



# National study on children's online safety in Ukraine: *key findings*





*The National Study on Children's Online Safety in Ukraine was carried out by the research agency **Sense Research**, commissioned by the non-governmental organization **Dignity Online** together with **Save the Children**, and in partnership with **the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine**. The project was implemented on the initiative of **the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine**.*

*This study was made possible thanks to the financial support of **the Government of Sweden (SIDA)**. Responsibility for the content rests entirely with the author. **Sida and Save the Children** do not necessarily share the views and interpretations expressed.*

*No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written consent of the copyright holder, except in cases provided for by the legislation of Ukraine*

**© NGO «Dignity Online», 2026  
All rights reserved.**

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted between January and June 2026 by the research agency Sense Research, commissioned by the non-governmental organization Dignity Online.

**Research method:** online survey.

**Geographic scope:** the territory of Ukraine (in areas under the control of the Ukrainian government).

**Target audiences:** parents of preschool-age children (0–6 years), who responded on behalf of their children, and school-age children (6–17 years), who took part in the study directly.

**The sample** is representative of the child population of Ukraine (0–17 years) by age, gender, type of settlement, and region.

**School-age children were recruited** through randomly selected general secondary education institutions (124 in total), with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Children's participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary, and possible only with the written informed consent of their parents/guardians.

**Data were collected** through an online survey on the “Lemur” platform of the company New Image MG. Given the sensitivity of the research topic, the study materials underwent a preliminary ethical review by internal experts of NGO Dignity Online and an independent review by the Research Ethics Committee of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

In total, **1,076 questionnaires from parents** of preschoolers and **5,737 questionnaires from schoolchildren** were analyzed.

## KEY FINDINGS

**One in four preschool-age children (26%)** receives their first gadget at the age of 3, and **about 80% of schoolchildren** start using social media between the ages of 6 and 10.

**About 78% of children** regularly eat with a device in hand, and **half of schoolchildren** go to bed late once a week or more often because of time spent on their phones.

**One in two children** has, over the past year, felt tired or experienced a worsening of mood after using the internet at least a few times, and **one in two schoolchildren** admits to having unsuccessfully tried to limit their own screen time.

Over the past year, **74% of schoolchildren** encountered violent images of war online at least once, **more than half (51%)** came across content about extreme weight-loss methods, **36% encountered** content about self-harm, and **24% came across** pornography.

**More than half of teenagers (54%)** became victims of cyberbullying over the past year.

**In 24% of cases,** attempts to draw children into illegal activity online were made through their own friends and acquaintances.

While **younger schoolchildren more often** tell their parents about risky situations they experience (**69.6%**), among **older teenagers (14–17 years)** only **37%** are willing to turn to their family, whereas **56%** are willing to share online dangers with friends.

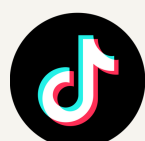
# RESEARCH RESULTS

For most children, the internet is an integral part of everyday life. According to their parents, **78% of preschoolers** use the internet. **Of these, 42% spend between 1 and 2 hours a day online.** The amount of time preschoolers spend online is also linked to how much time their parents spend online: children of parents who spend less time online tend to use the internet less. **Among schoolchildren, more than 70% spend 3 or more hours online every day,** and only 1.6% use the internet for less than an hour a day.

## Top 3 apps used by preschoolers:



Youtube – 81,5%



TikTok – 33,7%

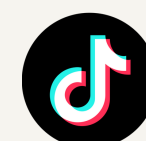


Mobile games – 33%

## Top 4 apps used by schoolchildren:



Youtube – 84,6%



TikTok – 77,9%



Telegram – 71,2%



Viber – 68,8%

According to parents, **only about 3% of preschoolers use social media.** Most of those who do use it do not have their own separate account. Most of those who do have an account registered it at the age of 3 to 5. **As for schoolchildren, the majority reported beginning to use social media between ages 6 and 10 – that is, before the officially permitted registration age for most social networks.**

Although **most parents rate their ability to assess and control the time their children spend online positively,** some children nonetheless show signs of an imbalance between time spent online and offline. Device use affects all areas of children's lives, in particular:

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

**24.9% of preschoolers and 34% of schoolchildren** use devices despite feeling unwell once a week or more often; **26.7% of preschoolers and 49.6% of schoolchildren** go to bed later because of internet use at the same frequency; **and 16.1% and 17.2% respectively** may go a long time without eating because they are spending time online.

### LEARNING

**28% of schoolchildren** spend less time on schoolwork because of internet use at least once a week.

### MENTAL HEALTH


**21% of preschoolers and 19% of schoolchildren** are in a bad mood after using the internet at the same frequency, and **13.1% of schoolchildren** feel down after visiting social media because other people's lives seem more interesting than their own.

