



SURVEY PRELIMINARY REPORT

Cyberbullying Survey for Deaf Young People in Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union

February 2024

Introduction

In the year 2022, the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) embarked on an impactful Erasmus+ funded project dedicated to enhancing the safeguarding of Deaf young individuals participating in physical activities. This initiative sought to develop guidelines and tools specifically tailored for international youth exchanges, seminars, training and meetings where attendees communicate in sign language. The objective was to foster respect among organisations and their participants, creating inclusive and culturally sensitive programs that ensure the involvement and well-being of all.

While the initial project primarily focused on inclusive physical activities, it became evident that a critical gap existed concerning online activities. The prevalence of hate speech on the internet, affecting Deaf young people significantly, prompted the realisation that existing guidelines were not suitable for addressing cyberbullying. The multifaceted nature of online activities, coupled with the lack of specific data on bullying within the Deaf community, led to the recommendation of a survey to map the profiles of both victims and perpetrators.

The project “*Deaf Youth against Cyberbullying: Action Kit and Manifesto*,” addressing the digital age's rising concern of cyberbullying, supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, was facilitated by Katia Pahud from Switzerland, Sofiya Kalinova from Ireland, and Lubna Mehdi from Norway. This project is led by the EUDY and in collaboration with the Deaf People's Association of Malta (DPAM), with participants from Spain, Romania, Norway, Netherlands, Malta, Latvia, Iceland, Czech Republic, and Belgium. This initiative aims to combat the surge in cyberbullying exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

The project seeks to collect data on cyberbullying, develop tools for Deaf youth workers, create materials for supporting affected individuals, and share a manifesto in sign language for online awareness. Deaf youth workers from partner organisations and national representative groups, along with individuals aged 0-35, are the primary focus. The project will especially address those aged 15-35, at a higher risk of cyberbullying.

The project focuses on a survey tailored for Deaf individuals aged 15-35, recognising their vulnerability to cyberbullying. Through collaborative survey creation and active participation, the project aims to address gaps in information and develop effective tools. This holistic approach

involves both youth workers and participants, contributing to the overarching goal of creating safe spaces, empowering youth workers, and building a toolkit for positive impact within the Deaf community.

This report serves as a provisional snapshot of the ongoing journey, emphasising the project's commitment to enhancing youth work and advocating for improved protection of Deaf young people on social media. The acquired competencies and insights aim to foster a more informed, inclusive, and supportive environment for Deaf youth across European communities.

Methodology:

The survey was conducted online using a self-administered questionnaire. We chose *Survio* as the platform to ensure the survey was as simple and accessible as possible for Deaf young people to read and fill out. The sample consisted of Deaf young individuals aged 15-35 in Europe, recruited through social media and the Youth National Associations of Deaf. Participation was voluntary, allowing respondents the freedom to choose which questions they would like to answer or end the survey at any point.

The questionnaire comprised seven sections:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Cyberbullying Experience
- Section 3: Cyberbullying Types and Perpetrators
- Section 4: Coping Mechanisms
- Section 5: Suggestions for Cyberbullying Prevention
- Section 6: Demographics
- Section 7: Additional Comments

In total, there were 56 questions. The questions were provided in English and translated into International Sign, and responses were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. No individuals were identified in any of the analyses or reports from this research.

The survey was distributed on EUDY's social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) on 20th November, 2023, and remained open until 14th February, 2024. It was also sent to Member Organisations via mail, and partners of this project also posted and shared the survey on their platforms. Additionally, a live session and competition were organised to win EUDY's items for

those attending the survey, requiring participants to comment and tag 3 friends and share the survey on their page. This approach aimed to expand the reach of the survey, particularly targeting youth groups.

