Teens and Cyberbullying

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF A REPORT ON RESEARCH

Conducted for

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (NCPC)

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By the National Crime Prevention Council

Survey conducted by

HarrisInteractive®

MARKET RESEARCH

The Harris Poll® PEOPLE

Executive Summary

The National Crime Prevention Council commissioned this study with Harris Interactive, Inc. to explore the issue of cyberbullying among middle school and high school-aged students in the United States. The survey had four objectives:

- Explore teens' experiences with cyberbullying
- Understand teens' emotional and behavioral reactions to cyberbullying
- Probe what teens think would be the most effective ways to prevent or put a stop to cyberbullying
- Determine how teens define cyberbullying and what other terms they use to describe it

This Executive Summary highlights key findings of the survey. It is accompanied by a set of action items and recommendations by the National Crime Prevention Council. The detailed survey report is available at http://www.ncpc.org/media.

Teens ages 13 to 17 are an online population.   They use the Internet, cell phones, instant messaging, and text messaging to talk to friends, gather information for reports, check out sports scores, and practice their social skills on a larger population. Their access to these electronic communications tools is found in many different places -- at home, at school, at friends' houses, and even at public libraries and WiFi sites. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of teens report that they have been using the Internet for three years or more; more than half say they have been on the Internet for five or more years. Eight out of ten teens (80%) say they used the Internet "yesterday" and 27 percent used the Internet for more than an hour "yesterday."

Though parents are generally quite vigilant about protecting their younger children from the content of specific types of sites and put clear limits on the amount of time spent online and the reasons for it, teens report that they are largely unsupervised by their parents while online.   Nine out of ten (90%) of 10- to 12-year-olds say their parents know where they are going online, compared with four out of ten (41%) of 13- to 15-year-olds. Only seven percent of 10- to 12-year-olds say their parents think they know their children's online destinations but really don't. But 27 percent of 13- to 15-year-olds report that their parents think they know online destinations but don't.
Interestingly, as teens get older, they believe that their parents should be more concerned with what the teens see and hear on line.

Cell phones are an important communication system for this age group. About 59 percent of 13- through 15-year-olds and 74 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds report that they have cell phones. Of teens that have cell phones, about 60 percent use text messaging. As many as 25 percent of teens send text messages while in school.

Cyberbullying is not an uncommon occurrence among teens in this age group. Slightly more than four in ten teens (43%) report that they have experienced some form of cyberbullying in the last year. The incidence of cyberbullying is higher among females than males; and is most prevalent among 15 and 16-year-olds, particularly among girls.

More than half of this total age group reported at least one cyberbullying incident in the past year.

Teen cyberbully victims report that immediately following an incident, they are likely to consider one or more actions, such as asking the person to stop, using electronic means to block the person from communicating with them, or talking with a friend. Teens are twice as likely to talk to a friend about the incident as to talk with their parents or another adult.

Teens report a wide range of emotions as a result of experiencing cyberbullying from anger to embarrassment to indifference. Over half of cyberbully victims report feeling angry (56%); one-third report feeling hurt (33%); a third report being embarrassed (32%), and one in eight said they felt scared (13%). Females are more likely than males to report all of these emotions; especially females ages 13 to 15. Many teens, however, claim that the cyberbullying incident did not bother them.

Though teens may not know immediately, about three out of four report that they eventually figure out who cyberbullied them. Often, this is a friend, someone they know from school or someone else they know. Fewer than one in four teen victims (23%) was bullied by someone they don't know. This "unknown" cyberbully was generally in a chat room saying mean or vicious things or someone sending cruel or threatening emails, instant messages, or text messages.

Most teens believe that people cyberbully for one (or more) of these reasons: "they think it's funny" (81%); "they simply don't like the person" (64%); "they view the victim as a loser" (45%). Nearly six in ten teens (58%) said the cyberbully "probably didn't see the action as a big deal."

Nearly half of teens said that cyberbullying happens because the cyberbully doesn't perceive any tangible consequences (47%) or feels he or she would not get caught (45%).

