



How do young adults protect themselves from cybervictimization?

A review of protective measures currently used by young adults in Canada

Introduction

There are **new data** available on the use of **protective measures** for cybervictimization among **young adults (aged 18 to 29)**. Using data from the 2018 *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS)*, this product explores the **relationship between cybervictimization and in-person victimization**, as well as the types of protective measures used by young adults who have experienced cybervictimization.

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Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Comment les jeunes adultes se protègent-ils contre la cybervictimisation? Examen des mesures de protection actuellement utilisées par les jeunes adultes au Canada.

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Key terms



Cybervictimizationⁱ

Can be described as **intentional and repeated harm done through the use of technology.**

People on the receiving end of this harm are considered **cyber victims.**ⁱⁱ



Protective measures

Actions that an individual may take to **protect themselves from harm.** For example, a cyber victim may use online protective measures such as blocking people and deleting their online account to limit further harassment. Protective measures **do not necessarily prevent cybervictimization.**

This information is not meant to blame victims, only provide information of what protective measures victims are sometimes forced to take. Preventing online violence should also involve updating policies, education, and updating laws that prevent this type of violence.



Indigenous

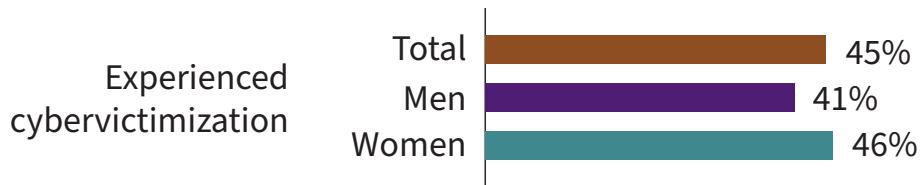
The term Indigenous is used to refer to all **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit** people. This was a **self-selected identity** survey question.

Findings¹

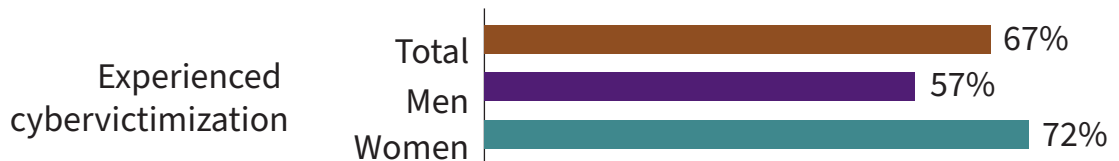
Young adults who have **experienced in-person victimization**, such as stalking, physical or sexual assault, and other types of unwanted behaviours in public were also likely to be **cyber victims**.ⁱⁱⁱ

Figure 1: Experiences of cybervictimization among young adults aged 18 to 29, by in-person victimization in the past 12 months, and gender, 2018^{iv}

Felt unsafe or uncomfortable in public



Was stalked

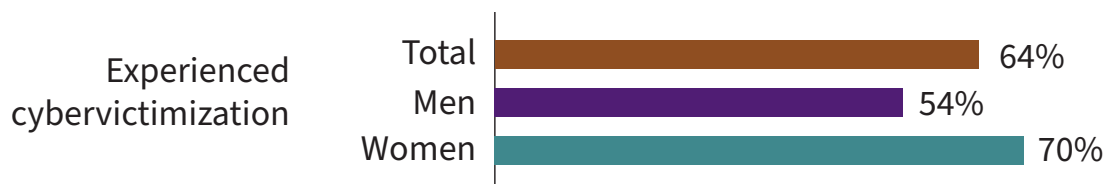


Experienced physical/sexual assault

One incident



Two or more incidents



¹ The data described below are descriptive, meaning that no statistical tests were conducted. All interpretations are based on the percentages listed. [Back to the text.](#)

Young adults use **different kinds of measures to protect themselves from cybervictimization and in-person victimization.**

Online strategies for protection against cybervictimization:

- blocking people,
- limiting internet usage, or
- deleting one's internet presence.^v