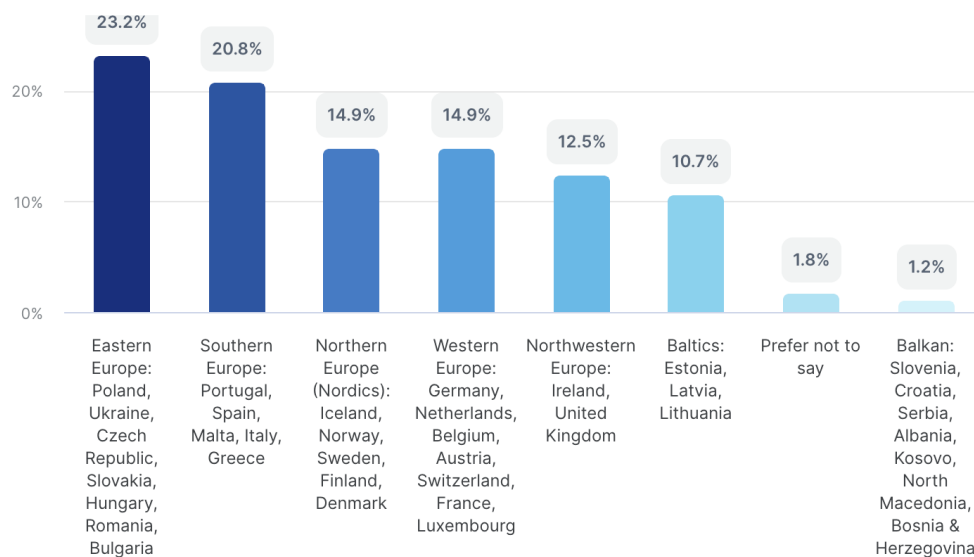
The live session consisted of three participants from this project and the EUDY's Youth Ambassador hosting the event. The aim was to explain what Cyberbullying is, discussing the effects of cyberbullying, and exploring strategies to combat it within the deaf community.

Originally, we aimed to conclude the survey on 31st January 2024, but due to insufficient respondents, we extended it until 14th February. Within a week of the extension, we received over 100 additional respondents. Partners made significant efforts by creating videos in their national sign languages to inform their communities about the survey. Some partners also organised workshops, both physical and virtual via Zoom, with young participants in their national sign languages. During these workshops, responsible individuals explained and translated the survey into their respective national sign languages.

As a result, we obtained 211 respondents, with 1076 visiting the survey, while 865 left it unfinished.

Sample Demographics:

The survey collected data on participants' European origins, with 168 responses recorded and 43 remaining unanswered. Below is the breakdown of responses:



Participants were asked to select their age group, the distribution is as follows:

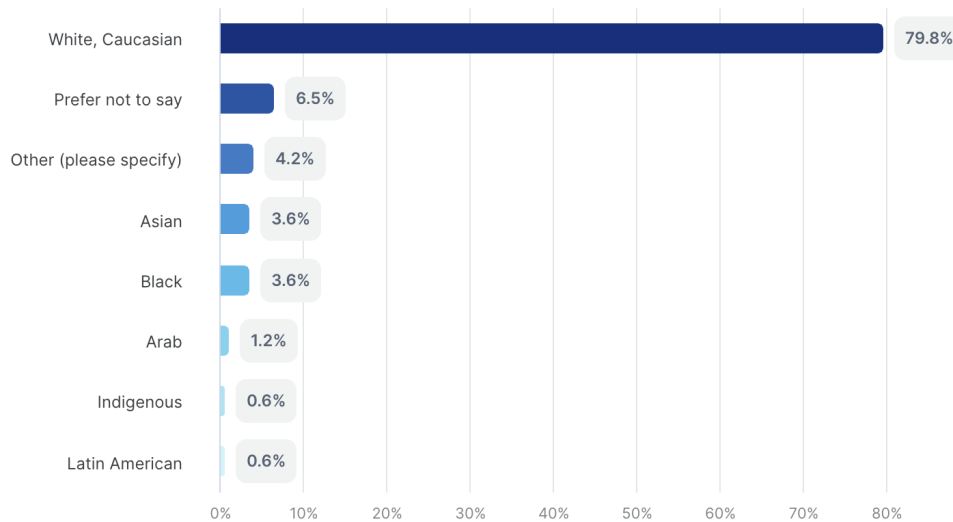
- 15-18 years old: 23.8%
- 19-24 years old: 39.9%
- 25-29 years old: 18.5%
- 30-35 years old: 17.9%

Participants were asked to identify their gender, with 168 providing an answer while 43 did not.

