Safe Spaces for Gen Z in the Digital World: Training on Combating Cyberbullying

CYBERSAFE-Z | Need Analysis Report

Project & Contributors

This report has been developed as part of the "CYBERSAFE-Z: Safe Spaces for Gen Z in the Digital World: Training on Combating Cyberbullying" project.

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INTRODUCTION

CYBERSAFE-Z (Erasmus+ KA210-YOU) is a 12-month project implemented by partners in Portugal, Poland, and Lithuania, focused on creating safer digital environments for young people by strengthening digital resilience and improving responses to cyberbullying. The project combines educational materials and non-formal learning activities (guidebook modules, webinars for youth workers, youth workshops, and awareness actions) to support young people and the professionals who work with them.

The purpose of this needs analysis report is to provide an evidence-based foundation for designing the CYBERSAFE-Z guidebook and training content. Specifically, the needs analysis aims to:

- assess young people's awareness, knowledge, and behavioural tendencies regarding digital safety, cyberbullying, and resilience;
- collect practical insights from youth workers and educators on patterns, challenges, and effective support strategies;
- map national and EU-level context (prevalence, trends, policies, and good practices) to ensure relevance and transferability across partner countries;
- identify priority competencies and learning needs that should be reflected directly in the project's modules, webinars, and workshops.

Methodology overview

Research design: mixed-method and cross-country comparative approach
To capture both measurable trends (e.g., awareness levels, platform use, perceived prevalence) and deeper contextual explanations (e.g., barriers to reporting, what support works in practice), CYBERSAFE-Z used a mixed-method design combining:

1. desk research, 2) an online youth survey, and 3) focus group discussions with youth workers/educators.

All three partner countries implemented the same overall methodological framework, enabling comparison across Portugal, Poland, and Lithuania and supporting identification of both shared needs and country-specific priorities.

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Data collection methods

1) Desk research (national + EU context)

Each partner conducted desk research to frame the national situation within a broader EU context. The desk research template guided partners to summarise:

- Cyberbullying prevalence and recent trends,
- demographic and digital-use trends relevant to youth online risk,
- education and awareness initiatives,
- policies and best practices.

This component ensures that the needs analysis is grounded in verified sources and that recommendations can align with existing national structures and policies where possible.

2) Online survey with young people

To gather comparable quantitative data, each partner implemented an online survey targeting young people, with at least 25 responses per partner country (minimum 75 in total).

The survey tool covered five core areas:

- Participant profile: age, gender, education level, daily online time, and most-used platforms;
- Digital awareness and safety: privacy settings, personal information sharing, verifying misinformation, digital citizenship, respectful online communication;
- Cyberbullying experience and perception: victim/witness experience and perceived prevalence;
- Digital resilience: coping with negative interactions, support-seeking, stress management, feeling safe online;

Training and support needs: prior training exposure, perceived usefulness, expectations from the project, preferred learning formats, and open comments.

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Most attitudinal items used a 1–5 Likert scale to allow consistent scoring and comparison across countries, alongside a small number of open-ended questions to capture expectations and additional needs.

3) Focus group discussions with youth workers and educators

To complement youth survey data with practitioner perspectives, each partner conducted one focus group session with youth workers and/or educators (minimum 5 participants, plus a moderator).

Focus groups were designed to explore:
- how youth workers and educators define and observe cyberbullying in their context;
- common reactions of young people and typical barriers to seeking help;
- perceived gaps in existing school/youth-centre awareness efforts (best/worst practices);
- skills that most support digital resilience;
- preferred training formats and methods that would be most useful in practice.

Sessions lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and followed a structured flow (opening, warm-up, main discussion, closing). Note-taking was supported by an optional audio recording, only with informed consent.

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Data analysis approach

Quantitative analysis (survey)

Survey data were analysed using descriptive and comparative methods:

- Frequency tables for participant profiles (age, gender, education status, online time, platforms used);
- Likert-scale scoring: mean scores were calculated for each statement (scale 1–5). Scores of 4.0+ were treated as strong indicators of awareness/strengths, while scores below 2.5 flagged priority learning gaps to be addressed in training content;
- Cross-country comparison: results from Portugal, Poland, and Lithuania were compared to identify shared patterns and country-specific differences that could inform tailored examples and activities.
-

Analysis outputs were compiled in spreadsheet format and supported with visualisations (e.g., bar charts, pie charts) where relevant.

Qualitative analysis (focus groups + desk research synthesis)

Focus group notes (and recordings where available) were summarised into key themes, including barriers, effective responses, and priority skills needed by youth workers and young people. Representative quotes were selected where appropriate and anonymised.

Finally, partners triangulated desk research, survey findings, and focus group insights to produce 3–5 actionable recommendations per country, with a specific emphasis on competencies that should shape the CYBERSAFE-Z guidebook modules and training activities.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics, safeguarding, and data protection

All data collection was designed to respect confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection principles. For focus groups in particular, the methodology emphasised:

- informed consent for participation and any recording;
- anonymity in reporting and no attribution of statements to identifiable individuals;
- a safeguarding approach: if distress arose, moderators could stop/redirect discussion and share local support resources.

Implementation timeline (needs analysis phase)

The needs analysis phase followed a coordinated schedule across partners, covering survey launch and collection, focus group meetings, and desk research/data analysis, culminating in a consolidated report prepared by Polivision.

Structure of this report

This report is organised as follows:
- **Introduction (project context and methodology)**
- **Portugal – Needs Analysis (desk research + survey analysis + focus group insights + recommendations)**
- **Poland – Needs Analysis (desk research + survey analysis + focus group insights + recommendations)**
- **Lithuania – Needs Analysis (desk research + survey analysis + focus group insights + recommendations)**

This structure supports both country-specific use (for local youth work practice) and cross-country learning (for module design and shared European approaches).

PORTUGAL

Need Analysis

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Overview

Cyberbullying prevalence

Recent EU studies show that cyberbullying remains a significant concern among young people, though prevalence rates vary widely between countries due to differences in definitions, methodologies, and age groups studied. Across Europe, estimates typically range from low single digits to over 20% in some countries, with meta-analyses noting substantial variation and mixed trends over time. While some nations report increases in recent years, others show stabilization or slight declines. Overall, cyberbullying tends to be less common than traditional bullying, but nearly half of victims experience both forms, underlining their strong interconnection.

In Portugal, available data suggest lower national prevalence compared to most EU countries. A meta-analysis of representative studies reported one of the lowest rates in Europe (2.8%) [1]. However, smaller and non-representative studies indicate higher exposure in specific groups: one found that 78.3% of young people (15–24 years) had experienced at least one form of cyberbullying [2]. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Portuguese online studies reported widespread exposure and increased psychological distress among victims [3]. Regional research from northern Portugal further revealed gendered differences, with males more often aggressors and females more often victims [1].

Overall, although Portugal's national rate appears comparatively low, existing studies highlight notable variation across samples and emphasize the continued relevance of cyberbullying as a youth issue across Europe. The evidence base remains heterogeneous, and no recent (2020–2025) nationally representative Portuguese data are available to establish an updated prevalence trend.

Demographic Trends

Young people across the EU are almost universally online. In 2024, 97% of individuals aged 16–29 used the internet daily, and 88% used social networks, with Portugal closely following these averages [4]. According to Eurostat, 90.6% of Portuguese households had internet access in 2024, and 88.5% of people aged 16–74 were recent internet users, confirming widespread digital inclusion [5]. Portugal's 15–24-year-olds account for approximately 10.3% of the population, forming a smaller but highly connected demographic [6]. Studies indicate that Portuguese youth spend around 145 minutes per day on social media, mainly on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp [7]. EU-wide analyses highlight that young people are increasingly accessing social networks through mobile devices, which heightens exposure to online risks and peer-related aggression [8]. Portugal's high youth connectivity, intensive social media use, and mobile-based communication patterns make adolescents particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying and online victimization.

Education and Awareness Level

Portugal has developed a comprehensive structure for digital safety education and cyberbullying awareness. The Portuguese Safer Internet Centre (Centro Internet Segura), coordinated by the National Cybersecurity Centre (CNCS), the Directorate-General for Education (DGE), and other partners, operates the national helpline (Linha Internet Segura) and hotline for illegal content, offers awareness campaigns, and coordinates Safer Internet Day events [9].

