

# About bullying

## What is bullying?

Bullying is unreasonable, repeated behaviour that causes harm to an individual or group of people. Bullying can take many different forms:

- **Physical** (hitting, tripping up)
- **Verbal** (insults, threats)
- **Social** (spreading gossip or excluding people)
- **Cyberbullying** (bullying online, via the internet, mobile phones and social media)
- **Microaggressions** (casual jokes, misgendering, everyday disrespect)
- **Covert** (withholding information in the workplace, or overloading workloads)

## Why do some people get bullied?

People can be bullied for any number of reasons, including differences in race, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, disabilities and abilities, weight or height.

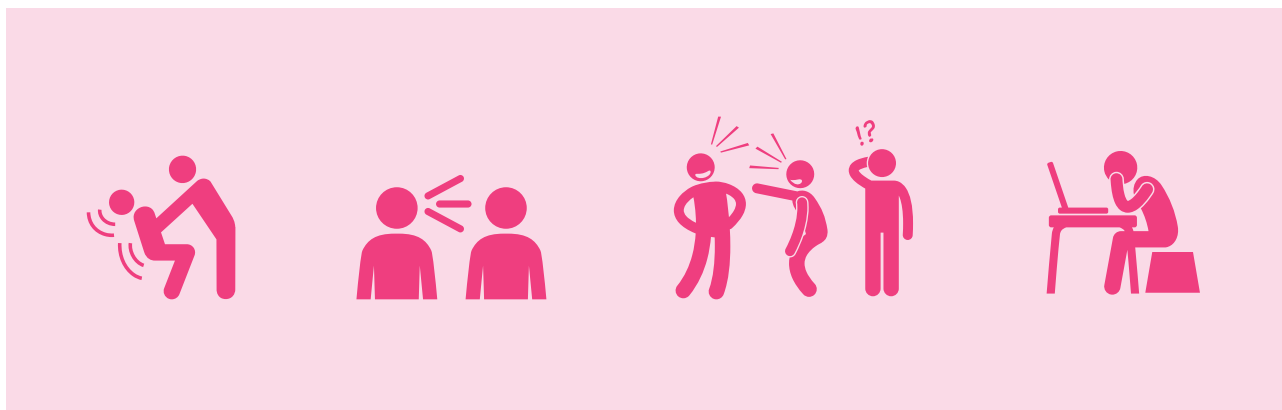
That's why it's so important to celebrate diversity and embrace our differences. Everyone should feel safe to be themselves - we aren't all the same and that's a great thing.

## Why do some people bully others?

Just as there are many reasons someone might experience bullying, there are also many reasons why someone might bully others.

- They feel unhappy, or have recently experienced a stressful or traumatic situation.
- They have been the target of bullying themselves.
- They want to feel important or powerful.
- They don't realise how their behaviour harms others.
- They believe being different is a bad thing.

While the bullying behaviour isn't okay, someone who bullies others often needs our help and awhi/support too.



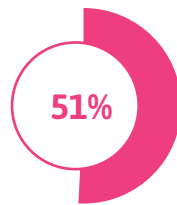
It's really important to remind people that it's okay to be different from others and it's not okay to bully people because they are not the same as you.

### Why prevent bullying?

- Many studies show that rangatahi/young people who are bullied are more likely to experience mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.
- This can impact on their learning, relationships and ability to feel good about who they are.
- Bullying harms the person being bullied, the person doing the bullying and can also harm those who witness it (bystanders).
- By taking bullying seriously and celebrating diversity, all rangatahi can feel safe and supported.



One in five teens have experienced an unwanted digital communication that had a negative impact on their daily activities.<sup>1</sup>



51% of secondary students had been hit or physically harmed on purpose in the last 12 months.<sup>2</sup>



ALL OECD



NZ

In Aotearoa, 13% of students are frequently bullied, significantly higher than the OECD average of 9%.<sup>3</sup>



- In Aotearoa, 6% of students said they don't feel safe on their way to school, and 6% said they don't feel safe in their classrooms.
- 13% reported not feeling safe at other places at school, such as in the hallway or bathroom.<sup>3</sup>

**'Being made fun of' and 'being excluded on purpose from activities'** are consistently the most common forms of bullying experienced by rangatahi in Aotearoa.<sup>4</sup>



One in five students from ethnic communities in NZ reported experiencing racist bullying in the last month, and over half witnessed others being bullied because of their ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>

1 Netsafe. (2023). Cyberbullying in New Zealand. [https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Report\\_2023.09.09-Cyberbullying-Costs-2023.pdf](https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Report_2023.09.09-Cyberbullying-Costs-2023.pdf)

2 Fleming, T., Archer, D., King-Finau, T., Dewhirst, M., & Clark, T. (2021). Youth19: Safety & violence brief. Youth19 and The Adolescent Health Research Group, Auckland and Wellington. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bdbb75ccef37259122e59aa/t/6168c9dbcfcd7750fb6b8aff/1634257377085/Youth19+Safety+and+Violence+Brief.pdf>

