

“Everything that is not a yes is a no”

A report about children’s everyday exposure to sexual crimes and their protective strategies.

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ECPAT Sweden

ECPAT Sweden is a child rights organisation working against sexual exploitation of children. We do this in several ways. We share knowledge about sexual crime to prevent it from happening. We work to inform public opinion and influence decision makers, and we collaborate with authorities, private businesses and other organisations. We also run ECPAT Hotline – a reporting site, as well as Ditt ECPAT – a support line for children and young people, and *Föräldrahjälpen* for parents. Our support lines offer help, support and knowledge about images, sexual harassment, threats and abuse online or IRL. ECPAT Sweden is part of the international ECPAT network, which comprises of 122 organisations in 104 countries.

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Preface

"Strangers on social media have forced me into having sex and sending nudes. My friends have also been in similar situations. Still the police refuse to bother with the matter and have told us to block the people on the chat."

These are the words of a 15-year-old boy that tell us how the adult world does not do enough. After having read almost 13,000 survey responses provided by children, I was struck by their great willingness to share their experiences. Now ECPAT has a duty to share this knowledge with you and all the other adults out there. We are all important adults to one child or another, and regardless of whether we are parents, teachers, sports coaches or decision makers, we must take joint responsibility for children's safety both online and offline.

In this report, many children share accounts of a world that may seem both frightening and unpleasant. For parents, these accounts might feel

surreal, or perhaps even so difficult to take on board that it is easier to just turn a blind eye. Still, this report describes children's everyday lives and realities – and they want you to know about them.

The more we adults understand and learn, the more

” I was struck by their great willingness to share.

we can prevent. However, we need to learn about the positive side of the internet too – not just the negative. The side of the internet that is the reason why children live a large part of their lives through their mobile phones. This is where love, friends, fun and social interaction can be found. The line between online and offline was blurred a long time ago, and digital life is just as “real” as everything else.

In order to be able to help children deal with risks, it is also important to remember that not all risks are synonymous with harm. For example, the majority of adults believe that children who send nude photographs are setting themselves up for

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The more we adults understand and learn, the more we can prevent.



unnecessary risks that are not worth taking. At the same time, half of the children from our survey told us that they had sent photographs, as sending consensual nudes is often seen as something positive. Nevertheless, in some cases, there can be serious consequences. “A simple nude” can turn into a crime if it is circulated, and those whose pictures are spread can be affected in many different ways.

“He asked for photographs and I sent them because I trusted him, but I shouldn't have because the entire school got the photograph.” (Girl, 15)

When you read this report, you will gain a clear understanding of some of the crimes that children become the victim of, and insight into how many children have been the victim of a crime. And how

important it is that we start to listen to what children tell us. I hope that you will take heed of the children's accounts in this report, and draw on them in your everyday life, your profession, or in your conversations with children.

A huge thank you to all the children and young people who bravely shared their experiences of victimhood and their strategies. We will take good care of the trust you have shown us.

Anna Karin Hildingson Boqvist
Executive Director ECPAT Sweden



This report provides us with a unique insight into the online lives of young people today. Nowadays, the internet is just as much a social arena for children as the playground is, but it is also a place where children experience – and must deal with – sexual abuse, threats, and violence on a daily basis. And by daily basis, we mean every single day. To the extent that a 17-year-old girl no longer reacts when she is sent a dick pic, as she has received them since she was ten.

Children* are the experts on their own situations. Hence, it is important that we adults listen to their experiences before we reach our own conclusions about what is “right” and “wrong” online. We were fortunate enough to be able to hear the voices of more children than we could ever have hoped for – almost 13,000 survey respondents. Not only is this unique, but this sends a message to society. Children want to speak out about their vulnerability, and it is our duty to listen to them.

What we did

During 2020, ECPAT conducted a targeted survey, “Nude på nätet” (“Nude online”) aiming to investigate children’s own boundaries related to sexual grey areas online. The children submitted free-text responses to accounts they had read. Here, they explained why they drew the line where they did and what strategies they used to protect themselves. The material is unusual and important, as we know far too little about the way children reason about sex and sexual risks online.

In the early summer of 2021, we posed questions to children once more and this time we chose to focus on their strategies relating to the accounts presented in the survey. At the end of the survey, children were able to respond to one or more areas linked to the accounts presented. One of these areas was about first-hand experiences of sexual offences online. In this report, we use the materials about being the victim of a crime, four selected accounts and finally a number of first-hand experiences provided by the children.

The aim is to present children’s vulnerability to sexual offences online, and to find out which strategies children use to protect themselves. In order to be able to place the results into context, it is important that we understand the role of the internet in children’s lives.

In the chapter *Children and the internet* we draw upon research and some of the children’s accounts in which they explain the positive elements of the internet and sending nude photographs. In the chapter *Types of crime* we highlight the results of the free-text responses, research, and first-hand experiences of being the victim of a crime. We then try to understand the children’s attitudes towards this vulnerability. Only once we have understood children’s attitudes towards the sexual risks and vulnerability online can we understand the strategies they use to manage them. The chapter *Accounts of children’s experiences of sexual offences* focuses on four accounts and the children’s responses to them. Here, we see how children try to protect themselves from falling victim, or how they react if they have been the victim.

* This report uses the definition in article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that child is every human being below the age of eighteen years.

We divided the children’s strategies into four categories:

Cautious strategies

Placing the blame on the person taking sexual risks. Children who choose these strategies believe that the best way to protect yourself is to never take sexual risks, such as sending nude photographs or visiting sites that might have sexual content. This also includes those who responded that people who become a victim after taking a sexual risk only have themselves to blame.

Protective strategies

Aiming to reduce the risks associated with sexual risk-taking. These strategies may involve anonymising an image or demanding a nude photograph in exchange for sending one of themselves, in order to reduce the risk that the image is shared with others. They can also involve blocking people who send threats or inappropriate materials.

Supportive strategies

Placing little emphasis on how the child who has become a victim has behaved or managed the risks. Instead, focus lies on the child seeking social support if they have experienced something unpleasant online. This might involve talking to friends or parents.

Restorative strategies

Providing some form of restoration for the child who has been the victim of a sexual offence, and often actively distance themselves from the belief that the victim’s behaviour needs to be scrutinised. It might involve confronting the perpetrator, refusing to feel ashamed, or reporting the abuse to the police.

It is important to note that it is not the child’s responsibility to protect themselves from online crimes. Nevertheless, ECPAT believes that children are experts on their own situation and often have the best solutions to the challenges they face. If adults do not find out about what children know, they are unable to take responsibility as they should – and their attempts to offer help risk being ineffective or, in the worst case, cause direct harm. This report aims to provide adults close to children with important information about their online strategies.



Children are the experts on their own situations.



Children were then asked to choose which option was the most suitable advice to give to the person in the story. They were also asked if they could relate to the accounts. Free-text answers could also be submitted for each response.

After they had finished with one account, they could choose to read and respond to others. Once they had responded to three accounts, they were also given the opportunity to respond to one or more specific topics and/or share their own experiences. The three topics addressed first-hand experience of online crime and the police, the ECPAT takedown feature for nude photographs that have been shared, and what parents should know about children's online lives. Children were given the chance to read and respond to a total of three accounts, three topics and to write about their own experiences. First, the children were asked to provide some background information. They were asked questions about their age, gender identity, where they and their parents were born, if they identified as LGBTQIA+ (14-17-year-olds only), if they lived with one or both parents or not, if their parents worked from home during the pandemic, and their parents' interest in their child's online life. We designed a total of 17 accounts, 6 of which were aimed at children aged 10-13 and the remainder aimed at 14-17-year-olds. The children were randomly assigned to one of the accounts for their age group based on the age they provided. Children who identified as non-binary were assigned the same three accounts to make sure there would be enough responses to be able to conduct analyses.

Survey via the children's own channels

Over the course of a few days during the spring of 2021, an information campaign was shared with the target group via Snapchat and Instagram Stories. The target group for the campaign and the survey was children between 10 – 17 years old (children aged 10-12 use social media even though the age limit is 13). Children who were interested could click on a link from the campaign to the survey. We also received comments that suggest that many children shared the link with their peers, and gave information about the survey to other children and young people.

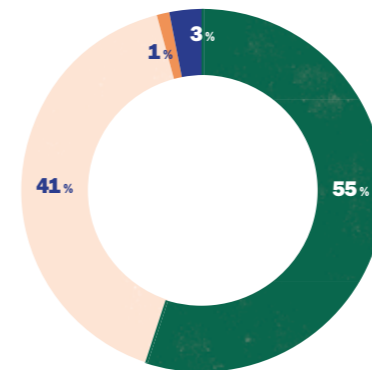
The children provided responses to accounts based on real events that other children and young people have shared with us. However, these accounts had been re-written to protect anonymity. The options in response to the accounts are based on children's own strategies and reflections. Here, we drew upon the free-text responses taken from the 2020 ECPAT survey "Nude på nätet" ("Nude online") looking at sexual boundaries online. For example, the accounts included information about children and young people who have been threatened online, or who have shared photographs that someone else sent. Five pieces of advice were presented after the accounts.

How many and which children responded?

A total of 12,836 children have responded to at least one account, and often more than one. Of these, at least 1,504 provided at least one free-text response. A total of 2,239 free-text responses to the accounts were submitted. Furthermore, 1,465 children responded to questions about experiencing crime and 168 children shared their own accounts. The survey has primarily reached children aged 15-17, and around 70 per cent of respondents were in this age group. Around half, 55 per cent, define themselves as girls, 41 per cent as boys, and around one per cent as non-binary. The remainder either did not want to answer the questions about their gender identity or chose "other". 13 per cent of children aged 14-17 identified as LGBTQIA+, 66 per cent did not, and the remainder were unsure. A significantly larger number of girls than boys identified as LGBTQIA+ or were unsure. Girls and non-binary children

12 836

children have responded to at least one account.



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often answered more questions and provided more free-text responses. Of the children who responded to the questions, only 24 per cent were boys. An analysis has shown that the boys who responded to the questions about being victims of crime are not entirely representative and they have experiences of the accounts to a somewhat higher extent than the other boys. They are also more likely to identify as

LGBTQIA+ than the other boys in the material. We have not found anything similar for the group of girls and non-binary children.

We analysed the quantitative data from the survey to see the degree of experiencing crime and any patterns in the strategies. We then conducted a qualitative analysis of the free-text responses, which have provided us with an insight into how children reason, their thoughts around risk-taking and responsibility, the strategies they use and their personal experiences. A large number of the children's free-text responses include comments on the accounts and explanations as to why the children chose a particular strategy. A number also draw on their own experiences or those of others and use that information as an additional argument. A discussion will follow the results section, and finally the tips and advice from children and young people aimed at other children and adults will be presented.

Children and the internet – a natural part of life

When we talk about children, young people, and sexual abuse, it is important to keep in mind how children's digital lives have changed and expanded fundamentally over the past ten years. Just one decade ago, extreme internet usage was defined as over three hours online per day. This is now the norm and most children do not draw a clear line between when they use the internet and when they do not.

There are both technical changes and changes to what children do online behind this shift. One of the most important differences is that the internet is now readily available thanks to mobile phones. The internet has also become more social and children's social media presence has increased substantially. Furthermore, children are using the internet at a younger age, and if we compare reports on children and the media by the Swedish Media Council, published in 2017 and 2019 we can see how these changes are happening rapidly¹. Therefore, it is not surprising that many adults fail to keep up and often try to protect children by regulating their digital presence in a way that the children feel is unrealistic and naive. For example, if a child is prevented from accessing social media platforms, this limits their access to interpersonal relationships as social media is a place where children meet with their friends to chat, game, or communicate with each other. The internet itself is not a dangerous place for children, however, platforms can be

used to threaten, harass, or commit sexual offences. Just as the child below writes, it is our duty and our responsibility as adults close to children to protect the child when they make the most of the opportunities provided by the internet. Not to protect the child from accessing information, playing and developing social competence.

"Sometimes it's the only place we can be where it's safe and we're not judged. Please don't take our safety net away just because you've heard horror stories. There'll always be people who want to exploit us, don't take away something that's important to us in an attempt to protect us." (Non-binary, 15)

The internet itself is not a dangerous place for children, however, platforms can be used to threaten, harass, or commit sexual offences.

Socialising or just playing a game?

When children describe what the internet means to them, it becomes clear that they do not draw a clear line between life online and offline. This is different from the way adults view the internet. Therefore, it is important that we start by accepting that for children, the internet is a natural part of life and a place for socialising, learning, entertainment, support, activism and community that melds with life beyond the internet². Children often use the internet for broader, more creative, and active purposes compared to adults, and it is unclear to what extent adults understand children's relationships to the digital world. Adults may consider themselves to be active in their children's digital lives by asking about concrete activities, such as "what YouTube channel are you watching?" or "What are you playing," but they often miss an important aspect – the child primarily sees the activity as socialising and identity-forming, not just playing a game³. This does not in any way mean that the internet is risk free, or

that children cannot be harmed online, as we will illustrate in this report. Rather, it means that from the child's perspective, these are risks that they need to learn to manage and develop effective strategies for. Children can benefit greatly from adults who are active in their digital lives and who maintain a discussion about the opportunities created by the internet. On the other hand, the parents and adults who try to limit a child's use of the internet might indeed reduce the risks the child may face. However, the child's digital competence and ability to benefit from the good sides of the internet will also be reduced⁴. This could in turn leave the child more vulnerable as they do not have effective strategies for dealing with the situations that may arise. Furthermore, if a child experiences something negative in conjunction with them breaking the rules or bans, fear or shame might prevent them from speaking out about what has happened.

¹ Statens medieråd. (2019). Ungar & medier 2019. Stockholm: Statens medieråd och Statens medieråd. (2017). Ungar & medier 2017. Stockholm: Statens medieråd

² Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S., & Khazbak, R. (2021). Investigating risks and opportunities for children in a digital world: A rapid review of the evidence on children's internet use and outcomes.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Livingstone, S. (2017). Maximising opportunities and minimising risks for children online: The Role of digital skills in emerging strategies of parental mediation. *Journal of Communication* 67(1): 82-105.

Increased digital competence in the broadest sense – being able to look for and evaluate information and stay safe on the internet – is associated with increased opportunities, but also increased risks. Children with a high level of digital competence tend to engage in riskier behaviour, as the risks can also mean greater opportunities for a child to experience their desired outcome⁵. It is unclear how well children are able to protect themselves from harm, and to what extent high levels of digital competence also correlate with good risk assessment and the strategies being successful when put into practice. An assessment of children’s strategies, needs to take into account that children can have other perspectives and goals than those of the adults around them. For example, children have a different view of online privacy compared to adults, and adults might see the child’s view as being riskier than it actually is⁶. The different views on privacy become clear if we look at the internet the same way as a child does – as a social arena. Here, social interaction does not benefit from high levels of mistrust for others. When making new contacts, children often have strategies based on looking for mutual friends, assessing the credibility of photographs and posts, asking control questions and quickly blocking the people who overstep their boundaries⁷. Nevertheless, research shows that children are generally worse at determining a person’s credibility than what they themselves believe⁸. By having an open discussion that is tailored to a child’s level of maturity, adults can help them find rules and strategies that can help them in their everyday life.

Children have always explored their sexuality

It is important that adults remind themselves that a lot of a child’s life takes place online, meaning that most of what is part and parcel of being a child or young person will also take place there. This means that flirting, falling in love and sex will all be a natural part of children and young people’s life online. Children and young people will continue to explore and experiment with sex, regardless of what their parents say; for many people, the internet may be a safe space to do this. Occasionally, this will mean that children engage in risk-filled behaviours such as sending nude photographs to each other, having online sex, or meeting people they have got to know online. It is important to remember that risk is not necessarily synonymous with harm and it is the latter that is important to avoid⁹. Research has shown that Norwegian children – who display great similarities with other Scandinavian children – engage in more risks but experience less harm than children in other European countries¹⁰. This does not mean that there are no problems, or that children are not abused or harmed in online environments. Rather, it means that adults must remember that there are many positive things about the internet and the risks must never mean that we prevent children from experiencing the positive.

Risk is not necessarily synonymous with harm.



5 Smahel, D. et al. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries.

6 Livingstone, S., & Stoilova, M. (2019). Using global evidence to benefit children’s online opportunities and minimise risks. Contemporary Social Science.

7 Groenstein, E., Baas, N., van Deursen A.J., & de Jong, M.D. (2018) Strategies and cues adolescent use to assess the age of an online stranger. Information, Communication & Society, 21(8) 1168-1185 and Nygren, T. & Guath, M. (2019) Swedish teenagers’ difficulties and abilities to determine digital news credibility. Nordicom Review, 40(1), 23-42.

8 Livingstone, S. (2017). Maximising opportunities and minimising risks for children online: The Role of digital skills in emerging strategies of parental mediation. Journal of Communication 67(1): 82-105.

9 Livingstone, S., & Mason, J. (2015). Sexual rights and sexual risks among youth online. London School of Economics and Political Science, commissioned by the European NGO alliance for child safety online (ENACSO).

10 Smahel, D. et al. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries.

How common is it for children to send nudes?

48 per cent of the children asked have sent nude photographs of themselves to others. Most found the experience to be something positive at the time they sent the photograph. In the survey, we asked the children to share their experience of sending nudes.

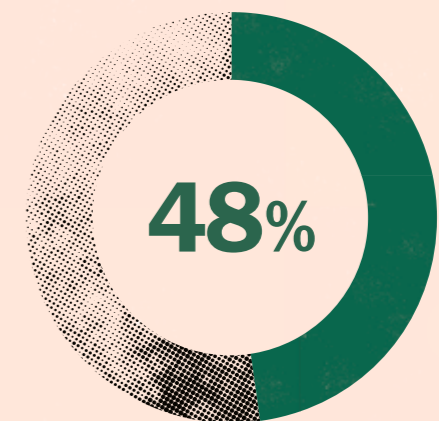
In the free-text responses, they describe the process as a natural part of exploring their sexuality, a way of gaining affirmation, and creating intimacy with the people they like. Sending nudes is one of the things that adults often believe to be problematic, whereas the children have a completely different understanding. The fact that a large part of a child’s everyday life takes place online means that elements such as falling in love and sex will also be acted out on the internet. This will always be the case, regardless of whether adults allow it or not. If we adults do not talk to children about how they can explore their sexuality, understand consent, grey areas and satisfying relationships online, then we are not considered relevant. Hence, the advice and strategies provided by adults will not be adapted to a child’s reality, which in turn can affect how children think about their online safety.

We swapped nudes and enjoyed it, mutual and a good relationship” (Girl, 16)

One important part of understanding how children have sexual relationships online is why they choose to send nude photographs to each other. Reasons stated by the children in our survey include it being pleasurable, exciting, mutual and it can increase a person’s self-esteem/confidence. As the child above stated, it can be part of a healthy relationship. As this

report primarily addresses children’s vulnerability to online sexual offences, we would like to emphasise that the vast majority of children find sending nudes unproblematic. Sending photographs is not a problem per se, nor does this have to be a cause for concern or part of risky sexual behaviour as long as the relationship itself is mutual, filled with respect and a safe place for the child to develop their sexuality. As the child describes in the following quote, the relationships can be long-term or temporary.

“It was a slow and natural process, like a type of ‘friends with benefits’ thing, so both of us have sent them back and forth over a long period. No pressure from anyone and both partners have similar relationships on the go at the same time. It like, helps both of us.” (Boy, 17)



48 per cent of the children have sent nude photographs of themselves to others.