Within schools, the Ministry of Education's initiative "Escola Sem Bullying. Escola Sem Violência" (School Without Bullying, School Without Violence), created by Despacho n.° 8404-C/2019, requires each school to develop an action plan for prevention, monitoring, and intervention against bullying and cyberbullying [10]. Complementing this, SeguraNet, managed by DGE, provides teaching resources and training for educators to promote digital citizenship, online resilience, and critical media literacy [11].

Portugal combines governmental coordination, NGO partnerships, and educational mandates, ensuring that awareness and prevention are addressed at institutional, family, and youth levels.

Best Practices, Governmental Practices, and Policies

At EU level, the Better Internet for Kids+ (BIK+) Strategy (2022) promotes online safety, empowerment, and access to age-appropriate content [12]. The Digital Services Act (DSA), enforced since 2024, requires platforms to implement measures ensuring a high level of privacy and safety for minors, including content moderation protocols, reporting tools, and age-appropriate design [13].

In Portugal, legal and educational measures align with these frameworks. The Estatuto do Aluno e Ética Escolar (Law No. 51/2012) defines students' rights and duties, establishing sanctions and educational interventions for bullying and cyberbullying behaviours [14]. The National Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Bullying and Cyberbullying (2019) strengthens monitoring mechanisms and obliges schools to include digital safety in their annual activities [10].

At the practice level, systematic reviews highlight that whole-school prevention programmes, such as KiVa, Media Heroes, and NoTrap!, reduce cyberbullying perpetration by 9–15% and victimization by 10–14% across European contexts [15]. Effective elements include empathy training, peer support, and digital literacy modules integrated into school curricula.

The combination of EU legislative backing, national school mandates, and proven educational programmes provides a robust policy framework for reducing cyberbullying risks.

Analysis of the Survey

A total of 25 young respondents (aged 18–29) participated in the CyberSafe-Z national survey (Portugal, 2025). Most respondents were in their early 20s, with the highest representation at age 29 (24%) and 23 (16%). The gender distribution shows 68% female and 32% male, consistent with other youth-focused digital literacy surveys in Portugal.

Regarding education, 44% hold a Master's degree, 28% are university students, and 8% have completed high school, indicating a relatively well-educated and digitally active sample.

Daily internet use is high, with the majority spending several hours online, mainly on mobile devices. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are widely used, confirming a strong integration of digital communication in their daily routines.

Most participants demonstrate awareness of basic digital-safety practices: they check privacy settings with some regularity, are cautious about sharing personal data, and tend to verify suspicious or false information. A large proportion reports familiarity with concepts such as digital citizenship and respectful online communication.

6. How often do you check your digital privacy settings?

25 de răspunsuri
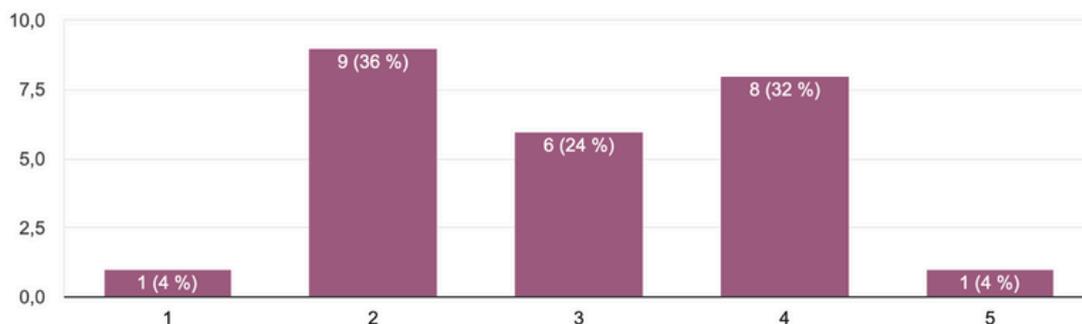
Analysis of the Survey

While digital awareness appears generally strong, responses also reveal gaps. Many young people understand the principles of online safety but do not consistently apply them, and self-reported caution often coexists with risky platform behaviours.

Awareness of the concept of cyberbullying is high, yet actual experience varies.. Examples shared by respondents include hate comments directed at creators, impersonation through fake profiles, extortion, and threats involving private information.

Witnessing cyberbullying appears far more common than being personally targeted. The types of incidents described match trends seen in Portuguese and European research, especially regarding harassment of content creators and attempts at financial or personal-data exploitation.

Young people appear confident but not fully supported. Emotional resilience is present, but institutional, peer, or professional support pathways are not widely recognised. This shows a need for clearer signposting to helplines, school/youth worker support systems, and peer-support structures.

4. How many hours per day do you spend online?
25 de răspunsuri

- Less than 1 hour
- 1–3 hours
- 3–5 hours
- More than 5 hours
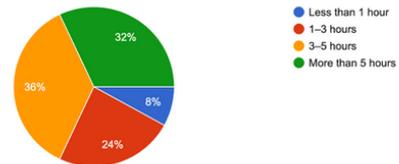
7. I am careful when sharing personal information online.
25 de răspunsuri
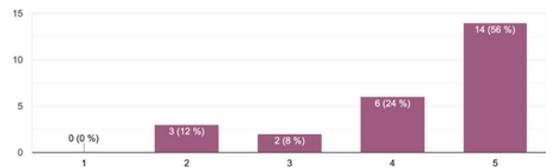
8. When I see false information online, I try to verify it.
25 de răspunsuri

12. Have you ever been a victim of cyberbullying?
25 de răspunsuri

- Yes
- No
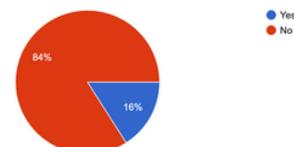
Analysis of the Survey

Although respondents know what cyberbullying is, far fewer feel prepared to help someone experiencing it. Many admit they lack the skills or tools to intervene safely. At the same time, nearly all believe that training on cyberbullying and digital resilience is necessary, and many feel that teachers, educators, or youth workers are not sufficiently prepared.
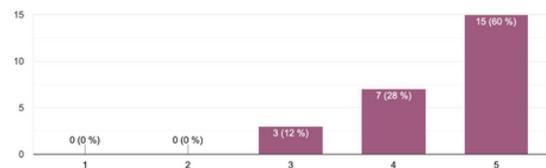
There is a discrepancy between knowledge and action. Young people can recognise cyberbullying but do not feel empowered to respond. This reveals an important capacity-building need, not just awareness campaigns but practical training, peer support models, and educator upskilling.

The training demand is high and clearly articulated. Interactive, in-person formats appear more trusted and effective, especially for sensitive topics such as emotional resilience and cyberbullying. Training models should therefore combine emotional literacy, practical guidance, and community-based support.

13. Have you ever witnessed someone else being cyberbullied?
25 de răspunsuri

- Yes
- No

68%
32%
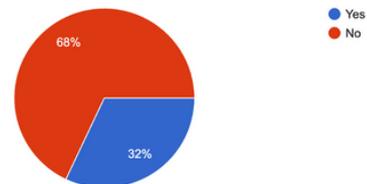
14. I know how to help someone who is being cyberbullied.
25 de răspunsuri

1 (4 %)
6 (24 %)
10 (40 %)
8 (32 %)
0 (0 %)
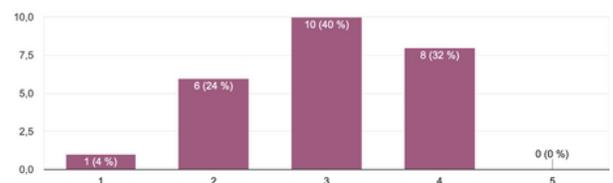
25. What kind of support is most effective for someone who is being cyberbullied?
25 de răspunsuri

- Psychological support
- Peer support
- Educational workshops
- All
- all

28%
16%
48%
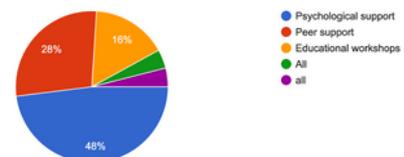
26. I am familiar with peer support systems.
25 de răspunsuri

2 (8 %)
4 (16 %)
6 (24 %)
10 (40 %)
3 (12 %)
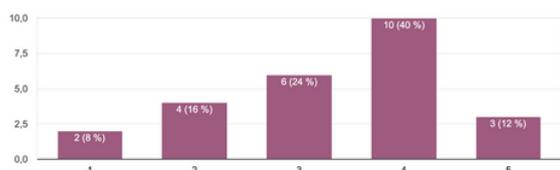
Analysis of the Survey

General Insights

- Young people are highly active online, with intensive use of multiple social platforms.
- They demonstrate good awareness of online safety principles but still engage in high-risk environments.
- Witnessing cyberbullying is common, even if personal victimisation is less frequent.
- Respondents lack action-oriented skills to intervene in cyberbullying situations.
- Many do not know where to seek help after harmful online experiences.
- There is a strong desire for more training, particularly face-to-face workshops.
- Youth believe that educators and youth workers need better preparation to address cyberbullying.

