



THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

# BANTER OR BULLYING?

A REPORT EXAMINING THE NATURE  
OF OFFENCE AND WHERE YOUNG  
PEOPLE DRAW THE LINE IN 2020

**NO OFFENCE**

Supported by





As the newest member of Cybersmile's expert advisory panel, I am proud to be working with the charity and Instagram on the Banter or Bullying? No Offence campaign.

I am a passionate advocate of digital wellbeing and youth mental health and believe that now more than ever we need to promote open and honest discussions between young people about cyberbullying. 2020 has been a difficult year for many and, with the majority spending far more time online, it's really important to think about how your words could be heard by someone else. Body language, tone of voice and so many other elements that make up offline interactions cannot be replicated online, making the fine line between banter and bullying even harder to see.

**DR RADHA MODGIL**  
NHS GP & Wellbeing expert



Following on from the success of our 2019 report exploring the relationship between banter and bullying amongst young people, we are excited to be working alongside Instagram again to learn even more about young people's experiences and perception when identifying and setting personal boundaries online.

This report explores a number of important areas designed to better understand the complexities surrounding offence, young people's awareness of their own boundaries and how they quickly spot bullying behaviour even when it's disguised. At a time when individual autonomy is growing when it comes to the online experience, we believe more work needs to be done to educate and encourage young people to make use of the features and tools available to them.

**DAN RAISBECK**  
Co-founder, The Cybersmile Foundation



Instagram is committed to leading the fight against online bullying and our work with Cybersmile is vital to this effort. We share Cybersmile's ambition of building a safer and more positive digital community and tackling all forms of bullying and abuse online.

Our work with Cybersmile has helped kick-start conversations between young people about when banter goes too far - highlighting how bullying is not always a binary "us vs. them" distinction and working to give young people the confidence to say when others cross the line. We are also working together to educate young people about the anti-bullying features available on Instagram. We recently launched a series of interactive learning modules to introduce these, helping young people get the most out of the time they spend on Instagram and giving them the tools to set their own rules of communication online.

**KIRA WONG O'CONNOR**  
EMEA Policy Programmes Manager, Instagram



I have been standing up to bullies since I was in school, but sometimes it's not always that clear cut. Banter with your mates can turn bad, and if not everyone is laughing, then it's time to stop and think about who could be hurting.

Talking openly and honestly with friends about what crosses the line for you is the best first step to getting the banter back on track.

**CHUNKZ**  
Social media sensation



I love what I do online and feel so lucky to connect and speak with so many amazing people from all over the world. But there are times when people post or comment hurtful things to one another and it can be tough to know how to deal with that.

Everyone should have the freedom to be themselves online, without worrying about what other people say. So if you ever find yourself dealing with negativity on and offline, talk to your friends or family about it or reach out to an organisation like Cybersmile for advice. Please never be afraid to ask for help!

**HOLLY H**  
Social media star



Instagram is my way of connecting with people, supporting and listening to others without judgement. I try to be the big sister role model that shares uncensored stories to provide a slice of escapism in amongst the chaos.

It's completely normal to be affected by a hurtful comment online, so tell someone in your support system to help process your emotions. Allow friends and family to rally round - there's an army of help out there, especially from charities like Cybersmile. On Instagram there are tools like blocking, restricting or muting people that can help empower you, so experiment and find what works for you.

