Executive Summary

Communication technologies have had a profound impact on the ways in which individuals and groups interact with one another. In Canada, high-profile cases of cyberviolence are forcing communities to engage with issues of online violence and bullying, including the ways these forms of aggression are directed at young women. In 2014, the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers was granted funding through the Status of Women Canada. The funding was provided to develop a project aimed at addressing cyberviolence within the province.

Some of the objectives of this project included the development of youth and community partnerships, a provincial online survey (offered to all genders), a series of focus groups, and collaborative strategy development. Nine focus groups took place across the province (Moncton, Riverview, Campbellton, Dalhousie, Fredericton, St. Stephen, Edmundston, Kingsclear and Elsipogtog First Nations), and included 65 young women ages 16-19. The provincial online survey was answered by 299 participants ages 16-19, with a target of having 100 participants. The survey and focus groups were offered in both official languages. The purpose of this need assessment was: to identify the technology youth were using, to explore youth experiences with cyberviolence, to explore community responses to the issue, and to understand the rules regarding internet use. Shockingly, over half of the sample stated they did not have rules with regards to internet usage.

Results suggest that over 50% of youth, ages 16-19, have been affected by cyberviolence. Findings indicated that 26% of youth reported that their first experience of cyberviolence occurred between the ages of 11-13. Participants highlighted the social context of cyberviolence, and related it to broader social issues of gender discrimination, homophobia, and issues relating to body image. According to the online survey, 57% of females reported sending an intimate photo online significantly more than males 27$. This statistic is understood as a symptom of the hypersexualization of women, as men were half as likely to do so.

According to the online survey and the youth that participated in the focus groups, cyberviolence is a growing issue, with substantial impacts on mental health. These may include feelings of depression, powerlessness, lower levels of self-esteem, anxiety, and anger. Overwhelmingly, respondents were unaware of the resources available, and felt as though little
was being done to combat the issue within their communities. Results from the survey and focus groups highlighted a need for increased resources and support, better coordination between existing initiatives, and increased awareness regarding available resources. Cyberviolence represents a formidable challenge to teachers, policy makers, and law enforcement officials - our project suggests the importance of increased education and awareness, as well as practical strategies and training for adults and communities dealing with this issue. Adults and service providers, who confronted with cyberviolence, believed that the creation of a safe and accepting atmosphere for youth would prove instrumental in fostering positive outcomes. Youth responses highlighted several qualities they look for in a confidant, including trustworthiness, kindness, someone familiar to them, and someone that can provide a safe and non-judgemental environment.

The involvement of youth, parents, guardians, grandparents, and the community to address the issues of cyberviolence is critical. The final stages of the project will aim to work with youth and community partners to develop, enhance, and carry out collaborative strategies to prevent this form of gender-based violence within the province.
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A Message from the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee

As youths, we were involved in this project as a way to improve the situation for generations to come. We have lived through experiences of cyberviolence and have felt the impact and effects of this. We want other youth to know that they are not alone and that there is help out there! Youth have the right to be involved in decisions that impact their lives and we encourage other youth to become engaged with this initiative.
Introduction

In recent years, communication technologies have had a profound impact on the ways in which individuals and groups interact with one another. In Canada, high-profile cases of cyberviolence are forcing communities to engage more deeply with issues of online violence and bullying, including the ways in which these forms of aggression are directed at young women. Cyberviolence can be broadly defined as harm caused by one individual or group to another using cyber-technologies including the internet, mobile phones, applications, and social media. Cyberviolence can include bullying, harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, luring, or images of child sexual abuse. The issue of cyberviolence can be framed in many ways - as an issue related to mental health, public health and safety, or as an issue related to violence against women. This report examines cyberviolence against young women in the context of New Brunswick.

The Project

In 2014, the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers, in partnership with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, was granted funding by Status of Women Canada. This two-year funding was granted to develop a project to prevent cyberviolence against young women in New Brunswick. The project explores the types, causes, and impacts of cyberviolence in New Brunswick in order to develop collaborative strategies to prevent and eliminate the issue. The project included a provincial online survey, a series of focus groups with young women ages 16-19, and a collaborative strategy development with a provincial youth advisory committee and community stakeholder group. The Provincial Advisory Committee, or PAC, is composed of young women ages 16-19 with a vested interest in preventing cyberviolence within their communities. The goal of the project is to help build collaboration among community stakeholders and youth to identify and respond to the specific needs of young women and girls related to cyberviolence in New Brunswick. The project team works closely with young people who are helping to identify the issues, expand their understanding of cyberviolence, and help carry out strategies to prevent this form of gender-based violence.

Limitations
Due to the requirements set out by the project proposal and ethics approval, participation in the focus groups, online survey, and provincial youth advisory committee were limited to young women ages 16-19. The survey also included young women and young men ages 16-19.

A Review of the Literature

In recent years, research exploring the impact of communication technologies on the victimization of children and youth has increased significantly (Perren et al., 2012; Tokunaga, 2010). This movement reflects the recognition that social media increasingly provides a platform for violent acts, including harassment, sexual violence, and bullying. This review outlines trends in the literature related to the nature and extent of cyberviolence, the effects on youth, and ways of responding to the issue.

Nature and Extent of Cyberviolence

Data on the prevalence of cyberviolence varies in the literature. Research has shown that between 20% and 75% of youth report experiencing cyberviolence. Due to the rapidly changing nature of technology it can be difficult to determine the specific nature of cyberviolence behaviours. Ybarra and West (2007) indicate that the most common forms of violence online are mean comments (32%), aggressive or threatening comments (14%), and use of the internet to spread rumors (13%). Juvonen and Gross (2008) found that over 70% of adolescents experience some form of cyberviolence within a one year period.

Some researchers argue that the prevalence of cyberviolence among youth is due, in part, to the process of identity formation that occurs during adolescence. This is marked by development of sexuality and interest in romantic attachments (Sales & Irwin, 2009). These characteristics contribute to an emphasis on relationships with peers and intimate partners. Through these relationships young people contextualize themselves and their self-worth. For this reason, it is unsurprising that young people make use of online social networks. Studies suggest that approximately 90% of adolescents in North America access the internet regularly, while approximately 70% use at least one social networking site (Subrahmanyam et al, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Currently, the most prevalent platforms for cyberviolence are social media sites, such as text messaging, and instant message (Knighton et al., 2012). Shariff (2010) found that 60% of youth have trouble distinguishing “the difference between harmless jokes or teasing, and harmful threats, privacy harm and persistent harassment”. Approximately one half of youth
report using technology in a private place and the majority of youth who experience
cyberviolence choose not to tell anyone about it (Mishna et al., 2010).

Similarities exist between online and offline violence, but the specific differences are
troubling. For example, aggressive, humiliating, and otherwise harmful material can be shared,
made permanent, and made public to a wide audience online (Heirman & Walrave, 2008). The
large scale and anonymous nature of the internet can also make it difficult for people to defend
themselves, seek recourse or avoid the person responsible (Perren et al, 2012).

**Impacts of Cyberviolence**

Nixon (2014) reports that 93% of youth who experience cyberviolence report negative
effects as a result. Youth that are experiencing cyberviolence are noted to have lower self-
esteeem and experience more interpersonal, physical, and behavioural issues than other youth
(Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Völlink et al., 2013). Studies report effects including: fear, uneasiness,
sadness, powerlessness, loneliness, anxiety, suicidal ideation, lower self-esteem, anger, and
aggression (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Nixon, 2014). The most commonly cited effect of
cyberviolence is depression (Magaud, Nyman, & Addington, 2013; Nixon, 2014). Feelings of
fear and powerlessness are reported to increase when the perpetrator is anonymous, and the
most harmful outcomes are related to the sharing of videos or pictures (Nixon, 2014).

Negative effects of cyberviolence are not limited to the person who is targeted, but also
impact the person responsible for the cyberviolence. Youth engaging in cyberviolence
behaviours may experience similar psychological effects as people who are targeted. These
include depression, anger, fear, sadness, embarrassment, and frustration. Relationship
disruptions are also commonly reported, including a lower sense of belonging, weaker
emotional bonds with caregivers, and lower levels of empathy. Rates of attempted suicide are
significantly higher than average for both victims and those who engage in cyberviolence
behaviours. Research has suggested victims are 1.9 times more likely to attempt suicide; this
can be compared to offenders who are 1.5 times more likely to attempt suicide than those
untouched by cyberviolence (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010, p. 216). In many cases, there is not a
clear separation between youth engaging in cyberviolence behaviour and the youth being
targeted. Research indicates that males are more likely to respond to cyberviolence with active,
physically retaliatory behaviours, while females tend to use more passive, verbally retaliatory
behaviours (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009).
Responses to Cyberviolence

Nixon reports that strong social support lessens the negative impact of symptoms caused by cyberviolence. However, research indicates that few victims feel comfortable reporting their experience (Nixon, 2014). Slonje & Smith (2008) report that 37.5% of youth who experienced cyberviolence told a friend, 8.9% disclosed to a parent, 5.4% to someone else, and 50% did not tell anyone. Youth who disclose their experiences are more likely to tell a parent or guardian than a school administrator, citing the belief that school officials will not handle the situation appropriately, or will fail to act entirely (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009, Nixon, 2014). Patterns in reporting indicate that parents and educators require additional information to respond to situations of cyberviolence, to foster an open dialogue on the issue, and to intervene effectively when required.

Government responses to cyberviolence are varied. In New Zealand, for example, an Internet Safety Kit included documents about online risks and creating safe internet environments. The kit was developed and distributed to schools and libraries (Butterfield, 2003). In 2013, Nova Scotia developed a Cyber Scan Investigative Unit. This unit allowed investigators to respond to complaints of cyberbullying, negotiate formal or informal resolutions and, if necessary, seek a cyberbullying prevention order. In the United States, Massachusetts mandates that every school in the state have an anti-bullying plan. These plans include anti-bullying curriculum, school-wide prevention, and intervention strategies. It also requires anonymous reporting procedures, specific consequences, methods for notifying parents and guardians, and referrals to counselling when necessary (Noonan, 2011).

