




THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

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STATE OF PLAY

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A national report exploring the prevalence and emotional impact of identity-based cyberbullying on Gen Z in the U.S.





As Gen Z continues to spend more and more time online, it has never been more important for Cybersmile to deepen our understanding of the true extent and impact of identity-based bullying, harassment and abuse online.

Identity-based bullying and abuse can lead to a wide range of issues which deeply affect not only the intended targets of the abuse, but also larger numbers of people who have been indirectly exposed to the abusive and problematic content.

In addition to helping Cybersmile understand the extent of the problem, this important State of Play report provides us with crucial insights into the emotional impact of identity-based bullying and abuse.

The powerful data from this report will play a key role in the effective development of scalable and sustainable volunteer training and support resources for a wide range of identity-based bullying and abuse related problems.

LAURA LEWANDOWSKI
The Cybersmile Foundation

At CO. by Colgate, we envision a world where everyone can express themselves freely and that's why we're proud to partner with The Cybersmile Foundation on The State of Play Report.

Founded on the values of inclusivity and authentic self-expression, CO. by Colgate believes that a smile is a powerful tool in building connections across all people and identities. Yet, we have seen how easily bias can turn into cyberbullying, and no one understands this better than the current, rising generation-Gen Z.

Through The State of Play Report, our mission is to show how we can reimagine a healthier future for all – one where everyone feels confident be who they truly are, without fear.

DANA MEDEMA
Vice President & General Manager, Oral Care, Colgate



STUDY OVERVIEW

Questions

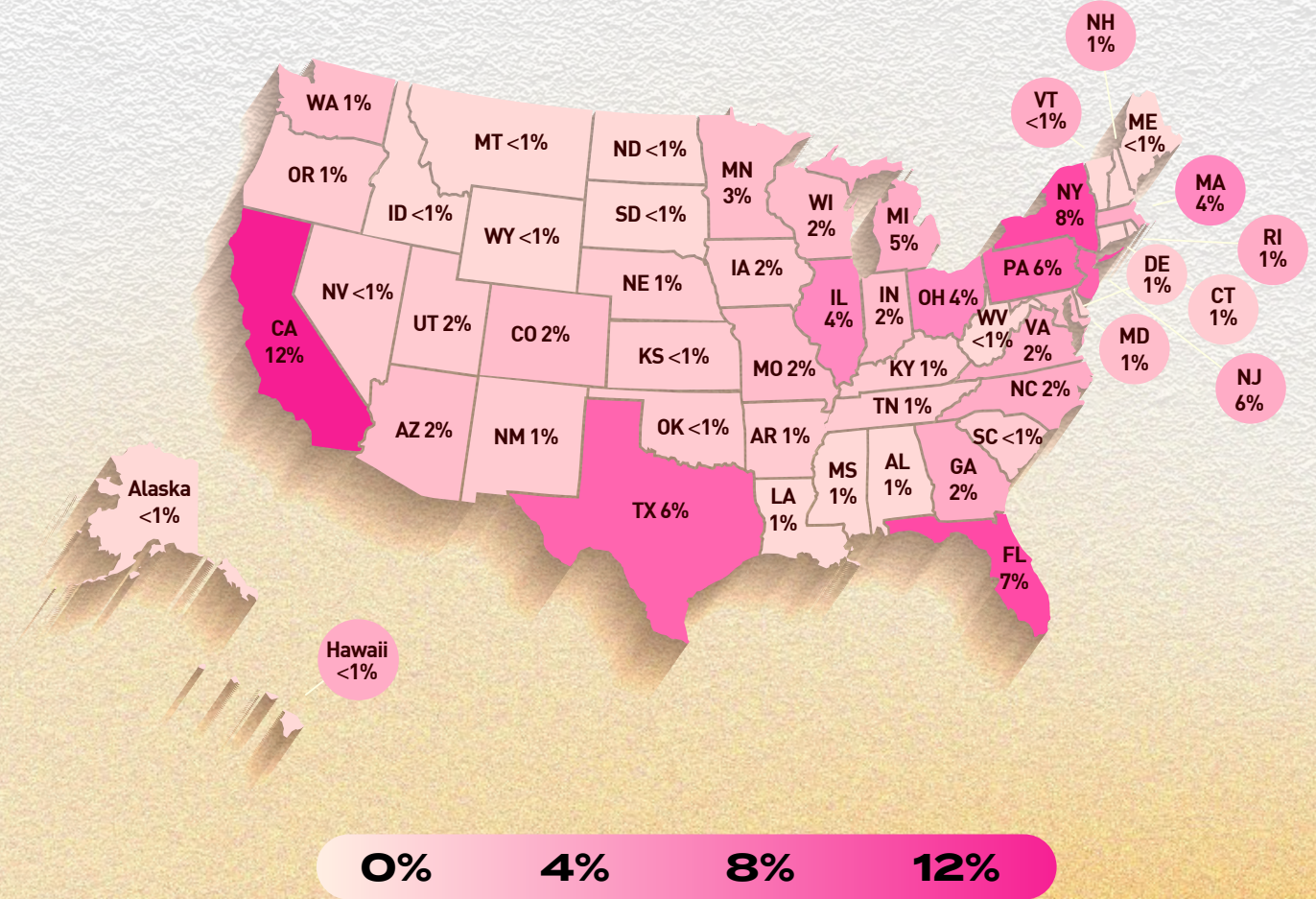
22 ASKED

Age range

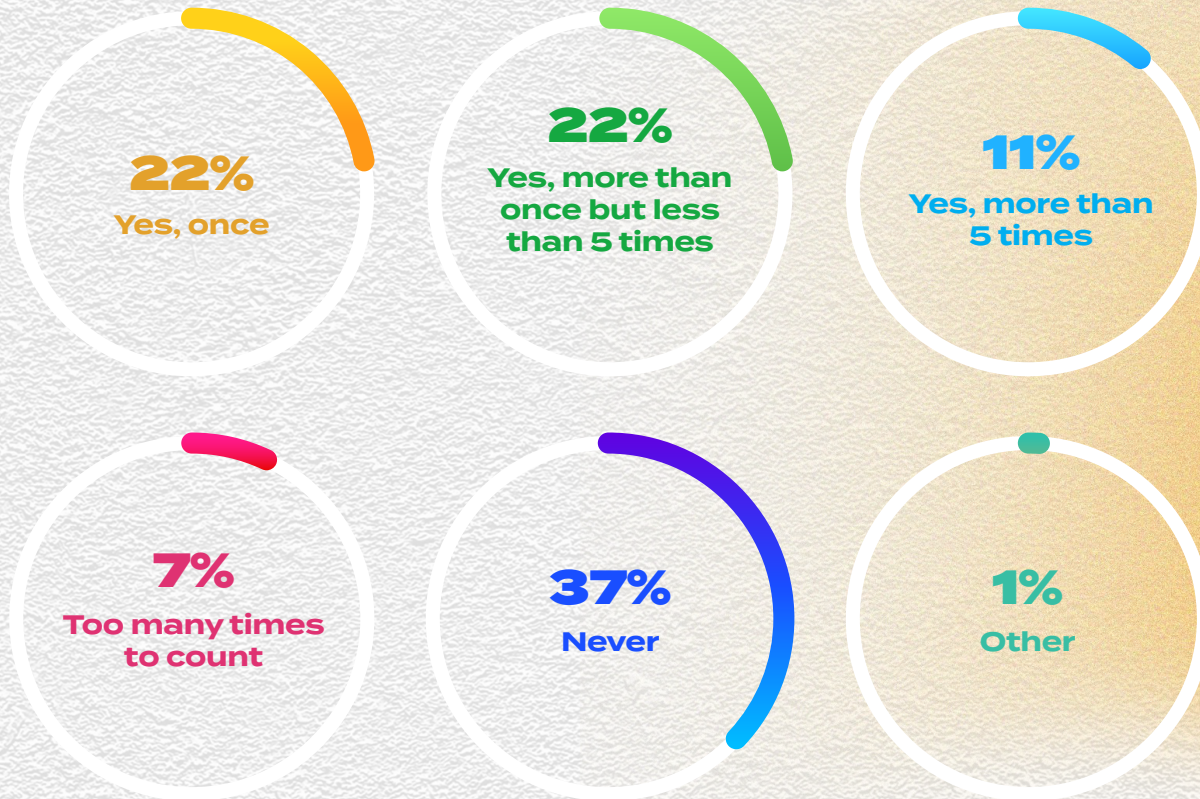
16 — 24

Respondents

1,096



1. Have you ever been targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment?

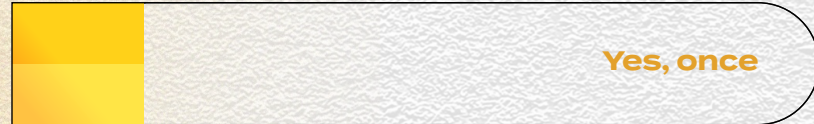


62% of respondents have been bullied online

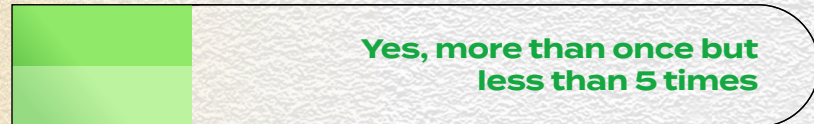
2. Have you ever seen somebody else targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment?

