

2024-25

Dignify

National Report

Report outlining the key findings from the Dignify School Survey in the Academic Year 2024-25

Introduction:

This report is based on data collected during the 2024–25 academic year, prior to the introduction of the Online Safety Act and other recent changes, including the withdrawal of Pornhub from the UK, and the new government plans to implement device-level prevention measures to protect children from explicit online content. It should not be read as an assessment of their impact. The online landscape is evolving rapidly, and these findings reflect the context at the point of data collection.

Despite this, the dataset is important. It enables year-on-year trend analysis and ensures that the experiences of participating young people are represented beyond their own school communities.

The next report, drawing on the 2025-26 academic year, will provide early insight into children's experiences in the post-Online Safety Act environment, including more detailed evidence on VPN use and related behaviours.

This report establishes a national benchmark for understanding how children engage with online sexual content and associated harms. It also provides a baseline against which future policy measures, including age verification and strengthened filtering, can be assessed.

Dignify's research is rooted in schools, working closely with teachers, leaders, and safeguarding teams to produce tailored insights for each community. This national report brings together data from across the UK, creating the largest dataset currently available on this issue and supporting an informed, evidence-based conversation about children's lived experiences.

Methodology:

The Dignify School Survey is a paid or funded service offered to schools and colleges; participating institutions were therefore self-selecting. The survey was administered online and anonymously to students in Years 7–13, with adaptations made to ensure age-appropriate content for younger participants. It collected quantitative data on students' views and experiences of social media, sexual harassment, nude sharing, pornography, and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Open-ended responses were analysed using open thematic coding, with anonymised quotations included to illustrate key findings.

In total, 5,384 students from 10 schools participated. The sample included a mix of state, selective, and independent schools, comprising both grammar and non-grammar, single-sex and co-educational institutions, as well as a further education college. All schools were located within Hertfordshire.

Content Warning:

This report contains references to harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual violence. It also includes descriptions of pornographic content, sexualised language, and discussions of abuse. Dignify recognises that this material may be distressing to read.

Signposting support is available at dignify.org/signposting

Executive Summary

In 2024-25, 5,384 students told us:

39% of children have seen pornography

Of these, 36% told us that they primarily view pornography at home and on their phone.

Average age children first see porn is **12 years old**

Of these, 44% said they first saw porn by accident. Other key reasons children first saw porn were curiosity (34%) and because someone showed it to them (28%).

75% of viewers watch porn again

46% watch pornography at least weekly, and 16% watch it at least daily.

28% of repeat users report having a porn habit or addiction

46% watch pornography at least weekly, and 16% watch it at least daily.

20% of repeat porn users have acted out something seen in porn

Of those who had, 14% said they did so because they felt pressured to do so by the other person. Almost half (44%) did so for mutual enjoyment, and 43% did so out of curiosity.

25% of children have received a nude image or video

Over half (57%) of those who had received a nude, received them from a stranger.

66% of children use social media several times a day

Almost a third (31%) agree that social media makes them compare themselves to others.

62% would **not** feel confident to tell their school if they had experienced sexual harassment

Only 55% of children agree that their school takes complaints of harmful sexual behaviour and sexual harassment seriously.

ONLY 21% learn about relationships and sex from their parent or carer

Aside from school (81%), the next most selected source of sex education was friends (25%).

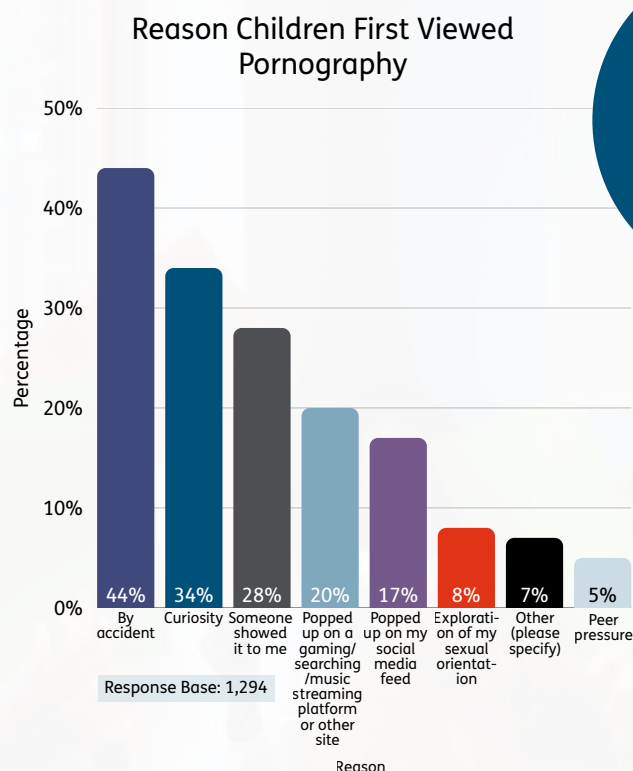
59% of children think more should be done to prevent children from viewing porn

Experience of Pornography

39% of children have seen pornography

1,411 secondary-aged pupils told us that they have viewed porn at least once. Of those, the average age children report first viewing pornography is 12 years old.