Analysis of the Focus Group

A focus group with 5 participants explored perceptions of cyberbullying, emotional responses, institutional gaps, and training needs. The discussion provided valuable qualitative evidence for shaping the CyberSafe-Z training model. Below is a synthesis of key findings and illustrative quotes.

1. Digital Use and Online Context

Participants reported spending 2–4 hours per day online, mostly on mobile devices. Their digital activity centered on entertainment, communication with friends, following sports or news, and sharing content.
As one participant explained, "I use social media mainly to talk to friends and watch videos."

2. Understanding Cyberbullying

Participants demonstrated a clear understanding of cyberbullying, describing it as hurtful messages, rumours, harassment, impersonation, or using the internet to embarrass someone. All had either seen it happen or knew someone who experienced it.
Awareness is not the main issue. Young people recognize cyberbullying, but struggle with knowing how to intervene, respond safely, or seek appropriate support.

3. Emotional Reactions and Coping

The emotional impact of cyberbullying surfaced strongly. Participants described reactions ranging from sadness and anger to fear, withdrawal, and stress. "Some get really quiet and stop using social media for a while.";"Many feel scared or stressed, and some talk to a friend but not to adults."
Blocking or ignoring aggressors was common, but often insufficient. Youth tend to rely on informal coping strategies, mainly peer support, while avoiding adults due to fear of judgment, minimisation, or loss of device privileges. Emotional regulation and help-seeking skills are clear training priorities.

Analysis of the Focus Group

4. Gaps in School and Youth-Work Responses

All participants agreed that schools and youth centres provide limited and ineffective education on cyberbullying.

Common criticisms included: Activities are too superficial; Awareness is limited to occasional talks; Materials (posters, leaflets, videos) are passive and not engaging

Preferred practices highlighted by participants: Interactive workshops; Role-playing real digital situations; Open discussions where youth can ask questions; Practical demonstrations on reporting and blocking tools. There is a strong demand for experiential, youth-centered approaches. Current school initiatives fail to provide practical skills, leaving young people underprepared.

5. Building Digital Resilience: Skills Identified by Participants

Across the discussion, several skills emerged as essential for strengthening young people's resilience online:

- **Emotional management** - Young people emphasised staying calm, controlling emotional responses, and understanding the psychological impact of online incidents.
- **Digital safety skills** - Participants repeatedly mentioned blocking, reporting, adjusting privacy settings, and recognising harmful behaviour.
- **Communication and help-seeking** - They stressed the value of knowing whom to talk to, how to express concerns, and how to ask for support.

The skills identified by participants align with European models of digital resilience, combining emotional literacy, technical safety actions, and interpersonal communication.

6. Preferred Learning Methods

When asked about ideal training activities, participants strongly preferred interactive, practical methods: Role-playing realistic scenarios; Small group discussions; Simulations or interactive games; Opportunities to practise responses; Real-life examples and case studies

Youth do not respond well to passive learning formats. Hands-on experiential training is perceived as more engaging and better suited to real digital challenges.

Analysis of the Focus Group

7. Closing Reflections

The most meaningful aspects of the discussion, according to participants, were:

- Learning how others deal with cyberbullying
- Hearing real experiences
- Sharing their own stories in a safe space
- Gaining awareness of protective measures
-

The focus group highlights critical gaps in current cyberbullying awareness efforts and identifies key priorities for training. Young people need practical, engaging, and emotionally supportive learning experiences that combine digital safety skills with emotional resilience and communication strategies. Schools and youth organisations must move beyond passive campaigns and adopt interactive, youth-centred methods. These findings provide a strong foundation for shaping the CyberSafe-Z training curriculum and ensuring it responds directly to young people's expressed needs.

Conclusion

The combined findings from the desk research, national survey, and youth focus group provide a clear picture of the current landscape of cyberbullying awareness, experiences, and skill gaps among young people in Portugal. Across all sources, one conclusion is consistent: young people understand what cyberbullying is, but lack the practical, emotional, and interpersonal skills to respond effectively when it happens.

1. Key Insights Across All Data Sources

Young people spend several hours per day online, mainly on social media platforms used for entertainment and communication. This intense digital presence increases exposure to online conflict and harmful interactions.

Both the survey and focus group show strong conceptual awareness of cyberbullying. However, few young people feel confident supporting victims, reporting incidents, or managing harmful digital situations. This gap between awareness and action is one of the main challenges identified.

Participants mentioned sadness, stress, fear, and withdrawal as common reactions. Many rely on peers rather than adults, indicating a need for resilience-building and improved trust in support systems.

Young people feel existing institutional efforts are superficial, usually limited to brief talks or passive materials. They consistently asked for interactive, hands-on learning methods, such as role-playing, simulations, and scenario-based discussions.

Nearly all survey respondents expressed a desire for more information, support, and training in digital safety. The focus group confirmed this, highlighting the need for training that is practical, engaging, and tailored to real online situations.

2. Priority Competencies for CyberSafe-Z

Based on the synthesis of all data, the CyberSafe-Z Guidebook should develop modules aimed at strengthening five essential competencies:

1. Emotional Resilience & Regulation – managing stress, fear, and online pressure.
2. Digital Safety & Technical Skills – blocking, reporting, privacy tools, recognising risks.
3. Communication & Help-Seeking – knowing who to talk to, expressing concerns, supporting peers.
4. Critical Thinking & Online Awareness – identifying manipulation, misinformation, risky behaviour.
5. Bystander Intervention Skills – safe, constructive ways to support victims and de-escalate situations.

These competencies directly address the gaps identified in the survey and focus group.

3. Actionable Recommendations for CyberSafe-Z Modules

1. Create practical, scenario-based modules
Use role-play, simulations, and real-life examples to help young people practise responses. This mirrors their clear preference for active learning.

2. Integrate emotional resilience training
Teach stress management, emotional awareness, and confidence-building as core elements of every module, not secondary additions.

3. Develop a strong peer-support and bystander component
Many youths witness cyberbullying but do not know how to act. Training should include safe intervention strategies and peer-support skills.

4. Include mini-guides or short trainings for educators and parents
Youth expressed low trust in adults' digital knowledge. Providing guidance for educators and caregivers strengthens the support network around young people.

CYBERSAFE-Z can address a critical need by offering a competency-based, youth-centered training model that combines emotional, technical, and social skills. By focusing on practical learning and resilience-building, the project can significantly improve young people's ability to navigate digital spaces safely and confidently.

Resources

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POLAND

Need Analysis

Cyberbullying in Poland

Ages 13–18 (Adolescence)

Prevalence: According to research, cyberbullying is quite common among adolescents in Poland. NASK's Nastolatki 3.0 study shows that approximately 40% of adolescents have experienced insults or humiliation online, and one in four young people has been humiliated in an online environment. Another NASK report found that one in five school students (20%) had been exposed to cyberbullying. Similarly, UNICEF and civil society research also highlights that a large proportion of Polish youth have encountered online threats and feel anxious about them. For example, according to data from the Polish Children's Rights Ombudsman, 97% of young people are aware of online dangers, while 84% consider hate speech to be the most harmful phenomenon. World Health Organisation reports also place Poland among the top five countries in Europe in terms of cyberbullying among young people.

