

CANADIAN TEENS & TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

FINDINGS FROM A 2024 GENERAL POPULATION SURVEY
AMONG CANADIAN TEENAGERS

SEPTEMBER 2025



ABOUT THE PROJECT: DIY: DIGITAL SAFETY

In today's digital world, young people face unique challenges when it comes to managing their sexuality and sexual experiences in digital spaces. It can be hard for them to find reliable guidance and support when dealing with digital harms, like technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). TFSV is an umbrella term that includes harmful practices like sexual name-calling and rumour spreading, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, online sexual extortion (also called "sextortion"), and online sexual harassment. TFSV is an urgent concern in Canada and around the world.

Parents, teachers, schools, youth organizations, community groups, tech companies, legal systems, and governments are all working to figure out how to help young people address TFSV and related digital harms. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of specific, tangible, and evidence-informed strategies that take youth's voices into consideration. It is crucial that young people's experiences and needs inform these new approaches and interventions.

DIY (Digitally Informed Youth): Digital Safety aims to understand the educational, policy, and legal issues with TFSV in Canada and create resources that empower young people and help them stay safe online and in person.

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We/I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay-wuk) and Chonnonton (Chun-ongk-ton) Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to our society.

WEBSITE

<https://www.diydigitalsafety.ca>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a 2024 general-population survey of 1,023 Canadian teens (ages 13–18) on their experiences with technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV), support-seeking behaviours, and legal knowledge surrounding these harms. TFSV includes harmful practices like sexual name-calling and rumour spreading, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, online sexual extortion (also called “sextortion”), and online sexual harassment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 1. Prevalence of TFSV:** Around one in three teens (28%) experienced at least one form of TFSV; nearly half (47%) knew someone who had experienced TFSV. The most common experiences were being sent sexual images or videos without consent (15%), receiving unwanted porn (13%), and online sexual harassment (11%). Snapchat was the most mentioned platform for sexual harassment (26%). Girls, young people with learning disabilities or neurodivergence, and those with mental health conditions were most likely to experience TFSV.
- 2. Perpetration of TFSV:** Nearly one in ten teens (7%) admitted to committing at least one form of TFSV. The most common behaviours were spreading sexual rumours (3%) and distributing intimate images of young people without their consent (2%). Boys were more likely than girls to report harming others.
- 3. Support Seeking:** When seeking support with TFSV, teens were most likely to go to their parents and guardians (44% of the teens told them, 42% of the teens found them helpful). Friends were also frequently told (39%), but they were less consistently helpful (24%). Adults

working in institutional settings (e.g., schools, police, and youth workers) were approached less frequently and were reported as less effective. One in five teens (19%) stated that they would never report TFSV to their school.

- 4. Legal Awareness:** Most teens correctly identified TFSV (e.g., sextortion, voyeurism, adults soliciting nude images from teens, taking and distributing intimate images without someone’s consent) as illegal. However, there was less certainty around the legality of consensually creating and sharing nude photos. Only one in five teens (21%) believed that consensually sending nudes to a close-in-age peer was legal, and six out of ten teens (60%) knew that taking a nude of oneself (without sharing) was legal. In Canada, there is an exception under criminal child pornography laws for young people who take nude images of themselves or their sexual experiences with their legal age sexual partners, as long as those images are kept between those youth (*R v Sharpe*, 2001 SCC 2, para 76). This behaviour is not illegal in Canada as long as it fits under the private use exception in *Sharpe*.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Individuals, social institutions, and technology companies need to do more to prevent TFSV. In particular, they need to address the needs of those at increased risk of harm, including teens who are neurodivergent, have a learning disability, or live with a mental health condition. Cultural and educational changes are needed so that young people feel safe seeking support from adults and are well-informed about their legal rights regarding intimate image-sharing. Teen perpetration of TFSV needs to be addressed, especially among boys.

INTRODUCTION

Social media and digital communications are foundational aspects of young people's lives. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that young people have had to learn how to manage their sexuality and sexual experiences in and through digital spaces and technologies. It can be hard for them to find reliable guidance and support when dealing with harmful experiences, like technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). TFSV is an umbrella term that includes harmful practices like sexual name-calling and rumour spreading, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, online sexual extortion (also called "sextortion"), and online sexual harassment. TFSV is an urgent concern in Canada and around the world.

TFSV is an umbrella term that includes harmful practices like sexual name-calling and rumour spreading, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, online sexual extortion (also called "sextortion"), and online sexual harassment.

Parents, teachers, civil society organizations, and governments are struggling to help young people manage TFSV because tangible and evidence-informed strategies are still lacking (Dietzel et al. 2024). While there is ample research on the various harms TFSV causes, we still have little information on how common it is for Canadian teens to be subjected to TFSV or commit TFSV. Also, it is largely unknown where Canadian teens go for help when things go wrong. Finally, while legislation in Canada has taken steps to make some forms of TFSV illegal (Dunn, 2024), it remains unclear if young people understand what is legal and illegal, and whether further educational efforts are needed in this area.

This report presents findings from a general population survey among Canadian teens that was conducted in 2024. The study aims to answer four overarching questions:

1. How pervasive are experiences of TFSV among Canadian teens?
2. How common is it for Canadian teens to commit TFSV?
3. Where do Canadian teens go for support with TFSV, and how effective are different support sources?
4. Do teens correctly understand the legality of different forms of TFSV in Canada?

This study's goals are to inform future policy, legal, and educational responses that shape young people's lives in Canada.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Over the past two decades, young people's online and offline lives have become increasingly integrated as they have relied on technology for entertainment, education, socializing, and other activities essential to their lives, including those of a sexual nature (Mendes et al., 2019). In 2022, for example, nearly all young Canadians aged 15 to 24 had access to the Internet (99%), and 91% utilized social media platforms (Statistics Canada, 2022). While technology has offered great opportunities for young people, it has also increased their exposure to various forms of sexual harm. Scholars and advocates have used 'technology-facilitated sexual violence' (TFSV) as an umbrella term to encompass these harms, which include sharing sexually explicit content about someone without consent, making unwanted or derogatory comments of a sexual nature, and coercing or deceiving someone to obtain some type of sexual content or interaction (Powell & Henry, 2017). These behaviours can occur through various means, including online platforms (e.g., messaging apps, social media, online gaming) and digital technologies (e.g., smartphones, tablets, computers), and can be perpetrated by romantic and sexual partners, close-in-age peers, known adults, and strangers.

