

LESSON PLAN

Online Hate and Harassment and What We Can do About It

What is online hate and harassment and what can we do about it?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-1	2-6	45-60 minutes	Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language.
7	8-12		

LESSON OVERVIEW

Online hate and harassment are ongoing problems in our society today. Many people experience online hate and harassment, which can cause stress, fear and harm, especially to those who are members of marginalized identity groups. Online hate and harassment impact people's experiences when they spend time online, and because people spend a [great deal of time online these days](#), the online hate and harassment that people face and witness can fundamentally affect their daily lives. ADL conducts a nationally representative annual survey of online hate and harassment to determine how many American adults experience hate or harassment on social media. Since 2022, the survey has also been conducted with teenagers, ages 13-17.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about online hate and harassment by reading and analyzing ADL's recent survey about it, reflecting on their own experiences with online hate and harassment and considering how online hate and harassment can be addressed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand what online hate and harassment are.
- Students will examine the increase and severity of online hate and harassment by reading and analyzing a survey.
- Students will reflect on their own experiences with online hate and harassment and compare those experiences to the survey data.
- Students will explore what can be done to address, reduce and prevent online hate and harassment.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- [My Experiences with Online Hate and Harassment Survey](#) (one copy for each student)
- [Executive Summary of 2024 Online Hate and Harassment Survey](#) (one copy for half of the students)



Web Related Connections

LESSON PLANS

[Don't Let Hate Ruin the Fun: Youth and Online Games](#)

[Teens and their Social Media Lives](#)

[The Tools I Need: Disability and Accommodations](#)

[When You are the Target: How to Respond to and Challenge Bias](#)

Other Resources:

[6 Ways to Be an Ally](#)

[Online Hate and Harassment Safety Guide](#)

[Bias and Hate in Online Games](#)

[Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2024](#)

[Online Hate: What Can I do to Help?](#)

[Swatting: What's Hate Got to do With It?](#)

Key Words

defamation
disability
disinformation
doxing

- **Notable Findings for Teens Ages 13-17 of 2024 Online Hate and Harassment Survey** (one copy for half of the students)
- Post-it® notes (1-2 per student)
- 4 pieces of chart paper (taped on wall) and markers dispersed around the classroom. Chart paper should read (1) What Individuals Can Do, (2) What Schools Can Do, (3) What Social Media Companies Can Do (4) What Government and Policymakers Can Do

Key Words Continued

generative AI
 harassment
 identity
 impersonation
 marginalized
 representative survey
 severe
 stalking
 swatting
 targeted
 threaten
 unprecedented

? What is Online Hate and Harassment?

1. Begin the lesson by asking students: *How much time (in minutes or hours) do you think the average person spends online per day?* Ask students to call out their responses and record a few on the board, asking for a show of hands which time students agree with.

Then share with students that the amount of time users spend on the internet varies by age group. On average, people spend 6.5 hours on the internet every day, according to the Global Web Index. Explain that people between the ages of 16 and 24 spend an additional 2.5 hours more time online than those between the ages of 55 and 64.

2. Explain to students that today we are going to talk about a part of our online lives: online hate and harassment. Ask students: *What is online hate and harassment?* Record their responses on the board/smart board. Ask students to share a few examples of online hate and harassment they've seen, experienced or heard about.

(Note to Teacher: Remind students that they should only share stories from their own experience and those they feel comfortable sharing. They should not share publicly what others have told them or use names or specific situations that would identify peers or other members of the school community. In addition, they should avoid using language that is considered harmful in the classroom and should never say slurs aloud.)

3. With students, unpack what online hate and harassment is by first eliciting and explaining/eliciting the following:
 - In general, harassment is defined as: "Unwanted and unwelcome online, verbal or physical conduct, often based on identity characteristics, that creates an unpleasant or hostile situation or experience."
 - Online harassment can include many types of unwanted or hostile contact on digital platforms – including social media, chat, and email – such as verbal abuse, hate speech, trolling, spamming, impersonation, and defamation. More severe forms include ongoing harassment campaigns, sexual harassment, stalking (willfully and repeatedly following or harassing another person in circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or death especially because of express or implied threats), doxing (someone releasing private information about them without permission), and swatting (having an emergency service like the police/law enforcement dispatched to their house as a hoax).
 - Online hate refers to abuse and harassment targeting someone for their identity, specifically as part of a marginalized group.

