

# *Cyberbullying Public Awareness Research*

## Summary

### Prepared for Public Safety Canada

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## Executive Summary

### 1. Background and objectives

Public Safety Canada (PSC) wants to better understand how to effectively prevent and address cyberbullying. The objectives of this research include obtaining a baseline measurement of Canadian youth and parents of youth in terms of their knowledge, experience, awareness, attitudes, and behaviours with respect to cyberbullying.

Using this information, it will be possible to develop and implement a public awareness campaign in an effective and efficient manner. Information obtained through this public opinion research will allow PSC to optimize the impact of its marketing initiatives. The findings will help inform PSC and relevant stakeholders on the types of tools and resources they should produce to educate the public on this issue and promote safe online behaviour.

### 2. Methodology

The following sample disposition was achieved: Environics Research conducted two online surveys of Canadians. The first survey was with 800 youth aged 14 to 24, and the second survey was of 600 parents with children between 10 and 24 years of age. Quotas were set by age, gender, and region, and the data were weighted to ensure the sample is representative of these populations according to the most recently available Census information.

As an online survey is a non-probability sample, no margin of sampling error is reported.

This size of sample provides robust data to understand behaviours, opinions, and attitudes within the total population and subgroups of interest for each parents and youth.

Target group	Target (quota)	Actual Unweighted	Actual Weighted
Youth aged 14-24 years old	800	800	800
14-17 years old	300	300	309
18-21 years old	250	250	246
22-24 years old	250	250	245
Parents of children aged 10-24 years old	600	600	600
Atlantic Canada	40	40	42
Quebec	140	140	144
Ontario	230	230	228
Prairies	110	110	108
BC	80	80	78

More information about the methodology for this survey is included in Appendix A.

### 3. Cost of research

The cost of this research was \$81,979.24 (HST included).

### 4. Key findings

**Cyberbullying affects a substantial minority of youth.**

**Safety and technology.** Virtually all youth spend several hours online each day and use the internet for social interaction multiple times daily. Text messaging, YouTube, email, Instagram, and Facebook are the most common types of social media sites or apps used by youth. Parents' perceptions of their children's technology use are similar.

- Only one-third of youth indicate that they feel very safe while online, and fewer parents feel the same way about their children when online.
- Most youth report positive experiences with texting, messaging, gaming, and using social media.

**Perceptions of cyberbullying.** Almost all youth and parents are aware of cyberbullying and think it is common, affecting a lot of young people. Most youth and parents agree that it is a serious problem, and most believe that cyberbullying is illegal.

- Youth most often learn about cyberbullying from school or teachers, followed by ads or public service announcements and news stories.
- While a plurality of youth and parents say that everyone is equally likely to be cyberbullied, others say specific targets of cyberbullying include those perceived to be unattractive, gender diverse, or LGBTQ.

**Experiences of cyberbullying.** Three in ten youth say they have personally experienced cyberbullying at some point, and a similar proportion of parents say the same of their children.

Most who were cyberbullied say that it took place over a year ago, and the most common platforms where youth experienced cyberbullying are Facebook and text messaging. Name-calling and negative comments about physical appearance are the most common types of cyberbullying experienced, with only one-quarter or fewer youth reporting they received physically threatening or sexually explicit messages. Most cyberbullied youth report that the cyberbully was someone from school, a friend or former friend.

- Youth report taking a variety of actions in response to cyberbullying, including blocking the bully, ignoring it, and talking to a parent or a friend. Most parents say they talked to their child about it and tried to be supportive.
- Most parents and youth say the cyberbullying stopped after they took action.

About half of the youth who were cyberbullied say that it was a very hurtful experience, while almost all parents say it was a very hurtful experience both for their child and for themselves personally. A majority of youth express concern about being cyberbullied in the future, as do most parents about their children.

**Witnessing cyberbullying.** About half of youth say they have witnessed cyberbullying directed at someone else, while three in ten parents say the same.

Of those who have witnessed it, most youth say it happened to someone at school or a friend, while parents are most likely to say that happened to a child of one of their friends, or a friend of their children. The most common types of cyberbullying witnessed by youth involved name-calling and negative comments about physical appearance.

- Youth are most likely to say that they talked to the victim and tried to be supportive, or that they talked to friends about it. Parents are most likely to say they talked to their own child about cyberbullying or tried to be supportive to the victim.

**Perpetrating cyberbullying.** One in ten youth admit to having cyberbullied someone. While a smaller proportion of parents say the same of their children, one-third are at least somewhat concerned that their child might cyberbully someone in the future.

Youth who may have cyberbullied someone say that the victim was most often someone from school, or a friend or former friend. The most common reasons for doing it are out of anger, thinking it was funny, and not knowing any better at the time.

- Parents who say their child may have committed cyberbullying are most likely to say that they confronted their child, disciplined them, or took away their phone.

**Responding to cyberbullying.** Parents are most likely to say that they would respond to their child being cyberbullied by being supportive, keeping records of incidents, showing their child how to block the cyberbully, or contacting the police. Youth are most likely to say they would block the cyberbully or to ignore it and not respond.

Most parents and youth express concern about cyberbullying and think that it is not being taken seriously enough. Most think that cyberbullies tend to get away with it, and just half agree that the authorities would take it seriously if it was reported. Most parents agree that they do not have enough information on how to deal with cyberbullying when it occurs. Few parents or youth are aware of any available resources for support with cyberbullying issues.