

“Everybody Got Demons, I Use Drugs To Quiet Mine”

*One Week on Snapchat
as a 7th Grader*

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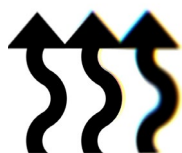


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47 Recommendations

“EVERYONE GOT DEMONS,
I USE DRUGS TO QUIET MINE”

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

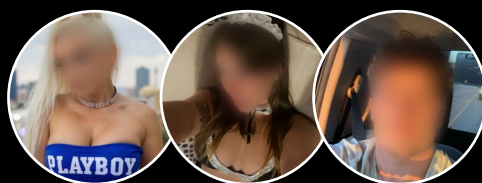


CONTENT WARNING: This report contains references to potentially harmful online content and interactions involving minors, including sexualized material and predatory behavior. Please take care while reading.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Snapchat has emerged as one of the dominant social media platforms globally, with a particularly strong foothold among American adolescents. Despite its widespread popularity, the app has drawn mounting scrutiny from parents, healthcare professionals, and policymakers over exposing minors to harmful content and predatory interactions. In response to these concerns, ParentsTogether Action and Heat Initiative conducted firsthand research to evaluate the platform's risks from a teenage user's perspective. Researchers used Snapchat for several hours on accounts registered to 13-year-olds to see what sort of content and connections Snapchat recommended. Here's what we found:

Unsafe Connections to Strangers



Snapchat recommended 419 strangers as friends to two accounts registered to 13-year-old users of the Android app, most of whom were likely adults **with an average estimated age of 24.**

Snapchat allowed the avatar teen accounts to **share their live, precise location to all friends without parental approval on both iPhone and Android.**

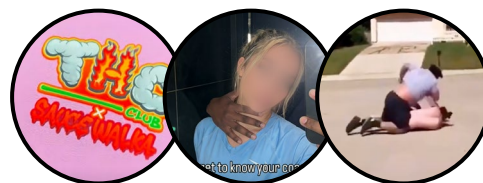
Snapchat's initial friend recommendations to new teen accounts included **at least six sexual content creators and three people advertising drugs for sale.**

The comments sections of **dozens of videos of young children prominently featured the sexualization of children,** including comments which appeared to reference the **production and sharing of child sexual abuse material.**

According to Snapchat, younger teens (ages 13-15) do not have access to Public Profiles. However, our **13-year-old avatar account Sophie received two friend requests from strangers, both of whom appeared to be adult men.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unsafe Content Recommendations



739 unsafe videos

Snapchat's Android and iPhone apps recommended **739 unsafe videos** to two 13-year-old avatar accounts across 12 hours of viewing, **on average recommending an unsafe video every minute.**

Snapchat recommended an unsafe video every minute on average.

257 drug & alcohol videos

Snapchat recommended **257 drug and alcohol videos**, including instructions on how to manufacture drugs, and videos of young children using drugs.

244 sexual videos

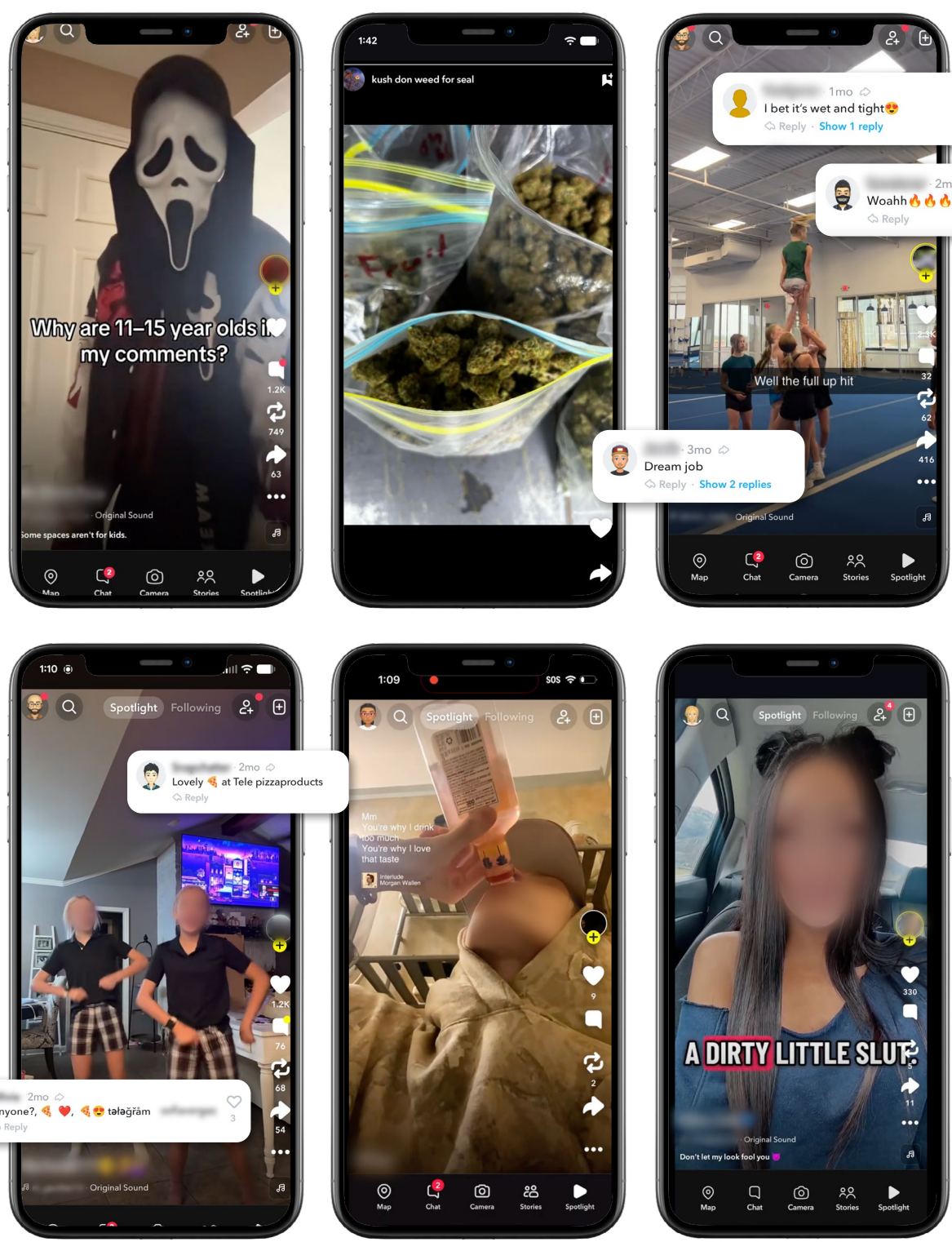
Snapchat recommend **244 sexual videos**, including 21 videos glamorizing age gaps or sexual relationships between children and adults and **32 videos glamorizing nonconsensual sex, incest, or sexual violence.**

Other unsafe recommendations include **95 videos promoting violence**, gang activity, or criminal behavior, **63 videos promoting extreme thinness** or disordered eating, and **52 videos glamorizing self-harm or suicide.**

The majority of unsafe content was recommended without conducting any searches or interacting with any content.

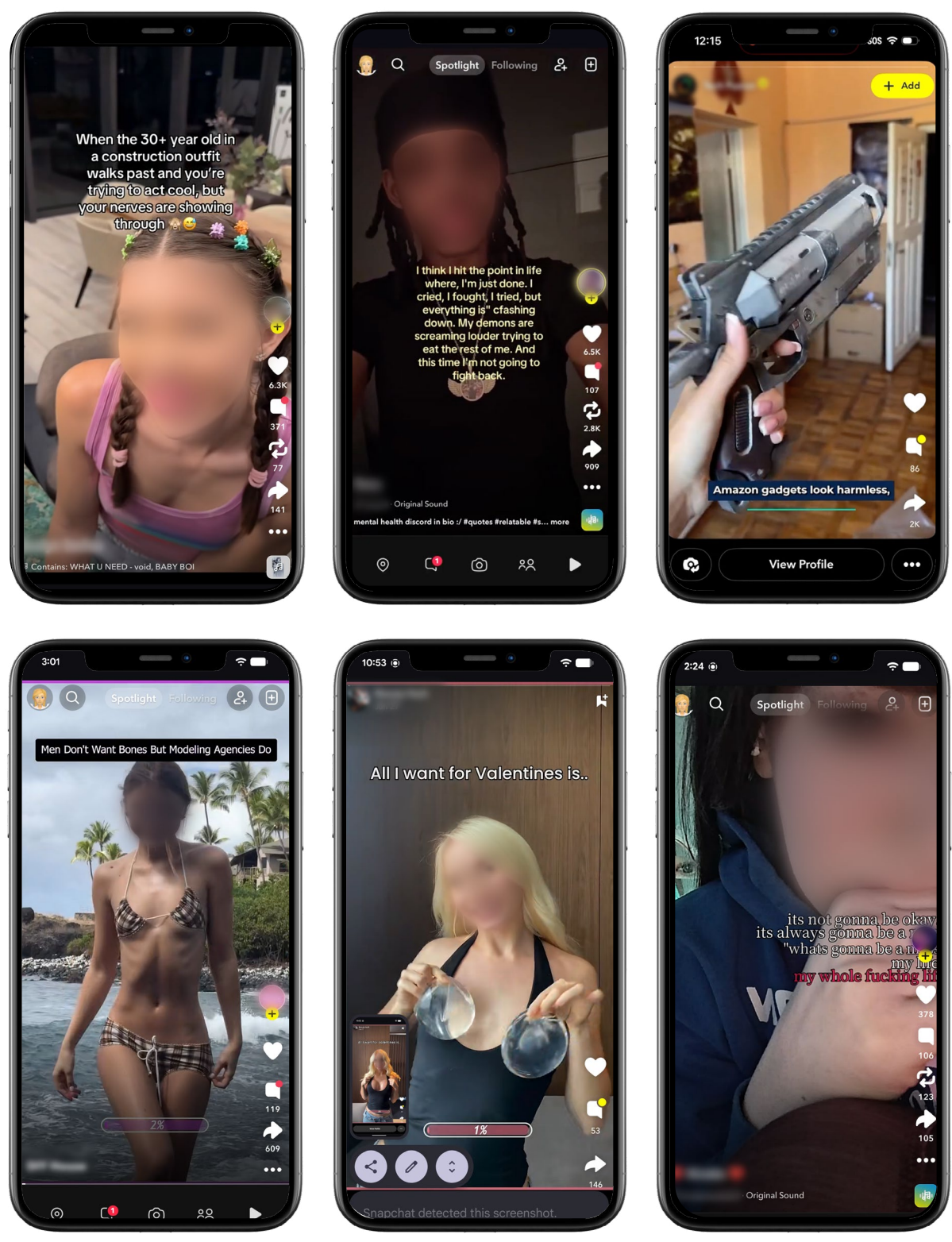
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings at-a-glance



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings at-a-glance



“EVERYONE GOT DEMONS,
I USE DRUGS TO QUIET MINE”

**BACKGROUND
& METHODOLOGY**



BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

Background

Snapchat was founded in 2011 by current CEO Evan Spiegel, along with Reggie Brown and Bobby Murphy. While Snapchat features some elements similar to other social media platforms, one of the defining features of the platform is disappearing messages, which vanish a few seconds after being viewed. These photo or video messages called “snaps,” can be edited to include filters and effects. In 2022, Snapchat launched their scrolling video feed called Spotlight, akin to TikTok or Instagram’s Reels.

Close to 1 billion monthly active users

Today, Snapchat is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, with close to 1 billion monthly active users. Snapchat is especially popular with young people, with 55% of American teens claiming they use the platform.

Over the past several years, Snapchat has been criticized by parents, health professionals, and civic leaders for exposing children to a variety of online harms. Snapchat has been sued by the attorney generals of several states, claiming they expose children to sexual content, drugs, predators, and addictive design. Parents have also sued the company for facilitating the fentanyl sales that cause their kids’ deaths. Earlier this year, Snapchat settled a lawsuit alleging they intentionally lured kids into compulsively using their platform.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Snapchat was the top platform where kids received unwanted sexual advances from predators in 2024. The Canadian Centre for Child Protection has also named it the primary social media app where sextortion occurs, and parents have said its the number one place their kids have shared child sexual abuse material.

Given the serious and widespread claims of dangerous design and harmful content recommendations on Snapchat, ParentsTogether Action and Heat Initiative wanted to better understand the experience of using Snapchat as a teen to help parents navigate keeping their kids safe on the app.

Methodology



A team of adult researchers created new Snapchat accounts registered to 13-year-old users on clean devices with no saved contacts. Each of these avatar accounts was given a persona informed by previously documented interactions between Snapchat and real children, profiles of real children, and consultation with parents and children’s online safety experts.

Sophie received friend recommendations on the Android phone, but **Kai** did not receive any on the iPhone, so researchers also created **Mateo**, an additional 13-year-old persona to confirm that friend requests were made on one type of device but not the other. **Mateo**, who also used an Android phone, received friend recommendations.

Both the **Sophie** avatar account and the **Kai** avatar account watched Snapchat content on Spotlight and Stories in three stages.

METHODOLOGY

STAGE 1

Both avatar accounts watched one hour of the videos Snapchat recommended on the Spotlight feed and one hour of the videos recommended via Stories without following, searching, or engaging with any of the content. Researchers documented any unsafe content recommendations.

Unsafe content was defined as containing any of the following:

- Sexual content
- Content glamorizing or promoting depression, self-harm, or suicide
- Content glamorizing, promoting, or selling drugs or alcohol
- Violent content, including violent fighting, gang or criminal activity, and weapons
- Content promoting disordered eating, body shame, or plastic surgery
- Dangerous challenges, pranks, and behavior
- Racism, extremism, and hate speech

STAGE 2

Both avatar accounts followed 50 creator accounts based on content recommended by Snapchat via Spotlight or Stories. The followed accounts represented a variety of creators and topics that might interest a child that age. The researchers then watched an additional hour of content on Spotlight and on Stories and documented unsafe content recommendations.

STAGE 3

Both avatar accounts searched for sensitive topics within Snapchat to identify whether that would change the type of content Snapchat recommended to them. The avatar accounts made the following sensitive topics searches:

- Sophie: sexual content, self-harm, suicide, and disordered eating
- Kai: violence, drugs, racism, and extremism

The researchers then watched an additional hour of content on Spotlight and Stories and documented unsafe content recommendations.

In total, each avatar account spent 6 hours on Snapchat, an estimate of average teen Snapchat use across one week, based on [Common Sense Media](#), [Pew Research](#), and [Snapchat's own estimates](#) of daily use. All the content referenced in this report was actively recommended by Snapchat's algorithm, and was not a direct result of search.

Researchers did not accept friend requests or communicate directly with individuals on Snapchat since the ease with which users can lie about their age means there was no way of ensuring they were communicating with adults and not minor children.

▶ *Throughout this report, we have blurred the faces and usernames of individuals Snapchat recommended to our avatar teen accounts to protect their privacy.*

“EVERYONE GOT DEMONS,
I USE DRUGS TO QUIET MINE”

**KEY
FINDINGS**



KEY FINDINGS

Unsafe Stranger Connections

ADULT STRANGERS RECOMMENDED AS FRIENDS

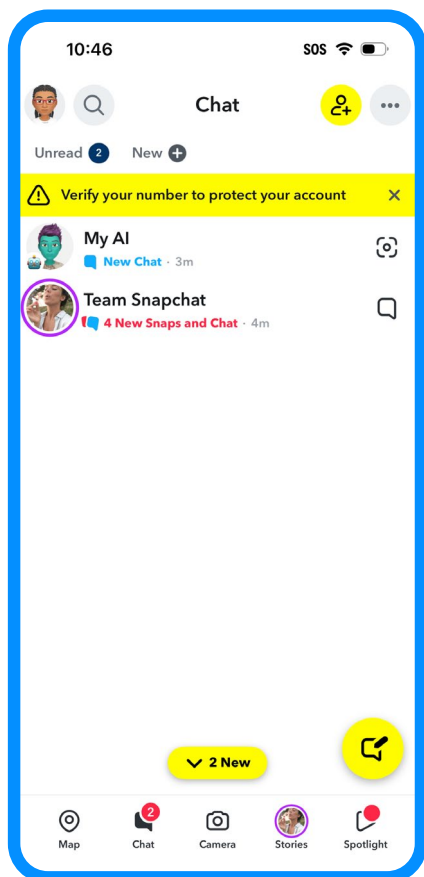
In 2022, Snapchat announced that “In order to be discoverable in Quick Add by someone else, users under 18 will need to have a certain number of friends in common with that person. Our research showed this setting appears to be accurate on Snapchat for iPhone. Avatar accounts created on iPhones with no contacts received no friend recommendations.

However, the avatar accounts created on Android phones with no contacts received more than 200 friend recommendations each from Snapchat. While the majority of teens use iPhones, an estimated 10-12% of American teens

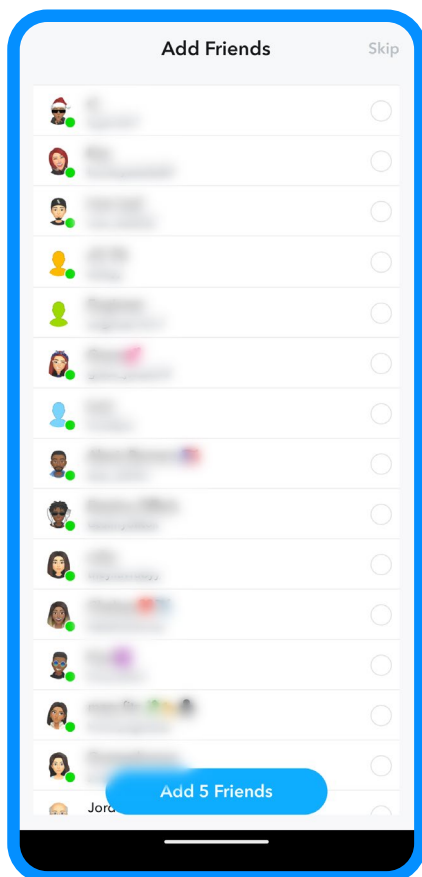
use Android devices. Given the lower price point of many Android devices, Snapchat’s decision to offer this basic safety feature only to iPhone users may mean teens from higher-income families have a safer experience on Snapchat than teens from lower income families.

In total, Snapchat recommended 419 strangers as initial friends for two avatar accounts registered to 13-year-old avatar accounts Sophie and Mateo. Of those recommendations, 93 (22%) had a publicly available photo which clearly showed their face.

