

## **Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do**

This section pulls together fundamental information about bullying, including:

### Definition of Bullying

In 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Department of Education released the first federal definition of bullying. The definition includes three core elements:

unwanted aggressive behavior

observed or perceived power imbalance

repetition or high likelihood of repetition of bullying behaviors

This definition helps determine whether an incident is bullying or another type of aggressive behavior or both.

### Research on Bullying

Bullying prevention is a growing research field that investigates the complexities and consequences of bullying. Important areas for more research include:

Prevalence of bullying in schools

Prevalence of cyberbullying in online spaces

How bullying affects people

Risk factors for people who are bullied, people who bully others, or both

How to prevent bullying

How media and media coverage affects bullying

### What We've Learned about Bullying

Bullying affects all youth, including those who are bullied, those who bully others, and those who witness bullying. The effects of bullying may continue into adulthood.

There is not a single profile of a young person involved in bullying. Youth who bully can be either well connected socially or marginalized, and may be bullied by others as well. Similarly, those who are bullied sometimes bully others.

Solutions to bullying are not simple. Bullying prevention approaches that show the most promise confront the problem from many angles. They involve the entire school community—students, families, administrators, teachers, and staff such as bus drivers, nurses, cafeteria and front office staff—in creating a culture

## P

of respect. Zero tolerance and expulsion are not effective approaches.

Bystanders, or those who see bullying, can make a huge difference when they intervene on behalf of someone being bullied.

Studies also have shown that adults can help prevent bullying by talking to children about bullying, encouraging them to do what they love, modeling kindness and respect, and seeking help.

### Bullying Statistics

Here are federal statistics about bullying in the United States. Data sources include the Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) and the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

### How Common Is Bullying

About 20% of students ages 12-18 experienced bullying nationwide.

Students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied said they thought those who bullied them: Had the ability to influence other students' perception of them (56%). Had more social influence (50%). Were physically stronger or larger (40%). Had more money (31%).

### Bullying in Schools

Nationwide, 19% of students in grades 9-12 report being bullied on school property in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The following percentages of students ages 12-18 had experienced bullying in various places at school: Hallway or stairwell (43.4%) Classroom (42.1%) Cafeteria (26.8%) Outside on school grounds (21.9%) Online or text (15.3%) Bathroom or locker room (12.1%) Somewhere else in the school building (2.1%)

Approximately 46% of students ages 12-18 who were bullied during the school year notified an adult at school about the bullying.

#### Cyberbullying

Among students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, 15 % were bullied online or by text.

An estimated 14.9% of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey.

#### Types of Bullying

Students ages 12-18 experienced various types of bullying, including:

Being the subject of rumors or lies (13.4%) Being made fun of, called names, or insulted (13.0%) Pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on (5.3%) Leaving out/exclusion (5.2%) Threatened with harm (3.9%) Others tried to make them do things they did not want to do (1.9%) Property was destroyed on purpose (1.4%)

#### State and Local Statistics

Follow these links for state and local figures on the following topics:

#### International Statistics

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics:

One third of the globe's youth is bullied; this ranges from as low as 7% in Tajikistan to 74% in Samoa.

Low socioeconomic status is a main factor in youth bullying within wealthy countries.

Immigrant-born youth in wealthy countries are more likely to be bullied than locally-born youth.

## Bullying and Suicide

The relationship between bullying and suicide is complex. The media should avoid oversimplifying these issues and insinuating or directly stating that bullying can cause suicide. The facts tell a different story. It is not accurate and potentially dangerous to present bullying as the “cause” or “reason” for a suicide, or to suggest that suicide is a natural response to bullying.

Research indicates that persistent bullying can lead to or worsen feelings of isolation, rejection, exclusion, and despair, as well as depression and anxiety, which can contribute to suicidal behavior.

The vast majority of young people who are bullied do not become suicidal.

Most young people who die by suicide have multiple risk factors.

For more information on the relationship between bullying and suicide, read “The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools” from the CDC.

## Anti-Bullying Laws

All states have anti-bullying legislation. When bullying is also harassment and happens in the school context, schools have a legal obligation to respond to it according to federal laws.

## Reference

[Doing Practitioner Research](#)

[Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice: Creating a Blueprint for Nurse Educators \(NLN\)](#)