

Anti-bullying policy must focus on all of society

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Policy to reduce bullying in the schoolyard needs to span all levels of society, say researchers from the University of Warwick, who warn that socioeconomic status is not a reliable indicator of whether a child is likely to become a bully.

Up to one third of children are involved in bullying, and a growing body of evidence has shown that bullying is a significant public health concern, which can cause long lasting health and [social problems](#).

The new review, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, advises that [policy makers](#) should be wary of assuming that bullies are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

In analysing 28 studies that reported an association between socioeconomic status and bullying, and adjusting for bias, the review showed that bullies were not more likely to come from low [socioeconomic backgrounds](#), and were only marginally less likely to come from the highest socioeconomic levels (2% less likely).

Professor Dieter Wolke said, "We can see that bullies come from all social backgrounds and bullies are found in all neighbourhoods. Some have previously suggested that bullies may be often operating in socially deprived areas – this is not the case!"

The likelihood of being a victim, or both a [bully](#) and victim, was seen to be slightly higher within lower socio economic classes.

Professor Wolke explained, "Bullying is about gaining access to resources and can be used to achieve elevated status within social groups. They are often the ring leaders that are not always detected by teachers .

Bullies are considered to reap social benefits from their actions due to the hierarchical nature of the schoolyard, where the most adept bullies become popular figures amongst their peers.

Neil Tippett, lead author of the review, added, "This hierarchy is familiar to us all from our own school days. In my view, so long as the rewards exist for bullies in the form of social status, it is difficult to

make bullies to change their behaviours as there is little incentive for them to do so."

"We need to think of ways to channel the abilities of bullies into prosocial activities where they can use their popularity and leadership qualities to benefit themselves and others "

This is the first systematic review and meta-analysis to explore the association between [socioeconomic status](#) and involvement in childhood bullying.

More information: Paper: [ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/ ... 105/AJPH.2014.301960](http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.1136/ajph.2014.301960)

Provided by University of Warwick

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