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# THE R.E.A.L. TALK

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What parents and teens know they should be talking about, but aren't.

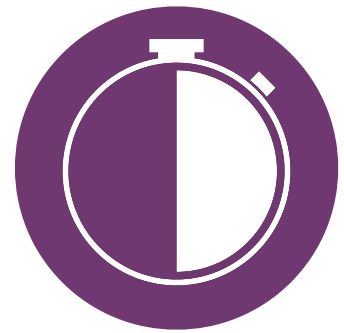
SHORTCOMINGS IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CAREGIVERS AND TEENS ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY.

# METHODOLOGY



## **Benenson Strategy Group conducted a nationwide study of:**

- 600 online interviews with minors age 13-17.
- 805 online interviews with parents and caregivers of 9-17 year olds.
- *Note: we refer to this audience primarily as “caregivers” throughout the report.*



## **The survey was conducted from April 7<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

- The margin of error for the minors audience is  $\pm 4.0$  at the 95% confidence level.
- The margin of error for the caregivers audience is  $\pm 3.5$  at the 95% confidence level.
- The margin of error for both audiences is higher among subgroups.

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# KEY FINDINGS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **There is a serious lack of important conversations happening between minors and their caregivers...**

- More than 1 in 3 caregivers say they have not had a conversation with their child about online grooming (36%), while nearly half say they have not had a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes (45%) or re-sharing nudes (52%).
- And teenagers themselves are even less likely to report that their parent or caregiver has discussed these things with them: online grooming (51%) or sexting/sharing nudes (46%), with fewer than 2 in 5 saying they have had a conversation about re-sharing nudes (39%).

## **...Yet there is near universal agreement that these conversations are important to have.**

- Over 90% of caregivers believe these 3 topics are at least somewhat important to discuss with their children, including 8 in 10 caregivers who say they are “very important.”

## **Breaking down the barriers to having these conversations will be crucial.**

- For a plurality of caregivers who have yet to have a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes with their child, the primary barrier appears to be that they think their child is too young to have this conversation.
- Embarrassment was the top barrier for those that have had a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes with their child.
- Minors are most comfortable having these conversations with their caregivers. However, nearly 1 in 3 minors who have not had a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes with their caregiver say that they don’t believe their caregiver wants to have this conversation.

**Caregivers and minors are more likely to have had discussions about online interactions with strangers than other topics. At the same time, minors indicate that across every platform they use, they are more likely to be talking to someone they do not know offline (including people they describe as “strangers”) than talking to someone they have met in real life.**

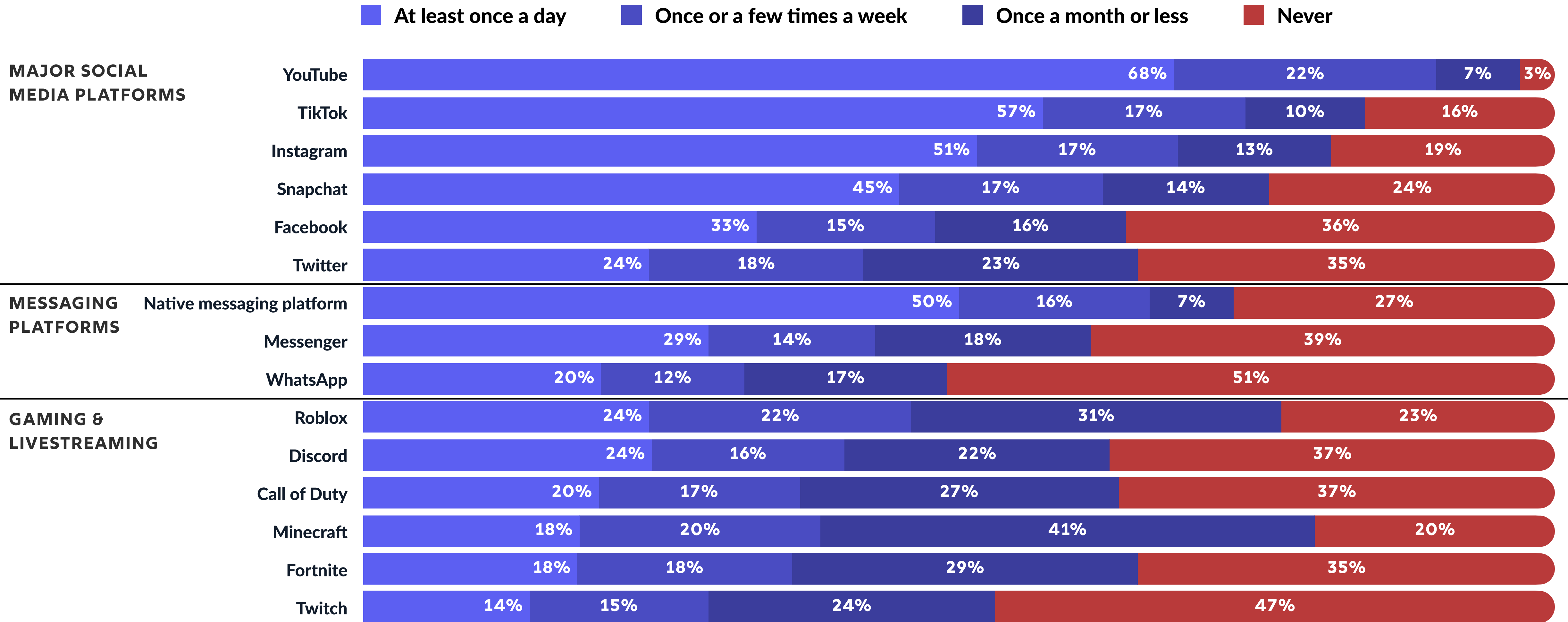
## **Gaming and livestreaming platforms are a critical blind spot for caregivers.**

- Platforms such as Minecraft, Roblox, and Discord had the highest gap in caregiver familiarity vs. minor usage.
- Concerningly, these are also the platforms that users are most likely to say that they chat with strangers.

# ONLINE ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

# YouTube is most widely used app daily among teens, followed by TikTok

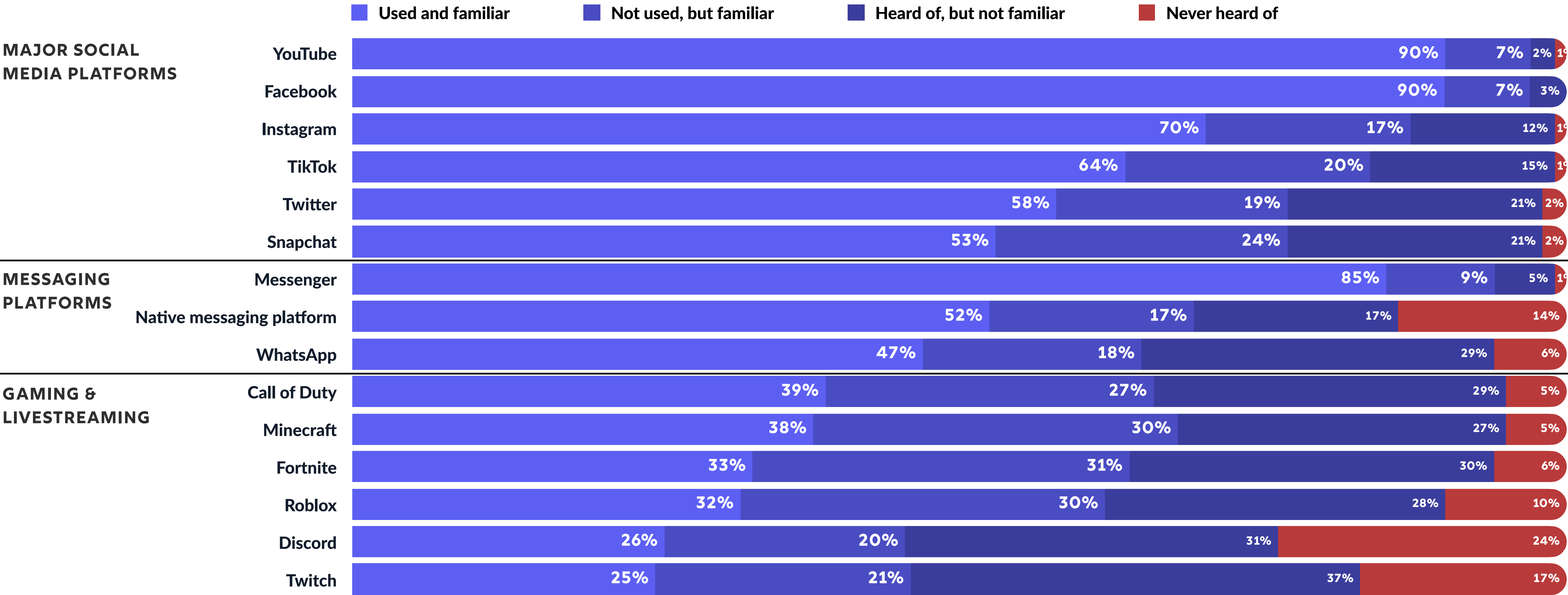
MINORS: PLATFORM USAGE



ONLINE ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

# Caregivers are generally familiar with the most popular platforms among minors – but are the least familiar with major gaming and livestreaming platforms