The breakdown is as follows:

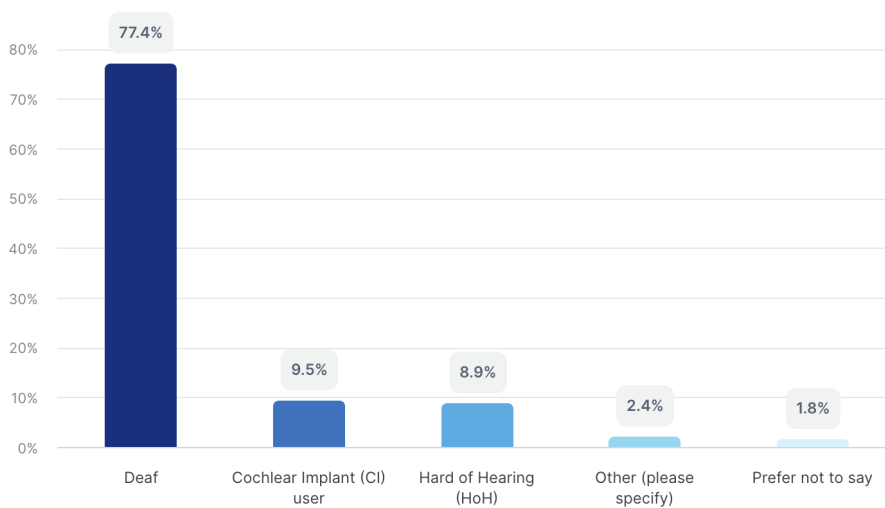
- Male: 34.5% (58 responses)
- Female: 57.7% (97 responses)
- Non-binary: 4.8% (8 responses)
- Prefer not to say: 3% (5 responses)
- Other (please specify): 0%

Respondents were asked to choose the option that best describes their race/ethnicity, with 168 providing a response and 43 remaining unanswered. The distribution is as follows:



- Black: 3.6% (6 responses)
- White, Caucasian: 79.8 (134 responses)
- Asian: 3.6% (6 responses)
- Arab: 1.2% (2 responses)
- Latin American: 0.6% (1 responses)
- Indigenous: 0.6% (1 responses)
- Prefer not to say: 6.5% (11 responses)
- Other (please specify): 4.2% (7 response)

Participants were asked to select their self-description from the following options:



- Deaf: 130 (77.4%)
- Hard of Hearing (HoH): 15 (8.9%)

- Cochlear Implant (CI) user: 16 (9.5%)
- Prefer not to say: 3 (1.8%)
- Other (please specify): 4 (2.4%)

(Out of 168 respondents, 43 did not provide a response).

Participants were asked about their proficiency in sign language in their country of residence:

- Mother tongue (my first language): 101 (60.1%)
- Fluent (I can communicate fluently): 45 (26.8%)
- Partially fluent: 9 (5.4%)
- Limited (I know basic signs): 6 (3.6%)
- None (I do not know sign language): 2 (1.2%)
- Prefer not to say: 3 (1.8%)
- Other (please specify): 2 (1.2%)

(Out of 168 respondents, 43 did not provide a response).

The sample demographics indicate a predominant representation of individuals from European origins, particularly from Eastern and Southern Europe. There is a notable absence of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals within the sample, with the majority identifying as White or Caucasian.

