

Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence

La Promotion des Relations et l'Élimination de la Violence



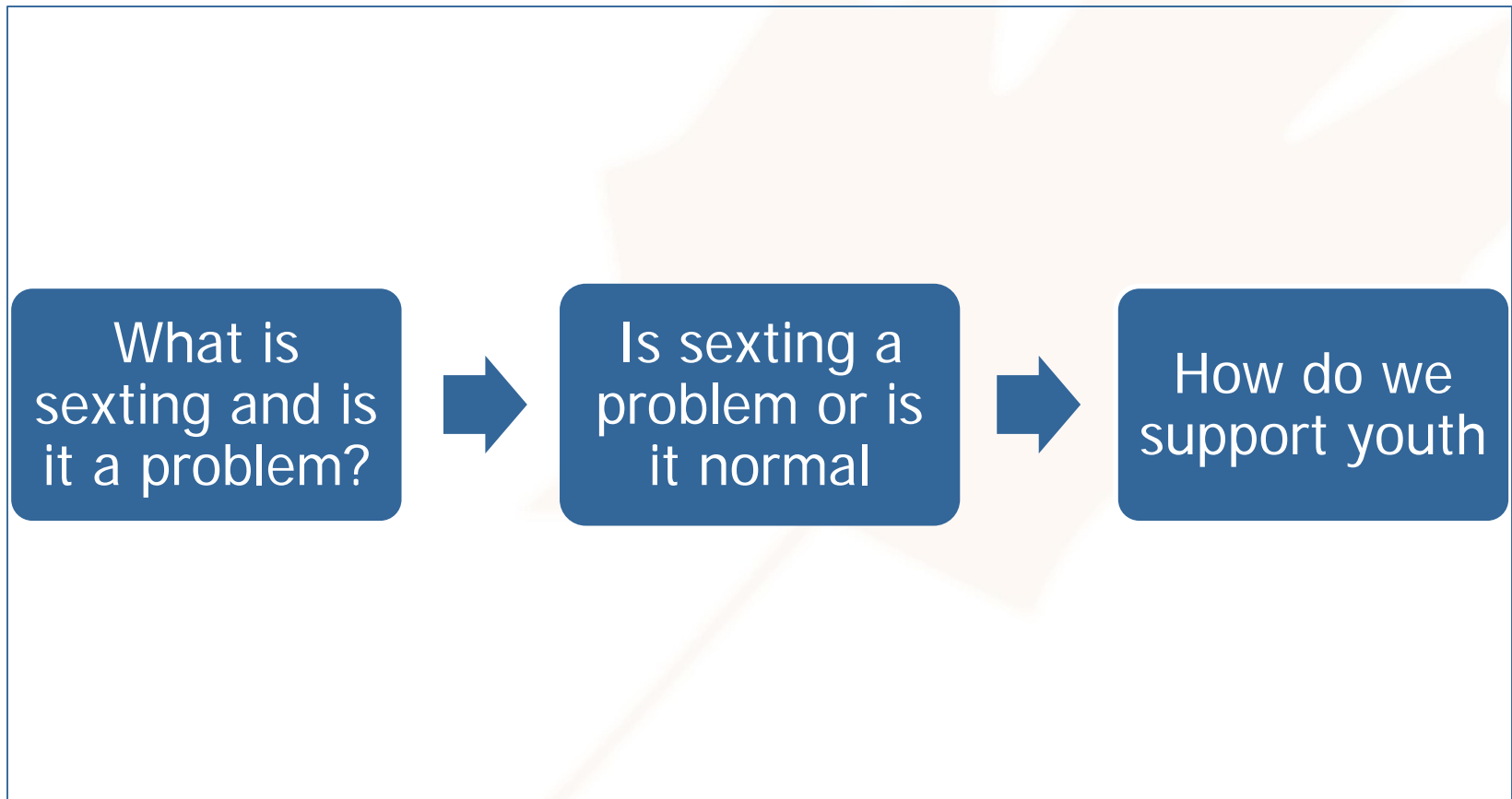
PREVNet

Sexting: The issues and how to address them

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THE NETWORKS
OF CENTRES OF
EXCELLENCE
NEW INITIATIVE 

Learning Outcomes

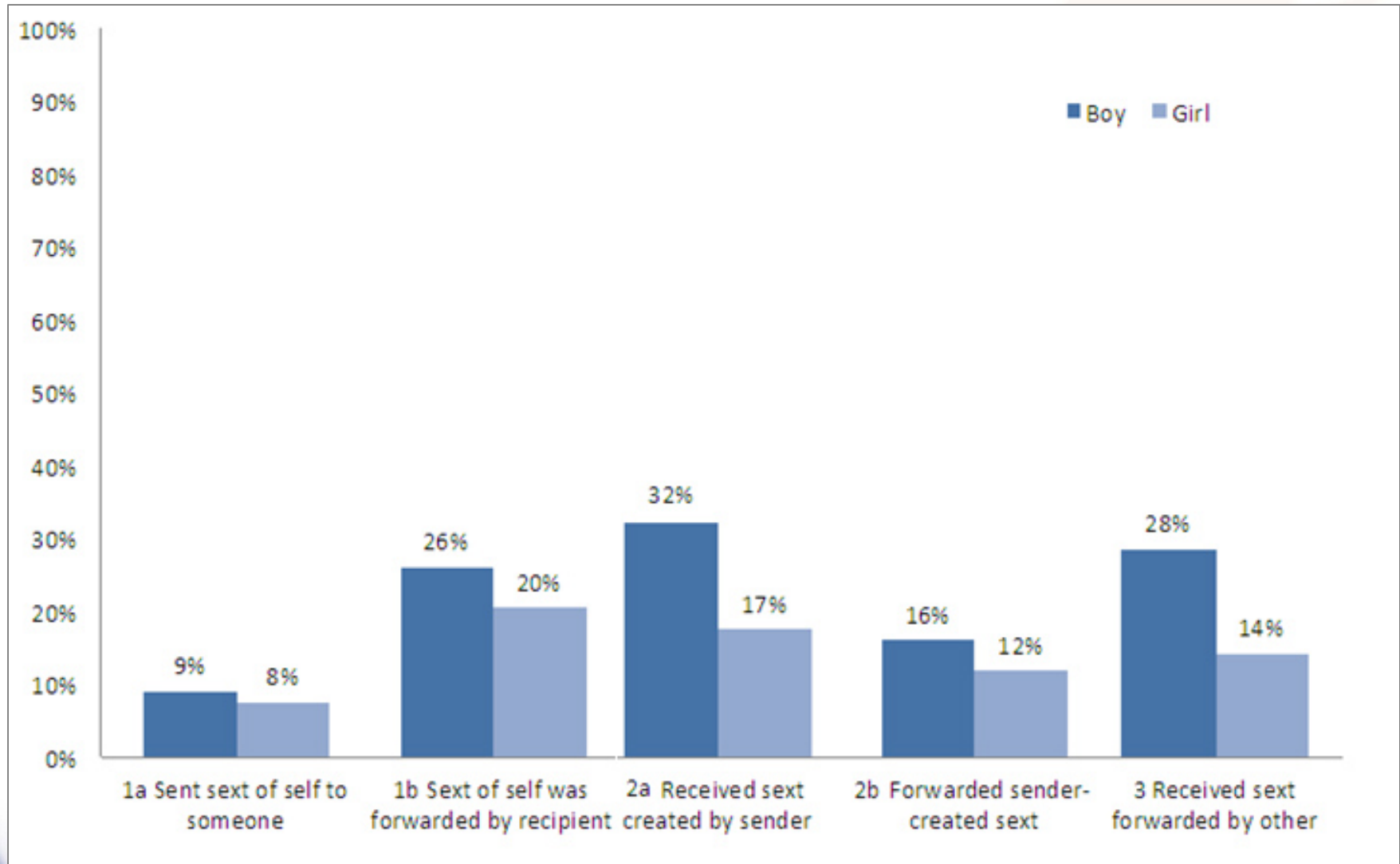




compromising nude sent
 yourself
 someone partner
 consent
 publicly forwarded sexually erotic
 receiving later sexual about
 text people other
 sending
 uploaded nearly sex showed pictures
 internet sex sext without experienced
 around Somebody information
 spread onto Posted videos shared
 images video intimate
 friend Disseminated
 content message
 photos related picture
 seminude messages



How common is sexting?



How Does Sexting Change with Age and Gender?

- Sexting increases with age
 - Receiving
 - Sending
 - Sharing
- Boys more likely than girls to engage in online sexting and risky sexual behaviour and report instrumental motivations
- Girls more likely to sext under pressure or to gain partner or increase popularity
- Sexual minorities engage in more sexting, particularly gay men



Why do Youth Engage in Sexting?

- Social goals
 - Popularity
 - Imitating friends
 - For males conform to social pressure
 - Trust and commitment in long distance relationships



Sexual Goals

- Flirting or show affection
- Initiating sexual activity
- Getting attention
- Arousing a partner
- Foreplay
- Excitement
- Fun and joking around
- Masculine sexual strength



Consensual Sexting

- Normal expression of sexuality through technology
- Private means to explore relationships
- Easier to explore identities
- Sexting correlated with sexual orientation, development, and LGBTQ more likely to engage
- Develop competencies to form, manage, and maintain relationships
- Healthy ways to discuss sexual health



But it is not always healthy

- May court but does not always positive
Related to digital violence
- Females repeatedly asked, pressured, or coerced to send images
- Related to offline harassment and sexual coercion
- Implication coercion not limited to in person and perpetrators may use images to cause further harm



