

# UTMUN



## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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COMITTEEE DIRECTOR  
KRISTA ARIELLO

VICE DIRECTORS  
MADISEN MONSON  
MADELEINE MILNE  
CHRISTIE MA

MODERATOR  
NERIJA GRAY

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## CONTENT WARNING

This committee will discuss sensitive content that may directly correspond with the lived experiences of delegates and staff.

This content might include:

- Rape, Sexual Assault, Sexual Harm, and Harassment
- Violence and Abuse (e.g., domestic violence)
- Child abuse
- Child marriage
- Discrimination, examples include:
  - Racism
  - Transphobia
  - Sexism and Misogyny
  - Mental illness and ableism
- Eating disorders and body image
- Injury and blood
- Death and dying

These content warnings aren't meant to discourage discussion on these topics, which are very important to discuss, but to allow individuals to disengage in the case that discussing and/or engaging with these issues hinders their overall wellbeing and comfort at UTMUN.

## A LETTER FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to UTMUN 2019! My name is Krista Ariello and I am excited to be the director of this year's Commission on the Status of Women. As Women's Rights have seen a recent wave of attention on the global stage, I look forward to productive discussions and the development of thoughtful resolutions that address the most prevalent issues facing women.

Along with the UTMUN team, we aim to create environment in which delegate will participate in insightful debate and collaborate with your peers to devise realistic strategies that will progress the fight for women's equality. Throughout the duration of this conference you will have the opportunity to showcase your ability to critically examine international issues and present your thoughts within the context of the formal structure of Model UN. The Dias expects that every delegate conducts themselves in manner that is both respectful to themselves and other committee members while using their diplomacy skills to participate in meaningful discussions that highlight their preparation and adheres to their countries foreign policy.

For your research, it is expected that you are familiar with all of the topics presented in the background guide. However, the background guide should only act as starting point as delegate are expected to be familiar with their countries policies and current initiatives related to the topics in discussion. There are some addition tips to guide your research however, delegate will excel in this committee if they have a strong understanding of their countries position and their stance relative to the global sphere. We recognize that opinions of your country to do reflect your personal opinions related to women's rights however, you are expected to make statements and decisions that reflect the perspective of your country.

The staff of the Commission on the Status of Women have invested time to construct the topics of discussion and we are eager to see how you critical examine the current state of women and how you will construct the future of women. We wish you the best of luck with your research and preparation. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to email.

Sincerely,

Krista Ariello  
Director, Commission on the Status of Women  
krista.ariello@mail.utoronto.ca

## TOPIC A: PROMOTING WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Financial independence is a powerful instrument to empower women, as it provides them with greater control over their lives. It gives women credibility in the decision-making processes within the family structure and offers flexibility. In cases where women have received a limited education which confounds their ability to work, they are more vulnerable to be controlled due to their reliance on their families.<sup>1</sup> This creates a dangerous environment in which women are forced to marry young or tolerate abuse, as a lack of finances have restricted their options.<sup>1</sup> Currently, women's participation in the global labour market is 27% lower than men's, and has declined from 52% in 1990 to 46% in 2016.<sup>2</sup> However, women can be a powerful force for change; they tend to reinvest their earnings to better their children's health and education, which positively impacts their communities.

Despite the recent push in Europe and Western Nations to create equal access to economic opportunities, there is still a ways to go. As of 2018, 100 countries still limit the work that women are permitted to do, and there exist significant disparities between earnings. Within 18 of these economies, women are still required by law to get their husband's formal permission to work.<sup>3</sup> Current strategies to deconstruct the barriers women face include providing financial investments to start business, and using digital tools to give females access to bank account in their own name. In Kenya, the government ensures that 30% of spending is dedicated to women, youth and people with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> This has enabled female entrepreneurs and women associations to increase female participation in the labour force. In Nepal, migrant female workers have created a network and in cooperation with the government they have established laws, protective rights and regulations for the 2.7 million workers.<sup>5</sup>

To accelerate economic growth, more women need to work, and work is tied to education. Increased educational attainment accounts for 50% of economic growth.<sup>6</sup> Although there has been a global increase in women attaining higher level education, this has not entirely translated to the workforce. Women are more likely to work in more informal, vulnerable, lower-

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<sup>1</sup> Anchal Kakker, "Why is financial independence for women important?" Jaagore, accessed November 9, 2018.

<https://www.jaagore.com/power-of-49/why-is-financial-independence-for-women-important>.

<sup>2</sup> Jim Yong Kim, "To Build a Brighter Future, Invest in Women and Girls," *Voices: Perspectives on Development* (blog), March 8, 2018, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/build-brighter-future-invest-women-and-girls>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "In Brief: Economic Empowerment of Women," UN Women, accessed November 9, 2018, [http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un\\_women\\_ee-thematic-brief\\_us-web.pdf?la=en](http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un_women_ee-thematic-brief_us-web.pdf?la=en)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment," UN Women, last modified July 2017, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>.

paid, and undervalued jobs than men. Women make up 43% of the agriculture force in developing countries, yet due to disparity in land ownership, female farmers have a lower ability to invest and benefit from new economic opportunities. Research has demonstrated that women are beneficial for businesses; companies with three or more women in senior management position see increases in organizational effectiveness.<sup>7</sup> Women have the potential to change the global economy, but they need platforms to overcome systemic inequalities.

## **WOMEN'S ACCESS TO ONLINE & MOBILE BANKING**

The advent of digitalized services not only make banking more convenient, it also enables women to invest in their business without compromising their obligations to their families.<sup>8</sup> Reports from the World Bank Global Index found that almost one billion women lack access to savings, credit or insurance accounts, and limiting access to financial services is a common means of domestic abuse.<sup>9</sup> In addition, there exists a disparity between the number of male and female bank account holders. In 2014, India had 20% fewer female account holders than male, but this number has reduced to 6% since the commencing the Aadhaar welfare program.<sup>10</sup> Under this program, accounts were created for women with the intention that they manage their family's welfare payments, rather than their husband.<sup>11</sup> This has combatted the male-dominant family dynamic, but has not eliminated it. In order to receive payments, they must be linked to a mobile phone, and in states such Rajasthan, cell phone access is still controlled by men. There, only 1 in 3 females can read and write text messages, which is clearly a barrier toward mobile phone use, and thus, control of finances.

Research has found that women consistently save about 10-15% of their earnings, with very little fluctuations in their balance. This further suggests that women's inclusion in their family's finances only benefits them.<sup>12</sup> In rural areas where access to banking infrastructure is limited, the use of mobile banking offers a medium for financial inclusion. In areas where mobile banking has made banking more accessible, women are saving 3x more money compared to those without access.<sup>13</sup> Surveys have found that women use mobile banking for twice the number of transactions as their male counterparts.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jamille Bigio, "Banks around the World Are Cashing in on an Untapped Market — Women. And It's Transforming Their Lives," CNN, October 16, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/16/perspectives/women-banking-economic-opportunity/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Saritha Rai, "India's First National ID System Is Helping the Country's Women," *Bloomberg*, December 11, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-12/india-s-first-national-id-system-is-helping-the-country-s-women>.

