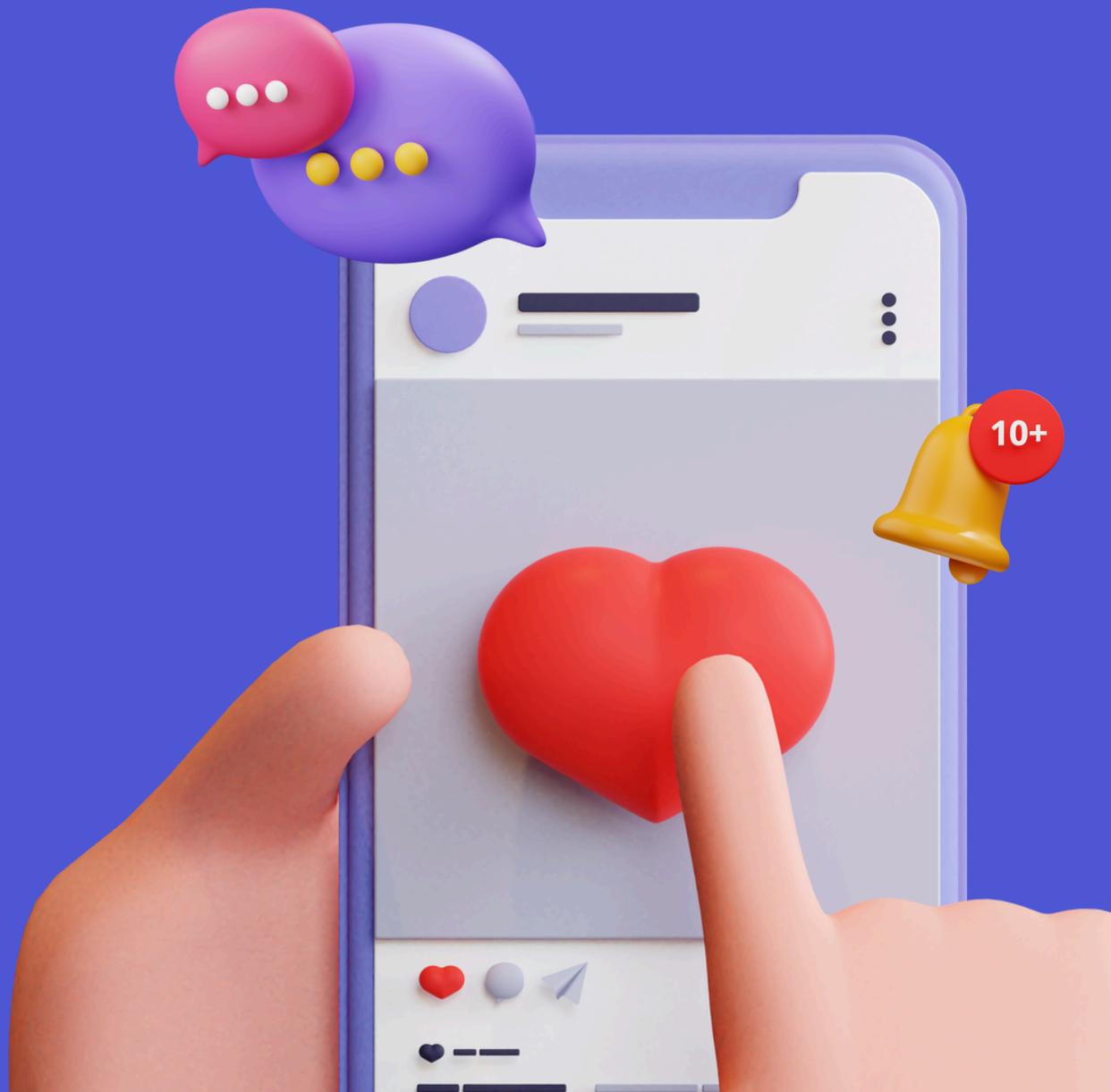


# DOUBLE TAP FOR GENDER AWARENESS



Research report on social media's impact on youth perceptions of gender stereotypes and gender-based violence





This publication is part of the “UP&UP FOR DIGITAL SOCIETY” (UP&UP4DS) project, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 2: Strategic Partnerships). Running from November 2023 to October 2026, the project is led by Telefono Rosa (Rome) in collaboration with Telefono Rosa Bronte, FILIA Center, INCOMA- International Consulting and Mobility Agency SL and the European Center for Quality (ECQ). This research, coordinated by FILIA Center, is a key part of Work Package #2, focusing on online content analysis and the deconstruction of gender stereotypes.

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# Abstract

In the digital age, social media is a double-edged sword, shaping youth perceptions of gender and fueling conversations around gender-based violence (GBV). While platforms offer powerful spaces for challenging outdated stereotypes and advocating for gender equality, they also amplify harmful norms and normalize violence. This research delves into how social media influences young people's views on gender roles, identity, and awareness of cyberviolence. Through a survey of 200+ teens across four European countries, the study analyzes how influencers' content reinforces or resists stereotypes and examines the broader impact of online spaces on youth attitudes. This report emphasizes both the risks and the opportunity for improved digital platform models, advocating for a more inclusive and empowering online space that fosters equality and fights against cyberviolence.

# Keywords

Digital gender discourse; Cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG); Social media activism; Youth empowerment; (Virtual) gender equality.



# About the project

UP&UP for Digital Society (UP&UP4DS) is a project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, running from November 1, 2023 to October 31, 2026. This project focuses on tackling the issues of cyberviolence and cyberbullying, which are closely connected to gender stereotypes in digital spaces. The project brings together partners from across Europe (Romania - FILIA Center, Bulgaria - ECQ, Spain - Incoma, Italy - Telefono Rosa Rome and Bronte) to create a more inclusive and equal online world, where everyone, especially girls and women, can safely engage without being harmed or limited by harmful stereotypes.

This research report is part of Work Package #2 Online Content Analysis and the Deconstruction of Gender Stereotypes, essential for understanding how online content influences people's ideas about gender, and finding ways to challenge harmful stereotypes.

## WP2 main objectives

- study the online content that young people consume to understand how it reinforces harmful gender stereotypes and promotes cyberviolence. We focus on how these issues disproportionately affect women and gender minorities.
- find and highlight online content and influencers that are working to break down gender stereotypes and promote more inclusive and equal views.
- teach young people, parents, teachers, and the general public about the dangers of gender stereotypes in online content, and the importance of creating content that promotes equality and respect.
- organize educational workshops to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and to showcase online content that supports gender equality, fairness, and respect for all individuals.

The UP&UP for Digital Society project aims to create an online world where everyone, regardless of their gender, can feel safe and empowered to participate without being limited or harmed by stereotypes. By working together, we hope to make the internet a place where equality, respect, and inclusion are the foundation of how (young) people interact.



# Intro

In today's digital world, social media plays a huge role in shaping how young people perceive and understand gender. These platforms have become powerful spaces for sharing ideas, expressing opinions, and spreading messages—both good and bad. For young people, social media offers opportunities to challenge outdated stereotypes and imagine a more equal and inclusive world. But at the same time, it can also reinforce harmful ideas, normalize violence, and uphold systems of inequality.

Through memes or serious posts, videos or pictures, influencers or average content creators, (young) people are constantly exposed to messages about gender. **While some of this content sparks important conversations and challenges unfair norms, much of it spreads harmful beliefs—like misogyny, toxic masculinity, or victim-blaming—that keep patriarchy in place. This makes social media a double-edged sword: it can be a space for empowerment and change, but also for harm and inequality.** In this sense, we believe that it is essential to understand how social media influences young people's attitudes about gender and power. By doing so, we can work to make online spaces safer, more inclusive, and more empowering — helping young people question oppression, reject violence, and imagine a more equal future for everyone.

Thus, **our research report explores how online content influences youth perceptions of gender norms and gender-based violence.** Drawing on a survey of over 200 teenagers across four countries, the report delves into key topics such as social media usage, the impact of digital content on gender identity, and awareness of cyber safety. In addition to survey insights, the report includes a detailed analysis of content shared by influencers identified by the survey participants. This content analysis examines aspects such as the number of followers, content themes (e.g., lifestyle, social causes, gaming, etc.), engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares), and the presence of gender stereotypes or gender-based violence in the content. Moreover, this report highlights positive examples of online practices, showcasing influencers who use their platforms to challenge gender stereotypes and combat cyberviolence. Overall, **this report provides a better understanding of how digital spaces contribute to shaping youth perceptions and behaviors around gender, offering valuable insights into the potential of the internet as a force for positive change.**



# Unpacking the issue: core concepts

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender. While violence affects people of all genders, its impact and prevalence vary widely, with women disproportionately affected. GBV is shaped by factors like the gender of both the victim and perpetrator, their relationship, and the type of violence involved. Other intersecting characteristics such as age, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity and/or race, further influence individual experiences.

For instance, **in the EU-27, 1 in 3 women has experienced physical violence, threats, and/or sexual violence during their lifetime.** Moreover, 13.5% have faced physical violence or threats and 17.2% have endured sexual violence, including rape or other non-consensual acts. Despite these alarming statistics, only 20.5% of women who have suffered such violence seek help from healthcare or social services, and just 13.9% report incidents to the police (FRA, 2024).

The rapid spread of technology and social media has exacerbated these issues, giving rise to cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG) as a global problem with severe economic and social consequences. Key institutions like the European Commission and the UN emphasise that CVAWG is global and cross-cultural, cutting across borders and amplified by digital platforms, increasing its scope and harm. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2022) highlights the complexity of defining CVAWG due to technology's evolving nature and the lack of universal definitions.

**Cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG) is a rapidly evolving issue, amplified by new technologies such as spyware, stalkerware, and emerging metaverse platforms,** which continually expand the ways in which abuse can be perpetrated. The range of abusers is broad, spanning from intimate partners to anonymous online users, making accountability complex and often elusive. CVAWG encompasses both traditional forms of abuse, such as harassment, and digital-specific threats like doxing and deepfake pornography. Its impact is pervasive and long-lasting, unrestricted by geographic boundaries, leaving survivors with little escape. Furthermore, CVAWG frequently intersects with other forms of discrimination, including racism and ableism, compounding the harm experienced by marginalized communities.

**Efforts to address GBV and CVAWG must also challenge gender stereotypes, as they are both a cause and a consequence of violence and inequality against girls and women.**

# 8 types of CVAWG

## cyber stalking

When someone repeatedly tracks or harasses you online, making you feel unsafe.  
*For example, your ex secretly uses a location-sharing app to monitor where you go without your consent.*

## cyber harassment & bullying

When someone repeatedly attacks or humiliates you online.  
*For example, after you post a selfie, a group of people starts sending you hateful messages and making fun of you in the comments.*

## online hate speech

When someone spreads violent or sexist messages targeting you.  
*For example, you share your opinion on gender equality, and strangers flood your DMs with threats and misogynistic insults.*

## revenge porn

When someone shares your private photos or videos without consent.  
*For example, you send a private photo to someone you trust, but later they threaten to leak it unless you send more. (sextortion).*

## IoT-facilitated violence

When someone hacks your smart devices to harass or control you.  
*For example, your home security camera suddenly moves on its own, and you realize someone is watching you without permission.*

## doxing

When someone shares your private details online, putting you at risk.  
*For example, after you criticize an influencer, your phone number and home address get posted online, and strangers start harassing you.*

## grooming

When an adult manipulates you into sharing explicit content.  
*For example, you meet someone online who says they're your age, but over time, they pressure you to send personal photos.*

## trolling

When people deliberately insult or provoke you online.  
*For example, you're streaming a game and random users start spamming sexist comments to make you feel unwelcome.*

# Unpacking the issue: core concepts

**Gender stereotypes** refers to preconceived ideas that assign specific characteristics, roles, and expectations to individuals based solely on their gender. These stereotypes limit personal development, educational paths, and career opportunities for all genders but disproportionately harm women by reinforcing power imbalances.

Deeply rooted in societal norms, stereotypes perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and justify unequal power dynamics. For example, assumptions about women's capabilities and roles contribute to structural barriers, limiting progress toward gender equality (Council of Europe, 2015).

**Gender norms** are the social expectations that dictate acceptable behaviors, roles, entitlements, and expressions of gender for individuals perceived or identifying as male or female. These norms can vary widely within and across different cultures (Harper et al., 2020).

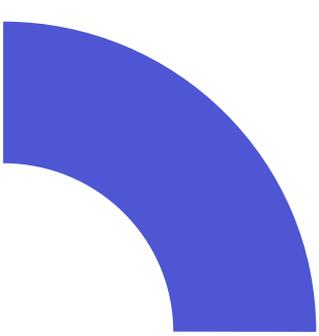
**An influencer** is a prominent social media personality with a significant number of followers who is often compensated by brands or marketing agencies to promote products to their audience.

**A content creator** produces written, visual, video, or audio material for an audience, typically in digital formats. This term often refers to individuals who generate educational or entertaining content for websites, social media platforms, or multimedia sites.

**Sexism** is discrimination, stereotyping or prejudice based on gender identity, commonly resulting in harm or disadvantage to women and girls.

**Social media** refers to online platforms that allow users to communicate, interact, and present themselves to audiences of varying sizes, ranging from broad public groups to narrower, more private circles (adapted from Carr & Hayes, 2015).

Having clarified the key terms, let us now turn to the statistics to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.





# What's the drama? (problem snapshot)

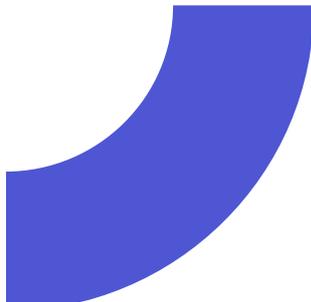
How much time do young people actually spend online? It's a question many of us probably ask ourselves, especially as we notice how deeply technology is embedded in their daily routines. Some even check their weekly screen time reports, which can reveal staggering amounts of time spent on social media, streaming, or gaming. **Recent studies show that in the EU, 96% of young people use the internet daily.** According to Eurostat (2023), the lowest usage rates were recorded in Italy and Bulgaria at 94%, while the highest were in Ireland at 100% and in Malta, Luxembourg, Portugal, Czechia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Latvia at 99%.

The latest Eurostat data sheds light on how young people spent their time online in 2022, with social media leading the pack – 84% of youth engaged in it, solidifying its position as the top internet activity since 2014. They typically engage by posting updates, sharing photos and videos, chatting with friends, following influencers, joining communities, and consuming endless streams of content tailored to their interests. **Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook dominate this space, offering interactive features such as stories, live streams, and videos that keep users hooked.**

Other notable online activities included reading news and internet banking. The use of internet banking climbed steadily over the years, from 45% in 2014 to 64% in 2022, while online news consumption peaked during the pandemic at 73% in 2020 before dropping slightly to 68%. The pandemic also drove a surge in online courses, which jumped from 13% in 2019 to 35% in 2021, but this figure fell back to 28% by 2022. Meanwhile, civic or political engagement online remained relatively low at 23%, though it has grown modestly since 2015.

Now, the issue of online violence against women is widespread. For example, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), **85% of women who spend time online have witnessed some form of online violence and also 38% of women have personally been targeted by online violence.** To be noted that younger women are particularly vulnerable: 45% of Generation Z and Millennials have experienced online violence, compared to 31% of Generation X and Baby Boomers. The report highlights critical gaps in addressing cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG). **Only 1 in 4 women report incidents to the platform where they occurred, and an even smaller percentage—just 14%—reach out to offline authorities.**





Alarmingly, 78% of respondents believe that women are often unaware of the available options to report harmful online behaviors. These figures, however, are likely to underestimate the true scale of the problem due to widespread underreporting, which remains a significant barrier to tackling online violence effectively. Despite these challenges, 9 in 10 women agree that online violence has harmful effects on their well-being, yet 83% still view the internet as a valuable source of information and support when dealing with online abuse (EIU, 2021).

It is important to note that **cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG) is not separate from offline violence; both forms of abuse are interconnected and should be understood as part of the same continuum.** The consequences of online violence extend far beyond individual experiences, significantly affecting the entire society.

## What's been said?

### Lit review

The influence of social media on youth trends and perceptions is both profound and complex, shaping personal identities while simultaneously redefining societal norms. **Platforms like Instagram and TikTok create spaces where young people interact with diverse representations of gender, often challenging traditional stereotypes and finding new ways to express themselves.** However, this influence is not without its challenges. While empowering content exists, much of the material on these platforms perpetuates harmful stereotypes and normalizes violence against marginalized groups.

For example, research by Alison V. Hall et al. (2016) highlights the intersection of racial bias and policing, reflecting broader societal struggles that are mirrored in youth culture as they navigate these messages. Basically messages about racial bias, systemic discrimination and social justice are commonly shared, debated, and internalized online and young people are exposed to both empowering narratives that challenge racism and harmful stereotypes that perpetuate it. The content they engage with on social media can influence their perceptions, attitudes, and interactions with these issues. Similarly, Kaplan et al. (2017) emphasize the impact of sexual violence narratives in media, which young audiences may internalize, shaping their attitudes toward relationships and consent.

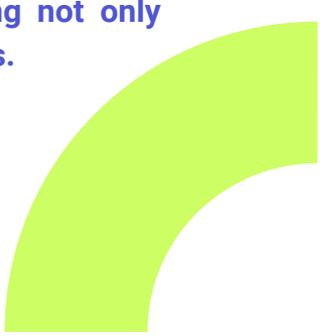




For instance, **when sexual violence is normalized or depicted in a certain way, young people may internalize these messages, meaning they might come to accept or downplay harmful behaviors, or misunderstand the boundaries of healthy relationships.** This could affect how they approach consent, sexual interactions, and their expectations of others. The digital landscape has also reshaped how gender stereotypes are perpetuated and resisted, particularly among young people. **Social media often amplifies traditional gender roles through images and narratives that impose unrealistic standards, limiting individual expression.** A study by Tiggemann & Slater (2014) found that exposure to idealized images on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook can reinforce traditional gender roles and beauty standards, particularly for young women. The pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty ideals like thinness, flawless skin, and a specific body type, was found to negatively impact self-esteem and body image. These portrayals limit how individuals, especially women, can express themselves, as they often feel compelled to meet these narrowly defined standards.

In addition to the pressure of beauty standards, **girls and women are often confined to representations of domesticity and caregiving, which further restrict their roles in society.** The lack of diverse, empowering portrayals of women deepens this issue, creating a void that can foster feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. As Sugg (2014) argues, the absence of multifaceted, strong, and assertive role models leaves young girls with limited examples of what it means to be a woman, reinforcing the harmful notion that there are only a few acceptable ways to embody femininity. This lack of representation not only limits young girls' sense of possibility but also perpetuates a narrow, patriarchal view of womanhood, leaving them to navigate their identities in a world that offers few alternatives to traditional gender expectations.

On the other hand, boys are often shown as aggressive, dominant, and unemotional, reinforcing toxic masculinity that discourages emotional expression, vulnerability, and healthy emotional connections. These representations not only diminish the value of emotional intelligence and sensitivity but also foster environments where emotional struggles are not acknowledged or addressed. As noted in the report *Hidden Violence: Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Adolescent Boys* by Barker et al., male victims of sexual violence are particularly vulnerable to suffering in silence. Societal expectations that discourage emotional openness and equate masculinity with stoicism prevent many boys from seeking help or expressing their trauma. This stigma around male vulnerability perpetuates the cycle of silence, shame, and untreated emotional pain. **These dynamics contribute to a self-perpetuating cycle, where young individuals internalize restrictive gender stereotypes, shaping not only their personal identities but also their views on relationships and gender roles.**





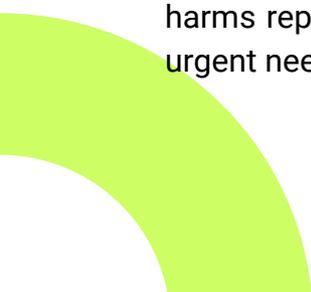
**These platforms can also facilitate the space for counter-narratives, allowing for the redefinition of societal norms and the promotion of more inclusive viewpoints.** For instance, the #MeToo movement empowered countless women to share their experiences with sexual harassment and assault, sparking widespread conversations about gender equality and consent. Similarly, the #BlackLivesMatter movement has helped reshape discussions around race, justice and systemic oppression.

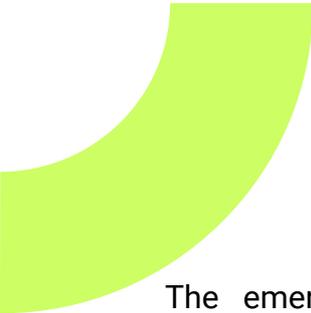
Scholars like Miller and Demirbilek (2023) highlight the power of social media campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence, fostering critical discussions and encouraging collective responsibility among young people. Nasriyah (2024) further points out that influencers and content creators can shape adolescents' understanding of gender equality by promoting positive narratives, though there is a risk of spreading biased information. Additionally, Molnar (2022) argues that young people actively use social media to challenge gender inequalities, sharing personal stories of resistance and contributing to broader movements of empowerment and collective change.

According to Pew Research Center (2021), 63% of teens say social media helps them feel more connected to others who share similar experiences, particularly regarding gender identity. This sense of connection offers an opportunity to challenge traditional gender roles and norms, allowing individuals to envision gender beyond rigid binaries. Hashtags like #TransIsBeautiful and #NonBinaryVisibility are examples of how social media promotes gender diversity and encourages a broader, more inclusive understanding of gender.

As it has already been mentioned, **social media plays a complex, dual role in shaping youth perspectives on gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. It functions both as a platform for raising awareness and as a medium that can perpetuate harmful norms.** While it holds the potential to educate and empower young people to take action against gender violence, it can also reinforce stereotypes and normalize abusive behaviors.

Taking into consideration the already presented dual role of social media, **the anonymity of these platforms emboldens perpetrators of cyber violence, fostering a toxic environment where abuse is normalized, and victims are frequently silenced or blamed.** Miller and Demirbilek (2023) highlights five common forms of online violence against women. Cyberbullying and online harassment expose women to threats, humiliation, and constant abuse. Revenge porn violates privacy, causing shame and real-life consequences. Sexual objectification reinforces misogynistic norms, while impersonation harms reputations through fake profiles or hacked accounts. These issues underline the urgent need for stronger online protections.

