



## **Fact #1: Traditional bullies are 2.5 times more likely to cyberbully than someone who has never bullied.**

In some ways, it is easier to fly under the radar when cyberbullying. Consequently, traditional bullying may be a stepping stone to cyberbullying. The individual inflicting harm may remain anonymous when bullying online, a factor that makes the bullying easier to get away with. It is also difficult for adults to catch a cyberbully in the act; they can't monitor digital devices 24/7.

Stopping a cyberbully often requires a young person to report, and the majority choose not to do so. (More on this later.) In addition, inflicting cruelty from a distance with the help of technology makes cyberbullying easier, which is why your everyday schoolyard bully is 2.5 times more likely to cyberbully than their non-bully counterparts<sup>2</sup>.

Even worse, cyberbullying can become more pernicious than traditional bullying because the hurtful content often goes viral. As we all know, it doesn't take long for a meme, story, or video to spread online. It's also unsettling that the victim may not know who the bully is or why they are being targeted.

## **Fact #2: At least one-third of middle and high school students have reported cyberbullying.**

After surveying over 25,000 students since 2002, the Cyberbullying Research Center estimates that 27 percent of teens have been cyberbullied at some point and 15 percent of tweens have been cyberbullied<sup>3</sup>.

Cyberbullying can take many forms, all of them harmful. It may involve harassment, the sharing of nude photos, encouraging self-harm or suicide, or falsely accusing someone of reporting troublemakers to administrators. Situations have been reported of a student creating a false identity profile or "sockpuppet" of another student to obtain personal information that is then spread through social media. Jealousy bullying is another form and involves an individual being cyberbullied by a jealous person because, for example, she is dating a popular boy.

Cyberbullying might also include the posting of hateful names or comments based on race or religion. It can also involve "doxing," where the cyberbully posts personal data such as a Social Security number, credit card number, or phone number of the victim<sup>4</sup>.

Girls are slightly more likely to become cyberbullying targets than boys. It's also important to note that while 14 percent of straight students experience cyberbullying, as many as 26 percent of LGBTQ youth experience it<sup>5</sup>.

## **Fact #3: Only 40 percent of cyberbullying victims report it to their parents, and only 30 percent report it to a teacher.**

One reason why cyberbullying persists is due to the victim not wanting to report the harassment. Unfortunately, less than half of all cyberbully victims report it to an adult<sup>6</sup>.

Without adult intervention, cyberbullying will likely continue and the harmful consequences will worsen.

Parents, in particular, can take several important actions if they become privy to this type of bullying. One of the most important steps is ensuring that their son or daughter is heard and feels safe. Kids and teens can begin healing if a parent is supportive and not dismissive of a reported situation.

In order to end the bullying, parents may also need to meet with a school administrator or, if the situation warrants it, the parents of the offender. Police can be contacted if a crime has been committed.

Because cyberbullying is public in nature and any information posted is permanent, it can lead to long-term consequences. A negative online reputation can impact future opportunities for education, employment, and more for both the offender and the victim. Working with an internet service provider or phone service provider to investigate and possibly remove the offensive material can help mitigate the damage. For example, upon request, search engines like Google will now remove any nude or sexually explicit material that has been posted<sup>7</sup>.

Clearly, children and teens can increase their chance for a healthy recovery if they report the bullying behavior to an adult, assuming the adult takes appropriate action.

**Pro Tip:** Looking for additional resources on how to prevent or stop cyberbullying? Check out our [cyberbullying resources page \(/resources/cyberbullying-resources-books-podcasts/\)](/resources/cyberbullying-resources-books-podcasts/), where you can find loads of podcasts, blogs, books, and organizations that deal with the topic.

## **Fact #4: Bullying increases the risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide.**

In one study, 93 percent of cyberbullying victims reported feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and powerlessness<sup>8</sup>. In addition, many feel anger, embarrassment, self-blame, and fear. Some believe that cyberbullying is more stressful than traditional bullying because in as many as 50 percent of the cases, the offender is anonymous. The victim is left to wonder if they know the person.

Not surprisingly, victims lose trust in others and often experience increased social anxiety and decreased self-esteem. Research has also revealed that both cyberbullies and cyberbullying victims are at an increased risk for suicidal thinking and suicidal attempts. The targets are at the highest risk, as they are almost twice as likely to have attempted suicide as youths not involved in cyberbullying. Cyberbullies are at 1.5 times the risk of those not involved in cyberbullying<sup>9</sup>.

## **Fact #5: The highest percentage of social media cyberbullying occurs on Instagram.**

Cyberbullying can and does occur on many platforms, but some seem to attract bullies more than others. An annual bullying survey revealed where cyberbullies target their victims. Over 10,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 20 participated in the survey. The following is a snapshot of [social media use \(/resources/is-social-media-ruining-your-life/\)](/resources/is-social-media-ruining-your-life/) and several social networks commonly used by cyberbullies<sup>10</sup>.

Social network	Percentage of young people who use the platform	Percentage of young people who have been cyberbullied on the platform
YouTube	92%	10%
Facebook	60%	37%
Twitter	37%	9%
Instagram	78%	42%
Snapchat	76%	31%
WhatsApp	58%	12%
Tumblr	15%	3%

## Final Thoughts

Unfortunately, cyberbullying is one of the negative byproducts of our increasingly digital world. However, there are [steps that parents can take](/resources/protecting-kids-online/) to prevent their child from falling victim to cyberbullying, or at least put a stop to it if it does occur. These include staying up to date on the newest apps, social media platforms, and digital slang that teens are using; monitoring your child's devices; following or friending your teen on social media sites or having another trusted adult do so; setting privacy settings; and knowing your child's usernames and passwords.

Maybe the most important thing we can do for our kids is to keep the lines of communication open and discuss with them the potential dangers that exist. Doug Flanders, M.D., articulated it well: "No parent can child-proof the world. A parent's job is to world-proof the child."

## Citations

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