

SG Her Empowerment (SHE)’s Stakeholder Submission for Universal Periodic Review 4th Cycle of Singapore



Submitted: October 2025

Founded in 2022, SG Her Empowerment (“SHE”) is an independent non-profit organisation, with Institution of a Public Character status, that empowers women and girls to achieve a Singapore where men and women can feel equal in their homes, workplaces, and communities. Our mission is rooted in fostering societal transformation through advocacy, collaboration, research and culturally-relevant solutions. SHE:

- **Engages the community** and listens to women and men for their views on challenges affecting women from all age groups and walks of life in Singapore;
- **Takes a data-driven and evidence-based approach** by facilitating research to develop impactful strategies;
- **Connects and collaborates** with partners in all it does, including civil society organisations, community groups, corporations and public agencies; and
- **Advocates for impactful change** through the above efforts to champion a more equal society for women and men alike.

(Current Word Count: 2784 words, excluding cover page and endnotes)

A. Executive Summary

1. SHE's submission¹ examines developments in Singapore's implementation of its human rights obligations from the previous cycle's supported UPR recommendations, with a focus on the rights of women and girls.
2. Since the last UPR, Singapore has made targeted legislative improvements to address violence and discrimination towards women through amendments to the Women's Charter and the Workplace Fairness Act. Through the Online Criminal Harms Act, Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act and Codes of Practice for Online Safety, Singapore has strengthened legislation to tackle online harms that pose safety threats to all Singaporeans.
3. More can be done to enhance the family violence regime for acts of coercive control and online forms of violence.
4. Clearer, trauma-informed recourse options for survivors of online harms and workplace harassment are needed. Additionally, legal clarity in defining online harms is needed, including those arising from Artificial Intelligence (AI).
5. The 2022 White Paper on Singapore's Women's Development² identified equal opportunities in the workplace and mindset changes as key action areas. Underlying stereotypes and biases fuel inequitable outcomes i.e., in workforce participation, further entrenchment of women in the domestic sphere etc.
6. Hence, more policy-driven efforts should be directed to support caregivers, including those re-entering the workforce. This includes dismantling gendered mindsets that hamper caregivers from benefitting from workplace initiatives e.g., Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangements.

¹ Data in this report features primary data collected from SHE's research, as well as observations and insights from SHECARES@SCWO, SHE's support centre for victims of online harms.

² The White Paper is a follow-up from the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development, launched in 2020.

B. Violence and Negative Conduct Against Women – Online and Offline
[Recommendations 59.47, 59.183, 59.184, 59.217, 59.224, 59.225, 59.235, 59.236, 59.238, 59.239, 59.240, 59.241, 59.242, 59.243, 59.244, 59.245, 59.246, 59.247, 59.248, 59.251, 59.252, 59.255, 59.256, 59.257, 59.260, 59.267, 59.272]

i. Family and Domestic Violence

7. In 2023, Singapore’s Women’s Charter (Amendment) updated the definition of ‘family violence’ to clarify that it includes physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse.³
8. Beyond family violence, new measures were introduced in courts from 2025⁴ to enhance protections for survivors. Selected sexual offence trials will be assigned to a specialist group of judges. A pre-trial checklist is also being piloted to protect complainants of sexual offences from improper cross-examination questioning.⁵
9. However, gaps remain in defining and addressing coercive control and online forms of family violence.
10. The Charter’s definition of sexual abuse references examples of egregious controlling behaviour, including threats, humiliation, monitoring, and isolation. However, it stops short of legally defining such acts as “coercive control.”
11. In practice, coercive control ranges from overt behaviours to subtle and incremental acts that gradually erode autonomy and reinforce unequal power dynamics.
12. Unlike other forms of abuse, perceptions of control and coercion vary amongst individuals and across cultural contexts. Without clearer legal definitions and acknowledgement of its spectrum, including its more subtle yet harmful expressions, such abuse risks going unidentified, under-reported, and insufficiently addressed.
13. Online forms of violence should be better recognised within the family violence regime. Cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse⁶ and online harassment could constitute emotional, psychological or sexual abuse, and can be used as a tool of coercive control to extend domestic violence into the digital sphere.

