



Young People and Violence

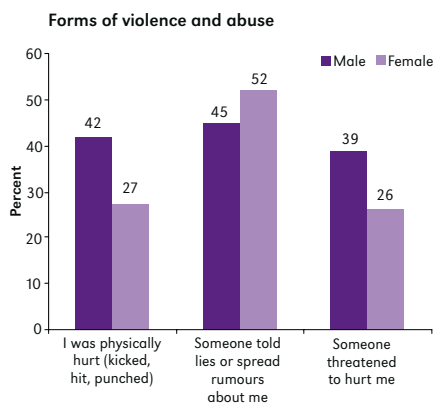
This fact sheet presents key findings on the incidence and effects of violence among young people in New Zealand from the Youth'07 report *Young People and Violence*. The results are drawn from Youth'07, the national survey of the health and wellbeing of 9,107 secondary school students from throughout New Zealand in 2007. Some comparisons are made with the previous survey conducted in 2001.

The results show that most students attending secondary schools in New Zealand are not involved in violent behaviour. Furthermore, many violent behaviours have decreased since 2001. Most young people are happy, involved in their communities and have caring relationships.

However, for considerable numbers of young people, being victims of violence is a part of their life, and this has serious consequences for their physical and mental health. Young people who are victims of violence at home, at school or in the community, are much more likely to be involved in further violence, both as victims and as instigators. Students who experience violence in their lives are much more likely to show signs of depression, and much more likely to attempt suicide than students who have not been the victims of violence.

Assaults: being hit or physically harmed

- 48% of male students and 33% of females reported that they had been deliberately hit or physically harmed within the last 12 months.
- For the students who had been hit or harmed, some of the incidents were reported as minor, but 24% reported that the violence had been pretty bad, really bad or terrible.



Bullying

Bullying is a common experience for many young people. Students reported various forms of bullying, including: people spreading lies and false rumours about them (48%); making sexual jokes, comments or gestures (38%); using hurtful names (41%); or threatening physical violence (33%).

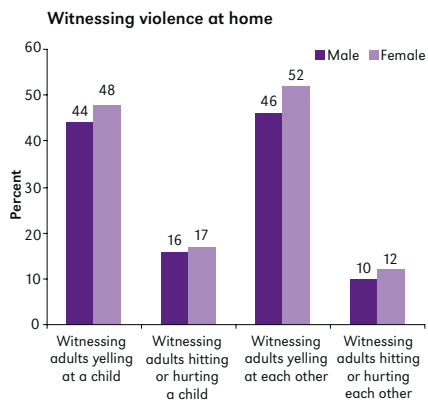
Of the students who were bullied in all these forms 32% reported that it was pretty bad, really bad or terrible. 57% said that they did not know why they were picked on; 5% said it was because of their body shape; 13% because they were smaller than other people; 24% because of their ethnic group or culture; and 8% because people thought they were gay.

Some students were victims of regular ongoing bullying at school: 6% of students reported they were bullied at school one or more times every week. Of these 51% reported that the bullying was pretty bad, really bad or terrible.

Violence in the home

Some homes are violent places. 12% of students reported that they had been physically hurt at home in the previous 12 months. 10% of students reported seeing adults physically hurting each other, and 17% reported seeing an adult hitting a child in their home.

Students were particularly concerned by witnessing violence between adults in their home. Of the students who witnessed this, 48% described it as pretty bad, really bad or terrible. The proportion of students who reported witnessing adults physically hitting or hurting each other increased from 6% in 2001 to 10% in 2007.



Violence and mental health

Does violence impact on the mental health of those who suffer it or who witness it? The survey results cannot determine that violence causes mental health problems, but they certainly show a strong association. Students who were bullied regularly (one or more times every week) and those who witnessed violence in their home were **much more likely to show signs of depression, and much more likely to attempt suicide** than students who had not been bullied or witnessed violence in their home.

The figures are striking. Of students who had **not** experienced or witnessed violence in their home, 6% of males and 11% of females showed significant symptoms of depression, but among students who **had** experienced or witnessed violence in their home these figures were more than twice as high: 13% of males and 26% of females showed significant symptoms of depression.

Similarly, of students who had **not** experienced or witnessed violence in their home, 2% of males and 5% of females had attempted suicide, but among students who **had** experienced or witnessed violence in their home these figures were more than twice as high: 7% of males and 13% of females had attempted suicide.

The association is even greater with students who had been bullied weekly. Among students who had **not** been bullied weekly, 6% of males and 13% of females showed significant symptoms of depression, and 3% of males and 6% of females had attempted suicide; but among students who **had** been bullied weekly these rates were over three times higher: 21% of males and 52% of females showed significant symptoms of depression, and 9% of males and 22% of females had attempted suicide.

Reference: Clark, T.C., Robinson, E., Crengle, S., Grant, S., Galbreath, R.A., & Sykora, J. (2009). *Youth'07 The Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Students in New Zealand: Young people and violence*. Auckland: The University of Auckland. Available at: www.youth2000.ac.nz

For more information go to publications at www.youth2000.ac.nz

For support: www.nzviolenceprevention.org.nz

Violence against others

41% of males and 27% of female students had hit or physically harmed someone else, and 26% of males and 12% of females had been in a serious physical fight. 9% of males and 3% of females had carried a weapon at least once in the past 12 months, and 4% of males and 1% of females had attacked someone using a weapon.

Students who had themselves been the victims of violence were much more likely to also be violent toward others.

Risk factors for violence

- Students from communities with greater levels of deprivation (lower socioeconomic status) are more likely to be exposed to, and to participate in, various types of violence.
- There is a strong association between high alcohol consumption and violence. This is particularly noticeable among students who are binge drinkers (5 or more drinks within one 4 hour drinking session).

Protective factors associated with less violence

- Students who had good relationships with their parents, teachers and friends were less likely to have been bullied or physically harmed.

Reductions in Violent Behaviours since 2001

- The proportion of students who reported having been hit or harmed in the previous 12 months decreased from 45% in 2001 to 41% in 2007.
- The proportion of students reporting breaking into someone's home in the last year to steal decreased from 5% in 2001 to 3% in 2007.
- The proportion of students reporting tagging decreased from 14% in 2001 to 10% in 2007.
- The proportion of students reporting unwanted sexual experiences decreased from 18% in 2001, to 12% in 2007.

