing and responding to TFGBV. This is especially so because TFGBV can be directly or indirectly perpetuated by political party members against their peers within their own party, as well as from rival parties, during electoral campaigning and everyday politicking. As anti-gender and other anti-democratic actors weaponise gender inequalities and the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people, addressing TFGBV in politics is essential for preserving democratic governance and human rights.

This toolkit offers a set of guiding questions and reflection prompts for gender and politics practitioners to identify which solutions and responses could be more effective and suitable for political parties in different contexts and with different ways of working.

Anti-gender actors

Anti-gender actors include civil society organisations (CSOs), think tanks, religious and faith-based institutions, political parties and others who are actively entrenching and expanding unequal gendered systems of power by dismantling human rights and protections for women, LGBTQI+ people and other marginalised people.

These actors, often with very diverse political and ideological positions, form a global, well-financed network that not only pushes back against feminist and LGBTQI+ gains since the 1990s, but also seeks to dismantle global rights-based democratic systems, using gender equality as the focal wedge issue. The resistance and opposition to gender equality, often tied to ethno-nationalist and religious agendas, vary in scale. That is why some actors are referred to as 'gender-restrictive', rather than 'anti-gender', meaning that their political agenda does not oppose all forms of gender equality efforts.

The questions are formulated based on the findings of the ALIGN report *Online violence against women in politics: what shapes political party responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?* (Michalko, 2026), which found that there are three sets of factors shaping parties' actions and responses to TFGBV: (1) gender norms, (2) the socio-political environment and (3) internal party practices.

The questions, split into key and additional detailed questions, are not exhaustive or all encompassing. They encourage users to consider issues that are identified in the literature on gender and political parties, especially feminist institutional analyses, and that emerged from interviews with 22 gender professionals and experts from around the world (Michalko, 2026). Through the reflections and analyses prompted by these questions, users will become better equipped to address the challenges and opportunities involved in responding to TFGBV. They will be able to more confidently design interventions with and for political parties, including assessing what types of interventions will be most appropriate, and when and how to implement them. . These responses and solutions should sit alongside systemic and structural changes that are needed to address TFGBV and that are outside the scope of any political party, including human rights-based AI and social media regulations (Akiwowo, 2022).

The toolkit includes references to select tools and guides primarily developed for political parties (see Annex 1). Some toolkits for other political institutions and actors, such as parliaments and individual politicians, are also included, because they provide valuable insights also relevant for political parties. While some toolkits focus on TFGBV, the majority focus on gender-based violence (GBV) as a whole. This toolkit is complementary to these existing resources, offering an additional set of considerations. Toolkits responding to TFGBV and GBV outside of politics are not included, but users may find them to be useful resources to further finetune their approaches.

There are no specific sources of information or methods to answer the questions presented in this toolkit. Nonetheless, the views and experiences of women and other marginalised groups of party members, politicians and affiliates must be included to ensure accuracy of the insights. This is especially important as race, sexuality, gender identity and age can put some women at additional risk of TFGBV.

In the context of limited resources and the need for effective implementation of programmes to address TFGBV and women's equal representation, it is essential for practitioners and others seeking to address TFGBV to consider factors outlined in this toolkit when deciding what solutions and responses are most likely to work.

The remainder of the toolkit is structured in three sections:

- **Section 2** outlines various types of party responses to TFGBV, which allows toolkit users to situate a party on a continuum based on its current practices. It highlights which toolkits can help with an in-depth assessment of the responses.
- **Section 3** breaks down the three sets of factors into guiding questions: (3.1) gender norms, (3.2) the socio-political environment and (3.3) internal party factors.
- **Section 4** offers a brief conclusion.

2 Responses to TFGBV: where does a political party fit?

Political parties' responses to TFGBV span several key areas of their work and operations, ranging from internal procedures to report TFGBV, sanctions for perpetrators and support mechanisms for victim-survivors, to codes of conduct that set normative standards and behaviour expectations for members, volunteers and other affiliates. The responses can therefore be preventive, protective or reparative. Depending on the depth and transformative potential of these actions, parties' actions can be indicatively placed along a spectrum, from those that actively discourage addressing TFGBV, to those that seek to transform unequal gender norms, strengthen women's voice and dismantle practices that valorise aggression or strength as markers of leadership (see Figure 1).

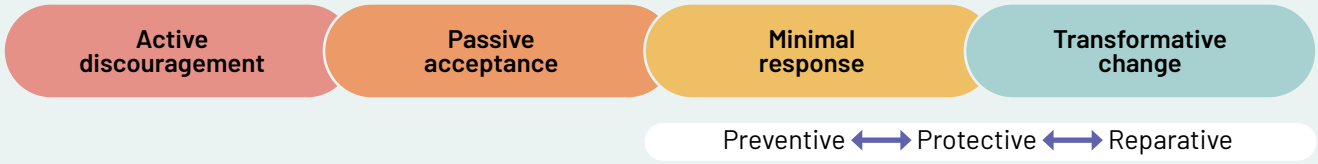
Many party responses, as outlined in Figure 1, are based on good practices of GBV prevention, including survivor-centric independent reporting mechanisms that protect survivors from having to confront perpetrators or their friends within the party and prevent re-victimisation. However, responses are not always tailored to the characteristics of TFGBV, such as the amplifying impact of algorithms which promote hateful content, or the blurred boundaries between the private and public life of women politicians that are often inherent to social media attacks. Due to the complex web of actors involved in TFGBV, and the role of AI and technology design and infrastructure, many parties' existing accountability mechanisms also fall short. They can be difficult to deploy to hold individuals responsible. Many responses then tend to put the onus on women politicians, either to keep themselves safe as individuals, or to collectively transform parties and other institutions in which they function. Both types of actions put additional expectations and labour on women and other marginalised groups that further deepen their systemic disadvantages compared to most men, especially those whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are aligned (i.e. cisgender men).

