

BULLYING

Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that may be repeated and involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. Making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose are all examples of bullying. Cyberbullying, or bullying that uses electronic technology, is different from other types of bullying in that it can happen at any time, messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly via the Internet, and they can be very difficult to delete after posting.¹

There is no specific factor that puts children at risk of being bullied or bullying others, although some groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered youth; youth with disabilities; and socially isolated youth may be at higher risk.² Being bullied has been associated with a wide range of short- and long-term emotional, physical, and developmental consequences, including depression, anxiety, headaches, sleeping problems, stomach ailments, and decreased academic achievement. Children who bully are also more likely to engage in violent and risky behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use and early sexual activity. Even children who witness bullying can be negatively affected.³

In 2013, 19.6 percent of high school students reported that they had been bullied on school property in the past year and approximately one in six high school students (14.8 percent) reported having been electronically bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, Web sites, or texting (figure 1). The likelihood of being bullied varied by a number of factors, including sex, grade level, and race and ethnicity. Females were more likely than males to have been bullied on school property (23.7 versus 15.6 percent, respectively) and more than twice as likely as males to have been electronically bullied (21.0 versus 8.5 percent, respectively).

Younger high school students were also more likely to report being bullied than older students: 25.0 percent of 9th-graders reported being bullied at school compared to 13.3 percent of 12th-graders (figure 1). Similarly, 9th-graders were slightly more likely than 12th-graders to report being bullied electronically (16.1 versus 13.5 percent, respectively).

Non-Hispanic Black students were less likely to report being bullied on school property or bullied electronically (12.7 and 8.7 percent, respectively) than all other racial and ethnic groups (figure 2). In comparison, non-Hispanic White students were significantly more likely

Figure 1. High School Students Who Were Bullied in the Past Year, by Grade and Location of Bullying, 2013

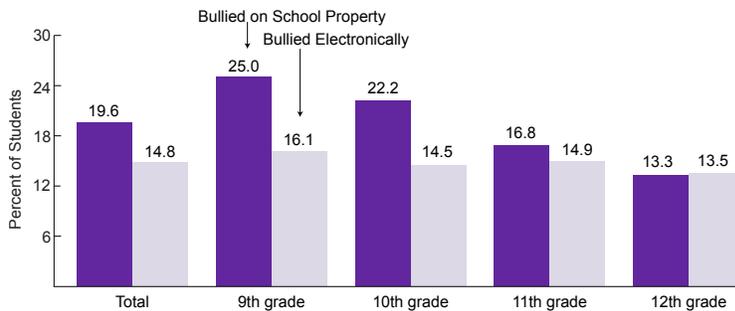
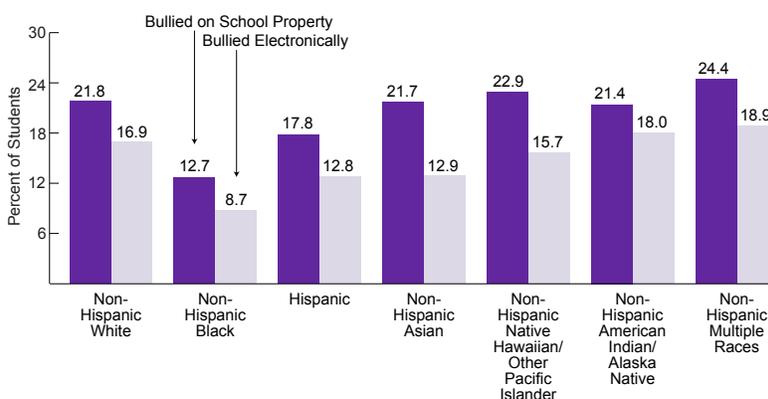


Figure 2. High School Students Who Were Bullied in the Past Year, by Race/Ethnicity and Location of Bullying, 2013



to report electronic bullying (16.9 percent) than non-Hispanic Asian, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic Black high school students (12.9, 12.8, and 8.7 percent, respectively). Evidence-based recommendations to

reduce bullying and its associated risks include both school-based programs that teach students about violence prevention and individual and group cognitive-behavioral therapy interventions for students exposed to violence.^{4,5}

Data Sources

Figure 1 and 2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Available at: <http://nccd.cdc.gov/YouthOnline>. Accessed September 20, 2014.

Endnotes

1. Gladden R. M., Vivolo-Kantor, A.M., Hamburger, M., & Lumpkin, C. (2014). Bullying surveillance: Uniform definitions and recommended data elements, Version 1.0. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-definitions-final-a.pdf>
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Stop Bullying: Risk Factors. Available at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/factors/index.html>. Accessed September 20, 2014.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Stop Bullying: Effects of Bullying. Available at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/effects/index.html>. Accessed February 16, 2015.
4. The Community Guide. Violence Prevention: School-Based Programs. Available at: <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/violence/school.html>. Accessed March 2, 2015.
5. The Community Guide. Violence Prevention: Reducing Psychological Harm From Traumatic Events Among Children and Adolescents. Available at: <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/violence/traumaticevents/index.html>. Accessed March 2, 2015.

Suggested Citation

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. *Child Health USA 2014*. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015. Online at <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa14/>