The fact that many children experience these positive feelings does not mean that they are unaware of the risks linked with sending nude photographs. Many children write about their reasoning with the risks associated with sending photographs. Many point out that anonymous photographs are safer, but there are different arguments about whether it is best to send the photographs to someone you know well and trust, or if it is better to send them to people who are not part of your own network. The children in the accounts below have chosen to send photographs to people they do not know, as they believe there are fewer risks. They also choose to leave out their face if the images ever were to be circulated.

"We were both ok with it and we'd been chatting for a while so we kind of trusted each other, no mutual friends so less risk of them being spread. No faces." (Girl, 15)

"It's happened a hundred times. Usually just flirting online and then you take more and more daring photographs of yourself until the point when like the guy asks for a nude and I'm like yeah no big deal if we're both fine with it and don't show our faces." (Girl, 16)

"Anonymous chat, I wanted to try it. I didn't include my face." (Girl, 17)

Other strategies the children touch upon include trading photographs to reduce the risk of them being circulated, as each person has sensitive material of the other. Or simply not sending a photograph of themselves. The fact that both children still have photographs of each other creates some form of balance of terror, as you know that if you spread a photograph then you also risk having a photograph of you circulated.

"She asked for a photograph, I answered, 'ladies first' and she sent one, so I sent one back." (Boy, 17)

"He asked for one and sent one back, so I felt safe." (Girl, 15)

Another strategy some children have involves not taking their own nude photographs, instead they find others online and send them. There are also children who have ended up with somebody using a photograph of their face and imposing it on another person's nude, then circulating it.

"She wanted some, so I googled photos" (Boy, 16)

It's happened a hundred times.

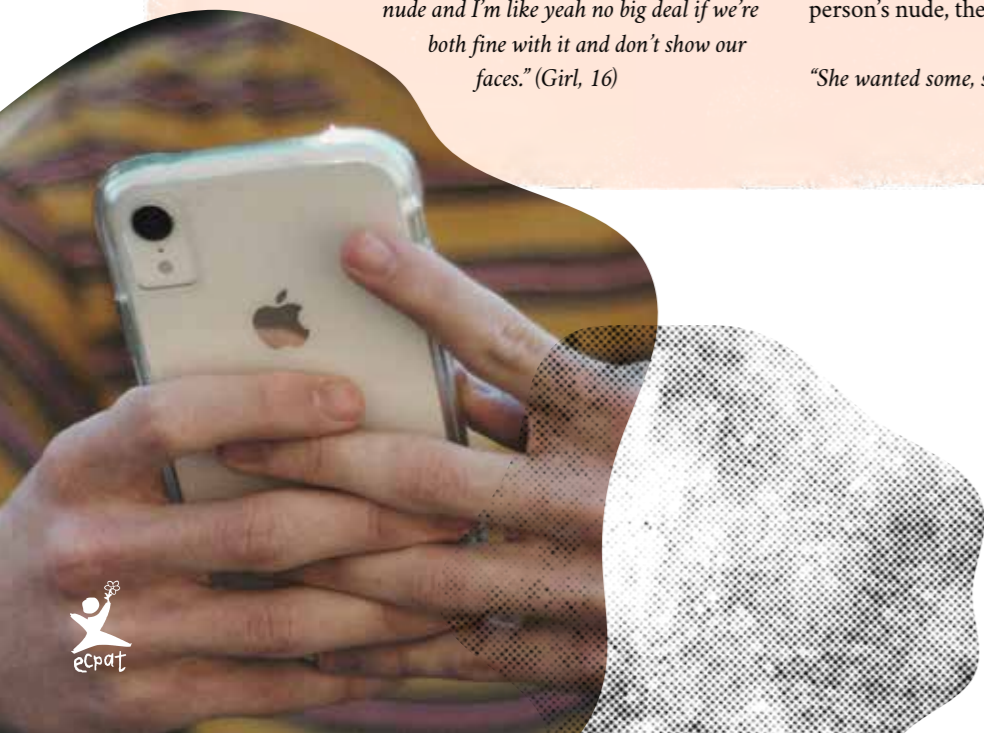
Finally, there are children who are aware of the risk that a photograph could be circulated, but they do not find this to be particularly problematic. The boy in the first free-text response below does not appear to take any precautions before sending a photograph, rather his strategy involves sending images to people who want to see his genitals. His attitude is not very common amongst the children. Many children and young people cannot freely express their sexuality in this way online without making risk calculations that assume they may become the victim of a crime. A recurring theme in the report that we will raise in section four about "accounts", is that many children have developed strategies that build on them more or less taking the blame for their own vulnerability. This consequently affects how they view themselves and others as victims of crime.

"Don't really care who sees my dick, as long as they want to see it." (Boy, 16)

Even though children are willing to send nude photographs and are aware of the risks, there are times when the nude photographs will be used in various ways that harm the child. In these instances, there is a risk that the child is not only affected by the initial harm, but the attitudes of the adult world make the situation worse. This happens when the child who sent a photograph – or received one – is made to feel shame for what they have done, rather

than being supported as a victim of crime. This means that a child's vulnerability online follows a long tradition of placing blame and shame on the victim of a sexual offence and their behaviour, rather than placing the blame on the perpetrator. When we question why a child who has been the victim of a sexual offence sent the nude photograph, we make the child partly responsible for the crime. This reasoning holds many similarities with saying a rape victim's clothing was too provocative, or why people have brief sexual encounters with people they do not know.

Don't really care who sees my dick, as long as they want to see it.



Children's exposure to online sexual offences

The internet is a place where a large part of a child's social life takes place and is somewhere with many positive elements. It is important to keep this in mind as we explore the third part of the report that looks into children's experiences of online sexual offences. Adults around a child have a responsibility to protect the child when they exercise their rights online – but not to protect the child from playing, developing and maintaining social relationships online.

Due to the pandemic, in recent years we have spent more and more time online, and the possibility of contacting friends and family would have been non-existent if children had been excluded from the internet. That said, it is important that we as a

society understand and are interested in listening to children's own accounts of experiencing sexual offences online. This is to ensure that children can continue to participate in all the positive aspects of the internet in a way that is safe and helps them develop.

The survey "Nude på nätet 2021" ("Nude Online 2021") builds on 17 different accounts that have been adapted for the age groups 10–13 and 14–17. In chapter four, we will present the children's reasoning around the accounts. After having responded to three accounts, the children were given the option to continue and answer questions on one or more topics. These topics included:

1. ECPAT's work with removal of sexual content involving children;
2. Children's exposure to sexual offences online and the work of the police on online sexual abuse;
3. Children's advice about what parents need to know about how young people use the internet, and how parents need to act if their child is the victim of sexual abuse;
4. Children's own accounts of sexual abuse and exploitation.

1465

answered questions about their experiences of sexual offences online and the police's work with online sexual abuse.

Children could leave the survey at any time, meaning that different children have responded to different numbers of accounts. The children also chose to answer the questions on the different topics in the final part of the survey. Of the 12,853 children who participated in the survey and responded to at least one account, 1,465 continued and answered questions about their experiences of sexual offences online and the police's work with online sexual abuse. 168 children chose to share their own accounts of sexual abuse and exploitation.

The children who chose to answer questions about their exposure to sexual offences online were asked five questions about the type of abuse they experienced. We asked the children if they

have received unsolicited nude photographs, have been threatened or blackmailed into sending nude photographs, have had their nude photographs shared with others without their consent, have been offered money for nude photographs and/or have sold sex to someone who contacted them online.

In this chapter, we will examine children's experience of sexual offences online and use children's own accounts as examples. We begin with an overview of the total number of children who have been victims of crimes online and then focus on each of the five types of offence separately. We will see that nude photographs are directly linked to four of the offences and how research has shown there is also a link between selling nudes and selling sex.



victimhood is not acknowledged, whilst girls experience greater consequences if their sexual behaviour is exposed (primarily when photographs are circulated), which can lead to further offences¹⁴.

Research has also shown that nude photographs of girls are viewed as a form of capital that gives status to the recipient, thus increasing the pressure on girls to send the nude photographs and on boys to share them if and when they receive them¹⁵. Further problems are created as a result of adults' lack of knowledge of children's sexual behaviour online, as there are no dynamic discussions between generations that address consent, boundaries, and violations in digital spaces. Instead, adults tend to tackle these issues by banning, warning and shaming, which in turn causes children to try to an even greater extent to hide the crimes they have been victim of from the adult world¹⁶. The children instead seek support from their peers. This works well in many cases, however sometimes this aggravates an already vulnerable situation¹⁷.

Great gender divide when it comes to being the victim of crime

Online sexual offences are still a relatively unexplored area, in particular the knowledge about children's strategies, approaches and interpretation of victimhood in the digital environment¹¹. Existing research shows that children are often unaware of what is considered a crime when it takes place online, and this is something that might be difficult for children to translate to the online context¹². Consequently, sexual behaviour online – particularly that which oversteps the line – often reinforces gender-stereotypical values and roles for girls and boys¹³. It creates an environment in which violations against boys are often downplayed and their

11 Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S., & Khazbak, R. (2021). Investigating risks and opportunities for children in a digital world: A rapid review of the evidence on children's internet use and outcomes.

12 See, for example Berndtsson, K. H., & Odenbring, Y. (2021). Unsolicited Dick Pics: Online Sexual Harassment, Gendered Relations and Schooling. In *Violence, Victimization and Young People* (pp. 113-128). Springer, Cham. och Hunehall Berndtsson, K. (2021). "Something You Just Don't Talk About": An Analysis of Teenage Boys' Experiences of Non-Consensual Sexting in Lower Secondary School. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 10608265211042794.

13 Brännström, L., Nyhlén, S., & Gillander Gádin, K. (2020). "You are so ugly, you whore" girls in rural Sweden discuss and address gendered violence. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 15(1), 1695308.

14 Berndtsson, K. H., & Odenbring, Y. (2021). Unsolicited Dick Pics: Online Sexual Harassment, Gendered Relations and Schooling. In *Violence, Victimization and Young People* (pp. 113-128). Springer, Cham.

15 Naezer, M., & van Oosterhout, L. (2021). Only sluts love sexting: Youth, sexual norms and non-consensual sharing of digital sexual images. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(1), 79-90.

16 Patchin, Justin & Hinduja, Sameer. (2019). It is Time to Teach Safe Sexting. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 66. 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.10.010.

17 Hartikainen, H., Razi, A., & Wisniewski, P. (2021). Safe Sexting: The Advice and Support Adolescents Receive from Peers Regarding Online Sexual Risks. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 5(CSCW1), 1-31.

In diagram 1, we can see how many out of the 1,465 children that responded to the questions on experience of sexual crimes online, have been victims of the various crimes we discuss. It is easy to see that there is a great difference between the genders, with

girls much more often being victims than boys. A majority of the girls have been victims of receiving unsolicited nude photographs, and being offered money for nudes; nine out of ten girls had received nude photographs.

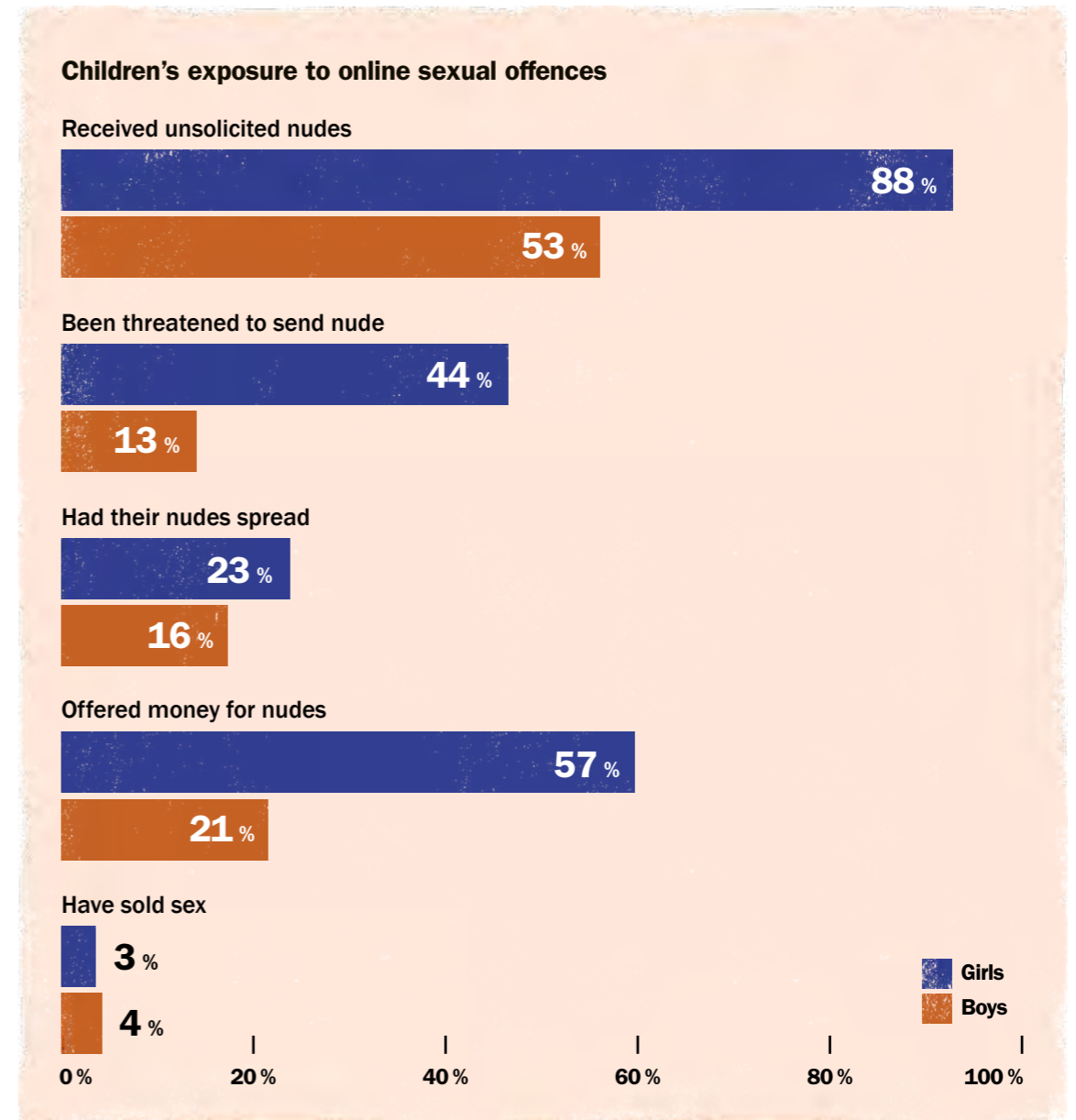


Diagram 1

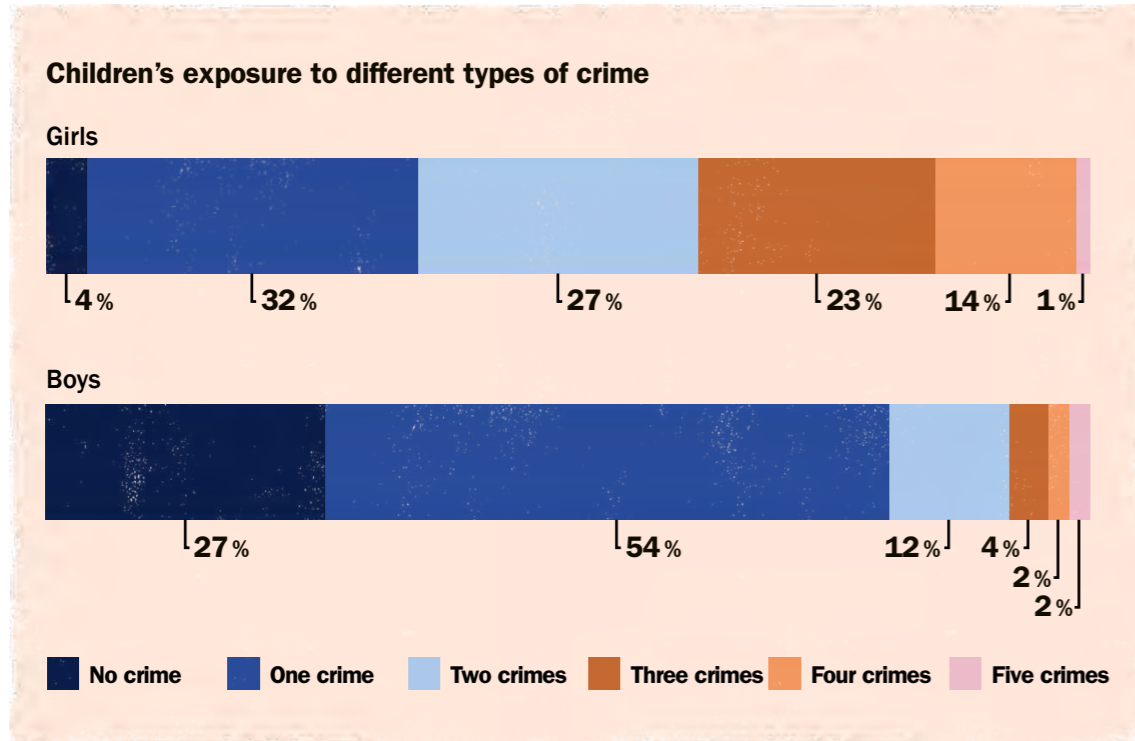


Diagram 2

Child victims of multiple crimes

The figures in diagram 1 make it clear that certain children have been victims of more than one crime. In diagram 2, the five types of crime have been added together for each child. The results show how many of the children have never been victims, and how many have been victims of one, two, three, four and five types of crime respectively. It is not the case that girls are on average victims of more types of crime than boys. Whereas 80 per cent of the boys had been victim of a maximum of one type of crime (one-fourth state that they have not been the victim of any of the crimes), the corresponding number for girls is only 36 per cent. The vast majority of the girls state that they have been the victim of at least one crime. Fewer than one girl in twenty state that they have not been the victim of any crime. There are significantly more girls who have been the victim of four or five different crimes rather than no crime at all.

It is clear in many of the children's own accounts that they have been the victim of several different types of crime. Many of them explain how they have received unsolicited nude photographs from someone, which can be an act of sexual molestation, to then be threatened by the person demanding a nude photograph. Hence, in just one conversation, a perpetrator could commit a number of different crimes against the child.

"Getting threatened etc. on Snapchat is common I think, because many people think there's no evidence or things like that since the photographs disappear. Many guys have asked for photographs and almost been threatening demanding them. Or they've just sent them out of nowhere. And opening nudes when you're at school in front of all of your friends isn't the best feeling." (Girl, 16)

"A guy who was at my school started sending photos, nudes, and when I was going to tell him that I didn't like it at school, he raped me." (Girl, 17)

In the survey, we did not ask if the child had been the victim of the same crime several times, but in the free-text responses provided, it appears as if compared to boys, girls are not only the victim of several types of crime, but they are also victims of the same crime on several occasions. This does not mean that no boys are victims of several types of crime or are regularly victims.

"I've seen so many unwanted nude photographs of guys, I have been threatened several times where they've said they'll spread photographs of me if I don't send more, and write about the sex acts they will do to me, these are guys I've not had contact with often and none of them actually

have any photographs of me, but you get paranoid when they say what they say and you almost believe that they've got hold of photographs of you. Or that someone's mate has set up a fake account because they want you to send photos so they can see them and spread them around school and with all your other friends." (Girl, 16)

"I've received death threats a couple of times and they've also threatened to kill my family if I don't send photographs. The easiest way to shut them up is to find out their IP address and send it to them." (Boy, 16)

"I've been sent hundreds of dick pics I haven't asked for. When I was younger, I chatted with dozens of paedophiles, I told them my age (11-13) and now they want nudes, send me nudes or meet IRL to have sex. No, I'm not exaggerating." (Girl, 17)



It is clear that children are at risk of being victims of sexual offences before they even reach their teens.