Furthermore, the survey primarily attracted younger participants, with a significant portion falling within the 19-24 years old age group. This suggests that the survey may have resonated more strongly with younger demographics, potentially reflecting their increased engagement with digital platforms and social media.

In terms of gender representation, the sample is predominantly female, though there is also a notable presence of non-binary individuals. This indicates a diverse range of gender identities within the respondent pool.

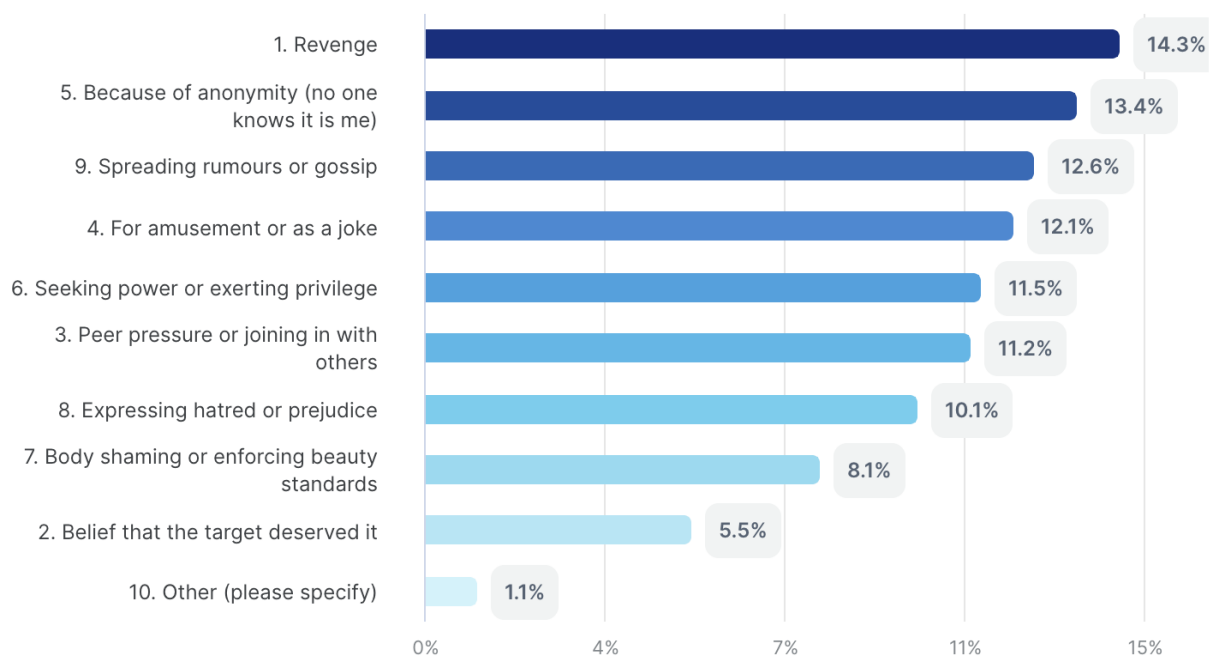
Additionally, the majority of respondents self-identify as Deaf, indicating a strong presence of individuals within the Deaf community. However, it's worth noting that there is also representation from individuals who identify as Hard of Hearing or Cochlear Implant users.

Finally, in terms of sign language proficiency, a significant portion of respondents report sign language as their mother tongue, highlighting the importance of sign language within the community. However, there is also a notable proportion who report limited or no proficiency in sign language, indicating potential diversity in communication preferences and needs within the community.

