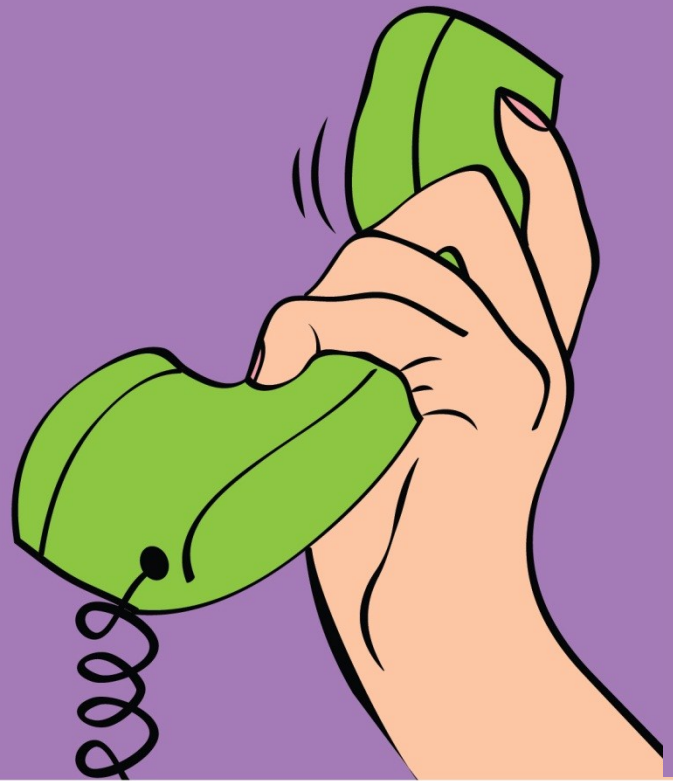


# CYBER HARASSMENT HELPLINE

SIX MONTH REPORT  
DECEMBER 2016 - MAY 2017



**0800-39393**

Monday to Friday between 9AM to 5PM



Digital  
Rights Foundation

"KNOW YOUR RIGHTS"

# About

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Digital Rights Foundation envisions a place where all people, and especially women, are able to exercise their right of expression without being threatened. Digital Rights Foundation believes that a free internet with access to information and impeccable privacy policies can encourage such a healthy and productive environment that would eventually help not only women, but the world at large.

# Acknowledgments

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The Helpline Team would like to thank everyone who has stepped up to support its operations and assist in spreading the word. The media has been eager to report on our work, which has meant that a lot more people have found out about our young Helpline. So thank you everyone who supported us and continue to follow-up.

We would also like to acknowledge some of our supporters who have gone above and beyond to help us become better at what we do in such a short span of time. Thank you to Dr. Safieh Shah for helping us develop mechanisms around mental health at the Helpline. A special nod to Rozan for helping us at our infancy. And to the DRF team (especially the communications and digital security team) for propping us up and constantly inspiring us to be better--we would have never gotten to six months without you.

And lastly, to our fearless leader Nighat Dad who conceived this idea and brought it to life through tireless hard work and sheer force of will. Here's to many more milestones!

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# Background

Digital Rights Foundation’s (DRF) Cyber Harassment Helpline was launched after the successful completion of the *Hamara Internet* (translates as “Our Internet”) project,<sup>1</sup> and its findings in the “Measuring Pakistani Women’s Experience of Online Violence” report.<sup>2</sup> It was found that there is a serious gap when it comes to addressing online harassment in individual cases and many women were not comfortable taking their complaints to the law enforcement agencies (LEAs).

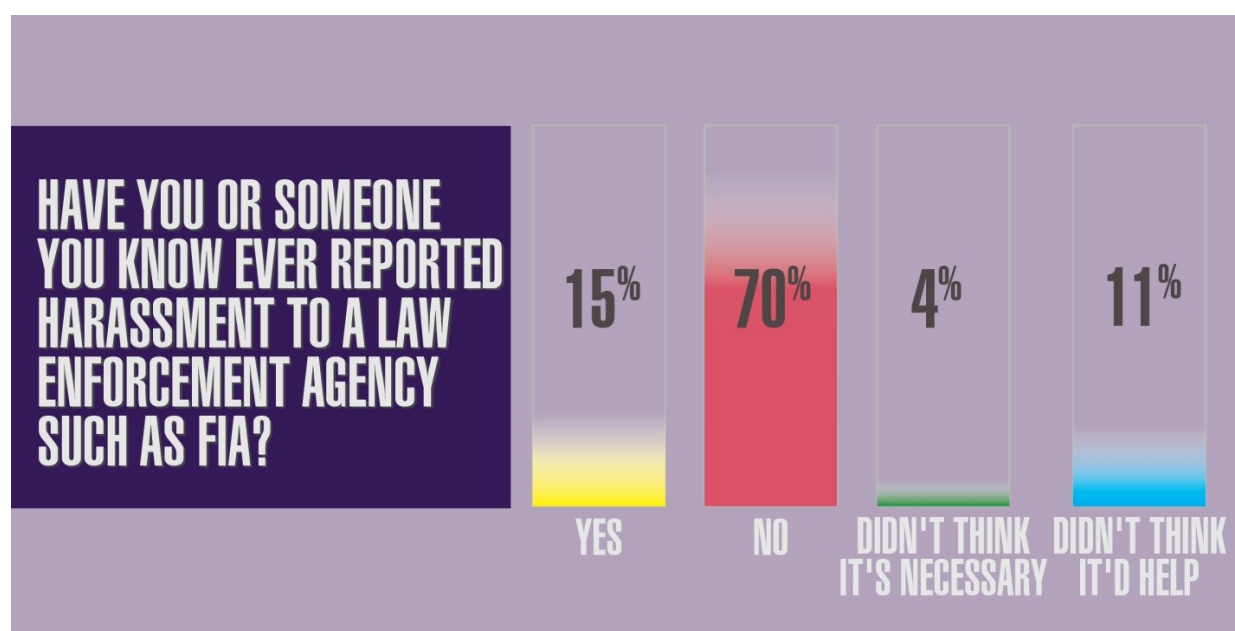


Figure 1: Have you, or someone you know, ever reported harassment to a law enforcement agency such as the FIA?

<sup>1</sup> The Hamara Internet project was a nation-wide campaign that provided training sessions for female university students regarding cyber harassment and digital security. The campaign reached 1800 young women and operated in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan.

<sup>2</sup> “Measuring Pakistani Women’s Experience of Online Violence: A Quantitative Research Study on Online Gender-based Harassment in Pakistan,” *Digital Rights Foundation*, <http://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Hamara-Internet-Online-Harassment-Report.pdf>.



*Figure 2: Why do you think that women don't report harassment?*

The Helpline seeks to address these gaps in the system and problems that women face by providing a gender-sensitive, confidential and safe space for those facing online harassment. The Helpline Support Staff has developed comprehensive [policies](#) around privacy, caller confidentiality and high-quality service.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Privacy and Confidentiality Policy: Cyber Harassment Helpline", [http://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Public-Policy-for-Helpline\\_30.11.2016-1.pdf](http://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Public-Policy-for-Helpline_30.11.2016-1.pdf).

# About: Pakistan's first Cyber Harassment Helpline

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DRF's Cyber Harassment Helpline is the region's first dedicated helpline for cases of online harassment and violence. The Support Team includes a qualified psychologist, digital security expert, and trained lawyer, all of whom provide specialised assistance when needed. The Helpline strives to help women, children, human rights defenders, minority communities and anyone who might feel unsafe in digital spaces.

The soft launch of the Helpline was on November 28, 2016 and it officially began taking calls on December 1, 2016. The Helpline is operational from Monday to Friday between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Helpline team can be contacted outside of office timings through email at [helpdesk@digitalrightsfoundation.pk](mailto:helpdesk@digitalrightsfoundation.pk).

This document is part of a series of quarterly reports by the Cyber Harassment Helpline to ensure transparency of its operations, share its experiences and add to the dearth of data around online harassment in Pakistan.

# Helpline Data: Understanding cyber harassment in Pakistan

## Total Number of Cases

The primary channel for communication for the Helpline is its toll-free number; however the Support Staff also handles complaints over email and Facebook inbox. The Helpline has received **763 complaints** in the form of calls, emails and Facebook messages from December 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017.

