Student Bullying and Harassment in California

What It Is
On kidsdata.org, measures of bullying and harassment at school come from:

- Student reports of being bullied or harassed on school property in the previous 12 months for any reason or for a bias-related reason
- Student reports on the number of times in the previous year they were bullied or harassed at school on the basis of a disability, their gender, their race/ethnicity or national origin, their religion, or sexual orientation
- Student reports on the number of times in the previous year they were cyberbullied by other students
- School staff reports of the extent to which bullying or harassment among students is a problem at their school

Why This Topic Is Important
Bullying is considered a significant public health problem. National estimates indicate that between 20 and 30 percent of children and youth are bullied at school each year, with certain vulnerable groups at even higher risk, including students with disabilities and LGBTQ youth. This aggressive behavior, which may be physical, verbal, or social—and may occur in person or online—can have long-term harmful effects. In addition to the risk of physical injury, victims of bullying are at risk for depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, physical health problems, substance abuse into adulthood, low academic achievement, and poor social and school adjustment.

Any involvement in bullying, whether as a bully, victim, or witness, is associated with negative outcomes. Youth who bully others are more likely to experience depression and engage in delinquent and suicidal behavior than non-bullies, and those who report being both a bully and a victim are at even higher risk for suicidal behavior. Further, youth who only witness bullying are more likely to report feelings of helplessness and other negative feelings than those who have not witnessed bullying. Even the fear of being bullied or harassed may disrupt a child’s ability to excel in school and life.

How Children Are Faring
According to a 2017-2019 survey of California students, more than one in four youth in grades 7, 9, and 11 had been bullied or harassed at school in the previous year, and more than one
sexual orientation and number of occasions (e.g., in 2017-2019, 17.7% of gay, 
lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in 
California had been bullied/harassed four or more times in the previous year because 
of sexual orientation). 
Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) & Biennial State CHKS. 

Students Who Were Bullied or Harassed Four or More Times in the 
Previous Year on the Basis of Race/Ethnicity or National Origin: 2017- 
2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>2.5%</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>7.5%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>12.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **African American/Black**
- **American Indian/Alaska Native**
- **Asian**
- **Hispanic/Latino**
- **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander**
- **White**
- **Multiracial**

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and 
non-traditional programs who were bullied or harassed at school in the previous year 
on the basis of their race/ethnicity or national origin, by race/ethnicity and number of 
occasions (e.g., in 2017-2019, 3.1% of Hispanic/Latino students in grades 7, 9, 11, 
and non-traditional programs in California had been bullied/harassed four or more 
times in the previous year because of their race/ethnicity or national origin). 
Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) & Biennial State CHKS. 

When students are bullied or harassed at 
school, it is most often for reasons of bias 
related to disabilities, gender, race/ethnicity or 
national origin, religion, or sexual orientation. 
In 2017-2019, an estimated 26% of California 
7th graders, 23% of 9th graders, 22% of 11th 
graders, and 13% of non-traditional students 
had been bullied or harassed in the previous 
year for bias-related reasons. The prevalence of 
bias-related bullying and harassment varies 
widely depending on region, reason for bias, 
and group affected. For example, Asian youth 
 statewide were more than twice as likely 
to have been bullied or harassed for reasons 
related to their race/ethnicity or national origin 
when compared with their Hispanic/Latino 
counterparts, according to 2017-2019 
estimates. Among California youth identifying 
as gay, lesbian, and bisexual, almost half 
(44%) had been bullied or harassed because 
they were, or were thought to be, gay or 
lesbian, with county-level percentages ranging 
from 17% to more than 60% across regions 
with data.

**View references for this text and additional research on this topic:**