



Putting U in the picture

Mobile bullying survey 2005



the children's charity

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Bullying can ruin children's lives. The consequences of it can vary widely, from making children upset or unhappy to, in rare cases, suicide. Bullying via mobile phone is a new and particularly nasty form of bullying. This is why leading children's charity NCH has joined forces with Tesco Mobile to tackle this problem head-on. With 97 per cent of 12–16 year olds owning a mobile phone, there is no time to lose.

Why NCH and Tesco Mobile?

NCH was the first organisation to take up this issue at a national level and is the internationally recognised expert on mobile bullying. It commissioned the first-ever survey into mobile and online bullying in April 2002, pinpointing text bullying as a new and very modern problem. Tesco Mobile is a responsible mobile operator, at the forefront of initiatives to help tackle this issue, and is determined to help raise awareness of mobile bullying among young people and families.

What do we mean by mobile bullying?

There are several ways someone can be bullied via a mobile phone. We define text bullying, the biggest mobile bullying problem, as one or more unwelcome text messages that the recipient finds threatening, or causes discomfort in some way. Very often bullies will disguise their numbers from the victim and in some cases they use other people's phones to avoid being caught.

Camera phones may be used to make the victim feel threatened, embarrassed or uncomfortable. Photographs could be sent to other people. Someone may receive silent calls, abusive messages or their identity may even be stolen and used to harass others who then think the victim is responsible. Bullying or threatening messages have been sent through websites using names and phone numbers of people who knew nothing about it.

A mobile phone is one of a child's most treasured possessions. They tend to keep it with them all the time

Why is mobile bullying such an important issue?

Historically, most bullying took place at school, or between home and the school gates. As soon as a child got home they could shut the door behind them and find sanctuary. Home was a place where the bullies could not reach them. Mobile bullying has changed that.

A mobile phone is one of a child's most treasured personal possessions. They tend to keep it on all the time. So if the mobile starts being used to harass a child, be it through text or camera phone bullying, it can seem like there is no escape. The bullies always have a way of reaching them. They can feel trapped, with nowhere to hide and no one they can turn to for help. Or they might worry that if they do tell their parents or another adult, their mobile phone will be taken away from them.

Very often bullies will disguise their numbers from the victim and in some cases they use other people's phones to avoid being caught

97% of 12–16 year olds own a mobile phone

(Mobile Youth, 2004)

● almost four million UK young people own a camera-enabled handset. This figure is set to double to eight million by 2007

(W2F Mobile Youth, 2005)

Putting U in the picture – key findings

A total of 770 youngsters aged 11 to 19 were questioned in the mobile bullying survey, which was carried out for NCH and Tesco Mobile by BMRB between 3 March and 6 April 2005.

Question: Have you ever been bullied or threatened by someone using any of the following?

20% had experienced some sort of digital bullying

14% by mobile text messaging

5% in internet chatrooms

4% via email

One in five youngsters (20%) admitted they had experienced some sort of bullying or threat via email, internet chatroom or text. Some experienced more than one.

Text bullying was the most significant form of bullying at 14 per cent. This was followed by internet chatrooms at five per cent and four per cent via email.

Question: Using their mobile phone camera, has anybody ever taken a photograph of you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or threatened?

This question was new to the 2005 survey and the response was startling. One in 10 youngsters (10%) admitted this had happened to them – more than via email or internet chatrooms.

Currently almost four million UK young people own a camera-enabled handset, with this figure set to double to eight million by 2007.

2005 survey



Question: As far as you know, was a photograph of that particular incident sent to anyone else?

17% believed the image had been sent to someone else

Of the young people who had had a photo taken that made them feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or threatened, 17 per cent believed the image had been sent to someone else.¹

Question: Who was the bullying or threatening behaviour carried out by?

73% knew the bully

26% said it was a stranger

Three-quarters (73%) of young people who had been bullied or threatened said they knew the person who bullied or threatened them, while a quarter (26%) said it was a stranger.

Question: Did you tell anyone you had been bullied?

