



Provincial Youth Cyberviolence Prevention Strategy

STATUS UPDATE

WHAT?

The Government of PEI is leading the development of a Provincial Youth Cyberviolence Prevention Strategy.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

In the digital age, the prevalence and risk of cyberbullying among youth in Prince Edward Island is a serious concern. With a significant portion of young lives unfolding in virtual spaces, escaping cyberbullying seems almost impossible.

It is important that government and its agencies and the community develop a shared understanding of how best to promote a safer online environment, and to equip youth with tools to protect themselves from the occurrence of, and the lasting effects of, cyberbullying.

“We were all introduced to social media etc. in such an abrupt way and we don’t have the resources to learn any of this stuff”

-A PEI youth

WORDS MATTER: **WHAT IS CYBERVIOLENCE?** DON'T YOU MEAN CYBERBULLYING?

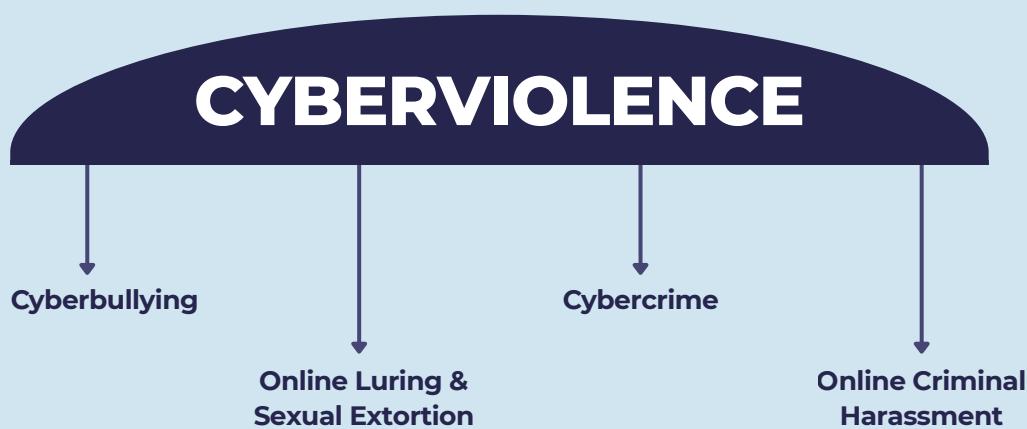
Although cyberbullying can take many forms, for the purpose of this strategy, cyberbullying has been defined as the use of computers, smartphones, or other connected devices to embarrass, hurt, mock, threaten, or be mean to someone online. (Public Safety Canada)

Cyberbullying can show up as:

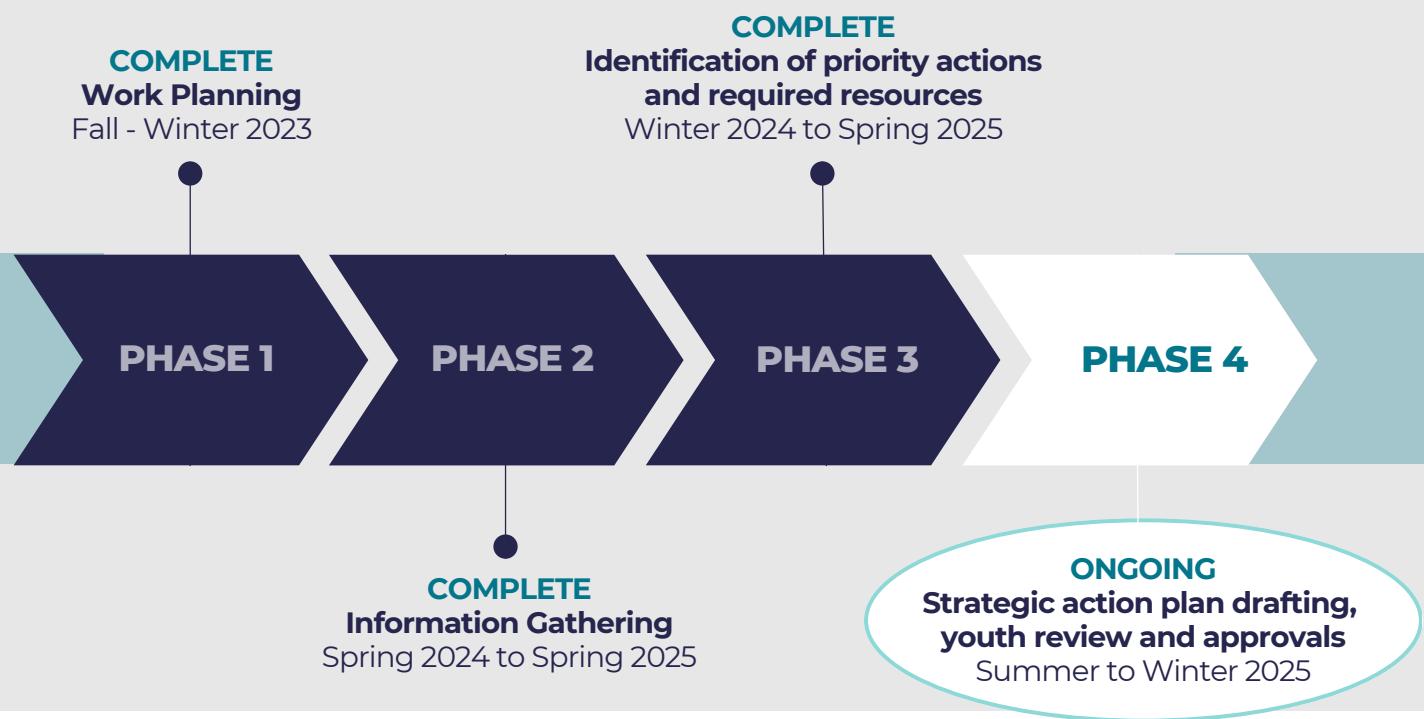
- General harassment online
- Verbal and emotional abuse online
- Threats and intimidation
- Use of images for personal attacks
- Exclusionary practices and social isolation

