



# Improving digital civility in an online world

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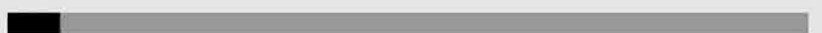


# Improving digital civility

From music festivals and dance classes to work and education—an increasing amount of our social interactions take place online.

And while the digital space is such a fundamental part of our lives—it has also, at times, become a breeding ground for bullying, trolling, and hate speech. This is why **ensuring kindness and respect** in communication is more important than ever.

***In this story, we'll discuss digital civility and how Microsoft is helping to improve it.***





# Is digital civility a problem?



Microsoft research tells us that people are increasingly concerned about digital civility—or the perceptions, tone, and risks of **online interactions**.

**But what, if anything, can be done to improve civility online?**

According to Microsoft, we start by measuring it.



# Measuring online risks



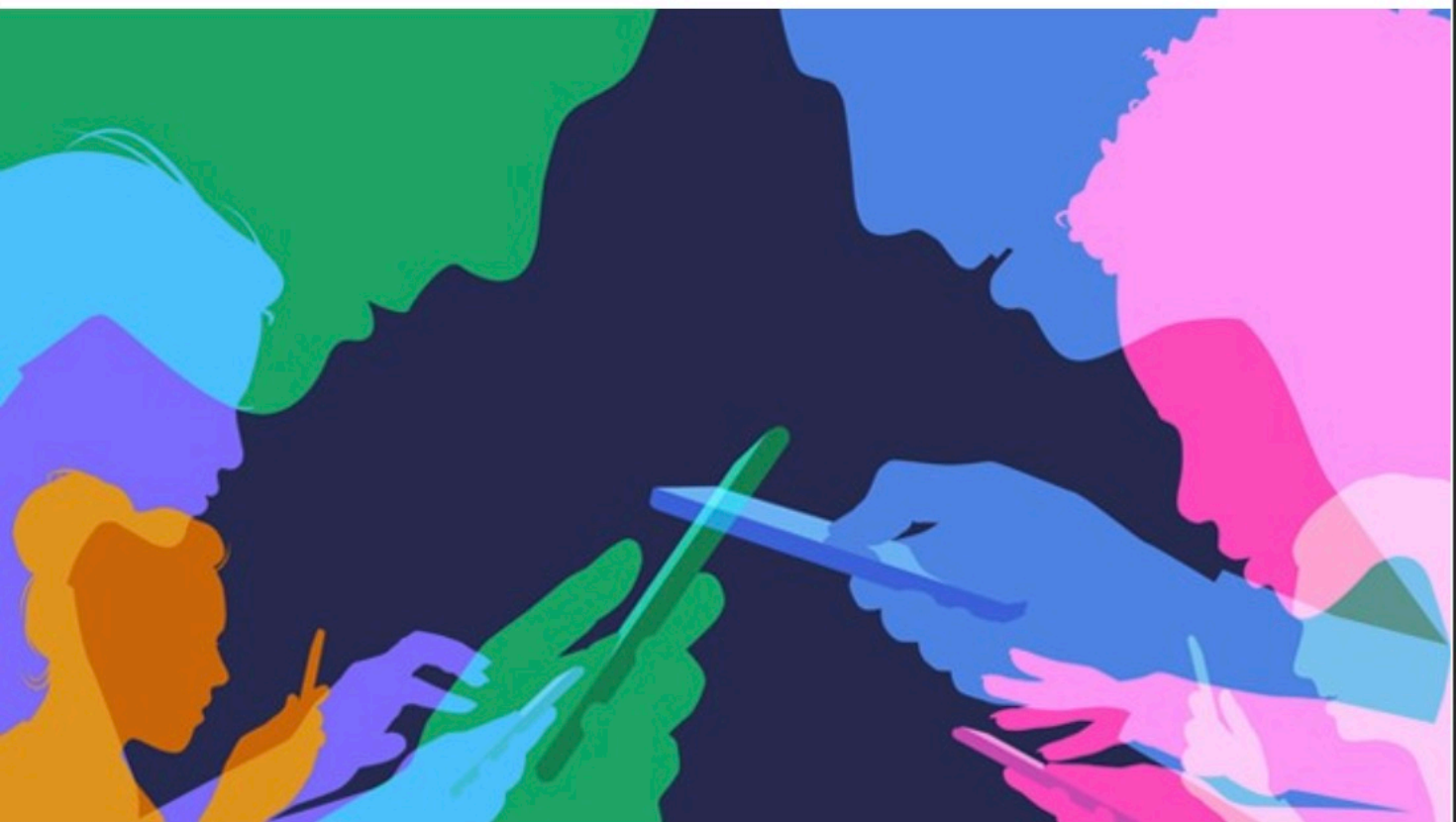
To help determine how to improve digital civility, Microsoft conducts **an annual, worldwide survey called the Digital Civility Index (DCI)**.

