Behind the Screens:

Safety in Digital Spaces for Children aged 10–17 in Jordan

2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rise of the internet has transformed how young people access information, entertainment, and education. Social media platforms have evolved into indispensable components of daily life, offering benefits, and shaping both individual and collective identities. The surge in online activity during the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this change. However, alongside these innovations lies a darker reality. This digital evolution brings inherent risks such as exploitation, harassment, bullying, and heightened stress levels. Children, in particular, are vulnerable to peer bullying, hate speech, and online harassment, which can have serious negative effects on their well-being and mental health.

The internet functions as a double-edged sword, helping fulfill needs and goals while also enabling the perpetuation of crimes, particularly among children, who have easy access to various websites. Electronic devices like tablets, smartphones, and laptops have become abundant, often replacing traditional toys and activities. This shift extends into schools and classrooms, where digital platforms serve as alternative means for peer communication, often without consideration of the risks involved in navigating the virtual world. Children, especially those lacking digital awareness and digital literacy, may inadvertently expose themselves to harm by engaging captivating websites, sharing personal information and facing potential threats, violations and dangers.

Recognizing the significance of children's virtual experiences and the associated risks, Save the Children Jordan conducted a mixed-method study targeting children aged 10-17 years and their parents. The study aimed to understand children's online experiences, the risks they encounter, and the support available to them from both the children's and parents' perspectives. The findings are expected to inform the development of relevant programs and advocacy efforts.

The study reveales a high level of internet access among children, with 76.7% reporting access through one or more devices, with no significant gender differences. The highest daily usage, at 86.5%, was observed among children aged 16-17 years.

Most parents reported raising their children's awareness about online safety or ensure their child is in the same room while browsing the internet. However, only a small percentage of parents (9%) use parental control applications, and 7.8% mentioned blocking websites. Interestingly, 57.4% of parents said their children assist them with using the internet, which may explain the low usage of parental control applications.

The study also uncovered a gap between parents' perceptions of digital violence and children's actual experiences. While 15.8% of children reported being exposed to some form of digital violence or abuse, only 3.9% of parents believed that their children were affected by such incidents. Cyberbullying was the most reported form of digital violence from both parents' and children's perspectives.

Regarding awareness of relevant organizations and reporting mechanisms, parents were asked about their knowledge of entities dedicated to protecting children from online risks. The majority were aware of the Cybercrime Department (73.9%), followed by the Family and Juvenile Protection Department (68.8%). When children were asked if they knew how to report inappropriate content online, responses were evenly split, with 52.5% stating they did not know how to file a report.

Among children who experienced online abuse, 69% reported taking action to address the issue, while 31% chose not to act. The most common response was to inform their mother (26%), followed by their father (16.9%). Only 8.7% reported turning to the police for help.

The study found that cyberbullying perpetrators are often individuals known to the children, such as friends, schoolmates, and even relatives. However, the qualitative findings revealed that sexual harassment frequently came from strangers, sometimes disguised as marriage proposals. Additionally, some children mentioned chat rooms in online games like Roblox and Fortnite as spaces where digital violence occurs, including verbal bullying and sexual harassment.

The study identified the platforms most commonly used by children, with YouTube leading at 22.6%, followed by Instagram, Facebook, educational platforms, and search engines, each garnering a 12% share. Younger children aged 10-12 reported the highest use of YouTube (32.6%), while those aged 16-17 showed a greater percentage for Instagram (17.4%) compared to other age groups.

Parents provided several recommendations to enhance internet safety for their children. The most favored approach, favored by 35.6% of parents was the use of strict measures such as cutting off internet access or temporarily confiscating the phones, reflecting a preference for immediate intervention to mitigate risks. Another widely supported strategy chosen by 23.5% of parents, involved proactively blocking inappropriate or dangerous websites, highlighting the importance of preventive measures to limit exposure to harmful content. Additionally, 15.2% of parents advocated for creating a more controlled online environment by using trusted apps or implementing parental control program.

Adolescents, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of engaging their peers in promoting online safety. They suggested initiatives such as peer to peer awareness campaigns, animated films illustrating online risks, collaborations with influencers and content creators, school-based activities like plays and role-playing, training peer educators to offer guidance, and promoting helpline numbers for support.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study aims to amplify the voices of adolescent girls and boys, aged 10-17, hailing from both the local community and refugees population in Jordan. The primary objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the online risks they encounter, examining the potential impact on their well-being, development, agency, and sense of safety.

Additionally, the study aims to explore strategies for safely navigating cyberspaces and to identify opportunities for extended support networks for and with adolescents, fostering adolescent activism.

The study provided a secure platform for adolescent girls and boys to openly discuss their internet experiences and how these experiences shape their lives, well-being, and agency. This involved scrutinizing trends in protective and risk factors, such as online abuse, harassment, and negative peer pressure. Furthermore, the study examined perceptions of adolescents and their caregivers regarding online experiences. It also delved into thefactors influencing adolescents' behavior both online and offline examining whether they refrain from certain actions or expressions due to these risks and pressures, and identifying instances where they feel compelled to act against their preferences.

An integral part of the research is to understand the support structures available for adolescents at risk of abuse, exploitation, harassment, or mental health concerns. It also examined the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of caregivers in safeguarding their children in the online realm.

The research endeavors to chart pathways for action in promoting online safety and enhancing well-being for adolescents, either independently or with support from their families, communities, duty bearers, or the international community. The findings will culminate in programmatic and advocacy recommendations tailored for duty bearers and civil actors, based on the insights derived from the research.

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a mixed method approach to gather and analyze data, beginning with a review of existing literature.

Qualitative Research:

For qualitative research, the study conducted 16 interactive workshops with children aged 10–17 and held 8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with caregivers, including mothers, fathers, legal guardians, or alternative caregivers responsible for childcare. Additionally, two interviews were conducted with experts in cybercrime law. The study focused on communities in the cities of Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, and Zarqa.

Workshops

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

1. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

Eight (8) FGDs were conducted with caregivers (mothers, fathers, legal guardians, or responsible alternative caregivers for children), without separating them by gender (except in Irbid city). They were distributed as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of the FGDs Sample by Governorates

Nationality	Number of Participants	Number of Sessions	Location
Jordanian (6)	19	2	**Irbid**
Syrian (3)	19	2	**Zarqa**
In every Session	19	2	**Mafraq**
Jordanian (16) Syrian (8)	24	2	**Amman**

2. Workshops:

The interactive workshops with children aimed to address their privacy concerns within the legal framework of electronic protection. A total of 173 participants took part in these workshops, which were divided by gender into eight workshops for males and eight for females. The workshops also considered diversity in location, age groups (10–13 and 14–17 years), nationality (Syrians and Jordanians), and educational backgrounds (government and private schools, including both national and international programs). The distribution of participants across the four governorates is detailed in Table 1.

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample of Interactive Workshops by Governorates

Nationality	Number of Participants	Targeted Age Group	Number of Workshops	Location
Jordanian	32 **Participants**	Two workshops for males / 10–13 years old One workshop for females / 14–17 years old	3	Irbid
Jordanian and Syrian	34 **Participants** 25 **Syrian** 9 **Jordanians**	Two workshops for Syrian refugee children (one for males and the other for females) / 14–17 One workshop for Jordanian children (females) / 10–13	3	Zarqa
Syrians from Zaatari Camp	(20) **Participants**	One workshop for males / 14–17 One workshop for females / 10–13	2	Mafraq
Syrian and Jordanian	87 **Participants** 67 **Jordanians** 20 **Syrian**	4 workshops for males (two workshops for ages 14–17, and two workshops for ages 10–13) 4 workshops for females (two workshops for ages 14–17, and two workshops for ages 10–13)	8	Amman

Quantitative Research:

The quantitative survey involved interviews conducted with two distinct groups: Children and Parents/Caregivers, across four governorates (Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, and Mafraq).

A total of 1,510 children (220 of which were refugees) and 750 caregivers/parents (97 of which were refugees), who serve as legal guardians or foster-carers for girls and boys, participated.

1510 Children
Participated in the survey

Each governorate was treated as a separate stratum, and a probability-based Stratified Random Sample approach was employed.

760 Caregivers
Participated in the survey

The distribution of the two samples, categorized by gender, age, rural, and urban characteristics, followed the known population distribution by the Department of Statistics (DOS) at the close of 2021. Anticipating an 80% response rate, additional interviews were included to compensate for potential non-communication or refusal based on findings from previous studies.

The results, visually represented in charts and detailed in this report, maintain a 95% confidence level, and constitutes a margin of error is 2.5% for children and 3.6% for caregivers.

Fig. 1 Survey Sample Demographics, Children

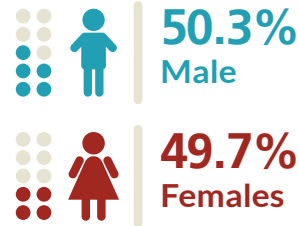## Geographic Distribution
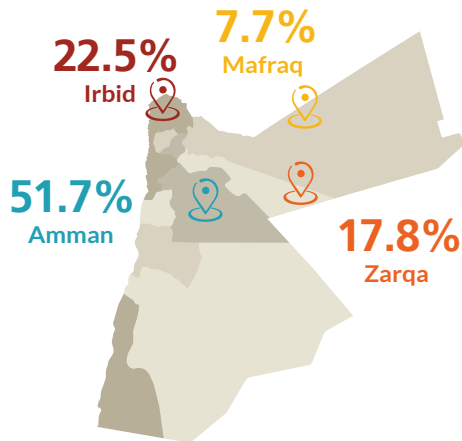
7.7% Mafraq

22.5% Irbid

51.7% Amman

17.8% Zarqa

Gender Distribution

50.3% Male

49.7% Females

Nationality Distribution

15% Refugees

0% Za'tari Camp

1% Other

84% Host Community

Jordanian — **84.4%**

Syrian — **11.6%**

Other — **4%**

Education Distribution

80.6%

5.2% — I do not go to school

10.4% — Private School

9.1% — UNRWA

Age Distribution

10-11 Years — **26.2%**

12-14 Years — **37.4%**

15-17 Years — **36.4%**

Urban / Rural Distribution

Urban **93.8%**

Rural **6.2%**
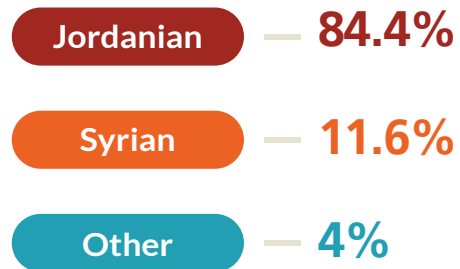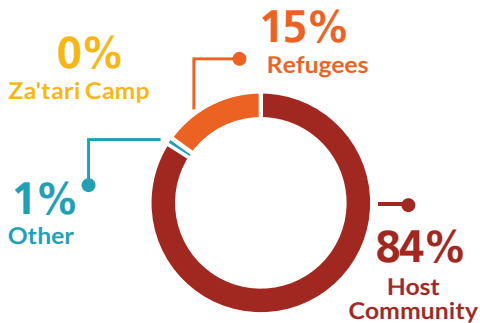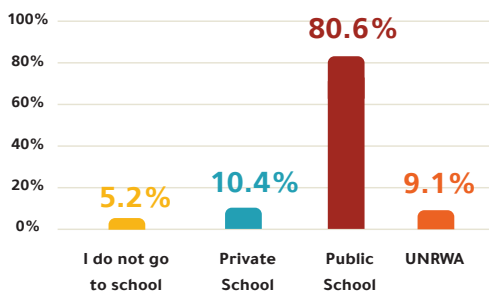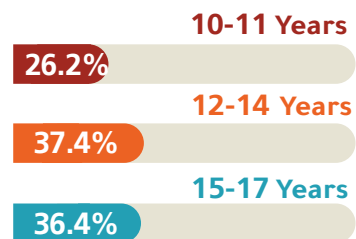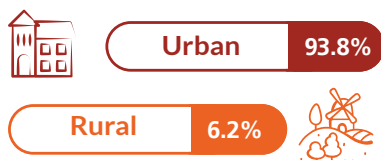
Disabilities Distribution

2% Children with Disabilities

98% Children without Disabilities
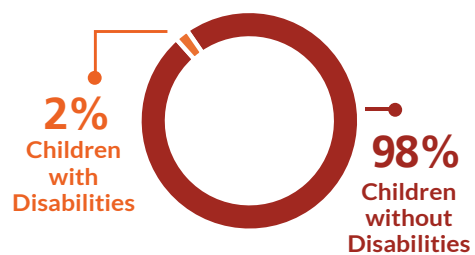
Fig. 2 Survey Sample Demographics, Caregivers