<sup>12</sup> Bigio, "Banks around the world are cashing in."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Laura Shin, "New Survey Reveals How Men And Women Bank Differently," *Forbes*, March 25, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurashin/2015/03/25/new-survey-reveals-how-men-and-women-bank-differently/>.

The primary motivator for women opening bank accounts is to receive digital transfers of public sector wages, government social benefits and public pensions. These uses have motivated 1 in 5 women to open accounts in Europe, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa.<sup>15</sup> In Kenya, one model of mobile banking kiosks called M-PESA has seen great success. The kiosk can be found in even the most rural parts of the country, enabling women to access financial services for which would otherwise they would have to travel prohibitively far. As a result of the program, 185,000 women have changed their source of income away from farming into more profitable fields, such as business and retail sales, which has generated an upward trends in their savings. However, this technology can only be used to its full capacity when women have proficient financial literacy. This includes education on how to use a transaction account, how to manage, budget and save money. The use of technology applications can assist by providing feedback to customers or modelling examples. In Bolivia, Peru and Philippines they have found text message reminders to be helpful tool to encourage people to save more.<sup>16</sup>

## **CASE STUDY: WOMEN-ONLY BANK IN ZIMBABWE**

As part of the Government of Zimbabwe's plan to strengthen female participation, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender & Community Development brought forth the idea of having a women's only bank. Initially, the idea was aimed to ensure rural women have access to credit services. With the latest improvements, it has become a national project that empowers all women. This initiative of Zimbabwe is supported by the United Nations Development Program, along with other countries like Tanzania, India and Bangladesh to seek the best model for women's banking. The main mission of this women's only bank is to empower women both economically and socially.<sup>17</sup>

Historically, women have been financially excluded with limited access to credit and inadequate knowledge on investment products. With such restrictions, women have been unable to save their income formally or access formal insurance products. With a women's only bank, it is the first of its kind to offer women, youth and small businesses loans. The Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank encourages female participation in the economy by catering their bank to the financial needs of women, particularly women who have been struggling to receive a loan. Zimbabwe collaborates with nearby countries to ensure that women have access to the necessary financial assets.<sup>18</sup> Financial exclusion has been women's main hindrance towards economic emancipation, but by creating a bank that is aimed towards supporting women, it helps bridge that gap.

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<sup>15</sup> Kristalina Georgieva, "The Gender Gap in Financial Inclusion Won't Budge. Here Are Three Ways to Shrink It," *Voices: Perspectives on Development (blog)*, May 23, 2018, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/gender-gap-financial-inclusion-three-ways-shrink-it>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank," Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank, accessed November 11, 2018, <http://www.womensbank.co.zw>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



## CASE STUDY: INDIA'S BHAMASHAH ID SYSTEM

Unique in India is their Bhamashah identification system which enables women to have increasing control over their family's finances. Prior to the Bhamashah system, India had the Aadhaar biometric identification system, that strived to efficiently distribute state services. Under the Aadhaar system, it was mandatory for all citizens to register with the system in order to access social welfare benefits, open bank accounts and manage mobile phone accounts. However, there was controversy surrounding the implementation of the Aadhaar system as some people believed that it violated their privacy.<sup>19</sup>

The Bhamashah system was launched in 2014 in response to the Aadhaar system. Like the Aadhaar system, it aims to better distribute India's benefits, but also hopes to improve women's access to banking services. Although both systems require citizens to have an Aadhaar number to register, the Bhamashah program is based on a family identification number, not a personal one. Ultimately, the main goal of the new Bhamashah system is to encourage women to make financial decisions. In order for a household to register for a Bhamashah identification card, the family needs to designate a female head of household who is over the age of 21, lives in the house and will open a bank account, if she does not already have one. This system links the women's bank account to her mobile phone number and enables her to act as the sole catalyst for carrying out certain transactions.

As of October 2017, 14.7 million families have enrolled in the program. 99% of the families designated a female head of household, and 66% of those women did not have a bank account prior to the Bhamashah system.<sup>20</sup> The Bhamashah system encourages female financial inclusion by requiring the designated women to open a bank account. In addition, this has inspired younger women to go to banks more often after observing the increasing national efforts to support women.

However, this program includes various challenges. 90% of the women who were named head of household for the purpose of this finance program continue to claim that men are the heads of the household.<sup>21</sup> Thus, despite the economic efforts to foster female independence, it has made little progress in changing their position within the family. Likewise, many of women's phones are controlled by men. Since the men of the household cannot make transactions themselves, the women must follow their order and help them carry out the transactions. Lastly is the problem of literacy. Only 20% of women who are assigned as heads of households know how to make calls and read or write text messages. This implies that 80% of women are restricted with their usage of phone services because of the mobile literacy

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<sup>19</sup> Jumana Farouky and Jihii Jolly, "Amid India's I.D. Debate, Women Quietly Gain Control of Family Finances," News Deeply, December 21, 2017, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/womensadvancement/community/2017/12/21/amid-indias-i-d-debate-women-quietly-gain-control-of-family-finances>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



problem.<sup>22</sup> Although the Bhamashah system has limitations, it illustrates a national initiative striving to change traditional gender roles by financially empowering women.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Women face numerous barrier to accessing employment and without sufficient means of work their financial independence is greatly restricted, unable to make their own money. The World Bank has found that in more than 104 countries there are restrictions on the type, hours and locations of work that women are permitted to take on.<sup>23</sup> Globally this impacts the employment opportunities of 2.7 billion women worldwide. Women are often prevented from doing jobs that are classified as “men-only” positions on the grounds that they are too dangerous or strenuous for women to perform. For example, in Russia women are not allowed to drive trains or pilot ships, in Mumbai female shopkeepers are restricted from working late, and in Malaysia women are not permitted to transport good at night.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, discrimination is still present in laws of many counties. In 18 countries husbands have the legal right to prevent their wives from working, and in 4 countries women are prohibited from registering companies. However, women are vital part of economic growth and the productivity of many industries is negatively impacted by limiting women's potential.

There exists two barriers for women in the labour force, the first being access to work, and the second being the barrier to achieving leadership or higher paying positions. As such, women tend to work in low quality jobs in vulnerable conditions with little potential for advancement.<sup>25</sup> Often, vulnerable employment is marked with shorter hours, unpaid work, contributions to a family business, limited maternity coverage and lack of social and sexual harassment protection. The occupations women do not reflect women's choice but rather determined by their socio-economic constraints and pressures to conform to traditional gender roles.<sup>26</sup> Gender roles vary depending on the region, religion, and household values, however, there are consistent patterns. In developing and emerging countries, women are less likely to work in a paid job after marriage. Despite limited access, women often need to work to support the financial needs of their family.<sup>27</sup> Their choice of occupation is further constrained by responsibility to care for their household and children, as well as the lack of affordable child care. In order to bridge the gap for women in the labour force, there needs to be a greater push for wage transparency and gender neutral job evaluations. Also, occupational segregation

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Johnny Wood, “104 Countries Have Laws That Prevent Women from Working in Some Jobs,” World Economic Forum, August 13, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/08/104-countries-have-laws-that-prevent-women-from-working-in-some-jobs/>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “The Gender Gap in Employment: What’s Holding Women Back?,” last modified March 2018, <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

needs to be deconstructed, moving women from low value jobs through education and public outreach strategies.

