

The logo for Dignify.org features the text "Dignify.org" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a red speech bubble. The speech bubble has a rounded rectangular body and a small tail pointing downwards and to the left.

Dignify.org

LET'S TALK ABOUT PORN

INTRODUCTION

The **Dignify** Charter

- ✓ **We champion healthy relationships**
- ✓ **We challenge the normalising of pornography, particularly its harmful effects on children and young people.**
- ✓ **We call out sexual objectification and all its negative consequences.**

It's time for a #RelationshipReset

Dignify is a charity which champions healthy relationships challenges the normalisation of pornography and call out the negative consequences of sexual objectification.

Dignify is working towards a future for our children and young people that is free from the sexual abuse and objectification that porn can normalise. Dignify runs workshops for children and young people; parent workshops; and parent and child workshops. Dignify also supports schools with assemblies, provides lesson plans and, through the Dignify School Survey, enables schools to audit sexually harmful behaviours in years 10 and above.

Ofsted's 2021 review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges highlighted how prevalent sexual harassment and online sexual abuse is for children and young

Dignify is working towards a future for our children and young people that is free from the sexual abuse and objectification that porn can normalise.

people, to the extent that they often didn't report it. Ofsted also reported that young people found that Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools did not address the challenges they faced and that teachers often underestimated or didn't understand the problems.

Dignify developed the Dignify School Survey for use with Years 10 and above to provide schools with an audit of the sexually harmful behaviours happening in their school (as recommended by Ofsted's 2021 review) as well as giving a deeper understanding of their students' use of social media and exposure to nudes and pornography. It also provides an overall assessment of students wellbeing. Following the analysis of survey responses, Dignify provides schools with recommendations for suggested changes or interventions, addressing any identified areas of concern.



METHODOLOGY

The Dignify School Survey is a quantitative survey tool which secondary schools use to explore their students' use of social media and exposure to nudes and pornography. Schools pay for the Dignify School Survey package and so the sample is self-selected.

KEY INFO

- ▶ 18 schools and colleges
- ▶ From across 6 counties
- ▶ Academic year September 2022 – July 2023
- ▶ 7,452 children participated
- ▶ Two schools used our special educational needs version of the survey
- ▶ Quantitative analysis used and qualitative analysis of open-ended questions using open thematic coding

SOCIAL MEDIA

- ▶ **96%** (6,846 respondents) used social media **at least daily**
- ▶ **32%** (2,277 respondents) **used social media several times an hour**
- ▶ **42%** (3,035 respondents) used social media **several times a day**

TOP PLATFORMS OVERALL

- ▶ **YouTube** (90%, 6,457 respondents)
- ▶ **WhatsApp** (88%, 6,304 respondents)
- ▶ **Snapchat** (84%, 6,015 respondents)
- ▶ **Instagram** (80%, 5,707 respondents)
- ▶ **TikTok** (80%, 5,674 respondents)

Female respondents were more likely to report using Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest

Male respondents were more likely to report using Twitter, Discord and Reddit

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- ▶ **61%** (4,517 respondents) agreed or agreed strongly that social media **made them feel more connected** to friends
- ▶ **47%** (3,339 respondents) reported that social media made them feel they **have friends to support them**
- ▶ **41%** (2,958 respondents) also agreed or strongly agreed that social media **allowed them to show their creative side**



NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- ▶ Over a third of respondents (**37%**, 2,678) agreed or strongly agreed that social media tended to make them **compare themselves to others** they follow (**34%**, 2,436 disagreed or strongly disagreed)
- ▶ One in ten (10%, 705 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt **pressure to post content** (68% disagreed or strongly disagreed)

- ▶ Female and other gender respondents were more likely than male students to report experiencing both the positive and negative impacts of social media
- ▶ **49%** of female respondents (1793), and 47% of other gender, respondents (91), agreed or strongly agreed, that Social Media made them **compare themselves to others**, compared with only 24% of my respondents, (794)