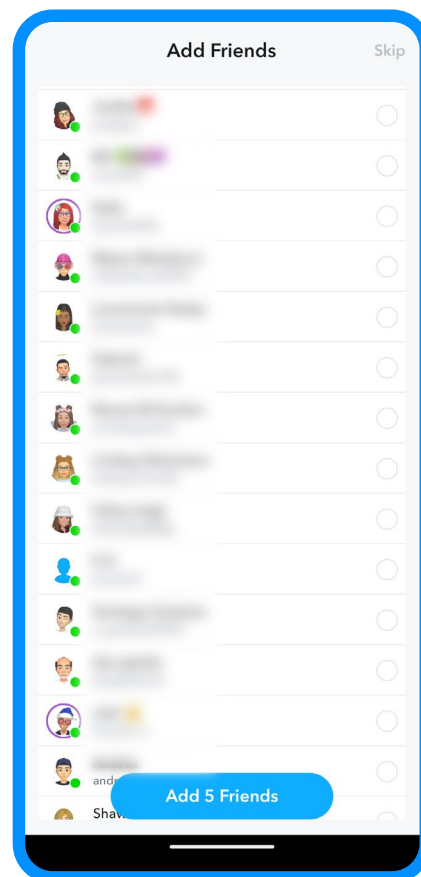
CHILD’S IPHONE



CHILD’S ANDROID PHONE



CHILD’S ANDROID PHONE



We analyzed those photos using age estimation software to determine if they were likely adults or likely children. The average estimated age of Snapchat's friend recommendations to the new 13-year-old accounts was 24, with a low estimate of 22 and a high estimate of 27. All of them were estimated to be likely adults.

It's unclear whether or not the bulk of the friend recommendations without a publicly available photo are adults or children, but at least 20% of Snapchat's initial friend recommendations were likely adults.

Three of the hundreds of people Snapchat recommended as friends to a 13-year-old. Age estimation software estimates they are all adults.

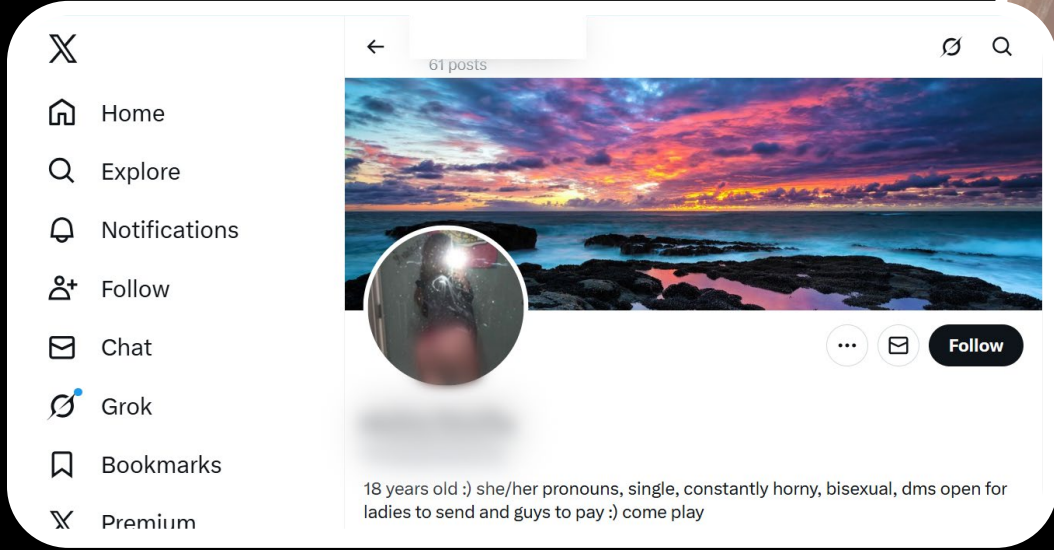
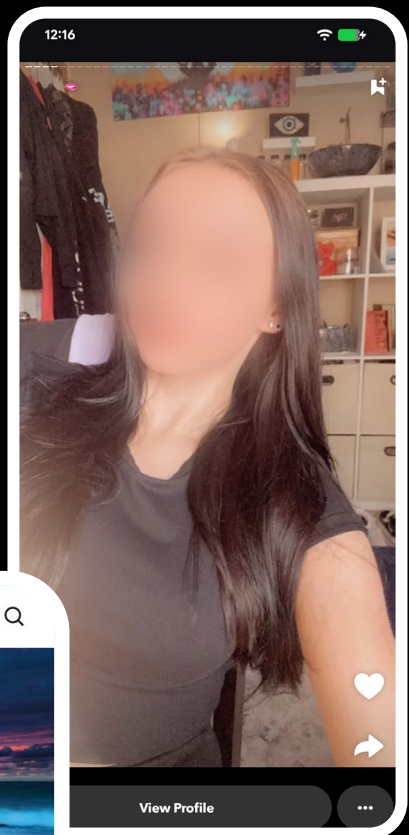


UNSAFE STRANGER CONNECTIONS

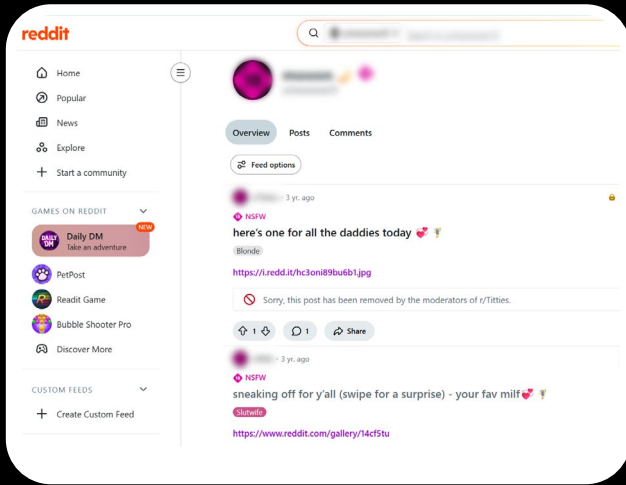
Friend Recommendations of Adult Sexual Content Creators

At least six of the friends Snapchat recommended were sexual content creators. These individuals, along with other creators in content Snapchat recommended, linked their Snapchat account to profiles with more explicit sexual content on other platforms. Some of these creators posted non-nude, sexually explicit content on Snapchat that describes or previews more explicit content on other platforms.

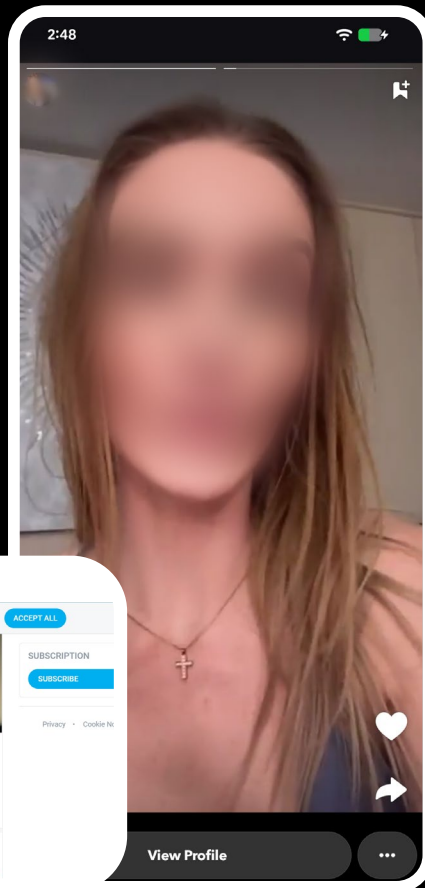
One of the first friends Snapchat recommended to a new 13-year-old account was a content creator who describes herself as “constantly horny” on an X account where she posts graphic masturbation videos.



Snapchat recommended this user as a friend for 13-year-old Sophie. Her Snapchat profile leads to her explicit Reddit page with headlines like “here’s one for the daddies” and tags like “slutwife.”

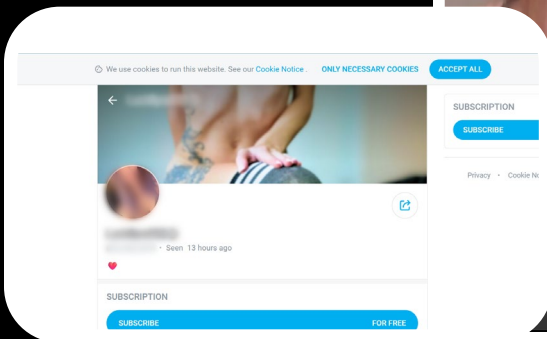


Snapchat recommended this user, who sells sexual content via X.com, OnlyFans, and fetish websites, as a friend for a 13-year-old.



In addition to sexual content creators, Snapchat also recommended adults who were using their Snapchat accounts to promote adult-oriented businesses, including shoes and costumes for exotic dancers, a burlesque club, and lingerie modeling.

Notably, researchers saw no evidence that any of the adult content creators Snapchat recommended to the teen accounts were seeking to promote their content to minors. On the contrary, a few of the videos Snapchat promoted to the avatar accounts included adult content creators complaining or expressing concern that their Snapchat content, which was clearly intended for adults, was reaching minors who were engaging with it.





▲ A masked content creator complains that young children are viewing his content and asks them to log off.

▶ A creator who posts motorcycle-themed sexually suggestive content expresses dismay that most of his followers are underage and asks adults to please start following instead.

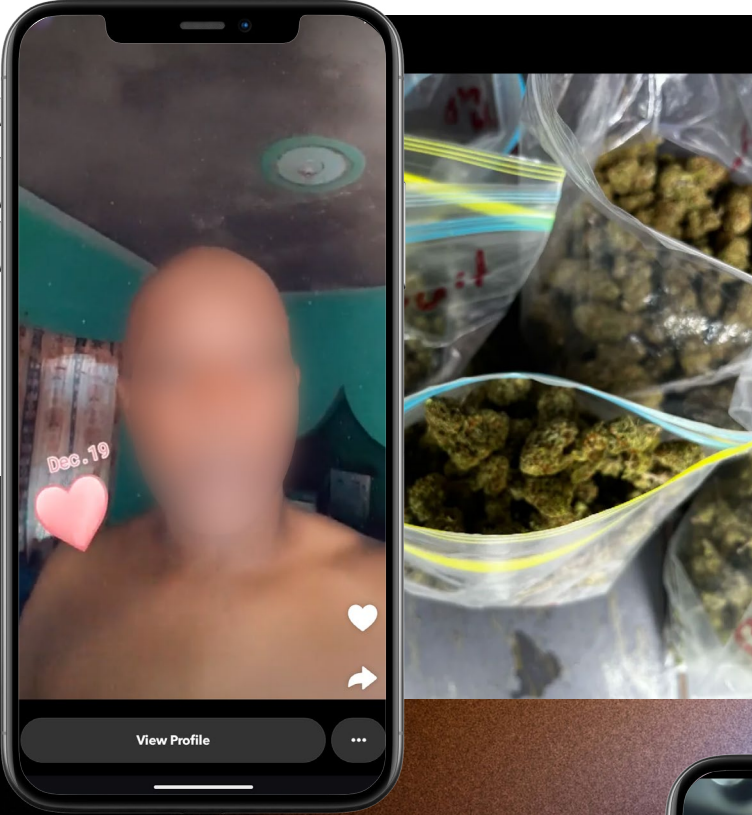


UNSAFE STRANGER CONNECTIONS

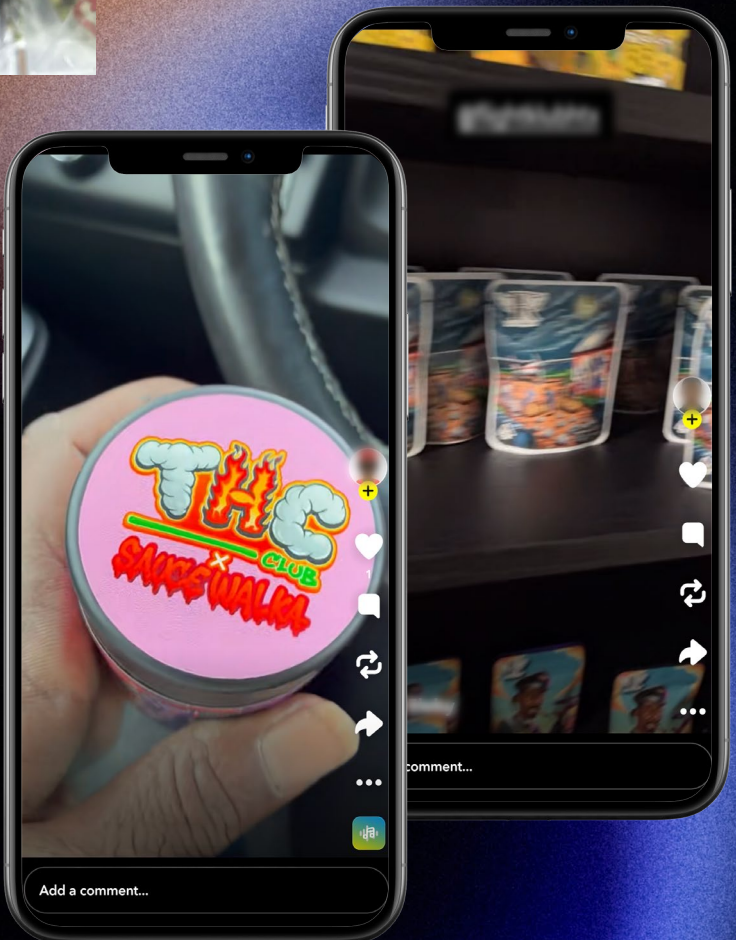
Friend Recommendations of Drug Sellers

Snapchat also recommended three likely adults whose profiles prominently feature drugs for sale as friends for the avatar teen accounts.

Snapchat recommended this user as a friend for 13-year-old Sophie. His profile prominently advertises marijuana for sale, with links available to purchase.



▶ Snapchat also recommended these two users as initial friends. Both are using their Snapchat profiles to advertise the sale of marijuana products.



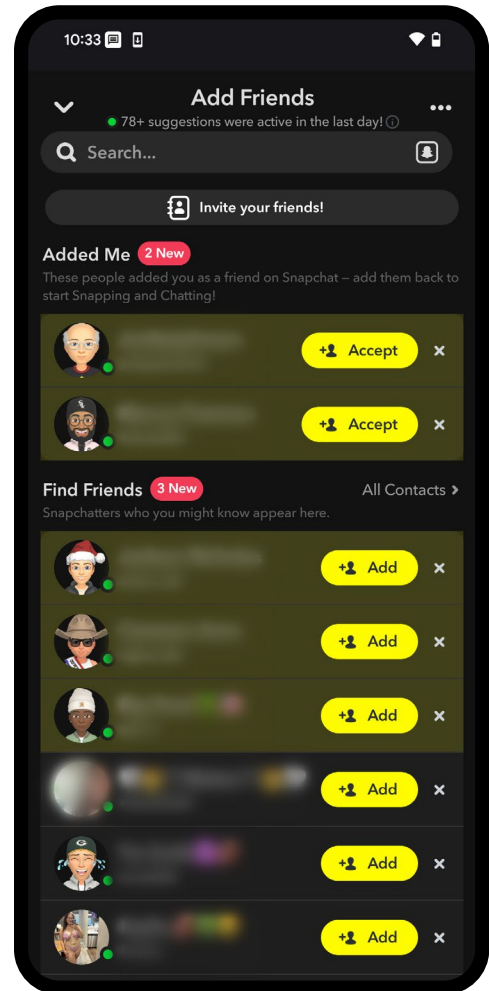
UNSAFE STRANGER CONNECTIONS

Friend Requests from Strangers

Snapchat's [website](#) claims “Younger teens (ages 13-15) do not have access to Public Profiles.” However 13-year-old Sophie, who had a female avatar, received two friend requests from strangers within the first 48 hours of joining Snapchat. The profiles both use male names and avatars.

13-year-old Mateo, who also used an Android phone but had a male avatar, did not receive any friend requests. 13-year-old Kai, the avatar account which used an iPhone, also received no friend requests.

The researchers were not able to determine how these individuals found Sophie's supposedly private profile so quickly or if private profiles were another example of a Snapchat safety feature that is only available for young iPhone users.



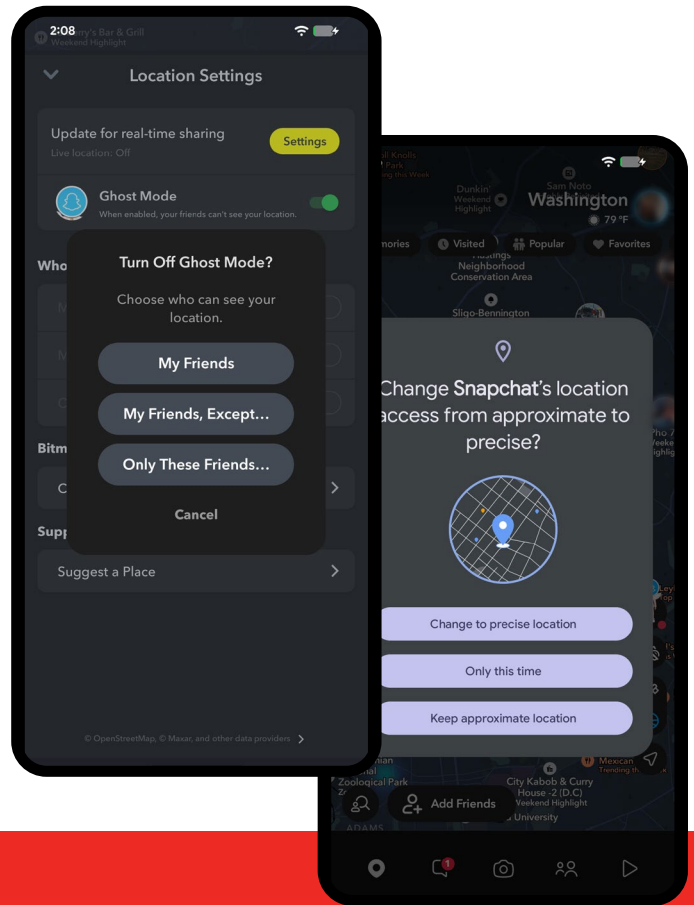
UNSAFE STRANGER CONNECTIONS

Sharing Live, Precise Location

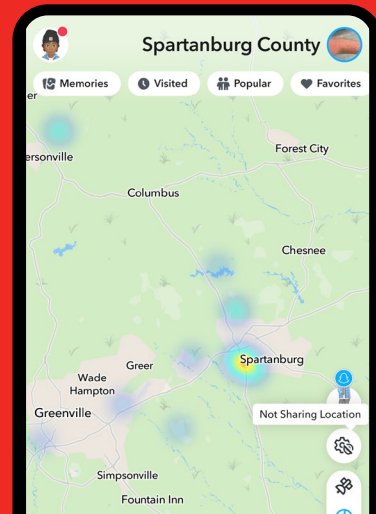
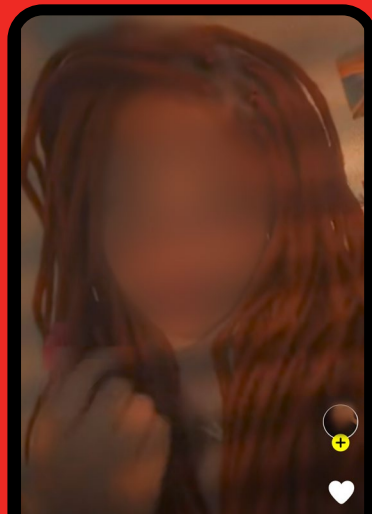
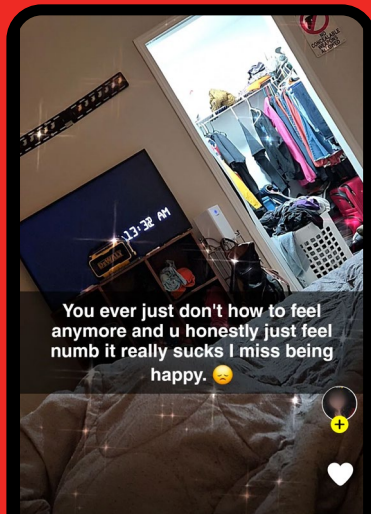
Both iPhone and Android avatar accounts were easily able to share their precise, live location with all their friends with no parent oversight or intervention. The default setting for the new teen accounts was “ghost mode”, which prevents people from seeing the user’s location. The avatar accounts were able to turn off ghost mode and also set the location to precise, instead of approximate, showing anyone on their friends list exactly where they are located.

