YOUNG CANADIANS IN A WIRELESS WORLD, PHASE IV

ONLINE MEANNESS
AND CRUELTY

Media Smarts

MediaSmarts

MediaSmarts is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization for digital media literacy. Our vision is that people across Canada have the critical thinking skills to engage with media as active and informed digital citizens. MediaSmarts has been developing digital media literacy programs and resources for Canadian homes, schools, and communities since 1996. MediaSmarts also conducts and disseminates original research that contributes to the development of our programs and resources and informs public policy on issues related to digital media literacy.

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Land Acknowledgement

MediaSmarts acknowledges that it is based on the traditional unceded and occupied lands of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg. With gratitude, we acknowledge the territory to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to building positive relationships with Inuit, First Nations, and Métis peoples from coast to coast to coast.

We strive to ground our research processes in care and reciprocity, and this includes being in a constant state of learning – especially when it comes to understanding the digital well-being and experiences of Indigenous peoples and communities across Canada. We commit to creating and maintaining respectful processes and relationships that recognize and seek to address power imbalances across the digital media literacy landscape.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young Canadians in a Wireless World (YCWW) is Canada's longest-running and most comprehensive research study on young people's attitudes, behaviours, and opinions regarding the internet, technology, and digital media. MediaSmarts has surveyed over 20,000 parents, teachers, and students through this study since 1999. The study is currently in its fourth phase, and this report is the fourth in a series of reports that will be published on our website.

Like in previous phases of YCWW, we designed two surveys – one for students in grades 4 to 6 and one for grades 7 to 11. In both surveys, we organized questions into various categories:

- Digital devices at home
- Screen time at home
- Technology at school
- Online privacy and consent
- Trust

- Relationships and technology
- Handling online problems
- Opinions on various digital topics
- Digital and media literacy
- Demographics

From October to December of 2021, surveys were administered online to 1,058 youth across Canada. A total of 79 students participated in a classroom-based survey, and 979 youth participated in a GenPop (general population) survey.

After several collaborative data analysis sessions, the MediaSmarts research team decided on the following topics and themes for the Phase IV reports:

- Life Online
- Encountering Harmful and Discomforting Content Online
- Privacy
- Online Meanness and Cruelty
- Sexting
- Digital Media Literacy

Phase IV will conclude with a Trends and Recommendations report to be released in 2023.

This fourth report highlights findings related to online meanness and cruelty and is the first of two reports focusing on relationships and technology. In what follows, we highlight how often and where youth experience, witness and engage in online cruelty as well as the reasons or motivations for their engagement. We also summarize findings related to how young people respond to online meanness and cruelty and from whom they seek support in navigating these harmful experiences. Findings presented in this report, like in previous Phase IV YCWW reports, highlight the importance of interpersonal and relational supports and building collective resilience to respond to the harms and challenges that can come from interacting with others in online spaces. Finally, we share resources currently available on the MediaSmarts website regarding how to respond to online meanness and cruelty.

We want to thank all students, parents, teachers, principals, and school administrators across Canada who engaged with this project in one way or another during Phase IV. YCWW remains the cornerstone of our work at MediaSmarts, and we are grateful for the support – in all forms – that sustains it.
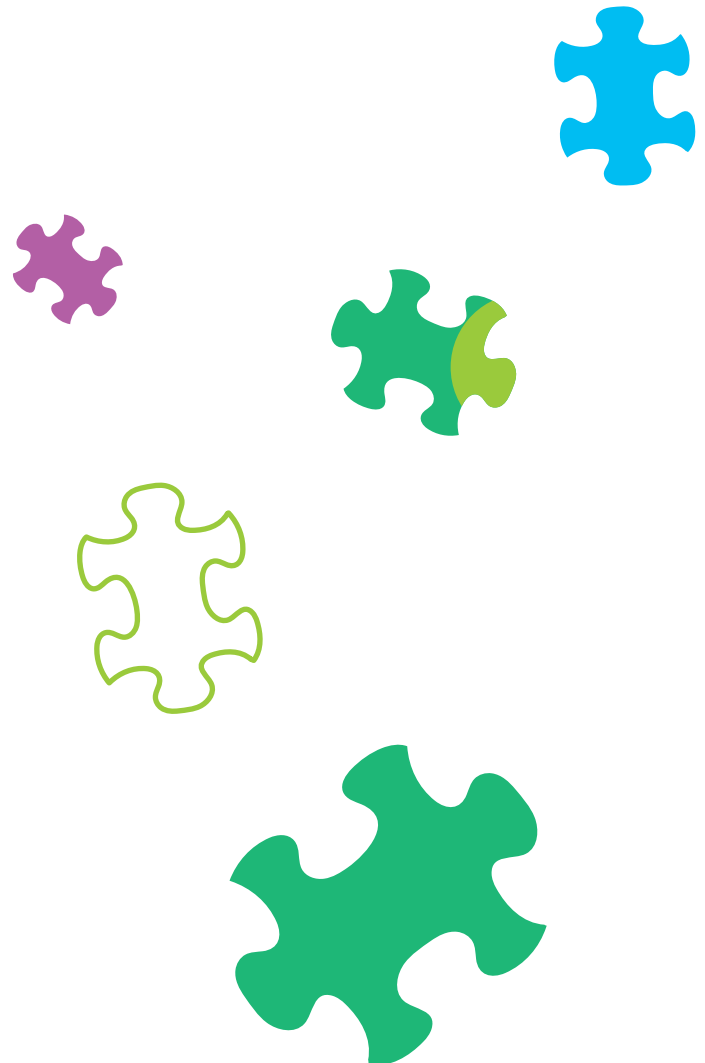
INTRODUCTION

Young Canadians in a Wireless World (YCWW) is Canada's longest-running and most comprehensive research study on young people's attitudes, behaviours, and opinions regarding the internet, technology, and digital media. MediaSmarts has surveyed over 20,000 parents, teachers, and students through this study since 1999.

The findings from YCWW are used to set benchmarks for research on children's use of the internet, technology, and digital media and have informed policy on the digital economy, privacy, online safety, online harms and digital well-being, digital citizenship, and digital media literacy, among other topics. This research is also used to inform other projects at MediaSmarts and at other organizations, including academic institutions, within our vast and growing network of research partners.

The study is currently in its fourth phase. In 2019, MediaSmarts' research team conducted focus groups to get a kid's-eye-view of what is working for young people online and what needs to be changed or improved so that they get the most out of their online experiences. Additional focus groups with parents helped to round out discussions about what is needed to foster (collective) online resiliency. This qualitative work helped us prepare for a quantitative survey that began in 2021.

Phase IV of YCWW culminates in a series of research reports that will be published on the MediaSmarts website. Topics include:

- Life Online
- Encountering Harmful and Discomforting Content Online
- Privacy
- Online Meanness and Cruelty
- Sexting
- Digital Media Literacy

As in previous phases of this study, Phase IV will also conclude with a Trends and Recommendations report.

A departure from previous phases is the inclusion of a longer research methods report as part of the full series of YCWW reports. While each report will contain a brief section on the research method, this separate report offers a deeper dive into the methodological decisions and processes undertaken by the MediaSmarts research team during Phase IV of YCWW. The various pivots and adaptations taken during this phase deserve elaboration and will be of interest to other researchers who have made, and continue to make, shifts in their work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overview: Young Canadians in a Wireless World

What follows is a summary of the previous three phases of YCWW and an introduction to Phase IV, which began with a qualitative research report published in January 2020.

Phase I (2000-2001) of YCWW involved 1,081 telephone interviews with parents across Canada and 12 focus groups with children ages 9-16 and parents of children ages 6-16 in Montreal and Toronto. The quantitative component of Phase 1 involved 5,682 self-administered paper-based surveys conducted in French and English classrooms in 77 selected schools across ten Canadian provinces.

At the time, parents were excited about the prospects of having their children use new technologies to help them learn and prepare for their future employment; they tended to exercise benign neglect online, trusting their children to come to them if they ran into problems. Youth participants felt that online media were completely private because adults did not have the skills to find them there, and they enjoyed a wide range of creative uses such as identity play and exploring the adult world. They also tended to trust corporations, calling them "friends."

In Phase II (2004-2005), we conducted 12 focus groups with children ages 11-17 and parents of children ages 11-17 in Edmonton, Montreal, and Toronto. Additionally, 5,272 self-administered quantitative paper-based surveys were conducted in French and English classrooms in 77 selected schools across Canada with students in grades 4 to 11. We were pleased that 302 of the 319 classrooms from Phase I participated in Phase II.

Although youth participants still enjoyed many online activities, they were becoming aware of how often they were being monitored online. In response, they developed several strategies to keep their online lives private. On the other hand, adults were beginning to conclude that young people were mostly "wasting their time" playing games and chatting (precisely the things that drew youth online in the first place).

Phase III (2011-2014) involved ten one-hour key informant interviews with elementary and secondary teachers representing five regions across Canada: the North, the West, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic. In addition to these interviews, MediaSmarts conducted 12 focus groups with children ages 11-17 and parents of children ages 11-17 in Calgary, Ottawa, and Toronto. The quantitative component of Phase III involved 5,436 surveys in school boards and schools in all ten provinces and all three territories.

In this third phase, adults began feeling overwhelmed by the reported dangers their children faced online, especially around cyberbullying. Youth participants indicated that cyberbullying was much less worrisome than adults feared; however, they felt that the protective surveillance they were being placed under in response to cyberbullying, and other perceived dangers, was stultifying and equated it to being "spied on" by family

members and teachers. They also argued that this kind of surveillance made it much more difficult for them to receive help from trusted adults when needed. Youth were also much less comfortable with the corporations that owned the sites and apps they used and questioned the regulatory model of click-through consent that meant others could collect and use their data. For example, 95% of the students surveyed said that the corporations that own the social media sites they use should not be allowed to see what they post there.

Phase IV of YCWW began with a [qualitative research report](#) that outlines findings from focus groups with youth ages 11 to 17 and a second set of focus groups with their parents in Toronto, Halifax and Ottawa. Generally, we discovered that young people are conscious about spending too much time online or on their digital devices and are also worried about the impact of misinformation on their online and learning experiences. Youth told us that they do not always want to rely on technology in school and some expressed feeling "creeped out" by the various forms of surveillance technology used in the classroom. Other findings related to teacher and parental controls over content and access to technology – both at school and at home – and how young people navigate or sometimes push back against those controls in favour of more creative uses like community engagement and self-expression. We also heard how these controls could contribute to an erosion of trust between young people and the adults in their lives.

Phase IV of YCWW also began with a name change to the project: from *Young Canadians in a **Wired** World* to *Young Canadians in a **Wireless** World*. This change in language speaks to shifts in digital technology and the online world since 1999 from a 'wired' to 'wireless' technological landscape that presents new opportunities and challenges for youth, parents, educators, policymakers, and the tech sector.

