

Envision Counselling and Support Centre Inc.

Cyberviolence Project

Need Assessment Report 2014

Funded by: Status of Women Canada

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Executive Summary:

Envision Counselling and Support Centre was created in 1994 under the name Violence Intervention Program (VIP). It was the collaboration of the Estevan Society Against Family Violence and the Weyburn Community Against Family Violence. Both groups had been in existence for more than 10 years. These groups approached the provincial government for specialized services for victims of abuse and violence in Estevan and Weyburn. Funding was obtained for individual and group counselling services.

Once established, VIP started the 24-Hour Abuse/Sexual Assault Support Line to provide support after office hours. The line received 10,000 calls from Saskatchewan callers in its first 10 years. In 2008, VIP went in a new direction. The name was changed to Envision Counselling and Support Centre Inc. and new programs were introduced to enhance existing services such as the Outreach Program, Children Exposed to Violence Program and the In-Home Program which is the umbrella for the Family Support Program and the Child and Youth Program.

In 2011, Envision received funding for the Family Intervention Program, which operates out of Carlyle as well as the Estevan and Weyburn offices. In 2013, the Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Program was expanded to operate out of our Carlyle office as well. Today, Envision has more than 30 employees, three office locations, and serves a population of more than 56,000 people and is continuing to grow with the diverse needs of Southeast Saskatchewan.

Introduction and Background:

The *Cyberviolence Project*, funded by a grant received from the Status of Women Canada, is a two year project that began in the spring of 2014 and will conclude in 2016. The project will focus on the prevention and elimination of cyberviolence among young women and girls in Southeast Saskatchewan. This project will be founded on a collaborative approach with key stakeholders to find solutions to the emerging issue of cyberviolence as it relates to sexualized violence. Envision will work with our community partners to determine the severity of the need and the effectiveness of current solutions in the Southeast. Collaboration with both existing and new community partners will help to inform the development and implementation of a strategy that, aligned with the provincial framework, will help to initiate change at the community level creating awareness about cyberviolence and necessary supports. Collaborative relationships with community stakeholders and patrons of community support services will be foundational in the development of a strategy and ongoing knowledge sharing throughout the project.

In order to appropriately evaluate the issues of cyberviolence in the Southeast, this project conducted a needs assessment. The community members that Envision serves, including clients, service providers and community stakeholders, were engaged and participated in the

needs assessment process. This will greatly contribute to the creation of a representative strategy inclusive of relevant solutions that will work to advance progress in the area of cyberviolence.

Purpose of Needs Assessment:

The main purpose of the needs assessment is to understand what the issues are facing young women and girls in Southeast Saskatchewan who are experiencing cyberviolence and all types of sexualized violence in the digital era. The goal is to improve the lives of the young female population that is exposed to violence online.

Sexual assault in the Estevan area has increased by 156%, according to 2012 Estevan Police Service statistics. The tremendous opportunities available as a result of the energy boom in the Southeast, has led to a region that is known for its young population when compared to other regions in Saskatchewan. It is also an area that has ranked number one in all of Canada in terms of a population that has significant discretionary income. The average household income is 114% above the national average household liquid assets of any Saskatchewan city (Estevan Chamber of Commerce 2012). The influx of new people populating this area has contributed to a host of issues including new residents feeling isolated, having little connection to the existing community and experiencing increased participation in alcohol and drug abuse resultant in social problems. Likewise, the higher standard of living can provide universal access to technology for young people in this region.

An informal survey of student counsellors in the Southeast reveals nearly 100% of students in grade 8 have their own cellphone. These children also have higher access to computers in the home, with unlimited wireless connection and other restrictions to internet connections removed. Envision counsellors, school social workers and police liaison personnel have all noted an increase in requests for support and information around the issues of cyberviolence.

Target Audience:

The target audience for this project's strategy is young women and girls who are experiencing violence online. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of what young women and girls are facing, the project focused on data collection from girls and boys between grades 7-12 as well as the parents and guardians of youth in the same cohort previously mentioned. In addition to those directly experiencing cyberviolence, the project highlighted the experience of service providers who deal with the aftermath of online violence. The main target for the youth component of the project was from the South East Cornerstone Public School Division #209 as well as the parents of youth who attended the school division. The school division was also utilized for access to school social workers and teachers.

Methods Used in the Needs Assessment:

To complete the needs assessment, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Qualitative research was used to give the data a personalized feeling and to understand what is happening with cyberviolence by giving participants the chance to convey their experiences using their own words. Quantitative research was used to provide data that had the ability to reach a larger range of people and highlight any common themes among them. This research method enabled data to be collected over the large geographical area that represents Southeast Saskatchewan.

The following methods were used for data collection in the needs assessment:

1. *Focus Groups (Qualitative)*: A total of 6 focus groups were held for this assessment with a total of 55 people participating. These groups took place primarily in Estevan and Weyburn as there was greater accessibility to participants in the cities. However, some groups took place at Ocean Man First Nation and Oxbow. Participants in the focus groups included youth in grades 7-12, parents, Envision counsellors, student counsellors, social workers, victim services volunteers, young adults, youth addictions workers and instructional technology consultants.
2. *Anonymous Online Survey (Quantitative)*: An online survey was created for this project, with the help of the project evaluation team, using questions that were relatable to the target population. A total of 370 people participated in the online survey. The online survey was created using Survey Monkey and ran from September 2014 to December 2014. The target population for this survey was the youth in the school division in grades 7-12 as well as the teachers. A partnership was formed within the South East Cornerstone Public School Division #209 and we were able to disseminate the survey to each of the schools. In addition, Envision's Outreach Educator incorporated the online survey into the presentations that were made in the schools. The online survey was also promoted on the Envision website as well as local radio stations with the hope that it would reach other parents and service providers that were not linked with the school division.
3. *Secondary Data Sources*: In order to prepare for this project, existing literature was reviewed pertaining to cyberviolence in general, current strategies and current data, gender based analysis, needs assessment guidelines and media coverage of cyberviolence in the Southeast were reviewed.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research:

Data collection, via both qualitative and quantitative methods, was facilitated by Envision's pre-existing and positive relationships within the community. This encouraged an optimistic response from the community and strengthened the efforts of this project significantly through sustainable community partnerships. Envision was also able to create a strong research and evaluation team to participate on this project, ensuring strong competencies in all aspects of the project. Having an Outreach Educator on the team was also an integral part of the data collection process as this existing relationship and trusted role in the community ensured that the appropriate people were engaged in the needs assessment activities. A significant strength of this project was utilizing existing service providers and community agencies that had established, trusted relationships which helped to propel the project and facilitate engagement with the intended audience. The established, trusted relationships also allowed our team to connect with participants who felt safe sharing their lived experience of cyberviolence, providing a deeper context and level of understanding.

The limitations of data collection included an inability to get the online survey into both school divisions in the Southeast. Even with the cooperation of the public schools, it was difficult to ensure participation of the targeted grades in the survey because taking up class time was not an option. Access to youth and adults in the community who were willing to participate or discuss the project was also a challenge. The focus groups posed some limitations as well, such as finding community members who were interested in participating. At times, when focus groups were established, full participation of the members present did not always take place due to fear of speaking out within the group.

Some of the challenges with participation were overcome during the needs assessment by offering an incentive of being entered into a draw for a \$50.00 iTunes gift card for participating in the online survey. There was also an emphasis on the anonymity of the online survey and the strict adherence to confidentiality of the focus groups in an attempt to make potential participants feel at ease. The online survey was offered to the members and the end of focus groups as an outlet for participants if they did not feel comfortable speaking in the group. As a means of promotion, Envision booths were set up at local trade shows and community events and partnerships with local media outlets were also utilized. Door prizes were included at promotional tables to encourage community member's participation in dialogue regarding the project. Focus groups and the online survey were also incorporated into existing Envision events and groups. In an attempt to ensure student participation, the Outreach Educator for Envision incorporated the online survey into the presentations that were done in the classroom and allowed time for each student to complete the survey.

