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# Cyberbullying Among 9-16 Year Olds in Ireland

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# Cyberbullying among 9-16 year olds in Ireland

Brian O'Neill, Thuy Dinh

## Summary

- **Almost a quarter (23%) of 9-16 year olds surveyed experienced some form of bullying, online or offline.** Bullying online or by mobile is less common (4%) than face to face. Levels of bullying in Ireland are a little above the average reported by the 25 countries (23% vs. 19%) but lower for cyberbullying (4% vs. 6%).
- **Bullying face to face is experienced by younger children (under 12) as well as by older teens.** Online bullying is much less common among younger 9-12 olds and happens mostly to teenagers.
- **More experienced internet users** and those who frequently use Social Networking Sites reported higher levels of bullying compared to those who use the internet less.
- For children who reported that they had been bullied on the internet, just 29% of parents were aware of this. **68% of parents did not know that their child had been bullied online.**
- **Up to a quarter of 15-16 year olds (24%) also say they have bullied others.** Nearly half of those who have bullied others online have also themselves been victims of cyberbullying.
- **Being the target of hurtful or nasty messages is the most commonly reported form of cyberbullying.**
- **The impact of cyberbullying is striking: over half of all children bullied online said they were very upset or fairly upset (52%).** For 44% this has a lasting effect.
- **Nearly a third (28%) of victims tried to fix the problem themselves.** A quarter hoped the problem would go away by itself.
- **Most young people who have been bullied talk to somebody about it (71%),** mostly a friend or one of their parents. Very few (6%) speak to a teacher.
- **The most prevalent technical response to cyberbullying is to block the person (48%).** Very few (15%) reported the incident using an online reporting tool or contacted an online advisor whose job it is to deal with such problems.

## Introduction

While bullying predates the internet, the phenomenon of cyberbullying – the circulation of hurtful or nasty messages online or via mobile technologies – has attracted widespread public concern and is perceived as one of the most damaging risks that young people can encounter during the course of their internet use.

This short report is intended to support initiatives such as the *Action Plan on Bullying* (2013)<sup>1</sup> and the awareness raising efforts of Webwise, the internet safety initiative of the PDST Technology in Education.<sup>2</sup> It supplements earlier research published in the first EU Kids Online report of Irish data *Risks and safety for children on the internet: the Ireland report* (2011). It presents new findings and further analysis of the EU Kids Online survey<sup>3</sup> specifically related to bullying, offline and online, among internet-using 9-16 year olds in Ireland.

Bullying was one of four types of online risk asked about in the EU Kids Online survey. Young people aged 9 to 16 years were asked if they had themselves experienced bullying or had bullied others; what impact this had on them; and what actions they took in attempting to deal with the problem. Parents were also asked if they were aware their child had been bullied.

The report is organised as follows:

- Who is bullied and who bullies?
- What forms does bullying take?
- What impact does online bullying have on young people?
- Comparing parent and child accounts of bullying
- How do young people cope with cyberbullying?

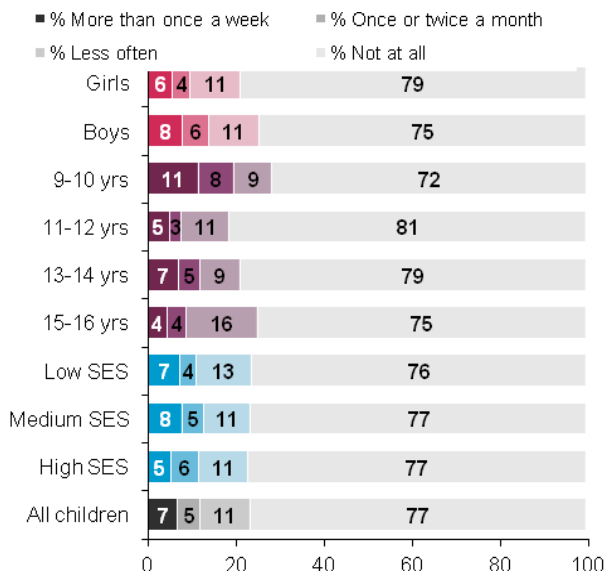
In conclusion, the report offers brief recommendations for policy in dealing with cyberbullying threats.

## Who is bullied?

In the EU Kids Online survey, children were asked if someone had acted in a 'hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months' either in person or via mobile phone or text, or on the internet, e.g. via email or social networking sites.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 summarises the main findings.