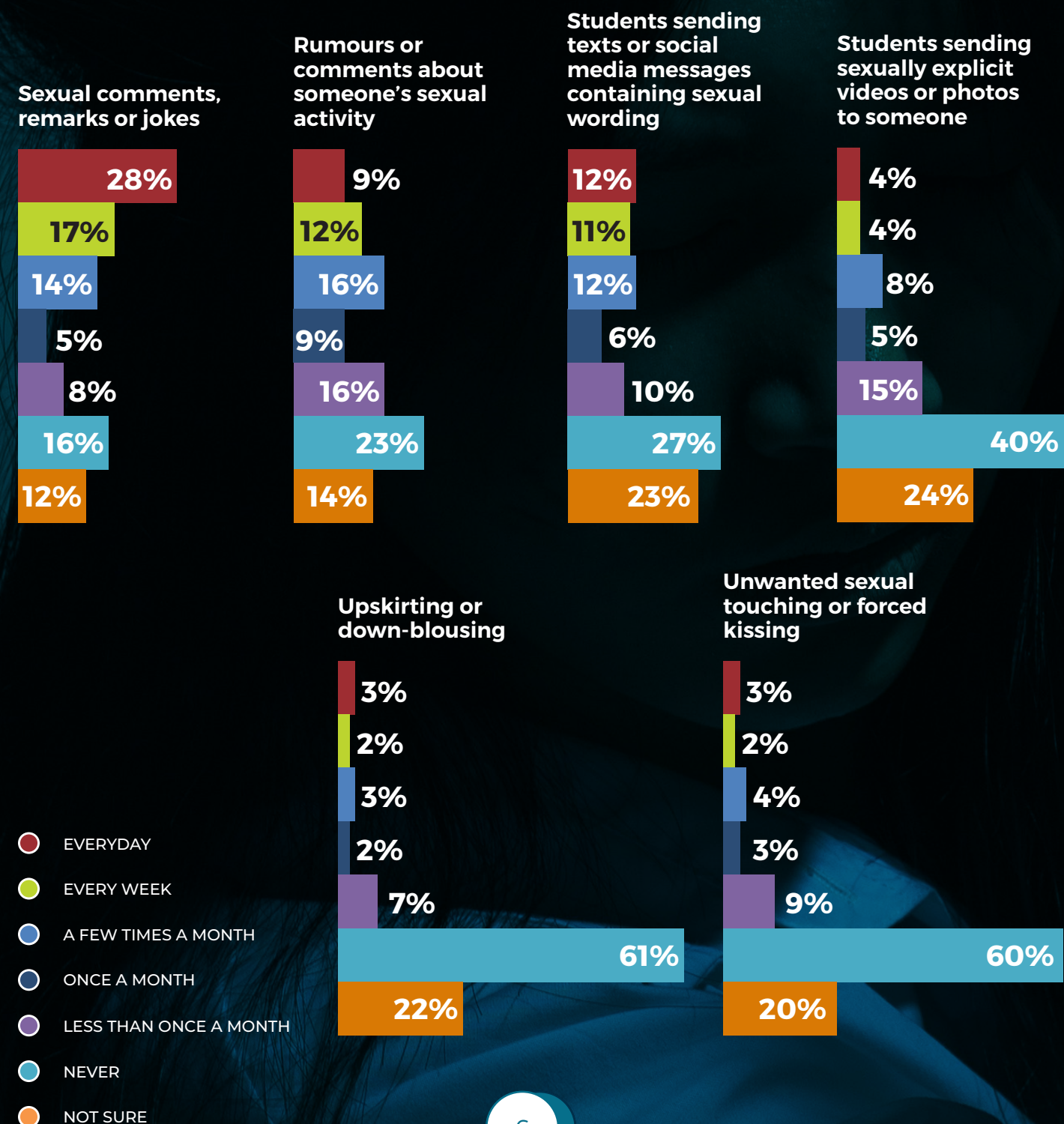


SEXUAL HARASSMENT

How often do you usually see the following behaviours happening at youR school? (%)

RESPONSE BASE: 6,727

Sexually harmful behaviour



As Ofsted reported, our findings show that sexual harassment is still very prevalent in schools.

- ▶ **44%** (2,983 respondents) reported that they observed sexual comments, remarks or **jokes at least weekly** at school.
- ▶ **22%** (1,451 respondents) observed rumours or comments about someone's sexual activity **at least weekly**
- ▶ **23%** (1,578 respondents) observed, **sexually worded** text or social media **messages being sent** at least weekly.

As the charts show, although happening less frequently, other sexually harmful behaviours were also being reported. Students were much more likely to report being the victim rather than the perpetrator and girls were more likely to

report being the victim of sexually harmful behaviour than boys. Our findings are consistent with what Ofsted reported in 2021. Ofsted found that girls were more likely to report being the victims of sexual harassment than boys.

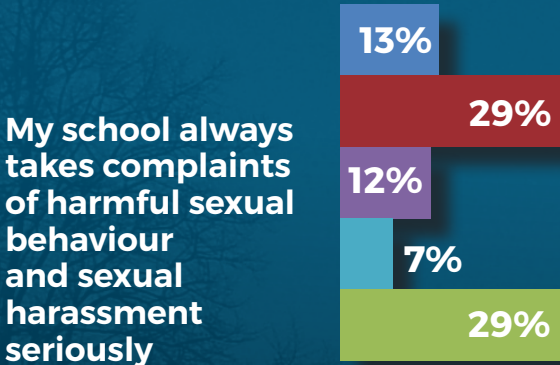
Schools are still not effectively managing sexual harassment in school as much as needed.

Levels of confidence in reporting sexually harmful behaviour were fairly low and individuals were particularly hesitant to report behaviour that had happened to them. Female and other gender respondents were less likely than male respondents to agree that their school takes sexual harassment seriously.

Schools are still not effectively managing sexual harassment in school as much as needed.

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL HANDLING OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

RESPONSE BASE: 6,708

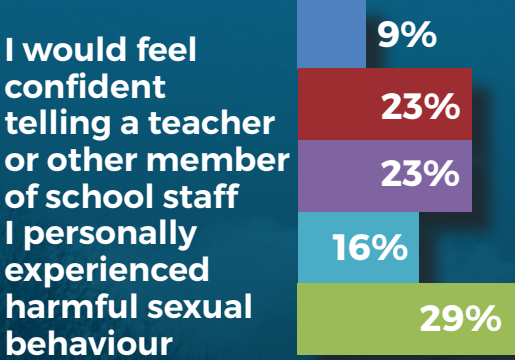


RESPONSE BASE: 6,727

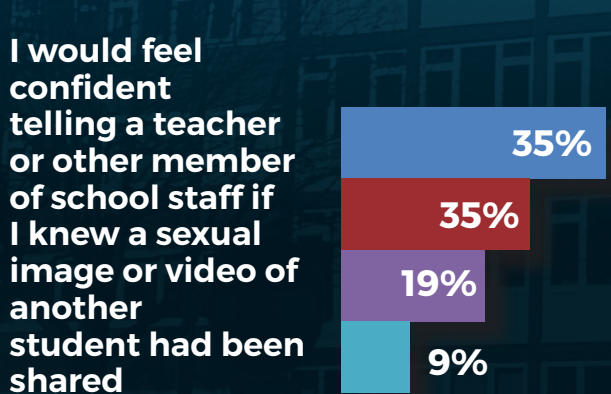


- STRONGLY AGREE
- AGREE
- DISAGREE
- STRONGLY DISAGREE
- NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

RESPONSE BASE: 6,727



RESPONSE BASE: 6,703



WHERE IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT HAPPENING?

- Only 4% (234 respondents) said they saw this **more often in school**
- 27% (1,610 respondents) said they saw this **more often online**
- 18% (1,056 respondents) said they saw these behaviours **more often outside of school**.

Much more needs to be done to support children and young people in tackling sexually harmful behaviour in the online space.

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on their experience of sexual harassment at school. An analysis of this qualitative data revealed several key themes. Many students raised concerns that sexual harassment was either ignored or not dealt with effectively at school. Concerningly, several students also suggested that teachers were part of the problem, making inappropriate jokes or comments particularly to female students.