VICTIMIZATION

Although research on TFSV has increased in recent years, data on the prevalence of victimization remain limited and can vary widely across studies. This is due, in part, to the evolving nature of TFSV and inconsistencies in the measurement and terminology used (Patel & Roesch, 2022; Gámez-Guadix & Martínez-Bacaicoa, 2022). Thus far, evidence shows that this is a prevalent harm that is experienced

differently depending on identity and social location. For example, in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation, cisgender girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ youth tend to face higher rates of exposure to TFSV overall (Turner et al., 2024). Some studies have also indicated that racialized groups, including Black and Indigenous peoples, are more likely to be targeted by certain types of TFSV, such as sextortion (Eaton et al., 2023), cyberstalking (Reyns et al., 2012) and harassment (Plan International, 2020). In addition, people with disabilities and assistance needs have reported higher odds of experiencing image-based sexual abuse (Powell et al., 2022). It is also important to consider the experiences of boys, as some studies show that they experience similar rates of nonconsensual intimate image distribution to girls (Douglass et al., 2020) and higher rates of financial sexual extortion (Martínez-Bacaicoa et al., 2025).¹

These patterns suggest that TFSV is embedded within broader gendered and discriminatory dynamics that reproduce stigma and marginalization against some groups (Morales et al., 2024). However, it is evident that studies examining the relationship between victimization and identity characteristics, such as race, disability, and geographic location, remain notably limited compared to those focused on gender and sexuality. Yet, understanding these intersections is crucial, as victimization can have profound and wide-ranging effects on young people's well-being, including increased risks of social isolation, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, substance use, and interpersonal difficulties (Champion et al., 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Snaychuk & O'Neill, 2020). Since these harms do not affect all youth equally, structural inequalities related to sexism, homophobia,

1 Research indicates that the dynamics of sextortion often differ by gender. For instance, according to statistics from [Cybertip.ca](#), boys are more commonly targeted with threats aimed at obtaining money, whereas girls are more often coerced into providing additional sexual images.

transphobia, racism, ableism, cisnormativity, and geographic marginalization can influence how TFSV is experienced, responded to, and reported. Our research examines some of these relationships by adopting an intersectional lens to account for these power dynamics and to highlight the diverse and compounding vulnerabilities that certain groups face (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2019). Studying these variables is not only essential for a comprehensive understanding of the scope and impact of TFSV. It is also critical for informing responses that are tailored and attentive to the systemic conditions that enable such violence in the first place.

PERPETRATION

Compared to victimization, perpetration of TFSV has received considerably less scholarly attention, especially among young people. Still, available evidence offers important insights. Aggregate findings from Patel and Roesch (2022) indicate that between 3% and 12% of individuals have, at least once, shared or threatened to share sexually explicit material of another person without consent. Besides, rates of perpetration have consistently been significantly higher among boys and men in many forms of TFSV, particularly those related to sexual harassment (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2023; Dunn et al., 2023) and image-based sexual abuse (Henry et al., 2019). Regarding age, Henry et al. (2020) found significant differences across all types of image-based sexual abuse perpetration, with people aged 16–39 years more likely (23.2%) than those aged 40–64 years (10.6%) to report engaging in one or more forms of image-based sexual abuse. This highlights the importance of working with young people, especially boys and young men, to prevent and address many forms of TFSV.

In some studies involving young people, it was found that having been a victim of some forms of image-based abuse increased the likelihood of being a perpetrator (Powell et al. 2022b; Sparks et al.,

2023), particularly for boys and men (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2023). In the study by Henry et al. (2020), most perpetrators identified themselves as the partner, former partner, family member, or friend of the victim. Although few studies have investigated the motivations behind TFSV perpetration, some suggest that emotional abuse serves as a key motivation for perpetrators, particularly within romantic relationships (Eaton et al., 2020). Other studies indicate that, in certain cases, perpetrators engage in these behaviors to gain status or for monetary reasons (Henry et al., 2020). Despite emerging insights, significant gaps remain in understanding who perpetrates TFSV and the social, relational, and digital contexts in which these harms occur, particularly among youth. This survey contributes to addressing this gap by providing large-scale, youth-centred data on TFSV perpetration in Canada.

SUPPORT

Despite advocates' and scholars' efforts to raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of TFSV, especially among children and youth, legislation, policies, and educational initiatives addressing this complex issue are often fragmented or lack comprehensive frameworks (Dodge, 2021; Khoo, 2021; McGlynn & Kelly, 2021). For instance, in Canada, we found considerable variation in the specificity and depth of TFSV responses and interventions within educational curricula, policies, and legislation across the provinces and territories (Dietzel et al., 2023). These limitations not only hinder teachers', parents', and students' understanding of TFSV and their ability to respond promptly and effectively to it (Horeck et al. 2023; Ringrose et al., 2021), but they also increase barriers, a lack of cooperation, and misinformation among other actors, such as police, legal staff, and front-line workers (Powell & Henry, 2018).

We need to pay more attention to these shortcomings, as data show that young people prefer to turn to their offline support systems,

which include caregivers and friends, when they feel unsafe regarding TFSV (Thorn, 2023; Dodge & Lockhart, 2021). As the Canadian government explores new policy and legislation to address online harms (Dunn, 2024), it is essential that these approaches are grounded in the lived experiences and needs of young people. As such, this survey aims to fill important gaps in understanding the victimization and perpetration of TFSV among youth, the types of support that they need and want, and the limitations of current support sources, including the police, schools, parents, and friends.



METHODS

DATA COLLECTION

We partnered with the research firm **Leger** to administer a general population survey to 1,023 teens between the ages of 13 and 18 in Canada. Data collection took place between October 15 and November 26, 2024.

The survey questions addressed the following areas:

- Views of technology (i.e., apps, social media, websites, and online games)
- Experiences with technology-facilitated sexual violence
- Use and evaluations of different people/groups who support teens exposed to technology-facilitated sexual violence
- Views of the legality of technology-facilitated sexual harms in Canada
- Demographics

Quotas² were created to ensure that the demographic profiles of the participants reflected, as closely as possible, the Canadian population in terms of gender, age, race, and distribution across the provinces and territories.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE

We use the acronym “TFSV” throughout this report to denote “technology-facilitated sexual violence,” an umbrella term that includes various forms of sexual harms experienced online and in person. The questionnaire was written in youth-accessible language, meaning that some forms of TFSV are

slightly different in this report than in the survey. For instance, in the survey, sextortion was described as “someone threaten[ing] to share your nude image if you didn’t send them more nudes or money.” When reported, quotes from the survey responses were not edited for grammar, spelling, and clarity.

