



# Prevention, Response, and Healing from Sextortion



Thorn. (2017). *Sextortion: Summary findings from a survey of 2,097 survivors*. Accessed at [https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sextortion\\_Report.pdf](https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sextortion_Report.pdf)

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# What is sextortion?

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Sextortion is threat(s) to expose explicit images if a victim does not comply with demands.

*(a form of online blackmail)*

# A 17-year-old boy died by suicide hours after being scammed. The FBI says it's part of a troubling increase in 'sextortion' cases.

By Josh Campbell and Jason Kravarik, CNN  
Updated 11:40 AM EDT, Mon May 23, 2022

## PRESS RELEASE

### FBI and Partners Issue National Public Safety Alert on Sextortion Schemes

Thursday, January 19, 2023

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, S

Over 3,000 minor victims targeted in 2022 across the United States

MINNESOTA · Published February 11, 2023 8:00am EST

## Growing 'sextortion' trend tricks boys into sending explicit images through gaming sites, extorted for money

### How law enforcement is promoting a troubling documentary about 'sextortion'

March 12, 2023 · 5:00 AM ET  
Heard on [All Things Considered](#)  
By Lisa Hagen

# 85%

of sextortion victims cited shame / embarrassment as their reason for **not** getting help.

**Caregiver blame attitudes can either inhibit or reinforce a child's likelihood to turn to a trusted adult if and when they are in need of help.**

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1 in 4 caregivers believe the receiver of nude imagery has a right to re-share the content at their discretion.

1 in 2 caregivers blame the victim in situations involving the nonconsensual re-sharing of their nudes

Caregivers of girls were twice as likely to blame the victim in situations involving the nonconsensual re-sharing of their nudes

# LGBTQ+ minors demonstrate areas of increased risk. When compared to non-LGBTQ+ minors, they were:

**2x**

**as likely to report having an online sexual interaction with someone they believed to be an adult**

*Compared to 2020, LGBTQ+ minors reported increased rates of online sexual experiences with adults (+8%) while non-LGBTQ+ minors reported a decrease (-4%), significantly widening the gap between these two groups.*