Types and Environments: Cyberbullying usually occurs on social media, messaging apps, and gaming platforms. The most common forms among young people in Poland are name-calling (29.7%), mocking (22.8%), belittling (22.0%), and threatening (13.4%). Another finding by NASK shows that 40% of young people have experienced name-calling online and 25% have been mocked. Although the perpetrator of cyberbullying is usually someone known to the victim (a peer or ex-partner), in some cases strangers may also send insulting and harassing messages.

Reasons: Experts indicate that peer pressure, low self-esteem, the desire for attention, or experiences of domestic violence may play a role in the motivations behind cyberbullying. Social media's anonymity and rapid interaction facilitate these behaviors while also intensifying their effects. Parents' inability to closely monitor their children's digital lives and a lack of awareness in the virtual environment are also factors that exacerbate the problem.

Results and Effects: Cyberbullying causes serious psychological effects on victims. Studies show that victims experience high levels of anger, helplessness, and sadness. For example, in a survey, 57.8% of victims reported feeling anger, while 50.7% reported feeling helplessness. Forty percent of victims distanced themselves from the characteristics associated with the attack, while half of the young victims tried to forget what they had experienced. All this emotional burden can increase the risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Cyberbullying can also reduce school performance, lead to social isolation, and undermine the sense of security.

Legal Situation: Under Article 190a of the Polish Penal Code, cyberbullying has been a crime since 2011. The crime of persistent harassment or identity theft carries a prison sentence of 6 months to 8 years. If the victim is proven to have attempted suicide, the penalty increases to 2–15 years in prison. Furthermore, since acts such as insult, threat, or invasion of privacy constitute separate offenses, additional penalties may also apply. However, studies show that only a small proportion of victims (e.g., only 10% of young victims) report the incident to the police. This highlights the lack of effective investigation.

Pevention and Intervention: Schools and Youth Centers: In Poland, schools and civil society organizations are developing various programs to prevent cyberbullying. For example, the IMPACT program, developed in collaboration with NASK and universities, is a 10-hour school curriculum designed for adolescents; it includes educational materials, video lessons, and e-learning training for teachers. In addition, the Polish Safer Internet Center (a partnership between NASK and the Empowering Children Foundation) organizes awareness-raising activities in schools, such as Safer Internet Day (SID) events, digital safety conferences, and the annual Digital Youth Forum for young people aged 14–17. The same center operates free helplines for young people (116 111 for children/adolescents and 800 100 100 for parents/professionals). Support can be obtained through these lines in cases of online harassment.

Role of Schools and Families: According to a public opinion poll, 63% of society believes that schools play an important role in combating cyberbullying. Despite this, only 47% of young people believe that schools are effective in this regard. Schools are trying to raise awareness through extracurricular activities and guidance programs; however, according to NASK data, more than 40% of students who experience bullying do not report the situation to school administrators.

New Public Initiatives: As of 2025, the Ministry of National Education launched a national project called "Children's Networks: Stop Cyberbullying." The aim is to mobilize society against cyberbullying through educational materials and counseling services

Ages 18–30 (Young Adults)

Prevalence and Profile: Cyberbullying is not limited to adolescents; young adults in Poland are also at risk. According to a public opinion poll, approximately 9.5% of the general population in Poland reported having been exposed to cyber violence at some point in their lives. Young women are affected at a much higher rate: 17.8% of women aged 18–24 reported having experienced bullying at least once. Another study covering a broader age range (18–34) found that approximately 24% of women had experienced violence online. Comparative studies from Turkey also ranked Poland among the countries with the highest rates of cyberbullying among young people.

Areas of Occurrence: Among the 18–30 age group, cyberbullying typically occurs through social media, dating apps, or workplace communication. For example, "cyberstalking," sharing private images, or insults may occur between former or current partners. Adult victims may experience psychological trauma due to digital harassment they encounter in their work or personal lives rather than at school. Polish law expanded the definition of "domestic violence" in 2023 to include actions committed via electronic communication. This will make it easier to investigate cases of cyberbullying within relationships or families.

Effects: Adult victims of cyberbullying also experience problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, shame, and feelings of worthlessness. For example, most young people (approximately 90%) report experiencing bullying multiple times, and the effects are as devastating as those of physical violence. The emotional consequences for victims of bullying include anger, hopelessness, and loneliness; these feelings can persist for a long time and lead to deterioration in social relationships. In addition, most victims may experience setbacks in their social environment and working life after information about themselves is shared.

Penalties: As with adolescents, cyberbullying among adults is also regulated by the Criminal Code. Increased prison sentences apply to repeated or violent online harassment. Most adult victims' ombudsman investigations raise concerns that perpetrators often go unpunished. Nevertheless, within the framework of the law, victims can also file lawsuits under other crimes such as identity theft, threats, or defamation; in these cases, moral damages and the removal of content can be requested.

Ages 18–30 (Young Adults)

Prevention and Support: There are no direct programs for young adults through schools, but awareness is being raised through universities, workplaces, and youth organizations. The Polish Safer Internet Centre's campus visits and online resources are also open to this age group. In addition, social awareness campaigns against cyberbullying are aimed at the general adult population. For example, the "Children's Networks" project, launched in 2025, provides training and resources to a wide audience, from young people to teachers. Emotional support hotlines (e.g., 116 123 Number: Crisis Helpline) and online counseling services are also available for young adults. However, there are still challenges in completely preventing cyberbullying: comprehensive education and supervision are required, not simple solutions that can be adopted amateurishly.

- **Research and Reports:** EU institutions and academic studies also highlight the extent of cyberbullying in Poland. According to a report by the European Parliament Research Service, surveys conducted in Europe show that the rate of cyberbullying among young people in Poland is 31.5%, which is among the highest levels. Field studies by NASK and UNICEF emphasize the lack of parental awareness and the isolation of victims. Policy analyses point to legal loopholes; a 2024 review noted that specific initiatives to combat cyberbullying are lacking in Poland, but that the 2023 legislation included the definition of "electronic means."
- **Statistics:** Although real-time statistical data is not collected in Poland, NASK and Amnesty studies provide reliable figures. According to community surveys, 87–91% of young people report experiencing cyberbullying multiple times, and 27% report explicitly refusing to seek help. Furthermore, unofficial sources show that 26% of young men engage in bullying, while 18% of girls are victims.
- **Preventive Policies:** As a result, schools and government agencies in Poland are stepping up their measures against cyberbullying. In 2025, the Ministries of National Education and Digitalization jointly announced a series of measures; within this scope, webinars and digital security training for teachers and students will be rolled out nationwide. In addition, police and cyber security units have begun to track online harassment incidents in coordination with law enforcement. All these steps aim to protect and raise awareness among young people, but their effectiveness continues to be measured by follow-up research.

CYBERBULLYING and DIGITAL RESILIENCE SURVEY RESULTS

In order to deepen the findings of the desk research and to gain a clearer understanding of young people's digital experiences, an online survey was conducted in the Polish context within the framework of the CyberSafe-Z project. The survey aimed to explore young people's internet use patterns, perceptions of online safety, awareness and experiences of cyberbullying, as well as their perceived competencies and training needs.

