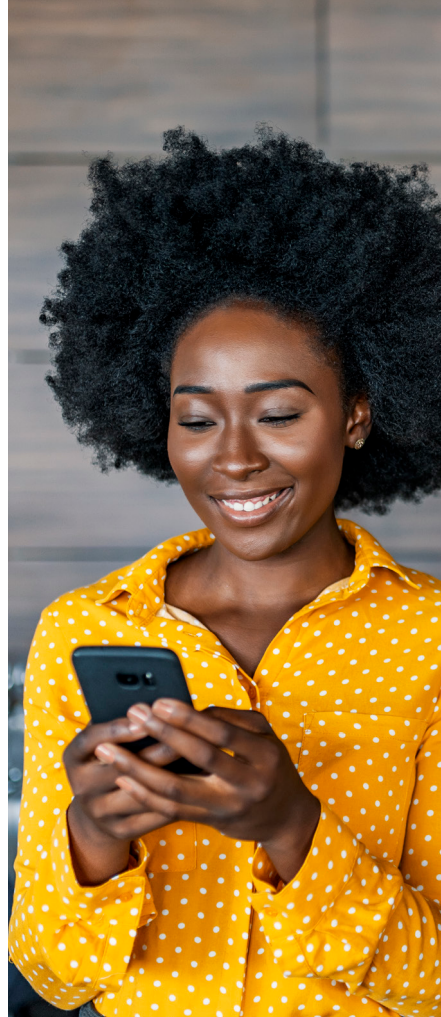




# FEMINIZING POLITICAL SPACES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ONLINE PRESENCE & ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG WOMEN IN KENYAN UNIVERSITIES



SUPPORTED BY



Hanns  
Seidel  
Foundation

## WHO WE ARE

Badili Africa merges beauty with civic dialogues to increase political awareness and involvement of women in governance and democratic processes in Africa. Specifically, we cultivate the engagement of young women in governance and political processes between the ages of 16 – 30 in tertiary institutions and urban informal settlements who are disenfranchised, disengaged and disillusioned by politics.

We also focus on the political mobilization of everyday Chama women in urban informal settlements. “Chama” is an “informal” platform used to mobilize and organize like-minded individuals with a shared interest in increasing their socio-economic livelihoods. Within Kenya, “chama women” form a key political resource as their networks enable them to easily mobilize voters for politicians to run successful campaigns. However, post election or campaign periods their organizing and decision-making skills rarely translate to meaningful engagement or voice in either demanding for better public service delivery or holding leaders accountable.

## QUICK SUMMARY

Research continues to show that online harassment is driving girls and young women mainly between the age of 15-25 years out of online platforms even at a time when COVID-19 has moved most aspects of our lives online, increasing the necessity of being online.

Badili Africa supported by Hanns Seidel Foundation recently held virtual conversations with young women from tertiary institutions focusing on the adverse effects of COVID-19 on their education, personal safety, bodily autonomy, mental health, peer support, social connections and economic prospects.

Given COVID-19 necessitated the world to slow down and adopt physical isolation measures to curb the spread of the virus, the internet gave us an opportunity to bridge gaps created by the lockdown measures. Badili intends to capacity build our constituency- young women in universities- as digital advocates to effectively navigate digital platforms to influence change as well as increase their inclusion in key decision making processes.

To achieve our goal Badili Africa rolled out a survey targeting young female university students in Kenya with an interest in digital advocacy. In a span of two weeks the survey collected information from 61 respondents. Following the survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were identified as the preferred methodology to further unpack data collected from the survey that will potentially lead to the creation of a digital advocacy programme for young female university students.

## OBJECTIVE

Explore young women’s presence and engagement on digital platforms.



## QUICK FACTS IN 2020

**58%** of girls and young women who have been harassed or abused online.

### One in five girls

has abandoned or cut down their use of social media because of online harassment.



Attacks most common on Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter, Snapchat.

