

The Hidden Dangers of Snapchat for Kids

EXPERIENCES OF SNAPCHAT USERS AGES 10-17



Note: All images generated throughout this report are fictional do not depict the individuals surveyed.

Quantitative Methodology & Research Design

This report presents findings from a 12-minute national quantitative study conducted among 1,016 minors aged 10-17 who have used Snapchat within the past 6 months. The data was collected from December 4th to December 19th, 2025.

Recruitment for all respondents was done directly through parents or guardians via a panel list. To participate in the research, consent was collected from the child's parent or guardian. While respondents' real ages were 10-17, this report only includes those whose stated age on Snapchat was between 13-17 to ensure that they received the default settings for teens. To achieve a nationally representative sample, data was weighted by age, gender, race, and geography. The margin of error for the full sample is $\pm 3.1\%$.

Participants were asked about 7 different experiences they may have had on Snapchat. Throughout the report, these experiences are referred to as "unsafe content or messages" or "unsafe experiences." The specific phrasing is as follows:

- | | | | |
|----------|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Graphically violent or bloody content or messages | 5 | Hate speech, racist, or discriminatory content or messages |
| 2 | Self-harm content or messages | 6 | Unwanted messages or contact from another user |
| 3 | Content, messages, or menus related to buying, selling, or using drugs or alcohol | 7 | People bullying or being mean to others in posts or messages |
| 4 | Sexually suggestive content or messages | | |

Given the sensitive nature of the questions asked in this research, help resources were provided to all participants in the event they wanted to learn more about the survey topics or needed professional support to talk about these issues.

Executive Summary

Snapchat has established itself as a platform for the young, with CEO Evan Spiegel claiming more than [20 million American teens](#) use it and some estimates showing that [90% of 13 to 24-year-olds](#) have Snapchat accounts. The platform boasts many features that appeal to kids and teens, like cartoon photo filters, social Snapstreaks, and disappearing messages.

Multiple [lawsuits](#) and [state investigations](#) allege that Snapchat's core design choices—including disappearing messages, Find Friends recommendations, and location-based features—have made it easier for predators to contact and exploit minors. Regulators have pointed to internal documents suggesting Snapchat was aware of numerous [user reports of sextortion](#) and other harms, but they did not act quickly enough to redesign risky features. These concerns have fueled public pressure and legal scrutiny.

Snapchat has introduced several new safety features aimed at addressing these criticisms. In 2024, the company rolled out [safeguards](#) that warn teens about suspicious friend requests and tightened the criteria for appearing in Find Friends for users aged 13-17. In April 2025, Snapchat [launched a Family Safety Hub](#), a centralized resource center built with guidance from Common Sense Media, giving parents clearer explanations of how Snapchat works and how to use its safety tools. In January 2026, Snapchat [expanded its Family Center parental controls](#), adding detailed insights into how teens spend time on the app, visibility into new friend connections, and contextual information about how those connections were formed (e.g., mutual friends or synced contacts).

This research's purpose is to hear from youth directly about their experiences while using Snapchat over the past year as Snapchat has rolled out new safety features. Our primary objective is to gain a deeper and more well-rounded understanding of the effectiveness of the new safeguards, assess the extent and regularity of exposure to harmful content and risky contact faced by minors on the platform, and learn about the impact these experiences are having on kids' emotional well-being.

ParentsTogether Action, Heat Initiative, Design It for Us, and The Anxious Generation partnered with Breakthrough Campaigns to conduct a nationally representative quantitative research study which collected self-reported data from 1,016 respondents aged 10-17 who have used Snapchat in the past 6 months.

The findings from this study make it easy to draw a concerning conclusion: minors still face alarmingly high rates of exposure to unsafe content or messages on a regular basis while using Snapchat in spite of these safety updates.

Specifically, over half (56%) of minor users reported having encountered unsafe content or messages in the past year.

The following are the key takeaways from this survey:

- 1. Unsafe content or messages are frequent for minors on Snapchat:** 1 in 3 minor users experienced unsafe content or messages on at least a weekly basis, including approximately 1 in 8 who saw sexually suggestive content at least weekly.
- 2. Minor users report Snapchat recommends adult strangers as friends:** Nearly 1 in 5 minor users have found that Snapchat's "Find Friends" feature has recommended accounts of people they don't know but believe to be run by adults. 13% of those minor users have added these adult strangers as friends, per Snapchat's recommendation.
- 3. Snapchat is a popular destination for strangers to "off-platform" minors for more private conversations, a common grooming tactic used by predators:** 18% of minor users said a stranger asked them to move a conversation from another platform to Snapchat. The top reason given for the move was to avoid oversight or evidence.
- 4. Kids aren't just talking to their friends:** 90% of unwanted messages minor users received were from strangers. Some of these messages are alarming and illegal—4% of minor users reported experiencing sextortion on Snapchat.
- 5. Many minors are desensitized to inappropriate and unsafe content on Snapchat:** 2 in 5 minor users who have encountered unsafe content or messages have responded by simply closing the app or ignoring it. More than half (54%) of those say it's because "I'm just used to it now."

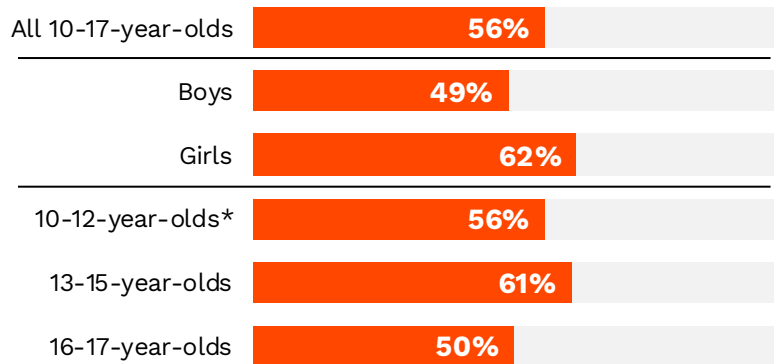
EXPOSURE TO UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES AMONG MINOR SNAPCHAT USERS



Over half of 10-17-year-old users encountered unsafe content or messages while using Snapchat.

Most minor users (56%) said they have experienced at least one type of unsafe content or message on Snapchat in the past year, while less than half (44%) have not. This indicates the platform's safety mechanisms aren't protecting the majority of young users.

UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES AMONG MINOR USERS ON SNAPCHAT



This was a common experience across many demographics and not only afflicted older teens. In fact, younger teen users (aged 13-15) were 11 percentage points more likely than their older counterparts (aged 16-17) to report having an experience with unsafe content or messages on Snapchat. This trend persisted in spite of the supposed increased privacy protections Snapchat provides younger teens.

Overall, the most common types of unsafe content or messages encountered were: unwanted contact (36%), bullying (31%), and sexually suggestive content (25%). Fewer minor users reported having seen graphically violent or self-harm content or messages on the platform, but it is still far too common.

