

## Get Informed About Bullying

### How widespread is bullying?

Bullying is a problem that affects ALL of our children - those who bully, those who are victimized, and those who are witnesses to interpersonal violence.

Statistics on the rates of bullying and cyberbullying vary between studies due to the measures used, the questions asked, and the population studied. However, the general consensus is that one out of three children are bullied at school, in the neighborhood, or online and that one out of three children bully others.

Additionally, the rates of bullying vary considerably across countries.

Approximately 9% to 73% of students reported that they have bullied another child, and 2% to 36% of students said that they were the victim of bullying behaviors. When young people, aged 11, 13 and 15 were asked to report on their experiences with bullying and victimization within the preceding two months, prevalence rates ranged from 1% to 50% across 25 countries in Europe and North America.<sup>1</sup>

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Shelley Hymel, Susan M. Swearer. *Bullying: An age-old problem that needs new solutions.*

### What is bullying and how does it differ in boys and girls?

What is bullying? <sup>1</sup>

- An intentional act. The child who bullies wants to harm the victim; it is no accident.
- Characterized by repeat occurrences. Bullying is not generally considered a random act, nor a single incident.
- A power differential. A fight between two kids of equal power is not bullying; bullying is a fight where the child who bullies has some advantage or power over the child who is victimized.

Strategies students use to bully others: <sup>1</sup>

- Physical - hitting, kicking, beating up, pushing, spitting, property damage, and/or theft.
- Verbal - teasing, mocking, name calling, verbal humiliation, verbal intimidation, threats, coercion, extortion, and/or racist, sexist or homophobic taunts.
- Social - gossip, rumor spreading, embarrassment, alienation or exclusion from the group, and/or setting the other up to take the blame.
- Cyber or electronic - using the Internet, email or text messaging to threaten, hurt, single out, embarrass, spread rumors, and/or reveal secrets about others.

Bullying and gender: <sup>2</sup>

- Boys tend to be physically aggressive.
- Boys may be more accepting of bullying than girls.
- Boys are more likely to both bully and be bullied than girls.

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Girls tend to bully other girls indirectly through peer groups. Rather than bully a targeted child directly, girls more often share with others hurtful information about the targeted child.

Girls experience sexual bullying more often than boys (for example, spreading rumors about sexual activity or being targeted as the recipient of sexual messages.)

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Shelley Hymel, Susan M. Swearer. [Bullying: An age-old problem that needs new solutions.](#)
2. Tanya Beran. [Bullying: What are the Differences between Boys and Girls and How Can You Help?](#)

## Why must we stop bullying?

It is important for all adults to understand that bullying does not have to be a normal part of childhood. All forms of bullying are harmful to the bully, the victim, and to witnesses. The effects can last well into adulthood.

1. Impact on Victims: Children who are bullied are at risk of the following: <sup>1</sup>
  - Anxiety
  - Loneliness • Low self-esteem • Poor social self-competence • Depression • Psychosomatic symptoms • Social withdrawal • Physical health complaints • Running away from home • Alcohol and drug use • Suicide • Poor academic performance.<sup>2</sup>
2. Impact on Bullies: Children and youth who frequently bully are more likely to: <sup>3</sup>
  - Get into frequent fights • Be injured in a fight • Vandalize property
  - Steal property • Drink alcohol • Smoke • Be truant from school • Drop out of school

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- Carry a weapon • Become a criminal. In one study, 60% of those who bullied had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.<sup>1</sup>

3. Impact on Bystanders, Witnesses and Assistants. Children can be influenced indirectly by being witnesses to interpersonal violence.<sup>4</sup> Witnessing others being victimized can significantly heighten feelings of vulnerability and lower feelings of personal safety.<sup>5</sup>

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Patricia McDougall, Tracy Vaillancourt, Shelley Hymel. [What Happens Over Time To Those Who Bully And Those Who Are Victimized?](#)
2. Adrienne Nishina. [Can Sticks and Stones and Names Really Make Youth Sick?](#)
3. [Stop Bullying Now!](#) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Children Who Bully](#)
4. Shelley Hymel, Susan M. Swearer. [Bullying: An age-old problem that needs new solutions](#)
5. Linda A. Cedeno, Maurice J. Elias. [How Do You Know When Your Student Or Child Is Being Victimized and How Can You Help](#)

## Why do kids bully?

There is no one single cause of bullying among children; individual, family, peer, school, and community factors can place a child or youth at risk for bullying. These factors work individually, or collectively, to contribute to a child's likelihood of bullying.

Family risk factors for bullying: • A lack of warmth and involvement on the part of parents. • Overly-permissive parenting (including a lack of limits for children's behavior). • A lack of supervision by parents. • Harsh, physical discipline. • Parent modeling of bullying behavior.<sup>1</sup> • Victimization by older brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Peer risk factors for bullying:

- Friends who bully.
- Friends who have positive attitudes about violence.<sup>1</sup>
- Some aggressive children who take on high status roles may use bullying as a way to enhance their social power and protect their prestige with peers.
- Some children with low social status may use bullying as a way to deflect taunting and aggression that is directed towards them, or to enhance their social position with higher status peers.<sup>3, 4</sup>

Other Factors:

- Bullying thrives in schools where faculty and staff do not address bullying, where there is no policy against bullying, and where there is little supervision of students—especially during lunch, bathroom breaks, and recesses.

