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Hoax Social Media Challenges Resurface

Well-meaning parents, teachers, law enforcement, and media could be perpetuating hoax social media challenges, and potentially putting teenagers at risk, when drawing attention to these challenges. In 2019, two social media challenges, the “Momo Challenge”—that dares young people to complete dangerous tasks—and the “48-Hour(s) Missing Challenge”—that encourages young people to go missing—trended on social media and in news reports despite being exposed last year as a hoax. While there are no confirmed reports that young people have engaged in these risky games, the more these myths are “popularized” on social media the higher the risk that teenagers learn about the challenges and act on them.

- According to Google Trends—which analyzes the volume of Google searches over time on a one to 100 scale—the “Momo Challenge” reached a score of 100 at the end of February after previously ranking no higher than 3 over the previous 12 months. Similarly, the “48-Hour(s) Missing Challenge” reached 100 in early February, initially appearing in search trends in late January.
- The “disappearance” in February of a 13-year old in Rock Hill, South Carolina sparked media attention about the “48-Hour(s) Missing Challenge;” although the girl was found 24-hours later hiding under her bed and denied participating in the challenge, media coverage boosted notoriety of the challenge online.
- The “Momo Challenge” resurfaced in late February in Northern Ireland after police became aware of the challenge and posted on its Facebook page a warning urging parents to supervise their children’s online activities. The challenge went “viral” via news reports in the United States and abroad, postings on social media, and circulation over the Internet.



"Momo" (Source: Newsweek)

Additional Resources:

- [NTIC: “48-Hour\(s\) Missing Challenge”: Potentially Dangerous Social Media Challenge](#)
- [NTIC: #BirdBoxChallenge: Newest in Dangerous Social Media Challenges](#)
- [NTIC: Young People Put at Risk in Social Media Challenge Games](#)