Geographic Distribution
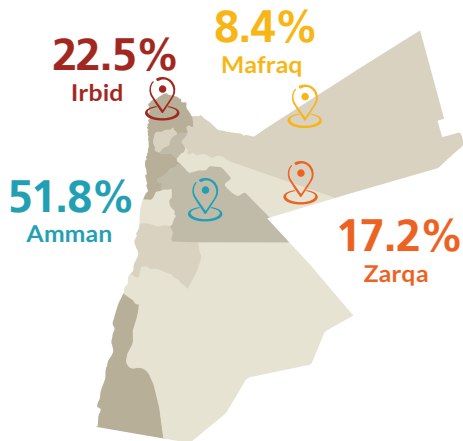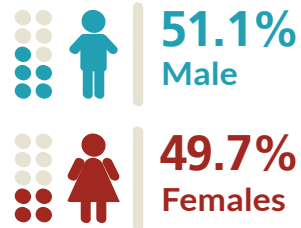
8.4% Mafraq

22.5% Irbid

51.8% Amman

17.2% Zarqa

Gender Distribution

51.1% Male

49.7% Females

Nationality Distribution

0.7% Za'tari Camp

12.8% Refugees

0.7% Other

85.9% Host Community

Jordanian — 86.4%

Syrian — 10.5%

Other — 3.2%

Education Distribution

- Does not read or write: 2.2%
- Primary School: 31%
- Secondary School: 43.5%
- High school: 11.1%
- BA: 11.3%
- Masters or higher: 0.9%

Age Distribution

- 10-11 Years: 31%
- 12-14 Years: 38%
- 15-17 Years: 31%

Urban / Rural Distribution

- Urban: 93.7%
- Rural: 6.3%
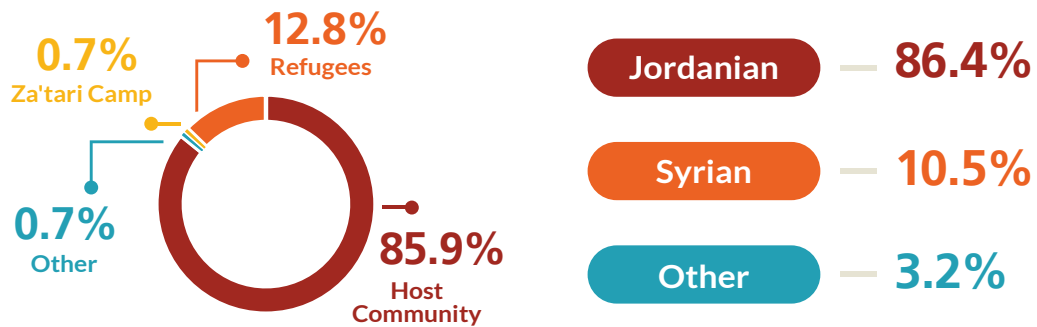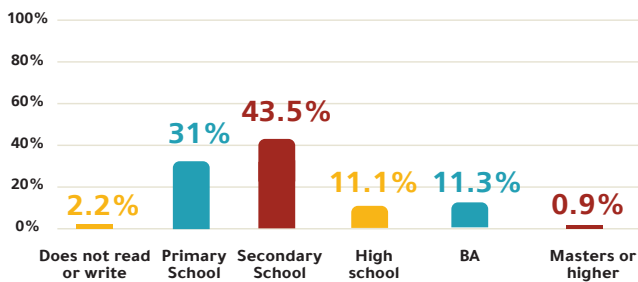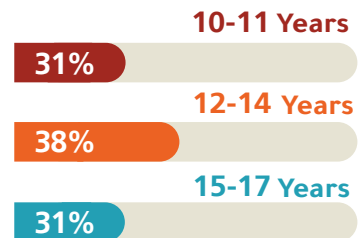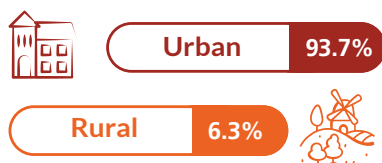
Social Status Distribution

- Married: 93.9%
- Single: 0.7%
- Divorced: 2.3%
- Widowed: 2.6%
- Other: 1%
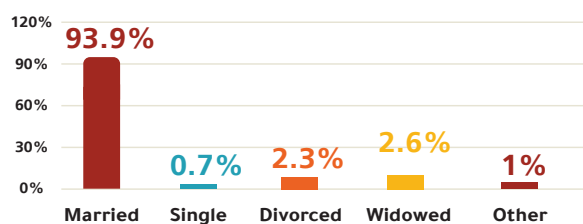
KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Children's Access to the Internet

Children across different age groups exhibit varying patterns of internet access, the majority reporting access, with 56.3% utilizing their own devices while others rely on family members' devices. Gender dynamics significantly shape this access, evident in variations in device ownership and internet accessibility between males and females. Notably, according to children a slightly higher percentage of males (61.4%) reported owning a personal phone connected to the internet compared to females (50.9%), reflecting societal norms and perceptions about gender roles.

Caregivers expressed concerns about females' unrestricted access to phones, citing societal expectations and potential reputational risks. This sentiment was echoed in FGDs, highlighting the perceived differences in societal roles between males and females.

> I have four daughters aged 12 to 19 and a six-year-old son. I bought my son a phone and a tablet twice because he broke them; he is my only son. However, I do not give any of my daughters a phone, not even when they turn eighteen. If I decide to give one, it must be monitored closely.
> FGD Participant, Zarqa

> I am annoyed by constant monitoring of my phone and the requirement to stay in the room where my mom is, fearing harassment from boys. However, I quickly calm down because there is no other solution.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Al Zarqa

> «In our society, males are not like females; Therefore, caution is needed when it comes to their internet access and usage .
> FGD Participant, Mafraq

Control exerted by caregivers notably impacts internet access, particularly among children aged 10-13 and females across different age groups, although exceptions exist in certain areas of Amman where females have more autonomy online.

Noteworthy is the high percentage of children aged 16-17 with personal device access, reaching 79%, with males in this age group reporting the highest percentage (87%) compared to females (70.9%), highlighting gender and age disparities in internet accessibility as illustrated in Graph 1.

> I use my mother›s phone because she refuses to let me use a phone on my own before I turn 18.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Al Zarqa
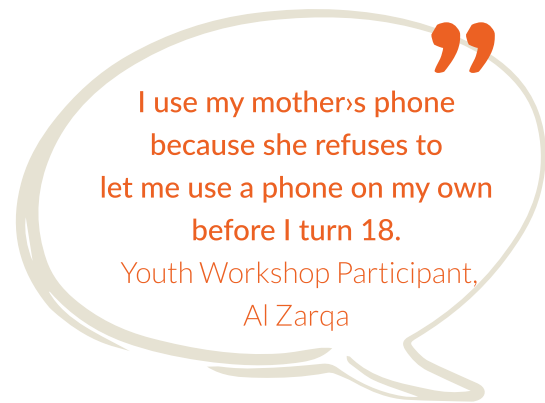
Graph 1: Access to Personal Mobile Phones, Children by age and gender.

	Male			Female		
	10-12 Years	13-15 Years	16-17 Years	10-12 Years	13-15 Years	16-17 Years
Yes	44.1%	62.1%	87.0%	37.9%	51.6%	70.9%
No	55.9%	37.9%	3.0%	62.1%	48.4%	29.1%
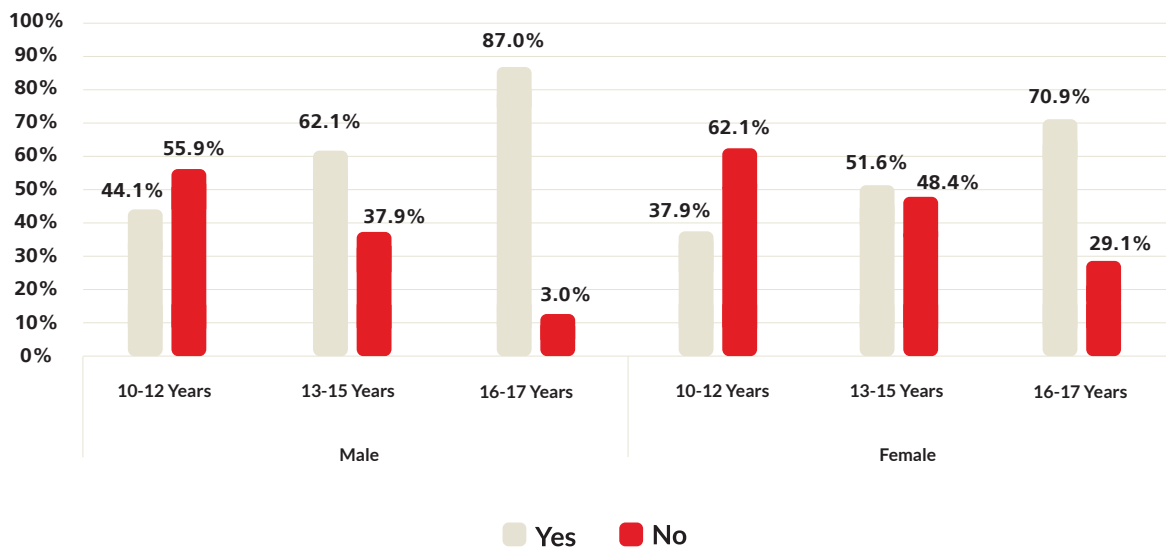
During FGDs, children reported early introduction to the internet, although exceptions were noted among some females in Zarqa and the Zaatari camp. The age of internet initiation among children varies significantly, influenced by cultural, societal, and individual factors.

Findings indicated that children with a lower socioeconomic status tended to start using the internet at a later age due to limited access to electronic devices and phones. Conversely, children from a higher socioeconomic status, often began using the internet at a very young age, sometimes even before starting school, owing to their affluent financial circumstances.

Both children and caregivers acknowledged the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on childrens' internet usage patterns, with an observed increase driven by the transition to online education. Half of the children expressed satisfaction with the heightened internet usage post-pandemic, noting that some did not possess personal devices before the pandemic.

3.1.1 Internet Habits

When delving into the internet habits of children, it was found that across all age groups, the majority reported using the internet daily.

76.7% children
Reported daily internet use

Specifically, 76.7% of children reported daily internet use, with an additional 18.8% indicating usage several times a week. Furthermore, the qualitative research findings revealed that the extent of internet usage is influenced by factors such as school schedules, holidays, and the educational program enrolled in.

Children attending schools with international programs were found to spend more time online compared to their counterparts in schools with national programs. This disparity is attributed to the curriculum differences, as students in international programs often follow British and American curricula, which are predominantly accessible online. Unlike traditional textbooks, their study materials are predominantly digital, allowing for unrestricted access to educational resources online.

Graph 2: Frequency of Internet Use (in days), Children
By age
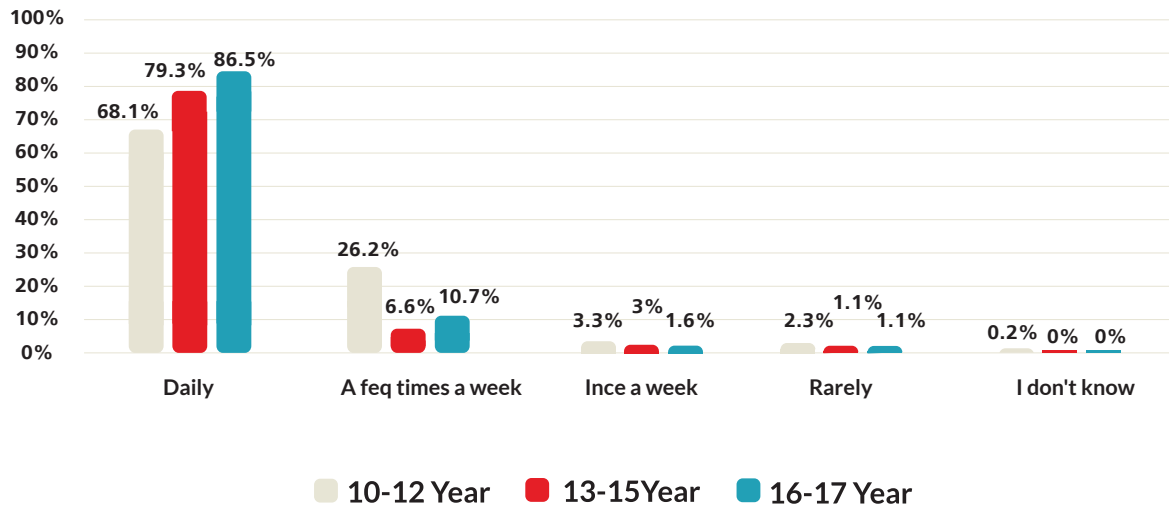
The majority of children reported using the internet for 1-3 hours per day (61.5%). Children aged 10-12 and those in the low socioeconomic bracket reported that they spend less hours on the internet compared with older age groups and those from higher socioeconomic bracket.