Harmful Motivations

- Pressure by partners and friends
- Embarrassing someone
- Being relational aggressive
- Seeking revenge
- Gendered sexual harassment



Risks Associated with Sexting

- Deviant approach adolescent risk prone and positive correlations between sexting and:
 - Risky behaviours
 - Substance abuse
 - Emotional problems
 - Interpersonal and mental health issues
 - Gateway to sexual activity
 - Related to multiple partners
 - Promotes inappropriate peer norms around expected dating or sexual behaviour
- No causation



But Girls are at Greater Risks From Sexting

- Men more likely to report consensual sexting versus women non-consensual
- Females greater risks for their sexts to be shared
- Qualitative studies repercussions in form of slut shaming or spotlighting girls
- Non-consensual sharing of sexts is girls fault
- LGBTQ greatest risk of having sexts shared

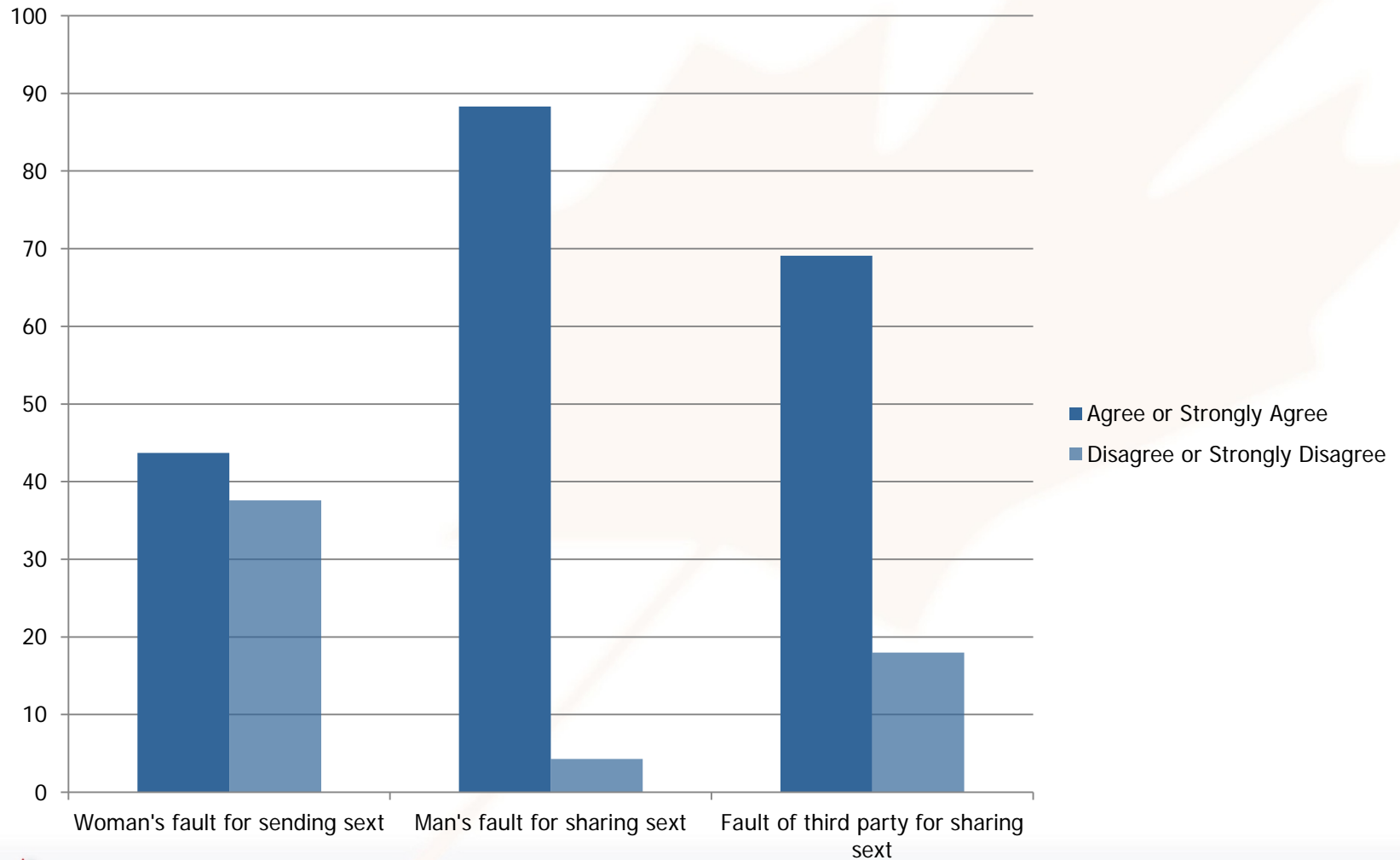


Girls Double Bind

- ⦿ Media-driven environment pressures girls to be popular, party, & be sexually attractive
- ⦿ Pressure to self-objectify in self-presentation online
- ⦿ Pressure to send explicit images of themselves to boys & men
- ⦿ Culture where girls harshly judge other girls' online behaviour & self-presentation
- ⦿ Rejected &/or punished for being “slutty”
- ⦿ Criticized for “trying too hard” to appear cool/popular
- ⦿ Blamed for their own sexual harassment online
- ⦿ Criticized for taking & /or sharing explicit images of self; blamed for images being shared without their consent
- ⦿ Criticized for wearing either too much or too little clothing



