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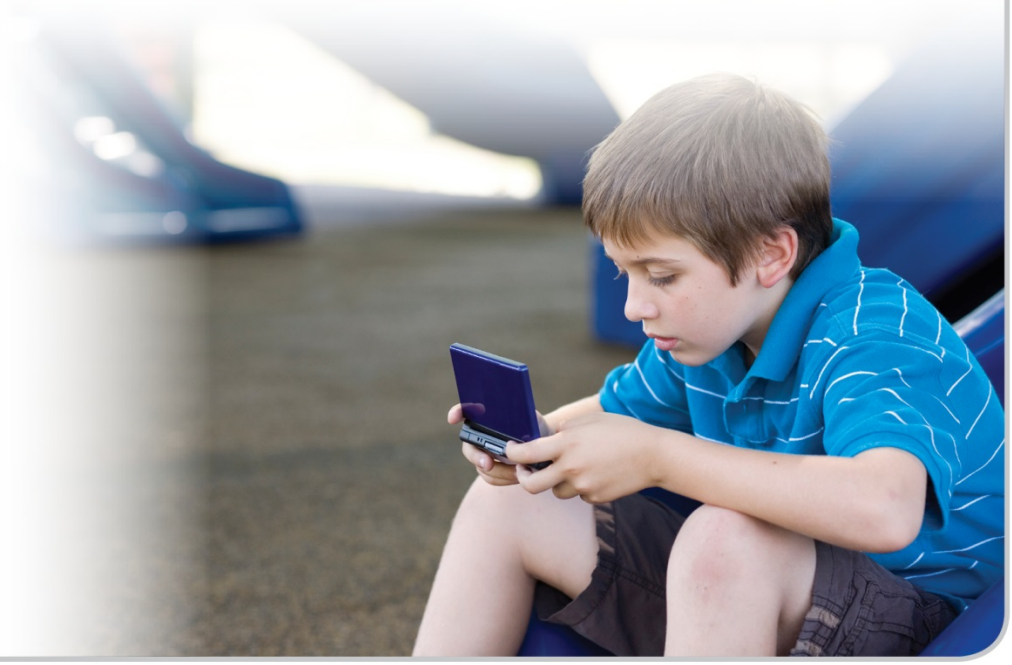
YOUNG CANADIANS IN A WIRED WORLD

Cyberbullying: Dealing with Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats

Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III



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CYBERBULLYING: DEALING WITH ONLINE MEANNESS, CRUELTY AND THREATS

Introduction

Few online issues have captured the public's attention more than cyberbullying. Online harassment has been linked in the news media to teen suicide, and high profile cases have put pressure on schools and legislators to clamp down on young people's networked communications. Although children have always had to learn how to deal with mean behaviour, many adults worry that online media can make this problem worse. Not only do adults fear that cyberbullying can occur away from the watchful eyes of parents and teachers, there is also a concern that media can potentially amplify the negative impacts of youthful mistakes in judgment because it is so easy to copy and repost hurtful comments and so difficult to remove text or images that have gone viral.

Until recently, policymakers have typically responded to these concerns by monitoring young people's communications and applying zero tolerance policies in schools. But a number of jurisdictions are beginning to explore more proactive solutions that help give young people the skills they need to build healthy relationships and understand the ways that technology can shape their communications. We hope that this report will contribute to this effort by providing a snapshot of the kinds of behaviours young people find upsetting and the types of strategies they use to respond to them.

Defining cyberbullying has been a difficult task for researchers, particularly because the term is often used to refer to a range of behaviours, from name calling to criminal harassment. There are also a number of competing definitions used in both academic writing and the policy debate. In our 2013 national survey of 5,436 Canadian students in grades 4-11, we asked students about mean and cruel behaviour, on the one hand, and threats, on the other hand, in order to get a better sense of the range of behaviours that may cause young people concern.

Cyberbullying: Dealing with Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats is the third in a series of reports drawing on the rich data we collected and is part of MediaSmarts' ongoing research project, *Young Canadians in a Wired World*.

Executive Summary

How big a problem is cyberbullying? Judging by media coverage, which frequently focuses on the most sensational and extreme cases, it's an epidemic and schools and legislators have often responded with heavy-handed measures. Students, on the other hand, often say that cyberbullying is less of an issue than adults perceive it to be – though even they, in many cases, overestimate how common it is. MediaSmarts' study *Cyberbullying: Dealing with Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats* suggests that so far as Canadian youth are concerned the answer is somewhere in between, presenting a portrait of online conflict that demands more nuanced, contextualized and evidence-based responses.

He Said She Said – Mean and Cruel Behaviour

In the survey, students were asked a series of questions on their experiences with mean and cruel online behaviour and online threats. In their answers, some commonly held perceptions were challenged, most notably those relating to 'mean girl' culture online, the types of behaviours that are most problematic for youth, traditional models of bullies versus victims and the reciprocal nature of online conflict. Additionally, online conflict is highly gendered with significant differences in how boys and girls experience mean, cruel and threatening behaviours online.

Being involved in mean and cruel behaviour is a common online experience for a significant minority of students.

- Twenty-three percent of students report that they have said or done something mean or cruel to someone online.
- Thirty-seven percent of students report that someone has said or done something mean or cruel to them online that made them feel badly.

Grade 8 appears to be a turning point; both behaviours rise throughout grades 4-8 and then stay relatively stable throughout grades 9-11.

- Behaving meanly increases across the grades, from a low of 6 percent in Grade 4, to 31 percent in Grade 8, to a high of 38 percent in Grade 11.
- Older students are more likely to report that someone has been mean to them.

The vast majority of this kind of behaviour involves name calling, but the overall number of students reporting this behaviour – although significant – is still relatively low.

- Eighteen percent of students say they have called someone a name online.
- When it comes to other negative behaviours:
    - six percent of students report that they have harassed someone in an online game
    - five percent have spread rumours
    - four percent have posted an embarrassing photo/video of someone
    - three percent say that they have made fun of someone's race, religion or ethnicity and two percent have made fun of someone's sexual orientation
    - one percent report that they have harassed someone sexually (e.g. said or did something sexual when the person did not want them to)

Contrary to popular conceptions of the "mean girl", boys are more likely than girls to be mean or cruel online.

- Boys are more likely than girls to harass someone in an online game, make fun of someone's race, religion or ethnicity, make fun of someone's sexual orientation or sexually harass someone.
- Girls are more likely than boys to post an embarrassing photo/video or call someone a name.
- There is no significant difference in the percentage of boys and girls who spread rumours (4% of all boys surveyed compared to 5% of all girls surveyed).

Online meanness is often less an attack of a "bully" against a "victim" than it is an ongoing part of the relational conflicts that arise as part of the drama of teen life.

- There is a significant overlap (39%) between students who have said or done mean things and students who have had mean things said about them.
- Retaliation is also a factor: the second and third most common reasons given by students for being mean online was because someone had said something mean or cruel about them first and because someone had said something mean and cruel about a friend first.

Many students see meanness as a common form of interaction with little perceived harm.

- Over half (55%) of students participating in mean and cruel online behaviour say they are "just joking around."
    - Boys (64%) are more likely than girls (45%) to use this excuse for being mean or cruel online.
- Boys are also more likely to say that they were motivated by boredom or by the fact their friends were doing it.
- Girls are more likely to report being mean online because someone has said something mean about them first (52%), and also because they don't like the person, the person said something mean about a friend or because they were angry.

Feelings about mean and cruel online behaviour

- Although 37 percent of students say that someone has been mean or cruel to them online, only 11 percent say this is sometimes (8%) and often (3%) a problem for them.
    - Younger students and girls are more likely to feel this way.

Sexting

Given recent concerns over sexting, in our survey we asked students in grades 7-11 who have access to cell phones specific questions on this issue. The findings from these questions will be discussed more fully in a subsequent report; however, in the context of cyberbullying, our data suggests that the overlap between sexting and online meanness is quite small.

- Only four percent of students in grades 7-11 with access to cell phones report that they have forwarded a sext that someone had sent them to someone else.

You're Going to Get It" – Dealing with Threats Online

- Thirty-one percent of students report that someone has threatened them online.
    - The majority of these students report this is a rare occurrence (once a year or less).
    - Only nine percent of these students report receiving online threats on a regular basis (once a month or more).
- The majority of the students (70%) who report receiving threats once a month or more do not see them as a serious problem.
- One third of students who receive online threats once a month or more – three percent of the total sample – report that these are sometimes, or often, serious problems for them.

When grade and gender are taken into consideration:

- Boys and older students are more likely to make online threats.
- Students in younger grades are most likely to report that online threats are often or sometimes a serious problem for them, peaking in Grade 5.
- Girls are twice as likely as boys to see online threats as a serious problem.

Student Strategies for Dealing with Conflict Online

Students use a number of strategies to respond to online meanness and threats.

Generally, students of all ages use similar methods to deal with online meanness and threats, with parents playing a significant role in helping children and teens handle online conflict. And despite – or perhaps because of – the power of technology to amplify online drama, students often prefer face-to-face negotiation to resolve online clashes.

The most common response overall for both meanness (50%) and threats (55%) is to ask parents for help.

- This is especially true for students in grades 4-7.
- Although asking parents for help drops throughout high school, even in Grade 11 many students will still turn to parents for help with online meanness (19%) and threats (26%).
- Half of all students – especially those in grades 4-6 – would tell their parents if someone sent them something over the Internet or on their phone that made them really uncomfortable.
- Seventy-two percent of students agree with the statement that, "If I have a problem online (for example, someone posts something hurtful or sends me a photo that makes me uncomfortable) I can trust my parent(s) to help me solve it."

Top Six Strategies

For mean and cruel behaviour:

Grades 4-6	Grades 7-11
Ask parent(s) for help	Ignore it and hope it would go away
Ignore it and hope it would go away*	Talk face-to-face with the person who posted it*
Ask another trusted adult*	Ask friends for help*
Ask a teacher for help	Ask parents for help
Talk face-to-face with the person who posted it	It would not bother me so I would do nothing
Ask friends for help	Privately email or message the person who posted it

* Tied for these grades

For online threats:

Grades 4-6	Grades 7-11
Ask parent(s) for help	Ask parent(s) for help
Ask another trusted adult	Ask friends for help
Ask friends for help	It would not bother me so I would do nothing*
Ask a teacher for help*	Ignore it and hope it would go away*
Ignore it and hope it would go away*	Talk face-to-face with the person who posted it
Call the police	Ask a teacher for help

* Tied for these grades

- Overall, contacting the police trails behind contacting other adults, although students are almost twice as likely to contact the police if a threat is involved (23% compared to 11% for meanness).
- French language students in Quebec are more likely than English language students in the rest of Canada to ask a teacher, another trusted adult or the police for help in dealing with online meanness.
    - They are also more likely to ask a teacher for help in dealing with an online threat, but there is no difference between these students when it comes to contacting the police regarding a threat.
- More students rely on face-to-face confrontation than on private communications over a networked device to deal with conflict, and posting an online response to an incident is the least preferred option for all grades.

There are different patterns of responses for boys and girls.

- For both meanness and threats, girls are more likely than boys to:
    - ask parents, friends, teachers or other trusted adults for help
    - privately message the offending party
    - ignore the conflict in the hope that it will go away
- Boys are more likely to not be bothered and so do nothing.
- When someone is mean or cruel online, girls are more likely than boys to confront the offending party face-to-face.
- When a threat is involved, boys are more likely to confront the offending party in person.
- The most common first responses to online meanness and threats are:
    - asking parents for help
    - ignoring it and hoping it will go away
    - doing nothing because they are not bothered by it
- If the first responses don't work, the most common second responses are:
    - asking parents for help
    - asking friends for help
    - ignoring it and hoping it goes away
- Parents and friends continue to be popular choices if the first two responses don't succeed.
    - However, for online meanness, talking face-to-face with the poster is another popular response.
    - Common third responses to threats include contacting the police and asking another trusted adult for help.
    - Students are also much more likely to talk to a teacher as a second or third option.

Bystanders and Interveners – Helping Others in Conflict

The good news is that many youth who witness people being picked on online will often do something about it. The bad news, however, is that part of this helping behaviour may include

retaliatory meanness, which reinforces the need for providing youth with more nuanced and pro-social strategies for when they witness online conflict.

- Sixty-five percent of students report that, when they have seen someone being mean or cruel to another person online, they have done something to help the person who is being picked on.
    - Girls are more likely than boys to help someone in this situation.
    - Students in grades 6 through 9 are slightly more likely to help than younger and older students.
    - Compared to students who have not participated in conflict online before, students who have been targets of mean, cruel or threatening behaviour, or who have behaved this way towards others themselves, are more likely to report helping someone who is being picked on online.

Rules and Attitudes about Cyberbullying in School and at Home

In keeping with the important role of parents, having household rules about treating others with respect online strongly correlates with more pro-social behaviour on students' part.

- Forty-seven percent of students have household rules about treating others with respect online.
- Having this rule correlates with lower levels of mean and threatening behaviour.
    - Students with no family rules about treating others with respect online are 59 percent more likely to be mean or cruel than students with rules and are twice as likely to make threats.

When it comes to schools, the picture is more complicated.

- Most students (62%) report that their schools have rules or policies to deal with cyberbullying.
    - However, over one third do not know whether or not there are rules in place.
- There is very little correlation between the presence of school rules and whether or not a student has engaged in meanness or threatening behaviour online or has been a recipient of meanness or threats.

Teachers are the most common source of information about how to deal with cyberbullying, even though they are among the last people students will go to for help with conflict.

- Sixty-two percent of students have learned about cyberbullying from teachers.
    - Parents are the second most common source of information.
    - The percentage of students learning from teachers stays fairly constant from grades 5-11, while the percentage of students learning from parents drops from one half in Grade 4 to one quarter in Grade 11.
    - By Grade 11, friends and online sources also rise in importance.

A large majority of students (81%) agree with the statement, "I feel respected and valued as a member of my school community."

- Perhaps not surprisingly, students who have either done mean or threatening things online or have had others do mean or threatening things to them are less likely to feel respected and valued.
- They are also more likely than other students to agree with the statement, "Bullies are usually popular at school."

Three quarters of the students who are aware that their school has rules or policies regarding cyberbullying think that they are sometimes or often helpful.

- However, the percentage of students who think the rules are never or rarely helpful increases across grades to a high of 35 percent in Grade 11.
- This ambivalence may be attributed to students' perceptions that adults are overly sensitive to their interactions and have trouble identifying bullying when it occurs. A large majority of students agree with the statement, "Sometimes parents or teachers call it bullying when kids are really just joking around."
- Students who have experienced online conflict think that school rules are less effective than students who have not experienced conflict.

Effective Interventions

The findings support the need for more nuanced approaches that support both the general student population and those youth who may be most at risk. Additionally, our findings speak to the need for resources for the home so that parents can better help their children learn to treat others with respect and to handle online conflict.

- Since the harm of online meanness is not evenly distributed, one-size-fits-all solutions are unlikely to be effective. In addition to general initiatives designed to increase empathy and promote healthy relationships among students as a whole, we need targeted responses to protect the most vulnerable students from harm.
- Empathy-building – in particular, teaching students to handle "hot" emotional states and to recognize and avoid the aspects of digital communications that may inhibit empathy – is crucial to help young people develop healthier relationships with each other and more productive responses to anger and interpersonal conflict.
- Interventions also need to be broadened to reflect the different forms that online conflict takes, such as harassment, reciprocal conflict and online relationship abuse and incivility.
- While it is good news the majority of students of all ages actively intervene to help others being cyberbullied, education may still be needed to give young people the skills they need to navigate conflict in a safe, pro-social and respectful way.

He Said She Said – Mean and Cruel Behaviour

Being involved in mean and cruel behaviour – i.e. doing mean and cruel things and having mean and cruel things done to you – is a common online experience for a significant minority of students, especially in middle school and high school. Grade 8 appears to be a turning point: both behaviours rise throughout grades 4-8, and then stay relatively stable throughout grades 9-11.

Twenty-three percent of students report that they have been mean or cruel to someone online, and 37 percent of students report that someone has said or done something mean or cruel to them that made them feel badly. Behaving meanly increases across the grades, from a low of 6 percent in Grade 4 to a high of 38 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 1). Similarly, older students are more likely to report that someone has been mean to them, from a low of 22 percent in Grade 4 to a high of 47 percent in Grade 10 (Figure 2).

The vast majority of this kind of behaviour involves name calling (Table 1). But the overall number of students reporting this behaviour – although significant – is still relatively low.

Seventy-eight percent of those students who have done something mean or cruel online say they have called someone a name (18% of the total sample). Self-reporting of other problematic behaviours is much lower. Around six percent of all students report that they have harassed someone in an online game, five percent have spread rumours, and four percent have posted an embarrassing photo/video of someone. Three percent say that they have made fun of someone's race, religion or ethnicity and two percent report making fun of someone's sexual orientation. One percent report that they have harassed someone sexually (e.g. said or did something sexual when the person did not want them to).[1]

Interestingly, name calling increases precipitously from Grade 4 (44%) through Grade 6 (82%) (Figure 3). Other behaviours fluctuate between grades but the percentages of students reporting that they do these things remain fairly stable.

