

The incidence of content that is harmful to children on regulated services

We invite stakeholders to provide evidence relating to the incidence of PPC, PC or NDC on regulated user-to-user, search or combined services. Please provide as much detail as you can.

This could include but is not limited to evidence about:

Confidential? - N

Children are experiencing growing levels of harmful content online, including violent and sexually explicit content and content focused on weight loss, eating disorders and cosmetic surgery. In our Girls' Attitudes Survey 2024, we found that 77% of girls and young women aged 7-21 have experienced online harm in the last year.

From Girlguiding's research, we have looked at incidences of PPC, PC and NDC content exposure.

When looking at PPC content exposure, experiences of violence against women and girls online is concerningly high amongst young people. When asked, one in eight (12%) young people surveyed, aged 13-18, say they have seen sexual threats, including those of rape, directed at women and girls online, and over a quarter (27%) have seen misogynistic comments on social media posts. Two fifths of children aged 10-16 (40%) have seen violent or upsetting images or videos online (Girlguiding research, 2026).

Not only are young people seeing these harmful comments and threats, but some girls revealed they are also receiving them firsthand. Over a quarter of girls as young as 13 (26% of 13-18 year olds) have seen rumours circulate about their own sexual behaviour online, and one in eight (13%) girls said they had received sexual threats online, including those of rape, from strangers. or someone they know (Safer Internet Day Research 2025).

Recently published Girlguiding research found that children aged 10-16 are finding their suggested content containing incidences of PPC. Over 20% of 10-16 year olds were shown content that made them feel uncomfortable. 16% said they were shown violent or disturbing content and 14% said they were shown sexual content.

Evidence of priority content includes girls' experiences of bullying, not just directed at themselves but also other social media users. Girls aged 7-10 years old have seen a 39% increase in mean comments online since 2021.

When we look at the differences of online experiences of girls aged 7-10, 50% of girls of colour are seeing mean comments, in comparison to 36% of white girls. We also

Question	Your response
	found that 53% of all girls aged 11-21 have seen hate speech online. This increases to 68% for disabled girls and 72% for LGBTQ+ girls. When asked about the factors impacting girls' mental health, 65% of girls aged 11-16 said 'bullying' was a key issue and in our 2023 report, 25% of girls aged 7-10 had experienced cyberbullying. But girls are not just experiencing bullying online, they also see it targeted at others, from their peers to high profile women. In 2022, Girlguiding's research found that 36% of girls aged 11-21 agrees that the abuse high profile women receive online puts them off certain jobs, such as politics. Unfortunately, there is a knock-on impact of this abuse. Girls are limiting themselves, with 35% saying they avoid talking or posting about certain subjects online (Girls' Attitudes Survey, 2025) to avoid abuse. Non-designated content may initially not appear as harmful as other content, but Girlguiding research found that body stigma content has a significant impact on girls' mental health and wellbeing. Girls in particular, are subject to extreme targeting by weight loss and cosmetic surgery content and adverts. We found that 6 in 10 girls and young women aged 11-21 are consumed by their own negative thoughts about how they look. 54% of girls aged 11-21 wish they looked like they do when they use filters on social media and 36% feel pressure to use these filters. These statistics are higher for girls who are disabled (48%) or neurodiverse (50%). As a result of this exposure to fake and edited images, we also found that 61% of girls aged 11-16 have said they want to lose weight. Girls as young as 11 tell us they're considering using anti-aging creams in the next 5 years. Nearly 1 in 5 young women aged 17-21 say they'd consider cosmetic procedures, like botox or fillers, in the next 5 years. This rises again to 23% for girls who are neurodiverse. From our Girls' Attitudes Survey 2023 report, we found that 50% of girls aged 11-21 said 'There are too many adverts online about losing weight or changing your appearance' whilst 34% of girls aged 11-21 have tried a diet after hearing about a celebrity or influencer using it.

Question	Your response
	The increase in the pressure girls' face regarding their appearance coincides with the decline we are seeing in girls' mental health and wellbeing. 76% of girls aged 11-16 told us that they know more girls their age that are worried about the way their body looks and 67% said they know girls with low self-esteem. Concerningly, 62% of girls aged 11-16 know someone who self-harms and 54% know someone who has an eating disorder. When asked about this link to content online, a girl aged 11-16 said 'The main insecurity women endure throughout their lives is being happy with their body. I wish more creators would show realistic content' (Girls' Attitudes Survey, 2024). Overall, 46% of 11-21-year-olds would feel safer online if there were more unedited images and content.
The quantity, prevalence or presence of specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC on regulated services and the frequency with which children are encountering this content.	Confidential? – N From Girlguiding's 2026 research, we found that children are exposed to PPC, PC and NDC on a regular basis, whether that is through organic content or advertisements. Almost a quarter of children aged 10-16 (24%) say they don't have control of what appears in their social media feeds or as suggested content. Just under one third (32%) have seen sexual images and videos online and two fifths (40%) have seen violent or upsetting images or videos online.
How demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation and disability influence the likelihood that children will encounter specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC.	Confidential? - N The findings of Girlguiding's research show that girls are particularly targeted by PPC, PC and NDC, due to their gender and the rise of misogynistic attitudes, language and behaviour online. We have also found that girls of colour, disabled girls, neurodiverse girls and LGBTQ+ girls are more likely to experience and encounter PPC, PC or NPC. 73% of girls have experienced sexism online or on social media – this figure rises to 84% for young women aged 17-21. The number of girls aged 11-21 who have received unwanted sexual images has risen from 26% in 2021 to 35% in 2024. The number of girls aged 13+ who