Females are often blamed need to confront gender roles



Blaming Girls

“It happens to girls the most where a girl decides to make a dumb mistake & sends a picture, like a nude picture, to someone” (G10 girl)

“A lot of girls like, especially when it comes to boys, they want to please boys by sending them pictures & saying certain things that end up getting on the internet & so many people see it” (G10 girl)



Invisibility

- Girls' victimization attributed to their poor judgment
- Narratives focused on how girls' behaviors should change, which often functioned to erase boys' culpability and roles
- Even when boys & girls engaged in similar behaviors the power of gender norms & stereotypes led to discounting boys' behaviors while problematizing these same behaviors by girls
- Influence of gender norms and stereotypes used to make sense of gendered & sexualized bullying & cyber bullying, was **typically invisible**



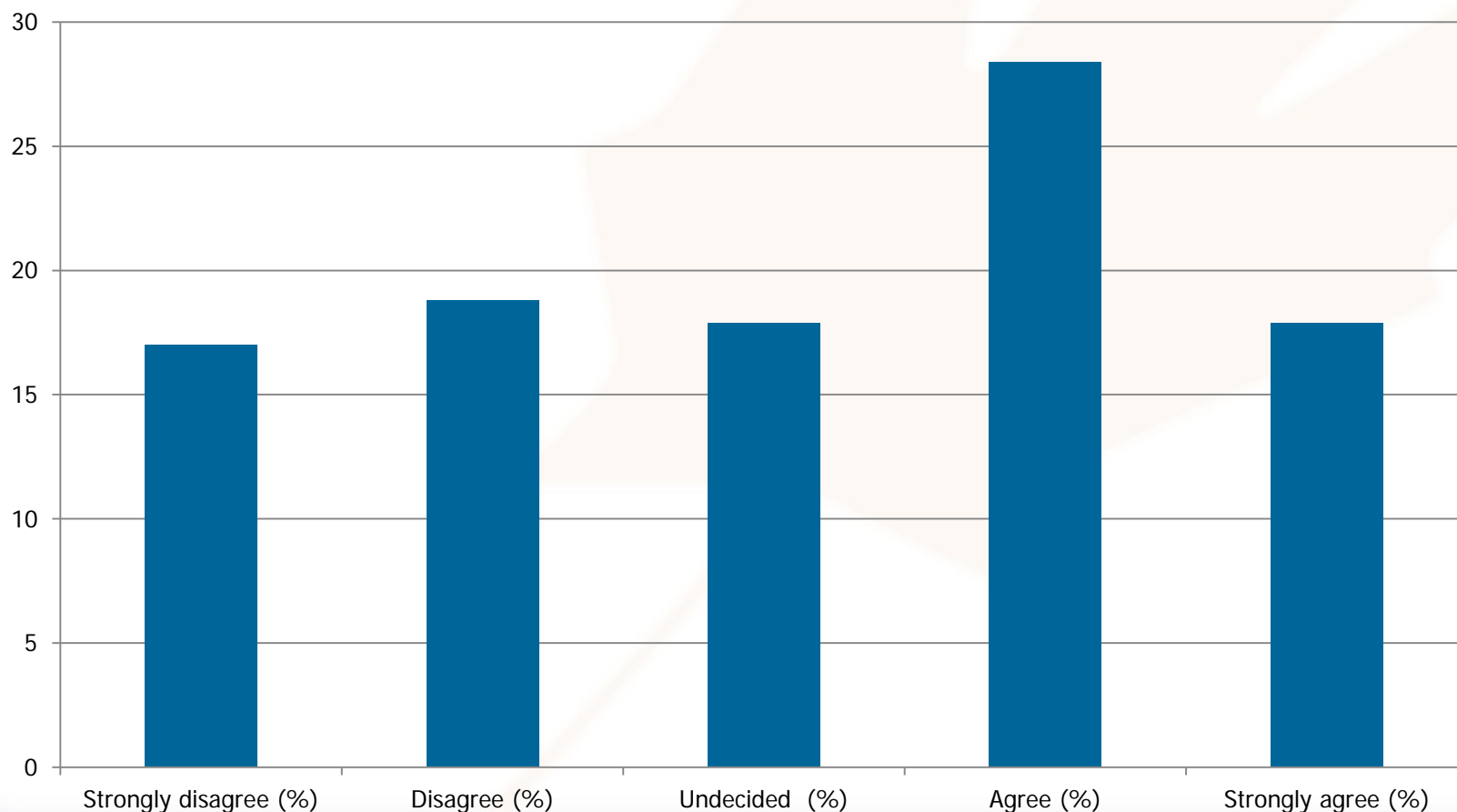
Invisibility to Adults

"[m]y friend got called a slut & a stripper in front of 2 teachers & they did nothing, they just looked at the person & looked away & they heard everything. She went to the washroom crying & got in trouble because she went to the washroom" (G7 girl)