“It’s prevalent, widely accepted and perpetrators aren’t held accountable for sexual assault by other students or by the school. Girls tend to accept that they just have to put up with this.”
- Year 13 student

The comments made in response to this question may suggest that one of the reasons sexual harassment is so normalised is that it is considered ‘banter’.

Over half (60%, 1,302 respondents) had received a nude from a stranger

“There are many incidents of sexual harassment and assault throughout different school years, there seems to be a sexual assault culture, the school are not supportive of it’s students in this way or stopping this culture”
- Year 13 student

“things become normalised in this generation and social media plays a more powerful role than adults can comprehend, it’s bigger and growing quicker than you think.”-Year 11 student

“From my experience, I don’t know of many serious incidents of this, but I often see/hear satirical sexual jokes, and even though they are not targeting specific people, they may still cause others to be uncomfortable.”- Year 11 student

“Most of the time these actions (excluding sexual touching) are pretty much just humorous- sexual touching has happened a few times but very rarely and can also be done as a joke more often than not.”
- Year 12 student

As students noted in their comments, this sort of culture leads students to be reluctant to report harmful behaviours due to concerns about being judged or not being taken seriously.

“Would speak to adults out of school but no staff in school as they do not take students seriously in other ways”
- Year 13 student

“no one is comfortable to talk to teachers as most of the time they feel there will be judgment”
- Year 11 student

this sort of culture leads students to be reluctant to report harmful behaviours due to concerns about being judged or not being taken seriously

Students made some suggestions about how could things change at school to improve awareness of sexual harassment and to prevent it happening?

“educate younger on and teach younger years not to do it rather than how to prevent it”
- Year 13 student

“More lessons on the rights and wrongs of sexual health and what a real relationship is. Bring more awareness on the dangers of harmful behaviours and what to look out for such as red flags.”
- Year 13 student

“People take photos of others over the tops of cubicles in the toilets and this makes me and my friends all very scared to use the toilets in my school. Perhaps we could have cubicles that reach the ceiling.”
- Year 11 student



NUDE SHARING

32% (2,157 respondents) had received a nude.

This figure was higher for females (38%, 1,305 respondents) and other gender (42%, 79 respondents) than males (25%, 773 respondents).

For those 2,168 respondents who had received a nude:

- ▶ **Over half (60%, 1,302 respondents)** had received a nude **from a stranger**
- ▶ **32% (691 respondents)** had received a

nude from a partner

- ▶ **31% (678 respondents)** had received a **nude from a romantic interest**
- ▶ **26% (553 respondents)** had received a **nude from a friend.**

Of those who had received a nude, almost three quarters of female respondents (72%, 938) and other gender respondents (73%, 58 respondents) had received a nude from a stranger.

9% of respondents had sent a nude.

PERCEPTIONS OF PORN

When asked to consider the impact of porn usage generally on young people, only 5% (327 respondents) considered it helpful compared with 31% (1,968 respondents) who thought it was harmful. However, 20% (1,313 respondents) stated it was neither helpful nor harmful and 19% (1,232 respondents) stated it was both helpful and harmful. This suggests that porn may be normalised, with students seeing it generally as a neutral or harmless influence.

Those identifying as other gender were most likely to say porn was helpful (20%, 36 respondents) compared with 8% of male respondents (220) and 2% of female respondents (71).

36% of respondents (2,515 respondents) thought **more should be done to prevent people** under the age of 18 from **viewing porn** compared with 22% (1,558 respondents) who didn't think more needed to be done. 32% (2,248 respondents) said they didn't know if more should be done.

42% of **female respondents** (1,483) said that more should be done, compared with 30% of male respondents (987) and 23% of other gender respondents (45).

Years 12 and 13 were more likely than other year groups to state that **more should be done to prevent children from seeing porn**. This is interesting as the older year groups are more likely to have been exposed to porn, but are also that additional actions need to be taken to prevent them from seeing it.

The survey asks students in more detail about what they think the impact of porn on people in general will be. Specifically, the survey asks if students think that those who view porn are more likely to

objectify others or to act out what they've seen in porn. 44% (2,835 respondents) stated that people are likely (quite likely or very likely) to **act out what they have seen in porn** compared with only 26% (1,674 respondents) who thought this was unlikely (quite unlikely or very unlikely) to happen. **The same pattern was seen when students were asked whether those who view porn regularly are more likely to objectify others.** 44% (2,814 respondents) stated they thought this was likely (quite likely or very likely) compared with only 22% (1,394 respondents) who thought this was unlikely (quite unlikely or very unlikely). **More female respondents (55%, 1,830)** and other gender respondents (52%, 93) stated that people are **likely** (quite likely or very likely) **to act out what they have seen in porn**, compared with only 32% of male respondents (912).

Again, the same pattern was seen when asking about objectification, with 53% of female respondents (1,765) and 57% of other gender respondents (102) stating that it was likely (quite likely or very likely) that **those who view porn regularly are more likely to objectify others**, compared with only 33% of male respondents (947).

YOUR EXPERIENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY

39% (2,519 respondents) had **viewed porn either intentionally or accidentally**. 48% of males had seen porn (1,404 respondents), 31% of females (1,021 respondents), and 53% of other gender (94 respondents).

Of the 1,855 students who responded, the average age at which respondents had first viewed porn was 12 years.

The average age of first viewing porn was

12.2 years for female students, 11.9 years for male students and 9.9 years for other genders. Of those who had seen porn, 34% (628 respondents) had seen porn aged 11 or younger. 32% of female respondents (236), 33% of male respondents (349) and 64% of respondents who identified as other gender (43), had seen porn before the age of 11.