**52%** of men more likely to be online compared to women in developing countries.

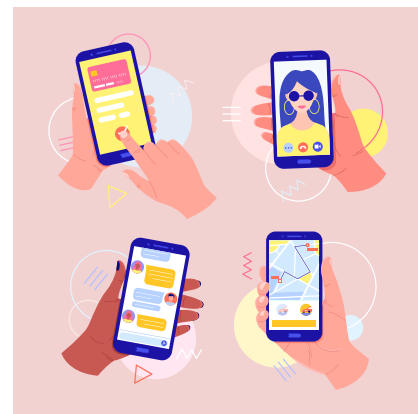
**Social media reporting tools** are not effective in stopping online abuse which includes explicit texts, pornographic content, cyberstalking.



Results from the survey sent out to young women in universities.

## 61 RESPONDENTS

Number of young women that responded to Badili Africa's survey expressing interest on digital advocacy



## 35 PARTICIPANTS

Number of young women who participated in the Focus Group Discussions held both online and offline.

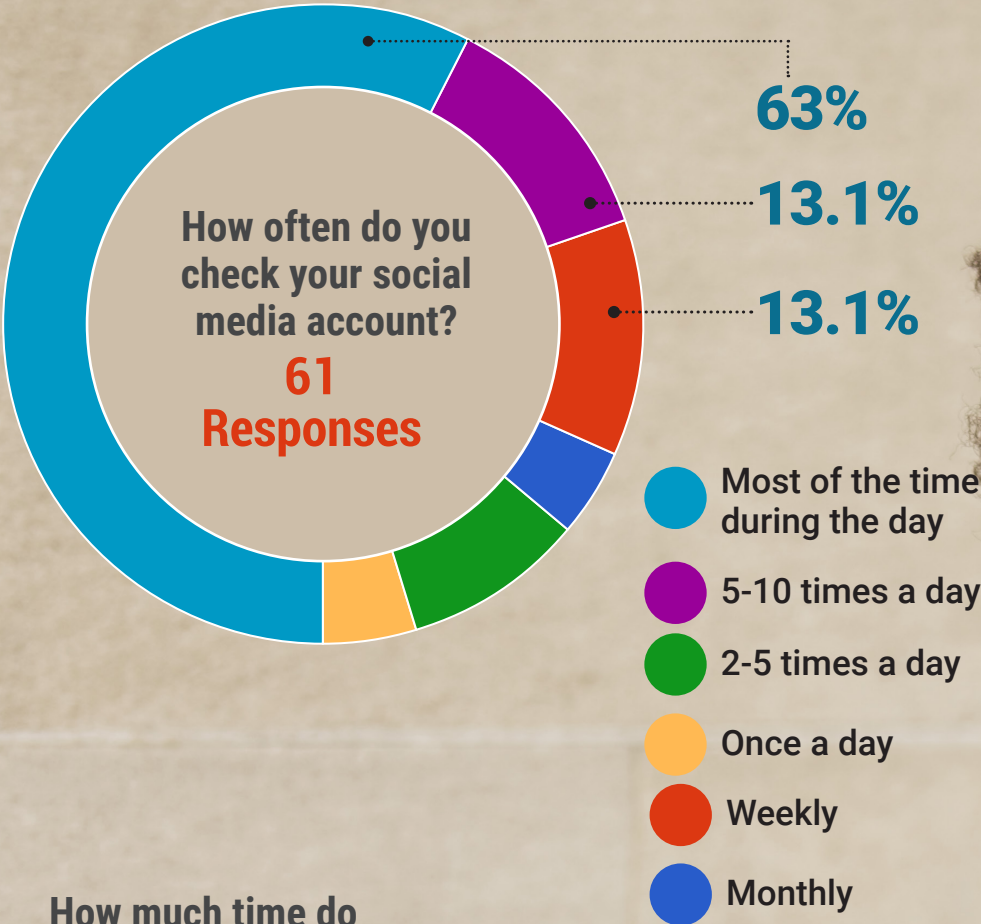


\*\*COVID-19 social distancing guidelines and measures were strictly adhered to.

