Children and young people's exposure to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

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TrygFonden   **Red Barnet**

Contents

Appendices are available in Danish: sletdet.redbarnet.dk/2024survey

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Introduction

Children and young people in Denmark are among the most digital in the world. This creates opportunities for learning, experiences and communities, but it is also associated with a wide range of risks. We, as a society, have far too often left our children and young people to face these risks on their own.

Although recent years have seen increased focus on the problems related to children and young people's digital lives, parents still find themselves powerless, and politicians struggle with how to practically address the obvious need for regulation of digital platforms. And while we adults fumble, the children largely blame themselves. When the screen has suddenly consumed an entire afternoon, when an unknown adult man sends nude pictures, or when they are tricked and extorted.

At Save the Children's SletDet (Delete-It) helpline, we meet children and young people every day who urgently need digital help and advice because they have been exposed to digital violations. We provide psychological first aid and help report and remove violating material. The inquiries range widely and paint a disturbing picture of how children and young people's presence on digital platforms also leads to deeply serious challenges for their safety, security and rights.

This survey documents that today it is the rule rather than the exception that children and young people are exposed to digital violations and unpleasant experiences online. It is very unsettling to read and demands action from all adults who are involved in the lives of children and young people, as well as from decision-makers in Denmark and the EU. For children and young people have the right to meet each other and seek communities and information without being exposed to violations and harmful content. And as a society, we should set exactly the same safety requirements for digital products targeted at children and young people as we do for physical products.

We are grateful that so many children and young people have participated in this survey and shared their experiences and their own reactions. There is an urgent need for us as adults to listen when they talk about their digital experiences and the digital culture they are part of.

Our hope is that the report will be read by politicians, professionals, researchers, parents and others who are in contact with and responsible for children and young people in Denmark. It is our common responsibility to ensure good and safe childhoods. Children are entitled to have this. It requires that we also work together – not least in dialogue with children and young people themselves.

Thank you to TrygFonden for making it possible to conduct this comprehensive survey as part of the Digital First Aid partnership.

Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen

Secretary General of Save the Children Denmark

1. Summary

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Children and young people spend a large part of their time and social life online. Developments are progressing rapidly, and digital platforms and communities are constantly moving. Therefore, it is important that we keep up with these developments and update our knowledge. In this way, we can ensure that children and young people receive qualified help and support when they are exposed to digital violations.

This representative survey, which Save the Children and TrygFonden have asked Epinion to conduct, is a survey of children and young people's exposure to digital violations and unpleasant experiences online. The survey follows up on a similar one from 2021, but at the same time explores in more detail how children and young people are affected by and react to unpleasant experiences online.

The survey is based on responses from 4,171 children and young people aged 9-17 years and on 14 interviews.

What is a digital violation?
"Digital violations" cover a wide range of transgressive experiences online. These include receiving offensive comments, being extorted and forced to send intimate photos or receiving unsolicited photos from others. To bring the whole spectrum into one overall concept, we use the term *digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online* in this report.

Children and young people's daily online time
Children and young people spend many hours every day online. The largest share (32%) spend three to four hours, 19% spend five to six hours and a full 7% spend seven to eight hours each day.

Those who spend the most time online are the 13-17-year-olds and children and young people who feel lonely or are struggling with poor well-being for other reasons.

How do they spend their time online and why?
The vast majority of children and young people spend their online time on Snapchat and YouTube. Common to all of them is that they see it as a way to socialise. For them, they need to be online to also be part of the community in the physical world.

The extent of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online
69% of the 4,171 children and young people have had one or more unpleasant experiences online over the past year. This is a significant increase from 2021 when the corresponding figure was 42% of children and young people.

Most children and young people have experienced being contacted by someone they did not want to talk to or write to (36%), seeing violent images or videos (32%) and receiving offensive comments online (29%).

A picture is emerging of a significant and general increase in all types of unpleasant experiences online. The unpleasant experience with the largest percentage increase is sharing private or intimate photos or videos. This has increased from 3% to 9%. So experiencing something unpleasant online has become a more common part of being online than in 2021.

Who is most at risk?
It is clear that those who feel lonely are also the most vulnerable. 84% of these children and young people have been exposed to a digital violation or other unpleasant experience online over the past year. Other vulnerable groups are:

- Girls (72%)
- 13-17-year-olds (73%)
- Children and young people struggling with poor well-being (79%)

Common to children and young people is that they see the unpleasant experiences as an inevitable part of being online. It is a condition, but at the same time one they would prefer to do without.

Most unpleasant experiences occur on Snapchat
Snapchat is the platform where most digital violations and unpleasant experiences occur. The most common unpleasant experiences on Snapchat is receiving private and intimate photos, being filmed or screenshotted and having rumours spread about you. When children and young people see violent content online, they usually see it on TikTok and YouTube.

Contacted by unknown adults
25% of children and young people have been contacted by an unknown adult. Of these, 13% have received content they did not want to receive. 12% of them have experienced an adult wanting them to do something unpleasant.

How children and young people experience digital violations
Children and young people react differently to digital violations and unpleasant experiences online. Most react by becoming angry (19%) or having a stomach ache (17%). In addition, some feel embarrassed or humiliated (11%), have trouble falling asleep at night (11%) or react by not wanting to go to school (9%).

Some groups of children and young people are more negatively affected than others when they are exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online. This applies to the 9-12-year-olds, the children and young people who feel lonely and those who struggle with poor well-being.

Children and young people find that it is worst when they know the person behind the digital violation or unpleasant experience online (59%), and less so when it is someone they do not know (41%).

What do they do about it?
32% of children and young people do not take any action when they have experienced something unpleasant. If they do anything, they most often block the person responsible (25%). Those who talk about their experience do so to their parents or other adults they know (23%) or to their friends (22%). Only 3% tell a teacher at school, after-school centre or youth club.

19% of the children and young people who are negatively affected by the digital violation and other unpleasant experiences online do nothing about the situation. It is mostly the children and young people who feel lonely or struggle with poor well-being who do not act on what they have been exposed to.

Therefore, children and young people do not ask for help when they are exposed to something unpleasant online
Many of the children and young people who do not seek help, think that ignoring it is the best path to follow. Also, many feel that they do not need help, or they prefer to handle the situation themselves.

And some children and young people do not seek help because they are afraid that it will make matters worse or because they do not trust the adults. This is especially true for the following unpleasant experiences:

- Others have shared private and intimate photos of them
- Others have spread rumours about them
- They are being threatened or extorted

However, children and young people say that they are more likely to share their experiences if they think the situation is serious and less so if they do not.

What do they do when others are exposed to something unpleasant online?
Children and young people acting on seeing others being exposed to something unpleasant is not a common part of online culture. 27% rarely or never do anything. Children and young people explain that they do not see it as serious – but a condition of being online.

2. Digital behaviour of children and young people

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In this chapter, we look into the digital behaviour of children and young people. First, we look at daily time spent and the digital media, platforms and games used by children and young people. Next, we describe the purposes that children and young people have for being online and how they spend their time there online.

2.1 Daily time spent online increases with age

The majority (85%) of children and young people aged 9 to 17 years spend at least one hour each day on digital media, platforms and games when they are not in lessons. In 2021, the figure was 80%. There is a relatively large difference in how much time children and young people spend online each day. Most (32%) state that they spend three to four hours online each day whereas 7% spend between seven and eight hours a day. Daily time spent online increases with age.

There is a tendency for children who feel lonely to spend more time online. 22% of them spend seven hours or more online every day. Among the others, the figure is only 10%.

Figure 1: Daily time spent on digital media, platforms and games
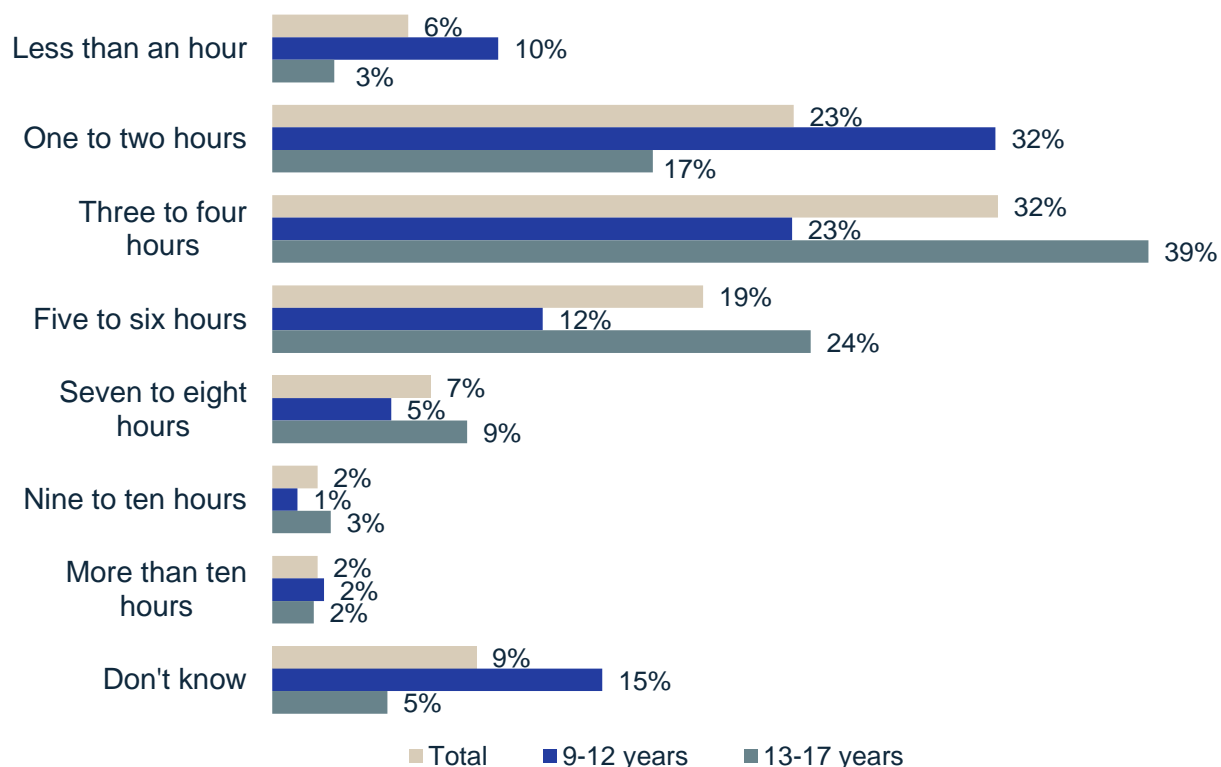
Figure 1 – full question: How much time do you spend in total each day on digital media, platforms or games when you are not in lessons? Think about all the time you spend on e.g. games, Messenger, SS, Snapchat, TikTok and similar. Tick the answer that is closest to your estimate." (N=4,171)

2.2 Children and young people mostly use YouTube and Snapchat

Children and young people use many different online services, but YouTube and Snapchat are by far the most important, as 82% and 72%, respectively, use these platforms.

Figure 2: The share of children and young people who use various digital media, platforms and games

YouTube — Total: 82%, 9-12 years: 85%, 13-17 years: 79%
Snapchat — Total: 72%, 9-12 years: 51%, 13-17 years: 86%
SMS — Total: 57%, 9-12 years: 50%, 13-17 years: 61%
TikTok — Total: 52%, 9-12 years: 27%, 13-17 years: 69%
Instagram — Total: 49%, 9-12 years: 17%, 13-17 years: 71%
Roblox — Total: 44%, 9-12 years: 65%, 13-17 years: 29%
Other games — Total: 42%, 9-12 years: 52%, 13-17 years: 36%
Messenger — Total: 34%, 9-12 years: 14%, 13-17 years: 48%
Facebook — Total: 29%, 9-12 years: 6%, 13-17 years: 46%
Discord — Total: 29%, 9-12 years: 20%, 13-17 years: 35%
Fortnite — Total: 27%, 9-12 years: 39%, 13-17 years: 18%
WhatsApp — Total: 17%, 9-12 years: 17%, 13-17 years: 17%
Other digital media — Total: 11%, 9-12 years: 9%, 13-17 years: 13%
Twitch — Total: 10%, 9-12 years: 8%, 13-17 years: 12%
OmeTV — Total: 7%, 9-12 years: 5%, 13-17 years: 8%
BeReal — Total: 6%, 9-12 years: 2%, 13-17 years: 9%
Reddit — Total: 6%, 9-12 years: 2%, 13-17 years: 8%
Google Chat — Total: 4%, 9-12 years: 5%, 13-17 years: 3%
Telegram — Total: 2%, 9-12 years: 1%, 13-17 years: 4%
Yubo (Yellow) — Total: 1%, 9-12 years: 0%, 13-17 years: 1%
F3 — Total: 0%, 9-12 years: 0%, 13-17 years: 1%

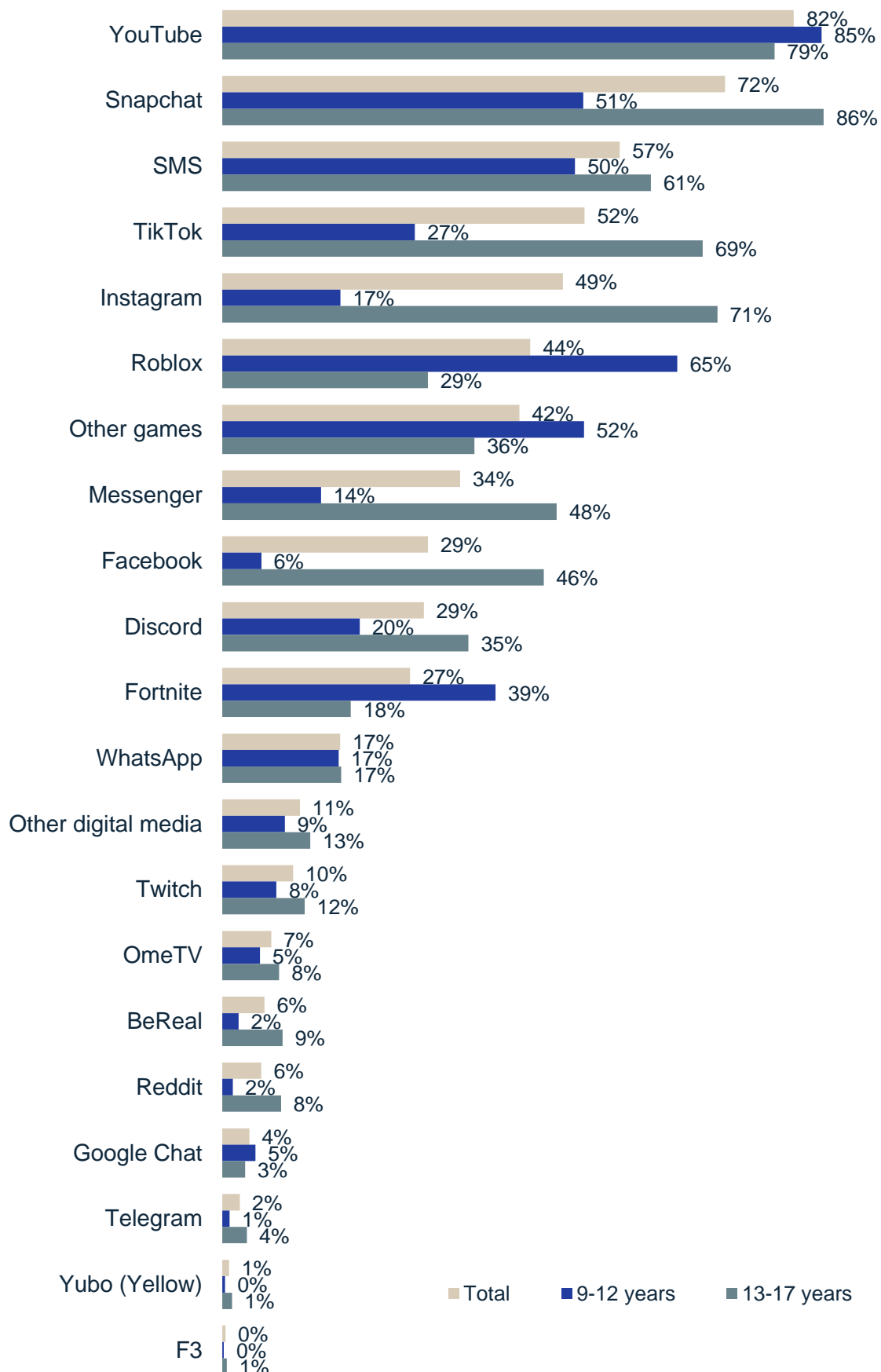Legend: Total, 9-12 years, 13-17 years

Figure 2 – full question*: "Which of these digital media, platforms or games do you use? Tick all that you use often."* Note that the options "Don't know" and "I don't use digital media, platforms or games" are not shown in the graph, as 0% have given these answers. (N=4,171)

YouTube is the most used platform among all groups – across gender, age and children and young people who feel lonely or are struggling with poor well-being However, the 9-12-year-olds use Snapchat much less (51%) than the 13-17-year-olds (86%).