(Note: If needed, you can also explain that online hate and harassment is different than cyberbullying and provide a definition of cyberbullying as follows: "The intentional and repeated mistreatment of

others through the use of technology, such as computers, cell phones and other electronic devices. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, sending mean, hurtful or threatening messages or images about another person; posting sensitive, private information about another person for the purpose of hurting or embarrassing the person; and/or pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad and/or to intentionally exclude someone from an online group.”)

4. Ask if students have any questions and respond to those questions.
5. Share that every year, ADL does a survey of online hate and harassment and we are going to explore the survey as well as our own experiences with online hate and harassment.



Survey: My Experiences with Online Hate and Harassment

(Note to Teacher: As an alternative to conducting the survey in class, you can have students complete this survey as homework the evening before you teach the lesson. In addition, you may decide that instead of completing the survey only as a class, you will seek to engage the whole school in conducting the survey. That will allow for a larger sample size, which is helpful.)

1. Explain to students that they are going to do a survey that asks some of the questions asked of teenagers age 13-17 as part of the survey. Explain that they will learn about those results later on.
2. Distribute the [My Experiences with Online Hate and Harassment Survey](#) and provide 10 minutes for students to complete it.

(Note to Teacher: You can also conduct the survey digitally by using [Poll Everywhere](#), [Mentimeter](#) or a preferred digital polling app.)

3. After completing the survey, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:
 - What was it like to answer questions about online hate and harassment?
 - What did you notice about your responses?
 - What did you wonder about your responses?
 - Were some questions more difficult to answer than others? Please explain.
 - Was there anything in the survey questions you didn't understand and for which you need more information?
4. After discussing their experience doing the survey, ask students to turn their surveys in (names should not be included) and tally results or tally the results while students are doing the reading activity in the next section.

Reading Activity: Let's Look at the Numbers

1. Explain to students again that every year, ADL conducts a survey about online hate and harassment where respondents in the U.S. are asked whether they've experienced any of the following on social media:
 - Been called offensive names.
 - Had someone try to embarrass them purposefully.

- Been physically threatened.
- Been harassed for a sustained period.
- Been stalked (willfully and repeatedly following or harassing another person in circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or death especially because of expressed or implied threats).
- Been sexually harassed.
- Been doxed (had someone release private information about them without permission).
- Been swatted (had an emergency service dispatched to their house as a hoax).

Explain that “severe harassment” in this survey includes physical threats, sustained harassment, stalking, sexual harassment, doxing, and swatting.

2. Distribute the handout, “[Executive Summary: Online Hate and Harassment Survey](#)” to half the students and “[Notable Findings for Teens: Online Hate and Harassment Survey](#)” to the other half of students. Explain that everyone will have ten minutes to read their article. After reading the article, they’ll get in pairs, with each person in the pair having read a different article.
3. After students have read their articles, pair them up and make sure the two in the pair read different articles. Provide five minutes for each of in the pair to share with their partner what they learned from reading the article.

(As students read, you can tabulate the results from the survey they did in prior step.)

4. Reconvene students and ask for any thoughts or reflections on what they discussed with partner. Then engage students in a whole class discussion by asking some or all the following questions:
 - What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
 - What did you read that you found surprising?
 - What did you read that you found unsurprising (or expected)?
 - Why do you think this is happening?
 - Does what you read in the report resonate with your own experience of online hate and harassment?
 - Why do you think the annual survey is subtitled, “The American Experience?”
 - For those who read the Executive Summary, what are your thoughts about the recommendations? What else would you recommend?
5. If you have the class or school survey results ready, share those results with students. Then engage students in a brief discussion by asking: *How do our results compare to the overall survey about online hate and harassment? If the results are very different, what are some possible reasons for those differences? How might you do the survey differently?*
6. Distribute one or two Post-it® notes to each student. Invite students to write on the Post-it® note their biggest takeaway from about the survey results and/or their experiences with online hate and harassment. Explain/ elicit that a “takeaway” is a main point or key message that is meaningful and where something important is learned, understood or an insight gained. Have students save their Post-it® notes for the closing activity.

Action Ideas: What Can We do about Online Hate and Harassment?

1. Ask students: *Now that you know more about online hate and harassment and how it happens, what do you think we can do about it?*

2. Distribute and hang 4 pieces of chart paper around the room with the following labels on the paper:

- What Individuals Can Do (what I can do and what I can encourage others to do)
- What Schools Can Do
- What Social Media Companies Can Do
- What Government and Policymakers Can Do

Provide markers for each student and invite them to move around the room and share their thoughts about what can be done, in each of the four categories, about online hate and harassment. Provide ten minutes for this task.