Challenge victim-blaming attitudes

It's the original sender's fault if a sext gets shared around.
They shouldn't send sexts if they don't understand the risks

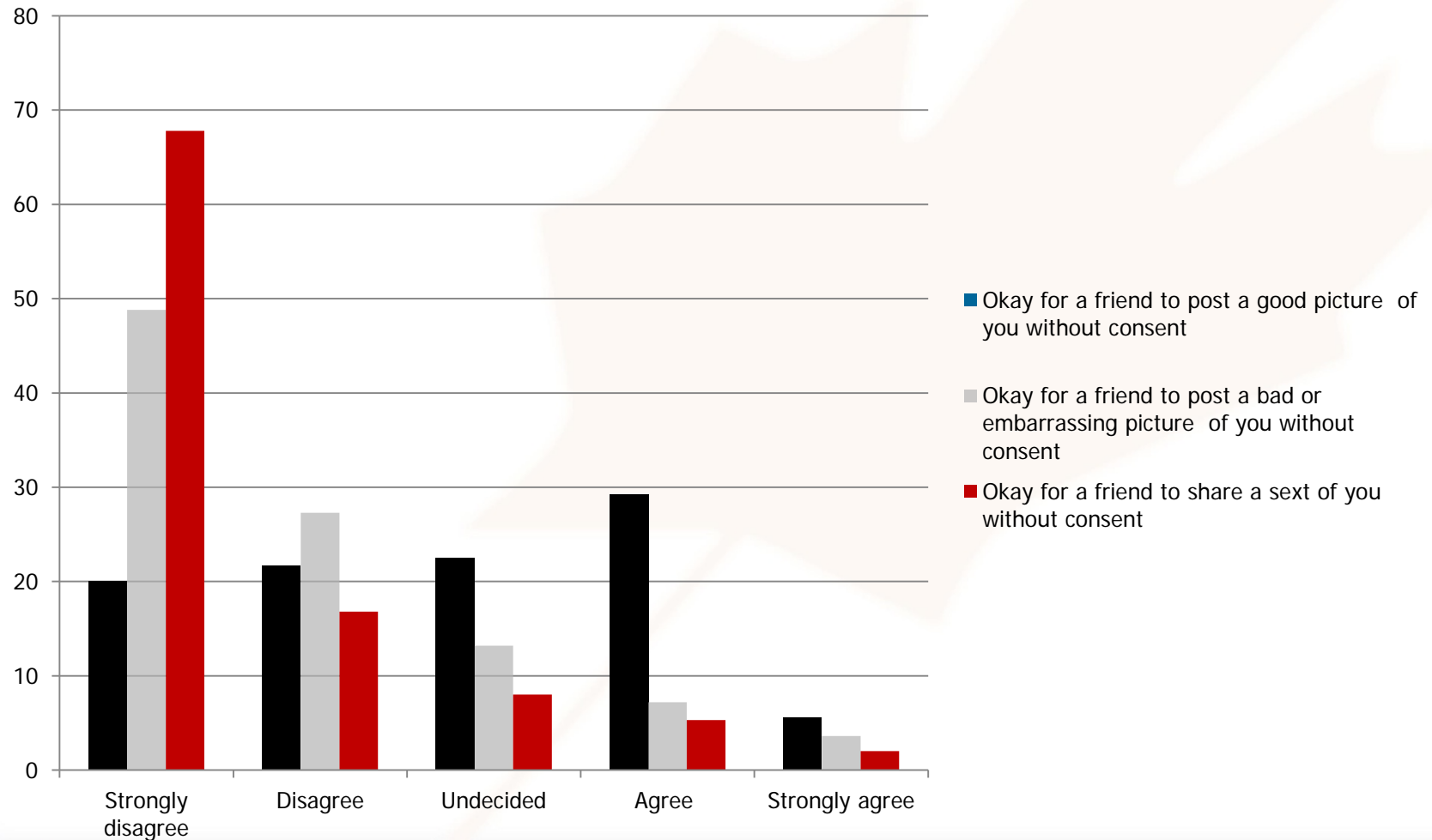


Gendered Stereotyping

- Participants emphasized these stereotypes even when their own descriptions did not fit
 - e.g., a participant who described a boy using 'guilt trips' to coerce a girl into sharing intimate images, depicted boys as bullying physically
- Participants rarely mentioned or acknowledged the behaviors or *existence* of the perpetrators, most of whom were boys (according to the students)
- Images described as '**getting out**' or '**ending up on the internet**'



