

SEXTORTION:

FINDINGS FROM AN ONLINE SURVEY ABOUT THREATS TO EXPOSE SEXUAL IMAGES



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INTRODUCTION

THE SURVEY AND SURVEY GOALS

Thorn and the Crimes against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire conducted an online survey of persons ages 18 to 25 who have been targets of threats to expose sexual images, or “sextortion” ($n=1631$). Respondents were recruited mainly through ads on Facebook and asked to complete anonymous surveys if they had been targets of sextortion. Our goal was to inform strategies to reduce these incidents by:

- **Educating the public and practitioners about sextortion;**
- **Improving mechanisms for reporting to websites, apps and other technology programs that are being used for sextortion; promoting reporting to technology companies by targets of sextortion and increasing effective responses to such reports;**
- **Equipping technology companies with more knowledge and information about how their platforms are being used in sextortion so they can create preventive strategies to combat the problem; and**
- **Encouraging help-seeking by targets of sextortion and providing them with resources.**

Details about how the survey was conducted can be found at the end of this report.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Sextortion is defined as threats to expose a sexual image in order to make a person do something or for other reasons, such as revenge or humiliation. Persons who completed the online survey are referred to as “respondents” and those who threatened them as “perpetrators.”

The respondents in our sample were primarily female (83%) and teenagers (ages 18 and 19); about 40% were in their early 20s.

The sextortion episodes they reported were diverse, but incidents broadly fell into two groups:

- a) In the wake of face-to-face romantic or sexual relationships during which sexual images were taken or shared, an aggrieved partner threatened to disseminate images either to force reconciliation or to embarrass or humiliate the respondent.**
- b) A perpetrator who met a respondent online used a sexual image obtained from the respondent or some other source to demand more images or sexual interactions.**

There was notable diversity in these episodes, however. Some respondents were male; demands were not always sexual in nature; and some perpetrators used elaborate deceptions to acquire images and threaten respondents.

The more serious cases involved stalking and physical and sexual assault in addition to sextortion and threats that lasted for 6 months or more.

Perpetrators carried out threats or otherwise harmed respondents in about 45% of cases, more frequently in the face-to-face relationship group than in the online encounter group, and disseminated sexual images in about 30% of cases.

The personal and psychological toll on respondents could be quite intense, with 24% seeing a medical or mental health practitioner and 12% having to move as a result.

Shame, embarrassment and self-blame were common feelings that kept many respondents from seeking help from friends and family or from reporting to technology companies that ran websites or apps used for sextortion.

Only 1 in 5 respondents sought help from or reported the episode to a website or app. Respondents were more likely to make reports when perpetrators posted images online. Of those who did not report incidents, about half reported skepticism that a website or app could help. More than 40% of those who did report to websites or apps said that the responses that they received were not helpful.

Complaints about unhelpful responses from technology companies included complicated documentation requirements, unsympathetic attitudes, lengthy delays, lack of follow-up about what was being done, and responses that did not fully address the problem.

Only 16% of respondents reported episodes to police, but police involvement was considerably more common among those who disclosed sextortion incidents to family or friends, were victims of violence or threats of violence in addition to the sextortion, or who saw a doctor or mental health professional as a result of the incident.

Respondents described a variety of barriers to police assistance, including lack of criminal laws addressing sextortion, lack of jurisdiction when perpetrators lived in other states or countries, and difficulties proving the identity of perpetrators. Some reported being shamed or blamed by police and some who were minors during incidents were threatened with prosecution for producing child pornography.

The report includes recommendations to:

- **Increase public awareness of sextortion in order to promote disclosure and improve support networks for victims**
- **Mobilize the education system to implement prevention curricula and provide support resources**
- **Mobilize bystanders to stop perpetrators and support victims**
- **Encourage the technology industry to develop proactive interventions, improve the experience of victims who report incidents, adopt practices and policies that prohibit sextortion, and increase collaboration across the industry**
- **Increase law enforcement's capacity to respond to sextortion cases and improve sensitivity to victims**

Many respondents described the sextortion they endured in detail and with feeling. They speak for themselves in much of this report.

WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

- Sixteen hundred thirty-one people who had been threatened with exposure of sexual images completed the online survey.
- Most respondents were women (83%), 14% were men and 2% described their gender as other. (*Table 1, pg. 69*) (“Male,” “female” and “other” were the only choices offered in the survey. In this report, we describe the gender of respondents who chose “other” as “unspecified.”)
- Almost 40% were age 18 at the time they completed the survey (39%). We were specifically interested in episodes that occurred to youth ages 17 and younger, and we deliberately aimed recruiting messages at 18-year-olds because we expected them to report more such incidents.
- Other respondents were ages 19 (16%), 20 (10%), 21 (9%), 22 (7%), 23 (7%), 24 (6%) and 25 (3%) when they completed the survey.
- Thirteen percent of respondents were Hispanic or Latino/a.
- More than three-quarters described themselves as White/Caucasian (78%), 4% were Black/African American, 3% Asian, 2% American Indian/Alaska native, and 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Four percent were multi-racial or other; 9% declined to describe their race.
- Nine percent of respondents had not graduated from high school, 37% were high school graduates, 40% had some college or technical schooling and 13% had a college degree or more.

Throughout this report, numbers are rounded to the nearest percent. Some categories may not add to 100% because of rounding. Missing data greater than 5% is noted. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer questions or answered don't know/not sure. Detailed tables are in the appendix.

All quotations in the report are from responses to the online survey. Some quotations have been altered slightly for clarity and to delete possibly identifying details. With each quotation, we list the gender of the respondent, their age at the time the threats began and whether they knew the perpetrator face-to-face or online.

Limitations of the survey

When reading this report, please keep in mind that the characteristics and experiences of respondents reflect how recruitment was conducted. Nine out of 10 respondents were recruited by ads on Facebook, and Facebook users may differ from other persons who have been threatened with exposure of sexual images. Also, respondents were age 18 to 25. This survey does not reflect the experiences of persons age 26 or older. Some respondents provided retrospective accounts of episodes that occurred when they were minors, but if we had gathered more contemporaneous data from minors they might have described such incidents differently. Overall, the respondents do not constitute a representative sample of persons who have been the targets of sextortion, so our findings cannot be generalized beyond this group. For example, we cannot say who is mostly targeted for sextortion and how it mostly occurs; we can only report the experiences of those who responded to the survey.

HOW SEXTORTION INCIDENTS UNFOLDED

CONTEXTS OF SEXTORTION INCIDENTS

“My ex-boyfriend wanted me back very badly after I broke up with him... He threatened suicide... He sent me horrible texts and Facebook messages and left me mean voicemails saying since I hurt him, he was going to make me hurt just as bad. He threatened to send naked pictures of me that I had sent him during our relationship to my college or to my parents over Facebook.”

Female, 21, face-to-face (f2f)

(Ages in quotations are ages when threats began, not ages at time of survey.)

“He was choking a cat [on a video chat site] and told me if I didn’t do as he said he would kill the cat. So I showed him my breast and he stopped hurting the cat. He then showed me the video he had of me showing my breast and said that if I leave [the site] he knows where I live and will post it to my Facebook page.”

Female, 17, online

Although the sextortion cases that participants described unfolded in a variety of ways, there were two basic contexts in which these incidents developed: face-to-face relationships (about 60% of cases) and online relationships (about 40% of cases). These two contexts showed substantial differences in dynamics, such as the speed at which incidents unfolded, the nature of threats, and how situations were, or were not, resolved.

- **Face-to-face relationships:** Most sextortion cases that happened in face-to-face relationships (respondents knew perpetrators in person) involved perpetrators who were, had been, or wanted to be romantic or sexual partners to respondents, although some cases involved other scenarios, such as malice or jealousy among friends or acquaintances. Almost 60% of respondents described face-to-face relationships with perpetrators (59%, n=968).
- **Online relationships:** The second context was online relationships (respondents met perpetrators online and never met them in person). These cases usually involved romantic or sexual relationships or one-time sexual encounters, although some respondents were threatened during online interactions without romantic or sexual elements. About 40% of incidents involved online relationships (41%, n=663).

TIMING OF SEXTORTION INCIDENTS

- Seventy percent of respondents described sextortion incidents in which threats occurred in 2014 (26%) or 2015 (44%); 15% described threats that happened in 2013 and 12% incidents from 2012 or earlier. *(Table 2, pg. 70)*
- Forty-six percent of respondents were minors (age 17 or younger) when the threats began. An additional 28% were teenagers, ages 18 or 19. Sixteen percent were ages 20 to 22, and 6% were ages 23 to 25 when sextortion incidents started.
- The situation had ended for two-thirds of respondents (67%) and was ongoing for 11%. Twenty percent did not know if the situation had ended.

FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

“I was in a controlling, emotionally abusive relationship and when I finally had the strength to break away I was still trapped by his threats to put my nude pictures that were for his eyes onto the internet for everyone to see.”

Female, 18, f2f

“I was younger and struggling with my gender identity and sexual orientation. I wasn’t comfortable being open with people at that point in my life. I feared for my safety if the wrong people found out that I’m trans. I stupidly got into an abusive relationship with someone older and really controlling. Whenever I tried to leave, he threatened to post pictures and videos taken during our relationship and to tell everyone that I’m trans and bisexual, and basically ruin my life.”

Unspecified, 21, f2f

“I ended a 3 year relationship and she did not take it well. While in this relationship we had a normal sex life and took pictures of each other for fun... By the time the threats started, I was involved with another woman... The threats eventually stopped but not before I had to tell my close friends and new girlfriend about the situation. This caused many hours of regret and unhappiness.”

Male, 19, f2f

“The guy who had posted [the pictures] was constantly talking down on me and telling me that I was a terrible person for what I did to him – I supposedly led him on and made him think we would date after multiple years of friendship. I was completely unaware of his intentions and that he had gotten nudes from my cell phone without my permission.”

Female, 18, f2f

Sextortion in face-to-face relationships tended to be perpetrated by men (89% of cases) and targeted against women (87%) although men were victims in 11% of cases and perpetrators were female in 9%. **(Table 3, pg. 71)** Gender was unspecified for about 1% of respondents in face-to-face relationships.

Almost half of respondents (47%) were younger than 18 when incidents began; 28% were 18 or 19; 16% age 20 to 22 and 6% were 23 to 25. Twenty-seven percent of perpetrators were age 17 or younger when they first threatened respondents; 42% were ages 18 to 21; 19% were 22 to 25 and 10% were older than 25.

Most respondents knew, or thought they knew, the perpetrator very or somewhat well (57% and 28%, respectively).

“Since he was the first boyfriend I was in love with and I was even convinced I was going to marry him one day, I trusted him ... The most terrifying thing about it all, to me personally, is the fact that I thought I knew him so well.”

Female, 20, f2f

“I was very shocked that someone I thought I knew so well (I had known this person for 6 years and then he was my boyfriend for about 6 to 9 months) wasn’t the person I thought they were. I was shocked that people could be so good at hiding how malicious they could be.”

Female, 22, f2f

About two-thirds (64%) described perpetrators as current or former intimate partners, including boy- or girlfriends, sexual or dating partners, spouses or live-in partners.

“We dated for almost two years, and when I decided we weren’t working... he threatened to expose pictures of me he had previously promised to delete.”

Female, 18

“[My ex-boyfriend] got mad at me one night because I had a conversation with his new girlfriend at the time. He claimed I tried to ruin his relationship with her.”

Female, 21, f2f

“Me and my ex-boyfriend dated for about 10 months and he was being verbally and emotionally abusive so I finally gathered the courage to leave him and after that he went crazy.”

Male, 16, f2f

Twenty percent of respondents in face-to-face incidents described perpetrators as current or former friends or acquaintances and 11% as persons known from school or work. Even when respondents categorized perpetrators as other than intimate partners, however, they often described them as potential partners, rejected suitors or sexual harassers.

“I liked this guy; he asked for a naked picture of me and told me he wouldn’t show anyone.”

Female, 15, f2f

“This person was mad at me for not reciprocating feelings.”

Female, 23, f2f

“This man was my supervisor... He always made advances towards me...”

Female, 22, f2f

Respondents described some face-to-face perpetrators as friends or new partners of former intimate partners.

“An ex-boyfriend sent [pictures of me] out to his friends and over the years one guy kept them.”

Female, 18, f2f

“I explained to her that those [images] were not recent and that her ‘boyfriend’ most likely saved them from the time we were dating. I told her I hadn’t had contact with him in years... She kept messaging me and threatening to expose them and calling me degrading things.”

Female, 15, f2f

“A girl is jealous of me so she teamed up with my ex. She says he gave her my nudes. Then she said she was going to post them on the internet to embarrass me.”

Female, 18, f2f

Also, not all incidents that occurred in face-to-face relationships involved sexual motivations. Some perpetrators appeared to be malicious for other reasons, for example:

“A girl I went to school with had taken a half-naked picture of me while we were changing for P.E. and posted it online tagging me in it. She called me ugly, fat, and a lot of body-shaming hurtful things.”

Female, 16, f2f

“I had a nude picture and sent it to my best friend to show I lost weight. She sent it to another girl, who I found does not like me. She sent it around and threatened to show my parents.”

Female, 18, f2f

“One girl stole my phone and took pictures ...and then sent them to another girl and then they went to the office and gave them to my principal and told her I was having sex and doing drugs on campus.”

Female, 18, f2f

TECHNOLOGY USE: FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

- Almost all respondents in face-to-face relationships (96%) had contact with perpetrators on a cell phone or online by computer, but a small number, 2%, did not. In these cases, perpetrators threatened to distribute sexual images online or via cell phone but interactions and threats happened in person.
- Sixteen percent of respondents in face-to-face relationships said that perpetrators used technology to hide their true identities. In most cases, perpetrators created fake online accounts or cell phone numbers to interact anonymously with respondents or respondents’ family or friends, usually to stalk or harass them.

Some respondents provided examples.

- *“He made several social media accounts under different names to try and get information on me from myself and friends.”*

Male, 20, f2f

- *“He would use random cell phone numbers and fake Facebook profiles to stalk me.”*

Female, 19, f2f

- *“He created fake online profiles to harass me and made new ones whenever I would block them as well as using different phone numbers.”*

Female, 17, f2f

ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

“A guy in his twenties told me that he loved me to get me to send him pictures of me nude. After I didn’t want to continue sending pictures, he threatened to create a Facebook page with my nudes.”

Female, 16, online

“I had photos on my page that showed a little bit of skin that I deleted because he was making inappropriate comments about them... He threatened to send Photo-shopped [sexual] images of me to friends or post them on social media sites as a way to convince me to hook up with him.”

Female, 23, online

“He messaged me, flirting with me. The boy in his profile picture was really hot, so I flirted back. Eventually I sent him nudes. An hour passed without a response from him, and then he revealed he was nothing he claimed to be. I asked him what he wanted and he said he wanted [sexual] favors. I told him to leave me alone and blocked him. He knew about another account I had however, and sent me more threats there... including an address to a motel near my house.”

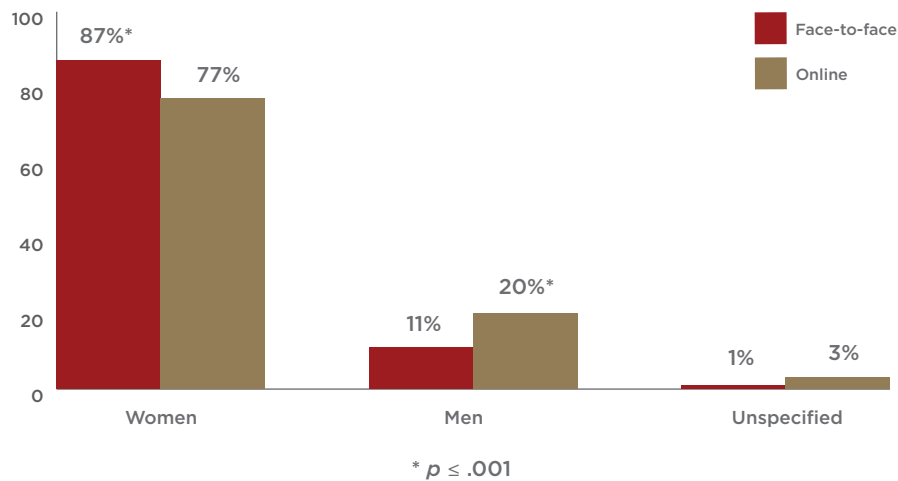
Male, 14, online

“I was going through a break up and I was horny. The girl had added me on Facebook a while back and we started talking. Eventually, I added her via Skype and she started touching herself and getting naked. She wanted to see my penis so I showed me masturbating and she recorded it and showed it to me on Skype then she made all the demands [for money] after I begged her not to show it.”

Male, 20, online

Online relationships in which respondents met perpetrators online and never met them in person involved a range of sexual situations from serious romances to hook-ups to encounters by minors with sexual predators to webcam blackmail scams. As with incidents in face-to-face relationships, victims of sextortion in online relationships were predominantly women (77%) although men were victims in 20% of cases and gender was unspecified for 3%. (*Table 4, pg. 72*)

FIGURE 1 FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE INCIDENTS: RESPONDENT GENDER



Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Respondents in face-to-face relationships differed from those online based on gender. (*Figure 1*) Women constituted 87% of those threatened with exposure of images in face-to-face relationships compared to 77% in online relationships ($p < .001$). Conversely, men made up 20% of those threatened in online relationships and 11% in face-to-face relationships ($p < .001$).

Forty-three percent of respondents were age 17 or younger when they were threatened by perpetrators they knew only online; 29% were 18 or 19; 15% age 20 to 22 and 6% were 23 to 25. This is similar to the age breakdown among respondents who knew perpetrators face-to-face. We do not have consistent information about age and gender of perpetrators in online relationships because respondents often did not have accurate information about their identities.

TECHNOLOGY USE: ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

When respondents knew perpetrators only online, their first contact was usually via computer (66% of online relationships) but first contacts happened on cell phones in 30% of online relationships.

- 31% of respondents in online relationships first interacted with perpetrators on social networking platforms (Facebook, Tagged, Instagram, others)
- 24% first interacted on messaging or photo messaging platforms (Kik, Snapchat, others)
- 12% first interacted on video voice call programs such as Skype, Facetime or webcam sites
- 11% first interacted on dating platforms such as OKCupid or Tinder
- Smaller percentages first interacted other ways: 4% on gaming platforms, 3% on email, 1% on image boards and 1% on video sharing social media platforms

TECHNOLOGY USE: ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS (CONT.)

We asked if, during first interactions, perpetrators asked respondents for information to allow further contact.

