

Online Stalking on Instagram

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Abstract

Social media influencers may be a particularly vulnerable population when it comes to online stalking. This study is the first to investigate how prevalent stalking victimization is in this population and what patterns of stalking behavior they may experience. I recruited Instagram influencers to complete an online survey of their experiences related to stalking. The social media influencers reported a higher prevalence of stalking than was reported in stalking prevalence surveys of community residents. Reported stalking rates in the social media influencers were similar to those experienced by other public figures such as media personalities and politicians. The results detail the diversity of stalking behaviors experienced by this population and how these behaviors manifest online and offline.

Keywords: Stalking; influencer; harassment; cyberstalking; social media; Instagram

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Introduction

Stalking is a form of targeted violence, involving a pattern or repeated course of conduct that induces fear or concern for one's safety (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). Unlike other forms of violence, stalking can include a diversity of behaviors, some of which may be lawful in isolation (e.g., unwanted communication, unwanted gifts, following the victim). The impact of stalking on victims most often involves psychological harm (e.g., depression and anxiety, trauma symptoms) (Acquadro Maran & Varetto, 2018; Cantu & Charak, 2020; Logan & Walker, 2019); though some stalking may involve actual or attempted physical harm such as physical assault, sexual assault, or even homicide (Roberts, 2005; Thompson et al., 2013; Viñas-Racionero et al., 2017). According to the General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety of 2014, conducted by Statistics Canada, approximately 1.9 million Canadians reported having experienced stalking behavior in the past five years, which represented approximately 6% of Canada's population aged 15 years and older (Burczycka, 2016). To date, the majority of research has focused on in-person stalking rather than on stalking behaviors that occur online through the use of Internet technology.

The Internet has revolutionized the ways in which people are able to connect, communicate with one another, and disseminate information. In Canada in 2019, over 34 million people (greater than 90% of the population) were Internet users (Statista, 2019). It is not surprising that individuals who engage in stalking behaviors would also use the Internet or other technologies as tools to perpetrate harassment, which has been termed "technology-facilitated stalking" (Woodlock, 2016). Unlike stalking that is committed without the use of technology, perpetrators may be able to inflict harm in more diverse ways. For example, they may cause social isolation in victims through the need to change phone numbers or leave social media, they may have more continuous access to victims, and the ability to readily spread libel and intimate information (Woodlock, 2016). Fisher et al. (2014) found that stalking behaviors among adolescents involved a range of technologies to harass or monitor a victim including cell phones, email, social media, global positioning systems (GPS), and listening devices. In addition to technology increasing the severity of in-person stalking behaviors, it may also be used as a medium through which stalking may occur, for example through Internet-based technology such as social media. Despite the rising popularity of social media, with

leading social media sites like Facebook hosting billions of users worldwide (Gómez et al., 2019), the role of social media in stalking remains poorly understood (Roberts et al., 2016).

Online stalking – also known as cyberstalking – broadly involves the perpetration of stalking behaviors through the use of the Internet, computers, and other electronic devices (Parsons-Pollard & Moriarty, 2009; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). It can include behaviors common in offline stalking, such as sending unwanted messages, unwanted sexual advances, or threats, but delivered remotely via online tools such as email or social media (Begotti & Acquadro Maran, 2019; Reyns, 2018). Cyberstalking can also include behaviors that are unique to the Internet. Internet-specific behaviors include sending viruses, impersonating someone online, hacking into their private online accounts, and spying on or physically tracking victims using devices connected to the Internet (Lopez-Neira et al., 2019; Powell & Henry, 2018; Sheridan & Grant, 2007). Additional challenges to risk assessment in cyberstalking include the ability for perpetrators to remain anonymous online, have access to multiple potential victim pools (e.g., through the use of chatrooms), and the ability for the perpetrator and victim to be in different policing jurisdictions, which complicates criminal prosecution. For the purposes of the current study, cyberstalking was defined as either originating online or primarily perpetrated using online technology. Most research into cyberstalking to date has focussed on intimate partner violence (IPV), sometimes referred to as intimate partner cyberstalking (IPCS), which can occur during an on-going intimate relationship. For example, current perpetrators of IPCS may use online technology to monitor their partners by checking browser history or personal emails to ensure they are not planning to end the relationship (Southworth et al., 2007). Perpetrators may also see cyberstalking as a way to maintain or initiate an intimate relationship, a motivation that may be more prevalent among female perpetrators (Smoker & March, 2017).

Prevalence rates for online stalking, also known as cyberstalking, are difficult to estimate; there is a lack of a consistency in the definition used in various surveys. According to the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety found that approximately 2.5 million people in Canada, or about 7% of Internet users aged 15 and older, reported having experienced cyberstalking within the last 5 years (Burlock & Hudon, 2018). This prevalence rate was actually higher than that of "stalking" reported in the same survey (Burczykca, 2016). The U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime

Victimization Survey in 2006 reported 3.4 million people in the US (1.5% aged 18 or older) were victims of stalking, with 1 in 4 of those victims having been victims of cyberstalking (Catalano, 2012). The Crime Survey for England and Wales reported 60,000 instances of “harassment and stalking” that were flagged as “online crime,” making up 15% of these offences (Elkin, 2019).

Online technology has become a significant part of people’s lives, particularly for maintaining relationships and social interactions. *Social media* refers to a type of online technology that allows users to communicate and share information, enabling them to form online communities around shared interests. Social media is pervasive in our societies, with over 3.5 billion social media users worldwide across a variety of platforms in 2020 (Statista, 2020). A new form of relationship is emerging online, especially within social media: the parasocial relationship. The term *parasocial relationship* (PSR) was first used by Horton and Wohl (1956) to describe when a person consuming a piece of media begins to form a one-way relationship with the media performer. This relationship is viewed as mutual even though the performer has no way of knowing the other person is there (Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen, 2016). For example, PSRs can form between shopping channel hosts and viewers, particularly older viewers, where hosts actively try to create an atmosphere of friendship, which leads to viewers being more willing to make purchases (Lim & Kim, 2011). This connection between PSRs and consumer habits has become prominent in social media spaces with regards to content creators, also known as *influencers*.

Social media influencers are individuals who earn financial income largely by releasing promotional advertising content through the use of their social media platforms. The term influencer arises from the notion that such individuals can affect the purchasing decisions of others due to their knowledge of a subject area, position of authority, or relationship with their audience. Typically, this media content will include photography, lifestyle and beauty guides, video essays, and video blogs where the influencer talks about their personal life (Yuan & Lou, 2020). To achieve the status of being an influencer, one must form an audience (often referred to as gaining followers), and produce content that garners interest, which typically falls into a niche area (e.g., fitness, beauty, lifestyle). Income revenues are formed when influencers partner with brands who then use the influencer’s social status to sell merchandise. Influencers have been found to have a great deal of sway over their audience’s purchasing habits through

the development of PSRs (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Lou & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019), which incentivizes them to build a close and personal rapport with their audience to bolster their brand (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Unlike traditional brand marketing, social media influencers form PSRs with their audience by directly interacting with them through the use of their social media content (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). For example, an influencer may regularly interact with fans, promoting a sense of friendship between them. Fans who do not receive direct interactions are still primed to anticipate these interactions (they may be seen as rare but within reach), which means regular interactions with some fans can strengthen a parasocial relationship with the whole fanbase (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). In turn, this increases credibility and trust with the influencer. An influencer may produce a video explaining a daily routine and the products they use during their routine. Engaging with their audience in this way can increase the strength of the PSR (Bond, 2016). Product recommendations are more likely to be viewed as coming from a trustworthy friend rather than an advertiser if a parasocial relationship exists between the two (Chung & Cho, 2017).

Despite the rising popularity of social media, there is little research into the intersection between PSRs and cyberstalking. Previous studies examining the role that PSRs may play in risk for stalking victimization have found that one-way interactions could trigger obsessive thoughts and a desire to contact celebrities (Leets et al., 1995), and may explain the shift between celebrity fascination to obsessive rumination and stalking behavior (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2008). Indeed, it may be suitable to compare influencers to other public figures. Celebrities, media personalities, and politicians experience higher rates of stalking than the general public. A survey of United Kingdom members of Parliament found that 38% had experienced stalking during their political career (James et al., 2016), while a 28% stalking prevalence rate was reported among Norwegian members of Parliament (Narud & Dahl, 2015). A survey of German media personalities largely working in news media found a 79% prevalence rate of stalking (Meloy, Hoffmann, & Sheridan, 2008). Influencers share similarities with these other public figures; their career requires them to be in the public eye with a large, anonymous audience and they are often in positions of higher status or authority, acting as role models and advisors to the public. Influencers may be at a higher risk of stalking due to being Internet celebrities. This may be especially true for female influencers; in the GSS on Canadians' Safety, 62% of stalking victims were women (Burczycka, 2016). This

finding has been consistent across time; surveys from the United States National Institute of Justice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Center for Injury Prevention and Control in 1998 and 2017 detailed higher rates of stalking victimization for women compared to men. These surveys reported 8% and 31.2% of women had been stalked respectively, compared to 5% and 16.1% of men (Smith et al., 2022; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Given these findings, it stands to reason that the influencer community may also be at risk of experiencing cyberstalking, particularly from their own audience due to the development of PSRs. If this is the case, influencers may be especially vulnerable as disconnecting from the perpetrator could be difficult without disconnecting from their audience, which could negatively impact their career and finances. This may be especially difficult because online stalking, especially through social media, can create a feeling of the perpetrator being “omnipresent” and able to access the victim at any time (Dimond et al., 2011; Woodlock, 2016).

