

# Child sexual abuse in Finland Barnahus project

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## Summary report of qualitative and quantitative research

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# Background and research goals of the study

# Background and research goals of the study

## 1/2

The council of Europe is currently implementing a Project on ensuring child-friendly justice through the effective operation of the Barnahus-units in Finland. It is co-financed by the EU Structural Reform Support Programme and implemented in close cooperation with the EU DG Reform and the Finnish National Institute of Health and welfare THL for the period 1/9/2021 to 29/2/2024.

Barnahus is a leading European model for child-friendly multidisciplinary and interagency response to child sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2019 Finland initiated its own nationwide Barnahus project to be implemented around the core of five university hospital expert units specialising on forensic psychology/ psychiatry (Barnahus-units). The EU-CoE Joint Project Barnahus in Finland sets to support the Finnish authorities in addressing the needs and challenges identified since the launch of their project so, as to reduce significant existing delays in the pre-trial and judicial processes involving children.

# Background and research goals of the study

## 2/2



The project is divided into 3 main components:

1. Improving the legislation and policy framework for the functioning of Barnahus services in Finland;
2. Strengthening inter- and multiagency coordination mechanisms to reduce the delays in the duration of the judicial processes related to child-victims of violence;
3. Increasing awareness on child sexual abuse through child participation.

## Topics of Interest – Qualitative research

The aim of the qualitative study was to shed light on the following topics:

- Awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse;
- How to react when finding out about a minor who has been sexually abused;
- Thoughts about Barnahus – model & related wishes and expectations
- The ideal approach used by professionals to handle and communicate with child victims;
- General thoughts on raising awareness of the topic (sources, channels, style & tone etc.);
- Opinions on the communication tools and materials used to explain and encourage reporting as well as general awareness raising.

## Topics of Interest – Quantitative research

The aim of the quantitative study was to shed light on the following topics:

- To establish a benchmark on Finland's understanding of child sexual exploitation and abuse at the start of the implementation of the project.
- To explore the rise of awareness of the existence of child sexual exploitation and abuse; how to identify if a child has been victimized; where and how to report a suspected child abuse case; which tools would be helpful in better detecting and understanding child sexual abuse.



# QUALITATIVE REPORT

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# Research approach

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# Research approach – Qualitative study

## METHODOLOGY

- 4 focus groups in Helsinki, Finland
- 8 participants per group
- LOI = 2 hours groups

## TARGET GROUP

- Children and adolescents (boys and girls), 12-17 years of age
- Parents with children under 18 living at home

## FGD STRUCTURE

- 1st FGD: Parents with children under 18 years. old (9.3.2023)
- 2nd FGD: Parents with children under 18 years old (14.3.2023)
- 3rd FGD: Girls of the age frame of 12-17 years old (15.3.2023)
- 4th FGD: Boys of the age frame of 12-17 years old (16.3.2023)

# Symbols and participants' comments



Using this symbol stands for content connected to **parents** in general



Using this symbol stands for content connected to **children/adolescents** in general (not boys and girls separately)



Using this symbol stands for content connected to **girls** only



Using this symbol stands for content connected to **boys** only

This report features lots of excerpts from the participants' comments. The comments are presented to illustrate the findings. The comments may have been edited a bit. This has been done to make them shorter and easier to understand.

# Main findings

# Children's rights and perceptions of child sexual abuse

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## Results of the qualitative study

# The understanding of children's rights



The children and adolescents define children's rights in broad terms. **The girls had a stronger focus on rights related to mental wellbeing rather than physical rights** (the right to be a child, freedom of self-expression and self-fulfillment and the right to be heard), whereas the **boys raised very concrete aspects and definitions** (children's right to receive care, the right to education and hobbies). Both the girls and the boys mentioned basic human rights as a basis for children's rights. Children's right to physical integrity and the right to set their own boundaries also came up in both groups.



In the parents' groups, the following themes were brought up:

- the right to receive good care,
- the right to a safe growing environment,
- the right to their own body and bodily integrity,
- the right to education and civilisation,
- the right to be a child and to live age-appropriate life.

**The parents' thinking reflects their own responsibility and role in securing children's rights.**

”

*Of course, a child has all the human rights, but also a very important thing is the right to education, in Finland the right to free education, and then the right to be taken care of. Someone takes care of a minor.*


(Girls)

*From the parents' perspective, there is the responsibility to take care and ensure food, safety and living conditions. For the parents' side, it is a responsibility.*


(Parents)

# What is considered to be child sexual abuse

In all groups it was concluded that child sexual abuse **takes various forms**. It includes a huge range of sexual acts against children, at different levels and in different contexts, from suggestive language and inappropriate touching to rape and sexual violence. Sexual abuse can also occur online.



The children and adolescents raised the issue that child sexual abuse is associated with a clear **sense of reluctance, coercion and pressure** from the child's perspective. They also expressed a strong awareness that in some situations the **abuser may also be another child**.



According to the parents, sexual abuse of children includes any sexual act against a minor. A possible exception to this rule was the case of acts between two teenagers of the same age (at the same developmental level), both of whom wanted to commit such acts. The parents seemed to be **particularly concerned about online child sexual abuse**, e.g., exposure to sexual images and speech, asking for and further distributing images of children.

”

*If you touch a child without permission, he or she does not want to be touched at all. And rape or forcing someone to do something, even if it does not involve sexual intercourse.*

(Girls)

*It can be inappropriate touching. Or outright rape, of course. It is as simple as someone touching you in an uncomfortable way.*

(Boys)

*Any act where a child or young person feels distressed or threatened. It is not always a physical act. It could be something verbal, or a picture received to one's cell phone – that can also cause distress in a child.*

(Parents)



# Awareness raising and education to prevent sexual violence against children: Existing materials and education



Both the parents and the children & adolescents **were in need of more information on child sexual abuse.**

- Child sexual abuse is a heavy topic that does not motivate people to seek information on their own.
- For many, the news about cases of abuse is perhaps the most important source of information on this issue.
- There is little coverage of the issue at school, and **it was hoped that schools would play a greater role in raising awareness** – both the children and the parents expressed this wish. The topic should be addressed at school **continuously.**



”

*There have been some cases in the news, quite a lot of cases. There's very little talk about child sexual abuse in school. (Girls)*

*Usually, you encounter it when there is news of a bigger case of child sexual abuse in Finland. So, there in the corner of the article there may be a tiny section about what to do if facing this issue. (Parents)*

# Talking with children about sexual violence



The children and adolescents reported that they had discussed the issue with their own parents to some extent. Their parents have mainly **warned them about the various dangers** (don't go out with strangers, don't talk to strangers online, etc.) and pointed out that such issues and concerns **should always be brought to the attention of adults**. The boys seemed to have discussed child sexual abuse with their own parents more than the girls. The girls were more likely than the boys to emphasise the embarrassing nature of such discussions.



The parents reported that they had **discussed** these issues with their children to some extent. **However, many wondered whether this might have been too little**. Despite the huge importance of the topic, many find it difficult and distressing to raise it with their children. According to the parents, teenagers can also be very reluctant to talk about this issue with their parents.

# Perceptions on who may be the victim of child sexual abuse



In all groups it was stated that in principle, **any child can become a victim of sexual abuse.**

The children and adolescents pointed out that the following factors can increase the risk:

- Gender: **girls are more likely or more often victims of sexual abuse than boys** (the boys argued that pedophiles are mostly men and that men also have more physical strength, making the act easier to commit).
- Age of the child: **younger children may have a higher risk of becoming sexually abused** because they are less aware than older children and therefore less able to recognize, watch out for and avoid potentially dangerous situations.
- The groups further discussed that **children who spend a lot of time online or outside their home are at higher risk of being sexually abused.**
- The girls also talked about the fact that a child who has been neglected by adults is more likely than other children to become a victim of sexual abuse. **Receiving attention from adults can also tempt such children into very harmful situations.**



Similarly, to the young, the parents also considered **gender and age** as factors increasing the risk of becoming a victim. In addition, they talked about how the child's **home conditions and relationship with parents** can either protect the child or can put the child at risk of sexual abuse. **Children with developmental disabilities** were also mentioned as a very vulnerable group by the parents in this respect.

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*If you're like 10 or 9 years old, you don't have much understanding that you're being abused. If you're in middle school or high school, you'll have more information about it and it's easier for you to know if someone is doing something bad to you.*

(Girls)

*The younger you are, the weaker and less experienced you are. Don't have the ability to defend themselves or report to parents or teachers.*

(Parents)

*Well, probably, a child in a poor social situation is more likely to become a victim - if they have a bit poorer home conditions. If, as we read in the papers, the child runs away and ends up with strangers, and then what happens. But I don't think in such black and white terms. It can happen to anyone.*

(Parents)

# Perceptions on perpetrators

It was agreed in all groups that **the abuser can be anyone** – a stranger or even a family member. However, both the children and the parents **associated various problems and conditions with individuals who commit child sexual abuse**, issues such as mental health challenges, substance abuse problems, and difficult childhood experiences were pointed out.



The fact that **the abuser could also be another child** was raised very strongly by the children. Also, the idea that **the abuser is more often a man than a woman** was raised in the girls' and the boys' groups.



The parents stressed that the abuser is quite often **an adult known to the child and in a position of authority** (relative, teacher, coach, etc.). The fact that the abuser can also be another child was only very briefly mentioned by the parents.



*There might be some problems. I wouldn't see someone who has everything going well in life, although that's probably possible, but maybe more likely people who have some problems in life. Maybe there is something in their background - they may have had a hard time.*

(Girls)

*Things have happened in one's own growth and history. Maybe a person is more likely to end up in such a situation if they don't have an entirely healthy childhood.*

(Parents)

*It could be anyone. But the likelihood is that it is somehow in a position of authority or something like that. Statistically this is probably the case.*

(Parents)

## Reactions in case of a suspicion of child sexual abuse



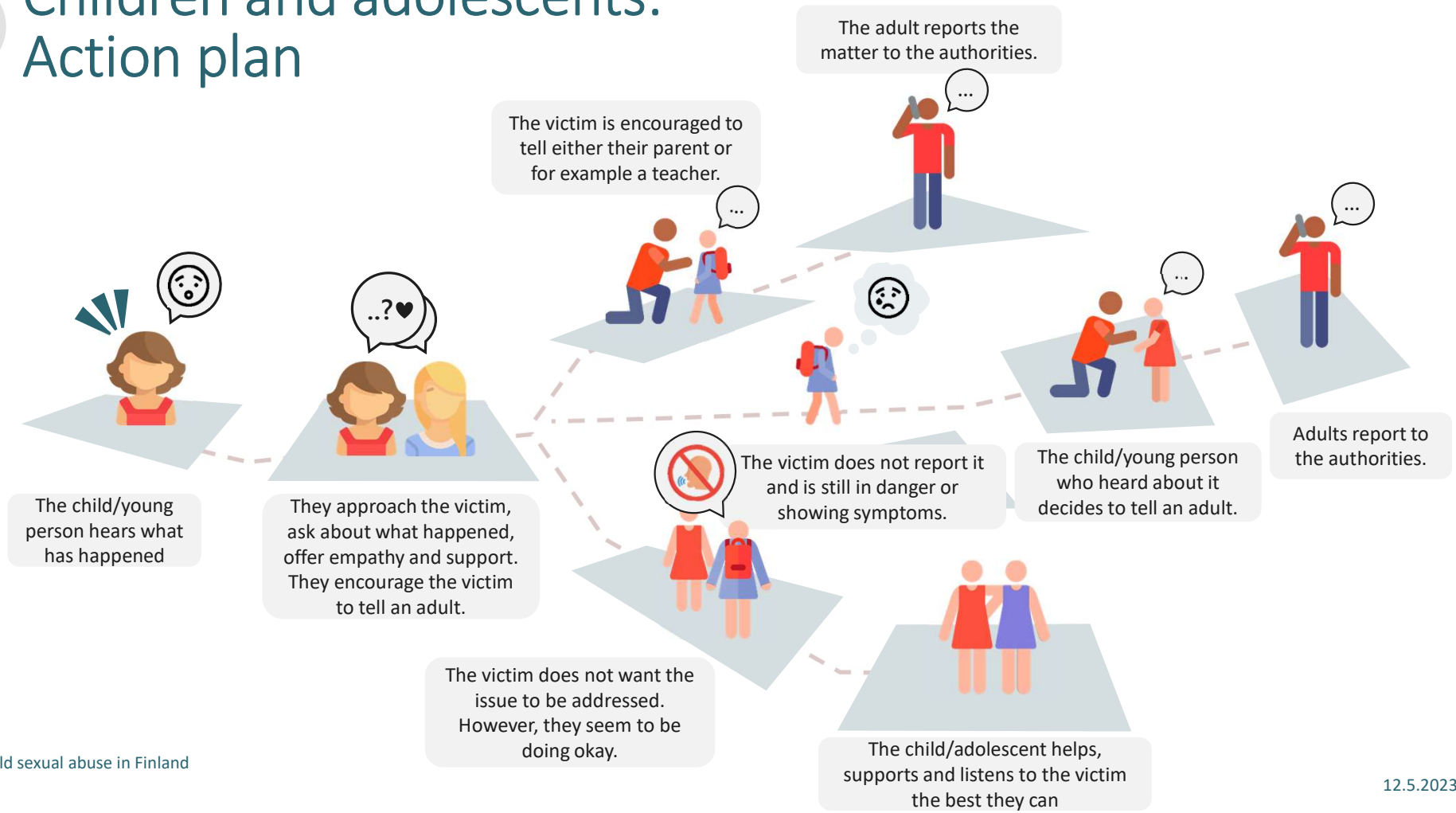
The children and adolescents said that whether the victim was their friend or someone they do not know that well, **they would approach the victim directly and ask about what happened. They would encourage the victim to report to the police or to tell their parents or their teacher.** As for reporting to authorities, the only thing that really came to mind for the young participants was to make a criminal report to the police. If the victim did not want to tell anyone, the **young would have a very high threshold for breaking the victim's trust.** This could lead to not reporting the abuse to anyone. However, if the negative consequences of the act started to show up in the victim's life or the victim would still be in danger, many would, despite breaking the trust, report it to adults.



The parents would not approach a potential victim as eagerly as the young - unless the victim was very close to them. For many, a little pause for reflection would be important before taking any action. If the potential abuse had occurred outside family, parents would report it to the **victim's parents in the first place.** However, they would want to make sure that a report was also made to the authorities. If the situation required them to report it to the authorities themselves (no action taken by the parents or domestic abuse), they would **most likely report it to the child welfare authorities.** It was considered that from there the case would proceed to the police as well. **In very urgent situations, and when the child is in constant danger, some parents would also be willing to report the matter directly to the police.**



# Children and adolescents: Action plan





# Parents: Action plan



# Concept of Barnahus

## Results of the qualitative study





# Concept of Barnahus: Research method



In the parents' groups feedback on the concept of Barnahus was addressed as follows:

- The moderator read aloud a description of the Barnahus service concept → Spontaneous reactions and ideas about the service concept were discussed with the participants.
- The participants were then divided into small groups to discuss and create a presentation board ("poster") of the most ideal Barnahus service concept.



In the children and adolescents' groups feedback on the concept of Barnahus was addressed as follows:

- The moderator read aloud a description of the Barnahus service concept → Spontaneous reactions and ideas about the service concept were discussed with the participants.
- The participants were then shown the video "What happens when I visit a Barnahus unit for an interview?" → The young discussed their thoughts about the video and on the Barnahus service in general, based on the video seen.

Next, I would like to tell you a bit about a service entity called Barnahus. Barnahus is an operating model that enhances the investigation process of suspected violence against children and young people, as well as the support and treatment of children who have experienced violence. Victims of sexual abuse and violence being an essential part of this work.

The service aims to avoid unnecessary burdening of a young person who is already in a traumatising situation. One of the ways to achieve this is by avoiding several interviews in various places. Repeated interviews about very difficult experiences are burdensome for the victims and therefore things should be resolved in way that several interviews are not needed.

The service entity brings together professionals of several fields. The operating model is described as an entity of 'four rooms'. Each of these rooms has its own purpose and functions. These are: criminal investigation, physical health, collaboration/protection and mental health.



# Spontaneous reactions to the concept of Barnahus were highly positive

In all groups, the participants reacted positively to the concept of Barnahus:

- A key point that was highlighted was **the avoidance of multiple repeated interviews in multiple locations, hence minimizing the burden on the victim**; the victim does not have to "reopen the wounds" over and over again with a different person. This was considered to be of the utmost importance, especially when dealing with such a traumatic issue.
- The description conveys that **the service model focuses on victims' care and well-being, not just on the investigation of the suspected crime**. Supporting the victim's psychological well-being was seen important, so that the victim can truly recover from what has happened.
- In addition, the description gives the impression **that efforts are made to keep the process fast and efficient**: all authorities co-operate and information flows efficiently between them. This means that the **victim does not have to wait** for months for the case to be processed but can concentrate on recovering from the incident as soon as possible.
- Individually, in the girls' group and in the other group of the parents, it was mentioned that victims may have the perception that dealing with an allegation of abuse is a long and exhausting process and therefore do not want to bring the matter to the attention of the authorities → This description of the Barnahus model shows that this is not the case. Knowing that the process is not that exhausting can encourage victims to come forward and report their case.

”

*It sounded good when they focus on the mental health of the victim and not on getting the job done. They're thinking about the person and how they're going to cope later on in life.*

(Boys)

*There is no more of that constant digging. No need to go back to those experiences. If no one understands the psychological side of it, then the traumatization is accumulated.*

(Parents)

*If it has happened, it is already traumatic. They would deal with it so that they don't have to be reminded many times.*

(Girls)

*Not too heavy a burden. Many people think that if I tell, I will have to run here and here.*

(Parents)



## The ideal environment was described as homely

In the parents' groups, the participants agreed that **the ideal Barnahus environment is calm, homely and child-sensitive:**

- Location could be a **little more remote**, not in the heart of the city center  
→ Calming environment
  - The environment should be **homely and home-like**, not institutional or hospital-like → Feels more familiar and safer for the child
  - The participants suggested that a homely atmosphere could be created by **bright colors** and the right furniture choices: **sofas and carpets** could be used just like in a normal home
  - Ideally, "**children's items**" would be displayed in the rooms, giving children the opportunity to engage in relaxing and enjoyable activities. For example, toys and games, animals or an aquarium could be such elements.
- Such an environment aims to calm the child and create a sense of security and, at its best, bring joy during a difficult process.

