

Online bullying "rapidly increasing" in Australia

August 6 2014, by Fran Strachan



Credit: AI-generated image

Almost 50,000 Australian children experience cyberbullying that can lead to humiliation and depression, new research by UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre has found.

The research, which shows that one in five young Australians aged eight

to 17 experiences [cyberbullying](#) each year, was commissioned by the [federal government](#) as part of its \$10 million commitment to Enhance Online Safety for Children.

Paul Fletcher, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications, announced the findings at the National Centre Against Bullying conference today.

The research shows that cyberbullying is most prominent in [children](#) aged between 10 and 15 years, with prevalence decreasing for 16-17 year-olds. The estimated number of children and [young people](#) who were victims of cyberbullying last year was 463,000, with around 365,000 in the 10-15 age group.

The report also notes that the prevalence of cyberbullying has "rapidly increased" since it first emerged as a behaviour.

"As more children and young people use the internet and have access to smart phones, cyberbullying has become more prevalent," said Chief Investigator Professor Ilan Katz from the Social Policy Research Centre. "Our research shows that cyberbullying can have a worse impact on victims than 'offline' bullying."

Professor Katz is also Chief Investigator of the project Youth Exposure to, and Management of, Cyberbullying Incidents in Australia.

The research found the majority of cyberbullying incidents were dealt with through reporting to a school, with 72% of schools reporting at least one incident in 2013. However, the more serious cases are typically reported to the police.

Concerningly, the research found there is increasing evidence of the lasting effects of cyberbullying with links to low self-esteem, mental

health issues, depression and anxiety.

The report recommends various interventions and responses to the prevalence of cyberbullying.

"Our research shows that the most promising approaches to the problem are to educate young people about appropriate behaviour online, and to create a facility for the rapid take down of offensive or distressing material from social networking sites," said Professor Katz.

More information: The research results are available online:
www.communications.gov.au/publications/cyber-bullying

Provided by University of New South Wales

Citation: Online bullying "rapidly increasing" in Australia (2014, August 6) retrieved 19 November 2023 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-online-bullying-rapidly-australia.html>

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