- In 40% of online relationships, perpetrators asked to be added as a friend or contact on a social media platform
- In 37%, perpetrators asked for the respondent's cell phone number
- In 31%, they asked for other online contact information, such as a screen name
- In 28%, they suggested moving to or using a specific site or app to interact further
- In 21%, they asked for other personal information, for example name, age, location

Some respondents described their first contacts with perpetrators and their reasons for interacting with them.

"[On meetme.com] they added me as a friend and messaged me. It started out innocent enough, but then it got more and more sexual, and they ended up asking for pictures. I had very low self esteem and felt pressured, so I regrettably sent one to make them happy/keep them interested in me."

Female, 16, online

"He started messaging me [on Facebook] because he found me pretty, and I have to admit my hormones were acting up and I needed to have some kind of sex to calm myself down."

Female, 19, online

"He... offered me money/incentives to "perform" [on chaturbate.com] for him. He recorded and took snapshots of our private encounter and then threatened to share them with my family & friends if I didn't perform for him whenever he wanted."

Female, 22, online

"It was on Tinder, and he contacted me being very sweet. Things escalated fast and infatuation quickly followed. In a matter of weeks of talking with this person he was obsessed with me. After trying to call it off, he got upset."

Male, 23, online

"He Facetimed me because he knew my best friend and she was trying to set us up."

Female, 18, online

"The man said he was 25. He messaged me on Kik and said hey so I started talking to him. He asked me stuff like my age where I'm from, what I like to do. It got personal later in the conversation when he asked me if I'd ever had sex, if I wanted to, have I ever seen a dick. When I said no he sent me a picture of his and said your turn. I know I didn't have to but I felt obligated to return the favor. After a couple pictures were exchanged I told him that I have to go but he said if I didn't send him more then he would find me on Facebook and post them everywhere."

Female, 14, online

We asked respondents in online relationships, "During your first contact with this person, did they lie or give you a false impression about who they were based on what you know now?" More than half (55%) said yes. Online perpetrators lied about: wanting a romantic relationship (42% of those who lied), their age (39%), being female when they were male (15%), being someone the respondent knew (13%), being male when they were female (3%) and other lies (21%). (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

"I met this 'girl' online, who turned out to be a man. He threatened to rape and beat me on camera if I didn't continue sending him sexual pictures. I had never sent pictures to this person but they had fabricated some pictures."

Unspecified, 18, online

"This guy claimed he cared for me and said he had cancer and faked children's deaths to get my sympathy. He said he wanted me to adopt his kid that never existed and then said she died."

Female, 16, online

"He found me on online and asked to message me. I was looking for someone to talk to so I let him. He started saying his brother was dying and only one person could help him. Then another person messaged me saying that it was the guy who could save the first person's brother. He said he would only help the brother if I Skyped him. I told him I didn't want a part in his scam. He said he was going to take my profile picture and put it on a porn star's body and post it on the internet. He kept describing how he was going to ruin my life if I didn't do what he wanted."

Female, 17, online

Respondents also described scams to blackmail victims for money and other schemes to acquire sexual images for sextortion purposes. Several respondents, mostly young men, described being blackmailed for money after engaging in webcam sex sessions via Skype or similar webcam programs.

"I was bored and made an account on a dating site. A user messaged me. We exchanged email accounts and then made contact on Skype. She checked that I was alone, and kept telling me that she was 'horny and wanted to have fun'. Eventually she directly asked me for cam sex. So we Skyped and started 'mutually masturbating'. Shortly after the screen went blank and the threats came. I was cooperative (perhaps too much so) and spent the next 4 hours or so making online accounts [and] doing whatever this person wanted me to do. Eventually she asked me to send at least \$300 to her charity in the Philippines. I talked her down to \$100. Later she offered to delete my video if I sent 100 more dollars to her charity. She shared her screen as she deleted the video. Obviously she could still have a copy stored somewhere else, but what choice did I have?"

Male, 20, online

"I matched with a woman on video chat. They asked to go on Skype. Once there they took off their clothes and asked me to do the same. After a while they turned off their camera and shared their screen which had recorded compromising video of me. For about 10 minutes while the predator showed the compromising video, showed me my Facebook page and opened messages to my friends, and set terms for money, I tried to buy time... I searched Google for advice while staying on camera and found accounts from others who said they had no repercussions when they disengaged their predator. So, I exited Skype and blocked the user. I received one additional message from a different account which only said, 'MOTH-RFUCKER'. The experience was alarming. For a couple of minutes I definitely felt within their control before doubting that someone would act on this threat, given the legal repercussions. I could easily see how people would submit to this extortion though."

Male, 20, online

One respondent described a scheme to acquire gaming assets.

"It was a very patient and planned out scheme. The person in real life was male but pretended to be female online and established rapport with me and a few other friends and gained our trust. 'She' enticed us to believe she was really beautiful... and threatened us for

nude photographs so that she could blackmail us whenever we refused to give her certain in-game items or currency. Our best friend fell for it and he lost all assets in the game which cost easily over \$2000.”

Male, 21, online

A small number of female respondents described being caught up in scams by perpetrators purporting to work for modeling agencies.

“A man posing as a modeling agent told me he ... wanted to offer me a contract. We had emailed typical stuff back and forth and he told me that he would like to Skype before meeting up, to make sure I was who I really said I was. ... He sent me the contract, and I read it over, and everything looked fine. Once I created the Skype account, he asked for typical things, like seeing my runway walk, and in a bikini, and everything felt fine. But then he asked to see my chest, to make sure that it was the same size I said it was, and I refused. He asked again and I said no, and then he told me it was normal and it only had to be for a second just to make sure. I lifted up my bikini for one second and he immediately exited out of the call and told me he wasn't who he said he was, and that he was going to ruin my life. He told me he took screenshots of the whole thing, and he was going to post them on numerous websites, along with my address, name, workplace, and phone number so that people would have access to me... I exited out of Skype, terrified and in shock of what had just happened, and he quickly emailed me threatening me...I never responded, and continue getting threats with screenshots of everything, along with my contact list (which I have no idea how he got). I never respond.”

Female, 22

WHAT WEBSITES/APPS PERPETRATORS USED TO INTERACT WITH RESPONDENTS

We gave respondents a list of types of websites/apps and asked them, “Did the person who threatened you ever contact you on or direct you to use any of the following types of websites or apps?” (Respondents could enter multiple answers.) **(Table 5, pg. 73)**

TECHNOLOGY USE: HOW PERPETRATORS CONTACTED RESPONDENTS

Perpetrators contacted respondents on or directed them to use

- Social networking platforms (Facebook, Tagged, Instagram, others) – 54% of all respondents
- Messaging or photo messaging platforms (Kik, Snapchat, others) – 41%
- Video voice call programs (Facetime, Skype, webcam sites, others) – 23%
- Dating platforms (OKCupid, Tinder, others) – 9%
- Email – 12%
- Video sharing social media platforms (Vine, Oovoo, Tumblr, others) – 6%
- Gaming platforms – 4%
- Missing data – 8%

About 45% of respondents reported contact on more than one type of platform.

HOW PERPETRATORS ACQUIRED IMAGES FROM RESPONDENTS

Most respondents in both face-to-face and online relationships (about 70% overall) knowingly provided sexual images to perpetrators, usually because they were in wanted romantic or sexual relationships with them. (**Table 6, pg. 74**)

Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Those in face-to-face relationships were more likely to knowingly provide images (75% compared to 65% in online relationships, $p < .001$), and they were more likely to do so because they were in wanted romantic or sexual relationships (78% compared to 62% of respondents in online incidents who provided images, $p < .001$).

However, respondents who knowingly provided images were not always completely willing. A considerable number provided images because perpetrators pressured them or made them feel bad. Others were tricked or threatened or forced. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.) Reasons for providing sexual images:

- They were in a wanted romantic or sexual relationship—72% of those who knowingly provided images
- Perpetrators pressured them to provide images or made them feel bad—51%
- Perpetrators tricked them into providing images—15%
- Perpetrators threatened or forced them to provide images—13%
- They expected to be paid for the images—2%
- They thought the pictures would be used for purposes such as modeling or acting—2%

Overall, 56% of those who provided images said they were pressured, tricked, or threatened or forced into it.

More than 40% of respondents who knowingly provided images acted freely. Some respondents described why they willingly sent sexual images:

“I was in love with him. We had been in a steady relationship for over a year.”

Female, 20, f2f

“I had sent the picture out when I just turned legal and thought the guy was a good guy. We never had sex or anything like that so I wanted to give him something to look at.”

Female, 19, f2f

“When we were together we were in a long distance relationship for a time. We both took sexual photos and sent them to one another to keep our relationship strong. He never pressured me to take these pictures, I chose to do that. I felt that it was a good idea, and I felt he would never use them against me.”

Female, 22, f2f

“I ended up getting pretty turned on because of a lot of the things he was saying to me... and he asked for a photo, just of my upper half. I sent it, thinking that as long as I didn't get my face in the photo, that it wouldn't be a big deal. Then he asked for more... and again, I sent them thinking that as long as my face isn't in the photo, it wouldn't be a big deal.”

Female, 23, online

"I was young, stupid, and horny. She seemed nice and offered to go on Skype and get naked."

Male, 19, online

"We eventually got to exchanging pictures, but it wasn't out of lust or anything. It felt like it was becoming genuine love."

Male, 17, online

Respondents also described how perpetrators pressured, tricked, or threatened or forced them into providing images.

"My then-boyfriend demanded that I send nude photos of myself for him. He acted like I was crazy, prudish, and stupid for not sending photos and that it was my duty to send them."

Female, 18, f2f

"He was an experienced photographer, and said that I should take pictures with him. I had no intention of posing provocatively, but I wasn't expecting him to be so pushy, and I was too unconfident to say no."

Female, 23, f2f

"I was desperate for friends and too naive to realize what I was doing. I didn't want to but I knew he would stop talking to me if I didn't."

Female, 18, online

"I was younger and he was a college guy. I... didn't want to seem like a baby."

Male, 17, f2f

"If I didn't he would cut himself and send me images [of it]."

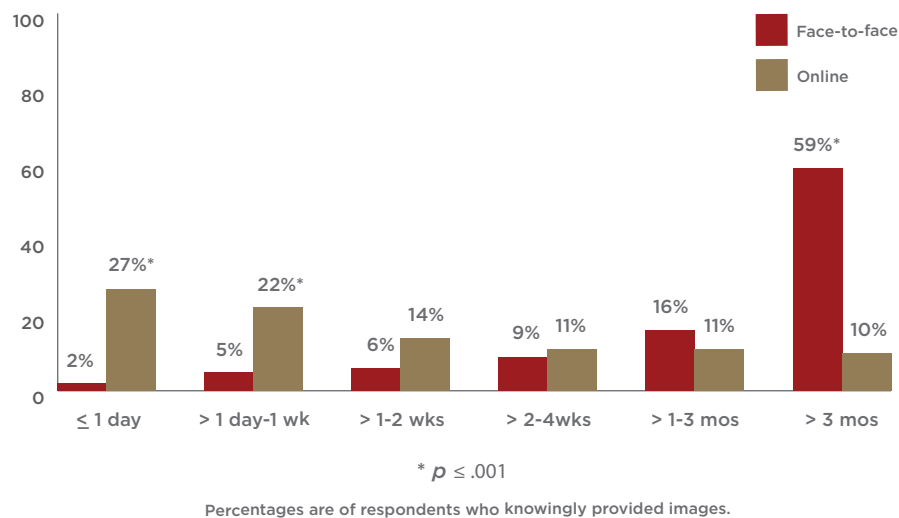
Female, 17, online

TIMING FOR ACQUIRING IMAGES FROM RESPONDENTS

We asked respondents who knowingly provided images to perpetrators, “How long had you known them or interacted with them online before they got the first image?” The answers ranged widely.

- One day or less – 11% of respondents who knowingly provided images
- More than 1 day to 1 week – 11%
- More than 1 week to 2 weeks – 9%
- More than 2 weeks to 3 months – 24%
- More than 3 months – 41%

FIGURE 2 FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE INCIDENTS: LENGTH OF TIME TO PROVIDE IMAGES



Face-to-face compared to online incidents: More than half of respondents in face-to-face incidents (59%) had known perpetrators for more than 3 months before they first provided an image, compared to 10% of respondents in online relationships who knew perpetrators for that length of time ($p < .001$). **(Figure 2)** Twenty-seven percent of respondents in online relationships provided images during the first day of contact compared to 2% in face-to-face incidents ($p < .001$); 49% in online relationships gave images within 1 week of first contact compared to 7% in face-to-face relationships ($p < .001$).

TECHNOLOGY USE FOR TRANSMITTING FIRST IMAGES

Sixty-six percent of respondents who knowingly provided images to perpetrators sent the first images via a texting platform. Respondents also first sent images

- Via photo or video sharing platforms—12% of those who knowingly provided images
- Email or links to photo storage sites—9%
- Taken by perpetrators when together with respondents—4%
- Shared through social networking, dating or other platforms—3%

(The final two categories were coded from text responses and might have been higher if we had provided them as specific response categories.)

OTHER WAYS PERPETRATORS ACQUIRED IMAGES

In 45% of cases, perpetrators acquired sexual images of respondents without their knowledge or consent, sometimes in addition to respondents knowingly providing images. Perpetrators:

- Recorded webcam sessions without respondent's knowledge or consent (18% of all respondents)
- Recorded images other ways without the respondent's knowledge or consent (12%)

Perpetrators also acquired images from other people, including other people voluntarily sharing the images with the perpetrators or perpetrators taking them illicitly from other peoples' cell phones (9%); created fake or Photo-shopped images (8%); or hacked into devices or online accounts to get images (5%). (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

Here are some examples of how perpetrators got images without the respondent's knowledge or consent:

"I let him borrow my laptop a few times to do some minor software and hardware repairs. During this time is when he accessed my nude photos (I assume)."

Female, 22, f2f

"I sent pictures to a boyfriend via email. Someone hacked my Gmail account and stole the photos."

Female, 21, online

"He took screenshots of me on Skype without my permission and then edited them so I was naked."

Female, 20, f2f

"He Photo-shopped my picture [from shoulder to head with clothes on] on a naked girl and posted it on my Facebook wall."

Female, 15, online

"I had sex with someone I don't know that well, and she took videos and pictures without my knowledge or consent."

Female, 18, f2f

We also found that respondents can be threatened even when images do not or may not exist.

"I didn't think he had any photos of me but if he was able to hack into my computer and tell me all sorts of other things about me, how was I supposed to know he didn't get into my webcam?"

Female, 16, online

"An ex-boyfriend tried to blackmail me back into a relationship with him. I do not know if the videos really exist, but the fear of my reputation being ruined forced me to relocate."

Female, 19, f2f

"I was really skeptical... because the person refused to tell me any information about themselves and what kind of photos they possessed... I was afraid the person actually had photos either fake or real but when I tried to call the person to talk with them and the phone number was fake I was very certain the threat was fake."

Female, 24, online

One respondent described how, in some internet arenas, getting threats to expose sexual images can become routine, whether or not such images exist. She describes how perpetrators may be trolling the internet looking for vulnerable targets.

"I would get bored and go on a webcam site just to talk to someone (a normal conversation) and then someone would message me and threaten me with posting nudes of me online unless I send them nudes, get off the site, put my webcam on, etc. It was scary at first because even though I hadn't taken any nudes in my life, people were threatening me with posting Photo-shopped nudes of me... I feel like for some people it's such a normal daily basis thing that it doesn't even affect them anymore, it's just another step in their day and that's how it is for me, it's not a daily thing but it does happen fairly often and I have no other reaction to it other than to just laugh it off. For others it's a scary thing especially if they really do have nudes out there somewhere."

Female, 15, online

CONTENT OF IMAGES

We asked, "How sexually explicit was the image that this person first threatened you with, thinking of the most explicit image if there was more than one?" Respondents said that images depicted:

- **Sexual acts, like masturbation or with another person (29% of all respondents)**
- **No sexual acts, but genitals (30%)**
- **No sexual acts or genitals but other nudity (22%)**
- **None of the above, but sexual poses in revealing clothing, like underwear (14%)**

So, while most respondents (about 60%) said images were sexually explicit, in a substantial minority of cases images did not show sexual acts or genitals.

Here are some examples of what respondents said about the content of the images they were threatened with:

"He said he was going to post a video of me strip teasing".

Female, 18, online

"I took my tank top off and let them see my bra."

Female, 15, online

"He made me send videos of myself masturbating."

Female, 15, f2f

"My boyfriend said he was gonna send everyone a picture of my boobs."

Female, 17, f2f

"There were photos of me sleeping nude and even pictures he had taken of me while my back was turned, as well as videos of sexual intercourse that I wasn't aware of."

Female, 21, f2f

WHAT PERPETRATORS WANTED FROM RESPONDENTS WHEN THEY THREATENED TO EXPOSE SEXUAL IMAGES

We asked respondents, “Thinking of all the times this person threatened you, what did they want from you?” (Respondents could enter multiple answers.) *(Table 7, pg. 75)* Perpetrators wanted:

- Additional sexual photographs or videos from the respondent – 51% of all respondents
- For the respondent to stay in or return to a relationship with the perpetrator – 42%
- To tell the respondent how to look or what to do in pictures or videos – 28%
- To meet the respondent in person (usually for sexual activity) – 26%
- To meet the respondent online for sexual activity – 24%
- To tell the respondent to hurt themselves – 10%
- To blackmail the respondent for money – 9%
- To make the respondent take sexual images of someone else – 7%

Here are some of the situations that respondents described.

“A couple of weeks [after breaking up] he contacted me and told me to get back together with him because he loved me. Then he told me to send him a nude video or he was going to post pictures I had already sent him on Facebook.”

Female, 16 f2f

“We started sending messages back and forth on the website meetme.com. We swapped Kik usernames and started to message on that. I got comfortable with him. That is when he asked for a partial nude. After much pleading I eventually sent it. After that, he constantly told me to send more pictures or he would send [the partial nude] to my followers on Twitter. He started to name every single follower. That is how I knew he was serious.”

Female, 17, online

“My first love who I trusted completely ...was jealous and possessive. It was comfortable which was why I would send him the pictures but then when he started going too far I would start standing up against him and say no. So he started threatening me with sending out the pictures if I did not do what he would say.”

Female, 17, f2f

“[He threatened] to Photoshop my face onto other naked women’s bodies if I didn’t get on webcam with him and show him my tits. He even sent me pictures of Photo-shopped images of other girls he had done it to in an attempt to intimidate me.”

Female, 16, online

“A 17 year old girl took my phone while I was preoccupied, went through it, and found both pictures of myself and of my girlfriend. She threatened to send them to people if I wouldn’t have sex with her.”