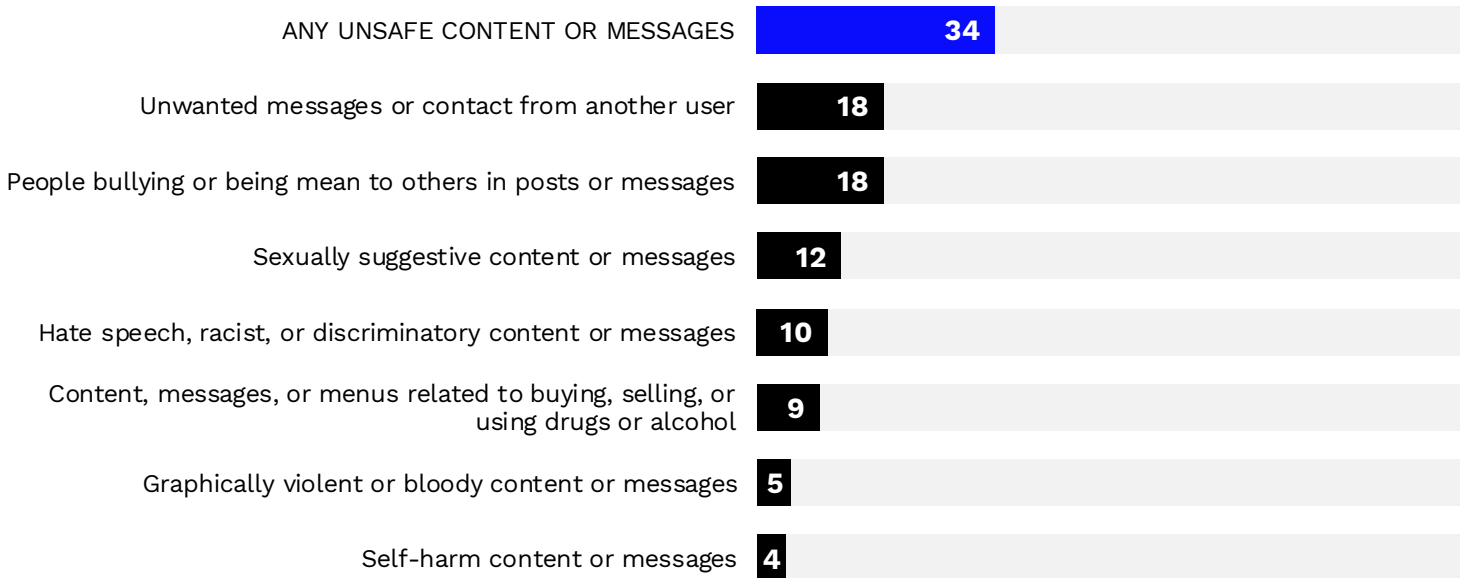
MINOR USERS WHO SAID THEY HAD EACH EXPERIENCE ON SNAPCHAT IN THE PAST YEAR

Unwanted messages or contact from another user	36%
People bullying or being mean to others in posts or messages	31%
Sexually suggestive content or messages	25%
Hate speech, racist, or discriminatory content or messages	18%
Content, messages, or menus related to buying, selling, or using drugs or alcohol	17%
Graphically violent or bloody content or messages	8%
Self-harm content or messages	7%
I have not experienced any of these on Snapchat	44%

Note: All images generated throughout this report are fictional do not depict the individuals surveyed.

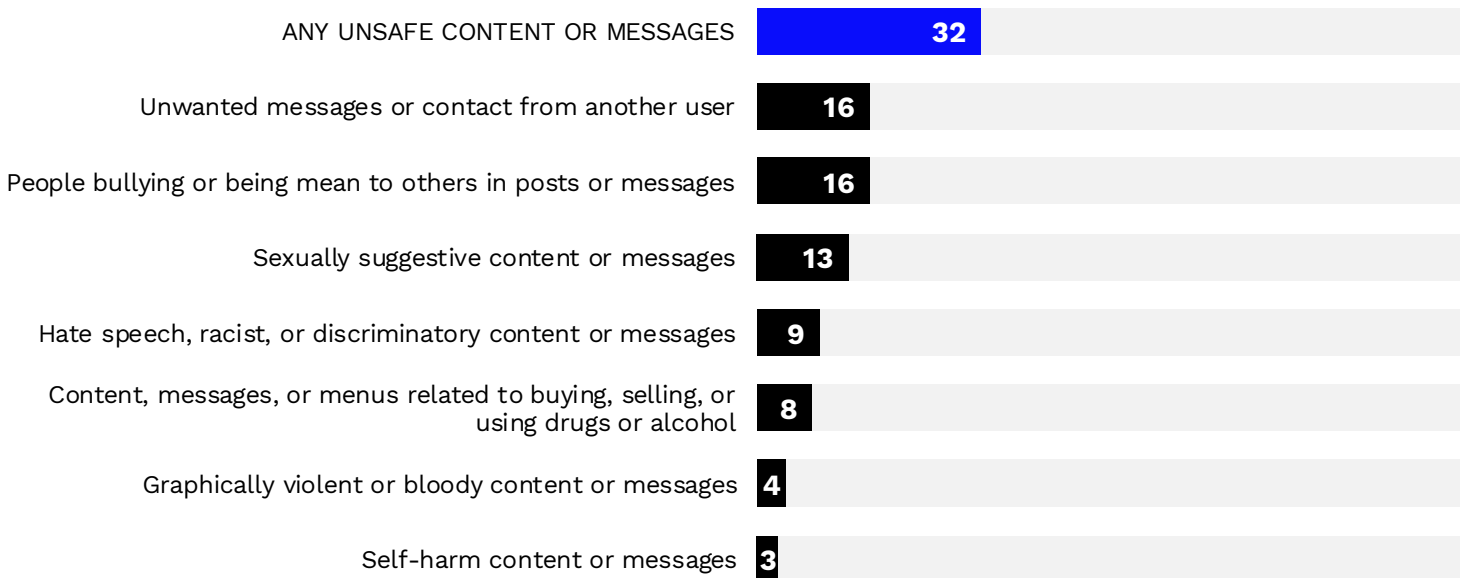
A third of minor users have encountered unsafe content or messages in the past month.

% WHO EXPERIENCED EACH IN THE PAST MONTH



Not only were these experiences recent, but the data also reveals that these are frequent occurrences, with a similar proportion exposed on a weekly basis.

% WHO EXPERIENCED EACH AT LEAST WEEKLY



Many minor users experienced serious negative reactions after being exposed to unsafe content or messages.

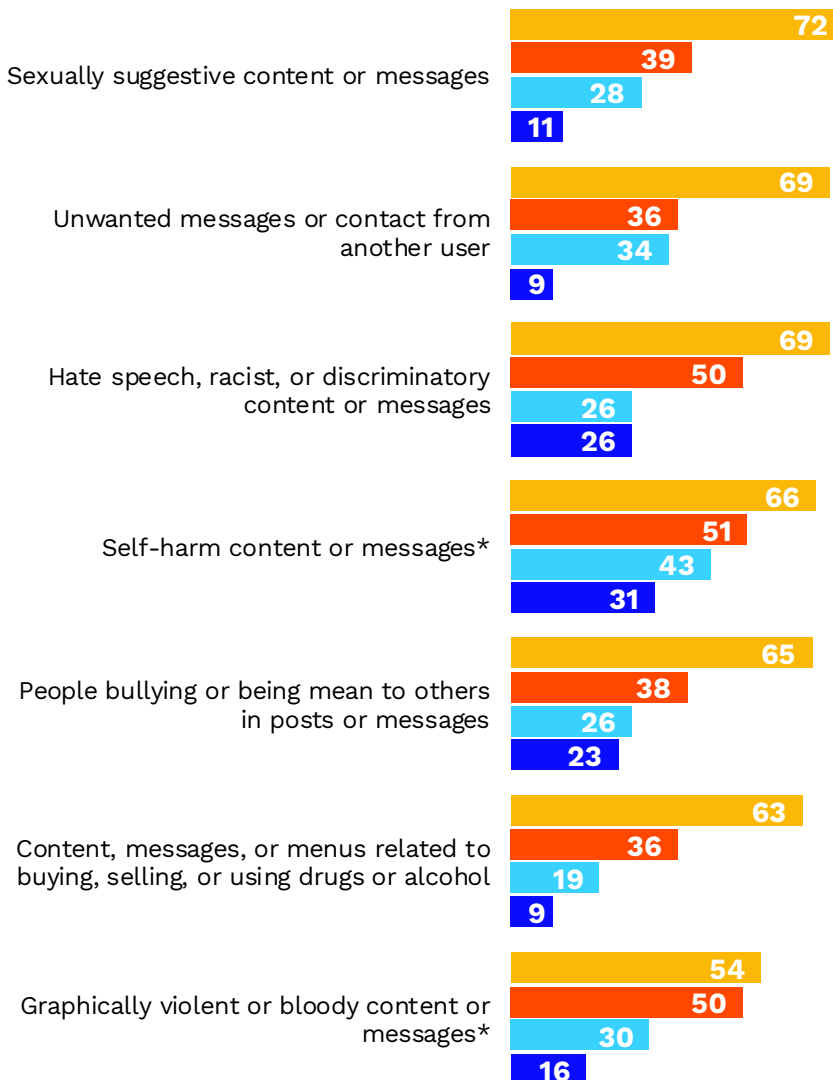
For each unsafe experience participants reported having, they were asked a follow-up question to better understand how specific experiences made them feel.

A vast majority said they felt either uncomfortable, disturbed, anxious, or depressed after seeing unsafe content and messages on Snapchat. Sexually suggestive content (72%), unwanted messages from other users (69%), and hate speech (69%) were the most likely to make minor users feel uncomfortable, while self-harm content (51%*), hate speech (50%), and graphic violence (50%*) were most likely to make them disturbed. While anxiety and depression were less frequent symptoms, self-harm content was most likely to bring about those feelings.

These feelings didn't immediately go away for most minor users. Among those who experienced unsafe content or messages, around a third (31%) said that most of the feelings persisted for a few days or more, with hate speech leaving a lasting impression on almost 1 in 3 (29%).

