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The Evangelical Fellowship
of Canada

By the Numbers: Rates and Risk Factors for Bullying

A Brief Examination of Canadian Bullying Statistics

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Anti-bullying Legislation.....	4
A. Ontario – Bill 13	5
B. Ontario – Bill 14	6
C. Quebec – Bill 56	7
D. Manitoba – Bill 18.....	8
E. Alberta – Bill 3	9
F. Nova Scotia – Bill 30.....	10
G. British Columbia – ERASE Program.....	11
H. Saskatchewan – Anti-Bullying Strategy	11
I. New Brunswick – Amendments to the <i>Education Act</i>	12
J. Prince Edward Island – Motion 14.....	13
K. Newfoundland and Labrador – Safe and Caring Schools policy	13
3. What is bullying?.....	13
4. General Trends in Canadian Bullying Statistics.....	15
A. Differences in Bullying Behaviour by Boys and Girls	15
B. Frequency of Bullying Behaviours.....	17
C. Risk Factors for Bullying	19
I. Religious Bullying	20
II. Racial bullying	21
D. Student Perspectives on Bullying	23
5. Bullying and Sexual Harassment	24
6. Bullying and the LGBTQ community	25
A. Care for All Children.....	25
B. Limited and Problematic Data on LGBTQ Demographic.....	26
7. Trends in Cyber-Bullying	29
8. Canadian Public Opinion on Bullying and Bullying Legislation	32
A. General	32
B. Alberta Statistics	35
9. Conclusion.....	38
A. General Trends.....	38

B. Hate Crimes in Canada..... 38

C. Going Forward 39

Bibliography 40

Schedule “A”: Statistics Canada on Bullying Rates 47

1. Introduction

A recent series of tragic teen suicides, as well as the introduction of several provincial anti-bullying bills, have brought the issue of bullying to the forefront of Canadians' minds. Parents, members of academia, counsellors, legislators and journalists are seeking to better understand the behaviours, causes, and rates of bullying in Canada.

While American bullying statistics are broadly available, there are fewer Canadian statistics and they are less accessible. Using the information available, the following discussion paper will provide recent statistics on bullying in Canada and note possible trends in the research. This is not an academic paper and it will not examine psychological, social or other reasons which may explain the tragic phenomenon of bullying. Further, this paper will not offer solutions or make proposals as to what can be done to reduce bullying in Canada. It is simply meant to increase awareness of the current status of bullying by offering readers information on its rates and the risk factors for which some students are targeted by bullying behaviours.

Though public awareness of bullying is growing, the phenomenon may have always existed, and is not endemic to any one country. The occurrence of bullying and victimization is greater than 65% in some countries, as reported by the World Health Organization's Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey in 2001/2002.¹ In this survey, Canada was 9th on the list of the 35 countries surveyed for highest rates of bullying, with numbers exceeding 40% (in 13 year old students). Further, more than 80% of Canadians feel that bullying is one of the biggest issues facing students today.

Bullying is a complex and multi-faceted behaviour and not one that legislation alone can address. One of the challenges facing bullying prevention programs is that there is no way to define a single cause of bullying. Bullying affects students of all gender, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds.²

2. Anti-bullying Legislation

The introduction of anti-bullying legislation in Canada was catalyzed by an increased public awareness of bullying in schools, particularly through media exposure of recent teen suicides. This exposure contributed to a sense of urgency in provincial governments, leading several provinces to introduce specific anti-bullying legislation—namely Bills 13 and 14 in Ontario, Bill 18 in Manitoba, Bill 56 in Quebec, Bill 3 in Alberta, and Bill 30 in Nova Scotia.³ Though laudable in purpose and intent, the forms of equity and inclusiveness that several of these bills advance pose significant risk to the religious freedom of students, parents, and schools in these provinces.

Though anti-bullying legislation could help promote safe and welcoming school environments, current legislation contains inherent weaknesses. Recommendations for improvement include:

¹ Canadian Council of Learning, "2007 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning: Results for elementary and secondary school learning," http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SCAL/2007/SCAL_Report_English_final.pdf, 32.

² *Ibid.*, 38.

³ Peter Jon Mitchell, "The limits of anti-bullying legislation," *Institute of Marriage and Family Canada*, May 2012, <http://www.imfcanada.org/sites/default/files/IMFCPublicationMay2012FINAL-WEB.pdf>, 4.

- A common characteristic in most proposed laws is a focus on combatting homophobia. Anti-bullying legislation would better serve children if it promoted respect for all students because of their inherent worth and value as human beings, regardless of their characteristics; thus, ensuring the principles of tolerance without undermining the religious freedom of faith-based institutions through forced acceptance of principles that contradict their teachings.
- Existing legislative definitions of bullying are inconsistent, with some including behaviours that cause as little as hurt feelings, something that is subjective and difficult to quantify. A nation-wide standardized definition of bullying that reflects current expert research would reduce confusion and also create a way for schools to effectively share information on beneficial means of addressing bullying.
- Some legislation defines bullying for school purposes as activities that occur at school, online and/or outside of school property and hours, meaning schools could be responsible for policing student activities at home. Clarified limits for school enforcement of anti-bullying policies would assist schools in their administrative processes.
- Some legislation threatens students who do not bully but fail to report bullying. Legislation that provides for suspension and expulsion of students who witness bullying but do not report it should be amended so that students who are themselves fearful of being bullied for reporting are not unintentionally subjected to punishment.

A. Ontario – Bill 13

Introduced by Laurel Broten, Minister of Education for Ontario, in November 2011, Bill 13⁴ (also known as the *Accepting Schools Act*), was designed to amend the *Education Act* to address the issue of bullying in schools. After revision, the Bill received royal assent on June 19, 2012.⁵

Bill 13 has 3 points of focus:

- It sets out a detailed definition of “bullying” and outlines stricter punishment for students who bully.
- It mandates school support of any student “activities that promote understanding, acceptance, and respect for all.”⁶ Intrinsic to this point is the mandatory school support of any student who wishes to create a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) club on campus.⁷
- It assigns responsibility to school boards to implement policies that undergird students, namely “an equity and inclusive education policy.” Bill 13 amends the *Education Act* to require school boards to “promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils, including pupils of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed,

⁴ Bill 13, *Accepting Schools Act*, Session 1, 40th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2012, http://ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2549&isCurrent=&detailPage=bills_detail_the_bill.

⁵ Legislative Assembly of Ontario, “Bill 13: Status,” http://ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2549&detailPage=bills_detail_status.

⁶ Office of the Premier [Ontario], “Giving Bullied Students Hope,” *News release*, November 30, 2011, <http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2011/11/giving-bullied-students-hope.html>.

⁷ Bill 13, s. 12.

sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.”⁸ School boards must also implement a bullying prevention and intervention plan.⁹

The Bill applies to public schools and Catholic schools, both of which are funded by the government of Ontario. The equity and inclusive education strategies inherent in the Bill, along with mandated Gay Straight Alliances (if requested by students) would require Catholic schools to further policies that are inconsistent with their religious beliefs, endangering their right to religious freedom and constitutionally recognized denominational education rights. Members of several religious faiths have expressed fear that their religious beliefs will be violated by the *Accepting Schools Act*, which not only promotes anti-bullying measures, but also acceptance and promotion of various sexual orientations and identities.¹⁰ Notably, the preamble says,

...everyone—government, educators, school staff, parents, students and the wider community—has a role to play in creating a positive school climate and preventing inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia, transphobia or biphobia.¹¹

The need to address bullying is important, but will it come at the expense of assigning “homophobic” and “bully” labels to any religious student or adult that adopts a socially conservative view of sexuality and marriage? A further implication is that Catholic schools may face legal measures should they refuse to teach curriculum that is inconsistent with church doctrine if that content is deemed to promote homophobia.

B. Ontario – Bill 14

Bill 14, the *Anti-Bullying Act*, was introduced by Ontario Progressive Conservative MPP Elizabeth Witmer on the same day as Bill 13.¹² The purpose of Bills 13 and 14 was the same, but their methods of achieving that purpose were different.

Bill 14, like Bill 13, made provisions for greater punishment for bullying and expanded the definition of bullying. It proposed board-instituted bullying prevention curriculum, developed strategies for reporting bullying, and required the Minister of Education to develop a bullying prevention model for the province. What it did not do is elevate the rights of certain groups, such as students who identify as LGBTQ, over others. It did not focus on student gender identity or sexual orientation; instead it focused heavily on bullying as a whole—how to prevent and address it—and highlighted the provincial government’s responsibility to develop sound, effective bullying policy. For a detailed comparison of the

⁸ *Education Act* [Ontario], s. 169.1(1)a.1, R.S.O. 1990, C. E-2, Government of Ontario, http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e02_e.htm#BK143.

⁹ Bill 13, s. 12.

¹⁰ The Canadian Press, “Anti-Bullying Bill: Religious Groups Say Ontario Legislation Advances Radical Sexualized Agenda,” *Huffington Post*, December 6, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/12/06/anti-bullying-ontario-bill_n_1131586.html.

¹¹ Bill 13, preamble.

¹² Bill 14, *Anti Bullying Act*, Session 1, 40th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2011, http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2550&detailPage=bills_detail_related.

two bills, see the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's "Ontario's Bill 13, *The Accepting Schools Act*, and Anti-Bullying Initiatives: What You Need to Know."¹³

Bill 14 died in Standing Committee, while Bill 13 received royal assent.

C. Quebec – Bill 56

Bill 56, *An Act to prevent and stop bullying and violence in schools*, was introduced in the Quebec legislature in February, 2012, and passed in June of the same year.¹⁴ Bill 56 amended Section 13 of Quebec's *Education Act*¹⁵ to strengthen its definition of bullying. It is now defined,

The word "bullying" means any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberative or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes;¹⁶

This definition of bullying is extremely broad, and gives schools the ability to punish students for "indirect behaviour" that may not be "deliberative." The potential impact of such an all-encompassing definition is worrisome, as it begs the question of how school boards will punish activities that occur outside of school walls and school hours.

Bill 56 also requires schools to tackle bullying by necessitating school anti-bullying and anti-violence plans. Each school's plan requires parental review and annual updates. The plan must include: administrative guidelines for how to monitor bullying in schools (including protocol for reporting cyberbullying); privacy measures to ensure bullying is reported in an appropriate manner; provisions for disciplinary measures against bullying; methods for handling bullying incidents post-facto; as well as the implementation of a support system for victims of bullying.¹⁷ Notably, the plan must include:

Prevention measures to put an end to all forms of bullying and violence, in particular those motivated by racism or homophobia or targeting sexual orientation, sexual identity, a handicap or a physical characteristic.¹⁸

The same amendments in Bill 56 also apply to private schools, as Bill 56 amends the *Act Respecting Private Education*.¹⁹

¹³ Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, "Ontario's Bill 13: What You Need To Know," Schedule A, February 2012, <http://files.efc-canada.net/si/Education/Bill%2013%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20and%20Answers,%20Feb%202012.pdf>, 12-14.

¹⁴ Bill 56, *An Act to prevent and stop bullying and violence in schools*, Session 2, 39th Legislature, National Assembly of Quebec, 2012, <http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2012C19A.PDF>.

¹⁵ *Education Act* [Quebec], s. 13, C. 1-13.3, Government of Quebec, http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/l_13_3/l13_3_A.html.

¹⁶ Bill 56, s. 2.

¹⁷ Yosie Saint-Cyr, "New Anti-Bullying Laws Across Canada," posted in *Slaw: Canada's online legal magazine*, February 16, 2012, <http://www.slaw.ca/2012/02/16/new-anti-bullying-laws-across-canada/>.

¹⁸ Bill 56, s. 4.

D. Manitoba – Bill 18

Bill 18, the *Safe and Inclusive Schools Act*, was introduced to the Manitoba legislature by Minister of Education Nancy Allen (NDP) in December, 2012. Similar to Ontario's Bill 13 in nature, the Bill amends *The Public Schools Act* "in the areas of bullying and respect for human diversity."²⁰ Stated in the Bill's Explanatory Note,

The Bill also requires each school board to establish a respect for human diversity policy. The policy is to promote the acceptance of and respect for others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment. The policy must accommodate student activity that promotes the school environment as being inclusive of all pupils, including student activities and organizations that use the name "gay-straight alliance."²¹

The Bill's definition of bullying is wide, including behaviours that "should be known to cause...harm to another person's...feelings."²² The broad scope of this definition means that any student who hurts another student's feelings, whether intentional or unintentional, could be subject to disciplinary measures. Enforcement of this policy appears to be unrealistic as it will place the burden on school administrators to investigate every instance of hurt feelings in schools.

The Bill's definition of bullying includes cyberbullying. Although cyberbullying is a pervasive issue that needs to be addressed, it occurs both at school and after hours at home. Since the Bill does not specify contexts for captured behaviours, it follows that schools could police cyberbullying in the privacy of students' homes.

Like Ontario's Bill 13, Bill 18 makes provisions for any student clubs promoting "the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities" (including use of the name "gay-straight alliance").²³ And since Bill 18 applies to both publicly-funded non-religious and religious schools, the bill would violate the religious freedom of religious schools through forced promotion of concepts inconsistent with certain religious beliefs.

Canada's Public Safety Minister (MP, Provencher, MB), Vic Toews, says of Bill 18,

If the provincial legislature does not amend Bill 18 to address concerns of faith-based organizations, schools and communities, the only remedy may be an application to the courts to decide if the legislation is compliant with Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.²⁴

¹⁹ Bill 56, ss. 22-24.

²⁰ Bill 18, *The Public Schools Amendment Act*, Session 2, 40th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2012, <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/pdf/b018.pdf>, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bill 18, s. 3.

²³ Bill 18, s. 4(2).