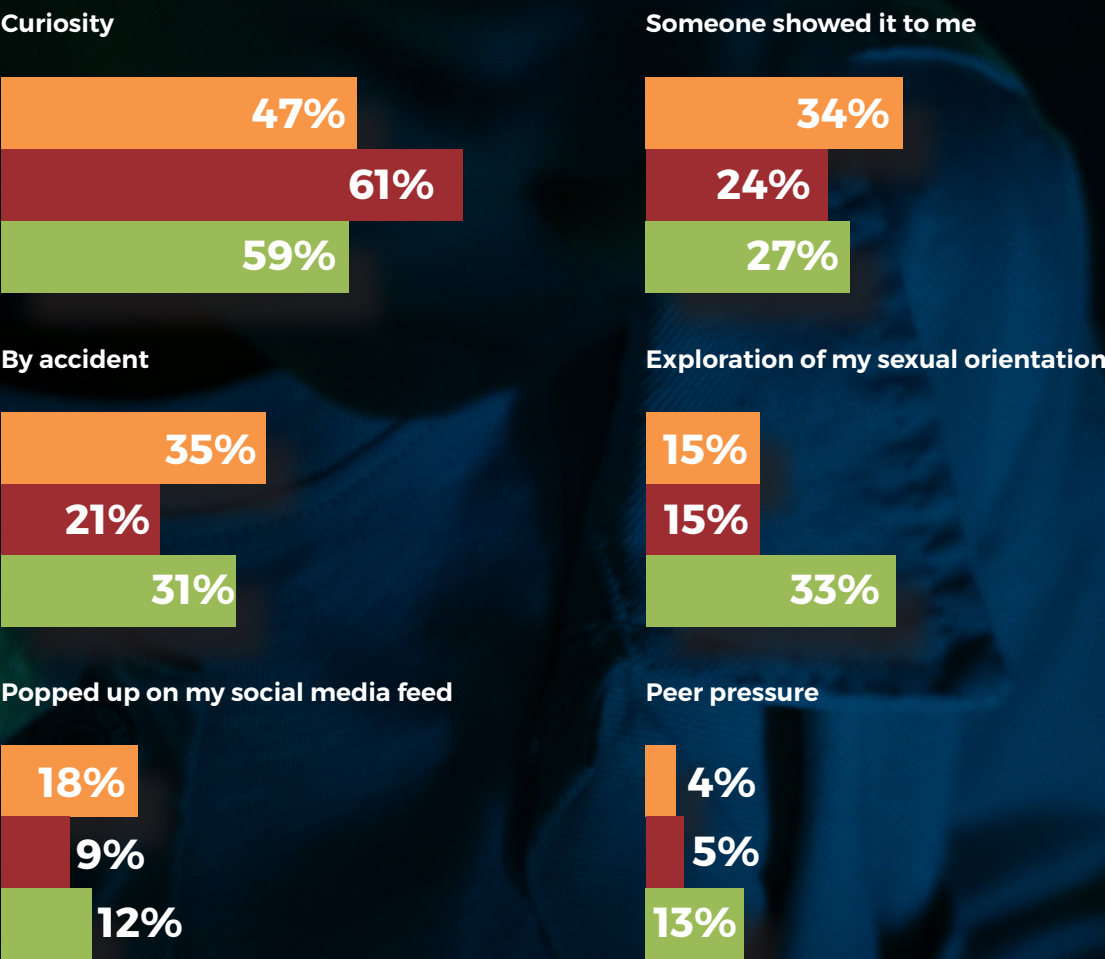
Of the 1,855 students who responded, the average age at which respondents had first viewed porn was 12 years.

REASONS FOR VIEWING PORN INITIALLY
AND REPEATEDLY

Thinking back to that first time you viewed porn, what were the main reasons why you looked at it?

RESPONSE BASE: 1,855

Reason for first viewing porn (%)