”

*Some kind of camping center, like in confirmation camp. Somewhere remote.*

(Parents)

*Home-like, not an institution, not a hospital.*

(Parents)

*Not an institution where you are interrogated and have cold rooms. But first ensuring that the client is comfortable in the situation.*

(Parents)

*Home-like, if it's an ascetic place, it can be scary.*

(Parents)



# Ideal environment as pictures

In the parents' groups the participants were asked to choose pictures that represent the ideal environment for Barnahus. The pictures are presented below.



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## All the people working in Barnahus units must be experienced in working with children



The participants were asked which professionals should be involved in the service and were asked to describe what these people should ideally be like. The following themes emerged rather consistently across the parent's groups:

- All professionals working with children should have a **high level of experience of interacting and working with children.**
- It is particularly important that adults working with children are **empathetic and able to relate to the child at the child's level** and to meet the child at an age-appropriate level.
- Among the different professional groups, **psychologists were identified as playing a key role for the child:** they are able to interview the child without leading them and can help the child to process what has happened. Depending on the case, the child may also need help of a therapist, a doctor or child welfare authorities.
- For investigative reasons, **the presence of the police in the process is important.** That is to gather the material for the trial. **The police** officer dealing with the case should also have experience and expertise in working with children.
- Overall, it would be best if **the team working on the case and with the child remained the same throughout the whole process.** This will allow the child and the professionals to build trust, strengthen the child's sense of security and reduce the burden on the child.

*Someone who understands, whether it is a policeman or a doctor, that they specialize in young people and children.*

(Parents)

*Psychologist is important. At that stage the child is already processing what has happened to them, and the psychologist is certainly better able to guide that processing than a police officer.*

(Parents)

*It has to be like a group, which would preferably be the same group. That there is a psychologist and a police officer. You get a broad competence on the side of the authorities.*

(Parents)



## The ideal process is fast, but the child tells the pace

The parents say that the process should be **quick and efficient from the authorities' side:**

- Interviews are kept to a minimum and unnecessary repetition is avoided. The authorities are also in close contact with each other and there is a seamless transfer of information between them.
- The child is interviewed by only one person and the others follow via video link. This not only minimizes the burden on the child, but also makes the work of the authorities more efficient and ensures that all parties have the same information about the situation.

On the other hand, the process must be **at the pace and on the terms of the child:**

- The child has time to get to know the professionals before the process starts → A sense of trust and security is created.
- The child is approached in an age-appropriate way, for example through play, games and drawing.
- Throughout the process, the "child sets the pace", i.e., the child should not be pressured but should be allowed to take breaks to progress at their own pace.

In the first parents' group, **the idea of a personal support person for the child was spontaneously raised:**

- Ideally, the child would be assigned a support person, i.e., one adult who would accompany the child throughout the process → It is easiest for the child to have one safe adult who can be trusted and relied upon.

➤ Overall, the process should give the child the feeling that they are safe, they can trust, and they will be helped.



## Important activities include ensuring proper follow-up care and providing nice activities for children

In the parents' groups, the following activities were brought up as something that should be included in the Barnahus service:

- A **thorough investigation** of the situation in preparation for a possible court case: a multi-professional team will investigate the child's situation and ensure that they are safe.
  - **The importance of follow-up and monitoring was strongly emphasized.** Support and help for the child must not stop short: support – such as therapy – must be available for as long as the child needs it. Ideally, a follow-up plan for the child will be created already during the process. After the case has been handled, the well-being of the child should be monitored by the authorities.
  - Among other activities, the children should have **access to age-appropriate, relaxing activities that** allow them to take a short break and have a little moment for themselves.
  - Low-threshold service was also suggested as one of the activities. The child could seek for help for themselves, even with a friend - if for one reason or another the child does not want his or her parents to be involved in the process.
- In general, the whole Barnahus service should communicate to the child that **things are going well, that help is available and that what has happened is in no way the child's fault.**

”

*That the follow-up care plan would have been received there. And you would know when and where you are going to go for treatment.*

(Parents)

*There must also be some kind of follow-up process. The situation just does not disappear like that. All at once, yes, but some kind of follow-up.*

(Parents)



## The video about a visit to Barnahus unit received positive feedback

In the groups of the children & adolescents, participants were shown the video "What happens when I visit a Barnahus unit for an interview?" The video received **very positive feedback**.

The **video conveys that the child is the focus of attention** and that efforts are made to make the situation as easy and comfortable as possible for the child. The following points were raised in this sense in both the girls' and the boys' group:

- The professionals **welcome the child warmly** and come to say hello → The child is given time to get to know the adults involved before the actual handling of the case.
- In the interview, **the child is allowed to first talk about things that are comfortable and important** to them, such as their hobbies → This also builds trust between the child and the interviewer.
- The **process is carried out at the child's pace**, the child is allowed to take breaks and is not pressured or forced to talk about anything.
- There is only one person with the child during the interview and the others follow the conversation via video link.



”

*What it looked like, it seemed like, very suitable for children. There are professionals there to help and a warm welcome for the child.*

(Girls)

*They took breaks between the conversation to give the child time to be themselves. And the police and someone else listened to the conversation that they weren't there. It didn't become overwhelming for the child.*

(Girls)

*Feeling good and safe to go at your own pace, and not straight off bombarded with questions.*

(Boys)

12.5.2023

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## The children and adolescents' hopes and expectations concerning the Barnahus model are similar to what came up in the parents' groups

After watching this video, a further discussion was held with the children and adolescents to understand **what they now think about the Barnahus service model and what it would ideally be like**. The points raised are very similar to those of the parents' groups:

- The young also described the **ideal Barnahus environment as homelike and non-institutional**. The ideal environment is colorful, and offering children activities that they can enjoy → Creates a sense of security for the child.
- The participants found it important that **the professionals working in Barnahus have experience in working with children and interviewing children** → They know how to interview children in the right way without overburdening them and how to establish a trusting relationship with them. Psychologists were identified as the key group and were considered to have the necessary skills in this area.
- The children and adolescents' groups also supported the idea of having one **"support person" who would accompany the child throughout the process** → It is easier for the child to build trust with one adult, whereas changing persons can be confusing and stressful for the child.
- Individually in the boys' group, it was also pointed out that ideally the child would have a say in the choice of their own "support person" or interviewer. For example, the gender of the interviewer may in some cases have relevance to the victim, it was noted.

”

*Some flowers and children's drawings on the walls. Kind of cozy. Maybe they should think about the little children the most. What makes the little kids feel good, makes everyone else feel good.*

(Boys)

*And it's good that the psychologist is there to talk to the child rather than the police. The police can be scary, or at least a more official figure than a nice woman like that.*

(Boys)

*When a person is around for a long time, the trust grows. If it's a different person every time, the child will be confused as to what to say to this person, whether they know everything or what.*

(Girls)

# About the communication tools



# Results of the qualitative study

## The videos serve well as communication tools

- **The Tell Someone You Trust video** received a positive response, and it was considered suitable **to be shown in schools**.
- **The Kiko and Hand video** was complimented by the children and adolescents for being **easy to understand and for its gentle tone**.
- The guidelines for parents contained mainly important information, but the leaflets seem too long, wordy and difficult to read. **In order to attract parents' attention, the texts should be more concise, visual elements should be added, or the information could be presented in video format.**
- Materials on the subject should also communicate about online abuse. The parents were particularly concerned about this issue and feel that it is difficult to monitor and intervene. For this reason, **very concrete guidelines and tools to prevent online abuse were requested.**
- Information on **how to recognize child sexual abuse and what to do if you find out that a child has been sexually abused was also wished for.**
- All in all, the information should be very **easy to understand, as practical and concise as possible**, so that it could reach people even when the issue is not acute, i.e., in a preventive way.



# Appendix

Group 1: Parents		
Gender	Age	Children
Female	48	daughter 13 y/o
Male	37	daughters 0, 2 and 14 y/o
Male	47	daughters 11 and 15 y/o
Female	43	daughters 12 and 15 y/o
Male	45	daughters 5, 10 and 14 y/o
Female	46	sons 8 and 12 y/o
Female	39	daughters 12 and 13 y/o
Male	50	daughter 14 y/o and son 16 y/o

Group 2: Parents		
Gender	Age	Children
Female	55	son 13 y/o
Male	47	daughters 2, 5, 8, 12 and 14 y/o
Male	43	daughter 15 y/o
Male	59	son 14 y/o
Female	39	sons 16 and 19 y/o
Female	44	daughters 10 and 13-v, sons 11 and 11 y/o
Female	46	daughter 15 y/o
Female	41	daughter 16 y/o and sons 17 y/o

Group 3: Girls	
Girl	13 y/o
Girl	13 y/o
Girl	16 y/o
Girl	17 y/o
Girl	15 y/o
Girl	15 y/o
Girl	14 y/o
Girl	17 y/o

Group 4: Boys	
Boy	16 y/o
Boy	12 y/o
Boy	14 y/o
Boy	13 y/o
Boy	12 y/o
Boy	15 y/o
Boy	16 y/o
Boy	16 y/o



# QUANTITATIVE REPORT

# Research approach

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## Research approach

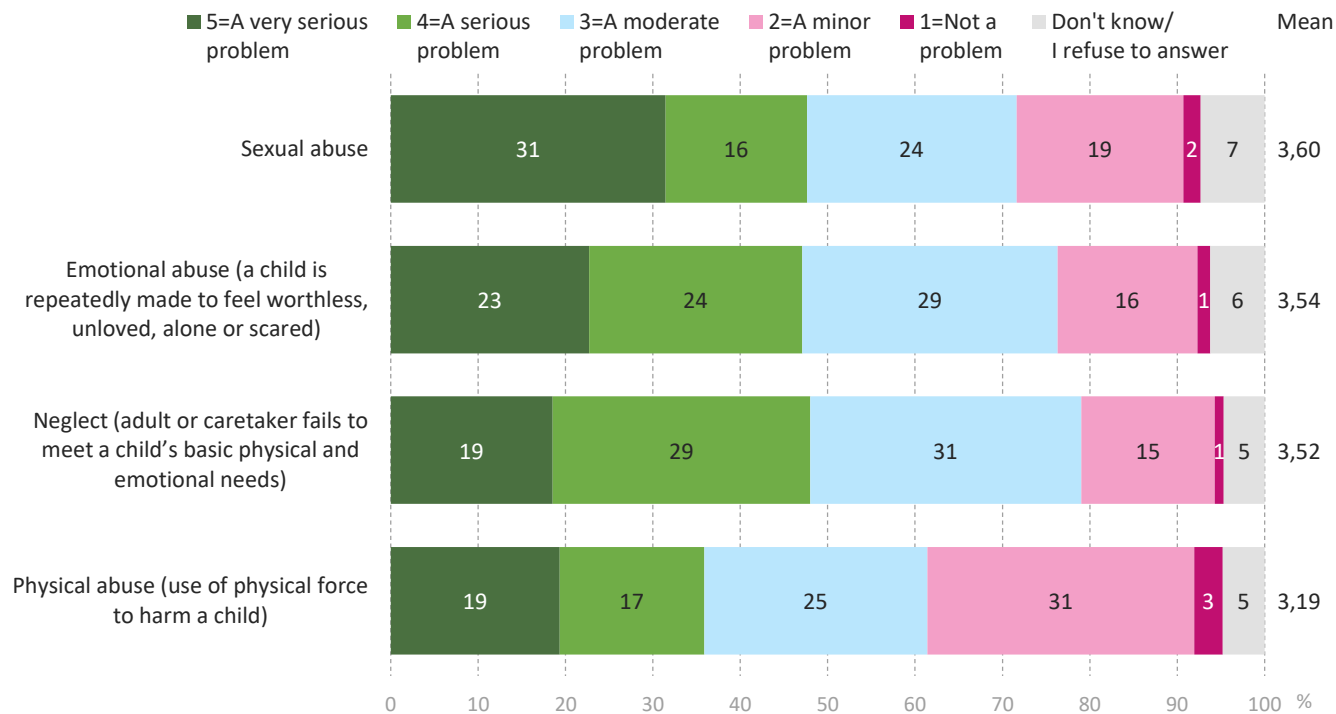
- Analyses are based on an Internet panel data (n=1106). The representative sample consist of adults in mainland Finland (18 to 79 years old). The latter part of study where the questions were about personal experiences of sexual abuse was filled in by 91 % of the respondents that answered to the first, general part of the survey(n=1004).
- The survey was conducted as online survey on Taloustutkimus Internet panel. The data was collected between 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2023.
- Additional data with five questions on the functioning of the service system was collected 14.4.–18.4.2023 on Taloustutkimus Internet panel. A total of 927 respondents gave their answers to this additional survey. Hence, over 90 per cent who had answered the original survey answered also this additional part.



# General concern and awareness

# Little less than half of Finns consider violence against children and child sexual abuse as a serious problem

In your opinion, how serious of a problem are the following types of child abuse in Finland?



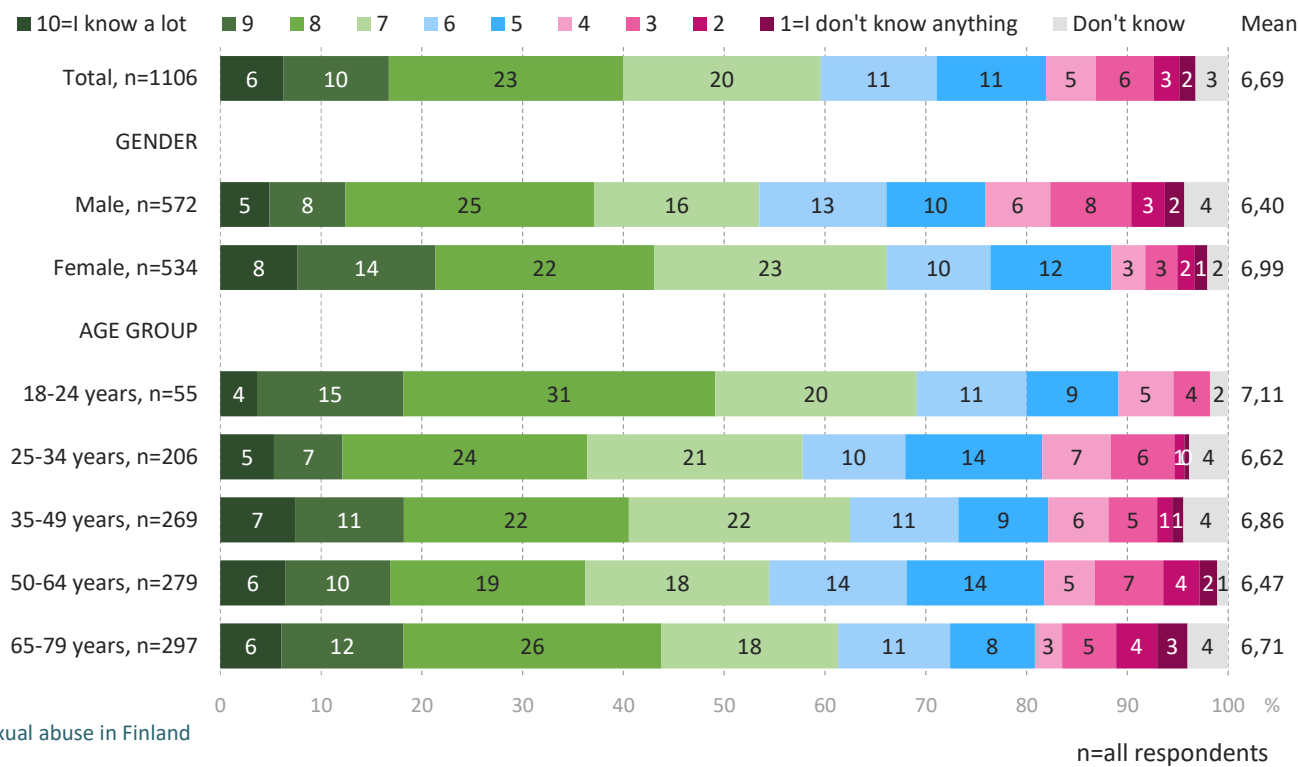
6696 Child sexual abuse in Finland

All respondents, n=1106

- 47 per cent of Finns consider child sexual abuse as a very serious or serious problem in Finland.
- The corresponding share for emotional abuse is 47 %, for neglect 48 % and for physical abuse 36 %.
- Women rate different types of child abuse more often as serious problems in Finland than men do.
- In terms of age, the pattern resembles a U-curve, the youngest adults and the elderly rate different types of child abuse most often as serious problems in Finland. In contrast, the 35-49 years old are the ones who most rarely see serious problems in sexual, emotional or physical abuse or neglect. This is the age group where it is by far most common to have minor children.
- In terms of education the pattern is that the lower the education the more likely it is to regard different types of child abuse as problematic.

# Very few Finns feel that they do not know about aspects that have to do with child sexual abuse

How much do you feel you know about aspects that have to do with child sexual abuse (what is child sexual abuse, what are the risks and the consequences of child sexual abuse, etc.)?

