

# ABOUT BULLYING



## What is bullying?

It isn't uncommon to hear someone say something insensitive or mean to someone else. Although these comments or actions are not okay, bullying has some specific features that make it much more serious and harmful.

- Bullying is deliberate – harming another person intentionally.
- Bullying involves a misuse of power in a relationship.
- Bullying is usually not a one-off – it is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time.
- Bullying involves behaviour that can cause harm – it is not a normal part of growing up (Ministry of Education, n.d.).<sup>1</sup>

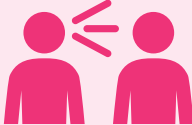
## What does it look like?

Bullying can be:



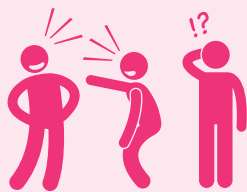
### PHYSICAL

- hitting, tripping up.



### VERBAL

- insults, threats.  
- called names, teasing.



### SOCIAL

- spreading gossip or excluding people.



### CYBERBULLYING

- bullying online, via the internet, mobile phones and social media. It's a common form of bullying, especially amongst young people (Steiner-Fox, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

## Why do some people get bullied?

We know people are more likely to be bullied if they seem different from their peers in some way.

This might include differences in race, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, religion, disabilities and abilities, weight or height.

That's why it's so important to celebrate diversity and embrace our differences – 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 someone.

- 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.

Labelling someone who bullies as a "bad person" isn't right or helpful. While the bullying behaviour isn't okay, someone who bullies others often needs our help and awhi/support too.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education. (n.d.). Prevent Bullying / Welcome—Positive Behaviour for Learning. <https://pb4l.tki.org.nz/Prevent-Bullying>  
<sup>2</sup> Steiner-Fox, H. W., Dutt, S. J., Christiansen, S. J., Newton, H. J., Matika, C. M., Lindsay, C., Sare, M.H., Kapeli, S.A., & Stronge, S. (2016). Rates of cyberbullying among women and men in New Zealand in 2015. NZAVS Policy Brief, 3. <https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/psych/about/our-research/nzavs/Feedback%20Reports/NZAVS-Policy-Brief-Rate-of-Cyber-Bullying.pdf>



**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.**

### Is bullying harmful? Why prevent bullying?

- Many studies show that rangatahi 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).
- Rangatahi who bully others, or are bullied (or both), are more likely to skip classes, drop out of school, and perform worse academically than schoolmates who have no conflict with their peers (OECD, 2017).
- By taking bullying seriously and celebrating the diversity of taurira/students, all rangatahi can feel safe and supported, and flourish at your school!



7 in 10 teens in NZ have experienced at least one type of unwanted digital communication in the past year (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018).<sup>3</sup>



19% of NZ teens experienced an unwanted digital communication that had a negative impact on their daily activities (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018).



ALL OECD



NZ

In NZ, 13% of students are frequently bullied, significantly higher than the OECD average of 9%. (OECD, 2023).<sup>4</sup>



High school students who had been bullied weekly or more often were four times more likely to experience significant depressive symptoms than students who had been bullied infrequently or not at all (Clark, Robinson, Crengle, Grant, Galbreath, & Sykora, (2009)).<sup>5</sup>

### Some people are more likely to be targeted

While all young people are potential targets of bullying, some groups can experience higher rates. Boys, students from disadvantaged or immigrant backgrounds, and low achieving students are at higher risk. We see this trend happening not just in Aotearoa, but globally.

**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. (ERO 2023)<sup>6</sup>**

3 Pacheco, Edgar and Melhuish, Neil, Online Hate Speech: A Survey on Personal Experiences and Exposure Among Adult New Zealanders (November 5, 2018). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3272148> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3272148>

4 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)

5 Clark, T.C., Robinson, E., Crengle, S., Grant, S., Galbreath, R.A., & Sykora, J. (2009). Youth'07 The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand: Young people and violence. Auckland: The University of Auckland.