²⁴ Deveryn Ross, "Allan should refer Bill 18 to Manitoba Appeal Court," *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 13, 2013, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/westview/allan-should-refer-bill-18-to-manitoba-appeal-court-197725501.html>.

E. Alberta – Bill 3

Alberta's education was previously directed by the *School Act* (1988). Five or so years of consultation, drafting, and tabling of legislation led to the passage of Bill 3, the *Education Act*,²⁵ in November 2012 (after two prior failed attempts).²⁶ The previous bills met with strong resistance, especially from homeschoolers and religious schools who claimed the legislation would restrict their freedom of religion by forcing them to teach concepts that violate the tenets of their faith, especially in reference to the following clause,

All courses or programs of study offered and instructional materials used in a school must reflect the diverse nature and heritage of society in Alberta, promote understanding and respect for others and honour and respect the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.²⁷

Outcry from religious education proponents and Alberta's Wildrose Party led to the removal of the clause from the final version of the *Act*. The government claimed it rejected Bill 18 (the second attempt) out of a desire for more stakeholder consultation on the Bill. The government did undertake consultation before the tabling of Bill 3.

In reference to bullying, Bill 3 defines the term for schools and mandates the establishment of codes of conduct in each school board to address bullying.²⁸ Bill 3 also proposes a yearly Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, already a common practice across Alberta.

A major item of concern is how Bill 3 enacts punishment for bullying. Not only are bullies punished when their actions are discovered, but any child who does not report bullying he/she witnessed is also subject to suspension or expulsion (including cyberbullying and bullying witnessed when outside school property). Section 31 says,

31. A student, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to

(e) refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behaviour directed toward others in the school, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means²⁹

If a student violates the school's code of conduct (which includes its anti-bullying policies), the student is subject to suspension or expulsion.³⁰ Included in a student's responsibilities is reporting bullying when

²⁵ Bill 3, *Education Act*, Session 1, 28th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 2012, http://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR_files/docs/bills/bill/legislature_28/session_1/20120523_bill-003.pdf.

²⁶ Sarah O'Donnell, "MLAs pass Alberta's revamped Education Act in sitting that stretched into Tuesday," *Edmonton Journal*, November 30, 2012, <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/MLAs+pass+Alberta+revamped+Education+sitting+that/7581826/story.html>.

²⁷ Bill 18, *Education Act*, s. 16, Session 4, 27th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 2011, http://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR_files/docs/bills/bill/legislature_27/session_4/20110222_bill-018.pdf, 28.

²⁸ Government of Alberta, "Education Act: Frequently Asked Questions," 2012, <http://education.alberta.ca/media/6663446/education-act-2012-faq.pdf>, 6.

²⁹ Bill 3, s. 31(e).

witnessed, even if the bullying occurs away from school property or is a form of cyberbullying.³¹ If a student fails to comply, he/she is subject to suspension or expulsion.³² Arguably this type of legislation is not practical to enforce and will force schools and administrators to mete out punishment to any student who bullies, as well as any bystander who does not report the witnessed act, in addition to the responsibility of penalizing behaviour that occurs in a student's home.

F. Nova Scotia – Bill 30

Awareness of bullying in Nova Scotia increased as the result of several youth suicides, which led to the creation of the Nova Scotia Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying in 2011.³³ Its purpose was to inform the issue and decide how to enact legislation that would appropriately address bullying in schools. After extensive consultation, the Task Force released its report in February 2012, which led to the tabling of Bill 30, the *Respectful and Responsible Relationships Act* in April, 2012.³⁴ Bill 30 amended the province's *Education Act* to require schools to form codes of conducts that address bullying and cyberbullying,³⁵ though the Bill did not include the majority of the Task Force's recommendations.³⁶ Bill 30 was criticized for its weak implementation of anti-bullying strategies and lack of strong definition of "bullying." Section 2 of Bill 30 simply states that all involved in the education process have a responsibility to address and prevent "disruptive and severely disruptive behaviour—including bullying and cyberbullying..."³⁷

However, in early 2013 Nova Scotia's Education Minister Ramona Jennex announced the province would be expanding its definition of bullying and cyberbullying in the *Education Act* to address the shortfalls of Bill 30.³⁸ Bullying, as seen in the *Education Act* regulations, is now defined,

"bullying" means behaviour, typically repeated, that is intended to cause or should be known to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property, and can be direct or indirect, and includes assisting or encouraging the behaviour in any way;

"cyberbullying" means bullying by electronic means that occurs through the use of technology, including computers or other electronic devices, social networks, text messaging, instant messaging, websites or e-mail;³⁹

³⁰ Bill 3, s. 36(1)(a), referencing s. 31(f).

³¹ Bill 3, s. 31(e).

³² Bill 3, s. 36(1)(i) and s. 37(1)(a), referencing s. 31(e).

³³ Meagan Jemmett, "Canada: Nova Scotia Releases Task Force Report on Bullying and Cyberbullying," *Borden Ladner Gervais LLP*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.mondaq.com/canada/x/200424/Education/Nova+Scotia+Releases+Task+Force+Report+On+Bullying+And+Cyberbullying>.

³⁴ Bill 30, *An Act to Amend the Education Act, to Address Bullying by Promoting Respectful and Responsible Relationships*, Session 4, 61st General Assembly, Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia, 2012, <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/PDFs/annual%20statutes/2012%20Spring/c014.pdf>.

³⁵ Bill 30, s. 2.

³⁶ Meagan Jemmett, "Canada: Nova Scotia Releases Task Force Report on Bullying and Cyberbullying."

³⁷ Bill 30, s. 2.

³⁸ Selena Ross, "Bullying in N.S. includes bystanders," *Herald News*, February 9, 2013, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/669879-bullying-in-ns-includes-bystanders>.

As with Manitoba's Bill 18, bullying is now defined for legislative purposes in a way that is likely too broad to properly enforce; behaviours that hurt other students' feelings may now be subject to penalty.

G. British Columbia – ERASE Program

In British Columbia, the issue of bullying has been widely publicized due to the story of Amanda Todd, a Vancouver-area teen who posted her bullying story online in a YouTube video before she committed suicide in October, 2012.⁴⁰ However, provincial legislation attempts have been relegated to workplace bullying; as of yet, no legislation concerning schools has passed. In June 2012, Premier Christy Clark implemented the Expect Respect and a Safe Education (ERASE) program, a \$2 million strategy designed to address bullying in schools.⁴¹ The program was passed in lieu of prior proposed anti-bullying legislation. With respect to this, Premier Clark was quoted as saying,

We are moving well past that and building in education and training tools for folks in schools and resources for parents to make sure they can deal with it to try and raise the profile of it across the province...My advice to Ontario is the legislation sends a message...It says government and society is concerned about this, but laws do not on their own stop bullying, and we have to do more [in reference to Ontario's Bill 13].⁴²

The ERASE program includes provisions such as community/teacher anti-bullying training, an online platform that allows students to report bullying anonymously, one professional development day per year to be devoted to anti-bullying planning and more stringent codes of conduct in schools.⁴³

H. Saskatchewan – Anti-Bullying Strategy

Saskatchewan currently has no anti-bullying legislation, but the Ministry of Education produced its "Anti-Bullying Strategy" in March, 2005.⁴⁴ The strategy's main action items include:⁴⁵

- Ensuring all schools have a program to address bullying; the program should increase awareness of bullying and educate the school community on its role in fighting bullying
- Lobbying the federal government to change the *Criminal Code* of Canada and the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* with the intent of addressing bullying

³⁹ Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia, "Ministerial Education Act Regulations made under Section 145 of the *Education Act*," s. 47(1A), S.N.S. 1995-96, c.1 (amended January 15, 2013), <http://gov.ns.ca/just/regulations/regs/edmin.htm>.

⁴⁰ YouTube, "Amanda Todd Suicide – Full Original Video," published October 12, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRxfTyNa24A>.

⁴¹ Dirk Meissner, "Christy Clark announces anti-bullying plan for B.C. schools," *Vancouver Sun*, June 1, 2012, <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Christy+Clark+announces+anti+bullying+plan+schools/6715827/story.html>.

⁴² Dirk Meissner, "Christy Clark announces anti-bullying plan for B.C. schools."

⁴³ Government of British Columbia, "Premier Announces ERASE; Bullying Strategy," *News Release*, June 1, 2012, <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/06/premier-announces-erase-bullying-strategy.html>.

⁴⁴ Saskatchewan Learning (Ministry of Education), "Anti-Bullying Strategy," March 2005, <http://education.gov.sk.ca/anti-bullying-strategy>.

⁴⁵ Government of Saskatchewan, "Government Announces Anti-Bullying Strategy," *News Release*, February 2, 2005, <http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=a6eb71e6-bb99-4239-a802-756d2ce271bc>.

- Initiating comprehensive anti-bullying and suicide prevention services for the province's schools; the amount allocated for this mandate is \$250,000 over three years.

The following year, in 2006, Saskatchewan produced a document at the request of schools to further clarify the workings of the Anti-Bullying Strategy, entitled, "Caring and Respectful Schools."⁴⁶ This document provided a definition of bullying for school contexts and a clear model policy for schools to help standardize anti-bullying efforts across the province.⁴⁷ The Policy's definition of bullying is slightly more focused than the definitions found in provincial legislation such as Alberta's Bill 3 and Ontario's Bill 13. The policy's definition is listed as follows,

Bullying is generally identified as a form of aggressive behaviour that is repeatedly directed at an individual or group from a position of relative power. Bullying behaviour can take many forms. It can be physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, insults, put-downs), social (e.g., social isolation, gossip) or cyber (e.g., threats, insults or harmful message spread through the internet). Bullying can be direct, "in your face" confrontation, or indirect, "behind your back," such as spreading rumours. Bullying can be done by one person or by a group. A child or young person being bullied feels helpless in trying to stop it.

A student is bullied or harassed when he or she is intentionally and repeatedly the target of the negative actions of a stronger or more powerful person or group that causes fear, emotional stress and/or physical harm.⁴⁸

I. New Brunswick – Amendments to the *Education Act*

Several prominent stories of school bullying in 2012 highlighted the issue of bullying in New Brunswick, including a 15-year old boy who set fire to a 14-year old girl's hair in February of that year.⁴⁹ The government passed an amendment⁵⁰ to the *Education Act* in 2012, which strengthened anti-bullying strategies in the province by requiring principals to report all bullying instances to the superintendent and requiring annual bullying reports from district education councils and the Minister of Education, among other measures.⁵¹ This amendment also expanded the *Education Act's* provision of a "positive learning and working environment" to include freedom from bullying, cyberbullying, and other negative behaviour that occurs both at school and outside of school (if the behaviour is thought to affect the school environment).⁵² In November 2012, the government also issued a press release outlining the

⁴⁶ Saskatchewan Learning (Ministry of Education), "Caring and Respectful Schools: Bullying Prevention A Model Policy," September 2006, <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/caring-respectfully/model-policy-2006>, 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ CBC News, "Anti-bullying officials hired to monitor school system," November 19, 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2012/11/19/nb-bullying-coordinators-1107.html>.

⁵⁰ Chapter 21: *An Act to Amend the Education Act*, Session 2, 57th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, 2012, <http://www.gnb.ca/0062/acts/BBA-2012/Chap-21.pdf>.

⁵¹ CBC News, "Anti-bullying legislation introduced," May 16, 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2012/05/16/na-bullying-legislation-schools-carr.html>.

⁵² Chapter 21: *An Act to Amend the Education Act*, 1.

appointment of two new provincial anti-bullying coordinator positions, and designating an annual Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.⁵³

J. Prince Edward Island – Motion 14

Prince Edward Island has not introduced any anti-bullying legislation, but in April of 2012 the provincial government passed Motion 14,⁵⁴ which calls for the government to pursue anti-bullying legislation in light of recent legislative changes in Ontario and Quebec with regard to bullying.

K. Newfoundland and Labrador – Safe and Caring Schools policy

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador (NFLB) has not introduced any anti-bullying legislation. Instead, the province created a “Safe and Caring Schools” policy, instituted in 2006.⁵⁵ In May 2012, New Democratic Party (NDP) Education Critic Dale Kirby introduced a private member’s motion that asked for anti-bullying provisions to be included in the province’s *Schools Act*.⁵⁶ The provincial government amended the motion, weakening its mandate for change by removing its definition of bullying and lessening the consultation process designed to jumpstart the province’s anti-bullying measures.⁵⁷

3. What is bullying?

Craig and Harel (2004) define bullying as “the assertion of interpersonal power through aggression.”⁵⁸ It is any recurring action, whether physical, verbal, or written, that is detrimental to another person. An imbalance of power must also be present, where the bully is stronger than the victim. Victimization by bullying occurs when someone experiences aggressive behaviour from another, stronger person. The bullying relationship exists in the sphere of continued power exertion, a widening of the gap between the stronger and the weaker person, as the repetition of hurtful behaviour eventually renders the victims unable to defend themselves.

⁵³ Government of New Brunswick, “Bullying awareness, prevention co-ordinators hired,” *News Release*, November 19, 2012, http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2012.11.1079.html.

⁵⁴ Motion 14: *Encourage Government in the Adoption of anti-Bullying Legislation in Prince Edward Island*, Session 2, 64th General Assembly, Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, 2012, <http://www.assembly.pe.ca/sittings/2012spring/motions/14.pdf>.

