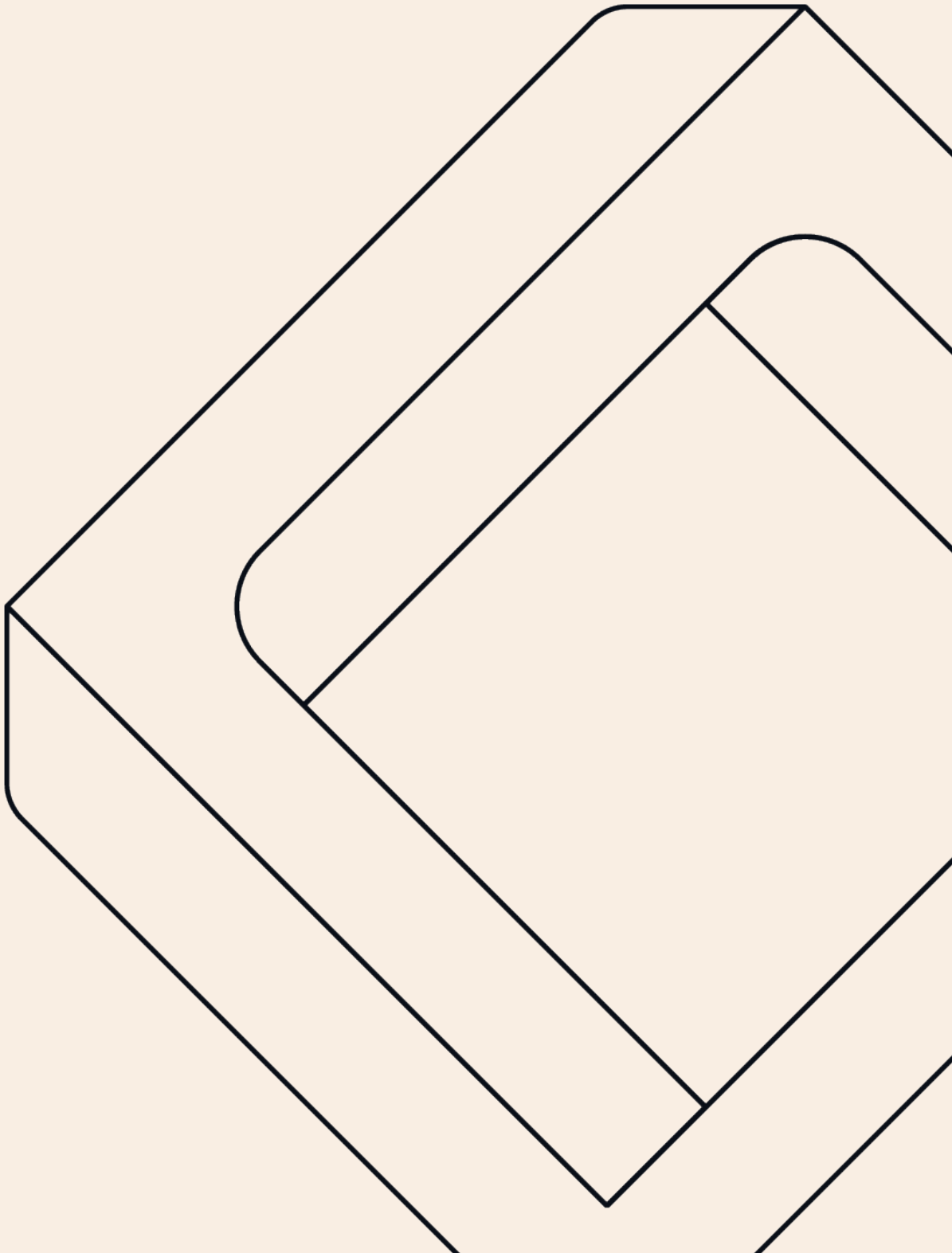


Technical Report

Adults and Under 18s Trial

30 01 2026



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Introduction

Background

Under the Online Safety Act 2023, Ofcom is required to develop guidance and codes of practice setting out how online services can meet their duties to protect their users. In its illegal harms statement¹ and associated “Illegal Content” Codes of Practice,² Ofcom has recommended that default safety settings should be provided for child users, helping to ensure that they are protected from network expansion, direct messages from those who are not in their network, and location sharing. Moreover, information should be provided to children before they disable a default, to allow them to understand the protections that settings afford and the implications of disabling them. Ofcom also recommends that services set defaults to ensure a safer experience for women and girls in its Guidance on protecting women and girls.³ These include defaults on unsolicited interactions and privacy settings, and presenting choices about settings in bundles that group similar safety settings together.

Ofcom has conducted previous research on user controls and default safety settings, which suggested that while defaults are effective in encouraging safer choices among children, they are not failsafe.⁴ Previous research also identified a potential backfire effect when default settings were paired with a message.⁵ These findings highlight the need for additional research that investigates the effectiveness of interventions that may reduce the likelihood of defaults being overridden. Moreover, Ofcom has highlighted that little research has been done to understand the difference between adults’ and children’s responses to safety settings. As a result, Ofcom commissioned Verian to conduct online experiments running simultaneously with adults and under 18s.

Research Objectives

- To learn about the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce the likelihood that default safety settings are overridden
- To learn which default settings are more or less likely to be overridden
- To understand differences in how adults and under 18s respond to default safety settings, including their likelihood of overriding these settings and attitudes towards them.

¹ Statement: Protecting people from illegal harms online

² Illegal content Codes of Practice for user-to-user services

³ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/a-safer-life-online-for-women-and-girls>

⁴ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/safety-technology/boosting-childrens-safety-online-user-controls>

⁵ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/safety-technology/behavioural-insights-to-empower-social-media-users>

Methodology

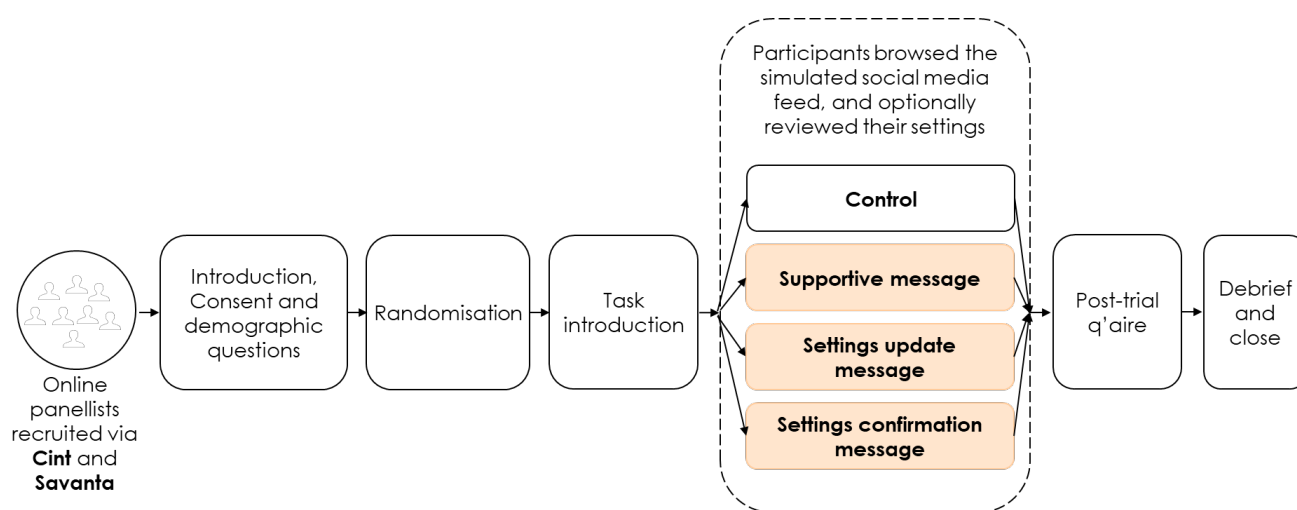
To explore the research questions, we conducted two online experiments using a between-subjects design with one control and three intervention arms. (This means that each participants completed the experiment once, in one of the arms, and we compared the outcomes of the different, independent groups to determine if the interventions caused a difference.) The two experiments differed mainly in the population of interest; one used a sample of adults, and one used a sample of under 18s.

In each experiment, participants were asked to browse a simulated social media feed, containing a variety of posts mocked up by the Verian team. The majority of feed content used in this experiment was shown to both adults and under 18s, however a small number of posts were altered for under 18s to make the content relevant and engaging for the participants. As participants browsed the feed, they received a prompt inviting them to review their safety settings. If participants engaged with the prompt, they had the option of updating their settings and saving their preferences. After reviewing their safety settings, participants continued browsing the feed.

After browsing the social media feed, participants completed a questionnaire, which included questions designed to probe the mechanisms by which the interventions may have worked (for example, did participants understand the safety settings available to them?), and attitudes towards safety settings and online safety. The questionnaire for children under 18 also asked about usual adult oversight when using social media. For a full list of the questions included in the questionnaire, please see Appendix 1: Questionnaire.

The flow of the experiment is summarised in the figure below. The sections below provide more detail on the design.

Figure 1: User flow through the experiment



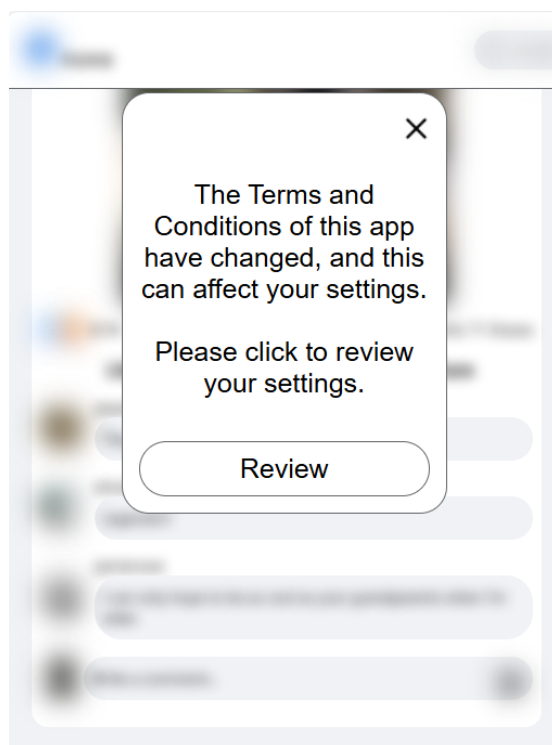
Procedure

Each experiment began with demographic questions to implement quotas (see Sample). We then randomly assigned participants into one of four arms using a least-

fill algorithm⁶. Participants were introduced to the social media feed and instructed to complete a 'browsing task' in which they scrolled through the feed.

During the browsing task, participants were shown the same 24 posts presented in a random order (see Feed content for details). After participants viewed the sixth post, they received a pop-up notification on screen that invited them to review their settings (see Figure 2). Participants could dismiss this pop-up by clicking 'X'. Following a soft launch, we introduced a 5-second delay before the 'X' button appeared on the initial pop-up, to encourage users to read the prompt rather than instantly dismiss it. In addition, participants were required to spend at least 30 seconds on the feed. These avoided participants skipping through the feed too quickly.

Figure 2: Prompt inviting users to review their settings



If participants chose to review their settings by clicking 'Review' on the pop-up notification, they were taken to a settings page which contained three types of settings: 'location sharing' settings, 'user connection settings' and 'Direct message' settings (see Figure 3). Each setting type contained several specific default safety settings. The specific default settings shown to participants were:

Location sharing settings

- *Do not show my location on my posts.*
- *Do not show my location on my profile*
- *Do not show my live location on FindMyFriends*

⁶ A least-fill algorithm keeps experimental arms balanced by assigning each new participant to the arm that currently has the fewest participants. If multiple arms are tied for the lowest number of participants, the participant is randomly allocated among these arms only.

User connection settings

- Keep my profile out of 'People you may know' suggestions
- Keep friend/follower suggestions turned off
- Keep my friends list private
- Keep me unlisted in mutual friends/followers

Direct Message settings

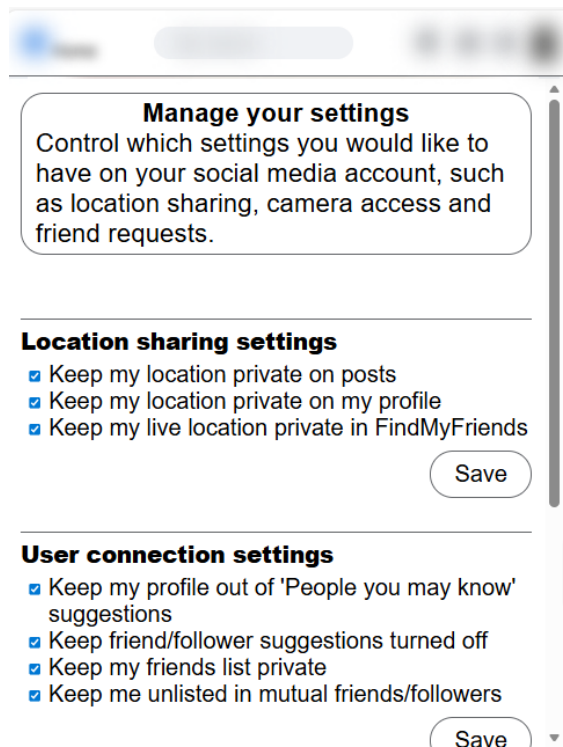
- Do not allow direct messages from users I am not connected to
- Warn me when I am added to a group chat with people I am not connected with

We refer to these settings as respectively 'Location sharing settings', 'Network settings' and 'Messaging settings' when we discuss results to limit space needed in Figures and Tables.

Each setting was marked with a tick to indicate it was turned on by default. At this stage, participants could turn off a setting by clicking on the tick and then clicking 'Save' to update their settings.

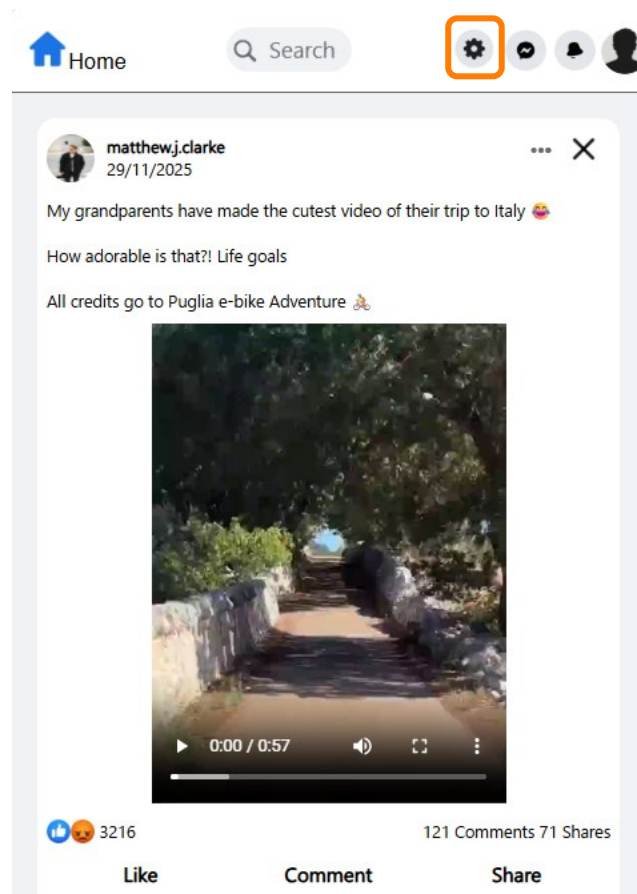
Participants assigned to the control condition saw the settings as shown in Figure 3. Participants assigned to the intervention conditions saw additional text and choice architecture at this stage (see Interventions for details). After reviewing the settings, participants had to click 'Confirm my settings' to return to the main feed.

Figure 3: Settings page with settings menu



After participants reviewed their settings, they returned to the social media feed and continued browsing until they had viewed all 24 posts. During this time, participants also had the option to navigate back to the settings menu via the settings icon (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Settings button which allows user to access the settings menu



Once participants reached the bottom of the social media feed, a 'Leave website' button appeared. Clicking this button ended the browsing task and started the survey.

Interventions

When viewing the settings menu during the browsing task, participants assigned to one of intervention arms saw a message that was shown next to the menu of options that they could change. The timing and the way in which the messages were shown differed across intervention arms.

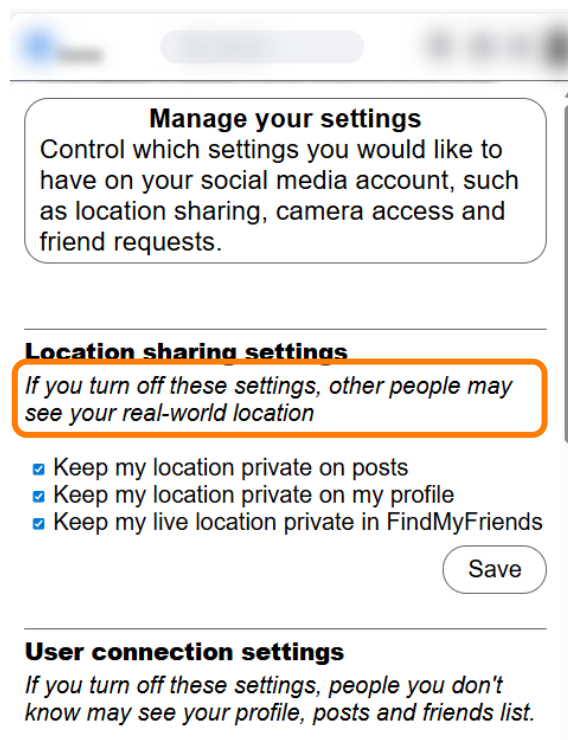
1. Supportive message

Participants in the 'supportive message' arm saw a message displayed underneath each settings category, which informed the user about the implications of disabling the default safety settings. Each category of safety settings had a unique message:

- **Location sharing settings:** "If you turn off these settings, other people may see your real-world location"
- **User connection settings:** "If you turn off these settings, people you don't know may see your profile, posts and friends list"
- **Direct messaging settings:** "If you turn off these settings, you may receive messages from people you don't know"

Figure 5 shows how the message related to the location sharing settings was shown to participants.

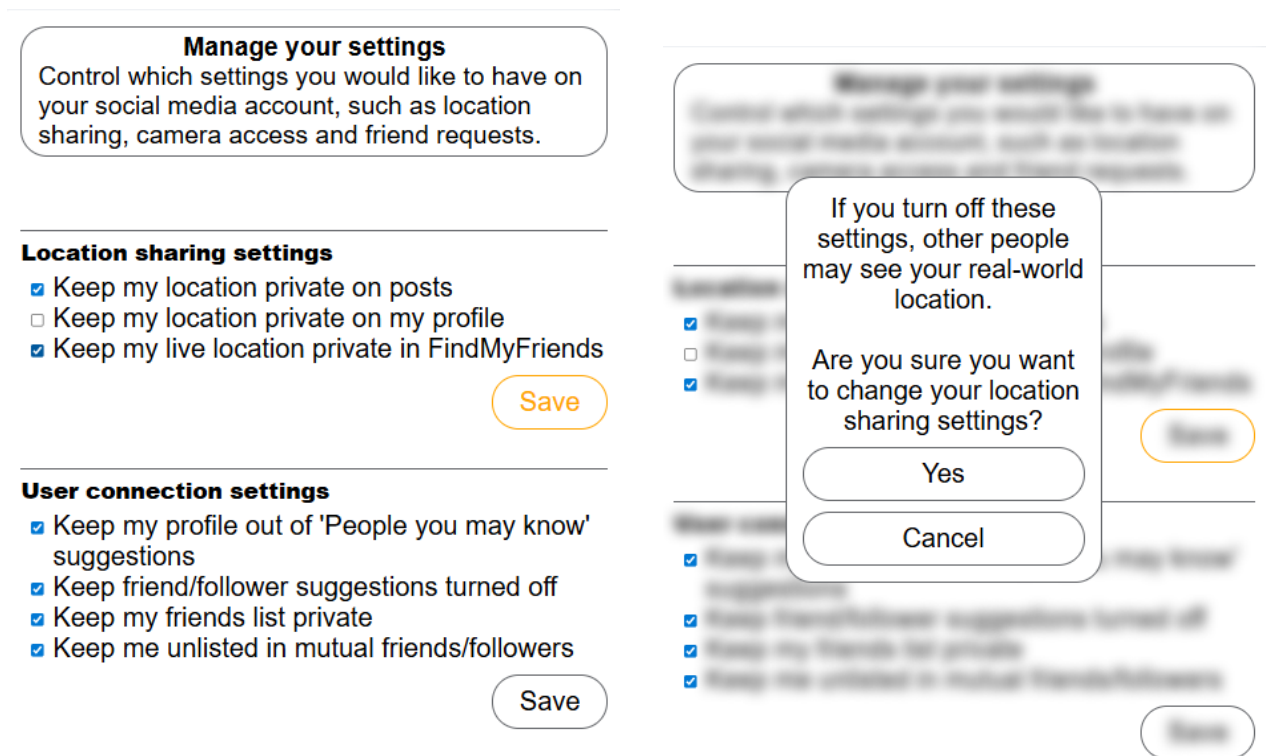
Figure 5: Example of messaging on the main settings menu



2. Settings update message

Participants in the 'settings update message' arm were shown a pop-up with the message used in the 'supportive message' arm if they chose to de-select any of the default safety settings within a particular category (for example, location sharing settings) and click 'Save'. Moreover, they were asked "Are you sure you want to change your [safety setting category] settings?". If participants clicked 'Yes', the setting was turned off. If participants clicked 'Cancel', the default safety setting remained on. See Figure 6 for an example of how this pop-up was shown to participants.

Figure 6: Example of messaging at the point of updating safety setting



Each safety setting (location sharing, user connection, direct messaging) triggered a unique pop-up for each set of safety settings. The pop-up was triggered each time a user tried to turn off any default safety settings by changing the setting and clicking 'Save'.