**2x**

**as likely to indicate they have had an online sexual interaction on Instagram**

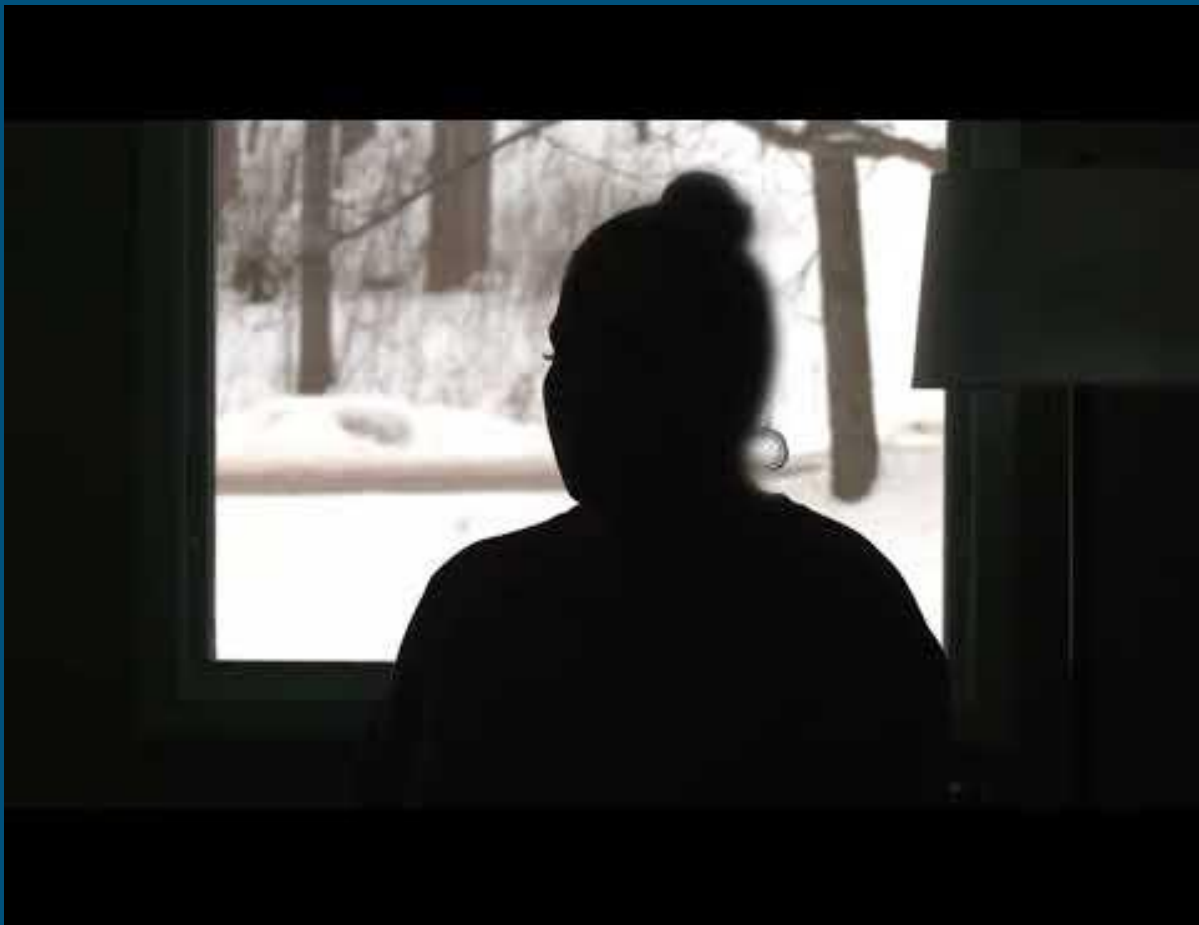
*LGBTQ+ minors were also more than 2x as likely to indicate they had an online sexual interaction on Snapchat than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.*

**5x**

**less likely to disclose their online sexual experience to a trusted adult**

*1 in 20 LGBTQ+ minors reported turning to a trusted adult as compared to 1 in 4 non-LGBTQ+ minors.*





**This has ruined my self-image, my relationships, and my trust of others. I still to this day don't feel like myself.**

*- Sextortion victim*

# Prevention

# Be an Askable Adult

- **Have conversations early & often**
  - **Stop the blame & shame game**
    - **Remove phrases like:**
      - I told you so!
      - This is why you shouldn't...
      - That's what happens when...
      - Why didn't you...
      - What were you thinking?
-

# Remove the Blame

- **Instead use phrases like:**
  - **How are you feeling?**
  - **This might be scary**
  - **This isn't your fault**
  - **What they did is a crime**
  - **We can get through this together**
  - **Let's talk to...**
  - **Thank you for trusting me with this**
  - **I'm glad you came to me**
  - **I'm so proud you are talking to me**
  - **It took courage for you to come to me**