Build on existing social norms around privacy



Gender Surveillance and Policing

Reinforcing traditional and stereotypical gender norms in others by rewarding behaviours that conform to norms and stereotypes and chastising behaviours that defy them

"I don't think many guys are [cyberbullied] unless it's like they're gay or they've done this or that, but for girls, it's mostly about appearance & it's mostly trying to get inside their brain & trying to get them to think like that. So you say you're fat, you're ugly, you're stupid. I get that a lot because I'm blonde, so it's always like, you're really stupid because you're blonde" (G4 girl)



Implications

- Without tools to unpack, girls may be more likely to blame themselves and each other for failing to achieve impossible standards of appearance and behavior
- Adults must recognize and challenge the social norms, stereotypes, and discourses that inform their responses to sexting
- Adult acceptance of contributes to culture that perpetuates gender inequality and promotes gendered violence and sexualized aggression
- Interventions must challenge these norms and discourses that privilege boys and foster a culture in which girls are sexualized and objectified



New Understanding

- Because boys' behaviour is often invisible or normalized, interventions must address boys' understanding of their responsibility
- Important to recognize that gender inequality, sexualized violence, and pervasive gender norms has detrimental effects on boys, men, and sexual and gender non-conforming young people

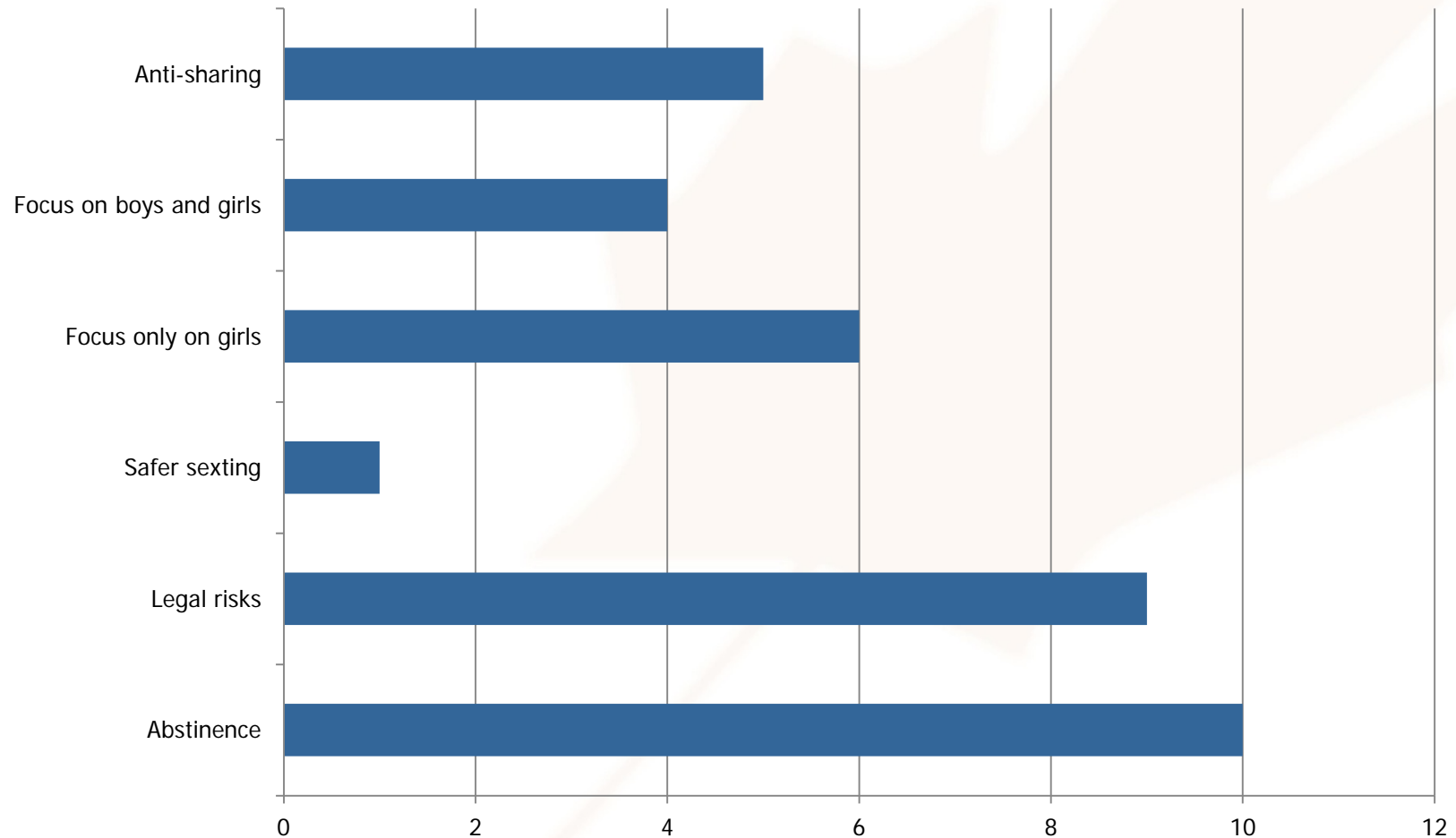




WHAT INTERVENTIONS CURRENTLY EXIST?



Main themes found in 10 interventions:



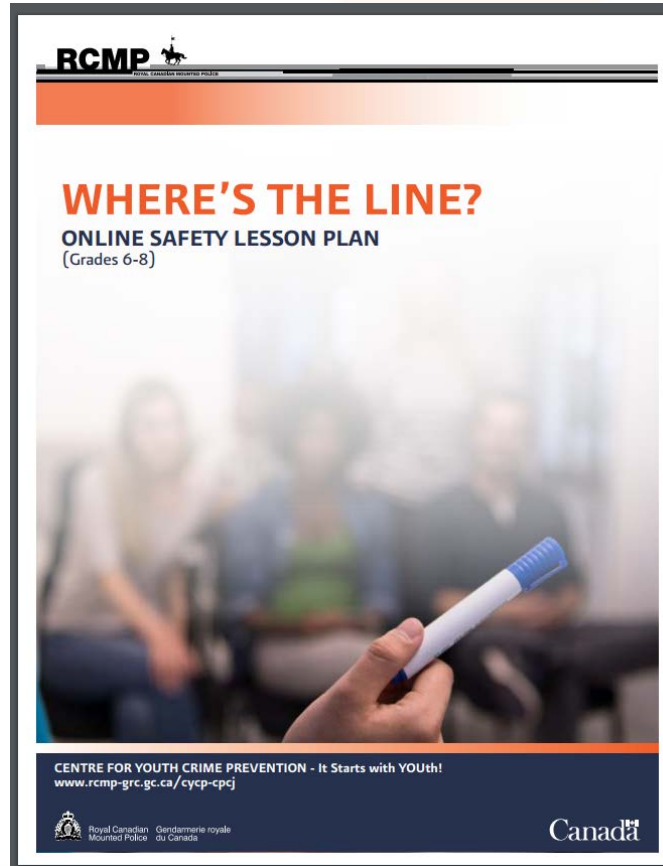
Practise Implications

1. No going back to technology era so need to embrace for good
2. Adolescents today are empowered
3. Prevention programs start early in preadolescence
4. Focus on improving knowledge of sexual development and deconstructing ideal body image
5. Pay close attention vulnerable groups
6. Deconstruct gender stereotypes and media ideals
7. Increase awareness about online context- false sense of privacy and easiness of disinhibition and aggression
8. Focus on future consequences problem solving, interpersonal sensitivity, and empathy



