

***Online Abuse and Crime By Youth:  
Results from the RIT  
Survey of Internet and At-risk Behaviors***

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**At the  
Internet Safety Technical Task Force (ISTTF) Meeting**

**Berkman Center for Internet & Society  
Pound Hall, Harvard Law School - Cambridge,  
Massachusetts  
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# Thanks to the Cyber Safety & Ethics Initiative



Monroe-Orleans BOCES 2 and other New York School Districts for their involvement and support!

# Today's Presentation

- Overview of RIT - CSEI research
  - Major points
  - Limitations of research
- RIT Survey of Internet and At-Risk Behaviors
  - Cyber bullying
  - Lying and deceitful behaviors
  - Sexual "offending"
- Observations of contemporary digital youth culture
- Your questions and comments

# Major Point 1: Students Experience Many Forms of Cyber Abuse . . .

- Academic dishonesty
- Plagiarism
- Piracy of music, movies and software
- Online threats and harassment (cyber bullying)
- Credit card fraud and identity theft
- Creating and posting child pornography
- Sending unwanted solicitations for sex
- Illicit purchasing of prescription and illegal drugs
- Writing and distributing malicious computer code
- Password cracking and computer hacking

. . . **As Victims and Offenders!**

# Major Point 2: Cyber Abuse, Crime and Victimization . . .

- Appears to be a function of
  - Number and type of devices used to access the Net
  - Amount of time spent online
  - Types of online activities and levels of social computing engaged in
  - Prior successful offending
  - Previous victimization
  - Declining age of onset of engaging online

# Major Point 3: Contemporary Digital Youth Culture is . . .

- Alarming
- Tolerant if not perpetuating cyber abuse, crime and victimization
- Not being adequately checked via:
  - Education
  - Supervision and role modeling
  - Enforcement
  - Technology

# Survey Methodology

- Largest, most comprehensive “cybercrime” study
  - Involved 14 Rochester, NY area school districts
  - Convenience sample = 40,079 K-12 students
  - Hundreds of parents and teacher respondents
- Survey (May-June 2007 + Sept – Feb, 2008)
  - Developmentally appropriate questions vetted by 50 experts
  - Seven instruments (5 student levels, parents, teachers)
  - Student content: online technology use, victimization, offending, social interactions, perceptions of supervision, etc.
  - Passive (Opt-out) parental consent via U.S. mail notices plus advance Website, community and media announcements
- Online survey using WebSurveyor
  - K-3rd grade instruments: audio (“talking computer”)
  - 4-12th grade instruments: text-based

# RIT Survey of Internet and At-Risk Behaviors (May 2007- January 2008)

## ■ Surveyed Districts

- **Brighton**; pop 3,548; n=2,684 (76%)
- **Canandaigua**; pop 3,988; n=3,314 (83%)
- **Diocese of Rochester**; pop 10,204; n=4,010 (39%)
- **East Irondequoit**; pop 4,026; n=2,212 (55%)
- **Fairport**; pop 6,998; n=4,583 (65%)
- **Greece**; pop 12,702; n=9,882 (78%)
- **Hilton**; pop 4,510; n=3,659 (81%)
- **Monroe BOCES #1**; pop 2,035; n=452 (21%)
- **Newark**; pop 2,335; n=1,460 (62%)
- **Penfield**; pop 4,670; n=817 (17.5%)
- **Pittsford**; pop 2,264; n=1,797 (79%)
- **Rush-Henrietta**; pop 5,682; n=467 (8.2%)
- **Webster**; pop 8,886; n=2,945 (33%)
- **Wheatland-Chili**; pop 769; n= 641 (83%)

## ■ Generally representative of youth in U.S. population

# Survey Results: K-1<sup>st</sup> Grade

(n = 4,743)

- Demographics
  - 51% boys and 49% girls
  - Ages 4 = 2.6%, 5 = 32%, 6 = 47.4%, 7 = 18%
- 63% (n=4459) use home computer to access Net
  - 92% play games
  - 66% watch videos or listen to music
  - 48% read or write email
  - 41% talk with people on website
  - 49% look at websites for school work
- 50% report parents do NOT watch their use of computer
- 39% report parents do NOT limit use of computer
- 70% report they use computers “for a long time”
- 56% have clicked on website not knowing what would happen
- 48% saw something that made them feel uncomfortable
- 28% did not tell a grownup after experiencing uncomfortable content

# Results: 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade (n = 5,549)

- Demographics
  - 50% boys and girls
  - Ages 6 = 2%, 7 = 34%, 8 = 47%, 9 = 16%, 10=1%
- Means of accessing Internet during 2006-2007 school year?
  - 14% use cell phone
  - 21% use video game console
  - 23% use portable video game console
  - 96% use a computer
- Location of home computer from which Internet was accessed?
  - 20% kitchen
  - 36% living room
  - 22% bedroom
  - 66% different room
- Online activities during 2006-2007 school year?
  - 94% play games
  - 60% watch videos or listen to music
  - 36% look at websites for school work
  - 37% read or write email
  - 13% email or talk with people you do not know

# Survey Results: 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

(n = 5,549)

- Victimization and offending during school year
  - 48% have clicked on website not knowing what would happen
  - 38% saw something that made them feel uncomfortable
  - 18% report someone was mean to them online
  - 9% admit they have been mean to someone online
  - 11% were asked private things about their body
  - 10% Have been told or shown private things about someone else's body
- 68% report parents do NOT watch them using computer
- 50% report parents do NOT limit their use of computer
- 63% report they use computer "for a long time"
- 30% report they did not tell a grownup after experiencing uncomfortable content online

# Survey Results: 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade

(n = 9,350)

- During the past school year . . .
  - 1 in 5 students have been victimized online
  - About 14% of students have experienced
    - Someone using their password without permission
    - Pretending to be them online; or
    - Embarrassment online
  - 1 in 4 students have committed some type of online deception, abuse or crime and posted personal information about themselves online
  - Illegal downloading of music and movies begins at this age/grade level.