3. After spending some time writing notes, invite students to choose one of the four categories in which they want to explore and discuss in greater depth and have them move to that part of the room. When students are situated, have each group assign a recorder (to take notes on the paper) and reporter (to report what their group discussed) to share back with the rest of the class. Invite each group to:

- Review the list of suggestions on the sheet.
- Add other ideas they have.
- Choose one or two to focus on (quickly vote if necessary.)
- Sketch out some preliminary action steps for that idea.

4. Invite each group's reporter to share back with the rest of the class the idea they focused on and what some of their action steps are.

Closing

Invite students to share their one big takeaway from today's lesson that they wrote on the Post-it® note. When all students have shared their takeaways, collect the Post-it® notes and post on the board or classroom wall for all to see.

Additional Reading and Resources

- [America Is Averting Its Eyes From Something Very, Very Wrong](#) (New York Times, December 21, 2023)
- [More so than adults, U.S. teens value people feeling safe online over being able to speak freely](#) (Pew Research Center, August 30, 2022)
- [Online Extremism is a Growing Problem, But What's Being Done About It?](#) (U.S. Government Accountability Office, February 13, 2024)
- [Teens Face Greater Threat of Severe Harassment Online Than Adults](#), Study Finds (GLAAD, October 20, 2023)
- [The Facts about Gendered Digital Hate, Harassment, and Violence](#) (Canadian Women's Foundation)

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. SL5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Language
L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

My Experiences with Online Hate and Harassment Survey

1. In the last year (12 months), have you experienced online hate and harassment?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure

2. In which platforms has the hate and harassment you've experienced taken place (check all that apply)?
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - YouTube
 - WhatsApp
 - TikTok
 - X/Twitter
 - Snapchat
 - Telegram
 - Discord
 - Twitch
 - Reddit
 - Other (please specify)

3. In the last year (12 months), have you been the target of identity-based online hate and harassment based on the following aspects of identity (check all that apply)?
 - Physical appearance
 - Race or ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Religion
 - Political Views
 - Gender Identity
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Political Views
 - None of these
 - Other (please specify)

4. Do you worry about experiencing online hate and harassment in the future?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure
5. When you experienced online hate and harassment, did you do any of the following (check all that apply)?
- Talked to a parent/guardian
 - Reduced time on social media
 - Talk to another trusted adult (e.g., family member, school counselor, teacher)
 - Changed habits to avoid being alone or in certain locations
 - Contacted (or asked an adult to) the platform to ask for help or report the hate/harassment
 - Contacted (or asked an adult to) the police or an attorney
 - Had emotional/mental health challenges
 - None of the above
 - Other (please specify)
6. Do you think online platforms should ban content that expresses hate or that encourages violence because of someone's identity?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Not Sure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Executive Summary: Online Hate and Harassment Survey

Severe online hate and harassment increased four points across the board in the past year, which was dominated by an unprecedented surge in antisemitism online and offline in the wake of Hamas' brutal attack on Israel on October 7. Decreases in platform enforcement and data access and new threats of hate and disinformation from generative AI tools all potentially contributed to this year's findings.

ADL conducts this nationally representative survey annually to find out how many American adults experience hate or harassment on social media. Since 2022, we have also surveyed teens ages 13-17. This survey was conducted in February and March 2024 and asked about the preceding 12 months.

Key Findings:

22% of American adults experienced **severe harassment*** on social media in the past 12 months, an increase of **18%** in 2023 (including an increase of physical threats from **7%** to **10%**).

People with disabilities...

45% experienced online harassment in the past 12 months (up from **35%** in 2023), compared to **36%** of non-disabled people.

31% experienced **severe harassment** in the past 12 months (up from **20%** in 2023, compared to **19%** of non-disabled people).

Harassment for disability also spiked: reasons for online harassment in the past 12 months remained stable, except for disability, which spiked from **4%** to **12%**, despite the proportion of disabled residents remaining similar.