Concluding Remarks

With the continuing emergence of new technologies and communication platforms, researchers, policy makers, teachers, and parents scramble to stay current with the online realities of youth. While statistics on the nature and extent of cyberviolence vary, both research and anecdotal evidence confirm that the incidence and severity of cyberviolence is increasing significantly. In order to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence, the literature indicates that solutions must emerge by means of collaboration at the intersection of education, legislation, and service provision.
Defining Cyberviolence

The Provincial Youth Advisory Committee (PAC) has provided significant leadership concerning this project, specifically with regards to the focus group and online survey. Participants in the PAC were asked to define cyberviolence by exploring the question, “What do you think about when you think about cyberviolence?” They categorized their responses into the following four categories:

Category 1 - Anonymity and Related Factors
- “Catfish”
- “It’s much easier to hide behind a screen”
- “Anonymous statuses that everyone knows who it’s about”
- “The feeling of being anonymous”
- “Fake identity” x 2
- “Hiding behind a screen” x 2
- “Changing ethnicities”
- “The choice to be anonymous”
- “Anonymous”
- “Anonymous hurtful questions on ask.fm”

Category 2 - Societal Norms and Tools Used to Enforce Them
- “People spend so much time on social network that it just becomes habit”
- “Not talking about violence against women”
- “Social standards”
- “Patriarchy”
- “With each generation more and more children are using the internet (or just people in general)”
- “The accessibility to so many people at once”
- “Unstoppable: spreading information”
- “An act/charade”
- “Porn”
- “Parents don’t regulate what their children are doing more and more often”
- “Facebook”
“What you put online stays online”
“Photoshop/ altering photos”
“Hacking accounts”
“Advertisements”
“Media such as magazines”
“Music videos objectifying women and lyrics”
“Media’s misrepresentation of women”
“Uploading offensive videos”
“Tagging awful pics”
“Young girls and technology influence”

Category 3: Sexting, Photos, and Videos

“Girls feeling like they need to send “sexy” pictures to be accepted
“Taking clothes off for webcam”
“Nude pics without consent”
“Sharing naked images”
“Sexting” x 3

Category 4: Judging and Being Judged

“Name calling”
“Name calling: objectification of women, catcall sort of thing”
“Girls being called “sluts” or “whores”
“Women are targeted more than men due to gender norms”
“Slut shaming”
“Rumours”
“Judging people’s posts and pictures”
“ Pretending to like someone to dis them in school”
“Bullying people because of their appearance”
“Movies: mean girls”
“Bullying” x 2
“Creating a 2nd version of you for the purpose of humiliation”
“Sharing other people’s private memories”
“Judging based on what you see not what you know”
Focus Group Findings

Introduction

The project to Prevent and Eliminate Cyberviolence against Young Women and Girls in New Brunswick included a series of focus groups to better understand the lived realities of young people in the province. The focus groups took place between May 2015 and November 2015. Young women between the ages of 16 to 19 participated in the focus group through invitation by community partners. Focus groups were held in the following locations: the Acadian Peninsula, Campbellton, Dalhousie, Edmundston, Fredericton, Riverview, St. Stephen, Elsipogtog and Kingsclear First Nations. Project partners included social workers, teachers, and community workers. The partners in each region facilitated the logistics and informed consent process with participants. Each focus group was audio-recorded and the facilitators discussed the importance of confidentiality and the legal/ethical requirements of the research team to break confidentiality. Each participant was invited to take their own notes on a questionnaire handout that was collected at the end of the meeting. At the end of each focus group, the facilitators shared a discussion debrief form and a list of supports and services in their region, the province and online. The following report summarizes the information gathered by the focus groups. Six groups were conducted in English, and three groups were conducted in French. A total of 65 young women participated in the focus groups thus far. Participants were asked the following questions:

- What do you think about when you think about cyberviolence?
- What are people doing about cyberviolence in your community?
- What strategies would you like to see in your community?
- If you experienced cyberviolence, what would you do?
- What do you do to make sure you don’t harm other people online?
Defining Cyberviolence

Participants were first asked, “What do you think about when you think about cyberviolence?” This question was answered by a collage activity, in which the youth were invited to cut and paste images from magazines that they considered to be related to cyberviolence. The activity was intended to be both an ice-breaker activity and a starting point for a discussion on the definition of cyberviolence. Photos of the collages are included throughout this report.

The focus group participants provided a broad understanding of cyberviolence, including what actions they consider to be cyberviolence, its unique qualities, the social context, as well as the impacts of cyberviolence. Participants were informed that for the purposes of this project, cyberviolence could include: bullying, harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, child luring, and images of child sexual abuse that occurs online or by text. Focus group participants began by outlining acts they consider to be cyberviolence, including discrimination and judgement, rumours and miscommunication, and sexting and nudes.

Acts of Cyberviolence

Discrimination and Judgement

Participants indicated that online communication platforms present a venue for discrimination and judgment. One young woman explains, “No one views each other as human anymore... you’re judged for the way you look, you’re judged for what you have, you’re judged for all that stuff.” Participants note that discrimination and judgement is present on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as on Ask.FM. The participants included gender norms and sexuality, sexual identity, and physical appearance as common subjects of discrimination.
youth explained: “They tell you to be yourself, but then they judge you for not fitting in.” The young women believe that people who engage in cyberviolence are not always aware of the harm caused by their actions. As one participant states, “I think that what they do, they don’t realise it’s bullying.”

Rumours and Miscommunication

The young women also outlined the harms of rumours and gossip. One participant states “I know people who are scared to even open their computer or laptop because of what people might be saying about them.” The participants also indicated that comments can easily be taken out of context online - “Things are miscommunicated online. It gets muddled. It’s much better to talk in person. You hear more truth and there’s less miscommunication.” They also explained that mean comments can get out of hand online. One young woman explains, “There is lasting drama. It starts over something petty and then gets really aggressive and lasts so long.” Another participant notes, “If someone gets called something they’ll do it to someone else, like a chain reaction.”

Sexting and Nudes

The participants referred to sending naked/intimate/sexual content online or by text as sexting, referring specifically to the photos as “nudes”. According to the participants, this is a common practice in most high schools, with some young men collecting and sharing the images amongst themselves or with others. One participant compared the trading of these images to trading Pokémon cards. One participant explains why young women send nudes despite knowing the potential consequences: “Guys online talk to you a certain way and change your mind [about sending a nude],” she says, “Because it feels good, what they’re saying to you.” Most participants
are not strictly against sexting, but they recognize its consequences - “If a girl sends a picture then the whole school sees it. And then you kind of get a name for it. Other guys will go to her because they think she’s easy.”

Unique Qualities of Cyberviolence

According to the focus group participants, cyberviolence has qualities that are unique from other forms of victimization. These include anonymity, constant connection, permanency, public access, and the generation gap between young people and adults.

Anonymity

One unique quality is the role of anonymity. As one youth indicated: “It’s much easier to say something mean online, because I don’t have to see their reaction.” The idea of hiding behind a screen was common during the discussions. Another young woman explains, “It’s easy to hide behind the screen, so people feel like they can say what they want; they feel like they can be as mean as they want.” Another youth noted - “with technology, people think they’re superior...screens protect them from the outside world. They dare to say things that they wouldn’t say in person.”

Constant Connection

Another factor that is unique to cyberviolence is constant connection. Participants noted that there is no escape from cyberviolence when they go home from school, whereas offline victimization can sometimes be physically escaped. One participant explains, “Having people say stuff about you on social media all the time, it can get exhausting to look at it all.” The young women emphasized that simply disconnecting does not solve the problems associated with constant connection. “It’s still there even if you’re not looking at it,” says one participant. “It follows you everywhere,” explains another young woman.

Permanency

Another factor that makes cyberviolence unique is that, as one participant voices, “Once something is posted online it’s there forever.” Individuals can quickly lose control over content once it has been posted online. The young women noted that people do not always think about the consequences before posting photos, or information on social media.

Public Access
The public nature of many online communication platforms also presents unique challenges. One participant notes, “It’s everywhere once it’s up [online].” Another participant associates cyberviolence with “making sure that the person is publically insulted, that everyone can see the person being insulted.” Instances of cyberviolence can be witnessed by large groups online, whereas offline violence can sometimes be more contained. The public nature of cyberviolence can add to distress for people who experience it.

**Generation Gap**

Focus group participants believe that adults struggle to understand their online lives. “The thing is,” explains one participant, “no one knows how to deal with this.” One young woman suggests, “Our parents need to be educated because they never grew up with the internet...they have phones and stuff, but they don’t understand. We grew up in the technology so we know how everything is working, but I don’t think they understand how it is.” Participants also note that some adults dismiss cyberviolence. One young woman recommends, “You shouldn’t brush it off as ‘oh they’re just jealous’ or ‘kids will be kids’ and such, because that won’t make the victim feel any better.” Another participant explains, “It needs to be recognized as a legitimate problem and taken more seriously.”

**The Social Context of Cyberviolence**

Many participants recognized issues related to cyberviolence as part of a broader social context, particularly related to gender-based discrimination and attitudes about women. They outlined double standards for young men and women, as well as discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth. One participant noted that: “If gender roles aren’t followed, people are shamed for it”. Participants also suggested that often cyberviolence revolves around the issue of body image, in particular the act of “fat-shaming” one another.
One participant says, “Cyberviolence is often around body image. It’s the easiest thing to fall back on when things become confrontational: ‘oh yeah? Well you’re fat!”’.

The participants emphasized that young women are commonly targeted online based on sexuality, physical appearance, and weight. “That’s the go to insult” shared a participant, “you’re either a slut, a whore, or you’re fat”. Another participant indicates: “for girls there’s a lot of pressure to look a certain way. And it’s not just seeing [mass] media, but people actually make comments about your body”. They recognized the presence of these issues online as an extension of broader social issues.

