



THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

# BANTER OR BULLYING?

A REPORT EXPLORING  
THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN BANTER AND  
BULLYING IN THE U.K.



It has been an honour to work alongside Instagram on our joint Banter or Bullying? report. Our mission was to undertake a study which not only offers valuable insights into the relationship that exists between banter and bullying, but also to create a report that would inspire meaningful conversation around the topic, encouraging young people to be more mindful of their own interactions online.

This report provides valuable insight into how young internet users are experiencing and perceiving the lines that exist between banter and abuse - acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. For us as an organisation, it is important that we understand how people are being affected by online interactions and how they are perceiving their own online behaviours, so that we can continue to develop relevant and effective preventative and reactive solutions to online abuse and harassment.

This research demonstrates that a large majority of young people have a deep affection for banter and have a desire to protect it from being abused or stigmatised. It is our hope that this report can start an important conversation which in turn, will help to protect this unique brand of humour from some of the challenges that it faces.

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

Instagram is proud to be working alongside The Cybersmile Foundation. Like Cybersmile, we share a belief that all forms of digital abuse, harassment and bullying are as unacceptable online as they are offline. Together, we will be shining a light on an important and often overlooked issue: how banter can either be used as an excuse for bullying, or accidentally go too far and leave people upset.

Alongside this, we will be working with Cybersmile to help educate more young people about how they can control what they see online. Instagram is committed to leading the fight against online bullying, which is why we have introduced a number of features to give young people greater control over what they see and experience.

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





I share a lot of my life online and I know first-hand how damaging it can be to be on the receiving end of hateful comments. I try to ignore negative comments altogether, but when I do respond, I'm often told they're 'just banter' and that I should let it go. Banter is never an excuse for bullying; they are different things. One should make you laugh, the other does the opposite.

**ZOE SUGG**  
**Founder of Zoella**



I'm really proud to be working with Cybersmile and Instagram for Anti-Bullying Week. I use my voice on Instagram to help support people younger than me, acting as their online big sister and a best friend to those older. I think there's a distinct line that has been blurred between banter & bullying, because it's so easy to type out a comment and send it without much thought. People excuse their nasty comments as a 'bit of fun' but in reality it's a form of bullying and we need to stick up for ourselves. If you're feeling bullied, the most important thing to remember is you're not alone, block and delete the comment, speak to someone about it. If it persists and is affecting you, both Cybersmile and Instagram provide information and advice about anti-bullying resources and tools you can use to get help for yourself or someone close to you.

**CHESSIE KING**  
**Social Media Influencer**



We all love a bit of banter. It's what we Brits do. But let's not lose these qualities to bullies and negativity. Let's talk openly if things get tough, put out positivity wherever we can and look out for each other.