## EUROPE

The European Union (EU) aims to increase female labour-market participation and reduce the gender pay gap, earnings and pensions gap. In 2017, they experienced a slow increase to 66.6% employment, though the quality of employment was still within the lower paid sector, with part-time work making up about 33% of female labour market. This contributes to the gender pay gap, as women earn about 11% less than their male counterparts. To combat this, the EU developed the European Pillar of Social Rights to establish equitable treatment between men and women within the labour market, the terms and conditions of their employment, and career progression. As of 2017, they adopted an action plan to tackle the gender pay gap and have made it illegal to engage in direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex.<sup>28</sup>

## WEST AFRICA

In West Africa, women lack access to land and finance hindering their ability to improve their lives. Recently, efforts to reduce the gender gap has led to a 20-30% increase in the yields of women's farms. The benefits of increases in production are shared to their families, as it has led to a tenfold increase in the better nutrition, a result that is not seen when men earn higher wages. However, in comparison to the global community West Africa is behind in women's health. Early marriage, teen pregnancies and low level education are all factors that greatly limiting their career opportunities and economic potential.<sup>29</sup>

## GLOBAL ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The freedom for work is a right and should be given the access to safe and fair employment opportunities not only for person benefit but, also that of the global economy. By 2025 if the gender gap in the labour market is reduced, Northern Africa's Gross Domestic Product is expected to increase by 9.5%, Southern Asia GDP should increase by 9.2%. Also, in Latin America and the Caribbean's GDP will increase by 4%, North America and Europe's GDP should increase by 2%.<sup>30</sup>

## MATERNITY LEAVE RIGHTS

A fair maternity leave is essential for women to be able to balance their career and family obligations. A lack of sufficient maternity and limited and expensive child care services

<sup>28</sup> "Questions and Answers: What Is the EU Doing for Women's Rights and Gender Equality?," European Commission, March 6, 2018, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-18-1602\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-1602_en.htm).

<sup>29</sup> Emanuele Santi, "Why Empowering West African Women Is Not Just Right, but Makes Economic Sense," African Development Bank, March 31, 2015, <https://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/measuring-the-pulse-of-economic-transformation-in-west-africa/post/why-empowering-west-african-women-is-not-just-right-but-makes-economic-sense-14119/>.

<sup>30</sup> "The Gender Gap in Employment: What's Holding Women Back?"

negatively impacts women potential in the labour force. On average, maternity leave lasts for 18 weeks, however, there is great variability across countries.<sup>31</sup> Women's Policy Research has concluded that offering women paid maternity leave is beneficial to the individual, business and the economy, as it secures women employment when they are ready to return to work, and decreases the reliance on public assistance programming. Some countries are leading the way such as Bulgaria, which offers 58.6 weeks of paid maternity leave at a rate of 78.4% of the mother's previous full salary. Also, Estonia and Poland offer 20 weeks of fully paid leave. On the other hand, the United States offers no guaranteed maternity leave as there are no federal laws regulating paid maternity leave. Therefore, it is left up to the discretion of employers, of which 40% choose not to offer any paid maternity leave.<sup>32</sup>

The global norm currently a minimum of 14 weeks with two thirds of original pay.<sup>33</sup> Of the 193 countries that participate in the UN, only four countries do not mandate paid maternity leave: New Guinea, Suriname, South Pacific Islanders and the US.<sup>34</sup> The United States is the only high income country not to have paid maternity leave, instead there is a 12 week protected leave that is unpaid. However, about 40% of women don't qualify for the Family Medical Leave Act, and only three states have enacted policy around paid maternity leave: California, Rhode Island and New Jersey.<sup>35</sup> In the long-term the population could suffer as women resort to having fewer children due to economic stress.

There are other impacts beyond the economic implications of insufficient maternity leave. The United States has the highest infant mortality rate of the 28 wealthiest countries, despite birth rates being at their lowest. Mothers in the US suffer from high rates of postpartum depression, with 1 in 10 women experiencing symptoms that negatively affect their health and wellbeing.<sup>36</sup> Maternity leave is not a vacation for mothers, and employers need to understand that this time is necessary for recovery. Mothers' need an appropriate amount of time for physical, mental and emotional health to revitalize in the weeks after giving birth to a child. For a sustainable future, we need women to work and bear children. Nobody should be forced to choose between one or the other, or be forced to compromise their personal well-being in order to have both.

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<sup>31</sup> Katie Warren, "Here's What Maternity Leave Looks like around the World," Insider, May 15, 2018, <https://www.thisisinsider.com/maternity-leave-around-the-world-2018-5>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Dominic Hernandez, "Fast Facts: Maternity Leave Policies across the Globe," Vital Record, January 23, 2018, <https://vitalrecord.tamhsc.edu/fast-facts-maternity-leave-policies-across-globe/>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Monica Froese, "Maternity Leave in the United States: Facts You Need to Know," Healthline, October 19, 2016, <https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/united-states-maternity-leave-facts>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. How do we develop a short term strategy to increase the female workforce? What long-term strategy should be implemented to provide women greater access to work?
2. How does online banking affect women's access to financial resources?
3. Considering the two case study, how can similar models be implemented within your county? What limitation exists in developing such models?
4. Why are women essential to workforce? What are your country's laws and policies regarding female employment?
5. How do ensure women find meaningful and high-paying work?
6. What are the societal implications of maternity leave? What is your countries policy and how does that compare to the global average?



## TOPIC B: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON WOMEN

### INTRODUCTION

One of the key global developments of the 21st century has been the unprecedented explosion of social media. From day-to-day communication with friends to the intimate spaces of dating, the widespread effects of social media are evident. As a result of social media, it has provided a platform for the constant revolution of social norms. From MySpace and Blogger to Instagram and Snapchat, there are inevitable dangers to such interactive platforms. Notably, it has led to issues such as the harassment of women in politics, body image and anxiety, but also led to new forms of commerce through influencer marketing. It is bodies like the CSW which hold responsibility to ensure the societal changes due social media are safe and constructive for those using it.

### HARASSMENT OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

Social media has created a space for anyone to share their opinion with wide audiences, regardless of the nature or validity of that opinion. This lack of oversight is particularly problematic for women in politics who are often subjected to mass public criticism and harassment through social media platforms.<sup>37</sup> While women in power have undoubtedly been the subject of harassment for decades, the change in medium has evolved to make harassment more widespread and problematic. Notably, social media allows politicians to be reached directly at any time and enables larger quantities of harassment to reach politicians than what was possible prior to the use of social media.