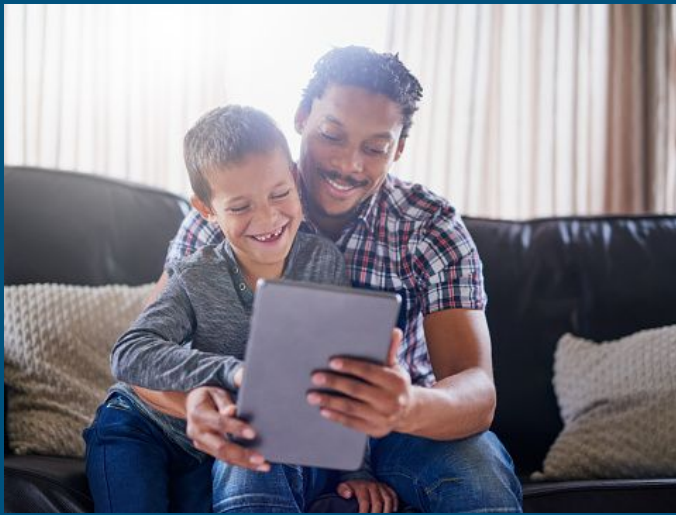
# Device Access & Monitoring

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- Talk & teach about privacy settings
- Chat about 'chat'
- Be transparent as possible:
  - Let them know you may monitor their activity
  - Check-in on a regular basis

# Awareness & Education

- THORN / Thorn for parents
  - AMAZE Resources
  - Common Sense Media
  - Be Internet Awesome
  - The Smart Talk
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# Response

# What if sextortion happens?

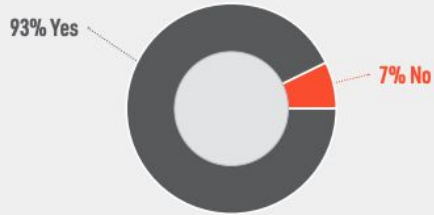
- ❑ **Stop** responding to the messages
  - ❑ **Talk** to a trusted adult
  - ❑ Do not send money
  - ❑ **Report**
  - ❑ Action **plan**
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# Stop Responding

- Warning signs of sextortion:
  - “I’ll show you mine..if you show me yours”
  - “I work for a modeling agency”
  - Wants to quickly develop a romantic relationship
  - Use multiple (fake) identities to contact you
  - You have many common ‘friends’ but have never met them
  - Wants to switch to different apps
- When your instincts tingle
  - Pause
  - Contact the ‘friend’ on a different platform
- Save messages for authorities (don’t delete)

WHEN VICTIMS COMPLIED WITH EXTORTERS' DEMANDS FOR MONEY...

DID EXTORTERS DEMAND MORE MONEY?<sup>12</sup>



DID EXTORTERS FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEIR THREATS OF IMAGE DISTRIBUTION?



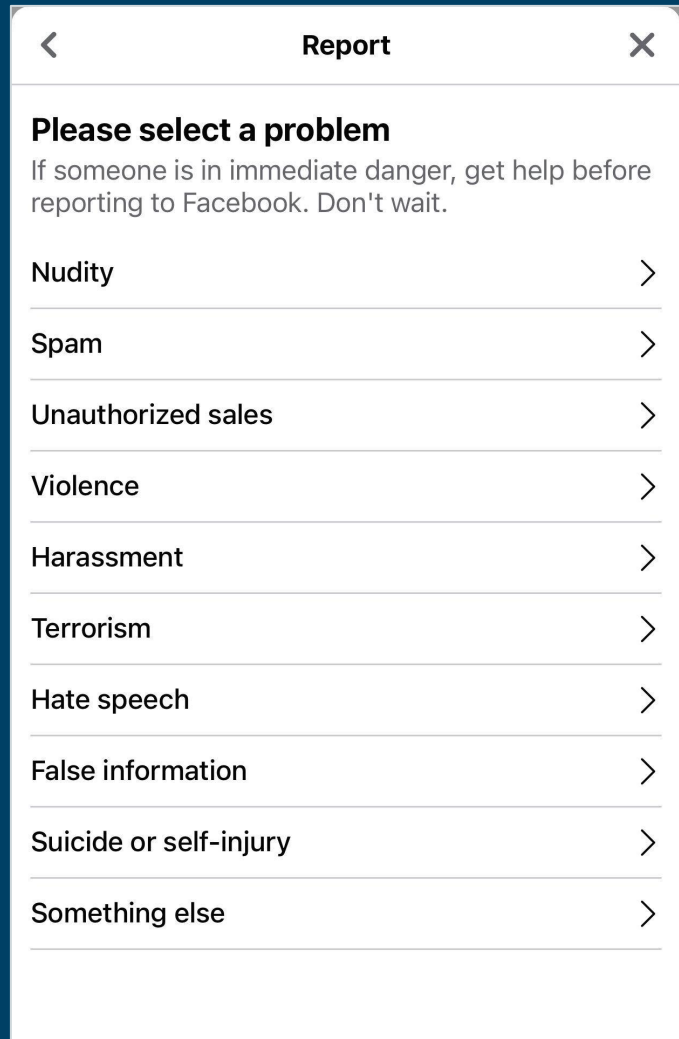
DID EXTORTERS FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEIR THREATS OF IMAGE DISTRIBUTION WHEN VICTIMS *DID NOT COMPLY*?



