FACTS ABOUT CYBER BULLYING

FROM THE PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT

This report draws on two main research project methodologies – a telephone survey of teens and parents, and a series of focus group discussions with teens. The Parents & Teens 2006 Survey sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative call-back sample of 935 teens age 12 to 17 years-old and their parents living in continental United States telephone households. The telephone sample was pulled from previous Pew Internet Project surveys fielded in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Households with a child age 18 or younger were called back and screened to find 12- to 17-year-olds.

A total of 7 focus groups were conducted with youth in June 2006. Three of the groups were conducted in an East Coast city and three were conducted in a Midwestern city. One focus group was conducted online, with high school students (and a mix of boys and girls). The other six groups were single gender, and interviewed 7th and 8th graders, 9th and 10th graders and 11th and 12th graders, one each of boys and girls for each grade group.

FINDINGS

1/3 of teens who use the internet say they have received threatening messages, have had private emails or text messages forwarded without their consent, have had embarrassing pictures forwarded without their permission, and have been the subject of false rumors.

Of all online forms of bullying or harassment, the most common is having private messages forwarded without consent.

Girls are more likely to experience online bullying than boys (38% to 26%).

Older girls (41%) between 15 and 17 say they have been harassed and bullied online.

Older girls are more likely to receive online threats (13%).

Teens that use social networking sites are more likely to have experienced someone forwarding embarrassing pictures (9%) than teens that do not use social networking sites (2%).

Teens who are regular users of social networking sites are more likely to have experienced some form of cyber bullying than teens who do not engage in social networking (39% to 23%).

Teens who have created content for the internet (blogs, uploading photos, sharing artwork, etc.) are more likely to report cyber bullying and aggressive forms of harassment.

2/3 of teens (67%) reported that bullying and harassment happens more offline than online.

Making Private Information Public Is the Most Common Form of Cyberbullying

Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?

	Yes	No
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	15%	85%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	13%	87%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	13%	87%
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	6%	94%
Answered "yes" to any of the four previous questions	32%	68%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

Older Girls Are the Group Most Likely to Report Experiencing Some Form of Cyberbullying

Girls 15-17 [n=252]	41%*
Boys 15-17 [n=237]	29%
Girls 12-14 [n=195]	34%
Boys 12-14 [n=202]	22%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%. * indicates statistically significant difference.*

Online Rumors Tend to Target Girls

Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?

	Boys	Girls
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	13%	17%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	10%	15%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	9%	16%*
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	5%	7%
At least one of the forms of cyber bullying listed above	23%	36%*

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%. * indicates statistically significant difference.

Do Social Networks Facilitate Cyber-Bullying?

Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?	Social Network User	Non-Social Network User
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	17%	12%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	16%*	8%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	16%*	8%
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	9%*	2%
At least one of the forms of cyber bullying listed above	39%*	23%

Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on social network users [n=493] and non-social network users (n=393]. Margin of error is between ±3% and ±5%. * indicates statistically significant difference.

Cyberbullying Tips from ConnectSafely.org

Don't respond. If someone bullies you, remember that your reaction is usually exactly what the bully wants. It gives him or her power over you. Who wants to empower a bully?

Don't retaliate. Getting back at the bully turns you into one and reinforces the bully's behavior. Help avoid a whole cycle of aggression.

Save the evidence. The only good news about digital bullying is that the harassing messages can usually be captured, saved, and shown to someone who can help. You need to do this even if it's minor stuff, in case things escalate.

Talk to a trusted adult. You deserve backup. It's always good to involve a parent but – if you can't – a school counselor usually knows how to help. Sometimes both are needed. If you're really nervous about saying something, see if there's a way to report the incident anonymously at school.

Block the bully. If the harassment's coming in the form of instant messages, texts, or profile comments, do yourself a favor: Use preferences or privacy tools to block the person. If it's in chat, leave the "room."

Be civil. Even if you don't like someone, it's a good idea to be decent and not sink to the other person's level. Also, research shows that gossiping about and trash talking others increases your risk of being bullied. Treat people the way you want to be treated.

Don't be a bully. How would you feel if someone harassed you? You know the old saying about walking a mile in someone's shoes; even a *few seconds* of thinking about how another person might feel can put a big damper on aggression. That's needed in this world.

Be a friend, not a bystander. Watching or forwarding mean messages empowers bullies and hurts victims even more. If you can, tell bullies to stop or let them know harassment makes people look stupid and mean. It's time to let bullies know their behavior is unacceptable – cruel abuse of fellow human beings. If you can't stop the bully, at least try to help the victim and report the behavior.