



COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Executive Director: Mary M. Breaux, Ph.D.

Cyberstalking: The Facts

Cristal N. Hernandez, M.A.

What is Cyberstalking?

Cyberstalking is considered a form of technology-facilitated abuse, such as cyberbullying and sextortion, all of which involve the use of technology to make someone else afraid or concerned about their safety.[1,2] Typically, perpetrators use social media, Internet databases, search engines, and other online resources to intimidate, follow, and cause anxiety or terror to others.[2,5] Existing research also suggests that many perpetrators are motivated by trying to reconcile a relationship, exact revenge, seek a relationship, or establish control over the victim.[5] Indeed, cyberstalking involves an invasion of a person's relative right to privacy and manifests in repeated actions over time.[1,2] It is considered one of the more severe forms of online harassment since perpetrators can use technology to find/track a victim's location and monitor what they do both online and offline.[2,3,5] Although the research base examining both cyberstalking perpetration and victimization is rapidly expanding, it has produced some notably discrepant findings, partly due to the lack of a standard and universally-accepted definition of cyberstalking as well as varying measures.[1,5,6,7]

Have You Heard?

- A 2020 survey found that 11% of U.S. adults have experienced online stalking.[4]
 - Women (13%) are more likely than men (9%) to report being stalked online.[4]
 - Hispanic adults are more likely to say they have experienced stalking online than other racial and ethnic groups.[4]
- Cyberstalking rarely occurs by a stranger and is often carried out by a person the target knows intimately or professionally.[1,2]

What are the Consequences of Cyberstalking?

Unfortunately, those who have experienced cyberstalking report significant emotional and physical impacts, much like traditional stalking.[1,4,5] Victims' experiences with cyberstalking are frequently covered by the mainstream media when celebrities are involved, but media headlines often do not accurately convey the true nature and extent of the phenomenon.[2] This could be one of the many reasons why most adult and juvenile victims alike do not report their experiences to law enforcement and even less engage in help-seeking behaviors.[1]

How to Raise Awareness and Support Survivors

To raise awareness of cyberstalking, support survivors, and remain safe in the digital world, it is important to become educated on cybercrime generally, as well as cyberstalking specifically. Since perpetrators take advantage of personal information and use it in malicious ways, standard Internet security practices are important, such as changing your passwords frequently and being cautious of what is posted online and who has access to it.[2] If someone discloses their cyberstalking victimization to you, encourage them to report the incidents to their local or state police department and save any potential evidence by saving texts and chats, taking screenshots, or printing out all communications.[2] Even if their state does not have a criminal law against "cyberstalking" specifically, the act of repeatedly harassing a person through the Internet or other technology may still be considered a crime under the state's stalking or harassment laws.[3] If they are a student, they should also alert the school to prevent the victimization of others in the broader campus community.[2]

Resources

Texas

- **Attorney General of Texas Cyber Safety –**
<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/initiatives/cyber-safety>
- **Houston Police Department Technology Abuse –**
https://www.houstontx.gov/police/fvu/technology_abuse.htm
- **The SAFE Alliance Safe from Stalking –**
<https://www.safeaustin.org/safe-from-stalking-a-comprehensive-guide-to-protecting-yourself/>

National

- **SPARC –**
<https://www.stalkingawareness.org/>

References

- [1]Walsh, W. A., Finkelhor, D., & Turner, H. (2025). Characteristics and dynamics of cyberstalking victimization among juveniles and young adults. *Violence against women*, 31(5), 1306-1327.
- [2]Hinduja, S. (2018). Cyberstalking. Cyberbullying Research Center. <https://cyberbullying.org/cyberstalking>
- [3]National Network to End Domestic Violence. (2020). Stalking/Cyberstalking. National Network to End Domestic Violence. <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/forms-abuse/stalkingcyberstalking#1>
- [4]Vogels, E. A. (2021). The state of online harassment (Vol. 13, p. 625). Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- [5]Weekes, C. J., Storey, J. E., & Pina, A. (2025). Cyberstalking Perpetrators and Their Methods: A Systematic Literature Review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15248380251333411.
- [6]Wilson, C., Sheridan, L., & Garratt-Reed, D. (2022). What is cyberstalking? A review of measurements. *Journal of Interpersonal violence*, 37(11-12), NP9763-NP9783.
- [7]Wilson, C., Sheridan, L., & Garratt-Reed, D. (2023). Examining cyberstalking perpetration and victimization: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(3), 2019-2033.

Texas State University System Board of Regents

Stephen Lee
Chairman
Bastrop

Don Flores
Vice Chairman
El Paso

Charlie Amato
Regent
San Antonio

Duke Austin
Regent
Houston

Sheila Faske
Regent
Rose City

Russell Gordy
Regent
Houston

Tom Long
Regent
Dallas

William F. Scott
Regent
Nederland

Alan L. Tinsley
Regent
Madisonville

Donavan Brown
Student Regent
San Marcos

Resources

- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative 844-878-2274
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving 877-623-3435
- National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
- Texas Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846