MINORS: PLATFORM USAGE

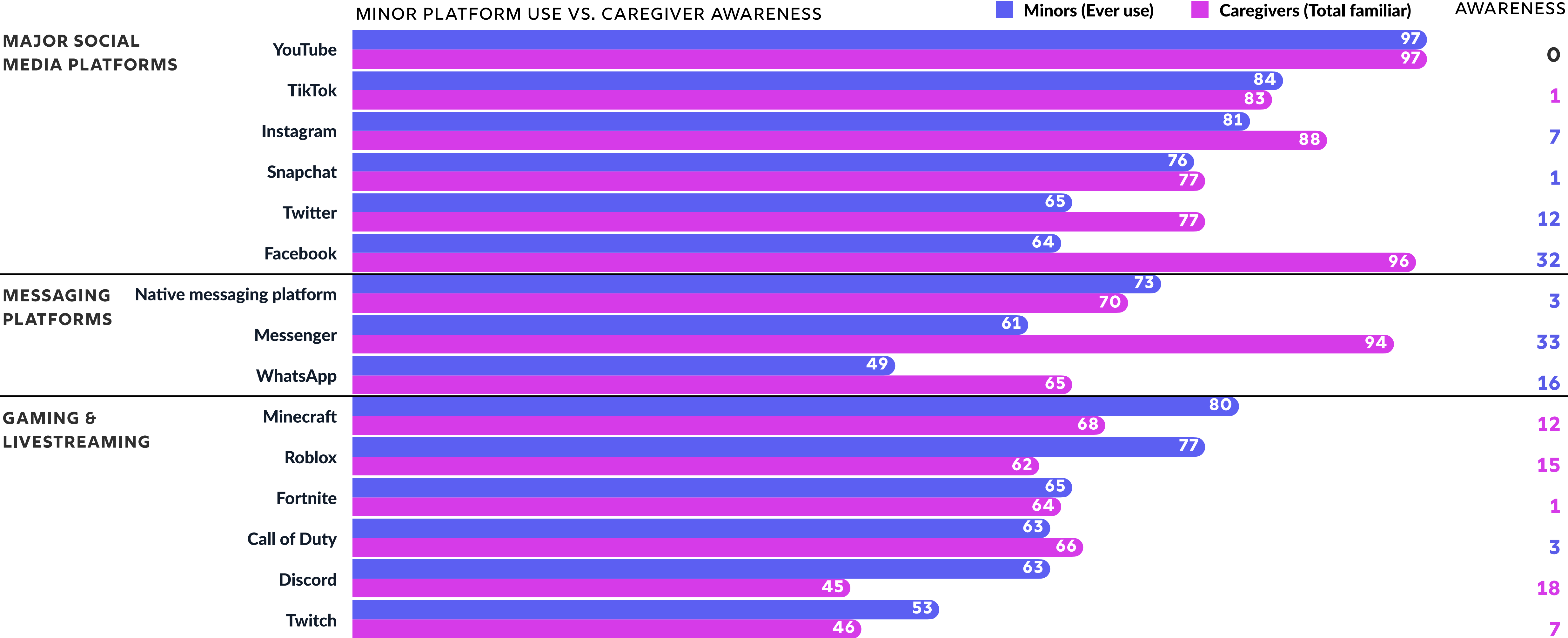




ONLINE ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

# The widest gap in caregiver familiarity compared to minor usage is for gaming and livestreaming platforms – particularly Minecraft, Roblox, and Discord

CAREGIVERS & MINORS: PLATFORM USAGE AND AWARENESS



**ONLINE ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS**

**Across every platform, minors are more likely to chat or message with people they have never met in person than people they know IRL**

**Caregivers & Minors: Platform Usage and Awareness**

	Chat or message with...			Chat or message with someone you also know offline	I never chat or message with other people using this platform
	...NET a stranger OR someone you only know online	...a stranger	...someone you only know online		
Snapchat	56	14	48	45	14
Discord	55	23	42	40	17
Instagram	55	15	45	45	14
WhatsApp	54	14	45	43	17
Messenger	54	15	44	45	12
Roblox	53	22	37	32	29
Facebook	51	17	41	47	18
TikTok	51	15	41	32	29
Native messaging platform	51	12	44	48	13
Call of Duty	49	23	30	24	34
Twitch	48	23	33	26	34
Fortnite	46	19	33	35	29
Twitter	44	15	33	27	37
Minecraft	37	15	26	33	37
YouTube	33	11	24	16	55

# Minors: Platform chatting cheat sheet

MINORS: CHATTING ON PLATFORMS WITH STRANGERS OR ONLINE-ONLY CONTACTS (AMONG USERS)

showing NET stranger OR someone you only know online	Gender		Age		Gender/sexual identity		Race		USR		
	Girls	Boys	13-14	15-17	LGBTQ+	Non-LGBTQ+	White	PoC	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Snapchat	53	60	50	60	42*	59	57	55	66	46	57
Discord	56	54	53	57	55*	56	57	53	61	53	49*
Instagram	46	63	54	55	55	55	53	56	61	52	48
WhatsApp	50	59	55*	54	43**	56	51	57	56	61*	41**
Messenger	47	60	56	53	43*	56	55	53	59	47	55*
Roblox	53	53	58	49	56	52	50	56	59	53	43*
Facebook	44	58	51	51	39*	53	51	51	60	48	39*
TikTok	46	55	55	49	47	53	56	46	56	49	51
Native messaging platform	45	57	51	51	42	53	47	54	58	44	49*
Call of Duty	42	54	48	50	35*	52	49	49	58	50	41*
Twitch	43	52	47	49	32*	53	52	43	55	41	46*
Fortnite	47	46	48	45	45*	46	48	44	48	43	44*
Twitter	40	47	47	42	27*	48	49	39	55	39	35*
Minecraft	34	39	39	36	31*	39	43	30	41	35	31
YouTube	27	37	34	31	25	35	33	32	41	33	18

\*BASE SIZE <100

\*\*BASE SIZE <50

# DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

# Almost half of caregivers say they have not had a conversation with their child about sexting/sharing nudes, while even fewer have had a conversation about re-sharing

**CAREGIVERS: TOPICS OF CONVERSATION**

*Which of the following topics have you had a conversation about with your child?*

	Gender		Caregiver Age		Child Age			Race		Education		USR			
	Moms	Dads	<40	40+	9-12	13-14	15-17	White	PoC	<Coll	Coll+	Urban	Sub.	Rural	
Chatting with strangers online	73	79	67	66	78	69	76	77	75	71	78	69	66	76	78
Bullying online	66	70	61	59	70	66	69	63	67	63	69	63	62	69	67
Online sexual predators/online grooming	64	69	58	60	66	56	76	65	63	65	67	60	64	64	63
Sexting/sharing of nude photos/videos of themselves	55	60	50	46	61	42	67	65	54	57	57	54	57	52	58
Re-sharing nude photos/videos of other children	48	53	42	42	52	38	56	54	46	50	45	50	51	48	42
Pornography	45	46	44	38	49	36	50	53	45	44	47	43	43	46	46
Safe sex	45	45	45	34	51	28	52	61	43	46	45	44	46	44	44

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

# Most minors say they have not had a conversation with their parents about sexting/sharing nudes; less than 2 in 5 have had a conversation about re-sharing nudes

**MINORS: TOPICS OF CONVERSATION**

*Which of the following topics have you had a conversation about with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)?*

		Girls		Boys		Gender/sexual identity		Race		USR		
		13-14	15-17	13-14*	15-17	LGBTQ+	Non-LGBTQ+	White	PoC	Urban	Sub.	Rural
Chatting with strangers online	65	63	65	70	61	56	68	69	60	63	60	77
Bullying online	60	67	62	63	50	57	61	66	54	57	60	66
Online sexual predators/online grooming	51	53	57	49	47	51	52	58	44	48	51	59
Sexting/sharing of nude photos/videos of themselves	46	40	52	43	47	46	47	50	42	45	48	46
Safe sex	45	41	45	43	50	36	49	46	44	47	38	54
Pornography	42	34	39	40	51	33	45	45	38	37	46	45
Re-sharing nude photos/videos of other children	39	38	38	40	38	33	42	40	37	43	36	40

