Bullying: evidence from the longitudinal study of young people in England 2, wave 2

Research brief

November 2015

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Summary

This research brief aims to examine trends in bullying. It is based on the latest data from the second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE2).

In 2014, LSYPE2 interviewed 11,166 young people in year 10. Here, their responses to questions about bullying are compared with the answers they gave the previous year when they were in year 9. Their responses are also compared with those of an earlier cohort of young people who were in year 10 in 2005.

Main findings

Overall

Overall, a significantly smaller proportion of year 10 students in 2014 said that they had been bullied in the last 12 months when compared with the equivalent age group in 2005. This is also the case when compared with their own responses when they were in year 9.

Types of bullying

Name calling remains the most common type of bullying, affecting around 1 in 5 young people. Cyberbullying was asked about for the first time in 2014, and just over 1 in 10 young people said they had experienced this in the last 12 months.

Frequency of bullying

Daily bullying affects around 6% of young people, and weekly, fortnightly or monthly bullying affects a further 7%. Eleven per cent of young people say they experience bullying less frequently than once a month, and a further 5% say that this varies.

Bullying in schools

Bullying remains an issue for schools. The majority of young people reporting most types of bullying say that this happens at least partly in school. Cyberbullying is an exception, and happens mostly outside of school. There is a link between truancy and bullying, as there was in the previous wave (LSYPE2, wave 1, 2013).

Bullying by characteristic

Rates of bullying vary by characteristic, and are not the same for every young person. Findings show:

- a higher proportion of females report bullying than males

- there is a difference in rates of reported bullying by ethnicity

- young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) report bullying more than young people without

- a higher proportion of young people with no religion report bullying, compared to those with a religion

- rates of reported bullying vary by location

The full wave 2 research report will be published early next year and this theme will be continued as we look at how young people's school and life experiences vary by characteristic, and also possible links with mental health and wellbeing.

Introduction

Aims

This research is based on the latest data from the second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE2).

This research brief looks at young people's responses to questions about bullying in:

- year 10 in 2014 (LSYPE2, wave 2)

- year 10 in 2005 compared to year 10 in 2014 (two different cohorts: LSYPE1, wave 2 and LSYPE2, wave 2)

- year 9 in 2013 compared to year 10 in 2014 (the same cohort: LSYPE2, wave 1 and LSYPE2, wave 2)

Background

The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England[1]

LSYPE2 is a large study of young people managed by the Department for Education (DfE). This study builds upon the first LSYPE which DfE ran from 2004 to 2010, and is now being continued by the Institute of Education (IOE)[2]. LSYPE2 started in 2013 and is following young people from the age of 13/14 to 19/20. During the second wave of interviews in 2014, 11,166 young people were interviewed. At this point, they were in year 10 (age 14/15). The previous cohort of year 10 students was interviewed in 2005.

The aims of LSYPE2 are:

- *to follow a sample of young people through the final years of compulsory education*

- *to follow their transition from compulsory education to other forms of education, training, employment and other activities*

- *to collect information about their career paths and about the factors affecting them*

- *to provide a strategic evidence base about the lives and experiences of young people*

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[1] Adapted from the wave 1 research report
[2] For further information, please see the Next Steps webpages

Bullying

Tackling bullying remains a priority of DfE. Current policy means that every school must have a behaviour policy, which needs to include steps taken to prevent all types of bullying. Two documents produced by DfE which may be of interest are:

1. the requirements and advice for schools, as well as details of expert organisations

2. advice for staff in schools about supporting young people who are bullied

Both can be found on the gov.uk website.

Methodology

Sampling[3]

The young people in LSYPE2 were sampled through a two-stage sampling process. First schools were sampled, followed by pupils within those schools. The sample includes young people in local authority (LA) maintained schools, academies and independent schools, but for practical reasons excludes small schools and overseas students. It includes special schools as well as mainstream provision. This sample was designed to ensure the widest feasible perspective on young people's experiences.

Attrition

Response rates for wave 2 were high at 85%. However, due to this attrition, the characteristics of the sample at wave 2 are slightly different from the sample at wave 1. In this research brief, figures for wave 1 are only calculated for the participants remaining in the study at wave 2. For this reason, there may appear to be minor inconsistencies between figures stated in the wave 1 research report, and figures in this research brief.

