

Babies in Bathtubs: Public Views of Private Behaviors Represented in the flickr™ Domain

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ABSTRACT

Flickr, a photo sharing website, brings the family photo album, once confined to private living rooms, into the public square. Publishing this and other personal content online raises issues of openness, access and privacy, and the subsequent loss of transparency between private and public lives. A thread in academic and popular discourse has been on the use of social technologies, such as Flickr, by youth and resulting issues of awareness concerning privacy and disclosure (e.g., Palen & Dourish, 2003; Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Recent research suggests, however, that adults may not be as aware of these privacy concerns themselves and, in fact, frequently post and disclose photos and information that may result in unintended public disclosure (Lenhart, et. al., 2007).

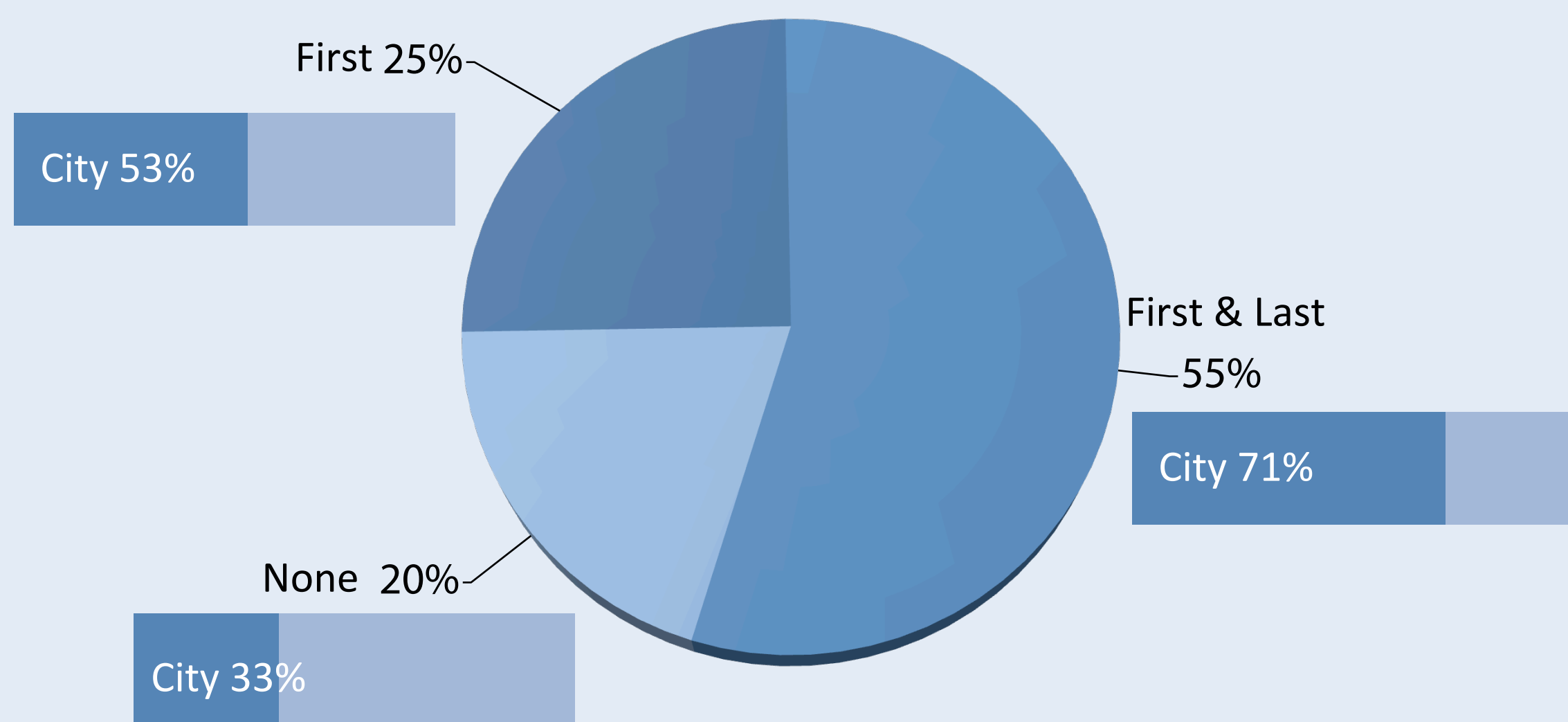
Through examining a particular class of content – photos depicting the iconic image of "babies in bathtubs" on Flickr – this study aims to quantify and describe issues of openness, access and privacy, and to raise awareness that these issues cross generational lines. The intent of this research is not to be lewd or moralistically subjective, but to highlight that issues of privacy and identity disclosure online are not just oriented to youth and young adults, but are an everyone condition; it's not just Junior posting revealing content, but Mom and Pop too.

