

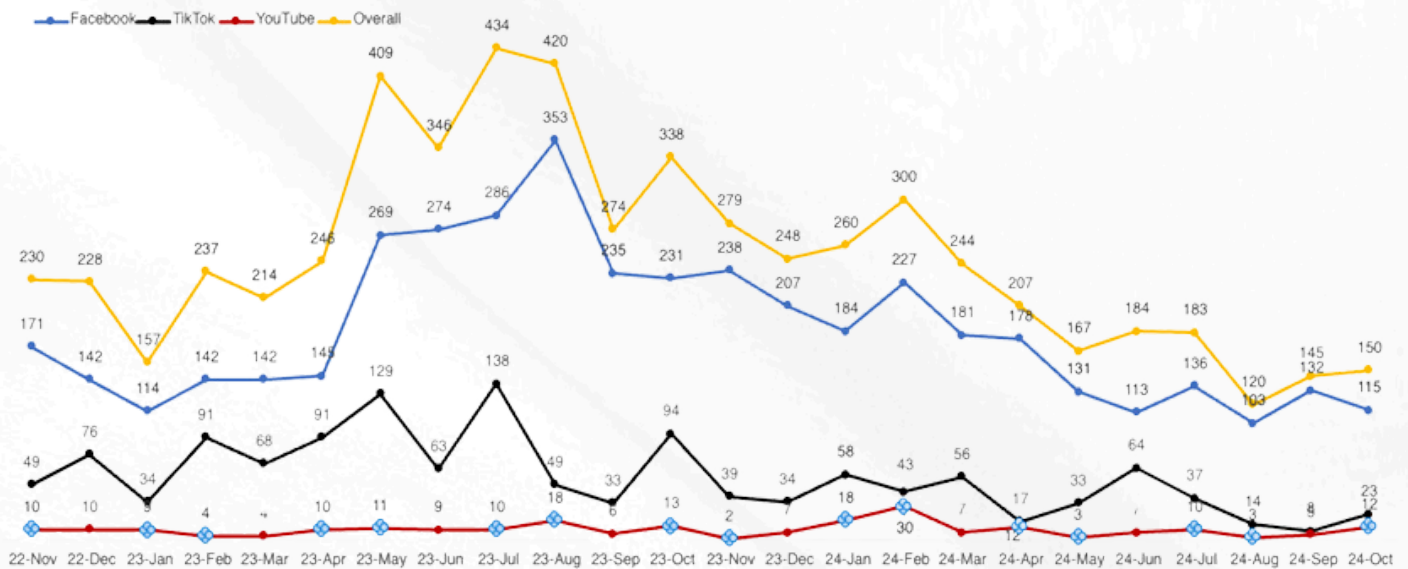
Harmful Speech in Sri Lanka

November 2024

“Hate speech may be used against women, refugees, migrants, gender-diverse and trans people, and minorities. It is massively amplified by the power of digital platforms and tools that enable it to spread across borders and cultures. States have an obligation under international law to prevent and combat incitement to hatred and to promote diversity, mutual understanding, and solidarity.”

UN Secretary General António Guterres

HARMFUL SPEECH TRENDS¹



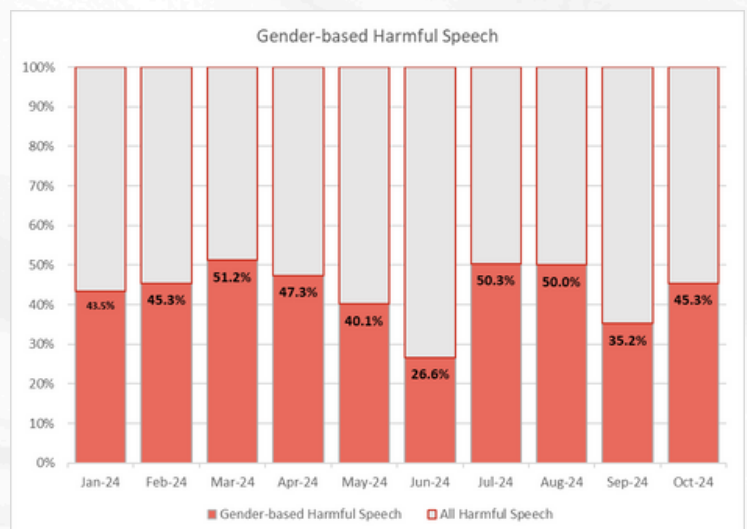
Breakdown of identified month-on-month harmful speech by Social Media Platform.²

Harmful speech increased by 3% in October 2024, trending upwards for a second month in a row.

