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# Online Harassment

*40% of internet users have personally experienced online harassment, from the mild to the severe; 73% have witnessed it occur to others.*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
ON THIS REPORT:**

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## Summary of Findings

Harassment—from garden-variety name calling to more threatening behavior— is a common part of online life that colors the experiences of many web users. Fully 73% of adult internet users have seen someone be harassed in some way online and 40% have personally experienced it, according to a new survey by the Pew Research Center.

Pew Research asked respondents about six different forms of online harassment. Those who witnessed harassment said they had seen at least one of the following occur to others online:

- 60% of internet users said they had witnessed someone being called offensive names
- 53% had seen efforts to purposefully embarrass someone
- 25% had seen someone being physically threatened
- 24% witnessed someone being harassed for a sustained period of time
- 19% said they witnessed someone being sexually harassed
- 18% said they had seen someone be stalked

Those who have personally experienced online harassment said they were the target of at least one of the following online:

- 27% of internet users have been called offensive names
- 22% have had someone try to purposefully embarrass them
- 8% have been physically threatened
- 8% have been stalked
- 7% have been harassed for a sustained period
- 6% have been sexually harassed

In Pew Research Center's first survey devoted to the subject, two distinct but overlapping categories of online harassment occur to internet users. The first set of experiences is somewhat less severe: it includes name-calling and embarrassment. It is a layer of annoyance so common that those who see or experience it say they often ignore it.

The second category of harassment targets a smaller segment of the online public, but involves more severe experiences such as being the target of physical threats, harassment over a sustained period of time, stalking, and sexual harassment.

Of those who have been harassed online, 55% (or 22% of all internet users) have *exclusively* experienced the “less severe” kinds of harassment while 45% (or 18% of all internet users) have fallen victim to any of the “more severe” kinds of harassment.

Online harassment tends to occur to different groups in different environments with different personal and emotional repercussions.

In broad trends, the data show that men are more likely to experience name-calling and embarrassment, while young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and stalking. Social media is the most common scene of both types of harassment, although men highlight online gaming and comments sections as other spaces they typically encounter harassment. Those who exclusively experience less severe forms of harassment report fewer emotional or personal impacts, while those with more severe harassment experiences often report more serious emotional tolls.

### Key findings

**Who is harassed:** Age and gender are most closely associated with the experience of online harassment. Among online adults:

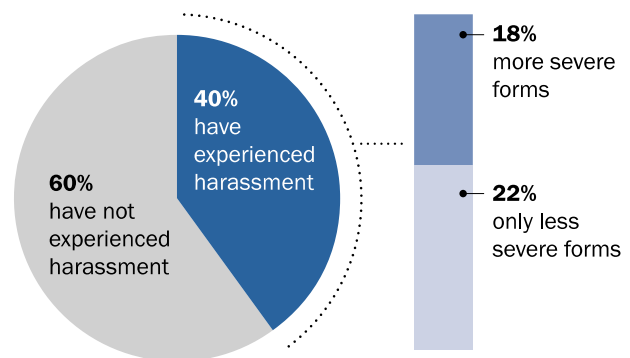
**Young adults,** those 18-29, are more likely than any other demographic group to experience online harassment. Fully 65% of young internet users have been the target of at least one of the six elements of harassment that were queried in the survey. Among those 18-24, the proportion is 70%.

**Young women,** those 18-24, experience certain severe types of harassment at disproportionately high levels: 26% of these young women have been stalked online, and 25% were the target of

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### Four-in-ten internet users are victims of online harassment, varying degrees of severity

*Among all internet users, the % who have experienced harassment or not and the % who have experienced more vs. less severe forms of harassment ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839.

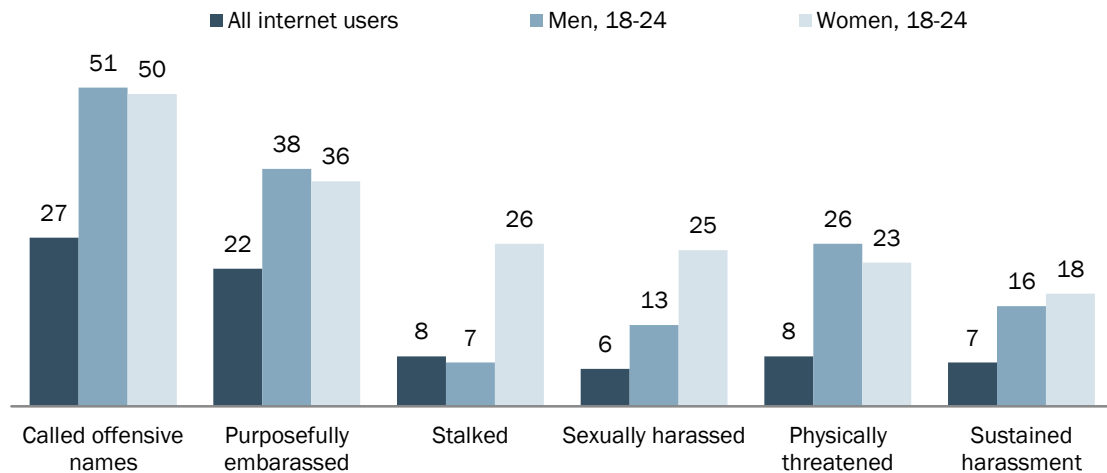
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online sexual harassment. In addition, they do not escape the heightened rates of physical threats and sustained harassment common to their male peers and young people in general.

### Young women experience particularly severe forms of online harassment

*Among all internet users, the % who have personally experienced the following types of online harassment, by gender and age ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839.

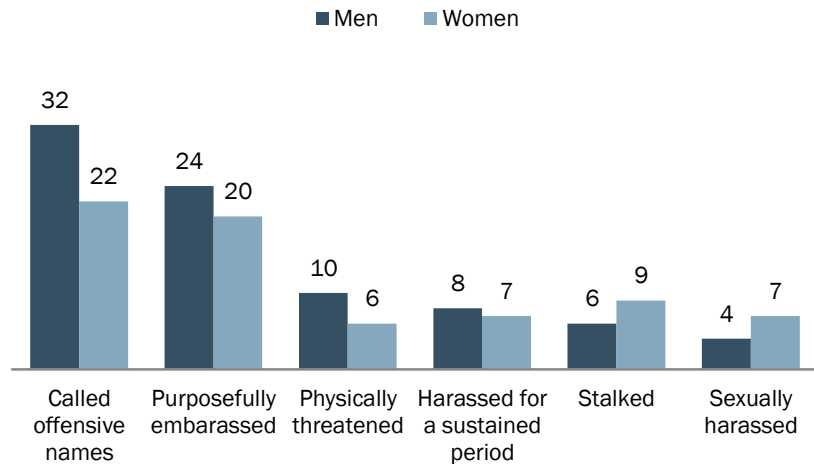
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Overall, men are somewhat more likely than women to experience at least one of the elements of online harassment, 44% vs. 37%. In terms of specific experiences, men are more likely than women to encounter name-calling, embarrassment, and physical threats.

Beyond those demographic groups, those whose lives are especially entwined with the internet report experiencing higher rates of harassment online. This includes those who have more information available about them online, those who promote themselves online for their job, and those who work in the digital technology industry.

## Men and women experience different varieties of online harassment

*Among all internet users, the % who have experienced each of the following elements of online harassment, by gender...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839.

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**Perpetrators of online harassment:** A plurality of those who have experienced online harassment, 38%, said a stranger was responsible for their most recent incident and another 26% said they didn't know the real identity of the person or people involved. Taken together, this means half of those who have experienced online harassment did not know the person involved in their most recent incident. <sup>1</sup>

**Where harassment occurs:** Online harassment is much more prevalent in some online environments than in others. Asked to recall where their most recent experience took place:

- 66% of internet users who have experienced online harassment said their most recent incident occurred on a social networking site or app
- 22% mentioned the comments section of a website
- 16% said online gaming

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were allowed to select more than one response option.

- 16% said in a personal email account
- 10% mentioned a discussion site such as reddit
- 6% said on an online dating website or app

Women and young adults were more likely than others to experience harassment on social media. Men—and young men in particular—were more likely to report online gaming as the most recent site of their harassment.

**Responses to online harassment:** Among those who have experienced online harassment, 60% decided to ignore their most recent incident while 40% took steps to respond to it. Those who responded to their most recent incident with online harassment took the following steps:

- 47% of those who responded to their most recent incident with online harassment confronted the person online
- 44% unfriended or blocked the person responsible
- 22% reported the person responsible to the website or online service
- 18% discussed the problem online to draw support for themselves
- 13% changed their username or deleted their profile
- 10% withdrew from an online forum
- 8% stopped attending certain offline events or places
- 5% reported the problem to law enforcement

Regardless of whether a user chose to ignore or respond to the harassment, people were generally satisfied with their outcome. Some 83% of those who ignored it and 75% of those who responded thought their decision was effective at making the situation better.

Those with more “severe” harassment experiences responded differently to their most recent incident with harassment than those with less “severe” experiences. Those who have ever experienced stalking, physical threats, or sustained or sexual harassment were more likely to take multiple steps in response to their latest incident than those who have *only* experienced name-calling and embarrassment, 67% vs. 30%. They are more likely to take actions like unfriending or blocking the person responsible, confronting the person online, reporting the person to a website or online service, changing their username or deleting their profile, and ending their attendance at certain offline events and places.

**After-effects of online harassment:** Asked how upsetting their most recent experience with harassment was, the responses ran a spectrum from being quite jarring to being of no real consequence:

- 14% of those who have experienced online harassment found their most recent incident extremely upsetting
- 14% found it very upsetting
- 21% said it was somewhat upsetting
- 30% reported it was a little upsetting
- 22% found it not at all upsetting

Taken together, half found their most recent experience with online harassment a little or not at all upsetting. But a significant minority, 27%, found the experience extremely or very upsetting.

Women were more likely than men to find their most recent experience with online harassment extremely or very upsetting—38% of harassed women said so of their most recent experience, compared with 17% of harassed men.

Again, there were differences in the emotional impact of online harassment based on the level of severity one had experienced in the past. Some 37% of those who have ever experienced sexual harassment, stalking, physical threats, or sustained harassment called their most recent incident with online harassment “extremely” or “very” upsetting compared with 19% of those who have *only* experienced name-calling or embarrassment.

When it comes to longer-term impacts on reputation, there is a similar pattern. More than 80% of those who have ever been victim of name-calling and embarrassment did not feel their reputation had been hurt by their overall experience with online harassment. Those who experienced physical threats and sustained harassment felt differently. About a third felt their reputation had been damaged by their overall experience with online harassment. Overall, 15% of those who have experienced online harassment said it impacted their reputation.



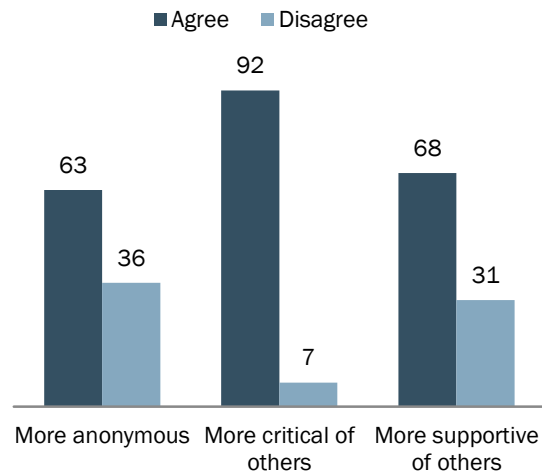
**Perceptions of online environments:** To explore the context that informs online harassment, respondents were asked about their general perceptions of and attitudes toward various online environments.

Fully 92% of internet users agreed that the online environment allows people to be more critical of one another, compared with their offline experiences. But a substantial majority, 68%, also agreed that online environments allow them to be more supportive of one another. Some 63% thought online environments allow for more anonymity than in their offline lives.

Respondents were asked whether they thought a series of online platforms were more welcoming toward men, more welcoming toward women, or equally welcoming to both sexes. While most online environments were viewed as equally welcoming to both genders, the starkest results were for online gaming. Some 44% of respondents felt the platform was more welcoming toward men.