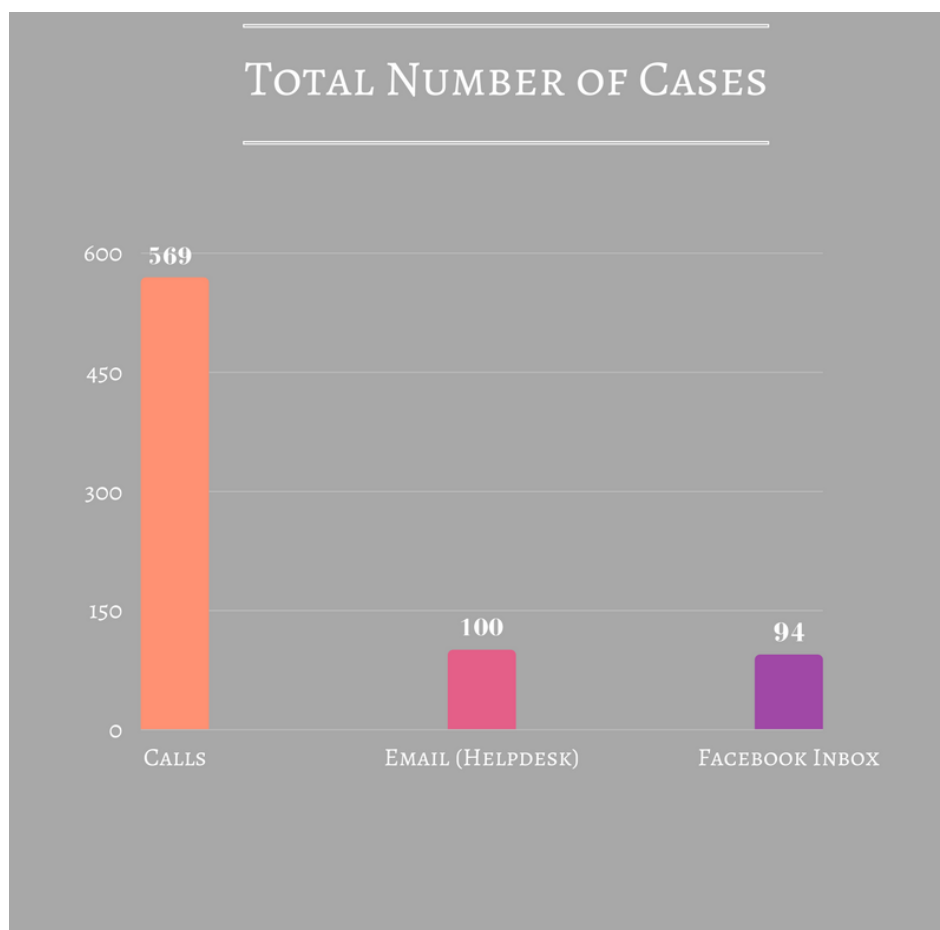


Figure 3: This breakdown is based on the number of individual complaints, and not the total number of calls, messages and emails that we received.

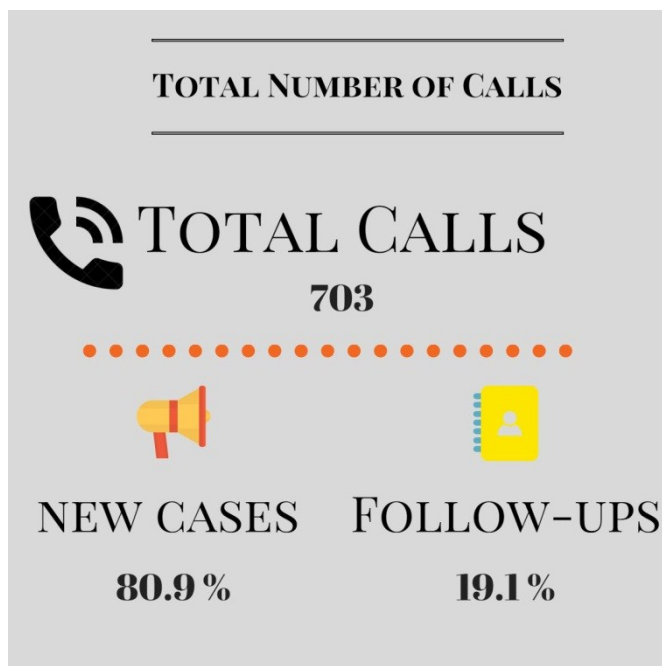


## Volume of Calls

In its first six months, the Cyber Harassment Helpline received 703 calls on its toll-free number.<sup>4</sup> Out of the total number of **703 calls**, 569 were first time callers and 134 were follow-up calls from people who were either updating their assigned officer about their case or seeking additional information.

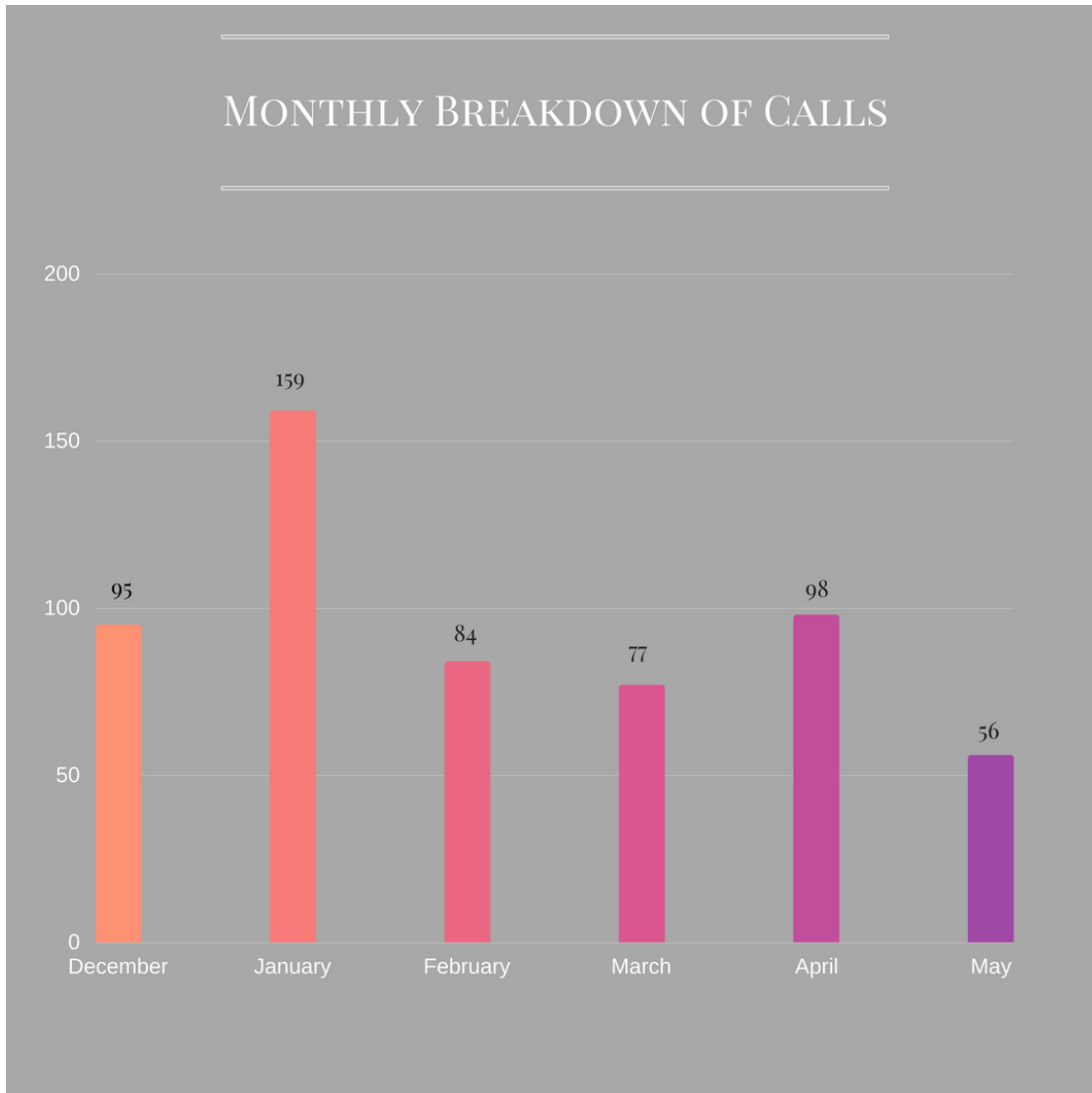
<b>Total Calls</b>	703
<b>Total New Call (Individual Cases)</b>	569
<b>Total Follow-Up Calls</b>	134

The flow of calls in the six months was quite sustained, with a surge in the months of January and April. The Helpline has been able to maintain an average of 82 calls per month.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that these numbers do not reflect the total number of calls received at the Helpline as we do not count calls outside of the Helpline hours and on non-working days (weekends and national holidays).