Key Areas of Focus Group and Online Survey Questions:

The focus groups and online survey questions were similarly designed in order to find trends in the data. The focus group questions were fewer and allowed for broader answers. There was some flexibility with the wording of the focus group questions depending on the group of participants, but the intent of the questions remained the same. More questions were needed for the online survey in order to understand the demographic of the person who was taking the survey. The online survey questions acted as a means to get the most data in the least intrusive way. Both forms of questions allowed for participants to share personal experiences.

Key components of the questions were as follows:

- Experience of the participant in regard to age, school attended and self-identified race and gender.
- What they would consider mean and/or cruel behaviour online.
- Experience with mean and/or cruel behaviour online.
- If cruelty online is a problem for them, who do they turn to for help if they reach out.
- The outcomes of reaching out.
- Reasons for not reaching out for support.
- Helpful aspects of dealing with mean and/or cruel behaviour online.
- Whether or not they considered mean and/or cruel behaviour online to be a problem.
- Impact of gender regarding violence online.

Barriers from Focus Group Findings: Findings are based on the shared themes of the focus groups and are taken directly from data collected from participants and often using their own words.

Key Findings from the Perspective of Young Women and Girls:

- **Defining Cyberviolence(Mean and/or Cruel Behaviour):**
When defining cyberviolence, it was clear that participants all had a good idea of what they considered to be cruel online behaviour. The differences occurred in severity of the behaviour and when participants identified the behaviour as a problem. However, “death threats” routinely came up as the final straw for seeking support.

“Well I hate seeing one person make a status about someone and like a bunch of girls, like 20 girls comment, calling her different names or sluts or something when it has nothing to do with them.”

Calling people names, exploiting someone's personal stuff, getting nasty texts or rude comments in the form of pictures, videos or words on all forms of social media were described by the young women and girls who participated as being forms of cyberviolence.

- **Prevalence:**

The vast majority of participants believed that cyberviolence is prevalent today. Nearly 100% of those involved estimated that the majority of people they knew had been bullied or mistreated online. "Yeah, like I've been cyberbullied and I know for a fact that I have, in one way or another, that I've done it to someone else." Participants also relayed that prevalence is increasing because of technology and the internet. It was stated that violence is worse on the internet because it cannot be avoided. The bullying is made worse because it is not just between two people; the whole world can see it and it is out there forever. It was noted that bullying and violence online hits the victim harder because "it's different when someone calls you a name in a hallway full of people rather than on the internet where everyone can see it" making it more influential.

- **Role of Anonymity:**

Based on the research collected, anonymity is a significant factor when it comes to online violence. When anonymity is an option, cruel behaviour escalates. "People will sit there behind an anonymous thing and they say whatever they want to whoever they want." Anonymity is currently a substantial part of the internet and social media sites which makes things worse for online violence. Perpetrators don't see the reaction that the other person has so it is almost like they forget there is another human being on the other end. It was also described that anonymity makes the experience of cruelty online more difficult. Those experiencing anonymous online brutality reported that it was sometimes easier to deal with random anonymous comments but that they became hurtful after a while. A key component of anonymity, much like cyberviolence in general, is the impact of repetition on the victim.

- **Victim Response:**

A variety of responses from victims who experience cyberviolence include trying to ignore the comments, retaliation by commenting back and confronting the person if known to the victim. Each scenario is different and complicated and dependant on the comfort level of the victim. As mentioned previously, when "death threats" are involved nearly 100% of participants said they would seek help. Leading up to such severe threats, however, responses were received on a continuum.

Outlined below are victim responses for those that sought support and those who did not:

Seeking Support: The majority of Individuals who sought support when experiencing violence online disclosed the events to their peer groups first. In addition to peer groups, disclosing to parents or other trusted adults did come up when situations seemed more serious to the participants and they thought they could not handle it themselves. Participants stated that support would be sought if they were made to feel uncomfortable, their day was being effected or there were feelings of suicide.

Not Seeking Support: Reasons for not seeking support included participants minimizing their situation, not wanting to bother others with their problems, embarrassment, not wanting to make the situation worse, feeling like they could handle it personally, trying to ignore it, not wanting to be labeled a “snitch” and fear; of admitting it is getting out of control, of the unknown and what will happen next. “If I got bullied on the internet, I wouldn’t go around telling everybody about it.”

- **Misunderstanding the Seriousness:**

Participants stated that teens are given the proper information and tools to act appropriately online, they just do not think about it or care about the risks. Individuals believe that in order to break the cycle of online violence, perpetrators need to experience it or have it happen to someone close to them before change will happen. “Teenagers make mistakes but on the internet, it’s there forever.” Online violence is not always understood as a serious offence and is often seen as a form of entertainment on the internet. Some perpetrators are being cruel online for fun and lack the understanding that people can be hurt by their actions.

- **Lack of Consequences:**

The data collected pointed to several participants feeling that consequences did not exist for perpetrators of cyberviolence. Teachers are limited in what they can do regarding online behaviour at school so students tend to feel as though they are not being heard. Some participants felt that teachers did not intervene at all. If the online violence is severe enough for police involvement, the legal ramifications for perpetrators are often limited by time and/or resources in rural communities. The lack of consequences for perpetrators of online violence deters victims from coming forward and minimizes the issue of cyberviolence.

- **Females and Males Experience Cyberviolence Differently:**

Those involved in the focus groups acknowledged that everyone reacts to situations differently, but in general, boys and girls experience cyberviolence in different ways.

Based on personal experiences, girls were believed to take things to heart and hold a grudge more easily than boys. Girls were found to perpetuate online “drama” in a reciprocal fashion more so than boys. Boys tended to handle things more directly and stick up for themselves more often. Boys also reacted with physical violence more often than girls. It should be noted that girls often get called names such as “slut” and have their intimate pictures spread around at a higher rate than boys do. It was suggested that these instances impacted girls more than boys because of the societal pressure placed on women and their image. The impact of the term “slut” on a boy was less harmful and in some cases improved his standing. The opposite is true for most girls. In terms of intimate pictures being distributed, the impact on boys and the response from peers was limited, which is again opposite for most girls.

- **Females and Males Commit Cyberviolence Differently:**

Gender does not necessarily divide how cyberviolence is committed, but it can provide a base for discovering commonalities. Everyone has the ability to be mean or cruel online, but the way that it is committed can differ. Participants described that girls teamed up on others regarding online violence more than boys. Girls were found to text out conflict rather than handle it in person and boys tended to handle confrontation more physically. One participant described a conflict via text as “a little war over the phone”. This indicates the depth of the influence words have when they are written to one another.

Key Findings from the Perspective of Parents and Service Providers:

- **Defining Cyberviolence (Mean and/or Cruel Behaviour):**

Participants found cyberviolence to be a broad social issue that was difficult to define. Cyberviolence included, but was not limited to, bullying and violent behaviours through social media, threats, insults or rumour spreading, hacking personal information and intimidating or coercive behaviours directed at others through technology in a public or private way. Cyberviolence was stated to often be intentional, premediated, harassing, dangerous and malicious and used as a way to hurt other people or entities. “Sometimes I think it starts out innocently but sometimes it’s purposefully hurtful.” In addition, cyberviolence includes blackmail, fake profiles and sexual predators. Participants agreed the boundaries of cyberviolence are vast and continuously evolving.

- **Prevalence:**

Individuals who participated believed that cyberviolence was an issue within the communities they live. Most participants agreed that cyberviolence can happen to

anyone; youth under the age of 18 are considered a vulnerable population where the issue is more prevalent and can cause harm. It was stated that through the growth of technology, cyberviolence has also expanded. Social media is experiencing a rapid incline within society and youth are enabled to access these sites 24/7 by having a device in their hands almost all of the time. Participants shared their belief that a dependency on cell phones is being created earlier and earlier with each generation. Cell phones have become a problem in classrooms and schools and teachers have been forced to adapt and enforce rules and techniques to work with technology and keep students engaged.