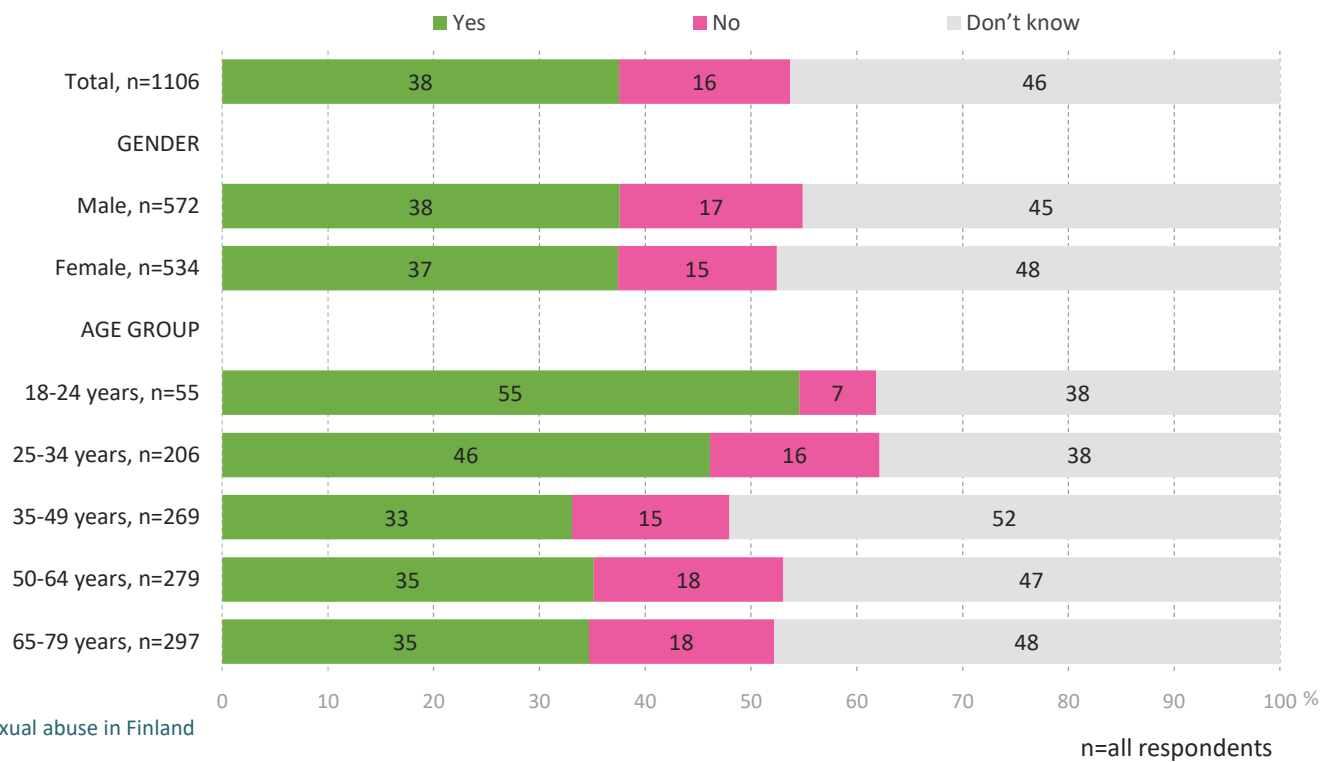


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- 59 per cent of people feel that they know quite a lot about aspects that have to do with child sexual abuse (7-10 on a scale where 10 is knows a lot and 1 doesn't know anything).
- Women feel this way more often than men and young adults (18-24 years old) more often than the others.

# Young adults feel most confident of recognizing signs of child sexual abuse

Do you think you would be able to recognize behavior of a person towards a child that may refer to sexual abuse?



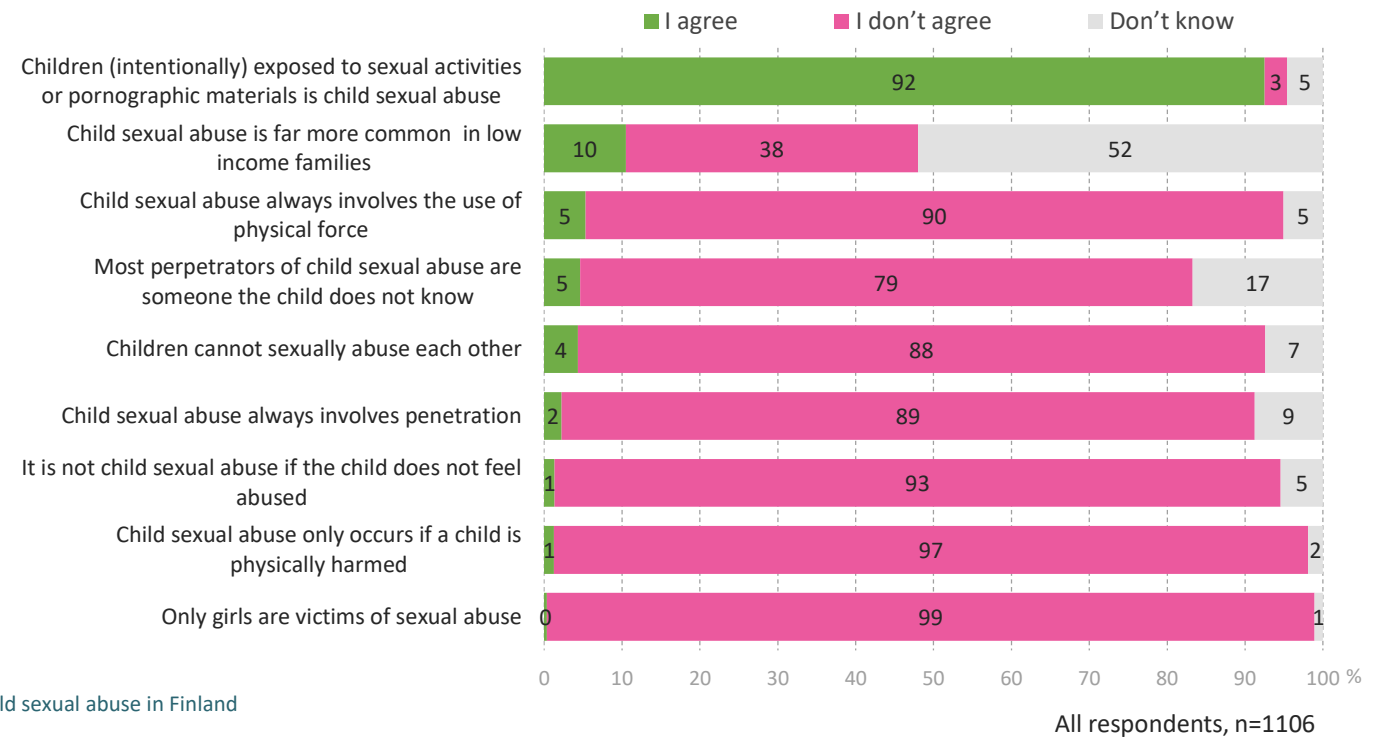
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- One third of Finns think that they would be able to recognize behavior of a person towards a child that may refer to sexual abuse and 16 per cent think that they could not.
- Especially young people think that they could recognize such behavior which can be considered as a positive sign since the new generations are exposed to all kinds of new threats in social media environment.

# Fact awareness

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# There exists an absolute consensus on what is sexual abuse and what is not

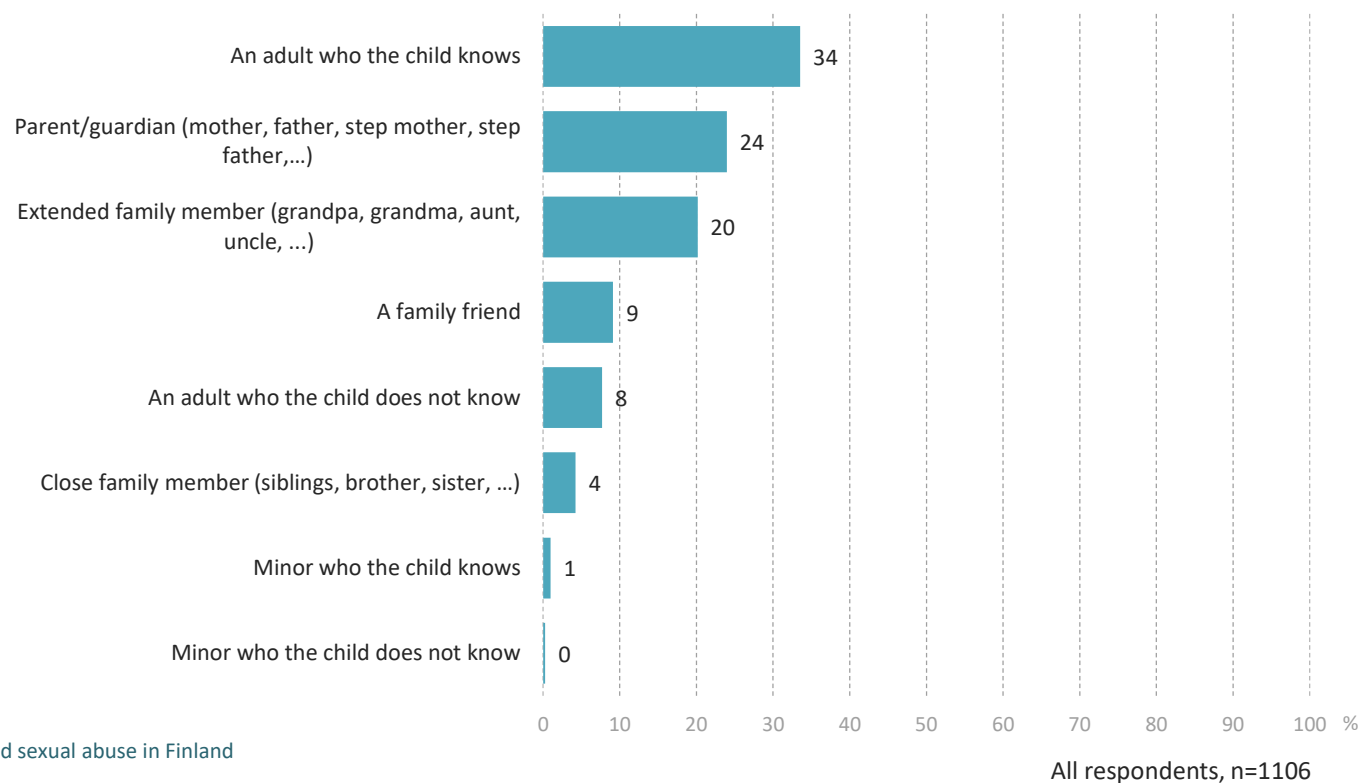


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- 92 per cent think children (intentionally) exposed to sexual activities or pornographic materials is child sexual abuse.
- Only about five per cent think that child sexual abuse always involves the use of physical force, that most perpetrators of child sexual abuse are someone the child does not know, that children cannot sexually abuse each other or that child sexual abuse always involves penetration.
- The question on whether child sexual abuse is far more common in low-income families was more challenging: half of respondents didn't take a stand in it. 10 per cent think that the case is so. Some studies show that there is a correlation between low socioeconomic status and being a victim of child sexual abuse. However, the connection was not strong.

# An adult who the child knows is believed to be to most likely person to sexually abuse a child

Which of the following individuals do you believe is the most likely to sexually abuse a child?

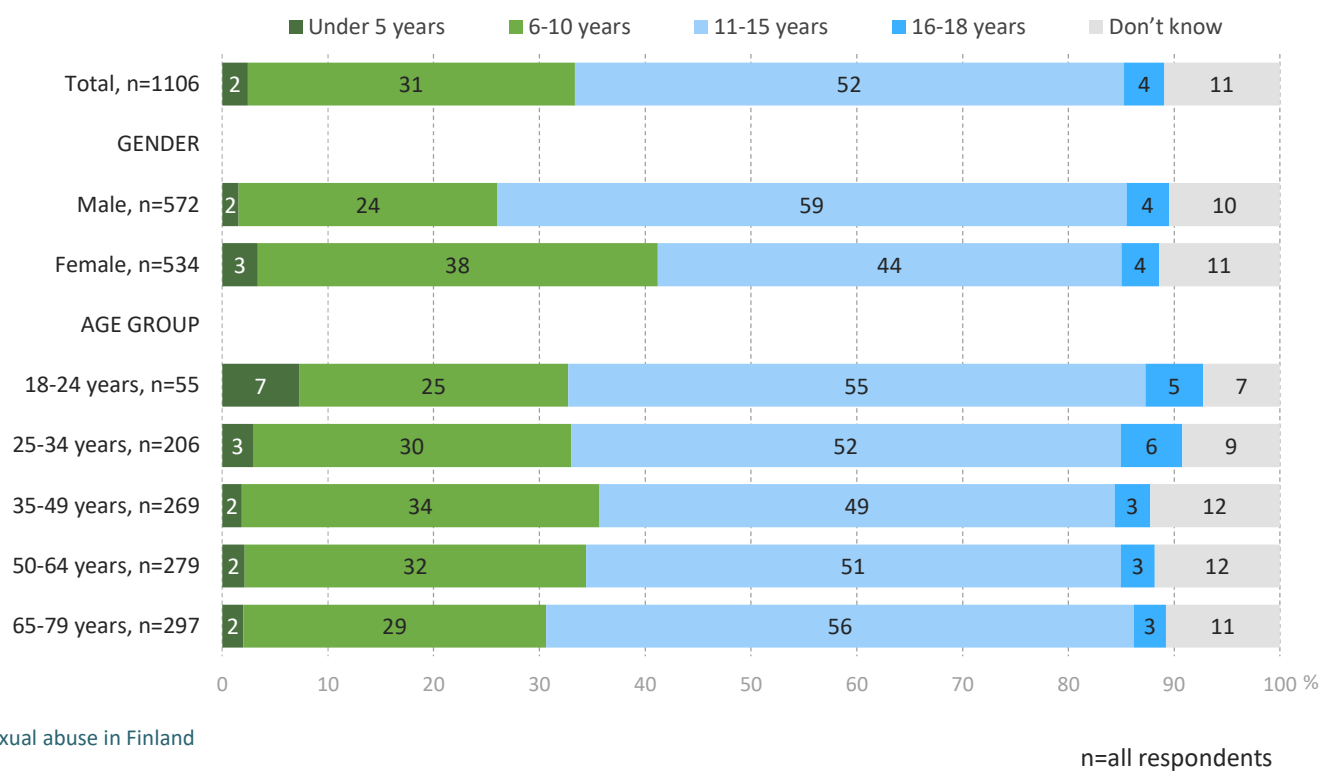


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- The respondents believe that the most likely individual to sexually abuse a child is an adult who the child knows (34 %).
- The second and third most common responses were parent/guardian (24 %) and extended family member (grandparents, aunt, uncle etc.) (20%).
- Unknown adult was mentioned by 9 per cent as the most likely "suspect".

# Half of the respondents think that child is most likely to be sexually abused at the age between 11 and 15 years

At what age do you think a child is most likely to be sexually abused?

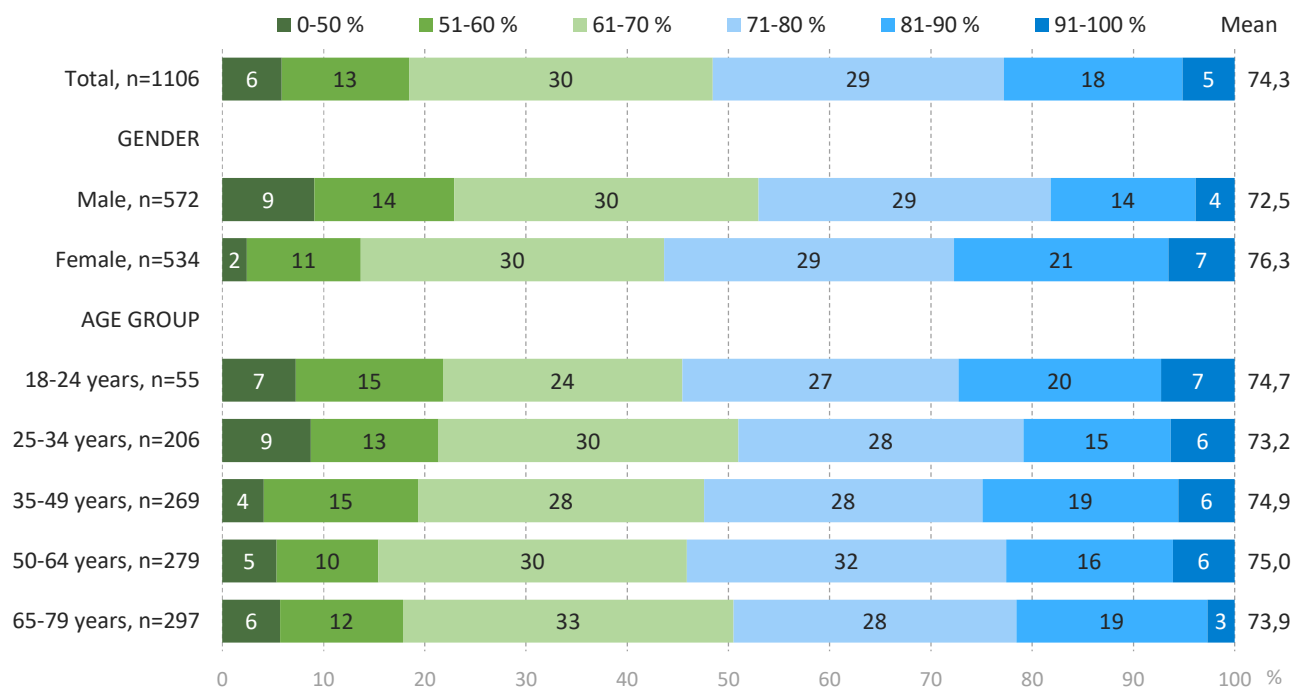


- Half of the respondents think that child is most likely to be sexually abused at the age between 11 and 15 years.
- One third think that is most likely to happen when the child is 6 to 10 years old. Especially women hold this view.
- Typically, the abuse starts before teen age but the age group where abuse likely happens at latest for children is 13 to 15 years old. Also, the worst sexual abuse occurs most likely then.