Teens believe that cyberbullying prevention needs to occur at three different levels – individual actions, online institutions, and parent education -- but most notably at the individual actions level.

In teens' views, the most effective way to prevent cyberbullying is to be able to block people who cyberbully from communicating with the victims (71%). The next most effective methods, according to teens, include simply refusing to pass along cyberbully messages (62%), and telling their friends to stop cyberbullying (56%). Slightly more than five in ten teens (56%) believe that online groups and Internet service providers (ISPs) should have the moderators who can block cyberbullies' messages. Forty-five percent (45%) of teens say that parents should tell their kids that cyberbullying is wrong; 43 percent (43%) say that cyberbullying should be reported to an adult. Unlike face-to-face bullying, teens do not view cyberbullying as an issue that should be addressed by the school; in fact, they feel that much of customary school intervention (large assemblies, etc.) would be largely ineffective.

Profile: Cyberbully Victims and Non-Victims

	Total Sample (n=824)	Statistics on Those Who Experienced Cyberbullying (n=380)	Statistics on Those Who Never Experienced Cyberbullying (n=444)
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Gender			
Male	51	43	57
Female	49	57	43
Age			
13	21	17	23
14	19	18	20
15	19	24	16
16	22	26	18
17	19	14	22
Level in School			
Middle School	26	22	30
High School	74	78	70
Amount of Time Spent on Internet			
Light	40	33	44
Moderate	33	35	32
Heavy	27	32	24

Detailed Findings

Online Landscape

The Internet is a popular and nearly commonplace tool among 13- to 17-year-olds. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of teens report that they have been using the Internet for three years or more. More than half of teens (55%) report that they have been using the Internet for five years or more. Eighty percent of teens used the Internet used the Internet "yesterday" and 27 percent used the Internet for more than an hour yesterday. [1]

Online statistics about teens and their involvement with cyberspace from this survey include the following:

> Ninety-six percent of teens have an email account
> On average, teens have 2.2 email addresses
> High school students are more likely than middle school students to report having more than three separate email addresses (17% vs. 9%)
> Many schools provide the Internet as a means for students to conduct research; 79 percent of teens use the Internet at school for school-related research. Using the Internet at school for research is more common for high schoolers than middle schoolers (81% vs. 73%).
> Interestingly, teens are also using the Internet at school for other purposes. Fifty-one percent of teens surf the web at school and 34 percent send and receive email at school.
> About 42% use the Internet at a friend's house and another 33% use the Internet in other places.
> Virtually all teens (97%) use the Internet at home.
> Ninety-three percent send and receive email from home, surf the web, and use the Internet for research for school at home.
> Teens also engage in other online activities at home: 75 percent send Instant Messages (IMs), 60 percent read or post messages on blogs or similar websites, and 23 percent visit online chat rooms.
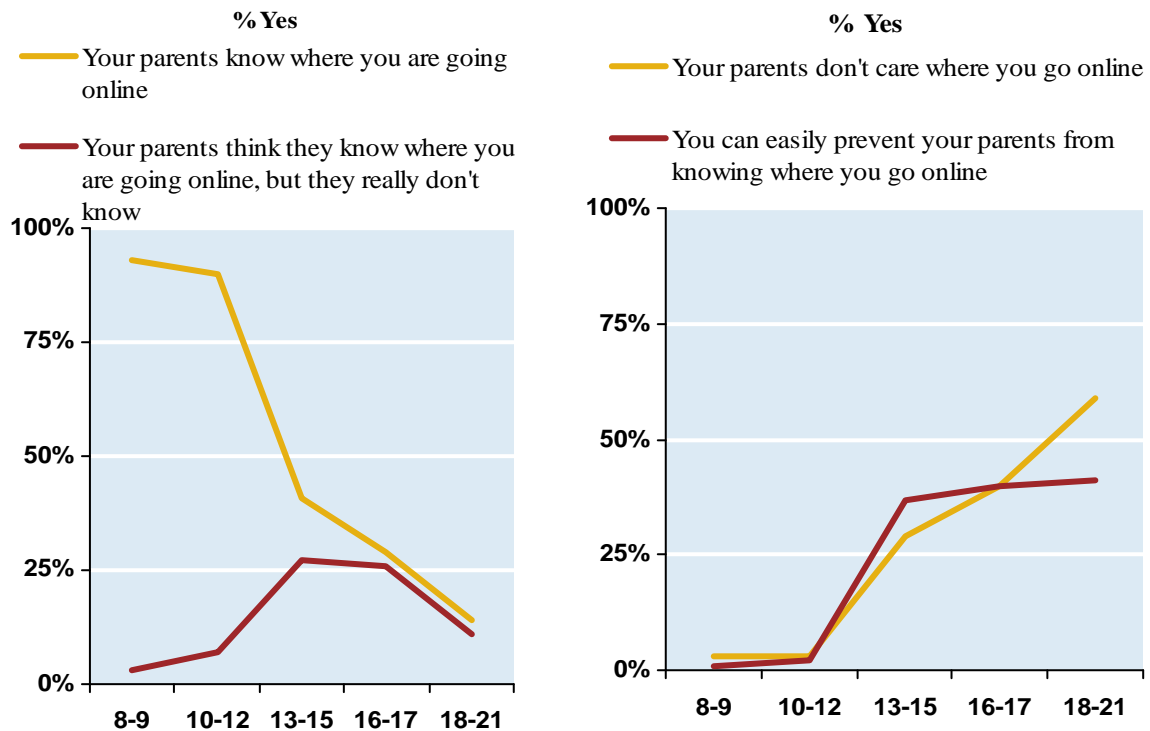
According to the teens participating in this study, parents take a variety of attitudes toward their children's online activity. About four in ten teens (43%) report that ***their parents usually know what they are doing online, but do not have any rules about their activity***. Twenty-seven percent report that ***their parents have no idea what they are doing online***. About 31 percent report that ***their parents have rules about their online activity***, however, eight percent report that ***they find ways around their parents' rules*** while 23 percent report that ***they follow the rules***.