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Models of bullying behavior are prevalent throughout society, especially in television, movies, and video games.<sup>5</sup>

When children are aggregated together, they associate with others who are similar to them or who have qualities or characteristics that in some way support their own behaviors.

For teenage girls, social aggression can be a way of creating excitement or alleviating boredom. It is also used as a method of gaining attention from other girls in order to secure friendships.<sup>6</sup>

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Stop Bullying Now! U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Children Who Bully.
2. E. Menesini. Is Bullying Learned at Home?
3. Thomas W. Farmer, Cristin M. Hall. Bullying in School: An Exploration of Peer Group Dynamics
4. Christina Salmivalli. Bullying is a Group Phenomenon What Does It Mean And Why Does It Matter?
5. Stop Bullying Now! U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Bullying Among Children and Youth.
6. Laurence Owens. Indirect Aggression Amongst Teenage Girls and How Parents Can Help.

## Is bullying on the rise?

The last several years have brought a number of high profile bullying and cyberbullying cases to the attention of the media. The severity of the incidents has generated speculation that the prevalence of victimization between children and teens has increased.

Despite the media frenzy around events such as school shootings, suicides, and filmed beatings on YouTube, there is no definitive evidence that bullying is on the rise. More research studies that consider rates of bullying over time are needed.

Why might bullying be on the rise?

- There is greater awareness of the seriousness of bullying, which could be due to higher reporting rates by students.
- The addition of cyberbullying as a new, easy, and round-the-clock place to bully.<sup>1</sup>
- There are a number of early childhood risk factors that have increased that might also increase a child's vulnerability to bully or be bullied, such as an insecure attachment to a primary care giver or lack of parental supervision.<sup>2</sup>

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Shelley Hymel, Susan M. Swearer. [Bullying: An age-old problem that needs new solutions.](#)
2. Ken Rigby. [Children, Parents and School Bullying](#)

## Why is bullying an age-old problem?

Bullying is one of the most traumatic aspects of childhood. It also happens to be one of the oldest. This is due to several reasons:

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- Children are afraid of retribution and consequences. Often adults do not handle bullying situations in a manner that maintains the trust and respect of the victim. Adults must assure the victim and follow through until the bullying stops.<sup>1</sup>
- Bystanders seldom intervene. To combat bullying, both parent/adult and child witnesses need to intervene.<sup>2</sup>
- Adults are not always present. Most bullying happens when adults are not present. Adult presence at school recess for example, school aids and parent volunteers could make a huge difference.<sup>3</sup>
- Adults don't always provide positive models of authority and may act aggressively themselves. Bullying is difficult to eradicate in schools and in modern culture because it is so often effectively used by both children and adults.<sup>4</sup> Adults should avoid aggressive, intimidating, and abusive behaviors, and instead model the social and emotional behaviors that they would like to see reflected by our youth.<sup>1</sup>

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Linda A. Cedeno, Maurice J. Elias. [How Do You Know When Your Student Or Child Is Being Victimized and How Can You Help?](#)
2. Christina Salmivalli. [Bullying is a Group Phenomenon What Does It Mean And Why Does It Matter?](#)
3. [Stop Bullying Now! U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Best Practices in Bullying Prevention and Intervention.](#)

4. Thomas W. Farmer, Cristin M. Hall. *Bullying in School: An Exploration of Peer Group Dynamics*. **Why is bullying hard to change?**

Bullying is a complex and age-old problem with many factors causing its prevalence in our schools. Understanding these factors is the first step to solving the problem of bullying. Also understanding the powers struggles that lead to bullying means a greater chance of finding methods to help stop it.

- Bullying others is a way of feeling powerful. Children need a positive way to feel their personal power.<sup>1</sup>
- Bullying others is a tool for gaining popularity. Children need a different way to feel popular. The challenge is to redirect the child's leadership potential from negative bullying behaviors to positive leadership skills and opportunities.<sup>2</sup>
- It takes two. The aggressor-victim relationship can involve a complex dynamic between two children. Aggressor-victim relationships may form when a potential aggressor finds a victim who can be successfully dominated because the victim is weaker, has few friends who will stick up for the him or her , and shows signs of suffering (such as crying).<sup>3</sup>
- Social aggression is learned behavior. Research documented from early childhood through mid-adolescence suggests that social aggression or bullying may be more of a learned behavior than physical aggression.<sup>4</sup>
- Peer group reputations stay the same. The reputation of a child or adolescent in the peer group tends to be stable over time (whether a victim or a bully).

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The rewards of bullying stay the same. Bullies do not work alone. The bully forms a coalition with other children in their peer group, which increases their status and helps the bully stay in charge. Because of such rewards, the bullying continues.

What peers expect of bullies and victims stays the same. Children expect their peers to behave in the same way they always do - for bullies to continue bullying and for victims to continue on the path of victimization. As a result of this, they unintentionally help them to continue their behavior.<sup>5</sup>

References on [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

1. Dagmar Strohmeier. *Bullying and its Underlying Mechanisms*. 2. Debra Pepler, Wendy M. Craig. *Bullying, Interventions, and The Role of Adults*. 3. Noel A. Card. *It Takes Two: Rethinking the Aggressor-Victim Relationship*. 4. Mara Brendgen. *Shoving, Gossip, and Beyond: How Environment Shapes Bullies*. 5. Antonius Cillessen. *Why is Bullying Difficult to Change?*