### SOCIAL LIFE

**21.2% of preschoolers and 33.6% of schoolchildren** spend more free time online than offline at the same frequency; **20.7% of preschoolers and 19.8% of schoolchildren** spend less time with family or friends because of internet use.

For many children, the internet has become part of daily household routines: **almost a quarter (24.9%) of preschoolers and more than half (53%) of schoolchildren spend time online during meals every day.**

It is also worth noting situations in which parents permit or tolerate circumstances that could potentially deepen this imbalance in the future: **half of the surveyed preschoolers (50.3%)** watch videos or cartoons online every day; **43.6% of parents** reported giving their children a gadget once a week or more often to calm them down or keep them from getting bored; and **28.5% of parents** give their children a gadget at the same frequency to feed them.

 **25,4 %** **Only 25.4% of schoolchildren** did not come across unwanted or uncomfortable content online over the past year, with older children encountering it more often than younger ones.

#### WAR-RELATED CONTENT

According to parents, **one in four (26.7%) preschool-age children** came across war-related content at least once a month. **As for schoolchildren, only 19.4%** never came across such content over the past year: **17.2%** see this content almost every day, and **21.7%** see it once a week or more often.

#### PORNOGRAPHIC CONTENT

According to parents, **approximately one in seven (14.6%) preschool-age children** came across pornographic content online a few times or more often over the past year. **Among schoolchildren, the figure is higher: almost one in four (24.5%)** came across such content at least a few times over the past year.

#### CONTENT ABOUT ONLINE CASINOS

**70.5% of schoolchildren** came across photos, videos, or information about online casinos over the past year: **more than half of children (57.3%)** encountered such content at least once a month, **and of these 21.9%** encountered it almost daily.

#### HATE SPEECH CONTENT

**Almost one in two (48.5%) children aged 10-17** came across content containing hate speech at least a few times over the past year, **with 28%** encountering it once a month or more often.

#### VIOLENT CONTENT

**20% of preschoolers** saw content depicting violence against people or animals online over the past year. Among schoolchildren, the share of those who encountered violent content rises: **almost one in two (48.7%) school-age children** came across such content online at least a few times over the past year.

#### CONTENT ABOUT DRUGS

**Almost a third (31.3%) of schoolchildren** came across content about drugs online at least a few times over the past year.

#### CONTENT ABOUT WEIGHT LOSS

**More than half of schoolchildren aged 10-17** came across content about ways to become very thin online at least a few times over the past year. **Girls encounter such content more often: 25.7% versus 11.8% of boys** see it at least once a week.

#### SELF-HARM CONTENT

**More than a third of schoolchildren aged 10-17** saw photos or videos of self-harm online at least a few times over the past year: **10.1%** at least once a month, and **8.1%** at least once a week.

## FAKE CONTENT

A significant share of schoolchildren also encounter fake content online: at least once a week, 49% saw photos or videos altered using software, 41.8% saw fake advertising, 31.7% saw fake news, 26.3% saw disinformation about the war, and 24.4% saw fake pages of well-known people or companies.

Since schoolchildren most often see all types of unwanted content and fake information on social media, this is likely related to the fact that children spend the most online time there.

In addition to encountering unwanted or uncomfortable content, children also fairly often find themselves in risky situations online.

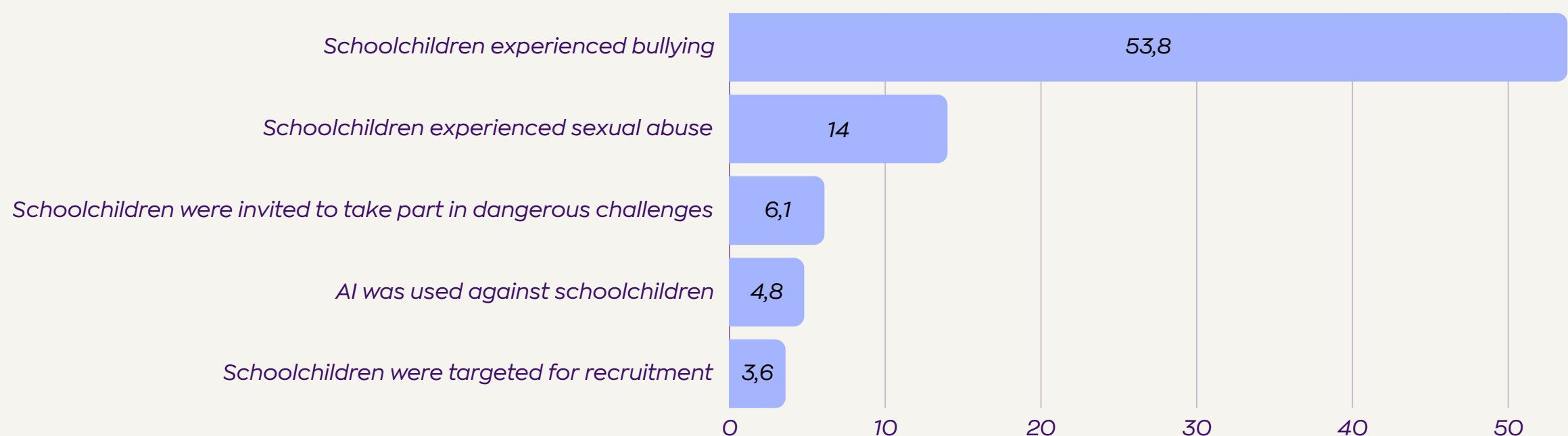
According to parents' estimates, almost one in ten preschool-age children experienced at least one situation of sexual online abuse or exploitation over the past year. In particular, children were sent photos and/or videos with naked body parts (6.2%), were asked to send such photos/videos or were asked questions with a sexual subtext (5.9% each), received photos or videos of another person's naked body parts (5.7%), received offers or messages on the topic of online sex (5.3%), as well as offers to meet in person for sex (5.1%).

