



DECEMBER 14, 2017

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND SEXTING—ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM,  
NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

SWGFL/UK SAFER INTERNET CENTRE,  
UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH, UNITED KINGDOM  
NETSAFE, NEW ZEALAND  
OFFICE OF THE ESAFETY COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIA



# Introduction

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner (Australia), Netsafe (New Zealand) and UK Safer Internet Centre with the University of Plymouth (UK) have collaborated on research culminating in this report on young people's experience of sending and sharing nude and nearly nude images, otherwise known as sexting.

For the purposes of this report, sexting is defined as any act or practice related to sending, receiving, requesting or being asked for mostly, but not always, self-generated nude or nearly nude images or video through digital tools and/or platforms. Such behaviour may arise for a range of reasons and contexts (e.g., consensual or non-consensual creation or sharing, flirting or relationship building, sexual self-exploration, coercion or extortion of content, intimidation and other abuse).

This work builds on jointly presented research by these agencies at the inaugural Online Safety on the Edge conference in Sydney on 3 November 2017 which was co-hosted by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and Netsafe New Zealand.

The purpose of this shared research is to better understand the:

- prevalence of sending and sharing of both solicited and unsolicited nude or nearly nude images or videos, and
- young people's influences and motivations for this behavior.

While each study is unique to its country context, the partners worked closely in the planning and delivery to enable a comparison of young people's experiences across those jurisdictions. In the case of New Zealand and Australia, this included the development of common methodologies underpinning their respective nationally representative surveys. In addition, the United Kingdom's more qualitative and school based study provided invaluable interpretative insights that were carried into the analysis and presentation of research findings of the other research partners.

This report represents the foundation for future cross jurisdictional research co-operation on issues of common interest to all three agencies. It also builds on previously available research on sexting and provides up to date and timely evidence that will be useful in informing and developing programs and resources targeting young people's online safety and security.

All three organisations would welcome the opportunity to discuss their individual or collective findings. Contact information has been provided in the report.

# UNITED KINGDOM

## Organisation overview

The research for the UK was carried out in partnership between the South West Grid for Learning Trust, one of the country's leading online safety charities, and the University of Plymouth, an academic institution with a strong track record in children's use of digital technology and children's rights, led by Professor Andy Phippen.

The research for the 2017 project built on research conducted between 2009 and 2017 by the two organisations. There were two major elements to this, exploratory survey work in 2009/10 followed by in depth qualitative work in 2012. The 2017 research described in this report builds upon the findings of both of these pieces of work and therefore it is worthwhile to briefly reflect upon the key findings of previous work to place this research in context. The aim of the survey work in 2009 was to determine the prevalence of 'sexting' among Key Stage 4 (14-16) young people (Phippen 2016). The research was focused on the culture of youth involved imagery—we were exploring how young people were exposed to this material, whether they are affected by it, and what their thoughts were about those who generated the material, and those who share/spread it.

In 2009, the 14-16 year olds we surveyed were asked whether they knew people who self-generated and shared indecent images, and around 40% of our respondents said they did. When asked about prevalence 7% said incidents happened 'regularly' and 13% said 'it happens all of the time'. The most popular response for this was they were aware of 'one or two' incidents of sexting in the last year (almost 40%). Approximately 56% of respondents said they were aware of instances where images were shared further than the intended recipient. However, interestingly when asked whether they thought that the aim of further spreading was to cause upset, only 22% said they felt this was the case. Which does raise the question of: what do they think the intentions of someone to non-consensually share an indecent image of a peer would be?

The 2012 work centred around focus groups with young people specifically exploring their attitudes toward these issues and how it impacts upon their lives. Around 100 young people were spoken to specifically as a result of this piece of research and allowed a detailed exploration of attitudes toward sexting (Phippen 2012).

The mundanity of sexting was clear from this research. This is something that happened, people get exposed to the images, whether they want to or not. There was also general agreement that a boy was far more likely to 'volunteer' an image to a girl (in general we talked about heterosexual relationships) and girls would self-generate as a result of a request, or pressure. Education was also discussed a great deal in these groups, with young people saying what little education they received around the topic in schools tended to focus on legality and prohibition, delivered in an 'output only' manner with no opportunity to ask questions.