The level of accuracy was so precise in some areas, zooming in revealed which house on a street the user was in. This feature is especially risky since it ties exact location to a recent Snap, which can reveal the interior of users’ homes, what they are wearing, and emotions or other vulnerabilities.

During a brief scan of the Snapmap, researchers were able to find photos of users in their homes and cars, linked to their precise location.



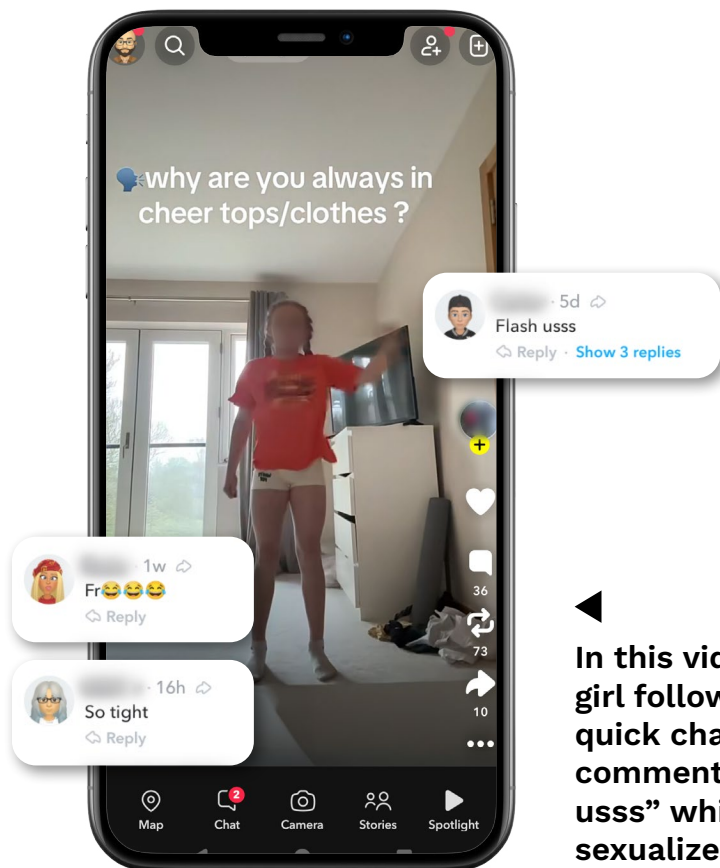
A user shares a Snap about a mental health struggle and another lays in bed making flirtatious facial expressions, both of which were available tied to precise locations via Snapmap. ▼



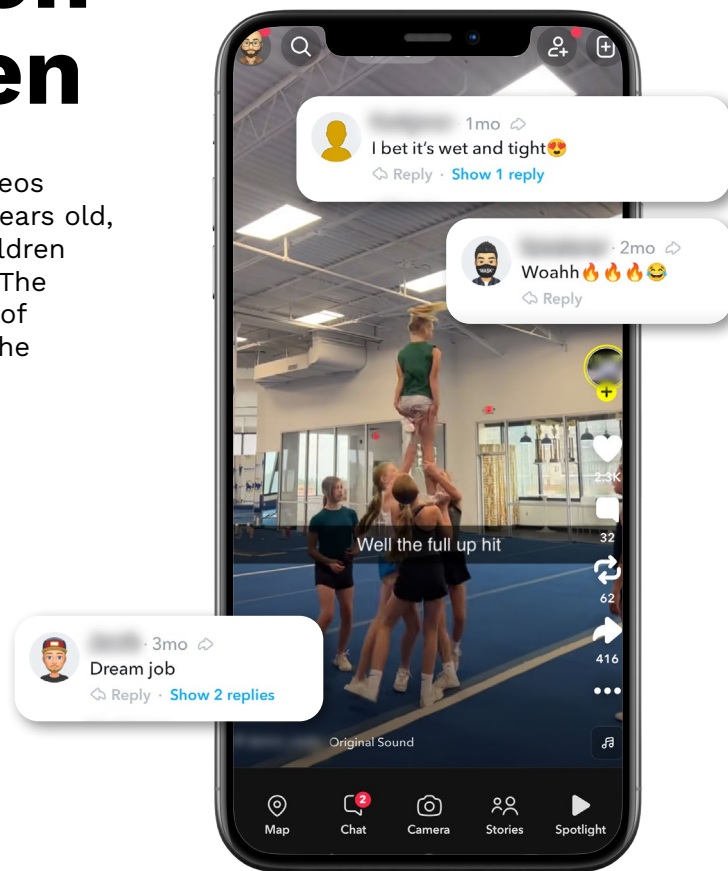
UNSAFE STRANGER CONNECTIONS

Sexual Harassment and Sexualization of Young Children

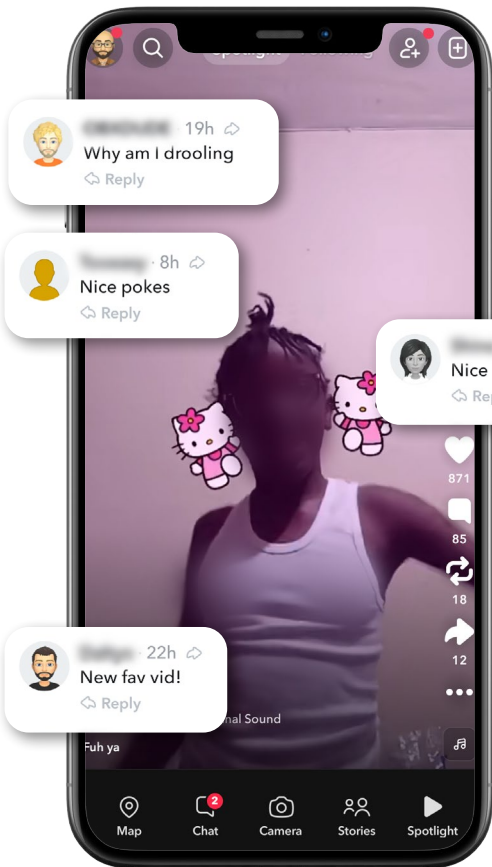
Both Sophie and Kai's accounts were recommended videos featuring young children who appeared to be under 13 years old, the minimum age for Snapchat. The videos featured children dancing, doing gymnastics, or singing to popular songs. The comments sections of several of these videos were full of comments sexually harassing or otherwise sexualizing the children in them.



◀ In this video, a little girl follows a popular quick change trend. One comment says “Flash usss” while others sexualize the video.



▲ This video of young girls engaged in cheerleading practice received dozens of sexualizing and harassing comments.

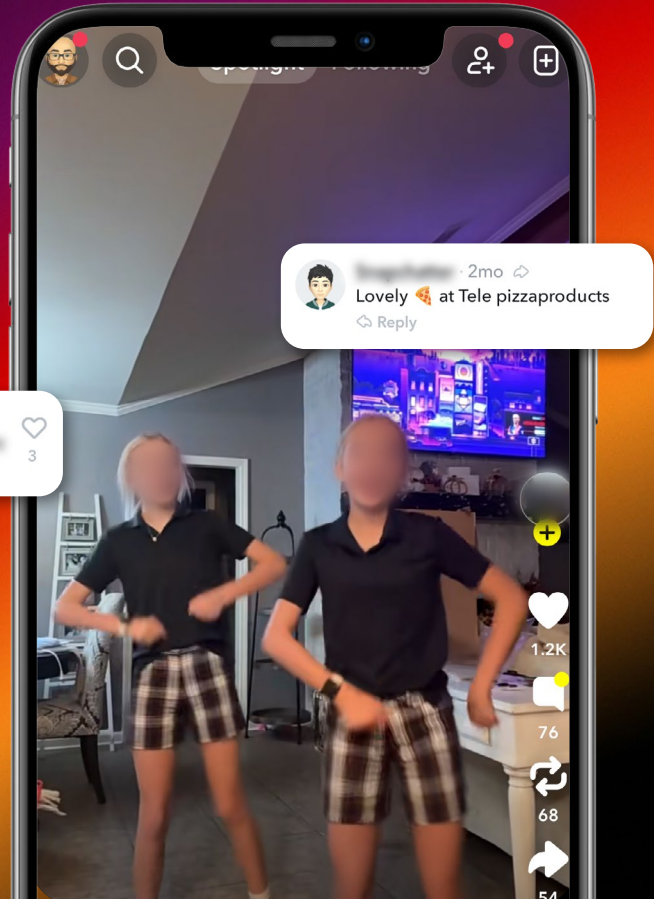
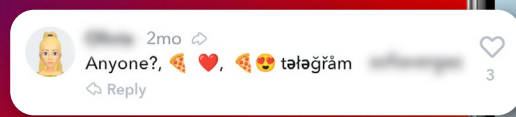


◀ A young girl uses a Hello Kitty filter while lip syncing to a popular song. In the comments, Snapchat users sexualize her body.

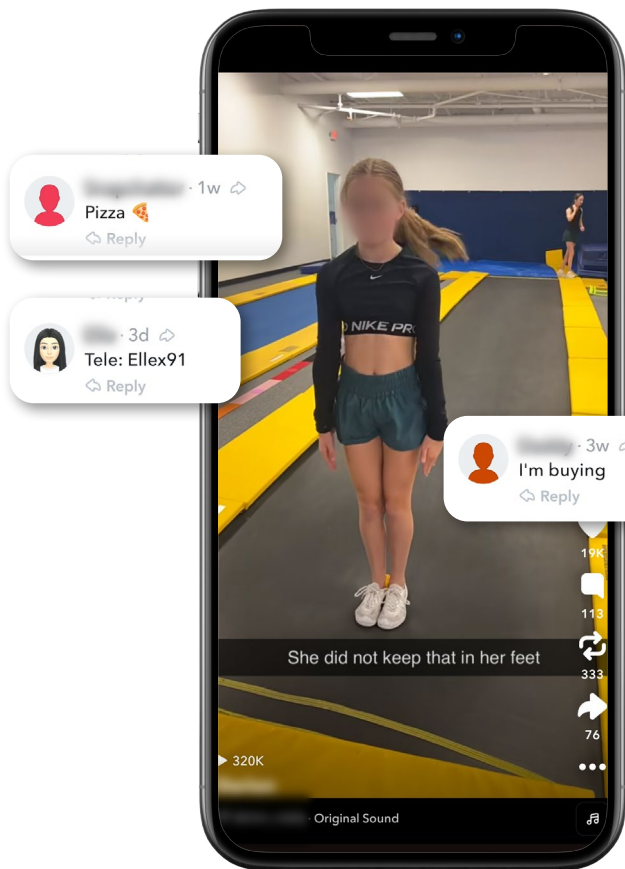


▶ A teenage girl tries on clothes in a fitting room, her mother off camera. Comments include “Omfg I bet you taste so good” and “She’s ready for sure.”

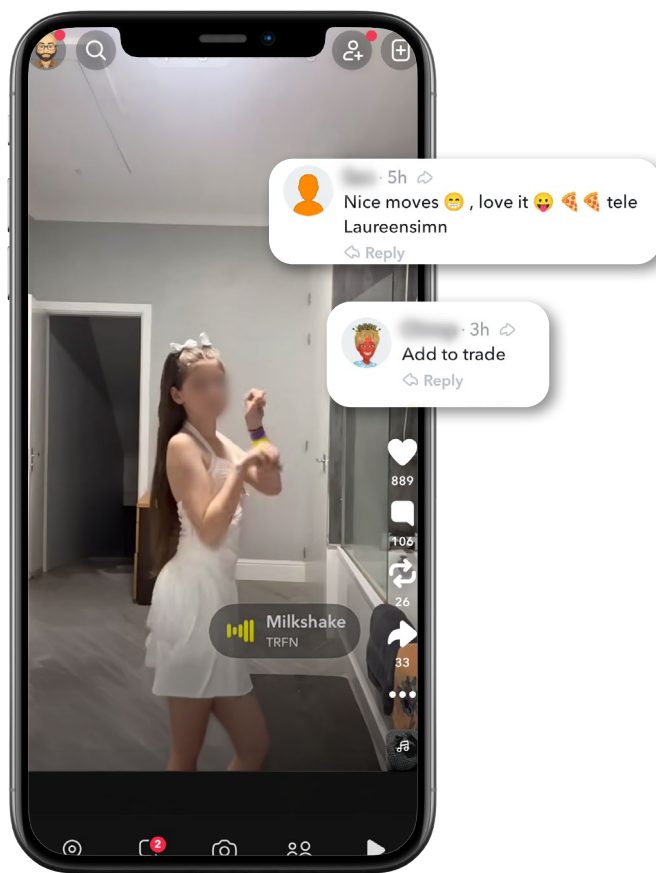
Several comments on videos of children also direct Snapchat users to Telegram handles, offering to trade photos and **advertising “pizza,” a known code for child sexual abuse images.**



▶ Two young girls dance in their school uniforms. Two different commenters use the pizza emoji to advertise Telegram handles, one of which is “pizzaproducts.”



A little girl does a tumbling routine while commenters say things like “I’m buying.” The same few Telegram handles were posted in more than two dozen videos of young girls.



A young girl dances to the song “Milkshake” while commenters advertise a “pizza” Telegram handle and offer to “trade.”

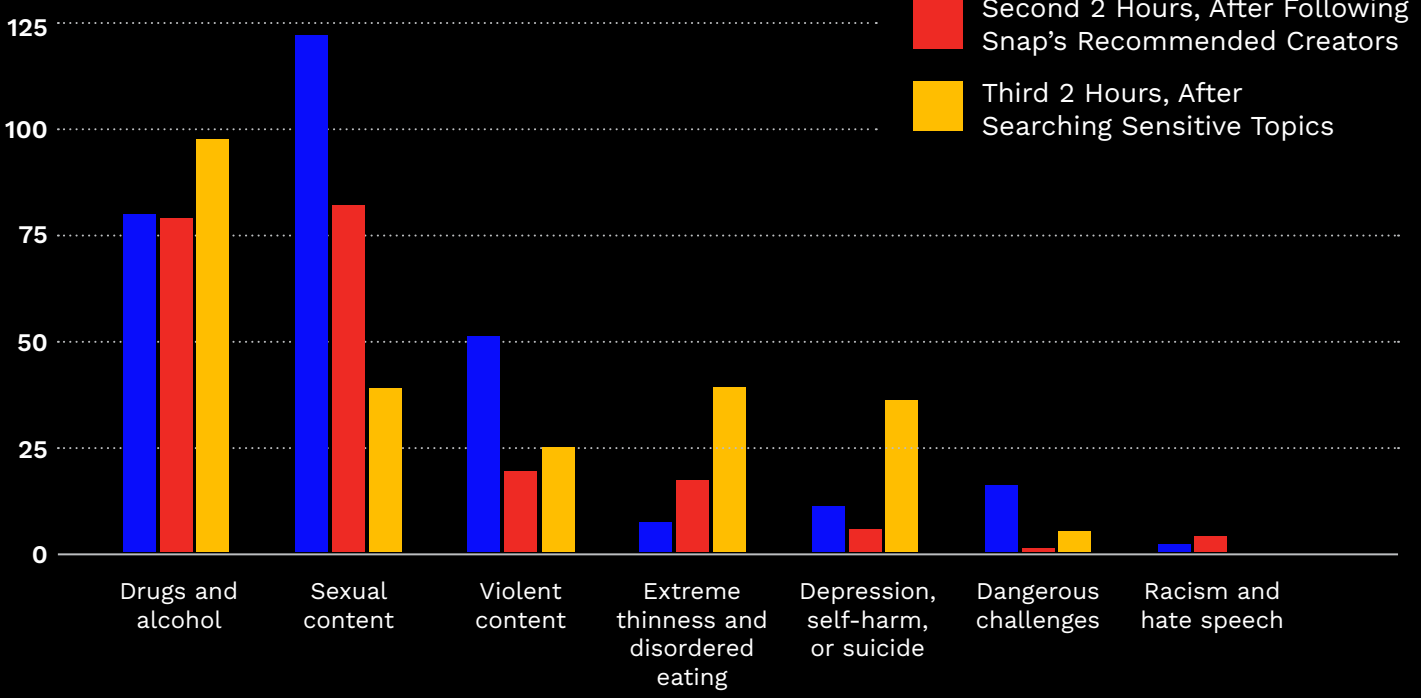
Given the age of the children in the videos, the disturbing nature of the comments, and the allusions to buying, selling, and trading images, the researchers reported this finding to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. It seems worth looking into to understand why the same private Telegram accounts are posting repeatedly in the comments section of videos of young children, advertising “pizza”, and offering to “buy” or “trade”.

Unsafe Videos Recommendations

Unsafe content recommendations began almost immediately on the new Snapchat accounts, with both avatar accounts logging unsafe content recommendations within the first two minutes of viewing.

