

## Cyber-bullying gathers pace

One third of US teenagers have been victims of cyber-bullying according to research.

The most common complaint from teens was about private information being shared rather than direct threats. Girls were more likely than boys to be targets and teens who share their identities online are the most vulnerable, the survey found.



32% of teenagers questioned had experienced one of more of the following: having a private e-mail, IM or text messaging forwarded or posted where others could see it, been the victim of an aggressive email, IM or text message, had a rumour spread about them online or had an embarrassing photograph posted online without permission.

As more and more young people join social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, so they are opening themselves and their personal information up to more people. The survey found that 39% of social network users had been cyber-bullied in some way, compared to 22% of online teens who do not use social networks.

Bullying has entered the digital age. The impulses behind it are the same, but the effect is magnified. In the past, the materials of bullying would have been whispered, shouted or passed around. Now, with a few clicks, a photo, video or a conversation can be shared with hundreds via e-mail or millions through a website, online profile or blog posting.

Some teens felt that the nature of the web was distancing bullies from their actions. People think they are anonymous because they can hide behind their computer monitor.

Last year the UK government issued guidelines to help parents and pupils deal with the issue of cyber-bullying after the Anti-Bullying Alliance found that one in five UK schoolchildren had been the victim of some form of online and mobile abuse. It advised youngsters not to give out personal contact details or post photographs of themselves online.

Adapted from BBC News. 28 June 2007

### Task

After reading the news story above, answer the following questions:

1. How common is the problem of cyber bullying amongst teenagers?
2. What sort of cyber bullying have teenagers experienced?
3. Why do you think that cyber bullying is on the increase?
4. What advice has the UK government given to parents and pupils to deal with cyber bullying?

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- Print out enough copies to use during the lesson

*You may not:*

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- Save this resource to a school network or VLE
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