The Impacts of Cyberviolence

Participants also indicated that experiencing cyberviolence has a significant impact on many areas of a young person's life. In particular, participants noted the substantial impact it can have on the mental health of those involved. They discussed impacts on mental health for individuals experiencing cyberviolence, as well as those who are engaging in cyberviolence behaviours. One participant shared: “this is mentally destroying a bunch of girls”. When it comes to experiencing cyberviolence, one participant explains, “Victims feel anxious, weak, and sometimes suicidal. They don’t feel loved and appreciated in the world”. The consequences of cyberviolence are severe, a participant speaks to this, stating that: “I would rather be hit, than having that blow up on my phone every day”.

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Participants also indicate that people who engage in cyberviolence behaviours are often trying to feel better about their own lives. As one young woman suggests, “No one is born a bad person. Usually kids that bully don’t have a good home life”, other participants add: “People do it to make themselves feel better, they believe they’re better. It’s often the people with low self-esteem that bully to make themselves feel better than others”.

Summary

Focus group participants provided a broad understanding of cyberviolence from their perspective as young people immersed in the world of technology. For the purposes of this project, cyberviolence can include bullying, harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, child luring, and images of child sexual abuse that occurs online or by text. Most specifically, participants outlined behaviours related to discrimination, rumours and miscommunication, and sexting and “nudes” as key acts of cyberviolence.

They further explained factors that make these forms of violence unique, such as anonymity, constant connection, permanency, public access, and a generation gap between young people and adults. The focus group participants located these factors within a larger social context of gender role expectations and attitudes about women. The young women recognized cyberviolence as a serious issue that impacts the mental health of both people who experience cyberviolence as well as those engaging in cyberviolence.
Existing Strategies

Focus group participants also explored what is already being done to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence in the province of New Brunswick. The key themes of this discussion included: lack of strategies, awareness campaigns, existing services and resources as well as rules about internet use. These themes will be explored further using information from the focus group results.

Lack of Strategies

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated that they did not know of anything being done to confront cyberviolence in their community. Others thought that responses to cyberviolence “are making it worse”, such as dismissive responses to cyberviolence such as being told to ‘ignore it’ or ‘get over it’. When pressed further, participants identified some activities that are dealing with the issue. Their initial response indicates lack of coordination among existing initiatives.

Awareness Campaigns

Participants indicated numerous existing public awareness campaigns. These included: Pause Before You Post, Pink Shirt Day, Red Cross (Beyond the Hurt / Respect Education), school-based anti-bullying committees, and school-based presentations. They also mentioned seeing videos, advertisements and posters confronting issues related to cyberviolence. Participants noted that cyberviolence was more commonly framed as “cyberbullying” than cyberviolence.

Services and Resources

In terms of services and resources for people who experience cyberviolence, some participants noted that they are encouraged to reach out to the school guidance department for help with this issue. At some schools, tracking forms are available for anonymous reporting of bullying. Social workers, psychologists, and counsellors were also named as people who help with cyberviolence. Participants mentioned Kids Help Phone and the Link Program - they were, however, uncertain as to how frequently these resources are used by their peers.

Rules and Consequences

Participants said that their cellphones and laptops are sometimes monitored at home by parents or guardians. They also discussed the use of suspensions from school as a possible
consequence of engaging in cyberviolence. Lastly, they noted that sometimes police involvement was a part of dealing with this issue.

**Barriers to Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence**

In addition to identifying existing strategies, participants also outlined barriers to preventing cyberviolence. These barriers include a lack of education and awareness about the issue, obstacles to help-seeking, and systemic barriers.

*Lack of Education and Awareness*

Lack of education and awareness presents one barrier to preventing cyberviolence. This includes lack of formal education (for example, in the school system), as well as lack of awareness about cyberviolence for the general population.

Participants suggested that it can be difficult for adults and peers to tell when someone is experiencing cyberviolence, due to its invisible nature. As one student explains, “Most of the time you’re just dealing with it at home... and people don’t know because you’re not being pushed into a locker.” The participants also noted that people who engage in cyberviolence are not always aware of the consequences. One participant explains, “Sometimes people don’t realize the power of their words.”

Participants also noted that they lack information about the laws surrounding cyberviolence and have the impression that there are few, if any, consequences for people who engage in this behaviour. The young women also indicate that knowledge-sharing between young people and adults is essential to developing meaningful responses to this issue.

*Obstacles to Help-Seeking*

Many young people are reluctant to seek help when experiencing cyberviolence. The focus group participants outlined key reasons why young women keep cyberviolence to themselves. These reasons included: inconsistent or ineffective consequences, fear of making the situation worse, and fear of getting in trouble.

*Inconsistent or Ineffective Consequences*
Most participants felt that consequences for cyberviolence are inconsistent. As one young woman shares, “Most people usually just walk away with a slap on the wrist”. “If you bring it to someone nothing usually happens,” says another young woman. The participants also perceive that reactions to cyberviolence sometimes punish the victim unfairly. One participant states, “I feel like people who send [a nude] to someone [originally] get blamed more than the person who sends it around [without permission].” They also perceive double standards for young men and young women when it comes to consequences. In one case of sharing intimate images, a youth explains, “he got a slap on the wrist and the teachers were like, ‘how do you want people to think about you?’”

Participants also noted miscommunication with adults. One young woman says, “When you do tell your parents, most of the time it goes, like, right over their heads.” “[Adults] don’t take it seriously and they don’t understand the effect it has on people’s lives,” says another participant.

Making it Worse

Young people are reluctant to come forward for fear of making the situation worse. Some participants indicated that the social consequences of reporting, or being perceived as a ‘snitch’, would prevent them from disclosing situations of cyberviolence. They also expressed that often victims fear an escalation of violence if they come forward. One young woman shares: “When you tell a teacher, the aggressor will harass you more.” “You don’t want to report it because you’re afraid it makes it worse,” explains another participant.

Getting in Trouble

Participants also perceived undertones of shame, judgement, and victim-blaming as factors that prevent young women from coming forward if they are being targeted, especially if they know they have done something that may be considered wrong, such as sharing intimate images. One participant states, “When it comes to a sexual assault a lot of people don’t listen to the victim. You automatically assume, ‘oh, they could have prevented it.’ And I think it’s the same when it comes to this stuff. You could have not said this or done that, there’s so many ways you could have stopped it, and it’s like, maybe I deactivated my facebook and then they’re gonna get at me on twitter... I need to be in contact with people, [I’m] not going to become isolated.” The young women feel that these undertones are present in the discourse surrounding cyberviolence. As one participant reflects, “It makes people that are the victims of having people spread their stuff around seem like it was their fault.”
**Systemic Barriers**

Structural issues were also discussed as barriers to preventing cyberviolence. As one young woman explains, “I’d probably keep it to myself because I don’t feel as though there are enough resources given to teens.” These barriers include waitlists to talk to a counsellor, insufficient mental health care, budget cuts in the education system, and an emphasis on academic and career issues, rather than personal issues, by school guidance departments.

**Recommended Strategies**

The focus group participants described a series of recommendations for preventing and eliminating cyberviolence against young women. They outline suggestions related to education and awareness, knowledge-sharing, services and resources, as well as coordination of policies and action plans for dealing with cyberviolence. The young women also provided advice for dealing with specific instances of cyberviolence.

**Education and Awareness**

**Cyber Safety**

The focus group participants emphasize the importance of education about cyber safety for young people, both in schools and by means of public education campaigns.

**Adult Education**

They recommended involving adults in conversations about cyberviolence and providing training for teachers as well as parents or guardians on the issue.

**Confronting Inequality**

In addition, the participants considered education on gender roles and the sexualisation of young women an important component of ending cyberviolence.

**Intergenerational Knowledge-Sharing**

Knowledge-sharing between young people and adults is critical for preventing and eliminating cyberviolence against young women and girls in New Brunswick. The participants indicated that young people and adults have different ways of thinking about the issue which
inform initial reactions to cyberviolence. For example, one participant explains, “When the school hears about nudes going around they freak out. But what you don’t realize is the girl is probably freaking out enough about the fact that her nudes are going around without a lecture on how it’s child porn.”

The young women indicated that strategies should be youth-informed. “I think they need things like this [focus group],” says one young woman, “where they can discuss what needs to be done and what measures to take, because like maybe they already have them, but it’s yet to be set in place [in a way we know about].” When it comes to information on cyberviolence, “We need more than just one day,” says one participant. Another participant mentioned “We can talk to elders about the issue, but I think chief and council should reach out more to kids to stop kids from committing cyberviolence.”

The participants recommended smaller groups rather than school-wide assemblies for sharing information about cyberviolence. One participant says, “They’re speaking to a group of 1,100 students at once and they’re here for like two minutes.” Another participant explains, “I know it takes up more time during the day, but I think it’s an issue that’s worth it in the end.” They also believe that more awareness about existing resources is needed, and recommend youth-informed modernization of awareness campaigns.

Services and Resources

Mental Health Care

The young women outlined services that would be helpful. These services included mental health care, mentorship, and a safe place to go when dealing with difficult issues. Developing resilience and self-esteem were also presented as a way to help deal with cyberviolence.

Website and Applications

The participants believe a website could provide resources, strategies, anonymous reporting, and counselling online or by text message. One group also thought creating an app that could act as a ‘pause’ by requiring confirmation before posting on social media would be helpful. They also recommended including advice for dealing with cyberviolence, as well as resources to confront inequality and hypersexualization.

Policies and Procedures
Coordination and Consistency

The focus group participants indicated that increased coordination of policies and procedures is required to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence. One participant says, “When a case of cyberbullying happens, have an action plan to help.” Recommended areas for policy development include: reporting procedures when cyberviolence occurs, how to respond to a disclosure of cyberviolence, and standard consequences for individuals who engage in cyberviolence. Consistent messaging and enforcement of consequences for cyberviolence is also recommended. This includes relevant information to both policies and legislation related to cyber violence.

Anonymous Reporting

Participants encouraged the ability to report anonymously and have situations handled by adults who are specifically trained in cyber-issues, perhaps as a third party intervention.