- **Role of Anonymity:**

The role of anonymity is significant when looking at the issue of cyberviolence. The participants identified two types of anonymous factors; one being people posting rude comments, etc. anonymously online and two being cruel comments that are posted about someone without their knowledge, perhaps on a site the victim is unaware of. In the first case, anonymity gives people the false courage that they can say anything they want online because there will be no consequences since their identity is hidden. Words are said online that would not normally be said in person. It was also mentioned that avatars and personas are created online and that these characters give people the ability to say and do things they may not have the nerve to do in their real lives. In the second case, rapid changes and turnover rates of social media sites make it difficult for one to be aware of all of the sites available. New sites and apps tend to start with small groups of people and spread through communities.

- **Victim Response:**

Participants stated that people today, in particular youth, have become desensitized to online violence and have built up a tolerance for it. Online bullying has become common place for those on the internet; a reality for those who visit it frequently. People, especially youth, online have normalized their experiences of mean and cruel behaviour. "It's online bullying but they don't see it as online bullying, unless it's absolutely severe." It is not seen as a big problem until it has been blown out of proportion and the victim has lost control. Hurtful words are so common in the online environment that the shock value is gone and it is looked at like it is part of the internet; like that is just how it is. This desensitization of cyberviolence leads to victims not seeking support. *Some reasons for not seeking support* were noted to be due to the stigma involved with speaking out, fear of the violence getting worse and being targeted more, fear of getting into trouble for the victim's role, they do not want to ruin their reputation and they feel shame or embarrassment so they want to keep it a secret. A lack of awareness of the

capability and impact technology can have enables youth to believe that they can handle issues of cyberviolence on their own and that they do not need to ask for help.

- **Misunderstanding the Seriousness:**

The internet provides a platform for violence that is much larger and more permanent than there has ever been in the past. It was stated that youth lack the understanding of the dangers of the internet and how there could be safety issues involved with some of the technology that is available. There is also a lack of understanding and empathy regarding how deeply harsh comments impact the recipients or their lasting effects. Many youth do not understand the legal ramifications that could come from online harassment or those pertaining to minors nude photo sharing. Due to the immediate nature of the internet and social media, responses often lack thought or foresight of what is actually being said or what the outcome has the potential to be.

- **Lack of Consequences:**

Cyberviolence is still a relatively new phenomenon which is important when trying to understand why there is a lack of consequences. Police are limited in what they can do to help those experiencing cyberviolence. It was stated that the laws have not caught up with technology, especially in smaller rural areas. Each situation is unique and the evidence that is available is often limited. It was identified that police involvement is more common in adult cases of cyberviolence than it is with youth cases. Resources are also limited in small communities. Lack of consequences for perpetrators of cyberviolence is also a significant factor. Youth are noticing cruelty going unpunished, perhaps even acts committed themselves, and it is giving them the sense that they can keep doing it because they did not get into trouble for it. Perpetrators lack remorse for their actions as well as they cannot see the immediate reaction of the victim.

- **Females and Males Experience Cyberviolence Differently:**

Adult participants in the focus groups agreed that females are being victimized more often than males and frequently experience cyberviolence from other females as well as males. Both females and males need support when experiencing cyberviolence, but both are going to come about it in a different way as they respond differently. Women were found to experience situations involving the spreading of intimate pictures more often than men. The female and male emotional development also plays a role in their experiences. Girls were found to be affected more by hurtful text messages and would engage more often in a cycle of back and forth comments. Girls were found to experience cyberviolence more in terms of relational aggression. Boys tended to be involved in instances of threats and harassment and handle things directly and with a

faster resolution. Boys were also found to experience a lot of their cyberviolence in online video games from strangers, acquaintances and friends.

- **Females and Males Commit Cyberviolence Differently:**

Participants acknowledged that online violence can be committed by both youth and adults but that cyberviolence is higher with youth. It was also noted that both females and males commit cyberviolence but to different degrees and in different situations. In terms of adults, males were noted to perpetuate cyberviolence more in cases of intimate relationships while females were higher perpetrators for cases with victims of the same gender. In youth, a lot of instances involve girls being cruel to other girls. As youth move into the age of dating and dating violence, both boys and girls participate.

Strengths and Barriers from Online Survey Findings:

Survey responses (N = 353) are divided by the age group (youth, adult) and sex of respondents (female, male).

Notes:

- Percentages do not always sum to 100 due to rounding and/or respondent omissions.
- All percentages are calculated as a function of respondents to each individual question.
- Where useful for interpretation, the number of respondents (n) is provided in parentheses.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Respondent Age and Gender (N)

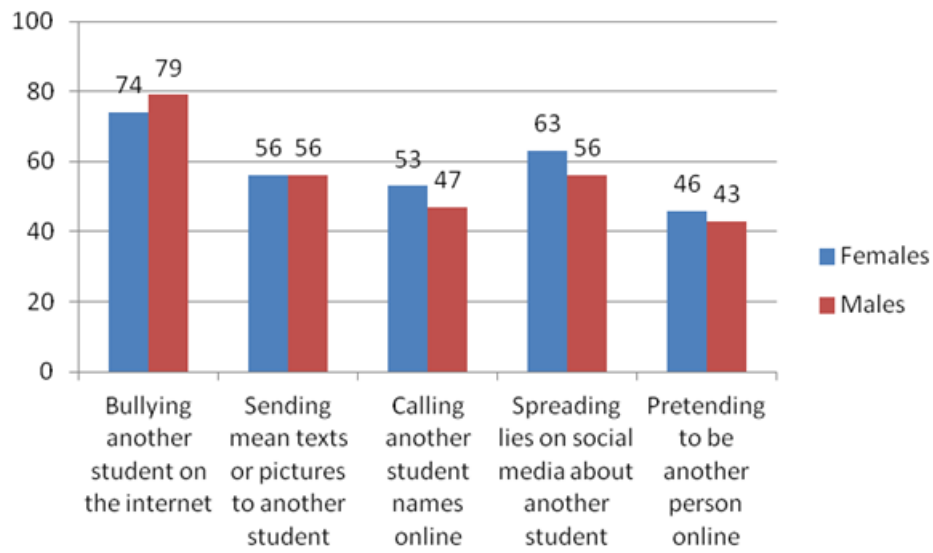
	Females	Males
Youth	117	100
Adults	115	21

Respondent Race/Ethnicity (%)

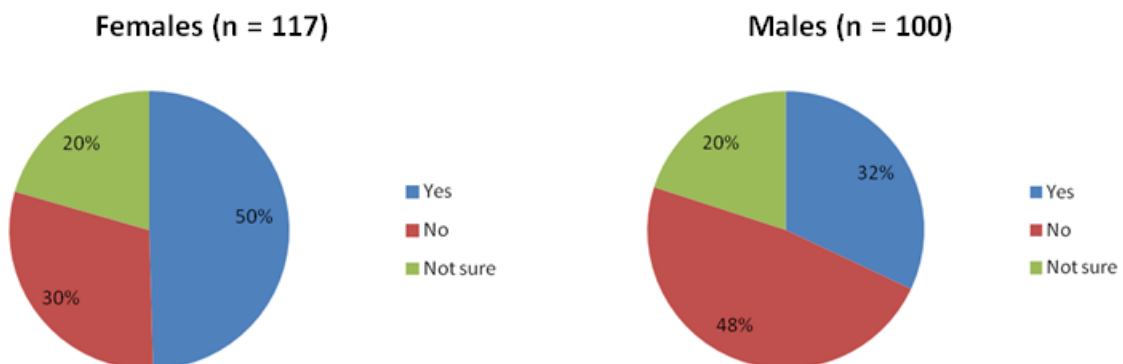
	Youth		Adults	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
First Nations	13	8	4	5
Caucasian	56	58	94	86
African American	2	1	0	5
Asian	6	11	1	5
Hispanic/Latino	1	0	1	0
Other	22	22	1	0

YOUTH RESPONSES

What do you think mean and/or cruel behaviour online is? (% endorse)



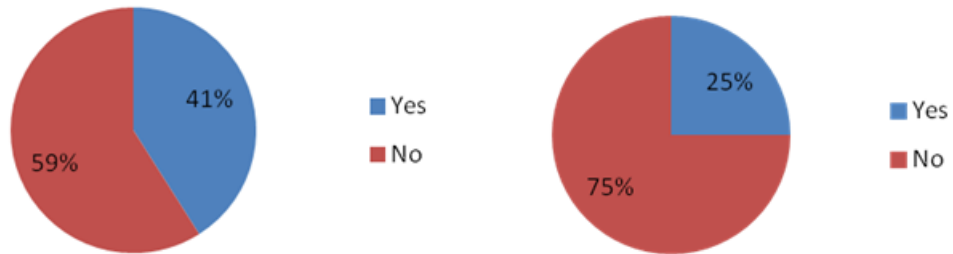
Have you ever experienced behaviour online that you consider to be mean and/or cruel?



