

insights:

# experiences of cyberbullying over time

headspace National Youth Mental  
Health Survey 2020



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## Methodology

### **This paper presents insights from the 2020 headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey.**

#### **Who conducted the survey?**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation funded the survey and commissioned Colmar Brunton (now Kantar Public) to undertake the survey, the analysis and reporting.

#### **Did the survey receive ethics approval?**

This study was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and received ethics approval from Bellberry Limited Human Research Ethics Committee (ref: 2020-04-395).

#### **How was the survey conducted?**

The first survey was conducted between July and September 2018 and involved a national telephone survey of 4,065 Australian youth (aged 12-25 years). The telephone survey was conducted by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing or CATI.

A quota sampling strategy was used, with quotas set according to age, gender and state/territory that ensured representation as per general population demographic spread.

The current survey was conducted between 25 May and 21 June 2020 and involved a national telephone survey of 1,035 Australian youth (aged 12-25 years). The survey was conducted when much of the country was in a stage of government enforced lockdown, or just emerging from a period of lockdown due to COVID-19.

#### **How is the data analysed and reported?**

Throughout the report, we provide metrics for the total sample and consider differences by gender and by age group.

The data has been weighted to represent the population of young people in Australia in each of the four age groups (12-14 years, 15-17 years, 18-21 years and 22-25 years), by gender and by state/territory of residence. Tests of statistical significance have been conducted and only differences significant at 95% confidence are presented.

In some instances throughout the report percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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## Executive Summary: Cyberbullying over time

Telephone survey

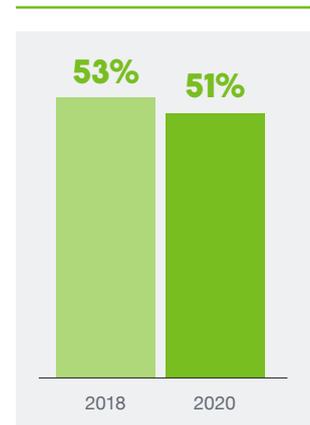


### Experience of bullying in digital contexts continues to be common among young people, with just over half (51%) of Australian young people reporting they have experienced some type of cyberbullying in their lifetime.

Rates remain high and stable between 2018 and 2020. No changes are seen among young men or young women, nor in each of the age groups.

Someone posting mean or hurtful comments online is the most commonly experienced type of cyberbullying.

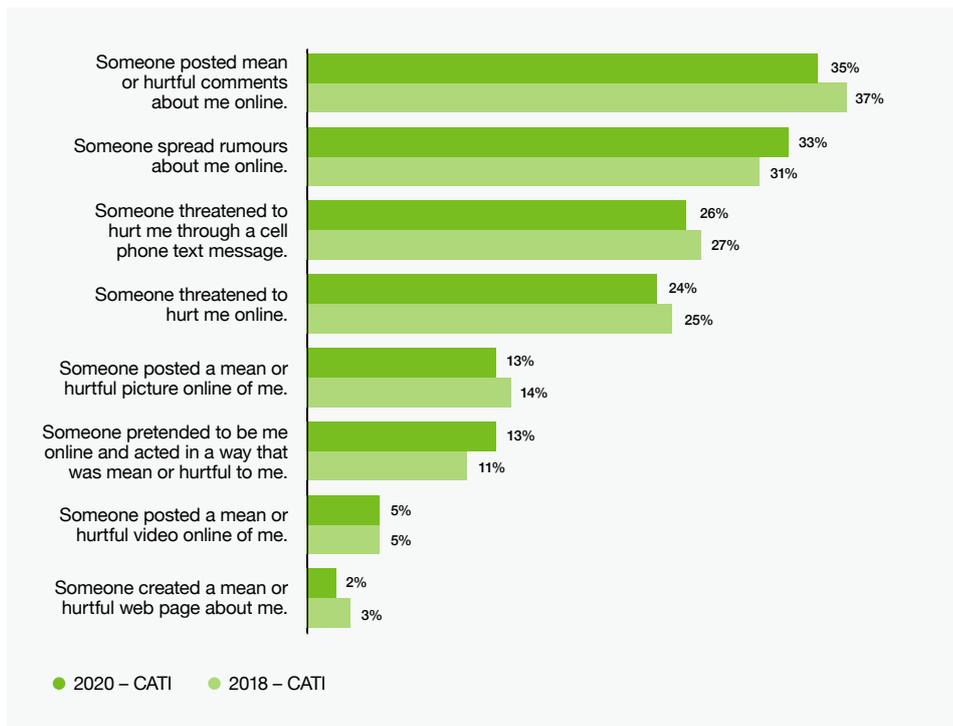
- One in three have experienced this in their lifetime (35%).
- A further one in three have experienced someone spreading rumours about them online (33%).
- In 2020, the rate of lifetime cyberbullying among young men (49%) is comparable to that of young women (52%).