Children and young people generally migrate from YouTube and games to other social platforms such as Snapchat and TikTok as they grow older. For example, 65% of the 9-12-year-olds use Roblox, but only 30% of the 13-17-year-olds use this platform.

In terms of social platforms related to games, there is also a considerable gender difference. For example, 44% of the boys play Fortnite and only 8% of the girls.

Children and young people who feel lonely use the same digital media, platforms and games as other children and young people. But they are also more frequent users of platforms like OmeTV and Yubo where the purpose is to meet new people. However, OmeTV has a media age limit of 18+ years and does not target children.

Neither time spent nor types of digital media, platforms and games used by children and young people have changes significantly since the 2021 survey.

2.3 Children and young people are online to socialise, learn, be creative and have fun

As can be seen in figure 3 on the next page, children and young people are online for many different reasons: to have fun, to stay in contact with people that already know, to meet new friends, to learn or to be creative. Across all children and young people, the majority (65%) indicate that they spend their time online for fun.

There is a tendency for girls to be online for, for example, keeping up with what their friends are doing or staying in touch with their family. Also, girls are more often online to follow celebrities or to find inspiration on how to eat, work out or look.

Boys, more often than girls, are online to find new friends, to meet others who share the same interests as themselves and to have fun.

Children and young people who feel lonely are more often online to meet someone with the same interests as themselves and to find inspiration on how to eat, work out or look.

In terms of age, the 9-12-year-olds are more often online to learn than the 13-17-year-olds.

Figure 3: How online time is spent

I have fun
65%
59%
72%

I am with friends I already know
58%
57%
59%

I pass time
52%
55%
50%

I keep up with what my friends are doing
47%
55%
39%

I stay in touch with my family
41%
48%
34%

I follow celebrities (e.g. influencers or athletes)
38%
46%
30%

I learn new things, e.g languages or crafting
26%
33%
20%

I find other inspiration
23%
29%
16%

I find inspiration on how to eat, work out or look
21%
25%
18%

I meet someone who share the same interests as me
18%
14%
22%

I find new friends
18%
15%
20%

Other
11%
10%
12%

Don't know/Do not wish to answer
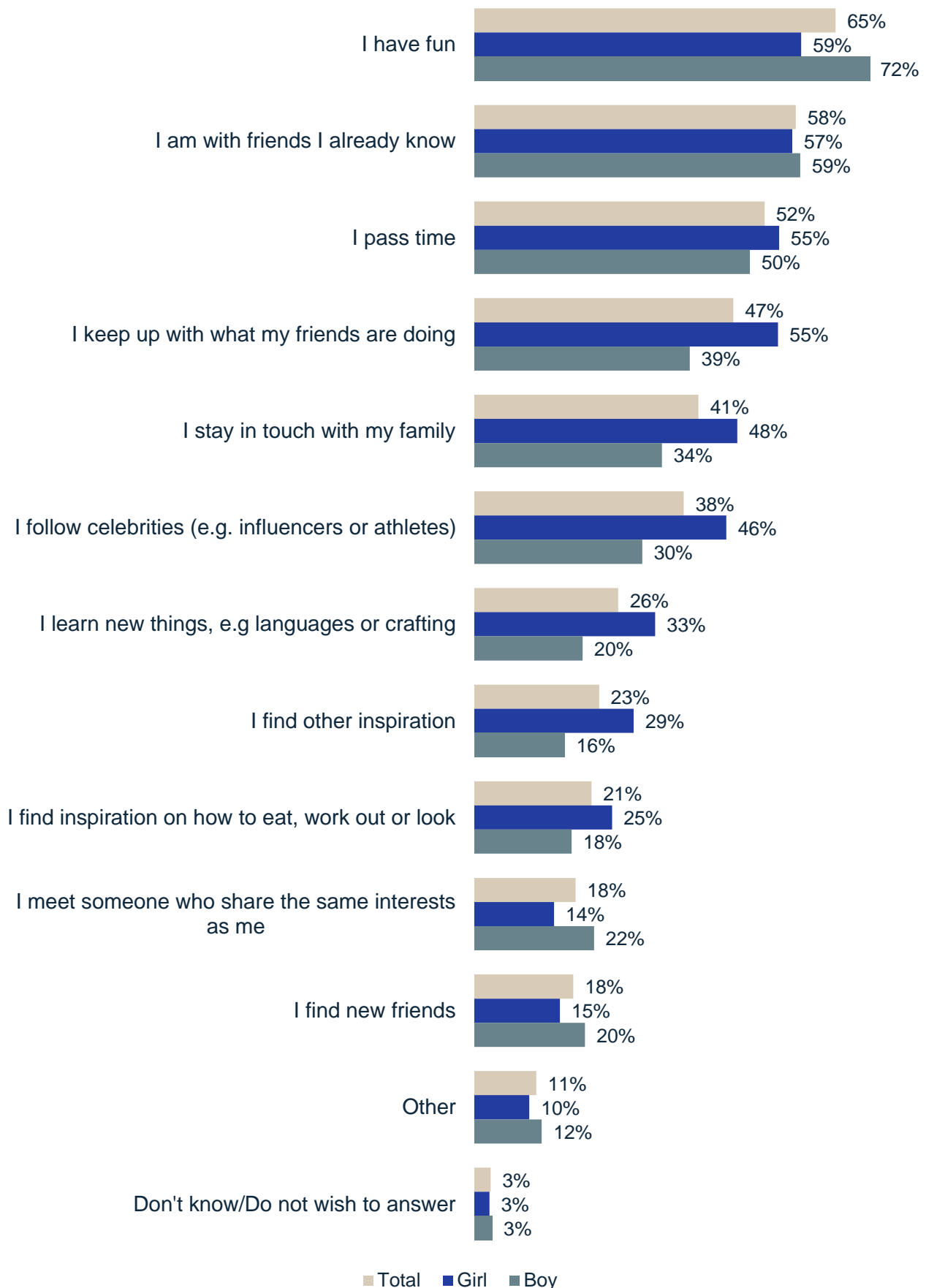3%
3%
3%

■ Total ■ Girl ■ Boy

Figure 3 – full question: *How do you most often spend your time on digital media, platforms or games? You may tick multiple answers."* (N=4,171)

In the interviews, children and young people particularly highlight the social aspect of the online universe as something that makes it important and attractive for them to be online

Therefore, it is not surprising that when asked what the best part of being online is, they typically mention the social aspect – such as being able to message or "snap" their friends.

The 9-12-year-olds particularly indicate that it is fun to play games and watch videos on e.g. YouTube. Asked about the worst part, the majority mention the harsh tone. This applies both to friends they socialise with online and strangers they meet in the digital universe. Some children would wish that they were more social in the real world, as much of their social life is lived online.

Their social life in the real world is also affected by their digital life. Often children and young people arrange to meet and form friendship groups online. Therefore, they think it is important to be active online to be part of the social life offline.

Even though many of them have had unpleasant experiences online, it does not stop them from using social platforms, media or games. It is an integral part of their daily and social lives, which most of them enjoy.

"

What is the best thing about being online?

I think the best part is that it's easy to be with people, even when you're not actually together. You get this feeling that you are actually together. Even when you are 100 km apart.

Girl, 16 years.

"

What is the worst thing about being online?

The way people can hate. For example, if you posted a video and then people are like "Oh, you're fat". They just trash you.

Girl, 15 years.

3. The extent of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

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This chapter looks at the extent of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online. We look at the extent of such experiences and the development since 2021. We then dive into the most and least common types of experiences, the platforms and games where they occur and who is behind them. We also look at how often children and young people are contacted by unknown adults.

3.1 The number of children and young people who have been exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online has increased significantly

69% of children and young people have been exposed to one or more digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online over the past year. This is a significant increase since 2021 when the figure was 42%. There is an increase in all types of digital violations and unpleasant experiences online.

It is not possible to directly compare the responses in 2021 and 2024 as categories have been added, and the most recent version has a changed set-up. Even so, it is clear that there is a significant increase in the number of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online.

This is also supported by the interviews. Children and young people have the perception that unpleasant experiences online occur very frequently and affect everyone in one way or another – and that it is a risk of being present online that they will have to accept. They all say that they or someone they know have had unpleasant experiences online.

Figure 4 on the next page clearly shows the difference between unpleasant experiences online depending on the group of children or young people involved.

For example, 65% of the boys have experienced something unpleasant online, whereas the figure for the girls is 72%. There is also an age-related difference. 73% of the 13-17-year-olds have had an unpleasant experience whereas the figure for the 9-12-year-olds is 62%.

> **"**
>
> *Somehow it is just regarded as part of being online. Like when people write trash to you. That is just really normal now. It is just how people are.*
>
> Boy, 15 years.

Figure 4: Share of children and young people who have had one or more unpleasant experiences online over the past year
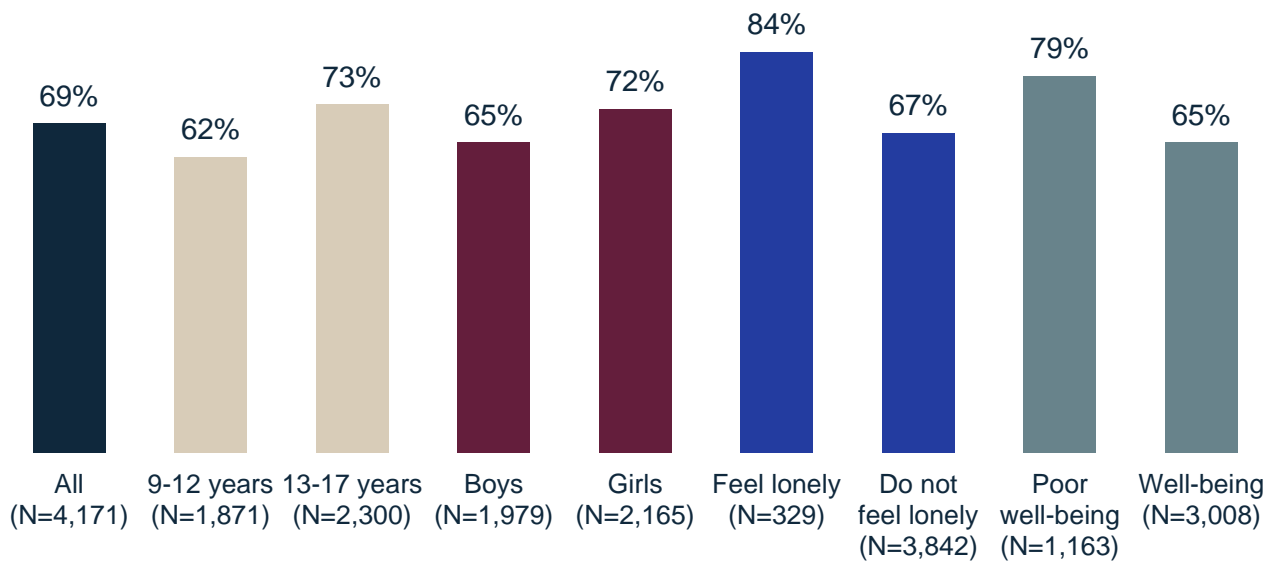

Figure 4 – The shares are calculated as children and young people who have indicated that they have been exposed to at least one digital violation or other unpleasant experience over the past year, across different types of digital violations.

In addition to gender and age, it also matters whether children and young people thrive or feel lonely. The children and young people who feel lonely have unpleasant experiences online more often (84%) than the other children and young people (67%). Looking solely at the children and young people who struggle with poor well-being, we see the same pattern. Here, 79% of them have experienced something unpleasant online, where the figure is 65% for the other children and young people. Overall, girls in particular, the 13-17-year-olds and those who feel lonely or struggle with poor well-being are particularly vulnerable.

The 2021 survey showed the same trends. However, it is clear that all groups have seen an increase in the number of unpleasant experiences online.

3.2 The increase is seen in all types of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

Figure 5 on the next page shows the share of children and young people who have been exposed to different types of digital violations or unpleasant experiences online over the past year. Most of the children and young people have been contacted by someone they do not want to talk to or write to (36%). 32% have seen violent images or videos that they did not want to see, and 29% have received offensive comments online.

"

It hasn't happened to me, but I know that it has to some of my friends. At least a lot of the girls. Like, someone just added them (on Snapchat, ed.) and sent these (intimate pictures, ed.).

Boy, 14 years.

A comparison of the results for the different types of digital violations and unpleasant experiences online from 2021 to 2024 shows an increase in all areas. Particularly noteworthy is the increase in the number of children and young people whose private or intimate photos have been shared. Here, the share has tripled from 3% in 2021 to 9% in 2024. Also, a significantly higher share of children and young people experience being bullied with something about them online, namely 4% in 2021 and 10% today.

Figure 5: Share of children and young people who have had each type of unpleasant experience online

Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to — 36% (2024), 18% (2021)

Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see* — 32% (2024)

Receiving offensive comments online (hateful or hurtful) — 29% (2024), 18% (2021)

Being photographed/filmed/screenshotted against my will — 25% (2024), 10% (2021)

Being socially excluded on social media or in online games — 21% (2024), 9% (2021)

Receiving private/intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see — 18% (2024), 13% (2021)

Other unpleasant experiences* — 17% (2024)

Others spreading rumours about me online — 12% (2024), 6% (2021)

Being bullied with something about me online (e.g. photos or videos) — 10% (2024), 4% (2021)

Others threatening or extorting me online — 10% (2024), 6% (2021)

Others having shared private/intimate photos or videos of me without my permission — 9% (2024), 3% (2021)

Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will* — 8% (2024)

