

The Essex Cybersurvey

By Adrienne Katz of Youthworks Consulting Ltd. Statistical analysis by Catherine Dillon

Executive Summary

(NB % are rounded up)

About the survey

The survey was undertaken in the Spring term of 2010 in Essex. The sample is made up of 1452 young people, 50% female, 50% male, Ages 10 -11 (31%)
Ages 12 -13 (46%) comprise the largest age group in the sample
Ages 14 -15 (20%)
Ages 16+ (3%)

ACCESS to computers and mobile phones without adult supervision is widespread.

94% have a mobile phone and 89% have a computer they can use on their own at home. Further independent access venues include clubs, libraries, cafes or friends' homes. Social Networking is popular with over three quarters of all the young people and more than three quarters of the girls. Those who are cyberbullied tend to use social networking sites and chatrooms more than their peers.

Experiences Online

It is important to note that 51% of all respondents did not have any of these online experiences. 49% of all respondents experienced one or more. However, among these 718 people (Recipients) the severity of the experience varies. Not all of them consider that what they had experienced was cyberbullying according to the definition given in question 11a. A group of 295 people or 20% considered their experience as cyberbullying (referred to as the CB group).

While one upsetting or abusive message does not necessarily mean that bullying is taking place, it can easily escalate or it may indeed present a risk on its own. Those who receive them may interpret the same type of message quite differently. The action may be part of an ongoing bullying campaign in the real world or it may be part of something going on behind the recipient's back.

Among the Recipients, half reported receiving a message from 'someone who was not who they said they were'. 42% of the recipients said they received a message 'which showed that 'people were talking about you nastily online''. More than a quarter had received a message from a stranger asking them 'to meet up,' while almost one third had received a message that 'tried to make them 'do something they did not want to do'.

Gender and age patterns suggest that it will be vital to address the local needs of girls and boys with a more nuanced approach when addressing cybersafety. Girls are markedly more likely than boys to experience 'people talking about you nastily online' (27% of all girls vs. 15% of all boys). Among female Recipients this is the most frequent form of message (52% of female recipients have experienced this).

Male Recipients on the other hand receive more messages 'with insults calling you gay' (44% of male Recipients vs. 31% of female Recipients).

There is an increase at age 14 -15 in most of the types of abusive message discussed. However this should not conceal the fact that the youngest age group experienced messages that could represent risk. Worryingly, over a third of the youngest age group of Recipients had received a message 'trying to make them do something they did not want to do'. Almost one in four of Recipients aged 10 - 11 had received a message suggesting they meet up with someone, while 30% report messages containing unwanted sexual suggestions, jokes or threats and 30% had received homophobic insults or threatening messages.

The peak age for unwanted sexual jokes and threats is 14 -17.

Experiences on Mobile phones

While around two thirds of young people did not experience any abuse via their mobiles, 32% of all respondents had experienced at least one form of phone abuse described in the questionnaire. The experiences of these Recipients included a variety of ingenious, manipulative or humiliating messages sometimes including images. Some messages demonstrated the total lack of inhibition shown by the sender shielded by this indirect medium.

Similar gender differences to those described in online abuse were found in Recipients' reports of mobile phone bullying. For example, boys are more likely to experience homophobic bullying as girls (34% vs. 25%). Girls were more likely to suffer name calling by text (52% vs. 45%)

Almost one in four of 12-13 year old Recipients say that the mobile phone bullying was carried on from their lives in school and almost 1/3 of 10 -11 year old Recipients report receiving scary threatening messages on mobiles.

Deliberately making and changing social arrangements by mobile phone/text in order to humiliate or exclude a targeted child, appears to be fairly common among all age groups but it peaks at age 12-13 when almost one third of Recipients report this

Indirect bullying

Cyberbullying messages do not have to be personally received by a young person in order to hurt or create a climate of fear. 58% of all respondents answered at least one of the questions on indirect bullying. 28% of all respondents say others have deliberately sent round messages spreading

rumours about them and as many as 46% know someone else to whom this happened.

Cyberbullying others

Forty eight boys (7%) and forty eight girls (6%) admitted Cyberbullying others.

Reporting and getting help

Although many people had some sort of unpleasant experience, they did not all classify this as bullying. 20% of all respondents classified their experience as Cyberbullying. Of these, 62% told somebody and 52% got help.

How did it make you feel?

Those who were cyberbullied described their reaction:

45% were 'very upset and angry' while a further 26% felt 'a little upset and down'. 19% said they were 'not bothered'. Boys were twice as likely as girls to insist that they were not bothered.

E-safety education

96% of the participants had received some form of e-safety education, 86% in school and 67% were taught by their parents. Smaller numbers learnt from their siblings, a website or at a youth club. Young people suggested a wide range of further sources which they were using to inform themselves with a strong thread of autonomy.

The quality of the e-safety education given was rated positively by 89% and it was generally thought to have been given at the appropriate time by 79%. Younger age groups are more likely to approve than the older ones, reflecting both recent improvements in the teaching of e-safety and the more independent views of older adolescents with experience.

However despite this near universal approval, large numbers said they did not follow these guidelines all the time. Only 42% said that they *always* followed the guidelines, leaving a majority who at least some of the time do not follow what they have been taught. A hard core of 16% do *not really* or *never* follow these guidelines while as many as 42% only *sometimes* do so, leaving them at risk when they do not.

Adults set up blocks to prevent young people accessing certain websites, but 31% of young people admit they try to get round blocks at least sometimes and 8% have a friend or sibling who can get past these blocks.

These findings vary according to age and it is important to note that the percentage of those who always follow the e-safety guidelines falls to 30% at age 14-15. (This pattern is consistent with what we found in other local authority areas).