The survey was completed by 28 young people aged between 13 and 30, in line with the project's primary target group. The sample included both adolescents (13–18) and young adults (18–30), allowing for age-based comparative insights. Participants represented a balanced gender distribution and were predominantly engaged in secondary and higher education. Overall, respondents can be described as heavy daily internet users, accessing online platforms primarily for social interaction, entertainment, learning, and information seeking. This profile reflects a group that is highly embedded in digital environments and therefore, particularly exposed to both the opportunities and risks of online interaction

1.Participant Profile

1.1 Age Dsitrubution

1. What is your age?
28 yanit

1.2 Gender Distribution
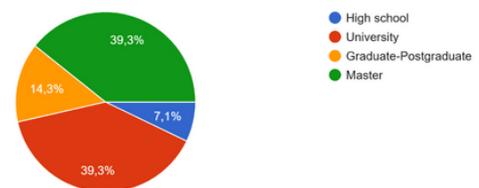
2. What is your gender?
28 yanit

Female
Male
Prefer not to say
Other

46,4%
53,6%
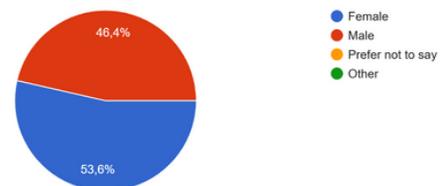
1.3 Education Level

3. What is your current education level?
28 yanit

High school
University
Graduate-Postgraduate
Master

39,3%
14,3%
7,1%
39,3%

The results indicate that the majority of participants are intensive daily internet users. Most respondents reported spending between three and five hours per day online, while a considerable proportion indicated usage exceeding five hours per day. This highlights the central role of digital environments in young people's everyday lives. Instagram, YouTube and TikTok emerged as the most frequently used platforms, all of which are highly interactive and visually driven spaces where exposure to cyberbullying risks may increase.

2.Daily Internet Use of Survey Participants

4. How many hours per day do you spend online?
28 yanıt

- Less than 1 hour
- 1–3 hours
- 3–5 hours
- More than 5 hours

32,1%
35,7%
28,6%
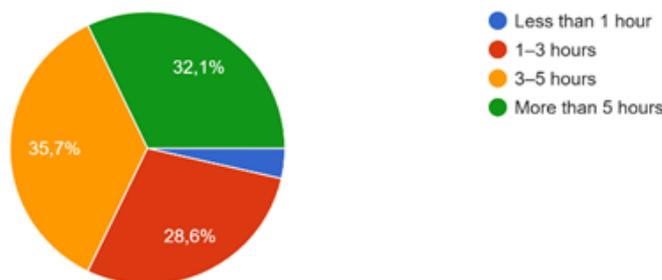
3.Most Frequently Used Digital Platforms among Participants

5. Which digital platforms do you use most frequently? (Select all that apply)
28 yanıt

Platform	Value
Instagram	25 (%89,3)
TikTok	6 (%21,4)
YouTube	21 (%75)
X (Twitter)	8 (%28,6)
Facebook	0 (%0)
Discord	2 (%7,1)
Other	7 (%25)

In relation to online safety and digital citizenship, the Likert-scale responses suggest that participants generally demonstrate a strong sense of individual responsibility. Many respondents reported being careful about protecting personal information and a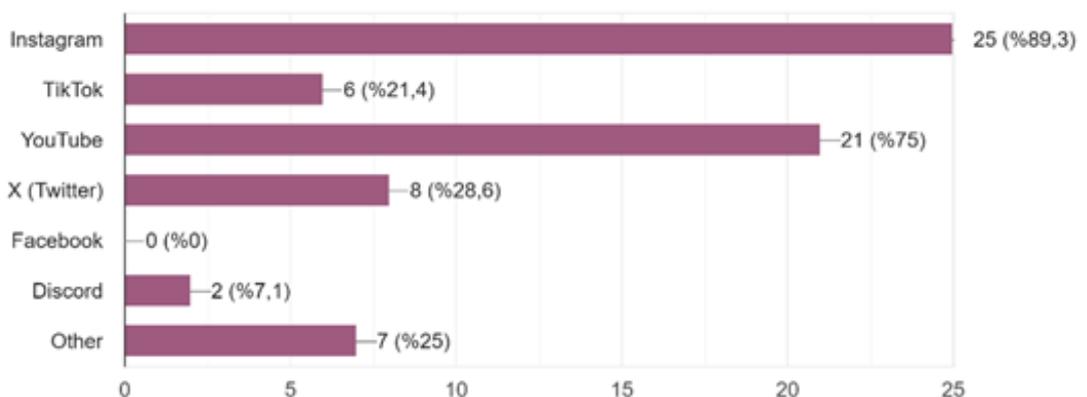cknowledged the importance of respectful communication in online spaces. However, this relatively high level of individual awareness does not fully extend to collective responsibility and active intervention. Participants expressed lower confidence in their ability to support peers who experience cyberbullying or to take action when witnessing harmful online behaviour. This indicates a gap between personal online safety practices and broader digital citizenship competences.

4.Self-Perceived Online Safety and Digital Citizenship Skills
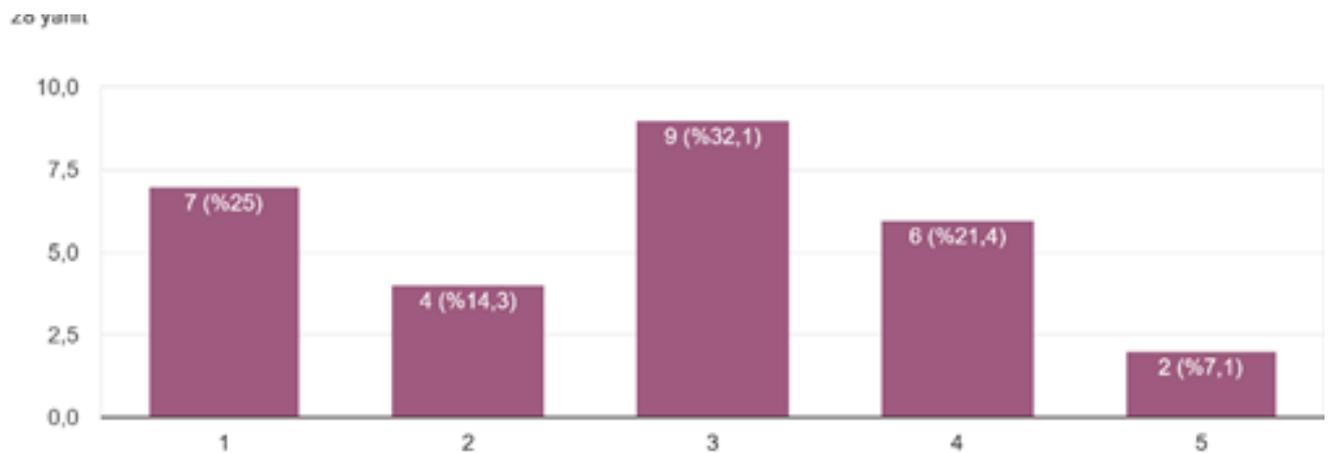
Awareness of cyberbullying as a concept is high among participants, with the vast majority indicating that they clearly understand what cyberbullying is. Direct victimisation within the sample appears to be limited; only a small number of respondents reported having personally experienced cyberbullying. In contrast, witnessing cyberbullying is considerably more common. Many participants stated that they have observed cyberbullying incidents affecting others in online environments.

5.Awareness and Experience of Cyberbullying

28 yanıt

6.Direct and Indirect Experiences of Cyberbullying

Have you ever been a victim of cyberbullying?
nıt

- Yes
- No

92,9% 7,1%
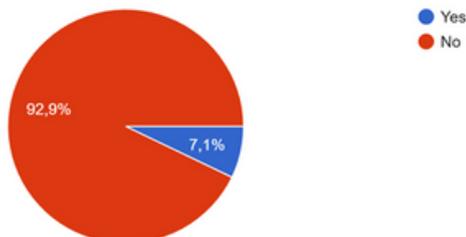
13. Have you ever witnessed someone else being cyberbullied?
28 yanıt

- Yes
- No

50% 50%
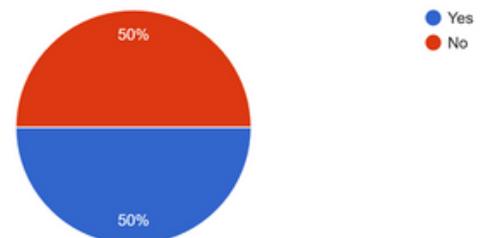
This discrepancy suggests that young people are more frequently exposed to cyberbullying as bystanders rather than as direct victims. While indirect exposure may not always be recognised as harmful, it can still have emotional and psychological effects and highlights the importance of empowering young people with bystander intervention skills.

When assessing competences to respond to cyberbullying, participants reported moderate levels of confidence. Although some respondents felt capable of managing negative emotions related to online interactions, many expressed uncertainty about how to respond effectively to cyberbullying situations or where to seek appropriate support. Confidence in institutional support, including educators and youth workers, was also moderate, indicating that existing support mechanisms are not always perceived as accessible or sufficient.