# Survey Results: 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade

(n = 9,350)

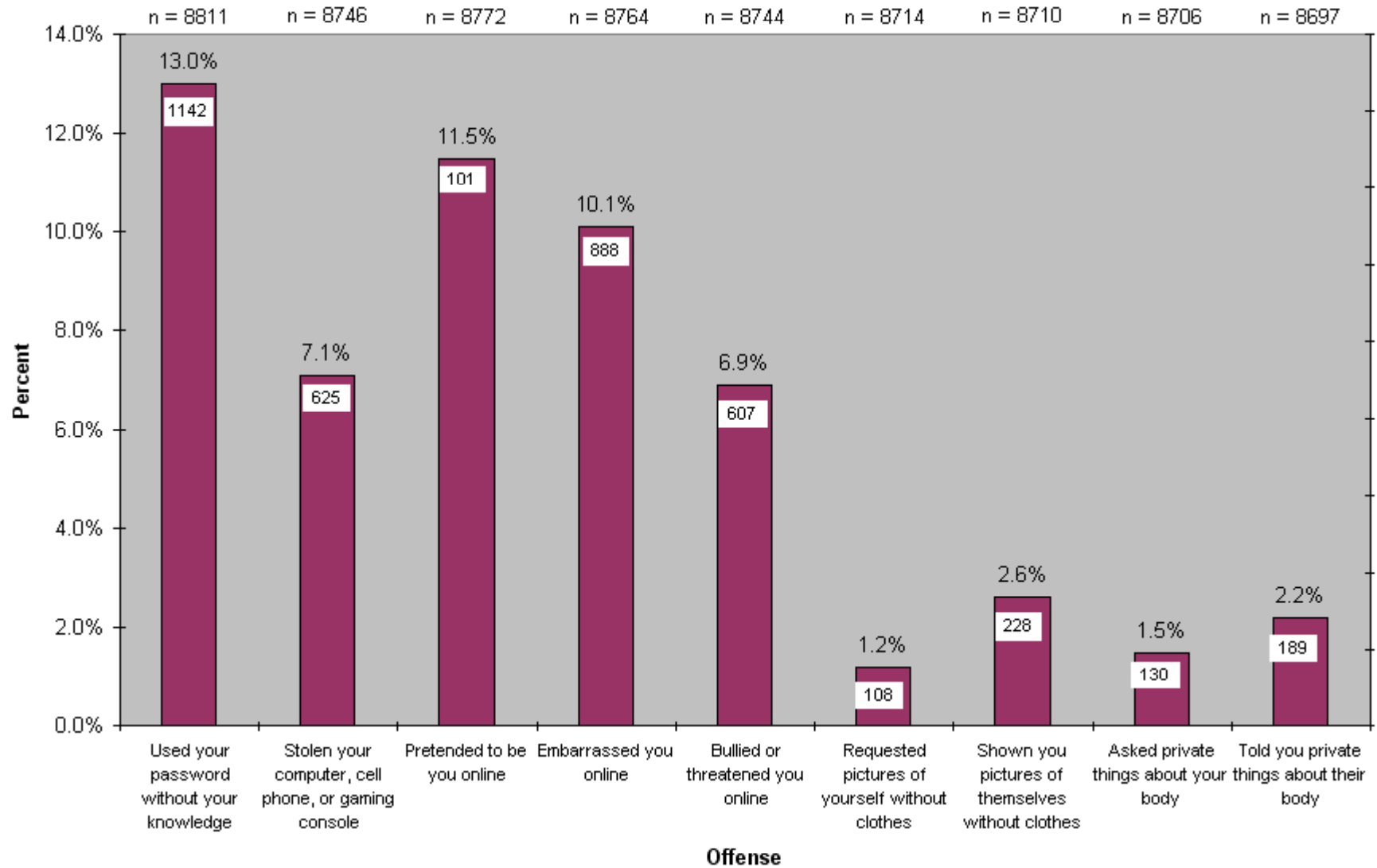
- Demographics
  - 50% boys and girls
  - Ages 9 = 21%, 10 = 31%, 11 = 34%, 12 = 12%
- Means of accessing Internet during 2006-2007 school year?
  - 91% Desktop computer
  - 49% Laptop
  - 12% Cell phone
  - 43% Video game console
  - 48% Portable video game console
  - 27% Other device
- Location from which Internet was accessed?
  - 44% Home in a shared space
  - 34% Home in a private space
  - 50% School lab, classroom or library
  - 25% Friend's house in a share space
  - 20% Friend's house in a private space
  - 28% Other location

