

New report gives insight into bullying in New Zealand

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In the first New Zealand study of its kind, a Victoria University researcher has found that 94 per cent of the school staff she surveyed have seen bullying in their school.

Dr Vanessa Green, Head of Victoria's School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, surveyed 860 teachers and senior staff from primary, intermediate and [secondary schools](#) around New Zealand about their [experiences](#) with, perceptions of, and attitudes towards [bullying](#).

"The majority of teachers and senior school management personnel are concerned, and there is a general feeling that we need to do something about it," says Dr Green.

Nearly half of those who took part in the survey said instances of verbal bullying were being brought to their attention weekly.

Other findings were that 68 per cent of respondents believe bullying begins between the preschool years and the ages of seven or eight, while just under half the respondents say that cyberbullying is mainly conducted by 11 to 14 year olds.

Over half of those who took part say girls are carrying out most of the cyberbullying.

Dr Green says the study shows that bullying is a national problem that must be addressed.

"The internet has made bullying a more complex issue than it was 20 years ago and, as a result, it requires a more sophisticated response. The old methods may not be as effective as they were. We need to be thinking in a more creative way about how to address bullying," she says.

Respondents were asked who they believed should be involved in anti-bullying strategies, with most agreeing that the entire school and community—school staff, parents and wh?nau—should be included.

"There is tension around who is responsible for managing and preventing bullying, especially cyberbullying, because a lot of it occurs outside of the home," says Dr Green.

She believes bullying has become so common that it is almost seen as a normal part of growing up.

"But it doesn't have to be that way. We can change [attitudes](#)."

A good place for schools to start, says Dr Green, is to put a greater emphasis on professional development in the area of bullying prevention.

A common theme among respondents was a feeling of disconnect between schools and families about how bullying is being dealt with.

Dr Green says this raises the issue that misunderstandings may affect how students and parents approach schools about bullying, and the school's response.

Many of those who took part in the study expressed frustration and confusion about who is responsible for bullying.

"I think society, in general, has high and possibly unrealistic expectations

that it is up to schools to recognise and deal with the issue."

Dr Green says although programmes to deal with bullying are widely available, they are being used at less than a third of the schools represented in the survey.

"This suggests that the programmes are not giving school staff the tools they need to combat bullying.

"Just under half of all respondents had received training on how to deal with bullying, and most of that training was quite a few years ago. So it's not surprising that many teachers, principals and schools don't know what to do about the issue."

Key findings

- 47% of respondents indicated that, in the previous month, verbal bullying had been brought to their attention at least once a week
- 68% of respondents believe that bullying begins between preschool and Year 4 (7–8 years, approx.)
- 57% of respondents indicated that they believe cyberbullying is mainly conducted by [girls](#)
- 46% of respondents believe that cyberbullying is mainly conducted by people between the ages of 11–14 years old
- 61% of [respondents](#) agree that teachers should help students deal with [cyberbullying](#) outside of the [school](#)

Provided by Victoria University

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