From the quote above it is clear that children are at risk of being victims of sexual offences before they even reach their teens. ECPAT's survey was aimed at children 10-17, and since recruitment took place via social media, the majority of children who responded were over 12, with the vast majority aged 14 or older. We have divided the children into three age categories to see how exposure to crime is affected by the child's age.

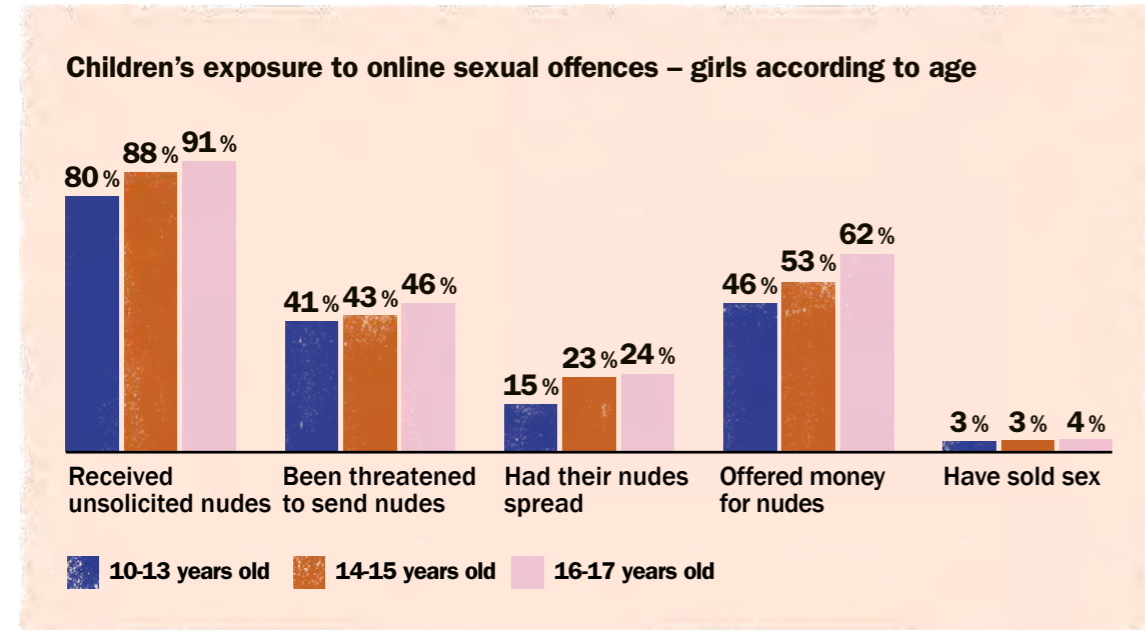


Diagram 3

In diagram 3 we see how girls' ages are relevant to their experience of crime, and diagram 4 presents the corresponding data for boys. The vulnerability of girls is both expected and surprising. As expected, the number of girls who are victims of all types of crime increases as the girls get older. This is mainly due to the fact that they have been online and had social media longer than the younger girls.

What was somewhat unexpected is that a large number of the 10–13 age group have been victims of crime after receiving unsolicited nude photographs (80 per cent), having been threatened into sending nude photographs (41 per cent), and having been offered money for nude photographs (46 per cent). Although these levels are lower than those for the older girls, the difference is not particularly large. The free-text responses from girls show us what might happen when girls fall victim and how they are affected.

"There was a guy who added me on Snapchat. He asked how old I was and for a photograph, and I said I was 12, even though I was 10. He asked for photographs and stupid as I am, I sent them, but he took a screenshot. He said if I didn't send more photographs, he'd spread

the ones he already had. I got scared and blocked him. About two years later he added me again but from a fake account. He told me he loved me and he can't let me go and if I didn't send photographs, he would spread the ones he had of me from when I was 10. I got scared and told him I lied about my age and that I'm actually 12 now not 13, he said that was ok as long as I sent nudes. I got scared and phoned my friend and told her, she created a group chat where our friend scared him and after that we all blocked him. He hasn't contacted me or anything since but I'm still afraid when I see new people have added me." (Girl, 13)

I was sent my first unwanted nude when I was 10. I got scared and felt sick and deleted the app, but I was soon back on it and since then the same thing probably happens once or twice a month, but what's most scary is that it happened more when I was 11–15 than it does now I'm 17." (Girl, 17)

I was sent my first unwanted nude when I was 10.

There is a different pattern for boys who are victims of crime, with the oldest group reporting less exposure to four of the five types of crime. Reports of having received unwanted nude photographs or having been offered money for sending nudes were greatest amongst boys in the youngest age group. 60 per cent of the boys reported having received unwanted nude photographs. There may be several explanations for why the pattern is different for boys; it may be a case of the selection amongst the boys who answered the questions relating to the crimes, and that it appears different for different age groups of boys. It can also be the result of boys' internet habits having changed more than girls', as boys have only recently started to use social media to the same extent as girls.

Finally, it may be a case of norms about masculinity, as studies have shown that boys in secondary school

who have been the victim of a sexual offence find it difficult to put things into words or interpret what has happened¹⁸ – perhaps these norms are not as established amongst younger boys. The latter explanation need not be negative as the boys' vulnerability and need for support can be more apparent to the adult world.

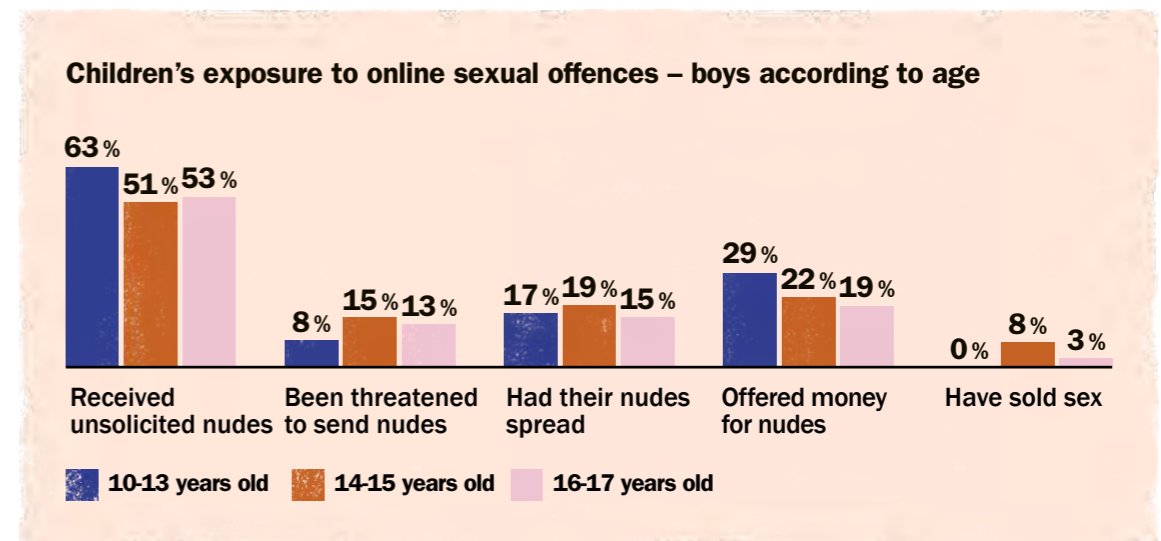


Diagram 4

18 Hunehall Berndtsson, K. (2021). "Something You Just Don't Talk About": An Analysis of Teenage Boys' Experiences of Non-Consensual

Sexting in Lower Secondary School. The Journal of Men's Studies, 10608265211042794.



Vulnerable groups

So far, we have focused on gender differences related to victimhood, however other factors might come into play and/or interact with the gender aspect. When we control for our other background variables¹⁹ in an in-depth analysis, we found that children who identify as LGBTQIA+ are at an increased risk of having been victim of a crime. This result particularly applies to boys in this group; they run the same risk as girls. Children who identify as non-binary are at a higher risk, on a par with heterosexual girls. Otherwise, the differences in this analysis are small, which can mean that heterosexual boys are less vulnerable than the other groups – which are roughly on the same level.

When we take all the background variables into account (regression analysis) and look at levels of crime as well as personal experiences included in the survey, the children who live in single-parent households or who do not live with their parents are at an increased risk of becoming the victim of crime. Surprisingly, the same applies if the child has parents who are interested in or very interested in the child's internet habits. This may be because the parents of children who are the victims of crime are more interested in their internet habits, or that the children whose parents are interested are more aware of whether a crime has been committed against them. This could also be explained by the fact that children whose parents are more interested in their online habits have a higher level of computer skills, meaning they expose themselves to more risks online, however they also have the skills to manage the risks in a way that means they do not suffer the same amount of harm.

Children who identify as non-binary are at a higher risk.



Often there are emotional elements where the child is in love with the perpetrator.

Who are the perpetrators?

When online sex crimes are discussed, the typical perpetrator that springs to mind is usually an old man, and adults often warn children primarily – or exclusively – about the online version of the “creepy old man”. In the same narrative, contact often takes place under false pretences (for example, the man pretends to be a child, a woman, or makes promises of modelling jobs) and over a long period. When we read the answers to the question about the perpetrator in the children's free-text responses, it becomes clear that this is an oversimplification. Diagram 5 shows how it is much more common for the perpetrator to be a child themselves, even though girls have often been the victim of adults and of other children. These children might be schoolmates, older children that

the child looks up to, friends, partners, or previous partners. What they have in common is that they often know the child, and that they do not fit the description in the warnings the children have been given by adults.

The fact that the perpetrator is another child does not necessarily mean the relationship is on equal terms. There is often an age difference, and the older child exploits the younger child's desire for affirmation. Furthermore, it might be the case that the child is afraid of the perpetrator.

ended up with me being anxious about going to school.” (Girl, 15)

Often there are emotional elements where the child is in love with the perpetrator and when they have sent the images voluntarily.

“I was with a guy online for a few months before I met him in real life (he was about 16/17, I was closer to 12/13), and he'd guilt tripped me into sending photographs. He was also very manipulative and forced me into having sex when I visited.” (Not specified, 14)

Even if it is more common for boys to be the perpetrators, girls are also mentioned in the material.

“I have been pressured into sending nudes. A girl on snapchat wanted them and started blackmailing and threatening me, so I felt like I needed to send them.” (Girl, 13)

Many children describe it as being harder to say no to other children compared to saying no to adults, especially if there are positive elements to the relationship. However, they also say that the consequences can be more severe as it is more common for the photographs to be circulated amongst the same social network.



“When I was 10, I chatted a lot with older people who pressured me into sending nudes. I felt more accepted and ‘cooler’ when a 15-year-old wanted to see me naked. I knew it was wrong and that there would be consequences, but when you're pressured into sending nudes it's not easy to say no when you're young and insecure. Sent that type of photograph until I was 14, even though they were spread every time.” (Girl, 17)

“When I was 12, three 14-year-old boys spread a photograph of my breasts. These guys had pressured me into sending the photograph. I was really scared, and it

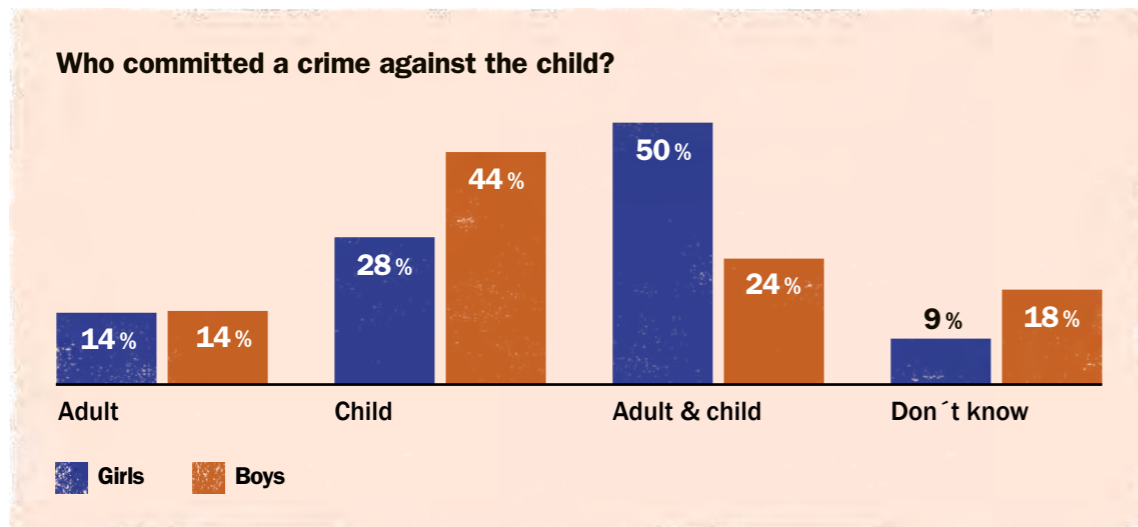


Diagram 5

¹⁹ These are: identifying as LGBTQIA+, having at least one parent born outside of Sweden, having cohabiting parents, having a disability, dividing time living with each parent, living with a single parent or not living with

any parent, if the parent(s) have worked at home during the coronavirus pandemic, if the parents are unemployed and a scale of 1–4 of how interested the parents are in their children's internet habits.

Types of crime

Received unsolicited nudes

If a child has received an unsolicited nude, they may have been subjected to sexual molestation. It is never ok to send nude photographs to somebody who has not asked for them and who does not want them. If the child is under 15, it is considered sexual molestation even if the photograph was welcomed, as children under the age of 15 cannot give consent for sexual acts.

Been threatened into sending nude photographs

If a child has been threatened into sending nude photographs, they may have been the victim of unlawful threats. Nagging someone into sending nude photographs can also be a criminal offence, it could be sexual molestation, attempted sexual exploitation of a child for sexual posing or attempted child pornography offence.

Had their nude photographs circulated

If someone has circulated a nude photograph of a child, the person who forwards the photograph can be guilty of a child pornography offence and unlawful violation of integrity. It is never ok to circulate nude photographs of another person.

Offered money for nude photographs

If somebody has offered a child money for a nude photograph, this can make them guilty of attempted sexual exploitation of a child for sexual posing or attempted child pornography offence.

Have sold sex

If a child has been exploited through sexual acts in return for payment, the child has not broken the law. It is the person who exploited the child who has committed a crime. If the child is under 15, the offence is considered rape of a child (statutory rape), and if the child is 15–17, the crime is exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act.*

* Exception: If a child below the age of 15 for example exchanges nude photographs or has sex with a person of equal age and development, and the act has not been abusive but with mutual consent, it is not considered illegal.

Children who have received unsolicited nude photographs

We see from the survey that a majority of children and almost all girls have been the victim of the crime of being sent unsolicited nude photographs. It is important to point out that a person who sends an unsolicited nude photograph to a child is guilty of sexual molestation, regardless of whether the sender was an adult or another child. The child who receives the unsolicited photograph or video must be viewed as a victim of a crime. Generally, these nude photographs are “dick pics” – images of an erect penis – and the recipient is often a girl. In the free-text responses, several of the girls describe the first time they received a nude photograph and the shock it caused them.

“I remember my first dp [dick pic] that I got when I was like, 11, it was a guy from Norway who I’d chatted with one day. He said that I was cute, and we sent heart emojis (which I’d never done with anyone before, and nobody had ever told me I was cute etc. before either). So, I was obviously happy, because I was a little shy kid, so... I don’t talk to boys either online or irl. So, I snapped with him for an hour-long-ish car journey. But when we arrived, I opened his snap and I saw a photograph of his penis. I completely froze and tried to hide my phone and I stood with my back against the wall so as not to show the others because I was ashamed. Me, as innocent as could be, in complete despair, and I blocked him, I was so shaky and that photograph scarred me, I just couldn’t erase it from my mind. I didn’t tell anyone because I felt so guilty. That was the first dp but certainly not the last, because I’ve been sent so many, I’m used to them and wouldn’t even raise an eyebrow if I was scrolling through my feed and opened one of those snaps.” (Girl, 13)

20 Brännström, L., Nyhlén, S., & Gillander Gådin, K. (2020). “You are so ugly, you whore” girls in rural Sweden discuss and address gendered violence. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 15(1), 1695308.

Research supports the child’s account. It is common that children react very strongly – experiencing surprise, disgust and shame – when they receive their first dick pic, which often happens before they are teenagers. Research also supports the fact that they quickly become used to them²⁰. In a survey of Swedish secondary school pupils, dick pics are described as being an everyday thing and that girls at one level accept receiving these unwanted photographs²¹. At the same time, they are frustrated with this incomprehensible behaviour, and disgusted by the photographs. The children also talk about other children, young people and adult men who send unsolicited dick pics and have various strategies to be able to continue sending unwanted photographs, even if the child makes it clear they are not welcome. Sometimes they will send unsolicited nudes as a form of “advance payment” and try to get the child to send a return photograph to keep things fair. Or they simply write that it is the child’s turn. This creates confusion with the child, or a feeling of not doing things right, meaning that a number of children send photographs even though they neither wanted to receive the nude photograph, nor send one back.

“We were online and she just sent one, so I sent one back so it wouldn’t be unfair.” (Boy, 17)

“People send nudes and see them as a ‘payment’ so you will send something back. I’ve found people who say ‘your turn’ after they’ve sent an unwanted nude. Feels bad.” (Not specified, 17)

“I have experienced guys who have sent nudes and said that I have to.” (Girl, 13)

21 K. H., & Odenbring, Y. (2021). Unsolicited Dick Pics: Online Sexual Harassment, Gendered Relations and Schooling. In *Violence, Victimization and Young People* (pp. 113-128). Springer, Cham.

Another strategy the children talk about is how perpetrators send an unsolicited nude and the child reports and/or blocks the sender's account, on Snapchat for example, and the perpetrator simply creates a new account and continues to send unsolicited nude photographs. We see the same thing with perpetrators who threaten to send the nudes to the child's friends and family. If the child blocks them, they continue these threats by creating new accounts to contact the child. This way, the perpetrators can continue to sexually abuse the child despite the fact the child is trying to protect themselves from receiving unwanted nude photographs via their social channels. The two accounts below talk about what can happen when children try to block perpetrators.

"I have received unwanted nudes from older men many times, and when I've reported them and blocked them, they create more accounts to be able to contact me." (Girl, 14)

"It might be guys who send photographs of their parts down below and when they are touching themselves and when you report it, it doesn't disappear from Snapchat." (Girl, 12)

a different way – even if they would not send this type of photograph themselves, they view the action as nothing significant, but that could be slightly embarrassing if the sender is revealed²³. These differing interpretations are no doubt one of the reasons that boys and men continue to send dick pics, despite girls unanimously distancing themselves from them, even though they are used to these photographs appearing.

"You've been sent like, a hundred unwanted photographs of guys, and all of them ask for photographs, I mean seriously, all of the guys are disgusting and they're so much bolder online." (Girl, 16)

"often random blokes send dp without finding out if the recipient wants them." (Girl, 15)

"I get dps I don't want all the time and I'm pretty much used to it. I don't like how this is almost part of my everyday life." (Girl, 15)

It is also clear that those who send these photographs can become irritated if the recipient explains that they have been harassed. The boys believe that the girls have a duty to protect them²⁴. In certain cases, girls and non-binary children have chosen to abandon this strategy and adopt a more confrontational approach to unsolicited dick pics. This can be seen as an active resistance against them being expected to take responsibility for the behaviour of boys and men that overstep the line²⁵.