3. Settings confirmation message

For participants in the 'settings confirmation message' arm, friction was introduced if participants chose to deselect any default safety settings across any safety setting category by:

1. changing the setting,
2. clicking 'Save', and
3. confirming the change by clicking 'Confirm my settings'.

If a participant completed each of the above steps, they saw a pop-up that indicated which default settings had been updated and informed them about the implication of those changes. The exact content of the pop-up differed depending on the safety settings the participant deselected. The pop-up also asked participants: "Are you sure you want to change your settings?". If participants clicked 'Yes', all changes to safety settings were changed. If participants clicked 'Cancel', the default safety setting remained on. See Figure 7 for an example of how this pop-up was shown to participants.

Figure 7: Example of messaging at the point of confirming settings

Manage your settings

Control which settings you would like to have on your social media account, such as location sharing, camera access and friend requests.

Location sharing settings

- ☒ Keep my location private on posts
- ☐ Keep my location private on my profile
- ☒ Keep my live location private in FindMyFriends

Save

User connection settings

- ☒ Keep my profile out of 'People you may know' suggestions
- ☒ Keep friend/follower suggestions turned off
- ☒ Keep my friends list private
- ☒ Keep me unlisted in mutual friends/followers

Save

You chose to update the following settings:

- Location sharing

This means:

- Other people may see your real-world location.

Are you sure you want to change your settings?

Yes

Cancel

CONFIRM MY SETTINGS

Feed content

The social media feed contained 24 posts which were shown to participants in a random order. The feed contained mock social media posts composed of a mixture of text, images and videos. The posts covered a wide range of topics, including food, travel, sport and health, beauty, and current affairs. Additionally, we included posts from a wide variety of accounts, including friend accounts, influencers and posts from branded accounts. Several posts shown in the feed for adults were adapted to ensure they were engaging for under 18s. For example, posts from branded accounts were altered so that they showed relevant products or services for children. For a full list of the posts included in this experiment for both adults and under 18s, please refer to Appendix 2: Feed Posts.

All posts shown in the social media feed were created by Verian researchers using open license content, content licensed for commercial re-use, or original content.

Sample

We recruited two separate samples for this experiment: a sample restricted to UK adults ($n = 3,201$) and a sample restricted to under 18s from the UK ($n = 5,717$).

To ensure the sample was demographically representative of the target population, we applied recruitment quotas on age band interlocked with gender and on UK region of residence, drawn from recent ONS population estimates for adults and

under 18s (see Table 1 and Table 2).⁷ Towards the end of the fieldwork period, we relaxed the planned quotas to aid data collection. We allowed each group to be up to 10 percentage point larger as proportion of the total sample compared to the original quota (see Data collection for details). As shown in the tables below, this means that the achieved sample is close but not exactly equal to the planned quotas. The distribution of demographics was relatively well balanced across trial arms in both the adult and under-18 samples.

⁷<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2023#the-population-of-the-uk>

Table 1: Quotas and achieved sample for adult sample (based on ONS mid-year population estimates 2023)

Age / Gender group	Planned (%)	Achieved (%)	Control arm – achieved (%)	Supportive message – achieved (%)	Settings update – achieved (%)	Settings confirmation message – achieved (%)
18–24; Female	5.1	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.5	4.0
25–34; Female	8.6	9.1	8.4	9.9	7.8	10.5
35–64; Female	25.0	25.4	24.8	25.0	27.8	23.8
65+; Female	12.9	9.5	8.9	9.9	9.1	10.1
18–24; Male	5.4	5.6	6.2	5.8	4.5	5.7
25–34; Male	8.3	9.8	10.9	9.0	10.0	9.4
35–64; Male	23.8	24.	25.6	22.8	24.1	24.2
65+; Male	10.9	11.0	9.4	12.1	10.9	11.6

Nation / Region	Planned (%)	Achieved (%)	Control arm – achieved (%)	Supportive message – achieved (%)	Settings update – achieved (%)	Settings confirmation message – achieved (%)
England: North ^[a]	23.3	23.4	24.2	21.9	25.1	22.5
England: Midlands ^[b]	25.5	23.2	24.1	25.4	20.1	23.2
England: South ^[c]	35.5	38.2	35.8	38.2	38.6	40.0
Wales	4.7	4.5	4.9	4.9	5.1	3.2
Scotland	8.3	8.7	8.6	7.6	9.4	9.1
Northern Ireland	2.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.6	2.0

a) North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber. [b] East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England. [c] London, South East, South West

Table 2: Quotas and achieved sample for under 18s sample (based on ONS mid-year population estimates 2023)

Age / Gender group	Planned (%)	Achieved (%)	Control arm – achieved (%)	Supportive message – achieved (%)	Settings update – achieved (%)	Settings confirmation message – achieved (%)
13–15; Female	29.8	29.1	27.6	30.9	28.8	28.7
16–17; Female	18.9	18.8	19.1	18.0	18.6	19.2
13–15; Male	31.2	31.0	32.5	29.0	31.4	31.1
16–17; Male	20.1	20.1	19.6	21.1	20.3	19.5

Nation / Region	Planned (%)	Achieved (%)	Control arm – achieved (%)	Supportive message – achieved (%)	Settings update – achieved (%)	Settings confirmation message – achieved (%)
England: North ^[a]	23.4	24.3	23.7	21.7	23.5	24.1
England: Midlands ^[b]	26.2	23.3	22.9	25.8	23.5	24.9
England: South ^[c]	35.4	37.4	38.9	37.1	37.5	36.0
Wales	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.4	3.9	4.3
Scotland	7.4	6.6	6.0	6.2	7.1	7.1
Northern Ireland	3.1	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.8	2.3

[a] North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber. [b] East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England. [c] London, South East, South West

During the post-experiment survey following the browsing task, we asked participants about their real-world social media use (see Table 3).

Table 3: Reported social media use

Sample	Proportion of participants who reported using social media (%)
Adult sample	97.0
Under 18s sample: young people (16–17)	99.2
Under 18s Sample: children (13–15)	98.9

Question: Have you used social media in the last 12 months?

Data collection and ethics

Participants were recruited via two panels: Cint and Savanta.

All adults were recruited via Cint (n = 3,201). Participants recruited into the adult sample provided consent at the point of starting the survey.

Under 18s were recruited from Cint and Savanta. We planned to recruit 3,200 under 18s via Cint and 2,500 via Savanta. However, we were not able to fulfil the quota on males aged 16–17 that we planned to collect via Cint, so these participants were collected via Savanta instead. The final obtained sample consisted of 2,954 under 18s from Cint and 2,763 under 18s from Savanta.

Children aged 13–15 were recruited via their parents. Cint and Savanta sent an invitation to parents asking for their child take part in the survey. If the parents consented to this, they were asked to pass on the survey link to their child. The child was then asked to agree to take part and complete the survey. This process was designed to safeguard children through parental control as well as satisfying the requirements of consent for data collection under data protection legislation, including the UK's General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). All other recruitment processes were the same as in the adult's experiment.

The process for recruiting 16–17-year-olds was the same as for adults, as participants aged 16 and 17 were deemed capable of consenting to data collection themselves.

As previously highlighted, some content shown in the feed for under 18s was adjusted to ensure it was relevant and engaging for younger users (see Feed content for details). No potentially harmful content was included in the feed.

Throughout fieldwork and data processing, Verian ensured compliance with the Data Protection requirements in the UK, including UK GDPR.

Analysis

Primary outcome and analysis

The primary outcome for this research was whether a participant turned off at least one of the default safety settings during the experiment, regardless of whether they clicked to review their settings or not. We compared the proportion of participants who turned off at least one setting in each intervention arm with the proportion in

the control arm using two-sample z-tests. We applied a Bonferroni correction to each to minimise the family-wise Type 1 error rate.⁸

Descriptive analyses (secondary outcomes)

We explored secondary measures to explore the mechanisms through which our interventions may have acted. This analysis focused on results of the questionnaire, as well as the proportion of participants turning off specific settings. To avoid inflating the family-wise Type 1 error, we analysed secondary measures descriptively. We include the following descriptive analysis in this report.

Stated preference for safety settings. We asked participants who use social media in real life whether they wanted people they were not connected with on social media to be able to do any of the following when using social media:

- see their profile or posts,
- see their location, or
- send them messages.

Understanding of safety settings shown in the experiment. The survey included three questions on understanding of settings. For each type of setting, participants were shown the settings box with a combination of settings turned on or off, and asked what other people would be able to see or do based on this combination. We assessed whether participants answered these questions correctly. The figure below shows the combination of settings in this question for each type of setting.

⁸ We are more likely to find spurious results if we conduct more statistical tests. The Bonferroni correction accounts for this by changing the effective threshold we use to assess whether a result is statistically significant. More precisely, the effective threshold is calculated by dividing the target significance level by the number of statistical tests conducted.

Figure 8: Understanding of safety settings questions in the survey

User connection settings

- ☐ Keep my profile out of 'People you may know' suggestions
- ☒ Keep friend/follower suggestions turned off
- ☒ Keep my friends list private
- ☒ Keep me unlisted in mutual friends/followers

If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to see their list of friends?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Note: correct answer is No.

Location sharing settings

- ☐ Keep my location private on posts
- ☐ Keep my location private on my profile
- ☐ Keep my live location private in FindMyFriends

If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think other people would be able to see their location (for example on their profile or posts) on this social media platform?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Note: correct answer is Yes

Direct Message settings

- ☒ Only show messages from people I am connected with
- ☒ Warn me when a group includes people I'm not connected with

If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that they would receive messages from other people who they are not connected with (not friends or followers)?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Note: correct answer is No.

Satisfaction with controls in experiment. We asked participants whether they were satisfied with the settings in the experiment controlling who could interact with them. This was asked as a Yes/No question. We excluded participants who did not view the settings because they did not see what the settings were.

Empowerment. We asked participants what type of things they felt they had control over when scrolling the social media feed in the experiment, such as whether other users could see their location in their profile or whether other users (they were not connected with) could send them messages. This was asked as multiple response questions where participants could provide more than one answer.

Previous awareness and use of settings. We asked participants whether they were aware of types of safety settings on existing social media platforms and whether they had previously used these settings before.

Perspectives on proposed changes to safety settings. We asked participants about their level of support for three potential changes to how online safety settings function on social media sites, namely:

- requiring platforms to explain the purpose of safety settings to users;
- turning on safety settings by default for all users; and,
- fixing safety settings for under 18s without these users being able to turn off the feature.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire shows how these proposed changes were described in the survey.

Participants were asked to what degree they agreed with the proposed change on a five-point scale ranging from completely disagree to completely agree. Moreover, we asked participants whether they agreed that the proposed changes would keep users safe and – if not – why they felt that the proposed changes would not keep users safe.

Experience of online harms. We asked participants about their experiences of online harms involving negative interactions with other users online that made them feel

uncomfortable, upset or negative in any way in the four weeks prior to the survey. Participants who reported experiencing a negative online interaction with another user were then asked if they took actions in response to experiencing this harm, and which action they took.⁹ Actions were elicited via a multiple response question with options including blocking users, stop using the platform or changing safety settings on the platform.

Power

We carried out a separate power calculation for both the adult and children samples to determine the minimum detectable effect of our intervention. Our power calculations assume the following:

- a binary outcome analysed using a two-sample z-tests
- A sample of 3,200 participants, or 800 per experimental arm
- An expected baseline proportion of participants ending the experiment with safety settings turned on of 69% for children¹⁰ and 85% for adults¹¹ based on previous research by Ofcom
- statistical significance at the 0.05 level, with Bonferroni adjustments for three comparisons (each intervention arm compared to a single control)
- the conventional threshold for power of 80%

The results of our power calculations indicate that we are sufficiently powered trial to detect an increase of 5–7 percentage points or more, and a decrease of 6–7 percentage points or more.

⁹ Participants who reported having experienced harm were asked if they were comfortable answering further questions on this topic. Follow-up questions were only asked of those participants were comfortable to do so.

¹⁰ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/behavioural-insights/testing-user-controls-with-children-2025.pdf?v=395473>. Based on the experimental arm with defaults turned on.

¹¹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/making-sense-of-media/best-practice-design-principles/behavioural-insights-to-empower-social-media-users.pdf?v=398354>. Based on the mini-experiment with safety settings turned on by default.

Results

Primary analysis – Proportion of participants who turned off at least one safety setting at the end of the experiment

Most adult participants (94.2%), young people aged 16–17 (93.8%) and children aged 13–15 (94.2%) had every default setting turned on at the end of the experiment. None of the intervention arms were statistically significantly different from the control arm for either adults or children (see Table 4).

In the control arm, 6.9% of adult participants turned off at least one default safety setting, compared to 5.1% in the supportive messaging arm, 4.8% in the settings update arm, and 6.4% in the settings confirmation message arm (see Figure 9). These percentages ranged from 5.1% to 7.4% for young people aged 16–17, and from 4.4% to 6.6% for children aged 13–15.

Figure 9: Proportion of participants who turned off at least one safety setting at the end of the experiment

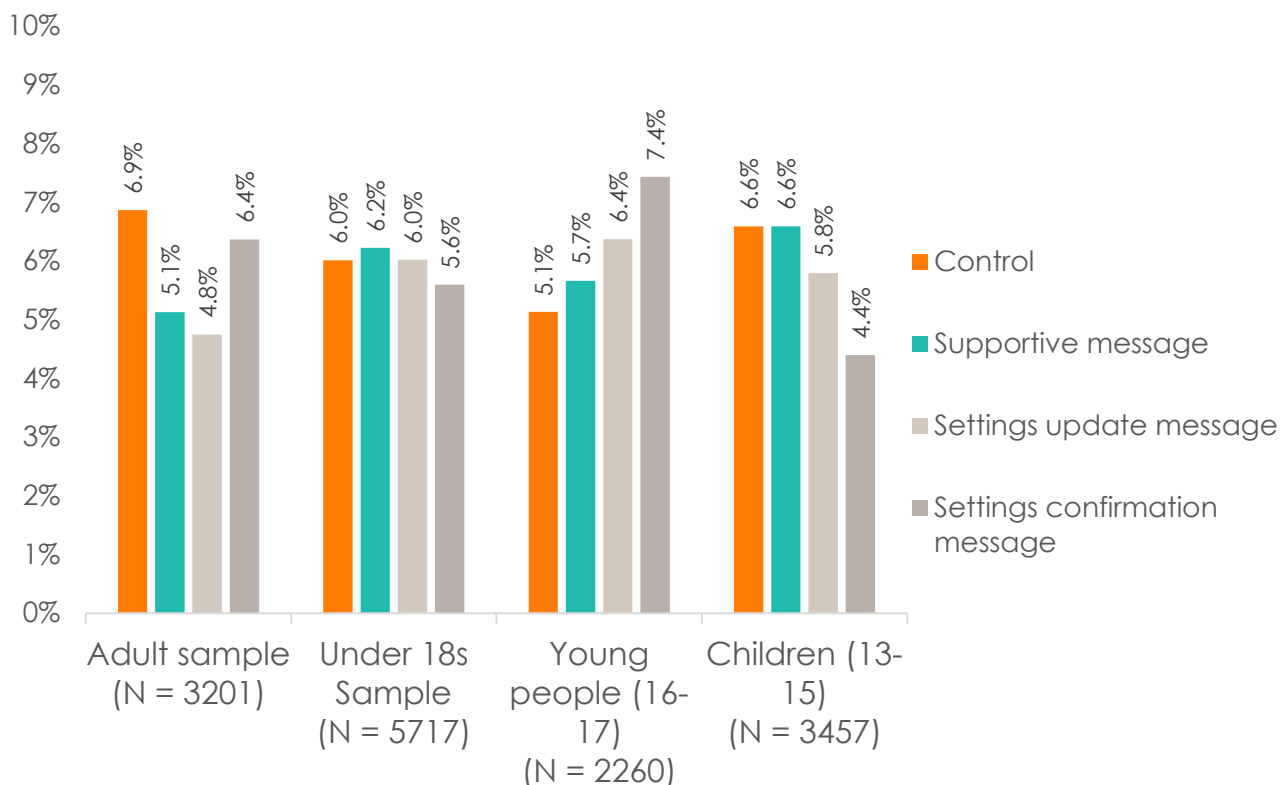


Table 4: Primary analysis – Adult and under 18 samples

Comparison	Difference in proportion turning off at least one setting (percentage points)	χ^2 [a]	p-value (statistical significance is assessed at 0.017 level) ^[b]
Adults (N = 3,201)			
Control vs supportive message	-1.7	2.13	.144
Control vs settings update message	-2.1	3.28	.070
Control vs settings confirmation message	-0.5	1.62	.688
Under 18 (n = 5,717)			
Control vs supportive message	0.2	0.05	.815
Control vs settings update message	0.0	0.00	.992
Control vs settings confirmation message	-0.4	0.23	.635
Young people (16–17) (n = 2,260)			
Control vs supportive message	0.5	0.16	.693
Control vs settings update message	1.2	0.80	.371
Control vs settings confirmation message	2.3	2.54	.111
Children (13–15) (n = 3,457)			
Control vs supportive message	0.0	0.00	1.000
Control vs settings update message	-0.8	0.47	.493
Control vs settings confirmation message	-2.2	3.99	.046

[a] Results from a 2-sample test for equality of proportions without continuity correction. Conducted as a special case of the Pearson chi-square test, which is mathematically equivalent to a two-sample z-test. [b] We assess family-wise significance at the 5% level, so with the Bonferroni correction it is evaluated at 1.7% ($\alpha = 0.017$).

For a full overview of the settings people turned off, broken down by each arm for each experiment, see Appendix 3 Figure 1, Appendix 3 Figure 2, and Appendix 3 Figure 3.

Additional analysis – Interaction effects

To further explore whether adults and children respond differently to the interventions, we conducted a regression analysis. We ran a logit regression predicting the likelihood that a user turned off at least one default safety setting by the end of the experiment. This model included indicators for each of the interventions (with the control group as baseline), indicators for children aged 13–15 and young people aged 16–17 (with adults as baseline), and interactions between each of these; see Appendix 4 Table 1.

We then assessed whether the interactions between interventions and age groups were jointly statistically significant. In other words, we looked whether there was any indication that at least one age group responded differently to at least one intervention compared to other age groups.

We did not find evidence for this. The joint test was not statistically significant ($p = 0.083$).

Descriptive analysis for adults' experiment

Results presented in this section are reported descriptively and have not been tested for statistical significance.

Proportion of participants viewing settings

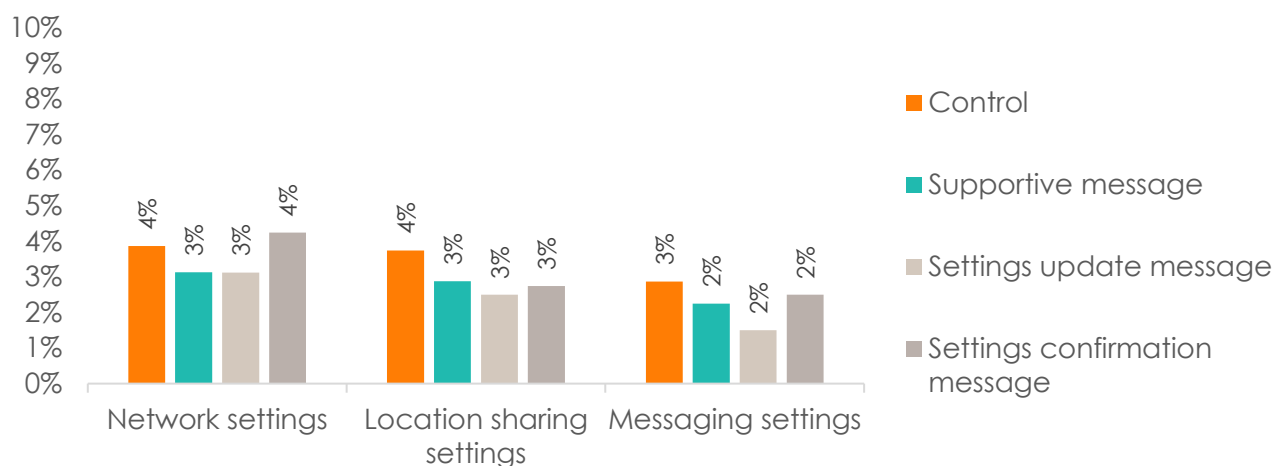
Around three in four participants viewed their settings at some point during the experiment (75%). This proportion was similar in each experimental arm (control: 75%; supportive message: 74%; settings update message: 74%; settings confirmation message: 76%), which was to be expected as the user experience in each arm was identical until participants reached the settings.

Which safety settings did participants turn off?

No one type of safety setting was turned off by more than 5% of participants. Participants most often turned off at least one network setting (4%), followed by

location sharing (4%), and messaging settings (2%). This pattern held across experimental arms (see Figure 9).

