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use of ICT by minors

Quantitative research

Malta Communications Authority – December 2012

27th Electronic Communications Forum

Research objectives

- ⊞ Gauge the levels of use of ICT, especially the Internet, by minors
- ⊞ Identify the perceptions and attitudes of minors and their parents related the safe use of the Internet
- ⊞ Identify safety related situations/circumstances minors might come across while they are browsing the internet
- ⊞ Assess the levels of awareness about the BeSmartOnline Project among minors and their parents

**Partially funded by the European Commission
as part of the BeSmartOnline project
under the EU Safer Internet Programme**

Methodology

- ✦ MCA commissioned M. FSADNI & Associates to conduct a 'quantitative' Research Study with students whose age varies between 8 years and 15 years (attending between Year 4 and Form 4 at school) and their parents, on the students' use of ICT.
- ✦ The study was supported by the Directorates for Educational Studies and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), the Church Schools, and the Association of Independent Schools.
- ✦ Two structured research instruments were developed (one for the students and one for the parents) in English and Maltese. The research instrument mainly consisted in 'close ended' questions and 1-5 Likert scale questions.

Methodology (2)

- ⊕ The fieldwork was carried out during May, 2012.
- ⊕ A total of 23 schools participated in the study, of which 14 were state schools, 7 were church schools and 2 were independent schools.
- ⊕ Students from the chosen classes were given an envelope containing the 'parent' questionnaire and a consent letter for their child to participate in the research. Parents were given five days to fill in the questionnaire, sign the consent form and return it to the school.
- ⊕ Students who returned the parent questionnaire and the consent completed participated in the student survey.



Sample frame

- ⊕ 566 students, and their parents, participated in the study
 - ⊕ 44.5% where in Year 4 to Year 6 primary education;
 - ⊕ 29% where in Form 1/Form 2 secondary education; and
 - ⊕ 27% where in Form 3/Form 4 secondary education.

- ⊕ 53% were female while 47% were male. Of the parents, a high 81% were female while the remaining 19% were male

- ⊕ 52% of the students hailed from schools in the centre region, 24% from students hailing from schools in the southern region, 13% from Gozitan schools and 11% from schools in the northern region

- ⊕ More than 60% of the students represented primary and secondary state schools. Another 30% represented primary and secondary church schools while 9% represented primary and secondary independent schools.

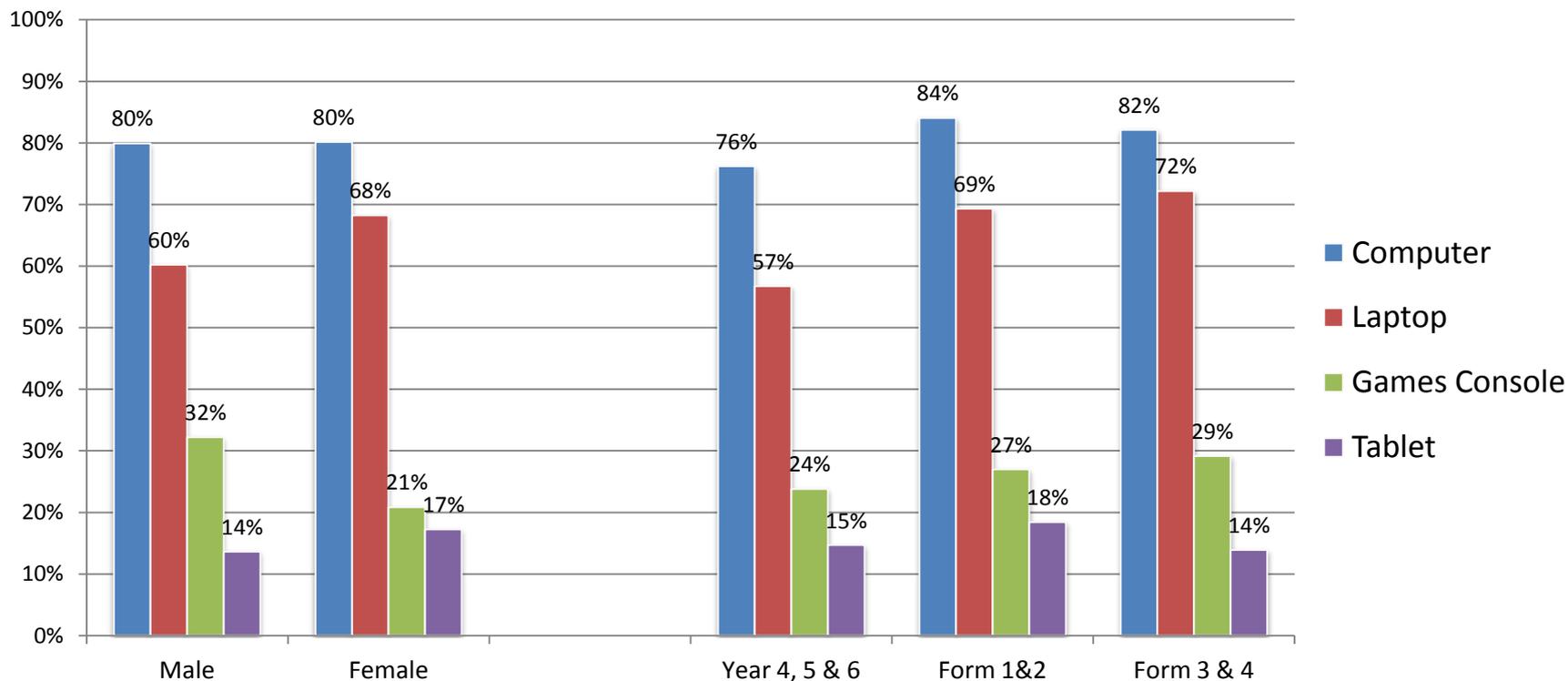
Survey limitations

- ⊕ The choice of schools and classes could have led to socio-economic biases especially in secondary schools where students are normally grouped by areas of study and gender
- ⊕ Non responses by parents, despite limited, may have led to an underrepresentation of students with high absenteeism or who may lack parental care
- ⊕ The busy school calendar made it difficult to conduct the study in some schools leading to a lower response rate than in others leading to a shortfall of 34 completed-student questionnaires from the target 600-count sample frame
- ⊕ Selected sampling method excluded all cases of minors who do not attend mainstream schooling

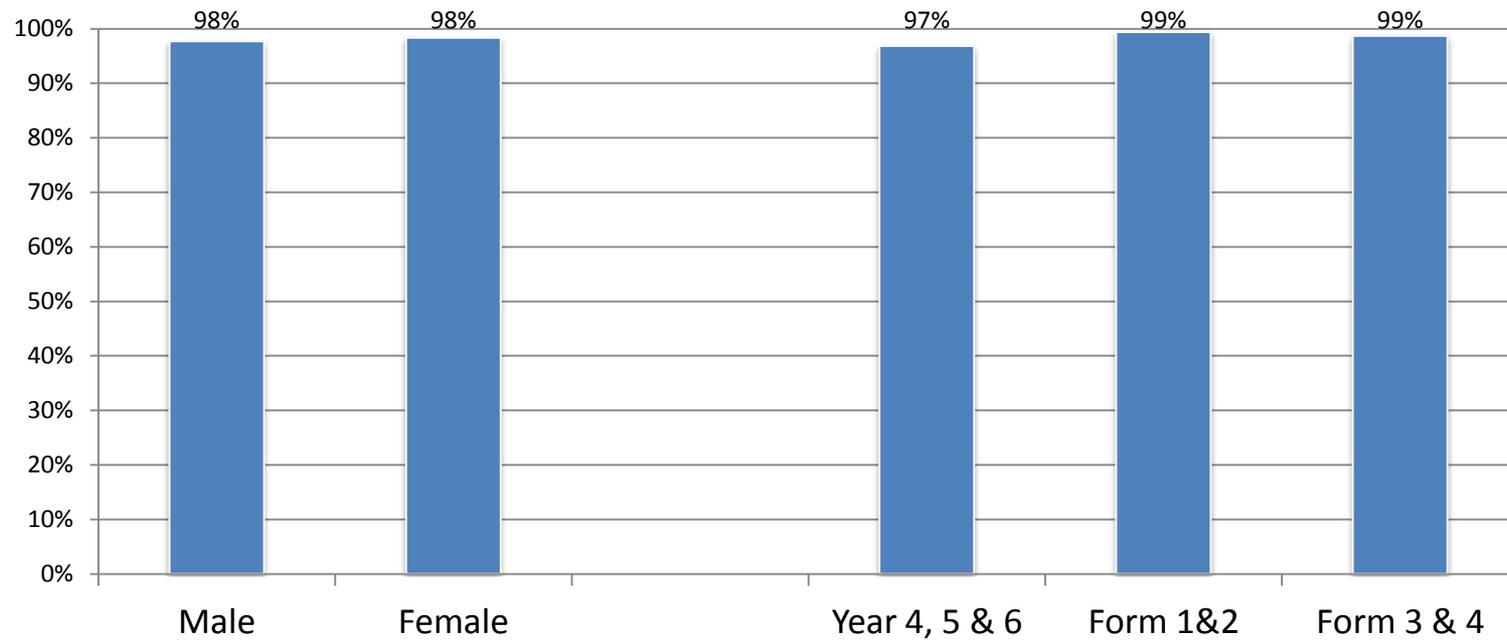
>> RESULTS - ACCESS

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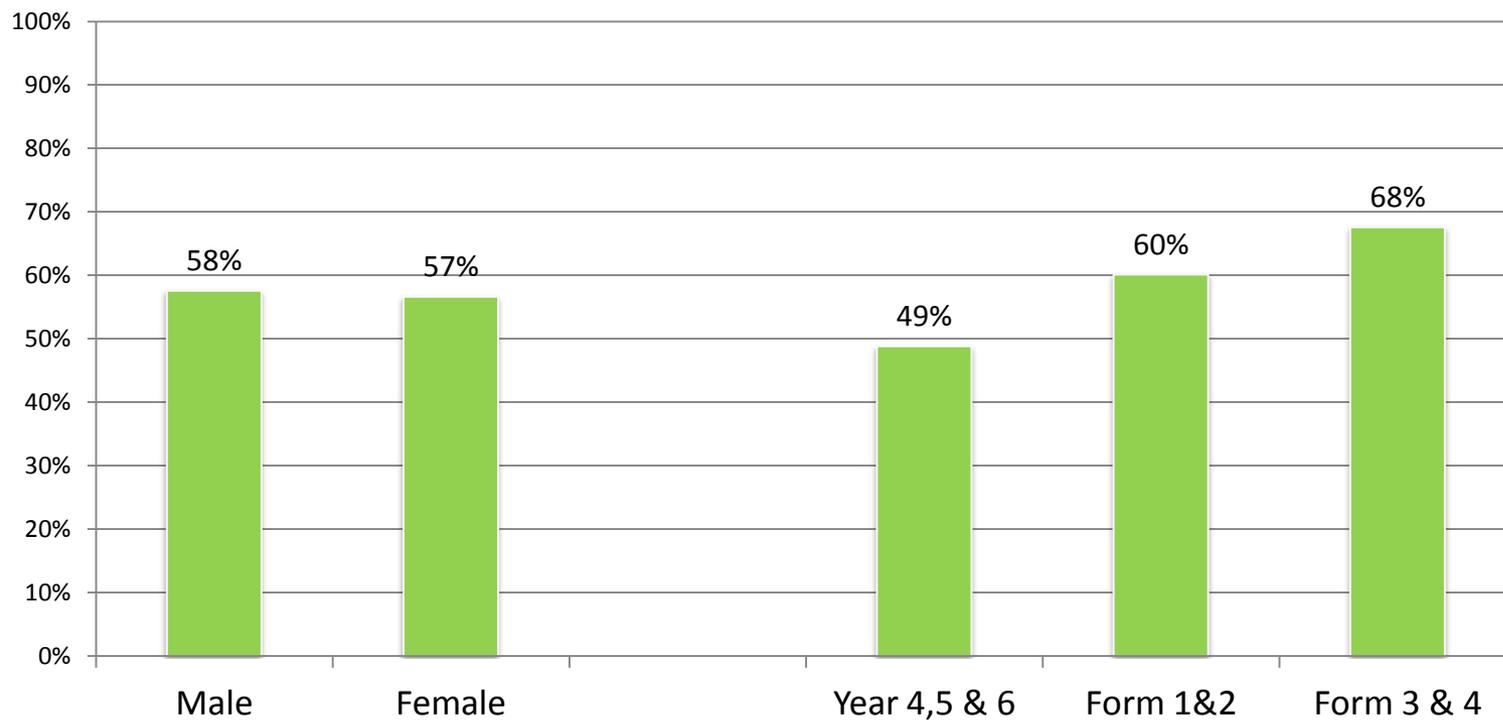
Devices at home with access to internet