Questions not responded to

All proportions in this report, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are of those who answered 'yes' or 'no' to each question. This means that young people who decided not to answer a question, or said they didn't know the answer, are excluded. Whilst these two responses are perfectly valid, they are very difficult to interpret. If these values were included in the base, the proportion reporting bullying would be **lower** than the proportions given in this report. It is important that we do not underestimate the scale of bullying, and so they are excluded.

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[3] Further information can be found in the LSYPE2 wave 1 technical report on the UK Data Service website.

If a young person is not asked a question, they are also excluded from all analysis. This is usually because it doesn't make sense to ask the young person a question due to their previous responses. For example, young people who say they have not been bullied are not asked whether the bullying took place in school.

Statistical testing

All differences that are commented on have been statistically tested at a 5% significance level.

Findings

Year 10 in 2014 (LSYPE2, wave 2)

In the second wave of LSYPE2 (2014), the young people were in year 10. They were asked whether or not they had experienced each of 6 types of bullying in the last 12 months: name calling, social exclusion, robbery, threats of violence, actual violence and cyberbullying. They can say yes to as many as apply.

Table 1: Proportion of young people experiencing each type of bullying in the last 12 months

Type of bullying	Percentage of young people	Base (weighted)
Name calling	22%	10,375
Social exclusion	15%	10,352
Robbery	1%	10,688
Threats of violence	14%	10,561
Actual violence	10%	10,614
Cyberbullying	11%	10,883

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2

The most commonly reported type of bullying was name calling, affecting around 1 in 5 young people. Social exclusion was next, closely followed by threats of violence. More young people reported threats of violence than actual violence, though there is a large overlap – 48% of young people who said they had been threatened had also experienced actual violence. Robbery was the least common type of bullying, only reported by 1% of young people.

LSYPE2 asked about cyberbullying for the first time in 2014. Just over 1 in 10 young people said that they had experienced cyberbullying by phone or over the internet. Seven per cent of young people said they had experienced each of these types of cyberbullying – phone and internet – including 4% who said they had experienced both[4].

If we include cyberbullying, we find that 37% of young people had experienced one or more of these types of bullying. If we don't include cyberbullying, this percentage drops to 36%.

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[4] Eleven per cent of young people say they have been cyberbullied. Any apparent inconsistency is due to rounding.

Changes in bullying

We look now at changes in bullying, comparing wave 2 of LSYPE1 and LSYPE2, and wave 1 and wave 2 of LSYPE2. When we discuss 'overall' bullying, we talk about young people who say they've experienced one or more of the following 5 types of bullying in the last 12 months: name calling, social exclusion, robbery, threats of violence and actual violence. We exclude cyberbullying for comparability.

Year 10 bullying: 2005 and 2014 (LSYPE1, wave 2 and LSYPE2, wave 2)

Overall, we see that the proportion of young people reporting bullying is lower for year 10 in 2014 than it was in 2005. Forty-one per cent of young people in year 10 in 2005 said they had been bullied in the last 12 months, compared with 36% in 2014.

We estimate that this means that approximately 30,000 fewer young people were being bullied in year 10 in 2014 than if the rates had stayed the same as in 2005[5].

The most significant decrease in bullying is in both threats of violence and actual violence. Threats of violence used to affect 1 in 5 young people in 2005, and affected closer to 1 in 7 in 2014.