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[1] Some of the online behavioral data in this section are taken from Harris Interactive's YouthPulse 2005. U.S. National Sample 8-21 year olds. N=2,034.
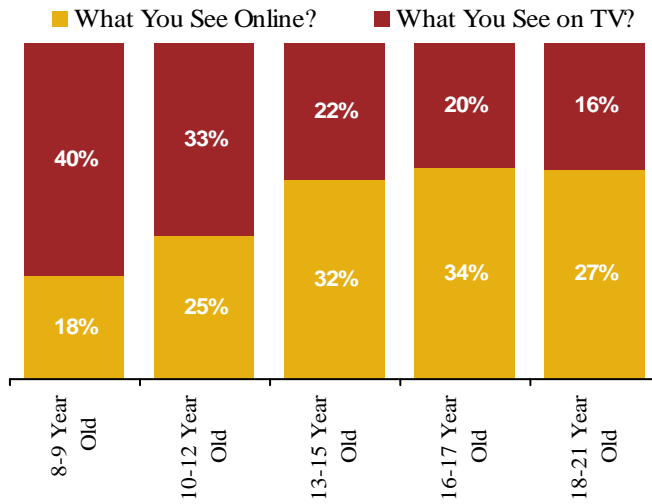
As a teen gets older they are less likely to have rules about their Internet use and less likely to follow what rules are established. Though 50 percent of 13-year-olds report that they have rules that they follow, the number drops precipitously, with 26 percent of 14-year-olds, 16 percent of 15-year-olds, 14 percent of 16-year-olds, and eight percent of 17-year-olds report the same. Middle school youth are almost four times more likely than high school youth (49% vs. 13%) to report that their parents have rules about their Internet activity and that they follow the rules. High school students were about three times more likely than middle school students to report that their parents have no idea what they are doing online (32% vs. 11%) and were about twice as likely to report that their parents usually know what they are doing online, but do not have rules about their online activity (47% vs. 24%).