Computer or laptop at home with access to internet

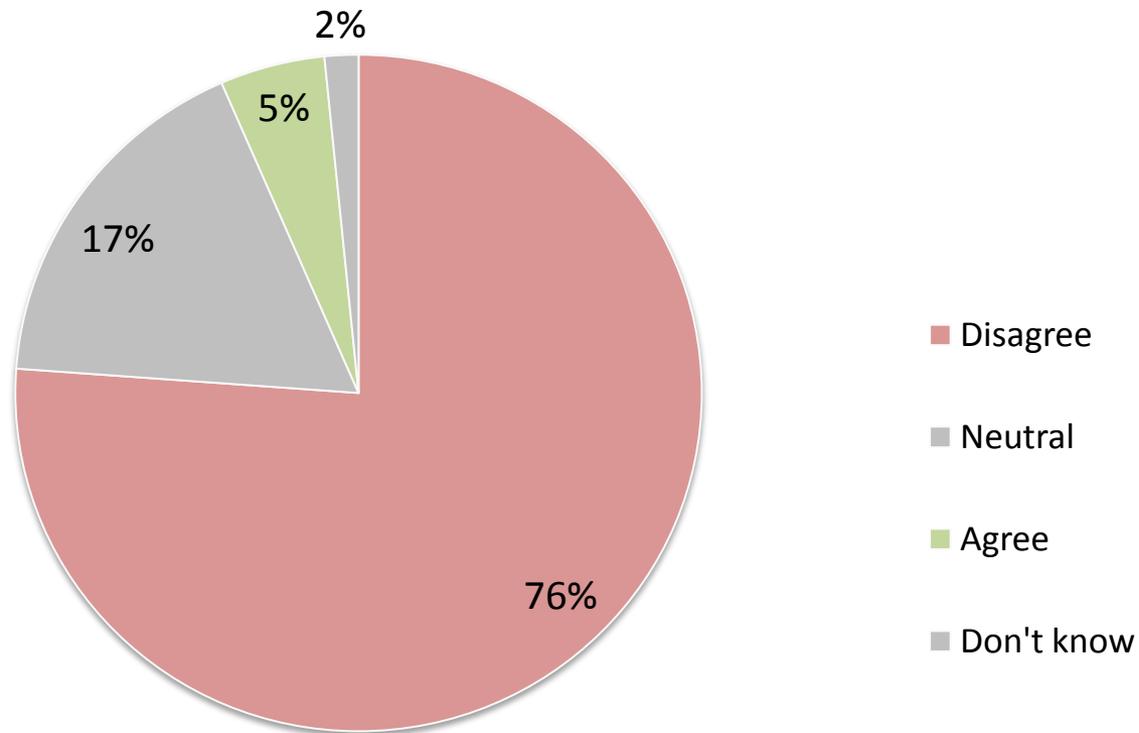


Percentage of students with internet access in the bedroom



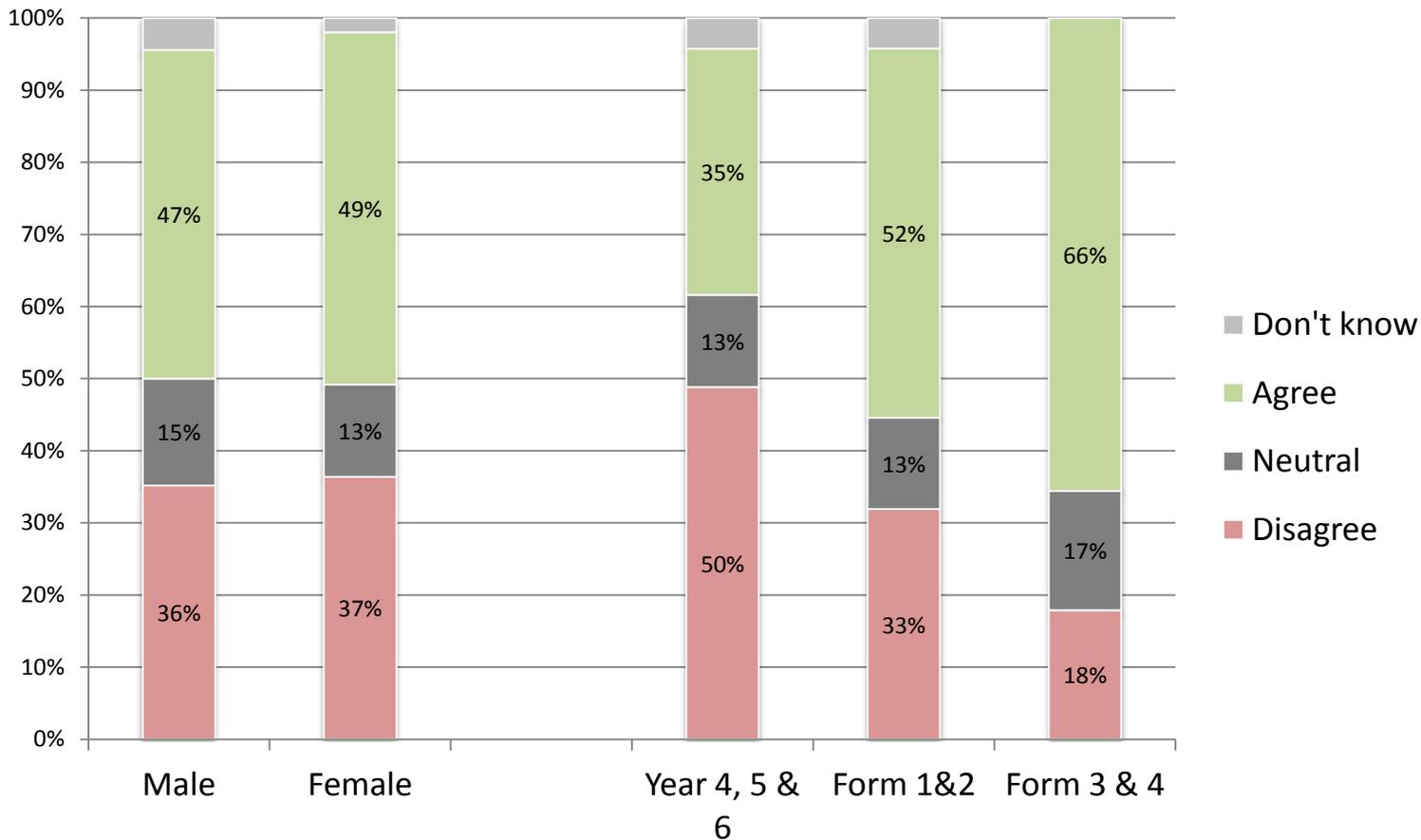
Parents:

I cannot afford internet at home for my child



Parents:

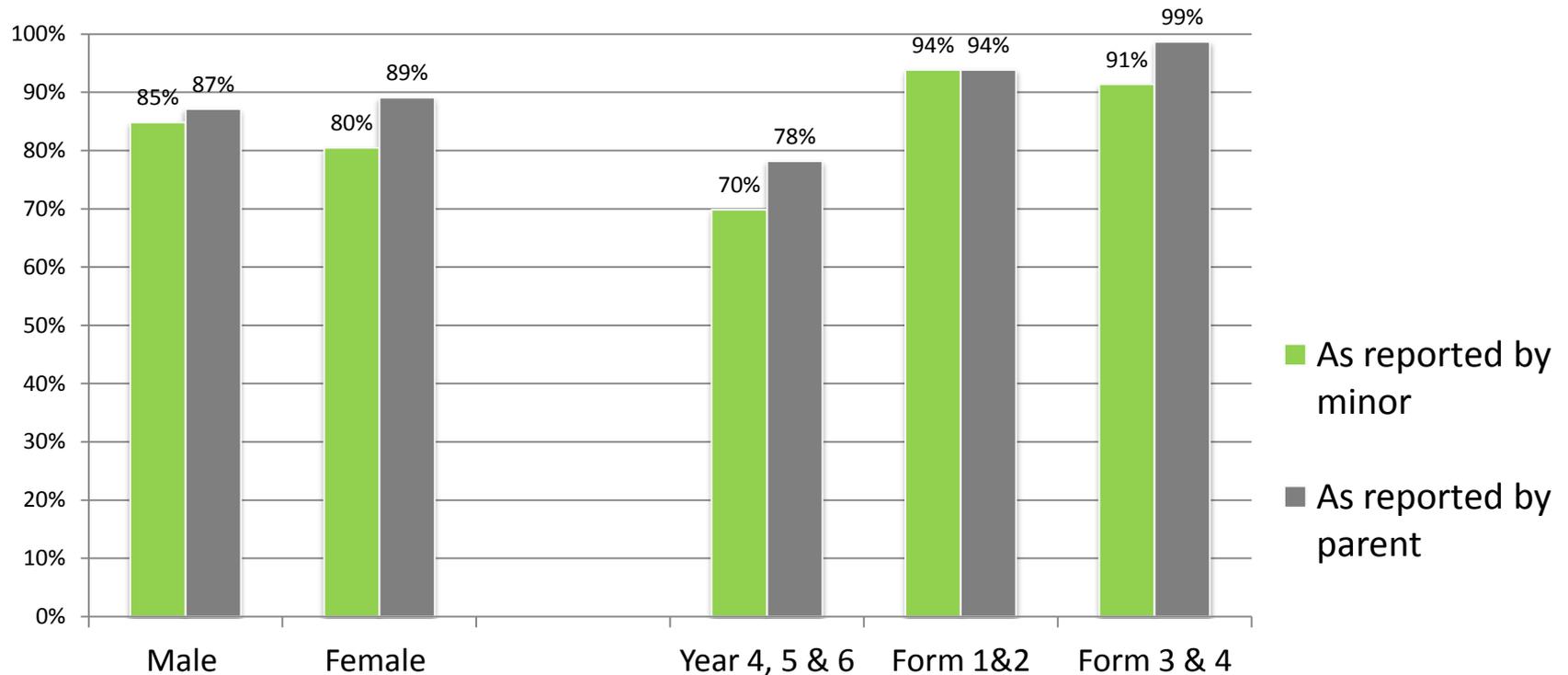
I feel that my child knows much more than me on how to use the internet