Others impersonating me online* — 6% (2024)
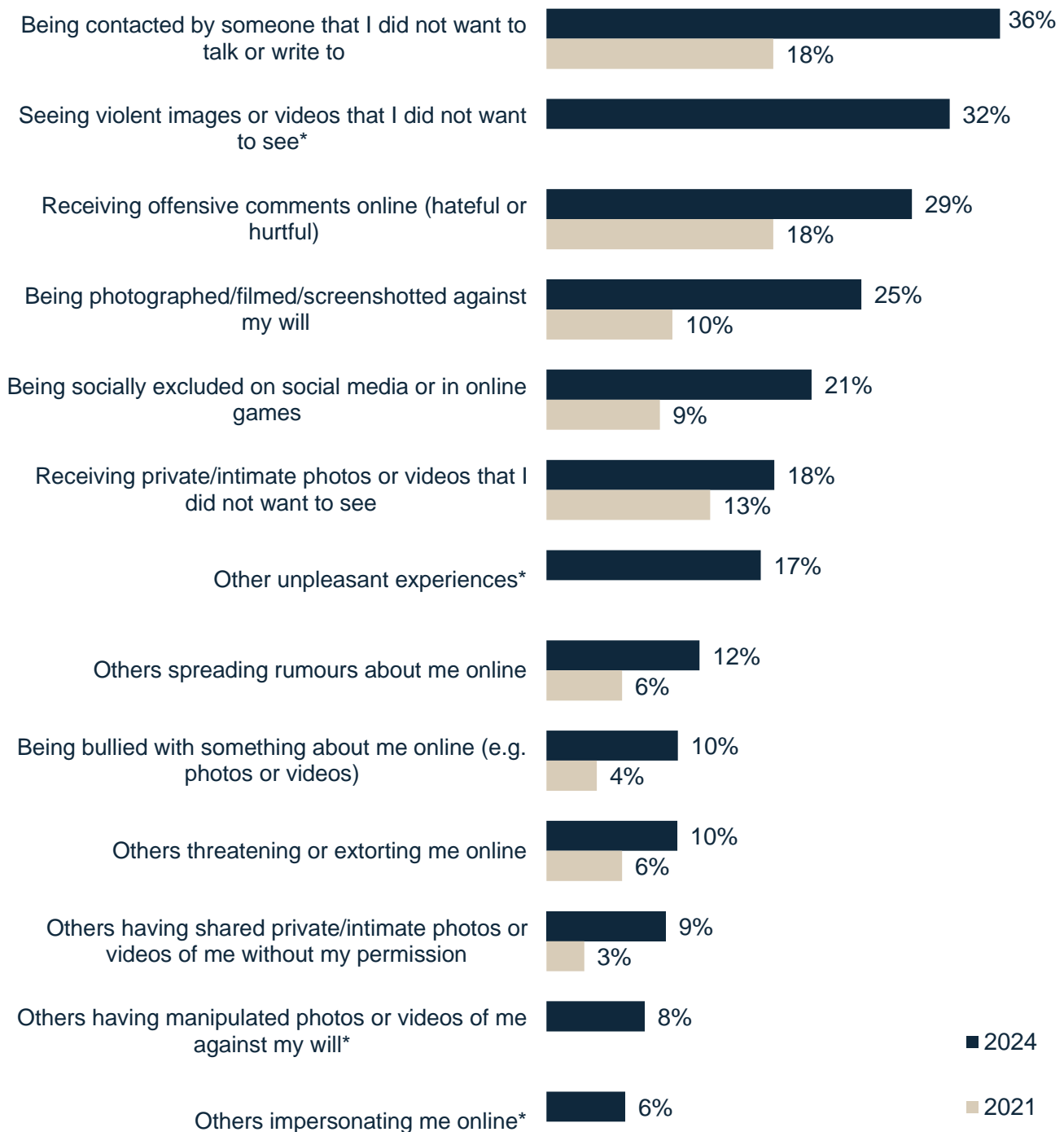
■ 2024 ■ 2021

Figure 5 – full question: *"Have you had any of these unpleasant experiences online over the past year? For example unpleasant experiences when you write or talk to others via digital media, platforms or games."* Questions marked with * have been added in 2024 and can therefore not be compared with previous years. *N (2024) = 4,171, N (2021) = 3.209*

Being photographed/filmed/screenshotted without permission is the unpleasant experience online with the second largest increase (15 percentage points more experience this in 2024), followed by being socially excluded on social media or from games online which has increased by 12 percentage points since 2021. Almost twice as many experience being threatened or extorted. This has increased from 6% to 10%.

In the interviews, more children and young people say that they are aware of the risk of experiencing something unpleasant online and therefore they try to be extra attentive when they are online. As examples of unpleasant experiences online they particularly mention being contacted by strangers, encountering violent videos without having searched for them, being socially excluded in games or online groups or receiving offensive comments. Most view these experiences as "normal" because a large part of their lives are lived online, and digital media make it easier to expose others to, or be exposed to, such things.

"If you ask generally, I think everyone has seen something unpleasant. I think everyone who scrolls sees someone getting hurt once in a while.

Girl, 17 years.

For example, it has become easier to create a fake profile to send hateful messages. Although children and young people see these experiences as "normal" and do not always feel the need to share them with others, most still feel uncomfortable being exposed to them. They would rather avoid these experiences if they could.

Ethnicity also has an impact on the types of unpleasant experiences that children and young people have had. For example, 13% of children and young people with an ethnic minority background have experienced their private/intimate photos being shared over the past year, whereas this applies to 8% of ethnic Danish children and young people.

3.3 More than one in three have had three or more unpleasant experiences online

As shown in Figure 6, 35% have had three or more unpleasant experiences online over the past year. 33% have had one or two unpleasant experiences online over the past year.

Again, particularly girls, the 13-17-year-olds and children and young people who feel lonely or struggle with poor well-being have the most unpleasant experiences online.

Looking at the children and young people who most often spend their time online, it turns out that those who are online to find new friends, meet people with similar interests and get inspiration on how to eat, work out or look are more likely to be exposed to a wider range of unpleasant experiences online About a quarter of them have had more than five different unpleasant experiences online over the past year.

Figure 6: Share of children and young people who have had one or more unpleasant experiences online over the past year
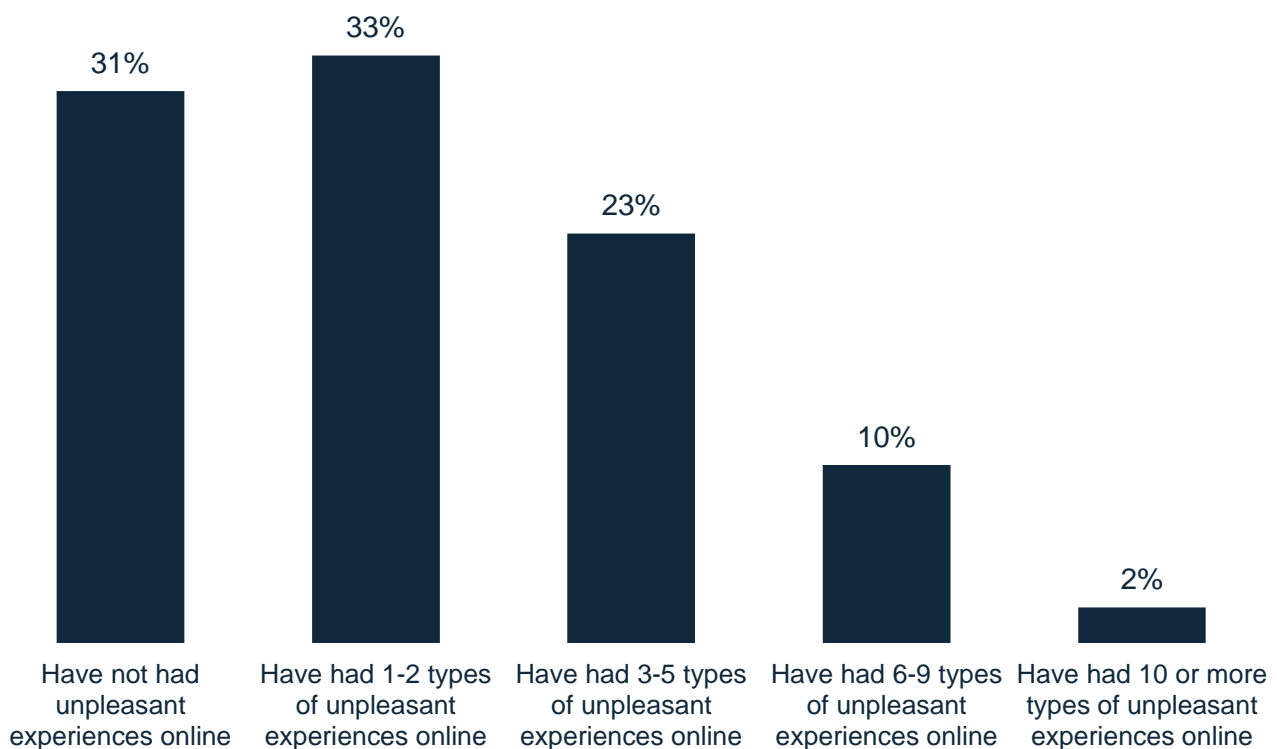

Figure 6 – The shares are calculated based on how many digital violations or other unpleasant experiences children and young people have had over the past year across different types of digital violations. (N=4,171)

3.4 More than half of the children and young people find that unpleasant experiences online repeat themselves

Many children and young people are exposed to different types of unpleasant experiences online, but it also turns out that a large part of them occur relatively frequently. 69% of children and young people have had at least one type of unpleasant experience online, but it is also part of the picture that many of them have had the various types of unpleasant experiences online multiple times over the past year.

On average, 11% of the unpleasant experiences online repeat themselves every week or every day. For 13% of the experiences, it is every month. Over half the experiences (57%) repeated themselves once to three times over the past year.

As can be seen from Figure 7 on the next page receiving offensive comments online is the unpleasant experience that repeats itself most frequently. 19% have this experience every day or every week. 30% of the children and young people who have seen violent images or videos have experienced this every month or more often.

The experiences that affect most also occur most frequently. For example, 29% of children and young people have received offensive comments online over the past year, and it is also the experience that most are exposed to repeatedly.

In the interviews, children and young people emphasise the frequent experiences as less serious, but nonetheless unpleasant, such as receiving intimate photos from strangers, seeing violent content online or receiving offensive comments online. All in all experiences that they do not want but do not worry them either. They say, for example, that "I see that all the time", that they "have gotten used to it" or that it is something "I quickly forget again". As they experience it several times, they get used to it and describe it as an everyday experience that quickly goes away again.

Figure 7: How often children and young people have been exposed to digital violations or unpleasant experiences online over the past year by various types of experiences
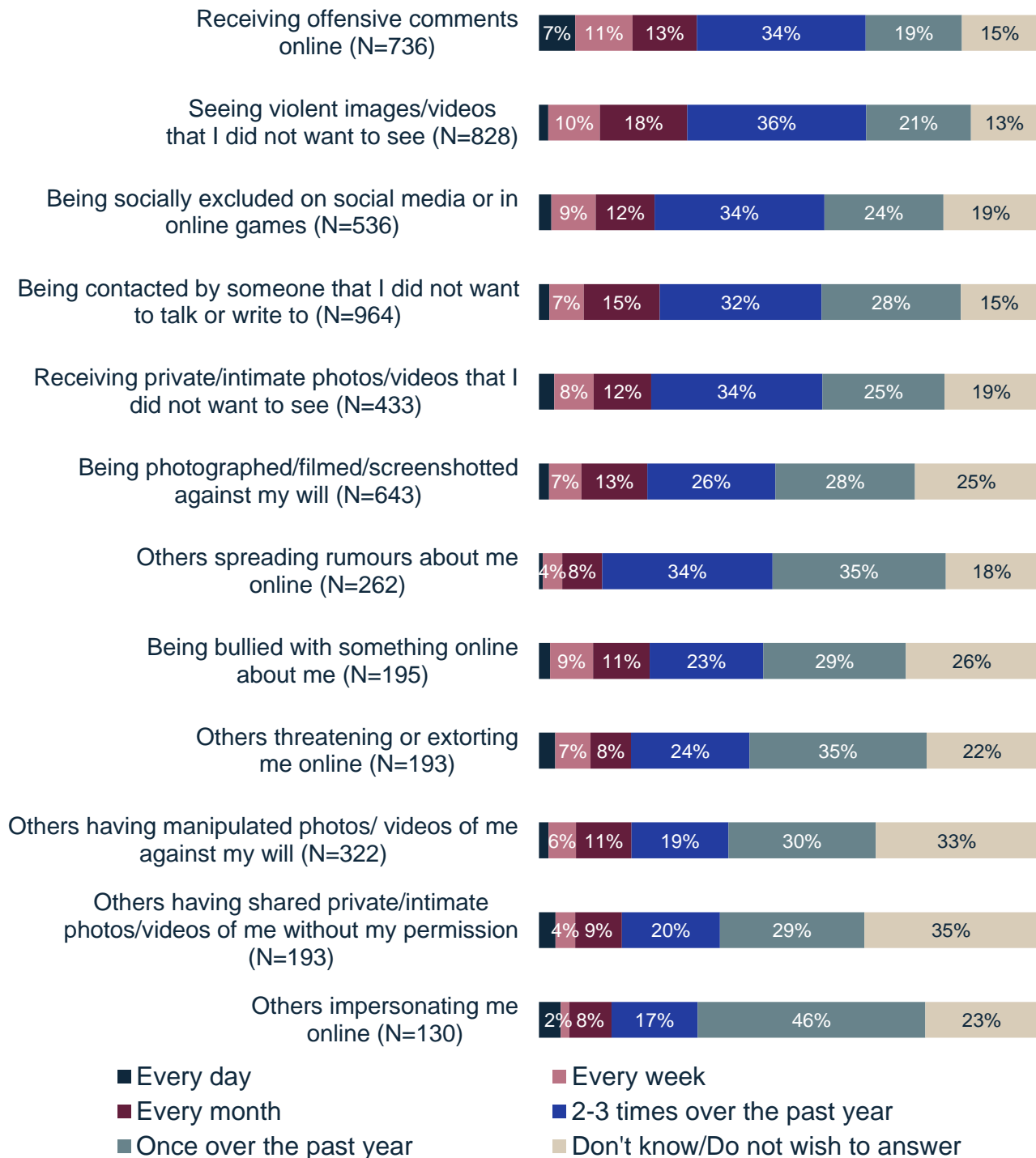
Experience	Every day	Every week	Every month	2-3 times over the past year	Once over the past year	Don't know/Do not wish to answer
Receiving offensive comments online (N=736)	7%	11%	13%	34%	19%	15%
Seeing violent images/videos that I did not want to see (N=828)		10%	18%	36%	21%	13%
Being socially excluded on social media or in online games (N=536)		9%	12%	34%	24%	19%
Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to (N=964)	7%		15%	32%	28%	15%
Receiving private/intimate photos/videos that I did not want to see (N=433)	8%		12%	34%	25%	19%
Being photographed/filmed/screenshotted against my will (N=643)	7%		13%	26%	28%	25%
Others spreading rumours about me online (N=262)	4%	8%		34%	35%	18%
Being bullied with something online about me (N=195)	9%		11%	23%	29%	26%
Others threatening or extorting me online (N=193)		7%	8%	24%	35%	22%
Others having manipulated photos/ videos of me against my will (N=322)	6%	11%		19%	30%	33%
Others having shared private/intimate photos/videos of me without my permission (N=193)	4%	9%		20%	29%	35%
Others impersonating me online (N=130)	2%	8%		17%	46%	23%

- ■ Every day
- ■ Every week
- ■ Every month
- ■ 2-3 times over the past year
- ■ Once over the past year
- ■ Don't know/Do not wish to answer

Figure 7– Full question: *"How often have you been exposed to [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online] over the past year?"* For the share who responded "Every day", the percentage does not appear for layout reasons.

As we have seen, the experiences that most children and young people have are often also the ones that occur frequently. One experience differs from this. Namely being bullied with something about them online. 10% of children and young people have experienced this and of these, 11% experience it every week or every day. So it occurs frequently, although it may not affect as many children and young people.

3.5 Digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online occur on many different platforms – but most on Snapchat

Snapchat is the platform where most children and young people have unpleasant experiences online (49%). 20% of the unpleasant experiences occur on TikTok and 14% on Instagram. Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram are also some of the platforms used by many children and young people.

