

A photograph of four young girls in school uniforms, including white shirts and headscarves, gathered around a laptop. They are all looking intently at the screen. The image is dimly lit, with a blue light source visible in the background. A solid blue vertical bar is on the left side of the image, and a solid grey vertical bar is on the right side.

# Children And Online Safety

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## The Internet and protection of children

- A new child goes on line every half second. Estimated 175,000 children go online for the first time every day.
- Growing number of children have access to the Internet, but not all know how to use the Internet.
- Internet brings opportunities for expression online, but opportunity and risk often go hand in hand.
- Children need protection from online sexual exploitation in an online world which is often a reflection society at large.
- As children's access to the Internet increases, efforts to better protect them from the dangers of online must keep pace - Violence against children is not unavoidable

## Forms of VAC perpetuated on line

- Violence, exploitation and abuse children might face in their homes, schools and communities are mirrored by violence they may face online.
- Online abuse of children takes many forms.
  - Culprits may produce, distribute and consume child sexual abuse material;
  - victimize children through live streaming of child sexual abuse;
  - Online grooming of children for sexual exploitation.
  - online bullying.
- Child sex offenders adapt the latest technology to commit crimes against children.

# Intersections between children's use and offenders' misuse of the internet.

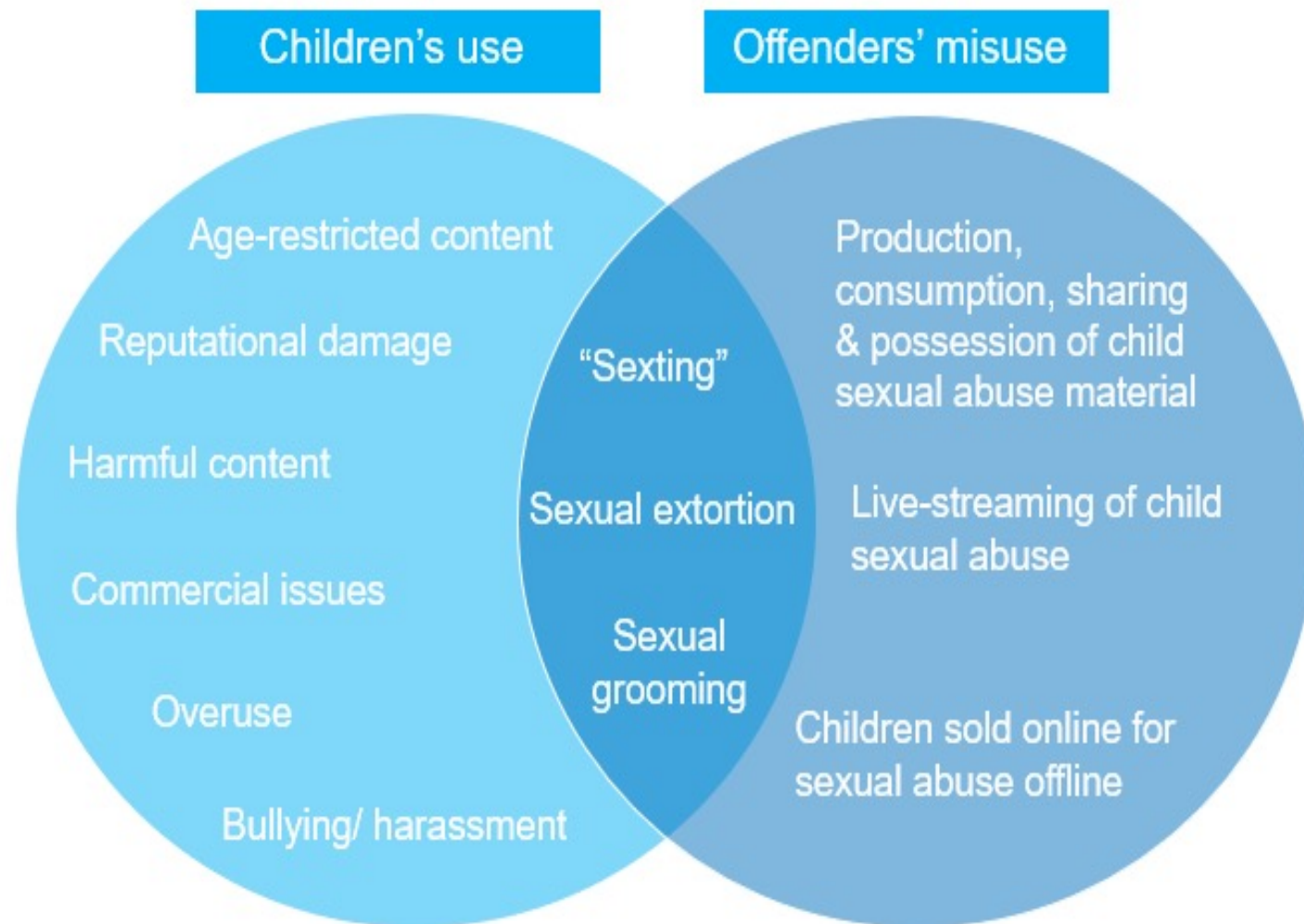
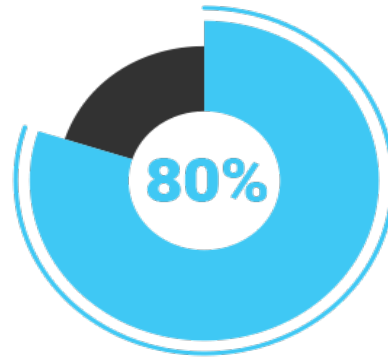