In-person strategies for protection against physical victimization:

- carrying something for protection (e.g., whistle, knife, pepper spray),
- checking the back seat for intruders before getting into a car,
- planning a route with safety in mind,
- staying home for fear of going out alone, or
- locking windows and doors at home.^{vi}

Young adults **often withdrew from social media or limited their online activities in response to cybervictimization.**^{vii}

22%

of young adults said that they **blocked people** on the internet because of harassment;

13%

said that they **restricted their access to the internet** to protect themselves from harassment; and

3%

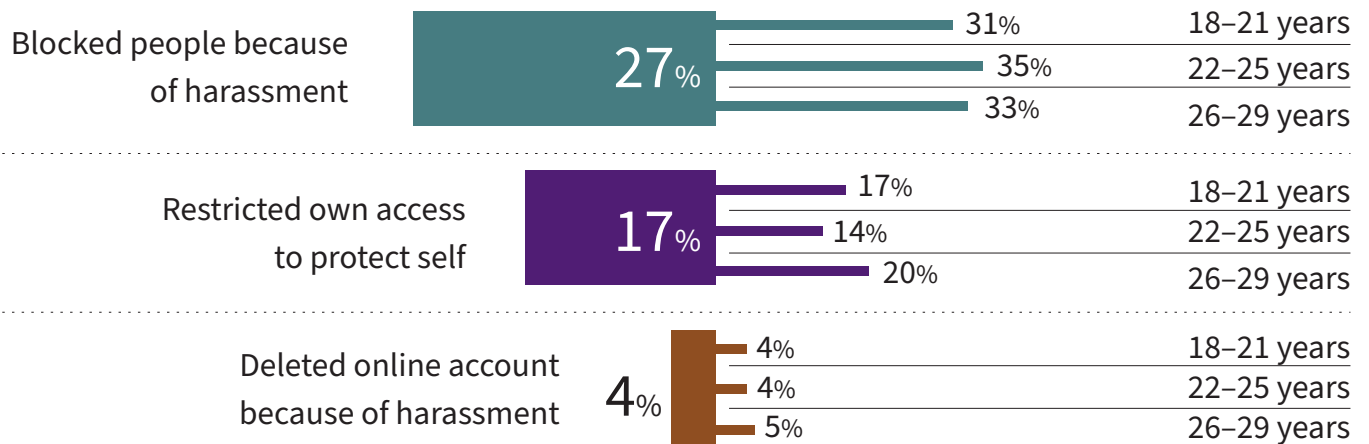
said they **deleted their online account** because of harassment.

Young women were more than twice as likely as young men to block people because of harassment.^{viii}

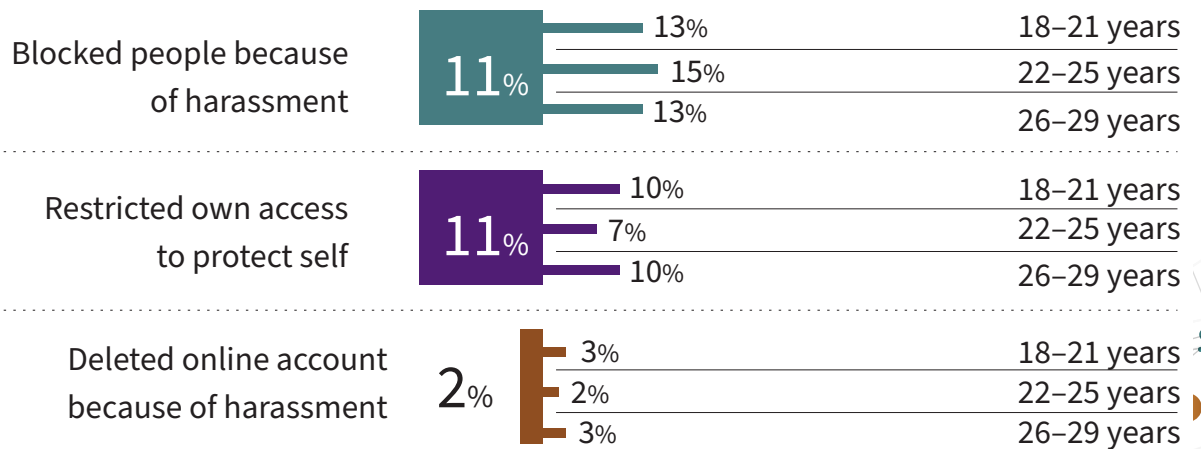
Across all age groups, young women were more likely to use any type of online protective measures compared to young men.^{ix}