## The SDG's represented



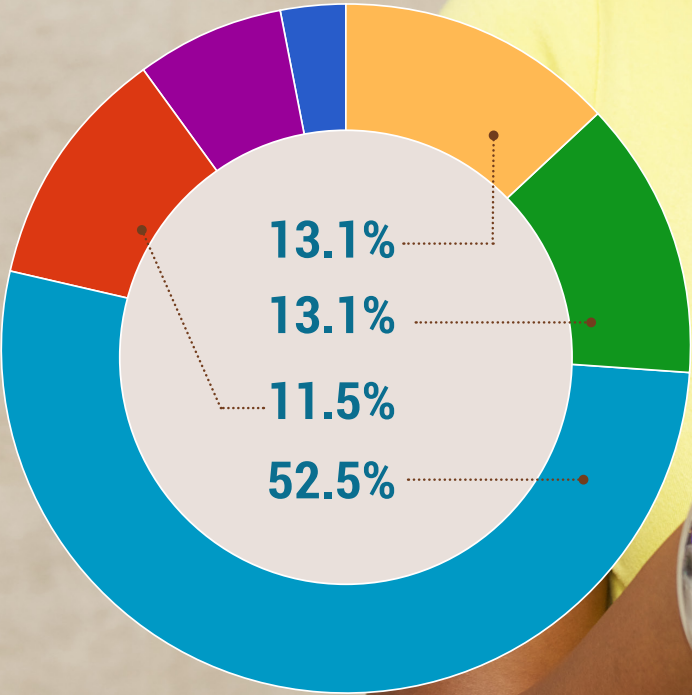
# Time spent online according to the survey



How much time do you spend on social media per day

**61 Responses**

- I am online most of the time
- Less than 30mins
- 30-60 minutes
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3 hours



## Selected Topics for the FGD's

01

### Digital Content

Focused on the type of content participant's engaged with, their most preferred format and their content creation process.

02

### Digital Emotional & Intelligence Quotient

Focused on the participants' level of comfort and