



## The experiences of 11-16 year olds on social networking sites

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# Contents

Executive summary	5
Introduction	6
Why children are particularly vulnerable	6
Section 1: 11-16 year olds' use of social networking sites	9
Sites used by 11-16 year olds	9
Likes and dislikes	9
Section 2: The experiences of 11-16 year olds	12
Experience of things which have bothered them	12
How these experiences made them feel, how often and for how long	15
The emotional impact on 11-16 year olds	16
Who children identified as responsible	17
Actions taken in response to upsetting experiences	19
Section 3: The experiences of boys and girls	21
Likes and dislikes by gender	22
Upsetting experiences by gender	23
Differences in frequency of upsetting experiences between girls and boys	24
Differing experiences of boys and girls	24
Who boys and girls identified as responsible	26
Differences in action taken between boys and girls	28
Appendix 1: Methodology and ethics	29
Appendix 2: Profile of 11-16 year olds in our sample	30

## Graphics

Graphic 1: Social networking sites: the numbers	6
Graphic 2: Social networking sites: an overview	7
Graphic 3: Percentage of 11-16 year olds surveyed with profiles on these social networking sites	8
Graphic 4: Percentage of those who had upsetting experiences on their favourite social networking sites	12
Graphic 5: Upsetting experiences amongst 11-16 year olds	13
Graphic 6: Frequency of upsetting experiences	15
Graphic 7: Who children identified as the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience	18
Graphic 8: Frequency of upsetting experiences by gender	24
Graphic 9: Upsetting experiences amongst 11-16 year olds by gender	25
Graphic 10: Who boys identified as the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience	26
Graphic 11: Who girls identified as the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience	27

## Tables

Table 1: What 11-16 year olds say they like most about their favourite social networking sites	9
Table 2: What 11-16 year olds like least about their favourite social networking sites	11
Table 3: Frequency of upsetting experiences	15
Table 4: The action children took	19
Table 5: Who children told about their experience	19
Table 6: Children who blocked the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience by age and gender	20
Table 7: Social networking sites used by boys and girls	21
Table 8: Likes by gender	22
Table 9: Dislikes by gender	22

## Figures

Figure 1: Length of time upsetting experience lasted for	16
Figure 2: Length of time 11-16 year olds felt upset	16
Figure 3: Upsetting experiences by gender	23
Figure 4: Action taken by boys and girls	28

# Executive summary

Research from 2010 showed that in one year alone, 13 per cent of UK children aged 9-16 experienced something on the internet as a whole which upset or worried them.<sup>1</sup> This new research shows that over one in four children aged 11-16 with a profile on a social networking site have experienced something upsetting on it in the last year (28 per cent), and of those who were upset, 11 per cent were dealing with this on a daily basis. While most children recovered quickly from their experience, some took weeks or months to get over it.

Children experienced a wide range of upsetting things. The most common upsetting experience was 'trolling' (defined as 'unkind comments or rumours circulated online'). However, a significant minority had received sexual messages, been encouraged to self-harm, or subjected to language which was violent or aggressive.

Over half of 11-16 year olds (58 per cent) believed at least one of the people responsible for the behaviour which had upset or bothered them was either a complete stranger, someone they only knew online, or they did not know who it was at all.

Our research also asked children what strategies they used to deal with upsetting experiences on social networking sites. Children in the UK seemed unable to voice their concerns effectively. Only 22 per cent of the children who were upset talked with someone else face to face about the experience.

The report also found some key differences between the experiences of boys and girls. More girls than boys had an upsetting experience (32 per cent compared to 24 per cent), but boys who were upset were twice as likely as girls to feel this way every day (16 per cent versus 8 per cent). Boys were more likely to say that at least one of the people responsible for the experience was a complete stranger, someone they only knew online, or they did not know who it was at all.

There is more that can be done by social networking sites themselves to ensure that their young users are safe online and that privacy and reporting mechanisms are easy for children to use. Self-regulation at EU level is proving slow, with no imminent prospect of progress. We therefore see a larger role for UK based agencies in ensuring that sites keep children as safe as possible. In particular, we are calling on the UKCCIS Executive Board<sup>2</sup> to make tackling the risks that children experience on social networking sites a priority issue.

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1 Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2010). *Risks and safety for children on the internet: the UK report*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. Available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33730/>

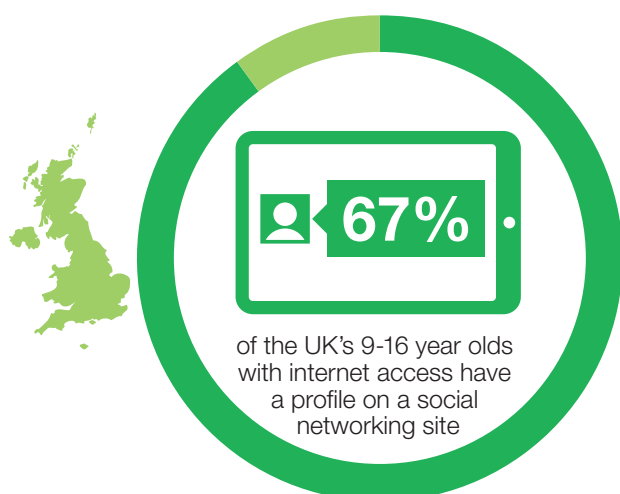
2 The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) is a group of more than 200 organisations across the government, industry, law enforcement, academia and charity sectors, who work in partnership to help keep children safe online. The Executive Board is chaired by government ministers.

# Introduction

Children's use of the internet has increased dramatically in recent years. Data from 2010 found 96 per cent of 9-16 year olds in the UK use the internet at least once or twice a week, with most going online every day.<sup>3</sup> Children use the internet for a wide variety of purposes, from completing school work to watching video clips and playing games. They are often described as 'digital natives', growing up in an age where online communication is the norm.

Social networking sites have played a huge role in changing the way children interact with other people online, and use of such sites has increased significantly in recent years. Sixty seven per cent of 9-16 year olds in the UK who have internet access have a profile on at least one social networking site, a figure which rises to 85 per cent amongst 13-14 year olds and 92 per cent amongst 15-16 year olds.<sup>4</sup> There are many positive aspects of social networking sites. Indeed, this research shows how much children

## Social networking sites: the numbers



and young people enjoy interacting with friends online. Children can use social networking sites as a platform to learn, share their views or demonstrate their creativity.

However, the risks are not yet well understood, and too little research exists to clarify them. Recent high-profile cases of teenage suicides linked to social networking sites, as well as research by the NSPCC<sup>5</sup> and other organisations have drawn public attention to some of the very real risks that can be posed on them.

The internet provides children and young people with opportunities to shape and explore the world around them. Too often, it simultaneously leaves them vulnerable to risks and exposes them to experiences which they find upsetting. To ensure that more children experience the benefits and not the drawbacks of the online world, children and parents need more information about how to navigate and stay safe on social networking sites.

This research begins to uncover some of the experiences that 11-16 year olds are having on social networking sites. The research considers the aspects of social networking that children like and dislike. Where children have experienced something that upset them, this research explores the nature of the experience, who children felt was responsible for the experience, and the action that children took.

## Why children are particularly vulnerable

The risks which can be encountered on social networking sites affect users of any age. However, they may be more acutely felt amongst children and young people, who may not be fully equipped to deal with the emotional and social impact of negative experiences online. Adolescence is a crucial time for the development of key areas of the brain, particularly the parts controlling decision making, self-awareness and understanding others. Before this area is fully developed, children may be less able to cope with difficult experiences.<sup>6</sup> This may mean, for instance, that they find images of a violent or sexual nature much harder to deal with than adults, who have greater understanding and self-awareness.