The findings from the qualitative portion of Phase IV helped us develop the surveys used in the quantitative portion. The following section on methods will outline the research plan for this quantitative research, the required shifts we made to that plan due to the COVID-19 pandemic, survey design, participant recruitment, data analysis, and a discussion of some limitations and considerations readers should keep in mind as you read through this report.
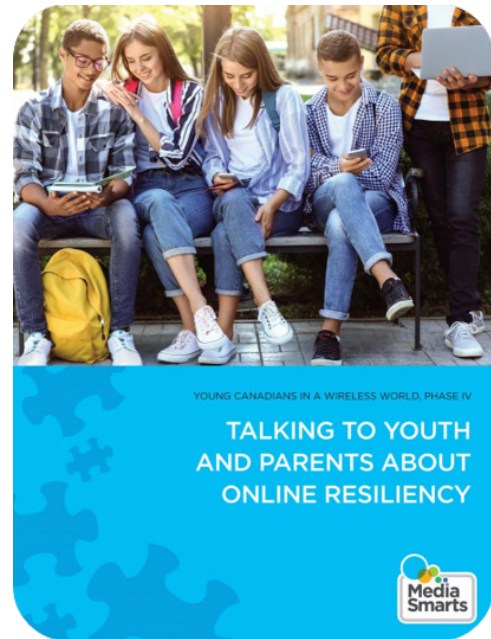
METHODS

Survey Design and Administration

As in previous phases of YCWW, we designed two surveys to explore the attitudes, activities, benefits, and challenges young people hold and experience when they are online and using digital devices – one for students in grades 4 to 6 and one for grades 7 to 11.[1] We organized questions into various categories:

- Digital devices at home
- Screen time at home
- Technology at school
- Online privacy and consent
- Trust

- Relationships and technology
- Handling online problems
- Opinions on various digital topics
- Digital and media literacy
- Demographics

The survey for youth in grades 4 to 6 had 82 questions, and the survey for youth in grades 7 to 11 had 100 questions. The additional questions in the second survey for older youth covered topics like sexting, pornography, and racist or sexist content.[2]

Also following from previous phases of YCWW, we planned to recruit participants from schools across Canada and hoped to survey between 6,000 and 8,000 students in the fall of 2020. Despite strong support for YCWW and MediaSmarts from school board representatives, fewer than half (n=25) confirmed their participation in Phase IV, citing complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to this low uptake, we extended the project timeline and adjusted our recruitment strategy and survey administration options, primarily by including a GenPop survey to reach a total of 1,000 participants.

From October to December of 2021, surveys were administered online, with the support of our partners at Environics Research Group, to 1,058 youth across Canada in two ways:

1. A total of 79 students participated in the classroom-based survey.
2. A total of 979 youth participated in a GenPop (general population) survey.

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1 If you are interested in viewing the surveys used in Phase IV of *Young Canadians in a Wireless World*, please contact our Director of Research at info@mediasmarts.ca.

2 Both surveys, along with all the required consent documents, recruitment texts, teacher instructions and method of analysis, were approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board.

Young Canadians in a Wireless World: Phase IV Quantitative Survey Participation			
	Younger Grades 4 to 6 Ages 9 to 11	Older Grades 7 to 11 Ages 12 to 17	Total
Classroom Survey	28	51	79
GenPop Survey	371	608	979
Total	399	659	1058

Data Analysis

To reduce bias in reporting the survey data, MediaSmarts' research team engaged in a collaborative analysis process. We started by reviewing the initial analysis report provided by the team at Environics and used this document to identify the key themes for individual reports. We then revisited the data with our own queries informed by the literature, contemporary discussion and debate around the various topics, and MediaSmarts' established expertise in digital media literacy.

For each report, we identified a lead analyst who offered their initial thoughts on the outline of the report, including the themes and critical data points to be included. Discussion among the research and education teams at MediaSmarts helped confirm (or triangulate) the themes for each report and served to expand on the story we wanted to share based on the survey responses. We then began writing the themed reports based on the outcomes of this collaborative analysis process.

Limitations and Considerations

When we began planning this project in 2019, our initial goal was to reach 6,000 to 8,000 participants. While we did not reach this target—primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic—we still reached over 1,000 survey respondents, thanks to participating principals and teachers and our research firm partner: Environics. Please read this report for full details on our recruitment strategy, including the pandemic pivots we made to reach our study goals.

Of note in this latest phase of YCWW is the additional demographic data (see Appendix A) we collected to help us understand how gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation might influence what young Canadians are experiencing online. We recognize the limits of making definitive claims due to our sample size, but our analysis

of this data reveals important snapshots and stories about young people's attitudes, behaviours, and opinions regarding the internet, technology, and digital media based on these various identity markers. We think this data is especially important given that it was collected during a global pandemic when so much of our lives were thrust online. We will continue to collect these demographic data in future projects and continue to work with other researchers and community partners to enhance and encourage an intersectional approach to digital media literacy studies.

We are also aware of the gaps in geographic representation – especially when it comes to representation from Northern Canada (Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories). While complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic are partially to blame, ongoing challenges related to the digital divide in Canada also contribute to this low representation. MediaSmarts remains committed to closing the digital divide and will continue to work with partners on future projects that centre the experiences of young people in rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities.

The reports in this series present survey data alongside other research and evidence that support analysis and provide important context. Where it makes sense, we speak to the findings alongside our other research projects and draw on the expertise and insights of other researchers.

Finally, not only will the findings be used to inform a series of recommendations for educators, policymakers, and decision-makers in various sectors, but they will also inform future research projects at MediaSmarts.

We want to thank all students, parents, teachers, principals, and school administrators across Canada who engaged with this project in one way or another during Phase IV. YCWW remains the cornerstone of our work at MediaSmarts, and we are grateful for the support – in all forms – that sustains it.

RELATIONSHIPS AND TECHNOLOGY—
ONLINE MEANNESS AND CRUELTY

This is the first of two reports in Phase IV of *Young Canadians in a Wireless World* focusing on relationships and technology. We have structured the reports in this way to give the appropriate attention and space to topics that require nuanced analysis and discussion: (1) online meanness and cruelty and (2) sexting. Both reports will detail how young Canadians experience, witness, and respond to online harms in the context of interpersonal relationships and, like other reports in the Phase IV YCWW series, will situate these findings with discussions of building trust, support, and collective resilience.

In this report, when we mention online meanness or online cruelty, we are referring to things like:

@#$!&

- **Calling someone a name**

- **Threatening to physically hurt someone**

- **Spreading rumours**

- **Posting or sharing an embarrassing photo or video of someone**

- **Making fun of someone's race, religion, or ethnicity**

- **Making fun of someone's gender**

- **Making fun of someone's sexual orientation**

Additionally, this report highlights the complex intersections between how youth experience, engage in, and respond to online meanness and cruelty. As you read this report, we encourage you to keep these nuances in mind. We speak to these intersections in more detail in the section titled Understanding Online Meanness and Cruelty.

Experiencing Online Meanness and Cruelty

About one-third (32%) of youth say they have experienced some form of online meanness or cruelty and are most likely to experience it in the context of online gaming, by text or private messaging, or in comments and posts on social media platforms.

One-third (32%) of youth say they have experienced online meanness and cruelty, with four in ten saying they experience this often or sometimes (see Figure 1).[3]

Figure 1: Experience of Online Cruelty
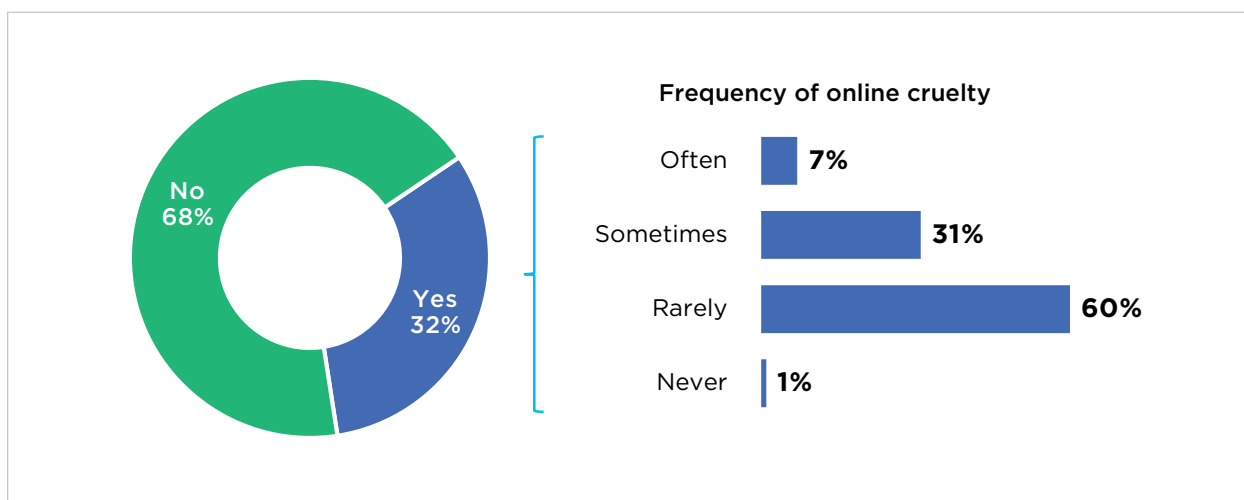
While there are no significant differences in whether young people experience online meanness and cruelty *overall* based on age,[4] we do note differences based on sexuality, race, disability, and gender: **LGBTQ+** youth are considerably more likely to experience online cruelty (50%, compared to 30% of heterosexual youth); white youth are slightly more likely to say that they have

LGBTQ+ is inclusive of any participant who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, questioning, or any other diverse sexual orientation.

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3 These findings align with statistics on cyberbullying from Public Safety Canada and remain consistent with Phase III of YCWW.

4 Youth in grades 4-6 and 9-11 were equally likely to have experienced online meanness and cruelty (34%) while those in grades 7-8 were less likely (26%). This contrasts with our Phase III data which shows a steady rise from grades 4 to 10.

experienced online cruelty (33%, compared to 28% of **racialized youth**); and **youth with a disability** are much more likely to say they have experienced online cruelty (54%, compared to 25% of youth without a disability). While the number of participants who identified as transgender (n=7) and gender diverse (n=6) is not large enough to be statistically significant, it is notable that 9 in 10 transgender youth and 7 in 10 gender diverse youth say they have experienced online meanness and cruelty.

Of those participants who reported experiencing online cruelty, we note differences in *frequency* based on gender and age as well as race and disability. Boys are slightly more likely to experience online cruelty more often (41%, compared to 35% of girls), as are transgender and gender diverse youth (n=13) (67% of transgender youth and 50% of gender diverse youth experience online cruelty more often). Similarly, older youth (41%, compared to 35% of younger youth), racialized youth (46%, compared to 35% of white youth), and youth with a disability (44%, compared to 35% of youth without a disability) experience online meanness and cruelty more often.

Youth who have experienced online cruelty say that they are most likely to experience it in the context of online gaming (41%), by text or private messaging (37%), and in posts (28%) or comments (26%) on social media platforms (see Figure 2).

In the Phase IV survey, we asked youth to self-identify regarding race (see Appendix A for a breakdown of the response categories). When we say 'racialized' throughout this report, we are referring to youth who identified as Indigenous, African/ West Indian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, or South/ Latin American.

In the Phase IV survey, we asked participants to self-identify regarding physical disabilities, intellectual/cognitive/ learning disabilities, and mental illness. The breakdown for each is available in Appendix A. When we say disability throughout the report, we are referring to any of the three categories.