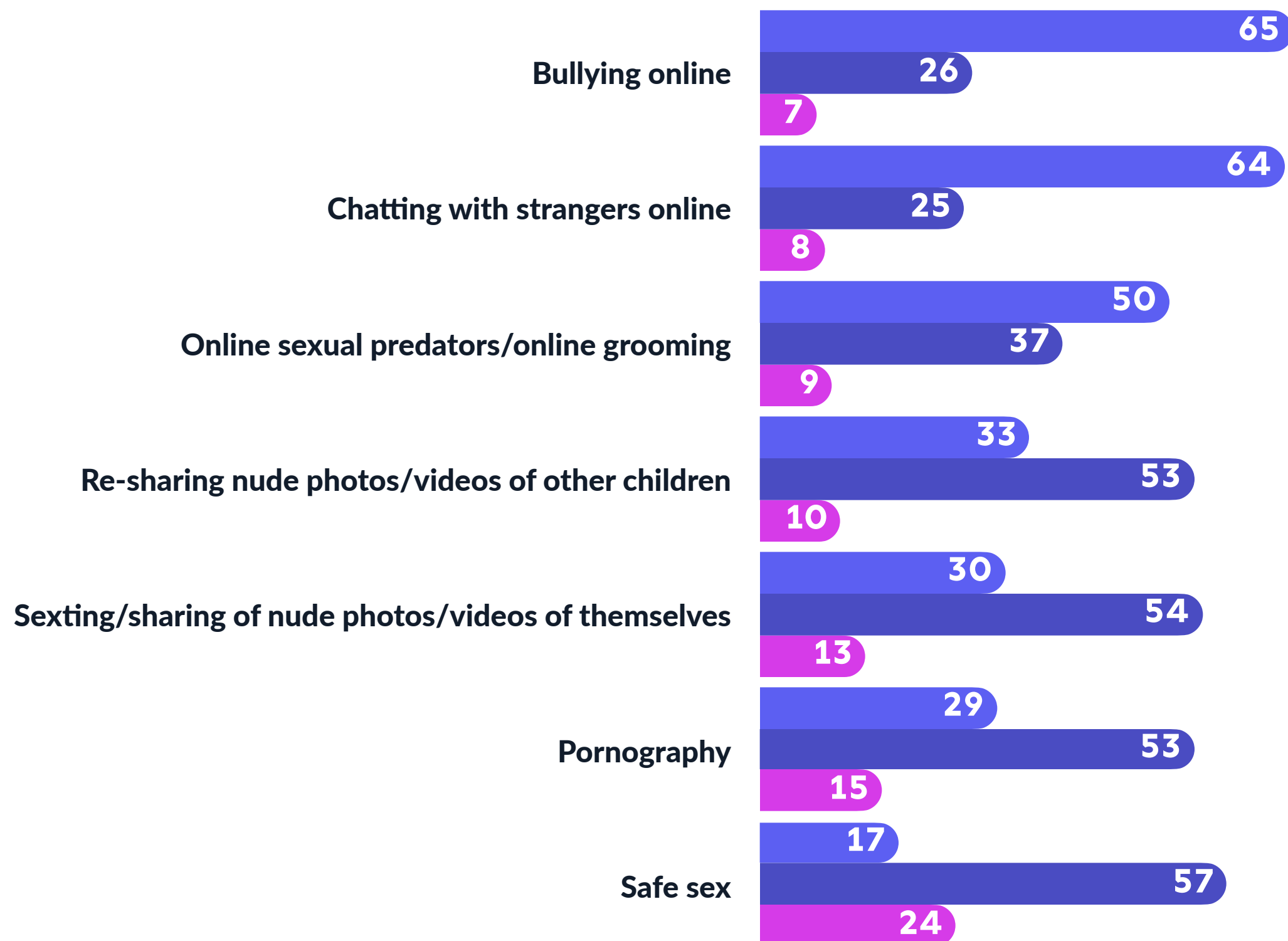
## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# Caregivers are talking to kids about risk of online interactions with others at younger ages, but most are delaying conversations about their child's own behaviors and exploration

### CAREGIVERS & MINORS: AGE FOR CONVERSATION

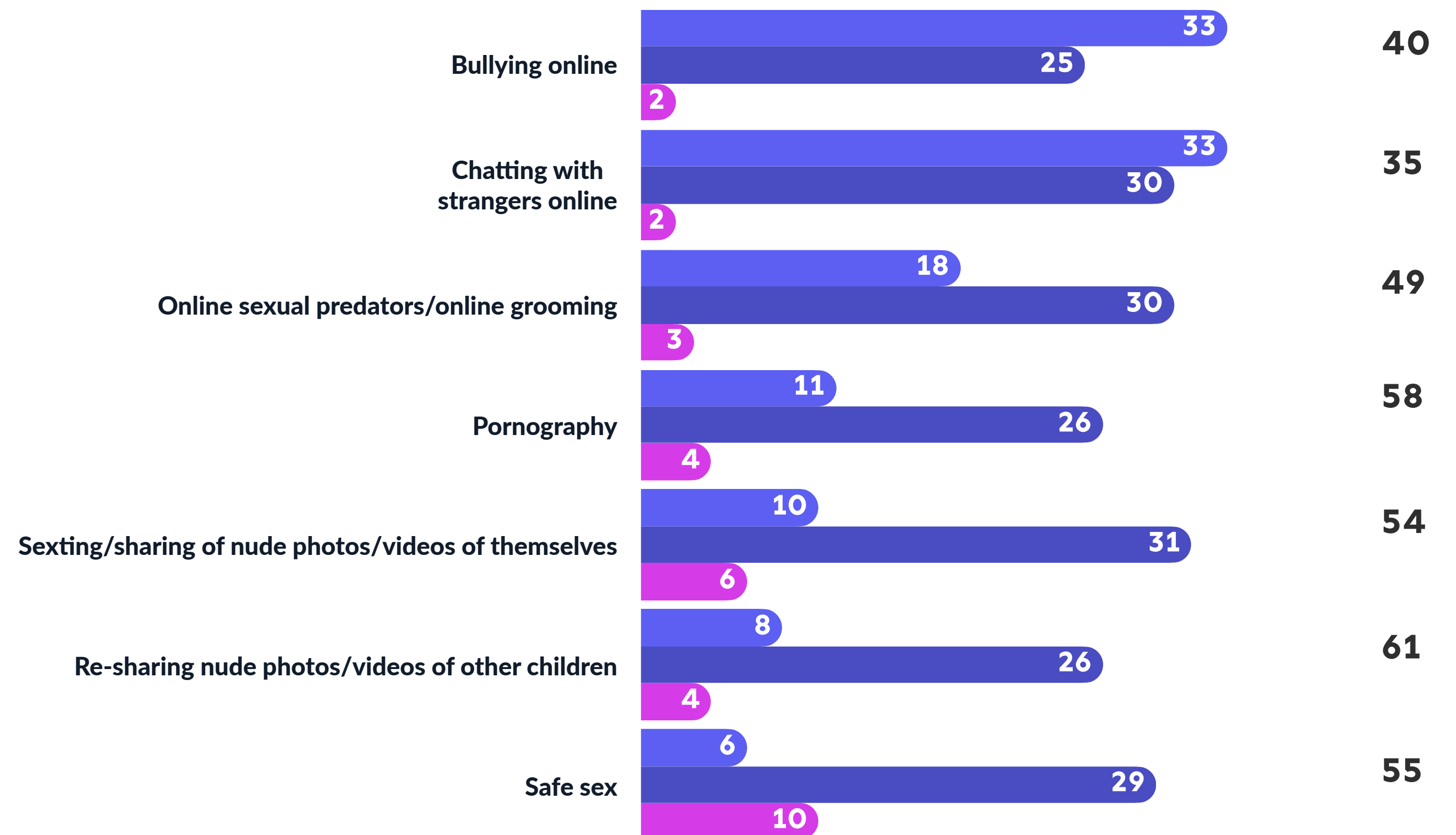
What age should a child be when parent/caregiver first has a conversation about the following topics?

■ 10 years or younger ■ 11-14 years old ■ 15 or older



How old were you when you had the following conversations with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)?