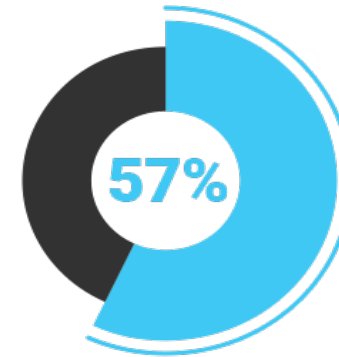
Diagram adapted with permission  
from Jenny Jones, GSMA



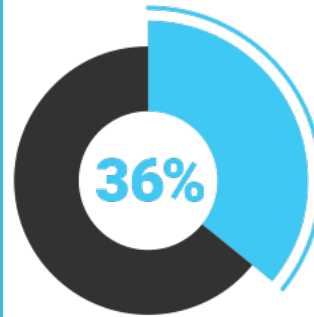
# Sexual abuse and exploitation



**80%**  
**of 18 year  
olds believe**  
children and adolescents  
are in danger of being  
sexually abused or taken  
advantage of online



**57%**  
**of 18 year  
olds think**  
their friends participate  
in risky behaviours  
online



**36%**  
**of 18 year  
olds strongly**  
believe that they can  
tell when people are  
lying about who they  
are online

Findings from a recent  
study of 18 year olds

# Recommendations for a safe Internet

- Building a safe online environment for children means being aware of the risks children are exposed to and supporting users who might be at risk.
- Online child sexual exploitation **cannot** be prevented without addressing risk factors in the physical, offline world.
- Strengthening the National Child Protection System is necessary before specialized services for online child sexual exploitation can be effective
- The tech industry needs to be engaged at national levels.
- Actions to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse must be balanced against their other rights in the digital world

# UNICEF CALLS FOR ACTION TO CREATE A SAFE ONLINE CHILDREN

- **Parents and educators** have the responsibility to ensure children are informed and guided as they navigate the online world, in line with their evolving capacities; and have a place to go if they need help.
- Parents should encourage children to talk about their experiences online, make sure they understand online risks and safe behaviour, and be available if they find themselves in trouble.
- Parents/caregivers alert to signs of distress that may emerge in connection with children's online activity. E.g, if a child is experiencing cyberbullying, they may give off warning signs, more or less use of devices, or becoming withdrawn or depressed.
- Parents can establish with their children rules for how, when and where the Internet can be used. Boundaries should be set to establish a healthy balance between online time and other activities.
- Parents should also ensure their children's device/s have the latest software updates and antivirus programmes and ensure that privacy settings are set to 'high.' For younger children, tools such as parental controls can help mitigate online risks.
- Parents to discuss openly with children how and with whom the children are communicating online. Children need to know that kind and supportive interactions are expected, and that hurtful, discriminatory or inappropriate contact is never okay. Children should feel confident about telling a trusted adult immediately if anything distressing or inappropriate occurs.

## Parental Control (digital monitoring)

- Parents who want to protect their children from cyberbullying, harmful digital behavior, and exposure to adult content can use parental control and monitoring software to help them set up systems that are less invasive to their children.
- There are free software options and apps available to help parents restrict content, block domains, or view their children's online activities, including social media, without looking at their child's device every day. Most of the free software options provide some features for free, but charge for more robust insight.
- A parent should consider a child's age, device use, and digital behavior when selecting software – what is suitable to restrict for a ten-year old may not be useful for a teenager.



## Parental controls for children online safety

- Monitor children social media sites, apps and browsing history if you have concern that cyber bullying may be occurring.
- Review or re-set your child phone location and privacy settings.
- Follow or friend your child on social media sites or trust another adult to do so.
- Stay up- to- date on the latest apps, social media platforms, and digital slang used by children and teens.
- Know your child's user name and passwords for email and social media
- Establish rules about appropriate digital behavior, contents and apps.