DISRUPTING HARM IN JORDAN [SNAPSHOT]

Evidence on technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse

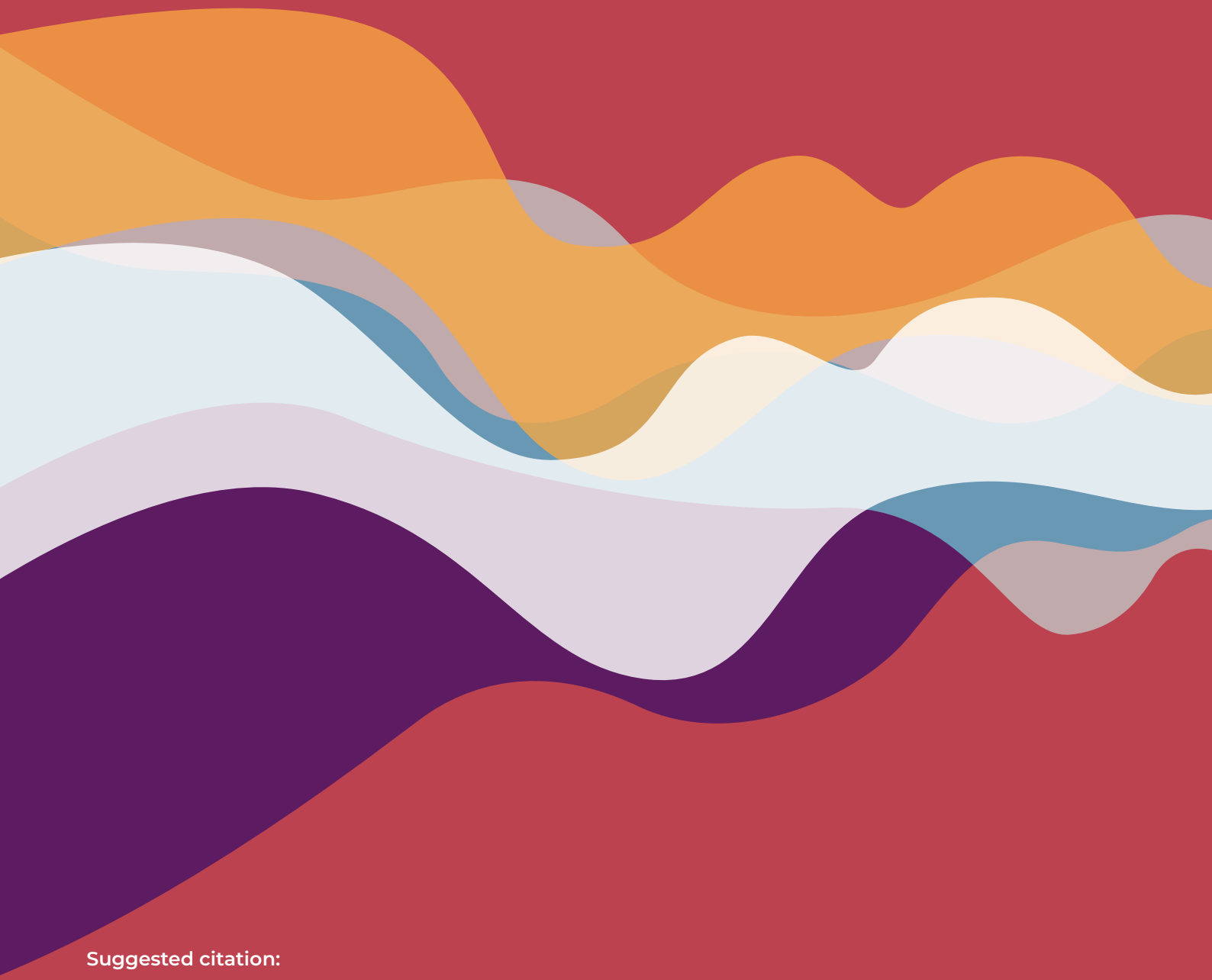


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This report discusses the sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Jordan. It includes accounts of child sexual exploitation and abuse cases as described by professionals in Jordan. Readers are encouraged to monitor their responses to the content and only engage with this report in ways that feel comfortable to them.



Suggested citation:

ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF. (2026). Disrupting Harm in Jordan: Evidence on technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. Safe Online.

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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS

This study comes as part of the ongoing efforts of the National Council for Family Affairs, in collaboration with its partners, to strengthen the child protection system in Jordan, particularly in light of the rapid transformations taking place in the digital world and the accompanying increasing challenges and risks that affect children's safety and well-being.

This study was supported by the Safe Online Initiative, with the research led by ECPAT International, and INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence Office – Innocenti in partnership with UNICEF Jordan Office and INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in Amman. It falls under a research and methodology project entitled "Disrupting Harm," and this partnership contributed to the development of a comprehensive conceptual framework that formed the basis of this collaborative effort. This framework adopts a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation and abuse using technology, and to design effective responses to address it.

The study also includes a comprehensive conceptual framework that formed the basis of this collaborative effort. This study was conducted within a national context, during the period 2024–2025. It employed a comprehensive methodology combining quantitative and qualitative tools, including a household survey targeting children aged 12–17, both Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees in the Zaatari camp. This was complemented by in-depth interviews with justice professionals, frontline workers, and law enforcement officials, as well as an analysis of the national legislative and policy framework. The study's significance lies in its focus on children's internet use in Jordan. It also provides in-depth insights into the risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse using technology, while considering the specific social and cultural context of the country. Furthermore, it identifies existing gaps in policies, legislation, and services, and offers a set of practical, evidence-based recommendations targeting various stakeholders, including the government, law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, civil society, families, and digital service providers.

Protecting children in the digital space is no longer an option, but a national imperative requiring concerted efforts and integrated roles among all partners. From this perspective, the National Council for Family Affairs affirms its commitment to continuing its work with national and international partners to promote a safe digital environment for children and ensure their full enjoyment of their rights, including the right to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation.

In conclusion, we extend our thanks and appreciation to all partners who contributed to the preparation and review of this study. Special thanks go to the members of the technical committee from various national and international institutions and to UNICEF Jordan for its ongoing support of the Council's activities and various children's issues, and to everyone who contributed to the success of this work. We hope that this effort will constitute a further step towards strengthening the protection of our children and building a safer future for them.

Dr. Mohammad Miqdadi
Secretary-General of the National Council for Family Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded by Safe Online, ECPAT International, INTERPOL and UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti (UNICEF Innocenti) worked in partnership to design and implement the Disrupting Harm research project and methodology. The original project idea and conceptualization were developed by Safe Online, providing the foundation for this collaborative effort.

This unique partnership uses a multidisciplinary approach to enhance our collective understanding of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse and the national response to these forms of violence against children. A combined investment of 15 million USD has allowed the Disrupting Harm research to be conducted in 13 countries across Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia from 2019 to 2022 and in another 12 countries, including Jordan, from 2023 onwards.

Between 2024 and 2025, with the support of the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), the National Technical Committee, and UNICEF Jordan, ECPAT International, INTERPOL and UNICEF Innocenti conducted research in Jordan to understand tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse from multiple viewpoints. The data in Jordan were collected through a household survey with 12–17-year-olds among nationals and refugees in Za'atari camp, interviews with justice professionals, front-line workers and law enforcement officers, and an analysis of national legislation and policy.

The Disrupting Harm methodology integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. In Jordan, key components of Disrupting Harm's standard methodology were not implemented. Survey measures related to children's experiences were excluded due to sensitivity concerns. Interviews with young people (16–24 years) who had been subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse during their childhood were also not conducted because safeguarding requirements could not be fully met. These limitations create significant evidence gaps, particularly in understanding the forms of abuse, perpetrator tactics, and pathways to support and justice. This has limited the extent of the recommendations made. Consequently, this snapshot report is not intended to describe all experiences related to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse nor to provide a comprehensive overview of the national response to these forms of violence in the country.

What is technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse?

The Disrupting Harm project uses the term technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse to refer to situations involving digital, internet and communication technologies at some point during the sexual exploitation or abuse of a child. This type of violence is sometimes referred to as 'online' child sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the term 'technology-facilitated' is now preferred[1] to convey that this violence against children does not only occur in online spaces; it can occur fully online or through a mix of online and in-person interactions between perpetrators and children. More information concerning key definitions used in this report can be found in the annex.

Key findings

Internet access and use

- Survey results indicate that internet access is nearly universal among children aged 12–17 in Jordan, regardless of whether they are nationals or reside in a refugee settlement. Internet users were defined as those who have used the internet in the three months prior to the survey.
- Home is the primary place of internet access for children aged 12–17 in Jordan. For children living in Za'atari camp, this typically refers to their shelter or caravan. Relatives' and friends' homes are also prominent. While the majority of children were attending school, the findings show that internet use at school remains limited. Internet use in malls or internet cafes was generally uncommon.

1 Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse: Second Edition*, ECPAT International, Bangkok, 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Mobile phones are the central tool for internet access among children aged 12–17 in Jordan. Other devices such as computers (desktop, laptop or notebook), tablets and smart TVs are less common.
- Survey data show that 83 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 93 per cent in Za'atari camp face barriers when they want or need to access the internet. Overall, children in Za'atari camp face more structural and resource-related barriers, including limited connectivity, electricity shortages, high costs and shared devices. In contrast, nationals aged 12–17 are constrained by time and parent or teacher-based restrictions.
- The use of YouTube and Facebook (Facebook Messenger) was very popular among all the children surveyed. Snapchat and Instagram are also popular for nationals aged 12–17, while WhatsApp is more popular among children in Za'atari camp.
- Engagement in entertainment (watching video clips and listening to music) and educational (for schoolwork) online activities was common among nationals aged 12–17 and children in Za'atari camp. Both groups also frequently used the internet for social connection (social media or instant messaging).
- Sixty-one per cent of nationals aged 12–17 have used artificial intelligence platforms or websites, compared with 32 per cent living in Za'atari camp.
- Fifteen per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 9 per cent living in Za'atari camp met someone face-to-face whom they first met online.
- Forty-five per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 26 per cent living in Za'atari camp had seen hate messages online in the past year. Fifty per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 38 per cent living in Za'atari camp had seen gory or violent images online in the past year.
- One in five cases of peer-to-peer emotional and psychological abuse occurred via digital or online devices.

Technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan

- In the Disrupting Harm research, survey data are typically used to assess the scope of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. In Jordan, however, key survey modules were excluded because they were considered too sensitive for the Jordanian context. The report therefore does not include data on the scale or nature of children's experiences of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Interviews with young people (aged 16–24) who were subjected to this abuse during childhood were also not conducted because safeguarding requirements could not be fully met.
- Nevertheless, the study interviewed 15 front-line workers and 8 justice professionals with experience of handling such cases to provide qualitative insights.

Professionals' perceptions

- The professionals interviewed expressed varying perceptions regarding the prevalence of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. While most front-line workers could only point to one or two specific cases, some indicated that nearly all cases of sexual violence against children they encountered involved an online element and could therefore be considered tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Law enforcement insights

- Law enforcement in Jordan, led by the Cybercrime Unit and Family Protection and Juvenile Department (FPJD), is central to addressing tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, coordinating with the judiciary and civil society.
- Challenges include the centralization of services in Amman, limited access in remote areas and gaps in specialized training. Prevention and awareness efforts remain limited and uncoordinated, though opportunities exist to expand them.

Legal framework

- The 2023 Cybercrime Law is the main legislative instrument addressing tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan and represents an important step in strengthening the legal response to online harms against children.

- The law criminalizes several forms of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, including the use of information technology to sexually exploit a child, as well as a range of offences related to the production, possession, transfer and dissemination of child sexual abuse material.
- The definition of child sexual abuse material covers images, recordings and other materials depicting real, virtual or simulated sexual acts involving a child, suggesting that certain forms of digitally generated material may fall within its scope. However, explicitly clarifying the applicability of the law to child sexual abuse material generated with tools powered by artificial intelligence would strengthen legal certainty.
- While possession of child sexual abuse material is criminalized, merely accessing such material without storing or sharing it is not explicitly addressed, which may limit efforts to reduce demand for this content.
- Conduct related to online grooming and tech-facilitated sexual extortion of children may be prosecuted under existing provisions on sexual exploitation or blackmail. However, these offences are not explicitly defined in the legal framework, which may limit the ability to fully capture the specific dynamics of these crimes.

The role of gender-based social norms in technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse

- Gender norms strongly shape the dynamics of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan. Many cases described by professionals involved girls groomed by older men into online relationships, with perpetrators later using threats of exposure to escalate abuse.
- Girls often do not disclose or report abuse and seek help only when they have no alternative. Interviews suggest that fear of blame, shame and punishment within families contributes to this silence. Professionals reported cases where girls were blamed or even required protection from male family members after abuse was discovered.
- Boys face different barriers that discourage disclosure and help-seeking. These challenges may be reinforced by the legal framework. Gender norms may minimize the severity of sexual violence against boys and further discourage reporting.

The role of parents and families in relation to disclosure, reporting, help-seeking and access to care

- Parents and caregivers play a central role in protecting children, but several family-related factors can also increase vulnerability to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse. Professionals noted that parents often struggle to recognize signs of trauma and limited open communication within families can discourage children from disclosing abuse. In some cases, parents respond by imposing strict restrictions or surveillance, which may undermine trust and agency.
- Professionals expressed mixed views on technology use. Many emphasized a lack of parental supervision as a key risk factor, while others argued that overly restrictive or authoritarian monitoring can be counterproductive. This is consistent with research showing that screen time alone is not linked to increased risk.
- Challenging family environments such as conflict, domestic violence or criminal activity were also identified as circumstances perpetrators may take advantage of. Professionals revealed that mothers are often the first to recognize signs of abuse and seek support, reflecting traditional caregiving roles, while fathers may be less involved in the recovery process.
- Overall, professionals highlighted the need to support entire families, helping parents balance concerns about children's behaviour with their well-being and safety.

The role of schools in relation to identification, prevention and disclosure

- A key finding is that schools play a critical role in identifying, preventing and facilitating disclosure of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

- Professionals noted that changes in behaviour or sudden drops in academic performance often signal abuse, and teachers or school counsellors can serve as key gateways for referral to support services.
- Schools are also important for awareness-raising, yet survey data show that only 57 per cent of children received any online safety information and the quality of this guidance is unclear.
- While some schools may resist addressing sexual topics, professionals suggest digital media education as an entry point for discussions on online sexuality and safety.

Access to justice and legal remedies for children subjected to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse

- Front-line workers reported that children and families in Jordan are often hesitant to engage with police or the justice system due to fear of legal procedures and negative referral experiences, and a lack of child-centred processes.
- In Jordan, statutes of limitations (3–10 years) restrict survivors' ability to seek justice, risking impunity for perpetrators. Children under 15 must report through a parent or guardian, which can hinder disclosure due to stigma or lack of support.
- The study reveals that children often first encounter the justice system via the police or mandatory reporting to the FPJD, frequently without adequate preparation or psychosocial support.
- Mandatory reporting laws require adults, especially professionals, to report suspected child sexual exploitation or abuse, with penalties for non-compliance. Interviews with professionals show that, while these processes can be traumatic and raise privacy concerns, outcomes improve when confidentiality is respected and procedures are clearly explained to children and families.
- Court procedures can retraumatize children, particularly due to the formal and unfamiliar nature of interactions with judges and prosecutors, as well as possible contact with perpetrators during proceedings. The study reveals that protective measures such as video links and closed hearings exist but are discretionary, limiting their consistent use.
- Slow case progression, the involvement of multiple professionals, and limited legal aid – which is mostly available only during trial – further strain children and families, sometimes leading to case withdrawal.
- Investigations of tech-facilitated child sexual abuse in Jordan are slowed by challenges in collecting digital evidence. The 2023 Cybercrime Law allows the seizure and preservation of electronic evidence and penalizes tampering, but the absence of mandatory data retention by service providers risks the loss of critical evidence before authorities can access it.
- Jordan lacks trauma-informed procedures for interviewing children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse, including limits on repeated questioning and trained personnel, increasing the risk of secondary victimization.
- Children in Jordan subjected to tech-facilitated sexual abuse have limited guaranteed access to recovery, reintegration and compensation. Rehabilitation services exist through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Jordan River Foundation, but specialized legal and psychosocial support is limited.
- Case management follows general child protection procedures, with specialized training on online abuse still needed, though the pledge made by Jordan to develop and implement an in-service social work capacity-building programme by 2027 offers an opportunity.
- Access to compensation is legally available but in practice could be hindered by legal fees and procedural barriers.

This report ends with a set of data-driven recommendations based on its key findings. They include actions to be taken by key actors across government, law enforcement, justice and social services sectors, by communities, schools and families, and by digital platforms and service providers. These are too detailed to be recounted in the executive summary but can be found on page 62 of this report.

METHODS

The Disrupting Harm methodology combines quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a better understanding of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. The quantitative data provide an understanding of the scope of this issue among children. However, this was not possible in Jordan because the relevant questions were excluded from the study instruments due to their perceived sensitivity within the national context. This exclusion was guided by the local study technical committee. The analysis of national legislation and policies, together with interviews with justice professionals, front-line workers and law enforcement, provide insights into the formal systems and processes intended to support children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse. It also offers important context to understand the sexual exploitation and abuse that children face and how families and communities react to it. The Disrupting Harm methodology also aims to interview young people (aged 16–24 years) who had been subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse during childhood. However, this component was not conducted in Jordan because the study team was unable to fully meet the safeguarding requirements necessary to ensure the protection and well-being of participants.

The same research methods were implemented in the other 11 countries[2] and adapted with local researchers to suit the country context. Unlike in other countries, the household survey in Jordan was conducted not only among the national population but also among the refugee population in Za'atari camp. The research was designed and implemented following strict safeguarding and ethics protocols. In Jordan, complementary research activities were designed with the aim of answering the following questions:

1. What is the extent and nature of internet use among children aged 12–17 and their caregivers in Jordan?
2. What characterizes tech-facilitated child abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse?
3. What factors are associated with victimization and perpetration?
4. How do children protect, prevent and respond to tech-facilitated abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse?
5. How do families, friends and social networks prevent and respond to tech-facilitated child abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse?
6. How do organizations (e.g. law enforcement, the justice sector, service providers, government and educators) prevent and respond to tech-facilitated child abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse?
7. How does existing policy and legislation prevent and respond to tech-facilitated child abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse?

Legal and policy analysis

The analysis of national legal and policy frameworks was aimed at identifying legal gaps, assessing compliance with international obligations, and highlighting strengths and gaps in national responses to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. The legal and policy analysis was developed using a detailed checklist consisting of over 140 items, ensuring consistency across countries analysed. This tool, based on international legal standards and best practices, evaluates areas such as legal definitions, criminalization, jurisdiction, child-centred justice, private sector responsibilities, and child protection policies.

To conduct the analysis, ECPAT International collected national laws and policy documents in collaboration with local partners, ensuring they reflected current legal frameworks. These were analysed using the checklist to identify legal gaps and enforcement challenges, supported by case law and reports on prosecution where available.

The draft analysis underwent internal and external expert reviews, including review from a local civil society partner and the UNICEF country office, to ensure accuracy and real-world relevance.

2 The second round of DH studies was completed in 12 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Mexico); Eastern Europe (Armenia, Montenegro and North Macedonia); the Middle East and North Africa (Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia); and South Asia (Pakistan).

More information on this research method can be found here.

Household survey of 12–17-year-olds and their parents/guardians

The purpose of the survey was to hear directly from children and their parents/guardians about their online experiences, both positive and negative. The questionnaire was divided into modules, most of which were administered by an enumerator. For personal questions, including those around well-being, mental health and violence, respondents input their answers directly in the tablet to ensure that their comfort and confidentiality were protected. The target population for the survey was 12–17-year-old internet users who live in a private (or individual) household. In addition, one of their parents/guardians was also interviewed regardless of whether they used the internet. 'Internet users' were defined as those who have used the internet in the three months prior to the survey, in line with the threshold set by the International Telecommunication Union.[3]

In Jordan, the survey targeted both nationals and refugees. The refugee sample was picked from the Za'atari refugee camp. For nationals, to achieve a nationally representative random sample of 12–17-year-old internet users, the survey used random probability sampling with national coverage. Fieldwork coverage for nationals was 100 per cent. 'Coverage' is defined as the proportion of the total population that had a chance of being included in the survey sample – meaning that the fieldwork would cover the area where they live if sampled. Data collection took place from 26 May to 4 July 2025.

The sampling followed a three-stage random probability clustered sample design. The response rate for the nationals was 84 per cent and 97 per cent in Za'atari camp. The sample achieved among nationals included 1,030 children and 1,030 of their parents/guardians, and 535 children and 535 parents/guardians in Za'atari camp.

