

The Digital Epidemic: A Comprehensive Analysis of Cyberbullying Statistics, Trends, and Impacts (2025)

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Abstract - The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has reshaped social interaction across all age groups while intensifying the global prevalence of cyberbullying. This study presents a systematic synthesis of recent international statistics and trends related to online harassment, based on empirical reports and large-scale datasets published through December 2025. The findings indicate a sustained rise in cyberbullying victimization worldwide, with prevalence rates among adolescents in several regions approaching or exceeding 60 percent, underscoring the pervasive and transnational nature of the phenomenon.

The analysis examines cyberbullying patterns across key demographic variables, including gender, race and ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation, revealing consistent disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized populations. Platform-level trends further demonstrate that the incidence of cyberbullying varies significantly across social networking and content-sharing platforms, influenced by factors such as anonymity, algorithmic content amplification, and engagement-driven system design.

In addition to prevalence patterns, the study reviews evidence linking cyberbullying exposure to adverse mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, self-harm behaviors, and suicidal ideation, with consistent effects observed across diverse geographic contexts. The findings highlight the urgent need for globally coordinated regulatory frameworks, proactive platform governance, and evidence-based educational interventions to mitigate the public health impact of cyberbullying and promote safer digital environments.

Key Words: Cyberbullying, Digital Harassment, Adolescent Mental Health, Social Media Safety, Online Victimization, Cyber bullying Statistics 2025.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid global expansion of social media platforms, instant messaging services, and digital communication technologies has fundamentally reshaped interpersonal interactions across societies. While these tools have enhanced global connectivity and access to information, they have also enabled new forms of harassment that transcend geographical, cultural, and temporal boundaries. Cyberbullying, broadly defined as the intentional use of

electronic communication to harass, intimidate, or harm individuals, has emerged as a pervasive global phenomenon affecting children, adolescents, and adults.

Unlike traditional forms of bullying that are often confined to specific physical settings, cyberbullying operates continuously and across borders. The persistence of digital content, coupled with anonymity and algorithm-driven amplification, increases both the visibility and severity of harmful interactions. Recent evidence suggests that online and offline victimization are increasingly interconnected, creating complex patterns of harassment that challenge conventional prevention and intervention approaches.

The objective of this paper is to examine the global landscape of cyberbullying through a systematic synthesis of international statistical evidence. Drawing on more than 180 data points reported between 2016 and 2025, the study analyses prevalence trends across regions, identifies demographic groups at heightened risk, and assesses the effectiveness of existing regulatory, technological, and educational interventions. By providing a comprehensive global perspective, this research seeks to inform evidence-based policy development and support the creation of safer and more inclusive digital environments worldwide.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Prevalence and Rising Trends Cyberbullying has escalated into a worldwide crisis, with incident rates rising sharply alongside increased digital access. Globally, approximately 30.5% of adolescents report being bullied within school environments, often with an online component (Pacer). Cross-national research covering 44 countries indicates that 15% of young people have been cyberbullied, while 12% admit to bullying others (WHO). Longitudinal data highlights this upward trajectory, with lifetime victimization rates among youth surging from 33.6% in 2016 to 58.2% in 2025 (Broadband Search). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, with 44% of students in surveyed regions noting an increase in online abuse during lockdown periods (Single care).

Demographic and Cultural Disparities Vulnerability to cyberbullying varies significantly across demographic groups. Research indicates a distinct gender gap, with girls facing higher lifetime prevalence rates (59.2%) compared to boys

(49.5%) (Pacer). Globally, marginalized groups face disproportionate risks; studies show that LGBTQ+ youth are significantly more likely to be targeted (47.1%) than their non-minority peers (CDC). Similarly, adolescents with disabilities report higher victimization rates (44.4%) compared to those without (31.3%) (CDC). Racial and ethnic biases also manifest online, with minority groups frequently reporting harassment specifically based on their race or ethnicity (Pew Research).

Platform Dynamics and Digital Environments The architecture of social media platforms plays a crucial role in the frequency of harassment. Visual-centric applications like Instagram (29.8%) and Facebook (26.2%) consistently record the highest rates of cyberbullying incidents (Broadband Search). Online gaming also represents a major vector for abuse; globally, a significant portion of online multiplayer gamers report experiencing hate or harassment, with identity-based attacks targeting 37% of young players (ADL). Despite these challenges, platforms are improving moderation, with proactive detection rates on major networks like Instagram reaching nearly 97% by 2024 (Exploding Topics).

Mental Health and Societal Impact The consequences of online aggression are severe and universally damaging. Victims of cyberbullying exhibit a markedly higher risk of depression and anxiety compared to non-victimized peers (Stopbullying). Most critically, the correlation between online harassment and self-harm is profound; global reviews indicate that victims are approximately twice as likely to attempt suicide (Exploding Topics). Beyond mental health, the impact is academic and behavioral, often leading to school avoidance and a decline in educational performance (Stopbullying). Despite the severity, reporting remains low globally, with less than half of victims notifying a trusted adult (Stopbullying).

