

Cyberbullying and Cell Phone Policy in U.S. Primary and Secondary Schools

The data for this report are from the 2010 and 2016 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), which asked public school principals about the prevalence of violence and crime in their schools, school security measures, disciplinary problems and actions, presence of security staff, and other related characteristics. The SSOCS is a nationally representative sample survey of over 3,000 public K–12 schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

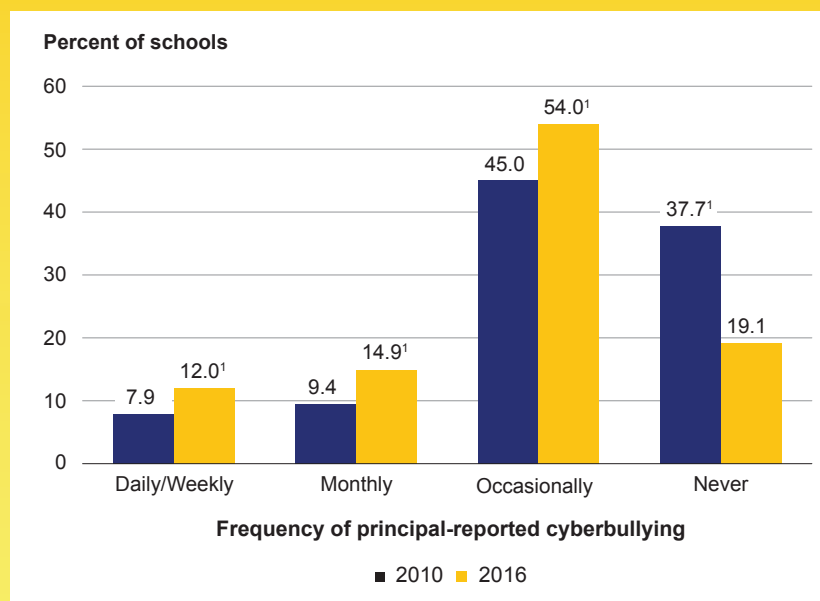
This report describes principals' reports of the frequency with which cyberbullying occurred among U.S. students in 2010 and 2016. Additionally, this report examines schools with more frequent reports of cyberbullying and compares groups of schools with varying racial/ethnic compositions and rules prohibiting cell phone use during school hours.

How does the frequency of principal-reported cyberbullying compare between 2010 and 2016 (Figure 1)?

Principals were asked to the best of their knowledge how frequently cyberbullying occurred (at school or away from school) among students who attend their schools. Comparing 2010 and 2016, increases were observed in the percentage of schools in all response categories except "never," where there was a decrease.

- The percentage of schools with principals reporting daily/weekly cyberbullying increased from 7.9 percent in 2010 to 12 percent in 2016.
- The percentage of schools with principals reporting monthly cyberbullying increased from 9.4 percent in 2010 to 14.9 percent in 2016.

FIGURE 1. Frequency of principal-reported cyberbullying in public schools: School years 2009–2010 and 2015–2016



¹ Indicates a significant difference between frequency of reported cyberbullying in 2010 and 2016 for each grouping of frequency of cyberbullying. "Cyberbullying" was defined for respondents as "Occurs when willful and repeated harm is inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices."
NOTE: Possible answers choices of "Daily," "Weekly," "Monthly," "Occasionally," or "Never." Daily and weekly were grouped into one category, labeled "Daily/Weekly."
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009–10 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2010. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–16 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2016.

- The percentage of schools with principals reporting occasional cyberbullying increased from 45 percent in 2010 to 54 percent in 2016.
- The largest difference was in the "Never" category, which had an 18.6 percentage point decrease from 2010 (37.7 percent) to 2016 (19.1 percent).

Data in this report are from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). To learn more, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs>. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crime/pss_pubs.asp.

How does the frequency of principal-reported cyberbullying vary by school rules on cell phone use and percent of students who are nonwhite (Figure 2)?

