



**National Parents Council Primary's (NPC)  
"Your Child & The Internet"  
Survey Results**



**Supporting Parents  
Supporting Children**

Feb 2022

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## Introduction

National Parents Council Primary (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in primary or early education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

### **NPC Vision**

NPC want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### **NPC Mission**

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

### **NPC's Key Activities are:**

- Representing the parents' voice in primary education
- Advocacy
- Building participation
- Service delivery

### **NPC Service Delivery**

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

### **Helpline**

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The helpline staff listen and give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

### **Training and Development**

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

### **Website**

The NPC's website [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie) aims to provide parents with information regarding primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding primary education issues.

## Results Overview

To mark this year's Safer Internet Day, National Parents Council Primary, in collaboration with Webwise (the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre) and TU Dublin, conducted a survey to explore parental attitudes to online risks and safety and effective parenting strategies to supporting children online. The theme of Safer Internet Day 2022 was #TalkListenLearn and NPC invited parents to answer a number of questions on their knowledge of their child's online behaviours, how they talk to their children about their online activities, and the supports parents feel they need to be better equipped to support their children's online activities. The survey was completed by over 1000 parents and found that **although 72% of children discuss with their parents what they do online, only 34% of them ask for advice about how to act online, and just 1 in 3 children looked for help with a difficult situation online.**

### The survey also found:

- Almost one quarter (24%) of parents say their children have been bothered or upset by something that has happened online.
- 59% of parents are unsure of how often their child has been upset by something online.
- Only 26% of parents think their child can cope with things online that bother or upset them.

### Comparing parent and child data from a National Advisory Council for Online Safety survey shows that parents underestimate negative experiences reported by children:

- Less than half of parents are aware of contact and conduct risks their children have experienced online
- Where children have been exposed to harmful online content, just one third of parents are aware of this
- While 28% of children report having had online contact with people they had not previously known, only 11% of parents are aware of this.

### #TalkListenLearn – Supporting Families

Increasing active parental mediation in children and young people's digital lives is important for developing greater awareness about issues that may arise online and building resilience in the face of those challenges.

*"Children are broadly happy (70%) with the level of parental involvement but just under 10% would like their parents to be more involved. This does not mean more restrictions, however, in fact active mediation is according to the literature likely to be much more effective – and importantly is respectful of children's rights to privacy and growing independence." - Professor Brian O'Neill*

*"Exploring why children don't tell when they come across harmful or upsetting content whilst online is at the centre of keeping children safe. The relationship between a parent and their child is critical to keeping children safe, however we need to urgently continue to research this particular issue so that we can best support children when they are feeling most vulnerable." - Áine Lynch, CEO National Parents Council*

In order to be able to offer this kind of support to their children, parents state that they need dedicated support and guidance in relation to digital parenting. More than half of parents surveyed want more virtual training sessions to support their child's online activities (64%) and website resources (57%), while almost half (45%) want face-face training to support their child online.

### Getting families talking

Students from across Ireland gathered together to develop a resource to help parents talk to their children. In consultation with Webwise, over 140 students collaborated to develop a set of Talking Points to give parents more confidence to effectively discuss a range of online safety topics with their children.

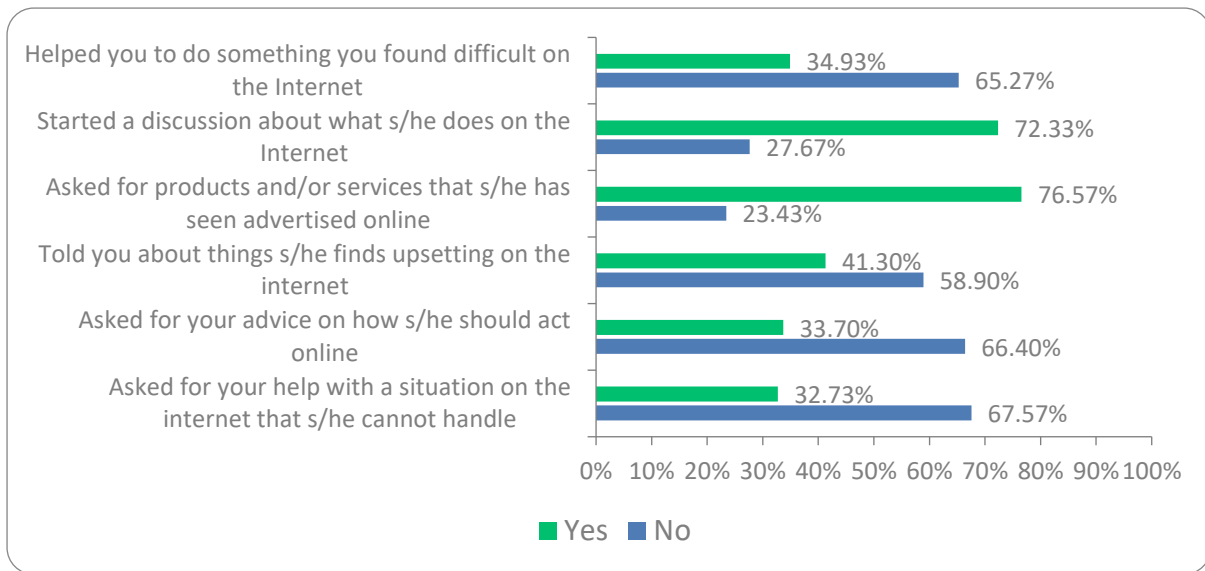
Deputy Director of PDST Digital Technologies, Anthony Kilcoyne said: *“We’re encouraging families to #TalkListenLearn. Webwise have excellent resources and supports available to parents. In addition to the Webwise Parents Hub, families can use the #TalkListenLearn topic generator to begin open conversations free from judgement or criticism; this is a great starting point.”*