Figure 2: Where Online Cruelty is Experienced
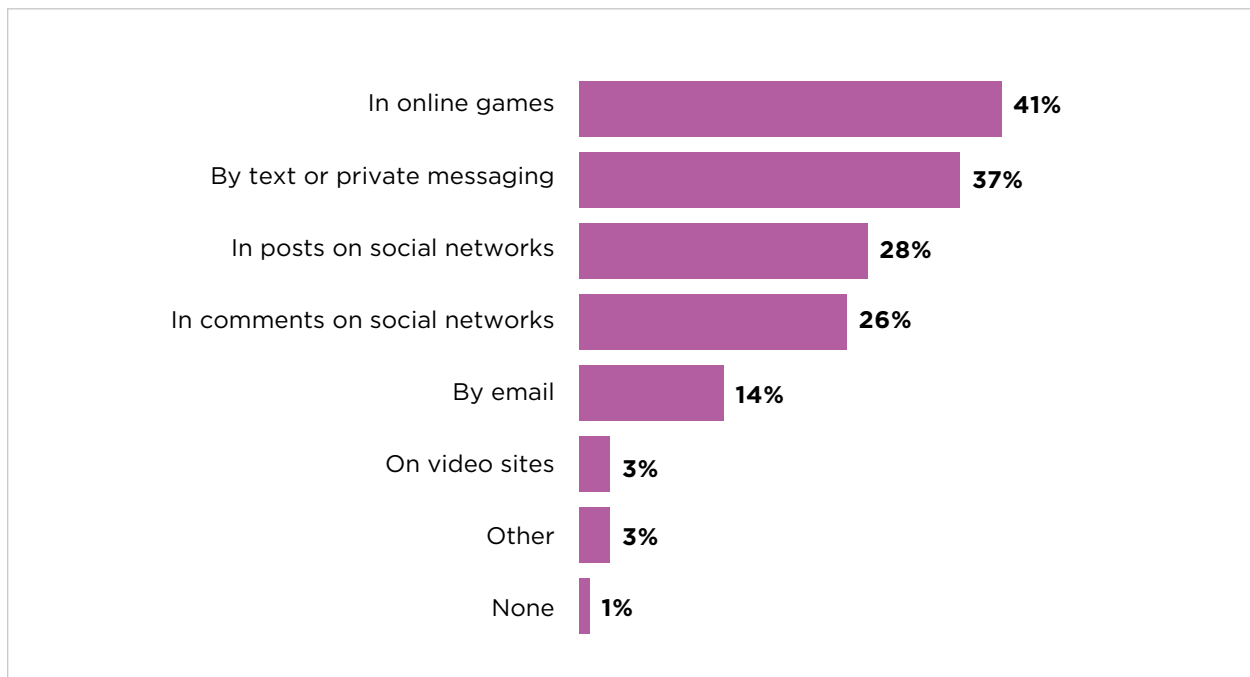
Girls (43%, compared to 29% of boys), transgender and gender diverse youth (n=13) (67% of transgender youth and 75% of gender diverse youth), older youth (44%, compared to 26% of younger youth), and racialized youth (41%, compared to 36% of white youth) are more likely to experience online cruelty through text or private messaging. Boys (48%, compared to 33% of girls), younger youth (51%, compared to 34% of older youth), and youth with a disability (45%, compared to 38% of youth without a disability) are more likely to say that they experience online cruelty while playing games online. Older youth, girls, racialized youth, youth without a disability, and heterosexual youth are all more likely to experience online cruelty through comments made on social networks.

Our analysis also shows a link between screen time and experiencing mean or cruel behaviour online. Specifically, youth with the highest levels of weekday screen time are most likely to say that they experience online cruelty by text or private messaging, while those with the lowest levels of weekday screen time are most likely to say they experience it when gaming online or through posts on social networks.

Additionally, our analysis finds a connection between online meanness and cruelty and racist and sexist content. Youth who have experienced online cruelty are more likely to agree that people say racist and sexist things to pick on others (82%, compared to 69% of youth who indicate they have never experienced online cruelty) and are more likely to say they have seen racist or sexist content online (76%, compared to 34% of youth who have not experienced online cruelty). However, youth who have experienced online cruelty are *less* likely to feel it's important to tell an adult if they see racist or sexist content online (58%, compared to 72% of youth who have not experienced online cruelty).

Other notable findings related to experiences of online meanness and cruelty include:

- Youth who keep their smartphone in their bedrooms (after they have gone to bed for the night) are more likely to experience online cruelty (37%, compared to 29% of youth who do not keep their smartphone in their bedroom).

- Youth who say they share personal information online are more likely to experience online meanness and cruelty (62%, compared to 25% of youth who say they do not share personal information online) and at higher frequencies (more often).

- Youth who have experienced online meanness and cruelty are more likely to worry they spend too much time online (42%, compared to 24% of youth who do not worry they spend too much time online).

- Youth who experience online meanness and cruelty are somewhat less likely to say that the internet is a safe place for them (52%, compared to 59% of youth who have not experienced meanness or cruelty online).

- In Phase IV of YCWW, boys and girls report experiencing online meanness or cruelty at the same rate (31% of boys, 32% of girls). This a significant change from our Phase III findings in which girls were nearly a third more likely to have been targets (43%, compared to 33% of boys).
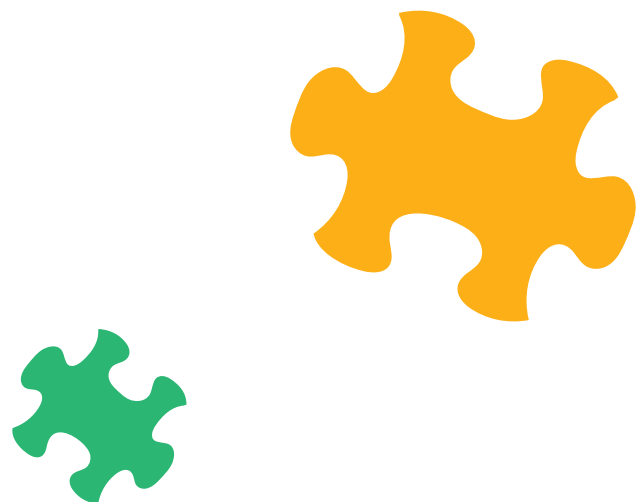
Witnessing Online Meanness and Cruelty

Almost half (49%) of youth say they have witnessed some form of online meanness and cruelty.

We also asked about whether youth have witnessed online meanness and cruelty – or if they have seen someone being mean or cruel to someone else online. Half of youth (49%) say they have witnessed some form of online cruelty (see **Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Witnessed Online Meanness and Cruelty
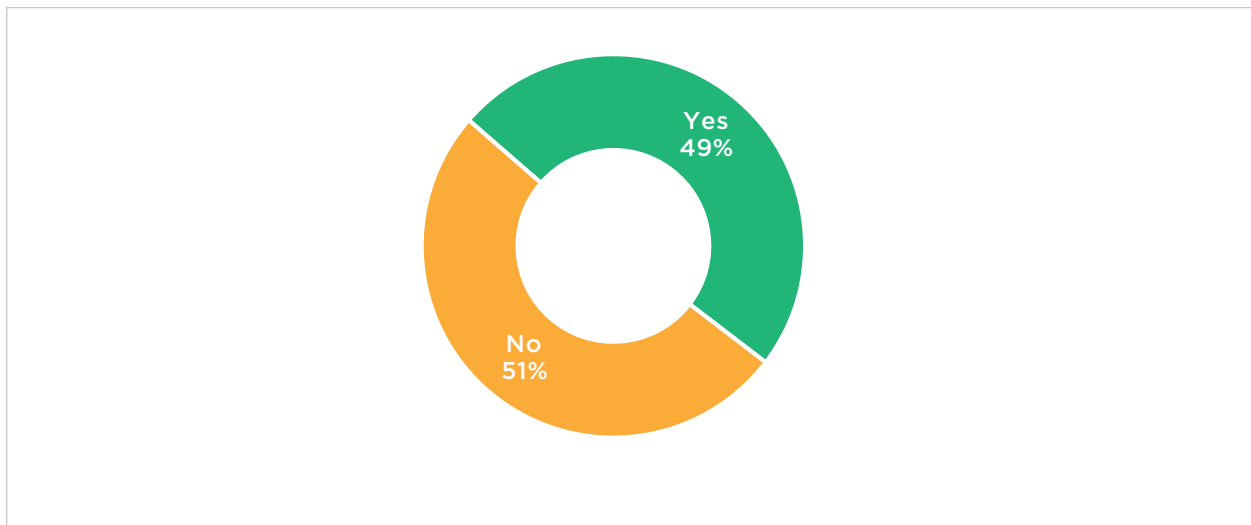
There are no demographic differences to note based on sexual orientation or race. Transgender youth (n=7) (71%, compared to 49% of boys and 48% of girls) are more likely to witness online meanness and cruelty, as are older youth (51%, compared to 46% of younger youth) and youth with a disability (67%, compared to 43% of youth without a disability).

Additional analysis related to witnessing online meanness and cruelty reveals the following:

- Youth who own their own smartphone are more likely to witness online meanness and cruelty (53%, compared to 34% of youth who do not own their own smartphone).

- Youth who keep their smartphone in their bedrooms (after they have gone to bed for the night) are more likely to witness online meanness and cruelty (56%, compared to 46% of youth who do not keep their phones in their bedrooms).

- Youth with the highest levels of weekday screen time are most likely to say they witness online meanness and cruelty more frequently.

- Youth who witness online meanness and cruelty are more likely to say they have seen racist and sexist content (73%, compared to 20% of youth who have not seen meanness or cruelty online).

- Youth who witness online meanness and cruelty are slightly less likely to agree that the internet is a safe place for them (54%, compared to 60% of youth who have not seen meanness or cruelty online).

Engaging in Online Meanness and Cruelty

Only two in ten (17%) youth admit to engaging in online meanness or cruelty. The majority (67%) of participants said that they rarely engage in this kind of behaviour online.

Youth who report engaging in online meanness or cruelty have done so mostly in the context of online gaming or through texts and private messages. Three-quarters (74%) of youth who report engaging in online meanness or cruelty say they have called someone a name.

Half of youth (51%) who engage in online meanness or cruelty say they do it as a joke.

Just under two in ten youth (17%) admit to engaging in online meanness or cruelty, with the majority saying they do this rarely (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Engaging in Online Meanness and Cruelty

Frequency of engaging in online cruelty

Often	**14%**
Sometimes	**18%**
Rarely	**67%**

No 83%
Yes 17%
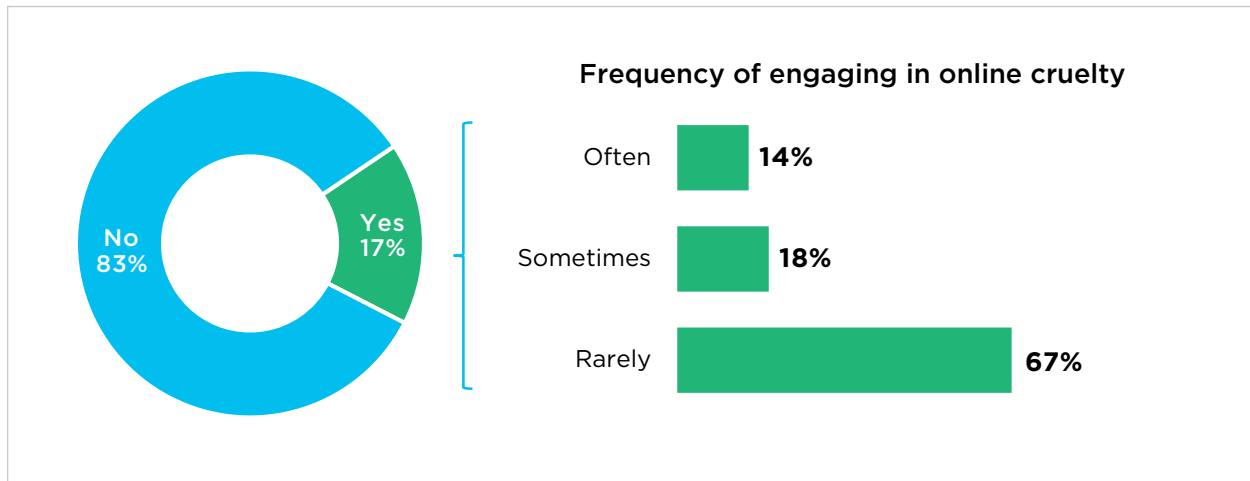
Boys and girls were equally likely (17% of boys compared to 16% of girls) to have been mean or cruel to someone online. This is in contrast to our Phase III findings, in which boys were more likely to have done so (26% vs. 20%). Similarly, there was little or no difference by grade, whereas in Phase III rates were significantly higher in grades 8-11 than in earlier grades.