# Survey Results: 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade

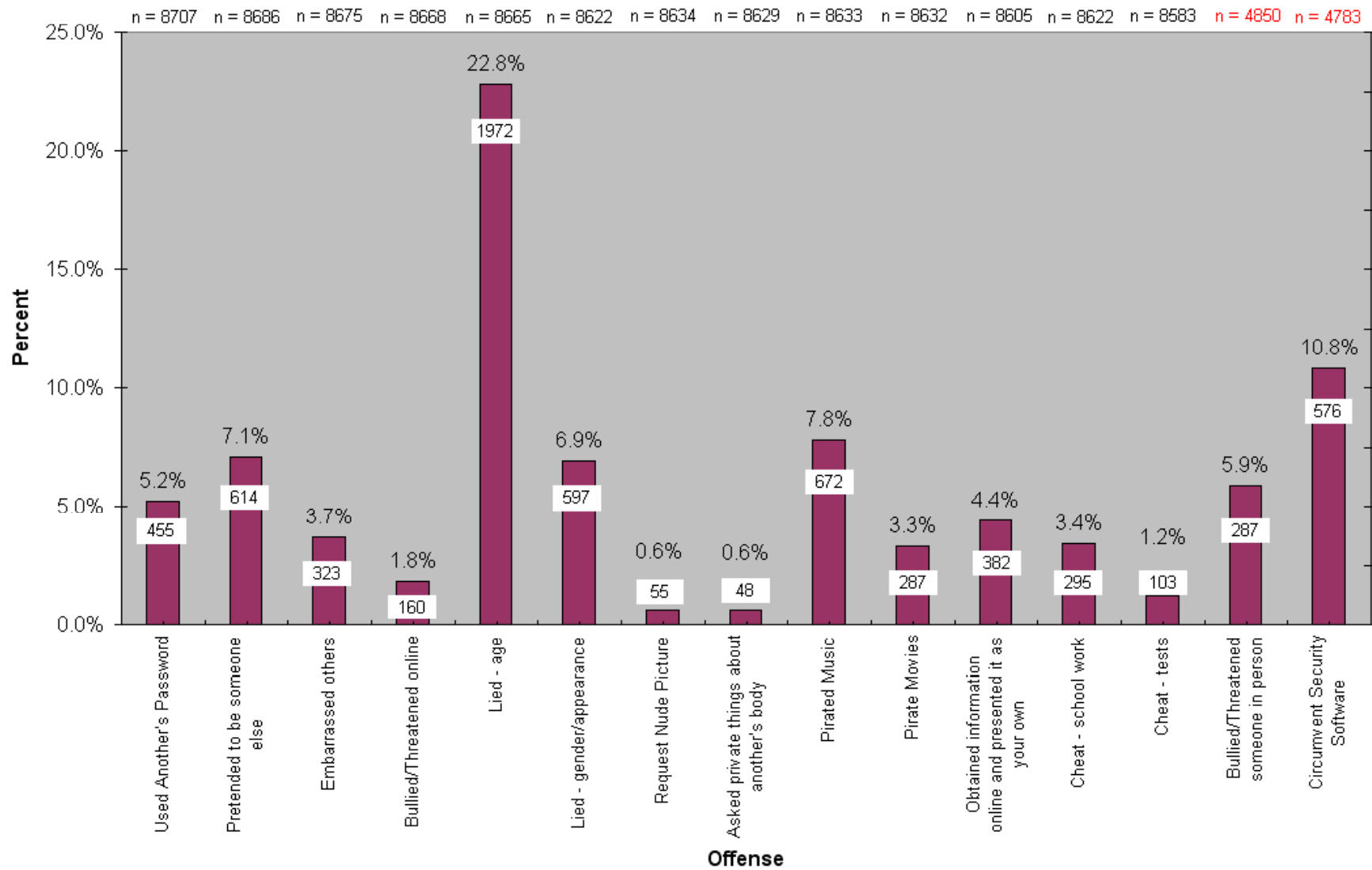
(n = 9,350)

- Online activities during 2006-2007 school year?
  - 38% Instant messaging
  - 54% read or write email
  - 26% Chat rooms
  - 24% Text message
  - 87% Websites for kids
  - 72% School work
  - 92% Play games
  - 72% Watch videos
  - 80% Listen to music
- Victimization during the past school year
  - About 20% have been victimized by one or more forms of online abuse/crime within the past school year

[4th-6th] Q14: During this past school year, has someone...



[4th-6th] Q17: During this past school year, have you...



# Survey Results: 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade

(n = 10,204)

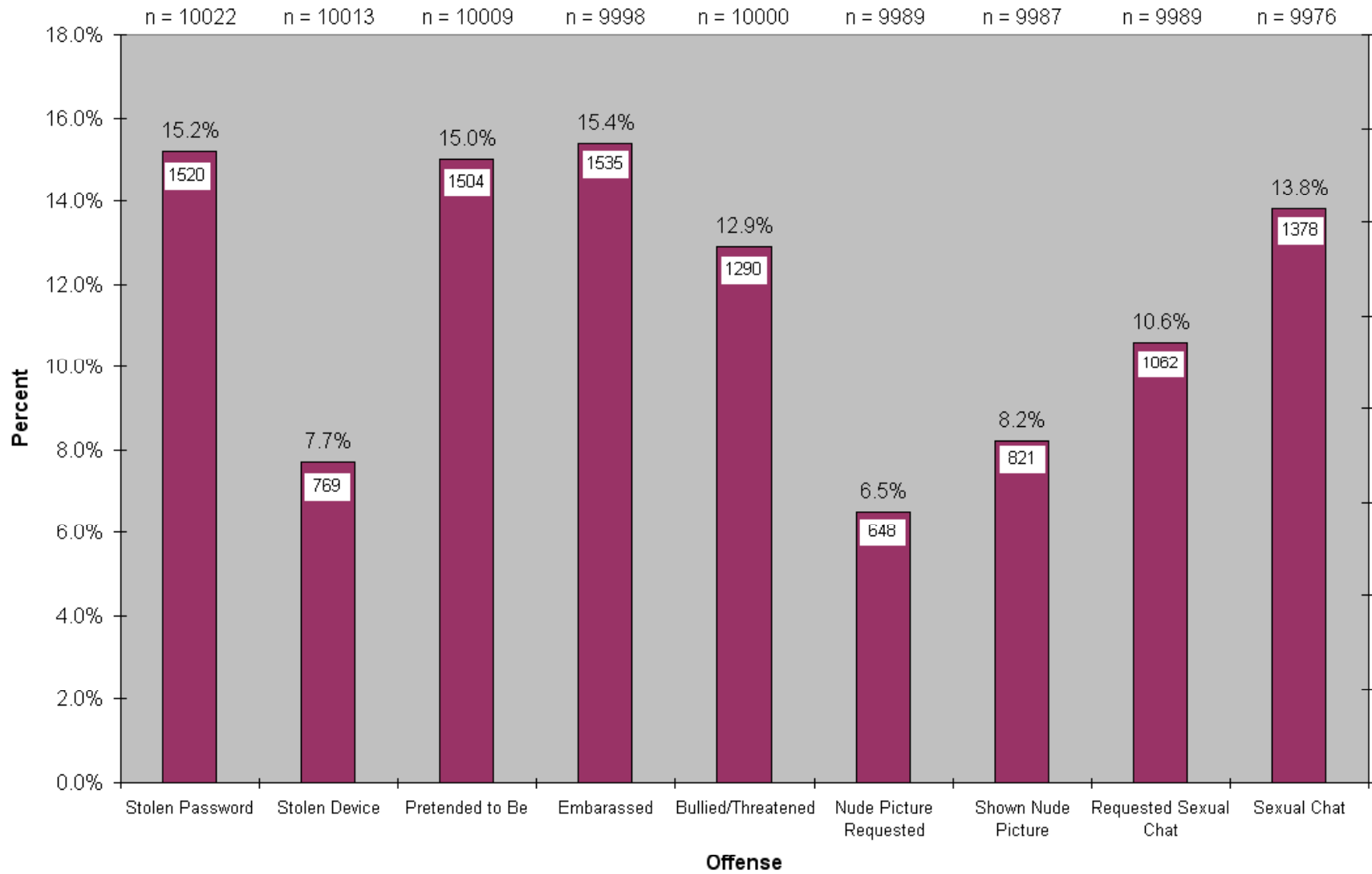
- By this age/grade level kids are using . . .
  - every type of IT device to access the Net;
  - the Internet to communicate in myriad ways
  - 45% have a social network (i.e., profile) website
- During the past school year about 1 in 4 kids:
  - Experienced some form of online victimization
  - Engaged in some form of online offending (i.e., deception, abuse or crime)
- Internet access by kids from schools is least likely to occur from within a private space
- Students have experienced the full range of computer crime and abuse, ranging from 15% having been embarrassed online to 7% having received requests for nude pictures

