

# 5



## The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS): Results of a quantitative survey of students and staff

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“ Every child and youth has the right to be respected and safe. Bullying is a violation of this basic human right. ”

(Kandersteg Declaration, Switzerland, June 10, 2007)<sup>[1]</sup>


## 5.1 Introduction

The Child Health Promotion Research Centre (CHPRC) at Edith Cowan University was contracted by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (formerly the Department of Education, Science and Training, DEST) to research the occurrence and nature of covert bullying in Australian schools. This research included conducting a covert bullying cross-sectional survey of school students and staff from both primary and secondary high schools across Australia. These surveys consisted of questions that gathered information from respondents relating to their experiences with and attitudes towards covert bullying, in addition to bullying in general. The goal of the covert bullying survey was to improve the knowledge and understanding of covert bullying in schools across Australia and to assist in the development of effective policy and practice to address this problem.

The design of the questionnaire and the development of the sampling techniques were undertaken by the CHPRC. Data Analysis Australia was contracted by the CHPRC to provide a statistical analysis of the student and staff survey responses.

### 5.1.1 Objectives

The analysis of the student survey aimed to describe the prevalence of bullying and covert bullying, the forms that it takes and to identify any age and gender patterns in bullying. The analysis of the student survey also sought to measure the impact of covert bullying upon students in addition to identifying young people's opinions on cyber bullying. The analysis of the staff survey aimed to gain an understanding of staff attitudes towards bullying behaviour as well as their perceptions of the prevalence of bullying and the effects bullying has upon students.



The specific objectives of the student survey are listed below.

- To describe the prevalence of bullying and covert bullying amongst school children in Australia.
- To describe the nature and circumstances within which covert bullying occurs.
- To ascertain how often those who bullied others covertly did so.
- To determine whether covert bullying is associated with other forms of bullying.
- To determine the students who were covertly bullied and who bullied others covertly and the predictors (at an individual and school level) of being covertly bullied and covertly bullying others.
- To describe the effects of being bullied covertly.
- To determine young people's opinions about cyber bullying and ways of preventing cyber bullying.
- To describe students' responses to knowledge of another student being bullied.

The specific objectives of the school staff survey were as follows.

- To describe school staff perceptions of the nature of bullying behaviours and their attitudes to bullying.
- To describe school staff perceptions of the prevalence of covert bullying.
- To describe staff perceptions of the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies used in schools.
- To describe staff perceptions of the effects of bullying on students.
- To determine the amount of time staff used to deal with all and covert bullying incidents.
- To ascertain the professional development needs of staff in this area.
- To determine, based on staff report, the policies and strategies used to address covert bullying within their school.



## 5.2 Methodology

### 5.2.1 Sampling

The study consisted of a cross-sectional survey. A stratified two-stage probability sample design was used to sample primary and secondary schools across all the States and Territories of Australia.

#### 5.2.1.1 Target population

The target population for the survey was all students enrolled in Year 4 to Year 9 in Government, Catholic and Independent schools in Australia. The sample population was the total group of students enrolled in Years 4 to 9 in Government, Catholic and Independent schools that were not excluded according to the exclusion criteria which follow.

- Non-mainstream schools such as distance education schools and those exclusively for students with special needs.
- Schools in remote or very remote areas (as classified by the DEEWR Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) codes).
- Smaller schools, i.e. schools with less than 30 students, enrolled in 2007, in each of the year levels being sampled. (Thirty or more students enrolled in Year 7 in the primary school for Queensland, SA, WA and the NT and 30 or more students enrolled in Year 7 in the secondary school for NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT).
- Schools in WA participating in current bullying related projects run by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre.

In addition, students with a disability which prevented them from completing hard copy self-complete questionnaires were excluded.

In NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, Year 7 is typically included in secondary schools whilst in Queensland, SA, WA and the NT this year level is typically included within primary schools. Students enrolled in Year 7 were sampled from either secondary or primary schools within each State and Territory according to the type of school in which this year level typically occurred within that State or Territory.



### 5.2.1.2 Sample design

The basic design of the quantitative survey was a stratified two-stage probability sample. Schools were selected at the first stage of sampling and classes within the schools at the second stage. Samples were drawn separately for primary schools (Years 4 to 6/7) and secondary schools (Years 7/8 to 9).

The study aimed to recruit and sample a total of 100 schools (50 primary and 50 secondary schools) across the eight States and Territories. A total of 106 schools, 55 primary and 51 secondary schools, returned surveys for this phase of the ACBPS.

Classes from each of the year levels Year 4 to Year 9 were randomly sampled. In NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, Year 7 students were drawn from secondary schools and from primary schools in Queensland, SA, WA and the NT. A sample of between 5000 and 7500 students was required, this equated to between 17 and 25 students per year level per school.

### 5.2.1.3 Sampling schools

Schools were sampled using a stratified sampling technique. Sufficient students needed to be sampled within each stratum to allow for adequate precision of prevalence estimates – about 100 primary and 100 secondary students per stratum. All schools that met the inclusion criteria were stratified by State and then by location (metropolitan or non-metropolitan/provincial, as classified by the DEEWR MCEETYA codes). All schools in the ACT are categorized as metropolitan schools and all schools in the NT as provincial or ‘non-metropolitan’ schools according to DEEWR classification codes, so no divisions by location were possible in the two Territories. Some of the strata were further divided by sector, either simply as Government or non-Government or, where school numbers permitted, by Government or Catholic or other Independent schools. A total of 25 strata were formed and the study aimed to recruit two primary and two secondary schools, randomly drawn from each stratum. Schools were therefore not sampled proportionately but such that sufficient students were obtained in each stratum to generate prevalence estimates i.e. by State and sector and location. Combined schools, i.e. schools with primary and secondary year levels, that had the required number of students enrolled in each of the targeted year levels, were included in the list of schools available for selection as a primary and/or as a secondary school within the stratum. Six replacement schools were randomly selected within each stratum.

Table 5.1 lists the strata and shows from which State, location and sector the schools came. For purposes of analysis the sector was only separated into Government and non-Government where Catholic and other Independent schools became part of the ‘non-Government’ group.

**Table 5.1: The number of schools sampled by stratum**

Stratum	State	Location	Sector	Primary schools	Secondary schools
1	Australian Capital Territory (ACT)*	Metro	non-Government	1	2
2	Northern Territory (NT)*	Non-metro	Government	2	1
2		Non-metro	non-Government	1	1
3	New South Wales (NSW)	Metro	Government	1	1
4		Metro	Catholic	2	2
5		Metro	Other independent	3	4
6		Non-metro	Government	3	2
7		Non-metro	non-Government	2	2
8	Queensland (QLD)	Metro	Government	2	3
9		Metro	Catholic	3	2
10		Metro	Other independent	2	2
11		Non-metro	Government	2	2
12		Non-metro	non-Government	1	1
13	South Australia (SA)	Metro	Government	2	2
14		Metro	non-Government	2	3
15		Non-metro	Government	2	2
15		Non-metro	non-Government	2	0
16	Tasmania (TAS)	Metro	Government	0	1
16		Metro	non-Government	1	2
17		Non-metro	Government	3	1
17		Non-metro	non-Government	0	1
18	Victoria (VIC)	Metro	Government	1	3
19		Metro	Catholic	2	1
20		Metro	Other independent	1	1
21		Non-metro	Government	3	2
22		Non-metro	non-Government	1	1
23		Western Australia (WA)	Metro	Government	4
24	Metro		non-Government	3	2
25	Non-metro		Government	3	2

\* Only three Australian Capital Territory schools and five Northern Territory schools agreed to be involved in this prevalence study. The small sample of participating schools in these territories limits the generalisability of these school data to the remainder of their territories.



#### **5.2.1.4 Sampling students and staff**


Each school principal was asked to nominate a person within his or her school to coordinate the data collection. This coordinator was required to organise the student and staff data collection in her or his school.

In each school, the coordinator nominated four staff members from the school who taught students in the year groups being surveyed (e.g. the teachers of the classes chosen for the administration of the student survey) and two senior administration staff members in their school, for example the school's principal and deputy principal. These staff members were asked to complete a brief survey for this project. At least one teacher from each of the year groups surveyed was given a staff survey.

Two to three classes of students were selected randomly per year level per school to obtain 17-25 completed questionnaires per year level per school. Each school coordinator was asked to randomly select the required number of classes of students. The coordinator was asked to choose from classes that had not been 'streamed' by academic ability and were therefore as heterogeneous as possible.

The number of classes chosen to participate in each school depended on the type of consent required. In States where active parental consent was required more classes were sampled to account for lower consent rates. For example, Government schools in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria required active consent for student participation in the data collection; therefore at least 60 students per year level were invited to participate in the project. In Government schools in the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory and non-Government schools in all States, active/passive consent was granted for student consent in the project, therefore at least 30 students per year level were invited to participate in the project.

The parents and caregivers of students in classes selected to participate in the Covert Bullying Project were asked to provide consent for their son or daughter to complete a survey. Each school coordinator was provided with stamped, pre-packaged envelopes (containing an information letter, consent form and reply paid envelope) for their school reception staff to attach address labels and mail from their school to the selected students. Mailing home the two rounds of consent forms ensured each parent/caregiver received the project information.



In Government schools in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria which required active consent for student participation, an initial information letter, consent form and reply paid envelope were mailed to parents requesting they return their consent form in the supplied reply-paid envelope to indicate whether their son or daughter could or could not participate in the project. Parents who had not responded after two weeks were sent a reminder information letter, consent form and reply paid envelope, which again requested active consent for their child to participate in the project. In Government schools in the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory and non-Government schools in all States, active/passive consent was approved by these sectors. Parental consent was obtained by mailing an initial information letter, consent form and reply paid envelope describing the study and requesting active consent for their child to participate. Parents who had not responded after two weeks were mailed a final follow-up letter requesting passive consent for their child to participate in the study and a reply paid envelope to return the completed consent form if they did not want their child to participate.

In New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, Years 4, 5 and 6 students were sampled from the selected primary/combined schools and Years 7, 8 and 9 from the selected secondary/combined schools. In Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 were sampled from the selected primary/combined schools and Years 8 and 9 from the selected secondary/combined schools. All sampled schools within a State or Territory were consistent in either including Year 7 in the primary school or the secondary school.



## 5.2.2 Instruments and measures

Two instruments were developed specifically for this project, one for students and one for classroom teachers and senior administrators. Please see Chapter 5, Appendix 1 and Chapter 5, Appendix 2 for a copy of each survey. The same survey instrument was used for primary and secondary students, ensuring comparability of the data across school years. Questionnaire items were selected from a pool of previously developed, validated and reliable items and scales developed by the CHPRC for children in Years 4 to 9 in consultation with DEEWR and some members of the international CORE-Net bullying prevention research group (<http://saf.uis.no/core-net/>).

### 5.2.2.1 Reliability and validity of bullying measures

Student reports of how often they were bullied and/or bullied others were measured using two items adapted from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire<sup>[2]</sup> and the Rigby and Slee Peer Relations Questionnaire<sup>[3]</sup>. These adapted items were tested for reliability previously by the CHPRC ( $n \approx 140$ ) and found to have moderate levels of reliability (being bullied  $Kw = .54$  and bullying others  $Kw = .45$ ). Consistent with previous research, response choices were specific and referred to a specific time period<sup>[4]</sup>. Additionally, the items refer to the repeated nature of bullying behaviour. The questions can be found in Chapter 5, Appendix 1. Two questions (Question 12 and Question 14) in the student survey referred to bullying in general. These were adapted to refer specifically to covert bullying (Question 18 and Question 19).

### 5.2.2.2 Definitions of bullying used

For the purposes of the student survey and this report, the following definitions have been adopted.

‘Bullying’ is repeated behaviour which happens ‘to someone who finds it hard to stop it from happening’.


Students were given this definition, with emphasis on the words in quotation marks. Examples of face to face or overt bullying and of covert bullying were also presented.

The different forms of being bullied and bullying others were distinguished as follows:

‘Being bullied’ (in any way) is defined as ‘being bullied again and again by another student or group of students every few weeks or more often in the term’.

‘Bullying others’ (in any way) is defined as ‘bullying another student or group of students again and again every few weeks or more often in the term’.

‘Being bullied covertly’ is defined as ‘being bullied again and again by another student or group of students, every few weeks or more often in the term, in ways that can’t be easily seen by others’.



'Bullying others covertly' is defined as 'bullying another student or group of students again and again, every few weeks or more often in the term, in ways that can't be easily seen by others'.

Being cyber bullied (e.g. internet or mobile phone) is defined as having any of the following happen to them *every few weeks or more often* in the term, according to Q16 of the student survey:

- sent threatening emails (Q16m);
- sent nasty messages on the internet, e.g. through MSN (Q16n);
- sent nasty text messages (SMS), or prank calls to their mobile phone (Q16o);
- someone used their screen name or password, pretending to be them, to hurt someone else (Q16p);
- someone sent their private emails, messages, pictures or videos to others (Q16q);
- mean or nasty comments or pictures were sent or posted about them to websites, e.g. MySpace; Facebook (Q16r);
- mean or nasty messages or pictures were sent about them to other students' mobile phones (Q16s); and/or
- being deliberately ignored or left out of things over the Internet (Q16t).

Cyber bullying others (e.g. internet or mobile phone) is defined as, the student perpetrating any of the following to another student(s) *every few weeks or more often* in the term, according to Q13 of the student survey:

- sending nasty or threatening emails to another student (Q13m)
- sending nasty text messages (SMS), or prank calls to another student's mobile phone (Q13n)
- sending nasty messages on the Internet, e.g. through MSN to another student (Q13o);
- using one or more people's screen name or password and pretended to be them (Q13p);
- sending someone else's private emails, messages, pictures or videos to other students (Q13q);
- sending or posting mean or nasty comments or pictures about another student to websites e.g. MySpace; Facebook (Q13r);
- sending mean or nasty messages or pictures about another student to other students' mobile phones (Q13s); and/or
- deliberately ignoring someone or leaving another student out of things over the Internet to hurt them (Q13t).

### **5.2.2.3 Bullying outcomes**

The outcome measures used in this report were: whether the student was bullied; was bullied covertly; had bullied others; had bullied others covertly; had been cyber bullied; or had cyber bullied others during the term in which the survey was conducted.



### 5.2.3 Data collection methods

The quantitative data collection was conducted with Year 4 to 9 students, their teachers and senior administration staff in the final term of the 2007 school year. The questionnaires were administered by school staff within Year 4 to 9 classrooms on a day nominated by the school coordinator according to a strict procedural and verbal protocol (see Chapter 5, Appendices 3 to 5). The self administered questionnaire was read aloud to the Year 4 to 6 students. Year 7 to 9 students read their own questionnaires. A questionnaire was given to each student who had parental consent, for their completion in class time. Students without parental consent were given alternative activities or asked to continue with other work provided by their class teacher. Anonymity of respondents was maintained by the use of identification numbers and teachers were asked not to look at students' responses. Student questionnaires were collected by the classroom teacher, sealed in an envelope and given to the school coordinator to post using reply paid registered post, to the Child Health Promotion Research Centre.

Questionnaires were completed by both students and staff from the same schools. Each school's coordinator was asked to distribute and collect completed staff questionnaires. All completed staff questionnaires were returned to the Child Health Promotion Research Centre with the student questionnaires via reply paid registered post.


### 5.2.4 Data analysis

#### 5.2.4.1 Data cleaning and preparation

Data Analysis Australia received the questionnaire results in two spreadsheets, one for the students and one for the staff. The data were subject to rigorous quality assurance testing. Checks were carried out on missing data and consistency of data.

Seventy responses were removed from the student data set for two main reasons: respondents answered too few questions or the questions were answered in an inconsistent or unreliable way. CHPRC identified a group of students who had answered 30% or less of the total questions. After Data Analysis Australia examined these it was decided that 20 of these responses should be deleted from the data set as they had answered less than 10% of the total questions. Those students who had answered questions on bullying in general were left in the data set. A further 50 responses were removed after being identified by CHPRC as inconsistent or unreliable.

One record was deleted as it was in the wrong year level for that school. After the removal of these 71 students a total of 7418 responses remained.



The questionnaires used in this research included a number of scales derived from existing bullying questionnaires. Several of these include scoring systems, and these are explained as follows.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire <sup>[5]</sup> includes 25 items, with five items in each of the subscales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and pro-social behaviours. For the twenty positively worded items, a score of 0 was assigned for each response of 'Not true', 1 for 'Somewhat true' and 2 for 'Certainly true'. The five items that were negatively worded (or worded in reverse to the rest of the items) were reverse coded. Mode values for each item were used to replace missing values. Each subscale score was calculated by summing the item scores for that subscale. To calculate an overall difficulties score, the scores from the emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer relationship problems subscales were summed. Total difficulties scores within the range of 0-15 were classified as normal, 16-19 as borderline and 20-40 as at risk<sup>1</sup>. The SDQ items form questions Q36a to Q36y in the student questionnaire.


Three important concepts to examine the school environment were measured, namely 'school culture', 'loneliness at school' and 'connectedness to school'.

'School culture' was calculated using the items in Q27a-Q27l of the student questionnaire. 'Unsure' responses were recoded as 3 'Neither agree nor disagree' on the 5 point Likert-type scale. For respondents who had answered 80% of the questions (10 or more out of 12 questions), a culture score was calculated as the mean of the individual's responses across the 12 culture questions. In addition to individual scores for perceived school culture, a school level response for culture was calculated by aggregating culture scores to produce the mean response for students at each school.

'Loneliness at school' (adapted from Cassidy & Asher, 1992 <sup>[6]</sup>) for each student was calculated as the mean of the 9 items in Q34 of the student questionnaire. Two items were reverse coded because they were positively phrased, whereas the other seven items were negatively phrased. The scores were classified as above the mean (higher loneliness) and below the mean (lower loneliness) based on the students' mean scores.

A 'Connectedness to school' score (adapted from McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Brum (2002); Resnick et al. (1997) <sup>[7; 8]</sup>) was calculated from the 4 items in Q32 of the student questionnaire. The responses were recoded into the following scores for each item: 1 = 'Never' 2 = 'Unsure' 3 = 'Sometimes' 4 = 'Usually' 5 = 'Always'. School connectedness was calculated as the mean of the four items in Q32. The scores were classified as above the mean (higher connectedness) and below the mean (lower connectedness) based on the students' mean scores.