## Mixed feelings toward online environment

*When asked to think of their online experiences vs. offline experiences, the % of internet users who agreed or disagreed that the online environment allows people to be ...*

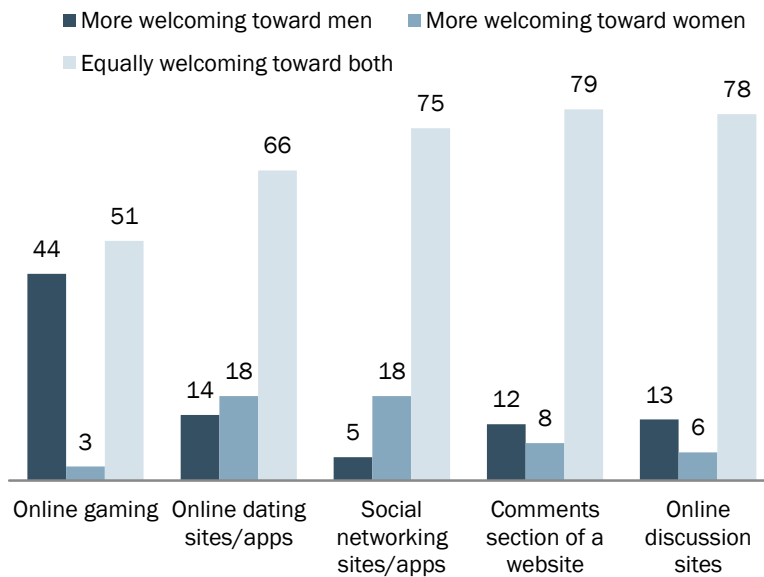


Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,849.

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## How welcoming are online “neighborhoods” to men and women?

Among all internet users, the % who thought the following environments online were more welcoming to men, more welcoming to women, or equally welcoming to both ...



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,849.

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### About this survey

Data in this report are drawn from the Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel, a probability-based, nationally representative panel. This survey was conducted May 30 – June 30, 2014 and self-administered via the internet by 2,849 web users, with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. For more information on the American Trends Panel, please see the Methods section at the end of this report.

## Introduction

For all the benefits it bestows, the internet has a dark side. Recently, much attention has centered on online harassment. It is a phenomenon that can take a variety of forms: name-calling, trolling, doxing, open and escalating threats, vicious sexist, racist, and homophobic rants, attempts to shame others, and direct efforts to embarrass or humiliate people. While some accept online harassment as a nuisance, others face situations that prompt them to take serious action and precautions.

At a basic level, there is no clear legal definition of what constitutes “online harassment.” Traditional notions of libel, slander, and threatening speech are sometimes hard to apply to the online environment. In addition, the anonymous and pseudonymous nature of the internet can make it easy for people to attack others without repercussions.

Further, there is little consensus as to who should be responsible for monitoring bad behavior online. The [Telecommunications Act of 1996](#) does not hold website administrators liable for content posted by users. Websites and other technology companies claim monitoring bad behavior is economically challenging. Many sites utilize “community standards” or self-reporting mechanisms to bring inappropriate behavior to their attention. However, these efforts have often been seen as unsatisfactory or ineffective. This was evident when [Zelda Williams](#), the daughter of the recently deceased comedian Robin Williams, shut down her Twitter account after a barrage of insensitive comments and abuse related to her father’s suicide became overwhelming to her.

Zelda Williams ultimately reinstated her account following the intervention of Twitter executives, but this issue has recently become the focus of female journalists and commentators who have shared [similar stories](#) of harassment, bigotry, and threats in various online spaces. Journalist Amanda Marcotte recently [shut off](#) “mentions” on her Twitter feed—the ability of other users to tag each other in their tweets—after feeling defeated from years of harassment. Soraya Chemaly, a media critic and activist, [recently outlined](#) why online harassment is uniquely harsh and cruel to women. Jill Filipovic [detailed her experience](#) with how easily online harassment becomes offline harassment. Game developer Zoe Quinn and video game critic Anita Sarkeesian were [forced to leave their homes](#) after harassment surrounding what’s called [#Gamergate](#), where the tension between the traditional “boys club” mentality of gaming and a growing call for gender parity in the community came to a head. As the controversy escalated, Ms. Sarkeesian was forced to [cancel an appearance](#) at Utah State University when she did not feel security under Utah’s gun laws would be adequate after receiving a “school shooting” threat. Amanda Hess, a freelance writer, argued that online harassment creates a “chilling effect” whereby women are [disinclined to participate](#) professionally, socially, or economically online.

The sexual nature of many of these incidents is a running thread through these journalists' stories. The most recent release of private, nude photographs of celebrities like Jennifer Lawrence, Kate Upton, and Rihanna sparked a debate over expectations of security and responsibility online. Many commentators [likened the release to revenge porn](#), in which nude or Photoshopped photos and videos of women are published on the internet, typically by way of a disgruntled ex-partner or spouse. Efforts by activists like [Charlotte Laws](#), whose daughter was a victim of revenge porn, highlight the difficulty in regaining control of one's image from the digital Pandora's Box in an area with little legal precedent and resources.

At the same time, a number of prominent websites have begun to review their practices surrounding harassment. Twitter vowed to [improve its policies](#) after the Zelda Williams fallout, reassessing how to provide support for those harassed beyond their "Report Abuse" button. In the meantime, third-party software developers at the Electronic Frontier Foundation released "[Block Together](#)," an app that allows Twitter users to block accounts and share lists of troublesome users. Last year, Facebook set up a [new review process](#) for pages and groups to determine if their content was too offensive for advertisements. Gaming company [Riot Games](#) assessed the abuses woven throughout their community and instituted new participation standards and mechanisms for players to police one another.

While these stories provide insights into online harassment, there has been little data about the prevalence of harassment online, when, how, and to whom it occurs, and its impact on victims. Much of the existing research focuses on teens, a group considered particularly vulnerable to bullying and whose social lives increasingly incorporate digital means. The Pew Research Center has examined issues such as [kindness and cruelty](#) and [privacy](#) on social media within the teen population. Some have argued that teens may have [more resources](#) than adults when it comes to online harassment, such as parents, teachers, coaches, school administrators, and others who can provide guidance and aid. When it comes to adults, if the steps one can take personally do not go far enough to end the harassment, local law enforcement is typically the only other option. But some research has argued that [law enforcement agencies](#) are either incapable or unwilling to take on such a complex world.

This is the context for the following study by the Pew Research Center. It is based on survey data from the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel. The first part of this report explores the incidence and demographics of online harassment. Part 2 describes perceptions of online environments and where online harassment takes place. Part 3 outlines how people responded to their online harassment. In Part 4, the emotional aftermath of online harassment is explored. Part 5 concludes the report by examining the incidence and demographics of witnessing harassment online.

## Part 1: Experiencing Online Harassment

Forty percent of adult internet users<sup>2</sup> have personally experienced some variety of online harassment. In this study, online harassment was defined as having had at least one of six incidents personally occur:

- 27% of internet users have been called offensive names
- 22% have had someone try to purposefully embarrass them
- 8% have been physically threatened
- 8% have been stalked
- 7% have been harassed for a sustained period
- 6% have been sexually harassed

Name-calling and efforts to purposefully embarrass someone are the most frequent forms of online harassment. Among those who have experienced some type of online harassment, two-thirds said that they had experienced name-calling and 54% were the target of embarrassment. For those who have only experienced one type of online harassment, some 81% indicate that their single experience involved name calling or purposeful embarrassment. In addition, these two elements also tend to occur alongside other, more serious examples of harassment. For instance, 80% of those who have experienced sexual harassment online have also been called offensive names and 63% have been purposefully embarrassed by someone online.

Put differently, online harassment falls into two distinct yet frequently overlapping categories. Name-calling and embarrassment constitute the first class and occur widely across a range of online platforms. The second category includes less frequent—but also more intense and emotionally damaging—experiences like sexual harassment, physical threats, sustained harassment, and stalking.

The rest of this report will explore these two categories of harassment in terms of the groups they impact, the online environments in which they occur, and the emotional and personal repercussions they produce.

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<sup>2</sup> Some 89% of American adults are now internet users.

## Demographics of Online Harassment

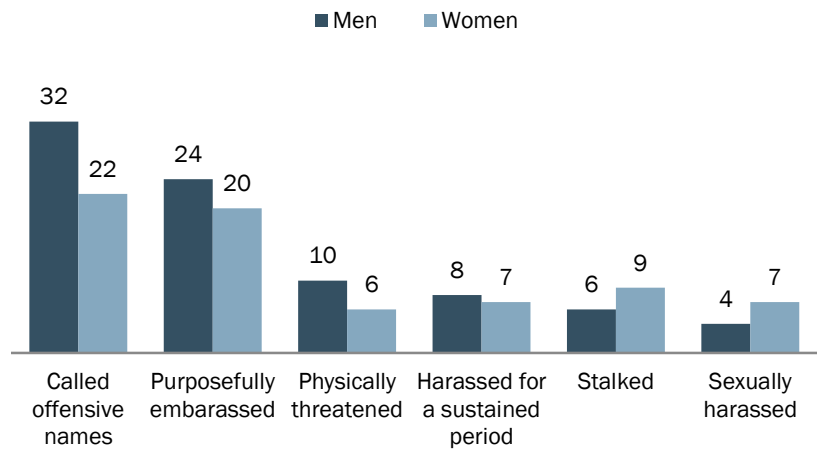
### Young people are the most likely demographic group to experience online harassment; men and women experience different varieties.

The level and intensity of harassment that people face online breaks down along a number of demographic lines.

Online men are somewhat more likely than online women to experience some level of online harassment overall. Some 44% of men and 37% of women have experienced at least one of the six types of harassment. Men are somewhat more likely than women to experience certain less severe forms of harassment like name-calling and being embarrassed. At the same time, online men are also slightly more likely to have received physical threats. While the differences are small, women are significantly more likely than men to report being stalked or sexually harassed on the internet. Name-calling and purposeful embarrassment are the most common forms of harassment experienced by both men and women alike.

### Men and women experience different varieties of online harassment

Among all internet users, the % who have experienced each of the following elements of online harassment, by gender...



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839.

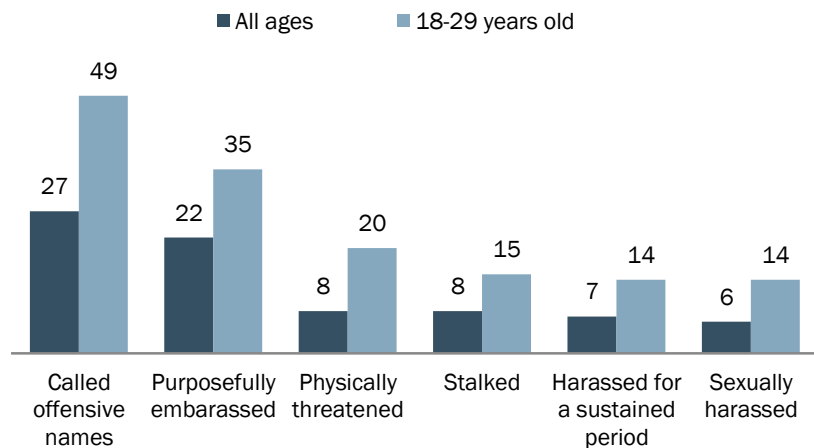
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Harassment occurs among all age groups, but it is especially prevalent among younger adults. Some 65% of internet users ages 18-29 (and 70% of those ages 18-24) have experienced some type of harassment online.

The youngest internet users, those ages 18-24, are particularly likely to say they are targets of some of the more severe kinds of harassment. Almost a quarter, 24%, have received physical threats. Some 19% have been the target of sexual harassment. Another 17% have been harassed for a sustained period of time.

## Young people experience unusually high rates of online harassment

Among all internet users, the % who have experienced the following types of online harassment, by age ...



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839.