87% of respondents have seen someone bullied online

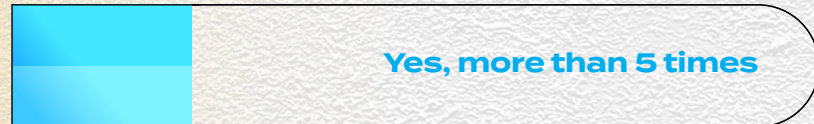
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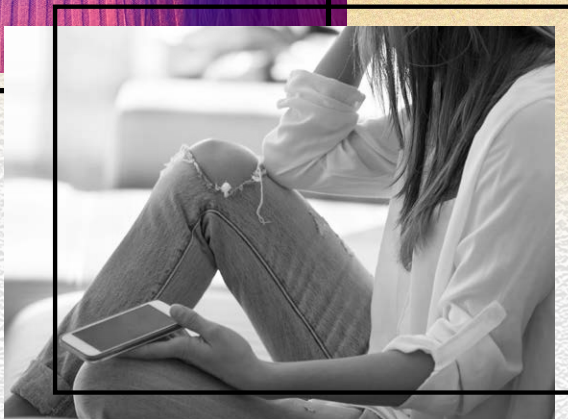
33%



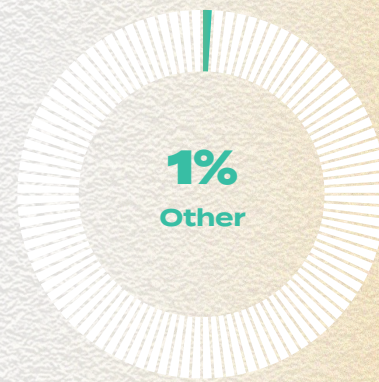
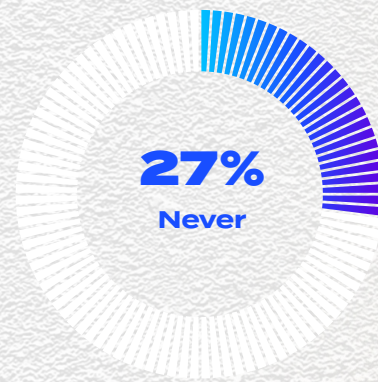
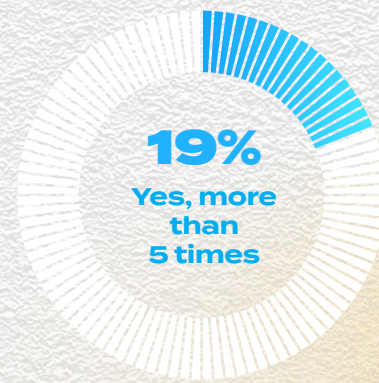
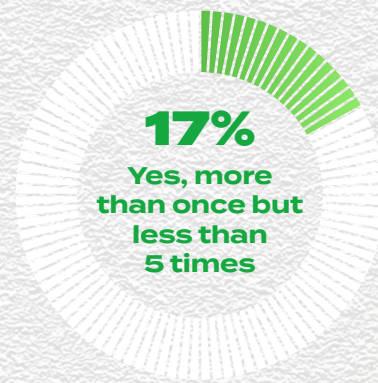
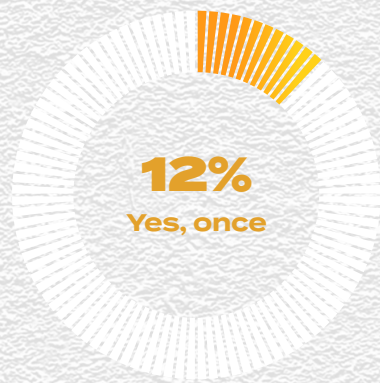
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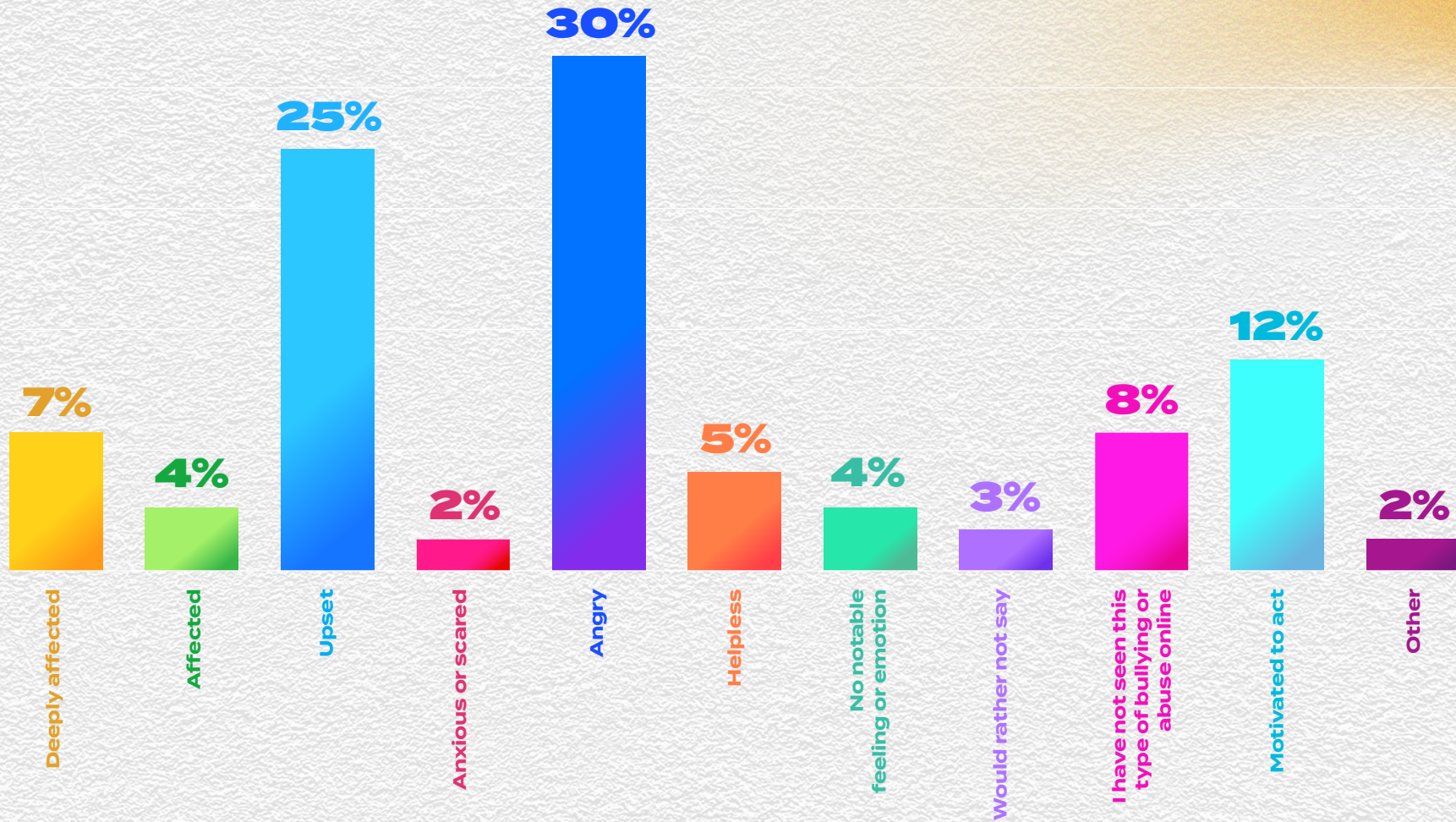
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3. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their skin tone?



4. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their skin tone?



5. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their racial or ethnic identity?

78% of respondents have seen someone bullied online for their racial or ethnic identity