Figure 8: Digital media, platforms and games where children and young people have been exposed to unpleasant experiences online – average across experiences

Platform	Percentage
Snapchat	49%
TikTok	20%
Instagram	14%
Other digital media	13%
Discord	12%
Roblox	11%
SMS	10%
YouTube	10%
Fortnite	9%
Other games	7%
Messenger	6%
Facebook	6%
OmeTV	4%
WhatsApp	4%
Reddit	1%
Telegram	1%
Twitch	1%
Google Chat	1%
BeReal	1%
Yubo (Yellow)	1%
F3	0%
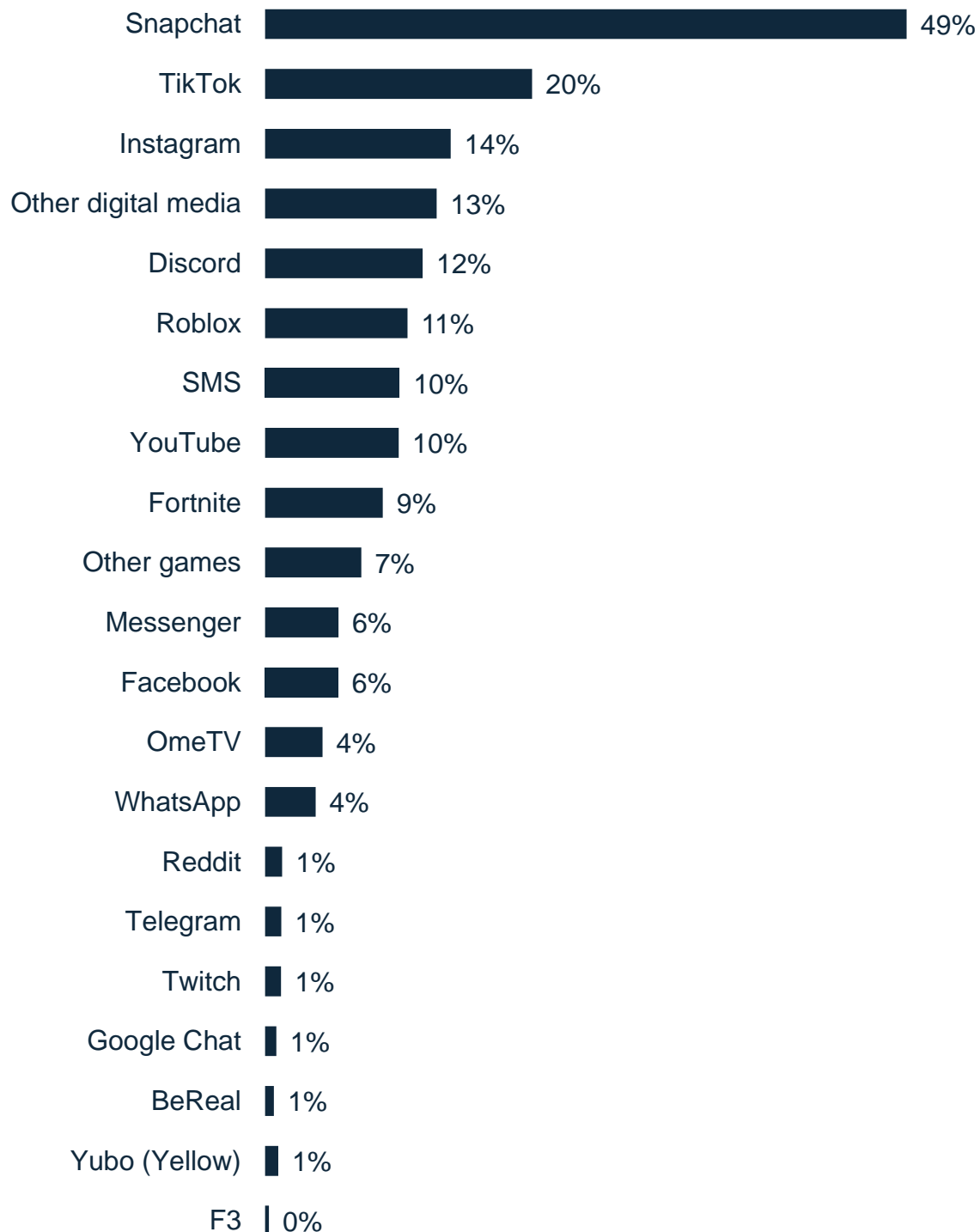
Figure 8– Full question: *"On which digital media, platforms or games have you been exposed to [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online] over the past year?" You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the weighted average of responses across all experiences. (N=4,171).

Even though 82% use YouTube, only 10% of the unpleasant experiences online occur there. Conversely, 12% of the unpleasant experiences occur on Discord which is only used by 29%. There are also many unpleasant experiences on OmeTV where 4% of the unpleasant experiences online occur even though only 7% of children and young people use that platform.

70% of those who have received private or intimate photos received them on Snapchat. The figure is 69% for those who have experienced being photographed, filmed or screenshotted without permission, and 64% of those who have experienced rumours being spread experienced it on Snapchat.

When children and young people talk about their unpleasant experiences online in the interviews, they highlight a pattern in which the design and features of digital platforms either increase or decrease the risk of being exposed to unpleasant experiences online. For example, it is easy for strangers to send intimate photos to children and young people on Snapchat that they do not want to receive, whereas the risk of encountering violent content or hateful speech is higher when scrolling through TikTok or Instagram.

"

I had Snapchat once. Some random person added me and I added them back, like just for fun. And then there were some like unpleasant photos. Like nudes and stuff.

Girl, 16 years.

3.6 Known children and young people are often behind the unpleasant experiences online

Who is behind each digital violation or unpleasant experience varies. In 39% of the cases, children and young people they know are behind. In 34% of the cases, the child or young person does not know who it is. In 3% of the cases, it is an adult they know.

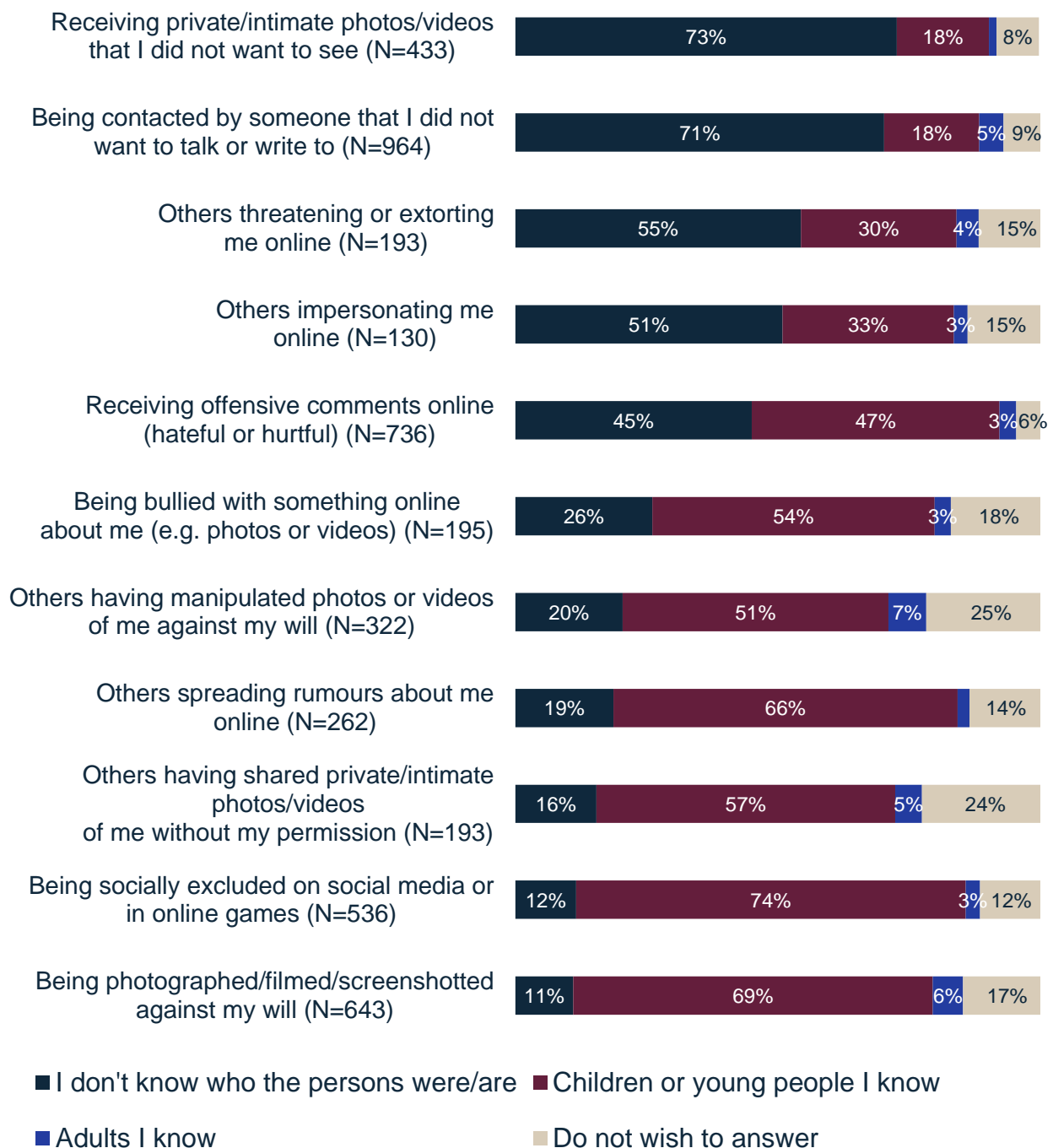**Figure 9: Who is behind the digital violations or unpleasant experiences online, divided into various types of experiences**

Figure 9– Full question: *"Which persons have [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online] over the past year? You may tick multiple answers."*

As shown in Figure 9, it is most often people unknown to the children and young people who send intimate photos and videos (73%) and who contact them even if they do not want to be contacted (71%).

On the other hand, it is often children and young people they know who exclude them (74%) or photograph, film or take screenshots of them without permission (69%).

In the interviews, two girls say that they have had their content shared on social media and have received offensive comments online. For example, children and young people they know have taken screenshots of their photos and shared them in threads where comments have been made on their appearance. Both stories confirm to the girls that the tone on social media is harsh and often very different from what they experience outside the digital world.

> **"**
>
> *I have often been trashed by people on social media. I just think it's easier. When we're at school, they don't even talk to me. And if they did, they would be pretty nice. But online, they would easily trash me.*
>
> Girl, 15 years.

> **"**
>
> *Because I've always been a little bigger than the others, so I've been an easy victim. And people have made like offensive comments about me on class Snapchat groups. And someone also DM'ed me.*
>
> Girl, 17 years.

3.7 Children and young people who feel lonely are more often contacted by unknown adults

A quarter of children and young people aged 9-17 years have experienced being contacted by an adult online that they did not already know. This figure is on par with 2021 when 26% of children and young people experienced this.

Figure 10: The share of children and young people who have experienced being contacted by an adult online that they did not already know
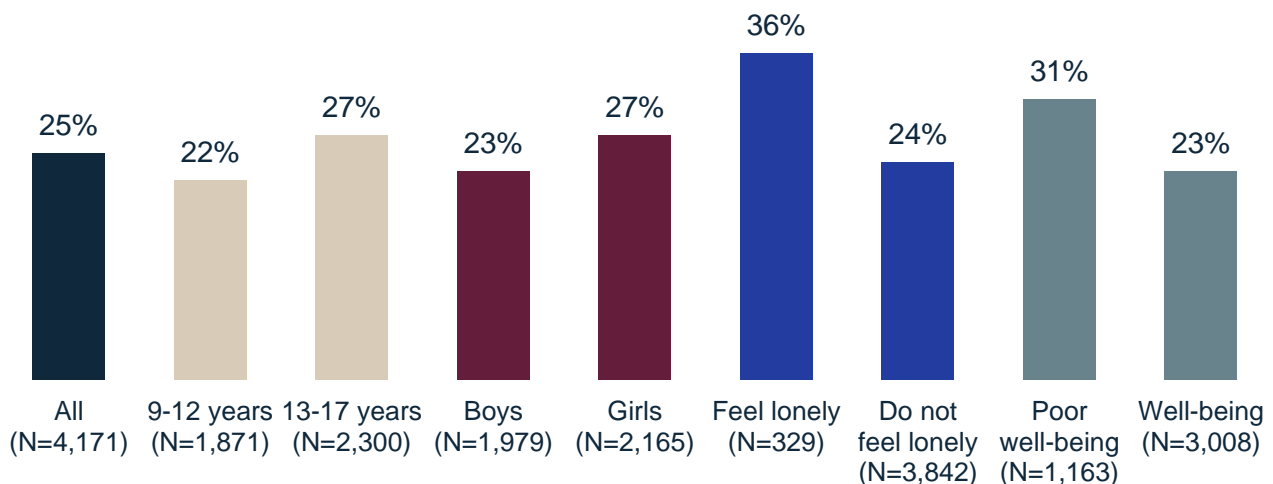

Figure 10 – Full question: *"Have you over the past year experienced being contacted by an adult online that you did not already know?"*

As shown in Figure 10, girls experience more contact from unknown adults than boys, whereas the 13-17-year-olds experience it more often than the 9-12-year-olds. The groups that most often experience being contacted by unknown adults are children and young people who feel lonely or struggle with poor well-being and children and young people who are looking for new friends online or inspiration on how to eat, work out or look.

As can be seen from Figure 11 on the next page the majority of children and young people who have experienced being contacted by an unknown adult do not know what the adult wanted and chose to ignore it. Compared to 2021, more children and young people ignore such contact. The figure has increased from 41% in 2021 to 51% in 2024.

> **"**
>
> *I don't know if it's been posted, but one of my best friends' friends once had an older guy add her on Snap and he like pushed her into some things where I thought "Wow, is this really how things are?"*
>
> Girl, 16 years.

The patterns that emerge when we look at who is most often contacted by unknown adults become even clearer when we look at what the adult wanted the children and young people to do. Although only slightly more girls than boys are contacted by unknown adults, girls have most often experienced that the adult wanted to talk or chat, that the adult sent them something that was unpleasant or that the adult wanted them to do something that they did not want to do (19% girls experience this as opposed to 4% boys). Similarly, the 13-17-year-olds experience this to a much higher degree than the 9-12-year-olds.

Figure 11: Content of the contact from the adult(s)

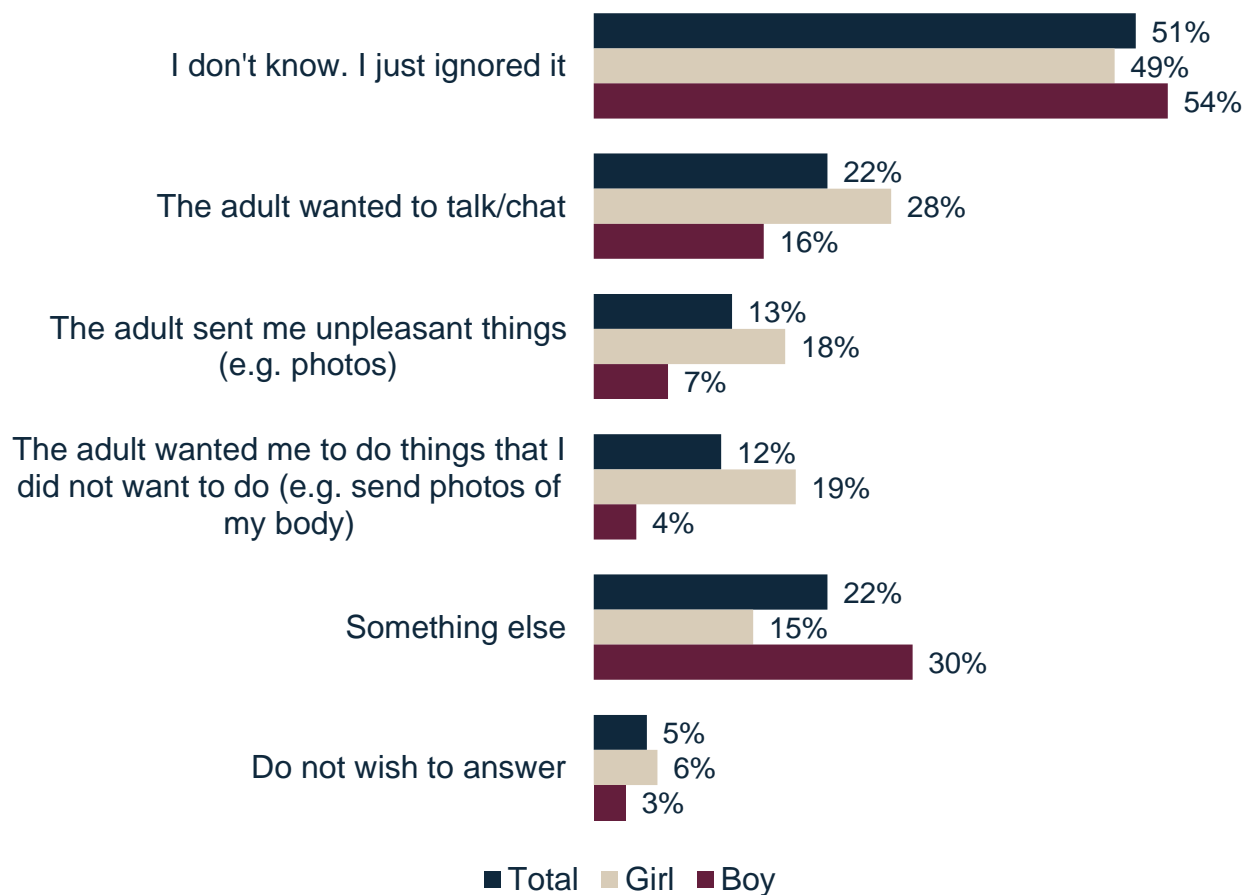|	Total	Girl	Boy
I don't know. I just ignored it	51%	49%	54%
The adult wanted to talk/chat	22%	28%	16%
The adult sent me unpleasant things (e.g. photos)	13%	18%	7%
The adult wanted me to do things that I did not want to do (e.g. send photos of my body)	12%	19%	4%
Something else	22%	15%	30%
Do not wish to answer	5%	6%	3%

■ Total ■ Girl ■ Boy

Figure 11 – Full question: *"You responded that you have been contacted by an adult online that you did not know. What did the adult, who contacted you, want? You may tick more answers."* (N=1,064)

Children and young people who feel lonely or struggle with poor well-being are not only more frequently contacted by adults that they did not already know, they are also much less inclined to ignore such contact. 37% of the children and young people who feel lonely and who have been contacted by an unknown adult, chose to ignore the contact, whereas this is true for 53% of children and young people who do not feel lonely. Children and young people who feel lonely are also more at risk of being contacted by unknown adults. There are three times as many of them as compared to others who experience receiving unpleasant things or having someone ask them to do something they do not want to do.