**The survey measures exposure to online risks** in different types of interactions—such as trolling, mean behavior, hate speech, and harassment.





# Surveying teens and adults



The most recent DCI polled 16,051 teens (13-17 years) and adults (18-74 years) in 32 geographies about their **exposure** to 21 different **online risks**.

Risks were placed into four categories—**behavioral, sexual, reputational, and personal/intrusive**.



# Surprising results



The DCI found that overall, **40% of teenagers** and **37% of adults** have been involved in online **bullying and harassment**.

And of those that encountered online risks—**15% cited discrimination as a risk**.

**One in five** reported being the **target of hate speech**, while almost **one-third** said they've been **exposed to online hoaxes, scams, or fraud**.



# How widespread is bullying?

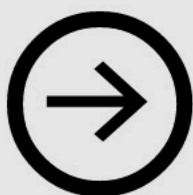


Perhaps not as surprising, was that **millennials and Gen Z** are the age groups **most affected** by **bullying**.

And while **Gen X'ers** made up the highest percentage of **targets** of bullying (62%), **Gen Z's** were more often **witnesses** (62%).

The most common defense to bullying was to **block the bully** (66%), while the least common was to **retaliate against them** (16%).

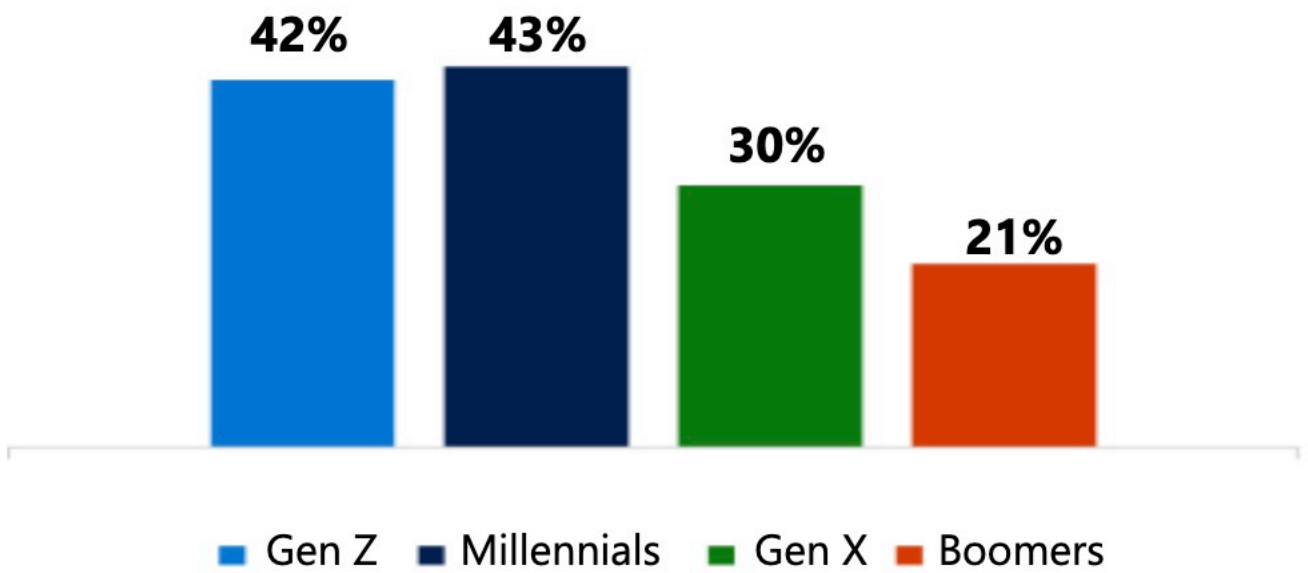
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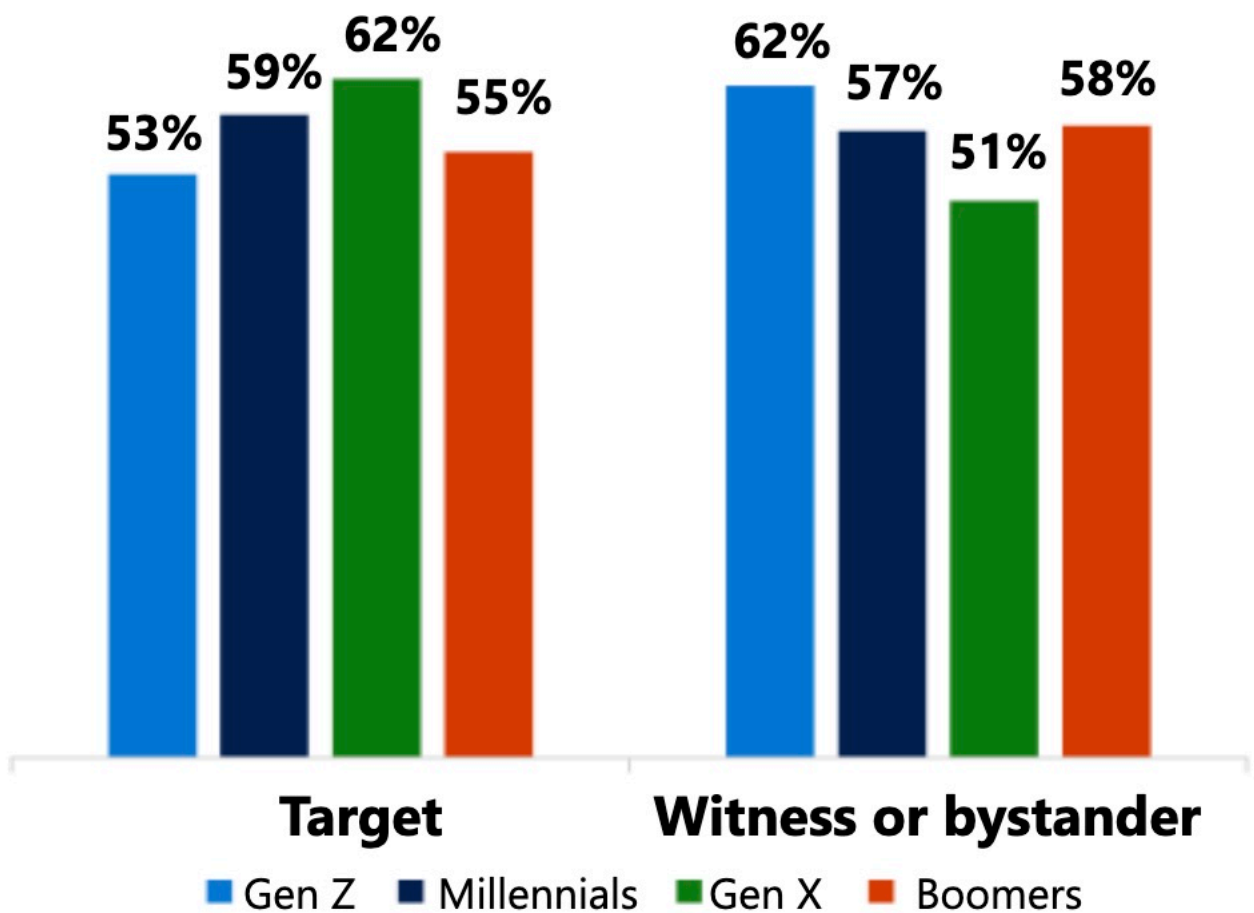