ease of engagement on social media platforms and their level of self awareness i.e. online vs offline persona.

03

### Digital Movements

Focus on participants' awareness of digital movements or campaigns that have led to meaningful public action/ change and any that had an impact on them personally.

04

### Digital security

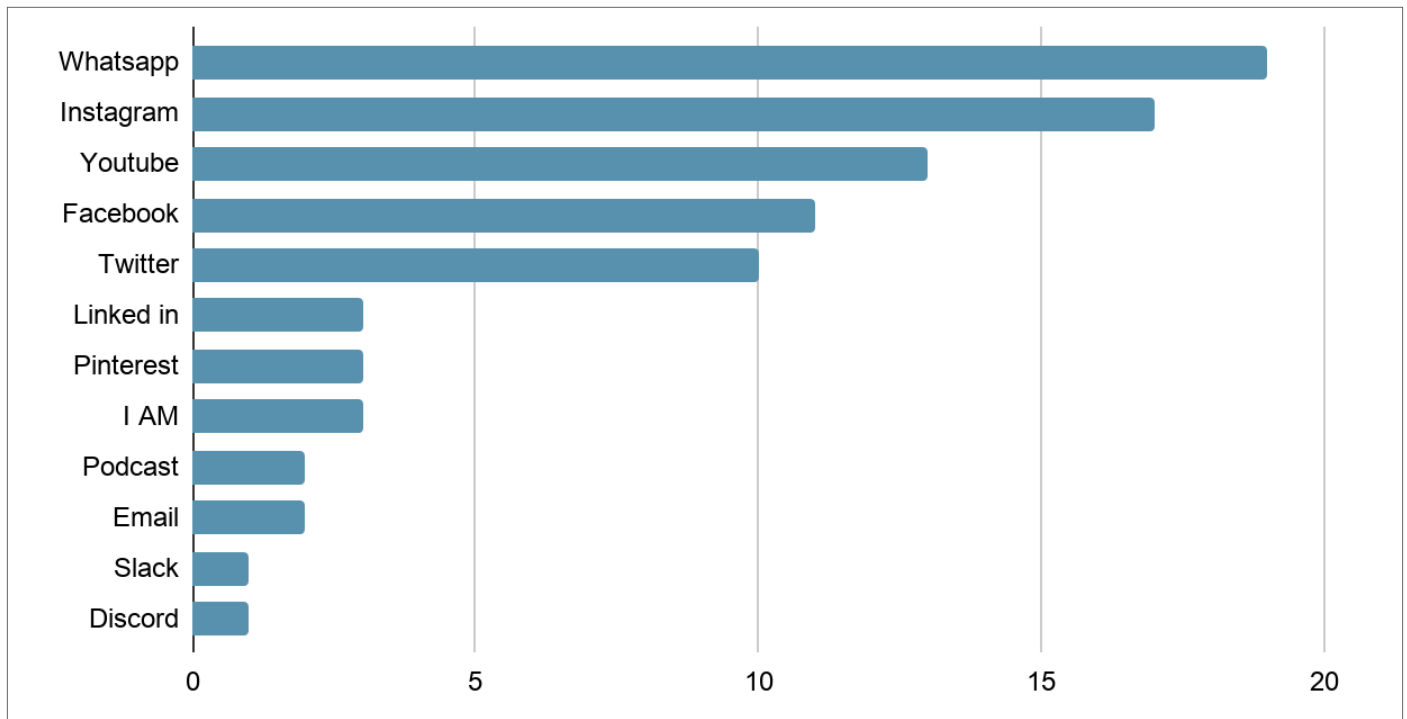
Focused on participants' awareness of Kenya's legal framework or stipulations on digital rights, laws, policies etc and find out if they have experienced any online security breach and online privacy measures they have taken.