³ Singapore Statutes Online. (2023). *Women’s Charter (Family Violence and Other Matters) (Amendment) Act 2023*. <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Acts-Supp/21-2023/Published/20230821>

⁴ These actions are in line with supported Recommendations 59.183, 59.248.

⁵ Lum, S. (2025, January 13). *New measures to protect complainants of sexual offences from improper questioning in court*. The Straits Times. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/spore-courts-add-new-measures-to-protect-complainants-of-sexual-offences-from-improper-questioning>

⁶ Defined as the dissemination of intimate images without consent.

- a. For example, an offending spouse may record videos non-consensually, creating leverage to compel compliance.
 - b. Denial of access to digital devices and accounts (e.g., online banking) could constitute a financial form of coercive control.
 - c. Digital harms can co-occur with physical violence. At SHECARES@SCWO, one-third of clients faced online and offline abuse simultaneously.⁷
14. Despite their co-occurrence with other forms of violence against women, there remains no legal definitions for concepts that are central to the understanding of online elements of abuse, including “online harms,” “online violence,” and “gender-based online harms.” This hinders recognition, reporting and redress for survivors, and limits the effectiveness of legislative efforts.
15. SHE hopes that future legislative efforts, such as an upcoming Domestic Violence Bill, will clarify the legal positions of such harms in existing family violence frameworks, thus strengthening protections for survivors.⁸

⁷ SHE (2025) Quick Guide to Online Harms

https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHE_Quick_Guide_to_Online_Harms_2025-02.pdf

⁸ Such action would be in line with previously supported Recommendations 59.235, 59.238, 59.239, 59.240, 59.241, 59.246, 59.247, 59.248, 59.251.

ii. Online Harms

16. Singapore has made commitments to combat violence against women and girls under international frameworks.⁹ This includes tackling violence occurring online towards girls and women and promoting a safer online space for all.
17. Online harms are prevalent. SHE's 2023 Study on Online Harms in Singapore¹⁰ found that 58% of Internet users personally experienced or knew others who have faced online harms. Girls and women face unique risks.
- a. Female youth in our 2023 Study were twice as likely to report experiencing sexual harassment compared to male youth.¹⁰
 - b. Misuses of generative AI pose new risks towards women, impacting both their safety and perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Global data sources estimate that 99% of deepfake pornography targets women.¹¹ In our 2024 Safeguarding Online Spaces (SOS) Study, female youth were also comparatively more likely to cite the exacerbation of body dysmorphia as a negative impact of AI-altered or generated images.¹²
 - c. Disrespect towards women online is normalised among segments of youth - 27% of youth in our 2024 Study felt that if a woman uploads an image of herself, she should accept all forms of comments, including disrespectful ones.¹²
18. Online harms have long-lasting impacts on individuals. Two in five survivors from the same 2023 Study faced at least one form of severe impact e.g., physical symptoms, suicidal ideation etc.¹⁰
19. Online harms could diminish the quality of civic discourse. To avoid online harms, 66% of participants reported self-censoring and 68% disengaged from online activities altogether.¹⁰
20. Only half of survivors reported their incidents to platforms or authorities.¹⁰ This could be attributed to the normalisation of online harms and gaps in help-seeking that further complicate the process for survivors.

⁹ This includes the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5.2 and 5.5). This is also reflected in Recommendations 59.58, 59.108, 59.109.

¹⁰ SHE (2023). *Study on Online Harms in Singapore 2023*.

https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHE_Report_on_Online_Harms_Study_Final.pdf

¹¹ Security Hero. (2023). *2023 State Of Deepfakes: Realities, Threats, And Impact*.