3 Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2010). *Risks and safety for children on the internet: the UK report*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. Available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33730/>

4 Ibid

5 Lilley, C. and Ball, R. (2013). *Younger children and social networking sites: a blind spot*. London: NSPCC. Available at: [www.nspcc.org.uk/blindspot](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/blindspot)

Our research shows that as children get older they become more likely to take action about upsetting things they experience online. This could indicate a greater degree of digital skill and understanding of internet safety, or increased maturity and awareness of dangers more generally.

Many of the most popular sites stipulate that users must be at least 13 years old, but there is currently no way of enforcing this. The NSPCC estimates that around half of all the UK's 11 and 12 year olds (666,000 children) currently have a profile on at least one social networking site which has a minimum age of 13, as outlined in our recent report *Younger children and social networking sites: a blind spot*.<sup>7</sup>

More could be done by social networking sites themselves to ensure that their young users are safe online and that privacy and reporting mechanisms

are easy for children to use. Self-regulation at EU level is proving slow, with no imminent prospect of progress. We therefore see a larger role for UK based agencies in ensuring that sites keep children as safe as possible.

### Methodology

The data contained in this report are the results of a survey of over 1,000 11-16 year olds who have social networking profiles. The survey was conducted in December 2012. More detail on the methodology is available at Appendix 1.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Professor Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Political Science, for her assistance with conducting this research.

## Social networking sites: an overview



6 Blakemore, S.J. (2010) The Developing Social Brain: Implications for Education. *Neuron* 65, March 25 2010.

7 Lilley, C. and Ball, R. (2013) *Younger children and social networking sites: a blind spot*. London: NSPCC. Available at: [www.nspcc.org.uk/blindspot](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/blindspot)

Percentage of 11-16 year olds surveyed with profiles on these social networking sites<sup>8</sup>

  
**84%**  
Facebook

  
**60%**  
YouTube

  
**50%**  
Twitter

  
**19%**  
Instagram

  
**17%**  
Google+

  
**15%**  
Club Penguin

  
**15%**  
tumblr

  
**11%**  
Moshi Monsters

**1%** Ask.fm

**1%** Chatroulette

**4%** Formspring.me

**5%** Habbo Hotel

**5%** Pinterest

**7%** Other

<sup>8</sup> Base: Children with social networking profiles that they regularly used (i.e. logged into at least once a week). Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.



# Section 1: 11-16 year olds' use of social networking sites

## Sites used by 11-16 year olds

Facebook was by far the most widely and regularly used social networking site amongst 11-16 year olds. Eighty four per cent of these children used Facebook regularly, at least once per week, compared to 60 per cent and 50 per cent for YouTube and Twitter respectively. These three sites were the most widely used, but there was also a variety of other social networking sites with fewer and less regular users. These were generally used in conjunction with the more popular sites.

## Likes and dislikes









We asked all the 11-16 year olds surveyed, including those who did not report having an upsetting experience online, about the elements of social networking sites which they liked and disliked the most.

## Likes

Children and young people told us that the aspects of using social networking sites that they enjoy most are talking to friends, sharing gossip, and having all of their friends available through social networks.

Children and young people also particularly enjoy the opportunities that social networking sites give them to express themselves in a different way. They enjoyed learning new things and the opportunity to be creative, particularly on YouTube, Tumblr, Moshi Monsters and Instagram. For some children and young people, feeling like they belonged to a community was something they liked about the social networking sites they used. Significantly more Tumblr users felt their favourite aspect of using the site was that people understood them – 32 per cent of these users compared to, for example, five per cent of Twitter users.

Table 1: What 11-16 year olds say they like most about their favourite social networking sites<sup>9</sup>

Rank	Total (all sites)	 Facebook	 YouTube	 Twitter	 Instagram	 Club Penguin	 Moshi Monsters	 GooglePlus	 Tumblr
1.	Being able to talk to my friends (33%)	Being able to talk to my friends (33%)	Learning new things (23%)	Keeping up to date with gossip (27%)	Being able to see and share photos (61%)	Playing games (53%)	Playing games (40%)	Being able to talk to my friends (14%)	Feeling people understand me (32%)
2.	Keeping up to date with gossip (25%)	All of my friends are on there (24%)	Being creative (15%)	Being able to talk to my friends (11%)	Being creative (19%)	Being creative (9%)	Being creative (14%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (13%)	Being able to see and share photos (23%)
3.	All of my friends are on there (24%)	Keeping up to date with gossip (14%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (9%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (10%)	All of my friends are on there (5%)	All of my friends are on there (8%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (10%)	Learning new things (10%); Playing games (10%)	Being creative (14%)

<sup>9</sup> Base: Children with social networking profiles. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options. Only the top three likes are included. Sample sizes were too small to show data for the other social networking sites.



## Dislikes

The things that children and young people liked the least on almost every social networking site were adverts and spam. Nearly one in five (18 per cent) were also concerned that they were spending too much time on social networking sites.

Although interacting with friends on social networking sites was the thing children and young people liked best about them, it could also be a source of concern. Seventeen per cent of children said that the thing they most disliked about social networking sites was that people could be rude and hurtful without realising it.

Other dislikes included the presence of strangers (13 per cent), cyberbullying (13 per cent), not having any friends on there (8 per cent) and seeing things they don't want to see, such as pornography (9 per cent).

On Club Penguin and Moshi Monsters, children said that the thing they disliked the most about using the site was 'strangers'. These sites are both aimed at younger children. There are a range of

possible reasons why so many children said that they disliked strangers on these sites, and this warrants further study.









Nowadays, not many people go on Facebook, so it's fine. It's much better for sites like Twitter and Instagram because you don't know the people and it's easier to get along with people. With Facebook, you know the people so it's much different.

Girl, 16

I don't like spamming on Facebook ... when you click on certain things porn comes up and it's kind of weird.

Girl, 15

Table 2: What 11-16 year olds like least about their favourite social networking sites<sup>10</sup>

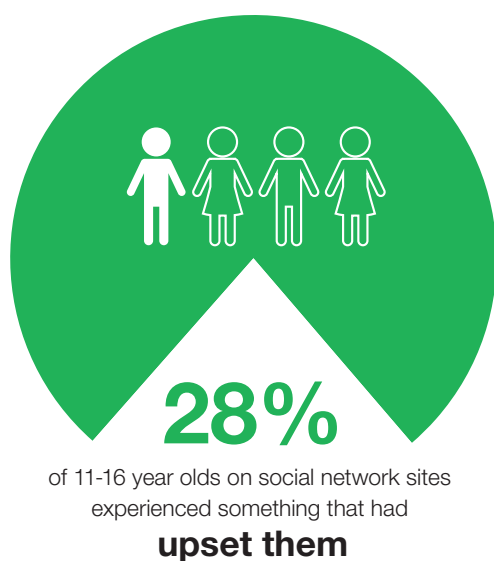
Rank	Total (all sites)	 Facebook	 YouTube	 Twitter	 Instagram	 Club Penguin	 Moshi Monsters	 Google+	 Tumblr
1.	Adverts (29%)	Adverts (13%)	Adverts (39%)	Spam (15%)	Spam (14%)	Strangers (10%); Adverts (10%)	Strangers (12%)	Spam (14%)	Spending too much time on there (23%)
2.	Spam (18%); Spending too much time on there (18%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (12%)	Seeing stuff you don't want to see, like porn (7%)	Spending too much time on there (10%)	Making you feel envious of others (12%)	I don't have any friends on there (9%)	Adverts (10%)	I don't have any friends on there (12%)	Seeing stuff you don't want to see, like porn (15%)
3.	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (17%)	Cyber bullying (11%)	Spending too much time on there (6%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (9%)	Spending too much time on there (9%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (7%); Spending too much time on there (7%); It puts you under pressure to make your life out to be amazing (7%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (7%)	Strangers (9%)	Making you feel envious of others (14%)

<sup>10</sup> Base: Children with social networking profiles. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options. Only the top three dislikes are included. Sample sizes were too small to show data for the other social networking sites.

