

# Keeping Girls Cybersafe

## What Everyone Needs to Know

www.cybersafegirl.ca

Girls use social media to be creative, communicate with friends, and to learn. Although social media can be quite useful, it can also have a negative impact on users, especially girls.

Sexualization and cyber-violence can occur through social media, instant messaging and email. Learning about these technologies and their risks can help young girls use social media in a safe way.

## The Facts

In 2008, girls aged 12 to 17 years-old, made up 86 per cent of the victims of the “other sexual crime” category, which includes luring a child via a computer, invitation to sexual touching and sexual exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

According to RCMP violent crime statistics for 2009, in 80 per cent of cases of luring minors over the internet for sexual purposes, the victim was female.<sup>2</sup>

Predators use child luring techniques, such as asking for help; bribery; affection and attention; authority; threats and weapons; trying to gain trust; compliments; employment; and using a false emergency.<sup>3</sup>

Sexual predators often use social networking sites, such as online blogs, where girls look to talk to new people.

Over half of the young people who report being sexually harassed over the internet said that they actually knew the person.<sup>4</sup>

More than half of the teenage victims of cyber-violence never report it.<sup>5</sup>

Online or cyber-violence is much more common among girls than boys, with 28 per cent of girls reporting being targeted by cyber-violence compared to just 15 per cent of boys.<sup>6</sup>

You must be at least 13-years-old to use Facebook; however, there are other websites open to all ages.<sup>7</sup>

More than 80 per cent of 10 to 17-year-olds have a Facebook page and nearly all have access to email.<sup>8</sup>

On an average day, young people are bombarded by many forms of media, including more than 30 million websites.<sup>9</sup>

By puberty, girls are three times more likely than boys to suffer from depression due to low self-esteem, negative body image, and feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and stress.<sup>10</sup> This vulnerability may be increased from exposure to social media.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. (2010). Child and youth victims of police-reported violent crime, 2008. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Newfoundland Constabulary/Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2011). Victim age/Gender analysis. UCR data for period 2006-2010.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (n.d.) Techniques used for luring children: Activity sheet. In Kids in the know. Retrieved from [http://www.kidsintheknow.ca/PDFS/gr4\\_luring.pdf](http://www.kidsintheknow.ca/PDFS/gr4_luring.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Media Awareness Network. (2012) Young Canadians in a wired world – Phase 2–Key findings. Retrieved from [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/phasell/key\\_findings.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/phasell/key_findings.cfm)

<sup>5</sup> Media Awareness Network. (2012). Cyberbullying. In Web aware. Retrieved from <http://www.bewebaware.com/english/cyberbullying.html#who>

<sup>6</sup> Weeks, C. (2012, August 1). The bullying gender gap: girls more likely to be targets. In The Globe and Mail. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/the-bullying-gender-gap-girls-more-likely-to-be-targets/article4456321/>

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (n.d.). Social networking websites. In The door that's not locked. Retrieved from [http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca/app/en/teacher/13-15/social\\_networking\\_what\\_is\\_it](http://thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca/app/en/teacher/13-15/social_networking_what_is_it)

<sup>8</sup> Vinkin Lee, M. (2012, August 31). One in 10 children falling prey to cyberbullying, survey reveals. In the Vancouver Sun. Retrieved from <http://www.vancouversun.com/health/children+falling+p-rey+cyberbullying+survey+reveals/7176052/story.html#ixzz2786wvzrM>

<sup>9</sup> Durham, M.G. (2008). The Lolita Effect: Sexy girls in the media. NOJ/HO Ж: Nabokov online journal, 2. Retrieved from [http://etc.dal.ca/noj/articles/volume2/14\\_Durham1.pdf](http://etc.dal.ca/noj/articles/volume2/14_Durham1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Girls Action Foundation. (2011, March 8). Girls in Canada today: National opinion poll & report on the status of girls. In YWCA Canada. Retrieved from [http://ywcacanada.ca/data/research\\_docs/00000175.pdf](http://ywcacanada.ca/data/research_docs/00000175.pdf)

