OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

# What have we learned from children about CYBERBULLYING?

To inform the mandate's work on protecting children in the digital environment, including its 2026 intergovernmental reporting and the relevant workstreams under the Global Pathfinding Alliance to End Violence against Children, the Special Representative consulted more than 37,000 children and young people from all regions through an online poll, complementing the regular consultations with children through the country visits and regional meetings.

## Key findings

Close to 1 in 3 children and youth know someone who has been cyberbullied.

2 in 3 children think there is more cyberbullying than before (in the past year).

More than 40% of children would not know who to turn to if someone was cyberbullied.

When asked if they thought AI was used to bully other children, the majority either don't know or don't think it is being used to bully others.

Most children and youth are not aware or do not know of actions in their countries to stop or raise awareness about cyberbullying.

## A widespread and growing concern

Cyberbullying is a common experience in children's lives. More than one in four respondents (28%) reported knowing someone who had been cyberbullied. A clear majority (66%) believe that cyberbullying has increased over the past year, indicating that children perceive the problem as both widespread and worsening.

| Do you know anyone who has been cyberbullied? | | |
|---|---|---|
| **YES** | **NO** | **I DON'T KNOW** |
| 28.1% | 55.9% | 15.6 |

| Do you think there is more cyberbullying than before? (like in the past year) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **YES** | **NO** | **I DON'T KNOW** |
| 66% | 10% | 24% |

## Gaps in support and reporting pathways

Despite the prevalence of cyberbullying, many children lack clarity on where to seek help. A significant proportion (42%) reported that they would not know who to turn to if someone were cyberbullied. Among those who do identify sources of support, most refer to parents, other trusted adults, or authorities. Teachers and police are also mentioned, though less frequently.

| If someone was cyberbullied, would you know who to speak to? | **YES** | **NO** |
|---|---|---|
| | 56.7% | **42.5**% |

When asked who they would turn to, children's responses illustrate the importance of **trusted relationships and accessible support and reporting systems.**

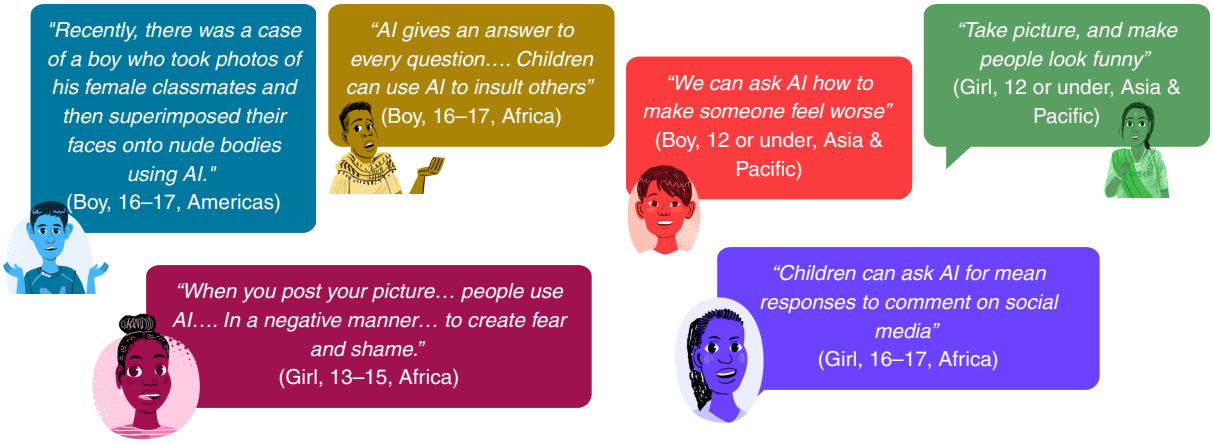
** Children participating in the poll were reached through networks of civil society partners that supported dissemination of the poll.*

# Emerging risks related to Artificial Intelligence

Children's awareness of the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in cyberbullying remains mixed. While 41% do not believe AI is being used for bullying and 36% are unsure, a notable minority (20%) identified specific ways in which AI is already being misused.