Figure 10: Proportion of participants who turn off at least one type of safety setting



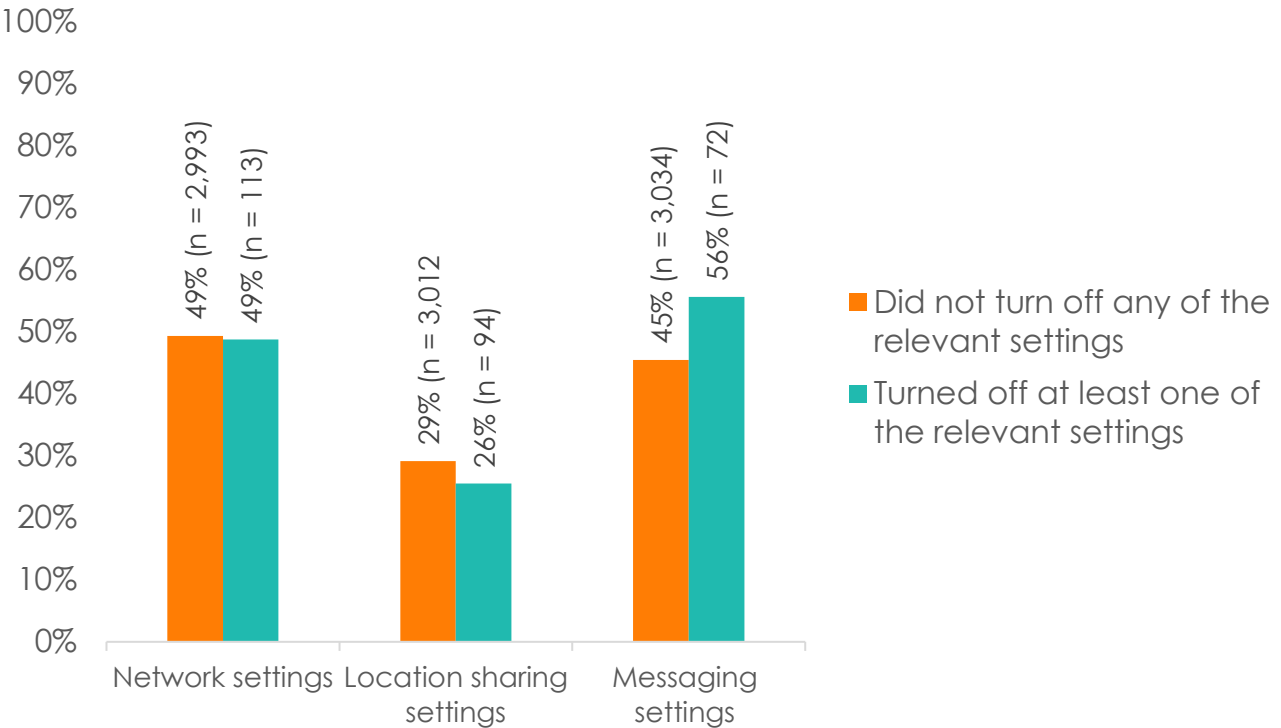
Note: Adult sample; n = 3,201

Stated preferences for safety settings

Around one in three participants said they wanted other people they are not connected with to be able to see their location (29%) when using real-world social media platforms, while just under half said they wanted others to be able to see their profile (49%) or send them messages (46%). We observed a similar pattern of stated preferences in every experimental arm (see Appendix 3 Figure 4).

Of the participants who turned off one or more messaging safety settings during the task, 56% said they wanted other people (not friends or followers) to be able to send them messages. Among those who left all messaging safety settings on, that proportion was lower, at 45%. We did not observe an equivalent difference in preferences between those who did and did not turn off location sharing or profile visibility settings (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Proportion of adults who want other people to be able to see their location, see their profile or send them messages, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment



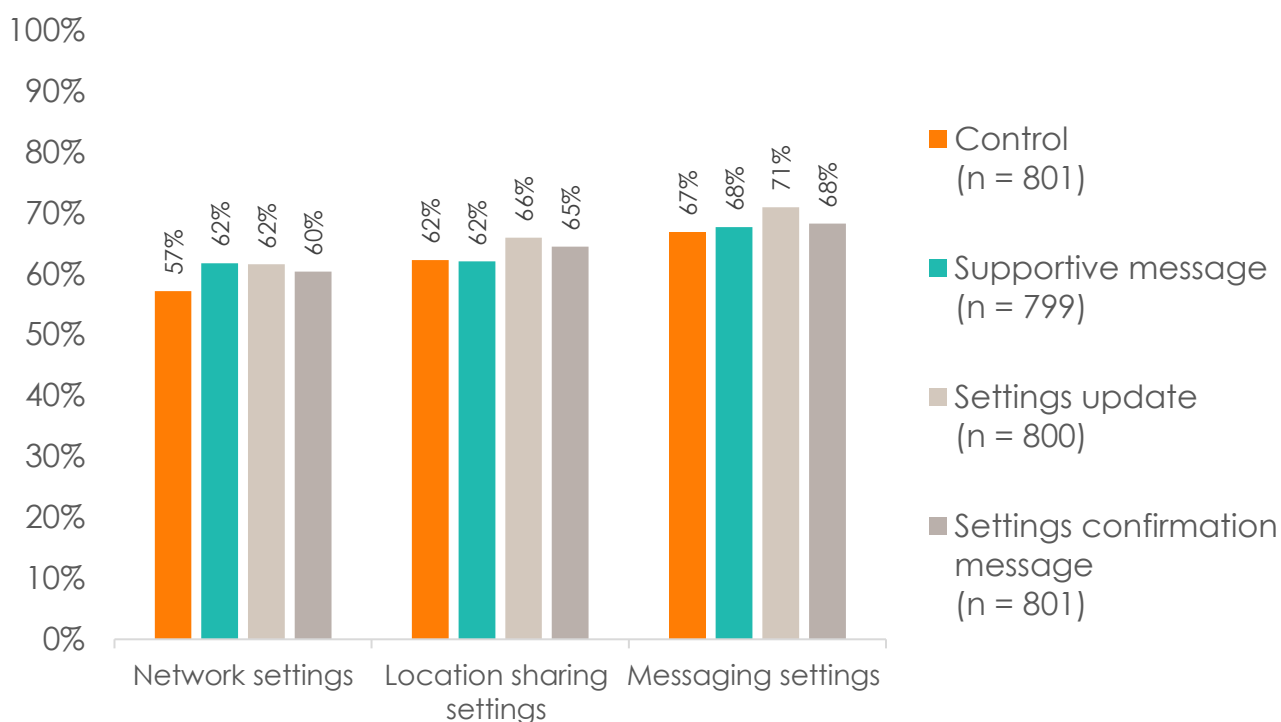
Question: When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to: see your profile and posts (network settings), see your location (location sharing settings) or send you messages (messaging settings)?

Note: Adult sample who responded 'Yes' when asked about their preferences for network, location sharing and messaging settings, excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,106.

Understanding of safety settings shown in the survey

Around two in three participants correctly understood the safety settings shown in the survey for all types of safety settings (network settings: 60%; location sharing settings: 64%; messaging settings: 69%). This did not differ across experimental arms (see Figure 12). 92% of participants correctly understood at least one safety setting, whilst 35% correctly understood all three safety settings.

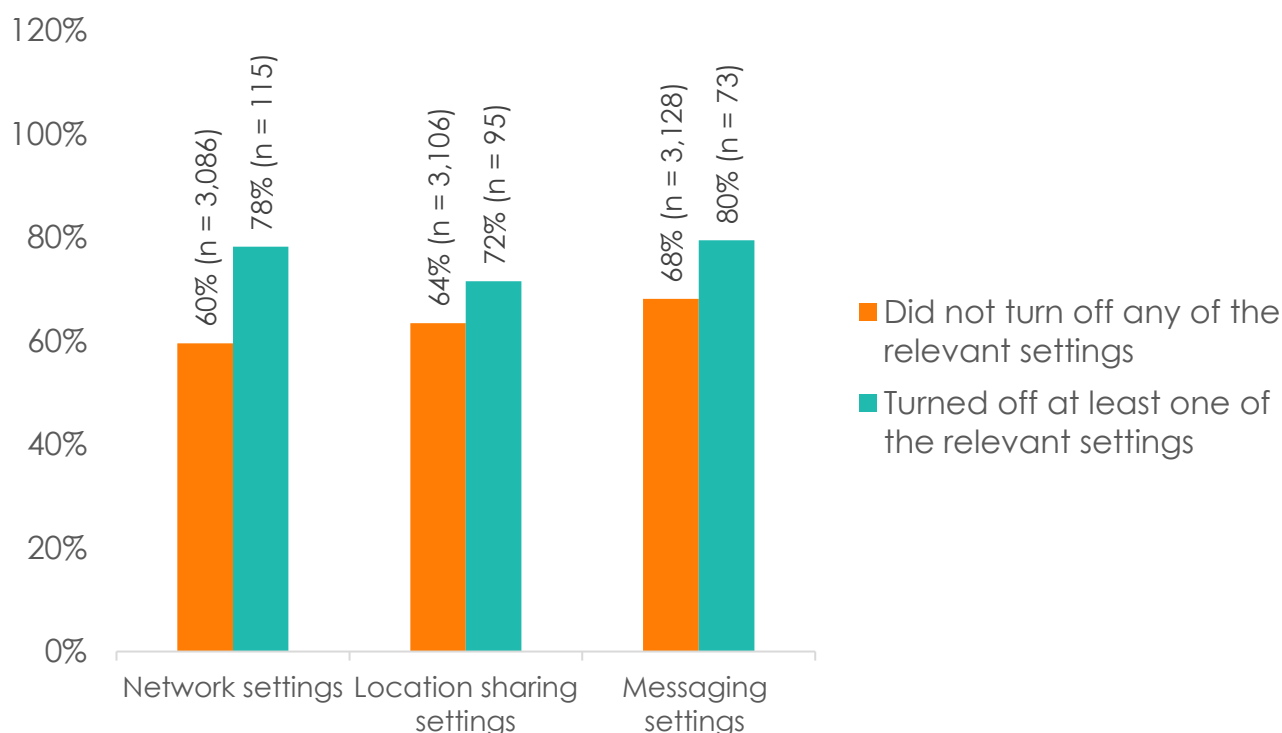
Figure 12: Proportion of adults who correctly understood location, network or messaging settings, by experimental arm



Question: If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to: see their list of friends (network settings), see their location (location sharing settings) or send them direct messages (messaging settings)? Note: Adult sample; n = 3,201.

Within each safety setting type, the participants who turned off settings showed better understanding than those who did not. For example, 78% of those who turned off a network safety setting correctly answered the understanding question about network safety settings, compared to 60% among those who left all network safety settings on – an approximately 18pp increase. The equivalent increases for location sharing settings and messaging settings were +8pp and +11pp, respectively (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Proportion of adults who correctly understood location, network or messaging settings, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment



Question: If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to: see their list of friends (network settings), see their location (location sharing settings) or send them direct messages (messaging settings)? Note: Adult sample; n = 3,201.

Satisfaction with controls in experiment

Among participants who viewed the settings menu in the experiment, 72% were satisfied with the settings available to control whether other users could see or interact with them in the social media feed. Satisfaction did not noticeably vary across experimental arms.

There was a small difference in reported satisfaction of around 7 percentage points between participants who did turn off at least one setting with those who did not. Of those who turned off settings, 79% said they were satisfied with the controls in the experiment, while for participants who did not turn off any settings 72% said they were satisfied with the controls.

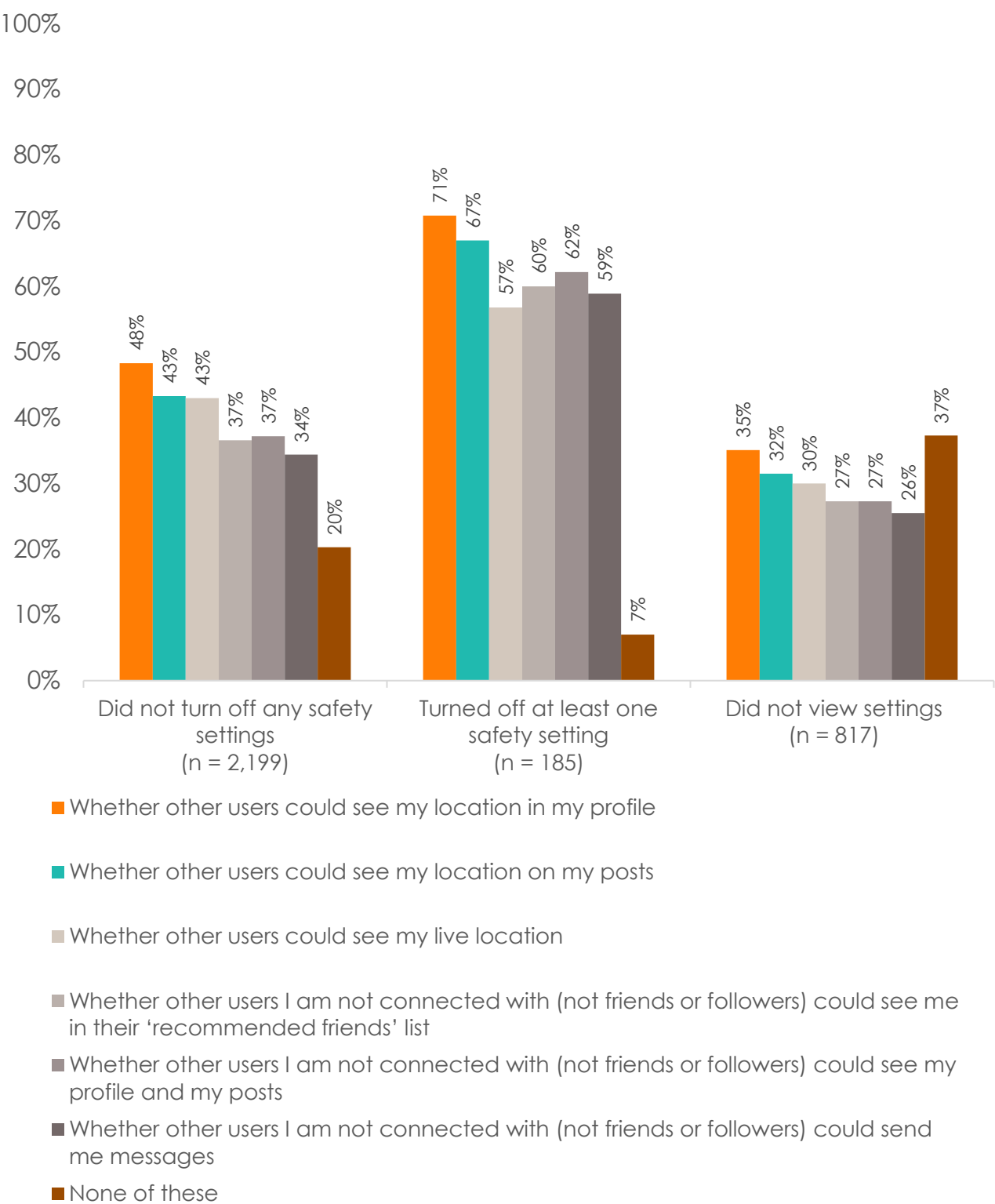
Empowerment

When asked about their experience scrolling through the feed in the experiment, participants who turned off at least one setting did feel more in control in general,

with a higher proportion of these participants feeling in control across all types of settings. In contrast, participants who did not view their settings felt least in control across all types of settings (see Figure 16).

Participants felt most in control over sharing their location with others via their profile (50%) or via their posts (45%). Participants felt least in control over others being able to message them (36%). The same pattern emerges comparing participants who did or did not change any settings (see Figure 16) and across experimental arms (see Appendix 3 Figure 5).

Figure 14: Settings adults felt they had control over, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment and for those not viewing settings in the experiment



Question: Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier? Note: Adult sample; n = 3,201.

Previous awareness and use of settings

Awareness of safety settings on existing social media platforms was similar across experimental arms, but – in line with previous findings – appears to be higher for participants who turned off at least one setting in the experiment compared to those who did not (see Appendix 3 Table 1).

Slightly fewer, but still the majority of, participants reported having previously used safety settings on existing platforms. The proportion of participants reporting using safety settings ranged from 62% to 71% across different types of settings. In contrast to awareness, this proportion was not consistently different for participants who turned off at least one setting in the experiment compared to those who did not (see Appendix 3 Table 2).

Descriptive analysis for under 18s experiment

Results presented in this section are reported descriptively and have not been tested for significance.

Proportion of participants viewing settings

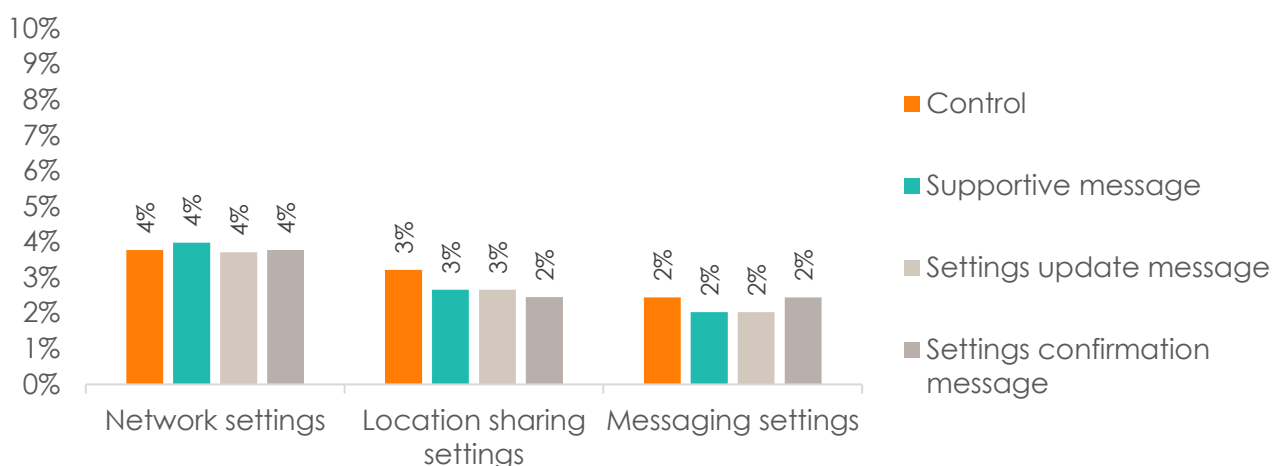
Just over three in four participants in the under 18 sample viewed their settings at some point during the experiment (under-18s: 77%; young people aged 16–17: 80%; children aged 13–15: 75%). These proportions were similar in each experimental arm for all age groups. These results are consistent with the adults' experiment, where 75% of participants viewed the settings at some point during the experiment.

Which safety settings did participants turn off?

No type of safety setting was turned off by more than 4% of under-18s.

Across the whole under 18 sample – and in line with the results for adults (see Figure 10) – under 18s most often turned off at least one network setting (4%), followed by location sharing settings (3%) and messaging settings (2%). This did not differ across experimental arms (see Figure 17).

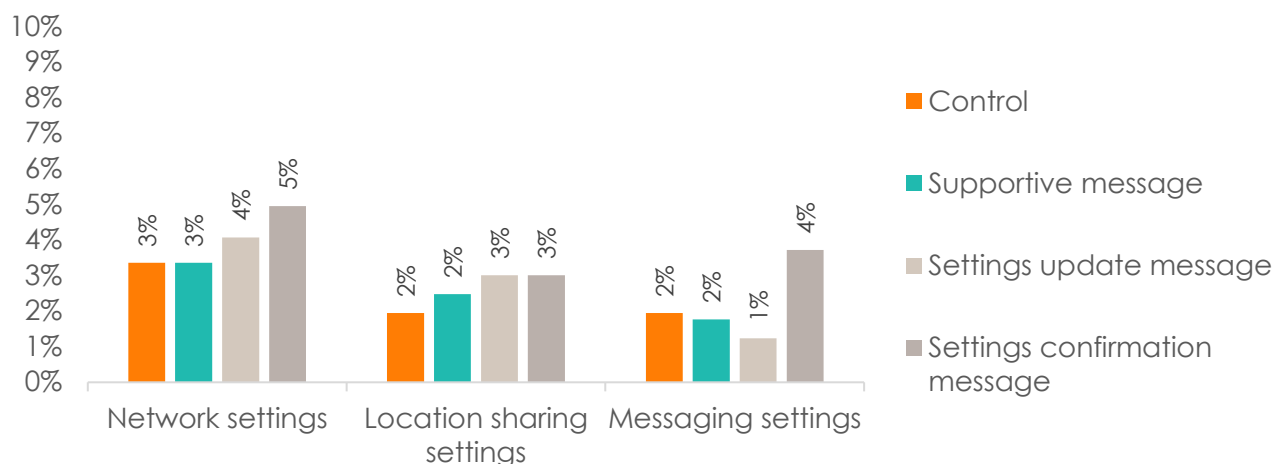
Figure 15: Proportion of participants who turn off at least one type of safety setting (Under 18s), by experimental arm



Note: Under 18s sample; n = 5,717

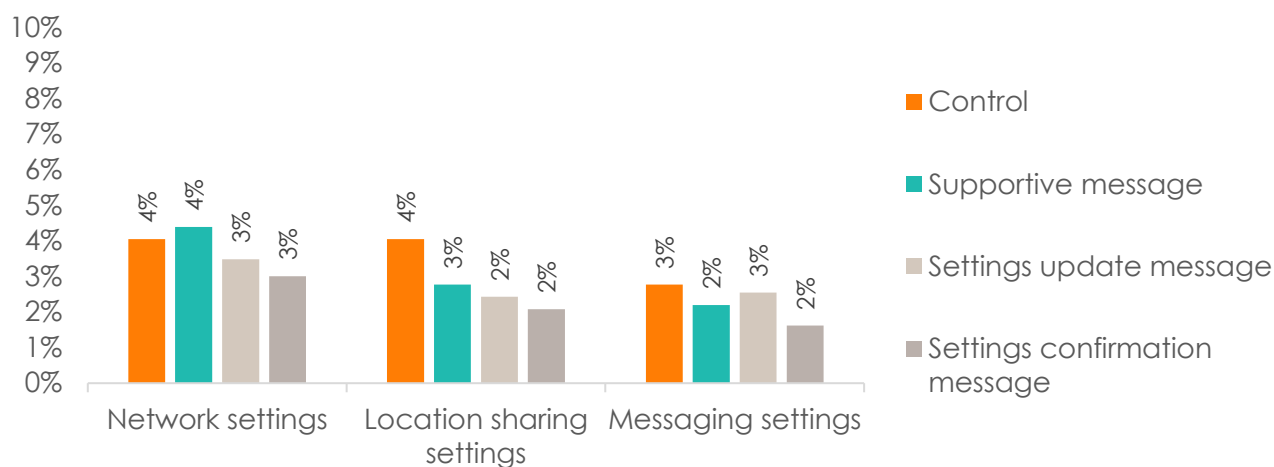
The pattern for all under 18s held across the two age sub-groups (see Figure 18 and Figure 19). These results are consistent with the adults' experiment, in which no type of safety setting was turned off by more than 5% of participants (see Figure 10).