14%
Yes, once

18%
Yes, more than once but less than 5 times

18%
Yes, more than 5 times

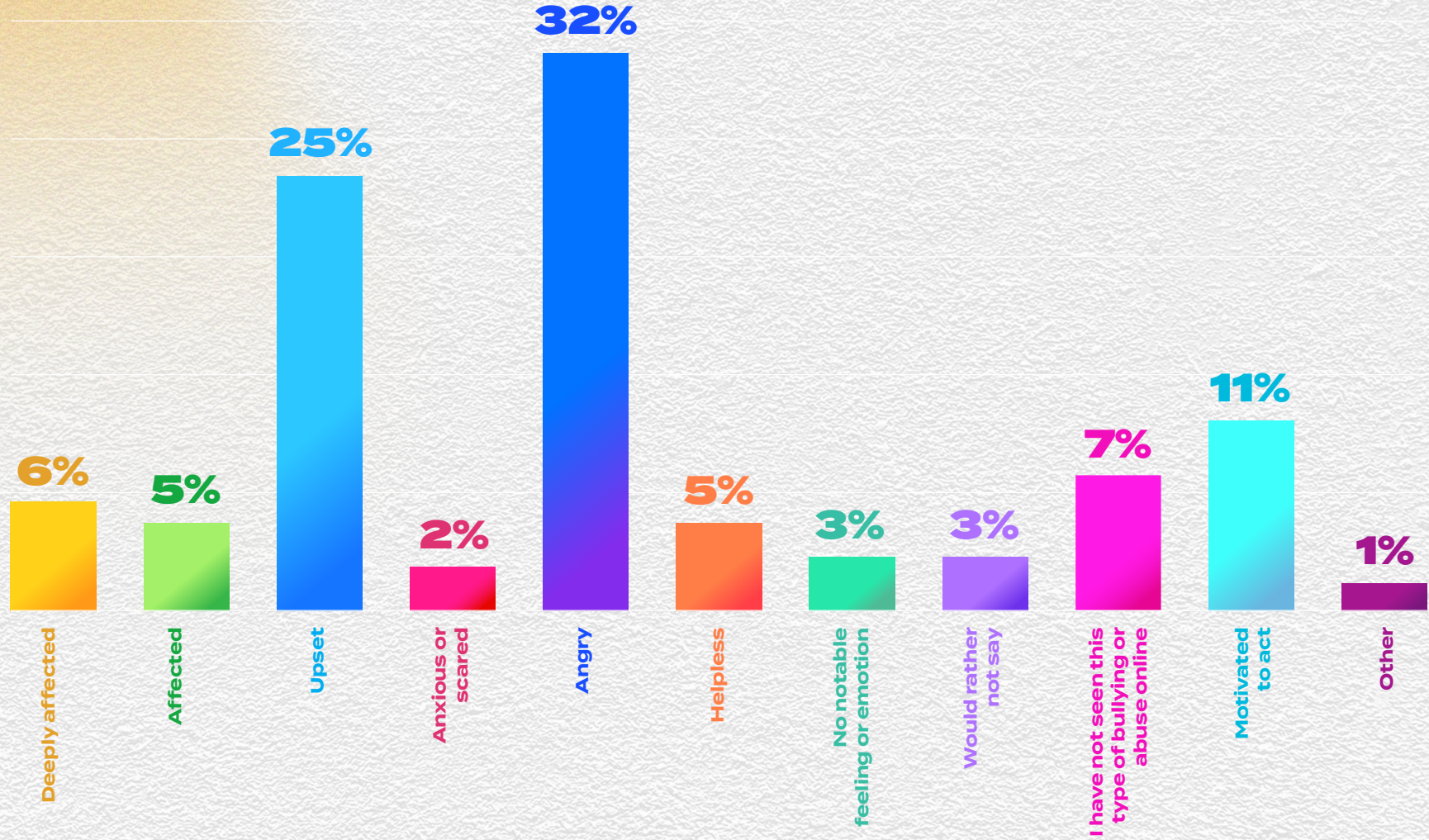
28%
Too many times to count

21%
Never

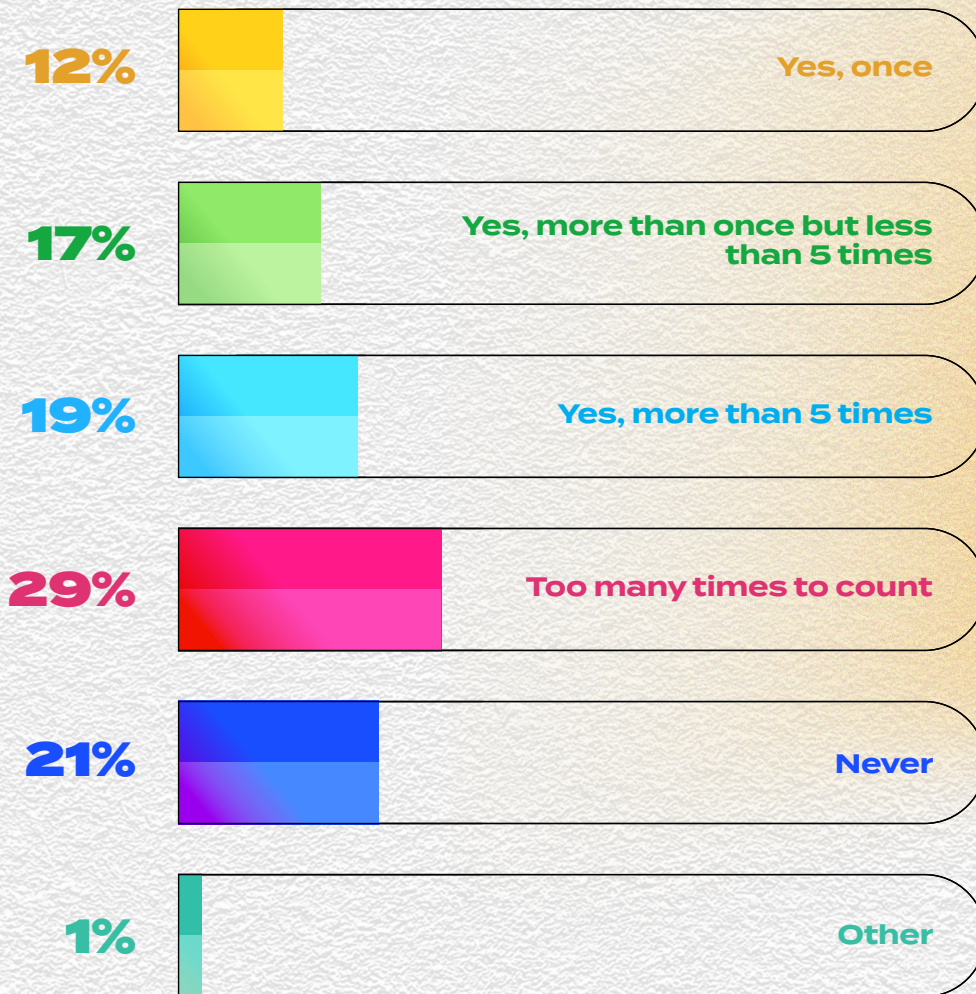
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Other



6. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their racial or ethnic identity?



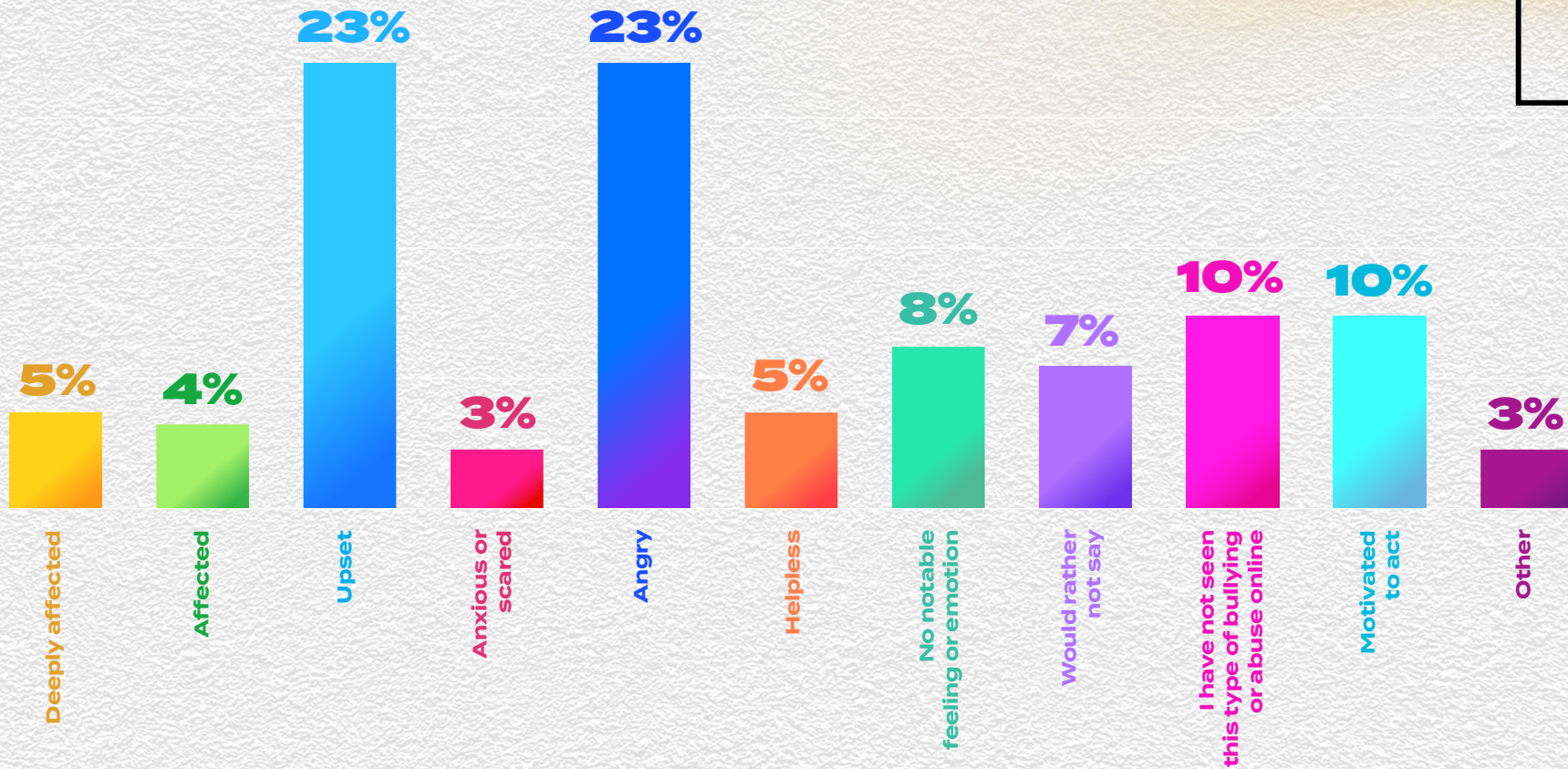
7. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their gender identity?

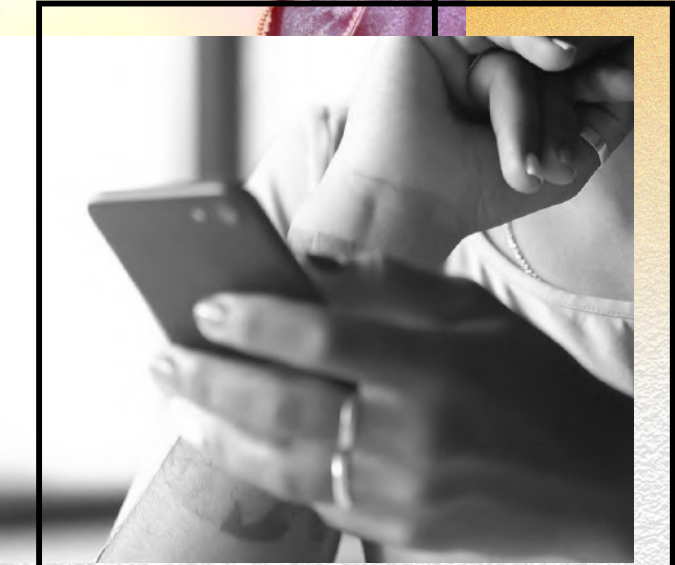


77% of respondents have seen someone bullied online for their gender identity

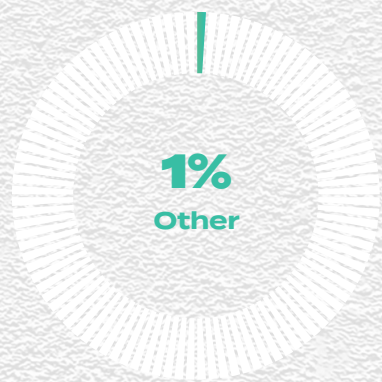
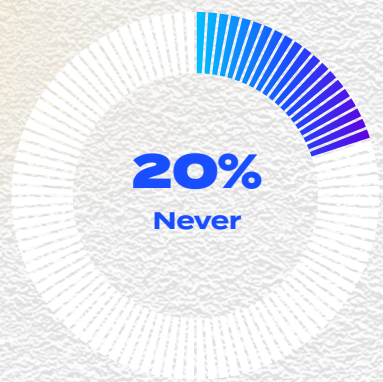
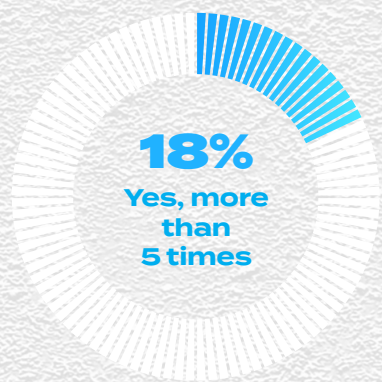
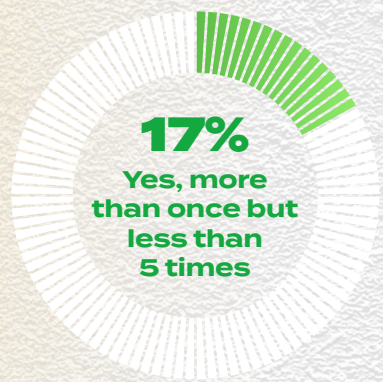
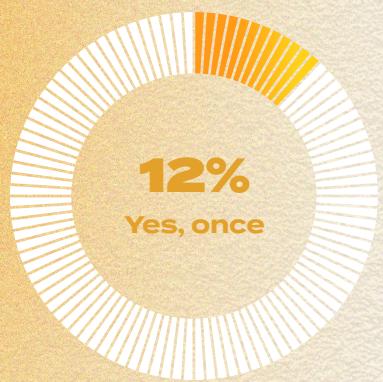


8. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their gender identity?