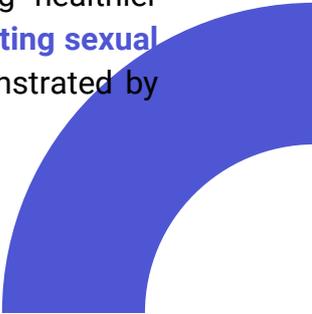




The emergence of CVAWG is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, as highlighted by Jankowicz (2022). A key factor is gender-based discrimination, with women disproportionately targeted by online harassment and abuse due to their gender. **Social media has become a tool for men to assert power and dominance, often through degrading comments about women's bodies, sexist jokes, or threats.** Such abuse reflects entrenched gender inequalities and reinforces the subjugation of women in both online and offline spaces. Anonymity is another factor that facilitates online violence. Social media platforms, **by allowing users to create fake accounts—rather than truly anonymous ones, as they still require basic information such as a username—provide a shield behind which perpetrators can harass, abuse, or spread misinformation about women without facing consequences.** This loophole not only enables abusive behavior but also shields perpetrators from accountability, further entrenching the power imbalance that allows such violence to thrive. The normalization of violence is also a critical issue. **Many individuals perceive online harassment and abuse as an inherent part of internet culture, with some even suggesting that women should simply ignore it. This normalization perpetuates the idea that women's experiences of abuse are trivial, discouraging them from speaking out and seeking support.** The widespread acceptance of such behavior desensitizes both perpetrators and bystanders, enabling the cycle of violence to continue unchecked.

Another significant factor is the lack of accountability and responsibility among social media platforms. Despite the growing prevalence of online violence, **many platforms have failed to implement sufficient policies to address and prevent harassment. As a result, perpetrators often face no consequences, further emboldening them and leaving women feeling powerless to report abuse.** This lack of structural responsibility within digital spaces underscores the need for more robust mechanisms to protect users and hold perpetrators accountable. Finally, misogyny remains a driving force behind the prevalence of violence against women on social media. Rooted in societal sexism, misogynistic attitudes manifest on social media in various forms — such as derogatory comments about women's physical appearance or threats to their safety. Misogyny fuels the dehumanization of women, reinforcing patriarchal power structures and perpetuating the culture of violence that women face online.

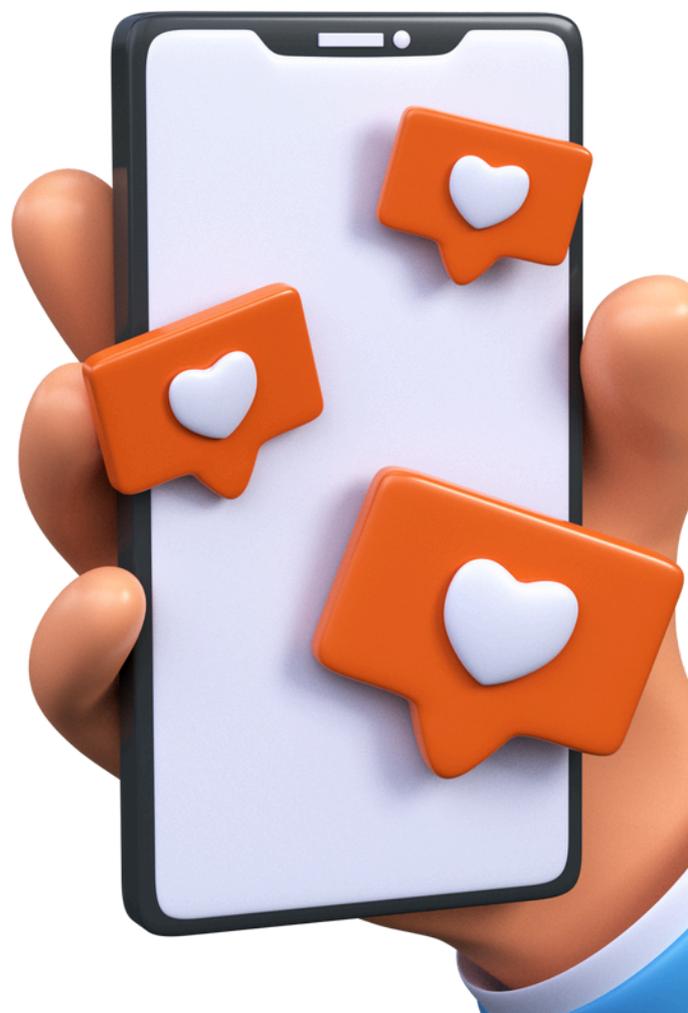
**Educational initiatives have emerged as key strategies in combating cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG).** Programs, such as those focused on training youth practitioners to address sexist and controlling behaviors online, are essential in shifting the discourse around gendered violence. Alldred et al. (2014) highlight how such programs can influence young people's attitudes and behaviors, fostering healthier relationships and gender norms. Also **engaging young men as allies in promoting sexual health and gender equity has proven to be an effective approach,** as demonstrated by organizations like the Healthy Teen Network.



The importance of school-based interventions is also underscored by recent research, which suggests that schools, as accessible and formative spaces for young people, can play a crucial role in primary prevention of CVAWG. As Faith and Fraser (2018) point out in UKaid Report, these interventions have the potential to reach large numbers of young people, particularly during critical periods when norms around gender and online violence are still being shaped.

However, most existing studies focus on the US and Canada, with limited attention given to Europe. This highlights the need for more comprehensive school-based programs that better incorporate gender perspectives in addressing both gender stereotypes and online gender-based violence, as discussed in this literature review.

We believe that through coordinated efforts, harmful behaviors can be challenged, societal attitudes toward gender and violence can be reshaped, and safer, more inclusive online (and offline) environments for women and girls can be created. It is essential that governments address these issues by providing schools with the resources they need while also fostering gender equality in public discourse. Projects like ours, however, do not have the means to systematically tackle these challenges but can pilot ideas that, with the support of institutional and governmental actors, may be scaled to effect lasting change.



# Methodology

This research was conducted from January 2024 to January 2025 and consists of three phases: a survey-based study applied in schools, content analysis of online influencers realised by team experts and a collection of good practices that challenge gender stereotypes and CVAWG. Each phase was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of online content on youth perspectives, particularly in relation to gender norms and online violence.

## Phase 1: Survey-based research among young people (January 2024 - April 2024)

The research team developed a survey to collect insights from young people aged 14 to 18 about their digital experiences, specifically focusing on social media use, gender stereotypes, and awareness of cyberviolence. The survey was structured into 8 sections, each addressing a different aspect of online influence. These sections explored socio-demographics, social media behaviors, content preferences, and cybersecurity practices. By incorporating a mix of attitudinal, behavioral, and preference-based questions, the survey offered a comprehensive view of how youth engage with online content. To ensure broad accessibility, the survey was translated into Spanish, Italian, Romanian, and Bulgarian and distributed to students in schools across the four participating countries. A total of 234 responses were collected from Romania, Italy, Bulgaria, and Spain.

## Phase 2: Analysis of online content by influencers (April 2024 - August 2024)

Based on the survey responses, where participants identified the most influential figures they follow, we selected a list of 15 influencers from all 4 partner countries. These influencers, whose content reaches large youth audiences, were analyzed to assess how their posts address or perpetuate gender norms, stereotypes, and issues related to cyberviolence. The analysis focused on several key aspects, including whether the content addressed topics such as gender norms, discrimination, inclusivity, and stereotypes, as well as its tone, language, engagement metrics, and representation of gender (whether it reinforced or challenged traditional gender roles). This resulted in the identification of key influencers across Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, and Spain, such as Iva Ivanova and Vladislav Radoslavov in Bulgaria, Andrei Șeralu (Selly) and Marilu Dobrescu in Romania, Chiara Ferragni and Michele Molteni in Italy, and IlloJuan and RickyEdit in Spain.

*The database is available upon request; interested individuals can simply reach out via email at [office@centrulfilia.ro](mailto:office@centrulfilia.ro).*

## Phase 3: Collection of Good Practices (September 2024 - October 2024)

This phase aimed to identify examples of positive online content that challenges gender stereotypes and combats cyberviolence. The goal was to highlight good practices from influencers who use their platforms to promote gender equality and inclusivity. Each partner organization identified three positive examples of content created by influencers that contributed to the deconstruction of gender stereotypes or addressed cyberviolence. These examples were analyzed based on the content's tone, themes, and audience engagement.

While this research provides valuable insights into the impact of digital content on youth perceptions of gender stereotypes and cyberviolence, several limitations must be acknowledged.

### Limitations of the study

**A significant limitation of the survey-based research lies in the reliance on self-reported data.** Participants were asked to reflect on their personal experiences, opinions, and online behaviors. This data can be subject to social desirability bias, where respondents may feel compelled to answer in ways that align with societal expectations or perceived norms. The survey was conducted across multiple countries (Romania, Italy, Spain, and Bulgaria), and while it was translated into local languages, cultural nuances in digital behavior may not have been fully captured. Each country has unique social dynamics, media consumption habits, and different levels of digital literacy, which could affect how respondents engage with online content. For instance, certain social media platforms may be more prevalent in one country than another, influencing the types of content youth are exposed to. Additionally, regional differences in attitudes toward gender roles and cyberviolence could lead to varying interpretations of the survey questions, making it challenging to draw universally applicable conclusions from the data.

Additionally, **the sample size and demographic distribution were also not representative of youth populations**, particularly overlooking rural or less connected regions, and the focus on the 14-18 age group excludes younger or older populations. Moreover, **the research is not a national or international representative study but an exploratory one, designed to offer insights and a snapshot of youth's digital experiences and their perceptions of online content.**

Another limitation is the reliance on engagement metrics for content analysis, which serve as quantitative indicators rather than qualitative ones. These metrics may not fully capture the true impact of the content on youth behaviour.

Lastly, **the study's time frame, from January 2024 to January 2025, restricts its ability to capture long-term trends in digital behaviors or shifts in social norms.** Due to the rapidly changing nature of social media trends and the influence of content creators, some of the data related to trends and influencers may lose relevance over time and may not reflect the current state of these trends outside the research timeframe.

However, steps were taken to mitigate these limitations - for example, the anonymity of the survey ensured participants could express their views openly, while project partners worked to guarantee the accuracy of the survey translation. Furthermore, the team remained attentive to emerging trends and adapted the research to reflect any new developments.

Now that we've established the context, let's explore the key insights from this study.



# Findings & insights

## Part 1: Survey-based research

The survey, designed by the research team to collect insights into young people's digital experiences, gathered responses from a diverse group of individuals aged 14 to 18 across the 4 partner countries: Romania, Italy, Bulgaria, and Spain. A total of 234 participants provided feedback through a structured survey translated into local languages. Let's dive in and explore the results!

### Section 1: Socio-demographics

The socio-demographic data reveals an age distribution where 14-year-olds represented the largest age group, making up 45% of respondents (105 participants), while participation steadily declined with age—only 10 respondents were 17 years old and 12 were 18. Gender distribution was also uneven, with nearly 60% of respondents identifying as female (138 participants), while 38% were male (88 participants). A small but important percentage identified outside the gender binary, with 2 non-binary respondents, and 6 participants (2.5%) preferred not to disclose their gender.

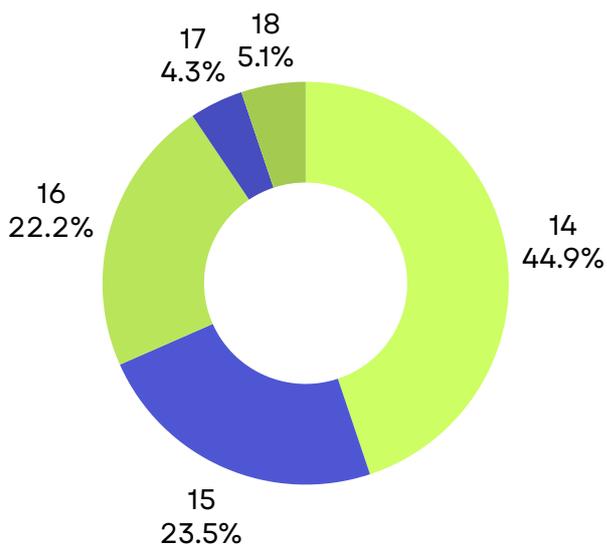


Chart 1: Age distribution

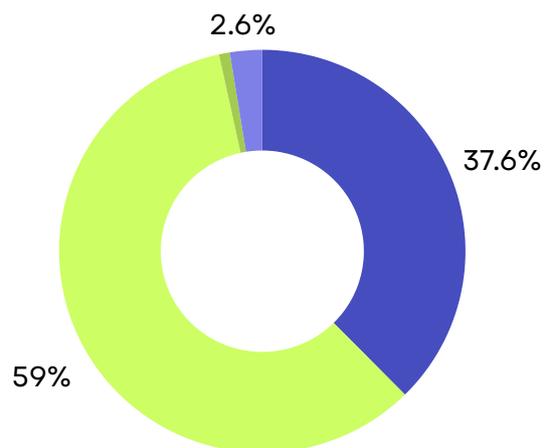
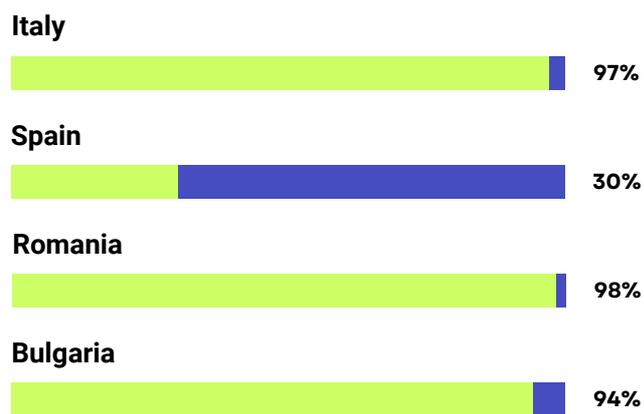
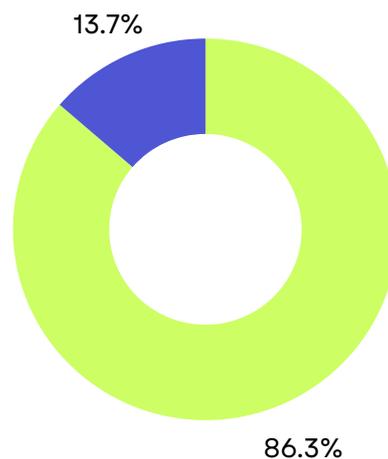


Chart 2: Gender distribution

The survey data reveals a clear urban-rural divide among respondents. Urban residents make up the vast majority, accounting for 86% (202 participants), while only 14% (32 participants) come from rural areas. Rural representation was highest in Spain, where 81% of rural respondents (26 individuals) are based, while Bulgaria, Italy, and Romania had notably lower rural participation. In contrast, urban areas saw significantly higher engagement, with Italy leading the way—contributing 29% of all urban respondents (58 from Telefono Rosa Bronte and 54 from Rome).



**Chart 3: Urban/rural distribution per countries**



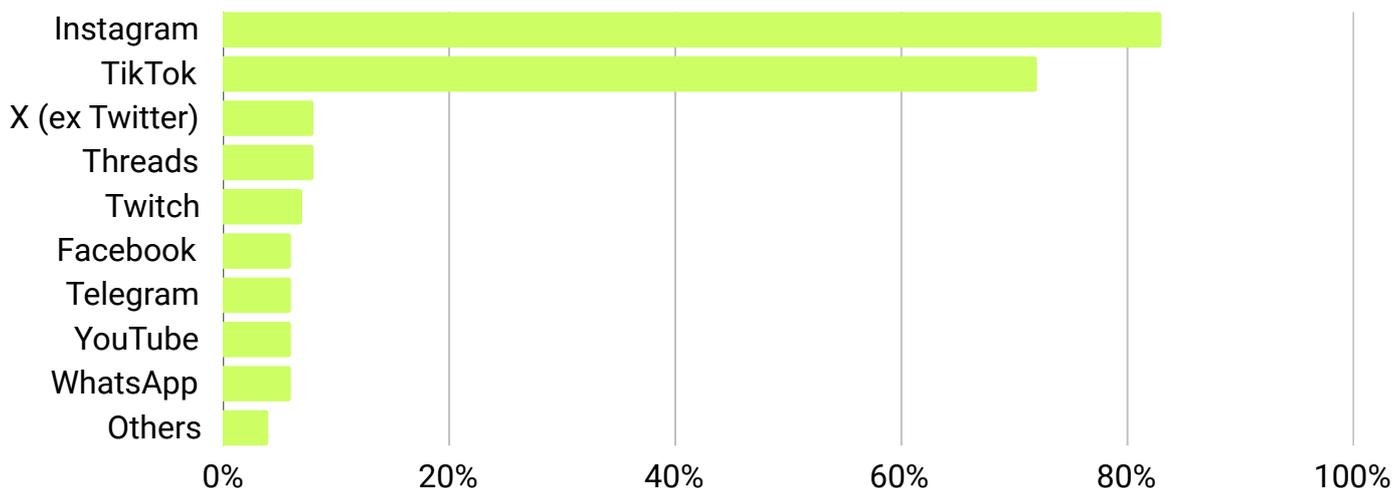
**Chart 4: Urban/rural distribution overall**

## Section 2: Social Media Habits

Data indicates a heavy preference for Instagram and TikTok as the leading social platforms among the respondents, with other platforms like YouTube, Threads, and Twitch being supplementary options. About 83% of respondents mentioned Instagram. TikTok follows closely behind, with 72% of teens actively engaging on the platform. Both platforms dominate social media usage, highlighting their strong influence on this demographic.

In contrast, platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Threads, and Twitch show significantly lower usage rates, each being used by only 7-8% of respondents. Traditional platforms like Facebook and YouTube, which once held significant sway, are now only used by around 6% of teens. The relatively new platforms, Threads and Telegram, also fall into this category.

WhatsApp, a messaging-focused app, is also used by 6% of teens, reflecting its role as a communication tool rather than a social network. Niche platforms like Discord, Reddit, and Snapchat have much lower usage rates, with Discord at 3%, Reddit at 1%, and Snapchat at less than 1%, indicating that these platforms cater to specific interests or communities rather than the broader teen audience.

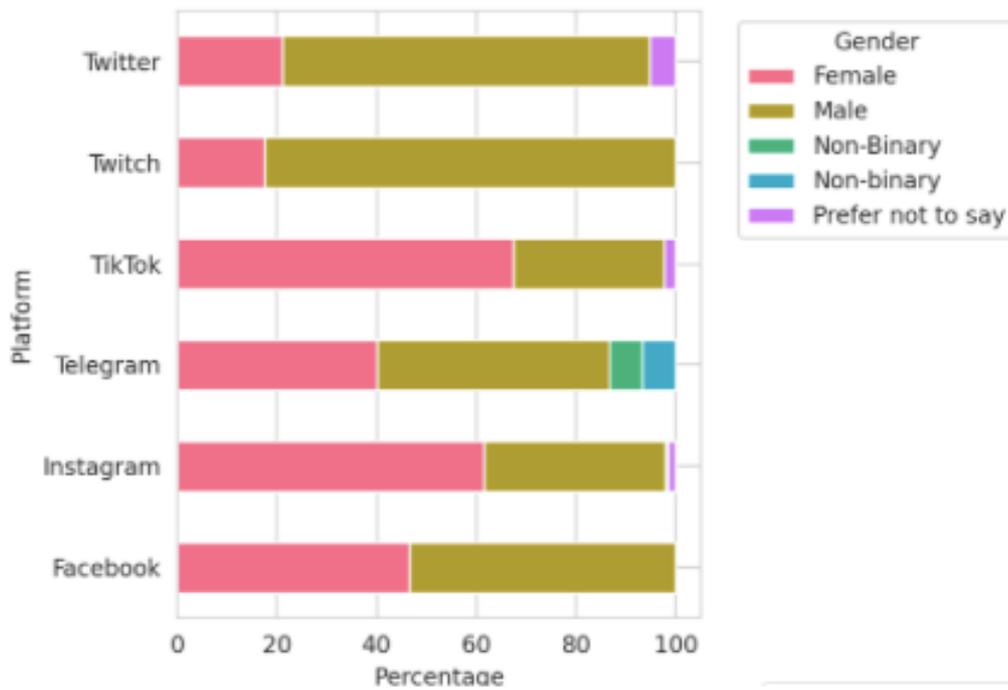


**Chart 5: Distribution of SoMe platforms**

The data reveals distinct platform preferences based on gender. Female respondents appear to favor TikTok and Instagram, platforms known for their visual, short-form content and influencer culture, which may align more closely with their online engagement habits. In contrast, Twitch, Twitter, and Telegram are predominantly used by male respondents, suggesting that these platforms may appeal more to male teens, possibly due to their focus on gaming, discussion, and real-time interactions. Another explanation could be that these platforms are less regulated, allowing more freedom for violent, sexual, and explicit content. For instance, Telegram is known for hosting groups that share revenge porn, war-related content, and extremist material, which may resonate more with male users.

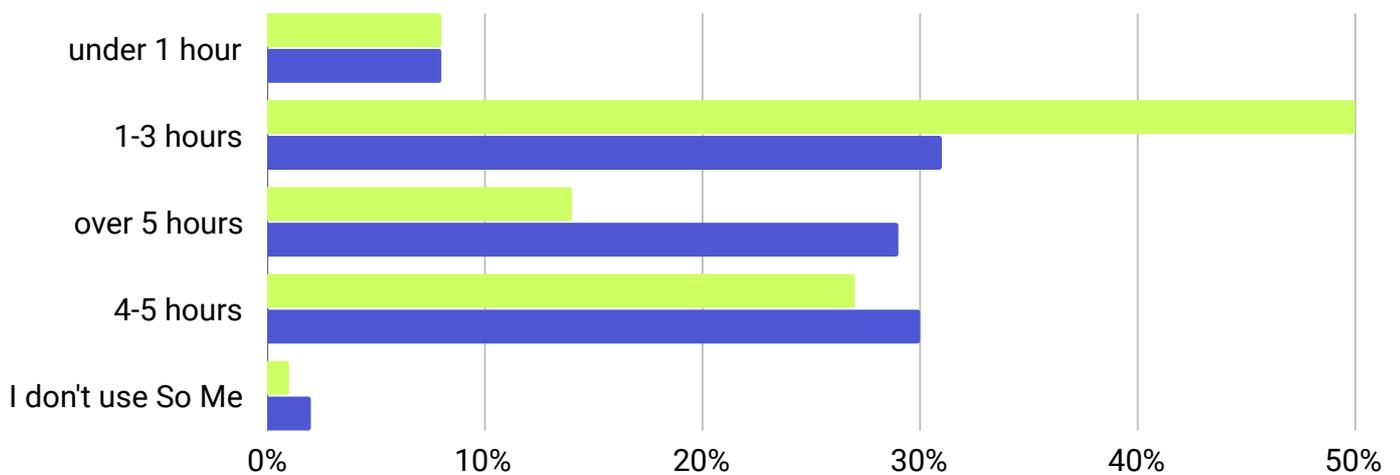
Despite these gendered trends, it's important to note that platforms like Twitter and Telegram have a smaller overall usage rate among teens. Facebook, on the other hand, shows a relatively equal distribution of use between genders, although it remains less popular among younger users, indicating its shift away from being a preferred platform for teens.

