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Asian American Psychological Association Leadership Fellows Program
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What is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of violence that is likely widespread but often under-reported.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice³ definition, bullying includes *repeated* harmful acts and a real or perceived imbalance of power between the victim and the bully.

Bullying can be physical (assault, intimidation, destruction of property), verbal (name-calling, threats) and/or psychological/relational (could be physical or verbal; may include social exclusion gossiping, rumors).

Bullying can occur in person or through technology (cyber bullying through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website, text messaging, or videos or pictures posted on websites or sent through cell phones).⁴

A person can be a bully, a victim, or both (bully-victim, sometimes called aggressive victim).

Myths about Asian American Bullying & Victimization

Myth: Asian American students are bullied far more than any other ethnic groups, with more than half (54%) of Asian American students reporting that they were bullied in the classroom.

Fact: Fewer Asian American students (17%) reported being bullied at school than did all other ethnic groups. The 54% figure refers to *where* the bullying occurred, not the overall rate. More than half (54%) of Asian American students who report being bullied, report it occurring in the classroom.¹

Myth: Asian American students are cyber-bullied far more than any other ethnic groups, with 62% of Asian American students reporting that they were bullied online up to twice a month.

Fact: Fewer Asian American students (2.9%) report being cyber-bullied than did all other ethnic groups. The 62% figure refers to *how frequently* the cyber-bullying occurred among those reporting being cyber-bullied, not the overall rate.²

What Do We Know about Bullying & Victimization among Asian American Students?

National data

According to *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2010 report*¹:

- Fewer Asian American students (18%) reported being bullied at school or cyber bullied, compared to Whites (35%), Blacks (31%), and Hispanics (28%). More Asian American victims of bullying say that they were bullied because of their race (11.1%), compared to Whites (2.8%), Black (7.1%), and Hispanic (6.2%).
- Like other racial minorities, Asian Americans (11%), report being more frequently targeted with race-related hate words relative to Whites (3%).

Among Asian American students, immigrant and 2nd generation students were more likely to be victimized than 3rd or later generation students. Data comes from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (a nation-wide sample of over 10,000 public high school students).⁶

Data on nearly 750 Asian American middle and high school students from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1994-95 cohort) suggest that 17% reported being violently victimized (e.g., had a gun/knife pulled on her/him, stabbed, cut, or jumped) at least once in the past year.⁷

Notable findings from local studies:

Among Korean American high school students (54% U.S. born) in NY and NJ, 31.5% reported being bullied and 15.9% reported being bullied & bullying others. These students experienced higher levels of depression.⁸

Racial/ethnic minorities who break stereotypes are more likely to be bullied. Asian American and Latino student athletes were more likely to be bullied, whereas sport participation was an insulating factor for White and Black students.⁵

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A survey of more than 1,300 6th graders in CA schools with predominantly Latino or Asian American students found that Asian Americans were the most frequently victimized ethnic group regardless of the school racial composition.⁹

Asian American, Latino, & African American students at one multi-ethnic public school in NYC, Asian American students described students verbal harassment (e.g., racial slurs, being mocked, teased) and physical victimization (e.g., being randomly slapped in hallways, physically threatened, punched, having possessions stolen) more than other racial group.¹⁰

Chinese American middle school students in Boston reported frequently experiencing race-based verbal & physical harassment by non-Asian peers. Harassing comments typically focused on Asian language or accent, school performance, & physical appearance. Boys more frequently reported physical harassment. Girls reported witnessing physical aggression toward Chinese American boys.¹¹

“When I was a teenager, I was bullied a lot, and I felt very insecure and very scared, and I didn't want to live.”

- Margaret Cho

Bullying & Victimization Statistics: Points to Keep in Mind

- Asian Americans are often missing or not available in nation-wide data on school victimization, making it difficult to compare across groups and across studies.
- How researchers ask a question determines how students will respond. Asian American middle school boys were less likely to report being a victim when asked how often they were “bullied” in the previous month, but more frequently reported being a victim when asked how often someone had repeatedly tried to hurt them or make them feel bad with specific behavior (e.g., name-calling, threatening, pushing/shoving, ignoring, spreading rumors).¹²
- Differences between and within Asian ethnic groups can be more important than findings with pan-ethnic Asian American groups. It would be useful to pay attention to findings on specific subgroups (e.g., Asian American student athletes or Vietnamese Americans) and not just those that combine all Asian Americans into one category.

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Resources

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
<http://aaldef.org/>

Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services (BRYCS) Clearinghouse for Bullying & Prevention
<http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/Highlighted-Resources-Bullying.cfm>

National School Safety Center
http://sssb.k12.hi.us/Safety%20and%20Well%20Being%20Toolkit/Annual%20Training/bullying_fact_sheets.pdf

Center for Disease Control
http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Bullying_Factsheet-a.pdf

National Association of School Psychologists
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying_fs.aspx

Asian American Psychological Association
<http://apaonline.org>

American Psychological Association
<http://apa.org>