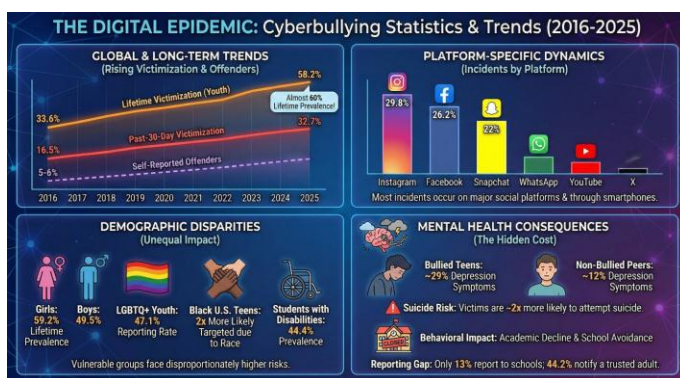


Fig -1: Digital Epidemic Cyberbullying Statistics, and Trends (2016-2025)

3. GLOBAL AND LONG-TERM CYBERBULLYING TRENDS

The trajectory of cyberbullying over the past decade reveals a disturbing escalation in both the frequency of incidents and the number of individuals involved as aggressors. As digital integration deepens globally, the boundary between offline and online aggression has dissolved, leading to sustained increases in victimization rates across all age groups.

Escalating Victimization Rates (2016–2025) Longitudinal data indicates a sharp rise in the prevalence of online harassment. Between 2016 and 2025, the lifetime rate of cyberbullying victimization among young people surged from 33.6% to 58.2% (Broadband Search). This trend is further evidenced by short-term exposure rates; the proportion of adolescents reporting victimization within the past 30 days nearly doubled, rising from 16.5% in 2016 to 32.7% in 2025 (Broadband Search). Global assessments corroborate these findings, with broader studies indicating that approximately 30.5% of adolescents worldwide have experienced bullying in school environments, often with an online component (Pacer).

The Rise of the Cyber-Aggressor Parallel to the rise in victimization is a significant increase in the number of individuals admitting to cyberbullying others. The rate of self-reported offending—individuals who admit to bullying others online—climbed from approximately 5%–6% in 2016 to 16.1% by 2025 (Broadband Search). International studies further refine this data, noting that between 2018 and 2024, the share of adolescents who cyberbully others increased from 11% to 14% for boys and from 7% to 9% for girls (WHO). This suggests that digital aggression is becoming a normalized behavioural response for a growing segment of the youth population.

Age-Related Susceptibility and Adult Victimization While often viewed as a youth issue, cyberbullying persists well into adulthood. A breakdown of victimization by age group reveals that young adults aged 18 to 25 report the highest rates at 40.5%, followed by 24% for those aged 26 to 35, and declining to 6.5% for those 66 and older (Single care). Among younger cohorts, the risk peaks during early adolescence. Data indicates that 38.4% of children aged 12–14 reported being bullied, compared to 29.7% of those aged 15–17 (CDC). This "middle school peak" is consistent with school administration reports, where 37% of middle schools reported weekly incidents compared to only 25% of high schools (Pacer).

Global Scope and the Pandemic Effect The universality of the issue is underscored by cross-national data. In a survey of students across 30 countries, one-third reported being victims of cyber bullying (Single care). A broader World Health Organization study involving 279,000 young people in 44 countries found that 15% had been cyberbullied, while 12% admitted to bullying others (WHO). The COVID-19

pandemic acted as a significant catalyst for this upward trend; 44% of students in one major survey noted a distinct increase in cyberbullying incidents during the pandemic, likely driven by the sudden shift to remote learning and increased screen time (Single care).

The Toxicity of Online Gaming Environments Online multiplayer gaming has emerged as a fertile ground for harassment. Approximately 83 million out of 110 million online multiplayer gamers surveyed in major markets (roughly 75%) reported experiencing hate or harassment (ADL). While there has been a decline in exposure to white supremacist ideology among youth gamers—dropping from 15% in 2022 to 9% in 2023—the prevalence of general hostility remains alarmingly high (ADL).

Frequency, Repetition, and Reporting Failures Cyberbullying is rarely a one-time event. Comprehensive surveys indicate that 14.5% of students experience repeated bullying, with 41.3% of victims expecting the abuse to happen again (Stop bullying). Despite the repetitive nature of these attacks, reporting mechanisms remain underutilized. Only 44.2% of bullied students notified a trusted adult about their experience (Stop bullying). Furthermore, there is a distinct power dynamic at play, with 15.4% of students reporting being bullied by someone they perceived as having more power or influence than them (Stop bullying).

Platform Moderation and Response Social media platforms have ramped up automated detection to combat this surge. Meta reported that the proactive detection rate for bullying and harassment on Facebook improved dramatically from 14.4% in 2019 to nearly 75.3% by mid-2025. Similarly, Instagram saw its proactive detection rate rise; to 96.9% by 2024 (Exploding Topics; Meta). Despite these technological advancements, the sheer volume of content necessitates that millions of posts are actioned quarterly, highlighting the persistent scale of the problem.

4. CYBERBULLYING PATTERNS ACROSS GENDER AND CULTURAL GROUPS

The experience of digital harassment is far from uniform, with significant disparities observed across gender, racial, and identity lines. Research highlights that specific demographic groups face distinct forms of victimization, often exacerbating existing offline social inequalities.

Gender-Based Disparities in Victimization: Data consistently indicates that females experience higher rates of cyberbullying compared to their male counterparts. Lifetime prevalence statistics show that 59.2% of girls have experienced cyberbullying, compared to 49.5% of boys (Pacer). This gap is also evident in short-term reporting; in school settings, 21.8% of female students reported being bullied versus 16.7% of male students (Stop bullying). The

nature of this harassment also differs by gender. Girls are disproportionately targeted with non-consensual explicit content; approximately 29% of girls report receiving unsolicited explicit images, compared to 20% of boys (Single care). Furthermore, girls are more likely to face questions about their whereabouts and activities online, with 17% of older female adolescents reporting persistent monitoring compared to lower rates for males (Pew Research).