One in two Australian young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying in their lifetime. This is comparable to the rate seen in 2018.

**Insight 1:**

## Experiences of cyberbullying remain stable over time



**Figure 1.**

Lifetime experience of cyberbullying – % Yes

Experiences of cyberbullying remain common among Australian young people. The proportion of young people who have experienced each of the different types of cyberbullying (in their lifetime) in 2020 is the same as that seen in 2018.

In 2020, one in three young people have experienced someone posting mean or hurtful comments about them online (35%) and a further one in three have experienced someone spreading rumours about them online (33%). One in four young people have experienced someone threatening to hurt them through a mobile phone text message (26%) or online (24%).

# 35%

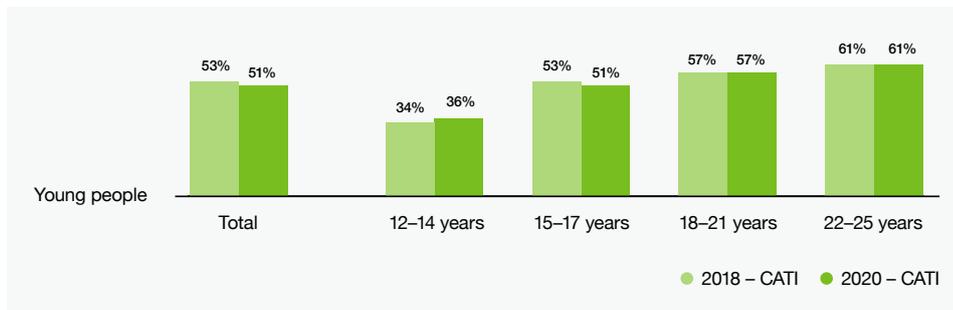
of young people have experienced someone posting mean or hurtful comments about them online.

Cyberbullying Victimization Scale.

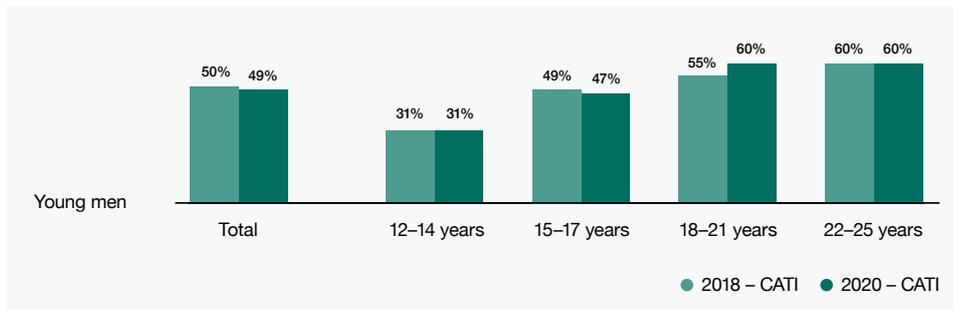
↓↑ Indicates results are significantly different from other survey at 95% confidence.

**Insight 2:**

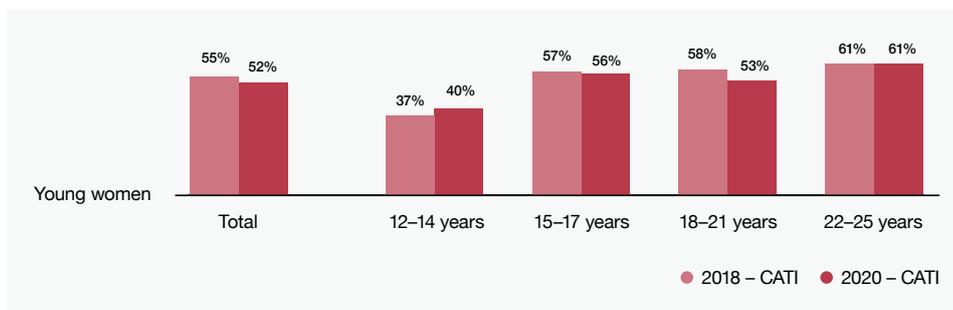
**In 2020, one in two Australian young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying in their lifetime (51%)**