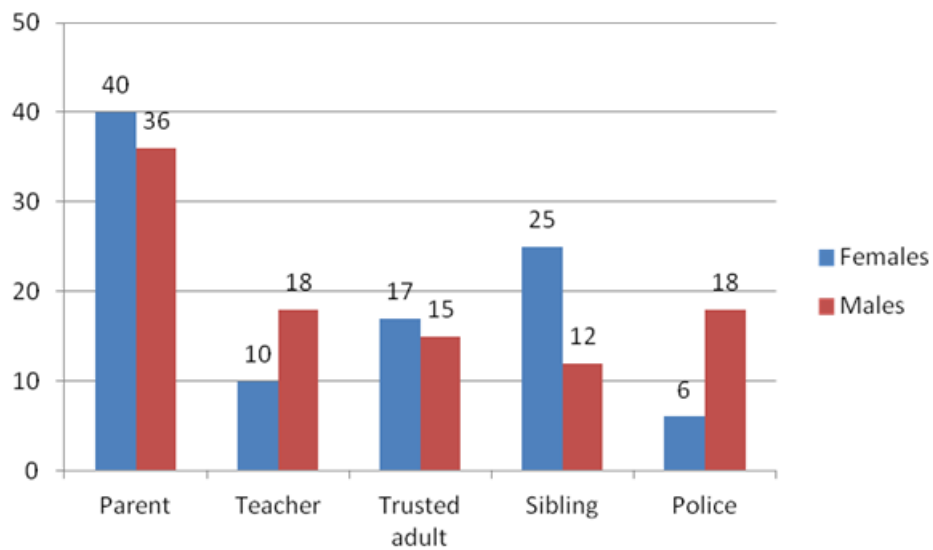
If you have experienced cruelty online, did you report it to anyone?

Females (n = 117)

Males (n = 100)

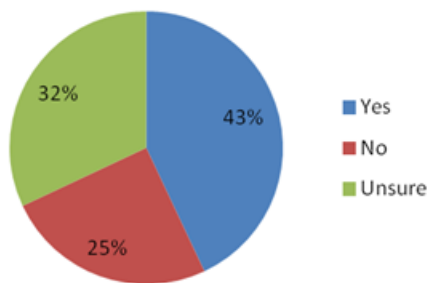


If you have reported experiencing cruelty online, whom did you report it to? (% endorse)

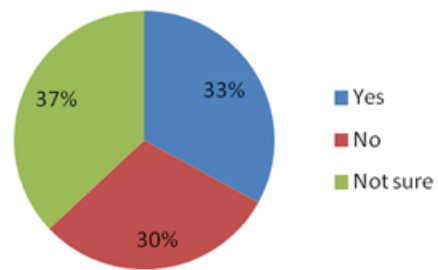


If you did report mean and/or cruel online behaviour did the situation get better?

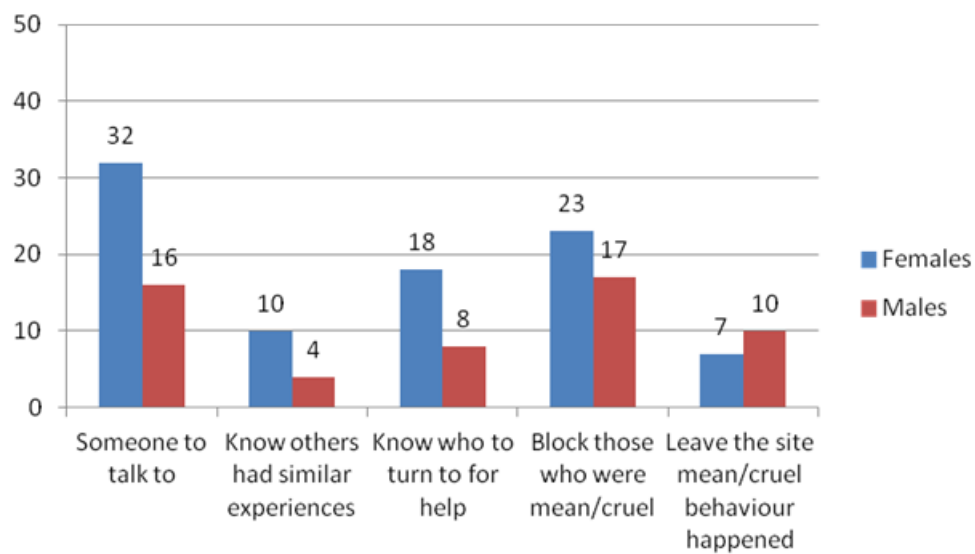
Females (n = 44)



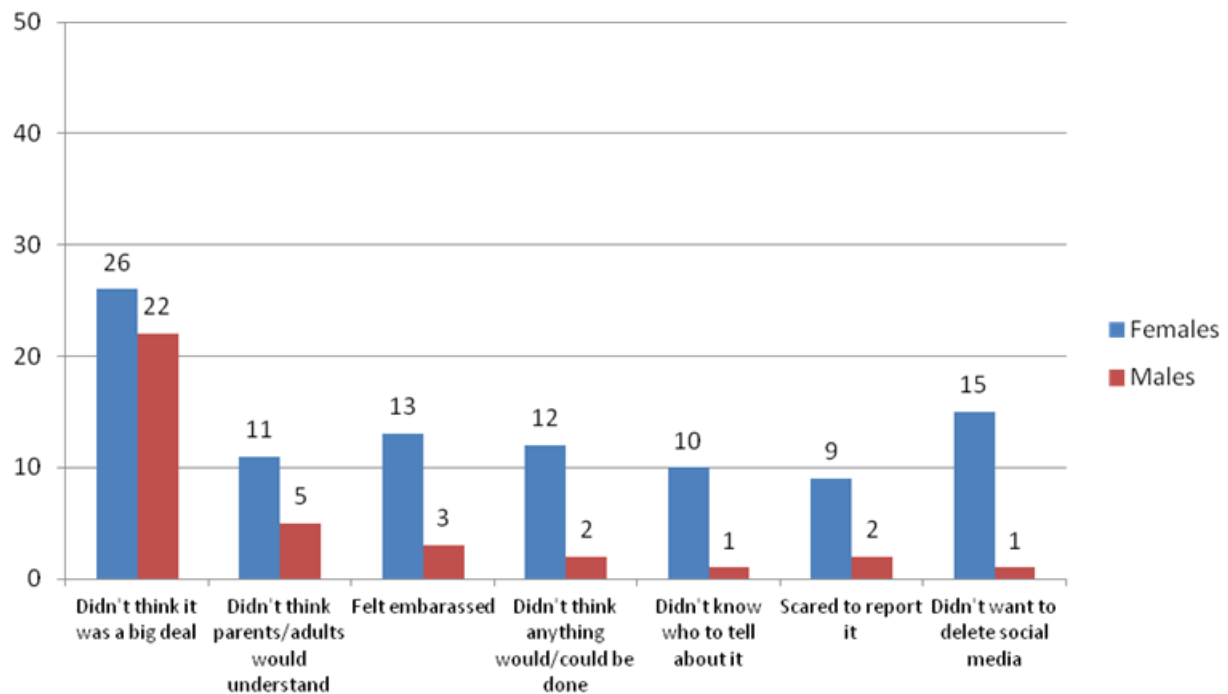
Males (n = 30)