■ 10 years or younger ■ 11-14 years old ■ 15-17 years old



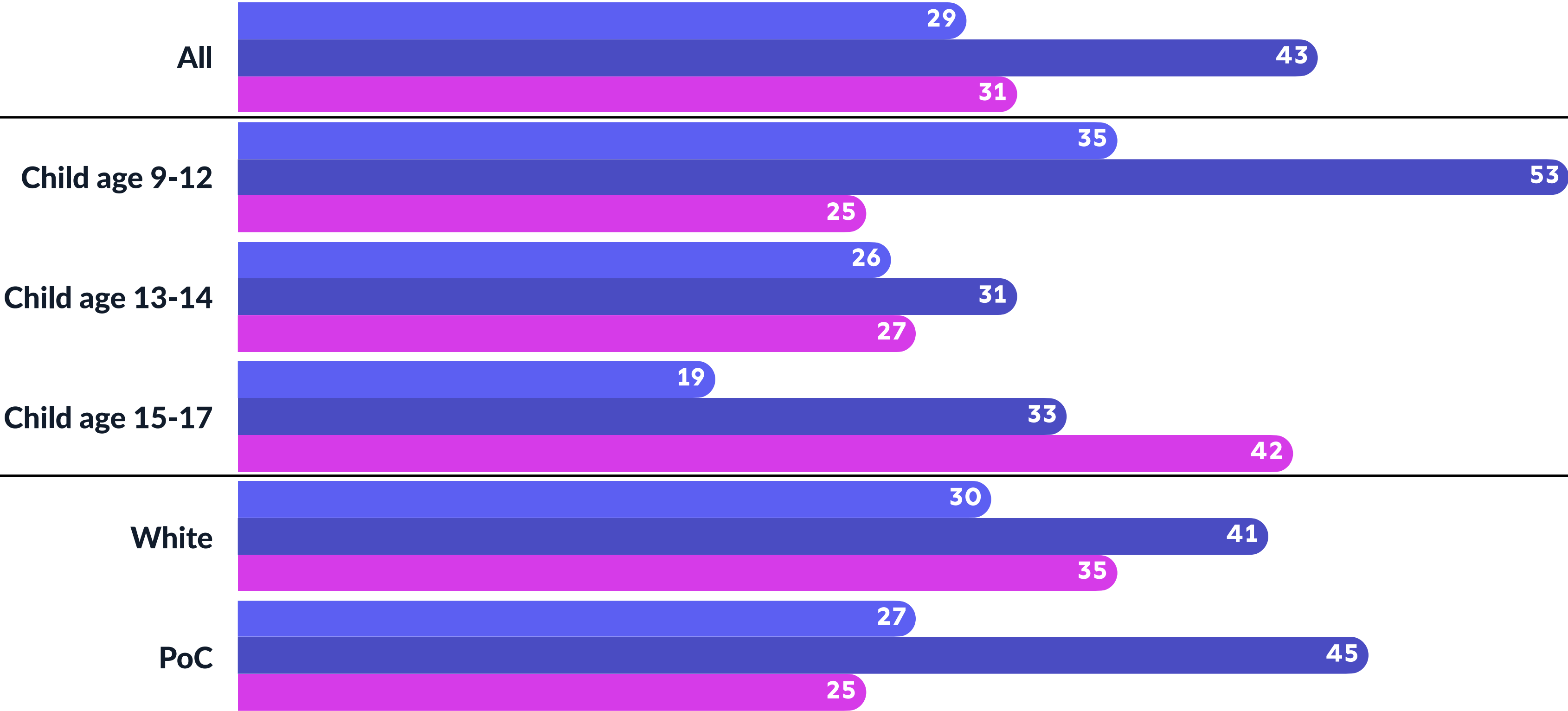
DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# Many caregivers who haven't discussed sexting with their teen say that the conversation should have already happened

CAREGIVERS: APPROPRIATE AGE FOR CONVERSATION

*What age should a child be when parent/caregiver first has a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes?  
Among those that have not had a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes*

■ 10 years or younger ■ 11-14 years old ■ 15 or older



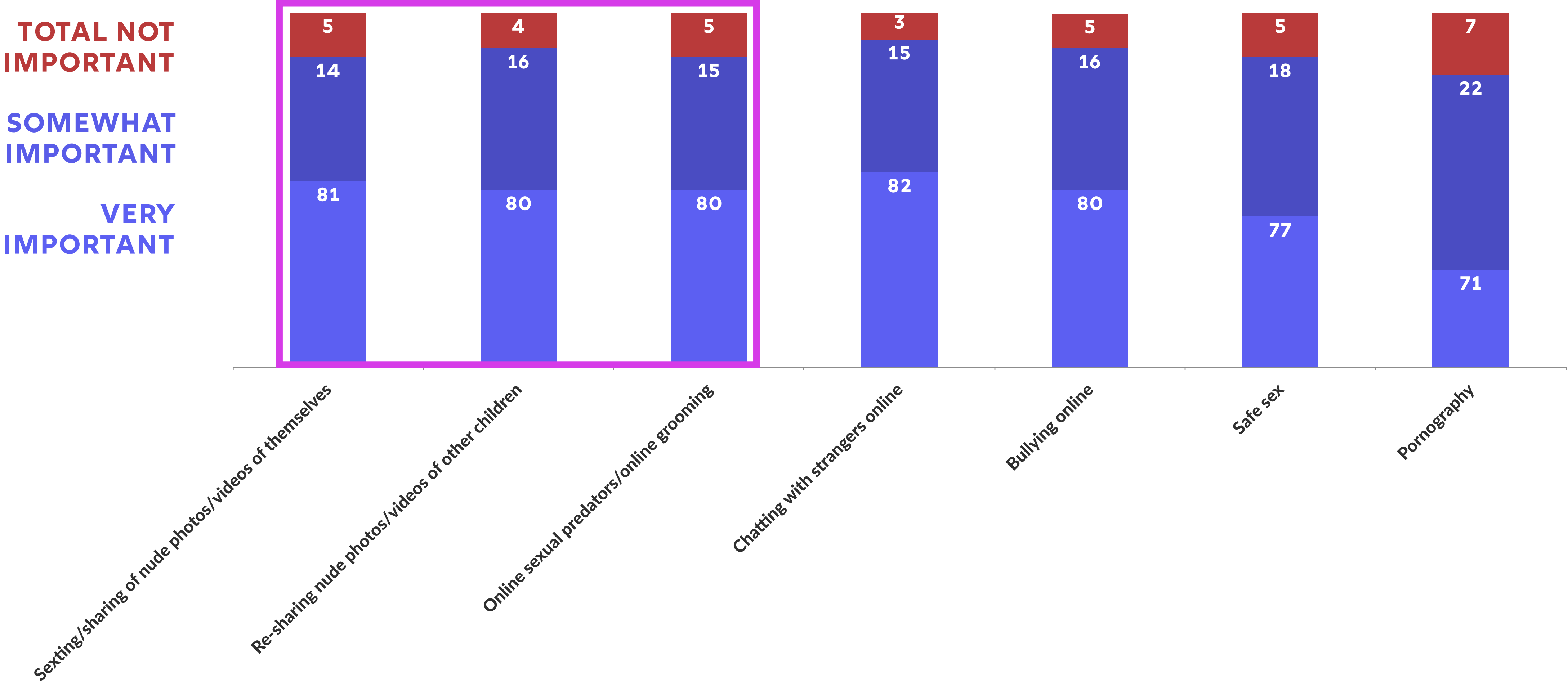


DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

While only about half of caregivers have discussed sexting, there is near universal acknowledgment it is an important topic to discuss (as well as other related topics)

CAREGIVERS: CONVERSATION TOPIC IMPORTANCE

How important of a topic is this to discuss with your child?