# The statistics

## *Involved in a bullying incident*



## *Role in bullying incident*



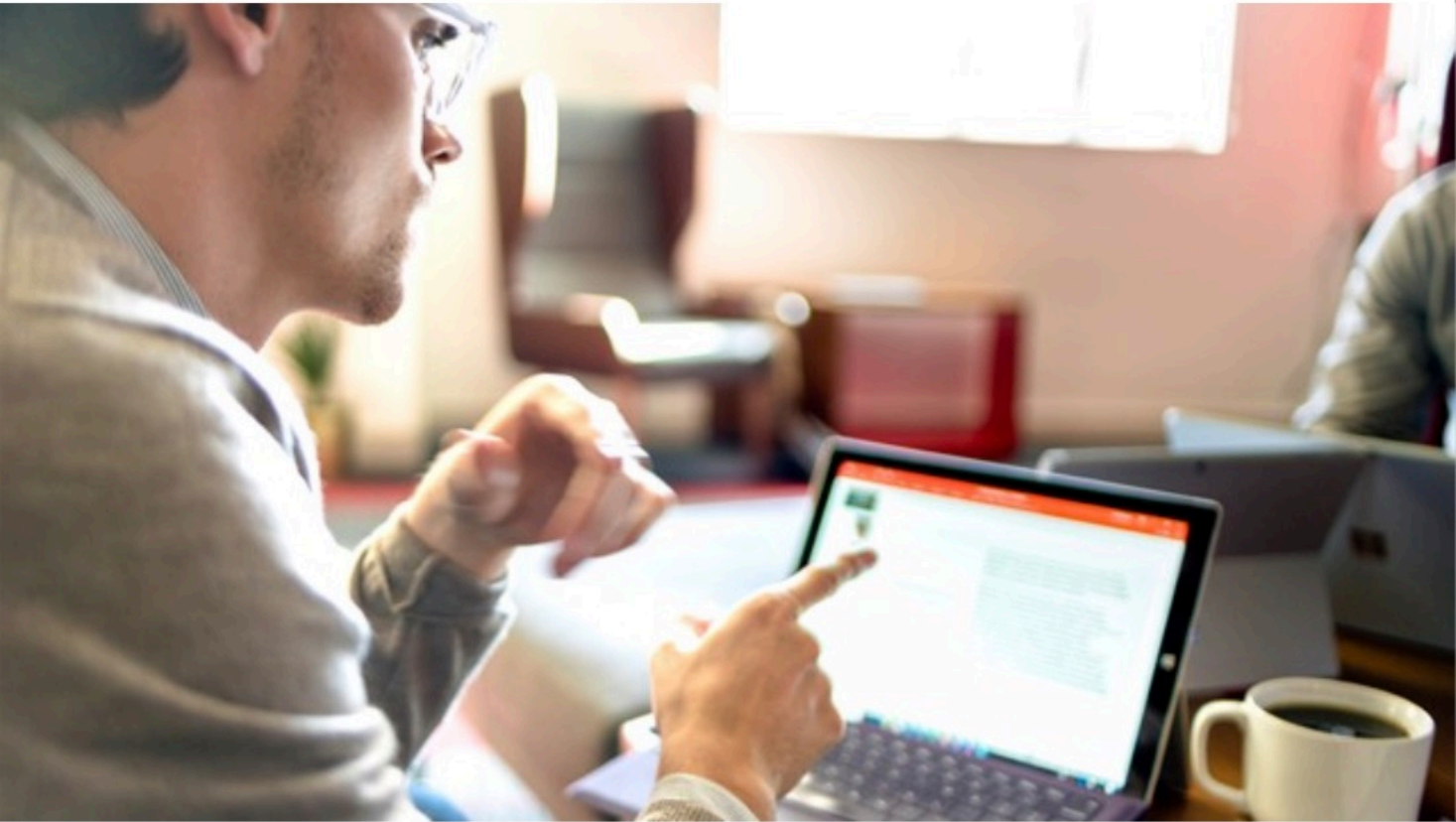
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# Hate and division growing



In the five years Microsoft has conducted the DCI—**three divisive risks** hit their highest levels in 2020. They were **hoaxes, frauds, and scams; hate speech; and discrimination**—all with the majority perpetrated **recently and by strangers**.

The **frequency of personal attacks** on a person (3 or more times) also went up by an average of 15%.