Overall, Snapchat recommended 739 unsafe videos to two 13-year-old avatar accounts across 12 hours of viewing, on average recommending an unsafe video every minute. Each avatar account received a similar number of unsafe videos, with Kai, using an iPhone, receiving 374 unsafe video recommendations and Sophie, using an Android phone, receiving 365 unsafe video recommendations.

UNSAFE SNAPCHAT CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS BY VIEWING SESSION



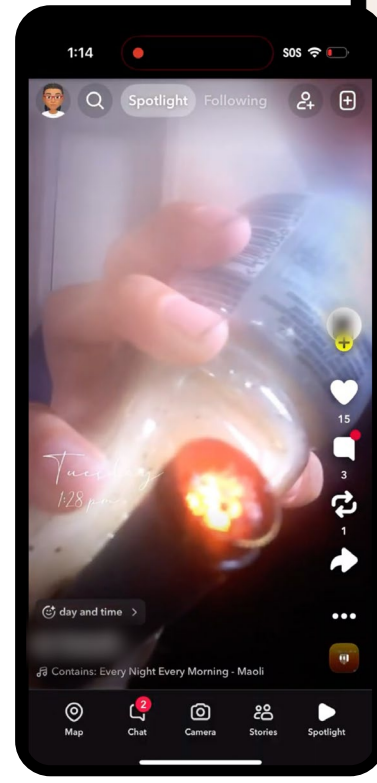
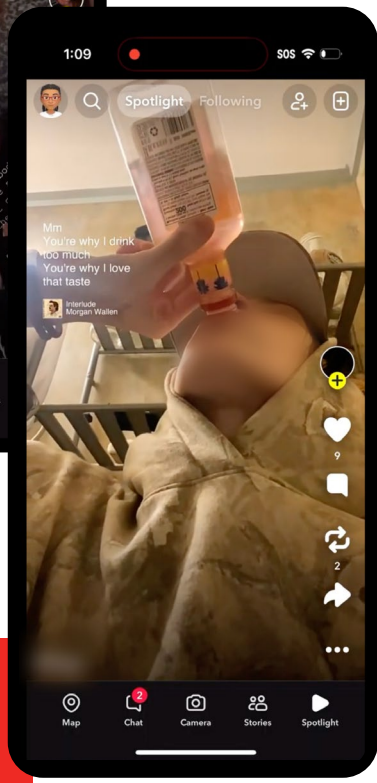
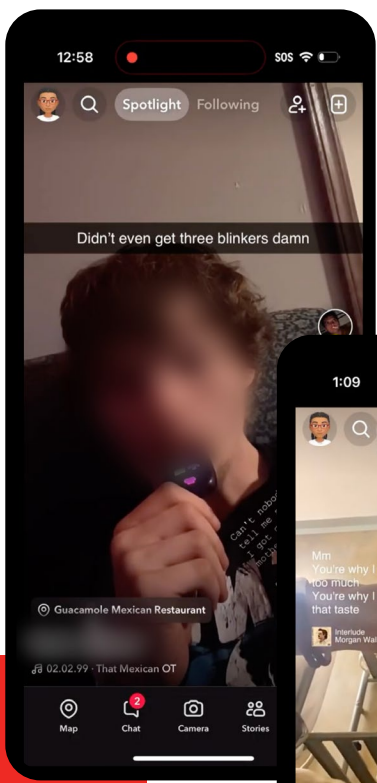
The majority of unsafe content (70% for Sophie and 64% for Kai) was recommended before the avatar accounts conducted any searches. Snapchat recommended different types of content at different rates across time. Recommendations of drug and alcohol content, for example, remained relatively steady across time with a slight uptick after the avatar account searched for drug-related terms. Sexual content, on the other hand, was frequently recommended during the first two hours of viewing and dropped off over time. Searching for related terms had the largest impact on extreme thinness and disordered eating content and depression, suicide, and self-harm content. Both those categories saw lower frequency of recommendations initially which increased after search.

Drug and Alcohol Content

During the research period Snapchat recommended 256 drug and alcohol videos to the teen accounts, with most videos highlighting marijuana use. As the avatar accounts watched for longer, Snapchat recommended more videos that included riskier forms of drug use, instructions for growing marijuana or creating drugs, and young children using drugs.

In one video a young man inhales a vape with the caption complaining about not “even getting three blinkers.” A blinker refers to a method of vaping where a user inhales from a vape pen continuously until the device’s safety feature activates, causing the indicator light to blink. Typically it means users are pushing themselves to the limit of inhalation.

A young man speaking to the camera says “Snapchat is constantly thinking I’m promoting smoking. I ain’t promoting that shit but it’s fun, it’s very fun”.

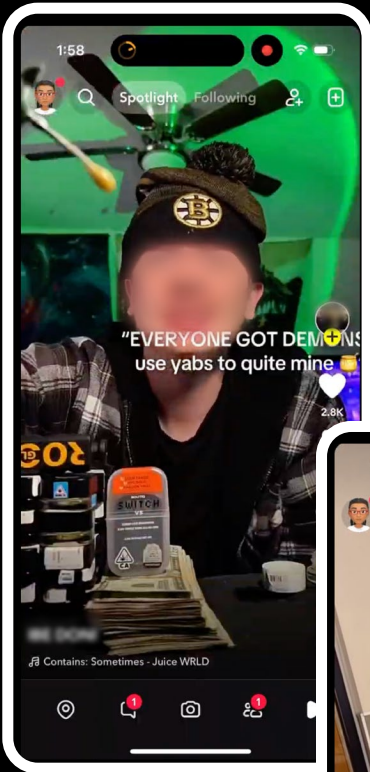


In another video a young man chugs an entire bottle of alcohol to a song that says “you’re why I drink so much, you’re why I love that taste.”

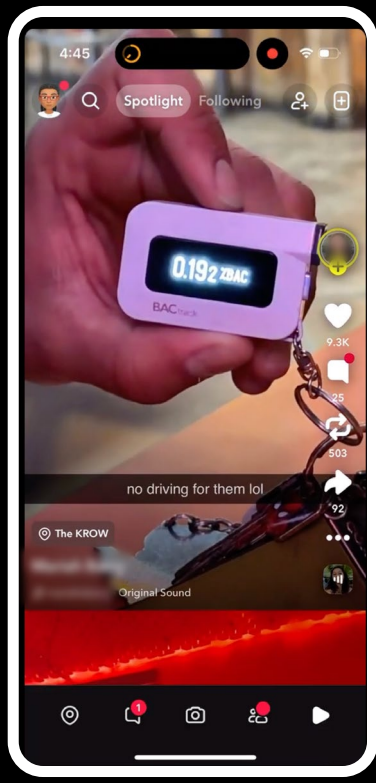
The user shows off a homemade bong made out of a water bottle and a broken flash light to smoke marijuana. The user is shown lighting it and smoking from it using the makeshift device.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT

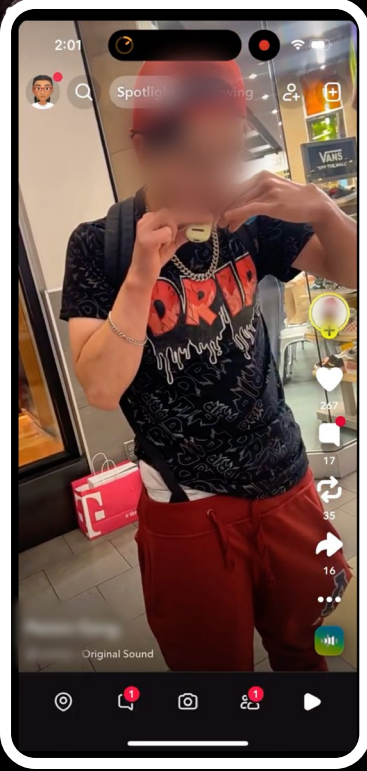
Examples of Risky Use and Overdose



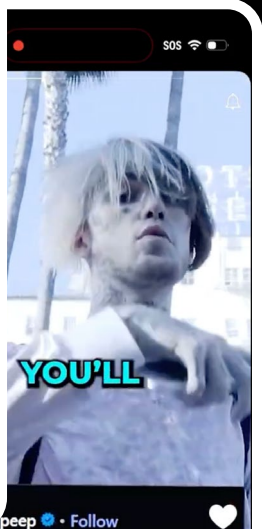
▶ A young man smiles while holding a marijuana concentrate, referred to as “dabs” which “are highly concentrated cannabis extracts—such as shatter, wax, or live resin—containing 60% to over 90% THC”. He then proceeds to use the dab and then is shown coughing violently with the caption “everyone got demons, use {dabs} to {quiet} mine.”



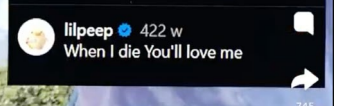
▶ Another video shows a smiling man breathing into a breathalyzer at a restaurant and laughing when he blows a .19 BAC, more than double the usual limit of .08 BAC to be able to drive.



▶ Another video shows a young man doing a double blinker, or inhaling two vapes at the same time, while his friend films him and cheers him on.



▶ In a video sharing the last words of famous rappers, they discuss rapper Lil Peep, a popular emo-rapper who posted “When I die You’ll love me” and told his friends “today is a good day” before he died from an overdose of Xanax laced with Fentanyl. The narrator of the video says the words were “prophetic and painfully bittersweet.”



DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT

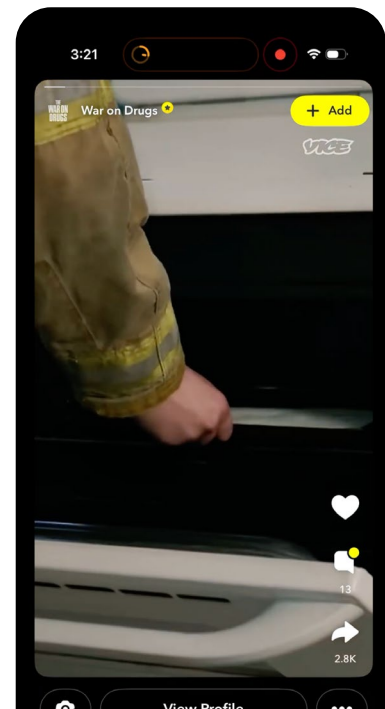
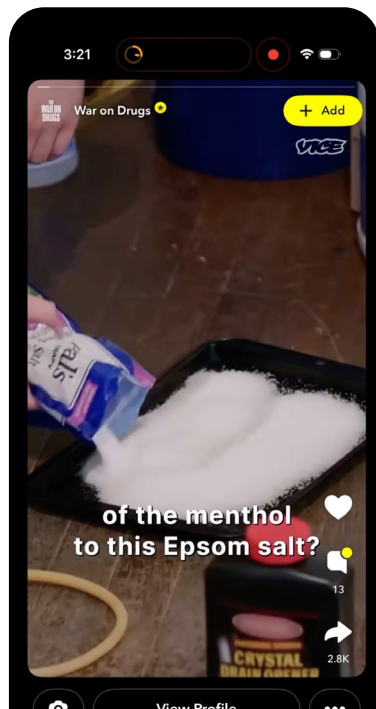
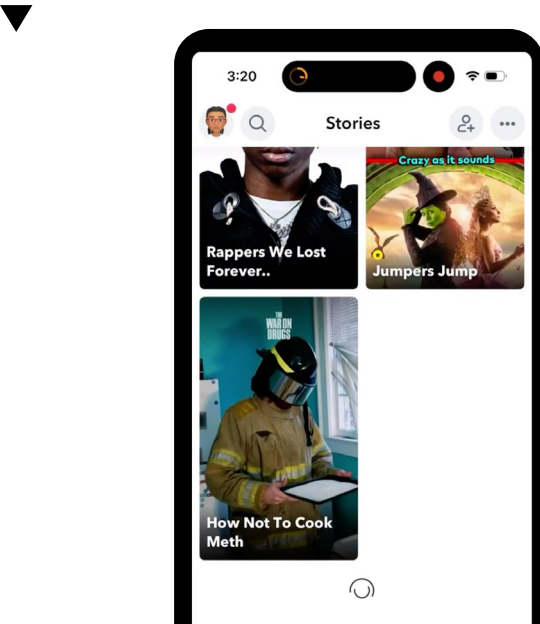
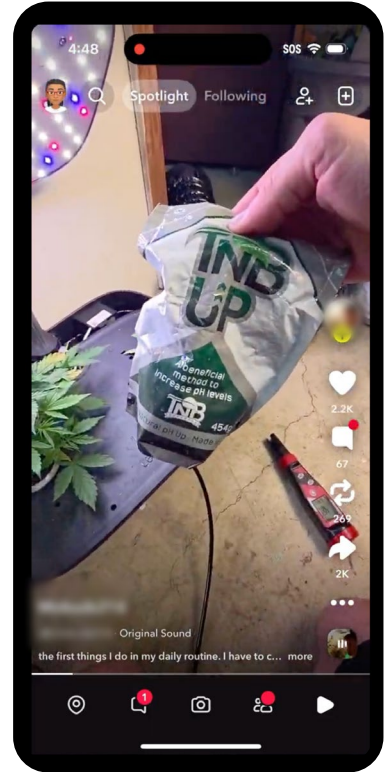
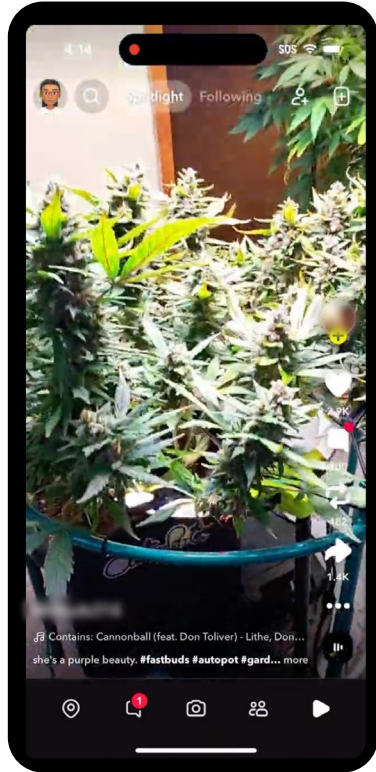
Drug Growing and Creation Instructions

Another concerning theme surrounding drug content being pushed towards 13-year-old Kai's avatar account were video demonstrations of how to grow marijuana and cook meth.

One user shows off his marijuana garden and highlights the “auto pot,” a brand that “requires no electricity, pumps or running water” and for a reasonable price can be purchased and used to easily grow marijuana. ▶

In another video, that same user walks through the supplies he uses and what he does to take care of his various marijuana plants he grows in his home. Leaving time for people to see the process, the equipment he uses, and the brand names.

A video entitled “How Not To Cook Meth” shows a man frantically attempting to cook meth with common household products before he goes through withdrawals. While the man is unsuccessful, the interviewer still outlines the processes he’s attempting to do despite getting the measurements wrong. They also show a diagram of the chemical reactions needed to cook methamphetamine.

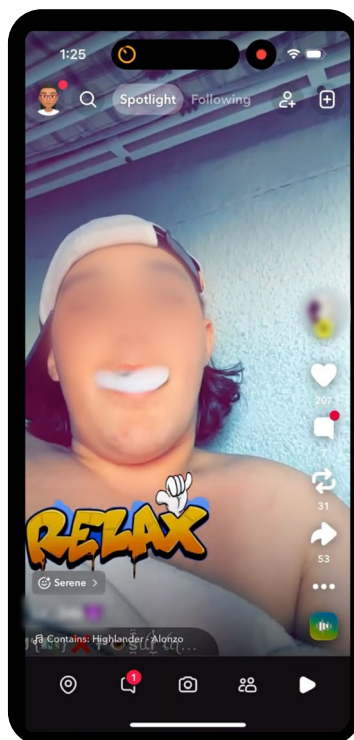


DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT

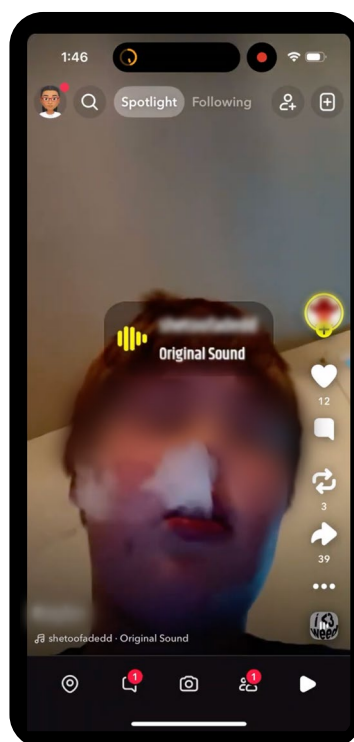
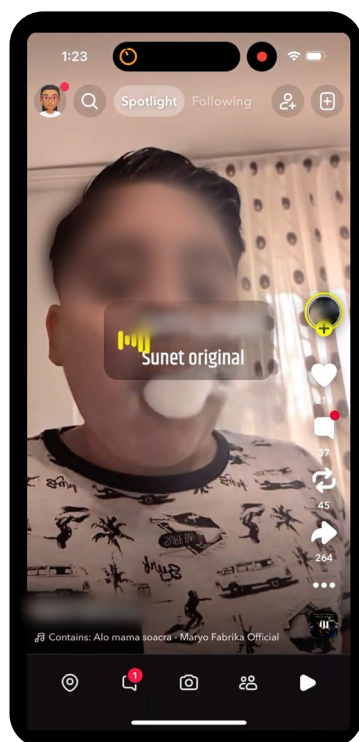
Children Using Drugs

As research progressed, video subjects became visibly younger, leading 13-year-old Kai's account to see several children his age or younger doing drugs.

Another, even younger boy, does the same trend with his vape. He inhales and blows out the smoke in the shape of circles, a thing that many marijuana smokers attempt to do in an effort to appear cool.

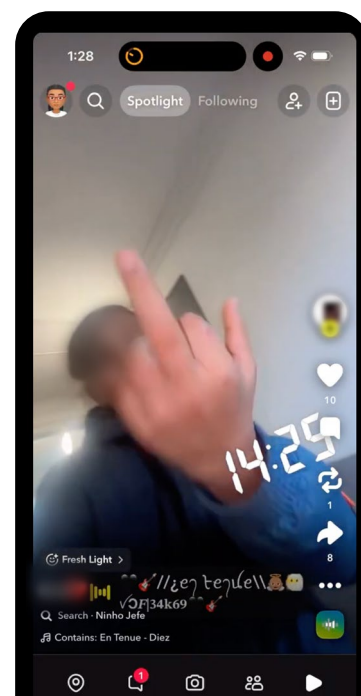


One boy sings along to a song while vaping. The boy does a common trend where smokers blow out the smoke in a controlled way in an attempt to make the smoke look visually appealing. This trend also is meant to show off a skill and a high level of experience and aptitude when it comes to smoking marijuana.