Though harassment by the public is commonplace for all politicians, it is much more prevalent issue for women. A study analyzing messages sent to lawmakers indicated that women were three times more likely than men to be sent sexist comments.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, recent studies have shown women are judged more harshly on the basis of attributes like marital status and appearance than their male counterparts.<sup>39</sup> Though initially seemingly inconsequential, such harassment impacts the receiver of such messages directly, taking a toll on them personally over time. Harassment can escalate to threats of violence or death, a surprisingly common occurrence. It was reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2016 that close to 45% of female parliamentarians had reported receiving threats of death, rape, beatings or abduction in that term alone.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, on a wider scale, this type of harassment through social media

<sup>37</sup> "Social Media Harassment of Women Politicians." *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Autumn 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor, Lin. "Online Harassment Takes 'Heavy Toll' on Women Politicians - Report." *Reuters*, 13 Mar. 2018, [af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL8N1QU47W](https://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL8N1QU47W).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

creates an environment of fear, discouraging women from pursuing or continuing a career in the field. Tragically, fears of facing harassment deters many women around the world from running for office.

Due to the medium of social media itself, there are numerous nuances which create difficulties in adequately responding and dealing with it. For example, social media platforms often are not responsive to claims of harassment online or do not have effective systems in effect to deal with it. Particularly, platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook have faced criticism for not removing abusive content despite being alerted of it.<sup>41</sup> This creates difficulties in effectively addressing problems on the platforms once they have occurred.

In order to invoke powerful change in reducing the harassment of women on social media it is necessary for a greater dialogue to take place, suggests Cathy Bennett, a Minister in the Status of Women cabinet.<sup>42</sup> Looking at the greater issues involved may prove effective in dealing with the root causes of issues surrounding social media. A great portion of a culture comes from language, and more specifically, commonplace vocabulary. The usage of discriminatory language to put down not only women, but people in general, allows for a culture to thrive on hate and negativity. Therefore, to shape change there must be a wider shift in environments created on social platforms and in society as a whole.

## BATTLING BODY IMAGE

The media is powerful in determining society's image of what is considered "beautiful" for females, often outlining specific ways for females to achieve such appearances. Misogynistic ideologies found in many of today's society's play a significant role in the image created for the "ideal woman." In many Western societies this ideal image of beauty is a woman who is feminine, presents herself properly and other specific, oftentimes unrealistic characteristics. Another example, though no longer prevalent in today's society, was the Chinese practice of footbinding which was a symbol of status and beauty in women.<sup>43</sup> In today's society, social media plays a major role in spreading such standards of beauty in women.

A key aspect of social media is its ability to expose users to a plethora of pictures of other people, celebrities and common folk alike. Social media gives its users the agency to post only what they want to be seen; it is often highly curated, presenting a favourable image of themselves to the world. Thus, accounts on social media should be viewed as a representation, rather than the full picture of that user's life - a reality many people are

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> "Social Media Harassment of Women Politicians."

<sup>43</sup> Amanda Foreman, "Why Footbinding Persisted in China for a Millennium," *Smithsonian.com*, February 1, 2015, [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-footbinding-persisted-china-millennium-180953971/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-footbinding-persisted-china-millennium-180953971/).



ignorant to. This is problematic when considering that studies show 88% of women report comparing themselves to images in the media compared to only 65% of men.<sup>44</sup> Of that 88%, more than half the women reported that the comparison was unfavourable whereas only 37% of men reported that conclusion.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, many users fall victim to issues of body images due to this lack of social media awareness.

Pressure from exposure to unrealistic representations of beauty through social media can lead to significant body dissatisfaction, even contributing to pressures of eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and orthorexia. These illnesses often stem from body dissatisfaction, a feeling easily brought on from comparisons made by the user of themselves with the unrealistically “ideal” bodies they are seeing on their screens. Studies by the Macquarie University and the University of New South Wales of Australian and American women indicated even as little as 30 minutes of social media use can “make women fixate negatively on their weight and appearance.”<sup>46</sup> Overall, directly and indirectly, social media is acting to harm the health of women using it and is enabling the greater societal issues of misogynistic beauty standards to expand.



Source: svetikd / Getty

## SOCIAL ANXIETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is directly correlated to the increasing mental health dilemma. With approximately 20% of social media users checking their social media accounts every three hours and 30% of

<sup>44</sup> Rheana Murray, “Social Media Is Affecting the Way We View Our Bodies — and It's Not Good.” *TODAY.com*, [www.today.com/style/social-media-affecting-way-we-view-our-bodies-it-s-t128500](http://www.today.com/style/social-media-affecting-way-we-view-our-bodies-it-s-t128500).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> “Unrealistic Social Media Portrayals May Contribute to Body Dissatisfaction.” *National Eating Disorders Association*, February 20, 2018, [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/blog/instagram-photos-may-contribute-to-body-dissatisfaction](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/blog/instagram-photos-may-contribute-to-body-dissatisfaction).



those users spending over 15 hours online per week, social media addiction is driven by the need to be active members of the social media community. However, such habits induce physical risks that include neck and lower back pains, obesity and heart diseases. In addition to physical concerns, social media is linked to depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and impulsive disorders.<sup>47</sup>

Specifically examining the effects of screen times, various researchers found that increased screen time results in biological and psychological effects. The Cincinnati Children's Hospital concludes that increased screen time leads to children's decreased brain connectivity in the language and cognitive control areas of the brain. In particular, the reward area within a cell is activated when users gain "likes", fueling the user's technology addiction. Focusing on adolescents, researcher Jean Twenge finds that prolonged screen time leads to increased chances of depression, especially among people who already contain suicidal tendencies. 48% of teens who spend five or more hours on their phones have had suicidal thoughts in comparison to the 28% of teens who spend only an hour on their phones per day.<sup>48</sup> Thus, as a result of adolescents' vulnerability to social media addiction, this perpetuates their increasing media usage that leads to various health concerns.

In spite of social media being a platform for reinvention, it fosters an atmosphere of constant judgement and competition where self worth is linked to a person's perceived attractiveness. 41% of women claim that their selfies increase self-esteem, while 46% of women reveals that media sites make them feel self-conscious about their appearance.<sup>49</sup> Despite the divided opinion, social media undeniably fosters a delusional world that allows their users to illustrate a better version of themselves, but not necessarily their true selves. In addition, the increasing use of photo manipulation contributes to the growing percentage of insecure women. With self worth being intertwined with anxiety and depression, prolonged exposure to the fictitious, perhaps toxic, world of social media pressures their users to display and achieve an unattainable, glamorous life.

Since the emergence of social media as an integral aspect of adolescent's lives, cyberbullying has become a key discussion topic among schools, adults and teens. With about 34% of students report having experienced cyberbullying and 15% of students admitting to cyberbullying others, social media has revolutionized traditional bullying.<sup>50</sup> Many teens and

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<sup>47</sup> "Social Media Obsession and Anxiety." *Anxiety and Depression Association of America*, [adaa.org/social-media-obsession](http://adaa.org/social-media-obsession).