METHOD

This poster reports findings from an analysis of publicly available images uploaded and shared via Flickr. Exploratory searches taken in preparation of the research design yielded result sets ranging from hundreds to tens of thousands. As a result, the search string developed for this study was constructed to capture both the activity (bathing) and the subjects, including stages of childhood (infancy through pre-teen) and familial relationships. A search across full-text fields and tags using – "Bathtubs and (Babies OR Kids OR Children OR Toddler OR Brother OR Sister OR Son OR Daughter OR Granddaughter OR Grandson OR Boy OR Girl OR Niece OR Nephew OR Cousin OR Male OR Female)" – yielded 5552 returns. The first 500 images, sorted by relevancy, were selected for analysis. Following a visual inspection of these images to determine eligibility – simply, did the image depict a child in the act of bathing – 327 were selected for further analysis. From these images, 190 unique contributors, or profiles, were identified. In total, 47 elements were coded for analysis, 26 pertaining to images and 21 pertaining to profiles. In this poster, we focus image analysis on four specific areas: depiction, description, licensing and viewership. For profile, we share findings on identification and participation.

PROFILE (n=190)

Identification: Name and Location



Community Participation

Contacts	Range	Groups
6%	0	1%
14%	1 to 10	12%
38%	11 to 100	36%
18%	100 to 250	27%
14%	251 to 500	15%
7%	501 to 1000	3%
3%	> 1000	1%

IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

This research resulted from lunch-time banter (and subtle disdain) over persistent media reports of youth's indiscretions committed via online social networking utilities. A quick Flickr search using the archetypal milestone photo in many of our pasts – the baby in the bathtub – made clear the lack of full treatment of the issue of self-selected, public disclosure via the World Wide Web. Preliminary analysis from our resulting research study confirms the obvious: issues of online privacy and disclosure are not a youth-oriented problem, but an everyone problem. Further, for the images in our study, decisions on disclosure are made by the contributor (e.g., parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle of the subject). The subjects of the contributed content are assumed to be uninvolved in decisions on access to their depictions – assumed because many of the depicted are simply too young to talk.