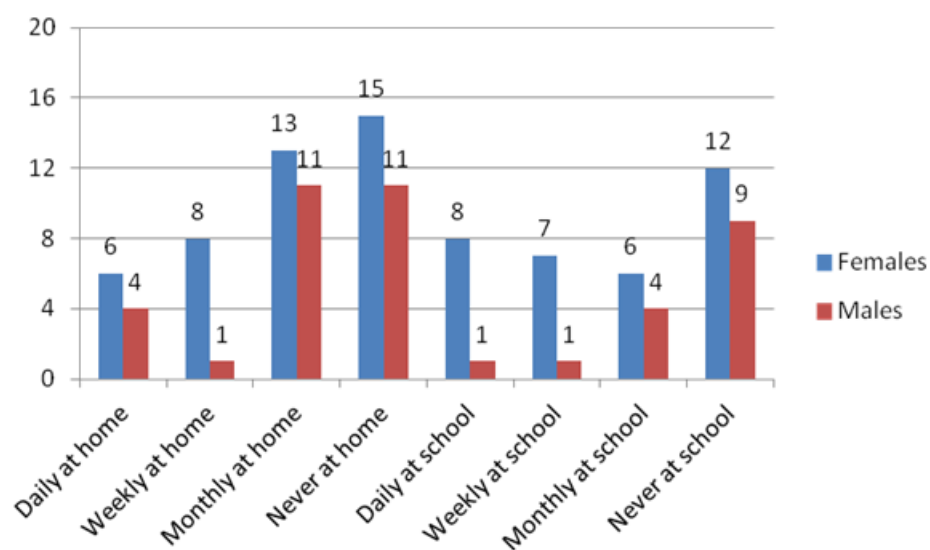
If you were experiencing mean or cruel behaviour online, what was helpful to you? (% endorse)



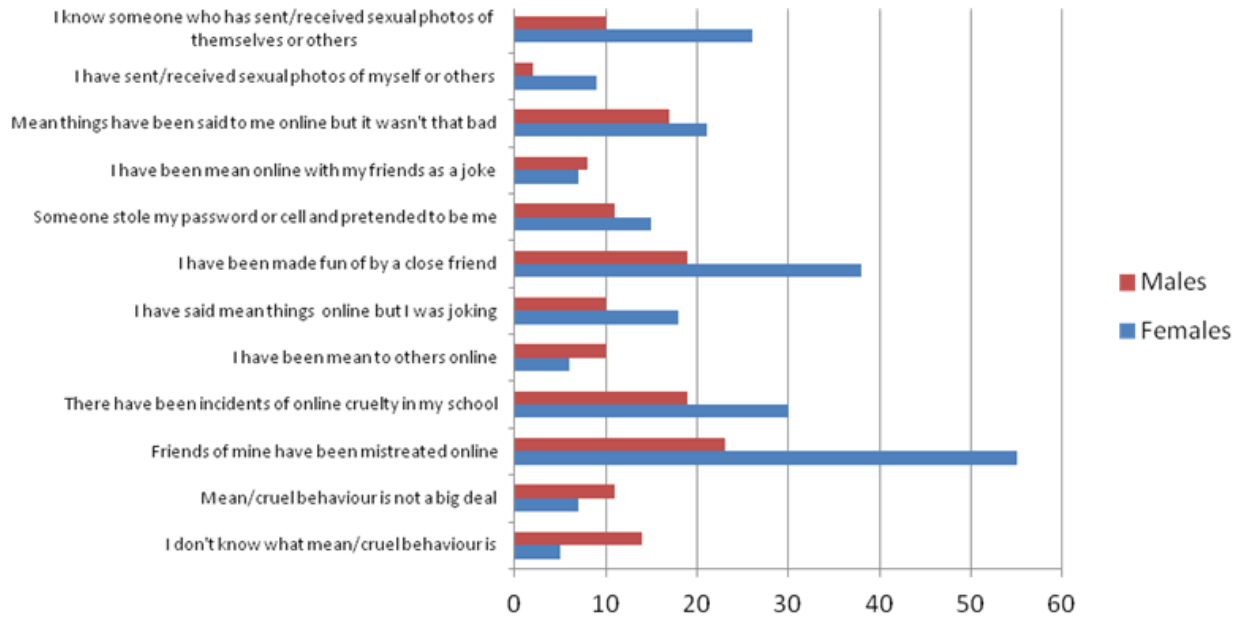
If you are/were experiencing mean and/or cruel behaviour online and did not report it, what is/was the reason? (% endorse)



If you are/were experiencing mean and/or cruel behaviour online, please indicate where and when it happened? (% endorse)

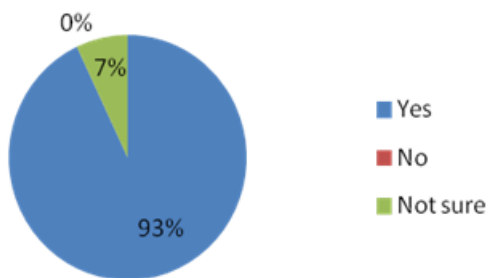


Select all that apply (% agree)

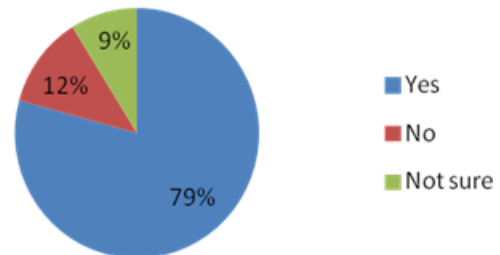


Do you think that there is a problem with people being mean and/or cruel online?

Females (n = 93)

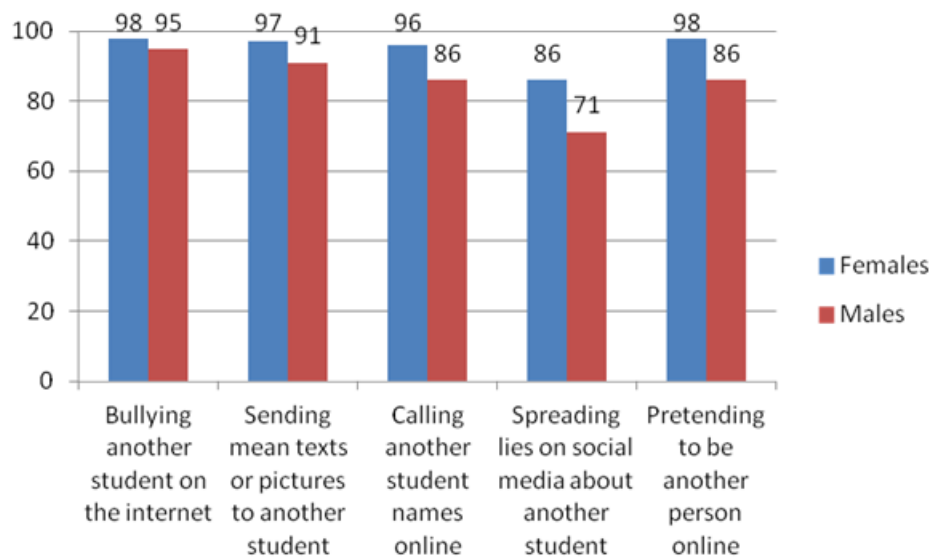


Males (n = 93)



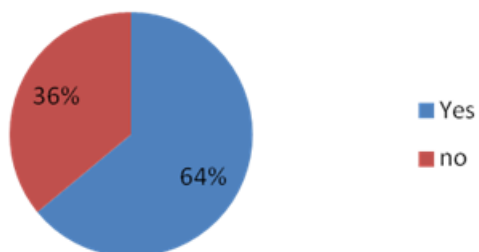
ADULT RESPONSES

What do you think mean and/or cruel behaviour online is (% endorse)

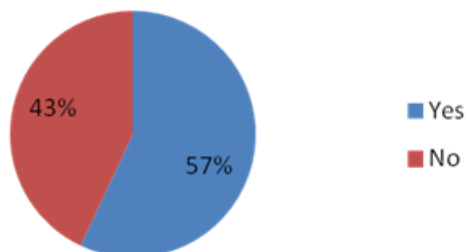


Are you the parent or guardian of a minor?