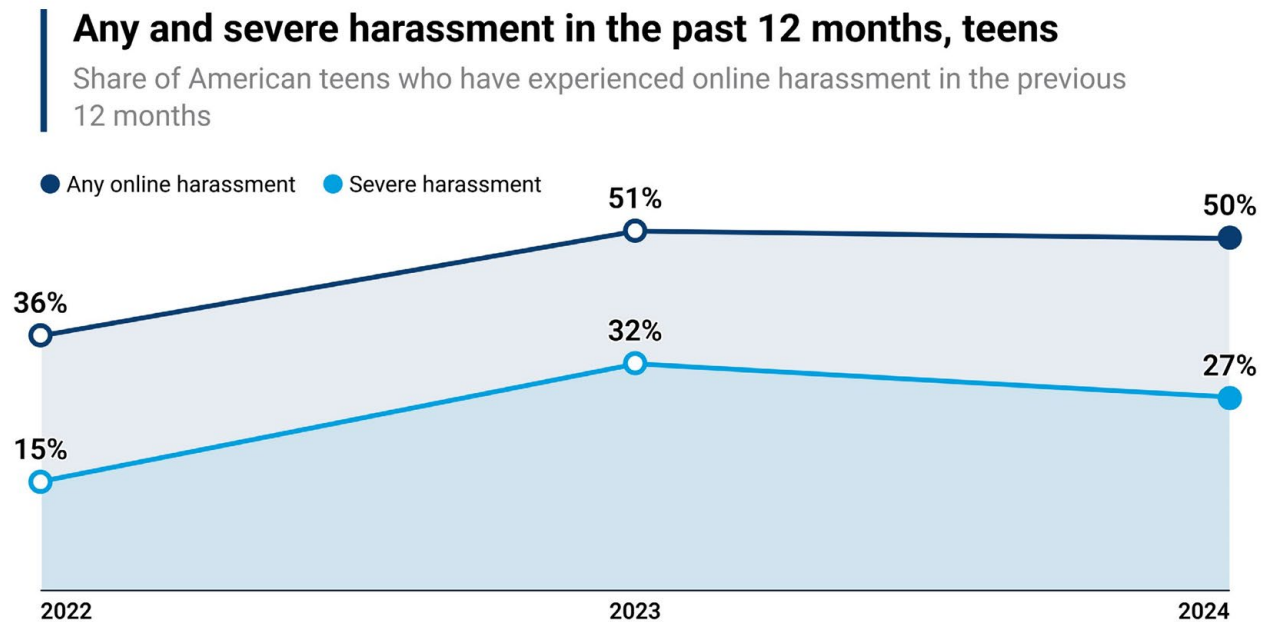
**Severe harassment includes physical threats, sustained harassment, stalking, sexual harassment, doxing and swatting.*

Notable Findings for Teens: Online Hate and Harassment Survey

ADL has surveyed teens 13-17 since 2022. In our 2024 report, overall online harassment remained consistent from the year before, with half (50%) of teens experiencing any harassment in the past 12 months. Facebook and Instagram remain the platforms where the most harassment occurs: among teens who were harassed online, nearly two-thirds experienced harassment on Facebook (61%), trending upwards from over half (53%) the year before, while decreasing on Instagram to nearly two in five (39%) from just under half (48%). Just under three out of five (59%) of teens worried about being harassed, threatened, or otherwise targeted online in the future. Over three-quarters (76%) of teens agreed or strongly agreed that content that expresses hate based on identity should be banned, up from 68% in 2023, while nearly four out of five (79%) agreed or strongly agreed that platforms should ban content that encourages violence against a person or group because of their identity, up seven percentage points from 72%. Teens were most likely to be exposed to disinformation about the 2020 presidential election (over a third, 37%, saw content that the 2020 presidential election was not legitimate) or that was antigay (almost a third, 31%, that LGBTQ+ people are grooming children to adopt their lifestyle).

Overall Harassment, Teens

Overall harassment in the past 12 months among teens remained consistent from 2023.



Unweighted N: 500 (2022); 550 (2023); 532 (2024).

Severe harassment includes physical threats, sustained harassment, stalking, sexual harassment, doxing, and swatting.