# On average, respondents evaluate that 3 out of four child abusers are men and one out of four women

Children are sexually abused by both men and women. Please evaluate how big of a %-share of abusers are men



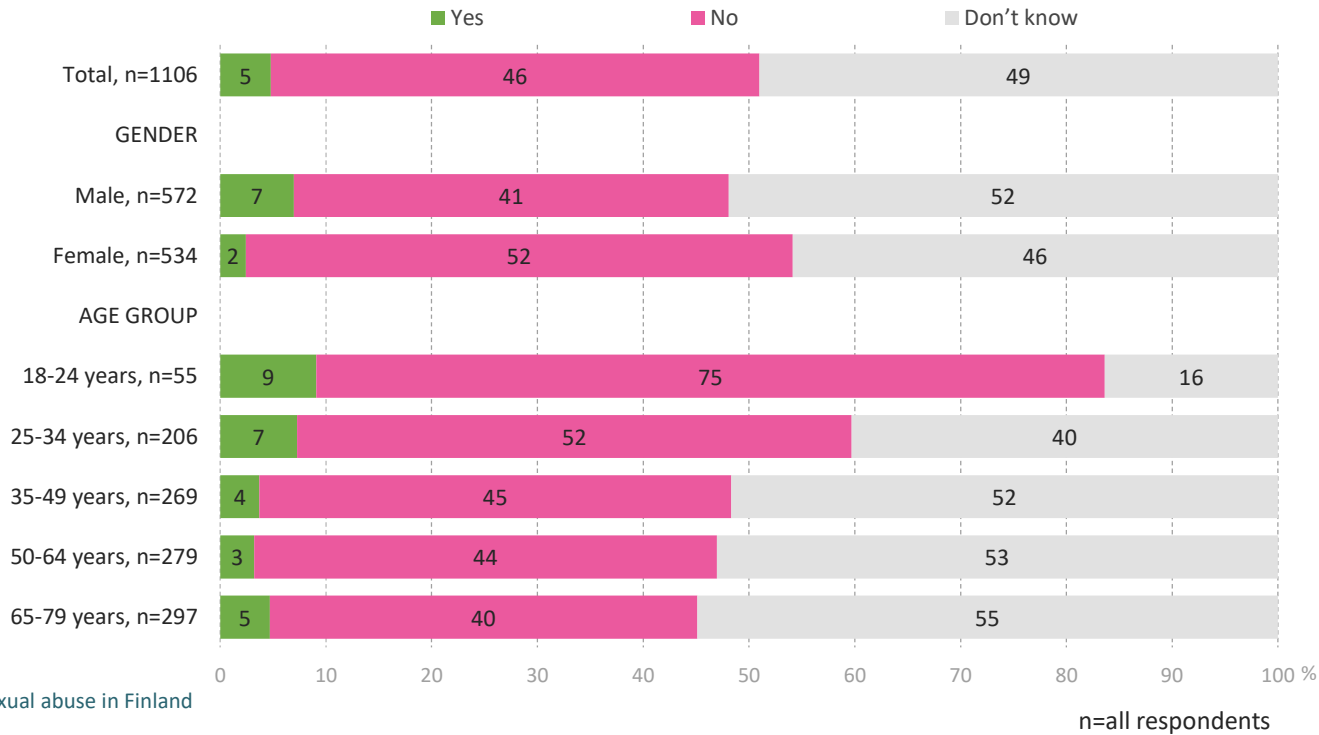
- On average, respondents evaluate that 3 out of four child abusers are men and one out of four women.
- There is no major variation in shares in different sociodemographic groups.
- In Finland, over 90 % of child abusers are men, so there is an understatement in the evaluated share. Nevertheless, 23 per cent of respondents evaluated that it is over 80 %.

# Conceptions and means to prevent abuse



# Especially young adults demand actions from schools to provide more information on how to prevent and protect children from child sexual abuse

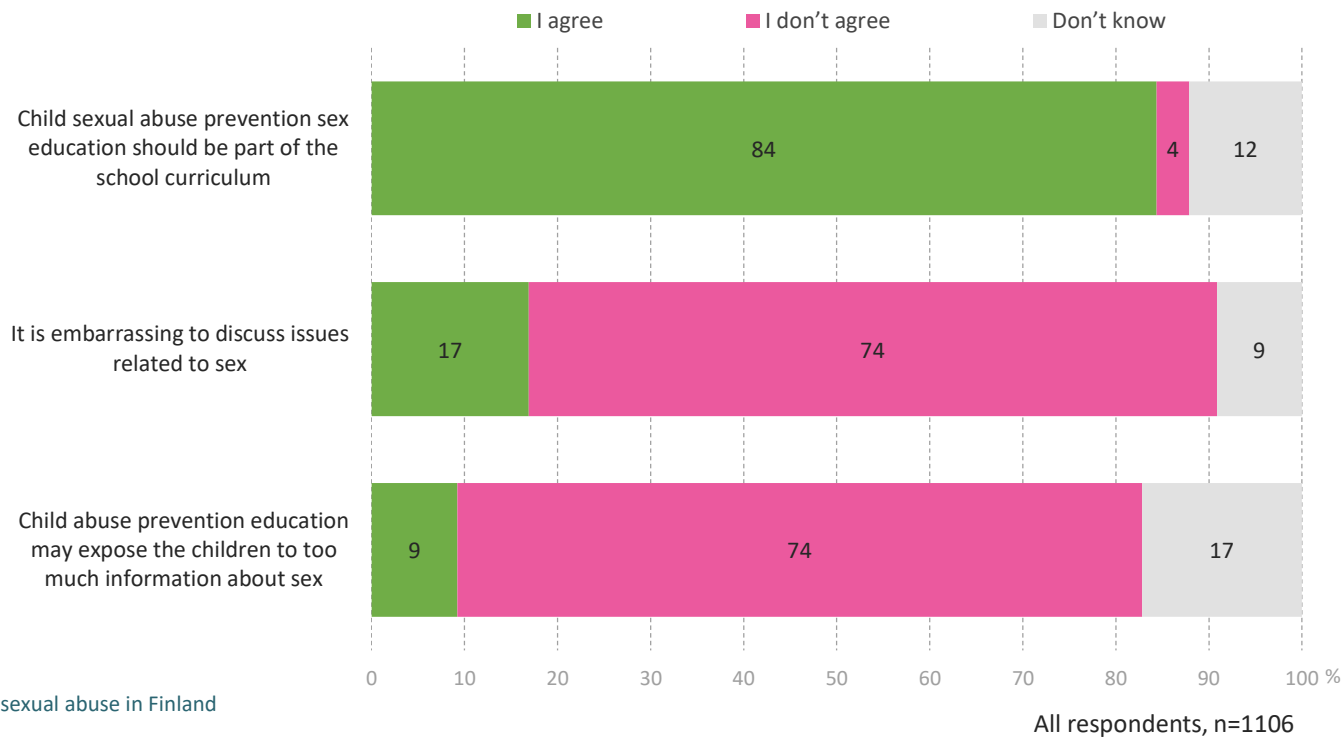
Do you think schools provide enough information on how to prevent and protect children from child sexual abuse?



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- Only five per cent of Finns think that Finnish schools provide enough information on how to prevent and protect children from child sexual abuse. Half couldn't take a stand on the issue and almost half thought that the schools are not doing their job well.
- Especially alarming is that 75 per cent of young adults (18 to 24 years old) are of the opinion that schools do not provide enough information. They have the newest experience and knowledge on the issue.

# One out of ten believes that child abuse prevention education may expose the children to too much information about sex

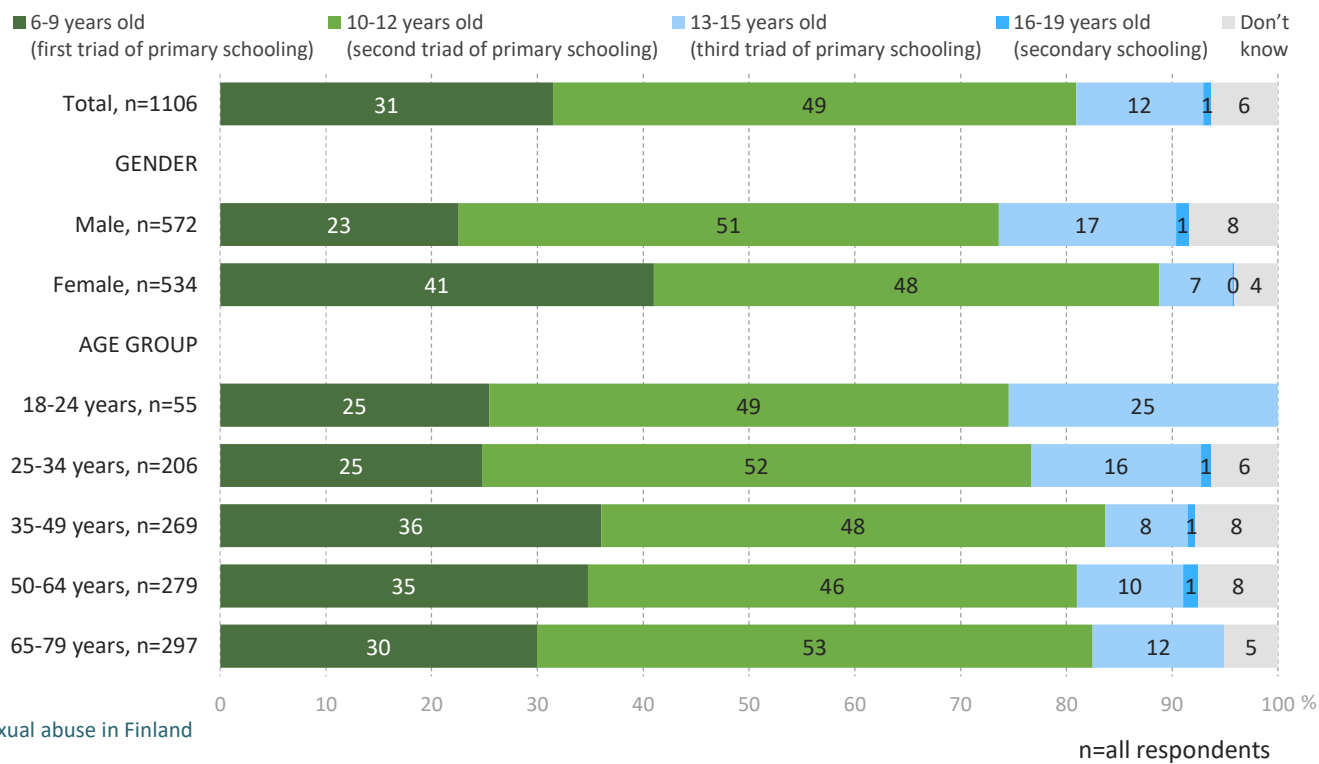


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- 84 per cent think that child sexual abuse prevention sex education should be a part of the school curriculum.
- One in six feels that it is embarrassing to discuss issues related to sex. This is more common among men than women.
- One in ten believes that child abuse prevention education may expose the children to too much information about sex.

# Women prefer educating children at earlier age about child sexual abuse in comparison to men

What age do you think children should receive information about child sexual abuse?

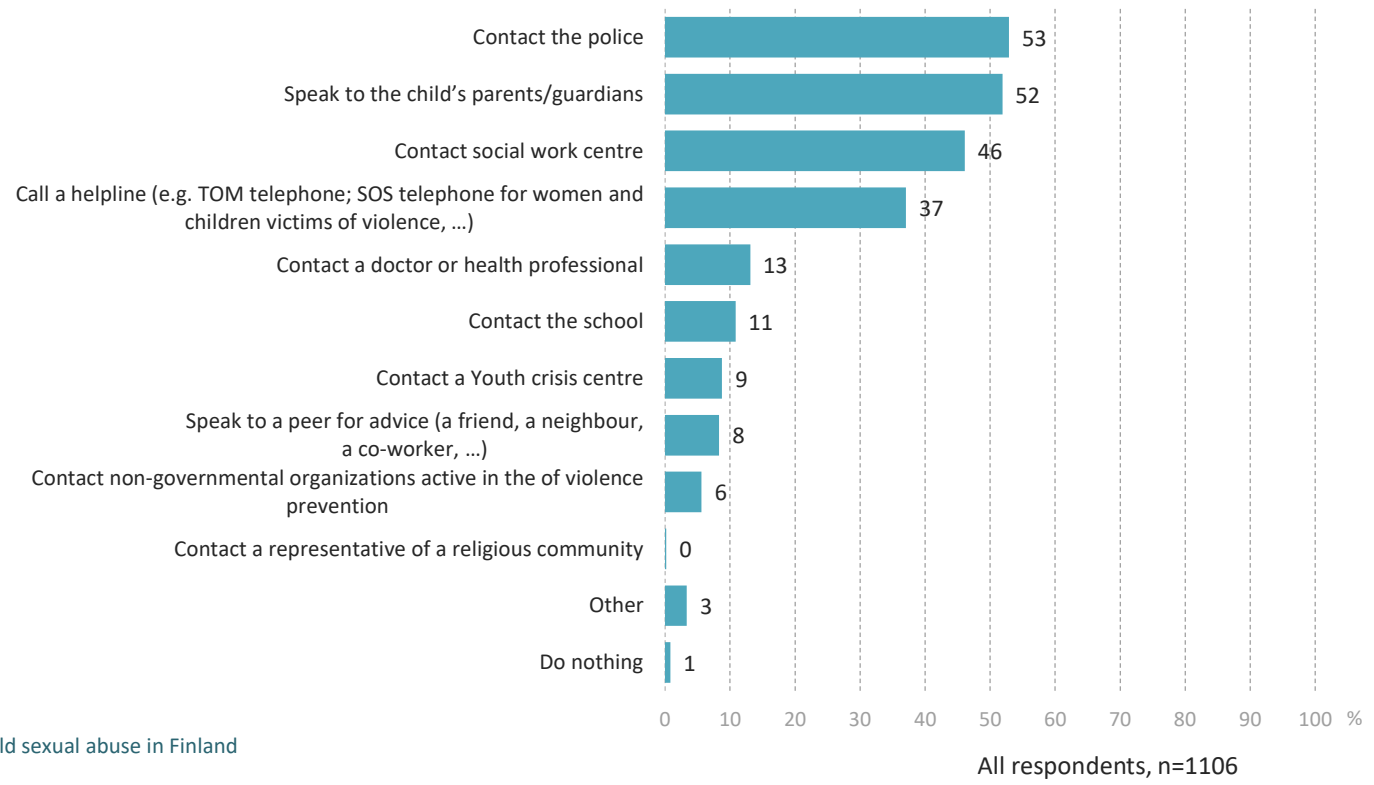


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- Half of Finns thinks that children should first receive information about child sexual abuse when they are 10 to 12 years old.
- A third thinks that children should first receive information about child sexual abuse already when they are 6 to 9 years old.
- There is a major gap between men and women: women prefer educating at earlier age while 17 per cent of men think that teen age is proper time for receiving such information

# Police, parents, social work centres and helplines are the first instances that people would contact if they suspected sexual abuse

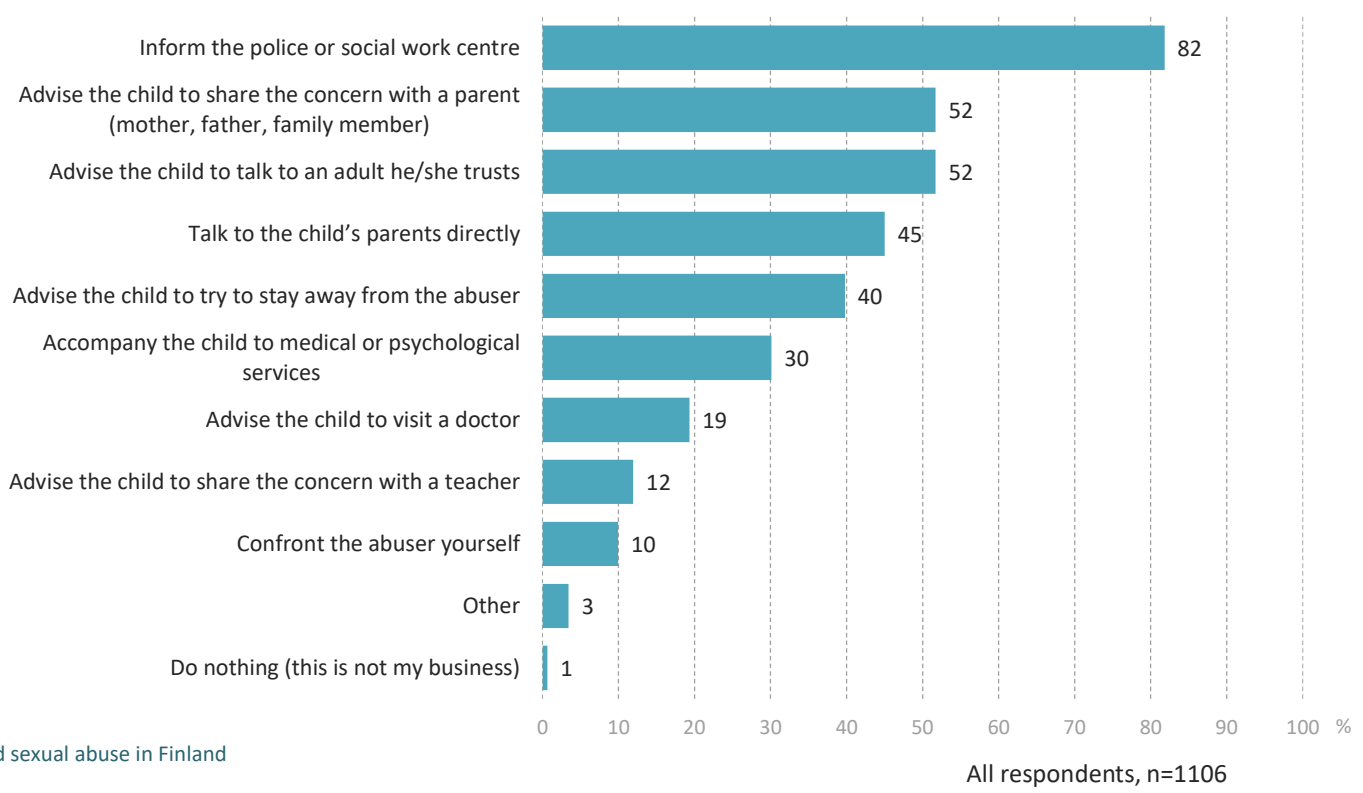
If you suspected that a child was at risk of being sexually abused, what would you do in the first instance?