# Survey Results: 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade

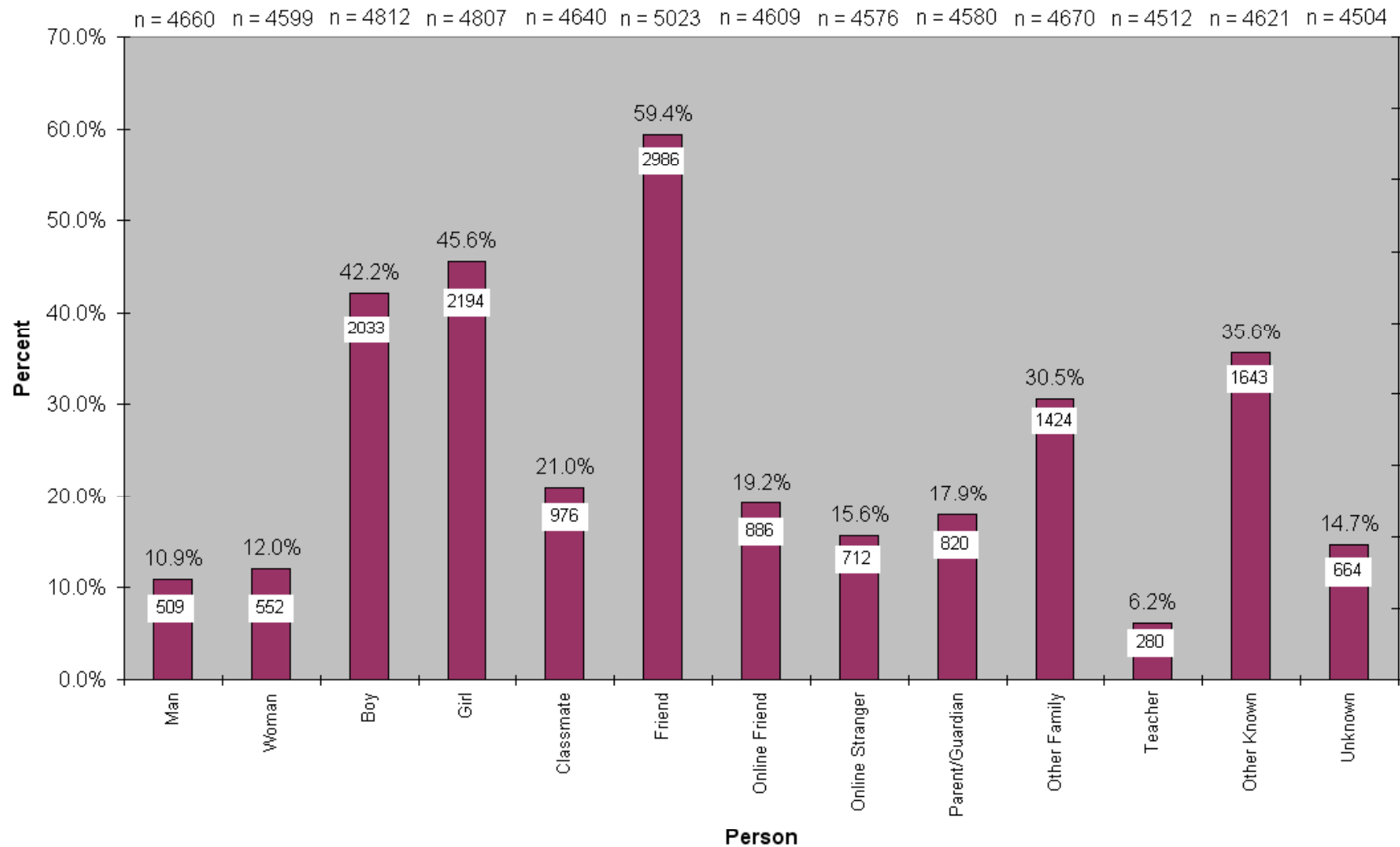
(n = 10,204)

- Within the past school year students have engaged in every form of IT-enabled crime or abuse. E.g.:
  - 24% Lied about their age online
  - 11% Pretended to be someone else online
  - 7% Circumvented security measures
  - 5% Cheated on school work