Graph 3: Frequency of Internet Use (in hours), Children
By age
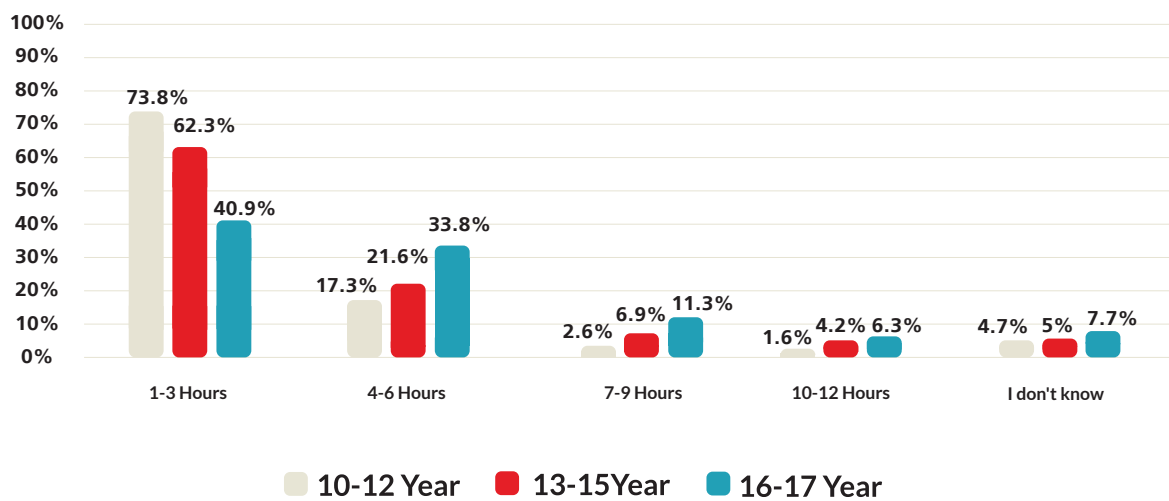
Graph 4: Frequency of Internet Use (in hours), Children
By socioeconomic status
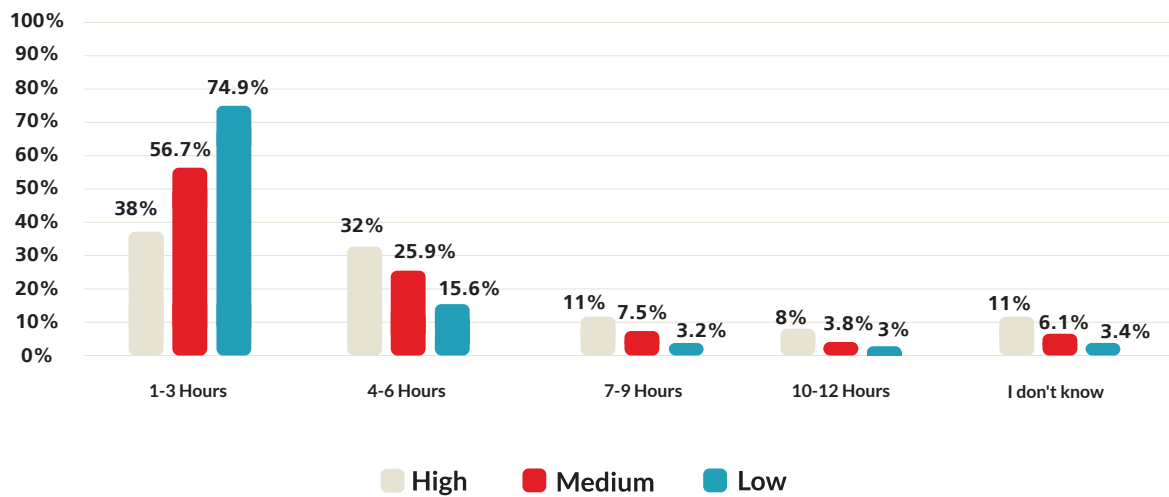
From the caregiver perspective on the other hand, average internet usage time of their children was estimated at 2.6 hours, while children provided a slightly lower estimate of 1.5 hours, this data may suggest that children could be underestimating the time spent online, possibly because they lose track of time while engaged in online activities. External observers might perceive the actual time spent online to be more than what children report.

4.2 Internet Supervision

Findings from quantitative survey indicated that the majority of children reported having permission to access the internet, with 80.4% indicating so, and no notable difference observed between genders.

Graph 5: Internet Permission, Children
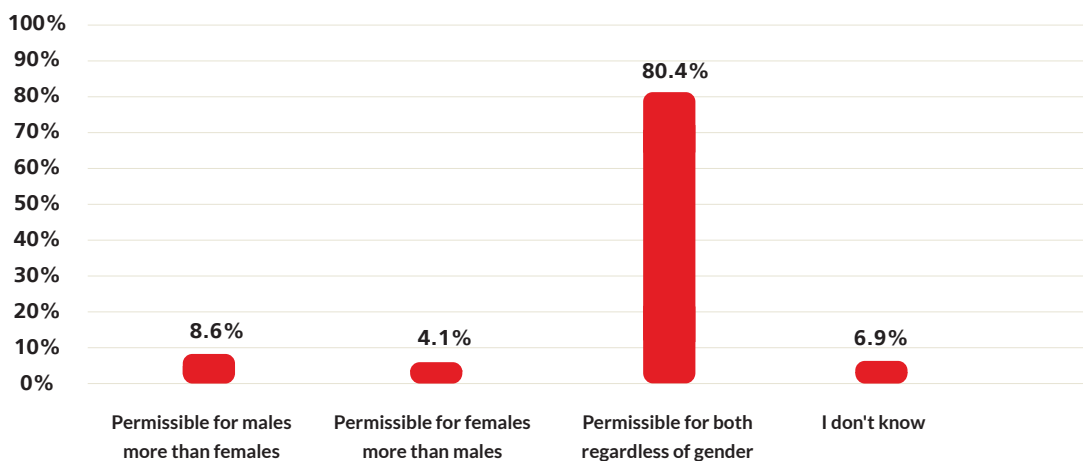
Despite granting permission for their children to access the internet, parents overwhelmingly expressed a preference for supervising their children's online activities directly, with 69.7% sharing this sentiment. Delving deeper into the dynamics of supervision, insights revealed differences in parental approaches, particularly concerning younger children. It was observed that more parents reported a preference for direct supervision when their children were younger (10-11 years old), with 75% allowing internet usage only under direct supervision.

> I give my 12-year-old son a phone for internet access, but only for one hour, and he has to sit where I can see him.
> FGD Participant, Irbid

> I mostly use the Internet with my mom; she follows Sheikh Othman Khamees and Maher Al-Muaiqly, and also the journalist Saleh from Gaza who reports events.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

However, as children grew older, particularly between ages 15-17, the percentage decreased to 66%, indicating a gradual shift towards granting more autonomy.

Additionally, gender disparities were observed in parental attitudes towards supervision, particularly among female children aged 14-17, with half expressing apprehensions regarding privacy in their internet usage. This concern stemmed from societal norms and parental restrictions implemented to safeguard their safety. However, it's worth noting that in Western Amman, females are afforded more freedom to access the internet compared to other areas, reflecting regional variations in parental attitudes and cultural norms.

> We monitor younger kids, but when my son turns sixteen, he does not allow us near his phone.
> FGD Participant, Amman

> I link my daughter›s phone to my email to control what she watches, while my teenage son should have privacy as he is a young man, so I don›t monitor him.
> FGD Participant, Mafraq

Graph 6: Internet Supervision, Parents by child age

Category	10-11 Year	12-14 Year	15-17 Year
Independently, without direct supervision	6.8%	7.4%	12.5%
Independently, with direct supervision	18.1%	21%	21.6%
Under direct supervision	74.8%	71.6%	65.6%
Refused to answer	0.3%	0%	0.3%
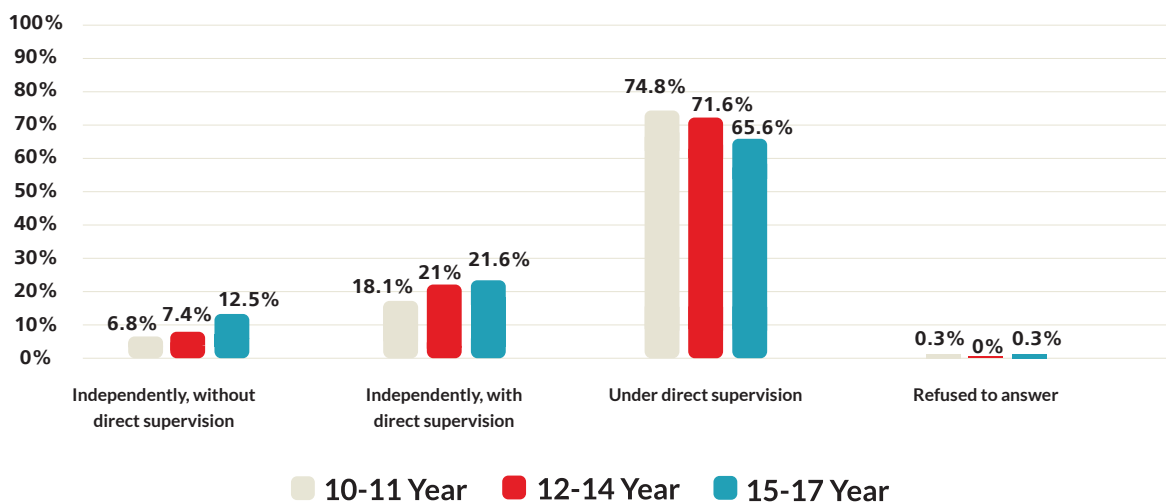
4.3 Online Harassment and Digital Safety

3.3.1 Digital Safety

When parents were surveyed about the extent of which they perceived their children's safety while using the internet, the responses appeared to be quite evenly distributed. The majority, at 31.4%, expressed a moderate level of confidence in their children's safety online. Additionally, 24.5% reported feeling that their children's safety was to a low extent. However, 23% felt that their children were not safe at all. Lastly, those who felt their children were safe to a high extent accounted for 21.1%, which was the smallest percentage but still relatively close to the others.

Gender breakdown revealed that male respondents were more likely (27.5%) to feel their children were safe to a high extent compared to females, where only 13.7% shared the same level of confidence. This suggests that mothers may be more attuned to potential risks than fathers.

Graph 7: Feeling Safe while Children use the Internet, Parents By gender
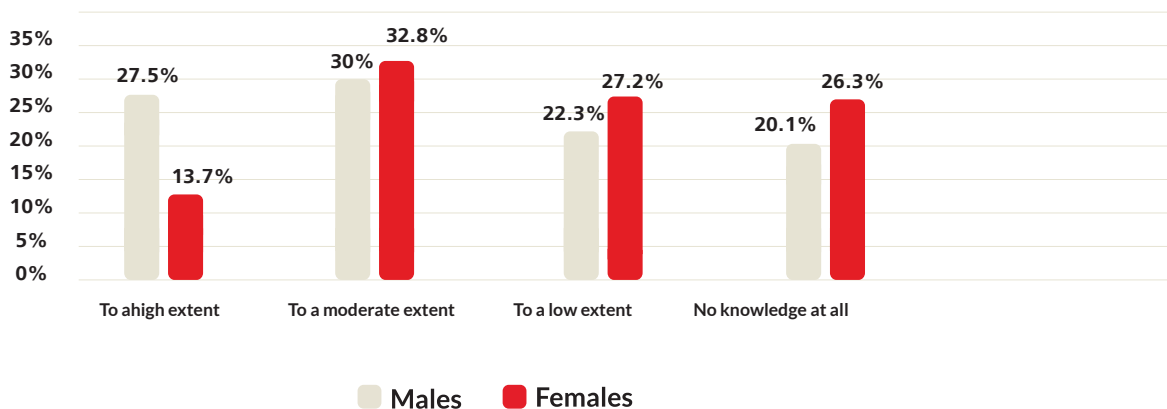
3.3.2 Online Violence

Overall, when both parents and children were asked about encounters with online harassment, bullying, defamation, and psychological pressure, a minority of children (15.8%) in both age groups (10-12 and 13-17) reported experiencing such incidents. Similarly, parents rarely reported their children facing these issues (3.9%), with a notable 21.1% expressing confidence in their children's online safety. However, the slight disparity in the data suggests that parents may not have a complete understanding of their children's online experiences. This is further emphasized by findings indicating that 7% of children reported parents not engaging in conversations about internet safety, and 9% of children using the internet independently without supervision. Such discrepancies may lead to parental uncertainty regarding their children's potential exposure to online risks.