**MO GILLIGAN**  
**Comedian**

## STUDY OVERVIEW

# 11 QUESTIONS ASKED

Age range



Respondents

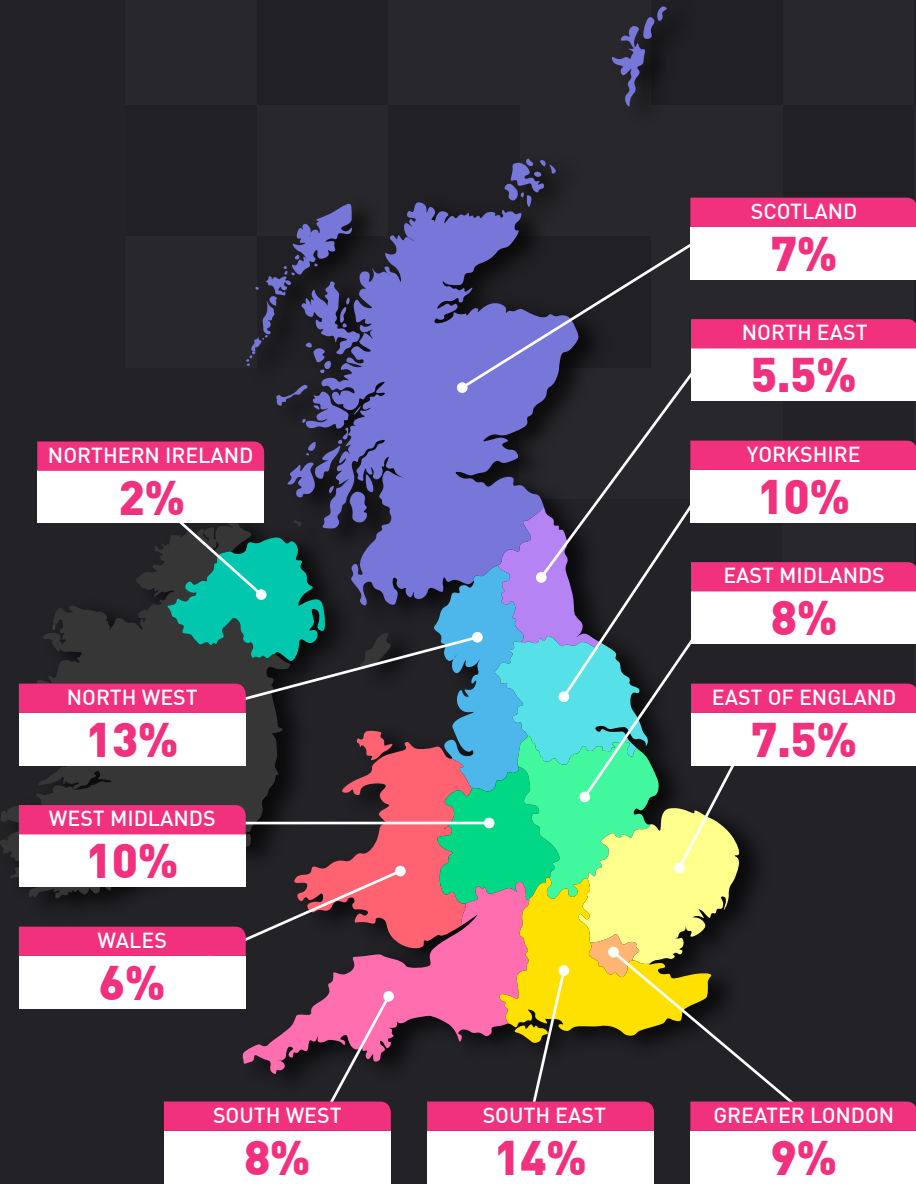


Sex

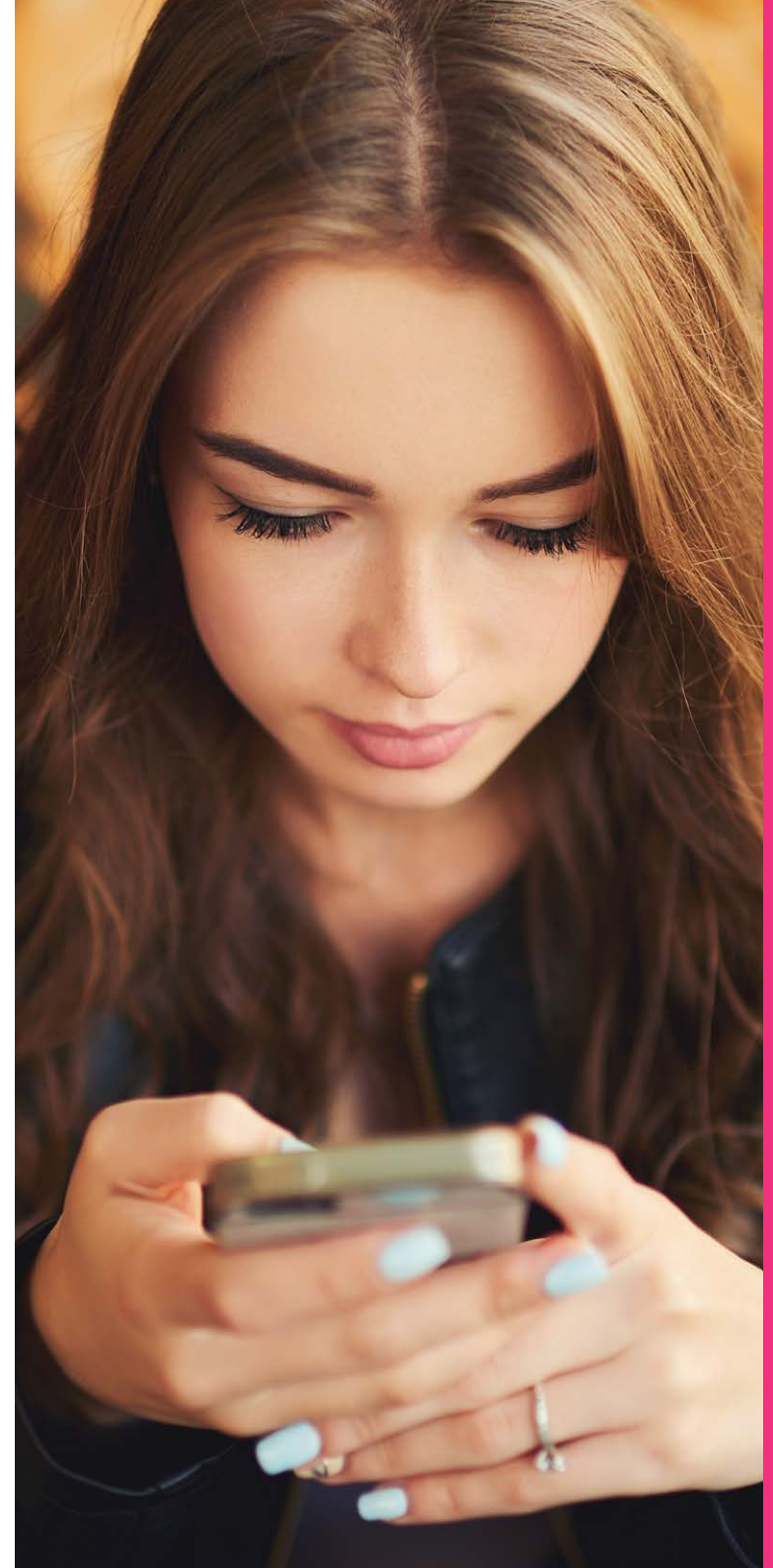
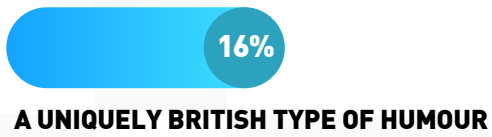
983  
MALE