## Key Questions addressed in the focus group discussions.

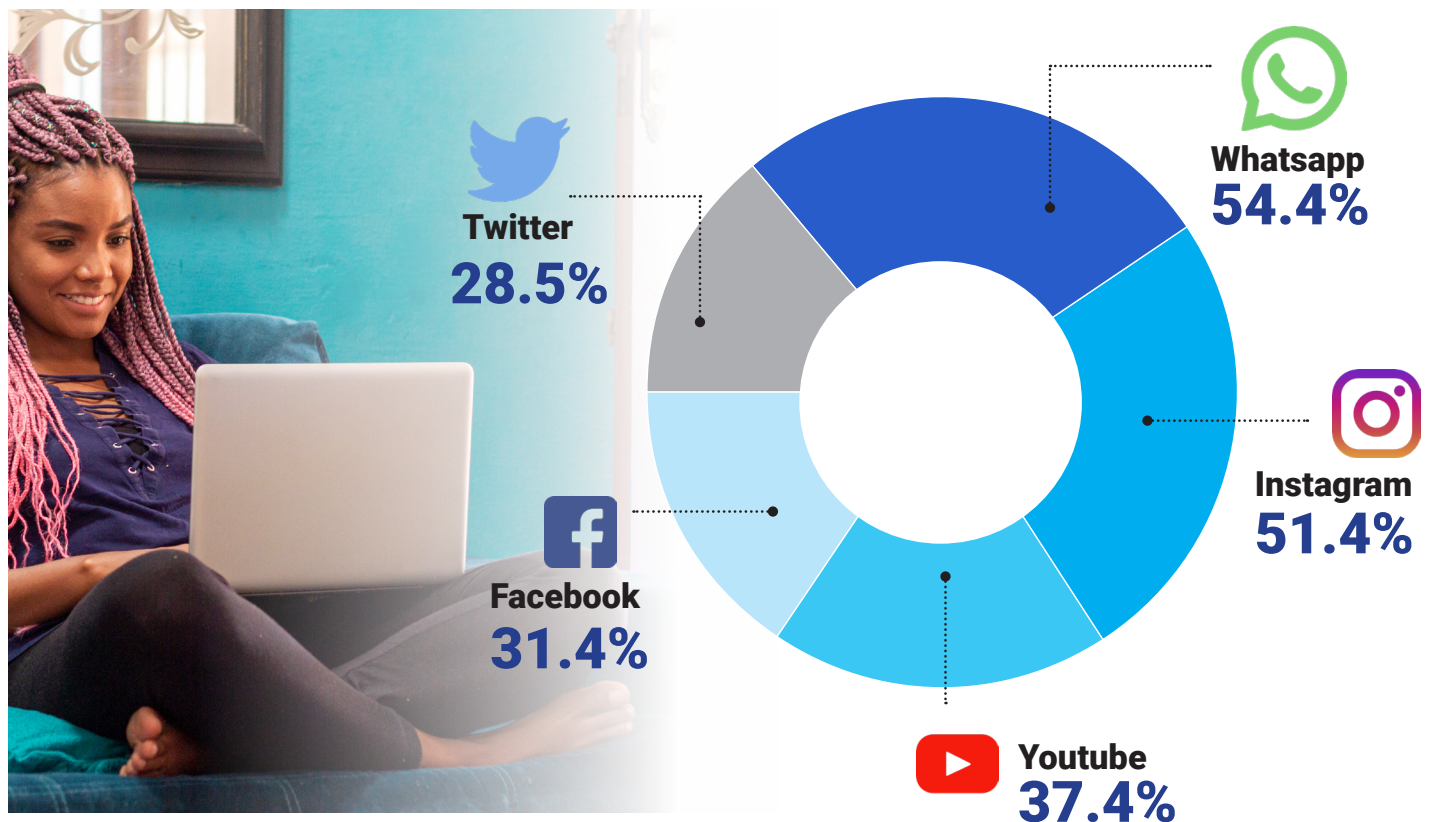
- Social media personalities admired both locally & globally
- Participants' most preferred social media platforms
- Type of content participants engaged with often
- Participant's "online" vs. "offline" persona
- Participants' content creation process for content on their social media platforms
- Measures participant's adopted to increase their level of online privacy or security
- Participants' awareness of Kenya's legal framework on digital rights, laws, policies etc
- Participant's awareness of digital movements or campaigns that have led to meaningful action/ change at societal or individual level