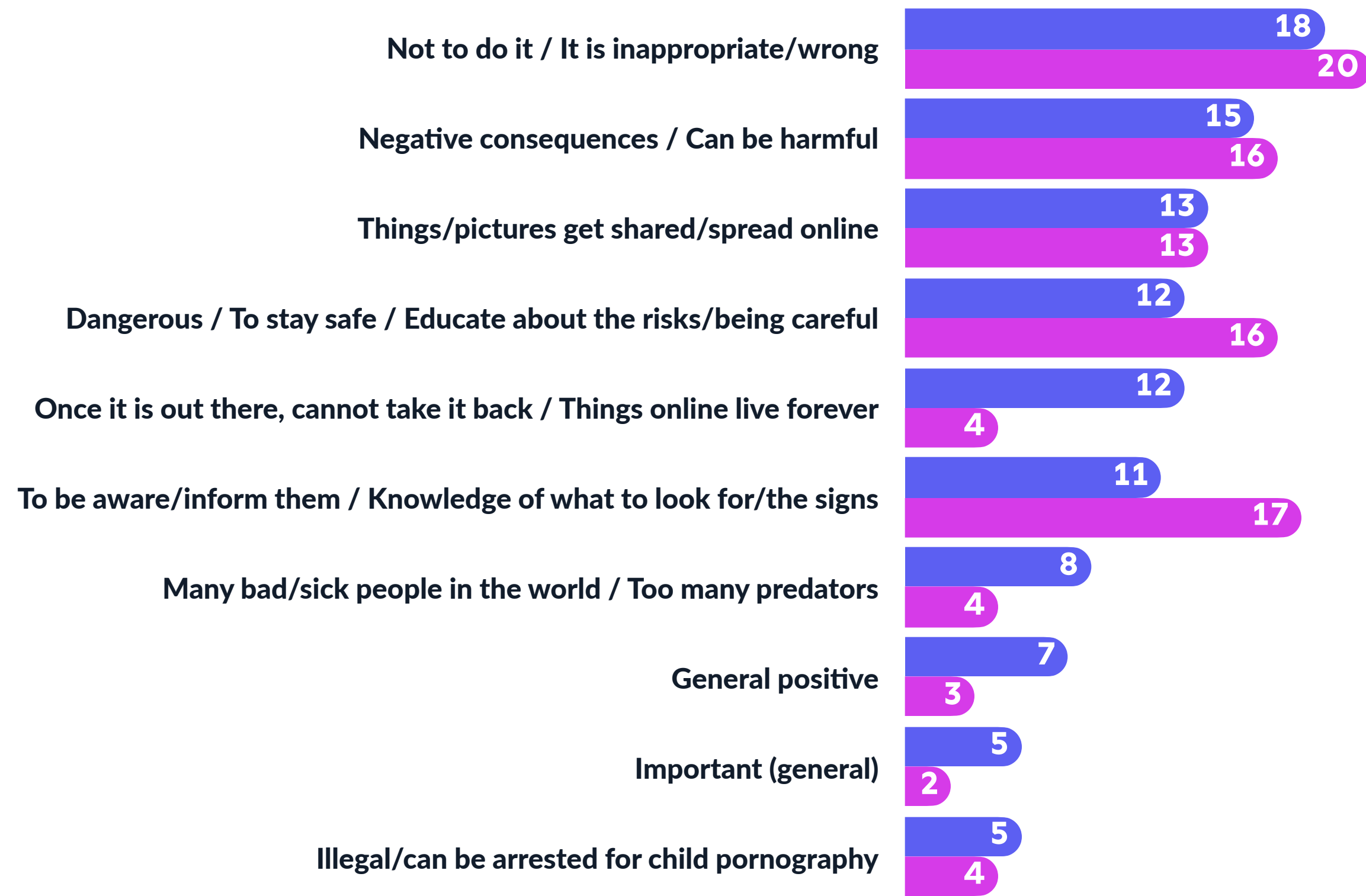


# There is general agreement between minors and caregivers as to why these are important conversations to discuss

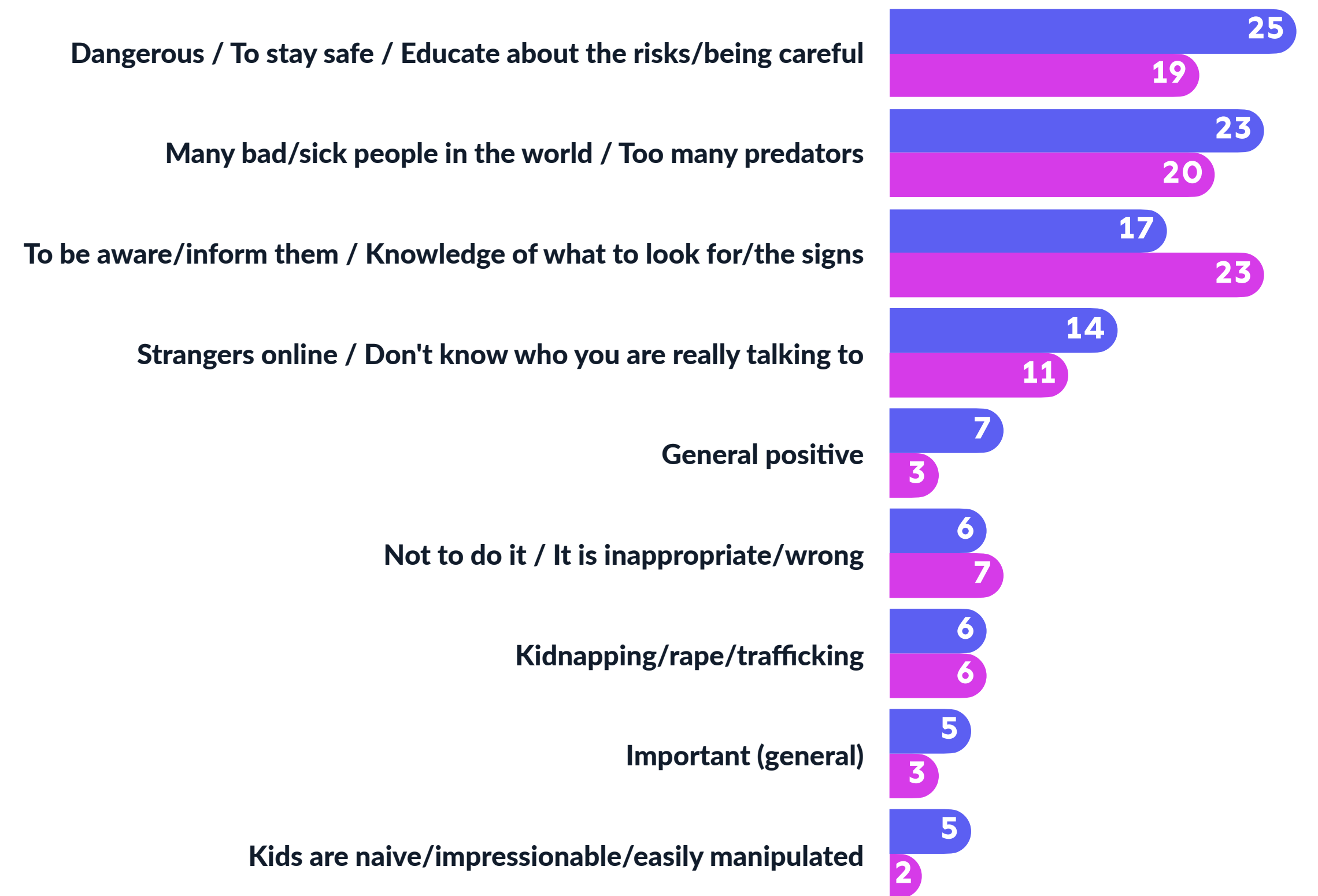
CAREGIVERS & MINORS: WHY DISCUSSING THESE TOPICS IS IMPORTANT (OPEN-END)

Caregivers Minors

**Why is sexting/sharing nude photos an important topic to discuss?**  
Among those that said the topic is important



**Why is online sexual predators/online grooming an important topic to discuss?**  
Among those that said the topic is important



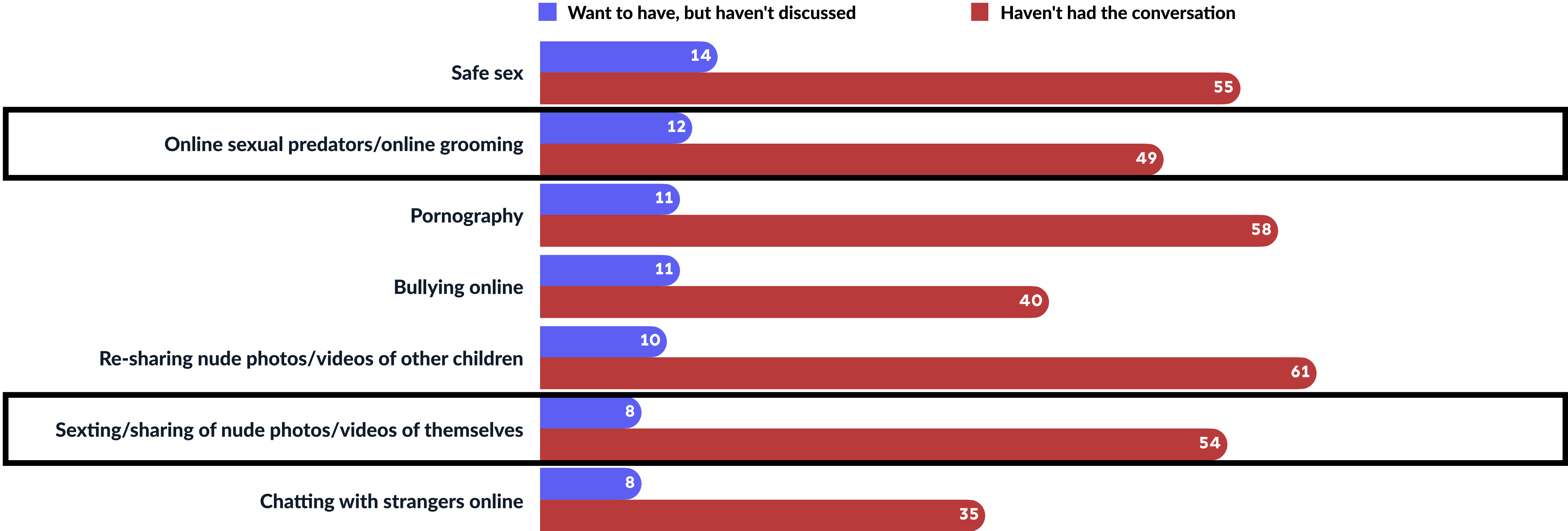
DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# About 1 in 10 teens who haven't discussed sexting or grooming actively want to have that conversation, but for the most part, caregivers are going to need to start these discussions

## MINORS: TOPICS MINORS WANT TO DISCUSS

*Which of the following conversations do you wish you had a conversation about with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)?*