Overall, this data highlights the dominance of visual and content-driven platforms like Instagram and TikTok in the social media landscape for teens, while other platforms play a more niche or secondary role.



**Chart 6: Distribution of SoMe platforms usage by gender**

The data reveals distinct patterns in social media usage between weekdays and weekends. During weekdays, a substantial majority of respondents, 50%, spend between 1 to 3 hours on social media, with 27% using it for 4 to 5 hours. A smaller proportion, 14%, dedicate over 5 hours, while a minimal 1% do not use social media at all. In contrast, weekends see a notable shift: 31% of respondents spend 1 to 3 hours on social media, while the percentage of those using it for 4 to 5 hours remains steady at 30%. The proportion of heavy users, those spending over 5 hours, increases to 29%, and the number of non-users rises slightly to 2%. This shift suggests that respondents generally engage more with social media on weekends, possibly due to increased free time or different leisure habits compared to their workweek schedules.

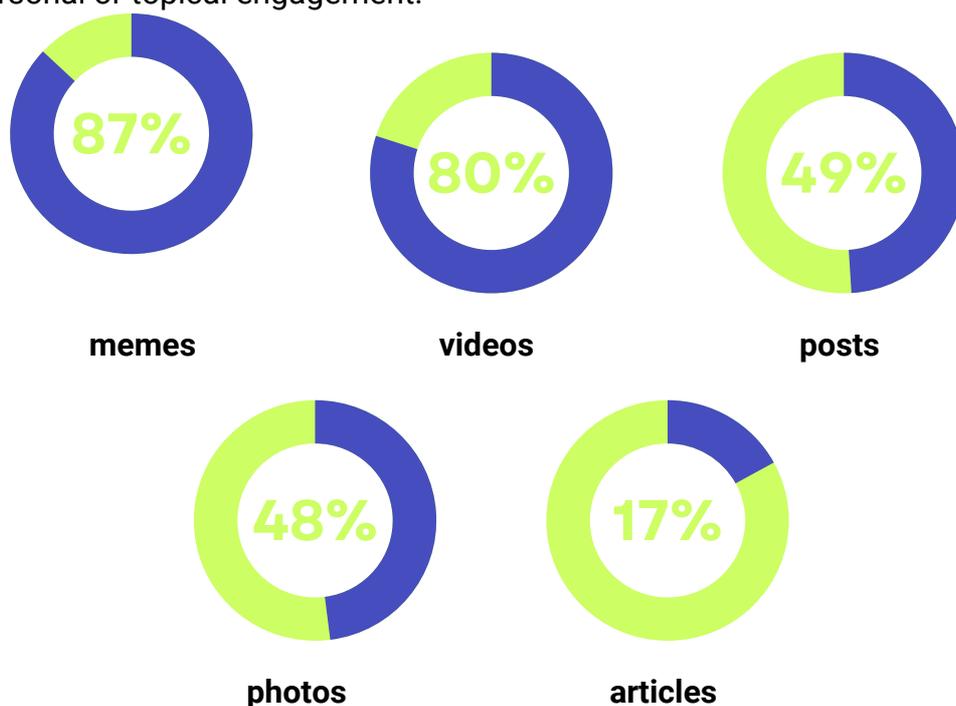


**Chart 7: Time spent on average on SoMe platforms weekdays (green) vs. weekends (blue)**

### Section 3: Content Preferences and Impact

Visual and entertainment-based content is overwhelmingly popular among respondents. Memes top the list, with 87% of respondents expressing interest in them, indicating a strong preference for humorous and easily consumable content that often goes viral on social media platforms. Videos also capture significant attention, with 80% of respondents favoring this format, reflecting the growing trend of video-based content across platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube. Photos are also highly popular, with 48% of respondents showing interest, suggesting that visual storytelling remains a key draw on social media.

Interestingly, traditional text-based content like articles appeals to only 17% of respondents, showing that lengthy or more in-depth content is less favored among this group. Meanwhile, 49% are interested in posts, which likely encompass a range of content types, including updates, opinions, and short-form text, indicating some desire for a mix of personal or topical engagement.

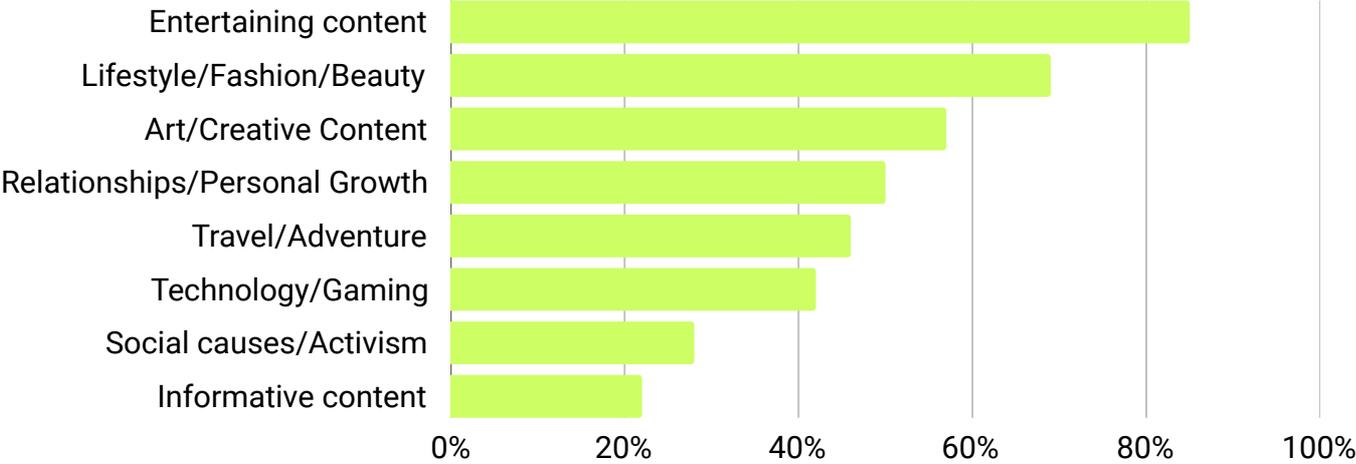


**Chart 8: Preferred types of SoMe platforms among respondents**

In the context of this research, memes are treated as a distinct category separate from other forms of digital media such as videos, photos, posts, and articles. This distinction is made because memes, unlike other types of content, have unique characteristics that set them apart in terms of their structure, function, and cultural significance.

Memes are typically short, easily shareable pieces of content that often combine text and images (or videos) to convey humor, social commentary, or cultural references. They are known for their viral nature, rapidly spreading across social media platforms, and being modified or "remixed" by users. This participatory aspect—where memes are not only consumed but also created, altered, and shared—gives them a unique role in digital communication and culture. While videos, photos, and articles are usually more formal or informational, memes are informal and often rely on trends, humor, or shared cultural references that may not be immediately understandable to all audiences. This distinct nature of memes justifies treating them separately, allowing for a deeper understanding of their specific role in shaping digital communication and social interactions.

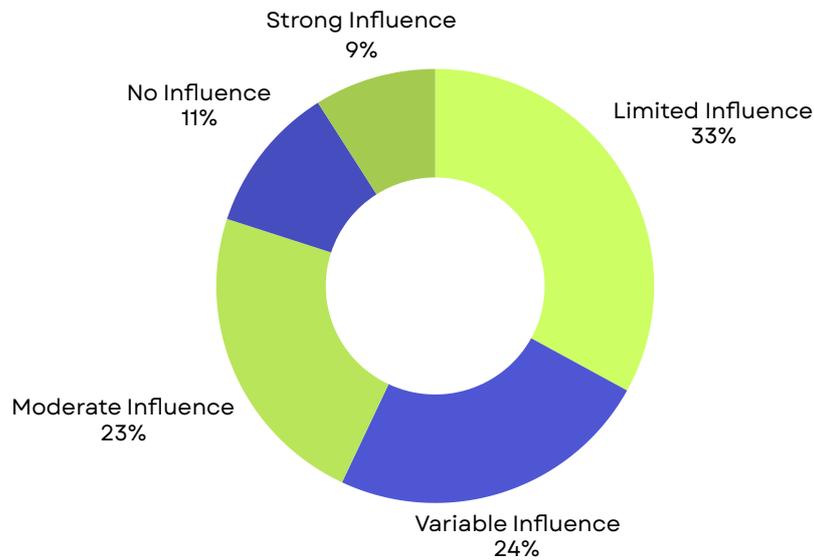
Respondents have a strong preference for entertaining content (85%) suggesting that teens primarily use media for fun, enjoying humor, memes, and funny videos to lighten their mood. Lifestyle, fashion, and beauty content (69%) is very popular, showing teens' interest in trends and how they present themselves. This also reflects the social pressure to meet beauty standards—though these standards may have changed, the pressure to fit in is still there. The attraction to art and creative content (57%) shows that many teens enjoy expressing themselves through art and DIY projects.



**Chart 9: SoMe content interest among respondents (aged 14-18)**

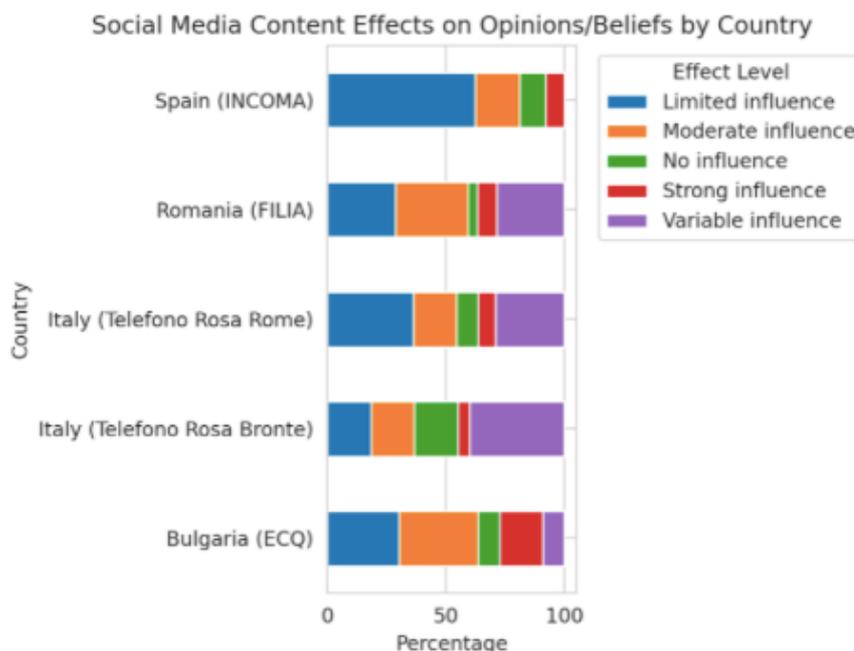
Half of the respondents (50%) are drawn to content that helps them with personal growth and relationships, which makes sense as they navigate friendships and personal development during these years. Travel and adventure content (46%) also appeals to teens, likely because it lets them explore the world and dream about future adventures. Technology and gaming (42%) are also popular, as respondents are naturally interested in the latest gadgets and games. While a smaller percentage (28%) is interested in social causes and activism, it shows that some teens are engaged in important social issues. Lastly, 22% enjoy informative content, valuing the opportunity to learn something new, even if it's a smaller group.

The data suggests that most respondents believe social media has a moderate influence on their opinions, beliefs or behaviors. Only 9% of the respondents are reporting a "strong" impact of SoMe, while 23% are indicating rather a "moderate" influence. This suggests that many teens do not see social media as overwhelmingly impactful. The 24% who feel its influence "varies" highlight that the effect may depend on the content or engagement level. Additionally, 33% reporting "limited influence" suggests that social media's impact is not always significant, reflecting a more nuanced relationship where its influence is shaped by personal agency, content, and context.



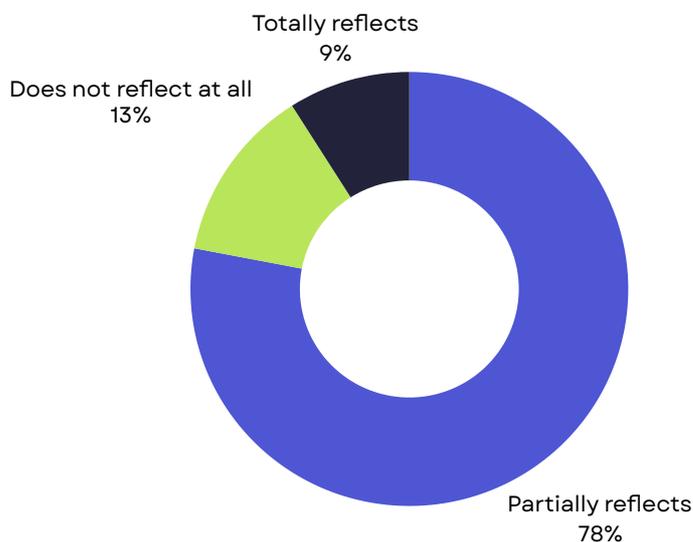
**Chart 10: Respondents self-perception of SoMe impact**

However, personal perceptions of how social media impacts youth may not accurately reflect the actual effects of the online environment. Here's the visualization of how social media content affects opinions and beliefs across different countries:



**Chart 11: Respondents self-perception of SoMe impact by country**

The varying perceptions of social media influence across different countries could be connected to the level of gender equality education and awareness in those regions. Countries with stronger gender equality education may have a more critical and informed understanding of how social media shapes gender norms, leading to more moderate or nuanced responses. For example, Spain, with a higher proportion of respondents reporting "limited influence," may have more public discourse around gender equality, fostering a greater recognition of how social media shapes opinions on gender and other social issues. Italy, with its balanced distribution and notable "Variable influence" responses, could reflect a population still grappling with the nuances of gender equality, where people may not fully recognize the role social media plays in shaping beliefs about gender norms. Meanwhile, Romania and Bulgaria, where responses show more moderate to limited influence, might indicate that while awareness of gender issues exists, there may be less formal education or public dialogue about how social media impacts gender perceptions.



**Chart 12: Respondents self-perception of SoMe real life reflection**

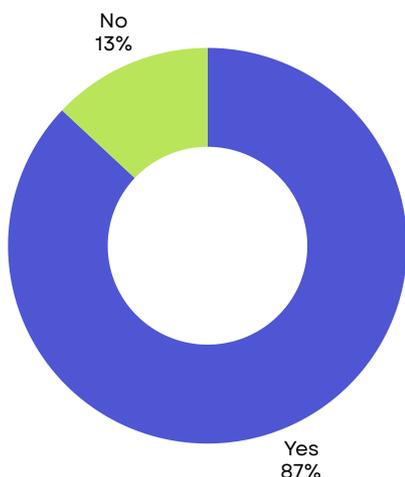
The data reveals that the majority of respondents (78%) believe social media only partially reflects real life and diversity, suggesting that many perceive social platforms as offering a curated or idealized version of reality. A smaller group (9%) feels that social media fully reflects real life, while 13% disagree entirely, believing social media does not reflect real life or diversity. This indicates a widespread recognition that social media often distorts or oversimplifies real-world diversity, aligning with the growing awareness of the gap between online representations and lived experiences.

The response "partially reflects" was the most common answer, regardless of the respondents' gender. This suggests a shared perception that social media provides an incomplete or selective portrayal of real life and diversity. Both male and female participants seem to recognize that while social media showcases aspects of reality, it often omits or distorts certain elements, possibly due to the curated nature of online content.

## Section 4: Gender stereotypes, Cyber violence and Online Content

When discussing the impact of social media presence, it's essential to acknowledge the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), particularly among teenagers. FOMO is the anxiety or unease individuals feel when they believe they are missing out on experiences others are enjoying - and it's also applicable for social media. This fear significantly influences how much time teens spend online and the types of accounts they follow, as they seek a sense of belonging and connection. They are more likely to engage with content and influencers who align with popular trends or promote idealized lifestyles, often leading to increased screen time and a stronger desire to fit in.

Social media's curated reality can heighten feelings of exclusion, pressure, and anxiety, particularly when young people compare their lives to the seemingly more exciting experiences of others. Data reflects this trend, with a significant majority (204 respondents – 87%) following influencers or content creators, while only a small group (30 respondents – 13%) does not.



**Chart 13: Influencers followership**



When asked to name their favorite influencer or content creator, respondents consistently highlighted figures like Chiara Ferragni, Michele Morrone, Selly, MARILU and MrBeast, demonstrating their broad appeal across various demographics. This trend indicates a marked preference for digital content creators from platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, reflecting a shift away from traditional media figures. The analysis of influencer popularity across regions reveals distinct patterns:

- In Romania, Andrei Şelaru (@selly) and MARILU (@mariludobrescu) are the top mentions, with 14.29% and 10.20% of responses, respectively, underscoring their strong local influence. Markiplier (@markiplier) and xSlyder also rank prominently in Romania, each capturing 8.16% of mentions, illustrating their wide appeal among Romanian audiences. Even a nationally representative study shows that high school and middle school students prefer Selly, Iorga7x, and Marilu Dobrescu on Instagram and TikTok, further confirming the trends identified in our exploratory research (CJI, 2025).

- In Italy, Chiara Ferragni (@chiaraFerragni) is the most mentioned, with 6.09%, indicating her significant popularity. Michele Molteni (@michele.molteni) follows with 4.35%, marking his notable presence in the Italian influencer landscape. Other Italian influencers like Elisa Maino (@la\_mainoo), Federica Scagnetti (@federica.scagnetti), and Sofia Crisafulli (@sofiacrisafullii) each receive 3.48% of mentions, reflecting a diverse range of popular figures.



**Note:** The responses in the survey were collected in January - April 2024, prior to the controversies surrounding Chiara Ferragni (starting July 2024). Ferragni's reputation has since been tarnished due to her involvement in misleading charity campaigns, most notably a fraudulent fundraiser with an Italian cake brand. As a result, Ferragni faced a €41.08 million fine and a significant loss of sponsorships, including Coca-Cola ad being canceled. Her involvement in the scandal also led to the introduction of the "Ferragni Law" in Italy, aimed at regulating influencers with large followings. These events have significantly damaged Ferragni's image, transforming her from a beloved influencer to a controversial figure, facing legal challenges and widespread public backlash.

- In Bulgaria, Iva Ivanova (@ivkabeibe) stands out with 12.12% of mentions, highlighting her considerable local popularity. Case (@caseoh\_games) and Mehdi (ElectroBOOM) Sadaghdar (@mehdi\_sadaghdar) each receive 6.06%, suggesting a solid, though less dominant, presence in the Bulgarian influence scene.

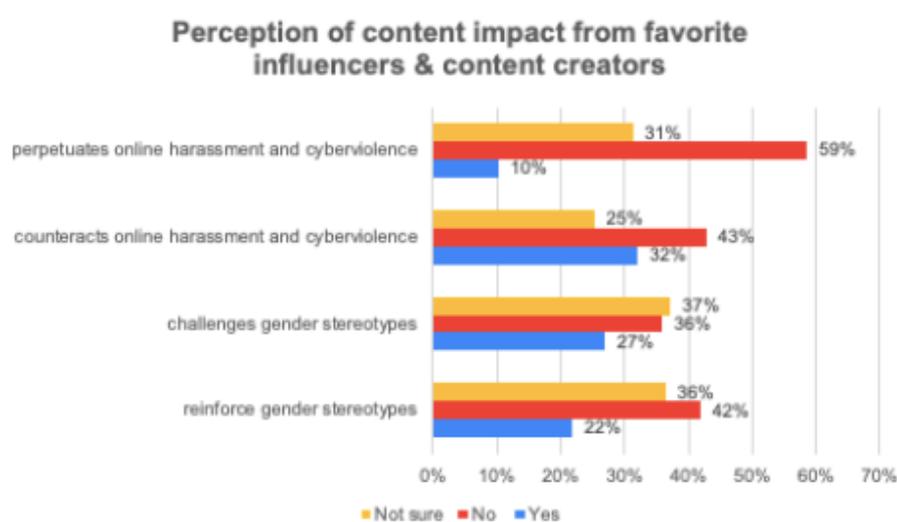


- In Spain, Juan Alberto (@illojuan) dominates with 24.32% of mentions, making him the most influential among Spanish respondents. @rickyedit, Fabiana Sevillano (@fabiana.sevillano), Lola Lolita (@lolalolita), and DjMaRiiO (@djmariiio) each garner around 8.11% of the responses, indicating a balanced interest in various Spanish content creators. Other names such as Javi Ruiz (@xbuyer) also appear, though with fewer mentions.



Overall, the data underscores the strong regional variations in content creator popularity, with certain figures significantly dominating their local markets while reflecting a diverse set of preferences across different countries. However, it is important to note that this study is not representative of the broader population (!) but provides valuable insights into the types of influencers teens are following online.