4. Children and young people's reactions to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

4. Children and young people's reactions to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

This chapter looks at the digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online. We look across the experiences and highlight both commonalities and differences in how children and young people typically react when they experience something unpleasant online and whether they talk to someone about it.

4.1 Many children and young people are negatively affected by digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

48% of the digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online that children and young people are exposed to affect them negatively. Most often, they either become angry (19%), have a stomach ache (17%) or do not know what to do (16%).

Figure 12: How digital violations and unpleasant experiences online affect children and young people – average across experiences

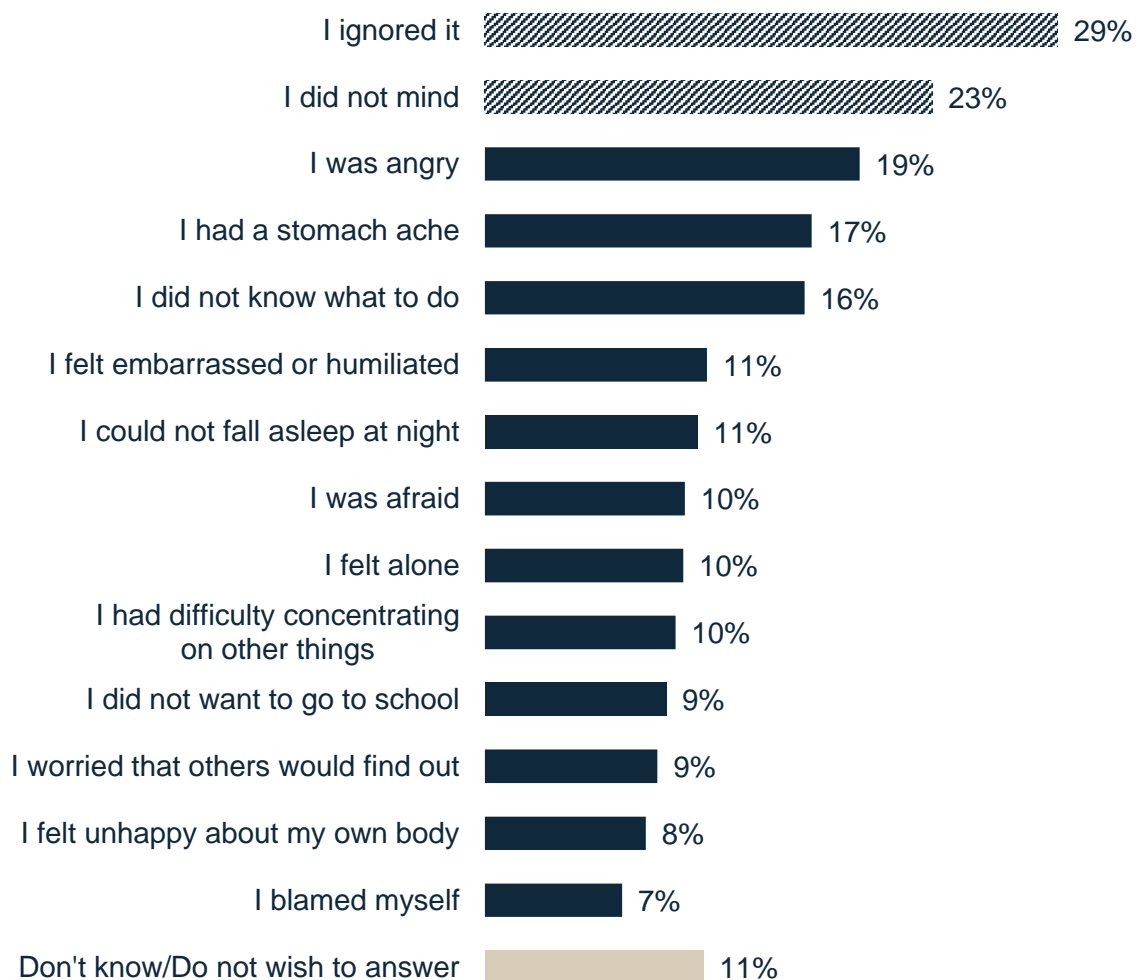| Reaction	Percentage
I ignored it	29%
I did not mind	23%
I was angry	19%
I had a stomach ache	17%
I did not know what to do	16%
I felt embarrassed or humiliated	11%
I could not fall asleep at night	11%
I was afraid	10%
I felt alone	10%
I had difficulty concentrating on other things	10%
I did not want to go to school	9%
I worried that others would find out	9%
I felt unhappy about my own body	8%
I blamed myself	7%
Don't know/Do not wish to answer	11%

Figure 12– Full question: *"How did it affect you that [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the weighted average of responses across all experiences. (N=2,841). N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.

Not all types of experiences affect children and young people equally. The experience that most often causes negative reactions is other spreading rumours about you online. This affects 66% of children and young people who experience it negatively. Almost as many (63%) are negatively affected by having private or intimate photos shared whereas being socially excluded on social media or in online games affects 61% of those who experience it negatively.

Figure 13: Share of children and young people who are negatively affected by various digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online
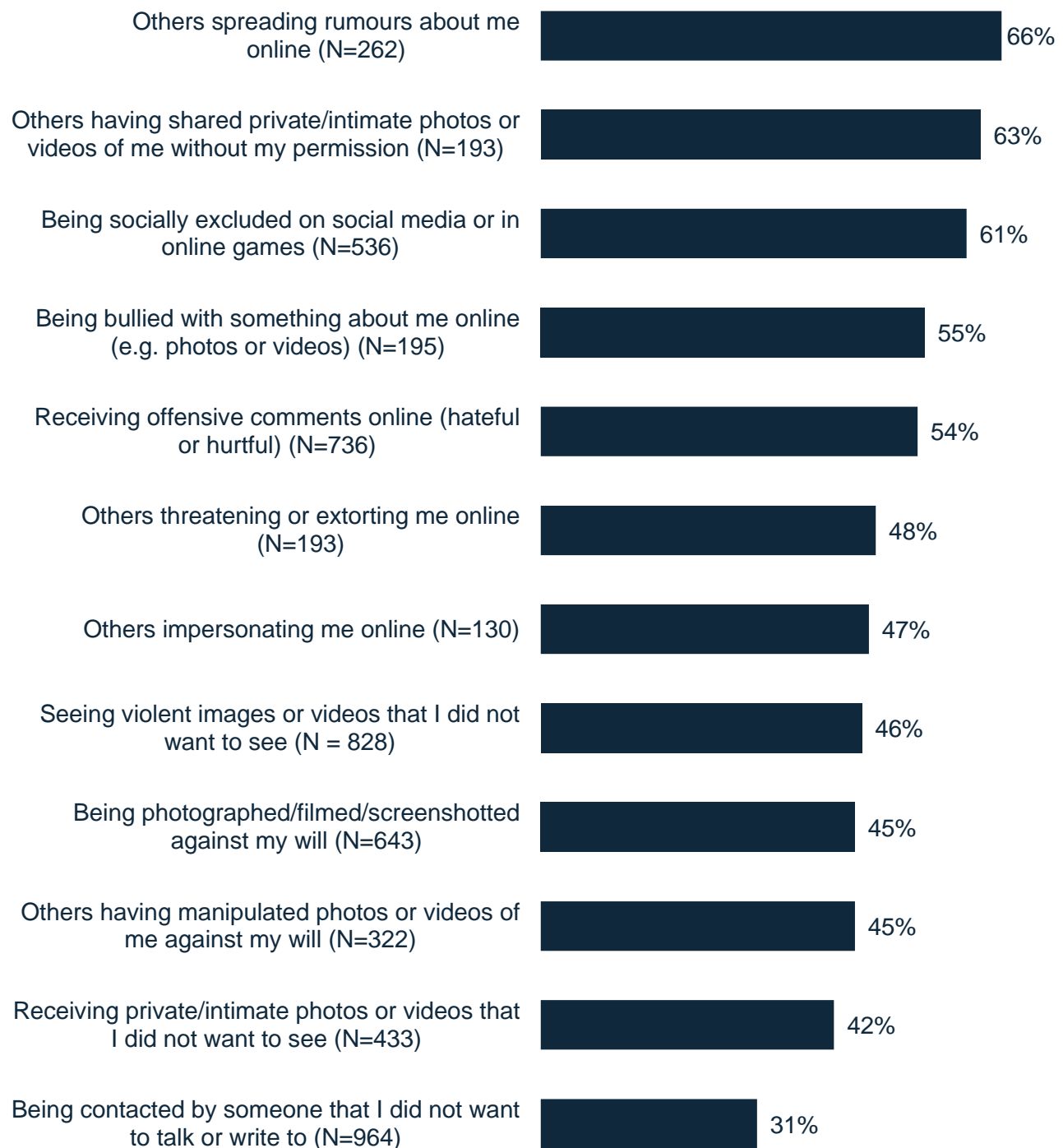
Others spreading rumours about me online (N=262)	66%
Others having shared private/intimate photos or videos of me without my permission (N=193)	63%
Being socially excluded on social media or in online games (N=536)	61%
Being bullied with something about me online (e.g. photos or videos) (N=195)	55%
Receiving offensive comments online (hateful or hurtful) (N=736)	54%
Others threatening or extorting me online (N=193)	48%
Others impersonating me online (N=130)	47%
Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see (N = 828)	46%
Being photographed/filmed/screenshotted against my will (N=643)	45%
Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will (N=322)	45%
Receiving private/intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see (N=433)	42%
Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to (N=964)	31%

Figure 13– Full question: *"How did it affect you that [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the share of children and young people who were negatively affected by each of the experiences.

As can be seen from Figure 14 on the next page, there is a difference in how children and young people are affected by various digital violations and unpleasant experiences online.

Across different types of experiences, many children and young people get angry, but especially when others spread rumours about them, when others share intimate or private photos of them, when others impersonate them or when others send offensive comments.

Stomach ache is a reaction that most often occurs in children and young people when others spread rumours about them or if they are socially excluded on social media or in online games.

Also, many children and young people do not know what to do when they experience something unpleasant online. Especially if others spread rumours, they are bullied with something online or if others share intimate/private photos of them. Spreading rumours and bullying stirs up all kinds of negative emotions at once and often, the children and young people who experience this may also react by not wanting to go to school.

Certain negative reactions are common in connection with certain types of experiences. For example feeling alone and being afraid. Children and young people often feel alone when they are socially excluded on social media or in online games or if someone has spread rumours about them. They are typically afraid if they are threatened or extorted or if they see violent videos or images that they do not want to see.

Feeling dissatisfied with one's own body or feeling embarrassed or humiliated is very much associated with others spreading rumours, sharing private or intimate photos or videos and bullying them with something online.

Figure 14: How children and young people are affected when they are exposed to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

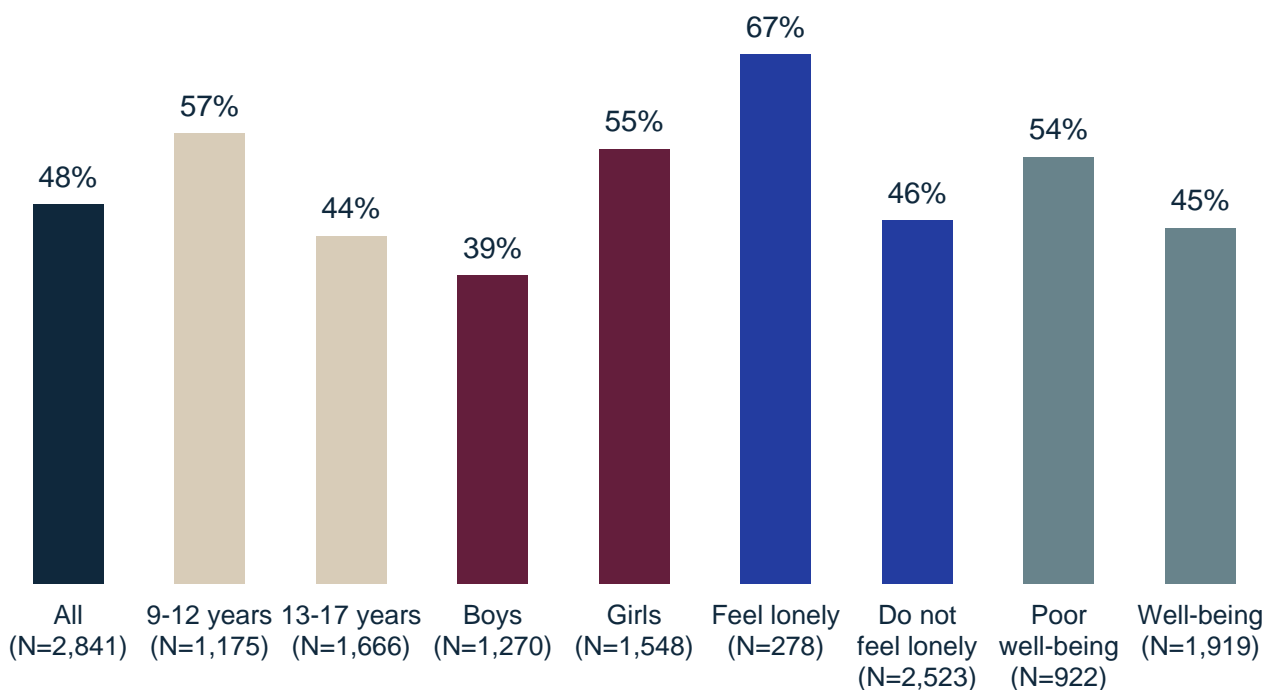| Type of digital violation or other unpleasant experience online	Was afraid	Was angry	Blamed myself	Felt embarrassed or humiliated	Felt alone	Felt unhappy about my own body	Could not fall asleep at night	Had difficulty concentrating	Had a stomach ache	Worried that others would find out	Did not know what to do	Did not want to go to school
Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to	8%	12%	2%	4%	4%	3%	5%	5%	9%	4%	13%	3%
Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see	16%	9%	4%	3%	3%	3%	14%	8%	19%	4%	14%	2%
Receiving offensive comments online (hateful or hurtful)	8%	26%	9%	11%	11%	12%	14%	13%	19%	9%	19%	12%
Being photographed, filmed, screenshotted against my will	8%	20%	4%	16%	5%	8%	5%	6%	11%	7%	11%	7%
Being socially excluded on social media or in online games	6%	24%	12%	15%	36%	9%	13%	10%	23%	8%	17%	16%
Receiving private/intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see	10%	11%	6%	11%	2%	6%	8%	9%	13%	12%	19%	4%
Others spreading rumours about me online	10%	36%	12%	20%	19%	17%	16%	18%	27%	18%	21%	22%
Being bullied with something about me online (e.g. photos or videos)	10%	24%	10%	24%	14%	14%	15%	12%	18%	14%	19%	19%
Others threatening or extorting me online	17%	20%	11%	9%	9%	11%	13%	16%	20%	12%	23%	9%
Others having shared private/intimate photos or videos of me without my permission	13%	29%	12%	26%	12%	16%	14%	14%	20%	19%	21%	17%
Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will	9%	18%	9%	14%	9%	12%	12%	12%	15%	13%	13%	14%
Others impersonating me online	11%	27%	3%	6%	7%	3%	6%	9%	14%	5%	14%	9%

Figure 14 – Full question: *"How did it affect you that [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* (N=2,841). N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.