A very young boy vapes while singing along to the Cheech & Chong song "Marijuana" which features the lyrics "I'm in love with Marijuana, Make me feel like an iguana, I love you like no other, In the morning I look for ya."

A young boy can be shown blowing out smoke, miming along to a song and sticking his middle finger up at the camera.



NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications defaulted to “on” on the Android app and avatar account Sophie received a notification at least every few hours. Notifications included both friend recommendations and content recommendations from Snapchat. Some of the notifications used emojis like the chili pepper and peach, which can sometimes signify sexual content, and featured headlines like “Sadie is a FREAK.”

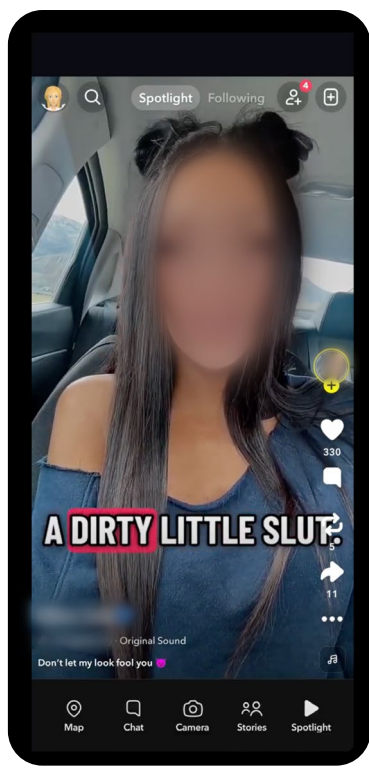
Apple requires notifications to be actively turned on for each iPhone app. Kai’s avatar account on iPhone was prompted to turn off notifications with a “please” on the prompt and a big circle around the “allow” button.



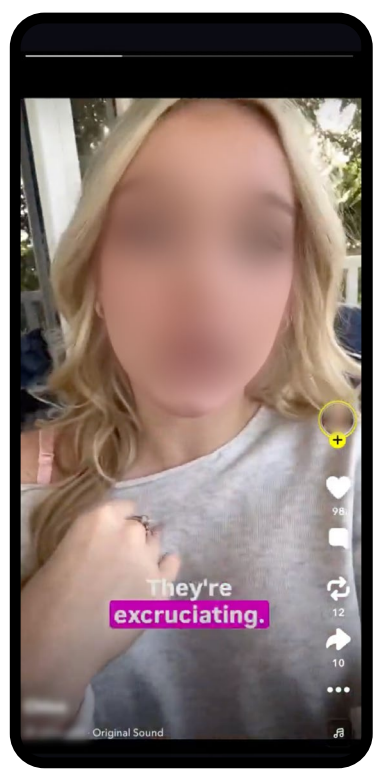
Sexual Content

During the research period, Snapchat recommended 244 sexual videos to the teen accounts. While none of these videos featured nudity, all featured sexual language, pantomimed sex acts, or both. Some patterns in the type of sexual content Snapchat recommended the teen avatar accounts emerged.

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL SEXUAL CONTENT

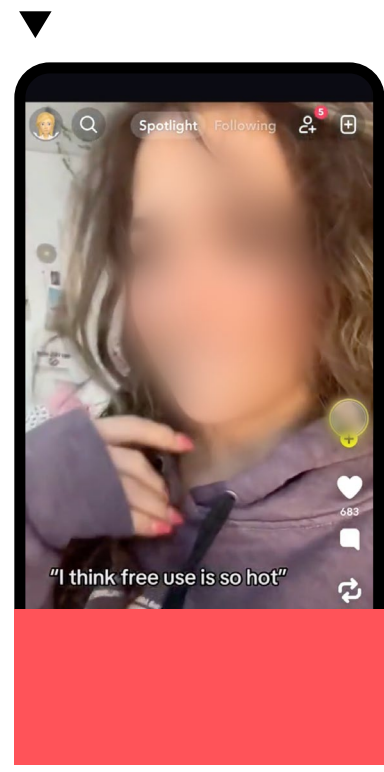


▲ A woman says to the camera “Don’t let my innocent look fool you, because I want you to fuck me like a dirty little cum slut.” Snapchat recommended several videos of apparent adults describing sexual acts in graphic detail. Some of the creators of this content appear to sell adult content on other platforms.

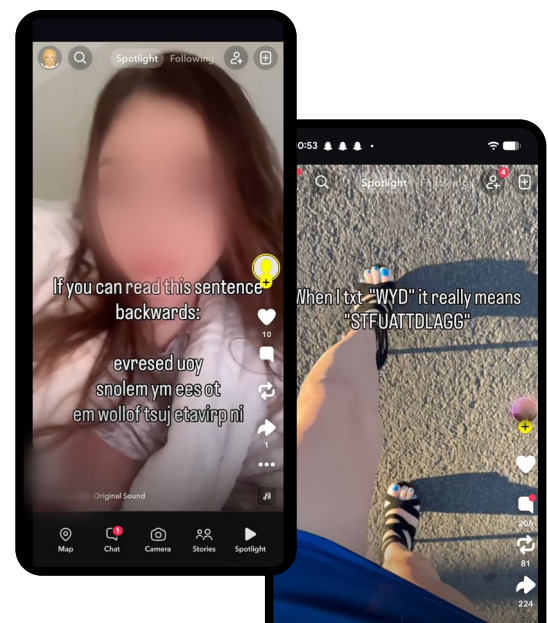


▲ Some of the sexual videos offered problematic advice, like this creator who encourages the viewer to accept pain during anal sex. “The first few seconds of backdoor are awful. They’re excruciating. But after you get past that and you grow a pair, oh my gosh you feel like LeBron James in his prime.”

A creator says “I think free use is so hot,” referencing a sexual practice where one partner consents to be always sexually available without the need to renegotiate consent. Presenting concepts like this without context to teens who are just learning how to navigate sexual consent can be problematic.



▶ A video of a woman in a short skirt walking plays behind a popular internet abbreviation that stands for “shut the fuck up and take that dick like a good girl.” Another creator’s backward message reads “You deserve to see my melons in private just follow me.” Many videos used slang, abbreviations, or backwards messages to talk about sex acts and sexual language.

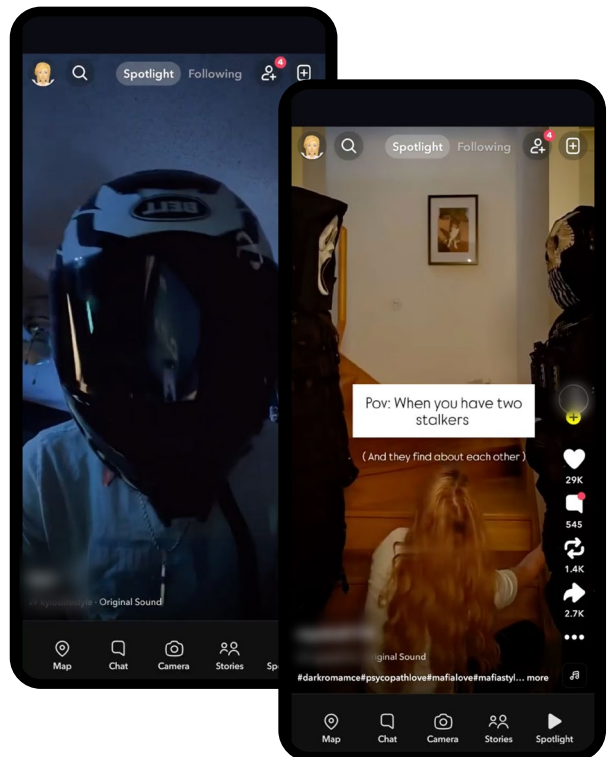


SEXUAL CONTENT

Examples of Sexual Violence Videos

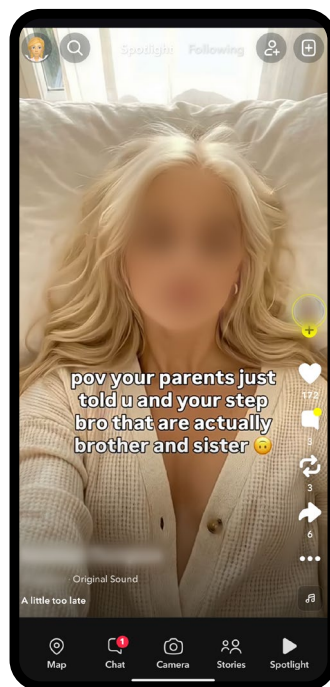
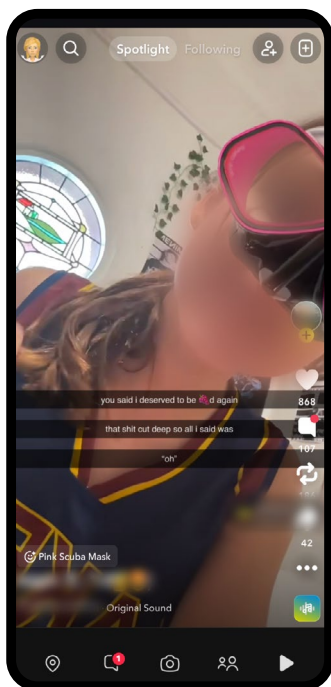
Of the 244 sexual videos Snapchat recommended the teen accounts, 32 glamorized nonconsensual sex, incest, stalking, or sexual violence.

A man in a motorcycle helmet whispers to the camera “If I get into bed with you and start snuggling, all you have to do is enjoy it. It helps me sleep, so I really don’t appreciate all the questions like who I am and how I got in your house. It ruins the moment.”



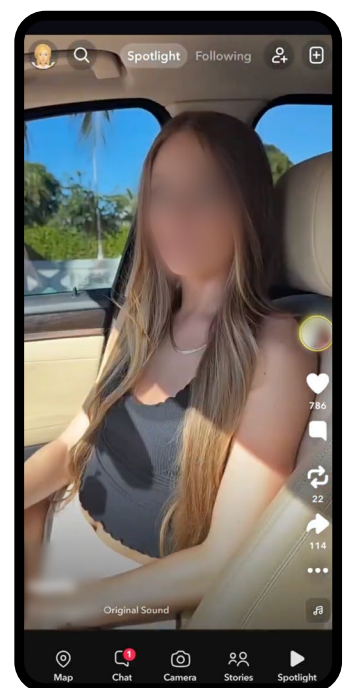
A woman rocks back and forth in bed miming sexual activity while bedsprings creak. The caption indicates that she’s having sex with her step brother or biological brother. Several videos used motion to indicate sexual activity, combined with captions and music.

A woman runs from two masked men, while the caption reads “POV: When you have two stalkers and they find out about each other”. Video hashtags include #psycopathlove, #mafialove, and #darkromance



A young girl lip syncs over a caption that reads “You said I deserved to be [grape emoji]ed again, that shit cut deep so all I said was “oh”. Emojis are frequently used to replace words like “rape” to avoid content filters.

A woman wearing a tank top and underwear says “I’m going to be really honest with you, this is your fourth test drive, what is it going to take for you to buy this car?” A man then grabs her hand and mimes forcing her to engage in a sexual act while she screams “I can’t do this for the fifth time!”

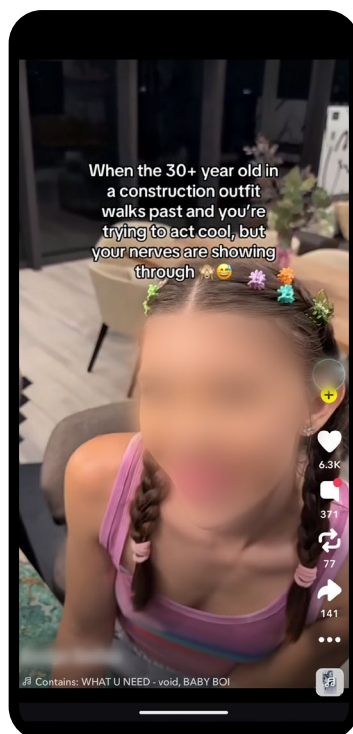


SEXUAL CONTENT

Examples of Age Gap Videos

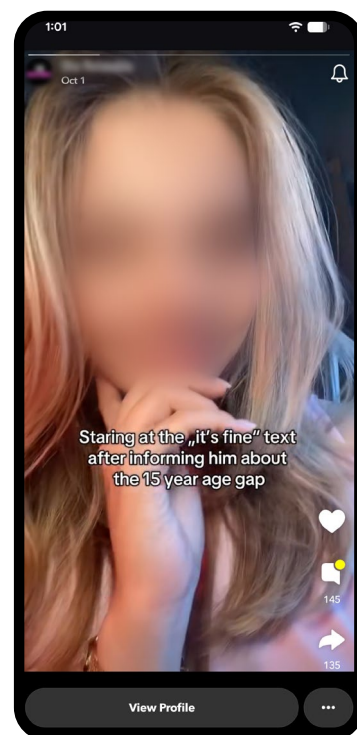
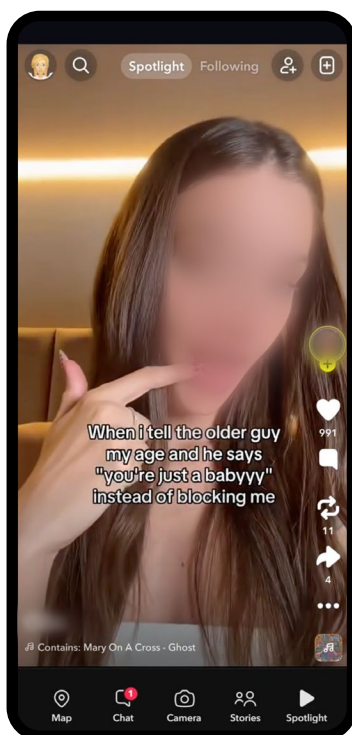
Additionally, 21 videos featured age gap relationships between children and adults, and other relationships with problematic power imbalances.

This video starts by claiming to give tips for getting on a sports team and ends with “get to know your coach” with an image of a man’s hand wrapped around a young woman’s throat.



An adult content creator dresses as a little girl and expresses interest in a 30+ year old man.

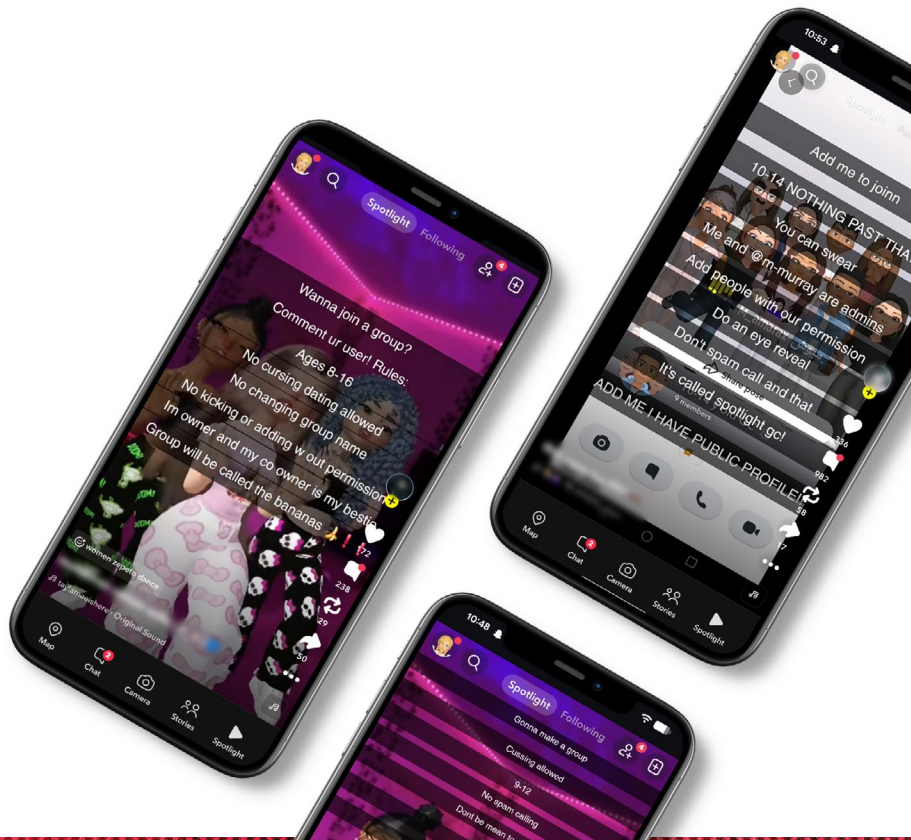
A creator makes flirty faces with the camera with the caption “When I tell the older guy my age and he says ‘you’re just a baby’ instead of blocking me. Another creator smiles over the caption “Staring at the ‘it’s fine’ text after informing him about the 15 year age gap. Snapchat recommended several videos that gave the impression the platform was full of very young women and girls looking for relationships with older men.



GROUPS FOR KIDS

Snapchat recommended several invitations to private groups for minors. Most of these private groups had posted age ranges between 8 and 18 years old. Several of them specifically targeted children ages 8-12, below Snapchat's minimum age of 13. Given the ease with which any user, adult or child, can lie about their age on Snapchat, these groups present a risk of connecting young children with predators, scammers, or other individuals who may be posing as children.

Snapchat recommended these and several other invitations to private groups for minor children.

