



Human Rights Education Center of Utah

The Data on Bullying

- It is estimated that 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students. (National Education Association)
- 85% of girls and 76% of boys have been sexually harassed in some form and only 18% of those incidents were perpetrated by an adult. (American Association of University Women)
- Young bullies carry a one-in-four chance of having a criminal record by age 30. (Study by Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesman)
- 15% of all school absenteeism is directly related to fears of being bullied at school. (Michele Borba, Ed.D.)
- 71% of students report incidents of bullying as a problem at their school. (Michele Borba, Ed.D.)
- One out of 20 students has seen a student with a gun at school. (Michele Borba, Ed.D.)
- It is reported that one third of middle school students feel unsafe at school because of bullying and do not report such behaviors to school personnel because they are scared, lack the necessary skills for reporting, and feel teachers and administrators do nothing to stop the bullying. (Batsche, G.M. & Knoff, H.M., 1994)
- 81% of middle school students reported engaging in at least one act of bullying in the last 30 days and 8% reported frequently engaging in acts of bullying behavior in the last 30 days. (Bosworth, K., Espelage, D.L., Simon, T.R., 1999)
- Boys bully more than girls and no relationships have been found between bullying behavior and grade, ethnicity and family type. (Bosworth, K., Espelage, D.L., Simon, T.R., 1999)
- Boys are more likely to use physical bullying and threats and girls use social and verbal means including spreading rumors about other students and excluding them from peer groups. (Boulton, M.J. & Underwood, K. (1992)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry No. 80; Updated May 2008

Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis.

Bullying behavior can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victims. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target. Recently, bullying has even been reported in online chat rooms and through e-mail.

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to endure such harassment and punishment.

Children and adolescents who bully thrive on controlling or dominating others. They have often been the victims of physical abuse or bullying themselves. Bullies may also be depressed, angry or upset about events at school or at home. Children targeted by bullies also tend to fit a particular profile. Bullies often choose children who are passive, easily intimidated, or have few friends. Victims may also be smaller or younger, and have a harder time defending themselves.

If you suspect your child is bullying others, it's important to seek help for him or her as soon as possible. Without intervention, bullying can lead to serious academic, social, emotional and legal difficulties. Talk to your child's pediatrician, teacher, principal, school counselor, or family physician. If the bullying continues, a comprehensive evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional should be arranged. The evaluation can help you and your child understand what is causing the bullying, and help you develop a plan to stop the destructive behavior.

If you suspect your child may be the victim of bullying ask him or her to tell you what's going on. You can help by providing lots of opportunities to talk with you in an open and honest way.

Facts About Bullying from YouthNoise™

1 in 6 – The number of children, grades 6 to 10, who say they are bullied sometimes; more than 1 in 12 say they are bullied once a week or more.

285 out of 4,743 – The number of children in grades 1 to 8 who admitted bullying others more than once or twice over a six week time period.

2% – The percentage of children grades 1 to 8 who report being both bullies and victims.

7 minutes – Bullying occurs in school playgrounds every 7 minutes, and once every 25 minutes in classrooms.

10 seconds – Bullying stops in less than 10 seconds when peers intervene on behalf of the victim.

More Information on Bullying

Prevalence

Almost 30% of youth in the United States (or over 5.7 million) are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both. In a recent national survey of students in grades 6-10, 13% reported bullying others, 11% reported being the target of bullies, and another 6% said that they bullied others and were bullied themselves.^[1]

Male vs. Female

Bullying takes on different forms in male and female youth. While both male and female youth say that others bully them by making fun of the way they look or talk, males are more likely to report being hit, slapped, or pushed. Female youth are more likely than males to report being the targets of rumors and sexual comments.^[2] While male youth target both boys and girls, female youth most often bully other girls, using more subtle and indirect forms of aggression than boys. For example, instead of physically harming others, they are more likely to spread gossip or encourage others to reject or exclude another girl.^[3]

Risk Factors for Bullying Behavior

While many people believe that bullies act tough in order to hide feelings of insecurity and self-loathing, in fact, bullies tend to be confident, with high self-esteem.^[4] ^[5] They are generally physically aggressive, with pro-violence attitudes, and are typically hot-tempered, easily angered, and impulsive, with a low tolerance for frustration. Bullies have a strong need to dominate others and usually have little empathy for their targets. Male bullies are often physically bigger and stronger than their peers.^[6] Bullies tend to get in trouble more often, and to dislike and do more poorly in school, than teens who do not bully others. They are also more likely to fight, drink and smoke than their peers.^[7]