<https://www.securityhero.io/state-of-deepfakes/#key-findings>

¹² SHE (2024) *Safeguarding Online Spaces (SOS) Study*

[https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHE_Safeguarding_Online_Spaces_\(SOS\)_Study_8Feb20242.pdf](https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHE_Safeguarding_Online_Spaces_(SOS)_Study_8Feb20242.pdf)

21. Across our studies in 2023-2025,¹³ help-seeking gaps we identified included:
- a. For platforms, many survivors perceived reporting as ineffective, thereby choosing to forgo reporting altogether. Those that did were often left unheard, receiving little to no updates. Only one in four survivors were satisfied with how platforms handled their reports.¹³
 - b. Formal avenues like police reports or legal proceedings felt intimidating. Some were unsure if their experiences were significant enough for legal action, and others were concerned about whether harm would escalate if they pursued such action.
 - c. Solutions should centre the empowerment of survivors by restoring agency and ensuring they feel heard and taken seriously. Swift content removal options are needed, alongside long-term support to address emotional impact.
22. The Government has introduced regulatory measures to combat online harms.
- a. The 2023 Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act (OSMAA)¹⁴ and Online Criminal Harms Act (OCHA)¹⁵ empowers authorities to remove or take down egregious¹⁶ and criminal content respectively.
 - b. In 2023¹⁷ and 2025¹⁸, the Codes of Practice for Online Safety for Social Media Services (SMSs) and App Distribution Services (ADSs) were issued. These require designated services¹⁹ to put in place processes to mitigate risks of exposure to harmful content for Singaporean users, especially children.
 - c. The Government announced the launch of the Online Safety Commission (OSC) by 2026, established through the upcoming Online Safety (Relief & Accountability) Bill. It will be a reporting pathway for victims of specific online harms that will issue legally-enforceable notices for content removals.²⁰ Accompanying measures in the Bill are anticipated to clarify legal obligations of platforms, perpetrators and other actors (e.g., administrators).

¹³ See Footnotes 7, 11; See also: SHE (2025) *404 Help Not Found Lived Experiences of Online Harms Survivors* [https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/404_Help_Not_Found - Lived Experiences of Online Harms Survivors - SHE Study 20251.pdf](https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/404_Help_Not_Found_-_Lived_Experiences_of_Online_Harms_Survivors_-_SHE_Study_20251.pdf)

¹⁴ Singapore Statutes Online. (2022). *Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2022*. <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Acts-Supp/38-2022/Published/20221221>

¹⁵ Singapore Statutes Online. (2023). *Online Criminal Harms Act 2023*. <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/OCHA2023>

¹⁶ Refer to footnote 13 for definition of egregious content.

¹⁷ IMDA. (2023, July 17). *IMDA's Online Safety Code comes into effect*. Infocomm Media Development Authority. <https://www.imda.gov.sg/resources/press-releases-factsheets-and-speeches/press-releases/2023/imdas-online-safety-code-comes-into-effect>

¹⁸ IMDA (2025, January 15) *New Online Safety Code of Practice for App Distribution Services Enhances Protection for Singapore Users*. Infocomm Media Development Authority. <https://www.imda.gov.sg/resources/press-releases-factsheets-and-speeches/press-releases/2025/online-safety-code-of-practice-for-app-distribution-services>

¹⁹ The six designated social media services are Facebook, HardwareZone, Instagram, TikTok, X and YouTube, and the five designated app distribution services are Apple App Store, Google Play Store, Huawei AppGallery, Samsung Galaxy Store, and Microsoft Store.

²⁰ Mohan, M (2025, March 11) *Singapore to set up safety commission in 2026 for victims of online harms*. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/online-harms-new-Government-agency-support-victims-4984041>