<sup>48</sup> Alice G. Walton, "How Too Much Screen Time Affects Kids' Bodies And Brains," *Forbes*, April 16, 2018, [www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2018/04/16/how-too-much-screen-time-affects-kids-bodies-and-brains/#200241121549](http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2018/04/16/how-too-much-screen-time-affects-kids-bodies-and-brains/#200241121549).

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Shearer, "'How Social Media Sites Could Be Contributing to Delusion in Young People'." *The Independent*, February 4, 2016, [www.independent.co.uk/student/istudents/filters-and-photo-manipulation-on-social-media-sites-are-creating-a-generation-of-deluded-a6852736.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/student/istudents/filters-and-photo-manipulation-on-social-media-sites-are-creating-a-generation-of-deluded-a6852736.html).

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Rossow, "You No Longer Need To Be On Social Media To Be A Victim of Cyberbullying," *Forbes*, May 6, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewrossow/2018/05/06/you-no-longer-need-to-be-on-social-media-to-be-a-victim-of-cyberbullying/#6ac5b53730cd>.

parents demand social media companies to take more responsibility and initiative in resolving the problem by responding to bully reports within a day and enforcing stricter punishment for those who violate behaviour and conduct expectations. Interestingly, a 15-year-old female survey respondent claims that teenagers expect cyberbullying, demonstrating the normalized online culture and attitude towards this new form of harassment.<sup>51</sup> Hence, teenagers and parents call for a technological update from media companies to combat the inconsequential treatment of cyberbullying, an inevitable byproduct of social media.

## SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Many individuals owe a great deal of their success, popularity, and relevance to social media. Platforms like Instagram provide spaces where celebrities in particular they can directly communicate with their fans. As Instagram continues to grow in popularity, so does the community of influencers. Social media influencers are models, fitness savants, and other such celebrities who make sponsored posts promoting various companies and products<sup>52</sup>. Included are major celebrities, such as the Kardashian family, as well as lesser-known individuals with followings that are steadily growing.

In recent years, companies have realized the value of the social connections curated via social media. The ability for an advertisement to reach people across the globe via shares and online interactions has led to the advent of social media marketing. Companies tend to seek out promotions from individuals with large followings, as they have a large audience that can be persuaded into purchasing the product in question. Celebrities also tend to have loyal and trusting fans; if a certain celebrity influencer deems a product to be worthy of endorsement, their fans will tend to believe that it is a worthwhile purchase. However, this influence can be abused and used to promote harmful products, such as appetite suppressants and laxatives disguised as weight-loss teas<sup>53</sup>. Companies benefit from the fact that women tend to compare themselves to the perfectly curated images of celebrities and influencers found on social media. Sponsored posts take advantage of these insecurities in order to promote products, which may help to explain why women are more likely than men to make impulsive purchases based on celebrity endorsements.

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<sup>51</sup> "Social media firms 'failing' to tackle cyber-bullying," *BBC News*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-43197937>.

<sup>52</sup> "Are Social Media Influencers Worth The Investment?," *Forbes*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/08/21/are-social-media-influencers-worth-the-investment/#42e6eba0f452>.

<sup>53</sup> "Can 'detox Teas' like Teami Help You Lose Weight?," *CNN*, August 14, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/14/health/detox-tea-explainer/index.html>.

However, despite its aforementioned darker aspects, the realm of social media influencing has created a new online career path for women<sup>54</sup>. Even individuals with lower follower-counts on social media platforms may be enlisted to help promote products by companies; since they are not extremely wealthy nor as famous as their celebrity counterparts, reviews by these influencers are perceived as more trustworthy and genuine by potential consumers<sup>55</sup>. Not only is it cheaper for companies to promote their products with these less-followed influencers, but making a sufficient amount of sponsored posts can be enough for many individuals to turn ‘influencing’ into a lifestyle<sup>56</sup>. It can be harder for women to become successful influencers in countries where social media censorship is rampant. For instance, in China, social media is heavily monitored and censored<sup>57</sup>. Many websites are viewed as ‘dangerous’ and social media accounts are frequently deleted if they do not align with the values enshrined by the government<sup>58</sup>. This makes it more difficult for women residing in the country to build a following and make enough sponsored posts to make a living.



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<sup>54</sup> “What It Takes to Make Instagram Influencing a Full-Time Career,” *Bloomberg*, November 29, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-11-29/what-it-takes-to-make-instagram-influencing-a-full-time-career>.

<sup>55</sup> Joel Matthew, “Understanding Influencer Marketing And Why It Is So Effective,” *Forbes*, July 30, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2018/07/30/understanding-influencer-marketing-and-why-it-is-so-effective/>.

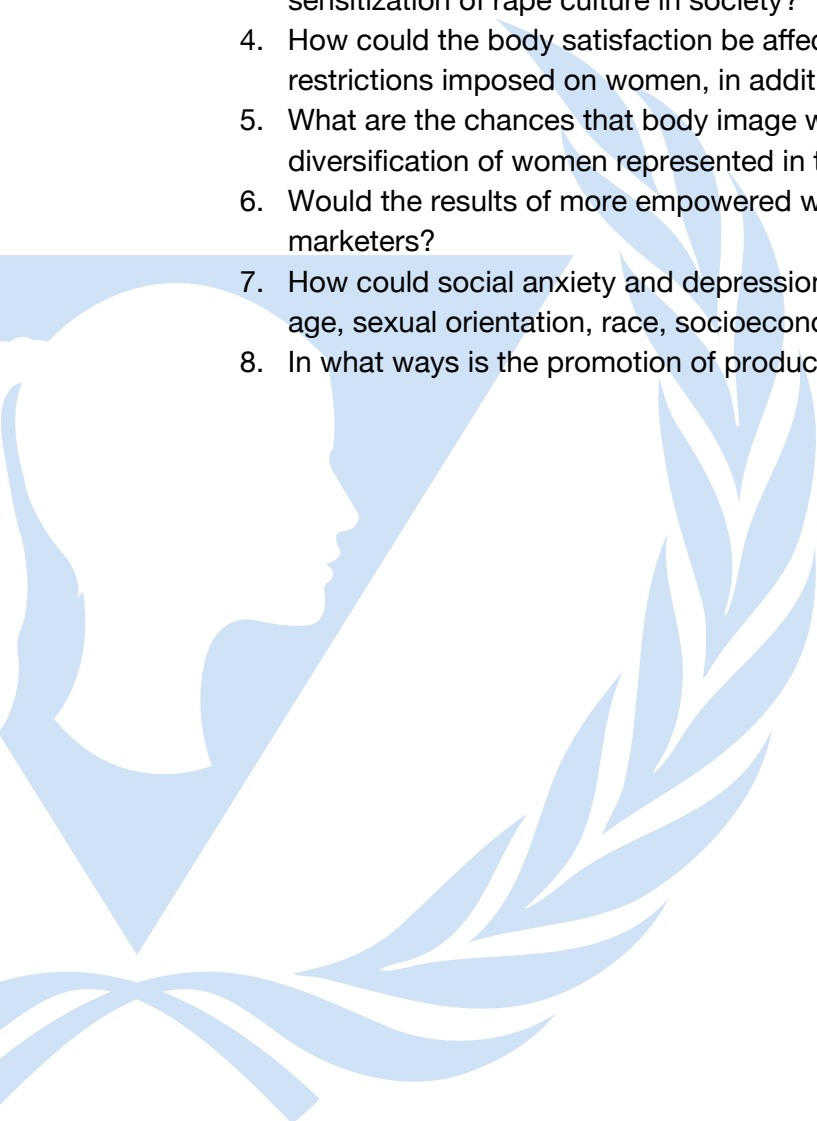
<sup>56</sup> “Are Social Media Influencers Worth The Investment?”