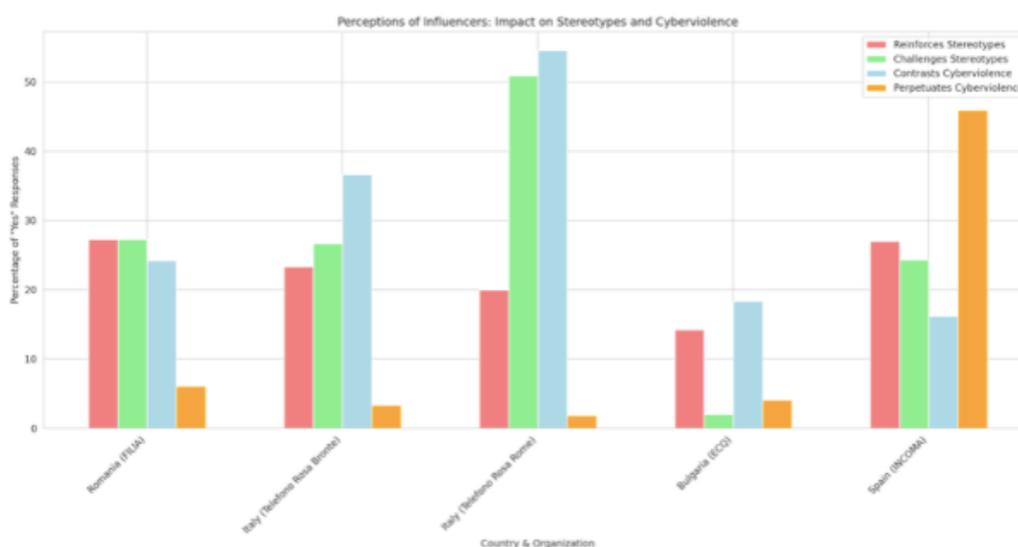
The data shows a mixed perception of influencers and content creators, with significant uncertainty regarding their role in either reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes and their impact on online harassment. This uncertainty may be linked to a lack of critical awareness and education about the consequences of gender roles and gender-based violence. Without the knowledge to identify harmful stereotypes or fully grasp issues like cyberviolence against women and girls (CVAWG), individuals may struggle to determine whether influencers are perpetuating or addressing these behaviors.



**Chart 14: Perception of content impact from favorite influencers & content creators**

A significant proportion of participants (36% to 42%) believe that influencers do not reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes or counteract online harassment and cyberviolence, suggesting a critical view of influencer content. On the other hand, a notable percentage (22% to 32%) recognizes that some influencers may reinforce gender stereotypes or counteract online harassment and cyberviolence, which implies that some influencers are perceived as having a positive social impact, but these figures are not overwhelmingly high. The "not sure" responses (25% to 37%) reflect uncertainty and a lack of awareness or understanding about the influence of these content creators, possibly indicating that respondents may not be fully equipped to critically assess how influencers contribute to or challenge societal issues. **This ambiguity suggests a need for greater education and awareness around the role of digital content in shaping opinions about gender and online behavior, particularly when it comes to recognizing harmful content.**

Here is a comprehensive visualization of how respondents perceive influencers and content creators across different countries, focusing on gender stereotypes and cyberviolence:

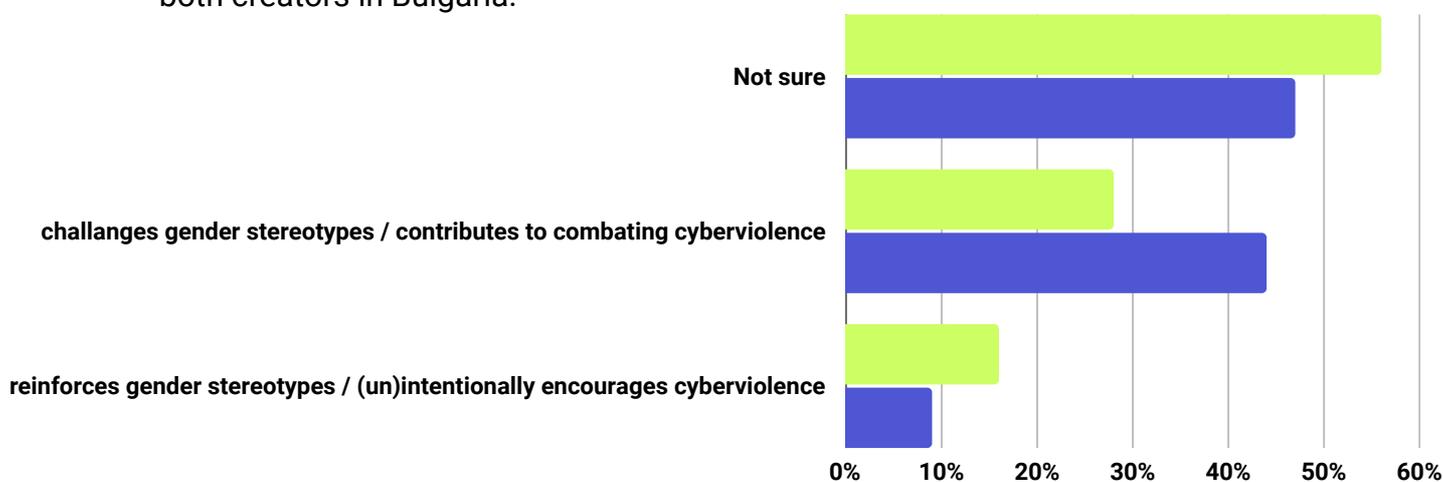


**Chart 15: Perception of content impact from favorite influencers & content creators per countries**

The data highlights regional differences in perceptions of influencers' roles in challenging or reinforcing gender stereotypes and cyberviolence. Italy stands out with the highest percentage of positive responses, showing influencers' strong impact in challenging stereotypes (50.91%) and countering cyberviolence (54.55%). Spain has the highest rate of respondents who feel influencers perpetuate cyberviolence (45.95%), suggesting concerns about harmful content. Romania reports low percentages across all categories, especially in challenging stereotypes (2.04%), indicating less engagement with content that addresses these issues. Bulgaria shows a balanced view, with equal perceptions of both reinforcing and challenging stereotypes (27.27%), reflecting a more mixed influence. These regional variations suggest that local context and media literacy influence how teens perceive the impact of influencers on gender issues and online harassment.

Respondents were also asked to identify influential content creators or influencers among young people. Some of the names mentioned were the same as those cited as their favorites, while others differed.

- Chiara Ferragni (@chiaraferragni) stands out as the most influential in Italy, receiving 24 mentions, which translates to 20.87% of the total. Her significant presence in Italy underscores her broad appeal and impact on the youth there.
- Andrei Şelaru (@selly) is particularly dominant in Romania, with 17 mentions and a notable 34.69% share. This suggests a strong connection with Romanian youth, positioning him as a major figure in the country’s digital landscape.
- Iorga Ana Maria Valentina (@iorga7x), also from Romania, has a smaller share of 8.16% with 4 mentions. While not as influential as Selly, she still holds a notable position in the Romanian content creator sphere.
- In Spain, Juan Alberto (@illojuan) is the most influential, capturing 18.92% of mentions with 7. His influence in Spain is significant, but he is closely followed by Ibai (@ibaillanos), who also holds a considerable share at 10.81% with 4 mentions.
- Andrew Tate (@cobratatealive) and Vladislav Radoslavov (@vl\_radoslavov) represent Bulgaria, with Andrew Tate receiving 18.18% of mentions (6) and Tochno s Vladi receiving 12.12% (4). This indicates a varied but substantial influence of both creators in Bulgaria.



**Chart 16: Perception of content impact from most popular influencers & content creators**

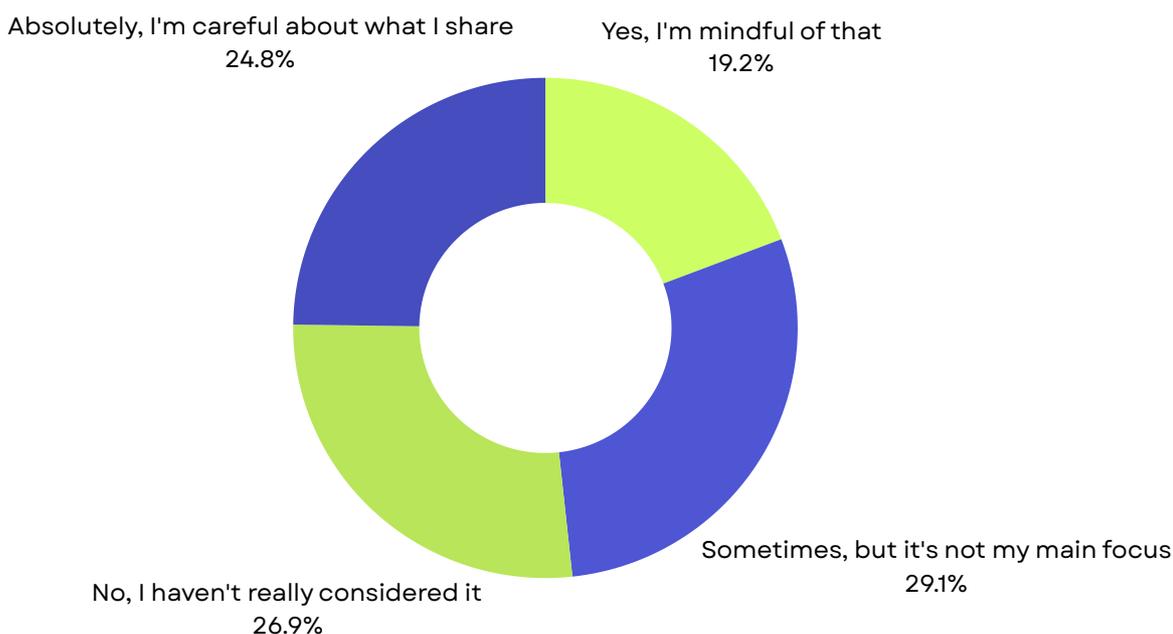
This graphic presents survey results showing how respondents view the impact of popular influencers and content creators on teens. The two colors represent the following categories:

- blue represents the percentage of respondents who believe influencers and content creators either challenge gender stereotypes or contribute to fighting cyberviolence.
- neon green represents the percentage of respondents who think these influencers either reinforce gender stereotypes or (un)intentionally encourage cyberviolence.

There is a nuanced perspective on the influence of popular content creators among teens. **A substantial percentage of respondents remain uncertain about whether these influencers reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes (56%) or contribute to or combat cyberviolence (47%)** - this uncertainty indicates the complexity of measuring the impact of digital content. On one hand, 28% and 44% of respondents view these influencers as playing a positive role by challenging gender stereotypes and fighting cyberviolence, suggesting that some content creators are making strides towards fostering a more equitable and safer online environment.

On the other hand, 16% and 9% of respondents believe that influencers may inadvertently or deliberately reinforce gender stereotypes and encourage cyberviolence. This highlights ongoing concerns about the negative aspects of content creation and its potential to perpetuate harmful behaviors. Overall, the diverse opinions underscore the need for continued scrutiny and critical engagement with the content produced by influencers, as their impact on young audiences is multifaceted and significant. **The variability in perceptions about whether influencers reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and cyberviolence may also reflect broader gaps in gender equality education.** Many people might struggle to recognize and articulate these behaviors due to insufficient awareness or understanding of gender issues and online safety.

Respondents were also asked whether they pay attention to the fact that the content they post or interact with online—such as by sharing or liking—might contribute to perpetuating stereotypes related to gender or violence. This question aimed to gauge the level of self-awareness among participants regarding the potential impact of their online actions.

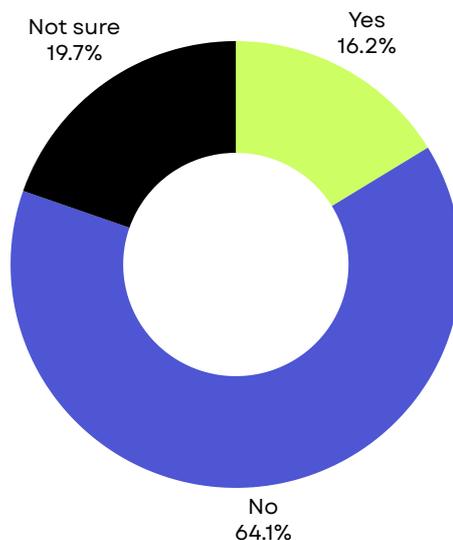


**Chart 17: Awareness of how online activity perpetuates gender stereotypes & cyber violence**

**Just 19% of the respondents report being mindful of how their online actions might perpetuate stereotypes or violence and 25% report being careful about what they share, suggesting a strong awareness and deliberate approach towards their online presence.**

This indicates a segment of the population is actively considering the implications of their digital behavior and strives to mitigate negative impacts. Additionally, 29% of the respondents acknowledge some level of awareness but do not prioritize it as a main focus suggesting that while there is a general recognition of the potential for online actions to perpetuate stereotypes or violence, it may not be a central concern for many individuals. Also 27% of respondents have not seriously considered the impact of their online interactions on perpetuating stereotypes or violence highlighting a significant area for improvement.

Although some individuals are proactive and conscientious about their digital behavior, a substantial portion either does not prioritize these issues or has not considered their implications at all. This disparity highlights a broader issue of insufficient focus on gender equality and the need for more robust education and awareness in this area. The lack of consideration for how online actions might reinforce gender stereotypes or violence underscores the necessity of integrating gender equality education into digital literacy programs.



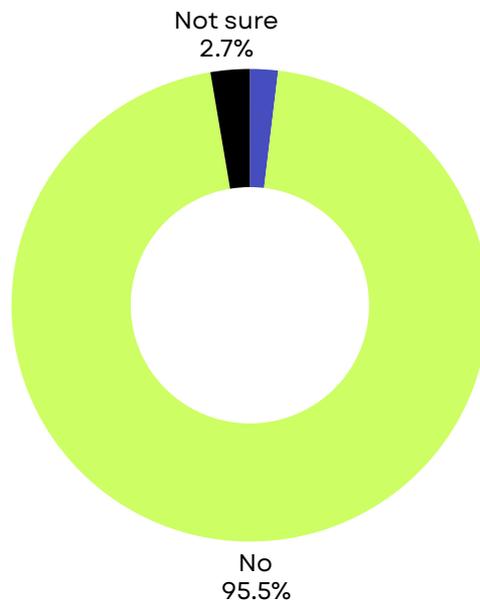
**Chart 18: Social media influence on gender norms**

When asked whether they felt pressured by social media or influencers to conform to gender norms, 64% of respondents indicated that they did not feel pressured, while 20% were unsure, and only 16% felt they were pressured. One possible explanation for the high percentage of respondents who did not feel pressured could be a lack of discussions and awareness among teens about gender norms and stereotypes. Without conversations around these topics, young people may not have the vocabulary or the critical perspective needed to identify or understand the pressures they are experiencing. In other words, they might not perceive the subtle reinforcement of gender norms in the content they encounter.

Among the 16% who did report feeling pressured, there was a notable gender disparity: females reported feeling pressured at double the rate of males (26 females compared to 12 males). The pressure may be especially pronounced for female teens, who are frequently exposed to idealized portrayals of femininity and beauty. This could also point to a broader cultural tendency to hold females to more rigid gender norms, which is reflected in the content they consume. Such pressures can have significant implications for self-esteem, body image, and overall mental health, suggesting the need for more education and critical discussions about media influence, gender norms, and the impact of online content.

### Section 5: Online experiences and safety

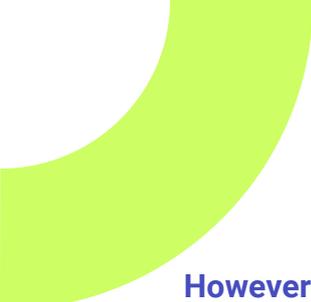
The data reveals that the majority of respondents across all genders have not felt targeted or harassed online due to the content they consumed or shared.



**Chart 19: Online harassment based on content shared or consumed**

Specifically, 186 out of 198 males (approx. 94%), 180 out of 198 females (approx. 91%), and 197 out of 199 non-binary individuals (approx. 99%) reported not experiencing such issues, with the "No" responses dominating each group.

In contrast, only a small percentage reported feeling targeted or harassed, with 6 males (approx. 3%), 7 females (approx. 4%), and 1 non-binary individual (approx. 0.5%) indicating they had such experiences. The "Not sure" responses are also relatively small, with 6 males, 11 females, and a few in the "Prefer not to say" category, suggesting uncertainty rather than direct experience. Notably, the non-binary and "Prefer not to say" groups have the lowest rates of reported harassment, highlighting that the incidence of feeling targeted is relatively low across all groups. This indicates that, for most respondents, online interactions do not lead to harassment related to content consumption or sharing.



**However, it is important to consider that the high number of "No" responses might also be related to a lack of recognition of violent behaviors, limited discussions about gender equality, or general unawareness.** Additionally, this being the first time respondents have encountered a survey from our project team, which could affect their willingness to answer honestly if they are not yet comfortable or confident in the process, potentially leading to socially desirable responses. Research shows that the awareness and recognition of harassment can vary, and trust in the survey process is crucial for obtaining accurate feedback.

Among those who reported feeling targeted or harassed online due to the content they consumed or shared, some examples include:

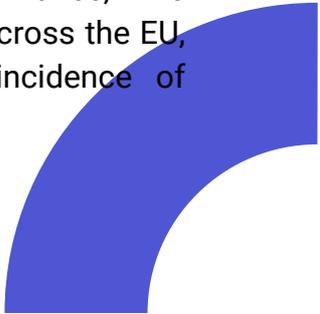
- *Insulting comments on their video, including claims of being ugly.*
- *Nasty comments and shares that were not accepted.*
- *Mockery for expressing an opinion on a video.*
- *Harassment related to political or religious discussions.*
- *Receiving unwanted nude photos and inappropriate messages due to being female.*
- *Systemic bullying in online environments, especially in video games, with severe comments like being told to kill themselves.*
- *Increased scrutiny of their profile.*
- *An incident involving physical assault after giving a derogatory nickname.*

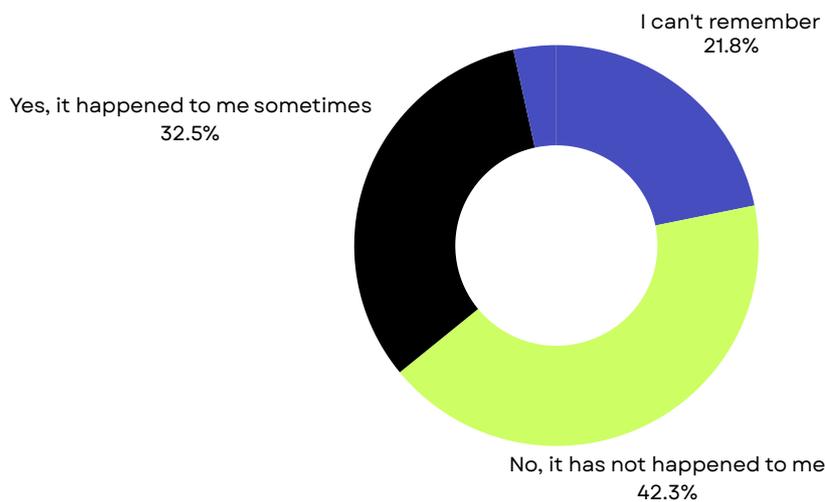
**The experiences of individuals targeted or harassed online highlight significant issues of sexism and systemic inequality, with girls and women disproportionately affected.**

Online harassment often includes inappropriate messages and unwanted advances, underscoring the gendered nature of the abuse.

A Pew Research study (2022) found that nearly half of U.S. teens aged 13 to 17 (46%) have been bullied or harassed online, with physical appearance being a common reason. Age and gender also play a role, with older teen girls particularly vulnerable to such abuse.

Similarly, a 2019 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) found that approximately one in three young people (27%) aged 15 to 29 in the EU have experienced cyberbullying in the past five years. Although the overall rate of cyberbullying is similar between women and men, women are more likely to be targeted with sexual harassment. Victims from minority groups, such as those with disabilities or from different ethnic or sexual backgrounds, are at an even greater risk. France, The Netherlands, and Germany have the highest reported rates of harassment across the EU, while Poland, the Czech Republic, and Romania show the highest incidence of cyberbullying specifically, according to a meta-analysis of European surveys.

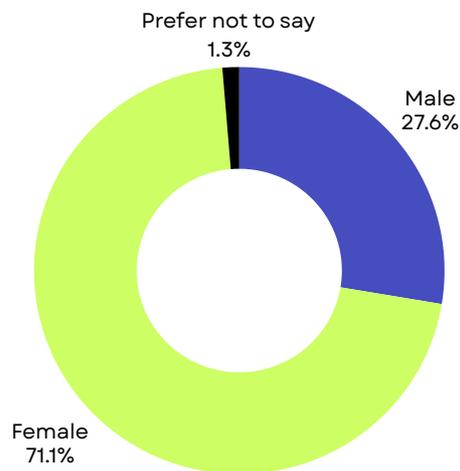




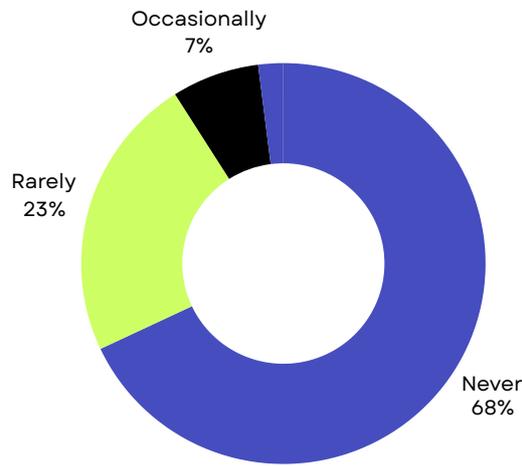
**Chart 20: Encountering disturbing content online**

The data reveals that a majority of respondents, 51%, either couldn't remember or chose not to recall any instances of content that made them feel uncomfortable or scared online in the past year. However, a significant proportion, 32%, acknowledged experiencing such content, with 8% reporting it happening frequently and 24% occasionally. This suggests that while a large number of teens may not be aware of or consciously reflect on the negative impact of online content, a considerable portion still encounters unsettling material.

**Chart 21: Of the respondents, one-third (33%) reported that the online content they encountered in the past year made them feel uncomfortable or scared, as though they shouldn't have seen it. Here is the gender distribution:**

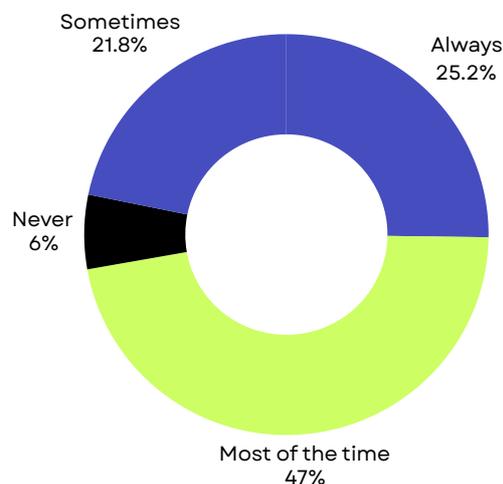


One-third (33%) of respondents felt uncomfortable or scared by online content in the past year, with 71% of them being female suggesting that women are disproportionately affected by distressing or inappropriate online content, highlighting a gender-specific issue in digital environments. The higher incidence among female respondents points to a troubling trend where girls and women face a disproportionate amount of inappropriate or harmful content, such as harassment or unsolicited sexually explicit material (genitalia images for example).