The **Talking Points**, updated **Parents Guide to a Better Internet** and other resources for parents are available here: <https://www.webwise.ie/talklistenlearn/>

The results of NPC’s **Your Child & The Internet** survey are presented below

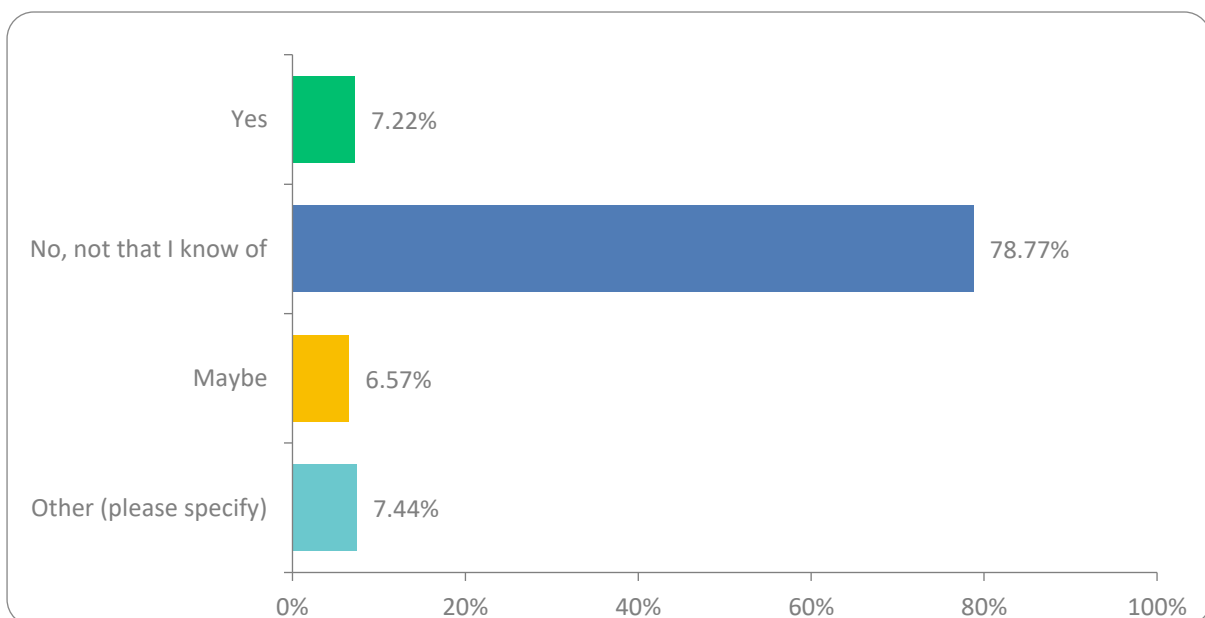
## Survey Results

### Has your child EVER done any of the following?



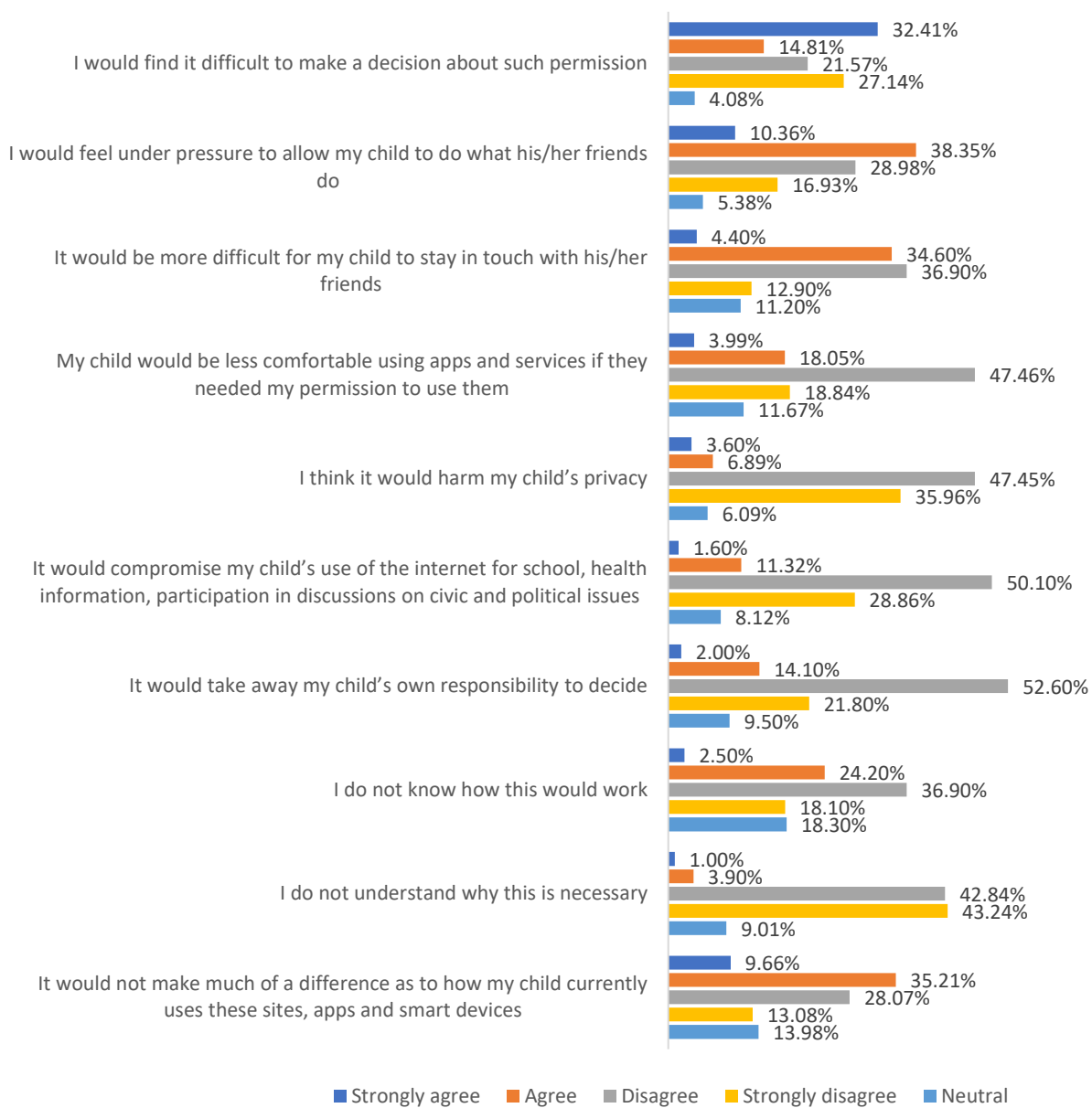
When asked about their children’s online behaviour, the majority of parents said that their child had asked for products or services that they had seen online. While 72% of parents say that their child has started a discussion about what they do online, a further 66% say that their child has never asked for advice on how they should act online, or, asked for their parents help with a situation on the internet that they cannot handle (68%)