White youth are slightly more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty (18%, compared to 13% of racialized youth), transgender youth (n=7) (43%, compared to 17% of boys and 16% of girls) and youth with a disability are also more likely to report engaging in this behaviour (34%, compared to 11% of youth without a disability).

In terms of frequency, girls and transgender youth (n=7) are more likely to say that they *rarely* engage in online meanness or cruelty (75% of girls and 67% of transgender youth, compared to 60% of boys), and racialized youth are more likely to say that they *often* perpetuate online cruelty (26%, compared to 10% of white youth).

Youth who report engaging in meanness and cruelty have done so mostly in the context of online gaming (44%), through texts or private messages (32%) or in posts (23%) and comments (22%) on social media sites (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Where Youth Engage in Online Meanness and Cruelty
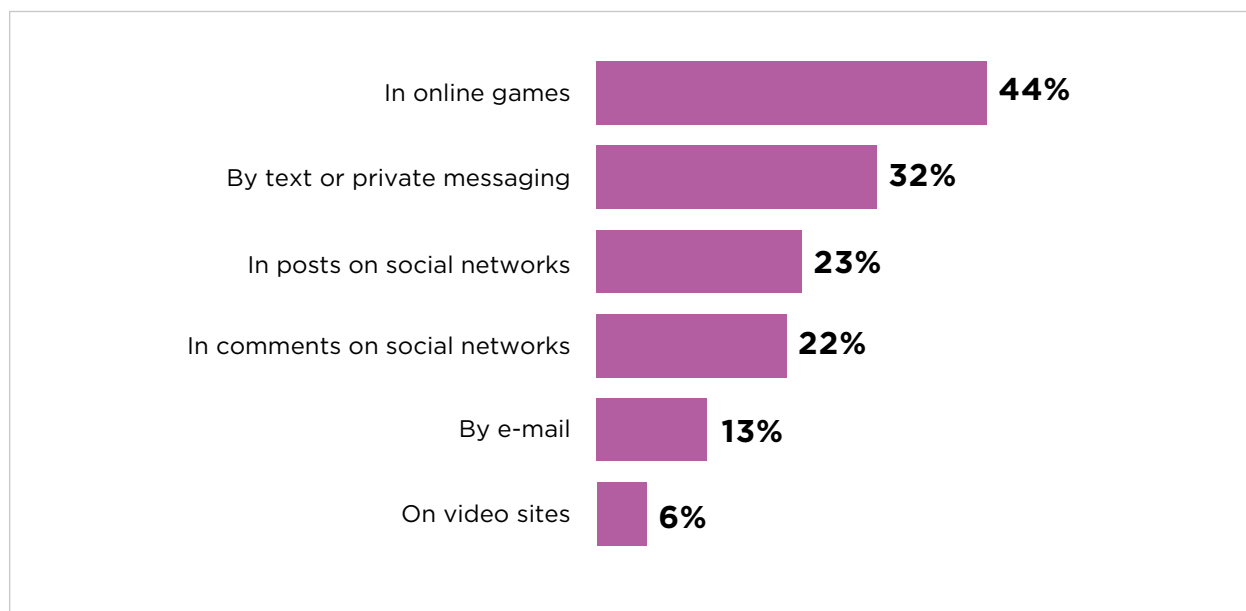
Girls (28%, compared to 15% of boys) and older youth (27%, compared to 18% of younger youth) are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty on social networks; boys (53%, compared to 32% of girls), transgender and gender diverse youth (n=4) (100%, compared to 32% of girls and 53% of boys), and LGBTQ+ youth (54%, compared to 43% of heterosexual youth) are more likely to engage in online cruelty when playing online games; older youth are more likely to do so through comments on social media posts (28%, compared to 12% of younger youth) and on video sites (8%, compared to 1% of younger youth); youth without a disability are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty through comments on social media posts (29%, compared to 14% of youth with a disability); and racialized youth are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty on video sites (15%, compared to 4% of white youth). We also know from analysis completed for the online privacy and consent report that some youth (7%) use fake or anonymous accounts to be mean to someone on social media platforms.

Among youth who say they have facilitated online meanness and cruelty (n=176), we also asked *how* they engage in this behaviour (see **Figure 6**). Three-quarters (74%) of youth who engaged in online meanness and cruelty say they have called someone a name – this was by far the most popular response.[5] Others say they have posted or shared embarrassing photos or videos of someone else (15%), spread rumours (14%), or threatened to physically hurt someone (10%).

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5 This finding aligns with other research on cyberbullying, and remains consistent with Phase III of YCWW.

Figure 6: Method of Engaging in Online Meanness and Cruelty
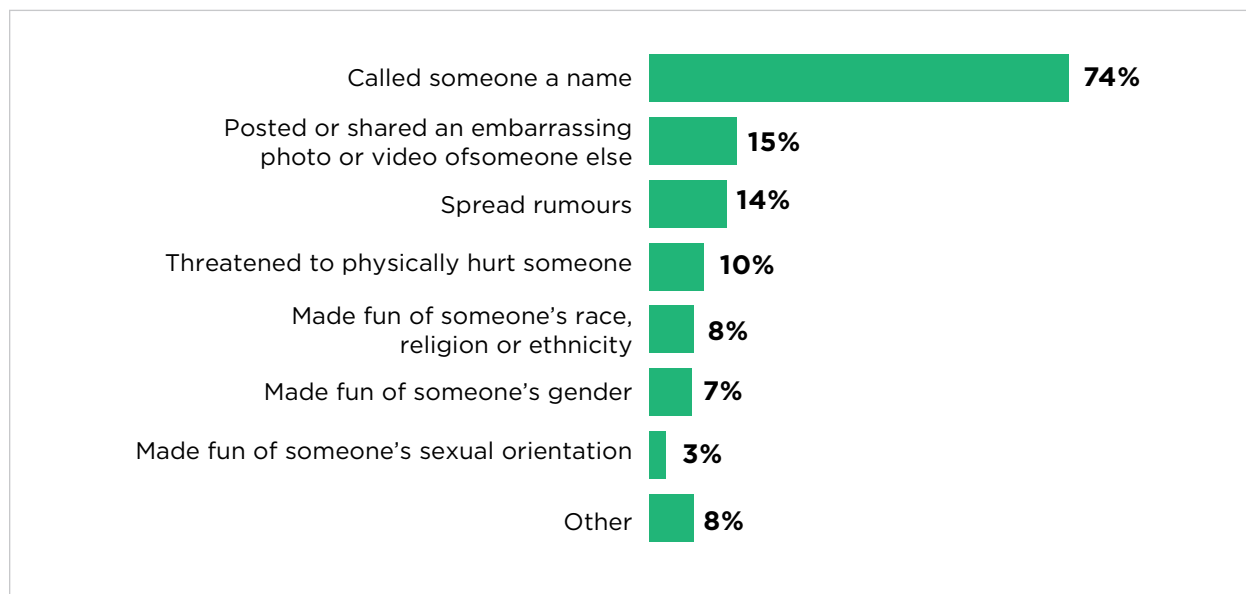
Girls (77%) and boys (74%) as well as transgender youth (n=3) (67%) are most likely to call someone a name. Older youth are more likely to report making fun of someone's gender (11%, compared to 1% of younger youth) and are slightly more likely to report calling someone a name (77%, compared to 71%). Heterosexual youth are also more likely to call someone a name (75%, compared to 67% of LGBTQ+ youth), as are white youth (81%, compared to 55% of racialized youth). Racialized youth are more likely to report threatening to physically hurt someone (23%, compared to 6% of white youth).

Of the youth who say they engage in online meanness and cruelty (n=176), we then asked about their reasons for engaging in this behaviour (see **Figure 7**). Half of youth (51%) who engaged in online meanness and cruelty say they did it as a joke. Other top responses indicate that the reason for engaging in mean or hurtful behaviour is in retaliation for something that was done to hurt them first (35%), something that was done to hurt a friend (22%), or because they wanted to 'get even' with someone else (20%).

Figure 7: Reasons for Engaging in Online Meanness and Cruelty
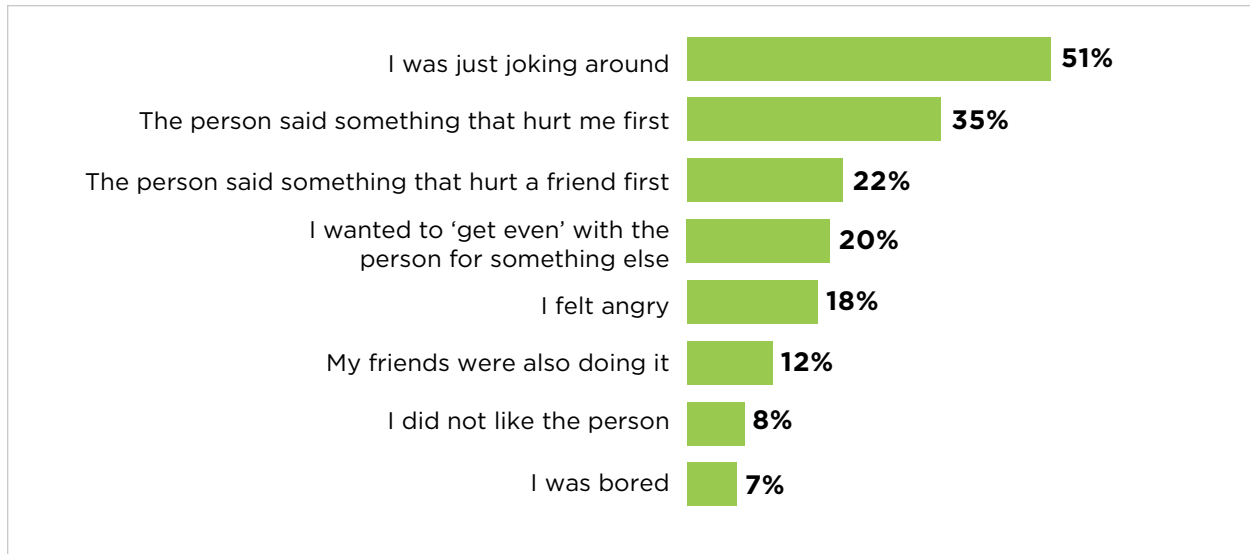
Reason	Percentage
I was just joking around	51%
The person said something that hurt me first	35%
The person said something that hurt a friend first	22%
I wanted to 'get even' with the person for something else	20%
I felt angry	18%
My friends were also doing it	12%
I did not like the person	8%
I was bored	7%

Girls are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty in response to someone hurting them first (42%, compared to 26% of boys), and boys are more likely to report joking around as the reason for engaging in this behaviour (60%, compared to 44% of girls). Transgender and gender diverse youth (n=4) are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty in response to someone hurting them or a friend first (67% in both instances). Older youth also seem to engage in online meanness and cruelty in response to someone hurting them first (46%, compared to 18% of younger youth) or wanting to 'get even' with someone (25%, compared to 12%). Older youth are also more likely to engage in this behaviour because their friends do it (17%, compared to 4% of younger youth). Younger youth are more likely to report engaging in online meanness and cruelty as a way of 'joking around' online (62%, compared to 44% of older youth).