PRIVACY, SAFETY, AND CONSENT

The survey was anonymous. Because teens cannot be members of the Leger survey panel, we recruited participants through their caregivers. Parents or guardians with teenage children were invited to the survey and provided a letter of information with details about the study. Caregivers were then asked to provide consent for their teen’s participation and let their teen complete the survey without their supervision. The teens received a modified version of the study letter (i.e., written in youth-accessible language) and their own consent form. We also provided a list of mental health resources for youth, which was accessible outside the survey and regardless of whether the individual completed the survey or not. The study underwent ethics review and received approval from the research ethics board at Western University (www.ethics.uwo.ca, project ID 125305).

DEMOGRAPHICS

The average age of participants was 15.3 at the time of the survey. There were similar numbers of girls/women and boys/men, with a small number of gender diverse (e.g., non-binary), Two-Spirit,

2 A quota is a mechanism built into an online survey that favours participants with specific demographic profiles until a certain number of those participants has been reached. This ensures, for example, that participants from less populated parts of the country are also included in the sample.

and transgender teens.³ The participants represented all Canadian provinces. We were however unable to recruit participants from the territories. Noteworthy shares of participants identified as having a learning disability or being neurodivergent (20%) or having a mental health condition (17%). The demographic information of participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant breakdown

DEMOGRAPHIC MARKER	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	COUNT (N)	PERCENT (%)
Age	13	166	16.2
	14	193	18.9
	15	197	19.3
	16	184	18.0
	17	202	19.7
	18	81	7.9
Gender	Girl/woman	499	48.8
	Boy/man	506	49.5
	Non-binary, agender, or gender diverse	10	1.0
	Two-Spirit	2	0.2
Transgender	Yes	15	1.5
	No	992	97.0
	Unsure/questioning	10	1.0
Sexual orientation	Straight	934	91.8
	Gay/lesbian	12	1.2
	Bisexual	22	2.2
	Queer	3	0.3
	Asexual	5	0.5
	Unsure/questioning	23	2.3
Province	Alberta	83	8.1
	British Columbia	69	6.7
	Manitoba	30	2.9
	New Brunswick	25	2.4
	Newfoundland and Labrador	9	0.9
	Nova Scotia	25	2.4
	Ontario	354	34.6
	Prince Edward Island	3	0.3
	Quebec	402	39.3
	Saskatchewan	23	2.2

3 The share of transgender and gender-diverse teens is slightly higher in our sample than the general population. Statistics Canada has found that 0.5% of Canadian teens between the ages of 12 and 17 are non-cisgender, including transgender and non-binary teens (Statistics Canada, 2023).

DEMOGRAPHIC MARKER	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	COUNT (N)	PERCENT (%)
Racial identity	Black/African/West Indian	41	4.0
	First Nations, Métis, Inuk, or Indigenous/Aboriginal	29	2.8
	East Asian	61	6.0
	South/Latin American	26	2.5
	Middle Eastern	29	2.8
	South Asian	60	5.9
	Southeast Asian	36	3.5
	White/European	749	73.2
	Other	20	2.0
Physical disability or chronic condition	Yes	34	3.3
	No	970	95.4
	Unsure / Prefer not to say	13	1.3
Learning disability or neurodivergence	Yes	202	19.9
	No	776	76.3
	Unsure / Prefer not to say	39	3.8
Depression, anxiety or other mental health condition	Yes	173	17.0
	No	771	75.8
	Unsure / Prefer not to say	73	7.2
TOTAL		1,023	100.0

FINDINGS

PREVALENCE OF TFSV

One in three (28%) teens said that they had been subjected to at least one form of TFSV.



Nearly half (47%) stated that at least one TFSV form had happened to someone they knew.



Around 1 in 3 participants (28%) stated that they had been subjected to at least one form of TFSV listed in the survey. Nearly half (47%) stated that at least one form of TFSV had happened to someone they knew.

The most common form of TFSV young people reported was having been sent an unwanted sexual image, nude image, or video—with 15% of the respondents indicating that this had happened to them, and 21% stating that it had happened to someone they knew. Also common was having been sent porn they did not want to see – 13% stated that this had happened to them and 17% said it had happened to someone they knew. The third most pervasive form of TFSV was sexual harassment, with 11% of the teens saying they had experienced it and 18% being aware of it happening to others. Figure 1 shows the pervasiveness of all forms of TFSV.

Examples of the “most stressful experience of TFSV” shared by teens:

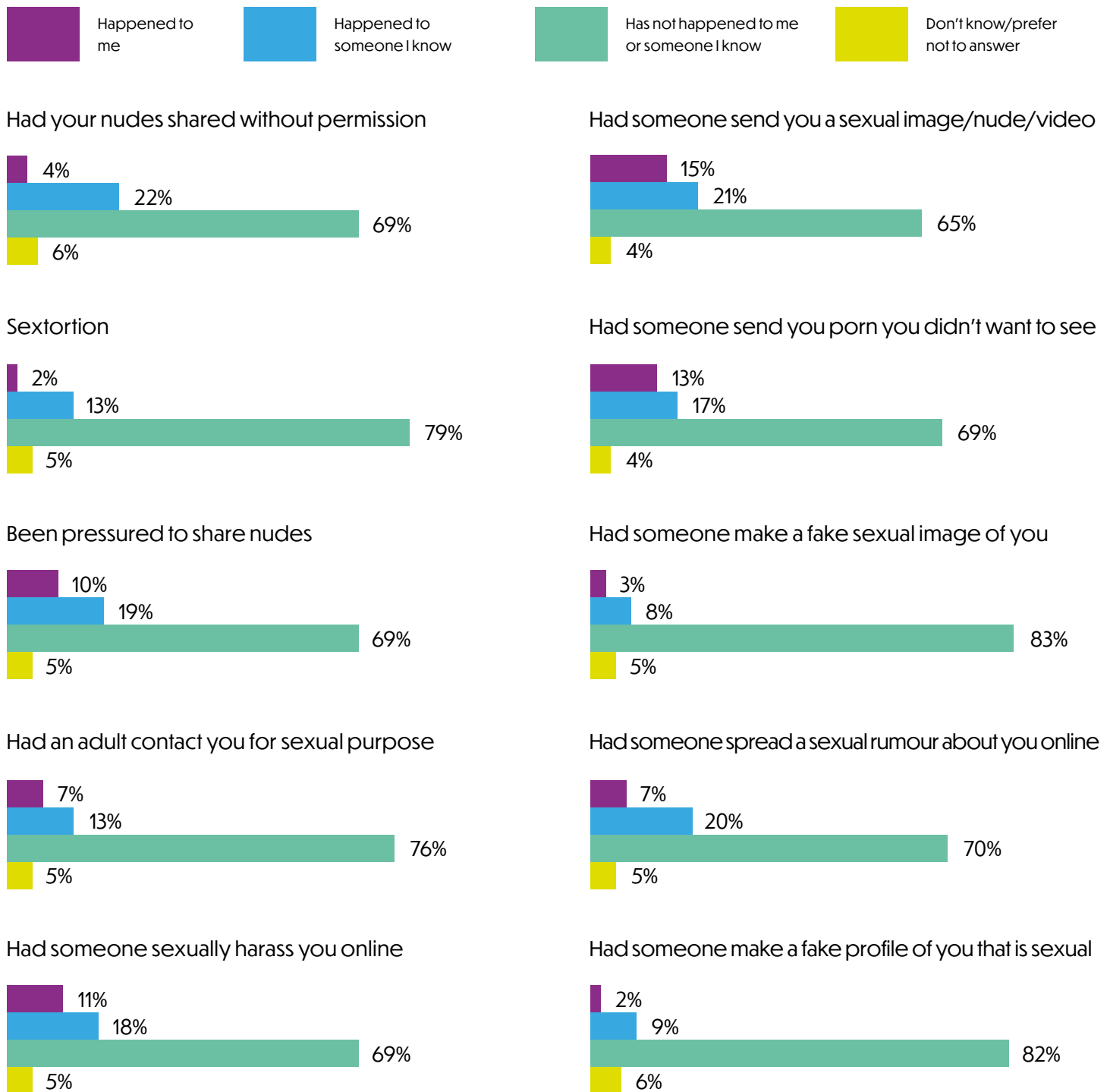
“Someone was pretending to be a girl i know and I thought that it was actually her and she was talking dirty to me. It ended up not being her. I reported it to my parents and they told the police.”