**Figure 2.**  
Lifetime experience of cyberbullying – % Yes  
*Young people*



**Figure 3.**  
Lifetime experience of cyberbullying – % Yes  
*Young men*



**Figure 4.**  
Lifetime experience of cyberbullying – % Yes  
*Young women*

In 2020, one in two Australian young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying in their lifetime (51%). This is comparable to the rate seen in 2018 (53%). Experience of cyberbullying remains stable among young women, young men, and for each of the age groups.

In 2020, experiences of cyberbullying are as prevalent among young women as they are among young men, and this is seen across each of the age groups.

The large increase in the incidence of cyberbullying among 15-17 year olds (compared to 12-14 year olds ) shows that early/mid adolescence is the stage when this harmful behaviour is most prevalent.

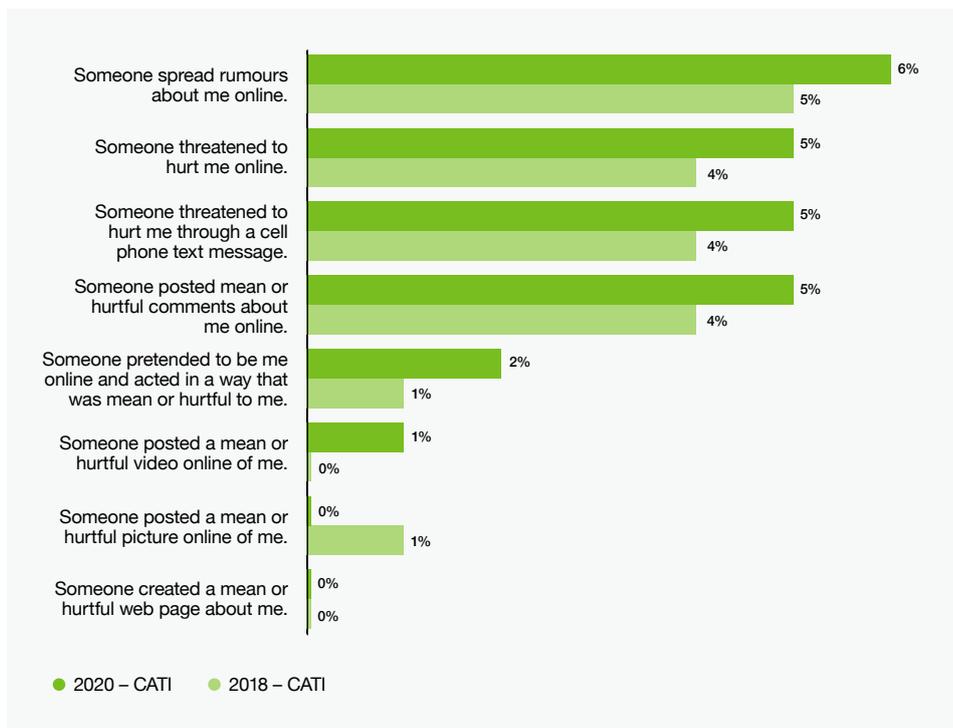
**51%**  
of Australian young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying in their lifetime.

Cyberbullying Victimization Scale.

↓ ↑ Indicates results are significantly different from other survey at 95% confidence.

**Insight 3:**

## Experiences of cyberbullying over the past month also remains stable in 2020 compared to 2018



**Figure 5.**

Past month experience of cyberbullying – % Yes

Rates of cyberbullying over the past month also remain stable in 2020, with no changes in rate of experiences seen for each of the forms of cyberbullying between 2018 and 2020.

In 2020, one in twenty young people experienced someone spreading rumours about them online, over the previous month (6%). A further one in twenty had experienced someone threatening to hurt them online (5%) and through a text message (5%) over the past month.