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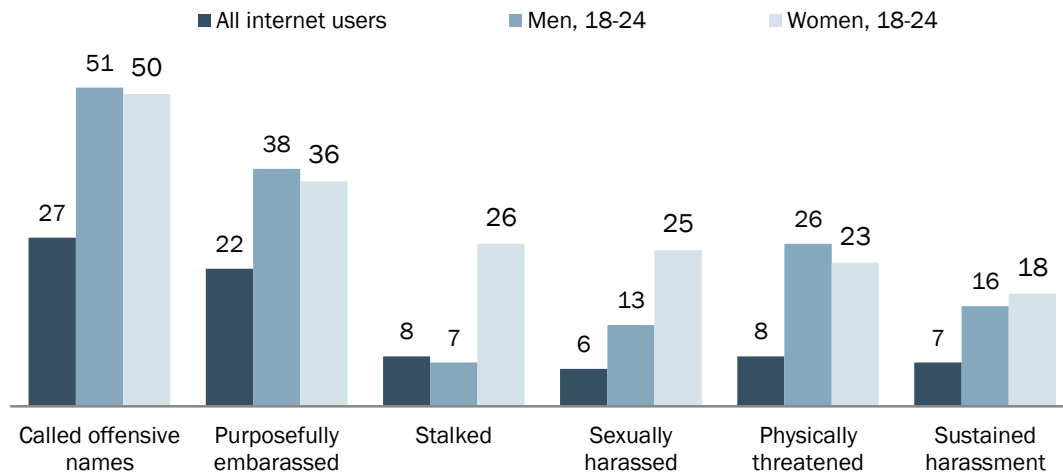
Online harassment is especially pronounced at the intersection of gender and youth: women ages 18-24 are more likely than others to experience some of the more severe forms of harassment. They are particularly likely to report being stalking online (26% said so) and sexually harassed (25%). In addition, they are also the targets of other forms of severe harassment like physical threats (23%) and sustained harassment (18%) at rates similar to their male peers (26% of whom have been physically threatened and 16% of whom have been the victim of sustained harassment). In essence, young women are uniquely likely to experience stalking and sexual harassment, while also not escaping the high rates of other types of harassment common to young people in general.

Stalking and sexual harassment are more prevalent among young women than among young men. But they are also more prevalent among young women than among women even a few years older (those ages 25-29). Women ages 18-24 who use the internet are more than twice as likely as women ages 25-29 to have experienced sexual harassment online (25% vs. 10%) and three times as likely to have been stalked online (26% vs. 8%). In addition, they are twice as likely as that older

cohort to have been physically threatened (23% vs. 11%) and twice as likely to have been harassed for a sustained period of time (18% vs. 8%).

## Young women experience particularly severe forms of online harassment

Among all internet users, the % who have personally experienced the following types of online harassment, by gender and age...



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839.

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African-American and Hispanic<sup>3</sup> internet users are more likely than their white counterparts to experience harassment online. Some 51% of African-American internet users and 54% of Hispanic internet users said they had experienced at least one of the six harassment incidents, compared with 34% of white internet users.

### Open-end responses: Politics and religion

*Throughout this report, some of the most compelling comments from open-ended questions about online harassment will be featured. Respondents were asked to describe their most recent experience and their answers ranged from simple phrases like “on Facebook” to detailed accounts of disturbing encounters. Here is a selection of insights from respondents who said they were called names or otherwise harassed for expressing political or religious opinions.*

<sup>3</sup> The Hispanic sample in this report is predominantly native born and English speaking.



“Through social media, and especially when commenting on controversial issues, often my difference of opinion from others would result in those who do not agree insulting and berating instead of arguing their point respectfully.”

“While commenting on a sensitive religious feminist issue, I was attacked because of my opinion and some of the other commenters resorted to name-calling in their anger.”

“On Facebook, a few days ago, I expressed my feelings about present issues and was harassed and called names. Of course there were not substantive arguments—just judgmental, harsh name calling.”

“I have been ridiculed for my religious and political beliefs.”

“Nothing major, just banter on a political discussion board. I view it as a badge of honor - usually means I made my point well when there is nothing left to say other than name calling.”

“Folks with different views would rather throw names than discuss real issues.”

“Someone has tried to embarrass me for my social views (but I am pretty good at defending myself, so no worries).”

“Just aggressive responses to my post in the politics section of the forum I visit. I really know better - nobody changes their mind based on something they read on an internet forum.”

“Someone didn't like a comment I made about their post about Obamacare. I pointed to facts I don't think he knew about so he called me an idiot and said I had no idea what I was talking about.”

“I've been called all sorts of names online in response to my being Jewish, and in response to my politically conservative views.”

“I am a strong supporter of LGBTQ persons. I've been invited to leave my church and start my own gay/lesbian church.”

“Just name calling because I don't support Obama policies and occasionally get accused of being racist.”

“Someone asked me what my views were on a topic, gay marriage. I knew they didn't want to know what I thought and tried to steer away from the topic. The person wouldn't drop it and I eventually said, ‘I leave the situation up to the voters, but my personal belief is marriage is defined by one man and one woman.’ They then went into how I should be ashamed to be, ‘a f\*\*\*\*\*g intolerant right wing racist bigot.’”

“I am constantly attacked on gun control as recent as the police shootings and the shooting across from diner in Walmart.”

“Every time I say something in favor of the President I get called all kinds of names.”

“Attacks by Obama supporters who have nothing else but insults. I was called a racist on a blog for criticizing administration lies.”

“A person whose political opinion I disagreed with told me that I should punch myself in the face and that if I didn't do it good enough he'd come and take care of it for me.”

“When I expressed disagreement with some of the core concepts of contemporary feminism (Rape Culture, privilege, toxic masculinity, etc.), any feminist who doesn't already know me has been quick to characterize me as a privileged, misogynistic rape apologist.”

“Name-calling for my pro-life stance online.”

“While tweeting about a woman's right to an abortion I was viciously harassed by numerous pro-life supporters.”

“I was called names by right-wing Facebook trolls. Since they can't stand on their ideas, they feel they have to call names and belittle.”

“My Democrat brother chewed me on [a] Facebook political post and I reminded him I'd fight to the death for his right to disagree with me.”

## Lifestyle Qualities and Online Harassment

### **Those who weave the internet more tightly into their daily lives report higher levels of online harassment.**

A number of non-demographic factors are also associated with whether or not someone has experienced harassment online. Put simply, those who live out more of their lives online—whether for work, pleasure, or both—are more likely to experience harassment.

Respondents answered three questions about lifestyle, both online and off, that may contribute to a closer proximity to online harassment in general.

Some internet users share more about themselves online than others, on personal or professional topics. Some 12% of internet users said there was a lot of information available about them online, 40% said some was available, another 40% said a small amount was available, and finally 7% reported there was no information available about them online.

Among the half of internet users who said there was a lot or some information about them available online, there was a small but statistically significant difference between them and those with a little or no information available. Some 43% said they had experienced at least one of the six incidents of harassment. This is a bit more than the 38% of internet users who said there was a little or no information about them online.

A portion of jobs in America require self-promotion and sharing of personal information online, but for some that comes with a cost. Among the 21% of employed internet users who need to market themselves online as a part of their job, almost half, 48%, said they had experienced online harassment. This compares with 38% of those who do not need to market themselves online for their job.

The type of job a person holds is also relevant to their experiences with online harassment. Digital technology workers (17% of the employed internet users in our sample) are more likely to report experiencing online harassment.

Almost half of those internet users who work in the digital technology industry (48%) said they had experienced online harassment. This compares with 39% of those who do not work in the digital technology industry.

Across all three of these lifestyle traits, offensive name-calling and attempts to make someone embarrassed were the most common online harassment experiences. Those who work in the

digital technology industry experienced name-calling at a rate of 39%, along with 32% of those who market themselves online for their job and 29% of those who say there is a lot or some information available about them online. Roughly a quarter, 27%, of those who professionally market themselves online were on the receiving end of efforts to be purposefully embarrassed, along with 24% of those who say there is a lot or some information available about them online and 24% of those who work in the digital technology industry.

## Part 2: The Online Environment

As [previous work](#) from Pew Research has shown, most technology users feel positively connected to the services and devices that connect them to others. It is not, however, a relationship without tension. Many users sometimes feel stressed by their constant connectivity (for example when their [cell phones distract or interrupt them](#)) or vulnerable when they consider [privacy trade-offs](#).

Building on this knowledge, two series of questions on this survey were designed to understand the specific context in which people may interpret online harassment. The first series examined how harassment might be tied to anonymity, criticism, and social support in respondents' online and offline worlds. The second series was designed to prompt respondents to think of how welcoming they perceive various online platforms to be toward men and women.

### Anonymity, Criticism, and Support Online

**Internet users observe criticism and anonymity more online than in their offline lives, but they also witness more support of one another.**

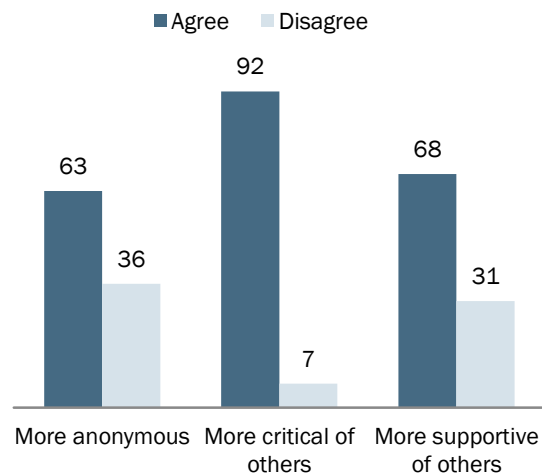
As a rule, people think the online environment is more enabling of anonymity and criticism when compared with the offline environment. Yet, they also think the online environment is more inviting of social support for users, compared with the offline world.

Specifically, respondents were asked to think of their online experiences compared with their offline experiences and whether the online environment allows people to be more anonymous. Some 63% agreed that the online environment was more enabling of anonymity than the offline environment, while 36% did not agree.

Respondents were then asked if the online environment allows people to be more critical of others, compared with their offline experiences. Fully 92% agreed that the online environment was more enabling of criticism,

#### Mixed feelings toward online environment

*When asked to think of their online experiences vs. offline experiences, the % of internet users who agreed or disagreed that the online environment allows people to be ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,849.

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while only 7% did not agree.

Finally, respondents were asked if the online environment allows people to be more supportive of others compared with their offline experiences. Some 68% said the online environment was more enabling of social support while 31% did not agree.

### **Open-end responses: Anonymity and criticism**

***In open-end responses detailing their experiences with online harassment, a recurring theme emerged about how respondents feel anonymity online allows people chances to be cruel.***

“Towards hiding beyond a keyboard and the anonymity the internet provides were verbally abusive.”

“A disagreement in a chat...people are 10 feet tall and bullet proof behind a screen.”

“In college some girls I didn’t get along with created fake email accounts and sent me nasty, harassing emails and instant messages, and also posted harassing anonymous comments on my blog.”

“People who disagree acting out in ways that would never be acceptable when dealing with someone in person.”

*On the issue of criticism, a number of the open-end responses highlighted how “people are just mean online sometimes.”*

“People just like drama and online is the easiest place for it.”

“Just offensive name calling which most of the time I ignore and move on.”

“Just someone being rude.”

“Guy just being nasty.”

“The way they talk very rude they don’t care if they hurt others feelings.”

## Friendliness Toward Men and Women on Different Digital Platforms

**Most online environments are seen as equally welcoming toward men and women; the exception is online gaming.**

When internet users were asked for their general impressions of how friendly various online platforms were to men and women, most perceived them to be equally welcoming to both genders.