Party actions do not always fit neatly into one of the categories represented in Figure 1. Actions and practices can be conflicting or at different levels. For example, some parties may adopt codes of conduct that explicitly state a 'zero-tolerance' approach to TFGBV and which can have transformative potential for the party culture. At the same time, a party may create or encourage dependencies on, or loyalty to, party leadership for campaign funding or nominations, disincentivising victim-survivors of TFGBV from reporting incidents, in fear of professional repercussions. This can diminish the effectiveness of the policy in practice. Therefore, the categories in Figure 1 should be seen as theoretical models that can help to assess relative strengths and areas of improvement for each party.



Online gendered violence is often inflicted through political figures' social media accounts. © PJ McDonnell | Shutterstock

Figure 1 A political party response spectrum



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: Michalko (2026)

Additionally, the following questions can be used to assess political parties' commitment and mechanisms for implementation:

- Does the political party integrate gender equality principles and a zero-tolerance approach to violence in its guidelines? Do these guidelines explicitly include TFGBV in their discussion of gendered violence?
- How does the party socialise these principles internally? Does it have mechanisms to promote equitable gender norms within the party and does it take into account how these vary among diverse groups of women?
- Do members understand what is at stake if these principles are not realised?
- Does the party have mechanisms in place to raise awareness about GBV and TFGBV, including their varied impact on queer and minority women, at all levels in the party?
- When considering at-risk individuals, does the party consider online risks? When developing response mechanisms, do they account for gendered needs and how these vary among different groups of women?
- Does the party have clear mechanisms to respond to and sanction instances of TFGBV and GBV more broadly?
- Does the party conduct gender audits to evaluate the culture within the party and the way in which it engages with the broader political system? If so, do they explicitly consider TFGBV?
- Does the party have media guidelines, including for social media? Does it work with media organisations to promote gender-sensitive reporting and fact-checking of gendered misinformation?

By outlining established best practices and recommended actions, the following toolkits can further help situate political parties and their strategies (see Annex 1 for more information):

- ***Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region* – Tool 3**
  (OSCE ODIHR, 2022c)
- ***Violence against women in European politics: a comprehensive toolbox for political parties***
  (Mršo, 2025)
- ***Preventing violence against women in politics: benchmarks for political parties***
  (Political Party Peer Network, 2022)
- ***Win with women: building inclusive 21st century parties***
  (NDI, 2018)

The following section builds on this foundational analysis of party practices and outlines questions that can assist practitioners with further identifying what (additional) responses may be feasible for a party in a particular context and time.

3 From analysis to action: what to consider when working with parties on TFGBV

While many political parties have started to consider TFGBV in politics, the existing responses may not be directly transferable or feasible across contexts. Parties in young democracies, for instance, may be less formalised and lack structures and branches to ensure that codes of conduct are implemented beyond the party headquarters in the capitol. Others may have procedures and practices in place which make victims–survivors of TFGBV dependent on funding or nominations for key positions, making it difficult for women to report TFGBV perpetuated by their peers if they want to succeed in their political career.