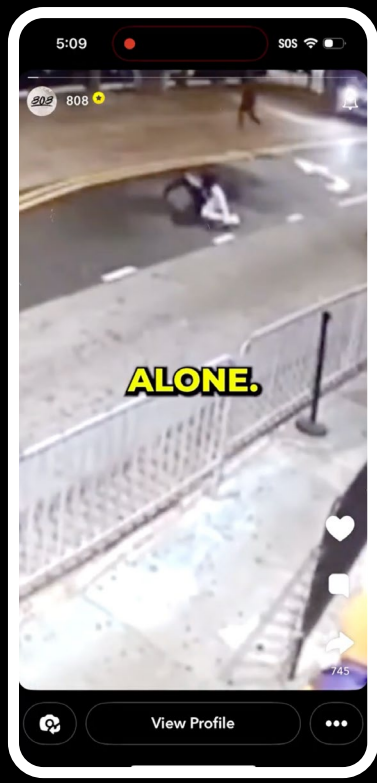


Violent and Criminal Content

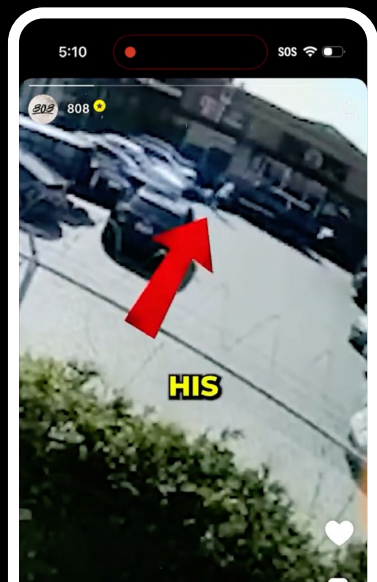
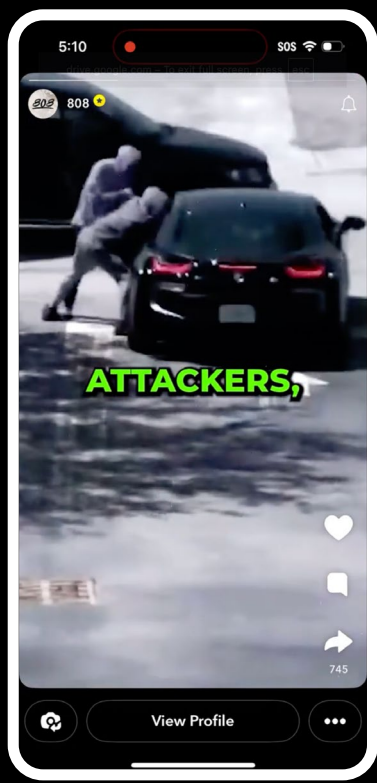
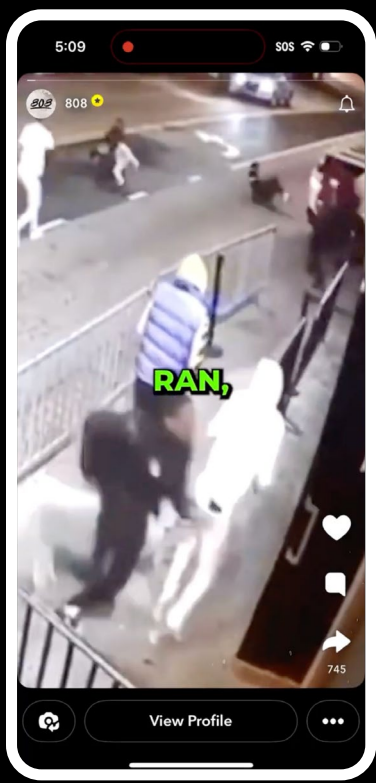
Snapchat recommended 95 videos promoting violence, gang activity, or criminal behavior, nearly all of which were recommended to the account registered to 13-year-old Kai. Researchers noted that the vast majority of violent and criminal videos featured Black people, and it's unclear whether Kai's Black avatar influenced this.

EXAMPLES OF FOOTAGE OF LIVE MURDERS

Snapchat recommended several videos that included surveillance footage of celebrities, especially rappers, being murdered. They also showed the crime scenes following the murders that incarcerated rappers were accused of.



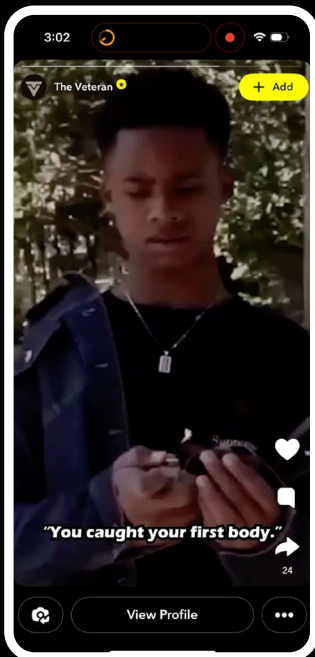
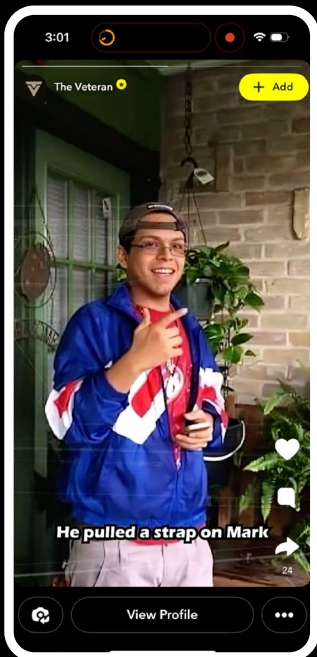
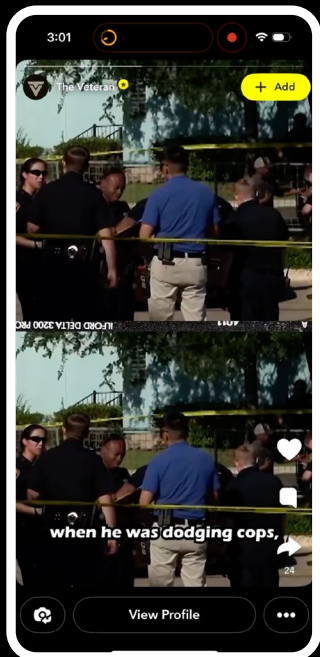
King Von is a rapper that was highlighted the most. King Von was murdered in 2021. The video shows him getting shot and lying in the street bleeding out as his friends run away. The video says his last words to his friends were “stop crying, y’all let them get me” and the narrator proclaims that this shows how heartbroken he was and says “it’s easy to see why he was the king of o block and why they had to do him so dirty to finally get to him.”



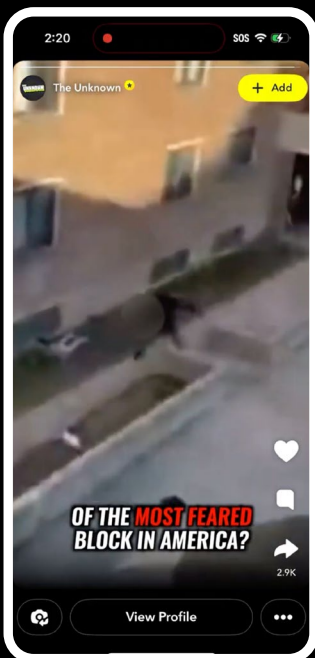
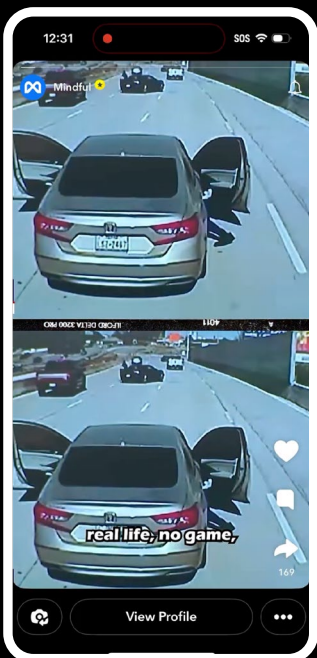
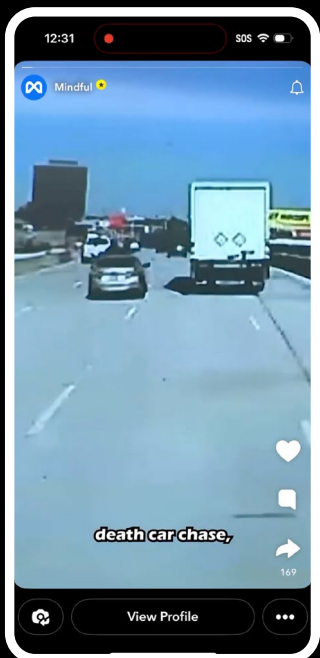
The video shows deceased rapper Nipsey Hustle getting gunned down outside of his store, with an arrow pointing to where his body lay as the perpetrator ran away.

The video shows deceased rapper XXXTentacion getting shot inside of his car with his attackers leaning in the window of his vehicle.

The video breaks down incarcerated rapper Tay K’s legal troubles. The narrator explains that while on the run from police, Tay K shot and killed a photographer he was working with. He snatched his bag from him and when he put up a fight he threw him from the car. The photographer jumped on the car to get his items back, Tay K urged the driver to pull into a parking lot and leaned out the window and shot him multiple times, leaving him on the ground dying they drove away. The video shows the crime scene as well as the congratulatory words from Tay K’s friend who was also in the car, “you caught your first body”. Tay K was sentenced to 80 years for murder.



The video shows the footage of rapper Mo3 being chased through traffic, tailed, and eventually trapped by the pursuant car. The narrator explains that Mo3 stops on the highway and hops out of his car running to the other side of his car presumably to grab a gun. In that time, the pursuant jumps out of their car and begins shooting at Mo3. Mo3 is seen running away on the highway and the narrator explains that “he took one to the back of the dome” and passed away. The narrator compares the tragedy to “a GTA 3” race, referring to the popular video game that many young teen boys play.

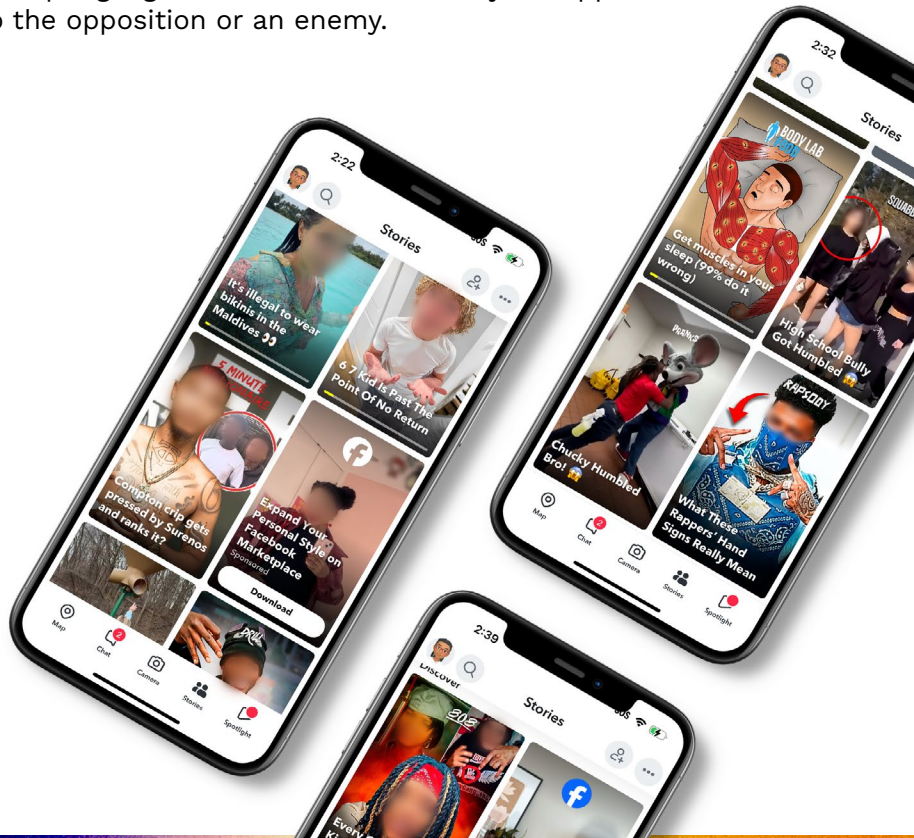


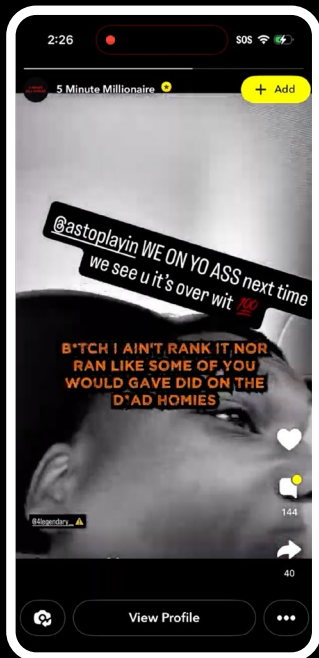
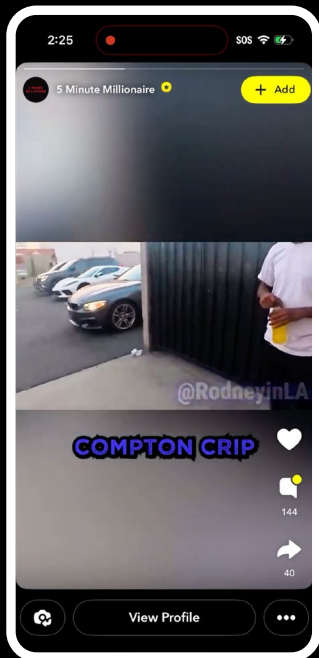
The video describes “O Block” in Chicago as “the most dangerous hood in America” and that “you can get away with murder out here, it’s like GTA.” The video shows a man getting gunned down and falling into the side of a building as the shooter keeps pursuing with more bullets.

GANG ACTIVITY

Snapchat recommended gang related content to Kai's avatar in Discovery.

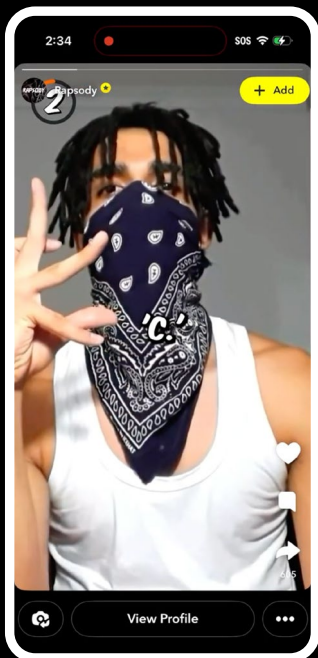
In Discovery you can see available gang related stories titled: "Compton crip gets pressed by surenos and ranks it", "What these rappers hand signs really mean", "Norteno packed out at Sureno rapper's show", and "A swole blood mistook Yella for an opp & it went left". Ranking refers to when a gang member is being asked if they're affiliated, often by a rival gang, and they deny any involvement. Packed out means getting physically assaulted by multiple gang members simultaneously. An opp refers to the opposition or an enemy.





The video talks about a rapper Tommy Gunz and his friend being approached by rival gangs and how people say their response indicated that they “ranked it”.

The video demonstrates the meaning, history, and how to form gang signs. The narrator calls gang signs “symbolic gestures that encapsulate identity, affiliation, and artistic expression.” Describing these signs and their relation to popular rap culture, using words like “legendary” and “iconic.”



The narrator calls gang signs “a badge of street credibility”. Proclaiming that the use of these signs by rappers can show the hard lives they’ve lived and give them a sense of authenticity that their fans enjoy. They say that these signs are an unspoken language of unity.



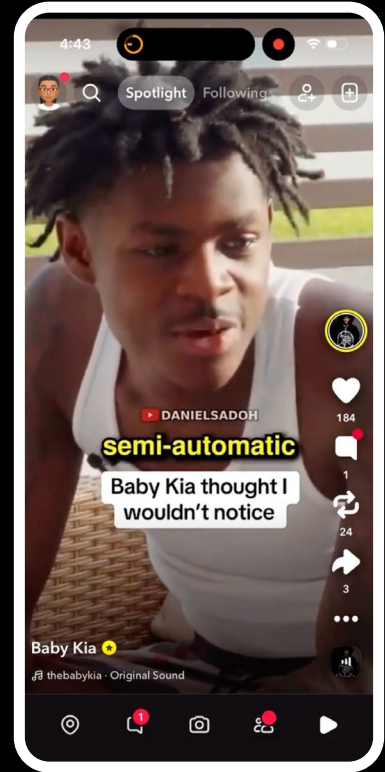
The video listed “rappers who are powerful gang members” showing which rappers are affiliated with which gangs. Calling them powerful adds a lens of positivity to the video, making gang life seem impressive.

VIOLENT AND CRIMINAL CONTENT

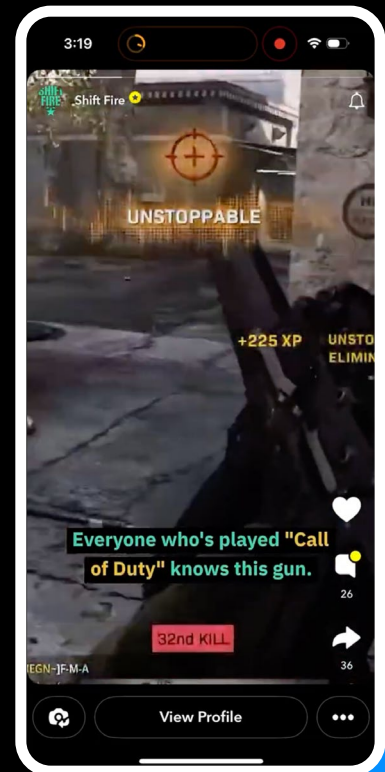
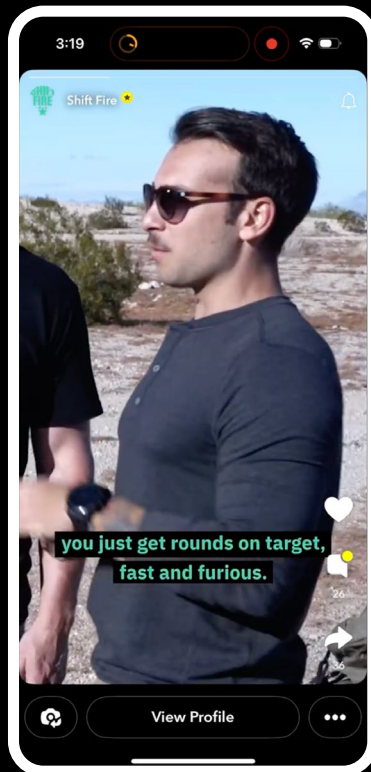
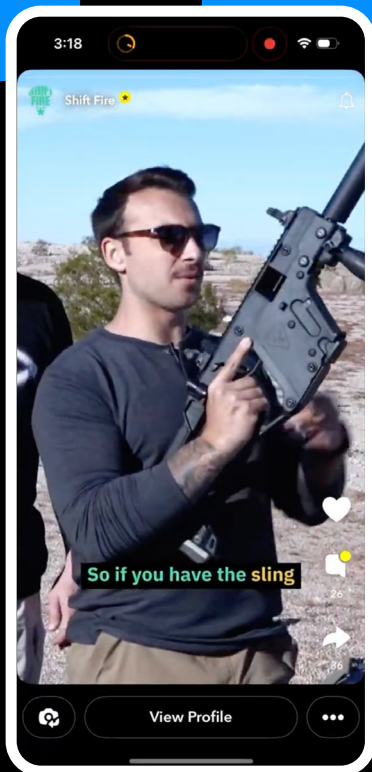
Guns and Weapons