## Section 2: The experiences of 11-16 year olds

Over a quarter of 11-16 year olds (28 per cent) have had one or more of a wide range of upsetting encounters on social networking sites, which they remembered up to a year later.

Percentage of those who had upsetting experiences on their favourite social networking sites<sup>11</sup>



Of those children and young people who saw or experienced something that bothered them, proportionally more were using Facebook, Twitter or YouTube at the time. Users of Facebook, which is designed for users aged 13 and over, were significantly more likely to have experienced something that bothered them (24 per cent, compared to 16 per cent of YouTube users for example). Moshi Monsters, which has a comparatively robust parental verification process in place, was the site with the fewest children and young people reporting a troubling experience.

### Experience of things which have bothered them

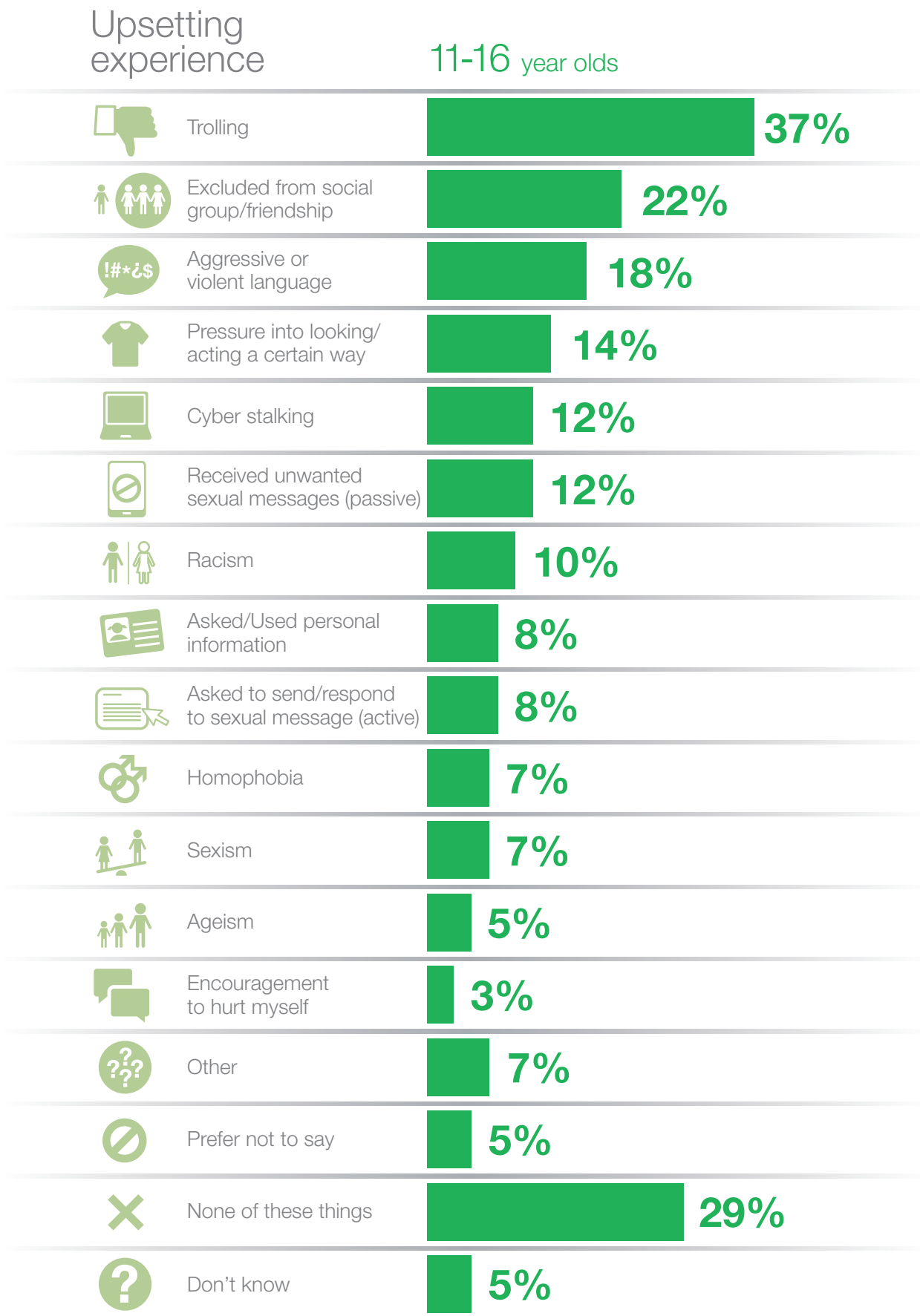
Online bullying, or cyberbullying, are terms often used to describe a wide spectrum of upsetting experiences online. We wanted to examine the range of possible behaviours which could be considered cyberbullying, to explore the nature of the experiences of children and young people. Therefore, we did not offer either term 'online bullying' or 'cyberbullying' as options in our online survey. The options we offered and the responses we received from children are on the opposite page.

We found that a wide variety of experiences were affecting children and young people.

By far the biggest issue was 'trolling'. We defined this as any unkind, sarcastic or negative comments or rumours circulated online. Nearly 40 per cent of the children who had felt upset named trolling as the reason for this.

Children were also affected by feeling excluded from a certain social group or friendship (22 per cent). Social pressures were felt by 14 per cent of children, such as the pressure to change how they behaved or looked. Twelve per cent said that they had experienced cyber stalking, 18 per cent had experienced aggressive and violent language, and three per cent were encouraged to hurt themselves. Twelve per cent reported being upset by an unwanted sexual message, however a smaller number were asked to participate actively by being asked to send or respond to a sexual message (eight per cent).

<sup>11</sup> Base: Children with social networking profiles. Sample sizes were too small to show data for other social networking sites.



<sup>12</sup> Base: Children who experienced something that upset them. In our survey we asked 11-16 year olds whether they were upset on one of their top three social networking sites. Of those who reported being upset, we asked about the upsetting experiences they had on any of their top three social networking sites. They may have had an upsetting experience on one, two or all three of these. 29 per cent of children indicated that on at least one of their top three social networking sites, they did not experience anything that upset them.





## How these experiences made them feel, how often and for how long

Upsetting experiences online can differ to those in offline contexts such as the school bus or playground. Children may not be able to escape them, even when they are in an environment like their bedroom, or a friend's house, where they might usually have some respite from experiences such as bullying.

Of the children who had upsetting experiences in the past year, over a tenth reported this happening almost every day, while over half (55 per cent) experienced it at least once a month.