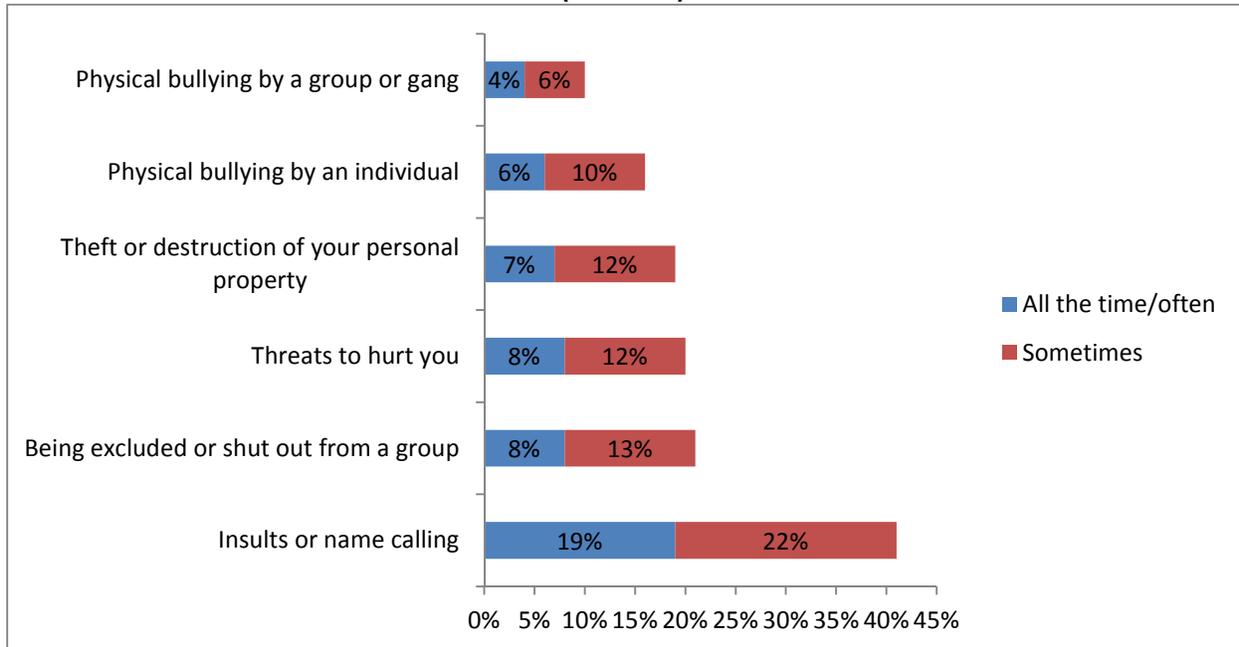
⁵⁵ Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, “Safe and Caring Schools Policy,” May 2006, http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentssupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf.

⁵⁶ Newfoundland and Labrador NDP Caucus, “Private Member’s Motion,” http://nldpcaucus.ca/sites/default/files/pmm_anti_bullying_legislation.pdf; see also, Newfoundland and Labrador NDP Caucus, “MHA renews call for anti-bullying legislation,” *News release*, October 9, 2012, <http://nldpcaucus.ca/nr100912StillNoAction>.

⁵⁷ Newfoundland and Labrador NDP Caucus, “Caucus reluctantly votes for ‘watered down’ resolution,” *News Release*, May 16, 2012, <http://nldpcaucus.ca/nr051612WeakenedResolution>.

⁵⁸ Wendy M. Craig and Y. Harel (2004), *Bullying, physical fighting and victimization*, In “Young People’s Health in Context,” http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/110231/e82923.pdf, 133.

Chart 1. Grade 7-8 students who were bullied (Fall 2006).



Source: Maria Yau and Janet O'Reilly, "2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12," http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about_us/external_research_application/docs/2006studentcensussystemoverview1.pdf, 21.

Note: The Toronto District School Board conducted a research report in which approximately 105,000 students were surveyed on school issues. The survey touched on bullying as well, and the results are demonstrated in the chart above.

There are four commonly recognized categories of bullying: physical, verbal, social, and cyber. Physical bullying involves actions that physically harm, such as hitting, kicking, punching, pushing/shoving, stealing, and dating aggression (physical or verbal actions within a dating relationship that can be harmful to the other person).⁵⁹ These actions can cause low self-esteem, physical injury, and/or damage to the person's belongings. Social bullying occurs when a person is intentionally excluded from a group, publicly humiliated with the intent to demean, or mobbed.⁶⁰ Other examples can include gossiping, rumours, or ignoring someone.⁶¹ Those who perpetrate social bullying are usually not caught.⁶² They can hide their actions because this form of bullying is not always readily apparent to bystanders. Verbal bullying can include insults, name calling, threats, sexual harassment, and ethnoculturally-based comments.⁶³ These actions can damage feelings and self-esteem in the bullied person.

Cyber-bullying has become a burgeoning avenue for bullies with the advent of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and the increase in cell phone ownership among young people. Students are learning how to use technology at younger and younger ages, and the internet is accessible to the majority of North American students. Cyber-bullies use the internet, cell phones, and other forms of technology to

⁵⁹ National Crime Prevention Centre, "Bullying prevention in schools," Government of Canada: Public Safety, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/bully-eng.aspx>.

⁶⁰ Government of Alberta, "What is bullying?" Human Services: Children and Youth, <http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/689.cfm>.

⁶¹ National Crime Prevention Centre, "Bullying prevention in schools."

⁶² National Crime Prevention Centre, "Bullying Prevention: Nature and Extent of Bullying in Canada," Government of Canada: Public Safety, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/2008-bp-01-eng.aspx#a9>.

⁶³ National Crime Prevention Centre, "Bullying prevention in schools."

“physically threaten, verbally harass, or socially exclude an individual or group.”⁶⁴ One implication of cyber-bullying is that it allows bullies to reach students not just at school, but at home and in the community as well, creating a constant threatening environment. Further, the use of emailed or texted photos can instantly damage a person’s reputation and self-esteem. Cyber-bullying has also opened up new potential for bullies to perpetrate their violence in a manner generally unnoticed by teachers or guardians, as children are usually alone during times of computer and cell phone use, leaving less room for parents and peers to step in and help.

4. General Trends in Canadian Bullying Statistics

There are a limited number of bullying statistics available to the Canadian public and they are provided by both government and non-governmental bodies. The surveys’ findings are not always congruent, but this paper’s objective is to provide a brief overview of general trends.

A. Differences in Bullying Behaviour by Boys and Girls

To begin, the data indicates that boys tend to bully more often than girls, with boys generally choosing physical bullying and girls choosing social bullying/exclusion.⁶⁵ Researchers postulate that bullying in boys may be more group-oriented while bullying in girls may occur more often one-on-one.⁶⁶ Forms of social and verbal bullying generally begin to appear in Grades 4-6, as children learn about the balance of power in their relationships with others.⁶⁷ The rates generally increase from elementary school until they peak in grades 6-8, and then wane throughout high school, where bullying tends to morph into other forms of aggressive behaviour such as dating violence and sexual harassment.

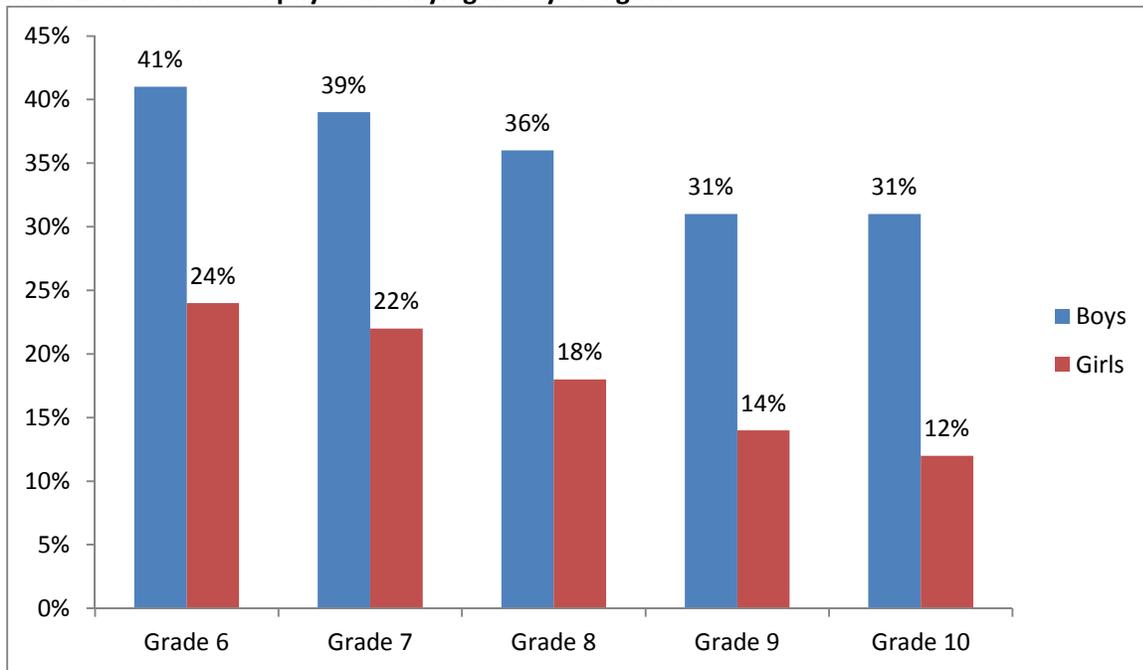
⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Canadian Council of Learning, “2007 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning,” 37.

⁶⁶ National Crime Prevention Centre, “Bullying Prevention: Nature and Extent of Bullying in Canada.”

⁶⁷ National Crime Prevention Centre, “Bullying Prevention in Schools.”

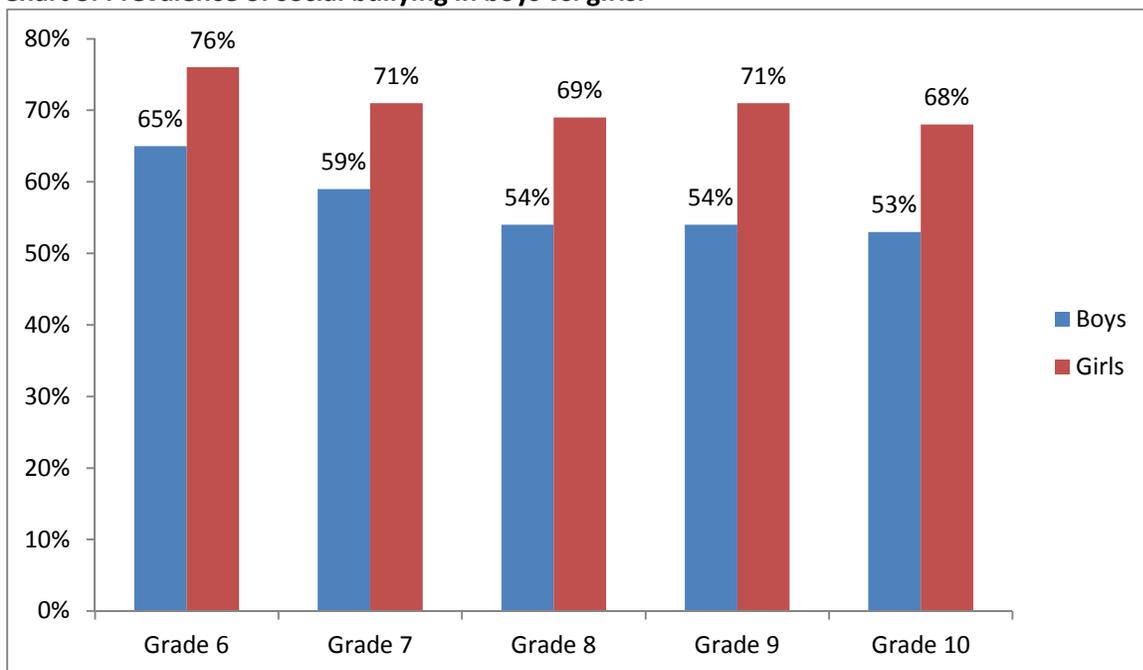
Chart 2. Prevalence of physical bullying in boys vs. girls.



Source: Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*, (2011) in “The Health of Canada’s Young People: a mental health focus,” Government of Canada: Public Health Agency of Canada, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/publications/hbsc-mental-mentale/bullying-intimidation-eng.php>.

Note: The percentages are taken out of all students who were bullied. Thus, 41% of grade 6 boys were not physically bullied—41% of all bullied Grade 6 boys were bullied physically.

Chart 3. Prevalence of social bullying in boys vs. girls.



Source: Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*.

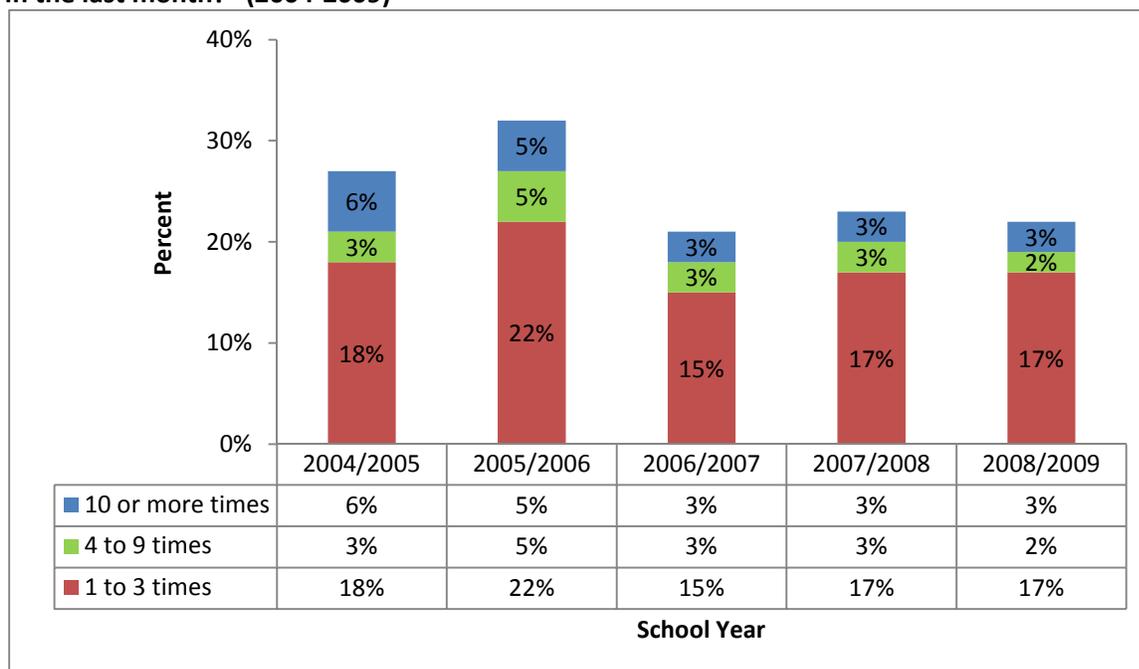
Note: The same concept in the note for Chart 2 applies to this chart as well.