<sup>57</sup> “Media Censorship in China,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified February 17, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/media-censorship-china>.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How could the harassment towards female politicians active today, affect the future generations of female politicians to come?
2. Why is language so vital to changing the dynamic of how female politicians are perceived?
3. In what ways does the language used to harass women in authority contribute to a de-sensitization of rape culture in society?
4. How could the body satisfaction be affected in countries that have conservative restrictions imposed on women, in addition to censored social media content?
5. What are the chances that body image will improve among women with the diversification of women represented in the media?
6. Would the results of more empowered women benefit or hurt the success of marketers?
7. How could social anxiety and depression vary depending on characteristics such as age, sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status, etc.?
8. In what ways is the promotion of products different country to country?



## TOPIC C: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Since its establishment in 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women has been committed to supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women globally.<sup>59</sup> Recently, in 2015, the Millennium Development goals were released.<sup>60</sup> The third of these goals was to, “promote gender equality and empower women.”<sup>61</sup> Under this mandate, a major focus has been on eliminating gender-based violence — a pressing issue facing women around the globe. It is estimated that one third of all women have experienced physical or sexual violence, most often at the hands of an intimate partner.<sup>62</sup>

There is a range of proven impacts of violence against women, namely long term physical, mental and sexual consequences.<sup>63</sup> The ramifications also go beyond the well-being of women themselves, also contributing to greater health care costs, legal expenses, and reducing women’s productivity within their communities.<sup>64</sup> The impacts of violence against women ripple into the community around them, proving to be much larger-scale issue than what might be expected from a cursory examination of the issue.

While numerous countries have legislation protecting women from gender-based violence, it proves difficult to ensure a standard, across the board. Though over 140 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 144 have laws on sexual harassment, they are not always in accordance with international standards.<sup>65</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, many countries lack critical legislation to protect the rights of women within their borders. For example, it is reported that 37 countries exempt rape perpetrators from prosecution altogether when they are married to, or subsequently marry, the victim.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the UN estimates that over 600 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not considered a crime.<sup>67</sup> Thus, it is clear comprehensive, widespread changes are required to improve this situation.

It is critical to address the underlying root causes of this issue in order to derive long-term and cost-effective solutions which address both prevention and healing for women. For example, it is important to note that less than 40% of women who experience violence seek

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<sup>59</sup> "Commission on the Status of Women," UN Women, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

<sup>60</sup> K. M. Devries et al., “The Global Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women,” *Science* 340, no. 6140 (June 28, 2013): 1527–28, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1240937>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> "Commission on the Status of Women."

<sup>63</sup> "What We Do: Ending Violence against Women," UN Women, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women," UN Women, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Devries et al., “The Global Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women.”

help.<sup>68</sup> Of that 40%, less than 10% reached out to the police for help.<sup>69</sup> This indicates a severe disconnect between victims and those with the resources to help them; this may be due to cultural stigma surrounding violence against women and women's rights. It is barriers like these which need to be resolved in order to support the healing of women affected by this issue and to move forward progressively.

## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION OR CUTTING

Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C) is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as being “procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.”<sup>70</sup> These procedures have no medical benefit and are often accompanied by a variety of severe long and short-term complications.<sup>71</sup> Consequences includes, but is not limited to: severe bleeding, infections, cysts, problems urinating and even death.<sup>72</sup> Also concerning is the negative effect it has on childbirth later in life: it often leads to complications and increased rates of newborn deaths.<sup>73</sup> Appallingly, it is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women have undergone FGM/C in 30 countries around the globe.<sup>74</sup>

FGM/C has been recognized by the international community as being a violation of human rights, and demonstrates a systemic form of discrimination against women. In 1997, UNICEF and WHO collaboratively released a statement against the practice of FGM/C.<sup>75</sup> The practice violates human rights to the security, health and physical well-being of females; however, is still prevalent in parts of the world. Data collected by UNICEF indicates that FGM/C is most prevalent in areas of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It is also found in certain areas of South America and Europe, though there is less reliable information collection on FGM/C in these areas.<sup>76</sup> Most notably, the top three countries where women aged 15- 49 experienced FGM/C between 2004 and 2015, were Somalia (98% of women), Guinea (97% of women), and Djibouti (93% of women).<sup>77</sup> Even more concerning is the rate at which genital mutilation is occurring in young girls, as the practice is most often performed on girls before they reach age five.<sup>78</sup> For example, in Yemen, 85% of girls experienced genital mutilation within the first week of life.<sup>79</sup> It is clear deep rooted beliefs are at play, leading to the widespread nature of this practice.

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<sup>68</sup> "Facts and Figures."

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "Female Genital Mutilation," World Health Organization, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> "UNICEF's Data Work on FGM/C."

<sup>75</sup> "Facts and Figures."

<sup>76</sup> "UNICEF's Data Work on FGM/C."

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.



The practice of FGM/C is tied to a number of ingrained cultural beliefs, thereby creating a pressure for people to conform and fit into their community.<sup>80</sup> These norms commonly stem from beliefs tied to the way a girl should be raised for marriage.<sup>81</sup> In some areas, FGM/C is considered a necessary step in raising a girl, contributing to her ability to be married through encouraging socially acceptable sexual behavior (falsely thought to decrease libido to ensure premarital virginity and fidelity in marriage).<sup>82</sup> This demonstrates a clear systemic issue involving the lack of education on women's reproductive health and rights which must be dealt with in order to make progress.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Most of the violence that women face is committed by an intimate partner. 30% of women across the globe who have been in a relationship report experiences of physical and/or sexual violence by a partner.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, up to 38% of murders of women are committed by their male partners.<sup>84</sup> This is just the tip of the iceberg as much of the violence experienced by women around the world goes unreported, making this data a very conservative estimate of a widespread issue.<sup>85</sup>

There are a number of negative consequences stemming from domestic violence beyond what is traditionally thought of: injury and death. This includes depression, alcohol use problems, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, and low birth weight babies.<sup>86</sup> Each of these are detrimental to the mental, physical and emotional well-being of women around the globe. Several factors increase vulnerability of women to domestic violence. The risk of intimate partner increases drastically if women are poorly educated, were abused as children or witnessed their mothers being abused by a partner, and if they exhibit attitudes of acceptance towards the idea of women's subordination.<sup>87</sup> The risk of domestic violence also increases in cases of child marriage, partly because the young women involved are poorly educated, a risk factor outlined above.<sup>88</sup> It is these factors and male dominated cultural norms which contribute to the severe prominence of domestic violence globally.