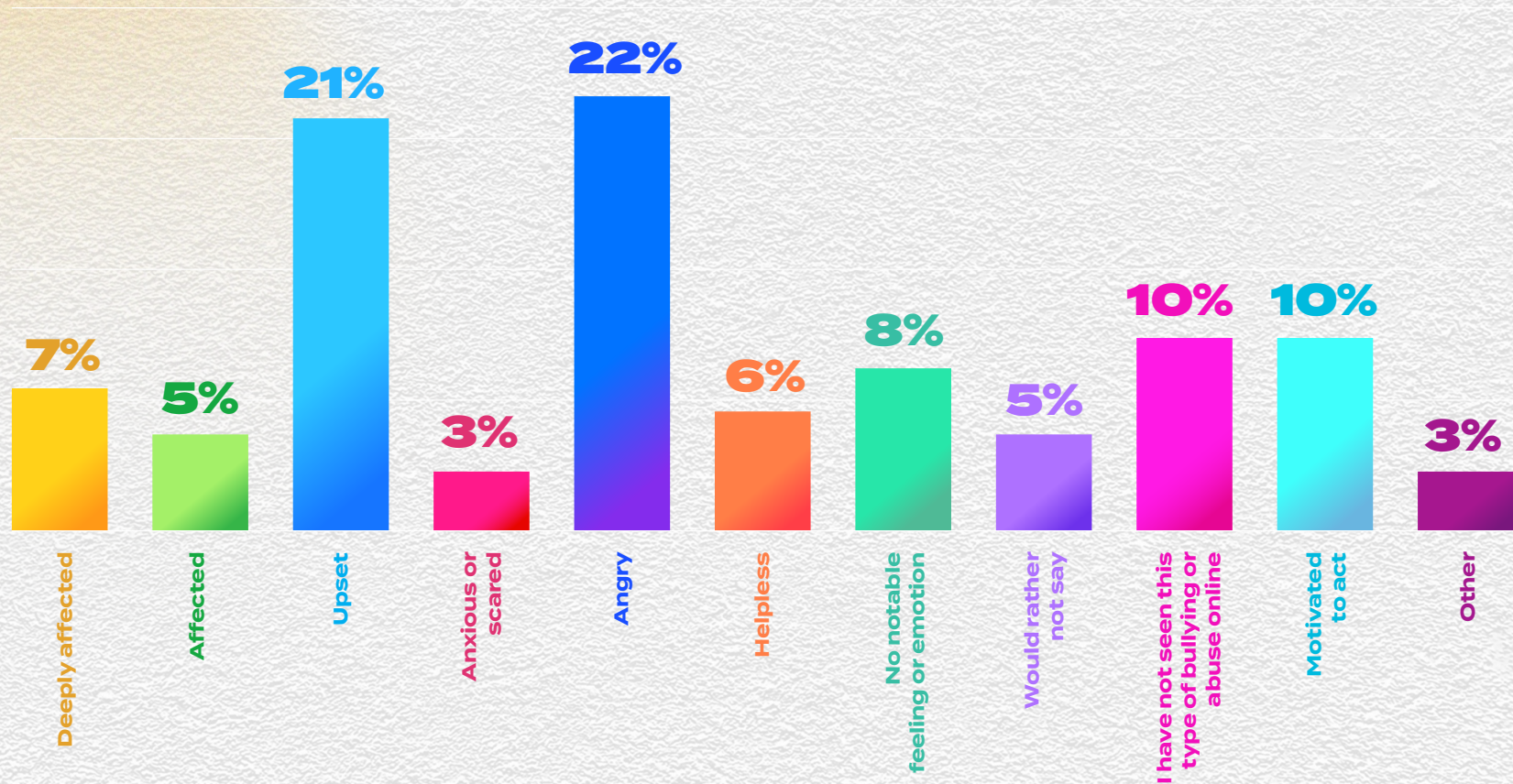




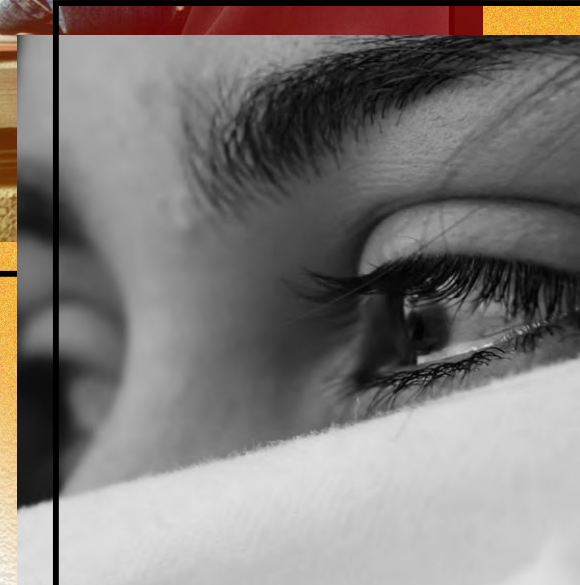
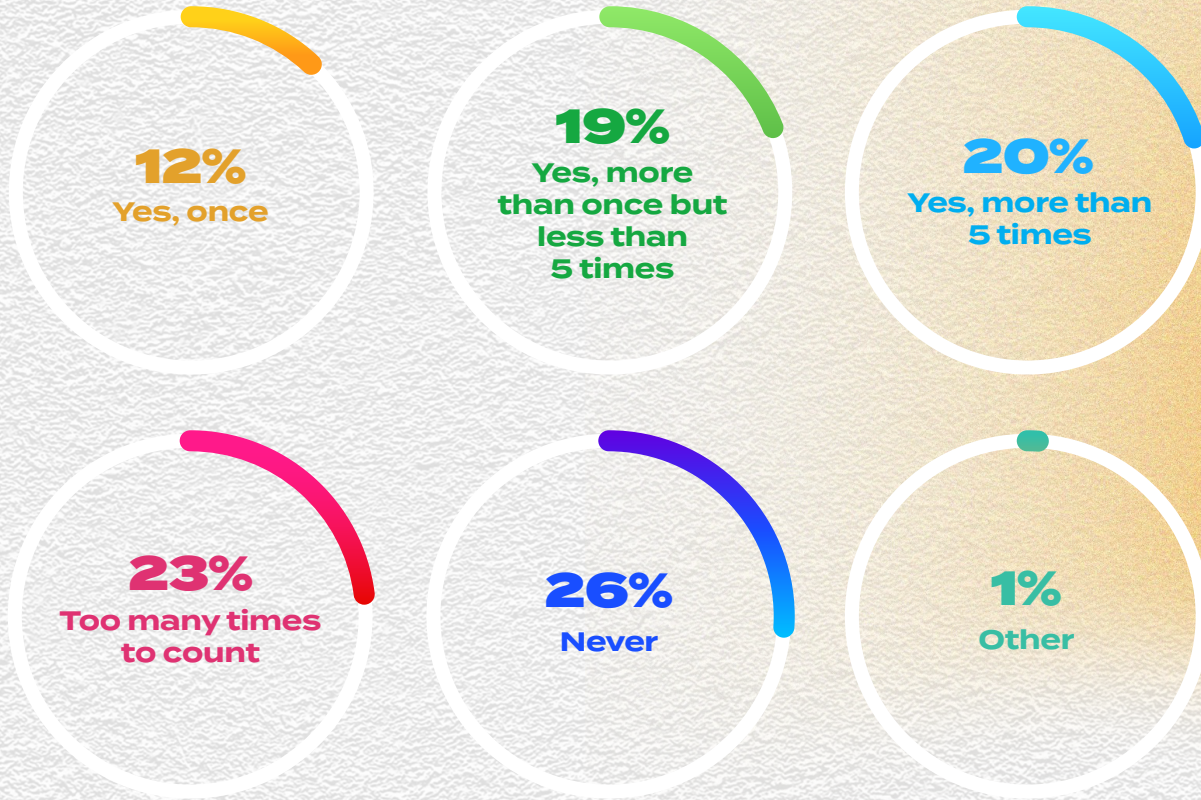
9. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their sexual identity?