Advice for Dealing with Cyberviolence

In addition to the recommendations above, the focus group participants provided specific advice for dealing with cyberviolence.

Advice for Adults

- Don’t brush it off
- Just getting off your phone doesn’t make it go away
- Make an effort to look for cyberviolence
- Know the signs of cyberviolence
- Discuss what needs to be done about it with young people
- Be more informed about what happens online
- Don’t make us uncomfortable
  o Learn how to be open
  o Be comfortable talking about it
- Be subtle and respect our privacy (e.g. don’t call us to the office on the PA system)
- Try not to be biased, keep a level head, don’t start just freaking out, find out both sides
- Avoid victim-blaming
- Create safe spaces where young people can talk about these issues
- Invest in mental health training and awareness
- Create rules about internet and cell phone use
Advice for Young People

- Express yourself in person
- Tell somebody
- Pause before you post
- Talk to the person who’s bothering you in person
- Don’t read into it
- Don’t post about others
- Shut it off and calm down
- Be positive on social media
- If you wouldn’t say it to their face, don’t say it online
- Block the person who’s bothering you
- Save posts and take screenshots
- If you send a pic, everyone is probably going to see it
- Use emojis so people get the tone
- Delete people you don’t like from social media
- If it’s important, call by phone
- Mind your own business
- Delete apps
- Don’t reply
- Let it go
Conclusion

The focus group participants provided a broad understanding of cyberviolence, including what actions they consider to be cyberviolence, its unique qualities, the social context, as well as the impacts of cyberviolence. Focus group participants outline acts they consider to be cyberviolence, including discrimination and judgement, rumours and miscommunication, and sexting and the sending of “nudes”. According to the focus group participants, cyberviolence has qualities that are unique from other forms of victimization, including anonymity, constant connection, permanency, public access, and factors related to a generation gap between young people and adults.

Many participants recognized issues related to cyberviolence as part of a broader social context, particularly as related to gender-based discrimination and attitudes about women. Participants also indicated that experiencing cyberviolence has a significant impact on the mental health of young people. They outlined impacts on mental health for individuals experiencing cyberviolence, as well as those who are engaging in cyberviolence behaviours.

The discussions also explored what is already being done to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence in New Brunswick. The key categories identified by participants outline lack of strategies, awareness campaigns, resources, and rules. The focus group participants also described a series of recommendations for preventing and eliminating cyberviolence against young women. They outlined suggestions related to education and awareness, knowledge-sharing, services and resources, and coordination of policies and action plans for dealing with cyberviolence. Lastly, the young women provide advice for dealing with specific instances of cyberviolence. Many of the recommendations made by focus group participants are currently being undertaken in New Brunswick; however, lack of a comprehensive collaborative strategy for these initiatives presents a gap in knowledge and implementation.
Online Survey Results

Demographics

This sample comprises 299 16- to 19-year-old young people ($M = 17.06$, $SD = 1.01$) who confirmed being residents of New Brunswick. Of the 299 participants, 179 (59.9%) were female, 88 (29.4%) were male, 4 (1.3%) identified as transgender, 1 (0.3%) identified as questioning, and 27 (9.0%) did not answer the question about gender. The survey was available in both official languages and was completed by 201 (67.2%) participants in English and 98 (32.8%) in French. Surveys administered in either French or English are analyzed together to show significance where present.

Participants reported being in Grade 7 ($n = 1$, 0.3%), Grade 8 ($n = 2$, 0.7%), Grade 9 ($n = 1$, 0.3%), Grade 10 ($n = 17$, 5.7%), Grade 11 ($n = 109$, 36.5%), Grade 12 ($n = 87$, 29.1%), first year of college or university ($n = 21$, 7.0%), second year of college or university ($n = 14$, 4.7%), or third year of college or university ($n = 1$, 0.3%); 17 (5.7%) reported not being in school, and 29 (9.7%) did not answer this question. Below is the table of key demographics for the sample as a whole as well as among females only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
<th>Female Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>17.06</td>
<td>17.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade in school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Endorsed SES challenges (%)*</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported mental health issues (%)*</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible minority (%)*</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations identity (%)*</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community of residence (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only valid percentages are reported. Those individuals who did not give any response were not included in the analysis.

**Technology Use / Most popular**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent Using App</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text/Messaging</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AskFM</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kik</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinder</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whisper</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yik Yak</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Rules Related to Internet Use**

Regarding household rules for internet use, 53% of youth reported that there are no rules specified in their household.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent with Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules about sharing personal info</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules about websites can/cannot access</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules about time online</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules about erasing browser history</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules about being supervised online</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No rules about Internet specified in household</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants provided the following examples of household rules related to internet use:

- *Fair chance to use computer*
- *Be smart, use common sense*
- *Leave computer unlocked for parents to check at whim*
- *No data that often*
- *No Rules*
- *Where I can use the internet*

**The Nature and Extent of Cyberviolence**

Participants were first asked how often they had experienced cyberviolence. They were then asked how often they experienced various forms of cyberviolence (e.g., made fun of online or by text, being threatened online or by text), as well as when these experiences happened. It appears that cyberviolence is mostly taking place on Facebook, Ask.FM, and over Text/Messaging. Although Facebook and Text/Messaging were reported among the most frequent social networks and devices, Ask.FM was not. As such, Ask.FM represents perhaps a
unique technology that is used less often but that also may have an increased potential for cyberviolence.

_Bivariate Correlations among Cyberviolence Experiences_

There was a significant positive relationship between all reported experiences of cyberviolence. This indicates that individuals experiencing and/or perpetrating one form of cyberviolence are likely also experiencing and/or perpetrating other forms of cyberviolence.

**Technology and Cyberviolence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent Reporting Cyberviolence on App</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AskFM</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text/Messaging</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kik</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whisper</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinder</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yik Yak</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of Experiencing Cyberviolence

There was no significant difference in the occurrence of cyberviolence reported by males and females, \( \chi^2(4, N = 267) = 4.76, p = .31 \). The majority of participants did report some experience of what they perceived as cyberviolence (56%). More specifically, 60% reported being made fun of online or by text, 60% reported feeling sad, angry or upset by something that happened to them or someone they know online or by text, and 66% reported experiencing drama online. Young people report fewer experiences of receiving messages from someone after asking them to stop (44%), and feeling threatened online or by text (37%).

Naked/Sexual/Intimate Images

33
Females (57.6%) reported being asked to send naked/sexual/intimate photos significantly more than males (27.3%), $\chi^2(4, N = 267) = 22.41, p < .001$. There were no significant other gender differences related to sending and receiving intimate photos, all $p > .08$. Other data related to sharing images includes:

- 49% reported being asked to send naked, sexual or intimate photos to someone.
- 42% reported receiving offensive or intimate photos they did not ask for
- 30% reported consensually sending naked, sexual or intimate photos to a person they were dating
- 31% reported receiving naked, sexual or intimate photos from someone they were dating
- 29% reported receiving naked, sexual or intimate photos from someone they were not dating.
Some youth also reported being forwarded a naked, sexual or intimate image of someone without his or her permission (17%). Some participants also report having an embarrassing (but not necessarily sexual) image or videos of them shared by text or online (23%). Of youth under age 18 years old, 24% reported sending an intimate photos to an adult at least once.

First Experiences of Cyberviolence

Most youth reported experiencing cyberviolence for the first time between the ages of 11 and 13 (26%) or between the ages of 14 and 15 years (19%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 or under</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 13</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 to 15</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 17</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 19</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Does Cyberviolence Happen?

Participants reported that cyberviolence happens all the time (63%), but perhaps most often after school (24%).
When Cyberviolence Happens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Cyberviolence Happens</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent with Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All the Time</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Weekend</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After You Go To Bed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Morning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effects of Cyberviolence

Hierarchical regressions were computed in order to identify which cyberviolence experiences are significant predictors of individual and interpersonal adjustment difficulties. The following relationships were found:

- Significant relationship between experiencing cyberviolence and trauma (overall).
- Significant relationship between sexting and dissociation symptoms.
- Significant relationship between experiencing cyberviolence and anxiety.
- Significant relationship between experiencing cyberviolence and depressive symptoms.
- Significant relationship between sexting and sexual trauma.
- Significant relationship between experiencing cyberviolence and sleep disturbances.
- Significant relationship between sexting and reported substance use.

Participants also described a series of effects that can be categorized as severe (e.g., long-term), moderate (e.g., short-term negative emotions), and minimal to no impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severe Impact</th>
<th>Moderate Impact</th>
<th>Minimal Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Made me Stronger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Impacted how I use the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>Mad / Angry</td>
<td>Made me more aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Disorders</td>
<td>Discomfort</td>
<td>I am a strong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Feeling Unsafe</td>
<td>Just erased the photo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many of the youth who were severely affected experienced cyberviolence that resulted in psychological harm (e.g., depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, etc.), physical harm (e.g. suicide attempt, self-harm), and social harm (e.g. isolation).