The age and gender breakdowns of the sample are presented below:

Age and gender distribution of child sample:

	Nationals	Za'atari camp
12–14 years	51%	56%
15–17 years	49%	44%
Girls	49%	47%
Boys	51%	53%

Age and gender distribution of parent/guardian sample:

	Nationals	Za'atari camp
Under 40 years	32%	44%
Over 40 years	68%	56%
Women	88%	87%
Men	12%	13%

More information on this research method, including safeguarding protocols and limitations, can be found here.

Interviews with front-line workers

This research activity aimed to understand how front-line workers in Jordan support children and young people subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse, and to identify how systems can better prevent and respond to these forms of violence. It also aimed to explore the experiences of front-line workers handling cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as their perceptions of good practices and challenges.

The population of interest for the study was front-line workers in Jordan – such as social workers, psychologists, child protection officers and case managers – who provide support or essential services directly to individuals subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse during childhood. Front-line workers were included in the study if their case/patient load over the last 12 months included at least one child or young person who had been subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse during childhood. Front-line workers were only invited to participate if they were able to talk to the researchers about a de-identified case.

3 International Telecommunication Union, *Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals, 2020 edition*, ITU, Geneva, 2020. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/manual/ITUManualHouseholds2020_E.pdf.

A trained researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 front-line workers. The sample included:

- Social workers employed in state systems under the Ministry of Social Development or working for NGOs supporting children, families, and adults
- Professionals supporting vulnerable populations intersecting with children subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse

Interviews were conducted between July 2024 and May 2025. Among the 15 front-line workers interviewed, 12 were women and 3 were men, based in 3 different cities in Jordan (Amman, Rusaifeh and Zarqa).

Throughout the report, attributions to data from this research activity with front-line workers will be indicated with (FW) at the end of quotes.

More information on this research method, including safeguarding protocols and limitations, can be found here.

Interviews with justice professionals

This research activity aimed to understand how Jordanian justice mechanisms respond to children subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse to identify how systems can better prevent and respond to these forms of violence. The research also aimed to explore the experiences of justice professionals handling cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as their perceptions of good practices and challenges.

The population of interest for this study was justice professionals in Jordan, such as lawyers, judges and special investigators. Justice professionals were included in the study if they had a direct role working on a case of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in the last five years. Justice professionals were only invited to participate if they were able to talk to the researchers about a de-identified case. Ongoing cases were excluded to ensure the integrity of the case in the justice system.

A trained researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with eight justice professionals across the judiciary. Their responsibilities included investigation, prosecution and overseeing cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Interviews were conducted between July 2024 and May 2025. All of the justice professionals interviewed were men.

Throughout the report, attributions to data from this research activity with justice professionals will be indicated with (JP) at the end of quotes.

More information on this research method, including safeguarding protocols and limitations, can be found here.

Interviews with national law enforcement

INTERPOL's Crimes Against Children Unit conducted field-based assessments in collaboration with each member country's National Central Bureau (NCB). INTERPOL's teams engaged directly with national law enforcement agencies in Amman, as well as child protection units, and trusted civil society partners and NGOs to understand the operational realities of investigating and responding to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse . These engagements focused on identifying practical challenges: gaps in resources, limitations in investigative capacity and barriers to international cooperation. The findings were to inform the targeted support INTERPOL provides, which could include access to specialized training, analytical tools and coordinated operational assistance. While this report includes INTERPOL's aggregated, non-sensitive findings, the full scope of its observations and conclusions (including detailed operational recommendations and tailored capacity-building measures) are shared exclusively with national authorities, ensuring the integrity of ongoing investigations.

More information on this research method can be found here.

Limitations and understanding the data

To fully understand the findings of this report, it is important to consider the limitations of the research activities and their implementation in Jordan.

1. The Disrupting Harm survey was originally designed to include modules on sexual violence, both in-person and through digital technologies. This included strict safeguarding protocols to ensure the well-being of research participants and the provision of the necessary care and support to participants if needed. However, these questions were deemed too sensitive for the Jordanian context by the local technical working committee, and were therefore excluded. This means that this report does not include any data on the scope or nature of children's experiences of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan.
2. The research team faced difficulties in recruiting judges and law enforcement officers due to scheduling constraints. It is possible that the sensitive nature of discussing cases of (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse could have been a contributing factor. As a result, this research includes a smaller number of representatives of the judiciary and law enforcement officials in comparison with the initial research plan. The research findings are therefore based more on perspectives shared by social workers, psychologists, case managers and child protection officers.
3. When professionals were interviewed, there were challenges in engaging in an open conversation about their experiences responding to cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. This may be due to several reasons, including concerns about data security, confidentiality and trust in the research process.
4. The study was originally designed to interview young people (aged 18–24 years) who had been subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse during childhood. However, after the pilot phase, when three survivors were interviewed, it was decided to not proceed with this component of the study because researchers identified challenges to implementing the required safeguarding standards. This represents a major gap in understanding what forms of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse children in Jordan face, what tactics perpetrators used to coerce children and how children were supported to seek help and access justice, among others. Without this information, it is difficult to understand how to best protect children and support them in child-friendly and trauma-informed ways.

Ethical approval

UNICEF Innocenti obtained ethical approval for the Disrupting Harm project from the Health Media Lab, a global institutional review board. In addition, UNICEF Jordan, the National Council for Family Affairs and the National Technical Committee for the Disrupting Harm Study, which included representatives from government institutions, NGOs and other key national stakeholders on child protection, reviewed and provided feedback on the research protocols and tools. The survey tools and protocols were also reviewed and approved by the Department of Statistics in Jordan.

National consultation

In a national consultation in February 2026, representatives across sectors including government, law enforcement authorities and civil society in Jordan were asked to provide input on the Disrupting Harm findings and recommendations to enhance their relevance for the Jordanian context. The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), the National Technical Committee and UNICEF Jordan supported the organization of the consultations.

INTRODUCTION

Disrupting Harm uses the term 'technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse' to refer to *any form of* sexual exploitation and abuse of a child that involves the use of technology. This broad definition allows for recognition of the diverse and evolving ways that digital tools, platforms and content can be used in the sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Technology in this context includes, but is not limited to, the internet, social media, messaging apps, online gaming platforms, and devices used to create or distribute images, videos, or other content. The definition does not depend on who the perpetrator is, how they commit the abuse, or the child's awareness that what is happening is abusive. It also does not depend on the child's actions before, during or after the sexual exploitation and abuse has taken place.

Each child subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse has a unique story. For some, it may be a single incident; for others, it is part of a broader pattern of violence in their lives. Incidents referred to in this report could be connected to existing abusive relationships, human trafficking, violence in school, home or the community, or other forms of violence that extend beyond what is captured through this research.

Perpetrators may use digital platforms to manipulate or threaten children they already know, or to contact children not previously known to them. Technology facilitates sexual exploitation and abuse in different ways: in some cases, it remains confined to the digital realm; in others, it extends and intensifies abuse that is already taking place in person. And in other instances, abuse begins online and later progresses into physical contact.

Tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse is shaped by a variety of factors and dynamics that are difficult to capture. These include but are not limited to power imbalances, social identities, economic inequalities, as well as social, gender and cultural norms and values. These dynamics are not always directly visible in the data but are critical to understanding how sexual exploitation and abuse occur and how children are impacted.

Due to challenges in hearing directly from children and young people about their exposure to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse, it is difficult to understand the scale of this issue in Jordan, the complex drivers of sexual exploitation and abuse, and the ways children and young people react and respond when they are victimized. Without speaking to children and young people and understanding the context in which violence occurs, there is a risk of oversimplifying the issue and missing key areas for prevention and response. Nonetheless, the findings presented in this report offer a starting point for understanding aspects of this issue in Jordan.

1. TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN JORDAN:

PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS, LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LAW ENFORCEMENT INSIGHTS

1. TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN JORDAN: PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS, LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LAW ENFORCEMENT INSIGHTS

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the phenomenon of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan, before delving into specific topics and themes that analyse it from its various angles. Beyond the definition adopted for the purposes of this study,[4] it is important to consider how front-line professionals themselves understand and describe these phenomena. The following sections therefore explore what practitioners working directly with children and families define as tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, and their perceptions of the extent of the phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a general overview of the legal framework in Jordan and statistical data collected by law enforcement through technology companies to lay the groundwork for deeper analysis and considerations.

Professionals' definitions and perceptions of the extent of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse

When asked how they would define ;tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse;", front-line workers offered a variety of answers. Several of them were mainly shaped by the cases that they had encountered directly. For example, one interviewee answered with reference to cases where a girl might have met a boy online, and then run away to meet the boy in person:

> ***We often deal with cases where the beneficiary ran away from home and met someone, which led to her being sexually assaulted. In my experience, girls run away due to family violence. For instance, parents might catch her talking to boys on the internet, leading to conflict and her eventual departure from home. These cases often escalate into sexual exploitation.*** **(FW)**

Another front-line professional interviewed considered tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse as simply *"any sexually abusive behaviour towards children" (FW), while another explained that it implies "any activity or act with sexual implications, including sharing inappropriate videos, images, verbal harassment, blackmail or explicit conversations."* (FW)

Another interviewee noted that within their organization, they tended to adopt a broad view of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse:

> ***This could be in the form of threats, verbal abuse, or even forcing victims to perform sexual actions through the internet or exploiting them through the internet. All these cases are classified under online sexual abuse and abuse in general.*** **(FW)**

One interviewee, in their definition, linked it with intrafamilial violence:

> ***[...] domestic violence, gender-based violence, or violence cases from outside the family, like online exploitation.*** **(FW)**

One front-line professional noted that in their family's own use of YouTube, an advert that might pop up between videos could be abuse:

> ***Children watch videos on YouTube... I don't let my child watch anything on the phone or the iPad because I need to take care of my family, but he watches TV, and I would be monitoring what he is watching. As he [my son] is watching YouTube an ad pops up, you can only click skip after one minute. This ad represents an abuse.*** **(FW)**

4 Tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse covers any situation involving digital, internet and communication technologies at some point during the continuum of sexual exploitation or abuse of a child.

1. TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN JORDAN: PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS, LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LAW ENFORCEMENT INSIGHTS

The most comprehensive definition of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse came from one interviewee who described it as *"any sexual activity or any activity of a sexual nature through the internet, social media and digital technology in general"* (FW). This front-line professional provided examples such as *"verbal sexual abuse, sexual blackmailing like photos, dissemination of videos and photos by creating an account in the girl's name and posting improper photos or talking to the girl with improper sexual language"* noting it could also take the form of *"filming and photographing children and selling their photos and videos, often without the consent of the child."* (FW)

As explained by one front-line professional, there is no single definition of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse shared among professionals in Jordan:

> ***There's no unified definition really. We follow the standard sexual abuse definition of minors and persons with special needs but it includes online forms even through indirect communication but with the intention of sexual exploitation that can also include through money. Sexual abuse is sexual abuse irrespective of being online or not.*** **(FW)**

The professionals interviewed, even those working together within the same institution, or as part of the same team, also had diverse perceptions on the extent of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. While most front-line workers could concretely only refer to one or two cases, some noted that almost all cases that they saw included some online component and thus constituted tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse:

> ***You know it's hard to count how many because almost all the young girls we support have had some level of experience with online exploitation. It's part of the profile of our target group – young girls who are particularly vulnerable due to the prevalence of technology in their lives and the lack of adequate supervision. Over the years, especially with the increased access to technology, the number of such cases has grown significantly.*** **(FW)**

One front-line professional reported that they saw between 5 and 10 cases a year at most, but that this was not because there are few cases, but rather a reluctance to report, the impact of social and cultural norms, and the stigma associated with it:

> ***This is not because there are no cases, but because people don't report. If you compare the numbers available at the Cybercrimes Department and those of the different organizations, you will see that there is a gap. At the present time, we don't have cases, except for four and my colleague has all the details regarding these cases.*** **(FW)**

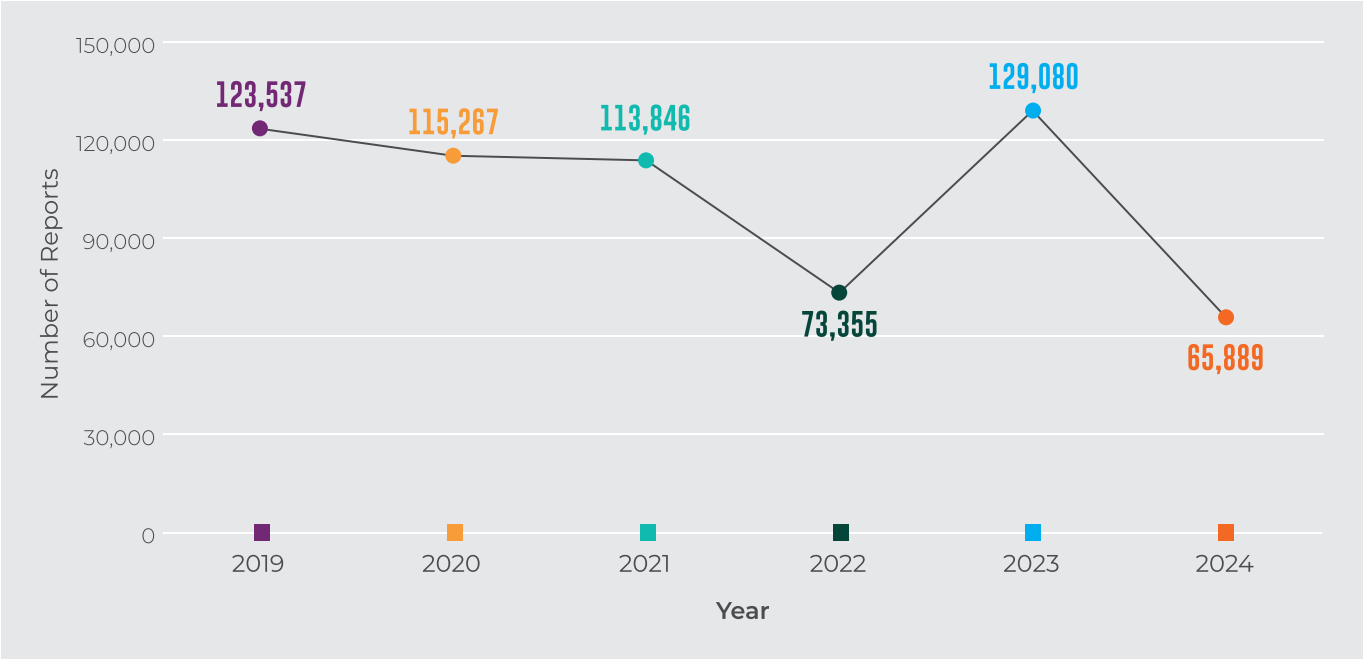
These insights from the interviews highlight that there is no single shared understanding of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. Definitions ranged from broad interpretations encompassing any form of sexual abuse involving technology, to more specific understandings shaped by the types of cases practitioners encounter in their daily work. The interviews also revealed differing perceptions regarding the prevalence of such cases: while some professionals reported encountering only a limited number of cases, others suggested that online elements are present in many of the situations affecting the children they support. These differing perspectives may also influence how cases are identified and addressed in practice.

Law enforcement insights: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports

Reports developed and disseminated by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) based in the United States of America, known as CyberTips, are an important indicator that can shed light on the rates of occurrence of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse taking place in a country.

United States law requires electronic service providers based in the United States to report suspected cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse to NCMEC. Most of these reports involve the upload of child sexual abuse material to a social media platform, by a user outside of the United States. Geographic indicators related to the upload of child sexual abuse material are used to refer the CyberTip to the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of CyberTips associated with Jordan. The graph shows a fluctuation, with a general downward trend of the number of CyberTips reports for Jordan from 2019 to 2024.



Given the worldwide trend in increased internet access, social media use and the ubiquity of handheld devices, an increase in CyberTip reports related to online abuse is naturally assumed for most countries.

When a downward trend such as this is noticed, as is the case in Jordan, it is worth considering why. The drop in reports in 2024 should not be viewed as a reduction in actual harmful activity, but rather the result of two major industry-wide changes:

- The "bundling" mechanism: in 2024, NCMEC implemented a "bundling" system to streamline reporting. Previously, every individual share of a specific illegal file could trigger a separate report. Under the new system, electronic service providers can group thousands of related instances into a single "bundle" report.
- The impact of Meta's end-to-end encryption: Meta (Facebook and Instagram), which historically has accounted for the vast majority of NCMEC reports, rolled out default end-to-end encryption across its messaging services throughout 2024. Because end-to-end encryption prevents service providers from scanning the content of private messages for illegal material using automated hashing tools, the volume of automated "flags" dropped precipitously.

It is important to recognize that these reports show only a partial picture of the overall landscape of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in any country, mostly due to the fact that only electronic service providers based in the United States are legally required to report instances of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse to NCMEC. In countries such as Jordan, where the primary language is not English and a variety of electronic service providers not based in the United States are used by the public, these reports are not capturing the full scope of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

It is strongly recommended that Jordanian law enforcement agencies establish a structured process to risk-assess and triage all CyberTip reports, even when immediate action may not be feasible. Experience shows that not every CyberTip report represents a child in immediate danger when assessed against NCMEC's risk assessment matrix; however, local context is essential. By incorporating national-level intelligence and law enforcement data, Jordanian authorities can provide a far more accurate assessment of the true risk associated with each report. This approach ensures that potentially high-risk cases are not overlooked and that resources are allocated effectively.

The legal framework on technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse

Adequate criminalization of the various forms of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse is a crucial first step towards accountability, as it affirms that such conduct constitutes a serious crime and provides the foundation for effective prosecution. Over time, clear legal recognition can also help shift societal attitudes by framing these acts as criminal offences rather than as personal or moral failure on the part of the child. In the longer term, this can contribute to dismantling the stigma and fear that enable perpetrators to exploit and abuse children, paving the way for broader cultural change.

The 2023 Cybercrime Law represents the main legislative instrument addressing these offences and marks a significant advancement in the legal response to online harms against children in Jordan. It criminalizes several core forms of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, including the use of information technology for the purpose of exploiting a child in prostitution,[5] encouraging debauchery, seducing another person or offending public morals.[6]

With respect to child sexual abuse material, the Cybercrime Law adopts a broad and protective approach by prohibiting a wide range of conduct related to the production, transfer and dissemination of images, recordings, drawings or other sexually explicit materials depicting the sexual organs of, or real, virtual or simulated sexual acts involving a child.[7] The law also explicitly criminalizes possession of such material within an information system or data storage medium.[8] Mere access to child sexual abuse material – meaning access without the intention to share further – is, however, not a crime. This could create a loophole that allows individuals to intentionally seek out and view child sexual abuse material online, including non-consensually shared content, without legal consequences, ultimately fuelling its continued circulation and undermining efforts to reduce demand.

Importantly, the inclusion of the term "virtual" in the law's definition of child sexual abuse material suggests that content that is digitally generated, including through the use of tools powered by artificial intelligence, could also be covered. Such material could instead fall under the broader category of "pornographic materials," whose production and dissemination are also criminalized, albeit subject to lighter penalties.[9] However, this appears unlikely as these offences seem to target material involving adults and require a complaint by the person depicted for prosecution.[10] In this context, attention to how these provisions are applied in practice would help

5 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2023). Cybercrime Law, Art. 14-B.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., Art. 13-B-1.
8 Ibid., Art. 13-C.
9 Ibid., Art. 13-A-1.
10 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2023). Cybercrime Law, Art. 13-A-2.

ensure that cases involving digitally generated child sexual abuse material are addressed under the legal framework specifically designed to protect children. This would support consistent implementation, without presuming the existence of interpretative gaps.

With regard to grooming of children for sexual purposes, although related conduct could potentially be prosecuted under the above-mentioned provision on use of information technology to sexually exploit a child, the legal framework in Jordan could be further strengthened by incorporating a definition of grooming that comprehensively criminalizes the process of building trust with a child with the intent of sexually abusing and/or exploiting the child, either in person or entirely online (for example, by coercing them to produce sexual content). Such a provision would align with the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime, adopted in December 2024, which defines grooming as *"the act of intentionally communicating, soliciting, grooming, or making any arrangement through an information and communications technology system for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against a child."*[11]

Regarding tech-facilitated sexual extortion of children, existing provisions on the use of information technology to blackmail or threaten someone to compel them to act or provide a benefit[12] offer a useful basis for prosecution. Such conduct is punishable by not less than one year in prison.[13] The penalty may be increased to temporary hard labour if the threat concerns matters affecting "honour" or is used to force someone to do something.[14] While these provisions could allow for prosecution of tech-facilitated sexual extortion of children, defining this conduct as a distinct criminal offence would be beneficial to fully capture the specific harms and methods involved, namely the coercive use of self-generated sexual material to extort sexual acts, money or other benefits from a child. It could also enable the collection of reliable data on recorded cases, which is essential for developing effective prevention and response strategies.