### Thinking about the previous question – if you answered ‘no’ to any question, has your child told or asked someone else other than you?



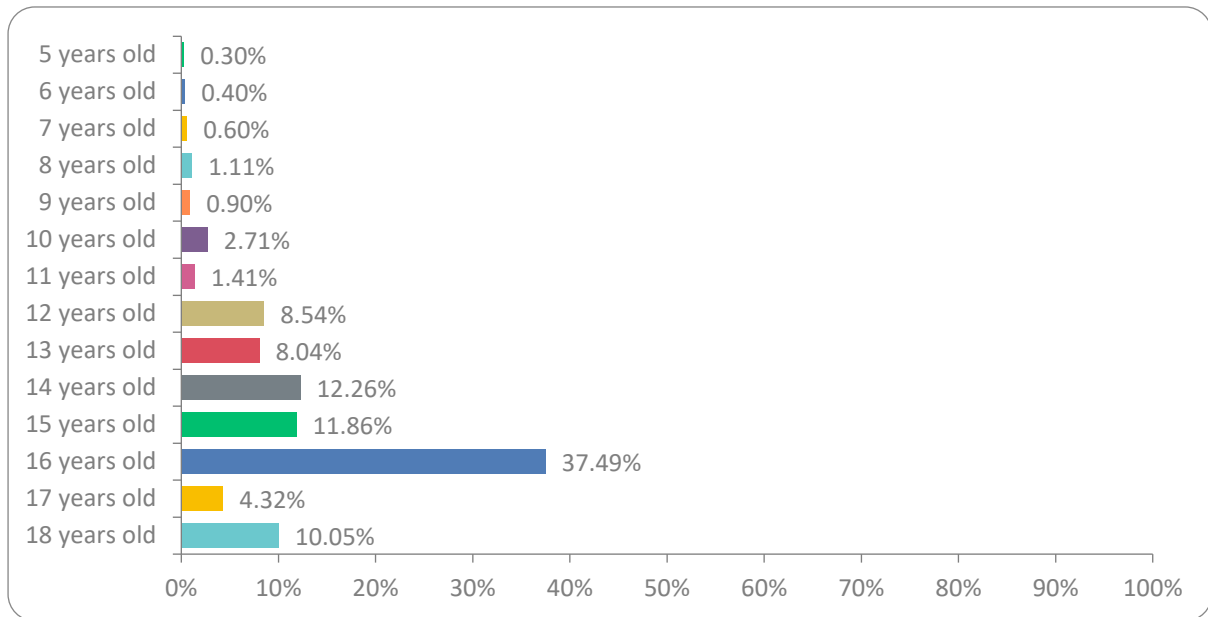
Building on the previous question, we asked the parents “if you answered ‘no’ to any question, has your child told or asked someone else other than you” about what they do on the internet, things they find upsetting online, asked for advice on how to act online or asked for help with an online situation they could not handle. Almost 80% of parents say that their child has not told or asked either them or someone else they know about any of those issues.