When comparing parental perceptions of online harassment experienced by males and females aged 10-17, notable differences emerge. Parents identified bullying as the primary concern for males (18.1%), while sexual harassment was seen as the predominant issue for females (16.2%). However, both sexes shared concerns about the sharing of inappropriate pictures and videos. Despite these distinctions, the overall top-rated issues were quite similar for both genders, suggesting that parents generally recognize
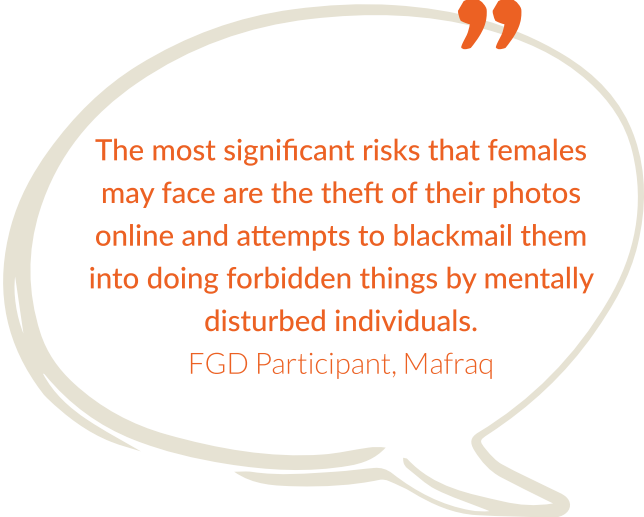
15.8% Children
who indicated that they experienced online violence

3.9% Parents
who indicated that their children experienced online violence

the common types of online harassment faced by young people, irrespective of gender. This awareness highlights the significant impact of online harassment on youths' daily lives and their engagement with the digital world, with identified risks including account theft, misuse of personal photos (particularly among girls), attempted extortion, exposure to inappropriate content, interacting with strangers during online gaming, and loss of privacy.

> The most significant risks that females may face are the theft of their photos online and attempts to blackmail them into doing forbidden things by mentally disturbed individuals.
> FGD Participant, Mafraq

3.3.3 Digital Violence Vulnerability

The vulnerability of children to online harassment is shaped by several key factors, including their awareness of online risks, internet usage patterns, and socioeconomic background.

Children aged 14-17, particularly those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with greater internet access, engaging extensively in digital activities such as online learning, social communication and media consumption demonstrate a heightened awareness of online risks, such as personal account theft and photo exploitation. Conversely, younger children and those from lower socioeconomic brackets may be less cognizant of certain risks, making them more susceptible to online harassment. Research conducted by Save the Children International across seven countries corroborates these findings, indicating that children from higher economic backgrounds were better equipped to utilize privacy settings and safeguard their digital safety, making them less prone to online harassment. However, excessive internet use can lead to digital addiction, exacerbating the vulnerabilities faced by children online.

Furthermore, there exists a significant gap in knowledge about cybercrime laws among both caregivers and children, potentially impeding their ability to address online threats effectively.

This is due to for the lack of comprehensive education and awareness programs on digital safety and legal rights to empower children and caregivers in safeguarding against online harassment and exploitation.

Table 3: Types of Problems Children face Online

Problems	Count	Percentage%
Bullying	47	36.7%
Online account hacking	24	18.5%
Extortion	16	12.3%
Online harassment	8	6.1%
Impersonation or fake profiles	6	4.6%
Discrimination or exclusion by others	6	4.5%
Sharing inappropriate or unethical images or videos	6	4.4%
Fraud	5	3.8%
Other	4	3.5%
Defamation	3	2.4%
Being pressured to engage in activities against one's will	2	1.5%
Spreading false information/news/rumors	1	0.9%
Online pressure to engage in harmful activities	1	0.9%
Total	**129**	**100.0%**

Table 4: Types of Problems Children face Online, according to Parents.

Problems	Count	Percentage%
Bullying	12	24.1%
Blackmail	9	17.8%
Hacking accounts	7	13.4%
Fraud	5	9.3%
Online harassment	4	7.8%
Identity theft and fake profiles	4	7.6%
Discrimination and exclusion	3	6.2%
Other	2	4.2%
Spreading fake news/ rumors	2	4.0%
Defamation	2	4.0%
Pressure to do things	1	1.7%
Total	**50**	**100.0%**

3.3.4 Types of Online Harassment

Bullying consistently emerged as the most frequently selected issue for both parents and children. However hacking and extortion were the second and third most prevalent concern Among the children ,while parents most frequently selected hacking as the third most common problem, with blackmail coming in second.

Cyberbullying

1

Information Security Risks   **3**

2   Sexual Harassment

Social Risks   **5**

4   Content Risks
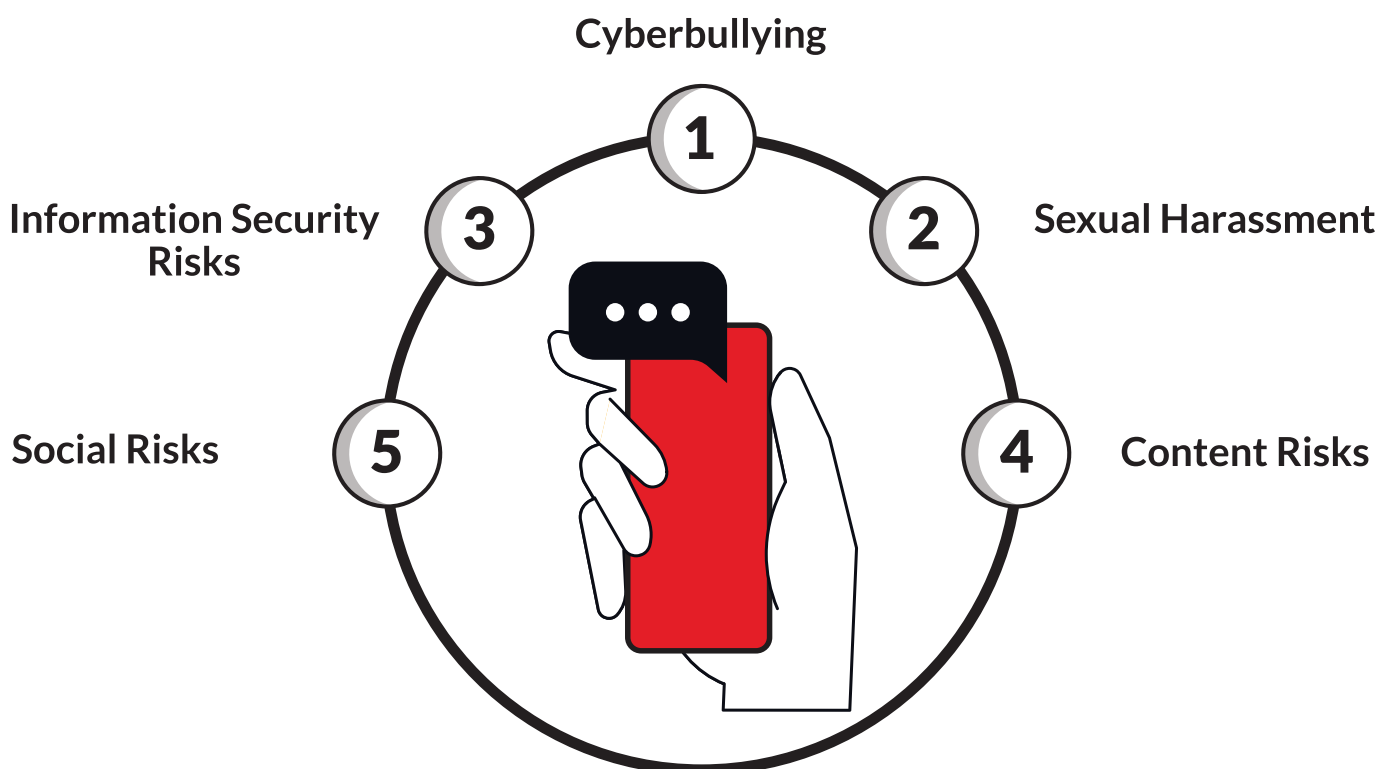
1. Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying emerges as a pervasive issue among children, involving the transmission of insulting, mocking, and threatening messages through popular social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. Both Syrian and Jordanian children, regardless of gender, are implicated in cyberbullying incidents, often employing memes as a means of online mockery against their peers. Disturbingly, the perpetrators of cyberbullying are frequently individuals known to the victims, including friends, schoolmates, and even relatives.

> I am bullied because of my skin color; they tell me I am dark, and it is beautiful to be white.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Female, Al Zarqa

Furthermore, children who engage in electronic gaming also encounter negative cyberbullying experiences, including exposure to offensive language, ridicule, and verbal assaults within the gaming community. These experiences contribute to a hostile online environment that can have detrimental effects on the mental and emotional well-being of children.

> When I play, if I win against the opponent, they insult and curse me with offensive words.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

2. Sexual Harassment:

During interactive youth workshops, it was revealed that almost half of the girls have encountered distressing situations involving the unauthorized dissemination of their photos. These incidents often involve threats to share additional pictures or requests for acquaintance, coupled with discussions on sexual topics. Additionally, some children girls have reported instances of sexual harassment, often under the guise of marriage proposals, despite their recognition that such propositions are improbable due to the young age of the harasser.

These incidents highlight the harrowing reality of electronic sexual harassment, where perpetrators employ various deceptive tactics to apply pressure on their victims. Some resort to social manipulation, disguising their advances under the pretext of marriage, while others leverage their technological skills to manipulate images, transforming them into explicit content. Additionally, perpetrators may illegally obtain personal information without the victim's consent and subsequently exploit it to issue specific demands or induce psychological distress.

> Many harassers justify their desire to get to know the opposite sex with an honorable intention. Once, a boy told my friend that he would tell his entire family he wanted to marry her, even though he is 16, and my friend is 14.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Female, Irbid

> I experienced sexual harassment from a 30-year-old guy who contacted me through Messenger. He told me details about marriage and childbirth, which caused me severe psychological distress. I informed my parents, and they reported the incident to the Cybercrime Unit. The case has not been resolved yet.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Female, Amman

3. Information Security Risks:
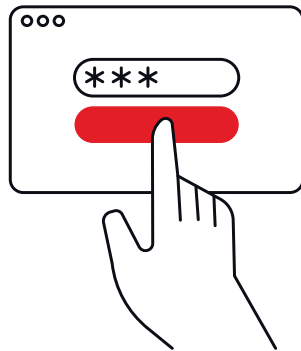
The majority of children participating in interactive workshops have faced various information security risks, ranging from privacy breaches to the compromise of personal data and account breaches. Female children from both Jordanian and Syrian backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to these risks, with account theft and the misuse of personal photos being prevalent concerns.

> My friend accessed my account, took my personal photos, and used them on a fake account to impersonate me.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Zaatari Camp

4. Content Risks:

Children face exposure to various types of inappropriate content online, including advertising, racist or discriminatory materials, and sites promoting unhealthy behaviors like self-harm. Participants highlighted instances where they encountered such content, expressing shock and discomfort, and often choosing to exit the platforms or skip the content altogether.
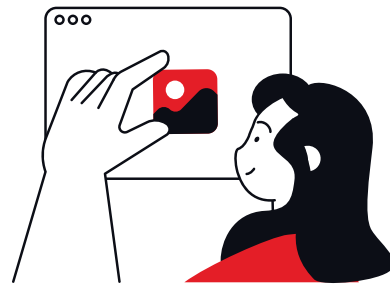
Certain applications and platforms present significant content-related violations and security risks for children. For younger children (aged 10-13), electronic games like Free Fire and Roblox pose risks, alongside YouTube with its inappropriate advertisements, and Facebook. Participants identified these platforms as sources of discomfort due to unsuitable content for their age.

> The most violating app is games like Roblox, and the inappropriate ads on YouTube are not suitable for my age.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Al Zarqa

On the other hand, older children (aged 14-17) face content violations and security risks primarily on Instagram, followed by Snapchat, PUBG, and Fortnite. These apps are cited for their problematic content, possibly stemming from the nature of the content and conversations shared on these platforms.

5. Social Risks:

Children face various risks related to their mental well-being and academic performance due to excessive internet use and exposure to hate speech online. Caregivers observed that children spending three hours or more online, particularly those aged 10-13, are more prone to feelings of isolation and loneliness compared to their peers with limited online activity.

This extended screen time also contributes to weakened relationships between parents and children, fostering a sense of alienation and distance within the family dynamic.

