

Has the COVID-19 pandemic lessened bullying at school?

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Students reported far higher rates of bullying at school before the COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic across all forms of bullying—general, physical, verbal, and social—except for cyber

bullying, where differences in rates were less pronounced. The findings come from a study published in *Aggressive Behavior*.

The study surveyed 6,578 Canadian students in grades 4 to 12. There were certain patterns seen in previous reports:

- Girls were more likely to report being bullied than boys.
- Boys were more likely to report bullying others than girls.
- Elementary school students reported higher bullying involvement than secondary [school](#) students.
- And gender diverse and LGTBQ+ students reported being bullied at higher rates than students who identified as gender binary or heterosexual.

"Most pandemic studies suggest notable threats to the wellbeing and learning outcomes of children and youth. Our study highlights one potential silver lining—the reduction of bullying," said lead author Tracy Vaillancourt, Ph.D., of the University of Ottawa. "Reducing bullying is important because it negatively affects all aspects of functioning, both in the immediate and in the long-term. Given the strikingly lower rates of bullying during the [pandemic](#), we should seriously consider retaining some of the educational reforms used to reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as reducing [class sizes](#) and increasing supervision."

More information: Tracy Vaillancourt et al, School bullying before and during COVID-19: Results from a population-based randomized design, *Aggressive Behavior* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/ab.21986](https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21986)

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