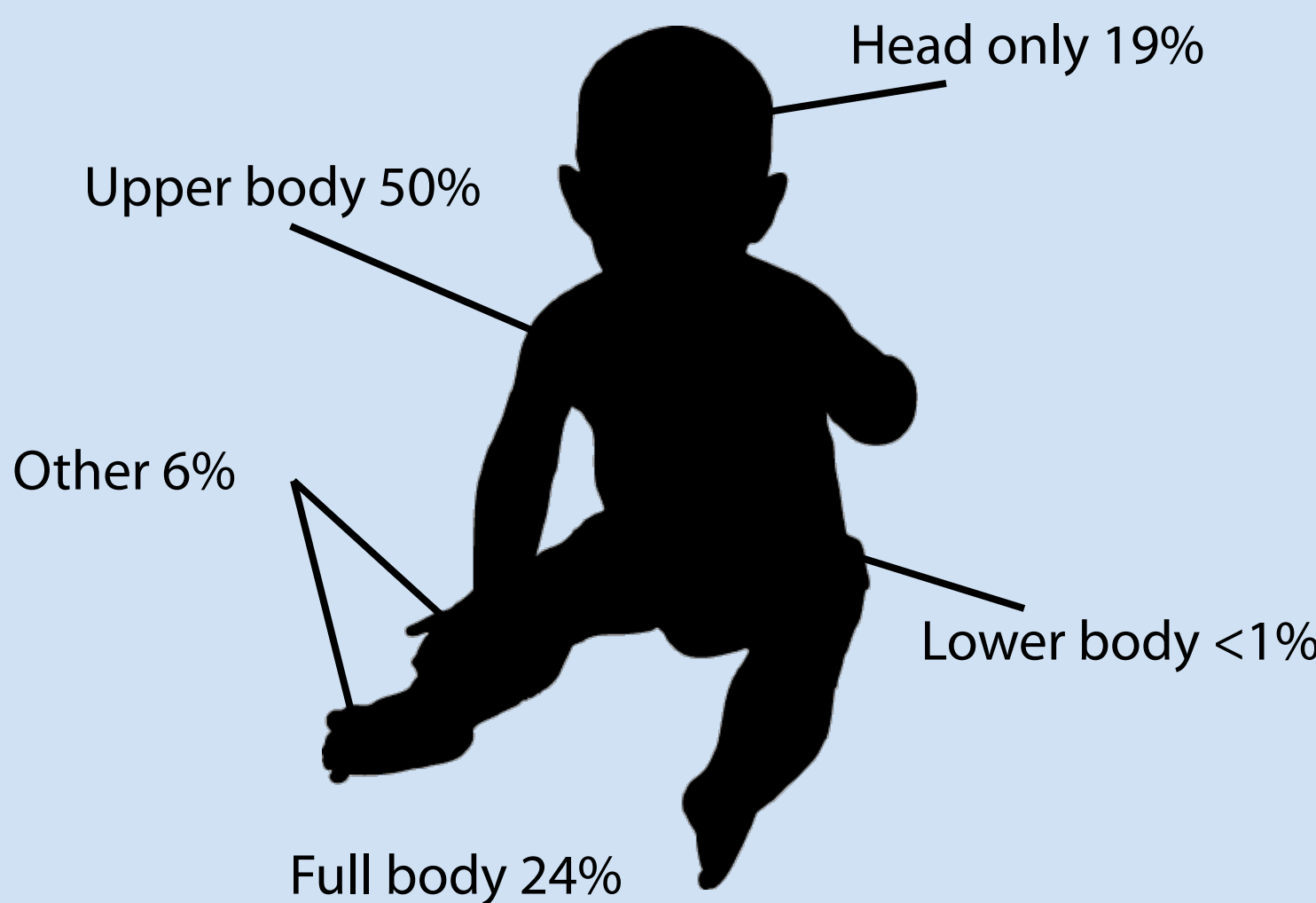
Further analysis is currently underway across the total criteria set for both images and profiles. Future investigations will seek to clarify patterns of use and decision-making processes in light of issues of privacy and openness through direct interaction with a sample of contributors.