- If people suspected that a child was at risk of being sexually abused, they would first contact the police (53 %), speak to the child's parents (52 %), contact social work center (46 %) and call a helpline (37 %).
- Men would be more prone to contact the police than women and women would be more prone to contact social work center and call a helpline than men.
- Those at pensioner age (65-) would be more prone to speak to parents and less likely to contact the police.

# Young adults are most likely to accompany a familiar child to medical or psychological services in the case of abuse

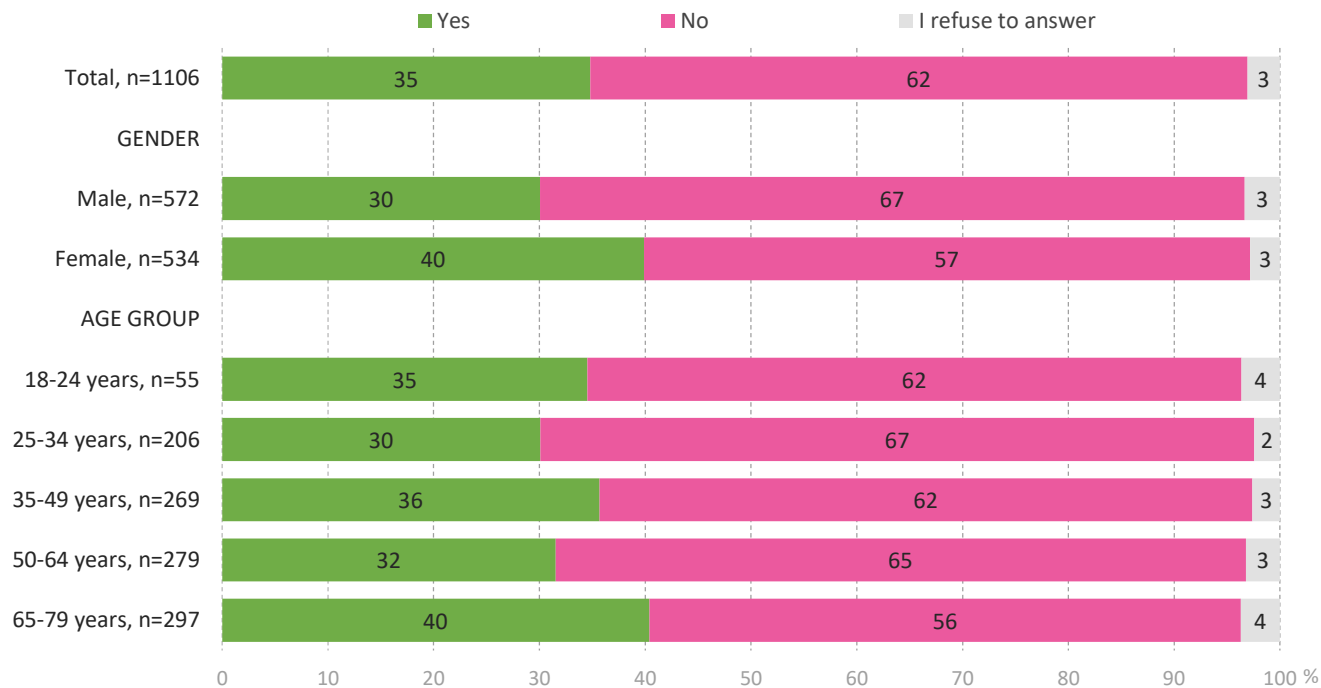
What would you do if a child you know confides in you about sexual abuse?



- By far the most common thing that people would do, if a child they know confides in them about sexual abuse, is informing police or social work centre (82 %).
- Women (60 %) would more often advise the child to talk to an adult he/she trusts in comparison to men (44 %) and accompany the child to medical or psychological services (38 % vs. 23 %).
- Men would more often confront the abuser themselves.
- The younger the respondent is the more likely it is to accompany the child to medical or psychological services, which most likely tells about the low threshold of younger generations to speak out about (mental) health problems.

# One third is aware of some organization/program that can be contacted for information about child sexual abuse

Are you aware of any organization/program you can contact for information about child sexual abuse should you require such information/advice?

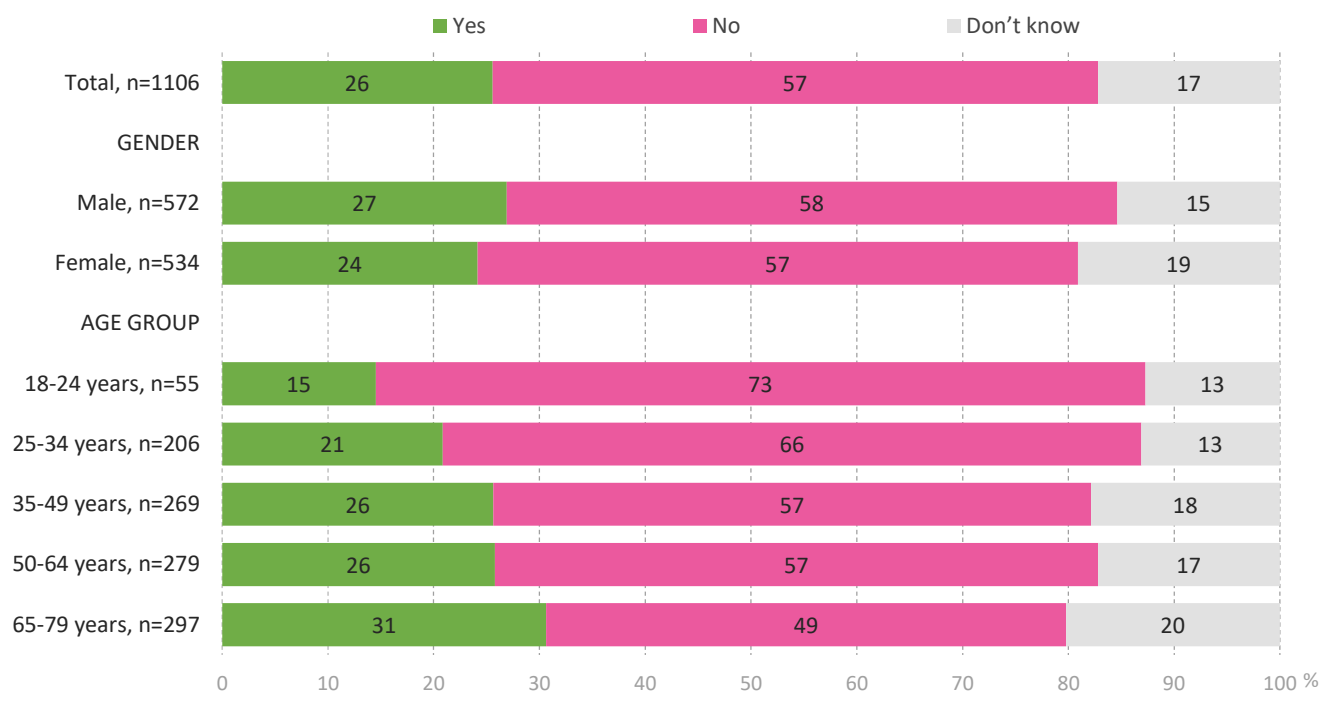


- One third is aware of some organization/program one can contact for information about child sexual abuse should you require such information/advice.



# One fourth has noticed campaigns on the prevention or protection of children against sexual abuse

Have you noticed campaigns on the prevention or protection of children against sexual abuse?



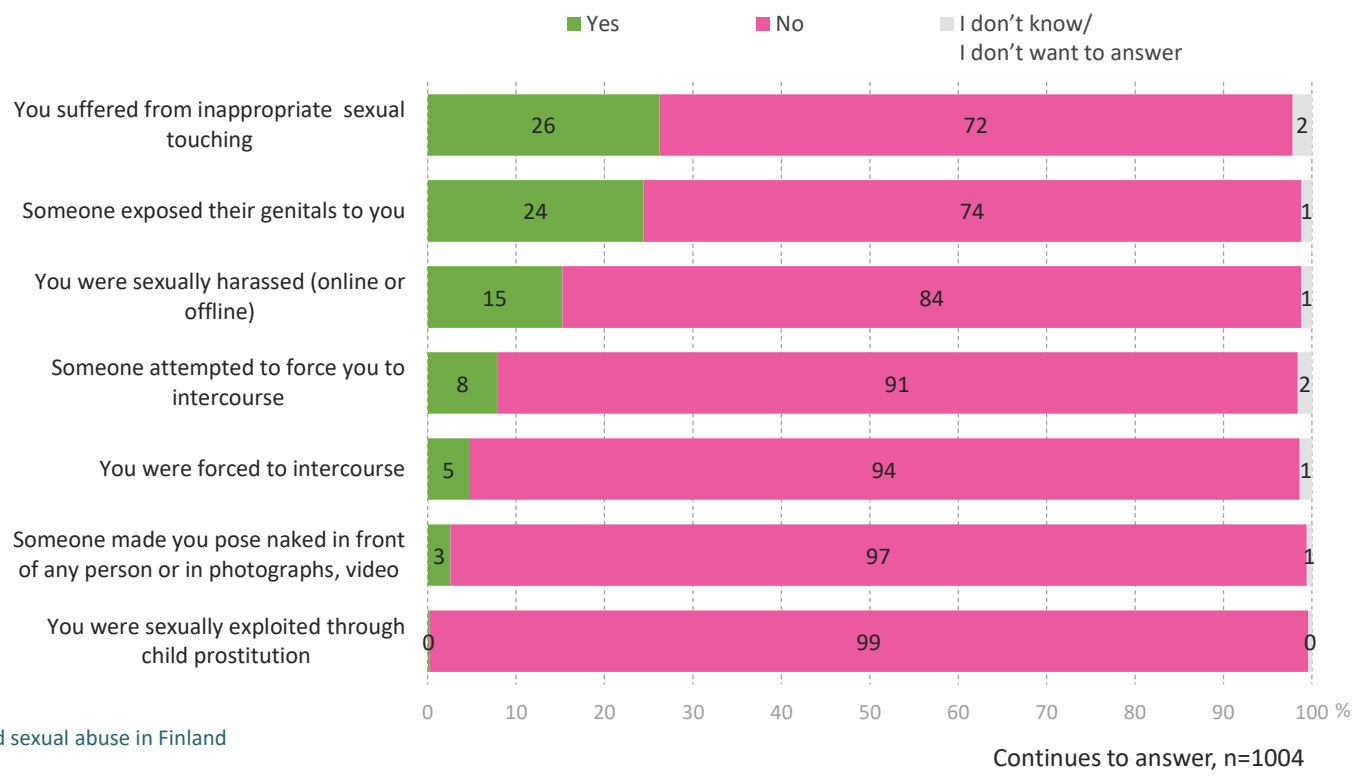
- One fourth has noticed campaigns on the prevention or protection of children against sexual abuse.
- The older the respondent is, the more likely it is that he/she has noticed such campaigns. This underlines the need of targeting the campaigns to young people.

# Personal experiences and investigation processes

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# Young adults suffer from sexual (online) harassment but into lesser extent from inappropriate touching

Have you experienced any of the following (before turning 18)?

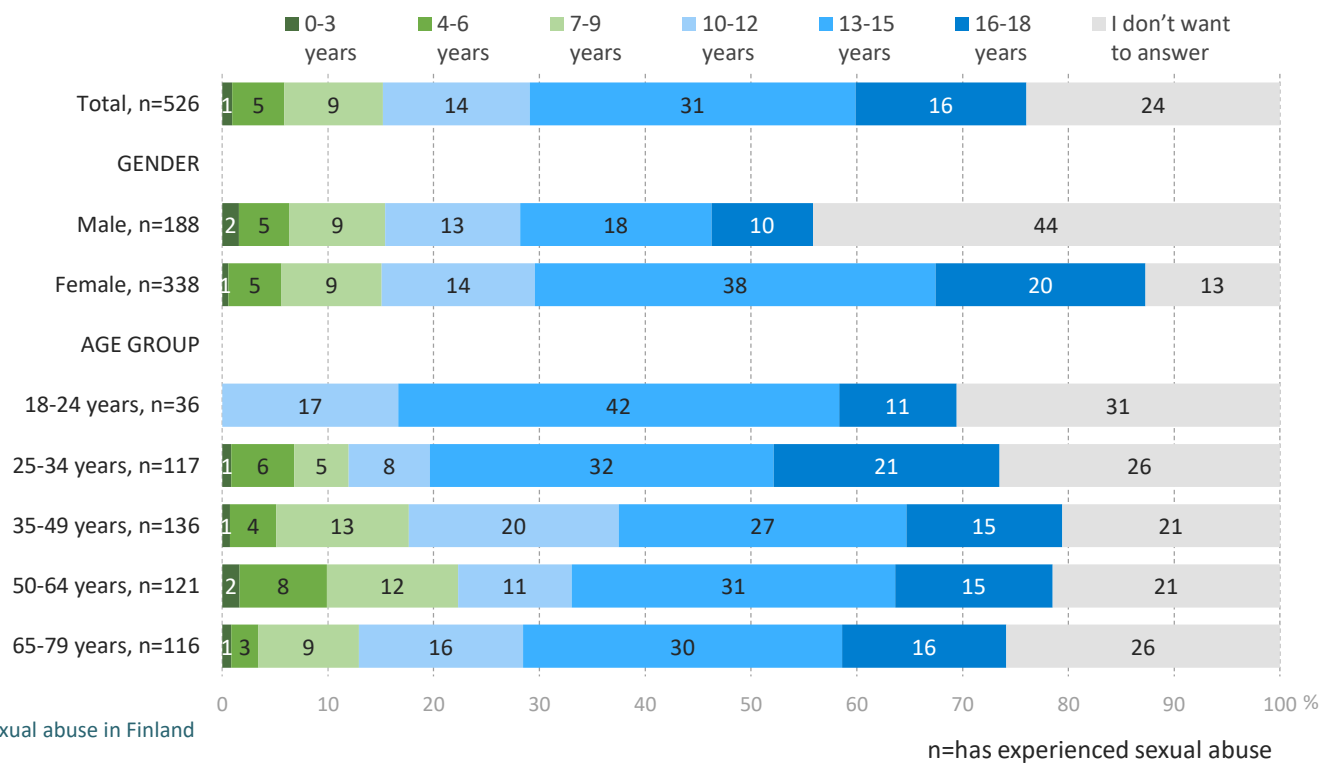


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- One in four has suffered from inappropriate sexual touching. One fourth has experienced someone exposing their genitals to them. 15 per cent has been sexually harassed (online or offline).
- All these forms are far more common to happen for women than for men.
- Among the youngest age group (18 to 24) inappropriate sexual touching is far less common (8 %) than in other age groups. Nearly half (43 %) of those between 18 and 24 years of age have been sexually harassed, which is due to online harassment. In the age group 50 to 64 years only 7 per cent report on being harassed as a child.

# Men have it more difficult to talk about their abuse experiences in comparison to women

How old were you at the time you experienced the worst sexual abuse (if there were more than one experience of sexual abuse)?

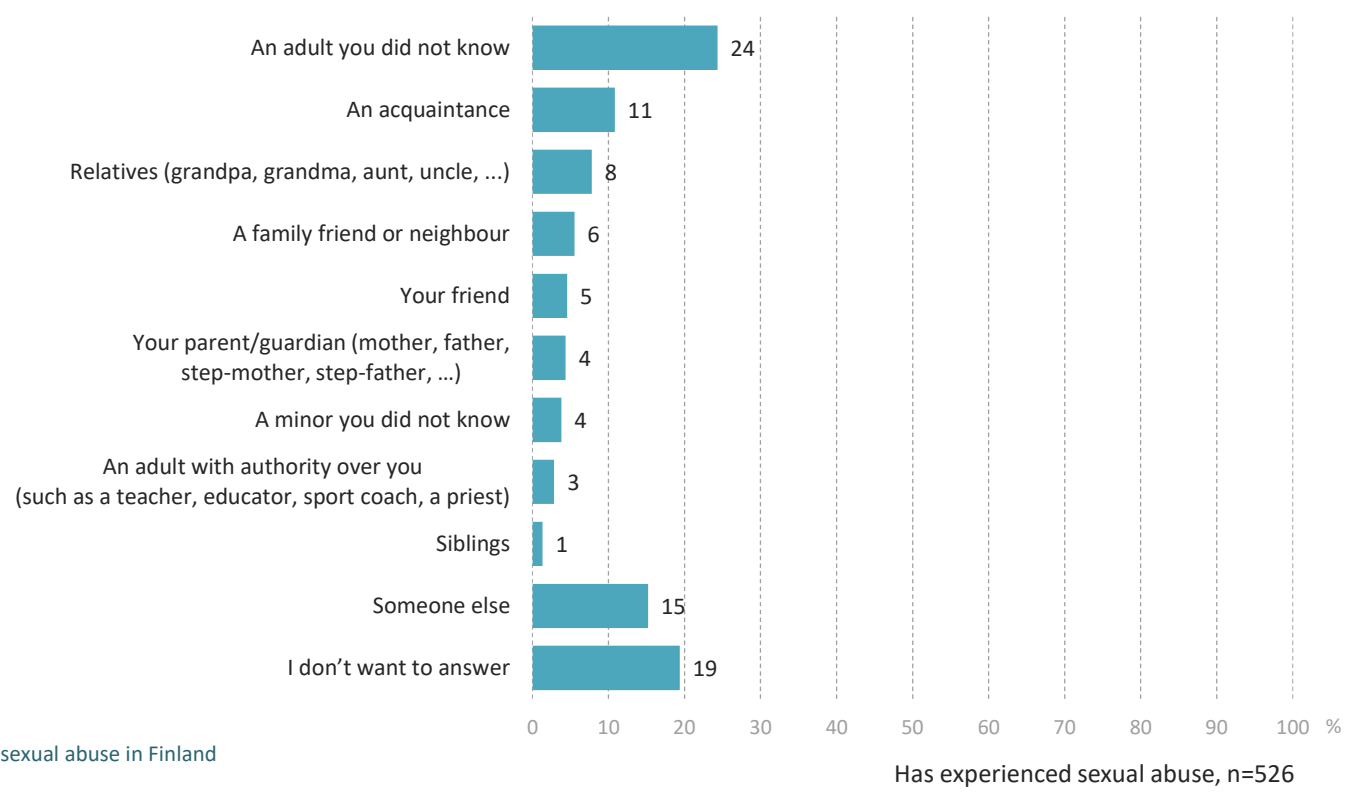


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- As a general finding, men have it more difficult to talk about their experiences in an online survey in comparison to women. Almost a half of the men who wanted to fill in the latter part of the questionnaire that entailed sensitive personal questions went through the survey by filling in the answer alternative "I don't want to answer".
- In contrast, approximately only one out of ten women filled in the survey in the same manner.
- In all age groups and among both genders it was most common that the worst sexual abuse happened when the victim was 13 to 15 years old.