Figure 1: Proportion of young people reporting each type of bulling in wave 2 of the two cohorts
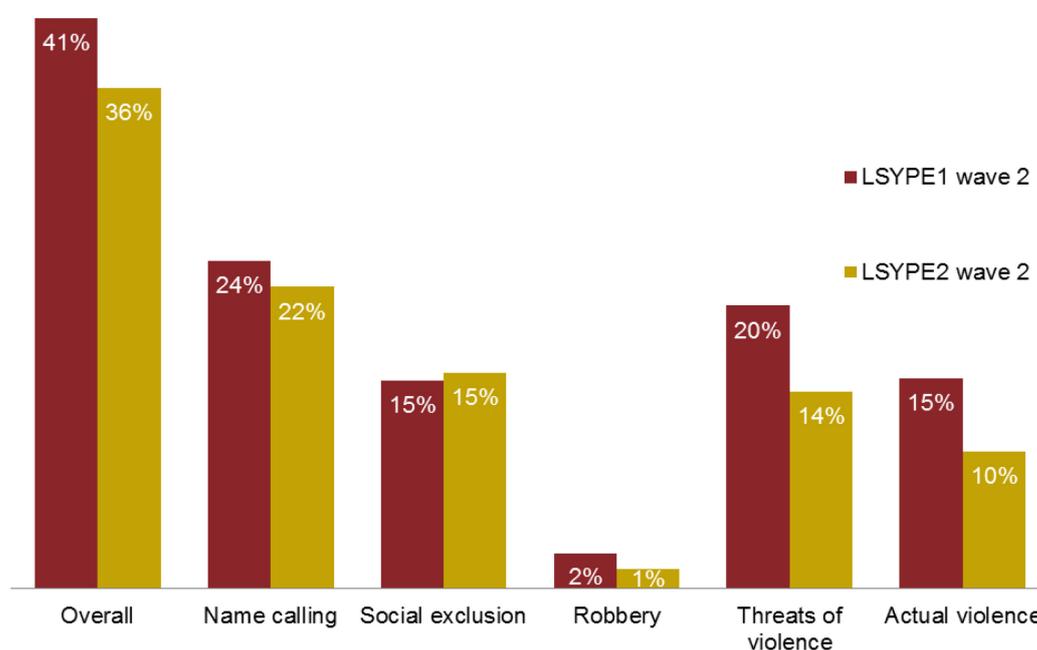
Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 1 and 2, wave 2.

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[5] An ad-hoc statistical release has been published alongside this research brief, explaining calculation of this figure.

Year 9 (2013) to year 10 (2014) (LSYPE2, wave 1 and LSYPE2, wave 2)

Next, we consider how this compares with the results we published last year when these young people were in year 9.

Overall rates of bullying have decreased – 43%[6] per cent of young people in year 9 said that they had experienced one or more types of bullying compared with 36% in year 10.

Reported rates of each type of bullying have followed a similar trend. Name calling was the most frequently reported type of bullying in both years, and also has the largest percentage point difference.

Figure 2: Proportion of young people reporting each type of bulling in LSYPE2 wave 1 and wave 2
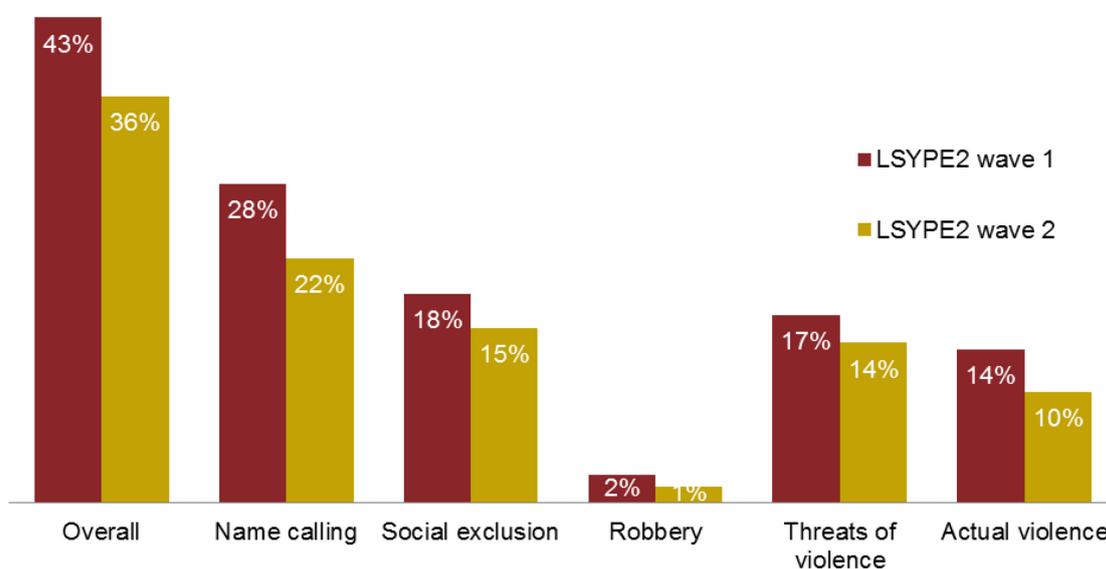
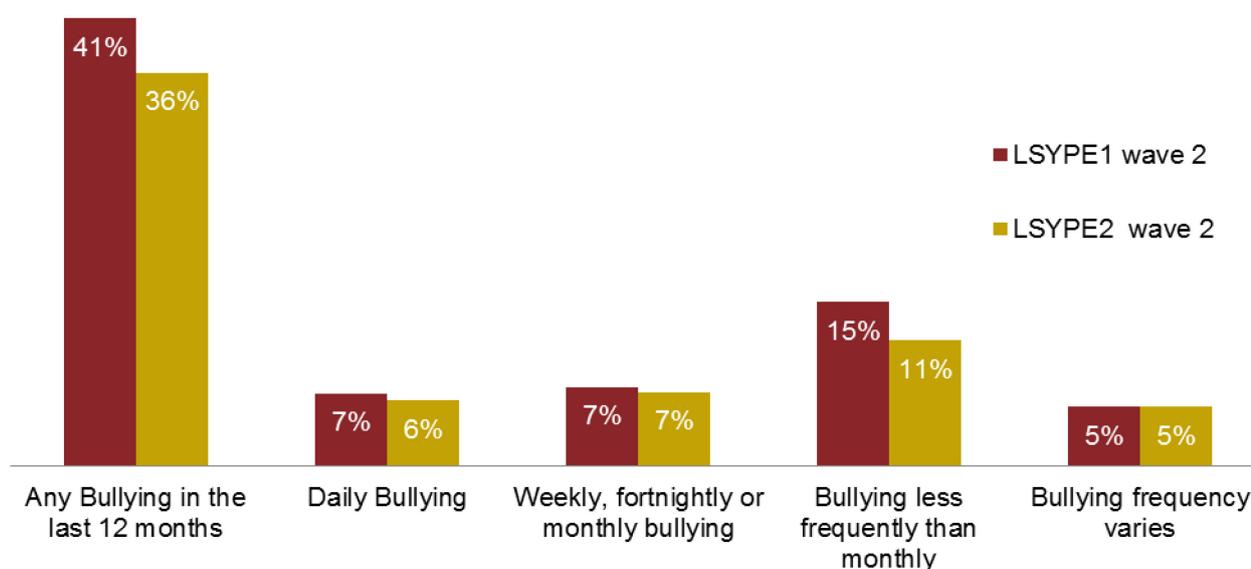Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, waves 1 and 2.