**Chart 22: Frequency of cyberbullying experiences in the past few months**

The data indicates that **the majority of respondents have not experienced cyberbullying recently, with 68% reporting that it has never happened to them. A smaller proportion, 23%, experience it rarely, while 7% encounter it occasionally.** Only 2% of respondents report experiencing cyberbullying frequently. This suggests that while cyberbullying affects a minority of individuals, the majority do not face this issue regularly. However, as mentioned before, **low reporting rates do not necessarily indicate that cyberbullying isn't happening. It's possible that some teens may not recognize or fully acknowledge what constitutes cyberbullying, which could lead to underreporting.** Additionally, they might downplay or dismiss these experiences when they do occur.



**Chart 22: Frequency of cyberbullying experiences in the past few months**

Overall, a majority of respondents feel safe online either always (59 representing 25%) or most of the time (110 representing 47%), suggesting a general sense of security among most users. However, 65 respondents (14 who never feel safe and 51 who feel safe only sometimes) experience varying degrees of insecurity, indicating that there is still a significant portion of users who do not consistently feel safe in online environments. While overall feelings of safety are relatively high, there remains a substantial portion of users who experience varying degrees of online insecurity.

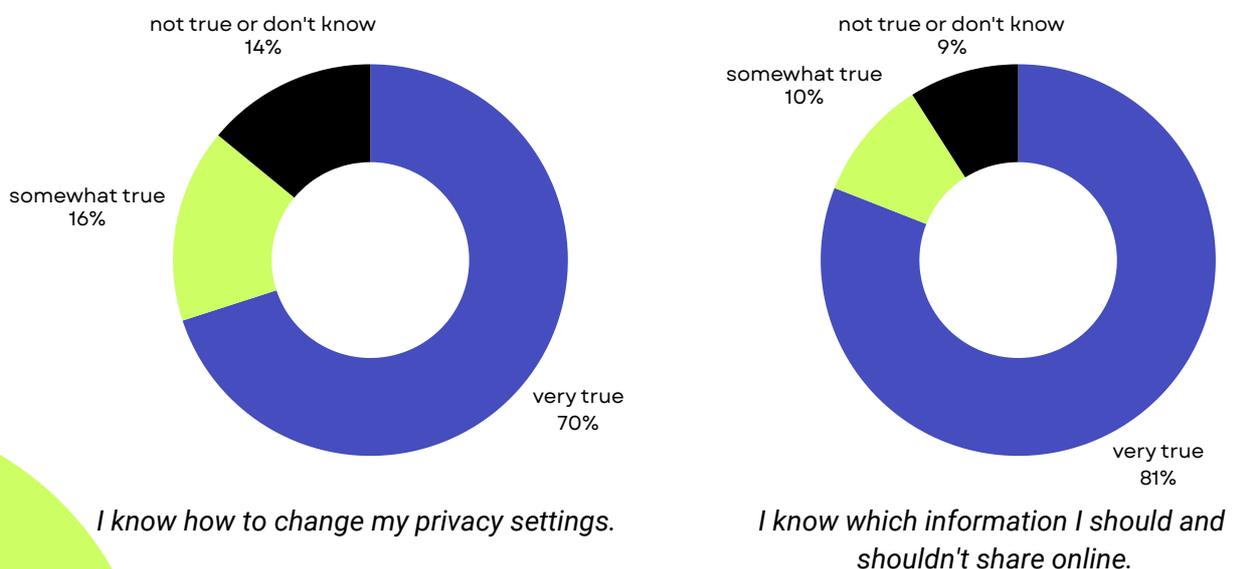
The data reveals important gendered differences in how individuals perceive their safety online, highlighting ongoing issues related to gender inequality and online harassment. In general, women and girls tend to report a slightly lower sense of safety compared to men and boys, suggesting that women and girls may face heightened risks of gender-based violence, harassment, and cyberviolence online. This trend reflects broader societal issues of misogyny and sexism, which are often amplified in digital spaces. The data also highlights a significant variation across countries, which may be influenced by cultural factors, the level of digital literacy, and awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) and cyberviolence against women and girls (CVAWG).

The relatively high percentage of respondents, especially women and girls, in countries like Italy and Spain, reporting that they only feel safe "most of the time" or "sometimes," points to the ongoing need for greater education and awareness on issues of online safety and gender stereotypes. **This underscores the importance of fostering media literacy, digital responsibility, and greater attention to the specific challenges that women, girls face online. It also points to the need for a stronger societal and institutional focus on combating online harassment, enforcing better protections for users, and empowering all genders to feel safe and supported in digital spaces.**

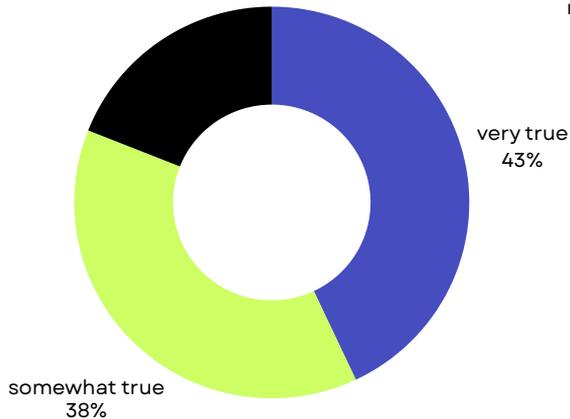
## Section 6: Cybersecurity awareness and practices

While respondents generally report feeling knowledgeable about managing privacy settings and understanding appropriate information sharing online, it's important to consider that these answers may be influenced by social desirability bias - as explained in the Limitations section. Teens might provide responses they believe are expected or perceived as "correct," rather than reflecting their true level of understanding or practice.

Chart 23: Online safety

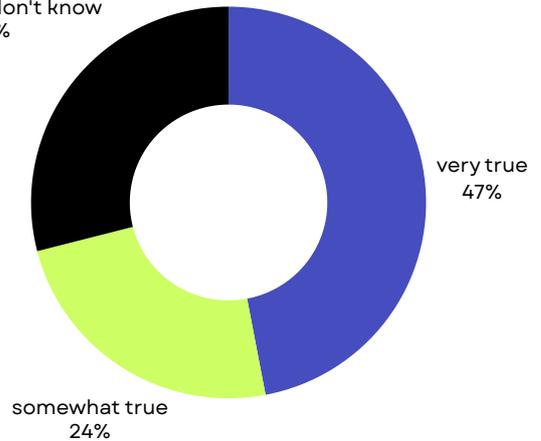


not true or don't know  
19%



*I find it easy to check if the information  
I find online is true.*

not true or don't know  
29%



*I tell my parents if i don't feel safe online.*

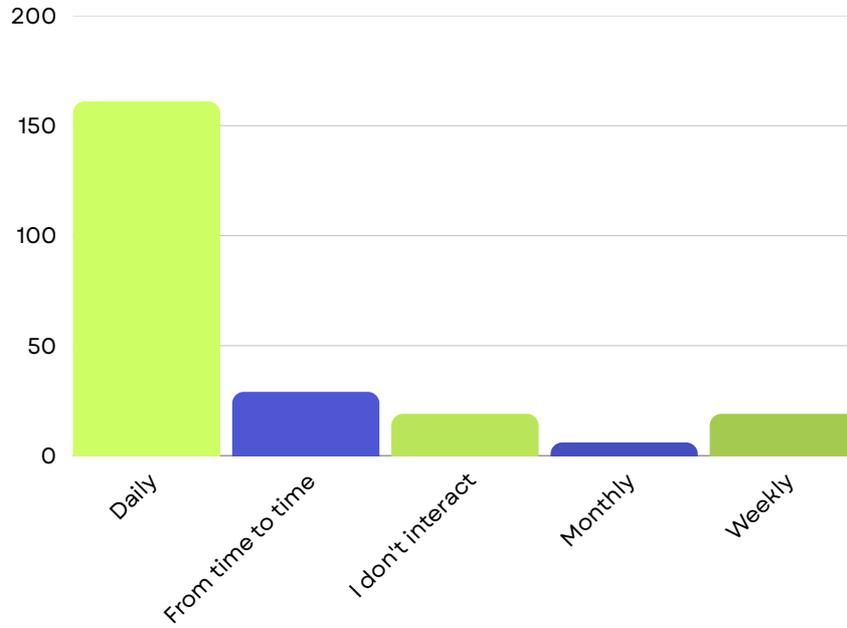
For example a strong majority of respondents (70%) are confident in their ability to change their privacy settings. Also 81% are confident about understanding what information is appropriate to share online, indicating a strong awareness of online privacy.

However, there is less confidence in verifying the truthfulness of online information, with a notable portion unsure about their ability in this area: less than half of respondents (43%) feel confident in their ability to verify the accuracy of online information and 38% feel somewhat capable, indicating that while they have some skills in verification, there may be room for improvement.

When it comes to communicating safety concerns to parents, while nearly half are proactive, a significant portion either does not engage in this practice or is unsure about it. Almost half of respondents (47%) say that they tell their parents if they feel unsafe online, reflecting a level of openness and communication. However nearly a third (29%) either do not inform their parents about online safety issues or are unsure about this practice and a quarter (24%) are somewhat open, suggesting they may occasionally share their concerns but not consistently. These insights suggest areas where increased education and support could be beneficial, particularly in verifying online information and fostering open communication about online safety.

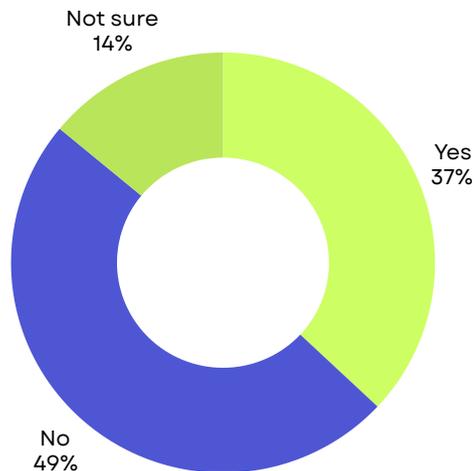
## Section 7: Engagement and Interaction

The high majority of respondents (161 - 69%) interact daily with social media content, showing a high level of engagement and possibly a strong habit or interest in social media. Smaller groups show a range of less frequent engagement, from weekly to monthly, and a small segment that doesn't interact at all.



**Chart 24: Engagement (like, comment, share) with SoMe content**

When asked about their participation in challenges, trends, or movements initiated on social media platforms, the responses were quite varied. Given the target group (teen 14-18 years) 49% of respondents indicated that they have never participated in such activities. Moreover, 14% were unsure about their participation, reflecting a level of ambiguity or a lack of awareness about whether they have taken part in these types of social media-driven activities. **Only 37% of respondents confirmed that they have actively participated in challenges, trends, or movements started on social media. However, teens often want to appear cool and laid-back online, so it's not entirely surprising that they may avoid participating in trends they perceive as "cringe."**



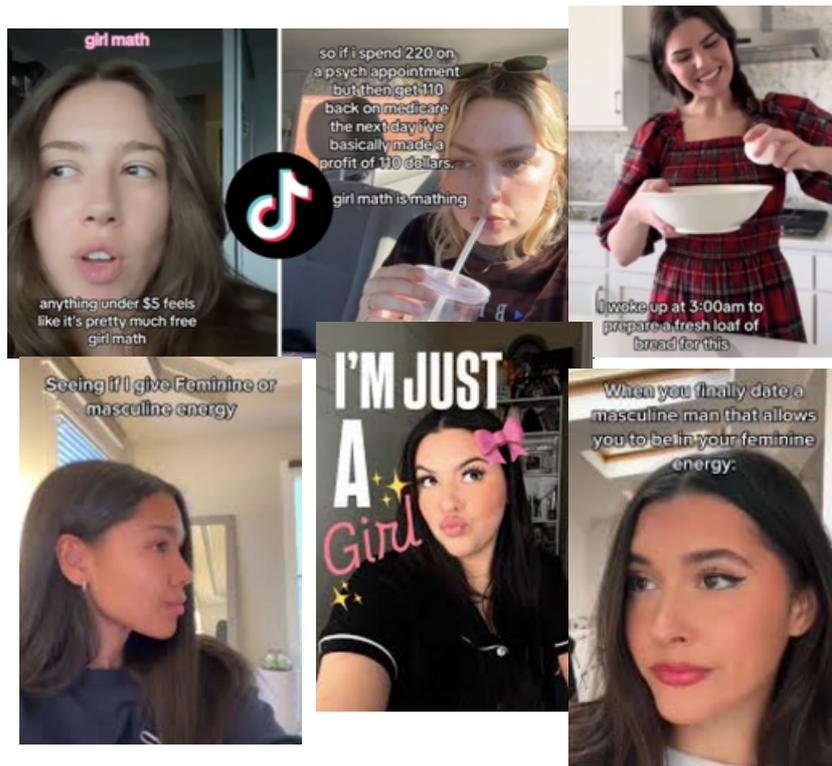
**Chart 25: Participation in challenges, trends or movements on SoMe**

The examples provided by respondents who have participated in social media trends, challenges or movements illustrate a wide range of activities:

- *Dance challenges/TikTok dances*
- *Lip sync and audio trends*
- *Visual and effect-based challenges*
- *Challenges involving physical actions: bottle flip, eating cinnamon, chubby bunny*
- *Gaming and community events*

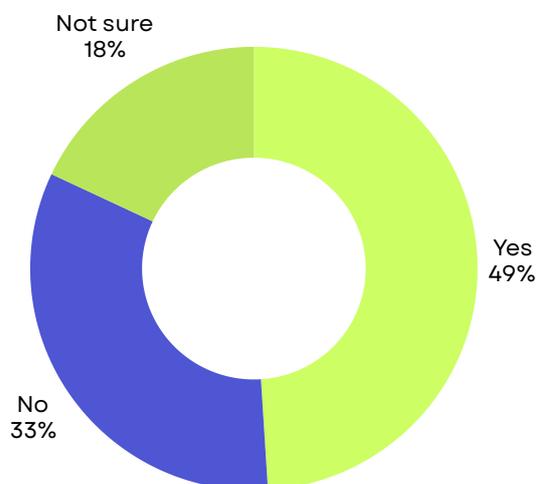
The variety of examples provided shows that social media users engage with a wide array of content types. TikTok, in particular, stands out as a major driver of trends and challenges, indicating its significant influence on current social media behaviors.

**Many of the online trends contribute to reinforcing stereotypes**, such as the "girl math" trend, where women and girls are depicted justifying illogical spending habits. This perpetuates the stereotype that women are bad with money or incapable of making rational financial decisions, suggesting that women's behavior should be emotional or irrational by default.



Likewise, trends like "feminine and masculine energies" or "I'm just a girl" promote the idea that specific traits are inherently tied to gender, which strengthens traditional roles and behaviors. The "tradwives" and "stay-at-home girlfriend" trends further reinforce outdated gender norms, implying that women should prioritize homemaking and dependence on their partner. **These trends encourage the belief that gender dictates abilities, interests, and roles, fostering narrow views of what men and women are "supposed" to do or how they should behave.**

**49% of respondents have stopped following or interacting with an influencer or content creator due to their content or actions.** This indicates that content quality or the actions of influencers can significantly impact user engagement and loyalty.



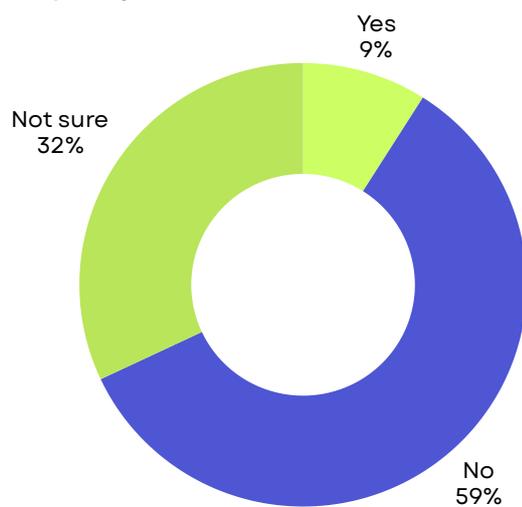
**Chart 26: Unfollowing influencers**

Being asked to provide examples, respondents reported:

- **Many users cited boredom or a loss of interest in the content** as reasons for disengagement. Examples: "It bored me," "I wasn't interested in the content anymore," "I didn't like the type of content he posted," "content that I find boring and that doesn't feed my brain," "the influencer became boring to me"
- **Negative behaviours, such as inappropriate conduct or harassment, are significant factors leading to disengagement too.** Examples: "Bad behaviors," "immature," "annoying contents," "being an asshole," "discrimination," "misogynist jokes," "cyberbullying," "harassed a woman," "humiliated people."
- **Discrepancies in beliefs or values** between the influencer and the audience can lead to disengagement. Users often stop following influencers whose views or content no longer align with their personal values or beliefs. Examples: "Because his behaviors or ideologies did not reflect me at all," "I did not agree with what they said," "supported political parties opposed to me," "Public speech on the topic of genders and sexuality," "disseminated content dangerous to my mental stability," "I support LGBTQT," "difference of opinions", "because it incited people to carry out unjust actions against certain people", "Content creators are influenced by money", "Simply growing up or had other interests" "I was no more interested"
- **Concerns related to safety, mental health, and ethical issues**, such as privacy violations, are also significant factors influencing the decision to unfollow.

Disengagement often occurs when influencers fail to represent diverse and inclusive perspectives or engage in content that marginalizes or excludes certain groups. Many users cited inappropriate or harmful behaviors, including misogyny and harassment, as reasons for disengagement. This highlights the critical importance of addressing gender-based violence and discrimination in social media interactions.

When asked whether they have ever taken action or supported a cause related to gender equality through the content of an influencer, the responses revealed a varied level of engagement: **only 9% of the respondents affirmed that they have actively supported gender equality causes inspired by influencer content**, indicating a subset of the audience actively engages with and promotes such issues through their social media interactions. In contrast, **a significant majority - 59% (139 respondents) reported that they have not taken such actions**. Additionally, 32% (75 respondents) were uncertain about their involvement, reflecting a possible lack of clarity or awareness regarding their engagement with gender equality issues related to influencers.



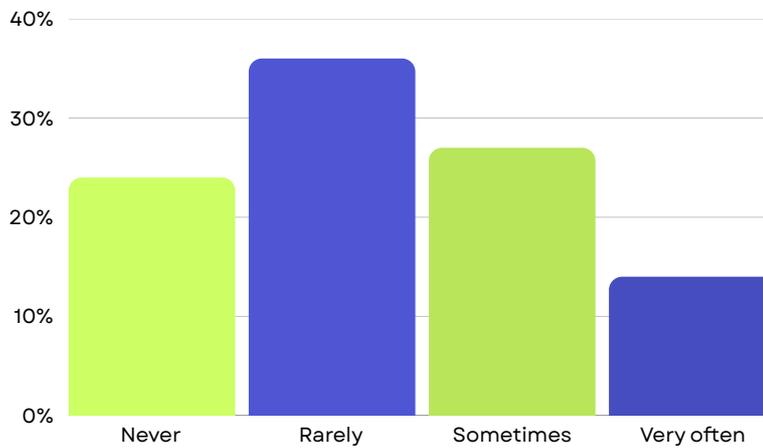
**Chart 27: SoMe influence on gender equality actions**

Respondents who have supported gender equality through influencer content showcased a range of engagement methods, highlighting the potential of influencers to drive social action. **Examples include donations during charity livestreams, contributing with clothes to relevant causes, or supporting initiatives indirectly, such as reading more about a social issue due to an influencer’s book sponsorship. Some respondents mentioned participating in awareness campaigns, such as a video addressing homophobia and racism, while others signed online petitions or actively reported gender-based insults on social platforms.**

These examples, while inspiring, also underline the relatively limited scale of participation. If influencers regularly incorporated discussions of gender equality and other social causes into their content, the audience would likely become more educated and familiar with these topics. This consistency could normalize social activism, making it a more integral part of online culture and encouraging broader and more sustained engagement in supporting equality and addressing pressing social issues.

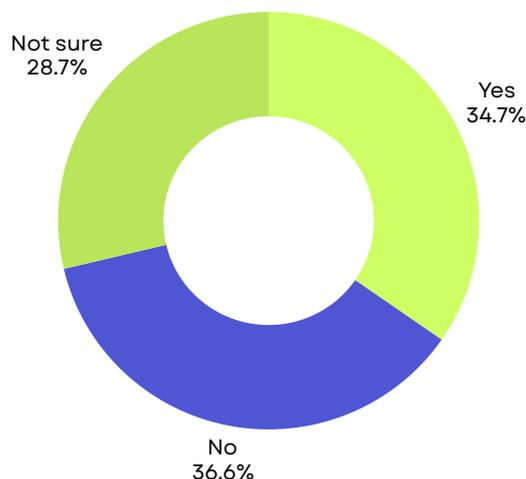
## Section 8: STEM/STEAM influences on SoMe

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and STEAM (which includes Arts) are critical fields shaping future careers. We asked young people (14-18) about their exposure to STEM/STEAM content on social media to understand its role in sparking interest and engagement. We found out that a relatively small proportion of respondents frequently engage with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) or science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) content on social media, with only 32 respondents reporting they see it very often and 63 encountering it occasionally. In contrast, **about 60% of respondents either rarely (36%) or never (24%) come across STEM/STEAM-related content.** This underrepresentation limits the visibility and accessibility of these topics, particularly for women and marginalised groups who are already significantly underrepresented in these fields.



**Chart 28: Exposure to STEM/STEAM content on SoMe**

**Only 35% of respondents follow someone on social media who serves as a role model for pursuing a STEM/STEAM career, while 37% do not, and 29% are unsure.** This highlights a gap in visibility and inspiration for young people, particularly in fields where representation already lags. Furthermore, the 29% of respondents who are unsure point to a potential lack of awareness about the importance of role models or difficulty in identifying figures who actively promote STEM/STEAM careers.