2,018  
FEMALE



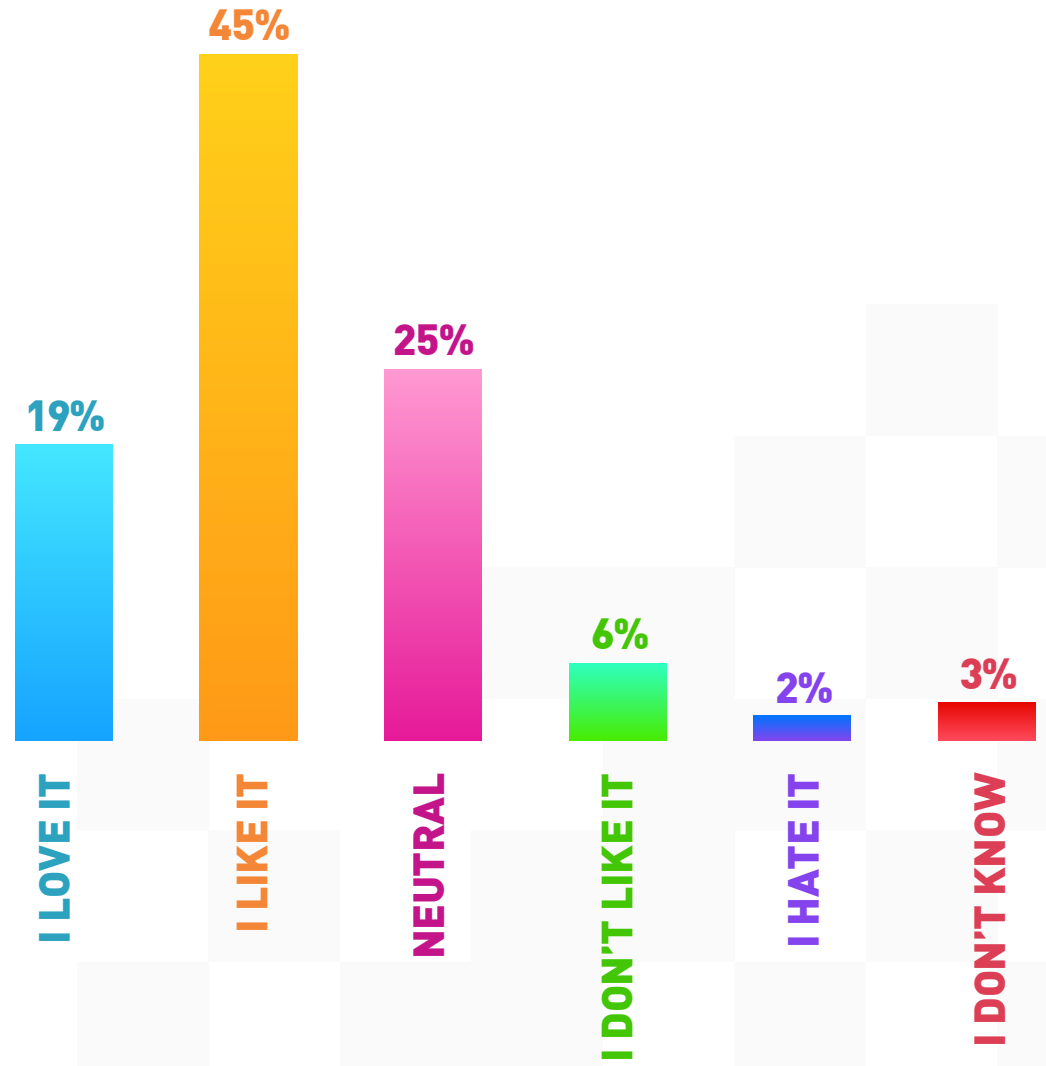
**Q1** WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING  
BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU WOULD  
DEFINE THE TERM 'BANTER'?