4.2 Especially 9-12-year-olds, girls and children and young people who feel lonely are negatively affected

Even though digital violation and other unpleasant experiences online affect children and young people differently, it is common for various groups of children and young people to experience them differently. The reactions of children and young people to these experiences vary, especially depending on their age group.

As shown in Figure 15, the 9-12-year-olds (57%) are more negatively affected by the experiences than the 13-17-year-olds (44%). Similarly, girls (55%) and children and young people who feel lonely (67%) are more negatively affected by the experiences than boys (39%) and children and young people who do not feel lonely (46%).

Figure 15: Share of children and young people who have been negatively affected by one or more digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online – average across experiences
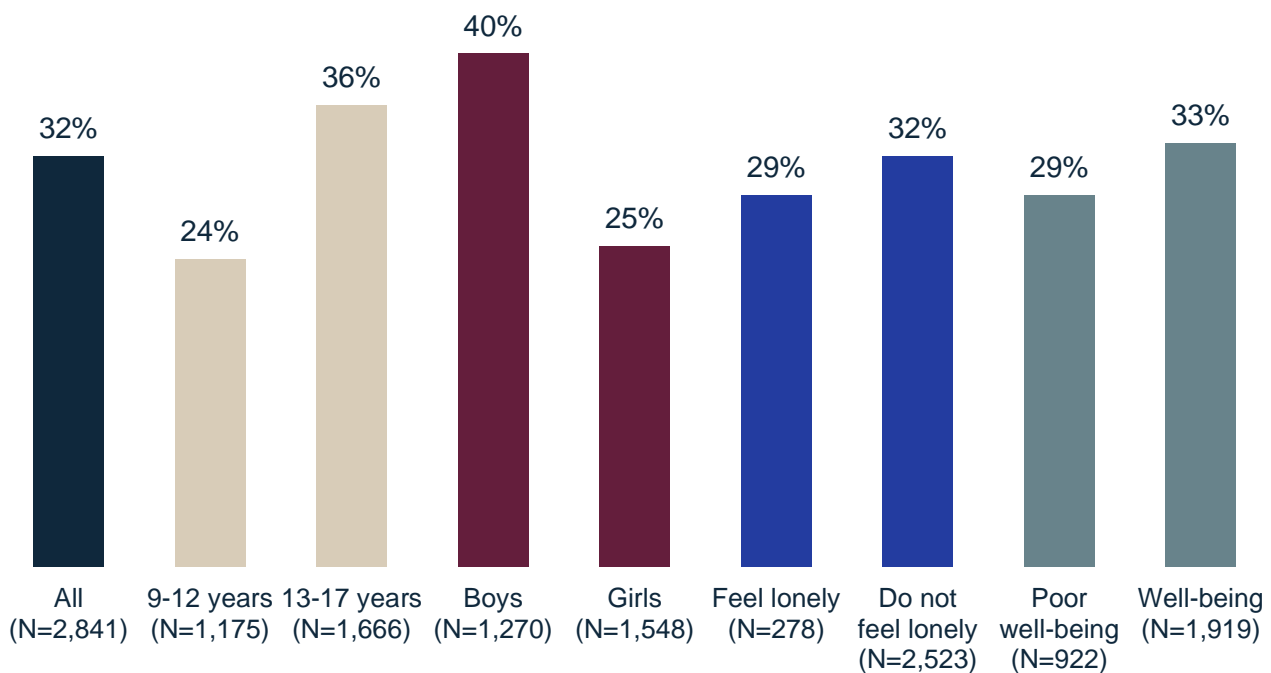

Figure 15 – Full question: *"How did it affect you that [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the weighted average across the experiences of the shares in various groups of children and young people who have been negatively affected by the experience. N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.

4.3 The impact is more severe when you know the person behind it

Children and young people are more affected by digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online when the experiences involve children and young people they already know (59%) than if the experiences involve persons they do not know (41%).

Children and young people are also more likely to respond passively to experiences involving people they do not know. In cases where they know the person or persons behind, children and young people react more often by not wanting to go to school.

4.4 A third do not act on digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online

32% of children and young people do not take action when they are exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online. As can be seen in Figure 16, particularly the 13-17-year-olds, boys, children and young people who feel lonely or struggle with poor well-being when they are exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online, do not take any action.

Figure 16: Share of children and young people who do *not* take action when they have been exposed to a digital violation or another unpleasant experience online – average across experiences

Figure 16 – Full question: *"What did you do about [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the weighted average across the experiences of the shares in various groups of children and young people who did not react to being exposed to the experience.

As shown in Figure 17 on the next page, particularly children and young people seeing violent images or videos they do not want to see, being photographed or screenshotted against their will or being socially excluded fail to take any action.

Figure 17: Share of children and young people who do not react when they are exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online
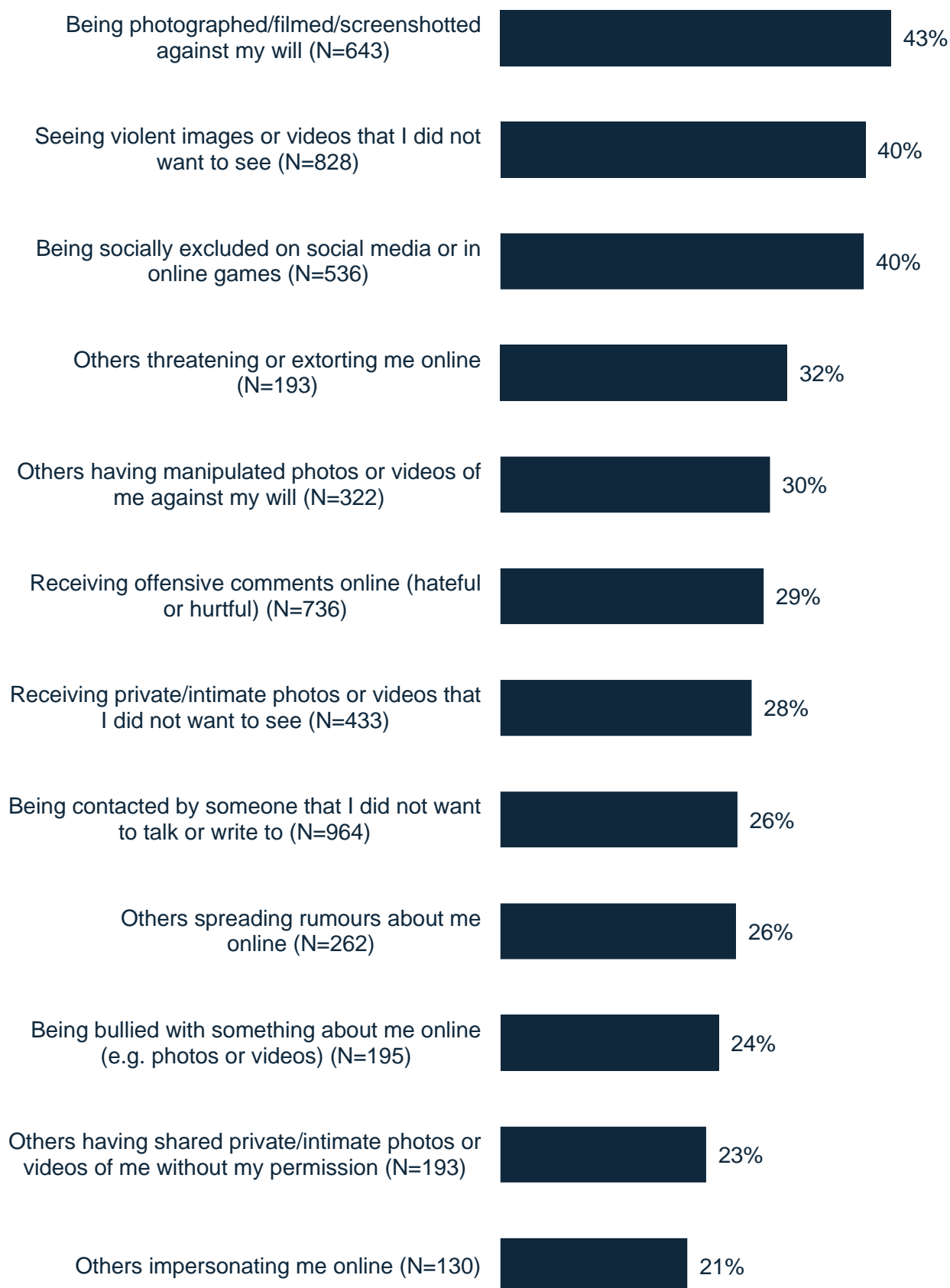
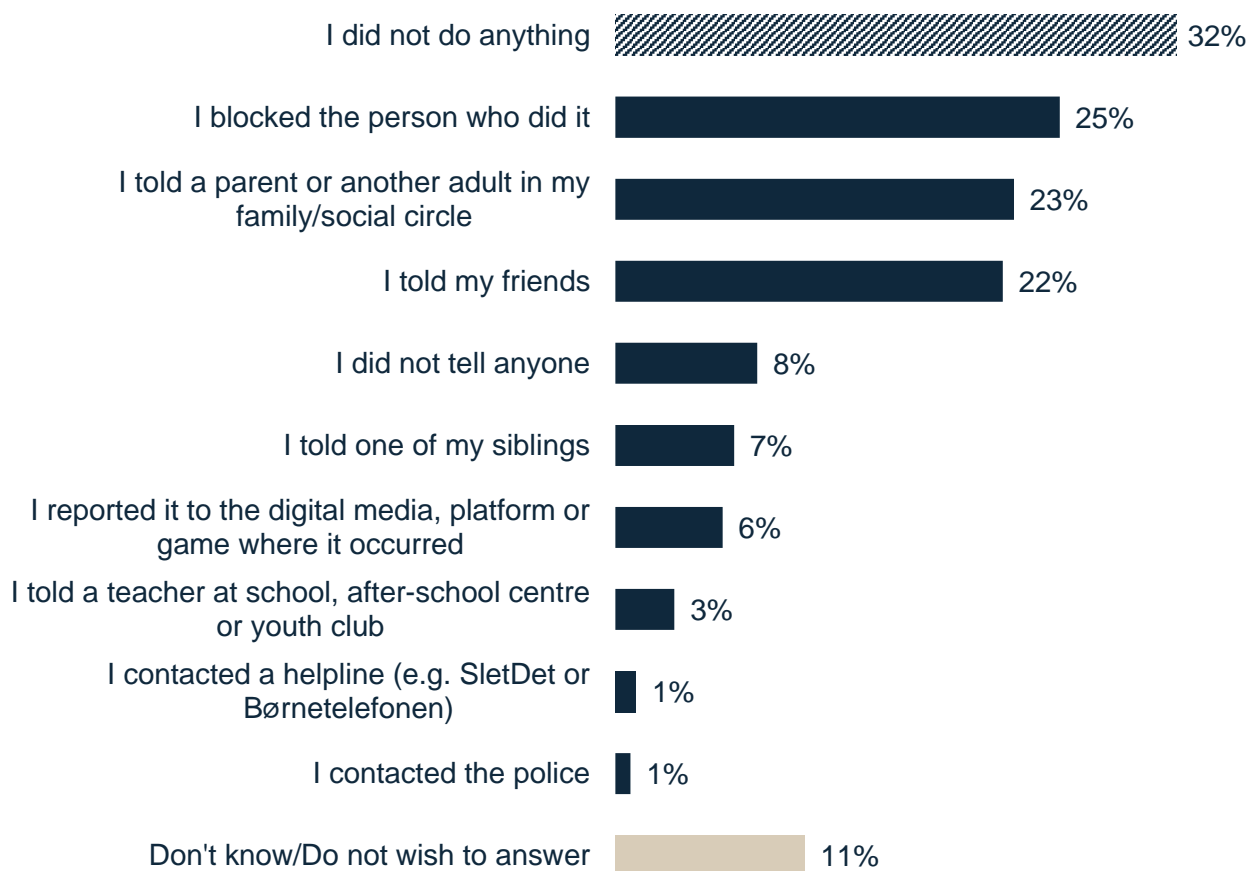|	
Being photographed/filmed/screenshotted against my will (N=643)	43%
Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see (N=828)	40%
Being socially excluded on social media or in online games (N=536)	40%
Others threatening or extorting me online (N=193)	32%
Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will (N=322)	30%
Receiving offensive comments online (hateful or hurtful) (N=736)	29%
Receiving private/intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see (N=433)	28%
Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to (N=964)	26%
Others spreading rumours about me online (N=262)	26%
Being bullied with something about me online (e.g. photos or videos) (N=195)	24%
Others having shared private/intimate photos or videos of me without my permission (N=193)	23%
Others impersonating me online (N=130)	21%

Figure 17 – Full question: *"What did you do about [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the share who answered "I did not do anything".

Epinion

4.5 Blocking is the most common action

The majority of children and young people who take action when they are exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online do so by blocking the person exposing them to it (25%), telling their parents or other adults in their social circle (23%) or telling their friends (22%). There are significant differences in how different groups of children act on the experiences they are exposed to, and both girls and 9-12-year-olds are more likely to tell adults and children their own age about their experiences than boys and 13-17-year-olds.

Figure 18: What children and young people do when they have been exposed to a digital violation or unpleasant experience online – average across experiences

Action	Percentage
I did not do anything	32%
I blocked the person who did it	25%
I told a parent or another adult in my family/social circle	23%
I told my friends	22%
I did not tell anyone	8%
I told one of my siblings	7%
I reported it to the digital media, platform or game where it occurred	6%
I told a teacher at school, after-school centre or youth club	3%
I contacted a helpline (e.g. SletDet or Børnetelefonen)	1%
I contacted the police	1%
Don't know/Do not wish to answer	11%

Figure 18– Full question: *"What did you do about [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the weighted average of responses across all experiences. (N=2,841). N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.

4.6 Different types of experiences and the actions of children and young people are connected

As shown in Figure 19 on the next page, there is a connection between different types of experiences and the way children and young people act. Many talk to both their friends and their parents about it if they are exposed to offensive comments, rumours being spread about them or private photos being shared.

Figure 19: What children and young people do when they are exposed to various digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online

What children and young people did

Type of digital violation or other unpleasant experience online	Told a parent or another adult	Told a teacher	Told my friends	Told one of my siblings	Reported it	Blocked the person who did it	Contacted a helpline	Contacted the police
Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to	29%	2%	18%	6%	5%	40%	1%	0%
Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see	21%	1%	16%	6%	6%	15%	0%	0%
Receiving offensive comments online (hateful or hurtful)	28%	5%	31%	10%	9%	32%	2%	1%
Being photographed, filmed, screenshotted against my will	15%	4%	19%	3%	2%	10%	1%	1%
Being socially excluded on social media or in online games	27%	3%	16%	6%	4%	14%	1%	1%
Receiving private/ intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see	17%	2%	28%	5%	11%	45%	1%	1%
Others spreading rumours about me online	29%	7%	35%	12%	8%	31%	2%	1%
Being bullied with something about me online (e.g. photos or videos)	19%	7%	26%	9%	7%	15%	2%	0%
Others threatening or extorting me online	19%	0%	24%	8%	8%	34%	1%	2%
Others having shared private/intimate photos or videos of me without my permission	21%	7%	24%	7%	5%	18%	5%	4%
Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will	17%	4%	15%	9%	5%	15%	4%	2%
Others impersonating me online	17%	4%	26%	7%	7%	23%	0%	2%

Figure 19 – Full question: *"What did you do about [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience online]? You may tick multiple answers." (N=2,841). N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.*

On the other hand, children and young people typically only talk to their parents but not to their friends if they have been contacted by someone they did not want to write to or talk to or if they have been socially excluded online. Children and young people talk to their friends more often than their parents if they have been bullied with something about them online, if others have spread rumours about them, have impersonated them, if they have been threatened or extorted, have received intimate or private photos or have been photographed or screenshotted without their permission.

4.7 Every fifth child and young people does not act, even if the experiences affect them negatively

It is most often the children and young people who are not affected who do not act. Although there is a clear tendency for children and young people to act on an experience more often if it has affected them negatively, far from everyone does. There is also a group of children and young people who keep the experiences to themselves, even if it has affected them negatively.