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<sup>80</sup> "Facts and Figures."

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> "Violence against Women: A 'global Health Problem of Epidemic Proportions'," World Health Organization, May 21, 2014, [https://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence\\_against\\_women\\_20130620/en/](https://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> "Facts and Figures."

<sup>86</sup> "Violence against Women."

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> "Facts and Figures."



Though the United Nations does not hold binding legal power over nations, its ability to set out international standards is critical in providing a precedent for countries to look to. One example of this was resolution 18/147 from 2004, which outlined a number of critical aspects of domestic violence as a widespread issue with specific actions to be taken by states.<sup>89</sup> The United Nations strives to *help* nations as they adopt new laws and implement the suggested preventative actions.<sup>90</sup>

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A common misconception states that women can avoid being victims of sexual harassment and assault by changing *their* behavior; they should wear modest clothing and should not walk in dangerous areas at night. This victim-blaming attitude ignores the fact that perpetrators make the conscious choice to sexually harass or assault others and insinuates that rates of sexual violence against women especially would be lowered if women simply abided by these rules. This is not the case; for instance, sexual assault and harassment are still frequently reported to occur during winter months, despite the need for more clothing to be worn in the winter than in the summer. Moreover, sexual crimes do not always occur in dark alleys or at the dead of night. For example, an American study conducted in 2016 found that over 21% of women in Washington DC report having been victims of some form of sexual harassment on public transportation.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to sexual harassment on the daily commute, women also face sexual harassment at work. One may remember the flood of sexual harassment and assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein that came to light in 2017, as many female celebrities came forward accusing him of offering them jobs in the acting industry in exchange for sexual favours. Many other prominent figures in Hollywood were subsequently exposed for their crimes as a part of the #MeToo movement. This movement is not new; though founded in 2006, the movement only became better known 11 years later after it went viral as a result of the wave of sexual crimes coming to light in Hollywood. Celebrities are evidently not the only individuals that face harassment and violence; the #MeToo movement was started by Tamara Burke in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, specifically black women and women of colour, find peace and heal after their experiences.

As was mentioned earlier, 154 countries have laws prohibiting sexual harassment, but this does not mean that they are strongly enforced or that the laws uphold the international standards and recommendations of the UN.<sup>92</sup> Even when laws are in place, sexual harassment

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<sup>89</sup> "Consequences of Sexual Assault on the Community," Stop Violence Against Women, October 26, 2012, [http://www.stopvaw.org/consequences\\_of\\_sexual\\_assault\\_on\\_the\\_community](http://www.stopvaw.org/consequences_of_sexual_assault_on_the_community).

<sup>90</sup> "Facts and Figures."

<sup>91</sup> "Statistics - The Prevalence of Street Harassment," Stop Street Harassment, accessed November 8, 2018, <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/resources/statistics/statistics-academic-studies/>.

<sup>92</sup> "Facts and Figures."

may still be prevalent as a part of a harmful convention in certain settings. For instance, the practice of demanding sexual favours in exchange for employment opportunities, often referred to as *quid pro quo* sexual harassment (Latin for ‘something for something’), is illegal in the United States. However, it is clearly still commonplace, as was made clear by the Harvey Weinstein scandal and the other high profile cases of sexual harassment in Hollywood.<sup>93</sup> Individuals in the industry came forward saying they knew of these crimes or had been victims of them for years but did not speak up earlier due to fear and a deference to the so called ‘norms’ of the industry.<sup>94</sup> Though laws can help shape public opinions and convey strong messages condemning sexual harassment against women, there is still work to be done in dismantling toxic practices of sexual harassment in cultures and societies worldwide.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST VULNERABLE GROUPS

Though violence and harassment against women is undoubtedly a far-reaching issue, minority groups are more likely to be at risk.<sup>95</sup> There is plenty of evidence suggesting that factors including sexual orientation, gender expression, ethnicity, disability status, and other circumstances like poverty may increase women’s risk of being victims of violence.<sup>96</sup> For example, a Ugandan survey found that out of 3706 11 to 12-year-old schoolchildren, 24% of the girls with disabilities reported sexual violence at school, compared to 12% of non-disabled girls.<sup>97</sup> On a similar note, a survey conducted in 2014 in the European Union found that 23% of non-heterosexual women in the LGBT community had experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by both male and female attackers.<sup>98</sup> Only 5% of heterosexual women reported such violence. Transgender women are also disproportionately affected by violence and harassment, and trans women of colour are especially at risk.<sup>99</sup> The intersections of transphobia and racism make these women especially vulnerable as they are deprived of housing, healthcare, employment, and other necessities due to discrimination.<sup>100</sup> As of October 2018, 22 transgender women were confirmed to have been killed due to violent hate-crimes, and though there are potentially many more, most victims will not be known due to misgendering in the media and in police reports.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “Quid Pro Quo Sexual Harassment,” accessed November 12, 2018, [http://www.stopvaw.org/quid\\_pro\\_quo\\_sexual\\_harassment](http://www.stopvaw.org/quid_pro_quo_sexual_harassment).

<sup>94</sup> Stephanie Zacharek, Eliana Dockterman, and Haley Sweetland Edwards, “TIME Person of the Year 2017: The Silence Breakers,” Time, accessed November 10, 2018, <http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/>.

<sup>95</sup> “Facts and Figures.”

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> “School-Related Gender-Based Violence Is Preventing the Achievement of Quality Education for All,” UNESCO, 2015, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232107>.

<sup>98</sup> “Facts and Figures.”

<sup>99</sup> “Violence Against the Transgender Community in 2018,” Human Rights Campaign, accessed November 8, 2018, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-transgender-community-in-2018>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Legal systems across the world often fail to properly punish perpetrators and ensure the continued well-being of survivors.<sup>102</sup> This is especially true for minority groups, as they are often ignored or discriminated against by law enforcement. For instance, the reports of murdered and missing Indigenous women in Canada are often not taken notice of. As a matter of fact, many major police forces in Canada do not keep track of the total number of missing Indigenous women; not even Statistics Canada keeps an up to date report.<sup>103</sup> Women in vulnerable, minority groups *often* expect to face this type of disregard when they go to the police with their stories, proving that additional support is clearly required for these victims of violence.