## Summary of research methodology

The UK research in 2017 adopted a mixed methods approach, incorporating a quantitative survey based element and a qualitative discursive element, the aim being to bring the most effective value from the different approaches—the survey work would allow some core statistics, and comparison with the Australian and New Zealand surveys, while the qualitative work would enable us to explore key themes from the research in depth with young people, providing a strong youth voice to the research.

At the time of writing, the survey has elicited 681 responses, with a fairly even gender split (53% male, 47% female) and the majority of respondents (66%) being aged 12-14. This younger demographic was deliberate—anecdotally we had observed a reduction in age in sexting practices in UK schools and we wanted to determine through quantitative measure whether this was the case. Data collection was carried out at a school level through contacts with establishments and to ensure we had a broad range of young people carrying out the survey. For the qualitative work 100 young people from year 10 (aged 14-15) were spoken to from five different schools. Focus groups were conducted with groups of 10, one male and one female group in each school aside from one all girls' school we worked with, where we had two groups of 10 girls. So in total we interviewed 40 year 10 boys and 60 year 10 girls. The discussions were recorded and analysed, with key themes being drawn from the qualitative analysis.

## Key findings

In the reporting of key findings, we look more in depth at the themes emerging both from the survey data and the qualitative work. These key themes include the similarity with previous research, the role of legislation to educate and prohibit, the role of pressure and other motivations in self generation, the responsibility for images, and where these views come from.

### More of the same?

In commencing this reporting, we should stress the use of terminology and the generation divide this causes. While we had considered this to be a piece of research exploring 'sexting', this was a term young people were generally uncomfortable with and, in a number of cases, they weren't aware of. Sexting is a term used by academics, practitioners and policy makers for something that actually encompasses a range of behaviours and motivations and a single term fails to appreciate this nuance. For young people, the term sexting is replaced, generally, with 'nudes' and 'dick pics'. The differentiation is deliberate because they, apparently, reflect very different practices—the volunteered image from a boy (the dick pic) and the self-generated image produced as a result of request or pressure (the nude). Many young people we spoke to observed that adults seem to show little understanding of the issues they face and terminology is one of the ways this gap is demonstrated to young people.

Unsurprisingly, there was little change in statistics with the 49% 2017 population reporting knowledge of peers sharing self-generated images. Nineteen per cent said that they were aware of 'a few' incidents in the past year, and 12% said it 'happens' all the time. Knowledge of further spreading was admitted by 44% of the population, with 68% of respondents saying they don't think this was done to cause upset. Therefore, even though the respondents were younger than those surveyed in previous research, we are seeing a number of similarities in terms of prevalence, the spreading of nudes and failing to appreciate that spreading nudes causes harm.

Interestingly, a lot of respondents from the focus groups (all aged between 14 and 15) stated that self generation was something that had 'died down' in their year however it had taken place when they were younger. They were also concerned that, for example, a year 8 child might self-generate, even though when they were that age it went on! This does highlight how quickly a judgemental viewpoint develops among people who have previously been exposed to these behaviours.

### Motivation

One way we developed this survey work from previous questionnaires was to add questions about motivation, as this was one of the key themes we wanted to explore with focus groups. These questions were presented as 'why do you think people send nudes', rather than 'why do you send nudes', to enable a less confrontational questioning style while still allowing us to explore attitudes. When presented with a number of options the most popular responses were:

- because they wanted a relationship (67%)
- to be told they are attractive (68%)
- because they were pressured into doing it (66%).

We also provided respondents with the option to provide a free text answer to this question too, and this elicited some of the most interesting responses, mainly focussed around the fact that people in relationships do this sort of thing, something we will return to later in this document. However, perhaps more interesting were a couple of responses:

*For pleasure (year 9 female)*

*Because it's their body and adults continually underestimate young people's understanding of consent and their free will. They want to. (year 11 girl)*

These are a clear reminder that, whether we wish to acknowledge it or not, young people are simply 'people' and become sexually aware and wish to engage, for pleasure, with sexual practices. Pleasure is something that arose in discussion groups too—the view, which is difficult to argue with, that the exchange of images can be an enjoyable part of an intimate relationship. While, clearly, there are issues related to the legality of intimate relationships among our study population, we cannot fail to acknowledge that young people will experience them, even before the age of consent.