23. SHE welcomes the legislative changes and the formation of the OSC, which we advocated for as an in-between pathway for survivors in previous fora, including CEDAW.²¹
24. Yet for the OSC to provide survivor-centred solutions, clearer escalation and prioritisation mechanisms across the ecosystem is needed. This is possible with concerted collaboration across stakeholders. Trusted Flagger relationships between tech platforms and community organisations offer a positive model. In its first two years, 70% of Trusted Flagger reports by the SHECARES@SCWO centre were resolved within 72 hours.¹³
25. Certain population segments, such as youth, require specialised pathways for support.²²
- a. In our SOS Study, four in 10 youth reported low awareness of self-help tools on platforms, while about half had low awareness of legal options for online harms.¹²
 - b. Pathways must account for safeguarding of minors. Particularly in cases of peer-on-peer incidents (e.g. cyberbullying), safeguarding considerations apply to both wrongdoers and targets of harm.
 - c. With that, a broader scope of education and rehabilitation must be considered for youth offenders in these evolving areas of harm.
26. Support must be embedded across the community. Frontliners including social service professionals, law enforcement, teachers and school counsellors, must develop consensus on protocols to enact in online harms cases especially as they relate to youth.
27. Beyond pathways of support, the evolving nature of harmful conduct online highlights the urgency of anticipating and addressing emerging harm, including those associated with misuses of generative AI. SHE hopes that future legislative efforts could begin by clarifying the legal position and definitions of harms associated with generative AI.

²¹ SHE (2024, April 8) *Shadow Report for Singapore's 88th CEDAW Session*
<https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/b39515552f327085b99f0cef0572e521.pdf>

²² Creation of such specialised pathways will further the implementation of previously supported Recommendations 59.255, 59.256, 59.257, 59.260, 59.267, 59.272.

iii. Workplace Harassment and Discrimination

28. The Government previously supported recommendations on enhancing access to complaint and remedial measures against workplace sexual harassment²³ and committed to strengthen efforts against discrimination of vulnerable groups, including women.²⁴
29. Based on data collected in 2023,²⁵ SHE found that one in three working Singaporeans faced at least one form of workplace harassment in the last five years. Specifically, women were more likely to face sexual (16%) and ageist (16%) forms of harassment.
30. The Government passed the Workplace Fairness Act (WFA) in January 2025, which codified protected characteristics, including pregnancy status or sex, against discrimination.²⁶
31. Beyond adverse employment decisions, nearly half of workers reported experiencing at least one form of online or offline sexually harassing behaviour at work in the last five years.²⁵
32. The Tripartite Advisory on Managing Workplace Harassment (TAMWH), Protection of the Harassment Act (POHA) and upcoming OSC could be forms of redress.
33. However, more guidance for survivors to navigate options for workplace harassment is needed. Aside from in-house mediation methods, third-party options should be available to survivors to encourage reporting.
34. Additionally, while the WFA prohibits employers from retaliating against whistleblowers, enforcement mechanisms within organisations have not been specified. Moreover, Singapore does not have universal whistleblower legislation protecting informants.
35. As it stands, the WFA requires employers to introduce a grievance handling policy which protects whistleblowers' identities. Given that retaliation can take many forms and differ across company contexts, the requirement for employers to establish company policies on protections against retaliation should likewise be codified.
36. Collectively, we must signal that sexual harassment is inappropriate and adopt this stance in the workplace.

²³ Recommendations 59.242, 59.243, 59.244.

²⁴ Recommendations 59.47, 59.58, 59.60, 59.64, 59.66, 59.184, 59.217, 59.224, 59.225, 59.233, 59.236, 59.299.

²⁵ Data was collected as part of a survey on Women in Leadership through an online panel via quota sampling. Working Singaporeans were defined as individuals engaged in paid work in the last five years. Selected findings may be found at this link, with data on workplace harassment to be shared publicly at a later stage. Reference SHE (2024) *Women in Leadership*. https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHEIN_Women_in_Leadership_2024.pdf

²⁶ Singapore Statutes Online. (2025). *Workplace Fairness Act 2025*
<https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/WFA2025/Uncommenced/20250512205501?DocDate=20250213&ProvIds=P13-#pr8->

iv. Recommendations

a. Family and Domestic Violence

37. Legally define key terms including “online harms”, “online violence”, “gender-based online violence” and various forms of digital abuse to ensure clarity in enforcement and protection, including emerging harms associated with generative AI (e.g. deepfakes).
38. Include coercive control and online harms as defined forms of violence e.g., in upcoming Domestic Violence legislation.