## Most proffered social media platforms



## Leading platforms in terms of daily usage



## Main reasons behind the preferred platforms

### WhatsApp

- Most preferred as it allows the user to control who has access to them hence increasing the level of privacy and freedom of expression for the user
- Ease of communication on anything of interest to the user i.e. social, business, educational or entertainment purposes
- WhatsApp groups allows users to easily connect with like minded individuals

### Instagram and YouTube

- Mainly preferred for their entertainment, inspiration and DIY content
- Visual formats are more appealing in comparison to audio or written formats

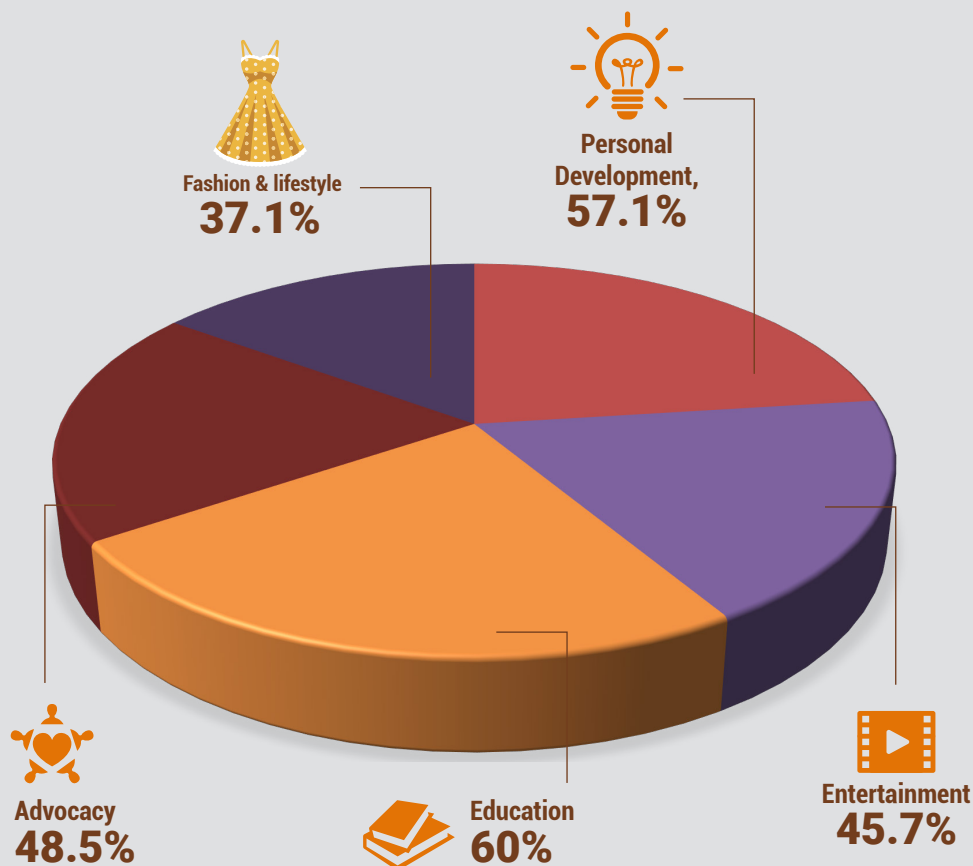
### Facebook

- Ranked poorly as a user was more than likely to experience a security breach
- Limited sense of privacy as "strangers" can easily view one's page
- Limited freedom of expression as one is likely to interact with their parents or relatives
- Those who preferred Facebook appreciated the ease of finding and joining groups on anything of personal interest and it accommodated longer posts unlike twitter

### Twitter

- Ranked extremely poorly as its viewed to have a lot of toxicity leading to less engagement from participants

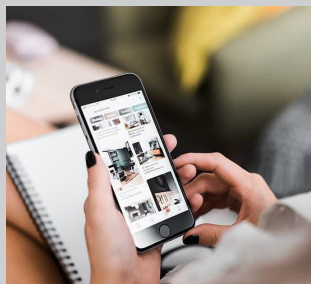
## Content participants consumed online



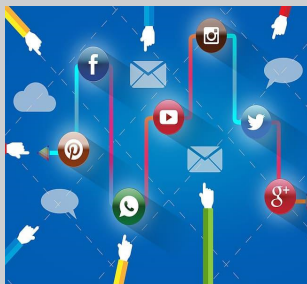
# Digital Emotional & Intelligence Quotient



Participants were quite aware of the harmful effects social media could potentially have on their mental well-being and were ready to quit platforms that triggered negative emotions in them



Participants identified specific content and social media platforms that had a positive effect on their confidence levels and mental well-being such as I AM app for self affirmations, motivational YouTube videos and Podcasts



Majority of the participants were keen on the kind of content they put out on their social media platforms and how it would portray them to the public



Low self-esteem, insecurity, anxiety, and peer pressure were some of the emotional states identified to be triggered by some social media platforms. Instagram was identified as the most likely social media platform to trigger these emotional states

## Digital Movements

- Participants were quite passionate about social justice issues and were using their social media platforms to raise awareness on causes they cared about while equally organizing activities offline on the same.
- Main causes and digital movements the participants were aware of or involved in:

### Mental health



### Students leadership & rights



### Ending rape culture



### Teen pregnancy



### Police brutality



### Ending period poverty & stigma



## Digital Security

**99%** ..of participants were not aware of their digital rights as provided for in the Constitution of Kenya (2010)

Also many of them were not keen to read the terms and conditions provided when subscribing to the different apps .