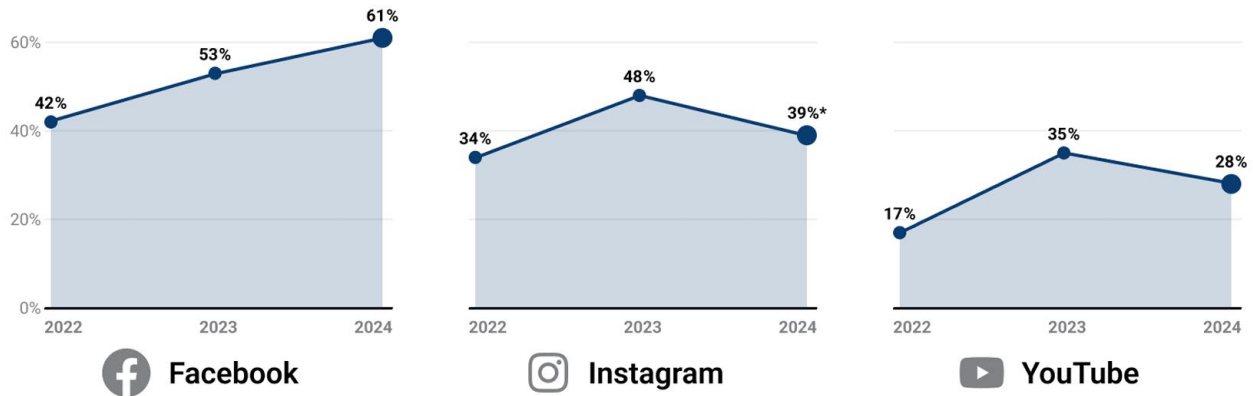
Source: YouGov Survey on behalf of ADL

Platforms where harassment happens, teens

Facebook and Instagram remain the platforms where most harassment against teens occurs.

Top platforms where harassment took place, teens

Harassment of American teens occurred on the following platforms



Unweighted N: 180 (2022); 287 (2023); 264 (2024).

*Significantly different from 2023 (p<0.05)

Source: YouGov Survey on behalf of ADL

Worry about future harassment, teens

The majority of teens were worried about being harassed, threatened, or otherwise targeted online in the future.

Worry about future harassment, 2023 vs. 2024, teens

Share of American teens who were worried about being harassed, threatened, or otherwise targeted online



Unweighted N: 550 (2023); 532 (2024).

Source: YouGov Survey on behalf of ADL

Outcomes of harassment, teens

Online information or harassment sometimes leads to offline harassment.

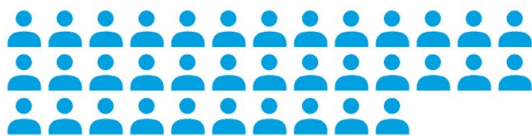
Outcomes that led to offline harassment, teens

Share of American teens who indicated the following outcomes of online harassment



26%

of teens reported that information available about them online has led to them being harassed offline/in-person[†]



36%

of teens reported that online harassment led to offline harassment[‡]

[†] Unweighted N: 532

[‡] Unweighted N: 264

Source: YouGov Survey on behalf of ADL

Exposure to hate and disinformation, teens

Many teens were exposed to hate and disinformation, most often election disinformation and anti-gay rhetoric.

Exposure to election disinformation and anti-gay rhetoric, teens

Share of American teens who were exposed to the following topics

The 2020 presidential election was not legitimate



37%

LGBTQ+ people are grooming children to adopt their lifestyle



31%

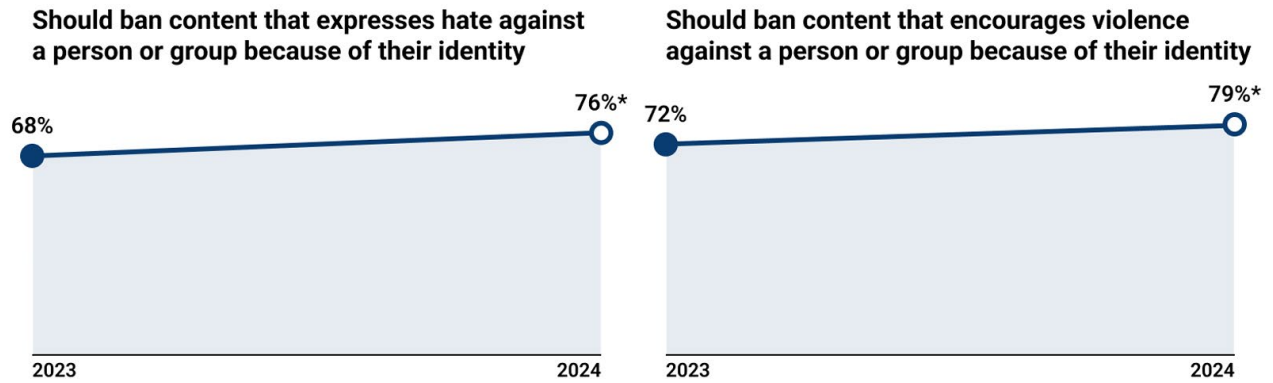
Unweighted N: 532

Source: YouGov Survey on behalf of ADL

Solutions and attitudes, teens

Teens were more likely this year to agree or strongly agree that platforms should ban content expressing hate or that encourages violence because of someone's identity.

Share of American teens who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements that online platforms:



Unweighted N: 550 (2023); 532 (2024).

*Significantly different from 2023 ($p < 0.05$)

Source: YouGov Survey on behalf of ADL