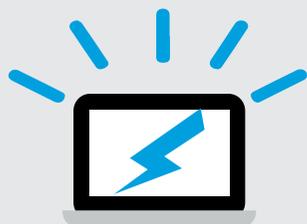# The shadow pandemic: Online and ICT*-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19

Women are exposed to high levels of violence through mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms and email.

- In Canada, **ONE IN FIVE** women experienced online harassment in 2018

- In Pakistan, **40%** of female college students faced harassment on the internet in 2016

- Online abuse and trolling in Australia already costs the economy up to **AUD 3.7 BILLION**

With more than half of the world's population under lockdown conditions more women and girls are using Internet with greater frequency:

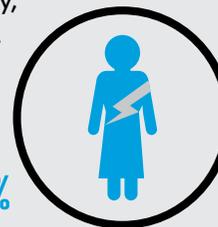- By early April 2020, internet use can increased between **50%** and **70%**

- From March to April 2020, there was a **535%** rise in daily traffic to Zoom.us – a popular and free video-conferencing service.

UN WOMEN

During the pandemic, online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls continue to be heightened:

This includes: physical threats, sexual harassment, sex trolling, sextortion, online pornography, zoombombing among others.

In **Australia**, online abuse and bullying have increased in the past month by **50%**

In **Northern York County**, Pennsylvania there was a **700%** increase of online harassment for the period of April 1-20, 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

In the **United Kingdom**, traffic nearly **DOUBLED** to the government helpline for adults experiencing intimate image abuse in the week of March 23, 2020.

Increased online violence facilitated by ICT during COVID-19 may impact:

- Women's **access to online services**
- **Education** and **employment** opportunities
- **Women's participation** as active digital citizens

Responses to COVID-19 must include:

For Government: Strengthen capacity of and protocols for law enforcement officials addressing online violence against women

For Women rights organizations, and other civil society organizations: Strengthen the awareness and capacity of women advocates, educators, and Internet users to identify, report online and ICT facilitated violence and how to access essential services online during COVID-19

For Internet intermediaries: Set high-level and clear commitments to upholding women's safety in online spaces during the pandemic and provide accessible and transparent reporting and complaints procedures