Figure 16: Proportion of participants who turn off at least one type of safety setting (young people), by experimental arm



Note: Young people (16–17) sample; n = 2,620

Figure 17: Proportion of participants who turn off at least one type of safety setting (children), by experimental arm



Note: Children (13–15) sample; n = 3,457

Stated preferences for safety settings

Around one in three young people aged 16–17 wanted other people they are not connected with to be able to see their location when using real-world social media platforms (30%), while 62% said they wanted others to be able to see their profile, and around half said they wanted others to be able to send them messages (51%). This pattern did not noticeably differ across experimental arms (see Appendix 3 Figure 6).

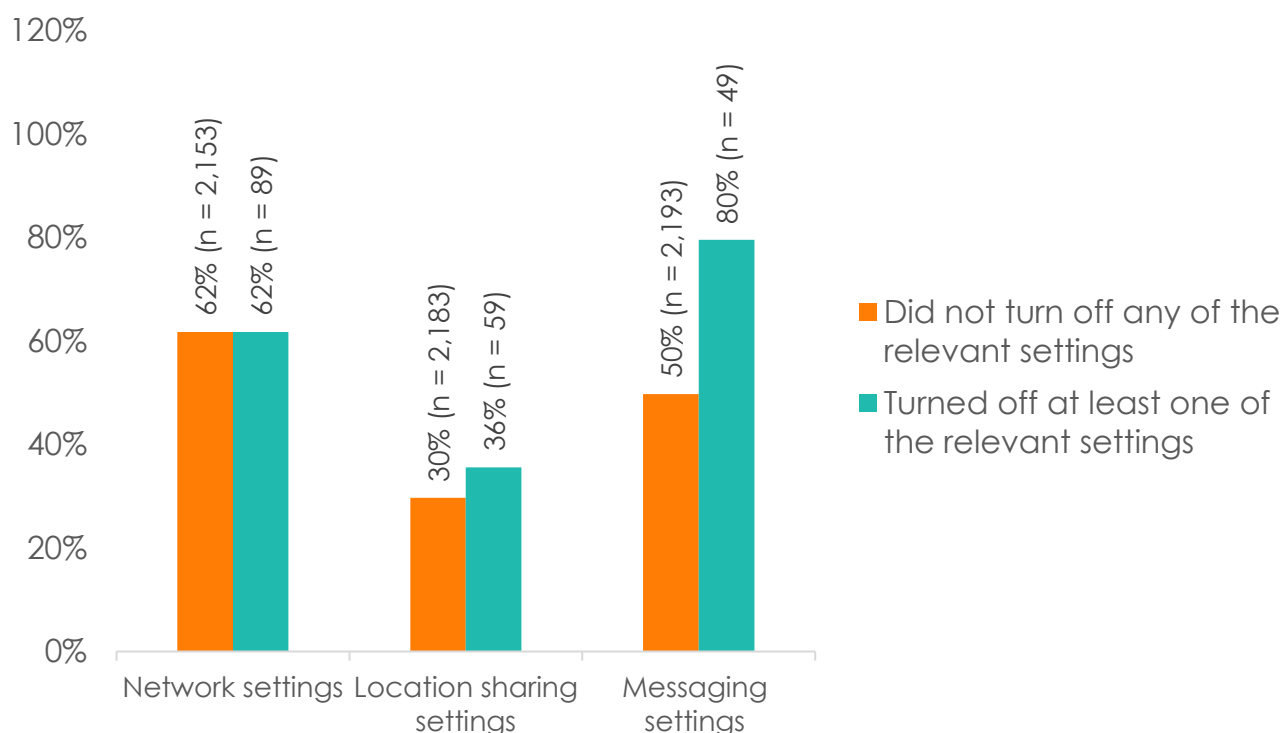
The stated preferences for safety settings were similar for children aged 13–15 to those of young people aged 16–17; around one in three participants wanted their location visible (33%). Over half of participants wanted others to be able to see their

profile (56%) while just under half wanted others to be able to message them (45%). There were no differences across experimental arms (see Appendix 3 Figure 7).

The reported stated preferences for young people and children were relatively consistent with the stated preferences reported in the adult's experiment (see Appendix 3 Figure 4). One notable difference is that a slightly higher proportion of under 18s reported that they wanted others to be able to see their profile (Young People: 62%; Children: 56%) relative to adults (49%).

Of 16–17-year-olds who turned off at least one message safety setting, 80% wanted others to be able to see send them messages, compared to 50% who did not turn off such settings. We did not see a similar difference in preferences for other types of safety settings (see Figure 20).

Figure 18: Proportion of young people (aged 16–17) who want other people to be able to see their location, see their profile or send them messages, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment

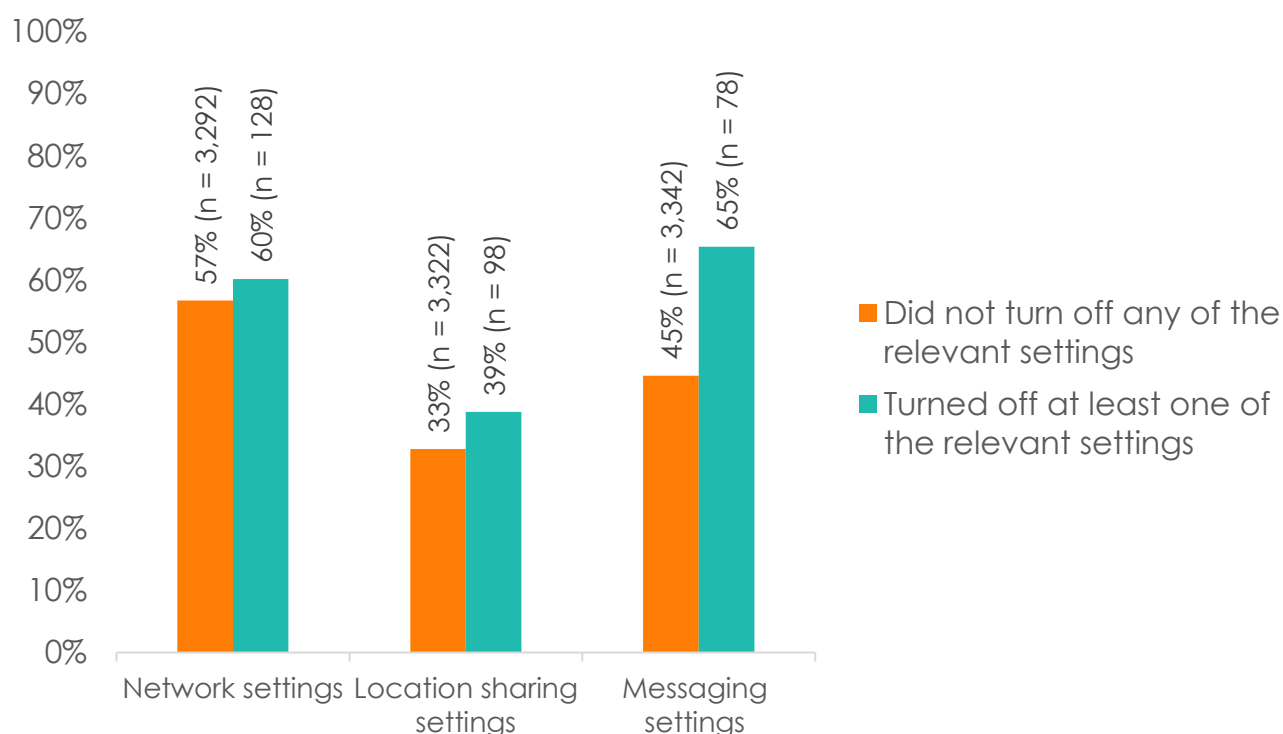


Question: When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to: see your profile and posts (network settings), see your location (location sharing settings) or send you messages (messaging settings)? Note: Young people (16–17) sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 2,242.

Of 13–15-year-olds who turned off one or more messaging settings, 65% wanted others to be able to send them messages. In line with young people, this proportion was higher than for participants who did not change messaging settings (45%). We did not see equivalent differences for other types of settings for children (see Figure 21).

The differences observed for both young people and children were consistent with the differences observed for adults (see Figure 11).

Figure 19: Proportion of children (aged 13–15) who want other people to be able to see their location, see their profile or send them messages, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment

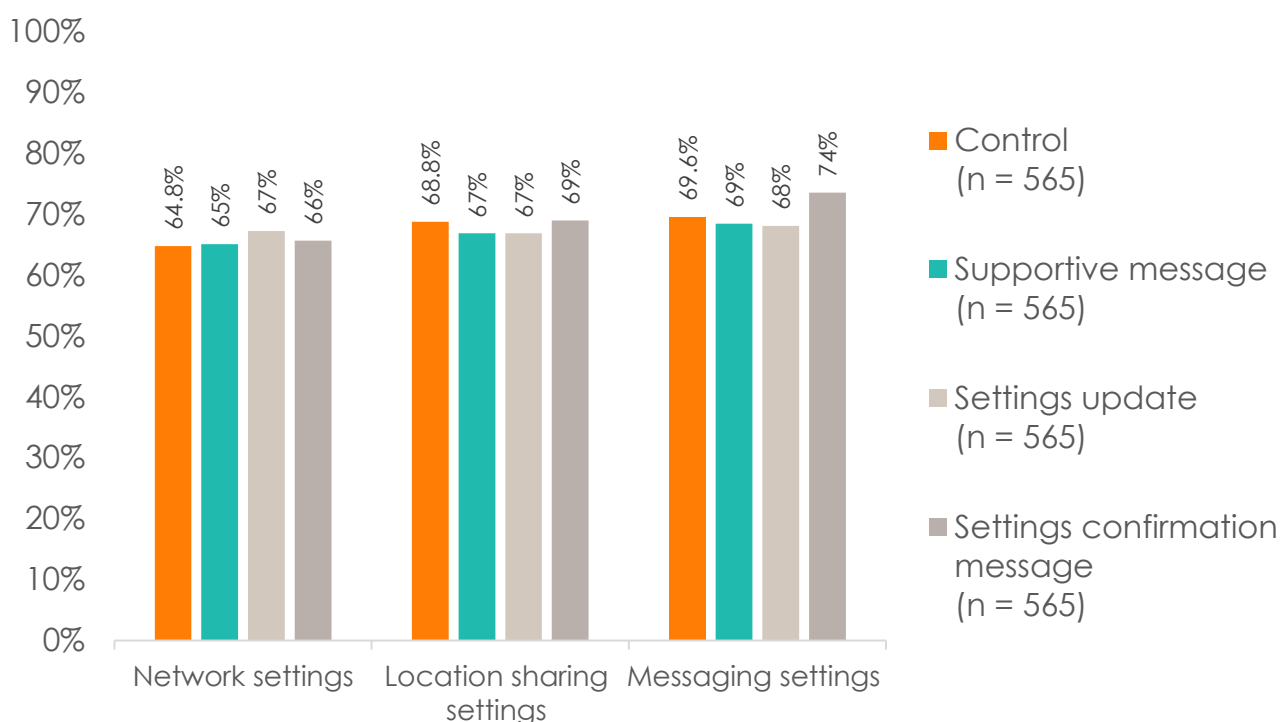


Question: When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to: see your profile and posts (network settings), see your location (location sharing settings) or send you messages (messaging settings)? Note: Children (13–15) sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,420.

Understanding of safety settings shown in the survey

For young people aged 16–17, around two in three participants correctly understood the safety settings shown to them in the survey (network settings: 66%; location sharing settings: 68%; messaging settings 70%). Understanding did not differ across experimental arms (see Figure 22). Across all young people aged 16–17 in the experiment, 94% correctly understood at least one safety setting, whilst 40% correctly understood all three safety settings.

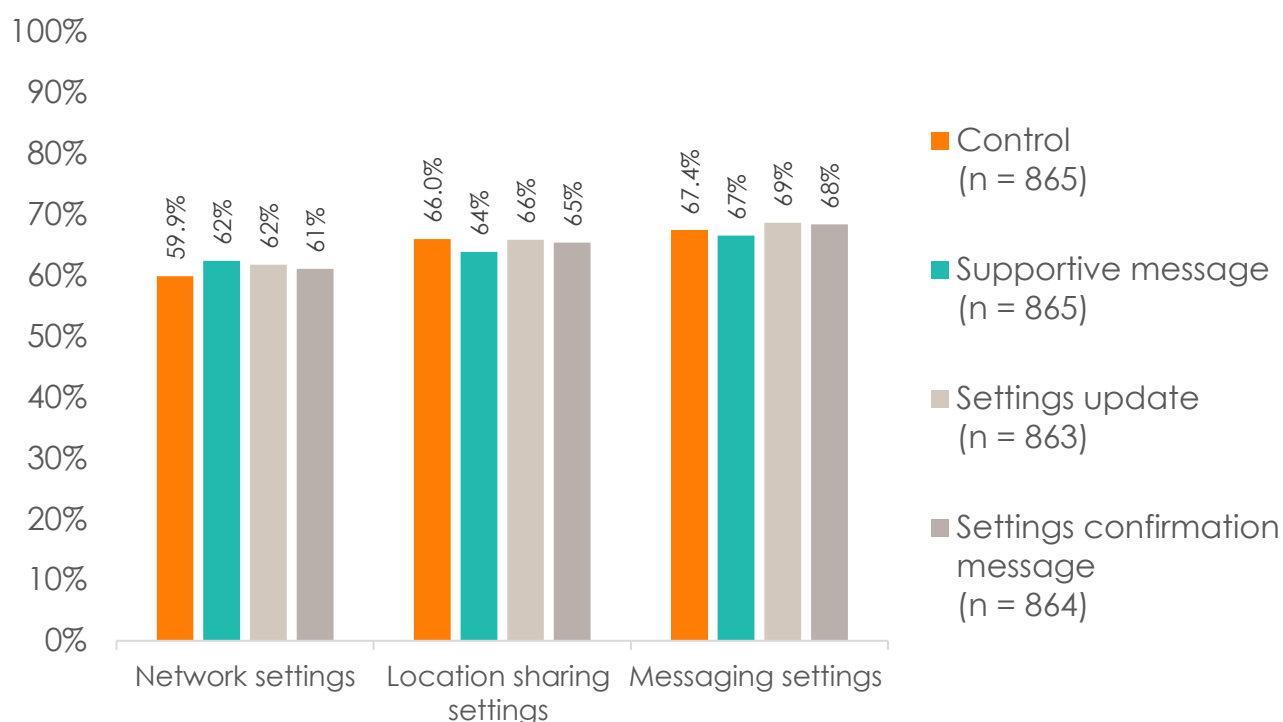
Figure 20: Proportion of young people who correctly understood location, network or messaging settings, by experimental arm



Question: If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to: see their list of friends (network settings), see their location (location sharing settings) or send them direct messages (messaging settings)? Note: Young people (16–17) sample; n = 2,260.

For children aged 13–15, around two in three participants correctly understood the safety settings shown to them in the survey (network settings: 61%; location sharing settings: 65%; messaging settings: 68%). This was similar to the proportion of adult participants (see Figure 12) and young people aged 16–17 who correctly understood the safety settings shown in the survey (see Figure 22). This proportion did not differ across experimental arms (see Figure 23). Across all children aged 13–15 in the experiment, 94% correctly understood at least one safety setting, whilst 34% correctly understood all three safety settings.

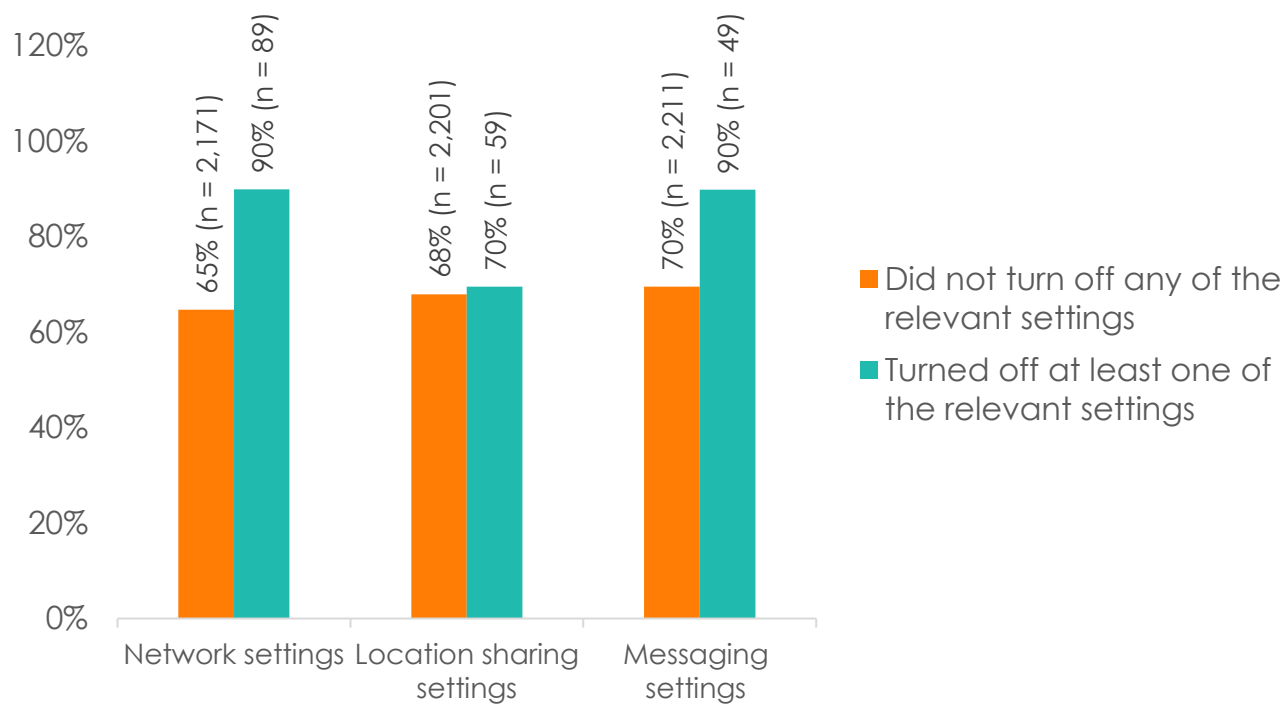
Figure 21: Proportion of children who correctly understood location, network or messaging settings, by experimental arm



Question: If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to: see their list of friends (network settings), see their location (location sharing settings) or send them direct messages (messaging settings)? Note: Children (13–15) sample, n = 3,457

Young people aged 16–17 who turned off network and messaging settings showed a better understanding than those who did not. For network settings, 90% of those who turned off a network setting correctly answered the understanding question about network safety settings, compared to 65% who left all network settings turned on – an approximate 25 percentage point increase. For messaging settings, the equivalent increase was approximately 20 percentage points. We did not see a difference for location sharing settings (see Figure 24).

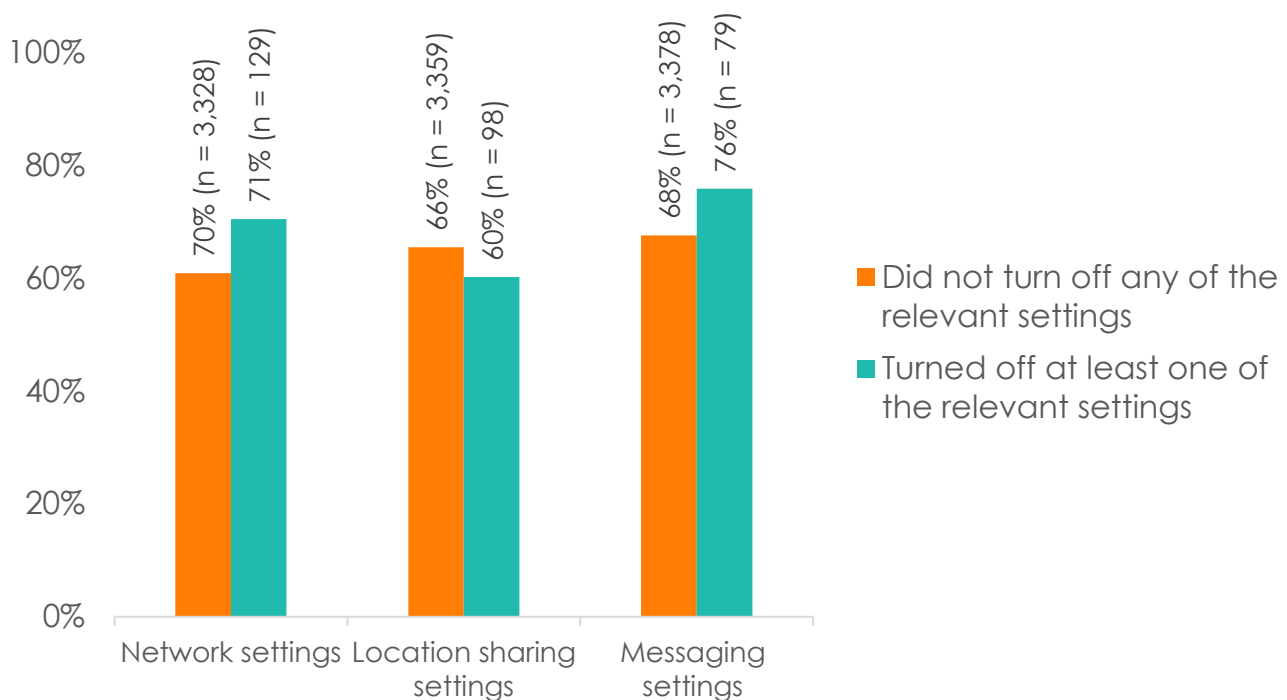
Figure 22: Proportion of young people who correctly understood location, network or messaging settings, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment



Question: If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to: see their list of friends (network settings), see their location (location sharing settings) or send them direct messages (messaging settings)? Note: Young people (16–17) sample; n = 2,260.