“Being threatened that someone would post my nude picture to my Insta account where my family and friends would see it”

“Getting a message asking if I want dick pics or pics of naked people. Also getting sent a link I didn’t ask for, the thumbnail for the link showed it was porn. Didn’t click on it.”

“I had experienced being harassed by a person pretending to be someone I knew but they were an impostor. This person sent me unwanted “dick” pics and asked me several times for nudes. I blocked this person and set up another fake account. I ended up having to close my Instagram account to stop the harassment”

Figure 1: Exposure to TFSV



Note: Multi-select questions, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

When asked which app had the most sexual harassment, one in four (26%) of the teens mentioned Snapchat.



We also asked participants to respond to an open-ended question about which social media and gaming services had the most sexual harassment. The platform the most mentioned was Snapchat (264 mentions), followed by TikTok (103 mentions), Instagram (95 mentions), and Facebook (60 mentions). Smaller numbers of participants also mentioned popular online games and gaming platforms, such as Fortnite and Roblox, as well as other sites and apps, including Twitter, YouTube, dating apps (like Grindr and Tinder), and Discord (see Table 1).

"A man about 26 years old asked me for nude photos of myself, I refused and blocked it and 1 hour later 2 accounts added me pretending to be teenagers and harassed me to receive photos."

"I have had someone deepfake a naked picture of me and sent it out to everyone of my friends. they had hacked into my Facebook account and put the picture as my account picture. It was embarrassing and stressful because most of my Facebook friends had seen it and it got shared with a lot of other people, I saw it later that day because I am on Facebook everyday but I didn't remove it in time. I actually just laughed it off with all my friends like it was some weird joke of a fake picture but I was so horrified by this. This is not funny and should not be done to anyone."

Table 2: Digital platforms with the most sexual harassment

Digital platform	Number of teens mentioning the service	Percentage of teens mentioning the service
Snapchat	264	26%
TikTok	103	10%
Instagram	95	9%
Facebook	60	6%
Games and gaming platforms	27	3%
Twitter/X	16	2%
YouTube	15	2%
Dating apps	13	1%
Discord	11	1%
Other	23	2%
TOTAL	964	94%

Note: Based on open-text question. Includes only usable responses (N=964).

Some demographic groups in our sample were significantly more likely than others to experience one form of TFSV.

Girls, participants with learning disabilities or neurodivergence, and participants with mental health conditions were subjected to TFSV at the highest rates.



Moreover, participants identifying as girls or young women were subjected to TFSV at a higher rate (32%) than boys and young men (23%). Unfortunately, we did not have a sufficient number of gender non-conforming participants to draw conclusions about the prevalence of TFSV in this group.

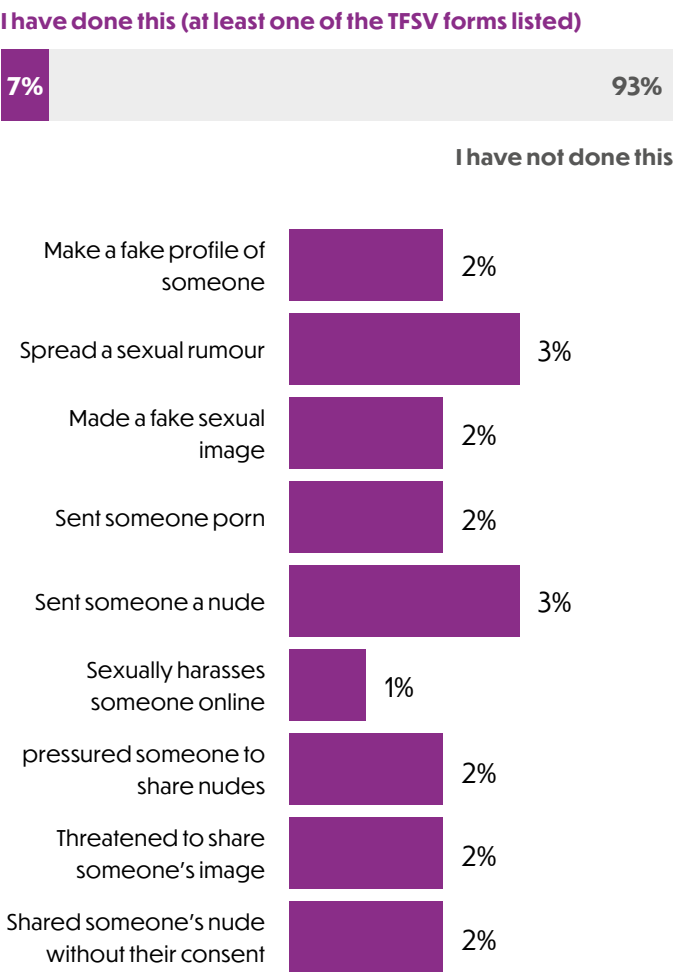
There was also a statistically significant difference among teens who identified as having a learning disability or being neurodivergent such that those who stated that they had those conditions were subjected to TFSV at a higher rate (39%) than those who did not (24%). The same was true for those teens who identified as having depression, anxiety, or another mental health condition. More than two in five (40%) of the respondents in this group (43%) reported being subjected to TFSV compared to only 23% of respondents who did not report having a mental health condition.