REFERENCES

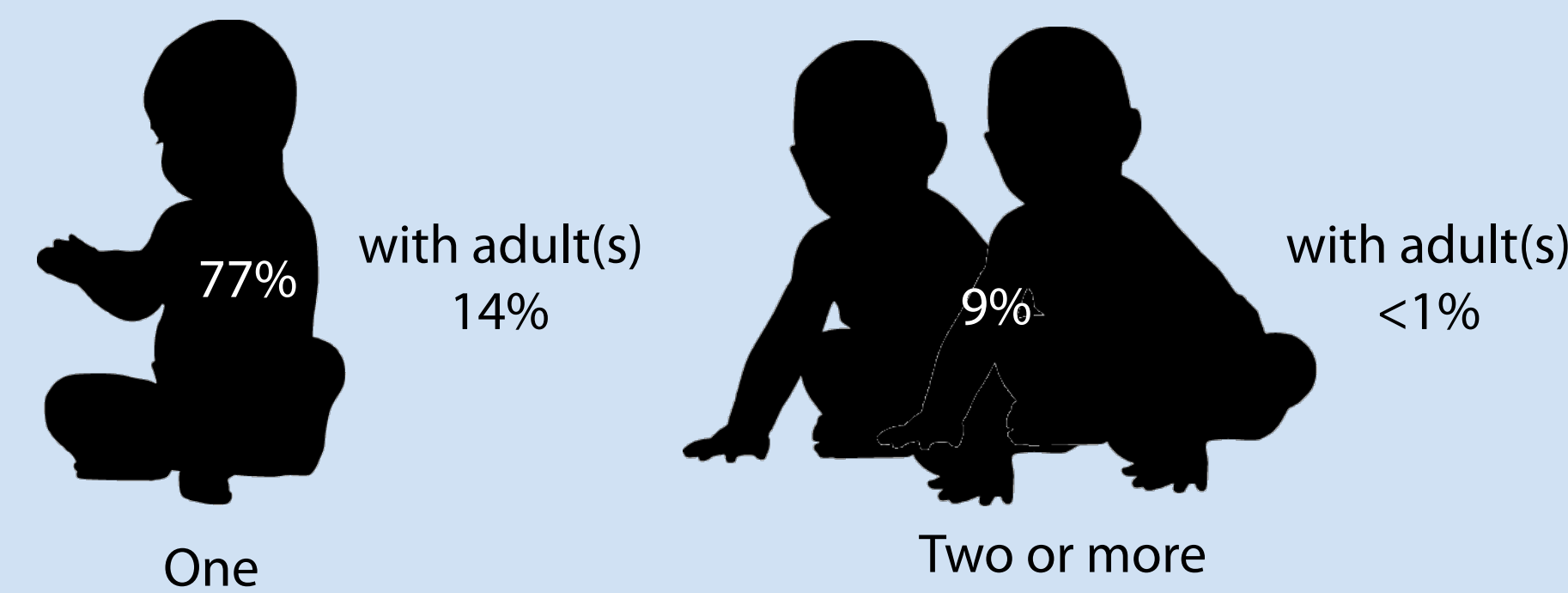
- Gross, R. & Acquisti, A. (2005) Information Revelation and Privacy in Online Social Networks (The Facebook Case). *ACM Workshop on Privacy in the Electronic Society (WPES)*, November 7, 2005, Alexandria, VA.
- Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Rankin Macgill, A., & Smith, A. (2007). *Teens and Social Media*. Retrieved February 1, 2008, from http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Social_Media_Final.pdf
- Palen, L. & Dourish, P. (2003). Unpacking "Privacy" for a Networked World. *CHI 2003*, April 5-10, 2003, Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

IMAGE (n=327)