Similarly, those aged 13–15 who turned off network and messaging settings showed a better understanding than those who did not. For messaging settings, 76% of those who turned off a messaging setting correctly answered the understanding question, compared to 68% who left all messaging settings turned on – an approximate increase of 12 percentage points. The equivalent increase was approximately 10 percentage points for network settings. We did not see an increase for location sharing settings (see Figure 25).

Figure 23: Proportion of children who correctly understood location, network or messaging settings, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment



Question: If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to: see their list of friends (network settings), see their location (location sharing settings) or send them direct messages (messaging settings)? Note: Children (13–15) sample, n = 3,457

The differences in the proportion of participants who answered the understanding questions correctly between those who did or did not turn off at least one setting were largest among young people, and smallest among children. The difference observed for adults (see Figure 13) sits in between.

Satisfaction with controls in experiment

Among young people aged 16–17 who viewed the settings, 75% were satisfied with the controls in the experiment. This did not vary across experimental arms. For children aged 13–15, a slightly higher proportion of participants who viewed settings were satisfied with the controls (79%). In line with the results for young people and adults, this also did not differ across experimental arms. Both young people aged 16–17 and children aged 13–15 reported similar, albeit slightly higher, satisfaction with the controls to adults (72%).

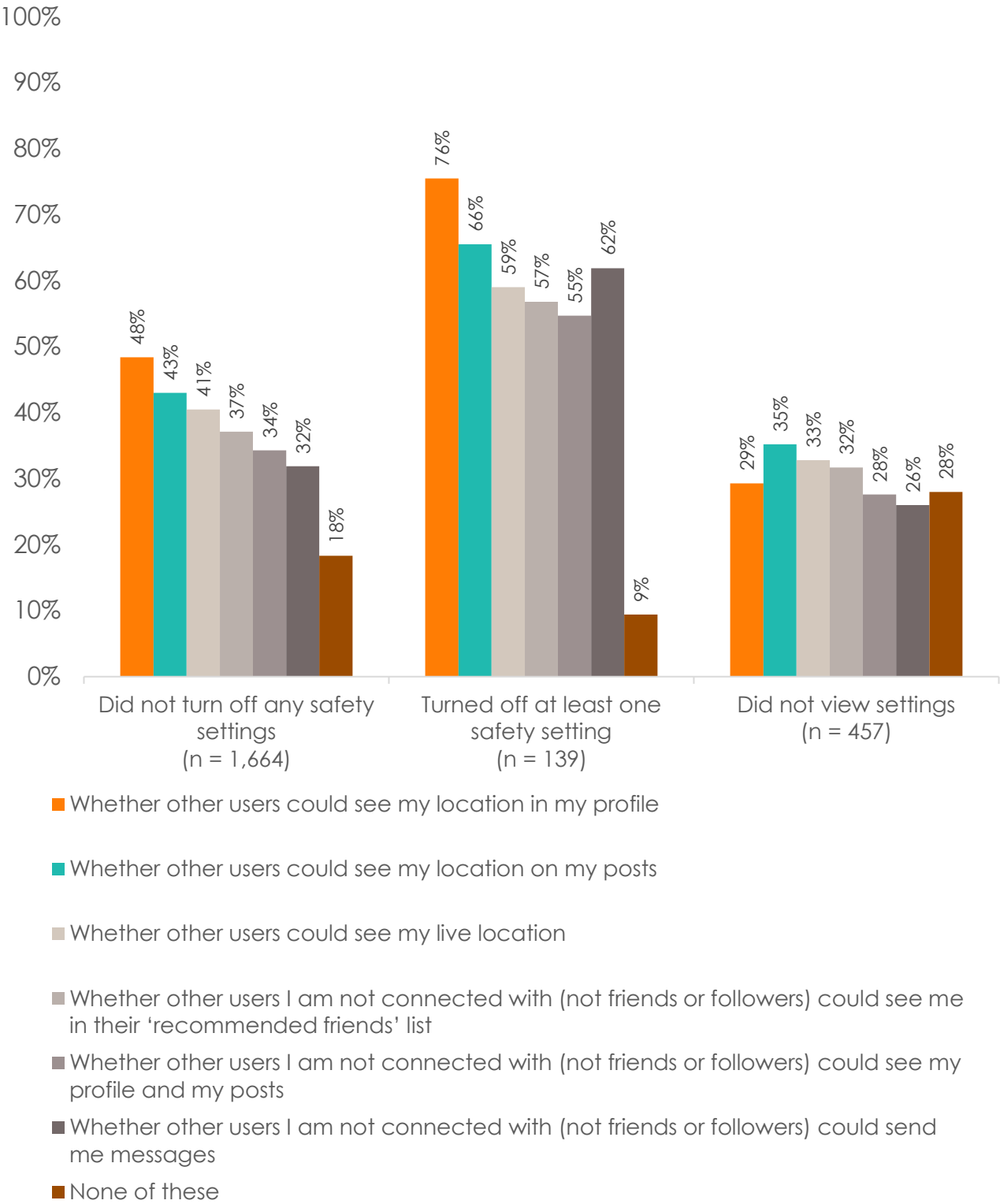
Consistent with the results in the adult sample, there was a small difference in reported satisfaction of around 7 percentage points between those aged 16–17 who did turn off at least one setting (82% were satisfied) and those who did not (75% were satisfied). Similarly, there was a small difference for children aged 13–15 in reported satisfaction of around 6 percentage points between those who did turn off at least one setting (84% were satisfied) and those who did not (79% were satisfied).

Empowerment

In line with the results from the adults experiment, both young people aged 16–17 and children aged 13–15 who turned off at least one setting felt more in control in general when scrolling through the feed in the experiment, with a higher proportion of these participants feeling in control across all types of settings. In contrast, young people and children who did not view their settings felt least in control across all types of settings (see Figure 30 and Figure 31).

Young people aged 16–17 felt most in control over sharing their location with others via their profile (51%) or via their posts (45%) and least in control over others being able to message them (34%). This pattern was the same across experimental arms (see Appendix 3 Figure 8). Participants who turned off at least one setting were more likely to feel in control over who could send them messages than the overall pattern would suggest (see Figure 30).

Figure 24: Settings young people felt they had control over, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment and for those not viewing settings in the experiment

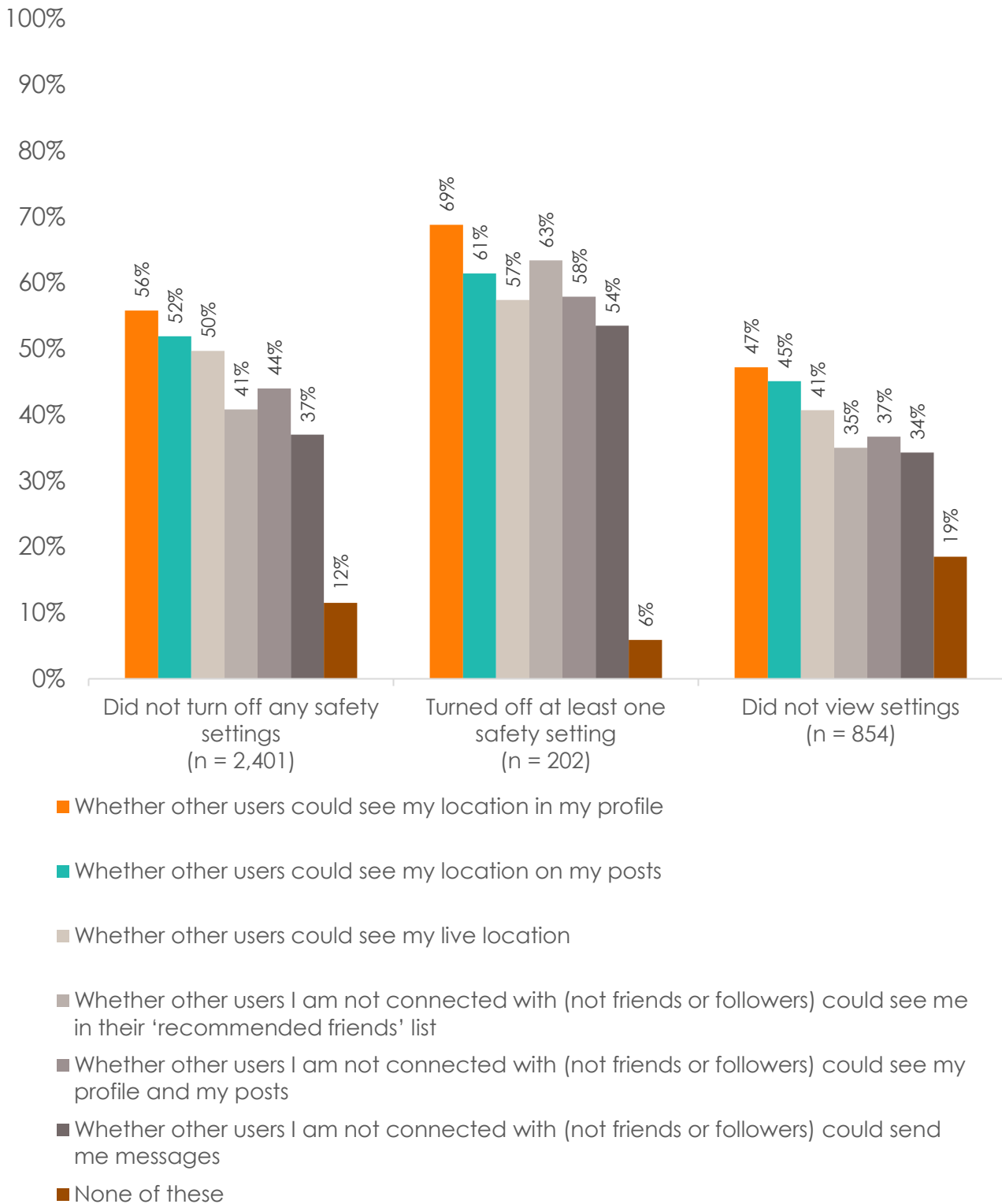


Question: Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier? Note: Young people (16–17) sample who viewed their settings; n = 1,803.

Children aged 13–15 also felt most in control over sharing their location with others via their profile (57%) or via their posts (53%) and least in control over others being

able to message them (38%). This pattern did not differ for those who did or did not change any setting (see Figure 31) or across experimental arms (see Appendix 3 Figure 9).

Figure 25: Settings children felt they had control over, by whether a participant turned off a relevant setting during the experiment and for those not viewing settings in the experiment



Question: Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier? Note: Children (13–15) sample who viewed their settings; n = 2,603.

Previous awareness and use of settings

As with the adults, most young people aged 16–17 said they were aware of safety settings on real-world social media platforms. Controls on who can see profiles and post were the best-known (81%) and controls on who a user can see content from were least well-known (72%). Awareness was similar across experimental arms and between those who did or did not change any settings (see Appendix 3 Table 3).

Slightly fewer young people reported having previously used safety settings (see Appendix 3 Table 4), ranging between 65% (controls on who somebody can see content from) to 77% (controls on who can see profiles or posts). Use was similar across experimental arms and between those who did and did not turn off any settings in the experiment.

Similarly, most children aged 13–15 said they were aware of different types of controls on social media. Controls on who can see profiles and post were the best-known (84%) and controls on showing location on posts was least well known (76%). Across types of settings, the level of awareness was higher for children compared to both adults and young people. Generally, children who turned off at least one setting in the experiment seemed more aware of controls than those who did not (see Appendix 3 Table 5).

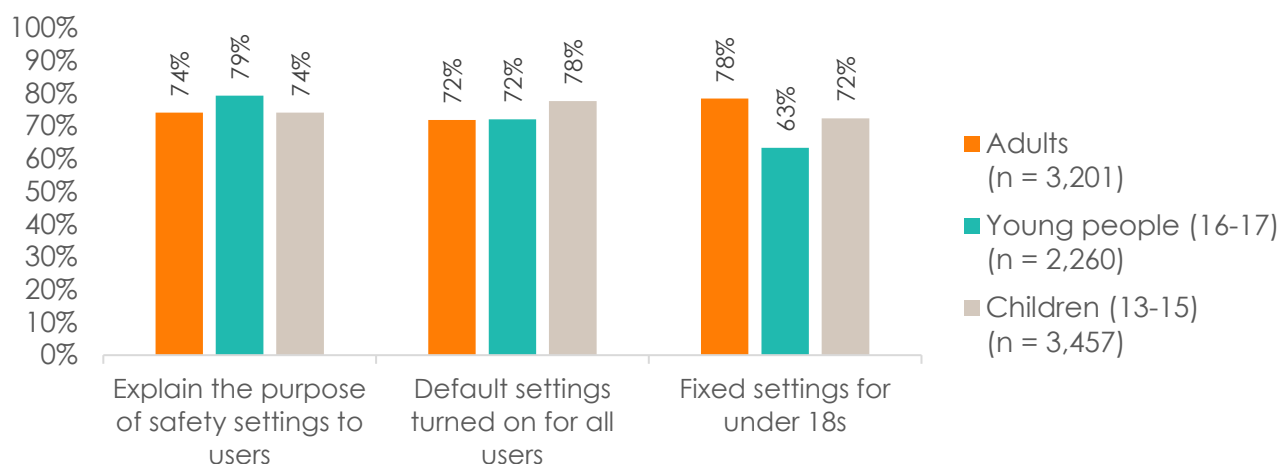
Most children had previously used controls, ranging between 69% (controls on who somebody can see content from) to 77% (controls on who can see profiles or posts). The pattern was similar across experimental arms and for those who did and did not turn off any settings in the experiment (see Appendix 3 Table 6).

Additional survey results

Perspectives on proposed changes to safety settings

Most participants across all age groups supported the introduction of each proposal (see Figure 32). The largest difference in support between age groups was for the fixed settings for under 18s; the proportion of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with this proposal was highest among adults while it was lowest among young people aged 16–17.

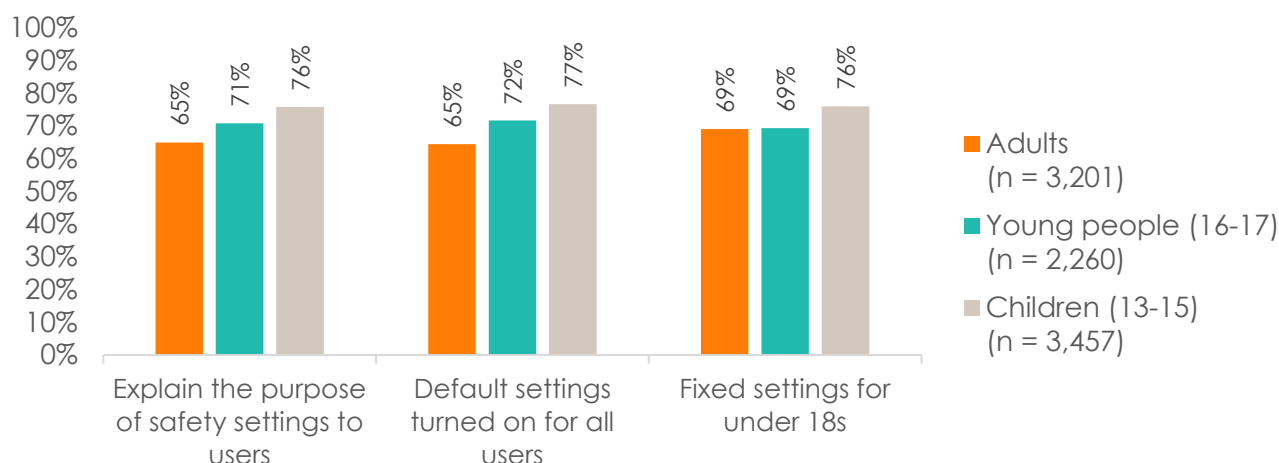
Figure 26: Proportion of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with proposed changes



Note: Adult and under 18 samples.

Most participants across all age groups also agreed that the proposed changes would keep users safe (see Figure 33). Across all proposals, the highest proportion of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that the proposed changes would keep users safe was among children aged 13–15 and the lowest was among adults.

Figure 27: Proportion of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed changes would keep users safe



Note: Adult and under 18 samples.

Across all age groups, the most frequently cited reasons why participants felt that explaining the purpose of safety settings would not keep users safe online were that:

- users will not read the explanations;¹² and,
- users will change settings despite the explanations.¹³

The most frequently cited reasons why default settings would not keep users were:

- safety settings themselves will not keep users safe;¹⁴ and,
- users will override safety settings.¹⁵

The most frequently cited reasons why fixed safety settings for under 18s would not keep users safe were:

- platforms cannot reliably determine who is under 18;¹⁶
- users under 18 will find workarounds;¹⁷ or
- regulation will push under 18s to less well-regulated platforms.¹⁸

For a full review of participants responses, please refer to Appendix 3 Table 7, Appendix 3 Table 8 and Appendix 3 Table 9.

Experiences of online harms

Across all adults, 17% of participants had experienced online harm in the form of negative interactions with other users, compared to 24% of young people aged 16–17 and 21% of children aged 13–15. A breakdown by type of harm is provided in Appendix 3 Table 10.

Participants in all age groups most frequently mentioned that they unfollowed, unfriended, blocked or muted someone in response to their most recent negative online interaction. Children were more likely to change their settings in response to experiencing a negative interaction than young people or adults (see Figure 34).

¹² Adults: 45% (n = 103); young people: 53% (n = 71); children: 42% (n = 72).

¹³ Adults: 44% (n = 100); young people: 33% (n = 44); children: 48% (n = 85).

¹⁴ Adults: 39% (n = 100); young people: 30% (n = 42); children: 35% (n = 73).

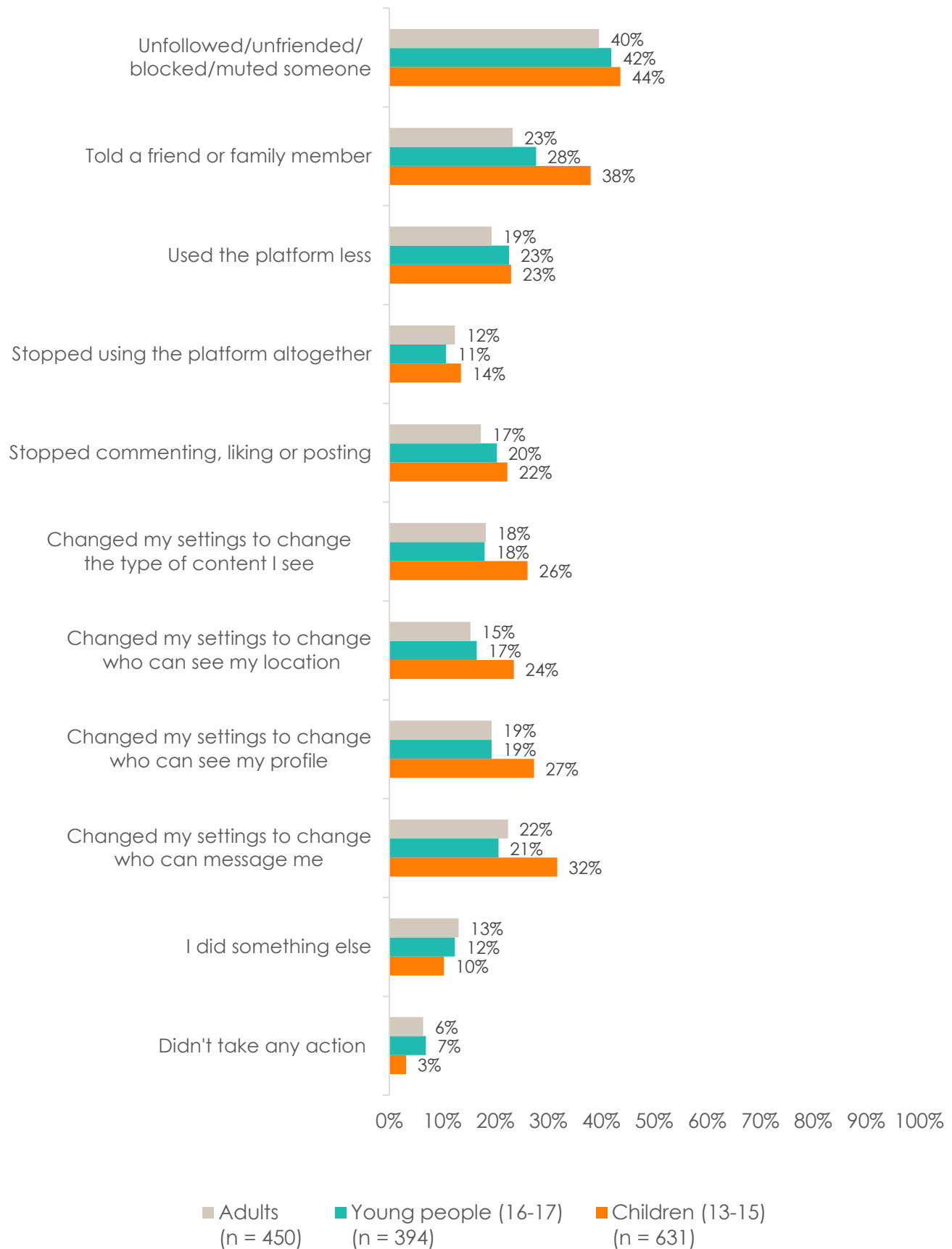
¹⁵ Adults: 38% (n = 99); young people: 35% (n = 49); children: 36% (n = 75).

¹⁶ Adults: 66% (n = 173); young people: 64% (n = 157); children: 60% (n = 144).

¹⁷ Adults: 51% (n = 132); young people: 53% (n = 131); children: 53% (n = 127).

¹⁸ Adults: 44% (n = 115); young people: 38% (n = 94); children: 41% (n = 97).

