

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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LANZAROTE CONVENTION

Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND'S REPORT RESULTS OF FINNISH CHILDREN AGED 12-17 ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND THE RELATED BULLYING IN DIGITAL MEDIA

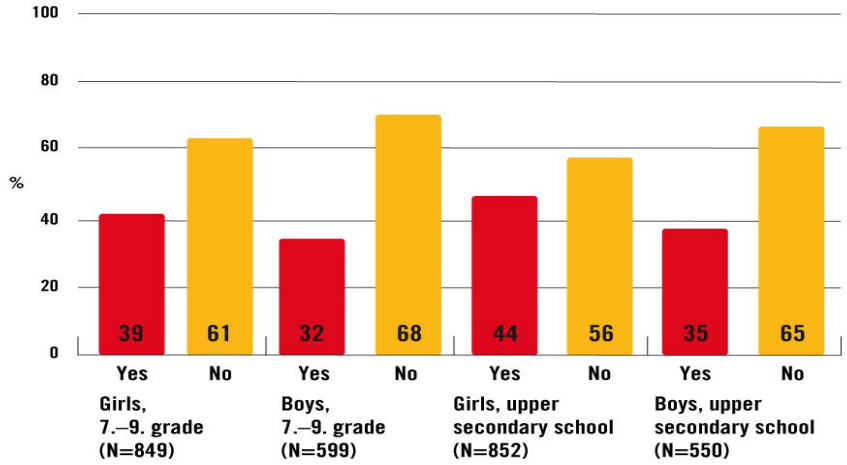
2nd thematic monitoring round

"The protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs)"

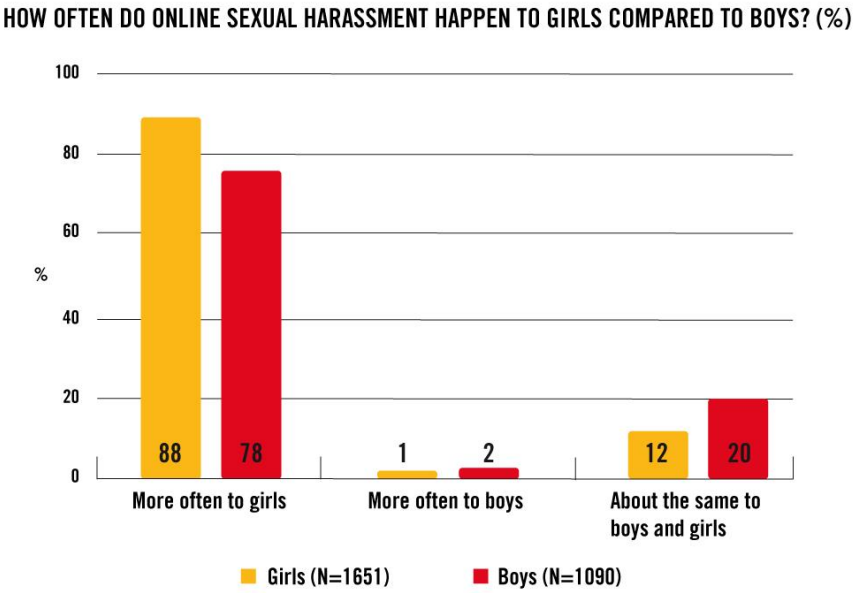
Specialists of Save the Children Finland have in their work paid attention to the uncontrollable spreading and inappropriate or criminal use of suggestive children's selfies, or images of children shot by others. Save the Children Finland set out to explore the phenomenon as experienced by children and adolescents. Report outlines sexual harassment and the related bullying in digital media as experienced by children and adolescents. The focus was to generate knowledge on the experiences of children of 12 to 17 years of peer-to-peer sexual harassment and the related bullying in digital media and hear the voice of children in the framework of the Lanzarote Convention. The report was written on the basis of a survey conducted by Save the Children Finland in February-March 2018. A total of 3,210 lower and upper secondary school children responded via web-based questionnaire.

The main finding of the report is that sexual harassment over digital media among children between the ages of 12 to 17 is rather common. Children and adolescents report having witnessed other children being subjected to sexual harassment and the related bullying in digital media.