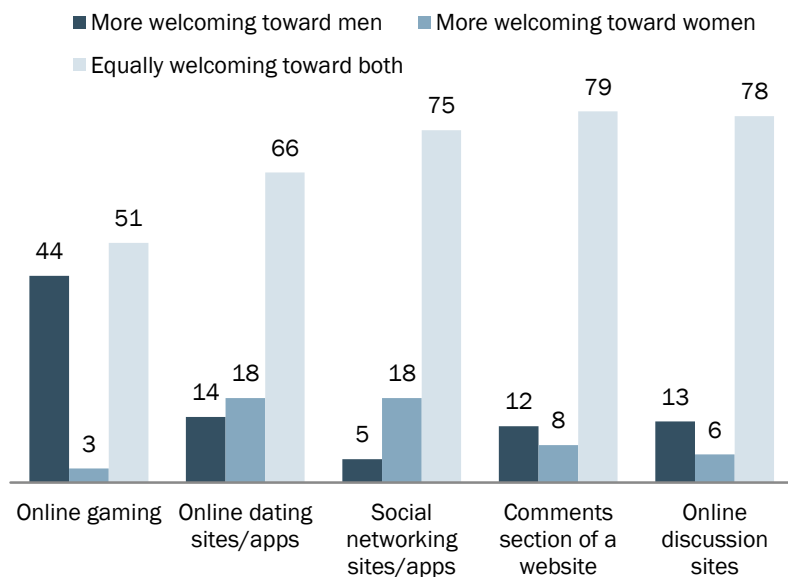
Respondents were asked about online gaming, online dating sites and apps, social media sites and apps, the comments sections of websites, and online discussion sites like reddit. They indicated if they thought each was more welcoming toward men, more welcoming toward women, or equally welcoming toward both.

By far the starkest results were for online gaming. Fully 44% of internet users believe online gaming is more welcoming to men, while just 3% believe it is more welcoming toward women. Half believe it is equally welcoming to men and women, a proportion much lower than any of the other environments. While most online women believed online gaming was equally welcoming to both genders (55%), a substantial minority believed it was more welcoming to men (40%). Men were more likely than women to think online gaming was more welcoming to men, 49% vs. 40%.

Fully 75% of internet users think social networking sites and apps are equally welcoming to both genders. This compares with 18% who thought they were more welcoming to women and 5% who said they were more welcoming to men.

### How welcoming are online “neighborhoods” to men and women?

*Among all internet users, the % who thought the following environments online were more welcoming to men, more welcoming to women, or equally welcoming to both ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,849.

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Much like social media, online dating sites and apps were seen as equally welcoming to both sexes overall, with a minority finding the platform more welcoming to women. Some 66% of internet users found online dating equally welcoming to men and women, while 18% thought it was more welcoming to women. Online dating, however, was seen as more welcoming to men than social media. Some 14% of internet users responded online dating sites were more welcoming to men.

Almost four-in-five internet users felt that discussion sites like reddit and the comments section of a website were equally welcoming to both sexes (78% and 79%, respectively). A minority felt these environments were more welcoming toward men than women, 13% and 12%, specifically.

Across all the neighborhoods, those under 50, particularly those 18-29, were more likely to see differences towards men and women in the atmospheres on these platforms.

## Harassment in Different Online “Neighborhoods”

### **Social media sites are the most common place people experience harassment online.**

Different online platforms have various user bases, reputations, and customs. The prevalence of online harassment in these online “neighborhoods” varies significantly. The 40% of internet users who had ever been the target of online harassment were asked to think about their most recent experience and indicate where that experience happened (totals add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses):

- 66% of internet users who have experienced online harassment said their most recent incident occurred on a social networking site or app
- 22% named the comments section of a website
- 16% named online gaming
- 16% said it occurred via a personal email account
- 10% said it was on a discussion site such as reddit
- 6% said it happened on an online dating website or app

Social networking sites and apps are a particularly popular online platform. Their popularity with younger internet users is especially tied to the high incidence of online harassment on social media sites and apps.

Fully 72% of those under age 50 who have experienced online harassment said that their most recent experience occurred on social media (including 74% of those 18-29 and 70% of those 30-49). This is a statistically significant difference compared with those over age 50, 44% of whom cited social media as the location of their most recent experience with online harassment.



### Open-end responses: Social media

***When asked to elaborate on their most recent experience with online harassment in their own words, respondents often described events on social networking sites.***

“I was harassed and threatened through messages and comments on my Facebook page.”

“I had someone use Facebook to try to spread nasty rumors about me.”

“Someone was not happy with something I posted on my Facebook, and tried to get me to remove it and when I would not they got angry and called me dirty names.”

“An old ‘friend’ of mine found me on FB and used inappropriate language to describe me and another old friend of mine. I asked him to stop but he didn’t, I had to block him so he would stop disturbing me.”

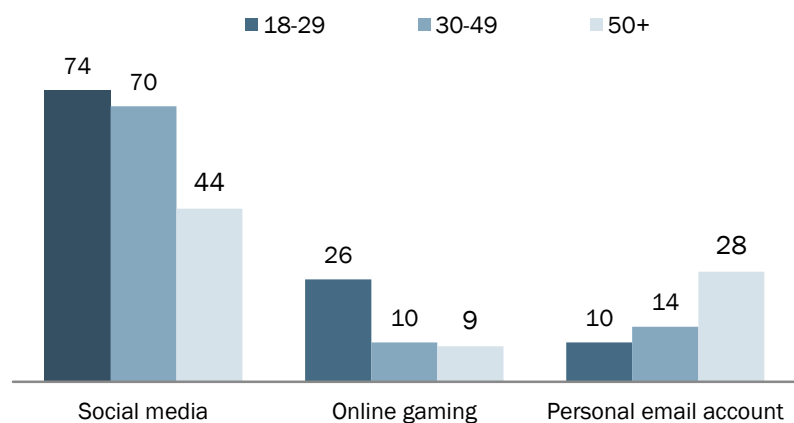
“A person didn’t like a comment I made on a post and threatened me and called me names.”

“Someone called me a bad name over social media.”

Those ages 50 and older who have experienced online harassment were particularly likely to say their most recent incident occurred via a personal email account. Some 28% of those 50 and older said so, compared with 12% of those under 50.

### Younger adults more likely to be harassed on social media and online gaming, older adults by email

*Among those who have experienced harassment online, the % who said their most recent experience occurred in the following places, by age ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=932.

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On the opposite end of the age spectrum, young adults who have been harassed were particularly likely to cite online gaming as the scene of their most recent harassment experience. Some 26% of those ages 18-29 who have experienced online harassment (and 31% of those 18-24) said that their most recent experience occurred within an online gaming environment. This is largely driven by the experience of young men—fully 34% of men ages 18-29 who have encountered online harassment noted that their most recent experience took place within online gaming, the highest of any age and gender combination.

Women were particularly likely to cite social networking sites and apps as the scene of their most recent incident with online harassment. Fully 73% of women who have experienced online harassment said their most recent incident occurred on social networking sites or apps, compared with 59% of men. Men were more likely to cite the comments section of a website as the site of their most recent harassment – 21% of harassed men vs. 11% of harassed women.

### Open-end responses: Online gaming

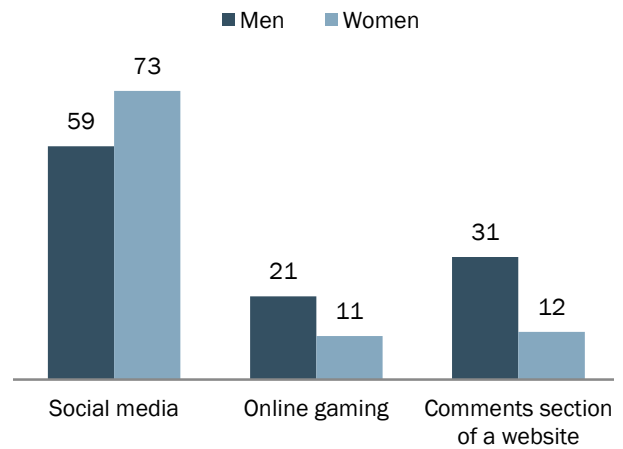
***In the open-ended comments from respondents, experiences with harassment and online gaming mostly came down to “sore losers” and name-calling. Many respondents easily brushed off the negativity.***

“Someone was a sore loser in an online game and hurled threats and insults.”

“Nothing bad just someone didn’t like how I was playing a game. The good thing is, on the computer, you can just leave!”

### Women more likely to be harassed on social media, men during online gaming and in comments sections

*Among those who have experienced harassment online, the % who say their most recent experience occurred in the following places, by gender...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=932.

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“When someone is losing a game, the opponent will abruptly leave but not without calling me or others a vulgar name or comment.”

“A standard bully-type came into a video game broadcast that a friend of mine and I run and made offensive comments at the two of us, mostly referring to our breasts.”

“This happens too regularly in online games to remember a specific occurrence.”

## Who Are Online Harassers?

### **Half of those who have been harassed do not know the person involved in their most recent incident.**

In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of *where* harassment is occurring online, this survey also sought to gain insight into *who* is responsible for these experiences.

Respondents were again asked to think about their most recent experience with online harassment and indicate who was involved (respondents were allowed to select more than one answer). A plurality (38%) said that the source of their harassment was a stranger, and another 26% said that they didn't know the real identity of the person or people involved. Taken together, half of those who have experienced some type of harassment do not know the person or people involved in their most recent experience.<sup>4</sup>

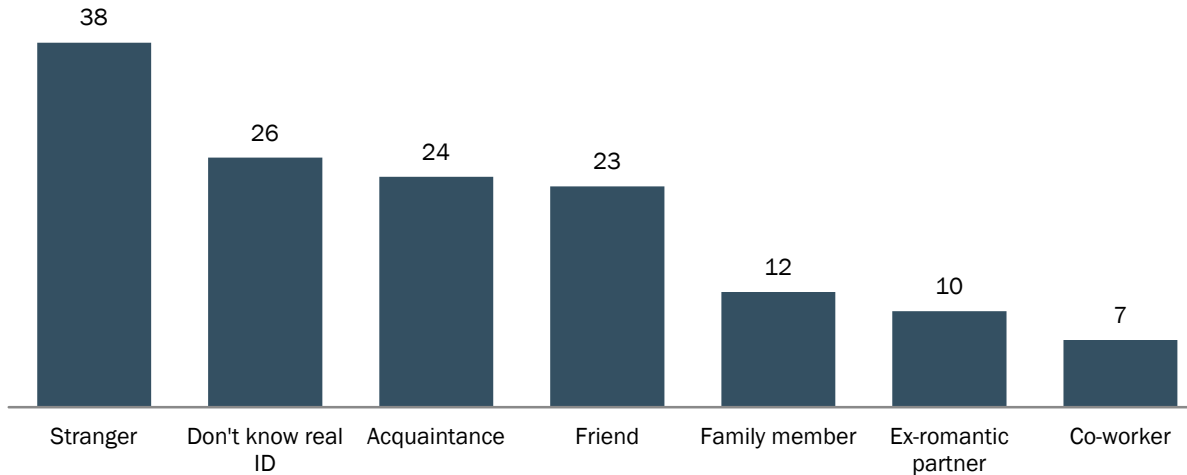
Among known perpetrators, acquaintances and friends were the most common types. Almost a quarter, 24%, of those who have experienced harassment said their most recent incident involved an acquaintance. Another 23% said it involved a friend. Family members were less frequently cited, at 12%. Previous romantic partners were named by 10% of those who have been harassed, and co-workers were identified by 7%.

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<sup>4</sup> Respondents were allowed to select more than one response option.

## Most internet users do not know who is responsible for their online harassment

Among those who have experienced harassment online, the % who said their most recent experience involved the following types of people ...



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=931.

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Men who have experienced harassment were more likely than women to say their most recent incident involved a stranger, 44% vs. 32%. Similarly, 33% of men said they didn't know the identity of the person involved, compared with 20% of women. This may be tied to the nature of the environments in which men report experiencing online harassment. Both gaming and the comments section of a website are places where identifying yourself is not a requirement for participation. In other words, both environments largely operate on anonymity.

Some 27% of women who have experienced online harassment said their most recent incident involved an acquaintance, somewhat higher than the 20% of men who said the same. Women were also more likely to say a family member was involved, 16% vs. 8% of men. Again, this may reflect the environments in which women are most likely to experience harassment: Social media activity is built around strong ties (family) and loose ties (acquaintances), and some platforms require people to participate with their real name.

Young people, those ages 18-29, who have experienced online harassment were more likely than any other age group to say their most recent incident involved a friend. Almost three-in-ten, 29%,

said so. This is unsurprising considering how much of young people’s social lives plays out online. They were also more likely than those 50 or older to cite an acquaintance, 29% vs. 17%.

### **Open-end responses: Who are harassers?**

***In comments where the person responsible was discussed, “family drama” was frequently noted.***

“A family member unhappy with my decisions is threatening my family.”