Figure 28: Participants reported actions in response to experiencing a negative interaction with another user



Question: "Thinking about the most recent negative interaction you have had online the last 4 weeks, which of the following actions did you take, if any? Please select all that apply. Note: Adult and under 18 samples.

Conclusion

Key findings

No impact of interventions

None of the interventions statistically significantly reduced the likelihood of participants overriding default safety settings at the end of the experiment relative to the control. This was consistent across both the adults and under 18s samples, and when looking at young people (aged 16–17) and children (aged 13–15) separately.

Default safety settings appear to be ‘sticky’

Participants reported mixed preferences for safety settings:

- one in three said they wanted other users they were not connected with to see their location (adults: 29%; young people: 30%; children: 33%);
- one in two said they wanted other users they were not connected with to be able to message them (adults: 46%; young people: 51%; children: 45%); and,
- one in two said they wanted other users they were not connected with to see their profile and posts (adults: 49%; young people: 62%; children: 56%).

Despite this, most participants ended the experiment with every default safety setting turned on (adults: 94%; young people: 94%; children: 94%). Indeed, no category of safety settings was turned off by more than 5% of participants in either experiment (adults: 5%; under 18s: 4%).

Notably, we also found that approximately one in four participants opted not to review their safety settings at any point during the experiment (proportion of participants who reviewed safety settings: adults: 75%; young people: 80%; children: 75%). These participants could not override the default safety settings in the experiment.

Responses from users who turned off default safety settings differ from those who did not

Turning off a default setting that limited who could contact a social media user was associated with participants wanting to be contactable. Compared to other participants, a higher proportion of those who turned off at least one such setting said that they wanted other users they were not connected with to be able to contact them.

Additionally, participants who turned off safety settings generally showed a better understanding of these settings than those who did not.

Responses to experience of online harm may differ across age groups

Young people (16–17) reported the highest rates of negative online interactions with other social media users (24%), followed by children (13–15) (21%) and adults (17%). The most common response to negative online interactions with another user was to block, unfriend, unfollow or mute that user. A higher proportion of children reported they had changed their settings in response to experiencing a negative interaction than young people or adults.

Support for proposed regulation

Most participants across all age groups supported the introduction of each of the proposed changes to existing regulations:

- requiring platforms to explain the purpose of safety settings to users;
- turning on safety settings by default for all users; or,
- fixing safety settings for under 18s without these users being able to turn off the feature.

Most participants across all age groups also agreed that the proposed changes would keep users safe online.

Strengths and limitations

Strengths

The trial's randomised design meant we could draw robust inferences about the causal impact of the interventions. Randomly allocating participants rules out systematic biases in the samples assigned to each arm so that they will be, on average, similarly likely to turn off default settings in the absence of any interventions. We may therefore ascribe any systematic differences in behaviour that we do observe between the groups to the interventions. Trial groups may still vary at random, so our inferential analysis identifies systematic differences as those that are unlikely to have arisen by chance.

We provided participants with a realistically mocked up social media platform, including a feed with different types of posts. On this feed, participants could interact with, like and comment on posts like they would in real life.

We included a large sample of adults (3,201 participants) and especially children under 18 (5,717 participants). That means we had a good chance of picking up relatively subtle effects.

Limitations

All safety settings included in the experiment were turned on by default and the interventions targeted participants who turned them off. This set-up was considered most relevant from a policy perspective during the design of the experiment. However, the results showed that default safety settings appear to be 'sticky'. As such, the interventions were relevant only for a small group of participants.

The safety settings included in the experiment were designed to limit how social media users can interact with other users. However, the experiment did not include participant interaction. As such, the way that participants experienced the social media platform did not change if they changed safety settings. This may mean that there was low motivation for a participant to change settings.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Young people (16-17) and adult questionnaire

INTRO_ADULT_AND_16_PLUS

ASK ALL
SINGLE CODE

Thank you for your interest in this study on social media usage. It is being conducted by Verian on behalf of another organisation. Verian is an independent social research company. All data collected in this study will be kept confidential in line with our privacy policy, and there is no way to link your identity with your answers. All data collected will be used for research purposes only. For more information, see our privacy policy [here](#). Please note that Verian and the other organisation are joint data controllers for this research.

We are interested in how people behave on social media. In this survey, we will ask you to browse on a simulated version of a social media platform. As you browse, please try to imagine you are browsing using a *real* profile, and think about how you would respond in real life. Afterwards, we will ask you about your experiences on this platform. We will also ask you about your positive and negative experiences online in the real world.

As a reminder, you are free to stop the survey at any time without giving a reason by closing your browser.

We have tested the survey and found that it will take about 10 minutes to complete. Are you happy to continue to the survey?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No [screen out]

AGE

ASK ALL
NUMERIC

What is your age?

- 1 [NUMERIC RESPONSE]
- 99 Prefer not to say

SCRIPTER NOTE: Terminate if NUMERIC RESPONSE < 18 or >100. Please restrict to integers only.

AGEBAND

ASK IF AGE == 99 – Prefer not to say
NUMERIC

Can you tell us which band your age falls within?

- 1 17 or under (Exclude)
- 2 18 to 24
- 3 25 to 34
- 4 35 to 44
- 5 45 to 54
- 6 55 to 64
- 7 65 or older
- 99 Prefer not to say

GENDER

ASK ALL
SINGLE CHOICE

What is your gender?

- 1 Female
- 2 Male
- 3 Prefer to use another term
- 99 Prefer not to say

REGION1

ASK ALL
SINGLE CHOICE

Where do you live?

- 1 England
- 2 Scotland
- 3 Wales
- 4 Northern Ireland
- 99 Somewhere else (Exclude)

REGION2

ASK IF REGION1 == 1– England
SINGLE CHOICE

Where in England do you live?

- 1 North East
- 2 North West
- 3 Yorkshire and the Humber
- 4 East Midlands

- 5 West Midlands
- 6 East
- 7 London
- 8 South East
- 9 South West

INTRO

ASK ALL

NO RESPONSE

We would like you to imagine it is a Saturday morning. You are sitting on your sofa about to scroll on social media ...

Please interact with each post in the feed as you normally would. You can interact with posts in the feed by:

- reacting to posts using emojis,
- commenting on posts,
- sharing posts,
- saving posts,
- hiding posts from your feed, or
- reporting posts.

You can also update your settings on the social media platform by clicking the settings icon.

[VERIAN TO SUPPLY IMAGE]

Make sure you read down to the bottom of the feed, and click the 'Leave Website' button to return to the survey when you're done. Please note that you must complete the full survey and debrief section to receive the incentive.

SOC_MED_USE

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

Have you used social media in the last 12 months? By social media, we mean sites like:

- Instagram
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- X (formerly Twitter)
- Reddit
- Discord
- WhatsApp
- YouTube

- 1 Yes

2 No

STATEDPREF_LOCATION

ASK IF SOC_MED_USE == 1 – Yes

SINGLE CHOICE

When you use social media in real life, do you want other people to be able to see your location (for example on your profile or posts)?

1 Yes

2 No

UNDERSTANDING_LOCATION

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

[show all participants an image of location sharing settings with all settings turned off]

If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think other people would be able to see their location (for example on their profile or posts) on this social media platform?

1 Yes

2 No

3 Don't Know

STATEDPREF_NETWORK

ASK IF SOC_MED_USE == 1 – Yes

SINGLE CHOICE

When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to see your profile and posts?

1 Yes

2 No

UNDERSTANDING_NETWORK

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

[show all participants an image of network sharing settings page with the 'Keep my profile out of 'People you may know' suggestions' turned off, and other settings turned on]

If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people would be able to see their list of friends?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't Know

STATEDPREF_MESSAGING

ASK IF SOC_MED_USE == 1 – Yes

SINGLE CHOICE

When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to be able to send you messages?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

UNDERSTANDING_MESSAGING

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

[show all participants an image of direct message sharing settings page with all safety settings turned on]

If someone chose the settings shown above, do you think that other people who they are not connected with (not friends or followers) could send them direct messages?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't Know

SATISFACTION_CONTROLS

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

When scrolling the social media feed earlier, were you satisfied with the settings available to control whether other users could see or interact with you?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Not sure / no opinion

DISSATISFIED_CONTROLS

ASK IF SATISFACTION_CONTROLS == 2 – No

MULTICODE

You indicated that you were not satisfied with the settings available for you to control whether other users could see or interact with you when scrolling the social media feed.

Why were you not satisfied with the settings available?

Please select all that apply.

The options were too hard to understand

There were too many options to choose from

I'm not confident that changing these settings would do anything

These settings are not important to me

5 Something else

6 Not sure (Exclusive)

EMPOWERED

ASK ALL

MULTICODE

Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier?

1 Whether other users could see my location in my profile

2 Whether other users could see my location on my posts

3 Whether other users could see my live location

4 Whether other users I am not connected with (not friends or followers) could see me in their 'recommended friends' list

5 Whether other users I am not connected with (not friends or followers) could see my profile and my posts

6 Whether other users I am not connected with (not friends or followers) could send me messages

7 None of these [exclusive]

CHANGED_LOCATION

ASK IF Participant changed location sharing settings in main experiment

MULTICODE

When reviewing your safety settings earlier, you turned off the setting that would:

SELECT AS NECESSARY

- Keep your location private on posts [show if 'Keep my location private on posts' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]
- Keep your location private on my profile [show if 'Keep my location private on my profile' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]
- Keep your live location private in FindMyFriends [show if 'Keep my live location private in FindMyFriends' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]

Why did you turn off these location sharing safety settings? Think about the kinds of reasons you might have in real life for making that decision.

Please select all that apply.

- 1 Location sharing is needed so my parents or family can know where I am (IF AGE < 18)
- 2 It helps my friends know where I am so we can meet up
- 3 Most people I know share their location, so it feels normal
- 4 My friends all share their location, so I don't want to feel left out
- 5 I want other people to know if I'm at a fun, popular or exciting place
- 6 It looks like I'm hiding something if I keep location sharing off
- 7 I want more personalised recommendations or content, which requires location sharing to be turned on
- 8 I generally check or change my location sharing settings if the platform has updated their terms and conditions
- 9 I made the same location sharing safety choices here as I do for all my social media platforms
- 10 I don't need location sharing safety settings, so I just turn them off
- 11 I prefer to make my own location sharing safety choices rather than go with the platform's recommendation
- 12 I want to tailor location sharing so I can share with friends but not other people
- 13 I didn't understand what the default safety settings meant
- 14 Something else (Please specify in a few words) (open text)
- 15 Not sure (Exclusive)

SCRIPTER NOTE: Randomise order of 1:13. Pipe = 'all of' if all location settings are turned off during the experiment, Pipe = 'some of' if one or two location settings are turned off during the experiment.

CHANGED_NETWORK

ASK IF Participant changed user connection settings in main experiment

MULTICODE

When reviewing your safety settings earlier, you turned off the setting that would:

SELECT AS NECESSARY

- Keep your profile out of 'People you may know' suggestions [show if 'Keep my profile out of 'People you may know' suggestions' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]
- Keep friend/follower suggestions turned off [show if 'Keep friend/follower suggestions turned off' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]
- Keep your friends list private [show if 'Keep my friends list private' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]
- Keep you unlisted in mutual friends/followers [show if 'Keep me unlisted in mutual friends/followers' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]

why did you turn off these user connection safety settings? Think about the kinds of reasons you might have in real life for making that decision.

Please select all that apply.

- 1 Most people I know have open profiles, so it feels normal
- 2 Being included in "People you may know" makes me look more popular
- 3 I want my posts to reach a bigger audience
- I want my posts to have a chance to go viral
- 5 I don't want to miss out on meeting new people, like friends of friends
- 6 Turning this setting off makes it easier to join groups or communities
- 7 I want more people to be able to find and follow me
- 8 I thought that turning this safety setting off would mean I would see more interesting posts
- 9 It makes it easier to connect with people who have similar interests
- 10 It looks unfriendly if no-one can see my connections
- 11 I generally check or change my user connection settings if the platform has updated their terms and conditions
- 12 I want others to see who I'm connected with on my profile
- 13 I made the same user connection safety choices here as I do for all my social media platforms
- 14 I don't need user connection safety settings, so I just turn them off
- 15 I prefer to make my own user connection safety choices rather than go with the platform's recommended choice
- 16 Something else (Please specify in a few words) (open text)
- 17 Not sure (Exclusive)

SCRIPTER NOTE: Randomise order of 1:15. Pipe = 'all of' if all location settings are turned off during the experiment, Pipe = 'some of' if one or two location settings are turned off during the experiment.

CHANGED_MESSAGING

ASK IF Participant changed direct messaging settings in main experiment

MULTICODE

When reviewing your safety settings earlier, you turned off the setting that would:

SELECT AS NECESSARY:

- Only show messages from people you are connected with [show if 'Only show messages from people I am connected with' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]
- Warn you when a group includes people I'm not connected with [show if 'Warn me when a group includes people I'm not connected with' setting deselected at the end of the experiment]

why did you choose to turn off these direct messaging safety settings? Think about the kinds of reasons you might have in real life for making that decision.

Please select all that apply.

- 1 I'm not worried about getting direct messages from strangers
- 2 Allowing direct messages from anyone means I can meet new people or make new friends online
- 3 Turning it off means I can more easily join groups or communities
- 4 Most of my friends allow direct messages, so it feels normal
- 5 I want to receive messages from new people for socialising, gaming invites, collaborations
- 6 It looks unfriendly if no one can message me directly
- 7 Direct messaging allows me to contact people I couldn't otherwise contact
- 8 I generally check or change my direct message settings if the platform has updated their terms and conditions
- 9 I want to be able to hear from people who follow my content
- 10 I made the same direct messaging safety choices here as I do for all my social media platforms
- 11 I don't need network expansion safety settings, so I just turn them off
- 12 I prefer to make my own direct messaging safety choices rather than go with the platform's default settings
- 13 Something else (Please specify in a few words) (open text)
- 14 Not sure (Exclusive)

SCRIPTER NOTE: Randomise order of 1:12. Pipe = 'all of' if all location settings are turned off during the experiment, Pipe = 'some of' if one or two location settings are turned off during the experiment.

ACCEPTABILITY_MESSAGING

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

In the future, social media platforms may need to do more to explain the purpose of safety settings to users. Under these rules, users could still change their settings to whatever they want.

Would you agree or disagree with this change?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

SAFETY_MESSAGING

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

And do you agree or disagree that this change would keep users safe?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

SCRIPTER NOTE: Keep ACCEPTABILITY_MESSAGING with SAFETY_MESSAGING; randomise order of ACCEPTABILITY_MESSAGING, ACCEPTABILITY_DEFAULTS and ACCEPTABILITY_FIXED.

NONSAFE_MESSAGING

ASK IF SAFETY_MESSAGING == 1 (Completely disagree) OR 2 (Disagree)
MULTICODE

Why do you disagree that this change would keep users safe?

Please select all that apply

- 1 Users are unlikely to read the platform's explanation of the purpose of the safety settings
- 2 Users are likely to change their safety settings despite the platform's explanation of the purpose of the safety settings
- 3 The safety settings themselves are unlikely to keep users safe
- 4 Explanations about safety settings tend to be too complicated or difficult to understand
- 5 Users don't feel that platform's safety messaging and settings are genuinely aimed at keeping them safe
- 6 These sorts of changes do not fix the core problem (e.g. algorithms that promote harmful content)
- 7 Users might be unsure how these settings are enforced by the platform
- 8 Users already get too much information about safety settings
- 9 Something else
- 10 Not sure (exclusive)

ACCEPTABILITY_DEFAULTS

ASK ALL
SINGLE CHOICE

In the future, social media platforms may need to have safety settings turned on automatically for users. Under these rules, users could still change their settings if they want to.

Would you agree or disagree with this change?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree

- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

SAFETY_DEFAULTS

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

And do you agree or disagree that this this change would keep users safe?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

SCRIPTER NOTE: Keep ACCEPTABILITY_DEFAULTS with SAFETY_DEFAULTS and NONSAFE_DEFAULTS; randomise order of ACCEPTABILITY_MESSAGING, ACCEPTABILITY_DEFAULTS and ACCEPTABILITY_FIXED.

NONSAFE_DEFAULTS

ASK IF SAFETY_DEFAULTS == 1 (Completely disagree) OR 2 (Disagree)

MULTICODE

Why do you disagree that this change would keep users safe?

Please select all that apply

- 1 The safety settings themselves are unlikely to keep users safe
- 2 Users worry that these sorts of changes feel like overreach
- 3 Users don't understand what the default safety settings protect them from
- 4 Users tend to think they can manage their safety without the need for the default safety settings
- 5 Users feel that having safety settings on by default restricts their choice
- 6 Users feel that having safety settings on by default reduces the quality of their experience using the platform
- 7 Users will simply override any safety settings the platform switches on for them
- 8 Users might feel that turning users' safety settings on by default still isn't enough to protect them from harm
- 9 Something else
- 10 Not sure (Exclusive)

ACCEPTABILITY_FIXED

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

In the future, social media platforms may need to automatically turn on safety settings for anyone under 18. Under these rules, non-adult users would not be able to change their settings.

Would you agree or disagree with this change?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

SAFETY_FIXED

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

And do you agree or disagree that this change would keep users under 18 safe?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

NONSAFE_FIXED

ASK IF SAFETY_FIXED == 1 (Completely disagree) OR 2 (Disagree)

MULTICODE

Why do you disagree that this change would keep users safe?

Please select all that apply

Platforms cannot reliably determine if users are under 18

The safety settings themselves are unlikely to keep users safe

It should be up to parents to decide what access their children are given on social media platforms

Users under 18 will simply find workarounds (e.g. way to cheat age detection)

It will push users under 18 towards less well-regulated platforms

These restrictive settings may block out helpful content or resources that users under 18 find useful

It may give users a false sense of security

8 Something else

9 Not sure (Exclusive)

HARM_EXPERIENCED

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

Thinking back over the last 4 weeks, did you have any interactions with other users online that made you feel uncomfortable, upset or negative in any way?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 99 Prefer not to say

HARM_CONSENT

ASK IF HARM_EXPERIENCED == 1 – Yes

SINGLE CHOICE

The next two questions ask you about negative interactions you might have had online. Answering these questions could be upsetting or distressing. You don't have to answer them if you don't want to, and you can skip them if you like.

[Please note that your responses to these questions will not be shared with anyone else, including your parents.]

- 1 I am happy to see these questions
- 2 I would like to skip these questions

SCRIPTER NOTE: Show if AGE < 18

HARM_TYPE

ASK IF EXPERIENCED_HARM == 1 – YES and HARM_CONSENT == 1 – I am happy to see these questions

MULTICODE

Which of the following, if any, have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? This includes any images, videos, audio or text, either comments, posts or messages you have seen and/or those shared directly to you.

Please select all that apply.

- 1 Unwelcome friend or follow requests, or messages
- 2 Stalking, cyberstalking or harassing behaviour
- 3 People pretending to be another person, e.g. 'catfishing'
- 4 Persistent bullying online
- 5 One off abusive behaviour or threats
- 6 Trolling, i.e. a person who says something to cause intentional upset or provoke a negative reaction
- 8 Pressure to send sexual or nude images or videos
- 9 People sending unwanted/unsolicited sexual or nude images or videos, e.g. 'cyber flashing'
- 10 Fake or deceptive images/videos, e.g. 'deep fakes'
- 10 Collection or use of my data without my knowledge or permission

- 11 Scams, fraud, or phishing
- 12 Private/intimate information made public, e.g. 'doxxing'
- 13 Sharing of, or threats to share, intimate images without consent e.g. 'revenge porn'
- 14 Intentional harassment during gaming, e.g. 'griefing'
- 15 Private conversations shared without consent
- 16 Group shaming, boycotting, or excluding someone based on their views, opinions or actions, including online 'pile-ons'
- 17 Unwanted sexual messages
- 18 Receiving unrequested gifts or in-game gifts from someone you've had brief, or no communication with, online or offline
- 19 Violent or distressing images or videos
- 20 Something else
- 99 I'd prefer to skip this question [EXCLUSIVE]

SCRIPTER NOTE: Randomise order of 1:19.

HARM_REACTION

ASK IF EXPERIENCED_HARM == 1 – YES and HARM_CONSENT == 1 – I am happy to see these questions and HARM_TYPE != 99 – I'd prefer to skip this question

MULTICODE

Thinking about the most recent negative interaction you have had online the last 4 weeks, which of the following actions did you take, if any?

Please select all that apply.

- 1 Unfollowed/unfriended/blocked/muted someone
- 2 Told a friend or family member
- 3 Used the platform less
- 4 Stopped using the platform altogether
- 5 Stopped commenting, liking or posting
- 6 Changed my settings to change the type of content I see
- 7 Changed my settings to change who can see my location
- 8 Changed my settings to change who can see my profile
- 9 Changed my settings to change who can message me
- 10 I did something else
- 98 Didn't take any action [EXCLUSIVE]
- 99 I'd prefer to skip this question [EXCLUSIVE]

SCRIPTER NOTE: Randomise order of 1:9.

PREVIOUS_AWARE

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE, GRID - ACCORDION

Before today, were you aware of the following types of safety settings on social media?

- 1 Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile
- 2 Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts
- 3 Settings that control who can see your profile and posts
- 4 Settings that control who you see content from
- 5 Settings that control who can send you direct messages

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 99 Don't know

PREVIOUS_USE

ASK IF SOC_MED_USE == 1 – Yes
SINGLE CHOICE, GRID - ACCORDION

And have you used any of these types of safety settings on social media?

- 1 Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile
- 2 Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts
- 3 Settings that control who can see your profile and posts
- 4 Settings that control who you see content from
- 5 Settings that control who can send you direct messages

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 99 Don't know

DEBRIEF

ASK ALL
NO RESPONSE

Thank you for taking part in this survey on social media usage conducted by Verian on behalf of Ofcom.

During the survey, we asked you about negative interactions you might have had online. If you have been affected by any of the topics discussed in this survey, or would like further support, you can contact a trusted support organisation such as [\[PIPE\]](#).