**Chart 29: Following Role Models in STEM/STEAM on SoMe**

This uncertainty underscores the need for greater promotion and accessibility of content that demystifies these fields and highlights diverse success stories. By increasing the presence of STEM/STEAM professionals as influencers and role models online, social media platforms could play a key role in sparking interest and breaking down barriers for the next generation of innovators.

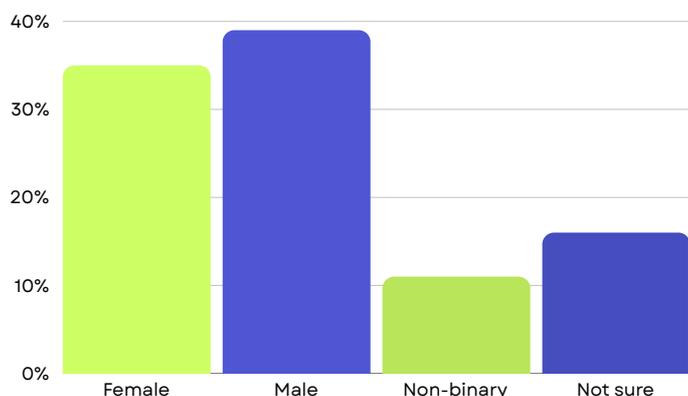


Chart 30: STEM/STEAM role models

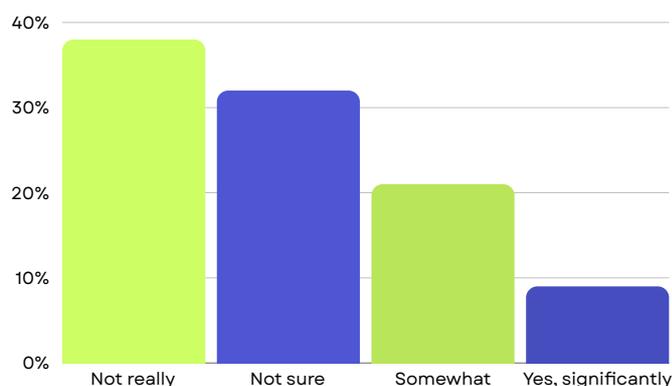


Chart 31: Impact of SoMe on STEM/STEAM career interest

Among those 34% who follow STEM/STEAM influencers, 39% follow male influencers, 34% follow female influencers, and 11% follow non-binary influencers. Interestingly, 16% of respondents are unsure about the gender of the influencers they follow, which may reflect a lack of strong connection or identification with the influencer or their content.

This could also suggest that some audiences engage with STEM/STEAM content primarily for its informational value rather than forming a personal or aspirational bond with the influencer themselves. However, the relatively higher percentage of followers for male influencers mirrors broader trends in the STEM/STEAM fields, where men have traditionally dominated both in visibility and representation. The 34% of respondents following female influencers signals progress and the growing influence of women in these areas. Overall, these numbers emphasize the need to amplify a wider range of voices in STEM/STEAM content creation. Doing so can help audiences form deeper connections with diverse role models, reduce barriers for marginalized groups, and foster a more equitable environment in these historically exclusive fields.

Finally, the data suggests that **social media plays a limited role in influencing interest in STEM/STEAM careers among respondents. While 38% state that social media has not really influenced their career interests, and 32% are unsure, only a small proportion—21% "somewhat" and 9% "significantly"—report being positively impacted.** This highlights a missed opportunity for social media platforms and influencers to spark interest in STEM/STEAM fields.

# Key takeaways

This research provides valuable insights into the digital habits and experiences of young people, emphasizing the urgent need for critical discussions on gender, power dynamics, and digital safety. Social media is a dominant force in shaping the beliefs, behaviors, and identities of teens, yet it operates within a broader framework of systemic inequalities that demand attention.

This study underscores the following key findings:

1. **While social media significantly influences teens' perceptions and behaviors, the ambiguity around whether influencers challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes highlights a gap in media literacy.** This gap is particularly concerning given that influencers play a central role in shaping norms and aspirations, yet critical engagement with their content remains limited. The lack of awareness about gendered power structures and stereotypes undermines teens' ability to recognize and resist these influences.
2. **While many teens report not experiencing online (sexual) harassment, this may reflect a failure to recognize or report harmful behaviors due to internalized gender norms and a lack of critical education on CVAWG.** Female respondents' heightened discomfort underscores the gendered nature of online harassment, which intersects with broader issues of sexism and systemic inequality in digital spaces.
3. There is **underrepresentation of STEM/STEAM content and role models on social media** limits its potential as a tool for promoting gender equity in these fields.
4. **While teens engage actively as consumers of content, their participation in social movements or content creation remains limited,** suggesting a need to foster greater agency and activism in digital spaces.

This research serves as an exploratory step toward understanding the digital experiences of teens, but it also underscores the need for a more comprehensive, systemic response. Bridging the gaps in media literacy, challenging the reproduction of harmful gender norms and promoting equitable digital spaces are essential steps to ensure that social media can become a tool for empowerment rather than a site of oppression. While this project offers a valuable pilot initiative, addressing these deeply entrenched issues requires sustained, collective action from educators, policymakers, and digital platforms.

# Findings & insights

## Part 2: Expert-driven online content analysis

Involving teenagers in providing responses was invaluable for gaining deeper insights into their interactions with social media, their preferences, and the influencers or content creators they regard as idols or role models. However, it became evident that an expert perspective was also necessary. Often, the potential reinforcement of gender stereotypes and/or cyberviolence is not evident in the posts themselves but rather in the comments or subtle references within the content.

The analysis was carried out by project experts, based on survey responses discussed earlier. Influencers and content creators who were mentioned four or more times in the survey were included in the final selection. This resulted in the inclusion of 14 influencers/content creators from four countries:

- influencers looked up by teens in Romania: Selly (7 mentions), Marilu (5 mentions) and Iorga (4 mentions)
- influencers looked up by teens in Bulgaria: Ivka Ivanova (4 mentions), Vladislav Radoslavov (4 mentions) and Andrew Tate (6 mentions)
- influencers looked up by teens in Italy: Chiara Ferragni (24 mentions), Michele Molteni (5 mentions), Elisa Maino (4 mentions), Federica Scagnetti (4 mentions), Gaia Bianchi (4 mentions) and Sofia Crisafulli (4 mentions)
- influencers looked up by teens in Spain: IlloJuan (9 mentions) and Rickiedits (4 mentions)

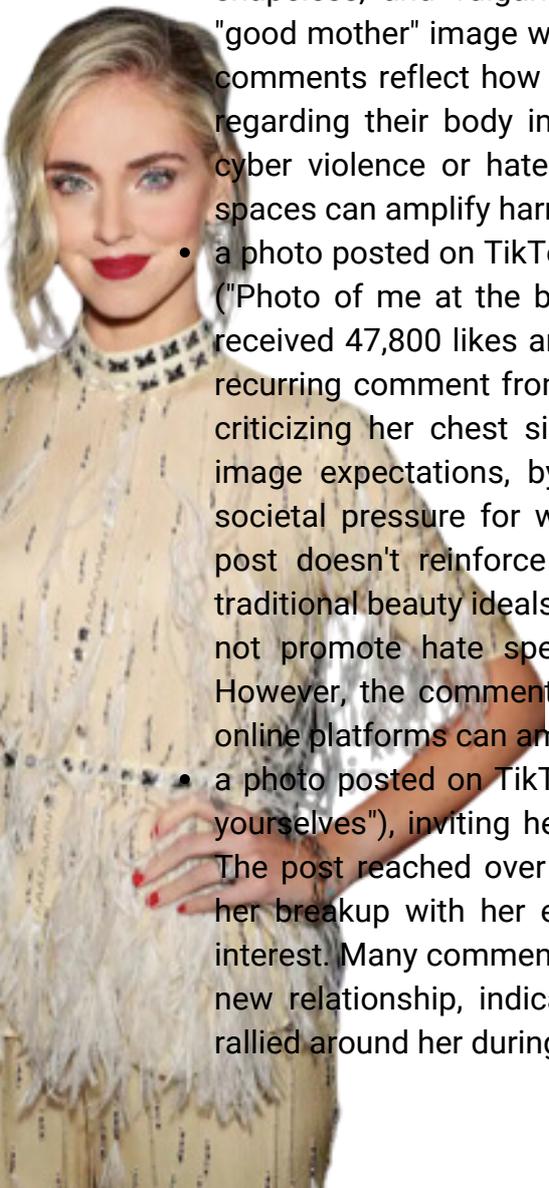
For each influencer or content creator, two posts per platform were analyzed, with selection criteria prioritizing the most popular posts based on metrics such as the number of likes, using tools like Social Blade. We considered the most popular posts because they reach the largest audience and have the greatest influence. Analyzing these posts helps identify the trends and messages that resonate most with teens, revealing the content that shapes opinions and behaviors.

In cases where similar content was present across multiple platforms, only one post was analyzed to avoid redundancy. Additionally, special attention was given to whether these influencers shared content on March 8th, International Women's Day, a globally recognized occasion dedicated to celebrating the achievements of women across social, economic, cultural, and political domains, as well as raising awareness about gender equality. By analysing whether influencers share content on this day (or not) and examining the messaging of such posts, we can draw conclusions about their engagement with and contribution to discussions on gender equality. The forthcoming sections will compile examples from each country, culminating in a set of overarching conclusions/takeaways.

## Italy

**Chiara Ferragni** is an influential Italian female entrepreneur, fashion blogger, and social media figure. With a massive following on Instagram (28.9 million followers) and TikTok (6.4 million followers), she is primarily known for her lifestyle, fashion, and beauty content.

- an Instagram post "Back to where it all started", a photo published on May 1st, 2024, the post received significant engagement with 549,595 likes and 2,406 comments. While the content itself doesn't explicitly address gender norms, stereotypes, or social issues, the comments reveal how online discussions surrounding her post can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and expectations, particularly related to motherhood, body image, and relationships. Comments ranged from accusations about her outfit being too provocative to insinuations about her trying to outdo her ex-husband following their breakup. Many times, the comments directed at women may not reflect their specific context but rather stem from inherent sexism.
- an Instagram post "May 1st in Malibu 🌊", published on May 2nd, 2024, she received 557,547 likes and 3,242 comments. While the post itself does not directly address gender norms or stereotypes, the comments reveal underlying societal pressures placed on her. Many comments criticized her physical appearance, describing her as too thin, shapeless, and vulgar. Others scrutinized her motherhood, questioning whether her "good mother" image was a facade, since she no longer showcased her children. These comments reflect how public figures are often held to unrealistic standards, especially regarding their body image and parenting roles. The post itself does not perpetuate cyber violence or hate speech, but the commentary around it highlights how online spaces can amplify harmful judgments related to gender and personal identity.
- a photo posted on TikTok titled "Foto di me in spiaggia secondo tanti dei miei followers" ("Photo of me at the beach according to many of my followers") on May 30th, 2024, received 47,800 likes and 584 comments. In this post, Chiara humorously referenced a recurring comment from followers who compared her body to a surfboard, particularly criticizing her chest size. This comment addresses gender norms, particularly body image expectations, by highlighting the focus on her physical appearance and the societal pressure for women to conform to certain beauty standards. While Chiara's post doesn't reinforce stereotypes or perpetuate cyber violence, it does challenge traditional beauty ideals by reclaiming the narrative in a light-hearted way. The post does not promote hate speech, and it's not influenced by any specific external event. However, the comment section's negative focus on her body brings attention to how online platforms can amplify harmful body image stereotypes.
- a photo posted on TikTok with the caption "Scrivete voi la caption" ("Write the caption yourselves"), inviting her followers to come up with their own captions for the image. The post reached over 7000 comments filled with ironic and humorous references to her breakup with her ex-husband, showing how her personal life remains a topic of interest. Many comments, however, reflected female support in light of her ex-husband's new relationship, indicating solidarity among her followers, particularly women, who rallied around her during this period.



## Italy

**Michele Molteni** is an Italian male content creator, known primarily for his YouTube channel (1.47M subscribers) where he shares entertaining and project-based content. One of his most notable series is "Costrusco il mega bunker" ("Building a mega bunker"), where he documents the construction of a large underground bunker beneath his property. He is also a TikTok content creator with 578.2K followers.

- in the video titled "Costrusco il mega bunker ep. 9" Molteni recaps the progress made on the bunker, continuing a series of episodes that have built up over the past year. The content is presented in a video format, with 85,363 likes and 1,617 comments as of the last post. This particular content does not seem to address gender norms, stereotypes, or any controversial issues, as the focus is purely on his creative and entertaining building project.
- in the video titled "Completo la mini casa sull'auto" ("I completed the mini house on the car"), he showcases a project where he builds a small house on a car. The video, published on May 1st, 2024, has received 71,383 likes and 1,576 comments, all of which are positive. There are no discussions or reinforcement of gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial issues in this video, as the content focuses solely on the creativity and engineering behind building the mini house on the car.
- in a TikTok video titled "Pioggia nel Mega Bunker" (Rain in the Mega Bunker), he shares a similar concept to his YouTube content, showing what happens inside his bunker when it rains outside. Published on May 18, 2024, the video has received 108,562 likes, 211 comments, and 354 shares. The content does not discuss or reinforce gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial topics. Instead, it focuses on the unique features of his bunker during a rainy weather event.
- in a TikTok video titled "Caduta in bici durante unboxing" (Fall off the bike during unboxing), he unboxes a product and demonstrates an incident where the front wheel of the bike he was testing detached. The video, posted on May 22, 2024, has garnered 96,557 likes, 421 comments, and 2,012 shares. The content does not address gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial topics and is focused purely on the comedic aspect of his biking mishap during the unboxing.



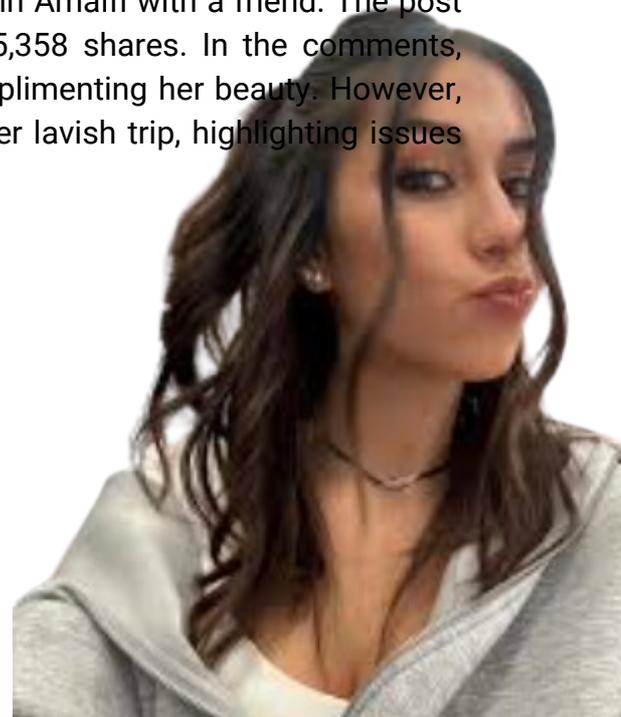
**Elisa Maino** is a young Italian female TikTok content creator with 6 million followers and 3 million followers on Instagram. Known for her engaging dance and lip-sync videos, Maino has become a prominent figure among Italian youth, leveraging her platform to collaborate with major brands.

- in a TikTok video titled "Passport Make Up Look," she provides a makeup tutorial for achieving the best look for passport photos. The video was posted on June 4, 2024, and has gained 152,163 likes, 156 comments, and 538 shares. The content is focused on lifestyle, fashion, and beauty, specifically offering makeup tips. It does not address gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial topics, and its tone is purely instructional and entertaining.
- in a TikTok video titled "Advertisement Dior Beauty," she promotes Dior Beauty products in collaboration with renowned makeup artist MrDanielMakeUp. The video, posted on May 16, 2024, has garnered 152,854 likes, 187 comments, and 3,142 shares. The content falls under the lifestyle/fashion/beauty category, with a focus on makeup and product promotion. The post does not address gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial topics and is purely an advertisement featuring beauty products.
- insta post titled "Evocative and elegant landscapes... Budapest, you are a painting," she shared a photo carousel of herself in Budapest, in collaboration with VisitHungary. The post, published on May 25, 2024, has received 93,900 likes and 81 comments. The content is related to lifestyle/fashion/beauty, showcasing beautiful landscapes and promoting tourism in Budapest. It does not address gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial topics and focuses purely on travel and aesthetics.
- insta post titled "A minute before the storm," she shares a photo carousel featuring herself in the same branded outfit, but in different poses. The post, published on May 31, 2024, has received 109,000 likes and 202 comments. The content falls under lifestyle/fashion/beauty, showcasing her outfit and fashion style. It does not address any gender norms, stereotypes, or controversial topics and focuses primarily on fashion and personal style.



**Federica Scagnetti** is an Italian female influencer with 2.7 million TikTok followers, renowned for her content on makeup, beauty, and body confidence. Additionally, she occasionally shares travel content, blending lifestyle elements into her platform.

- in a TikTok video titled "Trip planning with friends," she films herself, her boyfriend, and another couple of friends while they organize their next trip together. The video, published on July 22, 2024, has received 358,100,000 views, 146 likes, and 1,086 comments. The content itself does not appear to address gender norms, stereotypes, or cyber violence directly. However, many comments reflect a sense of envy with viewers expressing admiration and wishing they had similar friendships or the financial resources to enjoy such a lifestyle.
- on July 25, 2024, she posted a video promoting Garnier products as part of an advertisement, using a trending format. The video has garnered 73,262 likes, 158 comments, and 884 shares. In the comments, there is a mixed reaction: some followers criticize the outfit she wears in the video, while others praise her beauty. While the content itself does not explicitly address gender norms, stereotypes, or cyber violence, it does highlight the way influencers' appearances are often commented on—both positively and negatively—leading to a discussion about body image and expectations placed on influencers. The content is categorized as an advertisement (adv).
- an insta video on her recovery journey from an eating disorder (DCA), sharing her experience with her audience. The video has received 58,890 likes, 418 comments, and 45,568 shares. In the comments, her followers show strong support for her recovery journey, encouraging her to continue on the path to healing. Some of them also share their personal experiences with eating disorders and express solidarity, receiving support from others. The video addresses body confidence and mental health, shedding light on the struggles and recovery process, which fosters a supportive environment
- an insta carousel of images showcasing her holiday in Amalfi with a friend. The post has garnered 126,414 likes, 141 comments, and 45,358 shares. In the comments, most followers praise her physical appearance, complimenting her beauty. However, a small minority criticizes her lifestyle, particularly her lavish trip, highlighting issues like privilege or consumerism.



## Italy

**Gaia Bianchi** is an Italian female influencer with 2 million Instagram followers, primarily known for her lifestyle content. She shares insights into her daily life, fashion and personal experiences.

- an insta carousel of portrait photos featuring a sponsorship. The post has garnered 365,936 likes, 1,044 comments, and substantial engagement. In the comments, the reactions are divided into two groups: one group praises her beauty, complimenting her appearance and style, while the second group makes indecent comments about her physique and expresses sexual fantasies. These types of comments highlight a disturbing trend in the online space where some followers reduce the influencer to her physical appearance, crossing boundaries of respect and appropriateness. While the post itself focuses on promoting a product, it inadvertently becomes a platform for mixed comments, including some that objectify the influencer.
- an insta carousel of photos showcasing an evening outfit in California has received 342,299 likes and 383 comments. Gaia is criticized by some followers for being "too naked," reflecting a common issue where influencers are judged for their attire, often according to societal expectations of modesty.
- a tik tok video participating in a trend using a popular song, reached 156,042 likes and 227 comments. The comments focus primarily on her appearance, with many users describing her as "perfect."
- a video dedicated to her boyfriend, which has garnered 292,157 likes and 658 comments. The comments reflect a positive reaction from her followers, with many offering support and expressing admiration for the video. In this instance, the content is primarily about her relationship, and the feedback highlights a supportive and affectionate atmosphere from her audience.

**Sofia Crisafulli** is an Italian female influencer with 1.67 million followers on Instagram. She is known for her engaging content, which spans fashion, beauty, and lifestyle topics.

- an insta carousel of photos from a vacation with her son, which garnered 323,501 likes and 400 comments. In the comments, her followers expressed their love for her child and offered support to the influencer, with many focusing on her family and showing admiration for her role as a mother.
- a carousel of photos capturing moments from her vacation in Puglia. The post received 188,776 likes and 172 comments. In the comments, some followers speculated about a possible pregnancy, commenting on her body and suggesting that she might be expecting. This could represent a form of social pressure related to women's bodies or the expectation for women to have children.

None of the Italian content creators included in the analysis provided any commentary on March 8th, 2024.

## Spain

**Juan Alberto García Gámez**, known as **IlloJuan or LMDShow**, is a Spanish Twitch male streamer and YouTuber with 2.24 million followers. His content primarily focuses on gaming, commentary and entertainment.

- in a YT video titled "Primos de nuevo" ("Cousins again") he is explaining a recent breakup with his girlfriend. In the video, he humorously refers to their current relationship as "cousins" instead of partners. The video received 335,000 views and 32,210 comments. The content is mature, respectful, and avoids any misogynistic or sexist language. Overall, the video encourages a healthy perspective on relationships, focusing on emotional well-being rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes or expectations. However, even with a mature tone, the title could still reinforce a tendency to downplay the emotional weight of breakups, especially when it uses humor to reduce the complexity of the relationship.
- a gaming YT video titled "ARTHUR MORGAN VUELVE A CABALGAR 🐎 - Red Dead Redemption 2 #1," where he plays the video game, has 52,000 views and 1,875 comments. IlloJuan uses very colloquial, street language to engage with his audience. While the content is primarily focused on gaming, there are some comments considered sexist, such as "your mother smoked when she was pregnant" used as an insult to call a man "dumb". Although this language isn't pervasive throughout the video, it does appear.
- an insta picture posted on June 4, 2024, in which he shared the sad news of his dog passing away. The post, which has received 530,361 likes and over 12,600 comments. He expresses love and farewell to the dog, marking its passing in a personal and emotional way. The post does not contain any controversial content, with the comments primarily showing support from his followers, offering condolences and sharing their own experiences of losing pets.
- a series of pictures from his summer holidays posted on insta on August 10, 2024. has garnered 502,372 likes and over 4,100 comments. The content is light-hearted and there is no sexist or controversial material present. The comments are generally positive, with followers engaging with the holiday theme.
- a Twitch video titled "ILLOJUAN BUTANERO" posted in July 2024, where he plays a video game centered around butane distribution in the city. The video has received significant attention with 771,156 views. While the content itself primarily focuses on gaming, it includes random commentary and reactions to various content, including other users' videos. During the stream, IlloJuan uses expressions that can be considered disrespectful.
- a video titled "TOCADÓN DE HUEVOS ASTRONÓMICOS 🍳 HOY EMPIEZA LO BUENO (se van a caer los servers en 20 minutos) 🌩️ GROUNDED ft. Andrés y Guille #1" ("ASTRONOMICAL EGG SMASHING 🍳 TODAY THE GOOD STUFF BEGINS (the servers are going to crash in 20 minutes) 🌩️ GROUNDED ft. Andrés and Guille #1") where he plays the game Grounded with two friends, Andrés and Guille. The video, with 719,837 views, features casual banter and humor, where IlloJuan uses slang expressions. While the video is mainly focused on gaming and humor, IlloJuan uses some slang and makes jokes with his friends. Some of these jokes, depending on context, might be considered sexist or inappropriate.



