

Girl Scout Survey: Sexual Harassment of Teens on Net

by Anne Collier

Girls Scouts of the USA has gathered some data on Internet-based harassment of teenage girls. The organization released a study in mid-February — *The Net Effect: Girls and New Media* — that surveyed 1,000 U.S. girls aged 13 to 18.¹ Thirty percent of them said they've been sexually harassed in a chatroom, *Wired News* reports, adding that the harassment included unsolicited pictures of naked men, demands for personal details like bra size, and requests for "cyber sex."²

Other key findings include

- of the girls who said they were harassed, only 7 percent reported telling their parents what had happened
- 30 percent said they "didn't tell anyone" about the incidents
- 21 percent said that such harassment "happens all the time and is no big deal"
- more than 80 percent said they feel safe online
- when asked how they know what behavior on the Net is safe or unsafe, 84 percent cited their own common sense; 51 percent cited learning from parents; 46 percent cited television and the media; 29 percent cited teachers; 29 percent cited friends; and 4 percent said, "Nothing is that bad online because it is not really real"

The study concludes, "Girls are aware of the varied dangers of the Internet but want more proactive involvement rather than prohibitive don'ts from parents. All too often, these computer-savvy teenage girls are still naive and emotionally vulnerable, as they grapple with issues such as how to react to sexual online content they unwittingly encounter." Other tips for parents can be found in a sidebar of the report, *Girls and the Internet: Tips for Parents*.³

¹Whitney Roban, Ph.D. *The Net Effect: Girls and New Media*. Girl Scouts Research Institute. February 13, 2002, http://www.girlscouts.org/news/net_effect.html.

²Noah Schachtman. "Scouts Survey Net Harassment." *Wired News*. February 14, 2002. <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0%2C1284%2C50413%2C00.html>.

³Harriet S. Mosatche, Ph.D. *Girls and the Internet: Tips for Parents*. Girl Scout Research Institute. 1998,

http://www.girlscouts.org/about/ResearchInstitute/tips_parents.html.

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