Figure 2: Use of online protective measures by young adults aged 18 to 29, by gender and age group, 2018^x

Women



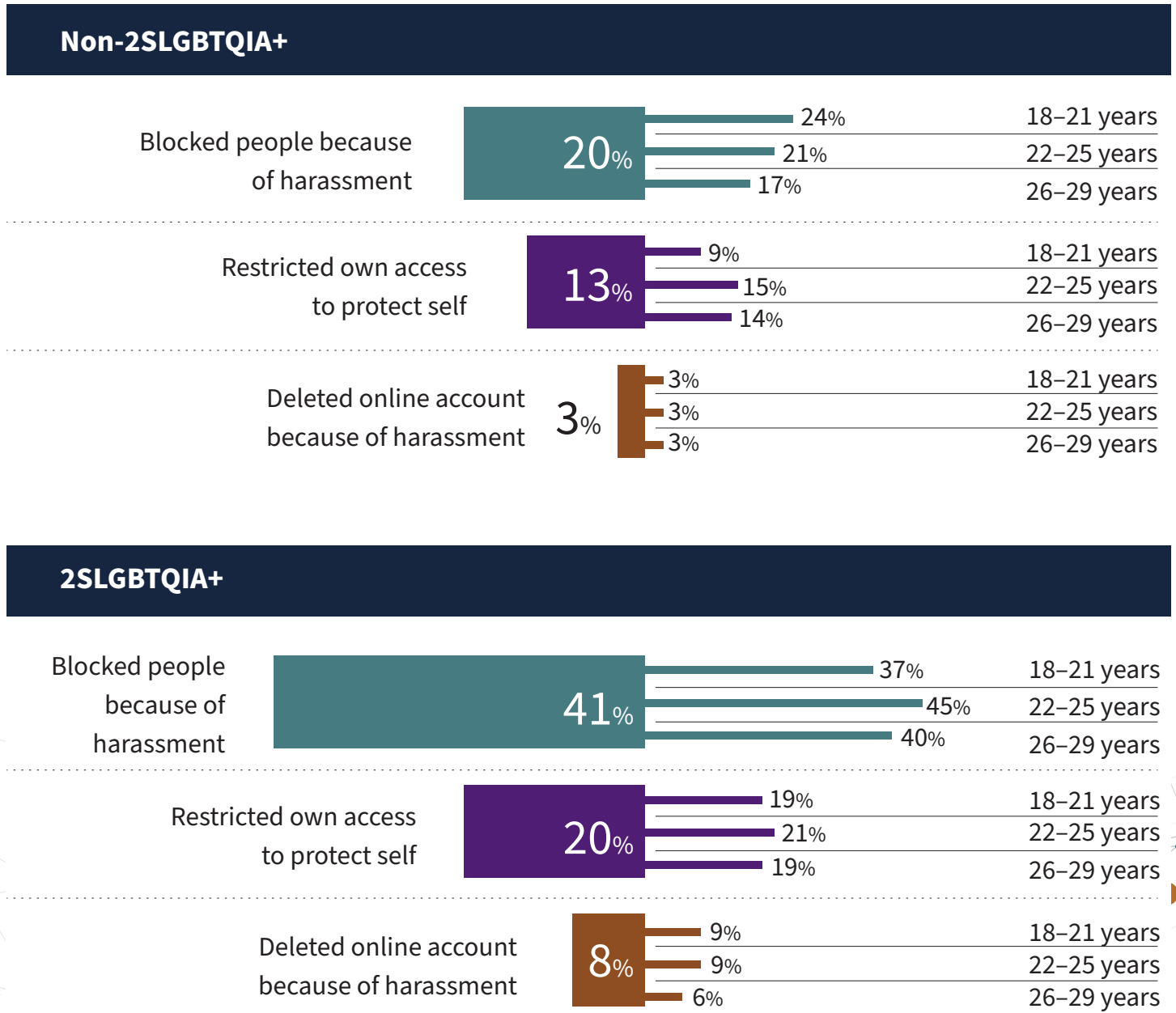
Men



2SLGBTQIA+ young adults were more likely to report using all types of online protective measures compared to their non-2SLGBTQIA+ counterparts. Across all age groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ young adults were also twice as likely as their non-2SLGBTQIA+ counterparts to report blocking people because of harassment.^{xi}