Male, 22, f2f

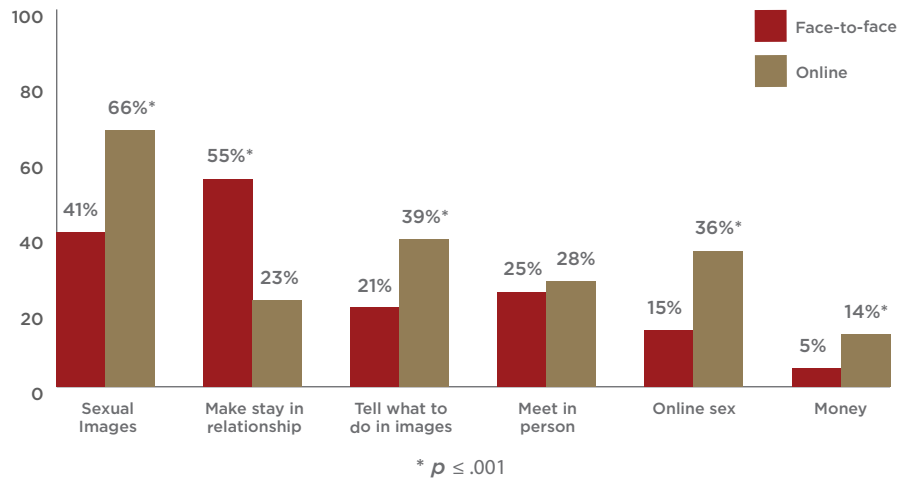
“He wanted me to stay with him but I didn’t love him anymore. He got mad and said that if I didn’t stay with him he was going to post the pictures and send them to my friends. I left and the pictures started appearing everywhere.”

Female, 18, online

“Via cell phone he informed me that he had recorded previous consensual sexual acts we had engaged in and threatened to put it on the internet and send to my family/friends if I did not give him money.”

Female, 20, f2f

FIGURE 3 FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE INCIDENTS: WHAT PERPETRATORS WANTED FROM RESPONDENTS



Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Face-to-face perpetrators more often demanded that respondents stay in or return to relationships (55% compared to 23% in online relationships, $p < .001$). (**Figure 3**) More perpetrators in online relationships demanded sexual pictures or videos from respondents (66% compared to 41% in face-to-face relationships, $p < .001$), told respondents how to look and what to do in pictures (39% compared to 21%, $p < .001$), demanded to meet them online for sex (36% compared to 15%, $p < .001$), and blackmailed respondents for money (14% compared to 5%, $p < .001$).

NATURE OF THREATS TO EXPOSE SEXUAL IMAGES

“I’m going to make accounts with your titties as the profile picture.”

Female, 16, f2f

“I post your dirty video... your video is gross, don’t even try me OK.”

Male, 19, online

“You’ve got 5 minutes to be nice and go on cam or I’ll be uploading you to motherless.com and linking your social networking friends... I don’t like being let down.”

Female, 19, online

“Let’s make a deal, I won’t post them if you jack me off.”

Female, 20, f2f

“Honey, I love you. Don’t do this. You don’t want me to talk with your friends, right? You would hate for them to see you like that right?”

Female, 20, f2f

“I have some lovely pictures of you. That thong is wonderful. I bet your mom and dad would like it too... They deserve to know just how much of a slut their little girl is.”

Female, 17, f2f

“I’ll make you regret losing me. All those pictures? Just keep an eye out online, that’s all I’m saying. They’ll go viral. Fuck you, fuck your life.”

Female, 18, f2f

Most commonly, perpetrators threatened respondents by saying they would post sexual images on the internet or send them to respondents’ friends or family members. However, the threats quoted above show that many perpetrators also wanted to hurt and humiliate respondents or to retaliate against them or exact revenge – motives that we did not specifically measure in the survey.

Perpetrators threatened to expose sexual images in several ways. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

- Post images online – 65% of all respondents
- Send images to respondent’s friends or acquaintances or other persons – 59%
- Send to or tell respondent’s family members about images – 46%
- Include respondent’s name with posted image – 37%
- Impersonate respondents with fake online accounts or photos – 24%
- Post other personal information about respondent with an image – 15%

THREATS OF OFFLINE HARM

Many respondents were also threatened with offline harms – for example, that perpetrators would use sexual images to get them in trouble at school or work. Some perpetrators threatened to physically harm respondents; stalk them; or harm their family, friends or pets. Many of these threats applied to substantial minorities of respondents. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

- Get respondents in trouble at work or school or with the law – 38%
- Stalk them in person – 31%
- Beat, rape, kill or otherwise physically harm them – 26%
- Harm the respondent’s family, friends or pets – 15%

Here are some of the situations in which respondents were threatened with offline harm.

“My ex-boyfriend threatened to send the pictures to my workplace if I refused to meet with him. He didn’t want to break up, I did.”

Female, 19 f2f

“He... wanted naked pictures and I would not send them to him and he threatened to put my pictures that are not in any way dirty on a snuff website and [told] me that people would find me and kill me. He said this happened to two other girls he knows.”

Female, 18, online

“His friend decided to join in and they both said they had photos of me that they would share on Facebook if I didn’t meet them in person and I couldn’t tell anyone, I went to meet them and they tried to rape me. I had brought my friend with me and he saved me.”

Female, 16, f2f

In addition to the threats we asked about specifically, some respondents who were gay, lesbian or had other minority sexual orientations or gender identities reported threats aimed at outing them.

"[S]he said 'Ready for the world to know who you really are, dyke?'"

Female, 16, f2f

"[He said he would] tell my parents about my sexuality... My family didn't know, but I knew that if they found out I'd be in danger."

Unspecified, 16, f2f

Also, some respondents described straight perpetrators who appeared to be targeting gay men or lesbians.

"He [the perpetrator] pretended to be a girl I was into."

Female, 15, online

"He told me I was 'sexy' and all of that, but it turns out he's straight and that he wanted to use my [sexuality] against me."

Male, 20, online

"A man contacted me through Craigslist saying he was a woman in response to my female seeking female ad... I searched the [female] name he gave me and found no one who looked anything like the pictures he sent me. I knew for sure then he had lied to me. I called him out on his abuse and he completely changed and began making threats. He called me a low life, poor, pathetic, fat, stupid girl and [said] that he would tell all my friends and family and post the photos I sent him..."

Female, 19, online

TECHNOLOGY USE: FOR THREATENING

(Respondents could enter multiple answers.) Respondents received threats:

- Via cell phone (61% of all respondents)
- By computer or related device (57%)
- In person (20%)
- In multiple ways (31%)

Face-to-face compared to online incidents: More perpetrators in face-to-face relationships used cell phones to threaten respondents (71% compared to 47% in online relationships, $p < .001$). Thirty-one percent of respondents in face-to-face relationships said they were threatened in person.

- Social networking platforms, for example Facebook, Tagged, Instagram (53% of all respondents)
- Messaging or photo messaging platforms such as Kik or Snapchat (42%)
- Video voice call programs such as Facetime or Skype (18%)
- Email (11%)
- Dating platforms, for example OKCupid, Tinder (6%)
- Video sharing social media platforms such as Tumblr, Oovoo (5%)
- Image boards such as 4chan (3%)
- Gaming platforms (2%)
- Missing data (27%)

Some respondents told us about how they were threatened via cell phone, websites/apps and in person.

“He has made 7 fake Facebook accounts... to message me and threaten me.”

Female, 22, f2f

“He still texts me [2 years after break up] every week every other day asking how his girl is doing.”

Female, 17, f2f

“[My ex-boyfriend and his friends] waited for me outside of work... [and] called my workplace to ask if I was there...”

Female, 22 f2f

“When I broke up with him, he began harassing me with phone calls and texts [and] stalking me at school and at home...”

Female, 17, f2f

“After we stopped communicating he would randomly text me things like ‘ha ha I still have your nudes’ or ‘Don’t try me I have your nudes.’”

Female, 21, f2f

“[He] began messaging me [with threats] constantly on any platform he could use. Viber, Kik, WhatsApp, Facebook, you name it.”

Female, 22, f2f

TIMING, FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF THREATS

We asked about the timing between respondents’ first contact with perpetrators and the beginning of threats. We found a wide range of answers, although more than one-third of respondents knew perpetrators for more than 6 months before threats began. Respondents reported threats beginning:

- During first contact – 11% of all respondents
- Less than 1 week – 9%
- Between 1 and 2 weeks – 9%
- More than 2 weeks to 1 month – 9%
- More than 1 to 3 months – 11%
- More than 3 to 6 months – 10%
- More than 6 months – 36%

Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Perpetrators in online relationships threatened respondents much more quickly after their first contact or meeting. Twenty-five percent threatened respondents during the first contact, compared to only 2% of face-to-face perpetrators ($p<.001$), and 42% threatened less than 1 week after the first contact compared to 5% ($p<.001$). In contrast, two-thirds of face-to-face perpetrators knew respondents for three or more months before they threatened them (66% compared to 18% in online relationships, $p<.001$).

We also asked how long the threats went on or, if still occurring, how long they had been going on.

Threats were made:

- Daily – 34% of all respondents
- Weekly – 22%
- Monthly – 14%
- Missing data – 11%

Threats lasted :

- Less than one week – 22%
- Between 1 and 2 weeks – 15%
- More than 2 weeks to 1 month – 13%
- More than 1 to 3 months – 14%
- More than 3 to 6 months – 9%
- More than 6 months – 22%

Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Perpetrators in online relationships threatened respondents more frequently (during the time that threats were most intense), but the duration of their threats tended to be shorter. Threats were more likely to happen daily (41% compared to 29% in face-to-face relationships, $p<.001$), and more likely to last less than 1 week (33% compared to 15% in face-to-face relationships, $p<.001$). About one-quarter of incidents from face-to-face perpetrators involved threats that lasted more than 6 months (26% compared to 17% in online relationships, $p<.001$).

Here are some descriptions by respondents that talk about the timing, frequency and duration of threats.

“He did it once [threats to expose images] and at first I was scared and was under his control. But then I owned up and said I would not be bothered if he leaked my nudes... and then after telling him I was calling the police... suddenly he backed down and stopped.”

Female, 19, online

“I threatened [my ex-boyfriend] with restraining orders and it worked because after 1 month or 2 the verbal and emotional abuse... finally came to an end.”

Female, 16, f2f

“He got mad [after I refused to hook up with him] and said he would take the pictures to where I work... This was in 2014 and he stopped for about a year and 2 months and then [he] called me in the middle of the night and said the same thing.”

Female, 20, online

“After I ended it, he started stalking me both online and in person, and sending me threatening texts, calls, voicemails, messages, emails. This is still going on [two years later]. He calls me from multiple numbers daily.”

Female, 16, f2f

“Still threatening what I have and making fun of my body even though the pictures are 4 years old. He still threatens to send them or give them away.”

Female, 18, online

“After a year I tried to end things because he was taking it too seriously and we hadn’t even met in person. He freaked out and that’s when all the threats started. They continued for 4 years and then I reached the point that I didn’t care what he did because it couldn’t be worse than dealing with him was... [In] the last conversation he said such awful things that I told him I was done and hung up. He called me approximately 114 times that night and sent countless texts. I blocked his number... and he started calling with his number blocked so it could go through. I have had my phone on the do not disturb setting for over a year as a result to send blocked numbers straight to voicemail... He still leaves voicemails occasionally.”

Female, 16, online

HOW OFTEN PERPETRATORS CARRIED OUT THREATS AND HOW THEY HARMED RESPONDENTS

We asked respondents, “Did this person do any of the things he/she threatened to do or harm you in some other way?” Respondents stated that perpetrators carried out threats in 44% of cases. **(Table 8, pg. 76)** Fifty-two percent of respondents seemed certain that the perpetrator had not carried through with threats, and about 3% were not sure. Some of the uncertain respondents suspected that perpetrators had posted images online or sent them to others, but they could not verify their suspicions.

Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Respondents in face-to-face relationships were more likely to carry out threats. In face-to-face relationships, about half of perpetrators carried out threats against respondents or otherwise harmed them, which is considerably higher than the about 1 in 3 who did so in online cases (49% compared to 37% in online relationships, $p<.001$).

HOW PERPETRATORS USED TECHNOLOGY TO HARM RESPONDENTS

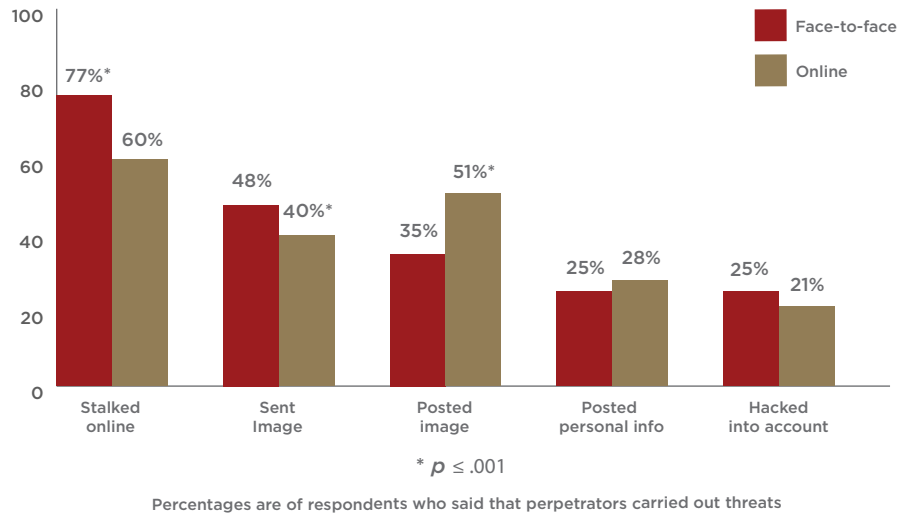
Respondents (who could enter multiple answers) said that perpetrators:

- Stalked respondents with repeated, unwanted online or cell phone contact – 71% of respondents who said that perpetrators carried out threats
- Sent sexual images depicting the respondent to people the respondent knew – 45%
- Posted sexual images online – 40%
- Posted personal information about the respondent with such images – 26%
- Hacked into online accounts that belonged to the respondent – 24%
- Created fake web pages or accounts that appeared to belong to respondents or fake photos that appeared to portray them – 15%

Sixty-six percent of respondents said that perpetrators who carried out threats had exposed sexual images of them by posting images online, sending images to people they knew or creating fake images that appeared to depict them.

FIGURE 4

**FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE INCIDENTS:
THREATS CARRIED OUT (ONLINE HARMS)**



Face-to-face compared to online incidents: More perpetrators in face-to-face relationships who carried out threats stalked respondents online (77% compared to 60%) in online relationships, $p < .001$. **(Figure 4)** More perpetrators in online relationships posted sexual images of respondents online (51% compared to 35% in face-to-face relationships, $p < .001$).

Some respondents described how perpetrators carried out threats.

"[The images] were released to a porn site that specializes in posting photos of 'slutty girls' in your area code."

Female, 21, online

"I had never had sex before and I wasn't ready for it, but I had exchanged photos with him. He pushed me harder for sex and I didn't want to. I refused. This went on for about 2 months and he finally sent [the pictures] to people at my school, my dad, and my principal at school."

Female, 16, f2f

"I got a weird message from someone on Facebook that I did not know. It was a guy from a nearby city informing me that someone had posted nude photos of me on a website. The website had a paragraph about how I was a lying cheating bitch and a whore. It gave my full name, city, and age along with the dozen photos he posted."

Female, 22, f2f

"He posted my nude photo on Twitter and Instagram and made me talk to him before he took it down. Then he kept reposting it on Instagram because I kept ignoring him."

Male, 16, f2f

"He posted sexual photos of me on a site that degrades exes and had random people he knew message me on my Facebook asking for sexual favors. He posted my real name and age on the photos. Co-workers and friends were sent links."

Female, 21, online

“He posted a photo intended to be innocent of my shirt with some cleavage showing, cropped so that only my cleavage was visible in an attempt to shame me on a page with a significant amount of likes (in the thousands) on Facebook for being a ‘whore’ and showing cleavage.”

Female, 17, online

OFFLINE HARMS COMMITTED BY PERPETRATORS

Perpetrators also harmed respondents in offline arenas or tried to. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.) Perpetrators:

- **Stalked or harassed respondents in person or tried to – 41% of those who said that perpetrators carried out threats**
- **Got them in trouble at work or school or with the law or tried to – 37%**
- **Beat, raped or physically hurt them or tried to – 33%**
- **Harmed family, friends or pets or tried to – 12%**
- **Extorted money or tried to – 11%**

In fact, respondents’ descriptions indicate that threats to expose images were often part of an array of malicious behavior that included actions such as stalking, threats of violence, attempts to undermine the respondent at work or school and actual violence.

“My ex boyfriend has refused to let go of our relationship and continues to stalk and harass myself, my friends, my family, and my boyfriend. He threatened to post sexual images of me and posted links to pornographic photos on his Facebook page, falsely claiming that the photographs were of me. I have had to move multiple times, change my phone number, change my email address, change my Facebook name, and deal with filing police reports on multiple occasions. I finally received a restraining order. However, he has now moved to a nearby town and has been sending my boyfriend threatening Facebook messages again. He has been reported to Facebook multiple times. He has a criminal record. I cannot get away from it ever.”

Female, 17, f2f

“He was going to send [pictures of me] to all my friends and my family if I didn’t agree to kiss him. We were in his car at night and he made me have sex with him. He was a lot bigger than me and I cried the whole time, but he yelled at me if I stopped kissing him while he was raping me. Then after it happened he used the pictures to keep me quiet, and he continued to threaten me.”

Female, 18, f2f

“When I tried to leave he would threaten to post unauthorized nude photos of me or he would kidnap my dog or threaten to call my boss and get me fired. He would key my car and punch windows. He tried to beat down my door when I would not let him into my apartment.”

Female, 25, f2f

Twenty-four percent of all respondents reported that perpetrators committed or attempted to commit acts of violence by stalking or harassing respondents in person; beating, raping or otherwise physically harming them; or harassing or harming family, friends or pets. Offline violence, or attempts at violence, happened largely in the context of face-to-face relationships, but online relationships were not free of this, although respondents’ descriptions suggest that in online relationships these were more often attempts at violence or reflections of respondents’ fears about what perpetrators might do.

“This man is actually going through court right now because he raped [more than one] girl... He threatened to do many horrific things to me and he talked about making me his slave and making me do stuff with this friends. The girls he raped, he met online and got them to come out to his house. He tried to do the same with me.”