The extent to which schools had adopted strategies to address covert bullying was calculated from the 23 items comprising Q16a-Q16w of the staff questionnaire. The total number of strategies that were adopted was summed, with a score of 11 or less counted as 'Less' strategies implemented, and a score of 12 or above counted as 'More' strategies implemented.



Where questions related to the frequency of being bullied, carrying out or witnessing bullying behaviours, the behaviour was classified as bullying if it occurred every few weeks or more frequently. Such behaviours were classified as not bullying if they only occurred occasionally (once or twice this term or less frequently).

A number of other aggregations have been used throughout the report to simplify the presentation of information, or to ensure that groups are large enough to be meaningful. For example, in the staff questionnaire results, age has been aggregated into broader categories than those used to collect this information.

#### **5.2.4.2 Weighting**

Sampling weights are applied to survey data to allow inferences to be made about the population from which the sample is drawn. If a sample was ideal, and representative of all Australian students in each of the target age groups, all the weights would be equal, that is, the ratio of the population size to the sample size. Weights should be considered as expansion factors permitting the scaling of the sample to the population. Hence the sum of the weights should accurately match the known population parameter – in this case, the total student population. An important feature of the weighting process is that it can compensate for unequal sampling probabilities, often correcting for imperfections in the sampling process.

The two key variables that were taken into account in the weighting process used in these analyses were the probability of a school being selected and the probability of a student being selected given that the school was selected.

The weighting process took into account the stratum and the school which was then scaled up to the school student population. The outcome of the weighting was a scaled weight being calculated for each year level in each school and assigned to each student within that year level within that school. The weighted data were used for all analysis except the logistic regression.

No weighting was applied to the staff survey.

#### **5.2.4.3 Non-independence of respondent data**

Most statistical techniques – both univariate and multivariate – assume independence in data. Unfortunately this is not usually the situation with cases of bullying since bullying tends to be nested within classes and schools and, possibly, between schools. For example, students drawn from the same class or school may be bullied by the same person(s). As such the idea of independence is lost as responses in the survey are dependent on each other in some way. This violation of the independence assumption means that traditional inference methods such as calculating p-values, bias and confidence intervals cannot be reliably determined. Thus a method of determining these inference measures by accounting for the dependence between responses has been used.



#### 5.2.4.4 Confidence intervals

To ascertain how precise the prevalence estimates are, confidence intervals were calculated (see Chapter 5, Appendix 6).


In any survey, it is essential to have reasonable guidelines on the precision of the estimates obtained. The most common way of representing these is through confidence intervals, since these have the potential to be meaningful even when the rates being estimated are quite low. An alternative and commonly used measure of precision is the standard error, but as standard errors imply that the uncertainty is symmetric about the estimate (which is not necessarily the case for estimates of low prevalence), confidence intervals provide the more relevant measure in this context.

The confidence interval for a specific statistic is the range of values around the statistic where the ‘true’ (population) statistic can be expected to be located with a given level of certainty. A smaller range indicates an estimate that is more precise. Small sample sizes or cells with low numbers generate less precise estimates and will have wider confidence intervals. The tables of confidence intervals are in Chapter 5, Appendix 6.

The computation of confidence intervals, where a survey has complex multistage sampling and similarly complex weighting procedures, is best done through the use of the bootstrap. This is a re-sampling technique whereby samples are simulated from the actual data to match the variability that would be observed if multiple real samples were used. To this end, the re-sampling follows the same stratum constraints of the original sampling. Sufficient re-sampling simulations are conducted to provide the empirical distribution of estimate. The confidence interval is then defined by the appropriate quantiles of this simulated distribution.

While this is generally recognised as the best procedure available, the resulting confidence intervals do have some shortcomings, as discussed following.

- Where a stratum has only one sampled element, it is not possible to simulate the possible variation. This situation leads to confidence intervals that are too small where the estimate includes such a stratum.
- While the simulated distribution of the estimates is generally quite realistic, this may be less so when measuring rates that are very low – that is where relatively few non-zero data records contribute to the estimated value. While the probability value associated with the interval will generally be correct, the confidence intervals may appear to vary in size.



The first of these shortcomings is due to a sampling design issue whereby some strata had only one school sampled and hence a measure of variability between schools in that stratum cannot be calculated. As such, the variability which exists in this stratum cannot be incorporated in any overall or aggregated calculations and hence an under-estimate of confidence intervals results. This design issue cannot be overcome using any method of calculation of confidence intervals.

For this survey, the 106 schools in the sample were re-sampled 1500 times – whilst matching the stratified sampling design – to construct empirical distributions of the prevalence estimates. Once the distributions had been constructed the 95% confidence intervals for the prevalence estimates were determined by taking the 2.5<sup>th</sup> and 97.5<sup>th</sup> percentiles of the distributions. This method of calculation incorporated the nesting of bullying within schools.

The bootstrapping was performed for the prevalence estimates using the R statistical package.

#### **5.2.4.5 Logistic regression**

Logistic regression was used to identify which characteristics were significant predictors of a student's likelihood of being covertly bullied or bullying others. Logistic regression is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous and the independent variables are of any type. Due to the non-independence of the data, the statistical significance of parameter estimates could not be determined using conventional p-values. Therefore confidence intervals were calculated for the parameter estimates using bootstrapping. The logistic regression was performed in Statistical Analysis Software (SAS).

The explanatory variables were firstly all included in a single model to assess their importance relative to each other and a backward process of elimination (with an alpha level of 0.05) was used to obtain a final list of significant predictors of the outcome variable. Thus the strongest predictors of being covertly bullied and covertly bullying others, from the list of explanatory variables, were determined.

The results from the logistic regression models are presented as odds ratios and their corresponding confidence intervals. The odds ratio shows how many times more likely a student is to be bullied or bully others compared with the reference level (for categorical variables) or for each increase of one unit (for non-categorical variables). An odds ratio of less than 1 means a student is less likely to be bullied or bully others, while an odds ratio greater than 1 means a student is more likely. Where the confidence interval contains the value 1, the odds ratio does not differ significantly from 1 and thus the *odds are similar* in the two groups being compared (for categorical variables) or for increases in the values of the variable (for non-categorical variables). On the other hand, where the confidence interval does not contain the value of 1, the odds are *significantly different* in the two groups being compared (for categorical variables) or for increases in the values of the variable (for non-categorical variables).

## 5.3 Student survey results

### 5.3.1 Response rates – schools and students

In total 229 schools were approached to recruit the 124 which agreed to participate in the study (54%). Reasons given by schools for not participating in the study included time restraints, lack of staff availability and previous commitments to other research projects. Of the recruited schools, 18 schools did not return surveys due to time constraints and flood damage to survey forms, leaving 106 schools participating. This corresponds to an overall school response rate of 46% (Table 5.2).

School response rates varied from State to State with Western Australia having the highest response rate of 80% and Victoria having the lowest at 27%. School response rates obtained for metropolitan (45%) and non-metropolitan regions (48%) were similar. A response rate of 40% was obtained for Government schools, 47% for non-Government schools, 50% for Catholic schools and 46% for other Independent schools (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.2: School response rates by stratum**

Stratum	State	Location	Sector	Schools where Surveys were Returned					
				Schools	Primary	High	Total	Response	
				Approached (n)	School (n)	School (n)	(n)	Rate (%)	
1	ACT	Metro		6	1	2	3	50	
2	NT	Non-metro	Government & non-Government	8	3	2	5	63	
3	NSW	Metro	Government	11	1	1	2	18	
4			Catholic	8	2	2	4	50	
5			Other independent	11	3	4	7	64	
6		Non-metro	Government	13	3	2	5	38	
7			Non-Government	6	2	2	4	67	
<b>Total</b>				<b>49</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>45</b>	
8		Qld	Metro	Government	9	2	3	5	56
9	Catholic			9	3	2	5	56	
10	Other independent			5	2	2	4	80	
11	Non-metro		Government	10	2	2	4	40	
12			non-Government	4	1	1	2	50	
<b>Total</b>				<b>37</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>54</b>	



Stratum	State	Location	Sector	Schools where Surveys were Returned				
				Schools Approached	Primary School	High School	Total	Response Rate
				(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(%)
13	SA	Metro	Government	9	2	2	4	44
14			Non-Government	9	2	3	5	56
15		Non-metro	Government & non-Government	8	4	2	6	75
		<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>58</b>
16	Tas	Metro	Government & non-Government	15	1	3	4	27
17		Non-metro	Government & non-Government	9	3	2	5	56
		<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>38</b>
18	Vic	Metro	Government	13	1	3	4	31
19			Catholic	7	2	1	3	43
20			Other independent	12	1	1	2	17
21		Non-metro	Government	14	3	2	5	36
22			non-Government	13	1	1	2	15
		<b>Total</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>27</b>
23	WA	Metro	Government	9	4	2	6	67
24			non-Government	6	3	2	5	83
25		Non-metro	Government & non-Government	5	3	2	5	100
		<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>80</b>
	<b>Total</b>			<b>229</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>46</b>

**Table 5.3: School response rates by area and sector**

Sector	Schools where Surveys were Returned				
	Schools Approached (n)	Primary School (n)	High School (n)	Total (n)	Response Rate (%)
Area					
Metro	139	30	33	63	45
Non-metro	90	25	18	43	48
Sector					
Government	88	18	17	35	40
non-Government	38	9	9	18	47
Catholic	24	7	5	12	50
Other independent	28	6	7	13	46
Other	51	15	13	28	55
Total Completed	229	55	51	106	46

Data were collected in the form of self-completion surveys from students in each year level from Year 4 to Year 9. Consent was sought from parents for their child to participate in the survey, in two ways. In certain States in Government schools, active consent was required i.e. parents had to sign and return a form granting consent for their child's participation. In most non-Government schools and small schools in the NT, ACT and Tasmania, an active/passive consent procedure was followed. That is, passive consent was assumed if the parent did not return a consent form in the two-round process. Where active parental consent was required, consent rates were markedly lower than in schools where it was not required and parents were required to 'opt out' to indicate non-consent.

Parent consent rates and student response rates per State are given in Table 5.4 and Table 5.5 respectively. In total 14 158 consent forms were sent for an overall consent rate of 62% (36% in schools where active consent was required and 96% in schools agreeing to passive consent). In total about 4% of all parents approached returned consent forms indicating they did not wish their child to participate. Student response rates were calculated based on the numbers of useable surveys returned. In total, for the 8782 students with parental consent, useable surveys were obtained from 85% (n=7418). Response rates were fairly similar across the States and Territories.

**Table 5.4: Parental consent rates by State**

State	Consent Type	Total students sent consent forms	Number with consent	Consent rate (%)
ACT	Active/passive	381	373	98
NT	Active/passive	604	589	98
NSW	Active	1727	582	34
NSW	Active/passive	1011	983	97
QLD	Active	1434	565	39
QLD	Active/passive	1274	1234	97
SA	Active	1196	573	48
SA	Active/passive	809	751	93
TAS	Active	90	19	21
TAS	Active/passive	927	892	96
VIC	Active	1544	485	31
VIC	Active/passive	655	615	94
WA	Active	1969	608	31
WA	Active/passive	537	513	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>7960</b>	<b>2832</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Active/passive</b>	<b>6198</b>	<b>5950</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>14158</b>	<b>8782</b>	<b>62</b>

**Table 5.5: Student response rates by State**

State	Total students sent consent forms	Number with consent	Number of useable surveys returned	Response rate (%)
ACT	381	373	317	85
NT	604	589	487	83
NSW	1727	1565	1358	87
QLD	1434	1799	1474	82
SA	1196	1324	1156	87
TAS	90	911	772	85
VIC	1544	1100	895	81
WA	1969	1121	959	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>8945</b>	<b>8782</b>	<b>7418</b>	<b>84</b>

Over 7000 students were surveyed about their experiences of bullying and being bullied. The number of respondents by State and a number of key demographics are shown in Table 5.6.

**Table 5.6: Number of respondents by key demographics by State**

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Australia	Percentage (%)
<b>Year Level</b>										
Year 4	46	254	97	270	226	115	179	225	1412	19
Year 5	33	247	83	271	209	129	182	137	1291	17
Year 6	52	222	90	250	179	135	172	179	1279	17
Year 7	54	253	90	244	177	148	173	175	1314	18
Year 8	60	205	59	236	188	135	103	108	1094	15
Year 9	72	177	68	203	177	110	86	135	1028	14
<b>Gender</b>										100
Males	139	581	237	650	550	435	445	484	3521	48
Females	178	777	246	822	603	332	447	469	3874	52
<b>Sector</b>										100
Government	0	316	305	394	455	376	397	536	2779	37
Non-Government	317	1042	182	1080	701	396	498	423	4639	63
<b>Area</b>										100
Metropolitan	317	882	0	1141	704	458	564	694	4760	64
Non-metropolitan	0	476	487	333	452	314	331	265	2658	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>1358</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>1474</b>	<b>1156</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>7418</b>	
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



### 5.3.2 Prevalence of bullying and being bullied

Being bullied and bullying others has social consequences for both groups and is a serious issue. But how widespread is the issue of bullying others and being bullied? Which demographic groups are affected the most and how is the bullying of others conducted? This section discusses the prevalence of bullying others and being bullied across all States and Territories and the key demographic groups. The data are analysed to see if there are differences between key demographics such as State, year level, sector, geographical area and gender. The report highlights areas of interest where a variation between demographics is evident or a trend is noticeable.

The following analysis provides prevalence estimates from Year 4 to Year 9 broken down by demographic variables to give a more complete picture of bullying, covert bullying and cyber bullying behaviours across Australia. Summaries of prevalence estimates for the student survey are provided in Tables 5.7 to 5.13 with a discussion of key results provided after the tables. All tables were generated using data weighted by sampling weights (as discussed at section 5.2.4).

**Table 5.7: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by key demographics by State – all forms of bullying**

Prevalence Rates – All Forms of Bullying										
		ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Australia
<b>Being Bullied</b>										
By year level	Year 4	26.1%	31.8%	43.3%	22.6%	23.2%	34.6%	26.7%	20.5%	27.4%
	Year 5	28.1%	39.8%	35.7%	26.4%	25.1%	28.9%	27.4%	39.0%	32.2%
	Year 6	21.2%	34.1%	23.1%	24.1%	24.3%	33.3%	11.1%	22.4%	24.6%
	Year 7	22.0%	20.9%	30.1%	27.8%	11.0%	37.9%	25.9%	24.1%	23.9%
	Year 8	27.7%	28.9%	33.1%	35.2%	25.9%	38.0%	25.3%	26.5%	29.1%
	Year 9	15.2%	22.0%	29.3%	30.9%	20.1%	19.0%	22.0%	21.4%	23.6%
By gender	Males	22.3%	31.7%	32.4%	28.2%	20.4%	28.3%	24.9%	22.7%	27.2%
	Females	23.7%	27.4%	32.2%	28.2%	22.9%	35.4%	21.9%	28.4%	26.2%
By sector	Government	-	29.6%	35.6%	29.1%	22.7%	28.5%	24.9%	26.8%	27.7%
	non-Government	23.0%	27.5%	24.4%	26.0%	20.7%	34.4%	19.8%	22.4%	24.6%
By area	Metropolitan	23.0%	28.1%	-	27.4%	20.1%	30.7%	23.4%	23.9%	25.9%
	Non-metropolitan	-	31.7%	32.2%	30.4%	28.8%	32.8%	22.5%	30.8%	29.2%
Total being bullied		23.0%	28.9%	32.2%	28.2%	22.0%	31.9%	23.2%	25.4%	26.7%
<b>Bullying Others</b>										
By year level	Year 4	13.0%	3.0%	14.3%	1.6%	3.7%	12.1%	1.5%	5.3%	2.9%
	Year 5	25.0%	13.0%	8.7%	12.5%	2.7%	11.1%	9.8%	3.5%	11.1%
	Year 6	3.9%	11.1%	11.3%	4.8%	8.9%	16.8%	4.7%	9.2%	7.9%
	Year 7	7.5%	8.1%	24.0%	4.7%	4.2%	9.2%	10.6%	5.8%	7.9%
	Year 8	11.2%	10.2%	8.2%	11.8%	17.5%	14.2%	6.5%	15.4%	10.8%
	Year 9	11.9%	10.7%	15.5%	8.6%	10.0%	9.5%	11.8%	15.9%	11.0%
By gender	Males	16.3%	13.2%	13.3%	8.5%	9.7%	13.7%	9.6%	12.6%	10.9%
	Females	7.1%	7.4%	11.7%	6.4%	7.7%	10.2%	6.5%	10.1%	7.2%
By sector	Government	-	8.3%	12.5%	7.6%	9.9%	10.2%	6.4%	10.7%	8.0%
	non-Government	11.7%	11.6%	14.4%	7.2%	7.5%	13.3%	10.8%	12.8%	10.5%
By area	Metropolitan	11.7%	9.8%	-	7.6%	7.5%	10.7%	7.0%	10.7%	8.6%
	Non-metropolitan	-	8.2%	13.1%	7.2%	14.7%	12.9%	10.7%	13.8%	9.6%
Total bullying others		11.7%	9.4%	13.1%	7.5%	9.1%	11.9%	7.9%	11.4%	8.8%