Regarding unwanted exposure to sexual content, the Cybercrime Law broadly criminalizes sending or transferring any pornographic material (including depicting adults) through information technologies.[15] Beyond this general provision, the law considers it an aggravating circumstance to send sexual content to a child, but only when there is proof of intent to lure or sexually exploit the child.[16] This means that behaviours such as cyberflashing are excluded. Considering the inherent harm such exposure can cause, the law should ideally be amended to recognize any act of exposing a child to sexual content as an aggravating circumstance, regardless of the perpetrator's specific intent. While the Cybercrime Law does not address unwanted messages of a sexual nature, the Penal Code punishes proposing an indecent act or addressing indecent words to a boy under the age of 18 or to a girl or woman of any age.[17]

Overall, the Cybercrime Law provides an important basis for addressing tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse and its existing provisions cover some forms of harmful conduct, while demonstrating responsiveness to emerging risks. Further refinement would build on this basis to close the gaps outlined above, as they risk enabling impunity in very specific circumstances. In chapter 5, we assess the practical implementation of existing provisions, exploring the barriers children face in accessing justice and how justice professionals and service providers handle such cases, to assess the extent to which responses are child-centred in practice.

11 United Nations, United Nations Convention against Cybercrime, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/243, Art. 15, United Nations. New York, 24 December 2024.

12 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2023). Cybercrime Law, Art. 18.

13 Ibid., Art. 18.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., Art. 13-A-1.

16 Ibid., Art. 13-B-2.

17 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1960). Penal Code, Art. 306.

2. THE ROLE OF GENDER-BASED SOCIAL NORMS IN ENABLING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

2. THE ROLE OF GENDER-BASED SOCIAL NORMS IN ENABLING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Interviews with front-line workers and justice professionals revealed that gender-based social norms create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by perpetrators. In general, if people act outside these norms, they may face consequences, including discrimination and exposure to harm. This was evident in the research where, in several cases described by professionals, perpetrators groomed girls and young women and then used fear of exposure to their relatives as a threat to escalate the abuse further:

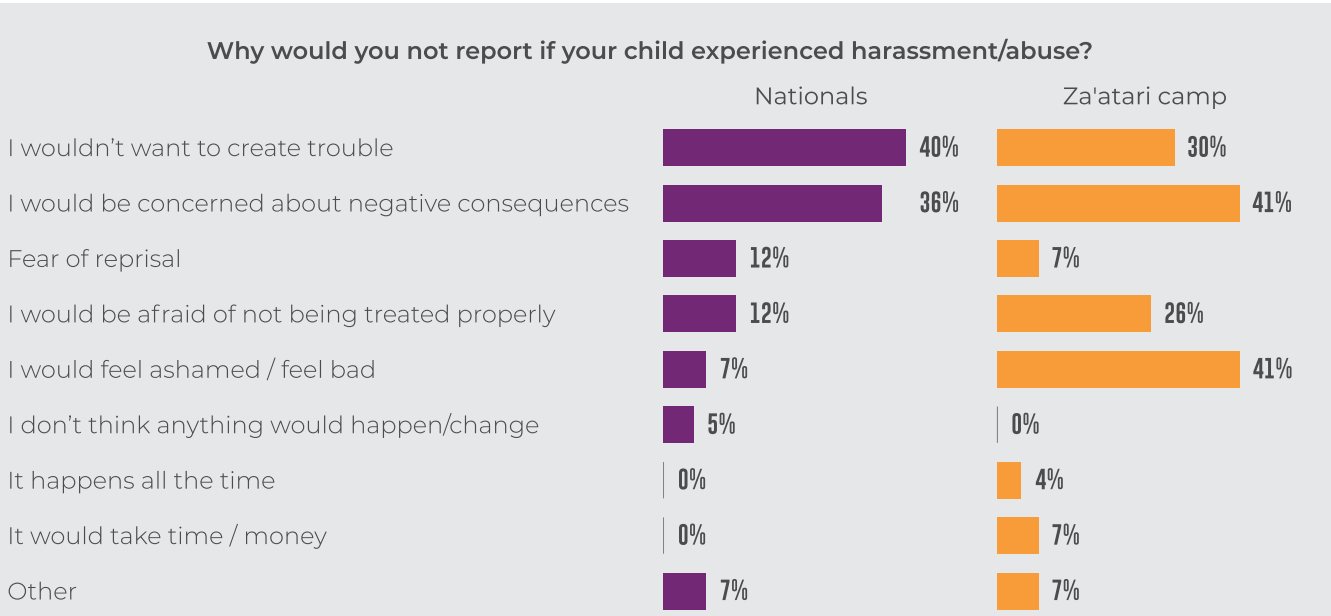
> ***Their online interactions escalated into an exchange of photographs. The perpetrator later weaponized these photos to coerce and blackmail the girl. He demanded more pictures, threatening to inform her brothers if she refused. Out of fear, she complied, sending additional photos. Eventually, the perpetrator arranged to meet her in person. He took her to a building, led her to the roof, and assaulted her.*** **(FW)**

> ***She then sent him a photo and day after day, he started asking for new photos. When she refused, he started threatening her by saying: 'I can get to your parents, I know where they live. I can ruin your life'.*** **(FW)**

> ***[He] threaten(ed) her... [saying:] 'If you don't continue talking to me, I will post your photos!'*** **(FW)**

Survey data on parents' responses (n=1,565) to child harassment or abuse reveal a similar pattern. While most parents surveyed indicated a willingness to take action if their child was harassed or abused, a small group (n=69) that would not report such incidents cited fear, social stigma and potential negative consequences as key deterrents to reporting.

Reasons for not reporting if a child experienced harassment/abuse



Base: Surveyed parents of internet-using children aged 12–17 who would not report to the police if their child were harassed or abused (n=42 – Nationals | n=27 – Za'atari camp).

In this sense, the perception that children have acted in a way that is contrary to social and cultural expectations and the resulting fear of exposure provides leverage to perpetrators, who use this to continue or escalate the exploitation and abuse of children. Some cases discussed by the interviewees escalated to contact sexual abuse.

Different people experience social and cultural norms in different ways, based on their intersecting identities[18] (being male, female, non-binary, young, old, migrant, native, rich, poor, having or not having a disability, etc.). Our findings show how the different social expectations placed on boys and girls lead to specific gender-related challenges in relation to sexual violence. In many instances described by professionals, girls subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse **did not seek help, disclose the abuse or even report it.** From the cases narrated during the interviews, it is evident that girls often hesitate to speak to adults about the abuse they endured. They do so only when they have no other choice.

We cannot say with certainty why children are hesitant to disclose or report abuse without speaking to children themselves. This remains a major gap in this type of research in Jordan. However, interviews with professionals revealed several factors that could make disclosure more difficult for children. These include **families and community members blaming girls for the abuse they were subjected to** rather than focusing on their well-being and/or trying to bring the perpetrator to justice. This is described in one example provided by a front-line worker:

> ***[The girl] was very concerned and scared of sharing what happened with anyone. She did not say anything. However, the grandmother found out by coincidence and there was a big issue in the way the grandmother dealt with the situation. She informed the [rest of the] family, and she made her [the girl] feel guilty… The family started treating her [the girl] like she was a disgrace to them.*** **(FW)**

Survey findings show that most parents (90 per cent) believe it is wrong for someone to take naked images or videos of themselves, and a significant proportion (81 per cent) feel that if such images or videos are shared with others, the person who took them is at fault. These attitudes may help explain the tendency to blame girls who are subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse.

In another case, a young girl decided to leave home *"due to feeling ashamed [about the exploitation and abuse] and feeling she had no support"* (FW). Other front-line workers observed similar patterns of blame and family rejection, as explained by one professional, who said:

> ***It's not uncommon for girls who have experienced sexual abuse or cyber sexual exploitation and become involved in the [social service] system to face rejection by their families.*** **(FW)**

18 The term *intersectionality* refers to an intellectual framework for understanding how various aspects of individual identity – including race, gender, social class – interact to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression. The term was coined by Crenshaw, in her 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." The concept of intersectionality has since been broadened beyond its initial framework of race and gender. It now includes a wide spectrum of social classifications, such as socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, age, physical or intellectual disabilities, and other dimensions of individual identity. Intersectionality emphasizes that different dimensions of identity are not isolated from one another; instead, they intertwine and overlap in intricate ways, resulting in distinct advantages or disadvantages, benefits or harms. The concept has been widely used by scholars in the realm of the sociology of childhood(s) to highlight that children are not a homogenous group but rather individuals with various intersecting identities. Child protection policies should therefore take this into account to be effective for all children, including the most vulnerable.

These issues are visible in parental attitudes emerging from the survey data, with roughly 1 in 5 caregivers (19 per cent) reporting that they would punish their child following an upsetting online experience. Such responses may reflect lingering attitudes that associate children's online exposure with disobedience or irresponsibility, rather than recognizing externally imposed risks.

Other research participants shared that it is not uncommon for a girl to **need protection from her own male family members** after the exploitation and abuse is disclosed or otherwise discovered:

> ***For instance, if the beneficiary [child receiving support] is living with her mother, who is aware of the abuse her daughter has endured, but she also has brothers who are married and unaware of the incident, this could present challenges if they were to find out. Similarly, uncles or other extended family members can also pose risks.*** **(FW)**

The fear of violence motivated by perceived family reputation is a concern, as shown by the following quote:

> ***I prevented a crime... the daughter could have been killed or she could have lost her education...*** **(FW)**

This form of violence against mostly women and girls, rooted in beliefs about preserving family status or social image, might also come into play when bringing cases to the FPJD. There seems to be a perception among some front-line workers interviewed that male family members need to be involved in official reporting and judicial proceedings:

> ***If it [prosecution] were to continue, the father should at some point be informed, as the guardian, and if we were to refer the guy [the perpetrator] to court, the father should be present, and he should be the one referring the guy to court. The daughter is legally incapable. She was 16 or 17 years old, and the mother was very afraid of the father knowing [she has been a victim of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse]. The FPJD respected the potential risk for the daughter.*** **(FW)**

> ***[I can talk of a case about] a mother and her daughter who was a victim of online abuse, and they don't want the father to know. If her father knew that she was in contact with a guy, she will be in danger [...] The first request that came from the mother when she called us was for the father not to know. And, as you know, the role of the father for the FPJD is very important, legally, because he is the guardian. We told her that we will do our best for the father not to know.*** **(FW)**

Professionals also described how families at times react to, or try to prevent, child abuse by arranging early marriage for the girls:

> ***[...] we invite families with issues of violence, and we raise their awareness on violence...we also invite families that have daughters who are at the early marriage age, and we train them. We conduct pre- and post-assessments... some parents believe that one way to protect girls from delinquency and sexual assaults... online or in person... is by protecting them and marrying them off.*** **(FW)**

2. THE ROLE OF GENDER-BASED SOCIAL NORMS IN ENABLING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

> ***In rural areas, for instance… and I myself come from a rural area so I know how sensitivity to such topics remains deeply ingrained. Historically, families preferred to resolve cases quietly – for instance, marrying off a girl who had been assaulted, or treating the case as a personal dispute between boys.*** **(JP)**

Although child marriage is not inherently related to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, it is discussed in this report because, along with other forms of abuse, such as rape, it forms part of the broader legal and social framework through which all forms of sexual violence are understood and addressed in Jordan, as elsewhere. Legal definitions and societal attitudes towards sexual offences can influence how all forms of abuse are interpreted, including those facilitated through digital technologies.

Indeed, although in Jordan the practice of perpetrators marrying the girl they abused has not been legally permissible since 2017,[19] previous accounts suggest that there are instances where families think that arranged marriages can be a way to protect girls who have been subjected to sexual violence, including tech-facilitated sexual abuse and exploitation, from further violence. This may in part be due to the fact that patriarchal gender-based social norms, which play an important role in some communities, link a girl's 'honour' with her sexual conduct. When the expression of sexuality takes places within the social institution of marriage, the girl's honour is considered 'safe'. However, this perspective does not take into account concepts such as 'consent' and 'sexual agency', and it may undermine the rights of girls while exposing them to further violence. These concerns are heightened by the fact that Jordanian law still permits the marriage of children aged 15 to 17 under specific circumstances.[20]

Boys are also impacted by social and cultural norms that hinder the disclosure of abuse and access to justice, especially when the perpetrator is a male. These barriers may also be reinforced by the legal framework itself. Under the Jordanian Penal Code, rape is defined as non-consensual sexual intercourse with a woman or girl.[21] Other sexual acts committed against both males and females are instead prosecuted as "violation of honour", a lesser offence carrying reduced penalties.[22] As a result, the notion that a boy can be subjected to rape does not formally exist in law. This framing implicitly suggests that sexual violence against boys is less severe or less deserving of protection than that against girls, reinforcing stigma and further silencing survivors. Similarly to what was described in relation to child marriage, narrow legal conceptions of rape can also shape perceptions of victimhood and harm in cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

According to interview participants, when males are subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation or abuse, one reason for non-disclosure, or for families' hesitation to contact the relevant authorities, is linked to several factors, including social expectations that males should be able to protect themselves, as well as the stigma associated with the nature of the abuse, particularly in cases that occur from male to male, which heightens feelings of shame and limits help-seeking.

One front-line professional explained that in a case where a boy shared with his mother that a man groomed him through an online game, even though the mother promptly encouraged psychosocial support for her child, her words reflected certain norms and expectations attached to masculinity:

19 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 'Jordanian Parliament abolishes law that allowed rapists to avoid prosecution by marrying their victims', UN-Women, New York, 4 August 2017.
20 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2019). Personal status Law, Art. 10.
21 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1960). Penal Code, Art. 292.
22 Ibid., Art. 299.

> ***The 13-year-old boy… I will talk to you about this case from a gender… the socially expected roles… and perspectives… the woman wanted him 'to be a man,' 'to defend himself,' etc. And her reaction was 'How come he did not know how to defend himself?!' 'How come he talked about personal things?!'*** **(FW)**

As noted by specialists working on the front lines, when discussing cases of boys who had been sexually exploited and abused by older individuals, social perceptions associated with cases of abuse occurring from male to male are a key factor in families' reluctance to report or seek services. They explained that fear of social stigma and its repercussions for the child's image and future leads some families to avoid engaging with service providers, out of concern that the incident may become known and result in negative social judgments.

> ***The father was informed… at the beginning there was no acceptance on both sides [father and mother], because of societal traditions and values… it was difficult for them to comprehend how their child was exposed to this incident… what would happen if someone knew about what happened… you know how it is in society […] In Arab societies and according to our traditions and culture, there is no acceptance of such issues. Even if the child was exposed to this form of abuse against his/her will… for fear they might be stigmatized… they fear that people might know… they [parents] pressure the child not to talk about the matter in public… they try to be very discreet about it.*** **(FW)**

Similarly, when the perpetrator in a case of abuse against a girl is a woman, that is, in cases where the abuse is female to female, some social concepts and beliefs related to personal relationships may complicate effective interventions and create an additional barrier to reporting and seeking help, as one interview participant explained.

This was reflected in a case described by one service provider, in which a girl was being lured by a group of women through social media. When the matter was discovered, the grandmother informed family members, which led to the girl being treated negatively and regarded as a source of embarrassment for the family. The service provider noted that the main issue was not only the incident itself, but the way it was interpreted and handled: the girl was not viewed as a victim of exploitation, but was treated as though she had engaged in wrongful behaviour. This understanding led the grandmother to bring the girl to the service centre out of concern about the impact on her behaviour, rather than as a child in need of protection and support.

The responses above illustrate how the grooming itself was treated as secondary and demonstrate a lack of understanding or acknowledgement that the child has experienced a grave violation of her rights. In addition, treating the child 'like she was a disgrace' reflects victim-blaming attitudes that are harmful to children. Such responses risk stigmatizing children and overlooking the fact they were exploited and abused, and require trauma-informed and child-centred service provision to help them recover. These reactions place more blame on the child than the perpetrator and therefore enable sexual violence to continue with impunity.

A child's fear that they will be blamed, punished or face further harm if they disclose – including violence justified by family members as a way of preserving family reputation – creates a barrier to help-seeking and is a serious protection challenge. If children and young people could rely on strong support from families, peers and communities, even when their acts may be contrary to social and cultural norms, this would diminish the perceived power that perpetrators have over children, meaning that they can seek help earlier and escape exploitative and abusive situations.

Some of the interviewees also underlined that **it is very difficult to openly discuss sex or sexual matters within the family and community. This makes it even more challenging for children**

to disclose abuse. Even for social workers and psychologists, to openly discuss topics such as (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse with both children and family members is challenging. For example, one front-line professional elaborated on the importance of using scientific terms for naming body parts:

> ***When I provide awareness-raising sessions for groups and I bring up the issue of sexual abuse... I tell them that it is important to understand that it is natural to name our body parts in their scientific terms... what makes us feel embarrassed about using these terms is the society... but there is nothing wrong in using these terms. Feeling embarrassed to use these terms will in return reflect on our children, who will feel embarrassed of their own organs. But if we talk about the organ in a natural way, they will understand that there is no need to feel embarrassed and hide things. We are models to our children... they will learn from us, and act like us. We are the first thing they see. This is my entry point when I talk to women... I actually ask them: 'what's going to happen if we name the organs in their scientific terms?'.*** **(FW)**

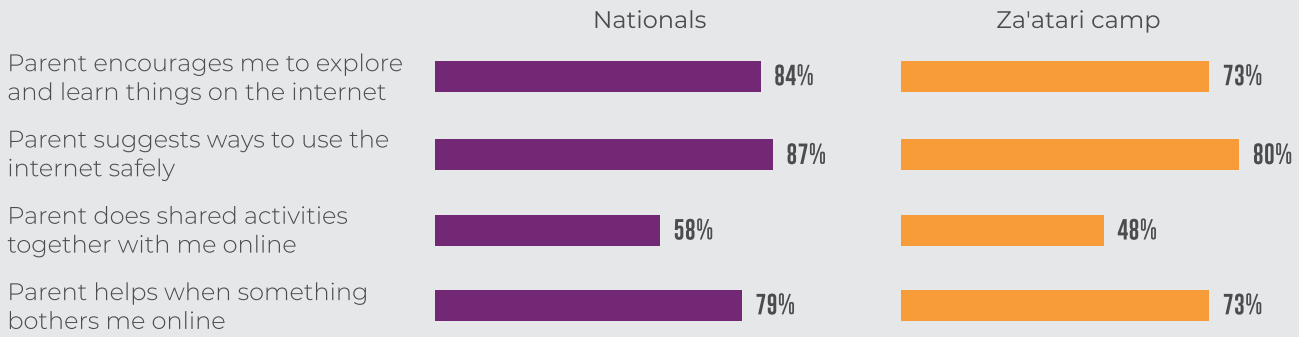
This reluctance can hinder education, knowledge and awareness about the risks and dangers that are prevalent within both the physical and digital environment, limiting effective preventive measures.

3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES

3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Survey findings suggest that parents' direct participation in children's online activities in Jordan remains limited. The survey data further shows that parents are more permissive with online activities that are solitary or content-consumption oriented, such as watching videos or messaging, but more cautious with activities that involve interaction or sharing online.

Enabling parent internet mediation



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 (n=1927; 884; 988 [nationals] | n=493; 478; 507; 467 [Za'atari].