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[6] This figure is different from the one published in the wave 1 research report due to using a different base. Attrition, as explained on page 10, also plays a part.

Frequency of Bullying

Thirty-six per cent of young people in year 10 reported they had been bullied in the previous 12 months in LSYPE2. Clearly, for a significant minority of young people, bullying was a regular problem. Six per cent of all young people in LSYPE2 reported experiencing bullying daily. A further 7% experienced bullying between once a week and once a month. Eleven per cent of young people were bullied less than once a month and 5% said the frequency of bullying varied.

Figure 3: Proportion of young people reporting each frequency of bullying

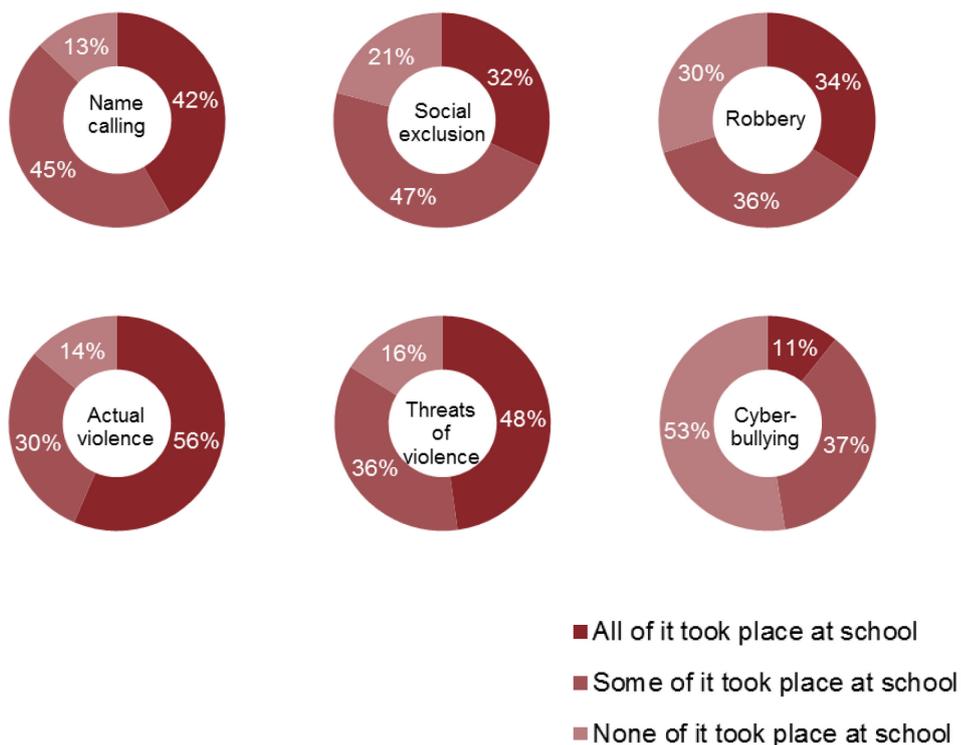Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 1 and 2, wave 2.

