

## Antisocial Behaviour and Bullying Among Students in the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, 2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS)

Antisocial or aggressive behavior, such as lying, stealing, setting fire, threatening to or actually hurting someone physically or psychologically, can harm victims as well as those who use these behaviours and their families and communities. (1) Risk factors for aggression among children include various individual (beliefs, lower-than-average intelligence), family (neglect, abuse, parents who use aggression), and environmental (live in an unsafe neighbourhood, aggressive friends) factors. (2)

One form of aggression is bullying, defined as “willful, repeated aggressive behavior with negative intent used by a child to maintain power over another child”. (3) Bullying can be physical (e.g. hitting, stealing), verbal (e.g. name-calling, threats), social (e.g. exclusion, gossiping), written (hurtful notes or signs), or electronic, also known as cyber-bullying: “the use of email, cell phones, text messages, Internet sites and chat rooms to physically threaten, verbally harass or socially exclude an individual or group”. (3) Dating aggression, sexual harassment, and ethnoculturally based bullying are also of concern. (4)

Children who show aggressive behaviours or bully others are at greater risk for mental health and substance use issues, (1) as well as continued aggression, bullying, and violence into adulthood. (1) (5) Those who cyberbully others may also be at greater risk for suicide ideation or attempts. (6) Victims of bullying or cyber-bullying are at greater risk for anxiety, depression, poor general and mental health, illicit drug use, tobacco use, self-harm (7), suicide ideation, and suicide attempt. (6) (7)

The purpose of this inFORM is to highlight findings on antisocial behavior and bullying from the 2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) within the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU).

### Methods & Data Notes

The OSDUHS is a population survey of Ontario students from grade 7 through grade 12, conducted every two years, that is distributed within publicly-funded schools within Ontario. (8) The survey is self-administered, anonymous, and considered representative of all Ontario students in both English and French language schools, within the Public and Catholic School Boards. (8) In 2016/17, the HKPRDHU purchased an over-sample of the OSDUHS in order to obtain estimates for youth residing within the HKPR District. In total, there were 1215 surveys completed for the 2016/2017 OSDUHS survey by students within the HKPR District; 585 by elementary-school students and 630 by high-school students. Male students accounted for 43.4% and female students accounted for 55.6% of respondents. Surveys were completed for students in grade 7 (n=232), grade 8 (352), and grades 9 – 12 (629)<sup>†</sup>. The median age of respondent was 14 years of age (mean: 14.1; standard deviation (SD): 1.72).

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<sup>†</sup>Two surveys did not report the grade of the student; summing the number of students by grade will not match the total sample size.

## Results

### Antisocial behaviour

- Most (95.8%, 95% confidence interval (CI): 91.0, 98.1) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students did not report engaging in more than 3 types of antisocial behaviour within the past 12-months.
- Among the most common antisocial behaviours among grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students were running away from home at least once (7.8%, 95% CI: 5.7, 10.6), carrying a weapon not for hunting purposes (6.4%\*, 95% CI: 4.3, 9.5), or damaging something on purpose that did not belong to them (4.8%\*, 95% CI: 2.6, 8.7). These estimates for HKPRDHU students are not significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students.
- One-in-twenty-five (4.0%\*, 95% CI: 2.67, 5.92) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported assaulting someone other than a sibling in the past 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).
- One-in-ten (10.4%\*, 95% CI: 7.4, 14.5) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported setting something on fire that they weren't supposed to in the past 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).
- One-in-nine (11.5%, 95% CI: 8.3, 15.9) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported being in a physical fight at school at least once in the past 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).

### Bullying others

- One-in-eight (12.0%, 95% CI: 8.9, 16.1) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported bullying other students at school since the beginning of the school year. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).
- The most commonly reported method of bullying other students was verbal attacks. One-in-nine (11.2%, 95% CI: 8.2, 15.2) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported bullying others this way since the beginning of the school year. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ). Bullying from methods such as physical, stealing, or damaged property cannot be released for the HKPRDHU.
- One-in-ten (10.1%\*, 95% CI: 6.9, 14.5) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported cyberbullying others in the past 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).

### Being bullied

- One-in-four (27.2%, 95% CI: 21.7, 33.5) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported being bullied at school since September. One-in-nine (11.3%\*, 95% CI: 7.5, 16.7) students reported being bullied daily to weekly. These estimates for HKPRDHU students are significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students (bullied at all: 21.0%, 95% CI: 19.2, 22.9,  $p < 0.05$ ; bullied daily to weekly: 6.7%, 95% CI: 5.9, 7.6,  $p < 0.05$ ).
- The most commonly reported method of being bullied was verbal attacks; nearly one-quarter (23.5%, 95% CI: 17.5, 30.8) of grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported being bullied in this way since the beginning of the school year. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly

different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ). Bullying from methods such as physical, or stealing or damaged property cannot be released for the HKPRDHU.