"People who send unwanted nudes and then say 'I know you want nudes' and 'but you asked for them' EVEN THOUGH NOBODY WANTS TO SEE YOUR TINY DICK." (Non-binary, 15)

²⁵ Hunehill Berndtsson, K. (2021). "Something You Just Don't Talk about": An analysis of Teenage Boys' Experiences of Non-Consensual Sexting in Lower Secondary School. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 10508265211042794.n

"I get dps I don't want all the time and I'm pretty much used to it."

Even though the children can have powerful reactions, especially when the person sending the photographs is someone they know or someone at their school, they are often completely unaware that this is illegal, nor do they think that it is something serious enough to be reported to the police – despite the discomfort they feel²². As for the boys, they have normalised this behaviour in

²² Ibid
²³ Ibid
²⁴ Brännström, L., Nyhlén, S., & Gillander Gådin, K. (2020). "You are so ugly, you whore" girls in rural Sweden discuss and address gendered violence. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 15(1), 1695308.

Naturally, there are also boys who do not hold these views and for them, the fact that many girls receive unwanted nude photographs is something of a conflict that is difficult to resolve.

"I've not experienced much of that online, but lots if not all of my friends who are girls have been sent photographs of a guy's penis without wanting it, and I think that's horrible, I think guys really should get their head around the fact that girls do not want to see these things and shape up, sometimes I don't like being a boy because of the way some men and boys treat girls." (Boy, 16)

"Some girls think it's a given that you'll send photographs, and send photographs, and then maybe you tell your friend and think that it's not right and the friend says 'what do you mean, be happy you got photographs', but like, think about if you didn't want them, it's completely different to when girls get an unexpected dick pic because that's a completely different issue, think sending nudes should be equal, and not just guy friends I tell about this stuff, but girl friends and get the same answer from them." (Boy, 15)

One norm that states how boys are the perpetrators and girls are the victims also creates an arena where girls have the power to leave boys feeling ashamed and socially excluded.

For example, by spreading a rumour or a nude photograph and saying that someone sent it and it was not welcome – even though this is not true or even a photograph of the person being accused. This may have serious consequences for the person being targeted²⁷.

"A girl that didn't like me made a fake dick pic." (Boy, 15)

Norms governing masculinity also mean that the boys lack the language or the arena for talking about feelings of discomfort and being violated.



The experiences of boys must not be downplayed, as many boys can also be subjected to receiving unwanted nude photographs. Boys who are victims of sexual offences – including receiving unwanted nude photographs – often do not know how to react and see themselves as victims to an even lesser extent than the girls²⁶. Norms governing masculinity also mean that the boys lack the language or the arena for talking about feelings of discomfort and being violated.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

Children who have been threatened into sending nude photographs

Many children, primarily girls, have been threatened and blackmailed into sending nude photographs and this is something many of the children recount in the free-text answers. In the quote below, the girls had come into contact with people via dating apps or social media; often these people are other children they already know. In other words, it is difficult for children to avoid these threats as they are on platforms where there are other children – including children who threaten and blackmail.

"We started writing via a dating app and then he asked for photographs and I said no, several times at first, but then he became sort of threatening and I felt I had to send them." (Girl, 17)

"Met a person on Omegle who asked me to send on Snapchat and then threatened me that he would spread them if I didn't send more." (Girl, 17)

In many cases, especially those where the perpetrators are adults and unknown to the children, the threats come quickly and are often serious. The aim is to get the child to send a nude photograph while they are afraid and have not had enough time to think or find support²⁸.

"He forced me and said he would send Bandidos if I didn't." (Girl, 17)

"Got many rape threats or that they [the nudes] would be spread etc., even had a suicide threat from someone I didn't want to send photos to, that they'd kill themselves if I didn't." (Girl, 15)

"He was an adult who told me exactly where I lived and I was really scared because I didn't know him. Then he wrote that if I didn't send him a photograph of my butt he would come round with a gun and he sent a photograph of a gun he was holding, then I sent the photograph and after that he started saying if I didn't send more then he would show my parents the photograph and everything." (Girl, 13)

The final quote shows how a person can gain power over the child if they have access to a nude photograph, as children are often afraid that the photograph will be spread or sent to their parents. This power can be used to continue to blackmail the child in order to get more photographs, videos where the child sexually abuses themselves, sex offline, or money.

"When I sent a photograph it didn't end there, he just wanted more and more so finally when I said no he threatened to spread the photographs if I didn't send more. So yeah, that's how it went." (Girl, 14)

"It was a guy I was super in love with. I started by sending a photograph of me in my underwear, for some affirmation. But then he started threatening me, saying if I didn't send more he would send that photograph to my parents and spread it among my friends." (Girl, 16)

The children's fears are not unfounded, as children whose photographs are circulated often become the victim of rumours, bullying and more sexual harassment such as "slut shaming". This affects girls much harder than boys²⁹. In many cases, children choose to block those who threaten them. This strategy is sometimes successful, however more often than not the perpetrator starts new accounts and continues to torment the child. Unfortunately, the threats – especially those of circulating the photographs – are often acted on if the child decides not to do what the blackmailer wants, and most of all if the child knows the perpetrator offline³⁰.

It is clear from many of the interactions the children have shared that the language used is incredibly cutting and misogynistic. The children often receive compliments in the beginning, to then be called "ugly", "disgusting" or "whore" if they don't do what they are told³¹.

"A guy got pissed off when I didn't want to send nudes and called me a whore." (Girl, 17)

In the free-text response, one boy explains how angry he became when he saw nude photographs of his sister in a group chat. The violation of his sister resulted in him assaulting the other boy. Despite this, he does not appear to reflect over the ongoing abuse he and his friends commit against other girls.

"We were all in a group chat and everyone sent photographs of girls they'd saved, then I see one of my sister... And I ask how he'd got hold of it... he said 'yeah the whore sent it to me because I threatened to kill her horse.'" (Boy, 17)

The dehumanising language about girls and the view of nude photographs as digital trophies that generate prestige and popularity also create a situation in which there are many sexual grey areas³².

It is clear that many boys also utilise nagging, flattery, and emotional blackmail in addition to threats, and they often seek out girls who are very young. Such an environment creates stress, insecurity, and fear amongst the girls.

“ A guy got pissed off when I didn't want to send nudes and called me a whore. ”

"Chatted with someone and really liked him, then he asked me for a full body photograph and gave me so many compliments, and then it went further, and he asked for a photograph of me in my underwear. First I said no, but 'you're absolutely gorgeous' blah blah blah and then he nagged so much that I finally sent one, because I didn't want him to stop chatting with me, and I got loads of compliments and was really happy, then it just went further and even though I'd already said way back that I would never send a nude or anything, I ended up doing it, mainly because I wanted to keep chatting with him, and then it felt good to get compliments for something you're actually unsure about." (Girl, 17)

"The person tried to make me feel guilty because I didn't want to send one, and eventually it worked. I was pretty much manipulated into doing it." (Unspecified, 15)

"But he asked me to send photographs and he sent one first and I hadn't asked for it, and I felt stupid, and he nagged his way to a photograph." (Girl, 13)

"You get all the attention and affirmation you want and then either they pressure you or they ask you for one because they think you're pretty and you feel more loved the more they say it." (Girl, 15)

29 Rosemary (Rose) Ricciardelli & Michael Adorjan (2019) 'If a girl's photo gets sent around, that's a way bigger deal than if a guy's photo gets sent around': gender, sexting, and the teenage years. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28:5, 563-577, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2018.1560245.

30 Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2016). Sextortion: Findings from a survey of 1,631 victims.

31 Ringrose, J., Regehr, K., & Whitehead, S. (2021). 'Wanna trade?': Cisheteronormative homosocial masculinity and the normalization of abuse in youth digital sexual image exchange. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1-19.

32 Ibid

28 Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2016). Sextortion: Findings from a survey of 1,631 victims.

Once more, it is important to remember that even if the vast majority of victims are girls, boys can also be affected and for each child the damage can be just as serious, regardless of gender identity.

"I trust her a lot and then she said if I don't listen and do what she says, she'll spread them." (Boy, 14)

"I sent a photograph to a boy and then he spread it. We were talking on Snap and I was 13 back then so not so smart." (Boy, 16)

There is a link between children who have been blackmailed into sending photographs in order to escape threats and mental health problems, failing in school, self-harm and, in extreme cases, attempted suicide³³.

"Was taken advantage of from when I was 13 to when I was 14 or 15, can't really remember since I've repressed it all. I was talking to a guy online and we sent photographs to each other. One day when I didn't want to send any, he got pissed off and started threatening me saying he'd show all of my family and everyone I know. I stood my ground and laughed it off because I was so certain he hadn't screen shot my photographs, since you can see when someone's done that on Snapchat. But then suddenly he sent ALL of my nudes in the chat, ALL OF THEM. He'd used some sort of program that makes it impossible to see when you screen shot. I was 13, little, little me. Terrified that people would find out. I didn't do anything, I was so afraid. So I carried on. Because he had proof. He had me completely trapped. I was totally manipulated and was in such a bad place. Knowing someone's got such power over your life is a really awful feeling, you can't describe it. It took a long time for me to get myself out of it, and the way I did it is a bit fuzzy. Don't remember all of it. But I just wrote goodbye and explained how bad I was feeling because of it all, and blocked everything. I'd had enough. Being stuck with him and continuing to send photographs just hurt me so much.

The impact it has had on me later in life is almost as bad as the actual event. I'm 17 now and it's been four years. But it still affects me. People find it hard to understand how I – someone who just sent photographs to a guy – can feel the way I do because of it all. It feels like I'm the only one that understands. After all of this, I couldn't trust anyone, not one single person. I still can't. I mean, I trusted him, but he let me down and I ended up where I did. I don't trust a single person. Then I had serious problems saying no, to pretty much everything. Never said no, even when I wanted to. I was constantly terribly afraid that people would be angry with me. It's really difficult to put yourself in this situation, but it was an absolute nightmare. I was so, so, so afraid, around the clock. Not to mention my incredibly low self-esteem. I really was at rock bottom. Started self-harming. In part by physically hurting myself. But my biggest problem was allowing guys to take advantage of me. Maybe the most unexpected thing, given the circumstances. But I was in such a bad place, I just didn't care anymore. I didn't care about anything. I mean, I didn't deserve my family or my friends. I felt so disgusting and worthless. I didn't have sex with guys, but I sent them photographs, just like with the previous guy. I never said no. Even though all I wanted to do was say no. Now I've made my way out of all of this, completely. All by myself. I didn't dare tell anyone until after it had been investigated and I felt somewhat better again. I was so afraid of being judged and hated.

My family still don't know, but some of my friends do. I still get a lump in my throat when I say no to the people I like. Get the feeling I'm disappointing them and that they'll get angry and leave me. But it's just a case of fighting through it. Because if I want to say no, then I do. Mentally, I'm not fully recovered. Right now it feels like I won't ever be. I'll no doubt always have this in the back of my mind at least. But I'm happy and incredibl proud that little me managed to break free. Sweet little me, 13 years old. Poor little thing. My story isn't as unique as I think. There are so many others who have been through the same thing. And I am so happy when I see this is getting noticed. Because I'm one of the victims and know what it's like to be in that position. Thank you." (Girl, 17)

Children whose nude photographs have been circulated

Around one in five girls and one in six boys have had their nude photographs circulated. What distinguishes those who have had their nude photographs spread from victims of the other crimes is that in principle, this only affects the children who have sent the images – approximately half of the children (48 and 44 per cent of girls and boys respectively). This means that almost half of the girls and one in three of the boys who have sent images have then had their images circulated.



Around one in six boys have had their nude photographs circulated.

When we read the free-text responses about sending nude photographs, it is clear that the children are aware that their photographs could be circulated. This awareness is apparent in various ways, some children choose to never send nude photographs to anyone – regardless of whether they trust the person or not. Others, however, use different strategies and risk assessments each time. Some children send nude photographs and do not attach much importance to the fact the images could be circulated by the

recipient. When the children describe positive experienced of sending nude photographs, it is often justified by trust in the recipient, and that it was fine as the recipient did not forward the photographs or take screen shots. However, it



Around one in five girls have had their nude photographs circulated

becomes clear from the accounts that this strategy – only sending photographs to someone they trust – is the same strategy used by people whose photographs have been circulated, i.e., they have sent nude photographs to someone they know and trust. When the children send the photographs to someone they trust who then circulates the images, the child often places a lot of blame on themselves and writes how they were “stupid” or “dumb”. Very few blame the person who has spread the photograph. They often write things like the child in the quote below, and blame themselves instead of placing the responsibility on the person who betrayed their trust by circulating the photograph – and who, in fact, could be guilty of a crime.

"He asked for photographs and I sent them because I trusted him, but I shouldn't have because the entire school got the photograph." (Girl, 15)

33 Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2016). Sextortion: Findings from a survey of 1,631 victims.



on platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, or in one case, Pornhub and then shaming the people who have sent nude photographs. In the autumn of 2021, young people repeatedly used “expose” accounts to circulate nude photographs without the creator’s consent. The photographs can be tagged with the child’s name and it takes a while before these accounts are reported or removed, but by this time the photographs have already been shared amongst many users. Sometimes the person responsible for circulating the photographs will start new accounts when they have been blocked. Spreading nude images of someone else in this way is illegal and incredibly humiliating for the person affected. The accounts suggest that the children generally feel that nobody does anything about the issue, which has an immense impact on the victim. A number of children state they do not want to go to school, and it affects their well-being long after their photographs are circulated.

“Many social media accounts where people spread other people’s photographs but hardly anyone does anything about it.” (Girl, 15)

“My photographs were spread on Pornhub and I know who did it, but I daren’t confront him. I contacted Pornhub and they took down the account and video, but I’m afraid because he still has them on his phone. I regret sending them.” (Girl, 16)

” I have been forced into sending nudes after receiving death threats.

Many children write about how their nude photographs were circulated when they tried to end a relationship or cut contact with the person they exchanged photographs with. Their photographs become a weapon that can be used against the child to make them stay in the relationship or maintain contact. We also see from these accounts that the threats are often acted upon and the photographs are spread when the child wants to end the relationship.

“I have been forced into sending nudes after receiving death threats. But I did it because we had built up trust and he sent me photographs, but when I didn’t want to send more, and wanted to cut contact, that wasn’t good because he spread the photographs.” (Girl, 16)

“I’ve been through a lot and I think everything is pretty tough. At first I thought a lot of it was my fault, but I’ve since learnt that it wasn’t my fault at all. I sent my ex a photograph of my butt (when we were together) and he saved it so he could threaten me! Then when we broke up, everyone at school had my nudes on their phones.” (Girl, 15)

One common way of spreading the photographs is by opening an account or using someone else’s

We also see how girls aged 11–13 have been sexually abused by boys aged 15–18, where the boys have actively pressured, threatened and manipulated the girls into sending photographs or meeting the boys in real life. In the accounts, it appears that the older child knows the younger child’s age, and many of the girls write how it seems as though the boy has tried to get them to fall in love, and played heavily on the young child’s feelings to be able to exploit her in different ways. The children whose accounts we can read have been the victims of sexual abuse, forced into sending nude photographs and, in certain cases, they have met the person and been victims of sexual assault.

” I need help but I don’t know where to turn.

“I got together with a guy from Snapchat after we’d talked on the phone and stuff for a few years, but then he started nagging me more and more to get me to send more nudes, and then he leaked the nudes online. I was 12 and

he was 18. I reported him to the police several times, but the investigation was dropped. This was about 4 years ago and he’s still sending them around. I need help but I don’t know where to turn. After reporting it to the police the 5th time, I gave up.” (Girl, 16)

Whilst nude photographs of boys are trivialised by both the boys themselves and those around them, the opposite is true for nude photographs of girls. Girls sending nude photographs – even voluntarily and in consensus – are in conflict with the social norms governing how girls are to behave. There is

no problem as long as nothing is revealed, however when images are spread this often has major consequences such as bullying, sexual harassment or long-term blackmail³⁴. A study from the Netherlands found that the intention when spreading other people’s photographs is not always to cause harm, but that there are at least six different reasons for doing so. Only two of them – revenge and shaming someone – have malicious intent. The other strategies are more about increasing popularity, strengthening friendships, creating discussion or, simply sexual immaturity³⁵. Unlike unsolicited nude photographs, sharing other people’s photographs without consent is not a crime with as clear a gender division³⁶. Admittedly, girls are those more likely to have their photographs circulated, and the consequences are often more serious than for boys. Nevertheless, boys also have their photographs circulated and suffer the consequences. However, there are about as many girls as boys who spread other people’s nude photographs, although unlike boys, when girls spread nudes the motive is more often to cause harm to the victim. This can be a way to punish girls who do not live up to the image of how a child is to behave if they are a girl³⁷. Boys who circulate photographs tend to do so without reflecting on how it affects the girls in the photos³⁸. Instead, for them this is often a way of generating popularity and status with other boys³⁹.

³⁴ Se exempelvis Ringrose, J., Regehr, K., & Whitehead, S. (2021). ‘Wanna trade?’: Cisheteronormative homosocial masculinity and the normalization of abuse in youth digital sexual image exchange. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1-19.

³⁵ Naezer, M., & van Oosterhout, L. (2021). Only sluts love sexting: Youth, sexual norms and non-consensual sharing of digital sexual images. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(1), 79-90.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Meehan, C. (2021). ‘If someone’s freaky, everyone loves it. It’s all about the drama’: young women’s responses and reactions to image based sexual abuse of other young women. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1-12.

³⁸ Hunehall Berndtsson, K., & Odenbring, Y. (2021). They don’t even think about what the girl might think about it’: students’ views on sexting, gender inequalities and power relations in school. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(1), 91-101.

³⁹ Naezer, M., & van Oosterhout, L. (2021). Only sluts love sexting: Youth, sexual norms and non-consensual sharing of digital sexual images. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(1), 79-90. Och Ringrose, J., Regehr, K., & Whitehead, S. (2021). ‘Wanna trade?’: Cisheteronormative homosocial masculinity and the normalization of abuse in youth digital sexual image exchange. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1-19.

Children who have been offered money to send nude photographs

Another way to get hold of nude photographs is by attempting to buy them. We see that a majority of girls and one in five boys have been offered money for nudes. In the responses, we can see how the children express an understanding that young people can choose to sell nude photographs, and several of them state they have done it themselves. What worries the children the most is that the buyer could find out their identity, rather than them having or circulating their photographs. According to the children, both adults and other children pay for the photographs and they explain how this is something that has been normalised.

It is not illegal to sell photographs for money, and in many of the accounts it appears as though the children have no problem with selling them. One child writes how it is an easy way to make money. However, it is illegal to buy photographs of minors or to offer children money for nude photographs.

"Felt like it, a fun thing we were both into, and I've sold" (Non-binary, 15)

"I like getting paid to send nudes. It's an easy way to make money." (Not specified, 17)

"I made SEK 500" (Girl, 10)

"I wasn't uncomfortable because I got paid and didn't need to be fully naked in the photographs. The guy I sent them to was also respectful." (Girl, 14)

Reasons behind selling photographs can include a mixture of needing money, excitement, and the desire for affirmation. A study by the Norwegian police found that children who sell photographs sometimes experience an escalation, either because they want to make more money or because the person who bought the photograph then uses it to pressure the child into sending more and more graphic images by threatening to circulate the image amongst the child's network. In the latter case, the child may feel even more vulnerable than with other threats and blackmail as they sold the first photographs which creates more shame. The Norwegian police have also observed cases where the perpetrator has paid to sexually exploit the child after having bought photographs⁴⁰. In the free-text responses, children reveal how things have gone wrong after they have sold photographs.