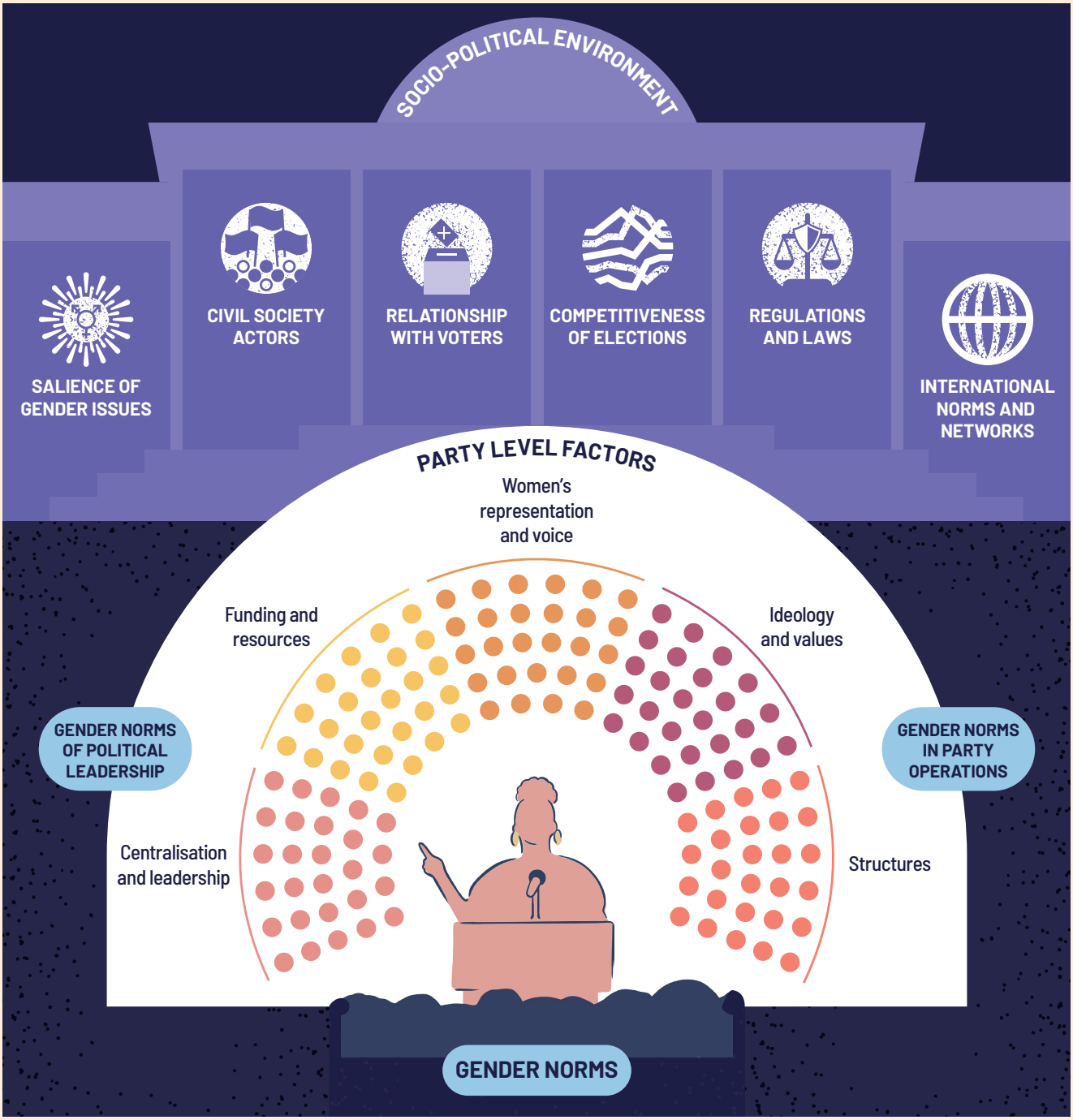
This section provides a set of guiding questions to help political parties reflect on how each of the three factors – (1) gender norms, (2) the socio-political environment and (3) internal party practices (see Figure 2) – can influence their response to TFGBV against women in politics.

These questions are non-exhaustive suggestions intended to help practitioners locate issues that ought to be considered prior to deciding what action parties could take or what issues need to be tackled simultaneously. For example, to evaluate if, when and how to implement a mandatory TFGBV training for all party members and party affiliates, it may be prudent to consider what norms and values are actively promoted within the party and by the party leadership, because they may undermine behaviours that the training seeks to instil.



Campaign posters outside a polling station in Lille during the first round of presidential elections. France, 2022.
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Figure 2 Factors that shape political parties' responses



Source: Michalko (2026) Credit: Illustration by Steven Dickie

3.1 Gender norms

Gender norms are ubiquitous in politics, interwoven in political parties (and other institutions) as well as in broader political systems (Lowndes, 2020; Erikson and Verge, 2022; Childs and Palmieri, 2023). Gender norms also intersect with other systems of power and privilege in any given society, such as race, religion, sexuality, age and ability. This means that women who are also part of other marginalised groups face the brunt of TFGBV (Jankowicz et al., 2021).

Perpetrators of TFGBV often weaponise gender norms attached to political leadership, which has historically been associated with traits and behaviours that are seen as masculine (Ehrlich and Riederer, 2025). Women and gender diverse people, unlike (cis)men, tend to be undermined and challenged, not seen as capable and competent leaders, as their skills and qualifications are questioned more frequently and harshly (Krook, 2026). Similarly, political agendas that are feminised or seen as 'soft', not least gender equality topics themselves, are also devalued and attacked. Political parties can therefore operate within the same patriarchal gender norms reflected in wider society, and they may directly or indirectly promote people who meet these normative gendered expectations, including those who perpetuate TFGBV or those who suffer through TFGBV as a sign of strength. They can operate in a culture that puts people who transgress these norms at a disadvantage, because they are not like the men who dominate political parties.

Table 1 outlines questions that can help assess whether a political party promotes unequal gender norms connected with TFGBV or ones that can be detrimental to TFGBV responses.

Table 1 Questions to prompt reflections on gender norms for political parties

Category	Key questions	Detailed questions
Gender norms of political leadership	Are stereotypically masculine-coded characteristics and traits promoted as signs of political leadership in the party?	• Does the party promote feminine-coded styles of political leadership, such as those based on empathy, collaboration, consensus, listening and inclusion? • Does the party recognise and value diverse forms of leadership exercised by women, including women of diverse racial and ethnic identities and ages? • Do party members engage in aggressive styles of politics and negative campaigns (attacking opponents rather than promoting positive messaging)? • Do party members and leaders venerate resilience and strength as a 'badge of honour'? • Does the party nominate, platform and promote to senior roles politicians who are seen as tough or assertive or similar? • Do women have to demonstrate their competence to party leadership more than men to be seen as legitimate political leaders? Does this vary across women from different groups? • Is women's authority questioned more often than men's? Does this vary across women from different groups?