**Table 5.8: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by key demographics by State – covert bullying**

<b>Prevalence Rates – Covert Bullying</b>										
	<b>ACT</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>TAS</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>Australia</b>	
<b>Being Bullied</b>										
By year level										
Year 4	13.6%	25.1%	22.9%	14.1%	12.1%	12.6%	16.2%	14.1%	18.5%	
Year 5	15.6%	21.8%	17.9%	17.9%	12.7%	17.1%	18.6%	25.1%	19.5%	
Year 6	7.7%	25.9%	18.0%	17.4%	14.4%	19.0%	6.4%	17.3%	17.5%	
Year 7	10.8%	17.4%	19.5%	13.8%	4.8%	25.4%	11.7%	18.9%	14.7%	
Year 8	8.9%	19.5%	14.3%	24.2%	17.3%	22.3%	11.2%	20.1%	18.2%	
Year 9	10.5%	11.3%	18.9%	15.9%	7.9%	13.8%	7.1%	15.0%	11.5%	
By gender										
Males	8.4%	19.1%	15.3%	16.8%	10.8%	15.0%	9.2%	15.2%	14.7%	
Females	13.5%	20.0%	20.7%	18.0%	12.8%	22.3%	13.5%	21.7%	17.7%	
By sector										
Government	-	21.6%	19.8%	18.3%	11.1%	15.3%	11.4%	19.4%	17.4%	
non-Government	10.9%	15.8%	14.3%	15.1%	12.9%	21.2%	11.8%	16.0%	14.4%	
By area										
Metropolitan	10.9%	19.5%	-	16.5%	9.8%	15.3%	12.5%	17.7%	16.1%	
Non-metropolitan	-	20.3%	18.1%	20.1%	19.0%	21.5%	8.4%	20.5%	17.4%	
Total being covertly bullied	10.9%	19.7%	18.1%	17.4%	11.8%	18.7%	11.5%	18.3%	16.4%	
<b>Bullying Others Covertly</b>										
By year level										
Year 4	4.4%	1.2%	6.8%	.7%	2.5%	6.4%	1.1%	3.0%	1.4%	
Year 5	3.1%	9.4%	3.4%	7.7%	1.6%	6.2%	3.5%	2.1%	6.5%	
Year 6	3.9%	9.3%	10.0%	2.8%	2.7%	11.3%	2.6%	2.4%	5.3%	
Year 7	3.3%	4.1%	15.4%	3.0%	2.6%	6.7%	5.4%	2.8%	4.2%	
Year 8	7.8%	3.9%	4.7%	7.9%	9.5%	10.0%	3.0%	5.1%	5.2%	
Year 9	7.2%	4.0%	14.5%	5.4%	1.8%	6.9%	4.6%	6.3%	4.7%	
By gender										
Males	7.2%	7.9%	9.0%	4.2%	3.8%	9.4%	4.3%	3.7%	5.4%	
Females	3.2%	3.7%	8.3%	5.2%	4.0%	6.6%	2.9%	5.1%	4.0%	
By sector										
Government	-	5.1%	8.8%	4.9%	3.6%	6.2%	2.4%	3.3%	4.2%	
non-Government	5.2%	5.3%	9.6%	4.4%	4.4%	9.3%	5.8%	6.5%	5.5%	
By area										
Metropolitan	5.2%	5.2%	-	4.7%	3.5%	6.8%	3.8%	3.6%	4.5%	
Non-metropolitan	-	5.1%	9.1%	4.8%	5.2%	8.9%	2.5%	7.0%	4.8%	
Total bullying others covertly	5.2%	5.2%	9.1%	4.7%	3.9%	8.0%	3.5%	4.3%	4.6%	

**Table 5.9: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by key demographics by State – cyber bullying**

Prevalence Rates – Bullying by Technology										
		ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Australia
<b>Being Bullied</b>										
By year level	Year 4	6.7%	4.3%	12.8%	5.0%	8.1%	6.8%	4.2%	7.1%	4.9%
	Year 5	.0%	7.1%	3.6%	2.3%	10.1%	5.7%	6.2%	5.6%	5.7%
	Year 6	7.7%	7.3%	5.5%	3.9%	8.2%	16.2%	5.0%	.8%	5.8%
	Year 7	5.9%	9.2%	10.4%	4.0%	13.5%	18.2%	4.5%	6.1%	7.1%
	Year 8	8.4%	8.1%	8.8%	8.0%	4.8%	15.9%	6.1%	8.8%	7.7%
	Year 9	8.6%	7.0%	11.2%	7.3%	3.2%	24.4%	9.4%	6.6%	7.8%
By gender	Males	6.0%	7.3%	9.7%	3.7%	4.1%	10.0%	4.6%	3.7%	5.2%
	Females	7.0%	7.3%	8.4%	6.8%	10.3%	21.0%	7.1%	9.2%	7.7%
By sector	Government	-	6.2%	9.6%	4.5%	7.2%	16.7%	5.4%	4.9%	5.7%
	non-Government	6.5%	9.6%	7.3%	7.1%	7.2%	14.7%	7.1%	9.4%	8.4%
By area	Metropolitan	6.5%	7.3%	-	4.7%	7.0%	10.2%	6.7%	5.7%	6.4%
	Non-metropolitan	-	7.4%	8.9%	6.9%	7.8%	19.9%	3.7%	8.9%	7.3%
Total being bullied		6.5%	7.3%	8.9%	5.3%	7.2%	15.6%	6.0%	6.3%	6.6%
<b>Bullying Others</b>										
By year level	Year 4	2.2%	1.1%	4.2%	2.2%	.8%	2.2%	.0%	2.0%	1.2%
	Year 5	3.0%	1.1%	1.4%	3.2%	2.8%	5.4%	.7%	3.9%	1.9%
	Year 6	.0%	2.0%	2.9%	.6%	7.6%	5.2%	2.6%	1.9%	2.2%
	Year 7	12.2%	3.2%	5.1%	1.7%	5.0%	8.4%	5.7%	3.8%	4.0%
	Year 8	9.8%	3.3%	8.4%	4.4%	2.1%	18.1%	3.7%	11.2%	4.8%
	Year 9	6.5%	5.9%	11.5%	9.2%	1.6%	8.3%	1.8%	7.1%	5.6%
By gender	Males	8.0%	3.2%	7.7%	2.9%	4.3%	10.0%	3.2%	6.2%	3.8%
	Females	4.4%	2.8%	5.3%	4.7%	1.9%	7.4%	2.3%	6.6%	3.3%
By sector	Government	-	1.1%	6.2%	3.1%	2.0%	5.8%	1.1%	5.4%	2.0%
	non-Government	6.2%	6.8%	6.6%	5.5%	5.0%	10.9%	5.6%	8.7%	6.4%
By area	Metropolitan	6.2%	2.3%	-	4.1%	3.4%	8.4%	2.7%	5.0%	3.2%
	Non-metropolitan	-	5.0%	6.4%	2.9%	1.6%	9.0%	2.4%	11.8%	4.4%
Total bullying others		6.2%	2.9%	6.4%	3.8%	3.0%	8.7%	2.7%	6.4%	3.5%



**Table 5.10: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by key demographics by year level – all forms of bullying**

<b>Prevalence Rates – All Forms of Bullying</b>		<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7 – Primary</b>	<b>Year 7 – Secondary</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Being Bullied</b>									
By gender	Males	23.0%	32.4%	24.3%	22.5%	29.4%	36.2%	20.9%	27.2%
	Females	31.4%	32.0%	24.9%	26.7%	20.6%	25.0%	25.2%	26.2%
By sector	Government	27.5%	34.7%	23.5%	25.6%	22.2%	31.9%	25.4%	27.7%
	non-Government	27.1%	26.4%	27.1%	22.7%	25.4%	24.6%	20.7%	24.6%
By area	Metropolitan	26.8%	33.1%	24.7%	28.4%	20.2%	26.3%	22.8%	25.9%
	Non-metropolitan	29.5%	29.0%	24.1%	13.5%	33.3%	36.8%	25.8%	29.2%
Total being bullied		27.4%	32.2%	24.6%	24.8%	23.5%	29.1%	23.6%	26.7%
<b>Bullying Others</b>									
By gender	Males	3.3%	17.2%	8.5%	7.0%	13.8%	10.7%	13.8%	10.9%
	Females	2.5%	5.1%	7.1%	3.4%	6.7%	10.8%	9.0%	7.2%
By sector	Government	1.8%	12.6%	6.8%	4.5%	7.0%	9.7%	10.0%	8.0%
	non-Government	5.4%	7.5%	10.3%	6.5%	12.2%	12.4%	12.7%	10.5%
By area	Metropolitan	2.2%	12.6%	8.0%	5.2%	8.2%	11.3%	9.3%	8.6%
	Non-metropolitan	5.4%	5.7%	7.3%	4.8%	11.8%	9.2%	15.8%	9.6%
Total bullying others		2.9%	11.1%	7.9%	5.1%	9.1%	10.8%	11.0%	8.8%

**Table 5.11: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by key demographics by year level – covert bullying**

<b>Prevalence Rates – Covert Bullying</b>		<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7 – Primary</b>	<b>Year 7 – Secondary</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Being Bullied</b>									
By gender	Males	11.8%	19.5%	16.8%	14.2%	17.8%	18.1%	6.0%	14.7%
	Females	24.8%	19.6%	18.3%	12.4%	14.0%	18.2%	15.1%	17.7%
By sector	Government	18.4%	22.0%	18.0%	13.7%	13.4%	20.7%	12.3%	17.4%
	non-Government	18.9%	13.5%	16.1%	12.4%	17.9%	14.1%	10.2%	14.4%
By area	Metropolitan	19.0%	20.6%	17.5%	14.4%	13.6%	16.1%	11.2%	16.1%
	Non-metropolitan	16.9%	15.7%	17.2%	10.2%	20.3%	24.0%	12.3%	17.4%
Total being bullied		18.5%	19.5%	17.5%	13.4%	15.2%	18.2%	11.5%	16.4%
<b>Bullying Others</b>									
By gender	Males	1.7%	10.3%	5.1%	3.8%	4.3%	4.6%	6.3%	5.4%
	Females	1.2%	2.7%	5.6%	2.4%	4.9%	5.6%	3.7%	4.0%
By sector	Government	.9%	7.6%	4.9%	2.9%	4.0%	4.9%	3.2%	4.6%
	non-Government	2.6%	3.9%	6.2%	3.5%	5.7%	5.8%	7.2%	4.2%
By area	Metropolitan	1.0%	7.0%	5.4%	3.2%	4.7%	5.4%	4.1%	5.5%
	Non-metropolitan	3.0%	4.8%	5.1%	2.7%	4.8%	4.8%	6.4%	4.6%
Total bullying others		1.4%	6.5%	5.3%	3.0%	4.7%	5.2%	4.7%	4.6%

**Table 5.12: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by key demographics by year level – cyber bullying**

<b>Prevalence Rates – Cyber Bullying</b>		<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7 – Primary</b>	<b>Year 7 – Secondary</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Being Bullied</b>									
By gender	Males	2.0%	5.8%	5.2%	4.6%	8.9%	5.2%	5.8%	5.2%
	Females	7.4%	5.5%	6.6%	7.2%	6.9%	9.0%	9.0%	7.7%
By sector	Government	4.1%	5.4%	3.7%	5.5%	6.4%	8.1%	6.5%	5.7%
	non-Government	6.9%	6.2%	10.8%	7.0%	9.5%	7.1%	9.8%	8.4%
By area	Metropolitan	3.8%	6.2%	5.3%	6.7%	7.9%	7.7%	7.3%	6.4%
	Non-metropolitan	9.2%	3.8%	7.6%	3.3%	6.8%	7.5%	9.3%	7.3%
Total being bullied		4.9%	5.7%	5.8%	5.9%	7.6%	7.7%	7.8%	6.6%
<b>Bullying Others</b>									
By gender	Males	.4%	2.7%	2.4%	3.2%	7.2%	5.0%	6.3%	3.8%
	Females	1.8%	1.1%	1.9%	2.0%	3.4%	4.8%	5.2%	3.3%
By sector	Government	1.0%	1.5%	.8%	2.3%	3.5%	2.6%	2.9%	2.0%
	non-Government	1.6%	2.8%	5.6%	3.4%	6.3%	8.5%	9.9%	6.4%
By area	Metropolitan	.4%	1.9%	2.2%	2.6%	3.8%	4.4%	5.9%	3.2%
	Non-metropolitan	3.9%	1.9%	1.9%	2.6%	7.0%	6.2%	5.0%	4.4%
Total bullying		1.2%	1.9%	2.2%	2.6%	4.6%	4.8%	5.6%	3.5%


**Table 5.13: Prevalence of bullying others and being bullied by gender and sector**

<b>Prevalence Rates – Type of Bullying by Gender and Sector</b>						
		<b>Males</b>			<b>Females</b>	
		Covert	Cyber	All Forms	Covert	Cyber
Being Bullied	All Forms					
Government	27.4%	15.7%	4.0%	27.9%	18.6%	6.9%
non-Government	27.0%	13.1%	7.2%	22.5%	15.7%	9.5%
Total	27.2%	14.7%	5.2%	26.2%	17.7%	7.7%
Bullying Others						
Government	9.9%	5.0%	2.2%	6.6%	3.6%	1.9%
non-Government	12.5%	6.1%	6.3%	8.6%	4.9%	6.5%
Total	10.9%	5.4%	3.8%	7.2%	4.0%	3.3%

The preceding tables show that bullying is a significant issue across Australian schools, without a large degree of variation across the broader demographic groups of gender, sector and geographical area. There are, however, some interesting differences between specific groups, and the key findings are outlined below.

The prevalence estimates support previous findings that Year 5 and 8 are among the highest of the year groups to indicate they are bullied, and also to indicate they have bullied others. This was consistent for both bullying overall and covert bullying. Year 9s also had a high prevalence estimate for bullying others (but not being bullied). For cyber bullying, there was an upward trend with year level, which is not surprising as children are likely to have greater access, proficiency and freedom in using technology as they get older. This trend was consistent in the reports of students who were bullied and those who bullied others.

When the year groups were examined separately for Government and non-Government schools, it is apparent that the peaks in being bullied among Year 5 and Year 8 students were present only in Government schools, with much less variation over the year groups for non-Government school students. The high rate of bullying others among Year 5 students was also higher for males than females, and at metropolitan schools compared with non-metropolitan schools.



Students from Government schools were more likely to indicate that they are bullied by others, either covertly or overall than students from non-Government schools. However, students from non-Government schools were more likely than students from Government schools to indicate that they bully others (covertly or overall), with an exception for Year 5 Government school students who reported bullying others at a comparatively high rate (13%). According to prevalence estimates for both bullying others and being bullied, cyber bullying was used more by students from non-Government schools compared with Government schools. For non-Government students the increased trend of cyber bullying for students as they get older is particularly strong. Among Year 9 non-Government students, 10% indicated that they cyber bullied others. Given that 13% of non-Government Year 9 students indicated that they bullied others overall, cyber bullying appears to form a substantial percentage of their bullying behaviour.

Higher prevalence estimates of bullying behaviour overall and covert bullying behaviour were found for the Northern Territory and Tasmania. There is, however, a relatively high uncertainty in the estimates of prevalence for these States due to the smaller sample sizes, as can be seen by the confidence intervals detailed in Chapter 5, Appendix 6.

Although little difference was found between the genders for being bullied overall (with only marginally higher estimates for males), females were slightly more likely to indicate they had been bullied covertly, compared with males. For all forms of bullying males were slightly more likely than females to admit that they bullied others.

### 5.3.3 Nature and circumstances of covert bullying

Covert bullying was described in the questionnaire as ‘bullying that cannot be easily seen by others’. Covert bullying behaviours include telling lies or nasty stories about someone behind their back, excluding someone with the intent to be hurtful, making others feel afraid, and all forms of cyber bullying.

Students were classified as having been covertly bullied if they had experienced covert bullying behaviour at least every few weeks during the term. Table 5.14 shows the frequency of covert bullying by year level and gender. Almost all students answered this question (98%) and of these, 16% stated that they were covertly bullied at least every few weeks. Just over half of all students said they were not covertly bullied and 30% of students had been bullied a maximum of only once or twice. It was noted, however, that 5% of students experienced covert bullying most days and 9% experienced some form of covert bullying at least once a week.

**Table 5.14: Whether students were covertly bullied and frequency of being covertly bullied**

<b>Frequency of Being Covertly Bullied</b>		<b>Not bullied</b>	<b>Once or twice</b>	<b>Every few weeks</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>Most days</b>
<b>This term</b>						
By year level	Year 4	50.6%	30.8%	6.5%	4.4%	7.7%
	Year 5	45.6%	34.9%	11.3%	4.0%	4.3%
	Year 6	55.7%	26.8%	7.6%	4.3%	5.5%
	Year 7 – Primary	48.2%	38.4%	6.1%	3.4%	3.8%
	Year 7 – Secondary	58.0%	26.7%	5.8%	3.0%	6.5%
	Year 8	52.9%	28.9%	7.0%	4.8%	6.4%
	Year 9	59.6%	28.9%	5.8%	2.5%	3.2%
By gender	Males	58.2%	27.0%	6.2%	3.4%	5.1%
	Females	50.2%	32.1%	8.0%	4.1%	5.6%
Total being bullied	Total	53.7%	29.9%	7.2%	3.8%	5.4%

Tables 5.15 through to Table 5.20 provide detailed information about the nature and circumstances of covert bullying. As such, the responses in these tables are restricted to those students who were covertly bullied at least every few weeks. Thus all of the percentages given in this section are of those students who indicated they had been bullied covertly. They represent the experiences of both covert and overt forms of bullying within this group. All tables are based on weighted data.