## Pressure

Returning to the issue of pressure, which is important given recently policy changes and advice to schools around sexting (see below), we have conflicting views from the survey results but more clear views from the focus groups. When presented with the statement 'There is a lot of pressure to send nudes', 39% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with it, whereas 33% strongly disagreed or disagreed with this (27% had 'no opinion'). However, almost 70% also said that pressure was one of the key reasons why young people sent nudes.

The role of pressure was confirmed in our discussion groups, with many young people talking about persistent demands for images, or feeling peer pressure to engage in these practices. What was apparent was that many young people could not see anything wrong with being subjected to this sort of pressure which, if interpreted as some described in groups, might be viewed more seriously as coercion or harassment. Where an individual is sending many messages a day asking for a nude image or, in worse cases, using previously obtained images to demand more, often more explicit, pictures or videos, this is moving into behaviour that might require the intervention of law enforcement. However, when both coercer and victim do not see anything wrong with what is happening (because no one has ever told them anything to the contrary) it becomes very difficult for young people to check their behaviours or ask for intervention.

The role of peer pressure in general should also not be underestimated—this is, for many, part of forming relationships. They have seen other peers engage in these practices and are now in relationships. Therefore, in their interpretation, this is a successful technique to achieve a relationship, and this is something that is of paramount importance for a lot of young people. Being in a relationship means you are popular and attractive, two things that carry great currency in their lives. A particular quotation from one discussion illustrates the illogical approach some young people have to forming relationships and the use of self generation to do so:

*Interviewer: Why do boys send dick pics?*

*Year 10 male: To get a nude back*

*Interviewer: Does that ever work?*

*Year 10 male: No, never*

*Interviewer: So why do it?*

*Year 10 male: Because one day it might*

The boy went on to explain that the exchange of nudes is what happens at the start of a relationship, in his view the first step. While this might seem a very strange process for adults, why would he not think this if he only has his peers to learn from and some of those have relationships as a result of this approach?

## Why are we standing still?

Perhaps one of the clearest things to emerge from the discussions was how little outlooks have changed over the past 5 years. Attitudes are still mundane, education is still sparse and tends to be in an 'output only' form, and knowledge is still developed by peers. Boys are still more likely to volunteer images, and girls are more likely to send as a result of requests and pressure, and the impact on the victim in the event that an image is spread depends on their gender, popularity and resilience. Girls are far more likely to receive abuse as a result of being the subject of a spread image, whereas most boys will laugh it off.

In talking to young people about their educational experiences around sexting, we might have evidence why this would be the case. Education tends to be, to use a term from some young people, 'output only'. Schools are provided with resources, such as videos, PowerPoint presentations or lesson plans that are then delivered in assemblies, social education lessons or tutorials. The delivery will generally be didactic without the opportunity to ask questions or discuss. Generally speaking, focus group attendees felt that they learned little aside from the legalities of sexting and had few answers to more complex questions, such as why victims are blamed when images are shared. By failing to provide them with relevant, up to date and pragmatic education around issues such as self-generation, we are leaving young people to their own devices. Therefore, is it any wonder they engage in risky behaviours and think the way to engage in a relationship is to share images of their genitals or ask for indecent images of their peers?

To develop the issue of victim blaming, this is still one of the most concerning areas around self-generation, and one which seems to have changed very little even from our earliest research. Victim blaming follows a typical pattern of someone sending an image to one person, then the recipient shares that image, and the victim then receives abuse from the wider community because they are a 'slut' or a 'slag' for sending the image to this one trusted individual. There is very little focus on challenging the behaviour of the individual who spread the image further, just the person who took the image. In the survey data almost 75% of respondents said the person responsible for the image is the person who took it, even though in many instances that image might have been generated through peer pressure, harassment or coercion.

## Legislation

Legislation, and its influence, is an important part of the new research. From survey results we could see that awareness of legality is apparent, with 64% strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement 'Sending a nude is illegal and people shouldn't do it' and 84% doing similar for the statement 'Spreading a nude to other people is illegal and people shouldn't do it'. This seems counter intuitive to the fact that every young person we had spoken to had been exposed to the fallout from nudes being spread around their schools—surely if they are all aware of the legislation, they would not do it and they would report others that did? Or is legislation not an effective deterrent?