Females (n = 116)

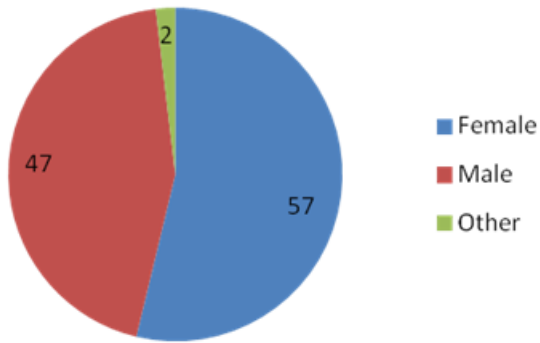


Males (n = 21)

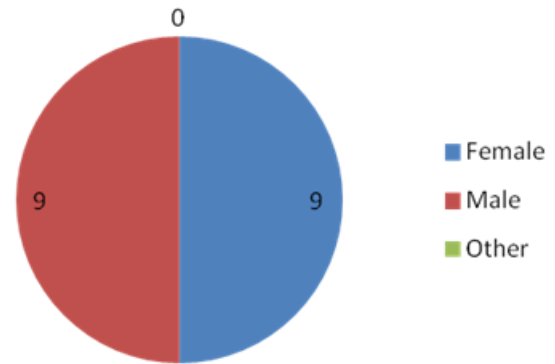


If you are the parent or guardian of a minor, what is their gender? (number endorse)

Females (n = 106)

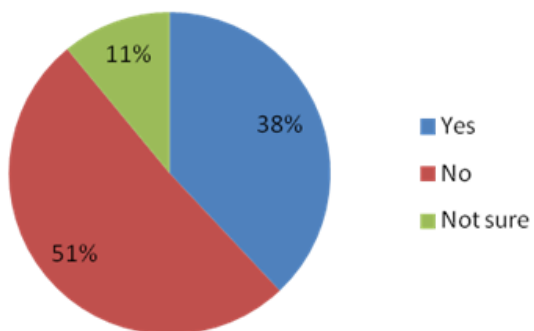


Males (n = 18)

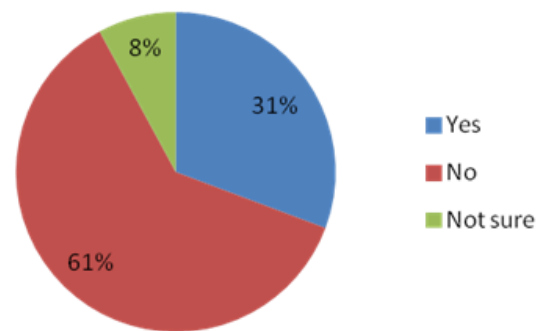


To your knowledge, has your child been affected at some point by mean and/or cruel behaviour online?

Females (n = 73)

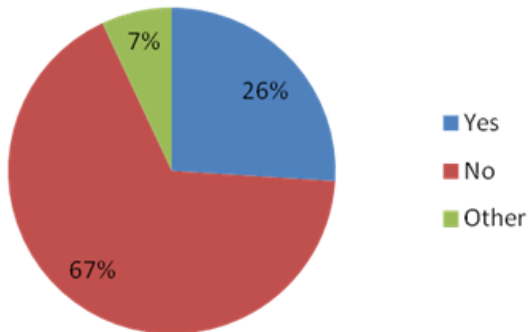


Males (n = 13)

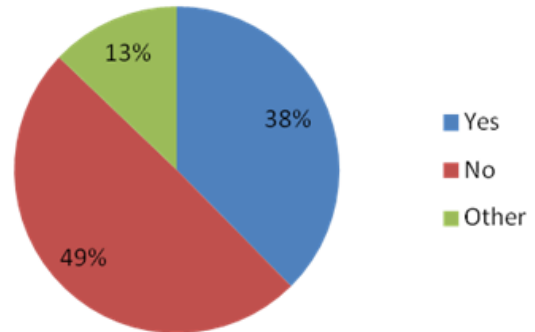


Did the minor tell you that he or she was experiencing cruelty online?

Females (n = 57)

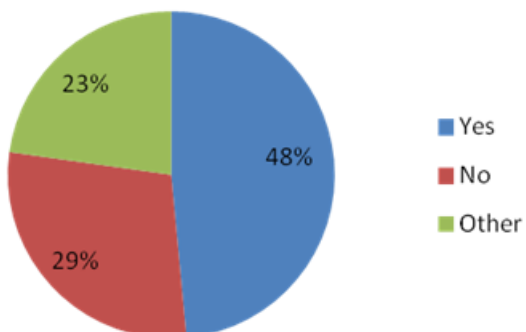


Males (n = 11)

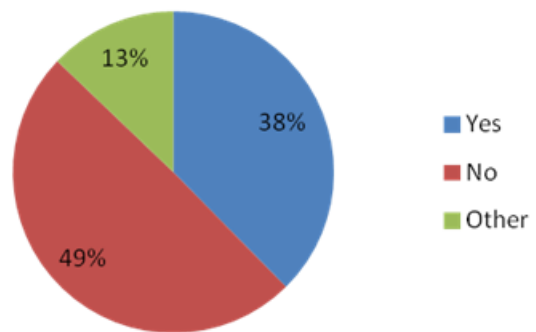


Did the actions taken help the situation?

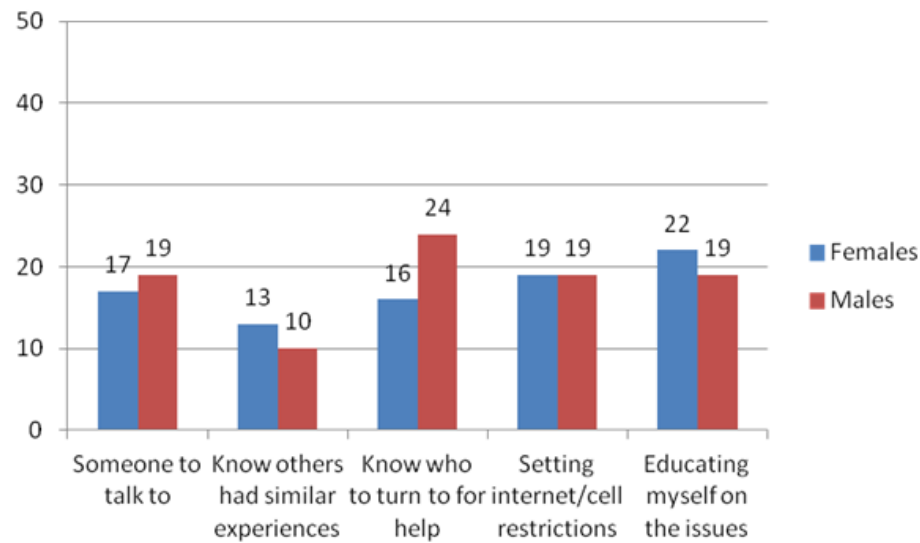
Females (n = 35)



Males (n = 8)