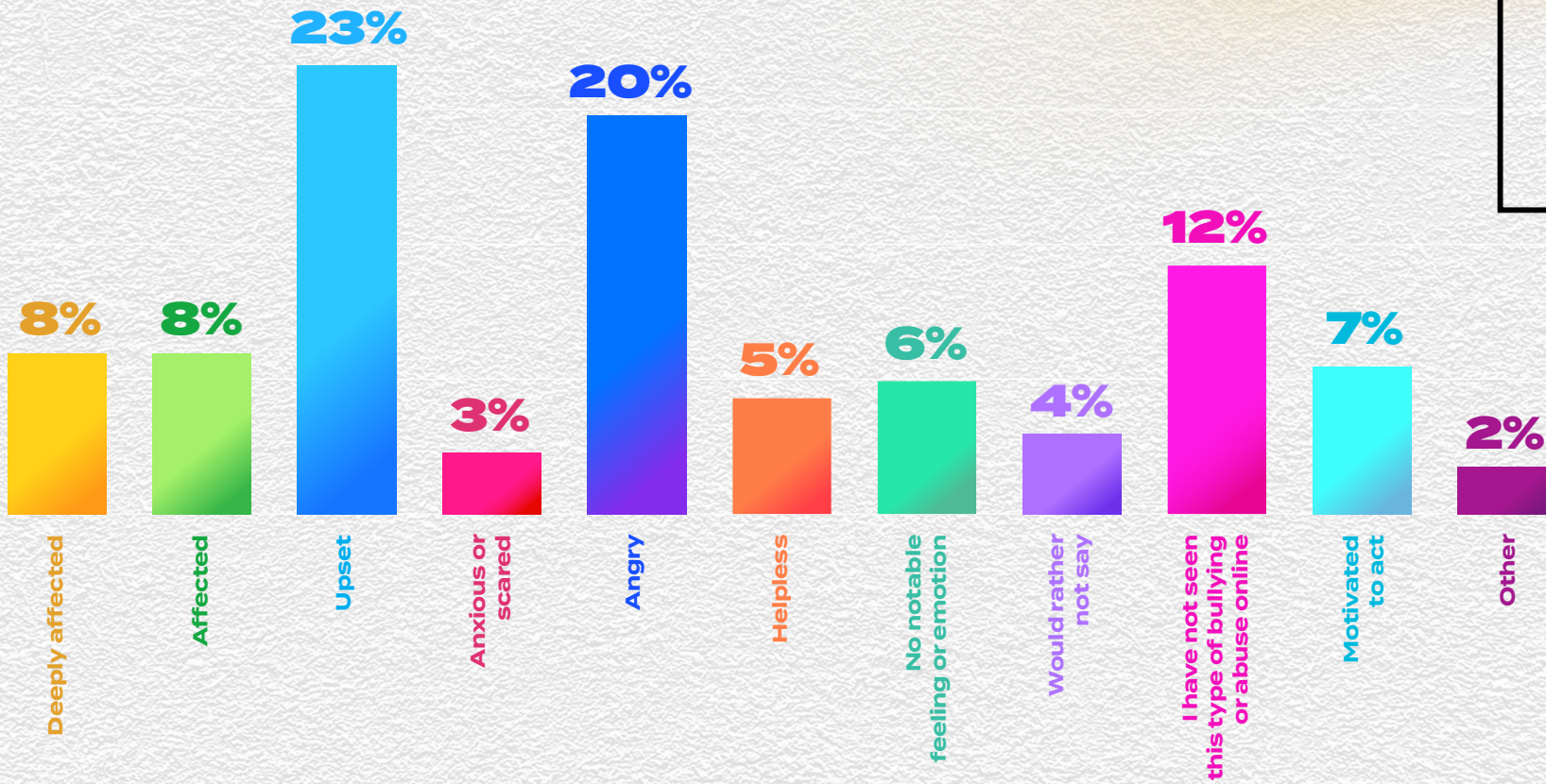
10. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted online with bullying, abuse or harassment based on their sexual identity?

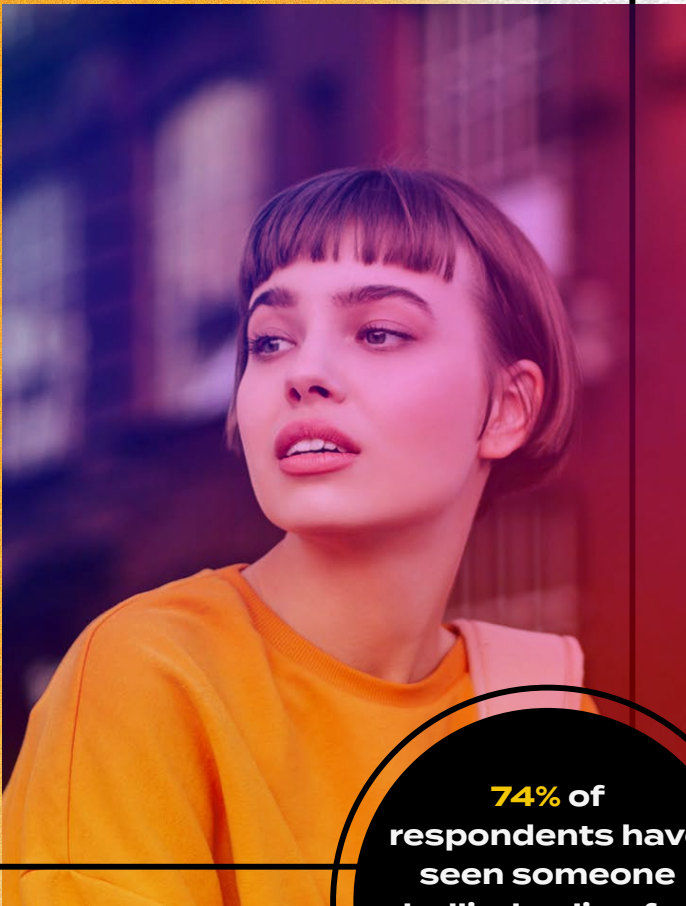


11. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment for their religious beliefs?



12. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment for their religious beliefs?

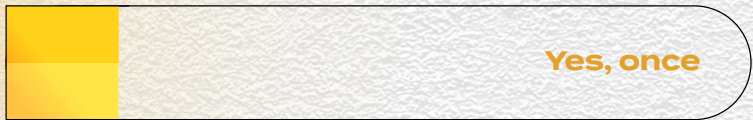




74% of respondents have seen someone bullied online for their physical or mental ableness

13. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their perceived physical or mental ableness?

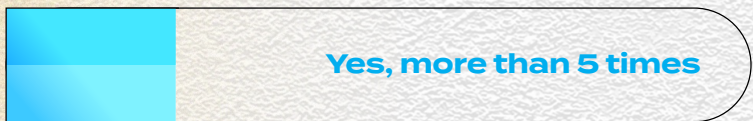
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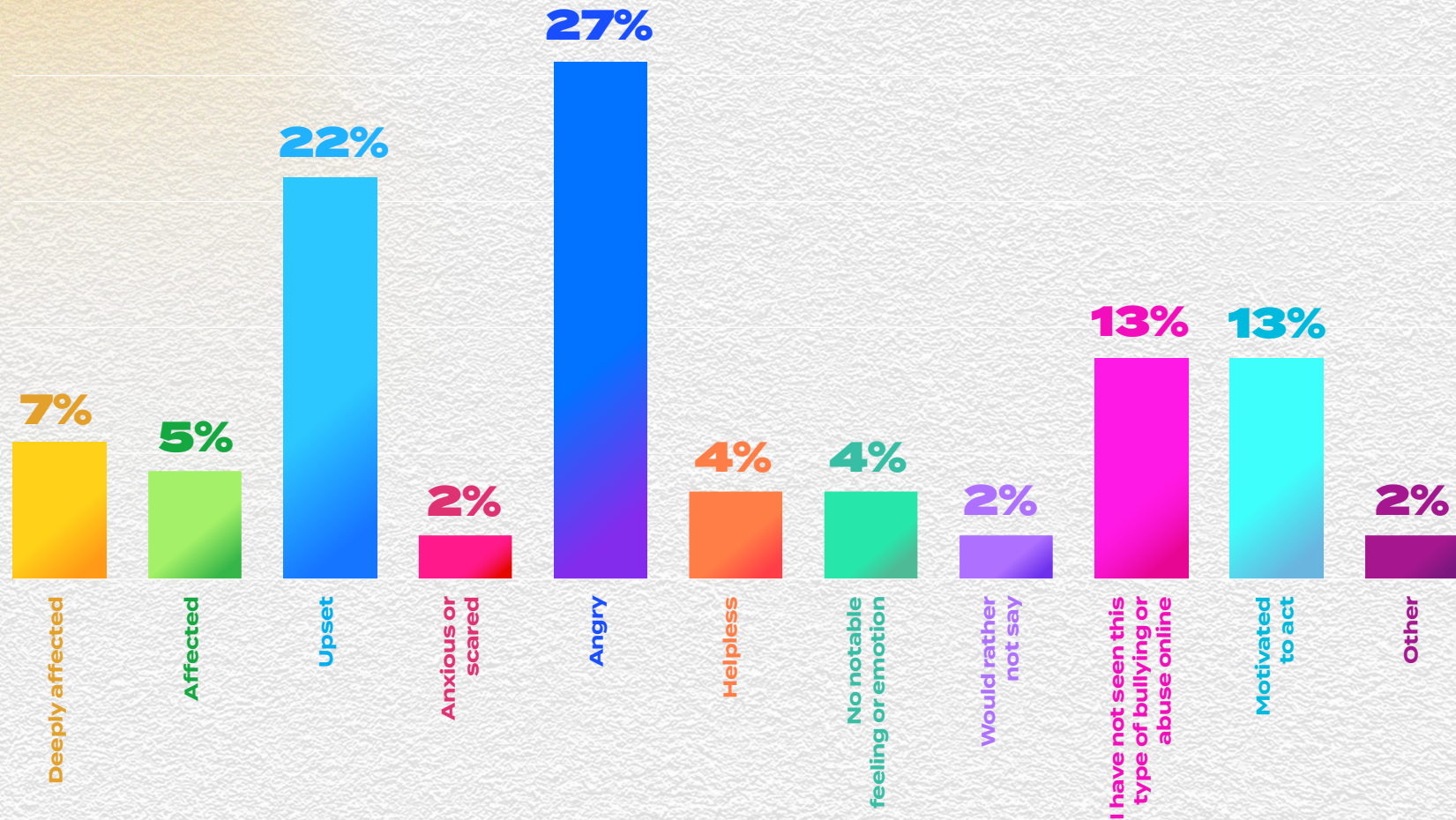
25%