# Glossary

**body image:** How a person feels about their weight, size and shape. Being unhappy with body image can lead to low self-esteem, poor self-image and eating disorders. Ultra-thin bodies of models and actresses are seen as “ideal” no matter how unrealistic or unhealthy it may be.<sup>9</sup>

**Chatroulette:** An online chat website that randomly pairs users from around the world for webcam-based conversations.

**child pornography:** Sexually explicit images, films, or writings which involve a child.

**child luring:** To tempt a child to do something or go somewhere. Rewards are often used. For example, an online predator may try to get a child to meet him or her by offering to bring a gift.

**cyber-stalking:** Use of the internet and social media to stalk or harass. Examples include false accusations, threats, monitoring, asking minors for sex or gathering information to harass.

**cyber-violence:** The use of technology to assault. Attacks are made to gain power, revenge or control. They may occur out of anger. It is the use of information and communication technologies in a deliberate, repeated and hostile manner. This may be the work of a person or group. Cyber-violence may occur in isolation or as part of a bigger problem as online comments or harassment could be followed up with a verbal or physical attack.

**Facebook:** A social media website that allows easy communication between friends, family and coworkers. The website promotes sharing of information, photos and videos.

**Flickr:** An online photo management and sharing website.

**harassment:** Intentional behaviour which is threatening or disturbing.

**hypersexualization:** Treating women and girls, including oneself, as over-sexualized objects of desire. Hypersexualized girls are often viewed as being concerned or involved in sexual activity. Hypersexualization portrays girls as sex objects. Girls are seen as hypersexualized when they wear mature clothing like miniskirts.

**Instagram:** A photo-sharing program which allows users to share photos via Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr.

**online predators:** Individuals who make contact through chat rooms, instant messaging or discussion boards. They often create fake identities to be closer in age with their intended victims. Online predators try to connect on the child’s level. Over time, they bring sex into the conversation or show sexually explicit material.

**self-esteem:** How one feels about oneself. High self-esteem is a good feeling about oneself. Low self-esteem means feeling poorly about oneself. Self-esteem is crucial to positive living.

**sexual exploitation:** Treating a child as a sexual and commercial object. Commercial sexual exploitation of children consists of violence against them.

**sexualization:** Treating women and girls, including oneself, as sexual objects rather than people with real sexual feelings of their own.<sup>11</sup> When girls are sexualized, their value comes from their sex appeal. This involves physical appearance. Sexualization is a problem for young girls because they are at a stage of life where they are trying to gain a sense of themselves.

**social media:** The use of web and mobile technologies to promote interactive dialogue. Facebook, YouTube, texting and online games are examples of social media.

**stereotyping:** The act of judging a person or group by categorizing. People are often stereotyped by race, age, sexual orientation or geography. They are seen as categories, rather than unique individuals with real feelings.

**StumbleUpon:** A website, similar to a search engine. It allows users to find new websites based on your personal preferences. Web pages are recommended by friends or other users.

**Tumblr:** A microblogging social media site used to share text, photos, quotes, links, music, and videos online.

**Twitter:** A real-time information network that connects users to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news through user-generated 140 character long “tweets.”

**violence:** Behaviour that is meant to gain power and control over family, intimate partners, colleagues, individuals or groups. Violence may occur only once. It may involve subtle manipulation. Violence may occur often and become worse over months or years. Violence may be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, cultural, verbal and financial, as well as neglect.<sup>11</sup>

**Youtube:** A website which allows users to post and watch user-created videos.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Women’s Health Network. (2005). Body image and the media. Retrieved from <http://www.cwhn.ca/node/40776>

<sup>10</sup> Levin, D.E. (2009, August). So sexy so soon: The new sexualized childhood and what parents can do to protect their kids. New York: Ballantine Books.

<sup>11</sup> Violence Prevention Initiative. (2010, November 22). Types of violence and abuse. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.nl.ca/VPI/types/index.html>