



What characteristics of bullying, bullying victims, and schools are associated with increased reporting of bullying to school officials?



Summary





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**August 2010**

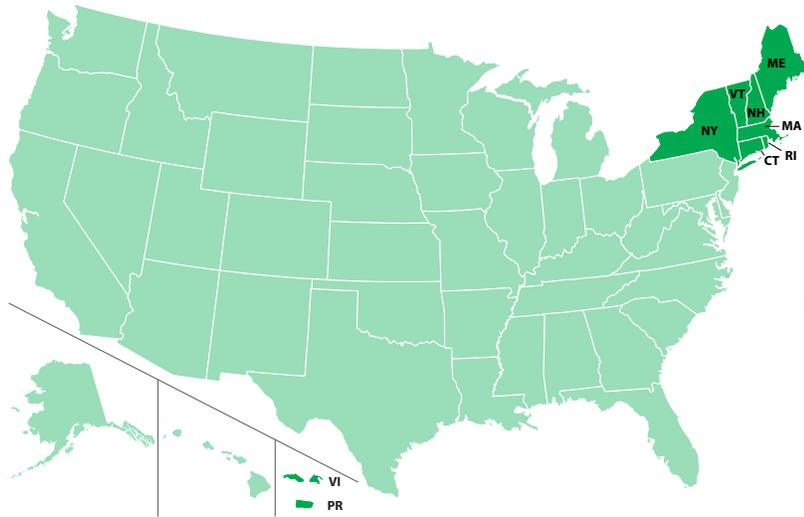
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This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

## What characteristics of bullying, bullying victims, and schools are associated with increased reporting of bullying to school officials?

**This study tested 51 characteristics of bullying victimization, bullying victims, and bullying victims' schools to determine which were associated with reporting to school officials. It found that 11 characteristics in two categories—bullying victimization and bullying victims—showed a statistically significant association with reporting. The study also notes the high percentage (64 percent) of respondents who experienced bullying but did not report it.**

Bullying appears to be frequent among U.S. students and has been associated with several short- and long-term negative consequences such as depression and poor health. Research suggests that many bullying incidents are not reported to school officials, which hampers educators' ability to define the scope or frequency of bullying behavior in their schools or districts, the first step in addressing the problem. Further, when bullying is under-reported, administrators are likely to receive an incomplete picture of bullying behaviors in their schools and of the conditions and settings in which bullying occurs.

This study used nationally representative data from the 2007 National Crime Victimization

Survey School Crime Supplement, a biennial survey of children ages 12–18 who attended school in the prior academic year, to examine which of 51 characteristics of bullying victimization, bullying victims, and bullying victims' schools are associated with increased reporting of bullying to a teacher or other adult at the school. The survey data show that 36 percent of bullying victims reported their victimization to a teacher or other adult at their school and that 64 percent of students did not.

Eleven characteristics were found to have a statistically significant association with reporting of bullying victimization, specifically:

- Eight characteristics of bullying victimization were statistically associated with increased reporting: bullying involving injury, physical threats, destruction of property, actual physical contact (pushing, shoving, and the like), greater frequency, multiple types, more than one location, and at least one occurrence on a school bus.

Seven characteristics did not appear to be associated with reporting: bullying that involved making fun of the victim or calling the victim names, excluding the victim, spreading rumors about the victim,

and forcing the victim to do things he or she did not want to do, and bullying that occurred in the school building, on school grounds, or somewhere else.

- Three characteristics of bullying victims were found to have statistically significant relationships with reporting. Grade level was significantly and negatively associated with reporting, and being involved in a fight during the school year and being afraid of attack and avoiding certain school areas or activities were significantly and positively associated with reporting.

Victim characteristics that did not appear to be associated with reporting included gender, race/ethnicity, household region, and academic performance.

- No characteristic of bullying victims' schools—including general characteristics, school culture, and school security and safety—was found to have a statistically significant association with reporting.

The results should be interpreted as exploratory associations between the reporting of bullying and various student and school characteristics and not as confirmations of causal relationships.

Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Northeast and Islands conducted this study of the conditions under which bullying victimization is reported in response to the concerns about bullying expressed by Parent Information and Resource Centers and other stakeholders in the REL Northeast and Islands Region and elsewhere.

Further research could be undertaken to understand why bullying is or is not reported and to learn more about the aftermath of reporting, including school responses to reports and whether victims who report bullying suffer reprisals. Such projects could require entirely new data collection efforts or the addition of items to existing student surveys such as the National Crime Victimization Survey School Crime Supplement.

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