

Parents support anti-bullying policies that protect overweight students

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Parents, both with and without overweight children, are concerned about weight-based bullying and are in favor of a range of policy initiatives to address the issue, according to two new studies published this month by researchers at the Yale Rudd Center.

Researchers surveyed 918 American [parents](#) with children ages 2-18

years. The first study, published in *Childhood Obesity*, examined parental perceptions and concerns about weight-based victimization in youth. The second study, published in the *International Journal of Obesity*, examined parental support for policy measures and school-based efforts to address weight-based victimization of overweight youth.

In the first study, researchers found that 53% of parents perceived that the most common reason youth are bullied is because they are overweight. Parents' views remained the same regardless of their own weight or their child's weight. Fewer than 13% believed that race, sexual orientation, or disability were the most common reasons for youth being bullied. In addition, parents both with and without [overweight children](#) expressed similar levels of concern about the health consequences of weight-based [bullying](#) for youth.

Research findings from the second study showed that although most parents perceived overweight youth to be vulnerable to weight-based bullying at school, less than half of the parents surveyed believed schools are adequately prepared to deal with the issue. At least 80% of parents agreed that schools should implement anti-bullying policies that include specific protections for students who are [overweight](#) or obese, increase resources available to youth who experience weight-based victimization at school, and promote awareness about this problem. Support was also strong for broader policy measures, with more than two-thirds of parents agreeing that state anti-bullying laws should include specific protections against weight-related bullying.

"These studies highlight how concerned families are about weight-based bullying, and that there is substantial support among parents for a range of actions to address this problem more effectively at both the school and state level," said Rebecca Puhl, lead author of both studies and deputy director at the Rudd Center.

The authors assert that this evidence can be used by schools and concerned parents to increase public awareness, support advocacy efforts, and inform policy makers about weight-based bullying and the need for greater protection of [youth](#) who are vulnerable to this form of bullying.

Provided by Yale University

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