*Among minors who have not had a conversation about the topic*

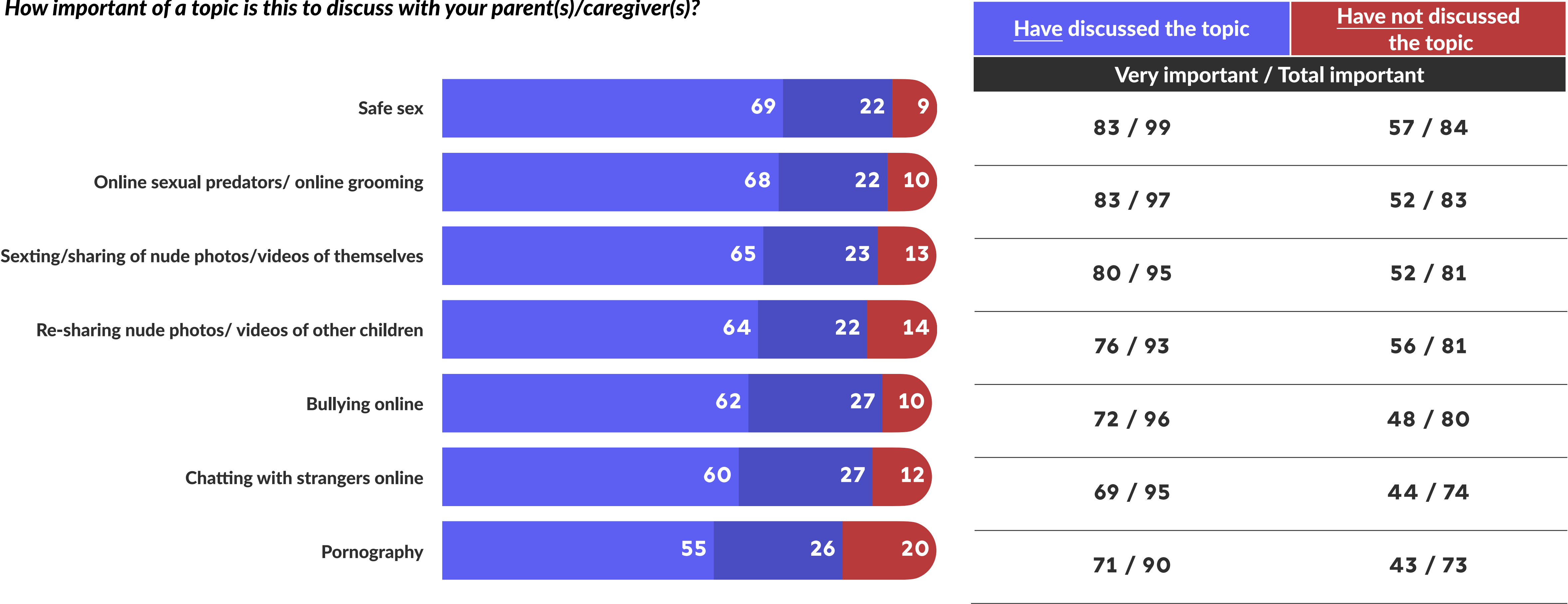


**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

**Even if most minors aren't eager to discuss these topics with their caregivers, most who have not still acknowledge they are important topics that should be discussed**

**MINORS: CONVERSATION TOPIC IMPORTANCE**

*How important of a topic is this to discuss with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)?*



## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# Most caregivers believe all topics should be discussed more than three times, but this desire isn't translating into action