**Table 5.15: Types of bullying behaviour experienced by those students who have been covertly bullied, by year level**

<b>Students who have been bullied covertly</b>		<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7 – Primary</b>	<b>Year 7 – Secondary</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Types of bullying behaviour experienced</b>		<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7 – Primary</b>	<b>Year 7 – Secondary</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Australia</b>
	Teased in nasty ways	44.2%	67.4%	65.9%	57.7%	69.9%	52.3%	65.3%	59.8%
	Hurt physically by another student	21.2%	31.5%	22.0%	10.3%	31.9%	27.5%	14.8%	24.3%
	Told lies about you	31.6%	42.2%	39.8%	39.6%	43.4%	34.8%	56.2%	40.6%
	Rumours spread about you	28.3%	34.8%	36.6%	41.0%	40.7%	33.3%	57.2%	37.9%
	Secrets told about you to others	29.5%	36.6%	30.9%	39.5%	46.1%	30.0%	51.8%	36.5%
	Deliberately ignored you	19.6%	39.7%	42.7%	45.8%	37.2%	29.8%	42.3%	35.2%
	Deliberately not talked to you to hurt you	28.0%	31.3%	24.6%	14.6%	40.4%	21.9%	47.5%	30.3%
	Deliberately tried to break up a friendship	21.2%	33.9%	19.6%	27.6%	18.9%	25.2%	41.2%	26.8%
	Made to feel afraid you would get hurt	14.2%	34.1%	16.9%	13.8%	31.2%	29.9%	36.4%	26.5%
	Ganged up on by a group	16.8%	40.0%	22.7%	16.3%	22.7%	24.1%	21.2%	24.6%
	Tried to frighten you	16.6%	20.3%	20.1%	19.7%	25.4%	29.2%	24.2%	22.7%
	Told by a student they would not like you unless you did what they said	21.3%	24.7%	17.4%	6.9%	17.7%	18.0%	12.9%	18.4%
	Wrote/circulated nasty notes about you at school	10.9%	11.8%	7.2%	7.2%	22.3%	8.6%	22.1%	12.7%
	Sent nasty messages on the internet (MSN)	6.6%	8.3%	8.3%	6.0%	17.6%	15.7%	28.6%	13.5%
	Deliberately ignored or left out of things over the net	6.0%	3.5%	8.4%	10.8%	15.5%	18.5%	15.4%	11.2%
	Sent nasty text messages or prank calls to your mobile phone	1.9%	6.2%	4.8%	2.7%	7.3%	13.7%	19.6%	8.8%
	Sent threatening emails	4.3%	10.0%	4.8%	4.1%	6.1%	6.3%	21.7%	8.5%
	Used your screen name or passwords	2.5%	11.0%	10.6%	1.3%	6.6%	.9%	10.4%	6.4%
	Posted mean or nasty comments or pictures on websites	1.9%	2.2%	5.0%	3.4%	21.2%	4.2%	10.6%	6.4%
	Sent your private emails, messages, pictures or videos to others	2.2%	4.6%	1.9%	1.0%	2.8%	2.3%	8.8%	3.5%
	Sent mean or nasty messages or pictures about you to others mobile phones	.9%	2.1%	1.4%	.1%	3.7%	.6%	10.6%	2.8%
	Other	30.1%	19.9%	13.0%	9.6%	20.7%	10.6%	34.6%	20.0%

**Table 5.16: How often, where and when students were covertly bullied**

<b>Students who have been bullied covertly</b>		<b>Location of covert bullying</b>						
<b>This term</b>		<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Break times</b>	<b>To school</b>	<b>From school</b>	<b>At home</b>	<b>Friend's house</b>	<b>Other</b>
How often	Not bullied	23.4%	12.1%	83.3%	71.8%	70.5%	76.5%	80.0%
	Once or twice	30.2%	23.4%	7.0%	13.3%	12.2%	13.3%	4.7%
	Every few weeks	17.5%	28.8%	2.6%	4.8%	4.4%	4.3%	3.0%
	Once a week	11.1%	11.8%	1.2%	3.4%	2.7%	1.9%	5.0%
	Most days	17.8%	23.9%	5.9%	6.7%	10.2%	3.9%	7.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Percentage of students who have been covertly bullied in this location at least every few weeks</b>								
By year level	Year 4	34.5%	70.5%	4.5%	7.2%	21.6%	12.8%	21.0%
	Year 5	39.2%	67.9%	8.6%	17.2%	21.7%	8.1%	5.3%
	Year 6	48.1%	74.3%	4.3%	10.5%	13.7%	3.4%	11.2%
	Year 7 – Primary	48.8%	71.4%	2.6%	4.6%	18.8%	5.7%	14.0%
	Year 7 – Secondary	65.2%	68.5%	15.1%	20.8%	17.6%	16.9%	15.0%
	Year 8	46.3%	51.6%	9.9%	16.8%	12.8%	5.3%	14.8%
	Year 9	51.1%	57.9%	20.1%	20.9%	17.2%	20.9%	27.8%
	Males	49.0%	69.4%	7.6%	14.9%	17.2%	10.5%	9.7%
	Females	44.7%	61.5%	10.9%	14.9%	17.3%	10.0%	19.8%
	Total	46.4%	64.6%	9.6%	14.9%	17.3%	10.2%	15.3%
By gender	Males	49.0%	69.4%	7.6%	14.9%	17.2%	10.5%	9.7%
	Females	44.7%	61.5%	10.9%	14.9%	17.3%	10.0%	19.8%
	Total	46.4%	64.6%	9.6%	14.9%	17.3%	10.2%	15.3%



**Table 5.17: Location of bullying by means of the mobile phone or the internet**

<b>Students who have been bullied covertly</b>							
<b>Location of being bullied by means of mobile phone or internet</b>							
<b>This term</b>	<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Break times</b>	<b>To school</b>	<b>From school</b>	<b>At home</b>	<b>Friend's house</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Mobile Phone or internet</b>							
Not bullied	75.3%	69.4%	89.6%	82.6%	74.3%	85.6%	91.9%
Once or twice	11.0%	11.1%	5.9%	9.0%	11.8%	8.1%	4.6%
Every few weeks	2.4%	8.0%	1.1%	2.2%	5.7%	1.1%	.5%
Once a week	2.8%	4.6%	.5%	1.0%	3.5%	1.5%	.9%
Most days	8.5%	7.0%	2.8%	5.2%	4.7%	3.7%	2.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Percentage of students who have been bullied by mobile phone or internet in this location at least every few weeks</b>							
<b>By year level</b>							
Year 4	12.7%	16.0%	1.0%	2.3%	12.6%	4.5%	2.5%
Year 5	5.9%	22.4%	3.4%	11.2%	12.7%	7.1%	2.2%
Year 6	13.2%	14.0%	1.3%	9.5%	10.5%	2.6%	2.3%
Year 7 – Primary	14.1%	24.5%	1.1%	2.4%	29.7%	3.2%	3.4%
Year 7 – Secondary	16.3%	18.6%	7.0%	8.0%	13.8%	8.4%	0.8%
Year 8	19.5%	14.6%	5.0%	8.5%	11.9%	5.3%	6.0%
Year 9	13.4%	33.1%	11.1%	12.6%	19.1%	11.8%	5.7%
<b>By gender</b>							
Males	15.4%	21.2%	4.0%	9.6%	11.7%	5.2%	3.0%
Females	12.5%	18.6%	4.7%	7.7%	15.2%	6.9%	3.9%
Total	13.6%	19.6%	4.4%	8.4%	13.9%	6.2%	3.5%

**Table 5.18: How often and by whom students were covertly bullied during the term**


<b>Students who have been bullied covertly</b>						
<b>How often and by whom</b>						
<b>This term</b>		<b>Mainly one boy</b>	<b>A group of boys</b>	<b>Mainly one girl</b>	<b>A group of girls</b>	<b>Both boys and girls</b>
How often	Not bullied	40.6%	44.7%	43.9%	42.7%	52.1%
	Once or twice	24.9%	15.6%	20.4%	23.1%	19.6%
	Every few weeks	14.8%	17.1%	11.4%	14.0%	11.5%
	Once a week	6.7%	8.8%	9.0%	7.1%	7.3%
	Most days	13.0%	13.8%	15.4%	13.1%	9.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Percentage of students who have been covertly bullied by these person(s) at least every few weeks</b>						
By year level	Year 4	18.3%	16.5%	36.3%	29.3%	18.9%
	Year 5	33.1%	45.6%	40.9%	35.4%	34.0%
	Year 6	45.7%	58.7%	30.5%	27.1%	25.6%
	Year 7 – Primary	28.6%	22.9%	21.1%	20.6%	32.6%
	Year 7 – Secondary	30.8%	46.6%	36.7%	36.4%	22.7%
	Year 8	34.1%	37.4%	34.1%	34.5%	26.5%
	Year 9	46.8%	39.1%	39.7%	47.5%	40.2%
By gender	Males	47.3%	63.2%	15.3%	15.5%	31.8%
	Females	26.2%	23.8%	48.0%	45.1%	26.1%
	Total	34.5%	39.7%	35.7%	34.2%	28.3%

**Table 5.19: Who was bullying and from where the bullying came**

<b>Students who have been bullied covertly</b>						
<b>Bullied by someone or people:</b>						
<b>Being bullied covertly by people you know / don't know</b>	<b>I know</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>From another school</b>	<b>Over internet, but don't know</b>	<b>Met over the internet</b>	<b>Other</b>
Not bullied	12.4%	73.7%	77.7%	90.3%	94.2%	78.8%
Bullied	87.6%	26.3%	22.3%	9.7%	5.8%	21.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Percentage of students who have been covertly bullied by these person(s)</b>						
By year level						
Year 4	77.8%	24.7%	15.5%	3.8%	1.7%	77.8%
Year 5	89.9%	18.5%	16.9%	10.7%	8.4%	89.9%
Year 6	87.4%	31.9%	27.0%	7.4%	3.9%	87.4%
Year 7 – Primary	90.4%	13.6%	22.7%	3.8%	9.4%	90.4%
Year 7 – Secondary	94.4%	47.9%	36.1%	16.9%	3.7%	94.4%
Year 8	90.4%	27.7%	16.3%	6.9%	4.4%	90.4%
Year 9	85.2%	16.2%	29.5%	17.4%	12.2%	85.2%
By gender						
Males	82.3%	31.9%	16.6%	4.0%	5.6%	82.3%
Females	91.0%	22.7%	25.8%	13.3%	6.0%	91.0%
Total	87.6%	26.3%	22.2%	9.6%	5.8%	87.6%

**Table 5.20: Year level of the students who bully others in relation to those who are bullied**

Covertly bullied by different age groups		Age groups of person(s) bullying:						Don't know which year level
		A year below	Same year	One year above	Two years above	Three years or more		
		How often	Not bullied	Bullied a few times	Bullied a lot of times	Total		
How often	Not bullied	75.2%	8.9%	50.4%	73.9%	84.7%	74.6%	
	Bullied a few times	20.9%	32.3%	36.8%	20.8%	11.0%	18.0%	
	Bullied a lot of times	3.9%	58.8%	12.8%	5.3%	4.3%	7.4%	
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Percentage of students who have been covertly bullied by these age groups at least a few times								
By year level	Year 4	31.9%	80.4%	49.0%	37.5%	15.2%	26.8%	
	Year 5	39.3%	89.1%	62.7%	12.9%	10.2%	26.8%	
	Year 6	20.6%	98.4%	45.6%	26.1%	21.7%	30.6%	
	Year 7 – Primary	31.1%	97.4%	24.1%	24.3%	12.2%	29.5%	
	Year 7 – Secondary	12.2%	96.8%	60.0%	41.1%	32.0%	26.9%	
	Year 8	13.1%	91.2%	48.7%	25.1%	14.4%	22.2%	
	Year 9	27.9%	90.9%	38.1%	20.1%	5.8%	17.6%	
By gender	Males	26.0%	90.0%	53.7%	31.7%	21.2%	28.8%	
	Females	24.1%	91.8%	46.7%	22.3%	11.3%	22.9%	
	Total	24.8%	91.1%	49.5%	26.1%	15.2%	25.3%	



Students who stated they had been covertly bullied in the past term experienced a range of bullying behaviours, including some overt bullying behaviours (Table 5.15). Being teased in nasty ways was the most prevalent form of bullying behaviour experienced by covertly bullied students, with three out of five students (60%) who have been covertly bullied stating they had experienced this form of bullying. This was consistently the most common bullying behaviour across all year levels, although the prevalence of this (and a number of other bullying behaviours) was lower amongst the Year 4 group. Having lies, rumours or secrets spread were the most commonly experienced covert bullying behaviours, each experienced by over a third of students who had been covertly bullied. Being cyber bullied most commonly takes the form of sending nasty messages on the internet, which has been experienced by 14% of these students (nearly one in six). Nearly one in four students (24%) who have been covertly bullied has also experienced being hurt physically by another (overtly bullied).


Of the covertly bullied students, Year 5 and Year 7 secondary students are the most likely to also be bullied physically and Year 7 primary and Year 9 the least likely. However, Year 9 students experience high levels of covert bullying behaviours and cyber bullying compared with other year levels.

Students were asked whether the covert bullying took place at each of a number of locations (Table 5.16). The results show that covert bullying takes place predominantly during break times and in the classroom. Nearly two thirds of students who were bullied covertly stated that this occurred during break times and nearly half stated the bullying happened in the classroom. Other locations registered less than 20% of students, with travelling to school the least likely location for covert bullying to occur. This may be related to the high incidence of children in today's society being driven to school. Students are slightly more likely to be covertly bullied at home than at a friend's house or when travelling from school.

Experiencing being bullied during break times is slightly higher in the lower year levels (4, 5 and 6). Year 7s in secondary schools who are covertly bullied are much more likely to be bullied in the classroom and on the way to and from school than Year 7s in primary schools.

As can be seen in Table 5.17, as with covert bullying overall, bullying by means of mobile phone or the internet most commonly takes place during break times (20%). With this type of bullying there are distinct differences between year levels. Secondary school students are more likely than primary school students to experience bullying by means of mobile phone on the way to school. Year 9s are more likely than all other year levels to experience these forms of bullying in break times and on the way to school, largely because they had more access to mobile phones. Almost one in three Year 7s in primary school experienced bullying by mobile phone or the internet at home, compared with only about one in ten for most other year levels. Year 5s were the least likely to experience these forms of covert bullying in the classroom. There was little difference between the genders in terms of the location of bullying by means of mobile phone or the internet.

Generally, the students who were covertly bullied reported they were bullied by students of the same sex (Table 5.18). Males are more likely to be bullied by a group, with nearly two in three being bullied by a



group of boys, compared with just under a half who have been bullied by mainly one boy. For females, similar percentages (both close to a half) have been bullied by a group of girls and by mainly one girl. Females were more likely to be bullied by males than males were to be bullied by females. Being bullied by a group of boys is more likely to be experienced in Year 5, Year 6 and Year 7 secondary. Year 9s experienced high levels of bullying from all categories compared with other year levels. Year 7 primary students experienced the lowest levels of bullying by one girl or a group of girls, while Year 4s were least likely to be bullied by one boy or a group of boys.

Of those students who experience covert bullying, most (88%) know the person who bullied them (Table 5.19). Year 6 (32%) and Year 7 secondary (48%) are more likely than other year levels to be bullied by someone they do not know. While nearly all students in Year 7 secondary who were covertly bullied were bullied by someone they knew (94%), nearly half (48%) were also bullied by someone they didn't know and a third (36%) by students from other schools. Year 9 students were more likely to be bullied over the internet, both by someone they had met over the internet (12%) and by someone they didn't know over the internet (17%), than other year groups. Males are more likely to be bullied generally by someone they don't know (32% males and 23% females), while females compared with males are more likely to be bullied over the internet by someone they don't know (13% females, 4% males).

Typically, students who are covertly bullied are bullied by other students from their own cohort (91%) or by students in the year above them (50%) (Table 5.20). However, bullying was also carried out by students at a lower level or higher level for a lesser percentage of students. Year 4 students and Year 7 secondary students were more likely to experience bullying by students two or more year levels above the student being bullied, compared with other year groups. Males were more likely than females to experience bullying from older students.

### 5.3.4 Frequency of bullying others covertly

This section deals with how often students are involved in bullying others. Specifically, year levels and gender will be analysed to investigate where differences or similarities exist.

Students are classified as having bullied others if they enacted bullying behaviour at least every few weeks during the term. A summary of bullying others covertly is provided in Table 5.21 using the weighted data.

**Table 5.21: Frequency of covert bullying behaviour by year level and gender**

<b>Frequency of Covertly Bullying Others</b>		<b>Did not bully</b>	<b>Once or twice</b>	<b>Every few weeks</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>Most days</b>
<b>This term</b>						
By year level	Year 4	81.8%	16.7%	.7%	.4%	.3%
	Year 5	70.4%	23.1%	3.3%	2.1%	1.1%
	Year 6	71.3%	23.3%	3.0%	.4%	2.0%
	Year 7 – Primary	76.7%	20.3%	2.2%	.2%	.7%
	Year 7 – Secondary	68.8%	26.5%	2.6%	1.9%	.2%
	Year 8	68.1%	26.6%	3.1%	.9%	1.2%
	Year 9	73.2%	22.1%	2.2%	1.3%	1.2%
By gender	Males	71.8%	22.8%	2.6%	1.4%	1.4%
	Females	72.9%	23.2%	2.4%	.9%	.7%
<b>Total bullied others</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

Overall, just under three quarters of all students (72%) do not bully and slightly under a quarter (23%) bully once or twice a term. Five percent of all students report bullying someone every few weeks or more often.

There is little difference between the year groups when it comes to comparing how often students covertly bully others. However, a lower percentage of Year 4 students (under 2%) report bullying others compared with the other year groups, while Year 5 has the highest percentage of students who bully others at 6.5%. There is also very little difference between the genders, although males are nearly twice as likely to bully others at least once a week compared with females (2.8% males to 1.6% females).

### 5.3.5 Other forms of bullying associated with covert bullying

Further insight into bullying can be gained by considering the different ways in which students are bullied, and bully others, in combination. Table 5.22 gives the percentages of those students, who are bullied in any way, who reported that they experienced covert forms of bullying. Note that these students may have been bullied in more overt ways as well. Similarly, Table 5.23 looks at all those who reported bullying others and identifies the percentages of those students who bullied others covertly. Weighted data have been used to generate these tables.

**Table 5.22: Percentage of students who were bullied in any way and also bullied covertly**

<b>Being Covertly Bullied</b>		<b>Not covertly bullied</b>	<b>Covertly bullied</b>
This term –	Not bullied	100.0%	.0%
Bullied in any way	Bullied	38.7%	61.3%
	Were bullied in any way		23.3%
By year level	Year 4	36.4%	63.6%
	Year 5	39.4%	60.6%
	Year 6	28.7%	71.3%
	Year 7 – Primary	45.0%	55.0%
	Year 7 – Secondary	33.2%	66.8%
	Year 8	37.1%	62.9%
	Year 9	50.9%	49.1%
By gender	Males	45.6%	54.4%
	Females	33.1%	66.9%



**Table 5.23: Percentage of students who bullied others in any way and also bullied others covertly**

Being Covertly Bullied		Not covertly bullied	Covertly bullied
This term –	Not bullied	100.0%	.0%
Bullied others in any way	Bullied others	46.8%	53.2%
Bullied others in any way			23.3%
By year level	Year 4	50.5%	49.5%
	Year 5	40.8%	59.2%
	Year 6	31.5%	68.5%
	Year 7 – Primary	30.7%	69.3%
	Year 7 – Secondary	47.7%	52.3%
	Year 8	50.6%	49.4%
	Year 9	56.1%	43.9%
By gender	Males	48.7%	51.3%
	Females	44.3%	55.7%

Three out of five students (61%) who were bullied in any way stated they were bullied covertly, whilst 39% indicated they were bullied but not by covert means. Of all the year levels, in Year 6 a larger percentage (71% of those bullied) and in Year 9 a smaller percentage (49% of those bullied) of bullied students reported being exposed to covert bullying. Relatively more of the female (67%) than the male (54%) students who were bullied, reported being bullied covertly.