>> RESULTS - USE

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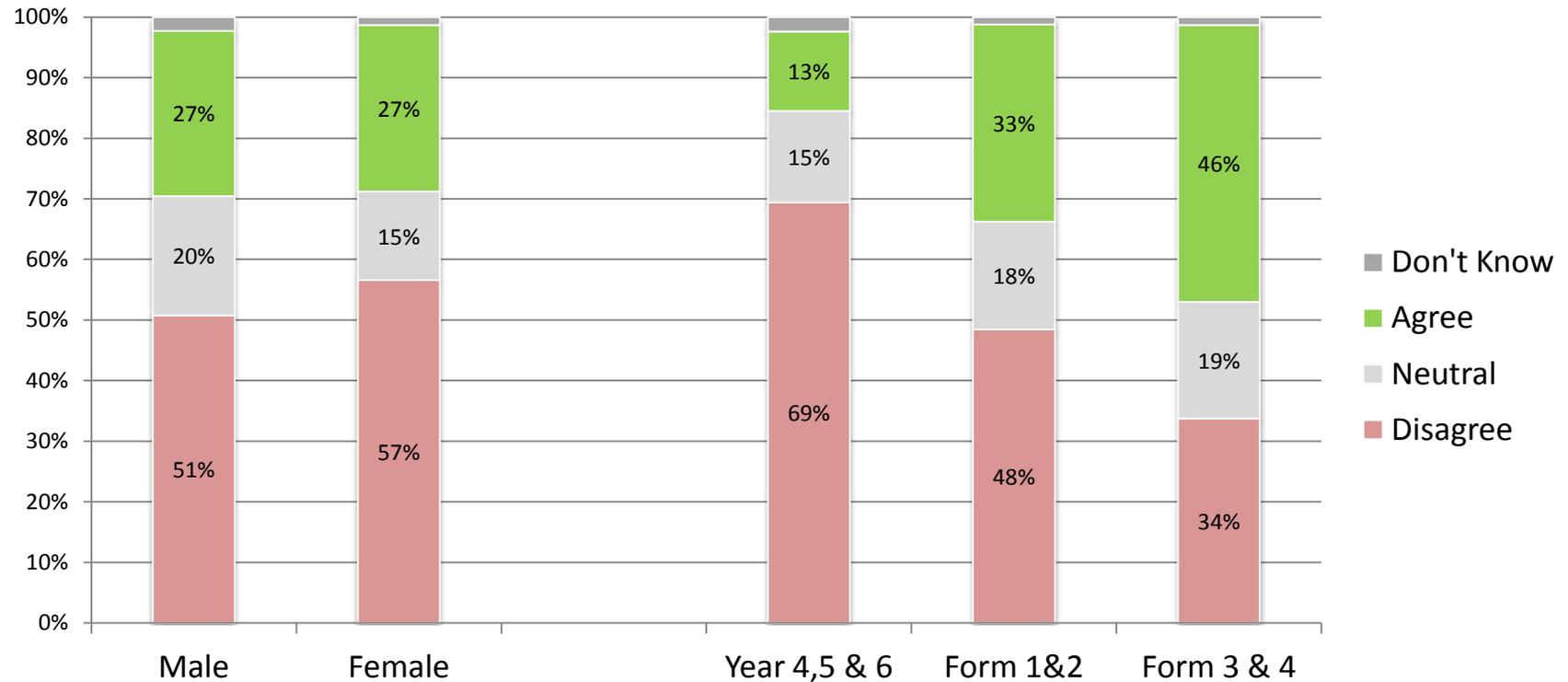
Make use of the internet minimum twice a week (not at school)



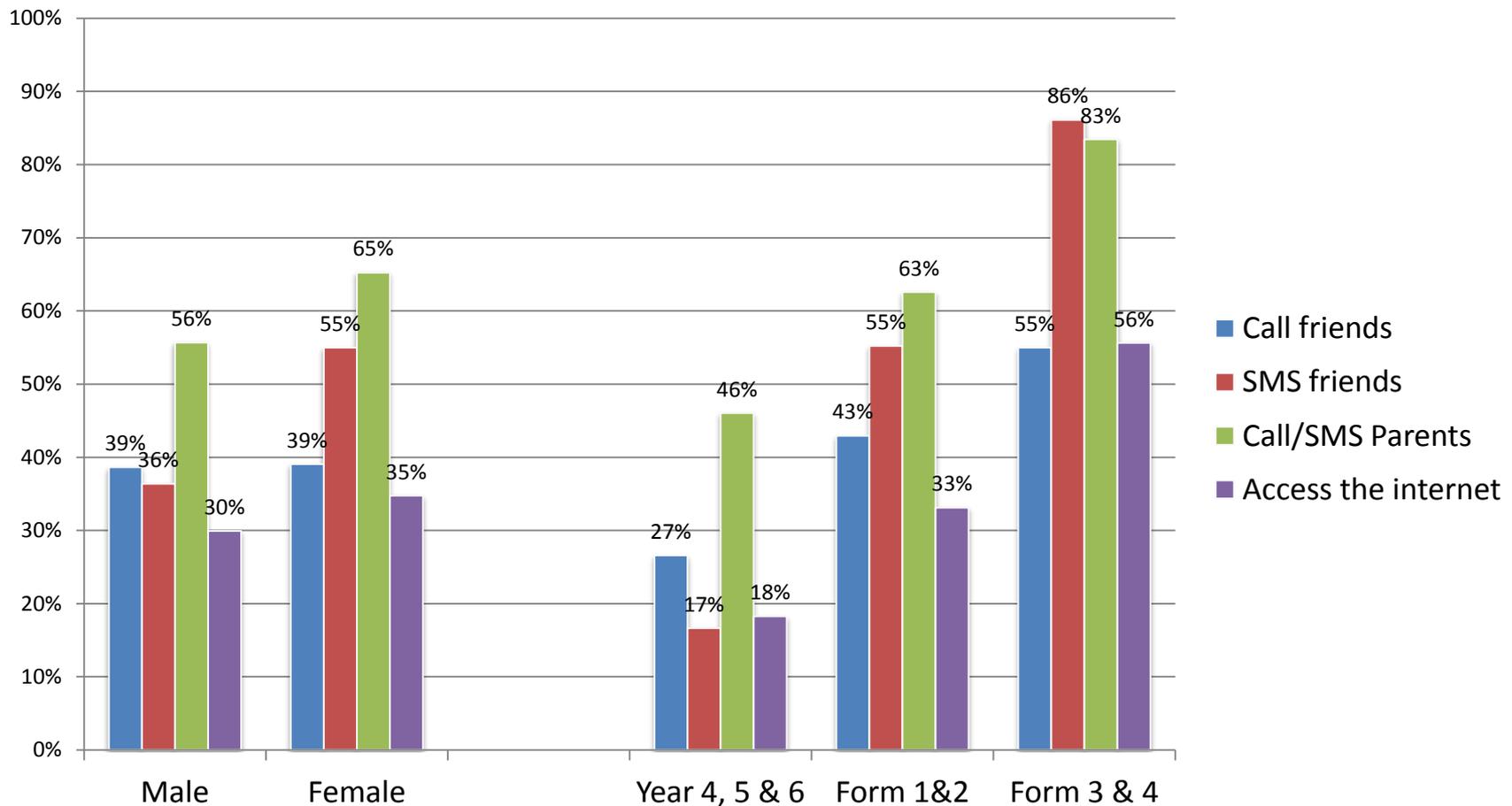
Parents report higher use by their children than children themselves

Parents:

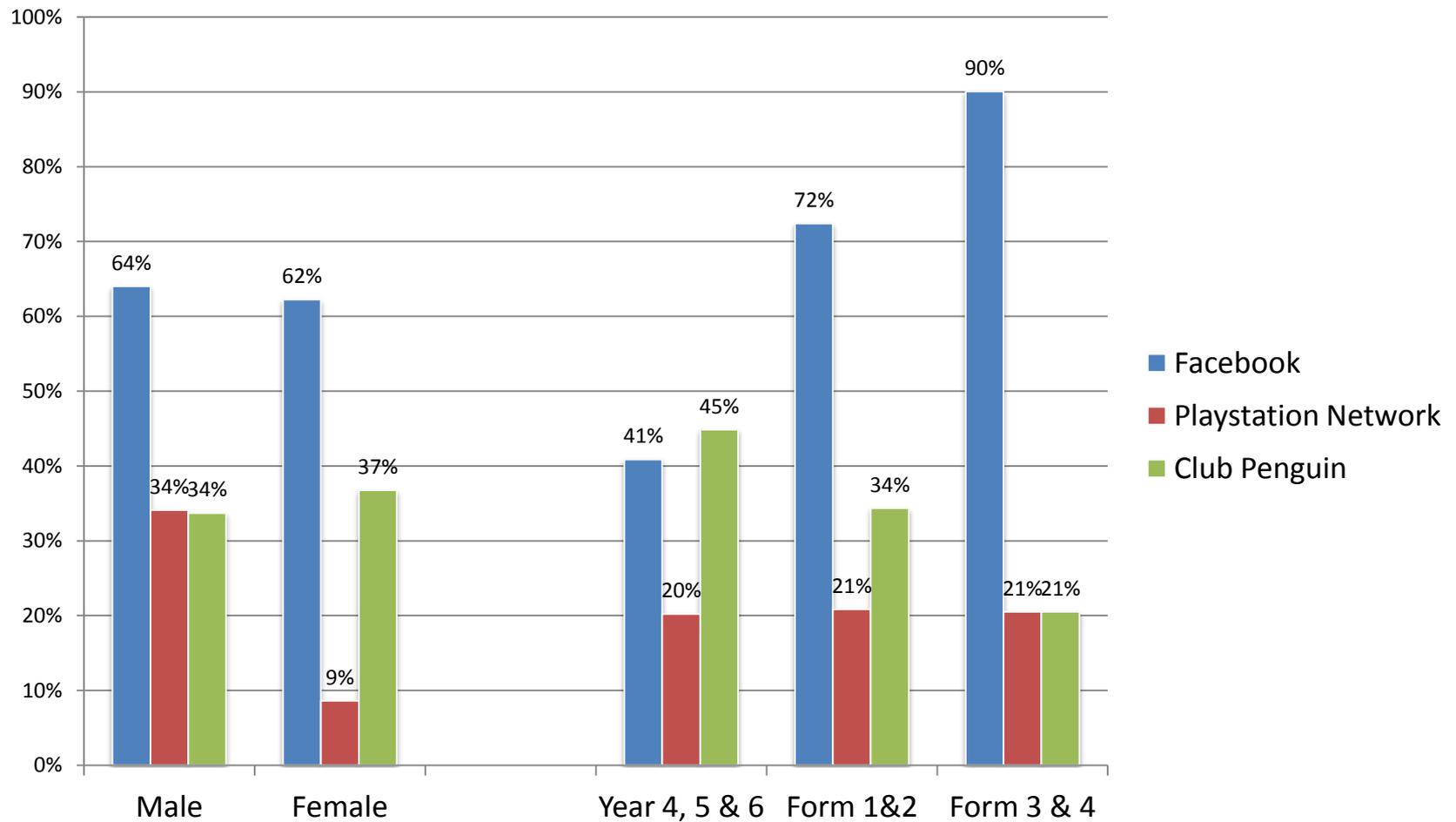
Children spend too much time on the Internet



