

Cyberbullying rampant among high school students

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Step into a class of 30 high school students and look around. Five of them have been victims of electronic bullying in the past year.

What's more, 10 of those students spend three or more hours on an average school day [playing video games](#) or using a computer for something other than school work, according to a study to be presented Sunday, May 5, at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Washington, DC.

"Electronic bullying of high [school students](#) threatens the self-esteem, emotional well-being and social standing of youth at a very vulnerable stage of their development," said study author Andrew Adesman, MD, FAAP, chief of Developmental and [Behavioral Pediatrics](#) at Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York. "Although teenagers generally embrace being connected to the Web and each other 24/7, we must recognize that these new technologies carry with them the potential to traumatize youth in new and different ways."

The researchers analyzed data from the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 15,425 public and private high school students. The school response rate was 81 percent, and the student response rate was 87 percent.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) conducts the survey on a nationally representative sample of high schoolers every two years to monitor six types of health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading

causes of death, disability and social problems among U.S. youths.

For the first time, the 2011 survey asked students whether they had been a victim of electronic bullying in the past 12 months, including through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites and texting. They also were asked how many hours they play video or computer games or use a computer for something that is not school work.

Results showed:

- One in six [high school](#) students (16.2 percent) reported being electronically bullied within the past 12 months.
- Girls were more than twice as likely to report being a victim of cyberbullying than boys (22.1 percent vs. 10.8 percent).
- Whites reported being the victim of cyberbullying more than twice as frequently as blacks.

"Electronic bullying is a very real yet silent danger that may be traumatizing children and teens without parental knowledge and has the potential to lead to devastating consequences," said principal investigator Karen Ginsburg, also at Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York. "By identifying groups at higher risk for electronic bullying, it is hoped that targeted awareness and prevention strategies can be put in place."

Results regarding video game and recreational computer use showed:

- Thirty-one percent of [high school students](#) reported spending three or more hours daily playing video games or using a computer for something other than school.
- Boys were more likely than girls to report playing for more than

three hours a day (35.3 percent vs. 26.6 percent).

"As technology continues to advance and computers become that much more accessible, [cyberbullying](#) will continue to grow as a hurtful weapon against kids and teens," Dr. Adesman concluded.

More information: To view the abstract, "Electronic Bullying and Recreational Video/Computer Time in U.S. High School Students," go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/vie...hp?nu=PAS13L1_2835.3

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