**CHESSIE KING**  
Social media star

## STUDY OVERVIEW

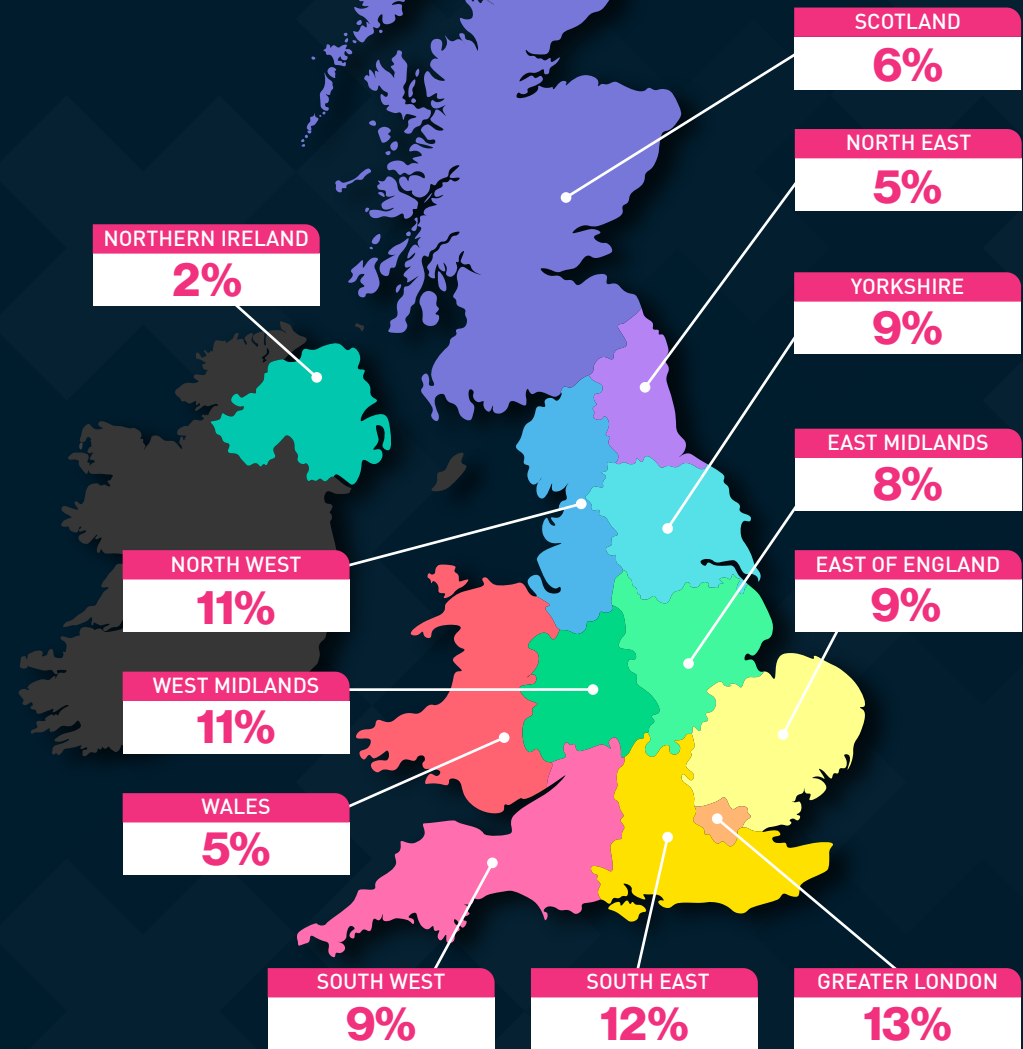
**13** QUESTIONS ASKED

AGE RANGE

**13** ..... **18**

RESPONDENTS

**3,003** 



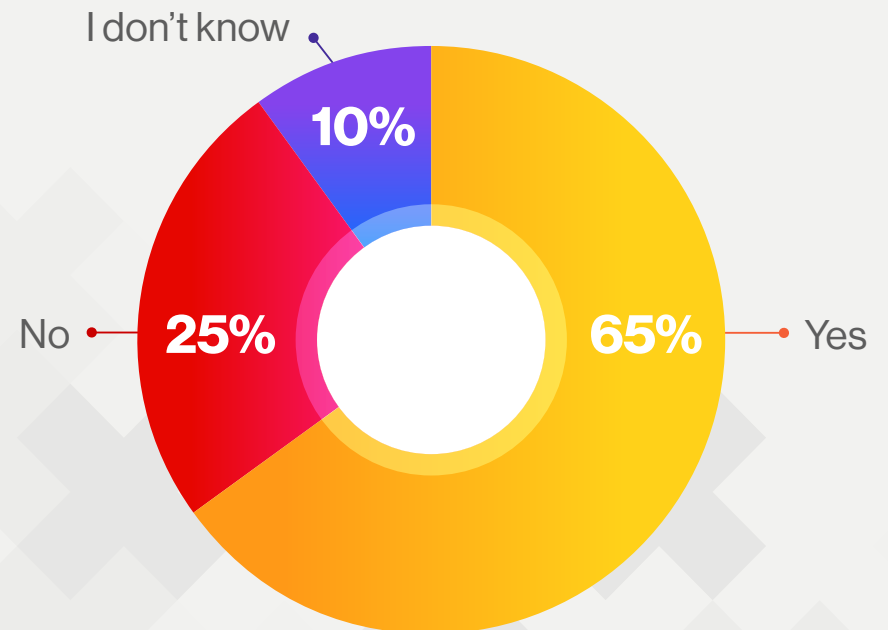
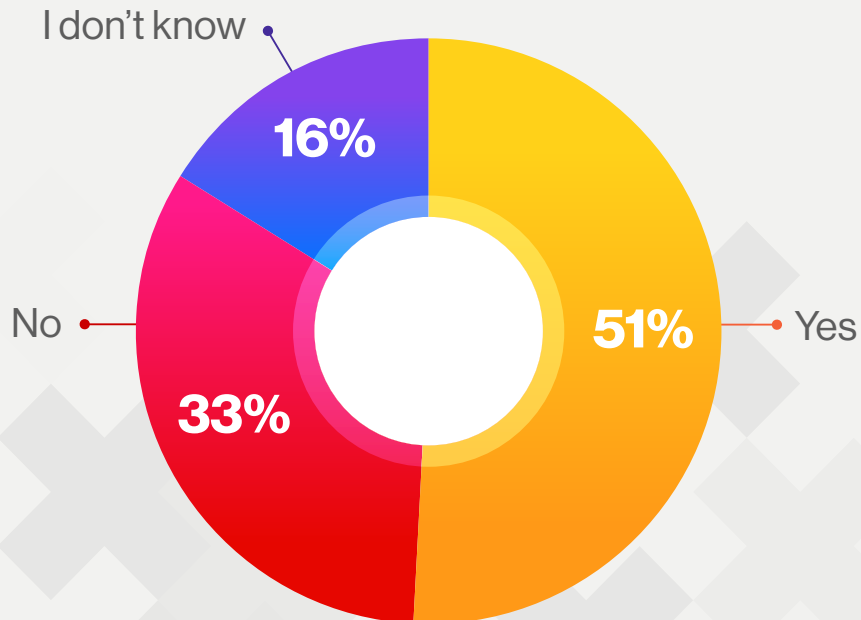
**Q1**

**Do you think calling something banter is sometimes used as an excuse for bullying?**

**2019**  
statistics

**vs.**

**2020**  
statistics



Q2

## Have you ever noticed somebody else be left upset or insulted by banter?

**2019**  
statistics

**41%**

Yes, on one occasion

**25%**

Yes, on more than one occasion

**34%**

No / Prefer not to say

vs.

**2020**  
statistics

**27%**

Yes, on one occasion

**56%**

Yes, on more than one occasion

**17%**

No / Prefer not to say

Q3

Have you ever been upset or insulted by a comment that started with “no offence, but...”?

50%



Yes, on more than one occasion

29%



No

19%



Yes, on one occasion

2%



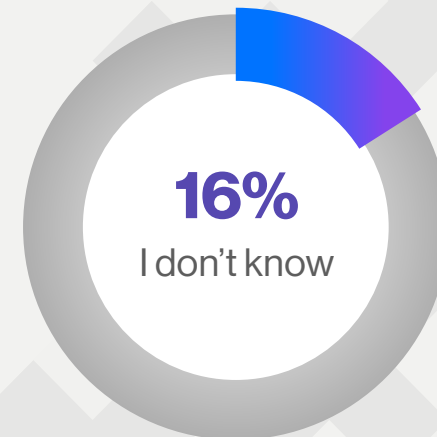
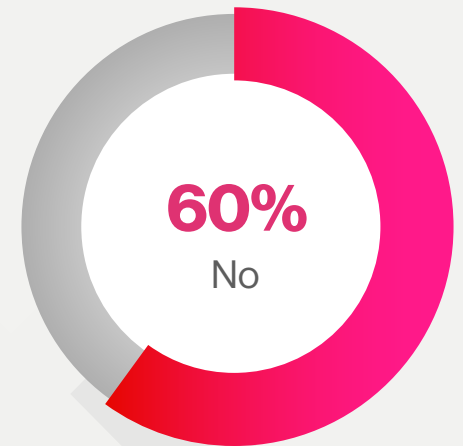
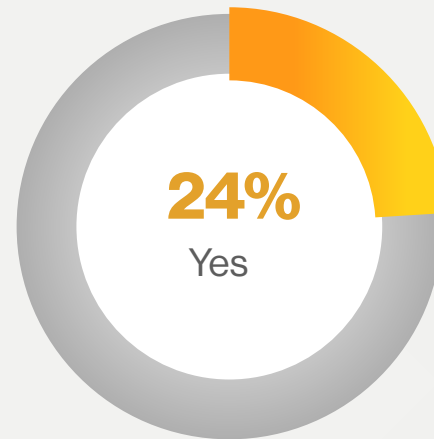
Prefer not to say