Table 1 Questions to prompt reflections on gender norms for political parties (continued)

Category	Key questions	Detailed questions
Gender norms in party operations	Does the party demonstrate a gendered approach to party portfolios or issues?	• Are women only given portfolios or responsibilities related to agendas perceived as 'soft', such as social protection, social welfare, etc.? • Are these agendas defended when attacked online and offline? • Are they perceived as less valued or important than other topics? • Do women in the party hold these portfolios more often? • Are women nominated or appointed for leadership positions only in a time of crisis or political struggle?
	Are loyalty and a culture of silence embedded in the party?	• Does the party leadership discourage internal conflict and sanctions on people who speak out on matters like TFGBV? • Does the candidate selection system create further pressures for women, especially women from disadvantaged groups, to keep silent on TFGBV to secure a nomination? • Do party members feel concerned and worried that their careers will be negatively impacted if they are critical of their peers? Is this the same across diverse groups of women? • Do the party and its leaders implicitly or explicitly prioritise reputation control over addressing TFGBV?
	Does the party operate on homosocial bonds (connections and networks of men)?	• Does the party tend to recruit and promote politicians from informal networks tied to (cis)men politicians at the expense of women and other marginalised groups? • Does the party have gender and minority quotas or other affirmative action measures? • Does the party tend to nominate women for losing seats (constituencies) or unelectable posts in party lists? • To what extent are affirmative action measures implemented? • Do these measures contribute to changing perceptions of leadership capabilities of diverse groups of women within the party?

Toolkits that can assist in identifying gender norms within political parties include:

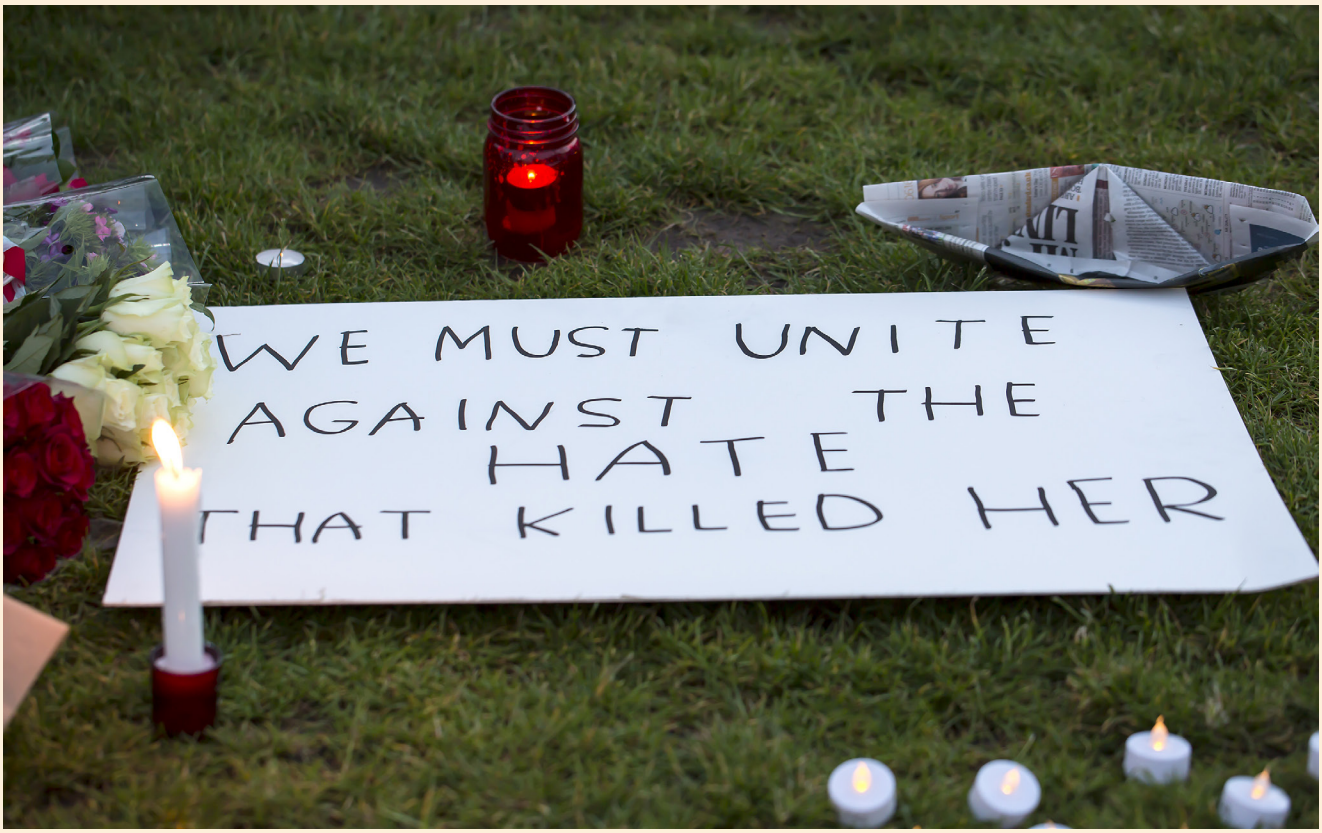
- ***Gender responsive governance toolkit* – Tool 2 (OSCE ODIHR, 2024).** This tool proposes a ten-step approach to gender auditing in three areas: representation, vision and policies, and organisational culture. It includes model questionnaires and action plans.
- ***Win with women: building inclusive 21st century parties* (NDI, 2018).** This is a step-by-step guide on how to conduct a gender assessment of political parties to understand existing gendered barriers and opportunities. It can be modified to solely assess TFGBV or to carry out a gender assessment that considers and captures GBV in all its forms.