**6%**

of young people have experienced someone spreading rumours about them online, over the previous month.

**5%**

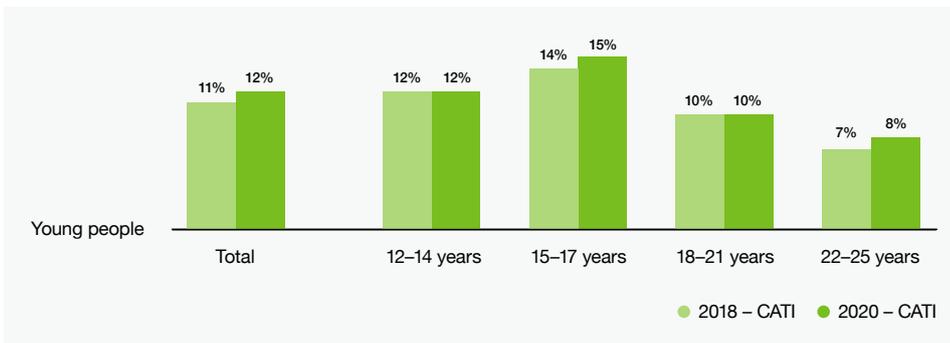
of young people have experienced someone threatening to hurt them online and/or through a text message, over the past month.

Cyberbullying Victimization Scale.

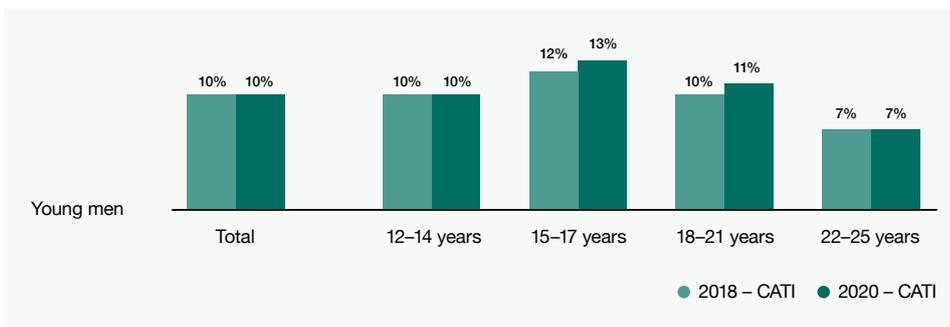
↓↑ Indicates results are significantly different from other survey at 95% confidence.

**Insight 4:**

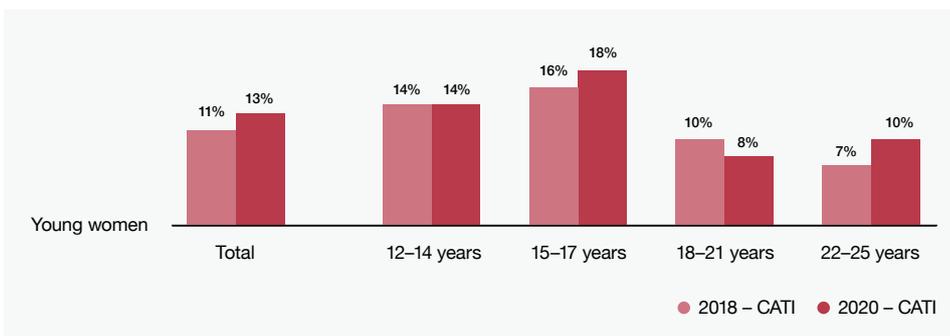
**In 2020, one in eight Australian young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying in the past month (12%)**



**Figure 6.**  
Past month experience of cyberbullying – % Yes  
*Young people*



**Figure 7.**  
Past month experience of cyberbullying – % Yes  
*Young men*



**Figure 8.**  
Past month experience of cyberbullying – % Yes  
*Young women*

In 2020, one in eight Australian young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying in the past month (12%). This is comparable to the rate seen in 2018 (11%). Experience of cyberbullying over the past month remains stable among young women, young men, and for each of the age groups.

In 2020, experiences of cyberbullying are as prevalent among young women as they are among young men, and this is seen across each of the age groups.

Cyberbullying Victimization Scale.

↓ ↑ Indicates results are significantly different from other survey at 95% confidence.



headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health