

ANNUAL REPORT

2025–2026

Digitally Informed Youth (DIY): Digital Safety is a five-year research project implemented by a team of scholars, researchers, and students that aims to empower young people and provide them with tailored resources against technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). The team strives to ensure that young people have safe and enjoyable experiences both online and offline. This report provides an update on our SSHRC Insight Grant from May 2025 to April 2026.

DIY: DIGITAL SAFETY AIMS TO ACHIEVE **FOUR OBJECTIVES:**

1

Explore how educational curricula, policies, and legislation address TFSV

2

Analyze the effectiveness of educational, policy, and legal responses to TFSV

3

Identify what education, policies, and supports young people want to combat TFSV

4

Create resources for youth and best practice recommendations for people who work with youth



Our team

Principal investigator

Dr. Kaitlynn Mendes

Professor
Canada Research Chair in
Inequality and Gender
Western University



Co-investigator

Prof. Suzie Dunn

Assistant Professor
Dalhousie University



Research Associate

Charlotte Nau

Postdoctoral Fellow
Western University



Co-investigator

Dr. Christopher Dietzel

Postdoctoral Fellow
Western University



Co-investigator

Dr. Alexa Dodge

Associate Professor
Saint Mary's University



Research Assistant

Estefanía Reyes

PhD Candidate
Western University



Our Research Efforts

National survey

We conducted a national survey of 1,007 young Canadians (aged 13–18) on their exposure to authentic violence and gore online, in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.



52% of participants identified as boys/men, 47% as girls/women, and small numbers identified as non-binary/agender/gender diverse, Two-Spirit, another gender, or transgender.



All Canadian provinces were represented in the survey. However, we were unable to reach participants from the territories.

Key findings

85%

of young people surveyed **had seen at least one form of authentic violence or gore** online.



Teens were exposed to a variety of violent and gore content, including **physical fights, murder, dead bodies, and abuse**.



Teens were most likely to see violent content on **YouTube** (44%) and **TikTok** (42%), but exposure occurred on a variety of platforms.



Most teens don't intend to engage with this content; **it mostly "shows up"** via posts from strangers and algorithmic recommendations.

Publications

Peer-reviewed articles

-  Dietzel, C., Dodge, A., Kalwani, N., Pallottini, A., & Mendes, K. (2025). Reflections on Intersectional Feminist Approaches: Promoting an Ethics of Care in Research on Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence and Youth. *Feminism & Psychology*, 1–14.
-  Kalwani, N., Dietzel, C., & Dunn, S. (2025). Systems-Level Problems Require Systems-Level Responses: An Intersectional Analysis of Canadian Secondary Schools' Responses to Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 178–194.
-  Dodge, A., Mendes, K., Dietzel, C., & Dunn, S. (2026). Desperately Seeking Non-Judgmental Supports: Young People's Perceptions of Adult Responses to Technology-Facilitated Harms. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 08862605251414437.
-  Nau, C., Dietzel, C., Dodge, A., Dunn, S., Mendes, K., & Reyes Molleda, E. (under review). Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence Among Canadian Teens: Findings from a 2024 General Population Survey. *Canadian Journal of Communication*.

Encyclopedia entries

-  Nau, C., & Dietzel, C. (2025). Non-consensual distribution of intimate images. In E. E. Blair & S. L. Deckman (Eds.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Education and Gender* (pp. 552–555). SAGE Publications.
-  Reyes, E., Kalwani, N., & Mendes, K. (2025). Sextortion. In E. E. Blair & S. L. Deckman (Eds.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Education and Gender* (pp. 649–653). SAGE Publications.

Research reports

-  Nau, C., Reyes, E., Dietzel, C., Dodge, A., Dunn, S., & Mendes, K. (2025). Canadian Youth and Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Findings from a 2024 General Population Survey among Canadian Teens. DIY: Digital Safety. <https://doi.org/10.5683/SP3/HBJOCW>
-  Reyes Molleda, E., Dietzel, C., Dodge, A., Dunn, S., Mendes, K., & Nau, C. (2026) "Canadian Teens and Technology-Facilitated Harms: Exploring Teens' Experiences of Harm and the Platforms Where It Happens", <https://doi.org/10.5683/SP3/ZWCG3S>

Knowledge Mobilization

Alliances and community connections



31 ORGANIZATIONS AND COLLABORATORS

- Adsum for Women & Children
- Algoma University
- Alliance against Violence & Adversity
- Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children
- City of Burnaby
- Cyber Threats to Canadian Democracy, University of Calgary
- Delaware Public School
- Edglands Institute
- IAPP Canada Privacy Symposium
- Intimate Partner/Domestic Violence Court Co-Leads Education Program
- Lanark County Interval House
- Mary Wright Public School, Strathroy
- National Judicial Institute
- New York Youth Justice Institute
- Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services
- Ontario Government Office of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity
- Ontario Provincial Police & Ministry of Attorney General Ontario
- OPHEA
- OsgoodePD's 4th Annual Privacy and Cybersecurity Law and Practice Annual Update
- Parkview Public School
- PHAC – Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Provincial & Demonstration Schools Branch, Robarts/Amethyst
- Social Studies Teachers Association
- Tecumseh school
- The Centre for Protecting Women Online
- The Centre, Sarnia
- Together Against Violence: Skills for change
- Western University
- Youth Opportunities Lab

“ You had great insight on the topic and our community members have already shared how thankful they were for your time and expertise. ”

City of Burnaby Crime Prevention Team

Infographics and fact sheets

- **What to know about deepnudes and other AI-generated sexual content.** This infographic explains what is considered a “deepnude” and why creating them without consent can violate people’s rights and lead to severe legal consequences in Canada.
- **Why don’t teens report digital harms to adults? And what can we do to make them more likely to (available in English and French)** Fact sheet with information about why teens often avoid seeking help from adults when they experience digital harms and what adults can do to make them more likely to seek support.