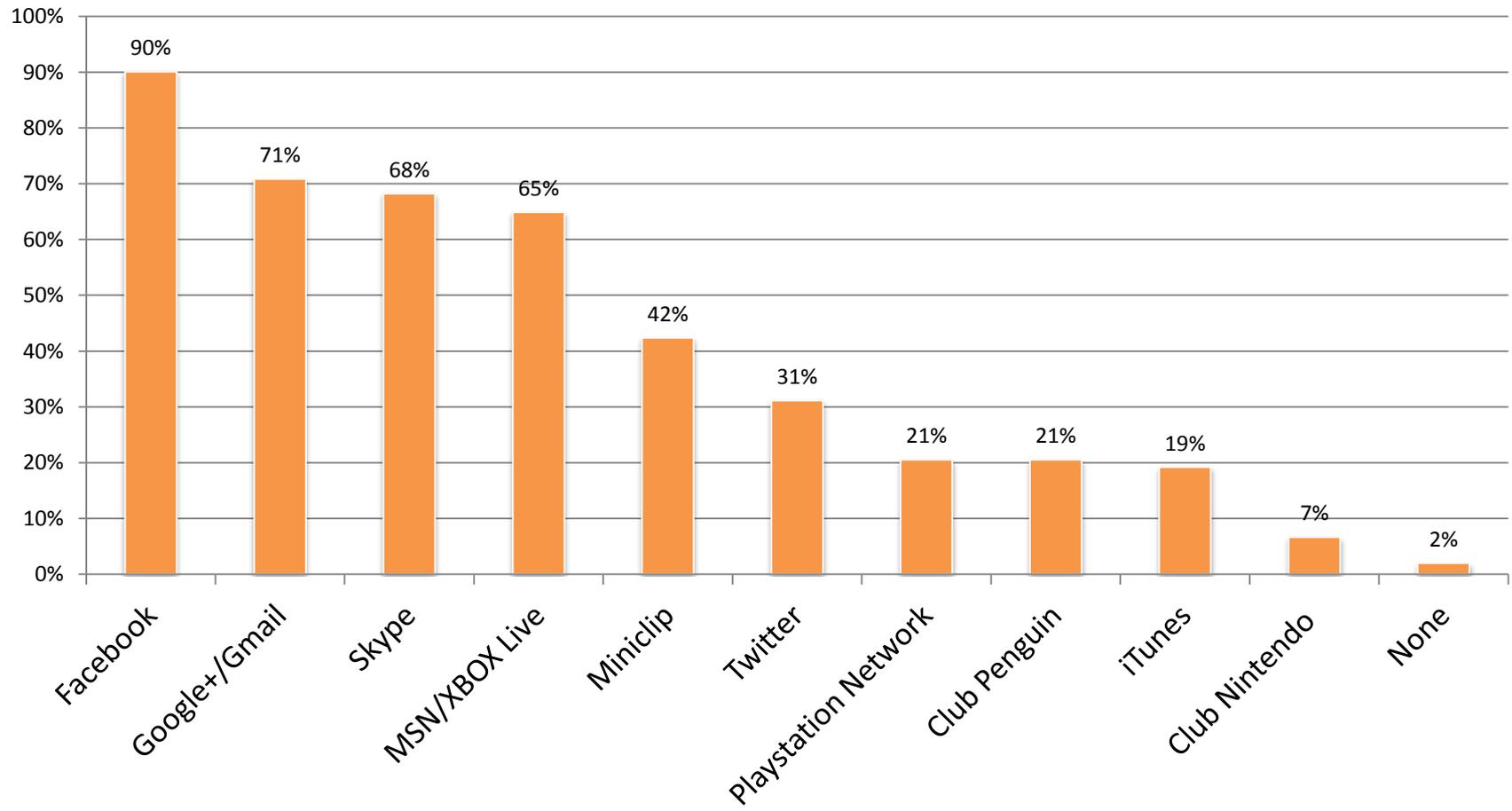
Mobile phone usage by students during the week prior to the survey



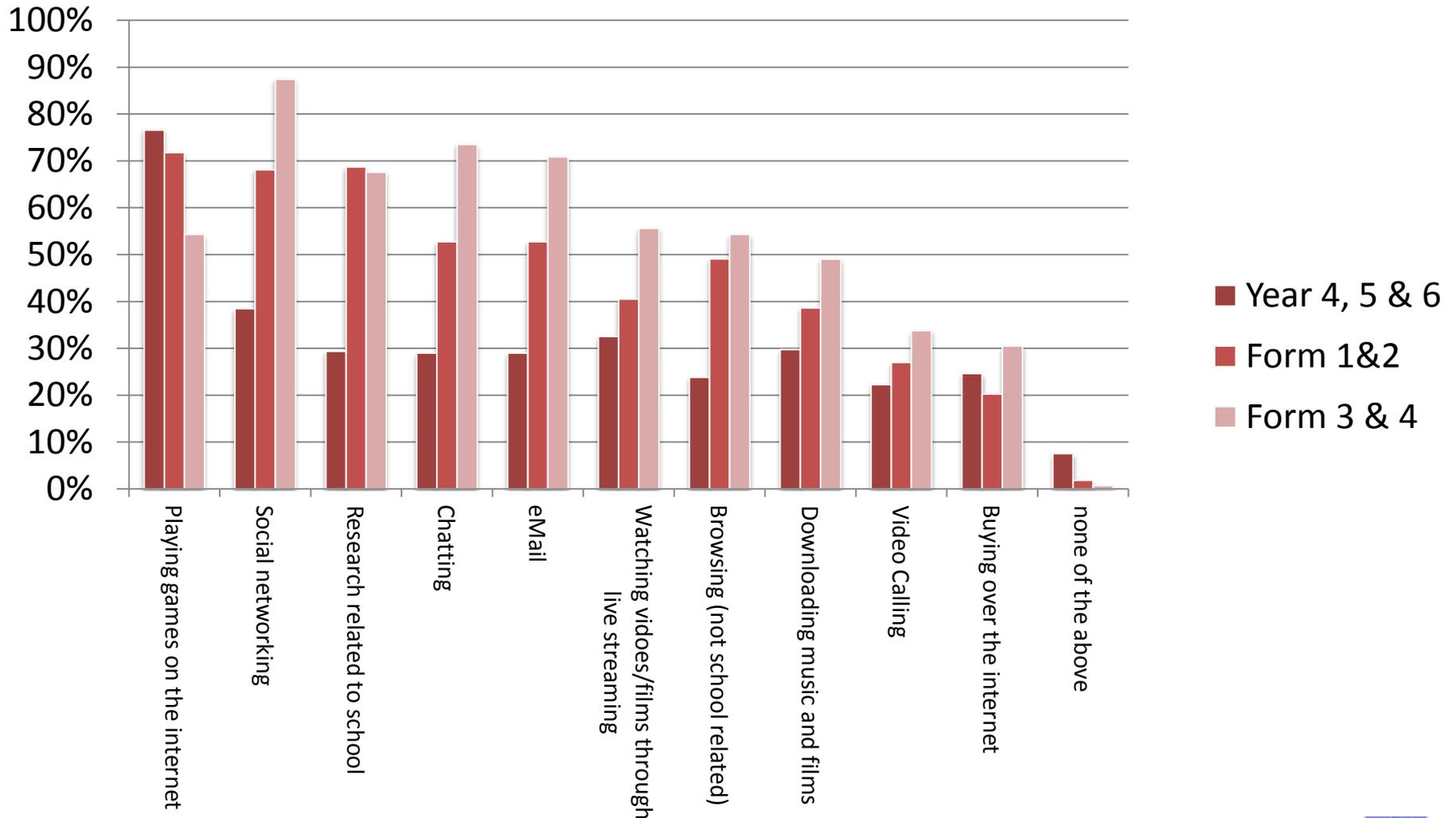
Students with an account/profile on Facebook, Playstation Network and Club Penguin



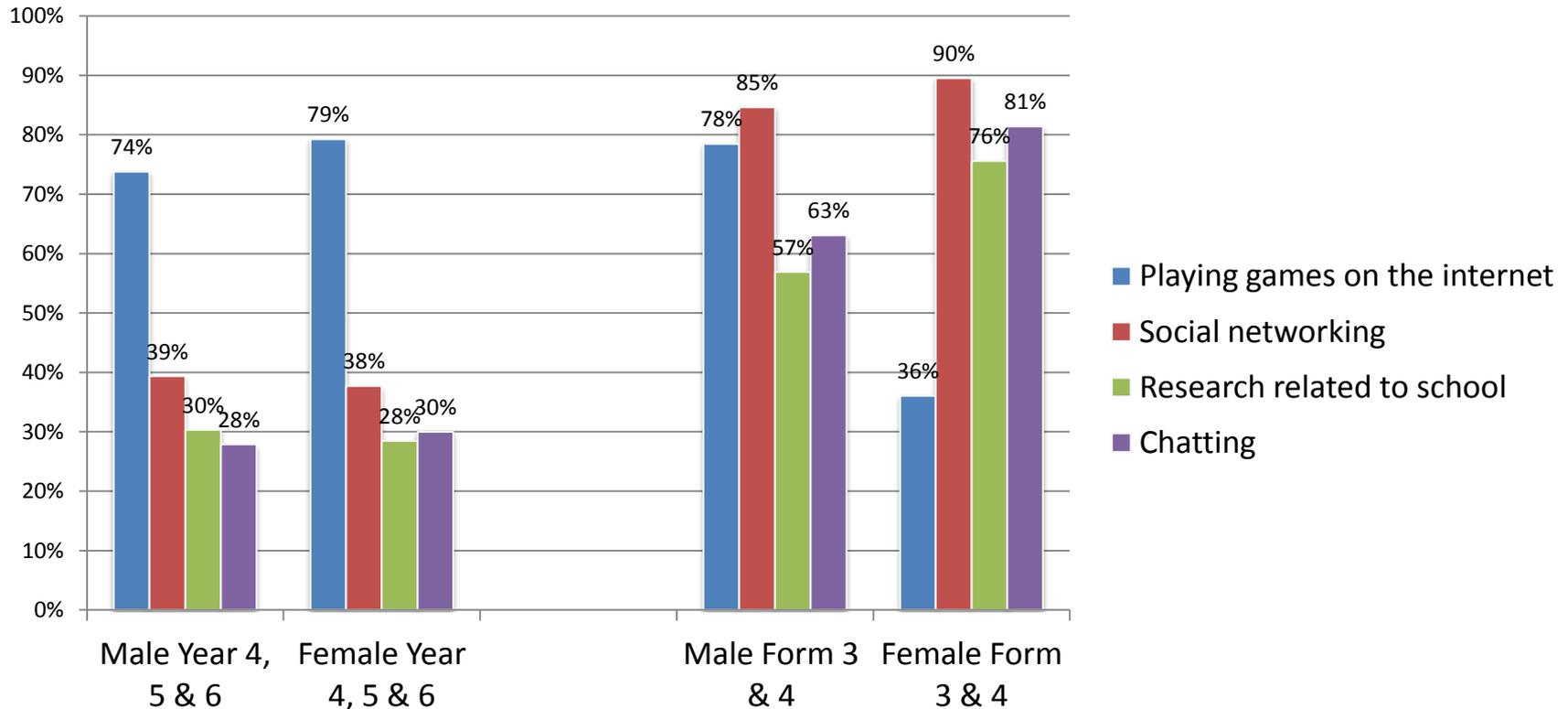
Form 3 & 4 students with an account/profile on websites/social networks



Reasons for using the internet in the two weeks prior to the survey



Reasons for using the internet in the two weeks prior to the survey - contrasted by age and gender