# The most common case is that the perpetrator is an adult the victim does not know

Was/were your perpetrator(s) ...?

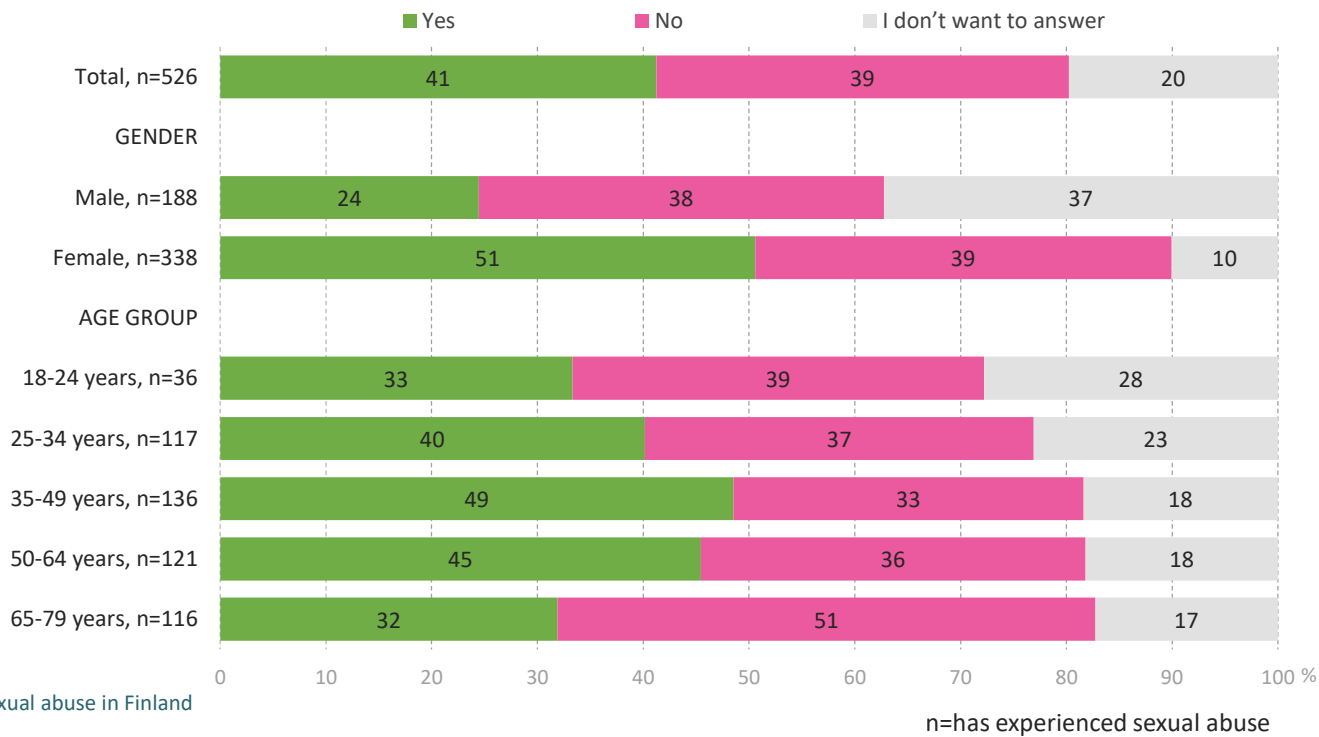


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- The most common case is that the perpetrator is an adult the victim does not know.
- The second most common case is that the perpetrator is an acquaintance and the third most common that he/she is a relative (grandpa, grandma, aunt or uncle).
- Especially for the younger people it is more common that the perpetrator is an adult the they do not know.
- Relatives being the perpetrators belongs more to the past as that is more common in older age groups.

# Men have kept the abuse to themselves into larger extent than women

Did you tell anyone about this abuse (before this study)?

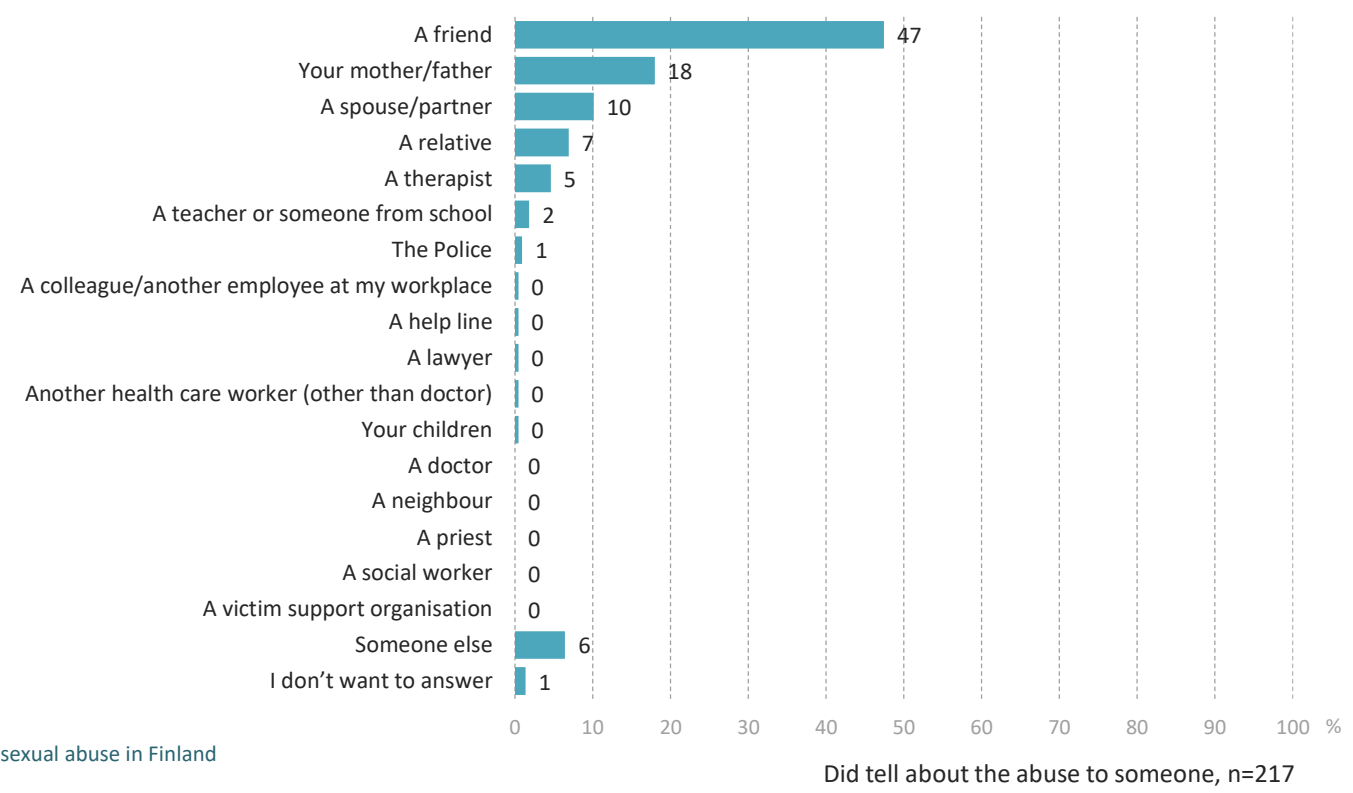


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- The difference in the openness between men and women in this delicate subject is also present in the fact that about a half of women say that they have told to someone about their sexual abuse, while among men the share is one in four.
- Talking about the case to someone is most common in the age group from 35 to 49 years and the least common among the youngest and the eldest.

# The younger generations are more likely to talk about sexual abuse first to their friends

Who did you tell the very first time after the abuse?

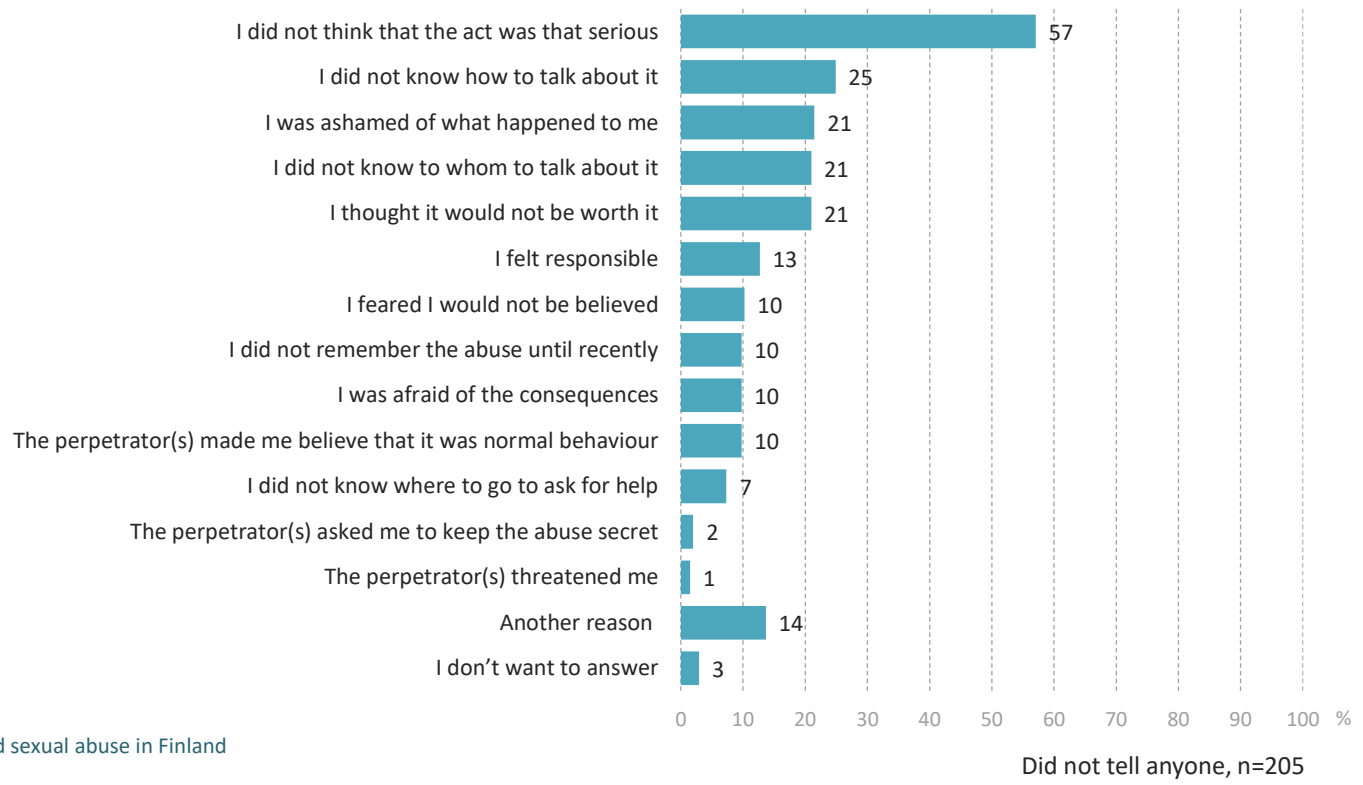


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- The younger generations are more likely to talk about sexual abuse first to their friends.
- Those between 50 and 64 years of age are most likely to tell about the abuse first to their spouse/partner.

# The most common reason not to talk about sexual abuse to anyone is to belittle the seriousness of the act

Until today, why have you not talked about the abuse?

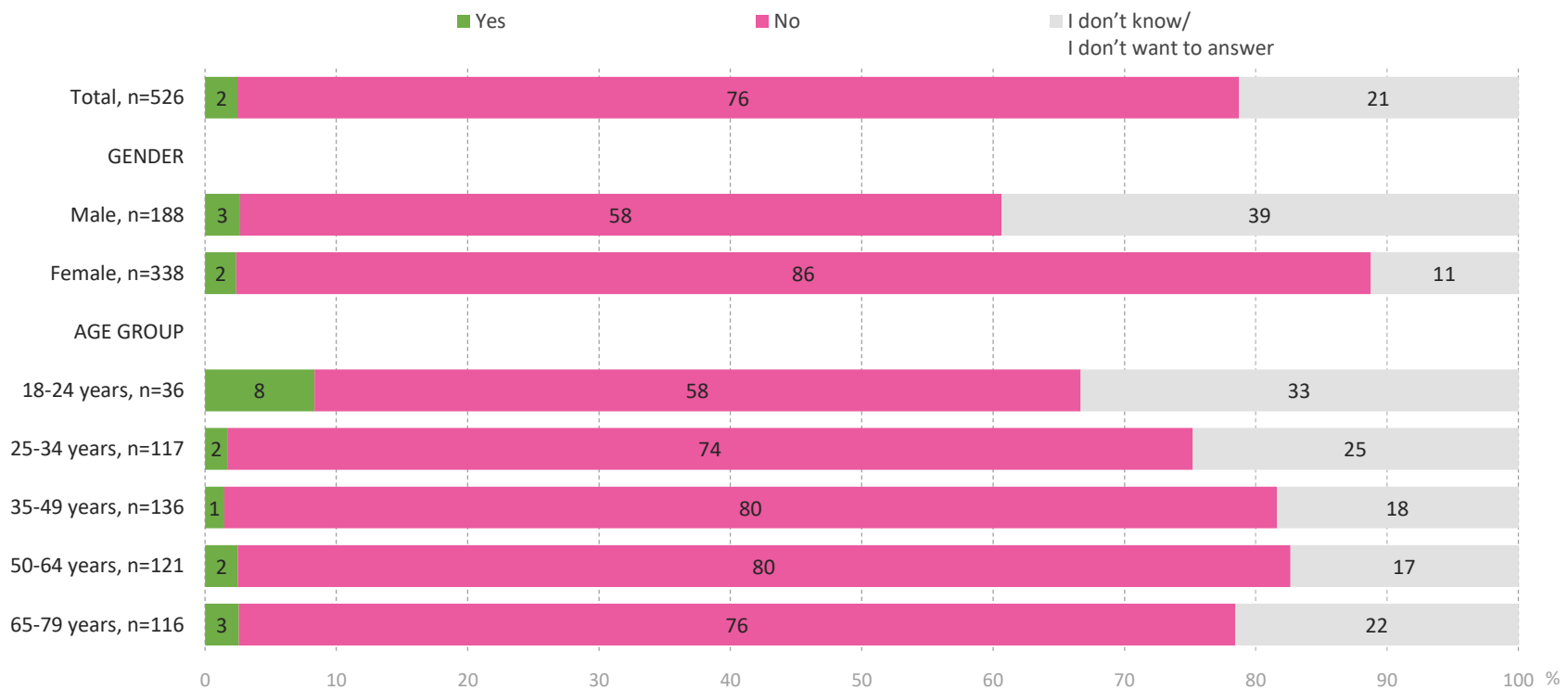


- Those who have not talked about the abuse until today have a variety of reasons why they have not talked about it. The most common one is that they didn't think the act was that serious.
- It is more common for those who are 50 years or older that they were afraid of the consequences, and they were ashamed of what happened to them.
- Especially the oldest ones (65-) state that they thought it would not be worth telling about it and they didn't know to whom to talk about it.



