



# BULLYING

## Definition

Deliberate psychological, emotional and/or physical harassment of one person by another, or a group, occurring at school or in transit between school and home. Includes exclusion from peer group, intimidation, extortion and violence.

Bullying has been identified as one of the major issues facing children and young people, parents, educators and the community at large. Although bullying has always occurred, it seems that this behaviour has been underestimated in both its extent and severity.

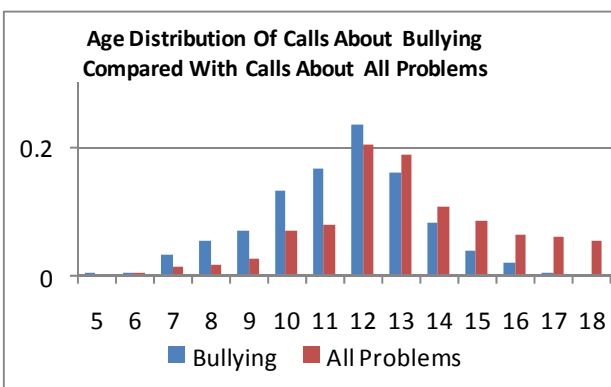
Each week, What's Up receives about 45 calls about bullying from children in New Zealand. The children that call What's Up regarding bullying identify a variety of reasons for their mistreatment. These reasons include:

- ethnicity
- resistance to pressure to behave in a certain way
- physical differences
- high achievement
- being new
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic background
- religious beliefs

Individuals who have low self-esteem or personal power can also be targeted. The nature and extent of bullying can vary from direct to indirect harassment, from minor irritants to assaults, and include illegal acts (sexual harassment, racial abuse, deprivation of human rights). It can include physical, verbal and gesture bullying, extortion and exclusion. The most common form of bullying is verbal harassment.

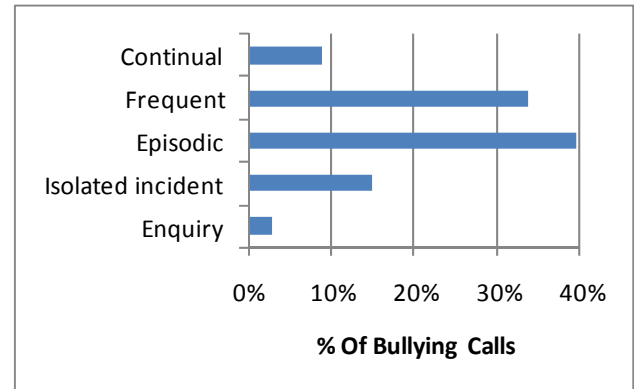
## Caller Characteristics

Bullying is ranked as the most common reason kids 12 years or younger call What's Up. About seven out of every ten calls about bullying are made by 10-13 year olds. These figures suggest that bullying is most troubling to children in late primary school or intermediate school. This has major implications for parents and educators of children aged between 9 and 13 years.



Bullying affects both girls and boys but makes up a significantly larger proportion of the calls made by males than those made by females (24% versus 16%).

The next graph shows the frequency of bullying experienced by the children who call What's Up.



About 43% of callers about bullying report experiencing frequent or continual harassment while at school and it has been a repeated experience for another 40%.

It seems that bullying is widespread and in many cases, severe.

## Trends

In the six years to the end of 2007, calls to 0800WHAT-SUP about bullying show a rising trend, although they fell slightly between 2006 and 2007, from 19.2% of all problems presented, to 18%.

During these six years, the proportion of calls reporting isolated incidents has decreased and the proportion reporting frequent bullying has increased, so that on average, the severity of bullying has been increasing.

## Why Do People Bully?

There are lots of different reasons people bully. Some reasons identified by young people include:

- They might get power and strength from bullying others.
- As a way to be popular and get known at school.
- Because they are scared, so they try to scare others to hide their feelings.
- Because they are unhappy and take it out on others.
- Because they are being bullied themselves.
- Using bullying as a way to try to be happier.
- As a way to try and fit in.

Children who engage in bullying behaviours also have a right to be treated with respect. Research has found that children who bully may have higher levels of anxiety, stress, depression and self harm.

## **What Being Bullied Feels Like**

Everyone feels lots of things if they are being bullied, see bullying or bully others. Some ways people say they feel when they are bullied are:

scared	depressed
sad	lonely
stuck	confused
worried	embarrassed
sick	stupid
not wanting to go out or to school	
alone	angry
mad	fed up
tired	not safe

## **How What's Up Can Help**

Through the medium of an anonymous, confidential telephone counselling service, What's Up aims to empower the children who are being bullied to identify their strengths and competencies in a climate where they are believed, supported and validated. What's Up is available to offer support and assistance in any situation. To address the issue of bullying, change must occur at a variety of levels. The following section includes suggestions for individuals, parents and schools.

## **What Can I Do If I Am Being Bullied?**

Some ideas young people have tried:

- avoiding the children who bully
- don't be alone with the children who bully—it feels safer with others around
- calmly walk away from them
- don't fight back - it only makes things worse
- don't keep it a secret - get support from someone you trust, eg. friend, teacher, school official
- calmly talk to the children or young people who bully about what is happening and how you feel
- forget about it by doing something you enjoy.

## **Helping Others Who Are Being Bullied**

- support someone who is being bullied by making a group or individual decision to respond in a way that clearly communicates, to the children or young people who bully, that bullying is not acceptable
- listen to someone who is being bullied and let them talk about how it feels
- support someone who is being bullied in the actions they take, eg. informing a teacher, school official, etc.

It is important to remember that doing nothing condones the behaviour.

## **Parents Whose Child Is Being Bullied**

- Listen to your child and make it clear that it is not their fault.
- Talk to other parents, or a support group, about strategies that might help.

- Raise the issue of bullying with your child's school. Find out what the school intends to do and what the current bullying policy is. If not satisfied with the actions of this school, make this clear to the relevant authorities.
- Help your child develop strategies to deal with the bullying. These include communication skills and assertiveness. Encourage the implementation of these strategies. Help them to find ways to change things - help them to see what they can change. Become aware of your own reactions. Your child should not be expected to handle bullying on his or her own.

## **Schools**

In the school setting, young people experience bullying as a frequent challenge. It is important to counter views that bullying is an inevitable part of school life. The wider community and particularly the adults within it, must take responsibility for making it clear that bullying is an act of violence and will not be tolerated in our society. Schools have an obligation to ensure they are a safe place for all students. Any meaningful response to bullying must recognise that a whole of community approach is necessary.

## **Other Resources**

The bullying-related websites listed below provide information and examples of programmes/strategies for young people, parents and schools.

### **Dr Rigby's Bullying Page**

[www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying](http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying)

**No Bully** [www.nobully.org.nz](http://www.nobully.org.nz)

**Child and Adolescent Psychological and Educational Resources** [www.caper.com.au](http://www.caper.com.au)

**Bullying No Way** [www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au)

**Kidscape** [www.kidscape.co.uk](http://www.kidscape.co.uk)

Updated June 2008

### **For more information:**

**The Kids Help Foundation Trust**  
PO Box 56642  
Dominion Rd  
Auckland

Tel: 09-630-4144 Fax: 09-630-4840

Email: [info@whatsup.co.nz](mailto:info@whatsup.co.nz)