Frequency of upsetting experiences<sup>13</sup>

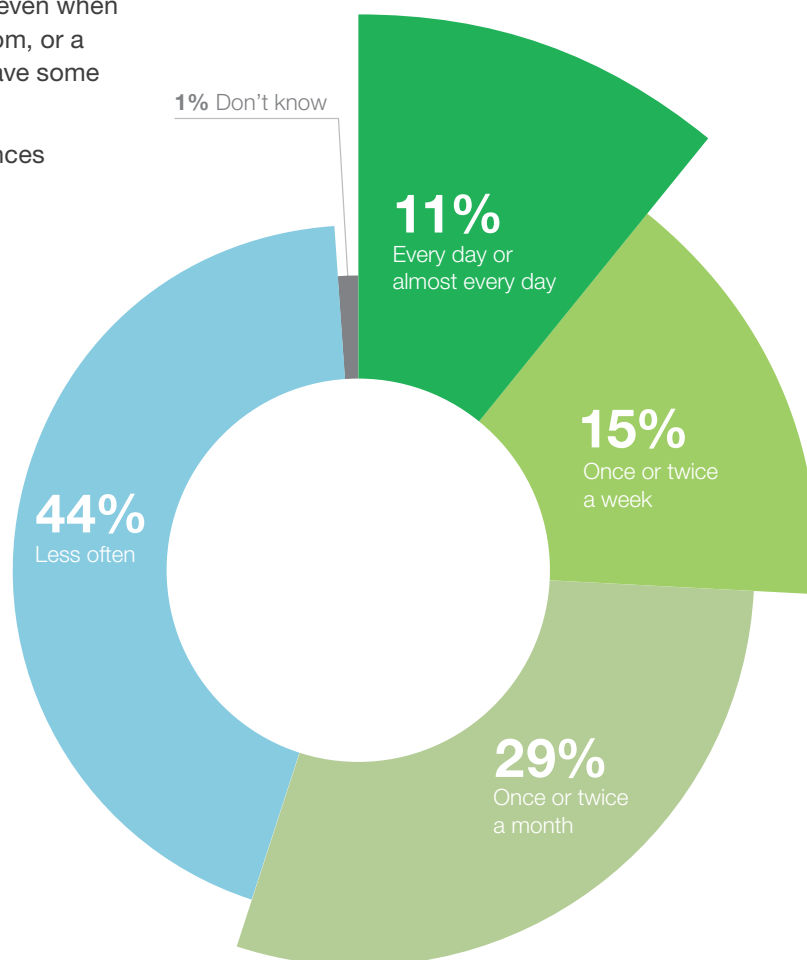


Table 3: Frequency of upsetting experiences<sup>14</sup>

How often children felt upset	Total (all sites)	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter
Every day or almost every day	11%	11%	14%	14%
Once or twice a week	15%	15%	13%	20%
Once or twice a month	29%	30%	24%	28%
Less often	44%	43%	44%	37%
Don't know	1%	0%	6%	2%

<sup>13</sup> Base: Children who experienced something that upset them.

<sup>14</sup> Base: Children who experienced something that upset them.



## The emotional impact on 11-16 year olds

Children reported a range of emotional responses following their experiences on social networking sites.

When it happens to you, it can be hurtful – especially when you like the person very much – I have spoken to the person since and he said he was only joking and was in a bad mood that day.

Male, 15

It made me feel angry when I was getting these pictures and inboxes, but my mum and dad helped me to block and report, and they contacted the police. It has now been dealt with.

Boy, 14

Scary, frightening, intimidating. I wished I was dead.

Girl, 12

Most experiences that upset children lasted a day or less than a day (55 per cent), some children experienced them for much longer. A fifth (19 per cent) reported that the experience lasted a few days or a week, and one in ten said that it lasted for a month or longer.

Most children got over the experience within a day (36 per cent), and some got over it within a few days (41 per cent). However a significant minority (12 per cent) felt upset for weeks or months after the event, and a small number of children reported that they still felt upset.

Figure 1: Length of time upsetting experience lasted for<sup>15</sup>

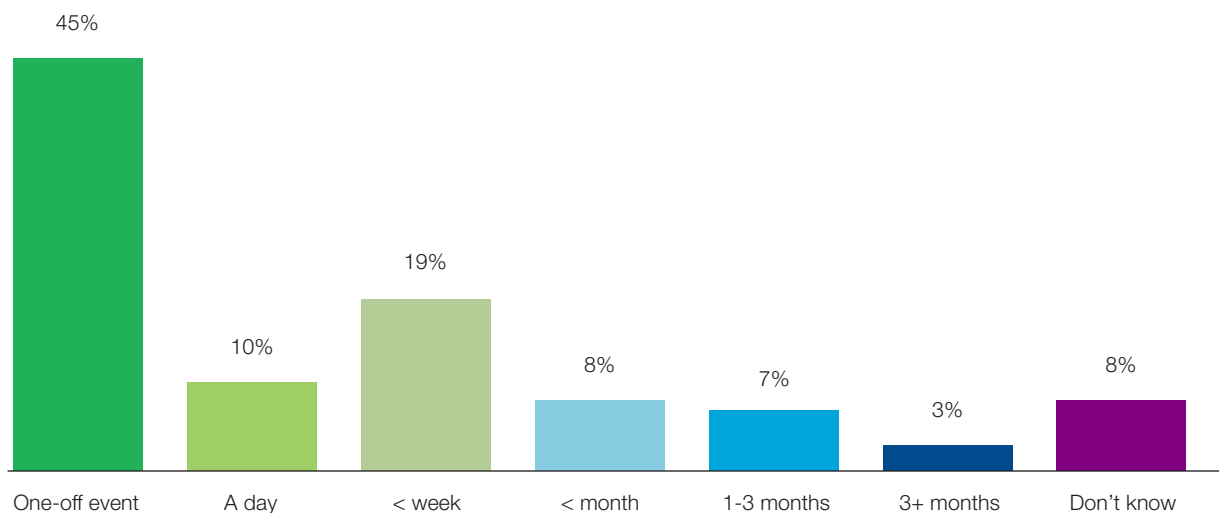
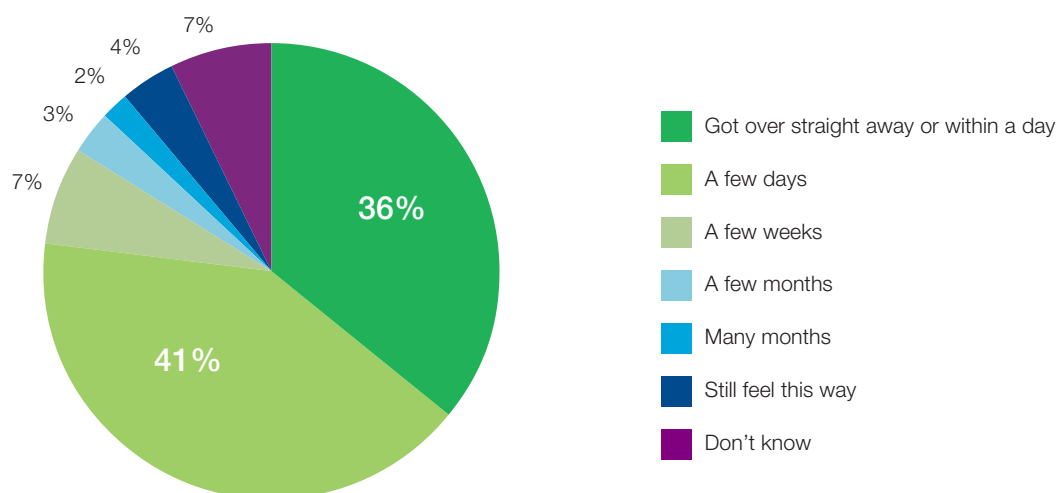


Figure 2: Length of time 11-16 year olds felt upset<sup>16</sup>



15 Base: Children who experienced something that upset them.

16 Base: Children who experienced something that upset them.



## Who children identified as responsible

Over half of 11-16 year olds (58 per cent) believed that at least one of the people responsible for their upsetting experience was unknown to them. One fifth (20 per cent) described them as a complete stranger. Fifteen per cent had no idea at all about the person's identity.

The nature of the online world is blurring the boundaries between friends and strangers. Twenty-three per cent of the people held responsible by children and young people for their upsetting experience were only known to the children online. However, children may still have counted these people as someone they knew, even if the relationship had developed online, but never face to face.

Many of the 11-16 year olds questioned (57 per cent) blamed someone who they knew face to face, in most cases another individual child, or group of children. In these cases, social media sites may provide an extension of their offline world, an additional platform for sharing information or pictures (even of a distressing nature to the child), or a venue for playing out conflicts.