**Severe Effects**

- "I developed a mental illness which [affects] my everyday life. I became depressed because of ex boyfriends spreading rumors online. I developed social anxiety because of the bullying from school mates."
- "After getting texts telling me to kill myself because no one would miss me, made fun of from texts, I wrote a note and was going to commit suicide but my parents came home and helped me."
- "Made me really untrustworthy. Made me have anxiety. Made me suffer from depression."
- "It [definitely] led to me suffering anxiety and depression and very low self-esteem. You never forget what’s said to you, and it stays in your mind all the time and I’m just not a happy person anymore."
- "A friend of a friend of mine was cyberbullied into suicide."
- "Crushed my self-confidence, had a lasting impact on my view of men, made me lose trust in people, became more withdrawn, decreased my ability to build solid relationships with members of the opposite sex."
- "I ended up becoming super closed off, I didn’t trust anybody and I got extremely depressed and it caused me a bunch of mental/emotional suffering. I cried a lot and went through some serious problems (suicidal, self-harm, eating disorder)."
- "I’ve had people bully me to the point that I attempted suicide multiple times."
- “Definitely had a negative impact in terms of self-esteem and confidence.”
- “Caused a sadness that turned into depression.”
- “It impacts how you see people. It takes years before you can trust people or gain friendship back.”
- “It made me depressed. I didn't want to go to school so I wouldn't have to face the person who bullied me.”
- "Made me feel like I was a mistake, like I shouldn't exist anymore."
- “When I was being cyber bullied I was in a very bad place in my life. I believe that the bullying increased myself harm and decreased my self-esteem. While I no longer self-harm I feel that it had a lasting impact.”
- “[After] I have been cyberviolence, I try not coming to school changing school, and barely talking to anyone.”
- “It impacted pretty bad considering i never wanted to go to school and education is really important and cyberviolence made me not want to come back and i still don’t.”
- “In middle school I had an issue with people saying mean things about me via instant messaging and social networking. Spreading rumors and making fun of me. I became very introverted and was unable to make friends because of it. I was not happy at school, ever. In early highschool I dealt with an incident in which I had an argument with someone via Facebook, and they proceeded to make comments about how I should kill myself. They knew that I was struggling with mental illness, and was already suicidal. I did not attempt suicide, however the comments made in that conversation caused my issues with self-harm to become worse.”

**Moderate Effects**

- “Gave a sense of extreme discomfort and a sense of being unsafe.”
- “Made me feel hurt and sad.”
- “It made me feel alone and powerless.”
- “The experience I had with cyber violence made me feel small, helpless, alone, and embarrassed. But once I sought help of an adult soon after it happened, I began to feel more at ease and in control. I knew I had done the right thing and that made me feel soooo much better.”
- “When I was younger it affected me deeply psychologically when anyone would post something i found personally offensive to the point of depression and eating disorders,
anxiety, and trust issues. Now not only do I almost never experience it, it doesn't have any effect on me at all. The only thing that upsets me is when people are mean to someone who isn't me, specifically minorities or someone who can't defend themselves or is weaker than they are."

"When I was younger, it used to genuinely bother me for people to tell me that my hair was greasy (Although it totally was) and that my friends were losers and that I was just a faggot. I would get really upset and then usually cry. As I started to get older, I stopped taking anyone messaging me hate seriously. I can think of one time I was defending LGBTQ rights on the status of one of my friends who is a lesbian, and a girl got into an argument with me and said she was going to kick my ass. I just laughed the entire time and make a joke of her terrible spelling. Now, I just avoid anything that's going to cause me to have confrontation. I keep my facebook friends list under 180 friends at all times, I got rid of my Ask.fm and I won't use twitter. It's just easier to block people who give you hate and have your online circle a nice group of supportive people."

"My boyfriend's crazy ex-girlfriend sent me mean messages but I laughed it off."

"It made me very sad to the point where I no longer wanted to have access to my cell phone because of hurtful text messages."

"A girl called me a whore and I was sad."

"I had a few falling out with friends because I sent her ex sexual pictures and she posted all of my secrets online. That impacted me because everybody knew all of my secrets and it ruined the rest of my friendships and my relationship."

"Makes you feel belittled in a sense where you have no control over it because it's in someone else's hands."

"Just made me angry."

"It made me feel worthless, though it's only happened once."

**Minimal Effects**

"It made me more aware."

"Just made me a stronger person."

"It has just [impacted] the way I use the internet."

"Not badly, I was mad for a few minutes but I got over it."

"It makes you a lot more weary of who to trust."
According to the results, the majority of youth who experienced cyberviolence are impacted by it. As outlined above, the level to which they are impacted can be broken down into three categories: severe, moderate, and minimal.

Responding to Cyberviolence

Help-Seeking Behaviors

When asked what action they would take if experiencing cyberviolence themselves, youth were most likely to talk to a friend/ask a friend for help (68.9%) or ignore it (50.9%). They were least likely to contact Kids Help Phone (18%), or do nothing because they feel nothing can be done (13.9%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Percent Endorsing Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to friend/ask friend for help</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore it</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to person responsible face-to-face/in person</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally message person responsible for cyberviolence</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask parent/guardian for help</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to counsellor/social worker</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask another adult for help</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teacher for help</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing (wouldn’t bother me)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact police</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek revenge</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Kids Help Phone</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing (nothing can be done)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what action they would take if a friend was experiencing cyberviolence, youth were most likely to talk to a friend/ask a friend for help (65.3%), talk face-to-face with the person responsible for the cyberviolence (49.8%), or ask a parent/guardian for help (49.5%). Youth were least likely to support doing nothing because it wouldn’t bother them (10.7%), and doing nothing because they feel nothing can be done (8%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action (for friend)</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Percent Endorsing Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to friend/ask friend for help</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to person responsible face-to-face/in person</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask parent/guardian for help</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask another adult for help</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally message person responsible for cyberviolence</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teacher for help</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to counsellor/social worker</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact police</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek revenge</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Kids Help Phone</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore it</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing (wouldn’t bother me)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing (nothing can be done)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualities of a Confidant

When asked about what qualities they look for in an individual when confiding about their experiences of cyberviolence, youth offered six main qualities that encourage them to confide to someone. Survey participants prefer to confide in someone who is trustworthy, kind and caring, familiar, safe, non-judgmental, and has the ability to help with their situation. The following sections are quotes taken from youth to demonstrate what survey respondents said about each of the five qualities.

Trustworthiness

- “The fact that I can trust them. Essentially trust is what I see in them, that's why I wouldn't just tell anyone about experiencing cyberviolence!”
- “I would talk to my mother, because she has made it clear to me time and time again that even if I mess up, she will always love and support me. I can trust her not to judge me and know that she won't tell others what we talk about.”
- “They are trustworthy and easy to talk to.”
- “Nothing I have trust issues so I wouldn’t turn to anyone.”
- “The person and I relate on many different things and I trust them not to tell other people about what I tell them unless they had to.”

Kind and Caring

- “I would go to someone for help who is kind, caring and trusting”
- “They never made me feel like it was my fault.”
- “More than likely, I wouldn't be searching help for the actual cyber bullying, I'd be seeking for a reassurance from a friend that I am not all the things the cyber bully(ies) said. So, qualities that would make me want to turn to them would be that I'm close to them, that they're positive and compassionate and that I can rely on them.”

Familiar

- “I would turn to my closest, trustworthy friends because they are people I can trust with this stuff. They also have never disappointed me with their advice before so I would doubt they would now.”
- “They are most likely going to be people who I have already gained trust in; close familiar relationships. However, I understand that cyberbullying can get very out of hand and traumatizing, which in those cases I would contact professionals such as counsellors/kids help phone.”
Safe

- “They have helped me in the past, we’re really close, they make me feel safe, they know me well, they know how to make me feel better, they know how to calm me down, I trust them.”
- “A feeling of being able to trust these people or feeling safe with them.”
- “Because they are not in positions of authority.”

Non-judgemental

- “They are not judgmental and I know that they only want what is best for me and those I love.”
- “If I was to talk to someone about cyber violence, it would have to be someone understanding, non-judgmental, kind, and who I am comfortable with. Like someone I have known for quite a long time.”
- "They would take my problem seriously, not judge me, and be supportive as best they could.
- Talking to teachers about getting cyberbullied isn't awkward and they won't judge you or treat you any differently."
- "They're not so close to me that they can affect my daily life, usually people who are unlikely to or cannot tell family members about this. I'd probably want someone who wouldn't judge, and is a good listener."
- "They would not judge me about anything and are always there to help. I know they would be genuinely concerned and helpful."

Able to Help

- “They are both trustworthy and experienced with the problems."
- "My counselor, she’s helped me with everything else."
- “They are smart and have power.”
- "Adults in general, because they should be able to handle it."
- "They give advice and help."
- "Open minded and helpful."
- "They are mature, wise, and appear to know how to handle these types of situations."

Taken as a whole, youth want to talk to someone who is understanding, non-judgmental, caring, kind, and trustworthy. Further, youth indicated that they want to talk to someone who has the ability to help; which according to youth is demonstrated by: listening,
giving advice, and holding a position of authority that enables that individual to help. Youth also want to talk to someone they have known a long time, who they feel close to, and have a comfortable relationship with. The survey responses indicate that young people notice reactions from parents, teachers, friends, or counsellors on a daily basis. They choose to confide in a person who has demonstrated that they possess the above qualities.

**Qualities of a Confidant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustworthy</th>
<th>Familiar</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Non-judgmental</th>
<th>Able to Help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confident they will Keep Confidential</td>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Give helpful advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident they won’t hurt you</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Won’t treat you differently afterwards</td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident they won’t judge you</td>
<td>History of helping</td>
<td>Sensitive to situation</td>
<td>Unconditional love (or friendship)</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident they will be able to help you</td>
<td>Enduring relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unconditional support</td>
<td>Maturity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | Authority | Emotional capabilities | Listening Skills |
| | | | |

**Initiatives to Prevent and Eliminate Cyberviolence in New Brunswick**

When survey participants were asked about existing efforts to confront cyberviolence in New Brunswick, only a few youth provided specific examples. Survey respondents indicated that existing programs are underutilized and not inclusive to all young people. Youth also indicated that existing programs also tend to focus on the ‘bully’ rather than focus on the larger picture that includes adults, community, and the larger social environment.
Community Initiatives Confronting Cyberviolence

Many students are not satisfied with existing programs in their schools. Furthermore, a large number of participants believe that there is nothing being done to prevent cyberviolence at the community level. The survey results indicate that measures are required to ensure that programs are achieving their desired effects. The following are survey respondent’s examples of community initiatives to confront cyberviolence:

- “The link program, but no one uses it.”
- “Cyberviolence committee”
- “At school, there is Beyond the Hurt, which is a group that is supposed to spread education about bullying, but they refuse to talk about any race or LGBTQ issues. The group itself is chosen by teachers for being the smart and popular kids, so most of them are white, cisgender, middle-to-upper class straight kids who have never been bullied in their life. But they make sure we all wear Pink on Pink Shirt day, so praise Jesus hallelujah I guess (sarcasm).”
- “There are programs/campaigns at school [that] try and educated people about cyber violence but they aren’t all that comprehensive nor are they promoting the right messages.”