**Figure 1: Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months**



QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months? QC113: How often has someone acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way towards you in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

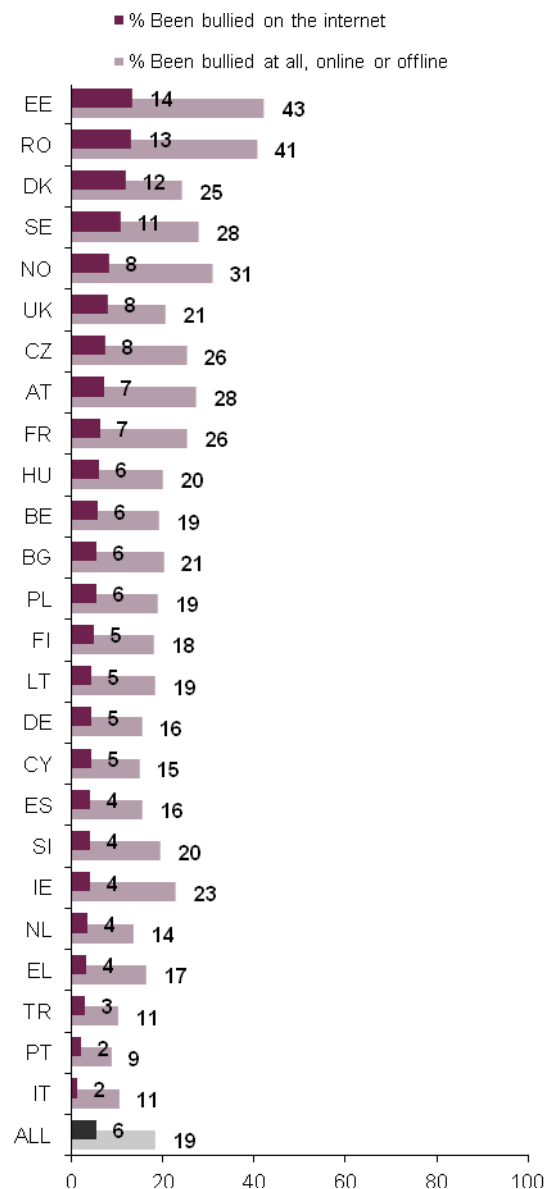
- Nearly one in four (23%) 9-16 year olds in Ireland say that someone has acted in this way towards them, online or offline, in the past 12 months. Slightly more boys than girls claim to have been bullied (25% vs. 21%).
- This is a regular occurrence for 12% of the sample: 7% say someone acts towards them in a hurtful or nasty way more than once a week and for 5% it is once or twice a month. For 11% it is less often, suggesting one or a few instances have occurred in the past year.
- Younger children, 9-10 years of age, claim to be bullied the most (28%), well above the European average of 17%.
- There are only slight demographic differences in that slightly more children from low and medium

SES homes report more frequent forms of bullying.

## Ireland compared

Figure 2 compares findings for Ireland with those of the other 25 countries included in the survey:

**Figure 2: Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months, by country**



QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

Most bullying takes place in the offline line world. Countries reporting the highest levels of face to face bullying (Romania – 41%; Estonia – 43%) also report the highest levels of online bullying.

In Ireland, the 23% who have experienced bullying online or offline (Figure 1) is slightly above the European average of 19%. Online bullying at 4% is at the lower end of the spectrum, below the European average of 6%, and half that of the UK where 8% reported being cyberbullied.

### Does cyberbullying correlate with higher levels of internet use?

In an earlier report,<sup>5</sup> we identified different patterns of online use among Irish children based on levels of use and the range of online activities. Six clusters or types were identified, ranging from ‘low use/low risk’ to more intensive forms of online activity. Table 1 analyses reports of being bullied within each of these clusters.

**Table 1: Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months by clusters**

	CL1	CL2	CL3	CL4	CL5	CL6
In person face to face	13	14	15	15	17	31
On the internet	1	4	9	4	5	14
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	2	2	3	6	9	10
<b>Has been bullied at all online or offline</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>39</b>
Not at all	81	81	80	77	77	61
Less often	7	9	9	14	18	16
Once or twice a month	4	4	9	3	0	14
More than once a week	7	6	2	6	6	10

QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months? QC113: How often has someone acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way towards you in the past 12 months? QC114: At any time during the last 12 months, has this happened [that you have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way]? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet. (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet

The six clusters reveal some interesting patterns in relation to experiences of being bullied.