Finally, 15-year-olds and 17-year-olds seem to experience TFSV at a higher rate than the other age groups, though this difference was relatively small. Roughly one in three (34%) of the 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds reported having been subjected to at least one form of TFSV. Among the other age groups, the share of participants who had been subjected to at least one form of the online harms listed was between 22% and 28% (see Appendix Table 3).

PERPETRATION OF TFSV

Regarding TFSV perpetration, 7% of respondents said that they had committed at least one form listed in the survey. The most common form of TFSV was spreading a sexual rumour about someone else online, with 3% of respondents saying that they had done this. Also, 2% said that they had shared someone’s nudes without their consent, and 2% indicated that they had threatened to circulate someone’s nudes to pressure them to share further nudes with them. For each of the remaining forms of TFSV, only 2% of the respondents stated that they had previously done them (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Perpetration of TFSV



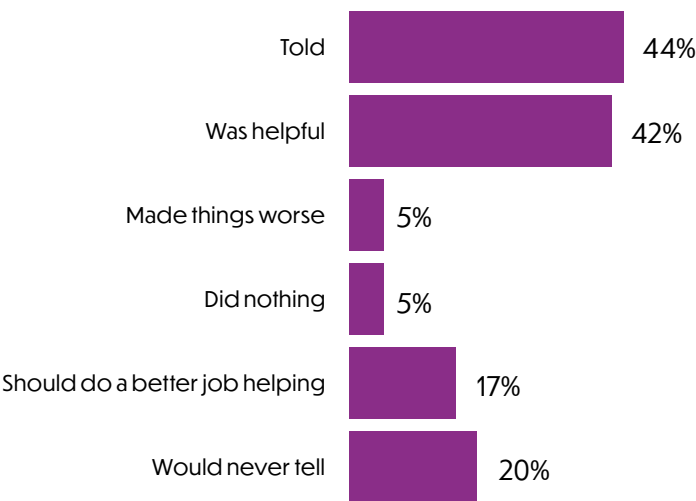
Note: Chart is based on a multi-select question, percentages for individual questions do not add up to 100%.

Some sub-groups in our sample were significantly more likely than others to have perpetrated TFSV. Among the boys and young men, 9% stated that they had committed one of the harmful behaviours, while 6% of the girls and young women said the same. Further, respondents who reported that they had depression, anxiety, or any other mental health condition perpetrated harms at a somewhat higher rate (9%) than those who did not report having a mental health condition (6%).

PERCEPTIONS OF AVAILABLE SUPPORTS FOR DEALING WITH TFSV

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Figure 3: Support from parents and guardians

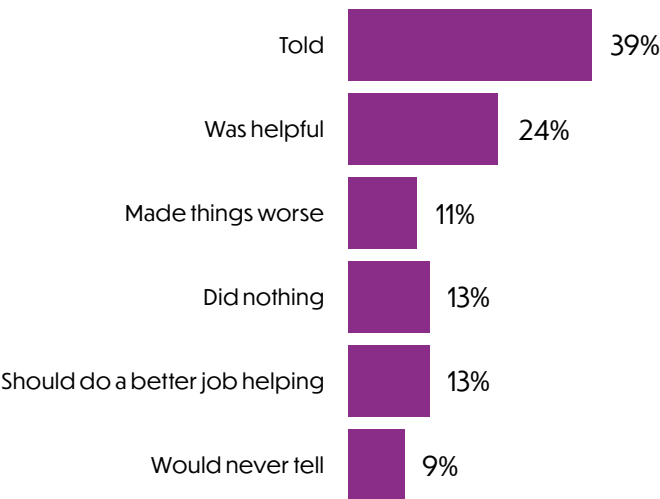


Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

For the teens who had been exposed to TFSV (28%), parents and guardians were the most relevant and effective source of support. Nearly half (44%) said that they had told their parents or guardians about TFSV victimization, and most of those respondents (42%) also found that their caregivers had been helpful. There was only a small percentage of respondents who indicated that their parents or guardians had made things worse (5%) or had done nothing (5%). However, many survey respondents also said that they would never tell their parents or guardians about TFSV victimization (20%) or reported that parents and guardians should do a better job helping them (17%). These percentages are shown in Figure 3.

FRIENDS AND SIBLINGS

Figure 4: Support from friends

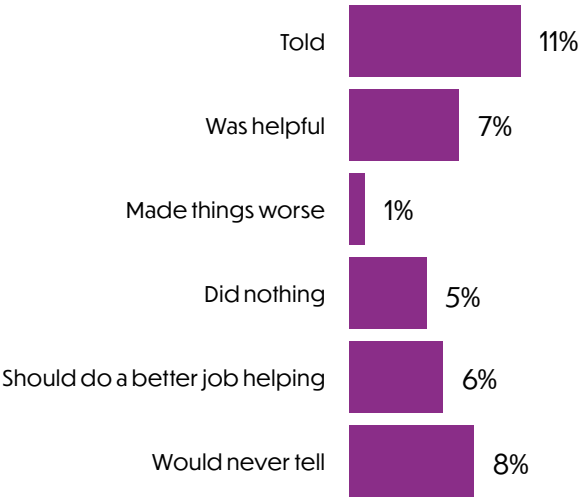


Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

Friends were a trusted source of support for many teens in the survey, though they were rated less effective at helping address TFSV victimization than parents and guardians. More than a third of respondents (39%) had told their friends about an experience of TFSV, and only 9% of respondents said that they would never tell their friends. Only a quarter of respondents (24%) found their friends helpful in addressing TFSV, with many reporting that their friends had made things worse (11%), done nothing (13%), or should have done a better job helping (13%). These findings are presented in Figure 4.

For the teens who had been exposed to TFSV, parents and guardians were the most relevant and effective source of support.