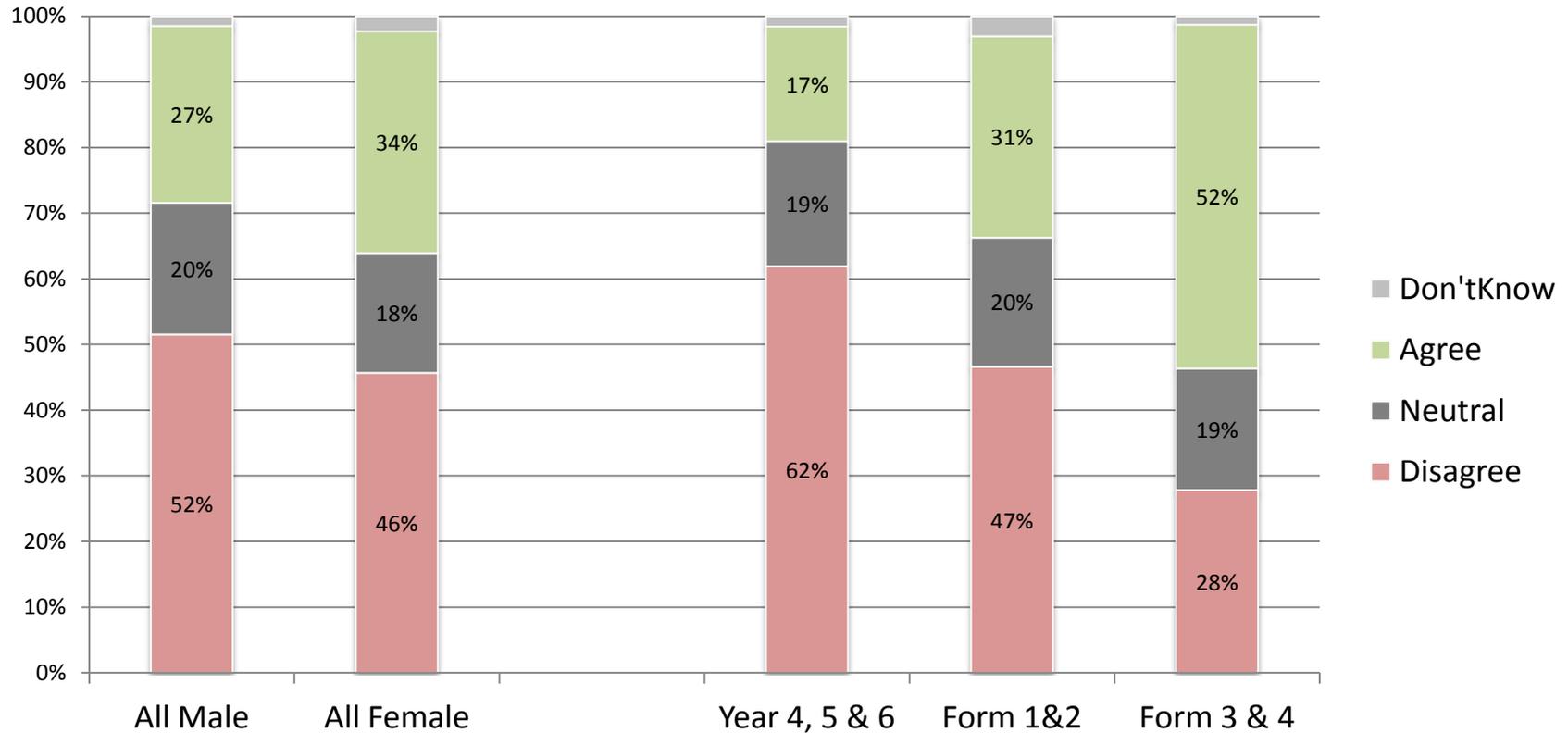


>> RESULTS - SAFETY

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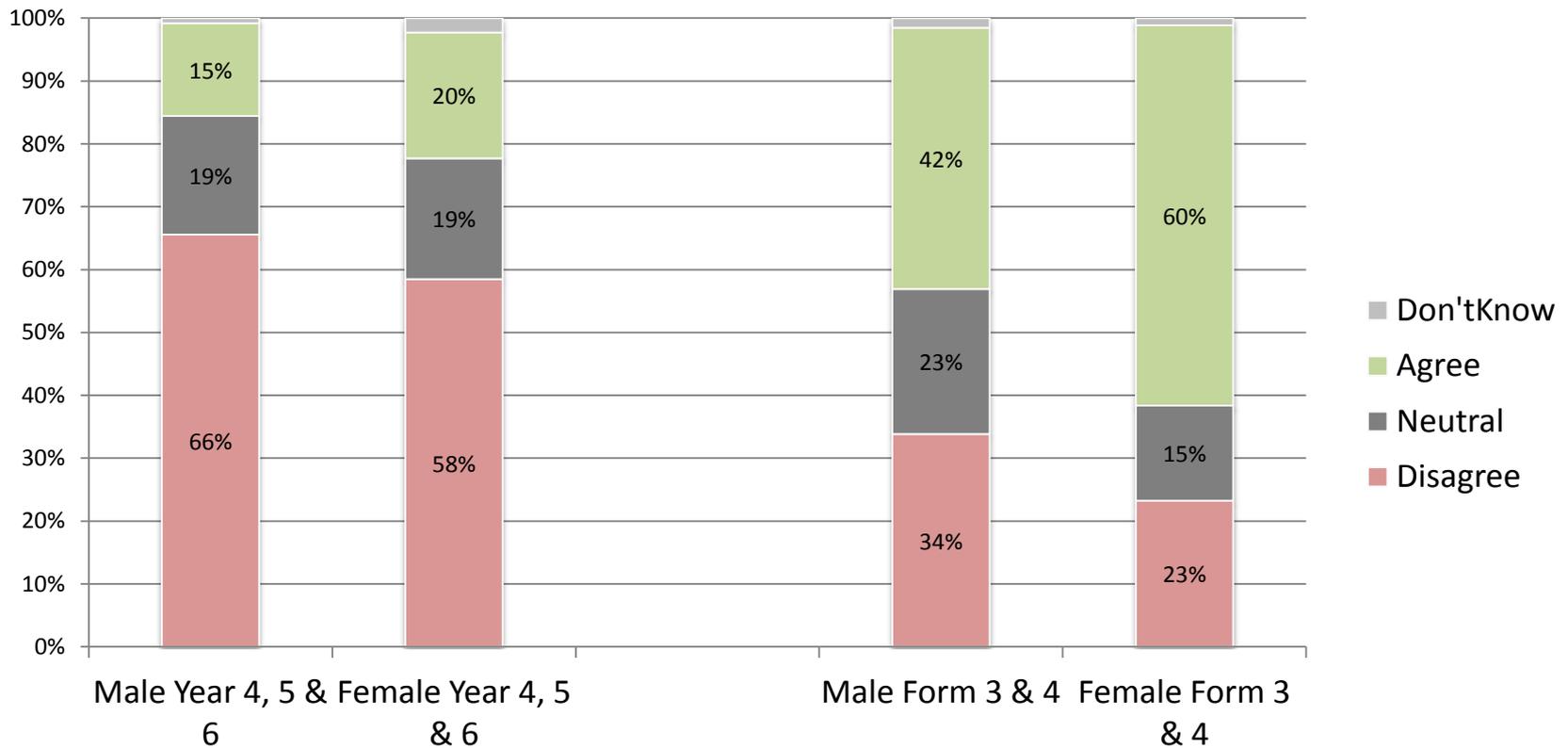
Parents:

I trust my child and therefore I do not need to supervise him/her when using the internet



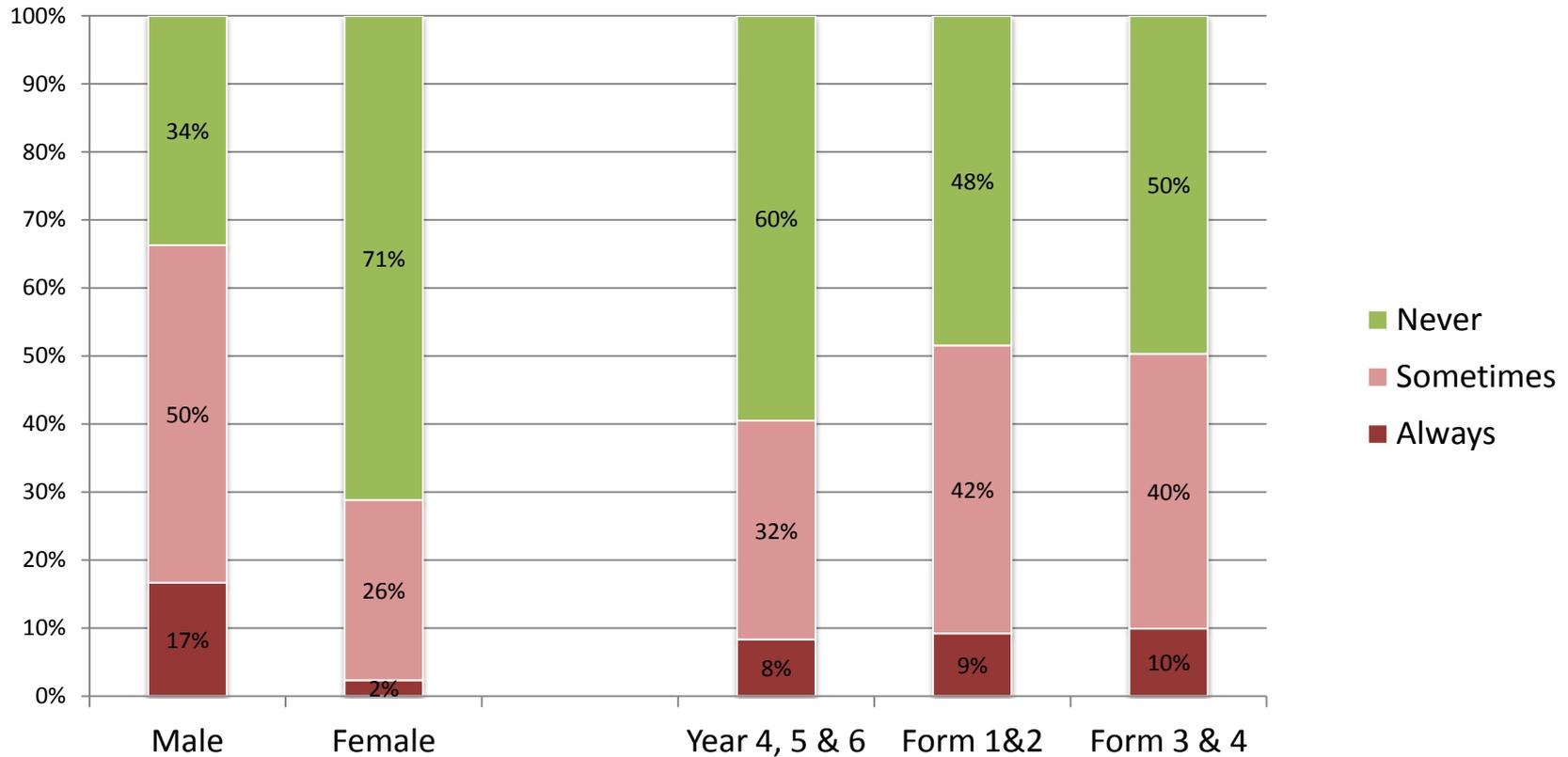
Parents:

I trust my child and therefore I do not need to supervise him/her when using the internet - contrasted by age and gender



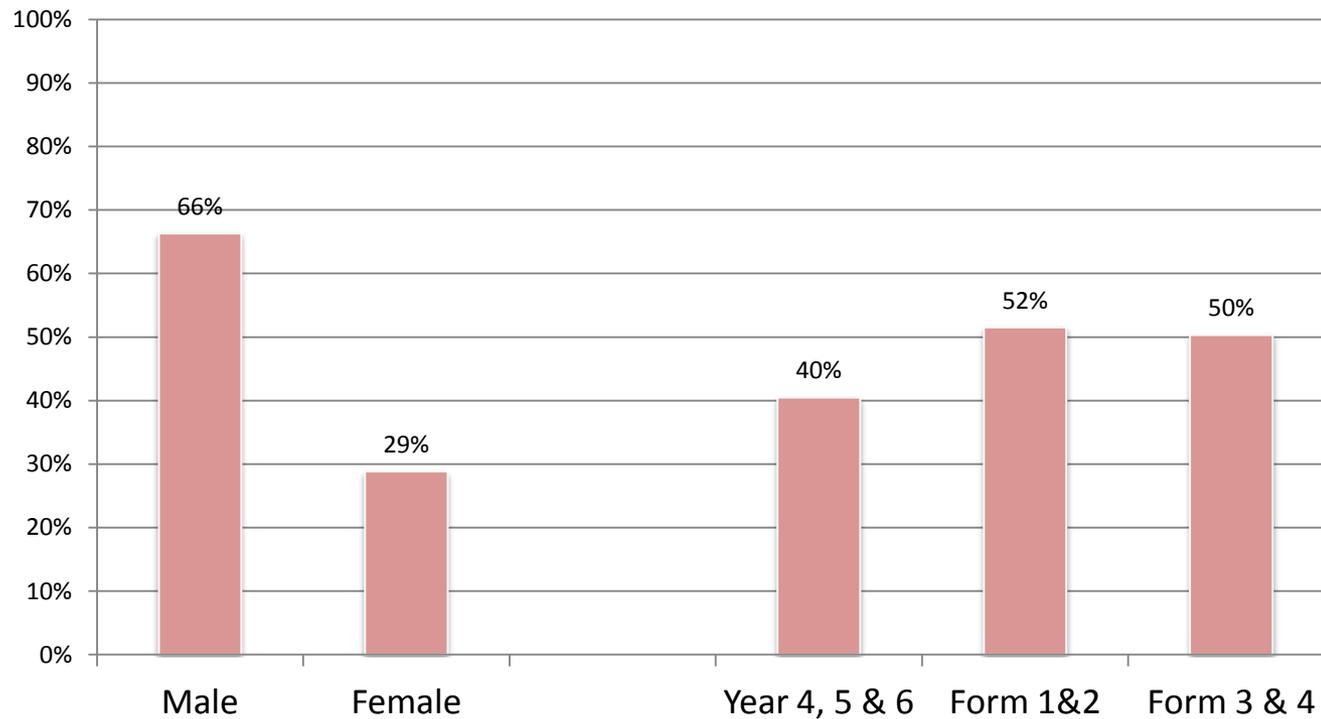
Students:

I play games that are not appropriate for my age

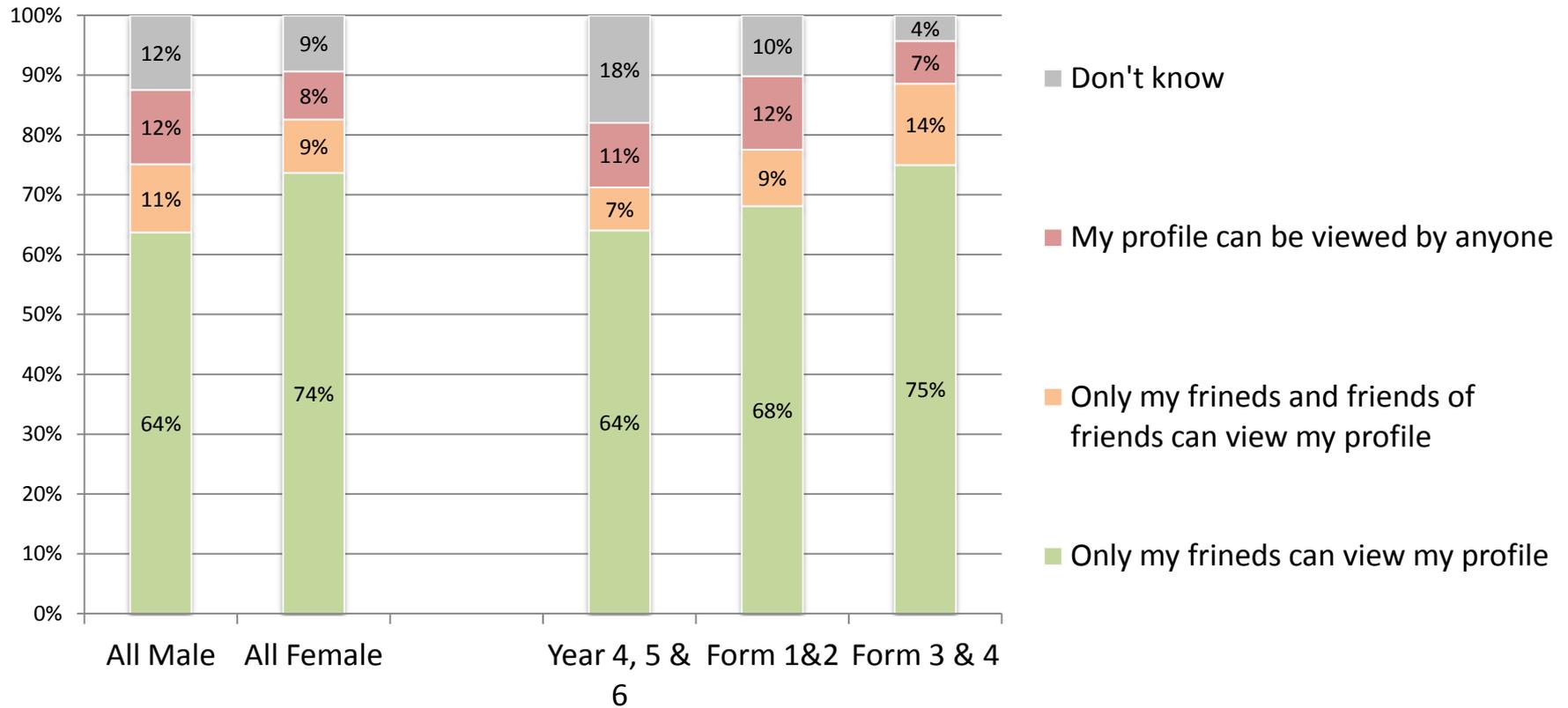


Students:

*I play games that are not appropriate for my age
(sometimes and always)*

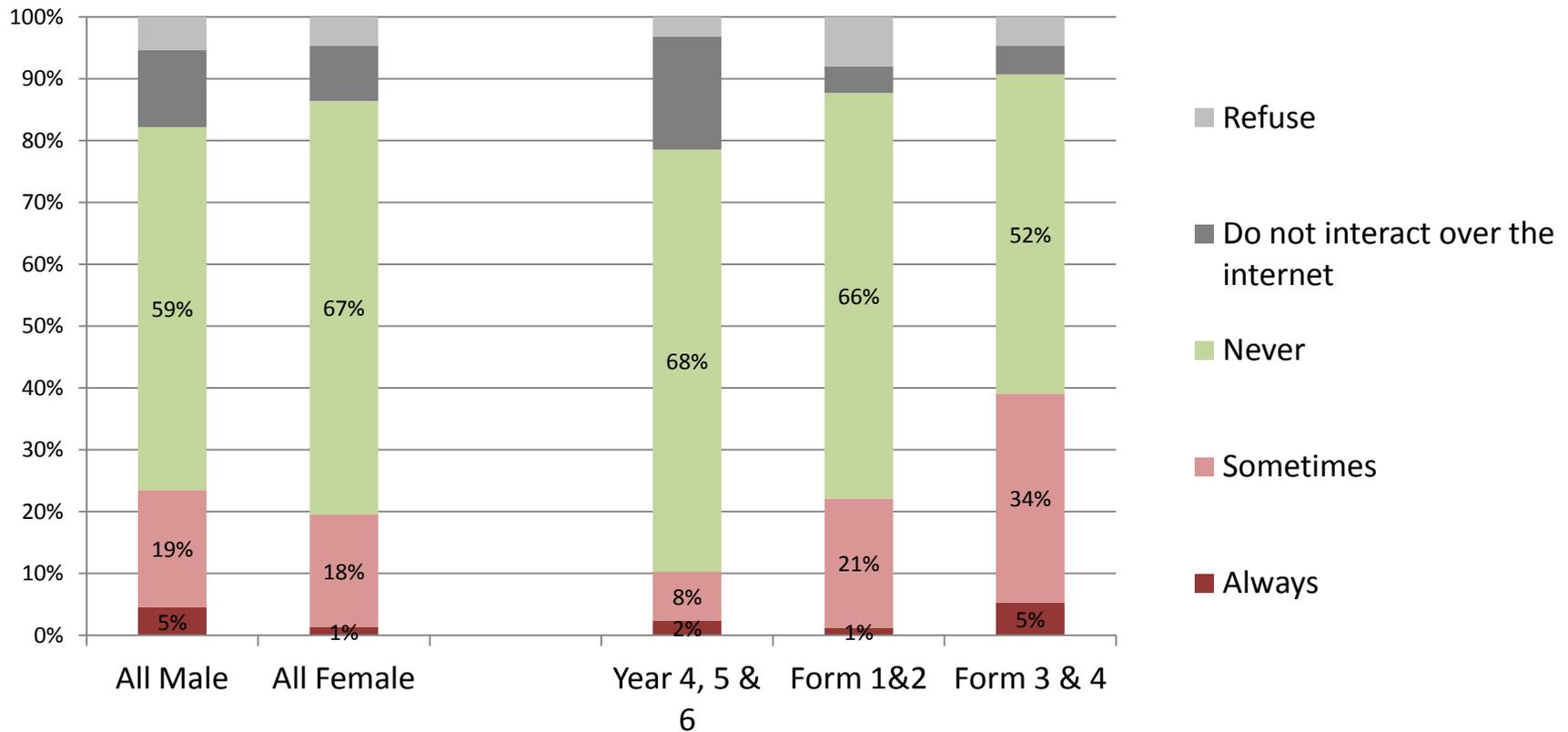


Students' settings on social networks (filtered by users only)



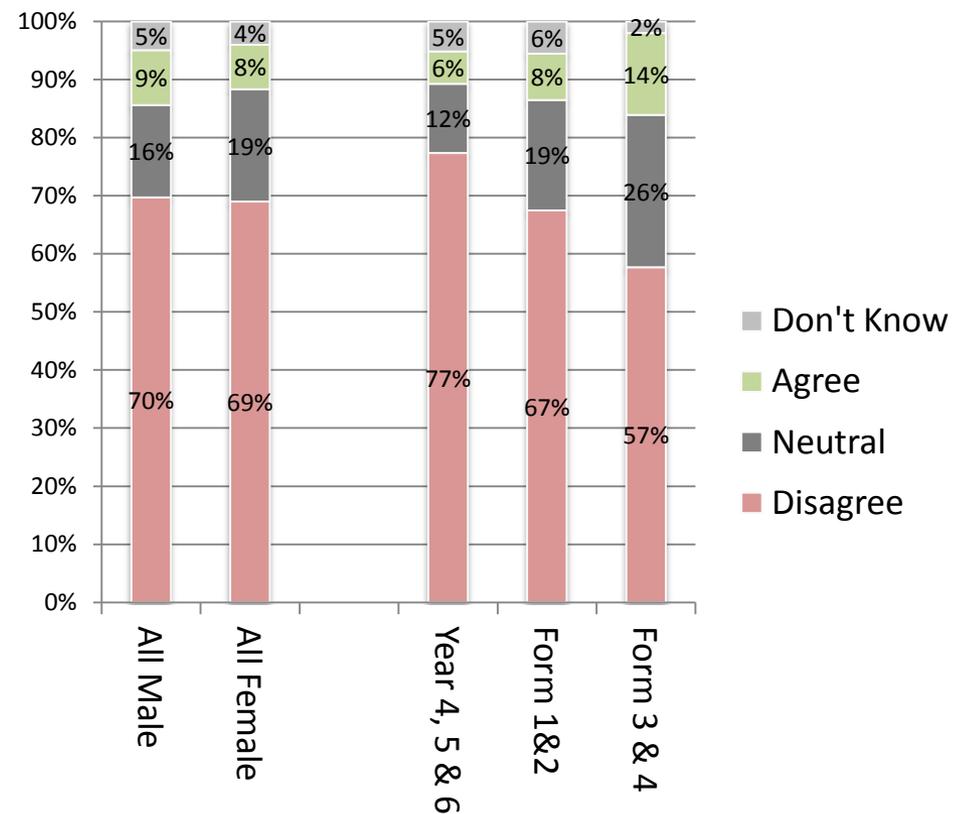
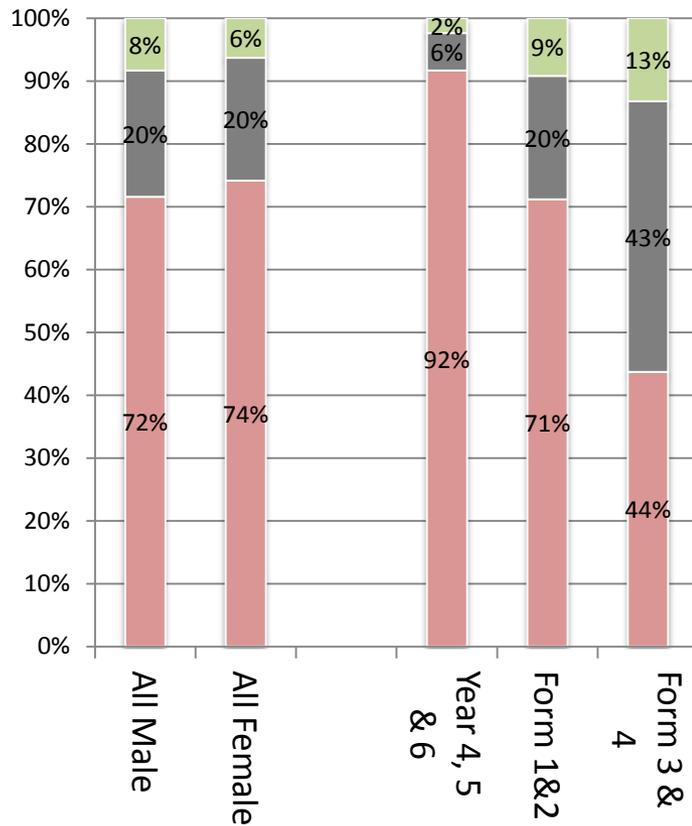
Students:

I interact with people I do not know over the Internet



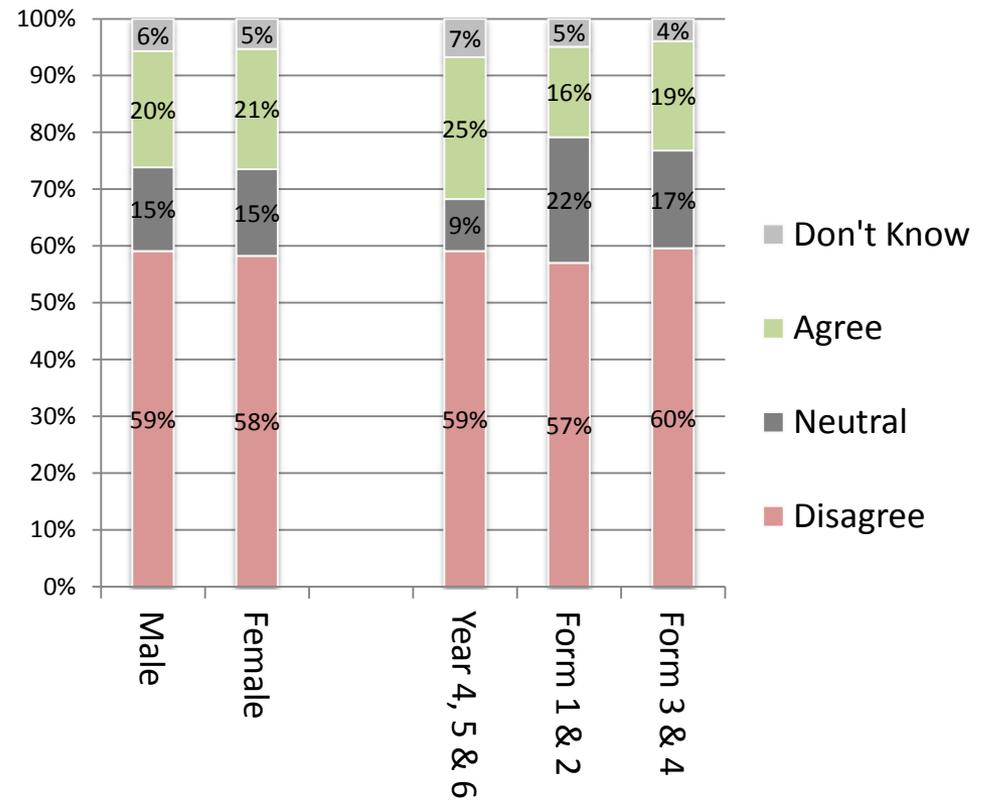
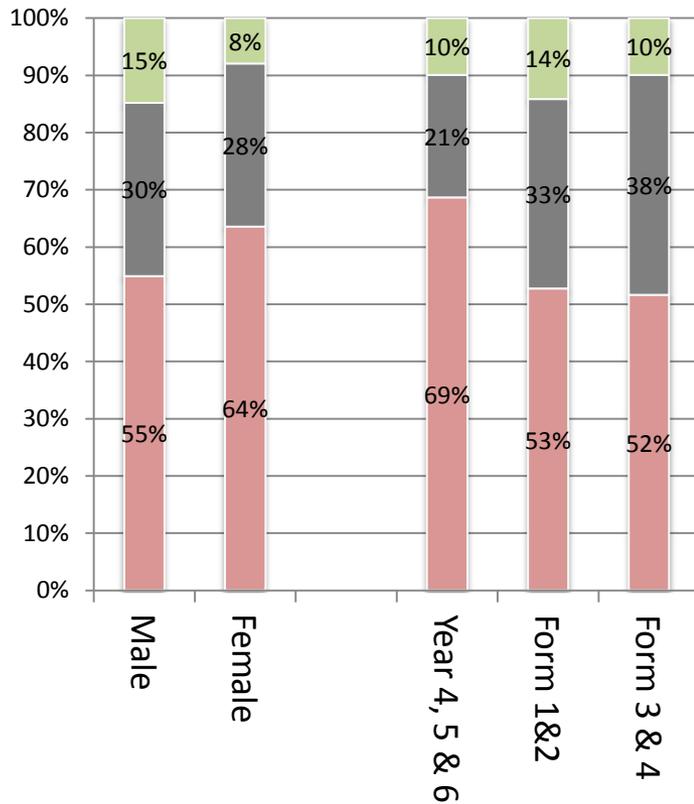
Students: *It is safe to meet new people over the Internet*

Parents: *It is safe for my child to make new friends over the Internet*



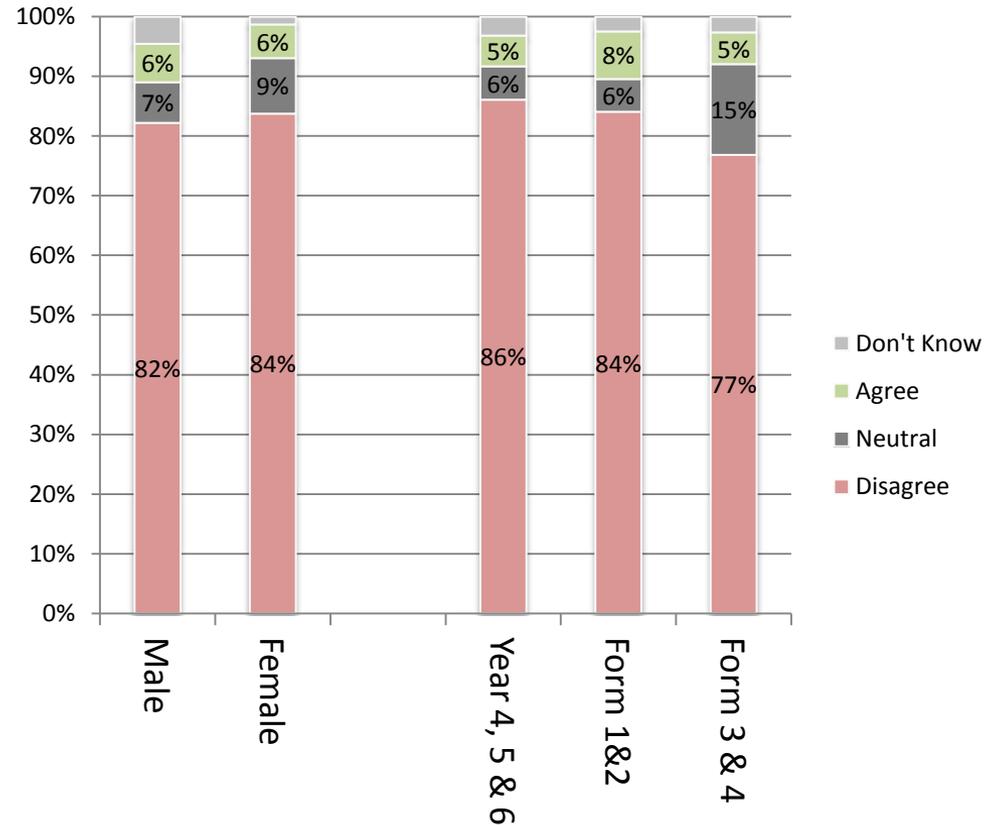
Students: *There are no risks when posting photos of oneself on a social network*

Parents: *It is not risky for my child to upload his/her photo on the Internet*



Students: *I would be willing to meet someone I made friends with over the Internet*