Contrary to popular conceptions of the "mean girl", boys are more likely than girls to be mean or cruel online (Figure 4). For example, of the 10 percent of students who admit pretending to be someone else online so they can do mean things without getting into trouble, boys (13%) are nearly twice as likely as girls (7%) to do this (Figure 5). Girls, on the other hand, are more likely than boys to have mean things said about them (Figure 6).

The kinds of mean behaviours are also gendered. Boys are significantly more likely to harass someone in an online game, make fun of someone's race, religion or ethnicity, make fun of

[1] It is important to note that this is self-reported behaviour, so there may still be a need to sensitize young people to the racist or sexist impact of their own behaviour on others, especially given the high percentage of students who report that mean behaviour is "just joking around" (see p.16 below).

someone's sexual orientation, or sexually harass someone (Figure 7). In-game harassment is particularly noteworthy. Not only is it the largest gender gap (33%), but it also increases in the later grades, even though gameplay actually decreases from Grade 5 onwards[2]. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely than boys to post an embarrassing photo/video or call someone a name. Interestingly, and again contrary to the "mean girl" stereotype, of those students who admit to being mean or cruel online, there is no significant difference in the percentage of boys (18%) and girls (20%) who spread rumours.

There is also a significant overlap (39%) between students who have said or done mean things and students who have had mean things said about them. This suggests that mean and cruel behaviour is often framed by relational conflicts/interactions between young people and not by unidirectional attacks. In other words, **our data suggests that conflict is often less an attack of a "bully" against a "victim" than it is an ongoing part of the clashes that arise as part of the drama of teen life.**

This is supported by the kinds of reasons students give to explain why they have said or done something mean (Table 2): a large percentage report that they have been mean in response to some relational problem. The most common reasons (other than joking around) are in response to someone saying something cruel about them or about one of their friends, not liking the person, being angry or wanting to get even with the person (Table 2).

Over half (55%) of students participating in this behaviour say they were "just joking around". This suggests that **many students see meanness as a common form of interaction with little perceived harm, raising questions about the need for intervention to help young people develop empathy for others.**

Once again, this behaviour is gendered (Figure 8). Although joking around is the most common reason cited by boys and the second most common reason cited by girls, boys are more likely than girls to explain their behaviour in this way (64% compared to 45% of girls). Boys are also more likely to say that they were motivated by boredom or because their friends were doing it. The top reason girls cite, on the other hand, was because someone had said something mean about them first (52%). Girls are also more likely to say that they did something mean because they did not like the person, the person had said something mean about a friend or they were angry. Boys and girls are equally likely to indicate that they have done something mean to get even.

For a significant number of boys and girls, meanness is seen as an appropriate response to conflict. Often, educational interventions encourage young people to stand up for someone when they are being bullied. However, our findings suggest that we may need to nuance our messaging and encourage young people to take a "do no harm" approach when they intervene in peer conflict as opposed to automatically standing up for the person they see as the "victim". Again, empathy-building – in particular, teaching students how to handle "hot" emotional states and to recognize and avoid the aspects of digital

[2] Steeves, V. (2014). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Life Online*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts, p.20. Available at: http://mediasmarts.ca/ycww/life-online

communications that may inhibit empathy – is crucial to help young people develop healthier relationships with each other and more productive responses to anger and inter-personal conflict.

Effective intervention will also target those young people who are most at risk of harm from online conflict. Although a significant minority (37%) of students say that someone has said or done something mean or cruel to them online, 70 percent of those students report that this is never or rarely a problem for them (Table 3). However, it is a problem sometimes (21%) or often (9%) for the remaining third, who make up 11 percent of the total sample. In addition, younger students (Figure 9) and girls (Figure 10) are more likely to find it a problem often or sometimes.

Since the harm of mean behaviour is not evenly distributed, one-size-fits-all solutions are unlikely to be effective. **In addition to general initiatives designed to increase empathy and promote healthy relationships among students as a whole, we need targeted responses to protect the most vulnerable students from harm. To do this, we need a much deeper understanding of the risk factors, such as gender, disability, race and sexual orientation, that may make some children more vulnerable than others. Interventions also need to be broadened to reflect the different forms that online conflict takes, such as harassment, reciprocal conflict, online incivility and relationship abuse.**

A Note on Sexting

We also asked students in grades 7-11 specific questions about sexting, which will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent report. While having a compromising image distributed out of one's control can undoubtedly be devastating, **our data suggests that the overlap between sexting and online meanness is quite small:** only four percent of students in grades 7-11 who have access to cell phones report that they have forwarded a sext that someone had sent them to someone else. This suggests that further research into identifying and addressing the risk factors for both sending and forwarding sexts may be more effective than viewing sexting primarily in terms of bullying and relying on criminalization or other punitive methods.

Figure 1: Being mean or cruel online: Grade

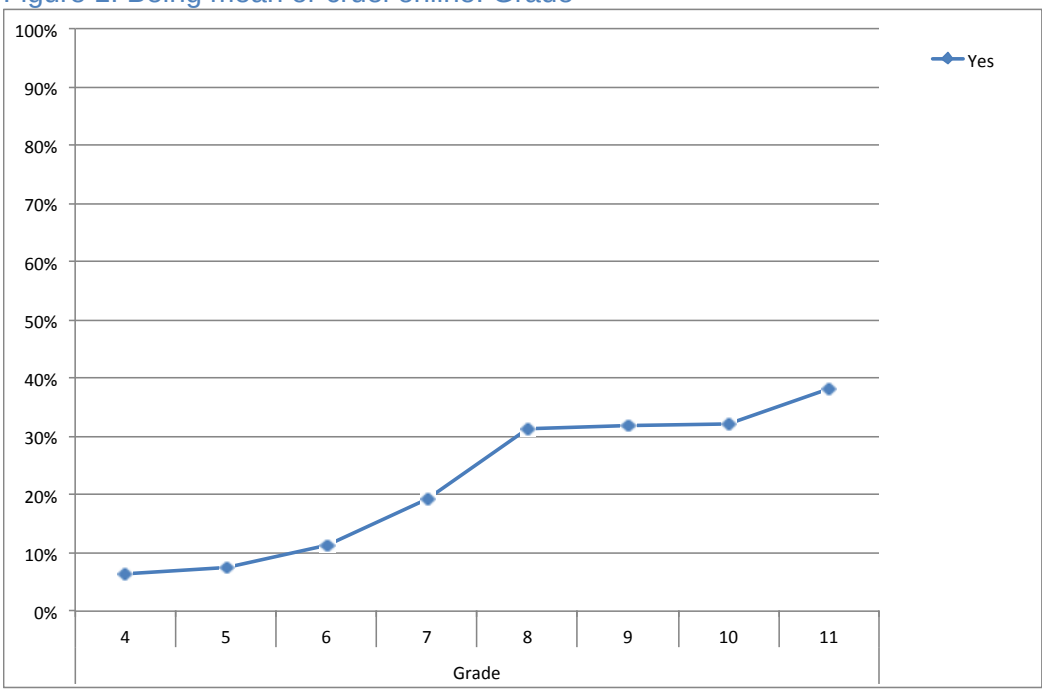


Figure 2: Being the recipient of mean or cruel online behaviour: Grade

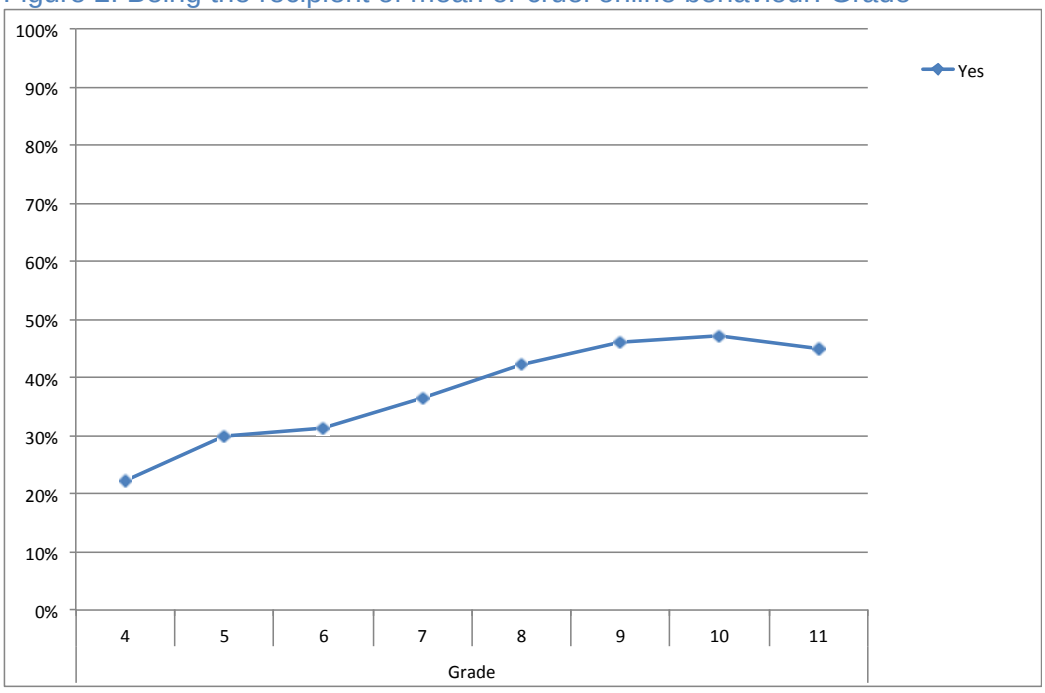


Table 1: Types of mean or cruel online behaviours

If you answered Yes, what did you do?	Percentage Yes
Called someone a name Grade	78%
Spread rumours	20%
Posted or shared an embarrassing photo or video of someone else	16%
Harassed someone sexually (said or did something sexual when the person did not want you to) (grade 7-11 only)	4%
Made fun of someone's race, religion or ethnicity ♂♀ Grade	12%
Made fun of someone's sexual orientation ♂♀	7%
Harassed someone in an online game Grade ♂♀	26%
Other	20%

Figure 3: Types of mean or cruel online behaviours: Grade

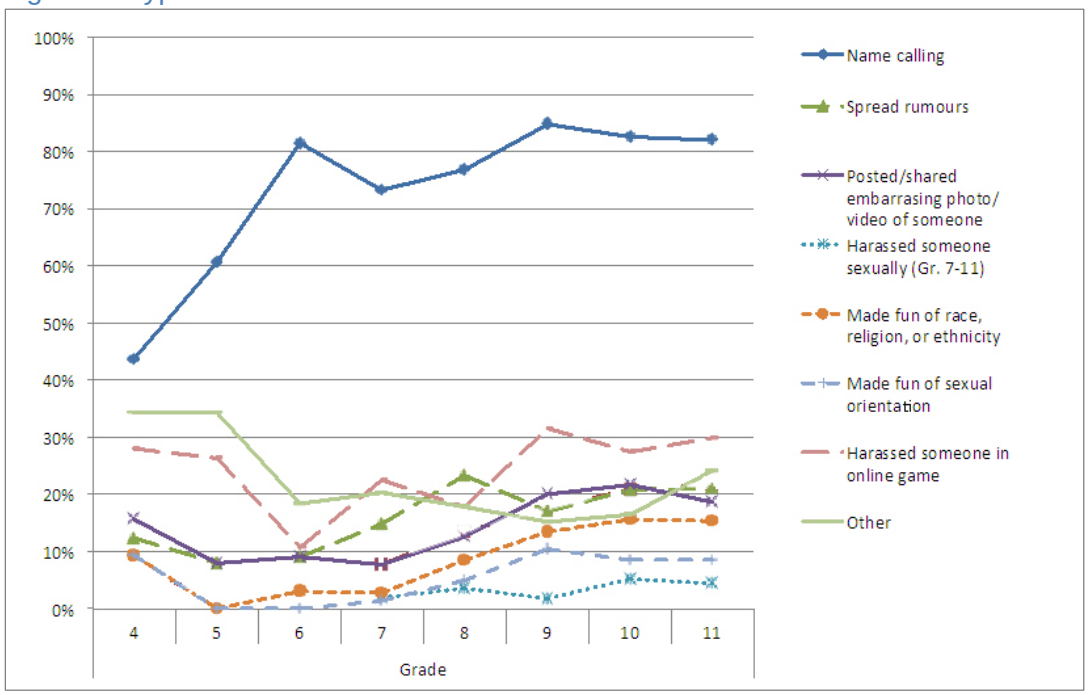


Figure 4: Being mean or cruel online: Gender

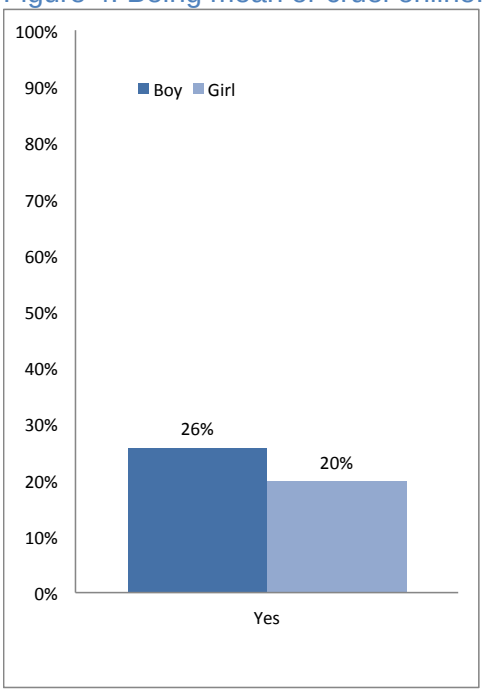


Figure 5: Pretending to be anonymous to be mean to someone: Gender

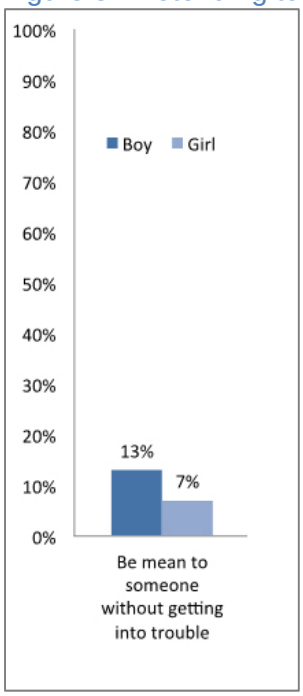


Figure 6: Being the recipient of mean or cruel online behaviour: Gender

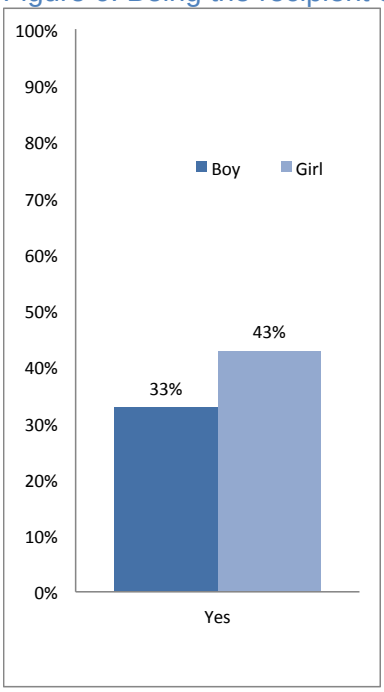


Figure 7: Mean or cruel online behaviours: Gender

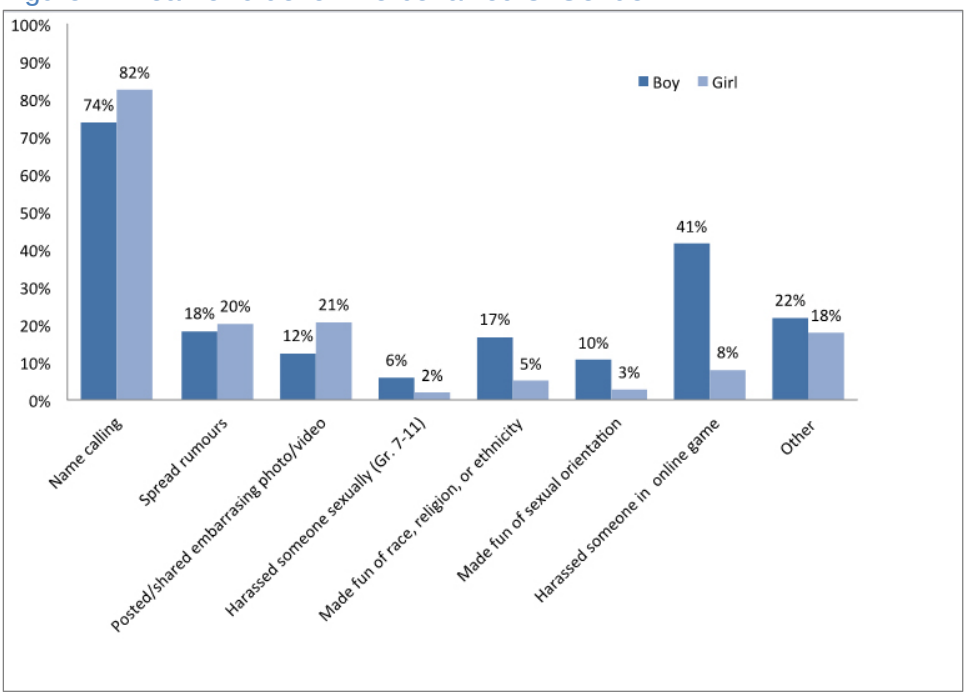


Table 2: Reason(s) for being mean or cruel online

If you answered Yes, why did you do it?	Percentage Yes
I was just joking around	55%
The person said something mean and cruel about me first	48%
The person said something mean and cruel about my friend first	32%
I wanted to get even with the person for another reason	22%
My friends were doing it	8%
I was bored ♂♀	15%
I was angry	25%
I did not like the person	32%
Other	12%
I don't know	5%

