

# Media Update

7 June 2016

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## UNICEF

Press release

### **Eighty per cent of 18-year-olds believe young people are in danger of online sexual abuse – UNICEF/Ipsos global poll**

NEW YORK, 7 June 2016 – Eight out of ten 18-year-olds believe young people are in danger of being sexually abused or taken advantage of online, and more than five out of 10 think friends participate in risky behaviours while using the internet, a new UNICEF study shows.

Perils and Possibilities: Growing up online is based on an international opinion poll of more than 10,000 18-year-olds from 25 countries, revealing young people's perspectives on the risks they face growing up in an increasingly connected world.

“The internet and mobile phones have revolutionized young people's access to information, but the poll findings show just how real the risk of online abuse is for girls and boys,” said UNICEF's Associate Director of Child Protection, Cornelius Williams. “Globally, one in three internet users is a child. Today's findings provide important insights from young people themselves. UNICEF aims to amplify adolescents' voices to help address online violence, exploitation and abuse, and make sure that children can take full advantage of the benefits the internet and mobile phones offer.”

The new report finds that adolescents appear confident with their own ability to stay safe, with nearly 90 per cent of interviewees believing they can avoid online dangers. Approximately six out of 10 said meeting new people online is either somewhat or very important to them, but only 36 per cent strongly believe they can tell when people are lying about who they are online.



More than two-thirds of girls, 67 per cent strongly agree they would be worried if they received sexual comments or requests over the internet, this compares to 47 per cent of boys. When online threats do occur, more adolescents turn to friends than parents or teachers, but less than half strongly agree they know how to help a friend facing an online risk.

Other findings from Perils and Possibilities: Growing up online include;

- Two-thirds of 18-year-olds in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean believe children and adolescents are in danger of being sexually abused or taken advantage of online. This compares to 33 per cent polled in the Middle East and North Africa.
- Two-thirds of interviewees in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean either believe strongly, or somewhat, that friends put themselves at risk online, compared to 33 per cent in the United States and United Kingdom.
- Eighteen-year-olds in the United States and United Kingdom are most confident they can avoid online dangers with 94 per cent strongly or somewhat agreeing they can protect themselves on social media. In the Middle East and North Africa only 41 per cent strongly agree and an additional 37 per cent agree somewhat.
- Adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa appear to value meeting new people online most, with 79 per cent saying it is either very or somewhat important. In the United States and United Kingdom 63 per cent say it is not very, or not at all important to meet new people online.
- In Central European countries, 63 per cent of interviewees strongly agree they would tell a friend if they felt threatened online, compared to 46 per cent who would tell their parent. Only 9 per cent would tell a teacher.

To engage children and adolescents in ending violence online, UNICEF is launching #ReplyforAll, which is part of its global End Violence Against Children initiative. #ReplyforAll puts adolescents' front and centre as messengers and advocates to keep themselves safe online. Children and adolescents will be asked to give their advice on the best ways to respond to online violence or risks and to raise awareness among friends through social



media. This work has been supported by the WePROTECT Global Alliance, which is dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children online through national and global action.

UNICEF, together with the WePROTECT Global Alliance, is calling on national governments to establish coordinated responses between criminal justice systems including law enforcement, and child welfare, education, health and the Information Communication Technology (ICT) sectors, as well as civil society, to better protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation.

“When young people, governments, families, the ICT sector and communities work together, we are more likely to find the best ways to respond to online sexual abuse and exploitation, and send a strong message that confronting and ending violence against children online – indeed anywhere – is all of our business,” said Williams.

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[Download broadcast quality photos and video.](#)

[Perils and Possibilities: Growing up online.](#)

Learn more about the #ReplyforAll campaign.

### **About the WePROTECT Global Alliance**

The WePROTECT Global Alliance is dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children online through national and global action. Its vision is to identify and safeguard more victims, apprehend more perpetrators and create an internet free from this crime. The WeProtect Global Alliance is comprised of governments, companies and civil society organizations signed up to the commitments made at the WePROTECT Children Online summits in London (2014) and Abu Dhabi (2015) and the members of the Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online.

## About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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