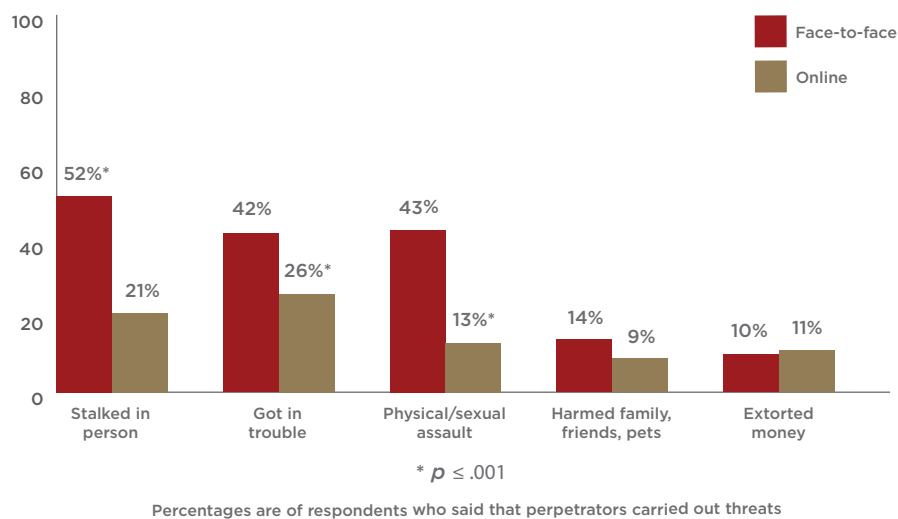
Female, 18, online

“She actually threatened to physically harm me and my children. Even after the site banned her, she has continued to stalk and harass me other places, harass and stalk my friends, and I am scared she might show up at my door one day.”

Female, 24, online

FIGURE 5

**FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE INCIDENTS:
THREATS CARRIED OUT OR ATTEMPTS (OFFLINE HARMS)**



Face-to-face compared to online incidents: More perpetrators in face-to-face relationships who carried out threats inflicted personal harms by:

- Stalking or harassing the respondent in person or trying to (52% compared to 21% in online relationships, $p < .001$) (**Figure 5**)
- Getting the respondent in trouble at school, work or with the law or trying to (42% compared to 26% in online relationships, $p < .001$)
- Beating, raping or otherwise physically hurting the respondent or trying to (43% compared to 13% in online relationships, $p < .001$).

CONSEQUENCES OF THREATS TO EXPOSE SEXUAL IMAGES

"It was a very dark time. I almost didn't make it through it. It felt like I was being raped through a phone."

Female, 17, online

"It felt like someone was not only invading my privacy, but also mentally (and almost physically) assaulting me when I saw the images go public."

Female, 21, online

"It was humiliating, degrading. Well it's hard to explain. Heart wrenching? Like someone sucker punched you in the gut and twisted your organs in a blender?"

Unspecified, 22, f2f

"...I have my guard up with every guy I meet and talk to now... I get flashbacks of the guys in our class staring at me and grabbing my ass, boobs and thighs."

Female, 15, f2f

"I'm over it. I've gotten to the point that if she wants to [post images of me], so be it. I don't care anymore. I'm not ashamed of what I look like. I'm upset she betrayed my trust."

Male, 20, f2f

"When the guy messaged me back to confirm he posted it onto the web, my heart beat started to race, I couldn't breathe and I felt sick. I did feel like ending my life... - because my life would probably be hurt and I assume that someone may try to rape me if my video is out there."

Male, 20, online

"[My family and I] are still embarrassed by the repercussions in a small town...It changed my life. I really took a turn down a harder, more shameful road after, haven't been proud of anything since. Self esteem is very low."

Female, 17, f2f

We asked respondents whether they were affected in certain ways by the incident. Did they lose a relationship, see a mental health practitioner, move, or have problems at work or school? **(Table 9, pg. 77)**

41% lost a relationship with a friend, family member or partner because of the incident.

"[My ex-boyfriend] still posts lies about me on Facebook, saying I lied to him and cheated on him (which I did not)... I've lost friends because of his lies..."

Female, 18, f2f

"He sent photos to my family and friends. I lost friends and [my] family lost respect and stopped talking to me."

Male, 19, f2f

24% of respondents saw a mental health or medical practitioner as a result of the incident.

"I was mentally tortured by an ex boyfriend because he had "pictures" of me. He threatened to expose me. I had to go to therapy because it took so much out of me mentally."

Female, 15, f2f

"I began self harming and picked up an eating disorder which I am now recovered from thanks to therapy. I do still struggle with constantly feeling the need to change my appearance so no one from that time can recognize me."

Female, 13, online

"I'm still on medication for anxiety [years later]. This has ruined my self-image, my relationships, and my trust of others. I still to this day don't feel like myself. The person I was before this nightmare is someone I can't get back."

Female, 15, f2f

12% moved to a new neighborhood, community or town.

"He threatened to hurt me and my family, and he followed me to work, school, etc. I had to... change schools, transfer my job, and move 30 minutes away."

Female, 18, f2f

"I moved, I got a dog, I would change my routine every 3 days (i.e. where I parked, what paths I took to classes and when I returned home)... I was so scared about what he would do..."

Female, 19, online

10% left or changed schools or had other school related problems

"After the image of me [in underwear] leaked all over our school, I became sexually harassed by a large number of my peers. Girls rejected me as a friend and started rumors about me, and I was even drugged at a party by someone who had heard I was "loose." While all of this was happening, I had never done more than kiss a boy."

Female, 15, f2f

"He took pictures of me on Skype and showed people at school. I lost a lot of friends and had to change schools because people told me to kill myself and that I'm a desperate whore."

Female, 18, f2f

"A boy sent pictures of me around and they circulated to the majority of the school. I was ostracized, objectified, alienated and made fun of for over 6 months of the school year."

Female, 15, f2f

8% left or changed jobs or had other job related problems.

"I still don't feel comfortable with him knowing where I work. I've quit two jobs because of it."

Female, 17, f2f

"I have such a rare name it shows up [in online searches], and I believe this may have even prevented me from having certain job opportunities."

Female, 16, online

"He went as far as... calling my workplace with continuous threats."

Female, 20, f2f

34% had none of the above offline impacts

"It was a very vague and short thing. I luckily wasn't too traumatized by it, just made to feel pretty uncomfortable. But I do know that it could have ended a lot worse, and I'm just thankful that my pictures weren't posted."

Female, 17, f2f

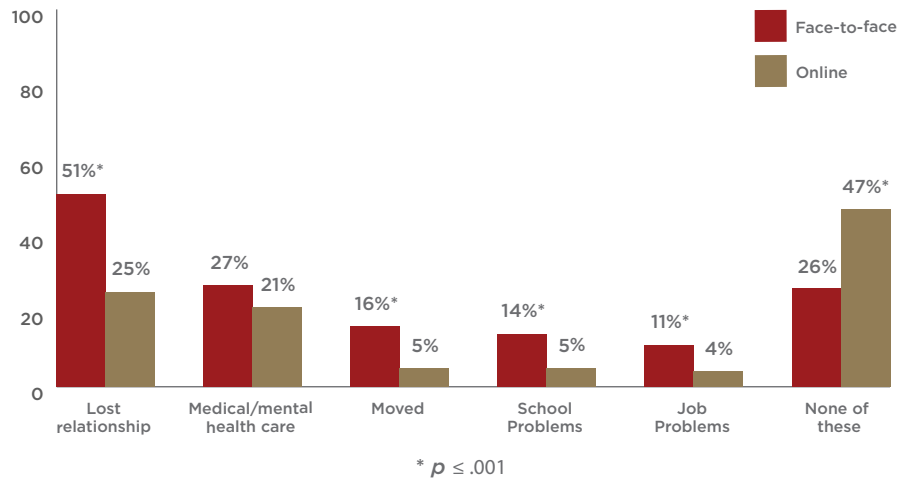
"I wasn't really fazed when he posted my XXX pictures on Facebook. I'm not ashamed of what I have but I did block him. More than anything I felt disrespected."

Male, 18, online

"I didn't mind... if she showed the pictures to her friends. I just wanted to avoid that. As well as get out of the relationship. It wasn't healthy."

Male, 17, f2f

FIGURE 6 FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE INCIDENTS: IMPACTS TO OFFLINE LIFE



Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Respondents in face-to-face relationships were more likely to be impacted in their offline lives in almost every category that we asked about. As a result of the incident, they were more likely to:

- Lose a relationship (51% compared to 25% in online relationships, $p < .001$) (**Figure 6**)
- Move to a new neighborhood, community or town (16% compared to 5% in online relationships, $p < .001$)
- Leave or change schools or have a school-related problem (14% compared to 5% in online relationships, $p < .001$)
- Leave or change jobs or have a job-related problem (11% compared to 4% in online relationships, $p < .001$)

Respondents in online relationships were more likely to have no such problems (47% compared to 26% in face-to-face relationships, $p < .001$)

There were other consequences also. Eleven percent of respondents had financial costs.

"I begged him to take [the pictures] down, and I even paid him several hundred dollars in cash to do so."

Female, 23, f2f

"She was from the Philippines and the money was for her niece to go to school. I'm not sure how true that was but I did send [several hundred dollars] to the Philippines."

Male, 18, online

Respondents had other fears too, especially about long term consequences.

"I was afraid of how it might affect my ability to advance my career and not as worried about friends and family seeing the pictures/video."

Female, 22, online

"I fear it's going to destroy my chances of ever being able to fall in love with someone. I don't love the person that I was in that video so how could anyone else? I just want my past to finally be my past. I'm so tired of fearing him."

Female, 20, f2f

"I still feel as though there are things on the internet that are completely untrue about me and my character, and I don't have the capability to actively defend myself any time my pictures are used to falsely portray me."

Male, 25, f2f

"She would threaten to post on social media about it, not leaking the nudes, but telling people who I was and what I did with her. It would be slightly devastating in the future, considering my aspirations"

Male, 17, online

Also, many respondents suffered shame and embarrassment and blamed themselves for what happened.

"I felt helpless and ashamed because I couldn't even talk to my friends or family about it. I was raised in a religious home and my family would hate me. I would be forever judged on what I did."

Female, 17, online

"I feel so ashamed that this happened to me because I should know better. I know what can happen with men you know, and should have expected it of someone I do not know."

Female, 20, online

"I should know better than to be giving out pictures. But I do it anyway and then I blame myself when the people on the receiving end are jerks about it."

Unspecified, 19, online

"Honestly, it was my fault. I shouldn't have sent a photo. I guess I just wanted to make him happy."

Female, 16, f2f

"The reason I didn't want to speak up is because I was afraid of what the adults in my life might think of me. I thought it was all my fault and I figured that's what they would tell me."

Female, 14, f2f

CHANGES TO TECHNOLOGY USE

Respondents made a wide range of changes to their technology use as a result of threats to expose sexual images. About one-third or more changed passwords, screen or user names; closed social media accounts; deleted apps from cell phone or stopped accessing certain websites. **(Table 10, pg. 78)** Only 13% said they made no changes to how they used the internet or cell phones. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

- 42% changed a password
- 34% changed a screen or user name
- 32% closed a social media account
- 32% deleted apps from a cell phone
- 32% stopped accessing certain websites
- 27% changed a cell phone number
- 29% took new security precautions online
- 25% disabled geo-location settings
- 21% changed an email address
- 21% un-tagged photos

Some respondents gave details of changes they made to technology use as a result of sextortion.

"I changed my name, deleted my email, and did a Google search on my name to delete all accounts that preteen me made on other sites like Xanga and Myspace."

Female, 19, online

"I used to never have security questions turned on, but now I have 4 security questions for any social media account that I own."

Female, 19, f2f

"I don't leave an online footprint anymore. Anything that I can use a fake identity for, I will."

Female, 18, online

"Now nobody touches my phone. You need to borrow it? Too bad. I disabled a lot of features on [my phone] and am careful about using it. The camera doesn't turn on unexpectedly like it used to."

Female, 21, f2f

"Can't receive tags on Facebook, have to approve every tag. People can't post on my wall."

Male, 19, f2f

"I don't talk to strangers online nor do I have accounts on dating sites or chat rooms."

Female, 14, online

"I turned the location tracker off that is on my cell phone. I went on all of my apps and took away the permissions for them to use location finding settings."

Female, 23, online

"I now have an encrypted app that saves my scrambled passwords for my protection."

Female, 18, online

"I set up a Google alert to email me whenever a new webpage with my name in it is created."

Male, 18, online

"I installed a wearable camera into an accessory piece so I can record anything that he may try to do in person."

Male, 17, f2f

HOW RESPONDENTS TRIED TO STOP THREATS AND GET HELP

We asked respondents if they reacted to threats by blocking or otherwise preventing perpetrators from online contact or trying to; complying with perpetrators' demands; telling family, friends or others about the situation; or reporting the situation to websites/apps used by the perpetrator or to the police.

BLOCKING PERPETRATORS FROM ONLINE CONTACT

About two-thirds of respondents (67%) tried to block perpetrators from contacting them online or by cell phone. **(Table 11, pg. 79)** (Sixteen percent said there was no option to block, for example when perpetrator contact was via texting.) Close to one-half of respondents who tried blocking perpetrators (47%) said blocking worked and contact stopped.

Face-to-face compared to online incidents: Respondents in online cases were considerably more likely to say that blocking was successful and that contact from the perpetrator stopped (57% of respondents in online relationships who tried to block compared to 39% in face-to-face relationships, $p < .001$).

"It's been almost a year, and I've managed to completely avoid all his threats by either blocking him or creating new accounts on social media and getting a new number."

Female, 20, f2f

"[She] typed on Skype saying if the money wasn't in soon she would post [the video] on Facebook. I simply deleted the messages and blocked her. I have never heard from this person again. Nor have I ever seen the video reappear."

Male, 20, online

"At first I thought [the threat to post photos of me if I didn't register on her cam site] was real, but the more I messaged back and forth, I could spot key signs that it was a 'bot,' or automated system. Instantly I considered this no threat whatsoever, and blocked them."

Male, 20, online

At the same time, about half of respondents who tried to block perpetrators were not successful. A number of them described the difficulties they encountered trying to block perpetrators and how perpetrators tried or managed to get around their efforts.

"I have to type his name into Facebook and other social media search bars to block the new accounts he constantly makes."

Female, 17, f2f

"[My ex-boyfriend and his friends] also continued to make fake Twitter accounts in my name to share the photos, or [accounts with] fake names which they used to make further contact with me once I had blocked or reported all existing accounts."

Female, 22, online

"I blocked the account, but the person who was blackmailing me made new fake Kik accounts every time I blocked one. So finally I just deleted my Kik account and deleted the app off my phone. ...I never heard from the person again."

Female, 18, online

COMPLYING WITH PERPETRATOR DEMANDS TO STOP THREATS

About half of all respondents (53%) tried to stop threats by complying with perpetrators' demands, and about one-third of those who complied (37%) said the threats then stopped. However, what respondents said about these situations suggests that it was rare for the threats to stop because respondents complied. Rather, their accounts show incidents ending for other reasons after respondents had done what perpetrators told them to do. Here is what some respondents said about threats ending after they complied with perpetrators' demands.

"He said if I paid for a video call girl, he'd [stop threatening me for nude webcam sessions]... Apparently, the transaction went through correctly, but he never got the session he wanted because he'd previously stalked and threatened the same girl. He said the pictures were already deleted... I told him if he did have pictures and ever decided to put them up, he would get in a lot of trouble for child pornography. This seemed to shut him up and... we've never talked again."

Female, 17, online

"Luckily the situation fizzled out without him posting or showing [images to his friends] that I know of. After it had stopped, he was calling and texting me that he couldn't believe that I thought he would really do that and that I obviously didn't know him if that's the kind of person I thought he was. It was really scary and confusing."

Female, 17, f2f

"He said send a nude or I'll show your friends. I told him he didn't know any of my friends. He told me he found my Facebook page and threatened to post [the pictures] there. I freaked out and reluctantly sent him another being careful not to show more than I had to. This went on for a couple of weeks then he just vanished."

Female, 17, online

"[After I sent him images, he lied about his age and claimed to be a minor when he was really 23. He said the] only way he wasn't going to send the pictures to the cops and his friends was if I stayed in the relationship and did as he said... I was scared that my life was going to be ruined but [later] he said it was all a joke. That the only reason he did this was because he was bored. A bored man messed around with my feelings and mind. That made me furious."

Female, 19, online

"He told me if I didn't send him [pictures] he would damage my social life and personal life. He also said how he found out all my information from searching me. I got scared so I did what he asked, but every time I got brave enough to say no and tell him off he would threaten me worse. I don't know what happened but after the last time he threatened me I just told him off and ignored the rest of his messages. He kept trying to get me to talk to him... and then I had to block him and just hope for the best."

Female, 14, online

OTHER RESPONSES THAT HELPED TO END THREATS

When we asked if respondents had said or done anything else in response to the threats that had helped to make perpetrators stop, some respondents described confronting perpetrators, standing up to them and not being intimidated (or pretending not to be).

"I told him I didn't care if my body got leaked to the world. I am not a celebrity so nobody will actually care. And ... I bluffed, and said I was reporting him to the police and they were tracking his IP address."

Female, 19, online

"I told him that what he was doing was wrong, and I highly doubted his parents (strict church members) would be pleased to hear their son had posted these photos online or had sent them to his friends."

Female, 19, f2f

"I jokingly said do it, and told them it would only make them look like the bad guy. I told them it could impact their future far more than mine. 'Who would date you after doing something like that to a girl?'"

Female, 16, f2f

"I informed him that I was underage and knew his full name, as well as where he worked, and if he did not leave me alone I would tell my parents about the pictures."

Female, 15, f2f

"I took the individual to judicial affairs at our school. It wasn't until I asked to file a restraining order that they then took him out of my classes."

Female, 19, f2f

Some respondents successfully ignored threats.

"[Any] random stranger has the ability to [take photos of a person and Photoshop their face onto another person's body]. If I were to have been threatened with a real nude photo of me, maybe I would [not have ignored him]. But being threatened with something that anyone could easily fake wasn't all that intimidating to me."

Female, 16, online

"The guy told me that if I didn't send him nudes (I'm a performer and he found my performer page on FB) that he would leak photos/videos of my performances to porn sites which would be annoying and rude and disrespectful. He wanted my number, he wanted to meet. He called me a slut, whore, and other horrible names. I knew that if I ignored him he would go away and nothing would happen."

Female, 23, online

Some respondents found other ways of defusing the situation, some with help from friends or family.

"I was lucky to have a friend who was able to steal his phone, delete all the pictures off of it, and delete my number from his phone. I haven't had problems ever since."

Female, 17, f2f

"I ended up faking that my parents found my phone and pretended to be my dad while messaging him. He didn't respond after that."