1. **“Low use, low risk”**: most children fit into this category of low online use/risk and a small range of activities. Not surprisingly, it has the lowest prevalence of being bullied at all or face by face (19% and 13% respectively) though it does have the second highest proportion of repeated bullying of more than once per week.
2. **“Low-use, gaming/or entertainment-oriented”**: has a similar profile to cluster 1 with one in 5 having been bullied at all. This group has somewhat higher levels of online bullying (4% compared to just 1% in cluster 1).
3. **“Learning-oriented”**: 1 in 4 of this group has been bullied and a higher proportion of this takes place online (9%).
4. **“Moderate-use, entertainment and communication”**: comprising a quarter of internet users, 1 in 4 of this group has also been bullied and 10% have been bullied either by mobile phone or online.
5. **“High-use, social networking oriented”**: this higher use cluster also has higher levels of being bullied at all (28%) with roughly similar amounts offline and online.
6. **“Focused social web use”**: this cluster has the highest level of children who have been bullied on the internet (14%) and both online and offline (39%). It also accounts for the highest percentage of children who have been bullied face to face (31%). This cluster is older in profile (13.9 year-old), and consists of slightly more boy than girls.

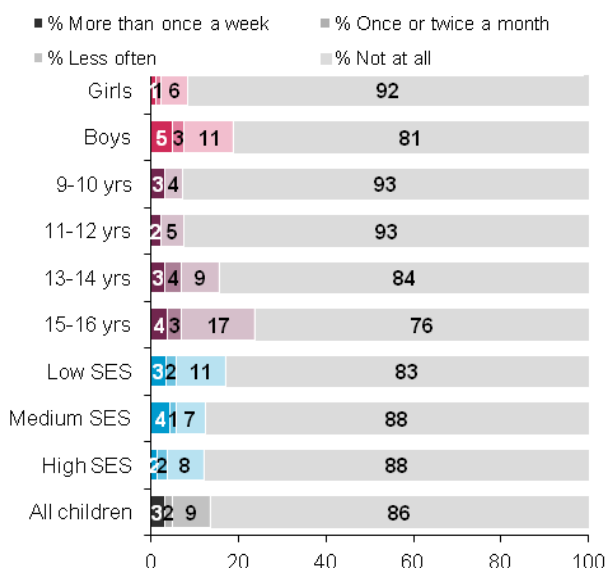
Looking at the prevalence of children who have been bullied both online and offline by cluster, there is a general tendency for face to face and cyberbullying to go hand in hand. It is important to note that the survey assessed children’s responses at one point in time only and we cannot conclude that the child who is bullied offline is more likely to become a victim online or vice versa.

The frequency of being bullied at all among clusters is also interesting. While cluster 6 has the highest percentage of children have been bullied more than once a week (10%), cluster 1 – with the lowest level of internet use - has the second highest level of being bullied repeatedly (more than once a week: 7%).

## Who bullies?

Since bullying is an activity that occurs largely among peers, children may not only be bullied but they may also bully others, either on the internet or in other ways. After asking children about their experiences of being bullied, children were also asked if they themselves had acted in a hurtful or nasty way to others in the past year.

**Figure 3: Child has bullied others online or offline in past 12 months**



QC125: Have you acted in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty to someone else in the past 12 months? QC126: How often have you acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- 14% of all children say that they have bullied others or had acted in a hurtful or nasty way in the past 12 months compared to the 23% of children who have been bullied in the past year (Figure 1).
- Bullying others is more common among 15-16 year olds (24%) and among boys (19%). There are few differences by SES in reports of bullying others.

Again, most bullying takes place in the offline world and as shown in Table 2 notably rises with age. Those that had bullied others online were almost exclusively older teenagers.

**Table 2: Ways in which children have bullied others in past 12 months, by age**

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
In person face to face	5	5	12	15	9
On the internet	0	1	1	5	2
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	0	2	6	2
Has bullied at all online or offline	7	8	16	24	14

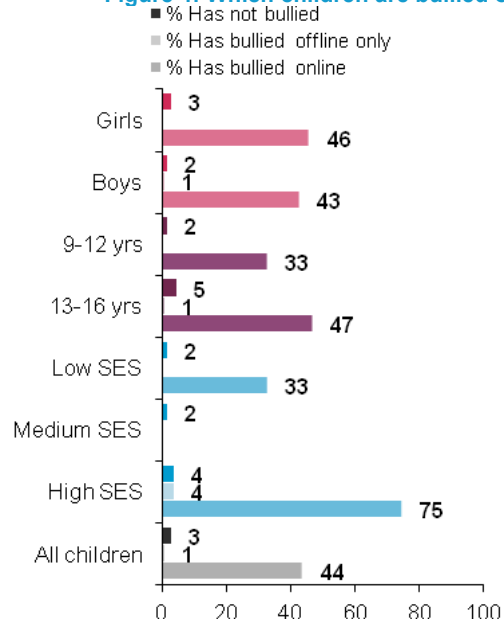
QC125: Have you acted in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty to someone else in the past 12 months? QC127: In which following ways have you (act in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty to someone else) in the past 12 months. (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet

## Does being bullied make some children retaliate by bullying others?

This is a question we explored in the full European findings.<sup>6</sup> Figure 4 examines the Irish data and asks whether children have been bullied online for three separate groups: those have not bullied others at all; those that have bullied others offline only; and those that have bullied others online.