<sup>5</sup> We excluded the month of January from the mean calculation given that it was an outlier.

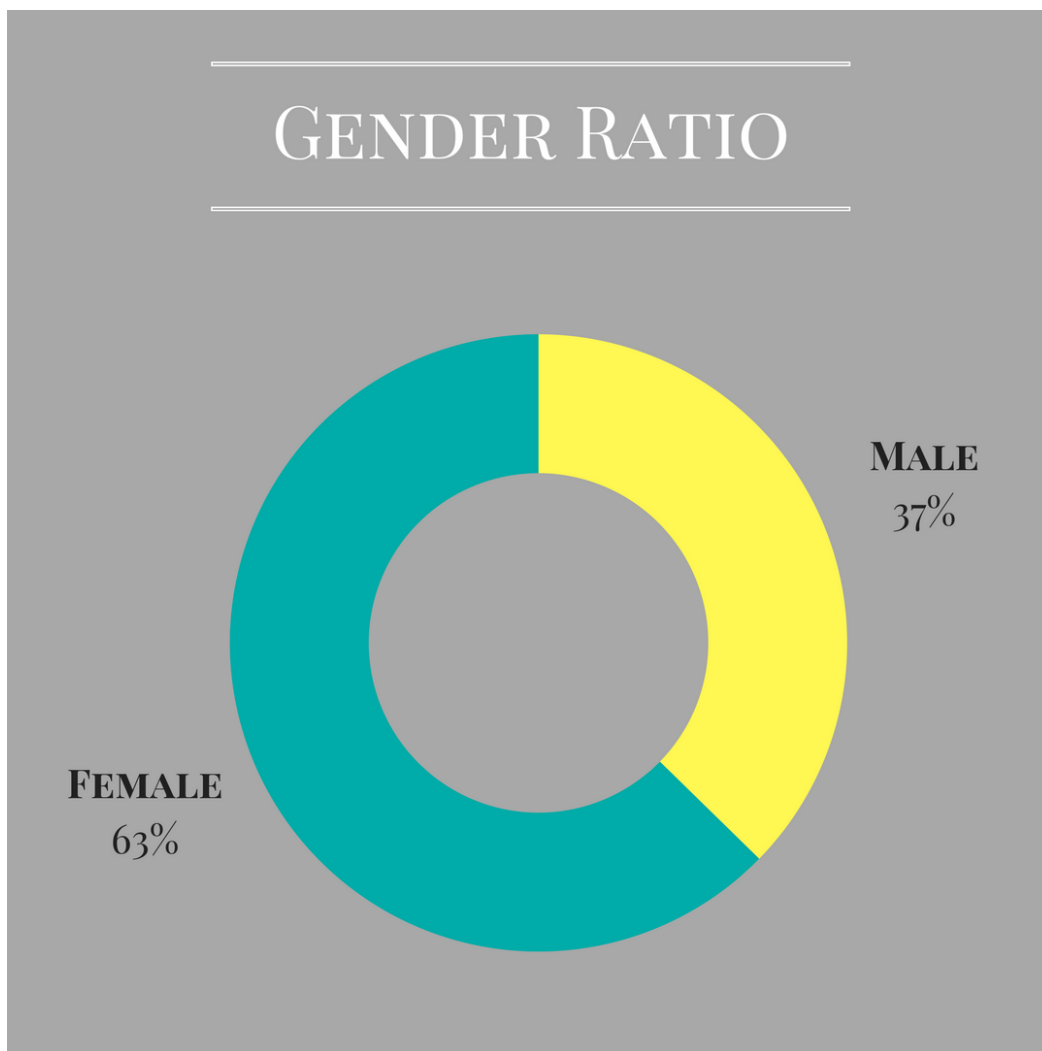


*Figure 4: This data is based on the total number of calls attended, not number of individual cases.*

The Helpline Support Staff only collects demographic information from the callers, and not through Facebook or email. For this reason, the rest of the analysis is based exclusively on calls which is also the primary service provided by the Helpline.

## Gender

The gender ratio has remained consistent since our Four Month Report.<sup>6</sup> Women were the primary victims of online harassment as per our data. We conduct our gender analysis using two sets of data: 1) gender ratio of the callers, and 2) a gender breakdown along “caller type.”<sup>7</sup>



*Figure 5: This data is derived from the total number of individual cases, not the total number of calls. A small discrepancy of 6 exists due the inability to get gendered information given the sensitive nature of certain calls.*

<sup>6</sup> The gender ratio at the four month mark was 62:37 (Female:Male).

<sup>7</sup> We categorize caller-type along these lines: a) “self”: the caller is calling about their own case; b) “on behalf of a friend”: the caller is not experiencing the harassment first-hand, but calling to report the harassment experienced by a friend; and c) “on behalf of a family member”: the caller is not experiencing the harassment first-hand, but calling to report the harassment experienced by a family member.

However, only 422 of our total callers have been categorized as “self”, calling about their own case. The gender data is thus distorted if the caller is relaying the experience of someone else, because the data only records the identity of the person calling and not the gender of the person experiencing the harassment. 82 of our calls are on behalf of a family member and 38 have been on behalf of a friend. In order to account for these situations we provide the “Gender Breakdown” data.

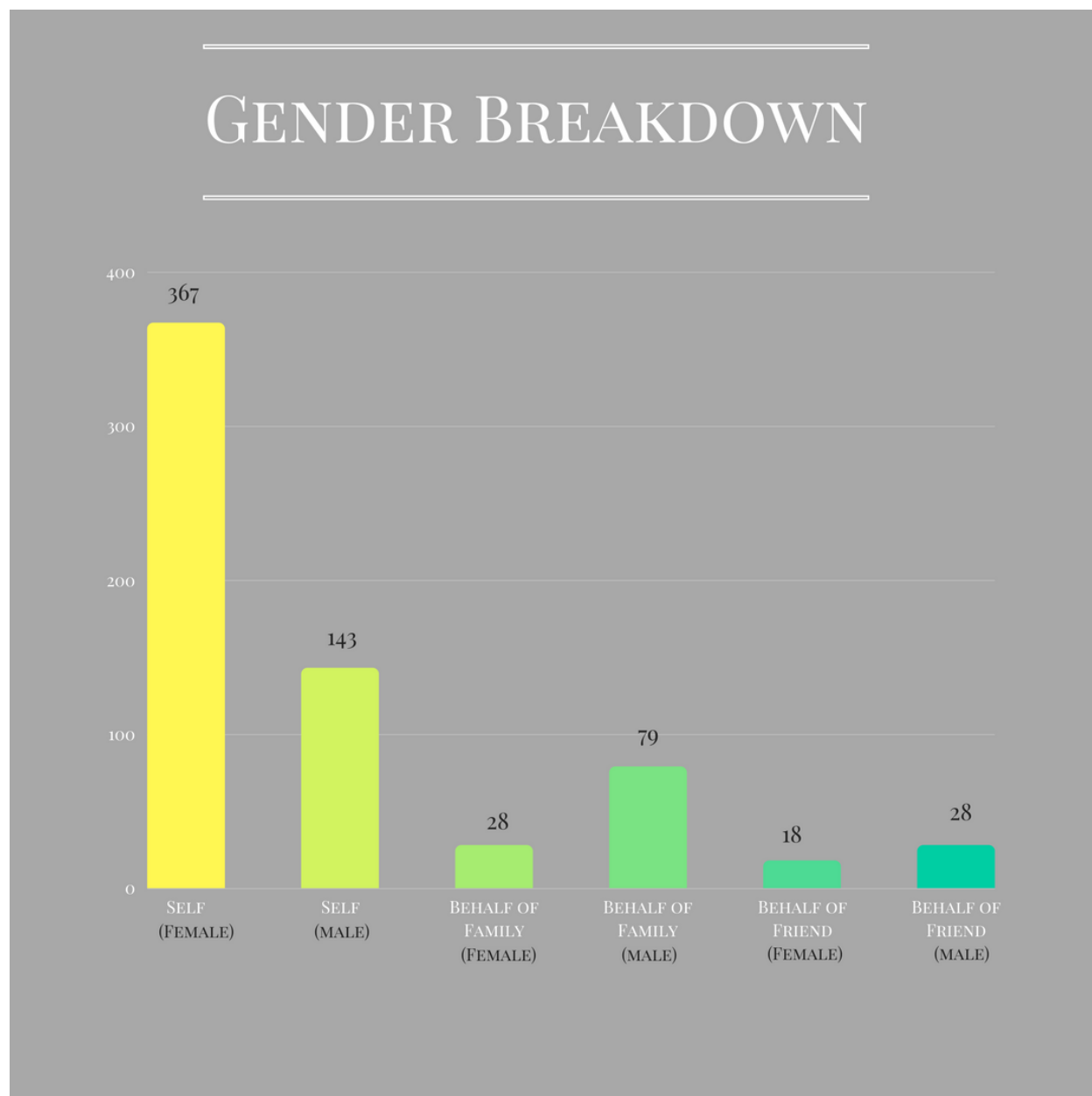


Figure 6: This data is based on the total number of calls. There is a discrepancy of 40 calls where we were unable to collect the relevant information.