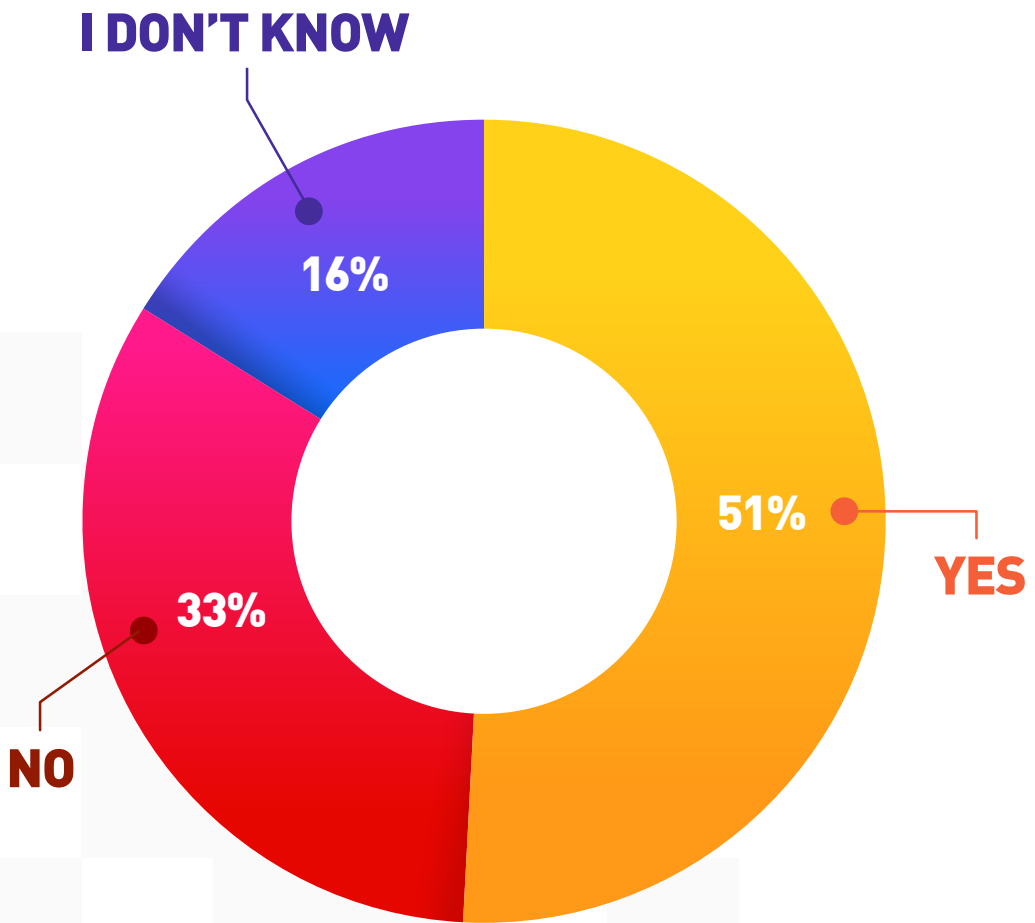


## Q2 HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BANTER?



**Q3**

**DO YOU THINK CALLING SOMETHING 'BANTER' IS SOMETIMES USED AS AN EXCUSE FOR BULLYING?**

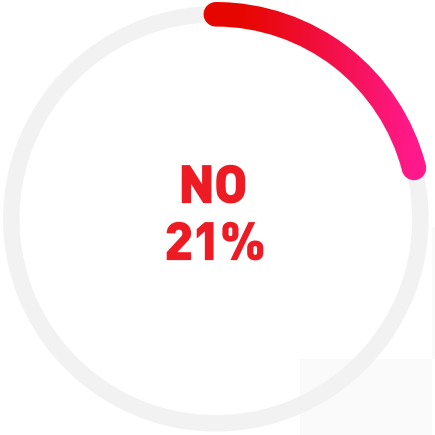






**Q4**

# DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS A CLEAR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BANTER AND BULLYING?





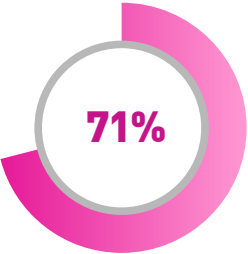
Q5

# WHEN DO YOU THINK THE LINE IS CROSSED FROM BANTER TO BULLYING?

Respondents selected all applicable answers.



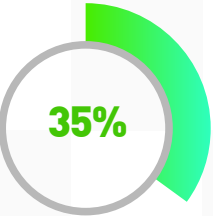
WHEN IT UPSETS  
THE OTHER PERSON



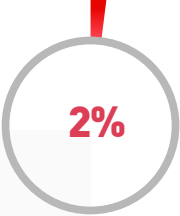
WHEN IT MAKES  
PEOPLE FEEL SCARED  
OR INTIMIDATED



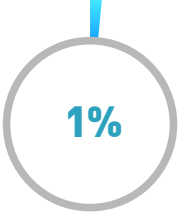
WHEN IT BECOMES  
PERSONAL



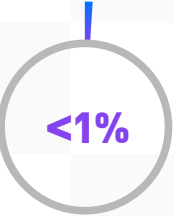
WHEN PEOPLE  
TELL ME I'VE  
GONE TOO FAR