7.Self-Perceived Competence to Respond to Cyberbullying

28 yanıt
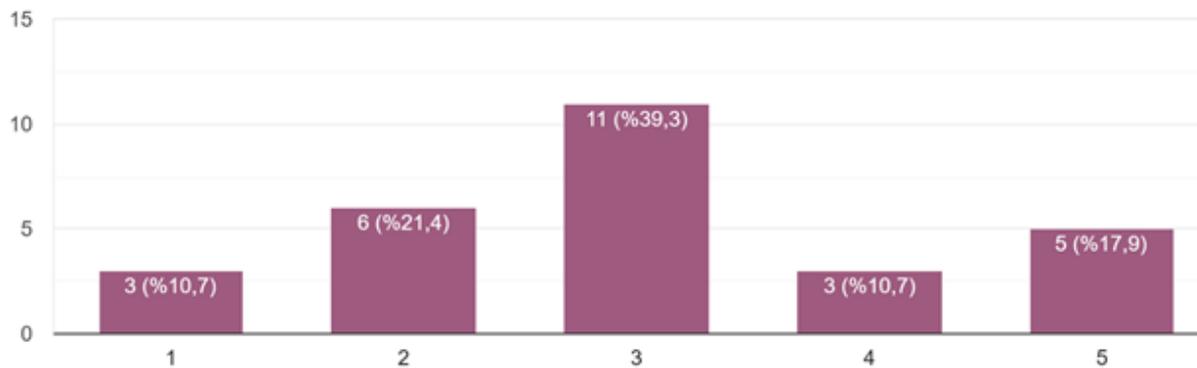
The survey findings clearly reveal a training gap. The majority of respondents indicated that they had not previously participated in any formal training related to cyberbullying, online safety or digital resilience. At the same time, most participants agreed that such training would be beneficial. Preferred forms of support included interactive workshops, peer support initiatives and practical guidance on how to report incidents and respond to cyberbullying.

The open-ended responses further enriched the quantitative findings by providing deeper insight into young people's lived digital experiences. Several participants highlighted the emotional and psychological impact of cyberbullying, even when they were not directly targeted. One participant stated that "witnessing cyberbullying makes the internet feel like an unsafe place for everyone." Another emphasized uncertainty about intervention, noting that "I often don't know whether stepping in will make things better or worse." Some participants underlined the importance of peer support, explaining that "having friends who stand up together online makes it easier to react." These recurring reflections point to common challenges related to bystander behavior, emotional safety, and the need for collective rather than individual responses.

Overall, the survey demonstrates that while young people are confident digital users, their ability to respond effectively and supportively to cyberbullying situations remains limited. The findings indicate a clear need for educational materials that go beyond awareness-raising and instead focus on practical skills, peer-based support strategies, and age-appropriate response mechanisms. When developing the project's training modules and guidebook, particular attention should be paid to strengthening bystander intervention skills, clarifying reporting pathways, and fostering digital resilience. Aligning educational content with these identified needs will ensure that project outputs are grounded in real experiences and contribute meaningfully to safer and more inclusive digital environments.

Analysis of the Focus Group

To further enrich and contextualise the survey findings, a focus group discussion was conducted with young people in Poland. The focus group enabled a deeper exploration of attitudes, perceptions and lived experiences related to cyberbullying, online safety and available support mechanisms, allowing participants to reflect collectively and build upon each other's perspectives.

Participants confirmed that digital platforms play a central role in their everyday lives and are closely linked to their emotional well-being. Most participants reported spending between three and six hours per day online, primarily on social media platforms, messaging applications and content-sharing services. One participant explained how digital communication is closely tied to everyday relationships, stating: "If we include WhatsApp and YouTube, then I use social media a lot... I communicate with my parents and relatives every day." (Participant 6). This high level of daily exposure reinforces the importance of addressing cyberbullying within routine online interactions rather than as an exceptional risk.

Cyberbullying was described by participants as a complex and sometimes ambiguous phenomenon. While harassment, insulting comments and public humiliation were commonly mentioned, participants also emphasized more subtle forms such as social exclusion, repeated negative messaging and the misuse of personal images. As one participant noted, "Sometimes we don't consider something as cyberbullying because we see it every day and think it's normal." (Participant 1). This normalization of harmful behavior highlights the need for clear definitions and concrete examples in educational interventions.

Analysis of the Focus Group

Several participants shared personal or indirect experiences of cyberbullying, particularly on social media platforms such as Instagram. These experiences included stalking, anonymous harassment, impersonation and repeated unwanted contact. One participant described a persistent case of online harassment: "I blocked them, but they created another account and another account." (Participant 4). Another recalled a humiliating incident from school years that continued to affect their sense of safety online. These accounts demonstrate that cyberbullying is often persistent, emotionally damaging and capable of extending beyond digital spaces into offline life.

A key theme emerging from the discussion was uncertainty and hesitation regarding intervention. While participants were generally able to recognize cyberbullying when it occurred, many expressed doubts about how to respond appropriately or support others without escalating the situation. This hesitation mirrors the survey findings, which indicated lower confidence in bystander intervention. Participants emphasized that knowing how to respond is as important as recognizing harmful behavior. As one participant explained, "You can be empathetic, but we don't really know how to communicate with victims of bullying." (Participant 2).

The focus group also revealed perceived gaps in institutional support. While schools and universities were acknowledged as potential sources of help, participants criticized existing responses as largely reactive and punitive rather than preventive and educational. One participant stated that "Most reactions are reactive... they just punish the perpetrator." (Participant 2). Youth workers, however, were seen as key actors who could create safer, more trust-based spaces for discussion, provided they receive adequate training and practical tools.

Analysis of the Focus Group

Peer support emerged as one of the most trusted and valued approaches. Participants stressed that young people are often more willing to seek help from peers who understand digital cultures and share similar experiences. At the same time, they emphasized that peer support should be guided by trained youth workers to ensure safety and effectiveness.

Finally, participants underlined the importance of educational approaches that are interactive, participatory and grounded in real-life situations. Traditional lecture-based formats were perceived as less effective, whereas scenario-based learning, simulations, role-play and group discussions were identified as particularly useful. One participant noted that experiential activities can increase empathy and awareness, stating that "simulations where people experience exclusion help them understand how painful it really is." (Participant 1). These preferences strongly support the project's non-formal education methodology and the development of practical, scenario-based training materials.

Overall, the focus group discussions reinforce the survey results by illustrating that young people are highly engaged in digital environments but feel insufficiently prepared to manage complex online risks. The findings emphasize the need for educational interventions that combine awareness, emotional resilience and practical response skills, directly informing the design of the CyberSafe-Z project's guidebook, workshops and peer support activities.

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LITHUANIA

Need Analysis

Cyberbullying in Lithuania

Cyberbullying has emerged as a critical issue affecting young people across Europe, with prevalence rates and societal responses varying significantly between nations. This report provides a detailed analysis of the cyberbullying landscape in Lithuania, a country that presents a unique and concerning case. Recent data from leading international organizations indicates that Lithuania has one of the highest rates of cyberbullying among adolescents in Europe, distinguishing it from many of its regional counterparts. This research synthesizes findings from recent studies, policy documents, and national reports to explore the prevalence, demographic trends, psychological impact, youth perspectives, legal frameworks, and prevention strategies related to cyberbullying in Lithuania. By examining the specific context of the country, this report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and the measures being implemented to address this pervasive online threat.

Cyberbullying Prevalence and Statistics

Lithuania stands out in European studies for its exceptionally high rates of cyberbullying. According to a 2025 report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) based on 2021–2022 data, Lithuania has the highest cyberbullying rate among all 29 European countries and regions surveyed, with 27.1% of children aged 11, 13, and 15 reporting being cyberbullied [1]. This figure is substantially higher than the OECD average of 15.5% and signals a significant public health concern for the nation's youth. The rate has also seen a notable increase, rising by more than five percentage points between the 2017–2018 and 2021–2022 periods [1]. National studies corroborate these findings. Research conducted among Lithuanian adolescents has consistently shown high exposure to online aggression. A 2025 study published in the journal Psychiatry International, which surveyed 4,124 students from seventh to tenth grade, found that bullying remains a widespread issue, with online bullying being a significant contributor to the negative experiences of young people [2]. The study revealed a strong correlation between being a victim of bullying (both online and offline) and a lower sense of happiness and well-being among adolescents. Only 48.81% of the surveyed students reported feeling happy, underscoring the profound psychological impact of such victimization [2].

