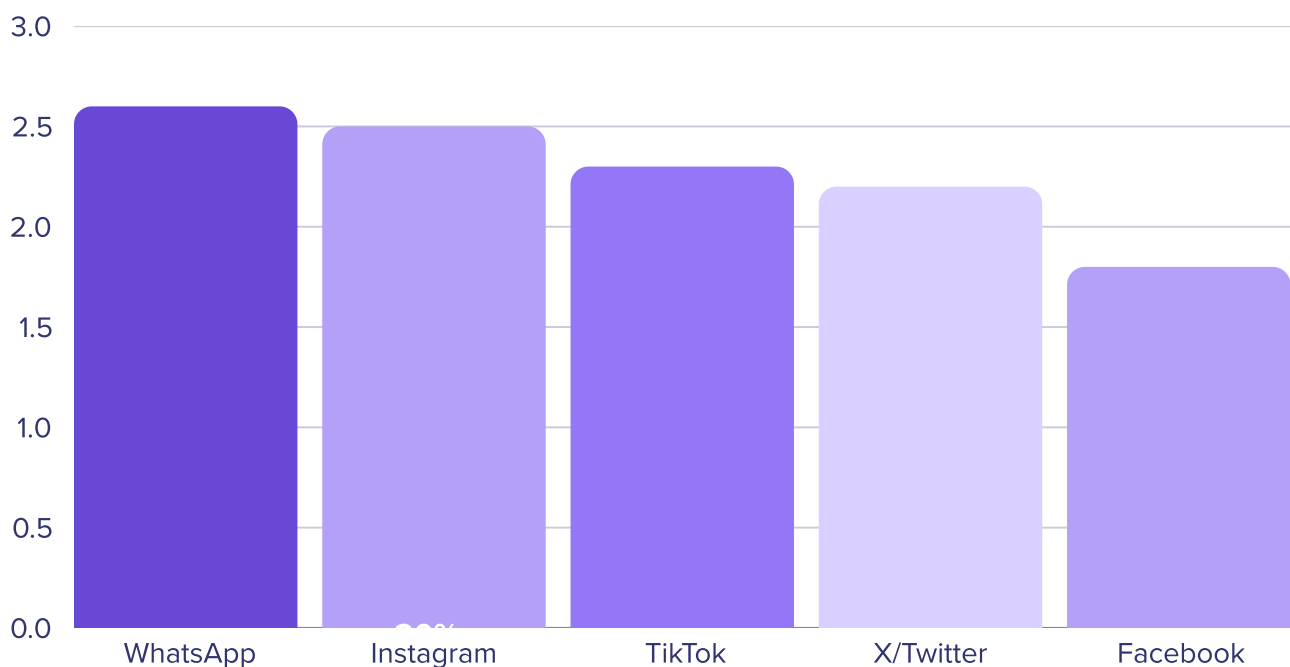# ALERT DESK ZW: TRACKING LGBTQIA+ DIGITAL SECURITY

We asked 101 LGBTQIA+ people in Zimbabwe about digital safety, how safe it feels to be openly queer online and navigate the space. This index shares their platform experiences in a clear, simple way- using a score out of 5 and a safety breakdown for each platform.

How to read the scores:
Unsafe (1–2) | In-between (3) | Safe (4–5)

Social Media Platform Safety Ratings

None of the big apps reach a score of 3/5. For most Queer users, every platform feels more unsafe than safe
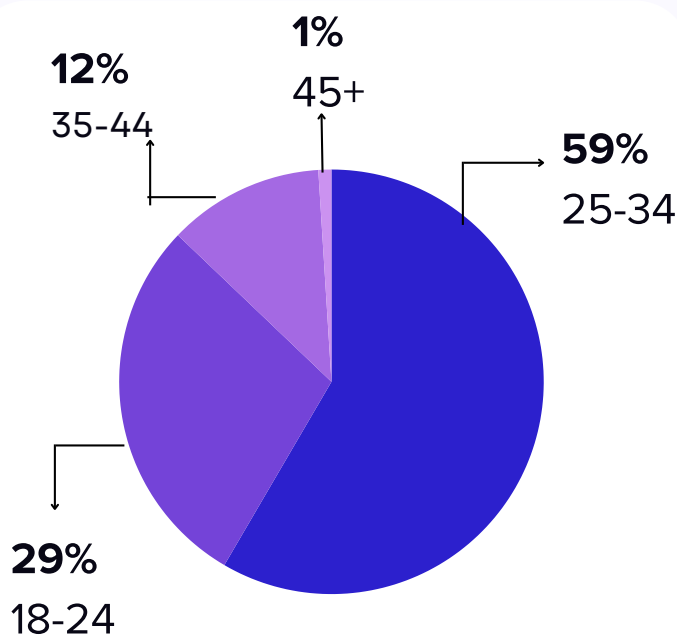
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Who took part? (n = 101)

Most respondents are young LGBTQIA+ people who are active online, mainly aged 18–34.

