



2022 Online Harassment and Abuse Survey Results Summary

Background

In November 2021, members of love is respect (the National Domestic Violence Hotline's healthy relationships and dating abuse prevention program for youth) participated in a White House Listening Session hosted by the Gender Policy Council (GPC) focused on the critical issue of online harassment and abuse. Shortly after, The Hotline began a survey research project, through funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family Violence Prevention Services Program, to hear directly from survivors on their experiences with online harassment and abuse.

Through this survey, we wanted to learn more about the prevalence of digital harm and online abuse, types of harassment, the impact to survivors, and the needs of those experiencing such abuse. The data and insights gained through this survey are instrumental to formulating policies, trainings, additional support and research, and expanded resources for those impacted by online harassment and abuse.

The Hotline conducted the survey from March 8 - May 1, 2022. The full survey* was conducted on The Hotline and love is respect digital chat lines and thehotline.org and loveisrespect.org. The survey collected qualitative and quantitative data, as well as demographic information. **960 people completed the survey.**

Survey Findings

Every respondent (100%) reported at least one type of online abuse and/or harassment. The most common types of online harassment and abuse reported by respondents were:

- 74% reported offensive name calling
- 62% reported bullying
- 56% reported purposeful humiliation
- 45% reported cyber stalking
- 45% reported body shaming
- 36% reported sexual harassment
- 27% reported being threatened with the posting of intimate/sexual pictures without permission
- 17% reported having intimate/sexual pictures of them posted without permission
- 12% reported sextortion
- 10% reported doxing (searching for and publishing their private and/or identifying information)

Not all the reported online harassment and/or abuse was a result of an intimate partner relationship. While many reported it was an intimate partner causing them harm in the open field portion of the survey, some reported that others, for example co-workers and other family members, were causing the harm.

- The most common setting in which the online harassment or abuse occurred was via text or other messaging apps (78%) and on social media (70%).

- 33% of respondents did not seek help or support. While those who identified as male made up a small portion of the respondents, males who completed the survey were 31% less likely to seek support or help, than those who identified as non-male. Respondents aged 13-18 were 43% less likely than other age groups to seek support or help.

- Of those who did seek help, 50% talked with friends, family or a trusted adult.

* The full survey featured four questions related to online harassment and abuse, and three demographic questions (age/gender/race). The Hotline also conducted an abbreviated questionnaire for those reaching out for services via phone on The Hotline and love is respect. Due to low response rates via phone, we are not including that data in this summary, however it will be included in our final survey report.

- 36% reported that they disconnected from the online network(s) or devices.

- 67% of respondents who experienced online harassment or abuse reported that it was related to gender, while 34% reported it was related to sexual orientation.



I didn't make a police report because there was 'no point' they said. Hard to trace and no resources. Currently there are pictures of me, and I can't stop them."

Key Takeaways:

- Most respondents turned to friends, family, or a trusted adult (whom The Hotline refers to as helpers) for support when experiencing online harassment and abuse. Sharing validating information, safety resources, and developing specific tools for helpers on how to support someone experiencing online abuse could create safer outcomes for those impacted.
- There is stigma and shame associated with online harassment and abuse, and some respondents expressed the fear of not being believed as a reason for not reaching out for support. Awareness efforts that validate experiences of online harassment and abuse, and reduce shame could cause more people, especially young people, to reach out for support.
- There is need for additional research, especially among younger people and those who identify as Black, Indigenous or people of color.

The full survey report will be released by The Hotline in July 2022.

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About The Hotline

The National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) is a vital service: our mission is to answer the call to support and shift power back to those affected by relationship abuse — 24/7/365. Established in 1996 and headquartered in Austin, Texas, The Hotline is the only national 24-hour domestic violence hotline providing compassionate support, life-saving resources, and personalized safety planning via phone, online chat, and text. To date we have answered more than 6 million calls, chats, and texts. Services are provided in English and Spanish through bi-lingual advocates and in more than 200 other languages through the use of Language Line. The Hotline is a frontline resource for survivors, often the first source to validate that abuse is being experienced, and a trusted provider of resources, referrals, and safety planning.

In 2007, The Hotline established love is respect, an initiative that engages, educates, and empowers young people to prevent and end abusive relationships. love is respect is a safe, inclusive space where young people can access information and get help in an environment designed specifically for them. love is respect mobilizes parents, educators, and peers to raise awareness on healthy dating behaviors and how to identify unhealthy and abusive patterns. Teachers, college advisors and other groups working with young people use our program, including loveisrespect.org, as a go-to resource to understand what a healthy relationship is, trends in teen dating abuse (such as the rise in digital abuse) and learn how they can protect themselves or the teens they care for from relationship abuse.

As one of the leading collectors of real-life survivor experiences, data, and trends (as the nation's largest direct-service provider to those impacted by domestic violence) —The Hotline is a leader in forging thoughtful, comprehensive, equitable, and socially responsible plans for enhancing support and expanding resources for survivors throughout the nation.