**In the future, young people under 16 may have to ask their parents for permission in order to be able to use social networking sites, apps and smart devices. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**



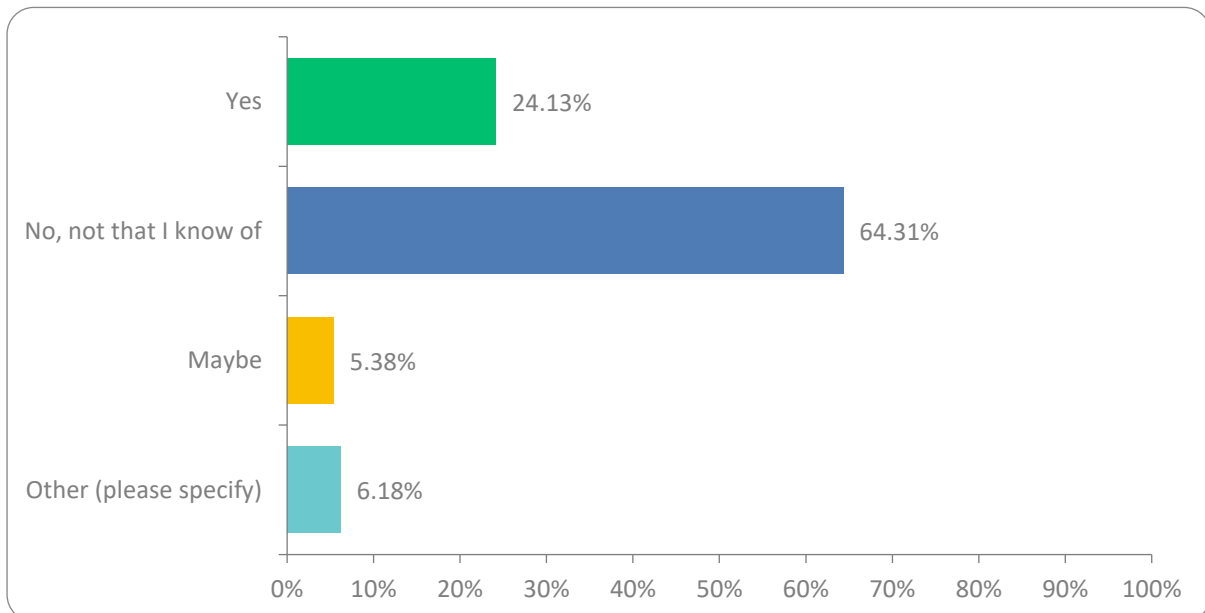
The vast majority (86%) of parents feel it is necessary that under 16s should have to have parental permission in order to be able to use social networking sites, apps and smart devices. Furthermore, 83% of parents do not feel that this would be an invasion of their children's privacy. However, parents were split when considering how difficult such a decision would be for them, with 47% saying they would find making a decision about online permissions difficult and 49% saying they would not find it difficult. Parents were also conflicted on the issue of allowing similar permissions to friends with 48% of parents say they would feel under pressure to allow their child to do what his/her friends have been permitted to do but 46% saying they would not. It is positive, however, that 66% of parents say their child would not feel any less comfortable using apps or services that required parental permission.

**At what age do you think your child will be or was old enough to make their own decisions about the websites, social media, apps or games they use?**



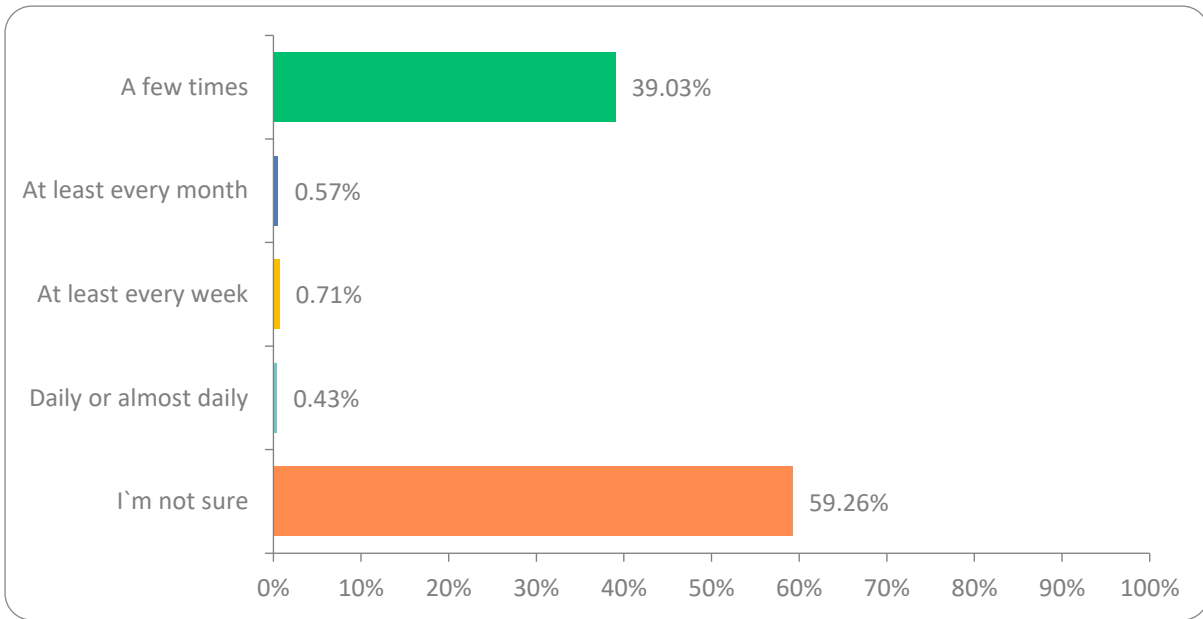
When asked about the age parents felt children are old enough to make their own decisions about their online activity, the most common answer was 16 years of age (37%). More than 6-in-10 parents say that children should be 15 or older to make such decisions. Only 16% of parents felt that any primary-school-aged children were old enough to make decisions about their online activity.

