



# School relationships & bullying

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Young people who are bullied are more likely to experience higher levels of absenteeism, physical harm, anxiety, depression, risk of suicide, and alcohol and substance use.

Bullying often occurs because of differences between the bullies and the victims, such as culture, ethnicity, age, ability or disability, religion, body size, physical appearance, personality, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.

## Cyber-bullying

- Cyber-bullying involves the use of electronic communication tools such as e-mail, web sites, chat rooms, text or image messaging to engage in bullying behaviour. Victims of cyber bullying are likely to experience similar health and wellbeing issues to those associated with school bullying, but cyber-bullying is less likely to be reported. It has been suggested that young people who experience cyber-bullying are likely to be more psychologically vulnerable than young people who experience bullying only at school.

## Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people

- Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people, as well as other ethnic minority groups within Australia, may experience bullying based on racial or ethnic discrimination.
- The 2005 West Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey obtained self-reported information on the experiences of school bullying and racism among Indigenous young people aged 12–17 years. According to the survey:
  - 31% of young people attending school reported being bullied at school and, of these, almost 30% experienced racism.

## Measuring bullying

- There is currently no nationally agreed definition of bullying in Australia. There are a number of important aspects to consider when measuring bullying, including the severity (type of bullying and frequency) and the effect that bullying has on the child, which may vary depending on the child's resilience.
- A widely used instrument to measure bullying behaviours in school-aged children is the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire.

## Bullying statistics

- In 2006 the Centre for Adolescent Health conducted a Healthy Neighbourhood project that investigated the health and wellbeing of 8,000 young people (12–14 years of age) living in 30 communities across Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.
  - 38% of young people experienced bullying in the previous 12 months (40% of females and 37% of males). Of these:
    - 19% were bullied daily or at least once a week
    - Almost two thirds were bullied less than once a week.
  - One in five young people said they had bullied others. Of these:
    - 7% bullied others on most days
    - 13% on a weekly basis
    - 80% less than once a week.