| Do you think AI is used to bully other children? | YES | NO | I DON'T KNOW |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 20.0% | 41.6% | 36.2% |

Among these responses, the most prominent and consistent concern across regions is the use of AI to generate sexualized deepfake images, particularly targeting girls. Other recurring risks include voice cloning, the creation of fake profiles, the automation of harassment at scale, and the perception that AI tools make harmful actions easier to carry out. Children's own words underscore these emerging risks:



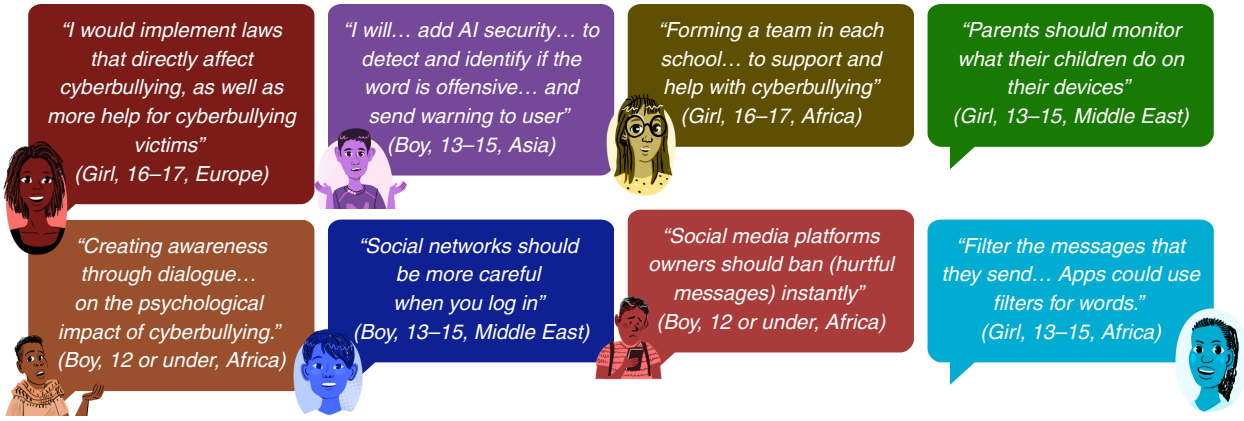

These reflections suggest that children are already encountering or anticipating new forms of harm linked to rapidly evolving technologies.

# Moving forward: Children's expectations from awareness to accountability

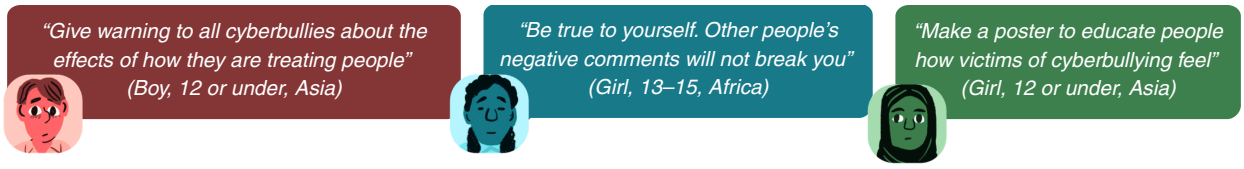
Children are clear that more action is needed to address cyberbullying. Their responses point to several key expectations.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| They expect social media platforms to take a more active role in preventing and responding to abuse, including stronger moderation and safety measures. | They emphasize the importance of family-level engagement, including parental guidance and monitoring. | They call for accountability - through laws, enforcement, and concrete consequences - rather than awareness alone. | They clearly link cyberbullying to mental health impacts, underscoring the need for supportive responses. |

Their suggestions illustrate both practical and systemic solutions:




Most children are not aware of any actions in their country to help stop or raise awareness about cyberbullying.

| Are you aware of any action in your country to help stop or raise awareness about cyberbullying? | YES | NO | I DON'T KNOW |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 25.9% | 45.7% | 26.7% |

At the same time, children also emphasize resilience and peer support.