What was clearly apparent was that, as with the majority of 'online safety' education that adopts a prohibitive approach, young people are happy to repeat verbatim the messages they have been told – in the same way we know cyberbullying is a big problem in schools even discussions with primary aged children will result in them telling you cyberbullying is bad and people should not do it. With 'output only' educational approaches—generally being shown videos in assemblies or having a teacher deliver some resources in the classroom—the messages are delivered and can be repeated, but the belief in the message is less clear. Lots of young people say 'don't cyberbully'. However, when asked to explain cyberbullying, they struggle. The knowledge is shallow and fragile, unexpectedly, and they are merely repeating what they have been told. The same seems to be the case for self generation—when asked they will tell you it's illegal, when you try to probe their knowledge, they know little aside from the fact 'it's illegal' or 'it's child pornography', a term, of itself, which is problematic and does not serve young people well.

Further discussion around legislation in the focus groups highlighted this further—they have been told self-generation among minors is illegal, however they are not sure why, what laws the legality relates to, or the broader legal context around it. They are told, either by teachers or external speakers, that it is illegal and if they do it they 'could be in a lot of trouble'. And there the message ends. One girl said that they had experienced an assembly a couple of years earlier when a member of the police came in and, in her words, 'scared us to death' about the trouble they could get in if they took nudes. Nothing about protection from harm if an image was spread, the focus was very much on the originator of the image and their potential criminalisation. When asked whether this talk worked, the girl said it didn't because she was aware of peers who did share nudes. I followed this up by asking why, if they were all scared, that would be the case? The girl simply said:

*I guess you don't think about the law when you're doing something like that*

However, what they had all decided, as a result of the talk, was that there was no way they would ever tell an adult if a friend was experiencing abuse, coercion or exploitation as a result of sharing a nude. The view was that the first response would be a telling off and threat of bringing in the police, some were aware of victims of the spreading of nudes being told off when they had gone for help. So it's little wonder that young people suffer in silence when dealing with some highly problematic and harmful fallout as a result of sending a nude.

When asked what advice they might give a friend who was being abused as a result of sending a nude, one girl said:

*I'd tell her not to worry about it, it'll blow over in a few days*

Legislative threats, and the use of poorly informed legislative understanding to impose control over young people, further exacerbates the victim blaming focus. If the message given to young people is no more complex than 'if you do this you're breaking the law', the victim is already concerned to disclose. Even with new legislation stating that the non-consensual sharing of an image is illegal, therefore offering protection to the victim, protection of the victim is not communicated effectively to young people.

If a victim, who is suffering abuse, harassment, bullying or exploitation as a result of self-generating an image believes that it is their fault that they are suffering harm because it is their 'fault' for sending the image in the first place, we are failing to protect children from the potential serious harm that arises from these behaviours.

In the survey we asked young people what adults can do to support young people in this area. The most popular responses were:

- listening (76%)
- not judging (74%)
- making sure there are confidential places to get help (73%).

However, it would seem from our discussions that these things are rarely afforded to young people who need help.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is from a young person's response in the survey:

*Having your nudes shared is criminal. Not just for the person sharing them but for the person taking them of themselves. We are told that if it's discovered both the sharer and the taker will be punished under child porn laws. This means that people who are being blackmailed (in the rare instances it occurs) can only be blackmailed because they know that reporting the issue could lead to them being charged criminally and put on a sex offenders list. This prevents reports. The system is causing these situations or at the very least exacerbating them. There needs to be a legislative change making taking pictures of yourself non criminalised. I know it's difficult but if the wellbeing of children and young people is important we need protection. (year 11 girl)*

**For further enquiries, contact**

David Wright [david.wright@swgfl.org.uk](mailto:david.wright@swgfl.org.uk)  
Andy Phippen [andy.phippen@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:andy.phippen@plymouth.ac.uk)

[saferinternet.org.uk](http://saferinternet.org.uk)



# New Zealand

## Organisation overview

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation focused on online safety and security. Its purpose is to enable all New Zealand internet users to confidently access digital opportunities and prevent online harm. This is complemented by Netsafe's statutory role as the Approved Agency under the *Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 (the Act)*<sup>1</sup>.

In this role Netsafe receives, assesses and resolves complaints about harm caused by digital communications through a process involving advice, negotiation, mediation, and persuasion. It also has a central role in providing education content and services to support New Zealand's internet users develop the knowledge and skills required to navigate online challenges and risks.