" I like getting paid to send nudes. It's an easy way to make money.

"It was extremely scary and I still think about it, even though it's been over a year. Once I'd done it I felt so guilty and I was really anxious, but I decided to tell my mum and report him to the police." (Girl, 15)

"a guy said he'd send me SEK 500 but instead he screen shotted everything and said he would send it to my family. Fortunately, I only had him on Snapchat and he didn't even know my surname so he couldn't spread anything even if he wanted to. He tried to get me to send more by threatening to spread the photographs so it would've been a vicious cycle." (Girl, 16)

"I sent them to put an end to the constant nagging, but it didn't. Instead I had to send more and worse photographs and videos for the same amount. But eventually I said no. But he didn't get that, so he raped me instead and I didn't dare tell anyone because I was ashamed." (Girl, 16)

There is also a clear distancing from the adult men who offer money to minors for photographs, even if the children express understanding for the other children who choose to sell them. Some children also express a disappointment as they feel that society does not give them the protection they deserve.

"I don't know much but I know many girls who have done this and ended up being blackmailed. Shame that the legal system doesn't see this as something serious." (Girl, 15)

The responses also show that in addition to selling nudes to older people for relatively large sums of money, there are also cases of children selling photographs to other children. Some see this as relatively common and not as problematic as when an adult buys the photographs.

"It's been the case that they've taken and paid at least SEK 50 for a photograph, and it's also been for different guys I've had something going with" (Girl, 14)

"Been offered money for nudes and to accept sex videos from others. The people offering me money have as far as I know been my age, so no old man in my case. I don't know if it has happened to my friends, but since it's pretty common to get money for nudes I can imagine it's happened." (Girl, 17)



40 Polititetet Kripos (2021), Barn som selger egenprodusert overgreppsmateriale.

Children who have been exploited through the purchase of a sexual act

It is not uncommon for children to meet people online who they later meet in person, and in some cases, the purpose of their meeting is sex. In some cases, they meet with people – almost exclusively adults – who pay to sexually exploit a minor. This is a group we know little about, and children who state that they have been sexually exploited for payment have left no or few words in the free-text responses. In relation to the other crimes, few of the children who responded to the questions about being the victim of a crime had “sold sex” to someone they met online – three per cent of the girls and around three and a half per cent of the boys. Most surveys conducted in the Nordic countries show that more boys sell sex than girls⁴¹. Children who have been sexually exploited for payment often meet the perpetrators on gaming platforms and social media, and in a few exceptional cases, on sites that offer sexual services for adults⁴². Therefore, it is not a case of children seeking out their perpetrators, rather the dynamics are often reversed, at least to begin with – even though those who are regularly

sexually exploited for payment can also advertise on sex sites⁴³. This dynamic makes it harder to find the children, remove them from an abusive situation and give them support⁴⁴.

“I wanted a sugar daddy and what wouldn't you do for money?!” (Girl, 14)

“I sold my body and got chlamydia.” (Boy, 15)

“My friends call it ‘sugar daddy’, it’s an easy way to make money.” (Girl, 17)

“A guy added me and said ‘you can have SEK 1000 if you send a video of yourself masturbating.’” (Girl, 14)

“ My friends call it ‘sugar daddy’, it’s an easy way to make money.

A Danish study found it is difficult for children to define what sexual exploitation for payment is or what sexual exploitation involves, and they are unwilling to see it as prostitution. Instead they choose to view sexual exploitation for payment – where the buyer is older – as a type of dating, where gifts, money, affirmation and maybe even a place to sleep, alcohol or drugs are natural elements of the relationship⁴⁵. However, many children who are sexually exploited for payment state additional reasons to just needing money, for example sexual curiosity, excitement or affirmation. There is also a gender difference in the reasoning, as boys often mention excitement or sexual curiosity, while girls often state money and affirmation as the reasons.



Boys often receive other forms of compensation than money.

Boys often receive other forms of compensation than money⁴⁶. The Nordic countries lack information about why children are sexually exploited for payment, and many professionals say it is difficult to identify the group⁴⁷. We know even less

about boys who are sexually exploited for payment than we do about girls, as expectations and norms around prostitution leave boys invisible. A report from the Jönköping County Administrative Board found that there is nothing to suggest that there are fewer problems for boys who are sexually exploited for payment than for girls, and the fact that this group is invisible can make the problems worse⁴⁸.

41 Holmström, C., Bjønness, J., Jensen, M. B., Seikkula, M., Antonsdóttir, H. F., Skilbrei, M. L., ... & Grönvall, Y. (2019). Young People, Vulnerabilities and Prostitution/Sex for Compensation in the Nordic Countries: A Study of Knowledge, Social Initiatives and Legal Measures. Nordic Council of Ministers.

42 Grönvall, Y., & Holmström, C. (2019). Sweden: Young people selling sex: knowledge base, social initiatives and legal measures. In Young People, Vulnerabilities and Prostitution/Sex for Compensation in the

Nordic Countries: A Study of Knowledge, Social Initiatives and Legal Measures. Nordic Council of Ministers.

43 Jonsson, L. S., Svedin, C. G., & Hydén, M. (2015). Young women selling sex online—narratives on regulating feelings. Adolescent health, medicine and therapeutics, 6, 17.

44 Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2021. PROSTITUTION OCH MÄNNISKOHANDEL 2021:23.

45 Bjønness, J., & Jensen, M. (2019). Denmark: Young people engaged in transactional sex—taking stock of current knowledge and social initiatives in the field I: Holmström C.(Eds.) Young People, Vulnerabilities and Prostitution/Sex for Compensation in the Nordic Countries. Young People, Vulnerabilities and Prostitution/Sex for Compensation in the Nordic Countries—A Study of Knowledge, Social Initiatives and Legal Measures, 29-66.

46 Grönvall, Y., & Holmström, C. (2019). Sweden: Young people selling sex: knowledge base, social initiatives and legal measures. In Young

People, Vulnerabilities and Prostitution/Sex for Compensation in the Nordic Countries: A Study of Knowledge, Social Initiatives and Legal Measures. Nordic Council of Ministers

47 Riksrevisionen (2021) Internetrelaterade sexuella övergrepp mot barn – stora utmaningar för polis och åklagare, RiR 2021:25

48 Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län (2017). Jag vill inte tystas längre - att se och möta ciskillar och transpersoner med erfarenhet av sex mot ersättning.



Accounts of children's experiences of sexual offences

In the first section of our survey, the children are given the chance to read through 17 different accounts of sexual abuse, nude photographs and consent. There are different accounts for the younger and the older children. Each child has the opportunity to respond to a maximum of three accounts before they can continue the survey and answer direct questions about being the victim of sexual offences online. The accounts build on experiences shared with ECPAT by children and young people, either after contacting us for support and advice, or in focus groups, interviews, or after participating in the first "Nude på nätet" ["Nude online"] survey in 2020. The children's experiences have been anonymised and in certain cases, two or more accounts have been merged into one. The children who participated in the accounts-based survey were presented with a scenario and then given a choice of five response options. These options are based on the responses from last year's survey. Consequently, the entire survey is built upon children's own experiences and strategies. The free-text responses could be used to comment on the accounts, suggest alternatives if none of the five options were suitable, or share the reasoning behind their choice. A large number of the children chose to do this.

The answers selected by the children and analyses of the free-text responses have provided us with vital information. How do children and young people deal with similar experiences online? And how would they react if they were faced with a similar scenario? Today, children and young people employ various strategies and risk assessment methods for managing their susceptibility to sexual crimes online. Some of these strategies are helpful, whereas others can increase the child's vulnerability. By listening to the children's reflections, we are also able to see that the way adults reason and assess risks when they try to help children protect themselves online is not in tune with the children's everyday lives. The safety, security and protection of children online is the responsibility of adults, and in order for us to take our responsibility, we need relevant knowledge about what actually goes on in children's everyday lives.

In this chapter, we present four of the accounts used in the survey. The accounts are about the sexual offences of sexual molestation, exploitation of a child for sexual posing, rape of a child, child pornography offences and unlawful violation of integrity

17 accounts are used in the survey. In this report we have chosen to focus on the four accounts that address different types of crime. We did this because when combined with the free-text responses, the children's answers provide us with important information about how the children would react or have reacted if they have been the victims of the crimes mentioned in this report. We chose to call the accounts we selected "**Tricked**", "**The phone**", "**Want to Be Anonymous**" and "**The Meet-up**". These accounts are presented in their entirety below.

The account

Tricked

Kim is new to the school where he meets Philip. They start messaging each other and after a while they start talking about sex. Kim asks if Philip would like a nude and Philip says yes, so Kim sends one. Philip goes quiet. Philip has taken a screenshot of the photograph. When Kim wakes up the next morning, there is chaos. He's received many messages from friends who have seen the photograph. Worst of all is a message from Philip who tells him that he was just messing with him.

Response 1: Philip's an idiot, messing with someone's feelings like that is not ok, and spreading a photograph you said yes to is wrong. I think his friends should tell him.

Response 2: I think he should've made sure the other guy sent a similar photograph to him first.

Response 3: I think Kim should've been more careful and not send any nudes at all.

Response 4: I think he only has himself to blame.

Response 5: I think Kim should talk to an adult. It's not his fault.

"Tricked" in the children's own words

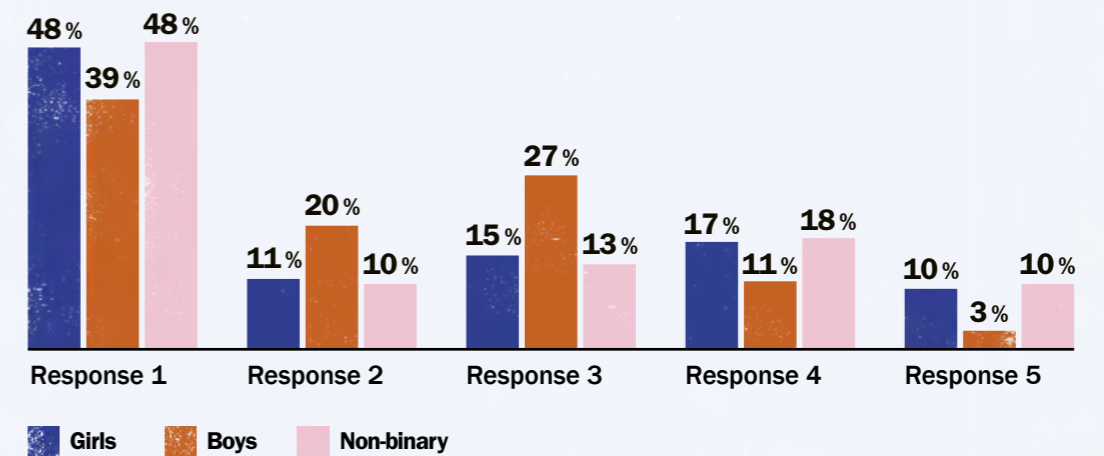
We see that around 20 per cent of the girls and non-binary children, and 10 per cent of the boys have similar experiences to those in the account. This is fewer than those children who have stated that their photographs have been circulated in a way not reflected in the account, which would suggest that the children find the context in which the

photographs are spread to be important. However, there are significantly more children – approximately half, regardless of gender identity – who know of someone who has had their photographs circulated in this way. The latter is important, as witnessing the spread of photos in a child's social network can affect their ideas of risks and strategies.

Own experience



Tricked



Based on the advice from the children, we see that the most common response is to place the blame on Philip who both tricked Kim and circulated his photographs. This applies to almost half of the girls and non-binary children, and around 40 per cent of the boys. The children's free-text responses are often more confrontational than the options provided, and they reinforce the outrage that many children feel towards Philip's behaviour. Some children suggest violence against Philip, and many point out that what Philip did was illegal, and they think Kim should report the incident to the police.

"People who spread photographs or threaten to spread your photographs are idiots and you should report them to the police if something like that happens." (Girl, 14)

Many children also share their own similar experiences or those of others and the consequences for the victim. They also leave comments saying that the people who spread the photos are "creeps", "arseholes" or "disgusting". The fact that so many children believe that the victim has not done anything wrong might appear contradictory, as those who have experienced their photographs having been circulated become the victims of harassment, rumours, and isolation. One child commented on this:

"If all his friends would just understand the situation properly, then Philip would be the only one who was ashamed." (Girl, 14)

Significantly more boys than non-binary children think that Kim should have exchanged photographs with Philip instead. The idea is that such an exchange acts as an agreement that reduces the risk of the photographs being circulated. One potential explanation for the gender difference could be that the consequences are often worse for a girl whose photographs are spread than for a boy.

"I think both of them should've done it [sent photographs] and that Kim shouldn't be the only one, and agree that nobody will spread the other's nudes." (Boy, 14)

People who spread photographs or threaten to spread your photographs are idiots and you should report them to the police if something like that happens.

The following two comments that state Kim only has himself to blame, or that children should never send nude pictures, have fairly similar free-text responses. Overall, these responses are equally common amongst girls, non-binary children, however boys are less likely to think that Kim only has himself to blame. Instead, they are more likely to believe he should not have sent the photographs. In both cases, the children state that the person sending the photographs needs to be one step ahead; it is important to only send photographs to someone they already know and trust. One typical answer is that Kim should partly blame himself as he was too naive.

"Kim should be more careful and not send it, but it's not Kim's fault it was spread. Kim probably trusted Philip." (Girl, 14)

The child below suggests a less common approach, that it would be better to meet up and "show off" his genitalia, instead of documenting and sending it. This way, no photographs are taken and there is no risk that anything will be circulated.

"Isn't it nicer doing stuff like this face-to-face? No risk

of photos being spread, because there aren't any and you still get to show off your genitalia (Why you would want to do that is beyond me, but we're all different and everyone deserves respect)." (Girl, 15)

The third theme in the free-text responses involves placing the blame on the child who sent the photograph, and believing that it is their fault that the photograph was circulated. Victim blaming is a common theme among the children, and appears in several of the accounts and free-text responses. We see one example in the quote below.

"It's your own fault if you send nudes, you need to think about the consequences." (Girl, 16)

The last option – Kim should talk to an adult – is the least popular. One in ten girls and non-binary children and one in thirty boys believed this to be the best advice. Those who choose this option emphasise that only adults can make sure that there will be consequences, and also, that it is the adults' responsibility.

"Kim should also tell an adult and make sure Philip faces consequences! These disgusting people shouldn't be allowed to stay in the same class as someone they've victimised, especially if they've not faced any consequences." (Girl, 12)

Another child reflects on the shame that affects the child, and the fear of being judged by adults if they speak out about what has happened.

"It happens too often, and people should talk about it more, because many people are ashamed and don't dare to tell an adult. But adults also need to learn how to talk to their children and understand them in a better way, as many children feel that their parents will just shame them and be disappointed." (Girl, 15)

In addition to these responses, around one in twenty children choose to give other advice. It is relatively common in these responses for the children to state that they cannot choose just one answer and they would like to combine several. There are also some boys who are outraged that photographs are sent between boys, and a number of homophobic comments that show there are greater risks for boys who are seen as being interested in their own gender.



The account

The phone

Charlie is 17 and is at college. She is fed up of not having any money or a job. Her phone is rubbish and its battery runs out quickly. Her parents say that they can't just go and buy her a new phone. A friend tells her about a man she knows online who buys photographs. She says that he's not creepy and he pays well. All she needs to do is send a nude and he'll pay SEK 1,000. She says she never includes her face and the whole internet is full of nudes, so who cares? Charlie adds the man and he sends her a dm, asking if she wants to sell a nude and he'll send a mobile money payment. He says she'll get more if she shows her face.

Response 1: Even if she does get the money, I think this is really dangerous. He can threaten her with these photographs and since he has her phone number, he can find out who she actually is.

Response 2: If someone wanted to pay that much for just one nude, I'd also sell one. SEK 1000 is a lot of money.

Response 3: I wouldn't be comfortable selling nudes to someone I don't know, but I don't see anything wrong with other people doing it. If you don't include your face, the person won't have anything to blackmail you with.

Response 4: I think it's better to be patient, talk to her parents about how she can pay them back in instalments and she should get a job. There are so many other options.

Response 5: I think it's sad and really awful that her friend encourages her to do this.



“The phone” in the children’s own words

We see that approximately 30 per cent of the girls and non-binary children, and eight per cent of the boys have experience of being offered money by an adult for nude photographs, and have considered doing it. Just as with circulating photographs, there are fewer children who state that they have been offered money for photographs when questioned about experiences of crime, which once more suggests that context is important. This is clear from one of the free-text answers:

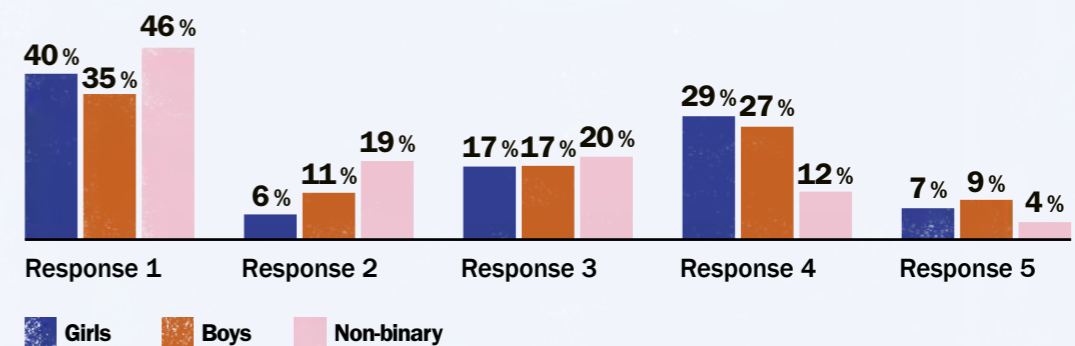
“I’ve not been in this particular situation, but many others where I’ve been pressured into sending nudes or doing other things to guys to get money or expensive things.” (Girl, 17)

However, significantly more children – around 40 per cent of the girls and non-binary children, and 25 per cent of boys – know someone who has been offered money for photographs by an adult. Just as with the circulation of photographs, the first-hand experiences of someone close to the children can also impact their risk assessment of the action. When we look at the responses, we see that it is more likely for a child with first-hand experience to choose to sell photographs (12 per cent), compared to a child without any experience (8 per cent).

Own experience



The phone



In the responses to the "The phone" account, we see a somewhat different pattern to that in "Tricked". In the latter, we saw differences in the way boys responded compared to girls and non-binary children. In "The phone", girls and boys respond similarly but the responses from non-binary children stand out.

The first option that emphasises that selling photographs can be dangerous is the most common for all gender identities. However, fewer boys than girls, and fewer girls than non-binary children emphasise this option. Instead, the children who choose this option mainly emphasise that there is a risk that the buyer will identify the child and blackmail them into sending more photographs. Or to meet and have sex. One girl who had sold photographs shared her experience:

"Ended up getting death threats and being blackmailed. My parents still don't know about it." (Girl, 16).

Several girls explain how they have sold nude photographs and were either threatened or had

“Ended up getting death threats and being blackmailed.”

their photographs circulated. However, other children who have sold photographs state that they never experienced

any problems, after ensuring the photos were made anonymous. Some children write how they had sent nude photographs to someone and been promised payment but had never received it; the person who received the photograph blocked them making it difficult for the child to obtain their payment. In the free-text responses, only one child clearly distances themselves from selling photographs because the sale is wrong. The other free-text responses mention the risks of selling the

photographs outweighing the benefits. It is important to remember that the options we have presented to the children are based on the free-text responses from the previous year's survey. This year, just as before, the majority of the children who respond have an open, non-judgemental attitude towards selling photographs for money. The quote below is one of the few that talks about selling photographs and describes the child's own risk assessment. I.e. balancing the need for money against selling photographs. The child does not describe the risks they see with the sale, instead they simply say that it is not worth it.