At the same time, there is a tendency for children and young people to not take action if the experience has been embarrassing, made them feel alone, if they have blamed themselves for it, it has made them feel bad about their body or if they have not known what to do.

There is also a tendency for children and young people who are exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online that they find embarrassing or make them feel alone to be less likely to act on the experiences compared to those who are affected by the experiences in other ways. However, it is difficult to identify exactly what it means for children and young people's actions if they see the experience as embarrassing or if it has made them feel alone. For the emotion is often one of a variety of emotions that characterise the way children and young people act.

5. Barriers to seeking help

5. Barriers to seeking help

This chapter starts by examining the most typical reasons why children and young people have not sought help. It then describes how the need for help varies depending on the type of digital violation or unpleasant experience online. Finally, we look at what kinds of help children and young people prefer.

5.1 The children and young people who do not seek help prefer to deal with it themselves or ignore it

As shown in Figure 20, children and young people who have unpleasant experiences online often do not seek help because they either think it is better to ignore it (30%), do not feel they need help (28%) or prefer to deal with it themselves (21%).

Figure 20: Why children and young people choose not to seek help or talk to someone when they are exposed to digital violations or unpleasant experiences online – average across experiences

I thought it was best to ignore it	30%
I did not feel that I needed help/to talk about it	28%
I would rather resolve it myself	21%
I hoped it would pass quickly	12%
I felt embarrassed	6%
I was afraid it would get even worse if I told someone	6%
I worried that my parents would forbid me from using the app	5%
I was afraid of what would happen	5%
I worried that the adults would not understand	5%
I did not trust anyone enough to tell them	4%
I worried that it was my own fault	4%
Don't know/Do not wish to answer	20%

Figure 20– Full question: *"Why haven't you sought help or told others about it when [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience]? You may tick multiple answers."* The figure shows the weighted average across all experiences. (N=2,841). N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.

> **"** *I'm old enough to take it. I don't feel it is super bad. It's just inappropriate. I don't feel it has hurt me physically or mentally in that way. It's just a little too much skin.*

Girl, 17 years.

> **"** *I think people keep it a lot to themselves and find it a bit difficult to talk about. And who would you talk to about it?*

Girl, 17 years.

As shown in Figure 21 on the next page, when children and young people experience others making offensive comments to them, they prefer to resolve it themselves, while thinking that it is best to ignore it is seen for many different digital violations – for example being extorted or threatened, being contacted by someone you do not want to talk or others making offensive comments to you online.

Many children and young people react to digital violations or unpleasant experiences online by thinking that it is best to ignore it or to handle it themselves instead of seeking help. However, for some children and young people, there are other reasons why they do not seek help. Some are afraid it will get worse if they say it, while others do not trust anyone enough to tell about their experience. This reaction is often seen if children and young people have been exposed to certain types of unpleasant experiences online. For example, 11% of those who have experienced rumour-spreading chose not to seek help because they did not trust anyone they could talk to.

This is also confirmed in the interviews, where many prefer to handle unpleasant experiences online by themselves, fearing that "it will get worse" if they share it with e.g. their teacher or their parents. They think that the situation can escalate if more people find out, for example that they are bullied online, which can lead to feelings of guilt and shame or fear that more people will do the same to them.

Although shame and fear of what may happen are not the most common reasons why children and young people do not talk about their experiences, these are precisely the reasons that recur in those who experience negative reactions but who still choose not to talk to anyone about it.

5.2 Children and young people hesitate to seek help from adults in serious or shameful situations because they fear it will make the problem worse

In the interviews, children and young people say that if they have been exposed to something – or if they imagine being exposed to something – most will primarily tell their friends. If it is very serious, they will tell their parents as well. They describe it as nice to share their experience with friends or family and see it as a way to process the experience by talking about it, getting good advice and moving on.

> **"** *I talk to my parents because they know me best and are the smartest. But sometimes I keep it to myself. If I was in school, I would talk to a teacher. And when I got home from school, I would talk to my parents too.*

Boy, 10 years.

Figure 21: Why children and young people do not take action when they are exposed to various digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online

Why children and young people did not take action

Type of digital violation or other unpleasant experience online	Worried that the adults would not understand	Did not trust anyone enough to tell them	Was worried that it was my own fault	Felt embarrassed	Would rather resolve it myself	Worried that my parents would forbid me from using the app	Was afraid it would get even worse	Hoped it would pass quickly	Thought it was best to ignore it	Was afraid of what would happen	Did not feel that I needed help/to talk about it	Don't know/Do not wish to answer
Being contacted by someone that I did not want to talk or write to	3%	2%	2%	1%	20%	2%	2%	7%	34%	3%	30%	22%
Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see	3%	2%	2%	6%	16%	7%	3%	13%	28%	3%	33%	19%
Receiving offensive comments online (hateful or hurtful)	6%	4%	5%	3%	31%	5%	8%	11%	34%	4%	30%	16%
Being photographed, filmed, screenshotted against my will	2%	2%	4%	8%	22%	3%	4%	11%	27%	4%	22%	24%
Being socially excluded on social media or in online games	8%	7%	7%	7%	21%	5%	10%	16%	29%	5%	28%	20%
Receiving private, intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see	6%	3%	5%	11%	12%	5%	5%	11%	34%	5%	34%	16%
Others spreading rumours about me online	13%	11%	10%	8%	30%	11%	8%	15%	19%	9%	20%	19%
Being bullied with something about me online (e.g. photos or videos)	5%	2%	4%	7%	16%	3%	5%	13%	29%	6%	24%	31%
Others threatening or extorting me online	6%	8%	9%	3%	15%	6%	8%	13%	35%	13%	28%	16%
Others having shared private/intimate photos or videos of me without my permission	8%	16%	4%	19%	23%	9%	21%	21%	25%	10%	28%	21%
Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will	4%	9%	5%	7%	18%	6%	5%	10%	22%	7%	19%	25%
Others impersonating me online	0%	0%	0%	8%	26%	8%	5%	5%	30%	3%	22%	11%

Figure 21– Full question: *"Why haven't you sought help or told others about it when [the digital violation or other unpleasant experience]? You may tick multiple answers."* (N=2,841). N indicates the number of children and young people who answered the question in relation to at least one experience.

However, it is a different situation if the experience is "*more serious*" and has tangible consequences for the child such as being extorted or having an intimate photo shared. Seeking help is seen as transgressive because it is vulnerable and the situation is associated with shame. Some describe that it is difficult because they "*prefer to do things themselves*", which applies especially to the 13-17-year-old interviewees.

Many children and young people also explain that one reason for not seeking help is that they may be afraid that the situation gets worse. It is an experience that manifests itself in different ways. They are either afraid that the actual experience will get worse. For example, they fear that if parents and any authorities are involved in a case about sharing an intimate photo, more people will see the photo and be aware of the case. In other cases, the child or young person is afraid that the adults take the matter "*too seriously*" when the experience itself is not perceived as serious for the child. In several cases, for example, viewing violent content is mentioned as an example of something adults would take *too* seriously and as a consequence, they are afraid that they will no longer be allowed to be online. In both cases, the fear that the situation will get worse creates a barrier for children and young people to share their experience and seek help.

5.3 Children and young people prefer the help of someone they know well. However, 13-17-year-olds are more open to offers such as an anonymous chat

When asking children and young people what type of help they want and who they prefer to help them, the type of digital violations, personal relationships and past experiences of seeking help matter.

For the children and young people who have close relationships with their parents, the parents are their first choice when they want to share their experiences with an adult. The reason for this is that the parents know them best and that they are the ones they are most comfortable with.

"

I don't think people dare to tell anyone because they're afraid that it will get worse. If I told my teacher, the ones who did it would come up to the office and get a piece of gum. It was never handled the right way.

Girl, 17 years.

"

The good thing about a chat is that you can talk to them without anyone finding out. But it's transgressive to call some random person and talk about something so vulnerable.

Boy, 15 years.

In the interviews, the children were presented with three examples of help you can go to if you are exposed to a digital violation or other unpleasant experiences online: parents, teachers and Save the Children's SletDet helpline.

Several of the interviewees do not want to share their experiences with their teacher. They argue, among other things, that they do not see their relation to their teacher as good enough to share personal experiences. Others point out that the experiences do not take place at school, but often at home and it is therefore not relevant for the teacher to know about them. A few have shared the experiences with their school teacher. Some think that this was helpful while others find that the teacher did not take the experience seriously or that it was shared with the rest of the class, even though it was not what the child wanted.

Only a few children and young people have knowledge or experience of calling or writing a chat helpline. They argue that it can be transgressive to call a stranger or that they cannot quite see how the chat can help. However, several of the 13-17-year-olds reflect that the chat is a good option in situations where it can be difficult to share the experience with someone they know and it is therefore an advantage that the chat is anonymous.

5.4 The majority of children and young people have witnessed unpleasant experiences online

The majority of children and young people have witnessed that someone they know has had unpleasant experiences online (60%). Asked if they take action when they learn that others have unpleasant experiences online, there is great variation in how often or rarely children and young people act.

One out of three take action "*every time*", "*most times*" or "*sometimes*" when they know someone who experiences something unpleasant online. More girls (38%) than boys (30%) respond that they take action at least sometimes. Similarly, more 13-17-year-olds than 9-12-year-olds take action when they learn that others have unpleasant experiences online.

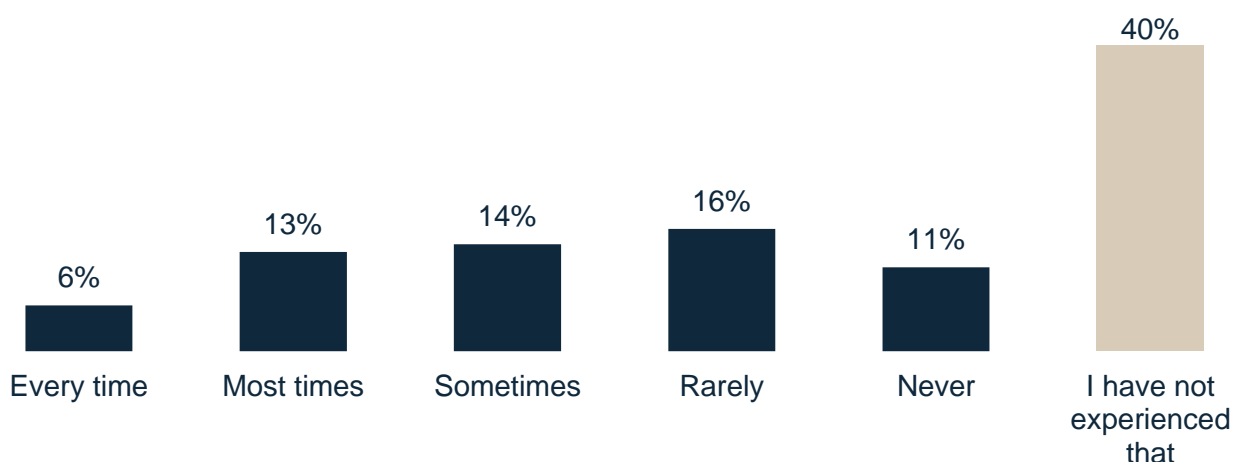**Figure 22: How often do you take action when someone you know experiences something unpleasant online?**

Figure 22 – Full question: *"How often do you take action when someone you know experiences something unpleasant online?"* (N=4,171)

27% of children and young people "*rarely*" or "*never*" take action when someone they know experiences something unpleasant online. There can be several reasons why children and young people do not take action when others have unpleasant experiences online. As described in Chapter 3, children and young people regard many of the experiences as less "*serious*" and an unavoidable risk of being present online. As a consequence, children and young people may not associate the experience with their friends needing help. It may also be that some children and young people lack knowledge about how to help in such situations.

In addition, many respond that they *have not* witnessed others having unpleasant experiences online (40%).

6. More about various types of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

Being contacted by someone that I do not want to talk or write to

36% of children and young people have been contacted by someone they did not want to talk to or write to over the past year.

In 2021, the figure was 18%.

When children and young people are contacted by someone they do not want to write or talk to, it is typically someone they do not know.

This is the case for 71%.

24% of the children and young people who have been contacted by someone they did not want to talk to or write to experience this at least once a month.

40% of the children and young people who are contacted by someone they do not want to talk to or write to block them.

At the same time, almost one in three also tell a parent or another adult in their family or social circle about what has happened.

Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see

32% of children and young people have seen violent images or videos over the past year that they did not want to see.

One in three sees violent content what they do not want to see at least once a month.

Both 9-12-year-olds and 13-17-year-olds often see violent content.

While 27% of 9-12-year-olds have seen violent images or videos over the past year, the same is true for 36% of 13-17-year-olds.

When children and young people see violent images or videos online, it usually takes place on TikTok and YouTube.

35% see the violent images or videos on TikTok, while 31% see them on YouTube.

Seeing violent images or videos that I did not want to see

Over half of children and young people are negatively affected by seeing violent content.

Children and young people typically react by getting a stomach ache (19%), being afraid (16%) or not being able to sleep (14%).

Many children and young people do not talk to anyone about the violent content they have seen.

This is true for 13% and another 40% say they did not do anything about.

"

There was a video on TikTok with a girl sitting in a shower and then there were three men who were cutting her head off until her head turned completely blue and came off. Or the guy who shot himself in the head live. Someone also blended a cat alive. It's kind of uncomfortable. I was just scrolling. I thought: "Why would they do that?" Then I scrolled on. I didn't really know what to do.

Girl, 15 years.

Receiving offensive comments online

29% of children and young people have over the past year received offensive comments online.

In 2021, the figure was 18%. 24% of the 9-12-year-olds and 32% of the 13-17-year-olds have experienced this over the past year.

Approximately one in three who receive offensive comments online experience this once a month or more often.

More than half of the children and young people who receive offensive comments online are negatively affected by it.

They often react by becoming angry or by getting a stomach ache.

Receiving offensive comments online

In half of the cases, the offensive comments are made by other children or young people.

When the person making the comment is someone the children or young people already know, they are more likely to be negatively affected by the experience.

Offensive comments are most often made on Snapchat. The boys often experience it on gaming platforms while the girls often experience it on social media.

"

When your classmates wrote you those things. Do you remember what you did after that?

I got mad. And also a little sad. I actually told my mum.

Girl, 15 years.

Being photographed, filmed or screenshotted against my will

25% **of children and young people have experienced being photographed, filmed or screenshotted against their will over the past year.**

In 2021, the figure was 10% of children and young people. Often (69%), someone they know does it.

Girls experience a little more often than boys being filmed, photographed or screenshotted against their will.

Among girls, 30% have experienced this, while the same applies to 20% of boys.

Almost half of those who experience it are negatively affected by the experience.

45% are negatively affected by being screenshotted, photographed or filmed against their will, often by getting angry or by finding it embarrassing or humiliating.

Being socially excluded on social media or in online games

21% of children and young people have experienced being socially excluded on social media or in online games over the past year.

Children and young people who feel lonely are also more prone to being socially excluded online.

Among these, 49% have experienced this, while the same applies to 18% of the other children and young people.

Children and young people are socially excluded on social media and gaming platforms.

Children and young people experience being socially excluded primarily on Snapchat (51%) but it often occurs on gaming-related platforms as well, especially Fortnite (28%) and Roblox (25%).

Children and young people who are socially excluded, often feel alone, get a stomach ache and lose the motivation to go to school.

Overall, being socially excluded is one of the violations that affects the most of those who experience it.

Being socially excluded on social media or in online games

Many children and young people do not act even though it is one of the experiences that affects the most.

Compared to other unpleasant experiences online, however, relatively many talk to their parents about what has happened.

Many avoid talking to someone about being socially excluded because they are afraid it will make things worse.

Among the children and young people who did not take any action, 10% were afraid that it would worsen the situation.

"

I just think it's become much more visible when this kind of thing happens. I can always see my friends' location on Snapchat. So it's really obvious when they agree to meet and have not asked me.

Girl, 17 years.

Receiving private or intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see

18% **of children and young people have received private or intimate photos over the past year that they did not want to see.**

In 2021, the figure was 13%.

22% of those who have received private or intimate photos experience it at least once a month.

Girls more often than boys experience receiving private or intimate images they do not want to see.

13% of boys have experienced it, but as much as 24% of the girls have.