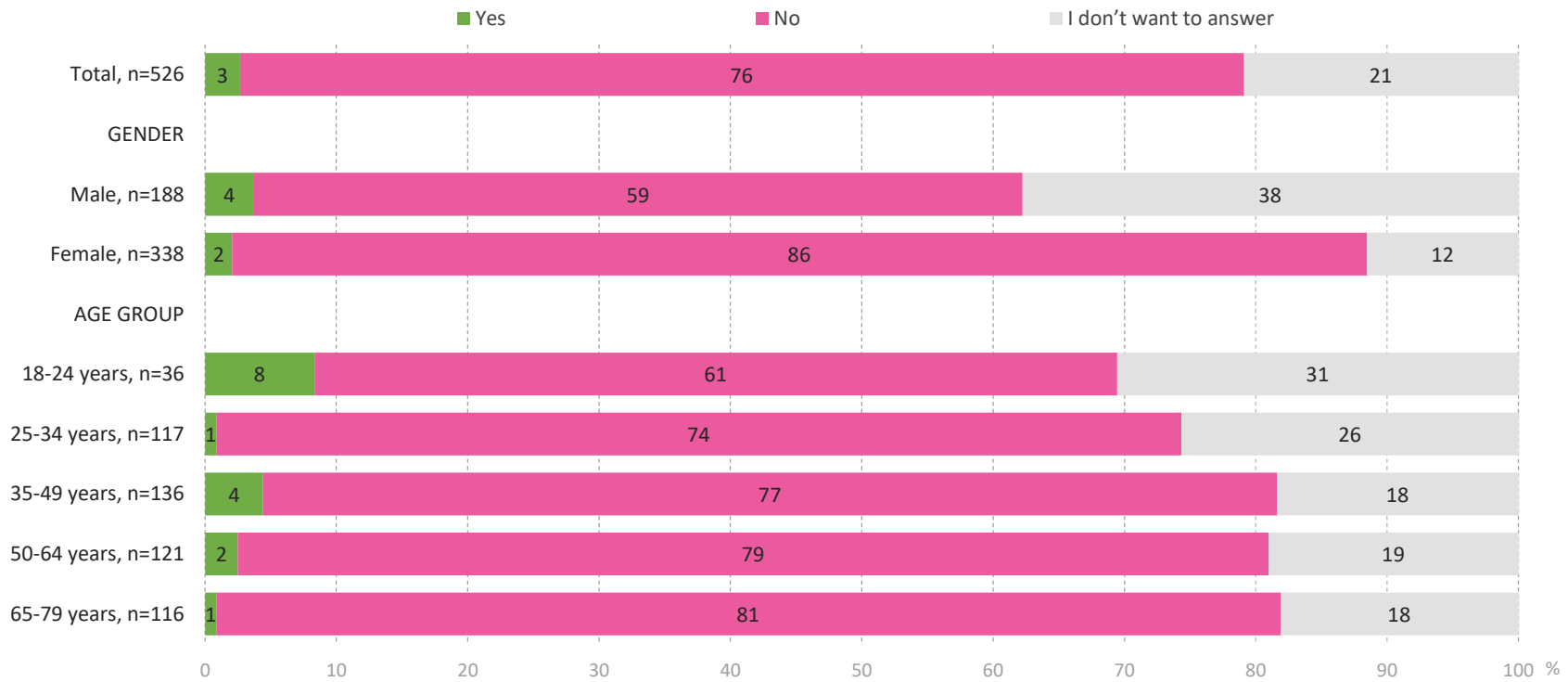
# Only two per cent say that an investigation request was filed after the abuse

Do you know if an investigation request was filed? (by you or someone else)



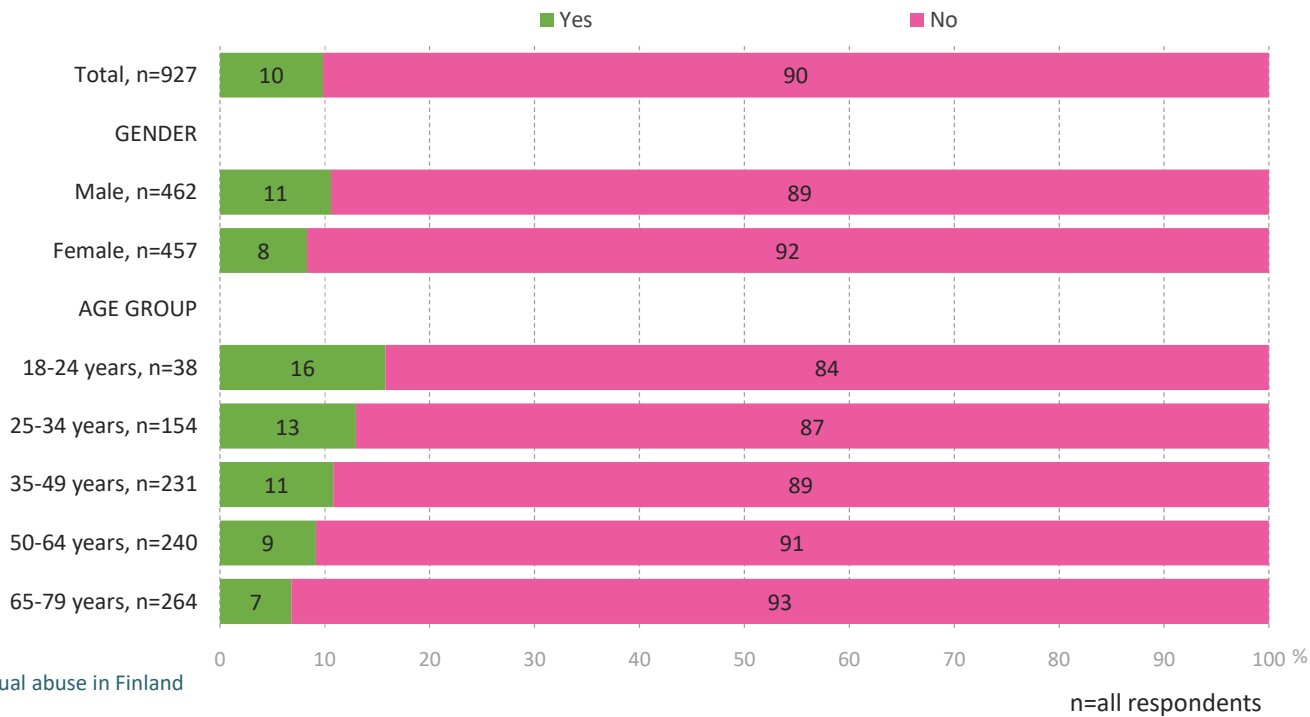
# Only three percent have been offered medical or psychological support

Were you offered medical or psychological support?



# Every tenth has personal experience or someone they know has experience from investigation processes that have to do with sexual violence against children

Do you have or does someone you know have experience from investigation processes that have to do with sexual violence against children (child sexual abuse)?

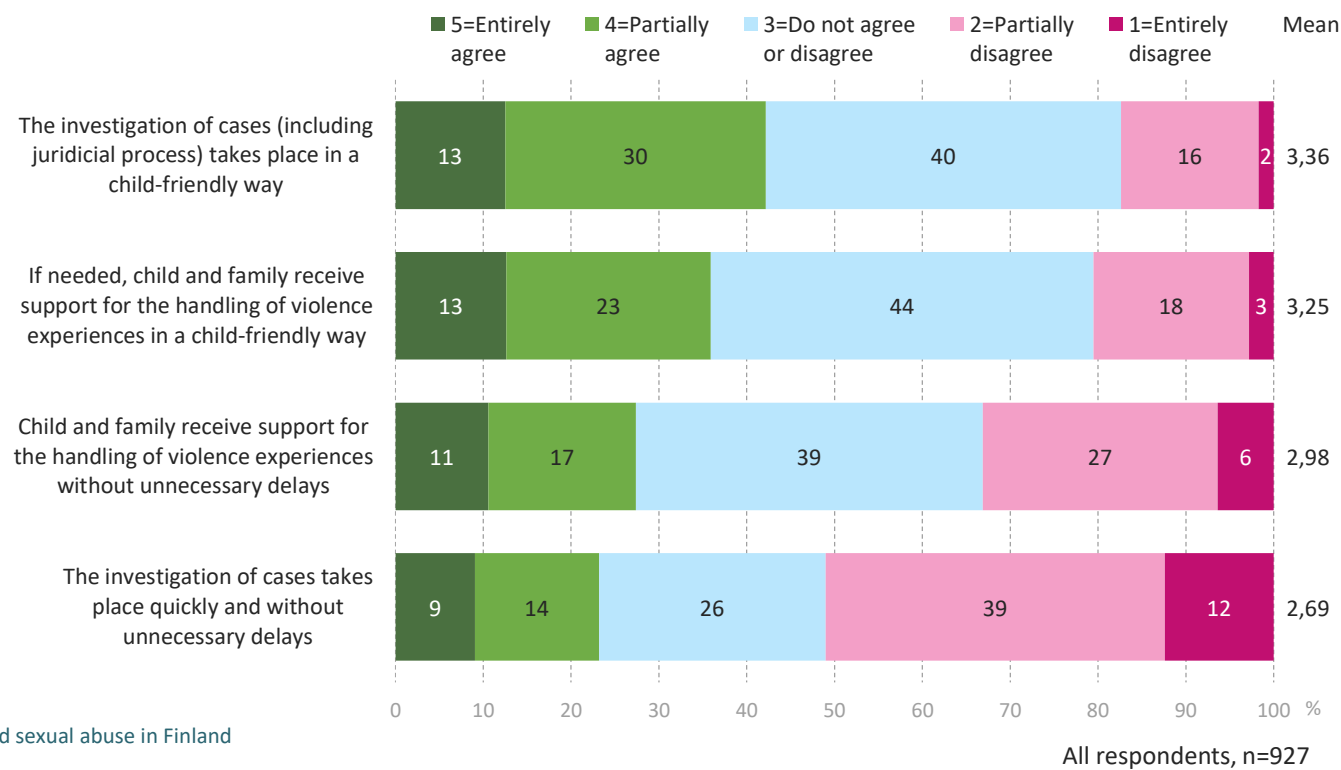


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- Experience from investigation processes are more common among the youth

# Heaviest critique on processes lies in their slow pace

What do you think about the functioning of our service system in following cases, where a child has been a victim of sexual violence

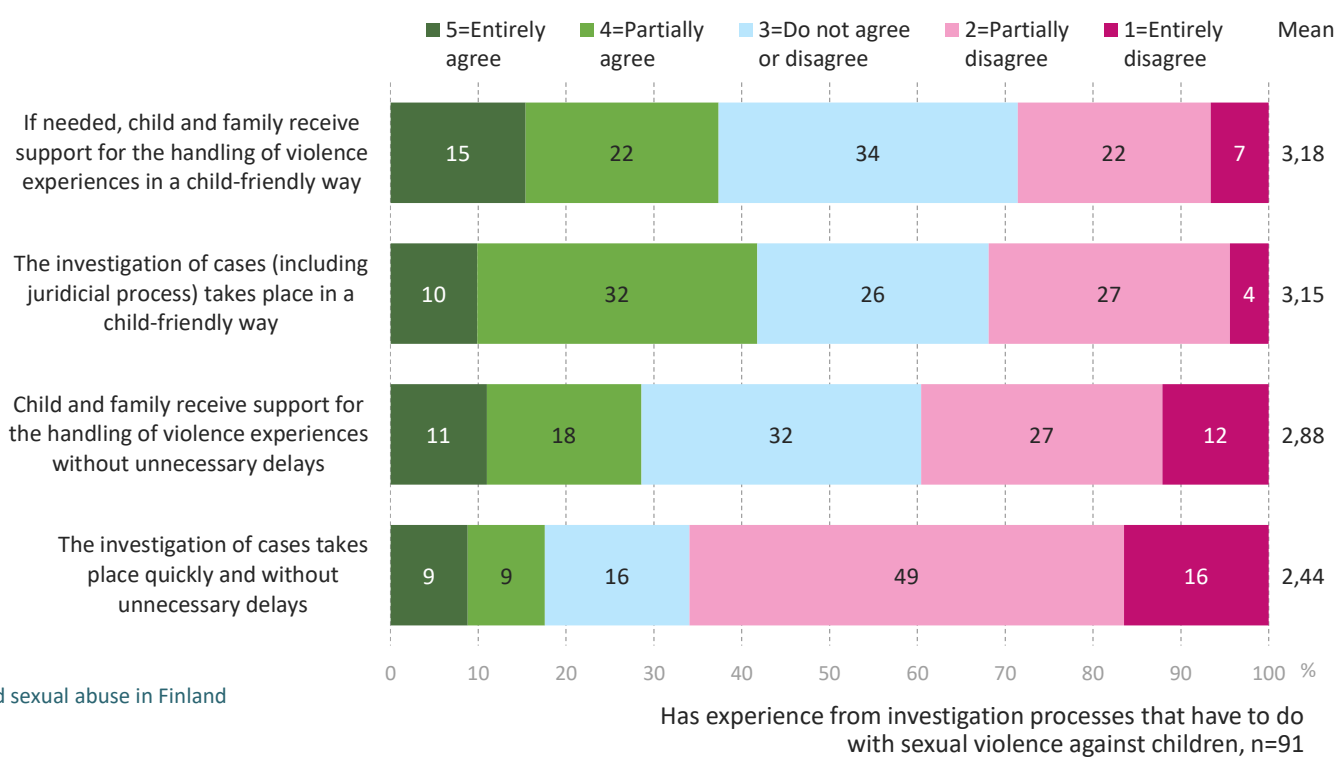


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- About 40 per cent of Finns cannot take a stand in matters on investigation processes concerning child sexual abuse.
- The exception is the question on whether the investigation takes place quickly and without unnecessary delays where the share is smaller and where critique is highest.

# Those who have experience from investigation processes that have to do with sexual violence against children give more critique to slow pace than to the lack of child-friendliness

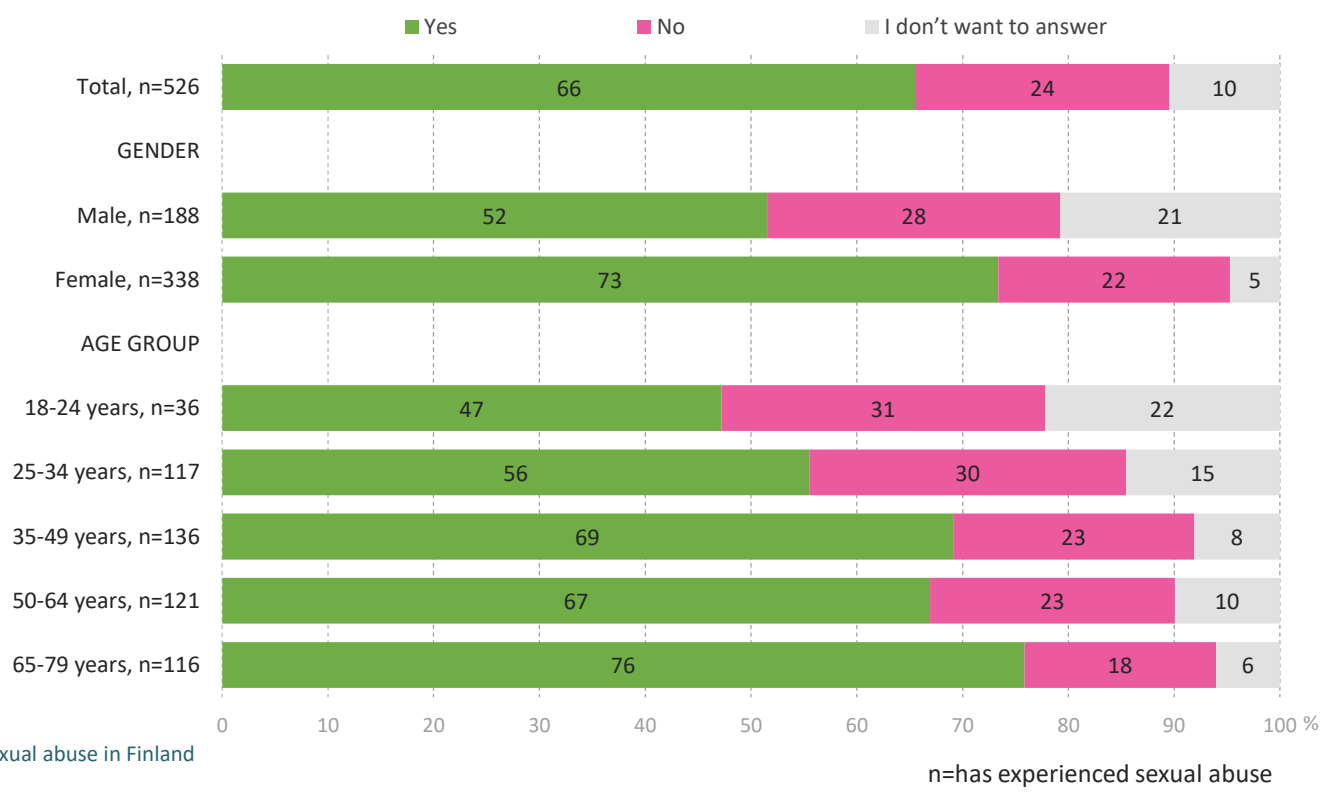
What do you think about the functioning of our service system in following cases, where a child has been a victim of sexual violence



- The views of those who have experience from investigation processes are largely similar to the population
- Nevertheless, critique towards the slow pace of the processes is even bigger in this group
- Two thirds think that the investigation of cases does not take place quickly and without unnecessary delays

# Women know better than men where to go or whom to talk to if they or someone they knew suffered from sexual abuse

Today, would you know where to go or whom to talk to if you or someone you knew suffered from sexual abuse?



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- Two out of three feel that they would know where to go or whom to talk to if they or someone they knew suffered from sexual abuse
- This is far more common among women than among men (73 % vs 52 %).
- The younger generations (under 35 years) know more seldom who to talk to or where to go to in such scenario.