Parents: *It is safe for my child to meet new friends made over the Internet*

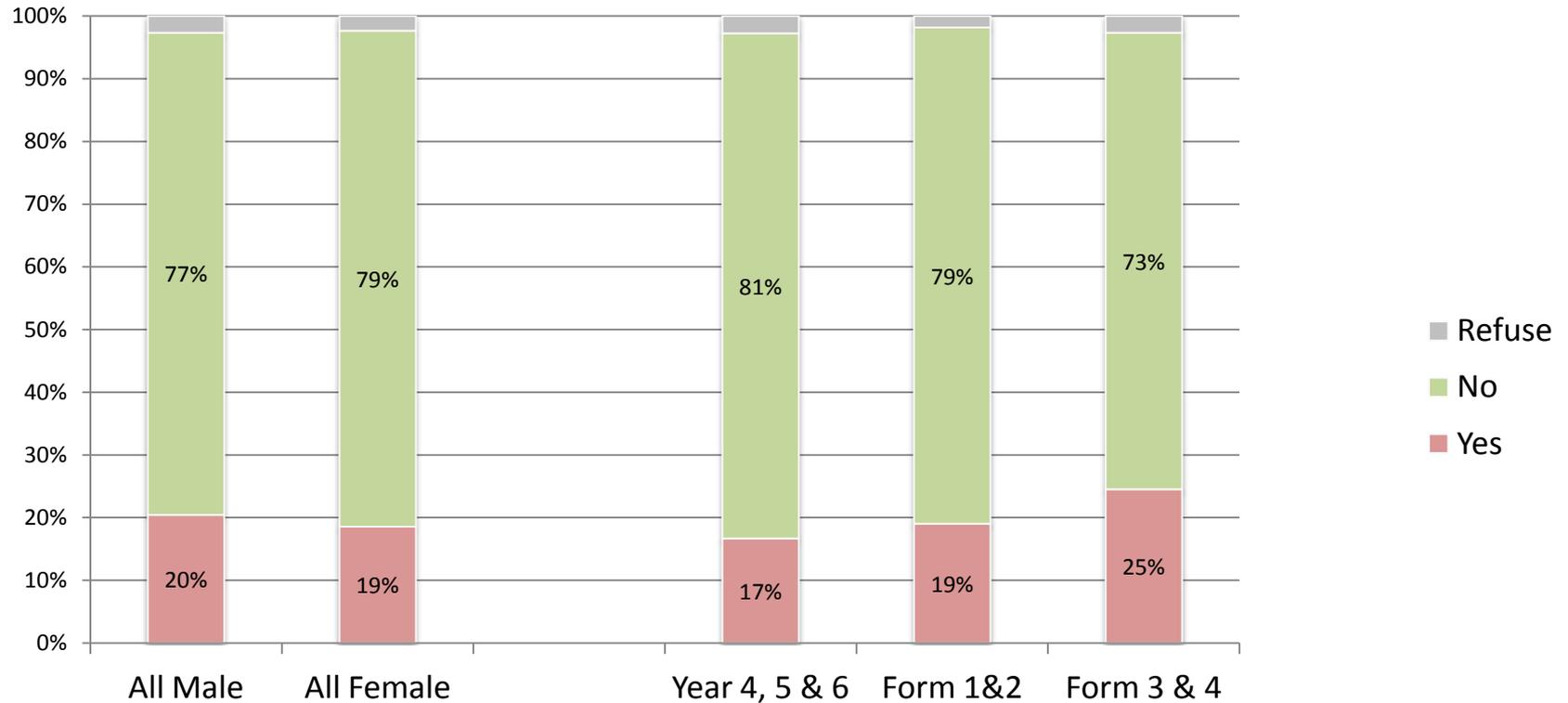


>> ONLINE BULLYING

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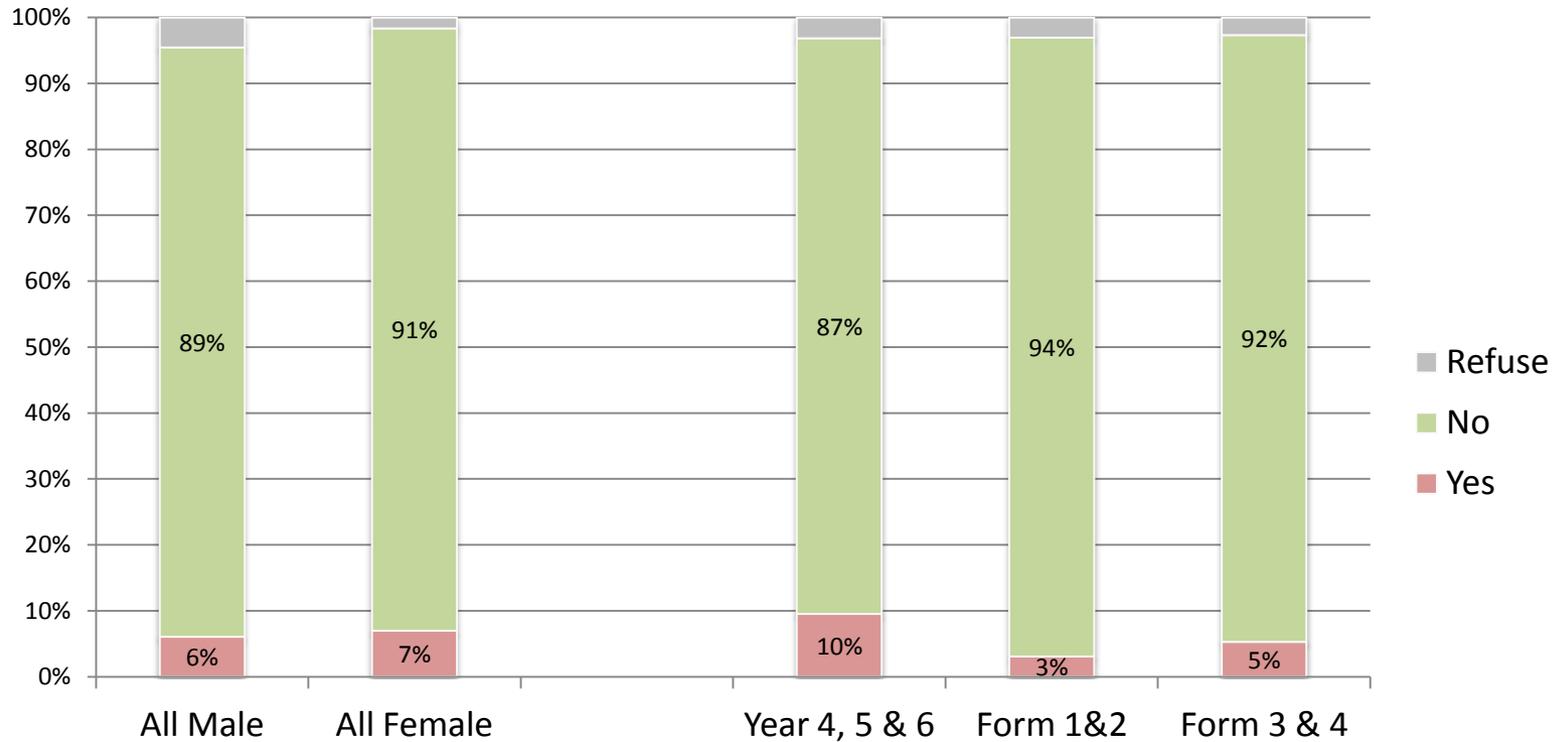
Students:

Do you know someone your age who has been or is bullied over the Internet?



Students:

Have you ever been bullied over the Internet?

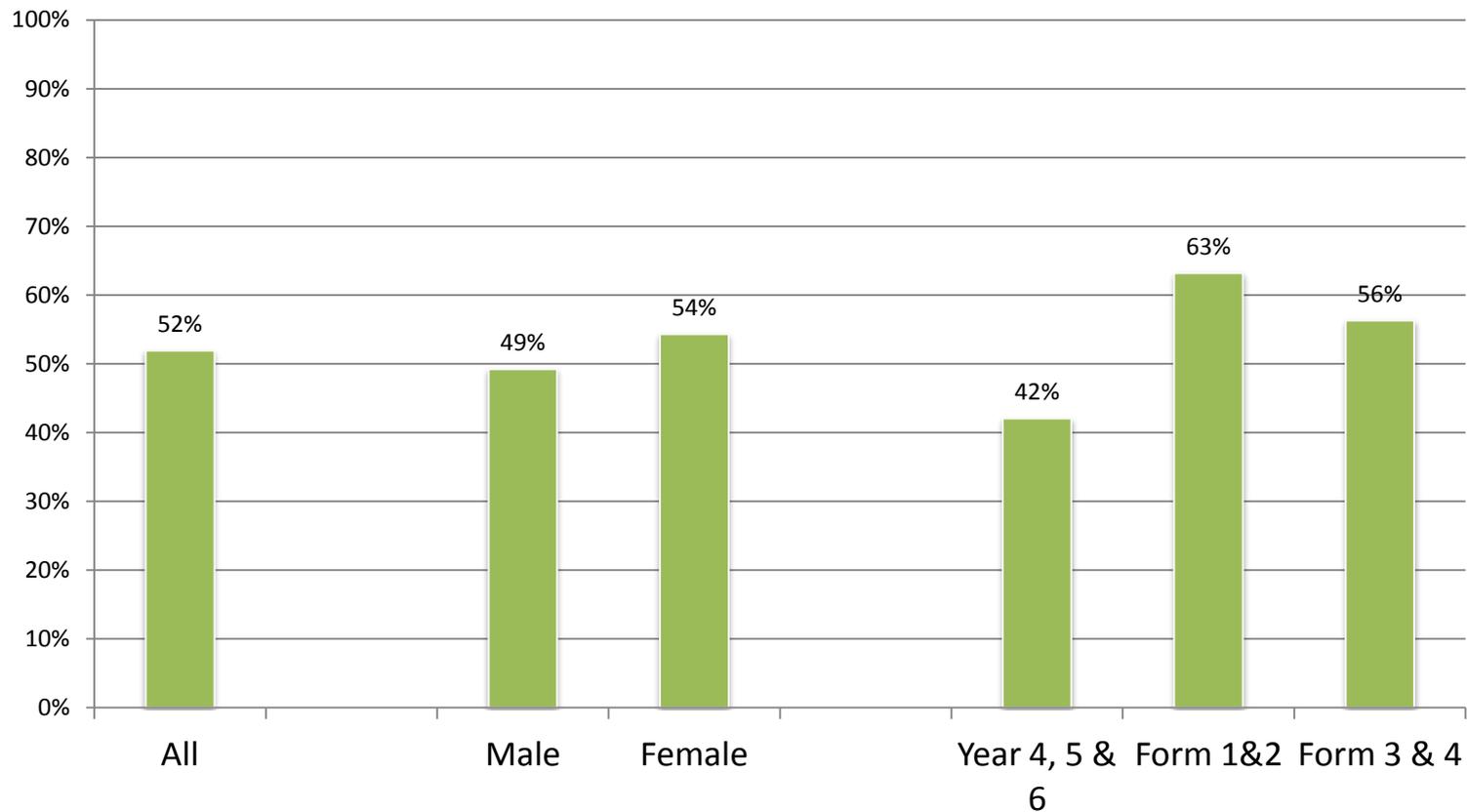


>> BRAND

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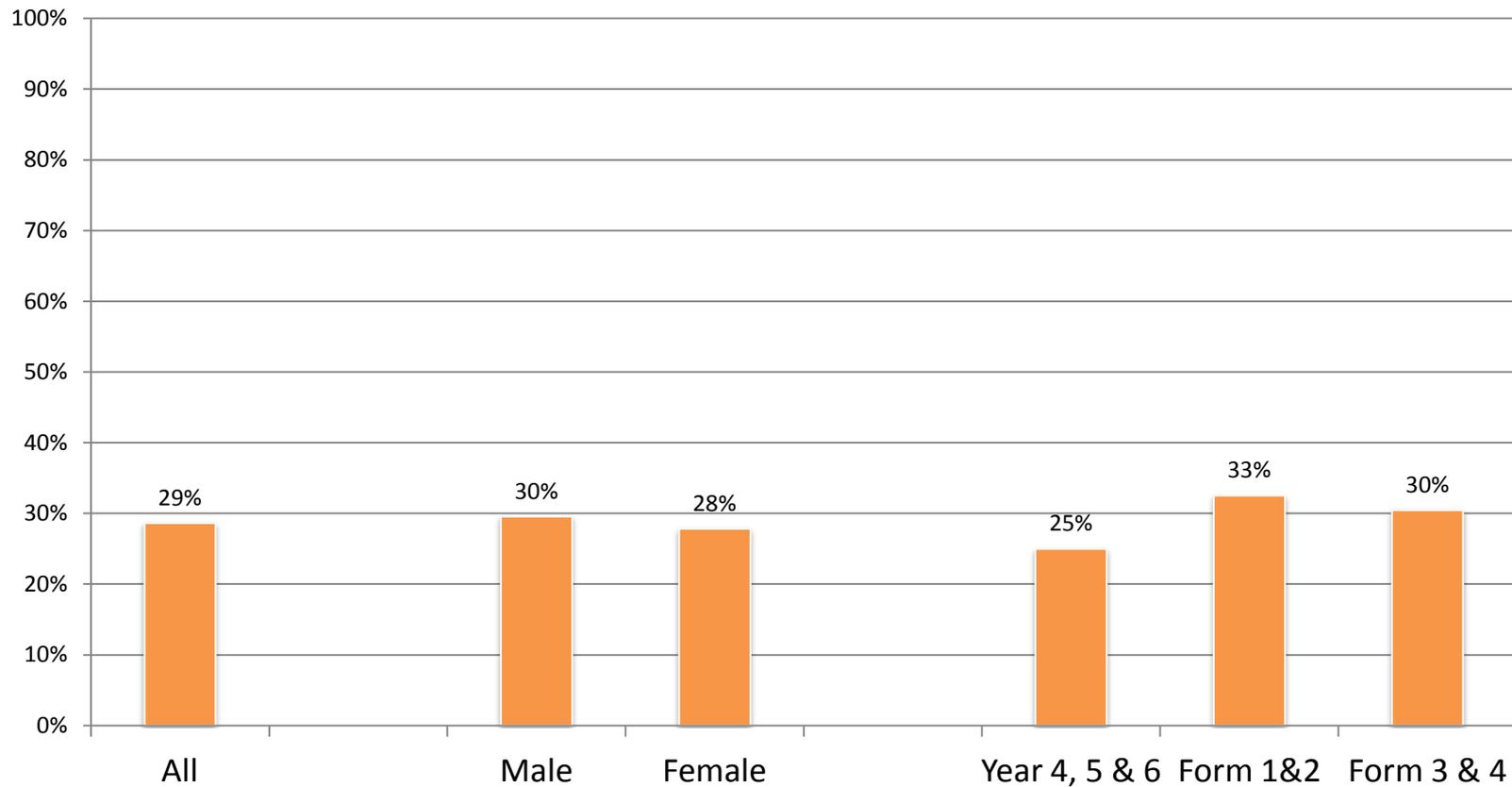
Students:

Have you ever seen the BeSmartOnline logo?



Parents:

Have you ever seen the BeSmartOnline logo?



>>CONCLUSIONS

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Key findings

- ✚ Internet usage continues to increase with access spilling to tablets, games consoles and mobile phones
- ✚ Different ICTs and their applications may be perceived differently by different generations (use of the term 'internet' may no longer be appropriate to use in such a surveys)
- ✚ Use of social networking is on the rise even amongst the very young
- ✚ Students, many times with the consent of the parents, are often not abiding to age restrictions for gaming and social networking
- ✚ There appears to be no digital divide between children although the socio-economic background appears to be linked to a student's access to ICTs
- ✚ Strong gender differences exist and are mostly observable amongst the older cohorts
- ✚ Children appear to be more knowledgeable about online risks than their parents but parents appear more concerned about potential risks than their children
- ✚ Parents may over trust children possibly because they feel alien to the technology or because they feel that their children are knowledgeable enough to take care for themselves