I DON'T KNOW



I DON'T THINK THERE IS  
ANY INSTANCE WHERE  
THE LINE CROSSES FROM  
BANTER TO BULLYING



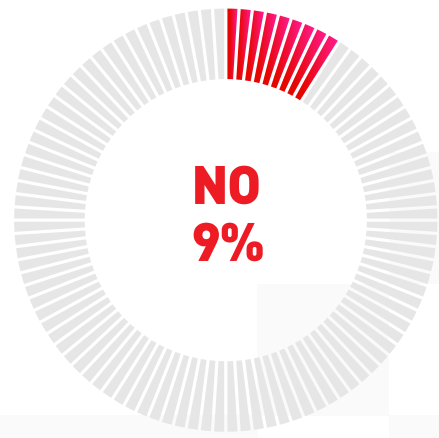
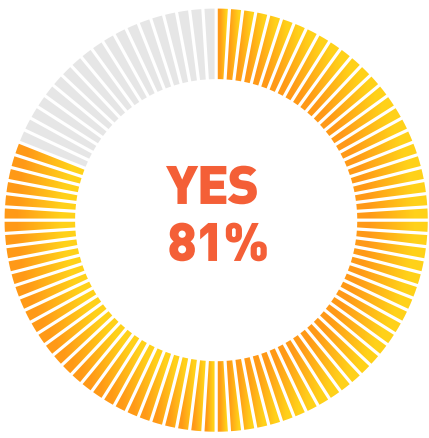
OTHER