Results

The ongoing survey on cyberbullying among Deaf youth aims to gather insights into their experiences, perceptions, and preferences related to cyberbullying. Here are key findings and statistics based on the responses received thus far:

1. Top Reasons for Cyberbullying:



- Revenge: 38.7%
- Belief that the target deserved it: 14.9%
- Peer pressure or joining in with others: 30.4%
- For amusement or as a joke: 32.7%
- Because of anonymity (no one knows it is me): 36.3%
- Seeking power or exerting privilege: 31.0%
- Body shaming or enforcing beauty standards: 22.0%

- Expressing hatred or prejudice: 27.4%
- Spreading rumours or gossip: 33.9%
- Other (please specify): 3.0%

2. Personal Experience with Cyberbullying:

Yes: 39.3%

No: 32.1%

I am not sure: 24.4%

Prefer not to say: 4.2%

3. Relationship with Cyberbullies:

Participants reported various relationships with cyberbullies, with classmates accounting for 53.0% and online friends for 50.0% of the reported connections.

4. Types of Cyberbullying Experienced:

Participants reported various types of cyberbullying.

- The most common were verbal harassment (72.1%), social exclusion (45.6%), and cyberstalking (39.7%).
- Other notable types included receiving unsolicited images or memes (29.4%) and catfishing (32.4%).
- Less frequently reported were impersonation (25.0%), outing (22.1%), and cyberbullying by proxy (22.1%).
- Fewer participants reported experiencing blackmail (26.5%), doxing (17.6%), or other forms of cyberbullying (5.9%).

5. Social Media Platforms Involved:

Facebook: 60.3%

Instagram: 57.4%

TikTok: 5.9%

Snapchat: 19.1%

WhatsApp: 27.9%

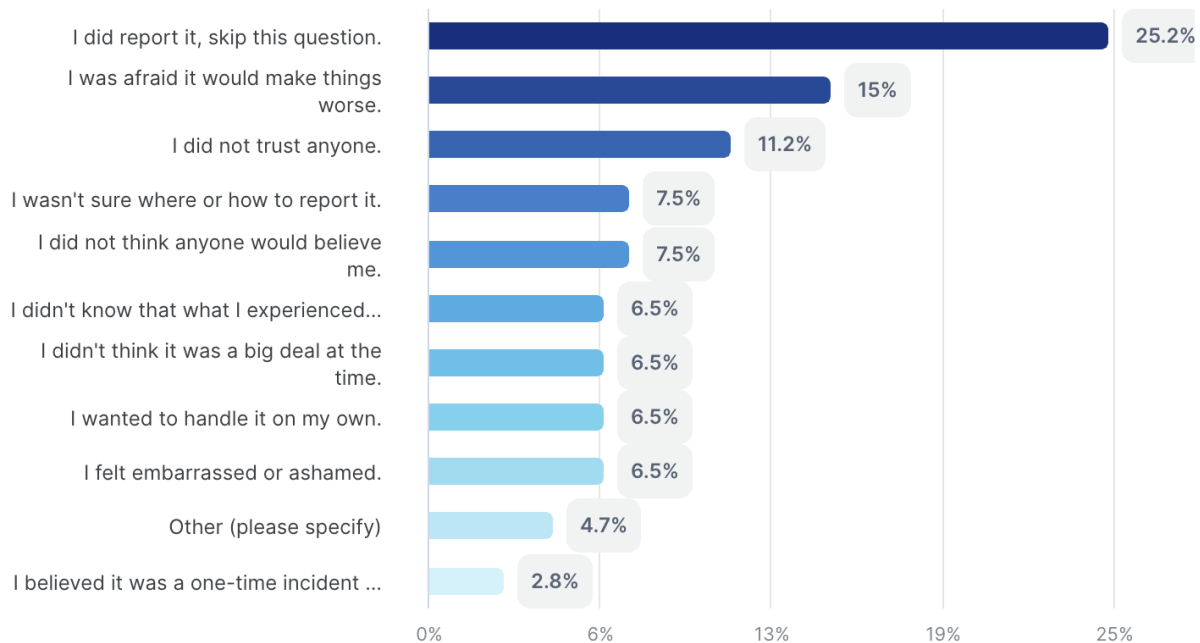
Online gaming: 14.7%

Other: 25.0%

Cyberbullying occurred across multiple platforms, with Facebook and Instagram being the most prevalent.

