

## Bullying Behaviour among Ontario Students

Over the past few years, the issue of bullying has been brought to the public's attention by concerned parents and school officials. Children who are bullied are likely to suffer adverse consequences academically, psychologically and socially. No longer seen as "just child's play," enduring bullying can trigger violent attacks in schools by victims seeking retribution – as was the case in recent school shootings.

This bulletin reports the prevalence of bullying behaviour among Ontario students in grades 7 to 13 (OAC), as measured in the 2001 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)*. The survey asked students about both being a victim and being a perpetrator of bullying since the start of the school year.

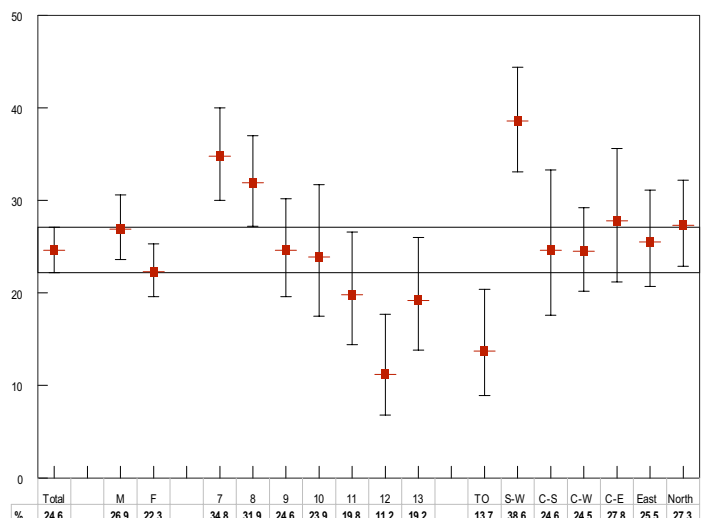
### Bullying Victims

One-quarter (24.6%) of students in grades 7 to 13 reported being bullied at school since the start of the school year. This represents about 225,300 of Ontario students. There is a small, but significant difference between males (26.9%) and females (22.3%) in reports of being bullied (Figure 1). Not surprisingly, there is significant grade variation, ranging from 34.8% of 7<sup>th</sup>-graders to 11.2% of 12<sup>th</sup>-graders. Reports of being bullied also differ by public health region of the province, with Toronto (13.7%) students least likely to be bullied and South-Western (38.6%) students most likely.

### Bullying Perpetrators

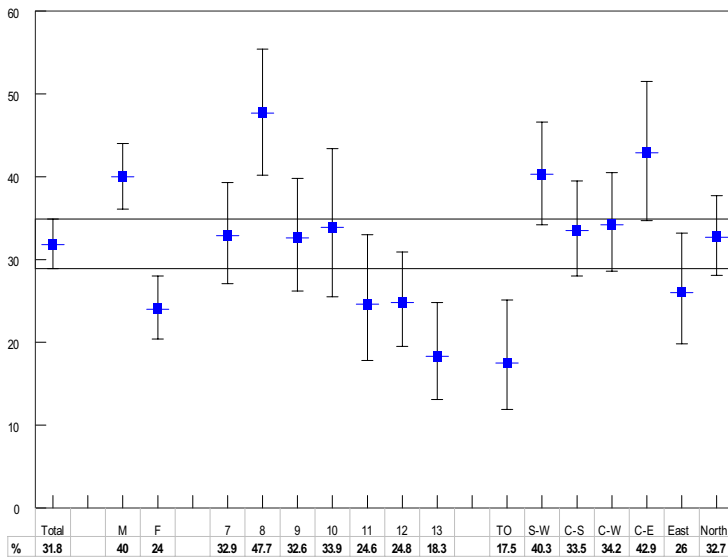
About one-third (31.8%) of students report bullying someone at school. Males are much more likely than females to take part in bullying (40.0% vs 24.0%, respectively). Reports also vary significantly by grade: the least likely to take part are 13<sup>th</sup>-graders (18.3%), whereas 8<sup>th</sup>-graders (47.7%) are the most likely to bully someone. Again, students in Toronto (17.5%) are least likely to bully someone, whereas those in the South-West and Central-East public health regions are the most likely (over 40%).

Figure 1. Percentage Reporting Being Bullied, by Sex, Grade, and Public Health Region, OSDUS 2001



Vertical bars represent 95% Confidence Intervals; horizontal bar represents the CI for the total estimate.

**Figure 2. Percentage Reporting Bullying Someone, by Sex, Grade, and Public Health Region, OSDUS 2001**



Vertical bars represent 95% Confidence Intervals; horizontal bar represents the CI for the total estimate.

### Methods:

The *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)* is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary (grades 7 and 8) and secondary (grades 9-OAC) school students conducted every two years since 1977.

The 2001 survey, which used a two-stage cluster design (school, class) included 4,211 students in grades 7 to OAC from 41 public and Catholic school boards, 106 schools, and 273 classes. The survey sample of 4,211 represents about 916,200 students in Ontario. Self-administered questionnaires, which promote anonymity, were administered by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis in the Spring of 2001. The student completion rate was 71%. All estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the complex sampling design. The two bullying questions were asked of a random half sample of students, N=2,243.

### Terminology:

- **Bullying** as defined in the questionnaire: “Bullying is when one or more people tease, hurt or upset a weaker person on purpose.”
- **Bullying Victim:** was measured with the question “Since September, how often have you been bullied at school?” Percentage reported here represents at least one incident.
- **Bullying Perpetrator:** was measured with the question “Since September, how often have you taken part in bullying other students at school?” Percentage reported here represents at least on one incident.
- **Public Health Regions** Ontario currently has 7 public health regions: *Toronto* (amalgamated); *Southwest*; *Central-South*; *Central-West*; *Central-East*; *East*; and *North*.<sup>1</sup>
- **95% Confidence Interval:** The 95% confidence interval can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the “true” percentage value if every student in Ontario was surveyed.
- **Significant Difference:** refers to a difference between two percentage values that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the p<.05 level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

### Source:

Adlaf, E.M., & Paglia, A. (2001). *Drug Use Among Ontario Students: Findings from the OSDUS, 1977-2001*. CAMH Research Document Series No. 10. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

### References:

1. Ontario Ministry of Health. (1999). *Ontario Health Survey 1996-1997: Derived Variables Document*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Health.

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