WHEN YOU HAD SEEN OR RECEIVED THESE ON SNAPCHAT, DID THE EXPERIENCE MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, DISTURBED, ANXIOUS, OR DEPRESSED?

% who selected any response among those who had each experience



Why this content was impactful in their own words...

Feeling depressed, waking up paranoid.

15, Girl, White, West

Seeing hate speech on Snapchat made me feel disturbed and emotionally heavy, because it reminded me how easily people spread harm without consequences.

14, Girl, Hispanic or Latino, South

They had me feeling intense and anxious the whole day after I see some of the stuff on there, the bully[ing] and the harassment of other people.

13, Boy, Hispanic or Latino, South

More broadly, minor users describe a general feeling of discomfort after being exposed to unsafe content or messages.

Unsafe content or messages on Snapchat made minor users feel anxious, upset, and angry, and made some no longer want to use the app.

It made me feel weird seeing kids my age selling drugs online. It made me want to tell their parents so they won't get in trouble with police. It also made me more careful about things I click on and view.

12, Boy, African American, South

It made me feel upset and uncomfortable, and sometimes I just wanted to ignore it and move on.

16, Boy, Hispanic or Latino, West

I feel a little bit violated and insecure whenever I use the app.

17, Girl, White, South

It made [me] feel unsafe and exploited when I saw these images and it kinda [made] me uncomfortable to use the app.

14, Girl, African American, South

None of it is surprising but the racism, bullying, etc. makes me extremely angry.

16, Girl, White, Midwest

It makes me feel like Snapchat is not for my age and I am just trying to fit in. I feel like Snapchat is for adults, but I am very interested in the features on the app and my friends use the app.

14, Transgender/Non-Binary, White, West

The self harm and hate related posts made me feel anxious and uncomfortable, and they really affected the way I viewed the platform.

16, Boy, White, Northeast

It makes me uncomfortable, but it is hard to escape it these days.

16, Girl, White, South

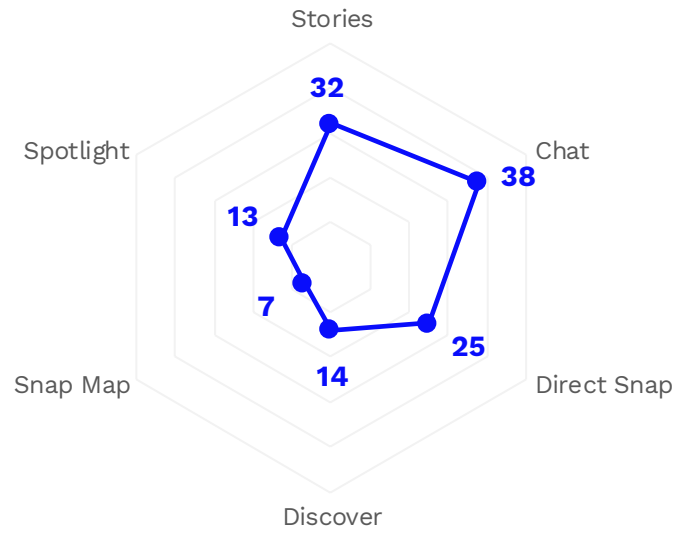
Going through these things made me feel icky. It made me not want to go on Snapchat for a long time.

14, Girl, White, South

Roughly 1 in 3 minor users saw unsafe content or messages on core Snapchat services, such as Direct Snap or Chat.

% WHO EXPERIENCED ANY UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES ON EACH SNAPCHAT SERVICE

While Snapchat is a more message-forward platform, the blame does not rest solely on individual bad actors sending inappropriate Direct Snaps or Chats. Algorithmic systems, such as Find Friends' recommendations, actively enable bad actors to discover and proactively contact minor accounts. And the likelihood of 10-17-year-old users encountering various kinds of unsafe content or messages through algorithmic-based services is not negligible either. Roughly 1 in 7 minor users said they have seen these on Spotlight (13%) or Discover (14%), suggesting that the services do in fact present a substantial risk. Another third (32%) said they have had an unsafe experience on Stories, which while chronological, also have an algorithmic component.



TOP 3 SNAPCHAT SERVICES WHERE MINOR USERS ARE BEING EXPOSED TO UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES

Among those who have had each experience

	#1	#2	#3
Unwanted messages or contact from another user	Direct Snap or Chat (85%)	Stories (20%)	Discover (8%)
Hate speech, racist, or discriminatory content or messages	Direct Snap or Chat (60%)	Stories (54%)	Discover (24%)
Sexually suggestive content or messages	Direct Snap or Chat (60%)	Stories (47%)	Discover (21%)
Content, messages, or menus related to buying, selling, or using drugs or alcohol	Stories (52%)	Direct Snap or Chat (51%)	Spotlight (19%)
People bullying or being mean to others in posts or messages	Direct Snap or Chat (65%)	Stories (55%)	Discover (16%)
Graphically violent or bloody content or messages*	Stories (53%)	Direct Snap or Chat (47%)	Spotlight (29%)
Self-harm content or messages*	Direct Snap or Chat (71%)	Stories (58%)	Discover (17%)

While it was more commonplace for 10-17-year-olds to come across unsafe content or messages in Direct Snaps, Chats, and Stories overall, when looking at individual types of unsafe content or messages, the data shows a different story. It suggests that 29%* of the graphically violent content or messages minor users encounter on Snapchat has been seen on Spotlight and 24% of the hate speech content or messages minor users reported experiencing has come from Discover.

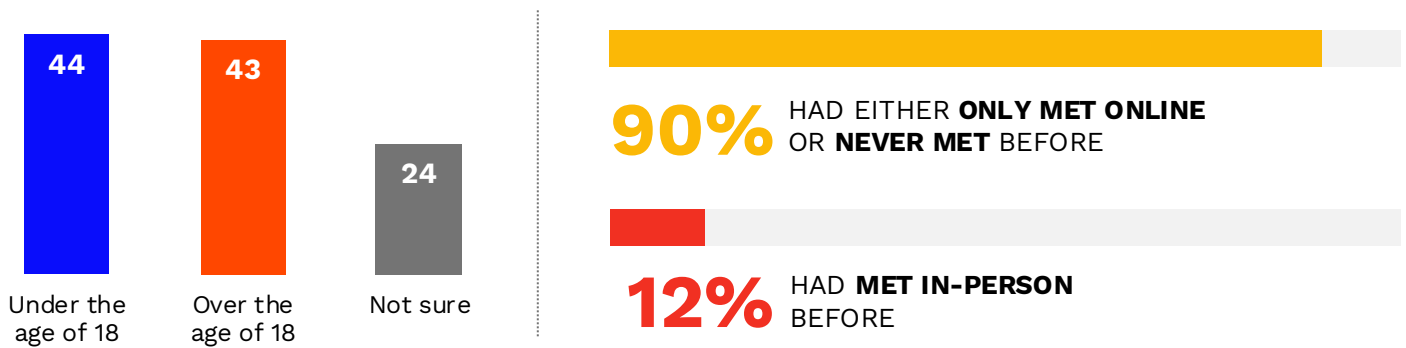
Please note: For details about the Snapchat services and features relevant to this report and the survey, please see the appendix.

Minor users regularly received unwanted messages from accounts they believe belong to adults and strangers.

Among minor users who received unwanted messages or contact on Snapchat, more than 2 in 5 (43%) said the messages or contact came from users they believe to be adults, while another quarter (24%) said they aren't sure. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of them say they either had only met the person online before or had never met them at all. This presents a substantial risk for unsafe encounters on the platform.

