



**Bullying in Minnesota Schools:
An analysis of the Minnesota Student Survey, 2010
Brief: Methodology**

In 2010, the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) included two questions regarding relational bullying and over 130,000 sixth-, ninth- and twelfth-grade students responded to those questions. The responses were analyzed in relation to other questions regarding risk and protective factors, including experiences of victimization across environments, school factors, community connections and interpersonal relationships, family characteristics and environment, and personal characteristics. This analysis is organized into separate briefs for each category, and includes a literature review, the MSS data, as well as recommendations for bullying prevention and intervention in schools.

Throughout the reports in this series, several findings emerged consistently.

- Students regularly involved in bullying incidents, whether victim, bully or bully/victim (*bullying-involved students*), have high rates of associated experiences, most of them negative.
- The data in these reports indicate that those classified as bullies have been victims of maltreatment themselves, in many cases.
- Bully/victims stand alone as the most at-risk group in every domain.
- Nearly half of all students responding had *no* involvement with bullying as a victim or a bully. Across analyses, the “never involved” group had the lowest incidence of risk factors and the highest frequency of protective factors.

Methods

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is administered every three years to students in sixth, ninth and twelfth grades. Since the first administration in 1989 approximately 90 percent of Minnesota schools have consistently participated in the survey. While a set number of questions remains constant in this survey, the survey is reviewed each administration to determine if changes are necessary due to constituent input and/or federal and state requirements.

The survey has two instruments: one for sixth-grade students and one for ninth- and twelfth-grade students. The ninth- and twelfth-grade survey instrument, or Secondary Survey, contains survey questions regarding students’ activities, opinions, behaviors and experiences. This includes questions on substance use, school climate, violence and safety, physical activity and nutrition, out-of-school activities, and connections with school and family. The sixth-grade survey instrument, or Primary Survey, includes many of the same questions as the Secondary Survey, but questions related to sexual activity and some substance use questions have been removed.

This report focuses on data collected during the 2010 administration of the MSS. More than 300 school districts participated in the Minnesota Student Survey representing approximately 88 percent of all Minnesota districts. The numbers of students per grade are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Number of Participants by Grade

Grade	2010
6 th	46,787
9 th	47,387
12 th	36,734
TOTAL	130,908

The student categories presented in this report are based on the response patterns to the following questions:

- *During the last 30 days, how often has another student or group of students made fun of or teased you in a hurtful way, or excluded you from friends or activities?*
- *During the last 30 days, how often have you, on your own or as part of a group, made fun of or teased another student in a hurtful way or excluded another student in from friends or activities?*

Both questions had the response options of “never”, “once or twice”, “about once a week”, “several times a week” or “every day”. A calculated response option for both questions was created that included student responses of “about once a week”, “several times a week”, and “every day”. This category was renamed “weekly or more”.

Of those students participating, 42.9 percent reported no involvement in bullying. Thirty percent (30.7%) said they had made fun of, teased, or excluded others once or twice in the last month, and 27.2% said they had experienced those things once or twice in the past month, which does not constitute bullying or victimization at this rate.¹

Of those remaining, 12.6 percent were classified as *victims* (were made fun of, teased in a hurtful way, or excluded from friends or activities by others with a frequency of weekly or more), 9.3 percent were classified as *bullies* (engaged in the actions listed above toward victims with a frequency of weekly or more), and 3.1 percent were *bully/victims* (bullied and victimized at least weekly).

Data presented in this report derives from the comparison survey response of the victims, bullies, bully/victims, and students who were never bullied or participated in bullying behaviors. Each student group (victims, bullies, bully/victims and never involved) were compared through a cross-tabulation analysis. The number of students in each group is presented in the Table 2.

¹ Definitions of bullying vary, but there are common elements, including an imbalance of power, intent to cause harm and repetition. According to the U.S. Government website on bullying prevention, StopBullying.gov, “incidents of bullying happen to the same the person over and over by the same person or group of people.” For more information, go to <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov>.

Table 2. Students Involved or Never Involved in Bullying

	Victims	Bullies	Bully/Victims	Never Involved
Number	16,514	11,948	4,011	56,282
% of total sample	12.6%	9.3%	3.1%	42.9%

Definitions

Throughout this report, certain terms will be repeated in reference to the various student groups. The following is the definitions of each student group and the associated terms.

Victim: A victim is a student who reported that in the previous 30 days he/she had been made fun of or teased in a hurtful way, or been excluded from friends or activities by a student or group of students about once a week, several times a week or every day.

Bully (noun): A bully is a student who reported that in the previous 30 days he/she had made fun of or teased someone in a hurtful way, or excluded another student from friends or activities on their own or with a group of students about once a week, several times a week or every day.

Bully/Victim: A bully/victim is a student who reported that in the previous 30 days he/she had been made fun of or teased in a hurtful way, or excluded from friends or activities by a student or group of students about once a week, several times a week or every day *and* that in the previous 30 days they had made fun of or teased someone in a hurtful way, or excluded another student from friends or activities on their own or with a group of students about once a week, several times a week or every day

Never Involved: A student who has never been a bully or victimized by bullying is a student who has reported that in the previous 30 days he/she had never been made fun of or teased in a hurtful way, or been excluded from friends or activities by a student or group of students *and* that in the previous 30 days had never made fun of or teased others in a hurtful way, or excluded another student from friends or activities on their own or with a group of students.

Common Terms and Phrases

The report also uses several key terms and phrases to describe a student’s involvement in bullying or their respective group. The following is a list of those common phrases and terms.

To bully: Bullying is making fun of, teasing or excluding another student from friends or activities.

To be bullied: Being bullied is being made fun of, teased or excluded from friends or activities by another student or group of students.

Regularly involved in a bullying incident (bullying-involved students): A student regularly involved in a bullying incident is a student who has reported being bullied weekly or more frequently or who has reported bullying others weekly or more frequently (response categories of about once a week, several times a week, or every day), or has both bullied or been bullied weekly or more frequently.

Minnesota Student Survey Data

The Minnesota Student Survey can be accessed on-line at the following websites:

Minnesota Department of Education	www.education.state.mn.us
Minnesota Department of Health	www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/
Minnesota Department of Human Services	www.dhs.state.mn.us
Minnesota Department of Public Safety	www.ojp.state.mn.us

These sites include the 2010 Trend Report, copies of the survey questions, state data tables and other analyses of the data. School districts may access their district-level data tables at the Safe and Healthy Minnesota Students (SAHMS) portal at www.education.state.mn.us. Select *Data*, *Data Submissions*, and scroll down to *SAHMS Portal*.

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