Just over half of all students who bullied others did so covertly. This was more likely to happen in Year 6 and Year 7 primary than in other years. There was little difference between the genders with slightly more than half of all students who bully others reporting that they had bullied others by covert means.



### 5.3.6 Predicting students involved in covert bullying

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of this report is to try to determine the predictors of being exposed to and engaging in bullying behaviour. How are students who are bullied and who bully others different from other students? To identify key characteristics for predicting whether students would be covertly bullied or covertly bully others, logistic regression models were fitted. Separate models were fitted for students who were covertly bullied and those who covertly bullied others. While it is possible to gain some information regarding characteristics of students who were bullied or bullied others by looking at results of descriptive analyses, such as cross tabulations, logistic regression incorporates the effect of a number of explanatory variables at the same time and so is a more powerful technique.

#### 5.3.6.1 Model output

A broad range of characteristics and demographics were gathered in the questionnaire and these were analysed to see which may be predictors of students who are bullied or who bully others. The initial logistic regression models for the outcomes of being bullied and bullying others covertly used the same group of explanatory variables, as shown in Table 5.24. The initial choice of explanatory variables was based on variables that were thought to be likely predictors. All the variables were tested for inclusion and only those variables which remained significant in the multivariable models were retained in the final models. Thus the strongest predictors (i.e. the most important factors) are identified in the multivariable models.

Note that, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, no conclusions can be drawn with regard to which variable is leading to changes in the other. For example, it is unclear whether feeling lonely at school is a cause or a consequence of being bullied.

The results from the models are presented as odds ratios with their corresponding confidence intervals. An odds ratio of less than 1 means a student is less likely to be bullied or bully others, while an odds ratio greater than 1 means a student is more likely, given all the other explanatory variables are the same. Since non-categorical variables take on many values (e.g. socio-economic status), small increments are not of much significance compared with changes for categorical variables (e.g. comparing males with females). The odds ratios associated with continuous variables are much closer to 1 in value than those for categorical variables. Where the confidence interval contains the value 1, the odds ratio does not differ significantly from 1 and thus the odds are similar in the two groups being compared (for categorical variables) or for increases in the values of the variable (for non-categorical variables).

The categorical variables with more than two categories i.e. State and perception of academic results (Q35) need care in their interpretation. Each category in the variable is compared against a reference category and the odds ratio is the difference in odds between that specific category and the reference category. For example, the odds of a student from the ACT being covertly bullied are only about two thirds of the odds of a student from NSW being covertly bullied (odds ratio of 0.66), if the other explanatory variables are the same.

**Table 5.24: Explanatory variables used for logistic regression**

Variable	Description	Comment	Category
ID1	State	Categorical variable. Reference category is NSW	School level
Year	Year level	Values 4 to 9	Student level
Gender	Gender	Categorical variable. Reference category is males	Student level
Q5	Whether the student has siblings and if they are the oldest	Categorical variable. Reference category is 'only child'	Student level
Q6a-h	Frequency of access to technology	Multiple part question. Each recoded to frequent (at least once a month) or non-frequent access. Reference categories are non-frequent use/Not applicable.	Student level
Q7a-d	Whether the students have rules about accessing the internet at home	Multiple part question. Missing values and responses of 'No access' recoded to 'No'. Reference categories are no access/no rules.	Student level
Q9a-i	Rooms within the home where internet accessed	Multiple part question. Missing values recoded to 'No'.	Student level
Q35	How students feel their academic results compared with their peers in 2007	Categorical variable. Missing and 'Don't know' responses recoded to 'About the same as most other students'. Reference category is 'Not as good as most other students'.	Student level
Sector	Government or non-Government school	Catholic and independent schools coded as non-Government. Missing values recoded to 1.5	School level
Area	Metropolitan or regional	Missing values recoded to 1.5	School level
School Size	Size of school	Number of students in the school	School level
SES	SEIFA index of advantage/disadvantage	Calculated based on the school postcode	School level
Culture	School culture	Average of scores for all parts of Q27 regarding student report of the culture within the school with regard to bullying.	Student level
Q16 School	Strategies adopted by a school	Based on Q16 from the staff survey regarding strategies adopted by the school to reduce covert bullying. For individual staff respondents, recoded to 'more than 50% of strategies adopted' or 'other'. Average value of all staff respondents within a school used.	School level
Q19 School	Priority placed on addressing covert bullying by school	Based on Q19 from the staff survey regarding the priority school staff place on addressing covert bullying relative to overt bullying. Average value of all staff respondents within a school used.	School level

### 5.3.6.2 Results from modelling

#### State

The model compares the likelihood of a student from a given State being bullied or bullying others relative to a student (whose other characteristics are the same) from New South Wales. Students from the ACT or Victoria are less likely to be bullied covertly than students from New South Wales, while students from Tasmania are more likely to be bullied covertly (Table 5.25).

Students from South Australia or Victoria are less likely than students from New South Wales to covertly bully others, with the odds of being a student who bullies others only about two thirds that of New South Wales students. Conversely, the odds of a student in the Northern Territory bullying others covertly are more than twice as high as those of a student in New South Wales (Table 5.26).

As there are likely to be a number of social or demographic factors, including differences in the State-based education systems, that affect bullying but that are not directly measured by the survey, it is possible that the State variable is a surrogate for these other influencing factors.

#### Gender

Gender seems to play a crucial role in determining whether a student is bullied or bullies others covertly. Females are significantly more likely (approximately one third more likely) to be covertly bullied than males. Females, however, are only about 70% as likely to bully others, compared to males.

#### Year level

When tested as a uniform trend, those in higher year levels are less likely to be bullied covertly. Year level does not appear to be an influencing factor on whether students bully others: Table 5.25 shows that similar percentages of students in each year level reported being covertly bullied.

#### Frequency of access to technology

Students who regularly use a computer without internet access at home were 16% more likely to be bullied covertly. Covertly bullying others is 63% more likely for students who frequently use the internet at places other than school or home. This may be because of a lack of adult supervision which gives opportunity, or possibly the bullying is being carried out while visiting a friend. Students who have internet access at school or at home are more likely to also access internet at other locations than those who do not (and only a small percentage of students do not have access at home or school), so it is unlikely that this reflects a lack of internet access at home due to lower socio-economic status.

**Table 5.25: Results of logistic regression modelling of covertly bullied students**

Parameter	Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
ACT	0.66*	0.56	0.73
NT	1.22	0.91	1.45
QLD	1.16	1.00	1.35
SA	0.84	0.67	1.04
TAS	1.20*	1.02	1.51
VIC	0.76*	0.64	0.90
WA	1.09	0.91	1.32
NSW	1		
Female	1.34*	1.20	1.52
Male	1		
Year level	0.90*	0.87	0.94
Use computer without internet at home frequently (Q6f)	1.16*	1.03	1.32
Not frequently/NA	1		
Rules regarding internet at home (Q7b)	1.22*	1.08	1.38
No access /no rules	1		
Academic results (Q35)	0.80*	0.72	0.90
Better than peers			
Same as peers	0.86*	0.77	0.94
Worse than peers	1		
School culture	2.01*	1.84	2.23

\* Odds of being bullied covertly significantly different in group vs reference group or for higher values of variable. Odds ratio less than 1 indicates reduced odds and greater than one indicates increased odds of being bullied covertly.

**Table 5.26: Results of logistic regression modelling of students who bully covertly**

Parameter	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
ACT	1.36	0.99	2.20
NT	2.19*	1.58	3.19
QLD	0.82	0.61	1.05
SA	0.66*	0.50	0.87
TAS	1.14	0.76	1.60
VIC	0.63*	0.44	0.90
WA	0.76	0.44	1.06
NSW	1		
Female	0.71*	0.58	0.89
Male	1		
Use computer with internet at place other than school or home frequently (Q6g)	1.63*	1.26	2.10
Not frequently/NA	1		
Rules regarding internet at home (Q7b)	0.68*	0.53	0.88
No access /no rules	1		
Access internet in living/family room (Q9e)	1.35*	1.07	1.67
Access in other areas/no access at home	1		
Academic results (Q35)	0.86*	0.77	0.94
Better than peers	0.63*	0.53	0.77
Same as peers	0.78*	0.67	0.92
Worse than peers	1		
Culture	1.84*	1.60	2.12

\* Odds of bullying others covertly significantly different in group vs reference group or for higher values of variable. Odds ratio less than 1 indicates reduced odds and greater than one indicates increased odds of bullying others covertly.

## Rules for using the internet and/or mobile phone

Rules about mobile phone use (both home and at school) and the internet at school were not significant once the other variables in the model were accounted for. However, having rules about use of the internet at home compared with not having rules or not having access to the internet at home was a significant predictor of both being bullied and bullying others covertly, although in opposite directions. Having rules was associated with a lower likelihood of bullying others covertly, but a higher likelihood of being bullied (Table 5.27). Care needs to be taken when interpreting this question as it is likely that it is really a measure of whether a student has the internet at home and this confounds the results. Cross-tabulations showed that among those with access to the internet at home, the prevalence of covertly bullying others was higher among students without rules (6%) than those with rules (3%).

**Table 5.27: Prevalence of covert bullying among students with and without rules for internet use (excludes students without access to the internet)**

		This term, were you covertly bullied by another student or group of students?	
		No	Yes
Rules for internet at school	Yes	82.6%	17.4%
	No	86.4%	13.6%
Rules for internet at home	Yes	82.6%	17.4%
	No	86.3%	13.7%

## Academic results

Students' perception of how they performed that year compared with their peers was significant for both bullying and being bullied (Q35). A student is less likely to be bullied covertly or bully others covertly if they feel they did better or the same academically than their peers, when compared with those who felt they have performed more poorly.

## School culture

The perception of the culture a school has towards bullying is highly significant both for those who are bullied and those who bully others. Not surprisingly, an average high score of the components of Q27 (i.e. a poor culture towards bullying), results in an increased risk of both bullying and being bullied.

### 5.3.7 What students do when they are bullied

This section looks at how students may react when they have been bullied, whether they told anyone and if there was any change after asking for help. Only students who stated they had been bullied covertly were used in this analysis. Despite this, a number of students responded that they had not been bullied in this way at later questions which concerned more specific aspects of covert bullying. The weighted results are given in Table 5.28 to Table 5.34, followed by a summary.

**Table 5.28: How students responded to being bullied if bullied covertly**

Types of reactions when bullied covertly	Not bullied this way <sup>a</sup>	Yes	No
Ignored the student(s) who were bullying you	10.7%	64.5%	24.9%
Did nothing	12.6%	34.9%	52.5%
Walked away	8.7%	68.8%	22.5%
Stayed away from the person/place where it occurred	8.6%	68.0%	23.4%
Got angry	10.6%	64.7%	24.7%
Fought back	14.1%	37.7%	48.2%
Told the student(s) to stop bullying you	7.9%	63.1%	28.9%
Made a joke of it	14.4%	21.4%	64.2%
Did not respond to the nasty or threatening emails/messages	54.2%	23.0%	22.8%
Kept a printed record of the nasty electronic messages	55.8%	13.1%	31.1%
Changed your mobile phone number, got a silent number, changed passwords/username	53.0%	16.5%	30.5%
Turned off your computer, mobile phone, or blocked messages or profiles	53.1%	18.5%	28.4%
Other	57.2%	18.8%	24.0%

<sup>a</sup>Multiple responses possible



**Table 5.29: How male and female students responded if covertly bullied**

<b>Students who have been bullied covertly in this way</b>		
<b>Types of reactions when bullied</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Ignored the student(s) who were bullying you	71.6%	72.5%
Did nothing	47.3%	35.4%
Walked away	72.2%	77.2%
Stayed away from the person/place where it occurred	67.7%	78.3%
Got angry	71.1%	73.3%
Fought back	53.2%	37.7%
Told the student(s) to stop bullying you	61.2%	72.9%
Made a joke of it	30.7%	21.7%
Did not respond to the nasty or threatening emails/messages	38.0%	56.2%
Kept a printed record of the nasty electronic messages	25.5%	31.6%
Changed your mobile phone number, got a silent number, changed passwords/username	26.7%	39.4%
Turned off your computer, mobile phone, or blocked messages or profiles	31.4%	43.5%
Other	33.0%	51.2%

**Table 5.30: How each year level responded if they were covertly bullied**

Students who have been bullied covertly									
Types of reactions when bullied	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7 – Primary	Year 7 – Secondary	Year 8	Year 9	Australia	
Ignored the student(s) who were bullying you	61.5%	65.7%	70.3%	74.6%	77.3%	76.9%	79.2%	72.2%	
Did nothing	31.5%	27.3%	36.9%	37.2%	51.3%	40.8%	54.3%	39.9%	
Walked away	83.2%	57.3%	89.2%	71.1%	75.0%	80.4%	69.5%	75.4%	
Stayed away from the person/place where it occurred	76.0%	71.5%	78.4%	67.4%	76.8%	71.8%	75.6%	74.4%	
Got angry	59.8%	72.8%	78.4%	68.1%	76.5%	76.6%	69.5%	72.3%	
Fought back	27.3%	59.9%	44.4%	41.8%	42.8%	40.2%	48.7%	43.9%	
Told the student(s) to stop bullying you	83.0%	70.5%	67.7%	67.6%	70.6%	63.9%	57.9%	68.6%	
Made a joke of it	18.9%	25.3%	17.1%	26.1%	18.0%	34.3%	29.2%	25.0%	
Did not respond to the nasty or threatening emails/messages	34.5%	48.0%	40.8%	55.7%	48.9%	49.4%	73.3%	50.2%	
Kept a printed record of the nasty electronic messages	27.4%	21.2%	30.3%	20.7%	29.9%	41.0%	28.8%	29.6%	
Changed your mobile phone number, got a silent number, changed passwords/username	37.0%	18.2%	58.1%	8.6%	21.2%	35.2%	30.9%	35.1%	
Turned off your computer, mobile phone, or blocked messages or profiles	36.6%	38.1%	41.2%	61.4%	54.2%	48.3%	19.7%	39.4%	
Other	74.2%	21.0%	65.5%	19.7%	24.8%	37.6%	57.1%	44.0%	

**Table 5.31: Where students who had been covertly bullied went for help**

Students who have been bullied covertly			
Whom they went to for help	Not bullied this way	Yes	No
Did not ask for help	11.1%	24.3%	64.6%
Parents/guardian	9.0%	57.2%	33.8%
Friends from my school	8.2%	64.0%	27.8%
Friends not from my school	11.6%	28.6%	59.8%
Teachers/School staff member	9.4%	45.9%	44.7%
Other family members	11.6%	38.5%	49.9%
Kids help line	14.5%	6.5%	79.0%
Website	18.5%	3.9%	77.6%
Other	19.9%	11.5%	68.5%

**Table 5.32: Where male and female students, if they had been covertly bullied, went for help**

Students who have been bullied covertly			
Whom they went to for help	Male	Female	
Did not ask for help	33.8%	23.3%	
Parents/guardian	56.3%	66.7%	
Friends from my school	57.0%	77.2%	
Friends not from my school	22.6%	38.0%	
Teachers/School staff member	51.7%	50.0%	
Other family members	36.8%	47.4%	
Kids help line	4.1%	9.6%	
Website	7.2%	3.4%	
Other	8.5%	18.0%	

**Table 5.33: Where students in each year level, if they had been covertly bullied, went for help**

Students who have been bullied covertly									
Who they went to for help	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7 – Primary	Year 7 – Secondary	Year 8	Year 9	Australia	
Did not ask for help	20.4%	23.9%	21.3%	17.0%	14.4%	32.1%	49.1%	72.2%	
Parents/guardian	76.1%	77.9%	69.8%	48.2%	59.1%	56.5%	42.1%	39.9%	
Friends from my school	71.6%	57.2%	64.4%	82.4%	83.1%	71.5%	71.1%	75.4%	
Friends not from my school	34.6%	26.6%	16.3%	28.2%	45.6%	24.5%	53.7%	74.4%	
Teachers/school staff member	63.9%	67.3%	57.1%	37.0%	48.3%	43.5%	28.0%	72.3%	
Other family members	63.8%	53.9%	47.9%	35.2%	44.9%	29.7%	29.0%	43.9%	
Kids help line	6.0%	1.9%	6.7%	4.1%	14.7%	3.9%	16.6%	68.6%	
Website	2.5%	10.0%	1.2%	6.7%	4.2%	1.1%	10.3%	25.0%	
Other	27.4%	13.0%	15.1%	4.3%	17.5%	8.9%	15.9%	50.2%	

**Table 5.34: What happened regarding the bullying after student asked an adult for help?**

Students who have been bullied covertly		
What happened after they went for help	Not bullied/did not ask for help	Things stayed the same or got worse
By year level		
Year 4	14.3%	47.6%
Year 5	11.3%	54.3%
Year 6	20.8%	60.9%
Year 7 – Primary	51.2%	33.0%
Year 7 – Secondary	24.1%	43.6%
Year 8	32.0%	42.6%
Year 9	55.8%	23.3%
By gender		
Males	29.5%	45.7%
Females	26.2%	44.3%
Total	27.4%	44.8%

### 5.3.7.1 How students responded when bullied covertly

Table 5.28 shows that approximately two thirds (69%) of students who have been covertly bullied reacted by walking away from the situation while a similar percentage made changes by staying away from the person bullying (69%) or the place where it occurred (68%). Less than half of the students bullied covertly were cyber bullied. The students who have been bullied in this way are less likely to take any measures against it, such as turning off their phone (19% yes vs 28% no) or keeping a printed record (13% yes vs 31% no). Students are, however, just as likely to respond (23%) to a nasty message as they are not to respond (23%).