Figure 8: Reason(s) for being mean or cruel online: Gender

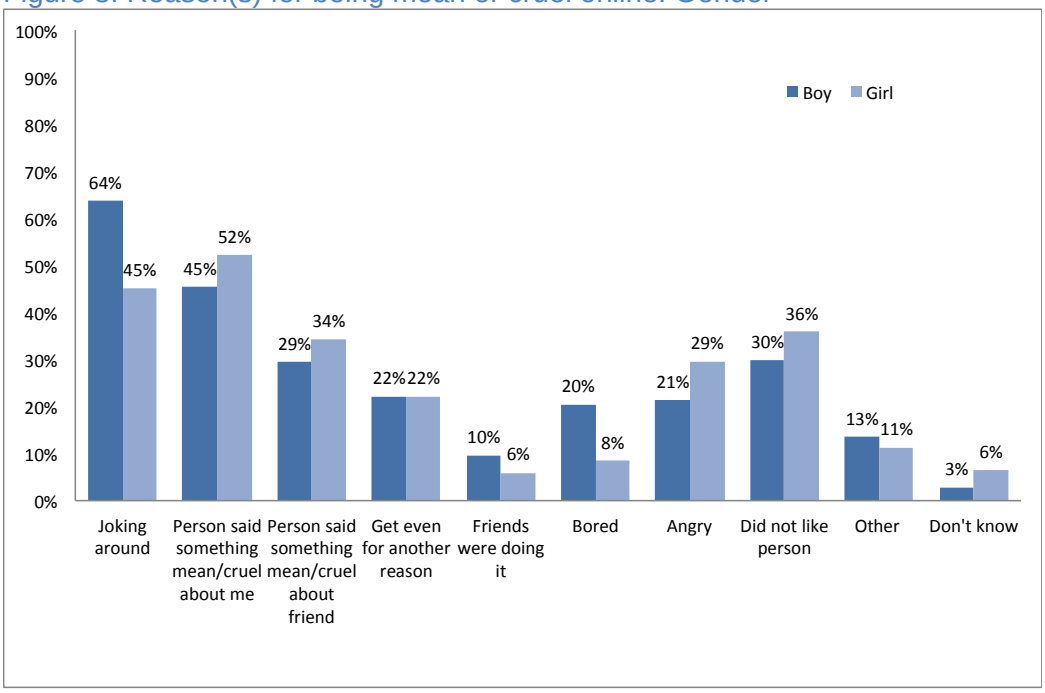


Table 3: Problems with mean or cruel online behaviour

If you answered Yes, how often was it a serious problem for you? ♂♀	Percentage
Often	9%
Sometimes	21%
Rarely	56%
Never	14%

Figure 9: Problems with mean or cruel online behaviour: Grade

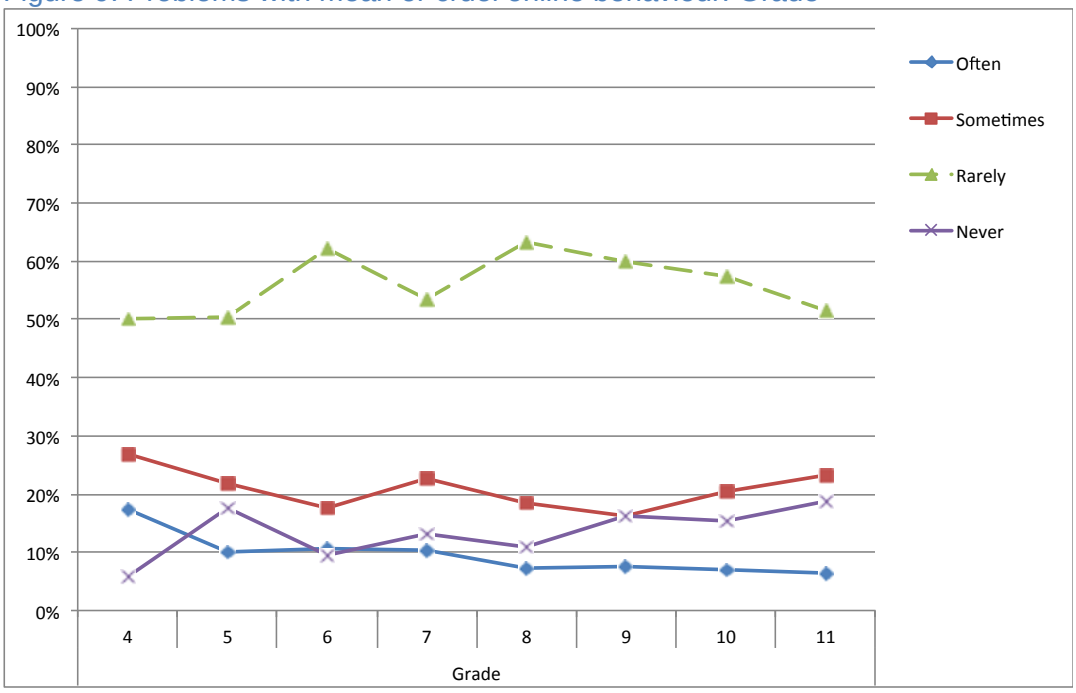
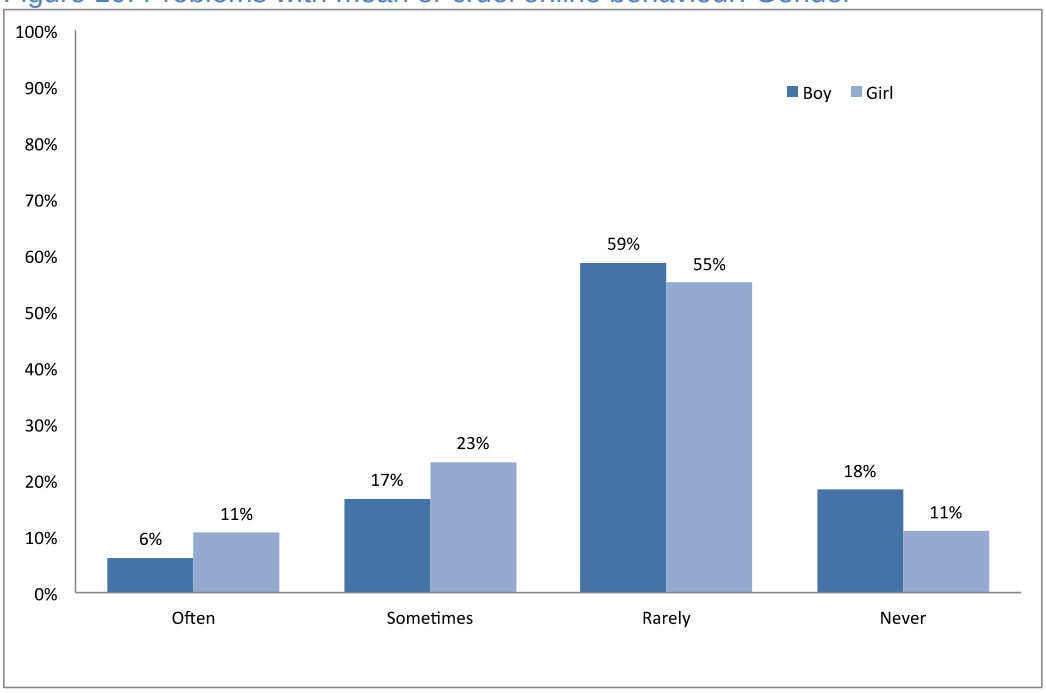


Figure 10: Problems with mean or cruel online behaviour: Gender



“You’re Going to Get It” – Threats

About one third (31%) of students report that someone has threatened them online by saying something like “I’m going to get you” or “You’re going to get it”. However, only nine percent of students report that they have threatened someone else.

Threatening behaviour is connected to age and gender: boys and older students are more likely to make threats (Figures 11 and 12) and to receive threats (Figures 13 and 14). However, threats are not as common a feature of online life as meanness.

Most threats are rare occurrences. Although 31 percent of students report that they have been threatened online, for two thirds of these students the threat has occurred once a year or less (Table 4). The remaining third are distributed across once a month (5%), once a week (2%) and once a day (2%).

It is important to note that 70 percent of students who receive online threats once a month or more do not see them as a serious problem (Table 5). This is especially true of boys (Figure 15), who are also more likely than girls to report that they feel safe online[3]. The number of students who are not bothered by the threats they receive also increases across the grades to more than half of students in grades 10 and 11 (Figure 16).

However, the remaining 30 percent of students who report receiving online threats once a month or more (3% of the total sample) say that these threats are sometimes or often a serious problem for them. Additionally, even though girls and younger students are less likely to report being threatened online, when it does occur they are more likely to say it was serious. Girls (46%) are twice as likely as boys (21%) to see threats as being more problematic.

[3] Steeves, V. (2014). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Life Online*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts, p.30. Available at: http://mediasmarts.ca/ycww/life-online

Figure 11: Making threats online: Gender

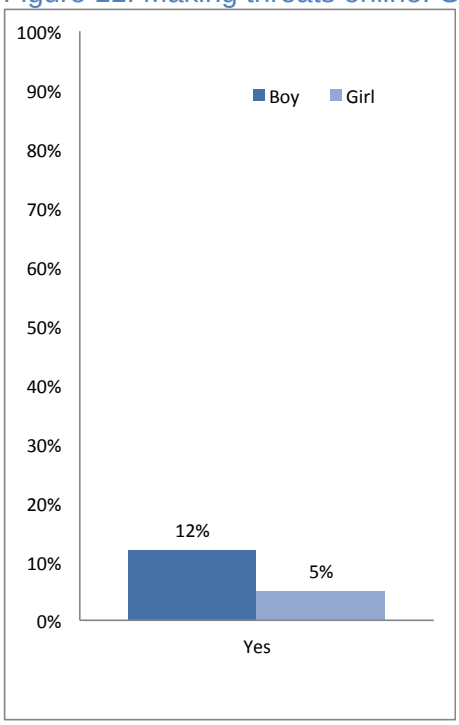


Figure 12: Making threats online: Grade

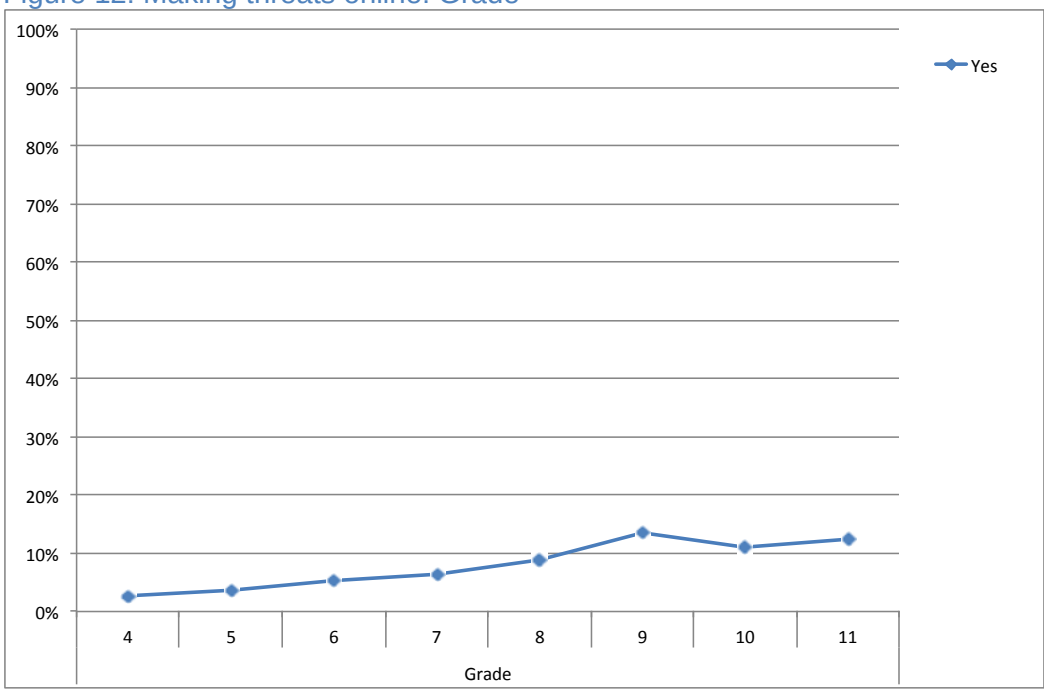


Figure 13: Being threatened online: Gender

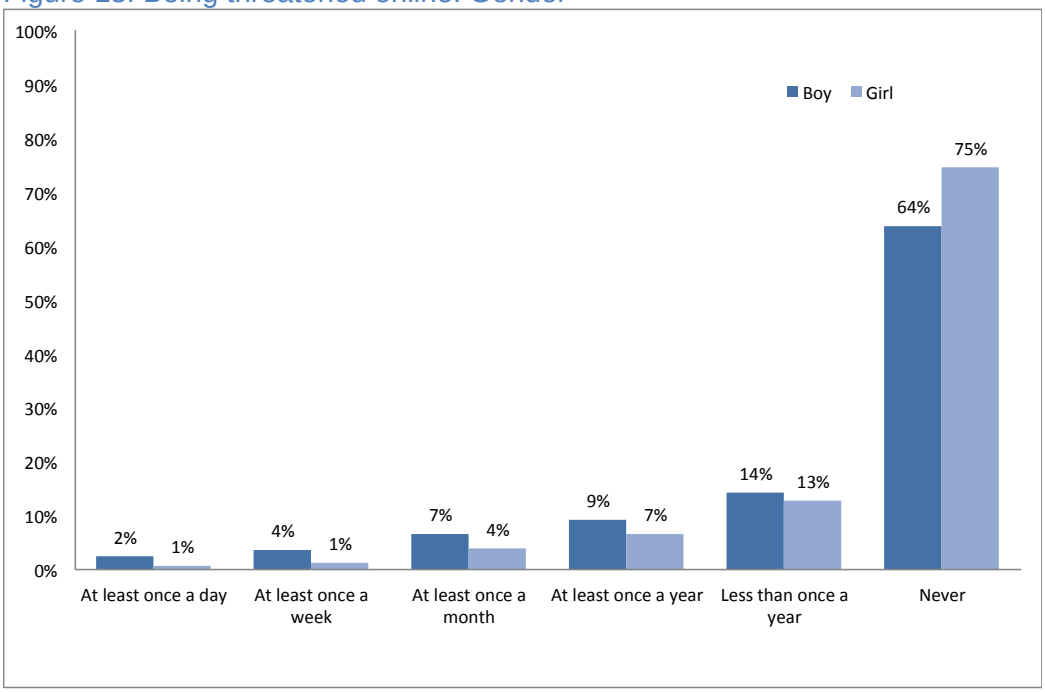


Figure 14: Being threatened online: Grade

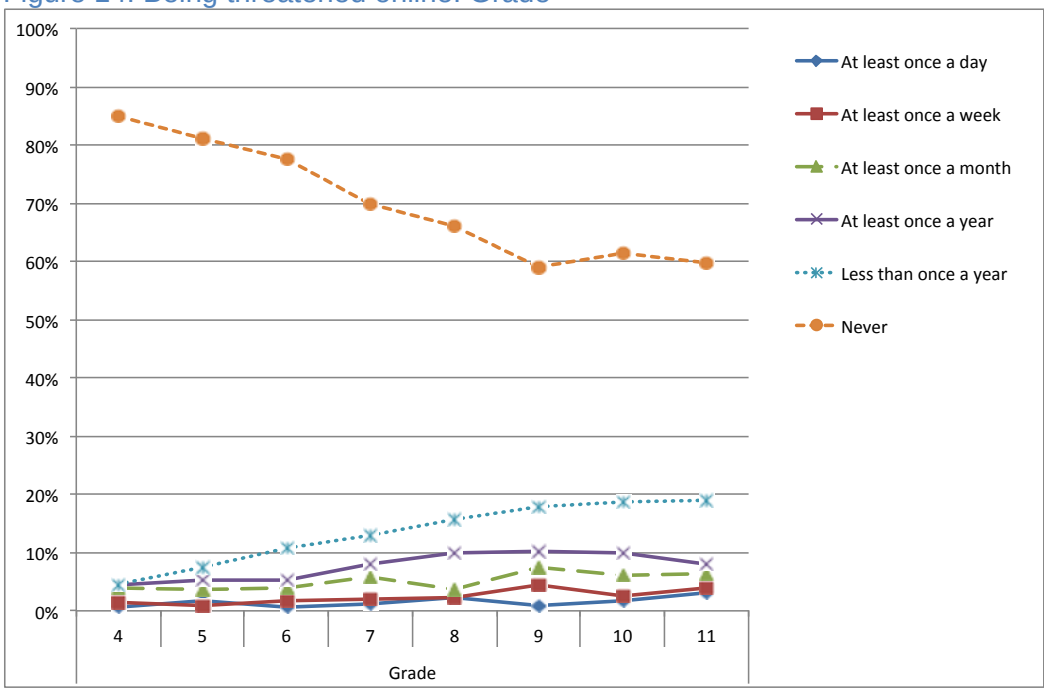


Table 4: Being threatened online

Has anyone ever threatened you online (for example, said things like "I'm going to get you" or "You're going to get it")? ♂♀ Grade	Percentage
At least once a day	2%
At least once a week	2%
At least once a month	5%
At least once a year	8%
Less than once a year	13%
Never	69%