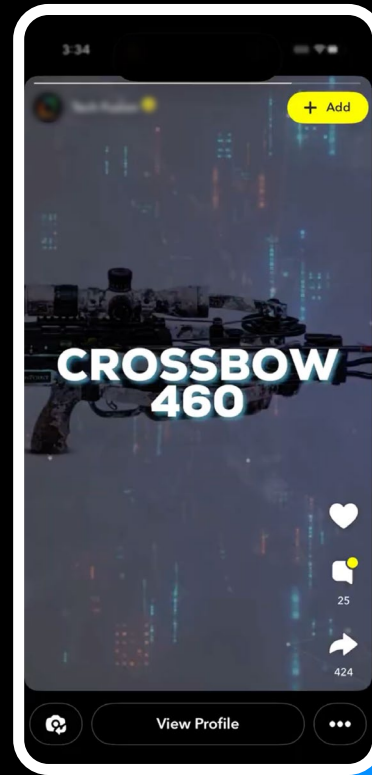
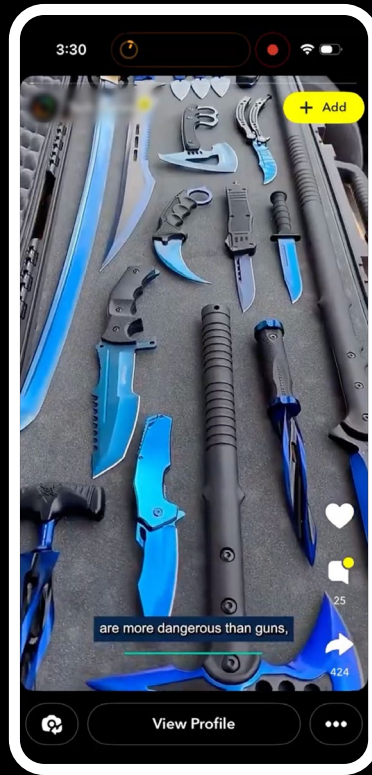
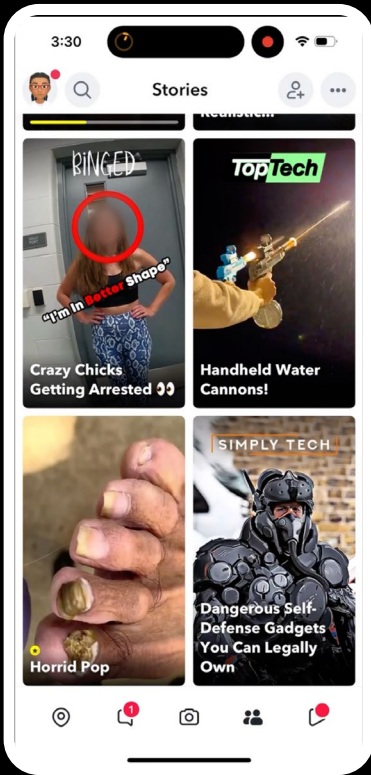
The algorithm suggested multiple videos featuring guns and other dangerous weapons, including those that can be purchased on platforms like Amazon as well as makeshift ways to make guns more dangerous.

An interviewer asks rapper Baby Kia, “what is a switch?” Baby Kia responds by saying “A small metal sphere which turns your gun from semi-automatic to fully automatic. You won’t believe some people just go and get pieces from Walmart and bend that bitch and drop that bitch right in that stick and it force the trigger to reset by itself without having a {switch}.”



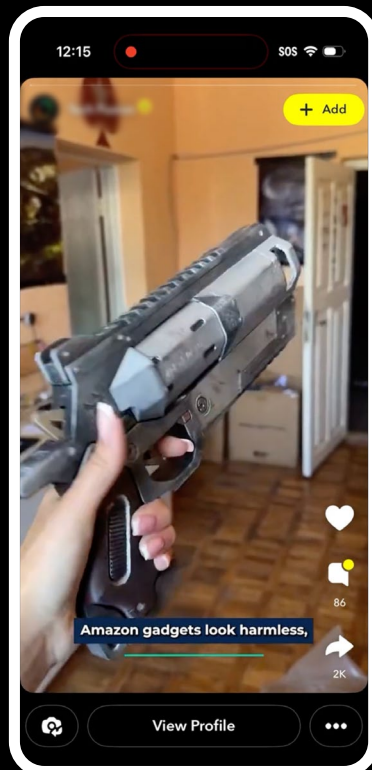
In another call to popular video games, the video goes over the specification and features of a rifle that they say “everyone who’s played ‘Call of Duty’ knows this gun.”





The narrator starts the video by saying “these self defense gadgets are more dangerous than guns and the wild part is that they’re still fully legal to own” and proceeds to outline several weapons including things like hidden knives, extremely forceful tasers, and remote turrets.

The Discover video is titled “Lethal Gadgets That Don’t Need Gunpowder on Amazon”. It starts by saying that “these gun-powder free Amazon gadgets look harmless but they can be dangerous if misused.” The video then outlines multiple of these weapons, describing in detail their capabilities, features, uses, and some even feature the exact name to search on Amazon to purchase.

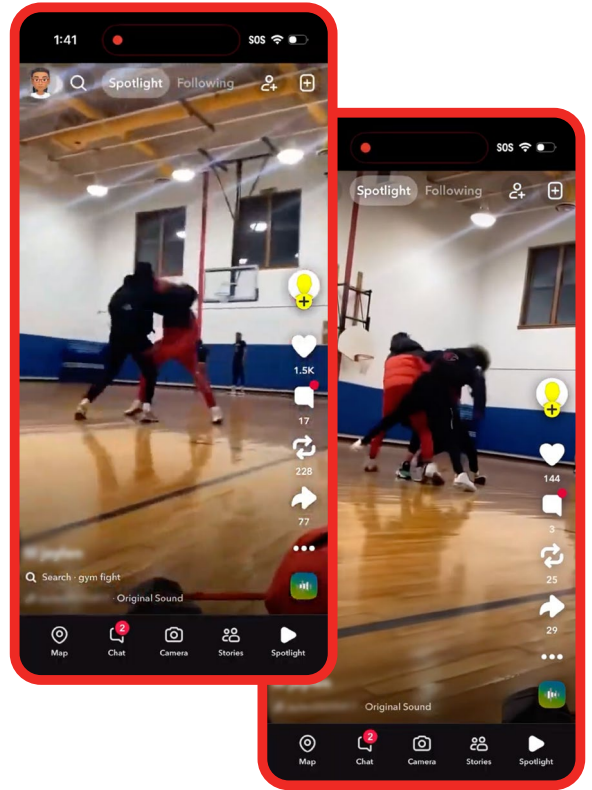


VIOLENT AND CRIMINAL CONTENT

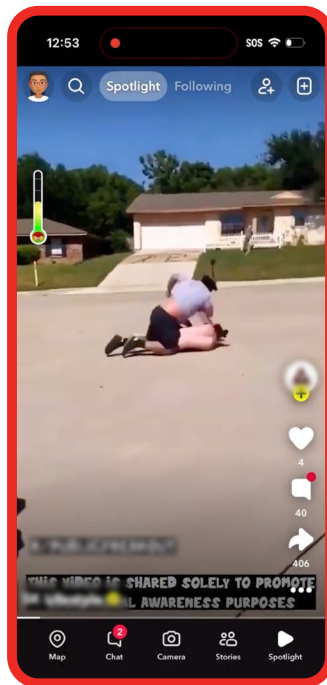
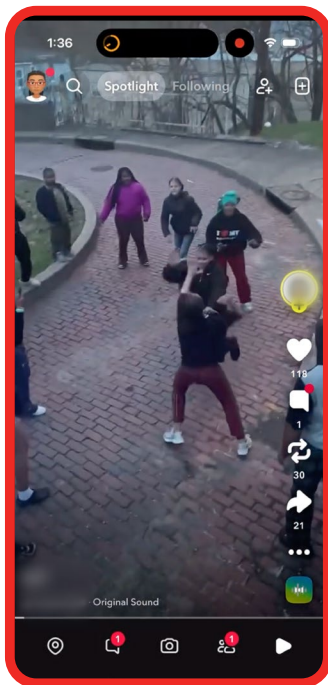
Violent Fighting

Snapchat recommended 50 videos of violent fights between people of all ages during the research period.

A fight between two boys in a school gym starts with a forceful punch to the head. The fight continues and an additional boy joins, punching another boy in the head repeatedly while others attempt, unsuccessfully, to break up the fight.

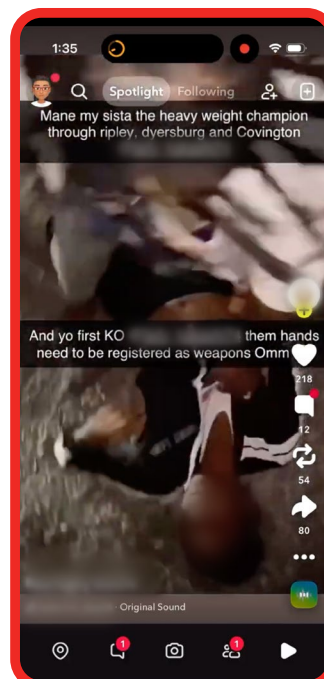


The video shows a fight where a mother had two boys fight one boy. He hits one brother hard enough to make him fall and stay on the ground. Then he body slams him into the concrete. As the mother comes in to try to break it up, he repeatedly punches her son and then kicks him in the head as their mom is screaming for him to stop.



Two girls surrounded by peers are violently yanking each other's hair while punching each other in the face. In the beginning, the surrounding girls let them fight while they film. As the fight progresses, they attempt to pull them apart and are mostly unsuccessful as one girl refuses to stop punching.

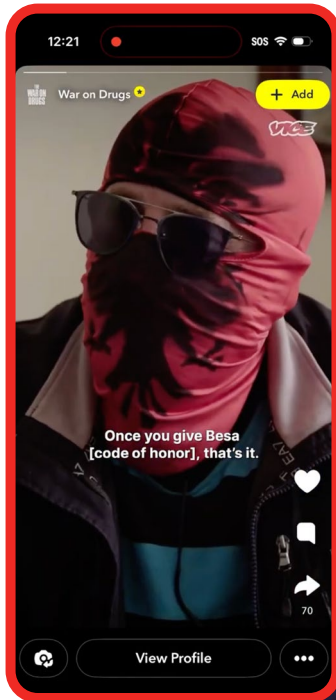
Two women fight as onlookers film. One woman quickly takes over, drags the other to the ground and starts aggressively punching her directly in the face. She is unresponsive and bleeding profusely and the woman will not stop hitting her. She has to be physically removed from her to stop.



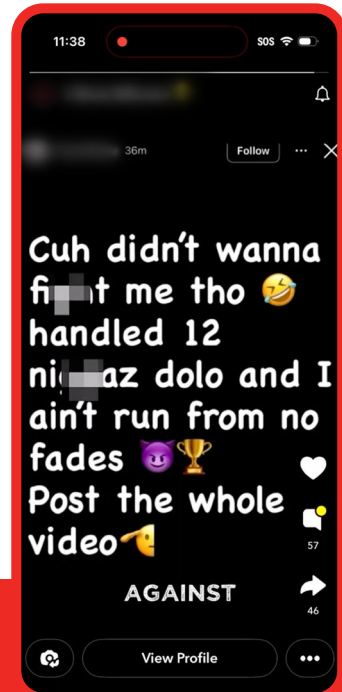
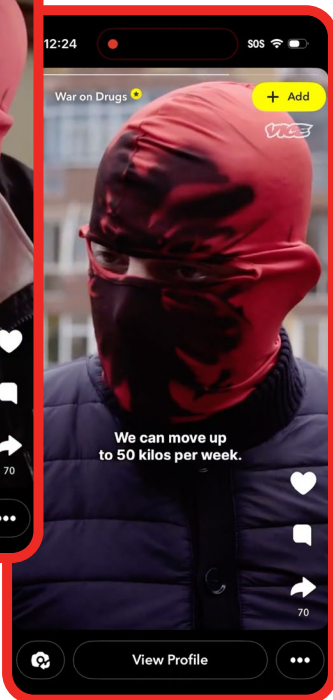
VIOLENT AND CRIMINAL CONTENT

Criminal Behavior

Snapchat recommended 21 videos promoting general criminal behavior and activity outside of the above categories.

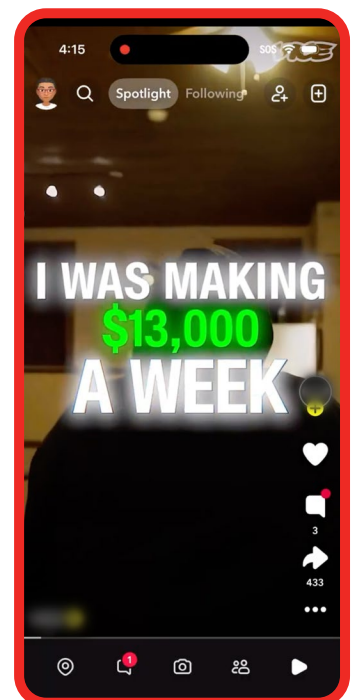
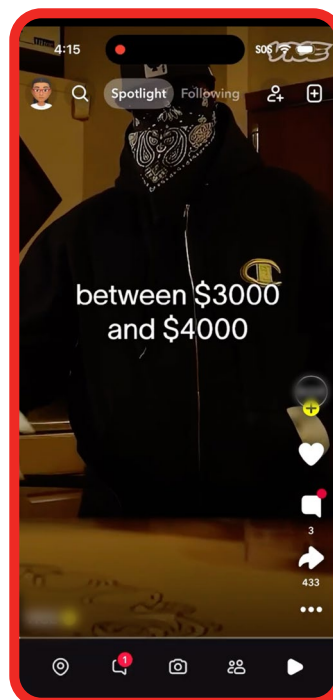


The video narrates the “beef” between two rappers over a stolen chain.



There is an in depth interview with multiple members of the Albanian mafia. In this video they discuss how they traffic drugs. They also talk about attempted murder, shoot outs with the police, and how they pay off international police in order to commit crimes in a multitude of countries.

This is an interview of a man who runs an illegal gambling ring. He highlights how much money he makes - which can be up to \$13,000 a week. They go into detail about the different levels of illegal gambling and the language people use to disguise it.



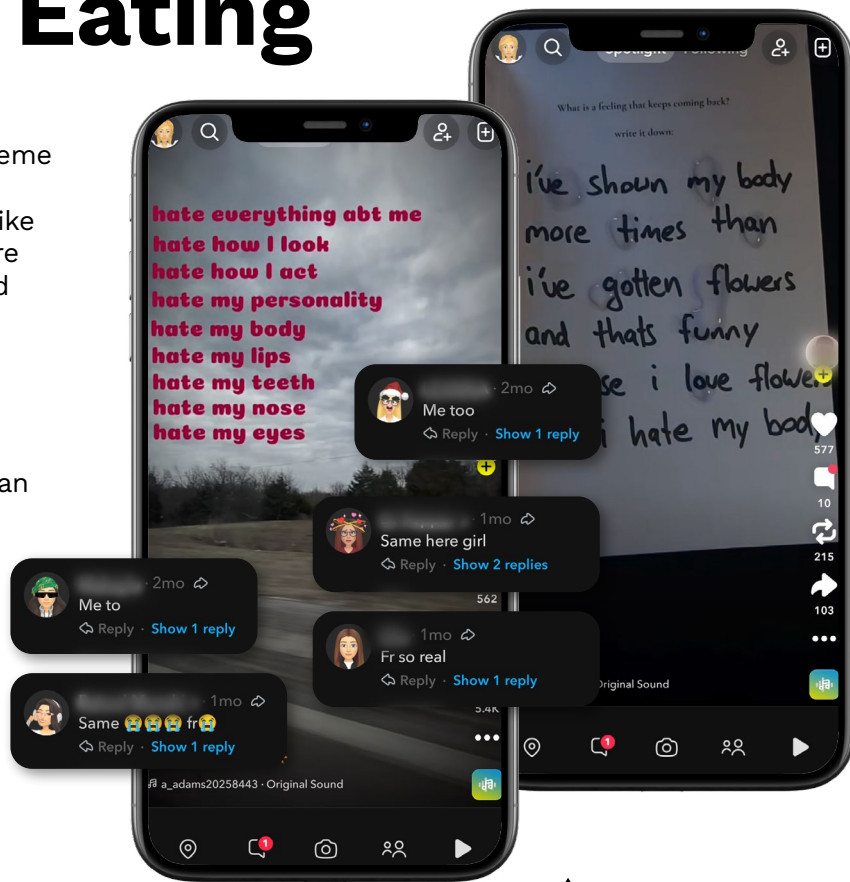
BODY SHAME CONTENT

Extreme Thinness and Disordered Eating

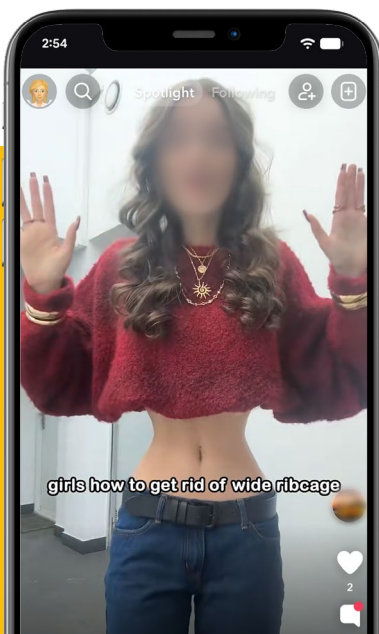
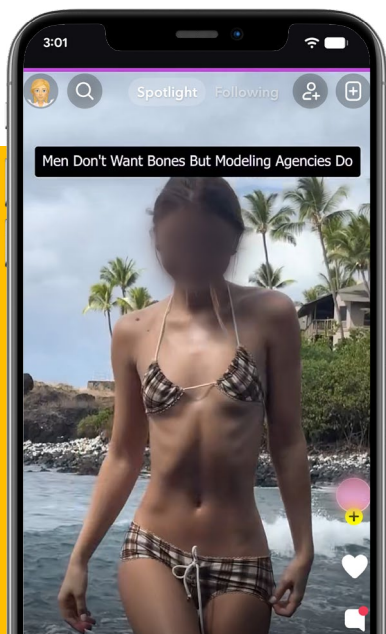
During the research period, Snapchat recommended 63 videos promoting extreme thinness, poor body image, disordered eating, or invasive appearance changes like plastic surgery. Most of these videos were recommended after searching for related terms. All the content in this report is a direct result of recommendations from Snapchat, not search.