2SLGBTQIA+ young adults aged 18 to 21 and 22 to 25 were around **three times as likely** as their non-2SLGBTQIA+ counterparts to **delete their online account because of harassment.**

Figure 3: Use of online protective measures by young adults aged 18 to 29, by sexual/gender diversity, 2018^{xii}



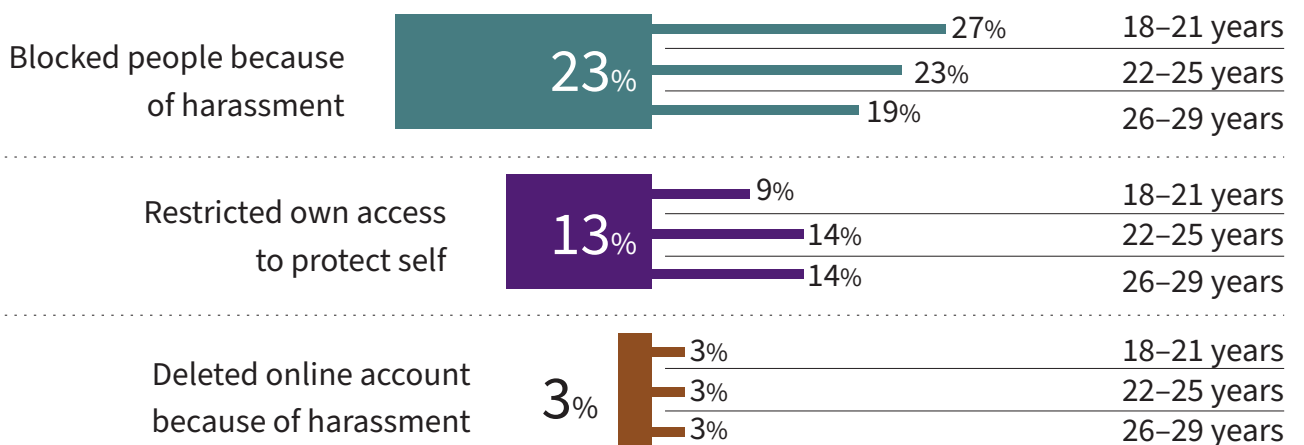
Indigenous young adults were more likely to use all types of online protective measures compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.^{xiii}

Overall, Indigenous young adults were **three times as likely** as their non-Indigenous counterparts to report **deleting their online account** because of harassment.

