

Inquiry into the Impact of Cyberbullying on Social Media on Children and Young People's Mental Health – Summary of Survey Findings

Context

Alex Chalk MP, in partnership with YoungMinds and The Children's Society, has set up an [inquiry into the impact of bullying on social media on young people's mental health](#).

To inform the inquiry, YoungMinds and The Children's Society, have carried out a survey of children and young people aged 11-25 to hear about their views and experiences of bullying online.

In addition to the survey, the inquiry will consist of three evidence sessions in the Houses of Parliament. During the evidence sessions, a panel of MPs, Peers and other experts will hear from:

- children and young people who have been personally affected by online bullying
- industry experts on the impact of cyberbullying on mental health;
- representatives from social media companies.

The two charities, along with Alex Chalk MP, will be publishing the results of the inquiry in a report early in 2018.

The Survey

The survey was hosted on SurveyGizmo between March and August 2017, and was completed by 1,089 young people aged 11-25:

- 62% of respondents were under the age of 18;
- Three-quarters of respondents were female (75%);
- Almost half of respondents (45%) said that they had experienced a mental health problem in the past.
- This high rate of self-reported mental ill health amongst respondents may be due to the dissemination of the survey by charities who work closely with young people with experiences of emotional and mental health problems.

Use of Social Media

Social Media platforms:

- The most commonly used social media sites recorded in the survey responses were: YouTube (82%), Facebook (79%), Instagram (78%), Snapchat (73%) and WhatsApp (58%).

- Females were more likely to favour photograph-sharing platforms: 85% of female respondents reported using Instagram compared to 62% of males, and 80% of females use Snapchat compared to 59% of males.
- 51% of males reported using Xbox Live or other gaming sites, compared to just 9% of females.
- Under 18s were more likely to use Snapchat and online gaming sites than over 18s, whilst more over 18s reported using Facebook (93%).

Age of first account:

- 61% of young people stated that they had their first accounts at age 12 or under, despite guidelines for social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram, all state you must be 13 years old to have an account.
- However, a higher proportion of under 18s stated that they had their first account before the age of 13, suggesting that young people are increasingly using social media from a younger age.
- Only 9% of all respondents stated that they started using social media at age 15 or above.

Time spent on social media:

- In total, 29% of the young people surveyed stated that they spend an average of more than four hours per day on social media, and 44% stated that they spend more than three hours per day on social media.
- Only 9% of survey respondents said that they spent an average of less than one hour per day on social media.

When social media is used:

- The most common time of day that young people reported using social media was in the hours immediately after school, college and work, followed by later in the evening.
- In total, 9% of young people stated that they always use social media between midnight and 6am, with 47% stating that they sometimes use social media during this time.
- A similar proportion of under-18s reported social media overnight, and those who reported using social media for an average of at least three hours per day were more likely to use social media between midnight and 6am.

What parents know about their children's social media usage:

- The majority of young people surveyed stated that their parents know what social media platforms they use (87%), how often they use them (78%) and how they use them (85%).
- However, 46% of children reported that they would not tell their parents if something upset them on social media, and this increased to 63% for those who had experienced online bullying in the last year.

Impact of social media:

- Overall, 62% of all respondents stated that social media had a positive relationship with their friends.
- Though more young people reported social media having a negative impact on their school, college or work life (27%), than a positive impact (22%).

- Similarly, significantly more young people reported social media having a negative impact on how they feel about themselves (38%), than a positive impact (23%). This was exacerbated for girls, with 46% of female respondents stating that social media had a negative impact about how they feel about themselves.

Differences in how young people interact online and offline:

- In total, 17% of young people surveyed stated that they always interact differently with others online than offline, whilst a further 65% stating that they sometimes interact differently on- and off-line.
- This was more remarked for those who stated that they spent an average of more than three hours on social media per day.

Cyberbullying

Personal experience of cyberbullying:

- In total, 39% of young people reported having personal experience of online bullying in their lifetime, in contrast to 49% who reported experience of off-line bullying.
- 27% of young people reported personal experience of online bullying within the last year, in contrast to 26% who had experienced bullying off-line.
- Overall, 15% of young people reported personal experience of online bullying within the last month, in comparison with 14% who reported off-line bullying.
- A higher proportion of under-18s had experienced both on- and off-line bullying within the last month, and last year, than those aged 18-25. However, more young people aged aged-25 had experienced online bullying than those aged under-18.
- Generally, our survey results showed that the more time children and young people spend online on average, the more likely they are to have experienced online bullying in the last year.
- Of those children and young people currently experiencing a mental health problem, 68% of those who responded to our survey said they have experienced cyberbullying in the last year.

Peer experience of cyberbullying:

- In total, 60% of young people reported having seen somebody be harassed or bullied online.
- Whilst 55% of young people reported knowing that one of their friends had been harassed or bullied online in their lifetime, and 33% knew a friend who had been harassed or bullied online within the last year.

Types of cyberbullying:

- 47% of young people reported having experienced threatening, intimidating or nasty messages via social media, email or text.
- 56% of young people have experienced exclusion from conversations, groups, games and activities online.

- 30% of young people have experienced persistent messaging after asking someone to stop.
- 32% of young people had experienced personal, private or embarrassing information being shared publicly.

Role of social media companies:

- An overwhelming majority of young people surveyed (83%) said that social media companies should do more to tackle cyberbullying on social media, whilst only 6% of young people disagreed with this.
- Similarly, 82% of respondents agreed that social media companies should do more to promote good mental health on their platforms, with less than 5% of respondents disagreeing with this.