Female, 16, online

"I got her to stop by discussing the situation with a mutual adult friend who gave her an ultimatum of stopping or being banned from his place of business... She decided to stop."

Male, 22, f2f

“I eventually told his mom that he was harassing me and the threats immediately ended, although I did block him on all social media and cellular devices to help ensure that he couldn’t contact me again.”

Female, 18, f2f

“He got over it after showing [the pictures to] one guy at work who immediately punched him in the nose.”

Female, 24, f2f

DISCLOSURE TO FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS

About half of respondents (52%) told family members or friends about the situation. Most of these disclosed to family or friends within a week of being threatened (54% of respondents who told). Others waited longer to tell. About 12% told family or friends between 1 and 2 weeks after the first threat; about 9% told more than 2 weeks to 1 month; 7% told more than 1 to 3 months and 17% waited more than 3 months after first threat to tell.

We asked respondents who they told. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

- 55% of respondents who disclosed told a friend who was 18 or older about the situation
- 37% told a parent
- 35% told a friend who was younger than 18
- 17% told an adult family who was not a parent

HELPFUL RESPONSES BY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Forty-three percent of respondents who told family or friends said that the person they told did something that “helped to end this situation or make it easier.” Respondents described friends, family and others who provided emotional support; helped to insure physical safety; confronted perpetrators directly or indirectly on their behalf; assisted with legal advice and interactions with authorities (for example, police, courts, school administrators); provided technical assistance such as blocking communications from perpetrators; and connected respondents with or provided mental health services. For example:

Providing emotional support

“My mom told me it wouldn’t be the end of the world if it did happen and we would get through it.”

Female, 18, online

“At first I was [wary about telling] my parents about it but they were so supportive and assured me that this wasn’t my fault.”

Female, 23, f2f

“Two of my friends are 4chan users and immediately found the post and defended me. I was grateful to have the support.”

Female, 23, online

“A couple of the other girls [the perpetrator] was in contact with and I began talking about our experiences with him, and it helped by allowing me to talk about this when I had nobody else I felt it was safe to talk to...”

Female, 16, online

"[My sister] found his Twitter and Instagram. She posted his comments to me, the harassment Twitter and his Twitter and Instagram on her Tumblr. It was re-blogged over 2,000 times, and there were droves of people supporting me and helping me to report his harassment to Twitter and to have the pictures removed."

Female, 23, online

Insuring physical safety

"[They] helped me cope with the constant messages and him following me. Friends and family never left me alone unless absolutely necessary."

Female, 17, f2f

"My [workplace] manager... excused my call-offs, made sure I got out of the building safely (and not alone) and sat down and talked to some other employees who had accepted friend requests from the fake profile in my name with the obscene photo as the profile picture."

Female, 22, f2f

Directly or indirectly confronting perpetrators

"We went to his apartment and called him down to meet with us face-to-face. I had a group of three friends that are all stronger and larger than I so I felt safer."

Female, 18, f2f

"[My friend] told him that our [sports] team would beat him up (honestly I think they would) and explained to him that this can send him to jail for stalking and harassment."

Female, 20, online

"My mother went to his mother and told her that his behavior was unacceptable and we will go to the police, but chose to give her a chance to stop her son first."

Female, 19, f2f

Assisting in interactions with authorities

"My friend held my hand while I called the police."

Female, 18, online

"[My] sister told me what I could do about filing a police report and obtaining a restraining order. Since I was 17 at the time, my mom had to come represent me in court."

Female, 17, f2f

Providing technical assistance

"My best friend ... fixed the security on all of my social media so that this person and others couldn't access my personal information."

Female, 20, online

"[My cousin] helped me create new accounts and get rid of contact with the person all together."

Female, 18, online

Addressing mental health

"My mother suggested therapy after she saw how affected I was..."

Female, 18, f2f

"My therapist... gave me exercises to do to help keep my emotions more in check."

Female, 16, online

"A counselor helped me to understand what was happening was abusive and helped me to ... be a little more accepting of myself..."

Unspecified, 21, f2f

"My therapist helped me to see that his actions are out of my control. Once I let go, he got bored with threatening me and stopped."

Female, 21, f2f

UNHELPFUL RESPONSES BY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Although most respondents got helpful responses from family and friends, about 1 in 5 (18% of those who told) said that people they told did something to make the situation worse. These respondents described family members or friends who blamed them for what happened, did not take the situation seriously, gave bad advice, did things that seemed to escalate the threats, invaded their privacy or spread gossip about what happened.

Blamed respondents for what happened

"[My parents] told me I was a whore for doing anything like that online in the first place."

Female, 19, online

"My mother beat me so I wouldn't call the cops again. She said it was all my fault and I should deal with it because I deserve it."

Female, 18, f2f

"There was a lot of slut shaming. I had my phone taken away from me and was punished for sending the image. I was made to feel ashamed of my sexuality and it made me sort of give up on myself."

Female, 15, f2f

Did not take the situation seriously

"[My friends] acted as though it was the normal way for a boyfriend to treat a girlfriend."

Female, 18, f2f

"My then-friends and girlfriend approached the whole situation with what seemed like total indifference."

Female, 17, online

"[My friend] said it was just some teenage boys playing pranks on the internet, that I should just ignore it."

Female, 19, online

Gave bad advice or did things that seemed to escalate the threats

"My sibling gave [the perpetrator] my phone number."

Female, 21, f2f

“When my sister’s boyfriend told him to leave me alone, the threats escalated to saying he would follow me forever.”

Female, 21, f2f

“[They] threatened him and said they were going to jump him. He retaliated by sending them my pictures.”

Female, 17, f2f

Invaded respondents’ privacy or spread gossip about what happened

“[My parents] read through everything and looked at the pictures to make sure they had the full story and to make sure I wasn’t lying. It was a huge invasion of privacy and I still feel horrible knowing my parents saw those photos.”

Female, 13, online

“My friends just secretly tried to find the pictures on the Internet.”

Female, 21, f2f

“[My] ‘bff’ told many girls in my grade and it ended up all over Twitter and everyone was talking about it at school. It was humiliating.”

Female, 16, f2f

WHY DID SOME RESPONDENTS CHOOSE NOT TO TELL FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

Forty-five percent of respondents did not go the family or friends for help. We asked them to describe why not. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.) They said they were:

- Too ashamed or embarrassed, 77% of those who did not go to family or friends for help
- Thought they might get into trouble, 55%
- Thought they could handle it by themselves, 48%
- Did not think it would be helpful, 28%
- Afraid the perpetrator would find out, 22%
- Threats stopped before it got to that point, 16%
- Did not occur to them, 7%

REPORTING SEXTORTION TO WEBSITES/APPS

About 1 in 5 respondents (21%) reported their situation to a website or app, but the majority of respondents did not report incidents to technology companies. **(Table 12, pg. 80)**

When we asked respondents who did not report why they did not, close to half (49%) said they did not think it would be helpful. Non-reporting respondents gave the following reasons for not reporting to a website/app. (Respondents could enter multiple answers.)

- Did not think it would be helpful (49% of non-reporters)
- Too ashamed or embarrassed (42%)
- Afraid the perpetrator would find out (28%)

- Did not occur to them (25%)
- Threats stopped before it got to that point (16%)
- Could not figure out how to make a report (13%)

We conducted an analysis to distinguish respondents who reported incidents to websites/apps from those who did not. We used a multivariate technique, logistic regression, that allowed us to determine which characteristics were related to reporting while controlling for a range of demographic and incident attributes such as respondent gender, age and education; the face-to-face or online context; the types of threats made by perpetrators; whether and what threats were carried out; and how respondents reacted to incidents. *(Table 13, pg. 81)*

WHEN SEXTORTION INCIDENTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE REPORTED TO WEBSITES/APPS

Sextortion incidents were more likely to be reported when:

- **Respondents were older or more educated:**
 - They were age 18 or older at the time of the incident; or
 - They were college graduates at the time of the survey.
- **Websites and apps were used in the incident in certain ways:**
 - Respondents and perpetrators met online and did not know each other face-to-face, which implies that much of their communication occurred on websites/apps; or
 - Perpetrators used the internet to create false impressions or lie about or hide their identities (in either face-to-face or online relationships); or
 - Perpetrators threatened respondents via computer or related electronic devices (rather than by cell phone or in person); or
 - Perpetrators hacked respondents' accounts; or
 - Perpetrators used dating sites/apps to interact with respondents during the incident.
- **Perpetrators threatened to impersonate respondents with fake accounts on websites/apps or with fake nude photos. (No other threats were related to reporting.)**
- **Perpetrators carried out threats by**
 - Posting sexual images online; or
 - Posting personal information about the respondent online.
- **Respondents disclosed incidents to family members and friends or to law enforcement.**

The overall picture is that sextortion was reported to websites/apps at higher rates when:

- 1) Respondents were more mature and educated and so possibly more confident and assertive about responding to the situation and more able to navigate reporting mechanisms; or
- 2) Websites/apps were particularly intrinsic to the incident because the respondent knew the perpetrator only online; there was contact through dating sites; the perpetrator made threats via computers; or misused websites/apps by hacking, abusing other users

or creating fake identities or accounts; or

3) Respondents were reacting to the posting of sexual images or other personal information online; or

4) Respondents were open about what had happened to them, often also disclosing to family members and friends and/or reporting to police.

All of those aspects of sextortion contributed independently to higher rates of reporting, but the strongest predictor was that perpetrators had posted images online. Respondents were about 2.7 times more likely to report incidents to websites/apps when perpetrators posted images online than when they did not.

WHEN SEXTORTION INCIDENTS WERE LESS LIKELY TO BE REPORTED TO WEBSITES/APPS

Our analysis also showed that sextortion incidents were less likely to be reported to websites/apps by respondents who:

- **Knowingly provided images to perpetrators; or**
- **Were threatened by perpetrators who wanted them to stay in or return to a relationship.**

In the first category, 19% of those who knowingly provided images reported incidents to websites/apps compared to 27% of those who did not ($p<.001$, not shown in table). Shame and embarrassment appeared to be a factor in this lower reporting. Thirty-five percent of those who knowingly provided images said they did not report because they were embarrassed or ashamed compared to 26% of those who did not provide images ($p=.001$). Otherwise these two groups (those who knowingly provided images and those who did not) had similar reasons for not reporting.

Among respondents who said perpetrators wanted them to stay in or return to a relationship, 17% reported incidents to websites/apps compared to 24% of those not dealing with perpetrators who wanted them to stay in a relationship ($p<.01$, not shown in table). More respondents with perpetrators who wanted them to stay in a relationship did not report because:

- **They were afraid the perpetrator would find out (27% versus 19% of those not threatened over staying in a relationship, $p<.001$).**
- **They were too embarrassed or ashamed (36% versus 30% of those not so threatened, $p<.01$).**
- **They did not think it would help (41% versus 35% of those not so threatened, $p<.01$).**

So it appears that shame prevented a considerable number of respondents from reporting incidents to websites/apps, particularly those who knowingly provided images or were being threatened by perpetrators who wanted them to stay in or return to a relationship. However, the belief that technology companies could not help was also a reason for not reporting. In some cases, perpetrator threats and behavior may not have been amenable to action by technology providers, particularly when perpetrators engaged in behaviors such as offline stalking, physical violence, and intruding in respondents' employment or school lives, areas that websites/apps generally would not have the power to address. As one respondent said,

"I knew him in person. Reporting wouldn't stop him."

Female, 18, f2f

Respondents also described several other reasons for not reporting incidents to websites/apps that we did not ask about directly. For one, websites/apps were not always involved in sextortion incidents.

"It wasn't app specific; it was just texting. You can't complain to the default messaging app."

Female, 15, online

"The threats were mostly in person, over the phone or through text."

Female, 15, f2f

"No threats were made over the internet."

Male, 20, f2f

Concerns about confidentiality prevented some respondents from reporting.

"Did not want parents to find out."

Female, 15, online

"I can't tell my family."

Female, 19, online

"I was afraid I would get into trouble as well."

Female, 17, f2f

Some respondents noted that respondents had not carried out threats to post images.

"He did not post anything to any sites yet."

Female, 20, f2f

"As far as I know he hasn't posted the photos anywhere else. If he does, I'll report it."

Female, 21, online

Several characteristics were not related to whether incidents were reported to websites/apps. These included the gender of the respondent; being pressured, tricked, threatened or forced to provide images to the perpetrator; perpetrators' wanting money or sexual images from respondents; or situations in which perpetrators carried out threats by sending sexual images to respondents' family or friends, getting them in trouble at work or school or stalking them on- or offline. None of these factors distinguished incidents that were reported to websites/apps from those that were not when we controlled for other characteristics.

EASE OF REPORTING SEXTORTION TO WEBSITES/APPS AND HELPFULNESS OF RESPONSES TO REPORTS

We asked respondents who reported incidents to websites/apps about how easy or difficult it was to make the report and to describe helpful and unhelpful responses by technology companies.

Looking only at the group of respondents who reported incidents to websites/apps:

- Sixty-two percent of reporters said that reporting to the first website was very or somewhat easy
- Twenty-five percent said it was somewhat or very difficult (13% did not answer the question)
- Twenty-six percent of reporters said the first site they reported to responded in a helpful way, and 44% said the response was unhelpful (Some respondents reported both helpful and unhelpful responses. Others did not answer this question.)
- Twenty-three percent reported to a second website/app and 4% to a third

We asked respondents to tell us how websites/apps were helpful or unhelpful and to comment about what made reporting easy or hard. The information we gathered provides examples but it does not give a thorough picture of current reporting experiences for several reasons. Respondents reported to a wide variety of websites/apps that presumably had different policies and procedures about handling reports. Also, we did not ask about dates of reports. They could have been made anytime over several years, and policies may have changed since reports were made. Finally, we could not evaluate whether respondents accurately understood or described website policies or responses.

EASY PROCESS AND HELPFUL RESPONSES BY WEBSITES/APPS

Some respondents said that reporting was easy and websites/apps were responsive when sexual images were posted without consent. For example:

“When a perpetrator used sexual images of the respondent to make a fake Facebook page and added his friends and family, the respondent said that reporting to Facebook was very easy and Facebook “closed the account after they saw pictures that violated Facebook policy.”

Male, 21, online

A respondent whose photos were posted on Twitter said that reporting was very easy.

“There was a button that allowed you to answer a few questions and be completely finished without even leaving the page.... [Twitter] removed all the photos and suspended his account.”

Female, 23, online

“When a perpetrator posted nude images of the respondent on Reddit with “actively hostile” messages, she stated that, “[Reddit] removed the archive and posts other people had put up with my images.” Reporting was very easy. “You clicked a button next to the post and wrote a justification in the box. The post would usually be removed within 24 hours.”

Female, 23, online

DIFFICULT PROCESS AND UNHELPFUL RESPONSES BY WEBSITES/APPS

However, many respondents described frustration and roadblocks when they tried to get websites/apps to respond to sextortion incidents. These included complicated reporting processes, requirements for proof that respondents could not meet or policies that allowed perpetrators to post images despite a respondent’s objections.

“Each and every single photo [on Tumblr] had to have its URL attached to the emailed report, even if it had been re-blogged by another user. So, I had to track down at least 10 URLs for one photo alone.”

Female, 21, f2f

“[Facebook] told me that they can untag me, but could not take down the image because it did not show my whole face (no proof it was actually me) and because... my private parts [were covered].”

Female, 18, f2f

“[Grindr] wouldn’t take down a fake account tied to my name that used my pictures and likeness.”

Male, 20, f2f

When a former boyfriend posted links to pornographic photos on his Facebook page claiming untruthfully that the images depicted the respondent, she said, “[They] refused to take action...”

Female, 17, f2f

“The respondent was threatened via Kik by an unidentified person who posed online as someone she knew, using a fake Facebook profile. “[T]he support team of Kik [did not look into this guy’s account and] Facebook [did not remove] the fake profile. There was not much proof and there wasn’t going to be unless he came after me and confessed to authorities himself.”

Female, 17, online

REVENGE PORN SITES

A number of respondents described exploitation by “revenge porn” sites that encourage the public embarrassment of persons – often specifically women – pictured in sexual images. Respondents described how such sites not only refused to remove sexual images posted without consent but abused those requesting removal of images or attempted to extort or extract money from them.

A perpetrator stole nude images from a cell phone and posted them on isanyoneup.com, a revenge porn site. The respondent said, “They refused [to remove the photos], and also said things to me to make me feel worse (i.e. that I was a slut and piece of shit for the pictures, and what I supposedly did to the guy).”

Female, 18, f2f

“In order to get the photo taken down [from anon.ib.com], it was a very difficult and long process which involved proving my identity and explaining what had happened via email to the owner of the website who was very unwilling to have the image taken down... The website initially took down the photo for me, but then allowed [the perpetrator] to repost the photo less than a week later.”

Female, 16, f2f

“I was able to click on my posts [on myex.com] and found a “remove my name” link. The first time I tried, the website said I had to pay thousands of dollars to remove my name. The second time, there were more options, so I tried the option [that the pictures showed a minor] and my request has been ignored.”

Female, 17, f2f

“I submitted a copyright infringement [complaint to yougotposted.com. The image] was removed once only to be [reposted]... It was very difficult to find resources or information [about reporting]. Most information was related to ‘hiring’ someone to remove my name from the post with no guarantee of the removal of the images themselves.”

Female, 22, f2f

“I had to create an account [on motherless.com stating] that my images were non-consensually posted (traumatizing in its own way) to then be told to jump through flaming hoops to get nowhere (first you need to tag the images, contact the person that posted them, have them write a message to remove them along with why and maybe they’ll be removed). In the end- nothing happened. All of my images are still posted on all of the sites... Because the images were not posted from the account that I was reporting with they ‘could not be removed.’ ”

Female, 20, f2f

ONLINE STALKING AND HARASSMENT

Respondents also reported difficulties when they tried to stop online stalking and harassment by perpetrators, especially when they were advised simply to block persistent perpetrators who created multiple accounts with fake names.

"I didn't have sufficient evidence to prove the [Facebook] accounts [being used to harass me] were fake and that it was my ex."

Male, 18, online

"[Kik] told me to block him - even though he was making multiple accounts."

Female, 17, f2f

"It took me 2 hours to find where I had to write the complaint [to Snapchat]... They refused to help me at all. All they said was to block him."

Female, 18, f2f

Respondents were also concerned when websites/apps failed to take strong steps such as banning perpetrators who posted illegal images or stalked or harassed other website users. They viewed some actions by websites as half-measures that did not address perpetrators' behaviors or reduce respondents' vulnerability to harassment or that of other users.

When the respondent informed Tumblr that the [posted] photos were taken when she was underage, "[They] did nothing to remove his account" although eventually they did remove the images.