**Figure 4: Which children are bullied online?**



QC 115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happen on the internet? QC125: Have you acted in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty to someone else in the past 12 months? QC127c: In which of the following ways have you acted like this?

Base: Of all children using the internet: only children who have not bullied at all, have bullied face-to-face and not online, have bullied online

- The most striking pattern to emerge shows that of children who have bullied others online, 44% have themselves been bullied online. This suggests that online bullying, in many cases, is a reciprocal process in which children both bully and are bullied by others.
- It appears that children from higher SES backgrounds, older teenager and slightly more girls are more likely to be both bullies and to have been bullied themselves online.
- By contrast, of children who have not bullied others, just 3 per cent have been bullied online. Among those who have bullied others offline only, only 1% have themselves been bullied online (a much lower rate compared to the European findings, at 10%).

## What form does cyberbullying take?

The most common form of bullying is in person, face to face: in fact, offline bullying is 4 times more common than online or bullying by mobile phone or text. 15% say that someone has acted in a hurtful or nasty way towards them in person, face to face compared with 4% who say that this happened on the internet or by mobile phone calls or messages.

The reason for looking at the different forms of cyberbullying may take is to identify whether particular applications such as chatrooms or social networking sites provide contexts in which bullying behaviour can occur.

Table 3 presents different forms of bullying as a percentage of all children who use the internet and therefore the totals represented are relatively low.

**Table 3: Ways in which children have been bullied in past 12 months, by age**

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
On a social networking site	0	1	3	6	3
By instant messaging	0	0	1	1	1
By email	0	1	0	0	0
In a gaming website	0	1	0	1	0
In a chatroom	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Any online</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
Some other way on the internet	0	0	2	1	1
In person face to face	19	13	14	15	15
<b>On the internet</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	1	4	10	4
<b>Has been bullied at all online or offline</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>

QC114: At any time during the last 12 months, has this happened [that you have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way]? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet. QC116: In which ways has this happened to you in the last 12 months? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet.

- The majority of bullying takes place face to face with just 4% online. Younger children (9-10 years) are more likely to have been bullied face to face while cyberbullying is much more a phenomenon for teenage years.
- Bullying face to face is something of a constant while the occurrence of online bullying rises steeply with age, by a factor of 2 between the ages of 13-14 and 15-16.
- Most cyberbullying takes place by mobile phone or text (10%), followed by some form of online bullying (9%), mostly related to use of social networking sites (6%).
- Email, gaming websites and chatrooms do not appear as significant threats for online bullying.



Gender is also a factor in the different forms that bullying takes. Looking at the ways in which children have been bullied in the past 12 months, Table 4 shows that:

- More boys than girls reported being bullied face to face especially in the younger age group.
- More girls than boys report being bullied online or by mobile phone or text, especially in the teenage group.

**Table 4: Ways in which children have been bullied in past 12 months, by age and gender**

%	9-12		13-16		All
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girl	
In person face to face	18	12	14	13	15
On the internet	1	1	5	8	4
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	1	4	9	4
Has been bullied at all online or offline	28	19	23	23	23

QC114: At any time during the last 12 months, has this happened [that you have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way]? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet. (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who use the internet.

Just what has happened when children are bullied is difficult to determine. For the 11-16 year olds who had been bullied online, we asked them what they had experienced (Table 5).

- Being the target of nasty or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying (3% of all 11-16 year olds). Having such messages passed around the peer group or posted where others can see them is less common (just 1% or 2% of 15-16 year olds). Only 1% has been threatened online.
- Although being bullied online is generally more common among older children, no particular age trend in forms of bullying is evident.

**Table 5: What happened when child was bullied online in past 12 months, by age (age 11+)**

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Nasty or hurtful messages were sent to me	n.a.	1	2	4	3
Nasty or hurtful messages about me were passed around or posted where others could see	n.a.	0	1	2	1
I was threatened on the internet	n.a.	0	1	1	1
Other nasty or hurtful things on the internet	n.a.	0	0	1	1
I was left out or excluded from a group or activity on the internet	n.a.	0	0	0	0
Something else	n.a.	0	0	3	1
At all on internet	1	2	5	8	4

QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet? QC117: Can I just check, which of these things have happened in the last 12 months? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children 11-16 years old who use the internet.