The term *cyberbullying* is increasingly used in mainstream media to describe cyberviolence incidents such as cyberstalking, identity theft, doxxing (publishing private information), sexual extortion, the sharing of images with the intent to intimidate or control, etc. These actions are far more serious than the word *bullying* suggests and include aggressive violations of personal safety and privacy. They demand interventions to address their severity and safeguard the well-being of youth effectively.

Although **this strategy will focus on youth peer-to-peer cyberbullying in PEI**, preliminary research conducted as part of the strategy has shown that many early prevention interventions and tools to address cyberbullying are also effective for other types of cyberviolence.



THE PROCESS:



“People don’t realize that the harms go beyond our online experiences. We can’t escape them and they lead to in person harms and experiences”
- A PEI Youth



The first stakeholder engagement was held in Spring 2024 to better understand the prevalence and context of cyberbullying, the impact it's having on youth, existing programs, training, or other initiatives that are working well, best or emerging practices, and input, guidance and recommendations for what should be included in a provincial youth cyberviolence prevention strategy.

This initial stakeholder engagement provided insight into the prevalence and context of cyberbullying in PEI, the impact on youth and best and emerging practices in the cyberbullying space.



In November 2024 a survey was launched on peer-to-peer cyberbullying from the perspective of those working with, caring for, or parenting youth aged 4-24.

The survey ran through January 2025 and the findings offer valuable insights into the prevalence and context of peer-to-peer cyberbullying in PEI, from the perspective of parents and caregivers. Some initial findings from the survey are found on page 5 of this document.



Throughout Winter 2024 and Spring 2025, two multi-sectoral working groups collaborated to identify gaps in existing services and develop potential solutions to address peer-to-peer cyberbullying in PEI.

The working groups met twice a month and were comprised of government and community representatives, many of whom work directly with youth and see the implications of cyberbullying in their work every day. The working groups served as think tanks, identifying gaps in existing services and developed recommended actions to inform the final strategy.



Youth engagement on the proposed actions in the strategy took place in October 2025.

Youth were guided through a review of the proposed actions identified to be included in the strategy and were invited to discuss whether the proposed actions align with the priorities and needs of young people across the province.

“We need to start talking about cyberbullying and stop normalizing it”
- A PEI Youth

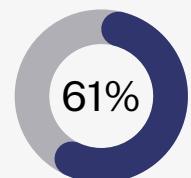
The draft strategic framework sets a course for change and improvement over the next five years. It seeks to leverage work underway that relates and aligns with the problem of cyberbullying and cyberviolence prevention. The framework addresses digital well-being and cyberbullying through a multi-faceted approach, emphasizing education, prevention, support and systemic change. The draft strategy is expected to focus on these priority areas:

- **Prevention, Education and Skill Development** This pillar area aims to equip youth, parents, and communities with the tools to navigate the digital world safely and ethically by promoting early digital and media literacy education and fostering public awareness to prevent and respond to cyberbullying and cyberviolence.
- **Positive Online Environments and Habits** This pillar emphasizes proactive measures, fostering positive social interactions online and offline, and promoting responsible digital habits.
- **Supports and Interventions** This pillar focuses on establishing improved systems to support individuals impacted by cyberbullying, provide avenues for reporting, and implementing restorative practices.
- **Operational Policy and Systemic Implementation**, This theme addresses the important role of policies and procedures and their effective implementation in order to create safer digital environments.
- **Public Policy and Advocacy** This theme highlights the importance of partnerships across various sectors and advocating for legislative and policy changes to address cyberbullying and emerging online harms.

