

The Impacts of Online Hate Speech

15
minutesWhat You'll Need: **Video** • **Student Handout** **CASEL FOCUS: Social Awareness**

Learning Objectives

- Reflect on how encountering hate speech online impacts themselves and others.
- Analyze how the internet has contributed to a rise in hate speech.
- Recognize the demand for creating welcoming online environments and the opportunities to combat hate speech online.

Note: This lesson is a starting point for a conversation about hate speech online. Given the sensitive nature of this topic, we recommend allowing additional time and space for students to process and discuss throughout the year.

Activity Steps

1. **Ask:** *How many of you are familiar with the term "hate speech"?*

Allow students to raise their hands.

Define **hate speech** as an attack using any form of communication targeting a person or people because of a group they belong to -- race, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, etc.

2. **Ask:** *How many of you have encountered hate speech online?*

Allow students to raise their hands and give some time for silent reflection.

3. **Say:** *Hate speech has existed for a long time, but in recent years, there's been an increase in how much it appears online. In one study, 64% of teens say they have encountered it at least "sometimes," compared to only 43% in 2012. (Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences, Common Sense Research, 2018).*
4. **Say:** *Today we're going to discuss online hate speech, including where we might find it, why people might post it, and how it affects us and others. To begin, we're going to watch a brief video hearing from teens about their experiences with online hate speech. As you watch the video, take note of perspectives you identify with and those that are outside of your experiences.*



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5. Show the video [Teen Voices: Hate Speech Online](#) (5:54 minutes).
6. Lead a class discussion exploring the questions below.

Optional: Distribute the [Student Handout](#) and have students answer the reflection questions independently before having a group discussion.

Discussion Questions

Ask: How does the presence of online hate speech impact ourselves, our community, and beyond?

Encourage students to explore their classmates' perspectives with curiosity and empathy.

Answers will vary, but highlight the following:

- It can make people feel unsafe.
- If it's not addressed appropriately, hate speech can end up defining a community.
- It affects not only those who are targeted by the hate speech, but also those who view it online.

Ask: Why might someone post hate speech online?

Sample responses:

- Fear or distrust of someone or something that is foreign or unknown to them ([xenophobia](#))
- To get attention or a reaction, or to align themselves to a particular identity or group

Ask: In what ways can online communities or platforms contribute to the prevalence and spread of hate speech?

- Memes and images are powerful and can be easily shared with a public audience.
- It is easier to say or share hateful things online because you can be anonymous and/or because you don't have to see the person who is being hurt.

Ask: How can we combat hate speech online and create welcoming online environments? What are some actionable steps you can take when you see hate speech online?

Encourage students to think about:

- Ways they can be an ally or upstander when they see hate speech online
- How they react if the hate speech was posted by someone they know or in a small community space

Sample responses:

- Flag the post on social media.
- Hold space for discussion with others who may be impacted by seeing the post.
- Get involved in activism groups working on creating welcoming online communities.

Send home the family conversation starter for this activity, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

To go deeper on this topic, check out the full lesson: [Countering Hate Speech Online](#).