**[7th-9th] Q16: During this past school year, has someone...**

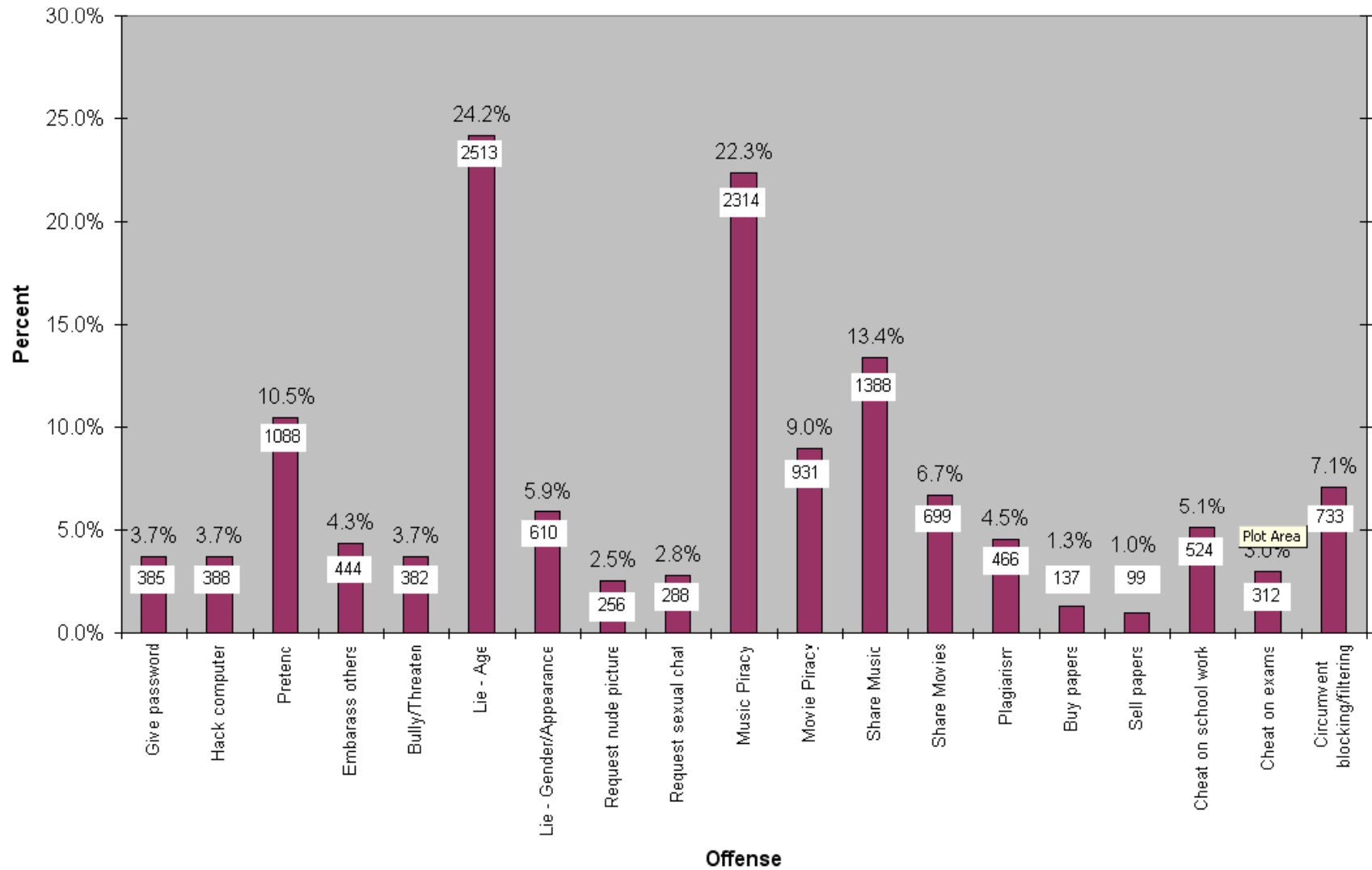


**[7th-9th] Q17: If you answered yes to one or more things in Question 16, was the person or people involved a:**



**[7th-9th] Q22: Which of the following things have you used a computer to do within the last year:**

n = 10366



# Factor Analysis of Offending (7-9<sup>th</sup> Grade)

- Generalists
- Pirates
- Academic Cheaters
- Deceiving Bullies

Principal components explain  
55% of total variance

# Survey Results: 10-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

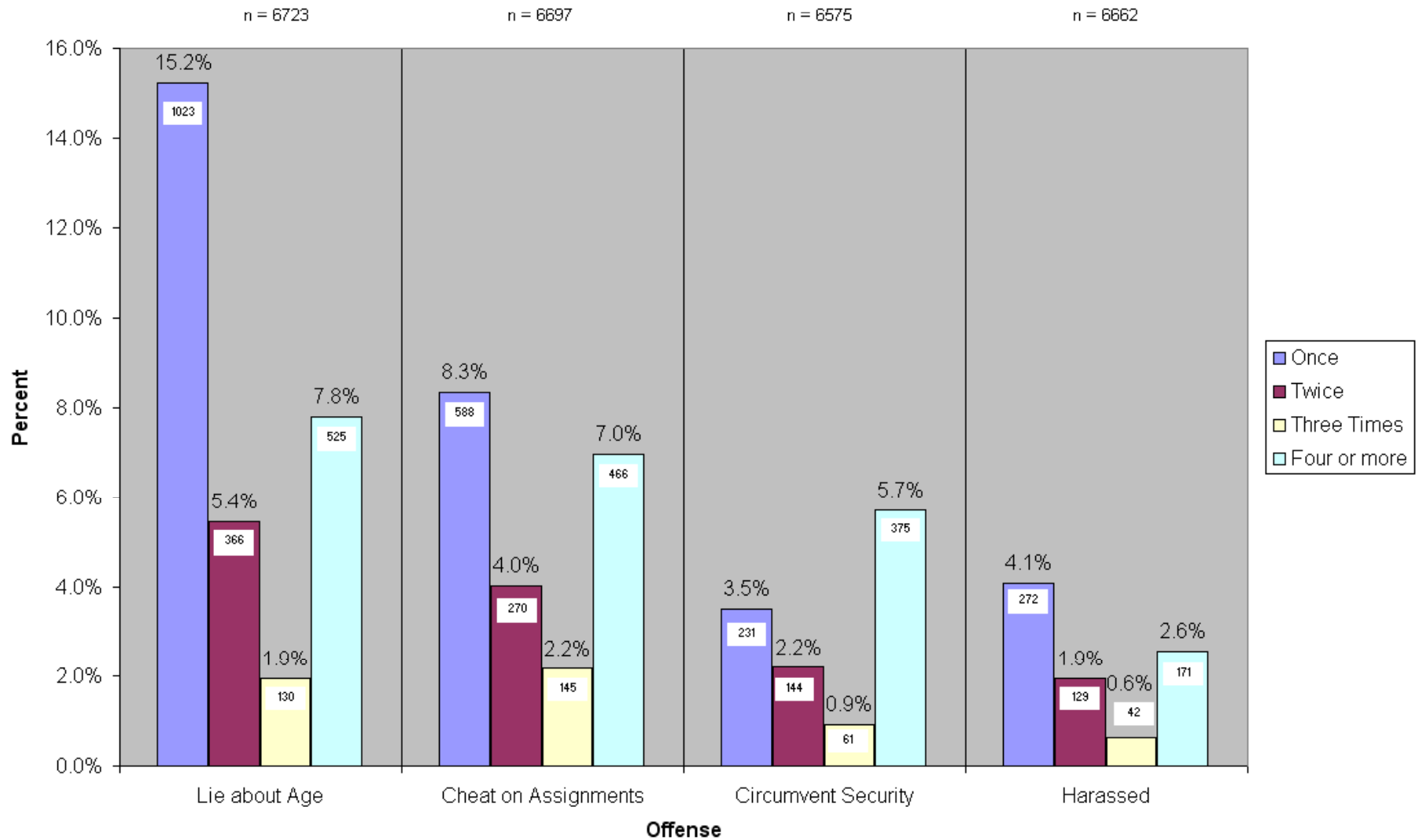
(n = 7,184)