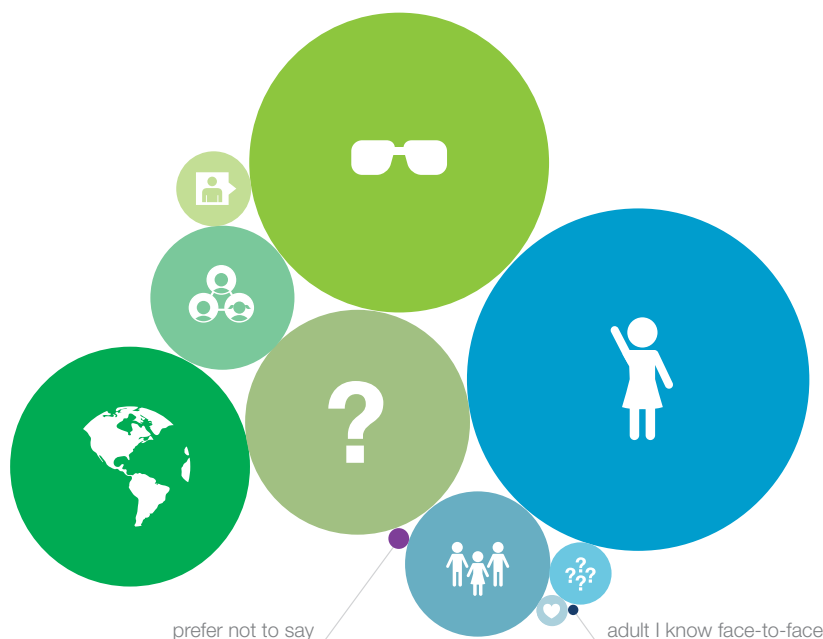
Totals do not add to 100 per cent because children may have selected multiple perpetrators for some experiences; an upsetting experience could have initially been caused by someone they knew face to face, and spread to people they did not know (or vice versa).

Something will happen at school and then someone will either make a status about the event or about a person. Then there will be an argument in the comment section.

Male, 13



## Who children identified as the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience<sup>17</sup>



### 58% Unknown to the child



### 57% Known to the child



### 2% Other



<sup>17</sup> Base: Children who experienced something that upset them.

## Actions taken in response to upsetting experiences

**Table 4: The action children took<sup>18</sup>**

Action taken	
Blocked the person/people from contacting me	30%
Stopped using the website for a while	23%
Talked to someone else face to face	22%
Changed my privacy/contact settings	18%
Reported the problem on the site	10%
Shut down my account	9%
Talked to someone else online	7%
Stopped using the internet for a while	5%
Other	7%
Don't know	3%
None of these	19%

Worryingly, children and young people affected by incidents on social networking sites rarely shared the burden of their concerns with others. Only one in five spoke face to face with someone about the problem. Seven per cent shared their problem with someone online. Others tried to deal with the problem alone.

Of the 22 per cent who did seek face to face support, many of them spoke with more than one person. Encouragingly, of those children who did share their experience, two thirds told a parent or carer (66 per cent). Around half of children confided in their friends (51 per cent).

The age of the children surveyed had an impact on their chosen confidant. Younger children were more likely to tell a parent, whilst older children were more likely to talk to friends. However, the majority of children kept the issue to themselves, and tried a range of other strategies to overcome it.

Ten per cent reported the problem on the site. Some children said they found it difficult to report poor behaviour, potentially identifying a serious barrier to children's ability to navigate social networking sites in safety.

*It's hard to report someone or make a complaint. It's sometimes hidden within the help pages and even then you can only report people you are friends with, so you have to be a friend before reporting them – it defeats the whole object...*

**Girl, 11**

Twenty three per cent stopped using the website where they had experienced something negative for a period of time. Eleven and twelve year olds were particularly likely to use this strategy (34 per cent compared to 19 per cent of 13-16 year olds). Fewer than one child in ten took the step of closing down

**Table 5: Who children told about their experience**

Person spoken to	Total	11-12	13-14	15-16
Parent or carer	66%	81%	71%	50%
Friend(s)	51%	25%	53%	70%
Brother or sister	15%	13%	18%	15%
Teacher	13%	13%	12%	15%
Another adult I trust	11%	6%	18%	10%
Someone whose job it is to help children	8%	0%	6%	15%
Boyfriend or girlfriend (or ex boy or girl friend)	6%	0%	6%	10%
Person responsible for behaviour	2%	0%	0%	5%
Someone else	2%	6%	0%	0%

<sup>18</sup> Base: Children who experienced something that upset them in the past year. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.







their account completely, though five per cent of children and young people went so far as to stop using the internet altogether, at least for a time.

Some children and young people tried to use channels available to them through the website itself to tackle the problem, by blocking or reporting the perpetrator or changing their privacy or contact settings. Twenty six per cent of children and young people who used the report or help button saw no action whatsoever taken in response to their action, and of those who did get a response, 17 per cent of were dissatisfied with it. Eighteen per cent changed their privacy or contact settings.

Thirty per cent tried to block the user causing the concern. This strategy becomes more likely as children get older: 18 per cent of 11-12 year olds, 28 per cent of 13-14 year olds and 38 per cent of 15-16 year olds blocked the person they thought was responsible for the behaviour that had upset them. Therefore, the ability to deal with upsetting incidents may increase as children become more confident, resilient and assertive. This may also be related to digital safety skills, which we know can be less developed in younger children.<sup>19</sup>

Just over half of children and young people felt that social networking sites took their safety seriously (55 per cent), and would take action if they were to report an abuse (56 per cent).

**Table 6: Children who blocked the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience by age and gender**

	Female aged 15-16	37%
	Male aged 15-16	38%
	Female aged 13-14	27%
	Male aged 13-14	30%
	Female aged 11-12	20%
	Male aged 11-12	15%

<sup>19</sup> Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2010). *Risks and safety for children on the internet: the UK report*. LSE. Available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33730/>



# Section 3: The experiences of boys and girls

The gender of the child had an impact on the social networking sites they chose to use, and the nature of the experiences they encountered.

Both boys and girls agreed that their favourite three sites were Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. A higher proportion of girls than boys use sites for photo sharing such as Instagram (27 per cent of girls and

11 per cent of boys) and Tumblr (22 per cent of girls and 7 per cent of boys). More girls than boys used sites marketed at younger children, such as Moshi Monsters (6 per cent of boys compared to 16 per cent of girls) and Club Penguin (12 per cent of boys compared to 19 per cent of girls).

Table 7: Social networking sites used by boys and girls<sup>20</sup>

Social networking site	Percentage of male social networking site users, who had a profile on these sites	Percentage of female social networking site users, who had a profile on these sites
Facebook	85%	83%
YouTube	62%	58%
Twitter	47%	53%
Instagram	11%	27%
Google+	19%	16%
Club Penguin	12%	19%
Tumblr	7%	22%
Moshi Monsters	6%	16%
Pinterest	4%	7%
Habbo Hotel	3%	6%
Formspring.me	3%	6%
Chatroulette	3%	0%
Ask.fm	0%	1%
Other	6%	8%

20 Base: Children with social networking profiles. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.



## Likes and dislikes by gender

All children and young people with social networking profiles were asked about their likes and dislikes (not just those who had been upset on social networking

sites). Boys and girls generally liked and disliked very similar things about social networking sites.