Current Study

Influencers are active, public online personalities who are incentivized to build PSRs with an audience, whose income is reliant on engagement with that audience. There has been no research into the prevalence and impact of online stalking within this population to date. We do not have an understanding of how at risk this population is for online stalking, though research suggests that there are risk factors inherent to the career of a social media influencer that could place them at increased risk. The present study is the first to investigate whether influencers do experience these behaviors, which behaviors are the most common, and what factors may predict behaviors. This preliminary study surveyed Instagram influencers to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence rate of stalking behaviors directed towards Instagram influencers?
 - I hypothesized that Instagram influencers will be at increased risk due to the vulnerability created by the PSR. Consequently, I hypothesized that Instagram influencers would report prevalence

rates of stalking higher than those reported in general population surveys, and that the majority of my collected sample would have experienced it.

2. What types of stalking behaviors do influencers experience?

- Based on research into technology-facilitated and in-person stalking, I expected to find unwanted messages to be the most common stalking behavior. I also expected to find Internet-specific behaviors (e.g., following/unfollowing accounts repeatedly, and using multiple accounts to get around blocks) to be prevalent. Lastly, I predicted that in-person stalking of influencers would be uncommon.

3. Are there any demographic factors that are predictive of more severe cyberstalking?

- I hypothesized that being a female influencer combined with a higher level of personal disclosure would be associated with increased likelihood or severity of stalking behaviors.

Method

Participants

I attempted to recruit a convenience sample of influencers on the Instagram social media platform who were at least 18 years old and who had between 5,000 and 1,000,000 followers. These inclusion criteria were intended to ensure that potential participants were capable of providing informed consent and also were sufficiently popular to be considered established on Instagram but not so popular as to be considered celebrities. I identified influencers as individuals who were posting advertising content for third party brands. I did not contact individuals who were advertising their own businesses or brands, nor did I contact individuals who built their following and popularity outside of social media and had moved to Instagram to grow their fanbase such as celebrities and other public figures. My intention was to focus the survey on influencers who had built their presence on social media and Instagram in particular.

I created an Instagram account (`research_of_online_stalking`) for the study. The profile page of this account contained an advertisement for the survey as well as details about the study, contact information for the researchers, and links to the survey. This account was also used to contact influencers and invite them to take part in a study on influencers' experiences with online stalking to gauge whether this was a problem in the influencer community, and if so, how it was affecting influencers. Influencers were invited to participate regardless of whether they had experienced stalking or not. I contacted participants either through Instagram's direct messaging feature from an Instagram account made specifically for the study or through email if they had listed one publicly on their profile page. The invitation sent to influencers encouraged them to share it with other Instagram influencers, and a small number of prominent influencers offered to promote the study widely. I also contacted influencer talent agencies, companies that are responsible for assisting influencers in managing their public relations and asked them to inform their clients about the study, though this method of recruitment did not meet with any success. Initially, influencers were advised that participation was voluntary. During the course of the study I received funding to establish a prize draw, and so revised the invitation to inform influencers that participants would be offered the

opportunity to register in a draw to win prizes of \$25 or \$50 CAD. (Participants who had already completed the study could not be entered into the prize draw retroactively due to the anonymous nature of the survey.)

During the course of recruitment, approximately 8,500 influencers received an invitation to participate and 168 responded, yielding a response rate of approximately 2%. Of the 168 influencers who responded to the survey invitation, 1 was excluded on the basis of age, 3 were excluded due to follower counts outside of the 5,000 to 1,000,000 range, and 1 did not provide consent and withdrew from the study voluntarily. A further 62 influencers provided consent but did not complete the survey (i.e., did not submit responses at the end). This resulted in a final sample of 101 participants, representing 60% of the influencers who responded to the initial invitation to participate. The content of the survey is described in detail below.

Of the 101 participants, 93 identified as female, 7 identified as male, and 1 identified as non-binary. Their reported follower counts varied greatly, ranging from 5,082 to 650,000 followers, with a median follower count of 25,500 followers. According to the Instagram Engagement Report conducted by Mention (2021), a social media and web monitoring tool, in 2021 about 54% of Instagram users had fewer than 1,000 followers; about 38% of users had between 1,000 and 10,000 followers; about 6% between 10,001 and 50,000, followers; about 1% had between 50,001 and 100,000 followers; about 1% had between 100,001 and 500,000 followers; and less than 1% had more than 500,001 followers. Based on these figures, all of the participants fell in the top half of Instagram users with respect to follower count, and about 77% of fell in the top decile (i.e., $\geq 90^{\text{th}}$ %ile). Participants produced a variety of content types including fashion (36 participants), health and fitness (15), food and nutrition (15), parenting advice (11), travel (10), DIY and home décor (9), and lifestyle coaching (8) being the most common. 53 participants were from the USA, with 19 from the United Kingdom, 18 from Canada, 6 from Australia, 1 from Austria, 1 from Belgium, 1 from the Philippines, 1 from Spain, 1 from Switzerland, and 1 from Trinidad.

The survey also asked how long participants had been influencers, whether their social media presence was their sole source of income, the extent to which they shared personal details with their fanbase, and how important they considered having a close connection with their fans was to their career as an influencer. Full details are presented

in Table 1. Briefly, most participants (approximately 88%) reported they had been an influencer for at least a year at the time of the survey; it may be that the study inclusion criterion regarding follower count was less likely to have been met by influencers with less than a year of experience. Approximately 26% of participants reported they were able to rely on their influencer career as their sole source of income. This supports the perception of this career as potentially very lucrative and accessible, though influencers who are being stalked via social media whose finances rely entirely on engaging with social media may find it difficult to avoid perpetrators without jeopardizing their careers. Most participants reported disclosing personal details to their fanbase and considered a close personal relationship with fans to be important to their careers (approximately 73% and 90% respectively). These findings suggest that many influencers engaged in behaviors that can trigger the development of PSRs.

Correlations among the demographic variables are presented in Appendix A.

Materials

Using SurveyMonkey survey software, all participants answered a series of questions that asked about: (a) social media presence, (b) demographics, (c) relationships with fans, (d) types of stalking behaviors experienced, (e) number of past perpetrators (f) when the stalking took place, and (g) relationship to perpetrator. Participants indicated any stalking behaviors they had experienced from a list of 26 behaviors.

This list was informed by the nature of stalking factors detailed in the Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM; Kropp et al., 2008). The SAM provides broad factors alongside examples of behavior that were used to differentiate between specific behaviors in the study. For example one factor in the SAM, "Communicates With Victim", includes remote attempts at contact such as phone calls, electronic communication, and deliveries to the victim as specific examples. These were included as separate behaviors in the survey such as *unwanted phone calls*, *repeated unwanted private/public communication*, and *sent things to you in the mail*. Behaviors specific to online stalking were informed by cyberstalking research, which identified unique forms of cyberstalking such as impersonating victims, hacking, and gathering and releasing

victims' information online (Cavezza & McEwan, 2014; Marcum et al., 2017; Sheridan & Grant, 2007; Spence-Diehl, 2003).

Table 1. Demographic Variables of Influencer Participants

Variable	N	%	95% CI
How long have you been an Instagram influencer?			
3-6 months	5	5%	[2%, 11%]
6 months to a year	7	7%	[3%, 14%]
1-2 years	24	24%	[17%, 33%]
2-3 years	19	19%	[12%, 28%]
More than 3 years	46	46%	[36%, 55%]
Is Instagram your sole source of income?			
Yes	26	26%	[18%, 35%]
No	75	74%	[65%, 82%]
Do you share personal details with your fans?			
No personal details shared	4	4%	[2%, 10%]
Not many personal details shared	23	23%	[16%, 32%]
Some personal details shared	51	50%	[41%, 60%]
Lots of personal details shared	23	23%	[16%, 32%]
Is having a close personal connection with your fans important for your career as an influencer?			
Yes	90	89%	[82%, 94%]
No	11	11%	[6%, 18%]

Note. N = 101.

I included *seeking sympathy from the victim's fanbase* as a behavior to investigate whether influencers' audiences were being utilized by perpetrators to further harass victims. Based on participants' responses, they were branched into different questions that asked for more specific details about those behaviors. These questions included how the behavior manifested and for how long the behavior lasted. For example, when asking about hacking or attempted hacking of online accounts the survey asks: "What account(s) did they try to access?", "Did they successfully access your account(s)?", "If they were successful, are you aware of how they gained access to your account(s)?", and "Approximately how many times did this happen?" In addition, throughout the survey participants were given the opportunity to clarify or add detail to their answers through free-form text boxes. Details of the full survey can be found in Appendix C.