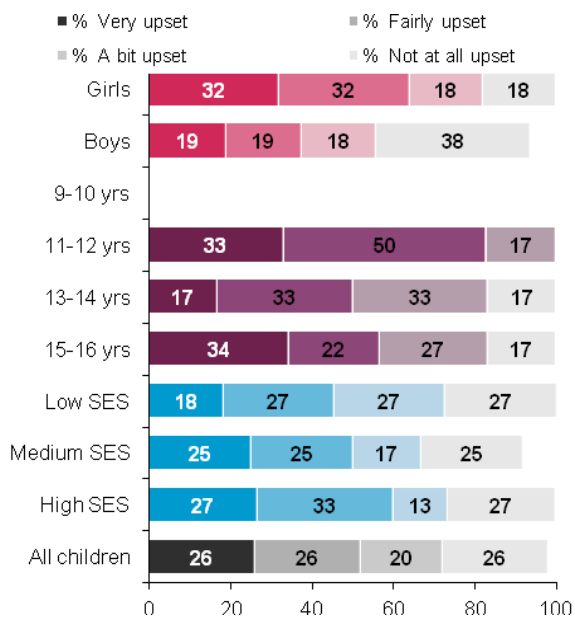
Findings for how children were bullied online were broadly in line with equivalent European findings whereby the sending of hurtful or nasty messages or having such messages passed around where others could see are the main forms that online bullying takes (4% and 2% respectively). The age trend that online bullying is generally more common among older teenagers is also consistent with the European average.

## The impact of cyberbullying

In order to assess the impact that it had on those who had reported being bullied, two measures of subjective harm were applied. Young people (11-16) were asked about the severity of the experience, i.e. how upset they had been the last time bullying took place, and its duration, i.e. for how long they had felt this way.

Figure 5 presents findings for those that been bullied online, how upsetting this experience was, if at all, the last time this occurred.

**Figure 5: How upset the child felt after being bullied online (only children who have been bullied online in past 12 months)**



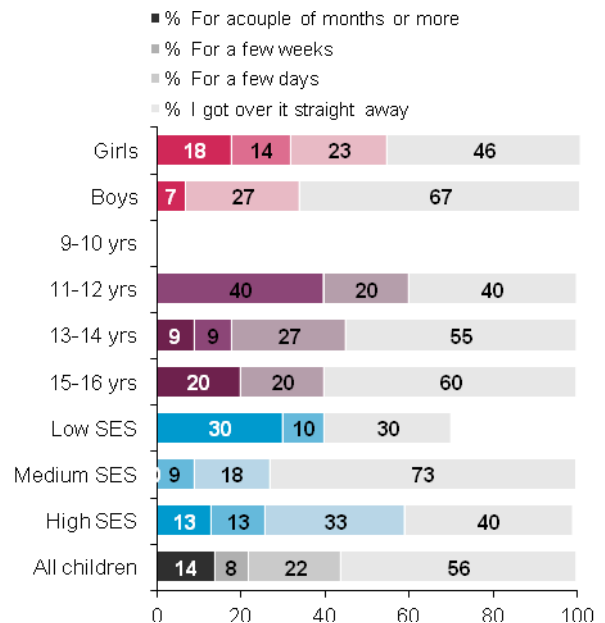
QC118: Thinking about the last time you were [sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet], how upset were you about what happened (if at all)?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who have been bullied on the internet in the past 12 months.

- The impact of online bullying is striking. Remembering that the overall incidence is low, its impact is felt as upsetting by nearly three quarters of children bullied. Over half (52%) say they were either very upset or fairly upset by the experience.
- Among 15-16 year olds, 34% were very upset and a further 22% fairly upset underlining the severity of the impact.
- Girls (32%) are more likely than boys (19%) to say they were very upset after being bullied online. A

quarter (26%) of those that had been bullied online say they were not at all upset.

**Figure 6: For how long the child felt like that after being bullied online (only children aged 11+ who have been bullied online in past 12 months).**



QC118: Thinking about the last time you were [sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet], how long did you feel like that for?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who have been bullied online in the past 12 months.