B. Frequency of Bullying Behaviours

The data demonstrates that bullying is usually an occasional occurrence, with several surveys demonstrating that bullies tend to victimize others on a monthly and even weekly basis. However, there are considerably fewer students who are bullied more than once per week than those who are bullied at least once per term or once per month.

Statistics Canada has performed research over the past several years on Canada’s school environments in their “Census at School.” Their data appears to indicate that the overall rates of bullying increase from 2005 to 2006, and then drop in 2007, after which they remained consistent through to 2009. The rates of frequent bullying (4-10+ times per month) decrease significantly after 2007, with rates of less frequent bullying (1-3 times per month) remaining fairly consistent through all 5 years of data. The average of all five data points is 25%, meaning that 1 in 4 students were bullied (whether frequently or infrequently) from 2005-2009. For the complete data on rates of bullying in schools, see Schedule “A”.

Chart 4. “How many times have you [high school students from across Canada] been bullied at school in the last month?” (2004-2009)



Sources: Statistics Canada’s “Census at School”, 2004/2005 to 2008/2009.

Note: See footnotes in schedule A for more source information.

The Health Behaviour in School Aged Children (HBSC) survey is commissioned every four years by the World Health Organization to provide information on the health and status of children across the globe. Prominent Canadian bullying researcher Wendy Craig discusses the findings of the HBSC over three time points: 2002, 2006, and 2010.⁶⁸ In 2002 and 2006, an average of 7,000-10,000 students in Canada were

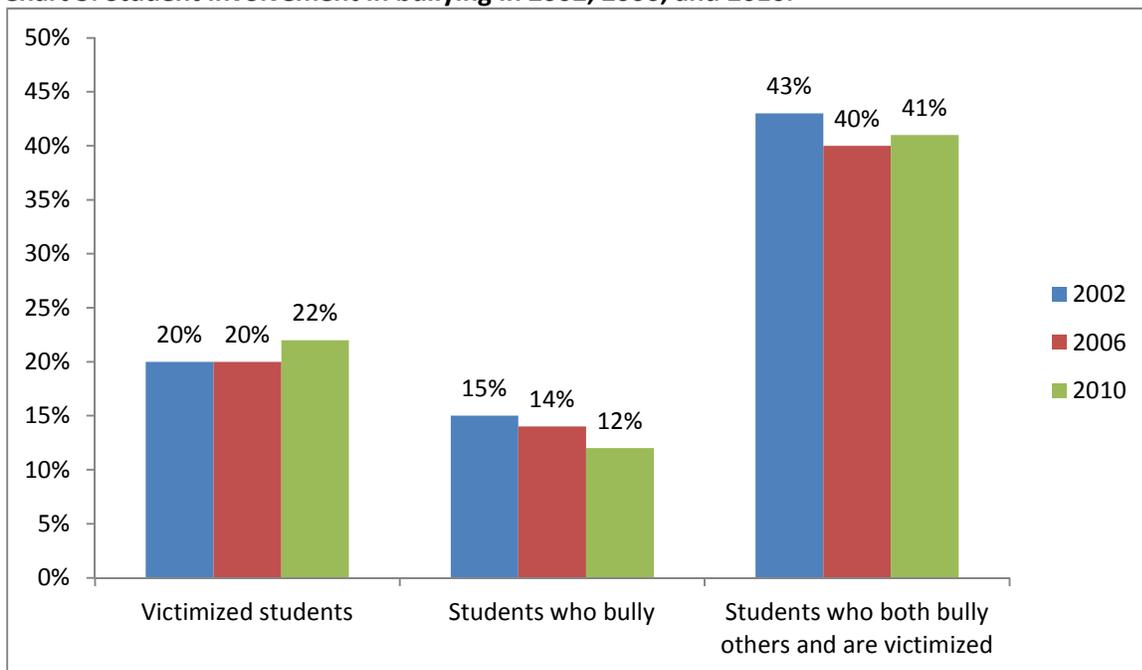
⁶⁸ Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*, (2011) in “The Health of Canada’s Young People: a mental health focus,” Government of Canada: Public Health Agency of Canada, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hpps/dca-dea/publications/hbsc-mental-mentale/bullying-intimidation-eng.php>.

surveyed. In 2010, approximately 26,000 students were surveyed. In the survey, a definition of bullying was included to help students assess their involvement in bullying:

Bullying occurs when another student, or a group of students, says or does nasty and unpleasant things to a student. It was also considered bullying when a student was teased repeatedly in a way he or she did not like or when he or she was deliberately left out of things. But it was clarified that it was not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argued or fought. It was also not bullying when the teasing was done in a friendly and playful way.⁶⁹

Students were then given the opportunity to mark the frequency of their bullying experiences at school over the last two months, i.e. did they bully another student (“perpetrator”), were they bullied themselves (“victim”), or were they involved in both scenarios (as a bully and a victim of bullying, or for purposes of the survey, a “bully-victim”). The results are shown below.

Chart 5. Student involvement in bullying in 2002, 2006, and 2010.



Source: Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*.

The rate of bullied students remains constant from 2002 to 2006, with a slight increase in 2010. The number of students who reported bullying others decreases over the same timeframe, albeit a slight decrease. The number of bully/victims drops from 2002 to 2006, and rises slightly from 2006 to 2010, although it still does not reach the 2002 percentage. The high number of bully/victims reported is a cause of concern, as this category of students is considered to be at the greatest risk for emotional, behavioural, and physical outcomes.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

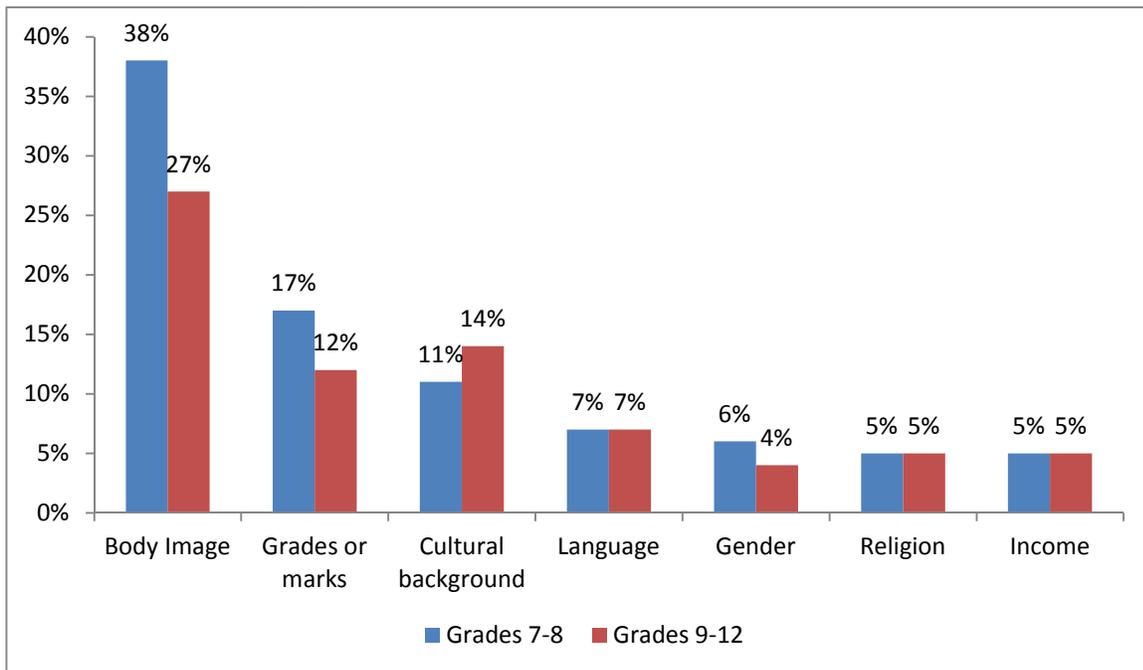
The number of students who were bullied according to the HBSC 2002, 2006, and 2010 is reasonably consistent with Statistics Canada’s findings on bullying from 2005 to 2009. The average percentage of students who were bullied as reported by the HBSC is 21%, and the average reported by Statistics Canada is 25%.

C. Risk Factors for Bullying

Based on current research, there are a number of factors which increase a student’s risk of being bullied. Appearance, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, grades, and socioeconomic status are all commonly identified reasons for which students are bullied. While some have asserted that the primary reason for bullying may be a child’s gender identity or sexual orientation, the data demonstrates that bullying behaviours target a number of distinctive factors among children. Researchers for the 2007 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning say, “SCAL data, along with a large and growing body of research, suggest that children from all walks of life can be victims of bullying, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.”⁷¹

According to the “Toronto District School Board Research Report,” which surveyed approximately 105,000 students in the Toronto area, the most common type of bullying was bullying based on body image.⁷² The second most common reason for bullying, and perhaps surprisingly for some, is not gender, sexual orientation or race, but grades or marks.⁷³

Chart 6. Reasons for being bullied



Source: Maria Yau and Janet O’Reilly, “2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12.”

⁷¹ Canadian Council of Learning, “2007 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning,” 30.

⁷² Maria Yau and Janet O’Reilly, “2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12: System Overview,” Toronto District School Board Research Report, http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about_us/external_research_application/docs/2006StudentCensusSystemOverview1.pdf, 21.

⁷³ Ibid.

It is important to address traditional views associated with reasons for bullying. In line with Chart 6's description of the greatest reason for being bullied as "body image," children are often bullied based on their appearance. Children who may be over-weight or under-weight, those who wear glasses or braces, children whose parents who cannot afford the latest styles in clothes—any child who may stand-out in some way to the bully runs the risk of becoming victimized. We can all likely remember, and perhaps were exposed to this behaviour ourselves; the awkward phases in middle school where our bodies are taking shape and limbs are growing to new awkward lengths. Special needs children are at an especially high risk of being victimized. The taunts of students at those they deem unintelligent or "slow," can leave lasting scars. In *Abilities Magazine*, Melissa Martz details her childhood experiences with bullying:

...Bullies can find any reason to target someone – maybe because he or she wears glasses, is overweight or wears hand-me-downs. Children with disabilities are frequently singled out for being different. They may speak differently, walk differently, use assistive devices or have difficulty with social interaction – all of which bullies can turn into jokes...It happened to me. While growing up in Kitchener, Ont., I was tormented because I stuttered (something that I still struggle with) and required special education for math and language arts. I was also made fun of because I repeated Grade 6... I'll always remember the pain I felt upon hearing nasty comments and laughter at school when I was in Grade 6 and other kids my age were in Grade 7.⁷⁴

I. Religious Bullying

Bullying based on a person's religious beliefs is a commonly overlooked category that merits attention, especially with Canada's increasing immigrant population and the variety of the world's religions practiced by its citizens. Researcher Wendy Craig explains,

Because bullying refers to behaviours that combine power and aggression and involve understanding others' vulnerabilities, the HBSC survey asked about sexual harassment and bullying based on race and religion.⁷⁵

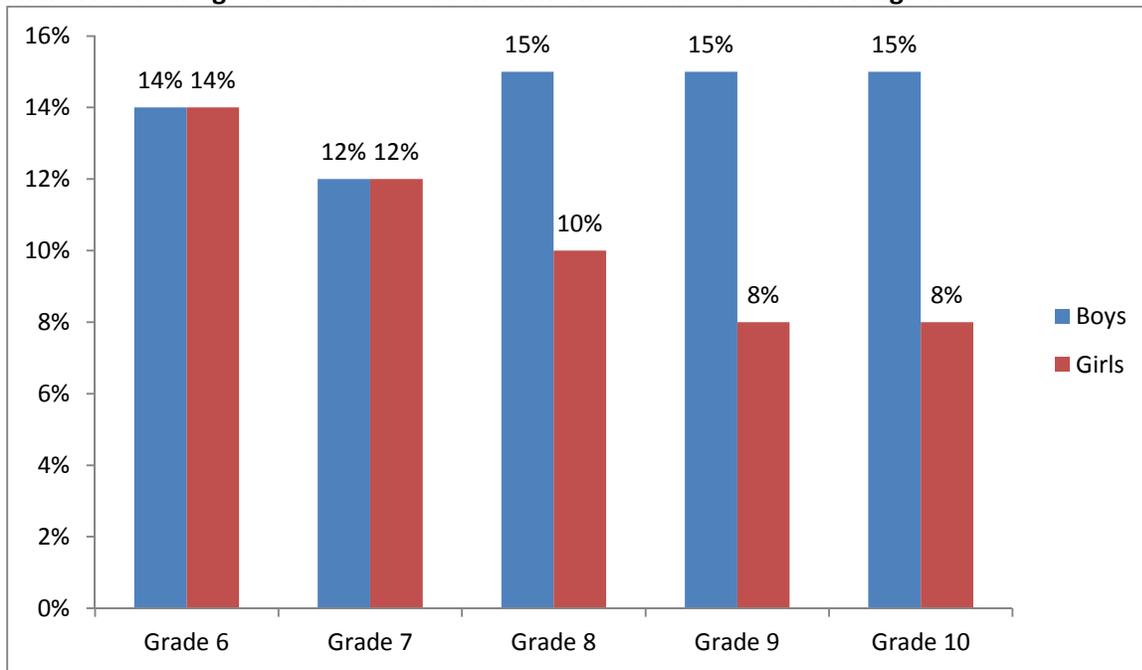
In the analysis of 2010 HBSC statistics, Craig provides the following chart that outlines the percentage of all bullying that is based on religion.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Melissa Martz, "Standing up to bullying," *Abilities Magazine*, Winter 2008-2009 edition, http://www.abilities.ca/learning/2009/02/11/issue77_article_bullying/.