Porn Viewing:



Nearly half (46%) of repeat users view porn at least weekly.

48% view porn most often at home

28% of repeat porn users report having a porn habit or addiction

A vast number of students are viewing porn by accident - including through website pop-ups or on social media. As we continue to look into the efficiency of the Online Safety Act, it is important that these numbers start and continue to decline, as we create a safer online-world for children.

Porn addiction and porn habits are issues affecting students of all genders. Of those who have seen porn more than once:

- 11% of female student report a porn habit or addiction
- 28% of male students report a porn habit or addiction
- 38% of students who identify as 'other' gender report a porn habit or addiction

The Impact of Porn:

31% of children find porn to be harmful

20% have acted out something they've seen in porn

Of those who have seen pornography, 20% have acted out something they've seen in pornography. With curiosity and mutual enjoyment selected as the main reasons.

Research suggests as much as 88% of pornography contains physical aggression or violence. Children should not be learning about sex and relationships by observing content they recognise to be harmful, that does not promote consent or safety. Pornography is encouraging children to act out often violent, illegal actions.

"My friend would send me pictures and videos of porn **almost daily even when I asked him to stop.** This started in Year 6 and ended around Year 7"
- Male (14)

"I plan my days around finding time to watch porn." - Male (18)

"Helps me get over my loneliness"
- Male (15)

"[Porn] made me feel **lonely and insignificant**" - Male (15)

"It **exploits women** and encourages violence and objectification"
- Female (16)

"My impression of sex and **healthy relationships has been ruined, it's caused addiction** and social as well as mental and physical ill health"
- Male (16)

"Helps me go to sleep" - Male (15)

"It can be used to explore sexuality - but it also gives people an **unrealistic expectation of sex** and younger people are more susceptible to addiction. It also **negatively impacts development** and how you see your sex and the sex you're attracted to."
- Female (16)

"[Porn] **ruined my innocence** and made me dependable on it."
- Female (17)

"**Desensitises you** to everything" - Male (17)

"I find it harmful as it can create an image in people's head of what sex should be like. When in reality, sex isn't going to be exactly like it is being shown." - Female (16)

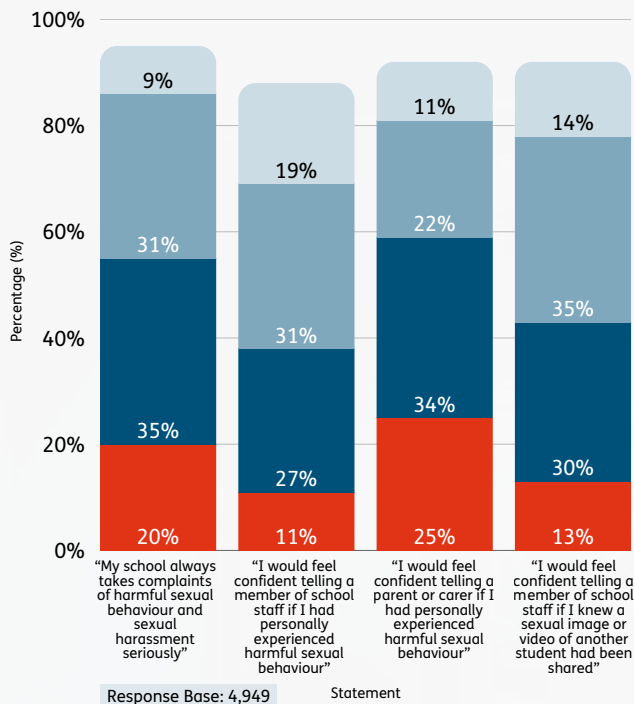
"It makes me sad while I do it and after and it **severely damages my mental health and it's ruined relationships I've had before.**"
- Male (15)