When only considering the yes/no responses (Table 5.29), females are more likely to avoid bullying than males by means such as staying away from the person or location (Girls: 78%; Boys: 68%), switching off their phone or computer (Girls: 44%; Boys: 31%) or changing their phone number or password (Girls: 39%; Boys: 27%). Females are also more likely not to respond to an electronic message (Girls: 56%; Boys: 38%) and slightly more likely to simply walk away than males (Girls: 77%; Boys: 72%). Males are more likely to fight back (Girls: 38%; Boys: 53%) or simply do nothing (Girls: 35%; Boys: 47%) compared with females.

Some interesting differences occurred between the Year levels (Table 5.30). Year 4 students are less likely to ignore the students doing the bullying (62%) compared with Year 9s (79%) and conversely a higher percentage of Year 9s did nothing (54%) compared with Year 4s (32%). Year 4 students are least likely to fight back (27%) but this increases considerably in Year 5 where three in five students (60%) are likely to fight back given the situation. Year 7 primary students were most likely to switch off their computer or mobile phone (61%) but least likely to change their mobile phone number or password (9%). Year 6 students were the most likely to change their mobile phone number or password (58%).

### 5.3.7.2 Who covertly bullied students went to for help

The importance of friends is seen here with 64% of students indicating they went to friends from their school for help (Table 5.31). Seeking help from friends was closely followed by parents, whom 57% of the students had asked for help. As indicated in Table 5.32, friends are especially important for females (77%) and this is primarily the group they sought help from when they were bullied, followed by parents (67%). Although fewer males went to school friends for help (57%), the same percentage sought help from a parent(s) (56%). Around half of the males and females asked for help from a teacher or staff member. A third of the males and 23% of the females did not ask anyone for help.

Students in the lower year levels (4, 5 and 6) are more likely to ask for help from their parents and other family members or a teacher than students in the higher year levels (Table 5.33). Although high across all year levels, asking for help from friends was the lowest for Year 5 (57%) and the highest for Year 7 primary (82%) and Year 7 secondary (83%). Year 9 students were the least likely to ask for help than the other year levels, with 49% not asking anyone for help.

### 5.3.7.3 What happened after an adult was asked to help

Students who were bullied covertly were asked whether things got better after they had asked an adult for help (Table 5.34). Overall, more than two out of five students (45%) who had been bullied felt that things stayed the same or got worse after telling an adult. This perception was highest in Year 6 with three out of five students (61%) stating that things stayed the same or got worse. Students in Year 4 (38%) and Year 5 (34%) were more likely to see an improvement compared with other years however, about half felt that things stayed the same or got worse.

### 5.3.8 Emotional response of students who are covertly bullied

It is not hard to imagine that being bullied would have a negative emotional effect on the student being bullied, but how do students who are bullying others fare emotionally? This section not only examines the well-being at school of the students who have been covertly bullied but also those students who are bullying other students. Students were given a range of questions relating to how safe they feel at school, are they lonely at school, how they feel about their school (level of connectedness) and whether they stay away from school due to bullying. Scores were determined for school connectedness and for level of loneliness and the results are shown in Tables 5.35 and 5.36. The scores were calculated as described in the methodology section (Section 5.2).

**Table 5.35: The percentage of students who feel less connected to the school (% below the mean) comparing all students, covertly bullied students and students who covertly bully others**

Level of connectedness to the school		Less connected (below mean)		
		All students	Covertly bullied	Covertly bully others
By year level	Year 4	53.6%	64.8%	83.6%
	Year 5	49.3%	73.1%	53.6%
	Year 6	48.6%	78.3%	81.2%
	Year 7 – Primary	51.4%	71.3%	81.9%
	Year 7 – Secondary	50.5%	74.5%	57.6%
	Year 8	42.2%	64.5%	65.4%
	Year 9	47.1%	75.9%	53.5%
By gender	Males	48.2%	71.2%	63.3%
	Females	51.1%	73.5%	59.2%
	Total	46.0%	69.6%	67.8%

**Table 5.36: The percentage of students who feel lonelier (% above the mean) comparing all students, covertly bullied students and students who covertly bully others**

Level of loneliness at school		More lonely (above mean)		
		All students	Covertly bullied	Covertly bully others
By year level	Year 4	46.1%	64.8%	68.8%
	Year 5	34.6%	63.7%	29.8%
	Year 6	33.5%	62.6%	47.3%
	Year 7 – Primary	33.5%	46.7%	55.1%
	Year 7 – Secondary	37.5%	75.8%	68.7%
	Year 8	37.7%	65.2%	77.8%
	Year 9	36.0%	66.2%	50.7%
By gender	Males	37.3%	65.2%	54.9%
	Females	36.2%	67.9%	42.3%
	Total	38.0%	63.4%	67.8%

A ‘school connectedness’ score was calculated for all students from a range of questions to ascertain how the student felt about his/her school (level of connectedness to school). An overall mean connectedness score was then calculated. Table 5.35 shows the percentage of students who had a score below the overall mean by year level and by gender, for all students, students who are covertly bullied and students who bully others covertly. The results show that there is a higher percentage of students who are bullied covertly (70%) and those who bully others covertly (68%) who feel less connected to their school than students overall (46%). This represents about two thirds of covertly bullied students and students who bully others covertly. There are, however, some notable variations observed between year levels.

The highest percentages of students who feel less connected to their school are those Year 4 students who covertly bully others (84%). This is considerably higher than the percentage of Year 4 students who are covertly bullied and who feel less connected (65%). Of the students who are covertly bullied and who covertly bully others, in Year 6 the highest percentages of students reported lower levels of connectedness (around 80%) than amongst these students in other year levels. Year 5s, Year 7 secondary and Year 9s have a higher percentage of students who are covertly bullied and who feel less connected to their school (73% to 76%) compared with those who covertly bully others in those year groups (54% to 58%). Year 8 and Year 4 have the lowest percentage of students who are covertly bullied and feel less connected to their school compared with other year groups.

Another characteristic measured is the 'level of loneliness' a student experiences at school. As with the level of connectedness a mean was calculated from the scores of all students and the percentage of students above this mean (level of loneliness) is shown in Table 5.36. Overall, a higher percentage of students who covertly bully others feel lonelier compared with the percentage of students who feel lonely amongst those students who are covertly bullied. The highest percentage of students who covertly bully others and report higher levels of loneliness are the Year 8s and the highest percentage of students who report higher levels of loneliness and are covertly bullied are the Year 7 secondary students.

The standardised Strengths and Difficulties Scale <sup>[5]</sup>, which formed part of the student survey, includes questions relating to emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention and peer relationship problems. A total difficulties score is calculated from these for each student. The scores are out of a total of 40 and, as recommended by the authors of the scale, can be grouped into three categories: normal 0-15, borderline 16-19 and at risk 20 – 40. The results are given in Table 5.37 and Table 5.38.

**Table 5.37: The difficulties score comparing those students who are not covertly bullied and those students who are covertly bullied**

Difficulties score		Not covertly bullied			Covertly bullied		
		Normal	Borderline	At risk	Normal	Borderline	At risk
By year level	Year 4	85.8%	10.4%	3.8%	70.5%	17.0%	12.6%
	Year 5	89.0%	6.4%	4.6%	63.8%	22.2%	14.0%
	Year 6	87.5%	7.0%	5.5%	56.9%	23.7%	19.4%
	Year 7 – Primary	78.0%	10.1%	11.9%	54.8%	36.2%	9.0%
	Year 7 – Secondary	87.6%	6.2%	6.2%	59.8%	12.3%	27.9%
	Year 8	84.3%	10.9%	4.8%	63.8%	22.0%	14.1%
	Year 9	81.0%	12.8%	6.2%	56.8%	15.6%	27.5%
By gender	Males	83.8%	9.4%	6.8%	59.9%	20.4%	19.6%
	Females	85.9%	9.4%	4.6%	63.2%	20.0%	16.8%
	Total	85.8%	10.4%	3.8%	70.5%	17.0%	12.6%



**Table 5.38: The difficulties score comparing those students who are not covertly bullied and those students who are covertly bullied**

Difficulties score		Do not covertly bully others			Covertly bully others		
		Normal	Borderline	At risk	Normal	Borderline	At risk
By year level	Year 4	83.1%	11.3%	5.7%	52.3%	29.9%	17.7%
	Year 5	85.6%	8.3%	6.1%	61.1%	26.8%	12.2%
	Year 6	83.3%	8.8%	7.9%	59.7%	31.7%	8.5%
	Year 7 – Primary	75.3%	13.7%	11.0%	67.5%	7.4%	25.2%
	Year 7 – Secondary	85.3%	6.6%	8.1%	44.2%	18.2%	37.6%
	Year 8	81.8%	13.3%	4.9%	52.1%	11.6%	36.3%
	Year 9	79.1%	12.3%	8.5%	56.4%	29.5%	14.0%
By gender	Males	81.1%	10.6%	8.3%	64.9%	19.7%	15.4%
	Females	83.2%	10.8%	6.1%	45.9%	26.8%	27.3%
	Total	83.1%	11.3%	5.7%	52.3%	29.9%	17.7%

Overall, three out of ten students (30%) who are covertly bullied fall into the borderline and at risk category compared with 14% of those students who are not covertly bullied. Covertly bullied students in all year levels (except Year 7 primary) have higher percentages in the borderline and at risk categories compared with students who are not covertly bullied. The Year 7 primary students have the lowest percentage of covertly bullied students in the at risk category (9%) however they have a very high borderline percentage (36%). The Year 7 secondary and Year 9 students who are covertly bullied have the highest percentage of students in the at risk category with 28%.

The greater levels of problems experienced by students who are covertly bullied compared with those who are not covertly bullied are even more evident when comparing the difficulties scores for students who covertly bully others to those who do not engage in covert bullying behaviour. Overall, nearly half (48%) of students who covertly bully others have a difficulties score in the borderline and at risk categories compared with 17% of those students who do not covertly bully. Year 7 secondary and Year 8 students have the highest percentage of students who covertly bully in the at risk category with 38% and 36% respectively while Year 6 students who covertly bully only have 9% in this category.

Tables 5.39 and 5.40 show students' ratings of how safe they feel at school. Students who were covertly bullied are less likely to feel safe all the time at school (17%) compared with students who were not covertly bullied (42%) and those who bullied others covertly (38%). There is a peak in the number of students who never feel safe at school among Year 7 secondary and Year 8 students, both for students who are covertly bullied and those who bully others covertly. Females who covertly bully are less likely to feel safe at school than males who bully covertly.

**Table 5.39: Feelings of safety at school comparing those students who were and were not bullied covertly**

Feel safe at school		Not covertly bullied				Covertly bullied			
		Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	Yes, some of the time	No, never	Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	Yes, some of the time	No, never
By year level	Year 4	43.2%	40.1%	14.3%	2.4%	29.1%	29.4%	30.9%	10.6%
	Year 5	45.0%	42.3%	12.1%	0.6%	20.4%	32.6%	36.6%	10.5%
	Year 6	43.2%	47.7%	6.6%	2.5%	15.6%	53.3%	26.2%	4.9%
	Year 7 – Primary	36.3%	48.3%	14.3%	1.2%	23.4%	37.4%	35.6%	3.6%
	Year 7 – Secondary	34.0%	53.6%	11.3%	1.0%	8.7%	40.1%	28.6%	22.6%
	Year 8	48.5%	42.0%	8.1%	1.4%	10.4%	49.4%	22.7%	17.5%
	Year 9	38.5%	50.2%	7.6%	3.7%	12.8%	36.2%	43.8%	7.1%
By gender	Males	44.1%	43.5%	9.7%	2.7%	17.0%	36.6%	33.2%	13.1%
	Females	40.2%	48.3%	10.0%	1.4%	16.2%	43.2%	29.8%	10.8%
	Total	41.9%	46.2%	9.9%	2.0%	16.5%	40.6%	31.1%	11.7%

**Table 5.40: Feelings of safety at school comparing those students who did and did not bully others covertly**

Feel safe at school		Did not covertly bully others				Covertly bullied others			
		Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	Yes, some of the time	No, never	Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	Yes, some of the time	No, never
By year level	Year 4	41.6%	37.6%	16.6%	4.2%	23.8%	22.4%	50.7%	3.2%
	Year 5	38.7%	41.8%	17.1%	2.5%	63.3%	22.6%	11.9%	2.1%
	Year 6	38.1%	49.1%	10.0%	2.7%	38.8%	43.9%	11.6%	5.6%
	Year 7 – Primary	34.7%	46.9%	16.9%	1.5%	37.2%	42.4%	18.7%	1.8%
	Year 7 – Secondary	31.3%	52.1%	13.7%	3.0%	11.6%	42.2%	19.5%	26.8%
	Year 8	42.4%	42.8%	10.7%	4.0%	24.9%	51.9%	11.2%	12.1%
	Year 9	35.1%	49.6%	11.4%	4.0%	42.5%	28.9%	22.1%	6.6%
By gender	Males	39.5%	43.3%	13.1%	4.1%	52.3%	27.2%	14.9%	5.7%
	Females	36.7%	47.2%	13.3%	2.8%	22.5%	46.7%	18.6%	12.2%
	Total	37.9%	45.5%	13.2%	3.4%	37.7%	36.7%	16.7%	8.9%

Students were asked how often they had stayed away from school this year because of being bullied covertly. Of those bullied covertly, 12% said they had stayed away once or twice, 11% said they stayed away more than twice, and 34% had not stayed away, but wanted to. As can be seen in Table 5.41, the less safe covertly bullied students felt at school, the more likely they were to stay away from school. Of students who were covertly bullied and never felt safe at school, 27% had stayed away once or twice, and a further 23% had stayed away more than twice.

**Table 5.41: Frequency of staying away from school due to covert bullying among students who are covertly bullied, by whether they feel safe at school**

Students who were covertly bullied				
Feel safe at school	Yes, all the time	Yes, most of the time	Yes, some of the time	No, never
Stayed home because of covert bullying				
Once or twice this year	4.3%	10.7%	11.5%	26.5%
More than twice this year	3.7%	8.7%	14.4%	22.9%

The way students feel at school and their general well-being is strongly related to whether they are being covertly bullied or not being covertly bullied. Weights (but not the scaling factor) were applied to the data and a significance test was performed to compare the statistical significance of differences in connectedness, feelings of safety, loneliness and the difficulties score between students who have been covertly bullied and those who have not. Those who were covertly bullied fared significantly worse with regard to each of these measures (Table 5.42).

**Table 5.42: Results from the chi-square significance test comparing the responses from students who have been covertly bullied and not been covertly bullied**

Well-being at school	Test statistic	Significance value
Connectedness to the school	408.96	$p$ -value < 0.001
Safe at the school	656.67	$p$ -value < 0.001
Loneliness	366.71	$p$ -value < 0.001
In general (Difficulties score)	171.42	$p$ -value < 0.001

### 5.3.9 Opinion of students on cyber bullying


The students' opinions were investigated to see what attitudes and beliefs they hold regarding cyber bullying and how these vary depending on their covert bullying status. The responses from the students who were bullied covertly and who bullied others covertly are presented in Table 5.43 and Table 5.44.

**Table 5.43: How covertly bullied students/students who bully others covertly, feel about cyber bullying behaviour**

<b>Cyber bullying behaviour</b>			<b>Yes, always</b>	<b>Yes, sometimes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
<b>Students who were bullied covertly or bullied others covertly</b>						
It is easier to bully another student over the internet than in person	Bullied	14.8%	24.0%	26.2%	35.0%	
	Bully others	17.8%	28.5%	27.0%	26.7%	
It is more hurtful to bully other students over the internet than in person	Bullied	10.6%	20.1%	38.9%	30.3%	
	Bully others	10.4%	20.1%	40.2%	29.3%	
Electronic bullying is scarier than face-to-face bullying	Bullied	8.7%	23.6%	43.8%	23.9%	
	Bully others	12.2%	12.6%	45.1%	30.1%	
Websites that make fun of other students are funny	Bullied	4.3%	8.6%	70.8%	16.3%	
	Bully others	11.6%	32.9%	39.1%	16.3%	
If you report electronic bullying, you will be the next one to be bullied	Bullied	15.3%	32.4%	20.3%	32.0%	
	Bully others	21.8%	24.9%	25.7%	27.7%	
It is worse to hit or punch a person than to send him/her a nasty email, instant message or text message (SMS)	Bullied	27.9%	22.7%	25.3%	24.1%	
	Bully others	30.3%	18.9%	26.4%	24.4%	
Students should be allowed to say whatever they want about other students on their personal web pages (e.g. MySpace, Facebook)	Bullied	5.7%	13.4%	64.5%	16.5%	
	Bully others	18.2%	27.9%	32.7%	21.2%	

**Table 5.44: Ways to stop bullying online**

<b>Way to stop bully behaviour online</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>
<b>Students who were bullied covertly or bullied others covertly</b>				
Blocking messages is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	70.9%	13.6%	15.5%
	Bully others	51.6%	31.5%	16.9%
Reporting to police and other authorities is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	42.7%	30.8%	26.5%
	Bully others	33.4%	46.1%	20.5%
Asking them to stop is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	60.7%	25.1%	14.3%
	Bully others	51.1%	32.2%	16.6%
Fighting back is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	21.2%	65.7%	13.1%
	Bully others	44.0%	43.6%	12.4%
Ignoring it is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	61.4%	25.8%	12.8%
	Bully others	49.5%	33.2%	17.3%
Keeping a record of nasty emails/messages is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	62.6%	17.0%	20.4%
	Bully others	50.7%	29.5%	19.8%
Telling a teacher is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	58.3%	29.8%	11.9%
	Bully others	43.3%	39.5%	17.2%
Telling a parent is the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	75.6%	16.2%	8.2%
	Bully others	60.3%	27.0%	12.7%
Changing email address/mobile phone numbers are the best way to stop students bullying others ONLINE	Bullied	53.3%	30.0%	16.6%
	Bully others	42.4%	40.9%	16.7%



Overall, the students involved in covert bullying behaviours think it is more hurtful to bully others face-to-face (40%) than it is to bully over the internet (30%). More than half of all students felt it was worse to hit or punch another student than send a nasty electronic message (51% of those bullied and 49% of those who bullied others).