It is apparent from the data that more men are calling on behalf of someone they know. In our experience, most of the time men are calling on behalf of women.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> To account for this gap in data, the Helpline has started to record the gender of both the caller and the person experiencing the harassment from June onwards--however this insight is not reflected in the current report since it deals with data from December, 2016 to May, 2017.

## Types of Cases

In order to better analyse the needs of the Helpline as well as general trends of online harassment in Pakistan, we categorize the cases according to predetermined typologies. The following are definitions that we use to sort the cases:

**Information Seeking:** These are general inquiries that we receive regarding cyber harassment, digital security, Digital Rights Foundation and the work that we do. This category also includes inquiries that we get outside the realm of digital rights, in which case our Helpline Support Staff redirects the caller to the relevant authorities and organizations.

**Fake Profile:** Fake profile or impersonation is when someone's identity is appropriated without their permission. This manifests itself in profiles purporting to or belonging to someone on social media websites, and contacting people through texts or calls pretending to be someone else.

**Blackmailing:** This often involves using personal information or psychological manipulation to make threats and demands from the victim.

**Unsolicited Messages:** Unsolicited messages are unwanted and repeated contact with someone which may include spam, repeated requests for contact, personalised threats, blackmail or any unwanted messages that make the receiver feel uncomfortable.

**Hacking:** Gaining unauthorized access to someone's electronic system, data, account and devices.

**Federal Investigation Authority (FIA)-related Inquiry:** These are queries we get regarding the complaint procedure of the National Response Centre for Cyber Crime (NR3C) of the FIA. These callers often want to file a formal, legal complaint. It also includes persons who are contacting the Helpline after they have dealt with the FIA, either to get advice on their case or to complain about the FIA officials or process.

**Non-Consensual Usage of Information:** This involves using, sharing, disseminating, and manipulating data such as photographs, phone numbers, contacts, and other personal information without consent and in violation of the privacy of a person.

**Online Stalking:** Online stalking is keeping track of someone's online activity in a way that it makes the subject of the stalking uncomfortable. For the purpose of this report, online stalking also refers to (repeatedly) contacting a person's friends and/or family.

**Doxxing:** Doxxing is the practice of leaking and publishing information of an individual that includes personally identifiable information. This information is meant to target, locate and contact an individual, usually through social media, discussion boards, chat rooms and the like;

and more often than not, is accompanied by cyberbullying and cyberstalking.

**Gender-based Bullying:** Any actions, statements, and implications that targets a person based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. Evaluations for gender-based bullying take into account the overall connotations attached to actions and verbal communications within the larger system of gendered oppression and patterns of behaviour that signify abuse.

**Non-Consensual Pornographic Pictures:** This is obtaining, using, distributing or retaining pictures, videos or graphic representations without a person's consent that violate their personal dignity.

**Financial Fraud:** Intentional actions of deception perpetrated by a person for the purpose of financial gain and profit; this includes using someone's financial data to gain access to accounts and make purchases. For the purpose of our operations, we confine our definition to fraud conducted through electronic means.

**Stalking:** This category includes monitoring, physical following, and harassment that occur outside of online spaces.

**Non-Consensual Photoshopped Pictures:** The manipulation, distortion or doctoring of images without the permission of the person to whom they belong. This is often accompanied by distribution and sharing of such pictures as well.

**Threats of Sexual/Physical Violence:** An action or verbal communication that results in the reasonable fear of sexual or physical attack.

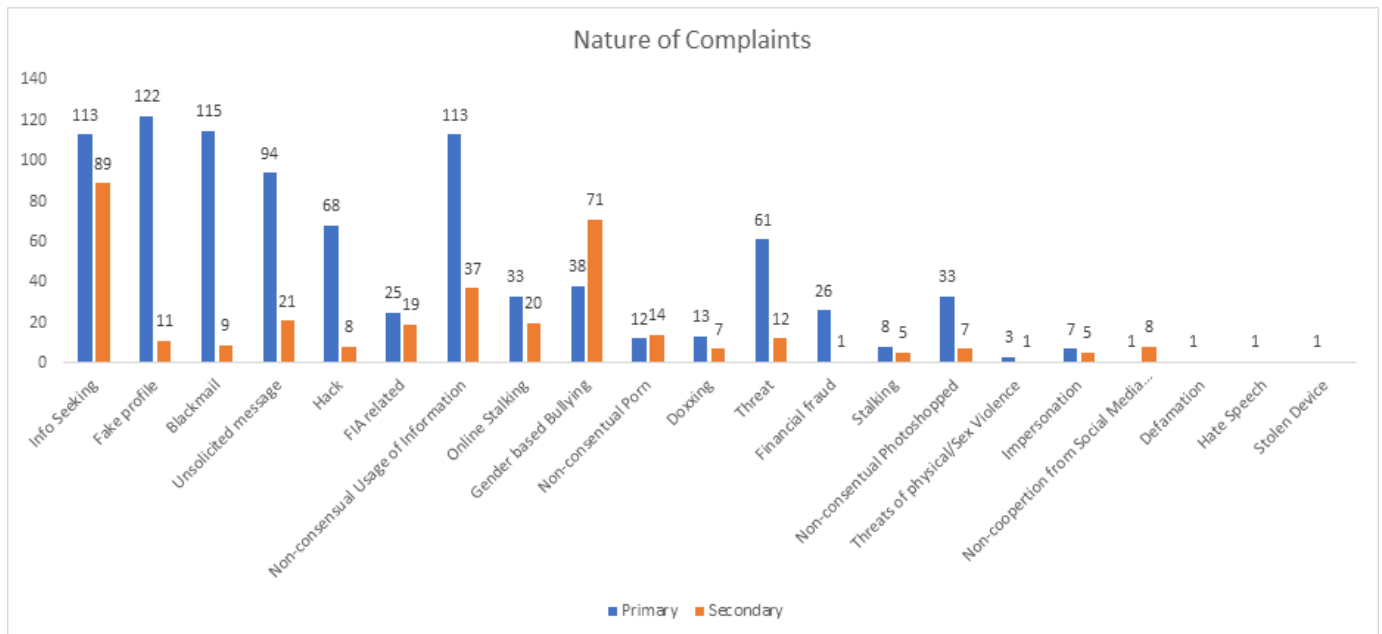
**Non-Cooperation from Social Media Platforms:** These complaints refer to a situation when a person has reported a case of cyber harassment to the relevant social media team, but has not received a decision in their favor.

**Stolen Device:** Cases where personal information, digital safety or privacy is compromised as a result of theft or misplaced electronic device.

**Threats:** These are all threats directed at the victim of online harassment that do not fall under the category of gender-based threats or sexual/physical violence.

**Defamation:** Any intentional, false communication purporting to be a fact that harms or causes injury to the reputation of a natural person.

**Hate Speech:** Any communication that targets or attacks an individual on the basis of their race, religion, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation. Hate speech becomes a matter of urgent action when it puts its target in physical danger or the reasonable apprehension of physical danger. However hate speech is not restricted to just incitement to violence, it is hate speech if it leads to the exclusion of or creation of a hostile online environment for its target.