Restrictive parent internet mediation

	Nationals	Za'atari camp
Does your parent allow you to – Download music or films (n= 973 [nationals]) n=526 [Za'atari camp]		
I am allowed to do this anytime	46%	52%
I am allowed to do this with permission or supervision	36%	35%
I am not allowed to do this	16%	14%
Does your parent allow you to – Use social media sites and apps (n= 1,014 [Nationals] | n=530 [Za'atari camp])		
I am allowed to do this anytime	59%	47%
I am allowed to do this with permission or supervision	32%	38%
I am not allowed to do this	9%	16%
Does your parent allow you to – Watch video clips (e.g., on YouTube) (n= 1,018 [Nationals] | n=527 [Za'atari camp])		
I am allowed to do this anytime	76%	67%
I am allowed to do this with permission or supervision	23%	29%
I am not allowed to do this	1%	4%

Does your parent allow you to – Play games with other people online (n= 992 [Nationals] | n=521 [Za'atari camp])		
I am allowed to do this anytime	48%	39%
I am allowed to do this with permission or supervision	25%	21%
I am not allowed to do this	27%	40%
Does your parent allow you to – Use instant messaging (n= 1,010 [Nationals] | n=531 [Za'atari camp])		
I am allowed to do this anytime	64%	56%
I am allowed to do this with permission or supervision	24%	32%
I am not allowed to do this	12%	12%
Does your parent allow you to – Share photos, videos or music online with others (n= 1,005 [Nationals] | n=530 [Za'atari camp])		
I am allowed to do this anytime	47%	40%
I am allowed to do this with permission or supervision	27%	23%
I am not allowed to do this	26%	37%

A lack of parental supervision was repeatedly emphasized by most of the service providers as a major risk factor for abuse, with a few of them calling for less screen time or no engagement with devices as prevention measures for tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. Survey data show that just over half of caregivers (54 per cent) believe they know more about the internet than their child, a perception that may shape how they supervise or support their children's online activities. Survey data indicate that caregiver-imposed restrictions were the second most common barrier to children's internet use. This is reflected as well through the words of a few front-line workers:

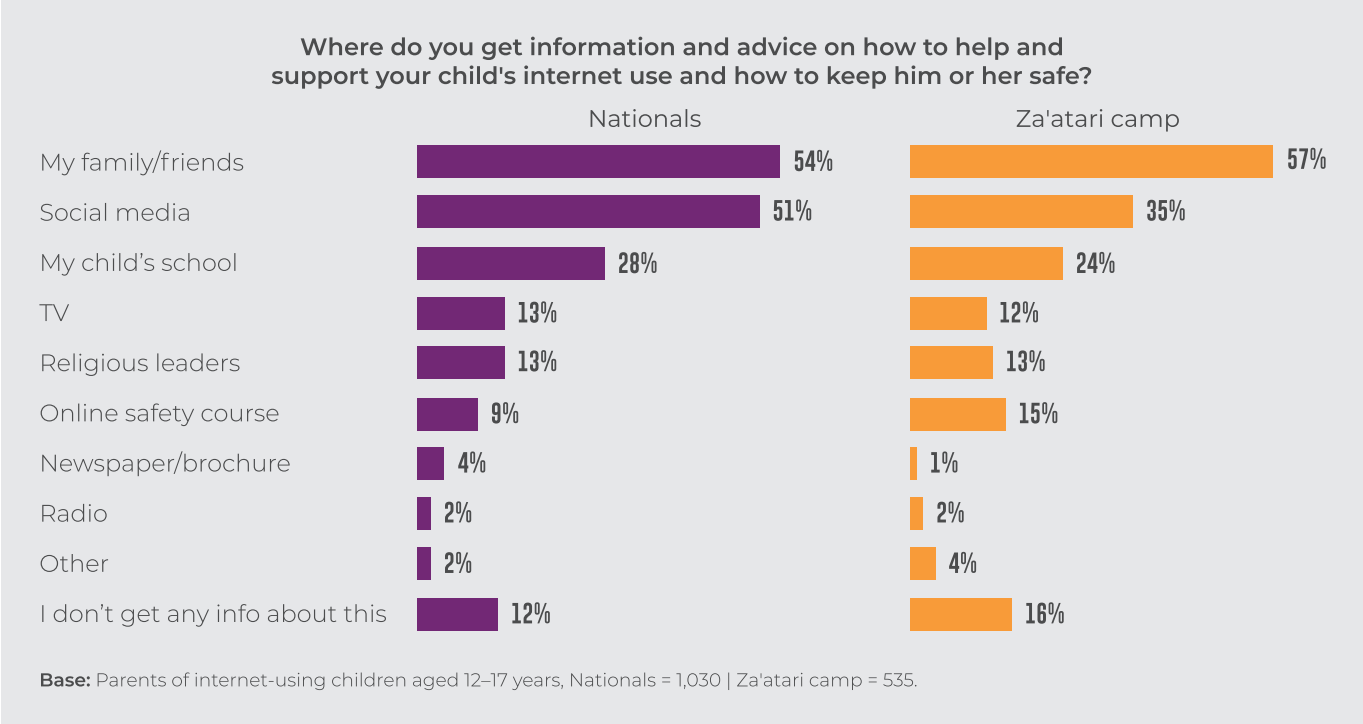
> ***[…] but this is what happens with people across society. Parents end up getting a phone for their child, because this cousin or this friend has one, and they don't want him/her to feel less than them. However, I believe that parents should know everything about their child's phone. And if they are not up to using technology, then they'd better not use it.*** **(FW)**

However, contrasting voices reflected on how, when parental supervision becomes authoritarian, including excessive control, restriction and discipline, it can be counterproductive, even creating opportunities for perpetrators to leverage fear of parents to sexually exploit or abuse a child. While spending time online can expose children to certain risks, large-scale research by UNICEF across 20 countries shows that screen time is not associated with increased exposure to tech-

facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, nor to other online harms like cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content.[23] Other factors, such as social and cultural norms that lead to victim-blaming and violence-supportive attitudes, lack of family support, and fear of punishment and isolation are more likely to increase the risk that children are exposed to online violence.

Parents' approaches to supervising their children's internet use and responding to online abuse may be shaped by the extent and type of digital safety information they receive. The survey asked parents where they get information and advice on how to help and support their child's internet use and how to keep them safe. Survey data indicate that parents in Jordan rely primarily on informal networks and digital platforms to obtain information and advice on how to help and protect their children online. This reliance may affect the quality, accuracy and reliability of the guidance parents receive regarding children's internet safety and digital well-being. The results also indicate important gaps in access to parental support and digital safety education. The fact that 12 per cent of national parents and an even higher proportion (16 per cent) of parents living in Za'atari camp reported receiving no information or advice at all suggests that a significant number of caregivers may lack the knowledge and skills needed to guide and protect children effectively online.

Access to online safety information



Base: Parents of internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

Relatedly, harsh parental discipline was highlighted by many professionals as a barrier to disclosure and reporting. **Fear of severe reactions** after *"misbehaviour"* or perceived *"mistakes"* **deter children from talking about their online activities** with their parents, which could include talking about potential abuse and deterring them from seeking help. Based on service providers' accounts, fear of parental anger or having their phones confiscated are a significant barrier to children disclosing sexual exploitation and abuse.

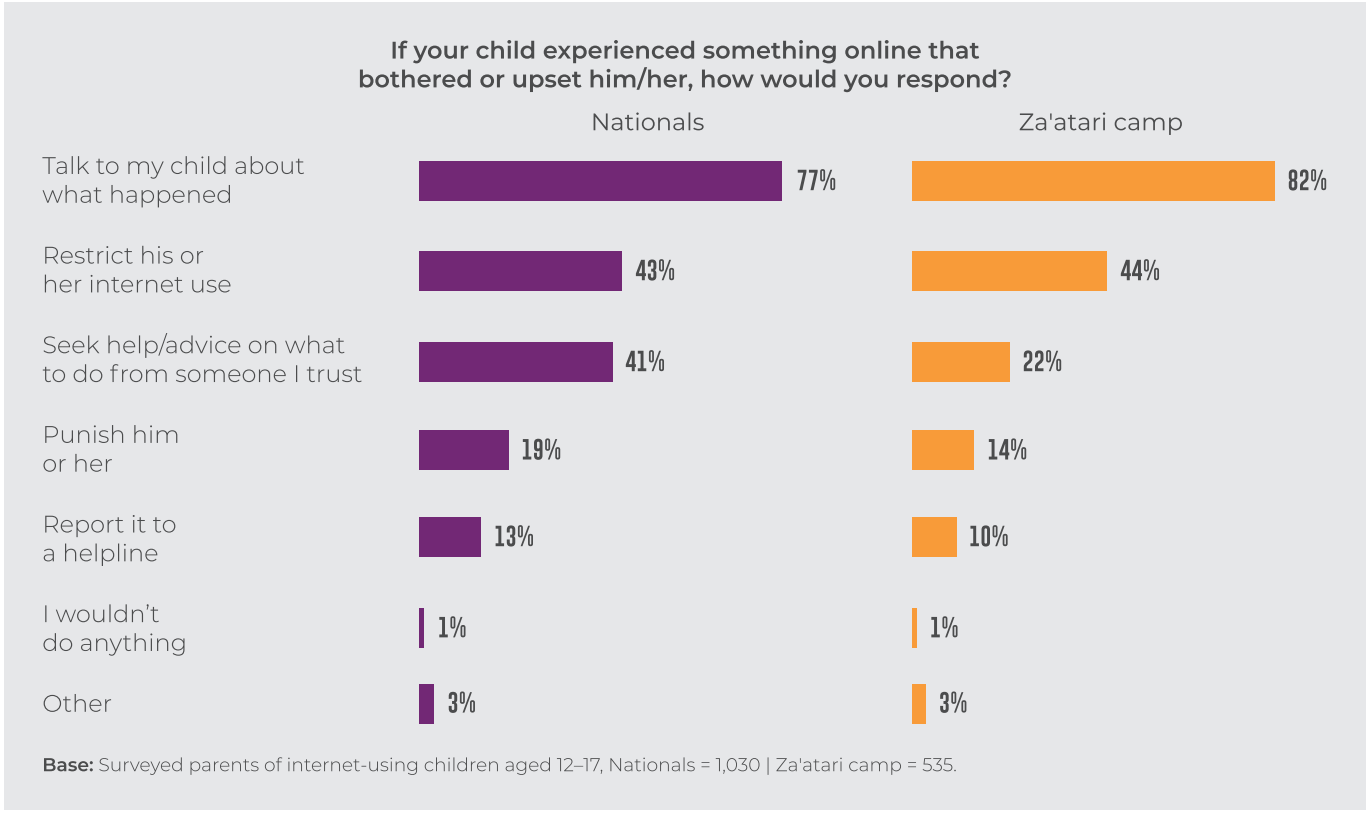
23 UNICEF Innocenti – Office of Strategy and Evidence, *Childhood in a Digital World: Screen time, skills and mental health*, UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, June 2025.

Several front-line workers noted that after a child discloses to their parents, they would stop trusting the child to make their own decisions or forbidding them (especially girls) from going out or being online. These were considered by parents as measures to protect the child from further harm:

> ***... During the follow-up sessions, the girl told me and the mental health specialist... that her mother would allow her sisters to go out together, but she would not allow her to accompany her sisters if the mother was not present [...] Sometimes it happens that parents unconsciously stigmatize the child. For example, everyone would be allowed to go out but not her, because 'we are afraid, we don't trust her anymore' [...] As a mother, she wanted to contain the situation by taking her daughter's phone. This is where we have a role in prevention and intervention.***

This response pattern was also observed in the survey. Survey data show that caregivers in Jordan tend to respond to their children's upsetting online experiences through communication and restriction. Talking to the child about what happened was the most common response (77 per cent), yet a substantial proportion (43 per cent) also implemented restrictive measures when a child encountered something distressing online. This indicates that alongside communication, restriction remains a widely used form of parental mediation in Jordan.

Parents' response if their child experienced something bothering or upsetting online



Base: Surveyed parents of internet-using children aged 12–17, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

According to the interviewees, an important part of their jobs is ensuring that parents are provided with valid alternatives to support their children, rather than taking punitive actions or imposing restrictions. This includes allowing the child to gradually regain independence, agency and responsibility, both in their digital journey and in their offline everyday life:

> ***The daughter was always accused of being in the wrong... all her practices are wrong... that she is not capable of assessing situations she puts herself in... She is not thoughtful about her actions... This is what the mother thought of the daughter. The mother was convinced that the bumpy relationship between the father and the girl was because of the daughter. From this point, we started addressing the mother's awareness about children's developmental stages [...] We worked with her on better parenting skills. It made a big difference... the mother was better able to understand her daughter's behaviour, actions and reactions... she understood that these reactions are a result of anxiety and fear.*** (FW)

When the professionals interviewed reflected on the role of parents in relation to disclosure, reporting, help-seeking and access to care, based on their cases, they also explained having the perception that parents were not always able to detect signs of trauma, and that they found it challenging to meet children's emotional and psychological needs.

The research reported extensively on supporting children who are exposed to difficult family circumstances within the family environment, such as family conflicts, the involvement of a family member in criminal activity, and domestic violence. The results also indicated that parental conflicts and domestic violence increase the risk of children being exposed to family trauma, which affects their mental health and in turn, increases their risk of being harmed and reduces the likelihood of reporting.

> ***At the same time, we must keep in mind the environment they [the children] come from, and we talk to them within the context of their environment and what they can do and what they can control within that context.*** (FW)

> ***I also began working with her [the girl survivor] on strategies to cope with her family dynamics. Her relationship with her stepmother is particularly strained, and she has lost contact with her mother.*** (FW)

In a few cases discussed by the interviewees, family members are perpetrators themselves, or facilitate tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, as, for example, explained by this front-line worker:

> ***In some cases, parents even exploit their daughters themselves, encouraging them to interact with boys online for material gain. When these situations come to light, parents often deny their involvement and place blame entirely on the girl. In extreme cases, such behaviour might fall under child trafficking.*** (FW)

In some interviews, particularly in more stable family settings, front-line workers perceived mothers as being more aware of the risks of their children being exploited or abused, or of such abuse already occurring.

However, even if mothers were able to identify changes in their child's behaviours, they often had difficulties supporting their children for a variety of reasons. The study has not interviewed mothers themselves, but based on front-line workers' and justice professionals' narratives and reflections on the cases they dealt with, part of these difficulties could be connected to challenging family

environments and gendered parenting norms and family dynamics. Some of these reflections are reproduced verbatim below.

As one front-line worker suggested, women can fear the reaction of male family members rather than perceiving them as supportive figures for their children:

> ***We told the child that we had to inform her mother, and we did. The mother was understanding but felt very angry and this is only natural. She said I have always tried to make her feel comfortable coming and talking to me. However, she feared the father's reaction.*** **(FW)**

In addition, interviewees mentioned instances when fathers were approached about the incident, but they refused to engage, or requested that the case be closed with no further action:

> ***In one case, the father of the child refused to talk or cooperate with the psychologist or the social worker. He was adamantly against any discussion related to the issue. I couldn't force him...*** **(JP)**

> ***The father repeatedly requested that the case be closed, fearing societal repercussions and the long-term impact on his son. This reflects a protective instinct but also highlights the stigma and fear of societal shame.*** **(JP)**

One professional also shared that engaging fathers in support and recovery sessions post-abuse is difficult due to the societal stigma associated with men seeking such help. These accounts suggest the need for the promotion of positive parenting practices, with specific strategies to increase fathers' involvement in children's care.

Additionally, a lack of positive communication within families can discourage disclosure and reporting, constituting a major barrier to a child receiving support, appropriate care and having a successful path to recovery. As demonstrated earlier in this report, some parents may even have the perception that their child is to blame for the sexual exploitation and abuse they suffered:

> ***The connection between working with the young woman and addressing family issues is critical. It's not uncommon for girls who have experienced sexual abuse or cyber sexual exploitation and become involved in the system to face rejection by their families. People might question how parents can reject a daughter who has been sexually assaulted, but this rejection stems from a variety of reasons. As my colleague, the social worker, may have explained, many parents struggle to comprehend how their daughter has 'put them in this situation' and often blame her.*** **(FW)**

According to the interviewees, many families find it challenging to ensure that their children *"behave appropriately"*, or appear to do so, while guaranteeing their well-being. This means that the front-line professionals' work with all members of the family is extensive and often time-consuming:

> ***Some parents refuse to attend or answer the call... They refuse to attend because they are angry... some parents find it difficult to accept... they can't accept the fact that their daughter has put them in this situation. Therefore, we try to find common ground... sometimes we meet with the parent separately. We sometimes try to schedule sessions with the father... at times, there is no acceptance on the part of the brothers... We never give up! We try to look for other family members, those who can support the young women, so we end up looking for the grandfather or the uncle. We have to continue searching for one supportive family member... we continue looking for a tip of thread to start somewhere.*** **(FW)**

Families' reactions seem rooted in fear of additional exposure, social isolation or reputational damage, all of which are likely influenced by social and cultural norms. No caregivers of children subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse were interviewed as part of this research in Jordan. However, it is crucial to engage this group in further research to understand their perceptions, fears and motivations, in order to better understand how they can be helped to support their children.

Families aside, professionals themselves are not exempt from internalizing harmful social and cultural norms that can lead to unconscious bias or victim-blaming in their practice. Some of this was reflected earlier in this report, and in addition, a few interviewees explain that children subjected to abuse and their families at times want to withdraw from seeking psychosocial support or any engagement with the formal system because of law enforcement officials making inappropriate comments that directly blame the child or their family.

Privacy and confidentiality by front-line professionals are key in encouraging disclosure, as explained in the following quote:

> ***I was also happy to learn, through my follow-up with the Cybercrimes Department and the FPJD, that the girl's problem was solved in a very nice and smooth way, in all privacy and confidentiality [...] From the mother's perspective, she felt relieved because we managed to maintain confidentiality and privacy...no one knew. The matter was dealt with in complete confidentiality and privacy...it was a success story in that sense [...] I am against cases giving up on their rights for fear of what society might say, particularly as nowadays, all organizations are very strict in observing the principle of privacy. Add to this that the perception people had of the FPJD and the Cybercrimes Department was negative [...] I can say, from my experience with the FPJD, that here is utmost privacy and confidentiality... it wasn't the case before, but this has changed. One indication on this change is that, for example, I used to read about rape cases reported to the FPJD but not anymore.... privacy and confidentiality have improved.*** (FW)

Considering the insights above, many of the interviews with professionals reflect a need for interventions aimed at improving well-being at the family level, with the intention to create safer and supportive environments for children to disclose and seek help. Families characterized by domestic violence, lack of positive communication and parental conflict reduce the possibility for children to feel at ease in talking with their parents about their online experiences, as well as for parents to deal adequately with their children's problems. It is therefore important to promote holistic and coordinated actions that strengthen relational dynamics within the household, enhance parents' emotional and educational competencies, and foster constructive communication patterns. Supporting caregivers in developing conflict-resolution skills, emotional regulation and digital literacy can create more stable and trusting relationships, ultimately increasing children's sense of security and openness. Interventions that address the needs of both children and parents together, rather than focusing solely on the individual child, are essential to ensure lasting impact and to reduce vulnerabilities that may otherwise persist within the home environment.

At the same time, societal interventions are necessary to ensure that parents have the tools to do so in a safe way, considering the widespread societal stigma and repercussions connected with tech-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, professionals themselves should be well trained to support children and families, creating a non-judgmental environment in which they too reflect on their own potential bias towards service beneficiaries.

4. THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

According to the survey, 93 per cent of internet-using children aged 12–17 were enrolled in school. Although all surveyed children accessed the internet at home, only 18 per cent had ever used it at school. Teacher-imposed restrictions also emerged as the third most common barrier to children's internet use. Despite these limitations, professionals and front-line workers highlighted schools as a key setting for addressing techy-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The interviewees (front-line and justice professionals) talked extensively about the school environment, which they identified as a crucial space for identification, prevention and at times, disclosure of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. According to many professionals, worsening school performance is a potential sign of abuse; conversely, during the path to recovery, children do better at school and socialize more with their peers. Additionally, they highlight that school is a place where information could be provided to children on digital media, sexuality and consequently, (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse. Educational settings could therefore play an important role in policies and programmes to tackle these forms of violence from different perspectives.

In several cases put forward by front-line workers, children subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse displayed changes in their behaviour and a sudden decline in academic performance, with evident signals of distress. These were noticed by teachers, or by female caregivers who subsequently talked to the teachers, who became the gateway for identification. In one instance, a child opened up to a school counsellor. She disclosed that she was being sexually abused and extorted by her neighbour and asked for support. This suggests that schools could serve as safe spaces and an opportunity for children to disclose abuse. However, for this to be effective and safe, teachers and educators must be well trained in identifying signs of abuse and trauma, and how to respond through sensitive and trauma-informed practices.

Front-line workers also identified schools as critical partners for referring cases of suspected abuse to relevant organizations, such as the FPJD or a service provision agency, for children to get psychosocial support. This protective role is actually embedded in national legislation, which requires education professionals to report incidents of child sexual exploitation and abuse to the relevant authorities if approached by a child seeking help, with a fine imposed if they fail to do so.[24]

> ***I would give the following recommendations... while the number of cases is increasing, it would be good to enhance access to services. How can we do that? We can start by delivering awareness-raising sessions in schools on sexual abuse, we can connect with the Child Protection Department and the Counselling Section at the Ministry of Education and give a role to school counsellors to raise the awareness of children on sexual exploitation, its effects and how they can protect themselves.*** **(FW)**

Involving schools during a child's path to recovery was also highlighted by some interviewees (front-line workers and justice professionals) as crucial. In their view, since improved academic performance and peer relationships are signs of well-being, teachers are in a good position to observe if a child is recovering and doing better:

> ***She [the child] was enrolled in structured activities like IT training and continuing education programmes. This helped her regain a sense of normalcy, and she feels better about herself. She's particularly driven when it comes to her education, and we're supporting her goal to sit for her exams and eventually apply to university.*** **(FW)**

24 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2022). Child Rights Law, Arts. 21, 22-A, 31-A.

She resumed her education and appeared to be thriving. She was smiling, and when we assessed the family later, they were doing well. (JP)

However, given the complexity of trauma response, a child appearing to thrive around their family or doing well at school may not always be an indication of how they are feeling and recovering. Furthermore, considering that not all teachers are trained in trauma-informed response, placing the responsibility of supporting the child's path to recovery entirely on them may not be realistic. Even so, knowing that school is a place where children spend a significant amount of their time, schools and their personnel can still play an important role in supporting front-line professionals in their work. A few interviewees identified school counsellors as potential key figures who could play an effective role in raising children's awareness of digital safety and sexual abuse. In this respect, teachers and counsellors would benefit from receiving additional training to recognize and respond to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse.

In terms of prevention, some interviewees underlined that **schools** are the **ideal settings for delivering digital safety education and awareness-raising sessions** specifically on (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse by talking about its manifestations, its impact, and on how children can protect themselves and seek help.