Cyberbullying Prevalence and Statistics

Cyberbullying Rate (11, 13, 15-year-olds)	27.1%	OECD, 2025 [1]
OECD Average Cyberbullying Rate	15.5%	OECD, 2025 [1]
Increase in Cyberbullying (2018-2022)	>5%	OECD, 2025 [1]
Adolescents Reporting Feeling Happy	48.81%	*Psychiatry International*, 2025 [2]

Demographic Trends and Gender Differences

A particularly distinctive feature of cyberbullying in Lithuania is the gender distribution of victims. Contrary to the trend in most European countries where girls are more frequently the targets of online harassment, in Lithuania, boys are more likely to be victims of cyberbullying. The OECD report highlights that 27% of boys in Lithuania report being cyberbullied, making it a significant exception to the European norm [1]. While girls in Lithuania are more likely to experience traditional bullying at school, boys face a higher risk in the digital environment [2].

Family structure also appears to be a contributing factor. Across Europe, adolescents from one-parent families are more likely to report being cyberbullied, and this trend holds true in Lithuania. The OECD data shows a cyberbullying rate of 19.8% in single-parent households compared to 14.1% in two-parent households [1]. This vulnerability may be linked to factors such as reduced parental supervision of online activities and increased time spent online by children for social connection.

The high prevalence of cyberbullying is situated within a context of widespread internet and smartphone use among Lithuanian youth. This high level of connectivity, while offering numerous benefits, also increases exposure to online risks and peer-related aggression.

Psychological Effects and Mental Health Impact

The consequences of cyberbullying on the mental health of Lithuanian youth are severe and well-documented. Research consistently demonstrates a strong link between cyberbullying victimization and a range of psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. A 2025 study focusing on the mental health of Lithuanian youth found that over 60% of respondents reported experiencing bullying, with problematic social media use being strongly associated with anxiety and academic stress significantly predicting increased symptoms of depression [6].

The most alarming correlation is between cyberbullying and suicidality. The cross-national Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which included Lithuania, found that victims of both school bullying and cyberbullying had a significantly higher risk of suicidal ideations, plans, and attempts. According to the study's findings from 2019, 17.8% of 15-year-olds in Lithuania had considered attempting suicide in the previous year, with 12.0% having made a plan and 9.5% having attempted suicide [7]. The research concluded that cyberbullying is a strong predictor of adolescent suicidality, highlighting the life-threatening potential of online harassment.

"Victims of cyberbullying and school bullying had a significantly higher risk of suicidal ideations, plans, and attempts. The SEM analysis confirmed a significant overall effect of bullying on adolescent suicidality. [7]"

These findings underscore that the harm caused by cyberbullying extends far beyond temporary emotional distress. It can inflict deep and lasting psychological wounds, contributing to serious mental health crises among adolescents. The persistent and inescapable nature of online harassment can lead to feelings of hopelessness, isolation, and worthlessness, which are significant risk factors for severe depression and suicidal behavior.

Youth Perspectives, Coping Mechanisms Help-Seeking Behavior

Understanding how young people in Lithuania perceive and respond to cyberbullying is crucial for developing effective interventions. While awareness of what constitutes cyberbullying is generally high, there is a significant gap between knowledge and action. Many young people can recognize online harassment but do not feel equipped or empowered to respond effectively, either as a victim or a bystander [8].

Help-seeking behavior among victims is complex and often fraught with barriers. A 2015 study found that Lithuanian schoolchildren who had experienced cyberbullying held more negative attitudes toward seeking help compared to their non-victimized peers [9]. This reluctance can stem from fear of judgment, concern that reporting the issue could make it worse, or a belief that adults cannot or will not provide effective support. Research from the EU Children's Participation Platform indicates that while many children would turn to parents or friends, a significant number remain silent [8].

Coping strategies vary among adolescents. Those with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to use technical coping mechanisms, such as blocking perpetrators and deleting messages. However, emotional resilience and the ability to manage the psychological impact of cyberbullying are skills that many young people lack. There is a clear demand among youth for more practical, action-oriented training that goes beyond simple awareness campaigns. They express a need for skills in emotional management, safe intervention, and knowing where to turn for effective institutional support.

To address this, innovative tools have been developed in Lithuania. The mobile app "Patyčių dėžutė" (Bullying Box) allows children to anonymously report bullying incidents, and the REAGUOK.LT e-learning platform provides resources for teachers, aiming to bridge the gap between reporting and effective school-based intervention [10].

Legal Framework and Governmental Policies

ULithuania has established a legal framework to address bullying and cyberbullying, integrating provisions into its criminal and educational laws. A person can be held criminally responsible for cyberbullying from the age of 16, and in some severe cases, from the age of 14 [4]. Specific actions such as making threats or engaging in hate speech online (for example, based on disability or sexual orientation) are considered criminal offenses and can be reported to the police.

The Law on the Protection of Minors Against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information is a key piece of legislation designed to shield children from harmful online content. Furthermore, the Law on Education (Article 23) explicitly addresses the need to protect children from all forms of violence, including psychological and online violence, within educational institutions [3].

These laws provide a foundation for holding perpetrators accountable and obligate institutions, particularly schools, to create a safe environment for all students. However, the effectiveness of these legal measures depends on awareness, reporting, and enforcement.

Prevention, Education, and Support Systems

In response to the high rates of cyberbullying, Lithuania has developed a network of organizations and initiatives focused on prevention, education, and support. The central body in this effort is the Lithuanian Safer Internet Centre (SIC), known as "Draugiškas internetas" (Friendly Internet). The SIC coordinates national efforts to promote safer and more responsible internet use among children and young people. It operates an awareness center, a helpline, and a hotline for reporting illegal content [5].

Key support services available to young people in Lithuania include:

- **Vaikų linija (Child Line):** A free and anonymous emotional support service for children and adolescents, accessible by phone and online.
- **Youth Line:** A similar service tailored for young people.
- **School-Based Support:** Schools are mandated to provide psychological help to students and are expected to have action plans for preventing and responding to bullying and cyberbullying.

Survey Analysis

Total Participants: 27

1. Introduction

This report analyzes the data from a survey conducted to understand young people's digital habits, awareness of cyberbullying, emotional resilience, and expectations regarding training and support systems. The purpose of the report is to provide a comprehensive perspective on the current state of young people in the digital world by combining quantitative data and qualitative observations derived from open-ended questions.

2. Sample Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the 27 participants indicate that the sample consists of highly educated and intensive internet users.
The sample represents a group of young adults who are active in the digital world and generally at the higher education level.There is a significant majority of male participants. The vast majority of the sample (85.2%) is at or graduated from the higher education level. The large majority of participants (81.4%) spend more than 3 hours online per day, indicating they are intensive internet users.

3. Digital Usage and Platforms

Participants are intensive internet users in their daily lives and are actively involved in social media platforms.
Most Frequently Used Platforms:According to the survey results, Instagram and YouTube stand out among the participants' digital platform preferences. TikTok also has a significant usage rate. This suggests that any intervention or awareness campaign should primarily target these visual and video-focused channels.

Frequency of Checking Privacy Settings (1=Very Rarely, 5=Very Often):The frequency of checking privacy settings is distributed on a scale from 1 to 5. The most frequent answers were 2 (29.6%) and 4 (25.9%). This suggests that participants show a moderate level of attention to privacy, but a regular and conscious habit in this regard has not been fully established.

Survey Analysis

4. Online Safety and Digital Citizenship (Likert Scale Analysis)

High Safety Behaviour: Participants report being quite careful about sharing personal data.
Moderate Critical Thinking: The tendency to verify false information is at a moderate level. This indicates an area that can be improved in terms of critical digital literacy.