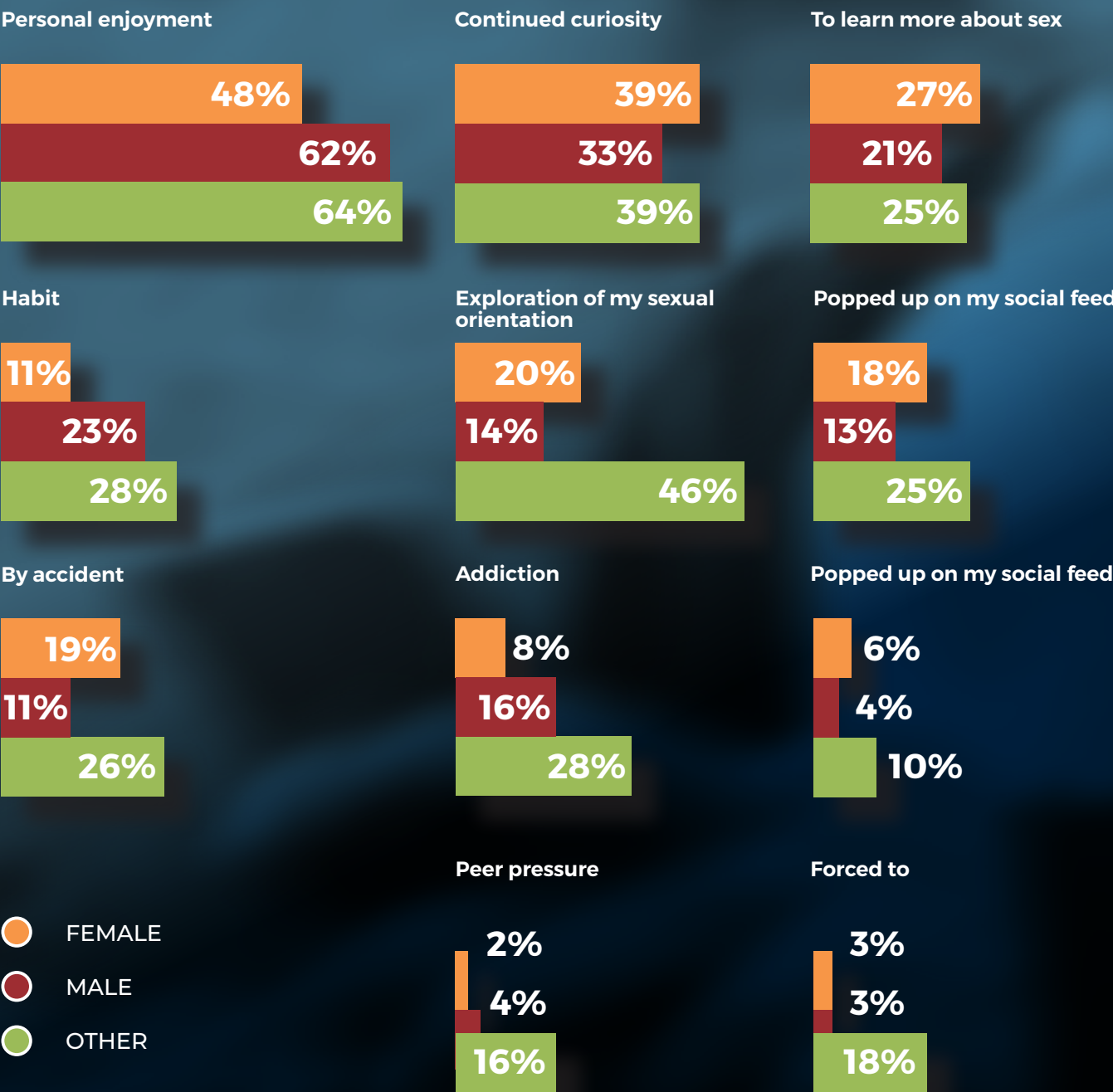
FEMALE
MALE
OTHER

REASONS FOR VIEWING PORN INITIALLY
AND REPEATEDLY

If you have viewed porn again since that first time, what were the main reasons why you looked at it?

RESPONSE BASE: 1,632

Reason for viewing porn again (%)



FEMALE
MALE
OTHER

REASONS FOR VIEWING PORN INITIALLY AND REPEATEDLY

The main reasons reported for first having viewed porn were **curiosity (54%, 1,003 respondents)**, because **someone else had showed them porn (28%, 520 respondents)** or **by accident (27%, 501 respondents)**.

A thematic analysis of the 'other' responses to this question highlighted a few key themes. Many respondents stated that they had initially watched porn for their own sexual pleasure. The next main theme that emerged was that they had first seen porn unintentionally, because either a link had popped up on a gaming site or other website, or through a social media platform. Another reason given related to this is that respondents had either been told about, or sent, specific videos by friends, acquaintances or strangers.

8% of respondents (49) said they had been pressured to act out something from porn by the other person

These qualitative responses give some insight into why some respondents report having viewed porn 'by accident'. It is important that we explore the reasons for 'accidental' viewing further, in order to try and prevent this happening in future.

1,632 respondents had viewed porn again. This means that 88% of those who had viewed porn and were willing to answer the questions **went on to view porn again**. This highlights the importance of taking action to prevent children and young people from seeing porn initially, particularly as viewing by accident seems to be such an issue.

The main reasons cited for **viewing porn** again were **personal enjoyment (57%, 928 respondents)** and **continued curiosity (36%, 580 respondents)**. 23% (381 respondents) viewed porn **to learn more about sex** and 17% (281 respondents) **to learn more about their sexual orientation**. It is very concerning that **almost a quarter**

"Adding a little more detail, someone had placed it on their WhatsApp status. I tapped away within a second."

- Year 10 student

"It was a horrible pop up advert when I was watching a show"

- Year 12 student

"it was an ad on my ps4 internet"

- Year 11 student

of respondents viewed porn to learn more about sex. Dignify wants to ensure that children and young people learn about sex and relationships in a safe way, through informative and relevant relationships and sex education at school and through open and honest conversations with parents, carers or other trusted adults. **Porn is not a normal, realistic portrayal of sex and can lead children and young people to have unrealistic expectations of sex.**

Key themes arising in the qualitative 'other' responses to this question were the same as the previous question. However, there were fewer references to accessing porn through random links or pop-ups and more references to links being sent directly from friends or acquaintances, sometimes in ways to try and disguise them.

"someone showed it to me"

- Year 11 student

"friends sent videos on the group chat"

- Year 10 student

36% of those who had viewed porn more than once (643 respondents) had acted out something they had seen on porn with another person.

"friends would send porn through disguised vids and gif"

- Year 10 student

As with comments to the previous question, some students expressed the view that watching porn was humorous and a way to have fun with friends.

"sleepover with friends and found some of it funny"

- Year 11 student

"me and the boys make fun of it"

