

# Bullying gets technical

Candice Bailey

CYBERBULLYING in SA is on the increase. And psychologists and online experts warn that while the phenomenon is under reported, the country will see more and more cases as access to technology increases.

In the latest research, just under 50 percent of 1 726 youngsters were victims of cyber-aggression.

One in three youngsters were victims of cyber-aggression at school while 42 percent experienced cyber-aggression outside school.

The study was done by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention in 2009, surveying young South Africans from four provinces.

In the survey, a quarter of the youngsters experienced bullying via SMSes on their cellphones.

And one in five youngsters admitted to having bullied someone via SMS.

According to the survey, close to 70 percent of those who had bullied others via SMS had been bullied themselves.

Cyberbullying was brought to the fore when a 15-year-old Krugersdorp High School girl became the latest victim on January 30, when she was attacked by a peer with a glass juice bottle after a series of on-line attacks by the girl and her friends.

According to experts, cyberbullying would only get worse.

Dr Pieter Streicher, MD of Bulksms.com, said cyberbullying had become a much bigger problem in the past five years.

It was growing because the use of technology was growing – and while not everyone in SA had a computer, most people had mobile phones.

The more children were exposed to technology, the more cyberbullying would grow, warned Streicher.