59% of pupils think more should be done to prevent children from viewing porn

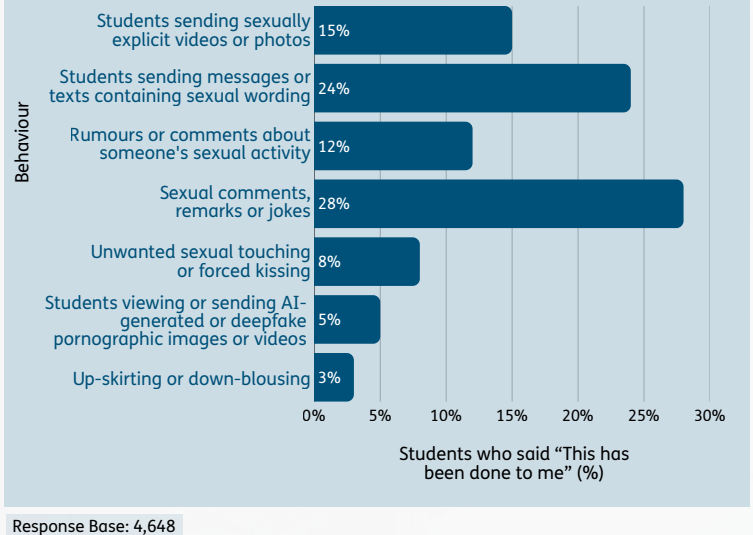
This has increased by 11% from 2023-24. More children are asking for help. It is our job to act.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Students' Confidence in Reporting Harmful Sexual Behaviour



Students' Personal Experience of Harmful Sexual Behaviour in School

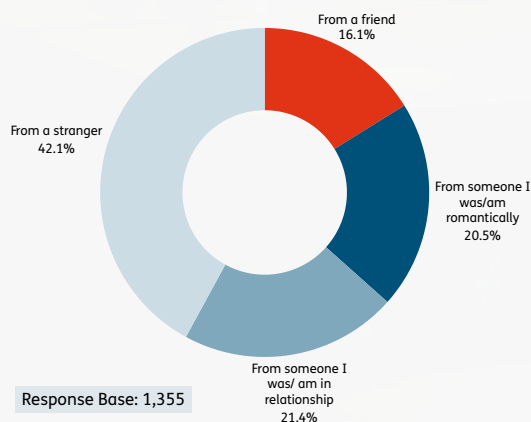


8% of students have personally experienced unwanted sexual touching or kissing in school

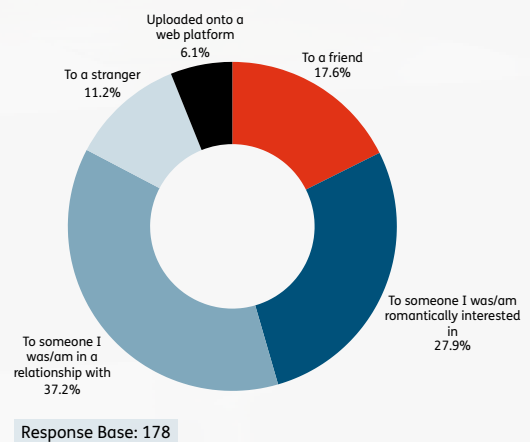
Nude Sharing

25% of children have received a nude

Who Students Received a Nude/s From



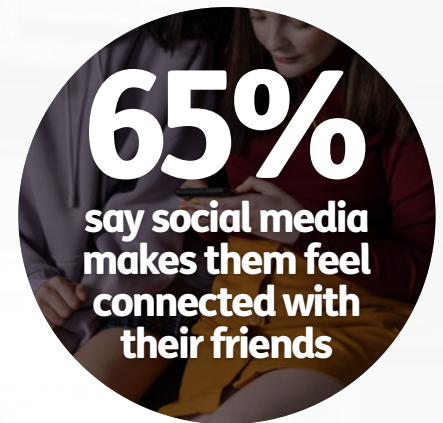
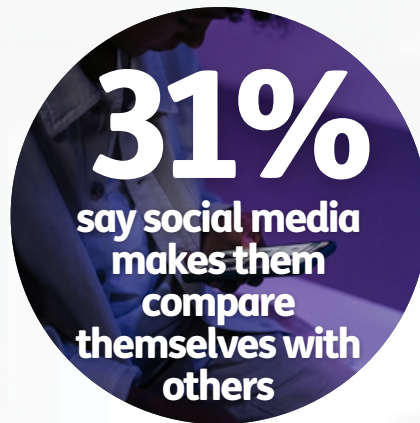
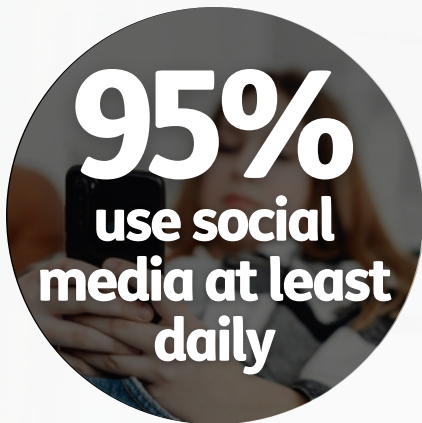
Who Students Sent A Nude/s To



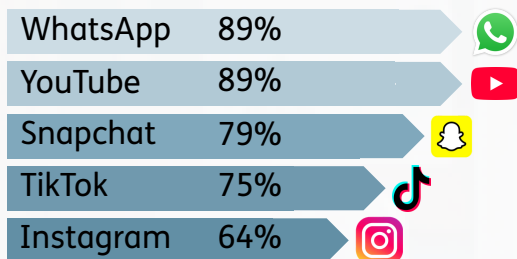
16% of secondary school students did not know that it is illegal to share a nude image or video of anyone, including themselves, if the individual is under the age of 18.