There are some stark differences when those who are bullied covertly are compared with those who covertly bully others. Almost two-thirds (65%) of the bullied students felt that students should not be allowed to say whatever they want about other students on their personal web pages, whilst only a third (33%) of those who bullied others felt this. More than three times as many students who bully others (45%) than are bullied (13%) felt that websites that made fun of other students were funny. Nearly one half of those who are bullied (48%) and those who bully others (47%) felt that if you report electronic bullying, 'you will be next', at least sometimes and one in five (22%) of those who bully others stated that you will always be next if you report electronic bullying.

Overall, telling a parent was considered the best way to stop online bullying (76% of covertly bullied and 60% of those who bullied others covertly chose this option). This was followed by blocking messages (71% of those bullied and 52% of those who bully), while fighting back was considered the least effective (21% of those bullied and 44% of those who bullied others). This last result, where twice as many of the students who bullied felt that fighting back was effective compared with the students who were bullied, was one of the notable differences between these two groups of students. For all other options, more of the students who were bullied thought that the suggested approaches would be effective against bullying behaviour than did those who bullied others.

### 5.3.10 Students' response when aware of other students being bullied

How students respond when they see a bullying incident can have a large effect on how the student who is being bullied feels and also the future bullying behaviour of the student who is bullying. Students were given a list of likely actions and were asked to state how they had acted the last time they saw or heard someone being bullied (in general). For the analysis the questions were considered individually and then grouped into appropriate and inappropriate behaviours (Table 5.45 to Table 5.47).

**Table 5.45: How students might react when they saw or heard about a bullying incident, grouped into appropriate and inappropriate behaviours**

Appropriate behavior	Inappropriate behaviour
Told parents	Did nothing
Told an adult at school	Ignored it
Told another student	Made a joke of it
Helped the person at the time	Joined in
Helped the person later on	Later hurt the person bullying
Got help	
Told the person bullying to stop	

**Table 5.46: Reactions of students to seeing or hearing about someone being bullied**

What actions did you take when you saw or heard about someone being bullied?	Yes	No	Total
I did nothing	39.6%	60.4%	100.0%
I told my parents	39.0%	61.0%	100.0%
I told an adult at school	29.0%	71.0%	100.0%
I told another student	65.7%	34.3%	100.0%
I helped the person being bullied at that time	42.4%	57.6%	100.0%
I helped the person being bullied later on	37.4%	62.6%	100.0%
I ignored it	28.7%	71.3%	100.0%
I made a joke of it	7.3%	92.7%	100.0%
I joined in with the person bullying	3.2%	96.8%	100.0%
I got someone to help stop it	39.7%	60.3%	100.0%
I told the person who was bullying to stop	53.4%	46.6%	100.0%
I later found a way to hurt the person who was bullying	8.8%	91.2%	100.0%
Other	12.6%	87.4%	100.0%



**Table 5.47: Appropriate or inappropriate behaviour by year level and gender**

<b>Reaction to seeing others bullied</b>		<b>Appropriate behaviour</b>	<b>Appropriate and inappropriate</b>	<b>Inappropriate behaviour</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>All students</b>					
By year level	Year 4	59.1%	35.6%	5.3%	100.0%
	Year 5	49.8%	41.7%	8.5%	100.0%
	Year 6	50.0%	42.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	Year 7 – Primary	52.5%	39.8%	7.6%	100.0%
	Year 7 – Secondary	47.8%	39.4%	12.9%	100.0%
	Year 8	43.2%	44.2%	12.7%	100.0%
	Year 9	42.6%	43.3%	14.1%	100.0%
By gender	Males	40.0%	45.1%	15.0%	100.0%
	Females	54.3%	38.6%	7.1%	100.0%
Total		48.1%	41.4%	10.5%	100.0%

The most common reaction to seeing someone being bullied was to tell another student (66%), which emphasises the significance of friendship and the support network this creates. The second most common reaction to seeing someone being bullied was to tell the bully to stop, with more than half of students reporting they had done this (53%). More students indicated they helped the person being bullied at the time (42%) rather than helping later on (37%) and more students told their parents (39%) than told an adult at the school (29%). Very few students reported they had joined in (3%) or made a joke of it (7%).

The responses, grouped by appropriate and inappropriate, are outlined Table 5.47. Nearly one half of all students use appropriate behaviour when they see or hear about someone being bullied (48%) and 41% use a combination of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour while a small percentage of students (10%) use only inappropriate behaviour. Year 4s are more likely to use appropriate behaviour than other year groups. Generally a higher percentage of primary school students use appropriate behaviour compared with high school students and this is reversed for inappropriate behaviour with 14% of Year 9s employing inappropriate behaviour. Also, males were twice as likely to engage in inappropriate behaviour (15% vs 7.1%) than females. Between 36% and 44% of students in all year levels reported both appropriate and inappropriate responses to witnessing another student being bullied.

## 5.4 Staff survey results

The staff survey on covert bullying was designed to measure staff members' awareness of the prevalence and nature of students' covert bullying experiences and the effects of this bullying on students. Information was gathered from staff about their attitudes to covert and overt bullying as well as their schools' responses to covert bullying, including examples of effective school responses to deal with covert bullying, and the amount of time staff use to address bullying. They were also asked about staff professional development needs in this area.

### 5.4.1 Response rates – staff

A total of 620 staff surveys were sent to recruited schools with 453 surveys returned, corresponding to an overall response rate of 74% (Table 5.48). Staff response rates varied from State to State with the NT (83%) and Queensland (80%) having higher response rates than the ACT (67%) and Western Australia (65%).

**Table 5.48: Teacher response rates by stratum**

Stratum	State	Location	Sector	Surveys Sent (n)	Surveys returned (n)	Response Rate (%)
1	ACT	Metro		18	12	67
2	NT	Non-metro	Government & non-Government	30	25	83
3	NSW	Metro	Government	13	10	77
4			Catholic	22	17	77
5			Other independent	35	23	66
6		Non-metro	Government	30	22	73
7			non-Government	23	17	74
		Total		171	126	74
8		Qld	Metro	Government	31	27
9	Catholic			30	24	80
10	Other independent			24	19	79
11	Non-metro		Government	24	18	75
12			non-Government	12	9	75
	Total			121	97	80

Stratum	State	Location	Sector	Surveys Sent (n)	Surveys returned (n)	Response Rate (%)
13	SA	Metro	Government	24	18	75
14			non-Government	30	23	77
15		Non-metro	Government & non-Government	36	24	67
		Total		90	65	72
16	Tas	Metro	Government & non-Government	24	21	88
17		Non-metro	Government & non-Government	30	20	67
		Total		54	41	76
18	Vic	Metro	Government	24	16	67
19			Catholic	17	16	94
20			Other independent	12	7	58
21		Non-metro	Government	29	22	76
22			non-Government	6	4	67
			Total		88	65
23	WA	Metro	Government	36	19	53
24			non-Government	30	24	80
25		Non-metro	Government & non-Government	30	19	63
		Total		96	62	65
	Total			620	456	74

In total, 453 teachers completed the survey. The demographics of the participants are presented in Tables 5.49 to 5.51. When interpreting the results, it is important to consider the size of the group in question, as higher external validity is possible for the larger groups than for smaller groups.

**Table 5.49: Number of staff respondents by age and gender**

Age	Gender		Total <sup>a</sup>
	Female	Male	
<30	48	17	65
30-39	66	36	102
40-49	78	37	115
50+	98	57	155
Total	290	147	437*

<sup>a</sup>Teacher sample size varies due to missing responses on different questionnaire items

**Table 5.50: Number of staff respondents by State**

State	Number <sup>a</sup>	Percentage
ACT	11	2
NSW	88	19
NT	25	6
QLD	97	21
SA	65	14
TAS	41	9
VIC	64	14
WA	62	14
Total	453	100

<sup>a</sup>Teacher sample size varies due to missing responses on different questionnaire items

**Table 5.51: Number of staff respondents by school sector, school type and geographic location**

Sector	School type		Location					
	Number <sup>a</sup>	Percentage	Number <sup>aa</sup>	Percentage				
Government	220	49	Primary	219	48	Metro	274	60
non-Government	233	51	Secondary	234	52	Non-Metro	179	40
Total	453	100	Total	453	100	Total	453	100

<sup>a</sup>Teacher sample size varies due to missing responses on different questionnaire items

## 5.4.2 Staff observations of bullying

To measure teacher perceptions of the nature and extent of bullying among students from Year 4 to Year 9, the staff were asked to state how often they observed or were informed about certain types of bullying. Variations in the amount of bullying observed may reflect either variation in the actual amount of bullying that is occurring, or in the percentage of bullying that is witnessed by or reported to teachers. The statements in Question 1 of the staff survey include overt, covert and cyber forms of bullying. Table 5.52 provides the overall prevalence of staff who indicated they had observed or been informed of each of the bullying behaviours occurring at least every few weeks. Occurring at least every few weeks was an aggregation of the response categories every few weeks, about once a week and most days.

Following this the responses are divided by a number of characteristics and compared by the form which bullying may take, i.e. overt, covert and cyber. The characteristics include gender and age of the teacher, the State or Territory, sector (Government or non-Government) and location (metropolitan or non-metropolitan) of the school. Another factor of interest is whether there are different behaviours based on whether the students are in primary or high school. Year 7 students are part of either the primary or the secondary school depending on the State in which the school is located.

Nearly two thirds of staff (65%) observed or were informed about students being teased in nasty ways every few weeks or more and half observe or were informed about students being deliberately ignored or left out of a group. Being hurt physically (32%) and being frightened or threatened (31%) was given by a third of teachers as being observed or reported to them every few weeks or more. Cyber bullying behaviours were reported by only a small percentage of staff (12% or less). The highest of these (12%) was a student being sent nasty text messages or getting prank calls on their phone.

**Table 5.52: The types of bullying behaviour that staff have observed or been informed of at least every few weeks**

<b>Bullying behaviour</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Teased in nasty ways	295	65%
Deliberately ignored or left out of a group to hurt him/her	228	50%
Told lies about another behind his/her back, to make other students not like him/her	155	35%
Hurt physically by another student	145	32%
Frightened or threatened by another student	140	31%
Deliberately try to hurt another student by not talking to him/her	138	31%
Hurtful rumours spread about him/her behind his/her back	139	31%
Made to feel afraid that he/she would get hurt	116	26%
Group of students decided to hurt a student by ganging up on him/her	115	25%
Have his/her secrets told to others behind his/her back, to hurt him/her	107	24%
Told by other students he/she wouldn't be liked unless he/she did what the other students said	102	23%
Deliberately tried to hurt another student by breaking up a friendship he/she had	87	19%
Sent nasty text messages (SMS), or prank calls to his/her phone	52	12%
Sent nasty messages on the internet, e.g. through MSN	51	11%
Nasty notes written and circulated about him/her	44	10%
Sent threatening emails	42	9%
Deliberately ignored or left out of things over the internet	17	4%
Mean or nasty comments or pictures sent or posted about him/her on websites e.g. MySpace, Bebo or Facebook	16	4%
Someone use his/her screen name or password, to pretend to be him/her, to hurt someone else	16	4%
A student's private emails, messages, pictures or videos were sent to others, without permission, by someone else	12	3%




Table 5.53 groups the bullying behaviours into overt, covert and cyber bullying and compares responses by demographics. A higher percentage of staff at Government schools observed or were informed about bullying behaviour than staff at non-Government schools; with about 80% of Government school staff compared with about 60% of non-Government school staff being made aware of overt and covert bullying incidents (the percentages for cyber bullying were 26% and 16% respectively). This was consistent with the findings of the student survey of a higher incidence of students being bullied in Government schools compared with non-Government schools for being bullied both in general and covertly.

There is quite a variation in the percentage of teachers who observed or were informed about bullying behaviour between States and Territories. In terms of overt bullying behaviours, about three-quarters of staff in Queensland, Victorian and NT schools reported they frequently observed or were made aware of overt bullying, compared with 46% of staff in ACT schools. Similarly, with regard to covert bullying behaviours, more than 80% of staff in the Victorian and NT schools were frequently made aware of covert behaviour, in comparison to about half (46%) of school staff in the ACT. While few staff responded, a small number of staff in the NT were aware of students being cyber bullied. The latter behaviour may be related to remoteness and limited availability of the technology. One would expect that, in States where a high percentage of students surveyed indicated they were being bullied, there would also be a high percentage of teachers observing or being informed about bullying behaviour. This is true for the Northern Territory, which had the highest percentage of students who were bullied. It is also noted for the ACT which had a low percentage of students being bullied. The opposite is true for Victoria, as the State had one of the lowest rates of being covertly bullied according to students (Table 5.9), and yet one of the highest rates of covert bullying observed by or reported to teachers.

Other demographic variations shown in Table 5.53 include the finding that a higher percentage of staff in non-metropolitan areas observed or were informed about bullying behaviour than in the metropolitan area for all types of bullying behaviour. More staff in primary schools reported being frequently aware of overt and covert bullying than was the case for secondary school staff, while cyber bullying behaviour was more commonly observed or reported in the secondary schools than in the primary schools. Overall, female staff observed or were informed about bullying behaviour slightly more often than male staff, particularly covert behaviours.

**Table 5.53: The percentage of teachers who observed or had bullying reported to them at school during the term**

		Overt	Covert	Cyber
Female	Age			
	<30	66.7%	70.8%	18.8%
	30-39	74.2%	75.8%	19.7%
	40-49	71.8%	71.8%	20.5%
	50+	71.4%	79.6%	21.4%
	Total	71.4%	75.2%	20.3%
Male	<30	76.5%	70.6%	23.5%
	30-39	66.7%	63.9%	16.7%
	40-49	64.9%	73.0%	24.3%
	50+	64.9%	59.6%	17.5%
	Total	66.7%	65.3%	19.7%
	State			
	ACT	45.5%	45.5%	18.2%
	NSW	65.9%	71.6%	25.0%
	NT	72.0%	84.0%	12.0%
	QLD	75.3%	71.1%	17.5%
	SA	64.6%	67.7%	20.0%
	TAS	65.9%	63.4%	26.8%
	VIC	76.6%	81.3%	18.8%
	WA	69.4%	72.6%	19.4%
	Sector			
	Government	79.5%	81.4%	25.5%
	non-Government	60.1%	62.7%	15.5%
	Location			
	Metropolitan	63.1%	65.3%	17.9%
	Non-metropolitan	79.3%	81.6%	24.0%
	School Type			
	Primary	74.9%	80.4%	13.2%
	Secondary	64.5%	63.7%	26.9%
	Total	69.5%	71.7%	20.3%





### 5.4.3 Staff perceptions of the prevalence of bullying

To gain an understanding of how the prevalence of covert bullying differs across year levels, staff were asked to report the percentages of students who are bullied covertly and who covertly bully others for each year level at their school.

A summary of the results for the prevalence of students who covertly bullied is displayed in Figure 5.1 and for students who bully covertly in Figure 5.2. In general the percentages presented in these plots display quite similar patterns to each other across year levels. For each year level under consideration a large percentage of staff members responded that they ‘don’t know’ what percentage of students are bullied covertly or bully others covertly. These percentages are particularly large for both the early year levels and the latter year levels and are comparatively low in the Year 8 and Year 9 levels.

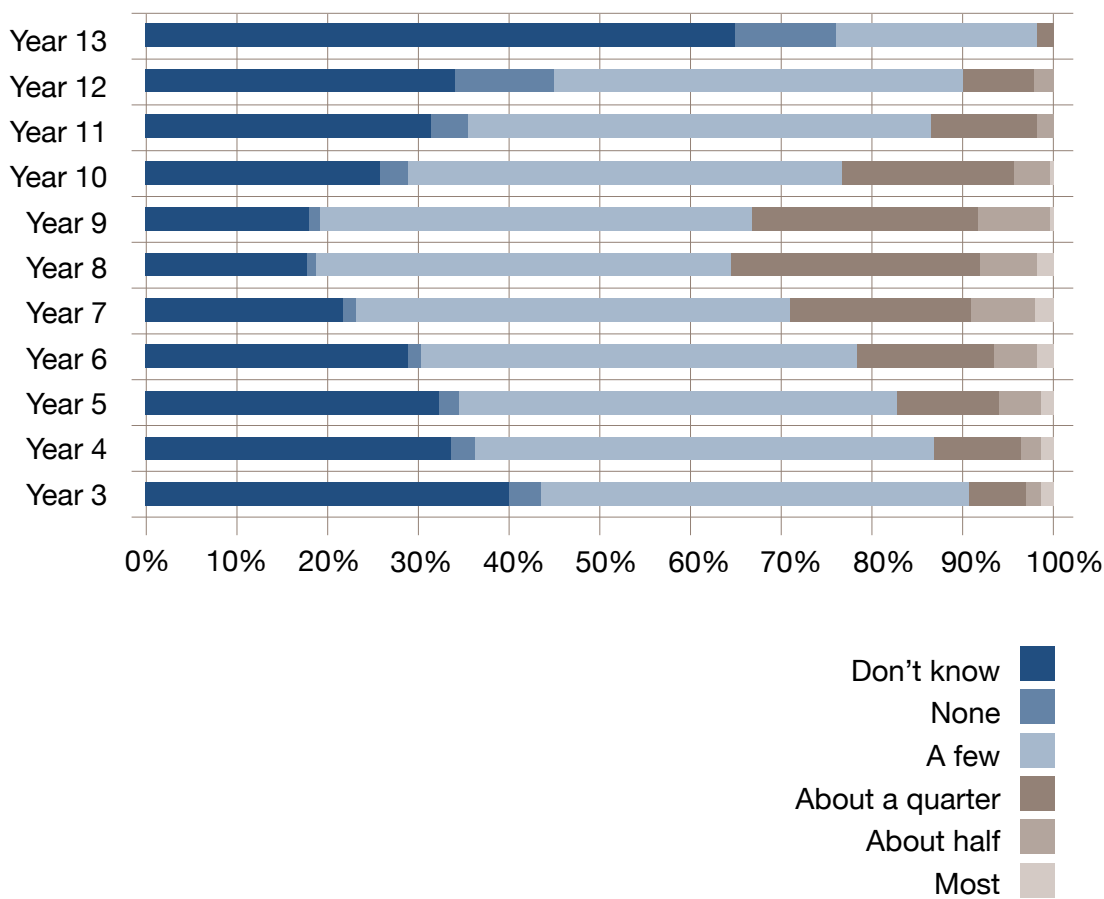
The percentage of ‘none’ responses i.e. the staff member thought that no students were bullied or bullied others covertly, was low for both the percentage of students who bully and the percentage of students who are covertly bullied. The percentages of these responses increased somewhat for the Year 12 and Year 13 levels. In both cases, the most common response given by staff members was typically that ‘a few’ students are either bullied covertly (22% to 51%) or covertly bully others (25% to 55%) with the percentage of staff indicating ‘a few’ remaining relatively constant across year levels.