CAREGIVERS & MINORS: CONVERSATION TOPIC FREQUENCY

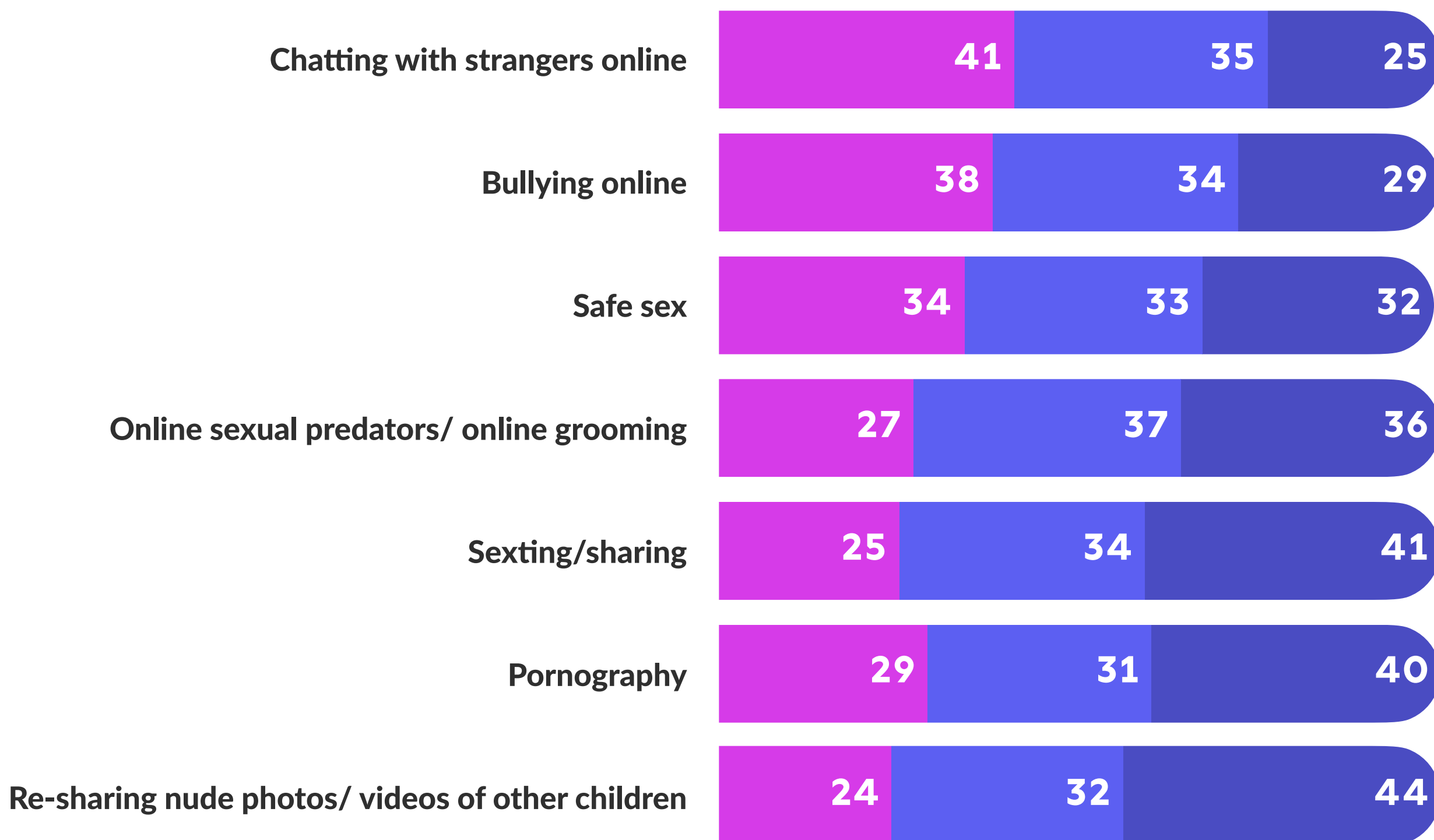
**MORE THAN THREE TIMES**

**TWO TO THREE TIMES**

**ONCE**

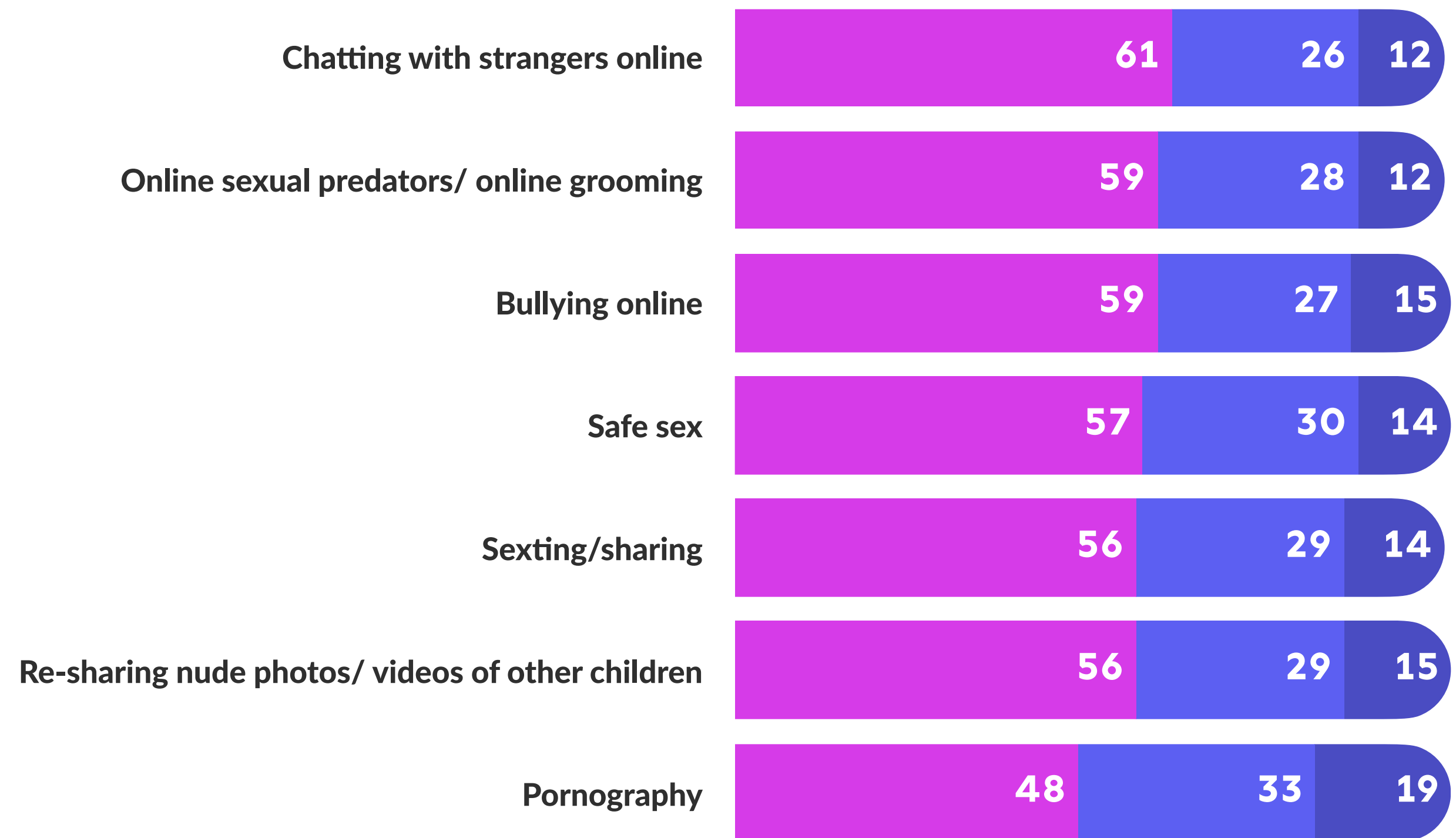
*How many times have you discussed the topic?*

*Among minors that have had the conversation*



*How often should caregivers have the following conversations?*

*Among caregivers that believe there should be a conversation*

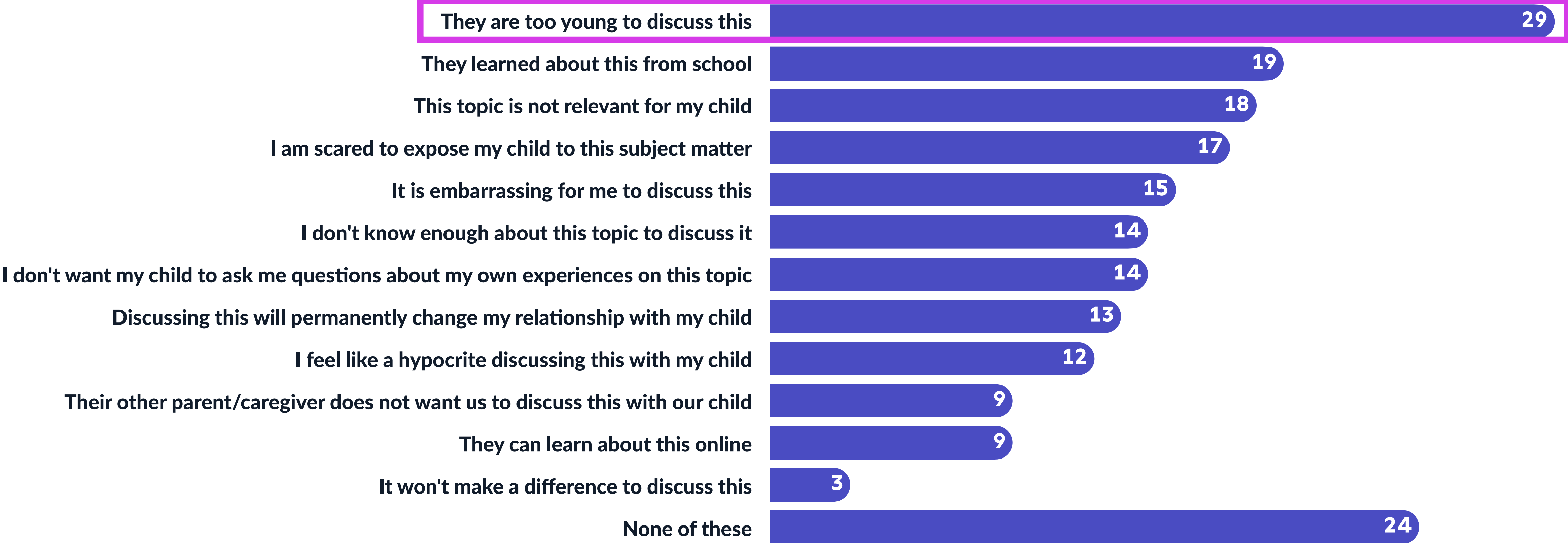


**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

# For those who have not yet had a conversation about sexting/sharing nudes, perceptions that their child is too young is the top barrier we need to overcome

CAREGIVERS: REASONS FOR NOT YET HAVING A CONVERSATION ABOUT SEXTING/SHARING NUDES (AMONG CAREGIVERS WHO HAVEN'T DISCUSSED THE TOPIC)

*Why have you not yet discussed this topic with your child?  
Among caregivers that haven't discussed sexting/sharing nudes*



DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# Among those who have discussed the topic of sexting/sharing nudes, risk of embarrassment was the top concern about having it in the first place

CAREGIVERS: BIGGEST BARRIER TO HAVING A CONVERSATION ABOUT SEXTING/SHARING NUDES (AMONG CAREGIVERS WHO HAVE DISCUSSED THE TOPIC)

*What was the biggest barrier to having this conversation in the first place?  
Among caregivers that have discussed sexting/sharing nudes*



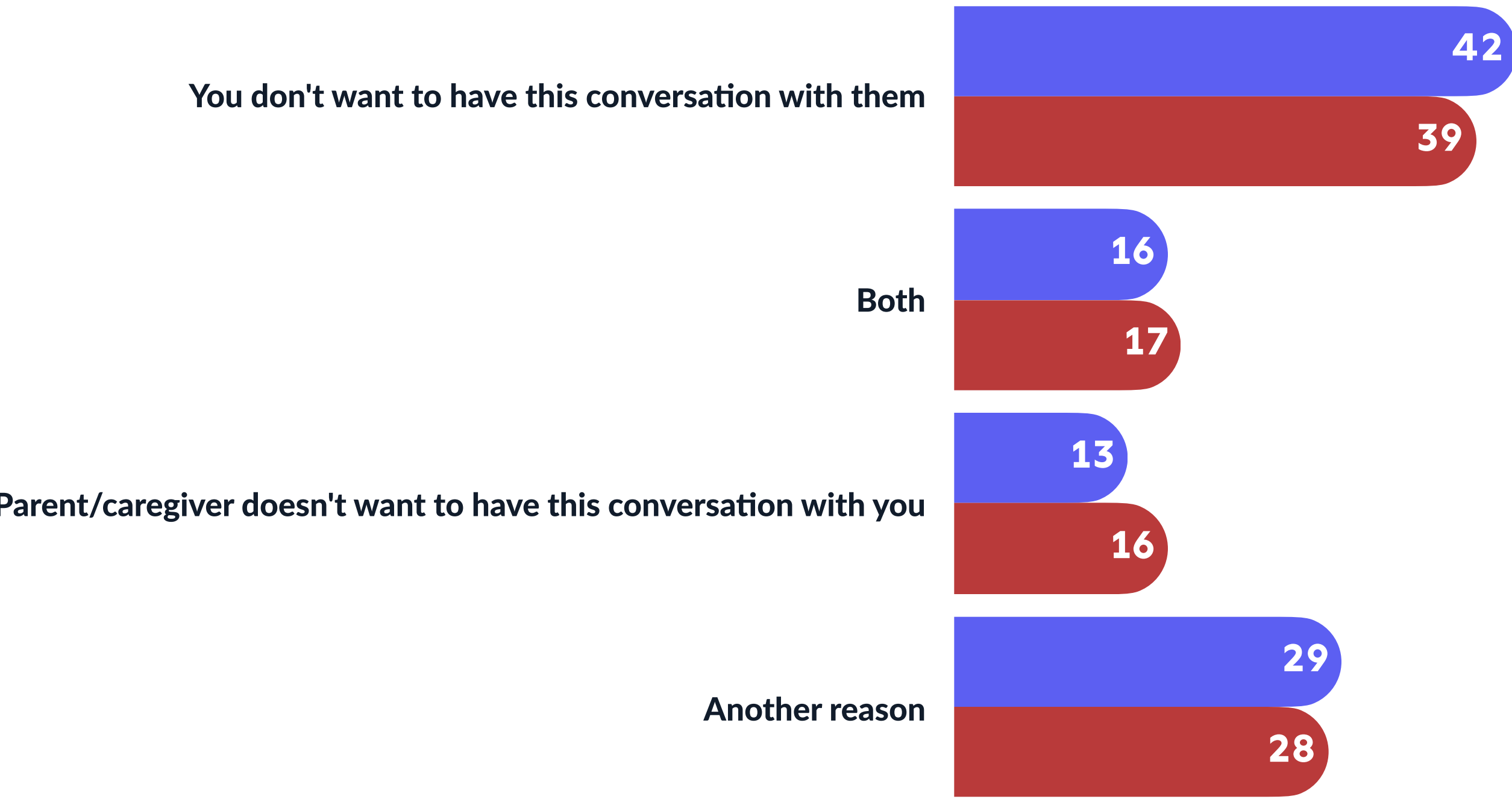
**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