**Q4**

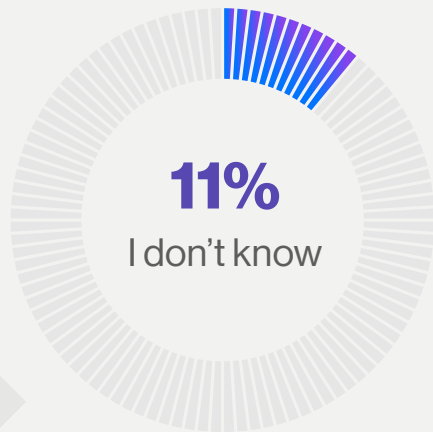
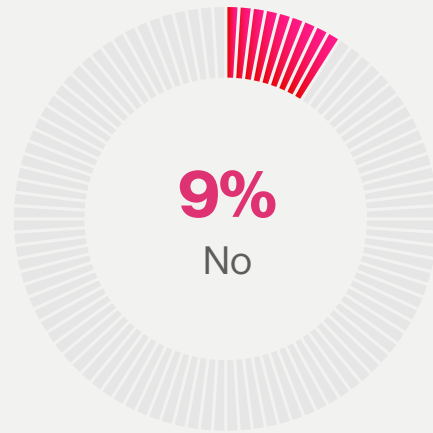
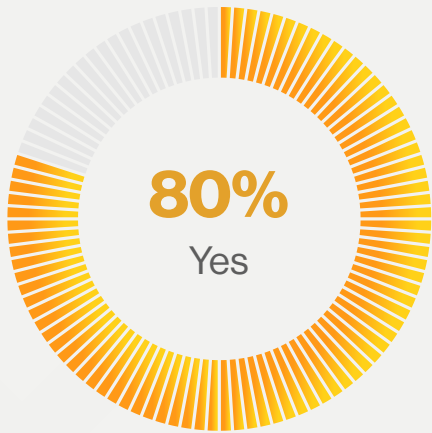
**Do you believe that using phrases like “no offence, but...” or “it’s just banter” when joking with friends or family can prevent someone from being offended?**





**Q5**

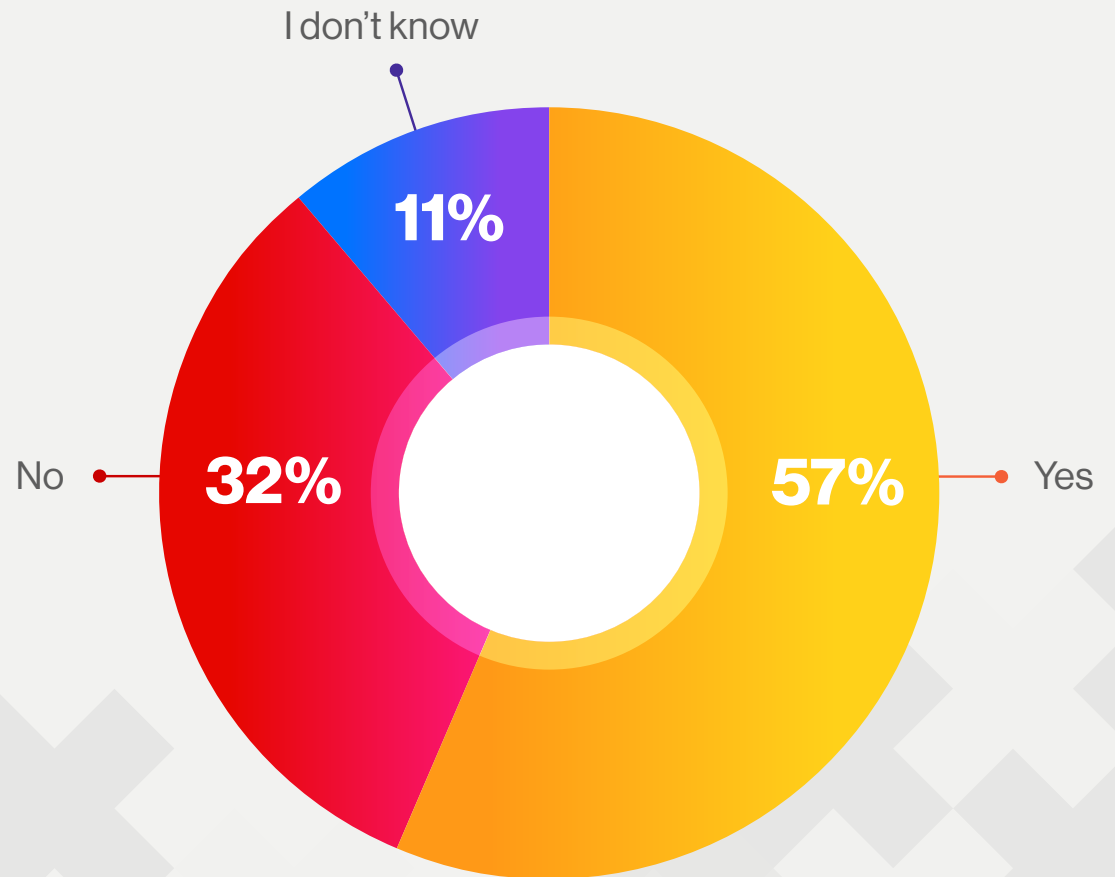
**Do you know what your own personal boundaries are and the topics that you find offensive?**