- Students spend a total of approximately 15 hours per week on various online activities
- Students have experienced multiple forms of victimization within the past school year, including:
  - Password cracking (24%)
  - Embarrassment online (16%)
  - Asked about sexual activities (23%)
- Students who were victimized were generally not upset by the abuse or crime, and 1 in 3 victims know the offender as a friend

# Survey Results: 10-12<sup>th</sup> Grade (n = 7,184)

- 15% of students have invited an online stranger to meet in person; 13% of students have accepted an invitation to meet an online stranger in person
- Digital piracy is the most common form of offending behavior – within the past school year:
  - 59% illegally downloaded music
  - 27% illegally downloaded movies
  - 21% illegally downloaded software

**[10th-12th] Q27: On how many separate occasions during this past school year have you used a computer or electronic device to...**

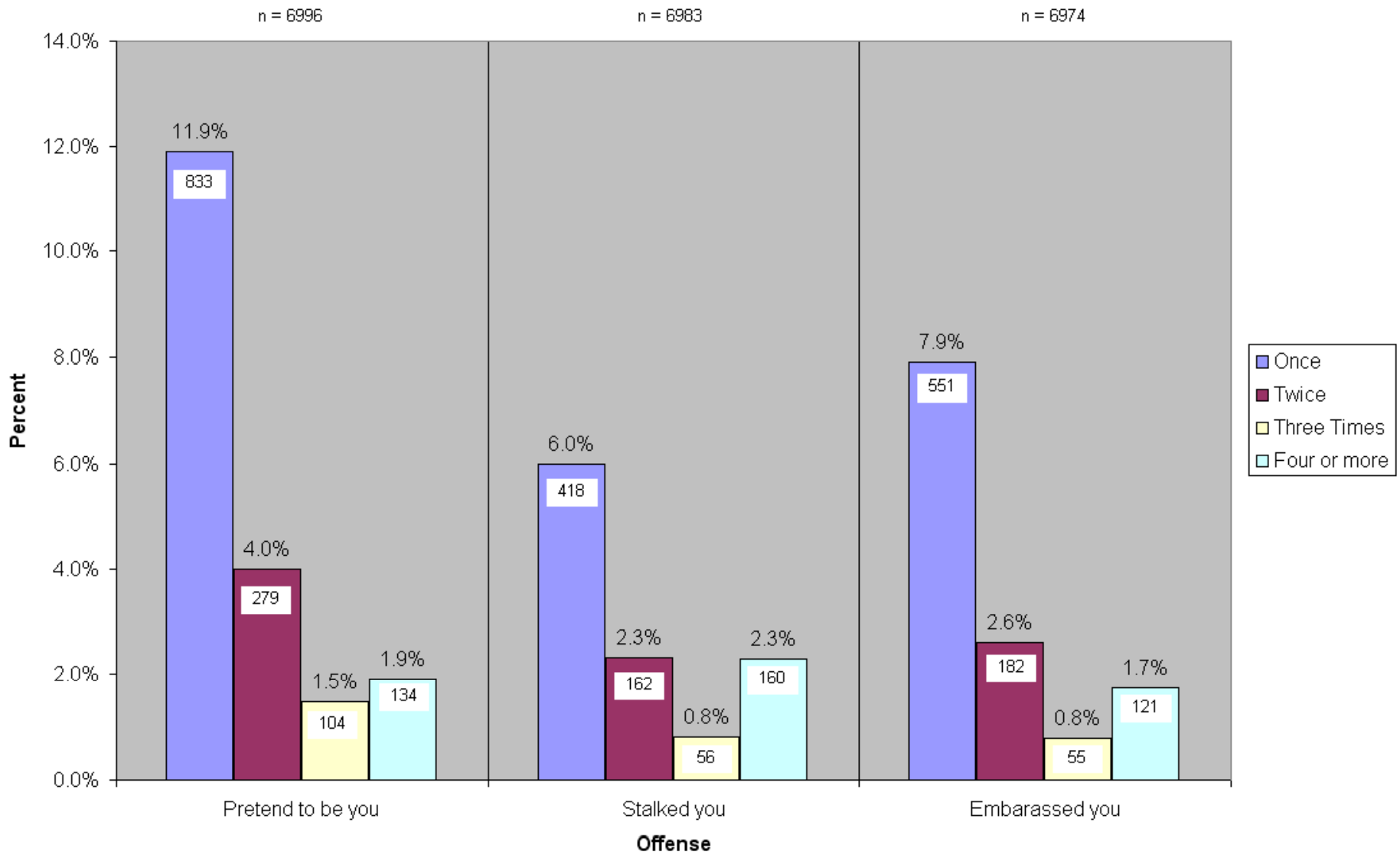


# Factor Analysis of Offending (10-12th Grade)

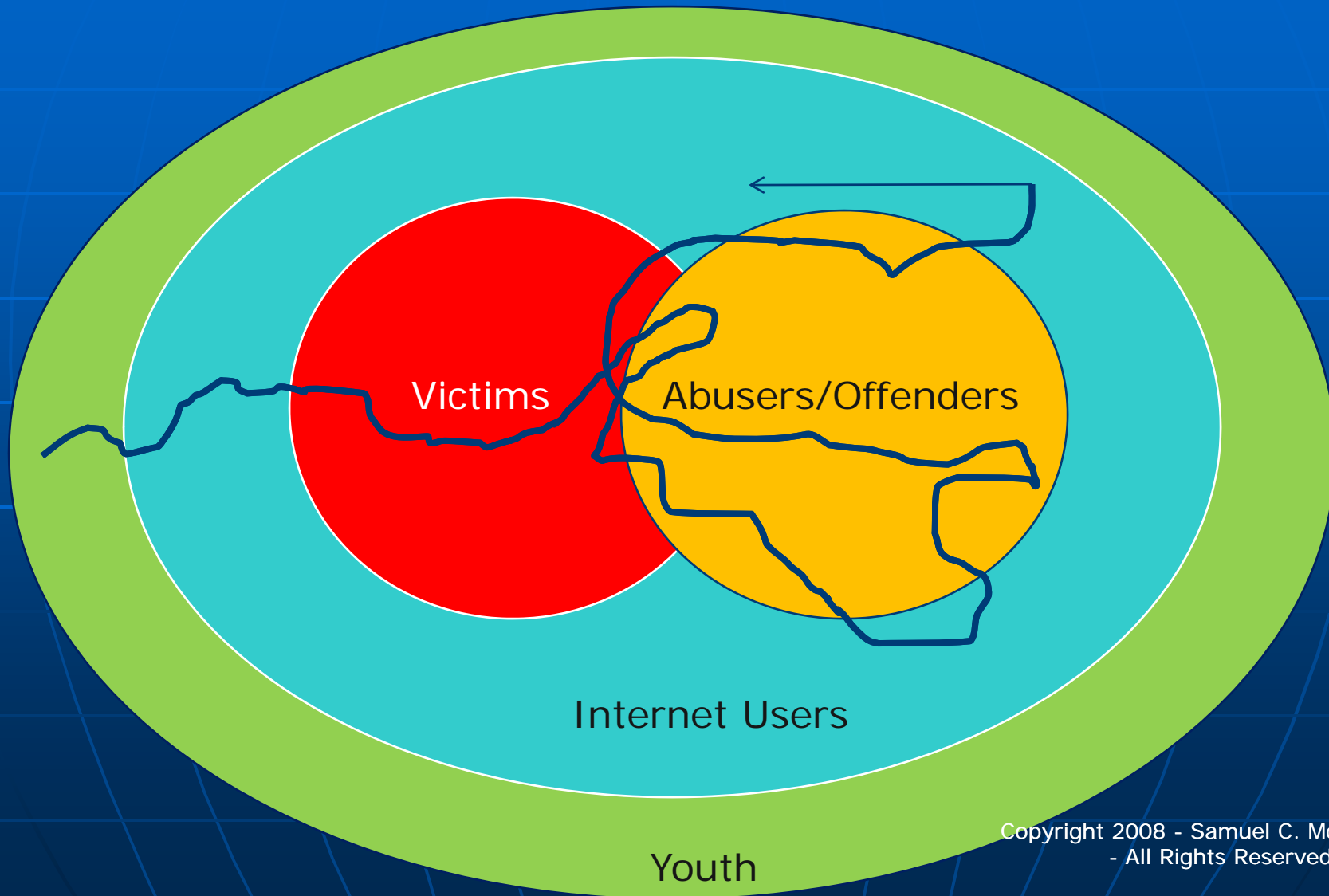
1. Hackers
2. Fraudsters
3. Pornographers
4. Deceiving Bullies
5. Data Snoops
6. Pirates
7. Academic Cheaters

Principal components explain 74% of variance

**[10th-12th] Q15: Please indicated how many times during this past school year [someone]...**



# Online Experiences and Interactions of Youth



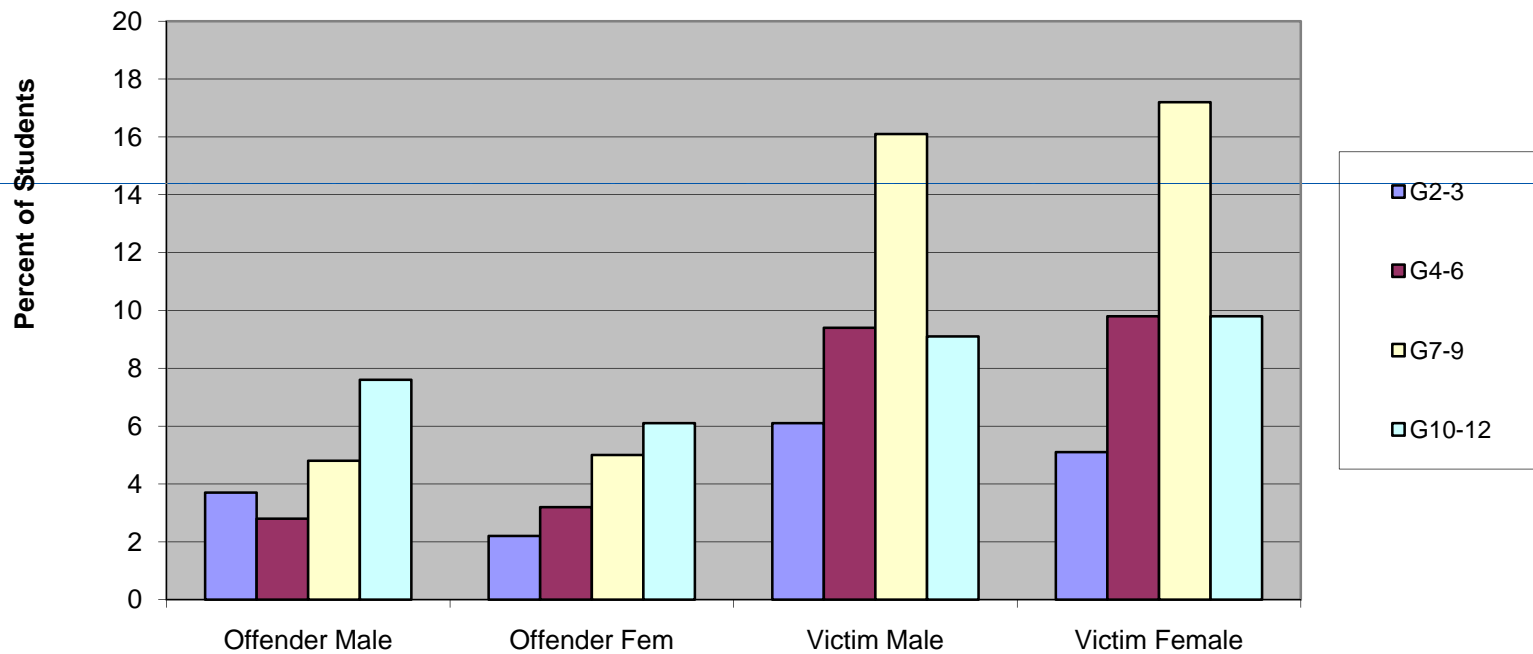
# General Observations: Digital Youth Culture