6. Reporting Cyberbullying and Reasons for Not Reporting Cyberbullying:

Many participants cited reasons for not reporting cyberbullying;



- fear of making things worse (23.5%)
- lack of trust (17.6%)
- uncertainty about reporting procedures (11.8%)
- feeling embarrassed or ashamed (10.3%)
- perception that it wasn't a big deal (10.3%)
- desire to handle it independently (10.3%)
- lack of awareness (10.3%)
- other unspecified reasons (7.4%).

Overall, the analysis suggests that barriers to reporting cyberbullying include fear of retaliation, lack of trust in support systems, uncertainty about reporting procedures, emotional factors such as embarrassment or shame, perception of the severity of the issue, and lack of awareness about cyberbullying behaviours. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive support mechanisms, education about cyberbullying, and efforts to foster trusting and supportive environments for victims to seek assistance.

7. Reporting Cyberbullying Through Sign Language:

- No, Due to Communication Barrier: 39.7% of respondents did not report the incident because they believed the platform administrators might not understand sign language. This indicates a significant barrier to seeking support and resolution for cyberbullying incidents experienced through sign language.
- Yes, But No Action Taken: 17.6% reported the incident to the platform's administration or support team, but no action was taken. This suggests a gap in the responsiveness of social media platforms to cyberbullying incidents, which may lead to feelings of frustration and helplessness among victims.
- Yes, With Appropriate Actions Taken: 8.8% reported the incident, and appropriate actions were taken by the platform's administration or support team. While a smaller percentage, this indicates that some victims received effective support and resolution from social media platforms, highlighting the importance of responsive and proactive measures in addressing cyberbullying.
- Not Cyberbullied Through Sign Language: 30.9% stated that they were not cyberbullied through sign language. This provides context about the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents specifically targeting individuals using sign language on social media platforms.
- Other Reasons: 2.9% provided unspecified reasons for their response. These reasons may vary and could include factors such as personal experiences, perceptions of platform responsiveness, or individual beliefs about reporting cyberbullying incidents.

Overall, the analysis suggests that barriers to reporting cyberbullying through sign language include concerns about communication barriers with platform administrators, potential lack of responsiveness from social media platforms, and varied experiences with the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. Efforts to address these barriers may include enhancing accessibility features for individuals using sign language, improving responsiveness of social media platforms to cyberbullying incidents, and increasing awareness about reporting procedures among users.

8. Preference for Communication in Sign Language:

- Yes, I would prefer to communicate in sign language: 49.4% (83 respondents)
- No, I am comfortable using emails or messaging: 16.7% (28 respondents)
- It depends on the situation: 36.6% (61 respondents)
- I have not thought about it: 19.0% (32 respondents)
- Other (please specify): 0.6% (1 respondent)

A majority of participants expressed a preference for communicating in sign language, highlighting its potential benefits in dealing with cyberbullying situations.

9. Effectiveness of Sign Language in Combating Cyberbullying:

Participants showed varying degrees of agreement on the importance of sign language, with some strongly agreeing that it provides a more personal and direct form of communication.

- Strong Agreement: 42.2% strongly believe that communicating in sign language can effectively combat cyberbullying due to its personal and direct nature.
- Agreement: 29.7% think sign language communication can be helpful, especially for those comfortable with it.
- Neutral: 15.6% are unsure if sign language communication significantly impacts combating cyberbullying.
- Disagreement: Only 3.1% disagree that the mode of communication matters as much as the quality of support.
- Strong Disagreement: 4.7% strongly disagree that sign language offers any particular advantage in combating cyberbullying.
- Not Applicable: 4.7% do not use or understand sign language, making the question irrelevant to them.