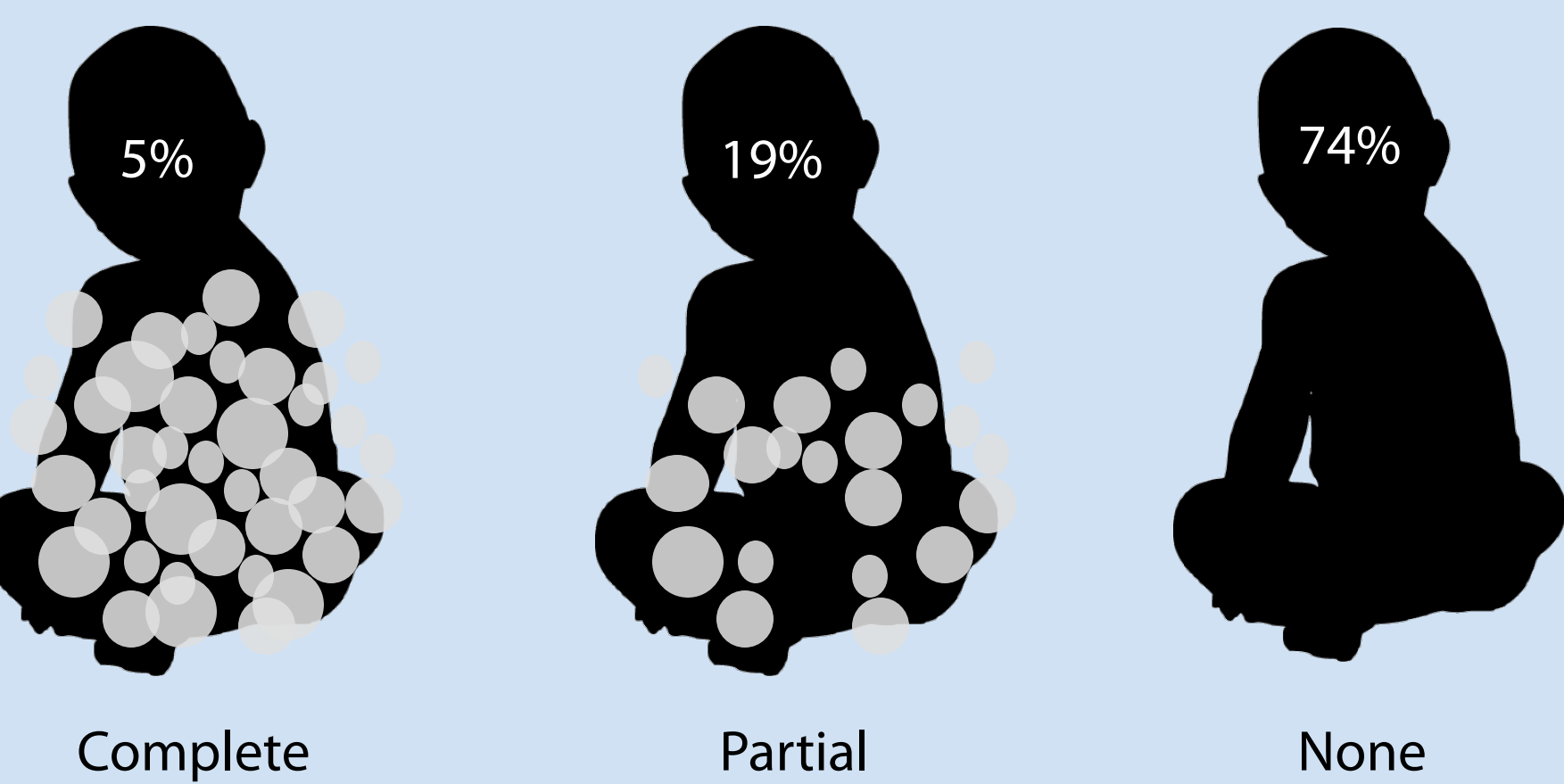
Depiction of Nudity



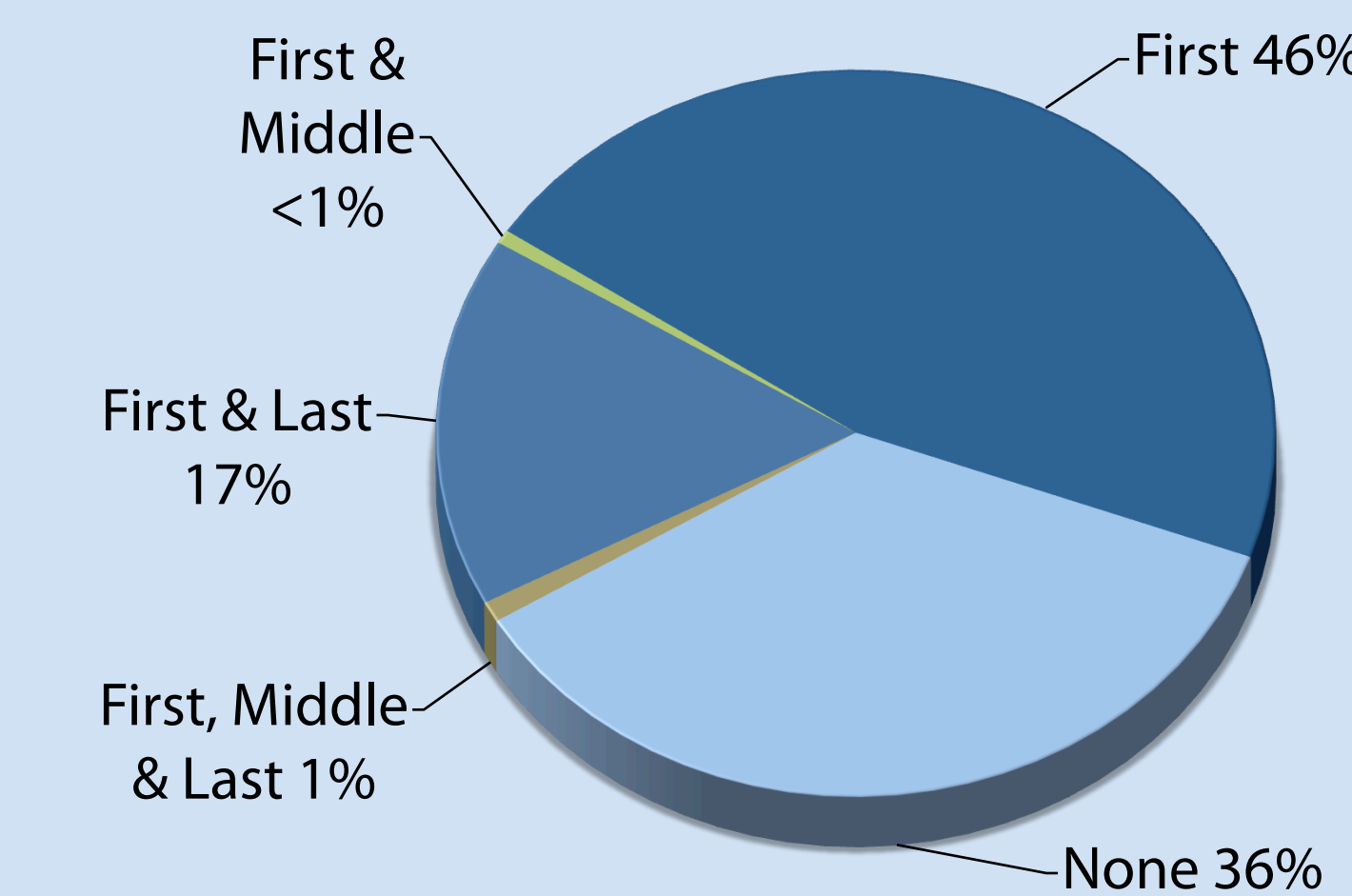
