

New survey reveals New Zealand's youth among worst in cyberbullying rates

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Results showed 81 per cent of Kiwis surveyed felt cyberbullying needed more attention. Photo / 123RF

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Kiwi kids are among the worst affected by cyberbullying worldwide, according to a new survey investigating the disturbing behaviour in 28 nations.

The survey found more than a quarter - 27 per cent - of parents or caregivers believed their child had experienced cyberbullying themselves.

Only India and Brazil recorded higher levels.

The survey, conducted by global market research group Ipsos, was completed in July by 501 Kiwis over the age of 18 and their parents or caregivers.

"Cyberbullying" was defined as being when a child or a group of children "intentionally intimidate, offend, threaten or embarrass another child or group of children" - specifically through the use of information technology.

The responses alongside international data collected from March to April this year from more than 20,793 interviews conducted in 28 countries - including Sweden, Italy, South Africa and France.

It also found almost every second caregiver or parent in New Zealand knew of a child in their wider community who had been cyberbullied prior to their 18th birthday.

Carin Hercock, managing director at Ipsos, called the findings concerning.

"Often in New Zealand we quite like being in the top rankings of things. But this is definitely an area where we don't want to be top."

Hercock noted that New Zealand had a relatively high rate of cyberbullying instances in which the perpetrator was reported as being the victim's classmate.

While this didn't look like a great statistic, she said it wasn't necessarily a terrible thing.

"In some other countries there were incidences of older people being involved - which is probably more disturbing.

"You'd like to think that when people become responsible adults that aren't doing that kind of thing... but in other countries they are doing it."

In India - the country shown as having the worst prevalence of cyberbullying - 37 per cent of parents responded yes when asked whether their child had experienced cyberbullying at some point.

Brazil came in just ahead of New Zealand - with 29 per cent of parents or caregivers under the assumption their child had experienced cyberbullying at some point.

Results also showed 81 per cent of New Zealanders felt cyberbullying needed more attention, and that current measures were not sufficient.

The average response across all 28 countries was 17 per cent.

Netsafe's Director of Education & Engagement Sean Lyons considered it "a little surprising" New Zealand rated so poorly.

The research Netsafe conducted itself, he said, always "stacked up" with other, comparable countries.

Commenting on the widespread opinion that we need more attention on cyberbullying, Lyons said he couldn't disagree - though pointed out measures were in place to help deal with the problem.

"Unless you can turn around and say, there's none of this going on, then of course more should be done.

"However, we have legislation in this county - that means that it's no longer just a nasty thing people have to deal with, it's a crime and people can face legal action."

The findings of the study come out as chart-topping singer, *Weekend Herald* columnist and social commentator Lizzie Marvelly opens up on the treatment she has received from haters and trolls – and the impact their vile words have had on her – in her new book, *That F Word*.

The abuse has covered topics she has covered in her weekly columns, questioning her musical ability and also targeting her with myriad racial-type attacks.

Marvally has also written of her tools for handling the abuse; including switching off from social media at times, blocking those who send her abusive content and not responding to trolls.