Figure 5: Support from siblings



Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

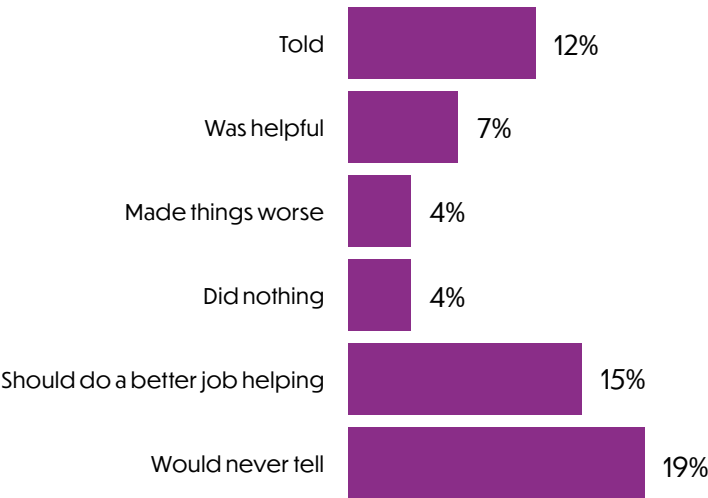
Teens were much less likely to turn to their siblings for support with TFSV. Only a tenth of respondents (11%) stated that they had confided in siblings about an experience of TFSV. There were mixed views regarding whether siblings were helpful or not helpful (see Figure 5).

INSTITUTION-BASED SUPPORT

Few teens stated that they had contacted schools, law enforcement, and youth programs for support (see Figures 6–8). For instance, close to 20% stated that they would never tell a teacher, principal, or their school about TFSV victimization (see Figure 6). Similarly, 14% said that they would never tell the police (see Figure 7) and 10% indicated that they would never tell a youth program worker (see Figure 8). Respondents also stated that these support sources should do a better job helping them: 18% about the police, 15% said this about their schools, and 8% about youth program workers.

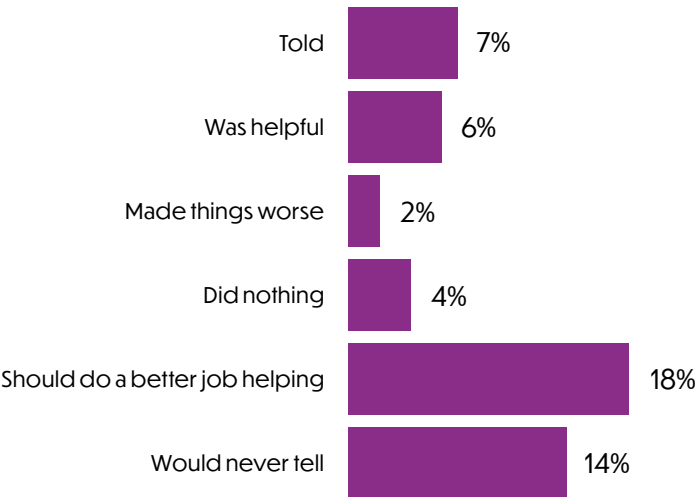
Notably, most teens who had reached out to the police (7%) had found them helpful (6%) and only very few (2%) felt that the police had made things worse. Support from the schools was rated less favourably – only around half of the teens who had told their schools (12%) found their responses effective (7%).

Figure 6: Support from teachers, principals, or the school



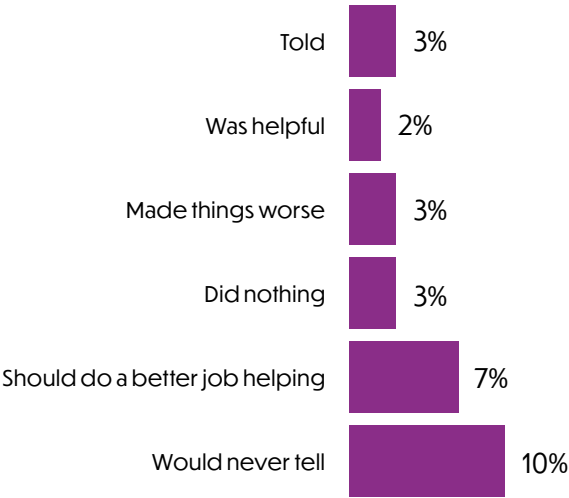
Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

Figure 7: Police



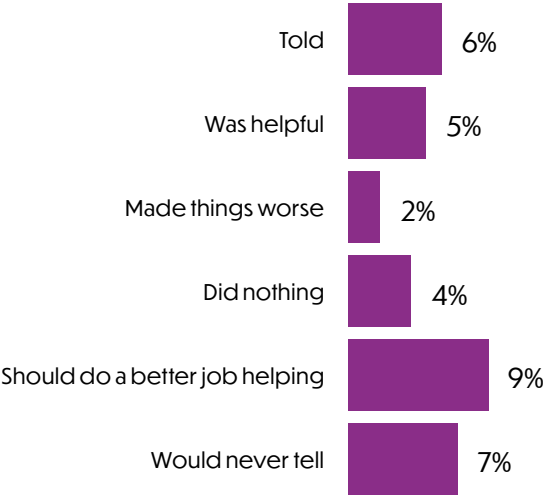
Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

Figure 8: Support from youth program workers



Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

Figure 9: Support from a therapist or counsellor

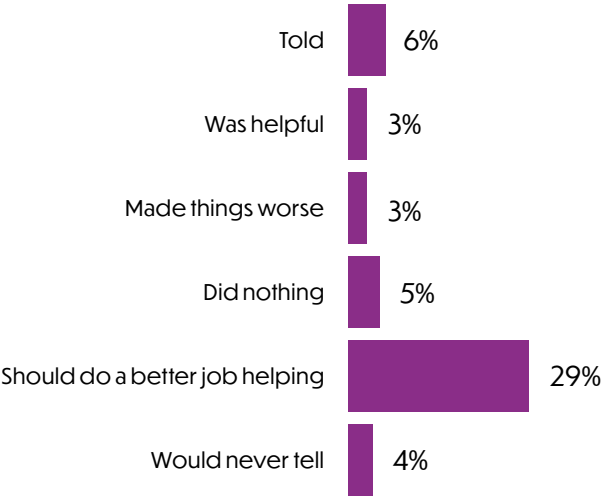


Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

OTHER SUPPORT SOURCES

Mental health professionals, such as therapists or counsellors, were described as effective by nearly all teens (5%) who had sought support from them (6%). Despite this, more teens indicated that they would never tell these professionals about an experience of TFSV (7%) and that these professionals should do a better job helping them address TFSV (9%). Few respondents (6%) had contacted a moderator (or reporting system) from an app, game, or website after being subjected to TFSV. Their responses received mixed ratings (see Figure 10). Notably, more than a quarter of respondents (29%) stated that those systems should do a better job at helping them address TFSV.

Figure 10: Support from app, game, or website moderator



Note: Multi-select question, percentages for individual responses do not add up to 100%.