Number of Subjects



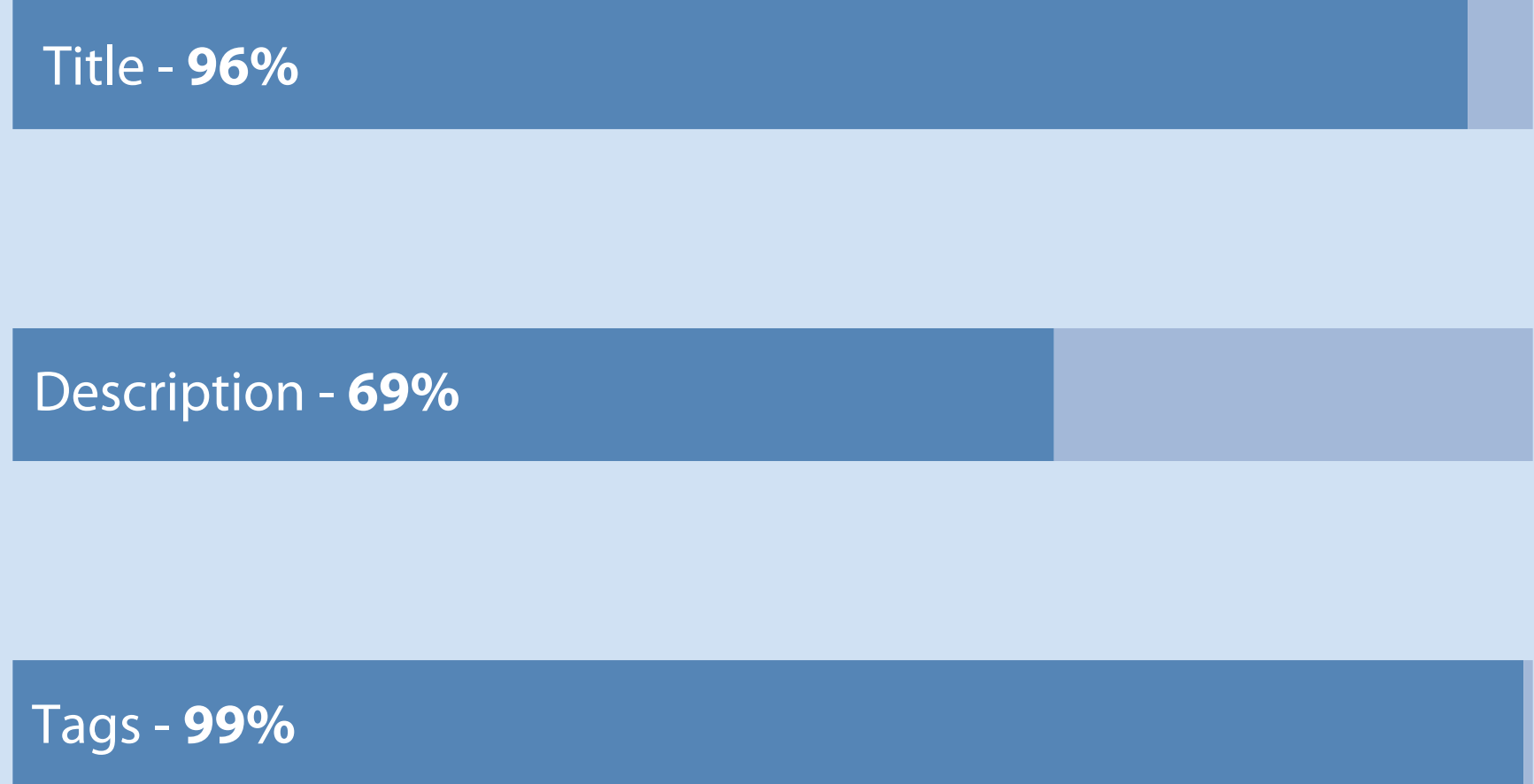
Bubble Coverage