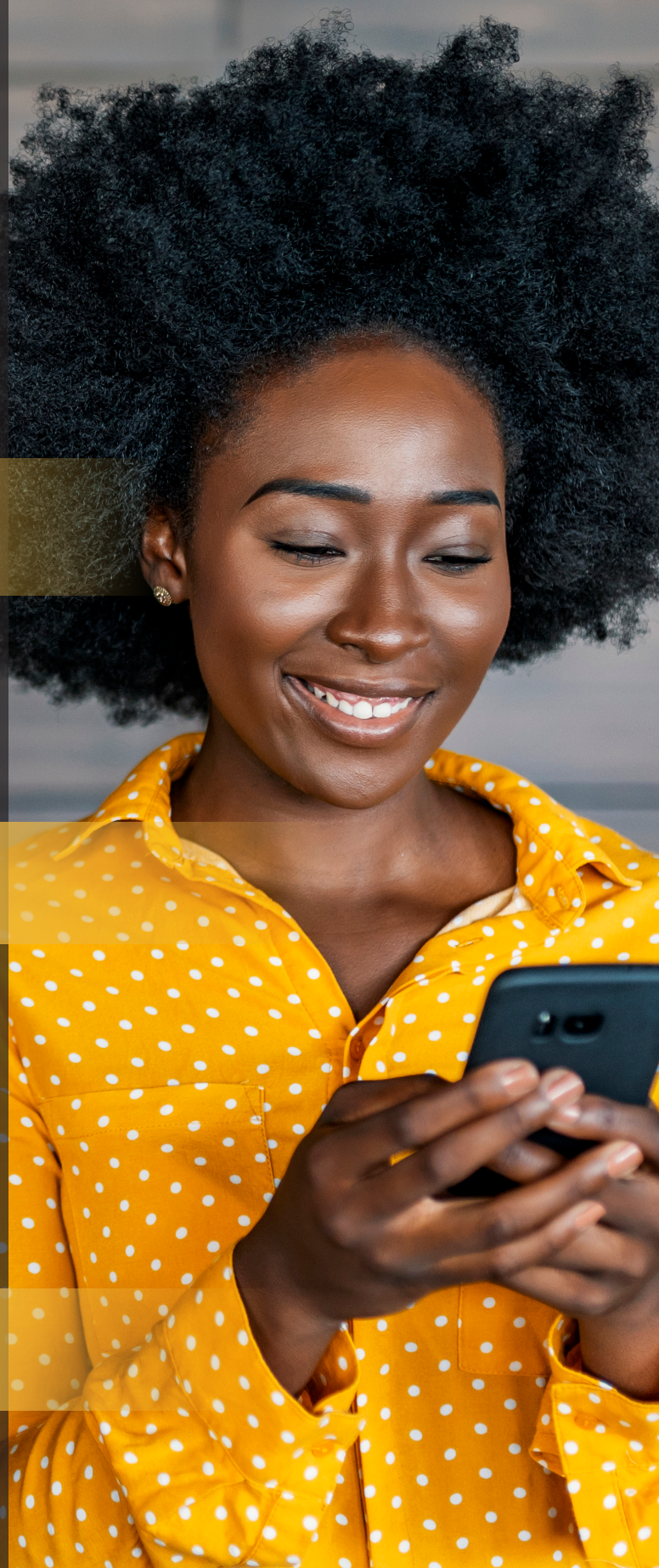
**76%** ...of participants had experienced some type of online security breach or knew someone who had been impacted.

To stay safe, participants regularly changed passwords while others quit the platform or took long breaks.

## Facebook and Instagram.

Leading platforms to likely experience a security breach in the form of pornographic content, explicit messages, trolling or cyber stalking.

Reporting tools on these platforms were equally not effective leading the victims to take long breaks from these platforms or quit all together.





## Way forward

As Kenya braces itself for 2022 general elections, social media platforms are predicted to be a key and major engagement avenue to reach first time voters which according to the 2019 census report will be approximately 5.29 million. Therefore, seeking to understand the digital engagement or advocacy needs of a subset of the youth population, young women, will be integral in designing social media campaign strategies that raise their civic consciousness and encourage them to meaningfully participate in electoral processes.



**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION  
FINDINGS ON YOUNG  
WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT ON  
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**



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