% WHO SAID EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ABOUT THE USER THEY HAD UNWANTED CONTACT WITH

Among those who experienced unwanted messages or contact

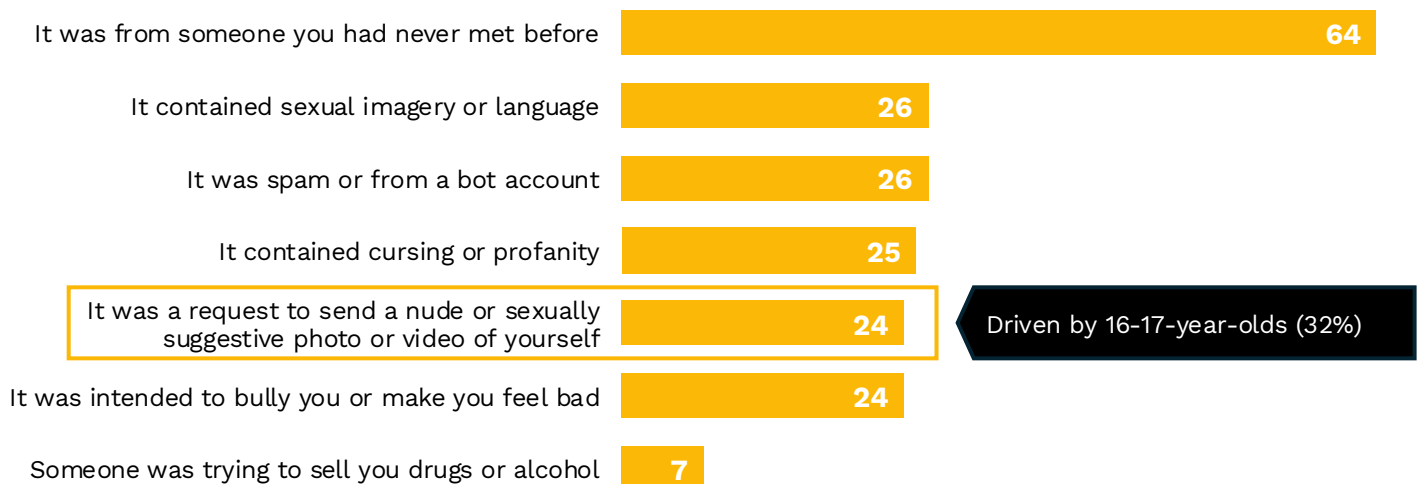


While most (64%) minor users felt the message was unwanted because it came from someone they had never met before, other reasons were far more insidious.

For a quarter of minor users who had this experience, unwanted messages contained sexual imagery (26%), spam (26%), profanity (25%), an intent to bully (24%), or a request for a nude photo (24%). Most of these kinds of unwanted messages had an indiscriminate impact on minor users, regardless of age or gender—whether boys or girls, 13-year-olds or 17-year-olds, about 1 in 4 encountered this content.

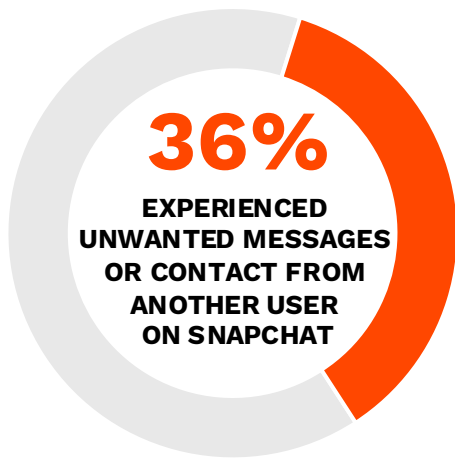
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES WHY THE MESSAGE(S) OR CONTACT FROM ANOTHER USER WAS UNWANTED?

% who said each among those who experienced unwanted messages or contact



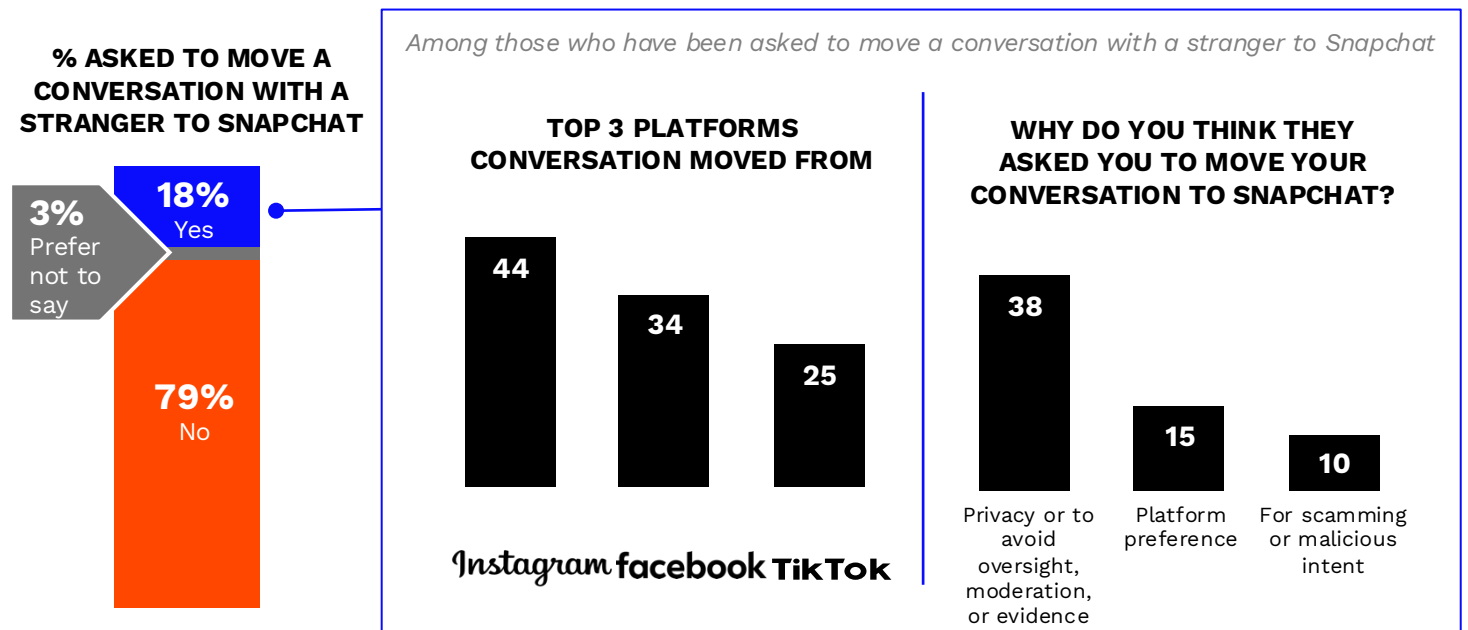
Alarminglly, 4% of all respondents reported having experienced sextortion – being pressured to do something through the threat of having a sexual image of them shared without consent.

Out of the full sample surveyed, 4% of 10-17-year-old users on Snapchat said they received unwanted messages that they deemed to be sextortion. This likely amounts to at least hundreds of thousands of US kids experiencing sextortion on Snapchat. This prevalence nearly triples when looking at LGBTQ+ 10-17-year-old users, among whom 11% say they have had a sextortion experience.



A common tactic in online grooming is off-platforming, where predators move conversations to another platform perceived as less monitored. To better understand the prevalence of this behavior and the use of Snapchat, respondents were asked if strangers had asked them to move a conversation from another platform to Snapchat. Nearly 1 in 5 minor users said yes.

Among those who were asked to move their conversation, nearly 2 in 5 (38%) said they thought the reason to move the conversation was to avoid oversight or send private messages. Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok were the platforms most frequently cited as the origin for these requests.

