

International Bullying Report - PISA

By David Knuckey

- On average, around the world, 4% of children are hit and 8% are the victims of nasty rumours, at school, at least a few times per month.
- Students perform worse in schools where bullying is more frequent.
- Bullying is more frequent in schools where there is poor discipline and negative relationships with teachers.

An OECD report has collected data on school bullying.

International standards determine that bullying is 'high', when more than 10% of students are frequently bullied.

- Worldwide, on average, 19% of students are frequently the victim of bullying.
- In Australia, 24% of students are frequently the victim of bullying.

Boys are more likely than girls to report being hit or pushed, but girls tend to be the victims of nasty rumours more than boys.

Children of immigrants who arrived in their host country after the age of 12 face a higher risk of bullying.

In most countries (including Australia), students in disadvantaged schools are more likely to be victims of bullying than students in advantaged schools.

Bullying's Impact on Student Performance

Students score 47 points lower in science in schools where the incidence of bullying is high.

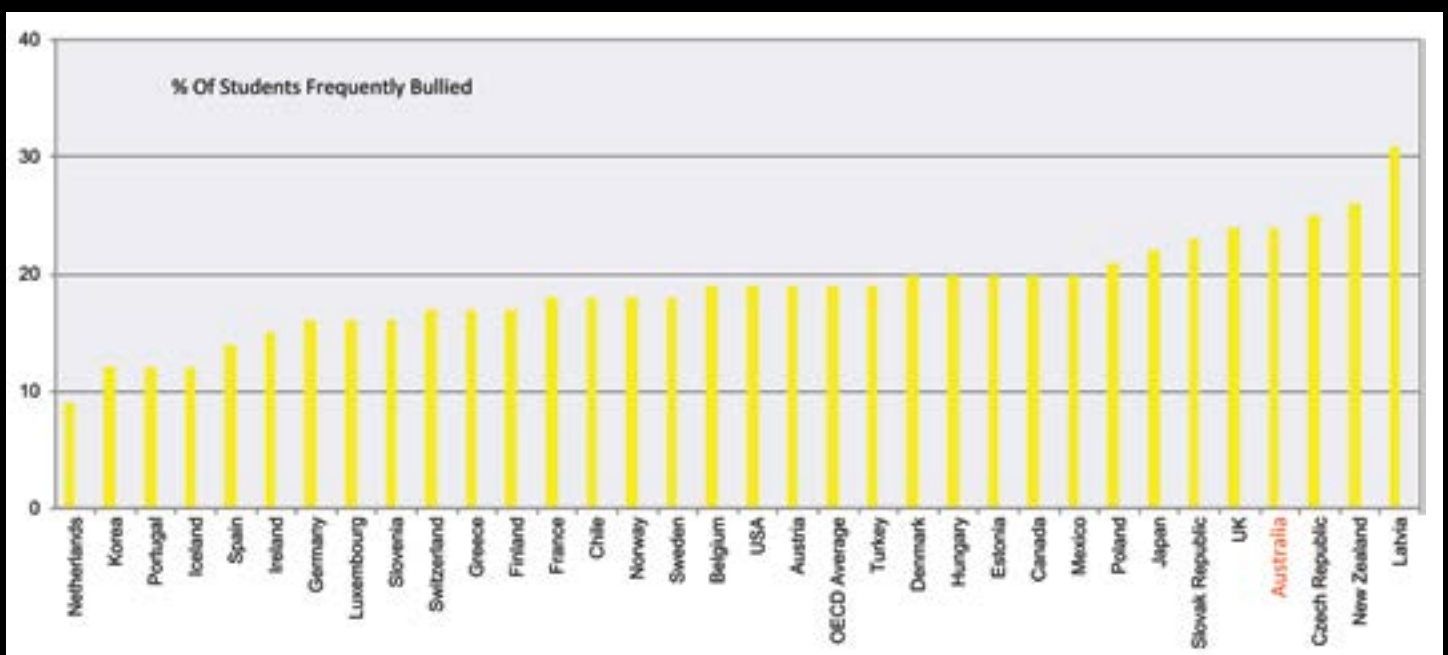
“9% of frequently bullied students reported that they had skipped school three or four times in the past two weeks.”

Long Term Consequences of Bullying

Bullying is an extreme form of stress for a child. Prolonged exposure to the stress hormone cortisol can alter parts of the brain architecture, such as the amygdala and hippocampus, which are critical for regulating emotions. These negative effects are more problematic for young people because the body's system for handling stress is particularly sensitive during this period of development.

Students who are frequently bullied tend to feel unaccepted and often forego making friends. On average:

- 42% of students who are frequently bullied feel like an outsider at school,
- 15% of students who are not bullied feel like an outsider.





Bullying can lead to depression, anxiety and sleep disorders.

About one quarter of frequently bullied children feel low satisfaction with life.

On average, across OECD countries, about 9% of frequently bullied students reported that they had skipped school three or four times in the past two weeks.

To Combat Bullying, Improve the School Climate

Educators can reduce the incidence of bullying by creating a climate of support and empathy both in and outside of the classroom. Schools with low incidence of physical and relational violence tend to have more students who are aware of schools rules, believe these rules are fair, and have positive relationships with their teachers.

Students feel more secure, are more engaged with school work and are less likely to engage in risky behaviours when in a structured and orderly environment.

On average, the proportion of frequently bullied students is about 6% higher in larger schools with poor discipline.

PISA data also shows that students are 12% more likely to be frequently bullied in schools where they perceive they are ridiculed or insulted by teachers.

These findings suggest that teachers might help limit bullying by communicating clearly to students that they will not tolerate any form of disrespectful behaviour and by acting as role models in the classroom.

Incorporating bullying prevention modules in initial teacher training can ensure that all teachers have basic preparation in detecting and reacting to different acts of bullying.

Another important strategy against bullying is building strong partnerships between schools and parents.

Summary

School leaders, teachers, parents and students need to work together to improve the school climate and reduce the incidence of bullying. Whole-of-school prevention and intervention strategies can make everyone responsible for supporting victims and confronting bullies. ■

Source: How much of a problem is bullying at school? PISA In Focus #74.