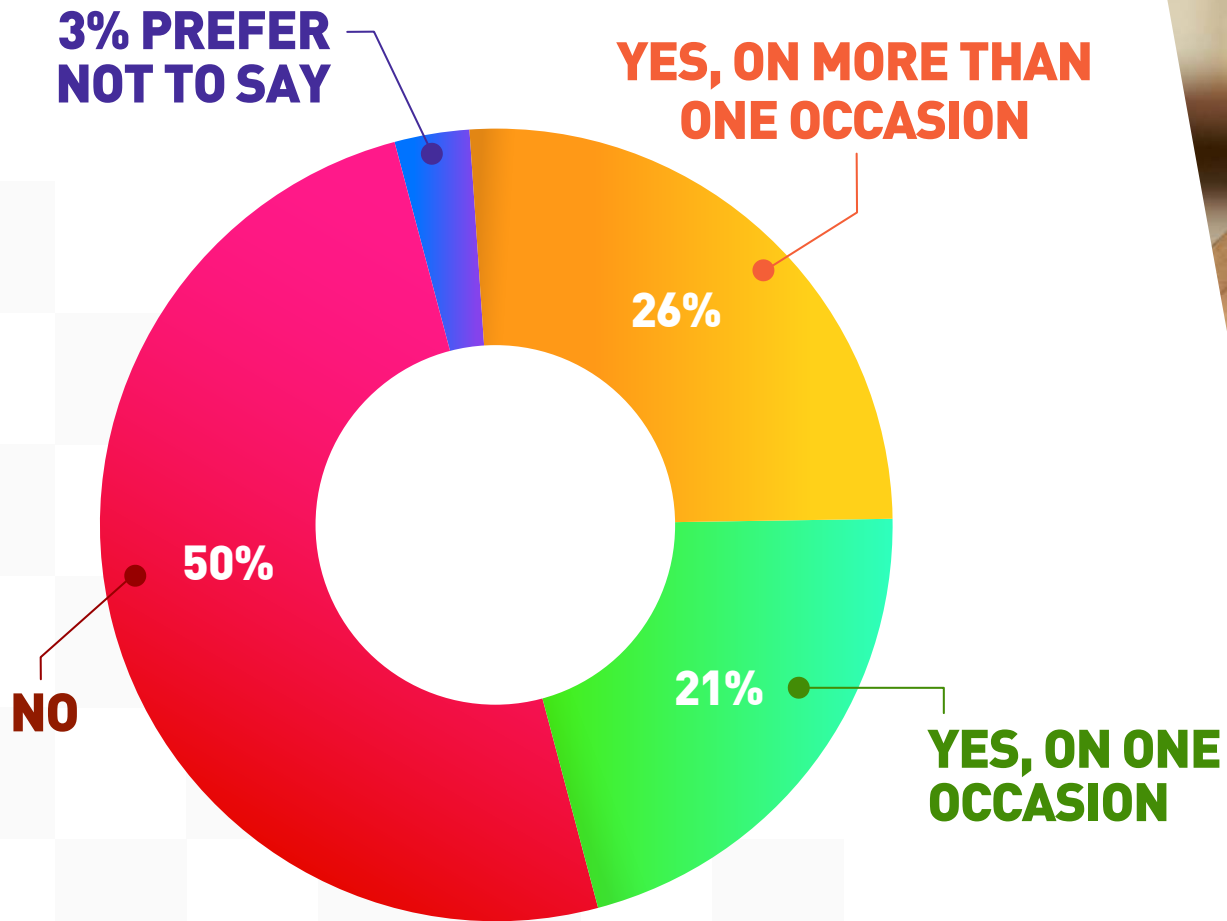


**Q6**

# DO YOU PERSONALLY FEEL YOU UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BANTER AND BULLYING?



**Q7** **HAVE YOU EVER PERSONALLY BEEN LEFT UPSET OR INSULTED BY BANTER?**

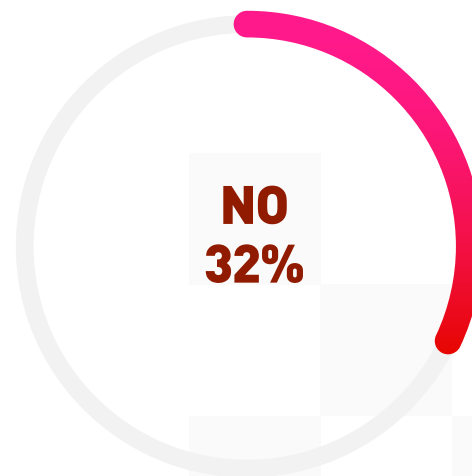
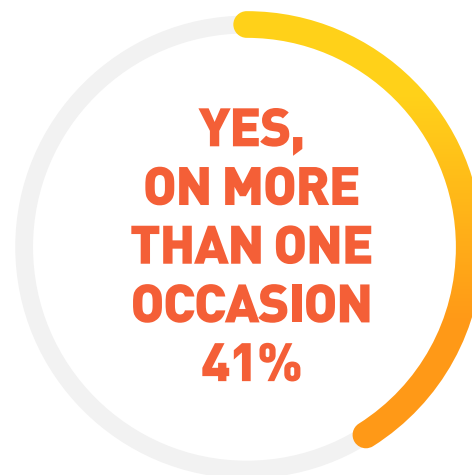






**Q8**

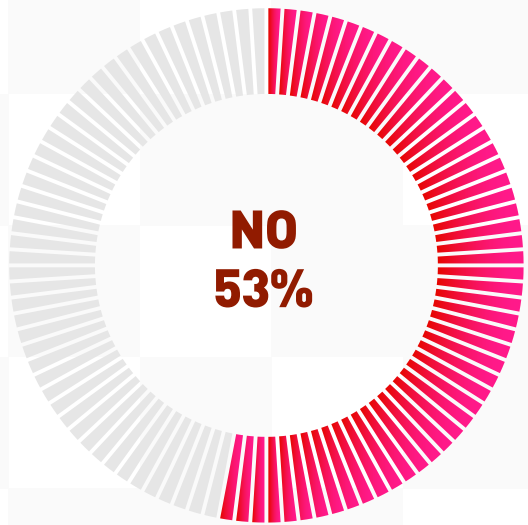
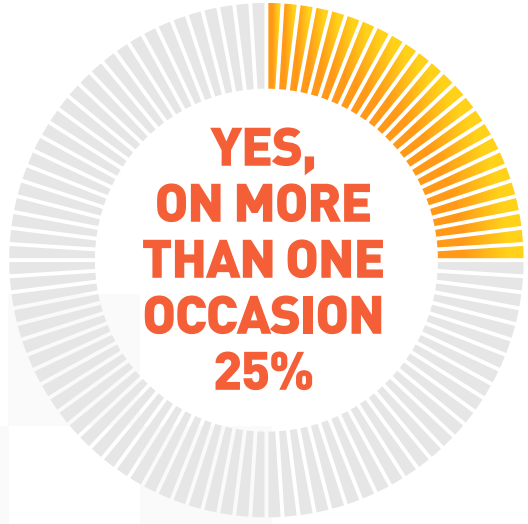
## **HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED SOMEBODY ELSE BE LEFT UPSET OR INSULTED BY BANTER?**