The duration of impact after being bullied online also varies, as is revealed by answers to the question, 'how long did you feel like that for?' (See Figure 6)

- Over half of children 'got over it straight away' (56%), indicating that online bullying was not something that had a lasting impact. However, for the remaining 44%, cyberbullying is something that has a more enduring effect. Nearly a quarter (22%) reported that its impact lasted for a few days. A further 8% felt its impact a few weeks later. However, 14% were more deeply affected for a couple of months or more. This is a very high level of impact compared to the equivalent European finding (2%).
- Nearly one in 5 (20%) teens, aged 15-16, felt this way for a couple of months.
- The data shows longer lasting effects for the youngest group (11-12 year-old), girls and low SES groups (at 40%, 18% and 30% respectively).

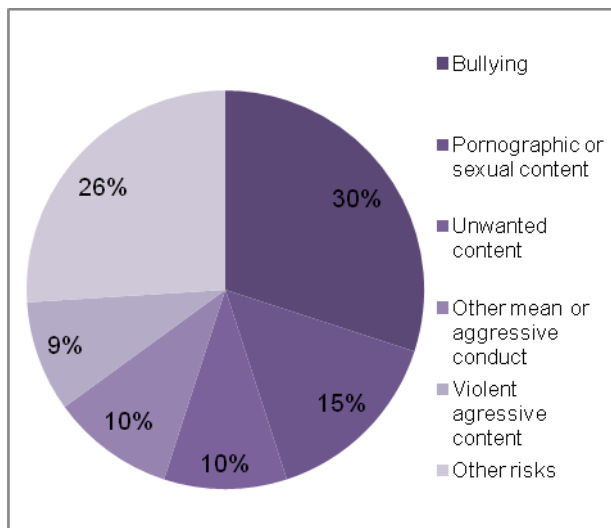


## Qualitative findings on cyberbullying

In addition to the quantitative findings presented in this report, children were also given an opportunity in an open-ended part of the survey to respond to the question: “What things on the internet would bother people about your age?”<sup>7</sup> The answers given were unprompted and were directly entered onto computer by the children so that neither interviewer nor parent could see how the child answered.

45% of the total Irish sample answered the open-ended question. Verbatim responses were coded by two independent coders according to a standard scheme which categorised the type of risk. Figure 7 presents the top risks coded by type.

Figure 7: Top risks as told by children



QC 323: What things on the internet would bother people about your age?

Base: N= 410, only children replied the open-ended question

Of the total responses entered, bullying – defined as *usually repeated aggression* – was the most prominent risk and was mentioned in 30% of answers given. Other mean or aggressive conduct (e.g. *receiving nasty messages; threats, Insults that lower our self-esteem and affect us psychologically*) accounted for a further 10% of responses.

Conduct risks account for at least 40% of responses given by children as things on the internet that bother children their age. The qualitative data provides another indication of the degree of impact that cyberbullying has on young people’s online experience.

Sampling from the open-ended responses, references to cyberbullying were represented among both younger children and older teenagers. Both boys and girls, for instance, 12 and 13 years of age referred to cyberbullying on social networking and social media sites:

*being called names like fat and buck tooth or being black mailed on social websites like bebo i herd my friends being called \“i’ll kill u bastered\” tomorrow and all that junk so i think there should be a 3 strike thing if do bad stuff you will be barred*  
(Boy, 12 years)

*if you go on facebook people might say bad things about you or your family or friends that will make you angry*  
(Boy, 11 years)

*hacking in to bebo pages when people can make up a bebo page pretending that its you bad comments people writeing about you on there page.*  
(Girl, 13 years)

*people posting horrible things about you on their bebo and face book pages*  
(Boy, 16 years)

Some teenagers offered explanations for the prominence of cyberbullying on social media:

*Well mostly social networking because it gives you a link to almost anyone and people can get overly obsessive about that! ie. Checking people’s status all the time judging them over their pictures and hearing gossip or having mean things said to you. That’s exactly why cyber-bullying is so huge! But people get so obsessive with their page that they could just delete their profile because they’re getting treated badly but they just won’t because they’ve put so much effort into it.*  
(Girl, 15 years)