The school system – educators must take an active role in providing guidance and education on digital safety. (JP)

[Schools] should have outreach initiatives targeting mothers or caregivers in general and raise their awareness about the same subject... by giving out pamphlets or ...Our organization produced brochures, colouring books that addressed the subject of sexual abuse in a simplified manner to get the messages across to children. (FW)

We need more specialists in cybercrimes to talk to the community and target schools. (FW)

[I recommend] intensifying awareness-raising sessions in schools focusing on young people... I mean we once worked on an 'early marriage programme', where we covered male and female schools, and the outcomes were very positive. (FW)

Nearly half of internet-using children reported having received information on how to stay safe online, including 41 per cent of national children and 47 per cent of children living in Za'atari refugee camp. This indicates that a substantial proportion remains without formal guidance. At the same time, we do not know if those who received online safety information received high-quality and evidence-based information, nor do we know the content covered. Digital literacy and safety is therefore an area in Jordan that could be strengthened via education institutions. This report could serve as a useful tool in determining what issues to speak to children about, and how different forms of abuse manifest in children's lives.

Exposure to online safety information



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 984 | Zaatari camp = 520.

However, as noted by one front-line service provider, there can be initial resistance from school principals and teachers to addressing topics related to relationships and sexuality, suggesting an approach that uses **technology and digital media education as an entry point** rather than sex, violence or tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse:

> ***I never tackled the issue directly, because people don't feel comfortable when they hear the word 'sexual' and this was a challenge for us... We, therefore, focused on the use of mobile phones and the internet and what challenges one might face when using the internet. Some would say the network connections, others would point out to how annoying it would be and one of the challenges that people highlighted was online sexual exploitation. This is where we come in to shed light on this issue.*** **(FW)**

Furthermore, some service providers explained that to be credible and appealing for children, awareness sessions should address the positive aspects of using technology and digital media alongside the risks.

Finally, it is important to note that many of the cases described by the interviewees pertain to **children subjected to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse** who were **also victims of bullying or corporal punishment within the school environment**, as shown by the following quotes:

> ***She [the child] was transferred to us due to her activities on social media [...] She had been facing bullying at school regarding her appearance [...] Bullying compounded her feelings of inadequacy.*** **(FW)**

> ***They [parents] would usually come to request a service, mainly to report bullying. Most of the cases we receive from male children are about bullying. Mothers would come and report that her child is not performing well in school, and she wants to know why. She would say that his performance has regressed, and she wants to know the reason. His average was in the 90s and has now dropped to 50s. She does not understand what is happening to her child. It starts as a bullying case but then we move to ask questions around what you do in your free time? What do you play and with whom? From the assessment, it became clear that the child was playing [name of a battle videogame where participants play online against each other].*** **(FW)**

Therefore, if schools and school staff are to serve a central role in prevention, identification, referral and support for cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, they need to first become a space where children feel safe and fully supported.

5. ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL REMEDIES

Front-line workers shared various opinions regarding the implementation of the policy and legislation currently in place to prevent and respond to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan. The picture emerging is that of a **general hesitancy by children and their families to involve the police** or the justice system due to fear of the legal procedures or of negative experiences during referral, and a lack of procedures centred on the child's needs, preferences and best interests.

This hesitancy, coupled with the disclosure barriers discussed in previous chapters and the need to improve both the legal and institutional structures as described in the following sections, risks causing significant delays in formally reporting abuse and limiting full access to services for children who have survived abuse.

Law enforcement agencies and institutional structures

Law enforcement agencies in Jordan play a critical role in identifying offenders, protecting children and upholding justice in cases involving tech-facilitated harm to children.

The Jordanian Public Security Directorate, through its Cybercrime Unit and the FPJD, serves as the primary law enforcement entity responsible for responding to cases involving sexual exploitation and abuse of children facilitated through digital technologies. These units operate within a complex institutional framework that involves coordination with the judiciary, other departments within the Ministry of Interior and civil society organizations providing child protection and victim support services. Understanding the current capacity, challenges and opportunities within these structures is essential for strengthening national responses.

At present, the centralized structure of the FPJD based in Amman presents limitations in investigations of cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly in remote areas. While Jordanian law enforcement agencies have established foundational capacities to address tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, gaps remain in access to advanced and specialized training. Similarly, prevention and awareness efforts related to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse are currently limited in scope and coordination, indicating opportunities for further development.

In parallel with institutional efforts, Jordan has made notable progress in strengthening its broader child protection and justice systems. These reforms reflect a growing recognition that effective prevention and response to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse require a comprehensive approach, one that combines strong policing capacity with legal and policy frameworks that uphold children's rights and protect them from all forms of violence and exploitation.

Procedural barriers to accessing justice

Children in Jordan may face some procedural challenges when seeking justice for tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. These challenges can affect their ability to come forward, initiate legal action and access justice, remedies and support in a timely and effective manner. One key example relates to statutes of limitations, the period after which legal action can no longer be initiated for a criminal offence. In Jordan, this period ranges from 3 years for misdemeanours to 10 years for felonies, starting from the date the crime was committed.[25] In other words, individuals subjected to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse have only 3 or 10 years to come forward, depending on the severity of the offence. The very existence of such deadlines risks shielding perpetrators from accountability, as by the time a survivor is ready to speak out, the window for prosecution may already have closed. To truly protect children and uphold their right to justice, statutes of limitations for all sexual offences against them should therefore be abolished.

These time constraints intersect with additional procedural barriers embedded in the criminal justice system, particularly with regard to children's ability to initiate complaints. In Jordan, children

25 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1961). Criminal Procedure Law, Arts. 338, 339; Hamzeh Abu Issa and Naji Al-Wreikat, 'The Statute of Limitations of Criminal Lawsuit in the Jordanian and Qatari Laws', *Journal of Law and Criminal Justice,* vol. 9, no. 1, June 2021, pp. 122–132.

aged 15 to 17 may file a criminal complaint independently, whereas those under 15 must do so through a parent or legal guardian.[26] If the child's interests conflict with those of their guardian, or if the child has no one to represent them, a prosecutor can act as their representative.[27] This requirement can itself create a barrier to justice, as younger children may be reluctant or unwilling to disclose the abuse to their parents in the first place. This is especially the case when victim-blaming, stigma and shame act as a barrier to disclosure and reporting. For these reasons, children should be able to report autonomously, with professionals and institutions receiving such reports equipped with appropriate procedures to provide psychosocial support and guidance throughout the reporting process. Insights from other countries where Disrupting Harm was conducted suggest the value of such approaches, with children highlighting the supportive role of trained workers who assisted them in sharing what had happened to them with their families.

Mandatory reporting and first contact with the justice system

Once a complaint has been filed, the prosecutor becomes competent to initiate criminal investigations,[28] while the Judicial Police is tasked with conducting the preliminary inquiry, gathering evidence and apprehending the perpetrator.[29]

In practice, according to the interviewees, in many instances the child's first contact with the justice system is when a report is made to police officials or, through any mandatory reporting process, to the FPJD (of the Jordanian police). Although this is a standard procedural pathway, interviewees noted that children often move through the early stages of the process without having received adequate preparation or psychosocial support to help them understand and cope with the legal procedures involved:

> ***The process starts with legal procedures before the case comes to us for psychosocial support. Sometimes, these procedures obstruct our work. The legal procedures are tough on the victims and their families. Therefore, when you go through these procedures, which is usually a first for them, they end up wanting to withdraw [...] Families fear that someone might know, the procedures make them feel like they're the suspects, etc. [...] There are cases that never come back. Because of these procedures [...] in my opinion, not all the staff working at FPJD are specialists or have backgrounds in mental health where they can deal with these cases. Being legal staff members, they revert to investigative techniques, driving the case to eventually feel guilty.*** **(FW)**

These dynamics must also be understood in light of mandatory reporting obligations established in national legislation. The 2022 Child Rights Law requires any person approached by a child seeking help after being subjected to sexual exploitation or abuse to report the case to the competent authorities.[30] It further imposes a stricter obligation on education, healthcare and social service professionals to report such cases or face a fine.[31] In addition, the 2017 Law on Protection from Domestic Violence obliges these professionals in both the public and private sectors to report any crime against a child committed by a family member, including (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse, upon becoming aware of it.[32] Non-compliance may result in up to one week's imprisonment and/or a fine.[33] The Penal Code further reinforces these reporting obligations by criminalizing the

26 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1961). Criminal Procedure Law, Art. 3-2.
27 Ibid., Art. 3-3.
28 Ibid., Art. 53.
29 Ibid., Art. 8-1.
30 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2022). Child Rights Law, Art. 22-A.
31 Ibid., Arts. 21, 31-A.
32 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2017). Law on Protection from Domestic Violence Law, Art. 4a-1.
33 Ibid., Art. 4c.

failure or delay by public officials and certain professionals to report crimes that come to their attention in the course of their duties, with limited exceptions.[34]

Several professionals explained that the **implementation of mandatory reporting processes can be challenging** and sometimes traumatizing for survivors and their families, who are very concerned about privacy and confidentiality:

> ***The main challenge I faced was when I informed the mother of the mandatory reporting.... we make sure that they are aware of the limits of confidentiality, specifically if the case is related to a child and we are obligated to report for the best interest of the child. We don't begin gathering any information without consent... However, the challenge was in how they perceived mandatory reporting and how that's linked to the FPJD [...] While the reporting is mandatory, the approach in how we communicate this requirement helps a lot. We don't state it [the requirement of mandatory reporting] in a threatening manner, and that 'It is a must,' and 'We have to do it!' You say it nicely, in an empathetic manner, taking into account that the mother is still in shock and is thinking of so many issues. We listen to the mother as much as she needs it, but ultimately, reporting is mandatory. We reassure her that they [FPJD] contact her and do so confidentiality, [we ask] 'Do you want us to tell them to contact you on your phone?' We try to reassure her while at the same time, we are alerting her to the reality of the situation [...] At the end of the day, she wants to protect her child, but at the beginning there is always anxiety and fear [of dealing with the FPJD].*** (FW)

Some families, especially those of refugees, feel threatened by mandatory reporting and the encounter with the justice system:

> ***Refugees, given their status, are just constantly afraid to come back for the service, especially after the mandatory reporting, even though we do explain the procedures and we make it clear that the mandatory reporting is in the best interest of the child.*** (FW)

On the other hand, when privacy and confidentiality are respected and when service providers explain to both parents and children a clear scenario, the interviewees say that developments of the cases are positive:

> ***The overall impact on the child was positive... it was equally positive on the mother who received the service in full confidentiality, as she had requested. The experience the child gained was excellent.*** (FW)

> ***Honestly, rarely do people refuse to report specifically in cases of online sexual exploitation when there are photos and videos involved because, for caregivers, the interest of the child comes [first]. They are less concerned about scandals, and we especially make sure they understand that we take confidentiality into consideration, ensuring that no other family member finds out about the case. We really had success stories, where abuse came to an end. Since we began [working on these cases], we never had a case where caregivers refused to report the case. It is worth noting that the case manager does not tell caregivers that they must report. On the contrary, the manager presents them with the pros and cons of all the available options, whether the case was reported or not, so the caregivers end up opting for mandatory reporting.*** (FW)

34 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. (1960). Penal Code. Art 207.

Court procedures and protection from retraumatization

Some interviewees highlighted that family interactions with the justice system can result in negative experiences due to unpleasant encounters with FPJD staff. This fear is especially related to the hearing process, where children are expected to stand in front of a judge and prosecutor:

> ***Children who were exposed to abuse, will more likely have to stand before the prosecutor to formally register their complaint and they will have to face the abuser, and this might cause them psychological harm or trauma.*** **(FW)**

This was noted in contrast to the fact that Jordanian law gives judicial authorities options to prevent direct contact between children and perpetrators during criminal proceedings. Indeed, procedural rules permit the use of technology, including video link, to protect witnesses under 18, provided such measures are considered necessary and still allow all parties to examine and cross-examine the testimony during the trial. However, their application is not automatic and remains at the discretion of the judges and prosecutors.[35] The same applies to closed hearings, which may be ordered by the court to preserve public order or morals.[36] Making these protective measures consistently applied and mandating closed hearings, alongside more explicit safeguards to prevent any contact with alleged perpetrators, would help reduce the risk of retraumatization for children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse.

One judge noted that such procedures were already being implemented in court to protect children, highlighting the positive impact these safeguards can have:[37]

> ***In criminal court, special procedures are in place to minimize retraumatizing the child. For instance, we have a dedicated room where children can provide testimony via CCTV. This set-up allows the child to see the judge and ruling body on a screen while sitting with a parent or guardian in a separate room. This process prevents the child from facing the aggressor directly, thereby avoiding additional trauma. Confidential trials are another essential safeguard, with attendance restricted to relevant parties, such as the child's caregiver, the defendant, lawyers and the general prosecutor. Publishing information about these cases is prohibited by law. The procedures are confidential by law.*** **(JP)**

At the same time, practices such as the recording or livestreaming of forensic interviews have not yet been sufficiently assessed from a trauma-informed perspective for children subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse. This is particularly relevant in cases where digital technologies may have been involved in the abuse, as some children may be more sensitive to being recorded or to the presence of cameras used by adults. While this will not be the case for all children, for some it may evoke feelings of vulnerability, embarrassment or fear of further exposure. Further research is therefore needed to ensure that the use of video recording is guided by trauma-informed principles and responsive to the individual needs, preferences and best interests of each child, balancing evidentiary value with their psychological well-being on a case-by-case basis.

Another challenge noted by a front-line worker is the involvement of multiple different professionals in the provision of services through to the judicial process, and the slow speed at which cases progress through the legal system, observing that this increases the *"psychological pressure"* and *"tension"* (FW) on the child, again creating more impetus for the child or their family to withdraw the case.

35 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1961). Criminal Procedure Law, Art. 158-3.

36 Ibid., Arts. 171, 213-2.

37 As part of its pledge at the 2024 Global Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children, Jordan committed to installing CCTV systems in courts by 2030 to ensure child-friendly justice procedures nationwide. https://endviolenceagainstchildrenconference.org/country-pledge/jordan/

Challenges in accessing legal aid could further compound these difficulties by limiting children's ability to navigate lengthy and complex proceedings. While the Child Rights Law affirms a child's right to legal assistance, including representation before security centres, public prosecutors and courts, it makes this right subject to the provisions of the applicable legislation.[38] In practice, this risks narrowing access, as relevant legal provisions in the Juvenile Law and Criminal Procedure Law seem to expressly guarantee free legal representation only to children in conflict with the law, not to victims of crime.[39] Moreover, legal aid is typically provided only during the trial phase, leaving child victims of crime without support during the critical stage of investigation,[40] when timely legal assistance could most effectively safeguard their rights and shape the outcome of the case.

Investigation challenges and digital evidence

The investigation of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse presents particular challenges related to the collection and preservation of digital evidence. Indeed, one judge noted the length of time taken to finalize cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. They attributed this in part to the longer time resulting from the collection of digital evidence:

> ***Unlike traditional crimes, where there is often a physical crime scene and tangible forensic evidence, we rely almost exclusively on digital evidence, which can be easily deleted. This significantly increases the time and effort required during both the investigation and the judicial proceedings.*** **(JP)**

The 2023 Cybercrime Law explicitly recognizes the evidentiary value of digital evidence, whether it is extracted from electronic devices or information systems,[41] or obtained from official authorities in foreign countries.[42] It also establishes a clear collection procedure, allowing law enforcement officers, with authorization from the competent prosecutor or court, to search, examine and seize electronic devices and systems used in cybercrimes, and to preserve related data for judicial proceedings.[43] The law further affirms that IP addresses constitute admissible means of evidence[44] and provides penalties for anyone who conceals, tampers with, destroys or damages digital evidence or its traces, or obstructs the work of competent authorities in accessing it.[45]

While these measures provide a solid framework for collecting and safeguarding digital evidence, Jordanian law seemingly lacks a general data retention obligation requiring internet service providers and online platforms to preserve user data for a fixed period for investigative purposes. In the absence of such a framework, critical digital evidence related to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse risks being deleted before authorities can obtain judicial authorization to access it.

Child-centred approaches in investigations and proceedings

Many research participants also highlighted the **need for appropriate training for law enforcement personnel** in handling cases of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse and in creating environments centred on the needs, preferences and best interests of children during investigations. According to some of them, the focus that law enforcement personnel have on extracting information as quickly as possible to start legal procedures overshadows the need to create a comfortable and trusting environment for the child. Furthermore, the physical environment at FPJD facilities may not always be child-friendly, potentially increasing anxiety in the children concerned.

38 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2022). Child Rights Law.

39 See Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2014). Juvenile Law, Art. 21; Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1961). Criminal Procedure Law, Art. 208; Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2018). Legal Aid Regulation No. 119 of 2018.

40 UNICEF Jordan, personal communication, May 2024.

41 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2023). Cybercrime Law, Art. 36-A.

42 Ibid., Art. 36-B.

43 Ibid., Art. 32.

44 Ibid., Art. 36-C.

45 Ibid., Art. 36-D.

Several interviewees suggested a need to strengthen trauma-informed practices across law enforcement staff, particularly when dealing with children subjected to abuse. For example, in a few instances, professionals stated that FPJD staff were reported as having made inappropriate comments or having behaved inappropriately, as shown, for example, by the following quote:

> ***They found her, but unfortunately, they treated her harshly, labelling her as mouthy and a troublemaker because she spoke up for herself [...] Unfortunately, the most difficult part of [girl's name]'s journey was her interaction with the police. It's disappointing. Their harsh treatment and labelling of her as a troublemaker only deepened her feelings [...] I believe there's a need for specialized training for police officers on how to interact with young people who have experienced trauma. Their approach can really have a significant impact on a child's willingness to engage with the system.*** **(FW)**

These accounts point to deeper procedural shortcomings. Indeed, the Criminal Procedure Law does not regulate how forensic interviews with child victims of crime, including survivors of (techy-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse should be conducted. Current rules do not require that interviews be carried out by specially trained professionals, limit the number of times a child can be questioned or mandate that interviews be systematically video- or audio-recorded for later use in court. The absence of such safeguards increases the risk of inconsistent practices and secondary victimization, as children may be repeatedly questioned by untrained personnel in environments that are not adapted to their needs. Establishing clear, trauma-informed interviewing protocols and mandatory training in child-centred practices (i.e. interviewing, service provision, dealing with disclosures, etc.) for all professionals who enter into contact with the children concerned, including but not limited to law enforcement, would strengthen child protection and ensure that evidence is collected in a reliable and child-sensitive manner.

Professionals also spoke of several instances where the **feeling of being blamed** or not fully understood and protected led children or their families wanting to withdraw any engagement with the formal justice system. Such experiences reflect broader gaps in the legal framework, which lacks provisions to protect child victims of crime, their families or witnesses from intimidation or retaliation, and to ensure the safety of those assisting them. While the 2017 Law on Protection from Domestic Violence introduced a system of court-issued protection orders in domestic violence cases,[46] these measures apply only in cases where the offence is committed by a relative. In addition, apart from trafficking cases, children subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse do not have access to psychological support or assistance during legal proceedings,[47] which risks further heightening their sense of vulnerability.

Access to recovery, reintegration and compensation

Beyond the ability to participate in legal proceedings in ways that protect their best interests, children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse should have systematic access to recovery and reintegration services as essential components of justice and reparations. For example, the Jordan River Foundation's Child Safety Program offers comprehensive rehabilitation services for children subjected to violence and works towards strengthening the capacity of other child protection organizations through training and knowledge exchange.[48] In Jordan, however, there are no explicit legal provisions guaranteeing this right, with rehabilitation for children subjected to sexual abuse usually passed to private entities and non-governmental organizations.

46 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2017). Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, Art. 16.
47 Justice Centre for Legal Aid, personal communication, February 2024.
48 Jordan River Foundation, JRF's Child Safety Program, accessed on 30 October 2025.

5. ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL REMEDIES

In the absence of specific national procedures that reflect the particular nature of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse or the needs of the children concerned, case management is guided by the national standard operating procedures on child protection, gender-based violence and domestic violence, along with internal procedures from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the FPJD.[49] Training for service providers on these procedures is ongoing,[50] but more specialized capacity-building on tech-facilitated sexual violence remains urgently needed. In this regard, the pledge made by Jordan to develop and implement an in-service social work capacity-building programme by 2027 to train staff in the provision of protective services for children at home, at school, within the community and in online settings offers a critical opportunity to address this gap.[51]

Access to compensation is another essential element of the right to justice for survivors, providing both recognition of and material redress for the harm they have suffered. Under Jordanian legislation, victims of crime may seek compensation either during criminal proceedings or through a separate civil action.[52] Yet the requirement to pay legal fees could discourage children subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse, or their legal representatives, from seeking compensation, even though procedures are in place to postpone payment in some cases.[53]

49 UNICEF Jordan, personal communication, May 2024
50 Ibid.
51 1st Global Ministerial Conference on ending violence against children (2024). Government Pledge: Jordan
52 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1961). Criminal Procedure Law, Art. 6.
53 Ibid., Arts. 55, 56.