Female, 21, f2f

"This man creates several OkCupid accounts and they are deleted all the time because of his behaviors. OkCupid refuses to just ban his IP."

Female, 21, online

"All [Meetme] did was tell me that the [perpetrator] was blocked from messaging me but they didn't suspend the account or anything like that."

Female, 18, online

REPORTING TO POLICE

Only 16% of respondents reported sextortion incidents to the police. We conducted an analysis (logistic regression, the same as we used to examine who reported to websites/apps) to distinguish respondents who reported to police from those who did not, while controlling for demographic and incident attributes such as respondent gender, age and education; the nature of the respondent's relationship with the perpetrator; the type of threats; whether and what threats were carried out; and how the respondent reacted to the incident. (*Table 14, pg. 82*)

WHEN SEXTORTION INCIDENTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE REPORTED TO POLICE

Sextortion incidents were more likely to be reported to police when:

- Perpetrators threatened or committed violence
 - Perpetrators threatened respondents with violence; or

- Perpetrators committed violence by stalking respondents in person; beating, raping or otherwise physically harming them or trying to; or harming or trying to harm respondents' family, friends or pets.
- **As a result of perpetrators' actions, respondents**
 - Saw a mental health or medical practitioner; or
 - Left or changed jobs or had other job-related problems.
- **Perpetrators misused the internet by**
 - Creating false impressions about who they were or lying about or hiding their identities (in either face-to-face or online relationships); or
 - Impersonating the respondent with fake accounts, web pages or photos.
- **Respondents disclosed to family members or friends or reported incidents to websites/apps.**

Overall, respondents reported sextortion to police at higher rates when:

- 1) **Incidents involved violence or threats of violence; or**
- 2) **Perpetrators' actions seriously affected respondents' mental or physical health or work life; or**
- 3) **Perpetrators used the internet to be devious about their own identities or to impersonate respondents; or**
- 4) **Respondents told family members or friends what happened or reported incidents to websites/apps.**

All of these aspects of sextortion contributed independently to higher rates of police reporting, but the strongest associated characteristic was disclosing incidents to family or friends. Respondents who told family or friends were more than 3 times more likely than others to go to police. Seeing a mental health or medical practitioner was also a strong predictor of police reporting. Those respondents were more than twice as likely to report to police compared to respondents who did not seek mental health or medical care as a result of an incident.

Further, personal characteristics of respondents such as gender, being a minor at the time of incident, and education did not affect whether respondents made police reports, nor did online actions by perpetrators such as posting images of or personal information about respondents. However, respondents were somewhat less likely to make police reports in instances where perpetrators were seeking sexual images from them.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WITH POLICE INVOLVEMENT

We did not ask respondents about reasons for not reporting incidents to police, but we did ask those who reported to police to tell us any "positive or negative things that happened as a result of police involvement." Some respondents said that police action resolved the situation.

"Police involvement is what stopped all the abuse."

Female, 17, f2f

"They were able to get the pictures and videos taken down."

Female, 18, f2f

“The police... forced him to delete all pictures and videos he had of me as well as talked to him about the serious damage he could have caused.”

Female, 15, f2f

“Police told him if he talked to me again he would be arrested... since then he has not bothered me at all.”

Female, 15, f2f

“I felt more safe in my apartment knowing that the situation was on file and I could call them if he physically showed up at my apartment again.”

Female, 23, f2f

Also, some respondents appreciated how the police treated them.

“The local police department took it very seriously. They understood the situation and did not try to make me feel bad for it either. They were concerned about my well being especially since he threatened to kill me.”

Female, 21, f2f

“It was a positive experience. The police came over and told me that I shouldn't be ashamed, because stuff like this happens all the time.”

Female, 22, online

“[The police] told me they would take his usernames and speak to him. They said if he did put the video up they would try to take it down. However, I couldn't bring myself to complete the report as I am fearful my family may find out. The police were sympathetic and told me when I'm ready or if things get worse they will be there to assist me.”

Male, 20, online

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH POLICE INVOLVEMENT AND BARRIERS TO CRIMINAL CHARGES

However, the responses also described barriers to pursuing criminal charges in sextortion cases. One barrier was that sextortion as respondents experienced it often was not a criminal offense.

“I was told there was nothing that could be done because I was over 18 years old when the photos were taken and they weren't my personal property because they were taken by my ex-boyfriend himself.”

Female 22, f2f

“They said that it was [a civil matter] and that there was nothing they could do to help. It was not considered a criminal act.”

Female, 22, f2f

“Police were unable to investigate unless threats of violence were made.”

Female, 22, f2f

“They wouldn't charge him because he was not blackmailing me for money.”

Female, 17, f2f

“I attempted to file a restraining order against the person, however because no physical abuse was involved the police could not grant one.”

Female, 18, f2f

“Since he had only threatened and I willingly sent the photos, there was, allegedly, nothing they could do.”

Female, 17, online

Some respondents were told they did not have adequate proof about what happened.

“The texts I showed [the police] ‘did not count as a real threat.’ ...I informed them he followed me in my hometown but they did not have proof so again nothing could be done. I did get a no contact order but he still managed to contact me via texting websites that let you text phones without a phone number. Since his number was not on the message, they could not do anything about this...”

Female, 20, f2f

“They couldn’t do anything because the threat I reported was online and I had erased all other evidence because I was underage and my parents would ask for my phone every now and then.”

Female, 17, f2f

“The police officer said there was nothing he could do unless I had more proof or until he actually did hurt me, a family member or one of my pets.”

Female, 21, f2f

Sometimes police did not have jurisdiction to take a report.

“Every time I called to file a report [where the perpetrator lived], they said they couldn’t help me because I’m from a different state.”

Female, 18, online

“My attacker was out of the country and they told me it was outside their jurisdiction.”

Female, 21 online

Some respondents described police who were rude, mocking and insensitive.

“The second night I called the police, the cop just said ‘Oh, you’re the girl with the internet porn again.’”

Female, 23, f2f

“Police told me that it was my fault and to not do things like video chat in the future to avoid this happening again.”

Female, 22, f2f

“The officer just said that there was nothing that could be done, kind of laughed at me, and told me to be more careful.”

Male, 20, online

“Police were very cold toward me. One had the guts to hit on me during the arrest of my ex-[boyfriend].”

Female, 24, f2f

“Police attempted to use me as a model for other kids in the town in order to prevent the distribution of sexual pictures.”

Female, 14, f2f

Also, police threatened to charge some respondents who were minors at the time they reported incidents with child pornography offenses.

"I was the one who ended up getting in legal trouble since I was the one who sent it."

Female, 16, f2f

"I was told I could be held responsible for making and distributing child pornography."

Female, 14, f2f

"The police threatened to bring me up on charges of distribution of child pornography."

Female, 17, online

"My boyfriend sent my whole family and his friends and my friends the photo. [My family and I] tried to press charges [and get a restraining order against him]. Him and I both looked at jail time, fines, and having to register as a sex offender for 'child pornography' since we were both under 18. Luckily, the state [did not press charges]."

Female, 15, f2f

"I feel really intensely angry that you can get in legal trouble for sending naked pictures of YOURSELF when under 18. You literally can be charged as a sex offender for it, which is so incredibly wrong because I was the victim. All that law does is protect abusers..."

Female, 17, online

DISCUSSION: WHAT WE LEARNED FROM RESPONDENTS

MALICE AND THE DESIRE TO HUMILIATE APPEARED TO DRIVE MANY PERPETRATORS

Based on respondents' descriptions, many perpetrators appeared to be malicious current, former or would-be romantic or sexual partners who were determined to use their victims' sexuality to humiliate, harass and control them. Perpetrators in both face-to-face and online contexts were described by respondents as showing spite and cruelty.

"[He] made multiple comments about wanting to hook up, that if I didn't meet up for casual sex he would get me drunk and rape me...I'm scared as hell that he would have a negative impact on my life just because I wasn't interested in having sex with him."

Female, 23, online

"Fake profile picture, fake name, fake everything. After I sent him nudes, he revealed he was not who he said he was. 'I'm older than 17 ;)' He was relentless and almost reveled in how scared I was."

Male, 17, online

"[He told me] that he should post the intimate photos I sent him during our relationship... to get back at me since I had 'hurt him so much.' Then [he told me] to kill myself, hurt myself... how he wished he could hurt me."

Female, 18 f2f

"He left a voice message telling me I was a slut and that everyone was going to know and that I should do what he says or he would send guys to my house. He then told me he 'targets the weak and wanting' and I gathered this wasn't the first time he'd done this."

Male, 21, f2f

"I am smart, educated, independent, and have self esteem. I never imagined I would be mixed up with this type of person... It can happen to anyone because the type of person who threatens somebody like this is also smart but malicious and selfish."

Female, 25, f2f

MOST (BUT NOT ALL) TARGETS WERE WOMEN

Most sextortion cases involved women or adolescent girls targeted by men or adolescent boys. Certainly men were targets in some cases and some perpetrators were women or teenage girls. As one respondent stated,

"While it's wrong that a woman who gets pictures sent around has a lot more to lose than a man due to societal viewpoints on sexual identity, it's also wrong that a woman is much less likely to be accused or suspected of doing something like this, also because of societal viewpoints on sexual identity. Crazy is crazy, mean is mean, and harassment is harassment, regardless of gender."

Male, 22, f2f

Nonetheless, many female respondents wrote about the blame, shame and humiliation they faced because of social attitudes about female sexuality and pointed out the role of sexism in these cases.

“It really scares me how much our society is okay with victimizing and objectifying women. I’m tired of being seen as an object of someone else’s pleasure that they can use and abuse, and exercise sick and twisted control over, as much as they please.”

Female, 23, f2f

“Why is it that women, fully grown adult women, who are free, 18, and American, cannot conduct themselves sexually, with their own discretion, without the thousands ready to both slut-shame and degrade them?”

Female, 21, f2f

“People who do this, they are everywhere. And they aren’t afraid. We live in a culture that told my rapist that I deserved it.”

Female, 17, f2f

“[M]y entire future can disappear with one click because my naked body is viewed as shameful and vile and as an indicator of me not being smart or trustworthy.”

Female, 17, f2f

“It’s disgusting that there are very few laws to combat this and people seem to place the blame on the victim rather than the perpetrator.”

Female, 17, online

“[Saying] ‘If you don’t want nudes leaked, you shouldn’t be taking them’ is stupid and a direct attack to the person. If a photo is taken in the situation of love and trust, why is that bad? Because sex is supposed to be a shameful act? It’s bad when it becomes a contorted weapon by a partner.”

Female, 17, f2f

But perpetrators are not always men, and women and girls are not the only targets. Some men were threatened by women and respondents described threats to expose images in same sex relationships. Transgender respondents told of their experiences with sextortion. Some respondents felt especially vulnerable because they could not be open about their gender or sexual orientation.

“I was afraid what might happen to me if I tried to get help. After a long time, I managed to get the courage to confide in the right people about what I was going through and I was able to get the help I needed to leave the situation and get my ex out of my life... It can feel like no one will care or they will say it’s your own fault if you report it. It’s also really hard when you fear discrimination as a LGBT person or based on your race, ethnicity, religion, etc.”

Unspecified, 21, f2f

SEXTORTION IS STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH DATING VIOLENCE AND STALKING

Respondents also described how sextortion is strongly associated with dating violence and stalking. Among the respondents who completed our survey, sextortion happened more often in face-to-face relationships than among respondents who knew perpetrators only online. In these face-to-face relationships, women and adolescent girls constituted almost 90% of victims. Most face-to-face perpetrators who carried out threats stalked respondents online and many also stalked them in person and deliberately undermined them at work or school. About 40% of face-to-face perpetrators who carried out threats beat, raped or otherwise physically harmed respondents.

“[My perpetrator’s] threat is an indication of a larger stalking/harassment problem, and I think you will find [that]... many others who have received threats of showing sexually explicit content experience deeper problems with the person threatening them.”

Female, 17, f2f

“I’ve gained far more understanding and compassion for women who seem to be stuck in terrible relationships. Not only do you have to deal with the loss of someone who was important to you, but you also suffer severe self-doubt, alienation, and constant fear of something happening. Being betrayed so malevolently by someone you let in to your life is a trauma that sticks with you.”

Female, 20, f2f

RESPONDENTS HAD LITTLE RECOURSE AGAINST PERPETRATORS

In general, sextortion posed little risk to perpetrators. Overall, perpetrators could easily humiliate victims by exposing sexual images, while respondents had few ways to prevent or stop the exposure or even remove images once they were posted. Respondents depended on technology companies to remove images, but technology companies’ procedures for evaluating content did not always give consideration to the wishes of persons depicted in images or take into account their embarrassment and emotional distress.

Sextortion was frequently accompanied by online harassment. Determined, persistent perpetrators could easily create multiple fake online accounts to hack, threaten and impersonate respondents. Again, respondents often depended on technology companies to intervene. Respondents pursued by abusive, vindictive perpetrators generally had no doubts about the identities of their tormentors, but technology companies often required more evidence than respondents could provide, allowing perpetrators to continue their campaigns of harassment. Also responses to the survey suggest that websites were reluctant to institute behavioral standards or address behavior to reduce the vulnerability of respondents by banning users, for example.

Similarly, law enforcement offered little or no assistance in many cases. Although some respondents received valued help from police, many adults who reported sextortion incidents found there were no criminal laws against such activity. In some cases, police treated respondents rudely or blamed them for what happened. When victims were minors, perpetrators were often breaking criminal laws about the production or distribution of child pornography, but respondents feared they were vulnerable to criminal charges also. Some respondents who described incidents that occurred when they were minors had been threatened with charges or blamed. So in many cases described in the survey, perpetrators were shielded from criminal consequences and respondents had little support from authorities.

ADVICE FROM RESPONDENTS

The respondents to our survey have faced difficult circumstances and we drew on their experiences by asking, “What advice would you give others who find themselves in similar situations?” Their replies addressed the risks of sending sexual images; the value of keeping evidence about threatening situations and disclosing incidents to friends and family; reasons to be assertive with perpetrators; and advice about reporting to police, avoiding self-blame, maintaining perspective about the impact of sextortion and preventing future incidents. Respondents said:

Think about the risks of sending sexual images.

“If able to be avoided, please just don’t send nudes at all. It doesn’t matter if it is your husband, your current boyfriend of 11 years, your boyfriend of 6 months, your best friend, etc. ... Something could always happen, even a lost phone being found and a stranger getting the photos.”

Female, 23, online

“Don’t let them persuade you to send them sexual pictures. Maybe it sounds adventurous but you need to... realize that those people just want some jerk-off-moment or some sexual night even if they told you they will love you...”

Male, 18, online

“Nearly everyone sends intimate photos to lovers... It is also smart, if you are sending these photos, to make [them] as least identifiable as possible. Don’t show your face, tattoos, a statement blanket/clothing or bedroom...”

Female, 17, online

Be realistic about the possible consequences of sending images.

“When you send those videos/pictures, make sure you know that it’s possible that they’ll end up on the internet.”

Female, 21, online

“If you’re going to decide you are grown and responsible enough to send nudes, then you need to take all precautions possible, including [taking the] judgment of the people you send them to, and also [the judgment of those] who you call your ‘friends’. If you can’t do any of that, then you should not be taking nude photos at all.”

Female, 18, f2f

Collect evidence about any threats and take safety measures against online intrusions and offline violence.

“Make sure you document EVERYTHING, [take] screen shots, get print outs of your phone activity... Look up your state laws against ‘revenge porn’ crimes, beat down the doors of the police station, find a victim advocate. It’s better to try and fail, than wonder if someone may have been able to help you legally.”

Female, 22, f2f

“Get as many people involved as possible and as many witnesses to the threats a possible.”

Female, 18, f2f

“[I]f the person makes you do sexual acts, make sure to get a rape kit from the hospital.”

Female, 16, f2f

“If [threats] happen ... block them right away. If need be take down your social media profile for a bit and make sure you tell everyone that ‘hey my profile was hacked. If anyone sends you anything referring to me don’t open it.’ Make sure not to give them emails they can use to search for your social media sites.”

Male, 20, online

“Put a damn password on your photo album, or just your phone all together.”

Female, 18, f2f

“Always do all you can to have full control of your Facebook profile, including log-in alerts and request passwords that are sent to your phone every time you log in from a new device.”

Female, 17, online

“Make sure you have some method of self defense, whether it’s a taser, hand-to-hand combat training, or even something as simple as a key chain weapon.”

Male, 25, online

“Keep a record of all the times you are contacted. Download a call recording app on your phone if you do choose to answer. And if it’s financially possible, set up video security around your home.”

Female, 21, f2f

“Get copyrights to photos to submit infringement of copyrights to websites. And remove listings on Google and other search engines.”

Female, 22, f2f

“If [you] have the money, get a good lawyer.”

Female, 23, f2f

Tell family and friends so they can help you.

“Reaching out is the best thing you can do. The people around you want what is best for you, they may be angry at first, but in the end, they will not love you any less... They might even gain some respect for your courage.”

Female, 18, f2f

“[Just] tell a very trusted friend or family member. Much preferably, tell someone with a sex positive attitude who will not shame you or make things worse.”

Female, 17, online

“Tell someone you trust about the situation. It is a tough thing to go through alone, let alone dangerous. Especially since many of us are at a young age when we go through it, it’s wise to go through it with people older who can handle it with you.”

Male, 14, online

“Have someone knowledgeable and mature intervene [with the perpetrator] for you.”

Female, 22, online

“Just be honest with your family... the sooner they know the sooner they can help.”

Female, 18, f2f

“Definitely tell people because once people know about what’s going on from your end they won’t think it’s funny if someone sends them something about you. They will (assuming they really are your friends) tell you about it and tell that person that they are the sick perverted person that they are.”

Male, 25, f2f

Respond assertively to perpetrators.

“The person who is extorting you is struggling for power over you. The more upset or startled you become, the more likely it is that they will continue.”

Female, 22, f2f

“Do not give into the demands of someone threatening you, whether it is money they are demanding, or a meet-up, or sexual acts, or even violence. Chances are they will always have access to the photos/videos that they have of you, so it doesn’t matter if you submit to their demands today- they can turn around weeks or months from now and demand something else.”

It's better to stand up for yourself from the get-go than agree to their original demands only to find out months from now they will make new threats..."

Female, 22, f2f

"Extortion is an emotional crime. It preys on those who respond emotionally. Play it cool. Disengage completely."

Female, 18, online

Deciding whether to make a police report can be difficult. Respondents were divided about whether and when to report perpetrators to the police. Some urged minors to make reports but others warned against it, noting that minors can risk criminal charges for child pornography offenses. Some noted adult reporting can be futile if laws do not criminalize sextortion that targets adults, but others had found help from police. However, respondents provided some general advice about police reporting and ways to ease the process.