⁷⁵ Wendy Craig, *Bullying and Fighting*, (2004) In "Young people in Canada: their health and well-being," Government of Canada: Health Canada, http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/publications/hbsc-2004/pdf/hbsc_report_2004_e.pdf, 92.

⁷⁶ Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*.

Chart 7. Percentage of all bullied students who were bullied based on religion.



Source: Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*.

II. Racial bullying

Previous studies on the relationship between immigrant status and increased risk of bullying are scarce.⁷⁷ Considering that 19% of children in Canada under the age of 15 were born in another country,⁷⁸ the issue of racial bullying is not something to be neglected. Studies show that children's struggle to grasp the English language also places them at risk for being bullied, and, in turn, also prevents them from adequately standing up for themselves when bullied verbally, which can open the door to physical bullying and aggressive behaviour.⁷⁹ Immigrant youth also run the risk of being stereotyped or categorized unfavourably.

Public Safety Canada reports that ethnic bullying occurred in 8-19% of middle school students.⁸⁰ They also found that 21% of high school students from minority groups

were bullied because of their ethnicity. The HBSC 2010 provides the following percentage of students who were bullied because of race/ethnicity.

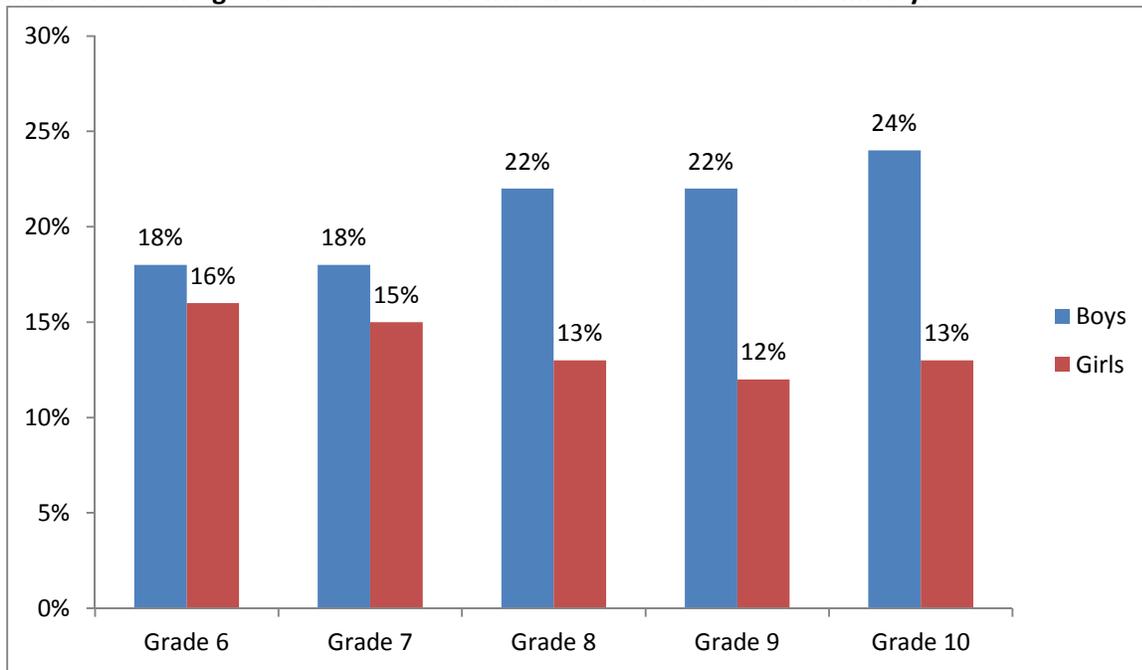
⁷⁷ Anne-Claire Larochette, "Bullying in a Multicultural Context: The Influences of Race, Immigrant Status, and School Climate on the Incidence of Bullying in Canadian Children and Adolescents," Queen's University, September 2009, http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/5158/1/Larochette_AnneClaire_200909_MSc.pdf, 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁰ National Crime Prevention Centre, "First Steps to Stop Bullying and Harassment: Adults helping youth aged 12 to 17," Government of Canada: Public Safety, http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/bully_12217-eng.aspx.

Chart 8. Percentage of bullied students who were bullied based on ethnicity.



Source: Wendy Craig and Heather McCuaig Edge, *Bullying and fighting*.

University of Toronto graduate student Cindy del Villar Nash wrote a thesis on bullying of immigrant students, titled “Bullying, Ethnic Discrimination, or Both? A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Immigrant Adolescents.”⁸¹ In her study of immigrant student experiences she comments,

Bullying behaviours that were experienced by the participants included rumours about them, people talking about them “behind their back,” and social exclusion... Participants who reported having been bullied stated that they were often bullied by more than one person at a time, such as a small group of peers outside of their own social circle.⁸²

Reports from the students themselves include,

Because on the first day of school, um, I sat next to this guy and I started talking to him. I was just trying to, you know, be friendly. And then, the next day, he just got up and he left and he changed his place. And then, after that, like, his whole group, they were talking about “brown” people.”⁸³

Some people used to be like, “What are you saying? I don’t get it,” right? And you feel so bad, you don’t want to say it again...⁸⁴

⁸¹ Cindy del Villar Nash, “Bullying, Ethnic Discrimination, or Both? A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Immigrant Adolescents,” University of Toronto, 2011, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/29522/7/delvillar_cindy_201106_MSW_thesis.pdf.

⁸² Ibid., 61.

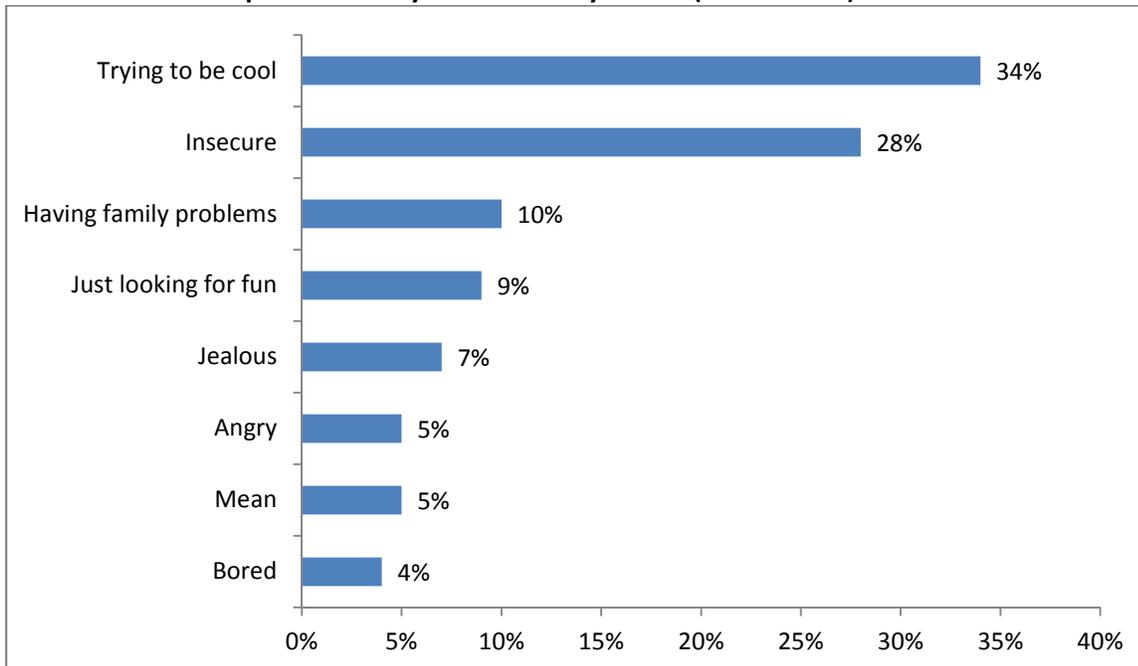
⁸³ Ibid., 46.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

D. Student Perspectives on Bullying

Bullying, in any form, directed at any child, is hurtful and can do lasting damage. It is important to consider all forms of bullying and risk factors. It is also important to address students' perspectives on the reasons for which some students exhibit bullying behaviours. In a Statistics Canada's 2010/2011 "Census at School," high school students across Canada were asked, "Why do you think some kids bully others?"⁸⁵

Chart 9. Students' opinions of why students bully others (Grades 9-12).



Source: Statistics Canada's "Census at School," 2010-2011. 26,364 elementary school and high school students were surveyed. Table results for "Why do you think some students bully others," found at http://www19.statcan.gc.ca/04/04_1011/04_1011_020-eng.htm.

Their answers provide a glimpse into students' perspectives on bullying, and affirm the proposition that bullying is a multi-faceted issue. The largest percentage, "trying to be cool," is not a foreign concept given that high school can be defined as a time in development when teenagers are trying to determine who they are, and a lot of that manifests itself in the desire to attain a certain status, to be labelled as "popular," or "cool."

⁸⁵ Statistics Canada, "Census at School," 2010-2011, Government of Canada, http://www19.statcan.gc.ca/04/04_1011/04_1011_020-eng.htm.

Further, when students at St. Anne’s Catholic School in Richmond Hill, Ontario were asked about bullying behaviours at their school, there was significant consensus that bullying was a “major problem”:⁸⁶

- 88% believed bullying was a major problem in their school;
- 62% said they have been bullied at some point or another;
- 40% said they have been bullies at some point in their school life;
- 78% said they have seen someone being bullied;
- 51% have reported bullying when they witnessed it in the school yard; and
- 12% are afraid to report because of the fear of being made fun of by the bully.

These responses show that students themselves are reflecting on the phenomenon of bullying, its impact on their school and the role they play when they adopt bullying behaviours.

And experiences of bullying are not soon forgotten. In the 2007 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning, 35% of Canadian adults said they remembered being bullied in school (25% of these said occasionally, 10% said frequently).⁸⁷ This supports the premise that bullying is not a new phenomenon. 50-69% of those parents surveyed said that they did not think current attempts to deal with the issue of bullying in schools are effective enough.⁸⁸ 49% of these parents reported that their children have been bullied before.⁸⁹ Out of this group, 17% said that the bullying occurred frequently.

5. Bullying and Sexual Harassment

One of the most common forms of bullying is sexual harassment bullying. In *Bullying and Fighting* (2004), Wendy Craig analyzes the 2001-2002 HBSC survey findings. She reports that out of all Grade 9 students who were bullied, 39% of boys and 55% of girls said they were victimized by sexual jokes, comments, or gestures.⁹⁰ Chart 10 details the findings across all grades surveyed.

⁸⁶ Ashley Imgrund, Jen Kroetsch, Kim Herbert, and Haily Buettner, “Bullying: A Growing Problem in Ontario Schools,” University of Nipissing, www.nipissingu.ca/education/mariacw/EDUC4128/Resources/Bullying.ppt (powerpoint resource), slide 5.

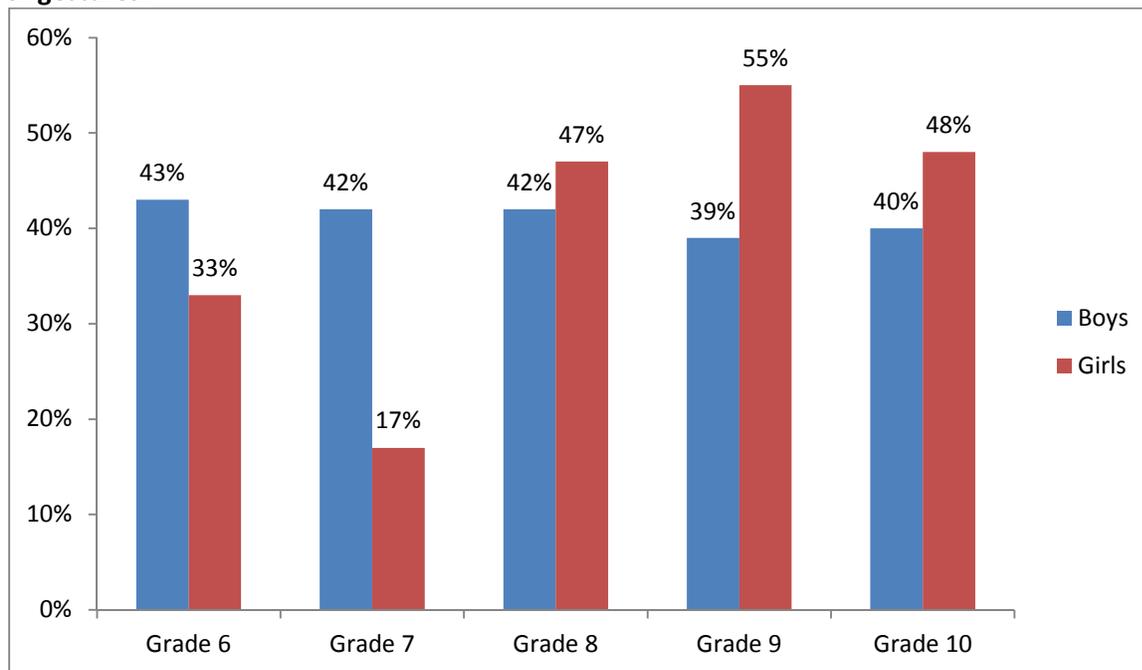
⁸⁷ Canadian Council of Learning, “2007 Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning,” 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹⁰ Wendy Craig, *Bullying and Fighting* 92.