3.2 Socio-political environment

Political parties do not function in a vacuum but are impacted by their socio-political environment (Poguntke et al., 2016). This includes the presence and activities of civil society, which shape public debate and policies, as was the case with the #MeToo movement (Berthet and Kantola, 2021).
The electoral system, party loyalty and funding landscapes can also play a role. For instance, while it may be desirable for political parties' leadership to speak out on TFGBV against their members and condemn a political culture that venerates aggression in politics overall, political leaders may not have the will or incentives to do so if they are afraid that they may lose voter and/or donor support. They may be influenced by highly polarised social debates about gender equality, often tied to white supremacist and anti-immigrant politics, as globally networked and well-funded anti-gender actors weaponise gender equality issues to undermine democratic politics and human rights for women, LGBTQI+ people and other minorities (Brechenmacher, 2024). If there are other issues that are more socially salient, such as issues of ethnic identity or inequalities caused by religious differences, issues of gender equality might be deprioritised.

The lack of will to act on TFGBV can also emerge in contexts where electoral competition is limited (such as two-party systems), which may not leave enough room for parties to use TFGBV as a policy agenda to distinguish themselves from other parties. Higher levels of competition and lower levels of party loyalty can influence parties' willingness to set themselves apart by addressing TFGBV internally and externally. Similarly, the rule of law or well-designed and enforced gender quota legislation can serve as enabling mechanisms for parties to address TFGBV, as they may want to support women candidates and politicians to stay in politics to comply with mandated quotas. Such legislation can also be mobilised by civil society or party members to demand action.

Table 2 outlines some questions that can help assess whether external socio-political factors can be used to support action against TFGBV or whether they act as an obstacle.



A candlelit vigil in London's Parliament Square for murdered MP, Jo Cox. UK, 2016 © Ms Jane Campbell | Shutterstock

Table 2 Questions to prompt reflections on external socio-political factors

Category	Key questions	Detailed questions
Salience of gender issues 	Are gender equality issues, and TFGBV in particular, important social and political topics?	• Have cases of TFGBV against women in politics, including queer and other minority women, mobilised public responses online and/or offline? • Do these mobilisations put pressure on parties to show that they view the issue as important? • Do they create a responsibility to act? • Are political parties using cases of TFGBV to attack each other and score political points? • Are other issues (such as racial or ethno-religious inequalities) seen by parties as more pressing priorities than gender equality?
Civil society and other actors 	What role do CSOs play in shaping parties' positions on TFGBV?	• Do anti-gender or gender-restrictive actors weaponise gender equality issues to polarise public debates? • Do these mobilisations put parties at risk when working on TFGBV? • Do they undermine potential allies among United Nations (UN) agencies or feminist CSOs? • Are there active feminist and human rights CSOs that mobilise and campaign to address TFGBV specifically or other gender equality issues more broadly? • Do CSOs speak out when women politicians are attacked in gendered ways, regardless of the ideology of the attacked? • Are there UN agencies (such as UN Women) and local CSOs that are able to provide expertise and support to address TFGBV? • What role does lobbying by tech companies and other private sector interests play in influencing a party position on TFGBV (and regulation in particular)?
Relationship with voters and competitiveness of elections  	Do electoral competition and voters' party loyalty allow tackling TFGBV to become a unique political platform for a party?	• What is the public opinion on TFGBV and gender equality issues and can it be mobilised to pressure parties to act against perpetrators of TFGBV? • Does party competition increase party loyalty (and reluctance to speak out on TFGBV) among women and LGBTQI+ members, through fear of electoral losses for the party? • Is the party trying to establish itself in a competitive field and can gender equality and TFGBV be used to develop its base? • Does the party sustain its position on TFGBV (and gender equality) beyond campaigns and elections?

Table 2 Questions to prompt reflections on external socio-political factors (continued)

Category	Key questions	Detailed questions
Regulations and laws 	How do laws on GBV and women's representation shape party action on TFGBV?	• Are there legal requisites for women's and other minority groups' representation (quotas)? • Can these legal tools be used to motivate parties to address the root causes of women leaving politics or not wanting to join parties and formal politics because of GBV (including TFGBV)? • Are there legal provisions for institutions such as parliaments or electoral commissions to respond to TFGBV? • Can these provisions supplement and encourage party action? • How do the rule of law and implementation of regulations on gender equality affect party actions? • Do laws and legal systems create pressure on parties to act on TFGBV? • What are the existing laws on violence against women in politics and TFGBV specifically? • Can these laws be used to hold parties accountable for addressing TFGBV? • Are laws and regulations targeting TFGBV misused to undermine freedom of speech, free and fair electoral competition, and other democratic principles?
International norms and networks 	Is the party motivated by global standards and organisations addressing gender equality or violence in politics?	• Does the party seek membership in an organisation, such as the European Union (EU), that requires improving gender equality? • Can the party's membership in a network of parties be used to push for more action on TFGBV? • Do party networks allow for cross-country learning and exchanges of good practices? • Does the party commit itself to upholding international legal instruments, conventions or bodies that seek to eliminate violence against women in their diversity, including women with disabilities, racial minorities and queer women?