According to parents, 5.7% of preschoolers received invitations to take part in a dangerous online challenge or game. A further 5% of preschoolers encountered a situation in which someone used or wanted to use AI-generated photos or videos of the child against them.

## AI CONTENT

Schoolchildren also fairly often see content created by artificial intelligence: at least once a week, 68.1% see content labelled "created by AI," and 50.2% see AI content that was passed off as real.

### Share of schoolchildren who became targets of risky actions over the past year



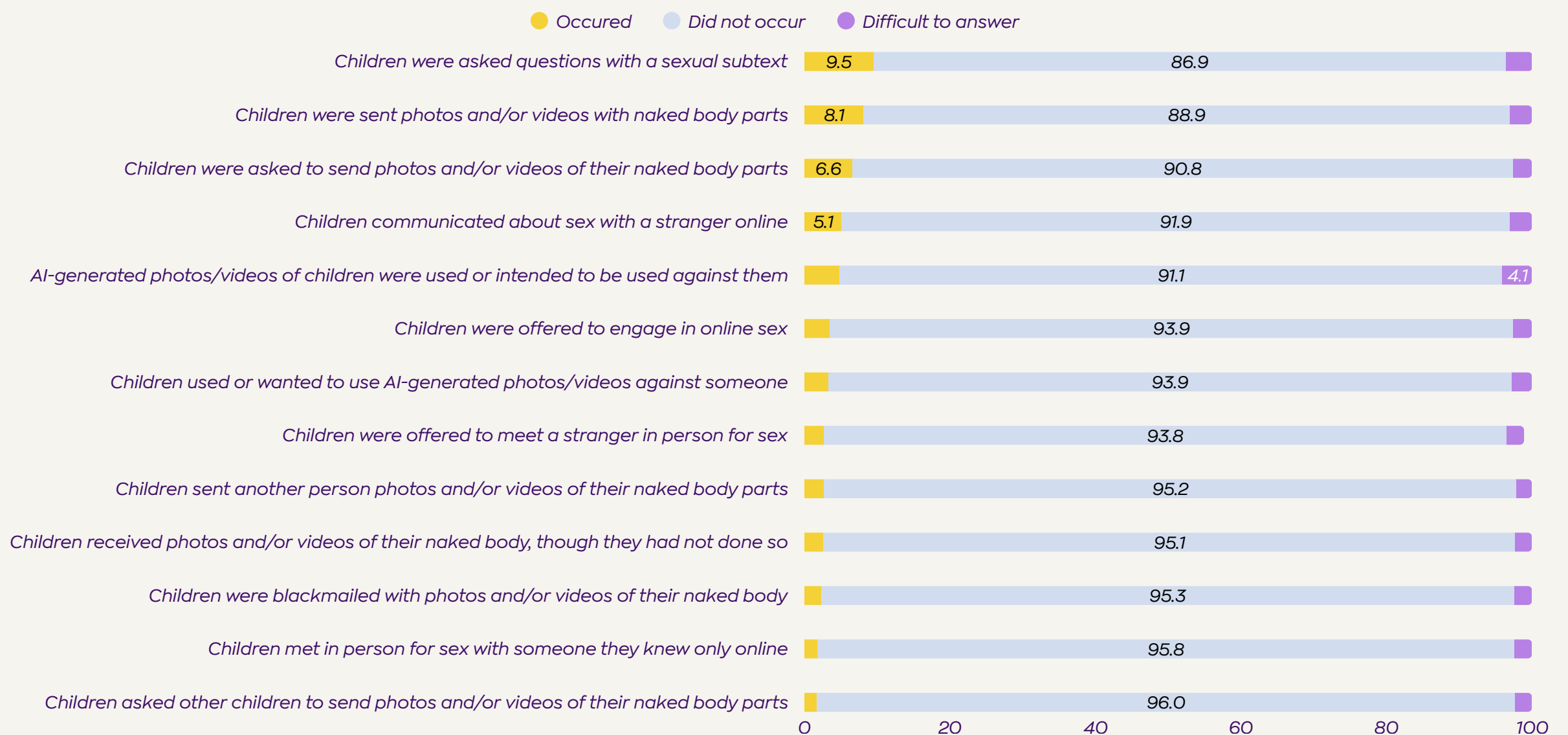
Analysis of schoolchildren's experiences of risky situations in the online environment showed that a significant share of children encountered various forms of potentially dangerous interaction online over the past year. More than half (53.9%) of the surveyed schoolchildren experienced cyberbullying. Its most common forms are receiving unpleasant or offensive messages (40.4%), being ignored or excluded from online groups (34.6%), and the spreading of offensive messages about children behind their backs (22.9%).