Chart 10. Percentage of all bullied students who said they were victimized by sexual jokes, comments, or gestures.



Source: Wendy Craig, *Bullying and fighting* (2004) In “Young people in Canada: their health and well-being,” Government of Canada: Health Canada, http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/publications/hbsc-2004/pdf/hbsc_report_2004_e.pdf, 92.

Although unclear how the HBS 2001-2002 defines the term, Public Safety Canada defines ‘sexual harassment’ as something that “occurs when a person or group hurts another person by taunting or discussing sensitive sexual issues, creating sexual rumours or messages, making homophobic comments, rating sexual body parts or name-calling, telling sexual jokes, and initiating unwanted sexual touching.”⁹¹The “Young Canadians in a Wired World” survey found that 12% of all Grade 7-11 students said they had been sexually harassed at least once this school year.⁹²

In many surveys on this topic, it is difficult to determine how sexual harassment is defined. Often, there are no categories that ask preliminary questions to account for a person’s sexual orientation, therefore it is impossible to determine if sexual harassment bullying is based on the person’s gender or their identification as heterosexual or LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-spirited, Intersexed, Queer and Questioning). However, the prevalence of sexual harassment bullying is quite high, making this an issue that requires careful examination.

6. Bullying and the LGBTQ community

A. Care for All Children

One of the issues most often raised during the recent national bullying discussion is the vulnerability of LGBTQ students. For example, Bill 13 introduced by the Minister of Education of Ontario has been

⁹¹ National Crime Prevention Centre, “Bullying prevention in schools.”

⁹² Erin Research, “Young Canadians in a Wired World: Phase 2,” 85.

critiqued for focusing in particular on bullying of LGBTQ students,⁹³ while other bodies, such as the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association in its recent *Respecting Difference* paper, have made particular efforts to acknowledge and address bullying of all students, for any reason.

While all children are equally deserving of dignity and respect, the special focus on LGBTQ students may artificially skew the statistical reality that this demographic makes up only a small portion of all bullied children and may unintentionally serve to minimize the suffering of victims of other forms of bullying. All students should be equally regarded and protected from bullying behaviours.

B. Limited and Problematic Data on LGBTQ Demographic

Accurate statistics on individuals who identify as LGBTQ or children who have been bullied for reasons relating to gender identity or sexual orientation are rare and fraught with interpretational difficulties.

For example, finding exact statistics on the population of Canadians who identify as LGBTQ is tenuous at best. There are several issues related to the correct reporting of this demographic. One issue is whether a survey asks if a person considers themselves LGBTQ in reference to their identity, or in reference to their behaviour. Those who have participated in LGBTQ behaviours may or may not self-identify as LGBTQ. There is also a distinction between “same sex attraction” and “same sex behaviour.”⁹⁴ Does experiencing same-sex attraction define a person’s sexual orientation? Does one incidence of same-sex behaviour determine a person’s sexual orientation? The definition of the term “homosexual” varies quite widely in literature.

The wording of these types of questions in surveys is an important factor when considering the data. In the study “Every Class in Every School,” conducted by EGALÉ Canada, the numbers reported for LGBTQ students are much higher than numbers traditionally associated with the LGBTQ population. According to EGALÉ, 14% of students identify as non-heterosexual,⁹⁵ while the Canadian Community Health Survey, commissioned by Statistics Canada and Health Canada, reports 2% of adults surveyed identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.⁹⁶

The disparity in numbers may be due to EGALÉ’s categories for sexual orientation. In the “Every Class in Every School” survey, survey participants are classified as one of the following, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Two-spirited, or 100% heterosexual.” Every student who does not choose “100% heterosexual” automatically falls into a LGBTQ classification. A similar occurrence appears in the McCreary Centre Society’s “Not Yet Equal” study⁹⁷ commissioned in schools across British Columbia, which finds that only 89% of male students and 82% of female students identify as “100% heterosexual,”

⁹³ See section 9, *Bill 13, Accepting Schools Act*.

⁹⁴ Stanton L. Jones, “Same-Sex Science: The social sciences cannot settle the moral status of homosexuality,” *First Things Magazine*, February 2012 online edition, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2012/01/same-sex-science>.

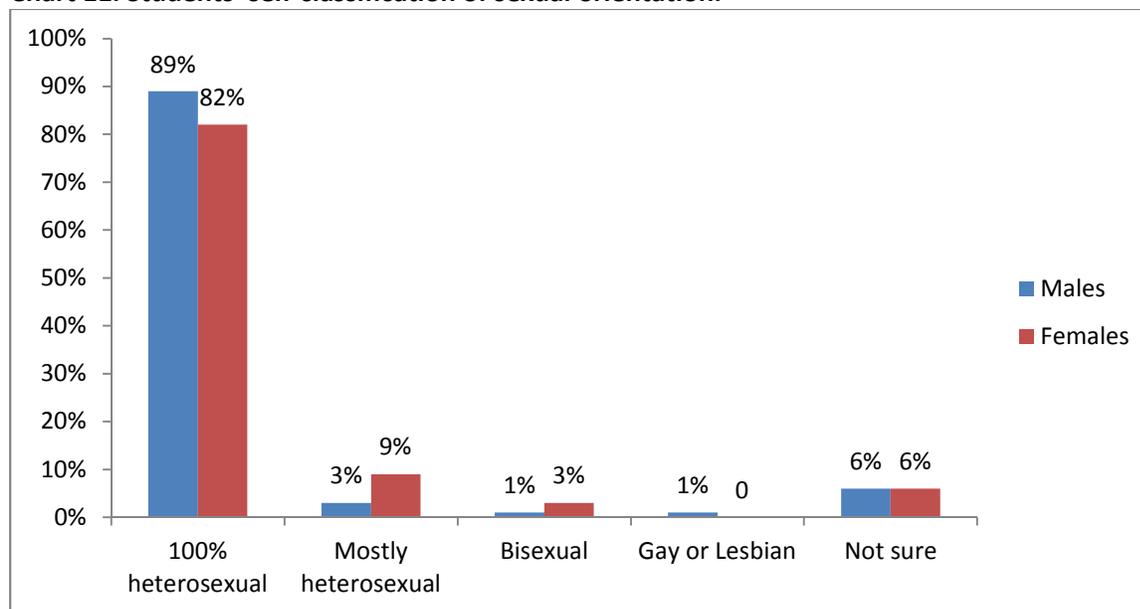
⁹⁵ Catherine Taylor and Tracey Peter, “Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools,” Egale Canada, May 2011, <http://www.egale.ca/EgaleFinalReport-web.pdf>, 42.

⁹⁶ Statistics Canada, “Gay Pride... by the numbers,” Government of Canada, July 2010, http://www42.statcan.gc.ca/smr08/2011/smr08_158_2011-eng.htm.

⁹⁷ The McCreary Centre Society, “Not Yet Equal: The Health of Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Youth in BC,” 2007, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/not_yet_equal_web.pdf, 12.

thus inferring that 11-18% of students are identifying as LGBTQ, when in actuality that may be a statistical anomaly based on the phrasing of the questions used. A tween or teen who has experimented with homosexual behaviour, or has thought about homosexual behaviour, or has questions because their best friend is the same gender, arguably does not define their sexual orientation accordingly. The term “questioning” is open-ended, accounting for a wide variety of thoughts or behaviours that teens may have experienced. The classifications and numbers in the “Not Yet Equal” survey are portrayed on the following chart.

Chart 11. Students’ self-classification of sexual orientation.



Source: The McCreary Centre Society, “Not Yet Equal: The Health of Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Youth in BC,” 2007, http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/not_yet_equal_web.pdf, 12.

The percentage of students identifying as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual is 1-3%, a finding which is consistent with the Statistics Canada numbers for the LGBTQ population.

Bullying based on sexual orientation does occur. In the McCreary Centre Society’s BC Adolescent Health Survey, they asked students to document their victimization experiences at school over the past year. The researchers found that LGBTQ students report higher rates of overall victimization than heterosexual students.⁹⁸ Table 1 shows the findings. However, and as the EGALE report’s executive summary notes “Any given school is likely to have as many heterosexual students as LGBTQ students who are harassed about their sexual orientation or gender expression.”⁹⁹

EGALE’s “Every Class in Every School” reports some high numbers in reference to homophobic bullying. According to the report, 70% of all students surveyed (both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ), stated that they

⁹⁸ Ibid, 16.

⁹⁹ Catherine Taylor and Tracey Peter. “Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools,” *Egale Canada*, May 2011, <http://www.egale.ca/EgaleFinalReport-web.pdf>, 137.

heard the statement “that’s so gay” every day.¹⁰⁰ 48% attested to hearing words along the lines of “faggot,” “lezbo,” and “dyke” every day. Further, just under 10% of those who identified as LGBTQ stated that they heard “homophobic” comments from their teachers either every day or at least once a week.

Further EGALE findings follow:¹⁰¹

Percentage of students who were physically harassed or assaulted due to others’ perceptions of their sexual orientation or gender identity:

- 20% of LGBTQ students
- 10% of non-LGBTQ students

Percentage of students who experienced verbal harassment due to their gender expression:

- 74% of transgender students
- 55% of sexual minority students (those who did not identify exclusively as heterosexual)
- 26% of non-LGBTQ students (heterosexual students)

Table 1. Victimization experiences school in the past year.

	Males	Females
Verbal harassment		
100% heterosexual	29%	37%
Mostly heterosexual	41%	53%
Bisexual	48%	54%
Gay/Lesbian	61%	66%
Purposeful exclusion		
100% heterosexual	24%	36%
Mostly heterosexual	36%	50%
Bisexual	44%	48%
Gay/Lesbian	55%	53%
Physical assaults		
100% heterosexual	13%	5%
Mostly heterosexual	13%	10%
Bisexual	28%	19%
Gay/Lesbian	7%	20%

Source: McCreary Center Society, “Not Yet Equal,” 16.

¹⁰⁰ Catherine Taylor and Tracey Peter, “Every Class in Every School: Executive Summary,” *Egale Canada*, May 2011, <http://www.egale.ca/extra\1489.pdf>, 15.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Ontario Minister of Education Laurel Broten reported the following information in a speech:

Harassment and aggression are also major issues for students confronted by homophobia. A 2011 national climate survey found that 64% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer students, and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents, feel unsafe at school. These numbers speak volumes and are haunting. That's nearly two thirds of the LGBTQ students suffering from homophobic bullying.¹⁰²

The percentage of LGBTQ students who feel unsafe at school is a large percentage, and not to be taken lightly. It is noted, however, that when the percentage of LGBTQ students or students with LGBTQ parents is applied to the percentage of LGBTQ students in the school population overall, this is a considerably smaller, but still significant, category of bullying. All children deserve to be provided a safe, protective environment where they can learn and grow without fear of harm.

For example, it is important to consider the overall number of students who feel unsafe at school. At St. Anne's Catholic School in Richmond Hill, Ontario, 281 students were surveyed, and 32% of them stated that they felt unsafe at school (note that the data referenced earlier in Chart 5 would suggest that 22% of Canadian students feel unsafe due to bullying).¹⁰³ 32% is no small percentage; that is 90 students in one small school who feel unsafe. If St. Anne's is an average school, the student population who might be considered LGBTQ may be as high as 3% or 8 students in this school; of which two-thirds, to use the figures quoted by Minister Broten, or 5 of the 90 students who feel unsafe would feel that way because of bullying related to sexual orientation or gender identity. To feel safe is one of the needs that must be at the forefront of anti-bullying legislation.

7. Trends in Cyber-Bullying

Intuitively, as the information age continues to provide the world with new technology and greater numbers of student have access to personal phones, computers, and social media, the face of bullying morphs along with our methods of communicating. In Canada alone, an estimated 61% of youth own MP3 players, while 43% own smartphones.¹⁰⁴ Cyberbullying is pervasive in that it can occur any time of day, whether parents and teachers are present or not.

Ipsos Reid, a reputable Canadian polling firm, surveyed 422 Canadian teens (ages 12-17) in late 2012 to gather information on cyberbullying.¹⁰⁵ Though a low percentage of participants (7.6%) said they felt they were bullied online, a much greater percentage (34.9%) said they had seen online postings of mean or inappropriate comments about others.¹⁰⁶ As with many surveys about bullying, girls responded with

¹⁰² The Honourable Laurel Broten, "Official Report of Debates: Wednesday 7 December 2011," Session 1, 40th Legislature, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2011, http://www.ontla.on.ca/house-proceedings/transcripts/files_pdf/07-DEC-2011_L011.pdf, 404.

¹⁰³ Ashley Imgrund et al, "Bullying: A Growing Problem in Ontario Schools," slide 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ipsos Reid, "Bullies Taking to Social Networking as Teens Become More Mobile," *Press Release*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?id=12507>, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Ipsos Reid, "Bullies Taking to Social Networking as Teens Become More Mobile," Detailed Tables, February 26, 2013, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=6010>, 1.

considerably higher percentages than boys. Also, a greater percentage of girls owned MP3 players and smart phones than boys (8-9% more).¹⁰⁷ Another trend noticed is one of age, with the 14-15 age category displaying the highest percentages of cyberbullying in three out of four categories.

Table 2. “Which of the following have you ever experienced through social networking sites?”