"Call the cops. There are new laws starting to come into place about the abuse of nude pictures and threats and if they keep getting calls about it, it will... make the laws come sooner."

Female, 17, f2f

"[Call] the non-emergency police number for your area as soon as you get the first threat..."

Female, 18, online

"Pressing charges lets [perpetrators] know that what they [were doing] was wrong and they should be punished for it."

Female, 17, f2f

"Report it. It's normal to feel ashamed but think about the future victims and helping them."

Female, 20, f2f

"[The police]... will give you a female to talk to if that makes you more comfortable. It's a sex crime, in my opinion..."

Female, 21, online

"Phone the police and ask if you can speak to a LGBT officer about a personal situation."

Male, 20, online

"Go to the police; take a friend with you."

Female, 17, f2f

Blame perpetrators, not yourself.

"It is within your right to show your body to whomever you please as long as you are of a legal age, and not coerced into showing them. There is nothing to be ashamed of. They are the ones doing something wrong by threatening you."

Female, 15, f2f

"You trusted someone and they let you down. Don't blame yourself."

Female, 17, f2f

"Sexual harassment online is not okay, no matter what the situation is, who started the conversation, who sent which pictures, whatever. It's just not okay. If someone tells you that you shouldn't have sent any pictures in the first place, forget them... Saying that is like telling a rape victim that they led their rapist on and that the crime was the victim's fault."

Female, 16, online

Have perspective about the situation.

“Although everyone and everything screams this is the end of the world, it is not. There are plenty of nudes of other women floating around... Your image will be forgotten.”

Female, 18, online

“Nude photos are not... a reflection of who you are... One day, the naked body and sex will not be so scandalous, and one day, people who post these photos online without consent, they will pay. But until then, all that you can do is hold your head high, take a hold of the power you have, and be prepared to start cutting people out of your life and making the ones who understand and don't judge you more central in your social activities.”

Female, 21,

“Know that you are not a victim - you are a target. This person, or group of people, is not doing this to you because of something you did, but because it is something they want to do... Embarrassment, while entirely valid and tragic, will pass - what is important is to be honest and straightforward about your situation with yourself and the people that are supporting you. Listen to Katy Perry's Roar and keep doing you!”

Male, 21, f2f

Protect others from being victimized.

“The people who do this won't just stop at you. They will continue to pursue other victims and the only way they will stop is if you get help and make them stop.”

Female, 17, online

“Try your best to warn other girls who may also be in contact with creeps like this. Us ladies need to stick together and help each other whenever we can.”

Female, 16, online

“The lack of support for people affected by 'revenge porn' is absolutely disgusting and the laws need to be fixed accordingly. If we all speak out, we can change things.”

Female, 17, online

RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC AWARENESS: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SEXTORTION IN ORDER TO PROMOTE DISCLOSURE AND IMPROVE SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR VICTIMS

The victims of sextortion are similar to other groups of victims of sexual exploitation who have come forward in recent years. They struggle with perpetrators against whom they feel relatively powerless. They have intense feelings of shame, embarrassment and often blame themselves for their situation. They feel isolated. They look out on an unsympathetic environment, and indeed their pleas for help often result in frustration and rebuke.

Other victim populations have benefited from greater public awareness and understanding about their plight. This public awareness has helped victims feel less isolated; made it easier to disclose their situation to friends, family, and the authorities; and resulted in more sympathetic responses. In fact, respondents pointed to parents as important sources of assistance and emotional support as they grappled with sextortion. Education that helps parents to be open with their children about sexual matters so children, including young adults, feel safe coming to them with problems would help improve support to victims.

To increase public understanding

- Increase education and awareness about sextortion, including online and offline safety tactics, through media coverage that looks seriously at the problem of sextortion and more books, articles and videos on the topic
- Execute campaigns to promote increased communication and disclosure between parents and children
- Create a survivor support network similar to the human trafficking survivor network
- Provide workshops and trainings for professionals, particularly those who respond to incidents of dating and other types of intimate partner violence and to sexual assault, abuse and exploitation
- Create media messages admonishing against pressuring romantic partners for sexual images and against harassing partners after break-ups
- Victims who are willing to speak publicly about their experiences may also help raise awareness

EDUCATION SYSTEM: MOBILIZE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TO IMPLEMENT PREVENTION CURRICULA AND PROVIDE SUPPORT RESOURCES

The most widespread current prevention strategy is to warn against making or disseminating sexual images with messages, often aimed at potential victims, like, “You cannot control where they will end up.” Some may have taken such warnings to heart, but creating and sharing sexual images in the context of romantic and sexual relationships appears to be widespread. Further, “Just say no” messages provide little help to those who are pressured, tricked or threatened/forced to provide images, and they do not stop perpetrators who acquire images covertly.

Prevention science suggests that we can help potential victims resist pressure to provide sexual images through programs that give them opportunities to practice refusal skills and formulate refusal

scripts which are convincing to them and others. One problem is that for many school and community based prevention programs sextortion is too freighted a topic to be included. Much more effort has to go into developing and testing programs aimed at adolescents that cover topics of healthy sexual and relationship activities and finding ways to integrate them into curricula and other youth activities. Also, programs that will reach young adults who are not in school need to be developed. Most importantly, programs need to be aimed at the behavior of perpetrators and potential perpetrators. Publicity that condemns sextortion might have some deterrent effect.

To discourage perpetration of sextortion

- **Implement prevention programs and messages focused on the consequences of distributing sexual images, as well as prevention tools to help resist pressure to send sexual images and increase resiliency**
- **Increase campus/school and other support resources for victims**
- **Train educators to increase awareness about sextortion**
- **Incorporate prevention messages about sextortion into sex education programs and programs aimed at teen dating and dating violence, including at the college level and beyond**

BYSTANDER AWARENESS: MOBILIZE BYSTANDERS TO STOP PERPETRATORS AND SUPPORT VICTIMS

A consistent finding from prevention science is that social networks can exert positive influences to prevent and intervene in dangerous social situations and relationships. Friends and acquaintances are often the first ones to know about abusive relationships. However, many of the respondents to our survey did not ask for help because they were afraid of being judged by peers and family, and some were mocked and ostracized when incidents became public. On the other hand, those who disclosed incidents to understanding friends and family expressed relief and appreciation for their support, which often included practical help and protection.

In the area of dating violence, programs in secondary schools and colleges have addressed the problem by teaching peers how to intervene in potentially dangerous situations without being judgmental. Effective programs include skills taught by role play and rehearsed in programs covering a wide range of social problems and socio-emotional topics. Bystander mobilization that helps to stop perpetrators of sextortion and teaches bystanders to support victims needs to go beyond secondary schools and colleges and reach a broader audience. Programs and messages should address how to pro-actively recognize sextortion, discourage perpetration, help targets respond in ways that avoid victimization and assist and support victims to get redress and minimize harm.

To increase support for victims

- **Provide programs to mobilize peers and other bystanders to pro-actively protect and support potential victims and dissuade perpetrators**
- **Create innovative programs including media messages to reach bystanders who are not part of student populations**
- **Include discussion about sextortion in programs for parents that address adolescent sexual development**

TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY: ENCOURAGE THE TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY TO DEVELOP PROACTIVE INTERVENTIONS, IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF VICTIMS WHO REPORT INCIDENTS, ADOPT PRACTICES AND POLICIES THAT PROHIBIT SEXTORTION, AND INCREASE COLLABORATION ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

Respondents said that websites/apps were slow to respond to complaints and often did not notify reporters about steps being taken in response to reports. Many technology companies did not appear to have special procedures for minors, who may have needed particularly quick and sensitive attention. Respondents to the survey seemed to have a hard time finding reliable, detailed and helpful information on websites/apps about options for reporting, including policies of technology companies for removing images. We also found that shame and embarrassment and concerns about confidentiality kept some respondents from reporting incidents.

Further, about half of sextortion episodes reported by respondents occurred to minors. These episodes may have more serious impacts. Also, just by virtue of their age and inexperience, this group deserves priority attention. The business model of many technology platforms draws heavily on engaging minors, so there should be a concomitant responsibility to protect them from harms that occur in this context and assist them when such harms occur. There are a variety of possible initiatives that might be particularly helpful to this population.

Our findings suggest that there is considerable skepticism, some of it based on experience, that the websites/apps used in sextortion incidents can be of assistance to victims. Based on responses to the survey, there are a variety of forms of education and assistance that technology companies can possibly provide and refine to help victims and also enhance public confidence.

To increase the responsiveness of websites/apps

- **Utilize research/data to create algorithms that pro-actively detect sextortion**
- **Create more accessible safety resources, improve reporting capabilities and follow-up procedures, and embed outreach and intervention tools in platforms. Examples include**
 - Easily accessed educational materials with suggestions about how to stay safe and how to manage threats and harassing behavior when they arise
 - Easily signposted blocking and help-summoning facilities and ways of capturing and archiving problematic messages and content
 - Online support groups and archived discussions for those looking for advice and help from other victims about how to handle threats and harassment
 - A triage system that gives priority to sextortion incidents and rapid response to requests for help
 - Warning systems for common sextortion blackmail scams, such as webcam sex scams aimed at young men
- **Develop clear policies prohibiting the non-consensual sharing of sexual images, and promote in-app/onsite warnings about the consequences of this behavior**
- **Share information across the industry about bad actors and share/adopt best practices industry wide, for example cross-platform agreements and capacities so that harassment cannot easily migrate from one platform to another**
- **Enhance responsiveness and sensitivity to help-seekers under the age of 18 by, for example**

- Giving urgent attention to requests for assistance coming from juveniles
- Providing specialized training for incident responders in understanding issues that face minors, so their responses will be developmentally sensitive
- Forming a technology industry coalition to mobilize for research that would develop, evaluate and improve prevention programs and messages aimed at minors. These efforts could include advisory boards and focus groups of minors to provide consultation about initiatives and policies.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: INCREASE LAW ENFORCEMENT’S CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO SEXTORTION CASES AND IMPROVE SENSITIVITY TO VICTIMS

Few of the victims from our study reached out to law enforcement. A combination of public outreach, police training, and new legislation may be needed to encourage victims to report and law enforcement to develop policies and practices that help victims. Even in jurisdictions where criminal laws do not address sextortion, law enforcement can advise victims on how to handle threats and harassment and provide support to help scare off offenders and protect victims. For example, police might be able to provide victims with boilerplate warnings to post or send out that suggest that police are monitoring interactions with a victim. New laws may be needed to clearly criminalize some of the threatening activities of perpetrators. Additionally, as with other sexual assault victims, police need to be trained to focus on perpetrator behavior to avoid exacerbating the sense of shame and self-blame that many victims feel.

In addition, law enforcement agencies need to review policies that lead them to charge young victims of sextortion with child pornography offenses or threaten to do so. Such policies, or victims’ fears of such policies, appeared to deter police reporting of perpetrators who victimized minors and increase the distress of victims who felt they could not get justice.

To increase law enforcement responsiveness and sensitivity to sextortion incidents

- **Improve criminal laws addressing sextortion and develop policies and procedures for law enforcement to assist victims even when criminal statutes are lacking**
- **Adopt a victim-centric approach and promote sensitivity training across all law enforcement agencies**
- **Create new investigative tools**
- **Train responders to increase sensitivity to victims who are minors and policies that promote reporting by minors and protect them from criminal charges when they are targeted for sextortion**

CONCLUSION

We hope that the information available in this report will help the public and professionals who respond to sextortion understand the nature of these incidents and the harm inflicted on victims, as well as prompt people to think about prevention and intervention and inspire new ideas and novel strategies to combat this problem.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE SURVEY

Thorn (www.wearthorn.org) and the Crimes against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire (www.unh.edu/ccrc) conducted an online survey to gather information about sextortion incidents.

HOW WE RECRUITED SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Most respondents were recruited via advertising campaigns on Facebook, which provided a grant to Thorn for this purpose. Thorn ran multiple ad campaigns on Facebook between July 17 and September 30, 2015, targeting English-speaking males and females in the United States ages 18 to 25. (We did not have the resources to conduct the survey in additional languages.) The ads targeted demographic groups based on age, educational level, income, and gender. Once we secured a minimum number of surveys to conduct statistical analyses, we focused the advertising to build up specific subgroups in the data including males, the LGBTQ community and 18 year-olds. We targeted 18 year-olds because we wanted information about incidents that occurred when respondents were minors and expected that 18 year old adults would be more likely to report such episodes.

The Facebook ads featured images (for example, people at computers, texts on cell phones, the question, “Got nudes?”). The text of the ads varied somewhat, but a common version read, “Sextortion/Has it happened to you?/If a person has tried to make you do something by threatening to show sexual images of you to someone or post it online, please help by taking this anonymous survey. We want to stop this crime!” Respondents clicked on a link to enter the survey.

The Facebook ads reached 1,364,823 people. From these ads and other recruitment tactics, 8,183 people began the survey and 26% ($n=2,103$) reached the end page. Of the 2,103 responses that reached the end page, we excluded 22% ($n=472$) as incomplete, leaving 1,631 completed surveys for analysis. Nearly 90% of the respondents that came to the end page were referred from the Facebook ad campaigns. The other approximately 10% came from advertising campaigns on Twitter (which also provided a grant for this research) and Google, digital outreach from Thorn and partners (blog posts, emails, social media), and organic search and referral traffic.

CONTENT OF THE SURVEY

Procedures for the online survey were approved by the University of New Hampshire Human Subjects Review Board. To administer the survey, we used Qualtrics Research Suite, a secure web-based survey data collection system available through the University of New Hampshire. The survey took about 20 minutes to complete. It was anonymous; it did not record IP addresses or ask questions that would have identified a respondent. It required respondents to state that they were age 18 to 25, but otherwise they could skip any question or exit the survey at any time.

The survey asked about respondents’ personal characteristics (for example, age, gender, education, race); whether they knew the perpetrator face-to-face or online only; perpetrator characteristics (in

face-to-face relationships); technology use during the incident and changes in technology use as a result of the incident; type, frequency and duration of threats; whether and how the perpetrator carried out threats; how the perpetrator acquired sexual images and their content; responses to threats; and disclosure and reporting of sextortion incidents.

The survey also included resources at both its introduction and its end for respondents who needed legal help or emotional or other support. These resources included links to organizations that provide assistance in cases of non-consensual distribution of sexual images, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, male victims and child sexual exploitation.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1
WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY:
ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
Respondent (R) gender			
Male***	20 (131)	11 (103)	14 (234)
Female***	77 (512)	87 (840)	83 (1352)
Unspecified	3 (18)	1 (15)	2 (33)
R age at time of survey			
18	39 (259)	38 (370)	39 (629)
19	19 (123)	15 (142)	16 (265)
20	9 (63)	11 (103)	10 (166)
21	9 (59)	9 (91)	9 (150)
22	6 (39)	9 (84)	7 (123)
23	7 (46)	7 (66)	7 (112)
24	6 (39)	5 (52)	6 (91)
25	3 (17)	3 (30)	3 (47)
R is Hispanic or Latina/o	13 (86)	14 (132)	13 (218)
R race			
White/Caucasian	76 (506)	79 (760)	78 (1266)
Black/African American	4 (28)	4 (37)	4 (65)
Asian	3 (19)	3 (28)	3 (47)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1 (6) †	1 (5) †	1 (11)
American Indian/Alaska native	2 (15)	3 (24)	2 (39)
Mixed race/multi-racial	3 (20)	3 (31)	3 (51)
Other race	1 (5) †	1 (6) †	1 (11)
Missing	10 (64)	8 (77)	9 (141)
Level of education completed by R			
Not high school graduate	10 (67)	9 (82)	9 (149)
High school graduate or GED	41 (269)	35 (340)	37 (609)
Some college or technical school	39 (259)	41 (400)	40 (659)
College degree or more education	10 (64)	15 (142)	13 (206)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent

† Cell size is too small to provide reliable results of tests for significant differences.

*** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 2
TIMING OF SEXTORTION INCIDENTS:
ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
Most recent threat occurred 2013 to 2015			
2015	46 (304)	43 (418)	44 (722)
2014	24 (160)	27 (257)	26 (417)
2013	13 (89)	16 (154)	15 (243)
2012	5 (30)	6 (54)	5 (84)
Earlier than 2012	7 (47)	7 (70)	7 (117)
R age when threats began			
13 or younger	3 (18)	3 (29)	3 (47)
14 or 15	10 (68)	9 (90)	10 (158)
16 or 17	30 (201)	35 (334)	33 (535)
18 or 19	29 (192)	28 (269)	28 (461)
20 to 22	15 (103)	16 (151)	16 (254)
23 to 25	6 (39)	6 (57)	6 (96)
Older than 25	0	<1 (2) [†]	<1 (2)
R was minor (younger than 18) when threats began	43 (287)	47 (453)	46 (740)
Sextortion incident has ended			
Yes	70 (467)	65 (630)	67 (1097)
No	10 (64)	12 (116)	11 (180)
Don't know/not sure	18 (118)	21 (207)	20 (325)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent

[†] Cell size is too small to provide reliable results of tests for significant differences.

**TABLE 3
CHARACTERISTICS OF INCIDENTS: FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS**

	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)
Respondent (R) gender	
Male	11 (103)
Female	87 (840)
Unspecified	1 (15)
R age when threats began	
13 or younger	3 (29)
14 or 15	9 (90)
16 or 17	35 (334)
18 or 19	28 (269)
20 to 22	16 (151)
23 to 25	6 (57)
Older than 25	<1 (2)
R was minor (younger than 18) when threats began	47 (453)
Perpetrator (P) gender	
Male	89 (865)
Female	9 (87)
Age of P at time of threats	
17 or younger	27 (260)
18 to 21	42 (407)
22 to 25	19 (182)
26 to 30	5 (53)
31 to 40	3 (31)
41 to 50	1 (10)
51 or older	1 (6)
How well R knew P when threats began	
Not at all	2 (16)
Slightly	11 (108)
Somewhat well	28 (275)
Very well	57 (549)
P was R's intimate partner	64 (621)
How R knew P	
Current or former boy/girlfriend, dating/sexual partner	61 (590)
Current or former spouse/live-in partner	3 (31)
Relative or foster relative	1 (10)
Current or former friend or acquaintance	20 (191)
Someone from work or school	11 (106)
Someone else	1 (15)
R had contact with P by cell phone or computer	96 (932)
P used cell/internet to hide true identity	16 (157)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."
Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

TABLE 4
CHARACTERISTICS OF INCIDENTS: ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)
Respondent (R) gender	
Male	20 (131)
Female	77 (512)
Unspecified	3 (18)
R age when threats began	
13 or younger	3 (18)
14 or 15	10 (68)
16 or 17	30 (201)
18 or 19	29 (192)
20 to 22	15 (103)
23 to 25	6 (39)
Missing	6 (42)
R was minor (younger than 18) when threats began	43 (287)
R first contact with P was via	
Computer or related device	66 (438)
Cell phone	30 (198)
R first contact with P was on	
Social networking site	31 (207)
Messaging or photo messaging app	24 (161)
Video voice call program	12 (82)
Dating sites/ app	11 (76)
Gaming sites/ app	4 (27)
Email	3 (17)
Image board site	1 (4)
Video sharing social media site	1 (9)
Other sites/app	7 (49)
During 1st contact P asked: ^a	
To be added as friend/contact on social media site	40 (263)
For R's cell phone number	37 (245)
For other online contact information (e.g., screen name)	31 (208)
To move to specific site or app	28 (183)
For other personal information (e.g., name, location)	21 (137)
During 1st contact P lied/gave false impression	
Missing	26 (171)
During 1st contact P lied/gave false impression about ^a	
Wanting a romantic relationship	42 (154)
Age	39 (141)
Being female when male	15 (55)
Being someone R knew	13 (49)
Being male when female	3 (11)
Something else	21 (76)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

^a Respondents could give multiple answers .