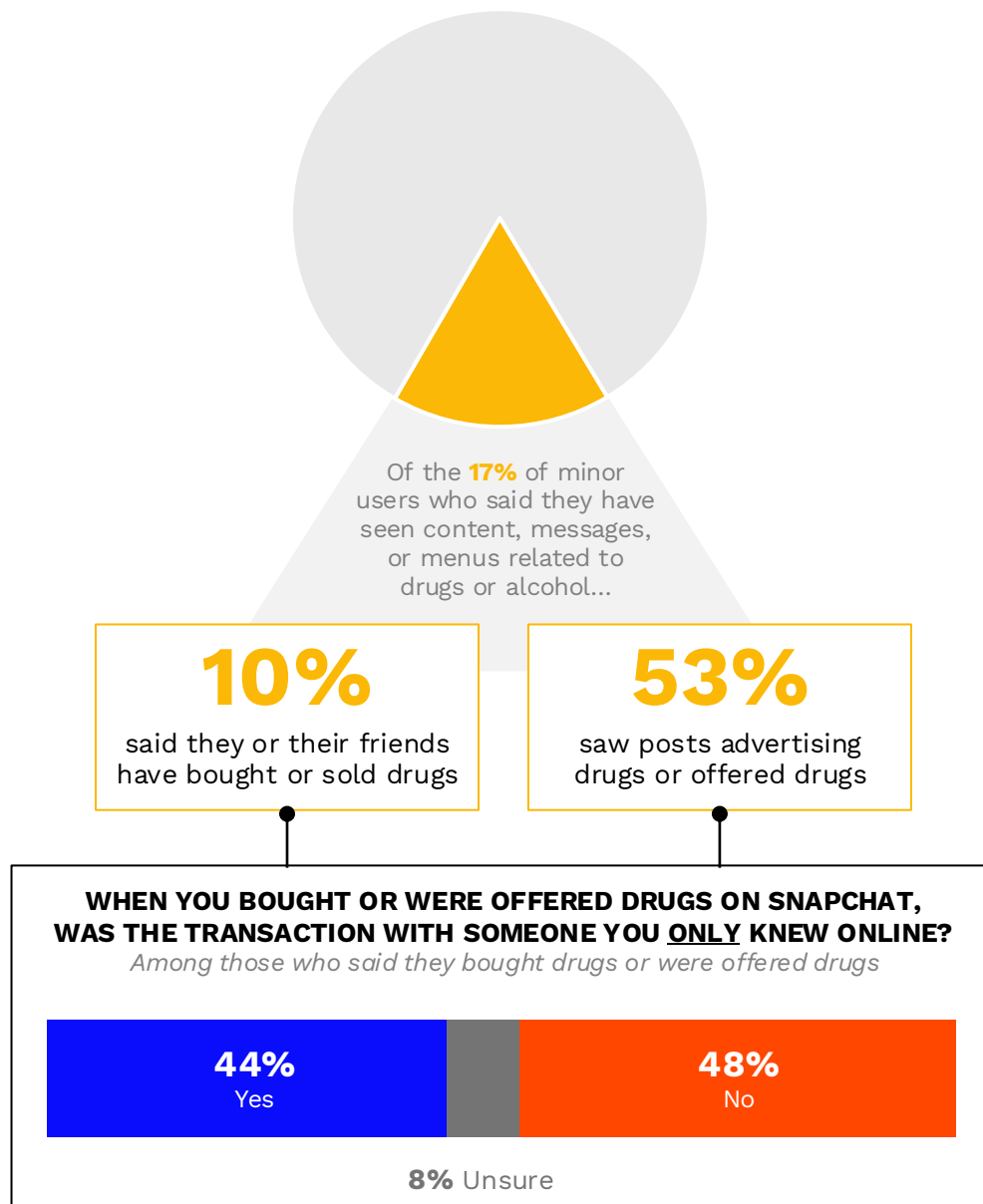


Some people on Snapchat are using the platform to advertise and sell drugs to minors.

Among the 17% of minor users who saw content, messages, or menus related to buying, selling, or using drugs or alcohol, more than half (53%) said they either saw posts that specifically advertised drugs or another user offered to sell them drugs directly. This equates to nearly 1 in 10 (9%) 10-17-year-old users saying someone sent them a Snap or Chat offering to sell them drugs or saw drug advertisements while using Snapchat.

Only 1 in 10 (10%) minors that have seen content, messages or menus related to buying, selling or using drugs or alcohol said that they or their friends went through with buying or selling drugs on Snapchat. However, this topic is sensitive and can carry legal repercussions, so there is reason to believe that it could be an undercount if some respondents felt uncomfortable admitting to buying or selling drugs.

For those who either bought drugs or were offered drugs on Snapchat, almost half (44%) said that they only knew the seller online, while an additional 8% were not sure.



MANAGING UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES



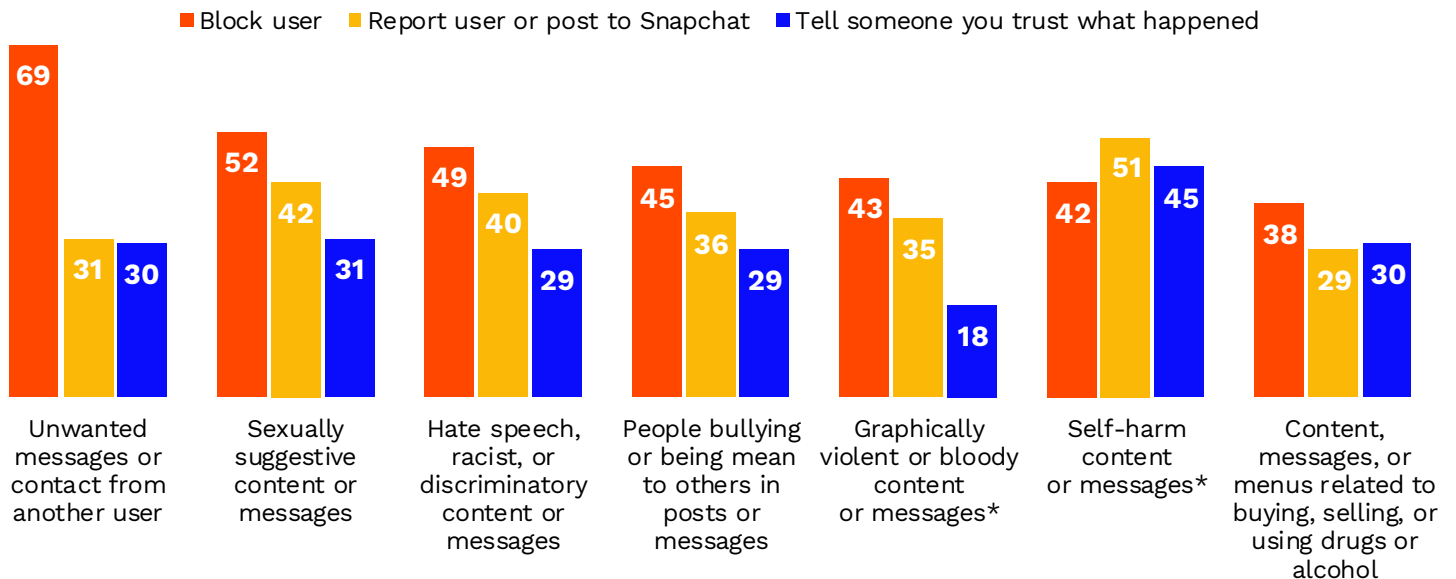
Minor users were less likely to disclose unsafe experiences on Snapchat to someone they trust than they were to handle the situation directly by blocking or reporting.

This trend holds true across nearly all categories of unsafe content or messages asked in the survey, with two notable exceptions: self-harm and drugs or alcohol.

When 10-17-year-old users did decide to act, they were more likely to block a user than to report the person or content. This preference for blocking likely contributes to under-reporting of these behaviors on the platform and limits parental awareness. An exception to this can be seen for self-harm content or messages, where minor users were more likely to report the content or post to Snapchat or tell someone they trust.

FOR EACH OF THESE EXPERIENCES, WHEN THIS HAPPENED TO YOU, DID YOU EVER DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?

Among those who had each experience

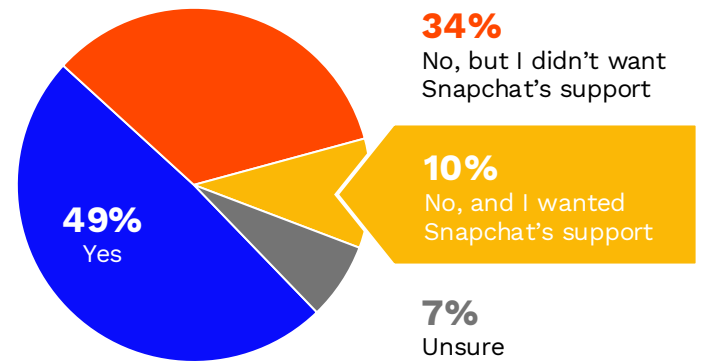


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Some minor users were left unsupported after having an unsafe experience.

Nearly half of 10-17-year-old users felt supported by the platform after disclosing an unsafe experience, indicating that Snapchat is largely helping those who ask. However, a third didn't. 1 in 3 (34%) reported not wanting support after an experience, highlighting that many kids choose not to come forward. These data points call attention to why social media platforms made available to minor audiences, such as Snapchat, need to be more proactive in supporting and preventing kids from these unsafe experiences.

WHEN YOU HAD THESE EXPERIENCES ON SNAPCHAT, DID YOU FEEL SNAPCHAT GAVE YOU THE SUPPORT THAT YOU NEEDED?
Among those who experienced any unsafe content or unwanted messages



Furthermore, the data reveals a deeply concerning pattern; many minor users were not getting any help after encountering unsafe content or messages on Snapchat.

Instead, 39% of minor users said they just ignored the unsafe content or messages or immediately closed the app after an experience. This behavior was particularly evident for bullying (15%) or unwanted contact (13%).

For most types of unsafe content or messages, aside from self-harm or unwanted contact, ignoring or immediately closing the app was a very common response, even if it was coupled with another action like reporting or blocking.