**Q6**

**Do you find it easy to talk with friends and family if they cross these boundaries?**



**Q7**

**Has social media made you more or less aware of what you find offensive or crosses your personal boundaries?**

**42%** Somewhat more aware

**22%** Much more aware

**20%** Neither more nor less aware

**9%** I don't know

**4%** N/A

**2%** Somewhat less aware

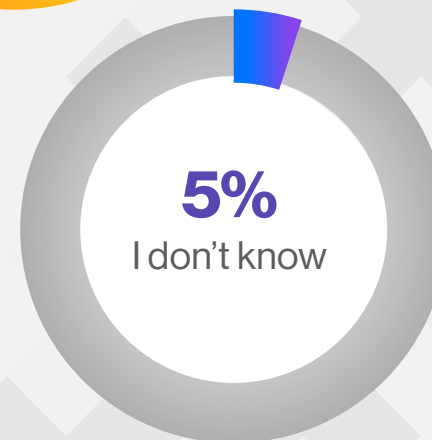
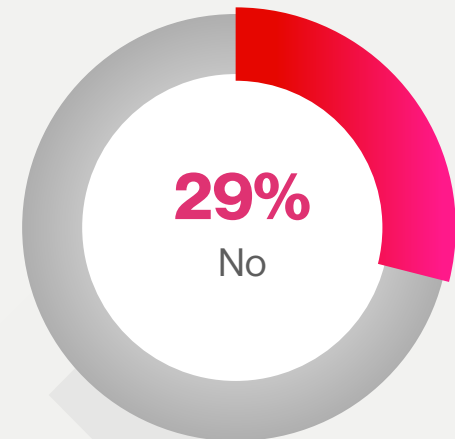
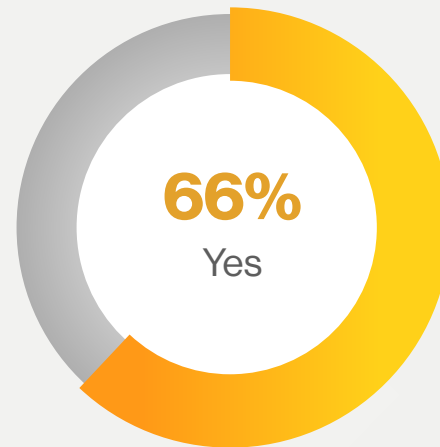
**1%** Much less aware





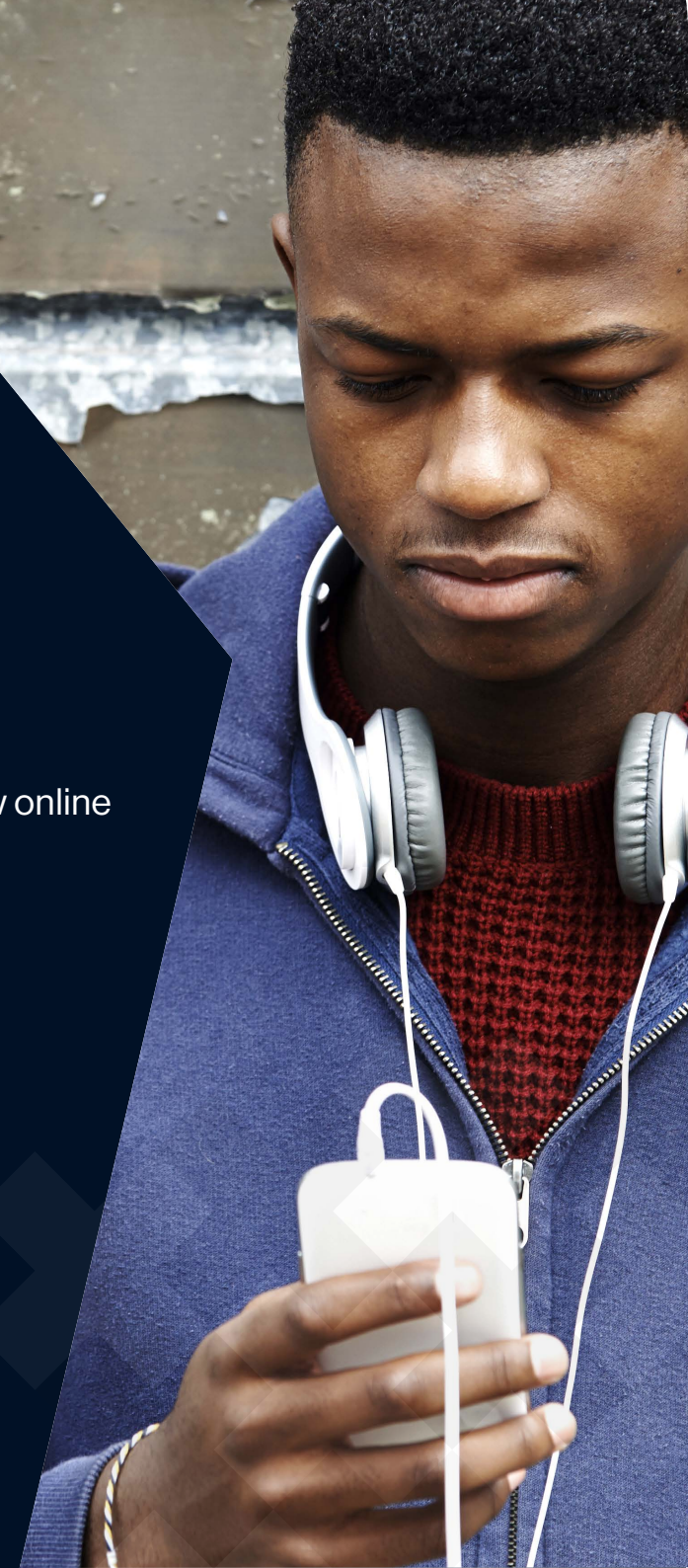
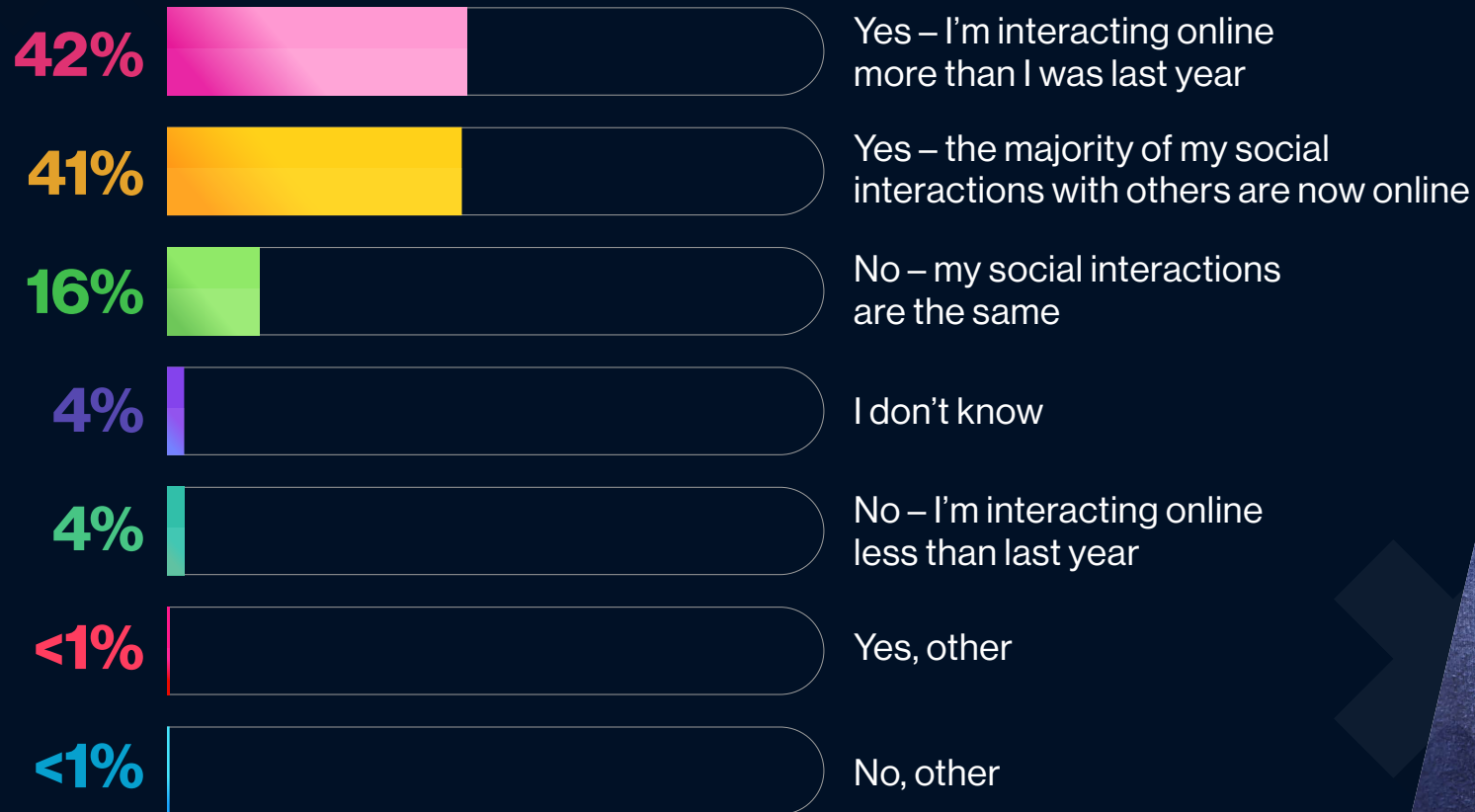
**Q8**