School

Where does bullying take place?

Bullying can of course happen both within and outside of school. That said, it is important to understand which types of bullying are most likely to happen in school, and which types are most likely to happen outside of school.

The majority of young people reported that name calling, social exclusion, robbery, threats of violence and actual violence occurred at least partly in school. This may be a reflection of the large proportion of a young person's time spent in school.

A different pattern can be seen for cyberbullying, where 53% of young people said that it took place completely outside of school. It may be that young people spend more time on their phones and on the internet when they are outside of school, and therefore cyberbullying occurs more frequently outside of school as a result.

Figure 4: Whether reported bullying occurred within school[7]

■ All of it took place at school

■ Some of it took place at school

■ None of it took place at school

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

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[7] Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Link with truancy

During LSYPE2, truancy rates[8] slightly increased from year 9 to year 10 (increasing from 10% in 2013 to 13% in 2014). This is the same pattern that we observed during LSYPE1, where truancy rates increased between wave 1 and wave 2, and again between wave 2 and wave 3. This is significantly lower than the equivalent proportion in 2005 where 25% of young people in year 10 said that they had truanted.

In the LSYPE2, wave 1 research report published in November 2013[9], a clear link between bullying and truancy was established. This is still true at the second wave. Fifty-nine percent of young people who had truanted said they had been bullied[10], compared with 34% of those who hadn't truanted.

However, when young people were asked why they had truanted, bullying was not a particularly common answer. Of course, bullying is a complex issue and young people who are bullied may experience a range of other issues.

Table 2: Proportion of young people giving each reason for truanting

Reason for truanting	Percentage
Bullying	9%
Bored	15%
Just don't like school	15%
Don't like particular teacher or teachers	13%
Don't like particular lesson or subject	20%
Something else	27%
Base (weighted)	**1,132**

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

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[8] Official estimates on unauthorised absence are collected from administrative data sources and are not comparable to LSYPE information on truancy. Unauthorised absence figures can be found in the Statistical First Release: 'Pupil absence in schools in England: 2013 to 2014'
[9] The wave 1 research report is available on the gov.uk website
[10] Including cyberbullying

Bullying by characteristics

We now consider the latest bullying data available, and break this down by a variety of characteristics. All of the following figures and percentages include cyberbullying in the overall measure of bullying.

Why do young people think bullying is happening?

If a young person reported bullying, they were asked why they thought the bullying had occurred. The most common reason cited for being bullied was their looks with almost 1 in 4 young people giving this reason. This also had, by far, the largest percentage point difference between males and females.

