

online Harms

Internet Matters

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Research methods

- Bi-annual nationally representative survey of 2,000 UK parents of children aged 3-17 and a survey of a 1,000 children aged 9-17.
- **Digital Wellbeing Index** is an annual study designed to assess both the positive and negative impacts of digital technology on children's lives. The study is based on a four-dimensional framework of digital wellbeing (developmental, emotional, physical and social) developed in collaboration with the University of Leicester. Findings are based on a detailed household survey of 1,000 children and their parents.
- Ad-hoc research into topical children's online safety challenges.

Parental concerns

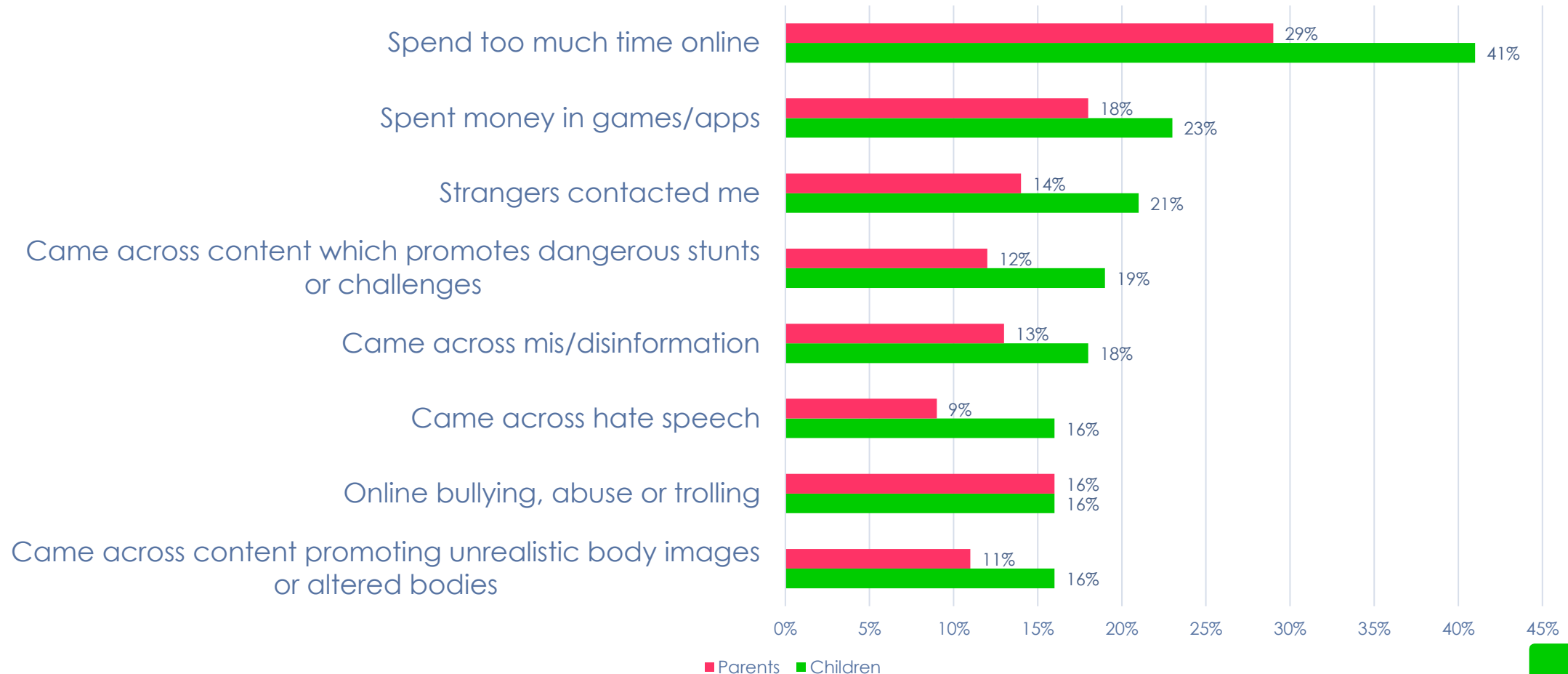
Top parental concerns



71% of children aged 9-17
report they have experienced
at least one form of harm online.

Spending too much time online, spending money in games and apps, and strangers contacting them are prevalent harms experienced by children online