**Have you ever used online tools to set boundaries? (e.g. blocking or unfollowing someone, changing privacy settings etc.)**



Q9

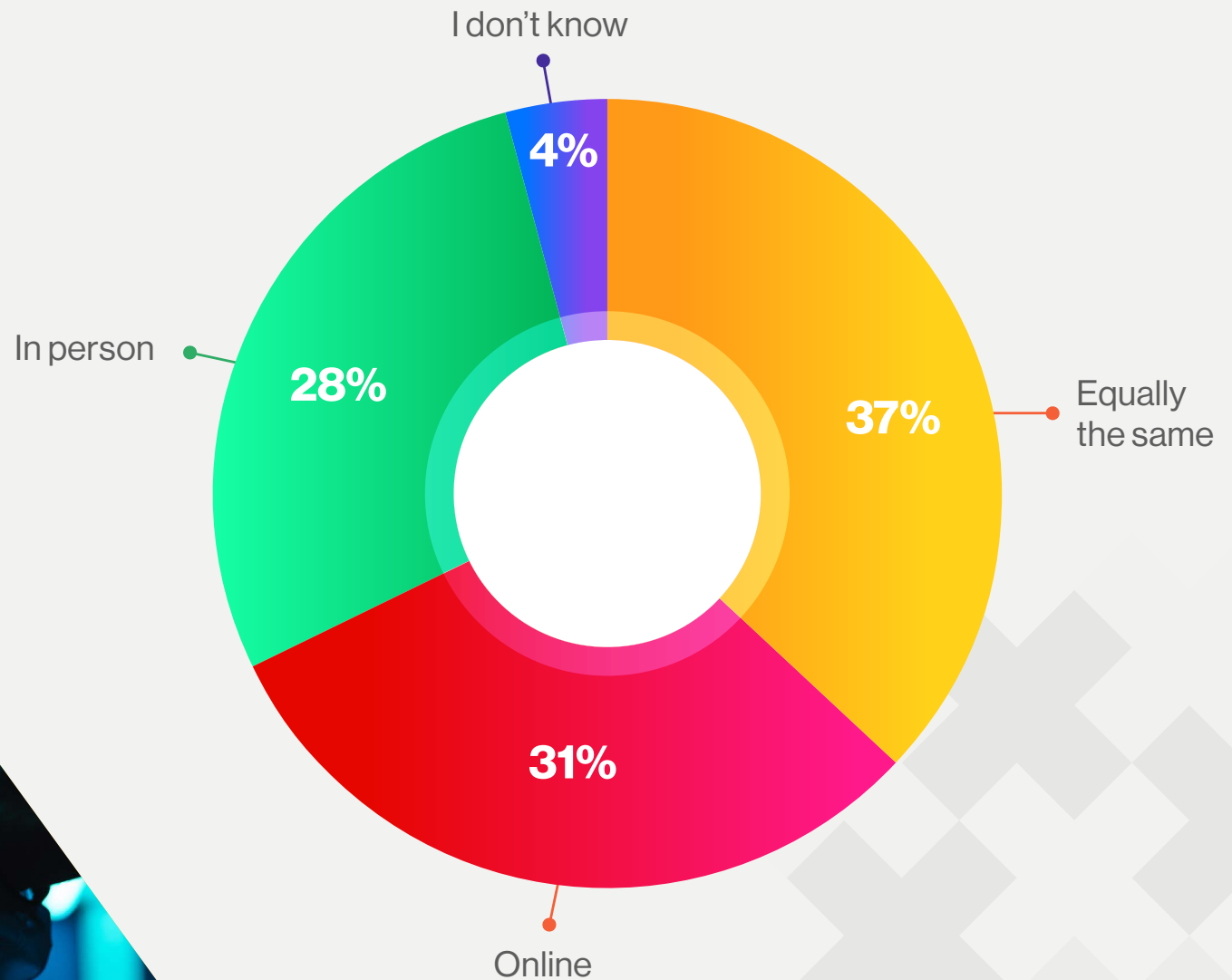
## Have your online interactions increased this year due to lockdown and social distancing?





