

# A survey of American teens finds that online bullying is a big problem

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Britain's Prince William holds a cardboard hand with the names he wrote down of five people he would turn to in the event of bullying: Catherine, Harry, Father, Grandmother and Grandfather. He took part in a group exercise during his visit to Hammersmith Academy to support the Diana Award's #Back2School Anti-bullying Campaign in London, England. Photo: Matt Dunham/AP

The Pew Research Center just released survey results about online harassment and cyberbullying among U.S. teenagers. The results show that a majority of teens say that they have been victims of online harassment or bullying. It also says that social media companies are not doing enough to fight the problem.

The Pew Research Center survey found that 59 percent of U.S. teens reported being bullied or harassed online. Sixty-three percent said it was a major problem for people their age.

The most common type of harassment cited was name-calling at 42 percent. Thirty-two percent of those who responded said someone had spread false rumors about them on the Internet. Sixteen percent said they had been the target of physical threats online.

Among teens surveyed, 1 in 4 said they had experience with explicit images. Some had received unwanted images or photos. Others had images of them shared without their permission or

consent. Teens within this group also said someone else besides their parents had asked them about their whereabouts.

### **Social Media Has Made Bullying Easier**

Monica Anderson is the lead researcher for the Pew report. She says that "name-calling and rumor-spreading have long been an unpleasant and challenging aspect of adolescent life." This is now made worse through frequent use of social media and smartphone technology accessible to teens.

According to Pew, similar numbers of boys and girls have been harassed online. Girls, however, are more likely to be the targets of rumor-spreading or nonconsensual explicit messages.

Most young harassment victims feel that teachers, social media companies and politicians are doing a poor or fair job in addressing the problem of cyberbullying. The problem has drawn the attention of U.S. first lady Melania Trump and Britain's Prince William.

Most teens believe parents are doing better with 59 percent saying that parents are doing a good or excellent job in addressing online harassment.

### **Being Online "Almost Constantly" Is Tied To Bullying**

One of the factors fueling online harassment is that many teens are frequently on their phones or online. A previous Pew study showed that 95 percent of U.S. teens had a smartphone. Nearly half were online "almost constantly."

The latest report shows that two-thirds of teens who say they are online almost constantly have been cyberbullied. That number is about 13 percent lower for those who use the Internet several times a day or less.

Pew said that 59 percent of parents were worried about their teen being harassed or bullied online. A similar number were concerned about their teen sending or receiving explicit messages.

The researchers surveyed 743 teens between the ages of 13 and 17 and 1,058 parents. They conducted the research between March 7 and April 10, 2018. The estimated margin of error — a measure of accuracy — is 5 percentage points for the teen group and 4.5 points for the parents.