6.1% of schoolchildren received an invitation to take part in a dangerous online challenge or game at least once a month.

3.6% of children reported that someone tried to recruit them or that they received offers to carry out risky actions online. Most often, offers to get involved in illegal activity came from children's friends or acquaintances. 39.9% of children did nothing after receiving such an offer. 3.9% of children accepted the offer, and almost half of them did so because they thought they were doing something useful and right.

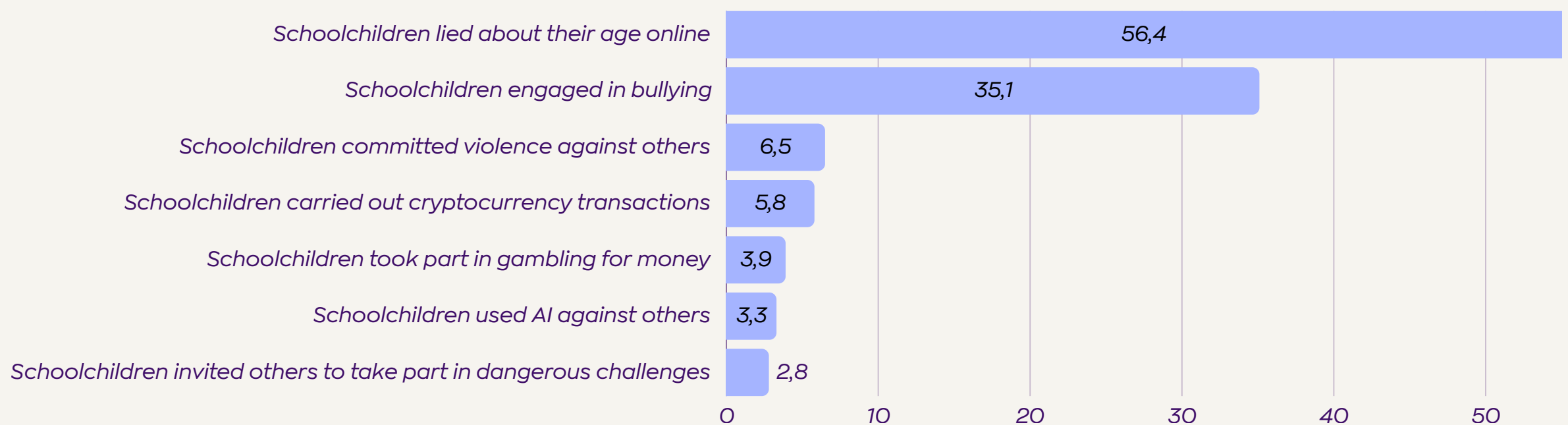
**About 14% of schoolchildren** encountered a situation of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation online at least once over the past year.

### Situations of sexual abuse and exploitation among schoolchildren



At the same time, some **schoolchildren** were involved in various forms of risky online interaction over the past year, although the prevalence of individual practices differs substantially depending on their nature.

### Share of schoolchildren who themselves committed risky actions over the past year



**More than half (56.4%) of schoolchildren** reported that they had given false information about their age in at least one place online. Most often, they did this **on gaming platforms or in games (36.6%), on social media (32.5%), and when creating an email account (31.2%).**

**35.1% of schoolchildren** engaged in bullying toward their peers over the past year. The most common forms are ignoring or excluding peers from online groups (**23.4%**), sending unpleasant or offensive messages (**20.2%**), and writing offensive comments about children on their social media pages or in shared chats (**9.3%**). **Meanwhile, almost one in fifteen surveyed schoolchildren committed violence against others.**

**About 6% of children** reported carrying out cryptocurrency transactions over the past year, and **about 4% of schoolchildren** reported playing online gambling games for money over the past year. **2.8% of schoolchildren** themselves invited other children to take part in a dangerous online challenge or game.