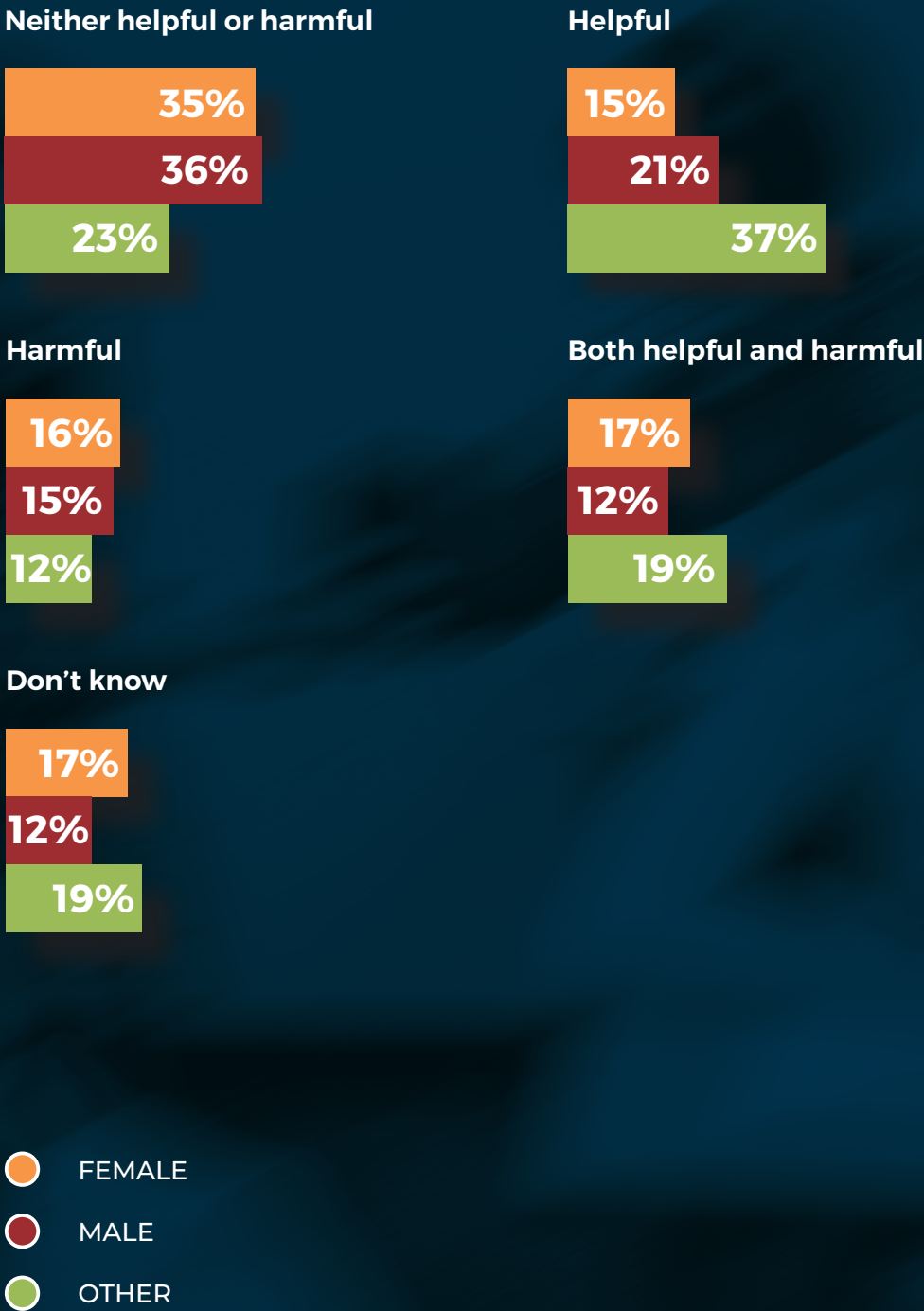
- Year 10 student

The majority of respondents (91%, 1,326 respondents) **viewed porn at home** and most (85%, 1,241 respondents) watched porn **on a mobile phone**. When asked how frequently they watch porn, 17% (255 respondents) **viewed porn at least daily**, with 10% (139 respondents) watching porn **daily** and 8% (116 respondents)

Do you consider that for you, porn usage has been....
(gender breakdown)

RESPONSE BASE: 1,811

Impact of porn (%)



several times a day. This is consistent with the findings above on the numbers of respondents reporting having a porn habit or addiction. 23% (342 respondents) **watched porn every few days**, 14% (200 respondents) watched porn weekly, **14%** (209 respondents) **watched porn every few weeks** and 6% (93 respondents) **watched porn monthly**.

36% of those who had viewed porn more than once (643 respondents) **had acted out something they had seen on porn with another person**. There was no significant difference in the percentage ages of each gender who had acted out porn. Of those who had acted out porn, the main reasons

for doing so were for mutual enjoyment (56%, 359 respondents), being curious to try it out (49%, 312 respondents) or for personal enjoyment (31%, 199 respondents). 8% of respondents (49) said they had been **pressured to act out something from porn** by the other person.

Those who had used porn were asked to consider whether this had been helpful or harmful to them. 19% (344 respondents) **considered it to have been helpful** and 15% (278 respondents) thought it had been **harmful**. However, 35% (639 respondents) stated it was neither helpful nor harmful and 16% (281 respondents) stated it was both helpful and harmful.

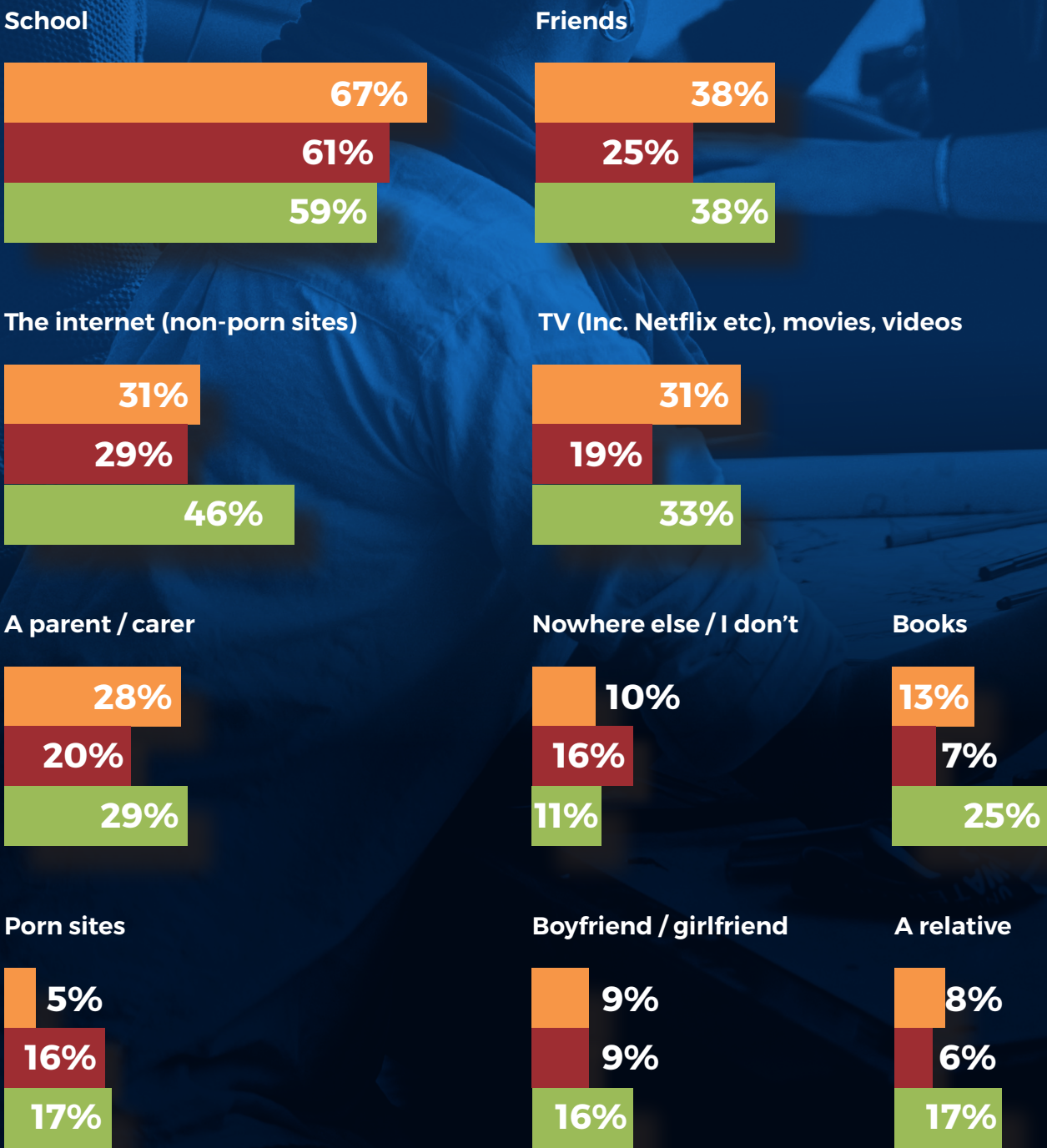
Those who view porn regularly are more likely to objectify others