Upon completing the survey, participants were directed to online safety resources in the event that the nature of the survey had caused any distress. Participants who had the opportunity to sign up for the prize draw were directed to a separate survey hosted on Qualtrics. This survey asked participants to enter their email address to be entered into the prize draw; this was done so that no identifying information could be connected to a participants' survey responses. Details can be found in Appendix B.

Full details of both surveys can be found in Appendices C and B, respectively.

Procedure

All participants were informed of the purpose and structure of the study; they were provided links to the study's Instagram account, which explained the study in detail, and provided informed consent at the beginning of the survey. The consent form explained confidentiality and explained that participants could withdraw from the study at any time; this option was reiterated at the end of the study as well prior to participants submitting their responses.

Participants who consented to participate completed a series of mandatory demographic questions before being branched off to more specific questions about their experiences. Aside from the demographic questions, all further questions were optional. Participants were allowed to skip questions that made them uncomfortable or that were not relevant to their experiences. At the end of the survey participants were given the option to contact the student lead researcher via email to express interest in future studies or to request information about the current study.

Throughout the survey, stalking was defined for participants as "unwanted and repeated communication, contact or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of those known to them" (Kropp et al., 2011, p. 128). It was also explained that for a behavior to be repeated it must have occurred more than two times. Participants were directed to only indicate behaviors they had experienced that they believed resulted from their online presence. For the section that focused on the participant's relationship with the

perpetrator, participants were directed to answer with the single most serious case of stalking in mind.

Data Analysis

I used a mixed methods approach to analyze the survey responses. Closed-ended survey responses were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 27). Free-form survey responses were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis, with the content coding schemes developed *a posteriori* based on the information provided by participants.

Results

Research Question 1: Prevalence of Self-Perceived Stalking Victimization

Participants answered two questions regarding whether they perceived they had been the victim of stalking that was related to their online presence. Based on the responses to these two questions, 52 participants reported they had been victims of stalking on at least one occasion during their careers as influencers, corresponding to a lifetime (more accurately, a “career-time”) prevalence rate of 51%, 95% CI [42%, 61%], and 29 indicated they had been victims of stalking on at least one occasion within the past year, corresponding to a 12-month prevalence rate of 29%, 95% CI [21%, 38%].¹ 6 participants reported they were being stalked at the time they completed the survey, corresponding to a point prevalence of 6%, 95% CI [3%, 12%].

Participants also reported how many people had engaged in stalking toward them. Of the 52 participants who reported they had been victims of stalking on at least one occasion during their careers as influencers, 43 provided an estimate. The number of reported perpetrators ranged from *Min* = 1 to *Max* = 50, with *Mdn* = 3; 6 participants reported 10 or more stalkers.

Prevalence of Stalking Behaviors

Participants also answered questions about their experience of 26 stalking-related behaviors that were related to their online presence, regardless of whether they perceived those behaviors to constitute stalking. 93 participants reported having experienced a stalking-related behavior on at least one occasion during their careers as influencers, corresponding to a lifetime prevalence rate of 92%, 95% CI [85%, 99%]. Of these 93 participants, the number of different stalking-related behaviors they reported experiencing ranged from *Min* = 1 to *Max* = 17, with *Mdn* = 4.

¹ For ease of interpretation, I will present all prevalence rates as percentages with two significant figures.

Why was the rate of self-reported stalking victimization (52%) so low compared to the prevalence of reported stalking-related behavior (92%)? To explore this question, I analyzed the reported level of fear in the 93 participants who reported experiencing at least one stalking-related behavior. Only 41% of these participants reported experiencing fear for their own safety or that of people known to them in relation to the stalking-related behavior. It is possible that they interpreted the behavior to be less serious in nature (i.e., not rising to the level of “real” stalking) or associated with some other, related phenomenon (e.g., “trolling,” “harassment,” or simple incivility).

Research Question #2: What Types of Stalking Behaviors Do Influencers Experience?

Prevalence of Specific Stalking-Related Behaviors

The prevalence rates of the individual stalking-related behaviors reported by influencers are presented in Table 2, arranged in descending order of prevalence. As the table indicates, the highest prevalence rate was for *unwanted private communication*, which was reported by 79% of participants, but the prevalence rates were relatively low for the most part, *Mdn* = 13%. One pattern evident in Table 2 is that, in general, the highest prevalence rates were reported for stalking-related behaviors that can occur online (e.g., *creating multiple accounts*, *hacking accounts*) as compared to those that cannot occur online.

To explore this finding more detail, I analyzed the behaviors that cannot occur only online or only offline and determined whether they were reported as occurring more frequently online or offline. The results, presented in Table 3, indicated they were more commonly reported as occurring online.

Table 2. Prevalence of Stalking Behaviors

Behavior	N	%	95% CI
Unwanted private communication	80	79%	[70%, 86%]
Derogatory or insulting comments	54	53%	[44%, 63%]
Repeated following/unfollowing accounts	52	51%	[42%, 61%]
Unwanted public communication	50	50%	[40%, 59%]
Impersonated victim online	38	38%	[29%, 47%]
Gathering information	35	35%	[26%, 44%]
Creating multiple accounts	34	34%	[25%, 43%]
Hacked or attempted to hack into accounts	31	31%	[23%, 40%]
Fake stories or rumors to damage reputation	28	28%	[20%, 37%]
Unwanted subscriptions/mailling lists/services	22	22%	[15%, 31%]
Unwanted phone calls	20	20%	[13%, 29%]
Intimidation	16	16%	[10%, 24%]
Unwanted mail	12	12%	[7%, 20%]
Repeated following/unfollowing friends and family accounts	11	11%	[6%, 18%]
Invited sympathy from the victim's fanbase	9	9%	[5%, 16%]
Unwanted gifts	7	7%	[3%, 14%]
Threats	7	7%	[3%, 14%]
Threatened self-harm or suicide	7	7%	[3%, 14%]
Released victim's personal information online	7	7%	[3%, 14%]
Appeared at home or workplace	6	6%	[3%, 12%]
In-person following	5	5%	[2%, 11%]
Broke into home or vehicle	2	2%	[0%, 4%]
Ignored official police order	2	2%	[0%, 4%]
Physical harm	2	2%	[0%, 4%]
Harm or attempted harm to pet	1	1%	[0%, 3%]
Damage or attempted damage to property	1	1%	[0%, 3%]

Note. N = 101.

Table 3. Frequency of Behaviors Perpetrated Online and Offline

Behavior	N	%	95% CI
Derogatory or insulting comments	54		
Online	46	85%	[73%, 92%]
Offline	11	20%	[12%, 33%]
Both	8	15%	[8%, 24%]
Did not specify	5	9%	[4%, 20%]
Intimidation	16		
Online	13	81%	[57%, 93%]
Offline	7	44%	[23%, 67%]
Both	5	31%	[14%, 56%]
Did not specify	1	6%	[0%, 18%]
Threats	7		
Online	7	100%	[65%, 100%]
Offline	3	43%	[16%, 75%]
Both	3	43%	[16%, 75%]
Did not specify	0	0%	[0%, 35%]

Note. N = 101.

Stalking Incidents and Perpetrator Demographics

61 participants reported how they first became aware they were being stalked and their relationship to the perpetrator. 43 (70%) participants reported noticing the behavior themselves, 7 (11%) reported being alerted by their fans/community, 6 (10%) reported being alerted by friends of family, and 5 (8%) reported being told by the perpetrator. 36 (59%) participants reported the perpetrator was a stranger prior to the stalking incidents, 15 (25%) perpetrators were reported to have come from their community/fanbase, 5 (8%) were reportedly friends or acquaintances, 4 (7%) were reportedly current or former partners, and 3 (5%) were reportedly professional colleagues.

40 participants were able to identify their perpetrator's age. Participants reported 1 (3%) perpetrator was under the age of 18, 6 (15%) were between the ages of 18-24, 10 (25%) between 25-29, 8 (20%) between 30-39, 9 (23%) between 40-49, and 6 (15%) who were 50 or older, with the oldest being a 60-year-old perpetrator. Reported ages ranged from *Min* = 16 to *Max* = 60, with *Mdn* = 32. 49 participants indicated their perpetrator's gender, reporting 35 (71%) male and 14 (29%) female perpetrators. Opposite-sex stalking perpetration was most commonly reported with 35 (72%) female victims targeted by male perpetrators, and 3 (6%) male victims targeted by female perpetrators. There were 11 (22%) reports of same-sex stalking perpetration, all of which were female victims targeted by female perpetrators.

62 participants gave free-form responses to identify what they believed to be their perpetrators' motivations for stalking. The responses were analyzed and coded into 9 categories; the results are displayed in Table 4. Seeking a relationship and trying to get attention from the victim were the most commonly reported motivators (34% and 32% respectively), while explicit sexual interest was less common (19%). Some participants indicated perpetrators wanted to cause them harm (19%), were seeking a thrill (13%), had a personal grievance (10%) or were acting out of jealousy (6%) or mental illness (5%). Most reports of personal gain as a motivator (21%) involved non-stalking perpetrators such as hackers and scammers ransoming accounts or seeking credit card information.