	Total	Male	Female
Seen postings of mean or inappropriate comments about someone you know	34.9%	29.9%	39.7%
Witnessing someone you know being bullied	19.7%	11.1%	28.0%
Seen postings of mean or inappropriate comments about yourself	14.3%	10.0%	18.5%
Feeling like you were bullied online	7.6%	5.9%	9.2%

Ipsos Reid, “Bullies Taking to Social Networking as Teens Become More Mobile,” Detailed Tables, February 26, 2013, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=6010>, 1.

Note: 326 of the 422 teens surveyed (those who had a personal profile with an online social network) answered this question.

A 2010 Ipsos Reid survey performed on behalf of Trend Micro USA gained the following insights.¹⁰⁸

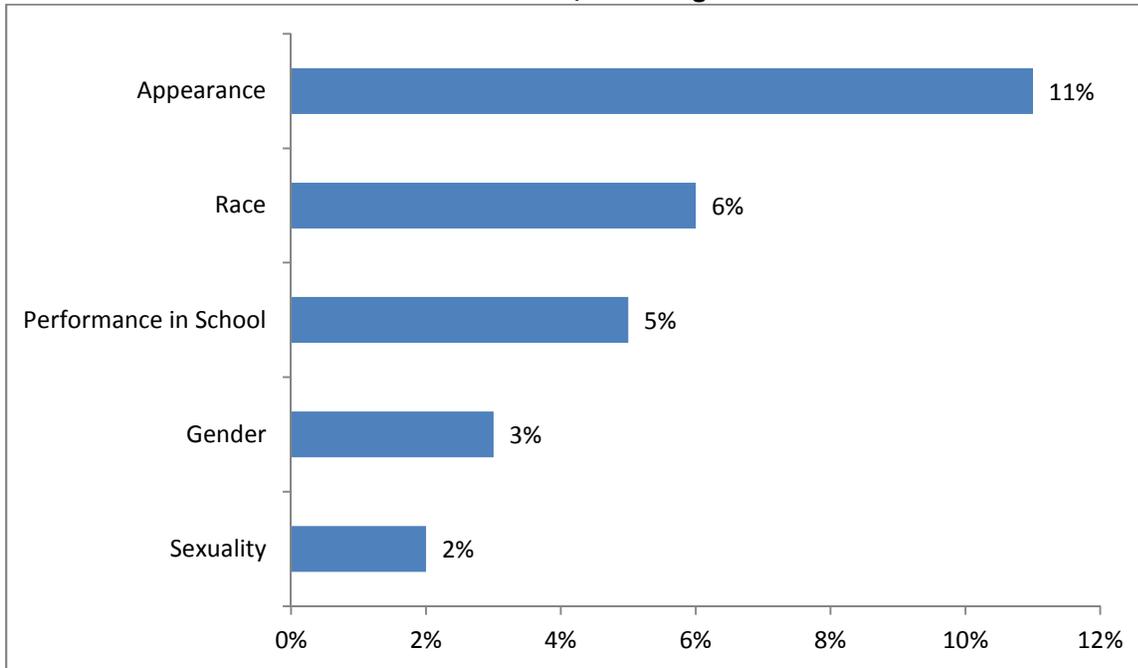
- Computer usage increases greatly around age 9, and parental concern/guidance increases from that age onward.
- Canadian parents on average begin to trust their children’s internet usage ability around the age of 13.
- Access to a computer is greatest at home (76%) and second at school (56%).
- 43% of parents use computer parental controls.
- Positively, 90% of parents said they provided guidance to their children in reference to sharing personal information online.
- 58% of parents said their child had not fallen victim to cyberbullying. Depending on their child’s age, only 3-11% of parents could conclusively state that their child had been a victim of cyberbullying. (The greatest prevalence was found in the 16+ age group, at 11%.)

Ipsos Reid surveyed students on the topic of online bullying in December 2011. They found that 21% of students had witnessed another student being bullied online. The results of the survey are found in Chart 13.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

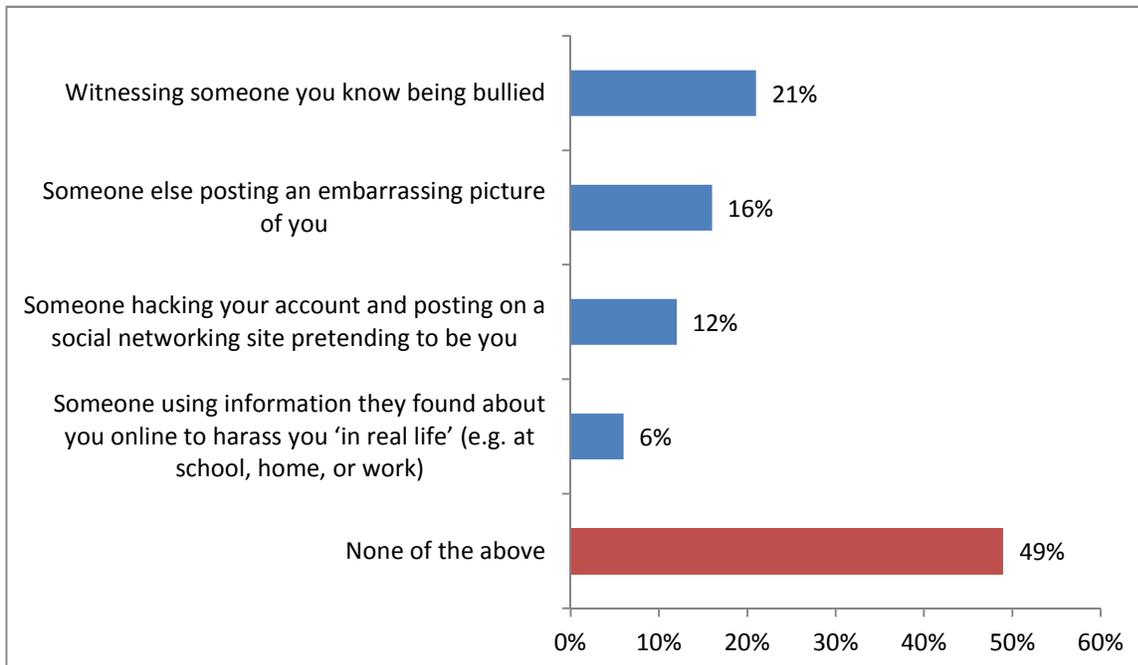
¹⁰⁸ Ipsos Reid (performed for Trend Micro USA), “Internet Security and Kids Research,” May 2010, found at <http://newsroom.trendmicro.com/index.php?s=23>, 6-7.

Chart 12. Reasons students were bullied online, according to students.



Source: Faye Mishna and Robert MacFadden, "Cyber Bullying Survey," University of Toronto, 2008, <http://www.governmentevents.ca/ypo2008/presentations/634.pdf>, 8.

Chart 13. Canadian youth aged 12-17: experiences with online bullying.



Source: Ipsos Reid, "The Internet a New School Yard for Bullies?" December 14-20, 2011, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?id=11464>.

Note: Ipsos Reid surveyed 416 Canadian youth aged 12-17 in 2011. They asked the question, "Which of the following have you ever experienced through social networking sites?" (the following numbers reflect percentages from the 321 participants who stated they had a personal profile with an online social network or community)

The University of Toronto's 2008 Cyber Bullying Survey found that 21% of all students (Grades 6, 7, 10, and 11) stated they have been bullied online at least once.¹⁰⁹ 35% of all participants stated they have bullied other students online at least once. 28% of all students watched someone else being bullied online. Again, as with non-cyber-bullying, the primary reason for being bullied was physical appearance.

With the knowledge that technology is playing a more important role in the lives of students now than ever, it is crucial to address the issue of cyber-bullying. How can parents, educators, and students increase their awareness of cyber-bullying and consider safeguards against its future occurrence? The internet is so widely available today that students can be bullied via technology without peers or adults ever becoming aware of it.

8. Canadian Public Opinion on Bullying and Bullying Legislation

A. General

Generally, awareness about the issue of bullying is increasing, as evidenced by the large percentages of people who identified that bullying is a serious issue and who would support the criminalization of bullying behaviours.

In late 2012, Ipsos Reid surveyed 1,008 Canadians on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada.¹¹⁰ The poll measured respondents' views on the prevention of bullying, their own bullying experiences, and effective bullying interventions.

When asked whether they were bullied as a child or teen, 59% said yes. There was no difference in the percentage of men and women who said yes, but there was significant difference among age groups. Out of the 18-25 age category, 73% said yes, while only 52% of the 55+ age group said yes.¹¹¹ The difference of 21% is stark and merits investigation. A possible explanation is the rise in the prevalence of cyberbullying, providing more opportunity for bullying due to its covert nature (it can occur in the privacy of a student's home, on their personal phone or computer, etc.).

When asked about the types of bullying experienced, several trends emerge.¹¹² Women were more likely to experience "teasing designed to humiliate; verbal abuse, taunting; and ridicule and humiliation on the internet," while men were more likely to experience "physical abuse such as being slapped, shoved, hit or beaten." Teasing was the greatest type of bullying experienced overall, at 72%. Older respondents (55+) reported physical bullying more than any other age group, while those under age 35 reported more teasing and internet ridicule.

Despite the large percentage of respondents who reported being bullied, when asked whether the bullying experience had a lasting negative effect on respondents as adults, only 9% said "very harmful,"

¹⁰⁹ Faye Mishna and Robert MacFadden, "Cyber Bullying Survey," University of Toronto, 2008, <http://www.governmentevents.ca/ypo2008/presentations/634.pdf>, 5.

¹¹⁰ Ipsos Reid, "Majority of Canadian Adults Have Been Bullied During Childhood...", December 10-17, 2012, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?id=12461>.

¹¹¹ Ipsos Reid, "Majority of Canadian Adults Have Been Bullied During Childhood...", detailed tables linked from the press release of this poll, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?id=12486>, 1.

¹¹² *ibid.*, 2.

while 35% said, “somewhat harmful,” 36% said, “not very harmful,” and 19% said, “not at all harmful.” A much greater percentage of women (especially those under 55 years) than men chose the “very/somewhat harmful” category, while a greater percentage of men (especially those over 55 years) chose the “not very/not at all harmful” category, meaning sex and age are both factors in the lasting effect of bullying.

Respondents were also asked to read statements related to bullying and choose one of four answers for each: agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly. The following table displays results for “agree strongly” combined with “agree somewhat.”

Table 3. “Below are some statements related to bullying. Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each.”¹¹³

	Agree/somewhat agree
Freedom from bullying is the right of every child and teenager	95%
Providing children and teens who bully others with an adult mentor to provide a positive influence in their lives is an effective way to reduce bullying	87%
Peer pressure on bullies is a powerful way to prevent abuse	83%
Stricter laws and legislation are effective ways to address bullying	79%
Not enough is being done to stop bullying in my community	78%

Source: Ipsos Reid, “Majority of Canadian Adults Have Been Bullied During Childhood...,” detailed tables linked from the press release of this poll, <http://www.ipsos-na.com/download/pr.aspx?id=12486>, 11.

When asked about bullying intervention, the greatest percentage of people chose peer pressure as an effective strategy over six other strategies. Answer options were as follows: very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not at all effective. See table below.

Table 4. “How effective do you feel each of the following interventions would be at preventing or reducing bullying?”¹¹⁴

	Very/somewhat effective
Peer pressure by those who witness or hear about acts of bullying	92%
Counseling and direct intervention by teachers, administrators or school-based conflict resolution experts	90%
Intervention by parents either to protect their child or to stop their child from abusing others	90%
Guidance and support from an adult mentor	87%
Public awareness programs for children and teenagers designed to encourage them not to bully and to intervene when they witness acts of bullying	84%
Stronger legislation against acts of bullying and stricter enforcement of those laws	76%
Internet campaigns to identify and discourage bullies	72%

Source: Ipsos Reid, “Majority of Canadian Adults Have Been Bullied During Childhood...,” detailed tables, 27.

¹¹³ “Agree” and “somewhat agree” results are shown together in this table.

¹¹⁴ “Very effective” and “somewhat effective” results are shown together in this table.

When examining trends in demographics, it is interesting to note a greater percentage of women answered very/somewhat effective than men in every category except for peer pressure. Also notable is that those older than 55 are most likely to find peer pressure, teachers, and parents the most effective strategies for bullying prevention. Anti-bullying legislation is most strongly advocated by the 18-34 age group. Despite the recent passage of anti-bullying legislation in several provinces, stronger legislation ranked next-to-last in this poll question.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada, an organization that provides mentorship to students, commissioned Harris Decima to perform a public opinion poll on the issue of bullying in February, 2012. The poll surveyed 1,034 participants across Canada aged 18 and older. The findings are as follows.¹¹⁵

- 95 per cent of Canadian adults surveyed believe people have a responsibility to take action to stop bullies.
- 89 per cent believe bullying poses a serious threat to the long-term well-being of children and teenagers.
- 50 per cent of Canadian adults surveyed were bullied as a child or teenager.
- 62 per cent of those who were bullied believe they would have benefited from having a volunteer adult mentor to help them cope.
- Nearly a third (30 per cent) think the abuse they suffered had a lasting harmful effect.
- 87 per cent of adults surveyed agree that action to reduce bullying strengthens communities over time.

In a February 2012 poll conducted by Angus Reid Public Opinion, 1,006 survey participants across Canada were questioned about bullying.¹¹⁶ Table 5 outlines the result of the poll, demonstrating extremely high percentages for those who think that bullying is a very serious problem in middle and high school. This may reflect the participants own experiences, years prior, as well perceptions based on their children's experiences or media reports. Further, the results demonstrate that participants believe that bullying occurs through all of life's stages, and does not end upon graduation from high school.