# CREATING AN ACTION PLAN



# Step 1: Report in-app



# Step 2: Report to authorities

Where should you report?

- National center for missing & exploited children (NCMEC)  
[Cybertipline](#),  
gethelp@ncmec.org or  
1-800-THE-LOST.
- FBI

# Step 3: Community Outreach

What if the photos get released?

- School
  - Friends
  - Family
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# Step 4: Remove

What if the photos get released?

- Scrub from internet

[MissingKids.org/IsYourExplicitContentOutThere](https://MissingKids.org/IsYourExplicitContentOutThere)

- Take it down

<https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/>

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# Most important message for young people:

if sextortion happens, it is NOT your  
fault.

The blackmailer is to blame-they  
are committing a crime.

# Healing



# Common effects of sextortion and other forms of sexual violence

- Intense shame & guilt
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - PTSD
  - Isolation
  - Bullying
  - Suicidal ideation or attempts
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# Important Do's

- Blame the blackmailer
- Cultivate self-compassion
- Focus on positive qualities
- Talk to a trusted adult
- Mindfulness practices
- Work with a mental health services provider
- Begin to rebuild relationships
  - With the support of family, friends, and other trusted adults

- The young people in our lives:
  - Might not recognize the effects of sextortion on their mental health.
  - Be unsure of who to go to for help.
  - Be afraid to get help due to shame and fear.
  - Need you to check-in, even if they don't ask.
  - Need your love, support, and guidance.

# Resources



# Educators

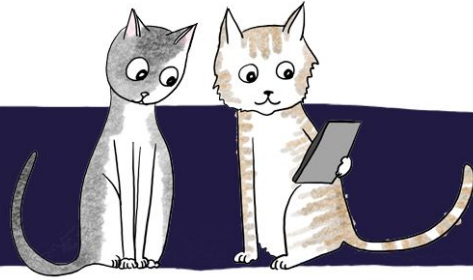
- AMAZE Educators
  - Sextortion video & more info
  - Digital & Media Literacy Toolkit
  - AMAZE/Thorn Resource Guide & recorded training
- Thorn.org
- Common Sense Media
- Be Internet Awesome
- NoFiltr youth resources



# Parents

- [Thorn for Parents](#)
- [AMAZE Parents](#)
- [Common Sense Media](#)
- [Be Internet Awesome](#)
- [The Smart Talk](#)