Age snapshot (demographic %)

12%
35-44

1%
45+

59%
25-34

29%
18-24

Identity snapshot

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and transgender respondents make up most of the sample, alongside smaller groups including asexual, pansexual, genderfluid, GNC and MSM.
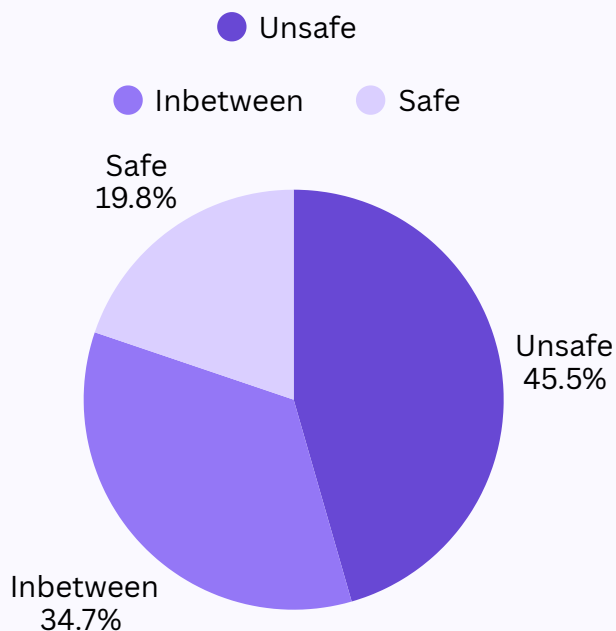
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WhatsApp
Score: 2.6 / 5

WhatsApp one of the leading social media platforms where people stay connected daily-through private chats and group spaces. But safety can still be broken through group dynamics, screenshots, outing, and harassment.

How safe does it feel?

● Unsafe

● Inbetween   ● Safe

Safe
19.8%

Unsafe
45.5%

Inbetween
34.7%

From the survey,38% of the respondents say their worst abuse was on WhatsApp.

Safety Tip:

Tighten group privacy — control who can add you and limit who can see your profile photo/status.

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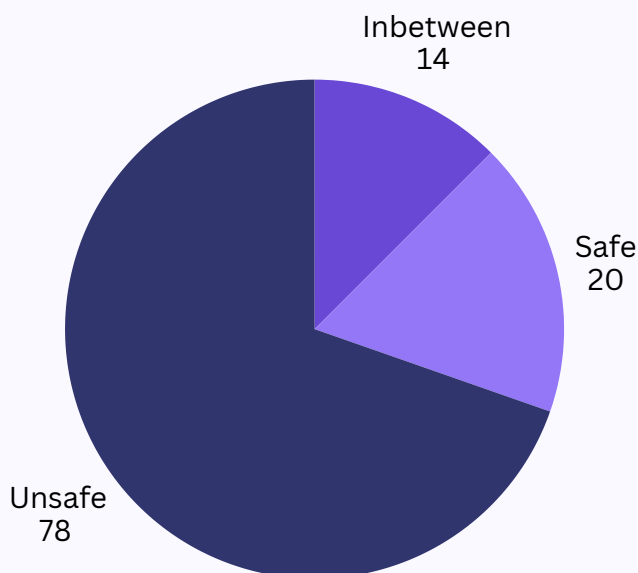# ALERT DESK ZW: TRACKING LGBTQIA+ DIGITAL SECURITY

Facebook
Score: 1.8/ 5

Facebook is highly public-facing. Posts, comments, and shares can travel beyond your chosen circle. For queer users, visibility without protection can increase exposure to hate speech, harassment, and targeting. Here, local language slurs are very common

How safe does it feel?

- ● Inbetween
- ● Safe
- ● Unsafe

Inbetween
14

Safe
20

Unsafe
78

From the survey,23% of the respondents say their worst abuse was on Facebook.