Table 8: Likes by gender<sup>21</sup>







					
	Rank	Total (all sites)	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter
Boys	1.	Being able to talk to my friends (32%)	Being able to talk to my friends (33%)	Learning new things (24%)	Keeping up to date with gossip (26%)
	2.	All of my friends are on there (27%)	All of my friends are on there (28%)	Being creative (15%)	Being able to talk to my friends (12%)
	3.	Learning new things (19%)	Keeping up to date with gossip (9%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (8%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (11%)
Girls	1.	Being able to talk to my friends (34%)	Being able to talk to my friends (34%)	Learning new things (21%)	Keeping up to date with gossip (29%)
	2.	Keeping up to date with gossip (30%)	All of my friends are on there (21%)	Being creative (14%)	Being able to talk to my friends (10%)
	3.	All of my friends are on there (22%)	Keeping up to date with gossip (20%)	Feeling I am part of an online community (11%)	Feeling more confident on it than I feel in real life (9%)

Table 9: Dislikes by gender<sup>22</sup>

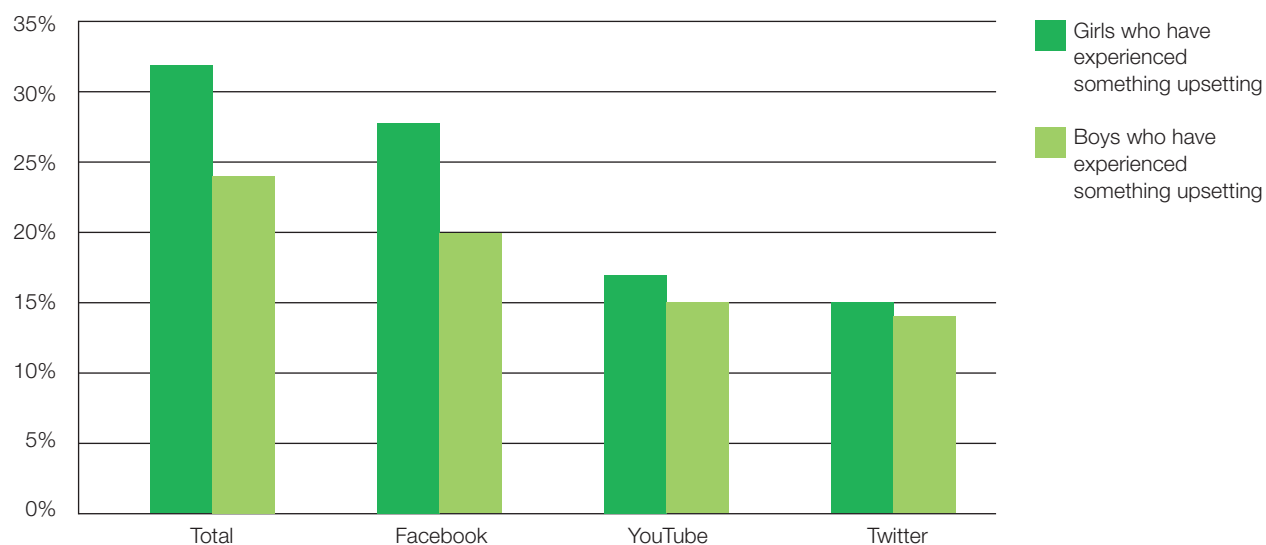
					
	Rank	Total (all sites)	Facebook	YouTube	Twitter
Boys	1.	Adverts (28%)	Spam (13%)	Adverts (37%)	Spam (12%)
	2.	Spam (18%)	Cyber bullying (12%); Adverts (12%)	Spending too much time on there (6%); Spam (6%)	Strangers (9%)
	3.	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (14%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (10%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (4%); Seeing stuff you don't want to see, like porn (4%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (8%)
Girls	1.	Adverts (31%)	Adverts (15%)	Adverts (40%)	Spam (18%)
	2.	Spending too much time on there (23%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (14%)	Seeing stuff you don't want to see, like porn (10%)	Spending too much time on there (14%)
	3.	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (20%)	Spending too much time on there (12%)	Spending too much time on there (7%)	People can be rude and hurtful without realising it (10%)

21 Base: Children with social networking profiles. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options. Only the top three likes are included. Sample sizes were too small to show the other social networking sites.

22 Base: Children with social networking profiles. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options. Only the top three dislikes are included. Sample sizes were too small to show the other social networking sites.

## Upsetting experiences by gender

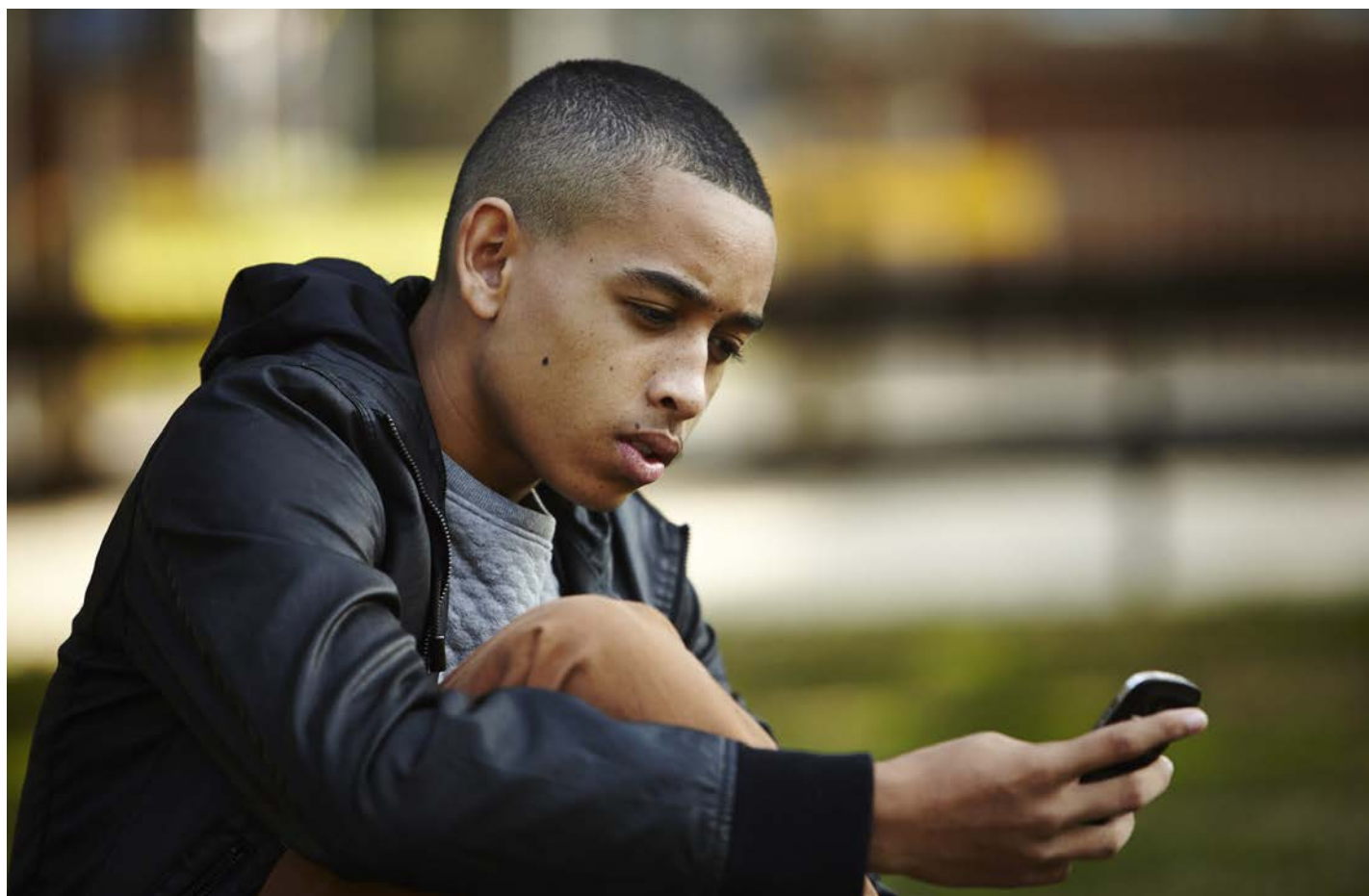
Figure 3: Upsetting experiences by gender<sup>23</sup>



More girls had felt upset by an experience over the past year than boys (32 per cent versus 24 per cent). This difference was especially clear on Facebook (28 per cent versus 20 per cent), but was the case for all of the top three sites. It is unclear whether this is due

to an increased volume of upsetting incidents in girls' use of the sites, or whether it is down to differences in emotional response to the same events between the genders.