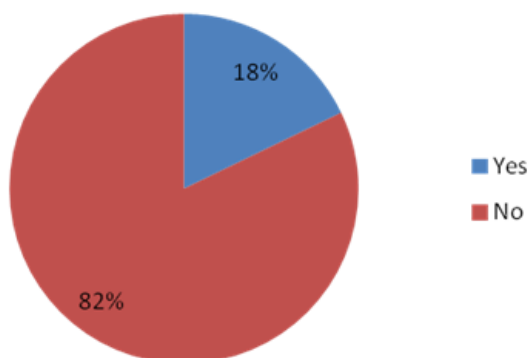


If your child was experiencing mean and/or cruel behaviour online what was helpful to you?
(% endorse)

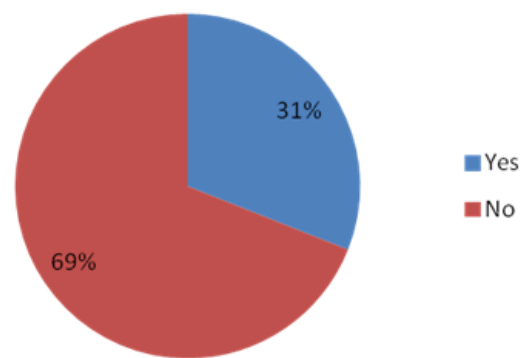


Have you personally or another adult you know, experienced mean and/or cruel behaviour online?

Females (n = 104)

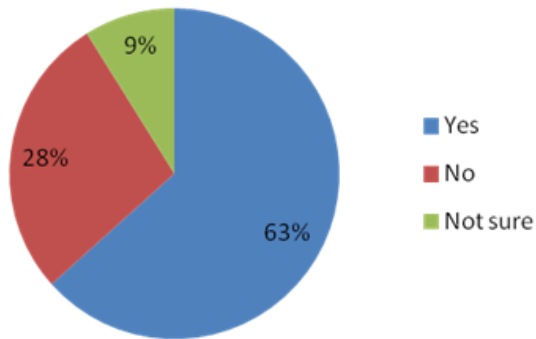


Males (n = 20)

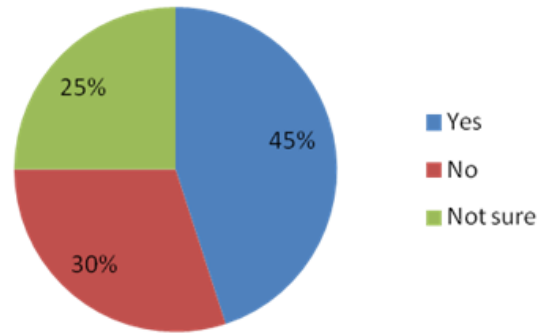


If you are/were experiencing mean and/or cruel behaviour online, did you report it?

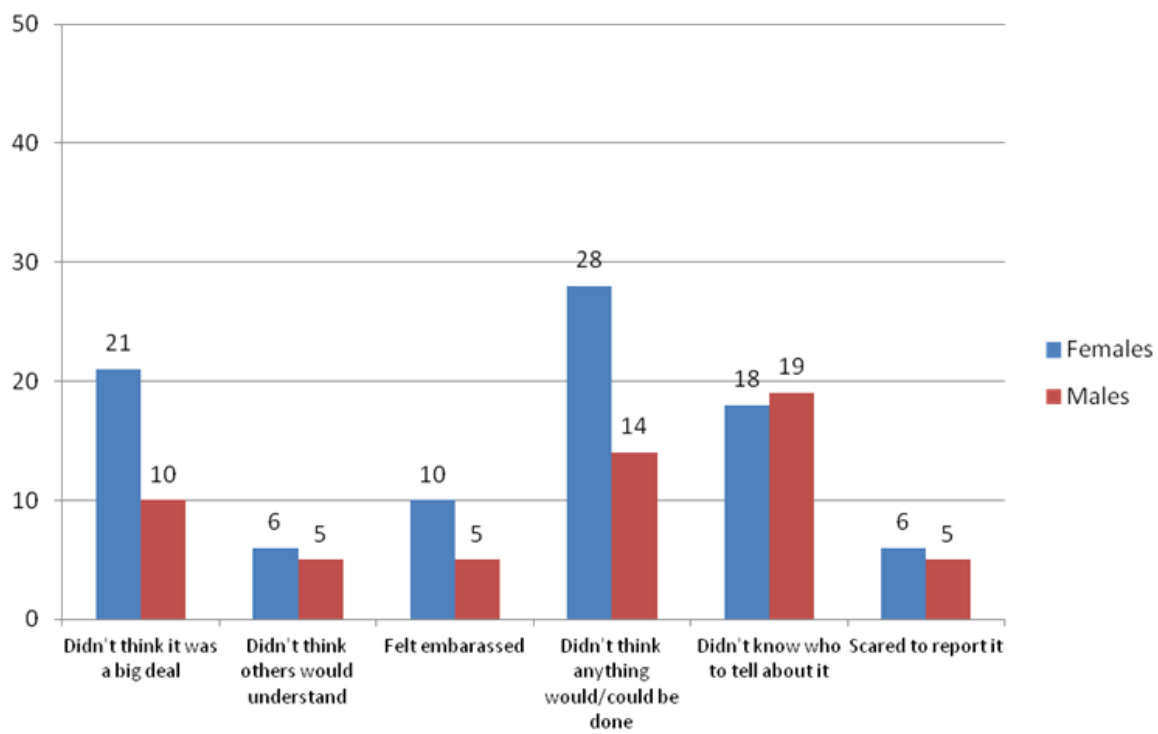
Females (n = 63)



Males (n = 13)

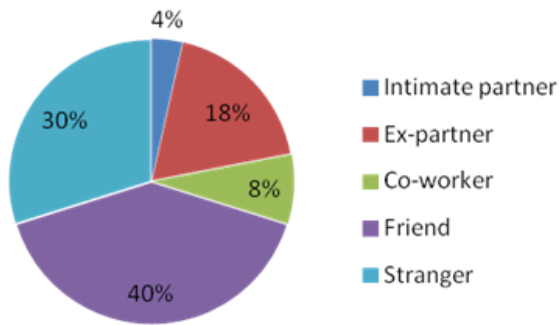


If you are/were experiencing mean and/or cruel behaviour online and did not report it, what is/was the reason? (% endorse)

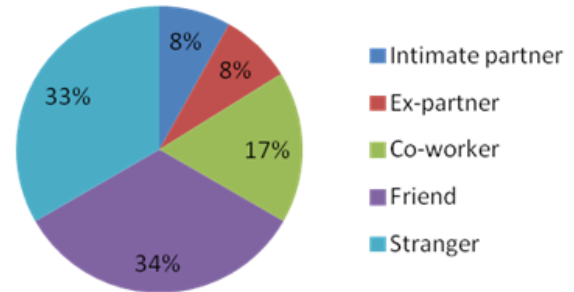


Who perpetuated the mean and/or cruel behaviour online?