> Sometimes, due to my frequent watching of Korean content, I feel like I live there. When I wake up and return to reality, I feel discomfort. I really wish to live in Seoul or Busan.
> Girl, Irbid

Furthermore, hate speech targeting children based on their nationalities and genders is a concerning phenomenon. Syrian children, in particular, are subjected to incitement to violence and bullying on social networks, exacerbating their vulnerability and sense of insecurity.

3.3.5 Online Perpetrators

The majority of cyberbullying incidents are perpetrated by individuals known to the victims, such as friends, schoolmates, and relatives, indicating that abusers in cases of cyberbullying and online harassment are often individuals within the victims' social circles or acquaintances. However, it is crucial to recognize that online abuse can originate from various sources, including peers, strangers on social media platforms, online predators, or even individuals known to the victims in real life. Therefore, raising awareness about online risks and promoting safe online behaviors is paramount to safeguarding children from potential abusers and harmful online interactions. By educating children and caregivers about identifying and responding to online abuse, proactive measures can be taken to mitigate the risks associated with cyberbullying and online harassment.

Although there was not a direct question on the quantitative survey if cyber bullying is commented by someone the children know, interestingly 64.7% of children participated in focus groups stated that most cyberbullying comes from people they know, primarily friends and classmates, followed by relatives.

4.4 Addressing Online Harassment Issues

Among all the children who reported experiencing harassment from both age groups, averaging 7.9%, they were inquired about whether they took any measures to address this issue. The majority, comprising 69.3% answered in the affirmative, while a smaller fraction, 30.7%, indicated that they did not take any action.

When dealing with these issues, both children and parents frequently turned to family assistance as their primary solution. Notably, children most commonly sought support from their mothers (26.8%), followed by seeking help from their fathers (16.9%) as the second option.

> I told my mom and my teacher when my female schoolmate hacked my accounts, created a fake account in my name, and posted my pictures.
> Girl, Amman

Table 5: Actions taken to address their problems, Children

Action	Count	Percentage%
Other	29	27.3%
Asked for help from my mother	29	26.8%
Asked for help from my father	18	16.9%
Responded to the one who caused me trouble in the same way	15	13.9%
Asked for help from the police	5	5.0%
Asked for help from my teacher	3	2.8%
Asked for help from a male family member	3	2.7%
Asked for help from a female family member	2	1.8%
Asked for help from the school counselor	1	1.0%
Asked for help from a CSO	1	0.9%
Refused to answer	1	0.9%
Total	108	100.0%

In the younger age group (10–13 years), children typically seek assistance from their parents when encountering online risks, turning to teachers at school if the issue involves a peer. Conversely, the older age group (14–17 years) tends to involve one of their parents or handle the situation independently, occasionally seeking assistance from the cybercrime unit.

A notable gender difference was observed, with a higher percentage of females (83.3%) taking action to address online problems compared to males (60.3%). Females primarily turn to their mother, older sister, or female friend for advice when facing risks online, often avoiding involving male family members due to social norms. Some females choose to remain silent about the issues they encounter online due to societal pressures against reporting violations, especially instances of online harassment.

However, there were notable variations, particularly among females in West Amman.

> It is impossible for me to inform my husband about what happened to my daughter, her personal account being stolen and her pictures being posted.
> FGD Participant, Female, Amman

In these cases, females were more inclined to inform their fathers about violations, including instances of online harassment.

Moreover, among the children who reported encountering harassment, a majority (52.7%) felt comfortable discussing their online issues. However, a significant portion (30.9%) expressed discomfort in addressing such problems, although this discomfort was lower among females, with only 13.9% reporting similar feelings.

Graph 8: Comfort Discussing Problems Faced Online, Children

By gender

	Yes	Sametimes	No
Males	49.1%	20%	30.9%
Females	58.3%	27.8%	13.9%

■ Males ■ Females
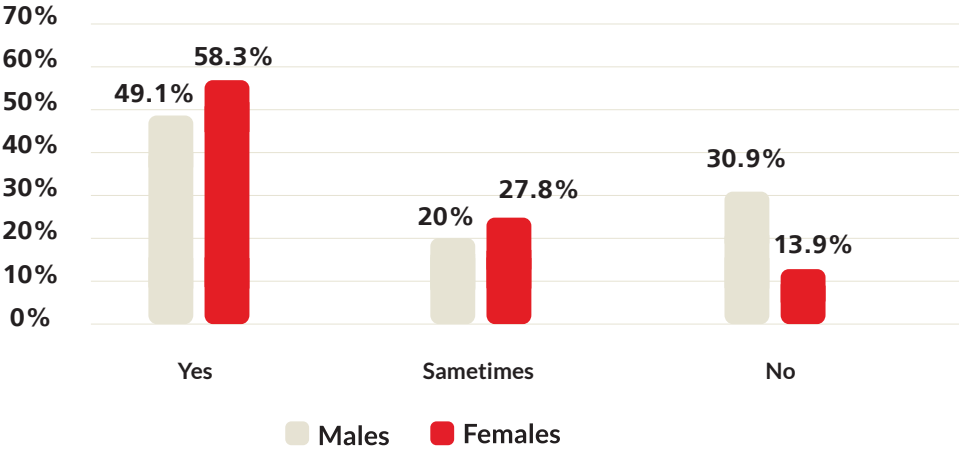
Among participants, there was a notable discrepancy in the comfort levels of discussing online issues between non-refugees and refugees. While 56.3% of non-refugees expressed comfort in discussing such matters, refugees reported a significantly lower comfort level at 30%. This disparity highlights a cultural and social dynamic influencing refugees' reluctance to address online problems openly, especially if the other party involved is of other nationalities. Encouraged by a prevailing cultural norm encapsulated in phrases like «Oh stranger, be wise,» many refugees opted for silence rather than seeking assistance. This silence was perceived as a protective measure, particularly given the vulnerabilities often associated with their refugee status. Some refugees expressed the belief that remaining silent when facing issues with Jordanians, whether online or in real life, was the most prudent course of action. Consequently, blocking the accounts of problematic individuals emerged as a common strategy among refugees, serving as a means to minimize further interactions and potential harm in the online sphere.

Graph 9: Comfort Discussing Problems Faced Online, Children By refugees
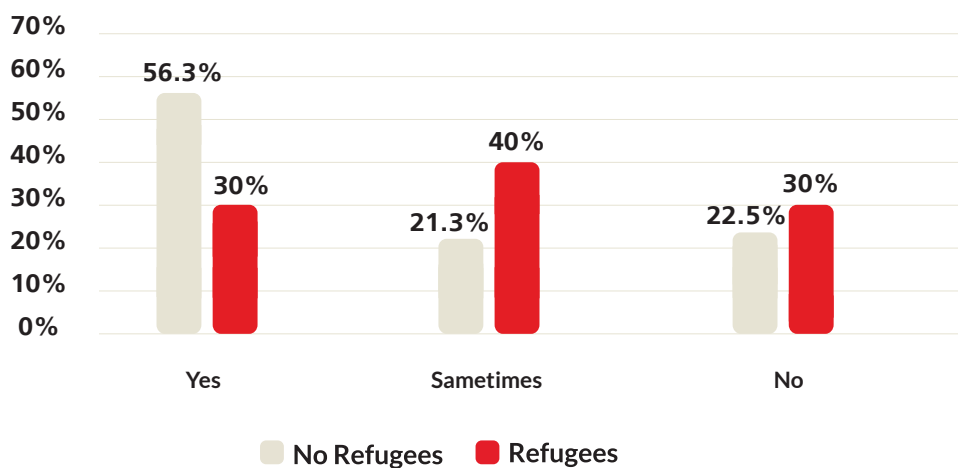
Additionally, when questioned about the outcomes of their efforts to tackle harassment, the majority reported success in resolving the problem (89.3%). However, a small percentage found their efforts unsuccessful, citing not getting their way or their rights. Despite these experiences, about 31.5% of children stated that online violence does not affect them, while 15.1% feel anxious about the problem, and 12.2% opt to close their social media accounts.

4.5 Internet Utilization

3.5.1 Internet as a Means of Learning

The study reveals that the reasons for internet usage among children primarily fall into two categories: entertainment (45.4%), such as playing online games, filling free time, and connecting with friends, and education (54.5%), including completing homework, seeking information, and accessing learning materials and platforms.

The qualitative findings reveal that children use the internet for entertainment purposes including watching movies, cartoons and following celebrities, playing online games, and communicating with friends online on various social media platforms. Particularly, the findings reveal a significant enthusiasm amongst most respondents (regardless of age group, gender, and nationality- both inside and outside refugee camps) in watching popular Japanese anime (dubbed cartoons), including series such as Detective Conan, Naruto, Attack on Titan, and others; some children reported spending more than five hours watching anime series daily. The findings reveal that these cartoons have played a significant role in subtly shaping their intellectual orientation towards the Japanese culture, to the extent that travelling to Japan has become a dream for some children.

> I watch Demon Slayer, Mirage, Hunter x Hunter, Inuyasha, and I hope to become a detective like Conan one day.
> Female Youth Workshop Participant, Al Za'atari Camp

> I love Japanese anime; we have become part of the Otaku army (enthusiasts of Japense anime) against Korean productions known as K-pop and the Army.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

> I want to study in Japan; there are entire restaurants designed like anime. Even in Jordan, in the Seventh Circle, there is an anime-themed resturant for One Piece.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

Entertainment Purpose (45.4%)		Educational/ Informative Purposes (54.5%)	
Entertainment and Games	23.8%	Homework	23.4%
Messaging Friends	14.6%	Education and awareness	11%
Making new friends	3.6%	Searching for information	9.4%
Video sharing	2.8%	Following the news	5.8%
Advertising products	0.6%	Exchanging of information	4.9%

The internet has emerged as a crucial information source for children, with 54.5% reporting its use for educational and informative purposes. In FGDs, children, particularly refugees, emphasized their reliance on the internet for studying and education. They expressed dissatisfaction with the educational standards in their schools, leading them to seek out online resources to bridge the gaps in their learning. Many refugees, both within and outside of camps, highlighted the abundance of free online educational materials, enabling them to access educational content without incurring additional expenses. This sentiment was echoed by caregivers of refugees who participated in FGDs in Al Mafraq and Zarqa, affirming that they utilize the internet to supplement the inadequate education provided to in schools.

Children described various educational uses of the internet, such as exploring different cultures, learning languages through online resources, accessing online school lessons, obtaining educational courses (especially in computer and hardware maintenance), keeping up with current events and news, reading poetry, and learning about healthy dietary habits. Among younger children aged 10 to 13 years, there is a preference for digital narrative stories covering religious or fantasy themes, which encourages creative thinking. Additionally, some children have taken to reading poetry along with music that is not commonly found in Arabic literature. Additionally, the majority of children indicate

I read poems by a poet named Grace, and her poems are not found in bookstores.
Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

I have an online lessons platform, and there are free cards distributed at the Afaq center.
Several Participants in Youth Workshops Za'tari Camp

> I learned Spanish through the internet, and now I can read and speak without having to go to any language center.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Irbid

Children in schools with international programs mentioned using the internet more for studying compared to other children in other schools. The curriculum does not rely on textbooks but follows curricula that requires projects and research.

utilizing YouTube videos as a learning tool, particularly due to evolving interests and shifts in information consumption methods. This enables them to access high-quality educational materials via modern digital technologies at a reduced cost. Furthermore, these technologies pave the way for personalized learning opportunities, aiding students in acquiring knowledge in a manner that aligns with their preferences- a viewpoint endorsed by both children and caregivers alike.

> I use the internet for an average of 8 hours because we have a plan in school, and we don't rely on books. We need to study and solve questions from previous years. That›s why the school provides us with iPads to study on.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

3.5.2 Most Popular Platforms Among Children

The study highlights the platforms most frequented by children, with YouTube emerging as the top choice (22.6%), followed by Instagram, Facebook, educational platforms, and search engines, each garnering a 12% share. Some prohibited sites, like TikTok, are also mentioned.

The study also reveals that younger children in the 10-12 age group reported a higher percentage of using YouTube, 32.6%. In contrast, Instagram usage showed the opposite trend, with the older age group of 16-17 reporting a higher percentage 17.4% of using Instagram in comparison to the other age groups.