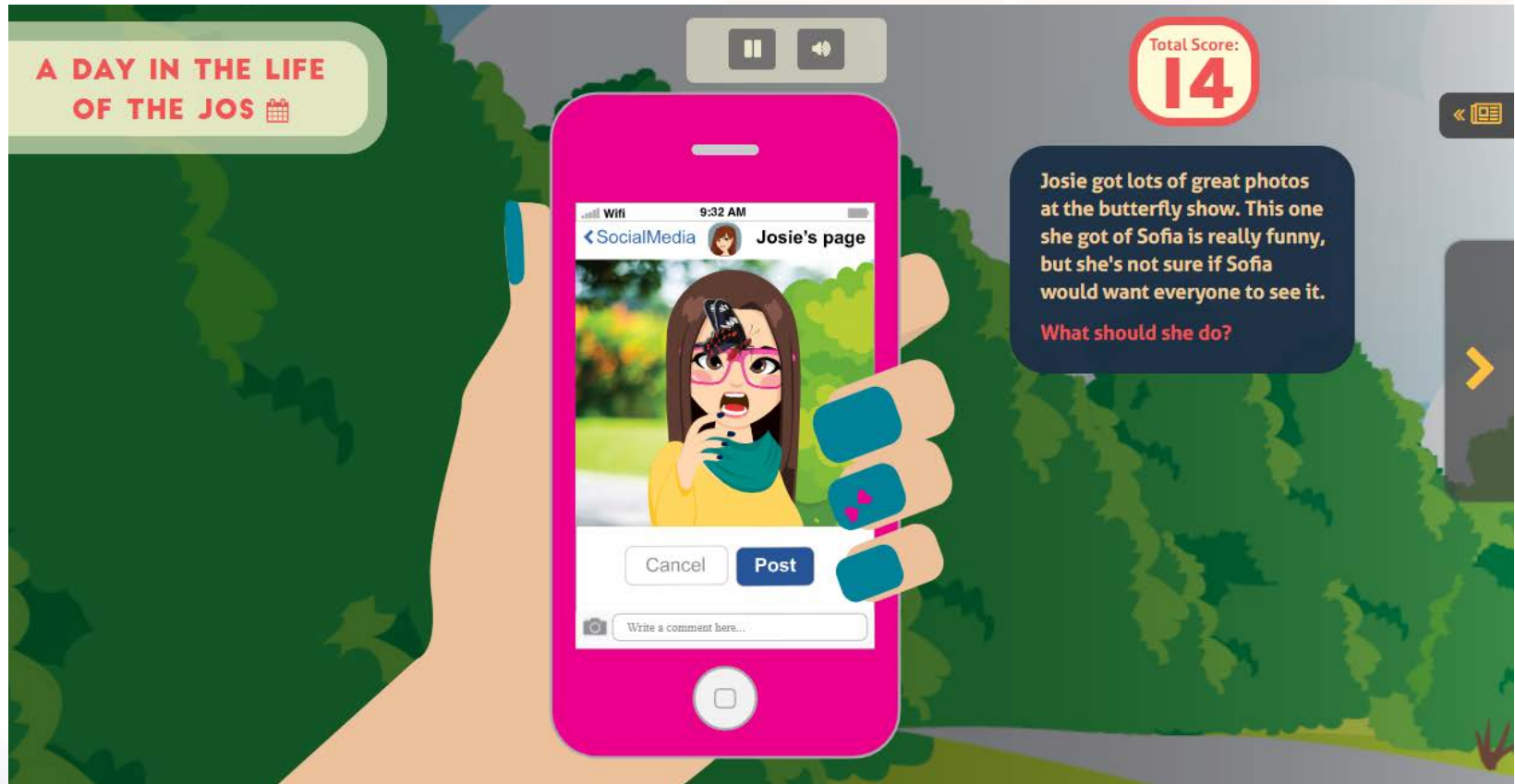
Priorities for Intervention

Social norming: Communicate *low rates of sexting and sharing*



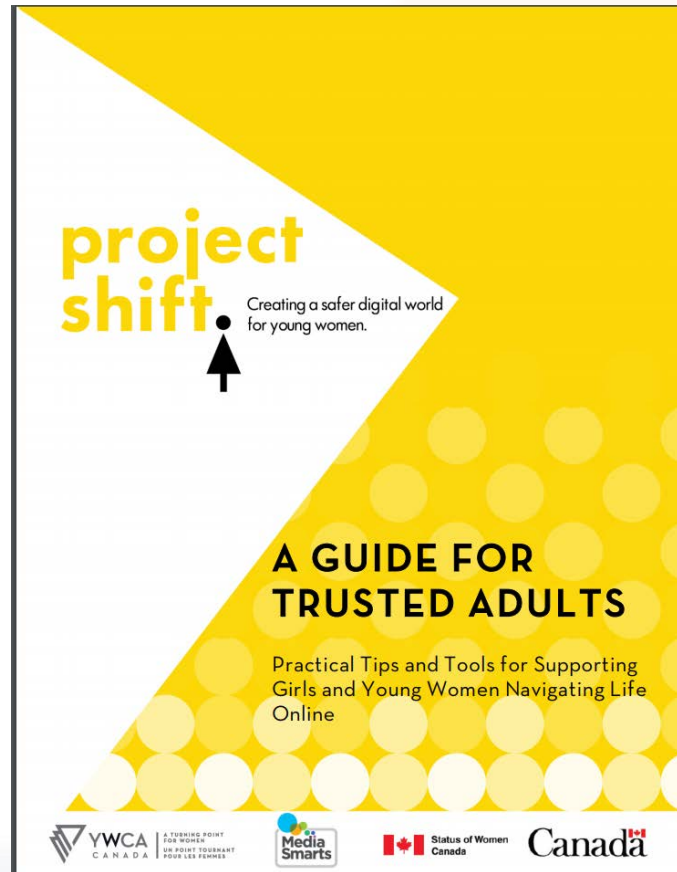
Priorities for Intervention:

Challenge attitudes that blame victims and excuse sharers



Priorities for Intervention

Supporting youth who are victimized: Provide tools for mitigating harm from shared photos



We Need to do More

- Most schools do not have response to sexting and typically actions occur after the fact
- Definition of sexting, privacy and sharing issues, and legal consequences training
- Put in sexual health curriculum- possible consequences, strategies for maintaining healthy relationships, the relationship of sexting to other risk behaviour may reduce risk
- Educational opportunities for teachers,
- Policy development