## Spain

**RickyEdit** is a Spanish male YouTuber with 3.05 million subscribers and a popular Twitch streamer. Known for his engaging and humorous content, he primarily creates videos around gaming, reactions, and challenges.

- on August 15, 2024, posted a video titled "*el vídeo que dalas no quiere que veas. (parte 1)*". In this video, he discusses the hate speech and threats he received from another popular male YouTuber, exposing the cyber violence and harassment he faced. With 49,000 views and 2,966 likes, the video focuses on his critique of the other content creator and sheds light on the online abuse he has been subjected to. The video is framed as a personal exposé, emphasizing the negative impact of cyberbullying and hate speech in the YouTube community.
- on August 21, 2024, he uploaded a video titled "*javioliveira me reta a un debate en directo. (parte 1)*" ("*javioliveira challenges me to a live debate. (part 1)*"), where he recaps a live debate with another YouTuber. The video includes content that touches on stereotypes, hate speech, and potentially sexist remarks. While RickyEdit criticizes some unethical practices, particularly those involving young women, the debate also highlights toxic behaviors and controversial issues within the YouTube community. Despite the focus on critiquing these practices, some comments and exchanges in the video may be interpreted as reinforcing harmful stereotypes or disrespectful language. The video has received 36,000 views and 2,530 likes.
- on January 26, 2025, he created an insta post related to receiving a prize, including pictures and a video of his acceptance speech. In the speech, he humorously addresses current issues, specifically making references to gender equality and joking about how to avoid sexist behavior and discrimination. While his tone is lighthearted, some may find his comments controversial due to the direct references to women and gender-related topics. The post has received 94,655 views, 561 likes, and 915 comments.
- on March 8, 2024, he posted a YT video commenting on controversial tweets made by women, as part of a series called "Locas de Twitter" ("Crazy Women on Twitter"). In this video, he critiques tweets he finds controversial, focusing specifically on those posted by women. RickyEdit addresses topics such as rejecting pedophilia, challenging negative stereotypes about women, and pushing against harmful social attitudes. However, his content is problematic as it frames feminist issues and content in a biased way, stemming from a misunderstanding of feminism's core purpose. The video garnered 402,584 views and 777 comments, with mixed reactions, especially regarding his approach to feminism and gender-related topics.



## Spain

- on March 15, 2024, he posted a YT video titled "Hablemos del 8M... (Let's talk about 8M...)" where he critiques the Women's International Day demonstration. He argues that the celebration is no longer focused on working women, as it once was, but has instead evolved into a platform advocating for women's rights that he believes overlap with men's rights and privilege. He suggests that this shift in focus is a departure from "real feminism," which, according to him, no longer exists. He further tries to justify his viewpoint by citing examples such as the pay gap between women's and men's football teams. He presents this disparity as something understandable from a marketing or productivity perspective. The video received 1,051,574 views and 3,737 comments, with mixed reactions. Many viewers likely disagreed with his characterization of feminism and gender equality issues.

On March 8, 2024, RickyEdit was the only content creator to post on this date, but the content he shared certainly does not align with an endorsement of women's rights or gender equality. His approach to feminist issues like social attitudes, gender norms, violence are highly biased and reflects a misunderstanding of feminism's core purpose.

## Bulgaria

**Iva Ivanova (@ivkabeibe)** is a Bulgarian female influencer with 193k followers on Instagram. She is known for sharing content related to fashion, beauty, and lifestyle, offering her followers a glimpse into her personal style and daily life.

- on August 5, 2024, she posted "A recap of the week in photos" which garnered 7,364 likes and 37 comments. While there were some supportive comments from fans, a significant portion of the comments were hateful and insulting. These comments included general insults as well as criticisms of her appearance. One particular comment praised her nose job with the remark "good job Turkey," which implied that her cosmetic surgery was done in Turkey, a common stereotype associated with medical tourism.
- on August 6, 2024 she, shared a video advertisement promoting a casino in Bulgaria. The post received 4,577 likes and 81 comments. However, the comments were predominantly negative and hateful, with many users criticizing the ethical implications of endorsing a casino.
- on July 5, 2024 a YT video titled "Podcast with @KriskoOfficial: When I become mayor of Gabrovo, the working week will be Saturday and Sunday only" where she interviews the popular Bulgarian rapper Krisko. During the podcast, they discussed various topics including Krisko's career, his hometown, and how fame would have looked if he were born in Los Angeles.



## Bulgaria

- The conversation also veered into more personal topics, such as Krisko's views on relationships, his disapproval of OnlyFans, and his opinions on the dynamics between men and women. Specifically, Krisko expressed his belief that it was unfair for uneducated women to earn large amounts of money compared to educated women who work hard. The podcast briefly touched upon gender expectations, noting that many men today enjoy being led by women.
- on July 12, 2024, she uploaded a podcast featuring a guest, a vlogger and businessman focused on personal development. During the interview, they discussed various topics, including the guest's life before becoming a YouTuber and the type of personality needed for success on social media, with an emphasis on extroversion over introversion. They also touched on cultural and mentality differences between Bulgaria and England, where the guest had previously lived. A notable part of the conversation was about monogamous relationships. The guest argued that there are no monogamous animals, suggesting a viewpoint that could challenge traditional ideas about human relationships.
- on July 12, 2024, she posted a TikTok video where she is dressed in a wedding dress, playfully asking her "fiancé" why he cheated on her. The video appears to be a skit, and towards the end, she humorously reveals that she cheated on him too. The majority of comments on the video express amusement, with viewers enjoying the playful content.
- on July 29, 2024, Iva Ivanova posted a TikTok video featuring herself cooking with a local singer, who is also participating in a cooking show. During the video, they challenge viewers to like the video, with the promise that if it receives 20k likes, the two will sing together. The comments under the video are generally positive, with no hate or discriminatory speech observed.

**Vladislav Radoslavov**, known by his TikTok handle [@tochno.s.vladi](#), is a Bulgarian influencer with a growing presence on the platform. He is known for his engaging and creative content, which often includes humor, trends, and relatable everyday moments.

- on August 1, 2024, he posted a video on TikTok showcasing an act of kindness. In the video, an elderly lady is seen selling flowers on the street, and Vladislav helps her financially. While the lady appears uncomfortable with the help, she is visibly touched by his kindness. The video received widespread positive attention, with 45.9k views, 392 comments, and 2,609 likes. The comments under the video are overwhelmingly supportive, with viewers praising him for his generosity.



## Bulgaria

- on August 5, 2024, he posted a video where he meets a homeless woman on the street. They talk about her situation, and he gives her some money. The video has garnered significant attention, reaching 32.3k views, 401 comments, and 1,806 likes. The majority of the comments are supportive, praising the influencer for his kindness and willingness to help those in need.
- on August 4, 2024, he shared a YouTube video titled "What's important is for us to appreciate each other🥰," which is a shorter version of the TikTok video featuring the elderly lady selling flowers. In this video, the influencer helps the woman financially, and she feels touched by his kindness. The video has received 1.9k views and 18 comments, with positive reactions from viewers.
- on August 1, 2024, he shared a YouTube Shorts video titled "That's why we should help each other 🥰." In this video, the influencer speaks with a woman who shares that her husband is sick. He offers her money and reassures her that he will continue to help her. Vladislav also calls on his viewers to support the initiative by donating. The video has garnered 1.7k views and 25 comments. The majority of the comments are positive, supporting Vladislav's charitable actions.
- on August 5, 2024, he posted a video on Instagram titled "On a bench." In the video, he helps a homeless woman, similar to the TikTok post mentioned earlier. They discuss the possibility of her finding a room in a retirement home, acknowledging that it's not an easy process. The video received 5,048 views and 58 comments, with no negative remarks. The comments are supportive, focusing on Vladislav's kindness and efforts to help the homeless woman.
- on August 14, 2024, Vladislav Radoslavov shared a video on Instagram titled "This comes from the heart." In the video, he has a conversation with a homeless woman. The woman reveals that she has an aunt in another city but cannot afford to go there. Although initially reluctant to accept his financial support, the influencer convinces her by emphasizing the importance of people helping one another. The video received 5,138 views and 42 comments. As with his other posts, the comments are overwhelmingly positive, expressing appreciation for his kindness and willingness to help those in need.

It was particularly concerning to see **Andrew Tate** mentioned as an influencer followed by Bulgarian teens. Tate, who has been under house arrest for crimes including trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors, is notorious for promoting toxic masculinity.

**TRIGGER WARNING: sexual violence!** *Tate brothers (Andrew and Tristan) used the loverboy method to lure their victims. Afterwards they were sexually exploited by members of the group, who forced them to film themselves during sexual acts. This content was later used by the two brothers to obtain significant amounts of money. The victims were humiliated, raped, beaten and were under the complete control of the two brothers. Andrew and Tristan Tate forced them to tattoo "Owned by Tate" on their bodies, a total demonstration of control and coercion.*

## Bulgaria

- on August 1, 2024, he posted a controversial tweet on X (formerly Twitter), stating "Typical man from Cardiff" alongside a picture of a man in a lifeboat wearing a lifejacket, holding a knife in one hand and English pounds in the other. This post has been widely criticized for being racist and discriminatory. It perpetuates negative stereotypes about refugees entering Europe by boat, depicting them as violent and as "stealing money" from locals. Additionally, the phrase "typical man from Cardiff" suggests that immigrants or refugees are the predominant demographic in Cardiff, which is misleading and harmful.
- on August 5, 2024, he posted on X (formerly Twitter) expressing his concern about receiving racist insults for being brown from white people in the UK, stating, "This is the first time in my life I'm getting serious racist insults for being brown from white people in the UK. Not a good look." The post received significant attention with 38k views, 6.2k comments, and 4.4k likes.

None of the Bulgarian content creators or Andrew Tate included in the analysis provided any commentary on March 8th, 2024.

## Romania

**Andrei Selaru**, known online as **Selly**, is a popular Romanian YouTuber and influencer with over 2.5 million subscribers on YouTube and more than 1.5 million followers on Instagram. He is best known for his engaging vlogs, challenges, and lifestyle content.

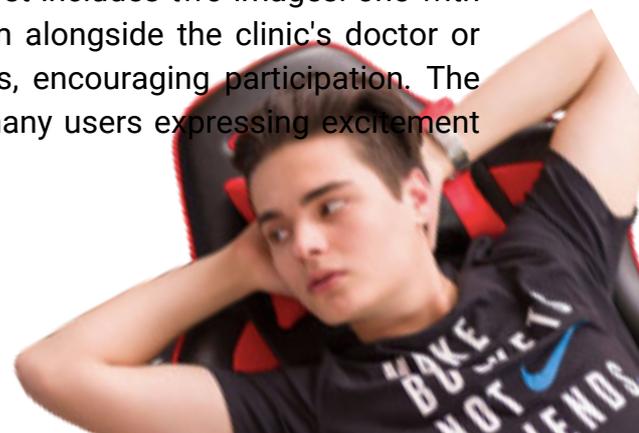
**Important note:** this year, Selly was involved in two significant incidents related to gender and violence, both mishandled to protect influencers' images. The first occurred during the filming of Buzz House, when Iorga was harassed and sexually assaulted by the manager of the cabin where the team stayed. Despite knowing about the assault, the team took no action. Selly should have taken a firm stance, ended the collaboration with the assailant, and encouraged Iorga to report the incident. As the manager, Selly is responsible for the team's safety and should undergo training on preventing gender-based violence. Additionally, his long-time collaborator and the screenwriter of the movie, Radu Alexandru (Piticigratis), has a problematic blog inciting violence against women.

The second incident took place at the Beach, Please! festival, where rapper French Montana invited Andrew Tate on stage. Tate, under criminal investigation for rape and human trafficking, was celebrated by Montana, who called him "his brother." The crowd cheered, normalizing violence against women. Associating with such figures sends a harmful message and discourages victims from seeking help. This was not the first time the festival had ties to abusers – several artists in the 2024 lineup, like 6ix9ine, Rich the Kid and Don Toliver, face similar accusations.

## Romania

Now, returning to the analysis of his content:

- a YT video uploaded on August 22, 2024, having guests the hip-hop band La Familia, members SISU and PUYA, takes a polygraph test and answers various questions. The video, which has reached 485,000 views, showcases the two rappers' conservative views on gender roles, relationships, and family values. These views were especially evident during their responses to certain questions. For example, when asked about preferring sons over daughters, Puya expressed a preference for daughters, claiming that life is simpler with them because they are more well-behaved. Additionally, SISU spoke about having multiple partners and mentioned preferring women for their "different energy" compared to men. The rappers also joked about sharing Puya's wife. While the tone of the video is intended to be humorous, the views expressed can be seen as promoting traditional and potentially harmful gender stereotypes. Their music and public statements often reinforce such conservative views, which can be seen as promoting hate speech and discrimination.
- in a YT video called "CEL MAI AFON CONCURENT CASTIGA | NICIO SPERANTA: Ep. 1" ("The most tone-deaf contestant wins / No hope: episode 1") uploaded on August 7, 2024, presents a talent show with a twist. The show, titled "No hope/Nicio Speranță," features male contestants with poor singing abilities competing for a chance to collaborate with two music producers. The format emphasizes humor, but the content becomes problematic due to the misogynistic behavior that is showcased. The contestants, all men from his community, submit videos of themselves singing badly, and some include extremely misogynistic lyrics. For example, one contestant includes lines like "I f\*\*ked your mom" and "She knows how to s\*\*k." Despite the inappropriateness of the lyrics, the judges—including Selly—laugh and do not address the misogyny, even giving the contestant a "green light" to continue. The selected contestants then proceed to create a song with more misogynistic lyrics, such as "I like pretty puss\*es, not those with infections, I don't like the dirty ones, when I took her she had washed up." This song continues to reinforce harmful stereotypes about women and their bodies. While the content of the show is intended to be humorous, the lack of any meaningful critique or pushback on the misogynistic language and attitudes perpetuates harmful views.
- an Instagram post on August 28, 2024, where he promotes a giveaway in partnership with House of Beauty Clinic. The giveaway offers a €10,000 prize for dental services, which is intended to be a promotional offer. The post includes two images: one with Selly holding a large voucher and another with him alongside the clinic's doctor or owner. The description outlines the giveaway rules, encouraging participation. The comments on this post are mostly positive, with many users expressing excitement about the opportunity to win the prize.

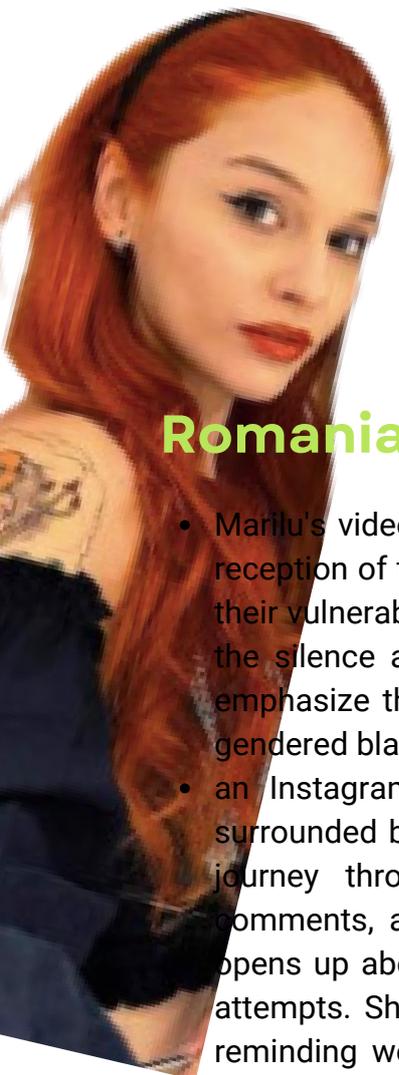


## Romania

- an insta post on August 21, 2024, where he shares a vacation couple photos with his girlfriend. The post includes two photos: one where he is holding her head and another where he is kissing her. There is no caption accompanying the images, allowing the photos to speak for themselves. In the comment section, people jokingly discuss their dynamic, with some commenters perceiving Selly as appearing aggressive while his girlfriend seems submissive. These comments highlight a playful, but also potentially controversial, interpretation of their relationship dynamic.
- a TikTok video posted on August 27, 2024, uses clickbait to tease his audience by suggesting that he has bought a Mercedes. As he's known for purchasing expensive cars, this creates anticipation for a luxury vehicle reveal. However, the twist comes when it is revealed that the "Mercedes" is actually a van. The video showcases the features of the Mercedes van and how Selly plans to use it for future shows. The content reached 167.1K views, with 828 comments and 8,637 saves. The video, which was watched by over 1.4 million people, plays with the audience's expectations, and the humor in the twist likely helped generate a lot of engagement. The comments section likely features a mix of reactions, with many finding it funny or clever, while others might feel misled by the initial claim of a luxury car purchase.
- in an Instagram post on 8th of March, Selly promotes a gas company through an advertisement, presenting it as a spontaneous gesture to appreciate his girlfriend for her constant support. The post is a mix of personal content and commercial promotion, where he invites her on a getaway, framing the trip as a thank-you for her support. Despite the personal tone, the post doesn't mention International Women's Day, even though it was posted on March 8th, which might have added a layer of relevance to the gesture.

**Marilu Dobrescu** is a Romanian influencer and content creator, known for her presence on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. She primarily focuses on lifestyle, fashion, and beauty content, sharing insights into her personal style, daily life, and beauty routines. With a strong following of over 100k on Instagram and 200k on TikTok, she engages with her audience through relatable and aspirational content.

- in a heartfelt YT video posted on 3rd of August, Marilu shares her deeply personal experience with miscarriage, offering an honest and vulnerable account of the emotional and physical impact, as well as the therapy she sought to heal. She discusses her journey with IVF, which included seven attempts, and the profound sadness of a miscarriage following her only positive pregnancy test. By openly sharing these challenging topics, she aims to break the stigma around issues like IVF, miscarriage, and other personal struggles often considered taboo. Marilu's content provides valuable insight and support, particularly for women going through similar experiences, fostering a community where sensitive topics can be openly discussed without shame.



## Romania

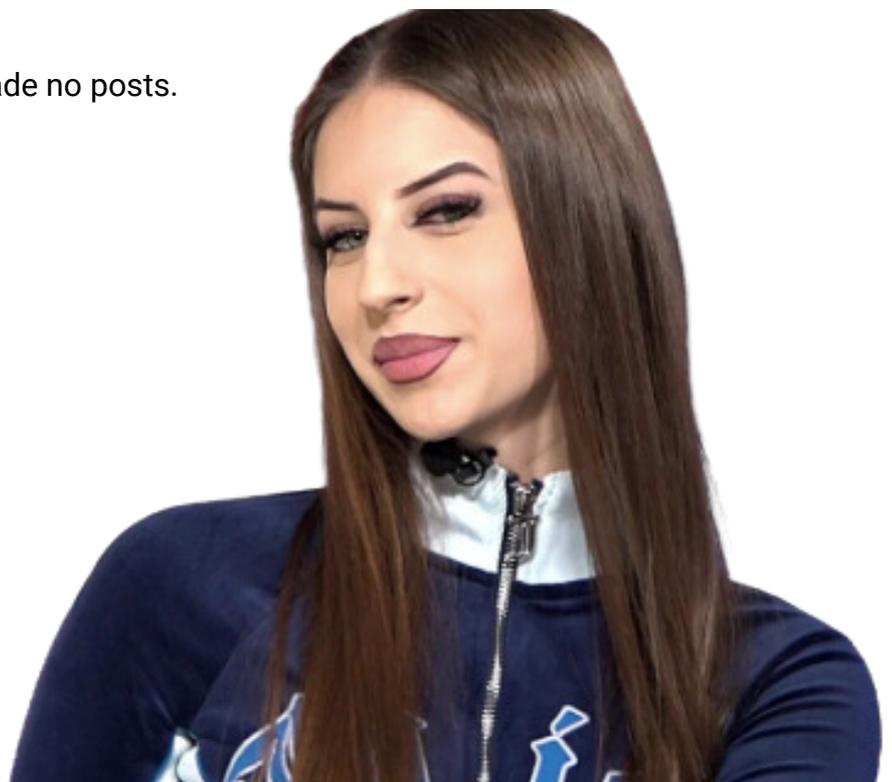
- Marilu's video reached almost 150K views and over 170 comments. The audience's reception of the video was mostly supportive; many viewers commend the couple for their vulnerability and courage in sharing such a deeply personal experience, breaking the silence around a topic that disproportionately affects women. The comments emphasize the need for greater societal empathy and understanding, criticizing the gendered blame often placed on women regarding fertility issues.
- an Instagram post on the same date, which features a striking image of her surrounded by syringes, serves as a powerful visual representation of her emotional journey through IVF treatments and miscarriage, receiving 69.1K likes, 208 comments, and 281 shares. She announces her latest YouTube video, where she opens up about the emotional and physical challenges she faced after years of IVF attempts. She encourages others to break the silence around these painful issues, reminding women that their feelings are valid, and seeking support is crucial. Her vulnerability fosters a sense of solidarity and validation.
- on March 8th, International Women's Day, she posted an Instagram photo to celebrate femininity, resilience, and strength. The choice of words, "God, how I love women and how I love being one of them," reflects pride and solidarity among women, evoking positive emotions. The significant number of likes, comments, and shares (79K, 89, and 141, respectively) indicates a high level of engagement. The comments predominantly supported the theme, celebrating "girl power" and appreciating the post's positive tone. While the post implicitly supports gender equality by celebrating women, it does not directly address inequalities or activism.
- on 13th of August she posted an Instagram picture taken in Bali, offering insights into her personal healing journey and transformation. With 771 likes, 5 comments, and 1 share, the post has moderate engagement. The lower comment and share count might indicate that the content, while appreciated visually, did not spark significant dialogue or discussion. Indirectly, the image and her openness about her experiences challenge the idea that women must hide their struggles or conform to societal expectations of perfection.
- on 19th of August a TikTok video provides a lighthearted take on societal expectations while highlighting a positive personal experience. By contrasting the societal expectation of needing a boyfriend for safety with her experience in Bali, where a kind stranger (the Uber driver) ensured her safety, Marilu subtly critiques gender norms. Her message promotes kindness and independence over stereotypes. The video has garnered significant engagement, with 57.9K likes, 69 comments, and 1,571 shares.