SCRIPTER NOTE: if AGE > 18, PIPE = <https://www.samaritans.org/>, else PIPE = <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Children (13-15) questionnaire

INTRO_PARENTAL_CONSENT

ASK IF SAMPLE = CHILD (i.e. aged 13 to 15)

SINGLE CODE

Thank you for your interest in this study on social media usage. This study is being conducted by Verian on behalf of another organisation. Verian is an independent social research company. All data collected in this study will be kept confidential in line with our privacy policy, and there is no way to link anyone's identity with their answers. All data collected will be used for research purposes only. For more information, see our privacy policy [here](#). Please note that Verian and the other organisation are joint data controllers for this research.

We are interested in how people, **including children**, behave on social media. We would like to invite your child to complete a short online survey on their own. In this survey, we will ask them to browse on simulated version of a social media platform. Afterwards, we will ask them about their experiences on this platform. We will also ask them about their positive and negative experiences using social media in the real world.

As a reminder, your child is free to stop the survey at any time without giving a reason by closing the browser.

We have tested the survey and found that it will take about 10 minutes to complete.

We would like to ask your consent for your child to participate. If you are happy to proceed, we will ask **you** a few questions about your (age, gender and region of residence). Please note, we will not ask your child any additional demographic questions in this survey. Afterwards, we ask you to hand this device to your child.

For this survey, we are interested to hear from children aged between 13 and 15. **If you have more than one child in this age range who wants to complete the survey, please think about the child whose birthday was most recent.**

Are you happy for your child to participate in this survey on their own?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No [screen out]

AGE_CHILD

ASK IF SAMPLE = CHILD (i.e. aged 13 to 15)

SINGLE CODE

What is your child's age?

- 1 13

2 14
3 15

GENDER

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

What is your child's gender?

1 Female
2 Male
3 Prefer to self-describe
99 Prefer not to say

REGION1

ASK ALL

SINGLE CHOICE

Where does your child live?

1 England
2 Scotland
3 Wales
4 Northern Ireland
99 Somewhere else (Exclude)

REGION2

ASK IF REGION1==1 England

SINGLE CHOICE

Where in England does child live?

1 North East
2 North West
3 Yorkshire and the Humber
4 East Midlands
5 West Midlands
6 East
7 London
8 South East
9 South West
99 Prefer not to say

DEVICE_HANDOVER

TEXT ONLY

Please now hand over your device to your child so they can take part if they want to.

Please click 'Next' to complete the survey.

1 Next

INTRO_CHILD_ASSENT

ASK IF SAMPLE = CHILD

SINGLE CODE

Thank you taking over this device from your parent. Your parent already agreed for you to take part in this survey, but we want to make sure you also want to.

We are interested in how people like you behave on social media. As part of this survey, we will ask you to browse on a social media website we made. After you finish that, we will ask how you felt using this platform. We will also ask you about good or bad things that may have happened to you online in the real world. We expect that it should take you about 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Are you happy to continue to the survey?

1 Yes

2 No [screen out]

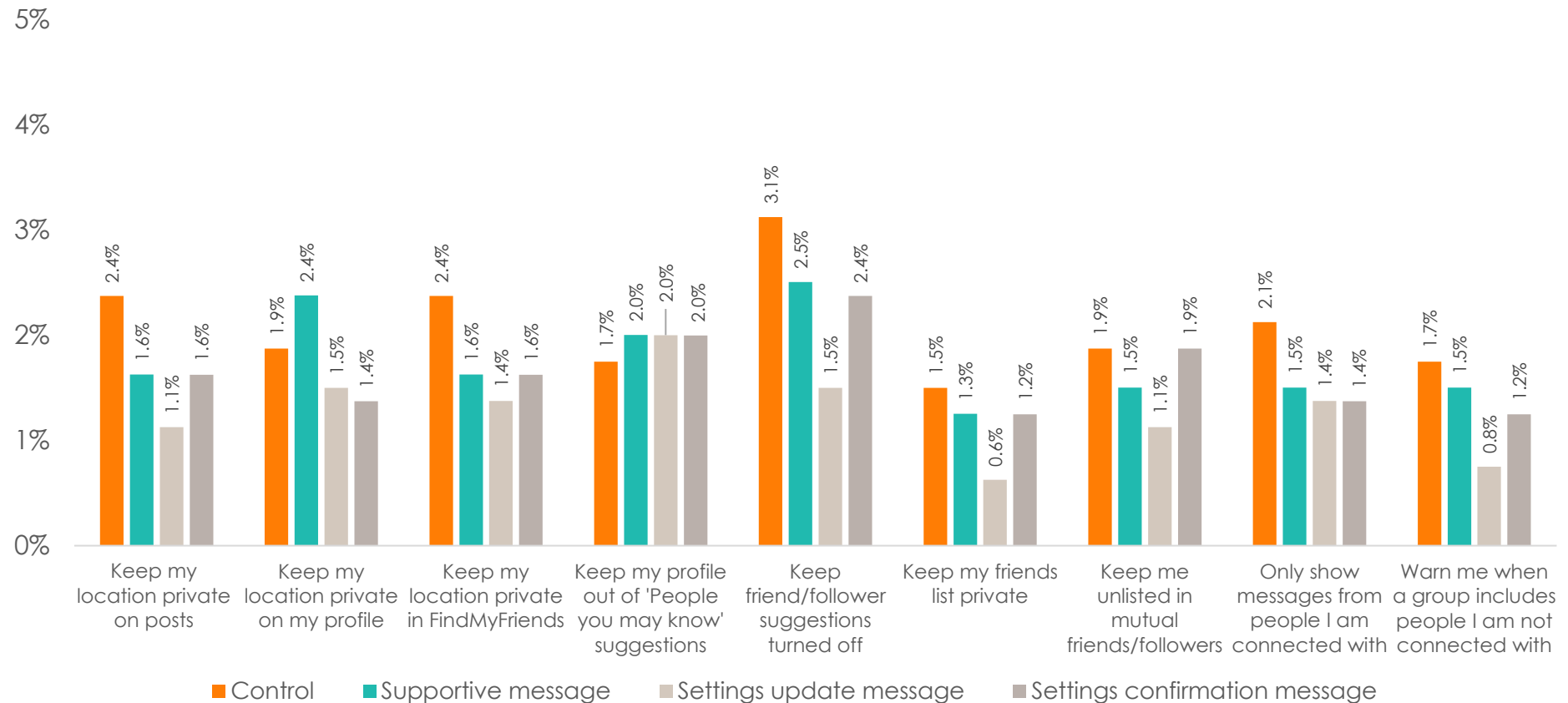
Appendix 2: Feed Posts

We created 18 posts for the simulated social media feed. See supporting document for the full list of feed posts.

Appendix 3: Further results

Further results for settings turned off during the experiment

Appendix 3 Figure 1: Proportion of participants who turned off each default safety setting (adults)



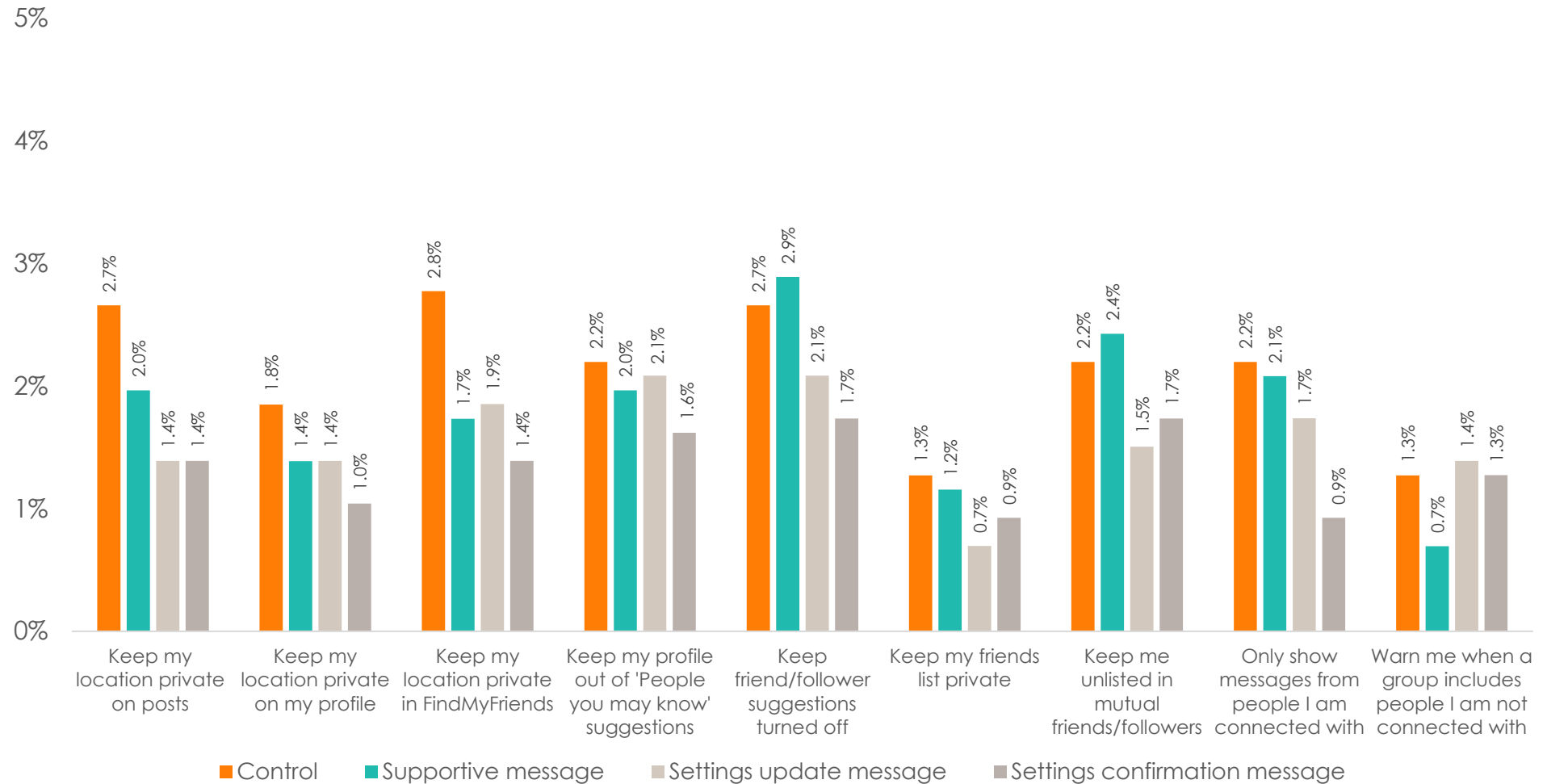
Note: Adult sample; n = 3,201

Appendix 3 Figure 2: Proportion of participants who turned off each default safety setting, by arm (young people aged 16-17)



Note: Young people (16-17) sample; n = 2,620

Appendix 3 Figure 3: Proportion of participants who turned off each default safety setting, by arm (children aged 13-15)

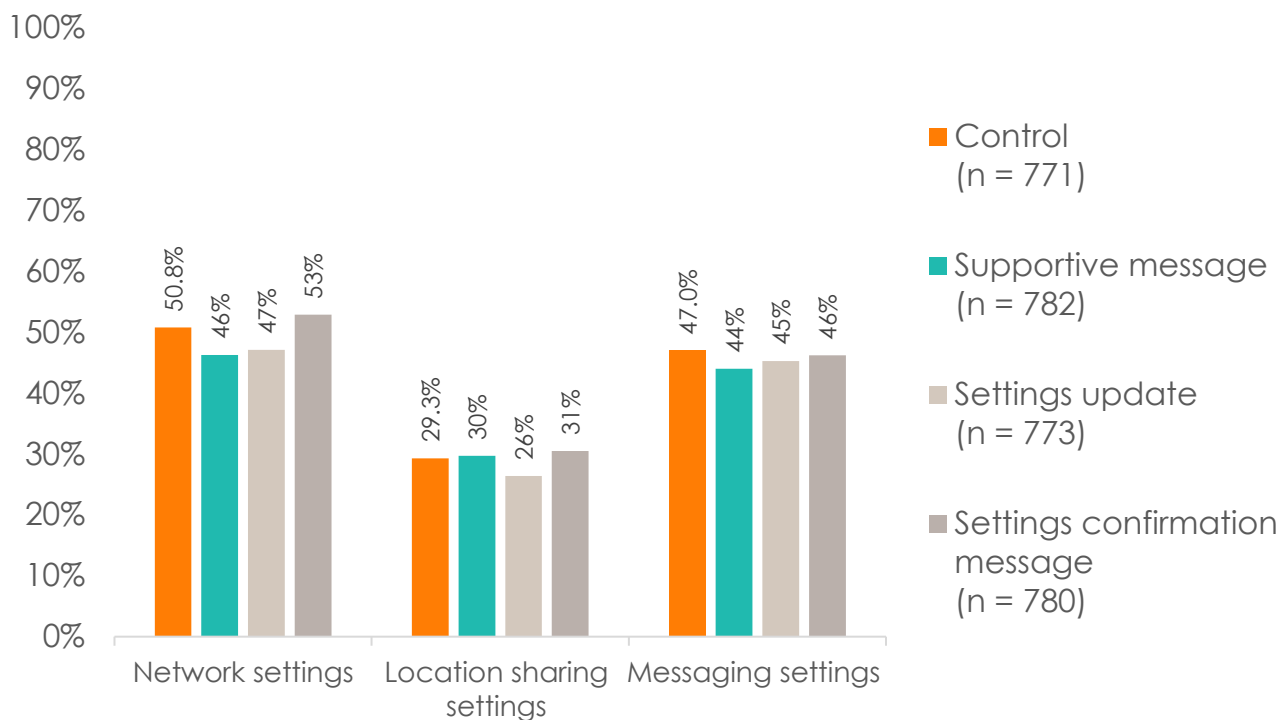


Note: Children (13-15) sample; n = 3,457

Further results for the adult's experiment

Stated preferences for safety settings

Appendix 3 Figure 4: Proportion of adults who want other people to be able to see their location, see their profile or send them messages, by experimental arm

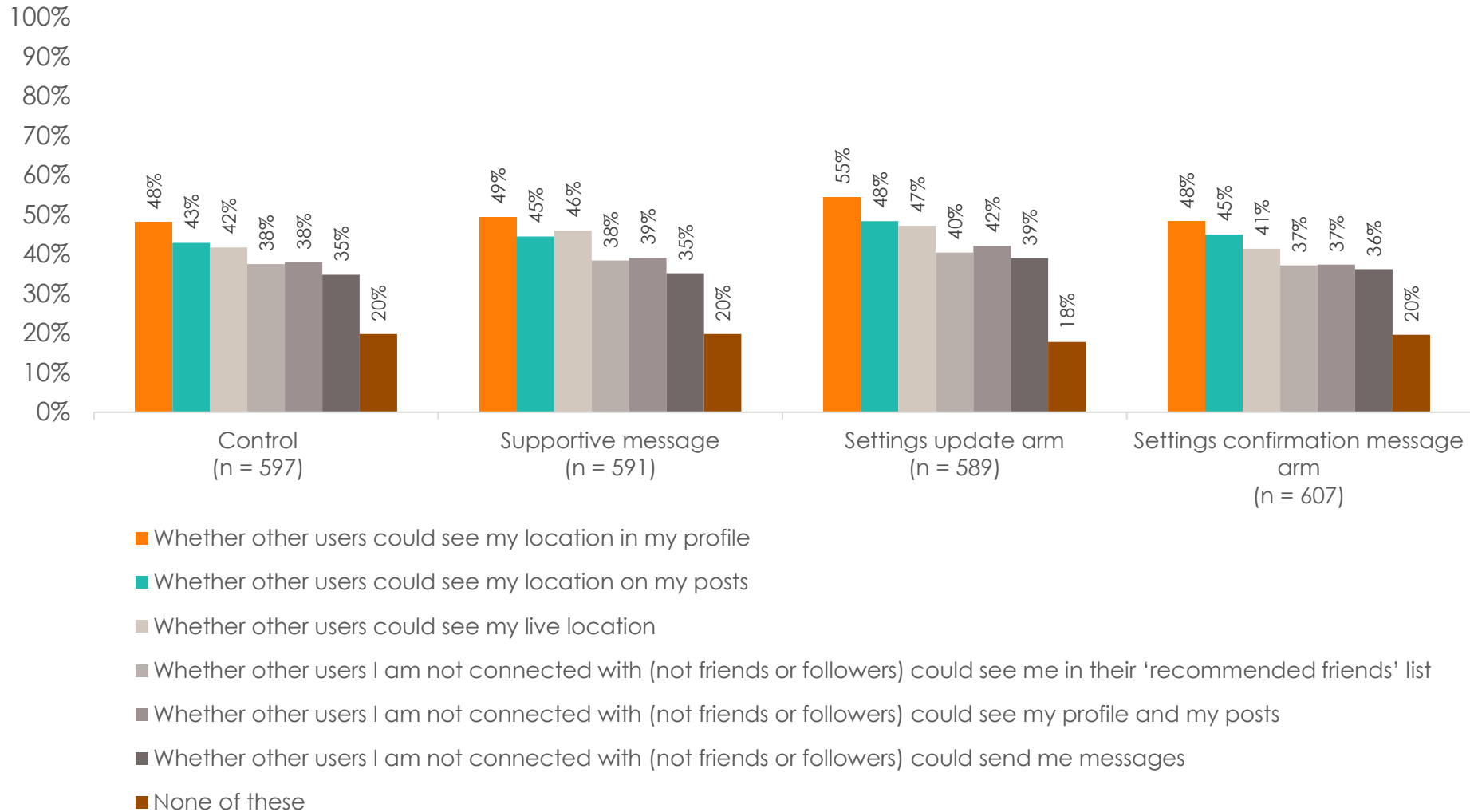


Question: When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to: see your profile and posts (network settings), see your location (location sharing settings) or send you messages (messaging settings)?

Note: Adult sample who responded 'Yes' when asked about their preferences for network, location sharing and messaging settings, excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,106.

Empowerment

Appendix 3 Figure 5: Settings adults felt they had control over, of those who viewed settings, by experimental arm



Question: Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier? Note: Adult sample who viewed their settings; n = 2,384.

Previous awareness and use of settings

Appendix 3 Table 1: Reported awareness of different types of safety settings

	Did not turn off any safety setting (%)	Turned off at least one safety setting (%)	Control (%)	Supportive message (%)	Settings update (%)	Settings confirmation message (%)
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile	70	76	69	69	72	70
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts	66	72	65	67	67	66
Settings that control who can see your profile and posts	79	85	78	80	79	79
Settings that control who you see content from	70	72	69	69	71	72
Settings that control who can send you direct messages	74	80	75	74	73	77

Question: Before today, were you aware of the following types of safety settings on social media? Note: Adult sample who responded 'Yes'; n = 3,201

Appendix 3 Table 2: Reported use of different types of safety settings

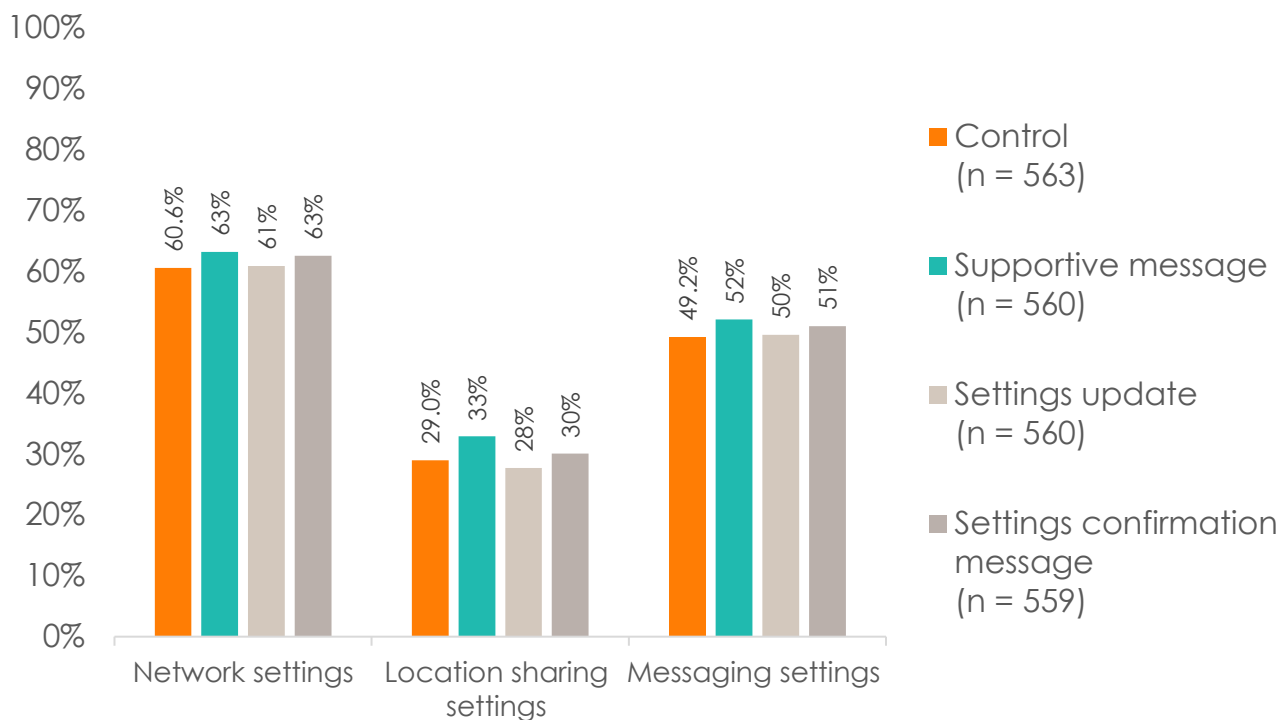
	Did not turn off any safety setting (%)	Turned off at least one safety setting (%)	Control arm (%)	Supportive message arm (%)	Settings update arm (%)	Settings confirmation message (%)
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile	65	61	62	66	65	66
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts	62	62	59	62	64	63
Settings that control who can see your profile and posts	71	78	70	71	74	71
Settings that control who you see content from	63	56	62	63	61	64
Settings that control who can send you direct messages	66	69	67	66	66	66

Question: And have you used any of these types of safety settings on social media? Note: Adult sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,106.