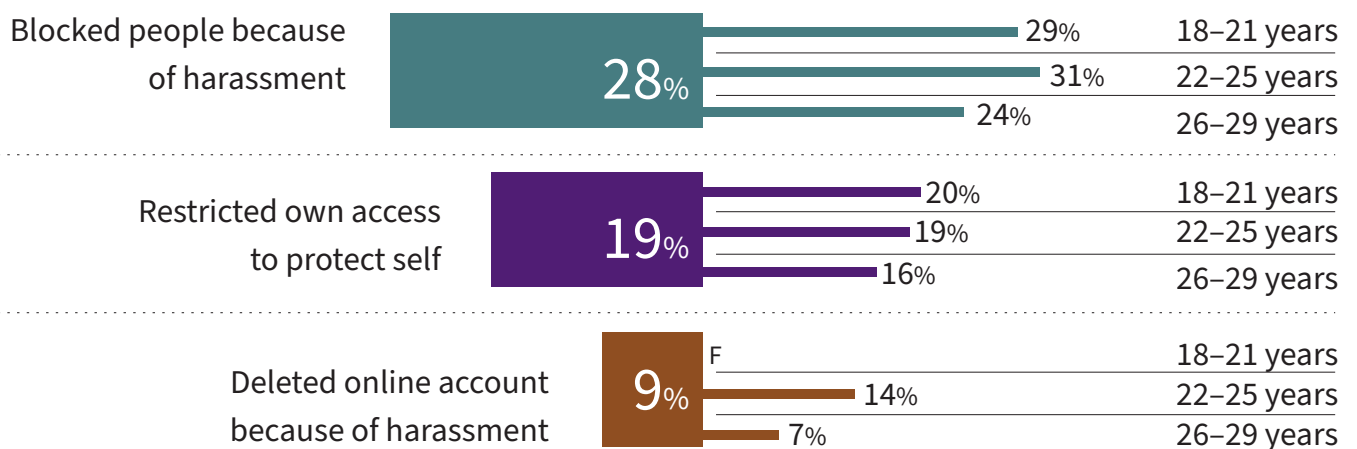
Indigenous young adults aged 18 to 21 were **twice as likely** as their non-Indigenous counterparts to **restrict their own access** to protect themselves.

Figure 4: Use of online protective measures by young adults aged 18 to 29, by Indigenous Identity, 2018^{xiv}

Non-Indigenous



Indigenous



F = too unreliable to be published

Conclusion

Protective measures may help to safeguard cyber victims from experiencing more harassment, but they do not prevent cybervictimization. **More research** on the **effectiveness** of different **protective measures** is needed to better understand what strategies can protect young adults from cyber harm.

References

- ⁱ The *2019 Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth* explored issues that have an impact on the physical and mental health of children and youth. Survey content included questions on harmful Internet posts; threats or insults through email, instant messaging, text messaging or online games; and the purposeful exclusion from an online community.

The *2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces* explored Canadians' experiences about personal experiences at home and in the workplace, in public spaces and online. Survey content included questions about inappropriate behaviours experienced online while using a cell phone or smartphone, the most serious incident experienced online while using one of these devices, the perpetrators of these incidents, and the ensuing consequences. [Back to the text.](#)
- ⁱⁱ Maxwell, E., Khanna, N., & Craig, W. (2022). [Examining key populations in the context of implementing cyberbullying prevention and intervention initiatives: Literature review on the role of the family.](#) Public Safety Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Hango, D. (2023). [Online harms faced by youth and young adults: The prevalence and nature of cybervictimization.](#) Statistics Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{iv} Hango, D. (2023). [Online harms faced by youth and young adults: The prevalence and nature of cybervictimization.](#) Statistics Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^v Hango, D. (2023). [Online harms faced by youth and young adults: The prevalence and nature of cybervictimization.](#) Statistics Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{vi} StatCan supplementary table number 9. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{vii} Hango, D. (2023). [Online harms faced by youth and young adults: The prevalence and nature of cybervictimization.](#) Statistics Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{viii} Hango, D. (2023). [Online harms faced by youth and young adults: The prevalence and nature of cybervictimization.](#) Statistics Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{ix} Hango, D. (2023). [Online harms faced by youth and young adults: The prevalence and nature of cybervictimization.](#) Statistics Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^x Statistics Canada, *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces*, 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{xi} Statistics Canada, *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces*, 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{xii} Statistics Canada, *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces*, 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{xiii} Statistics Canada, *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces*, 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{xiv} Statistics Canada, *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces*, 2018. [Back to the text.](#)