Table 4. Perpetrator Motivations

Motivation	<i>N</i>	%
Relationship/Get closer to victim	21	34%
Personal Gain (e.g., followers, money)	13	21%
Sex (explicitly sexual interest)	12	19%
Revenge/Personal Grievance	6	10%
Mental Illness	3	5%
Attention	20	32%
Cause harm to victim	12	19%
Thrill/Boredom/Satisfaction	8	13%
Jealousy	4	6%

Note. *N* = 62. Individual participants were able to report multiple motivations.

Diversity of Stalking Behaviors

Participants indicated how certain stalking behaviors they experienced were perpetrated. The results are displayed in Table 5. Unwanted private and public communication were perpetrated mostly through the most accessible and convenient means: Instagram direct messaging (73%), posts (74%), and liking posts (52%). Instagram live feeds were a less common method (14%). Contact via other platforms was less common than contact via Instagram (28% and 26% for private and public communication respectively) and similar to rates of contact via email (26%).

Most attempts at gathering information took place within the victim's fanbase (66%). Personal and contact information were the most sought after (69% and 54% respectively), with humiliating information following (29%). Most multiple accounts were created to circumvent a block or ban (85%) or to contact the victim while pretending to be a different person (56%).

Fake stories designed to damage the victim's reputation were mostly spread to the victim's community (71%). Spreading stories to the victim's professional contacts was less common (29%), as was spreading stories outside the victim's community (21%). Hacking was mostly focused on social media accounts (90% and 42% for Instagram and other social media respectively). Hacking of personal communications was less common (29%).

There were 5 reported instances of in-person stalking. 3 perpetrators (60%) attempted face-to-face contact, one of which (20%) attempted physical contact. 3 (60%) watched the victim from a short distance while very close by and 1 (20%) watched from far away. 3 (60%) perpetrators followed the victim either on foot or in a vehicle and 3 (60%) trespassed on the victim's property. 3 (67%) appeared at the victim's home while 2 (33%) appeared at their workplace.

Table 5. Diversity of Stalking Behaviors

Behavior	N	%
Unwanted private communication	80	
Instagram direct messaging (DM)	58	73%
Email	21	26%
Other online platforms	22	28%
Unwanted public communication	50	
Instagram posts	37	74%
Instagram live feed chats	7	14%
Liking Instagram posts	26	52%
Other online platforms	13	26%
Gathering information	35	
Within victim's fanbase	23	66%
Outside of victim's fanbase	10	29%
Other means ^a	2	6%
Gathered personal information	24	
Gathered contact information	19	54%
Gathered humiliating information	10	29%
Copying social media content	1	3%
Created multiple accounts	34	
Circumvent block or ban	29	85%
Pretend to be different people	19	56%
Anonymous harassment	2	6%
Fake stories to damage reputation	28	
Spread to victim's community/fanbase	20	71%
Outside of victim's community/fanbase	6	21%
To sponsors/professional partners	8	29%
To the victim's local community	1	4%
Hacking into accounts	31	
Hacked Instagram accounts	28	90%
Other social media accounts	13	42%
Personal communications	9	29%
Financial accounts	2	7%
Other accounts ^b	1	3%
In-Person following	5	
Followed on foot or in vehicle	3	60%
Watched from a distance	1	20%
Watched from very close by	3	60%
Had property trespassed upon	3	60%
Approached face-to-face	3	60%
Perpetrator made physical contact	1	20%
Appeared at home or workplace	6	
Home	4	67%
Workplace	2	33%

Note. N = 101. ^aIncludes social media stories and "skip tracing" software. ^bDropbox

Research Question #3: Are Any Demographic Factors Predictive of More Severe Cyberstalking?

Analyses related to this research question were complicated by the correlations among and distributions of variables. First, some influencer characteristics were significantly correlated, such as *follower count* and *time spent as an influencer*, as well as *personal disclosure to fans* and *reliance on Instagram for sole income*. Second, many of the influencer characteristics had extreme prevalence rates. In particular, *gender* and *connection with fans* both were extreme, with 90% or more of influencers identifying as female gender and rating a connection with fans as very important to their work.

In light of these problems, I decided to focus the analyses of influencer characteristics on *follower count* and *personal disclosure*. Also, given the skewed distribution of these two variables, as well as the number of stalking-related behaviors reported by influencers, I decided to dichotomize them all, Q4 (about the highest 25% of responses) = *high* versus Q1, Q2, and Q3 (about the lowest 25% of responses) = *low*.

First, I examined the bivariate association between variables related to stalking severity and diversity (*self-reported stalking victimization* and *number of stalking-related behaviors*, both dichotomized) and influencer characteristics (*follower count* and *personal disclosure*, both dichotomized) as indexed by tetrachoric correlations. The findings are presented in Table 6. The correlation between *self-reported stalking victimization* and *number of stalking-related behaviors* was positive in direction, large in magnitude, and statistically significant; the other correlations, however, were small in magnitude and not statistically significant.

Second, I examined the bivariate associations between individual stalking-related behaviors reported by influencers (all dichotomized) and variables related to influencer characteristics (*follower count* and *personal disclosure*, both dichotomized) as indexed by tetrachoric correlations. The findings are presented in Table 7. The only significant correlation was between *impersonated victim online* and *follower count*, which was positive in direction, moderate-to-large in magnitude, and statistically significant; the remaining correlations were mostly small or moderate in magnitude and not statistically significant or could not be calculated due to extremely small cell frequencies.

Table 6. Tetrachoric Correlations (r_{tet}) Among Variables Reflecting Stalking Severity/Diversity and Influencer Characteristics

	Stalking Severity/Diversity		Influencer Characteristics	
	1	2	1	2
Stalking Severity/Diversity				
1. Perceived Victimization	--	.86*	.03	.03
2. Stalking-Related Behaviours	.07	--	.13	-.10
Influencer Characteristics				
1. Follower Count	.17	.18	--	.13
2. Personal Disclosure	.17	.19	.18	--

Note. $N = 101$. Numbers above the diagonal are r_{tet} values; numbers below the diagonal are SE for r_{tet} . * $p < .001$.

Third, I examined the multivariate association between variables related to stalking severity and diversity (*self-reported stalking victimization* and *number of stalking-related behaviors*, both dichotomized) and influencer characteristics (*follower count* and *personal disclosure*, both dichotomized) using binary logistic regression. I focused on the regression coefficients for *self-reported stalking victimization* and *number of stalking-related behaviors* as indexed by (adjusted) odds ratios; I was uninterested in overall model fit. With respect to *self-reported stalking victimization*, the odds ratios for *follower count* and *personal disclosure* both were small in magnitude and not statistically significant, OR = 1.07 and 1.09, respectively, $p \geq .863$. The pattern was similar with respect to *number of stalking-related behaviors*, OR = 1.49 and 0.73 for *follower count* and *personal disclosure*, respectively, $p \geq .418$, except that in this analysis the coefficient for *personal disclosure* indicated it was actually associated negatively with *number of stalking-related behaviors*.

Finally, I examined the multivariate association between individual stalking-related behaviors reported by influencers (all dichotomized) and variables related to influencer characteristics (*follower count* and *personal disclosure*, both dichotomized) using binary logistic regression. The findings are presented in Table 8. The only significant odds ratio was between *impersonated victim online* and *follower count*, which was positive in direction, moderate-to-large in magnitude, and statistically significant; the remaining odds ratios were mostly small or moderate in magnitude and not statistically significant or could not be calculated due to extremely small cell frequencies.

Table 7. Tetrachoric Correlations (r_{tet}) Between Influencer Characteristics and Stalking-Related Behavior

Stalking-Related Behavior	Follower Count	Personal Disclosure
Unwanted private communication	.00	.22
Unwanted public communication	.12	.13
Gathering information	.07	.09
Repeated following/unfollowing accounts	-.07	-.31
Repeated following/unfollowing friends and family accounts	.13	.24
Creating multiple accounts	.10	-.07
Unwanted phone calls	.03	.05
Unwanted gifts	.20	.30
In-person following	-.13	--
Appeared at home or workplace	-.20	-.11
Unwanted mail	-.07	.04
Unwanted subscriptions/ mailing lists/ services	.34	.00
Derogatory or insulting comments	.11	.06
Intimidation	-.07	.05
Threats	--	-.17
Threats of self-harm or suicide	.38	.10
Broke into home or vehicle	--	--
Ignored official police order	--	--
Harm or attempted harm to pet	--	--
Physical harm	.23	--
Damage or attempted damage to property	--	--
Fake stories or rumors to damage reputation	-.09	-.14
Hacked or attempted to hack into accounts	.17	.18
Impersonated victim online	.44*	-.24
Released victim's personal information online	.00	-.16
Invited sympathy from victim's fanbase	-.11	.34

Note: $N = 101$. -- = could not be calculated due to extremely small cell frequencies. * $p < .01$

Table 8. Logistic Regression Between Follower Count and Personal Disclosure and Behaviors Experienced