# POLICY MAKER RESOURCES ON SEXTORTION.

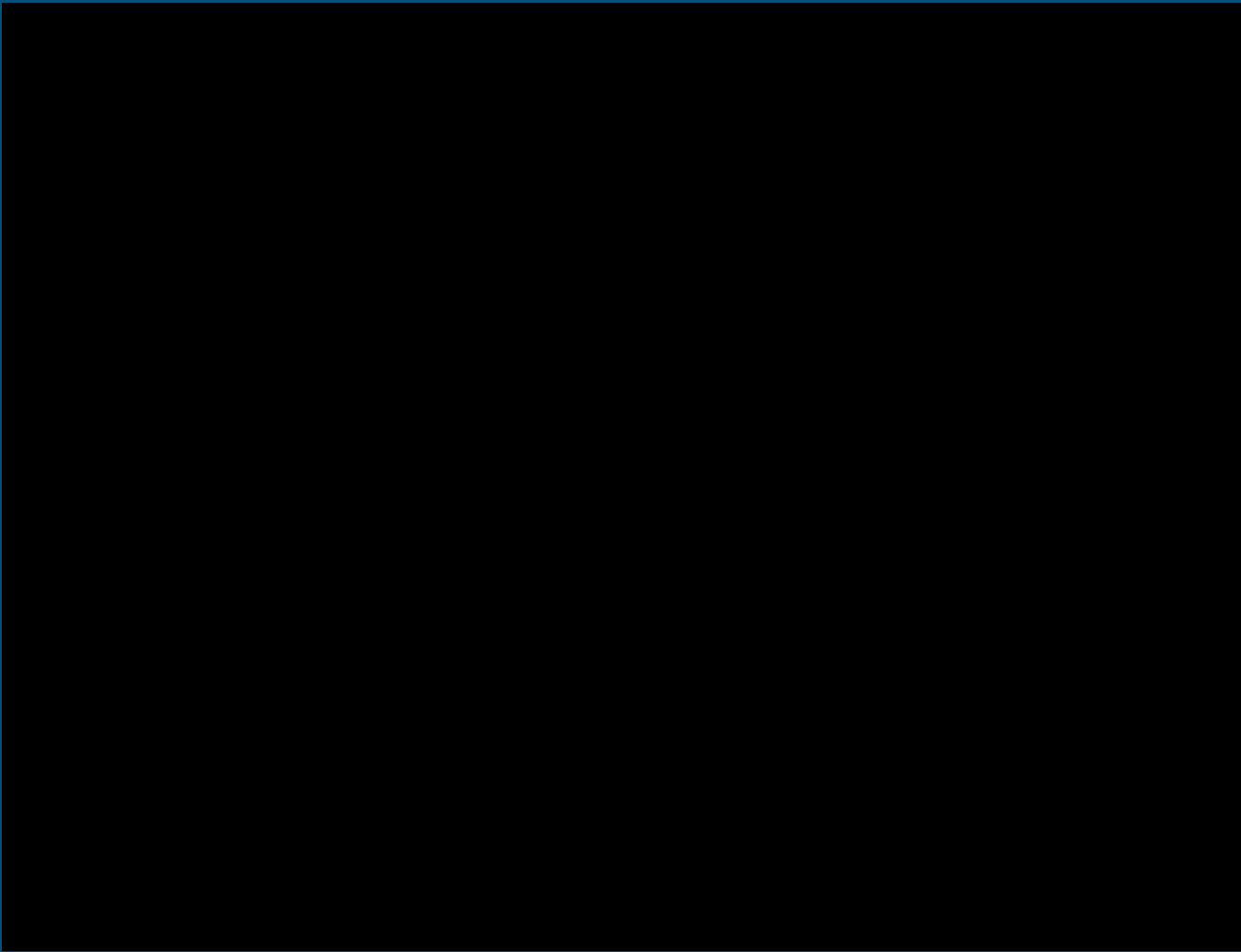


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THE KEY TO GOOD CRIMINAL LEGISLATION IS THAT THE END RESULT APPLIES TO REAL-WORLD HARMS WHILE BEING NARROWLY TAILORED TO PASS CONSTITUTIONAL MUSTER, AND FOR THE PUNISHMENT TO BE SUFFICIENT TO DETER THE BEHAVIOR.

- C.A Goldberg, Victims' Rights Law Firm

STOP SEXTORTION - TIPS FOR POLICY MAKERS



# What are your next steps?

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- In-class
- School-wide
- Families and caregivers
- Other settings

## Next steps:

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- Integrate skills-based sextortion prevention lessons into your HE & CSE curriculum
- Workshop with PTA
- School-wide sextortion response plan

QUESTIONS?



# Thank-you!



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