THORN

Your users may not be who you think they are. And they may not use your platform the way you expect.

New Thorn research asked 1,000 young people how they actually use the internet. Here's what tech leaders need to know.

FACT #1

Age gates aren't enough on their own.

47%

of minors said they accessed an app, website, or platform **before meeting its minimum age requirement.**

FACT #2

Online sexual interactions are complex and rarely isolated.

27%

of minors reported an online sexual interaction.

FACT #3

AI is becoming part of the youth safety journey.

15%

of minors said they sought advice from an AI chatbot or companion after an online sexual interaction.

Important questions for platform leaders and safety teams

- Are our safety systems designed for minors despite our stated age requirements?
- Can young users get help before harm escalates?
- How does our AI chatbot or companion respond when a young user indirectly discloses sexual pressure or harm?
- Are product, policy, AI, moderation, and support teams examining these experiences as connected pathways?

Three practical steps for platform safety

Step 1: Design for youth presence.
Build safeguards and protection, even in age-restricted spaces.

Step 2: Introduce well-timed friction.
Use prompts and interruptions around risky behaviors, including requesting, uploading, or publicly sharing intimate imagery.

Step 3: Pair enforcement with support.
Give users exit strategies, removal options, and connections to human help.

Explore the full findings in **Thorn's Youth Perspective Report**.
To learn more about what these findings could mean for your platform's safety strategy, contact **Safer by Thorn**.

© 2026 Thorn