**As far as you are aware, in the past year, has anything happened online that bothered or upset your child in some way? (e.g. made them feel uncomfortable, scared or feel that they shouldn't have seen it)**



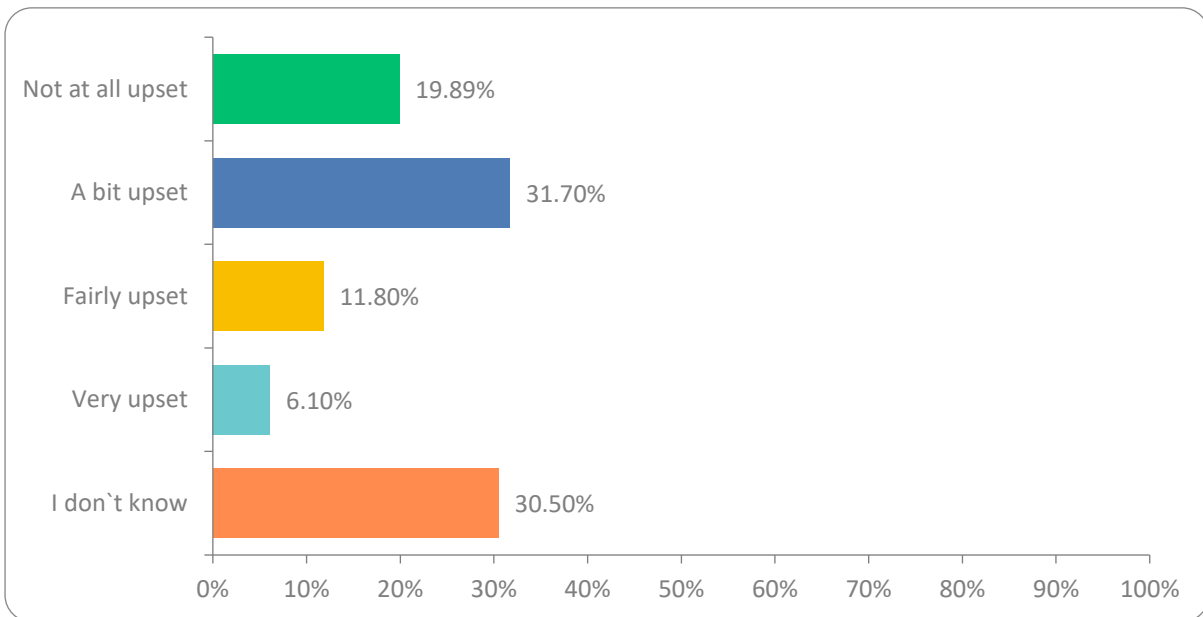
While the majority of parents (64%) of parents say they are not aware of their child being bothered or upset being something happening online in the last year, it is concerning that 1-in-4 parents say that their child has been uncomfortable or scared by something they've seen online, or seen something they think they shouldn't have.

### In the PAST YEAR, how often did this happen?



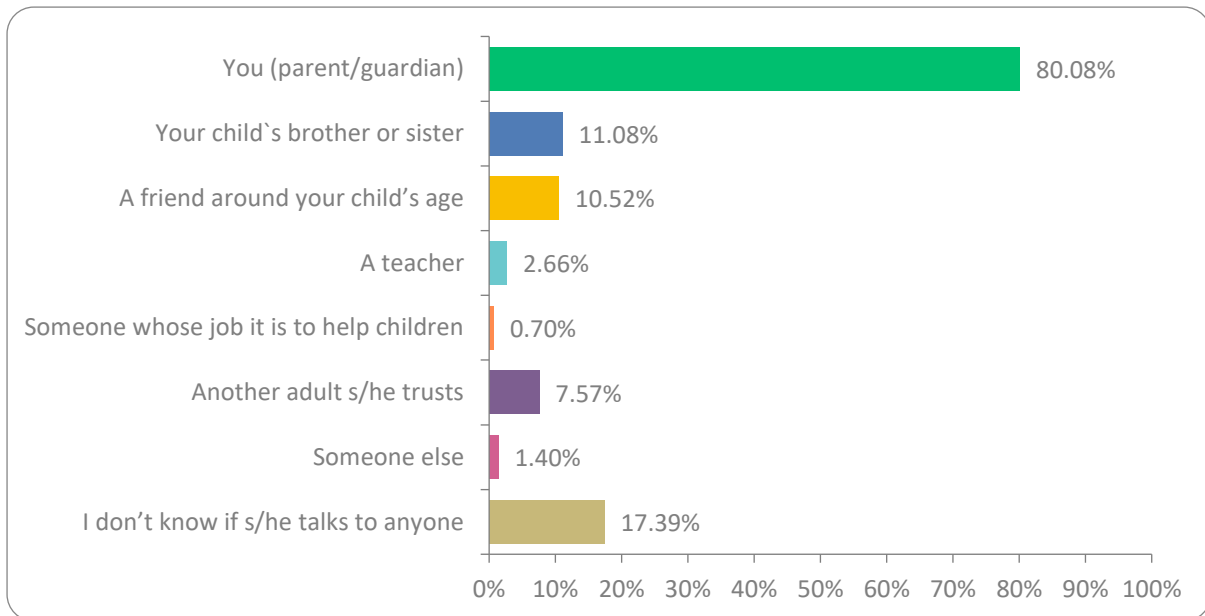
Of the parents who said that their child has been upset or bothered by something that's happened online, almost 39% say this has happened "a few times". However, the majority (60%) of parents say they are unsure of how often their child has been upset or bothered by something online.