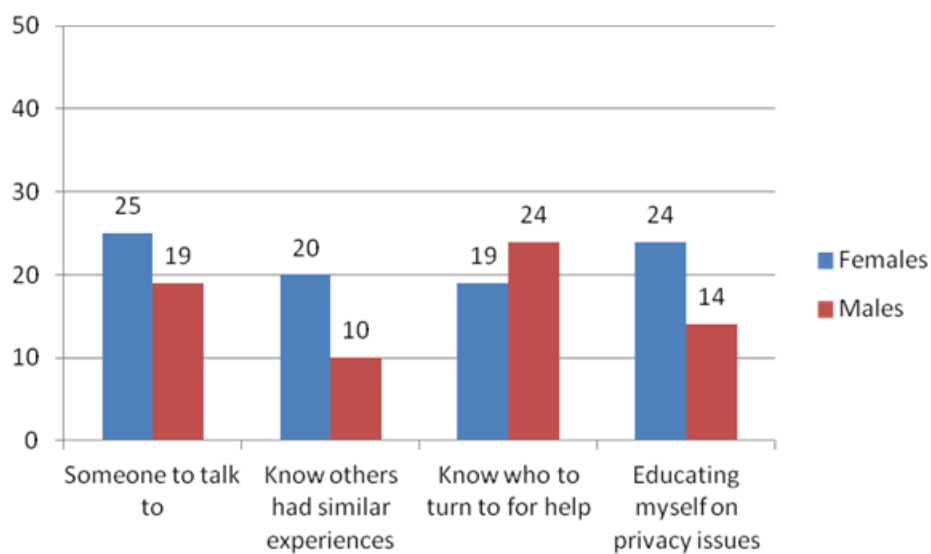
Females (n = 80)



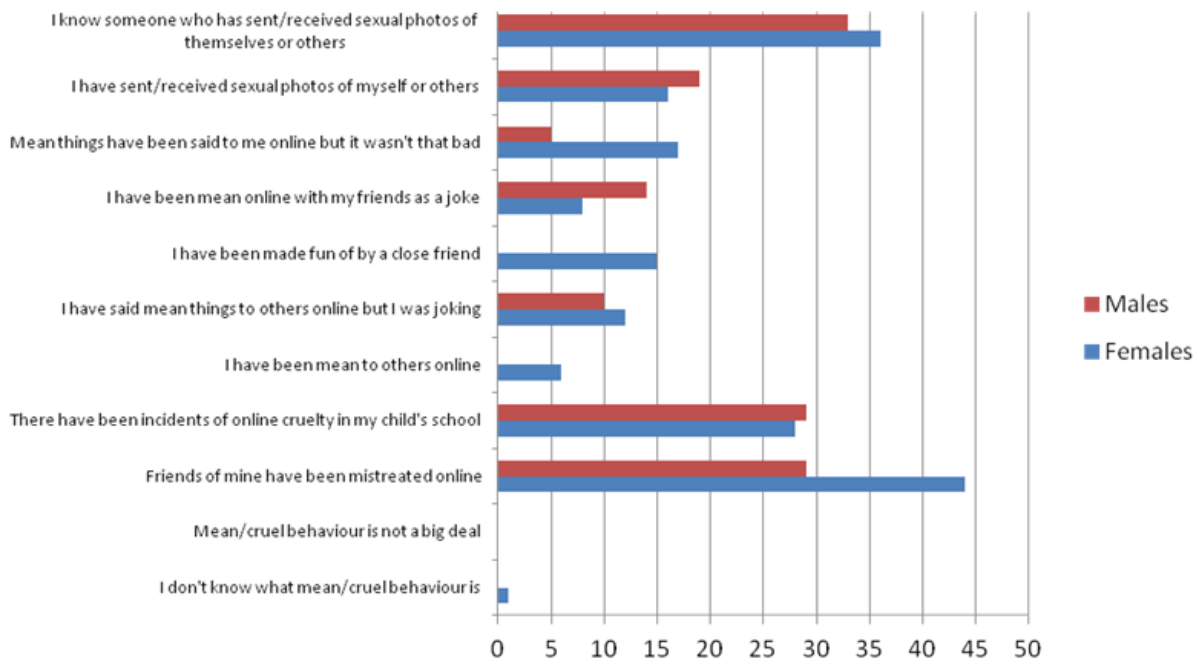
Males (n = 12)



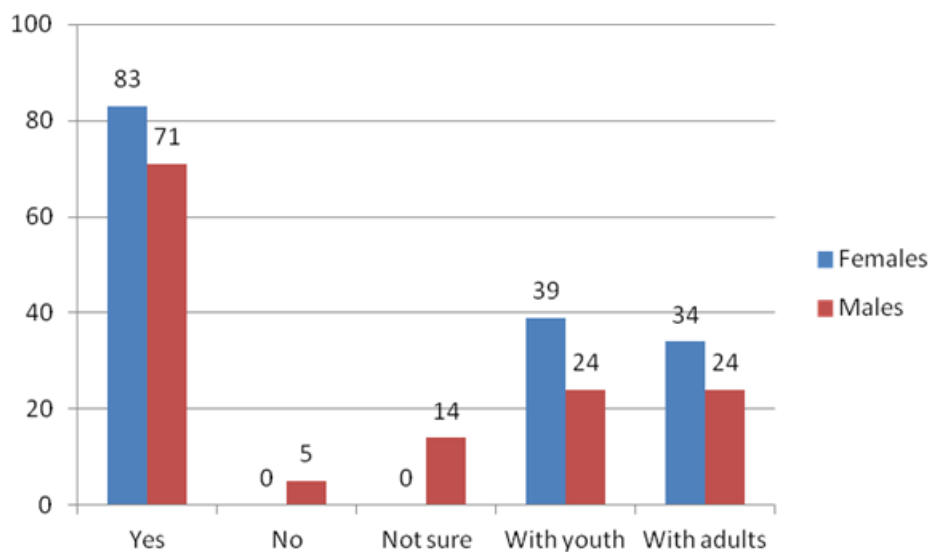
What helped you the most if you are/were experiencing mean and/or cruel behaviour online? (% endorse)



Select all that apply (% agree)



Do you think that there is a problem with people being mean and/ or cruel online? (% agree)



Summary for Recommended Strategies or Solutions:

Based on the findings of the data collected, three main areas, education, partnerships and support, were highlighted with a focus on the prevention of cyberviolence. Education was discovered as an area that needs improvement. Education needs to be made available to youth and especially parents on the different aspects of cyberviolence. Education need to be provided on the prevention of cyberviolence but also on how to react to online violence and where the supports are for help. Awareness needs to be created about the pressures that youth are facing online and how much of an impact technology has on their development and the hold it has on people's lives in today's society. It needs to be vocalized that cyberviolence is a serious issue in order to deter its minimization. Education would also consist of empathy training and bringing back the human connection to electronic communication. An important element of education would be to work with the community to find out which information is most important to them in order to obtain the best response.

Another area of focus that would be a significant part of any strategy succeeding would be partnerships. A partnership with telephone companies in our communities such as Sasktel and the *I am Stronger* campaign should be looked into as a way to spread information and support to those who use their services. Partnering with an existing campaign that is already grounded would help with exposure, promotion and support and resource availability. This partnership may look like text messages that are sent out to customers who agreed to receive information regarding cyberviolence or positive affirmations or encouragement. Telephone companies are a hub that everyone needs to access at some point in order to keep their technology going. This relationship could be utilized as an efficient and effective way to get information to the people who request it. Another partnership would be with local school divisions and devising a plan to keep cellphones out of schools in order to put the focus back on learning.

The last area that was identified for a strategy was support. Support needs to be made available for those that are experiencing cyberviolence and those that are working against it. Victims of cyberviolence need more accessible supports. A need was recognized for support groups within communities that are age and gender specific. This would give community members a chance to share with others who are going through the same experience and be a safe place for people to open up. Another form of support would be for those that are battling cyberviolence whether it is parents or service providers. This may look like specialized personnel who deal solely with cyberviolence cases and free up teachers, counsellors and police to focus on their main jobs. This community liaison support role would be imperative in uniting communities. Having one person or team with a focus of cyberviolence will enable the continuous changes of technology to be monitored and help communities to know where to turn in crisis.

The areas of education, partnerships and support that were identified are all interconnected for a strategy that will create a united front for communities. This united front will enable communication and create a network that provides guidelines on how to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence while simultaneously building the strength of the community.

Ending Remarks:

In closing, the phenomenon of cyberviolence is vast and ever changing. This creates a need for the strategy to be flexible while addressing prevention and elimination. Those who are experiencing cyberviolence are the ones who hold the answers for its demise. It is important to note that youth need to be continuously engaged and be a part of the solution. Youth should be incorporated into all aspects of the strategy from education to partnerships to support and have hands on involvement. The solution for cyberviolence needs to focus on using technology to its advantage and working with where the community is at. One off strategies and solutions will not eliminate cyberviolence. A strategy that encompasses longevity while maintaining a focus on current events will need to be established.