Graph 10: Frequently Used Websites/ Applications, Children. By age
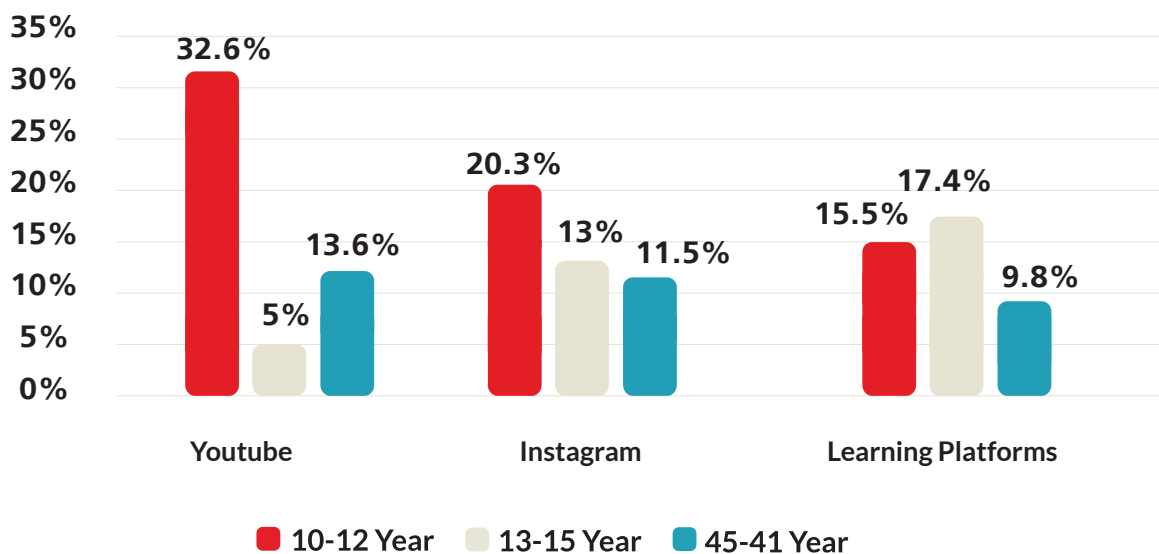
Qualitative insights indicate that children opt for different platforms based on their specific needs. For communication purposes, platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, online Team's meetings, WhatsApp, and Facebook are preferred. Zoom is specifically mentioned by some, as a platform used for online classes. Older children (aged 14-17) also utilize Messenger, Telegram, and Imo. Notably, Syrian refugees exhibit a higher inclination towards using the Imo app over Messenger, citing its popularity in Syria.

In a distinct scenario, four children primarily from East Amman mentioned engaging in online product sales by utilizing platforms like Instagram and Facebook. This initiative is driven by their challenging financial circumstances, aiming to secure additional income.

> I showcase products online to neighbors, relatives, and friends, and I now have customers. Two days ago, I offered a living room set to our neighbor, and I get a commission in return.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

> Every Friday, I go with my cousin to the baleh (a place selling second hand items). We buy sports shoes, take pictures, and post them on Instagram and Facebook. We buy the shoes for 7 dinars and sell them for 10 or 12, with a delivery charge of 2 dinars, making the total amount 12 or 14.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

A number of children also discussed their involvement in producing digital content across various formats on YouTube. This content creation spanned areas such as gaming, music, as well as educational and artistic content. However, approximately half of those who shared their experiences in digital content creation revealed that they eventually shut down their channels. This decision was often attributed to online bullying or parental pressure, particularly prevalent among younger age groups and females.

> «I had a YouTube channel where I provided gaming content, but my mom forced me to stop because I›m young, and she›s concerned for me.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Irbid

Table 6: Frequently Used Websites/ Applications, Children – Frequency

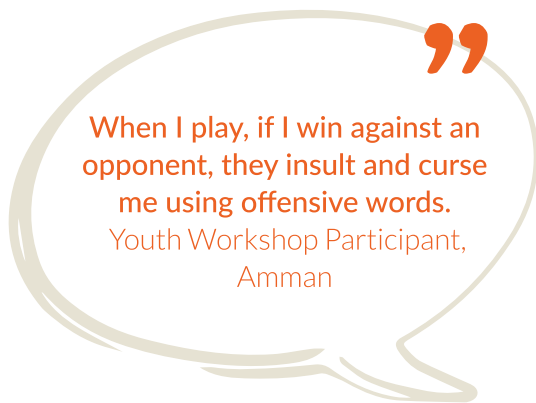| Website/Application	Count	Percentage%
Youtube	1124	22.6%
Instagram	592	11.9%
Learning Platforms	579	11.6%
Facebook	552	11.1%
Search Engines (google..etc)	551	11.1%
Snapchat	417	8.4%
Online games	400	8.0%
Tiktok	341	6.9%
Whatsapp	323	6.5%
Twitter	56	1.1%
Other	37	0.7%
I don't know	2	0%
Total	**4975**	**100%**

3.5.3 Online Games

Approximately 36.9% of children opt not to engage in any online games, with 15.2% favoring Free Fire and 14.5% preferring PUBG as their top choices. A smaller percentage enjoy playing FIFA (4.1%) and Roblox (3.4%). On the other hand, however, during qualitative data collection children reported dedicating a significant portion of their time to online gami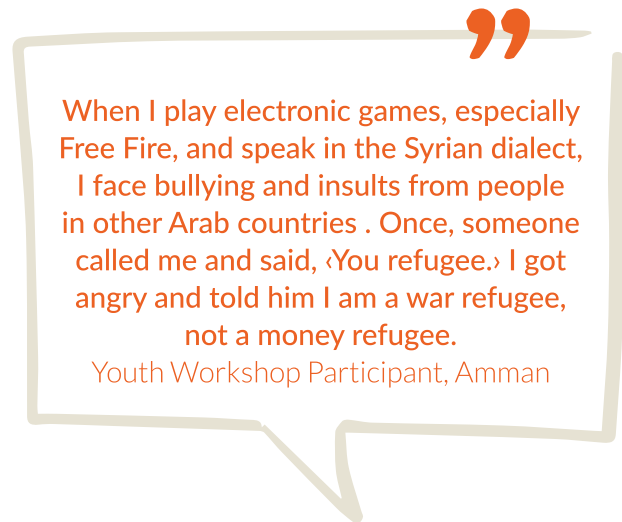ng, from moderate to extended sessions lasting 5-8 hours daily, particularly among the 10–13 age bracket. Male participants commonly mention games like FIFA, Fortnite, PUBG, and Free Fire, while females tend to play games such as Roblox, Free Fire, Minecraft and Among Us.

> Most of my friends at school and I play Roblox together.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

The study highlights that online video games have evolved into digital arenas fostering gaming proficiency and social interaction, notably through chat functions enabling player-to-player communication. However, a majority of children who engage in online gaming report negative experiences, ranging from adverse communication to ridicule and even instances of verbal assault and abuse.

> When I play electronic games, especially Free Fire, and speak in the Syrian dialect, I face bullying and insults from people in other Arab countries . Once, someone called me and said, ‹You refugee.› I got angry and told him I am a war refugee, not a money refugee.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

> When I play, if I win against an opponent, they insult and curse me using offensive words.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

3.5.4 Impact of Internet Usage

When it comes to internet safety, parents generally report having some knowledge of the risks associated with internet use, with 83.3% indicating a moderate to high level of awareness. Among non-refugees, a higher percentage (59.1%) reported having a high level of knowledge about these risks.

Participants in interactive workshops noted hate speech directed at young refugees online. This includes the use of provocative insults that incite violence and the promotion of terms indicative of insults and bullying. Specifically, individuals with a Syrian dialect have reported instances of being bullied and insulted while engaging in online games, as demonstrated in the verbatim excerpt provided below.
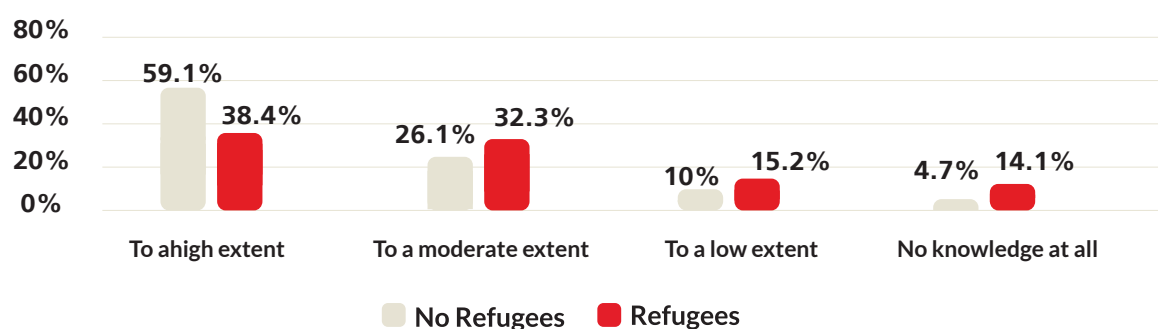
**Graph 11: Knowledge about the Risks of Using the Internet, Parents.
By refugees/non-refugees**

When children assessed the impact of internet usage on themselves, they reported a two-fold trend, acknowledging both positive and negative impacts, particularly in the realms of time management and education. On the positive side, they perceive the internet as a valuable tool for learning and completing homework, also serving as a source of entertainment during their free time. On the negative side, both age groups (10-12) and (13-17) express concerns under the same two themes: the risk of wasting time online and the strong emotional bond they have with the internet, leading to frustration when the connection is lost. Additionally, there is a perceived risk of falling behind in schoolwork.

Table 7: Negative Effects of Internet Usage, Children (13-17)

Negative Effects	Count	Percentage%
Wasting time on the internet	519	22.1%
Feeling discomfort when the internet connection is lost	359	15.3%
Neglecting my school responsibilities	318	13.6%
Negatively affecting my health and sleep hours	224	9.6%
Using the internet as a way to isolation from family and friends	223	9.5%
Seeing advertisements and promotions encouraging access to inappropriate websites	179	7.7%
Finding it difficult to control the time I spend on the internet daily	150	6.4%
I don't know	101	4.3%
Imitating some of what I see on the Internet	98	4.2%
The internet negatively affects my behavior towards others (Aggressiveness)	69	2.9%
Experiencing harassment or extortion from unknown individuals	66	2.8%
Other	34	1.5%
Refused to answer	1	0%.
Total	**2342**	**100.0%**

The qualitative findings shed light on some of negative effects of internet usage identified in the quantitative survey, including:

1. Isolation from family and friends:

Many children mentioned spending significant amounts of time on the internet, particularly during holidays. This prolonged exposure to social media often results in heightened feelings of isolation and loneliness. The findings suggest a correlation between the time individuals spend on social networks and their likelihood of experiencing social isolation and loneliness. Caregivers specifically noted that children, particularly those aged 10–13, who spend three or more hours online are more vulnerable to feelings of isolation and social loneliness compared to their peers who spend only one hour daily. Caregivers voiced their frustrations about their relationships with children across all age groups, attributing much of the discord to excessive internet usage. This over-reliance on digital platforms significantly contributes to feelings of alienation and distance between caregivers and children. The majority of caregivers confirmed a notable lack of psychological and social harmony as a result of these dynamics.

> Even though we are under the same roof with our children, they are isolated in their virtual world, unlike our upbringing in the past, away from electronic devices.
> FGD Participant, Amman

2. Internet addiction and feeling discomfort when connection is lost:

During interactive workshops, children raised various concerns related to mobile phone usage, including feelings of irritation, anxiety, nervousness, and psychological distress stemming from their dependency on phones. They described behaviors such as constantly checking the phone charger and preferring to stay home due to inadequate internet coverage in other locations as indicators of their attachment to their devices.

> I always check the phone charger, and I prefer to stay at home rather than go to my grandfather›s house because the coverage is bad there.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

Most caregivers view their children, particularly boys aged 10–13, as internet addicts. Caregivers acknowledged allowing internet access to quiet their persistent children or to maintain order while they were occupied or busy.

> If I prevent my son from using the internet, he gets upset and starts breaking things.
> FGD Participant, Zarqa

> My wife, if the boy cries, gives him the device to silence him. The child grows up accustomed to long hours on the internet.
> Father, FGD Participant, Irbid

> My son drives me crazy if I restrict him from the internet. He sits near me and does annoying movements. To get rid of him, I give him the phone.
> Mother, FGD Participant, Irbid

> When I have guests, I give him the essential device to keep him quiet.
> Mother, FGD Participant, Irbid

Close to half of the children who participated in the qualitative research revealed feelings of distress when they were unable to access the internet. This distress manifested in various ways, from anger and irritability to behaviors such as refusing to eat or study.

> I›m always on the internet, and if I›m prevented, I stop eating and studying.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

3. Imitating online content:

Caregivers observed that children often adopt unconventional and irrational ideas, blindly emulating different cultures, particularly those of Japan and Korea. They believed this trend was eroding local culture, causing feelings of alienation and identity crisis. However, insights from most children in the study suggest a shift back towards Arab culture following the 2023 Gaza war, influenced by media coverage, especially from Gaza-based journalists. Many reported participating in online campaigns advocating for boycotting products supporting Israel.