Further toolkits that can assist in identifying how external socio-political environmental factors may undermine the prevention and response to TFGBV include:

- ***Interventions for ending online violence against women in politics* (NDI, 2022).** This guide can help political parties understand the role that technology companies, governments, civil society and media organisations have in addressing TFGBV against women in politics. In doing so, the guide can help political parties understand how actions of these external stakeholders hinder or support party-level responses to TFGBV.

- ***Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region* – Tools 2 and 4 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022b, 2022d).** Tool 2 provides a list of measures that political parties can advocate for in parliaments to prevent and address violence against women in politics, while Tool 4 provides advocacy guidance to women's organisations and civil society. Like the previous toolkit, these can help political parties understand how the actions of these actors can hinder or support party initiatives addressing TFGBV against women in politics.

- ***Violence against women in European politics: a comprehensive toolbox for political parties* (Mršo, 2025).** The toolkit discusses examples of legal reform on online violence from different countries (ibid.: 28–31). This can be useful to political parties when assessing to what extent their country's legal frameworks support action against TFGBV and how they can be strengthened.

3.3 Party-level factors

Party responses to TFGBV are often tied to codes of conduct, setting up and resourcing independent, survivor-centric reporting mechanisms, or strengthening women's organisations inside the parties. However, some of these solutions may not be feasible or fully implementable in practice due to the structural features of political parties, as well as the nature of TFGBV, which often involves a complex web of actors.

As mentioned at the start of Section 3, parties may function differently in young democracies compared to the so-called established democracies from which much of the research on parties has emerged; yet even in the latter context, party politics continue to change in response to technological advancements (Gauja et al., 2025). For instance, parties that do not have a membership base that pays dues may be less likely to have the financial, technical and logistical means to enforce expected behaviours for rank-and-file members, volunteers and other affiliates outside of the party hub or the capitol. Similarly, some parties may operate as formal vehicles for one individual or a small group. The centralised nature of the leadership and the dependency on a leader may make it less likely that investments will be made into party policies and structures, or that individual members – especially women and members of marginalised groups – feel able to be critical of their peers connected to the leadership.

Table 3 outlines some questions that can help assess how internal party factors may shape a party's TFGBV responses.

Table 3 Questions to prompt reflections on internal party factors

Category	Key questions	Detailed questions
Structures	Does the party have people, structures and mechanisms to effectively disseminate and enforce codes of conduct around TFGBV?	• Does the party have dues-paying members who can be directly influenced or held accountable to codes of conduct surrounding TFGBV or social media behaviours? • Are there other mechanisms besides codes of conduct to engage with party members and affiliates that could be effective? • Does the party engage external, non-party members in the life of the party and its decisions, such as nominations? • How can these engagements shape the expectations around TFGBV that the party wants to put in place? • Does the party have access to alternative, external sources of support if there is insufficient expertise internally to build capacity on TFGBV? • Does the party track and collect data about TFGBV?
Ideology and values	Do party values, ideology or policy platforms include a commitment to gender equality?	• Does acting on TFGBV (including against women in politics) align with other policy values and commitments of the party, such as human rights, fairness and justice? • Are there synergies between external policy commitments and internal changes that can be leveraged to promote changes within the party? • Do voters expect the party to have a certain track record and stand on gender quality, potentially including TFGBV? • Do the women in the party experience gendered political violence tied to the party policy platform, for example, on issues like sexual and reproductive health and rights? • Do party leaders and members underplay the severity of TFGBV as 'merely' online?
Women's representation and voice	How much power and influence do women, especially victims-survivors of TFGBV, have within the party?	• Are there formal or informal structures, such as women's wings, that support the empowerment and voice of women from different groups? • Do these structures have adequate and independent resources to ensure their ability to act without fear of negative reprisal from party leadership and peers? • Are these organisations actively involved and engaged in decision-making, or are they mainly engaged symbolically, especially to mobilise women voters? • Does the party offer dedicated funds for women candidates to support their run for office? • Are women's organisations and all women in the party at large supported by male allies, especially in the party leadership? • Does the party leadership speak in defence of women victims-survivors and advocate for party action in line with demands and requests of these women?

Table 3 Questions to prompt reflections on internal party factors (continued)

Category	Key questions	Detailed questions
		• Are women in the party aware of the multiple forms of TFGBV and reject it as not an acceptable cost of doing politics? • Are women encouraged and supported to cross party lines to build broad coalitions with other women and marginalised groups in politics that also experience TFGBV (for example, through all-women caucuses)? • Do all women in the party receive support and recognition of their experience of TFGBV, or is the focus limited to some groups of women (e.g. most senior), especially in the leadership of the party?
Centralisation and leadership	Is the party decision-making centralised?	• Does the party operate for the political success of a small group, or does it seek to create a broad base? • Does the party invest in developing its internal structures and policies? • To what extent is the party interested in and working on retaining and developing women members and politicians, including queer women, racial minorities and other marginalised groups? • Is there a culture of silence around violence and other issues in the party? Does the party leadership silence internal discussions? • Are women concerned over the negative impact on their careers if they speak out on TFGBV? Is this shared among women from different groups? • Is the electoral system, including campaigning, highly individualised? • Do campaign funding practices increase members' individualism and does that lead to some members' disregard for any party-demanded changes? • Does individualism put women at a disadvantage because they lack access to networks and resources, ultimately making them dependent on party leaders or sponsors?
Funding and resources	How does the party funding influence the position of women members and gender equality agenda?	• Is the party in power (in government) and does that provide it with additional resources to act on TFGBV? • Does the party funding depend on membership dues? • Does that restrict how the party allocates resources to changing internal practices and norms? • Is the party financially supported by the state and does the state prescribe the use of funds for internal gender equality matters? • Does the party rely on individual benefactors and donors who shape gender-related policies? • Does this dependency make the party less likely to address issues of TFGBV?