Figure 5: Reasons young people say that bullying occurred[11]
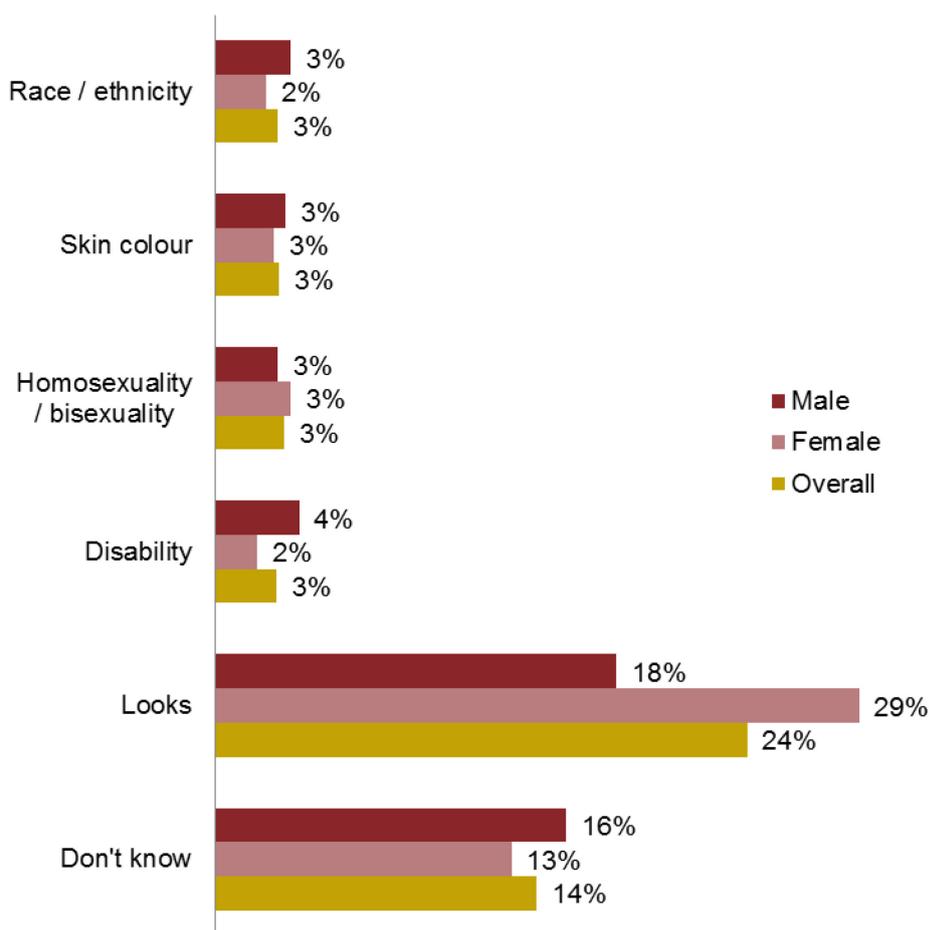
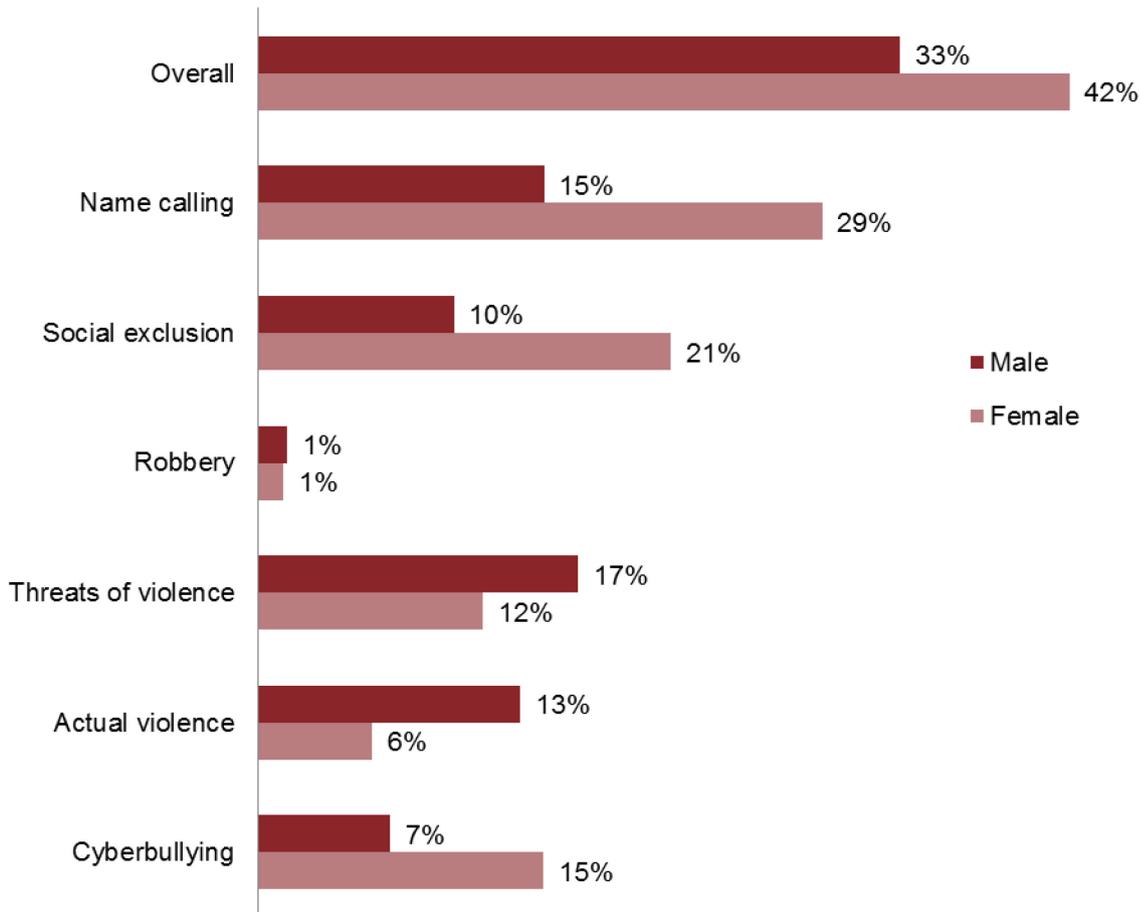Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