Children regularly engage with online content, with online celebrities and digital influencers being significant sources of inspiration and influence. While this influence can have positive aspects, the study highlights substantial risks when children imitate behaviors of online celebrities, which turn into trends. Some children imitate negative content found on platforms like TikTok and YouTube, including dress styles, appearance, lifestyle choices, and even risky behaviors. The respondents mentioned specific challenges ranging from consuming extremely spicy Korean ramen, as well as instances of self-harm, as detailed in the following excerpts.

> There's a girl at school trying to harm herself. She told me, 'Miss, I'm trying to hurt myself in the bathroom like a famous girl in Youtube.
> School Teacher, FGD Participant, Irbid

> There are challenges we do, like YouTubers, such as the slime challenge, flour, soap foam, and extremely spicy Korean ramen challenge—a fun challenge even though your stomach and mouth hurt for a while after finishing it.
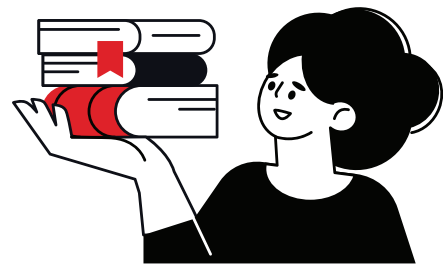> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

> Once my siblings did a challenge on TikTok, pouring water on my face while I was asleep. I woke up very startled.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

> My son once imitated TikTok and tried to cut his hand. He wanted to livestream it, and when we found out, it caused a big issue.
> FGD Participant, Irbid

4. Decline in Academic Performance:

Most caregivers and some children acknowledge the impact of spending long hours online on their academic performance.

> When I bring my school certificates, I know my mom will punish me because I sit a lot to chat with my friends on Instagram.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

> We argue about every exam because of the internet, so the children's school performance has declined.
> FGD Participant, Amman

4.6 Online Influencers and Digital Creators

When children were asked if they follow influencers/ activists on social media 51.8% of the children said they do, an almost equal percentage of them said they do not (48.2%). Children from the older age groups appear to be more likely to find interest in following influencers/ activists compared to the 10–12-year-olds (56.4% and 56.9% vs. 44.2%).

Graph 12: Following Influencers/Activists on Social Media, Children.
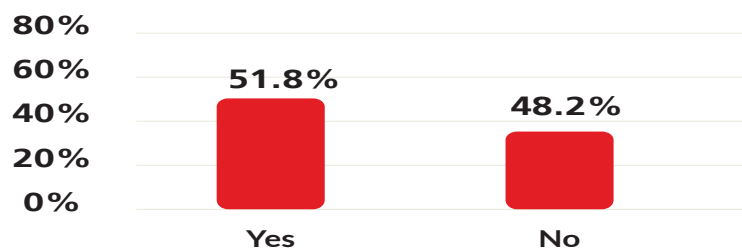
Concerning how others perceive children's choices and access to the internet, children asserted that they make these decisions independently (86.6%), free from external influence, including that of their friends. They believe that their choices are generally acceptable, with no objections from anyone, and are viewed positively by parents and the community. This sentiment remains consistent among children who follow online influencers and activists (51.8%), with 82.0% of their families approving of this behavior. When children were asked about their own perception of the information they find online, they indicated that they sometimes trust it while other times they do not (67.8%).

This somewhat surprising result can somewhat be justified by the timing of the survey, which was conducted November 2023 during the period of aggression on Gaza and the shift in the content being followed by children.

Graph 13: Family Satisfaction with Following, Children.
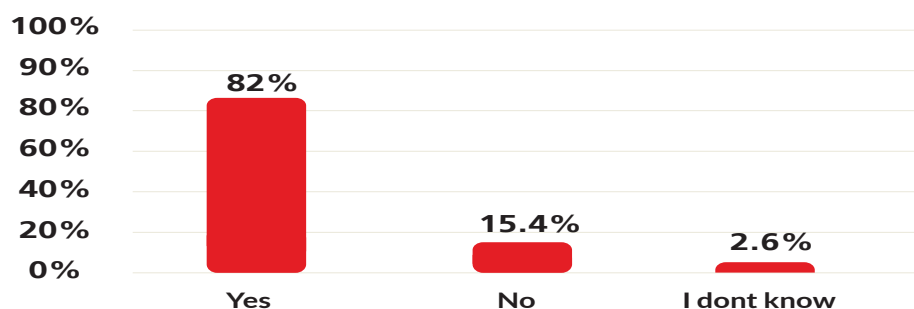
Qualitative findings suggest that numerous children are drawn to celebrities and content creators who educate them on new subjects, inspire them to cultivate new talents, and encourage innovation across different domains. For instance, boys are motivated in sports, whereas girls express a preference for learning arts and technology from certain influencers. Older children, particularly those aged 14 to 17, mentioned following celebrities and content creators who have had a positive influence on them.

"

The internet has opened new horizons for us and expanded our knowledge, especially content creators who roam the world, and we learn from them the cultures of different peoples.
Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

I follow Sheikh Othman Khamees and listen to Maher Al-Muaiqly, in addition to journalist Saleh from Gaza, who broadcasts events live. The important thing is that they convey the message respectfully and appropriately.
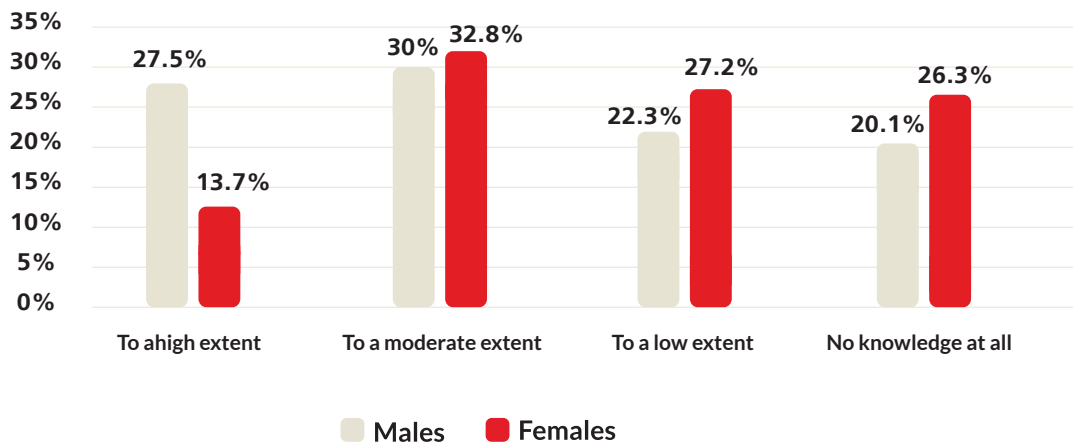Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

I follow cooking content and create delicious Western dishes and desserts.
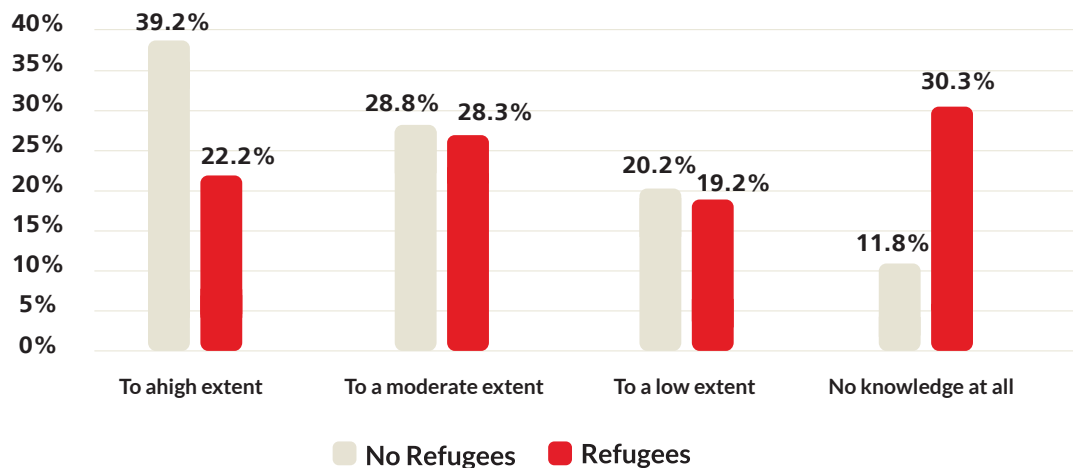Youth Workshop Participant, Irbid

Parents often express a sense of caution rather than complete confidence in their children's online safety, as 55.9% reported a moderate to low level of confidence. Male respondents had a higher percentage (27.5%) of feeling that their children were safe to a high extent, compared to females, where only 13.7% shared the same level of confidence.

Graph 15: Feeling Safe while Children use the Internet, Parents. By gender

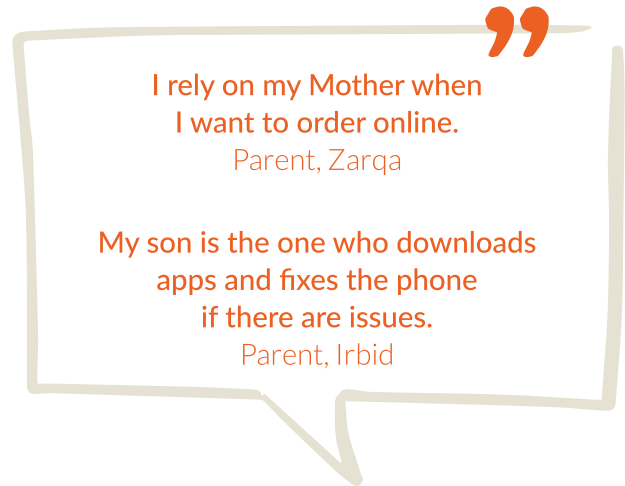|	To a high extent	To a moderate extent	To a low extent	No knowledge at all
Males	27.5%	30%	22.3%	20.1%
Females	13.7%	32.8%	27.2%	26.3%

Legend: Males, Females

Regarding awareness of legal aspects related to internet misuse, 65.9% of parents acknowledge a moderate to a high level of understanding in this area. Non-refugees reported a higher percentage (39.2%) of individuals who claimed to be highly aware of these laws and consequences compared to refugees.

Graph 16: Awareness of Laws/Legal Consequence associated with Internet Misuse, Parents. By Jordanians/non-Jordanian

|	To a high extent	To a moderate extent	To a low extent	No knowledge at all
No Refugees	39.2%	28.8%	20.2%	11.8%
Refugees	22.2%	28.3%	19.2%	30.3%

Legend: No Refugees, Refugees

However, when parents were questioned about whether their children assist them in using the internet, the responses were almost evenly distributed, with 57.4% answering affirmatively and 42.6% responding negatively. Throughout the focus group discussions, caregivers report that their children are more skilled and knowledgeable in using the internet and various applications, and that they rely on them in certain situations. They attribute this proficiency to children's frequent daily interactions with technology, whether through digital gaming or the use of mobile devices. Caregivers also report that children are quick to acquire technological skills and often demonstrate a willingness to actively explore technology.

When the data was analyzed based on parents' age, it was found that parents in the 29-35 age

> I rely on my Mother when
> I want to order online.
> Parent, Zarqa
>
> My son is the one who downloads
> apps and fixes the phone
> if there are issues.
> Parent, Irbid

group had the lowest percentage of asking their children for help, with only 47%, as compared to the other age groups. In contrast, the 36-40 age group had a higher rate of 64%, while the remaining age groups fell in between.

