

Study: Bullying victimization among sexually and gender diverse youth in Canada

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In 2019, 7 in 10 youth aged 15 to 17 years reported that they had experienced bullying at some point in the preceding year. The risk of being teased, insulted or excluded was heightened among sexually and gender diverse youth, which includes those who are transgender, non-binary and/or have same-gender attraction, compared with cisgender youth attracted exclusively to a different gender.

According to data from the Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth from 2019, 77% of sexually and gender diverse youth had been the target of bullying in the previous year, a higher proportion than that of cisgender youth who are attracted exclusively to a different gender (69%).

The results come from a new study, [Bullying victimization among sexually and gender diverse youth in Canada](#), which sheds light on the prevalence and severity of self-reported experiences of bullying among youth who have same-gender attraction, as well as transgender and non-binary youth. The association between bullying, mental health and well-being, including suicidal ideation, was also studied. This is the first time that nationally representative data are available to examine bullying among sexually and gender diverse youth. These youth represented 18% of all youth aged 15 to 17 years in 2019.

Bullying was measured by asking respondents whether, in the past 12 months, they had experienced any of 10 different forms of bullying, ranging from being made fun of, to having one's property destroyed, to cyberbullying (such as hurtful information posted on the Internet).

Poor mental health reported by one-third of bullied sexually and gender diverse youth populations

Not only are sexually and gender diverse youth more likely to be bullied, their mental health is often worse than cisgender youth attracted exclusively to a different gender. After socio-demographic and socio-economic factors were taken into account (see Note to readers), sexually and gender diverse youth were twice as likely to describe their mental health as poor (33%) compared with other bullied youth populations (16%) and non-bullied sexually and gender diverse youth (16%). The likelihood of declaring poor mental health was lowest among non-bullied cisgender youth with exclusively different-gender attraction (6%).

Bullied youth also showed higher risk of reporting recent suicidal ideation; though, again, this was more common among sexually and gender diverse youth. In 2019, bullied youth with same-gender attraction or who were transgender or non-binary (27%) were twice as likely to consider taking their own life in the last year compared with other bullied youth (13%). Cisgender youth who were not bullied and who were exclusively attracted to a different gender were the least likely (5%) to have had suicidal thoughts in the last year.

Bullied youth were most likely to skip school, perhaps reflecting their poorer mental health or desire to avoid bullying incidents, or both. After socio-demographic and socio-economic factors were taken into account, the probability of skipping school at least three times in the past year was 20% among bullied sexually and gender diverse youth and 16% among their bullied cisgender, exclusively different-gender attracted counterparts. This compares with a 10% probability among sexually and gender diverse youth who had not experienced bullying and 9% among non-bullied cisgender youth with exclusively different-gender attraction.



Sexually and gender diverse youth experience a higher number of forms of bullying

The accumulation of stress and emotional health issues related to bullying are likely compounded if an individual is frequently bullied and bullied in many different ways. Overall, weekly or daily incidents of bullying were more often reported by sexually and gender diverse youth, with 10% reporting two or more incidents of bullying at least once a week compared with 6% of cisgender youth exclusively attracted to a different gender.

In addition, almost one in six (16%) sexually and gender diverse youth experienced 6 to 10 different forms of bullying in the past 12 months compared with 1 in 10 (10%) among other youth.

Note to readers

This study was funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

The study is based on the 2019 Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth (CHSCY). It is the first time that data are available to examine bullying among sexually and gender diverse youth using a nationally representative sample.

Data were collected directly from respondents from February 11, 2019, to August 2, 2019. The 2019 CHSCY covers the population aged 1 to 17 years as of January 31, 2019, living in the provinces and territories. For the study, the population of interest includes youth aged 15 to 17 years as these youth were asked about their sexual attraction preferences.

The CHSCY includes 10 items asking about experiences of bullying. The specific question is: Sometimes people tease, hurt or upset another person on purpose. During the past 12 months, how often did the following things happen to you?

- *Someone made fun of you, called you names or insulted you*
- *Someone spread rumours about you*
- *Someone threatened you with harm*
- *Someone pushed you, shoved you, tripped you or spit on you*
- *Someone tried to make you do things you did not want to do*
- *Someone excluded you from activities on purpose*
- *Someone destroyed your property on purpose*
- *Someone posted hurtful information about you on the Internet*
- *Someone threatened or insulted you through email, instant messaging, text messaging or an online game*
- *Someone purposefully excluded you from an online community*

Estimates on mental health, suicide ideation and truancy among youth are based on predicted probabilities from logistic regression. The regression adjusted for a range of socio-demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, community and household characteristics, and parental involvement (e.g., frequency youth discussed daily activities with parents).

Definitions

Sexually and gender diverse youth includes youth with at least some same-gender attraction (exclusive or equal attraction to both genders), transgender youth and non-binary youth.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5233](#).

The article entitled "[Bullying victimization among sexually and gender diverse youth in Canada](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).