28% did not tell anyone

41% of those bullied told a friend

24% spoke to a parent about it

14% spoke to a teacher about it

Worryingly, more than a quarter of respondents (28%) did not tell anyone. Two-fifths (41%) of those bullied told a friend. A quarter (24%) spoke to a parent about it and 14 per cent to a teacher.

Question: Would you say that you have ever sent a bullying or threatening message to someone else?

11% had sent a bullying message to someone else

87% said no

One in 10 youngsters (11%) admitted they had sent a bullying or threatening message to someone else. A total of 87 per cent said no.

◀ **One in 10 youngsters admitted being photographed by a mobile phone camera and feeling threatened**

Question: Why did you not tell anyone that you had been bullied or threatened?

28% did not tell anyone
31% because it was not a problem
12% there was no one they wanted to tell
11% did not think it would stop the bullying
10% did not know where to go for help

Of the 28 per cent of respondents who were bullied or threatened but did not tell anyone, the majority (31%) said this was because 'it wasn't a problem'. A total of 12 per cent said it was because 'there was no one I wanted to tell', 11 per cent didn't think it would stop the bullying or threats and one in 10 (10%) didn't know where to go for help.

Question: What kind of help or support would have encouraged you to report the threats or bullying?

28% did not tell anyone
23% said speaking to an expert at dealing with bullies would have made a difference
15% said a staff member at school would have helped
13% knowing of a website with advice on dealing with bullies

Of the 28 per cent of youngsters who were bullied or threatened but did not tell anyone, a quarter (23%) felt that 'knowing how to get hold of and speak to someone who was an expert at dealing with bullies' would have made a difference. A total of 15 per cent said 'knowing there was a staff member in my school/college dedicated to stopping bullying' would have helped.

'Knowing of a website with

lots of advice and tips on dealing with bullies' was the next most popular answer at 13 per cent.

Question: When did the threats or bullying take place?

For youngsters in education, half (50%) of the threats or bullying happened at school or college. A total of 17 per cent took place at the weekend, 21 per cent after school or college and six per cent in the school/college holidays.

For those respondents not at school or college who had been bullied or threatened, 42 per cent said this happened after 9pm, 41 per cent between 9am and 6pm and 18 per cent between 6pm and 9pm.

What are NCH and Tesco Mobile doing to tackle mobile bullying?

As the survey results clearly show, too many children are suffering in silence. NCH and Tesco Mobile are working together to make sure as many children as possible have access to information and advice about how to deal with being bullied by mobile phone.

For this reason NCH and Tesco Mobile are launching an interactive website so young people can access information and advice about mobile bullying at the click of a button. The website – www.stoptextbully.com – will encourage youngsters to talk to an adult or friend about being bullied by mobile phone. It will also be a comprehensive guide full of information about where they can go for more help and advice.

A new 24-hour service is also being launched, where youngsters can text a special number if they are being bullied by mobile phone. All they need to do is text the word 'bully' to '60000' to receive more advice and support. Tesco Mobile will donate the cost of every text sent to this information service to NCH. That way every penny will help continue the battle against mobile bullying.

NCH and Tesco Mobile are also working closely with Tesco's computers for schools campaign. To help tackle mobile bullying, information will be sent to more than 28,000 schools across Britain, providing teachers, parents and guardians with the information they need to provide support to young people.

This is just the start of a longer term joint campaign to stamp out mobile bullying and prevent more children's lives being ruined.

Contact details for children, parents and teachers

Tips, advice and other information for children, parents, teachers and others affected by mobile bullying can be found at www.stoptextbully.com

Contact details for journalists

Please contact the NCH press office on 020 7704 7111 or out-of-hours on 07802 806 679 for a more detailed breakdown of the survey, interviews or other information. Alternatively email siobhan.mccann@nch.org.uk

Or please contact Joanna Kinloch at Tesco Mobile on 07770 435 943 or at joanna.kinloch@tescomobile.com

¹ (Base sample for this question was 78)