Table 5: Problems with threats online

If you answered At least once a day, At least once a week or At least once a month, did you think it was a serious problem for you? ♂♀ Grade	Percentage
Often	12%
Sometimes	19%
Rarely	27%
Never	43%

Figure 15: How often is online threat a problem: Gender

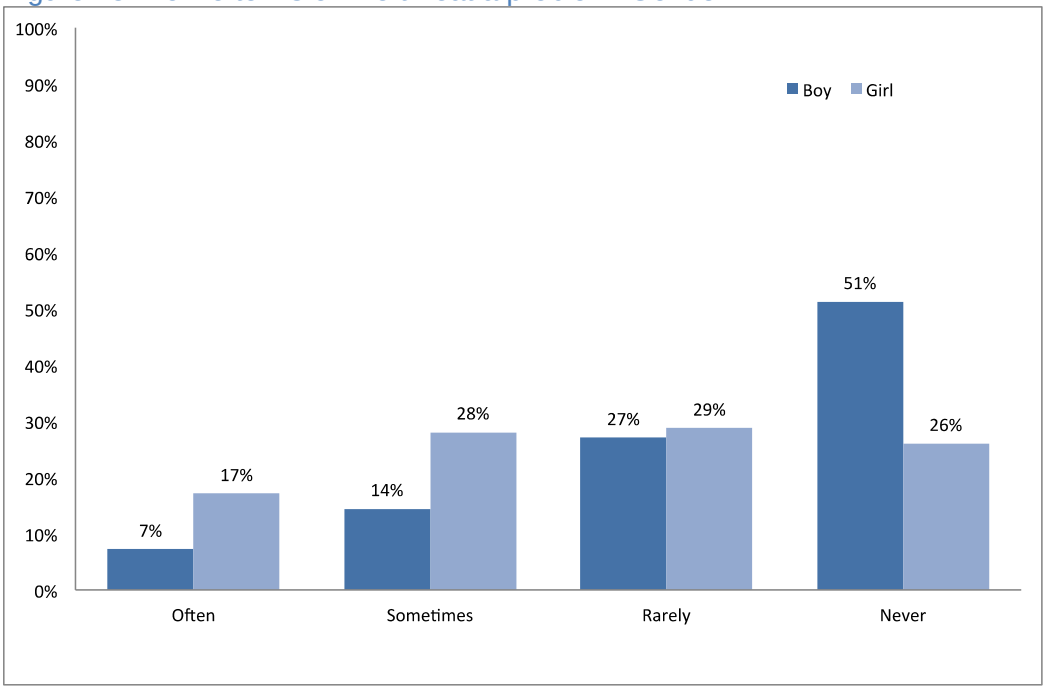
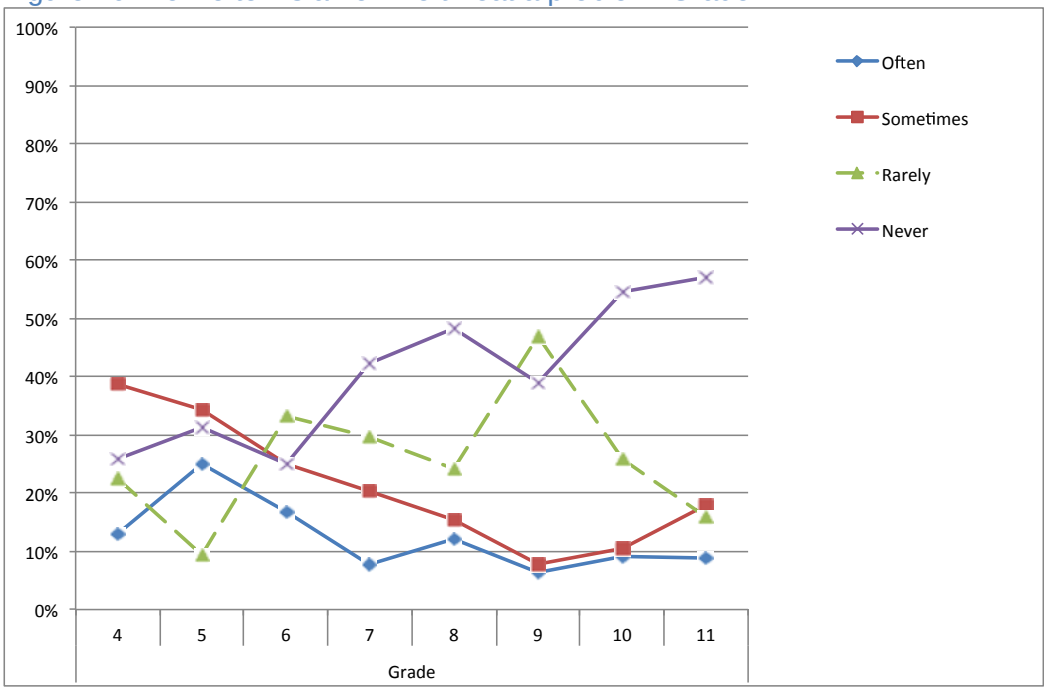


Figure 16: How often is an online threat a problem: Grade



Student Strategies for Dealing with Conflict Online

Students use a number of strategies to respond to online meanness (Table 6) and threats (Table 7). The most common response is to ask parents for help, especially for students in grades 4-7.

Asking parents for help is the top response until Grade 8 (for mean or cruel behaviour) and Grade 9 (for threats) (Figures 17 and 18), when more students prefer to ignore the behaviour and hope it goes away or turn to their friends for help. Asking parents for help continues to drop throughout high school, as young people seek more independence from home. However, even in Grade 11, around one fifth and one quarter of students continue to rely on parents for help with meanness and threats, respectively. This underscores how important parents are when it comes to helping young people navigate online issues.

Overall, half of all students report that they would ask their parents for help if someone did something mean or cruel to them online, ahead of both friends (38%) and teachers (17%) (Table 6). The numbers are highest in grades 4 (75%), 5 (79%) and 6 (68%) (Figure 17). Similarly, 55 percent report that they would ask their parents for help if they were being threatened online (Table 7), with students in grades 4 (74%), 5 (80%) and 6 (72%) again most likely to do this (Figure 18). Half (51%) of all students report that they would tell their parents if someone sent them something over the Internet or on their phone that made them really uncomfortable (Table 8). The percentage was highest for students in grades 4 (82%), 5 (80%) and 6 (70%) (Figure 19).

The ability to go to parents for help may also be linked to trust. Seventy-two percent of students agree with the statement that, “If I have a problem online (for example, someone posts something hurtful or sends me a photo that makes me uncomfortable), I can trust my parent(s) to help me solve it” (Table 9). However, agreement drops across the grades, from a high of 87 percent in grades 4 and 5 to a low of 55 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 20). This suggests that older students’ willingness to ask parents for help may be affected by the level of trust they have in their parents to help in a way that respects their need for independence.

The second and third top responses, ignoring conflict and relying on friends, are also key strategies for all age groups.

Interestingly, the percentage of students who would not be bothered by online conflict almost quadruples between Grade 4 (10% for meanness and 11% for threats) and Grade 11 (41% for meanness and 39% for threats) (Figures 17 and 18). Doing nothing because they would not be bothered by it or confronting the person face-to-face are the next most typical responses, especially after Grade 6. Direct confrontation rises across the later grades, with older students tending to rely more on negotiation and less on appeals to authority. However, face-to-face

confrontation is a more common response to meanness (35%) than it is to threats (24%) across all grades.

About one quarter of students ask a trusted adult or a teacher for help. This falls off across the grades, particularly after Grade 6. However, all students prefer to ask another trusted adult over a teacher (by 6% for threats and 8% for meanness), making teachers the least likely adults that students will approach for help, other than police officers. This reluctance may reflect the fact that zero tolerance policies require teachers to report all cyberbullying to the school administration and/or police, which takes the resolution of the problem out of the student's hands. This is unfortunate, since teachers are in an excellent position to provide informal support and guidance to young people experiencing conflict.

Contacting the police trails behind other adults, although students are almost twice as likely to contact the police if a threat is involved (23% compared to 11% for meanness) (Tables 6 and 7). This may be linked to our finding that 28 percent of students think police should be able to see their social media activity; police presence may be perceived as a protective safety measure for more serious forms of online conflict, especially by younger students[4].

French language students in Quebec are more likely than English language students in the rest of Canada to ask a teacher (French 33%, English 16%), another trusted adult (French 40%, English 25%), or the police (French 20%, English 10%) for help in dealing with online meanness. In like vein, they are also more likely to go to a teacher (36% French, 27% English) for help in dealing with an online threat, but there was no difference between the two groups when it came to contacting the police regarding a threat.

Privately messaging the offending party is ranked between talking to a trusted adult and a talking to a teacher, and rises across the grades. **Interestingly, students are more willing to rely on face-to-face confrontation than on private communications over a networked device to deal with conflict, and posting an online response to an incident is the least preferred option for all grades.** Instead, it appears that most students prefer to resolve their conflicts privately or offline.

Once again, there are different patterns of responses for boys and girls. For both meanness and threats, girls are more likely than boys to: ask parents, friends, teachers or other trusted adults for help; privately message the offending party; or ignore the conflict in the hope that it will go away. Boys are more likely to not be bothered and so do nothing. With respect to meanness, girls are more likely than boys to confront the offending party face-to-face; boys, on the other hand, are more likely to do so when a threat is involved. Accordingly, boys are much less likely than girls to ask for help (Figures 21 and 22).

Almost one fifth (19%) of students indicate that they would respond to meanness by "Other" means, and 886 students provided a written explanation. Although close to one quarter of written explanations fall within the ten options presented to students in the survey (as discussed

[4]Steeves, V. (2014). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Online Privacy, Online Publicity*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts, p.35. Available at: http://mediasmarts.ca/ycww/online-privacy-online-publicity.

above), a significant percentage of “Other” responses involve retaliation, 12 percent involve a physical threat (e.g. “beat them up” or “punch them”), five percent with similar behaviour (e.g. “say something cruel back” or “do it back”) and 11 percent through unspecified means (“fight them” or “hurt them”). This again supports the need for interventions that provide students with more productive ways to respond to social conflict.

Although students would use the same strategies for responding to meanness and threats, there are some differences in how they would implement them. We asked students what they would do first, second or third in response to each (meanness Figure 23 / threats Figure 24). As was noted above, the most common first responses for both are: ask parents for help (22% / 27%), ignore it and hope it goes away (22% / 18%) and not be bothered by it (20% / 21%).

The most common second responses are also very similar: students would ask parents (17% / 19%) and friends (17% / 18%) for help or ignore it and hope it goes away (14% / 13%). Another common second response to meanness is talking to the offending party face-to-face (14%). Face-to-face confrontation in regard to threats (9%) was not a common second or third response. This likely reflects the perception that threats are more problematic than meanness or cruelty, and that face-to-face confrontation may lead to further escalation.

The most common third responses also have interesting differences. Asking parents (16% / 14%) and friends (13% / 11%) continue to dominate the list of responses, and students continue to be more likely to use face-to-face confrontation to address meanness but not threats. However, common third responses to threats include contacting the police (21% compared to 12% in response to meanness) and asking another trusted adult for help (12%). The preference to contact the police may reflect the perception that threats are inherently more dangerous, especially when earlier efforts to resolve the problem have failed.

Indeed, compared to first responses, the percentage of students who choose to do nothing, ignore the problem or ask their parents for help drops (in second and third responses) if the first response fails, with respect to both meanness and threats. Although talking to parents remains high for all three choices, if the most popular strategies do not work in the first place, more students opt to talk to a trusted adult or to the police the second or third time around. Students are also much more likely to talk to a teacher as a second or third option.

It is noteworthy that only a very small percentage of students will contact the police as a first or second response, but it is the most popular third response for threats and the fourth most popular third response for mean and cruel behaviour. This suggests that young people see the distinction between mean behaviour and threats as a continuum and that common meanness can become more serious if attempts to stop it are unsuccessful. However, unlike contacting police, talking to teachers never rises beyond the middle rank of the most popular strategies, suggesting that even in extreme cases students are reluctant to involve teachers or school administration.

Table 6: Responses to mean or cruel online behaviours

What would you do if someone said something mean or cruel to you online?	Percentage
It would not bother me so I would not do anything. ♂♀ Grade	27%
I would ignore it and hope it would go away. ♂♀	42%
I would talk face-to-face with the person who posted it. Grade	35%
I would privately email/message the person who posted it. ♂♀ Grade	23%
I would post something about it online.	7%
I would ask my friends for help. ♂♀ Grade	38%
I would ask my parent(s) for help. ♂♀ Grade	50%
I would ask my teacher for help. ♂♀ Grade	17%
I would ask another adult I know and trust. ♂♀ Grade	25%
I would call the police. Grade	11%
Other ♂♀	19%

Table 7: Responses to being threatened online

What would you do if someone threatened you online (for example, said things like “I’m going to get you” or “You’re going to get it”)?	Percentage
It would not bother me so I would not do anything. ♂♀ Grade	26%
I would ignore it and hope it would go away. ♂♀	33%
I would talk face-to-face with the person who posted it. Grade	24%
I would privately email/message the person who posted it. ♂♀ Grade	18%
I would post something about it online.	5%
I would ask my friends for help. ♂♀ Grade	40%
I would ask my parent(s) for help. ♂♀ Grade	55%
I would ask my teacher for help. ♂♀ Grade	21%
I would ask another adult I know and trust. ♂♀ Grade	27%
I would call the police. Grade	23%
Other ♂♀ Grade	16%