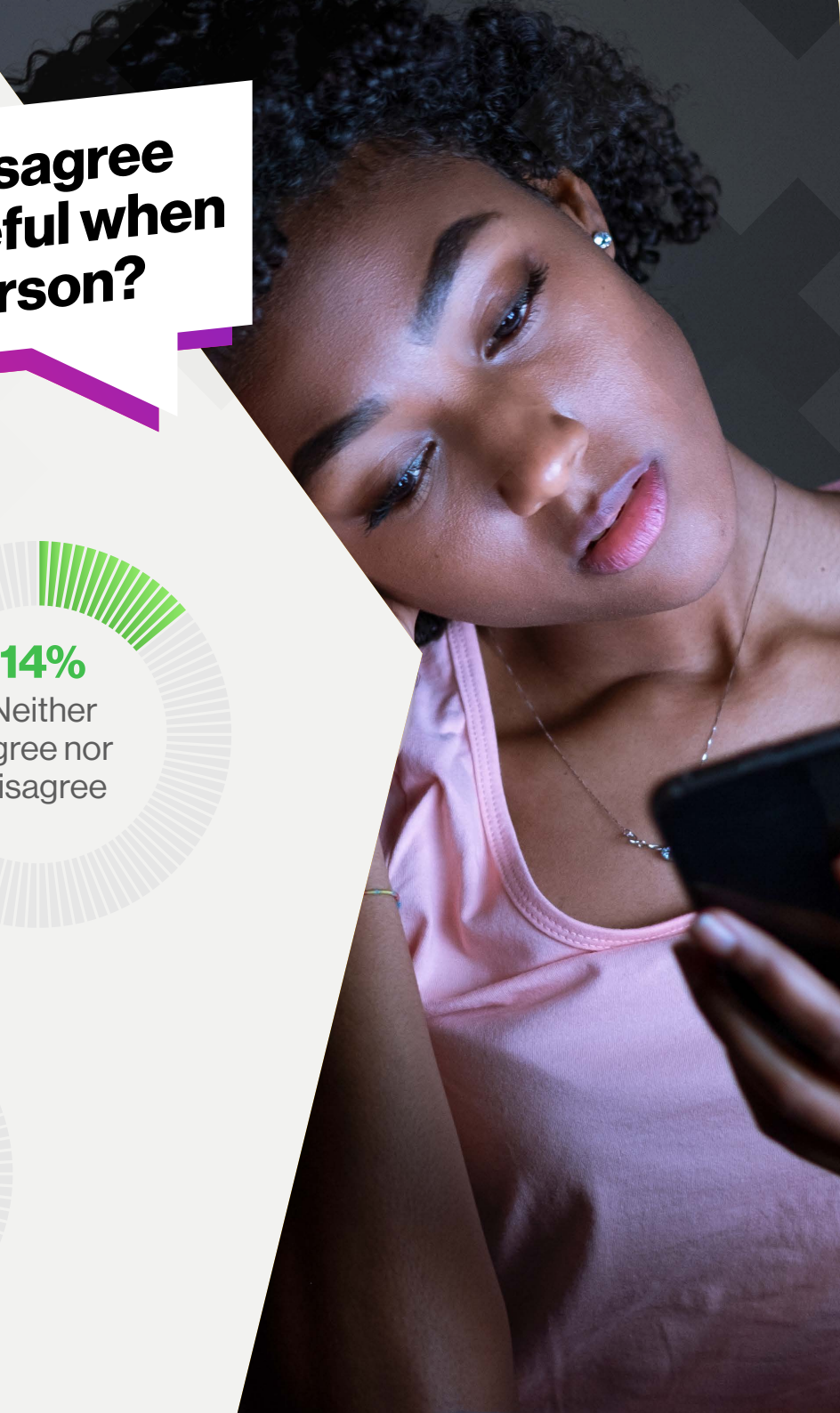
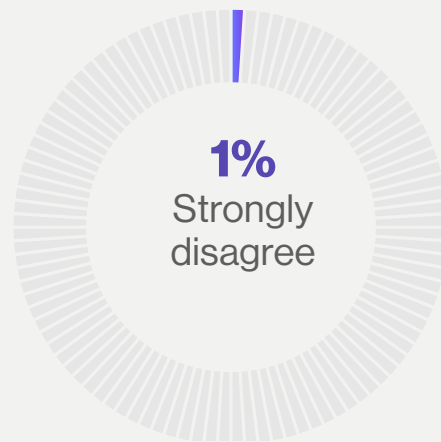
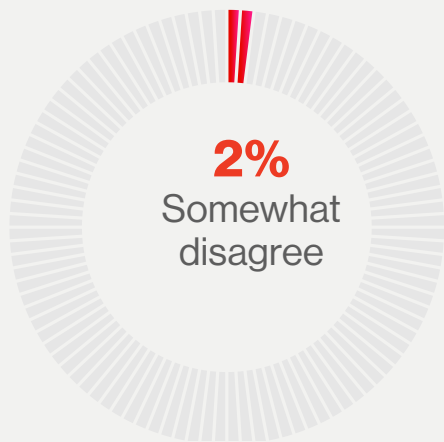
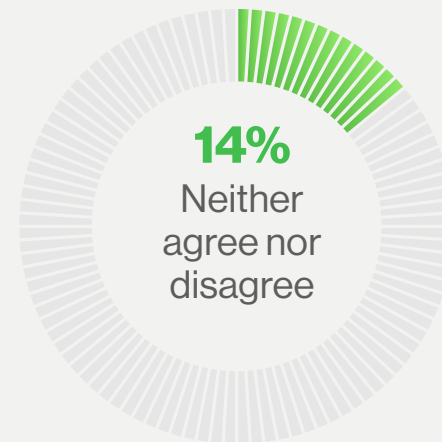
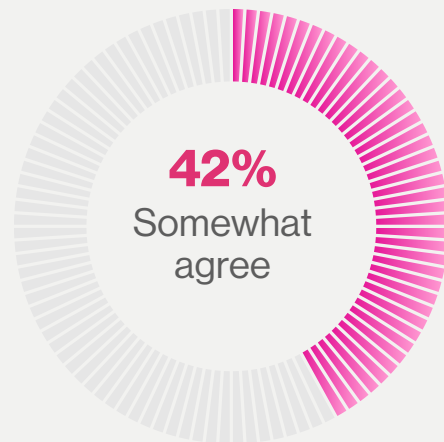
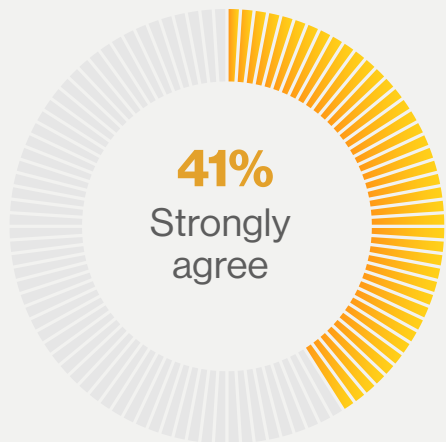
**Q10**