Racial and Ethnic: Targeting racial identity significantly influences the likelihood and nature of online abuse. Adolescents from minority backgrounds often report higher rates of identity-based harassment. For instance, Black adolescents are approximately twice as likely as other racial groups to be cyberbullied specifically due to their race or ethnicity (Avast). In the gaming community, this trend is stark, with 50% of Black adult gamers reporting harassment based on their race (ADL). The impact of this targeted abuse is severe; studies indicate that Black middle-school victims of bullying are 135% more likely to consider suicide than their non-victimized peers (Exploding Topics). Conversely, some data suggests variations in general bullying rates, with White non-Hispanic teenagers reporting a bullying rate of 39.6%, compared to varying rates for other groups, highlighting the complex interplay between general harassment and identity-specific attacks (CDC).

Vulnerabilities of LGBTQ+: Youth Sexual and gender minority youth remain one of the most at-risk populations for online aggression. Reports indicate that LGBTQ+ youth experience bullying at a rate of 47.1%, significantly higher than the 30% rate observed among non-minority youth (CDC). This disparity underscores the use of digital platforms as venues for identity-based intolerance, where minority status can serve as a focal point for harassment.

Disability and Vulnerability: Adolescents with disabilities face elevated risks of victimization. Research shows that teenagers with developmental disabilities report a bullying prevalence of 44.4%, compared to 31.3% for those without disabilities (CDC). Specific targeting is also evident, with nearly 10% of bullied students reporting that they were harassed specifically because of their disability (Pacer). This suggests that perpetrators often exploit perceived vulnerabilities, making online spaces particularly hostile for neurodivergent youth or those with physical disabilities.

Socioeconomic Factors: Economic background also plays a role in exposure to cyberbullying, though the trends are complex. Some studies suggest that students from lower-income households experience cyberbullying at roughly twice the rate of those from higher-income households (22% vs. 11%) (Security.org). However, conflicting patterns exist in different regions; for example, data from the United Kingdom suggests that children from more affluent families may be more likely to report victimization, potentially due to greater access to devices and digital platforms (Anti-Bullying

Alliance). This dichotomy indicates that while digital access increases exposure, socioeconomic stress may also correlate with higher rates of conflict and harassment.

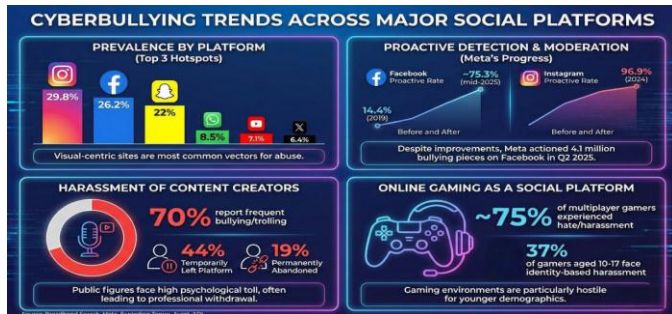


Fig -2: Cyber bullying Trend across Major Social Platforms

5. CYBERBULLYING TRENDS ACROSS MAJOR SOCIAL PLATFORMS

The digital landscape is fragmented across various applications, each fostering unique social dynamics that influence the frequency and nature of harassment. Research confirms that while cyberbullying is pervasive, it is most concentrated on visual-centric and text-heavy social networking sites where interaction is constant and public.

Prevalence by Platform: Certain platforms consistently emerge as hotspots for digital aggression. Broadband Search data identifies Instagram as the platform with the highest frequency of reported cyberbullying incidents, accounting for 29.8% of cases. It is followed closely by Facebook at 26.2% and Snapchat at 22%. Other major communication tools also see significant activity, with WhatsApp (8.5%), YouTube (7.1%), and X (formerly Twitter) (6.4%) rounding out the list (Broadband Search). The dominance of Instagram and Facebook suggests that platforms are relying heavily on image sharing and public commenting systems may offer more vectors for abuse compared to private messaging apps.

Corporate Response and Content Moderation: In response to rising toxicity, major tech companies have invested heavily in automated moderation systems. Meta has reported significant strides in proactive detection. For instance, on Facebook, the proactive detection rate for bullying and harassment improved from a mere 14.4% in 2019 to nearly 75.3% by mid-2025 (Meta). Similarly, Instagram has seen massive improvements, with its proactive detection rate reaching 96.9% by 2024 (Exploding Topics). Despite these high percentages, the absolute volume of abusive content remains staggering; in just one quarter (April–June 2025), Meta took action on 4.1 million pieces of bullying content on Facebook alone (Meta).

Harassment of Content Creators: The issue extends beyond personal peer groups to public figures and creators. Avast reports that 70% of content creators state that bullying,

trolling, and identity attacks occur frequently, with 36% describing the behavior as regular. The psychological toll on these individuals is high, often leading to professional withdrawal. Statistics show that 44% of harassed creators left their platform temporarily, while 19% abandoned it permanently to preserve their well-being (Avast).

The Gaming Sector as a Social Platform: While often categorized separately, online multiplayer games function as massive social platforms where harassment is rampant. ADL research indicates that approximately 83 million out of 110 million online multiplayer gamers (roughly 75%) have experienced hate or harassment. This environment is particularly hostile for younger demographics, with identity-based harassment targeting 37% of gamers aged 10-17 (ADL).