Parent involvement appears to shift dramatically as children reach and move past age 13. Whereas 90 percent of 10- to 12-year-olds report that their parents know where they are going online, only 41 percent of 13- to 15-year-olds report the same. Similarly, while only seven percent of 10- to 12-year-olds report that their parents think they know their children's online destinations, but they go online, but really don't know, 27 percent of 13- to 15-year-olds report that their parents don't really know where they go online, but think they do.

% Yes

━━━ Your parents know where you are going online

━━━ Your parents think they know where you are going online, but they really don't know

% Yes

━━━ Your parents don't care where you go online

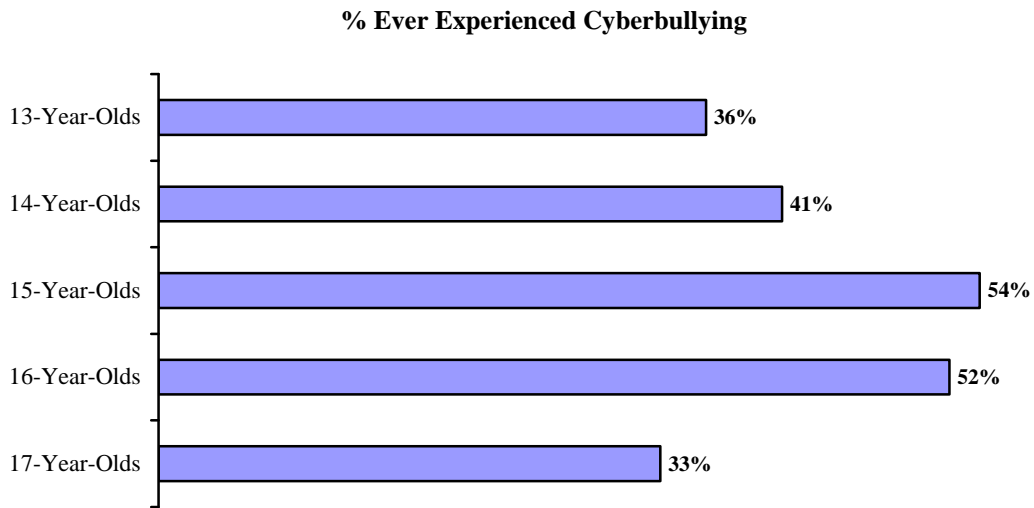━━━ You can easily prevent your parents from knowing where you go online

Thirteen- to 15-year-olds are also more likely than younger tweens to say that their parents don't care where they go online (29% vs. 3%) and that they can prevent their parents from knowing where they go online (37% vs. 2%).

Interestingly enough, while teens have fewer restrictions about the Internet as they grow older, older teens are more likely to report that their parents should be worried about they do on the Internet. A majority of teens say that their parents should worry less about what these teens see on television and more about what they see online.

Chart legend: ■ What You See Online? ■ What You See on TV?

Age Group	What You See Online?	What You See on TV?
8-9 Year Old	18%	40%
10-12 Year Old	25%	33%
13-15 Year Old	32%	22%
16-17 Year Old	34%	20%
18-21 Year Old	27%	16%