Additional demographic differences include:

- heterosexual youth are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty because they feel angry (21%, compared to 4% of LGBTQ+ youth);

- white youth are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty as a form of 'joking around' online (57%, compared to 28% of racialized youth);

- racialized youth are more likely to engage in this behaviour because someone hurt them first (53%, compared to 30% of white youth), to 'get even' (43%, compared to 16%), or because they do not like the person they are directing the cruelty at (18%, compared to 5%); and

- youth with a disability are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty as a way of 'joking around' online (56%, compared to 46% of youth without a disability).

Other notable findings related to engaging in online meanness and cruelty include:

- Youth who own their own smartphone are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty (20%, compared to 6% of youth who do not own their own smartphone).

- Youth who keep their smartphone in their bedroom (after they have gone to bed for the night) are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty (23%, compared to 11% of youth who do not keep their phone in their bedroom).

- Youth with the highest levels of weekday screen time are more likely to say they engage in online meanness and cruelty more frequently.

- Youth who share personal information online are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty (47%, compared to 10% of youth who do not share personal information online).

- Youth who engage in online meanness and cruelty are *more likely* to say that they have seen racist or sexist content online (81%, compared to 40% of youth who have not engaged in online cruelty) and are *less likely* to tell an adult about seeing this harmful content online (53%, compared to 70% of youth who indicate they do not engage in online cruelty).

- Youth who engage in online cruelty are more likely to worry that they are spending too much time online (67%, compared to 40% of youth who have not been mean or cruel online).

- Youth who engage in online cruelty are more likely to say that they have engaged in *all* of the online activities we asked about. Interestingly, this includes pro-social activities such as joining or supporting an activist group (47%, compared to 34% of those who have not been mean or cruel online) and posting content about a cause or event they care about (72%, compared to 51%) as well as activities like talking to online-only contacts (84%, compared to 57%).

Responding to Online Meanness and Cruelty

In response to experiencing online meanness or cruelty, youth are most likely not to do anything or ignore the behaviour.

Two-thirds of participants (64%) say they have responded after witnessing online meanness or cruelty. Most respond by communicating with either the person who was hurt or the person who did it.

We asked participants what steps they would take if someone said something mean or cruel to them online. The survey allowed them to select and rank three options: their first response, what they would do if the first response did not work, and what they would do if *that* did not work.

The results tell us that at first, youth are most likely not to do anything or ignore online cruelty. Then, if that did not work, turning to parents or guardians, friends, teachers, the police, or confronting the person who posted or shared the content are backup plans (see **Figure 8**).

Girls are more likely to ask a parent or guardian (26%, compared to 19% of boys) or a friend (8%, compared to 4% of boys) for help when it comes to responding to online meanness or cruelty. Boys are more likely not to do anything (26%, compared to 21% of girls). Transgender youth (n=7) are more likely to send a private email or message to the person responsible (43%, compared to 10% of boys and 8% of girls). Gender diverse youth (n=6) are also more likely to send a private email or message to the person responsible (50%, compared to 10% of boys and 8% of girls).

Older youth are more likely to ignore it and hope it goes away (23%, compared to 18% of younger youth), while younger youth are more likely to ask a parent or guardian for help (32%, compared to 16% of older youth). Racialized youth are more likely to post something online about experiencing online meanness or cruelty (4%, compared to 1% of white youth). Youth with a disability are more likely to ask a parent or guardian for support (24%, compared to 16% of youth without a disability) or ignore it (22%, compared to 16%).

Figure 8: Response to Online Meanness and Cruelty

Figure 8: Response to Online Meanness and Cruelty

I would not do anything so the person would think it did not bother me
- First: 24%
- Then, if that didn't work: 5%
- If that also didn't work: 5%

I would ask my parent(s) / guardian(s) for help
- First: 22%
- Then, if that didn't work: 19%
- If that also didn't work: 24%

I would ignore it and hope it would go away
- First: 21%
- Then, if that didn't work: 15%
- If that also didn't work: 6%

I would talk face-to-face with the person who posted it (if possible)
- First: 12%
- Then, if that didn't work: 12%
- If that also didn't work: 9%

I would privately e-mail or message the person who posted it
- First: 9%
- Then, if that didn't work: 10%
- If that also didn't work: 7%

I would ask my friends for help
- First: 6%
- Then, if that didn't work: 15%
- If that also didn't work: 11%

I would post something about it online
- First: 2%
- Then, if that didn't work: 5%
- If that also didn't work: 5%

I would ask another adult I know and trust
- First: 2%
- Then, if that didn't work: 5%
- If that also didn't work: 9%

I would ask my teacher for help
- First: 2%
- Then, if that didn't work: 12%
- If that also didn't work: 9%

I would call the police
- First: 1%
- Then, if that didn't work: 1%
- If that also didn't work: 14%

Legend:
■ First
■ Then, if that didn't work
■ If that also didn't work

The tables below summarize the top strategies for responding to online meanness or cruelty and highlight some additional and important demographic differences. For instance, we can see that some groups of youth (girls, transgender youth, gender diverse youth, younger youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth without a disability) prefer to take more personal or *relational* approaches to responding to this behaviour, while others (boys, older youth, heterosexual youth, and youth with a disability) prefer to disengage or ignore it.

Top Strategies by Gender for Responding to Online Meanness and Cruelty:

Gender	Most popular strategy	Second most popular strategy	Third most popular strategy
Boys	Do nothing (26%)	Ignore it (20%)	Ask parents for help (19%)
Girls	Ask parents for help (26%)	Do nothing or ask friends for help (21%)	Talk face-to-face with the person responsible (11%)
Transgender youth (n=7)	Private email or message the person responsible (43%)	Ask friends for help (29%)	Ignore it or post something about it online (14%)
Gender diverse youth (n=6)	Private email or message the person responsible (50%)	Do nothing (33%)	Ask parents for help (17%)

Top Strategies by Age for Responding to Online Meanness and Cruelty:

Age	Most popular strategy	Second most popular strategy	Third most popular strategy
9-11	Ask parents for help (33%)	Do nothing (19%)	Ignore it (18%)
12-13	Do nothing (26%)	Ask parents for help (22%)	Ignore it (18%)
14-17	Do nothing (26%)	Ignore it (24%)	Talk face-to-face with the person responsible (14%)

Top Strategies by Sexual Orientation for Responding to Online Meanness and Cruelty:

Sexual orientation	Most popular strategy	Second most popular strategy	Third most popular strategy
Heterosexual youth	Do nothing (24%)	Ask parents for help or ignore it (21%)	Talk face-to-face with the person responsible (12%)
LGBTQ+ youth	Ask parents for help (24%)	Do nothing (22%)	Ignore it (19%)

Top Strategies by Race for Responding to Online Meanness and Cruelty:

Race	Most popular strategy	Second most popular strategy	Third most popular strategy
White youth	Do nothing (24%)	Ask parents for help (23%)	Ignore it (19%)
Racialized youth	Do nothing (24%)	Ignore it (23%)	Ask parents for help (19%)

Top Strategies by Ability for Responding to Online Meanness and Cruelty:

Ability	Most popular strategy	Second most popular strategy	Third most popular strategy
Youth with a disability	Do nothing (25%)	Ask parents for help or ignore it (16%)	Talk face-to-face with the person responsible (13%)
Youth without a disability	Ask parents for help (24%)	Do nothing (23%)	Ignore it (22%)

We also asked participants whether they have responded to witnessing online meanness or cruelty. Out of those who have witnessed this behaviour (n=509), two-thirds (64%) say they have responded (see **Figure 9**).[6] Girls (67%, compared to 60% of boys), transgender (n=5) (80%) and gender diverse youth (n=2) (100%), younger youth (69%, compared to 61% of older youth), LGBTQ+ youth (71%, compared to 63% of heterosexual youth), white youth (68%, compared to 55% of racialized youth), and youth with a disability (76%, compared to 58% of youth without a disability) are all more likely to respond to witnessing online meanness or cruelty.

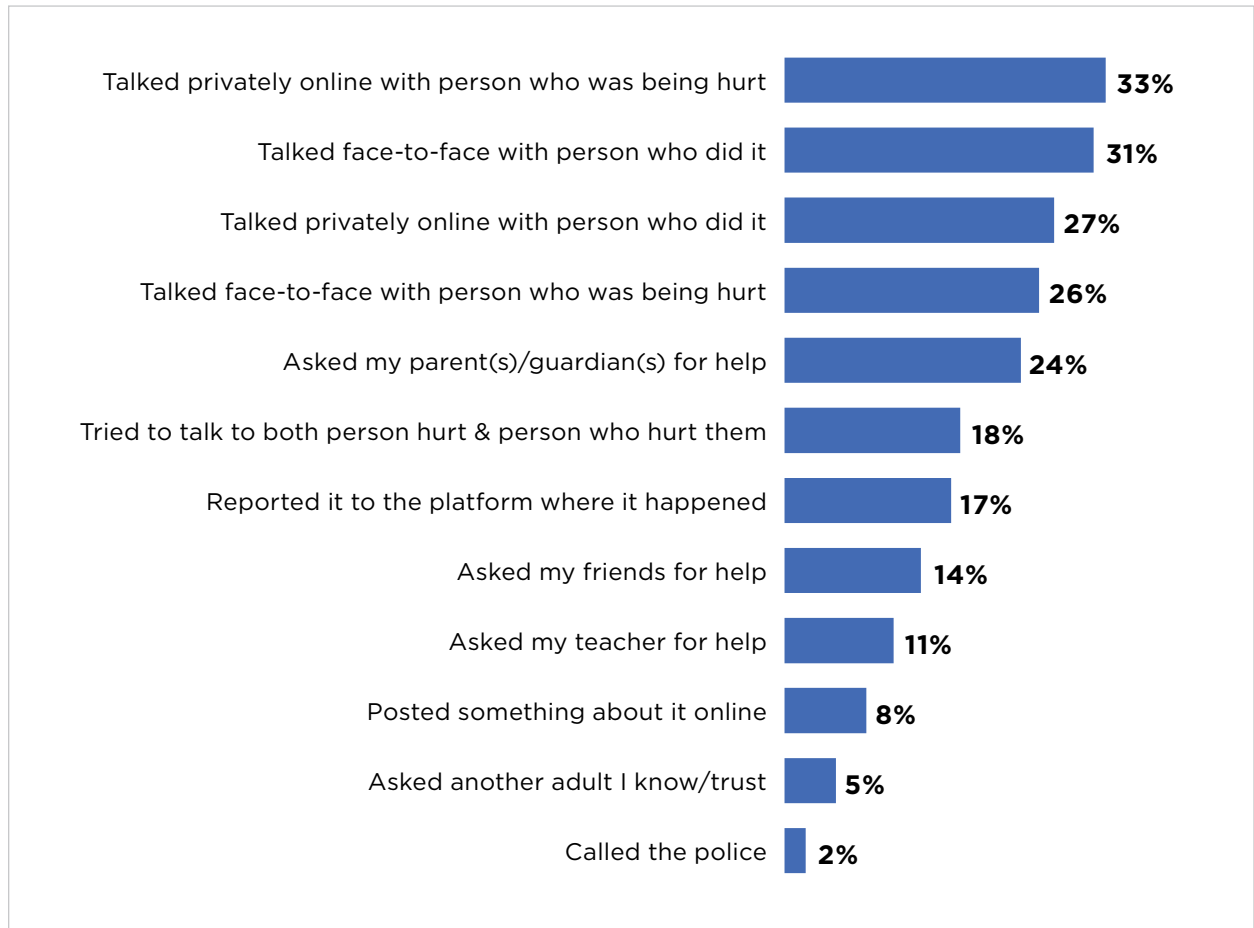**Figure 9: Responding to Witnessing Online Meanness and Cruelty**