Further results for the under 18s experiment

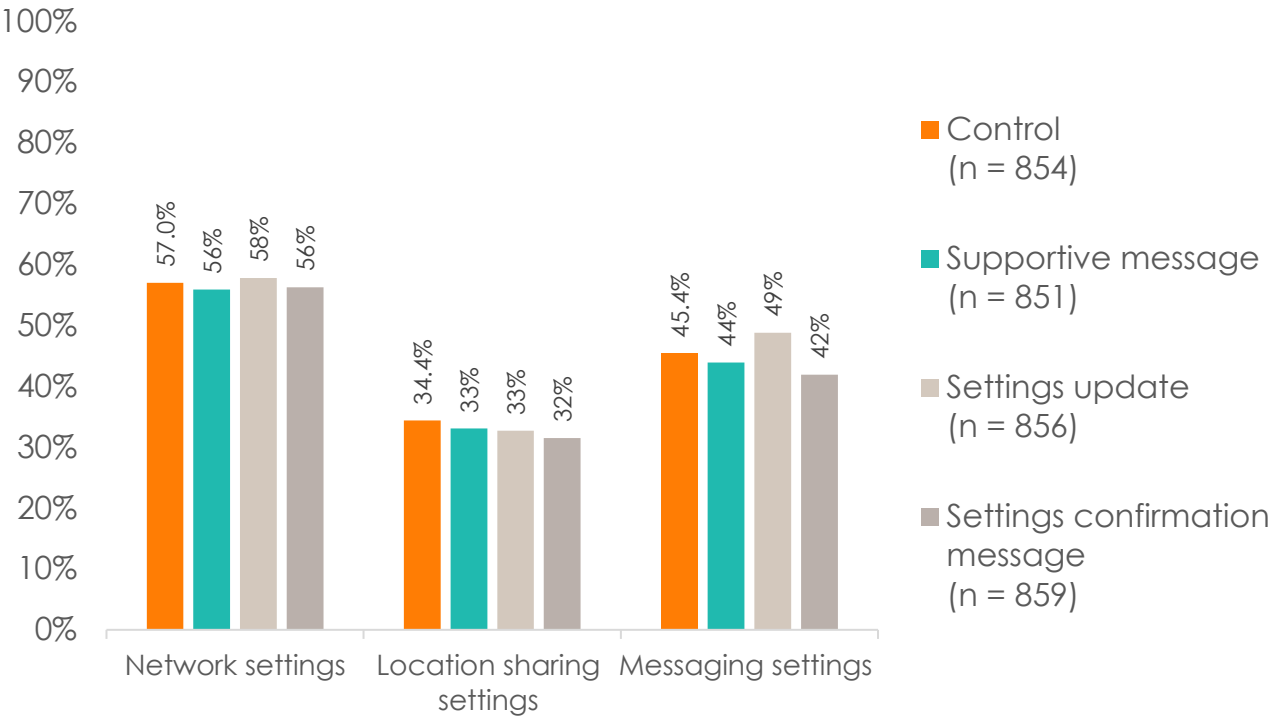
Stated preferences for safety settings

Appendix 3 Figure 6: Proportion of young people (aged 16–17) who want other people to be able to see their location, see their profile or send them messages, by experimental arm



Question: When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to: see your profile and posts (network settings), see your location (location sharing settings) or send you messages (messaging settings)? Note: Young people (16–17) sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 2,242

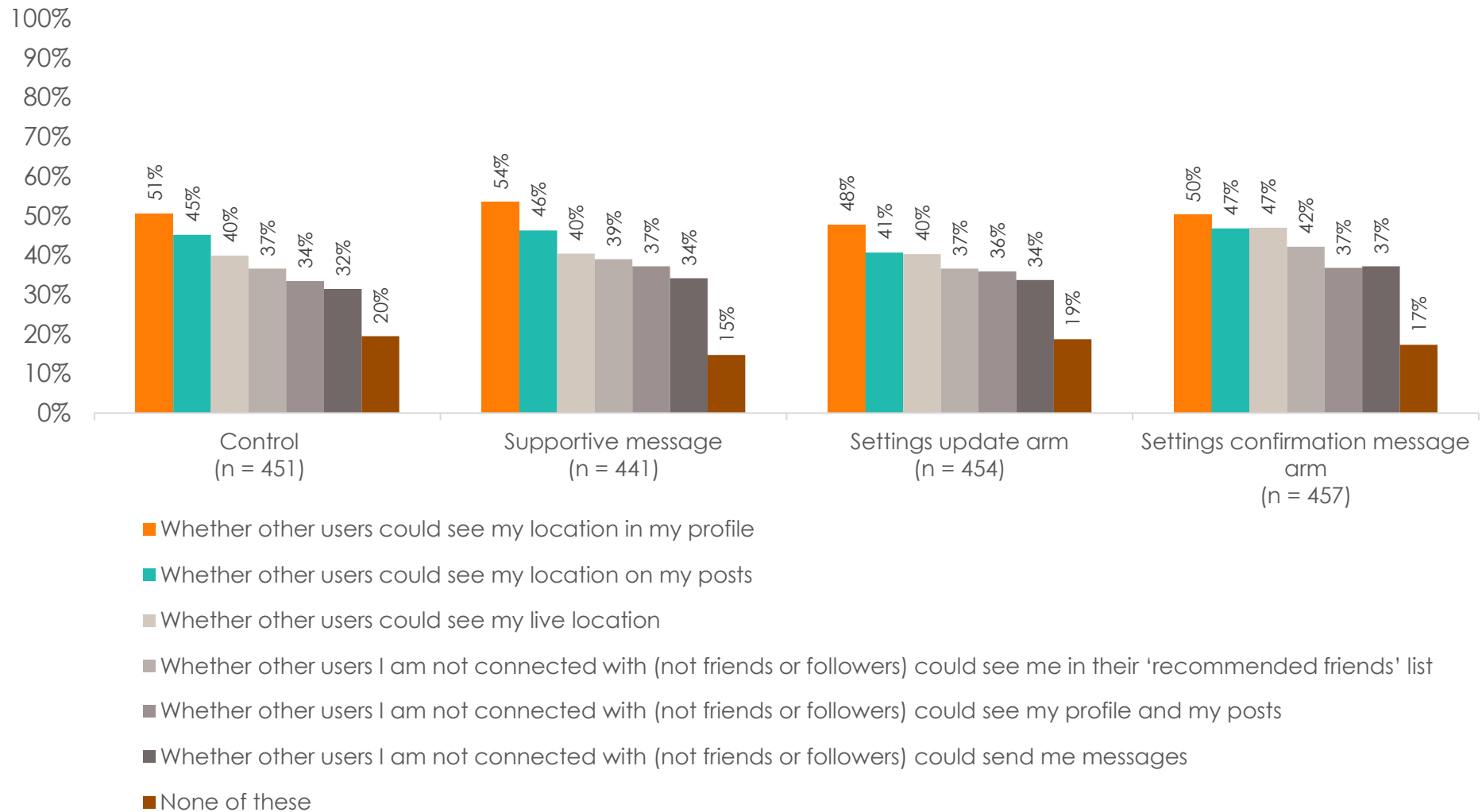
Appendix 3 Figure 7: Proportion of children (aged 13–15) who want other people to be able to see their location, see their profile or send them messages, by experimental arm



Question: When you use social media in real life, do you want other people who you are not connected with (not friends or followers) to: see your profile and posts (network settings), see your location (location sharing settings) or send you messages (messaging settings)? Note: Children (13–15) sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,420.

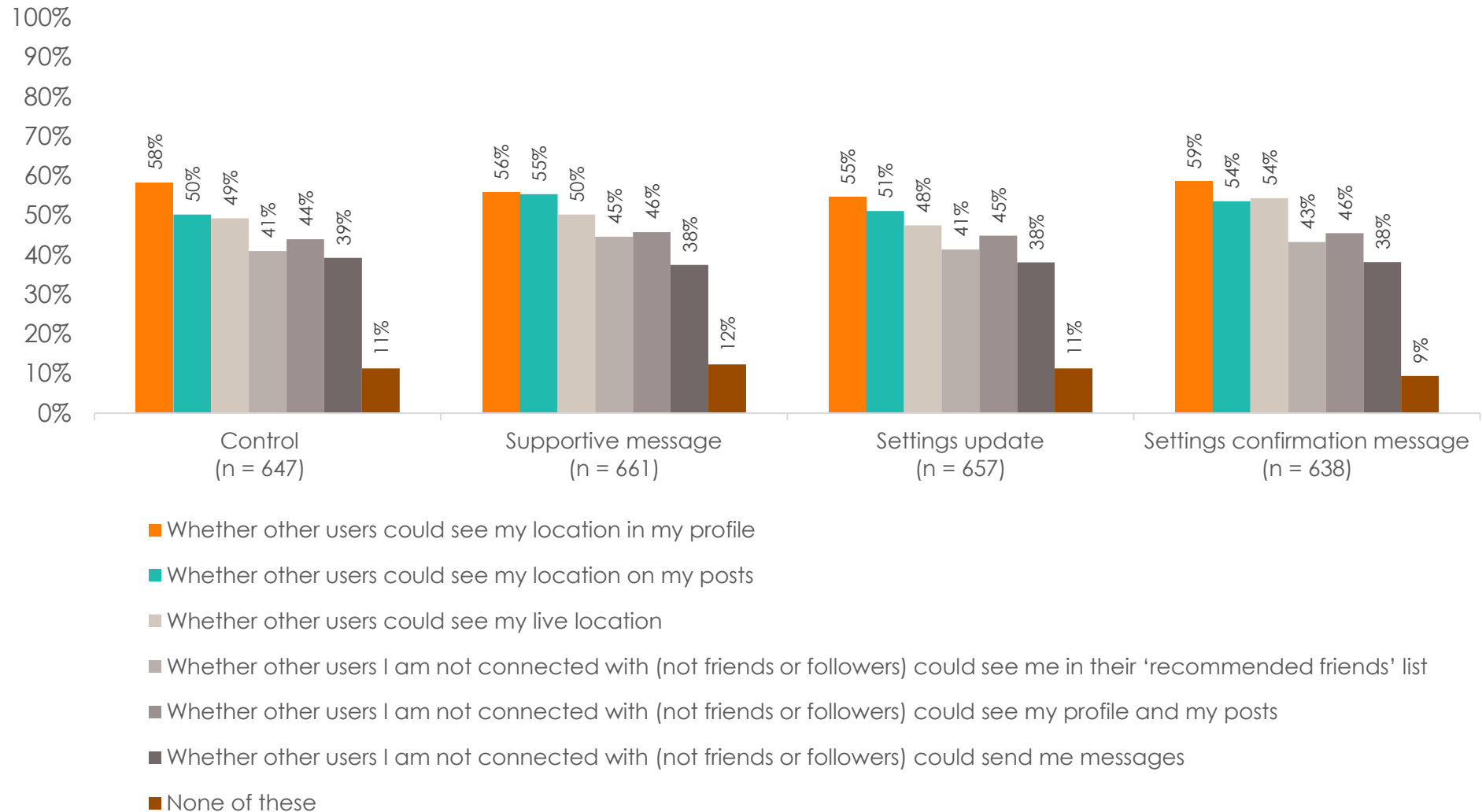
Empowerment

Appendix 3 Figure 8: Settings young people (aged 16-17) felt they had control over, of those who viewed settings, by experimental arm



Question: Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier? Note: Young people (16-17) sample who viewed their settings; n = 1,803.

Appendix 3 Figure 9: Settings children (aged 13-15) felt they had control over, of those who viewed settings, by experimental arm



Question: Which of the following, if any, did you feel you had control over when scrolling the social media feed earlier? Note: Children (13-15) sample who viewed their settings; n = 2,603.

Previous awareness and use of settings

Appendix 3 Table 3: Reported awareness of different types of safety settings (young people aged 16-17)

	Did not turn off any safety setting (n = 2,121) (%)	Turned off at least one safety setting (n = 139) (%)	Control arm (n = 565) (%)	Supportive message arm (n = 565) (%)	Settings update arm (n = 565) (%)	Settings confirmation message (n = 565) (%)
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile	79	85	78	82	78	81
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts	76	80	74	76	76	78
Settings that control who can see your profile and posts	81	81	82	80	80	81
Settings that control who you see content from	72	69	73	70	70	75
Settings that control who can send you direct messages	80	81	80	80	79	81

Question: Before today, were you aware of the following types of safety settings on social media? Note: Young people (16–17) sample who responded 'Yes'; n = 2,260.

Appendix 3 Table 4: Reported use of different types of safety settings (young people aged 16-17)

	Did not turn off any safety setting (n = 2,103) (%)	Turned off at least one safety setting (n = 139) (%)	Control arm (n = 563) (%)	Supportive message arm (n = 560) (%)	Settings update arm (n = 559) (%)	Settings confirmation message (n = 559) (%)
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile	77	85	75	78	78	78
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts	73	74	71	74	72	74
Settings that control who can see your profile and posts	76	78	77	78	72	76
Settings that control who you see content from	66	58	67	65	63	66
Settings that control who can send you direct messages	75	73	76	74	73	76

Question: And have you used any of these types of safety settings on social media? Note: Young people (16–17) sample who responded 'Yes'; n = 2,260.

Appendix 3 Table 5: Reported awareness of different types of safety settings (children aged 13-15)

	Did not turn off any safety setting (n = 3,255) (%)	Turned off at least one safety setting (n = 202) (%)	Control arm (n = 865) (%)	Supportive message arm (n = 865) (%)	Settings update arm (n = 863) (%)	Settings confirmation message (n = 864) (%)
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile	81	89	80	80	83	82
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts	76	78	74	75	77	77
Settings that control who can see your profile and posts	84	89	83	84	84	85
Settings that control who you see content from	76	79	76	76	75	77
Settings that control who can send you direct messages	82	81	81	81	82	83

Question: Before today, were you aware of the following types of safety settings on social media? Note: Children (13–15) sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,420.

Appendix 3 Table 6: Reported use of different types of safety settings (children aged 13-15)

	Did not turn off any safety setting (n = 3,220) (%)	Turned off at least one safety setting (n = 200) (%)	Control arm (n = 854) (%)	Supportive message arm (n = 851) (%)	Settings update arm (n = 856) (%)	Settings confirmation message (n = 859) (%)
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your profile	75	80	75	73	77	76
Settings that control whether your location is shown to other users on your posts	70	73	71	70	71	70
Settings that control who can see your profile and posts	77	81	78	78	77	77
Settings that control who you see content from	69	68	69	69	68	69
Settings that control who can send you direct messages	76	75	77	75	75	77

Question: And have you used any of these types of safety settings on social media? Note: Children (13–15) sample who responded 'Yes', excluding participants who do not use social media in real life; n = 3,420.

Reasons why participants believe each of the proposed changes to safety setting wouldn't keep users safe

Appendix 3 Table 7: Reasons why participants believe explaining the purpose of safety settings on social media apps wouldn't keep users safe

	Adults (n = 228) (%)	Young people (16–17) (n = 133) (%)	Children (13–15) (n = 173) (%)
Users are unlikely to read the platform's explanation of the purpose of the safety settings	45	53	42
Users are likely to change their safety settings despite the platform's explanation of the purpose of the safety settings	44	33	49
The safety settings themselves are unlikely to keep users safe	36	18	30
Explanations about safety settings tend to be too complicated or difficult to understand	26	23	28
Users don't feel that platform's safety messaging and settings are genuinely aimed at keeping them safe	25	15	19
These sorts of changes do not fix the core problem (e.g. algorithms that promote harmful content)	37	19	24
Users might be unsure how these settings are enforced by the platform	18	12	19
Users already get too much information about safety settings	8	8	15
Something else	6	2	4
Not sure	3	6	1

Question: Why do you disagree that this change would keep users safe? Note: Adult sample who believed explaining the purpose of safety settings on social media apps wouldn't keep users safe; n = 228, young people (16–17) sample who believed explaining the purpose of safety settings on social media apps wouldn't keep users safe; n = 133, children (13–15) sample who believed explaining the purpose of safety settings on social media apps wouldn't keep users safe; n = 173.

Appendix 3 Table 8: Reasons why participants believe having safety settings turned on by default that can be turned off, wouldn't keep users safe

	Adults (n = 258) (%)	Young people (16–17) (n = 140) (%)	Children (13–15) (n = 209) (%)
The safety settings themselves are unlikely to keep users safe	39	30	35
Users worry that these sorts of changes feel like overreach	17	22	18
Users don't understand what the default safety settings protect them from	33	29	30
Users tend to think they can manage their safety without the need for the default safety settings	32	29	38
Users feel that having safety settings on by default restricts their choice	23	26	28
Users feel that having safety settings on by default reduces the quality of their experience using the platform	15	15	13
Users will simply override any safety settings the platform switches on for them	38	35	36
Users might feel that turning users' safety settings on by default still isn't enough to protect them from harm	17	19	16
Something else	4	6	2
Not sure	3	6	1

Question: Why do you disagree that this change would keep users safe? Note: Adult sample who believed having safety settings turned on by default turned on by default that can be turned off, wouldn't keep users safe; n = 258, young people (16–17) sample who believed having safety settings turned on by default turned on by default that can be turned off, wouldn't keep users safe; n = 140, children (13–15) sample who believed having safety settings turned on by default turned on by default that can be turned off, wouldn't keep users safe; n = 209.

Appendix 3 Table 9: Reasons why participants believe having safety settings turned on by default which cannot be turned off for any users under 18, wouldn't keep these users safe

	Adults (n = 261) (%)	Young people (16–17) (n = 246) (%)	Children (13–15) (n = 239) (%)
Platforms cannot reliably determine if users are under 18	66	64	60
The safety settings themselves are unlikely to keep users safe	33	28	30
It should be up to parents to decide what access their children are given on social media platforms	25	28	32
Users under 18 will simply find workarounds (e.g. way to cheat age detection)	51	53	53
It will push users under 18 towards less well-regulated platforms	44	38	41
These restrictive settings may block out helpful content or resources that users under 18 find useful	17	26	25
It may give users a false sense of security	28	20	20
Something else	3	4	2
Not sure	1	4	1

Question: Why do you disagree that this change would keep users safe? Note: Adult sample who believed having safety settings turned on by default which cannot be turned off for any users under 18, wouldn't keep these users safe; n = 261, young people who believed having safety settings turned on by default which cannot be turned off for any users under 18, wouldn't keep these users safe (16–17) sample; n = 140, children who believed having safety settings turned on by default which cannot be turned off for any users under 18, wouldn't keep these users safe (13–15) sample; n = 209.

Types of harm experienced

Appendix 3 Table 10: Types of harm experienced by participants

	Adults (n = 470) (%)	Young people (16–17) (n = 410) (%)	Children (13–15) (n = 647) (%)
Unwelcome friend or follow requests, or messages	24	24	26
Stalking, cyberstalking or harassing behaviour	15	16	15
People pretending to be another person, e.g. 'catfishing'	18	19	26
Persistent bullying online	13	17	20

	Adults (n = 470) (%)	Young people (16–17) (n = 410) (%)	Children (13–15) (n = 647) (%)
One off abusive behaviour or threats	19	15	18
Trolling, i.e. a person who says something to cause intentional upset or provoke a negative reaction	25	23	27
Pressure to send sexual or nude images or videos	12	16	16
People sending unwanted/unsolicited sexual or nude images or videos, e.g. 'cyber flashing'	16	14	20
Fake or deceptive images/videos, e.g. 'deep fakes'	21	19	27
Collection or use of my data without my knowledge or permission	12	11	13
Scams, fraud, or phishing	29	26	31
Private/intimate information made public, e.g. 'doxxing'	9	11	12
Sharing of, or threats to share, intimate images without consent e.g. 'revenge porn'	8	9	13
Intentional harassment during gaming, e.g. 'griefing'	11	11	16
Private conversations shared without consent	12	16	19
Group shaming, boycotting, or excluding someone based on their views, opinions or actions, including online 'pile-ons'	13	14	19
Unwanted sexual messages	19	28	24
Receiving unrequested gifts or in-game gifts from someone you've had brief, or no communication with, online or offline	9	10	10
Violent or distressing images or videos	16	15	26
Something else	6	3	3

	Adults (n = 470) (%)	Young people (16–17) (n = 410) (%)	Children (13–15) (n = 647) (%)
I'd prefer to skip this question	4	4	3

Question: Which of the following, if any, have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? Note: Adult sample who experienced harm and consented to seeing the question about types of harm experienced; n = 470, young people (16–17) sample who experienced harm and consented to seeing the question about types of harm experienced; n = 410, children (13–15) sample who experienced harm and consented to seeing the question about types of harm experienced; n = 647.

Appendix 4: Logit model for additional analysis

Appendix 4 Table 1: Logit model for additional analysis

Coefficient	Odds ratio	T value	P-value
<i>Age (baseline = adults)</i>			
Children (13-15)	0.997	-0.240	0.811
Young people (16-17)	0.983	-1.339	0.180
<i>Intervention (baseline = control)</i>			
Supportive message	0.983	-1.473	0.141
Settings update message	0.979	-1.797	0.072
Settings confirmation message	0.995	-0.424	0.671
<i>Interaction terms</i>			
Children x Supportive message	1.018	1.062	0.288
Children x Settings update message	1.013	0.808	0.419
Children x Settings confirmation message	0.983	-1.036	0.300
Young people x Supportive message	1.023	1.238	0.216
Young people x Settings update message	1.034	1.833	0.067
Young people x Settings confirmation message	1.028	1.530	0.126
Intercept	1.071	8.249	< 0.001



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