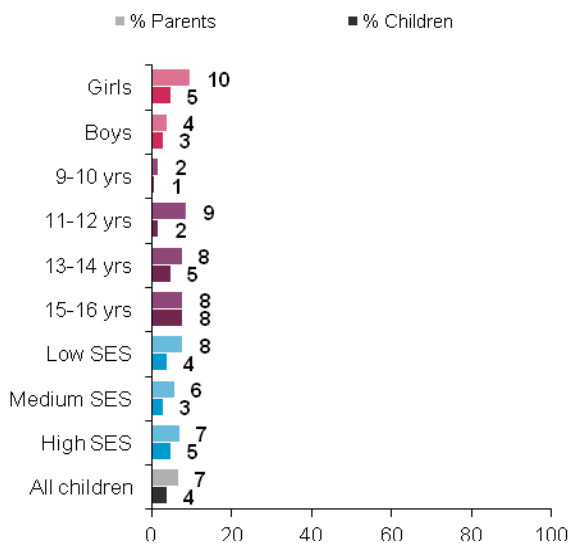
*If people put your secrets on the internet..If People take Pictures or videos of you and put them on the internet when you dont want them to ...If People make up rumours about you and Put it on the internet... If People Take a Picture of you and they Edit it to Make it look bad and they put on the internet it would be bad...If people you Add as a Friend e.g on bebo and you dont know them they could call you Names and Make you feel sad.*  
(Girl, 13 years)

## Comparing children's and parents accounts

Figure 8, comparing children's and parents' accounts in cases where the child has been bullied, reveals some important differences and gaps in awareness.

- Overall, parents tend to overestimate the prevalence of cyberbullying with 7% saying their child has been bullied online when only 4% of children report this to be the case.
- Among 15-16 year olds where most online bullying takes place, there is agreement between parent and child accounts.
- Parents of girls and younger children tend to overestimate the extent of cyberbullying.

**Figure 8: Children's and parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online**



QP235: [Has your child] been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet by another child or teenager? QC115: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

Uniquely, the EU Kids Online study was able to compare individual parent and child answers to assess whether parents were aware when *their* child said they had been bullied.

So, for example, in the case where children say that 'yes, they have been sent hurtful or nasty messages on the internet' (Table 6), we can see that one third (29%)

confirm this to be the case but nearly two thirds (68%) of parents say this has not happened.

This gap in awareness, in cases where children have been bullied online, is stark and underlines the need to improve communication between parents and young people about cyberbullying.

**Table 6: Comparison between children's and parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online**

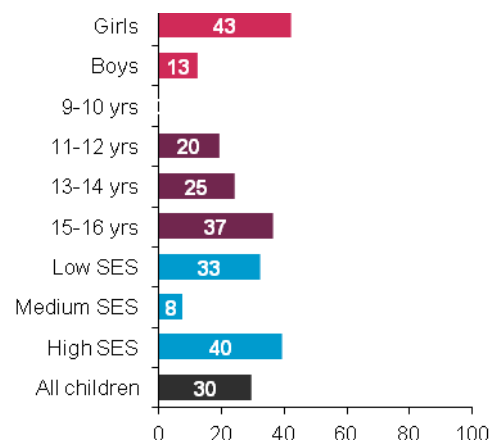
Child has been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet?	Child's answer:	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	29	6
No	68	90
Don't know	3	4
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet by another child or teenager? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months [have you been treated in a hurtful or nasty way] on the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

Figure 9 looks more closely at just those parents who are aware that their child has been bullied online.

**Figure 9: Parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online (only children who have been bullied online):**



QP235: [Has your child] been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet by another child or teenager?

Base: One parent of children who use the internet and who have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online.

- As above, one third of parents are aware when their child has been bullied online but nearly two thirds are not.
- Parents are more likely to be aware that their child has been bullied online in the case of girls more than boys, for older teens rather than younger users, and for parents from a higher SES background.

## How do young people cope with being bullied?

Building resilience and enabling young people to cope with online problems that may bother or upset them is an important objective of internet safety education. In addition to asking about the risks they encountered, EU Kids Online also examined the kinds of coping strategies young people adopted in response to online threats.

**Table 7: How the child coped after being bullied online**

% who did	All
Try to fix the problem	28
Hope the problem would go away by itself	23
Feel a bit guilty about what went wrong	19
None of these things	27

QC120: The last time this happened, did you do any of these things afterwards? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: All children who were bullied

- In relation to being bullied (online or offline), most (28%) tried a proactive solution by trying to fix the problem themselves.
- A further quarter of those that had been bullied (23%) adopted a more fatalistic response and hoped the problem would go away by itself.
- A number also felt guilty about what went wrong, adding to their sense of victimisation and vulnerability (19%). 27% did not do any of these things.

The second type of coping strategy asked about was in relation to seeking some form of social support. Children and young people were asked if after the last time they had been bullied online they talked to anyone at all.

**Table 8: Who the child talked to after being bullied online**

% who did	All
Anybody at all	71
A friend	42
My mother or father	36
My brother or sister	4
Another adult I trust	0
A teacher	6
Someone whose job it is to help children	0
Someone else	8

QC121: Thinking about [the last time you were sent hurtful or nasty messages on the internet], did you talk to anyone about what happened? QC122: Who did you talk to? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: Children aged 11-16 years who use the internet and have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online.