Experiences online according to parents and children



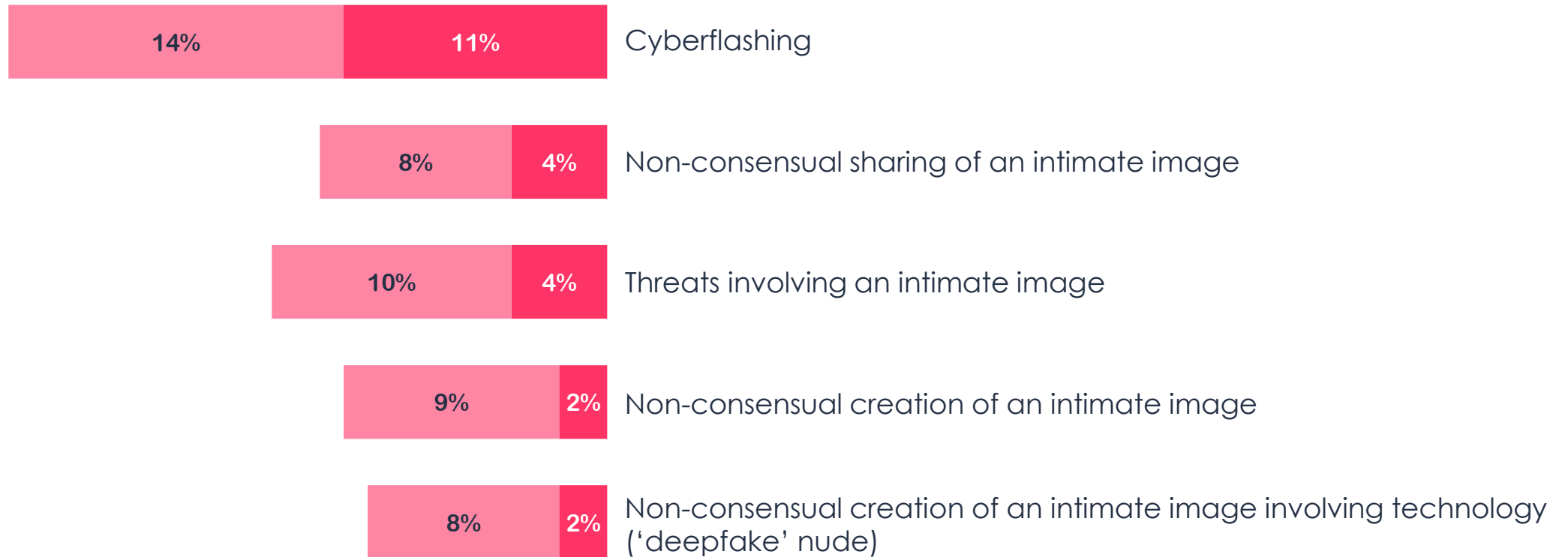
Parents underestimate the level of harm that children are experiencing online with 37% of parents saying their child has experienced *none of the harms listed*, compared to 29% of children.

Harms change depending on the child

- Teenage girls are significantly more likely to receive unwanted contact from strangers, often men and boys. Our Digital Wellbeing Index report found that **in 2024 48% of girls** aged 15-16 years old said that strangers have tried to contact them – **up from 29% in 2022**.
- **Boys are more likely** to come across content which promotes dangerous stunts or challenges (**21% versus 16% of girls**).
- Older children are twice as likely to come across content promoting unrealistic body images or altered bodies - **20% of 15-17 year olds** report seeing this type of content as opposed to **9% of 9-10 year olds**
- Vulnerable groups, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those with experience of physical or mental health conditions, experience significantly more harm online compared to their non-vulnerable peers. For example, vulnerable children encounter more instances of abuse and bullying online – **35% and 46%, respectively, compared to 24% of those without vulnerabilities**.

Knowledge and experience of image-based abuse

■ Experienced themselves ■ Someone they know has experienced



The New Face of Digital Abuse: Children's experiences of nude deepfakes

- Nude deepfakes: AI-generated, sexually explicit images based on real people
- **98%** of all deepfakes are sexual imagery and, **99%** of these are of women and girls.
- **13%** of children have encountered deepfake nudes, equating to around half a million children and young people in the UK.
- **55%** of teenagers report that it would be worse to have a deepfake nude created and shared of them than a real nude image. **Just 12% of teenagers** disagree with this statement. Reasons include a lack of autonomy and awareness of the image, anonymity of the perpetrator, how the image could be manipulated to make the victim appear and fears that family members, teachers or peers might believe it to be real.
- Children and parents think more needs to be done – **84% of children** and **80% of parents** think nudifying apps should be banned for everyone. **88% of parents** think more needs to be done to protect children from encountering nude deepfakes. **92% of children** and **86% of adults** think that children need to be taught more about the risks of nude deepfakes.

Media Literacy

- Having the ability to evaluate what is true and false online, being able to create and share digital content safely and responsibly, and being aware and able to keep oneself safe from online harm.
- **70% of children** report they feel confident keeping themselves safe online.
- **23% of children** claimed to be confident in their ability to identify what is real or fake online but could not correctly identify a fake social media profile when presented with one.
- **50% of children** know how to use privacy settings and only 34% of children adjust privacy settings so only their friends can see their profile.
- **50% of children** know how to report upsetting content or comments

Media Literacy

- Parents are children's main source of information about online safety. **82% of children** say parents are who they turn to for information about online safety issues.
- **44%** aren't aware they can set up a block for adult content on their children's phone.
- **A third of parents** use broadband parental controls.

Digital Wellbeing Index

- **Confidence and Independence:** Children feel that the time they spend online and their online experiences are increasingly important in helping them feel confident and independent. **75% of children** view technology and the internet as important to their independence.
- **Inspiring young minds:** The online world is playing a greater role in shaping the lives of young people. Across the survey, we find children viewing the internet as an ever more significant resource for job inspiration, being creative, learning beyond the classroom, and discovering new hobbies.
- **Distance diminished:** We're seeing how online spaces are turning into lively social hubs, with children increasingly saying that being online makes them feel like they're part of a group.

Resources and guidance

[What is a deepfake? Resource for parents and young people](#)

[How to talk about harassment and abuse online](#)

[My Family's Digital Toolkit](#)

[Internet Matters' Teachers Hub](#)

Research: [The new face of digital abuse](#)

Research: [Digital Wellbeing programme](#)



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