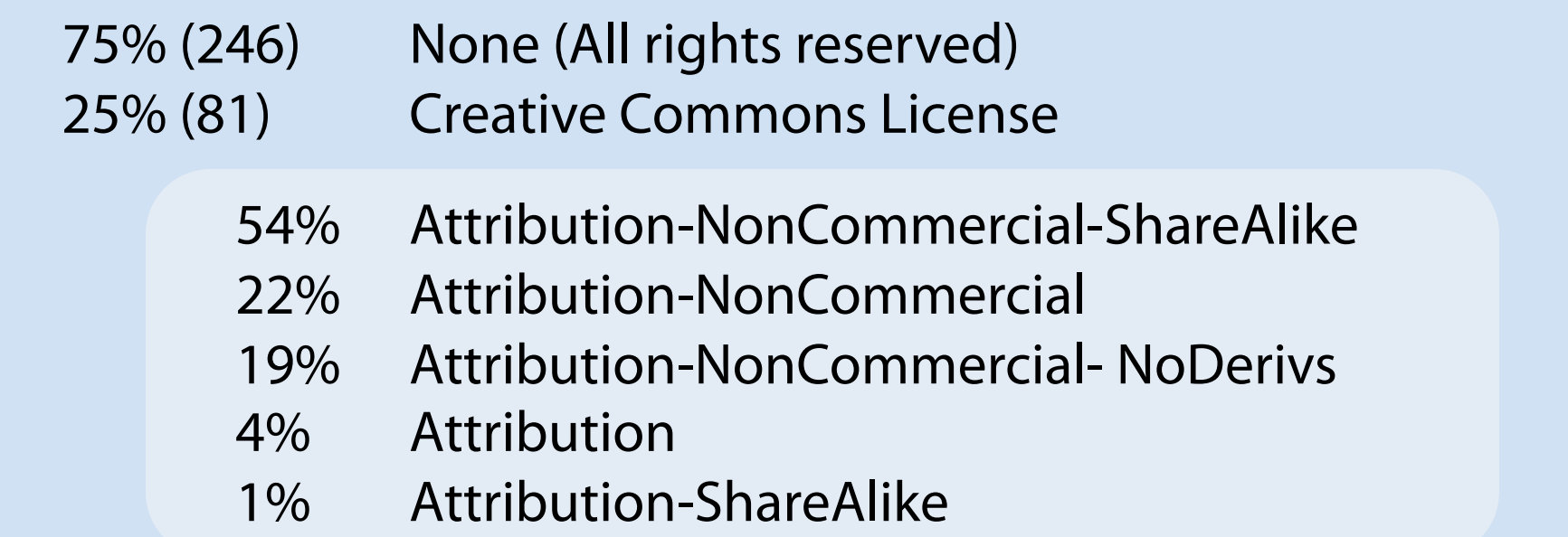
Subject Name Identification



Descriptive Elements



Licensing



Interaction