- One-in-five (20.4%, 95% CI: 16.9, 24.5) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported being cyberbullied (bullied electronically or over the Internet) in the past 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).
- One-in-twenty (5.7%\*, 95% CI: 3.5, 9.0) grade 7 – 12 HKPRDHU students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school at least once in the past 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## Public Health Messaging

Aggression among children and youth can be prevented by creating healthy relationships with them and building a structured and secure environment. Protective factors include various individual, family, and environmental factors such as empathy, high self-esteem, family stability, appropriate discipline, success in school, and a healthy relationship with a caring adult. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health provides the following tips: (2)

- Set clear expectations for behaviour
- Praise and reward positive social behaviours
- Identify stresses or triggers for aggressive behaviour and work to eliminate them or reduce their impact
- Listen, show concern when appropriate, and be understanding
- Manage problems as they arise, including small ones before they turn bigger
- Help them develop skills and strategies to manage their emotions

Bullying can have serious long-term impacts on children who are bullied or who bully others, and it is important to address as soon as it is identified. (9) The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends the following for parents of children: (10)

- Speak with your child so they know the difference between friendly behaviour and bullying
- Teach them to not be a bystander and to stand up for and help anyone being bullied, or to find an adult to help
- Let any child being bullied or that is bullying others know that they are not alone, and you are there to help
- Involve teachers, school authorities, or relevant community members to address bullying
- Provide effective learning consequences for children who bully
- Speak with a health professional if your child is experiencing any mental health issues

It is also important to involve the child's teacher, principal or vice-principal, or any relevant community member (e.g. coach, instructor). (9) (10) In Ontario, all schools and boards are required to have policies to prevent and address bullying, bullying prevention and intervention plans, and policies for progressive discipline and equity and inclusion education, and principals are required to investigate any known incidences of bullying and report it to the relevant parents. By addressing aggressive behaviour and

promoting healthy relationships, bullying and antisocial behaviour can be prevented and children can lead safer and healthier lives. (2) (9)

## References

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11. **Ministry of Education, Ontario.** Safe Schools: What do I need to know? [Online] May 22, 2013. [Cited: January 9, 2020.] <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/need.html>.

## Limitations

Only students attending a school in the Catholic or Public-School system were including in the sampling for the OSDUHS. Students attending private schools, students that are home-schooled, and school-aged children that are not attending school (dropped out) were not eligible to participate in the survey.

Although individual school boards agreed to allow the OSDUHS to be administered in their schools, the decision for a school to participate or not was at the discretion of the school's Principal, which may lead to over- or under-reporting for students in certain areas within the HKPRDHU's region.

All responses provided by the students are self-reported may be subject to some amount of bias—potentially more so with questions considered to be sensitive—however, it is not possible to confirm or refute the responses provided. Children absent on the day the survey was administered or children who declined to participate in the survey may also contribute to potential bias in the data, if these children systematically differed from those who participated.

## Definition of Terms

**Estimate** – The estimate is the per cent or value observed/reported in the sample that is generalized to the broader population with similar characteristics (e.g., grade 7 – 12 students).

**95% confidence interval (95% CI)** – Confidence intervals (CIs) are the range of variability around an estimate. The 95% CI displays the range surrounding an estimate in which there is a 95% probability that the population value occurs.

**Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ )** – When estimates are said to be significantly different (or statistically significant;  $p < 0.05$ ), this indicates that the differences observed are not likely due to chance alone. Additional factors may be present (or absent) to a greater degree in one or more of the groups being compared.

**Mean** – The mean (or average) is calculated by adding the observed values together and dividing by the number of observations.

**Standard Deviation (SD)** – The standard deviation (SD) indicates how much the observed values vary from the mean. A lower SD indicates that more of the observed values are closer to the mean (higher precision), whereas a higher SD would indicate that the observed values are spread out more widely around the mean (lower precision).

**Coefficient of Variation (CV)** – The coefficient of variation is the ratio of the standard deviation to the estimate, displayed as a percentage. The CV indicates the size of the standard deviation compared to the estimate. As the variability around an estimate increases so too does the CV. For example, a CV of 33% indicates that the SD is 33% or one-third the size of the estimate.