“Adult son making rude comments because he feels he is being treated unfairly. Jealously, senseless!”

“It was a situation between my sister and I...we had a verbal altercation because of decisions she made and she took to Facebook to call me all kinds of names.”

“The family of my late husband posted things to me – hurtful things. Eventually they stopped when I ignored them and blocked them.”

***Ex-romantic partners were also a recurring issue.***

“I was being stalked by an ex and had to report it to the police.”

“Internet stalking (checking up on me) that led to staking in real life by an ex.”

“An Ex-gf who was really upset with our break-up chose to post offensive things about me online in a number of places.”

“I have been experiencing frustration with a former girlfriend of my boyfriend’s stalking me. She has been able to locate where I work, my email address, personal cell phone number. She sends text messages on a weekly basis and threatens me.”

“I had a former partner continually trying to contact me after I broke things off. When he couldn’t reach me, he started having friends message. Eventually I changed my information and converted all my posts to private.”

“Husband’s ex-wife stalked and stole my identity.”

## Part 3: Responses to Online Harassment

People who experience online harassment employ a variety of tactics in response. Some simply ignore the behavior. Others respond directly on the platform, or notify website administrators. Some employ offline methods and involve law enforcement. Whichever option is chosen, the large majority of people are satisfied with the outcome.

When asked to think of their most recent incident, 60% of those who have experienced online harassment said that they elected to ignore the behavior. When asked if they felt ignoring it was effective at making the situation better, 83% answered affirmatively and 17% were not satisfied.

### Open-end responses: Ignoring harassment

*A portion of respondents in the open-end comments brushed off online harassment as “nothing too major” and often chose to ignore it.*

“I just didn’t let it bother me.”

“Nah, I do not generally care about what people say online, as it has nothing to do with real life.”

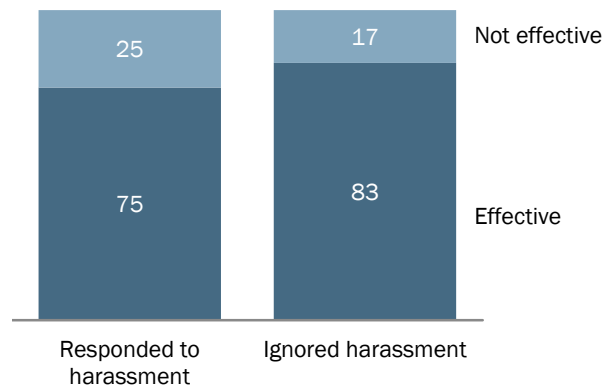
“Just laugh at them and call them ‘MORONS’.....”

“Too much to relate really: It is a general characteristic of the medium and environs – hence I visit sparingly and do not comment or interact online if I can help it. It feels like bottom-feeders are the norm online, in my experience.”

“Same person kept harassing me on a Facebook group for an extended period of time. Threatening me, calling me names, etc...But I know the person is just some random “troll” (you need to know

### Ignoring vs. responding to harassment

*60% of those who have experienced harassment ignored their most recent incident while 40% responded to it. Among those who either ignored or responded to their most recent experience with online harassment, the % who felt it was effective vs. not effective ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n= 549 for those who ignored harassment; n= 368 for those who responded to harassment.

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what that means on the internet) and I didn't take it seriously. Online harassment does not faze me. People should learn not to get offended by silly things.”

## Response Steps

### **Actions in response to online harassment ranged from direct confrontation online to involving law enforcement.**

Some 40% of those who have experienced online harassment took some sort of action in response to their most recent incident, ranging from direct confrontation to engagement with law enforcement.

When asked if they felt that any of the steps they took were effective at making their most recent situation better, three-quarters of those who responded to online harassment said they did. A quarter were still not satisfied.

Overall:

- 47% of those who responded to their most recent incident with online harassment confronted the person online responsible for the harassment
- 44% unfriended or blocked the person responsible
- 22% reported the person responsible to the website or online service
- 18% discussed the problem online to draw support for themselves
- 13% changed their username or deleted their profile
- 10% withdrew from an online forum
- 8% stopped attending certain offline events or places
- 5% reported the problem to law enforcement

There were few demographic differences between those who took various steps in response to their online harassment, with two key exceptions: women and those under 50 who responded to their harassment were more likely than their counterparts to unfriend or block the perpetrator. Some 55% of women did so, compared with 34% of men and 49% of those under 50 unfriended or blocked someone, compared with 27% of those over 50.

For some, responding to harassment is a relatively straightforward affair. Forty-nine percent of those who responded to their recent harassment incident took a single step. But others engaged in a more multi-faceted response, as 48% took multiple actions in response to their most recent experience. Indeed, some 8% of online harassment victims report taking four or more of these specific actions.

As noted in Part 1, online harassment exists along a spectrum of severity. Of those who have been harassed online, some 45% have experienced especially severe forms of harassment (these include physical threats, sexual harassment, stalking, or harassment over a sustained period of time). They tend to have a much different response to their most recent harassment incident compared with the 55% of harassment victims who have *only* experienced less severe versions of these behaviors (i.e., name-calling and embarrassment).

Specifically, past victims of more severe forms of harassment were more likely to respond to their most recent incident<sup>5</sup> by unfriending or blocking the person responsible (62% vs. 27%), confronting the person responsible online (53% vs. 41%), reporting the person responsible to the website or online service (34% vs. 11%), changing their username or deleting their profile (21% vs. 4%), or ending their attendance at certain offline events or places (12% vs. 3%). They were also more likely to take multiple actions in response to their most recent incident (67% vs. 30%).

#### **Open-end responses: Response steps**

***Besides the response steps listed, a number of respondents in the comments reported that they confronted the person face-to-face. Others brought the problem to the attention of other authority figures, like lawyers or managers at work.***

“Confronted the person face-to-face.”

“Called the person.”

“Talked out the problem.”

Confronted the person offline politely.”

“Secured a lawyer.”

“Got a lawyer.”

“Reported it to a supervisor at work.”

“Confronted at work and eventually terminated.”

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<sup>5</sup> Note that in our survey, we asked what type(s) of harassment people have experienced in the past, and how they responded to their *most recent* incident of harassment. However, we did not specifically ask what *type* of harassment people experienced most recently.



## Part 4: The Aftermath of Online Harassment

For those who have experienced online harassment, the fallout can range from insignificant to an ongoing trauma. This survey examined not only the immediate after-effects of harassment, but also the possibility that these effects linger.

Asked how upsetting they found their most recent experience with harassment, the responses were varied:

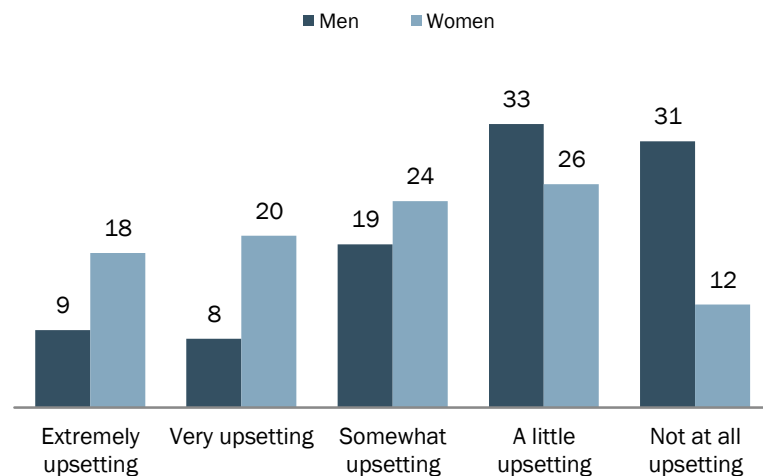
- 14% of those who have experienced online harassment found their most recent incident extremely upsetting
- 14% found it very upsetting
- 21% found it somewhat upsetting
- 30% found it a little upsetting
- 22% found it not at all upsetting

Taken together, half found their experience with online harassment a little or not at all upsetting. But a significant minority, 27%, found the experience extremely or very upsetting.

Women who have been harassed online were more than twice as likely as men to find their most recent experience with online harassment “extremely” or “very” upsetting -- 38% of harassed women say that their most recent experience falls into this category, compared with 17% of harassed men. On the other hand, 31% of men said that their most recent experience with harassment was “not at all” upsetting, compared with just 12% of women.

### Women more likely to be upset by online harassment

*Among those who have experienced online harassment, the % who found their most recent experience upsetting in the following degrees, by gender...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4), Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=932.

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As was the case with their responses to incidents of harassment online, people who have experienced more severe forms of harassment in the past are particularly likely to indicate that their most recent experience had a pronounced negative impact. (Again, we do not know precisely what type of behavior provoked this emotional response in their most recent exposure to harassment online.) Some 37% of those who have experienced severe forms of harassment in the past (such as physical threats, stalking, and sustained or sexual harassment) found their most recent experience with online harassment “very” or “extremely” upsetting.

To be sure, many people who are exposed to “less severe” forms of harassment like name-calling or embarrassment report a strong emotional impact, although this effect tends to be more muted. Among those who have *only* experienced these more moderate forms of harassment (but not the more severe versions noted above), 19% indicate that their most recent interaction was “very” or “extremely” upsetting to them.

When gender and severe harassment combine, the results are especially stark. Although men and women are equally likely overall to have experienced “severe” harassment in the past (i.e., sexual harassment, stalking, physical threats, harassment over a sustained period of time), they differ in how upset their most recent experience with online harassment made them.

Some 51% of women who have ever experienced severe harassment online found their most recent incident “extremely” or “very” upsetting. (Again, we do not know the particular circumstances of respondents’ most recent incident.) This is a significant difference compared with the 23% of men with severe experiences who similarly felt “extremely” or “very” upset about their most recent incident. It is also significant to the 27% of women and 13% of men who have *only* experienced name-calling and embarrassment but were still “extremely” or “very” about their most recent encounter. That is to say, women with severe harassment experiences are set apart in their reactions to their most recent harassment.

The opposite trend is also true. Men who have *only* experienced “less severe” types of harassment are particularly likely to find their most recent incident with harassment “a little” or “not at all” upsetting. Fully 69% said so, compared with 49% of their female counterparts. When compared with those with “severe” past experiences, 57% of men and 26% of women found their most recent incident “a little” or “not at all” upsetting.

Those who have experienced online harassment were asked when their most recent incident occurred. Some 8% said it was still occurring now, 39% said it happened within the past year, and 53% said it occurred more than a year ago.

### Open-end responses: Severe harassment

***The open-end responses describing more severe types of harassment like sexual harassment, stalking, and physical threats included especially graphic descriptions and strong sentiments. Responses often mentioned the great lengths people went through to end the harassment, and identified the gender of the respondent. These trends were atypical of less severe harassment stories.***

“Had to change my profile and my name on it to hide because of the bullying. Always being attacked online, called names, told I should be dead, why don’t I just die, I don’t deserve to breathe, I take up too much space. I had guys send me pics of their penis telling me I was a no good w\*\*\*e and that that is what I deserve and they are going to stick it to me. The police wouldn’t help they just laughed and told me to take him up on it.”

“I was told that someone should rape me which was horrific since it’s one of the things I fear most.”

“Online commenters told me I was ‘asking to be raped,’ that maybe I made all of this up, and that my parents were to blame because they raised a r\*\*\*\*\*.”

“I was on a website and stated my opinion in a discussion. I was sexually harassed and physically threatened.”

“Wymen don’t internet. Show me ur b\*\*bz 4 proof”

“A man I went to high school with was sending me inappropriate photos and comments of a sexual nature.”

“I was threatened and told that if I stopped communicating with this man he would find me and rape me.”

“Dating site guys would ask for vulgar pleasures. When turned down I was called offensive names.”

“Men on online dating sites can become belligerent when they feel rejected.”

“If I post something and they know I’m a woman, people automatically think I’m flighty or slutty.”

“Being sexually harassed, unfortunately, seems like it is just part of being a female. I do not think I have had an entire day without at least one comment/gesture (in person or online) that could be

called sexual harassment. I have had people attempt to embarrass me...but I do not embarrass easily.”