Figure 17: Responses to mean or cruel behaviour: Grade

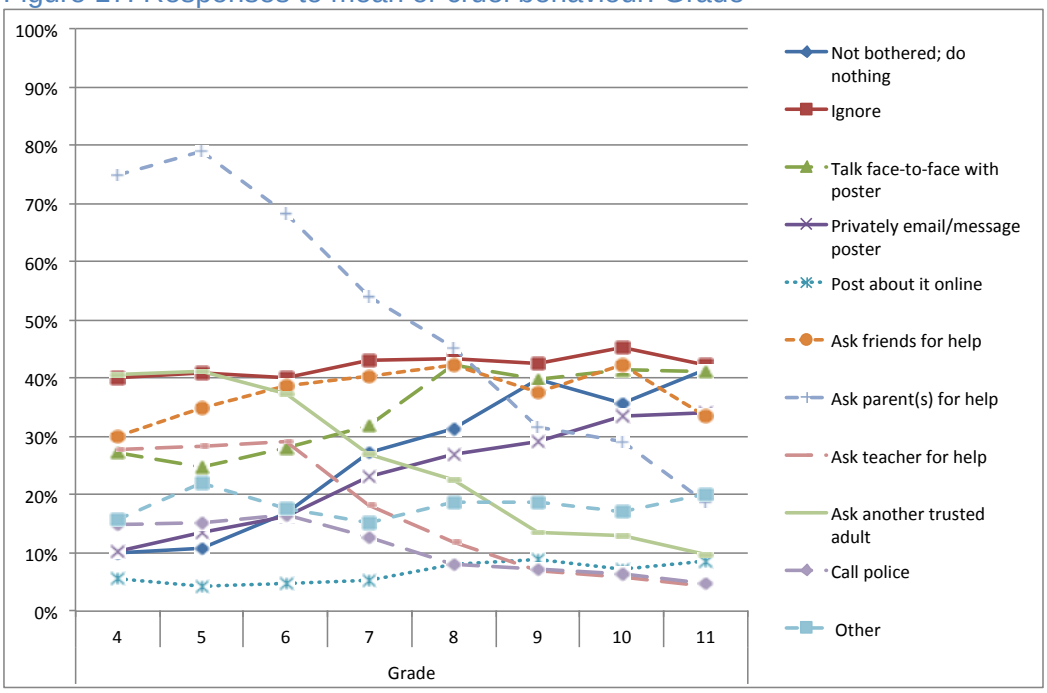


Figure 18: Responses to being threatened online: Grade

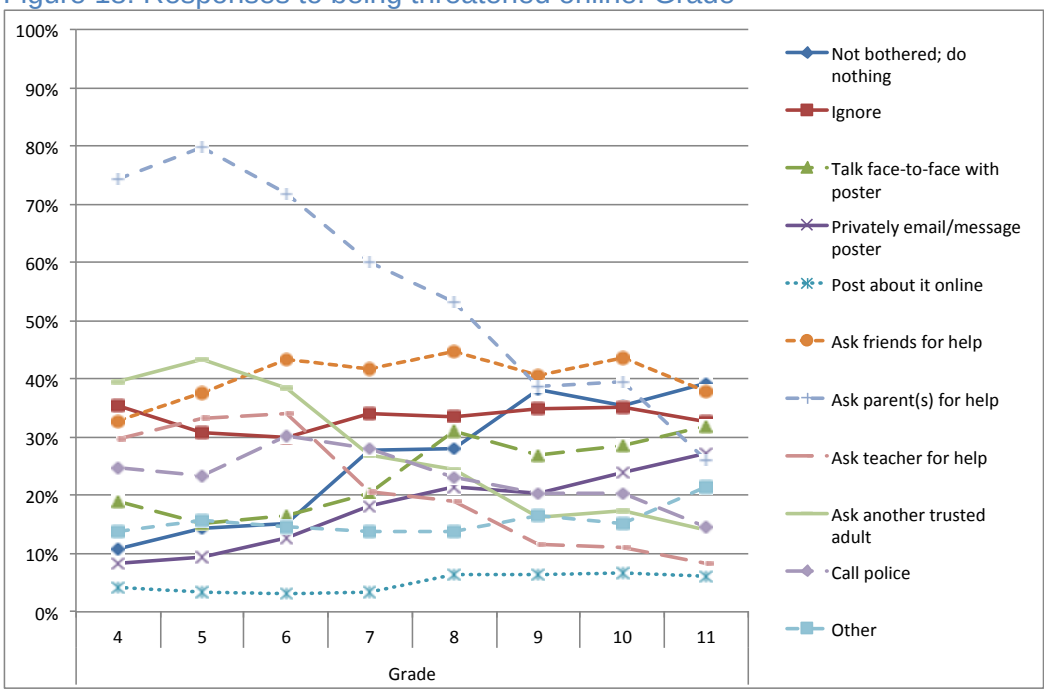


Table 8: Responding to uncomfortable content

What would you do if someone sent you something over the Internet or on your phone that made you really uncomfortable?	Percentage
I would tell my parent(s) ♂♀ Grade	51%

Table 9: Opinions: Parental trust

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Parental supervision and privacy	Agree Percentage
If I have a problem online (for example, someone posts something hurtful or sends me a photo that makes me uncomfortable) I can trust my parent(s) to help me solve it. ♂♀ Grade	72%

Figure 19: Talking to parents about uncomfortable online content: Grade

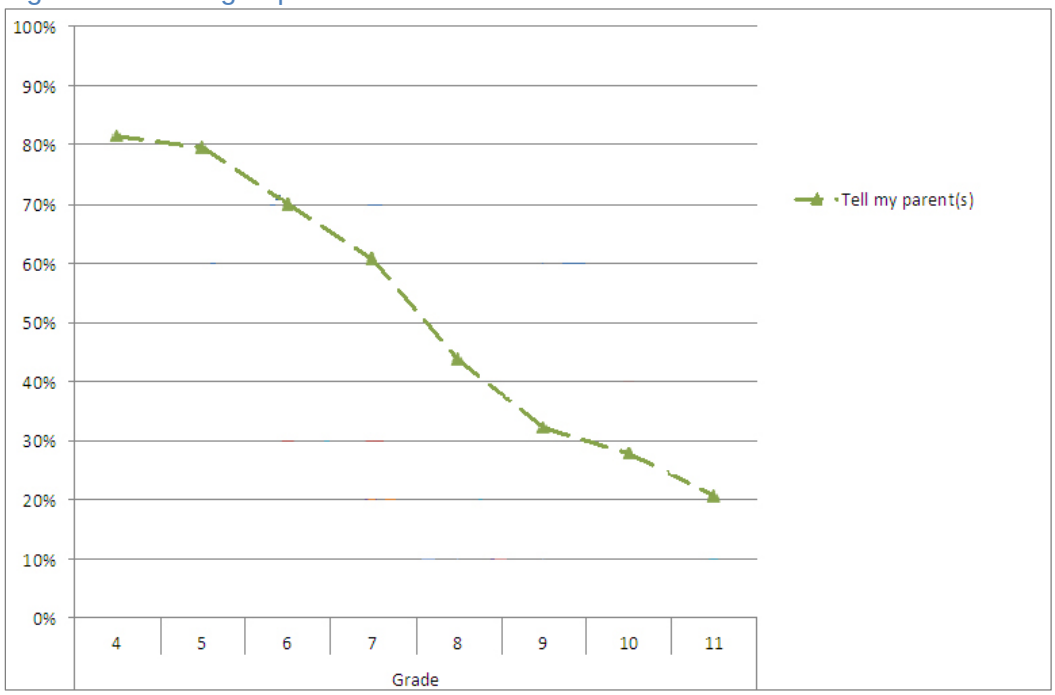


Figure 20: Opinions: Help from Parents: Grade

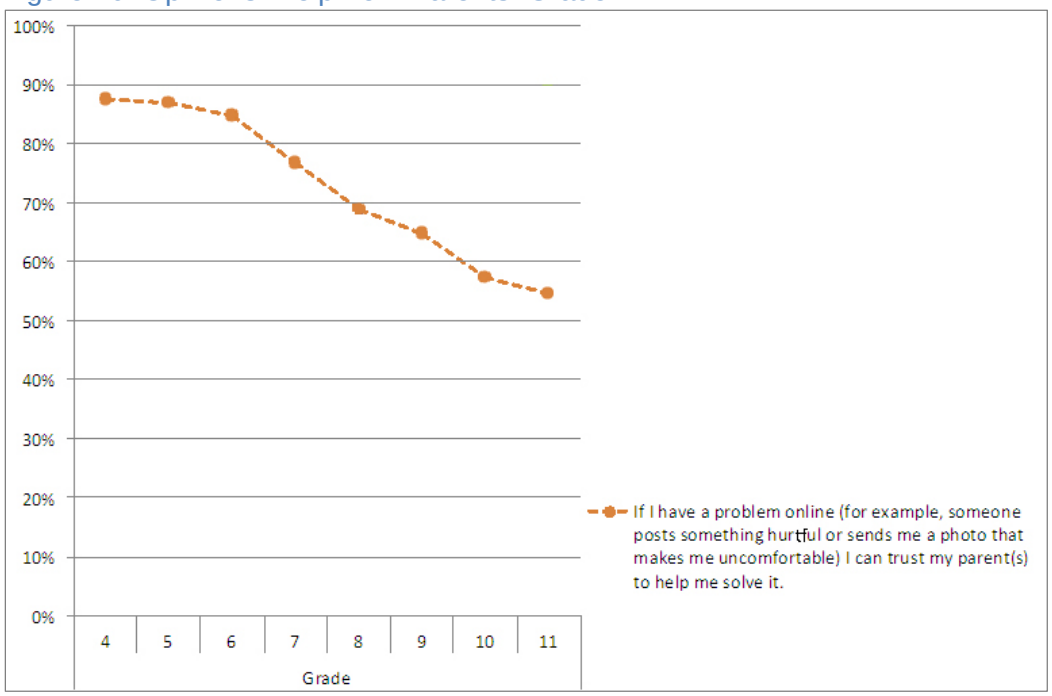


Figure 21: Responses to mean or cruel behaviour: Gender

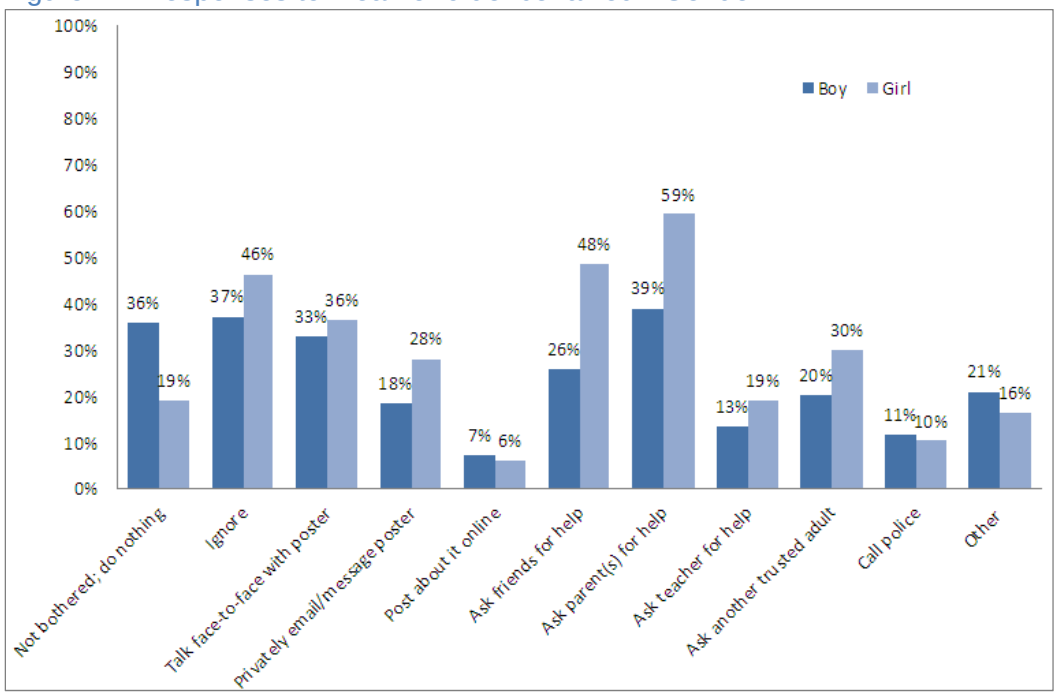


Figure 22: Responses to being threatened online: Gender

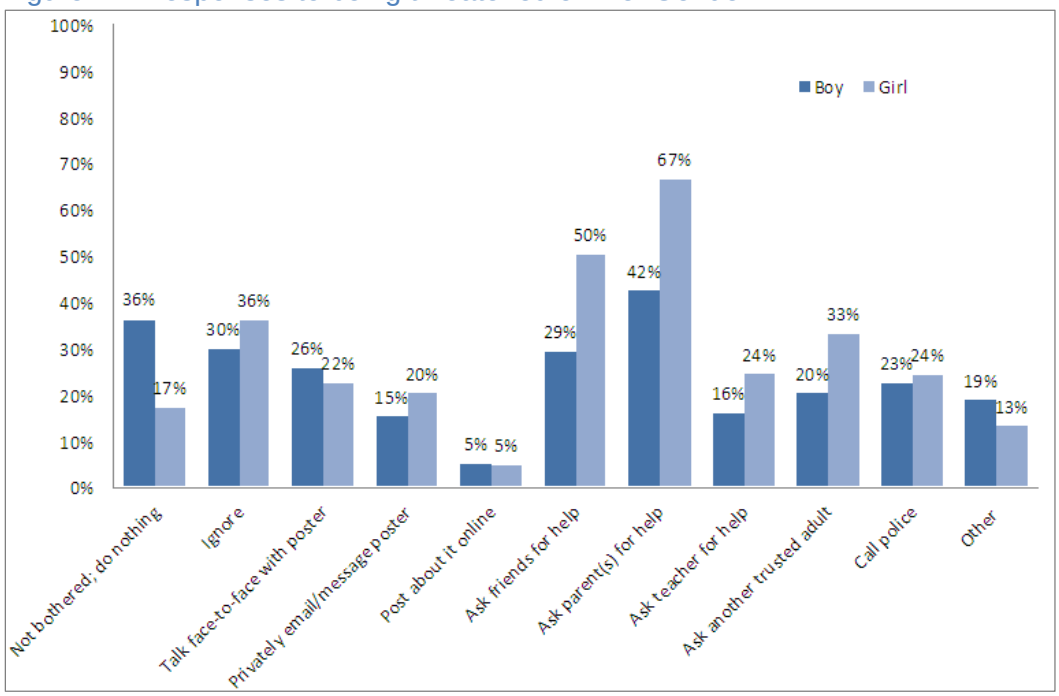


Figure 23: Responses to mean or cruel behaviour: First, second, and third responses

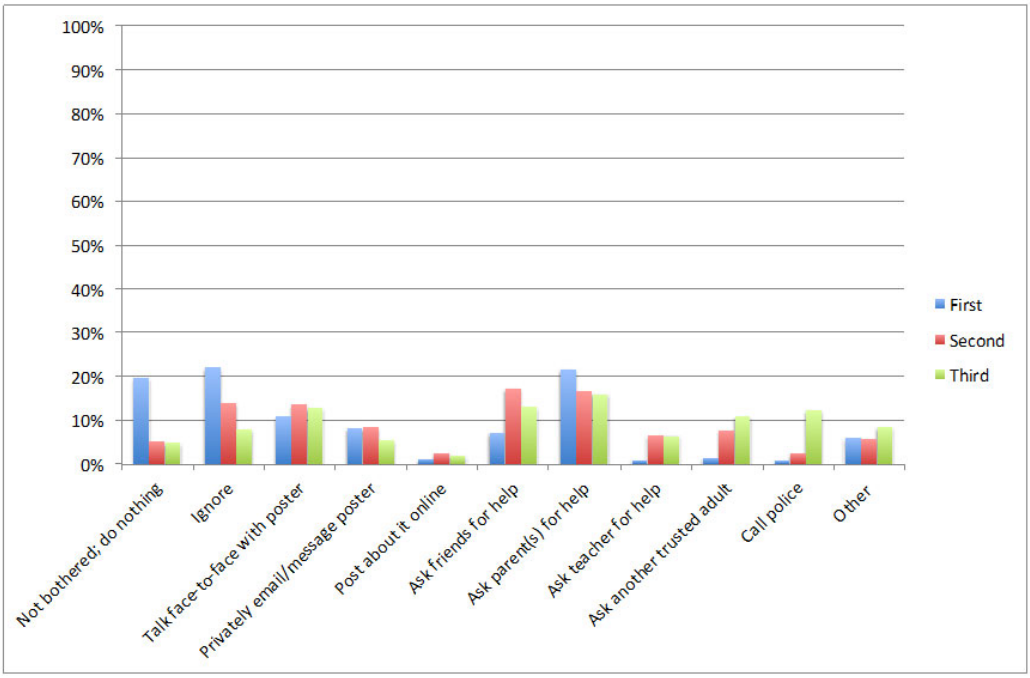
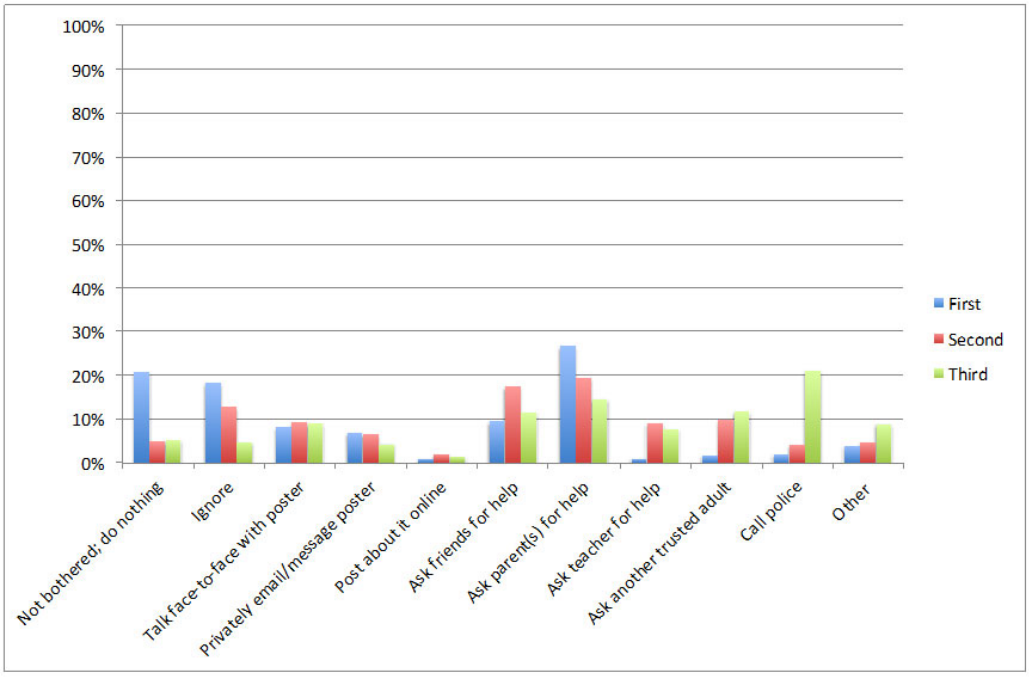


Figure 24: Responses to being threatened online: First, second, and third responses



Bystanders and Interveners – Helping Others in Conflict

Sixty-five percent of students report that, when they have seen someone being mean or cruel to another person online, they have done something to help the person who is being picked on (Table 10). Girls are more likely than boys to help someone in this situation (Figure 25), and students in grades 6 through 9 are slightly more likely to help than younger and older students (Figure 26). Helping is lowest in the early grades, rising from 58 percent in Grade 4 to a high of 71 percent in Grade 9, suggesting that students gain confidence and skills as they get older.