Q9

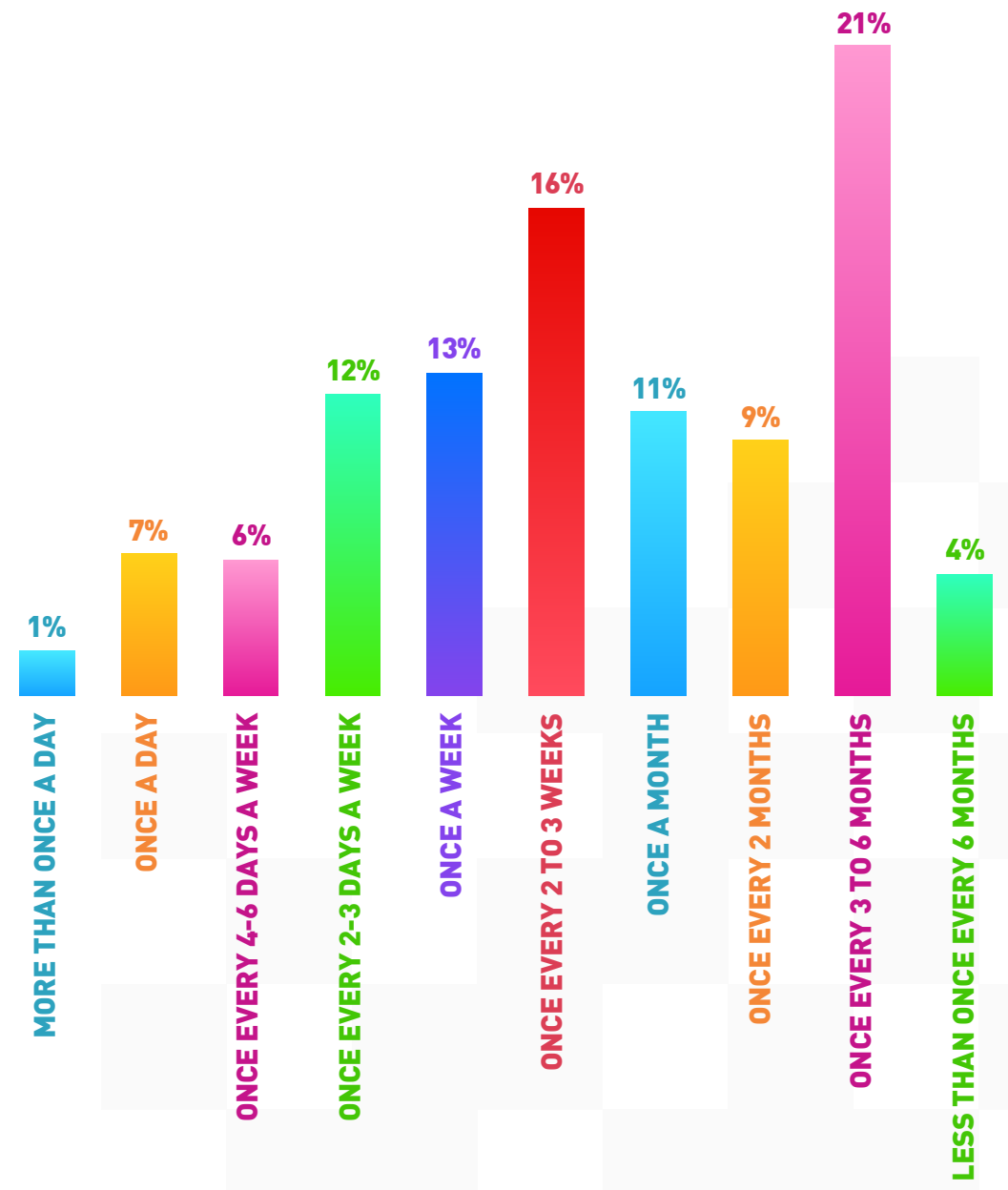
# HAVE YOU EVER BEEN OFFENDED OR UPSET AFTER WITNESSING BANTER AS A BYSTANDER?