TABLE 5

WEBSITES AND APPS PERPETRATORS USED TO INTERACT WITH RESPONDENTS: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
Websites/apps P used or told R to use ^a			
Social networking sites***	48 (318)	58 (558)	54 (876)
Messaging or photo messaging apps	42 (277)	40 (390)	41 (667)
Video voice call programs***	30 (201)	18 (173)	23 (374)
Dating sites/apps***	13 (83)	6 (57)	9 (140)
Email	13 (85)	12 (116)	12 (201)
Video sharing social media sites	6 (42)	6 (56)	6 (98)
Gaming sites/apps	5 (32)	3 (26)	4 (58)
Image board sites	3 (22)	3 (31)	3 (53)
Other sites/apps	7 (47)	5 (49)	6 (96)
None of the above***	5 (32)	14 (136)	10 (168)
Missing	9 (60)	7 (69)	8 (129)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

^a Respondents could give multiple answers .

*** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 6

HOW PERPETRATORS ACQUIRED IMAGES: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
R knowingly provided image to P***			
Yes	65 (434)	75 (729)	71 (1163)
No	27 (179)	20 (194)	23 (373)
Missing	7 (50)	5 (45)	6 (95)
R 1st gave sexual image to P because ^a			
	<i>n=434</i>	<i>n=729</i>	<i>n=1163</i>
In a wanted romantic or sexual relationship***	62 (270)	78 (568)	72 (838)
Pressured to give images or made to feel bad	53 (231)	49 (356)	51 (587)
Tricked into it***	22 (96)	11 (83)	15 (179)
Threatened or forced	15 (65)	12 (85)	13 (150)
Expected to be paid for images**	4 (17)	1 (10)	2 (27)
Thought image would be used for modeling/acting	3 (11)	2 (14)	2 (25)
P pressured, tricked or threatened/forced R**			
	62 (268)	53 (386)	56 (654)
How long R knew P before providing image***			
One day or less	27 (117)	2 (12)	11 (129)
>1 to 7 days	22 (96)	5 (38)	11 (134)
>1 to 2 weeks	14 (59)	6 (42)	9 (101)
>2 weeks to 1 month	11 (49)	9 (66)	10 (115)
>1 to 3 months	11 (49)	16 (116)	14 (165)
>3 months	10 (43)	59 (430)	41 (473)
Knew P <1 week before image***			
	49 (213)	7 (50)	23 (263)
Knew P >3 months before image***			
	10 (43)	59 (430)	41 (473)
How R gave or sent 1st image***			
Text message or app	56 (242)	73 (530)	66 (772)
Email or link to photo storage site	14 (59)	6 (41)	9 (100)
Photo or video sharing site/app	16 (70)	10 (73)	12 (143)
Picture taken in person	0	7 (50) [†]	4 (50)
Social networking, dating, other online site/app	5 (22)	2 (14)	3 (36)
Some other way	3 (14)	1 (10)	2 (24)
Other ways Ps acquired images ^a			
	<i>n=663</i>	<i>n=968</i>	<i>n=1631</i>
Recorded a webcam image without consent***	23 (156)	14 (133)	18 (289)
Recorded image without consent other way***	8 (52)	14 (139)	12 (191)
Someone else gave it to them	9 (58)	9 (89)	9 (147)
Created a fake image***	11 (76)	5 (48)	8 (124)
Hacked into a device or online account	6 (38)	5 (50)	5 (88)
Some other way	4 (27)	2 (23)	3 (50)
None of the above***	34 (225)	46 (449)	41 (674)
Missing	12 (78)	9 (85)	10 (163)
Content of image R was threatened with			
Sexual acts	30 (196)	28 (273)	29 (469)
Genitals	28 (183)	32 (306)	30 (489)
Other nudity	19 (125)	24 (228)	22 (353)
Revealing clothing	16 (109)	13 (126)	14 (235)
Don't know/missing	7 (50)	4 (35)	5 (85)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

^a Respondents could give multiple answers.

[†] Cell size is too small to provide reliable results of tests for significant differences.

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 7

HOW PERPETRATORS THREATENED RESPONDENTS: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
What P wanted from R ^a			
Sexual pictures/videos of R***	66 (437)	41 (395)	51 (832)
Make R stay in or go back to a relationship***	23 (151)	55 (536)	42 (687)
Tell R how to look/what to do in pictures***	39 (259)	21 (203)	28 (462)
Meet R in person	28 (183)	25 (243)	26 (426)
Online sex***	36 (241)	15 (144)	24 (385)
For R to hurt self	9 (58)	10 (101)	10 (159)
Money***	14 (90)	5 (53)	9 (143)
Sexual pictures/videos of another person***	10 (67)	5 (46)	7 (113)
P threats of online actions ^a			
Post sexual image of R online**	69 (461)	62 (602)	65 (1063)
Send image to friend/acquaintance/other (non-family)***	53 (348)	63 (612)	59 (960)
Send sexual image of R to family	47 (313)	46 (441)	46 (754)
Tag or include R's name with posted image	38 (252)	36 (347)	37 (599)
Create fake accounts or sexual images of R***	31 (208)	19 (188)	24 (396)
Post other personal information with picture	16 (104)	14 (138)	15 (242)
P threats of offline actions ^a			
Get R in trouble at school, job or with the law***	32 (215)	42 (409)	38 (624)
Come after R or stalk in person***	24 (158)	36 (348)	31 (506)
Beat, rape, kill or physically hurt R***	19 (129)	31 (297)	26 (426)
Harm R's family, friends or pets ***	11 (72)	17 (165)	15 (237)
P made threats via ^a			
Cell phone***	47 (309)	71 (692)	61 (1001)
Computer/other device***	67 (444)	50 (485)	57 (929)
In person***	2 (15)	31 (304)	20 (319)
Websites/apps P used to threaten ^{a,b}			
Social networking sites/apps***	45 (248)	58 (455)	53 (703)
Messaging/photo messaging apps	40 (221)	43 (339)	42 (560)
Video voice call programs***	25 (136)	13 (104)	18 (240)
Email	12 (64)	11 (89)	11 (153)
Dating sites/apps	7 (41)	5 (43)	6 (84)
Video sharing social media sites	4 (23)	5 (43)	5 (66)
Image board sites	3 (14)	3 (29)	3 (43)
Gaming sites or apps	3 (15)	2 (17)	2 (32)
Missing**	23 (156)	30 (288)	27 (444)
Time from first contact with P to start of threats***			
During first contact	25 (164)	2 (20)	11 (184)
<1 week	17 (112)	3 (33)	9 (145)
Between 1 and 2 weeks	14 (94)	5 (46)	9 (140)
>2 weeks to 1 month	11 (75)	8 (76)	9 (151)
>1 month to 3 months	11 (73)	11 (104)	11 (177)
>3 months to 6 months	7 (44)	13 (124)	10 (168)
>6 months	11 (74)	53 (518)	36 (592)
Threats began <1 week after 1st contact***	42 (276)	5 (53)	20 (329)
Threats began >3 months after***	18 (118)	66 (642)	47 (760)
Frequency of threats			
Daily***	41 (269)	29 (286)	34 (555)
Weekly**	19 (127)	25 (238)	22 (365)
Monthly***	9 (57)	18 (176)	14 (233)
Something else	21 (137)	16 (154)	18 (291)
Missing	11 (73)	12 (114)	11 (187)
Duration of threats			
<1 week***	33 (216)	15 (149)	22 (365)
Between 1 and 2 weeks	15 (98)	16 (153)	15 (251)
>2 weeks to 1 month	11 (73)	14 (139)	13 (212)
>1 month to 3 months	12 (82)	15 (145)	14 (227)
>3 months to 6 months	7 (48)	10 (95)	9 (143)
>6 months ***	17 (114)	26 (248)	22 (362)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The tables show differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator

^a Respondents could give multiple answers.

^b This set of questions was added after the survey began, $n=1334$.

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 8

HOW PERPETRATORS CARRIED OUT THREATS OR HARMED RESPONDENTS: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
P carried out threats or otherwise harmed R***	37 (245)	49 (477)	44 (722)
P harmed R by ^a	n=245	n=477	n=722
Repeated unwanted online or cell contact***	60 (147)	77 (367)	71 (514)
Sending a sexual image of R to someone	40 (98)	48 (227)	45 (325)
Posting a sexual image of R online***	51 (126)	35 (166)	40 (292)
Posting personal information about R online	28 (69)	25 (121)	26 (190)
Hacking into an account belonging to R	21 (51)	25 (121)	24 (172)
Getting personal information about R's family	21 (51)	18 (85)	19 (136)
Creating fake accounts or photos of R	19 (47)	14 (65)	15 (112)
Exposed images of R (sent, posted, created fake images)	69 (169)	65 (309)	66 (478)
Perpetrator ^a			
Stalked or harassed R in person***	21 (51)	52 (248)	41 (299)
Got R in trouble at job, school or with law***	26 (64)	42 (200)	37 (264)
Beat, raped or physically hurt R***	13 (31)	43 (204)	33 (235)
Harassed or harmed R's family, friends or pets	9 (23)	14 (66)	12 (89)
Extorted money from R's family or tried to	11 (28)	10 (49)	11 (77)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

^a Respondents could give multiple answers.

*** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 9

IMPACTS ON OFFLINE LIFE AS RESULT OF INCIDENT: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
R had following impacts on offline life ^a			
Lost relationship with friend, family, partner***	25 (169)	51 (491)	41 (660)
Saw a medical or mental health practitioner**	21 (136)	27 (262)	24 (398)
Moved new neighborhood/community/town***	5 (33)	16 (159)	12 (192)
Left/changed school/ school related problem***	5 (31)	14 (133)	10 (164)
Left/changed job/other job-related problem***	4 (29)	11 (108)	8 (137)
None of the above***	47 (308)	26 (248)	34 (556)
Missing***	11 (72)	6 (57)	8 (129)
Respondent had financial costs**			
Missing	10 (69)	13 (131)	12 (200)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent.

^a Respondents could give multiple answers .

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 10

CHANGES TO TECHNOLOGY USE AS RESULT OF INCIDENT: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
Changes R made to technology use ^a			
Changed a password	39 (258)	44 (429)	42 (687)
Changed a screen or user name***	42 (276)	29 (278)	34 (554)
Closed a social media account	35 (232)	30 (291)	32 (523)
Deleted apps from cell phone**	36 (239)	30 (288)	32 (527)
Stopped accessing certain websites***	44 (292)	23 (223)	32 (515)
Changed a cell phone number***	21 (141)	31 (299)	27 (440)
Took new security precautions online	32 (210)	27 (260)	29 (470)
Disabled geo-location settings	27 (180)	24 (232)	25 (412)
Changed an email address	23 (153)	20 (196)	21 (349)
Untagged photos***	17 (112)	25 (237)	21 (349)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent

^a Respondents could give multiple answers .

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 11

HOW RESPONDENTS REACTED TO INCIDENTS: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
R tried to block P or prevent online contact	70 (462)	64 (622)	67 (1084)
Blocking prevented P contact with R***	n=462	n=622	n=1084
Yes	57 (265)	39 (240)	47 (505)
Missing	9 (40)	7 (43)	8 (83)
R complied with P's demands to stop threats	n=663	n=968	n=1631
Yes	51 (337)	55 (532)	53 (869)
Missing	6 (40)	5 (53)	6 (93)
Threats stopped after R complied	n=337	n=532	n=869
Yes	38 (128)	37(197)	37 (325)
Missing	9 (30)	9 (49)	9 (79)
R disclosed incident to family/friends**	n=663	n=968	n=1631
Yes	47 (314)	55 (537)	52 (851)
How long after threats R told family/friends	n=314	n=537	n=851
1 week or sooner	57 (180)	52 (277)	54 (457)
>1 to 2 weeks	11 (34)	12 (66)	12 (100)
>2 weeks to 1 month	8 (24)	9 (50)	9 (74)
>1 to 3 months	5 (17)	7 (39)	7 (56)
>3 months	16 (49)	17 (91)	17 (140)
Who R told ^a			
Friend older than 18	53 (167)	57 (305)	55 (472)
Parent	33 (103)	39 (210)	37 (313)
Friend or family member age 17 or younger	31 (99)	36 (195)	35 (294)
Other adult family member	17 (52)	19 (101)	18 (153)
Family/friend helped end situation/make it easier	47 (149)	40 (215)	43 (364)
Missing	11 (36)	13 (71)	13 (107)
Family/friend made situation worse	15 (48)	19 (102)	18 (150)
Missing	13 (40)	9 (51)	11 (91)
Did not go to family/friends because ^a	n=349	n=431	n=780
R was too embarrassed or ashamed	78 (271)	76 (328)	77 (599)
R thought might get into trouble	57 (198)	53 (230)	55 (428)
R thought could handle by self	48 (166)	49 (209)	48 (375)
R did not think they would be helpful	27 (96)	29 (124)	28 (220)
R was afraid P would find out **	17 (61)	27 (114)	22 (175)
Threats stopped before it got to that point	19 (68)	14 (60)	16 (128)
Did not occur to R	7 (24)	7 (29)	7 (53)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent, P=perpetrator

^a Respondents could give multiple answers.

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 12

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS TO WEBSITES/APPS OR POLICE: ONLINE COMPARED TO FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS

	Online Relationship n=663 % (n)	F2F Relationship n=968 % (n)	All Respondents n=1631 % (n)
R reported situation to website/app***	28 (183)	17 (160)	21 (343)
Missing	8 (56)	5 (49)	6 (105)
Website/app response was helpful	<i>n=183</i>	<i>n=160</i>	<i>n=343</i>
Yes	26 (48)	26 (41)	26 (89)
Missing	21 (39)	14 (22)	18 (61)
Website/app response was not helpful	40 (73)	49 (78)	44 (151)
Missing	26 (47)	23 (37)	25 (84)
Instructions for reporting were easy to find/follow			
Very or somewhat easy	62 (113)	63 (100)	62 (213)
Very or somewhat difficult	26 (48)	24 (39)	25 (87)
Missing	12 (22)	13 (21)	13 (43)
R did not report to website or app because ^a	<i>n=424</i>	<i>n=759</i>	<i>n=1183</i>
Did not think it would help	48 (203)	49 (376)	49 (579)
Too embarrassed or ashamed	42 (179)	42 (321)	42 (500)
Afraid P would find out	32 (137)	26 (197)	28 (334)
Did not occur to R	25 (108)	24 (182)	25 (290)
Threats stopped before it got to that point	16 (68)	16 (123)	16 (191)
Couldn't figure out how to make a report**	17 (74)	11 (84)	13 (158)
R reported situation to police	<i>n=663</i>	<i>n=968</i>	<i>n=1631</i>
Yes	14 (90)	17 (167)	16 (257)

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding. The table shows differences significant at $p \leq .01$ or less and missing data of more than 5%. Data are missing because respondents declined to answer a question or answered "Don't know/Not sure."

Abbreviations: f2f=face-to-face, R=respondent

^a Respondents could give multiple answers .

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 13

LOGISTIC REGRESSION: CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH REPORTING SEXTORTION TO WEBSITES/APPS

	Unadjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Respondents were <i>more</i> likely to report incidents when:	
R was age 18 or older when threats began	1.4 (1.0–1.8)*
R had college degree or more education	1.6 (1.1–2.4)*
Online relationship	1.5 (1.1–2.1)**
P used internet to create false impression or lie about identity	1.5 (1.1–2.1)**
Threats were made via computer	1.8 (1.3–2.4)***
P hacked accounts belonging to R	1.6 (1.0–2.5)*
P used dating sites/apps to interact with R	1.8 (1.1–2.7)*
P threatened to impersonate R online or create fake nude images	1.6 (1.2–2.2)**
P posted sexual images online	2.7 (1.9–3.8)***
P posted personal information about R online	1.5 (1.0–2.4)*
R disclosed incident to family/friends	2.3 (1.7–3.1)***
R reported incident to police	2.2 (1.5–3.1)***
Respondents were <i>less</i> likely to report incidents when:	
R knowingly provided sexual images to P	0.7 (0.5–0.9)*
P wanted R to stay in or return to a relationship	0.7 (0.5–1.0)*

Note: Model also controls for gender and race, other threats by perpetrator and frequency and duration of threats; other harms committed by perpetrator; offline impacts to respondent and other types of websites/apps used in incident.
Abbreviations: R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

*** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$

TABLE 14

LOGISTIC REGRESSION: CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH REPORTING SEXTORTION TO POLICE

	Unadjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Respondents were <i>more likely</i> to report incidents when:	
P threatened R with violence	1.6 (1.2–2.3)**
P harmed R with violence or tried to	1.7 (1.2–2.4)**
R saw mental health or medical practitioner as result of incident	2.2 (1.6–3.0)***
R left job or had job related problems as result of incident	1.9 (1.2–2.9)**
P used internet to create false impression or lie about identity	1.5 (1.1–2.0)*
P impersonated R with fake accounts, web pages or photos	1.9 (1.2–3.0)**
R disclosed incident to family/friends	3.4 (2.4–4.9)***
R reported incident to website/app	2.3 (1.6–3.2)***
Respondents were <i>less likely</i> to report incidents when:	
P wanted R to provide sexual images	0.7 (0.5–0.9)*

Note: Model also controls for gender, age, race and education; other threats by perpetrator and frequency and duration of threats; other harms committed by perpetrator; other offline impacts to respondent and types of websites/apps used in incident.
Abbreviations: R=respondent, P=perpetrator.

*** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$