b. Online Harms

39. Embed survivor support throughout society – in schools, workplaces, and community settings – by training first-responders including peers, parents, teachers and law enforcement to be trauma-informed.
40. Conduct public education to develop a shared code of conduct of online behaviour, including values of respect, healthy boundaries and address unhealthy gender-biased beliefs that underlie harmful conduct towards women. When applicable, a rehabilitative approach should be promoted towards offenders.
41. Improve pathways for survivors through OSC:
 - a. Provide clear support pathways that offer updates and swift removal without requiring police or court involvement.
 - b. Create specialised, cross-sectoral pathways for cases involving minors. This includes clarifying the safeguarding duties of stakeholders who may encounter minors as survivors or wrongdoers of online harms. The Sector-Specific Screening Guide²⁷ adopted in the detection, reporting and management of child abuse incidents could be a reference.
 - c. Mandate platforms to have accountability measures for perpetrators, including flagging users who repeatedly harm others, even across new or linked accounts.
42. Research how online harms affect school-going youth to inform targeted interventions.

²⁷ The SSSG is an evidence-based tool that guides frontline professionals who have contact with children on a regular basis on managing reports of suspected child abuse. It is part of the Structured Decision-Making system alongside the Child Abuse Reporting Guide, to provide both guidance and follow-up to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children of suspected abuse. More information can be found here: [https://www.msf.gov.sg/what-we-do/help-those-in-need/article/resources/sector-specific-screening-guide-\(sssg\)-and-child-abuse-reporting-guide-\(carg\)](https://www.msf.gov.sg/what-we-do/help-those-in-need/article/resources/sector-specific-screening-guide-(sssg)-and-child-abuse-reporting-guide-(carg))

c. Workplace Harassment

43. Engage the public and clarify – in accessible language - pathways of support for workplace harassment in existing legislative frameworks (e.g. POHA, OSC).
44. Implement mandatory anti-discrimination and harassment training in workplaces, audited by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP).
45. Introduce whistleblower protection legislation in Singapore to reinforce a culture of help-seeking. Short of that, require employers to codify protections for informants against retaliation in their company policies.

C. Equitable Economic Opportunities [Recommendations 59.47, 59.184, 59.213, 59.215, 59.219, 59.221, 59.222, 59.224, 59.226, 59.227, 59.228, 59.232, 59.233, 59.234]

i. Traditional Mindsets Remain

46. Singapore has consistently supported economic rights to ensure equal access to employment opportunities and outcomes.
47. However, deeply entrenched mindsets of traditional gender roles persist, resulting in women assuming main caregiver roles at home. The Government has identified the need to tackle mindsets and forge new societal norms as an action plan in the 2022 White Paper on Singapore Women's Development.²⁸
48. SHE's 2023 Social Experiment on Gender Mindsets²⁹ revealed persistent stereotypes about women's domestic responsibilities that entrench their role at home:
- a. In a hypothetical task-allocation scenario, women were assigned seven of 12 household tasks, being overwhelmingly preferred for food-related tasks (e.g., feeding children, cooking).
49. These biases contribute to inequitable employment outcomes:
- a. Career success remains tied to male-associated traits.
 - 46% of participants believed an 'ambitious and assertive' individual would get promoted over a 'caring and nurturing' one. 68% identified the employee with preferred traits as male.²⁹
 - b. Higher caregiving burden may perpetuate existing pay gaps.
 - Data from the Ministry of Manpower suggests that occupational segregation is a driver of our gender pay gap, in which women are overrepresented in lower-paying occupations.³⁰ Perceptions of inflexibility and time demands of higher-paying roles may lead to women avoiding certain occupations altogether. Instead, they may prioritise flexible roles to balance caregiving duties, even if lower-paying.
50. Likewise, they shape upskilling disparities:

²⁸ Ministry of Social and Family Development (2022) *White Paper on Singapore Women's Development. Towards a fairer and more inclusive society*. https://www.msf.gov.sg/docs/default-source/celebrating-sg-women-document/white-paper-on-singapore-womens-development.pdf?sfvrsn=708177eb_3