“ NEVER give the person any information about you.”

"I was offered SEK 500 for some nudes and at that time I was really addicted to smoking, but I didn't have any money and I wanted a packet of cigarettes, so I did think about it. But in the end I decided it wasn't worth it." (Girl, 16)

This is also evident where the children say that they would not sell photographs of themselves, but they see nothing wrong if other people do so. Here, the children are clear that it is important to limit the risks associated with selling photographs.

"If she doesn't show her face or anything else you can link to her, then he has no evidence that it's her if he, say, uses the photograph to threaten her." (Girl, 14)

"I've sold nudes and I think as long as you're comfortable doing it, then you can do it. But I would never show my face and I think doing that is pretty stupid. If your phone number can't be traced then you can use a mobile money payment, otherwise use PayPal. NEVER give the person any information about you because then things can go wrong." (Non-binary, 15)

However, some children, more boys than girls, and more non-binary children than boys say that they would be prepared to sell photographs for SEK 1,000. This does not mean that they are unaware of the risks, rather they do not consider the risks to be as serious as other children do.

"I'd do it, easily, mainly because I don't care if anyone spreads them. I wouldn't encourage my friends to do it though." (Non-binary, 17)

The children who may consider selling photographs also have negative views of the perpetrators. So even though they see nothing wrong with selling nude photographs, they think buying them is wrong.

"I think it's a bit of a dilemma. She needs money and you can do a lot when you're desperate. But it's really disgusting that there are people like him. The problem is the men that ask underage people for nudes, be it for money or not! They should be held accountable and the police should be involved. The police shouldn't care if you've sent them to someone and been paid. The police should just focus on finding the person behind the account and do something." (Girl, 16)

The accounts also reveal that perpetrators request photographs of other body parts and not only private part nudes. Several children mention that they have been offered payment for a photograph of their feet. Photographs of feet are not illegal and are not considered to be sexual molestation if the requester has not expressed sexual intentions towards the child or asked them to perform sexual acts with their feet.

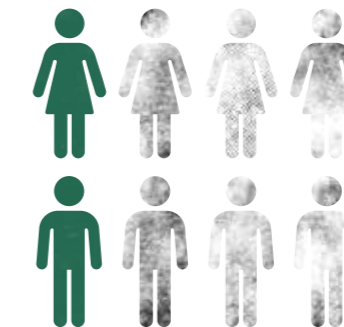
Threatening a child to send photographs of their feet is illegal and may constitute an unlawful threat.

"I've thought about selling photographs of my feet, since I've heard they pay well and feet aren't really blackmail material, but I'd never sell nudes to strangers..." (Girl, 16)

Over one-quarter of the girls and boys focus on other ways of earning money without explicitly mentioning the risks. The same applies for one in ten non-binary children.

"It's really sad that it's like this, but you could get a summer job and earn money that way." (Girl, 14)

Fewer than one in ten children and somewhat more boys than girls and non-binary children choose the option that the friend acted incorrectly. This is surprising, as many girls wrote about this in the free-text responses to last year's survey. When we look at the responses from this year's survey, it is clear that many believe the friend acted incorrectly, nevertheless this is not the most important advice they would give. However, a few children have a strong reaction to the friend's advice and underline this in the free-text responses.



Over one-quarter of the girls and boys focus on other ways of earning money without explicitly mentioning the risks.

"It's awful that her friend encouraged her to do this. She shouldn't be friends with her anymore." (Girl, 15)

Around four per cent responded that none of the advice was suitable. Just as with "Tricked" they chose to combine several of the statements to provide a more nuanced view of the situation. One child has focused on the perpetrator and not on the child's situation.

The account

Want to be anonymous

Johanna and Anton have been hanging out for a while and Johanna really likes him. She has sent him nudes since he asked for them and thinks they're fairly innocent. After a while, they start arguing a lot and Johanna feels that she's getting tired of it. One evening she says she doesn't want to see him anymore. Anton doesn't say anything when she asks how he's feeling. The next evening, Anton pops up in her chat again. He says they're together and will stay that way otherwise he'll send her nudes to her friends. When Johanna tells him to get a grip, he says she's the one that needs to get a grip and she's the bad one just dumping him like that. When Johanna says she's going to block him, he says it's at her own risk and if she does, he'll definitely spread the photographs.

Response 1. If you're going to send nudes, you need to make sure nobody knows it's you in the photographs. This way you can always deny it if it gets spread.

Response 2. I think she should phone the police and not care that it's embarrassing.

Response 3. I think it's partly her fault because she sent the photographs.

Response 4. Don't let it get to you. I think she should stand up to the fact she took the photographs, even though it can be difficult at times. Cut contact and report.

Response 5. I think she should tell an adult.

"Want to be anonymous" in the children's own words

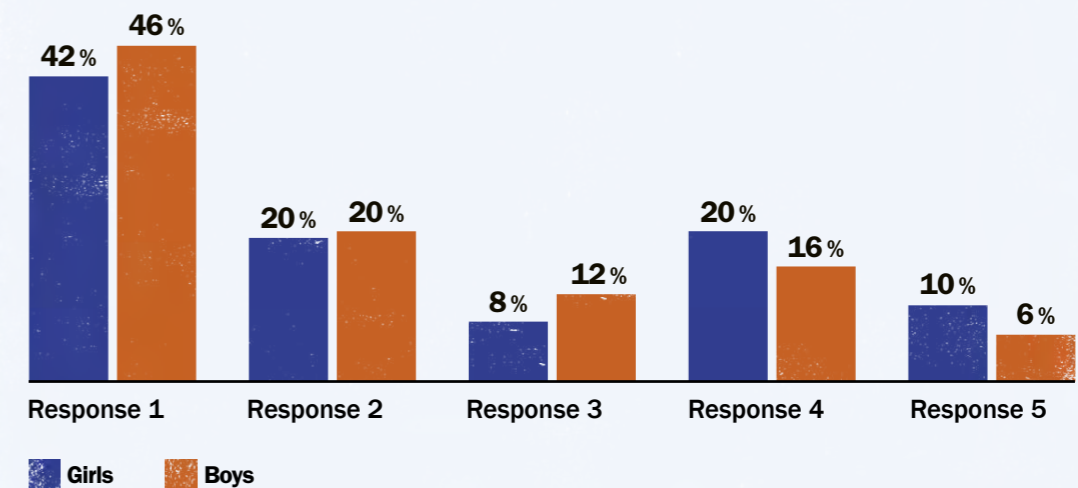
29 per cent of the girls and 12 per cent of the boys had personal experiences of a similar situation to that in "Want to Be Anonymous". Approximately

half of the girls and almost 40 per cent of the boys know someone who has experienced something similar.

Own experience



Want to be anonymous



The most common answer chosen by over 40 per cent of both boys and girls states the importance of anonymising photographs, often with the addition that nobody can be fully trusted when it comes to nude photographs. Some children are clear that they do not think it is enough to simply hide or exclude their faces.

"Personally, I think that you need to carefully make sure that photographs do not contain any identifiable information, such as your face, tattoos, scars, perhaps a photograph hanging on the wall that friends may recognise, etc. This way you can deny everything if it gets spread before you can report it to the police or similar." (Girl, 17)

In addition, several children state that the best thing to do is to refuse to take nude photographs – even in relationships – and one child suggests that this could be turned into something exciting.

20%

Twenty per cent of the girls and boys believe this type of blackmailing should be reported to the police.

"One idea is to turn 'saying no to nudes' into something sexy and exciting, like 'I'll show you next time we meet' or something." (Boy, 16)

Twenty per cent of the girls and boys believe this type of blackmailing should be reported to the police. However, some believe that Johanna should first

threaten to report Anton to the police, and only do so if he does not listen.

"In this situation, Anton is being disgusting. If he spreads the photographs, he will be breaking the law and maybe blackmailing her. Johanna will lose nothing by breaking off contact with such an immature, sick person. She should contact the police if it gets worse." (Girl, 17)

Several children state how they have reported similar situations to the police, but the perpetrator has not faced any consequences. These children are frustrated at the lack of legal protection.

"The person really suffered mentally as the photographs were actually spread. Even though they reported the incident to the police, nobody was convicted, which is typical." (Girl, 16)

"Strangers on social media have forced me into having sex and sending nudes. My friends have also been in similar situations. Still the police refuse to bother with the matter and have told us to block the people on the chat." (Boy, 15)

Another child suggests that Johanna should report the incident to the police, although she herself did not dare to when in a similar situation. However she has re-evaluated it all in hindsight.

"I was too afraid to report it, but I regret not doing so. It's my body and nobody should be allowed to spread photographs of it if I don't want them to. I will never let anyone do the same thing again." (Girl, 17)

20 per cent of the girls and 15 per cent of the boys believe that instead of being ashamed, Johanna should own the situation since she has not done anything wrong.

"Live in a small town and everyone's seen my tits. But don't let that ruin everything. At first I thought it was

really awful, but now when I look back on it I just think of him as an insecure idiot." (Girl, 17)

"Confident people like me would just forget about it and get behind the nudes they took, you can't control the fact they're being spread." (Boy, 16)

However, one girl points out that it is not easy to hold your head up high and carry on in similar situations, even though that is what she suggests. This is because there is a major stigma around nude photographs of girls.

"It's tough, because people will think you're ugly and a bad person and get a bad impression, but that's not the case. You trusted the person you sent the photograph to." (Girl, 15)

One in ten girls and around one in twenty boys suggest that Johanna should speak to an adult. Even though relatively few children choose this answer, many free-text responses raise the importance of talking to someone who can help.

"Don't be afraid to tell an adult or a friend you trust. You can always get help to get out of the situation." (Girl, 14)

A couple of children mention the issue that not all children know an adult they can trust.

"I think Johanna should get an adult involved if she feels comfortable doing so and knows they will actually do something that can help her. Unfortunately, she might not feel comfortable telling an adult close to her about these issues. If so, I think she needs to reach out to a friend. She mustn't forget to stand up for herself and not let him devalue her. But I know it is not easy." (Girl, 14)

12 per cent of the boys and eight per cent of the girls answer that Johanna is partly to blame as she sent the nude photographs voluntarily. Despite this, those who submitted a free-text response make it clear that

they believe Anton was in the wrong as he threatened to circulate the photographs.

"Partly Johanna's fault because she sent them and what did she think was going to happen when they started fighting? But that's not her fault. What Anton's doing is fucked up, I don't get how he can justify it." (Boy, 16)

“ Don't be afraid to tell an adult or a friend you trust.”

Finally, approximately eight per cent of children believe that none of the options are suitable. Just as with the other stories, it is a case of a lack of nuance with the options available and they would prefer to combine several options for a more comprehensive answer. There are other children who suggest violence or threats.

"When it happened to someone I knew, I went and punched the guy. And it worked." (Boy, 17)

One child believes that this type of conflict can be resolved through a mediator, and that the threat might not be so serious.

"I mediate between many who are fighting, since I know most people and I'm mature, so people tend to talk to me and then I talk to the other person and try to sort it out." (Boy, 17)

Finally, some children believe that this is the symptom of a larger problem, and that the solution lies in changing the norms that mean people circulate photographs and that those around them do not react.

"The way he's acting is not ok at all. As a society we really need to sort ourselves out and teach everyone the right fucking way to behave towards other people." (Girl, 15)

The account

The meet-up

Oliver gets a snap of Astrid dancing with her friends. Astrid says she's 15 but Oliver teases her and says she looks younger. Oliver is 16. They chat for a while and Oliver thinks Astrid is cute, but he's not in love. Astrid often writes to Oliver that she likes him. This weekend, Oliver will be home alone since his parents will be going to his grandfather who has been ill. Astrid goes round to Oliver's, and they watch films and drink cider left behind by Oscar's mum. Oliver undresses Astrid and it seems like she wants to, but she doesn't say much. Afterwards she just wants to go home. When Oliver wakes up the next morning, he sees a message from Astrid telling him she's 12 years old. He feels sick.

Response 1. I think that Oliver should've realised she was lying about her age. Loads of people on Snapchat are younger.

Response 2. What Oliver did was illegal and not ok. I think he should try to talk to his friends about what has happened.

Response 3. I think Astrid should've known better than to hang out with guys who are 16. It's partly her fault.

Response 4. Oliver should talk to his parents. They'll probably be able to help him.

Response 5. I think Oliver should message Astrid. If they message each other and everything feels ok, he has nothing to worry about.



“The meet-up” in the children’s own words

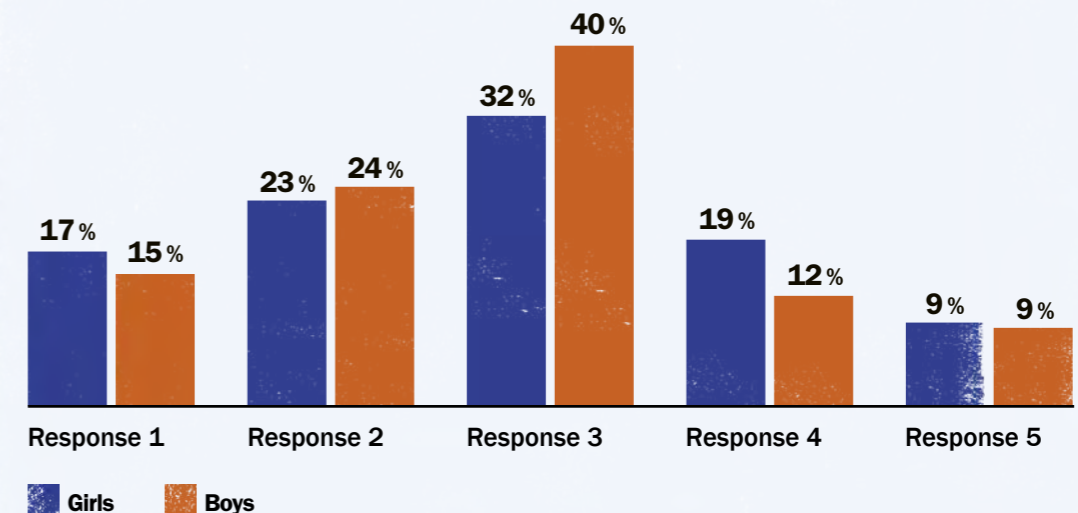
“The Meet-up” is an account in which an older boy meets a much younger girl and subjects her to a sexual assault. The children are asked to give advice about how he can deal with the consequences of the attack. Here, the perspective is slightly different as the children are being asked to give advice to the perpetrator. Hence, it is difficult to know exactly how the children interpreted the question about their own

experiences. However, we see that 12 per cent of the girls and eight per cent of the boys state they have had similar experiences. Around 30 per cent of the girls and 20 per cent of the boys state they know somebody who has been through a similar situation. There is no question that corresponds to this section about being the victim of a crime, but this is one example of when children subject other children to sexual abuse.

Own experience



The Meet-up



The most common response is that Astrid is partly to blame as she hangs out with boys who are much older than her. Around 30 per cent of the girls and 40 per cent of the boys respond this way. It is clear in the children's free-text responses that they are irritated at the fact Astrid lied about her age. Several children, both boys and girls, defend Oliver, saying that Astrid's lie created a situation in which Oliver subjected her to sexual assault.



The most common response is that Astrid is partly to blame as she hangs out with boys who are much older than her.

"Mostly Astrid's fault. Not only does she create problems for herself, but Oliver is affected too. Feels like she used him really. If I were Oliver, I would've been super angry with Astrid." (Girl, 15)

"Actually, I'd say that most of this is Astrid's fault. Yeah, these things happen. Sex needs to build on trust and if one person lies things won't be good." (Boy, 16)

One child believes that if there are any uncertainties, it is important

to obtain proof of age by asking the other person to show their ID – whereas other children object to this logic, meaning they believe that Astrid is mostly to blame.

"How was the guy supposed to know Astrid was 12? She told him she was 15. Do you need to ask for a birth certificate and ID to be able to talk to someone? Frankly, I think if you lie about your age, you only have yourself to blame." (Girl, 17)

A few of the children who blame Astrid explain that they too have found themselves in similar situations to Oscar's, where the other person has lied about her age. They explain how the feeling of doing something illegal makes them feel stressed, anxious and angry.

"Me and my friend had sex with a girl when we were 16. She said she was 15 but it turned out that she was 13. She has no regrets, but both me and my friend feel a bit uneasy because of it all." (Boy, 17)

One girl writes how she adds one or two years to her real age when she talks to older boys, but she believes that if things go wrong then it is her responsibility.

The second most common response chosen by 22 per cent of the boys and 25 per cent of the girls state that Oliver has broken the law and he should talk to his friends about it. It becomes clear from the free-text responses that the fact that Astrid lied takes away from Oliver's illegal actions. These children still believe that the incident was either partly or mainly Astrid's fault, however Oliver might need support from friends since he did something illegal that is not his fault. However, there are a few girls who blame Oliver for the incident. These girls focus on the lack of consent, despite the fact that a child under 15 cannot consent to sex with a child who is significantly older than them.

"Oliver is a dick. Not only because he gets turned on by a child, but because he did things without her permission. If it's not a clear yes, then it's a no." (Girl, 16)

A similar response is based on how Oliver should have realised that Astrid could be lying and therefore, he should have been more careful. Approximately 15 per cent of the children, regardless of gender, choose this option.

Nevertheless, the children's free-text responses still appear to place the blame on Astrid as she had lied. Other children wrestle with the issue of guilt and feel that the entire situation is complex. Occasionally, this leads to even more blame being placed on the younger child.

Obviously I think it's not 100% ok for a 12-year-old and a 16-year-old to be hanging out. But Oliver should've seen it, or at least a little bit.

"Obviously I think it's not 100% ok for a 12-year-old and a 16-year-old to be hanging out. But Oliver should've seen it, or at least a little bit. I understand Astrid became shy and didn't know what to do, but you can still try to come up with a lie like you're on your period or something that would've stopped it from happening. But I don't know how I feel about Oliver. Was he really a jerk? Or did he genuinely not know?" (Girl, 14)

"It was a pretty bad move for him to take her clothes off, even when he knew he didn't feel the same way about her. Astrid probably found it difficult to say no because she was no doubt uncomfortable and unsure about what was going to happen at the time. It's nobody's fault, but it all ended very badly." (Girl, 14)

Compared to the other accounts, more children believe that Oliver should talk to his parents; 18 per cent of the girls and 12 per cent of the boys. None of

the free-text responses elaborate on the children's reasoning – most of them still question Astrid's lie more than anything else.

The least popular option is that Oliver should contact Astrid to see how she is feeling. Just under 10 per cent of both boys and girls choose this. Even here we see how most of the children place the blame on Astrid, but one boy reflects on why contacting Astrid would be the best option.

"It's a tricky situation if you don't know that someone's underage, I think. I think it's good that Astrid tells him and if they talk to each other nothing will get worse, in my opinion. If it is the case that Astrid has regrets, or feels that Oliver did something that wasn't ok, it's up to her what she wants to do, talk to Oliver or her parents." (Boy, 15)





Relatively many children, almost 20 per cent, feel that none of the answers are suitable. Compared to the other accounts, relatively few believe that the options lack nuance and want to combine several of the strategies.