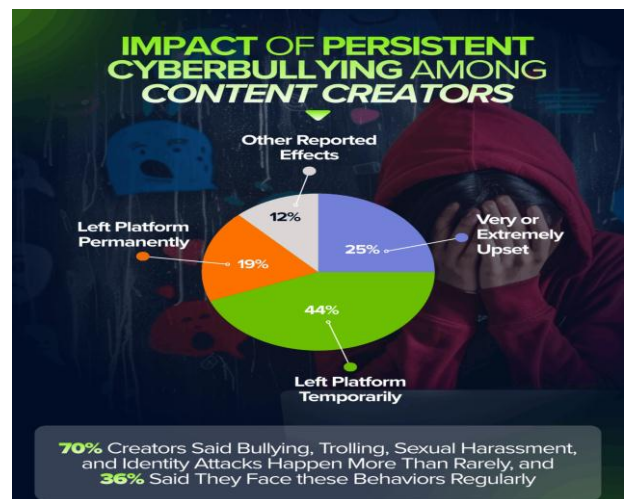


Fig -3: Impact of Cyber bullying

6. COMMON BEHAVIOURS SEEN IN CYBERBULLYING CASES

Cyberbullying manifests through a diverse range of aggressive behaviours facilitated by digital platforms. These actions are often designed to intimidate, humiliate, or socially isolate the victim. The landscape of these behaviours varies by age group and platform, but specific patterns in prevalence and method are clear.

Verbal Abuse and Name-Calling the most prevalent form of cyberbullying is direct verbal aggression. In major surveys of adolescents, approximately 59% have experienced at least one abusive online behavior, with name-calling being the most frequently reported, affecting 42% of this demographic. This aligns with broader findings indicating that name-calling accounts for 37% of all online harassment cases. In the United Kingdom, insults and name-calling were similarly identified as the most common form of online bullying, affecting 10% of all children aged 10–15. For younger demographics, or "tweens" (ages 9–12), mean or hurtful comments affected 30% of those surveyed.

Rumours, Exclusion, and Humiliation Beyond direct insults, perpetrators often use social manipulation to harm victims. Spreading false rumours is a common tactic, experienced by 22.2% of students in one survey and 22% of teens in another large dataset. Exclusion is another significant behavior, particularly among younger users; 28.9% of tweens reported being excluded from group chats or online activities. Humiliation also plays a major role, affecting 26.9% of tweens.

Triggers and Content of Harassment The content of abusive messages often revolves around personal relationships and appearance. According to data analysis, the most common triggers for harassment include problems involving dating partners (36.1%) and conflicts with friends (31%). Comments about sexual behavior also appeared in 31% of messages, while physical appearance and weight were targeted in 21.9% and 26.4% of cases, respectively.

Explicit and Invasive Behaviours Severe forms of harassment involve privacy violations and threats. About 17% of teens in major studies report receiving unsolicited explicit images, and 7% have had explicit images of themselves shared without consent. Digital stalking is another concern, with 15% of teens reporting that someone other than a parent constantly asked where they were, what they were doing, or who they were with. Physical threats, while less common than name-calling, are still significant, affecting 10% of teens.

Victim Responses and Mitigation How victims respond to cyberbullying varies by age. Among tweens, the most common response is to block the bully (60.2%), followed by telling a parent (50.8%) or ignoring the behavior (42.8%). In contrast, general victimization statistics show that only 11% of victims told their parents, while 36% asked the bully to stop and 34% blocked them. This suggests that younger children may rely more heavily on parental intervention, while older victims often attempt to manage the situation independently or through platform tools.

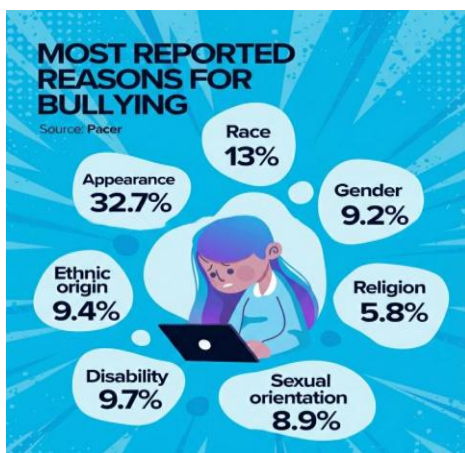


Fig -4: Reasons for Cyberbullying

7. CYBERBULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

While cyberbullying is frequently associated with personal social media use, its impact significantly permeates institutional environments, affecting both the professional workplace and the educational system. The digital transformation of these sectors has created new vectors for harassment that disrupt productivity, learning, and safety.

The Extension into the Professional Sphere: Cyberbullying is not confined to adolescence; it has entrenched itself in the modern workplace, particularly with the shift toward virtual office models. Research indicates that 18% of remote workers have reported being cyberbullied, suggesting that the lack of physical presence does not protect employees from harassment (SQ Magazine). This phenomenon appears to disproportionately affect younger professionals who are arguably more integrated into digital communication channels; approximately 23% of employees aged 25–39 have experienced workplace cyberbullying (SQ Magazine).

Prevalence and Escalation in Schools: The educational sector remains the primary epicentre for digital aggression. A majority of institutions are affected, with 61% of schools reporting at least one cyberbullying incident (SQ Magazine). Longitudinal data reveals a dramatic escalation in victimization rates over the last two decades; in 2007, only 18.8% of students reported having been cyberbullied, a figure that rose sharply to 54.6% by 2023 (Pacer). The frequency of these incidents peaks during early adolescence, with middle schools reporting weekly cyberbullying incidents at a rate of 37%, compared to 25% for high schools and 6% for elementary schools (Pacer).