- Most do in fact talk to somebody about having been bullied online (71%). This is a positive finding and is perhaps attributable to the extensive awareness-raising efforts about cyberbullying that have taken place.
- In nearly half of cases (42%), this is a friend, followed by one of their parents (36%).
- Notably very few (just 6%) speak to a teacher about what had happened. Given the importance of schools in reinforcing positive messages about internet safety and in promoting effective strategies to deal with bullying, this low finding is of concern.

Young people were also asked if they had used any of the internet-specific mechanisms such as using 'report abuse' buttons in response to the incidence of bullying.

**Table 9: What the child did after being bullied online**

% who did	Did this	Did this help
I blocked the person who had sent it to me	48	46
I deleted any messages from the person who sent it to me	40	37
I stopped using the internet for a while	23	15
I changed my filter/ contact settings	18	6
I reported the problem (e.g. clicked on a 'report abuse' button, contact an internet advisor or 'internet service provider (ISP)')	15	9
None of these	24	5
Don't know	0	0

QC123: Thinking about [the last time you were sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet], did you do any of these things? QC124: Which, if any, of the things you did helped you? (Multiple responses allowed)

Base: Children who use the internet and have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online.

- The most common responses for young people to employ were 'blocking the person' who sent the hurtful message (48%) and deleting messages from those who had sent them (40%). Most said this had helped.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) stopped using the internet at all for a while, which though it helps to remove the source of upset also means losing out on online opportunities.
- Some also changed filter or contact settings. Remembering that most online bullying takes place on social networking sites this would appear to be an appropriate step to take. However, only one third of those who did this found it helpful.
- Few (just 15%) reported the problem using an online reporting tool or contacted an online advisor whose job it is to deal with such problems. Only 9% of those who had been bullied found this helpful, indicating that much work needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of technical solutions.

## Recommendations

EU Kids Online has found that while cyberbullying is not the most prevalent risk that young people encounter online, it is the one that has the most severe impact. Findings show that it particularly affects teenagers, is closely associated with more intensive internet use and happens mostly on social networking sites. Alongside the extensive recommendations made by the Anti-Bullying Working Group reporting to the Minister for Education and Skills (2013), the following are some specific recommendations arising from the findings of this survey.

- **Improving communication between parents and children should be a priority given the high gaps in awareness.** Awareness-raising efforts should focus on encouraging dialogue between parents/carers and children about cyberbullying and how to deal with it.
- The fact that nearly three quarters of young people do seek social support when they have been bullied is a very positive finding. **Awareness of the opportunities for peer mediation support and positive interventions should therefore be developed given that it is to friends that young people will first turn.**
- **Given that so few turn to teachers in seeking support in cases of cyberbullying, updated school policies, continuing professional development for teachers and new resources to support the implementation of the personal safety aspects of the Social Personal Health Education curriculum are needed.** Young people need to be encouraged speak more openly about cyberbullying threats.
- **Service providers need to develop and make available more effective reporting mechanisms.** Very few young people use an online facility to report abuse. Blocking mechanisms are used and prove helpful when available but this only partially deals with the problem.
- **Social networking sites, where the majority of cyberbullying takes place, need to improve technical support facilities.** Young people do try to use filters and contact settings to manage their online communication but less than a third find this helpful.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills*

<sup>2</sup> The Webwise initiative of the Professional Development Support Service for Teachers (PDST), acts as technical coordinator for the Safer Internet Ireland Awareness Node, which has primary responsibility for the development of material and programmes of awareness to ensure children, teachers and parents understand the benefits and risks of the internet, through initiatives such as [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

<sup>3</sup> Funded by the European Commission Safer Internet Programme (2009-11), the EU Kids Online network surveyed 9-16 year olds using in-home, face-to-face interviews with a random stratified sample of 1000 children in 25 countries across Europe. Full technical details available at: [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

<sup>4</sup> Details of the questionnaire and project methodology are available on the project website: [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

<sup>5</sup> O'Neill, B., & Dinh, T. (2012). Digital Literacy, Digital Opportunities. *Digital Childhoods Working Paper Series* (No. 2).

<sup>6</sup> Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., & Ólafsson, K. (2011). Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full Findings. LSE, London: EU Kids Online, p.65.

<sup>7</sup> See Livingstone, S., Kirwil, L., Ponte, C. and Staksrud, E. (2013). *In their own words: What bothers children online?* LSE, London: EU Kids Online.

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## Other reports

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