6 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

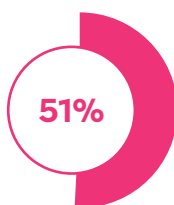
These terms refer to bullying based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Rangatahi/young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or other sexuality and gender diverse communities, or are perceived to be part of the rainbow community, experience 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>7</sup>**

- The Youth19 national health and wellbeing survey of New Zealand secondary school students found:



Over one in five transgender students (23%) said that they had been bullied at school weekly or more often in the past year, compared to 5% of cis gender students (Fenaughty, Sutcliffe, Fleming, Ker, Lucassen, Greaves, & Clark, 2021).<sup>8</sup>



51% of secondary students had been hit or physically harmed on purpose in the last 12 months. (Fleming, Archer, King-Finau, Dewhirst, & Clark, 2021).<sup>9</sup>



One in 14 of same/multiple sex attracted participants said that they had been bullied at school weekly or more often in the past year (Fenaughty, Clark, Choo, Lucassen, Greaves, Sutcliffe, Ball, Ker, & Fleming, 2021).<sup>10</sup>



Discrimination and social exclusion on the basis of sexuality or gender identity has been directly linked to an increased risk of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts for rainbow young people (Adams, Dickinson & Asiasiga, 2012).<sup>11</sup>



The effects of homophobic and biphobic bullying at school can be lifelong, and can include lower educational attainment, lower income and lower wellbeing (Henrickson, 2008).

- 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
- Fenaughty, J., Sutcliffe, K., Fleming, T., Ker, A., Lucassen, M., Greaves, L., & Clark, T. (2021). Youth19 brief: Transgender and diverse gender students. Youth19 and The Adolescent Health Research Group, Auckland and Wellington. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bdbb75ccef37259122e59aa/t/607cb8431453ca0b05c53bb8/1618786373138/Youth19+Brief\\_Transgender+and+diverse+gender+students+April2021.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bdbb75ccef37259122e59aa/t/607cb8431453ca0b05c53bb8/1618786373138/Youth19+Brief_Transgender+and+diverse+gender+students+April2021.pdf)
- 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>
- Fenaughty, J., Clark, T., Choo, W. L., Lucassen, M., Greaves, L., Sutcliffe, K., Ball, J., Ker, A., & Fleming, T. (2021). Te āniwaniwa takatāpui whānui: Te aranga taera mō ngā rangatahi: Sexual attraction and young people's wellbeing in Youth19. Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington.
- Adams, J. Dickinson, P. & Asiasiga, L. (2012). Mental health promotion and prevention services to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex populations in New Zealand: Needs assessment report. Auckland: Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui, The National Centre of Mental Health Research, Information and Workforce Development.

## Cyberbullying

According to [Netsafe](#), there is a growing number of reports from and about young people, who experience a disproportionate amount of harm online compared to other age groups (Netsafe, 2021). [Online bullying or cyberbullying](#) is when digital technology is used in a way that intends to harm another person or group. Online bullying 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. (Identify survey: Community and advocacy report (2022)).<sup>12</sup>**

## Bullying experienced by the rainbow community

Tauira who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or other sexuality and gender diverse communities, experience higher rates of bullying.

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 with the most common places they felt this way being classrooms, bathrooms or changing areas, corridors and stairwells, at a school event or function, and getting to and from school.

**Online bullying in particular poses some specific challenges. As so much of a young person's life involves online activity (e.g. school, social life), rainbow young people experiencing online bullying often feel they cannot escape it and must restrict their online presence in response. (InsideOUT report (2021)).**

<sup>12</sup> Fenaughty, J., Ker, A., Alansari, M., Besley, T., Kerekere, E., Pasley, A., Saxton, P., Subramanian, P., Thomsen, P. & Veale, J. (2022). Identify survey: Community and advocacy report. Identify Survey Team. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60187146e9f9034475dea113/t/6390e802bd4e535d10b72a17/1670440980159/community\\_advocacy\\_report.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60187146e9f9034475dea113/t/6390e802bd4e535d10b72a17/1670440980159/community_advocacy_report.pdf)