²⁹ SHE (2023, November) *Social Experiment on Gender Mindsets*. https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHE-SocialExperimentGenderMindsetsReport_20231124.pdf

³⁰ Lin, E., Gan, G., & Pan, J. (2020, January). *Singapore's Adjusted Gender Pay Gap*. Ministry of Manpower, Manpower Research and Statistics Department. https://stats.mom.gov.sg/iMAS_PdfLibrary/mrds-Singapores-Adjusted-Gender-Pay-Gap.pdf

- a. SHE's 2024 Women in Leadership Study showed that 27% of women who were open to leadership opportunities did not actively pursue them. The top challenge cited was time constraints due to responsibilities such as caregiving.²⁵
51. Mindset shifts are needed to dismantle these stereotypes surrounding women's domestic duties that drive inequitable employment outcomes.

ii. Workplace Flexibility for Caregivers

52. In 2024, one in five residents outside the labour force cited housework and caregiving as their reason for not working. 85% of them were women,³¹ highlighting the need to support women managing caregiving loads, including those returning after a career break.
53. The Government has taken action to increase caregiver support.
- a. By 2026, government-paid shared parental leave will be increased to 10 weeks, and mandatory paternity leave will be doubled to four weeks to encourage fathers to play a more active role in caregiving.³²
 - b. Starting December 2024, employers were required to establish formal processes for employees to request Flexi-Work Arrangements (FWAs), per the Tripartite Guidelines for Flexible Work Arrangement Requests. These were implemented to facilitate discussions about FWAs between employers and employees.
 - c. The WFA codified caregiving as a protected characteristic to prevent discrimination against caregivers.²⁶
54. These policy measures must be implemented alongside efforts to shift gendered mindsets and recognise caregiving as a shared responsibility. SHE's 2024 data on FWAs³³ showed:
- a. Two in five flexi-workers reported being overlooked for promotions or had less opportunities for development. 36% of women faced such disadvantages, affirming the continued need to shift misconceptions about women who tap on such measures.
 - b. Men were more likely to experience such disadvantages (45%). Fathers (20%) were twice as likely as mothers (10%) to receive backlash from their supervisors for taking parental leave.

³¹ Ministry of Manpower (2024) *Labour Force in Singapore*. Ministry of Manpower, Manpower Research and Statistics Department. https://stats.mom.gov.sg/iMAS_PdfLibrary/mrds_2024Labourforce.pdf

³² Lim, V., Jacob, C. (2024, November 14). *Law passed to increase shared parental leave and mandatory paternity leave*. Channel News Asia. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/paternity-leave-shared-parental-leave-law-passed-4746111>

³³ SHE (2024) *Flex Appeal 2024*. https://api2.she.org.sg/uploads/SHE_Report_-_Women@Work_Flex_Appeal_20240722F.pdf

- c. Men may face stigma when seeking flexibility or more involvement in the domestic sphere, discouraging uptake of initiatives that allow for increased participation in caregiving.
55. Without the dual shift of changing perceptions about women's roles at home and creating a more supportive culture for men's involvement, progressive workplace measures aimed at improving women's economic participation will have a limited impact.

iii. **Recommendations**

56. While the Ministry of Education's Character and Citizenship Education Curriculum includes general content on gender stereotypes and mutual respect, more can be done to help students unlearn harmful mindsets and stereotypes. This includes addressing how gendered mindsets play out in different spaces (e.g. workplace and home) and what students can do as bystanders or targets of harmful, limiting gendered mindsets.
57. Similarly, engage employers and workplaces to positively shape mindsets on gender norms and stereotypes. This includes tackling negative gendered stereotypes about both men and women with caregiving responsibilities.
58. Invest in upskilling for girls and women, including those returning to work from caregiving breaks, through career mentorship, networking opportunities.
59. Conduct public education that addresses equal sharing of care burdens and barriers of uptake for women and men respectively, in tandem with recently introduced progressive workplace policies.
60. Conduct nation-wide research to understand ingrained mindsets about women and men across different spheres.