Variable	Follower Count		Personal Disclosure	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Private Communication	0.97	[0.33, 2.83]	2.01	[0.53, 7.55]
Public Communication	1.35	[0.56, 3.21]	1.41	[0.55, 3.61]
Gathering Information	1.20	[0.49, 2.96]	1.27	[0.48, 3.23]
Un/Following Accounts	0.88	[0.37, 2.12]	0.42	[0.16, 1.10]
Un/Following Friends/Family Accounts	1.41	[0.38, 5.31]	2.08	[0.55, 7.90]
Multiple Accounts	1.32	[0.54, 3.26]	0.81	[0.29, 2.21]
Unwanted Phone Calls	1.07	[0.37, 3.13]	1.16	[0.37, 3.64]
Unwanted Gifts	1.83	[0.38, 8.92]	2.65	[0.54, 12.96]
In-Person Following	0.66	[0.07, 6.29]	--	--
Appearing at Home or Workplace	0.49	[0.05, 4.40]	0.70	[0.08, 6.32]
Unwanted Mail	0.80	[0.20, 3.20]	1.17	[0.29, 4.76]
Unwanted Subscriptions	2.65	[0.99, 7.12]	0.92	[0.29, 2.90]
Derogatory Comments	1.32	[0.55, 3.18]	1.15	[0.45, 2.94]
Intimidation	0.79	[0.23, 2.70]	1.17	[0.34, 4.10]
Threats	--	--	0.61	[0.07, 5.47]
Threats to Self	3.63	[0.75, 17.43]	1.25	[0.22, 7.14]
Home/Vehicle Invasion	--	--	--	--
Ignored Police Order	--	--	--	--
Harm to Pet	--	--	--	--
Physical Harm	2.80	[0.17, 46.90]	--	--
Property Damage	--	--	--	--
Damage to Reputation	0.79	[0.29, 2.14]	0.67	[0.22, 2.04]
Hacking	1.54	[0.62, 3.86]	1.59	[0.60, 4.22]
Impersonation	3.78*	[1.50, 9.53]	0.42	[0.14, 1.27]
Released Personal Information Online	1.03	[0.19, 5.67]	0.54	[0.06, 4.79]
Invited Sympathy from Victim's Fanpage	0.62	[0.12, 3.26]	3.20	[0.77, 13.21]

Note. *N* = 101. OR = (adjusted) odds ratio; -- = OR not calculated due to lack of variability. * *p* = .005

Discussion

Findings

The results of this study supported the hypothesis that the prevalence of stalking and stalking-related behaviors would be high among Instagram influencers, compared to the prevalence rates in the general population observed in previous surveys from Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These rates suggest that influencers are at higher risk of stalking victimization, the 51% “career-time” prevalence rate found in this study may be due to influencers’ status as online public figures. It was hypothesized that victim gender may also play a role, however most participants in the study were female. Future research should aim to recruit a sample of male influencers to compare their experiences with stalking behaviors to the female influencer population.

Online stalking behaviors were found to be more prevalent than offline or in-person behaviors, which supports our second hypothesis. The most common behaviors are those that can be perpetrated with little effort; many influencers have their contact information (email, agent email, phone number etc.) readily available on their profile page and can be contacted via direct message by any Instagram user. Influencers are incentivized to make themselves easily accessible so that potential clients can get in touch to offer brand deals and other important career opportunities. Perpetrators can therefore easily harass victims with unwanted communication and comments. Ordinarily a victim of stalking may be able to remove any public records of their contact information to help prevent these behaviors, but influencers may find their careers adversely impacted if clients find it inconvenient to reach them. The next most common behaviors can also be perpetrated online but require more effort or investment on the part of the perpetrator. Impersonating a victim, gathering information, creating multiple accounts, hacking accounts, and spreading false rumors about the victim are all more difficult than sending a communication. These behaviors seem to revolve around becoming more involved in or affecting the victim’s influencer life, learning more about them, or maintaining contact in cases where the victim has tried to cut contact, and are more harmful (in some cases strictly illegal) than unwanted communication/comments. Hacking attempts predominantly focused on the victims’ social media accounts, where a perpetrator would be able to access private information and correspondence relating to

the victim's influencer life. Multiple accounts were most commonly used to maintain contact by circumventing blocks/bans or posing as a different person. Information gathering and spreading fake stories were predominantly focused on the victim's immediate fanbase as a source of information and to damage the public reputation of the victim. These behaviors may represent a likely way for online stalking perpetrators to escalate beyond attempts at communication; influencers may be more at risk of these behaviors due to being socially successful and prominent individuals. This is supported by participants' reported motivations of perpetrators, which included a desire for a relationship/closeness or attention from the victim as the two most common motivations.

In-person stalking behaviors are less common, though certainly still possible. Approximately 20% of derogatory/insulting comments took place offline, while around 43% of intimidation and threats were offline, suggesting that more serious and directly harmful behaviors may coincide with an escalation from online to offline perpetration. Despite this, participants reported very few violations of police orders. The scope of this study did not involve how victims respond to stalking perpetrators, it is worth investigating whether this population are contacting the police, how police typically respond to these cases, and whether police orders are viable in these contexts. Proper attention should be paid to cases where stalking escalates from online to offline, as this can lead to dangerous outcomes. Andreea Bolbea, an influencer, had one perpetrator escalate from harassing emails to flying to her home and repeatedly mailing packages to her and her family's homes. Some cases can escalate to lethal physical harm, such as the tragic case of Jenae Gagnier who was killed by a perpetrator in her home. The results of this study do suggest that directly harmful behavior such as threats, home/vehicle invasion, physical harm, and property damage are relatively rare in this population, but regardless any escalation from online communication to in-person stalking may be a significant enough to warrant serious intervention. Perpetration of in-person stalking may suggest that perpetrators who escalate from online to offline stalking are likely to attempt in-person contact, however the sample size for this behavior is too small to draw any conclusions. Investigating the transition of perpetrators from online to offline stalking should be a focus of future research.

Reports of how participants became aware they were being stalked and reported victim-perpetrator relationships suggest an influencer's fanbase may be a source of stalking behaviors but may also be able to detect those behaviors within the community

and report them to the victim. I expected to see more perpetrators originating from the victim's fanbase if PSRs are a key factor for stalking in this population. Most perpetrators were reported as strangers, which does not rule out the involvement of PSRs as they are a one-way relationship, however this connection will require further investigation. It may indicate that most perpetrators do not attempt to engage with the victim as part of the community first, or that their attempts to do so prior to escalating to stalking behaviors are not noticed by the victim.

Results of opposite and same-sex stalking perpetration are similar to those found by Sheridan et al., (2014). Participants reported higher rates of female-female stalking, though this may be due to a lack of male participants in the study. The most commonly reported perpetrator motivations such as wanting a relationship can be categorized under a desire for closeness with the victim, which is a typical motivator for stalking. Others such as wanting revenge are possible but difficult to confirm without accounts from the perpetrators themselves. While this would be a difficult population to reach, investigating a sample of influencer stalking perpetrators would be a valuable area for future study.

The results of the correlations and BLR analyses suggest that there is minimal association between *follower count*, *personal disclosure*, and each of the stalking behaviors including *number of behaviors* experienced. A weak negative correlation was found between *follower count* and *impersonation* but neither variable was correlated with any other stalking behavior. The BLR model was significant for *follower count* and *impersonation*, however no other models were statistically significant.

Despite this, we can see that influencers are targeted at a greater rate than the general public. It may be that differences between *follower count* and *personal disclosure* do not play a significant role in stalking victimization within the influencer population. As discussed previously, approximately 77% of this study's population sample are considered to be in the 91st percentile of follower counts on Instagram. It is possible that reaching this stage and becoming an influencer means a higher risk of stalking victimization, and the difference in *follower count* or rates of *personal disclosure* becomes less important in predicting stalking. Future research should compare influencers and non-influencers on the same social media platform to better identify predictors for stalking victimization in this population.

Alternatively, *follower count* and *personal disclosure* may not be a suitable predictor of stalking victimization. There may be a variable that is unaccounted for in this study that is a better predictor, in which case a more in-depth study of influencer experiences may help to explore what leads to stalking victimization among influencers, and what can be done to prevent it.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As this was apparently the first study in this area, the survey was limited in scope and detail; it was not designed to capture in-depth information about participants' experiences with stalking, nor did it ask about victim safety factors or participants' responses to stalking. This was a deliberate decision to keep the survey brief to increase participant retention. Future, more in-depth research should be conducted to focus on more detailed accounts of influencers' experiences with stalking. This would add context that is lacking from the present study and could provide insight into how influencers respond to stalking, what resources they rely on, and whether there are areas for intervention to increase victim safety in this area.

The participant sample comprised a very small response rate of individuals contacted at approximately 2%. It is hard to know whether the results of the survey are representative of the general influencer population; it may be that participants who had experienced stalking or were already concerned about the issue are more heavily represented in this sample. I received anecdotal reports from influencers and influencer marketing agency representatives during this research that suggested stalking is a widespread issue in the community and that most influencers have encountered stalking at some point in their career, however the data from this study cannot conclusively support those claims due to the small response rate.