**Do you find it easier to communicate with people in person or online?**



# Q11

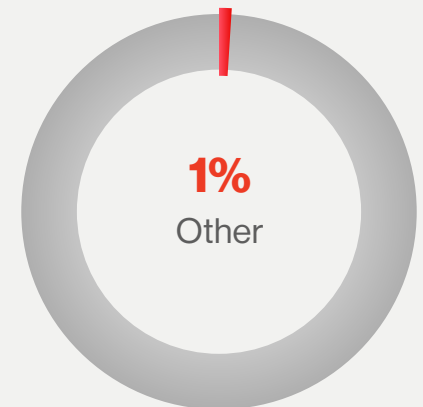
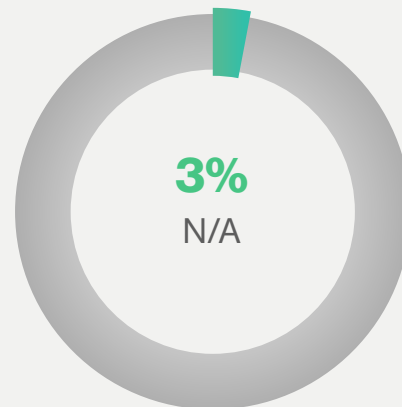
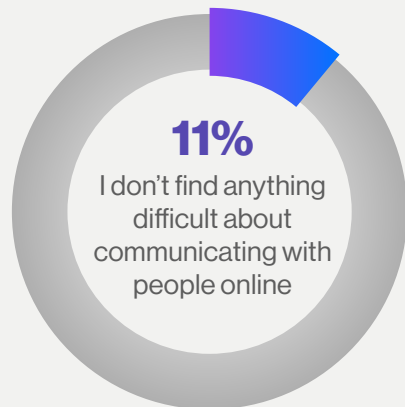
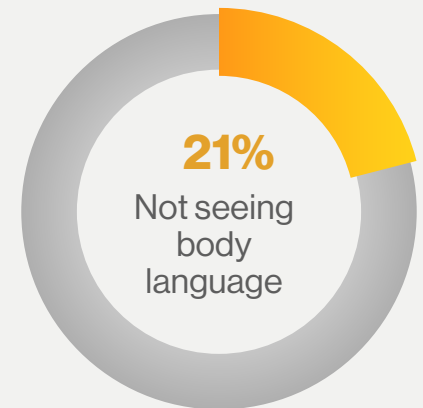
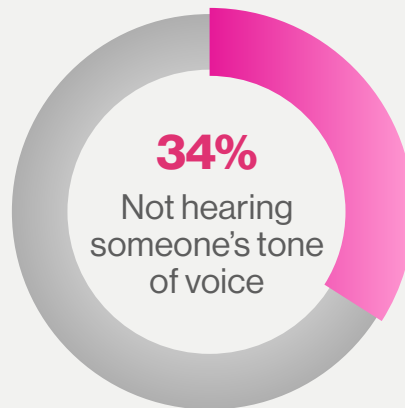
To what extent do you agree or disagree that people need to be more careful when communicating online than in person?





**Q12**

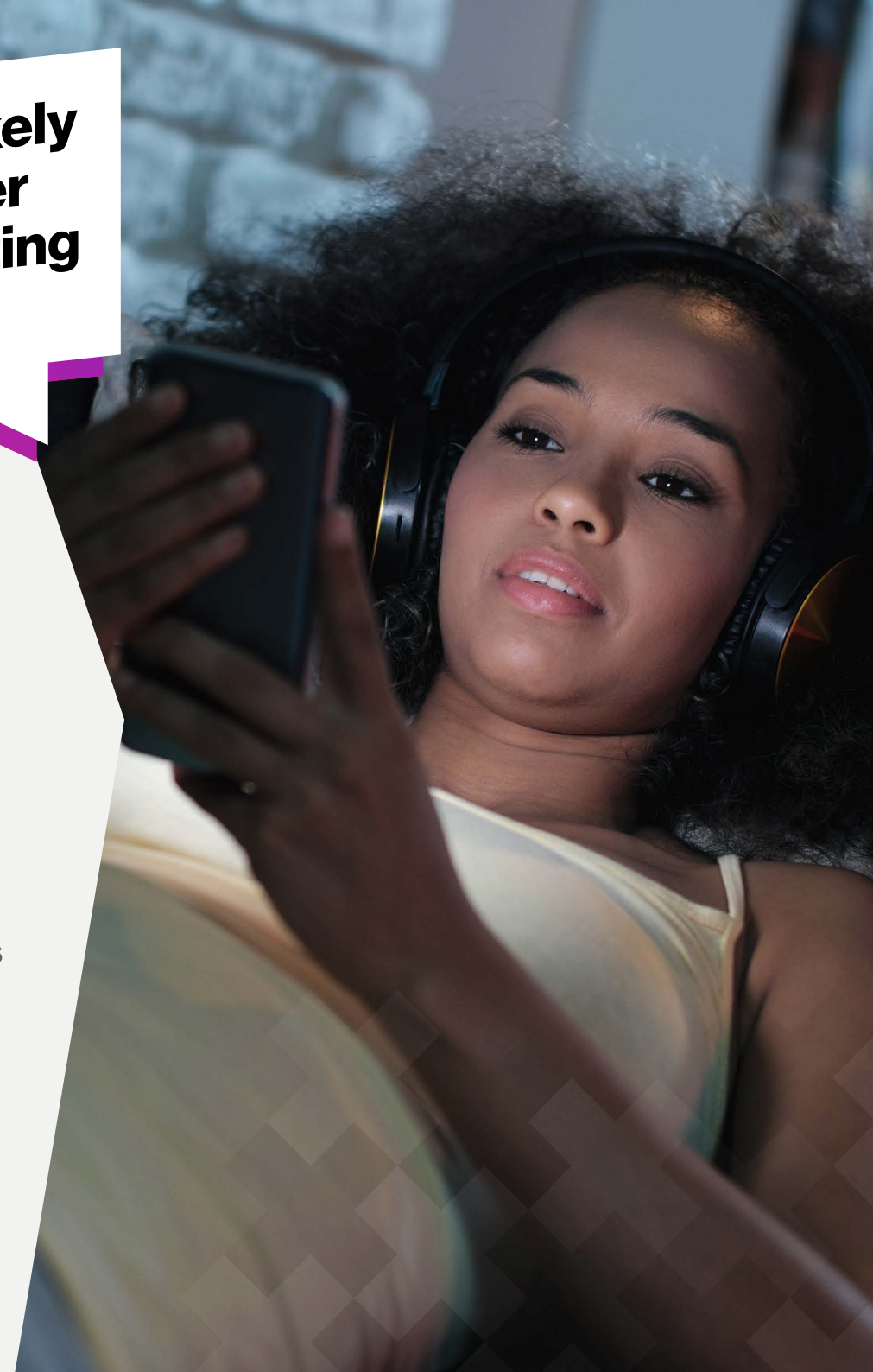
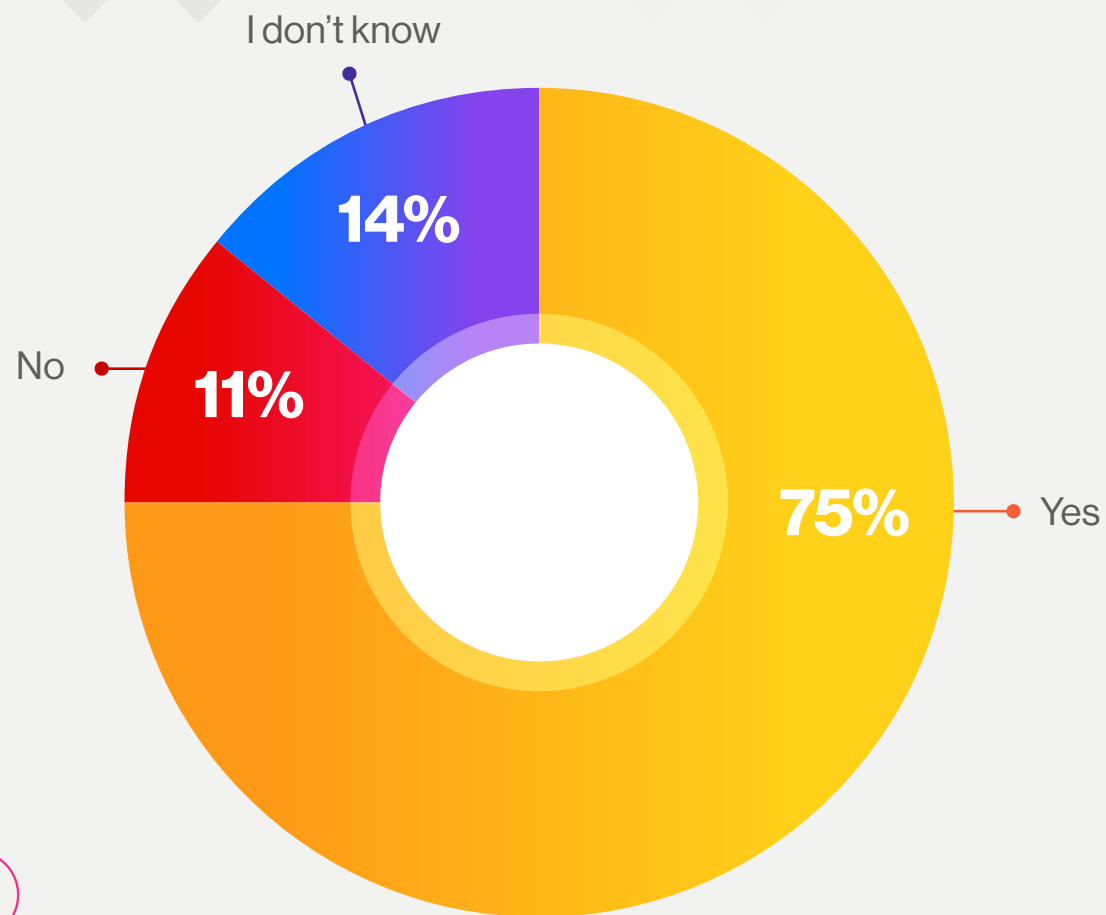
**What, if anything, do you find most difficult about communicating with people online?**