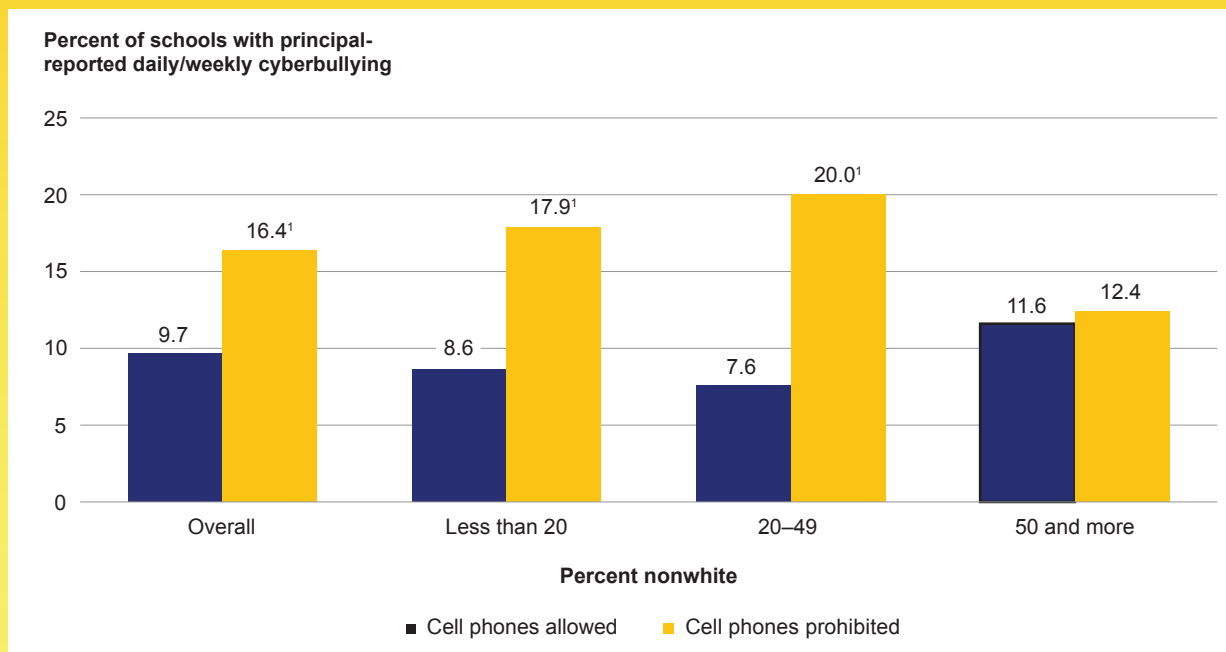
In the 2016 SSOCS, principals reported whether their school had rules prohibiting students from using cell phones during the school day. Results indicate schools that did not allow cell phone use indicated a higher percentage of principal-reported daily/weekly cyberbullying.

- Across all schools, 65.8 percent had rules that prohibited the use of cell phones (data not shown in figures).
- Schools that did not allow their students to use cell phones had a reportedly higher rate of daily/weekly cyberbullying (16.4 percent of schools) than did schools that allowed cell phone use (9.7 percent of schools).

Similar results were found when considering the percent nonwhite enrollment of the school.

- Schools in both the less than 20 percent nonwhite and 20 to less than 50 percent nonwhite groups exhibited similar behavior: higher rates of reported daily/weekly cyberbullying for schools that did not allow cell phone use as compared to those schools that did allow cell phone use.
- Schools where 50 percent or more of the student body was nonwhite showed no difference in reported daily/weekly cyberbullying between those that allowed cell phone use (11.6 percent) and those that did not allow the use of cell phones (12.4 percent).

FIGURE 2. Frequency of principal-reported daily/weekly cyberbullying by school cell phone rules by percent nonwhite: School year 2015-2016



¹ Indicates a significant difference between schools where cell phones are allowed and where they are prohibited. Information presented does not imply causality. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015-16 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2016.

This NCES Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Spencer Eanes of Avar Consulting. Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All noted differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. In the design,

conduct, and data processing of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.