A contributing factor to the small response rate may be that influencers are a particularly difficult population to recruit for several reasons. Firstly, influencers are difficult to contact. Instagram does not provide a 'master list' of users marked as influencers. While some free lists of select influencers can be found online, companies that provide 'influencer search engines' market towards brands and charge significant prices for access to their services. Searching for influencers on the Instagram platform involves searching through user posts; this involves searching by keywords (e.g., #ad)

and identifying influencer accounts that are mixed in with brand accounts, products and services, and independent businesses advertising their own products. Using more specific terms (e.g., #influencer) can help to narrow the search, but many influencers do not identify themselves as such, sometimes using other terms such as 'brand ambassador' or leaving out any reference to their influencer status in some cases. In other cases, individuals may identify themselves as influencers but not meet the definition used in this study. This does not make contacting influencers impossible, but it is a time-consuming process and hard to automate.

This study's recruitment attempts and the survey itself were also limited to English speakers. There are many Instagram users and influencers across the world. According to Statista (2022), as of January 2022 India had over 230 million users compared to the United States, which had just under 160 million users. Brazil had over 119 million, Indonesia over 99 million, Russia had 63 million, Turkey over 52 million, Japan over 46 million, Mexico just under 38 million, and South Korea with over 20.5 million. While attempts were made to recruit influencers from outside of the US, UK, and Canada, most of this study's sample were located in those countries. Researching stalking of influencers in other countries would be a valuable area of research and could include translated recruitment and survey materials so that the English language is not required to participate. Cross-cultural comparisons of online stalking victimization would be worthwhile for understanding how stalking behaviors manifest around the world.

Advertising research to influencers without direct communication includes other obstacles. An Instagram account was created to provide information about the present study. While this was able to provide additional details and legitimacy to recruitment, the way Instagram functions means that these posts will not be widely seen by the platform's users and will not reappear in users' feeds as new posts are prioritized. Advertising outside of Instagram was considered but there is a significant negative perception of the influencer community online. Online spaces dedicated to influencer culture (e.g., the Reddit subreddit 'r/influencer') often have to shut down as a result of harassment and disruption. This makes it difficult to find spaces to reach influencers through advertising means.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to influencer recruitment, however, is that many influencers are expecting monetary compensation beyond what academic institutions

are likely to be able to offer. Influencers are often self-employed; their income is not guaranteed, and they must use their time responsibly in order to be successful. They are also used to receiving frequent and numerous requests for promotions, interviews, consultations etc. and have to decide where to focus their attention. This study was estimated to take between 15-20 minutes to complete; participants who cited money as a reason for not taking the survey expected at least \$100 USD (one influencer charged \$1000 USD per hour) for this amount of time. Given the demand for a popular influencer's time, academic institutions are unlikely to be able to 'outbid' other offers from brands and organizations who can pay far more.

Influencer marketing agencies provide one avenue for contacting influencers on a larger scale; these organizations do maintain lists of influencers and can make use of email chains and other resources to convey information about research. However, these agencies have to prioritize presenting opportunities to their clients that will make them the most money in order to stay competitive in their field. Many agencies are not interested in presenting offers that do not come with a significant monetary incentive for their clients, and some screen out opportunities relating to academic research entirely. Agencies that were willing to disseminate research information were not confident that doing so would yield a response as most influencers will ignore offers from their agency that does not include suitable payment.

It may be beneficial to put time and resources into developing an established and reputable presence on social media for conducting future research in this area. Building closer relationships with influencers who are interested in tackling this issue may provide opportunities to motivate other members of the community to share their experiences with stalking. Creating resources to help influencers cope with and protect themselves from stalking behaviors, and making these resources freely available online, may also help to build trust and a reputation with the community as a worthwhile project.

The results of the statistical analyses in this study were somewhat disappointing, though not surprising. The study is underpowered due to its small sample size; repeating these analyses with a larger participant sample may result in more significant associations. Alternatively, a different approach may be needed to identify factors that are more relevant to the increased rate of stalking. Without past research to build from, I chose simple variables to focus on that could be represented in a survey and might

represent an influencers' popularity or exposure to a fanbase, but there was no guarantee this would provide concrete results revealing the core factors related to stalking. Moving forward, it will be important to develop better ways to understand and analyze stalking of this population.

Future research should aim to explore other variables or measure the same variables with alternative approaches, breaking broader variables down into more specific variables or using different methods of measurement. For example, while follower count may not be associated with stalking behaviors, future research could examine growth of a fanbase, measuring how many followers an influencer has gained over a period of time. Self-reports of personal disclosure to fans may be unreliable or too broad; future research could involve raters examining influencer profiles for certain forms of content, what kind of persona an influencer projects, or methods of interacting with fans. Measuring participants' level of fear for each behavior may give us a better understanding of when an influencer is more likely to distinguish between average harassment and stalking.

Moving away from a survey format and towards an interview format would also be beneficial. A structured interview with an influencer who has experienced stalking would allow for a more in-depth investigation into how stalking is perpetrated via social media. Influencers would have the opportunity to explain their situation in detail and focus attention on important factors in their circumstances specifically, rather than the comparatively rigid survey format. Interviews could be recorded, transcribed, and content could be coded for analysis of more focused variables. Future research could also make use of alternate forms of measurement, for example borrowing from the areas of communications theory and risk assessment, to allow for more effective analysis.

Conclusions

This study was the first to investigate stalking of social media influencers as the career of being an influencer is relatively new, and most research to date is focused on in-person stalking. While the present study only provides a preliminary look into this issue, there is evidence to suggest that stalking within this population is a serious issue worthy of attention and further study. Future studies in this area should aim to recruit larger samples of participants to validate (or invalidate) the representativeness of the

results found in the present study. The scope of future studies should be broadened to include other social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook.

Being an influencer is an increasingly lucrative and appealing career choice for individuals of all ages around the world. There are millions of influencers in the world at the time of writing, and millions more are likely to choose to become influencers in the coming years. If the results of this study are accurate, millions of people around the world are placed at greater risk of becoming victims of stalking, and currently we have very little understanding of this issue and how to respond to it. The forensic psychology community should take an interest in this area and help to protect this growing industry.

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Appendix A.

Correlations (r_b) Between Follower Count and Personal Disclosure and Other Demographic Variables

		Follower Count	Personal Disclosure	Time as Influencer	Sole Income
Personal Disclosure	r_b	.07			
Time as Influencer	r_b	.30**	-.06		
Sole Income	r_b	-.08	-.27**	.07	
Connection with Fans	r_b	-.08	-.19	.05	.06

Note: N = 101. **p < .01.

Appendix B.

Email Collection Survey

13/08/2021
Software

Qualtrics Survey

Default Question Block

Please enter your email below to be entered into the prize draw. Once you have submitted your email, please return to the original survey and submit your responses.

Appendix C.

Online Stalking Survey Questions

Consent Form

Online Stalking on Instagram

Study Team

Student Lead

Will Fox
Mental Health Law & Policy Institute
Simon Fraser University
Office:
Email:

Co-Investigators

Sarah Coupland, PhD., researcher

Principal Investigator

Stephen Hart, PhD.
Email:

This study is being conducted as part of a master's level graduate degree and is intended to be published as a public document upon completion of the study.

Invitation and Study Purposes

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are an Instagram user with a follower count between 5,000 and 1,000,000, who makes some portion of your living income online through Instagram. We are interested in how many Instagram influencers have experienced stalking and harassment online, and what kinds of behaviours they have experienced. By speaking directly to those affected by online stalking, we hope to use this information to better understand how stalking occurs in these communities and how best to address it.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Study Procedures: What happens if you say, “Yes, I want to be in the study?”

If you say ‘Yes’, here is how we will do the study:

1. You will be asked to complete a survey which will ask you about your Instagram presence, whether you have experienced online stalking, what happened while you were being stalked, and how you responded to it. You will not be asked any identifying questions (such as your name or who harassed you).
2. The survey will be hosted by SurveyMonkey, a provider external to SFU. SurveyMonkey is hosted in Canada, though its parent company, SurveyMonkey, Inc. is owned and operated in the United States of America.
3. The survey should take between 15-20 minutes to complete.
4. Some questions may be sensitive in nature and may ask you to think back to an upsetting time in your life. You do not have to answer these questions if you do not want to, the only mandatory section of this survey are some initial demographic questions. There will be no negative consequences for skipping or not answering a question. You can exit the survey at any time.
5. If you wish to be entered into our prize draw, you will be directed to a separate survey hosted by Qualtrics, a provider external to SFU, which is owned and operated in the United States of America. There, you will be asked to enter your email, which will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw and will be deleted once it has been used in this way.

Potential Risks of the Study

As previously mentioned, there are some questions in the survey that may be upsetting to think about. If you find that the questions are too upsetting, you may stop at any time and exit the survey. Resources for dealing with distress are available on our Instagram page if you need them and will also be provided at the end of the survey.

We understand that this survey is asking for personal and sensitive information, which makes confidentiality a primary concern. The survey does not contain any questions that can be used to identify you, and the survey and data are hosted by SurveyMonkey in Canada. Per their Privacy Policy, SurveyMonkey will not have access to individual responses, only anonymous aggregate data, and will not collect your contact information unless you directly contact them.

If you wish to be entered into the prize draw, you will be asked to enter an email address for the purposes of electronic payment. This will be done via a separate survey and will not be connected to your responses in the original survey. Your email will only be stored until it has been used for the prize draw, at which point it will be deleted. Your email will not be used for any purposes other than the prize draw.