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# The statistics

**76%** of people reported enduring consequences from being treated uncivilly.

***Of those...***

**40%** were less likely to participate in social media after the incidents.

**37%** became less trusting of other people offline.

**33%** lost sleep.

**24%** endured a damaged reputation.

**17%** had thoughts of suicide.

**19%** said it negatively affected their school performance.

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# Teens lead civility recovery



**Digital and social media activity** exponentially **increased** during the pandemic—especially in countries with the strictest lockdowns.

And while 1 in 4 said civility online was better, 1 in 5 said it was worse. Overall however, it improved 3 points since 2019—with **teens accounting for nearly 80%** of the change across all risk categories.

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# The statistics

## ***Of the 26% that said civility was better...***

**67%** saw more people helping others.

**62%** felt a greater sense of community.

**60%** felt 'we're all in this together.'

**59%** felt people were coming together to deal with the crisis.

## ***Of the 22% that said civility was worse...***

**60%** said people take their frustration out online.

**54%** felt people are less tolerant.

**53%** think there are more personal attacks/negative comments.

**52%** think people are acting selfishly.

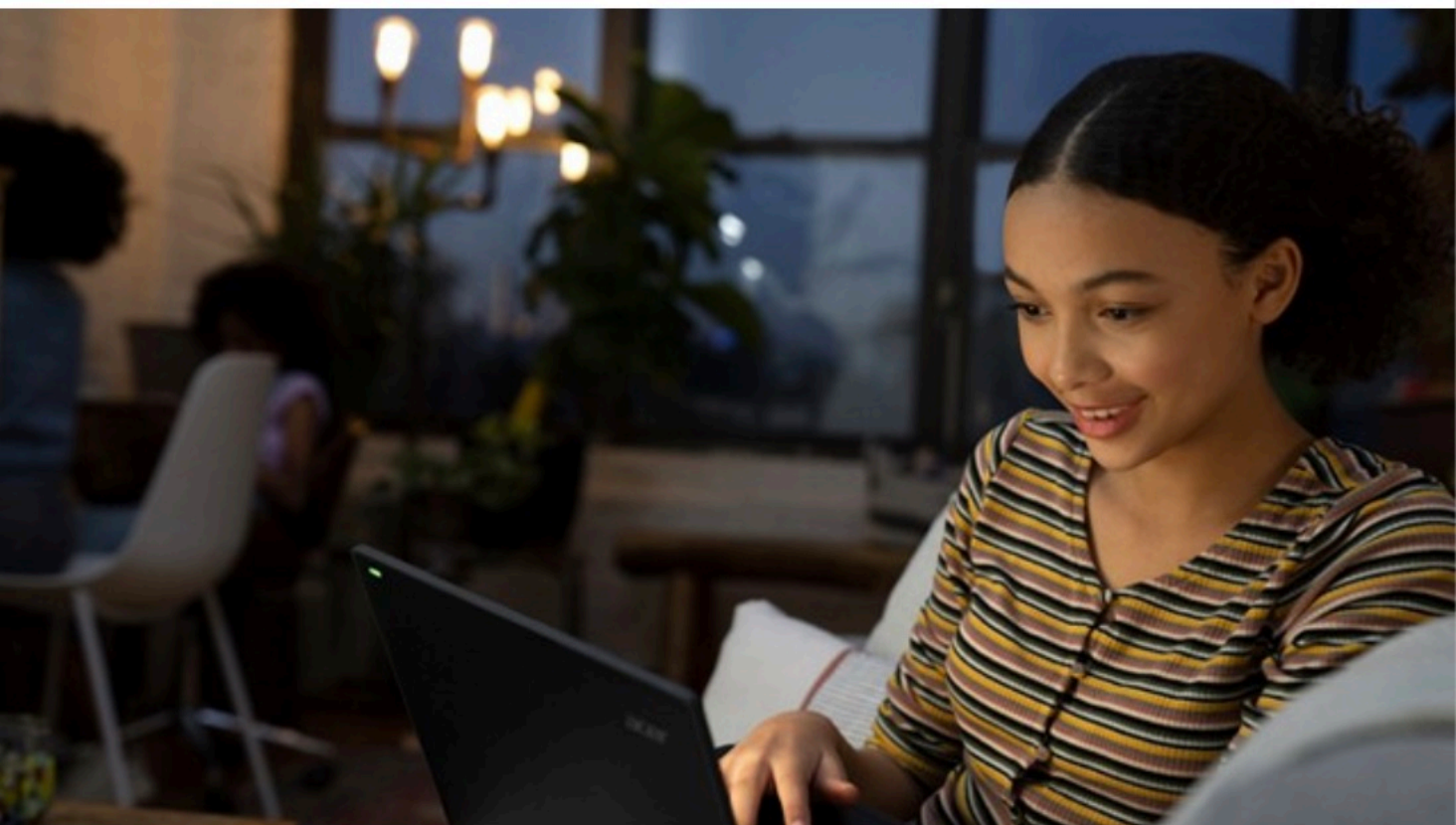


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# Key worldwide findings



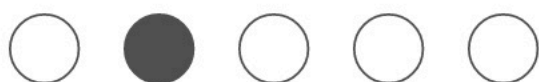
**Overall, teens showed more favorable scores.** This decline could be tied to **greater awareness among teens of serious online risks.**



# Key worldwide findings



**The U.K.**, which has held the number one spot for online civility in three of the last four years, slipped to number two in 2020, witnessing a **steady climb in incivility to 55%.**