**Sample-size** – The sample-size is the number of responses or individuals observed. As the size of a sample increases the SD decreases, and the ability to detect differences (power) increases.

\* – A single asterisk (\*) indicates that the reported estimate has a higher degree of variability and should be interpreted with caution. When a single asterisk (\*) is used, the CV for the estimate is within the range of 16.6% – 33.3%.

\*\* – A double asterisk (\*\*) indicates that an estimate has been suppressed. Data are suppressed when the CV or an estimate is equal to or greater than 33.3%. Additionally, values have been suppressed when the reported sample-size (the number of people responding to a question) is less than 30.



Table. 1 Antisocial Behaviour Determinants and Risk Factors, HKPRDHU vs. Ontario

Topic	Response	HKPRDHU	Ontario	Difference
ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	Did not engage in antisocial behaviour in the past 12 months	95.9 (91.2-98.1)	93.1 (91.9-94.2)	
	Engaged in antisocial behaviour in the past 12 months	** (1.9-8.8)	6.9 (5.8-8.1)	
RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME	Did it at least once in the past 12 months	7.8 (5.7-10.6)	11.0 (9.4-12.8)	↓
	Not done it	92.2 (89.4-94.3)	89.0 (87.2-90.6)	↑
CARRIED A WEAPON	Did it at least once in the past 12 months	6.4 * (4.3-9.5)	5.6 (4.2-7.5)	
	Not done it	93.6 (90.5-95.7)	94.4 (92.5-95.8)	
VANDALISM	Did it at least once in the past 12 months	4.8 * (2.6-8.7)	7.8 (6.7-9.2)	
	Not done it	95.2 (91.3-97.4)	92.2 (90.8-93.3)	
ASSAULTED SOMEONE	Assaulted someone at least once in past 12 months	4.0 * (2.7-5.9)	5.4 (4.1-7.0)	
	Did not assault someone at least once in past 12 months	96.0 (94.1-97.3)	94.6 (93.0-95.9)	
FIRE SETTING	Did it at least once in the past 12 months	10.4 * (7.4-14.5)	8.1 (7.0-9.4)	
	Not done it	89.6 (85.5-92.6)	91.9 (90.6-93.0)	
PHYSICAL FIGHT AT SCHOOL	At least once in past 12 months	11.5 (8.3-15.9)	11.4 (9.7-13.3)	
	Not at least once in past 12 months	88.5 (84.1-91.7)	88.6 (86.7-90.3)	
BULLY OTHERS YES OR NO	Has bullied other students at school since September	12.0 (8.9-16.1)	11.1 (10.0-12.4)	
	Did not bully other students at school since September	88.0 (83.9-91.1)	88.9 (87.6-90.0)	
BULLY OTHERS METHOD	Physical attacks	** (0.0-0.7)	1.2 * (0.8-1.9)	↓
	Verbal attacks	11.2 (8.2-15.1)	9.5 (8.5-10.5)	
	Stole or damaged their things	** (0.1-4.7)	** (0.2-1.2)	
CYBERBULLY OTHERS	Cyberbullied others in past 12 months	10.1 * (6.9-14.5)	9.7 (8.3-11.3)	
	Did not cyberbully in past 12 months	89.9 (85.5-93.1)	90.3 (88.7-91.7)	
BULLIED YES OR NO	Has been bullied at school since September	27.2 (21.7-33.4)	21.0 (19.2-22.9)	↑
	Was not bullied at school since September	72.8 (66.6-78.3)	79.0 (77.1-80.8)	
BULLIED METHOD	Physical attacks	2.2 * (1.3-3.9)	2.0 (1.5-2.6)	
	Verbal attacks	23.5 (17.5-30.8)	17.3 (15.4-19.4)	
	Stole or damaged your things	** (0.4-5.6)	1.7 (1.2-2.3)	
CYBERBULLIED	Cyberbullied in past 12 months	20.4 (16.9-24.5)	20.5 (18.8-22.3)	
	Was not cyberbullied in past 12 months	79.6 (75.5-83.1)	79.5 (77.7-81.2)	
THREATENED WITH A WEAPON AT SCHOOL	At least once in past 12 months	5.7 * (3.5-9.0)	5.5 (4.5-6.6)	
	Not at least once in past 12 months	94.3 (91.0-96.5)	94.5 (93.4-95.5)	

↑ Indicates a significantly higher estimate compared to the rest of Ontario; ↓ Indicates a significantly lower estimate compared to the rest of Ontario.