### The last time something happened online that bothered or upset your child, how upset was s/he about what happened (if at all)?



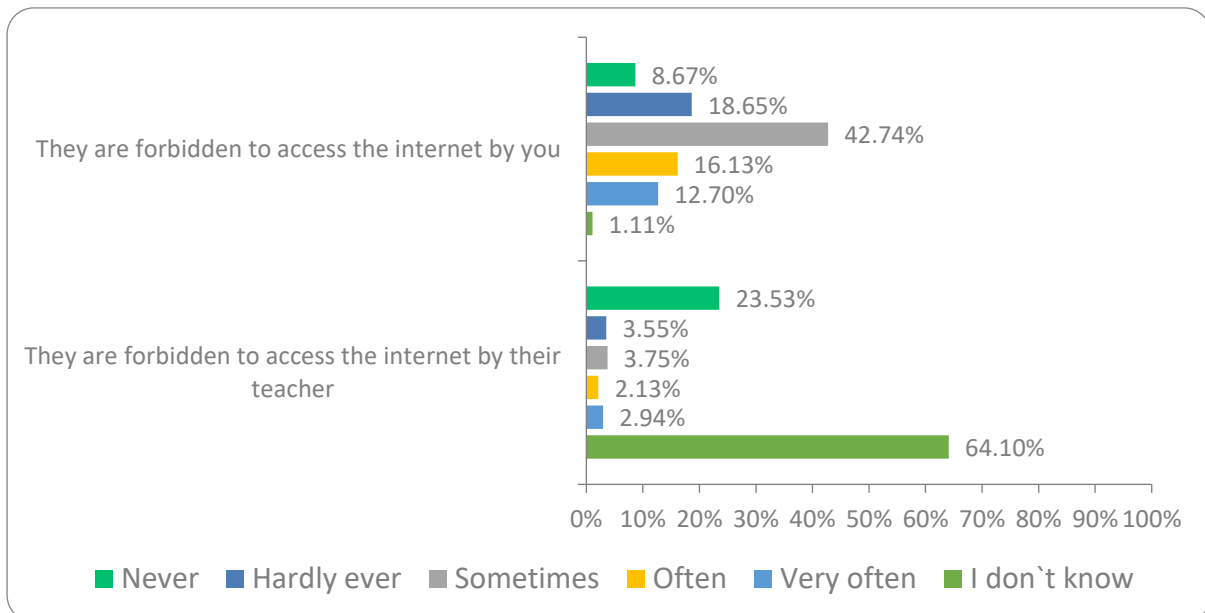
When considering the impact online content has on children, half of parents say that the last time their child saw something online that bother them they were either "a bit" (32%), "fairly" (12%), or "very" (6%) upset. Only 1-in-5 parents say that their child was "not at all upset"

**The last time something happened online that bothered or upset your child, if it did, who did your child talk to? (Please tick as many boxes as needed)**