3 OECD. (2023). PISA 2022 results (Volume I and II) - Country notes: New Zealand. [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes\\_ed6fbcc5-en/new-zealand\\_33941739-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/new-zealand_33941739-en.html)

4 Mhuru, M. (2021). He Whakaaro: What do we know about bullying behaviours in New Zealand? Education Counts. [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/203575/He-Whakaaro-What-do-we-know-about-bullying-behaviours-in-NZ.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/203575/He-Whakaaro-What-do-we-know-about-bullying-behaviours-in-NZ.pdf)

5 Education Review Office (ERO). (2023). Education for all our children: Embracing diverse ethnicities. Ministry for Ethnic Communities. <https://evidence.ero.govt.nz/documents/education-for-all-our-children-embracing-diverse-ethnicities>

## Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying

These terms refer to bullying based on a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Rangatahi who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or other sexuality and gender diverse communities, or are perceived to be part of the rainbow community, experience higher rates of bullying than students who do not. However, it is important to note that not all of these students will experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying.

**Rainbow young people are resilient, have higher rates of volunteering and community engagement and are an important part of our community. Despite this, rainbow young people are particularly vulnerable to experiencing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.<sup>6</sup>**

The Youth19 national health and wellbeing survey of New Zealand secondary school students found that over one in five transgender<sup>7</sup> students, and one in 14 same/multiple sex attracted students said that they had been bullied at school weekly or more often in the past year.<sup>8</sup>

Identify’s 2022 community and advocacy report, which surveyed rainbow youth in Aotearoa, found that:

- More than half felt their school was not supportive of their rainbow identity.
- Over a third said they had experienced bullying at least once in the past 12 months. The proportion of trans and non-binary students who had been bullied was significantly larger than cisgender students who had been.
- One in six felt unsafe or very unsafe at their school as a rainbow person.



Discrimination on the basis of sexuality or gender identity remain strongly associated with poorer mental health among people in the rainbow community, who are three times more likely to consider self-harm or suicide and experience higher levels of depression when socially isolated or excluded.<sup>9</sup>



Bullying contributes to lower achievement among rainbow students, unless they experience belonging and strong teacher support.<sup>10</sup>

- Clark, T. C., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Denny, S., Crengle, S., Dyson, B., Fortune, S., Lucassen, M., Peiris-John, R., Robinson, E., Rossen, F., Sheridan, J., Teevale, T., Utter, J. (2013). Youth12 Overview: The health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students in 2012. Auckland, New Zealand: The University of Auckland
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- Fenaughty, J., Lucassen, M. F. G., Clark, T., & Denny, S. (2019). Factors Associated with Academic Achievement for Sexual and Gender Minority and Heterosexual Cisgender Students: Implications from a Nationally Representative Study. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 48(10), 1883–1898. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01124-w>

## Cyberbullying

According to **Netsafe**, online harm is increasing.<sup>12</sup> **Online bullying or cyberbullying** is when digital technology is used in a way that intends to harm another person or group. Cyberbullying can take many forms, including:

- Name calling.
- Repeated unwanted messages.
- Spreading rumours or lies.
- Fake accounts used to harass people.
- Excluding people from social activities.
- Embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

**Nearly half of Māori (46%) have experienced harmful digital communications in the past year that include unwanted sexual advances, false allegations, racist remarks and online stalking.**<sup>13</sup>



**Reasons for sending a harmful digital communication included “for a joke” (28%), “to influence behaviour or thoughts” (14%), “to scare” (8%) and “to embarrass” (6%).**<sup>14</sup>

## Be an Upstander

We all have the power to prevent bullying by being an Upstander. Using your words and actions to help someone who is being bullied can make a huge difference.

There are lots of ways you can support someone who is being bullied. Create a distraction to help them move away from the situation, let them know they’re not alone, get help from someone you trust, or call out the behaviour if you feel safe to do so.

For more tips on how to be an Upstander and safely stand up to bullying, visit [pinkshirtday.org.nz/upstander](https://pinkshirtday.org.nz/upstander).

12 Netsafe. (2023). Cyberbullying in New Zealand. [https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Report\\_2023.09.09-Cyberbullying-Costs-2023.pdf](https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Report_2023.09.09-Cyberbullying-Costs-2023.pdf)

13 Netsafe. (2023). Netsafe’s research reveals New Zealanders escalating negative online experiences for 2023. <https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/MR-19-December-Netsafes-research-reveals-New-Zealanders-escalating-negative-online-experiences-for-2023.pdf>

14 Boundy, A. (2021). Who sends harmful communications? Netsafe – Providing Free Online Safety Advice in New Zealand. [https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Report\\_Who-is-sending-and-sharing-potentially-harmful-digital-comms-Netsafe-Perpetration-Report.pdf](https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Report_Who-is-sending-and-sharing-potentially-harmful-digital-comms-Netsafe-Perpetration-Report.pdf)