The Blur Between School and Digital Life: The distinction between "online" bullying and "school" bullying is increasingly irrelevant. About 72% of children who faced online bullying reported that at least part of the harassment occurred specifically at school or during school hours (Anti-Bullying Alliance). Consequently, the impact on the educational environment is severe; two-thirds of bullied teens stated that cyberbullying directly affected their ability to learn and feel safe in school (Avast). This behavior is fuelled by a perception of low accountability; globally, 81% of young people believe cyberbullying is easier to get away with than face-to-face interactions (Broadband Search).

Gender Disparities in Educational Harassment: Gender gaps regarding victimization are pronounced within the school system. High school girls reported being electronically bullied at a rate of 21%, compared to 12% for boys (Stopbullying.gov). When isolating the method of harassment among bullied students, 27.7% of females and 14.1% of males specifically experienced bullying via online platforms or text messaging (Stopbullying.gov).

Intervention, Discipline, and Reporting: Institutions and students show varying responses to these threats. In terms of disciplinary action, 37% of cases reported by schools resulted in suspension (SQ Magazine). However, a significant gap in reporting persists; among bullied students, only 44.2% notified an adult about the abuse (Stopbullying.gov). Despite this, there is a potential shift in bystander culture in some regions; in the U.K., 93% of children stated they would tell someone if they saw something upsetting online, indicating a high willingness to intervene or report on behalf of others (Anti-Bullying Alliance).

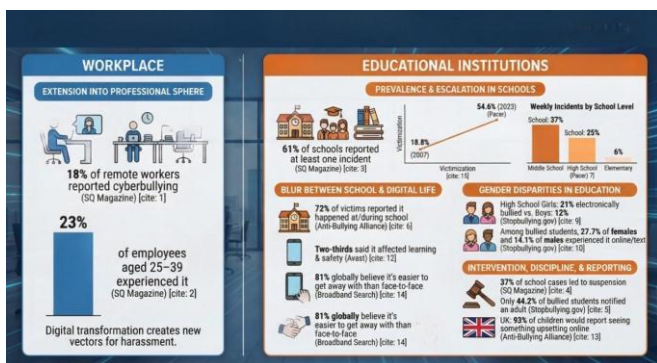


Fig -5: Cyberbullying in workplace

8. MOTIVES BEHIND CYBERBULLYING AND RISK FACTORS

Understanding the specific motivations behind cyberbullying is essential for developing effective prevention strategies. Perpetrators often target perceived vulnerabilities or differences, with harassment frequently stemming from prejudice, relationship conflicts, or social friction.

Physical Appearance and Body Image

Physical attributes remain the primary catalyst for bullying behaviours. According to student reports analysed by Pacer, appearance was the leading reason for bullying incidents, accounting for 32.7% of all cases. This trend is corroborated by Avast, which analysed the content of abusive messages and found that weight was a specific trigger in 26.4% of cases, while general physical appearance was the subject of 21.9% of messages. This data indicates that body shaming continues to be a dominant tool for online aggressors.

Identity-Based Harassment and Intolerance

A significant volume of cyberbullying is driven by bias against a victim's fundamental identity. Pacer statistics reveal that race was cited as the reason in 13% of cases, followed by ethnic origin at 9.4% and religion at 5.8%. Gender and sexuality are also common targets; gender accounted for 9.2% of reported reasons, while sexual orientation accounted for 8.9%. Furthermore, 9.7% of cases were directed at students specifically because of a disability.

High-Risk Environments: Online Gaming

The environment of online gaming presents a particularly hostile landscape for identity-based attacks. The ADL reports that harassment based on gender affects nearly half of the community, reaching 48% among online gamers. Racial targeting is even more severe in this sector, with 50% of Black adult gamers reporting that they were harassed specifically due to their race.

Interpersonal Conflicts and Relationships

Cyberbullying frequently arises from personal disputes rather than random attacks. Avast found that issues involving dating partners were the most common driver in their study, fuelling 36.1% of cyberbullying messages. Similarly, conflicts with friends were the root cause of 31% of incidents. These conflicts often involve invasive commentary, with 31% of messages focusing on the victim's sexual behavior.

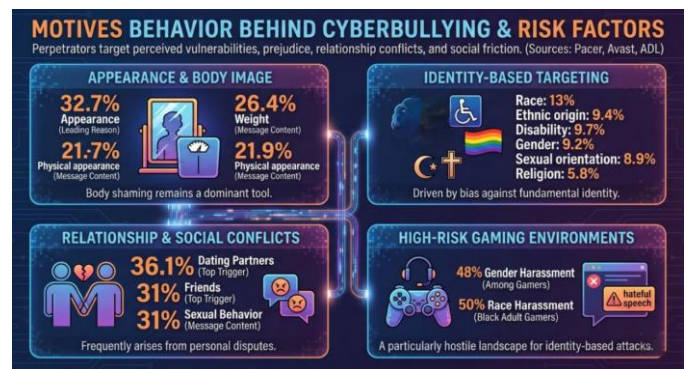


Fig -6: Motives behind Cyber bullying and Risk Factors

9. CONSEQUENCES AND MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS OF CYBERBULLYING

The impact of cyberbullying extends far beyond the screen, manifesting in severe psychological, behavioural, and life-altering consequences for victims. Research highlights a profound correlation between digital harassment and detrimental mental health outcomes, as well as significant disruptions to daily life and career stability.