Experiences with Cyberbullying

About four in ten teens (43%) report that they have experienced some form of cyberbullying in the last year. It is more common among females (51%) than males (37%). It appears that cyberbullying is most common among high school students. While 46 percent of high school teens have experienced cyberbullying, only 35 percent of middle school teens have had that experience. Looking deeper at the results by age group and gender by age, differences become apparent. Cyberbullying is most common among 15- and 16-year-olds, and clearly more prevalent among females than males.
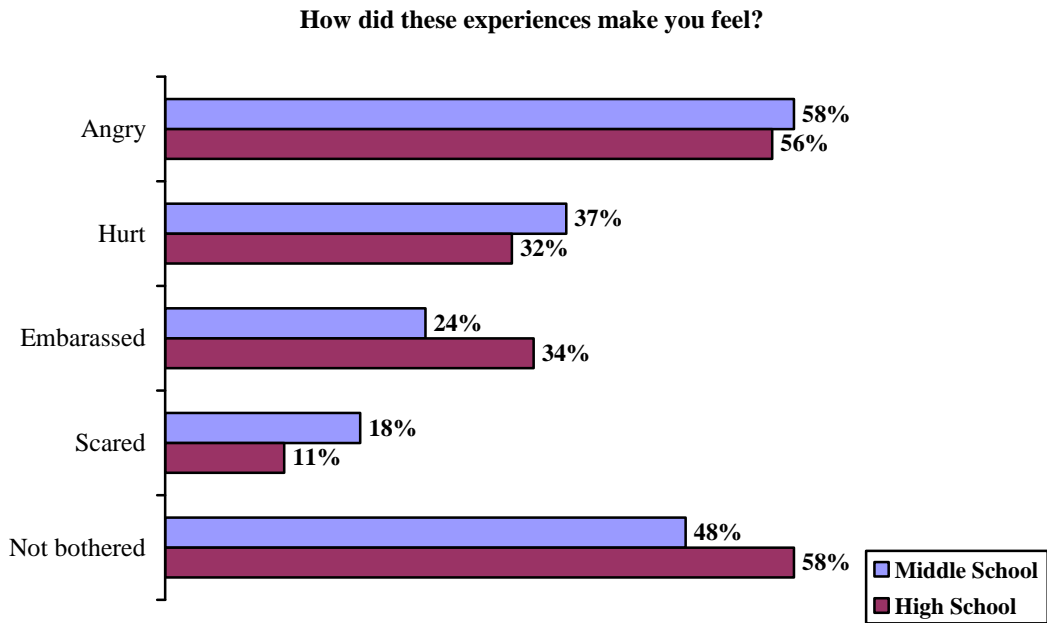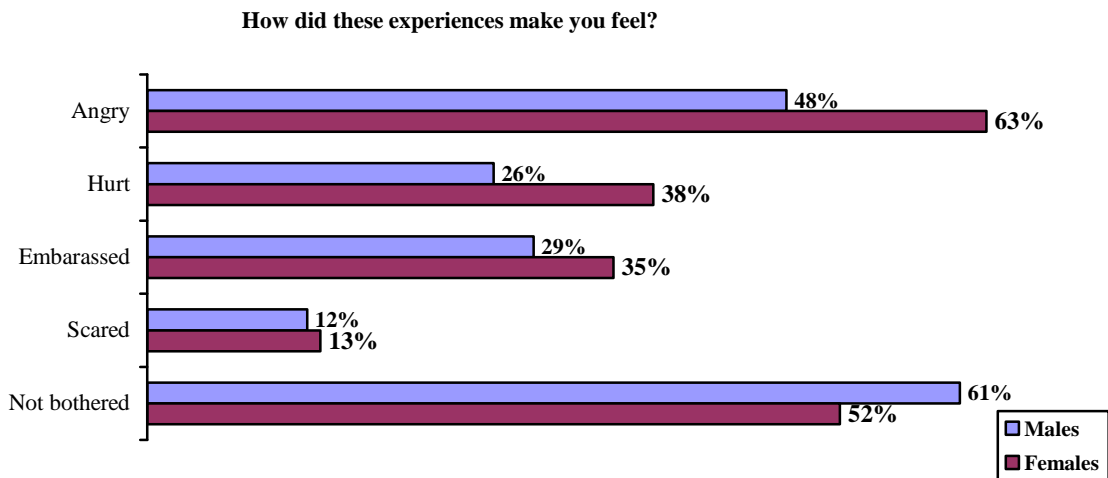
% Ever Experienced Cyberbullying

Age Group	Percent
13-Year-Olds	36%
14-Year-Olds	41%
15-Year-Olds	54%
16-Year-Olds	52%
17-Year-Olds	33%

Base: All Respondents (n=824)