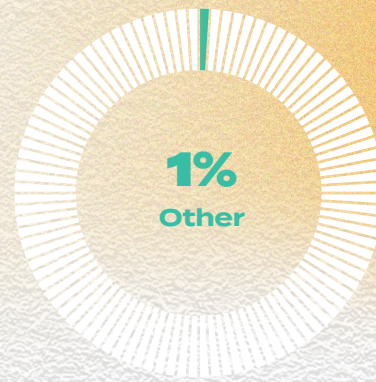
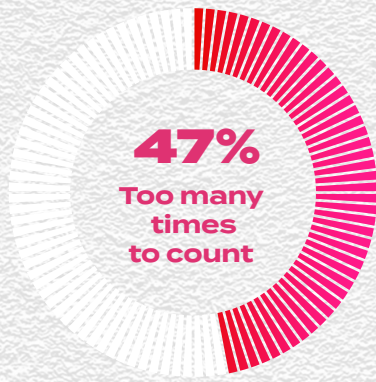
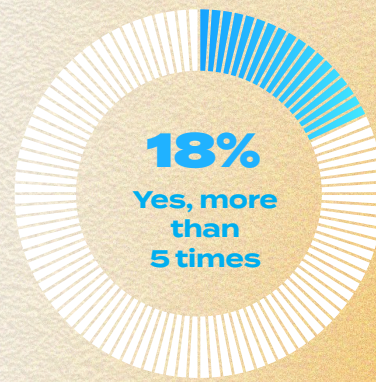
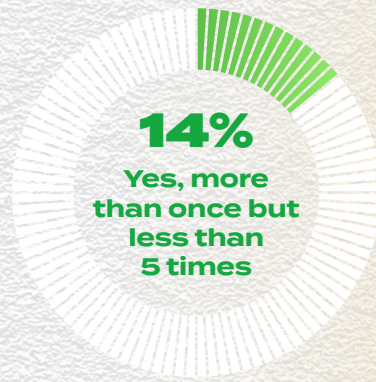
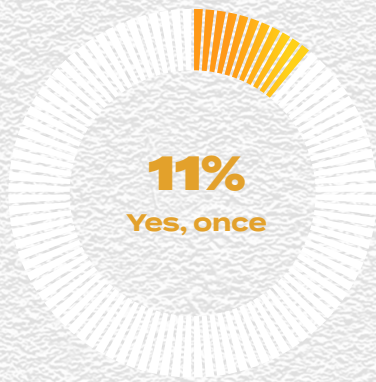
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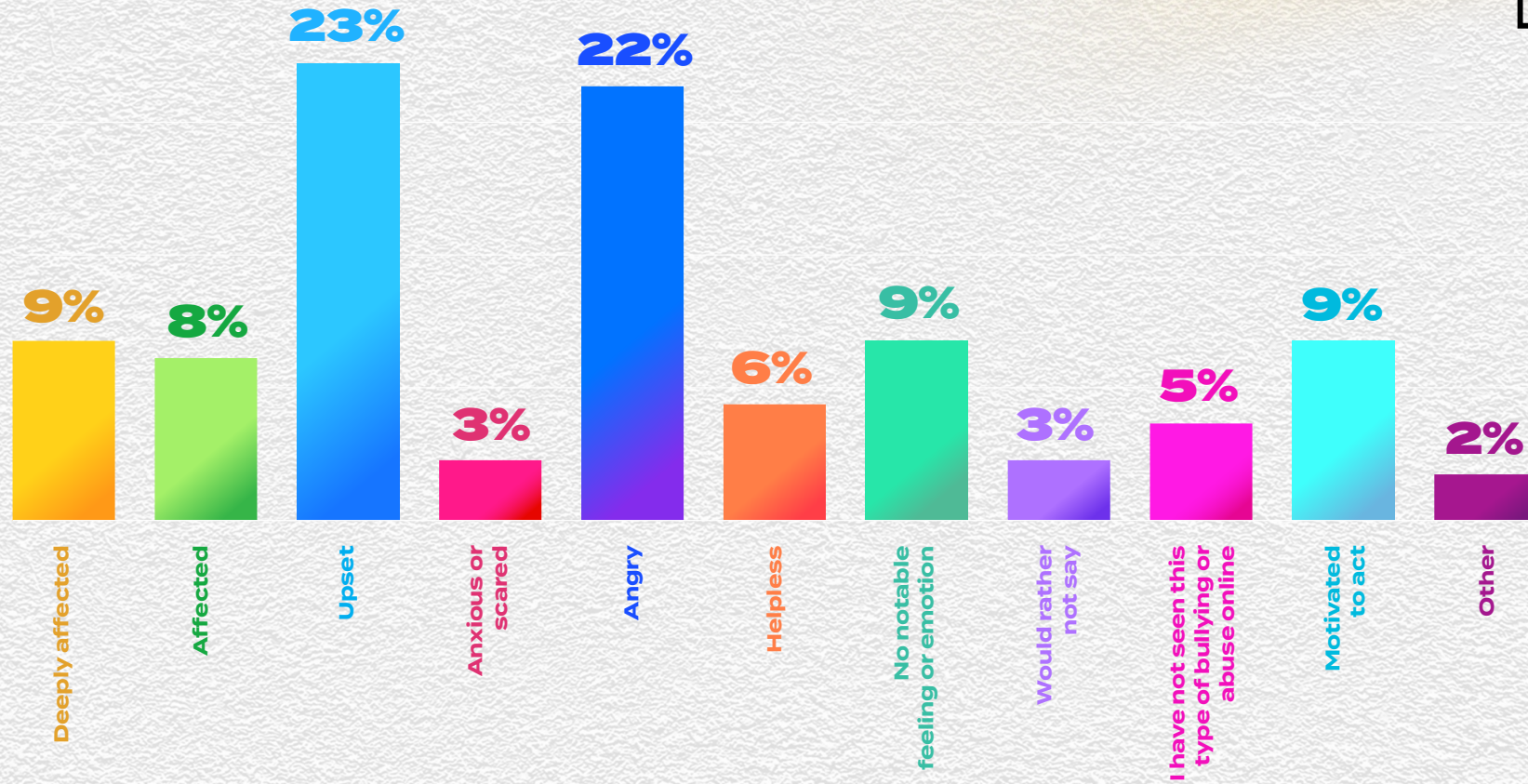
14. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their perceived physical or mental ableness?



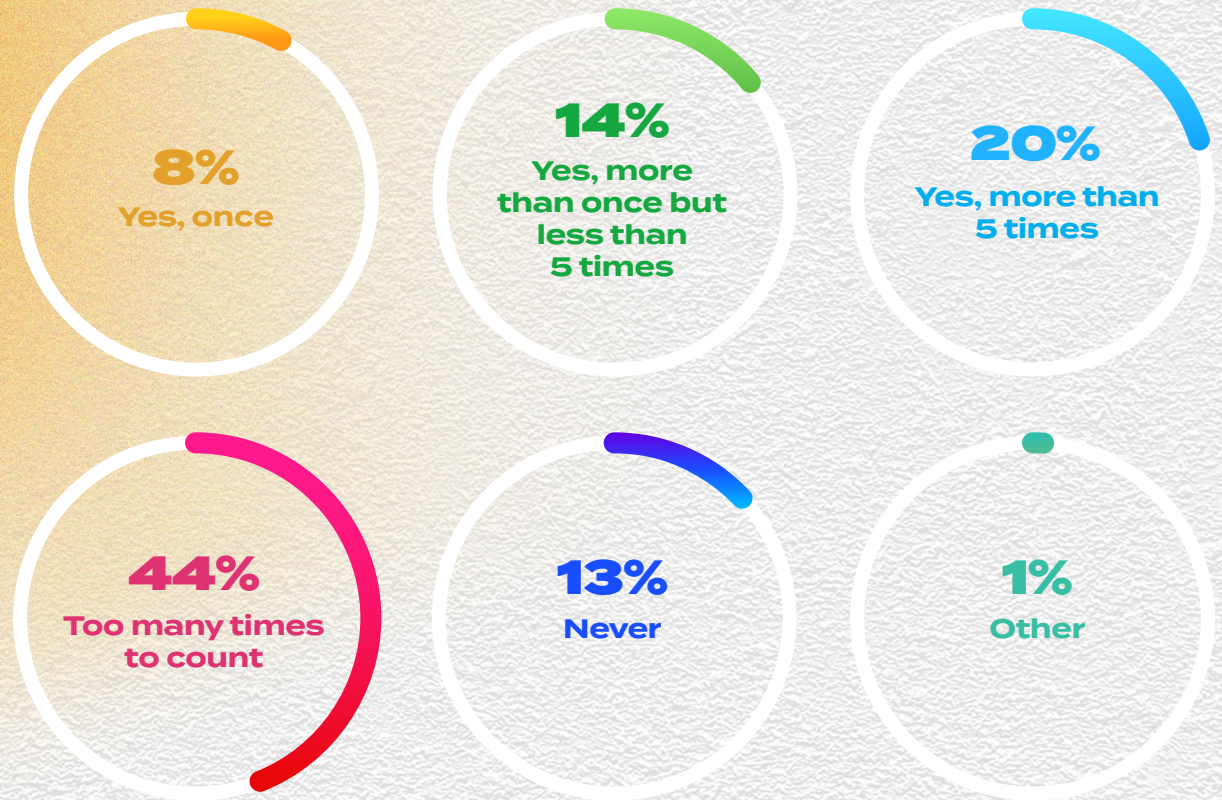
15. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment based on their physical appearance?



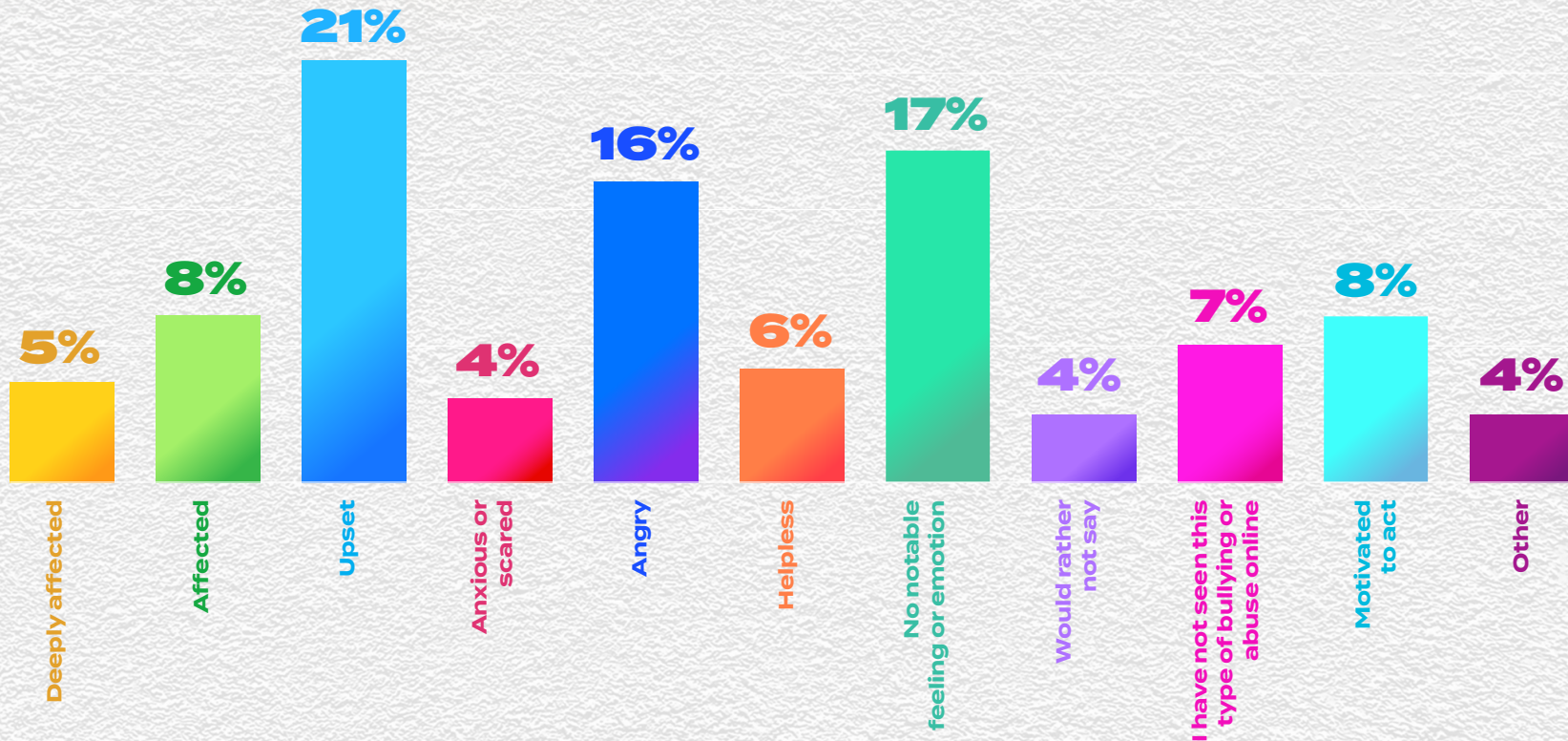
16. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted online with bullying, abuse or harassment based on their physical appearance?