Potential Benefits of the Study

We cannot know whether you will benefit from this study directly, though it is our hope that by gathering information about online stalking of Instagram influencers we can begin to build a body of research that will help to address it in the future.

Payment

At the end of this survey, you will be given the option to enter yourself into a prize draw. For every 50 submitted surveys by participants who have signed up for the prize draw, 3 will be randomly selected to receive payments; one payment of \$50 CAD will be awarded to the winner, along with two payments of \$25 CAD each to two runners-up.

Payment will be in the form of electronic visa gift cards; in order to receive an electronic payment, you will be required to provide an email address where the payment can be sent. Your email will only be used for the prize draw, and once it has been used in this way it will be deleted.

In order to be eligible for the prize draw, you must submit your completed survey. However you may still decide not to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable; you do not need to answer every question in order to be eligible for the prize draw, it is only required that you submit your responses at the end.

You will only be contacted about the results of the prize draw if you have won.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality will be respected. We will not collect identifying information about you, and any analysis and/or presentation of survey responses will refer only to participants as anonymous. If you enter yourself into the prize draw, your email will be collected in a separate survey that will not be connected to your survey answers. Your email will only be used for the prize draw, and will be deleted once it has been used for this purpose.

At the end of the study, you will be asked if you are interested in participating in a potential follow-up interview. To avoid asking for contact information in the survey, we will only ask if you are interested and provide you with contact details for our research team. If you do choose to contact us, we will assign you a research number and may contact you in the future about participation in future studies.

Withdrawal

You may withdraw from this study at any time without giving reasons with no negative consequences for doing so. Your answers to the survey will only be collected if you reach the final page and select the 'Done' button. To withdraw from the study before then, you can close the survey at any time. There will be a warning at the end of the survey to indicate when you are submitting your responses for collection.

As we are not collecting any identifying information from you during this survey, we will not be able to locate individual responses once they are submitted. This means that you will not be able to withdraw your data from the study after it has been submitted.

If you enter yourself into the prize draw and submit your email, but later decide you would like to withdraw from the prize draw, you can contact the student lead, Will Fox, at [redacted] to have your email removed.

Study Results

The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles or presented at academic conferences. The results of this study may also be used for future research into the area of online stalking.

Who can you contact if you have issues about the study?

If you have questions about the study, or wish to be informed of the results of the study once it is complete, please contact the student lead, Will Fox, at

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics

Future Use

* 1. The results of this survey will be saved for seven years after publication, after which they will be destroyed provided we do not submit an ethics application to use it in future research. The current research team, Will Fox, Dr. Sarah Coupland, and Dr. Stephen Hart, will have access to the results of this survey, which will be stored in a secure SFU online repository.

The results may be used for future ethically approved research without participants being contacted for further consent. This future use of results will be limited to seven years, provided we do not submit an ethics application to use it in future research.

Future research may include comparing the results of this survey to other survey results on different social media platforms or comparing them to other populations. This research will likely be conducted by the same SFU research team but may include other researchers at SFU or external to SFU for the purposes of collaboration. The results of this survey may be uploaded to a second secure online repository to make them accessible to researchers external to SFU.

Do you understand and accept that the results of this study may be used for future research without your further consent?

Yes

No

Future Contact

* 2. Would you be open to participating in future research on this topic? This would involve taking part in a follow-up interview with one of our researchers to get a better understanding of your experiences with online stalking.

Checking 'yes' does not commit you to any future research, it simply shows us how many people are interested. Information about how to get in touch to participate in future research will be provided at the end of the survey.

Yes

No

Participant Consent

* 3. Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time by exiting the survey without giving a reason and without any negative impact to you.

Please take the time to review this consent form to ensure that any questions you may have about the study are addressed. If you have questions that are not addressed here, you can contact the student lead at

Checking the box below and completing this survey indicates that you consent to participate in this study. You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study.

By checking the box below, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old.

Yes, I consent to participate in this study.

No, I do not consent to participate in this study.

* 4. Briefly, how would you describe the type of social media content you produce?

* 5. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Undecided
- My gender identity is not listed here (please specify)

* 6. Are you over the age of 18?

- Yes
- No

* 7. Do you have a follower count between 5,000 and 1,000,000?

- Yes
- No

* 8. What is your current follower count?

* 9. How long have you been an Instagram influencer?

- Less than 3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- More than 3 years

* 10. Is your Instagram content your sole source of income?

- Yes
- No

* 11. Do you share personal details with your fans? (e.g. your day-to-day activities, photos of your home/local area, future plans.)

- Yes, I share lots of personal details with my fans.
- Yes, I share some details with my fans.
- Yes, but I do not share much with my fans.
- No, I do not share any personal details with my fans.

* 12. Would you say that having a close connection with your fans is important for your career as an influencer?

- Yes
- No

* 13. In what country are you located?

Nature of Stalking

Please indicate whether you have experienced any of the following behaviours by checking the appropriate boxes. For the purposes of this survey, please only include behaviours that came from or as a result of your online Instagram presence. For example, if you have experienced in-person harassment, please only note it here if you believe you were targeted due to your Instagram presence.

14. Please indicate if you have ever experienced any of the following:

Note: **Repeated** means that it occurred more than two times.

- Repeated unwanted private/direct messaging (DM) communication (private messages, email.)
- Repeated unwanted public communication or attempts at communication online (public commenting, talking in a live stream chat, liking posts).
- Person communicated to others to gain information about you (seeking personal information, seeking advice on how to talk to you).
- Repeated following/unfollowing of your own account(s).
- Repeated following/unfollowing of accounts belonging to your friends and family.
- Individual created multiple accounts to follow/message your account(s).
- Unwanted phone calls.
- Received unwanted gifts.
- Followed you in person.
- Showed up at your home or workplace.
- Sent things to you in the mail.
- Signed you up to unwanted subscriptions/mailling lists/services.
- Made derogatory or insulting comments towards or about you.
- Acted in an intimidating way or communicated with you in a menacing manner without threatening you (sending dead flowers, frightening messages, interfering with your daily life).
- Threatened you directly or behaved in an explicitly threatening way (death threats, pointing a weapon at you).

- Threatened you directly or behaved in an explicitly threatening way (death threats, pointing a weapon at you).
- Threatened to kill or harm themselves.
- Broke into your home or vehicle.
- Ignored an official police order (peace bond, protection order, restraining order) and continued their behaviour towards you.
- Hurt or attempted to hurt your pet.
- Harmed or attempted to physically harm you.
- Damaged or attempted to damage your property.
- Made up fake stories or rumours about you to damage your reputation.
- Hacked or attempted to hack into your online account(s).
- Pretended to be you online using an alternate account or accounts.
- Released your personal information online.
- Tried to get sympathy from your own community/fanbase regarding these behaviours and your response to them.

Stalking is defined as “unwanted and repeated communication, contact or other conduct that deliberately or recklessly causes people to experience reasonable fear or concern for their safety or the safety of those known to them.”

15. Which of these best describes your situation?

- I have never been the victim of stalking.
- I have been stalked in the past, but I am not currently being stalked.
- I am currently being stalked, but I have not been stalked in the past.
- I am currently being stalked, and I have been stalked in the past.

16. How many different people have pursued you?

17. Have you been the victim of stalking in the last 12 months?

Yes

No

Most Serious Incident

For this next section, try to focus on the single most serious case of stalking you have experienced. Please answer the following questions with that case in mind.

Note: Moving forward, we will be referring to the person who was engaged in stalking behaviour as "the perpetrator".

18. When stalking first begins many people are unsure if they are actually experiencing stalking. How did you first find out that you were being stalked?

- I noticed the perpetrator's behaviour.
- A friend or family member told me about the behaviour.
- My fan community told me about the behaviour.
- The person told me themselves.
- Other (please specify)

19. What was your relationship with the perpetrator before their behaviour began? Please use the section below to give any details you feel comfortable with that you feel are relevant to help clarify or provide context for your answer.

- Professional (e.g. colleague)
- Community (e.g. a fan or follower)
- Current or former partner
- Friend or acquaintance
- Stranger
- Other (please specify)

20. Please feel free to add any additional comments about this section here.

20. Please feel free to add any additional comments about this section here.

21. Did their behaviour cause you to fear for your safety or for the safety of someone you know?

Yes

No

22. For how long, if at all, were you aware of the perpetrator as a member of your community before they began stalking you?

Most Serious Incident

Please answer the following questions about your most serious stalking incident. If you have experienced more than one case of stalking, please answer the questions with the most serious case in mind.

Some of these questions may make you uncomfortable or bring back some distressing memories. If you find a question upsetting, or if you feel it is too personal, please remember that you are not required to answer them and can either skip questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

23. What was the perpetrator's approximate age at the time they were stalking you?

24. What is their gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Unsure
- Their gender is not listed here (please specify)

Unwanted Private/DM Communication

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator was repeatedly sending you unwanted messages online in private or through direct messaging.

25. How did they communicate with you? Please select all that apply.

- Instagram direct messaging
- Email
- Direct messaging through another online platform (please specify at the bottom of this page)
- Other private online communication (please specify)

26. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks.
- 2-4 weeks.
- 1-3 months.
- 3-6 months.
- 6 months to a year.
- More than a year.

27. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Unwanted Public Communication

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator was repeatedly sending you unwanted online messages in public.

28. How did they communicate with you? Please select all that apply.

- Public commenting on Instagram posts.
- Talking in Instagram live stream chats.
- Liking Instagram posts.
- Public communication through another online platform (please specify the platform(s) and how they communicated through it at the bottom of this page).
- Other public online communication (please specify).

29. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

30. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Gathering Information

Please fill out this page if you learned that the person was communicating with others to gain information about you.

31. Where were they gathering information? Please check all that apply.

- In your community/fanbase.
- Outside of your community/fanbase.
- Other (please specify)

32. What sort of information were they trying to gather? Please check all that apply.

- Personal information to learn more about you.
- Contact information in order to communicate with you.
- Private information to use against you. (e.g. to humiliate or embarrass).
- Other (please specify)

33. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

34. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Following/Unfollowing of Accounts

Please fill out this page if you experienced repeated following/unfollowing of your accounts.

35. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

36. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Following/Unfollowing Friends and Family Accounts

Please fill out this page if the person repeatedly followed/unfollowed accounts belonging to your friends and family.

37. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

38. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Multiple Accounts

Please fill out this page if the person created multiple accounts to follow/message you.

39. What did they use these accounts for? Please check all that apply.

To pretend to be different people.

To get around a block or ban.

Other (please specify)

40. Did the person try to communicate with you while pretending to be a different person?

Yes.

No.

Unsure.

41. How long did the behaviour last for?

Less than 2 weeks

2-4 weeks

1-3 months

3-6 months

6 months to a year

More than a year.

42. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Unwanted Calls

Please fill out this page if you received unwanted phone calls from the person.

43. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

44. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Unwanted Gifts

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator sent you unwanted gifts.

45. What were the gifts?

46. Where were the gifts delivered?

- Your home.
- A friend or family member's home.
- PO Box.
- Your workplace.
- Other (please specify)

47. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

48. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

PO Box Gifts

49. You indicated that gifts were sent to your PO box. Was this PO box set up to receive gifts from fans? Gifts can still be unwanted even if this is the case.

Yes

No

In Person Following

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever followed you or otherwise approached you in person.

50. How did they do this? Please check all that apply.

- Followed you on foot or in a vehicle.
- Watched you from a distance (e.g. outside your home).
- Watched you from a short distance while very close by.
- Trespassed on your property.
- Talked to you face-to-face.
- Made physical contact with you.
- Other (please specify)

51. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year

52. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Home or Workplace

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever showed up at your home or workplace.

53. Where did they show up? Please check all that apply.

Home

Workplace

54. How long did the behaviour last for?

Less than 2 weeks

2-4 weeks

1-3 months

3-6 months

6 months to a year

More than a year

55. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Unwanted Mail

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever sent you things in the mail that you would not call a gift.

56. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

57. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Mailing Lists

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever signed you up for mailing lists, subscriptions, or other services.

58. Approximately how many times did this happen?

- Once
- 2-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- More than 20 times

59. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Derogatory Comments

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever made derogatory or insulting comments towards you, either online or offline.

60. Where did they make these comments? Please check all that apply.

Online

Offline

61. How long did the behaviour last for?

Less than 2 weeks

2-4 weeks

1-3 months

3-6 months

6 months to a year

More than a year.

62. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Reputation

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever made up fake stories about you to damage your reputation.

63. Where did they spread these stories? Please check all that apply.

- To your own community/fanbase
- Outside of your own community/fanbase
- To your sponsors or other professional partners
- Other (please specify)

64. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

65. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Hacking

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever hacked or attempted to hack into your online account(s).

66. What account(s) did they try to access? Please select all that apply.

- Instagram
- Other social media
- Personal communications (email, chat apps)
- Financial accounts
- Other (please specify)

67. Did they successfully access your account(s)?

- Yes
- No

68. If they were successful, are you aware of how they gained access to your account(s)?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

69. Approximately how many times did this happen?

- Once
- 2-5 times
- 6-10 times
- 11-20 times
- More than 20 times

70. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Impersonation

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever pretended to be you online using an alternate account or accounts.

71. How long did the behaviour last for?

- It happened once
- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- More than 3 months

72. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Personal Information

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever released your personal information online.

73. How many times has this happened? Estimate or give your best guess if you are unsure.

74. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Intimidation

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever tried to make you feel fearful by saying or doing things that threatened harm but in a way that was vague or indirect. In other words without explicitly threatening you.

Some examples of this include yelling at you, banging on your door, vandalizing property, sending skull emojis, making vague statements like “you’ll regret this”.

75. Did they do this online or offline? Please check all that apply.

Online

Offline

76. How long did the behaviour last for?

It happened once

Less than 2 weeks

2-4 weeks

1-3 months

More than 3 months

77. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Threats

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever made explicit threats, or acted in a threatening manner towards you. Examples could include sending you death threats or brandishing a weapon at you while yelling. Threats can be made to you or about you to another person and can be conveyed in words or through behaviour.

78. Did they do this online or offline? Please check all that apply.

Online

Offline

79. Did you believe that they would have carried out those threats?

Yes

No

80. How long did the behaviour last for?

It happened once

Less than 2 weeks

2-4 weeks

1-3 months

More than 3 months

81. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Threats to Self

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever threatened to harm or to kill themselves.

82. Did you believe that they would have carried out those threats?

Yes

No

83. How long did the behaviour last for?

It happened once

Less than 2 weeks

2-4 weeks

1-3 months

3-6 months

6 months to a year

More than a year.

84. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Home or Vehicle Invasion

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever broke into your home or vehicle.

85. What did they break into? Please select all that apply.

Home

Vehicle

86. How many times has this happened? Estimate or give your best guess if you are unsure.

87. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Supervision Violation

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever violated any supervision orders given by the police. Supervision orders can include official warnings, conditions of bail or probation, or any court orders such as restraining orders or no-contact orders.

88. What supervision order did they violate? Please check all that apply.

- An official warning (e.g. police warning)
- A court order (e.g. peace bond or restraining order)
- A court imposed condition (e.g. condition of bail or probation)
- Other (please specify)

89. How many times has this happened? Estimate or give your best guess if you are unsure.

90. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Pet Abuse

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever hurt or attempted to hurt a pet of yours.

91. How many times has this happened? Estimate or give your best guess if you are unsure.

92. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Physical Harm

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever harmed or attempted to physically harm you or someone close to you. This can include assaulting you physically, sexually, or using a weapon against you (including setting fires). This can be either a deliberate attempt to cause harm, or being reckless concerning the possibility of causing harm.

93. What types of violent behaviour did they engage in? Please check all that apply.

- Physical assault (this includes restraining you against your will)
- Sexual assault
- Use of a weapon
- Setting a fire
- Other (please specify)

94. How many times has this happened? Estimate or give your best guess if you are unsure.

95. What injuries did you suffer?

- None
- Minor
- I was treated and released
- I was hospitalised

96. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Property Damage

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever damaged or attempted to damage your property.

97. How many times has this happened? Estimate or give your best guess if you are unsure.

98. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Appealing to Community

Please fill out this page if the perpetrator ever tried to get sympathy from your own community/fanbase regarding their stalking behaviour and your responses to them.

99. How long did the behaviour last for?

- Less than 2 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year.

100. Is there anything else you would like to say about this behaviour that you feel is relevant, or to help clarify your responses?

Conclusions

101. What do you believe was the perpetrator's motivation for all of this behaviour? What were they trying to get out of it?

102. Is there anything else you would like to add about the perpetrator's motivations for stalking you? Additionally if there is anything you would like to add to clarify your responses or add context for any of your answers, please do so here.

Prize Draw

If you would like to sign up for the prize draw, please click the link below. You will be taken to a separate survey where you can enter an email for the payment to be sent should you win the draw. Your email will be stored separately from this survey and will not be connected to your answers. Your email will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw, and will be deleted once we have selected three winners.

Once you have entered your email, please return here to submit your survey. For every 50 submitted surveys from respondents that have signed up for the prize draw, 3 will be randomly selected to receive one of three payments: \$50 CAD, \$25 CAD, and \$25 CAD.

You will only be contacted about the results of the prize draw if you have won one of the three payments.

[Click Here to Enter the Prize Draw](#)

103. Please check the box below if you have signed up for the prize draw.

I have signed up for the prize draw.

Follow-Up Contact

You have reached the end of the survey. **Please click the 'Done' button below to submit your responses. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you can close the survey now without clicking the 'Done' button.**

Thank you for your time.

If you are interested in taking part in a follow-up interview, please contact the lead researcher by e-mail at the following address:

Contacting us at the e-mail above does not commit you to taking part in any future research, but will give us permission to contact you to see if you are still interested down the line.

This survey asks about sensitive topics, and some questions may be upsetting for some people. If you are feeling distressed, please refer to the resources below for help.

Canada

<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/looking-for-local-resources-support/>

United States

<https://nami.org/help>

United Kingdom

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/crisis-services/helplines-listening-services/>

Europe

<https://www.mhe-sme.org/library/youth-helplines/>