<sup>23</sup> Base: Children with social networking profiles.



## Differences in frequency of upsetting experiences between girls and boys

Although boys were less likely than girls to have an upsetting experience, those that were upset were twice as likely to feel this way every day or nearly every day (16 per cent versus 8 per cent). Girls were more likely than boys to experience something upsetting once or twice per month (33 per cent versus 24 per cent).

## Differing experiences of boys and girls

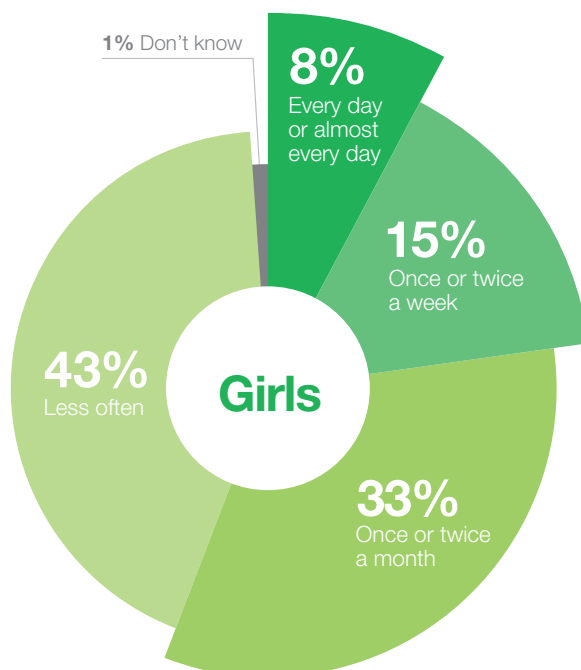
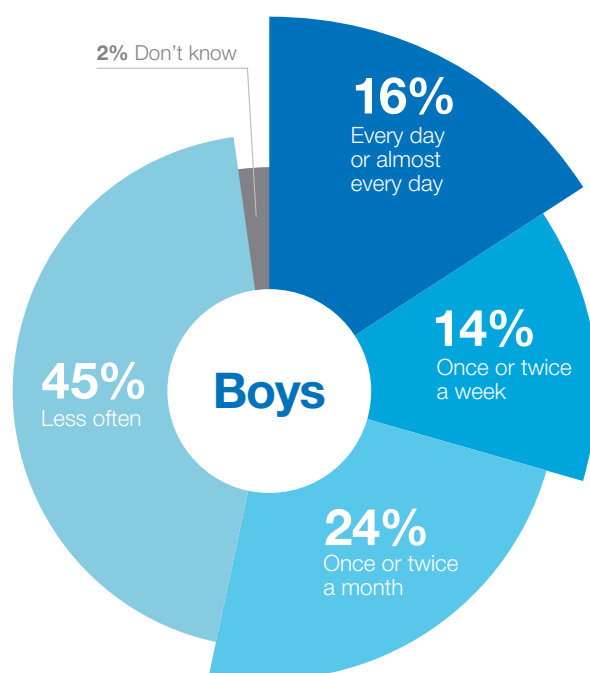
Girls were more likely to report being upset by exclusions from social groups or friendships, and pressure to look or behave in a particular way.

Boys reported more concern about violent and aggressive language and unwanted sexual messages. They also had more experience of various kinds of discrimination, including racism, homophobia and sexism.

I was asked to send sexual pictures and videos to someone who wouldn't leave me alone. I was also threatened because I had stood up for someone, by an adult who threatened to come round and use violence against us.

Girl, 16


















Frequency of upsetting experiences by gender<sup>24</sup>



<sup>24</sup> Base: Children who experienced something that upset them.



## Upsetting experiences amongst 11-16 year olds by gender

Upsetting experience	Girls	Boys
 Trolling	37%	36%
 Excluded from social group/friendship	26%	18%
 Aggressive or violent language	13%	25%
 Pressure into looking/acting a certain way	17%	11%
 Cyber stalking	11%	15%
 Received unwanted sexual messages (passive)	8%	18%
 Racism	8%	13%
 Asked/Used personal information	8%	8%
 Asked to send/respond to sexual message (active)	8%	8%
 Homophobia	5%	11%
 Sexism	4%	11%
 Ageism	1%	7%
 Encouragement to hurt myself	3%	4%
 Other	6%	7%
 Prefer not to say	3%	8%
 None of these things	34%	22%
 Don't know	7%	2%

## Who boys and girls identified as responsible

When we asked 11-16 year olds who they thought was responsible for causing their upsetting experience on a social networking site, there were striking differences between the answers of boys and those of girls.

Boys were more likely than girls to say that someone they did not know face to face was responsible for the experience (75 per cent versus 47 per cent), whereas girls were more likely than boys to blame a face to face friend who is a child (46 per cent versus 17 per cent). Boys are more likely to blame a group of children they only know online (10 per cent versus 2 per cent).

Who boys identified as the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience<sup>25</sup>



### 75% Unknown to the child



### 44% Known to the child

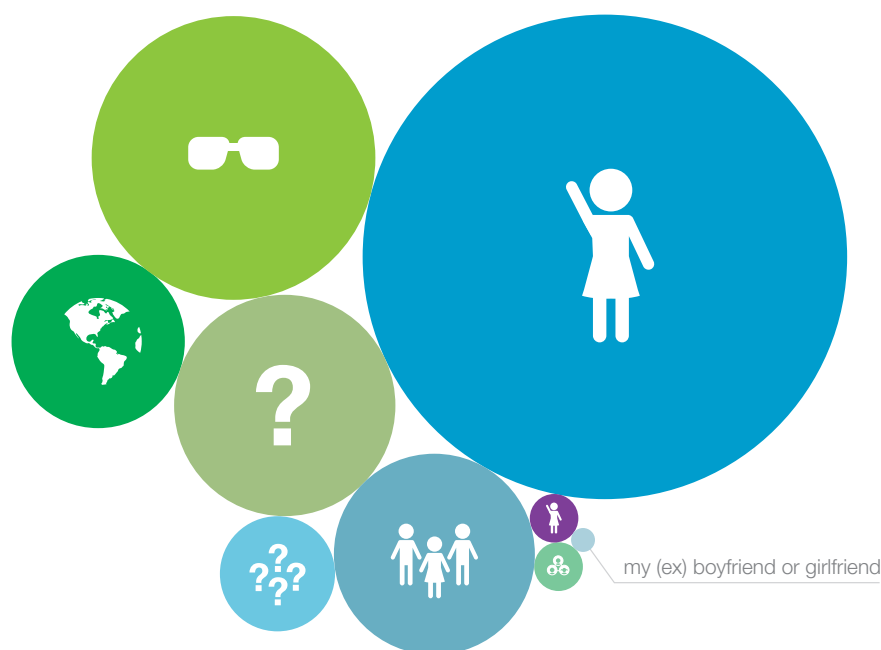


### 3% Other



<sup>25</sup> Base: Boys who experienced something that upset them. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

Who girls identified as the person or people responsible for the upsetting experience<sup>26</sup>