6. PREVENTION EFFORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

How can policies create preventive environments?

A comprehensive approach to prevention requires national coordination and planning. Despite notable progress in addressing family violence and child trafficking through dedicated policy frameworks, Jordan has not yet developed specific, comprehensive strategies or policies aimed at preventing tech-facilitated violence against children, including sexual exploitation and abuse. Nevertheless, some targeted actions have been undertaken. For example, in November 2025, the National Cyber Security Centre launched an awareness campaign to promote safer online behaviour among children.[54] This initiative disseminated age-appropriate, interactive materials for children and provided guidance for parents on protecting children when using smart devices, social media and online games. The campaign highlighted key threats such as cyber extortion, online harassment and malicious software, and outlined recommended preventive measures.

The National Council for Family Affairs is currently in the process of preparing a multisectoral, gender-sensitive, and disability-inclusive National Multisectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to Child Protection, Family Violence and Violence against Women and Girls (2026–2030).[55] It remains unclear, however, to what extent the plan will address tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse or include specific measures to prevent and respond to it. In developing this framework, particular attention should therefore be paid to ensuring that its different manifestations, including emerging risks such as sexual extortion and child sexual abuse material generated by artificial intelligence, are explicitly addressed.

How can different stakeholders within society play their part in prevention efforts?

This study has highlighted the role that various stakeholders in Jordan play when it comes to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. In terms of prevention, parents in particular might hold a more central role in protecting children online since, according to the survey, they currently seldom accompany their children during their online experiences. By fostering open and supportive communication about internet use and sexual safety, parents could build preventive family environments. Because discussing sexual matters is often difficult within families, according to the professionals interviewed, they should actively ensure home is a space where children feel comfortable sharing concerns without fear of punishment or blame. Parents in Jordan can also guide their children on safe internet practices, help them evaluate whether online content or websites are trustworthy and engage in shared online activities to better understand their digital experiences. Promoting healthy gender norms and addressing stigma around sexual abuse can further reduce barriers between parents and their children, facilitating communication within the family environment and the sharing of online experiences.

According to the professionals interviewed, schools are also key environments for preventing peer violence and tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse because most children regularly attend school in Jordan. Targeting schools within prevention policies could enable a large number of children to be reached. Schools can become places for awareness-raising sessions about online risks, grooming tactics and safe digital behaviour, with the integration of online safety education into the curriculum. Furthermore, school personnel could be trained to become key actors in identification and referral, ensuring schools put precise safeguarding and protection mechanisms into practice.

54 'National Cybersecurity Center Launches "You Are the Hero" Awareness Campaign for Children', *Jordan Times*, 30 November 2024.

55 1st Global Ministerial Conference on ending violence against children (2024). Government Pledge: Jordan; Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, National Council for Family Affairs (2024). Facebook publication; Jordan New Agency (2025). NCFA, GAGE Unveil Study on Violence Against Adolescents in Jordan; United Nations Children's Fund, 'Jordan Launches the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children, Women and Families', 29 June 2026.

This study has also highlighted how prevention efforts and opportunities should be enshrined in the whole societal framework, since common attitudes and behaviours play a role in the way tech-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation takes place in Jordan, as in various other contexts. Communities must address the broader social and cultural factors that enable online child sexual abuse, including harmful gender norms, stigma and victim-blaming attitudes. From the details of the cases shared by the professionals interviewed, there emerges the potential benefit of public awareness campaigns and community education that challenge beliefs that blame victims or discourage reporting, helping families and communities respond more supportively when abuse occurs, but also discouraging perpetrators from harming children with no consequences, at both the legislative and societal level.

How can legislation ensure the liability of online platforms and how can platforms prevent violence?

Online platforms and internet service providers play a central role in shaping children's online environments and therefore in preventing tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. Through the design of safety features, accessible reporting tools and systems for the rapid detection and removal of harmful material, platforms can help prevent the circulation of abusive content, reduce children's exposure to online harm and limit opportunities for perpetrators to exploit digital spaces.

Under the 2023 Cybercrime Law, individuals responsible for managing a website, social media platform, public page, group or channel can be held criminally liable for illegal content hosted on it, including child sexual abuse material. They then face the same penalties as the perpetrator.[56] Therefore, the law goes beyond a standard notice and take-down approach, as its wording indicates that liability arises from the mere presence of illegal content rather than from a failure to remove it after notification. By contrast, for personal account holders, liability is triggered only when they refuse to remove illegal content after being requested to do so by the person depicted or the competent authorities.[57]

While the Cybercrime Law creates an incentive for online platforms to proactively detect and remove illegal content to mitigate their risk of liability, it stops short of imposing an explicit obligation to do so. Furthermore, the law does not require platforms to establish accessible, clear and user-friendly mechanisms for users to report illegal content. Introducing such obligations could facilitate the faster identification and subsequent removal of child sexual abuse material.

In addition to the provisions outlined above, prosecutors and courts may order online platforms and service providers to remove, disable or block access to illegal content, temporarily suspend user accounts, and preserve or transfer all data necessary to identify the perpetrator and facilitate prosecution.[58] Failure to comply may result in fines.[59] In cases of non-compliance, or when urgency so requires, prosecutors and courts may directly order the competent authorities to block the platform, service or access to the illegal content.[60] Foreign social media platforms with more than 100,000 users in Jordan must establish a local office to process requests from judicial and official authorities or face the suspension of advertisements and a gradual reduction of bandwidth traffic on their platforms.[61]

The current approach focuses largely on content removal and accountability after harm has occurred, missing the opportunity to position platforms as active allies in prevention. A child rights-based approach to online safety requires stronger and more proactive obligations on digital service providers to integrate safety-by-design measures into the development and operation of their services. This includes conducting child-rights

56 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2023). Cybercrime Law, Art. 25-A.
57 Ibid., Art. 25-B.
58 Ibid., Art. 33-A.
59 Ibid., Art. 33-C.
60 Ibid., Art. 33-B.
61 Ibid., Art. 37.

and safety risk assessments; implementing privacy-by-default settings for child users to limit public visibility and unwanted contact; strengthening safeguards around content recommendation systems to reduce children's exposure to sexualized or exploitative material; limiting the collection and profiling of children's personal data; and establishing clear safeguards to address artificial intelligence-enabled risks. Embedding these safeguards into platform design and architecture can help prevent harm before it occurs, reduce opportunities for grooming, coercion and non-consensual distribution of sexual content, and create safer digital environments for children.

[Parents] should actively ensure home is a space where children feel comfortable sharing concerns without fear of punishment or blame.

7. INTERNET ACCESS AND USE AMONG CHILDREN AGED 12–17 IN JORDAN:

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

7. INTERNET ACCESS AND USE AMONG CHILDREN AGED 12–17 IN JORDAN:RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

This section presents data on internet access and use among children aged 12–17 in Jordan. It includes information on online activities, potential risks and harms, and digital skills. National-level data on children's internet access and use are often scarce. The Disrupting Harm project collected key indicators on children's internet use via the household survey to address this gap.

Understanding how children access the internet, whether they go online regularly or not, what they do online, and how parents engage with their internet use, may provide insights into how to create a digital environment that is safer and more enjoyable for children. However, prevention of (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse is not primarily about what children are doing online. Disrupting Harm data from other countries consistently show that perpetrators act opportunistically, using coercion and manipulation while taking advantage of existing social and gender inequalities, misogyny, the lack of adequate support networks and gaps in protection systems to commit abuse against children online and/or in person.

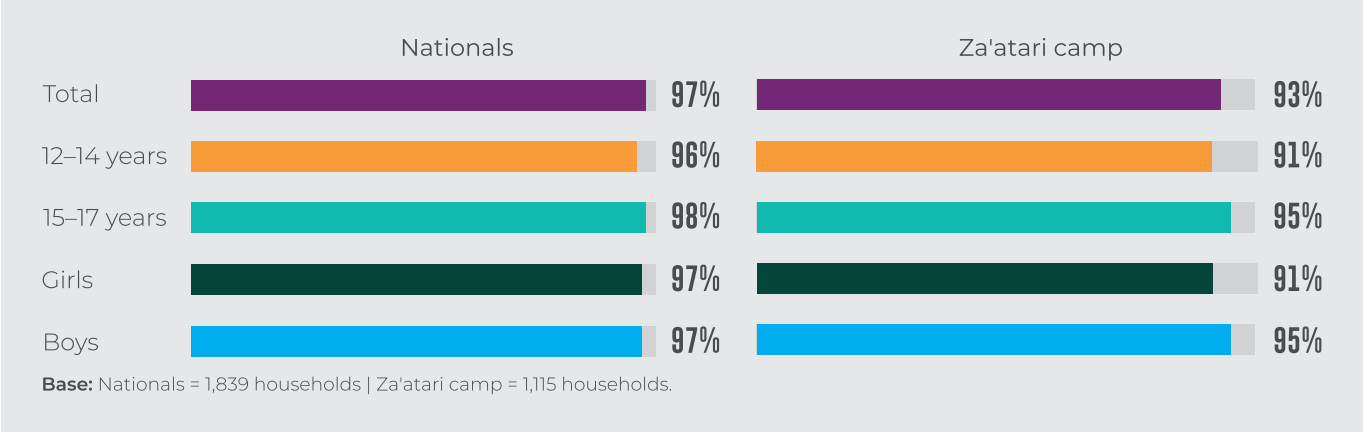
Any effort at prevention must therefore look beyond what children are (or ought to be) doing online; not doing so often results in victim-blaming or treating children as complicit in the exploitation and abuse they have been subjected to. Instead, prevention requires a multi-pronged approach that focuses on creating barriers to offending, while addressing norms, values and inequalities that enable perpetrators to sexually exploit and abuse children.

As noted earlier, the household survey in Jordan was conducted among both the general population (here referred to as nationals) and the refugee population in Za'atari camp. Accordingly, the data presented here cover both groups, with comparisons made where relevant.

Internet access and frequency of use

Survey results indicate that internet access is nearly universal among children aged 12–17 in Jordan, regardless of whether they belong to the national population or refugee community. 'Internet users' were defined as those who have used the internet in the three months prior to the survey. Among the nationals (n=1,839), 97 per cent of screened[62] children aged 12–17 had used the internet in the past three months. Similarly, 93 per cent (n=1,115) of screened children aged 12–17 in Za'atari camp had used the internet during the same period. The survey also assessed children's frequency of internet use. Overall, internet use is highly frequent among children aged 12–17 in Jordan, among both nationals and those living in Za'atari camp.

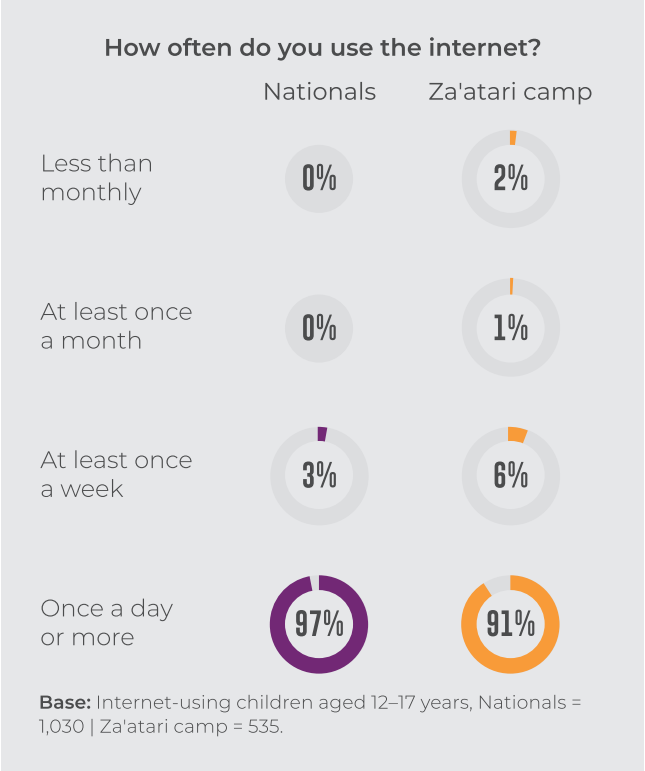
Internet use rates among 12–17-year-olds in Jordan



Base: Nationals = 1,839 households | Za'atari camp = 1,115 households.

62 During survey data collection, enumerators visit randomly selected houses into order to identify which households are eligible to take part in the study. In each randomly selected household, enumerators ask whether the 12–17-year-olds (if found in the household) had used the internet in the past three months.

Frequency of internet use



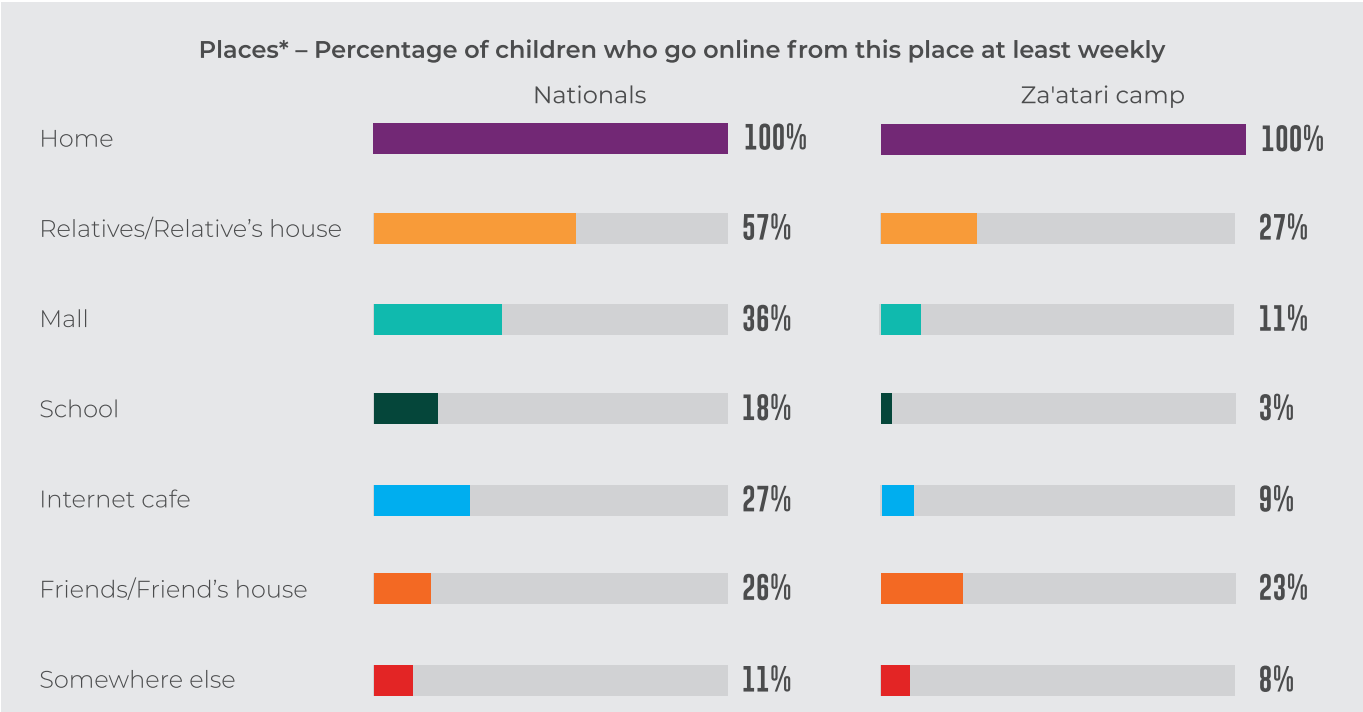
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

Place of internet use

Home is the primary place of internet access for children aged 12–17 in Jordan. For children living in Za'atari camp, this typically refers to their shelter or caravan. Among nationals aged 12–17, internet use at home was nearly universal, with 98 per cent using it once a day or more. In Za'atari camp, daily internet use at home was also common, with 92 per cent using it once a day or more. Although 93 per cent of surveyed children among nationals and 76 per cent living in Za'atari camp were attending school, the findings show that internet use at school or college remains limited. A majority of children (82 per cent of nationals) had never used the internet at school, increasing to 97 per cent in Za'atari camp. This suggests that school-based digital learning opportunities for children aged 12–17 are fairly limited in Jordan.

Internet use in malls or internet cafes was generally uncommon, suggesting that public commercial spaces are infrequent sources of online access for children. These questions may not have been applicable to children in Za'atari camp.

Most popular places to go online among internet-using children aged 12–17



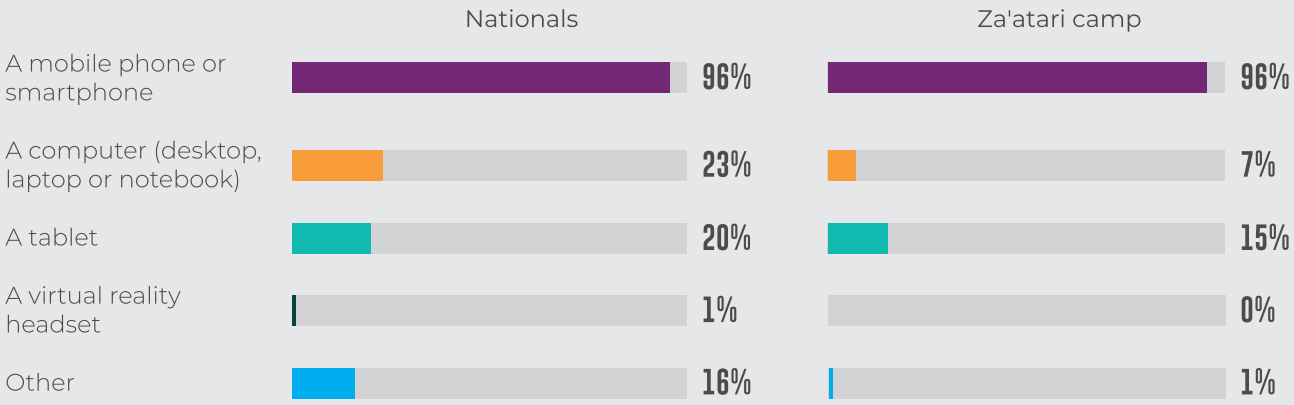
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

*Multiple-choice question.

Device for internet access and use

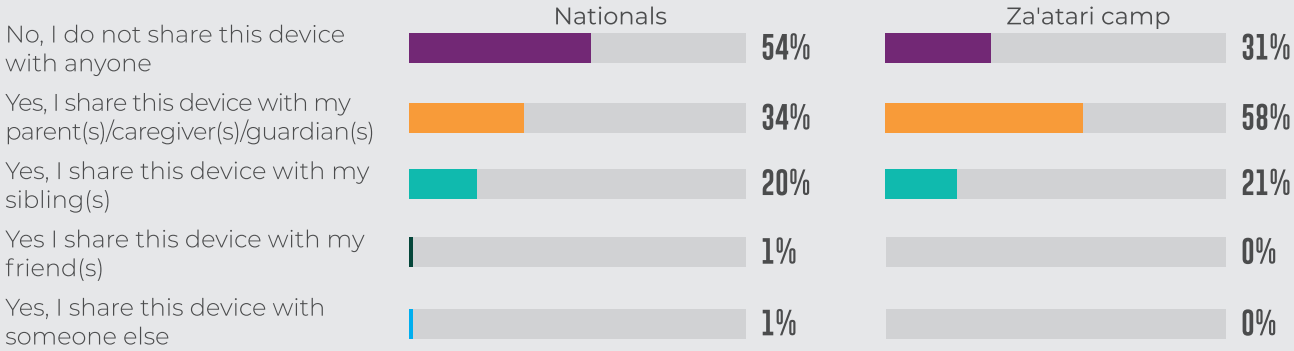
Mobile phones are the central tool for internet access among children aged 12–17 in Jordan, regardless of the population. A mobile phone was the overwhelmingly dominant device, used by 96 per cent of children in both groups. Other devices were less common, with 23 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 using computers (desktop, laptop or notebook), which was rare (7 per cent) among children living in Za'atari camp. Similarly, tablets were used by 20 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 15 per cent of children living in Za'atari camp. Use of virtual reality headsets is practically non-existent.

Most popular devices to access the internet among 12–17-year-olds



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

Do you share this mobile phone or smartphone with others?

