

## Bullying among Post-Primary School Children by Ethnic Status in Ireland

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### INTRODUCTION

Bullying is defined as repeated negative behaviour with the intent to cause harm, within the context of an unequal power relationship.<sup>1</sup> The associated detrimental health effects on the victim and the bully are well documented; however the effects on those who witness bullying are less established. There is growing recognition of the role played by those who witness bullying.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore; ethnicity has been suggested as being an important factor that may contribute towards bullying and victimisation.<sup>3</sup> Immigrant children may be at an increased risk of bullying and victimisation, however research in the area is limited and contradictory.<sup>4</sup> Even less is known in relation to witnessing bullying and ethnic status.

### OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study was to compare bullying behaviours among post-primary school children in Ireland by ethnic status using data collected as part of the 2010 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey.

### METHODOLOGY

Data were utilised from 9,290 post-primary school children who took part in the 2010 Irish HBSC survey. HBSC is a cross-sectional, nationally representative school-based study. Students were classified as being non-immigrants if they were born in Ireland, and immigrants if they were born outside Ireland or if at least one of their parents were born outside Ireland, but they were born in Ireland. Students were also asked 'How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?', 'How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?' and 'In the past couple of months, what did you do when you saw bullying?' Children that reported ever being bullied, ever bullying others or ever witnessing bullying were compared by ethnic status.

### RESULTS

**Table 1 - Bullying Among Post-Primary School Children by Ethnic Status in Ireland**

Bullying	Non-immigrants		Immigrants		p
	N	%	N	%	
Been Bullied	1,685	22.3	349	26.8	0.000
Bullied Others	1,250	16.5	256	19.6	0.005
Witnessed Bullying	2,674	36.0	486	38.1	0.147

The majority of students sampled were classified as non-immigrants (72.5%). A larger proportion of immigrant children reported being bullied (26.8% vs 22.3%) and bullying others (19.6% vs 16.5%) at school in the past couple of months and these differences were significant. For witnessing bullying, a greater proportion of immigrant children than non-immigrant children reported that they witnessed bullying (38.1% vs 36.0%) in the last couple of months, although this was not significant.

### CONCLUSION

Bullying victimisation and perpetration are prevalent behaviours among post-primary school children, but prevalence rates differ by ethnic status. This descriptive study suggests that there could be cultural influences (ethnicity or nationality) which could affect the way that children perceive and understand bullying behaviours. Cultural influences on reporting of bullying behaviours could also exist which could result in differences in reporting bullying behaviours. This investigative work gives some insight into the differences in bullying behaviours by ethnic status in Ireland.

### REFERENCES

Available on request.

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