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[11] Religion, gender and age have been compressed due to the small number of responses. Due to this, 'none of these' is also not displayed to avoid misleading results.

Gender

Overall, a higher proportion of females reported bullying than males (42% and 33% respectively). If we look at each type of bullying separately, we can see that this is true for name calling, cyberbullying and social exclusion. However, a higher proportion of males reported threats of and actual violence than females.

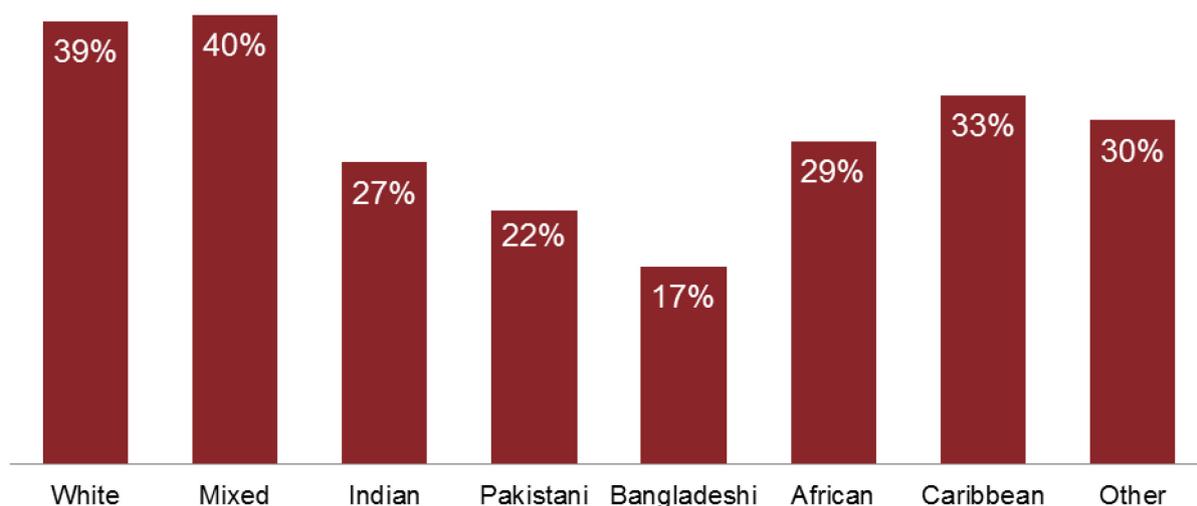**Figure 6: Proportion of young people experiencing each type of bullying by gender**

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

Ethnicity

The proportion of young people of each ethnicity reporting bullying varies. A higher proportion of young people of white and mixed ethnicities, and a lower proportion of Bangladeshi young people report bullying. This pattern is similar to what we observed in LSYPE2, wave 1 (age 13/14 in 2013).

This could be for a wide range of reasons. For example, there may be cultural differences, either in what is classified as bullying, or whether a young person choses to acknowledge this. Alternatively, this may be linked to mixing across ethnic groups – some ethnic groups may mix with other ethnic groups more than others. There may be a link between ethnicity and where a young person lives, and this may be another explanation if some parts of England are 'hotspots' for bullying.

Figure 7: Proportion of young people of each ethnicity experiencing bullying

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

Special education needs (SEN)

Next, we consider the different experiences of bullying of young people with and without Special Educational Needs (SEN)[12]. A higher proportion of young people with SEN reported bullying, compared to young people without SEN.