We also asked students about their experience of nudification apps. In the Academic Year 2024-25, 4% said their friends have used them to create images, and 4% said they had personally used them to create images.

Social Media



Most used social media platforms

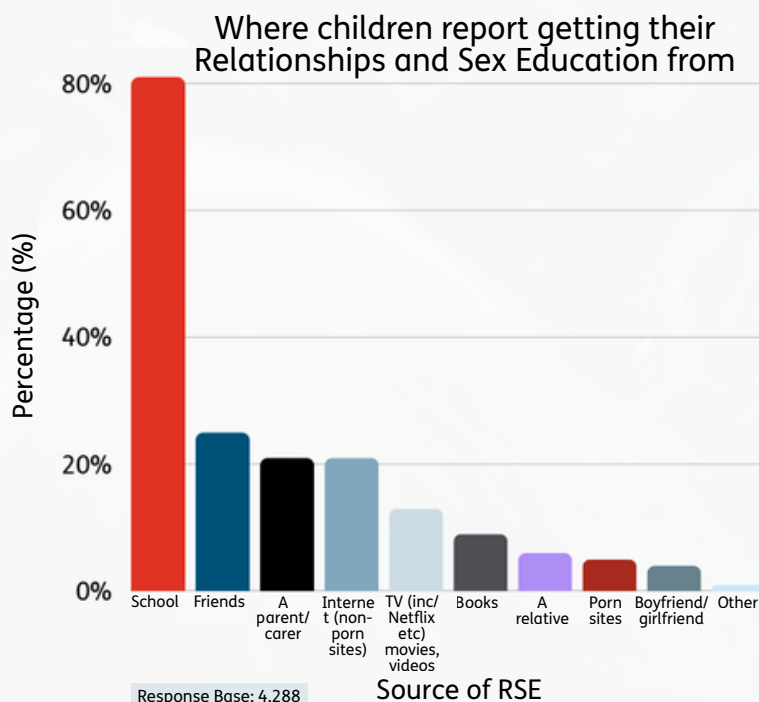


"[Porn has been] harmful, as I didn't want to see it and it was **sent to me on Snapchat**, meaning I opened it with[out] being able to see what it was beforehand"
- Year 10, Other

Relationships and Sex Education

We asked students where they get their sex education from:

- **81%** cited 'School' as a key source of sex education
- Only **21%** said their 'Parent/Carer' were a main source of sex education
- **5%** said that pornography is a main source of sex education



More students learn about sex from their friends (25%) than their parents or carers (21%).

Recommendations

1) Schools should take structured, proactive steps to elevate students' voices

Many schools are increasingly aware that meaningful student voice is essential to effective safeguarding and high-quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). The voices heard in this report come from students in schools who are proactively listening and responding to their context. We recommend that schools consider engaging with services such as the Dignify School Survey, our Ambassador Programme and other education provisions that are designed to provide accurate insights into students experience, and offer practical evidence-led mechanisms for change, aligning with Ofsted's 2025 framework.

2) Parents and carers should have training available to help them navigate online safety with their children

The role of parents and carers in children's formative years is critical, as children spend more time at home than at school. As first exposure to the online world, including its harms, occurs at increasingly young ages, it is essential that parents are equipped to know how to respond and intervene. We recommend providing free, accessible training that supports parents and carers in this digital age. Starting through primary schools, these workshops would provide education on the adolescent brain, age-appropriate conversations and healthy digital boundaries. This training would empower families to have a consistent, preventative approach to online safety that builds children's resilience before harmful patterns can embed.

3) Government should tighten legislation around online safety for children

Stronger government action is needed to protect children from harmful online environments. While the Online Safety Act provides a foundation, gaps remain in limiting children's exposure to inappropriate content and enforcing platform accountability. Tighter legislation should introduce stricter social media age verification, clearer restrictions on access to harmful material, and stronger penalties for non-compliance. It should also close loopholes that allow harmful content to bypass safeguards or be algorithmically promoted. By strengthening and enforcing these measures, government can create safer digital spaces, reduce early exposure to harm, and support a more consistent, preventative approach to children's online wellbeing.

Get Involved:

For more about our survey, scan here or email research@dignify.org



For more about our education, scan here or email education@dignify.org



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As seen in:



itv NEWS



The Guardian



Exclusive on our 2024 National Report, May 2025

Exclusive on rising child exposure to pornography, January 2026

Reported on Dignify's nationwide statistics, March 2023

Pornography Harms Coalition open letter, March 2026; Parenting & porn exposure article, March 2023

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