**Q13**

**Do you think people are more likely to overstep the mark from banter into bullying, when communicating online than offline?**





# Ever heard **“NO OFFENCE BUT...”** and worried what was coming?

Has banter with your mates gone too far? Well, you are not alone

32%

don't find it easy to talk with friends and family when they offend them

65%

think **banter** can be used as an **excuse for bullying**

68%

have been **upset or insulted** by a comment that started with "No offence, but..."

75%

agree that people are more likely to **overstep the mark** from banter into bullying when talking online

## Cybersmile's **five step** guide for talking to a mate who's crossed the line



- 1 Choose a safe space to communicate calmly without distractions
- 2 Recognise the importance of your friendship and why it is valuable
- 3 Address the issue or the behaviour without making it a personal attack
- 4 Be mindful of your emotions and how they can affect your perspective
- 5 Remember, it's ok to have different opinions – it makes the world interesting!

Cybersmile and Instagram are working together to fight online bullying. Here's Cybersmile's guide to dealing with bullying on social media...



### When it happens to **you**

- ✓ Try not to retaliate, this could escalate the situation
- ✓ Consider blocking the person or reporting them to the social media 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 organisation like Cybersmile if you need further help
- ✓ Always call emergency services if you feel threatened or in danger in any way

### When it happens to **someone else**

- ✓ Watch for posts and comments showing the person needs support
- ✓ Report the issue to the social media platform so they can take action
- ✓ Reach out privately to offer support if you are comfortable doing so
- ✓ Consider suggesting professional support from organisations like Cybersmile
- ✓ Always call emergency services if you think someone is in danger of harm



# Establishing your personal boundaries can stop hurtful comments before they happen.

Here's a quick guide to the Instagram tools that can help you set your own rules of communication online:



**RESTRICT:** Restricting someone's comments on your posts means their comments will only be visible to them, and they won't be able to see when you're online.



**COMMENT WARNING:** Instagram's AI powered feature lets people know when their comment may be considered offensive before it's posted, giving them a chance to reflect and choose to be kinder.



**COMMENT FILTER:** Words, phrases or emoji's which upset you? Use Comment Filter and you won't see these come up on your posts again.



**HIDDEN COMMENTS:** Instagram's new AI feature automatically hides potentially harmful comments, learning from others that have been reported.



**MUTING:** Hit mute if you still want to follow someone, but personally decide when to see their content. Only you'll know you've muted someone, so you don't need to worry about their reaction.



**BLOCKING:** If you want to prevent all interactions with someone, you can simply block them – you won't see their content anymore, they won't see yours.



**PRIVACY:** You can set your privacy any way you like – including turning your account to private or using Close Friends to share Stories with a select group.



**REPORTING:** If you see hurtful comments, you can report any content in just a few taps (including DMs or comments).

## **ABOUT THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION**

The Cybersmile Foundation is a multi-award-winning nonprofit organisation committed to tackling all forms of digital abuse and bullying online. They work to promote kindness, diversity and inclusion by building a safer, more positive digital community and encouraging people to realise 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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