Safety Tip:

Lock down your audience, limit who can comment/message and review tags before they appear on your profile.
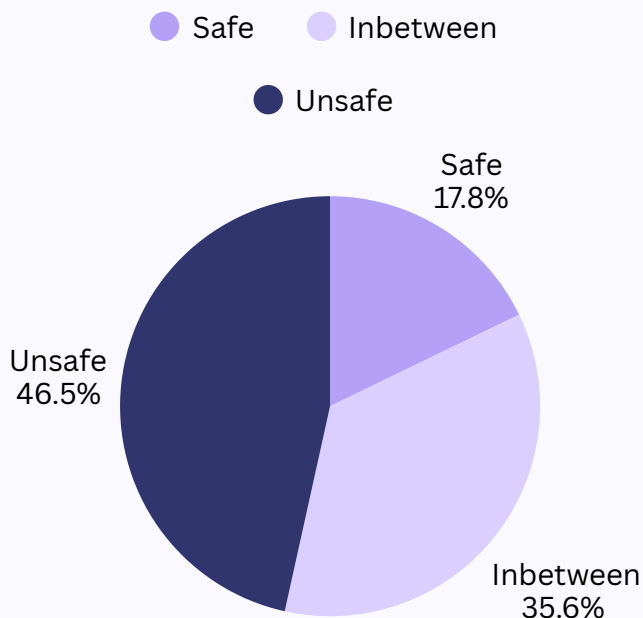
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Instagram
Score: 2.5/ 5

Instagram can feel softer, but harm still happens in comments, DMs, and when content gets reshared beyond your control. "In-between" safety still means risk is present.

How safe does it feel?

● Safe ● Inbetween
● Unsafe

Safe
17.8%

Unsafe
46.5%

Inbetween
35.6%

From the survey,13% of the respondents say their worst abuse was on Instagram.

Safety Tip:
Use comment filters + restrict direct messages DMs from strangers.
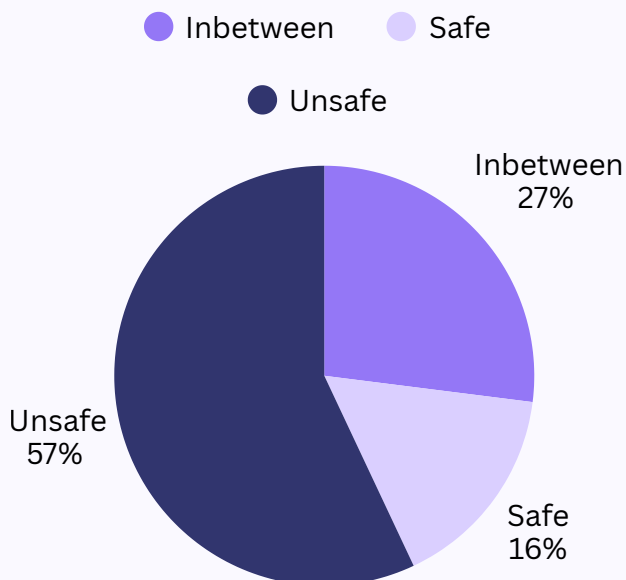
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X(Twitter)
Score: 2.2/ 5

X moves fast and content can become public discourse instantly. Queer voices can find community but also face pile-ons, hate speech, and targeted harassment. Just like Facebook, local language slurs are a norm.

How safe does it feel?

- ● Inbetween
- ● Safe
- ● Unsafe

Inbetween
27%

Unsafe
57%

Safe
16%

From the survey,9% of the respondents say their worst abuse was on X.

Safety Tip:

Use mute/block tools early + limit who can reply to your posts. The option of making your account private is also available.

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Where the worst hurt happens (summary)

Where the worst hurt happens (Severe abuse reports)
- WhatsApp: 38%
- Facebook: 23%
- Instagram: 13%
- X (Twitter): 9%
- TikTok: 4%
- Dating apps: 4%
- Other: 9%

For many LGBTQIA+ Zimbabweans, the same apps that hold our friendships, group chats, organizing, and everyday check-ins are also where harm lands hardest. This isn't happening "somewhere else". It literally shows up in the spaces we use to feel close, to be seen, and to survive. When safety breaks in these familiar places, it doesn't just hurt online; it follows people into their bodies, their relationships, and their daily choices.

Harm concentrates on everyday platforms, especially WhatsApp and Facebook. Digital violence is being normalized where queer people are most present. Safety is not an individual burden. A feminist, care-centered response demands platform accountability: stronger anonymity, faster trauma-aware reporting, and moderation that protects LGBTQIA+ dignity, voice, and visibility in Zimbabwe.