On the other hand, some children feel that the answers were not clear enough in blaming Oliver for the course of events. Instead, they focus on Astrid not having given consent rather than the age difference.

"If there's no consent, then it's rape. Your options are useless." (Girl, 17)

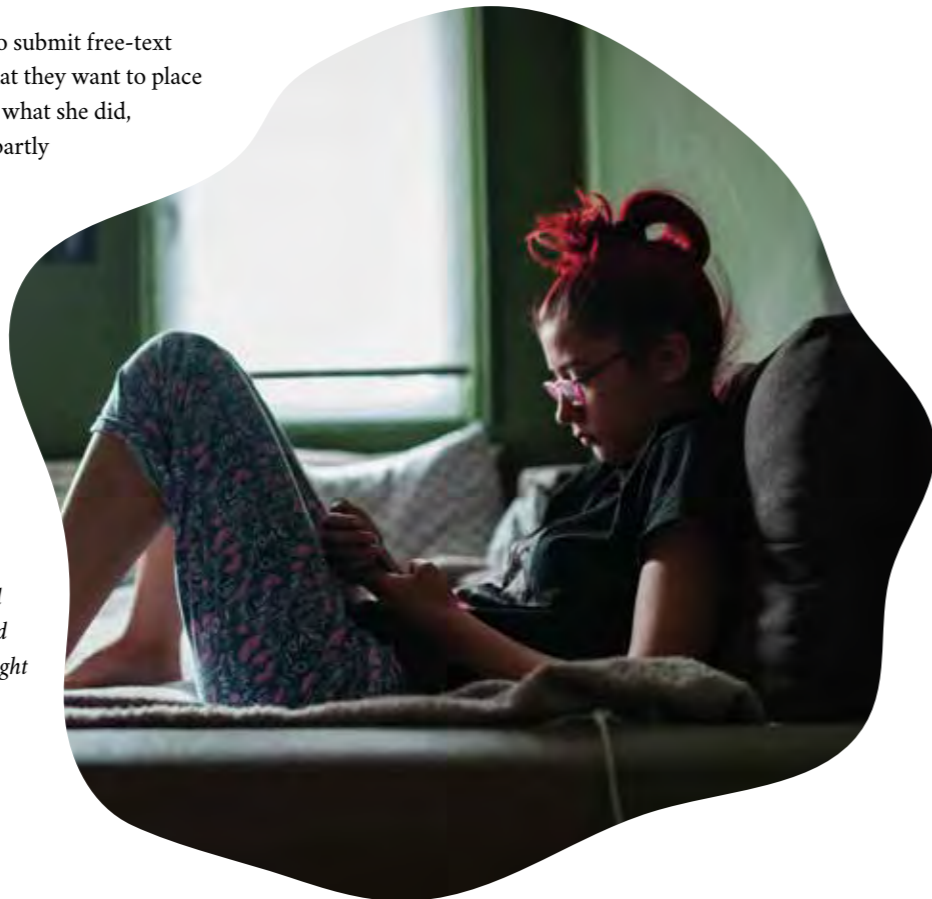
"He should never have taken her clothes off without her permission. If it's not a yes, then it's a no. I mean, since she was quiet, he shouldn't have done anything." (Boy, 17)

The majority of those who submit free-text responses make it clear that they want to place more blame on Astrid for what she did, rather than it being only partly her fault.

The majority of those who submit free-text responses make it clear that they want to place more blame on Astrid for what she did, rather than it being only partly her fault.

"Yeah, it's not Oliver's fault that she lied about her age, and you don't check people's ID or anything (you just don't do it). It's her fault and she should take the consequences." (Boy, 17)

"Oliver's the victim here. Astrid's to blame. Astrid lied about her age and Oliver did what he did because he thought she was 15, not 12. Astrid should apologise." (Girl, 16)



Summary of the children's own words about the accounts

It is clear from the children's responses that they seldom distance themselves from sexual risk-taking because they see it as strange or immoral. Instead, the children tend to reflect on how the risks affect their choices and room for manoeuvre. Children make different decisions depending on how they perceive these risks. However, whereas some children and adults may find the child's actions to be naive and ill-considered, the child in question might believe that the potential benefits outweigh the risks in this particular situation. Actions which some children may see as posing unnecessary risk may, for others, be an exciting and positive experimentation with their sexuality.

There are differences in where girls, boys and non-binary children stand on risks and

vulnerability online. The most obvious result is that boys are less likely to seek support from adults compared to girls and non-binary children, and that boys are more likely to demand nude photographs in exchange to protect themselves.

Actions which some children may see as posing unnecessary risk may, for others, be an exciting and positive experimentation with their sexuality.

Boys are also more likely to suggest using violence as a solution. It is more common for boys to place the blame on the victim if the victim is a girl, however the reverse is true if the victim is a boy. Despite this, children generally

tend to have similar responses. However, the free-text responses suggest that it can be difficult for them to relate to someone who does not share their gender identity or sexuality. This means that there are gender differences in the free-text responses.

Strategies in the children's own words

The children who participated in this survey have shared thousands of free-text responses about their own experiences of sending nude photographs and sexual offences online. They have also provided comments on the survey's accounts or on the response options. The children describe how they relate to their everyday lives and social relationships online, and their free-text responses provide us with a unique insight into their stance on unsolicited nude photographs, threats, harassment, and requests to sell photographs. This approach can involve risk-taking behaviours to a higher or lower degree, and can be both situation and context based. In the same way that children and young people relate to other risks in their relationships with people offline, each child who has contributed to this survey has their own approach or strategies for how they relate to others online.

The internet is part of life, and a friend can let you down, a partner exploit you, or an adult can subject a child to a crime even online. Most children are aware of these risks and have developed strategies to address them. The strategies were not created in a vacuum; they are a way for children to manage their everyday lives and relationships online. A number of the strategies can be more or less helpful if their aim is to avoid being tricked, let down or becoming victim of a crime. All the strategies are attempts by the child to control how another person acts in a situation or relationship they have entered into either voluntarily or following threats, pressure and/or force. In the case of this report, the strategies are about finding ways to make the most of the fun and exciting side of the internet, without ending up as a victim of crime committed by other children, young people or adults. These strategies can be more or less helpful and need to be understood based on the fact that the only person who can affect whether a child becomes the victim of crime is the person who commits the crime against the child.

Those who participated in the survey chose to share their opinions and experiences in the free-text responses for each account. After having analysed thousands of responses from children and young people, we have chosen to group their strategies into four themes that emerged from their comments. In this section, we will present each of these four themes together with our analyses.

These themes are: cautious strategies, protective strategies, supportive strategies and restorative strategies.



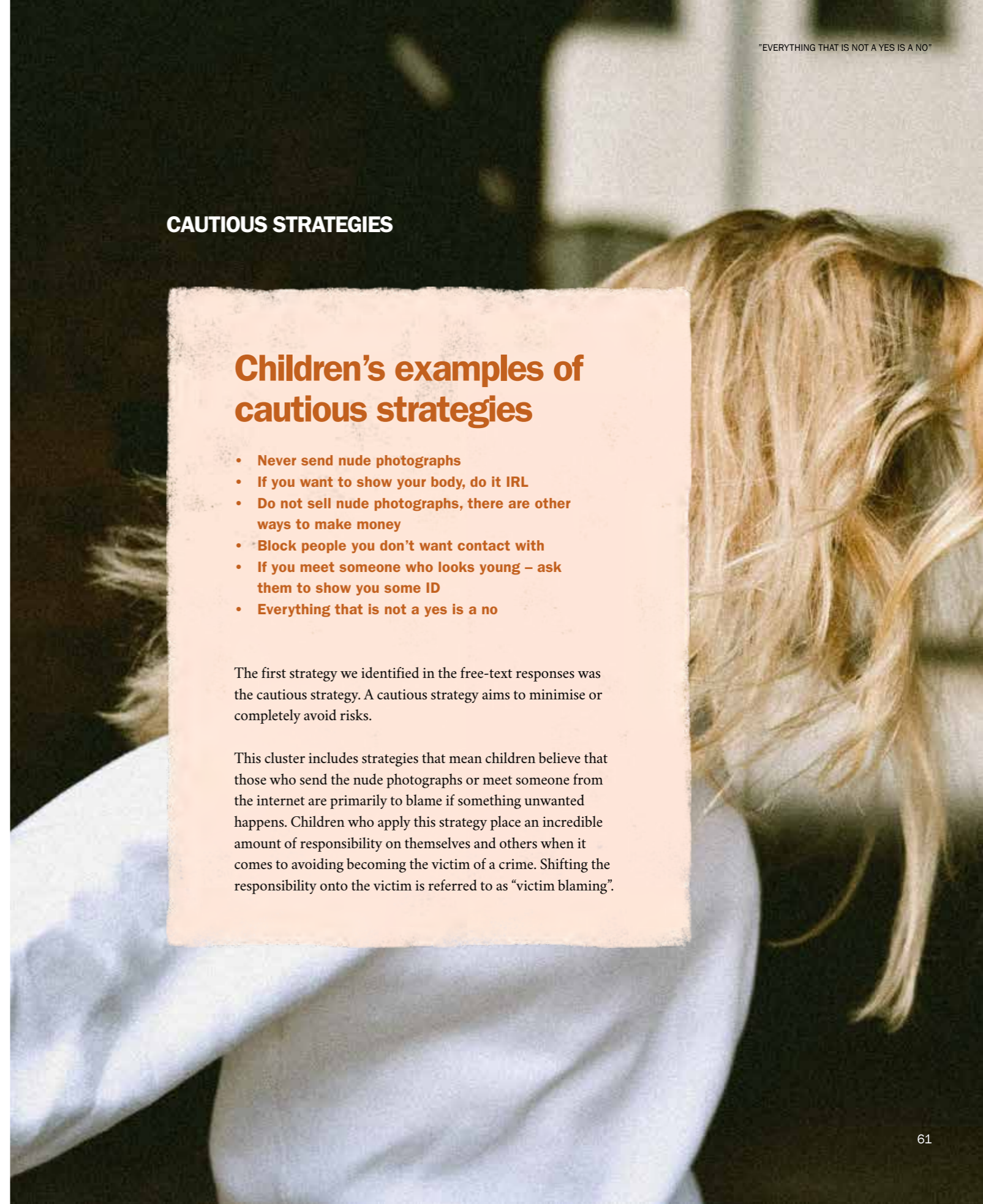
CAUTIOUS STRATEGIES

Children's examples of cautious strategies

- **Never send nude photographs**
- **If you want to show your body, do it IRL**
- **Do not sell nude photographs, there are other ways to make money**
- **Block people you don't want contact with**
- **If you meet someone who looks young – ask them to show you some ID**
- **Everything that is not a yes is a no**

The first strategy we identified in the free-text responses was the cautious strategy. A cautious strategy aims to minimise or completely avoid risks.

This cluster includes strategies that mean children believe that those who send the nude photographs or meet someone from the internet are primarily to blame if something unwanted happens. Children who apply this strategy place an incredible amount of responsibility on themselves and others when it comes to avoiding becoming the victim of a crime. Shifting the responsibility onto the victim is referred to as "victim blaming".



Cautious strategies

Amongst the cautious strategies listed by the children, some are completely against sending nude photographs, selling photographs or meeting people they think look young. Approximately half of the children who responded to our survey have sent nude photographs. Completely distancing themselves from actions such as sending nude photographs need not be problematic, and if a child never shares a nude photograph of themselves, the likelihood of one being spread to others is low. Choosing to not send nude photographs need not necessarily mean that the child is not exploring their sexuality in other ways. Children and young people have the right to express their sexuality in different ways.

It only becomes problematic when this cautious strategy affects the child's self-image and the way they view others when something happens to them. The quote below taken from the "Want to Be Anonymous" shows us two different types of reasoning around cautious strategies. In essence, both of the boys share the same cautious strategy i.e., do not send nude photographs. However, in the first quote it is much clearer that Johanna – whose photographs were circulated after she wanted to break up – is to blame for the person she trusted letting her down and spreading her nude photographs.

"Just like the previous story about nudes, it's partly Johanna's fault because she sent them and what did she think would happen if they started fighting? But she's not to blame." (Boy, 16)

"One idea is to turn 'saying no to nudes' into something sexy and exciting, like 'I'll show you next time we meet' or something." (Boy, 16)

Another belief that stops children from sending photographs is that the risks are too great and the consequences too serious when sending or selling nudes, or that the photographs can be circulated by someone the child trusts. The majority of children who responded to "The phone" are not against selling images in principle, however the risks associated with selling the photograph or film are so high that they choose a cautious strategy. This attitude suggests that if a child has sold a photograph that has been circulated, they should have understood that sending the photograph was a high risk. Consequently, the blame is placed on the child who, by documenting a sexual act which was then circulated, has become the victim of at least two sexual offences. When the child sold the photograph, they did not break the law; they are a victim of a crime. Many of the free-text responses to "The phone" describe the children's deliberation over the trade-off between the payment – something positive they need – but which has too serious consequences.

The children who believe that "selling photographs" is fundamentally not wrong also share accounts of having accepted payment for photographs of their feet or for receiving photographs of another person masturbating instead. According to the children, this is not as risky as sending a nude photograph for payment.

A third cautious strategy involves being against actions such as sending nude photographs on principle, and advising others against it, as the consequences for the child sending the photograph would be too great.

Cautious strategies amongst children who risk committing sexual crimes against others

The Meet-up" is different from the other accounts as the cautious strategies address ways in avoiding committing a crime against another child, rather than the other way round – attempting to prevent yourself from being the victim of another child or adult.

A cautious strategies in "The Meet-up" account would be to not see someone if you are not certain they are over the age of 15, because it is wrong to start a sexual relationship with someone who is underage. But also because the consequences of seeing the child pose a great risk to yourself.

"He should never have taken her clothes off without her permission. If it's not a yes, then it's a no. I mean, since she was quiet, he shouldn't have done anything." (Boy, 17)

"I mean, you need to ask for ID." (Boy, 16)

I mean, you need to ask for ID.



PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES

The children's examples of protective strategies:

- **Never show your face in a nude photograph**
- **Exchange nudes with each other**
- **Only send nudes to people you trust**
- **If you do not know the recipient, there is less of a risk that the photograph will be circulated amongst your class**
- **Never give your mobile number to someone if you are selling them a photograph**
- **Get to know a person before you meet them**

We call this group of strategies "protective" ones. They include those that aim to reduce risks and consequences if something goes wrong. Compared to the cautious strategies, the protective strategies do not involve abstaining from all risks. The children's free-text responses contain a number of protective strategies that aim to reduce the risk of becoming the victim of a sexual offence. A common protective strategy amongst boys is to exchange nude photographs and create a balance of terror if, for example, the relationship ends.

Trust is another protective strategy. Many children reflect on the importance of trust when sending nude photographs, which involves knowing the person they send the nudes to. This does not necessarily mean that the child needs a physical relationship with the person they know – trust can also be created between children in online relationships. The way trust is used as a protective strategy varies amongst the children, which is evident in the free-text responses. Trust is both context and situation-based, hence it is not a universal strategy. Nor is it particularly helpful as the majority of nude photographs are circulated by people the child knows and trusts – such as their partners or friends.

Protective strategies

"Be careful and don't make yourself vulnerable don't show your face at least. Always have a way out." (Girl, 17)

"Think hard before you send a photograph of yourself nude or partially clothed. Do you know the person? Have they done similar things before? Do you know if the person in question has good intentions?" (Girl, 16)

This reasoning is common in the free-text responses, regarding both the accounts and personal experiences. These protective strategies are nothing unique for online sexual interactions between young people; mainly young girls and women are expected to take responsibility for boys' and men's behaviour that oversteps the mark, which in turn means that the onus is either fully or in part on the victim to protect themselves from sexual abuse. She is expected to think about the way she dresses, how she interacts with men, and the places she visits.

There is similar reasoning in the cautious strategies, however here we see that the full or partial responsibility of the victim to prevent anything happening to them is through for example, protecting their identity through not showing their face, only having sexual interactions with people they know or with people they do not know. The blame falls on the victim – not the perpetrator, and not only is the child left to deal with their victimhood but they must also deal with being shamed and judged by those around them. Girls risk harsher judgement if their nude photographs are spread, and in the free-text responses we see how the girls are dehumanised and the language used against them is often crude and misogynistic. Boys are also the victim of unsolicited nude photographs and have their photographs circulated, however they are not judged in the same way as girls. This does not mean that the boys' experiences are less significant than the girls'.

"My friend's nudes got spread around our school and other people's schools in our town and another one. Now everyone's saying how disgusting she is and that she wants everyone to see her body. She sent it to someone she trusted." (Girl, 14)

As for the protective strategy about selling photographs, the children have similar opinions about sending nudes. Many of the protective strategies the children provide involve protecting their faces so the person in the photograph cannot be identified if the image is spread. Another strategy involves not using their mobile number or mobile payment services.

"If she doesn't show her face or anything else you can link to her, then he has no evidence that it's her if he, say, uses the photograph to threaten her." (Girl, 14)

"I've sold nudes and I think as long as you're comfortable doing it, then you can do it. But I would never show my face and I think doing that is pretty stupid. If your phone number can't be traced then you can use a mobile money payment, otherwise use PayPal. NEVER give the person any information about you because then things can go wrong." (Non-binary, 15)

Some of the children write that a protective strategy can involve using a company or platform designed for selling photographs, thus creating security.

"If it were a more private place, like if she had an Only Fans account where she sent him nudes instead of via text, then I would've done it too, I mean, you don't even need to use your own nudes if you don't have to show your face." (Not specified, 14)

Protective strategies amongst children who risk committing sexual crimes

In the account "The Meet-up", the protective strategies look at how children and young people can avoid ending up in a situation where they subject others to sexual offences. Here, the strategies they use involve finding out about the other person to see if they are who they say they are. This might mean checking Instagram or looking up the child's age.

"In this context, I think Oliver should've spent a bit more time getting to know her, find out if her story was true. I get that Astrid has a situation going on as she's so young, if anyone has done anything wrong it's Oliver, but she also needs to look after herself!" (Girl, 16)

We see similar reasoning in the account below. However, the difference here is that the child blames both Oliver and Astrid – even though the child believes that Oliver should have asked Astrid about her age, and that he should have thought a little harder.

"Happens and I think both are at fault because he could've asked first, but then if she lies about her age he wouldn't know if she looks older, but if someone looks younger then you should think a bit harder." (Boy, 17)

” If someone looks younger then you should think.

SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

Children's examples of supportive strategies:

- Tell an adult who can help you
- Tell a friend
- Get help from a teacher

We refer to the final two strategies as supportive and restorative. Unlike the cautious and protective strategies, these do not focus on the child's own behaviour. The supportive strategy involves turning to an adult or friends for support if something happens. These strategies attempt to solve or alleviate the consequences of what has happened to the child. Children are more likely to turn to a friend than an adult, both for advice about a protective or cautious strategy and when something has happened. Just as adults can give unhelpful advice, friends can also contribute to more or less risk taking online, something which is clear from the responses to "The phone". In the free-text responses we also see how young girls especially choose to send nude photographs to be liked and because others do, whereas older boys can encourage each other to persuade young girls into sending nudes as this can create status and conversation. We have also read accounts from boys who do not want to participate in this discourse and are then questioned about not wanting unsolicited nude photographs from girls. One example of a supportive strategy involves talking to an adult.

Supportive strategies

Few children believe that it is a good idea to talk to their parents, Few children have chosen to write about supportive strategies in the free-text responses, although those that do, tend to suggest that the child should reach out to an adult as well as report the incident to the police. The adult can either be a parent or a teacher. One of the children reflects on how the perpetrator should not be allowed to remain in the same class as the victim.