FIG. 1. IN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU SEEN ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT DONE BY YOUNG PEOPLE? (%)

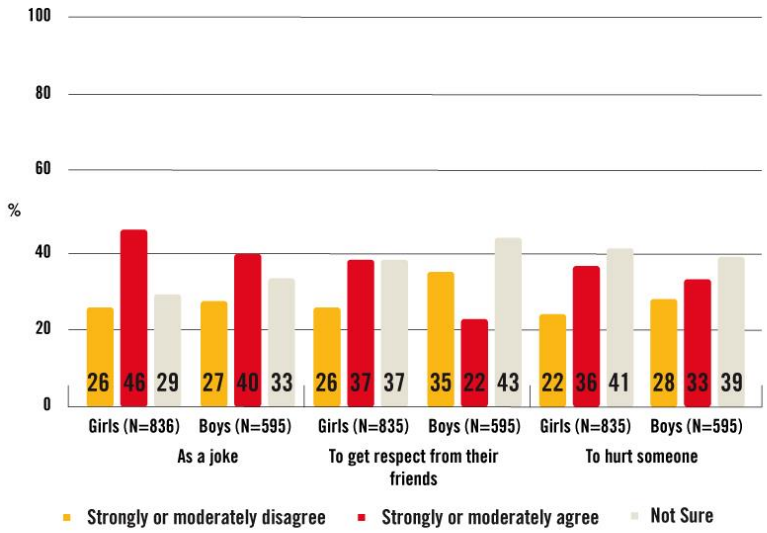


The findings indicate that girls more often than boys are subjected to sexual harassment. All of the children and adolescents reported that girls are more likely to be harassed and bullied.



Children and adolescents primarily perceive sexual harassment and the related bullying in terms of messing but a significant part of the respondents perceive it offensive. The findings show that the children and adolescents are aware that it is not allowed to share nude images over digital media. Despite this, approximately one third of the respondents had received nude images or video footage on their smartphones, or seen suggestive footage being shared in group conversations. The report pinpoints a contradiction between the attitudes and actions of the respondents.

FIG3. 7.–9. GRADE: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE THAT THESE ARE REASONS WHY YOUNG PEOPLE TARGET OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT? (%)

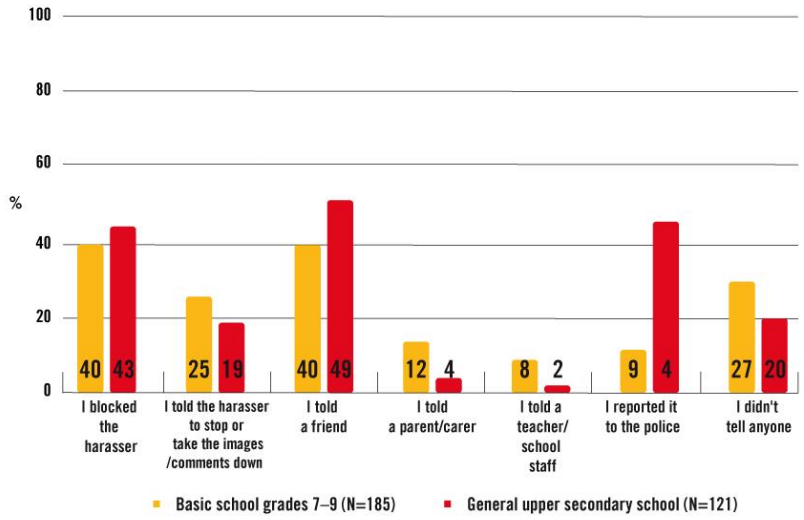


According to the findings, children and adolescents rarely capture footage in secret, or share such images or footage. Footage modified and edited to portray another child in a suggestive way had come to the attention of approximately a third of the children and adolescents. Children and adolescents most commonly share naked images of themselves when they are dating.

As a rule, children and adolescents do know what to do when they encounter sexual harassment and the related bullying in digital media. However, a significant part of children and adolescents do not know what to do in such situation. The most common way for children and adolescents to deal with sexual harassment is to block the perpetrator and tell a friend. The most salient reason for not telling an adult of sexual harassment is the feeling of shame. The second important reason for not telling an adult, according to the respondents, is apprehension due to the potential parental penalty loss of digital media privileges.