Additionally, youth mentioned speeches and ‘talks’ about cyberviolence taking place at school; however, they do not believe that these talks are an effective way to prevent cyberviolence. Below are a few statements illustrating the dissatisfaction with talks about cyberviolence:

- “PSA’s and the occasional talk at the high school.”
- “Yes, in my high school we have speakers come to talk about it, the senior leadership class and student council does tons of presentations and anti-bullying advertising. Most teachers and bus drivers have no tolerance for bullying at all.”
- “There are speech efforts but they aren’t affective.”

Youth discussed how they felt that in many schools, the effort to prevent cyberviolence is solely in the form of advertisements. Many of the advertisements offer a basic level of awareness, however, they often lead to confusion and did not scratch the surface of the issue. For example, many youth talk about anti-bullying awareness campaigns that happen only through the course of one day or at most a week. This suggests that there needs to be a more enduring program in place. Focusing on bullying for such a short amount of time can send the message that this issue is of a low level of importance. The following are quotes by youth who note that the only effort being carried out by their school is through advertisement:
A significant number of youth believe that nothing is being done to prevent cyberviolence, as outlined in the following examples:

- "I don't hear anything being done to stop cyberbullying."
- "I do not know of anything to prevent cyber bullying or cyberviolence."
- "No there's nothing being done. People care but they don't do anything."

Youth-led Initiatives

The following are examples of youth-led initiatives that are confronting cyberviolence in New Brunswick:

- "Talking"
- "We-Act Club"
- "In a recent project, my friends and I offered the idea of a mental health support group in our school. Run by teens, for teens."
- "A few groups...pink shirt day. Mainly just raising awareness."
- "Yes in my experience all the anti-bullying things are driven by the youth in schools doing their best to prevent it. In my school prevention is key. Causing awareness to the problem and teaching the younger students right off the bat that bullying is wrong and showing the effects of their actions should they bully someone. Online or anywhere!"
- "With certain topics, people will confront the aggressor on social media with the intent that others will see it."
**Adult-led Initiatives**

The following are examples of what youth identified as adult-led initiatives:

- "Only the involved teachers."
- "Adults are rather [oblivious] to this, especially parents, teachers seem to be a bit more on the ball."
- "This survey I guess, mostly nothing."
- "Trying to talk kids into not doing it."
- "Yes. Adults are very concerned and scared about cyberbullying and cyberviolence."
- "Teachers try to put a stop to it in the school (not really effective)."
- "They monitor their kids activity online."
- "Teachers and the like make efforts to stop bullying because it is usually happening at school or between students. Parents usually try to address bullying if their kids have gone through it."
- "Some do and some don't, some parents teach their kids its fine."
- "I am not aware of any adults other than teachers, youth leaders, and some parents doing anything to help this horrible problem. But that's just my own experience. I imagine there are lots of adults doing things to help."

**Learning about Cyberviolence**

The majority of youth involved in this project agree that they have a right to be protected from cyberviolence (78.9%), and that more education is an important part of ending cyberviolence (64.8%). However, 54% of respondents reported that they are not learning about cyberviolence in school, whereas 26.8% reported that they are, and 19.2% reported that they did not know. There are several sources that youth reported as a way of learning more information on cyberviolence. These sources included their parents, friends, their personal experiences, school, the internet and pamphlets. The quotes listed below help to outline the responses of survey participants:

- "I have gotten all my information from online, people coming into my school and sharing these things with us the students, and talking to others who have experience it."
- "From online campaigns. For example, on BBC, some youtubers got together and hosted a show on online hate, what online hate is, and how to handle it/stop it"
- "Usually I have to do my own research online and through groups at school."
- "I go to my parents or other family members."
- "Tumblr actually has a large community which endorses equality, kindness, and general decency online and if someone says anything rude or insulting they get called out pretty quickly. A lot of pages on Tumblr endorse internet safety."
- "When I was in high school, I believe we had a couple presentations on bullying and such, in which case kids help phone came up and all those resources came up"

Detecting Cyberviolence

According to survey participants unless the victim comes forward, cyberviolence is an invisible issue and almost undetectable. Youth describe cyberviolence as a form of violence that is hidden and kept secret. Moreover, cyberviolence is increasingly complex for the average parent or teacher to understand. This due to evolving technologies - many interactions can be hidden, deleted, and difficult to recover. Not only are actions of cyberviolence often difficult to detect, its effects can also be hard to identify. Youth believe there is a change in attitude and behaviours when they are dealing with cyberviolence, but note that similar reactions that can be attributed to other experiences.

Youth outline these points in the following examples:

- "In my opinion, it can be very hard to know when this is happening to someone until they break down. They don't want you to know they are being bullied. I have only heard very few time of someone taking action and telling an adult about what is happening."
- "I don't think teachers can tell all the time unless they hear about it from students, but if parents check their kids' phones then parents usually know about it."
- "Not always. I think they usually start to notice once it has been going on for a while or has gotten really bad."
- "I don't think so, given the increasing difficulty of keeping track of what your kids are doing or what's being done to them online."
- "No. They don't realize it is happening because they cannot see the computer screen or cell phone that it is happening on, so they have no idea. If the targeted person does not indicate that they are being cyber-bullied, there is no possible way for a parent or teacher to realize that they are being targeted."
- "Not unless the victim tells them. They may be able to tell if someone is struggling with a problem, and that should definitely be addressed by them, but it would be difficult to specifically catch cyber violence if the victim tells no one."
"I'm not confident that they can because not every adult knows what happens with their child's online endeavours, and not every child is open about those things."

"No because they don’t pay enough attention to the kids to know when there is a difference in them."

"No because it happens so secretly."

"Only if they are told by victim or have the social media where someone has posted the issue publicly."

"I wouldn’t really know, maybe the victim has significantly lost confidence and is more reserved than usual? It's hard to tell, because it could be something else that's triggered these unusual characteristics."

"Not unless you tell them. It's not as obvious as many people make it seem. The violence and abuse are subtle and only really appear in context."

"Sometimes, but some kids keep everything inside and don’t show what they are feeling they may smile but it don’t mean they are happy."

Gender Differences and Cyberviolence

When it comes to engaging in and experiencing cyberviolence, participants identified that there are some gender-based differences. Many youth attribute these differences to the process of socialization and gender role expectations. Youth report that males and females differ in the way that they engage in cyberviolence, react to cyberviolence, and the way in which they are bullied. The following examples outline the ways males and females react differently to cyberviolence:

"Boys tend to keep it to themselves and try to hide their emotions"

"Yes, because males act tough and have to cover it up."

"I believe males may not speak up or take action, whereas females may message back or speak up. Although I think both can apply to each gender."

"I think males tend to take bullying and cyberviolence in a more aggressive way than females."

"Yes because males wanna fight or ignore and females getting mad and wanna fight or hold a grudge and mouth about each other for weeks."

"Yes, guys tend to confront the person face to face, while girls tend to keep it going online/through text."

"Males are more likely to seek out confrontation and avoid emotions, and also less likely to report it. Females are less likely to seek confrontation but will often be very affected by it."
"People who identify as female tend to be more emotional than male due to socialization and societies ideas about what gender so that would affect how a person would deal with it."

Yes because females tend to be more sensitive and get upset about it and males tend to shrug it off."

"They have a way different way of dealing with it, men physical and women emotionally."

"Yes, men fight and women hold grudges for a long time."

"Boys might tend to brush things off easier, but I don't think that's always the case. It depends on the individual rather than just the gender."

"Yes because I believe women are more sensitive and take things more [personally] than males do."

"Yes, I think males would tend to just forget about it because of the fear of being perceived as weak whereas a female would probably discuss it with someone they feel close to."

"Though I think both genders experience cyber violence, I feel as though the people who identify as females deal with it in a harder way. Girls are cruel and I find that we take everything to heart, whereas males have a bit of a tougher skin."

"Yeah, females are more nasty and verbal about all the problems. Guys are like "yeah lets beat the shit out of each other and move on". Girls drag it out until the one being picked on/abused is basically at their breaking point."

"People who identify as male tend to internalize their emotions, while people who identify as female do the opposite."

"Females are more emotional. Males typically just hit each other than make up."

As mentioned, youth believe there is a difference in content when it comes to cyberviolence. Sexuality and appearance tend to be the target for females, whereas males are scrutinized based on masculinity. A youth’s quote illustrates the difference saying “in some ways, people will attack a girl for being ‘ugly’ or stuff like that; While males have a different way of being attack[ed].” Although findings suggest that there are gender differences, some respondents believe that gender may only be a variable to a small extent, as outlined below by two respondents:

“IT really has little to do with gender as far as the victims are concerned; honestly those who identify as something other than male or female probably have it worse than either of the two. Everyone would deal with cyber violence in their own way, but gender really doesn’t play a constant role. If someone who identifies as male believes that men shouldn’t speak out, then that may hinder him. However, not all those who identify as male would react that way.”
"I think everyone deals with [cyberviolence] in their own way and it doesn’t [matter] if they are a girl or boy."

Cyberviolence and Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging in Cyberviolence</th>
<th>Experiencing Cyberviolence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Youth</td>
<td>Female Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Hold Grudges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Catty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek Revenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Youth</td>
<td>Female Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoic</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough Skin</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Struggle</td>
<td>Talk it out with friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended Strategies to Prevent and Eliminate Cyberviolence

Survey participants recommended the following strategies to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence against young women and girls in New Brunswick.