"Kim should also tell an adult and make sure Philip faces the consequences! These disgusting people shouldn't be allowed to stay in the same class as someone they've victimised, especially if they've not faced any consequences." (Girl, 12)

Another child reflects on the shame that affects the child, and the fear of being judged by adults if they speak out about what has happened.

"It happens too often, and people should talk about it more, because many people are ashamed and don't dare to tell an adult. But adults also need to learn how to talk to their children and understand them in a better way, as many children feel that their parents will judge them and be disappointed." (Girl, 15)

In the free-text responses about seeking help from an adult, one child says that Johanna from "Want to Be Anonymous" should not have to manage the situation alone – she should get help. She should reach out to an adult, a support organisation or at least turn to a friend who can help her. In the following example, the child states that Johanna should seek the help of an adult, however they understand that this might feel uncomfortable because of the subject matter.

"I think Johanna should involve an adult if she feels comfortable and knows that the adult she reaches out to will actually do something to help her. Unfortunately, maybe she doesn't feel comfortable with any of the adults she knows when it comes to this stuff, if so, I think she

should reach out to a friend and she shouldn't forget to stand up for herself and not let him belittle her." (Girl, 14)

Other children believe it is not a good idea to tell an adult such as the police, as the adult will not take action, or that it does not matter because the photographs will still be spread.

"Even if you tell someone, the person might have already spread the photographs. Then it makes no difference whether you tell an adult or not. The photographs are spread to someone, who then sends them to someone else, meaning the photographs will always be out there somewhere." (Girl, 15)

In two of the free-text responses, the children have chosen to tell adults, however they say it took them time and by that point many people had already seen the photographs. The example below is one of them, and in addition to supportive strategies, it also contains restorative strategies. In both of the cases where children have shared the information, the adult has opted to report the incident to the police.

"I have a friend, let's call her 'M'. She and a guy from a class in our year have sent each other nudes and are like, friends with benefits, and then one day almost everyone in our year had her nudes... she went up to him, punched him in the face, then reported him to the police, then went to the head teacher and parents so there were some serious consequences. He was suspended for a month." (Girl, 17)

There are no differences in the supportive strategies for children who are the victim of sexual abuse and children who risk sexually abusing other children.

RESTORATIVE STRATEGIES

Children's examples of restorative strategies:

- **Call out**
- **Block**
- **Report to the police**
- **Report to the platform**
- **Stand up for yourself**
- **If somebody lies, it is not your fault**

The latter strategy is the restorative strategy. Here, focus lies on how the child can react after having been the victim of a sexual offence. The basic premise of this strategy is that the child's behaviour is not to be blamed, instead all the blame must be placed on the perpetrator. These strategies can involve reporting the incidents to the police, calling a person out, getting revenge or focusing on the fact that the child who has been the victim has not done anything wrong and must not feel guilty.

Restorative strategies

Many children select a restorative strategy. Almost half of the girls and non-binary children and just short of 40 per cent of the boys who respond to "Tricked" select the restorative strategy where Philip was the problem and that Kim's friends should tell him this. Violence or threatening the person who circulates nude photographs is a recurring theme in the free-text responses. It is almost exclusively boys who use this strategy for dealing with their personal situation or that of somebody close to them.

The free-text responses show us that it is just as common for boys and girls to choose confrontation as their restorative strategy. This might involve

77 **When it happened to someone I knew, I went and punched the guy. And it worked.**

finding the person and being "very angry" or "giving them a piece of their mind" and consequently stopping the person from spreading the photographs. However, confronting the perpetrator involves a risk to the victim, and

in the example we can see girls who have confronted their perpetrators and become the victim of even more sexual violence as a result.

"My friend was writing to a guy on Snapchat and he wanted photographs. She was hesitant at first but then she sent one, he took a screen shot and she called me, panicking, he had sent it to some of his guy friends and when she told me who they were I added him and had a go and then I found his number and called him and shouted and was really angry, he deleted the photographs and so did his friends." (Girl, 14)

Few non-binary children chose to share their thoughts in the free-text responses. However, many of the boys and girls share their opinions Those who think it is perfectly ok for a child to sell a nude photograph if they want to, place the blame with the person buying photographs from a child. The response below is an example of how several of the children chose this restorative strategy reason.

"I think it's a bit of a dilemma. She needs money and you can do a lot when you're desperate. But it's really disgusting that there are people like him. The problem is the men that ask underage people for nudes, be it for money or not! They should be held accountable and the police should be involved. The police shouldn't care if you've sent them to someone and been paid. The police should just focus on finding the person behind the account and do something." (Girl, 16)

Another recurring restorative strategy is to hold your head up high and place the blame with the perpetrator, where it rightly belongs.

"Embarrassing to not be able to accept that a person doesn't like you and being forced to use blackmail to get them to stay with you." (Boy, 17)

"When it happened to someone I knew, I went and punched the guy. And it worked." (Boy, 17)

"I'm stronger now and don't give a shit if some immature boy thinks that nobody has ever seen a girl's body and feels like he has to show everyone the photograph." (Girl, 17)

Restorative strategies amongst children who risk committing sexual crimes

Most of the restorative strategies mentioned in "The Meet-up", focus on how when a person has lied, the child in the account should not be seen as being guilty of a crime, it is not right for him to be reported to the police as he did not know her age. The children's free-text responses argue that the child who has committed a sexual offence has not done anything wrong as he could not have known that the child was underage. He should therefore hold his head up high and not be ashamed.

Some of the free-text responses state that if a child has not consented to a sexual act, it does not matter whether she had previously lied about her age or not. She has the right to support and may be struggling.

Analysis of the children's strategies

The majority of free-text answers in this survey look at the children's own or others' experiences of sexual offences. We have grouped the responses into four strategies: cautious, protective, supportive and restorative.

The majority of children do not have a clear boundary between when they use the internet and when they do not. When children describe what the internet means to them, it becomes clear that they do not draw a clear line between life online and offline. This is different to the way adults view the internet, and this difference also includes how children explore their sexuality and relationships where the internet is a central component. Today, children and young people employ various strategies and risk assessment methods for managing their susceptibility to sexual crimes online. Some of these strategies are helpful, whereas others can increase the child's vulnerability. In this chapter, we want to highlight some of the challenges we see with these strategies used by children. Some of

these challenges are the responsibility of the adult world, others can be addressed through dynamic discussions between children and adults on the topics of consent, grey areas, and boundaries in the online world.

Strategies must build on the everyday lives of children

By listening to the children's reflections, we are also able to see that the way adults reason and assess risks when they try to help children protect themselves online is not in tune with the children's everyday lives. The safety, security and protection of children online is an adult's responsibility, and in order for us to take our responsibility, we need relevant knowledge about what actually goes on in children's everyday lives.

Therefore, a cautious or protective strategy should be based on the child's needs and wishes in the specific relationship or situation. It may, for example, involve the child negotiating the terms about how a nude photograph can be saved, shared or circulated, before they send the photograph. The negotiation is a way for a child to set out their own terms and make them clear to the recipient. This reduces the risk of the photograph being spread or used in a way the child has not agreed to in advance. Children and young people will explore their sexuality in different ways, where relationships with others can be healthy if both partners consent. If this trust is abused or if a person threatens or blackmails the child, it is never the child's fault. The sexual act itself is not problematic, nor should the child be blamed or shamed by others. Nevertheless, the cautious and protective strategies can be helpful if they contribute to children and young people developing relationship

boundaries and conditions with people online. We know that guilt and shame experienced by children are part of the reason why they choose not to seek help from an adult if they are a victim of a crime.

It is never the victim's fault

It is painfully clear in the children's free-text responses that they place a lot of blame on the person who has been the victim of a crime – regardless of whether they themselves were affected or another



The fact is that it's never the victim's fault.

child. Children and young people should be able to spend time online and interact with each other without becoming the victim of a crime. In the free-text answers we see how many children attempt to take over the responsibility for their own safety and security from the adult world, and subsequently, the blame for the crime from the perpetrator. Some of the protective strategies – for example, staying off a specific platform or only sending nude photographs to people you know as this reduces the likelihood that the images will be spread – occasionally build upon an incorrect understanding that a perpetrator is always an adult they do not know, which we see in the free-text responses. The fact that so many children and young people have assumed responsibility for their own safety is nothing other than a failure on the part of adults. Protecting yourself from abuse and exploitation is an unacceptable burden that a child must not bear. Children and young people should be able to spend time on social platforms without risking becoming the victim of abuse and unwelcome sexual contact. When, for example, we question why a child who has been the victim of a sexual offence

sent the nude photograph, we make the child partly responsible for the crime. This reasoning holds many similarities with saying a rape victim's clothing was too provocative, or why people have brief sexual encounters with people they do not know. Therefore, the discourse on grey areas, consent and boundaries online must always be based on the fact that it is never the victim's fault.

Only send nudes to someone you trust

We see that both the cautious and protective strategies are no different between children who have had their photographs circulated beyond their control, and those who have not. Both groups use similar strategies, namely they only send photographs to people they trust. Trust is an important component of children and young people's relationships, and this also becomes clear in the account where a child subjects another child to a crime, as the children emphasises it is never ok to lie about your age. Approximately half of the children who participated in the survey have shared nude photographs, and one-fifth have had their photographs circulated. We learn from the free-text responses that it is often a child's schoolmate, an older child, a friend, partner, or previous partner who circulates the photographs. And so, if the aim is to prevent the circulation of the photographs, the strategy of only sending photographs to someone you trust is not always helpful.



We know that guilt and shame experienced by children are part of the reason why they choose not to seek help from an adult.



Nobody wants unsolicited nudes

"I've sent a photograph to a guy, just because, but then I said I'd sent it to the wrong person." (Girl, 14)

"People who send unwanted nudes and then say 'I know you want nudes' and 'but you asked for them' EVEN THOUGH NOBODY WANTS TO SEE YOUR TINY DICK." (Non-binary, 15)



90 per cent of the girls and 60 per cent of the boys who answered the questions about their experience of the crimes have received an unsolicited nude.

90 per cent of the girls and 60 per cent of the boys who answered the questions about their experience of the crimes have received an unsolicited nude. These are often dick pics – photographs of erect penises. These numbers are completely unacceptable. The children describe how they reacted strongly to their first dick pic, but they later became normalised. The children explain how they block or call out the sender, or – in rare cases – tell an adult. If confronted, the perpetrators respond by either starting a new account and continuing to sexually harass, threaten or blackmail the child. The free-text responses also tell us that the children place a large portion of the blame on themselves if they receive unsolicited nudes. This might be because they are

on platforms where they are not allowed, or perhaps feel they themselves have contributed to the sexual abuse by having a relationship with the person who sent the photograph. Hence it is important to point

out that discussions on consent, grey areas and sexual exploration must be based on the fact that things are never the victim's fault. Sending an unsolicited nude is sexual molestation. It is not as easy as simply blocking the sender, as many of the children have received unsolicited nudes from people they know and have a relationship with. Therefore, blocking

needs to be combined with reaching out to an adult who has supportive and restorative strategies such as reporting the incident to the police and the platform. Nor is using confrontation on your own as a restorative strategy the best option, as many children say this has led to more crimes against them.

Consent, save and spread

The children mention an additional protective strategy – making sure that they have the other person's consent before sending a nude photograph. A discussion on grey areas and consent are vital so children and young people are able to develop secure and respectful relationships both on and offline. It is the responsibility of adults to make sure that children, young people (and adults) know what is and is not permitted when it comes to sending nude photographs and other sexual interactions. One good strategy is to begin by asking for consent and then letting the person decide if their photograph can be saved. A common strategy that is often used by boys is to only send nude photographs in exchange for one. This can be a good approach, if both parties agree. However, it is important to highlight that if a person spreads another person's nude photograph, it is never ok to spread their photograph tit-for-tat and this may be illegal. The strategy of consent, save and spread also includes a discussion of what will happen to the photographs once the relationship ends. The nude photographs belong to the person who sent them, and it is never ok to spread them as revenge.

"I've sent a photograph to a guy, just because, but then I said I'd sent it to the wrong person."

Blackmail, nagging and threats

The children's free-text responses show us that they often face nagging, blackmail and threats. As the children state that the perpetrators are often other children – many a time a partner or previous partner – it can be difficult to say no. Several of the cases involve younger girls (aged 10–12) and older boys (aged 15–17) and the girls want to feel liked, pretty, and not disappoint the boy. Nude photographs of girls are also seen as a form of currency amongst boys and a way to increase their popularity. In contrast, girls often face crude and misogynistic language if their photographs are circulated. Nagging about photographs can be a crime, depending on the child's age. A protective strategy that works must account for the person who is nagging the child not necessarily being a stranger, but instead someone the child has a relationship with. We see an online variant of the creepy old man that does not always correspond with the child's reality. The girl in the quote below has several strategies for dealing with nagging and blackmail. Once more, it is important to point out that if a child is the victim of a criminal act, it is never the child's fault.

"I would say I'm a strong person. I don't care that people ask for nudes. It's a simple situation that's easily managed. The fact that people behave strangely isn't a problem, just block them or log out. I don't react to blackmailing, nagging or peer pressure. None of it works on me. So my life online is pure bliss. As long as you know what to do and the balls to say no. Don't share information or details, nobody can touch you online." (Girl, 16)

The children's free-text responses also say that adult perpetrators often go directly to serious threats that are acted upon. And if the perpetrator frightens the child into sending nude photographs, it quickly escalates, and the child finds themselves in a violent spiral that they must obtain help quickly for in order to break free. Partners, friends, schoolmates, and previous partners also act upon their threats, and almost half of the children who shared nude

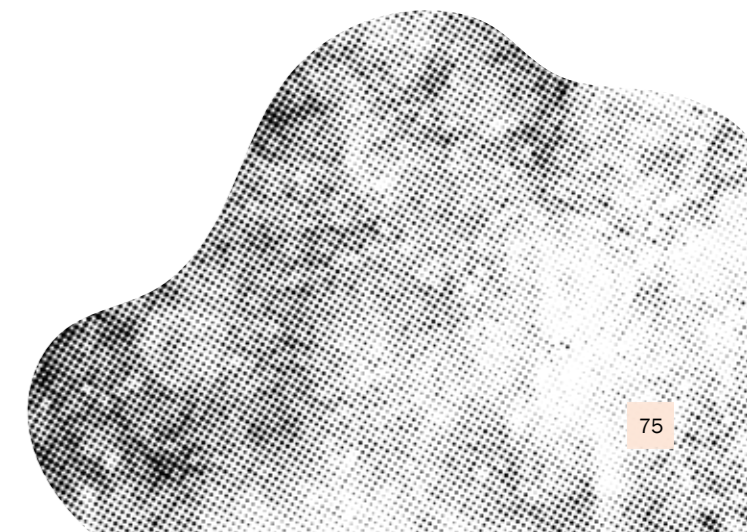
photographs stated that the images had been spread. If a child has sold a photograph, the perpetrator may try to get the child to send more by using the image as blackmail. Sometimes, the perpetrator tries to persuade the child into meeting them in real life.

As a child is often the victim of another child, we want to emphasise the importance of talking to your own children about what is and is not allowed online. It is understandable that children and young people want to explore their sexuality and this in itself is nothing problematic. And as nude photographs can be seen as a type of currency and increase boys' popularity primarily, or are a way for girls to feel liked and receive affirmation, it is important to talk about how neither sending nor receiving a nude photograph is a right. Everything that is not a yes is a no.

Everything that is not a yes is a no.

Sexual offences against children must always be reported to the police

Sending an unsolicited nude is a crime. Buying a nude photograph from a child is a crime. Threatening, blackmailing or otherwise attempting to obtain a nude photograph is a crime. It is essential that society validates crime victims, ensures that they are protected, and reports sexual offences against children. This also applies to children who are the victims of other children. If a child takes sexual risks and violates the rights of other children, they need help and support, and the victim must be protected from the perpetrator.





Discussion

"Really open question haha what do you even write. Can talk about a girl I've been talking to since January, only online, and now we've met a few times and she makes me feel so good and I think I like her and she likes me. What does that have to do with photographs? I dunno, we've sent photographs a couple of times I guess? I guess you'll read seriously twisted stuff from kids who've had bad experiences so maybe it's nice now you're reading something good that's happened online instead." (Boy, 15)

This report provides a unique insight into the everyday lives of children online, and their exposure to online sexual offences. Almost 13,000 children participated in our survey and there are around 23,000 responses to accounts. In addition, we received nearly 4,000 free-text responses. The vast majority of the participants suggest they want

to invite the adult world into a conversation about consent, boundaries, and sexual abuse online. In order for us to be able to contribute to this dialogue, we need knowledge about how children and young people view the internet and their relationships and find out what their everyday lives actually look like.

It is important to note that it is not the child's responsibility to protect themselves from online crimes. However, children are the experts on their personal situations and they often have the solutions to the challenges they face. If adults do not find out about what children know, they are unable to take responsibility as they should – and their attempts to offer help risk being ineffective or, in the worst case, cause direct harm. Adults who read this report will gain an insight into children's own reasoning and strategies for when they assess the pros against the cons of their decisions.

ECPAT's take-home advice for adults

With help from the strategies, and advice and experiences of the children who participated in the survey, we have put together some especially important points for our adult readers.

No to dick pics

A majority of the children who answered this survey had received unsolicited nude photographs from other children or adults. Many receive unsolicited dick pics before they turn ten. This is completely unacceptable and is a crime that must be reported to the police.

Nagging works

Half of the children surveyed have sent a nude photograph. Just as many have been offered money for one. One in five has had a nude photograph of them spread. Many children have been nagged, threatened, and blackmailed by people they know. Many children describe it as being harder to say no to other children compared to saying no to adults, especially if there are positive elements to the relationship. However, they also say that the consequences can be more severe as it is more common for the photographs to be circulated amongst the same social network. It is the responsibility of adults to support the children and prevent them from making decisions they do not want to make. Threats and blackmail must be reported to the police.

It is a matter of gender

It is easy to see that there is a great difference between the genders, with girls more often being victims than boys. Boys use violence to a greater extent, downplay the seriousness of their actions, and expect girls to take responsibility for their boundaryless behaviour. Girls receive harsher punishment from those around them if their nude photographs are circulated, they are dehumanised and face misogynistic language. We also see that a large proportion of the boys in this survey have experienced sexual abuse, which we must take seriously. Discussions of online relationships must include problematisation of stereotypical gender roles in society.

Do not contribute to the one-sided picture of the internet version of a "creepy old man"

Most children do not fall victim to adults, but rather to other children. Their schoolmates, an older child, friends, partners, an ex partner. This does not mean that children are not also victims of adult strangers but a one-sided focus on that danger can cause children to underestimate the risks in other interactions. Threats to circulate photographs are often made by both children and adults.

It is never the victim's fault

It is clear that the children surveyed place a great deal of responsibility for their safety on themselves. If they become the victim of a crime, they blame themselves. The shame and the guilt often make it difficult to tell others what has happened to them. It is our responsibility to remove this burden from the victim, and not contribute to victim blaming – but instead place the culpability with the perpetrator. It is never the victim's fault.

Talk about consent, save and spread

Many of the children do not know what is legal or illegal. As adults, it is our responsibility to make sure children have the information they are entitled to. In this report, you can read about what is and is not legal when it comes to certain online sexual offences, information which can be shared with children around you. One important strategy for protecting yourself and others online is asking for consent before you a nude photograph is shared, and to decide if it is ok for the photograph to be saved. Talk about what will happen to the photographs if the relationship ends and that anything other than "yes" means "no".

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