

# FIGHTING THE TROLLS:

## How researchers can mitigate online abuse

### 01 Organizational Mitigation

The Conversation Canada has prepared new authors for potential backlash and offers support, but even those open to debate find that interactions can sometimes become overwhelmingly negative. Support from authors' respective institutions is necessary. This situation underscores the importance of restoring the collective well-being and democratic health on digital platforms.

Given the growing demand from funding agencies for researchers to engage in knowledge mobilization activities, universities must urgently develop resources and policies that support scholars who seek psychological or legal assistance due to experiencing severe online harassment. We recommend:

- Clear expectations for management
- Advocacy and support by unions
- Develop sector-wide support
- Support networks
- Recognize vulnerabilities
- Training for leadership and faculty
- Support for academic freedom
- Condemnation of harassing behaviour
- Funding
- Clear instructions and resources
- Cross-departmental plans and protocols
- Simplification of reporting

### 02 Personal Mitigation

Recognize the distinction between constructive criticism and harmful cynicism, social media is primed to encourage emotional engagement, but sometimes harmful criticism can lead to pile-ons. As a content creator, make sure your social media accounts employ two factor authentication, and delete old posts so they cannot be mined by trolls. Be wary of posting pictures or any content that can identify your personal life, and give your HR, Dean, and Communication department the heads up when you're posting about topics known to be controversial. To offer bystander intervention, you can:

- Offer to help clear out evidence of harassment
- Help to document harassment and report abusers
- Delete harassing comments and block abusive accounts
- Offer to accompany the target to necessary meetings
- Public messages of support on social media (if safe to do so)
- Private messages of support via email, direct message, or in-person
- Reach out with offers to talk or distract
- Prepare yourself and colleagues before engaging in high-visibility or controversial

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## Resources

- **Data & Society:** Best Practices for Conducting Risky Research and Protecting Yourself from Online Harassment
  - [https://datasociety.net/pubs/res/Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_Conducting\\_Risky\\_Research-Oct-2016.pdf](https://datasociety.net/pubs/res/Best_Practices_for_Conducting_Risky_Research-Oct-2016.pdf)
- **Games and Online Harassment Hotline:** Speak Up & Stay Safe(r): – A Guide to Protecting Yourself From Online Harassment
  - <https://gameshotline.org/online-free-safety-guide/>
- **eSafety Commissioner:** Online safety
  - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/basic-online-safety-expectations>
- **Troll Busters**
  - <http://www.troll-busters.com/>
- **RGDI Research Group:** Online Abuse Toolkit for Managers and Employers
  - <https://www.dpicollective.com/online-abuse-digital-toolkit-2/>
- **Crash Override Network**
  - <http://www.crashoverridenetwork.com/>
- **PEN America:** Online Harassment Field Manual
  - <https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/>
- **RGDI Research Group:** Impacts, Lessons Learned, & Best Practices for Supporting Knowledge Workers Targeted by Online Abuse: A Knowledge Synthesis Report
  - <https://www.dpicollective.com/knowledge-synthesis/>
- **Online Violence Response Hub**
  - <https://onlineviolenceresponsehub.org/>
- **The Union of Journalist in Finland:** Hate Campaigns: What You Should Do
  - <https://journalistiliitto.fi/en/hate-campaigns-advice-kit-for-journalists-what-you-should-do/>
- **Tactical Tech:** Training Curriculum
  - <https://en.gendersec.train.tacticaltech.org/>