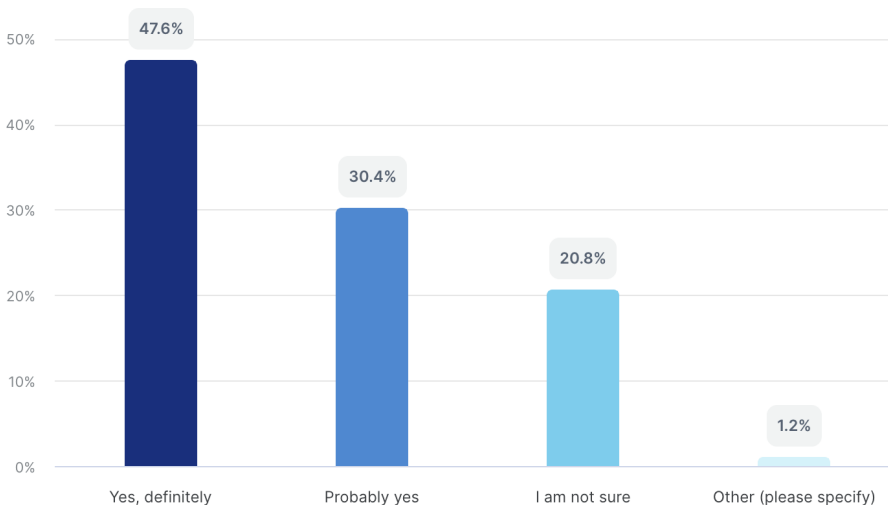
10. Importance of Educating the Deaf Community About Cyberbullying:

- 4.8% of respondents rated the importance of educating the deaf community about cyberbullying and its impacts as low.
- 1.8% rated it as somewhat unimportant.
- 9.0% rated it as moderately important.
- 14.4% rated it as important.
- The majority, 70.1%, rated it as highly important, indicating a strong consensus on the significance of educating the deaf community about cyberbullying and its impacts.

Overall, the overwhelming majority of respondents believe that educating the deaf community about cyberbullying is of utmost importance, with a significant portion rating it as highly important.

11. Need for a Policy and Guidelines on Cyberbullying:

- Yes, definitely: 47.6%
- Probably yes: 30.4%
- I am not sure: 20.8%
- Other (please specify): 1.2%



The majority of participants believe that their Youth National Association of Deaf (YNAD) should have a policy and guidelines for cyberbullying on their social media platforms and website.

Conclusion

The initial responses indicate a significant prevalence of cyberbullying among Deaf youth, with varied experiences, types, and platforms involved. Participants expressed a strong demand for awareness, education, and specific policies within Deaf youth associations to address and prevent cyberbullying effectively.

One notable concern highlighted in the responses is the need to understand how to report instances of cyberbullying in sign language. The challenge arises because authorities may not

be familiar with sign language, posing difficulties in identifying and addressing cyberbullying incidents among the Deaf community. This underscores the importance of developing accessible reporting mechanisms and ensuring that authorities are equipped to understand and act upon cyberbullying cases communicated in sign language.

The survey results underscore a clear consensus among participants regarding the necessity for the Youth National Association of Deaf (YNAD) to establish a policy and guidelines for addressing cyberbullying on their social media platforms and website. With nearly three-quarters of respondents expressing definitive support and an additional proportion leaning towards agreement, there's a resounding call for proactive measures to combat cyberbullying within the Deaf community. As such, the implementation of comprehensive policies and guidelines stands as a crucial step towards fostering a safer and more inclusive online environment for all members.

With 211 respondents, this survey offers comprehensive insights into the experiences and needs of the Deaf community in combating cyberbullying. The identified challenges will contribute to shaping the Manifesto and Action Toolkit for EUDY and its member organisations, aimed at creating a safer online environment for Deaf youth. The survey results will serve as vital information for our future endeavours in working with Deaf youth. We are using the hashtag #EUDYCyberSafe to spread this information.

This report is authored by Lubna Mehdi for the Project Management of EUDY's Project: *Deaf Youth against Cyberbullying: Action Kit and Manifesto*.

Date: February 26, 2024

Location: Brussels, Belgium