Figure 8: Proportion of young people with and without SEN experiencing bullying
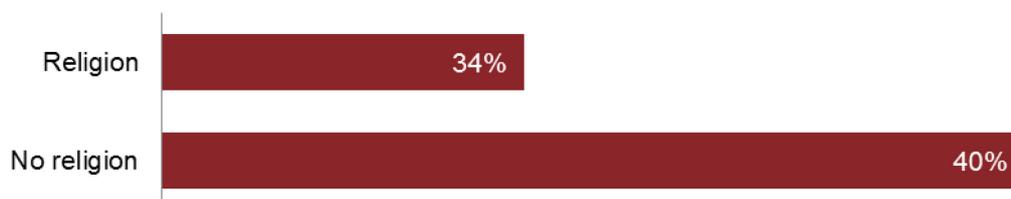

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

Religion

Young people were asked about whether they identified themselves as having a religion[13]. A higher proportion of young people who say that they have a religion reported bullying in comparison to those who say they do not.

Figure 9: Proportion of young people with and without a religion experiencing bullying

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

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[12] The SEN status of the young people, as recorded in the spring 2013 school census, has been matched in from the NPD where available (subject to consent). In this publication, those with a statement of SEN, those with SEN with School Action and those with SEN with School Action Plus, are all considered to have SEN.

[13] The response options were: 'no religion'; 'Christian' (which includes all denominations); 'Buddhist'; 'Hindu'; 'Jewish'; 'Muslim'; 'Sikh'; 'other'; 'don't know' (which includes agnostics); and 'refused'. As in the rest of this research brief, young people who responded 'don't know and 'refused' have been excluded. 'No religion' is then compared to the total number of young people in any of the other categories.

Region[14]

Rates of reported bullying vary around England. The South West is the region with the highest proportion of young people reporting bullying, followed by the East Midlands. London is the area with the lowest proportion of young people report bullying.

Table 3: Proportion of young people in each region reporting bullying

Region	Percentage of young people reporting bullying in the last 12 months	Base (weighted)
North East	39%	493
North West	36%	1,475
Yorkshire and The Humber	36%	986
East Midlands	40%	905
West Midlands	37%	1,126
East of England	37%	1,153
London	32%	1,391
South East	39%	1,735
South West	42%	975

Source: Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: cohort 2, wave 2.

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[14] Regional breakdowns are based on the Region (formerly known as Government Office Region) that contains the address each young person was living at when interviewed. Regions are defined by the Office for National Statistics to represent major geographic areas of England and consist of a number of contiguous local authorities. The full set of nine regions has been reported on in breakdowns, with only the handful who could not be assigned to one being excluded. Further information on the regions can be found on the ONS website.

Conclusions

The overall figures are very positive. The rate of bullying of almost all types has decreased from the equivalent age group in 2005. Similarly, this rate has decreased from when these young people were in year 9.

This represents a significant estimated decrease in bullying. We estimate that 30,000 fewer year 10 pupils experienced bullying in 2014 than would have been the case if the rates of bullying were the same as they were in 2005.

Being called names remains the most common form of bullying. Cyberbullying was asked about for the first time in 2014, and just over 1 in 10 young people reported it. Next year, when wave 3 data is available, we may be able to start to see if there is a trend with this.

A significant minority of young people experienced daily bullying in 2014 (6%), almost the same as in 2005. These figures between cohort 1 and 2 are similar for young people who were bullied weekly, fortnightly or monthly. The biggest decrease is for the young people experiencing bullying less than once a month – this has reduced from 15% in 2005 to 11% in 2014.

Experiences of bullying are not the same for every young person. A higher proportion of girls reported cyberbullying, name calling and social exclusion than boys, and a higher proportion of boys reported threatened or actual violence. It is important, however, that this finding does not undermine the significant number of young people of both sexes experiencing different types of bullying. We have seen that experiences of bullying also vary by ethnicity, SEN, religion and region.

Clearly, bullying is an important issue for schools. Aside from the fact that most young people reporting most types of bullying said that this takes place at least partly within school, there is also a link between truancy and bullying. This emphasises the important role of schools and educational policy in tackling and preventing all forms of bullying.

In this bullying research brief, we have looked at experiences of bullying, and whether they are the same for every young person in England. The full wave 2 research report will be published early next year and this theme will be continued as we look at how young people's school and life experiences vary by characteristic. Another focus of the report will be mental health, and it will be interesting to see what, if any, links this might have with bullying.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:
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