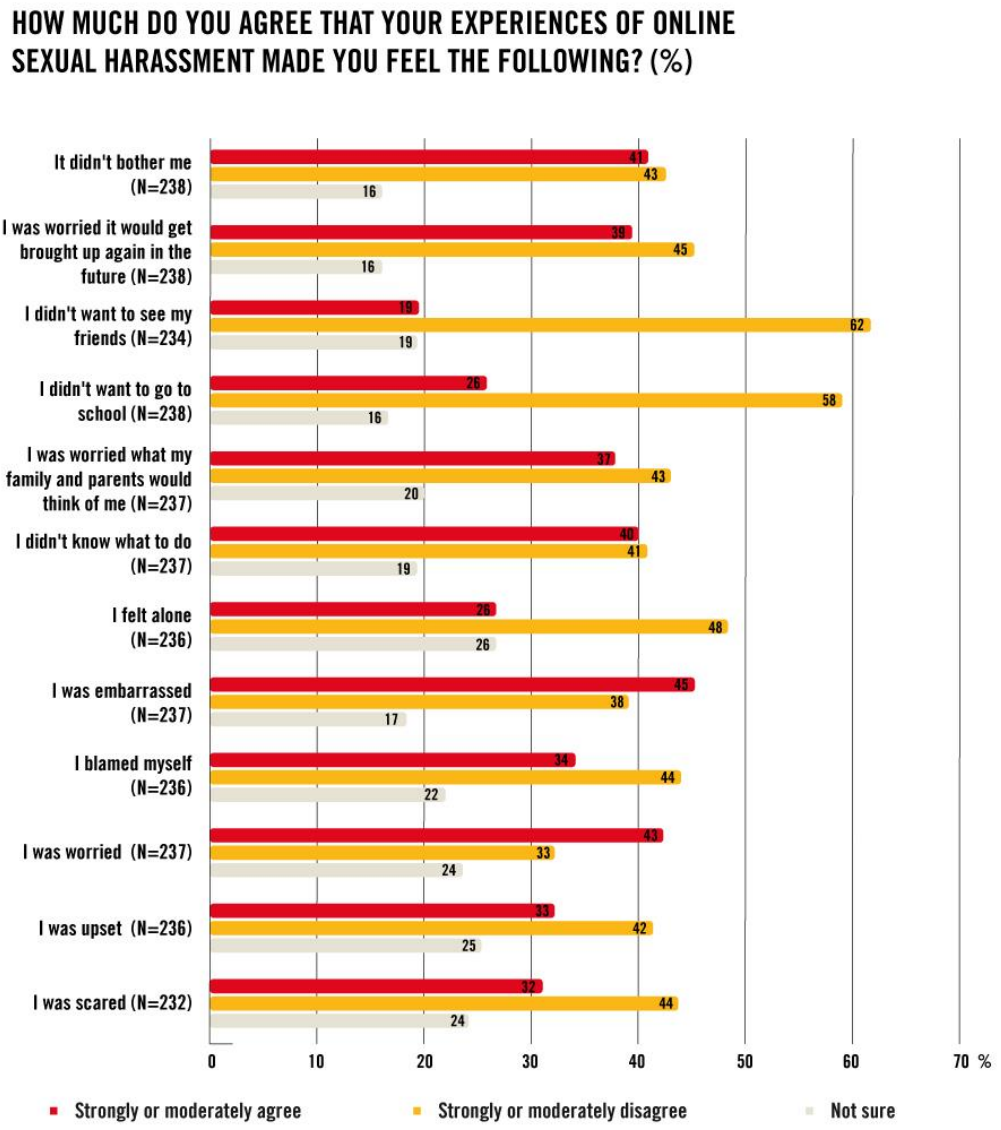
It seems that many children and adolescents have the technical skills of combating sexual harassment and related bullying but at the same time, they seem to be alone with feelings and questions about the phenomena. The views and suggestions of children are clear on this: they need adults to start the open conversation and expect guidance on the significant safety skills regarding the sexual footage in digital media. *Save The Children Finland underlines that there are no digital natives; children learn fast how to use digital media devices, but not how to be safe online.*

FIG. 15. WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN YOU EXPERIENCED ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT? (%)



The respondents hold that schools do not offer enough information and guidance on sexual harassment or sharing suggestive footage in digital media. Children and adolescents report having received little information on legislation concerning sexual harassment, or how and where to report possible incidents of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment and related bullying awakens various emotions in children and adolescents, although some thought that it did not bother them that much. Children and adolescents report shame, being worried, being frightened as well as being sad after experiencing sexual harassment and related bullying. They also felt that they do not want to go to school and were worried what their family and parents would think of them. Some of the respondents were accusing and blaming themselves of what had happened. Many felt they did not know what to do and felt lonely.



On the basis of the report, Save the Children Finland recommends that

- Children and adolescents need to be provided with knowledge on legislation and digital skills concerning sexual footage, the possession of such footage and downloading or sharing such footage without permission.
- The terminology and legislation related to this phenomenon must also be updated.
- Multidisciplinary research and open discussion between professionals about securing the rights of children in digital media needs to be nurtured.

Save the Children Finland will utilize the report widely also as a part of evaluation work on how the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child is fulfilled in Finland. The findings of the report will also be used to generate knowledge for the use of professionals working with children, children's parents, and children and adolescents themselves in Finland.