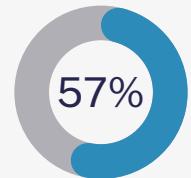
THE FINDINGS:

These pages highlight some preliminary findings from the parent and care provider survey that took place in Winter 2024. It is important to note that the survey explored results on cyberbullying experiences and events from a parent and caregiver perspective. This data is not an indicator of prevalence of cyberbullying, as respondents may not have been aware of all youth experiences.

Relationship between victims and the person causing the harm *



Former friend



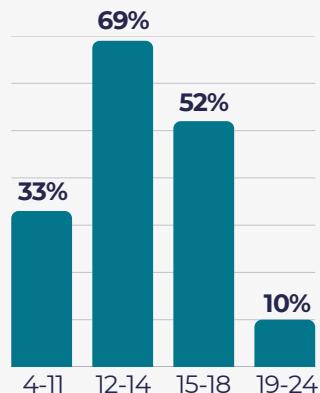
Current friend



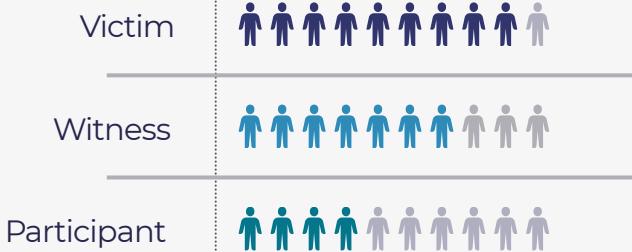
Acquaintance

“ We got an invite to Kids Messenger yesterday and didn’t know what to do... I’ve just been keeping my kids away from it since I don’t understand. ”

Age of youth involved in incident *



Youth experienced cyberbullying as *



Platforms most mentioned *

Social Media

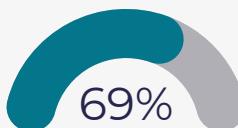
74%

Messaging Apps

60%

Text Messages

53%



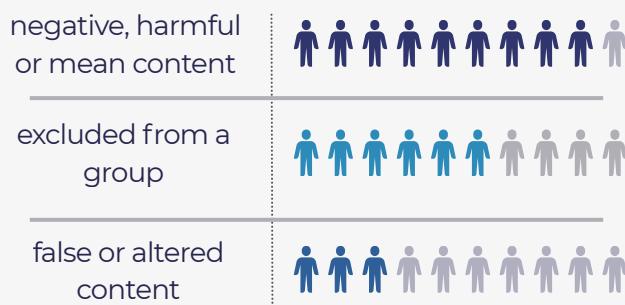
Reported that Snapchat was the app involved

4 out of 5

respondents reported that they found out about the incident directly from the youth involved

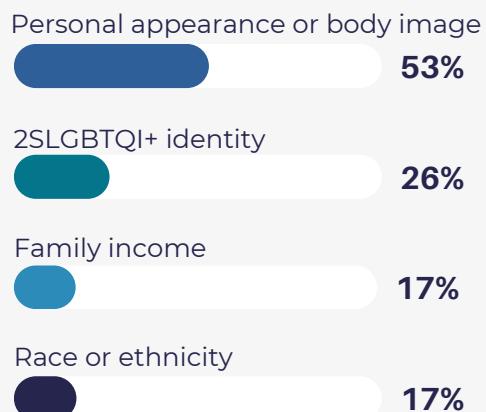
* Totals do not add to 100% as respondents could select more than one response

Types of cyberbullying experienced *



“Comments on body weight. Comments on their friends not actually liking them. ,”

Reasons for the cyberbullying *



The best ways to share resources with parents/careproviders *

- Facebook (64%)
- Dedicated website (28%)
- Newsletters (23%)

The most reported Cyberbullying impacts

negative effects on mental health	behavioral issues
social problems (loneliness, exclusion)	reduced school attendance
negative effects on self-esteem	reduced time at recreational activities
negative effects on body image	reduced school performance

The top 3 most helpful actions taken when responding to cyberbullying events



“Most children are embarrassed about being cyberbullied. If they do tell a parent/guardian/friend/teacher, it often gets dealt with poorly, which causes them more stress and problems. ,”

* Totals do not add to 100% as respondents could select more than one response



For more information about the Provincial Youth Cyberviolence Prevention Strategy visit <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/provincial-youth-cyberviolence-prevention-strategy> or contact: justicepolicy@gov.pe.ca