Mental Health and Psychological Impact

The emotional toll of cyberbullying is widespread and acute. According to Avast, approximately 94% of teens reported that cyberbullying negatively affected their lives, with 69.1% citing specific impacts on their self-esteem and 31.9% on their friendships.

- Anxiety and Depression:** Data indicates that 29.8% of bullied teenagers showed anxiety symptoms, compared to only 14.5% of those who were not bullied. In a broader survey, Single care found that 37% of victims developed social anxiety and 36% developed depression.

- **Suicidality and Self-Harm:** The risk of severe outcomes is alarmingly high. Victims of cyberbullying were found to be at elevated risk, with **24%** contemplating suicide and **23%** engaging in self-harm (Single care). Global data corroborates this, with studies showing that more than **13%** of adolescents have attempted suicide in connection with cyberbullying.

Behavioural Risks and Substance Abuse

Victims often turn to high-risk behaviours as coping mechanisms. Research reveals that cyberbullying victims were **2.5 times** more likely to use marijuana and **2.5 times** more likely to engage in binge drinking compared to their non-victimized peers.

Disruption to Education and Daily Life

The stress of harassment frequently forces victims to alter their physical environments and educational paths.

- **School Changes:** SQ Magazine reports that **16%** of victims changed schools to escape the abuse, while **8%** went as far as moving to a new home.
- **Academic Performance:** In specific regional studies, such as in Saudi Arabia, **26%** of students aged 12–18 stated that cyberbullying directly affected their school performance (Avast). In the U.S., **6.5%** of teens explicitly reported impacts on their schoolwork (Avast).

Professional and Economic Consequences

Cyberbullying also destabilizes careers and professional lives, particularly for adults and content creators.

- **Workplace Impact:** Harassment forces significant professional upheaval, with **13%** of victims changing jobs and **7%** seeking legal help to address the abuse (SQ Magazine).
- **Content Creators:** For those working in digital media, the consequences are direct and career-threatening. Avast reports that **44%** of harassed content creators left their platform temporarily, while **19%** abandoned it permanently. Furthermore, **25%** described being "very or extremely upset" by the experience.

10. REGULATORY APPROACHES ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING

The legal landscape for cyberbullying is evolving rapidly, with governments worldwide implementing stricter penalties, defining specific criminal offenses, and mandating institutional responses. The following breakdown highlights

the diverse regulatory approaches across the United States and major global jurisdictions.

United States Legislative Framework

In the U.S., regulation is primarily state-driven, creating a patchwork of statutes that increasingly criminalize digital harassment.

- **State Statutes:** According to the **Cyberbullying Research Centre**, **48 states** now include cyberbullying in their anti-bullying statutes, and **49 states** require schools to have formal bullying policies.
- **Sanctions and Reach:** The law is becoming more punitive and expansive. **45 states** allow for criminal sanctions, and **46 states** permit school-based sanctions. Crucially, **28 states** now cover off-campus conduct, acknowledging that online harassment often occurs outside school hours but impacts the educational environment.
- **Penalties:** The consequences for offenders can be severe. A misdemeanor conviction can result in up to **1 year** in prison or a **\$1,000** fine. If escalated to a felony, penalties can reach **5 years** in prison and a **\$5,000** fine. These penalties often increase if the cyberbullying contributes to a suicide.

Global Legal Standards and Enforcement

Nations outside the U.S. have adopted distinct legal mechanisms, often integrating cyberbullying into penal codes or creating specialized safety commissions.

- **United Kingdom:** Enforcement is active and high-volume. In 2023, police made **12,183 arrests** (approximately **33 per day**) for offensive or menacing online messages under communications laws.
- **France:** The legal system imposes harsher penalties for online offenses compared to offline ones. Under French cyberbullying rules, penalties double from 1 year and a €15,000 fine to **2 years** and a **€30,000** fine when harassment occurs online.
- **Japan:** Recent amendments have stiffened penalties. Since the 2022 penal code amendments, online insults can result in up to **1 year** in prison and fines up to **¥300,000**.
- **Brazil:** New legislation is particularly strict. Law 14.811/2024 categorizes cyberbullying as a criminal offense punishable by **2 to 4 years** of imprisonment plus a fine.

- **South Korea:** The legal framework integrates schools directly. The 2004 School Violence Prevention Act legally classifies cyberbullying as "school violence," covering incidents that happen both inside and outside of school.
- **India:** Legal action is pursued under multiple provisions. Cases are charged under at least **5 key provisions**, including Sections 66E and 67 of the IT Act and Sections 354D, 499, and 507 of the IPC.
- **Canada:** Federal reforms specifically target non-consensual image sharing. The sharing of intimate images without consent is a crime punishable by up to **5 years** in prison.
- **South Africa:** The Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020, effective since December 2021, criminalizes harmful data messages, including the disclosure of intimate images.
- **Australia:** The approach emphasizes content moderation and removal. The Safety Commissioner issued more than **500 content removal requests** following nearly **1,700 complaints**, fining platforms that fail to act quickly.

