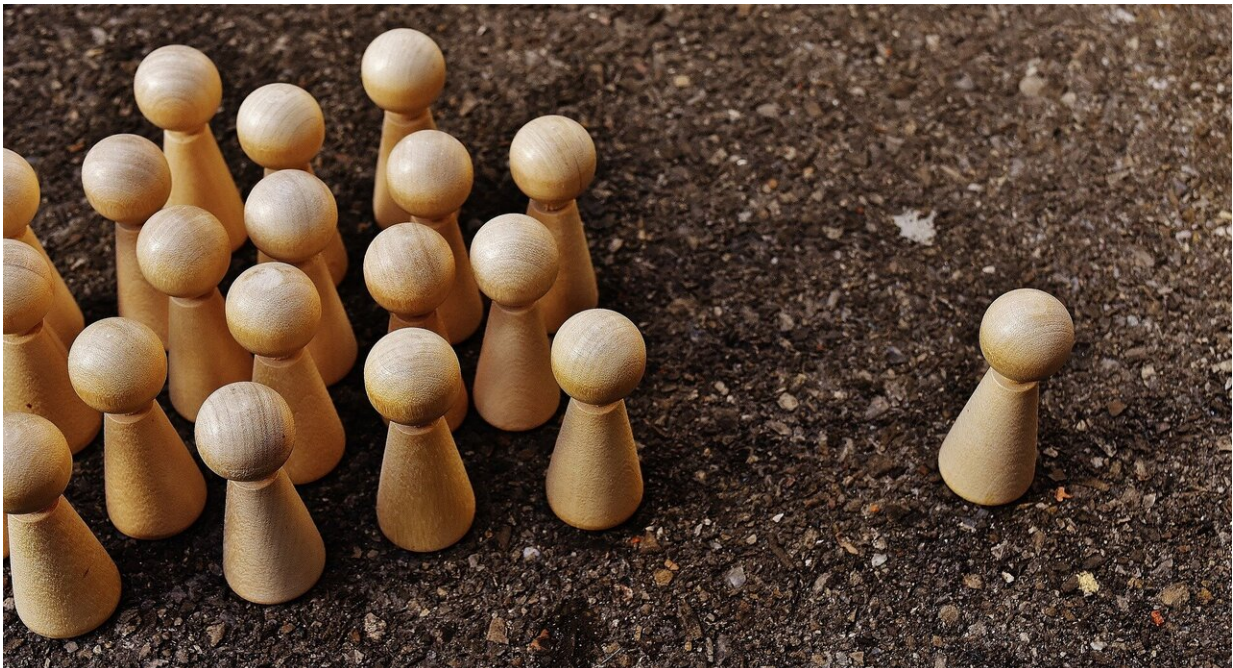


# Boys who are bullied online may have more risky sex

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A collaboration of researchers at Louisiana State University, University of Missouri, and University of Tennessee found that peer victimization is associated with adverse psychological and behavioral problems, including depression and risky health behaviors such as substance use and unprotected sex with multiple partners. In 2015, approximately one-third of high school students in the US reported having sex recently. Of

these, 43 percent had not used a condom, 21 percent had drunk alcohol or used drugs before sexual intercourse, and 14 percent had not used any contraception.

Recent research suggests that [adolescent boys](#) who are cyberbullied pursue risky sexual behaviors more frequently than girls who are cyberbullied. Results may reflect a culture of toxic masculinity and highlight the need to pay special attention to male victims, who may be reluctant to self-identify, and therefore, at greater risk of negative health outcomes.

The study, "Peer victimization, depression and sexual risk behaviors among high school youth in the United States: a gender-based approach," by Youn Kyoung Kim, Mansoo Yu, Courtney Cronley and Miyoun Yang has been published in the International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health. The authors examined gender differences in the relationships between four types of peer victimization (school bullying, cyberbullying, physical dating violence, and sexual dating violence), depression, and risky sexual behaviors among US high school students.

The researchers analyzed the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior System Survey, a nationally representative survey of US high school students containing data from 5,288 individuals who reported having engaged in [sexual intercourse](#). The results show that all types of [peer victimization](#) are related to symptoms of depression for both females and males, and physical and sexual dating violence are associated with increased risky sexual behaviors. However, school bullying does not predict risky sexual behaviors. Among males, cyberbullying predicts increased [risky sexual behaviors](#) and the relationship is greater when a boy is depressed.

"It is critical to create safe and private spaces for boys to share their experiences, and we hope that this research will encourage schools to consider efforts to destigmatize victimization through peer mentorship

and open communication," said Youn Kyoung Kim.

**More information:** Youn Kyoung Kim et al. Peer victimization, depression, and sexual risk behaviors among high school youth in the United States: a gender-based approach, *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.1515/ijamh-2019-0139](https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2019-0139)

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