“An unknown person used the search function to find me on every social media site, proceeding to harass me continually...until I called the police, after which he disappeared.”

“A person who was rejected personally followed me online and off, contacted people I knew, and let me know he knew what I was doing, where I was going and with whom I was associating. I let him know, in the strongest terms, to cut it out. But Neanderthal being Neanderthal, he really didn’t fully stop until another male came into the picture and THEN this ‘person’ backed off. Because male territory he understands. Disgusting.”

“I had a former partner continually trying to contact me after I broke things off. When he couldn’t reach me, he started having friends message me. Eventually I changed my information and converted all my posts to private.”

“Someone I know kept on saying they wanted to fight me and sending me messages until I blocked them it didn’t stop.”

“I had a woman stalk me, which began online and continued in the real world, ending in the courtroom.”

“Threatening to harm my pets and myself and my personal property. Cops were no help!”

“Guy said he was going to ‘slap me silly’.”

“I am a woman who identifies as a feminist. Whenever I try to educate about my beliefs others attack me. Sexual harassment is something that happens on a regular basis.”

## Reputation and Online Harassment

### **A share of the victims feels some longer-term damage from their experiences.**

Online harassment can have long-term effects. In a time when everyone from future employers to future romantic partners can potentially find personal information on others with a simple Google search, online harassment can cast a long shadow.

The majority, 85%, of internet users who have been the target of online harassment have not had an experience that hurt their reputation. Another 15%, however, do feel that their reputation was damaged by their experience with online harassment.

Again, there were differences based on the severity of online harassment that occurred. Those who experienced certain types of severe harassment—namely, physical threats and sustained harassment – were more likely to feel their reputation had been hurt. Some 34% of those who have experienced sustained harassment and 31% of those who have been physically threatened said their reputation had been hurt. Conversely, those who experienced more benign types of harassment like name-calling and embarrassment were more likely to feel their reputation had not been damaged—82% and 80%, respectively.

Those who found their most recent experience with online harassment “extremely” or “very” upsetting were more likely than those who found it “a little” or “not at all” upsetting to say they have had an experience with online harassment that hurt their reputation. A quarter, 26%, of those who found it extremely or very upsetting said their reputation has been hurt by online harassment, compared with just 10% of those who only found their harassment a little or not at all upsetting.

#### **Open-end responses: Professional settings**

***In the open-end responses, many comments about reputation were work-related or criticized professional abilities.***

“I met a guy in a work environment, and he called me after a work event. I then got harassing phone calls from a woman telling me to leave him alone, and she even stalked me on Facebook. It was horrifying. A police officer friend of mine contacted her and him for me; clearly a dispute on their end, but it was terrifying. I was worried about my work reputation as well as my personal reputation.”

“Attacks through mass emails and comments on blogs on my personal and professional character, leading to extended professional review when applying for jobs. Ultimately unfounded/libelous criticisms that delayed employment opportunities.”

“A slight mistake in a message was twisted and re-sent out to my organization.”

“Over a period of years, there is a person who posts angry messages about my business and who tries to contact me. I therefore quit Facebook and Social Media for the last few years.”

“Someone made a public post on Facebook criticizing my job performance.”

“I was a guest on a Facebook page for union employees. One employee did not want me on page (I was in management), continued to make snide remarks until I removed myself from the page (in an effort not to detract from the group).”

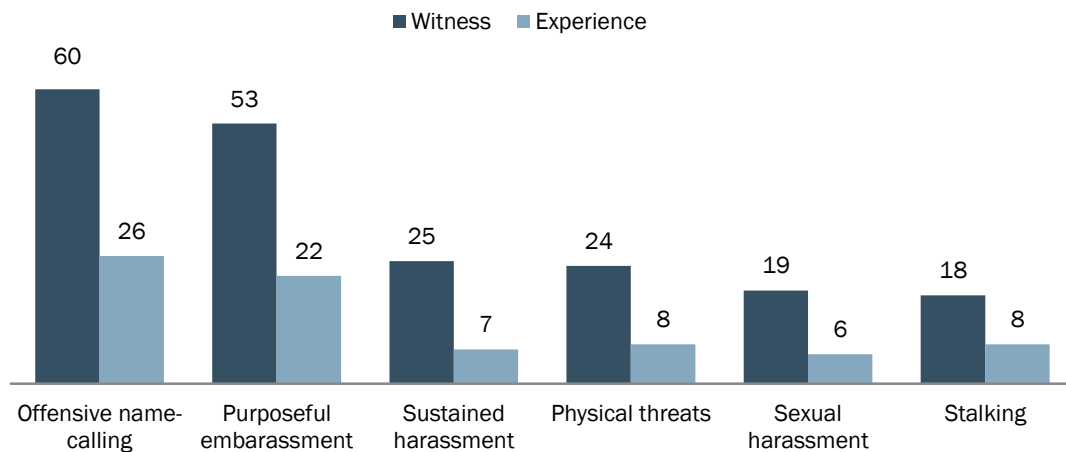
## Part 5: Witnessing Harassment Online

Nearly three quarters of internet users—73%—have witnessed online harassment. Offensive name-calling and purposeful embarrassment were the most common types of harassment people witnessed. Respondents were asked if they had witnessed the following types of harassment online:

- 60% of internet users said they had witnessed someone being called offensive names
- 53% said they witnessed efforts to purposefully embarrass someone
- 25% said they witnessed someone being harassed for a sustained period of time
- 24% said they witnessed someone being physically threatened
- 19% said they witnessed someone being sexually harassed
- 18% said they witnessed someone being stalked

### More internet users witness harassment online than experience it

*Among all internet users, the % who have witnessed vs. experienced the following elements of online harassment ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,839 for personally experience; n=2,841 for witness.

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## Demographics of Witnessing Online Harassment

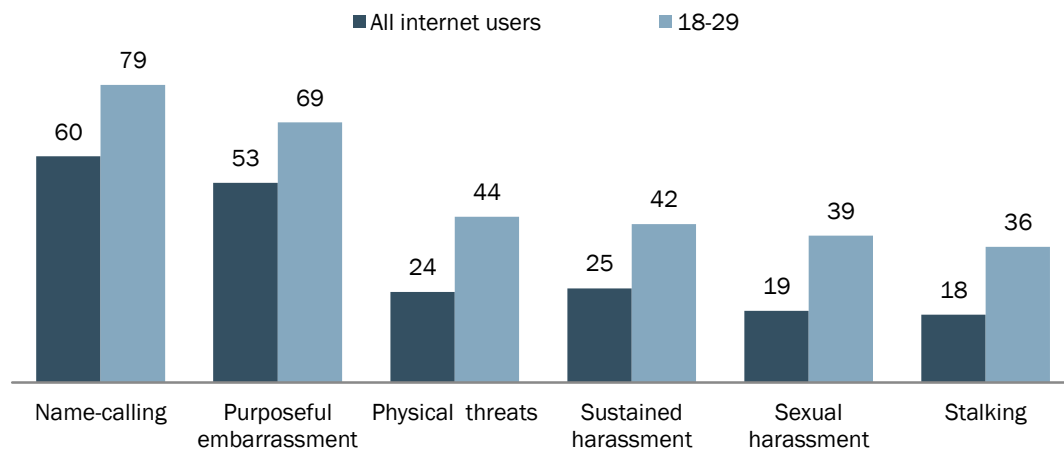
### Young people are the most likely demographic group to witness online harassment.

Young people, those ages 18-29, are the most likely of any demographic group to witness harassment online, both in general and across each specific element. Fully 92% have witnessed some kind of harassment online.

Young people are most likely to observe name-calling and efforts to embarrass someone, but their experience stands out when considering more severe types of online harassment. Young people observe physical threats, sexual harassment, stalking, and harassment over a sustained period of time at almost double the rate of the general internet-using population. Those 30-49 observe these types of harassment at similar rates to the general internet-using population, while those over 50 observe them at significantly reduced rates. Much like experiencing harassment, young people are particularly exposed to witnessing online harassment.

### Young people are particularly likely to witness all types of online harassment

*Among all internet users, the % who witness the following types of harassment, by age ...*



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. n=2,841.

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Hispanics and African-Americans are more likely than whites to witness harassment. Fully 88% of Hispanics, 84% of African-Americans, and 69% of whites have witnessed at least one kind of online harassment. Across the six individual elements, Hispanics are more likely than whites to witness each one. Along with Hispanics, African-Americans are also more likely than whites to witness physical threats, purposeful embarrassment, and stalking online.



Those who have witnessed online harassment were also likely to be the target of it. Over half of internet users, 53%, who have witnessed the harassment of others online were the target of online harassment themselves. They were more than ten times as likely as internet users who have not witnessed online harassment to experience it by a margin of 53% to 5%.

### **Open-end responses: Witnessing harassment**

***Respondents were asked to give their own description of the most recent incident of online harassment they witnessed. The themes and frustrations described were similar to the stories documented throughout this report of those who experienced harassment.***

***Many respondents noted anonymity was behind much of the harassment they witnessed and gave people license to behave badly.***

“Some people lose all sense of decency when they think actions on the internet are anonymous.”

“Behavior and language that would never be done in person.”

“Commenters on message boards say all kinds of horrible things to people unthinkingly. There is so much security in the idea of anonymity so people are much more forward with the things that they say because there isn't as much chance of them actually being confronted about what they have said or done.”

“Comments sections of websites can be a racial and/or misogynistic free for all. People hide behind their anonymity to say the most foul, racist and sexist things. They say things that they would never say face to face. In the past I have called some of these people out, and lectured them on their behavior. However, you can't always rationalize with a sick or stupid mind.”

“People lose their moral compass online. You can be as cruel as you want behind a screen because no one is immediately responding and you don't have to face what you say/do.”

“A lot of these things happen anonymously. They become less frequent when a person's identity is known, but is still seen.”

“Mostly anonymous online forum attacks of a silly nature, nothing of great import.”

“Twitter, Facebook, and email, all allow anonymous people to write the most hateful harmful things about and to people. It should not be anonymous anymore. People should be allowed to say what they want, but the recipient should know who the author of the comments is. Too many

people get online and feel empowered to reach out and strike at strangers with a vengeance because nobody knows who they are. Five years from now we'll wonder why we let people get away with this so long. It will be changed.”

“Anonymous people calling other people names and questioning their character.”

“I have seen people being called racist things like the n-word or s\*\*t or gay slurs. I have seen other people being called dumb or stupid. Mostly on tumblr. They use the anonymous setting and just rip people apart.”

“It is far too easy for a person to stalk , harass, and threaten another online and remain completely anonymous.”

“Social networking allowing someone to be anonymous, thus allowing them to say anything about multiple people.”

“Facebook, and Twitter usually...people using anonymity to verbally attack people or embarrass them with their beliefs.”

“I've seen people belittle people they don't even know. The anonymity of the internet allows people to be ruder than they would be in real life.”

“Much like anyone else. Folks are attacked online for simple comments or their beliefs. The assumed/presumed anonymity of the internet makes for a lot of tough guys and bullies.”

“People regularly insult others on the internet far more freely than in personal situations because of the anonymity involved. People wouldn't regularly insult others for such minor things, but on the internet there are seldom consequences, and people take advantage of this.”

“People say things they wouldn't normally say face to face.”

***Most people said they witnessed general cruelty or meanness online. Name-calling, insults, and an inability to respect differences in opinion were common complaints. Some expressed a certain amount of apathy that meanness is just the nature of life online.***

“Angry people haranguing over a delicate situation and trying to bully their views into fact. Offensive language was the main propellant in the conversation and loud voices.”

“Someone being ridiculed on a forum for their beliefs and opinions. The use of profanity and physical violence, although the offender probably never intended to act on it. Cowards tend to have a lot of courage sitting behind their computers.”

“Attack with regard to another's point of view and sometimes go the point of name calling.....or worse.”

“Comments in posts are often offensive, vulgar and mean spirited towards the writer or other commenters.”

“Foolish ridicule, not letting people have their own thoughts, not being able to disagree and let be, having to have last word, we need to let other opinions count as much as our own.”

“Friends, or friends of friends, being d\*\*ks stashed away at their home with no one around, completely comfortable saying whatever comes to mind without thinking first.”