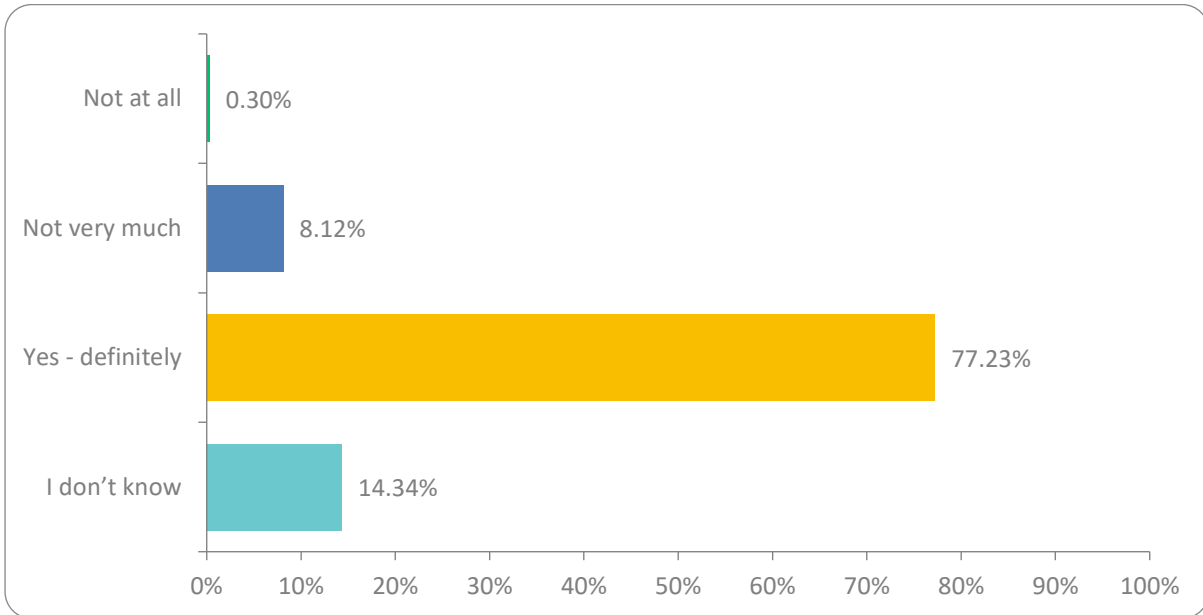
It is encouraging that most parents (80%) feel that their child spoke to them that last time something happened online that upset or bothered them, however, almost one-fifth (17%) of parents say they do not know if their child talks to anyone when they have been upset by something online.

**How often does the following happen to your child? (Please tick one box on each line)**



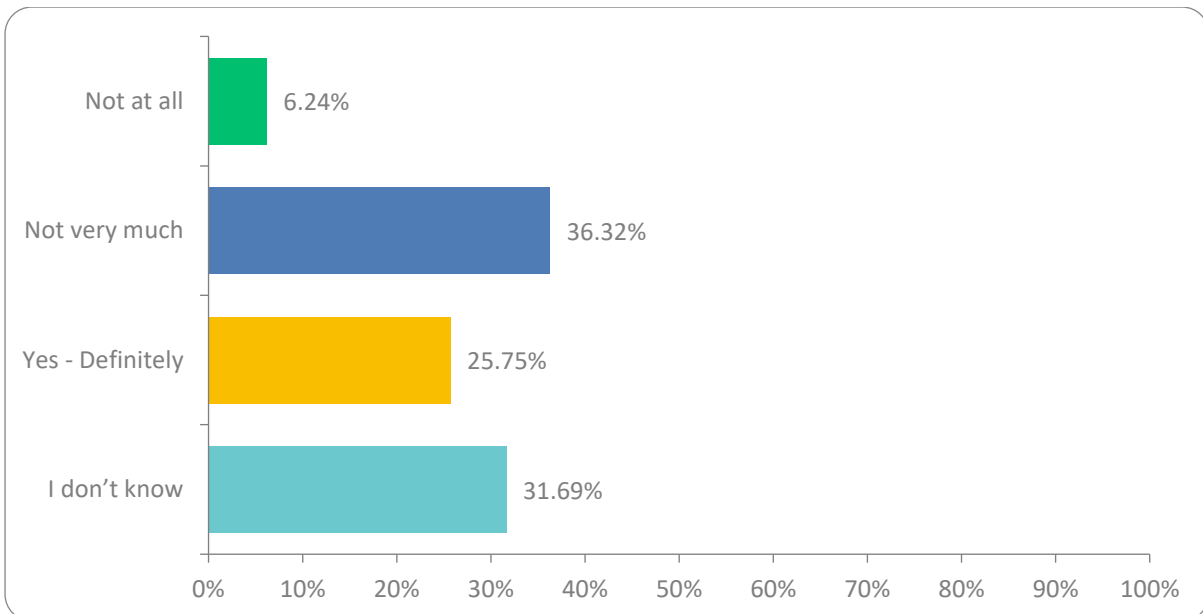
Over 70% of parents say that they “sometimes”, “often” or “very often” forbid their child from using the internet. The majority of parents (64%) don't know if their child has been forbidden to access the internet by their teacher.