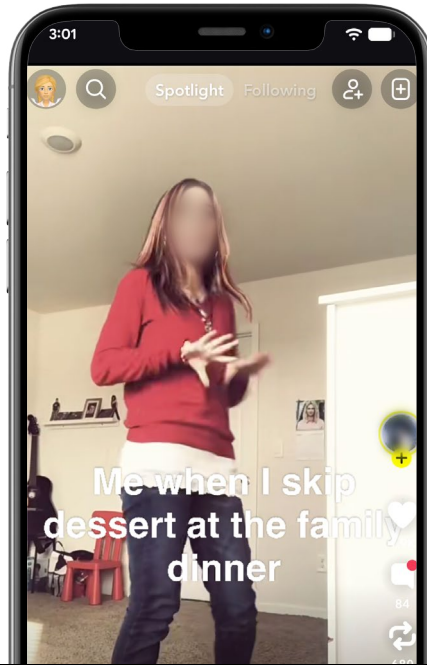
Snapchat also recommended several videos showcasing extreme thinness as an ideal body type and showing creators complaining about their bodies when they did not fit that ideal.

A very thin woman walks in a bikini under the caption “men don’t want bones but modeling agencies do.” Another woman with an unrealistically small waist offers tips for “how to get rid of a wide rib cage”. A woman with protruding hipbones and a very small waist announces she’s finally happy with her figure. Snapchat recommended several videos celebrating heavily edited or unrealistically slim bodies.



In one video, a narrator reads a list of all the things they hate about their body. In the comments section, people agree that they also hate their bodies. In another video, a creator writes a note about how they hate their body. These were several videos with text describing self-hatred of body, weight, or appearance.

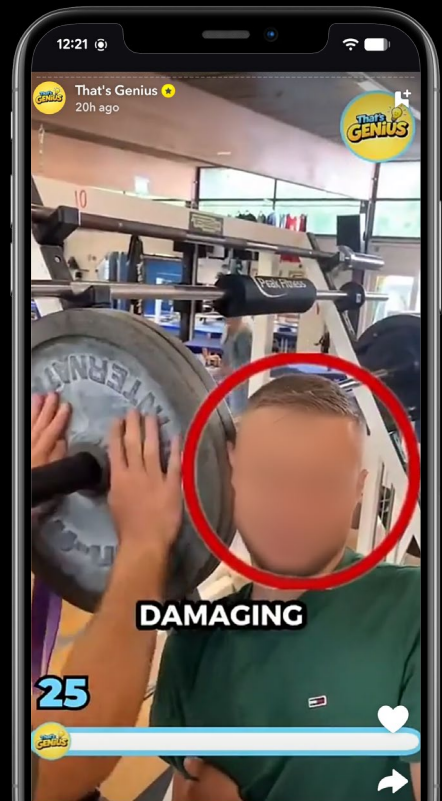




A creator responds to the prompt “you need to eat” by singing the song lyrics “Beauty is pain and there’s beauty in everything. What’s a little bit of hunger? I can go a little while longer.” Another creator shares how she hides skipping dessert from her family. A slender woman stands in profile with the caption “when the outfit eats but its clear I do too.”

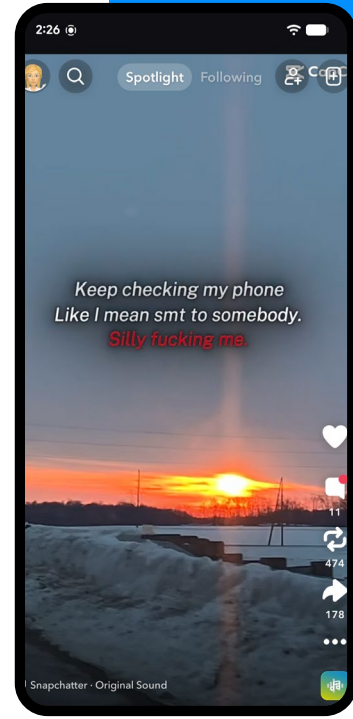
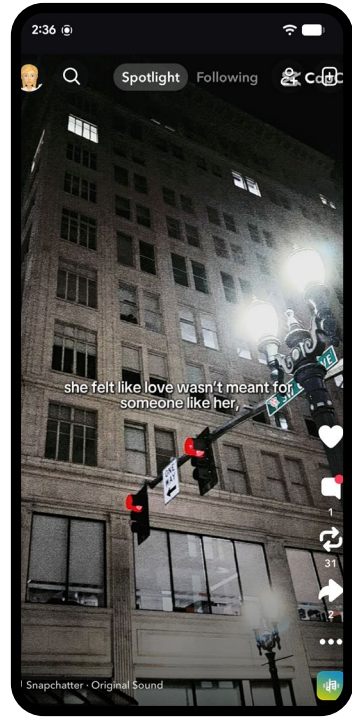
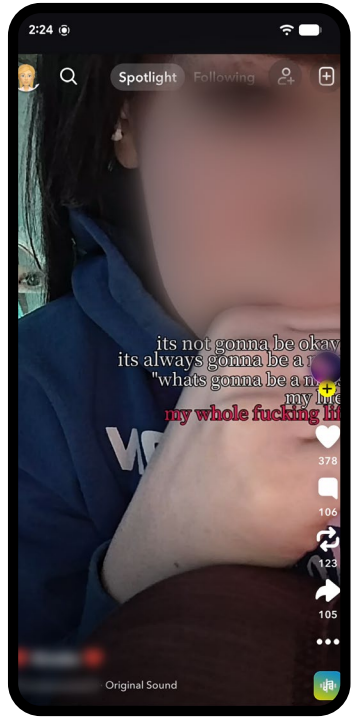
While less common than other types of videos, Snapchat did recommend videos featuring plastic surgery and other extreme ways of changing appearance to conform to beauty standards.

A creator describes a leg lengthening surgery that involves breaking leg bones to increase height. Another creator shares her excitement about getting breast implants. A third creator intentionally slams a weight into his ear to get a more “masculine” cauliflower ear.



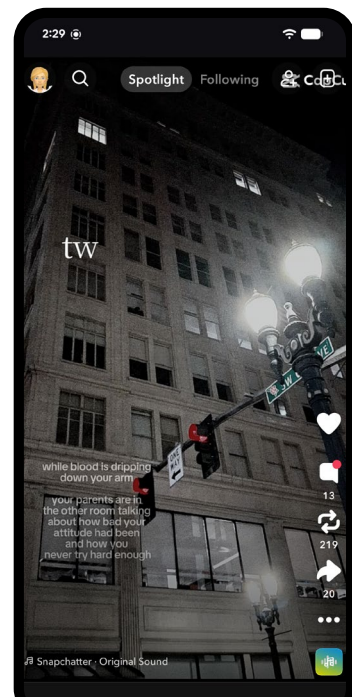
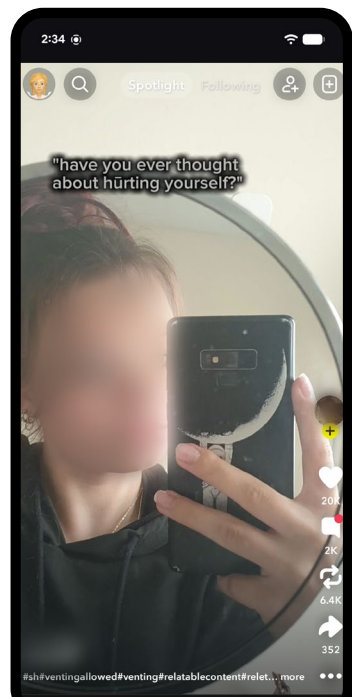
Depression, Self Harm and Suicide

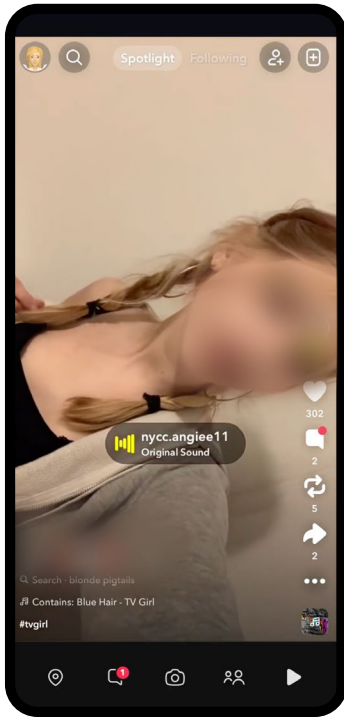
During the research, Snapchat recommended 53 videos featuring depressive, self-harm, and suicide content. Most of these videos were recommended after searching for related terms. All the content in this report is a direct result of recommendations from Snapchat, not search.



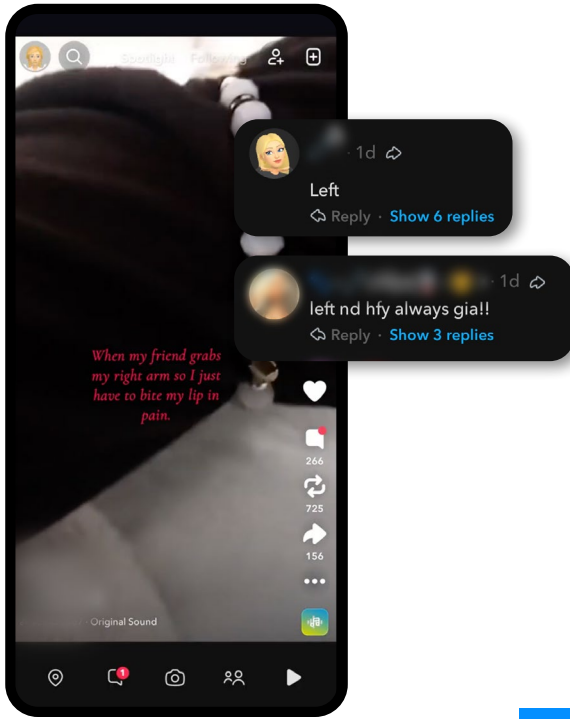
▲ Snapchat recommended several videos where users were expressing depressive thoughts. One video includes a girl crying with the caption “its not going to be okay, it’s always going to be a mess.” Another says “she felt like love wasn’t meant for someone like her.” Another video reads “keep checking my phone, like I mean something to somebody. Silly fucking me.”

A woman agrees to the question “have you ever thought about hurting yourself?” Video of a dark street is under the caption “While blood is dripping down your arm, your parents are in the other room talking about how bad your attitude has been and how you never try hard enough.” Text overlays about self-harm were common in self-harm videos. ▶

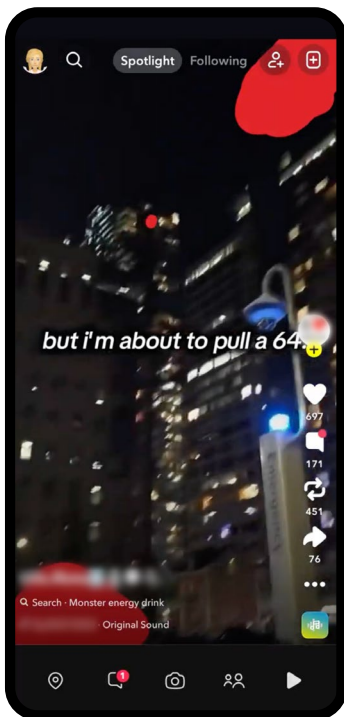




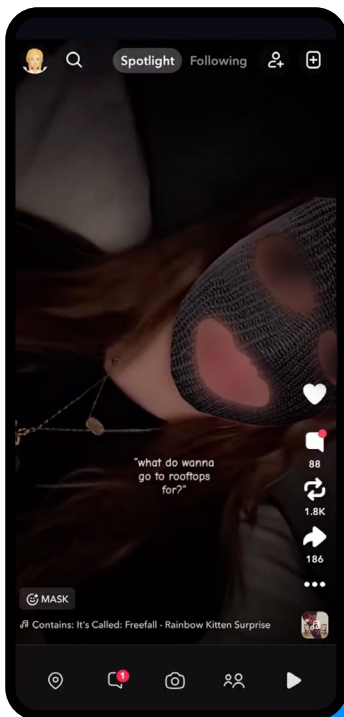
▲ A girl sings a song that includes the phrase “there was nothing I could do to stop her from cutting.” Her profile features knife and safety pin emojis, sometimes used to signal self-harm and cutting.

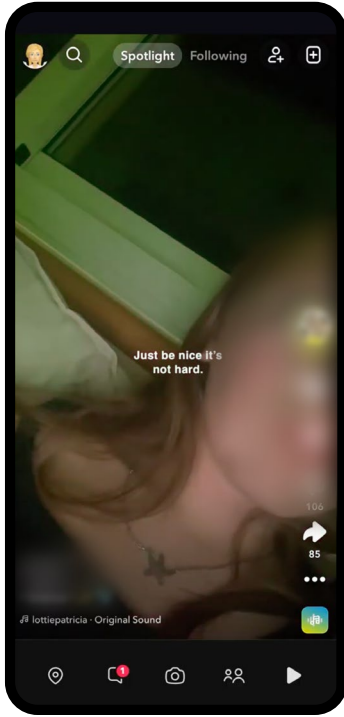


▲ Someone moves their covered arm behind the caption “When my friend grabs my right arm so I just have to bite my lip in pain” - a seeming reference to self-harm marks. Users respond in the comments with the body parts they self-harm.

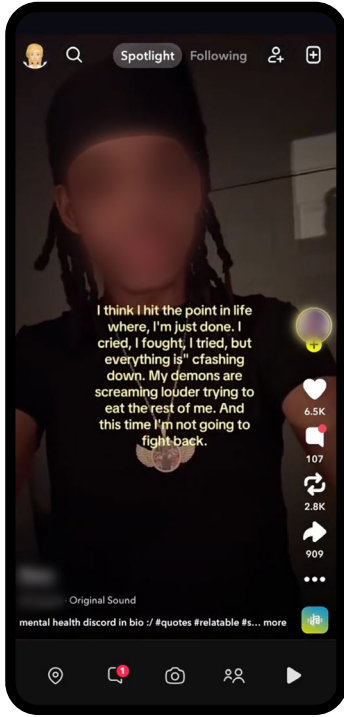


◀ Snapchat recommended a video of the meme “she’s talking 67, but I’m about to pull a 64.” It both uses and references the song Nintendo 64 by Alex G, about depression and planning a suicide. In another video, a girl lip syncs to the song Freefall by Rainbow Kitten Surprise behind the caption “what do you go to rooftops for?” The juxtaposition of music and text is a common theme in videos signaling suicidal ideation or plans.

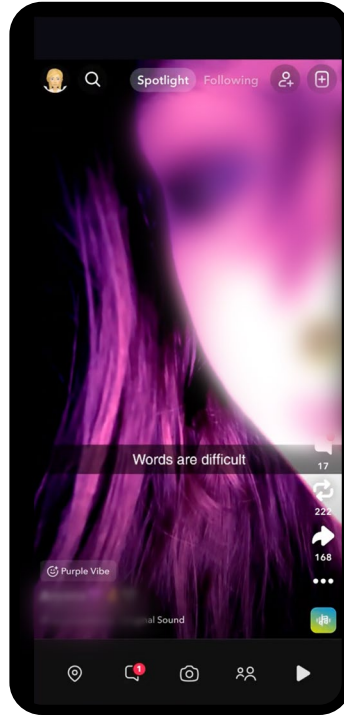




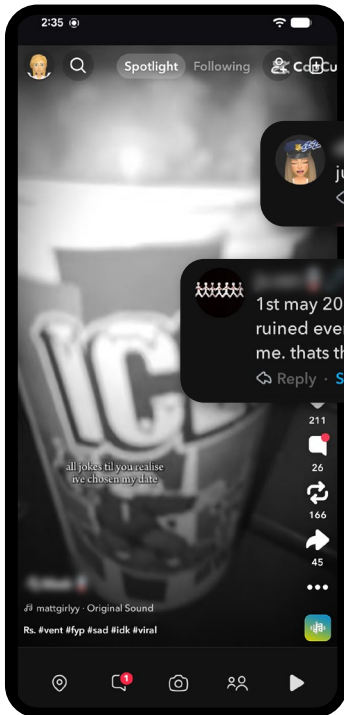
▲ A girl cries over audio that says “you never want to be the reason someone takes their own life” and goes on to talk about people taking their own lives due to bullying. Snapchat recommended videos with this audio more than once.



▲ A young man looks into the camera behind text indicating his demons have won and he’s not going to fight back.



▲ A young girl says “My boyfriend is afraid of me cheating, baby you should be more scared of me bunjee jumping off a cliff and I don’t put the rope on.”



◀ Sad music plays over a video with the caption “all jokes till you realize i’ve chosen my date.” In the comments sections, Snapchat users discuss future dates with emojis like doves and safety pins sometimes used to indicate death, self-harm, and suicide.



“EVERYONE GOT DEMONS,
I USE DRUGS TO QUIET MINE”

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Snapchat’s pattern of exposing the avatar teen accounts in this research to both risky contact from strangers and unsafe content create serious concern for kids’ safety on the platform. Snapchat’s unique design features also make it extremely hard for parents to supervise their child’s online activity. Because messages disappear, adults have little window into who kids are communicating with and what they are saying or doing. Features like frequent notifications and an endless content scroll keep kids on the platform for longer, exacerbating other design issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SNAPCHAT

Based on the findings in this research, ParentsTogether Action and Heat Initiative have the following recommendations for Snapchat to increase minor safety on the platform:

Implement real safety by design:

Remove addictive features, give minor accounts the strongest privacy settings by default—including blocking precise location sharing unless a parent consents—and remove features that enable harmful connections with adults.

Close Android app loopholes:

Ensure kids using Snapchat on Android devices have access to the same tools and settings as kids using Snapchat on iPhones.

Block accounts engaging in child sexual abuse:

Remove comments and accounts advertising child sexual abuse content, including via coded language and emojis, and block those individuals from creating new Snapchat accounts.

Turn off algorithmic content recommendations for kids:

Stop using algorithms to recommend content to under 18 accounts.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

Based on the findings in this research, ParentsTogether Action and Heat Initiative have the following recommendations for Snapchat to increase minor safety on the platform:

Don't allow children or younger teens to use Snapchat:

Without necessary safety improvements, Snapchat is not a safe platform for kids and young teens.

Consider monitoring software:

Consider using a monitoring software to have greater insight into what platforms kids are using and how they are using them.

Talk with older teens about the risks of Snapchat:

If parents do allow kids to use Snapchat, talk about the specific risks in advance, including sexual exploitation and sextortion, access to drugs, and content that may worsen depression or disordered eating. Parents should also help older teens navigate how to avoid or respond to unsafe content like violent content, sexual content, and drug content.