“General bullying and comments intended to humiliate or cause stress to someone, usually on Facebook.”

“I come across comments often on Facebook of people that take offense of another person’s opinion. These comments can often lead to more comments from many people and include all types of remarks (funny/dirty/nasty/etc).”

“I have seen someone spreading untruths about another person to others on social sites. Telling lies and trying to get others to believe it and to tell others as well. Very disturbing to see that especially when you know the person they are referring to and you know that it is untrue.”

“In comments on a Facebook post, many times people will harshly and indecently harass other people leaving comments. They call them terrible names, use terrible language, say ugly things about them although they do not know them, and will argue for a long time.”

“In general, whether anonymity is a factor or not, people feel entitled to be brutal in their conduct with people they don't know.”

“Just reading what the person puts online turns my stomach.”

“Someone calling someone names.”

“The ‘comments’ require no Mensa Membership so they can and have devolved into name calling.”

“People in online forums can just be mean. I have seen all types of inappropriate comments that people make to harass, demean and belittle others. I don't understand why people are so disrespectful and uncaring and just plain mean.”

“People just say names, ask for nudes, and tell people they suck at life.”

“People say very mean things on the internet with no fear of repercussions, racial slurs get thrown around, often for nearly no reason at all.”

“People talking s\*\*t about others publicly rather than one-on-one.”

“People think they can get away with anything online so they treat people however they want.”

“People think they can say or do whatever they want online because they don't have the personal interaction or accountability to others.”

“It's all over the internet. How can you not see it?”

“It's the Internet. It's pretty much everywhere. There's a lot of crap online, but you gotta take the bad with the good, and I accept it for what it is.”

“Haters gonna hate. It's constant.”

***Many people observe harassment online surrounding political or religious differences or public figures.***

“Deliberate meanness aimed at political figures.”

“I argue politics and see discussions of the same. They get pretty ignorant. Racism, discrimination, generalization, you name it I've seen it. I'm surrounded by unaccountable ignorant a\*\*holes.”

“I have observed condescending and antagonistic remarks about people in an online discussion group about local politics and social issues.”

“I have observed social networking used to vilify different people for their religious and/or political beliefs. This is especially true of current political leaders.”

“In blogs mainly discussing politics where people lash out at each other because they are so unhappy with themselves or wish to feel more superior to others in their point of view.”

“In reading blogs: 1. People call those with different political and/or religious views very insulting names and insult their intelligence. 2. Many cannot and do not stick to the issues because they think the more improperly emotional they get...the better they will make their point. WRONG...THEY just belittle themselves.”

“On Facebook a friend continually derided one political party and their candidates in such a mean spirited way that I dropped the person as a friend.”

“Rude put-downs relating to disagreements on politics or religion.”

“Someone being persecuted for their faith and adherence to its tenets.”

“I got off of Facebook because of religious nuts who force their opinions on everyone.”

“I often see a lot of hatred and name calling at the President.”

“Came across several liberal/progressive trolls that verbally threaten and harass online participants in order to break up the conversation and to be of general annoyance.”

“General name calling during heated political or social discussions. The raunchy and generally lewd commentary comes from supporters of a left leaning slant, usually. When they have lost the debate and are relegated to character assassination as an offensive (no pun intended) weapon.”

“General site trolling where people, usually right-wing extremists, call anyone who disagrees with their little worldview nasty names and occasionally, especially if the target of their trolling is female, it descends into sexual harassment.”

“Liberal left inclined trolls, calling people stupid, threatening death, saying sexually offensive things.”

“Mostly gun rights nuts responding to calls for sensible gun legislation.”

***Comment sections on websites were also noted for hosting antagonistic conversations between contributors. These were often news sites.***

“Comments pages where people can remain anonymous, particularly on news websites.”

“Comments section of news stories are full of personal insults and name calling.”

“Comments sections of news articles often contain some very racist, homophobic, sexist language.”

“Five minutes in the comments sections of any websites.”

“I see this type of thing all the time in the comment sections on articles. I don't know if the harassing comments are being read by the people they are directed at but there are always lewd comments being tossed around.”

“In the comment sections of news articles there are frequently those who resort to name calling when someone states an opinion that differs from their own.”

“It frequently happens in the comments section of just about everything--news sites, YouTube videos...anytime there's a chance to voice opinions, people will take it too far and make personal attacks.”

“Offensive or insensitive or ignorant comments in response to published articles or columns relating to politics, economics, and culture.”

“Comments regarding an article or video that have been demeaning and abusive - either related to the video itself or lashing out at others who are commenting with different opinions.”

“A hate filled response to a written article. There was no dispute of the facts, just verbal abuse/dogma.”

***Other spaces online where harassment was frequently witnessed included social media sites, blogs, video sites, and discussion boards.***

“Almost all of it has occurred on either YouTube comments or Facebook.”

“Blogs, especially political blogs have profanities and vulgarities unbelievable about 50% of the time.”

“Comments usually posted anonymously by people on large websites like YouTube.”

“Facebook.”

“Harassment in comments in Facebook, BuzzFeed, and YouTube.”

“Have seen this many times on Facebook and definitely on Twitter. With status updates and tweets it is easy to talk about others in a negative way.”

“Inappropriate anonymous comments on sites such as YouTube.”

“I’ve seen a site called 4chan. It’s pretty scary on there.”

“Mainly in comments sections of news articles and Craig’s List.”

“On Youtube and Reddit, rude or harassing behavior are common. This is especially true when it comes to comments and content related to controversial topics like politics, race relations, and religion, but occasionally this nastiness spills over into topics that are supposed to be more light-hearted like sports or pop culture.”

“People treating others with disrespect via social media.”

***Embarrassing photos and videos were often used as examples.***

“Compromising photos being posted to social media.”

“I cannot describe particulars. Generally posting a picture that shows someone in a compromised position even if it is fairly innocent. Just the intent is there to try and embarrass the person.”

“Offensive pictures (pornographic or violent), name calling.”

“Pictures being posted with teasing/unfriendly comments.”

“Pictures posted of embarrassing behavior.”

“Posting pictures of someone that are embarrassing and tagging that person.”

“Someone posted some explicit pictures and they were reported and the person who was reported got angry and called the other person a bored b\*\*\*h.”

***Many observed very personal attacks—“airing dirty laundry” of family drama.***

“A disagreement broke out when someone critically commented on hearsay of another person's activities. There was a good bit of name calling after the airing of their own family secrets and dirty laundry by the first victim. The exchange was destructive and sad.”

“A single mom making accusations that her son's father was not a good dad.”

“A woman being shamed by her husband’s family for allegedly having an affair.”

“An in-law posting about an incident in which she blamed her husband, an aunt posting about someone who wronged her family in some way.”

“Facebook posting about a marital affair.”

“I have seen family members embarrass and make fun of each other on social media to the point of siblings getting written out of my parent's will.”

“I have witnessed Facebook be used for family arguments and cause break ups between relationships. I have also witnessed racism and hatred.”

“I witnessed a mother being stalked by her baby daddy and calling her names.”

“It was families attacking one another while a divorce was going on... Also men and women creeping on their crushes.”

“Just started on Facebook and of the 5 friends I have 2 in particular think it is okay to embarrass their family members and be outright rude. I do not want to know that stuff and I really don't think others do either. Of course then, I am a lot older than 18 and 40.”

“People sharing embarrassing moments about themselves, their spouse, or their children.”

“Personal attacks that should not be made public about family members.”

“Witnessed a group being embarrassed by a family member of a recently deceased person for some in the group not ‘mourning enough.’”



***Others said the harassment they witnessed involved colleagues or other work-related situations.***

“Broadcast emails about a person's mistakes/errors in the office setting.”

“Comments directed toward a coworker not by name but in general.”

“I have seen a team member at work use his cell phone to post disparaging remarks about another team member and then comment openly about them.”

***Others witnessed sexual harassment and derogatory comments toward women.***

“A friend making inappropriate sexual comments toward women.”

“Anytime a person gets into an argument online these days you see threats, cursing, offensive language and other disturbing characteristics. Young women especially when posting pictures of themselves deal with sexist remarks about their bodies, the sad part is that some of them, though uncomfortable with how to respond, don't even really understand how disrespectful it is.”

“Everyday sexism and harassment of women.”

“Facebook friends bashing each other's name, creepy old guys frequently commenting on girls pictures etc.”

“Facebook, gives people the freedom to say and post almost anything they want too. On any given day you can see people getting called dirty names, or see girls intimate pictures posted on a guys' page because they broke up and he thinks that showing those pictures will make him feel better (or vice versa).”

“General name calling and bullying in gaming forums. Or when people think someone is female they will make sexual comments and continue on. Lots of comments are seen when girls post pictures on Facebook.”

“Guys and studs exposing naked pictures of females who sent them naked pictures.”

“I have been on a dating website where women of color are put down and talked about as if they were subhuman.”

“Keyboard bullies, calling women the ‘c’ name etc.....”

“Lots of misogyny, racism, sexism, gender policing, body shaming and anti-intellectualism.”

“Many things. It is the internet. I see people getting called all kinds of names and being put down for having any kind of opinion. It is also common for men to sexually harass women. For some reason they act like it's ok. I blame the porn and beauty industry for that one...”

“Misogynistic language and rape threats in comments sections of news articles on feminist topics.”

“Questionable comments and remarks of a sexual nature to girls’ selfies or profile photos on social networks.”

“Real life video posted of hooligans molesting women on the streets by lifting their skirts and exposing their bums.”

“Seen people purposely mock others’ comments. Seen men go after women who make comments that are feminist. I have felt fearful myself of commenting on certain posts because of the response I would get.”

“Strong younger women seem to get targeted. It looks pretty awful. Rape threats, death threats.”

***Physical threats and stalking were observed by some.***

“I have seen people in a group I was in get a death threat before. There is always that one crazy ‘hiding’ behind their computer!”

“People don't like what someone posted and people threatened them with bodily injury.”

“People threatening to do physical harm because they don't like what is being said, name calling.”

“Someone was physically threatened for posting a comment online.”

“A lot of taunting. No matter what he would make up a different name and go at her again. Constantly threatening her telling her where she was at all times and what she was doing and telling her what she was wearing. The police did nothing. There is no justice. That is a fairy tale.”

“Following people around social media sites and comment sections, leaving threatening and insulting comments for the purpose of harassment.”

“I saw a man like and comment on nearly all of my friend's old posts and pictures. He then began messaging her and showing up at places she had ‘checked-in’. I have also seen women arguing on social media websites and have seen individuals say bad things about someone who has passed away.”

“Mostly persons attempting to track someone down in ways that person did not give permission to do, such as personal email and the like.”

“Sustained bullying and harassment of online targets, including threats or detailed descriptions of violence they hope the target sustains, usually as a consequence of disagreement. Not just idle threats, but things like doxxing (outing someone's identity to the Internet mob), trying to get people fired/expelled, attacking someone through technological means, etc. I've seen it happen to people I know, but consider it so ubiquitous so even when I don't know someone under attack I assume such attacks are happening.”

***Online games and sports discussions were also noted as environments where name-calling and cruelty occurred. Sometimes it was considered just the nature of the game.***

“Chiding someone for their likes and dislikes in things such as sports, cars, athletes, colleges football teams things of that nature.”

“I have seen all that was mentioned [in the question prompt] plus more on any game site. Apparently, no one monitors the site. There is a place to complain but there are no changes. Thank-goodness there is a way to ‘ignore’ that person...and I have ‘ignored’ hundreds!”

“In games such as World of Warcraft some people rage and take it far too serious and do everything they can to humiliate someone.”

“Just the normal trash talk that goes down on Call of Duty.”

“Lots of comments on videogame streams are extremely graphic and violent in nature, though I sincerely doubt any of it is ever intended to actually be carried out and it's more a community norm to talk dirty and angry.”

“Message boards for sports teams can get threatening before moderators take them down, and even sexually threatening. I suspect it's because the poster is drunk.”

“Mostly just verbal harassment on Xbox Live.”

“People talking a bunch of s\*\*t to each other on online games like Call of Duty.”

“Playing competitive games on the internet with other people and they are just sore losers and cannot accept losing gracefully. They lose their temper and start calling other players names.”