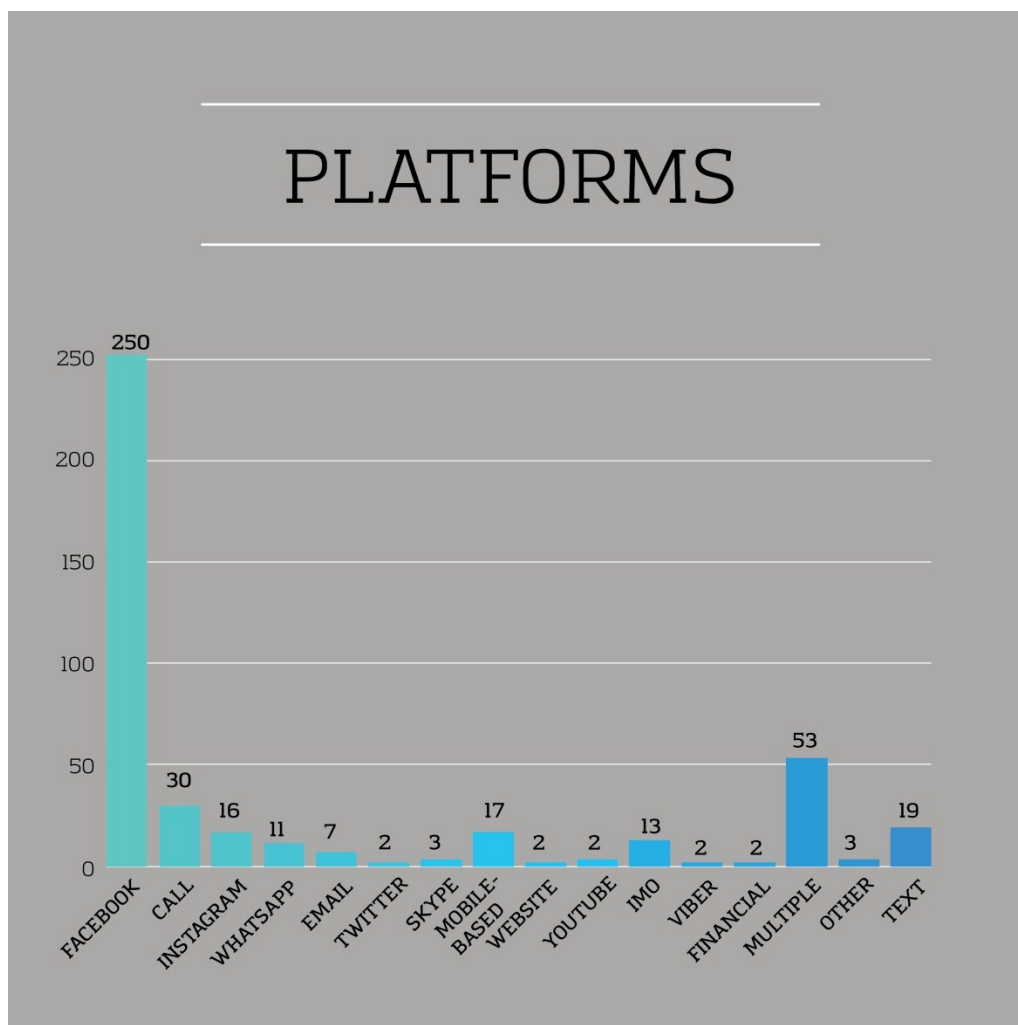


*Figure 7: This data is based on the total number of cases. Keep in mind that some of callers reported more than one type of complaint. The Helpline Support Staff categorized the nature of the complaint as “secondary” and “primary” according to the facts of each individual case.*



## Platforms

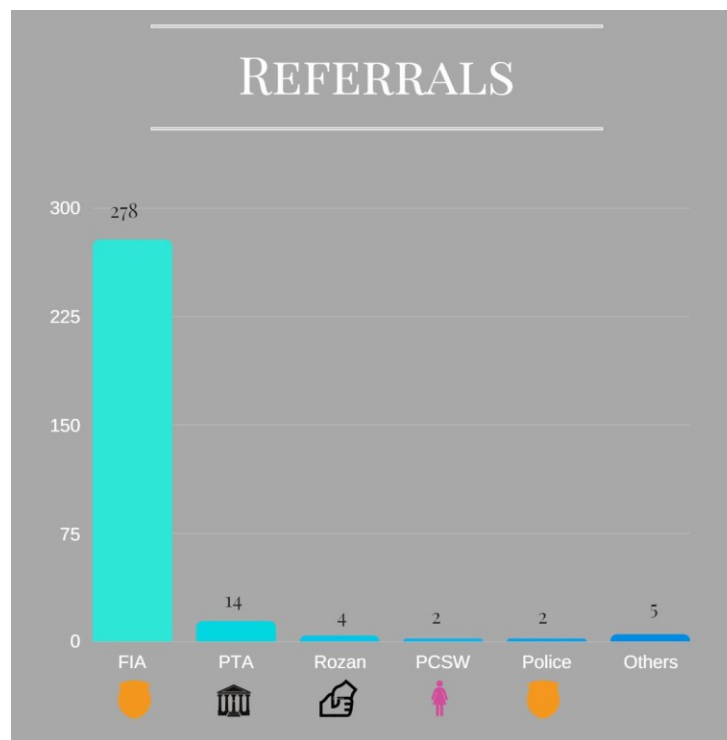
The Helpline deals with cases of harassment which occur across multiple digital platforms and spaces. Through Figure 8 (below) we wish to identify the mediums and social media platforms that are the most common sites for harassment. The companies that own these platforms are diverse in their policies, community guidelines and mechanisms to address harassment. Furthermore, since most of these companies have offices in foreign jurisdictions there is often a cultural and language barrier when it comes to reporting cases of online harassment. By far the biggest number of complaints at the Helpline relate to Facebook (250 complaints).



*Figure 8: This data is based on the total number of individual cases handled by the Helpline. There is a discrepancy of 78 cases as this category of data was not adequately and systematically obtained in the first month of operations (December).*

## Referrals

Given that DRF is a non-governmental organization, there are certain limitations to our investigative powers. When a caller wants to pursue a legal case or investigate into the identity of their harasser, the Helpline Staff informs them about the National Response Centre for Cyber Crime (NR3C) of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Nevertheless, the final decision is with the caller whether they want to follow through on the referral. In cases of emergency, situations that require immediate action from Law Enforcement Authorities (LEAs) or when specialised services are needed, our Staff refers the case to other relevant government authorities or NGOs for assistance.



*Figure 9: This data is based on the total number of individual cases, not number of total calls attended. Not all cases are referred to external organizations, which is why there is a gap between the number of cases referred (305) and total number of cases.*

As is evident above, most of our cases are referred to the FIA, given that it is the designated agency under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016.

## Geographical Distribution

The caller data of the Cyber Harassment Helpline was also segregated by geographical location and collected from callers who felt comfortable with providing it. A majority of the cases received by the Helpline were from Punjab (44%), the most populous province. However the fact that a significant portion of our cases were from the federal capital (8.7%) as compared to only 1.6% from the entire province of Balochistan shows a gap in our outreach strategies, an aspect we plan to address in the next quarter of operations.

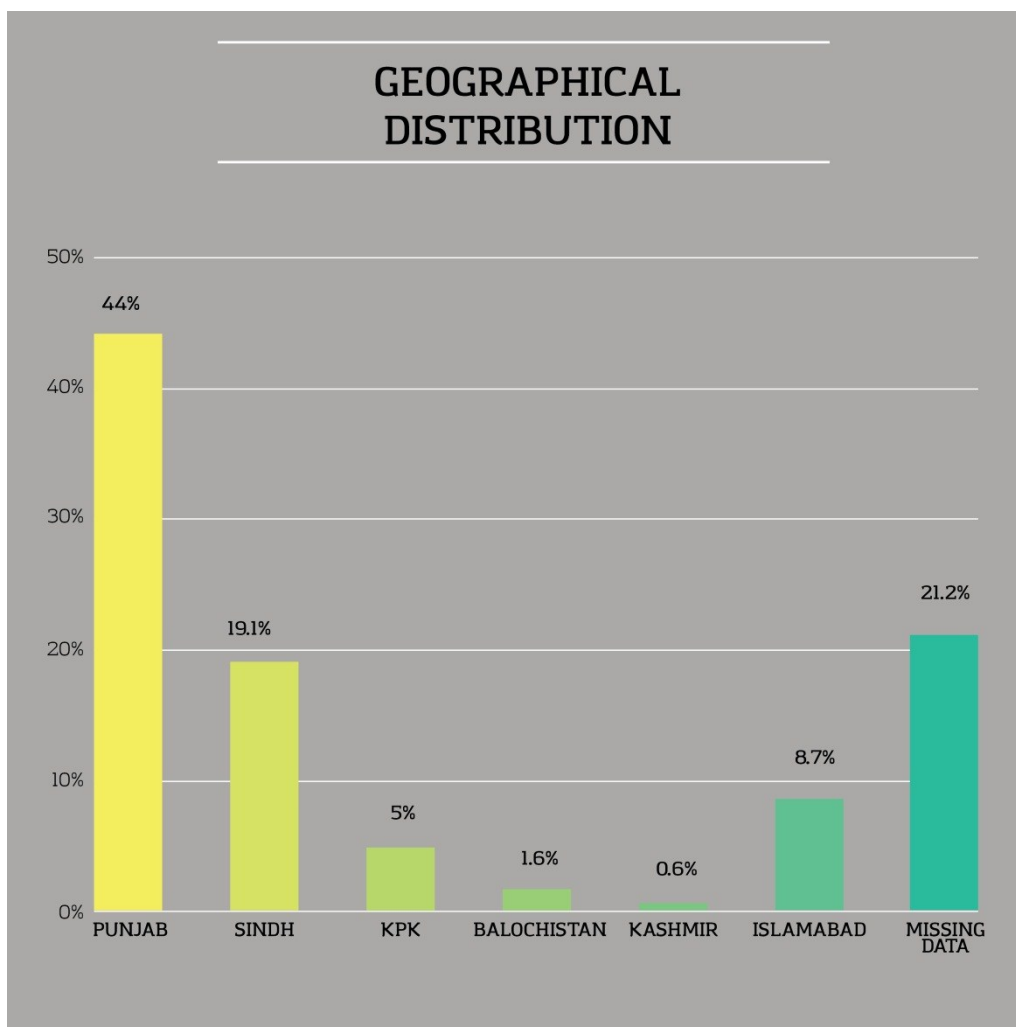


Figure 10: This distribution is based on the number of individual cases.