The gender-auditing toolkits mentioned in Section 3.1. can also be useful to assess party-level factors. Other toolkits include:

- ***Preventing violence against women in politics: benchmarks for political parties*** **(Political Party Peer Network, 2022).** By providing guidance on possible actions to encourage women's participation throughout the political participation cycle, this toolkit can help political parties reflect on the role of party mechanisms in responding to TFGBV.

- ***Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region*** **– Tools 2 and 3 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022b; 2022c).** While Tool 2 is directed at parliaments, political parties can also use these recommendations to assess how gender-transformative their own structures and processes are. Tool 3, through its discussion of recommended actions and common challenges, can also help political parties assess the role of party-level factors in their response to TFGBV.

4 Conclusion

Tackling TFGBV in politics requires cross-sectoral action by all democratic actors. National and global policies and regulatory solutions embedded in human rights frameworks and principles of equality and safety by design are essential to addressing the structural challenges embedded in AI and digital technology, as well as in the business models of the companies that operate them. These responses are increasingly being implemented, for example, in the EU, Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). Yet, political parties themselves also ought to do more to safeguard democratic governance and women's equal representation and rights.

This toolkit highlights factors that shape the effectiveness and viability of specific party-level solutions to TFGBV. Political parties that do act against TFGBV most commonly focus on prevention, in the form of training for women to stay safe, or protection when TFGBV has occurred. This is partially in response to the difficulties identifying actors involved in TFGBV and complexity of some of the technology involved. However, many parties still avoid addressing the root causes in their institutions and the sector, such as the masculine norms of strength and aggression that dominate political life. This often leads to the dismissal of TFGBV's impact on women and LGBTQI+ people, especially those from racial and other minorities, who frequently choose not to report it out of concern for professional reprisal or other adverse consequences.

Transformative approaches that address the underlying power inequalities and norms in political parties are less common and more challenging to achieve. By asking important questions about norms, the socio-political environment, and internal party practices and structures, gender professionals can better ascertain what responses are more plausible for political parties in their context. While good practices from around the world do exist, one-size-fits-all solutions to TFGBV against women in politics are not possible due to the variety of factors that shape the principles and actions that political parties adopt. Alongside the insights and practical recommendations of the resources referenced (see Annex 1), gender professionals can use this toolkit to better advise with parties on how to tackle TFGBV against women in politics.

As the toolkit underscores, there are many challenges that parties face in mobilising political will and resources to act. The socio-political environment and internal practices of parties may, however, also offer openings for gender professionals to motivate parties to address TFGBV. Taking meaningful, well-targeted and contextualised action on TFGBV in political parties is not a 'nice to have'. In the current moment of rising anti-gender and anti-democratic politics worldwide, responding to TFGBV is essential to preserve democratic governance based on equal representation and participation of all people in their diversity.

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Annex 1 Useful resources

This annex overviews a selection of guides and resources that gender professionals and others working with political parties can use to enhance their analytical work on TFGBV. Some of the tools included are not specifically addressed to parties; however, their recommendations are applicable to party work. Resources are cross-listed where they serve multiple purposes. Please refer to the reference list for full details.



To understand TFGBV against women in politics

These resources can help improve understanding of why and how TFGBV against women in politics manifests.

***Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region* – Tool 1 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022a):** Defines violence against women in politics and describes solutions using the '4Ps' approach: prevention, protection, prosecution and policy coordination. Not TFGBV-specific; however, it is explicitly included and discussed.

***Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region* – Tool 5 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022e):** Annex 1 is a glossary on TFGBV, which includes terms such as 'astroturfing' (coordinated campaigns designed to look like organic grassroots movements or trends), 'non-consensual intimate image abuse' (distributing sexually explicit images or videos without the person's consent), 'trolling' (posting abusive comments to alarm, distress or humiliate) and 'zoombombing' (hijacking virtual sessions to disrupt communication and harass attendees through intrusive digital content), among others.

***From theory to practice: building and testing a framework for definitions of online gender-based violence and other terms* (Carillo et al., 2024):** Provides an overview of TFGBV. It offers a framework for developing a common definition, which can be used to better assess different elements of TFGBV (including technology used and perpetrators) and measures to address them.

***How to stay safe online: a digital self-care toolkit for developing resilience and allyship* (Akiwowo, 2022):** Framed by the lived experience of TFGBV by former British councillor and founder of UK charity Glitch. The book outlines the impact of TFGBV on women, including in politics, and offers practical tools for women and strategies for allies, including in workplaces and institutions that are relevant for parties and their affiliates.

***Holding our digital ground: A playbook to mitigate gendered disinformation during elections and beyond* (CIR, 2024):** Overviews gendered disinformation tactics and response strategies, including for and by political parties. The guide's framework covers four stages of the disinformation life cycle and offers areas of intervention from preparation to response and disruption of the cycle.



To strengthen party structures

The following resources outline the institutional changes necessary for political parties to combat TFGBV against women in politics.

***Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region* – Tool 2 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022b):** Provides a roadmap to address violence against women in politics within and between parties. It discusses best practices and common challenges and an action checklist. Not TFGBV-specific, but it is explicitly discussed under GBV.

Violence against women in European politics: a comprehensive toolbox for political parties **(Mršo, 2025):** Provides guidance for parties to review and improve existing party policies and mechanisms around four areas: awareness-raising, legal and statutory frameworks, online violence and mitigation, and communications. Includes practical considerations – for example, for leadership and party branches to develop commitment statements, response protocols and event safety protocols. Users would need to modify the tool to incorporate TFGBV considerations.

Win with women: building inclusive 21st century parties **(NDI, 2018):** Step-by-step guide for party gender assessments. Also offers guidance on preparing parties for change, creating organisational buy-in. Includes methodological advice on how to carry out surveys, interviews and focus groups. Can be modified to solely assess TFGBV or to carry out a gender assessment that considers and captures all forms of TFGBV (as it stands, the tool considers TFGBV only in terms of harassment, threats and disinformation through social media).

Preventing violence against women in politics: benchmarks for political parties **(Political Party Peer Network, 2022):** Recommends actions for each phase of the electoral cycle and for women across levels (from female aspirants to elected representatives). Not TFGBV-specific, but it is explicitly discussed.

The digital resilience toolkit for women in politics (2nd edition) **(Wilfore, 2025):** While aimed at women in politics rather than political parties, the technical recommendations provided also apply to political parties (e.g on pages 48 and 59). These include, among others, responding by amplifying positive messages and building an online counter-speech team.



To create training resources and support mechanisms for party members and affiliates

These resources can help identify information and support that members must have access to and the type of information that needs to be covered in trainings for all members.

Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region **– Tool 5 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022e):** Guide for women in politics to prevent and respond to GBV that includes: personal safety planning (such as increasing digital awareness and capacity), immediate response to incidents (such as prioritising physical safety, preserving evidence and reporting), and post-incident recovery (such as access to mental health support and reevaluating security risks and response plans). It also includes a section on recommended actions for fellow party members, such as being an active bystander and how to offer support.

Violence against women in European politics: a comprehensive toolbox for political parties **(Mršo, 2025):** Contains useful templates for awareness-raising activities (such as examples of leaflets), key considerations when developing protocols and guidelines for victim/survivors, examples of training modules, models for psychological support and counselling services, and examples of legal support mechanisms. Users will need to modify the tools to ensure they cover and respond to TFGBV.

The digital resilience toolkit for women in politics **(2nd edition) (Wilfore, 2025):** Toolkit for women in politics that covers digital security, incident reporting and counter-speech. It offers a guide on how to counter sexual and reproductive health rights disinformation. It also highlights important components of TFGBV training, such as teaching party members how to shift conversations from defence to offence using values-based storytelling and counter-speech.

Online violence response hub **(Coalition Against Online Violence, no date):** Offers guidance for responding to TFGBV based on the type of abuse and the user's role – whether they are a survivor or an ally. It also includes a course titled 'Know your trolls' which aims to help women identify online abuse and know how to respond. While designed for media professionals, this platform serves as a primary model for political parties to replicate in their own training programmes and resource hubs.



To collaborate and coordinate with other actors

These tools explore the role of other stakeholders in TFGBV, such as tech companies and media organisations. This can help ensure that party policies complement and strengthen broad-based action.

Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region **– Tool 2 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022b):** Presents promising practices for parliaments to address violence against women in politics, such as independent complaints mechanisms, helplines and points of contact, codes of conduct, mandatory trainings, and emergency grants, to name a few. Not TFGBV-specific, but TFGBV is explicitly considered under GBV.

Addressing violence against women in politics in the OSCE region **– Tool 4 (OSCE ODIHR, 2022d):** Addressed to women's organisations, the tool provides advice on advocacy and collaboration. Not TFGBV-specific, but TFGBV is explicitly considered under GBV.

Introducing MINA: the WFD method for institutional action to protect democracy by addressing violence against women in politics. A practical process for parliaments **(Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2025):** Step-by-step trauma-informed guide to support political parties' work with parliaments and electoral bodies to identify and address cross-institutional conditions enabling GBV against women in politics and embed accountability mechanisms. It proposes a cyclical six-phase methodology: introduce, share, reflect, commit, sustain and connect. Users will need to adapt this to include TFGBV.

Interventions for ending online violence against women in politics **(NDI, 2022):** Recommends a 'menu' of policies for technology companies, governments, media organisations and civil society to address TFGBV against women in politics. The interventions discussed can be tailored to different regional and political contexts. Provides political parties with a holistic view of what ending TFGBV against women in politics requires.

Guidelines for the construction of a parliamentary code of conduct to protect women from online gender-based political violence based on the experience of Latin America **(Ibarra et al., 2024):** Section 2 provides suggested steps and considerations to develop parliamentary codes of conducts that address and respond to TFGBV. Analysis and recommendations based on Latin American experience; users outside of the region would need to reflect and adapt it to their context.

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Citation

How to cite: Michalko, J. and Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez, D. (2026) *Online violence against women in politics: how to support political parties to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence*. ALIGN toolkit. London: ALIGN/ODI Global. www.alignplatform.org/resources/toolkit-how-to-support-political-parties-address-online-violence.

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Cover image

Based on graphic design by Steven Dickie.

ALIGN is led by ODI Global and currently supported by a range of international donors

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