# Summary of quantitative report



# Summary of quantitative report

- Many Finns consider sexual abuse and violence against children as a problem in Finland, but they do not find the situation alarming at large.
- The level of basic awareness is high, and Finns have good knowledge on the basic facts that have to do with different aspects about the occurrence of child sexual abuse.
- Education in school on the subject is insufficient especially according to young adults and many think that education should begin at a very early phase in order to maximize the efforts to prevent abuse.
- There is much room for improvement on making the campaigns against child sexual abuse more known and rising the level of knowledge on the instances/organizations which individuals can contact in the case of abuse.
- Finns were willing to share their personal experiences on the matter even though it is an extremely delicate one. About 90 per cent of the respondents wanted to fill in also the latter, personal part of the survey. Nevertheless, many men went through these questions by choosing "I don't want to answer" -alternative, which tells that men have it more difficult to talk openly about their experiences
- Especially young adults have faced sexual (online) harassment and they are more likely to talk about sexual abuse first to their friends.
- The level of shame and cluelessness in the case of sexual abuse is especially common in the older generations while the younger ones are more likely to get professional help.
- As regards to the functioning of the service system in cases, where a child has been a victim of sexual violence, the heaviest critique from those who have experience from the processes place heaviest critique on pace and unnecessary delays. This is an area where the officials should work on making the system better.
- It is encouraging that majority, two thirds, would know whom to talk to if they or someone they knew suffered from sexual abuse



# Background variabels

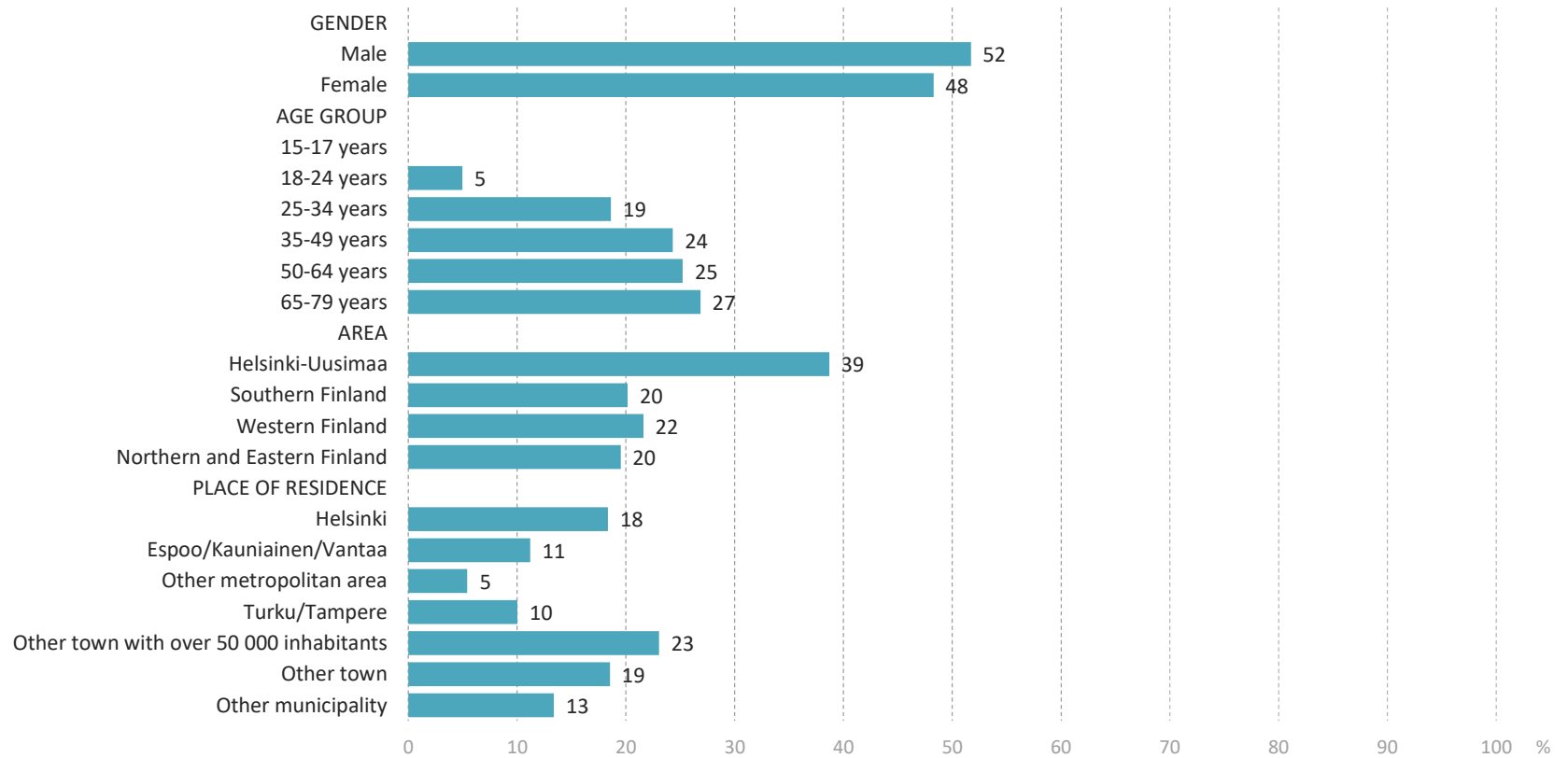


Co-funded  
by the European Union

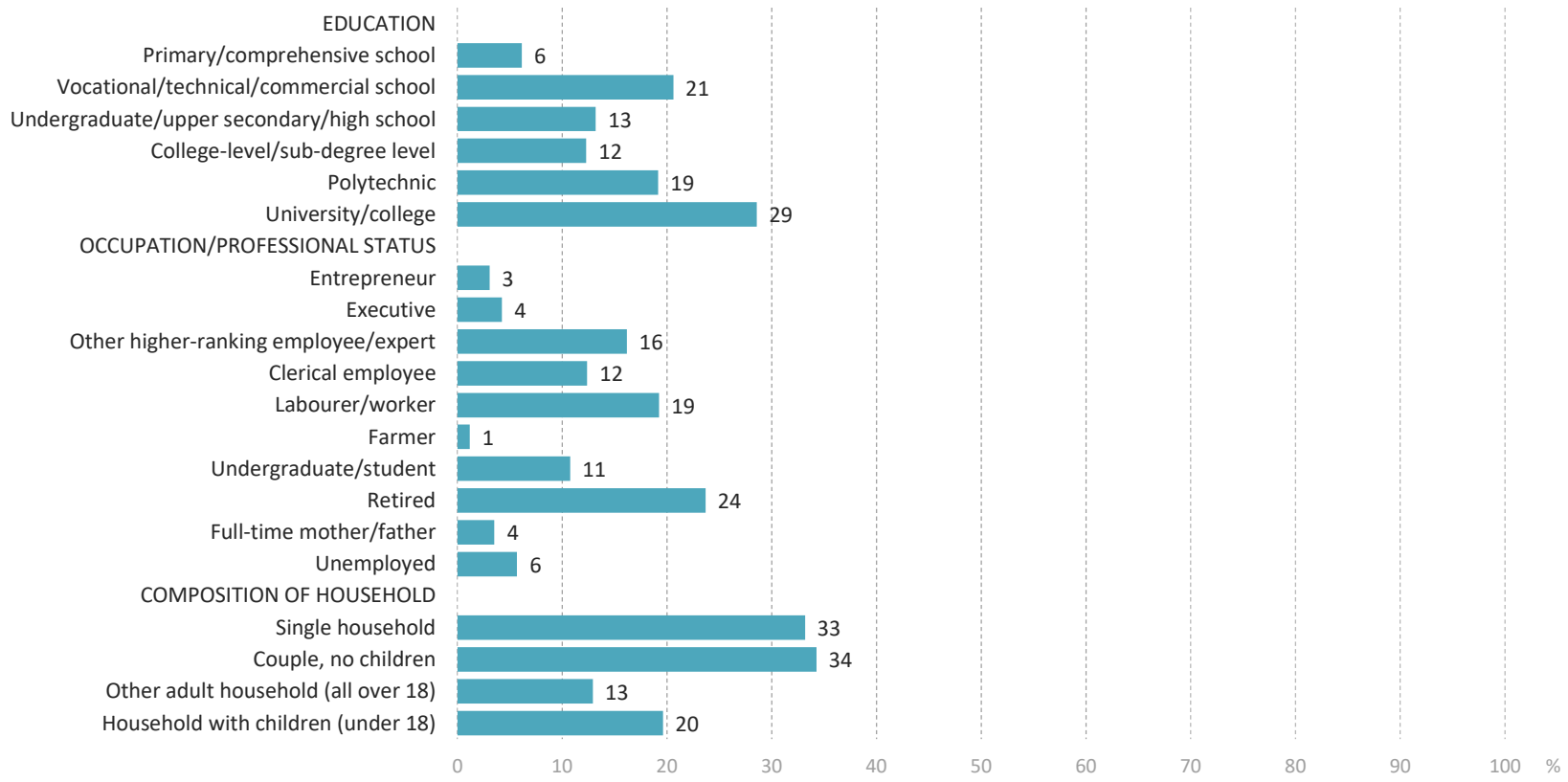


Co-funded and implemented  
by the Council of Europe

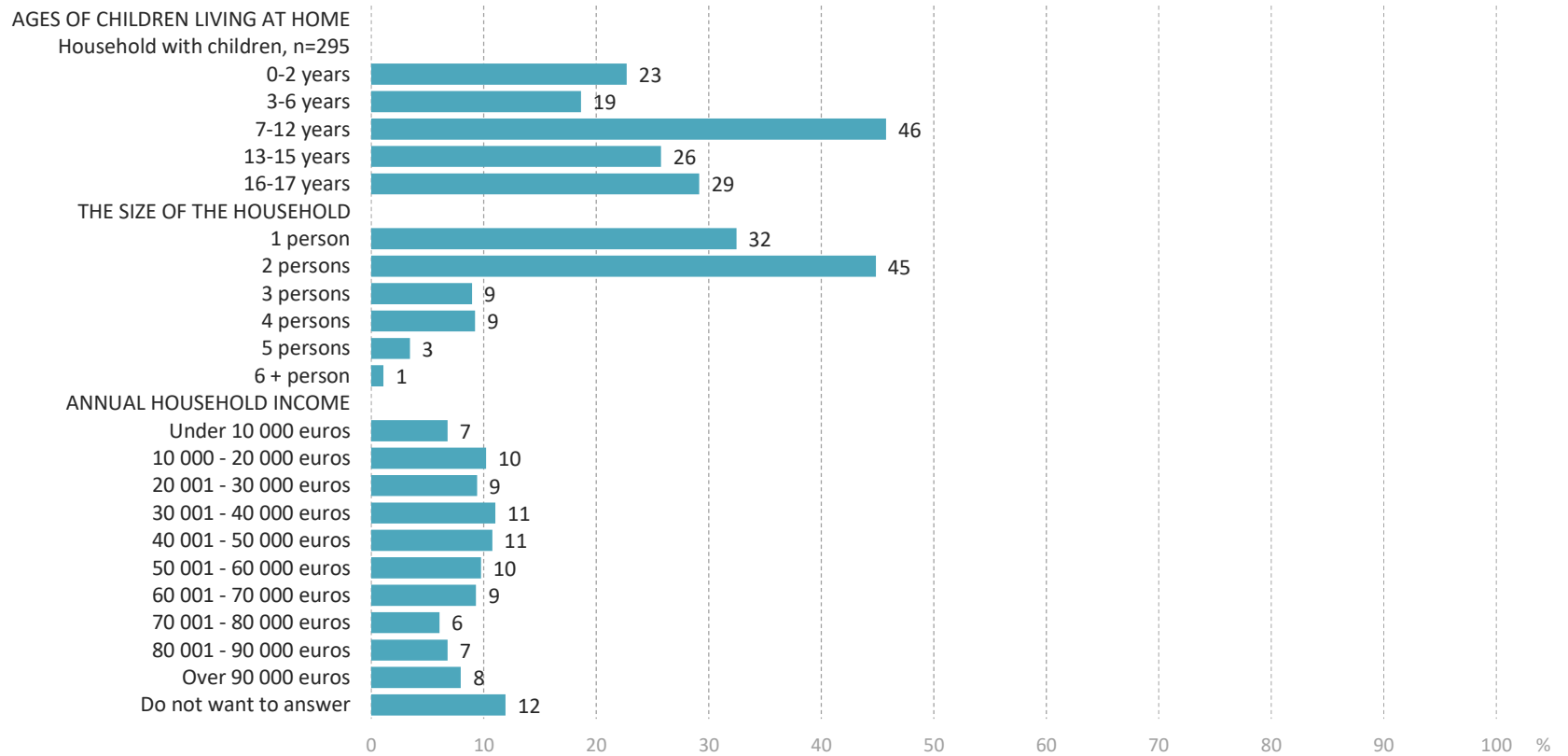
# Demographics



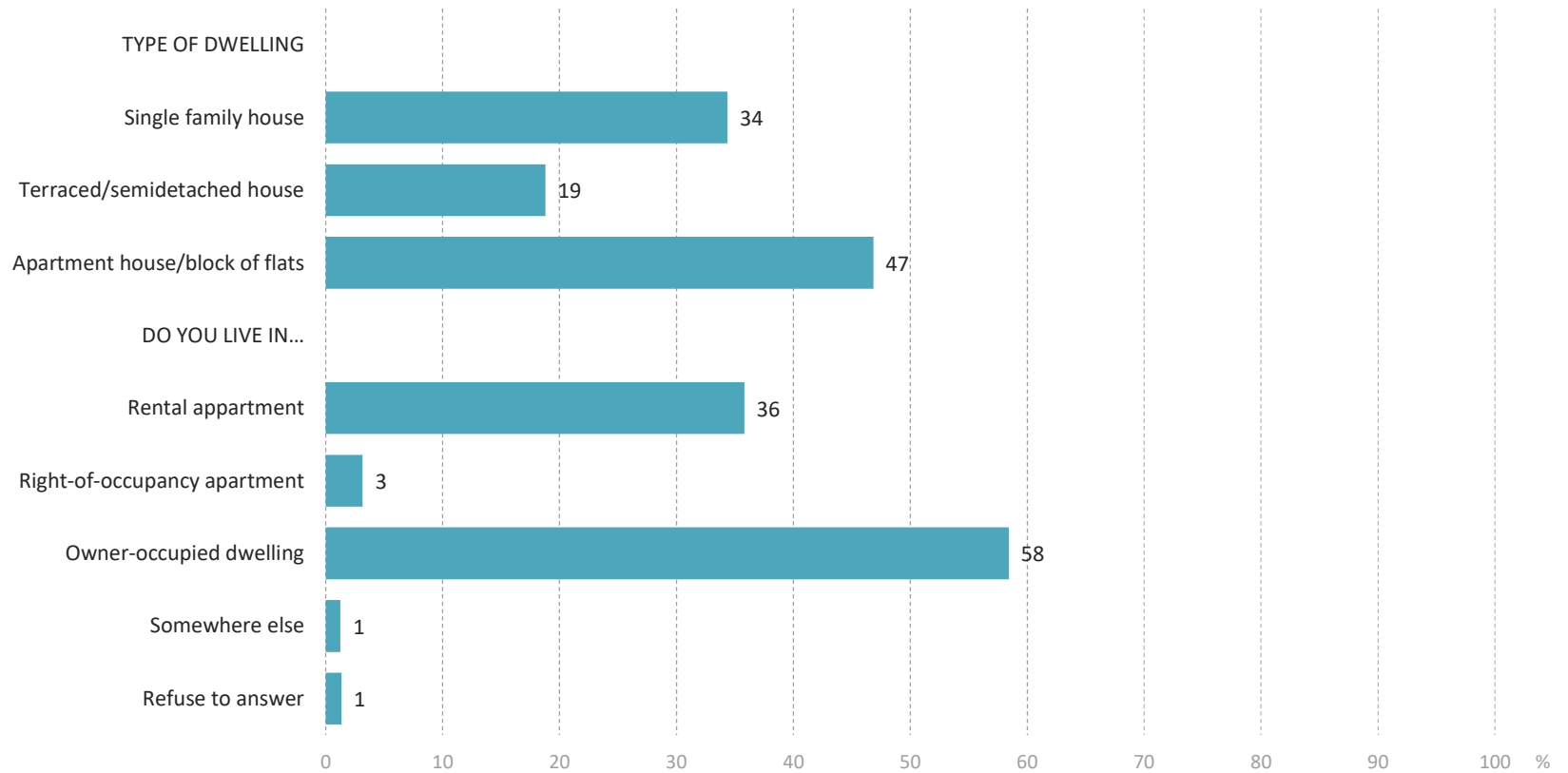
# Demographics



# Demographics

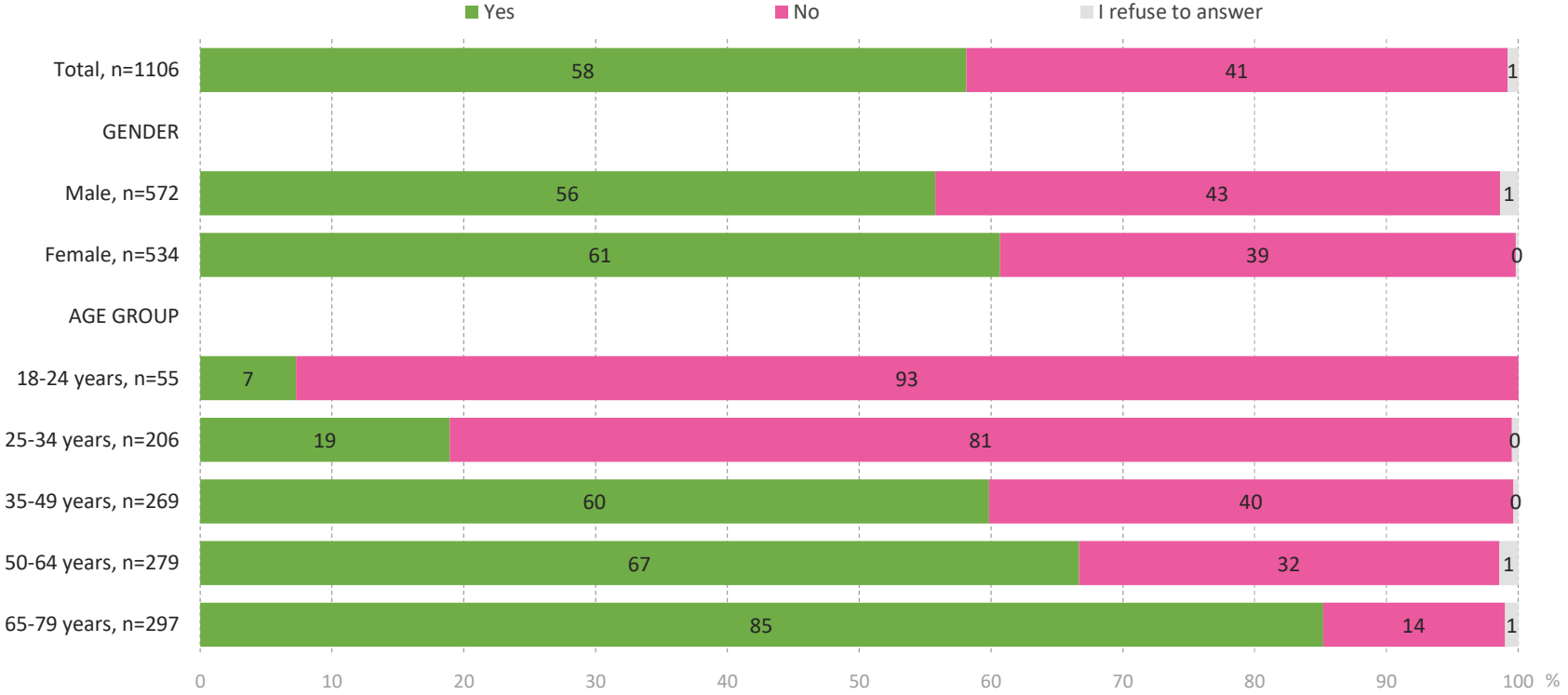


# Demographics



# Do you have any children?

Please include your own children, as well as step or foster children.  
 Also include children who are not living with you now but who you've taken care of in the past



# How many people under the age of 18 are living in your household?