LEGAL AWARENESS: VIEWS ON THE LEGALITY OF DIFFERENT TFSV FORMS

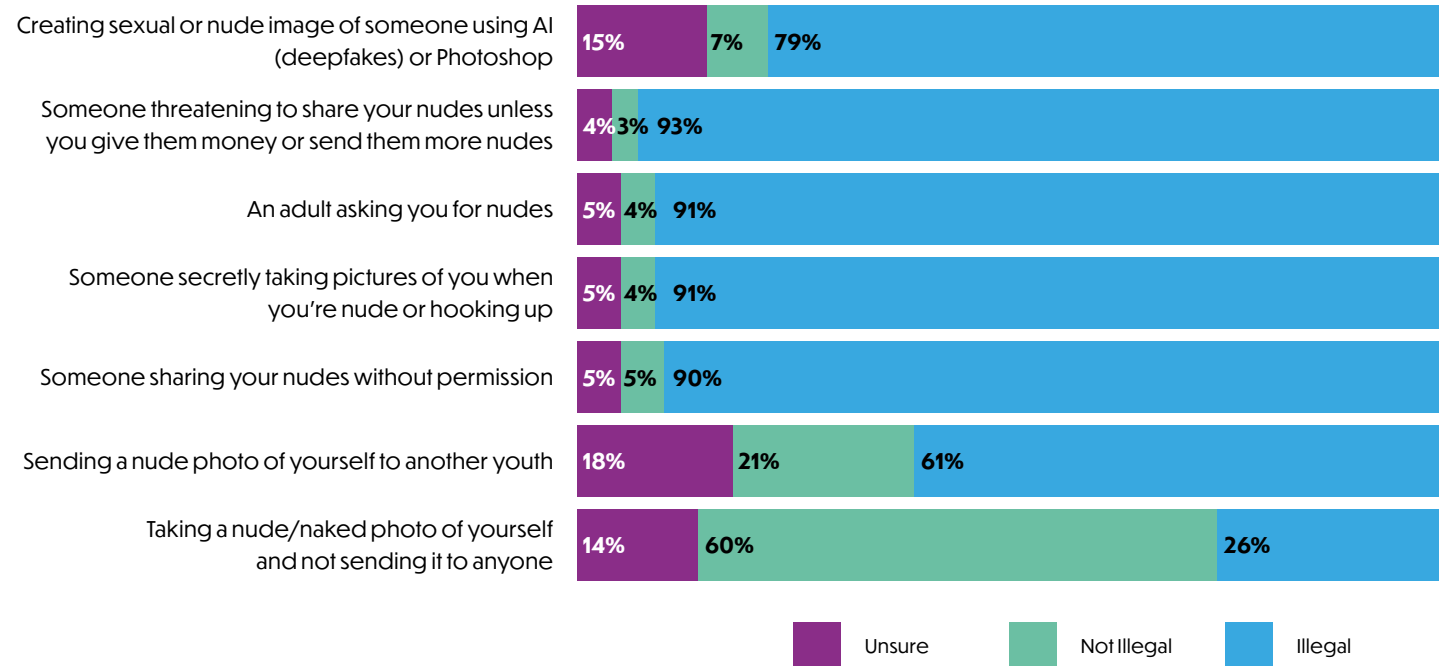
Most survey respondents correctly identified various forms of TFSV as illegal in Canada. The overwhelming majority (90% and up) thought that sextortion, adults soliciting nude images from teens, voyeurism, and distributing intimate images without someone’s consent were illegal.

There was less certainty on whether creating a fake sexual image of another person was illegal, though the majority (79%) thought that it was. This is unsurprising as the current legality of “deepfakes” in Canada is complex. In several Canadian provinces, there are civil intimate image statutes that prohibit distributing sexual deepfakes without consent, and the creation of sexual deepfakes of minors is a form of criminal child pornography (Dunn, 2024).

More than one in four teens (26%) incorrectly thought that taking an intimate image of themselves without sharing it with anyone was illegal. One in five respondents (21%) noted that teens sharing

intimate images of themselves with other youth is legal in Canada. In some cases, this is true. In Canada, there is an exception under criminal child pornography laws, which prohibits sexual images of minors, for young people who take nude images of themselves or their sexual experiences with their close-in-age sexual partners, as long as those images are kept private between those youth (*R v Sharpe*, 2001 SCC 2, para 76). This behaviour is not illegal in Canada as long as it fits under the private use exception in *Sharpe*.

The findings also showed a relationship between support seeking and views of the legality of different TFSV forms. Teens who had told someone about being subjected to TFSV were more likely to state that sharing a nude image with another teen was legal, which suggests that those who think sharing sexual images is illegal may be less likely to seek out help. However, they were also more likely to state that someone taking and distributing non-consensual intimate images of them was legal, that sextortion was legal, and that creating fake sexual images of another person was legal.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report shares key findings from Canadian teens on their experiences of TFSV, including personal experiences, experiences of friends or peers, and perpetration. The report fills a significant gap in Canadian-specific knowledge on their experiences of being impacted by or perpetrating TFSV; where they go for help when things go wrong; and if the help they seek makes things better or worse. We found that:

- Parents, teachers, civil society organizations, and governments are struggling to help young people manage TFSV because tangible and evidence-informed strategies are still lacking.
- 1 in 3 teens have experienced TFSV, with a slightly higher number for girls, people with learning disabilities or neurodivergence, and those with mental health conditions.
- Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok are the most common places where youth experience TFSV.
- Self-reported perpetration figures were low, but boys are more likely than girls to admit to perpetrating TFSV.
- Parents and guardians were the most helpful and relevant source of support for TFSV victims.
- Lack of knowledge about laws around TFSV is a barrier to support. Teens who knew the laws and their rights were more likely to seek help than those who didn't.

Youth rarely report to social media and gaming platforms and think those companies should do a better job addressing TFSV.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. With almost 1 in 3 Canadian teens having experienced TFSV, it is clear that individuals, social institutions, and technology companies need to do more to prevent this harm.
2. Prevention and response supports should be tailored to address those at increased risk of harm, such as teens who are neurodivergent, have a learning disability, or live with a mental health condition.
3. Although the majority of young people do reach out to adults for support, this support is often ineffective and sometimes makes things worse for the teens. More work is needed to create a culture where young people feel safe seeking support from adults when they experience TFSV, especially in institutional settings like schools, youth organizations, and police agencies.
4. Young people need to be better informed about their legal rights in relation to the consensual creation and sharing of intimate images. When teens are misinformed about the law – or when they incorrectly believe they will be charged for taking or consensually sharing nude images of themselves – they are less likely to reach out for support if those images are later shared without their consent by someone else.
5. Very few young people use social media reporting tools when they experience TFSV. These companies should review and improve their reporting systems so that youth have adequate and timely responses from the platforms where many of these harms occur.
6. Technology companies need to do more to address teens' frequent exposure to unwanted sexual images and sexual harassment. Snapchat in particular was found to be a common space where such exposures occurred, but many popular apps were identified as sites of exposure.
7. As a large portion of young people (in open-ended questions) described receiving messages from strangers pressuring them to send nude images and threatening to share these images with their contacts, technology companies need to do more to address the rise of this kind of sextortion from adult strangers on their platforms (Instagram in particular is named in these examples).
8. Additional cultural and educational changes are needed to prevent and address teen perpetration of TFSV. This is especially true for boys, who perpetrate these harms more often.