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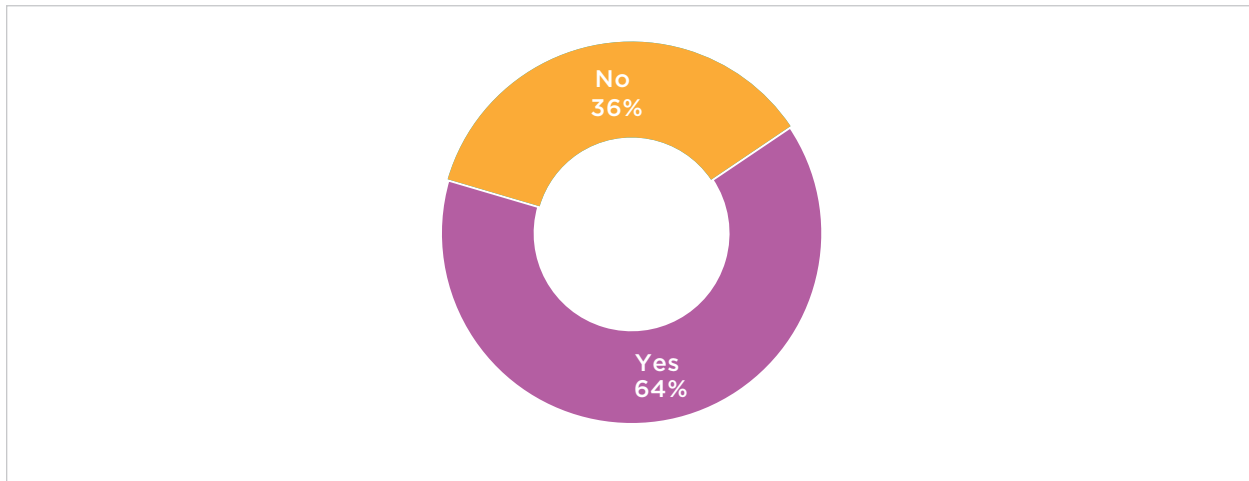
6 This finding remains consistent with findings from Phase III of YCWW.

Additional analysis reveals that youth most likely to respond to witnessing online meanness or cruelty:

- have their own smartphones;
- keep their smartphones in their bedrooms (after they have gone to bed for the night);
- have moderate levels of screen time (between 1-2 or 2-3 hours per day);
- are also more likely to see racist or sexist content online;
- use privacy settings and read privacy policies;
- are more likely to say they have people in their lives who can help solve a problem online;
- are more likely to say they know how to protect themselves online;
- are more likely to have experienced or engaged in online meanness or cruelty themselves; and
- unlike the other behaviours studied in this report, there was no correlation between either weekday or weekend screen time and responding to online meanness or cruelty.

Youth who said that they have responded to witnessing online meanness or cruelty (n=325) say they mostly do so by communicating privately online with the person who was being hurt (33%), talking face-to-face with the person who did it (31%), talking privately online with the person who engaged in meanness or cruelty (27%) or talking face-to-face with the person who was hurt (26%) (see **Figure 10**). Of note are young people's preferences for responses that emphasize communication with the people involved and the unlikeliness that they would report it to platforms where cruelty is occurring (17%) or call the police (2%).

Figure 10: Response to Witnessing Online Meanness and Cruelty

Response	Percentage
Talked privately online with person who was being hurt	33%
Talked face-to-face with person who did it	31%
Talked privately online with person who did it	27%
Talked face-to-face with person who was being hurt	26%
Asked my parent(s)/guardian(s) for help	24%
Tried to talk to both person hurt & person who hurt them	18%
Reported it to the platform where it happened	17%
Asked my friends for help	14%
Asked my teacher for help	11%
Posted something about it online	8%
Asked another adult I know/trust	5%
Called the police	2%

Transgender (n=4) and gender diverse youth (n=2) are more likely to report online meanness or cruelty to the platform (75% of transgender youth and 100% of gender diverse youth, compared to 14% of boys and 17% of girls). Younger youth are more likely to ask a parent or guardian for help (33%, compared to 19% of older youth) in response to witnessing online meanness or cruelty. LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to report it to the platform (37%, compared to 15% of heterosexual youth. Heterosexual youth are more likely to ask a teacher for help in these situations (13%, compared to 2% of LGBTQ+ youth). Racialized youth are more likely to talk to both parties involved in the situation (27%, compared to 15% of white youth) and post something online in response to online meanness or cruelty (16%, compared to 7%). Youth without a disability are more likely to ask a parent or guardian for help (28%, compared to 18% of youth with a disability), while youth with a disability are more likely to talk privately with the person who was hurt (39%, compared to 29% of youth without a disability) or report it to the platform (25%, compared to 13%).

Trust and Support

When screen time is managed via technological solutions, young people are more likely to experience, witness, or engage in online meanness and cruelty than if their screen time is being managed using non-technological approaches.

46% of youth indicate having a household rule for treating people online with respect.

Seven in ten (70%) of youth say that their school has rules about cyberbullying, and many (84%) find these rules helpful.

One-quarter (25%) of youth want to learn more about how to deal with cyberbullying.

Like with all other areas covered in the YCWW Phase IV survey, we asked participants about the influence of adult involvement and rules on their experiences with and responses to online meanness and cruelty. The findings presented below demonstrate what we have highlighted in previous reports – that young people benefit from interpersonal and relational support, rather than technological solutions, to preventing and addressing various online harms. This also reinforces what we highlighted in the qualitative portion of Phase IV, which is that building **collective resilience** is essential to digital well-being and supporting young Canadians in situations of interpersonal conflict.

Collective resilience is the ability of a community or group of people to collectively respond to or recover from changing and sometimes stressful or adverse environments. In the online context, this can be expressed as a young person's ability to: participate in safe and inclusive online communities, draw strength and support from the people around them, foster trust, and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Adult Involvement

First, we will start with the role of adult involvement and engagement in addressing issues related to online meanness and cruelty. In the [Life Online](#) report, we presented high-level findings around how parents or guardians manage and limit screen time in the home using both technological (e.g., using an app or device) and non-technological (e.g., setting specific times or places where devices cannot be used or arranging activities that do not involve screens) strategies. In this report, we share what our additional analysis tells us about the relationship between managing screen time and online meanness and cruelty.

What we find generally is that when screen time is managed via technological solutions, young people are more likely to experience, witness, or engage in online meanness and cruelty than if their screen time is being managed using non-technological approaches (see **Figure 11**).

Figure 11: Approaches to managing screen time
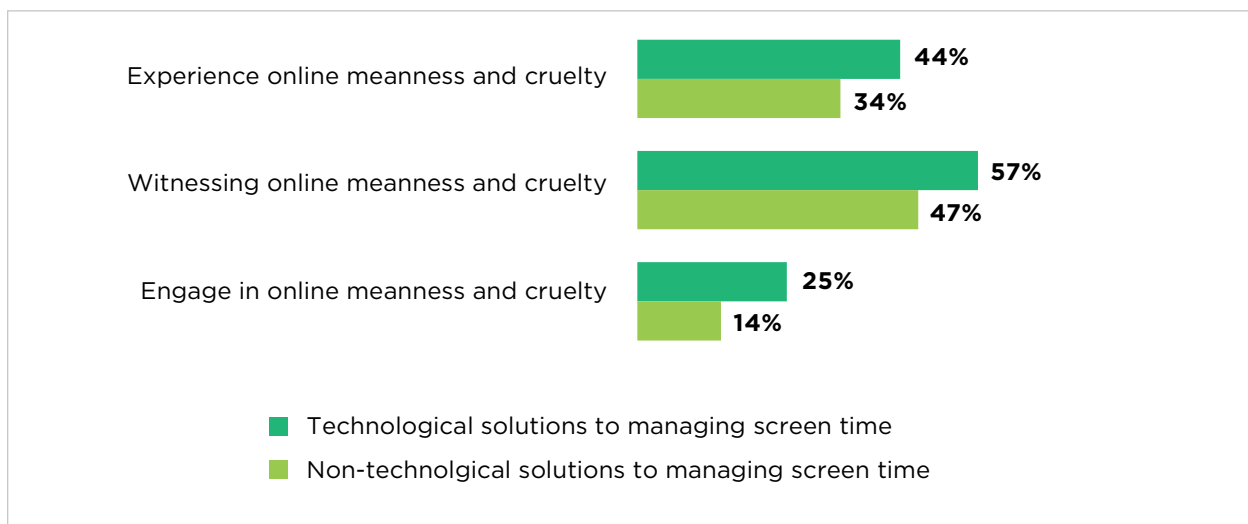
We also find that when young people have their screen time managed through technological approaches, they are more likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty *more frequently,* than those whose screen time at home is managed using non-technological approaches. However, youth whose parents or guardians use technology to limit screen time are more likely to respond to witnessing online meanness and cruelty (75%, compared to 57% of youth whose parents or guardians do not use technology to limit their screen time).

Next, we conducted further analysis to understand the relationship between adult supervision and engagement and online meanness and cruelty. Here, we note that youth who are usually with an adult when they go online are less likely to experience, witness, and engage in online meanness or cruelty (see **Figure 12**).

Figure 12: Adult supervision

Experience online meanness and cruelty
- Adult supervision: **28%**
- No adult supervision: **40%**

Witnessing online meanness and cruelty
- Adult supervision: **45%**
- No adult supervision: **58%**

Engage in online meanness and cruelty
- Adult supervision: **17%**
- No adult supervision: **21%**

■ Adult supervision
■ No adult supervision
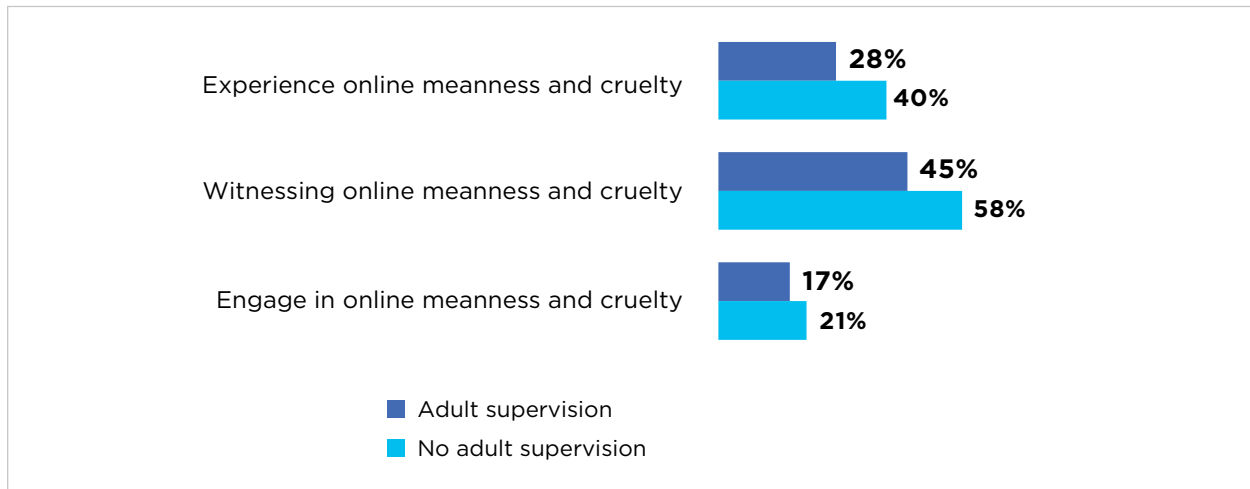
Additionally, youth who usually go online with an adult at home are more likely to respond to witnessing online meanness and cruelty (73%, compared to 55% of youth who say they are never online with an adult at home).