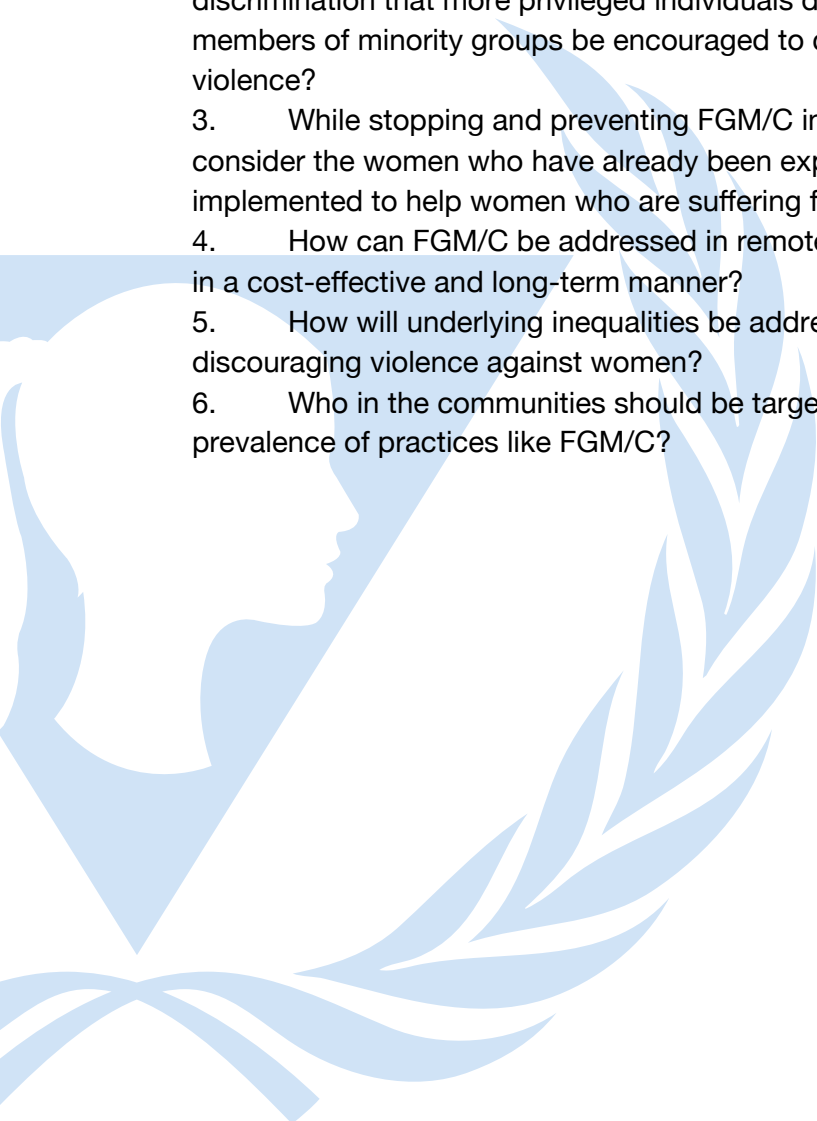
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<sup>102</sup> “Ending Violence against Women.”

<sup>103</sup> Margo McDiarmid, “Still No Clear Numbers How Many Indigenous Women Are Missing in Canada,” CBC News, last modified December 21, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/indigenous-missing-women-police-data-1.4449073>.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Many factors were listed as possible precursors to intimate partner violence: child marriage, subpar education, and abuse during childhood are among them. Should these factors be targeted for improvement as a means of reducing domestic violence? If so, which factor should be prioritized and why? If not, why?
2. Minorities and racialized groups are often distrustful of law enforcement due to discrimination that more privileged individuals do not face. How can female victims who are members of minority groups be encouraged to come forward and report incidences of violence?
3. While stopping and preventing FGM/C in the future is imperative, it is also important to consider the women who have already been exposed to FGM/C. What, if anything, should be implemented to help women who are suffering from complications from these procedures?
4. How can FGM/C be addressed in remote communities which are problematic to reach in a cost-effective and long-term manner?
5. How will underlying inequalities be addressed through the implementation of actions discouraging violence against women?
6. Who in the communities should be targeted in approaches aiming to reduce the prevalence of practices like FGM/C?



## ADVICE FOR RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

A great starting place for your research is the background guide, understand the global context of each of the issues before diving into your country's specific foreign policy and laws related to the following issues. Below, we have provided some key resources, it is in your best interest to read, these are primarily from the UN and The World Bank so they should clearly outline the international perspective. In order for you to participate in meaningful debate it is essential that you also research the conditions in your specific country.

Consider reports about your country in the context of government action, non-profit organizations and female activism. It is optimal to use varied sources from trusted resources, this can include but, is not limited to new reports, government documents, case studies, books, and academic journals. The goal of your research should be to understand the condition in your country and to find evidence to support claims that you want to make for international recommendation in resolutions.

To ensure you are well prepared, plan ahead by devising possible solutions that you can foresee would be beneficial to females within your country and beyond. It may be beneficial to research examples of countries that have implemented the strategies you are proposing so that it may serve as an example. The opposite may also be beneficial, research countries that have been less successful and understanding why their models have failed in contrast and how it can be improved.

Finally, in order for your diplomacy skills to shine during this conference it is recommended that you are familiar with the MUN procedure. The rules and guidelines can all be accessed on the UTMUN website, being well versed in procedure will ensure you can focus your energy on discussion instead of formalities. Overall, students that have spent sufficient time preparing will stand gain the most from this experience but, this must be coupled with a respect and collaboration with other delegates.

Best of Luck!

## TOPIC A KEY RESOURCES

Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment". UN Women. Accessed November 9,2018.  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>  
*Good starting point for background research, as it provides a general overview of the global effects of economic empowerment of females.*

Kim, Jim. "To build a bright future, invest in women and girls." The World Bank. Accessed November 9,2018.  
<https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/build-brighter-future-invest-women-and-girls>  
*Assessment and research from the world bank that supports the notion that women are girls are a valuable investment but also, drastically change a community my reinvesting into their families.*

"Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank," Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank, Accessed November 11, 2018. <http://www.womensbank.co.zw>  
*Related to Zimbabwe all women bank, outlines the countries initiatives that could be applied elsewhere*

Wood, John. "104 countries have laws that prevent women from working in some jobs". World Economic Forum. Accessed November 9, 2018.  
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/08/104-countries-have-laws-that-prevent-women-from-working-in-some-jobs>  
*Outlines the barrier that women are facing today, when trying to access the labour market, as well as the conditions and type of work that women are given.*

## TOPIC B KEY RESOURCES

C.Berryman, C., Ferguson, C.J. & Negy, C. Psychiatr Q (2018) 89: 307.  
*Discusses the effects of social media on mental health.*

Dijck, José van, The culture of connectivity : a critical history of social media, Oxford University Press, 2013  
*A historical and critical analysis of major social media platforms.*

Djafarova, Elmira, and Chloe Rushworth. "Exploring the Credibility of Online Celebrities' Instagram Profiles in Influencing the Purchase Decisions of Young Female Users." *Computers in Human Behavior* 68. Complete (2017): 1-7.  
*Discusses the effects of Instagram influencers on young women's purchasing habits, and the extent of their influence.*

"Social Media Harassment of Women Politicians." *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Autumn 2017, p. 28+.  
*A discussion between three women politicians on their experiences being harassed on social media.*

## TOPIC C KEY RESOURCES

Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women. Accessed November 08, 2018.  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

*A good starting point for research on the committee and its role in the United Nations.*

"Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women." UN Women. Accessed November 08, 2018. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

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