**Graph 14: Children support with internet use, Parents.
By Parent Ages**

|	Yes	No
35-29 Year	47.4%	52.6%
40-36 Year	63.8%	36.2%
45-41 Year	54.1%	45.9%
55-46 Year	59.1%	40.9%
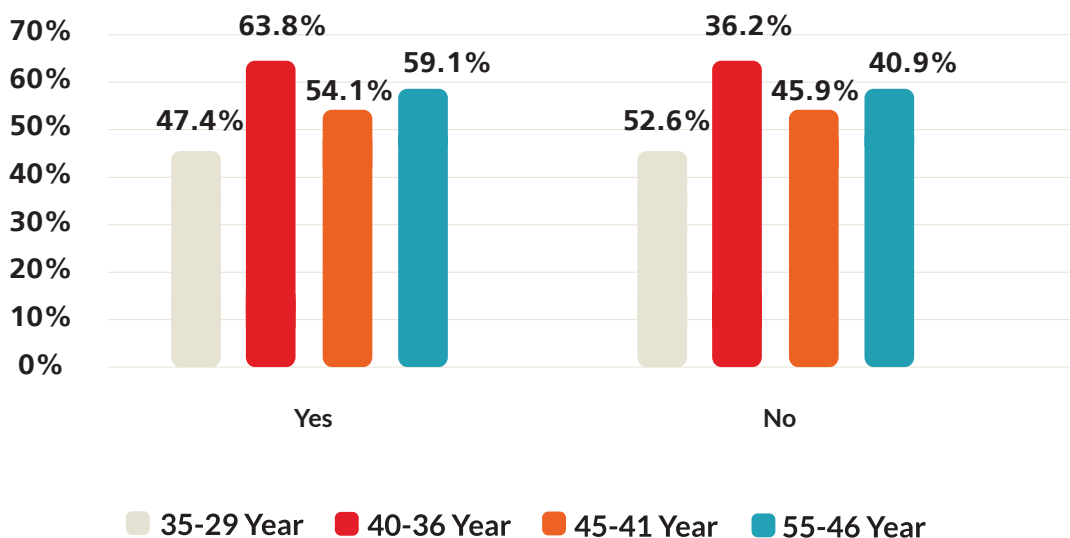
3.7.1 Digital Protection Methods

Considering their overall awareness of internet risks, safety, and legal implications, the majority of parents, though not a significant percentage, believe they possess knowledge about how to protect their children from the potential dangers associated with internet use (59%). Non-refugees had a higher percentage (60.5%) of individuals who claimed to be knowledgeable about protecting their children compared to refugees. Parents generally reported commonly perceiving open communication with their children and direct supervision as the most effective methods to ensure their safety online.

In contrast, when all children were asked about their experiences with the measures and strategies used by their parents to protect them from internet risks, the majority reported that they had indeed experienced such protective measures (73.1%).

Graph 17: Implementation of Protection Measures, Children
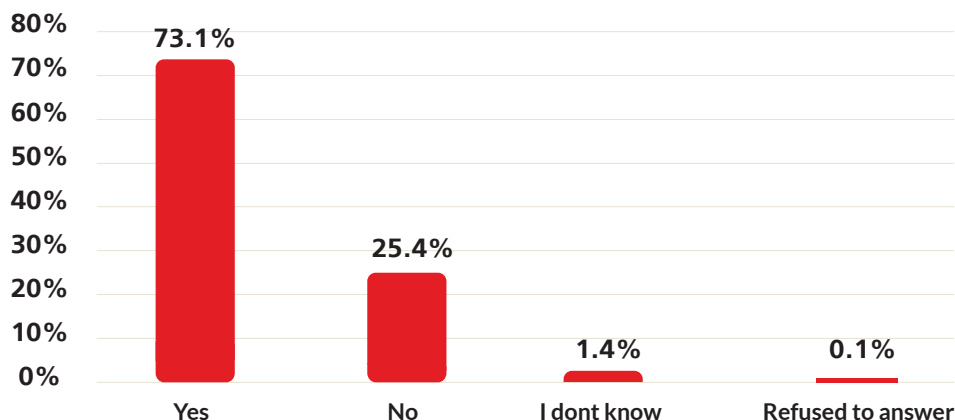
This finding appears somewhat exaggerated when compared to the responses of the parents, who reported a lower percentage of being knowledgeable about ways to protect their children. It suggests that the protective measures taken by parents may be better perceived and appreciated by their children, even if parents themselves may not be entirely confident in their knowledge of internet safety.

The qualitative findings further reveal that most children believe they are digitally protected. They enhance safe and responsible behaviors by dealing with problems and risks primarily through actions such as blocking accounts, reporting abuse to service providers, restricting view of profile pictures and stories to friends or specific individuals, setting accounts to private and downloading antivirus apps like "Trojan Horse" to protect their devices from malicious APPs. They are also aware not to open unknown source links, referred to as "phishing".

Certain children, particularly those attending schools with international programs, were more knowledgeable about digital protection measures. Among the apps utilized by children for private communication, as reported by participants from schools with international programs, are F-Secure, Secure Folder (specifically for Samsung devices), One Security, Brave Browser, Save App, Security, Ginlo, My Data Manager, Web Application Firewall (WAF), and Best Secret Folder (used to safeguard photos). Furthermore, some children mentioned using the TOR browser, recognized for its challenging traceability, to maintain online anonymity, access the dark web, and conceal personal information

while browsing the internet. The familiarity with these protective measures among participants from schools with international programs is credited to educational initiatives embedded within the curriculum and reinforced through school awareness programs.

> We received informative lectures at school regarding internet protection and awareness of risks by counselors, collaborating with the Public Security Department, Criminal Investigation Department, and the Cybercrime Unit. They explained the Cybercrime Law of 2023.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Amman

Protection methods utilized by children in government schools, private schools with a national program, and schools in refugee camps include creating strong passwords for devices and apps, which are kept confidential and known only to their parents. They also prioritize refraining from sharing personal data and photos with strangers. During discussions, the majority of children concurred that adjusting privacy settings on their devices or apps to prevent the inadvertent sharing of personal information was crucial for safeguarding their data.

> passwords except with my parents, and I also avoid sharing personal photos.
> Youth Workshop Participant, Irbid

> I don›t share my accounts and I created private accounts on Instagram and Facebook that only friends can see, and I control who can view the content.
> Youth Workshop Participant,
> Za'tari Camp

Both parents and children generally consider themselves safe while using the internet and are aware of potential risks. Consequently, 81.5% of parents do not use specific electronic applications to safeguard their children while they are online. Among the minority who do use such applications, parental control applications were the most commonly mentioned. This finding remained consistent when children aged 13-17 were questioned about their methods for safely accessing applications, with 86.1% stating that they do not employ any specific protective measures. For the few who claimed to have safety protocols in place, their approaches were basic and somewhat rudimentary, such as blocking unwanted sites and avoiding untrusted links. One common method shared during the FGDs involves blocking inappropriate websites directly through the telecommunications company. Additionally, some caregivers opt for specialized search engines designed for children aged 10 to 13, like the Kiddle browser. However, younger children often express their reluctance to use such browsers, with one citing disinterest due to its association with younger age groups. Mothers, in particular, highlight protective measures such as keeping the child in a visible and audible location within the home. This method was favored by most mothers as it allows them to actively monitor their child's online activities.

> It›s better for my son to play where I can see and hear him. I always let him play PlayStation in the living room, which is open to the kitchen, so I can monitor him well.
> FGD Participant, Zarqa

When cross-tabulating data to examine the relationship between parental supervision and the online risks faced by children, it was revealed that supervision has a minimal impact on exposing children to internet risks. The percentage of those supervised and exposed to risks is slightly lower at 3.8%, compared to those who are not supervised, which stands at 4.2%.

Regarding conversations with their parents or family members about online safety, the majority of children reported engaging in such discussions (75.5%).

Graph 18: Conversations about Online Safety with Parents, Children
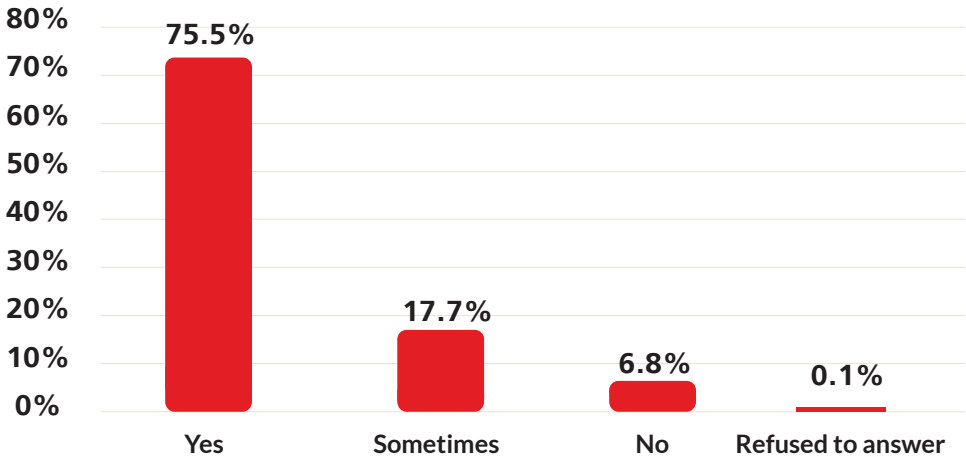

This aligns with the perception that children feel protected by their parents when it comes to online risks. Finally, parents were asked whether their children's online interactions, whether positive or negative, have influenced their overall feelings of happiness. The responses were closely divided, but a majority reported positive effects.

3.7.2 Reporting Cyber Crimes

When parents were asked about their awareness of organizations dedicated to safeguarding children from online risks, they demonstrated higher awareness levels for the Cybercrime Department, with the highest recognition rate at 73.9%, followed by the Family and Juvenile Protection Department at 68.8%. However, awareness of Community Policing and Civil Society Organizations was comparatively lower. Only 40.6% of parents reported being aware of Community Policing, and 34.9% were aware of Civil Society Organizations. For the latter two, the majority of respondents hadn't even heard of them.

Graph 19: Parent Awareness of official/unofficial Entities for Cybercrimes related Assistance
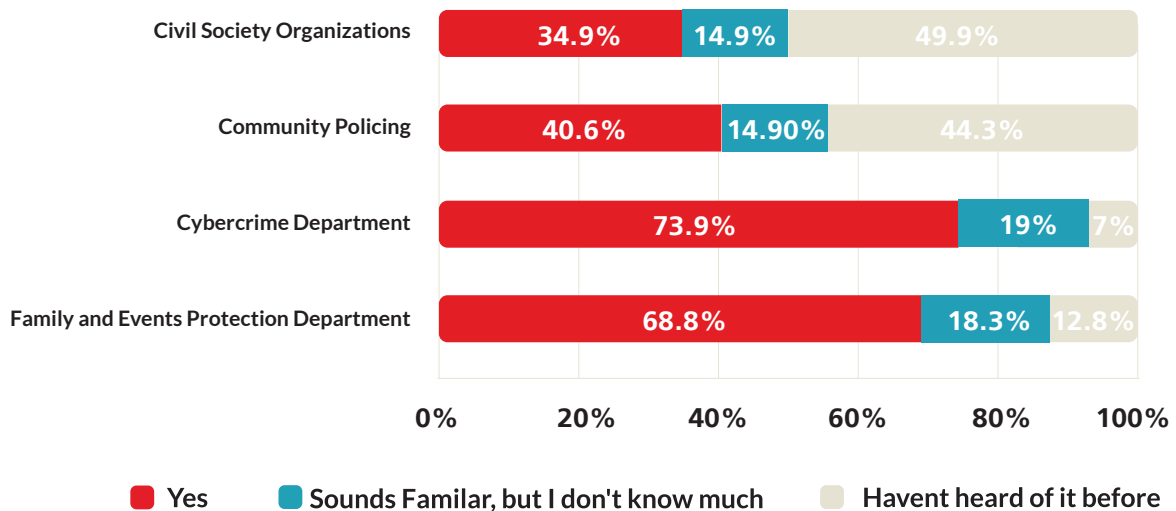
The FGDs revealed that while the majority of both children and caregivers recognize the unit's importance and believe in the efficacy of filing complaints or reporting online risks, there seems to be a reluctance, particularly among females and Syrian refugees, to seek help from the unit. The findings indicate that some caregivers only resort to the Cybercrime Unit in certain circumstances, such as cases of online sexual harassment.

The study moreover uncovers a strikingly low level of awareness regarding the Electronic Crimes Law of 2023 among caregivers and children alike. The prevailing perception is that this law imposes substantial restrictions. Despite this lack of awareness, both children and caregivers concur that laws, particularly the Electronic Crimes Law, play a crucial role in mitigating the risks and challenges that children might encounter online.

> "
> We only know that it prohibits you from even expressing a negative opinion about anything and anyone.
> Focus Group Participant, Mafraq

> "
> In general, the awareness of my opinion is low. People know that there is a law, and they know that the law criminalizes insulting or harming others, but they do not know the details.
> Expert, In-depth Interview Participant, Justice Center

Parents offered several recommendations to bolster internet safety for their children, combining immediate interventions, preventive measures, and technological solutions can contribute to a comprehensive approach in safeguarding children from potential online risks. The most favored approach, endorsed by 35.6% of parents, involved implementing strict measures such as cutting off internet access or temporarily confiscating the phone. This approach signifies a desire for immediate intervention to address potential risks.

Another widely supported strategy, chosen by 23.5% of parents, involved the proactive blocking of inappropriate and dangerous websites. This suggests a recognition of the importance of preventive measures to restrict access to potentially harmful online content. Furthermore, 15.2% of parents advocated for a more controlled online environment by endorsing the use of known and safe apps or implementing parental control programs. This recommendation underscores the significance of leveraging technological tools to create a secure digital space for children, allowing parents to monitor and regulate their online activities.

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