Dignify wants to ensure that children and young people learn about sex and relationships in a safe way

Where do you get sex education from?

RESPONSE BASE: 6,193

Sources of sex education



● FEMALE
● MALE
● OTHER

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

School remains the main source of sex education for the majority of children and young people (64%, 3,962) which is why it is so crucial that data from surveys, such as the Dignify School Survey are used to inform the development of informative and relevant relationships and sex education.

Almost a third of respondents (30%, 1,884) reported using the **internet** to look **for information on sex** and 27% (1,646 respondents) **got information from TV**. Whilst some educational websites may provide children and young people with helpful advice, in general, there is a significant risk that turning to friends, the internet or TV will lead students to receiving unrealistic, incorrect or misinformed information. If students are favouring the internet as a source of sex education, RSE in schools should be signposting safe and informative websites that students can visit to obtain further information if needed.

Concerningly, less than a quarter (24%, 1,511 respondents) **cited their parents or carers** as a **source of sex education**, with only 20% of male respondents (568) stating they got sex education from a parent or carer and 28% of female respondents (895) and 29% of other gender respondents (48) stating this. This lack of engagement is concerning, particularly as previous findings have shown children and young people are most likely to watch porn at

home and on a mobile phone (most likely purchased by, or owned by a parent or carer. Parental controls on home WiFi and devices are thus crucial to ensure that children are not able to access harmful content.

Studies have also shown that a large amount of pornography depicts violence or non-consensual behaviours.

Sadly, one in ten respondents (10%, 630) had turned to porn to find out more about sex. This figure was **even higher for male respondents (16%, 450)** and other gender respondents (17%, 29) than female respondents (5%, 162). Porn is not a realistic representation of sex. **Studies have also shown that a large amount of pornography depicts violence or non-consensual behaviours.**

One study found that one in eight titles shown to first time users on the front page of a frequently used porn site depicted violence. An extensive report from the Children's Commissioner in January 2023, outlined the serious harms to young people from online pornography.

Protecting children from the harms of online porn can only be done if children are given robust education on sex, relationships and the harms of porn and by schools and families working together to ensure practical protections are in place

to ensure online safety at home and at school.

To support the development of high quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programmes in schools we also asked if students had any other comments they would like to make about their school's RSE.

A thematic analysis of all the responses to this question highlighted a number of key themes. Helpfully, in addition to general criticism and requests for improvement, many students commented on how they wanted their sex education to be improved and what topics they felt needed more coverage. Overall, there was a strong theme that **relationships and sex education needed to go beyond biology** and help equip students to face real-life situations and relationships. Comments suggested that students wanted **more discussion on the reality of what sex is like both physically and emotionally** and sexual pleasure, as this is why many turn to porn. They wanted this to be less taboo so that it could be discussed rather than them having to turn to porn. More specifically, teaching on the following topics was requested:

- ▶ **How to maintain healthy relationships and end relationships in a good way**
- ▶ **Sexual assault and sexual harassment**
- ▶ **The harmful impacts of porn and objectification**
- ▶ **Contraception**
- ▶ **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

Overall, there was a strong theme that relationships and sex education needed to go beyond biology and help equip students to face real-life situations and relationships.

- ▶ **Periods and other discussion on the female body**
- ▶ **Consent**

These quotes illustrate some of these topic suggestions.

"I think sex education needs to be improved so that more people understand their bodies and how they work as well as what they could expect from them. They should be told more about contraception and different birth control methods. There needs to be more period talk, explaining what it is, the symptoms, how best to deal with it, as well as all the different period product options. They need to teach about different conditions either biological (e.g. breast

cancer or endometriosis or menopause) or STDS and the signs for these symptoms. They should also recommend books or other sources that students can use to learn more about their bodies."

"Schools rarely talk about the realities of sex. Maybe this is due to the fact that they are scared about discussing such a topic however it's clear that a lot of the younger generation are learning about sex from porn rather than in a classroom so the stereotype of sex being something bad needs to be talked about."

"Should be done from year 7 not year 9, should be a continuous theme throughout all years and not stop after year 9/10. I cant remember anything useful that was taught to me, because it was not regular enough. Important to raise awareness of the damaging effect of porn from a younger age- I was only taught about this last year in school (age 16)."

Another key theme that came through across schools was that sex education is very heteronormative and students wanted more information on same sex relationships, again to stop them turning to porn to explore their sexual orientation.

"I feel like schools only really cover the basics of sex, and never really talk about personal enjoyment; they only talk about sex as a means of procreation. Also, I've found that schools don't cover LGBTQ+ sex education, which was a big detriment to me personally and led to me learning from porn and having unrealistic expectations of sex."

It is clear that in many cases the RSE delivered in school is not fit for purpose and requires significant improvement. Both Dignify and the Esteem programme run by acet-UK are working to increase the delivery of relevant and informative RSE to schools across the UK.