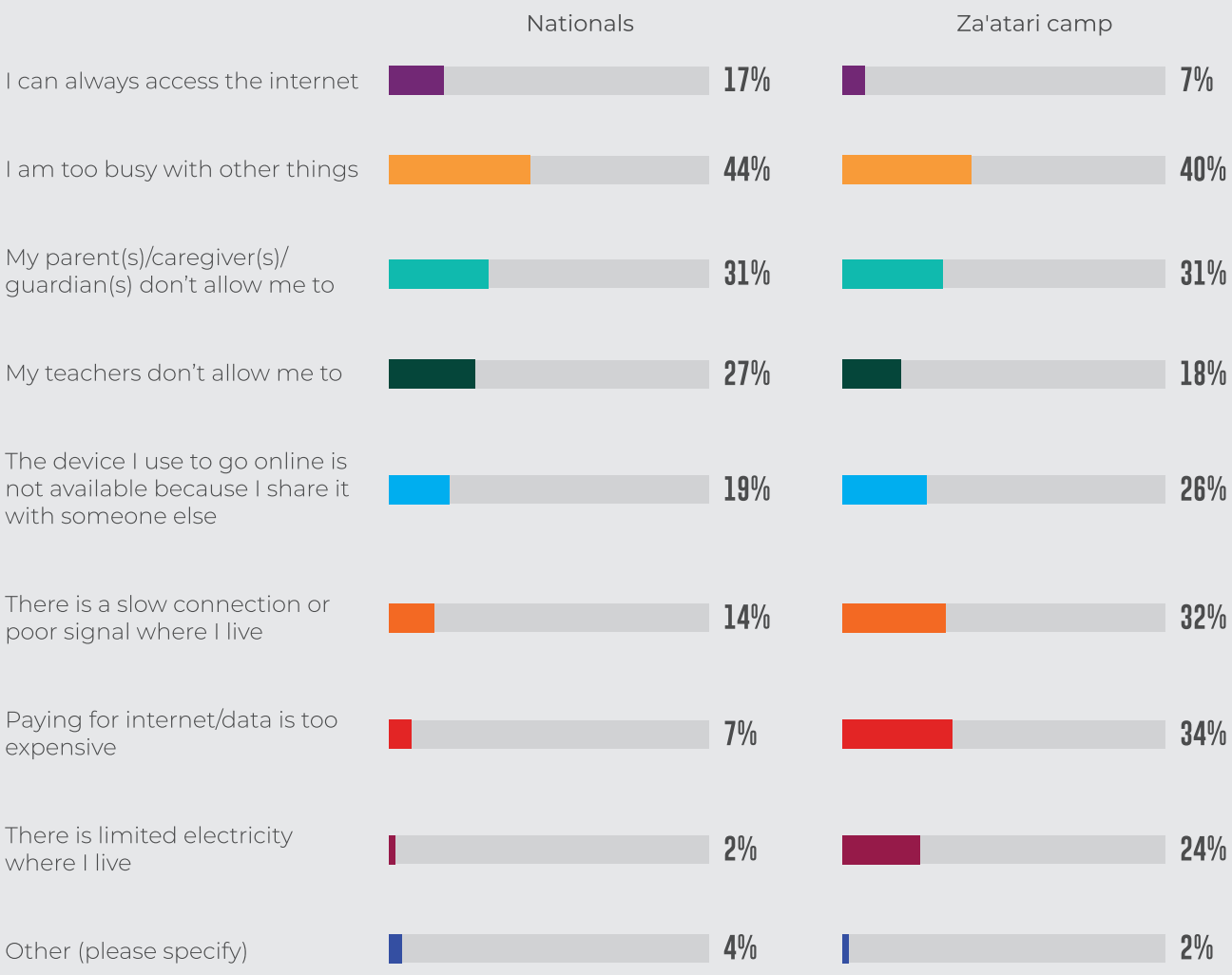


Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years who use a mobile or smartphone, Nationals = 987 | Za'atari camp = 513.

Barriers to internet access and use

Children in Jordan face multiple barriers to accessing the internet, with some notable differences between nationals and those living in Za'atari camp. Survey data show that only 17 per cent of surveyed nationals aged 12–17 and 7 per cent living in Za'atari camp can always access the internet whenever they want to. Overall, children living in Za'atari camp face more structural and resource-related barriers, including limited connectivity, electricity shortages, high costs and shared devices. In contrast, nationals aged 12–17 are more likely to be constrained by time and parent or teacher-based restrictions.

Barriers to internet access and use



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years who use a mobile or smartphone, Nationals = 987 | Za'atari camp = 513.

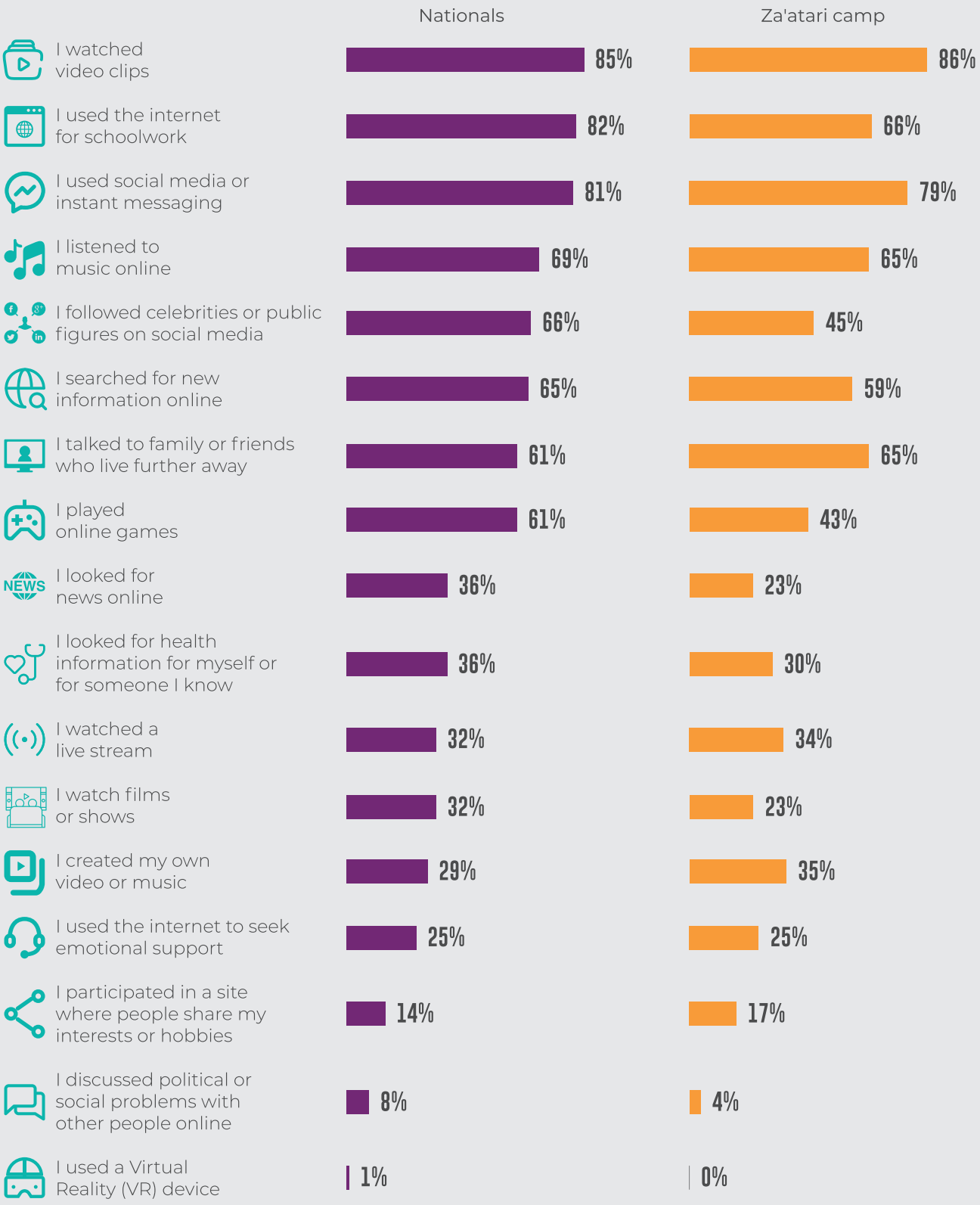
Online activities and engagement

The survey examined the types of online activities children engage in on a weekly basis or more. Data show that children in Jordan engage in a wide range of online activities, with some variation between the nationals and those living in Za'atari camp. Engagement in educational and informational online activities was common among both groups, though higher among nationals.

Both groups frequently used the internet for social connection, which is also common in other parts of the world. Notably, talking to family or friends who live farther away was slightly higher among children living in Za'atari camp (65 per cent) than nationals (61 per cent), which likely reflects their life situation and demonstrates one way in which digital technology can help maintain relationships with distant family.

Entertainment activities were widely reported and the most popular among both groups of children, which is similar to other countries. Most activities were fairly equal between the two groups of children, though more nationals played online games regularly (61 per cent) compared with 43 per cent in Za'atari camp. One quarter of children from both groups use the internet to seek emotional support.

Activities children engage in online at least once a week

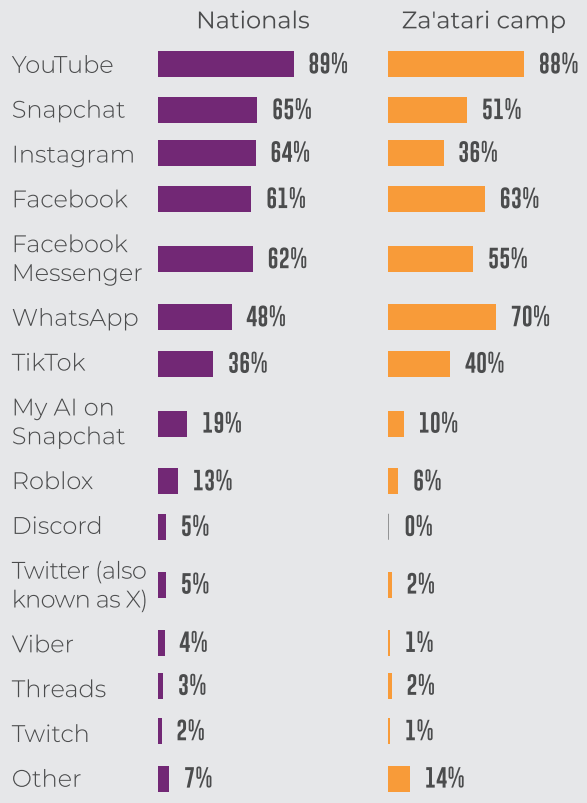


Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

Apps used

Children in Jordan use a diverse range of digital platforms and apps. For both nationals and children living in Za'atari camp, use of YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook and Facebook Messenger was very popular. Nationals were more likely to use Instagram, while children living in Za'atari camp were more likely to use WhatsApp. Children in Jordan also use platforms for gaming or entertainment. Roblox was used by 13 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and only 6 per cent living in Za'atari camp, while Twitch was rarely used by either group. Emerging digital technologies, such as My AI on Snapchat, were used by 19 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 10 per cent living in Za'atari camp, reflecting early adoption of artificial intelligence-integrated platforms among children aged 12–17 in Jordan. Use of virtual reality-related apps like BeReal and Line's artificial intelligence tools was almost non-existent.

Apps or websites ever used



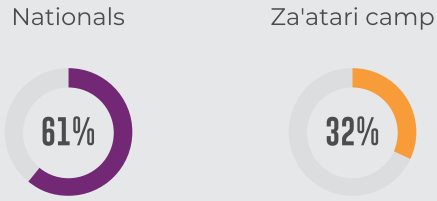
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Za'atari camp = 535.

Use of artificial intelligence-powered platforms and websites

Use of artificial intelligence platforms or websites was considerably higher among nationals aged 12–17 (61 per cent) than those living in Za'atari camp (32 per cent). Among children who had used artificial intelligence, the most common use was for finding information, followed by providing help to complete schoolwork from home.

Use of artificial intelligence-powered platforms and websites

Children aged 12–17 years that have used platforms or websites that use AI



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,014 | Za'atari camp = 512.

Reason for using artificial intelligence



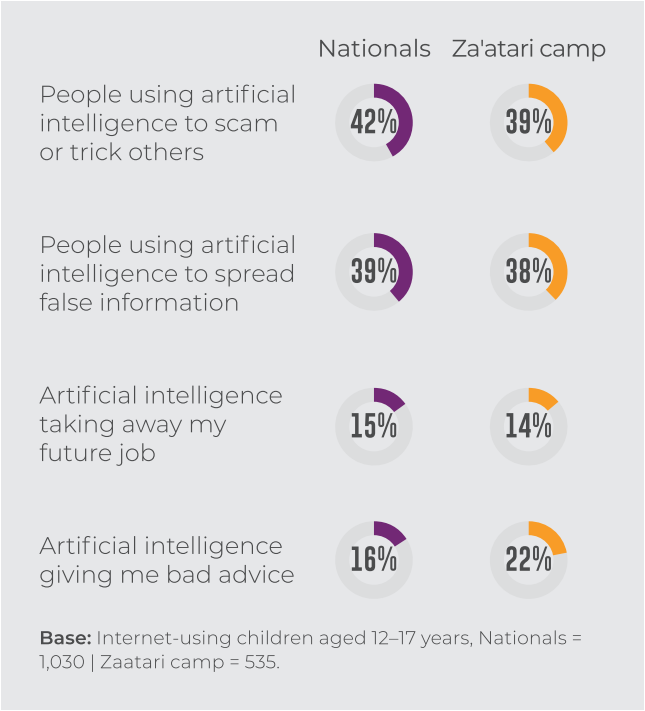
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years who have used artificial intelligence platforms or websites, Nationals = 618 | Za'atari camp = 164.

Concerns about artificial intelligence

Concerns about artificial intelligence were common among both nationals aged 12–17 and those living in Za'atari camp. The most frequently mentioned concern was the potential for people to use artificial intelligence to scam or trick others, cited by 42 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 39 per cent in Za'atari camp. Similarly, concerns about artificial intelligence being used to spread false information were reported by 39 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 38 per cent in Za'atari camp.

Fewer children expressed concerns about the impact of artificial intelligence on future employment, with 15 per cent of nationals and 14 per cent in Za'atari camp worried that it could take away their future jobs. Concerns about artificial intelligence providing bad advice were slightly higher among children in Za'atari camp (22 per cent) compared with nationals (16 per cent). A notable proportion of surveyed children preferred not to share their views on artificial intelligence-related concerns, including 31 per cent of nationals and 33 per cent in Za'atari camp. Meanwhile, 9 per cent of national children and 14 per cent of children in Za'atari camp indicated that none of the listed concerns worried them.

Worries about artificial intelligence



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Zaatari camp = 535.

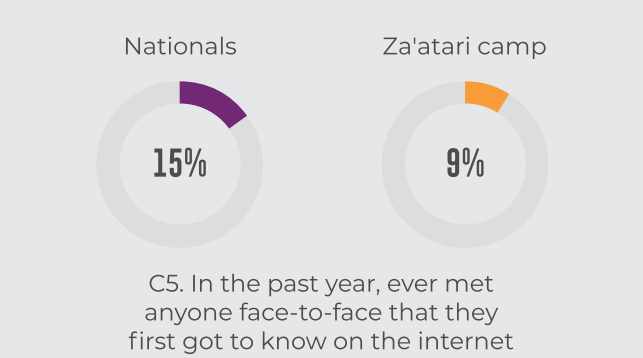
Risks and harm online

As children increasingly engage with digital platforms, their online experiences bring both opportunities and significant risks. While the internet can foster learning, creativity and social connection, it also exposes young users to harmful situations that can impact their safety and well-being. This section presents data on three key areas of concern: (1) instances where children meet in person with individuals they first encountered online, (2) exposure to hate speech and violent content and (3) tech-facilitated peer violence. Understanding children's exposure to these risks is essential to reduce harm and promote safer online environments for children.

Meeting people in person whom they first got to know online

The survey examined whether children had, in the past year, met anyone in person whom they first got to know online. Among nationals, 15 per cent reported having met someone face-to-face whom they initially met online, while only 9 per cent living in Za'atari camp reported such meetings.

Meeting in person people first met online

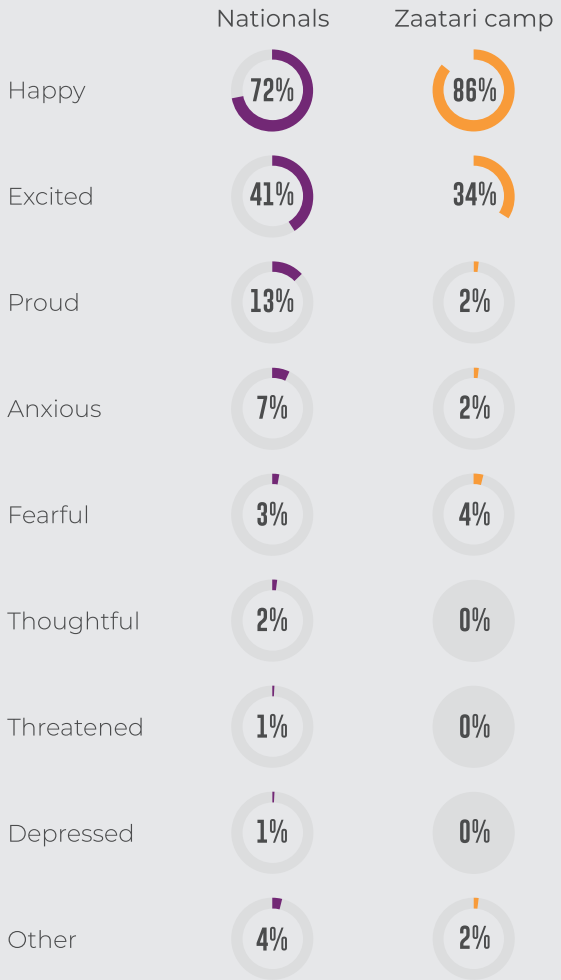


Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,028 | Za'atari camp = 534.

Among children who had such in-person meetings, the experience was generally described positively. The majority mentioned feeling happy, including 72 per cent of nationals and 86 per cent in Za'atari camp. Feelings of excitement were also common, mentioned by 41 per cent of nationals and 34 per cent in Za'atari camp. A smaller proportion of nationals mentioned feeling proud

(13 per cent), compared with only 2 per cent of children in Za'atari camp. Negative emotions were mentioned less frequently. Feelings of fear were mentioned by 3 per cent of nationals and 4 per cent in Za'atari camp, while anxiety was mentioned by 7 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively. Very few children mentioned feeling depressed (1 per cent) or threatened (1 per cent). While for most children this is a positive and increasingly common activity, these findings also highlight the importance of guidance on how to recognize unsafe online interactions and how to manage in-person meetings, to mitigate potential risks.

How children felt when they met in-person someone they first got to know on the internet



Base: Children who met in person someone they first got to know online, Nationals = 152 | Zaatari camp = 50.

Exposure to hate and violent content online

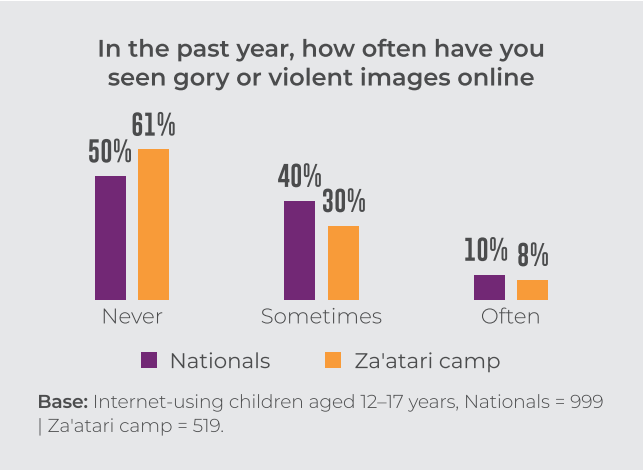
The survey also examined children's exposure to hate messages and gory or violent images online. Among nationals, 45 per cent of children had been exposed to hate messages in the past year. This was less common among children in Za'atari camp (26 per cent). Exposure to gory or violent images was somewhat higher, for both nationals (50 per cent) and those in Za'atari camp (38 per cent). These findings highlight the importance of continued digital safety education and guidance to help children navigate and cope with harmful online content, while advocating for companies to introduce better content moderation policies to avoid exposing children to potentially harmful content.

Exposure to hate messages online



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 985 | Za'atari camp = 522.

Exposure to violent content online



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 999 | Za'atari camp = 519.

Exposure to technology-facilitated peer violence

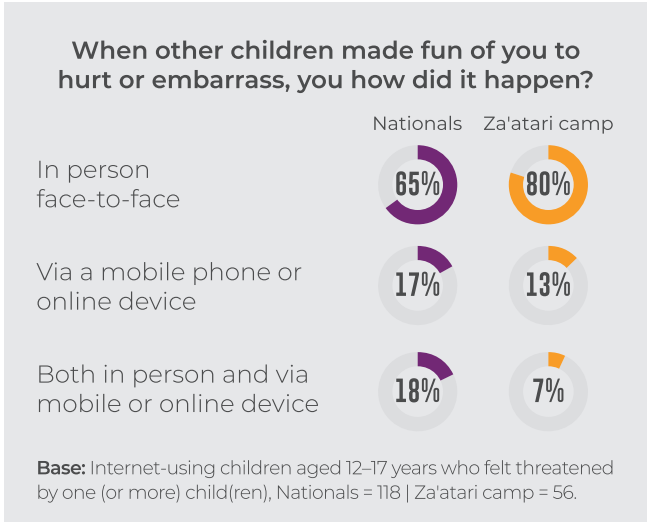
The survey found that a significant proportion of children in Jordan experience emotional and psychological abuse from their peers. For instance, 16 per cent of nationals aged 12–17 and 15 per cent living in Za'atari camp felt threatened by other children in the past year. As many as 30 per cent surveyed nationals aged 12–17 experienced other children spreading false rumours about them. While most of these experiences occurred in person, around 1 in 5 of cases occurred via digital or online devices.