## 47% Unknown to the child



## 67% Known to the child



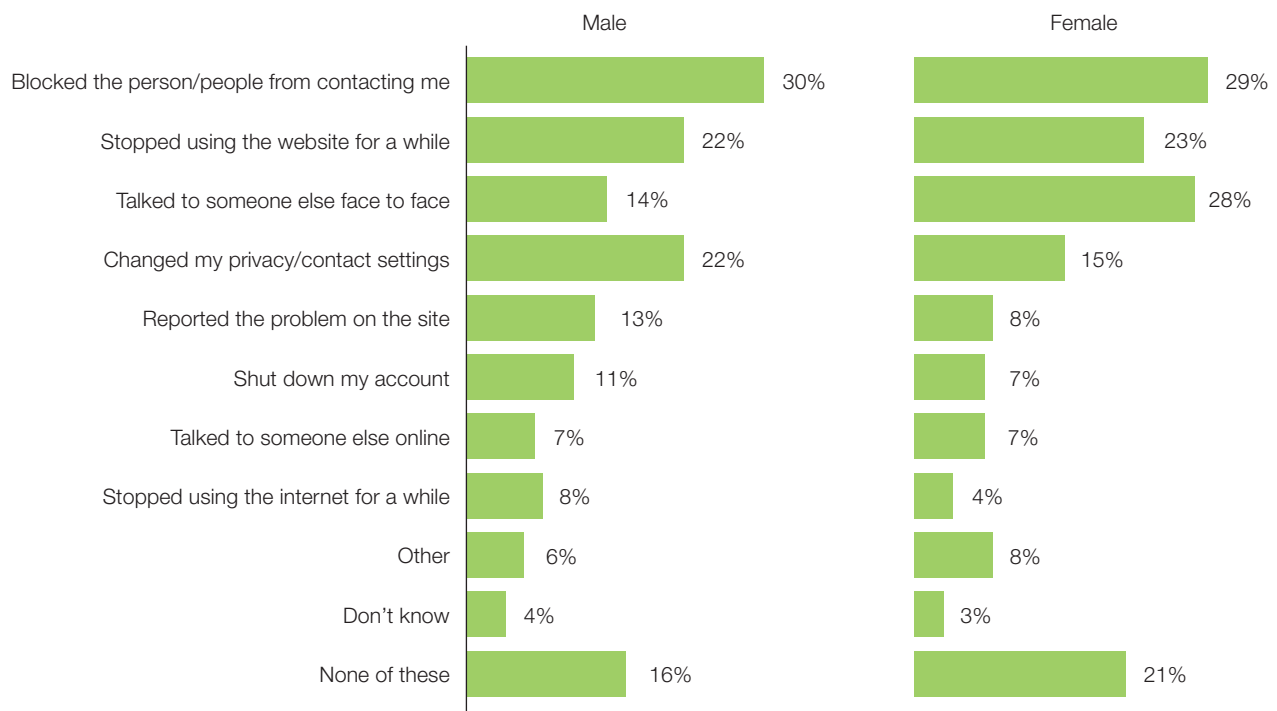
## 2% Other



26 Base: Girls who experienced something that upset them. Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

## Differences in action taken between boys and girls

Figure 4: Action taken by boys and girls



Boys were particularly unlikely to seek help face to face – only 14 per cent of boys did so compared to 28 per cent of girls. Boys were more likely to change their privacy or contact settings than girls (22 per cent versus 15 per cent).

# Appendix 1: Methodology and ethics

## Methodology, consent and ethics

In December 2012, the NSPCC conducted an online self completion survey of 1024 11-16 year olds in the UK who had a profile on at least one social networking site. Interviewees were recruited by a market research agency, ResearchBods, who had a pre-existing panel of over 45,000 children. Interviewees received a written explanation of the research aims before signing a consent form. Their parents had previously given their consent for their child(ren) to be part of the online panel, and were given the opportunity to opt-out of this particular survey due to its sensitive nature. Each interviewee received a modest honorarium. Questionnaire completion lasted an average of 7 minutes, and comprised a series of questions presented online.

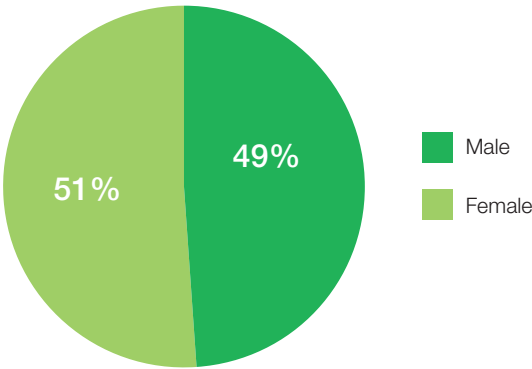
The NSPCC's Research Ethics Committee approved the research methodology and appropriate protocols were put in place to ensure that the rights and well-being of children were protected during the research process. These included:

- The right to opt out of answering any or all questions, without penalty
- Obtaining informed consent from both children and parents
- Clear signposting to ChildLine
- Information about how to complain
- Information about anonymity and confidentiality, data storage and publication of findings

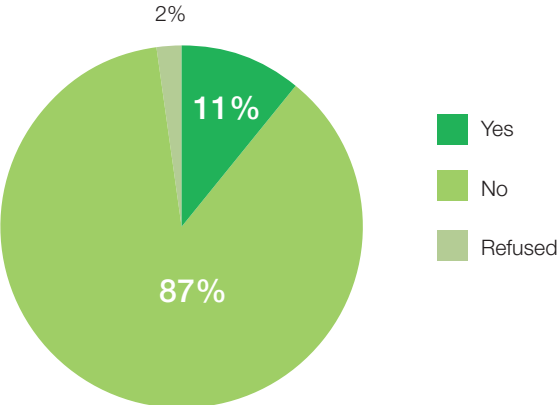
We did not sample children younger than the age of 11 because of the ethical issues involved, which would have significantly added to the cost of the research. For results based on the total sample, we can say with 95 per cent confidence that the error margin attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 3.06 per cent.

# Appendix 2: Profile of 11-16 year olds in our sample

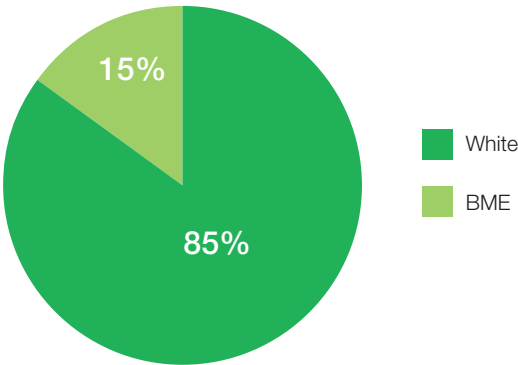
Gender



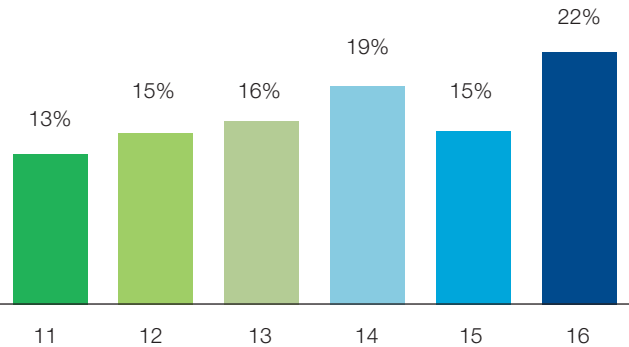
Disability



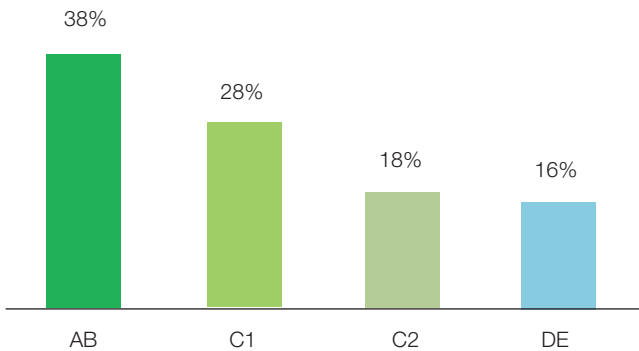
Ethnicity



Age



Social grade







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