### Do you feel you can help your child to cope with things online that bothers or upsets them?



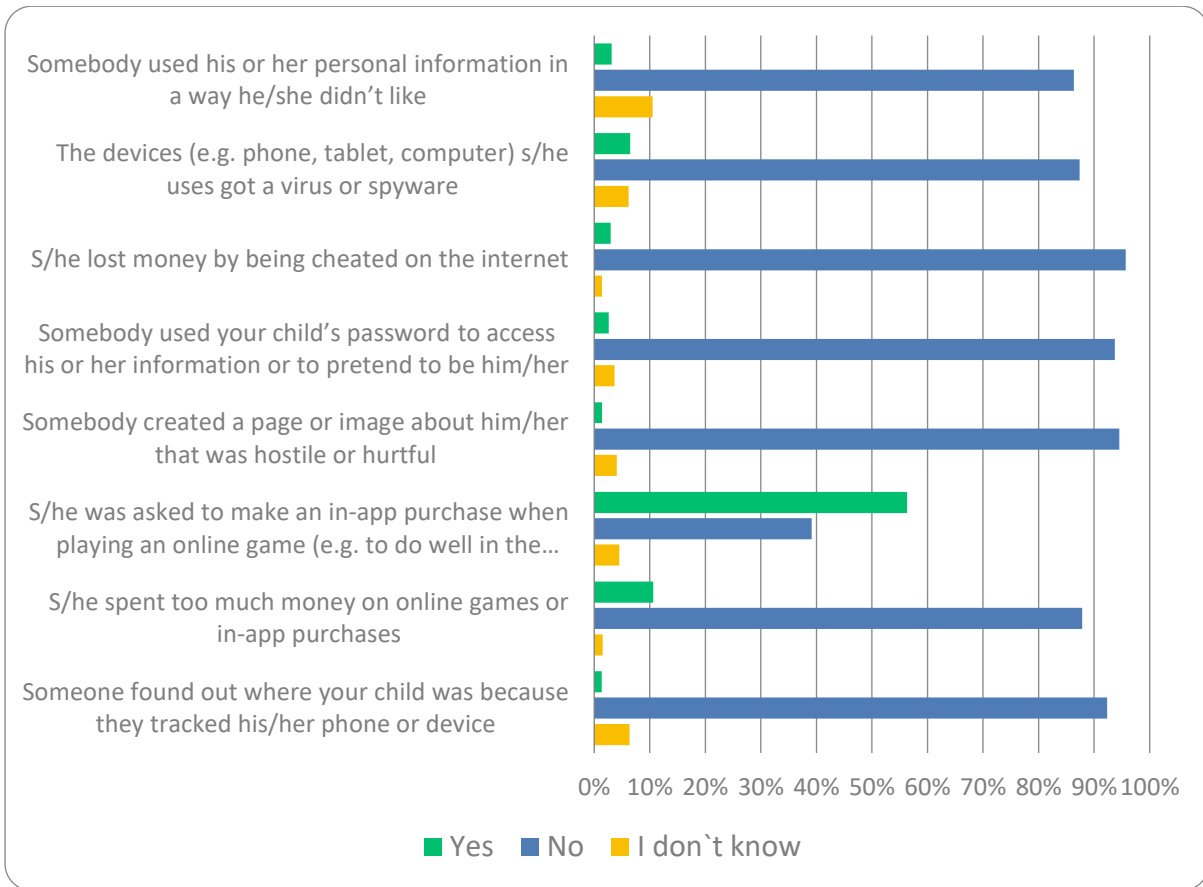
It is encouraging that almost 80% of parents feel they can definitely help their child to cope with things that upset or bother them online.

### Do you think your child can cope with things online that bothers or upsets them?



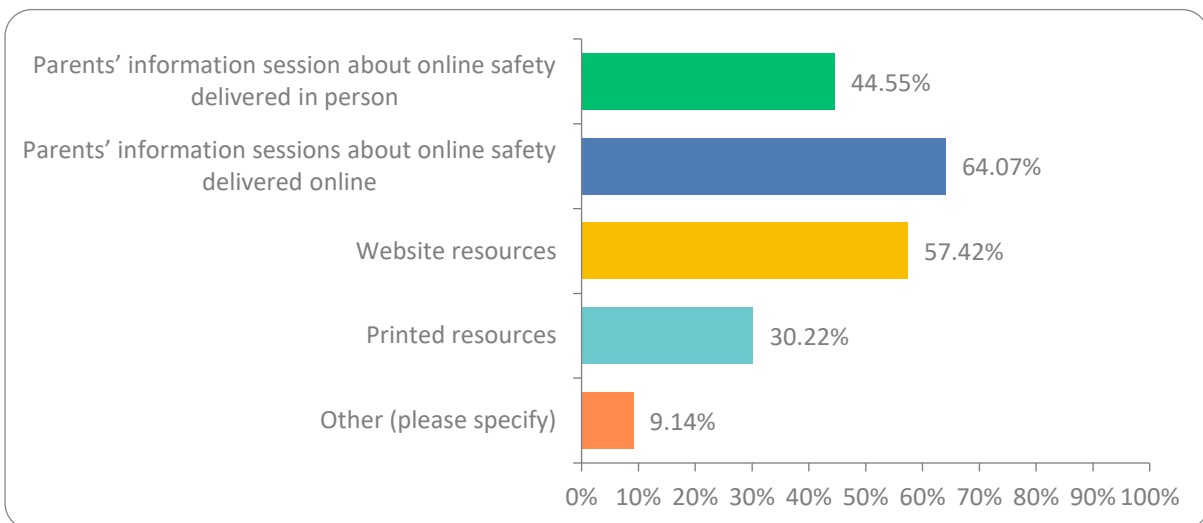
In contrast to the question about their own ability to help children cope with things that upset or bother them online, only 26% of parents feel their children is able to cope with such content. The largest group of parents (42%) say that their child is either “not at all” or “not very much” able to cope with things that upset them online.

**As far as you are aware, in the past year, have any of these things happened to your child on the internet?**



When assessing the kinds of risks children have been exposed to online, the most common answer was that children were asked to make in-app purchases when playing an online game

**Q14 As a parent, what support would you like, to be able to support your child's online activities? Please tick all that apply.**



Parents would like additional help so that they are better equipped to support their children online. 65% of parents would like parents' information sessions about online safety delivered online, while 45% would like them delivered in person. 57% of parents would like website resources to be available to them.