- Social computing via website forums, chat rooms, blogs, electronic gaming, "IM-ing" and "texting" are integral aspects of life
- Social computing provides for creativity and stimulating online interactions
- Social computing = mobile computing
- Always being online, available to chat or help out, and rapid-fire messaging is highly valued

# Alarming Aspects of Contemporary Digital Youth Culture

- Online incivility, promiscuity, abuse and crime by and among youth is common
- Sending mean messages and/or posting nasty content is done routinely by many though not all youth
- This is learned, “normal”, expected and encouraged online by millions of youth

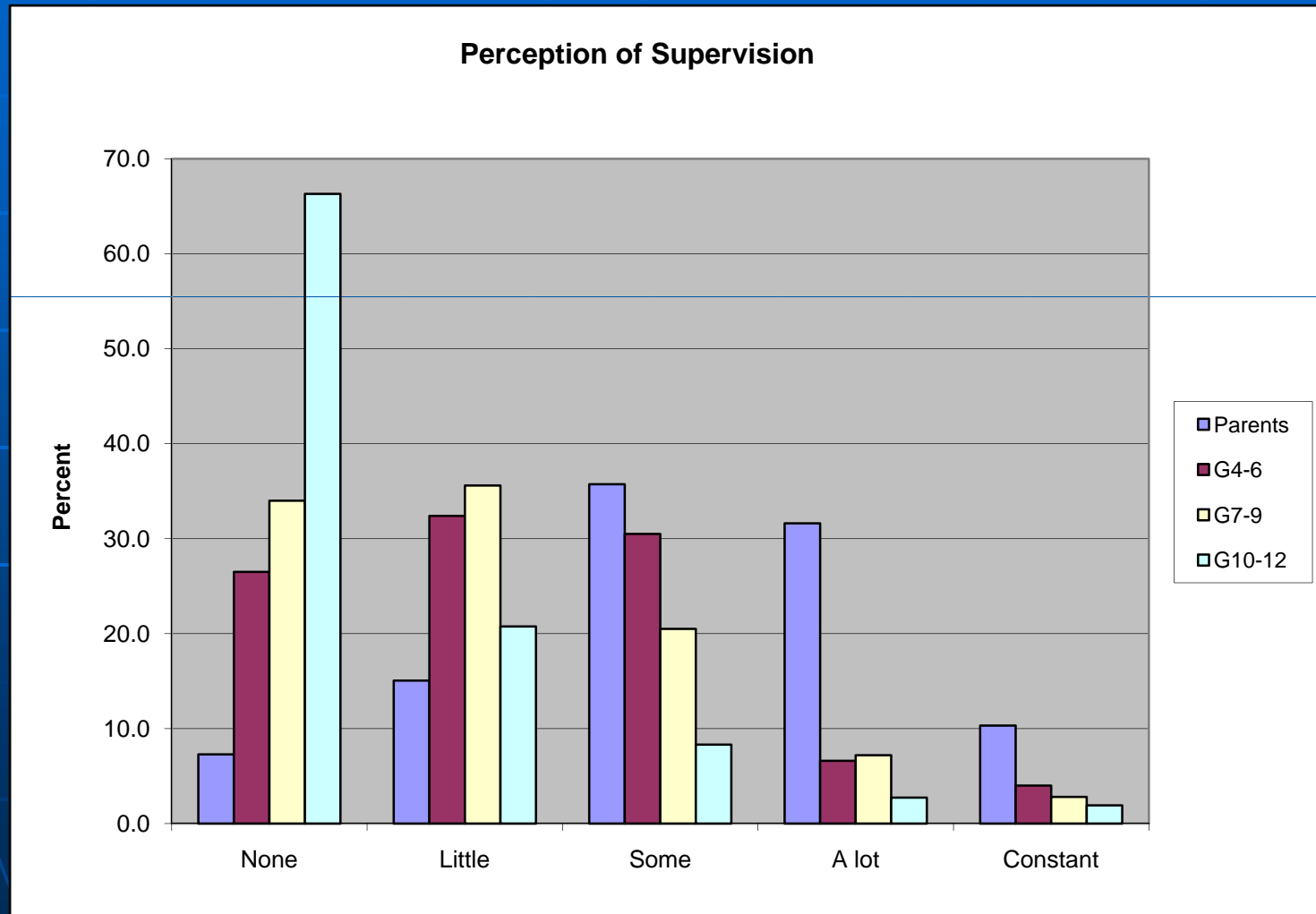
# Cyber Bullying K-12<sup>th</sup> Grade



# Alarming Aspects (cont.)

- “Leetspeak” when used for deception
- Multiple personal profiles consisting of true-to-false information
- Lying and deceit is common
- Rampant naivety (or apathy) about trustworthy online friendships and the process of “friending” undermine civility
- Content and behaviors multiply “virally” as youth create, teach and promote their online culture

# Choices and Parental Oversight



# Limitations of Survey

- Retrospective questions – youth must remember prior year's events
- Sensitive questions may illicit over or under-reporting of certain behaviors
- Sample does not include densely populated inner-urban school district
- Questions do not ask “why” students behave online as reported

# The Cyber Safety and Ethics Initiative

([www.bcybersafe.org](http://www.bcybersafe.org))

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