# For more than 1 in 4 minors, there is a belief that caregiver’s reluctance to have the conversation is a reason they have not discussed sexting or grooming

MINORS: REASONS FOR NOT YET HAVING HAD THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATIONS (AMONG MINORS WHO HAVEN'T DISCUSSED THE FOLLOWING)

*What do you think is the main reason you have not discussed this?*

- Sexting/sharing of nude photos/videos of themselves
- Online sexual predators/online grooming



	Only Caregiver doesn't want to / TOTAL Caregiver doesn't want to	
	Sexting/ sharing	Online grooming
Girls	13 / 27	14 / 28
Boys	13 / 30	18 / 36
13-14	17 / 36	24 / 40*
15-17	11 / 24	12 / 29
LGBTQ+	20 / 37*	32 / 51*
Non-LGBTQ+	11 / 27	11 / 28
White	19 / 31	16 / 32
PoC	9 / 28	17 / 35
Urban	12 / 35	13 / 36
Suburban	18 / 31	21 / 33
Rural	9 / 22*	13 / 30*

\*BASE SIZE <100



**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

# Friends and online-only friends appear to be nearly as influential as family members on many of these topics

MINORS: DISCUSSION ENVIRONMENTS

*Have you ever discussed the following topics...*

	Online grooming	Sexting/sharing	Re-sharing	Bullying online	Chatting with strangers online	Safe sex	Pornography
With an adult family member or other trusted adult	43	39	36	46	50	42	37
In a classroom setting at school	29	23	25	44	34	35	20
With your friends	31	31	29	38	35	27	33
With people you know online only	9	8	8	11	12	6	8
<b>NET Friend/Online only</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>36</b>
None of the above	27	32	33	18	19	27	32

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# Parents are the people minors feel most comfortable discussing any of these topics with

MINORS: TOPIC SUPPORT

*Who would you feel comfortable turning to for support on the topic?*

	Sexting/sharing	Re-sharing	Chatting with strangers online	Bullying online	Online grooming	Safe sex	Pornography
A parent or guardian	49	49	57	58	55	52	49
A friend	30	29	35	37	30	28	30
A trusted adult, like an uncle, aunt, or family friend	24	24	32	31	27	24	22
A teacher, guidance counselor, or someone at school	14	18	22	32	22	19	15
A sibling	13	12	19	21	13	13	13
A police officer	8	9	10	13	16	5	7
Someone else	3	2	3	5	1	2	3
No one	18	19	11	11	15	15	18

**DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

# Minors: Topic support cheat sheet (younger teens are especially likely to say they are most comfortable discussing sexting with their parents)

MINORS: TOPIC SUPPORT

Showing % discussed sexting/sharing	Girls		Boys		Gender/sexual identity		Race		USR		
	13-14	15-17	13-14*	15-17	LGBTQ+	Non-LGBTQ+	White	PoC	Urban	Suburban	Rural
A parent or guardian	53	52	42	48	33	54	55	42	45	48	58
A friend	22	32	28	34	32	31	29	31	34	28	30
A trusted adult, like an uncle, aunt, or family friend	21	26	31	21	16	27	22	26	24	24	25
A teacher, guidance counselor, or someone at school	18	13	17	11	15	14	14	14	17	11	15
A sibling	11	15	15	12	13	14	14	12	13	11	17
A police officer	10	5	9	8	9	8	9	7	9	7	8
Someone else	3	5	1	3	9	2	3	3	3	2	5
No one	22	15	21	17	25	15	14	22	18	24	10

\*BASE SIZE <100

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

# Above all, minors believe loyalty is what makes someone a real friend; being trustworthy, caring, and accepting/understanding are also key

MINORS: REAL FRIEND (OPEN-END)

What makes someone a real friend?  
Among all minors



23% said cares / listens / accepts

Showing responses 5% and above

# APPENDIX

# Minors: Platform usage cheat sheet

## MINORS: PLATFORM USAGE

% Use daily	Girls		Boys		Gender/sexual identity		Race		USR		
	13-14	15-17	13-14*	15-17	LGBTQ+	Non-LGBTQ+	White	PoC	Urban	Suburban	Rural
YouTube	61	62	70	76	61	70	67	68	74	62	69
TikTok	58	56	51	58	59	56	53	60	59	56	57
Instagram	47	57	35	63	46	52	48	55	53	50	53
Snapchat	43	47	29	53	40	46	46	44	41	41	55
Facebook	40	37	32	29	21	37	42	25	36	27	41
Twitter	23	18	22	31	19	25	25	23	30	20	20
Native messaging app	43	61	35	53	54	49	48	52	48	52	52
Messenger	36	31	24	28	21	31	39	19	36	25	27
WhatsApp	18	18	25	22	11	22	24	16	28	16	16
Roblox	35	20	26	18	29	22	22	24	24	25	21
Discord	19	18	32	26	27	23	23	24	28	22	22
Call of Duty	20	10	23	27	10	22	20	18	24	18	16
Minecraft	19	9	22	23	15	18	19	17	20	15	17
Fortnite	11	9	32	22	10	21	20	16	23	15	15
Twitch	13	11	19	16	14	14	16	12	17	12	10

\*BASE SIZE <100

# Caregiver: Platform awareness cheat sheet

## CAREGIVERS: PLATFORM AWARENESS

% Total familiar	Gender		Caregiver Age		Child Age			Race		Education		USR		
	Moms	Dads	<40	40+	9-12	13-14	15-17	White	PoC	<Coll	Coll+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
YouTube	98	97	98	97	97	99	97	96	99	97	98	98	98	95
Facebook	97	95	97	96	98	97	94	98	94	97	96	96	96	96
Instagram	86	90	92	85	88	91	85	86	90	82	93	94	85	83
TikTok	83	84	88	80	85	88	79	82	85	79	88	90	80	81
Twitter	71	84	79	77	79	82	72	75	80	67	88	84	74	73
Snapchat	74	81	83	73	80	80	72	78	75	76	78	83	74	74
Messenger	96	93	96	93	95	96	92	94	94	95	94	95	95	93
Native messaging app	65	75	72	68	69	79	65	69	70	62	78	69	72	68
WhatsApp	56	74	74	59	69	72	56	60	71	52	78	79	57	58
Call of Duty	53	80	72	62	69	71	58	67	64	63	69	76	56	67
Minecraft	62	75	70	67	70	76	61	70	66	60	77	74	61	71
Fortnite	54	75	73	58	70	70	52	66	61	60	69	71	57	67
Roblox	55	69	72	55	72	69	45	63	60	56	68	70	54	64
Discord	33	59	55	39	48	58	34	46	44	34	58	59	40	37
Twitch	30	63	54	41	49	52	39	45	48	37	56	56	40	42

# Minors: Discussion environment cheat sheet

## MINORS: DISCUSSION ENVIRONMENT

Showing % discussed sexting	Girls		Boys		Gender/sexual identity		Race		USR		
	13-14	15-17	13-14*	15-17	LGBTQ+	Non-LGBTQ+	White	PoC	Urban	Suburban	Rural
With an adult family member or other trusted adult	43	41	40	34	32	41	42	36	38	34	47
In a classroom setting at school	22	21	18	29	29	22	25	21	20	23	28
With your friends	22	35	30	33	33	31	33	29	35	29	30
With people you know online only	5	7	5	13	11	8	8	8	11	6	5
None of the above	33	34	37	26	31	31	30	35	29	37	31

\*BASE SIZE <100





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