Knowledge Mobilization

Talks and workshops

Topics:



3

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
(AGED 13-18)

- Digital rights and relationships



7

FOR PARENTS AND
CAREGIVERS

- Parenting in a digital age



28

FOR ADVOCATES,
SCHOLARS, EDUCATORS,
POLICYMAKERS, JUDGES,
LAWYERS, JUSTICES OF
THE PEACE, POLICE AND
FRONT LINE WORKERS

- Panel on Cyber Abuse and Tech-Facilitated Violence
- "What You Need to Know About Tech-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Young People and Harmful Content"
- Technology-facilitated sexual violence by an intimate partner
- Online harms affecting youth
- "Wait...That Counts as Digital Violence: Red Flags You Miss Online"
- "TFSV: Who is Left Unsafe Online?"
- "Youth Safety, Sextortion, and Deepfake Nudes"
- "Dangers numériques: Discussion sur la violence fondée sur le genre facilitée par la technologie à travers les expériences scolaires"
- Practical tips for staying safe online: 16 days of activism against gender-based violence
- Managing children's privacy
- "Supporting those Impacted by Image-Based Abuse"
- "Why Teens Don't Seek Help for Digital Harms, and How We Can Change That"

5000+ people reached

Media Engagement



22

Podcasts, TV, and radio interviews given by team members.
Including:

- Alberta at Noon, CBC News
- CBC Radio
- CBC The House
- CKNW Radio Vancouver
- CTV News Channel with Marcia MacMillan
- Global News
- Just Asking: CBC
- Le café show, Radio-Canada Alberta
- Morning Live, CBC News
- Ontario Today
- Sarnia-Lambton
- The Mike Farwell Show
- The Morning Brew with Andrew Schultz
- The Morning Show with Devon Peacock
- This Hour with Angie Seth, CTV News
- Toronto Star



20

News articles and features where members of the team were quoted.
Including:

- BetaKit
- Canadian Press
- CBC News
- CBC North
- CTV News, Montreal, QC
- Fanshawe
- Global News
- Hearsay, 46th
- National Post
- Radio-Canada International
- The Canadian Press
- The Globe and Mail
- The Tyee
- University of Toronto Medicine Magazine
- Winnipeg Free Press



2

Op-ed articles authored by team members.
Including:

- The Conversation
- Toronto Star

Social media



475 ▲ 19%

Followers



55

New posts across Instagram, Bluesky, and LinkedIn



~10K

Impressions (times our content has been displayed on screen)

Website



9106 ▲ 113%

Total visits

2431 ▲ 211%

Visits to the **Resources** and **Support services** sections

Expert Advisory Consultation

In the last year, we engaged with several government agencies and officials in Canada, as well as private institutions, to provide expert opinions on improving current frameworks and approaches for addressing TFSV among youth. Below are some examples of the actors we have engaged with.

- Content Child and Youth Death Review and Analysis (CYDRA) Unit at the Office of the Chief Coroner, Ontario
- Evidence review for intimate content communicated without consent, The Department of Canadian Heritage
- MPP Jess Dixon for Ontarios' Intimate Partner Violence Committee report, for the Government of Ontario
- Ontario Law Commission
- Ontario Ministry of Education and Premier's Office
- One Child
- Expert Group to Support a Handbook on Existing International and Regional Legal and Policy Frameworks Addressing Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls for United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Association for Progressive Communications
- Model National Framework for Addressing Non-consensual Intimate Images (NCII): A Blueprint for Global Standards for Preventing and Responding to Adult Image-based Abuse, Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, UN Women, UN Office for Drugs and Crime
- Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment & Abuse Advisory Group, Multi-governmental International Coalition

Conferences



4 PRESENTATIONS

- 27th Annual Victoria International Privacy & Security Summit
- Bournemouth University Research Seminar Series
- Monster Fest
- Transforming Justice Conference

Next Steps

Objectives for the next period:



Knowledge mobilization:

Continue developing educational resources for youth and guidance for those who live and work with young people.



Academic publications:

Continue producing rigorous research on technology-facilitated harms that centers young people's lived experiences and advances youth-informed policy and practice.



Partnerships:

Partnering with *MediaSmarts* to develop comprehensive resources for parents and teachers on technology-facilitated harms.



diydigitalsafety.ca



[@diydigsafety](https://www.instagram.com/diydigsafety)



diydigitalsafety@uwo.ca