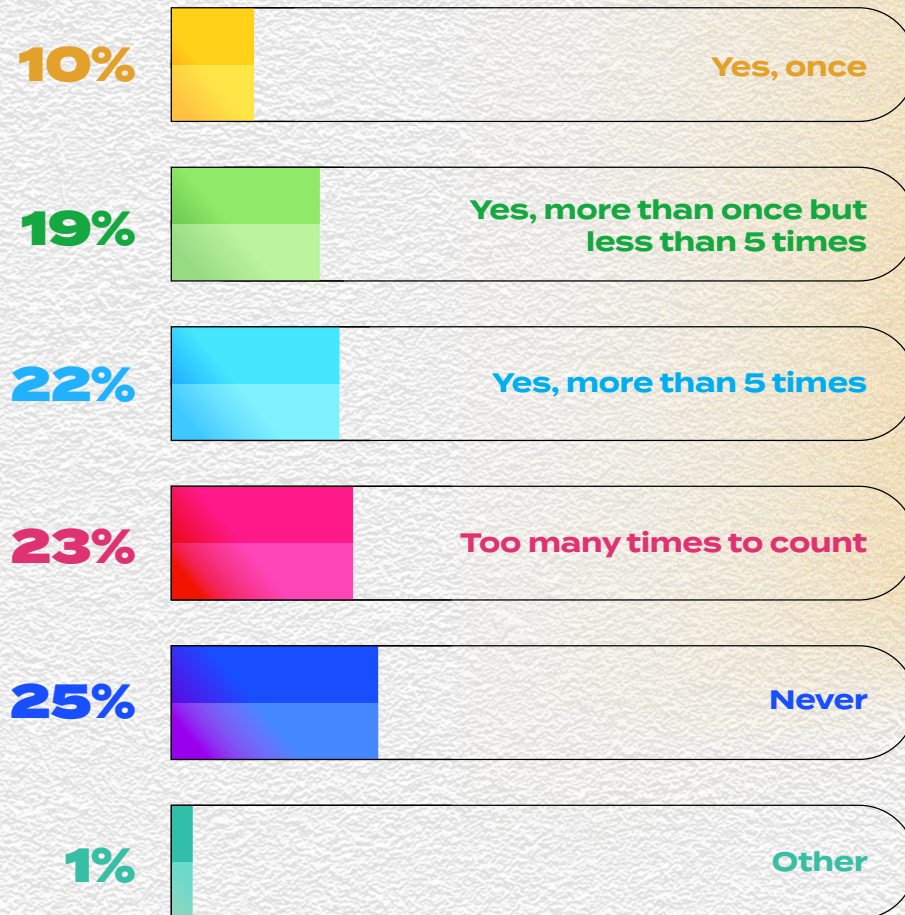
17. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online bullying, abuse or harassment for expressing their opinion?



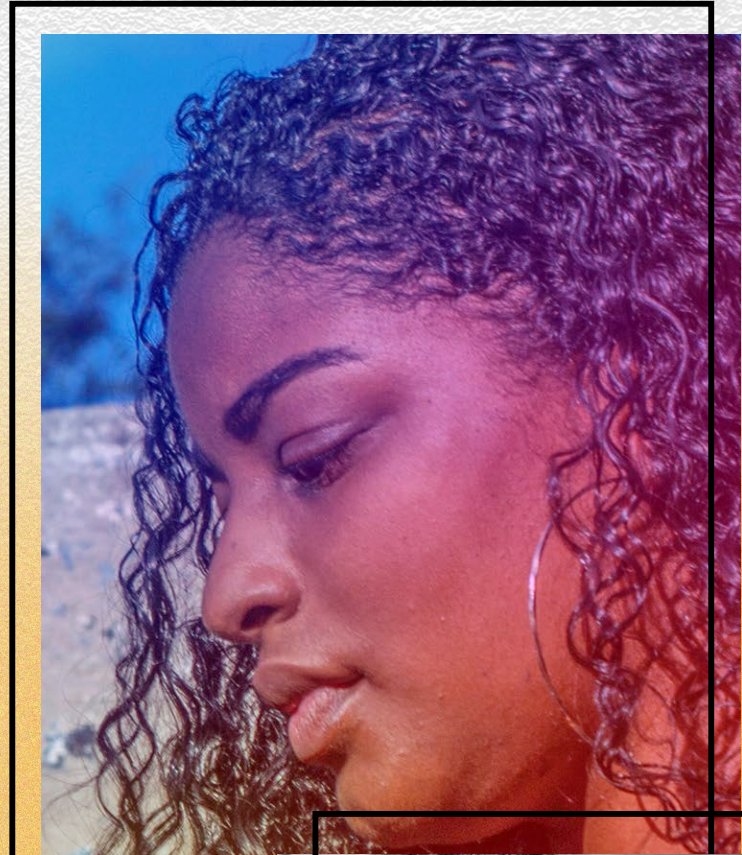
18. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted online with bullying, abuse or harassment for expressing their opinion?



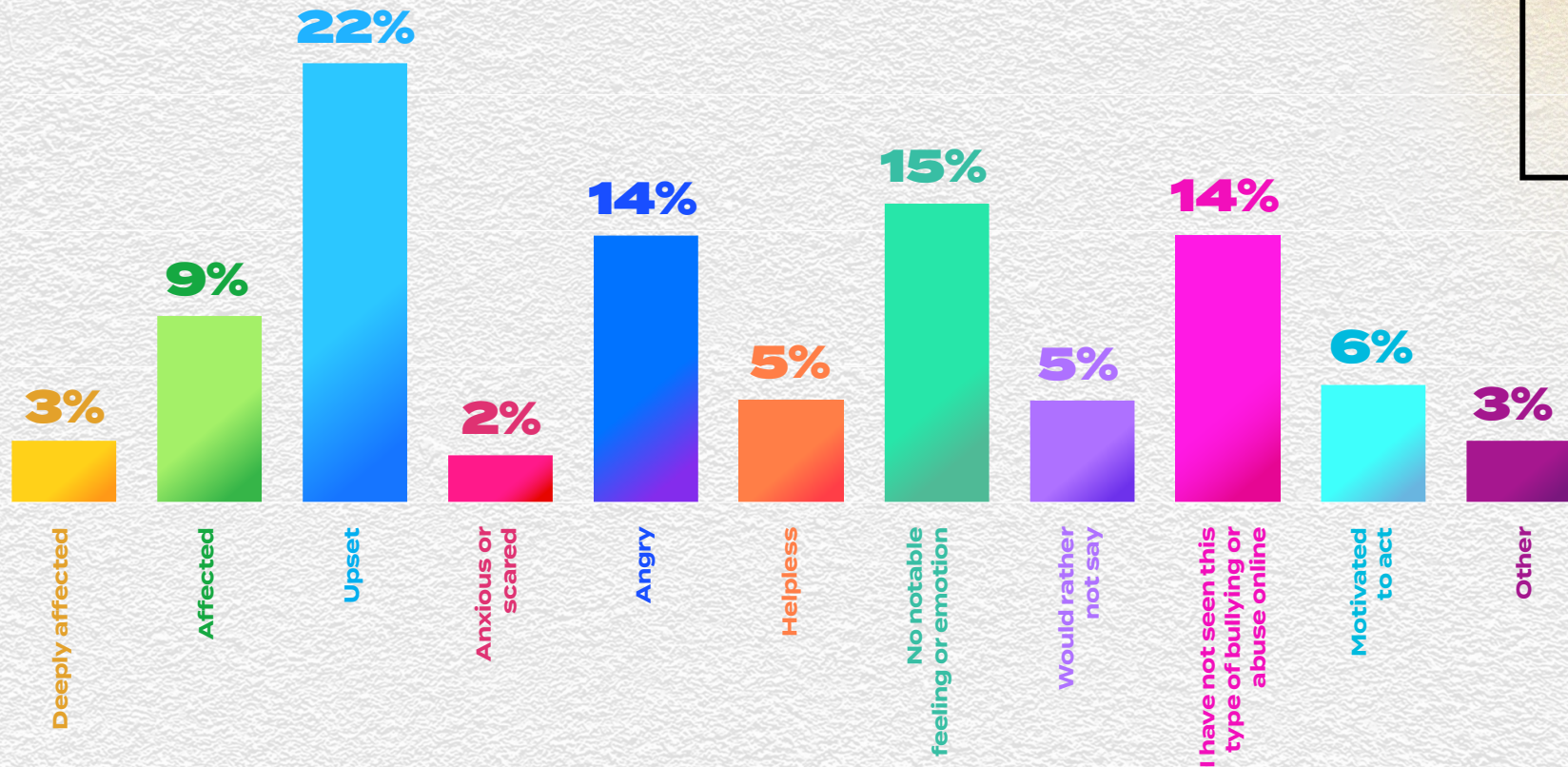
19. Have you ever seen somebody targeted with online abuse, bullying or harassment for how they express their individuality or identity?