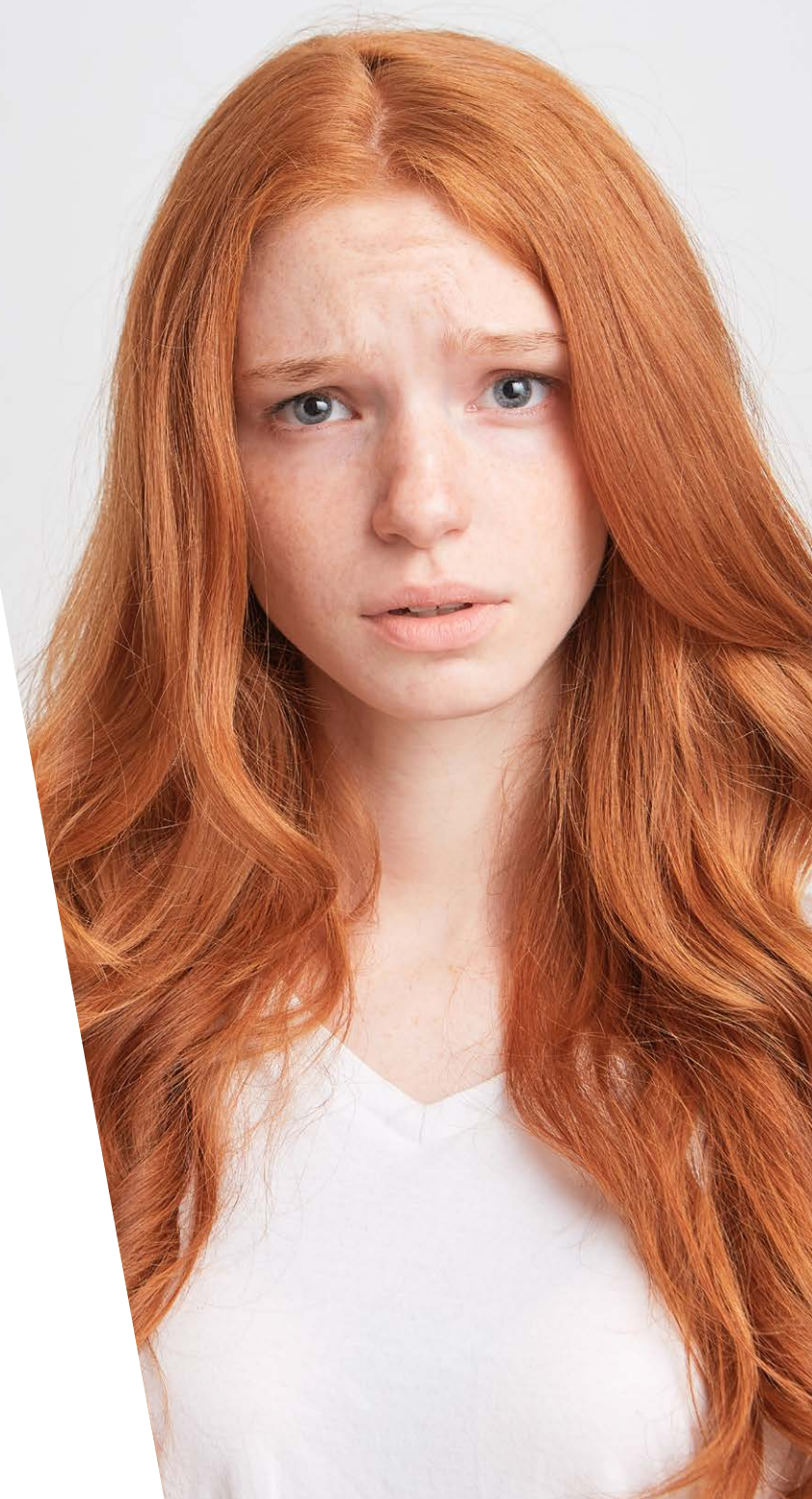
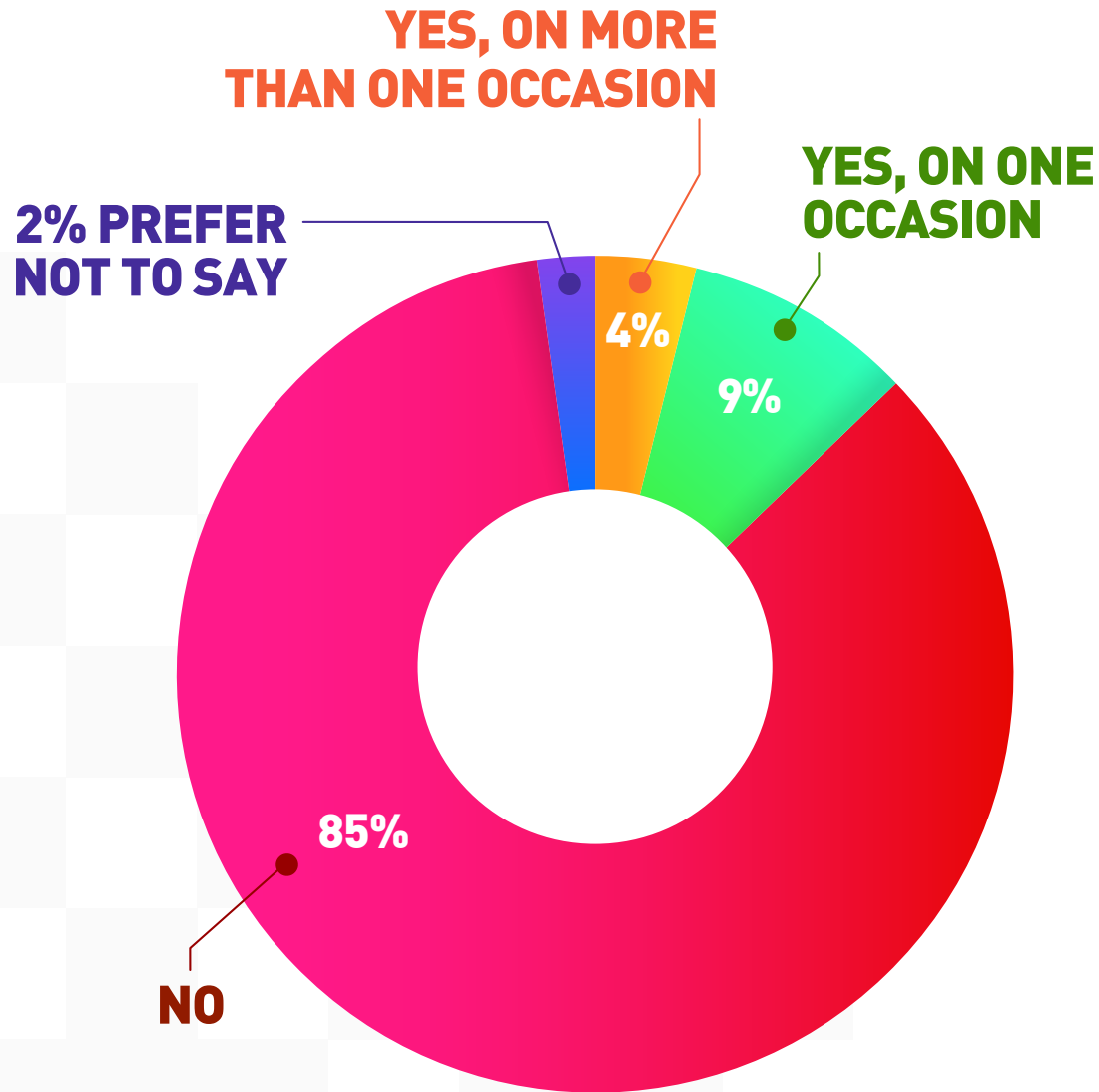
**Q10**

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE OTHERS LEFT UPSET OR INSULTED BY BANTER?





**Q11** **HAVE YOU EVER EXCUSED A BULLYING INTERACTION MADE BY YOURSELF AS BANTER?**



## **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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