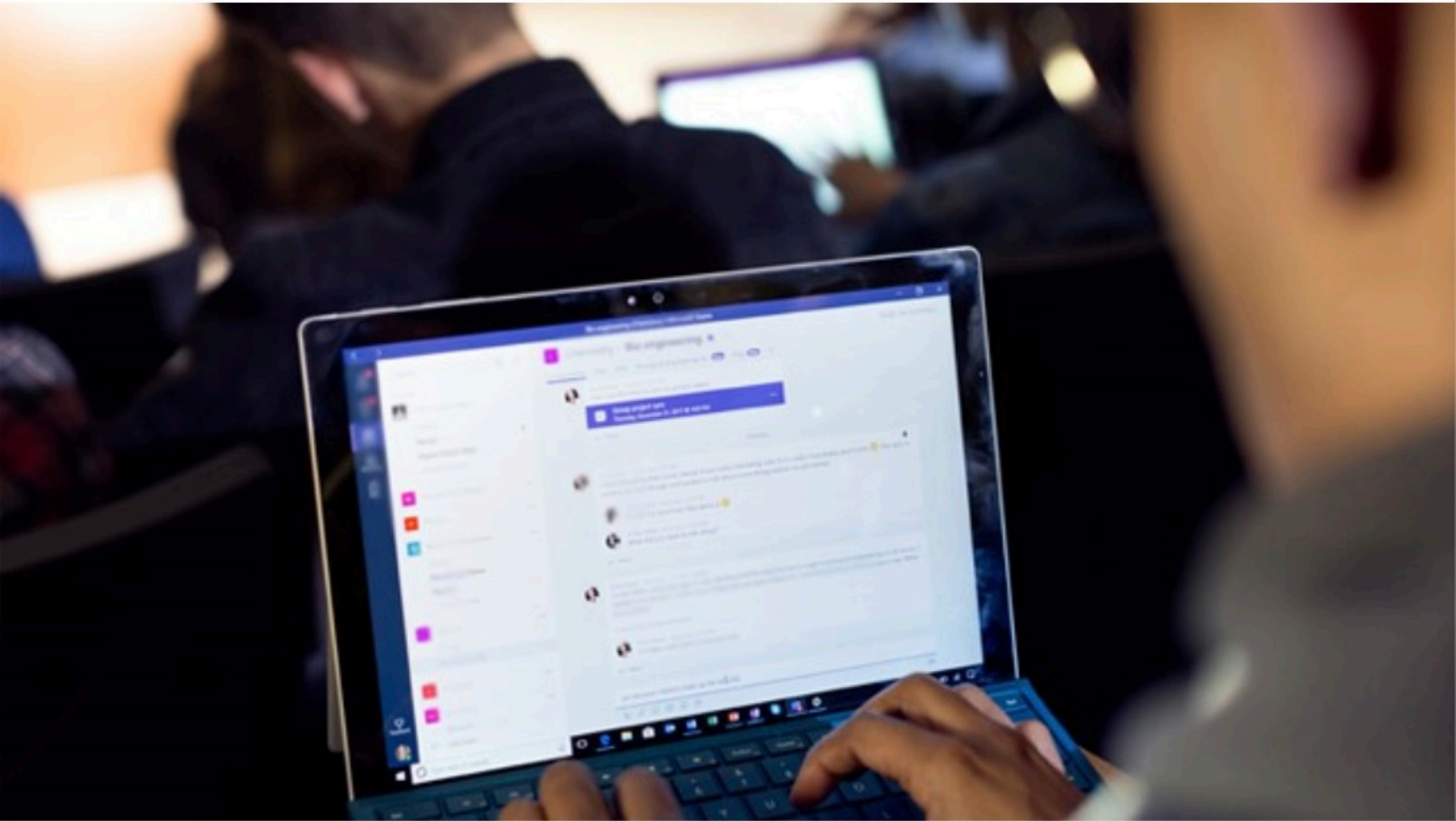
# Key worldwide findings



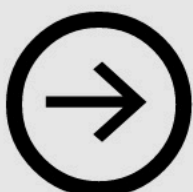
In the Asia Pacific region, **31% of respondents said civility online improved** during the pandemic—as people helped and encouraged one another, displayed a greater sense of community, and **came together to deal with the crisis.**



# Key worldwide findings



The countries with the **highest online incivility readings** were South Africa (81%), Russia (80%) and Mexico (76%). In 2019 all three were at 80% or higher.

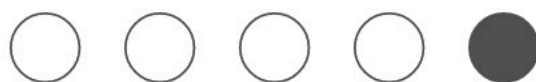




# Key worldwide findings



In **Latin America**, **31% said online civility declined** during the pandemic—9 percentage points above the worldwide average of 22%. **APAC, Central and Eastern Europe**, and the combined **North American and Western European block**, reported “**worsening**” percentages of 22%, 28% and 17%, respectively.



# What does it all mean?



Microsoft sees these results as a clear need for more “digital good.”

**But what is digital good?  
And how can we embrace it?**

Put simply, digital good means **showing more kindness and respect in our everyday encounters** to ensure that online interactions have a constructive impact on everyone involved.





# Promoting best practices



To help ensure more constructive online communication and ultimately more digital good—Microsoft created the **Digital Civility Challenge**.

The worldwide challenge focuses on **four ideals or best practices** people can abide by when they engage online.





# Digital Civility Challenge



## Live the golden rule

I will act with empathy, compassion, and kindness in every interaction, and treat everyone with dignity and respect.



# Digital Civility Challenge



## Respect differences

I will appreciate cultural differences and honor diverse perspectives. When I disagree, I will engage thoughtfully and avoid name calling and personal attacks.



