# Cybersmile campaign reveals lasting scars of online abuse on Gen Z mental health



Cybersmile, in collaboration with Adam & Eve/DDB London, has launched a poignant campaign titled “Words are permanent” aimed at highlighting the enduring damage caused by online abuse. This initiative employs striking visuals of children's faces seemingly inked with derogatory phrases, reinforcing the profound and lasting impact of online insults. One particularly arresting image features the face of a girl adorned with terms like “Freak” and “Waste of space”, coupled with the stark reminder that these are genuine comments directed at real children.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness of the harrowing reality of cyberbullying, an issue that disproportionately affects the younger generation. As Scott Freeman, chief executive of Cybersmile, articulated, “This campaign is a powerful and thought-provoking example of the long-term effects that online abuse can have on young people today.” His comments reflect a broader concern within society regarding the need for a safer online environment for all youths.

Statistical findings underscore the urgency of this initiative. Research conducted by Cybersmile revealed that a staggering 89% of Generation Z believes social media detrimentally affects their mental health, with a significant 86% admitting it leads to increased anxiety. Furthermore, more than half of those surveyed indicated that their sleep quality suffers due to their online engagement. This data resonates with findings from the McKinsey Health Institute, which reported that a quarter of Gen Z associates excessive social media use with poorer mental health outcomes.

The highlight of the Cybersmile campaign is not merely the stark imagery but also its foundation in creating meaningful conversations around online abuse. Ant Nelson and Mike Sutherland, the chief creative officers at Adam & Eve/DDB, expressed a desire for the campaign to resonate emotionally, stating that it aims to shine a light on the cruelty faced online, especially by children. They hope that this initiative will play a role in fostering positive change and direct attention to necessary support systems.

The troubling statistics present a bleak picture; for instance, 42% of Gen Z report that social media negatively impacts their self-esteem, while nearly 59% have experienced cyberbullying. These conditions contribute to alarming levels of anxiety and depression within this demographic, indicating that social media platforms can serve as breeding grounds for mental health issues. Moreover, the pressures of maintaining an online presence exacerbate these challenges, with 67% feeling compelled to remain constantly available.

This campaign not only utilises innovative AI technology to create its impactful images—ensuring that no real children are exposed to harmful messages—but also serves as a clarion call to address the pervasive problem of online abuse. The visual narrative embedded in the campaign aims to foster awareness and provoke thought, reminding society that while words may be digital, their consequences are often indelible.

In light of these revelations, the launch of this campaign serves as a crucial reminder of the responsibility that both individuals and platforms hold in creating a safer and more inclusive digital landscape. As Cybersmile continues its advocacy, the hope is to cultivate an environment where the damaging legacies of online abuse can be addressed and ultimately diminished.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 2, 3
3. Paragraphs 3, 4
4. Paragraphs 3, 4
5. Paragraphs 2, 4, 5
6. Paragraphs 4, 5
7. Paragraphs 5, 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cybersmile-highlights-permanence-online-abuse-tattooed-faces-children/1918904> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cybersmile.org/2022/06/17/examining-the-impact-of-social-media-use-on-the-wellbeing-of-gen-z/> - This article presents findings from Cybersmile's 2022 study on Gen Z's social media usage and its effects on mental health. Key statistics include: 89% of Gen Z report that social media negatively affects their mental health; 86% say that social media use makes them feel anxious; and 51% say that their sleep is negatively impacted by the amount of time they spend online. The study highlights the significant impact of social media on Gen Z's overall wellbeing, including mental health, physical fitness, and diet.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/apr/28/social-media-mental-health-gen-z> - A 2023 study by the McKinsey Health Institute reveals that Gen Zers are more likely than other generations to report negative feelings about social media. The study found that one in four Gen Z members connect spending a lot of time on these platforms with poorer mental health. Additionally, 35% of Gen Z respondents spend over two hours on social media daily, with passive use linked to declines in wellbeing over time.
4. <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/gen-z-mental-health-the-impact-of-tech-and-social-media.> - McKinsey's report examines the impact of social media on Gen Z's mental health. It highlights that 35% of Gen Z respondents spend over two hours daily on social media, with passive use linked to declines in wellbeing. The study also notes that negative effects are greatest for younger generations, with Gen Zers more likely than other cohorts to report negative impacts from social media.
5. <https://www.gitnux.org/gen-z-depression-statistics/> - This article presents statistics on the impact of social media on Gen Z's mental health. Key findings include: 42% of Gen Z report that social media has a negative impact on their self-esteem; 39% report that social media makes them feel anxious; and 38% report experiencing cyberbullying, which contributes to depression. The article emphasizes the significant negative effects of social media on Gen Z's mental health.
6. <https://www.gitnux.org/social-media-mental-health-statistics/> - This article provides statistics on the impact of social media on mental health. It reports that 87% of teenagers have experienced cyberbullying on social media platforms, and individuals who spend more than two hours per day on social media have a 2.7 times higher chance of being diagnosed with depression. The article underscores the detrimental effects of social media on mental health.
7. <https://www.gitnux.org/generation-z-mental-health-statistics/> - This article presents statistics on Generation Z's mental health. It reports that 67% of Gen Z feel pressure to always be available online, and 45% feel judged when posting on social media. Additionally, 59% have experienced cyberbullying. The article highlights the challenges Gen Z faces in managing their mental health in the digital age.