Bullying among New Zealand youth

Main research findings

Students were more than twice as likely to engage in bullying than averages reported in other international studies. Being a victim of bullying also appears to be higher relative to the international data.

Bullying by text message was the most popular means, followed by traditional bullying inside the school. Being a victim of bullying occurred most often in school, followed by texting.

Overall, traditional bullying was more common in males than females, while being a victim of bullying was most common in school for males. Rates of bullying via texting or the internet was not found to differ between males and females.

Overall, there were no differences between bullying and being a victim of bullying based on ethnicity. However, when examining the different types of bullying, Māori individuals reported being a bully inside school, outside school, and through texting more than the other ethnic groups.

In terms of being a victim of bullying, Māori youth reported texting, as the greatest source of bullying compared to the other ethnic groups.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

High rates of bullying and victimisation compared to the international averages should be of concern and draw attention to the need for intervention programmes or policies in the educational system, which address all forms of bullying.

Although bullying appears to be a problem for all, Māori youth are using specific types of bullying more often than other groups as well as being a victim of text-based bullying more often than other groups.

As a bi-cultural and multicultural nation with higher than average levels of endorsement of diversity among New Zealanders, the observed differences between ethnic groups must exist for some other reason, such as a perceived discrepancy in privilege between different ethnic groups.

Intervention programmes may need to be adapted to cater specifically to the needs of Māori students such that this problematic behaviour can be stopped.