Peer-to-peer violence



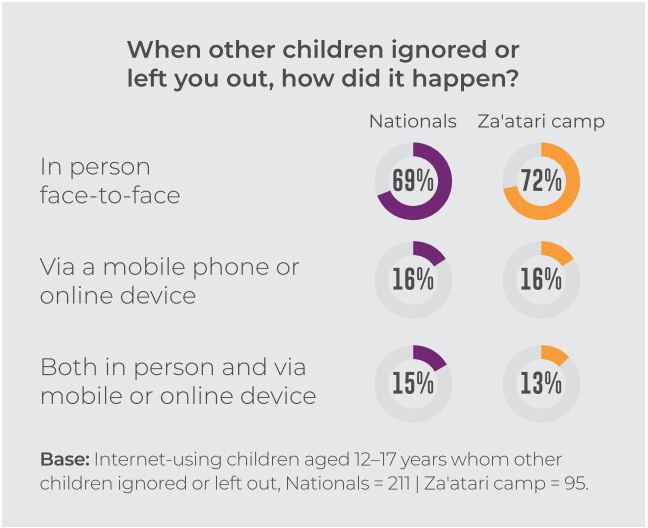
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years who felt threatened by one (or more) child(ren), Nationals = 118 | Zaatari camp = 56.

Peer-to peer violence



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years who felt threatened by one (or more) child(ren), Nationals = 118 | Za'atari camp = 56.

Peer-to-peer violence



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years whom other children ignored or left out, Nationals = 211 | Za'atari camp = 95.

Peer-to-peer violence



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years whom other children spread false rumours about them, Nationals = 228 | Za'atari camp = 71.

Digital skills

The survey assessed self-reported digital skills among internet-using children aged 12–17. Self-reported digital skills were generally high among both national children and children living in Za'atari camp, particularly in relation to managing online interactions and sharing content. Differences between the two groups were more pronounced for some online safety and privacy-related skills. National children were more likely than children in Za'atari camp to report knowing how to report harmful content on social media (82 per cent versus 69 per cent) and how to change privacy settings (78 per cent versus

66 per cent). Just over half of children in both groups reported knowing how to check whether a website could be trusted, with 57 per cent of both national children and children in Za'atari camp indicating confidence in this skill. This suggests that while many children possess practical and social digital skills, critical digital literacy skills related to evaluating online information may be less developed.

Self-reported Digital Skills



Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 years, Nationals = 1,030 | Zaatari camp = 535.

8. CONCLUSION

8. CONCLUSION

The findings highlight that while internet access among children in Jordan is widespread, with mobile phones as the primary tool, structural, familial, and social barriers shape their online experiences and vulnerabilities. Limited connectivity, shared devices and parental or institutional restrictions affect access, particularly for children in refugee settings.

Techn-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse remains difficult to quantify in Jordan due to the exclusion of sensitive survey modules and safeguarding constraints, yet qualitative insights reveal that online elements are present in many cases. Gender norms strongly influence abuse dynamics, with girls often groomed by older men and boys facing unique barriers to disclosure, compounded by fear, stigma and family or legal constraints.

Families and schools play central roles in prevention, detection and support. Parents can create protective, communicative home environments, while schools serve as key sites for identifying abuse, facilitating disclosure and raising awareness. However, gaps in teacher and parental guidance, family conflict, limited online safety education and cultural resistance to discussing sexual topics hinder effective prevention.

The legal and justice systems in Jordan provide a foundational framework through the 2023 Cybercrime Law, procedural safeguards and specialized law enforcement units. Nevertheless, statutes of limitations, centralized services, slow case progression, limited legal aid, limited trauma-informed procedures and gaps in digital evidence retention pose barriers to justice. Children often face retraumatization in courts, and access to psychosocial support, rehabilitation and compensation is inconsistent.

Emerging initiatives, such as awareness campaigns, planned multisectoral action plans and social work capacity-building by 2027, offer opportunities to strengthen prevention, protection and recovery services. Targeted refinements to legislation, child-centred justice processes and specialized training for families, schools and service providers will be essential to fully safeguard children, improve reporting and prosecution of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, and ensure survivors' access to justice, recovery and reintegration. Overall, a multilayered approach combining legislative, institutional, familial, educational and societal interventions is critical to prevent and respond effectively to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse in Jordan.

Taking these positive steps and challenges into account, this report ends with evidence-based recommendations that were workshopped and validated with national experts and stakeholders in Amman in February 2026. However, to support the effectiveness of these recommendations it is important to address the underlying stigma and shame, which very often overlooks the fact that the children in question are victims of abuse who have the right to support and understanding, rather than judgment.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Disrupting the harm caused by tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse against children requires comprehensive and sustained action from all stakeholders – families, communities, government representatives, law enforcement agencies, justice and social support service professionals, and the national and international technology and communications industry.

While children are part of the solution, the harm caused by these forms of sexual violence obliges adults to act to protect them; care must be taken not to put the onus on children to protect themselves from harm without support. The following detailed recommendations for action in Jordan are clustered under eight key insights from the Disrupting Harm data and are signposted for different stakeholder groups. However, all these recommended actions are interlinked and are most effective if implemented in coordination.

INSIGHT 1

Gender-based social norms create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by perpetrators of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

1. **Advocate for child-centred protection and risk management**
   a) Strengthen immediate child protection responses following disclosure, ensuring thorough risk assessments and safety plans aligned with the National Framework for Family Protection from Violence (2016) and National Standard Operating Procedures (2018).
   b) Enhance responses to high-risk cases (e.g., honour-based risks and child marriage), including clear referral pathways, protective measures and coordinated action with the Ministry of Social Development and judicial authorities.
   c) Ensure reporting mechanisms and services are accessible and inclusive for boys, addressing the stigma and social barriers that hinder disclosure and access to justice.

2. **Promote multi-stakeholder collaboration and community engagement**
   a) Enhance multi-stakeholder collaboration among government, civil society, community leaders, educators, youth groups, families and technology companies to promote positive social norms, improve digital safety, and expand safe and accessible reporting mechanisms.
   b) Reduce victim-blaming attitudes through targeted community engagement and behaviour-change messaging, coordinated with NCFA and relevant partners.
   c) Strengthen long-term, culturally appropriate community awareness efforts, in coordination with NCFA and partners, to address misconceptions, emphasize the seriousness of tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse, encourage supportive family responses, and promote respectful behaviour and online safety.

3. **Institutionalize capacity-building and professional training**
   a) Build the capacities of FPJD and front-line practitioners on forms of online child sexual abuse, trauma-informed interviewing techniques and safe procedures for handling digital evidence.
   b) Institutionalize specialized capacity-building for teachers, social workers, FPJD, the Cybercrime Unit, prosecutors and judges, ensuring that the training aligns with national frameworks and focuses on the identification of abuse, child-friendly disclosure, safety planning, social norms affecting help-seeking and relevant child rights principles.

INSIGHT 2

The legal framework both reinforces and underpins gender-based social norms, creating additional vulnerabilities for boys and girls subjected to tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse within communities and families, who sometimes blame or further victimize them.

4. **Reform legislation and policy**
   a) Explicitly recognize in child-protection legislation and national action plans that honour-based violence, marriage of children below the age of 18, and family retaliation are risks linked to disclosure of sexual violence, including tech-facilitated abuse.
   b) Promote legal reforms to ensure all children, whether girls or boys, are fully protected from sexual offences under the law; adopt a gender-neutral legal framework with proportionate penalties.
   c) Strengthen recognition and visibility of boys as potential victims of sexual violence within national policies, child protection frameworks and service provision.
   d) Review and revise legislation, policies and enforcement practices to guarantee that protections, penalties and survivor support apply equally to all children; guidance should ensure children are never blamed.

INSIGHT 3

Parents play a critical role in children's protection, yet a range of family-related factors could be exploited by perpetrators and hinder disclosure.

5. **Develop and fund evidence-based family and parenting interventions**
   a) Develop and fund evidence-based parenting programmes (online and in person) promoting balanced mediation, guidance, dialogue and age-appropriate rules.
   b) Equip parents with skills for children's safe internet use, understanding of privacy and online opportunities.
   c) Strengthen home-based digital safety initiatives with practical guidance and supportive responses without blame or punishment.
   d) Promote positive, non-punitive parenting, trust-based communication and fathers' involvement, while ensuring mothers receive tailored support.
   e) Address family environment and caregiver well-being as risk and protective factors; integrate risk screening for intrafamilial violence/conflict.
   f) Integrate positive discipline and constructive behaviour management into national parenting programmes.
   g) Expand access to child and adolescent mental health services and integrated psychosocial support for caregivers.
   h) Fund national campaigns promoting positive parenting, shared caregiving and culturally sensitive approaches.

INSIGHT 4

The school environment is a critical space for identifying, preventing and sometimes facilitating disclosure of tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.

6. **Develop and fund school-based interventions**
   a) Introduce mandatory school-based digital literacy programmes covering online safety, content evaluation, cyberbullying, privacy and responsible social interactions.
   b) Use interactive and evidence-based learning tools (gamified apps, videos and workshops that have been properly evaluated for impact) to improve children's online risk awareness.
   c) Promote clear, child-friendly reporting and support mechanisms in schools and community settings.
   d) Train school counsellors and teachers to provide first-line psychosocial support and follow referral pathways.
   e) Position schools as central actors in prevention, identification and recovery, including monitoring academic progress, peer relationships and safe reintegration.
   f) Enable schools to address sensitive topics through culturally acceptable entry points.
   g) Mandate regular training for school staff on identification, trauma-informed responses and referral procedures in accordance with the approved procedures of the Ministry of Education.
   h) Expand school-based counselling and psychosocial support services.
   i) Formalize referral mechanisms between schools, child protection and specialized NGOs.

7. **Institutionalize capacity-building and professional training**
   a) Strengthen the capacity of teachers and school counsellors to recognize and respond to early warning signs, providing structured training on child-sensitive responses, confidentiality and referral pathways.

INSIGHT 5

With the adoption of a dedicated Cybercrime Law in 2023, Jordan has strengthened its approach to cybercrimes; however, further measures are needed to ensure comprehensive protection for children from tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse, including online grooming and sexual extortion.

8. Reform legislation and policy

a) Adopt dedicated legal provisions to explicitly criminalize the conduct of intentionally communicating, soliciting, grooming or making any arrangement through an information and communications technology system for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against a child, either in person or entirely online, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

b) Amend existing provisions on child sexual abuse material to criminalize deliberate access, even when the material is neither purchased nor downloaded.

c) Amend the Cybercrime Law to provide that the exposure of a child to sexual content always constitutes an aggravating circumstance of the existing offence of sending or transferring pornographic material through information and communication technologies, irrespective of the perpetrator's intent.

d) Adopt legal provisions for the explicit criminalization of tech-facilitated sexual extortion of children. While the Cybercrime Law may be applied to prosecute this form of child sexual exploitation and abuse, a dedicated provision, supported by a clear definition, would better capture its unique dynamics, including the coercive use of self-generated sexual material to extort money or sexual acts from a child.

e) Provide further legal clarification on the scope of the Cybercrime Law's definition of child sexual abuse material with respect to digitally generated or manipulated content, including material generated by artificial intelligence. This would support consistent application of existing provisions and ensure that material appearing to depict a child falls within the child protection framework, regardless of the involvement of a real child in its production.

INSIGHT 6

Current legislation imposes no proactive obligations on internet service providers or online platforms to prevent the dissemination of child sexual abuse material or to retain data that could support investigations into child sexual exploitation and abuse.

9. Reform legislation and policy

a) Establish a comprehensive legal framework on data retention, with necessary privacy safeguards in place, to ensure that service providers preserve user data essential for investigating child sexual exploitation and abuse offences.

b) Introduce binding and explicit obligations on internet service providers and online platforms to implement technical solutions for the proactive detection, blocking and reporting of child sexual abuse material.

c) Adopt legal provisions requiring internet service providers and online platforms to establish clear, accessible and user-friendly notice and take-down mechanisms for reporting child rights violations or illegal content, including child sexual abuse material.

INSIGHT 7

The interviews highlighted that procedural legislation and the case management framework in Jordan would benefit from further development to better support access to child-centred justice procedures and effective remedies in cases of (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, addressing barriers to report among children and families is critical to ensure that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse are being reported and responded to.

Hesitancy to engage with the justice system due to concerns of stigma, alongside procedural barriers in Jordan may discourage some children and families from formally reporting tech-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, there are aspects of Jordanian procedural legislation and the case management framework that may limit access to child-centred justice procedures and effective remedies in cases of (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse.

10. Reform legislation and policy

a) Abolish or extend statutes of limitations for (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse to ensure delayed disclosure does not prevent formal reporting and prosecution.

b) Mandatory reporting policies should be reviewed to ensure they do not inadvertently cause harm to survivors and their families. Clear safeguards must be introduced to protect privacy, confidentiality and the best interests of the child, including flexibility in reporting pathways and mechanisms to assess risk before automatic referrals to law enforcement.

c) Policy guidance should mandate that case managers and professionals clearly explain legal processes, possible outcomes and children's rights to both children and caregivers in simple language. When families are supported to understand what will happen and why, trust increases and case outcomes improve.

d) Ensure that all children, regardless of age, are able to report cases of (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse autonomously and access child-friendly reporting mechanisms without requiring parental or guardian involvement. Professionals and institutions receiving such reports should be equipped with trauma-informed procedures and adequate training to provide psychosocial support and guidance throughout the reporting process, including support in helping children safely disclose the abuse to their families.

e) Policies should recognize that refugee and migrant families may experience heightened fear of authorities. Justice and child protection systems must integrate culturally sensitive practices, including cultural mediators, and assurances that reporting abuse will not negatively affect immigration or asylum status.

f) Adopt dedicated legal provisions to guarantee unconditional and systematic access to free legal representation and psychological support for all children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse from the moment a complaint is submitted, including throughout the investigation and all subsequent stages of the criminal process. Establish clear procedures and inter-agency coordination mechanisms to ensure effective implementation.

g) Amend the Criminal Procedure Law to require that forensic interviews of children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse be conducted exclusively in child-friendly settings by specially trained professionals, audio- or video-recorded where appropriate considering the individual circumstances, needs and preference of each child, and limited in number to prevent repeated or insensitive questioning.

h) Amend the Criminal Procedure Law to prohibit direct contact between children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse and alleged perpetrators at all stages of judicial proceedings.

i) Ensure effective protection of children and their families from intimidation and retaliation during justice proceedings, including by amending relevant legislation to extend the possibility of court-issued protection orders to all cases of sexual violence against children, regardless of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

11. Institutionalize capacity-building and professional training

a) Ensure all law enforcement and justice professionals working with children subjected to tech-facilitated abuse receive continuous training in safeguarding, children's rights, digital realities, and gender-sensitive and trauma-informed care.

12. Recovery, reintegration and compensation

a) Develop dedicated operating procedures for providing recovery and reintegration services in cases of (tech-facilitated) child sexual exploitation and abuse, and ensure that the upcoming in-service social work capacity-building programme includes training on their implementation to enable tailored, child-centred interventions that take into account survivors' specific needs and vulnerabilities.

b) Allocate adequate public funding and resources for recovery and reintegration programmes for children subjected to (tech-facilitated) sexual exploitation and abuse, and strengthen collaboration with organizations already providing specialized services to expand the coverage and quality of support services.

c) Start strategically and progressively amending relevant criminal and civil procedural rules to waive all legal fees and related costs for children seeking court-ordered compensation from the perpetrator in cases of sexual violence as part of a long-term, sustainable reform process.

INSIGHT 8

Children in a refugee camp setting experience greater challenges and barriers to accessing and using the internet than children in the national population.

13. Address digital access, inclusion and safety for children in a refugee camp setting

a) Address structural connectivity and infrastructure barriers: expand child-friendly internet access points, stable electricity, and affordable/subsidized connectivity in refugee contexts.

b) Promote private sector partnerships to expand safe internet access and digital solutions for refugees in camps through incentives such as tax exemptions and other investment support measures.

c) Provide tailored digital literacy training for children in refugee communities.

d) Expand safe digital spaces (learning hubs, creative content, coding and storytelling) under appropriate safeguarding.

e) Embed equity into national digital inclusion strategies, explicitly including refugee children and camp settings.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Disrupting Harm in Jordan report was written by Rogers Twesigye, Maria Rosaria Centrone, Andrea Varrella, Tiago Afonso and Schager Monica.

ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti have appreciated the unique opportunity to work together to gather evidence around tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. This report is the result of a three-year collaborative effort to gather and generate this evidence.

This research would not have been successful without the engagement of so many individuals and partners, especially those in Jordan. Our thanks and appreciation go to our colleagues in Jordan including UNICEF Jordan, Justice Center for Legal Aid, and INTERPOL's National Central Bureau Amman. The project partners also wish to thank the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) and the National Technical Committee for their indispensable support to this research. In addition, we thank all the representatives of organizations in Jordan who participated in the national consultation.

The authors would like to thank our research partners in Jordan for their expertise and collaboration in collecting the data:

- **Justice Center for Legal Aid:** Review of national legislation and policies.
- **Tech Legality:** Interviews with justice professionals, and front-line workers.
- **Ipsos International Social Research and Ipsos Jordan:** Implementation of the household survey.

The authors would like to thank the following colleagues for their valuable comments and suggestions during the development and drafting of this report: Angela Davis (UNICEF Innocenti), Marium Saeed (UNICEF Innocenti) and Suzan Kasht (UNICEF Jordan).

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The authors also wish to acknowledge colleagues who reviewed the report and contributed with their expertise: Daniel Kardefelt Winther (UNICEF Innocenti), Sendrine Fabié (ECPAT International), Serena Tommasino (Safe Online), and Suzan Kasht (UNICEF Jordan).

Finally, the findings and insights presented in this report would not have been possible without research participants taking the time to speak to the researchers. Our sincerest gratitude goes to all children, young people, parents, front-line workers, justice professionals, law enforcement and other professionals who participated in this study.

11. ANNEX:

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

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Child sexual abuse: What defines an abusive act can be difficult to capture or to definitively categorize. The term 'abuse' is often referred to as treating another person in a cruel or violent way. The term often focuses on both the act (e.g. violent, non-consensual), as well as the effect of the act (e.g. causing bodily injury, pain – physical or emotional -, distress, etc.)

Child sexual abuse more specifically, refers to various sexual activities perpetrated on children (persons under 18), regardless of whether the children are aware that what is happening to them is neither normal nor acceptable. It can be committed by adults or peers and usually involves an individual or group taking advantage of an imbalance of power. It can be committed without explicit force, with perpetrators frequently using authority, power, manipulation, or deception.[63]

Child sexual exploitation: Involves the same abusive actions mentioned above. However, an additional element of a threat or of exchange for something (e.g., money, shelter, material goods, or non-material components such as protection, a relationship, or even the mere promise of such) from a third party and/or the perpetrator must also be present.[64]

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM), including AI-CSAM: Photos, videos, audios or other recordings, or any other representation of real or digitally generated (including generated through/by AI) child sexual abuse or sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.[65]

Livestreaming of child sexual abuse: Child sexual abuse that is perpetrated and viewed simultaneously in real-time via communication tools, video conferencing tools and/or chat applications. In most cases, the perpetrator requesting the abuse in exchange for payment or other material benefits, is physically in a different location from the child(ren) and the facilitators of the abuse.[66]

Online grooming of children for sexual purposes/ solicitation of children for sexual purposes: Building a relationship with a child via technology with the intent of sexually abusing or exploiting the child.[67]

Sexual extortion of children: The blackmailing of a person with the help of self-generated images of that person in order to extort sexual favours, money, or other benefits under the threat of sharing the material beyond the consent of the depicted person (e.g. posting images on social media). Often, the influence and manipulation, typical of perpetrators of grooming over longer periods of time (sometimes several months), turns into a rapid escalation of threats, intimidation, and coercion once the person has been persuaded to send the first sexual images of themselves.[68]

Sexual harassment: "Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment," as defined by the Istanbul Convention (art. 40), the only international legal definition of the term.[69]

Children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour: This term refers to sexual behaviour or developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive.[70]

For further guidance on terminology and key considerations, refer to the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

63 Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse: Second Edition*, ECPAT, Bangkok, 2025, pp. 31–34.
64 Ibid., pp. 39–44.
65 Ibid., p. 63.
66 Ibid., p. 86.
67 Ibid., p. 95.
68 Ibid., pp. 97–98.
69 Ibid., pp. 36–38.
70 Ibid., p. 160.