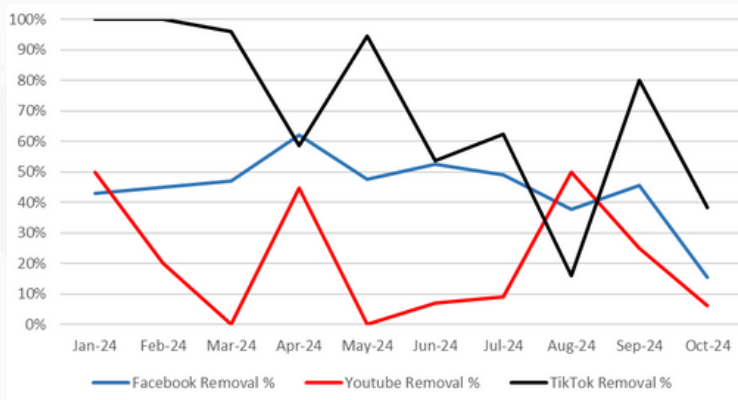
However, gender-based harmful speech increased by 33% during the same period and accounted for more than 45% of all harmful speech recorded in October.

53% of gender-based harmful speech targeted women political actors, primarily women candidates campaigning for the November 14 parliamentary elections.

Disinformation³ continued to decline, having peaked in August 2024 in the run up to the September 21 presidential election.⁴



1. Harmful speech includes hate speech, dis/misinformation, harassment and incitement to or glorification of violence.
 2. The ability to monitor Facebook was negatively impacted by the retirement of Meta's CrowdTangle tool on 14 August 2024.
 3. While there is no universally accepted definition of disinformation, it is commonly understood as information that is not only inaccurate, but is also intended to deceive and is spread in order to inflict harm.
 4. The UN in Sri Lanka relies on trusted external fact-checkers to independently monitor dis- and misinformation. Actual levels of dis- and misinformation may be higher than reported due to monitoring capacity constraints.



The responsiveness of all platforms to removing harmful content declined in October.

The [Comprehensive Methodology for Monitoring Social Media](#), recently launched by Office on Genocide Prevention, underlines the importance of the participation of social media platforms in the social media monitoring processes.

It issues a universal call for increased data sharing and transparency by social media platforms, as these greatly affect the ability of the UN and other organizations to use online hate speech monitoring to help prevent violence and discrimination.

The Impact of Gender-Based Hate Speech Online

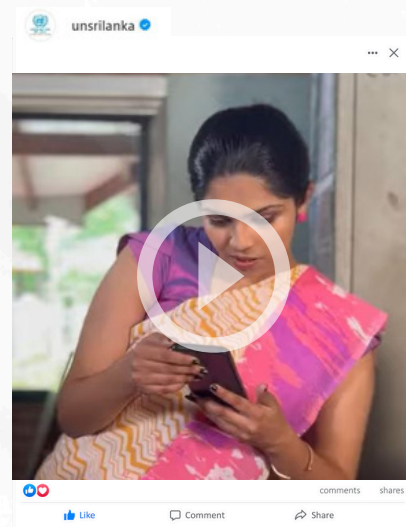
According to the [UN Global Principles for Information Integrity](#), gender-based hate speech, disinformation and violence are used to systematically subjugate women by silencing and pushing them out of the public sphere.

This can have devastating and long-lasting consequences for women’s participation, suppressing women’s voices and fueling self-censorship, causing professional and reputational damage and jeopardizing hard-won progress in gender equality.

Addressing gender-based hate speech and disinformation in Sri Lanka

On the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, the UN in Sri Lanka launched the [#UniteAgainstHate](#) campaign to raise awareness about the dangerous impact of harmful speech and ways to combat it.

The campaign includes a focus on gender-based harmful speech.



HOW TO RESPOND TO HARMFUL SPEECH



DISENGAGE when you know it’s false and/or harmful to someone else



VERIFY authenticity before you share



AMPLIFY facts, call out mis/disinformation, and [#UniteAgainstHate](#)