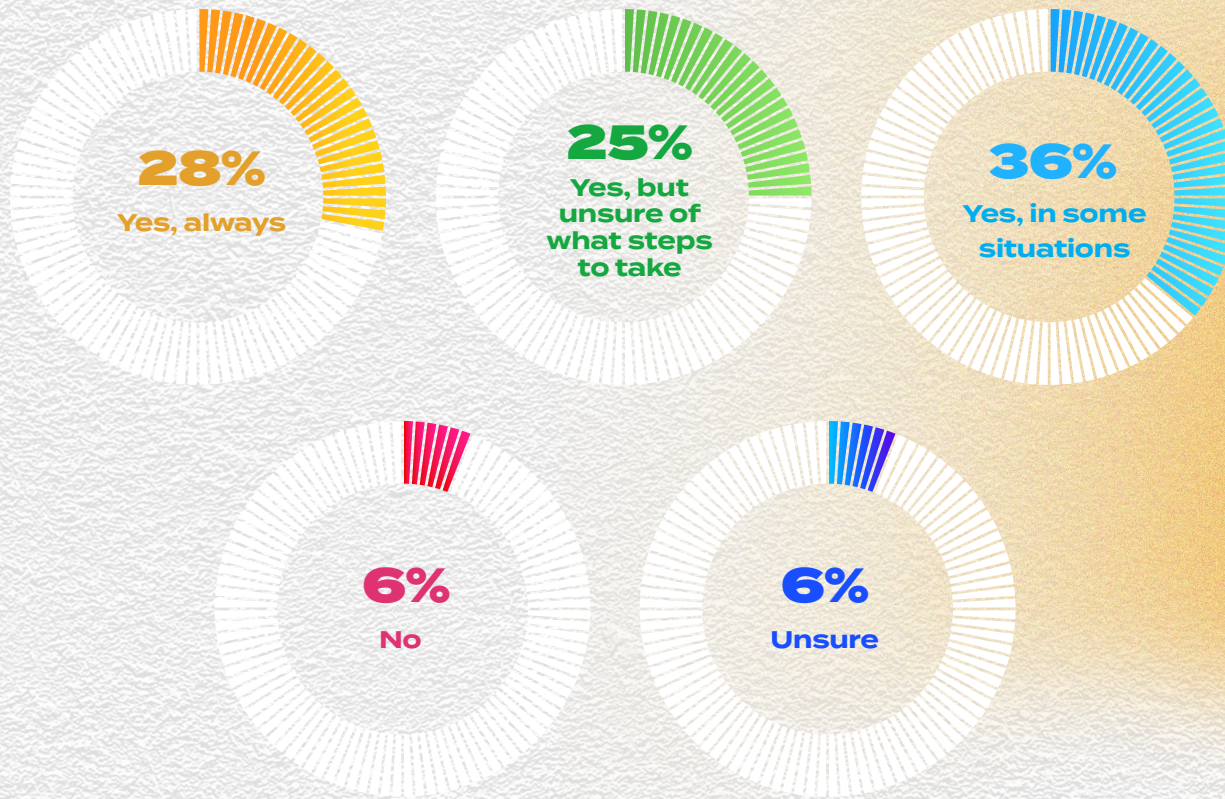
74% of respondents have seen someone bullied online for expressing their individuality or identity



20. How do you feel when you see somebody targeted online with bullying, abuse or harassment for how they express their individuality or identity?

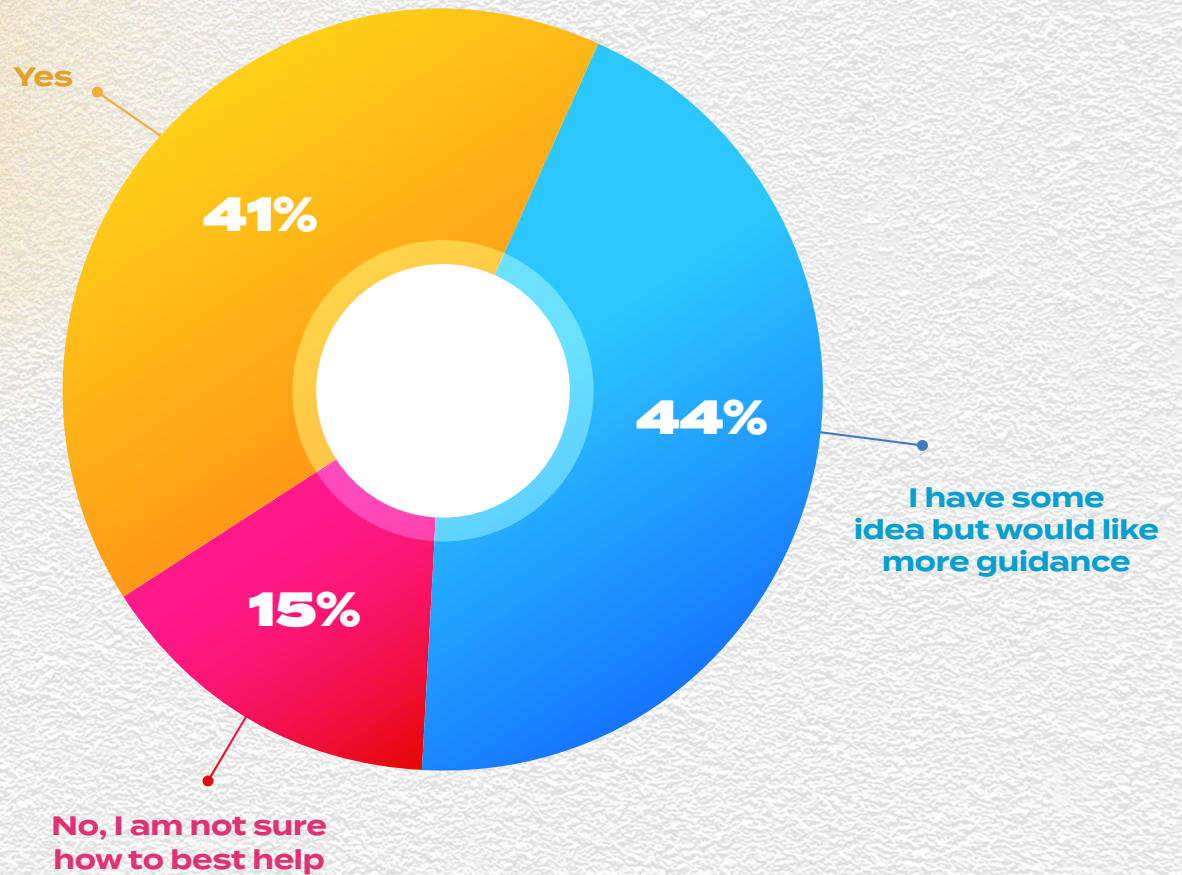


21. Do you think you will be motivated to act as a result of seeing someone bullied, abused, or harassed online?





22. Do you know how to best help when someone is being abused, harassed or bullied online?



Cybersmile Tips for Being a Better Digital Citizen

Learn how to protect yourself and others



Take the time to learn and understand how to use safety, privacy and security features and how to access platform support and reporting tools.

This is valuable knowledge that you can use to stay safe online - or pass on to others to keep them safe too!

Click with compassion



Try to apply the same principles of civility to your online life that you practice in real life.

Always remember you are connecting with other human beings when online - considering other people's feelings and sensitivities is important and will help you to avoid causing offence unintentionally.

Don't Retaliate



Retaliating when someone is targeting you usually only escalates the situation and makes things worse. Establish your own boundaries and don't be afraid to end a conversation if it is not reasonable or productive. Normalize the use of the block feature - that is what it is there for!

Encourage a positive community tone



Using platform community management tools such as word and phrase filters to control not only your own experiences but also what your audience could be exposed to can really help reduce the circulation of abusive content and the potential for offence and trauma. Abusive content affects everybody reading it - not just the intended target.

Help others in need



Reaching out to help someone in need has the power to change or even save a life.

Look out for people who are being targeted with abuse or who appear to be in crisis and if you're comfortable doing so, connect with them privately to let them know you are there for them. If you do not feel comfortable reaching out, you can anonymously report people being abused or in crisis to the platform safety team who will follow up with the user.

Be the change



Being a good digital citizen is about leading by example and positively changing negative online behaviors. Respecting people and their boundaries as well as knowing how to look after yourself and others can help each of us to play our part in creating a kind and truly inclusive internet for everybody.

Cybersmile Tips for Dealing with Cyberbullying

If you are targeted with cyberbullying



Try not to retaliate, this could escalate the situation



Consider blocking the person or reporting them to the platform



Talk to someone that you trust about the situation – close friends and family are a great place to start



Reach out to a support organization like Cybersmile if you need further help



Always call emergency services if you feel threatened or in danger in any way

If you see somebody else targeted with cyberbullying



Watch for posts and comments showing the person needs extra support



Report the issue to the platform so they can take action



Reach out privately to offer support if you are comfortable doing so



Consider suggesting professional support from organizations like Cybersmile



Always call emergency services if you think someone is in danger of harm

Cybersmile Resources

Cybersmile offer a wide range of free-to-all resources to help keep everybody safe and positive online. Use the links below to access our education and support programs and join our social community for a regular stream of inspiring and informative content in your feed!

[Help & support for all aspects of life online](#) 

[Access Cybersmile Education Program](#) 

Join our social community of
over 1.4 million by connecting with us



ABOUT THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

The Cybersmile Foundation is a multi-award-winning nonprofit organization committed to digital wellbeing and tackling all forms of abuse and bullying online. They work to promote kindness, diversity and inclusion by building a safer, more positive digital community and encouraging people to realize their full potential without the fear of ridicule and abuse. Through education and the promotion of positive digital citizenship, The Cybersmile Foundation reduces incidents of cyberbullying and provides professional help and support services to children and adults around the world.



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The Cybersmile Foundation is an international nonprofit organization registered as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization in the U.S. and as a registered charity in the U.K. (No. 1147576)