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APPENDICES

Appendix Table 1: Forms of TFSV (questionnaire items)

Here are some things that young people told us happened to them online. For each item on the list, select if this has happened to you or someone you know.	Me	Someone I know
Had your nudes shared without permission		
Had someone threaten to share your nude image if you didn't send them more nudes or money (AKA sextortion)		
Been pressured to share nudes		
Had an adult contact you for a sexual purpose (for example: to get you to send nudes, sexting, or asking you to hook up with them)		
Had someone sexually harass you online (for example: send unwanted sexual messages or comments; sexually harassing your player in a game)		
Had someone send you a sexual image/nude/video of themselves or others that you didn't ask for		
Had someone send you porn you didn't want to see		
Had someone make a fake sexual image of you without your permission (for example: a deepfake or photoshopped image)		
Had someone spread a sexual rumour about you online (for example: telling people you had sex with someone you didn't, sharing private information about your sex life)		
Had someone made a fake profile of you that is sexual (for example: with fake sexual pics of you, pretending to be you and asking someone else to hook up)		

Appendix Table 2: TFSV prevalence by age

AGE														
Any harm	13		14		15		16		17		18		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Has not happened to me	130	12.7	150	14.7	130	12.7	137	13.4	134	13.1	58	5.7	739	72.2
Has happened to me	36	3.5	43	4.2	67	6.5	47	4.6	68	6.6	23	2.2	284	27.8
TOTAL	166	16.2	193	18.9	197	19.3	184	18.0	202	19.7	81	7.9	1023	100.0

Note: $\chi^2(5, N = 1023) = 13.75, p = .02$.

Appendix Table 3: TFSV prevalence by gender

GENDER IDENTITY										
Any harm	Girl/woman		Boy/man		Non-binary, agender, gender diverse		Two-spirit		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Has not happened to me	338	33.2	392	38.5	5	0.5	1	0.1	736	72.4
Has happened to me	161	15.8	114	11.2	5	0.5	1	0.1	281	27.6
TOTAL	499	49.1	506	49.8	10	1.0	2	0.2	1017	100.0

Note: $\chi^2(3, N = 1017) = 14.95, p = .002$.

Appendix Table 4: TFSV prevalence by learning disability or neurodivergence

LEARNING DISABILITY OR NEURODIVERGENCE										
Any harm	Yes		No		Unsure		Prefer not to say		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Has not happened to me	123	12.1	588	57.8	20	2.0	5	0.5	736	72.4
Has happened to me	79	7.8	188	18.5	10	1.0	4	0.4	281	27.6
TOTAL	202	19.9	776	76.3	30	2.9	9	0.9	1017	100.0

Note: $\chi^2(3, N = 1017) = 19.57, p < .001$.

Appendix Table 5: TFSV prevalence by depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions

LEARNING DISABILITY OR NEURODIVERGENCE										
Any harm	Yes		No		Unsure		Prefer not to say		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Has not happened to me	98	9.6	594	58.4	41	4.0	3	0.3	736	72.4
Has happened to me	75	7.4	177	17.4	24	2.4	5	0.5	281	27.6
TOTAL	173	17.0	771	75.8	65	6.4	8	0.8	1017	100.0

Note: $\chi^2(3, N = 1017) = 37.48, p < .001$.

Appendix Table 6: TFSV perpetration by gender

GENDER IDENTITY										
Any harm	Girl/woman		Boy/man		Non-binary, agender, gender diverse		Two-spirit		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Has not happened to me	471	46.3	462	45.4	9	0.9	1	0.1	943	92.7
Has happened to me	28	2.8	44	4.3	1	0.1	1	0.1	74	7.3
TOTAL	499	49.1	506	49.8	10	1.0	2	0.2	1017	100.0

Note: $\chi^2(3, N = 1017) = 9.08, p = .028$.

Appendix Table 7: TFSV perpetration by depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions

LEARNING DISABILITY OR NEURODIVERGENCE										
Any harm	Yes		No		Unsure		Prefer not to say		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Has not happened to me	158	15.5	723	71.1	56	5.5	6	0.6	943	92.7
Has happened to me	15	1.5	48	4.7	9	0.9	2	0.2	74	7.3
TOTAL	173	17.0	771	75.8	65	6.4	8	0.8	1017	100.0

Note: $\chi^2(3, N = 1017) = 9.64, p = .02$

Appendix Table 8: Evaluation of different support sources

	No one		Teacher, Principal, or school		Police		Moderator/ reporting system		Friends		Sibling	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Whom did you tell?	71	25.0	35	12.3	21	7.4	16	5.6	112	39.4	31	10.9
Who was helpful?	65	22.9	19	6.7	17	6.0	8	2.8	67	23.6	20	7.0
Who made things worse?	158	55.6	11	3.9	5	1.8	9	3.2	32	11.3	4	1.4
Who did nothing?	147	51.8	16	3.9	11	3.9	13	4.6	38	13.4	13	4.6
Who should do a better job helping?	53	18.7	43	15.1	50	17.6	82	28.9	36	12.7	18	6.3
Whom would you never tell?	68	23.9	55	19.4	41	14.4	11	3.9	26	9.2	23	8.1

	Parent or Guardian		Youth program worker		Counsellor/ therapist		Other		Unsure	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Whom did you tell?	125	44.0	9	3.2	16	5.6	6	2.1	3	1.1
Who was helpful?	120	42.3	6	2.1	15	5.3	5	1.8	11	3.9
Who made things worse?	13	4.6	8	2.8	6	2.1	6	2.1	46	16.2
Who did nothing?	15	5.3	9	3.2	12	4.2	8	2.8	40	14.1
Who should do a better job helping?	49	17.3	20	7.0	25	8.8	8	2.8	26	9.2
Whom would you never tell?	58	20.4	27	9.5	19	6.7	15	5.3	42	15.1