Question	Your response
	have felt pressure to share images of themselves they're not comfortable is 16%. Girls from marginalised backgrounds are more likely to have seen hate speech online compared to the figure for all girls, with 56% of girls in deprived areas, 68% of disabled girls and 72% of LGBTQ+ girls.
The services or types of service where children are most likely to encounter specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC.	
The severity of harm that UK children suffer, or may suffer, as a result of content that is harmful to children We invite stakeholders to provide any evidence regarding the severity of harm that UK children suffer, or may suffer, as a result of encountering PPC, PC or NDC. Please provide as much detail as you can. This could include but is not limited to evidence about:	Confidential? - N Girlguiding research shows that girls are disproportionately affected by online harms, something made worse by the worrying rise of misogynist influencers. Girls want better protection online, with Girlguiding's Girls Attitudes Survey finding that 50% of girls saying the removal of harmful content would make them feel safer. Girls want online platforms to take action to help them feel safer: 45% of girls want more protection for children and young people (e.g. age verification, restrictions for under 18s) (Girls' Attitudes Survey, 2025).
The impact that specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC can have on a child's wellbeing, behaviours, or other physical or psychological outcomes. This might include evidence concerning cumulative exposure to specific kind(s) or combinations of PPC, PC or NDC.	Girlguiding's Safer Internet Day research explored the impact of influencer culture, particularly those promoting misogynistic content. When asked about content they've seen from influencers, 66% of boys aged 13-18 report seeing Andrew Tate content on social media. Over half (60%) of boys said that they see this content through their algorithms ('for you page/feed'). 36% of boys said the content had been showed to them by friends in school. When asked how they respond to seeing videos on social media that make them feel uncomfortable, half of respondents (50%) said they 'just click off' – but 14% of boys aged 13-18 revealed they will just watch the video anyway, regardless of how it made them feel.

Question	Your response
	Not only is the impact of this content significantly negative for boys who are forced to view content fed through their algorithm, the content has a huge impact on girls, both directly and indirectly through the rise of misogynistic attitudes, language and behaviour. The research reveals that online harms and misogynistic content makes girls feel unsafe (34%) and unable to tell a parent or carer (32%).
Any causal links between a child encountering specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC and subsequently suffering physical or psychological harm.	The research conducted to mark Safer Internet Day 2025 looked at the impact of online harms. When asked about how the online harms they've experienced make them feel or react, girls aged 13-18 said • 32% felt unable to tell a parent or carer • 34% felt unsafe • 15% wanted to miss school • 11% stopped seeing friends or going out
How demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation and disability can influence the severity of harm that UK children suffer, or may suffer, as a result of encountering specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC.	
Whether it is appropriate to make changes to the kinds of PPC and PC in the Act We invite stakeholders to provide evidence that suggests any kind(s) of PPC and/or PC in the Act are inappropriate or incorrectly categorised. This could include but is not limited to evidence indicating that:	
Any kind of PPC or PC in the Act should cease to be categorised as content harmful to children.	Confidential? – Y / N

Question	Your response
Any kind of PPC would be more appropriately categorised as PC.	Confidential? – Y / N
Any kind of PC would be more appropriately categorised as PPC.	Confidential? – Y / N
We invite stakeholders to provide evidence in support of additional kind(s) of content being added to the PPC or PC categories in the Act. This should include, but is not limited to:	
Evidence that the kind(s) of content pose a material risk to an appreciable number of children.	Confidential? – Y / N
Evidence that the kind(s) of content pose a risk of significant harm to children.	Confidential? – Y / N
Evidence to support each kind of content being categorised as either PPC or PC.	Confidential? – Y / N

Please tell us how you came across about this call for evidence.

- ☐ Email from Ofcom
- ☐ Saw it on social media
- ☒ Found it on Ofcom's website
- ☐ Found it on another website
- ☐ Heard about it on TV or radio
- ☐ Read about it in a newspaper or magazine
- ☐ Heard about it at an event
- ☐ Somebody told me or shared it with me
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Please complete this form in full and return to ContentHarmfultoChildren@ofcom.org.uk.