Education, Prevention, and Intervention

- "Tell students how to end it, how to get help."
- "I don't really know, I don't think that it's likely it will ever stop so I think it's more important to teach people how to deal with cyberviolence unless it's actually dangerous like public naked pictures etc..."
- "That's a tough question. Probably try to investigate more in to who has been a victim of cyberbullying/who is being bullied and work together to try and come up with a solution. Being aware is a huge part."
- "Have a public campaign and invite people to talk about it."
- "I would get kids to practice Metta (loving-kindness meditations) like they do in Tibet from a very young age. This would socially condition people to be more kind and empathetic."
- "for me I would go from school to school and talk about it and also get teachers to teach it to the younger people in our society and teach them what to do if it ever happens and tell them that they aren't alone because if it happens to them when they get older and it hasn't been taught to them they aren't going to know what to do. So this is something i would do to help the youth in our community"
- "Make it be part of some curriculum starting in elementary school, because much of this starts at a young age, and make they clearly understand what is wrong and what is
right. Make it mandatory to graduate high school, maybe like a certain amount of classes talking about if or something. But once people leave school, you really can’t do anything, and those morals are already implemented, so it needs to start at a young age!"
- "Difficult to balance privacy and policing but maybe make a mandatory class on it in elementary school."
- "have an automatic deletion of messages using unjust language."
- "Teach people to be kind and make all resources about "cyber violence" easily available to those who need it. Make sure there is a trusted figure for everyone who would need it to speak to. Monitoring communications is a violation of privacy and is not practical, at this age it is time to give more freedom."

Consequences for Engaging in Cyberviolence

- "Ban people from the Internet who misuse their privileges; and punish them by law."
- "Have a place to report it and the government/an organization could investigate."
- "If there were no limit to what I could do to prevent cyber violence. I would make every person found committing an act of cyber violence lose their right to use the internet. Or at least social media sites."
- "Force everyone who cyberbullied to be kicked off the internet for 5 days."
- "Press charges against a bully and its parents"
- "I would make sure that everyone who experienced cyber violence had a person that they could talk to without feeling pressured and make sure that those doing the bullying were punished in a more severe manner than taking their internet access away for a week."
- "Ban people from using the internet for certain amounts of time and have real consequences if they get caught using it and also for the people that help them go online instead of just telling the people that get bullied to stay off line because that punishes the victims and doesn’t even stop what’s happening."

Limitations on Social Media Use

- "Destroy the app Ask.Fm"
- "Destroy the app Ask.FM because it is a terrible social network app!"
- "Get rid of social media. As long as there is a way that somebody could harass somebody else while being behind a screen and feel safe, it will happen."
- "Would make sure there was a block option on every social media."
Summary

The majority of youth in New Brunswick have been impacted by cyberviolence. The online survey was completed by 299 young residents of New Brunswick. Respondents were between the ages of 16 and 19, and represented Anglophone, Francophone, and First Nations youth. Participants reported severe impacts, moderate impacts and minimal impacts when it comes to cyberviolence. The majority of impacts, however, do fall between severe and moderate. Furthermore, there was a significant positive relationship between all reported experiences of cyberviolence. This indicates that individuals experiencing and/or perpetrating one form of cyberviolence are also likely to be experiencing and/or perpetrating other forms of cyberviolence.

When asked about qualities in a confidant, youth identified important qualities that make them want to confide in someone about their experiences of cyberviolence. They prefer to talk to someone who is trustworthy, kind and caring, familiar, safe, non-judgmental, and has the ability to help.

The survey results also reveal that few parents or guardians set rules for their youth that directly prevented cyberviolence or promoted safety. Cyberviolence can happen anywhere at any time. Setting rules and creating expectations around internet and cell phone use is one way to ensure that youth know the risks associated with the online world. It is important to note that youth describe cyberviolence as an invisible issue, barely detectable due to the secrecy surrounding this form of violence. They largely report dissatisfaction with current initiatives confronting cyberviolence. They would like to see increased knowledge sharing about existing initiatives, and more inclusive programming with greater community involvement.

It was found that youth also believe that males and females experience, engage in, and are targeted by cyberviolence in different ways. Participants noted that females tend to respond verbally, while males respond with physical aggression. They also believe that females are targeted more about sexuality and appearance. Females who experience cyberviolence are thought to be more likely than males to disclose these experiences.
Identifying Needs

Introduction

This project aims to attain a better understanding of what strategies youth and relevant stakeholders believe will prevent cyberviolence. Ideas pertaining to strategy development were generated by reaching out to the youth through focus groups and online surveys, and by organizing a community partners meeting to discuss strategy development with relevant stakeholders.

Technology, education and awareness, youth engagement, and policy were four areas that were analyzed. Within these four areas, gaps were detected based on the findings highlighted throughout the needs assessment. The following is a gap analysis that indicates areas that youth and community partners have identified as being a priority. This section discusses recommendations that youth and community partners have brought forward to address the gaps within each area. The information was presented to the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee with the purpose of gathering the youth’s opinions on the proposed recommendations. The committee had the opportunity to review the existing recommendations and provide feedback which is included in this analysis.

Gap Area: Technology

**Gap #1: Lack of Utilizing Social Media**

Though social media is recognized as a major contributor in perpetuating cyberviolence, youth and community partners have expressed that social media can also play a role in raising awareness and providing education on the issue.

**Recommended Strategies**

1. A video that creates awareness
2. Websites for education and awareness

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**

A video addressing cyberviolence might work, but may not receive desired attention. The video would need to be high quality and be well scripted to engage the intended audience. Youth also mentioned that resources, such as high school and university email accounts and websites, should be utilized to share information about cyberviolence. One youth mentioned that high school students will often check their school’s website in search of scholarship information and bursaries, therefore, the school website may be a useful tool for delivering this information.
**Gap #2: Lack of Education**
Youth and community partners acknowledged that there is a generational gap in understanding technology. Both youth and community partners identified the lack of education regarding technology as a gap, and provided the following recommended strategies.

**Recommended Strategies**
1. More informed consent when using certain applications
2. Engaging everyone, not only parents and youth
3. Developing a “toolkit” for adults to use when the rules are broken
4. Appropriate monitoring by adults. Not neglecting, but also not invasive.
5. Privacy settings, informed by youth and adults
6. Helping youth with disclosure of cyberviolence
7. Enhance knowledge of parents regarding the issue of cyberviolence

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**
The provincial youth advisory committee recommended that cyberviolence education involve children at a younger age in the discussion, because they are also being impacted by cyberviolence. The education has to be specific to current technology and the topic needs to be re-evaluated to ensure that as technology changes, the information is still relevant and helpful. The provincial youth advisory committee also mentioned that including cyberviolence awareness in the curriculum of required classes may be useful. One youth mentioned that new cyberviolence posters should be made, but these posters need to be offered in both official languages.

**Gap #3: Lack of Coordination of Strategies**
Lack of coordination of online strategies has been mentioned as a barrier to preventing cyberviolence. Youth and community partners also said that many organizations seem to be implementing some sort of strategy through the use of technology, however, collaboration of these strategies could be more effective.

**Recommended Strategies**
1. Communication among partners regarding current strategies
2. Building on strategies that are currently working

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**
The provincial youth advisory committee spoke of a lack of coordination exists in relation to resources for cyberviolence. This can be noted by the various organizations creating websites. Youth may benefit from collaborative strategies resulting from organizations connecting more frequently. This would allow organizations to figure out what is being done and what needs to be done regarding cyberviolence prevention and elimination. They also stressed that
resources need to remain online because that is the easiest way for youth to access the information.

**Gap Area: Education and Awareness**

**Gap #1: Lack of Coordination and Collaboration**
Youth had difficulty identifying current strategies that exist within their communities. The youth that were aware of current programs and initiatives noted that programs were underutilized. This highlights a need to address the gap of coordination and collaboration on current strategies and initiatives.

**Recommended strategies**
1. For youth to participate in roundtable discussions with community partners
2. Engage youth with implementing strategies and initiatives about cyberviolence
3. Have a way to measure strategies to ensure they are meeting their objectives
4. Stronger communication within the community about initiatives that are currently taking place

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**
When discussing the gap in regards to collaboration and coordination with the provincial youth advisory committee, the youth recommended that when including youth with strategy development, it is important to incorporate a diverse group of youth to ensure that both introverted and extraverted youth are included. Further, the youth noted that it was also important to include youth who speak different languages, to ensure cultural diversity in the strategies development process.

**Gap #2: Effective Education Programs and Strategies**
One need identified by youth was the requirement for education, intervention and prevention on cyberviolence. Youth identified that the programs they were aware of were not inclusive to all members of the community, and often focused more on the perpetrator of cyberviolence. Survey participants also noted that awareness campaigns and presentations at school were not the most effective prevention method. Further, youth mentioned that awareness programs have short duration periods such as a day or a week to focus on the issue. Youth felt that this relays the message that bullying is an issue of lower importance.

54% of survey respondents noted that they were not learning about cyberviolence within their school. In contrast to this, 64.8% of survey respondents felt that learning about the issue is an important prevention method. Participants identified that recognizing cyberviolence is difficult, and unless a youth comes forward to confide in someone, cyberviolence is almost
undetectable. Education on the effects of cyberviolence could help adults, youth and helping professionals look for signs that could help detect cyberviolence.

**Recommended Strategies**

1. Implement programs that are effective and do more than raise awareness of the issue.
2. Youth recommended enduring programs
3. Educate all members of the community, and have programs that are inclusive to youth and adults
4. Start education programs at younger ages, such as kindergarten
5. Have accessible programs for parents; such as lunch and learns at their work
6. Use creativity to implement programs and strategies (e.g. have youth put on plays for their parents about important issues)

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**

The youth identified education as an important way to prevent cyberviolence. When asked what effective education programs and strategies look like to the youth, they noted that programs need to start at an early age. The youth also discussed the idea of having a full year ‘life course’ as a mandatory class that starts in high school. According to the youth, this course would discuss basic life skills and knowledge such as sex education, healthy relationships, bullying/cyberviolence, and even teaching them to complete their taxes.