The Act itself is based on ten communications principles that broadly outline what is considered to be acceptable online behaviour. Many of the challenges that can arise when the sharing of nudes goes wrong are covered by these principles. Currently, public attention centres on the potential risks faced by young people sharing nude content online, and the apparent pervasiveness of this behaviour. However, in New Zealand, statistical evidence explaining its extent among young people is non-existent. This is the first quantitative study conducted in New Zealand about sharing nudes through digital technology.

While the international body of knowledge is growing, in New Zealand, no research has been conducted on the prevalence of the sharing of nudes among young people. Available research in the New Zealand context has focused on technology-mediated challenges and harm. With no research evidence about the prevalence of the sharing of nudes, public discussion and reflection on this topic have been guided by anecdotal information and single cases reported in the media. Our study set out to address this, and in doing so raises important questions for all those with a role in supporting young New Zealander's healthy development.

This study is part of a larger project exploring young people's experiences of digital risk and harm carried out by Netsafe in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry for Women.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0063/latest/DLM5711810.html>

## Summary of research methodology

Two specific objectives guided the New Zealand study. First, the study sought to gain an understanding of the prevalence and extent of sending/receiving/sharing nude or nearly nude images or videos among teens aged 14-17 years old. Second, it sought to identify differences in terms of gender, age, disability, and ethnic groups.

This study was led and this report prepared by Netsafe's Policy and Research team. However, it is part of a larger project exploring young people's experiences of digital risk and harm carried out in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry for Women. The survey was delivered by Colmar Brunton, New Zealand.

The research questions that guided this study were:

- What is the prevalence and extent of sending/receiving/sharing nude or nearly nude images or videos among teens in New Zealand?
- Are there any differences in terms of gender, age, disability, and ethnic group?

We conducted an online survey based on a representative sample of New Zealand teens aged 14-17. The survey questions were cognitive tested, piloted and then refined before going live. Data collection started at the end of July 2017 and continued for five weeks. Participants were selected, a representative sample of 30 to 65-year-old adults, who were asked whether they have children in the target age group. To provide benchmark data for sampling and weighting, 2017 population projections for children were used.

A total of 1,001 New Zealand teens completed the online survey. Data collected from this representative sample allowed the analysis of sub-groups with a maximum margin of error of +/- 3.1% on total results. 51% of respondents were males and 48.7% females, while 0.3% identified as gender diverse.

Because of the sensitive nature of the study participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected. Industry standards such as the Research Association's Code of Practice were followed. Parental permission was obtained online for all participants at the beginning of the online survey. The participants and their parents/caregivers received information about the purpose of the project, the name of the institutions behind the study, and an explanation about use and protection of the data provided. Information on relevant support services was provided to participants.

## Key findings

The New Zealand study highlighted a number of key findings relating to young people's experiences and attitudes presented here. The full findings, discussion and conclusions of this study can be accessed online at [netsafe.org.nz/teens-sexting-report/](https://netsafe.org.nz/teens-sexting-report/)

### **NZ teens sharing nudes of themselves is not as prevalent as the public might believe**

- Approximately 4% of teens say that they have shared a nude or nearly nude of themselves in the last 12 months. The percentage nearly doubles among older teens aged 17 years old (7%).

### **Understanding teens' behaviours and experiences requires a deeper look into the different dimensions of this phenomenon**

- 1 in 5 have been asked for nudes of themselves in the last year.
- Almost 4 in 10 say they know someone who has shared nude pictures or videos with someone else at some point in the past.
- Almost 3 in 10 are aware of someone else who has received nudes they didn't ask for, and almost a quarter are aware of someone being asked for nude or nearly nude images/videos of themselves.
- About half of those who have personally experienced or know someone involved in the sharing of nude content say this happens 'often or very often'.

### **NZ teens' attitudes to, and motivations for, sharing nude content are more mature than adults may believe**

- Just over half of young people (54%) think that nudes are sent by their peers to seek attention, gain social approval, or because of peer pressure.
- The majority disagreed with the following statements:-
  - Adults overreact about the sharing of nudes;
  - Sharing nudes is a good way to explore things about yourself;
  - It is OK to keep nudes that have been sent to you long after you received them; and
  - Sharing nudes is not a problem because everyone does it.
- Almost three-quarters agree that people should be punished for threatening to share images.