## (In)accessibility to FIA's Offices

Ease of access to LEAs is one of the most important determinants to access to justice and reporting of crimes. The fact that the FIA's National Response Centres for Cyber Crime are only located in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi and Lahore (6 major cities) is a great impediment to reporting cyber harassment, and cybercrime in general. The FIA's procedure for reporting requires that the complainant travel to the NR3C's office in person and register their case in order to commence legal proceedings. As mentioned above, 39.5% of the cases the Helpline receives come under the domain of the FIA.

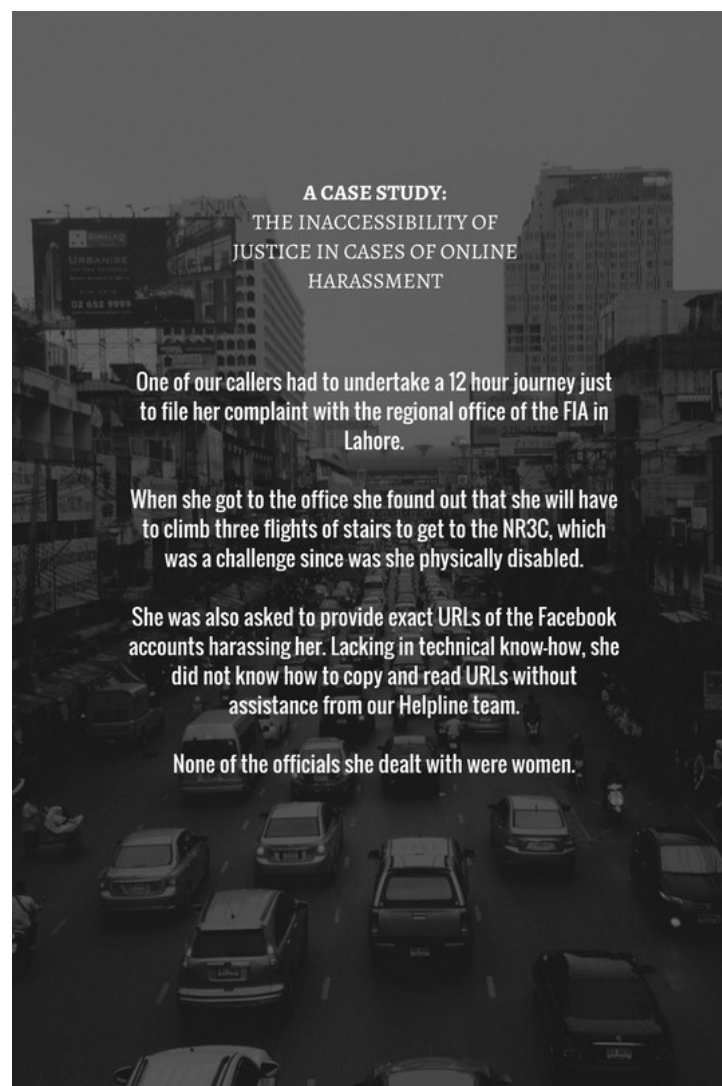


Figure 11 below shows the number of calls received from cities with offices of the NR3C (“major cities”) in comparison to the number of calls from other cities and

areas (“other cities”). If callers from “other cities” want to pursue a legal case they will have to travel to their nearest NR3C, located in a different city, simply to lodge a complaint. Furthermore, this journey will have to be made regularly if they chose to follow up on the case. We received around 355 cases from areas with no offices of the NR3C, adding a layer of inaccessibility to the entire process.

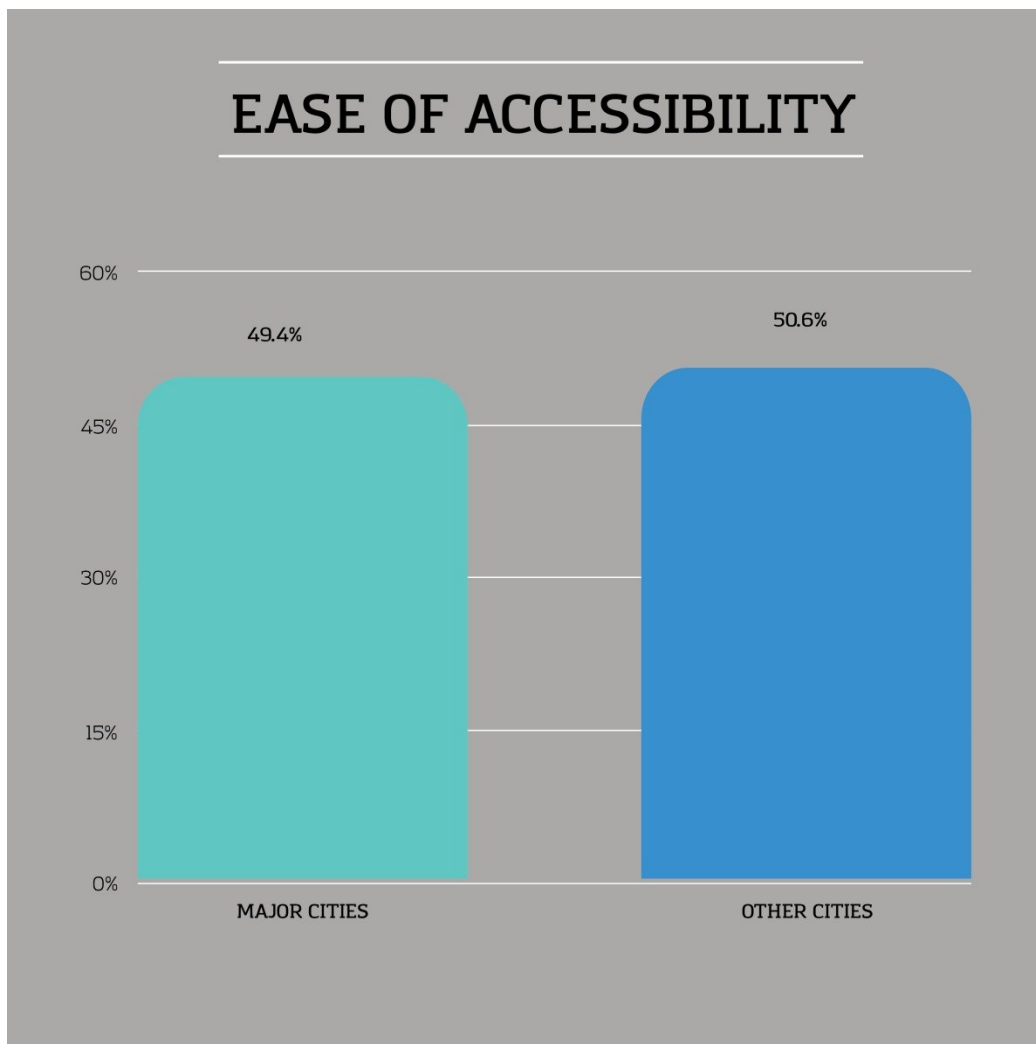


Figure 11: This data is based on individual cases, not the total number of cases.