The vast majority of them receive the photos or videos on Snapchat.

70% receive the photos or videos from Snapchat and typically from someone they do not know.

Receiving private or intimate photos or videos that I did not want to see

One in four who experience this says that they did not mind.

This makes it one of the experiences that the fewest are negatively affected by.

One in 10 who do not seek help when they experience it, fails to do so because it is embarrassing.

Those who send private or intimate photos are typically not taken seriously by children and young people.

Instead, they pity them.

Others spreading rumours about me online

18% **have over the past year experienced that rumours have been spread about them.**

In 2021, 6% had experienced that others had spread rumours about them online.

Girls more often than boys experience someone spreading rumours about them.

While 15% of the girls have experienced that others have spread rumours about them, the same applies to 9% of the boys.

It is often children and young people you already know who spread rumours.

This is the case for 66%. In these cases, children and young people are affected to a greater extent than if the rumours are spread by strangers.

Others spreading rumours about me online

Having rumours spread about you, often has a negative effect.

The children and young people who experience this, often get angry, get a stomach ache, refuse to go to school or experience it as embarrassing or humiliating.

Although many are affected by this, relatively few seek help or talk to anyone about what has happened.

26% of those who experience it do not take any action. At the same time, however, relatively many talk to their parents about it.

Many of those who fail to talk to someone about it argue that they are afraid that adults will not understand or that they will be banned from using their phone.

Being bullied with something about me online

10% of children and young people have experienced being bullied with something about them online over the past year.

In 2021, the figure was 4%.

Especially children and young people who feel lonely have been bullied with something about them online.

25% of them have experienced this, while the same applies to 9% of the other children and young people.

When children and young people are bullied with something about them online, it is most often done by children and young people they already know.

But 26% of those who have experienced this were bullied by someone they did not know.

Being bullied with something about me online

When children and young people are bullied online, they typically experience it as embarrassing, they get angry and they do not want to go to school.

Children and young people who are bullied online often tell their friends what has happened.

26% of those who have been bullied do so.

Others threatening or extorting me online

10% **of children and young people have experienced being threatened or extorted online over the past year.**

In 2021, the figure was 6%.

Approximately the same number of girls and boys are exposed to threats and extortion.

This goes for 11% of the boys and 9% of the girls. In 2021, it was 5% of the boys and 7% of the girls.
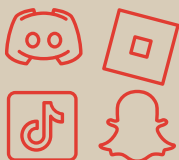
Threats and extortion are seen on both Snapchat, Roblox, Discord and TikTok.

On Discord, it is almost exclusively experienced by boys, while girls most often experience it on Snapchat and TikTok.

Threats and extortion typically come from someone that children and young people do not know.

But 30% of the children have been threatened or extorted by children and young people they already know.

Others threatening or extorting me online

Many children and young people who are threatened or extorted do not know what to do.

This applies to 23% of them, while 21% get angry and 20% get a stomach ache.

Threats and extortion affect girls more than boys.

Regardless of the specific negative emotion or reaction they get, more girls than boys experience them.

Every fifth child or young person who experiences being extorted or threatened, talks to their parents or another adult about it.

It is one of those experiences that relatively few talk to an adult about.

Many children and young people who experience being threatened or extorted do not talk to anyone about it because they are afraid of what will happen.

This is the case for 13% of them. This makes threats and extortion one of the experiences where most people face this barrier.

Others having shared private or intimate photos or videos of me without my permission

9% of children and young people have experienced others having shared private or intimate photos or videos of them without their permission.

In 2021, the figure was 3%.

This is especially experienced by children and young people who feel lonely.

Among them, 17% have experienced this, while the same applies to 8% of the other children and young people.

Snapchat is most often the platform used when children and young people have private or intimate photos or videos shared without their permission.

This was true for 61% of those who experienced it.

Private or intimate photos and videos are widely shared by children and young people they already know.

Others having shared private or intimate photos or videos of me without my permission

63% of those who experience having their private or intimate photos or videos shared without their permission are negatively affected by it.

Children and young people who have their private or intimate photos or videos shared are typically angry, embarrassed, blame themselves or do not know what to to.

Girls are more often negatively affected by having their private or intimate photos or videos shared than boys.

This is regardless of the specific negative emotions or reactions.

Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will

8% of children and young people have experienced others having manipulated photos or videos of them against their will.

Half of the children and young people who have experienced others manipulating photos or videos of them have experienced it on Snapchat.

At the same time, 20% have experienced it on social media that are not included in the survey.

Photos and videos are typically manipulated by children and young people they already know.

However, 20% have experienced that photos or videos of them are manipulated by someone they do not already know.

Others having manipulated photos or videos of me against my will

Almost half of those who have photos or videos of them manipulated against their will are negatively affected by it.

They often become angry (18%), have a stomach ache (15%) or feel embarrassed (14%).

Most of those affected by others manipulating photos or videos of them act on the experience.

They typically do so by talking to their parents or friends or by blocking the persons who did it.

Others impersonating me online

6% of children and young people have experienced that others have impersonated them online.

Roblox and Fortnite are often the platforms used when children and young people experience that others impersonate them.

But it also occurs on platforms like Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram.

Typically, someone that the children and young people do not know impersonate them.

This is indicated by half of the children who have experienced it, while 33% experienced that it was children and young people they already knew.

Others impersonating me online

Almost half of those who experience others impersonating them are negatively affected by it.

They typically become angry (26%), have a stomach ache (14%) or do not know what to do (14%).

The children and young people who do not talk to anyone typically argue that the experience has not affected them.

7. Advice for adults

7. Children and young people have several helpful suggestions for adults on how to help them.

Parents should chill a bit more instead of getting super angry and stuff like that.

Make a system where TikTok is checked more thoroughly and filters the things that are posted.

Set age limits. Maybe as recommendations for parents.

Talk to students about it. About what can happen. And what are the options if it does.

Try to support your child as best you can by listening to them and their feelings. Just talk. Sometimes you just want to get it off your chest without it being a big deal. Don't make it too big a deal.

If you think something's wrong, ask if something's wrong.

The thing about not judging. If a child has experienced something unpleasant, it is difficult to talk about. Show the child that it's not their fault.

Listen to the children instead of telling them to ignore it.

Promote the options even more. Show that the chat is anonymous. Show other options than running to your parents.

Take it more seriously. Talk to the children and make them see what it really is they are doing, and tell them how quickly it actually hits and how much it can really destroy a person.

If I was an adult I would try to understand it more myself. So it's easier to understand how I can actually help my child or the student or person on the phone.

Instead of removing the problem by for example taking the phone away from the child, try talking about it. Half the child's social life is on that phone.

Listen first. Ask what's going on and if they're okay. Most of the time you have some control over it and maybe just need a view on what to do. Take it easy and don't panic.

Normalise talking about it. Right now, I think it's very taboo to have to admit that something did happen.

At the end of the interview, the children and young people interviewed had the opportunity to give adults advice on how to help children and young people who have had unpleasant experiences online. The suggestions are written in children and young people's own words.

8. Method and data

8. Method and data

This chapter presents the data basis for the survey and the methodological approach that underpins the analyses we have conducted. First, we describe the quantitative data basis and how it has been collected and processed. The quantitative data constitute the survey's primary data basis. We then describe the survey's qualitative data basis.

8.1 Purpose of the analysis

The purpose of the survey is to uncover children and young people's digital behaviour and their exposure to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online. The survey population is therefore children and young people aged 9-17 years in Denmark.

The combination of the questionnaire survey and a series of interviews allows us to make general statements about children and young people's digital behaviour and exposure to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online and to nuance these trends and gain a deeper understanding of the topic through interviews.

The survey is based on the survey on children and young people's experiences with digital violations (*Børn og unges oplevelser med digitale krænkelser)* (conducted by Rambøll Management Consulting at the request of Save the Children) from 2021, and the survey design also relies significantly on the 2021 survey to ensure comparability. However, some adjustments have been made to the survey design to adapt to updated knowledge in the field and new needs for knowledge.

8.2 Quantitative data from a country-representative questionnaire survey

The primary data basis for the survey is a country-representative questionnaire survey among Danish children and young people aged 9-17 years.

The purpose of this part of the survey is to uncover the general trends for children and young people's digital behaviour and their exposure to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online.

To uncover this, we have asked children and young people questions on the following subtopics:

- Background characteristics
- Digital behaviour
- Experience with and handling of digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online
- Well-being and loneliness

While working on the report, we have looked at the analysis results across different groups of children and young people: gender, age, loneliness and well-being. We only present gender-disaggregated data, as the category "Girl or boy does not apply to me" is very small. We have chosen to divide age into two categories: 9-12-year-olds and 13-17-year-olds. In terms of loneliness, we have also divided children and young people into two groups: Those who do not feel lonely, and the children and young people who feel lonely (responding that they "often" or "very often" feel lonely).

The well-being of children and young people is measured using the WHO-5 well-being index which scores well-being based on five questions. The index ranks from 0-100 with a higher score indicating better well-being. We have classified children and young people with a score below 50 as having poor well-being, cf. the guide for WHO-5 (Danish Health Authority, 2017). This differs from the method used to classify the well-being categories in the 2021 report, where children and young people were categorised as struggling with poor well-being if their well-being score was below the average (which was 66.5 at the time). This must be taken into account when comparing results on well-being.

8.2.1 Pilot test

The questionnaire is pilot tested by children to ensure that it is perceived as understandable, relevant and relatable by the target group. The purpose of the pilot test was to achieve high measurement validity and ensure that we are actually measuring what we intend to measure.

The pilot test was conducted with four children in the younger age group (9-12 years) who were instructed to think out loud and share their immediate reactions. The focus along the way was on whether the questions were clear and meaningful and whether the response categories were exhaustive.

8.2.2 Structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is structured so that all respondents first answer some background questions and then questions about their digital behaviour. They are then asked if they have been exposed to digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online. For each violation or unpleasant experience, six follow-up questions are asked:

- How often has this happened
- On which digital platform, media or game did it happen
- Who was behind it
- What impact did it have
- How they acted on it
- Why they may not have taken any action

To avoid the questionnaire being too long, we set a maximum for how many digital violations or unpleasant experiences online one respondent could be asked follow-up questions on. For the age group 9-12 years, the maximum was two digital violations or unpleasant experiences online, whereas for the 13-17-year-olds it was three. If a respondent has been exposed to more than two digital violations or unpleasant experiences online, the follow-up questions will be asked for a random selection of the experiences. However, follow-up questions were always asked for the following digital violations, as they were not widely experienced in the 2021 survey: 1) Having had private/intimate photos/videos of me shared without my permission and 2) others manipulating photos or videos of me against my will.

To address reading difficulties, children and young people were given the option to have the questions and answers read aloud to them. In addition, the layout of the questionnaire was adapted to the age group to ensure that it was relevant and engaging.

8.2.3 Quantitative data collection

To obtain a representative sample of the population, we combined two data collection methods: 1) a collection of responses from 9-15-year-olds where primary schools are recruited to let their students answer the questionnaire in class and 2) a panel survey among 16-17-year-olds to also reach those who have completed primary school.

The data collection among primary schools was carried out by inviting all primary schools in Denmark which are registered in the institutional register to participate in the survey (this includes municipal as well as private primary schools and continuation schools). First contact with the schools was when we asked school secretaries to complete a questionnaire with contact information for relevant teachers (in grades 3-9).

After receiving the contact information, we submitted the actual questionnaire to the teachers, asking them to have their students complete it in class. During the data collection, the school secretaries received an invitation to the survey, up to two e-mail reminders and telephone reminders, if they had not reported contact information after the e-mail reminders. The teachers received an e-mail invitation as well as two reminders if no students associated with the relevant teacher had completed the questionnaire. Continuation school teachers and 3rd grade teachers, whose students had not completed the questionnaire, received one more invitation.

To reach the 16-17-year-olds who have finished primary school, we used an interview panel where we contacted parents of young people in the target group (16-17 years). The parents received a questionnaire and were asked to pass the questionnaire to their child if they were in the target group so they could complete it. The parents were encouraged to let the child complete the questionnaire on their own.

Data was collected via the two above methods in the period May and June 2024.

8.2.4 Data basis and analysis weights

After the data collection, we cleaned the responses, which gave us a data basis consisting of 4,171 responses from children and young people aged 9-17 years. To ensure representativeness, we have weighted our data basis to account for the fact that some groups of children and young people are over- or underrepresented in the responses compared to the population.

Table 1 shows an overview of the background characteristics for children and young people in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and region. The table shows figures for both the unweighted and the weighted responses as well as the population.

Overall, the table shows that the non-weighted responses broadly resemble the population in terms of gender and region. There are a few biases – especially in relation to age, which are compensated for by the calculated analytical weights and thus taken into account.

Therefore, the results from the survey can be generalised to the entire population of 9- to 17-year-old children and young people in Denmark, with the caveat that the responses may not fully represent the population on certain parameters that are not included in the survey. The results in the report are based on the weighted dataset.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for responses (both unweighted and weighted) and the population

Background characteristics		Responses unweighted	Responses weighted	Population
Gender	Girl	52%	49%	49%
	Boy	47%	51%	51%
	Girl or boy does not apply to me	1%	1%	- *
Age	9 years	7%	10%	10%
	10 years	13%	10%	10%
	11 years	12%	10%	10%
	12 years	12%	11%	11%
	13 years	18%	11%	11%
	14 years	16%	12%	12%
	15 years	7%	12%	12%
	16 years	7%	12%	12%
	17 years	7%	12%	12%
Ethnicity	Ethnic Danish	78%	85%	85%
	Ethnic minority background	22%	15%	12%
Region	Copenhagen	23%	31%	31%
	Central Jutland	25%	23%	23%
	North Jutland	12%	10%	10%
	Zealand	16%	14%	14%
	South Denmark	24%	21%	21%
Number		4,171	4,171	588,670

Source: The distribution of the responses from the questionnaire is based on Epinion's calculations, and distributions for the population are from Statistics Denmark, Table FOLK1E (2024K2).

Note: Ethnicity is measured by asking children and young people the question: *"What language do you speak most often with your closest family?"* The children and young people who responded: "*Another language than Danish*" or "*Both Danish and another language"* are categorised as having another ethnicity than Danish. Please note that some figures in the table may add up to more than 100% due to roundings.

* Statistics Denmark does not include an "other" category in the gender distribution and this category is therefore not included in the calculation of the weights but merely constitutes their actual weight in the sample.

8.3 Qualitative data from interviews

In addition to the quantitative questionnaire survey, we conducted interviews with 14 children and young people aged 9-17 years.

The children and young people interviewed were recruited through a short questionnaire survey which was submitted via a panel to parents who have passed on the contact to their children. From here, the interviewees were selected to ensure a diversity of age, gender and residence across Denmark. In addition, children and young people have been recruited who in the short questionnaire survey indicated that they have been exposed to one or more digital violations or other unpleasant experiences online.

A total of ten interviews were conducted, of which four were duo interviews much like the classic interview in which two children and young people participated together. It was up to the children and young people themselves to decide whether they wanted to bring a friend, sibling or someone similar to the interview in order to create the best conditions for a safe and confidential environment.

All ten interviews were conducted online. Children and young people had the opportunity to choose whether the interview should take place online or physically, which helped ensure that they could feel safe and comfortable during the interview.

Epinion

The in-depth interviews with children and young people were conducted with the aim of gaining insight into how children and young people experience digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online and which factors affect their decisions to seek help. In addition, the qualitative data help nuance and qualify the quantitative data from the questionnaire survey.

The ten interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach where the interview was based on an interview guide but also allowed for flexibility, enabling the children and young people to influence the course of the interview themselves.

Two different interview guides were prepared for different age groups. One for the 9-12-year-olds and one for the 13-17-year-olds. This ensured that the interviews were conducted in an inclusive and relevant manner with language and content that matched the target group. Both guides follow the same overall themes:

1) Current digital behaviour

2) Exposure to digital violations and other unpleasant experiences online

3) Knowledge of and experience with options

Table 2 shows an overview of the interviewees' distribution by gender and age.

Table 2: Distribution of interviewees by gender and age

	9-12 years	**13-17 years**
Boy	3	3
Girl	1	7

9. Appendices

Appendices are available in Danish:

sletdet.redbarnet.dk/2024survey

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