The high incidence of users detaching after these distressing experiences highlights a systematic issue. It suggests that Snapchat has a greater responsibility beyond providing intuitive reporting or blocking mechanisms. The burden should not fall on minor Snapchat users to proactively seek out support from the platform. Not only is this an unrealistic expectation for young people when encountering content that puts them in a state of distress for extended periods of time, but it also shifts responsibility to moderate the platform on the very minors being harmed. Snapchat needs more proactive support mechanism, not just reactive ones, to foster a safe environment where users are empowered rather than desensitized into passivity.

MINOR USERS WHO SAID THEY ONLY IGNORED OR CLOSED THE APP AFTER AN EXPERIENCE
Among those who had each experience

ANY UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES	39%
People bullying or being mean to others in posts or messages	15%
Unwanted messages or contact from another user	13%
Sexually suggestive content or messages	11%
Content, messages, or menus related to buying, selling, or using drugs or alcohol	10%
Hate speech, racist, or discriminatory content or messages	7%
Graphically violent or bloody content or messages*	5%
Self-harm content or messages*	2%

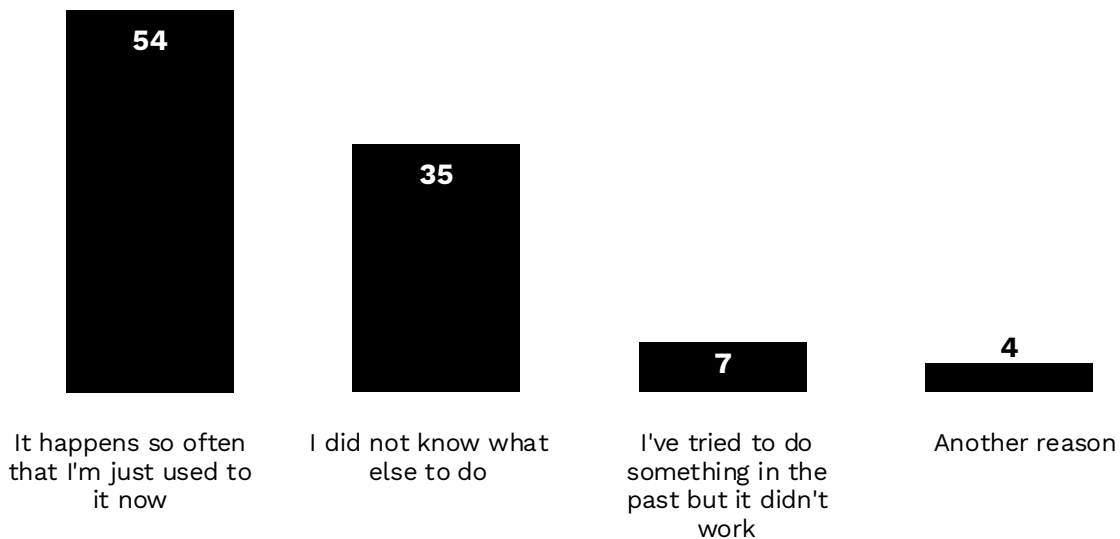
Encountering unsafe content or messages on Snapchat is the new normal among this subset of users.

Acclimation to this type of material is the main reason for ignoring unsafe content or messages on Snapchat. Over half (54%) of 10-17-year-old users who ignored it reported desensitization. That’s 11% of minor users who say they are used to encountering unsafe content or messages on Snapchat when extended to the full survey sample.

Despite Snapchat’s blocking and reporting tools, over a third who had an unsafe experience and ignored it said they were unsure what to do. Overall, nearly 1 in 5 (18%) minor users said they’re either desensitized or don’t know what to do. This suggests that while safety tools are available on the platform, adoption or accessibility of the tools are low.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO IGNORE IT OR KEEP SCROLLING?

Among those who experienced any unsafe content and unwanted messages and ignored it



In their own words...

It made me more sad, but I’m kind of used to it so it’s not that big of a deal anymore. [It] is just normal.

14, Transgender/Non-binary, Other ethnicity, Midwest

I am used to seeing this type of content so it didn't bother me that much. At first, it was concerning and I considered reducing the amount of time, but after a while it became almost normal.

16, Girl, White, Northeast

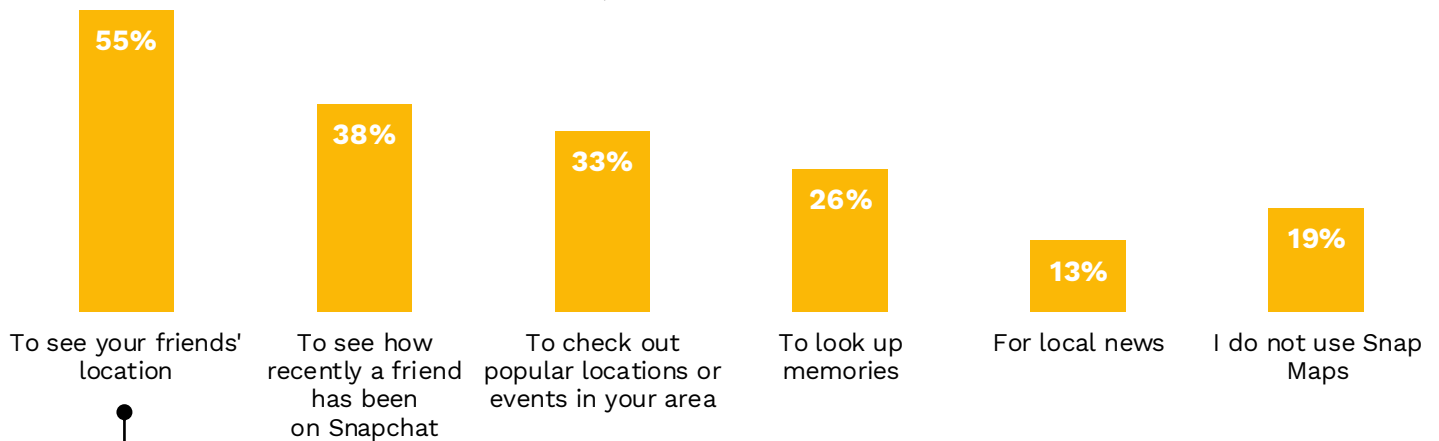
IMPACT OF SNAPCHAT'S UNIQUE FEATURES



While Snap Maps help minor users connect with friends, it also creates a feeling of being excluded for some.

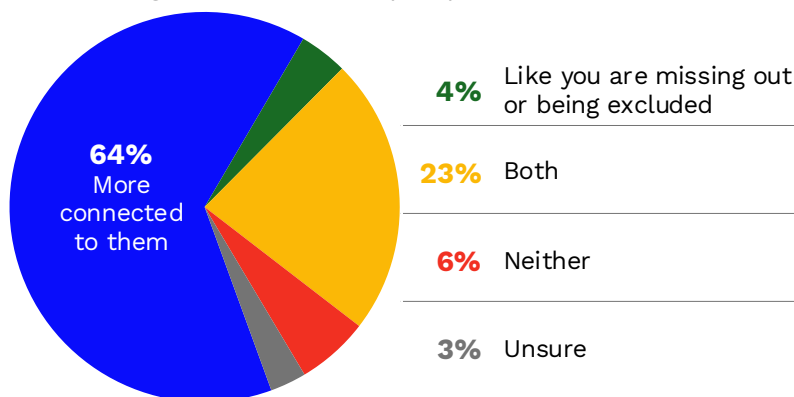
“Snap Map” is an interactive map that displays the real-time location of other users (if location sharing settings are enabled) and public Snaps from around the world. With more than 4 in 5 (81%) minor users who reported using it, Snap Maps is an incredibly popular feature. A notable majority (70%) of minor users say they use Snap Maps for their friends, with 55% using it to see friends’ locations and 38% using it to see how recently friends have been on the platform. Another 2 in 5 (40%) say they use Snap Maps for research, with 33% using it to explore popular locations or events nearby, and 13% using it for local news.

IF YOU USE SNAP MAPS, WHAT DO YOU TYPICALLY USE IT FOR?



HOW DOES BEING ABLE TO KNOW YOUR FRIENDS' LOCATION MAKE YOU FEEL?