Children and teens that come from homes where parents provide little emotional support for their children, fail to monitor their activities, or have little involvement in their lives, are at greater risk for engaging in bullying behavior. Parents' discipline styles are also related to bullying behavior: an extremely permissive or excessively harsh approach to discipline can increase the risk of teenage bullying.^[8]

Surprisingly, bullies appear to have little difficulty in making friends. Their friends typically share their pro-violence attitudes and problem behaviors (such as drinking and smoking) and may be involved in bullying as well.^[9] These friends are often followers that do not initiate bullying, but participate in it.^[10]

Risk Factors for Being Targeted by Bullies

Children and youth who are bullied are typically anxious, insecure, and cautious and suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defending themselves or retaliating when confronted by students who bully them.^[11] They are often socially isolated and lack social skills.^[12] One study found that the most frequent reason cited by youth for persons being bullied is that they "didn't fit in."^[13] Males who are bullied tend to be physically weaker than their peers.^[14] ^[15]

Long-term Impact on Youth

There appears to be a strong relationship between bullying other students and experiencing later legal and criminal problems as an adult. In one study, 60% of those characterized as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.^[16] Chronic bullies seem to maintain their behaviors into adulthood, negatively influencing their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships.^[17]

Bullying can lead the children and youth that are the target of bullying to feel tense, anxious, and afraid. It can affect their concentration in school, and can lead them to avoid school in some cases. If bullying continues for some time, it can begin to affect children and youth's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. It also can increase their social isolation, leading them to become withdrawn and depressed, anxious and insecure. In extreme cases, bullying can be devastating for children and youth, with long-term consequences. Researchers have found that years later, long after the bullying has stopped, adults who were bullied as youth have higher levels of depression and poorer self-esteem than other adults.^[18]

Effective Programs

Effective programs have been developed to reduce bullying in schools. Research has found that bullying is most likely to occur in schools where there is a lack of adult supervision during breaks, where teachers and students are indifferent to or accept bullying behavior, and where rules against bullying are not consistently enforced.^[19]

While approaches that simply crack down on individual bullies are seldom effective, when there is a school-wide commitment to end bullying, it can be reduced by up to 50%. One approach that has been shown to be effective focuses on changing school and classroom climates by: raising awareness about bullying, increasing teacher and parent involvement and supervision, forming clear rules and strong social norms against bullying, and providing support and protection for all students. This approach involves teachers, principals, students, and everyone associated with the school, including janitors, cafeteria workers, and crossing guards. Adults become aware of the extent of bullying at the school, and they involve themselves in changing the situation, rather than looking the other way. Students pledge not to bully other students, to help students who are bullied, and to make a point to include students who are left out.^[20]

Notes

1. Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment., 285(16), 2094-2100.
2. Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment. Journal of the American Medical Association, 285(16), 2094-2100.
3. Olweus, D. (1993). Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., p. 19.
4. Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment. Journal of the American Medical Association, 285(16), 2094-2100.

5. Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., p. 34.
6. Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., pp. 34-43.
7. Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.
8. Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., pp. 39-43.
9. Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.
10. Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere (Wiley).
11. Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc
12. Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association With Psychosocial Adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.
13. Hoover, J.H., Oliver, R., Hazler, R.J. (1992). Bullying: perceptions of adolescent victims in the Midwestern USA. *School Psychology International*, 13, 5-16.
14. Batsche, G.M., & Knoff, H.M. (1994). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in the schools. *School Psychology Review*, 23(2), 165-174.
15. Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED384 437.
16. Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED384 437.
17. Oliver, R., Hoover, J. H., & Hazler, R. (1994). The perceived roles of bullying in small-town Midwestern schools. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 72 (4), 416-419.
18. Rigby, K. (2001). Health consequences of bullying and its prevention in schools. In J. Juvonen & S. Graham, Eds., *Peer Harassment in School: The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimized*. New York: Guilford Press.
19. Olweus, D., Limber, S., & Mihalic, S. (1999). *Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Nine: Bullying Prevention Program*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
20. Olweus, D., Limber, S., & Mihalic, S. (1999). *Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Nine: Bullying Prevention Program*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

In addition to this data, HREC has a multi-media library of books, CD's, DVD's and human rights curriculums that are made available to any educator in Utah at no charge. For more information, please contact us at:

The Human Rights Education Center of Utah
 455 East 400 South, Suite 212
 Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
 (801) 521-4283
 e-mail: carla@hrecutah.org
www.hrecutah.org