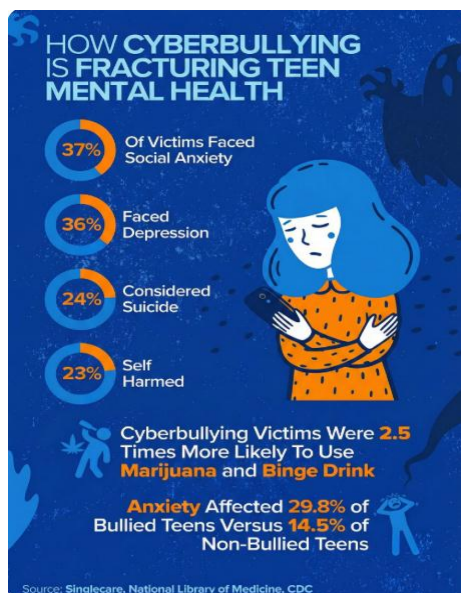


Fig -7: Cyberbullying and Mental Health

11. HOW COMPANIES AND ONLINE PLATFORMS RESPOND TO CYBERBULLYING

As digital platforms face increasing pressure to curb online toxicity, tech companies are deploying a mix of automated technologies, user-empowered tools, and policy enforcement. However, a significant gap remains between the corporate metrics of success and the user experience of safety.

Proactive Detection and Artificial Intelligence

Major platforms have shifted aggressively from relying on user reports to using AI for identifying harassment before it is seen. The data shows a massive reliance on automation:

- **Facebook's Improvement:** On Facebook, the proactive detection rate for bullying and harassment rose dramatically from **14.4%** in 2019 to **88.9%** by mid-2024. Consequently, the volume of bullying content acted upon dropped from **7.9 million** pieces in early 2024 (Jan–Mar) to **4.1 million** by mid-2025 (Apr–Jun).
- **Instagram's High Efficacy:** Instagram saw even steeper improvements, with detection rates climbing from **35%** in 2019 to **96.9%** in 2024.
- **Automation vs. User Reports:** By the second quarter of 2025, Meta reported that automated systems found **75.3%** of removed bullying content, while user reports accounted for only **24.7%**.

Appeals and Content Review

Despite high automation, the system is not infallible, and platforms maintain an appeals process for contentious decisions.

- **Volume of Appeals:** In the first quarter of 2025 (Jan–Mar), Facebook recorded **904,000** appeals regarding bullying and harassment decisions. This number decreased to **681,000** in the following quarter (Apr–Jun 2025).

The Gap in Public Trust

Despite the high success rates reported by platforms regarding AI detection, user sentiment suggests these measures are insufficient.

- **Global Dissatisfaction:** A global survey indicates that **67%** of social media users believe platforms do not address cyberbullying effectively.
- **Youth Sentiment:** This frustration is particularly high among younger demographics; **71%** of 13–24-year-olds stated that social media platforms are not doing enough to prevent cyberbullying. Similarly, **74%** of U.S. teens rated social media companies' handling of online harassment as only "fair" or "poor".
- **Adult Concerns:** The anxiety extends to adults as well, with **65%** across 17 countries citing cyberbullying as the biggest online risk, indicating a strong demand for better corporate responses.

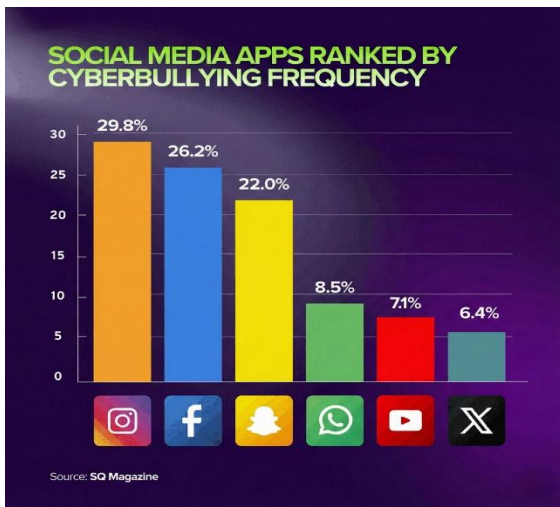


Fig -8: Social Media App ranking by Cyberbullying Frequency

12. CYBERBULLYING IN ONLINE MULTIPLAYER GAMES

Online multiplayer games function as massive social platforms where digital aggression is rampant. Unlike static social media, the real-time, competitive nature of gaming often escalates harassment, making these virtual environments particularly hostile.

Widespread Prevalence of Harassment

The scale of abuse within the gaming community is massive. Research indicates that **75%** of the approximately **110 million** online multiplayer players in the U.S. have experienced hate or harassment. This translates to roughly **83 million** individuals facing abuse while gaming.

Identity-Based Targeting

Gaming platforms are frequent venues for severe identity-based attacks targeting age, gender, and race.

- **Youth Targeting:** Identity-based harassment is rising among younger demographics. **37%** of gamers aged **10–17** reported being targeted because of their identity, a significant increase from **29%** in the previous year.
- **Racial Harassment:** The environment is particularly toxic for minority groups. Among adult gamers, **50%** of Black players reported being harassed specifically due to their race.
- **Gender-Based Abuse:** Harassment based on gender remains a critical issue, affecting nearly half of the community, with rates reaching **48%** among online gamers.

Exposure to Extremist Ideologies

While general harassment remains high, there has been a decline in the visibility of extremist content. Exposure to

white supremacist ideology dropped among youth gamers from **15%** in 2022 to **9%** in 2023. A similar decline was observed among adults, falling from **20%** to **15%**.

Economic Consequences for the Industry

Toxic behavior directly impacts the gaming economy. The hostility of these environments drives players away from spending; **20%** of players reported spending less money on games specifically because of the hate and harassment they encountered.

13. REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVEL COMPARISONS OF CYBERBULLYING TRENDS

Cyberbullying is a global issue, but its prevalence, the level of public anxiety it generates, and the response from authorities vary significantly across different regions. Data reveals distinct patterns in parental concern and victimization rates worldwide.

Global Levels of Parental Concern

A comprehensive survey across 17 countries highlighted widespread anxiety among parents regarding their children's online safety. **Singapore** topped the list with the highest recorded concern, while Brazil showed the lowest levels of worry among the nations surveyed.

- **Singapore: 49%** (Highest recorded concern) (Avast)
- **Australia and Mexico: 46%**
- **Italy: 42%**
- **Canada, Germany, and the U.K.: 41%**
- **United States: 40%**
- **France and Spain: 37%**
- **Czechia and Colombia: 36%**
- **Denmark: 35%**
- **India: 34%**
- **South Korea: 31%**
- **Brazil: 28%**

North America

- **United States:** In the 2021–22 period, **19.2%** of students aged 12–18 reported being bullied (Stopbullying). Among high school students specifically, **19%** were bullied on school property (Stopbullying). Of those students who were bullied, **21.6%** experienced it online or via text (Stopbullying). To combat this, a national program has allocated **\$36 million** to support victims of cyberbullying (Broadband Search).
- **Canada:** The rates are notably high, with **39%** of internet users reporting they have experienced cyberbullying (SQ Magazine). Vulnerable groups face higher risks; **30%** of Indigenous women reported being targeted online (Broadband Search).

Europe

- **United Kingdom:** The *Crime Survey for England and Wales* found that **19%** of children aged 10–15 experienced at least one type of online bullying (Anti-Bullying Alliance). This level of victimization aligns with the **41%** of parents in the U.K. who expressed concern about the issue (Avast).

Asia and Pacific

- **Singapore:** Beyond just parental concern (which is the highest globally at **49%**), the region is a focal point for cyberbullying awareness (Avast).
- **Japan:** Approximately **15%** of children were reported to have experienced cyberbullying (Broadband Search).
- **Saudi Arabia:** The impact on youth mental health is severe. **26%** of 12–18-year-olds stated that cyberbullying directly affected their school performance, and **21%** admitted it made them consider self-harm (Avast).
- **Australia:** The country has taken active regulatory steps. The safety Commission investigated nearly **1,700** cyberbullying complaints and issued more than **500** content removal requests in a single year (Avast).

Latin America

- **Brazil:** There is a notable gap between user experience and parental awareness. While **41%** of internet users reported being cyberbullied (Broadband Search), only **29%** of parents said their child had been victimized (Single care). This disconnect may explain why parental concern in Brazil was among the lowest in the survey at **28%**, despite high victimization rates (Avast).

14. CONCLUSIONS

Cyberbullying has evolved into a global digital epidemic whose scale, persistence, and consequences rival those of major public health challenges. The comprehensive evidence synthesized in this study clearly demonstrates that cyberbullying is no longer a peripheral issue confined to adolescence or isolated online spaces; rather, it is a structurally embedded phenomenon within modern digital ecosystems. Between 2016 and 2025, cyberbullying victimization has risen sharply across regions, platforms, and age groups, with prevalence rates among adolescents in some contexts exceeding 60%. The normalization of online aggression, reflected in the parallel rise of cyber-aggressors, signals a troubling shift in digital social norms.

The findings further confirm that cyberbullying is deeply inequitable in its impact. Gender, race and ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic

context significantly shape both exposure and severity. Marginalized populations—particularly girls, LGBTQ+ youth, racial minorities, and individuals with disabilities—experience disproportionate and identity-based harassment, compounding existing social vulnerabilities. These patterns highlight that cyberbullying is not merely an individual behavioural problem, but a reflection of broader structural inequalities reproduced and amplified in digital spaces.

Platform architecture and engagement-driven design play a decisive role in shaping harassment dynamics. Visual-centric social networks, algorithmic amplification, anonymity, and real-time competitive environments—especially in online gaming—create conditions that intensify abuse. Although major platforms have made measurable progress in automated detection and content moderation, the persistence of high victimization rates and widespread user dissatisfaction reveals a critical gap between technical enforcement metrics and lived user safety. Technological solutions alone remain insufficient without transparency, accountability, and user-centered governance.

Perhaps most concerning are the profound psychological, educational, and economic consequences associated with cyberbullying. The strong and consistent links to anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicidal ideation, academic disengagement, job turnover, and platform withdrawal underscore cyberbullying's status as a serious mental health and societal issue. These harms extend beyond victims to families, institutions, and digital economies, reinforcing the urgency for coordinated intervention.

Regulatory responses worldwide show meaningful progress, with many countries strengthening legal definitions, penalties, and institutional responsibilities. However, fragmented enforcement, jurisdictional inconsistencies, and uneven awareness limit the effectiveness of these measures. The evidence presented in this paper suggests that addressing cyberbullying requires a multi-layered global strategy—one that integrates robust legislation, ethical platform design, proactive moderation, digital literacy education, and accessible mental health support.

In conclusion, cyberbullying in 2025 represents a critical intersection of technology, psychology, and social justice. Combating it demands a shift from reactive, incident-based responses to preventive, systemic, and evidence-driven frameworks. Policymakers, educators, platform developers, researchers, and communities must collaborate to redefine digital spaces as environments of accountability, empathy, and inclusion. Only through sustained global cooperation and interdisciplinary action can the trajectory of this digital epidemic be reversed and safer online ecosystems ensured for future generations.

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