Students who have been mean or cruel or have threatened someone else, or who have experienced someone being mean and cruel or threatening to them online, are almost equally likely to step up and help someone who is being picked on (Table 10). Once again, a sharp division between "bullies" and "victims" is not supported by the data.

These students are also more likely to stand up for someone than students who have not participated in conflict online before. It is possible that this reflects a learned empathy on the part of young people who have experienced online conflict, but it is also consistent with the view that online conflict is commonly contextualized by relational "drama" among a young person's friends. Our findings indicate that a significant percentage of students say something mean and cruel because someone has either said something to them or to their friends first, and that students often turn to friends for help when they are being picked on. Part of that helping behaviour may include retaliatory meanness.

Although it is good news that a majority of students of all ages go beyond being bystanders in a conflict and actively intervene to help, education may still be needed to give young people the skills they need to navigate conflict in a pro-social and respectful way. In particular, it suggests that students who witness online conflict need more nuanced advice than just to stand up and defend the person being attacked: instead, they need to be given a range of possible strategies to intervene without risking further harm.

Table 10: Helping someone being picked on online

When someone has said something mean or cruel online to someone else, have you ever done anything to help the person who is being picked on?	Percentage Yes
Overall ♂♀ Grade	65%
Students who have been recipients of mean/cruel comments or threats	78%
Students who have not been recipients of mean/cruel comments or threats	52%
Students who have made mean/cruel comments or threats	75%
Students who have not made mean/cruel comments or threats	61%

Figure 25: Helping someone being picked on online: Gender

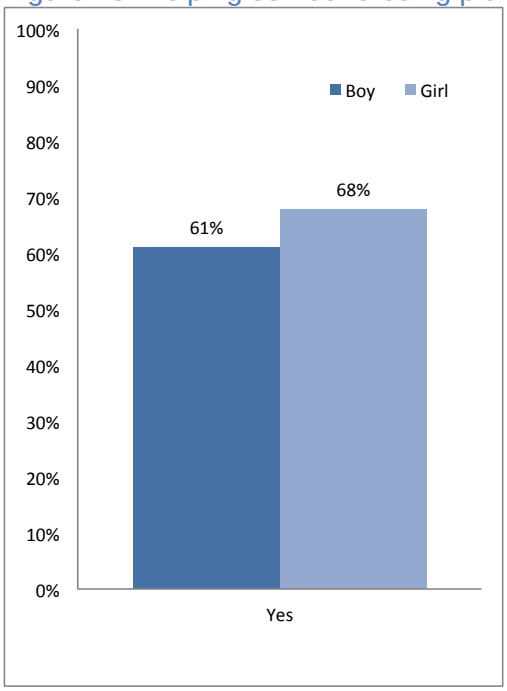
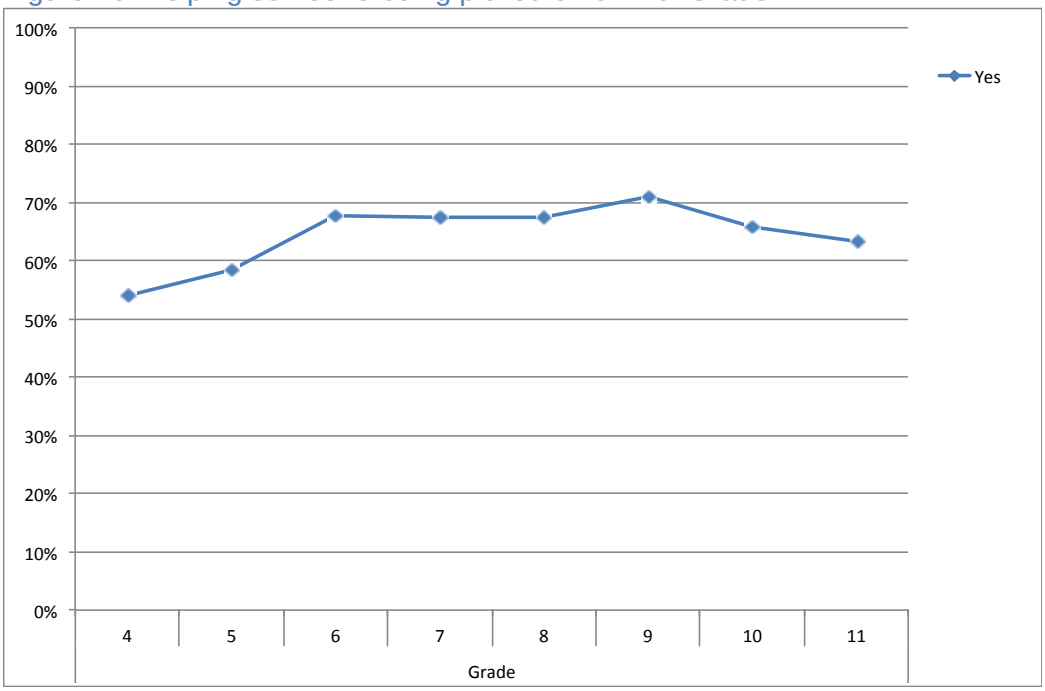


Figure 26: Helping someone being picked on online: Grade



Rules and Attitudes about Cyberbullying in School and at Home

Most students (62%) indicate that their schools have rules or policies to deal with cyberbullying (Table 11). However, over one third (35%) do not know whether or not there are rules in place. In addition, there is very little correlation between the presence of school rules and whether or not a student has been a recipient of meanness or threats or has engaged in meanness or threatening behaviour (Figures 27 and 28). This suggests that school rules have very little impact on student behaviour.

Teachers are the most common source of information about how to deal with cyberbullying, even though they are among the last people students will go to for help with conflict.

Sixty-two percent of students have learned about cyberbullying from teachers (Table 12). Parents are the second most common source of information, at 43 percent. Girls are more likely than boys to indicate that they have learned from either teachers or parents (Figure 29), reflecting similar trends noted above where girls are more likely to go to adults for help. Moreover, the percentage of students learning from teachers stays fairly constant from grades 5-11, while the percentage of students learning from parents drops from one half in Grade 4 to one quarter in Grade 11 (Figure 30). Friends and online sources also rise in importance for older students, to 21 percent and 26 percent respectively in Grade 11. At the same time, students expressing an interest in learning more about cyberbullying in school drops from 55 percent in Grade 4 to 26 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 31). Older students may be less interested in learning about cyberbullying because they feel more confident about their ability to deal with it themselves or they may see it as less likely to be serious and more likely to be "just joking around". It may also be that their faith in school-based interventions declines (Figure 32), making teachers seem less authoritative on the subject.

Although it decreases across the grades, **a large majority of students (81%) agree with the statement, "I feel respected and valued as a member of my school community" (Table 13). However, students who have either done mean or threatening things online or have had others do mean or threatening things to them are less likely to feel respected and valued.** They are also more likely than other students to agree with the statement, "Bullies are usually popular at school" (49% compared to students who have never been targeted (36%) and students who have never done this to others (40%). This suggests that they may be more likely to think that meanness and threats are ways to acquire social capital, or that people with social capital are more likely to use their popularity against others.

Three quarters of the students who are aware that their school has rules or policies regarding cyberbullying think that they are sometimes or often helpful (Table 14). However, the percentage of students who think the rules are never or rarely helpful increases

across grades to a high of 35 percent in Grade 11, just as the opposite perception, that the rules are often helpful, drops precipitously to a low of 17 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 32). On the other hand, the percentage of students indicating that the rules are *sometimes* helpful rises across grades. This suggests that although older students may lose faith in the effectiveness of school rules, they still see some value in them.

The ambivalence towards school rules may in part be a reflection of students' perceptions that adults are overly sensitive to their interactions and have trouble identifying bullying when it occurs. A large majority of students agree with the statement, "Sometimes parents or teachers call it bullying when kids are really just joking around" (Table 13). Once again, students who have experienced conflict are more likely to say this is true, suggesting that those who need help with conflict may be confused by interventions that are directed towards behaviour that is perceived to be harmless.

Students who have experienced online conflict think that school rules are less effective than students who have not experienced conflict (Figures 33 and 34). In particular, they are less likely to think the rules are often helpful and more likely to think the rules are rarely or never helpful. This pattern holds for those students who have had others say mean or threatening things about them, and for those who have said mean or threatening things about others.

On the other hand, **having a rule at home that you must treat people online with respect correlates with lower levels of mean and threatening behaviour** (Figures 35 and 36). (Forty-seven percent of students have household rules about treating others with respect online.) In particular, students with no rules are 59 percent more likely to be mean or cruel than students with rules (27% compared to 17%), and those with no rules are twice as likely to make threats (11% compared to 5%). Like other household rules, this one applies to more girls (54%) than boys (40%) (Figure 37) and decreases across grades from the mid-50 percentile in grades 4-7 to 26 percent in Grade 11 (Figure 38).

Table 11: School rules and policies regarding cyberbullying

Does your school have rules or policies about cyberbullying?	Percentage
Yes	62%
No	3%
I don't know	35%

Figure 27: Relationship between being recipient of mean/cruel behaviour or threats and school rules

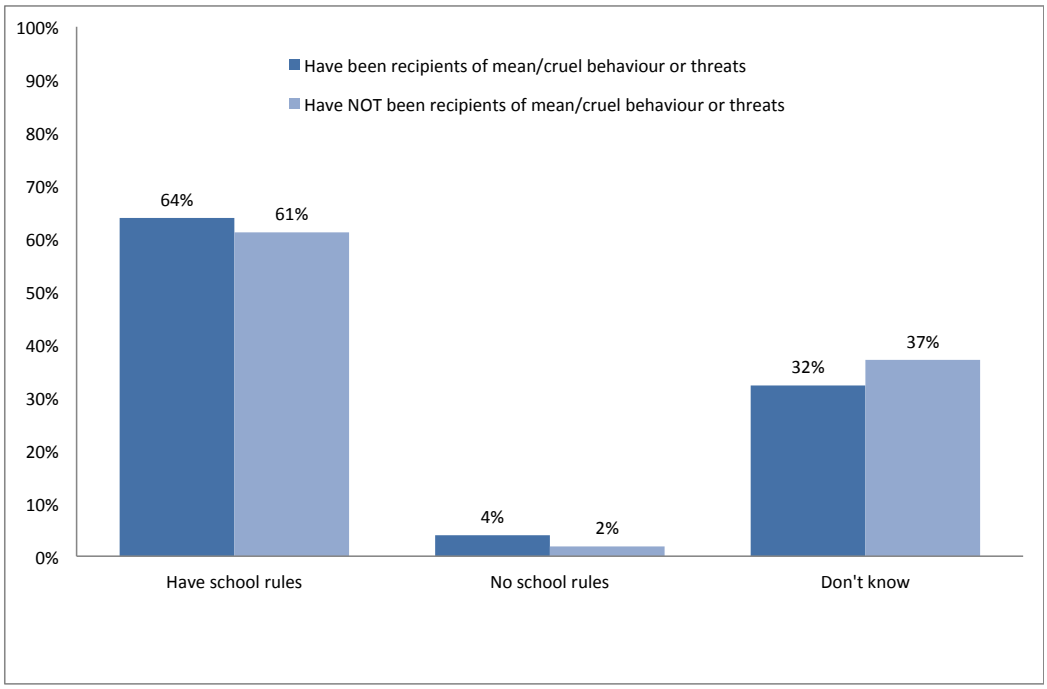


Figure 28: Relationship between engaging in mean/cruel behaviour or threats and school rules

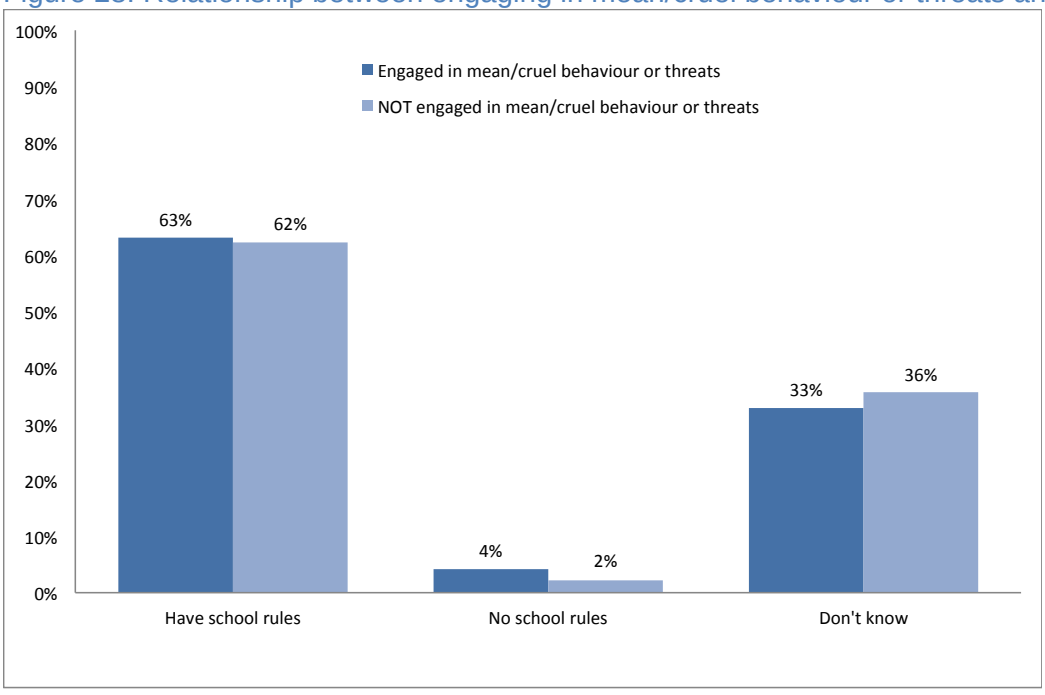


Table 12: Learning about online activities

I have learned about the following activities	From my parent(s)	From teachers	From friends	From reading about it online	I have never learned about this
How to deal with cyberbullying	♂♀ Grade 43%	♂♀ Grade 62%	Grade 15%	Grade 13%	Grade 14%