Low Conceptual Awareness: The mean value being at a neutral level suggests that, despite participants exhibiting responsible online behaviours, their familiarity with formal concepts like "digital citizenship" is low.

High Respect Awareness: Participants strongly acknowledge the importance of respectful communication online.

High Awareness: The general level of knowledge about the concept of cyberbullying is high.

Human Observation: Participants show high awareness in practical behaviours such as personal safety and respectful communication. However, the lack of conceptual knowledge, such as "digital citizenship," indicates a gap in framing their practical responsibilities within a theoretical framework.

5. Cyberbullying Awareness and Experience

The rate of direct victimisation is low (18.5%). The rate of witnessing is high(44.4%). The perception that cyberbullying is very common among young people is strong(40.7%).

Human Observation (Qualitative Data Analysis):

Victim Examples (Q12): Victimisation is generally concentrated in the form of personal attacks, humiliation (bad comments on photos, insults), and bullying based on appearance. One participant's warning to double-check the identity behind an account highlights the risk of identity deception.

5. Cyberbullying Awareness and Experience

- **Witness Examples (Q13):** Witnessed incidents cover a wide range, including criticism of appearance and clothing, racism/discrimination, and even bullying over digital art projects. The high rate of witnessing (44.4%) confirms that cyberbullying is a widespread and visible problem in online environments.

Conclusion: Although direct victimization is low, nearly half of the participants have witnessed bullying, and they perceive bullying as very common. This highlights the importance of the bystander role and suggests that anti-bullying programs should target not only victims but also witnesses.

6. Competence to Respond and Emotional Resilience

Participants' perceptions of coping with difficulties and accessing support mechanisms.

Moderate Competence: The perception of knowing how to help is slightly above neutral. This suggests that young people have a moderate level of confidence in intervening in bullying, but need more training in this area.
Moderate Resilience: Emotional protection ability is moderate. This suggests that participants are somewhat resilient but do not have a strong emotional protective shield.

Moderate Support Network: The perception of knowing someone to reach out to for support is moderate. This may indicate that support networks are not strong or accessible enough.

High Stress Management: Participants feel relatively competent in managing stress arising from digital interactions.
Moderate-High Social Skill: The tendency to build positive online relationships is high.

6. Competence to Respond and Emotional Resilience

Moderate-High Social Skill: The tendency to build positive online relationships is high.

Low Safety Perception: The perception of safety is at a neutral level. This indicates that participants generally do not feel completely safe.

Conclusion: While participants score high on personal skills like stress management and building positive relationships, they have lower confidence in intervening in bullying, emotional protection, and accessing support networks. The low perceived safety level suggests gaps in knowledge regarding digital resilience.

7. Training, Support, and Needs

Very Low Training Level: Indicates that the vast majority of participants have not received formal training.

High Perception of Benefit: Despite not having received training, young people strongly believe that such training would be very beneficial.

Low Confidence: Confidence in the knowledge level of educators is at a neutral level.

High Information Need: Young people express a strong desire to learn more about these topics.

Moderate Familiarity: The level of familiarity with peer support systems is low.
High Perception of Effectiveness: Social media campaigns are considered an effective tool.

Most Effective Type of Support (Q25):44.4% of participants cited Psychological support as the most effective type of support. This is followed by Educational workshops (29.6%) and Peer support (22.2%).

7. Training, Support, and Needs

Preferred Learning Activity (Q29):51.9% of participants prefer the Online webinar format, while 40.7% prefer Face-to-face workshops. This indicates a high demand for flexible and online learning formats.

Human Observation (Qualitative Data Analysis - Q28): Additional comments show that young people focus on fundamental values such as information, empathy, and respect. The demands for more professional work with psychologists and building digital resilience strategies are consistent with the quantitative data (the prominence of psychological support in Q25).

8. Overall Interpretation and Implications

The survey reveals a group of digitally active, highly educated young people who tend to behave responsibly. However, their experiences and perceptions point to some significant knowledge and support gaps.
Strengths

- **High Digital Usage and Basic Safety Awareness:** Participants are intensive internet users and are careful about sharing personal information.
- **Awareness of Respectful Communication:** They strongly understand the importance of respectful communication online.
- **High Demand for Training:** Despite not having received formal training, they have a strong belief that such training would be beneficial and need more information.
- **Competence in Stress Management:** They perceive themselves as competent in managing stress arising from digital interactions.

Weaknesses and Risks

- **Low Safety Perception:** They do not feel completely safe in digital environments.
- **Lack of Conceptual Knowledge:** Familiarity with fundamental concepts like "digital citizenship" is low.
- **Intervention and Support Gap:** They have moderate confidence in knowing how to help someone being cyberbullied and have doubts about the strength of support networks.

7. Training, Support, and Needs

- **Low Confidence in Educators' Competence:** Confidence that teachers/educators have sufficient knowledge to address cyberbullying is low.

- **High Witnessing Rate:** Nearly one in two young people has witnessed cyberbullying.

Action and Training Recommendations

In light of the findings, training and support programs should focus on the following areas:

1. **Enhancing Intervention Competence:** Young people should be provided with practical skills (bystander intervention) on how to safely and effectively intervene when they witness cyberbullying.
2. **Strengthening Emotional Resilience:** Strategies for emotional protection from negative online comments and techniques for coping with digital stress should be developed.
3. **Promoting Support Mechanisms:** Clear information should be provided on the accessibility and use of psychological support, peer support, and other help resources.
4. **Developing Educator Capacity:** The knowledge and competence of educators in dealing with cyberbullying and digital safety should be increased.
5. **Establishing a Conceptual Framework:** The concept of "digital citizenship" should be explained in a more understandable and practical way, linking it to the responsible behaviors young people already exhibit.
6. **Utilizing Preferred Formats:** Training should be delivered through a combination of the formats preferred by young people: online webinars and face-to-face workshops.

Focus Group Insights

TTo complement the quantitative data gathered through surveys, focus group discussions offer a valuable method for delving into the qualitative nuances of young people's lived experiences with cyberbullying. While this desk research did not involve conducting new focus groups, synthesizing the findings from existing literature allows for a deeper understanding of the perceptions, emotional responses, and unmet needs of Lithuanian youth. Such qualitative insights are critical for contextualizing the high prevalence rates and for designing interventions that resonate with the target audience. The discussions in these settings often reveal the normalization of certain online behaviors and the complex social dynamics that statistics alone cannot capture, providing a voice to the numbers and highlighting the human impact of cyberbullying.

Emerging themes from qualitative studies and focus groups in similar European contexts, which can be extrapolated to Lithuania, point towards a significant disconnect between awareness and practical skills. Young people consistently demonstrate a clear understanding of what cyberbullying is but feel ill-equipped to handle it. They often express a preference for interactive, peer-led workshops over passive, adult-led presentations, believing that role-playing and real-life scenario discussions are more effective for building emotional resilience and intervention skills. Furthermore, a recurring sentiment is the fear of adult overreaction, such as confiscating devices, which discourages reporting. These insights strongly suggest that future prevention strategies in Lithuania should be co-designed with young people, prioritizing empathy, practical skills, and the creation of trusted, accessible support networks that empower them to act safely and effectively.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying in Lithuania presents a complex and urgent challenge. The country's position as having one of the highest rates of cyberbullying in Europe, coupled with the unique trend of boys being more frequently victimized, demands targeted and sustained intervention. The severe mental health consequences, including a heightened risk of suicidal behavior, underscore the gravity of the issue. While a legal framework and a network of support organizations are in place, the persistently high prevalence rates and the reluctance of youth to seek help suggest that more needs to be done to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Strengthening practical, skills-based digital literacy education, promoting proactive and empathetic online behavior, and ensuring that all young people know how and where to seek confidential and effective help are critical priorities. Future efforts must focus on empowering youth, building emotional resilience, and creating a school and community culture where bullying is not tolerated, and support is readily accessible. Continued research is necessary to monitor trends, evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions, and adapt strategies to the ever-changing digital landscape. Ultimately, tackling cyberbullying in Lithuania will require a concerted effort from government, schools, families, and young people themselves to foster a safer and more supportive online environment for all.

Resources

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-Need Analysis-

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