“Right off the bat let me say I have never felt like any event like this ever had intent behind it. But this happens all the time in online multiplayer games I play. Offensive and harsh verbal treatment is commonplace there. There are so many examples but most are like this ‘F you’ or ‘STFU’ or ‘uninstall, you’re garbage.’”

“Sports blogs are notorious for online feuds between posters. There can be very nasty back and forth due to the ‘distance’ between posters. Would never happen face to face.”

***Some felt the name-calling and comments they witnessed online were meant as a joke.***

“Just friends playing jokes.”

“Just funny comments that may be a little hurtful anyway.”

“More of a joke than anything else, when someone gets a hold of a phone of another person with their Facebook and they post random funny things and sabotage their profile.”

“Mostly in a joking, playful manner.”

“Normally in jest, friends call each other obscenities.”

“Generally young people on Facebook trying to have fun.”

***Many were concerned for the teenagers they saw targeted online. This was especially true of parents and teachers.***

“I have teenagers and I have seen it all. Their friends committing suicide and etc due to the internet. My own children have experienced harassment and many times stayed up all night crying.”

“Teenagers at my daughter’s school wrote something online about a classmate.”

“Just name calling and insults from teenagers.”

“Mostly teenagers ranting.”

“Teenagers and older young adults being bullies.”

“I’ve seen teens harass the heck of out of each other online. Parents had to intervene.”

“Teenage kids from my child’s school.”

“I have two nieces. One is in her mid-20's and the other is in her late teens. They are very different in build, attitudes, musical tastes and just about everything else. The differences also include the ways they have each been harassed online while in Jr. High and in High School. Between them I have seen every type of harassment and stalking I checked off on the previous list [in the question prompt]. The stories are numerous and often gruesome. I will not go in to detail in order to protect them.”

“As a former teacher I have witnessed both teachers and students being harassed.”

“As a teacher, I have been privy to this sort of harassment taking place in my students' lives.”

“Student to student harassment on Facebook and a grandparent threatening a teacher on Facebook.”

“As a teacher, I have had bullies in my classroom who continuously enjoy bullying certain children.”

“During the weekends when students are out of school, a lot of name calling takes place online. Young people will come back to organized settings such as dance class, after-school activities, etc. mad at each other. The problem is often name calling online through Facebook, Twitter, etc.”

“Mostly things reported by students and brought in to school by parents complaining about bullying.”

“A student being teased and insulted on an ongoing basis by classmates.”

“A young high school student being called names and being bullied in social media.”

## Survey Questions

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### 2014 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL

WAVE 4 JUNE

TOPLINE

MAY 30-JUNE 30, 2014

TOTAL N=3,217

WEB RESPONDENTS N=2,849

MAIL RESPONDENTS N=368<sup>6</sup>

Margin of error for all internet users is +/- 2.4 percentage points.

Note: This report is based on questions that were only asked of web respondents.

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#### ASK ALL INTERNET USERS<sup>7</sup> [N=2,849]:

ON1. In general, how much information about you is publicly available online?

12	A lot of information about me
40	Some information about me
40	A small amount of information about me
7	No information at all about me
*	No answer

#### RANDOMIZE ITEMS

#### ASK ALL INTERNET USERS [N=2,849]:

ON3. When you think about your online experience compared with offline experiences, would you say...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. The online environment allows people to be more anonymous	63	36	1
b. The online environment allows people to be more critical of others	92	7	1
c. The online environment allows people to be more supportive of others	68	31	1

<sup>6</sup> Question wording in this topline is that from the web version of the survey. Question wording and format was adapted for the paper questionnaire delivered by mail; this questionnaire is available on request. All questions asked in both modes unless noted.

<sup>7</sup> All questions based on internet users were asked on the web mode only.

**RANDOMIZE ITEMS****RANDOMIZE ORDER OF MEN/WOMEN IN QUESTION STEM WITH RESPONSE OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER****ASK ALL INTERNET USERS [N=2,849]:**

ON4. Do you think each of the online environments below are [ROTATE ORDER: more welcoming toward men, more welcoming toward women], or about the same for both?

	More welcoming toward men	More welcoming toward women	About the same for both	No answer
a. Social networking sites/apps	5	18	75	1
b. Online dating websites/apps	14	18	66	2
d. Comments section of a website	12	8	79	1
e. Online gaming	44	3	51	2
f. Online discussion sites such as Reddit	13	6	78	3

**ASK ALL EMPLOYED INTERNET USERS [N=1,802]:**

JOB1. In your current job, would you say you need to make information available about yourself online in order to market yourself on the internet, or is that not something you need to do for your job?

20	Yes
79	No
*	No answer/Other

**AMONG ALL EMPLOYED; ASKED ON WEB MODE ONLY [N=1,802]:****JOB3. Do you work in the digital technology industry?**

17	Yes
83	No
0	No answer

**RANDOMIZE ITEMS****ALL INTERNET USERS [N=2,841]:****Here are a few questions about your experiences online.****ON5. Have you ever witnessed any of the following behaviors directed at a particular person online?***(Not including something directed at you)**[Check all that apply]*

	<u>Yes</u>	Not selected/ <u>No answer</u>
a. Someone being called offensive names	60	40
b. Someone being physically threatened	24	76
c. Someone being harassed for a sustained period	25	75
d. Someone being stalked	18	82
e. Efforts to purposefully embarrass someone	53	47
NO ITEMS F OR G		
h. Someone being sexually harassed	19	81
<b>Yes to any (NET)</b>	<b>73</b>	



**IF YES TO ANY IN ON5 [N=1907]:**

ON6a. **Can you describe what you have witnessed in your [IF ONE ITEM CHECKED ABOVE: experience/IF MORE THAN ONE ITEM: experiences] of this kind?**

**OPEN ENDED RESPONSES NOT SHOWN**

**RANDOMIZE ITEMS****ASK ALL INTERNET USERS [N=2,839]:**

ON7. **Which, if any, of the following have occurred to you, personally, ONLINE?**

*[Check all that apply]*

■	<u>Selected</u>	Not selected/ <u>No answer</u>
a. Been called offensive names	27	73
b. Been physically threatened	8	92
c. Been harassed for a sustained period	7	92
d. Been stalked	8	92
e. Had someone try to purposefully embarrass you	22	78
NO ITEMS F OR G		
h. Been sexually harassed	6	94
<b>Yes to any (NET)</b>	<b>40</b>	

**IF YES TO ANY IN ON7 [N=932].**

ON8. **Can you describe what happened in your most recent [IF ONE ITEM CHECKED ABOVE: experience/IF MORE THAN ONE ITEM: experiences] of this kind?**

**OPEN ENDED RESPONSES NOT SHOWN**

**AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT (YES TO ANY IN ON7) [N=932]:**  
**We're interested in understanding more about your most recent [IF YES TO ONE: experience/IF MORE THAN ONE: experiences] of this kind.**

**ON9. When did this occur?**

8	Still occurring now
39	Within the past 12 months
53	More than 12 months ago
*	No answer

**AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT (YES TO ANY IN ON7); RESPONSE OPTIONS IN ORDER SHOWN ON FORM1 AND REVERSE ORDER ON FORM 2 [N=932]:**

**ON10. Overall, how upsetting was this, if at all?**

14	Extremely upsetting
14	Very upsetting
21	Somewhat upsetting
30	A little upsetting
22	Not at all upsetting
*	No answer

**AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT (YES TO ANY IN ON7) [N=932]:****ON12. In which of the following online environments did this occur?***[Check all that apply]*

	<u>Selected</u>	Not selected/ <u>No answer</u>
a. Social networking sites/apps	66	34
b. Online dating websites/apps	6	94
NO ITEM C		
d. Comments section of a website	22	78
e. Online gaming	16	84
f. Personal email account	16	84
g. Online discussion site such as Reddit	10	90

**AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT (YES TO ANY IN ON7) [N=931]:**ON13. **Thinking of the person or people involved, how did you know them?***[Check all that apply.]*

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected/ No answer</u>
a. Friend	23	77
b. Family member	12	88
c. Co-worker	7	93
d. Someone you were romantically involved with	10	90
e. An acquaintance	24	76
f. A stranger/someone I had never met before	38	62
g. I don't know the real identity of the person or people	26	73

**AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT (YES TO ANY IN ON7) [N=931]:**ON14. **Did you do anything to respond to the behavior or did you just ignore it?**

40	Responded
60	Ignored it
*	No answer

**RANDOMIZE A-H – ITEM “I” IS ALWAYS THE LAST ITEM BEFORE “OTHER”  
AMONG THOSE WHO RESPONDED TO ONLINE HARASSMENT (ON14=1) [N=380]:**

ON15. Which, if any, of the following did you do?

*[Check all that apply]*

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected/ No answer</u>
a. Withdrew from an online forum	10	90
b. Unfriended or blocked the person	44	56
c. Confronted the person online	47	53
d. Changed your username or deleted your profile	13	87
NO ITEM E		
f. Discussed the problem online in order to draw support for yourself	18	82
g. Reported the person responsible to the website or online service	22	78
h. Stopped attending certain offline events or places	8	92
i. Reported the problem to law enforcement	5	95
j. Other ( <i>Specify</i> )	17	83

**AMONG THOSE WHO TOOK SPECIFIC STEPS IN RESPONSE TO ONLINE HARASSMENT (IF YES TO ANY IN ON15) [N=368]:**

ON16. Do you feel that any of the steps you took were effective at making the situation better, or not?

75	Yes
25	No
0	No answer

**AMONG THOSE WHO IGNORED ONLINE HARASSMENT (ON14=2) [N=549]:**

ON17. Do you feel that ignoring it was effective at making the situation better, or not?

83	Yes
17	No
0	No answer

**AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT (IF YES TO ANY IN ON7) [N=930]:**

ON18. Have you ever had an online experience of this kind that hurt your reputation, or haven't you had that occur?

15	Yes, have
84	No, have not
*	No answer

## Methods - The American Trends Panel Surveys (ATP)

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by the Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults living in households. Respondents who self-identify as internet users (representing 89% of U.S. adults) participate in the panel via monthly self-administered Web surveys, and those who do not use the internet participate via telephone or mail. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Data in this report are drawn from the web component of the June wave of the panel, conducted May 30-June 30, 2014 among 3,217 respondents (2,849 by web and 368 by mail). The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,217 respondents is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,849 internet users is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

The accompanying table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for selected groups discussed in the report.

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### Sample Size and margin of error for American Trends Panel (Wave 4)

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
All internet users	2,849	2.4 percentage points
Witnessed online harassment	1,907	2.9 percentage points
Experienced online harassment	932	4.1 percentage points
Men, experienced online harassment	491	5.7 percentage points
Women, experienced online harassment	441	6.0 percentage points
18-29, experienced online harassment	278	7.6 percentage points
30-49, experienced online harassment	309	7.2 percentage points
50+, experienced online harassment	341	6.8 percentage points
Online men, 18-24	127	11.2 percentage points
Online women, 18-24	139	10.7 percentage points
Responded to online harassment	380	6.5 percentage points
Ignored online harassment	549	5.4 percentage points

Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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All current members of the American Trends Panel were originally recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, a large (n=10,013) national landline and cellphone random digit dial (RDD) survey conducted January 23rd to March 16th, 2014, in English and Spanish. At the end of that survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The invitation was extended to all respondents who use the internet (from any location) and a random subsample of respondents who do not use the internet.<sup>8</sup>

Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel. A total of 5,338 agreed to participate and provided either a mailing address or an email address to which a welcome packet, a monetary incentive and future survey invitations could be sent. Panelists also receive a small monetary incentive after participating in each wave of the survey.

The ATP data were weighted in a multi-step process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the propensity to join the panel varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, telephone service, population density and region to parameters from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey. It also adjusts for party affiliation using an average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys, and for internet use using as a parameter a measure from the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The Web component of the June wave had a response rate of 60% (2,849 responses among 4,729 Web-based individuals enrolled in the panel); the mail component had a response rate of 66% (368 responses among 556 non-Web individuals enrolled in the panel). Taking account of the response rate for the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization (10.6%), the cumulative response rate for the June ATP wave is 3.5%.

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<sup>8</sup> When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.