



Cybervictimization: The Facts

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What is Cybervictimization?

Cybervictimization refers to threats, intimidation, and other harms inflicted through digital means such as texting, social networking platforms, gaming forums, and other online spaces. [1] A prominent form is *cyberbullying*, which includes repeated and intentional harassment, threats, exclusion, or embarrassment via digital technology.[2] While cybervictimization can affect people of any age, adolescents are especially vulnerable due to their frequent social media use and developmental sensitivity to peer perception.[1] Unlike traditional bullying, cybervictimization can be anonymous, persistent, and far-reaching, leaving victims feeling exposed and helpless.[3] As online interactions become more embedded in everyday life, addressing digital abuse has become critical to protecting mental health, especially for youth and other marginalized users.[1]

Have You Heard?

- A 2023 systematic review found that personality traits (e.g., low self-esteem, impulsivity) and risky online behaviors increase one's likelihood of being cyberbullied.[4]
- A global study of youth in 42 countries confirmed that increased time on social media correlates with both cyberbullying victimization and perpetration.[5]
- Research also links cybervictimization with elevated risks of suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety among teens, underscoring the importance of early intervention.[1,6]

What Are the Consequences?

Cybervictimization can lead to serious psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.[1,3] Victims may also experience social withdrawal, academic decline, and in some cases, long-term trauma.[1,3] The digital nature of the abuse often intensifies these effects by making it difficult for victims to escape or seek help.[1,2,4]

How to Support Survivors

If someone you know is experiencing cybervictimization, listen without judgment and validate their feelings. Encourage them to document incidents (e.g., taking screenshots, saving messages) and block/report the offender through platform tools. Schools and parents can foster safer online environments by promoting digital literacy and kindness. Advocates can raise awareness about state and national protections, and policymakers can support laws that hold online platforms accountable for user safety.

Resources

Texas

- **Office of the Attorney General of Texas Cyber Safety** – <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/initiatives/cyber-safety>
- **Texas Education Agency Internet Safety: Cyberbullying** – <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/learning-support-and-programs/technology-resources/internet-safety-cyberbullying>

National

- **Cyberbullying Research Center** – <https://cyberbullying.org>
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** – <https://988lifeline.org>
- **NetSmartz Cyberbullying Unplugged** – https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/netsmartz/downloadable/tipsheets/Cyberbullying_Unplugged.pdf
- **StopBullying** – <https://www.stopbullying.gov>

References

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- [6]Massing-Schaffer, M., & Nesi, J. (2020). Cybervictimization and suicide risk in adolescence: An integrative model of social media and suicide theories. *Adolescent Research Review, 5*(1), 49-65.

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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