An effective education and awareness program could have real life stories that youth discuss with their peers. Furthermore, having programs that last longer than a week was another idea brought forward by the youth. Lastly, the youth discussed having new posters throughout schools as some of the current posters have language that implies victim blaming, and these posters are not an effective way to prevent cyberviolence.

**Gap Area: Youth Engagement**

**Gap #1: Lack of Youth Involvement in the Development/Delivery of Services**

The focus group and the community partner’s workshop identified a need for more youth involvement in the development and delivery of material and services on the topic of cyberviolence.

**Recommended Strategies:**

1. Make involvement more accessible to youth (offer transportation, offer in diverse languages, appropriate timings, recognizing that youth have responsibilities and interests outside of school)
2. Begin engaging youth at a young age
3. Offer incentives that cater to the interests of the specific youth involved
4. Offer support for youth who are involved (public speaking education, debriefing, counselling, and education on how to deal with a disclosure)
5. Develop material based on youth interest
6. Create a safe space for youth to discuss issues and contribute to the conversation of cyberviolence
7. Choose participants based on their interest in addressing the issue, but keep in mind that representation matters

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**

Members of the PAC also recognized a need for youth engagement to become more accessible to youth. They endorsed the ideas of offering transportation and compensating youth for their time. They also suggested that engagement times could be designed to fit individual schedules, and specifically discussed utilizing a youth’s free period instead of pulling them from class. They also agreed that youth should be offered incentives to participate in engagement. They suggested ideas for incentives, such as earning a free period, a “get out of homework” pass, pizza, monetary compensation as well as exploring possible incentives that are more individualized for the youth involved.

The youth agreed that engagement should start at a younger age, as we know from our online survey, cyberviolence can begin as young as age eleven. When further discussed, the committee suggested making cyber safety a topic that is discussed in the curriculum for students as young as grade five. They explained that education should revolve around both keeping yourself safe, as well as knowing how you can prevent yourself from harming others online.

The committee suggested that support is varied. Some programs which engage youth offer debrief sessions whereas some do not. They explained that counselling is not often offered for the youth involved, and that they believe that this would be very helpful as sometimes the material can be emotional.

They were also excited about the idea of having a safe place set up in schools for youth to go if they were experiencing cyberviolence or struggling in general. They explained that they would likely use this resource, especially if there was a trained peer support person there to speak with.

In regards to representation, the committee suggested that more thought needs to go into the choosing of youth who are involved in these initiatives. They explained that recruiters should put more focus on engaging with quiet students who may not volunteer to become involved. Representation should be considered to ensure that participant groups are as intersectional as
possible. One committee member noted that choosing students from different groups or “cliques” in school, and from different age demographics, would be best for ensuring engagement among different students.

**Gap#2: Lack of Follow Up/Continuity of Involvement**
Community partner’s identified a lack of follow up offered to youth involved in cyberviolence initiatives. They suggested that often youth are not involved with the process on a continual basis, this can lead to disengagement of the youth as well as creating an unintended disconnect between youth and adult input.

**Recommended Strategies**
1. Adopt a “snowball” process for participants. Current participants help to recruit new participants
2. Develop a program that offers mentoring on cyberviolence to younger students by older students
3. Engage with youth throughout the entire process of material development or service delivery
4. Incorporate follow-up into the process of youth engagement

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**
Committee members explained that the snowball process was already being used among youth-led initiatives. They explained that this can be helpful, but can also contribute to the lack of representation in the groups of youth who are involved. Therefore, when adopting this model it will be important to take this into consideration.

The committee supported the idea of a peer mentorship program and explained that this does happen in some schools. They suggested that peer mentorship could extend further than being specifically about cyberviolence, and could be used as a way to discuss other difficult areas of a youth’s life. With this being said, they specifically suggested that peer support, both as mentors, as well as in general, should be offered training around issues of cyberviolence so they are well equipped when interacting with other youth.

They explained that youth should be a part of the development and delivery process of initiatives that involve youth. In terms of continuity of their involvement, the committee explained that follow up should be incorporated into the process of any form of youth engagement. For example, follow up after a program is being offered.
Gap Area: Policy

Gap #1: Lack of Youth Involvement in the Formation and Evaluation of Policy
Youth participation in the policy making process is not merely a goal to aspire to - it is a political right. All too frequently, policies which have a direct impact on the youth they aim to affect are executed and evaluated without their input. If any policy - whether it is educational or judicial - is to be effective, it must be informed by the youth voice. The formation of the Provincial Advisory Committee was a necessary and important step in this project.

Recommended Strategies

1. Youth need to be offered incentives to participate. If we are going to acknowledge youth as experts, compensation is necessary to reflect this.
2. Involving youth in the policy making process means thinking “outside of the box”. By making the policy process interactive, engaging, and fun for youth, this will facilitate their involvement. One example could be the development of a possible video asking youth what sort of policies they would like to see enacted either provincially or within their school(s), and presenting this to policy makers and/or school administration.
3. When recruiting youth, special attention must be paid to both their assets and role within the specific committee. This role needs to be made clear to them, and based upon their specific assets.
4. Given the diversity of the province, it may be an advantage to have multiple Provincial Advisory Committees based on region, to ensure that all voices are reflected.
5. Authentic youth engagement process that provides a safe place to be involved in the formation and evaluation of policy.
6. Ensure a process that each stakeholders, including youth, recognize the opportunity and limitation in order to make changes in policy.

Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback
Practical implications for the need to involve youth in the policy making process were firstly discussed in a broad sense. How can we best ensure that the youth voice is not only invited, but also validated and listened upon? The need to compensate – either through honorarium, formal payment, longer lunch, or “extra credit” was raised as some practical ways to ensure that the youth voice is respected.

With relevance to the second recommendation, some alternative suggestions were offered. Speaking on video, it was raised that this may discourage – rather than encourage – some youth from participating. Some youth may feel vulnerable on camera, and be reluctant to participate. An online survey was also suggested as one way to facilitate involvement in a way which was more sensitive to this. The importance of incorporating “fun” was one which was
universally recommended – incorporating games and interaction into discussions surrounding policy and the importance of accessible language were all highlighted as important.

Recommendations three and four were well received. With relevance to recommendation three, specifically noted was the importance of having a youth who would be particularly adept at recruiting other youth. With relevance to suggestion four, the importance of specifically targeting minority groups was additionally noted.

**Gap#2: Lack of Standard, Consistent, and Effective Consequences**

Frequently, interventions after a cyberviolence incident can be one of two extremes – either cyberviolence is treated as a nominal offense, or retribution is enacted through a “discipline and punish” model. Neither of the above options engages the perpetrator with regards to the effects of their actions. Further, this lack of consistency leads to confusion, and prevents effective intervention.

**Recommended Strategies**

1. Introduce a code of conduct model to be implemented across New Brunswick. Cyberviolence is classified as “serious misconduct” under the New Brunswick’s *Education Act*. Concrete guidelines need to be introduced to inform interventions in cases of cyberviolence

2. In addition to punitive actions, interventions need to be focused on assisting perpetrators in understanding the consequences of their actions

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback**

With regards to a code of conduct, it is important that interventions be catered to the level of harm done. A step model – whereby interventions are classified based upon the level of harm done – was thereby recommended. It was suggested that the code of conduct model be based upon providing perpetrators with an understanding of the potential consequences of their actions, rather than provide a list of punishments. The importance of providing education to individuals with regards to the existence of any policy was emphasized.

It was agreed by the committee that follow through with perpetrators needs to be implemented in conjunction with clear consequences. The committee suggested that many youth may not understand the consequences of their actions on the victim, or may not understand what is meant by emotional harm. Thus, emphasis should be placed on providing formal support to perpetrators aimed at helping them to understand the above consequences.

**Gap #3: Lack of Awareness with Regards to Relevant Policies**

Parents, educators, youth, community, and service providers need to be aware of the relevant cyberviolence policies that impact them. Too often, policies are enacted without ensuring that
individuals are properly informed. Education on relevant policy, first and foremost, needs to be made more accessible - both to youth, and to parents.

**Recommended Strategies**

1. Integrate cyberviolence awareness with regards to policies into school curriculum
2. Have an online quiz or interactive course for students to complete on the topic of policy
3. Have a policy newspaper for parents, adult, community, stakeholders, youth, which can be sent out on a regular basis regarding necessary policies and policies change,

**Provincial Youth Advisory Feedback:**
The importance of making policy accessible to youth and parents was one which was universally acknowledged as essential. Many of the practical strategies listed above were mentioned by the committee. With regards to integrating cyberviolence awareness and policies, this was acknowledged as a potential option, and likewise received positive feedback. The suggestion of an online course or quiz, additionally, was well received. It is important that this course be designed in a fashion which will be fun and interactive for youth - possibly having the course attached to an online game.

Additionally, the importance of keeping parents informed was one which was highlighted by the committee. The possibility of sending out a newsletter was raised - however, it was also suggested that this option may not reach the parents unless it was directly delivered to them. Related to this, the suggestion of sending regular emails was also one which was suggested.
Conclusion

The needs recognized throughout this document, have been synthesised from information given from community partners, youth who participated in the project and Provincial Advisory of young women and girls. Their recommendations are strongly being considered and will guide future strategies to prevent and eliminate cyberviolence in New Brunswick.

The findings highlight that cyberviolence happens all the time, but mostly after school, therefore there is a need for more strategic actions at a community level. The involvement of youth, parents and guardians, grandparents and the community to address the issues of cyberviolence within the province is critical. The final stages of the project aim to work with youth and community partners to develop, enhance, and carry out collaborative strategies to prevent this form of gender-based violence within the province. Cyberviolence is an issue that is not going to resolve itself. As technology continues to advance, so will forms of cyberviolence. It is our responsibility, as a community, to work with youth towards addressing this issue.

Next Step

- **Strategy Development**
  - Community partners meetings
    - To identify strategic partners
    - To develop action plan
    - Developing measurement process
- **Ongoing Provincial Advisory Committee meetings**
- **Knowledge Sharing**
  - Website
  - Toolkit
  - Launch
- **Evaluation**