Figure 29: Learning about how to deal with cyberbullying: Gender

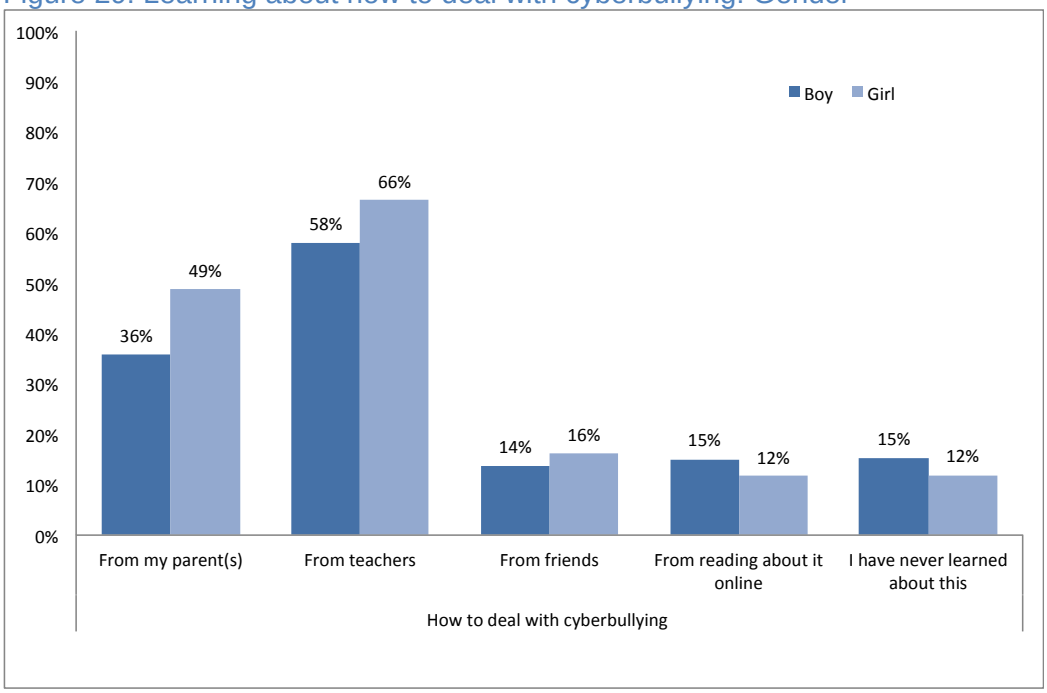


Figure 30: Learning about how to deal with cyberbullying: Grade

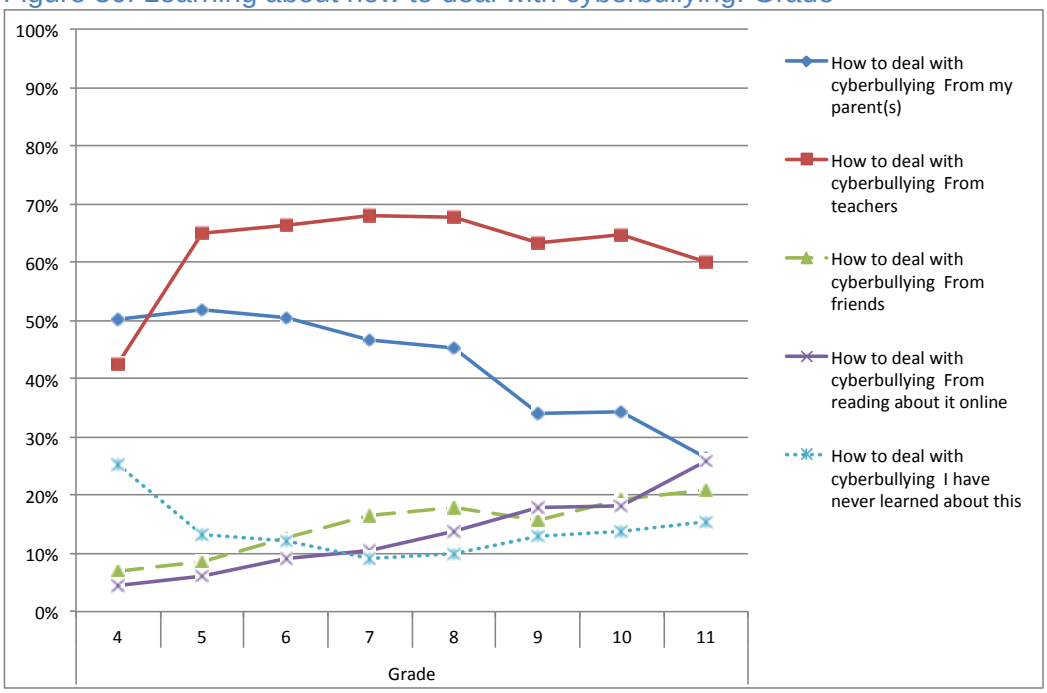


Figure 31: Would you like to learn more about cyberbullying in school?: Grade

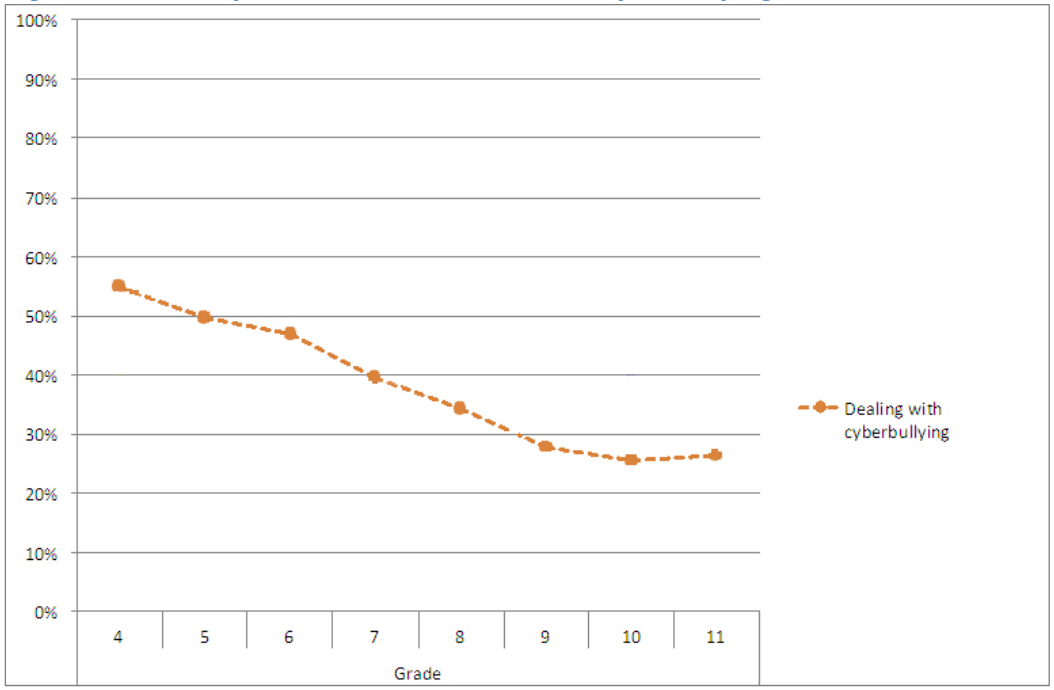


Table 13: Opinions: School Culture

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? School Culture	Agree Percentage				
	Overall Agree percentage	Has been recipient of mean/cruel or threatening behaviour	Has NOT been recipient of mean/cruel or threatening behaviour	Has engaged in mean/cruel or threatening behaviour	Has NOT engaged in mean/cruel or threatening behaviour
I feel respected and valued as a member of my school community. Grade	81%	76%	86%	73%	84%
Bullies are usually popular at school. ♂♀ Grade	42%	49%	36%	49%	40%
Sometimes parent(s) or teachers call it bullying when kids are really just joking around. Grade	76%	80%	71%	82%	73%

Table 14: Helpfulness of school rules and policies regarding cyberbullying

If you answered Yes, do you think the rules or policies are helpful? Grade	Percentage
Often	36%
Sometimes	40%
Rarely	17%
Never	6%

Figure 32: Helpfulness of school rules and policies regarding cyberbullying: Grade

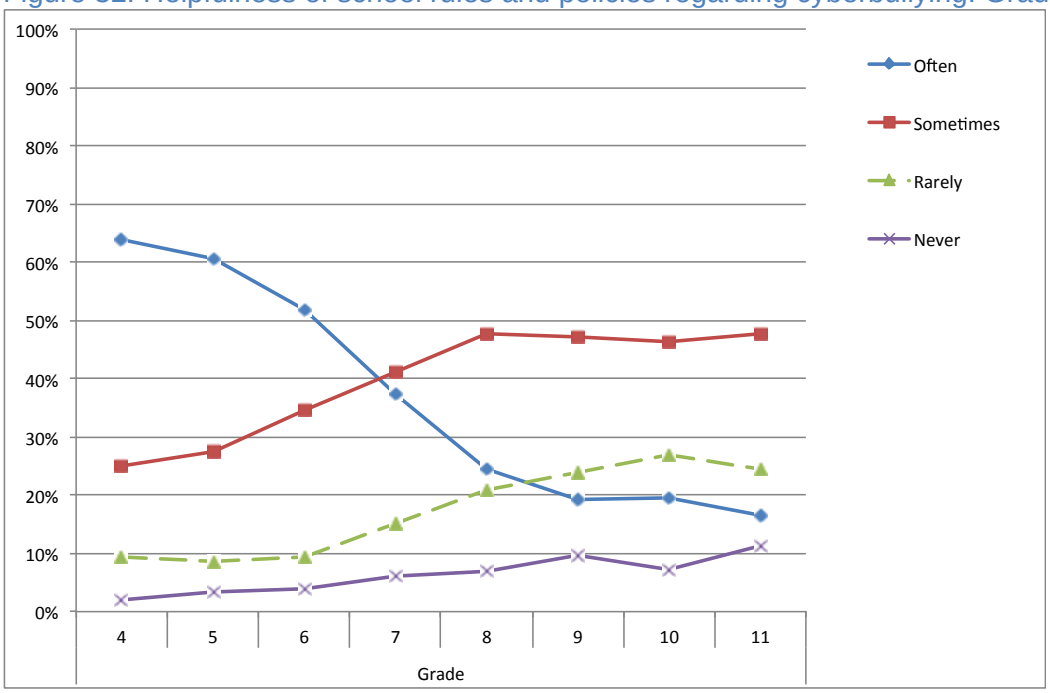


Figure 33: Helpfulness of cyberbullying policies and rules for those who have been the recipient of mean/cruel or threatening behaviour

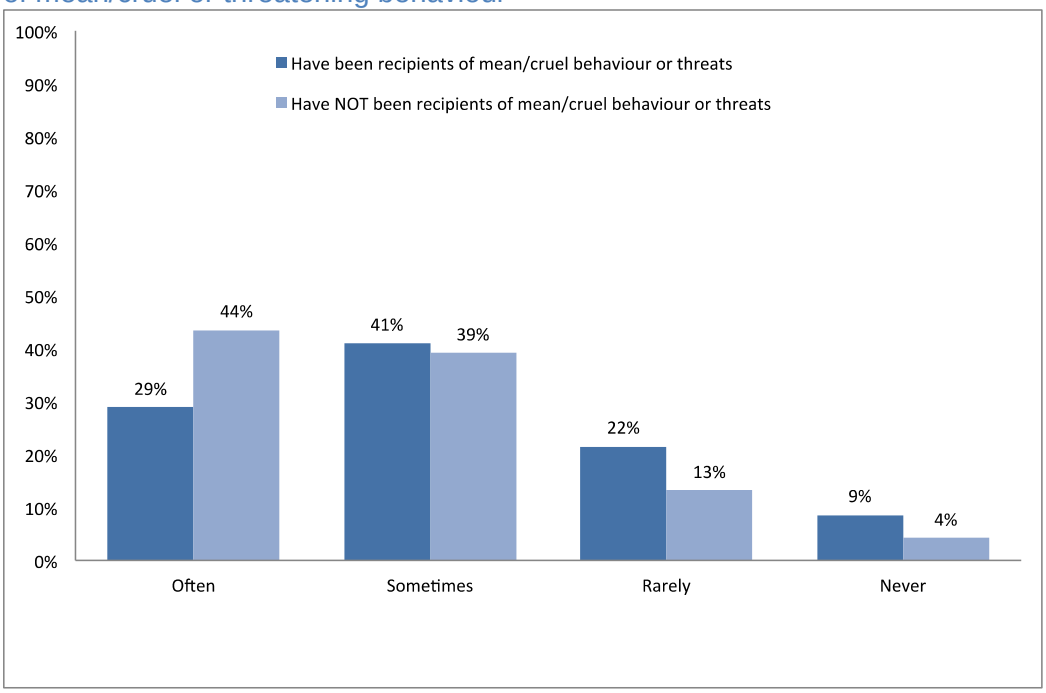


Figure 34: Helpfulness of cyberbullying policies and rules for those who have engaged in mean/cruel or threatening behaviour