### **Not all young New Zealanders have the same experience, with differences between genders, ethnicities and those with a long-term disability.**

- Nearly a quarter of all girls (24%) surveyed has been asked for nudes of themselves compared to boys (14%). The percentage of receiving unsolicited nude content in the last 12 months is slightly higher in girls compared to boys as well.
- While views are mixed on the degree of pressure to send these types of images, girls are more likely to report such pressure than boys.
- Five per cent of all boys surveyed have asked someone for nudes of them. In contrast, the percentage for girls is 2% in the last 12 months.
- For Māori and Pacific teens it is more common to be asked for nudes of themselves than other ethnic groups.
- Nearly 1 in 4 Māori teens have received unsolicited nude or nearly nude content. This figure is higher than New Zealand European/Pakeha and Pacific teens.

- Teens with disabilities were more likely to be asked for nudes of themselves and receive unsolicited nude content than those without impairments.

**For further enquiries, contact**

[neilm@netsafe.org.nz](mailto:neilm@netsafe.org.nz)  
[edgarp@netsafe.org.nz](mailto:edgarp@netsafe.org.nz)

Full NZ report Teens and “sexting” in New Zealand: Prevalence and attitudes can be accessed at:  
[netsafe.org.nz/teens-sexting-report/](https://netsafe.org.nz/teens-sexting-report/)

[netsafe.org.nz](https://netsafe.org.nz)

# Australia

## Organisation overview

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner is committed to empowering all Australians to have safer, more positive experiences online. The Office co-ordinates and leads the online safety efforts of government, industry and the not-for profit community. It has a broad remit which includes providing:

- a complaints service for young Australians who experience serious cyberbullying
- identifying and removing illegal online content
- tackling image-based abuse.

The Office also provides audience-specific content to help educate all Australians about online safety including young people, women, teachers, parents, seniors and community groups.

## Summary of research methodology

The findings of this report come from questions asked in the 2017 eSafety Youth Digital Participation Survey. This was a 20 minute long nationally representative online survey of 1,424 teens (aged 14-17) and 1,593 kids (aged 8-13) sourced from online panels. The statistical results were weighted based on age, gender and location to be nationally representative of Australian youth. Additional demographic information was collected on the basis of respondent's household makeup, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and disability status as well as the type of school attended by respondents. Questions relating to sexting were only asked of survey participants aged 14–17 years. Parental consent was sought for all survey participants with field work conducted from the 25th of August to the 21 of September 2017. Responses were in respect to activities that had occurred in the 12 months to June 2017.

## Key findings

### The language of sexting

Although a seemingly convenient shorthand, young people often do not use the term 'sexting' to talk about this constantly evolving and changing practice. In their own words, Australian teens have described sexting in ways that vary from the colloquial to the explicit. Some of the terms used include 'nude or nudies.'

### Sending, asking for and sharing a nude or nearly nude image among Australian teens

Young people perceive that sending and sharing nude or nearly nude images or videos is common. Around 9 out of 10 teens surveyed (14-17 years of age) thought that sexting happened among their peers and around 4 in 10 reported that it either happened often, or all the time. However, these perceptions were not consistently held by all teens. For instance, girls were significantly more likely than boys to think that it was something that occurred often or all the time (50% of girls vs 39% of boys).

### Teen's overall experiences

Nearly 1 in 3 young people aged 14-17 years in Australia had some experience with sexting in the 12 months to June 2017. This included sending, being asked and asking, sharing or showing nude or nearly nude images or videos. This was lower for males, 22% and higher for females, 35%. The prevalence of individual activities is explored further in the following section.

### Sending

Only around 5% of teens said that they have sent a nude or nearly nude image or video of themselves to someone else in the 12 months to June 2017. However, there were significant differences observed based on the age of respondents. Sixteen and 17 year olds were similarly likely to send a video or image of themselves with 7% and 8% respectively having done so.

In comparison, only 1% of 14 year olds and 4% of 15 year olds had engaged in a similar activity. Differences were less noticeable when considering the gender of respondents, with girls slightly more likely than boys to have had this experience (7% vs 4% for boys).