Among those who use Snap Maps to see friends' location

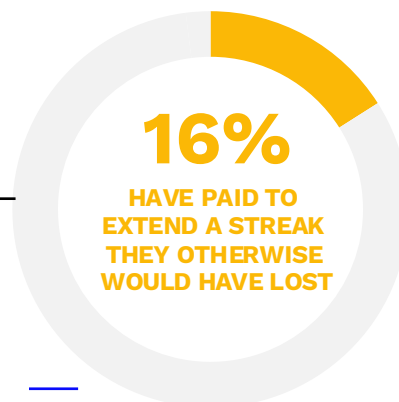
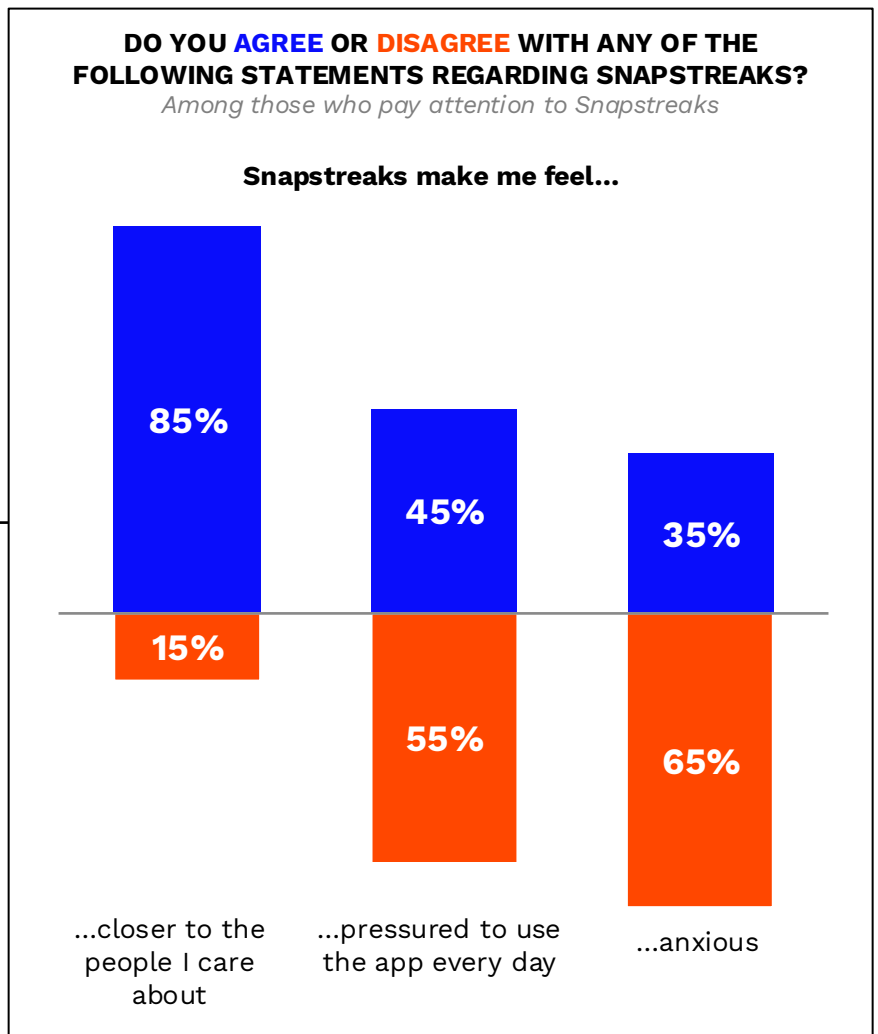
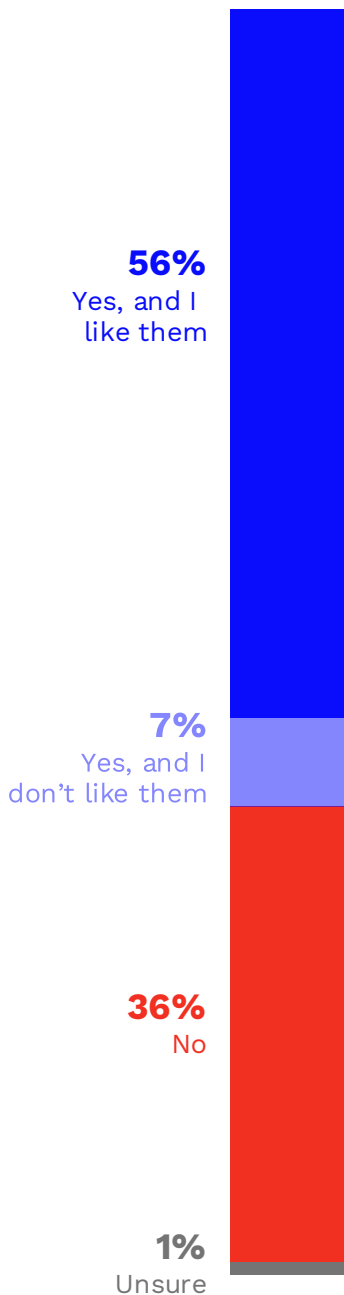


With the ability to track friends’ locations comes consequences. While nearly all (91%) said that seeing friends’ locations via Snap Maps made them feel more connected, over a quarter (27%) said it made them feel like they were missing out or being excluded.

While Snapstreaks were generally well-liked, they can also become a source of anxiety or pressure for minor users.

“Snapstreaks” are a counter display that tracks the consecutive days you and another user have sent Direct Snaps to each other. A majority (63%) pay attention to Snapstreaks, though 7% admitted to not liking them. But maintaining Snapstreaks can come at a price, sometimes literally. Almost 1 in 5 (16%) said they paid money to extend a streak they otherwise would have lost. And while 85% said that Snapstreaks made them feel closer to the people they care about, almost half (45%) reported feeling pressured to use the app daily, and 1 in 3 (35%) said Snapstreaks made them feel anxious.

ARE SNAPSTREAKS SOMETHING YOU PAY ATTENTION TO?

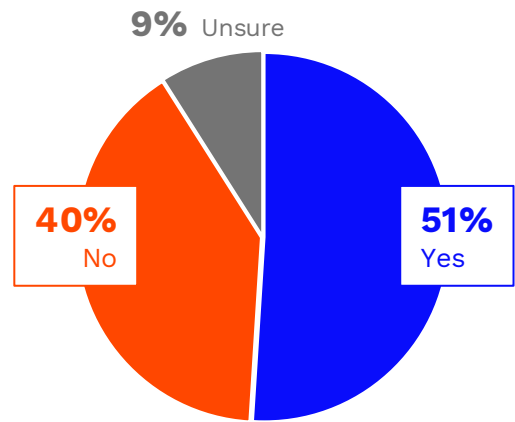


Snapchat's "Find Friends" feature is facilitating interactions between minor users and adult strangers.

"Find Friends" is a feature that allows users to add new contacts by searching for their username, syncing phone contacts, or scanning a unique QR code. Over half of 10-17-year-old users (51%) said that Snapchat's "Find Friends" recommended profiles to them of people they didn't know in real life, while 9% said they were unsure.

This becomes an issue when this subset revealed that in more than 1 in 3 (35%) instances, the recommended profile belonged to someone they believed to be an adult. Additionally, 30% of the time, minor users could not be certain what the age of the user was. Snapchat's active pushing of adult accounts on minor users only serves to heighten the risks of experiencing unsafe contact or messages.

HAS SNAPCHAT'S "FIND FRIENDS" FEATURE RECOMMENDED PROFILES OR ACCOUNTS OF PEOPLE YOU DID NOT KNOW IN REAL LIFE?



WAS THE USER THAT WAS RECOMMENDED TO YOU SOMEONE YOU BELIEVED TO BE...