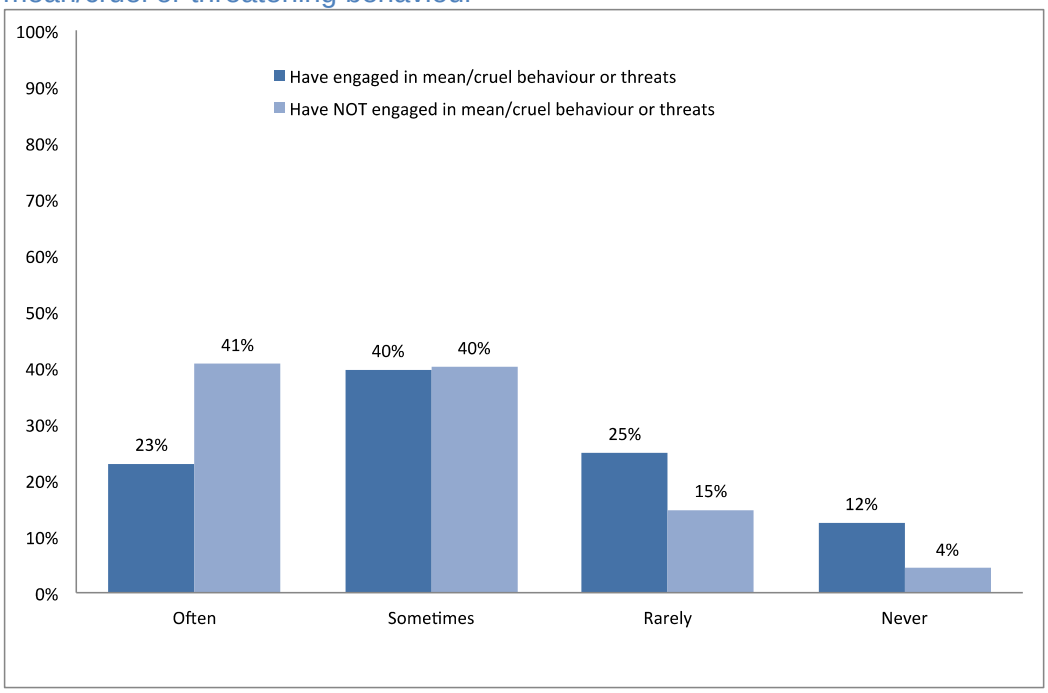


Figure 35: Respect rule and being mean or cruel to someone online

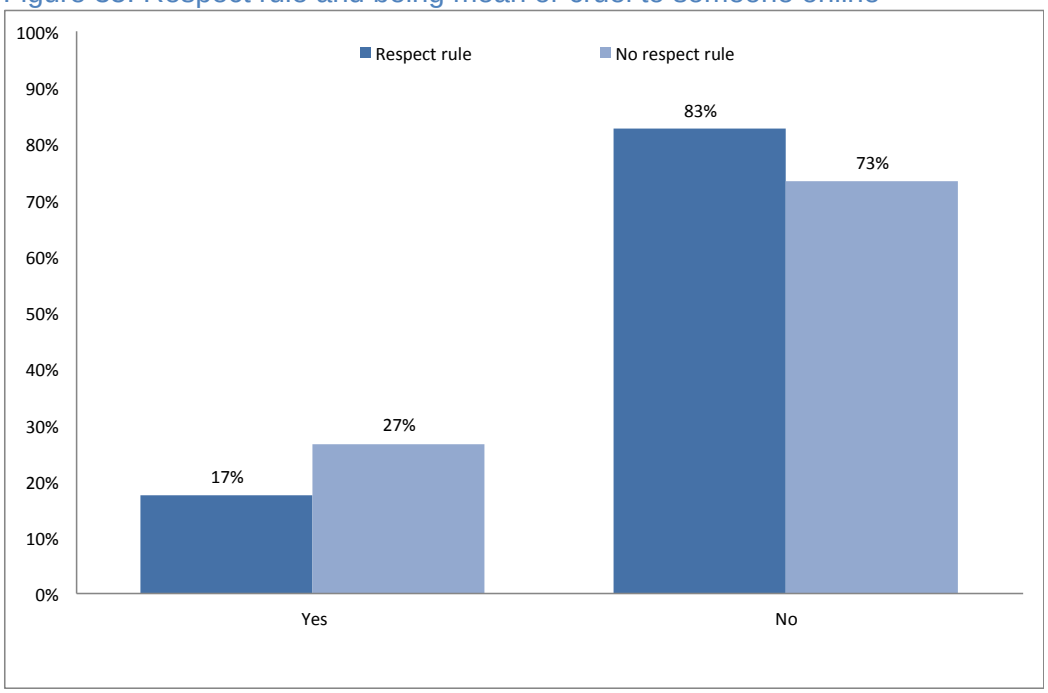


Figure 36: Respect rule and making threats online

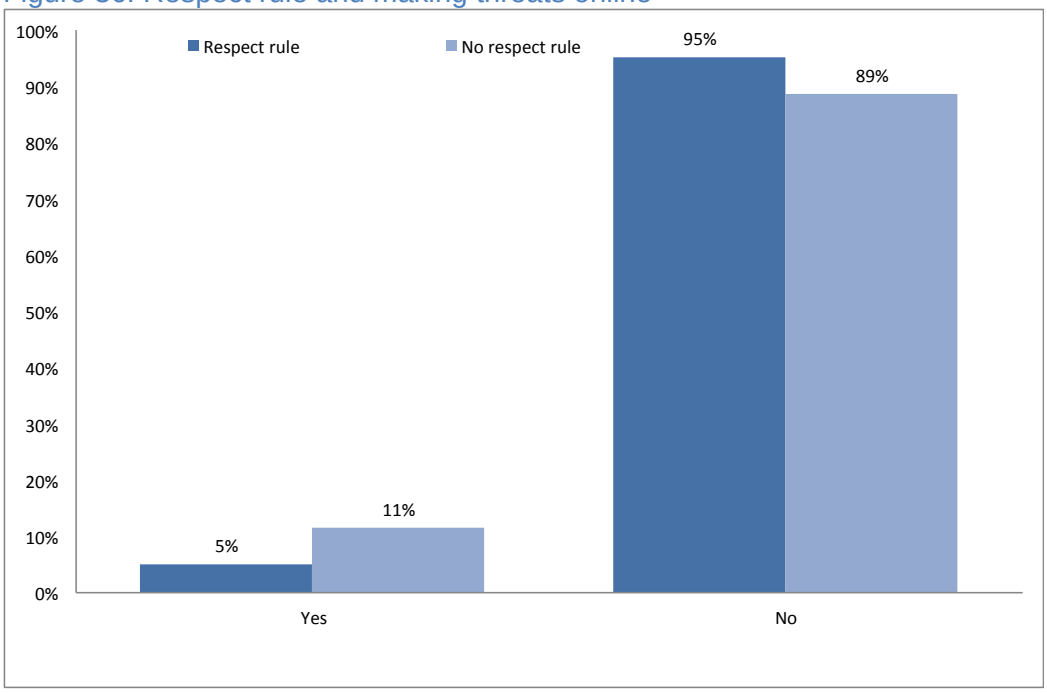


Figure 37: Household rules about online activity: Gender

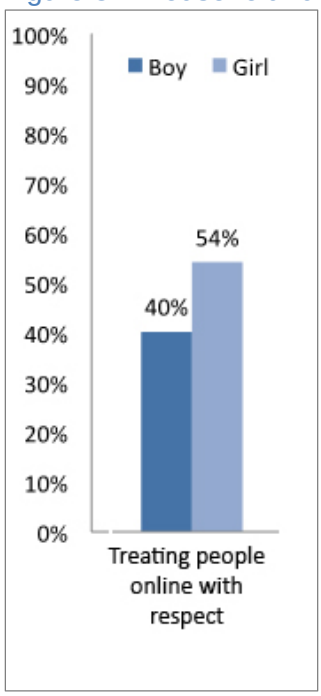
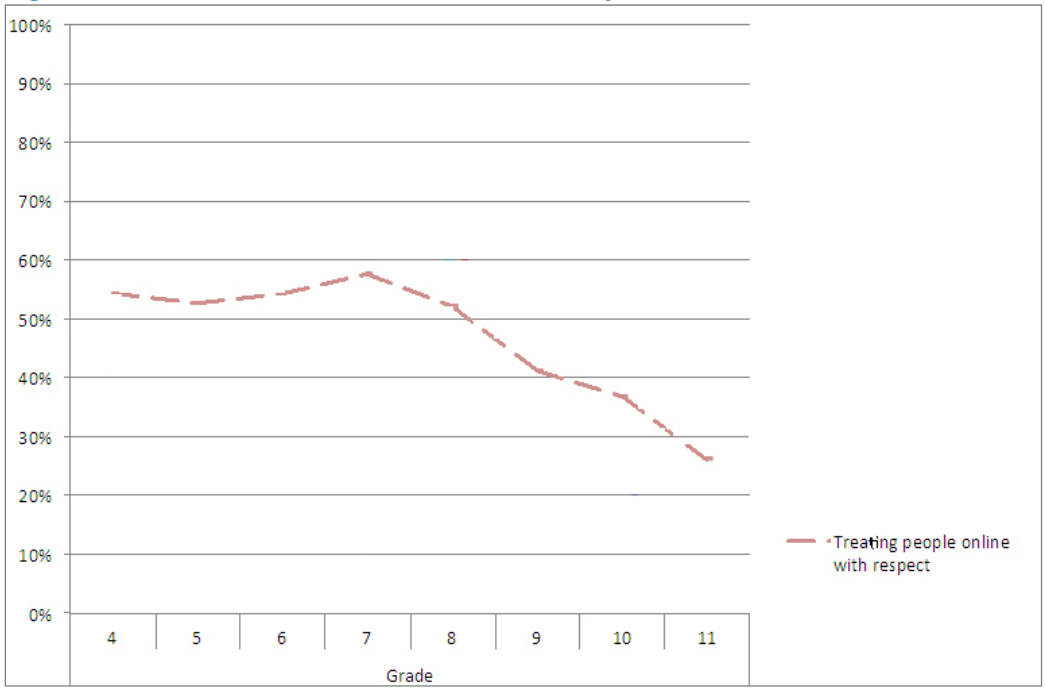


Figure 38: Household rules about online activity: Grade



Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a survey that was administered in 2013 to 5,436 Canadian students in grades 4 through 11. The purpose of the survey was to explore the benefits and challenges children experience when they use networked devices such as computers, tablets, cell phones and iPods. The survey explored the social codes young people develop with respect to their online social interactions and their attitudes about online issues such as privacy, cyberbullying, sexting and offensive and hateful content. It also explored the ways young people use online media to support their learning (both in and out of school) and to create new content.

The survey instrument, consent documents, recruitment text, instructions and method of analysis were approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board.

Recruitment

Students were recruited through school boards and schools in all 10 provinces and three territories.

MediaSmarts contacted school boards that had participated in its 2005 survey. Additional school boards were also contacted. In total, 51 school boards (44 English and 7 French) agreed to assist in recruitment and all requisite board approvals were then obtained. In Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, approval was also obtained from territorial research institutes and the school boards' district education councils.

MediaSmarts then contacted principals of schools within participating school boards. The principals of schools that had participated in the 2005 survey were asked to provide access to the same number of classes and grade levels for the 2013 survey. Principals of new schools were asked to provide access to classes with teachers who were willing and able to assist with recruitment. In total, 140 schools (126 English and 14 French) agreed to assist with recruitment. The schools included a representative selection of urban and rural and public and Catholic schools.

Principals then approached teachers and asked them to assist with student recruitment. Teachers who agreed to do so received the survey documents from Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group (*Directions*). Survey documents included: student information letters; detailed parental consent forms; instructions for teachers; and (where applicable) paper copies of the survey. Teachers distributed the student information letters and parental consent forms to students in specific classes approved by the principal. Students interested in participating were asked to take the information home to their parents. Parental consent forms for all participating students were signed and returned to the teacher by the students.

Administration of the Survey

The survey instrument was developed by Valerie Steeves, with input from MediaSmarts and an advisory committee of experts in the field of children and technology, including Jacquelyn Burkell (Faculty of Information & Media Studies, University of Western Ontario), Wendy Craig (Department of Psychology, Queen's University), Bernard Froese-Germain (Researcher, Canadian Teachers' Federation), Sara Grimes (Faculty of Information, University of Toronto), Phillip McRae (Executive Staff Officer, Alberta Teachers' Association, University of Alberta, Faculty of Education) and Leslie Regan Shade (Faculty of Information, University of Toronto).

The survey was open from February to June of 2013. Students in grades 7 through 11 responded to 57 questions in total. However, since some of the questions dealt with age-sensitive content – including sexting, sexism, racism, romantic relationships, gambling, pornography, future employers and more complex digital tools (e.g. advanced search functions) — a shorter version of the survey without these questions was created for students in grades 4 through 6. Accordingly, those students responded to 52 questions in total.

Students in schools where the language of instruction was English completed the survey in English. Students in schools where the language of instruction was French completed the survey in French.

The surveys were completed during class time and administered by the classroom teacher, teacher-librarian, vice-principal or the principal. Participating students either completed the survey electronically or filled out a paper version, depending on the availability of Internet access and the preference of the teacher. Students were advised that: neither the teacher nor the school would see their responses; their answers would be kept anonymous; they could skip any question they did not want to answer; and they could stop filling out the survey at any time. Surveys completed on paper were placed in an envelope and sealed in the students' presence. The envelope was then mailed to Directions by express post. Surveys completed electronically were administered by Directions using Fluidsurveys online survey software.

In total, 5,776 surveys were received in paper and electronic formats. Data cleaning left 5,436 surveys (1,721 paper and 3,715 electronic) for analysis. Some students skipped questions and/or did not complete the entire survey. Accordingly, to minimize the loss of data, the analysis was conducted on a question by question basis. The results reported are therefore based on the number of students who completed each question and not on the number of students who completed the survey as a whole.

Notes on Statistical Analysis[5]

Statistical analysis was conducted by Directions and the tables and graphs included in this report were prepared by Directions.

[5] The paragraphs on Chi-squared tests and on interpretive and inferential caution were written by Directions and were included with the permission of the author.

Chi-squared tests were used to identify statistically significant differences in responses by gender, grade, primary language of instruction (French, English) or affluence. To compensate for the possibility that errors may be correlated with one another in some way when making multiple comparisons from the same data set, it is often helpful to establish a more stringent significance level. Thus, instead of the commonly used significance/alpha level of .05, it is sometimes recommended that one perform a Bonferroni Correction by dividing the alpha level (.05) by the number of items being compared, therefore establishing a higher and more stringent threshold for significance. For the current analysis, for each factor of gender or grade, 400 tests were run, thus, the significance/alpha level was calculated as = .05/400 = 0.000125 and applied to all of the tests.

In the results presented in this report, statistically significant differences by gender are indicated next to the question by ♀♂ and statistically significant differences by grade are indicated next to the question by Grade.

Comparing French language Students in Quebec and English language Students in the Rest of Canada

Throughout the report, we compare the responses of French language and English language students in the sample. Because the number of students in English language schools in Quebec (124) and the number of French language students outside of Quebec (204) was very low, comparisons between students on the basis of language of instruction alone would have made statistical comparisons difficult. To explore any differences between French language students and English language students, we therefore compared the responses of students in Quebec whose primary language of instruction was French with the responses of students in the rest of Canada whose primary language of instruction was English.

There were statistically significant differences between the two groups regarding access to technologies, privacy-related behaviours, the role of adults in students' online lives, cyberbullying and racism/sexism. However, interpretative and inferential caution is warranted because there were approximately eight times more English language students than French language students in the sample. Even though the analysis applied very stringent criteria (significance level of 0.000125), making strong inferences about the differences observed or generalizing the findings beyond the sample is not warranted.

Comparing High Affluence Students and Medium Affluence Students

A modified version of the Family Affluence Scale[6] was used to measure students' socioeconomic status. The scale is widely used in research with children because it enables researchers to solicit information about socioeconomic status directly from the children themselves and the scale shows some construct validity[7]. Although reports in regard to reliability are mixed, we opted to use the scale instead of relying on postal codes as a proxy for

[6] Currie, Candace E., Rob A. Elton, Joanna Todd and Stephen Platt. (1997). Indicators of socioeconomic status for adolescents: The WHO health behavior in school-aged survey. *Health Education Research*. 12(3), 385.
[7] Kehoe, Susan and Liam O'Hare. (2010). The reliability and validity of the Family Affluence Scale. *Effective Education*. 2(2), 155-164

socioeconomic status because of the number of rural schools with large catchment areas in the recruitment pool and the variability of socioeconomic status within individual Canadian schools.

The scale is based on responses to the following four questions:

1. Does your family own a car, van or truck?
   (No, we don't own a car, van or truck = 0; Yes, one car, van or truck = 1; Yes, more than one car, van or truck =2)
2. During the past 12 months, how many times did you travel away with your family?
   (Not at all = 0; Once = 1; Twice = 2; More than twice = 3)
3. How many computers does your family have?
   (None = 0; One = 1; Two = 2; More than two = 3)
4. How well off do you think your family is?
   (Very well off = 4; Quite well off = 3; Average = 2; Not very well off = 1; Not at all well off = 0)

We created a composite score for each student who responded to all four questions. The composite scores were then divided into categories of low affluence (including composite scores of 0, 1, 2 and 3), medium affluence (including composite scores of 4, 5, 6 and 7) and high affluence (including composite scores of 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12).

Only two percent of the sample fell into the low affluence category. Because the numbers of students (65) in this category was so low, statistical comparison between the low affluence group and the medium and high affluence groups was not possible. Accordingly, students on the low affluence category were not included in the analysis of socioeconomic status, and the results reported in this report are based on a comparison of the medium and high affluence groups only.

Limitations: Interpretive and Inferential Caution is Recommended

As with all survey data, readers should be cautious about the interpretations or inferences they draw from these findings. Regardless of the age of the respondents, answers from self-reports are typically less reliable than direct observation of a behaviour. All respondents manage the impression that they convey with their answers. Answers may represent what the respondent wants us to know or think about their behaviour, rather than how they actually behaved. In addition, differences in the percentage reporting behaviour between groups may reflect differences in how comfortable each group is in reporting the behaviour, rather than differences in how much each group actually engages in the behaviour.

When data are collected from different age groups in the same survey, it is tempting to want to interpret the differences in the percentages as increases or decreases from one age group to another. These data do not support such claims. The most that can be said is that a larger or smaller percentage of respondents in one or another age group said this or that. Moreover, when there are differences between age groups it is also tempting to infer that the differences

are attributable to maturity when they might simply reflect differences in the frame of reference or experiences that younger and older students have about the object of the question.

One should be cautious about comparing the findings from this survey to the findings in previous surveys for several reasons. First, technology has changed dramatically; online accessibility and content in 2013 is very different from that of 2005 or 2001. Second, in addition to the technological changes that have occurred the rapid nature of social and cultural changes occurring in the eight years since the last survey may mean that the Grade 4 students today are different from the Grade 4 students surveyed eight or 12 years ago.

Demographics of Survey Participants

Forty-one percent of survey participants were boys and 46 percent were girls. An additional 13 percent did not report a gender. The number of students per grade ranged from 424 for Grade 11 to 745 for Grade 7.

Table 15: Demographics: Number of survey responses by gender and grade

	Grade									
Gender	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**Not provided / other[8]**	**Total**
Boy	226	213	271	356	322	249	304	194	96	2231 (41%)
Girl	272	296	288	368	376	252	347	229	73	2501 (46%)
Not Provided	13	12	24	21	14	17	8	1	594	704 (13%)
Total	**511 (9%)**	**521 (10%)**	**583 (11%)**	**745 (14%)**	**712 (13%)**	**518 (10%)**	**659 (12%)**	**424 (8%)**	**763 (14%)**	**5436**

Survey participants were drawn from all 10 provinces and three territories. Eighty-six percent of students were enrolled in schools in which English was the primary language of instruction. The remaining 14 percent of students were enrolled in schools where the primary language of instruction was French. Seventy-three percent of the students enrolled in French schools were from Quebec; the remaining students enrolled in French schools were from Manitoba (20%), Ontario (3%), Prince Edward Island (2%) and New Brunswick (2%).

[8] 16 students from Grade 3 participated and 44 students from Grade 12 participated. This is likely because some classes are split Grade 3/4 and 11/12 and these classes participated as a whole.

Table 16 Demographics: Number of responses by language of instruction and province

Primary Language of Instruction				
	English	**French**	**Total**	
British Columbia	513		513	(9%)
Alberta	560		560	(10%)
Saskatchewan	382		382	(7%)
Manitoba	171	152	323	(6%)
Ontario	1992	24	2016	(37%)
Québec	124[9]	557	681	(13%)
Newfoundland and Labrador	162		162	(3%)
Prince Edward Island	106	16	122	(2%)
New Brunswick	373	12	385	(7%)
Nova Scotia	180		180	(3%)
Yukon	32		32	(1%)
Northwest Territories	24		24	(<1%)
Nunavut	29		29	(1%)
Unknown	26	1	27	(<1%)
Total	**4674 (86%)**	**762 (14%)**	**5436**	

The survey asked students to indicate what languages they spoke at home. Ninety-one percent spoke English at home and 28 percent spoke French at home. Two percent to 6 percent also reported speaking a language at home other than French or English.

[9] Eight students in an English language school took the survey in French as the survey was administered in their French Second Language class.

Table 17: Demographics: Languages spoken at home

What languages do you speak at home? [10]	% Speaking
English	91%
French	28%
Arabic	3%
Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, other dialect)	6%
German	3%
Greek	2%
Italian	5%
Korean	2%
Panjabi (Punjabi)	3%
Persian (Farsi)	1%
Polish	2%
Portuguese	2%
Russian	2%
Spanish	4%
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	3%
Tamil	2%
Urdu	2%
Vietnamese	2%
Other	**11%**

A large majority of the students who completed the survey in one of the official languages reported that they spoke that language at home (96% English and 92% French).

Table 18 Demographics: Languages spoken at home by students taking survey in English or French

What languages do you speak at home?	English survey	French survey
English	96%	57%
French	19%	92%

Students were asked a series of questions to determine their socioeconomic status based on the Family Affluence Scale[11]. Only two percent of the sample scored in the low affluence category. Approximately two thirds self-reported as being high affluence.

[10] Twelve percent of respondents did not provide language information. In addition, some students reported an improbable number of languages spoken at home; however, these numbers were very low and these students' responses were included in the analysis.
[11] See Methodology for more information about the Family Affluence Scale.

Table 19: Demographics: Affluence

Affluence Level	Percent Respondents
Low	2%
Medium	32%
High	66%

Figure 39: Demographics: Frequency distribution of composite affluence scores