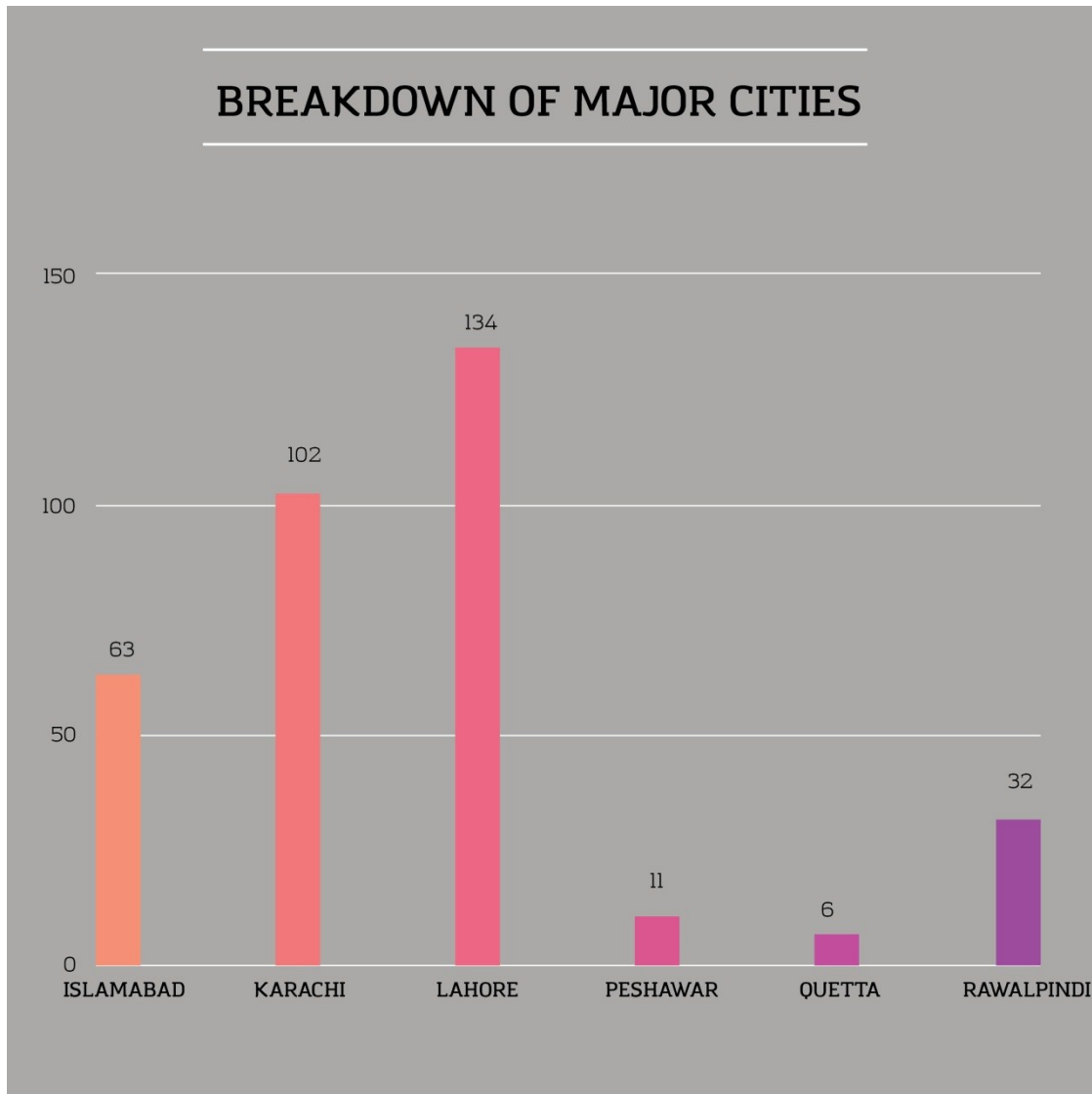


Figure 12: This data is based on the number of individual cases.

## Mental Health

After the Helpline’s Four Month Report, DRF identified that there was a gap in its data regarding the mental health consequences of online harassment. To address this gap, DRF has conducted a descriptive and psychological review of data gathered through calls on Pakistan's first cyber harassment helpline to understand effects of cyber harassment on women's mental health. Jannat Fazal explored this through an abstract titled “Online harassment: a retrospective review of records”.<sup>9</sup>

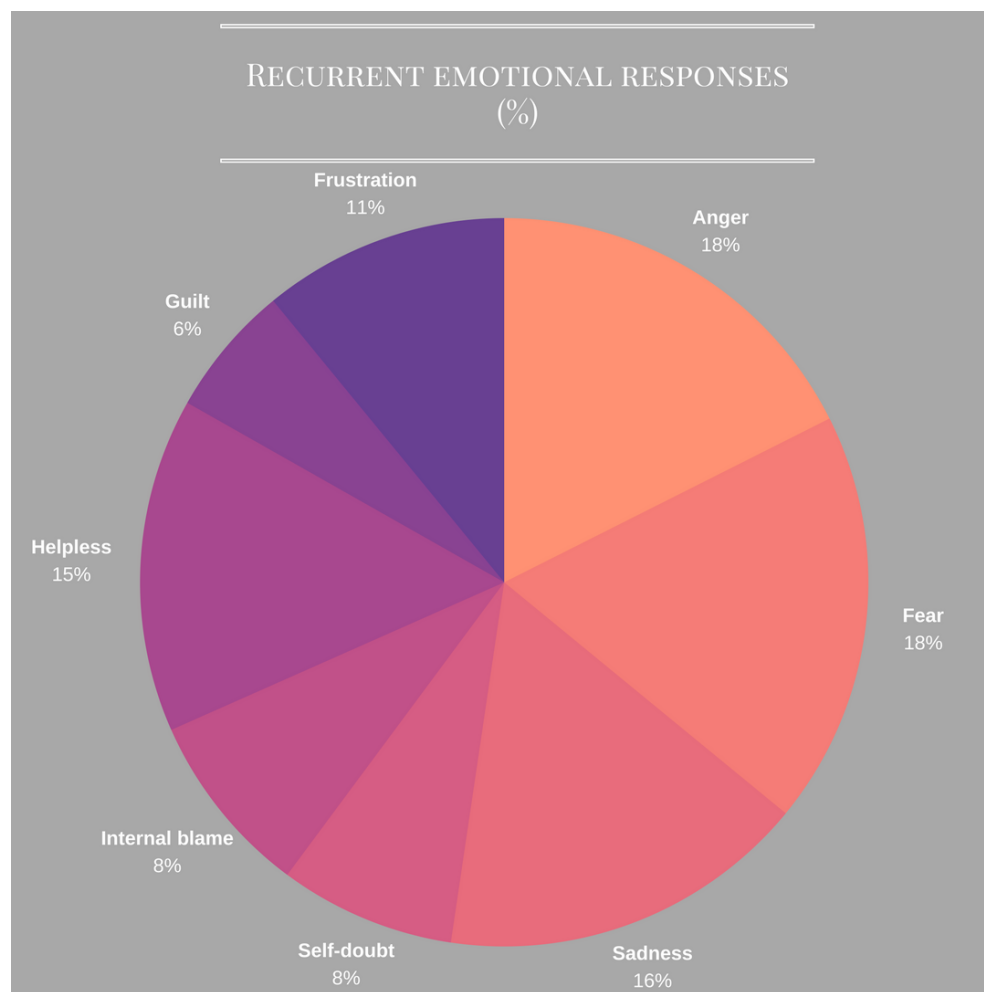


Figure 13: This data is based on a sample of 50 calls where psychological data was recorded.

<sup>9</sup> “Online harassment: a retrospective review of records”, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Scientific Day South Asia 2017, <https://f1000research.com/slides/6-785>.

