

One in five school-aged children in England experience cyberbullying

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New research carried out by Kent's Center for Health Services Studies as part of the Health Behavior of School Age Children Survey (HBSC) for England has found that cyberbullying among school-aged children has

risen, with 1 in 5 adolescents reporting being victims. The HBSC is part of an international program led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Of 11,13 and 15-year old adolescents in England, 21% reported being victims of cyberbullying in the survey, which is a 3% rise since the HBSC's previous survey in 2018. There was an increase in both genders from 15% to 18% for boys and from 20% to 23% for girls.

This research is published as part of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe's [second volume](#) of the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which focuses on patterns of bullying and peer violence among adolescents across 44 countries and regions.

While the overall trends in school bullying have remained stable since 2018, cyberbullying has increased, magnified by the increasing digitalization of young people's interactions, with potentially profound impacts on young lives.

With adolescents spending an increasing amount of time online, these figures highlight the urgent need for interventions involving educators, parents, [community leaders](#), and policymakers to foster digital literacy and safety.

In relation to country specific figures, England is the nation with the highest reported levels of Cyberbullying, among those surveyed. This is particularly apparent in 11-year-old girls with a prevalence of 30% who said they had been bullied online "at least once or twice in the last couple of months." This alarming increase calls for targeted gender-sensitive solutions that promote digital safety, empathy and inclusive school cultures.

Professor Sally Kendall and Dr. Sabina Hulbert, who led the HBSC in England research at Kent's Center for Health Services Studies said, "While we cannot be sure why in our country young people experience such disproportionate levels of cyberbullying, especially in the youngest age group, we can certainly echo the call for action and we want to highlight the urgency of the situation. Our schools need to be safe spaces where our children can flourish, not battlegrounds that threaten the youngest and most vulnerable."

Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, said, "With young people spending up to six hours online every single day, even small changes in the rates of bullying and violence can have [profound implications](#) for the health and well-being of thousands. From [self-harm](#) to suicide, we have seen how [cyberbullying](#) in all its forms can devastate the lives of young people and their families. This is both a health and a human rights issue, and we must step up to protect our children from violence and harm, both offline and online."

WHO/Europe has recently published its first-ever "[position paper](#)" on protecting children from online harms. It will support governments in formulating consistent requests to online and [technology companies](#), with the overall goal of securing healthy online environments in which children can thrive.

Provided by University of Kent

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