

## More than 25 percent of teenagers have suffered cyber bullying in the past year

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Cyber bullying lasts for less than a month for most teenagers. Credit: SINC

Cyber bullying is an emerging phenomenon that is becoming increasingly common among teenagers. Research by the University of Valencia (UV), based on a study carried out in the region, shows that between 25% and 29% of all teenagers have been bullied via their mobile phone or the internet over the past year.

"The data from our study shows that technological bullying affects 24.6% of teenagers in the case of mobile telephony, and 29% with regard to the internet. In the large majority of cases, this abuse lasts for a month or less", Sofía Buelga, co-author of the study and a researcher at the UV, tells SINC.

The research, which has been published in the latest issue of the journal

*Psicothema*, was carried out by means of a survey in 11 secondary schools in Valencia in 2009, with 2,101 teenagers between the ages of 11 and 17 responding, 1,098 of whom were boys and 1,003 were girls.

According to the experts, this [cyber bullying](#) lasts for less than a month for most teenagers. "Out of the total surveyed, 17.4% were bullied via their mobile phones and 22.5% on the internet".

Although cyber bullying is a short-lived problem for most adolescents, there is a "relatively small, but significant" percentage of teenagers who have been subject to bullying of moderate (less than one attack per week) and severe intensity (more than one attack per week) over the course of more than three months, 4% between 3 and 6 months and 3% for more than a year.

In cases where bullying is moderate and lasts for more than three months, the most commonly used means for it is the mobile phone. "This could be explained by the availability and central importance that mobile phones have in life. Previous studies have shown that teenagers aged between 12 and 14 have had an average of three mobile phones, and 63% of them never switch them off", explains Buelga.

## **Students in their first years at school are most frequently bullied**

"More cyber bullying tends to take place in the first years at school than in the last ones, both by mobile and internet", says the expert. The study shows that girls suffer more bullying than boys in most cases, particularly verbal bullying, invasions of privacy, spreading of rumours and social exclusion.

"It is very important to raise young people's awareness, since they are

often not aware of the repercussions of their actions", Buelga adds.

## Differences from other studies

"There are large methodological differences between countries and studies into the prevalence of cyber bullying. These imbalances explain why the rate of bullying reported in studies varies between 5% and 34%", the expert explains.

The report EU Kids online, produced this year in 25 European countries, shows that Spain is "slightly below" the European average in terms of internet bullying. The average rate of internet bullying in Europe is 5%. Estonia and Romania reported the highest incidence of this phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the latest Report of the Ombudsman concluded in 2007 that the electronic bullying rate among secondary school pupils in Spain was 5.5%.

"Technology is taking on ever greater importance in daily life. This is why we need measures to teach people how to use it responsibly and positively", concludes Buelga.

**More information:** Sofía Buelga, María Jesús Cava y Gonzalo Musitu. "Cyberbullying: Adolescent victimization through mobile phone and internet" *Psicothema* 22 (4): 784-789, noviembre de 2010.

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