Household Rules

We also want to note some relationships between the presence of household rules and experiences of online meanness and cruelty. Our analysis reveals that youth with household rules in all the categories we asked about in the survey are:

- less likely to engage in online meanness and cruelty;
- less likely to say they were 'just joking around' as motivation for engaging in online meanness and cruelty;
- more likely to respond when they witness online meanness and cruelty; and
- more likely to ask parents or guardians for help in situations of online meanness and cruelty.

This last finding in particular supports analysis in the Life Online report about the presence of household rules in general as an indicator that parents and guardians are more likely to engage in conversations with youth about their online lives and experiences. These conversations, as we have noted elsewhere, are important for building the trust and support youth require to navigate various online problems and challenges more successfully.

When it comes to specific household rules, we note that 46% of participants indicate having a rule for treating people online with respect. Research on cyberbullying speaks to the importance of shared rules or values in preventing instances of online meanness

or cruelty[7] and reinforces MediaSmarts' emphasis on building collective resilience (both inside and outside of the home).

Finally, we know that in some cases household rules are established *after* a negative or harmful experience has already occurred. While we of course want to emphasize the importance of prevention, the conversations and new rules or guidelines that might result from experiencing, witnessing, or engaging in online meanness and cruelty are essential to preventing further harm and repairing any harm that has already happened. These conversations also help to build trust between youth and the adults in their lives.

School Rules and Policies

Rules outside of the home, like those that are established at school and in the classroom, are also important when it comes to helping young people navigate online relationships. Seven in ten (70%) youth say that their school has rules about cyberbullying, and many (84%) find these rules to be helpful (see **Figure 13**).

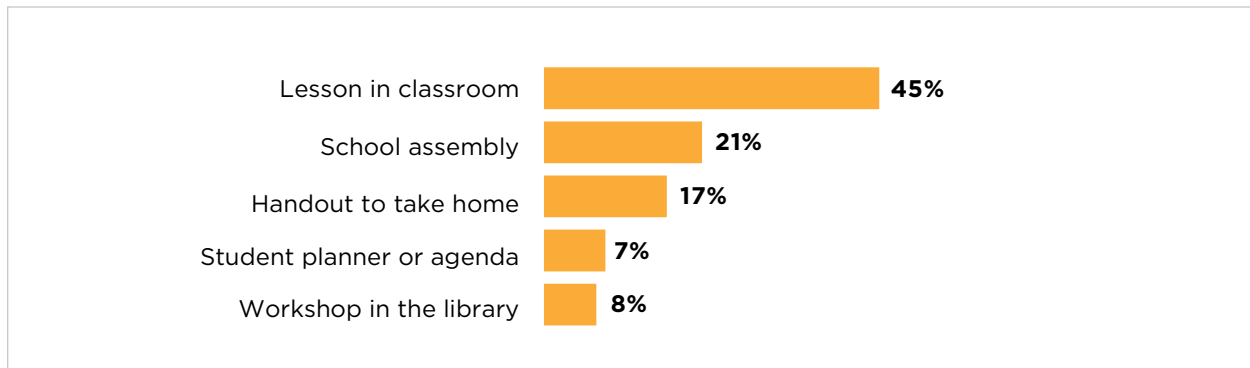**Figure 13: School Rules and Policies on Cyberbullying**
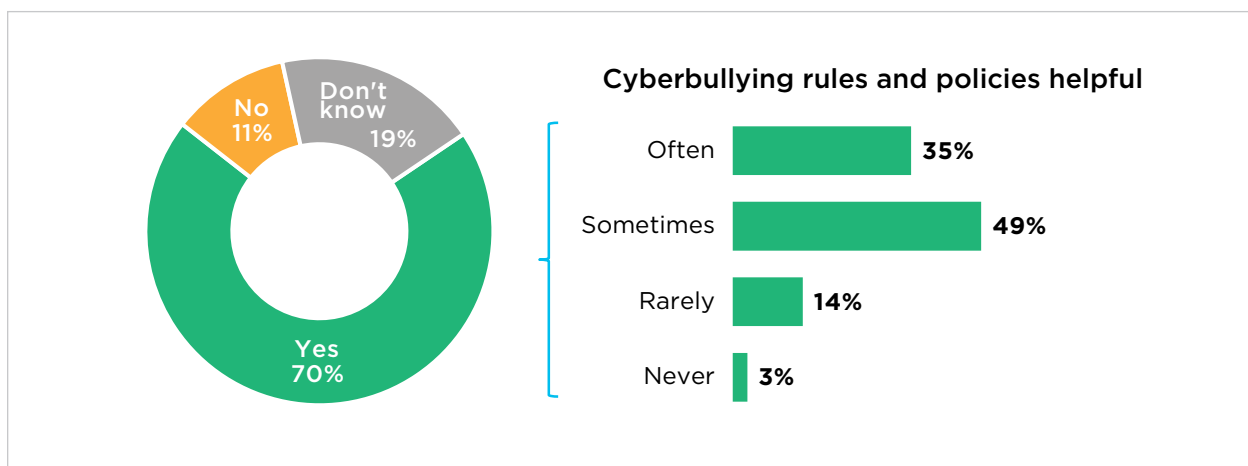
Overall, the number of youth who say they do not know if their school has rules or policies on cyberbullying has decreased from 35% in Phase III of YCWW in 2013 to 19% in Phase IV in 2021. However, boys, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth with a disability are most likely to say they do not know if their school has rules or policies on cyberbullying.

Youth typically learn about the rules and policies on cyberbullying through lessons in the classroom (45%), school assemblies (21%), or from handouts that they take home (17%) (see **Figure 14**).

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7 Hsieh, M. L., Wang, S. Y. K., & Cao, L. (2021). Understanding cyberbullying victimization from an integrated approach: offline preventive attributes and behavior problems do matter. *Victims & Offenders, 16*(4), 610-630.

Figure 14: Where Students Learn About Cyberbullying Rules/Policies at School

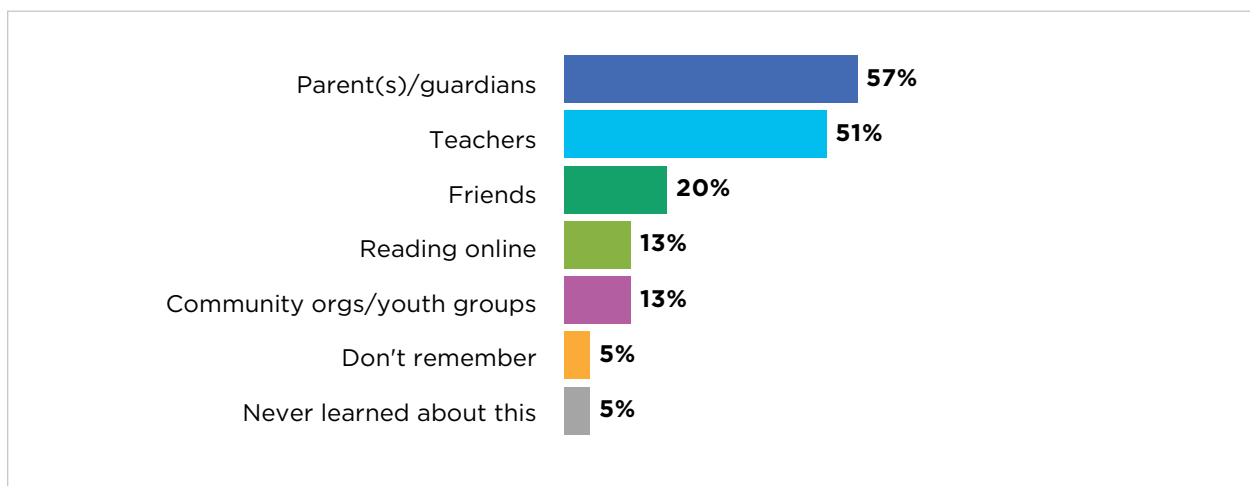|	
Lesson in classroom	45%
School assembly	21%
Handout to take home	17%
Student planner or agenda	7%
Workshop in the library	8%

The relationship between these rules and students' experiences is complex. Students who say there is a rule about cyberbullying in their school are more likely to have experienced meanness or cruelty online (37%, compared to 22% of those whose school has no rule). The same pattern was observed with engaging in online meanness and cruelty: those whose school has a rule are more likely to say they had done so (20%, compared to 8% of those whose school has no rule). Youth whose school has a cyberbullying rule are more likely to have called someone a name (76%, compared to 33% of those whose school has no rule) and considerably less likely to engage in all the other forms of online meanness and cruelty we asked about.

Learning About Dealing with Online Meanness and Cruelty

57% of youth indicated that they learn about how to deal with cyberbullying from their parents. Just over half (51%) of participants indicated that they learned how to deal with cyberbullying from their teachers (see **Figure 15**).

Figure 15: Learning How to Deal with Cyberbullying

Parent(s)/guardians	57%
Teachers	51%
Friends	20%
Reading online	13%
Community orgs/youth groups	13%
Don't remember	5%
Never learned about this	5%

Overall, one-quarter (25%) of participants indicated that they would like to learn *more* about how to deal with cyberbullying. Our findings suggest that youth who experience online meanness and cruelty are most likely to want to learn more about it and these youth are more likely to read about how to deal with online meanness and cruelty online compared to youth who engage in online meanness and cruelty.

The number of young people who learn about dealing with online meanness and cruelty from their parents has increased from 43% in Phase III of YCWW in 2013 to 57% in Phase IV in 2021. The number of youth who learn about dealing with online meanness and cruelty from teachers has decreased from 62% in Phase III of YCWW in 2013 to 51% in Phase IV in 2021. These findings suggest that youth are increasingly engaging with parents or guardians alongside school-based support for learning about and dealing with online meanness and cruelty. This also reinforces the importance of adult engagement and building trust and support between youth and adults so that they are better prepared to navigate various online problems – including online meanness and cruelty.

As we highlighted in our report on [encountering harmful and discomfiting content](#), youth feel confident that there are people in their lives who can help them solve the online problems they experience – 86% of participants agreed with this statement. Younger youth (88%) and LGBTQ+ youth (83%) are more likely to agree with this statement than other participants.[8] Overall, youth who have people in their lives who can help them solve online problems are less likely to experience, witness, and engage in online meanness and cruelty.

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8 Overall, this sense of support increased from 72% in Phase III of YCWW in 2013 to 86% in Phase IV in 2021.

Understanding Online Meanness and Cruelty

In the qualitative portion of Phase IV, we outlined the social, environmental, and technological factors that impact young Canadians' ability to get the most out of their online interactions. Additional analysis reveals that these same technological, environmental, and social factors highlight the complex ways that youth experiences of and engagement in online meanness and cruelty overlap.

Earlier in this report, we provide examples of technological factors that impact online meanness and cruelty, including whether a young person uses their own smartphone and whether their screen time is managed using technological solutions. We also highlight examples of environmental factors that impact online meanness and cruelty such as whether a young person keeps their phone in their bedroom after they have gone to bed for the night or whether they go online with adult supervision and engagement. Another example of an environmental factor is online anonymity.