### Being asked and asking

Teens were three times more likely to experience being asked for a nude or nearly nude image or video of themselves (15%) than sending an image or video (5%). When broken down into age and gender, older teens were again more likely than younger teens to have been asked. Approximately 18% of 17 year olds compared with 11% of 14 year olds had this happen to them. Girls were also more than twice as likely as boys to have been asked (22% vs 8%).

For those that were asked, over half of the requests came from someone they did not know (52%). Significantly more girls (54%) than boys experienced this from those they did not know (36%). Relatively fewer requests were reported from either friends (33%) or boyfriends and girlfriends (31%). Being asked for these images or videos raised overwhelmingly negative emotions among respondents. Nearly 60% felt uncomfortable and 43% felt disgusted. Other common emotions included feeling pressured (26%), nervous (26%) and mad/angry (21%). A minority either felt flattered (18%) or excited (10%).

Mirroring these negative emotional responses, around three quarters of teens did not send an image or video of themselves after a request (73%). Younger teens aged 14 years were more likely not to send one than older teens aged 17 years (82% vs 66%).

For those sending an image or video of themselves, 19% did so because they trusted the person who asked for it (19%). In addition, around 15% of teens who sent an image or picture of themselves did so but made sure that their face could not be seen.

The flipside of being asked for a nude or nearly nude of yourself is asking that of others. This was not often reported by respondents with only 3% of Australian teens admitting that they had done so in the 12 months to June 2017. As with other behaviours, age was closely associated to asking for such images or videos with 4% of 17 year olds having done so, compared with only 1% of 14 year olds.

## Sharing

Only around 5% of all teens either shared an image of someone else online or had shown it to others on their device during the 12 months to June 2017. Seventeen year olds were twice as likely as 14 year olds to engage in this behaviour (6% v 3% respectively). There was little difference in terms of gender.

## Receiving

Around 15% of all teens have received an image or video of someone nude or nearly nude that they did not ask for. Older teens were significantly more likely to have received these images with 17 year olds almost twice as likely as 14 year olds to have experienced this (19% vs 11%). In addition, girls were significantly more likely than boys to receive an image (19% vs 12%).

## Distribution platforms

Snapchat was by far the most common platform for sending, receiving, sharing or circulating nude or nearly nude images and videos. Of the teens who had done any one of these activities in the 12 months to June 2017, 64% did this using Snapchat. Other less common means of sharing these types of images included Facebook/Facebook Messenger (39%), SMS/MMS (17%), Instagram (15%), WhatsApp (9%), KiK and Skype (7% respectively).

## Actions after receiving unwanted nude or nearly nude images and videos

Nearly three quarters of all those who received unwanted nude or nearly nude images or videos took at least one action as a result. The most common action was blocking the account of the sender (49%) with girls significantly more likely to do so than boys (64% vs 27%). The second most common action was telling their friends (31%). Communicating or writing something to the person who sent the images or videos (not face to face) was the third most common option (19%).

## General attitudes to sending and receiving nude or nearly nude images or videos

Around 9 in 10 teens agreed that spreading a nude picture or video of someone without their consent was illegal and people should not do it. Also, around three quarters of all teens (72%) disagreed that they often felt pressured to send these types of images.

Results also showed that there was little variation between teens and their other responses. Where these differences did exist, they related to younger teens' victim blaming attitudes and the beliefs around the illegality of sending a nude picture or video. For example, 26% of 17 year olds (and 28% of all teens) agreed that it was someone's own fault if their images were shared without consent compared to 38% of 14 year olds. Fourteen year olds were also more likely to think that it was illegal for someone to send a nude picture or video. Approximately 78% of them agreed that it was illegal compared with 64% of 17 year olds (and 70% of teens overall).

## Comparison: image-based abuse and nude or nearly nude image sharing

Image-based abuse occurs when intimate, nude or sexual images are distributed without the consent of those pictured. The Office's recent Image-based abuse national survey found that around 15% of 15 to 17 year old girls had ever experienced it.

In comparison, in the 12 months to June 2017, 2% of all teens had had a nude or nearly nude image or video of themselves shared without their permission.

## For further enquiries, contact

[research@esafety.gov.au](mailto:research@esafety.gov.au)

[esafety.gov.au](http://esafety.gov.au)