Emotional Responses to Cyberbullying

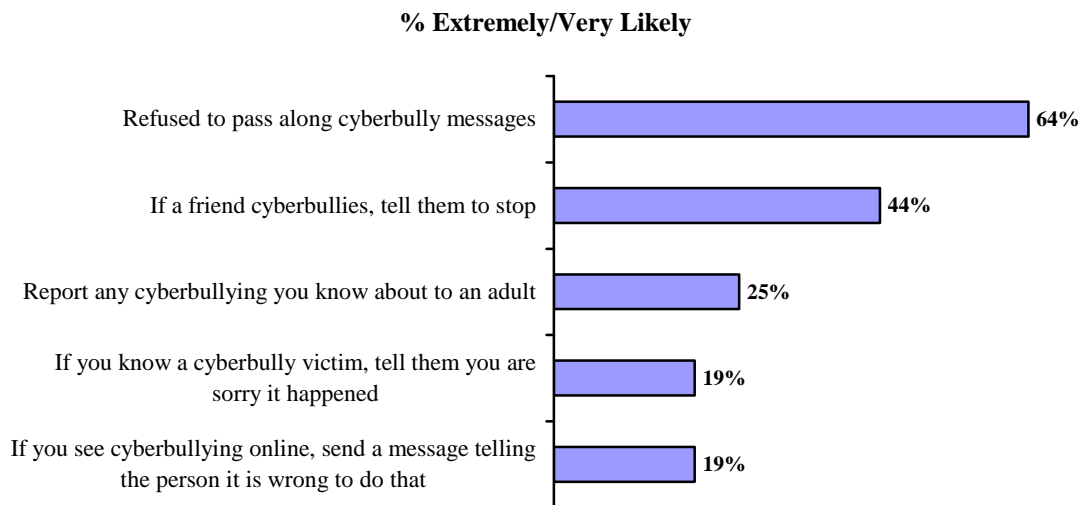Teens experience a wide range of emotional responses to cyberbullying.

How did these experiences make you feel?

Base: Experienced Cyberbullying (n=380)

How did these experiences make you feel?

Base: Experienced Cyberbullying (n=380)

Teens believe that cyberbullying prevention should start at the individual level. Teens want the ability to block people who cyberbully. They also believe that refusing to pass along cyberbully messages and telling their friends who cyberbully to stop are effective means of prevention. Teens do not believe that cyberbully prevention is especially effective at the school level. Less than four in ten teens reported that schools should have rules against cyberbullying (37%), schools should educate students in classrooms or small groups about not cyberbullying (33%), adults should be taught on how to help young people stop cyberbullying (32%), and schools should hold assemblies to educate students about not cyberbullying.

Among teens who reported they thought at least one self-action would be an effective way to prevent cyberbullying, 64 percent reported that they are extremely/very likely to refuse to pass along cyberbully messages. Over four in ten (44%) reported they are extremely/very likely to tell a friend to stop cyberbullying. Teens who reported that at least one self-action would be effective reported that they were not as likely to do the other self actions: less than one-quarter are extremely/very likely to report cyberbullying they know about to an adult (25%), to tell a cyberbully victim they are sorry (19%), and to send a message to someone who is cyberbullying that it is wrong to do that (19%).

% Extremely/Very Likely

Refused to pass along cyberbully messages	64%
If a friend cyberbullies, tell them to stop	44%
Report any cyberbullying you know about to an adult	25%
If you know a cyberbully victim, tell them you are sorry it happened	19%
If you see cyberbullying online, send a message telling the person it is wrong to do that	19%

Base: Reported At Least One Self-Action Would Be Effective (n= 633)

Survey Methodology
A nationally representative sample of 824 middle and high school students aged 13 through 17 participated in an online survey. Respondents were invited to participate in the survey through password-protected emails. Respondents were either contacted directly or recruited through their parents. All respondents or their parents were members of the Harris Panel Online (HPOL). Interviews averaged ten minutes in length and were conducted between February 2 and February 15, 2006. Data were weighted to reflect a nationally representative online sample based on the following known demographic parameters: gender, age, race, parents' education, region, Internet use, and urbanicity of school. The results of this sample are subject to a sampling margin of error of +/- 3.41 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.