WELLBEING

The Dignify School Survey uses the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) to provide a measure of students' wellbeing and mental functioning. The rationale behind including questions on wellbeing in the Dignify School Survey questionnaire, was to see if there is a correlation between wellbeing and any of the other issues examined in the survey. Where relevant or appropriate, this analysis has been included in this report.

The results show that wellbeing levels among these students are notably below those seen in the general UK population. The mean WEMWBS score was 43.1 compared with the average score of 46.5 among 16-24 year olds in the Scottish Health Survey 2022 which is the most recent comparative data for a similar age group. The short version of the WEMWBS was used in the Health Survey for England in 2021, giving an average score of 25.7 for 16-34 year olds. Scores for the short WEMWBS range from 0-35 rather than 0-70 in the full version.

In the current survey, 47% (2,855 respondents) were in the low wellbeing category (with a WEMWBS score of 42 or lower) compared with 15% in this category in the general UK population. Only 5% (319 respondents) reported high wellbeing, compared with 15% in the general UK population. 47% of respondents (2,842) were in the moderate wellbeing category.

There was a noticeable gender difference with 76% of other gender respondents (121) and 57% of the female respondents (1,804) reporting low wellbeing compared with only 34% of male respondents (930). Population studies such as the Health Survey for England and the Scottish Health Survey have also found that females tend to report lower wellbeing than males. However, the difference is not generally this notable.

An analysis by year group found that the percentage of students in the low wellbeing category seemed broadly to increase with increasing year group. 37% of Year 9 (27 respondents) and 44% of Year 10 (921 respondents) reported low wellbeing, along with 48% of Year 11 (791 respondents), 47% of Year 12 (535 respondents) and 53% of Year 13 (475 respondents).



CONCLUSIONS

Social media is central to the lives of children and young people today. Our findings show that the vast majority of respondents are using social media multiple times a day and there are some positive outcomes of this, as many respondents use social media as a key way of connecting with and building relationship with others. However, social media is not without its downsides, and the social pressure to post content and live up to the idealised representations of life that some post on social media is clearly impacting on the wellbeing of young people. Our findings suggest there is a correlation between the perceived negative personal impact of social media and wellbeing. It is vital that children and young people are given support to put in place healthy social media habits to protect their wellbeing and encouraged to make meaningful face-to-face relationships with others.

Other issues, such as sexual harassment, can also impact young people when using social media, with over a quarter reporting seeing sexual harassment more online. Sadly, our findings are consistent with those of Ofsted in 2021 and show that sexual harassment remains prevalent in secondary and sixth form education, with female students more likely to be the victim of this. In spite of Ofsted's report, it is clear that there more to be done to ensure that schools deal with this effectively and create a culture where children and young people feel confident in reporting sexually harmful behaviours. It would appear that perhaps too often these behaviours are dismissed as 'banter', but

these behaviours also seem to have been normalised to some extent in schools and across social media.

The normalisation of sexual content across the internet and in schools may also go some way to explain why nude sharing is also prevalent among children and young people, with almost a third of respondents having received

The normalisation of sexual content across the internet and in schools may also go some way to explain why nude sharing is also prevalent among children and young people

a nude and of these, over half having received a nude from a stranger. Again, female respondents seem to be disproportionately targeted by strangers sending nude images. Dignify plans to conduct further qualitative research to explore why and how this is happening, in order to be able to teach children, particularly girls and other gender children,

Tackling the harms of porn requires a joint effort between schools, RSE educators, parents and law makers

We need to understand that children are curious and if their questions are not answered, it is easy for them to pick up a phone and search for the answers. Sadly, this is how many may find themselves coming across porn

how to protect themselves from receiving unwanted nudes.

Respondents' perceptions of porn also suggest that sexual content may be normalised for some young people, with around one in five respondents stating it was neither helpful nor harmful or both helpful and harmful respectively, suggesting that they either saw porn as a neutral influence or as having benefits as well as risks. However, when asked if those who viewed porn would be likely to act it out or objectify others as a result, in both cases, more students reported this was likely rather than unlikely, demonstrating some awareness of the risks of porn.

Almost 40% of respondents had viewed porn, with an average age of first viewing porn of only 12 years. This highlights the need for RSE to be taught earlier, in an age-appropriate way to help students

understand the harms of porn. Particularly when

some students are coming across porn 'by accident', likely because it popped up on social media or a gaming feed. Children need to know what to do if this happens and parents need to be aware to help prevent this viewing in the first place. The vast majority of children who view porn once go on to view it again. Of those who viewed porn again, almost one in five respondents did so out of habit and more than one in ten reported having an addiction to porn. This is a really alarming finding and more needs to be done to prevent children from accessing porn in the first place as well as providing support for those already having issues.

Ensuring the use of professionally delivered, informative and relevant RSE is one way

that it might be possible to reduce the numbers of children turning to porn to find out more about sex. It is clear from looking at the comments on school's RSE that current RSE is not fit for purpose, with content often limited, not relevant and delivered in a way that makes students feel uncomfortable rather than encouraging beneficial open conversation. **Parents also need to step up and do more to prepare their children for future relationships and have open conversations about the harms of porn.** Less than a quarter of parents are having these conversations and Dignify wants to empower parents to support their children and have honest and open conversations about sex and relationships.

We live in a world now where information is easily accessible at the click of a button and parents are often unprepared for this, having grown up in a very different culture. We need to understand that children are curious and if their questions are not answered, it is easy for them to pick up a phone and search for the answers. Sadly, this is

how many may find themselves coming across porn, which will only give them an unrealistic representation of what a healthy relationship looks like.

Tackling the harms of porn requires a joint effort between schools, parents and law makers, to ensure that it is harder for children to access porn in the first place and that children are equipped to use social media and other digital resources in a safe and healthy way. It is also vital that the RSE taught in schools is informative, relevant and taught by professionals to ensure that children are equipped to go on to lead happy and healthy relationships, free from the harms of porn.

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Charity number 1192067
Contact **admin@dignify.org**