# Digital Civility Challenge



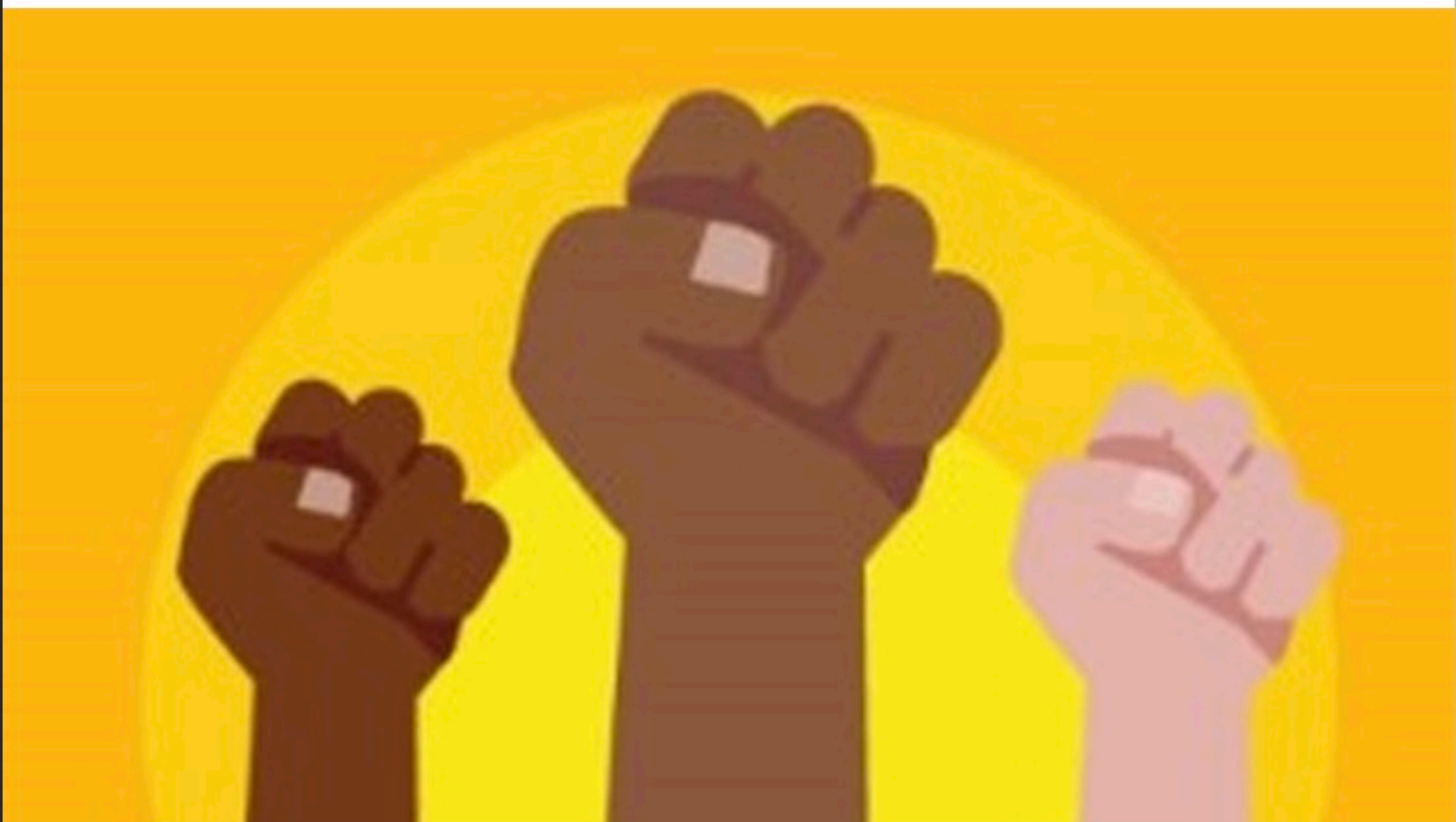
## Pause before replying

I will pause and think before responding to things I disagree with. I will not post or send anything that could hurt someone else, damage someone's reputation, or threaten anyone's safety, including my own.





# Digital Civility Challenge



## **Stand up for myself and others**

I will tell someone if I feel unsafe, offer support to those who are targets of online abuse or cruelty, report activity that threatens anyone's safety, and preserve evidence of inappropriate or unsafe behavior.



# Safer Internet Day



Another way Microsoft is helping to achieve digital good is through Safer Internet Day. For the past five years, Microsoft has used this day to **advocate for better digital civility**.

It is **celebrated in 170 countries** aiming to help make the internet a safer and **better place for all**—especially for children and teens.

Held the second Tuesday of every February, it offers people **around the world** an opportunity to take stock of their digital lives.



# The good news



While many of the statistics in this Story may be concerning—there is some good news. According to the DCI, of the **teens** and **adults** involved in online **bullying and harassment**—the vast majority expressed remorse for instigating or contributing to bullying (79%).

And of those exposed to risks, 57% took at least **one Digital Civility Challenge** action **to recover** from a risk incident such as bullying or hate speech.







# Treat everyone with respect

As we continue to prioritize innovation in tech—**safety and civility must also be prioritized.**

Because the more we strive to make kindness a cornerstone of the online experience, the more users of all ages can benefit from all that our digital life has to offer.

That's why it's in all of our best interest to **treat everyone we interact with online with dignity and respect.**



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