¹¹⁵ Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada, "Half of All Canadians are Bullied as Child or Teen," news release, February 15, 2012, <http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/en/Home/Communications/news/halfofallcanadiansarebulliedaschildorteen.aspx>.

¹¹⁶ Angus Reid Public Opinion, "Many Canadians Believe Bullying Should be Considered a Crime," February 14-15, 2012, http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/2012.02.29_Bullying_CAN.pdf.

Table 5. “How serious a problem do you think bullying is in each of the following facets of life in Canada?”

	Very serious/ Moderately serious	Not too serious/ Not serious at all	Not sure
Elementary school	88%	10%	2%
Middle school/High school	94%	4%	2%
College/University	43%	49%	8%
Family Life	52%	44%	5%
The workplace	53%	43%	5%

Source: Angus Reid Public Opinion, “Many Canadians Believe Bullying Should be Considered a Crime.”

The same 2012 survey found that Canadians are overwhelmingly in favour of criminalizing bullying behaviours. This is distinct from the anti-bullying legislation currently before the Ontario legislature, which would only amend the *Education Act* and address behaviours that take place in schools.

When survey participants across Canada were asked, “Do you think bullying should be considered a crime?”¹¹⁷

- 19% said, “Yes, but only if it involves physical violence.”
- 65% said, “Yes, even if no physical violence is involved.”
- 6% said, “No, bullying should not be considered a crime.”
- 10% said, “Not sure.”

They were also asked the following: “Cyber-bullying ‘involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.’ In the United States, a proposed federal law would make it illegal to use electronic means to ‘coerce, intimidate, harass or cause other substantial emotional distress.’ Do you support or oppose enacting a law similar to this one in your own province?”¹¹⁸ 90% supported such legislation, while only 6% percent were opposed and 4% stated that they were unsure.

B. Alberta Statistics

In 2008, 2010, and 2012, Ipsos Reid polled residents of Alberta as part of the “Alberta Children and Youth Services: Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey.” The intent was to measure public knowledge of bullying and family violence, determine prevalence of bullying and family violence in the media, and glean information for future direction with regards to public awareness and education strategies in the prevention of bullying and family violence.

In 2008, 1,571 people aged 16 and older were polled.¹¹⁹ When surveying for attitudes about bullying, 91% said the prevention of bullying should be a high community priority, and 83% said the provincial government should make it a high priority as well. Similar to the Ipsos Reid survey outlined above

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁹ Ipsos Reid Public Affairs, “Alberta Children’s Services: Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2008,” March 2008, http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/documents/familyviolence/2008_Family_Violence_Bullying_Survey_Final_Report.pdf, 1.

(“Majority of Canadian Adults Have Been Bullied During Childhood”), agreement was stronger among women than men for every bullying prevention strategy except the category stating bullying was normal childhood behaviour.¹²⁰

Table 6. “Next, I am going to read a series of statements about bullying, and I would like you to tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.”¹²¹

	Agree/strongly agree
Bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for my community	91%
I have a personal responsibility to reduce bullying in my community	89%
Bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for the provincial government	83%
Bullying is just a normal part of growing up	24%
I encourage my children to be accepting of people who are different from themselves	98%
I talk to my child/children about bullying	90%

Source: Ipsos Reid Public Affairs, “Alberta Children’s Services: Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2008,” March 2008, http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/documents/familyviolence/2008_Family_Violence_Bullying_Survey_Final_Report.pdf, 15.

The survey also asked those polled to identify different behaviours that constitute bullying. When presented with a list of behaviours, the category that received the greatest percentage was “verbal abuse,” at 69%. Physical bullying was a close second at 68%, while cyberbullying was only chosen by 7% of people.

In 2010, the “Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey”¹²² polled 977 Albertans and elicited slightly different results than the 2008 survey. In 2010, when examining different types of bullying behaviour among young people, the greatest forms chosen were verbal and physical bullying, both at 72%. Cyberbullying was chosen by 10% of people, opposed to the 7% that chose this option in 2008. In the 2010 survey, participants were also asked about their awareness of cyberbullying (this question was not included in the 2008 survey). 70% of people said they were aware of the issue, while 30% said no. One trend noticed by the researchers was that 77% of Albertans with a university education were aware of cyberbullying, while only 58% of those with high school or less education were aware of the issue. When asked about the prevalence of cyberbullying in their own community, 19% said it occurred “a lot,” 37% said, “a fair bit,” 26% said, “not very often,” 7% said, “not at all,” and 12% said, “don’t know.” In total, 56% of people answered “a lot” or “a fair bit,” which is a significant percentage and identifies cyberbullying as a major issue in Albertan communities.

The 2010 survey also asked about attitudes regarding bullying prevention. Compared to the 2008 survey, the results are mostly similar, with the only differences being a 4% decrease for both bullying prevention as a high community priority and as a high provincial government priority, as well as a 2% increase in parents who talk to their children about bullying. As is common, the percentages for women

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²¹ “Agree” and “strongly agree” results are shown together in this table.

¹²² Ipsos Reid Public Affairs, “Alberta Children and Youth Services: Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2010,” March 2010, http://child.alberta.ca/home/documents/familyviolence/PO_Survey_Final_Summary_Report_2010.pdf/.

are higher than those for men in the following categories: personal responsibility to abate bullying, prevention as a high community priority, and prevention as a high provincial priority.¹²³

Table 7. Next, I am going to read a series of statements about bullying, and I would like you to tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.¹²⁴

	Agree/strongly agree
I have a personal responsibility to reduce bullying in my community	88%
Bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for my community	87%
Bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for the provincial government	79%
Bullying is just a normal part of growing up	27%
I encourage my children to be accepting of people who are different from themselves*	98%
I talk to my child/children about bullying*	92%

Ipsos Reid Public Affairs, "Alberta Children and Youth Services: Albertans' Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2010," March 2010, http://child.alberta.ca/home/documents/familyviolence/PO_Survey_Final_Summary_Report_2010.pdf/, 17.

*These questions answered by those who have children under 18 (n=372).

The 2010 survey added a question about awareness of community anti-bullying strategies, which demonstrated that only 17% of those polled were either aware of or involved in a community initiative designed to address bullying. Involvement was higher among women and those with a university education. Despite the low response to awareness of and involvement in community anti-bullying campaigns, 61% of people said they thought the community could help themselves or others deal with bullying issues. This is also notable considering 88% of people (see Table 7) agreed that they have a personal responsibility in regard to the issue of bullying in their community. It seems respondents display concern for the issue and feel constrained to answer in favor of community and government initiatives, but personal involvement is low, suggesting a disconnect between belief and action. In table 7, it's evident that most parents talk to their children about bullying, which is positive and does demonstrate personal action, but it may not translate into community anti-bullying efforts. However, since a high percentage of participants agreed that bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for the government, the community, and for individuals, it suggests participants are unclear as to who is most responsible for addressing the issue.

Ipsos Reid performed the "Albertans' Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey" again in 2012.¹²⁵ This time, 900 Albertans aged 16 years and older were surveyed. Key findings include a significant increase in the awareness of cyberbullying and an increase in the opinion that communities, individuals, and the provincial government all have a responsibility to counter bullying.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹²⁴ "Agree" and "strongly agree" results are shown together in this table.

¹²⁵ Ipsos Reid, "Alberta Children and Youth Services: Albertans' Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2012," March 2012, http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/documents/familyviolence/PO_Survey_Summary_Report_2012.pdf/.

In the 2012 survey, when asked about what types of behaviour constitute bullying, 72% identified verbal bullying, 65% listed physical bullying, 22% marked social bullying, and 19% mentioned cyberbullying (which is nine percentage points higher than in 2010). Also, opposed to the 70% in 2010 that answered yes to, “Are you aware of the issue of cyberbullying,” 83% of the participants said yes in 2012.

A 13% increase in awareness means the issue could be gaining more traction in the media. When asked about the frequency of cyberbullying in their own communities, 62% of participants answered either “a lot” or “a fair bit,” which is six percentage points higher than the 2010 number.

When attitudes regarding bullying were surveyed, the numbers rose for bullying prevention as a personal responsibility (93% vs. 88% in 2010), bullying prevention as a high community priority (89% vs. 87%), and bullying prevention as a key provincial priority (87% vs. 79%). Again, the percentage of people who claimed involvement or awareness of community anti-bullying initiatives was low (22%), though there was a 5% increase from 2010.

In summary, the survey’s occurrence over three time periods (2008, 2010, and 2012) is useful in identifying how attitudes have changed over four years. Albertans are now more aware of bullying in general, especially cyberbullying, and demonstrate a strong personal responsibility to counteract bullying, while also believing communities and the provincial government should both make the prevention of bullying a top priority. By demographics, women continue to provide higher percentages for awareness and prevention questions.

9. Conclusion

A. General Trends

An overview of available Canadian statistics on bullying permits one to conclude that bullying is a complex behaviour that is often difficult to define. For this reason, it is difficult to compare one study to another, as surveys may be measuring different behaviours. Further, some surveys fail to define key terms, such as “sexual harassment”, which complicates the interpretation of data. Lastly, certain organizations group students into broad categories or gender constructs which renders the extrapolation of data to compare with generally accepted categories difficult, or even controversial, as a consequence of the resulting statistical anomaly.

There are, however, still trends that can be drawn with some confidence from the data sets. First, students are most frequently bullied, both in traditional forms of aggression as well as through cyberbullying, for three primary reasons: body image and physical appearance; school grades or marks; and cultural background and/or race. A small number of students face bullying on a weekly basis, but bullying generally happens once or twice a month.

Student polling also demonstrates that children are very aware of the damaging aspects of bullying behaviours and consider it to be a problematic form of aggression within schools.

B. Hate Crimes in Canada

Not unrelated are the rates of hate crimes committed in Canada by minors. Hate crime data can be used to further inform the bullying discussion.

Hate crimes are “criminal offences motivated by hate toward an identifiable group.” In 2009, there were 1,473 police reported hate crimes committed in Canada.¹²⁶ The number of hate crimes represents a 42% increase from the previous year’s numbers. A factor to note is that the number of incidents reported and the number of actual incidents may differ, as crimes are not always reported. Notably significant is the fact that the greatest number of hate crimes (both victims and perpetrators) occurred in youth aged 12-17. The most commonly reported reason for hate crimes in 2009 was race or ethnicity, at 54% of all incidents reported. The next highest reasons were religion (29%) and sexual orientation (13%).

Diversity is on the rise in Canada. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada’s visible minority groups rose 27% making this issue more relevant than ever. The hate crime findings demonstrate the seriousness of the issue of ethnicity and religion in young people today.

C. Going Forward

While it is outside the scope of this discussion paper to provide recommendations to reduce bullying behaviours, we do encourage that any such measures be considered with a full knowledge of the following:

1. Already existing anti-bullying policies, initiatives and legislation;
2. Current and accurate data on bullying behaviours and victimization;
3. Bullying data in Canada is limited and often difficult to access;
4. Anti-bullying initiatives that seek to be inclusive of all students and victims must consider all risk factors for bullying (body image, grades/marks, cultural background, language, religion, etc.) and respect existing laws and constitutional rights (including identified grounds of prohibited discrimination under human rights legislation);
5. The population composition of students and parents in regard to the target school, schools, or school boards, including race, religion, and other relevant factors.
6. The reality that bullying is a problem requiring engagement beyond the school, with parents and the community-at-large.

¹²⁶ Mia Dauvergne and Shannon Brennan, “Police-reported Hate Crime in Canada, 2009,” released June 7, 2011, Component of Statistics Canada catalogue no. 85-002-X *Juristat*, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11469-eng.pdf>.

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Schedule “A”: Statistics Canada on Bullying Rates

In a Statistics Canada’s 2008/2009 “Census at School,” high school students across Canada were asked, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?”¹²⁷

- 77% said, “0”
- 17% said, “1 to 3”
- 2% said, “4 to 9”
- 3% said, “10 or more”

In a Statistics Canada’s 2007/2008 “Census at School,” high school students across Canada were asked, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?”¹²⁸

- 77% said, “0”
- 17% said, “1 to 3”
- 3% said, “4 to 9”
- 3% said, “10 or more”

In a Statistics Canada’s 2006/2007 “Census at School,” high school students across Canada were asked, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?”¹²⁹

- 79% said, “0”
- 15% said, “1 to 3”
- 3% said, “4 to 9”
- 3% said, “10 or more”

In a Statistics Canada’s 2005/2006 “Census at School,” high school students across Canada were asked, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?”¹³⁰

- 68% said, “0”
- 22% said, “1 to 3”
- 5% said, “4 to 9”
- 5% said, “10 or more”

In a Statistics Canada’s 2004/2005 “Census at School,” high school students across Canada were asked, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?”¹³¹

- 72% said, “0”
- 18% said, “1 to 3”
- 3% said, “4 to 9”
- 6% said, “10 or more times”

¹²⁷ Statistics Canada, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?,” Government of Canada, Census at School 2008/2009, http://www19.statcan.ca/04/04_0809/04_0809_020-eng.htm.

¹²⁸ Statistics Canada, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?,” Government of Canada, Census at School 2007/2008, http://www19.statcan.ca/04/04_0708/04_0708_020-eng.htm.

¹²⁹ Statistics Canada, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?,” Government of Canada, Census at School 2006/2007, http://www19.statcan.ca/04/04_0607/04_0607_027-eng.htm.

¹³⁰ Statistics Canada, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?,” Government of Canada, Census at School 2005/2006, http://www19.statcan.ca/04/04_0506/04_0506_027-eng.htm.

¹³¹ Statistics Canada, “How many times have you been bullied at school in the last month?,” Government of Canada, Census at School 2004/2005, http://www19.statcan.ca/04/04_0405/04_0405_019-eng.htm.