## Romania

**lorga** is a popular TikTok creator with 843.8K followers, known for her satirical videos on life and society. She also has 91.9K followers on Instagram. Her account has been deleted several times due to controversial content, so her current most popular post may not reflect her usual style. lorga has also been involved in multiple scandals due to problematic remarks. One example is during BuzzHouse (Selly's show previously mentioned), where she physically attacked another contestant, later claiming she should have been more violent. It's crucial to note that physical aggression is never acceptable.

- lorga also faced harassment and sexual assault by the cabin manager during the show. Despite his unwanted advances and following her to a hotel, the team did nothing to intervene. A strong message of zero tolerance for such behavior should have been enforced, but instead, the incident led to victim-blaming comments.
- on 22nd of August, an Instagram post featuring a Louis Vuitton bag reflects her journey from humble beginnings to success. The image, a Louis Vuitton bag, is a visual representation of wealth and personal achievement. While the single post doesn't explicitly showcase her personality, her broader context reveals her as a figure who mixes sass and humor to engage her audience. Her rise to prominence from TikTok streams in her family's garage adds a layer of relatability and inspiration to her story. The post has 22.9K likes and 38 comments, which is a strong engagement rate for a new account.
- on August 11, she uploaded a TikTok video joking about drunk driving that raises concerns due to the sensitive nature of the topic, even though the intent appears to be satirical. The video has substantial engagement, with 232K views, 224 comments, and 11K saves. The high save count indicates the video resonated with many viewers, either because they found it funny or provocative. While satire can highlight societal issues effectively, it risks being seen as trivializing the dangers associated with such behavior.

Regarding the March 8th lorga made no posts.



# Key takeaways

- **Across various influencers, there is a tendency to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, often through beauty standards, body image and roles related to motherhood.** For example, the content created by influencers like Chiara Ferragni, Federica Scagnetti and Gaia Bianchi often reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and promotes unrealistic beauty standards. IlloJuan's content doesn't directly promote harmful gender stereotypes, but his use of sexist language in gaming reflects broader sexism within the gaming community. RickyEdit, however, directly reinforces gender stereotypes by dismissing feminism and misrepresenting its goals, especially in his critique of Women's International Day. **While some influencers may not actively promote harmful stereotypes, many still implicitly reinforce traditional gender roles.**
- Cyber violence against women and girls, including body shaming, slut-shaming, and online abuse, is a significant issue faced by many influencers, particularly women. **The comment sections of influencer posts often reveal the prevalence of harmful commentary, threats, sexist messages.** For example, Iva Ivanova faces hateful comments about her appearance, particularly following her cosmetic surgery, with the comment "good job Turkey" serving as an example of the body-shaming.
- **Most influencers miss the chance to leverage their platforms to promote gender equality and challenge harmful gender norms.** For instance, Chiara Ferragni doesn't question beauty standards or engage in meaningful discussions about gender issues. Her platform fails to educate her audience on these topics. Both Selly and Iorga also overlook opportunities to address gender inequality directly. Selly's handling of the BuzzHouse incident, for example, contributes to the normalization of gender-based violence and downplays its severity. On the other hand, Marilu seems to be one of the few more actively engaged with women's issues, although she could benefit from more structured information. It would be helpful if she collaborated with NGOs to further direct her audience toward relevant resources.
- **People often feel free to make sexist and harmful comments about women in the public eye because they think there will be no consequences.** When the account is smaller or more personal, the interaction feels more real and people are less likely to behave this way. This might explain why reports of hateful comments are lower when students are asked, as the harmful comments are more normalized and go unchallenged in public spaces.

Overall, influencers could challenge gender stereotypes, reduce cyber violence, and promote equality, but many avoid these crucial conversations, missing opportunities for education and empowerment.

# Findings & insights

## Part 3: Good practices collection

In this section of the research, our goal was to systematically gather and analyze good practices in online content that either challenge gender stereotypes or address cyberviolence. Through this process, we sought to identify and highlight positive examples of content that promote inclusive, diverse, and empowering messages, while also raising awareness about the dangers of reinforcing harmful stereotypes and behaviors. We collected 15 specific examples of influencers who have leveraged their online presence to challenge gender norms and/or combat cyberviolence.

**From Italy, we identified the following good examples:**

**Tasnim Ali (TikTok - 766,127 followers):** Tasnim uses short video clips to address social issues, combat stereotypes, and promote cultural tolerance. She engages her audience with a mix of humor and serious discussions, sharing personal experiences as a young Muslim woman in Italy. For instance, one of her popular TikTok videos features her humorously debunking common misconceptions about Muslim women, showing herself in everyday situations like shopping or studying, with a caption like “Just your typical Muslim woman doing regular things”. Tasnim also collaborates with NGOs like “WeWorld” to raise awareness about online hate and promote social inclusion, encouraging her followers to join the conversation and report discrimination.

**Francesco Cicconetti (Instagram - 227,000 followers):** Francesco uses a blend of serious and playful tones in his videos and posts to raise awareness about gender equality and social inclusion. One example of his approach is a humorous post where he challenges the stereotypical idea of masculinity by jokingly mimicking an exaggerated “alpha male” persona. In the video, Francesco mocks the concept of toxic masculinity while also showing how men can be emotionally open and inclusive. He often incorporates popular movie references, such as using clips from “The Wolf of Wall Street” to comment on gender stereotypes in the workplace, making serious issues more relatable and accessible to a wide audience. Francesco has collaborated with organizations like “UN Women” and “No Hate Speech Movement,” using interactive content like Q&A sessions to foster dialogue about social inclusion and gender equality, making his message resonate with both younger and older audiences.





**Giulia Biasi (Instagram - 56K followers):** Giulia focuses on raising awareness of gender equality and violence against women through serious and humorous posts. Her content includes personal reflections, informative articles, and news stories about these issues. A notable example is when she shared an Instagram post about a recent news story concerning a high-profile case of domestic violence. Giulia paired it with an informative article about the impact of domestic violence on women and added her personal reflections on how the media handles such cases. She engages primarily with teens and young adults, especially women, aiming to provoke moral reflection and discussions around these critical topics.

**Carlotta Bertotti (Instagram - 352K followers; TikTok - 333K followers):** Carlotta promotes body positivity and self-acceptance, sharing her personal journey of embracing her unique birthmark. Through both serious and inspiring content, she encourages her audience, mainly young adults, to challenge beauty standards and embrace diversity. Carlotta's posts, which include videos, photos, and personal stories, address gender stereotypes and promote mental wellness, often collaborating with brands and social causes.



**Eterobasiche (Instagram - 282K followers):** Eterobasiche is a comedic influencer duo that uses satire to critique gender stereotypes, sexism, and societal expectations. One popular example is their skits where they impersonate "basic straight males" in exaggerated, stereotypical scenarios, such as at a soccer match or playing video games. Their video series mocks how these stereotypes play out in daily life, challenging gender roles while incorporating satire to make complex issues accessible. Through exaggerated parody and activism, they raise awareness about issues like catcalling, patriarchy, and victim-blaming, collaborating with feminist movements and social campaigns.



From Spain, we identified the following good examples:

**Júlia Salander (YouTube - 300K followers):** She combines feminist discourse with data-driven analysis to address gender inequality and societal stereotypes. In her video podcast *El sentido de la birra*, she critiques gendered norms, such as the use of gendered toys and beauty standards that pressure women to conform, using evidence-based arguments. For instance, she discusses how cosmetic enhancements like hyaluronic lip fillers are marketed to women, questioning whether this pressure truly represents freedom. Her content primarily engages a general audience, especially those interested in social justice and feminist activism. She promotes her book, *Tu argumentario feminista en datos*, and while she doesn't collaborate with NGOs, her approach highlights the importance of using reliable data in feminist discourse.

**Patri Psicóloga (YouTube - 144K followers):** Patri focuses on mental health awareness, body positivity, and combating body-shaming, particularly in response to societal and online criticism of public figures. In her video *Basta ya de criticar cuerpos*, she discusses the harmful effects of body-shaming after Spanish Olympic athlete Paula Leitón was criticized for her body despite winning gold. Patri urges her audience to challenge harmful stereotypes and embrace self-respect, especially in the context of online bullying. Her content resonates with individuals affected by body image issues, especially young adults and teens. She uses real-time events, like the Olympic Games, to create engaging and relevant discussions on cyberbullying and societal pressures, offering practical advice for dealing with these challenges.

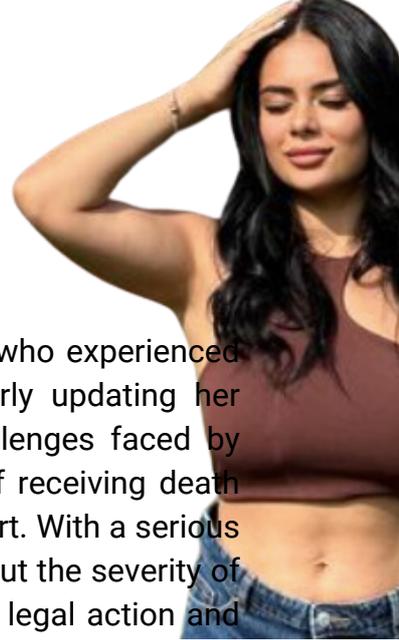
**Leticia Rodríguez (Instagram - 14.3K followers):** Leticia uses her Instagram platform to address body shaming and the dangers of romanticizing unhealthy behaviors promoted online. In one of her posts, she critiques the viral "food challenges" on social media, which encourage extreme dieting or unhealthy eating habits for likes and attention. Through a serious yet relatable tone, she engages her primarily young female audience in conversations about body autonomy and critical thinking when consuming content online. Leticia shares her personal experiences with cyberbullying, highlighting how hateful comments about her appearance have impacted her. Her message emphasizes balanced body positivity and the importance of self-worth, without promoting unrealistic beauty standards. For example, she stresses that it's important to love your body regardless of how it looks on social media, where unrealistic beauty standards often prevail.

In Bulgaria, we identified the following good examples:

**Yasmina Kirilova (YouTube - 13.1K followers)** is a lifestyle influencer who experienced severe and disturbing online threats. She began posting and regularly updating her followers about her experience with cyberviolence and the legal challenges faced by victims. In a series of 7 videos, she shares her personal experience of receiving death threats online, updating her audience on the case as it progresses in court. With a serious and empathetic tone, Yasmina engages her audience in discussions about the severity of cyberviolence and its underreporting. She openly addresses the lack of legal action and the victim-blaming mentality surrounding online abuse. For instance, in one video, Yasmina shares evidence of the harassment, including real-time text messages and calls from the abuser, while calling out societal perceptions that influencers "ask for it" by being on social media. Yasmina emphasizes that victims should not be silenced and encourages her followers to speak out against online abuse. She aims to inspire others to take action and shows the emotional toll cyberviolence can take, challenging viewers to think critically about online harassment and its impact.

**Ivo Dimchev (Instagram - 64.7K followers):** leverages his Instagram to promote his music and challenge traditional gender norms. In an organic post featuring a reel of his latest song, Ivo uses playful and unconventional elements, such as wearing a long blue wig and bold makeup, to defy typical gender stereotypes. The tone of his content is light-hearted, yet his message is clear: he encourages freedom of expression through unique fashion choices and art. Through his posts, Ivo engages his predominantly young, open-minded audience, inviting them to break away from societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. For example, in one reel, he blends provocative music with playful visuals, promoting a message of self-expression and individuality. His content appeals to those who appreciate alternative music and progressive fashion, challenging the norms of both the music and fashion industries.

**Double Trouble (YouTube - 25.6K followers):** they are a duo who use their podcast to discuss social issues including burnout, AI, personal development, crypto, folk psychology etc. They also covered domestic violence and homosexuality as well as feminism and regularly use a conversational and casual tone to engage their primarily young adult audience. While the duo doesn't provide specific statistics, their engaging commentary and relatable style open the conversation for their followers to reflect on these inequalities. Their content provides an accessible entry point for discussions on women's rights, challenging stereotypes with humor and thought-provoking examples.



From Romania, we identified the following good examples:

**Alina Greavu / ALUZIVA (Instagram - 132K followers):** she is dedicated to advocating for gender equality, providing a platform that empowers women to discuss gender-based issues openly. By tackling important social and gender issues, Aluziva fosters conversations that challenge traditional stereotypes and promote awareness about women's rights. One notable example is a short video where Alina humorously critiques the common belief that "if a boy hits you, it means he likes you." She uses this light-hearted approach to lead into a serious discussion on gender-based violence and emotional expression. The primary goals are to challenge the harmful belief that aggression equals affection, promote healthy emotional expression, and encourage critical thinking about the messages around love and relationships. This content is part of Alina's personal initiative, "1 minute of therapy," where she shares personal reflections and discussions on various social issues.

**MARILU (Instagram - 511K followers & YouTube - 389K subscribers):** by sharing her own traumatic experience in a conversational and intimate style, she creates a safe space for her audience, especially young women, to engage with various sensitive topics considered to be taboo. One example would be content that is presented in 2 formats: a long-form YouTube video (48 minutes) sharing a personal story about an assault experience, and an Instagram photo post summarizing key points of the story and raising awareness about safety at tourist destinations. Her tone is serious, impactful, and urgent, urging viewers to raise awareness and believe victims. The content has 497 comments, with many reflecting victim-blaming attitudes. Despite this, Marilu has responded by posting a follow-up video to address and educate on why victim-blaming is harmful.

**Madalina Vin (TikTok - 37K followers):** she creatively blends entertainment with education by using a makeup tutorial format to discuss important topics like feminism and gender equality. Her relaxed and relatable style makes serious discussions on issues such as misinformation and misogynistic stereotypes feel approachable, particularly for young women. A good example is a short tik-tok video where she critiques a podcast by Jorge, a Romanian singer known for his controversial views. Madalina aims to debunk myths surrounding women's sexuality, particularly challenging harmful stereotypes that perpetuate misinformation about female bodies. She references a fact-check from Reuters to debunk a popular myth about women retaining DNA from all previous partners. The combination of a makeup tutorial with a critical discussion of misinformation creates a unique and engaging approach. This casual format allows Madalina to address serious topics in a relatable and accessible way. The supportive comments reflect that the content resonates with those seeking to challenge outdated gender stereotypes.



# Key takeaways

**First thing first: education doesn't have to be a missed opportunity; many influencers are using their platforms in incredibly creative ways to raise awareness about important issues.** Through innovative approaches, they're making complex topics more engaging and accessible to a wide audience.

- **Humor and satire can effectively challenge harmful stereotypes.** For instance, influencers like Francesco Cicconetti humorously mock toxic masculinity while promoting emotional openness for men. By engaging in these conversations, influencers can encourage their followers to reflect on and question the norms that have been ingrained in society, fostering a more inclusive and progressive mindset among their audiences. By blending humor with serious discussions, influencers can make challenging topics more relatable and accessible. Also, influencers like Eterobasiche use exaggerated parodies and satirical skits to critique stereotypes such as the “basic straight male” persona, poking fun at the absurdity of gendered expectations. Humor makes the message more palatable while encouraging viewers to think critically about the issues at hand. Satirical content can be both thought-provoking and entertaining, bridging the gap between awareness and action.
- **Casual, relatable formats make serious topics more accessible.** This approach helps break down barriers to discussion and makes complex topics feel less intimidating, especially for younger audiences. For example, Madalina Vin uses makeup tutorials as a format to address pressing issues like feminism and gender stereotypes, making the discussion feel more informal and approachable. This method allows followers to absorb important messages without feeling overwhelmed, creating a safe space for open dialogue about sensitive subjects. The relatability of these formats helps normalize conversations around often-taboo topics, ensuring they reach a broader audience.
- **Personal storytelling creates empathy and raises awareness.** By being vulnerable and transparent, influencers can create emotional connections with their audience, encouraging others to reflect on their own experiences or even take action. For instance, Marilu's YouTube video about a personal assault experience (and many others) and her Instagram posts about safety not only raise awareness but also invite followers to reflect on victim-blaming attitudes. Through such narratives, influencers humanize the issues, encouraging empathy and understanding. Personal storytelling also empowers others to share their own stories, building a community where people can support each other and engage in meaningful discussions on sensitive topics.

# Key takeaways

- **Influencers can collaborate with NGOs to amplify their messages.** These partnerships allow influencers to be part of national or global initiatives and campaigns, strengthening their credibility while providing valuable resources to better inform their followers. For example, influencers like Francesco Cicconetti collaborate with organizations such as UN Women and the "No Hate Speech Movement" to advocate for gender equality and social justice. These collaborations can involve joint content creation, awareness-raising campaigns, or fundraising initiatives that extend the influencers' impact beyond their immediate audience. Basically, working with NGOs enables influencers to contribute to larger social movements, enhancing their ability to create meaningful change and draw attention to important issues like gender discrimination, online hate, and other forms of injustice. Nonetheless, it serves as a way to spotlight the efforts of small NGOs with limited resources, helping them reach wider audiences. This approach can create new connections, potentially attracting followers and/or donors, while also acknowledging their expertise on specific issues.





# Discussion

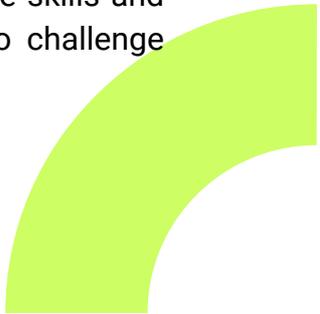
As we conclude this research, we aim to highlight a critical point for our readers to consider: **in today's digital age, social media has evolved into an indispensable tool for activism. It offers everyone, but especially young people, a powerful, accessible platform to raise awareness, mobilize communities, and advance social justice initiatives in ways that were previously unimaginable.**

Social media has significantly democratized activism by breaking down traditional barriers, such as geographical constraints, and enabling grassroots organizers to connect with and inspire larger, more diverse audiences. Where information distribution was once monopolized by career journalists and social elites, these platforms have leveled the playing field. Now, anyone with an internet connection has the potential to educate themselves and others, amplifying voices that might otherwise go unheard. Moreover, social media offers a dynamic space where activists can share real-time updates, form global networks, and collaborate on solutions to pressing issues. Its visual and interactive nature fosters engagement, making it easier to spread messages, create awareness campaigns, and rally support for causes.

While challenges such as misinformation and digital divides persist, the transformative potential of social media in activism cannot be overstated. It empowers individuals to become informed advocates and active participants in the fight for equality and justice, fostering a new generation of changemakers who are reshaping societal norms and policies.

# Conclusion

This research highlights the significant impact of social media on how young people understand gender roles and gender-based violence. While digital platforms offer opportunities to challenge stereotypes and promote equality, they also expose many users to harmful content, including misogyny, toxic masculinity, and online harassment. Influencers play a key role in shaping these narratives—some reinforce outdated gender norms, while others use their platforms to promote more inclusive perspectives. However, many young people remain passive consumers rather than active creators or advocates for change. To build a more equal digital space, students need the skills and confidence to engage critically with online content and use their voices to challenge discrimination.





One of the biggest challenges is **the lack of media literacy, which makes it harder for young people to recognize and question gender bias in digital spaces.** However, there are also positive examples of influencers using humor, storytelling, and engaging formats to highlight issues like gender discrimination and online violence. These approaches show the potential of social media as a space for learning, discussion, and activism. Partnerships between influencers, educators, and NGOs can help amplify these messages and encourage more critical conversations in schools and online.

**To create lasting change, education must play a central role.** Schools should integrate gender equality and media literacy into their curricula to help students navigate the digital world safely and thoughtfully. Teachers can support this by encouraging discussions about online content, helping students recognize harmful stereotypes, and promoting respect and inclusivity in digital spaces. Additionally, young people should be aware of how to report online harassment and have access to safe spaces where they can discuss these issues openly.

Ultimately, **social media has the potential to be a powerful tool for gender equality—but only if young people, educators and influencers work together to make digital spaces more inclusive, respectful, and empowering for everyone.**

Last but not least, we encourage policymakers to build on exploratory studies like this one to develop policies that address the intersection of gender, age, (dis)ability, residence with the digital culture. At the same time, we remain committed to sharing our expertise and are open to ongoing dialogue to contribute to these efforts.



# What's next

## 2025-2026

### March 2025

Transnational meeting in Seville, Spain, including the research launch event and dissemination plans.

### April 2025

Workshops for students (14-18) in schools across Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, and Romania, addressing gender stereotypes and CVAWG, based on this research.

### May 2025

Pilot testing a teacher training in Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, and Romania on gender stereotypes and CVAWG, based on this research.

### June - December 2025

Refining the teacher training program to ensure its effectiveness, incorporating feedback from pilot sessions, and supporting teachers through the final stages of the course to successfully complete.

### October 2025

Transnational meeting in Catania to review completed activities and set strategic directions for outreach efforts.

### January - August 2026

Organising outreach seminars in all partner countries to engage educators, students, and stakeholders in discussions on gender stereotypes and CVAWG, share research findings, and promote best practices.

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# Appendices

- Youth perspectives on online influence (survey)
- Response database (an excel file compiling survey responses for further analysis)
- Content analysis dataset (a centralised excel file documenting online content from selected influencers)
- Good practices report (a more comprehensive document outlining best practices identified in the study, including links)

*All appendices are available upon request. Interested parties may contact the research coordinator at [adela.alexandru@centrulfilia.ro](mailto:adela.alexandru@centrulfilia.ro) for access.*



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