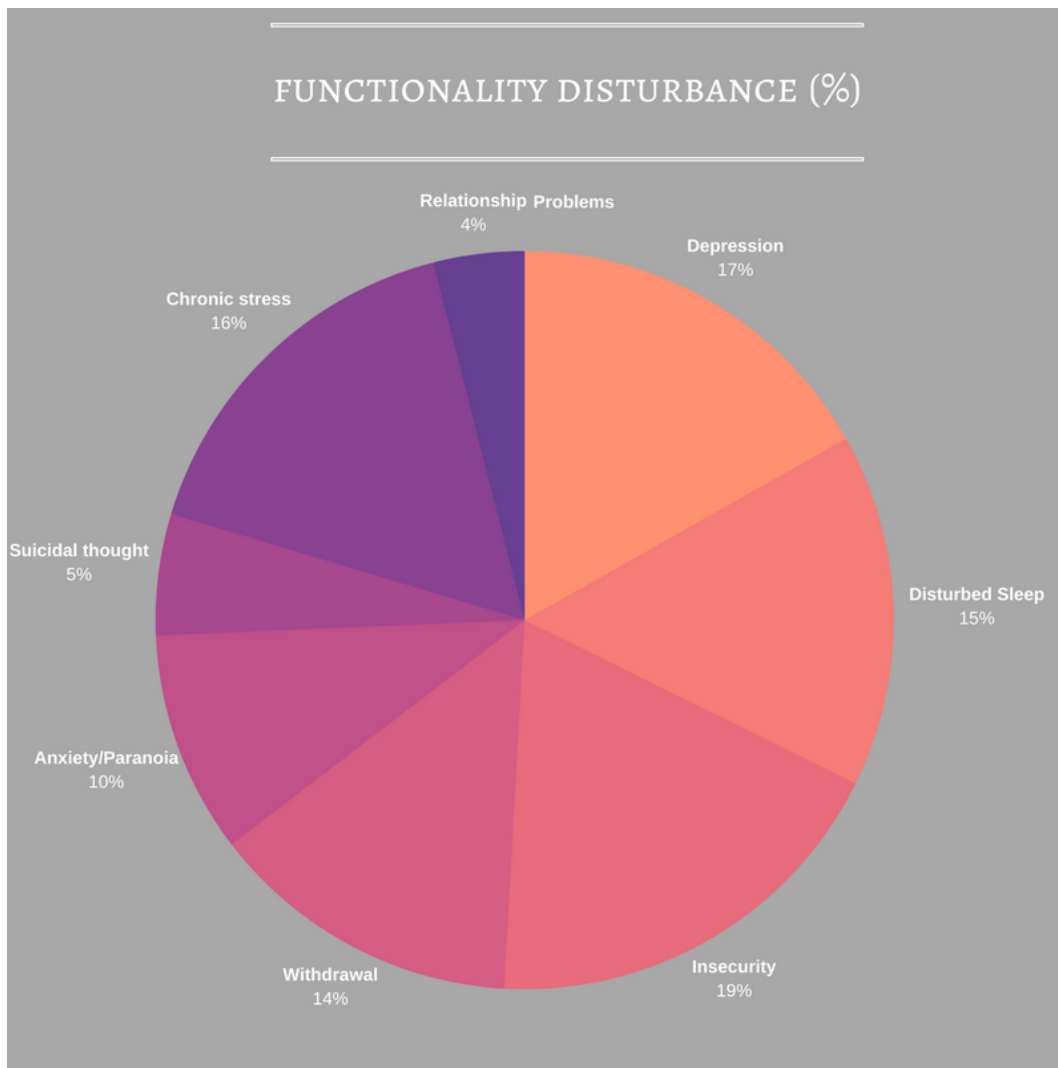


Figure 14: This data is based on a sample of 50 calls where psychological data was recorded.

We plan to continue exploring the psychological effects of online harassment through our online campaigns and add to the discourse through further research.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Further reading: Jannat Fazal, "Cyber Harassment: How Real is it for A Survivor's Mental Health?", Digital Rights Foundation: Blogs, April 10, 2017, <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/cyber-harassment-how-real-is-it-for-a-survivors-mental-health/>.



# Roadmap for Helpline

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The Helpline has met its quarterly goal of successfully launching its operations and sustaining a steady and consistent number of calls in its first 6 months. The Helpline now plans to expand its geographical reach and policy advocacy. The Helpline will conduct outreach in less urban settings to ensure that awareness about its services is not just restricted to major cities. Online harassment and violence is not solely an urban issue and as cases such as the Kohistan case show, women in these areas are even more vulnerable due to lack of institutional support.<sup>11</sup>

The Helpline wishes to establish a more robust referral mechanism with the law enforcement agencies to ensure timely registration of cases and speedy investigation.

We have set in motion plans to expand the timings of Helpline to seven days a week to ensure greater access. We have observed that a lot of people are not able to call within working hours in a weekday, which is why we wish to hire more support staff to cover more shifts.

In terms of data collection, the Helpline team has used the six month mark to stake stock and review data collection mechanisms. Data, such as mental health indicators, were not being collected. In the next quarter, we plan to start collecting demographic information from our email communications as well. Data regarding age has also been missing from our analysis and our new data collection mechanism will account for the oversight.

On the advocacy front, DRF wishes to build on the overwhelming response its first quarterly report received to launch advocacy campaigns to ensure better implementation of laws. In the next quarter, Helpline reports will be accompanied by policy briefs which will use the data generated by the Helpline to suggest policy interventions. DRF envisions data and victim led reform as part of the future work of the Helpline.

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<sup>11</sup> Naveed Siddiqui, "Kohistan video case: Girls declared alive by SC had actually been killed, says Bari," *Dawn*, October 21, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1291398>.

# Recommendations

- **Greater resource allocation to LEAs:** The FIA's NR3C, which handles cases of online harassment, is criminally under-resourced. For instance, there are only 11 Investigation Officers for all 36 districts of Punjab. The NR3C teams are burdened with not just online harassment cases of an entire province, but all cybercrime related complaints. Given the extent of the problem and huge volume of cases, the lack of human resources leads to inordinate delays. We urge the Ministry of Interior to allocate more resources to the NR3C for the specific purpose of tackling online harassment.
- **A Rapid Response Cell:** Certain cyber harassment cases require urgent action for redressal. In certain cases where sensitive personal information is leaked or threatened to be leaked, immediate action is necessary. The FIA currently lacks the ability to provide these emergency services. Thus a rapid response cell that is operational 24/7 needs to be established in addition to the regular operations of the NR3C.
- **Training, Gender-sensitization and coordination with gender departments:** There is an urgent need for better trained Investigation Officers and gender-sensitization in the processes of the NR3C. Furthermore, more female officers are required to handle cases around online harassment, especially in situations where women are not comfortable speaking to male officers about their experiences. We also recommend that kiosks be set up all over Punjab that could work in tandem with the women crisis centres that fall under the Social Welfare departments in Pakistan.
- **Better service delivery for citizens:** The FIA needs to provide a better service to the public and citizens who wish to contact them. The helpline number of the NR3C (9911) is often reported to be inactive and non-responsive, which discourages a lot of women from pursuing their complaint. The alternatives, NR3C office landline numbers, are also consistently busy or unavailable - accessibility to LEA goes hand in hand with proper enforcement of the law. Currently, there is a response lag of around 30-60 days between filling out the online complaint [form](#)<sup>12</sup> of the NR3C and contact from the office about going forward with the complaint.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** The FIA needs to develop clear and public

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<sup>12</sup> The form can be found at: <http://www.nr3c.gov.pk/creport.php>.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) privacy, confidentiality and protection of evidentiary data and identity of the complaints. We have seen that women are often reluctant to provide evidence in cases of cyber harassment given the lack of SOPs around sensitive and personal information. Evidentiary procedures often require women to submit physical, hard copies of pictures and conversations containing highly personal information.

- **Greater geographical access:** Based on the data highlighted in the “Geographical Distribution” section, 50.6% of our callers cannot approach the FIA without leaving their city of residence. Travelling to the FIA’s NR3C headquarters requires a huge investment in both time and money for many, which impedes their access to justice. We strongly urge more and geographically accessible offices of the NR3C in order to facilitate women from smaller cities in lodging their complaints.
- **Greater accessibility for disabled persons:** Upon visits to several regional offices of the NR3C, we have identified that some of the branches do not have adequate facilities to accommodate persons with disabilities. Functioning elevators, ramp for wheelchairs, accessible toilet facilities and assistance in filing applications are minimum requirements that every NR3C office should meet.
- **Awareness-raising:** Greater awareness raising regarding cyber harassment, privacy and data protection through public service messages by the FIA, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Ministry of Information Technology. We recommend public service message advertisements and social media awareness campaigns to promote awareness about PECA, repercussions and the procedure of filing a complaint in easy and citizen-friendly ways. NR3C offices should have clearly displayed posters (with visual aids) explaining the reporting processes and rights of citizens.
- **Psychological needs:** Provision for psychological services at NR3C to help complainants deal with the psychological trauma and distress that they might experience due to online harassment and violence. The cybercrime wing should offer a safe space for victims and help them deal with their trauma.
- **Case management and tracking system:** Complainants should be able to track and receive regular updates on the progress of their case through an accessible and easy-to-use case management system.
- **Capacity-building for legal system:** Training and capacity-building for investigators, prosecutors and judges regarding the requirements of cyber

crimes in terms of evidence laws and the technical aspects of cyber law.

- **Rules of Business:** The Rules of Business to be promulgated by the Ministry under s. 51 of PECA should be compatible with principles of free speech, data protection and safe spaces. The drafting of these rules should be a transparent, consultative and multi-stakeholder process.



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