Among those who were recommended someone they didn't know through "Find Friends"

35%

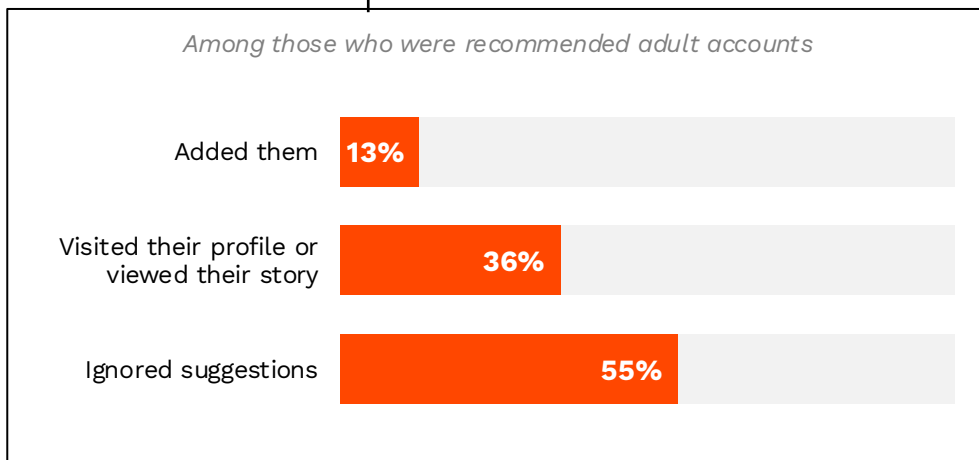
Over the age of 18

53%

Under the age of 18

30%

Not sure

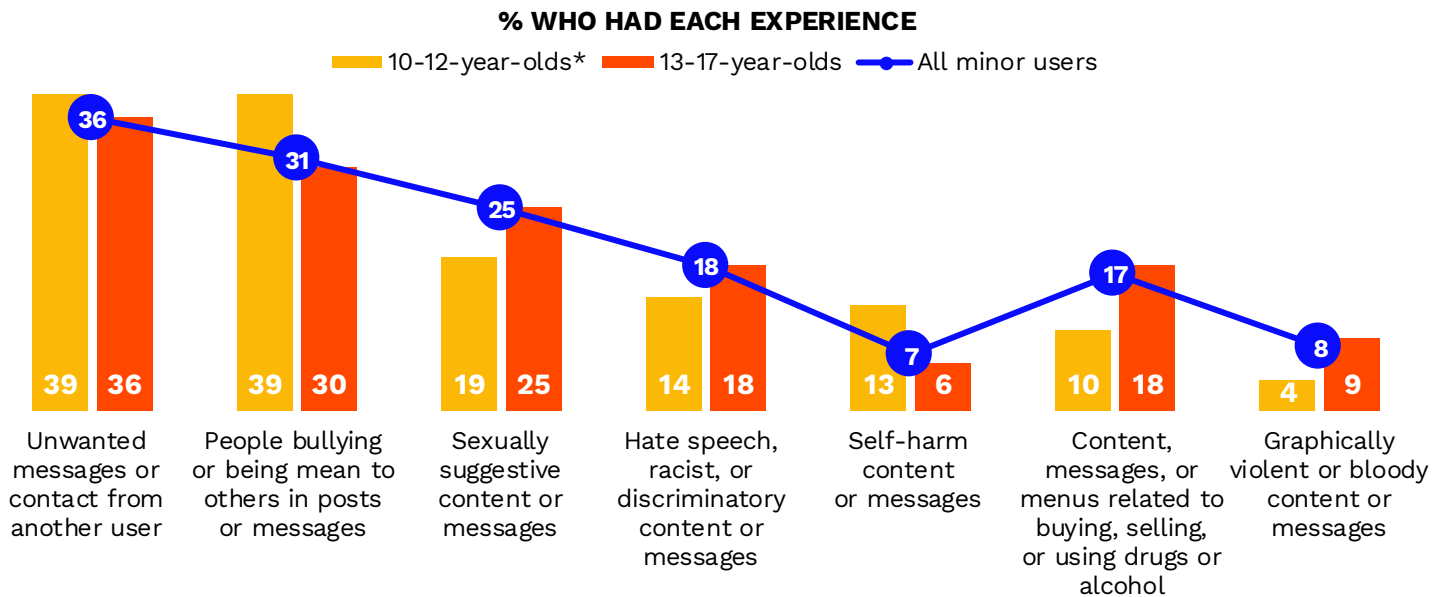


While 55% of minor users ignored the "Find Friends" suggestion to add an unknown adult account, almost half (44%) interacted with the accounts in some way. More than a third (36%) visited the account's profile or viewed their story, while 13% added them.



Pre-teens are finding their way on to Snapchat despite age restrictions, and are encountering unsafe content and messages at similar rates as teens.

Not only are underaged users using the platform, but the data shows they are much more likely than their older peers to experience bullying and self-harm content. Specifically, 2 in 5 (39%*) 10-12-year-old users said they have seen people bullying or being mean to others on Snapchat compared to 30% of 13-17-year-olds. Disturbingly, they were 2x* more likely than teen users to report encountering self-harm related content or messages on the platform.



Concerningly, unsafe content and messages are disproportionately experienced by LGBTQ+ kids, who are approximately 1.5* times as likely than average to have an unsafe experience on Snapchat.

86%
OF LGBTQ+ KIDS*

54%
OF NON-LGBTQ+ MINORS

HAVE EXPERIENCED UNSAFE CONTENT OR MESSAGES

The overwhelming majority (86%*) of kids in the LGBTQ+ community reported experiencing at least one kind of unsafe content or messages. More so, they were more likely to say they had at least 3 unsafe experiences (55%* among LGBTQ+ vs 23% among non-LGBTQ+), despite being more likely to report lower daily Snapchat usage rates than their peers. While LGBTQ+ minor users share the same top 3 types of unsafe content as minor users overall, they are more likely to experience each kind of unsafe content or message than their peers.

Please note: Data points for 10-12-year-olds and LGBTQ+ minors on this page have a base size less than n=100 as indicated by an “*”. These findings should be considered directional only.

Recommendations

These findings indicate that Snapchat is an environment where minors routinely encounter unsafe content or interactions and are connected with adult strangers. These occurrences are common enough to desensitize minors to them. Snapchat’s design choices, including algorithmic friend recommendations, disappearing messages, and streak-based engagement contribute to conditions in which risk is not incidental but embedded in the core user experience. The result is a digital space where both everyday interactions and more serious exploitation risks—such as coercion, sextortion, or “off-platforming”—are recurring experiences for many minors.

Snapchat’s unique features also make it extremely hard for parents to supervise their child’s online activity. Because messages disappear, adults have almost no way to see what’s happening. In addition, features like notifications and Snapstreaks are designed to keep kids coming back to use the app more often and for longer periods of time, far beyond what most parents can realistically monitor. Even when young users attempt to navigate harm on their own, platform reporting mechanisms frequently fall short, leaving minors without guidance or support in high-risk moments.

ParentsTogether Action, Heat Initiative, Design It for Us, and The Anxious Generation have the following recommendations for Snapchat to increase minor safety on the platform.

1. Implement Safety by Design

Implement age-appropriate design for minors, including removing all addictive features, setting default privacy for minor accounts to the highest level, removing features that facilitate harmful connections with adults, disabling companion chatbots, and implementing effective, privacy-protective age assurance to support the application of those protections.

Some platform specific design changes include:

- Stop recommending adult strangers as friends for minors and allow minors to flag strangers to friend requests and blocking
- Remove the Snapstreaks feature for minor users
- Provide an easy way for teens to flag unwanted messages or contact and the reason why

2. Stop Harmful Algorithmic Recommendations

Prohibit the algorithmic promotion of harmful information including child sexual abuse, self-harm content and drugs.

Further research is urgently needed to understand how Snapchat’s design affects the safety and well-being of underage users—particularly those who are already vulnerable. This includes examining exposure to sexual and drug-related content, the pathways through which predators leverage platform features, and the disproportionate risks faced by LGBTQ+ youth and other marginalized groups seeking community online. Additional work is also needed to assess age-verification weaknesses and to evaluate what safeguards are necessary to protect children who access the platform despite nominal restrictions. A deeper evidence base will be critical for informing policy, platform design standards, and the development of effective interventions that truly prioritize child safety.

Glossary of Snapchat Services and Features

Chat	Snapchat's core messaging service for text conversations, calls, and sharing media, including the ability for messages to disappear after opening.
Direct Snap	Ephemeral photos or short videos users create and edit which can be sent directly to other users or posted to their Story.
Discover	A curated section featuring professionally produced short-form content, news, and entertainment from various media organizations or popular creators.
Find Friends (formerly known as Quick Add)	A feature that allows users to add new contacts by searching for their username, syncing phone contacts, or scanning a unique QR code.
Snap Map	An interactive map that displays the real-time location of other users (if location sharing settings are enabled) and public Snaps from around the world.
Spotlight	A feed showcasing user-generated photos or videos from the entire Snapchat community for 24 hours. The order of users shown is often curated based on the user's past interactions.
Stories	A chronological collection of Snaps that plays like a daily narrative, visible to their chosen audience for 24 hours, with the order of friends' stories often algorithmically personalized based on their engagement and past interactions.
Streaks	A counter display that tracks the consecutive days two users have sent Direct Snaps to each other.

Please note: The definitions for Snapchat services in this appendix are derived from official Snapchat resources. For more information on these services, please refer to Snapchat's official website: www.snapchat.com