

Bullying and Cyberbullying in the MetroWest Region (Grades 7-12)

Highlights from the 2014 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

Bullying and cyberbullying, and their potential effects on adolescent mental health, continue to be great concerns as the use of social media and proliferation of new sites continue to rise. Since 2006, the *MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey* (MWAHS) has collected information on bullying behaviors online and on school property across the MetroWest region. The MWAHS was most recently administered in Fall 2014 to 12,191 students at the middle school level in grades 7-8 (93% participation rate) and 24,355 students at the high school level in grades 9-12 (89% participation rate). This fact sheet summarizes bullying data for grades 7-12.

How many youth are involved in bullying?

- School bullying***
 - 23% of middle school youth and 20% of high school youth were **bullied on school property** in the past 12 months.
 - 5% of middle school youth and 7% of high school youth report that they **bullied someone else on school property** during this time.
- Cyber-bullying***
 - 19% of middle school and 21% of high school youth were **victims of cyberbullying** in the past 12 months.
 - 6% of middle school youth and 9% of high school youth report **cyberbullying someone else**.

Which youth are more likely to be victims of bullying?

- Sex**
 - **More girls than boys report being bullied, both at school and online.** For example, reports of school bullying in middle school are higher among girls than boys (26% vs. 20%), and reports of cyberbullying victimization are nearly twice as high among girls than boys (24% vs. 13%). Similar patterns exist at the high school level.
- Grade**
 - **Reports of bullying victimization vary substantially by grade.** Reports of bullying victimization on school property range from 17-24% by grade and are highest in grades 7 through 9. Reports of cyberbullying victimization range from 17-23% and are highest among 9th grade students.
- Sexual orientation**
 - **Sexual minority youth are at increased risk of being bullied.** High school youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning report more school bullying (34% vs. 18%) and cyberbullying (30% vs. 20%) than heterosexual youth.
- Disabilities**
 - **Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied.** For example, middle school youth with physical and/or learning disabilities are more likely than youth without disabilities to be bullied at school (37% vs. 21%) and to be cyberbullied (29% vs. 15%).

How often do bullying victims talk to adults about being bullied?

- Help-seeking behaviors**
 - **Many youth who are bullied do not seek help from adults; those that do are more likely to tell a parent/adult outside of school than a school adult.** For example, only 41% of middle school youth who are bullied on school property talked to an adult at school about being bullied, and 59% talked to an adult outside of school.
 - **Cyberbullying victims are less likely to talk to adults than school bullying victims.** For example, 29% of high school cyberbullying victims told a parent/non-school adult, compared with 42% of school bullying victims.

How is bullying associated with mental health problems?***

- Depressive symptoms**
 - **Victims of bullying are more likely to report depressive symptoms.** For example, middle school youth who are bullied at school are far more likely to report depressive symptoms in their lifetime than nonvictims (31% vs. 9%).
- Suicidality**
 - **Bullying victims are more likely to report both considering and attempting suicide.** For example, 28% of high school students who are cyberbullied report seriously considering suicide,* compared with 9% of nonvictims.

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The *MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey* (MWAHS) is conducted by Education Development Center, Inc. with funding from the MetroWest Health Foundation. The MWAHS is an anonymous survey of youth in 25 communities. One of the largest student surveys in the nation, its goal is to inform local policies and programs. In 2014, 40,526 students took surveys, representing over 90% of students in the region.

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* during the past 12 months

**using the Internet, cell phones or other electronic devices to bully, tease, threaten or spread rumors about someone

*** The MWAHS data is cross-sectional, therefore, we cannot attribute causality to these associations.