While we have written elsewhere about the benefits of anonymity in online spaces, especially for racialized and queer youth, young people are also acutely aware of the risks. For example, 27% of youth agree that people will say things online that they would not say offline, and 15% of youth agree that it is easier to get in fights or arguments online than it is offline. In both the qualitative and quantitative portions of Phase IV of YCWW, social connection and creative engagement are the most important *social* factors supporting young Canadian's technology use. However, these social factors also impact online meanness and cruelty. For example, youth who post videos of themselves are more likely to experience, engage in, and respond to witnessing online meanness and cruelty. The same is true of youth who participate in community engagement and online activism.

Rather than providing clear differences (in behaviour and interactions) between youth who experience and youth who engage in online meanness and cruelty, our analysis reveals a complex intersection of experiences, engagements, and responses:

- Youth who engage in online meanness and cruelty have also had experiences of online meanness and cruelty:
    - 87% of youth who said they engaged in online meanness or cruelty have also had someone do something mean or cruel to them (compared to 13% of youth who say they have engaged in online meanness and cruelty without experiencing it).
- Youth who experience online meanness and cruelty, have also engaged in it:
    - 46% of youth who have experienced online meanness and cruelty have engaged in it themselves (compared to 3% of youth who say they have not experienced online meanness and cruelty).

- Youth who witness online meanness and cruelty are also highly likely to have experienced and/or engaged in it.

- Youth who both engage in and experience online meanness and cruelty are more likely to report 'just joking', retaliation, or defending a friend as the rationale for *why* they engage.

- Youth who both engage in, and experience, online meanness and cruelty are also more likely to defend someone as a form of intervention or a response to witnessing online meanness and cruelty.

These findings support research that highlights the need to complicate our understandings of online meanness and cruelty to avoid oversimplifying the dynamics of 'victims' and 'perpetrators'. Without this more complex understanding, interventions can advance victim-blaming attitudes, such as (unrealistic) strategies that simply suggest youth stop using digital devices or platforms (specifically social media).

Instead, we need to expand and diversify support and resources for young people that foster collective resilience. You will recall that youth in this study were clear about preferring *relational* approaches to managing or dealing with online meanness and cruelty, such as talking offline or face-to-face with the people involved rather than engaging with technology platforms or the police. These findings are consistent with recent research that challenges strictly legal or policy-based responses which are often framed as evidence of taking online meanness and cruelty 'seriously' but do so at the cost of alternative methods of intervention, specifically educational approaches.

Recognizing that there is no 'silver bullet' of protection when it comes to mitigating online harm, our findings point to the value of adult involvement and engagement, specifically in the context of online meanness and cruelty. For example, household rules are related to higher levels of help-seeking on the part of youth, which is essential for building collective resilience. Similarly, many of the social, environmental, and technological factors that impact experiences of and engagement in online meanness and cruelty are also considered to be positive activities, such as community engagement and online activism or engaging in creative media making and sharing. Consistent with the work of scholars like Dr. Sonia Livingstone, collective resilience aims to support youth in cultivating these positive online experiences while preparing them to manage harms and challenges as they arise.

NEXT STEPS

In this report we presented findings that tell us 32% of young Canadians ages 9 to 17 have experienced online meanness and cruelty, 49% have witnessed it, and 17% have engaged in this behaviour. While most youth (64%) say they have responded after witnessing *someone else* experiencing online meanness and cruelty, they are most likely not to do anything or ignore the behaviour when it is happening to them. Additionally, we learned that youth who experience online meanness or cruelty are also more likely to engage in it. This 'retaliation' is another indicator that young people need more support when it comes to responding to and navigating relationships and technology.

As a result of our analysis for this report, we note the need for resources that emphasize the interpersonal and relational responses that many youth seem to prefer when it comes to responding to online meanness and cruelty. We also want to highlight the importance of resources that help young people interact with each other from a place of empathy, rather than in more reactive ways that are often easier to resort to online. These calls for more relational and restorative resources echo what other experts suggest in response to technology-facilitated violence and bullying.
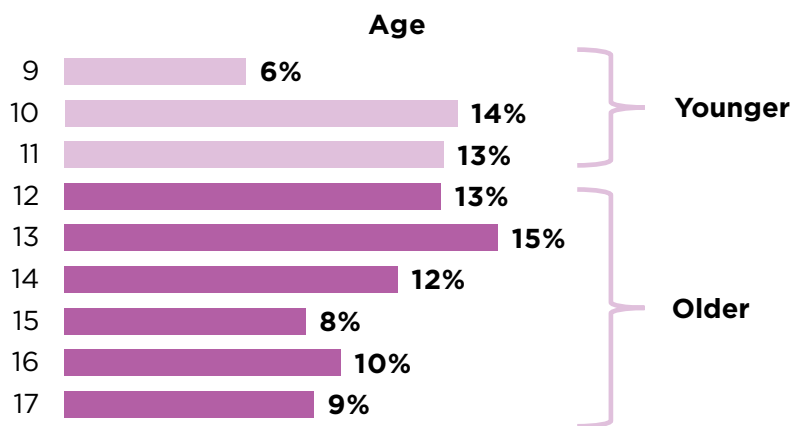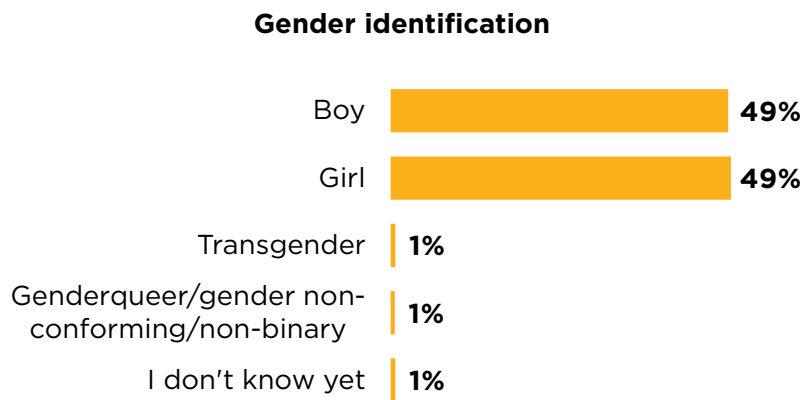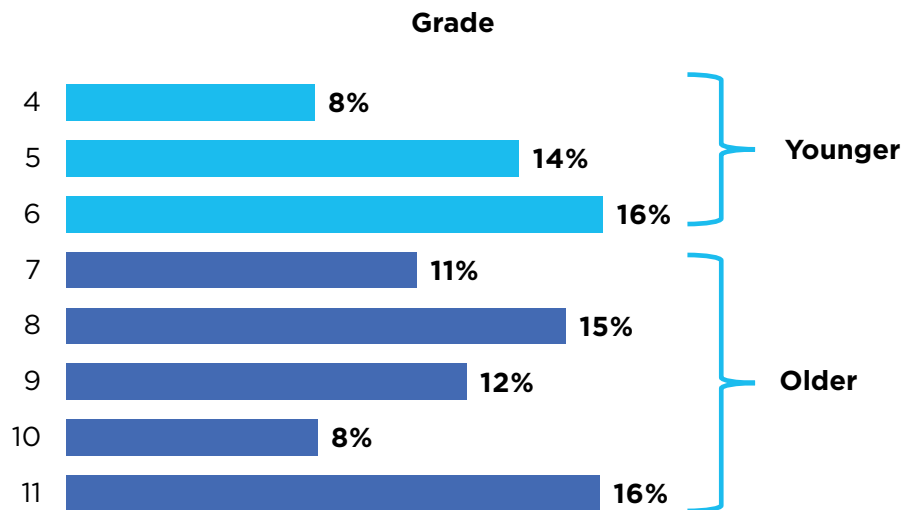
In our own efforts to build collective resilience and provide youth, families, teachers, and communities with resources to prevent and address online meanness and cruelty, MediaSmarts has the following resources available on our website:

- [Use, Understand & Engage: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools](#). A complete suite of classroom resources covering nine essential aspects of digital media literacy including Ethics and Empathy, which addresses students' social-emotional skills and empathy towards others as well as their ability to make ethical decisions in digital environments.

- [Stay on the Path: Teaching Kids to be Safe and Ethical Online](#). A series of resources that aims to promote and encourage ethical online behaviour and digital citizenship with young people.

- [What to Do if Someone is Mean to You Online](#). A tip sheet that offers strategies for responding to online meanness and cruelty.

- [How Kids Cyberbully](#). An article that outlines four different patterns of cyberbullying: griefing, drama, harassment, and relationship violence.

- [Strategies for Fighting Cyberbullying](#). An article that outlines various approaches or responses that can be communicated to young people either at home or in school.

We hope that the YCWW Phase IV reports, including the qualitative findings, will help us better understand what is working and what needs to be changed or improved so that young Canadians get the most out of their online experiences. This research will inspire future projects at MediaSmarts and within the broader research community. In addition, a final trends and recommendations report will provide educators, policymakers, and other critical decision-makers in government, the technology industry, education, and community organizations with the foundation to build and support collective digital resilience and well-being for young Canadians.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographics

Grade

Grade	Percentage	Group
4	8%	Younger
5	14%	Younger
6	16%	Younger
7	11%	Older
8	15%	Older
9	12%	Older
10	8%	Older
11	16%	Older

Gender identification

Gender	Percentage
Boy	49%
Girl	49%
Transgender	1%
Genderqueer/gender non-conforming/non-binary	1%
I don't know yet	1%

Age

Age	Percentage	Group
9	6%	Younger
10	14%	Younger
11	13%	Younger
12	13%	Older
13	15%	Older
14	12%	Older
15	8%	Older
16	10%	Older
17	9%	Older

Province of residence

- NF 1%
- PEI 0%
- NS 2%
- NB 2%
- QC 24%
- ON 36%
- MB 3%
- SK 4%
- AB 14%
- BC 12%
- NT 2%
- YT 0%
- NU 0%

First language

- English 71%
- French 24%
- Cantonese/Mandarin 2%
- Other 3%

Identifies as having a physical disability

- Yes 13%
- No 79%
- Prefer not to say 9%
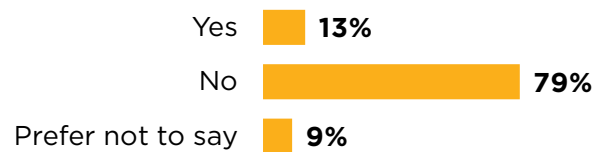
Identifies as having intellectual/cognitive/learning disability

- Yes 13%
- No 77%
- Prefer not to say 9%
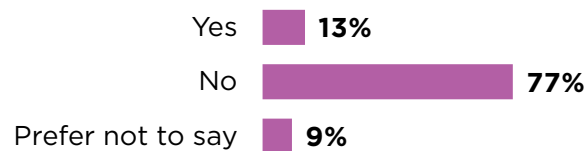
Identifies as having a mental illness

Yes	16%
No	75%
Prefer not to say	9%

Race identification

European (White)	69%
Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.)	10%
Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, Métis)	7%
South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)	4%
African/West Indian (Black)	4%
Middle Eastern (Iranian, Iraqi, Saudi Arabian, etc.)	2%
South/Latin American (Mexican, Puerto Rican,...	2%
Other	3%
I don't know	3%
Prefer not to say	3%

30% racialized

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual	86%
Bisexual	3%
Gay or lesbian	2%
I don't know yet	6%
Prefer not to say	2%

14% LGBTQ+