The percentage of staff who recorded ‘about a quarter’ or ‘about half’ was similar for both questions with the percentages of these responses increasing from Year 3 before reaching their highest levels in Years 7 to 9 and then decreasing across the final year levels. The percentage of staff who indicated that most students are bullied covertly was relatively low with, for each case, less than 2% of staff recording this response for any year level.

In both plots a pattern is exhibited between the percentages of ‘don’t know’ and ‘none’ responses and the percentages of ‘about a quarter’ and ‘about half’ responses. In general, as the percentage of staff recording the ‘about a quarter’ and ‘about half’ responses increases, the percentage of ‘don’t know’ and ‘none’ responses decreases. This suggests that staff awareness of covert bullying increases in the final primary school years and the early high school years as the prevalence of covert bullying increases.

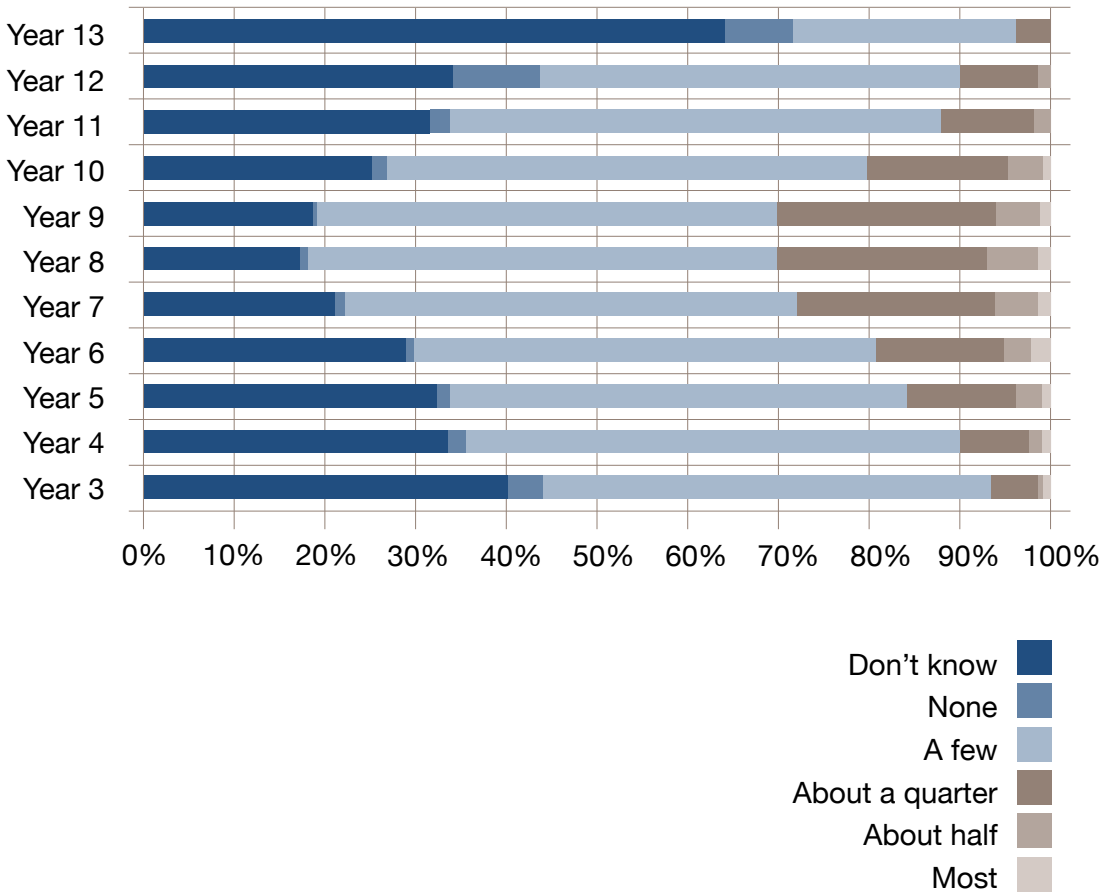


**Figure 5.1: Percentage of students who were covertly bullied, staff responses regarding their school**





**Figure 5.2: Percentage of students who covertly bullied others, staff responses regarding their school**




### 5.4.4 Behaviours schools identify as bullying

Traditionally, overt forms of bullying have been more widely recognised, with covert bullying and cyber bullying gaining recognition more recently. To gain an understanding of the attitudes staff hold regarding covert bullying, staff members were surveyed about what behaviours teachers perceive to be bullying. This was achieved by asking staff members to indicate whether most teachers at their schools considered each of a series of bullying behaviours to be forms of bullying, as shown in Table 5.54. The responses to a selection of these behaviours are presented in Figures 5.3 to 5.7, by gender and age, to provide indicative results.

**Table 5.54: Percentage of teachers who agreed/disagreed with a selection of statements on bullying behaviour**

<b>The following statements are considered bullying by most teachers</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Students teasing others in nasty ways	2%	96%	2%
A group deciding to hurt other students by ganging up on them	2%	94%	4%
Students hurting others physically	3%	94%	4%
Students trying to frighten or threaten other students	3%	93%	4%
Students making others feel afraid they would get hurt	4%	91%	5%
Students spreading hurtful rumours about others behind their backs	6%	91%	3%
Students deliberately ignoring or leaving others out of a group to hurt them	6%	90%	4%
Students telling lies about others behind their back, to make other students not like them	6%	89%	5%
Students circulating nasty notes about other students at school	7%	88%	4%
Students sending threatening emails	8%	87%	5%
Students sending nasty text messages (SMS), or prank calls to other students' mobile phones	9%	87%	4%
Students sending nasty messages on the internet, e.g. through MSN	9%	86%	5%
Students telling others they won't like them unless they did what they said	8%	85%	7%
Students trying to hurt other students by trying to break up friendships they have	11%	83%	6%
Students deliberately trying to hurt others by telling other students' secrets behind their backs	11%	83%	6%
Students deliberately trying to hurt other students by not talking to them	11%	83%	6%
Students sending or posting mean or nasty comments or pictures about other students to websites e.g. MySpace, Bebo or Facebook	13%	82%	5%
Students using other students' screen names or passwords, to pretend to be them, to hurt others	17%	77%	6%
Students sending other students' private emails, messages, pictures or videos to others without permission	18%	75%	7%
Students deliberately ignoring or leaving others out of things over the internet	23%	66%	11%



As expected, according to staff consideration of the teachers in their school, most teachers regarded teasing, hurting, frightening others, spreading rumours and ignoring other students to hurt them as being forms of bullying. Although 86% of the staff surveyed felt that most teachers would consider sending nasty messages by email, phone or the internet (e.g. MSN) bullying, nearly one quarter were unsure if other inappropriate use of the internet would be considered bullying, with 11% not considering it bullying. Around 20% of staff stated they didn't know whether most teachers at their school would consider sending other students' private emails, messages, pictures or videos to others without permission to be a form of bullying.

Figure 5.3 reveals that, in general, the majority of the staff surveyed felt that most teachers at their school consider 'students telling others they won't like them unless they did what they said' to be bullying. Figure 5.4 shows that staff typically believe that most teachers at their school consider 'students making others feel afraid they would get hurt' to be bullying, with over 90% of staff indicating this for most age and gender groups. Male staff members under 30 are a notable exception to this with 18% of this group responding that most teachers at their school do not consider this behaviour to be bullying.

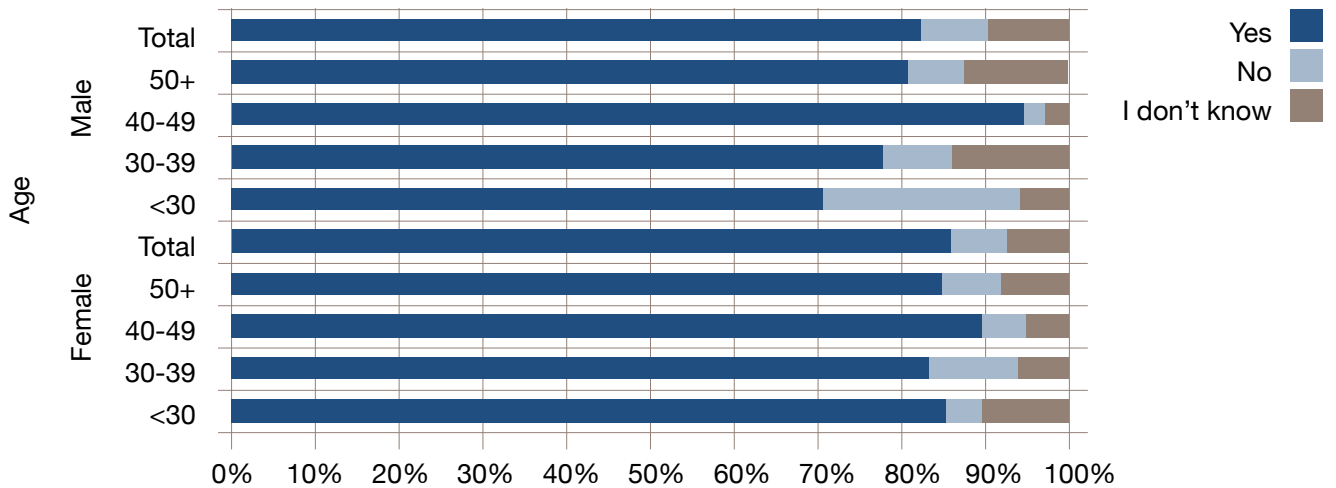
As demonstrated in Figure 5.5 an overwhelming percentage of staff members indicated that most teachers at their school consider the more conventional bullying act of 'students teasing others in nasty ways' to be bullying, with more than 95% of staff providing this response for every gender and age group except for females aged 30-39 years (92%).

The percentages of staff members who believe most teachers consider 'students using other students' screen names or passwords to hurt others' to be bullying varies notably across age and gender (Figure 5.6). Male staff members aged between 40-49 and 30-39 years gave the highest percentage of 'yes' responses to this question (86%). Males aged less than 30 years gave the lowest percentage of yes responses, with just 59% of staff members in this group believing that most teachers at their school consider this behaviour to be bullying.

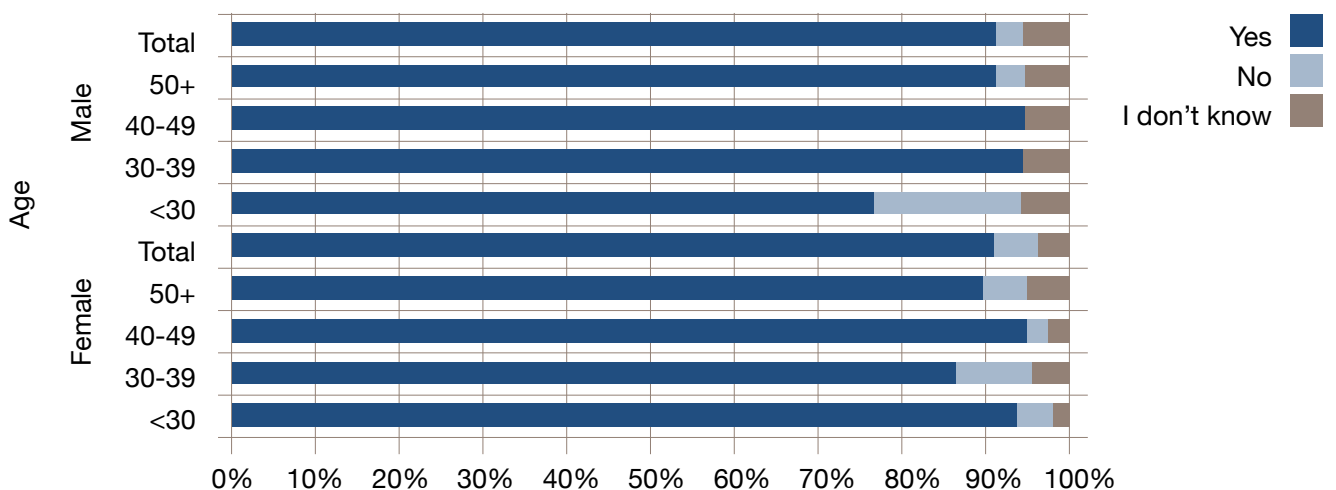
The percentage of staff members who responded 'yes' when asked whether most teachers at their school consider 'students sending or posting mean or nasty comments or pictures about other students to websites' to be bullying varies considerably across gender and age groups, with a somewhat greater percentage of males responding 'yes' than females (Figure 5.7). Males aged 30 to 39 years had the highest percentage of staff members who believe that most teachers consider this act to be bullying (89%) while males aged under 30 had the lowest percentage at only 65%.



**Figure 5.3: Do most teachers consider ‘students telling others they won’t like them unless they did what they said’ to be bullying, male and female staff responses**

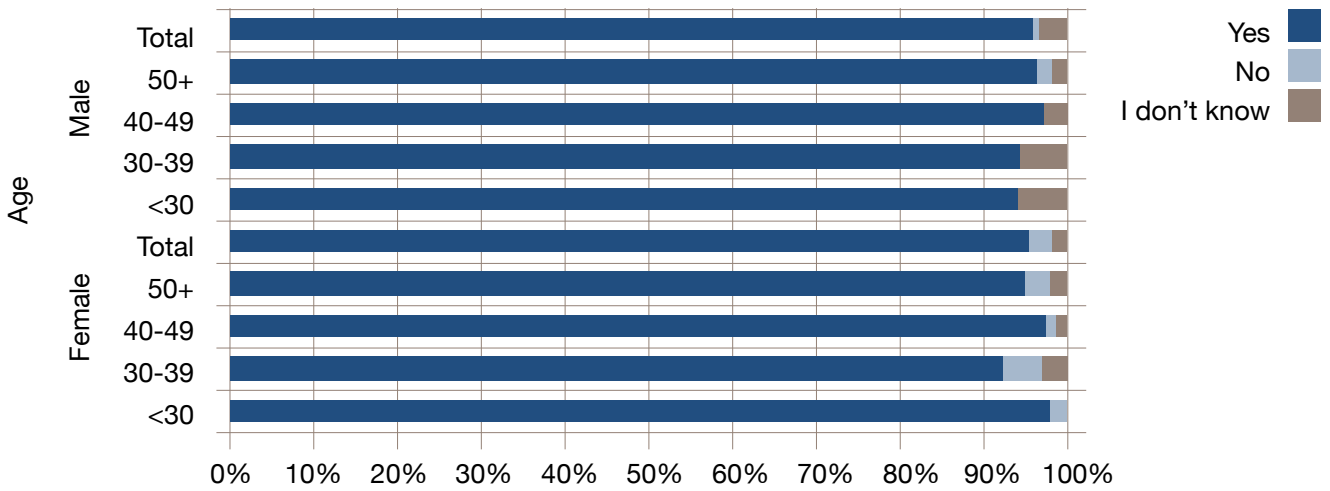


**Figure 5.4: Do most teachers consider ‘students making others feel afraid they would get hurt’ to be bullying, male and female staff responses**

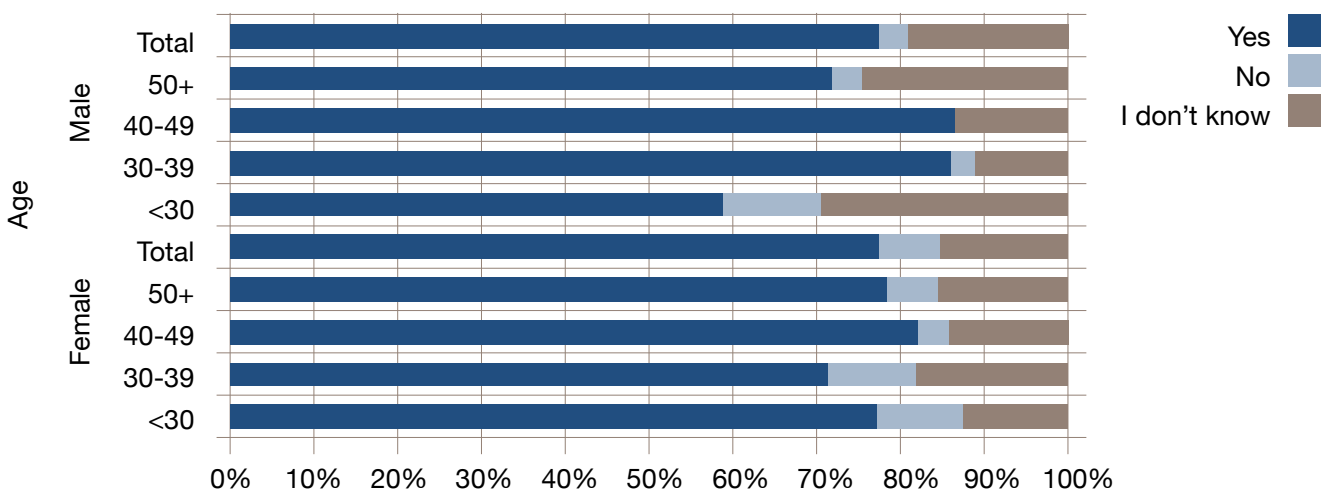




**Figure 5.5: Do most teachers consider ‘students teasing others in nasty ways’ to be bullying, male and female staff responses**

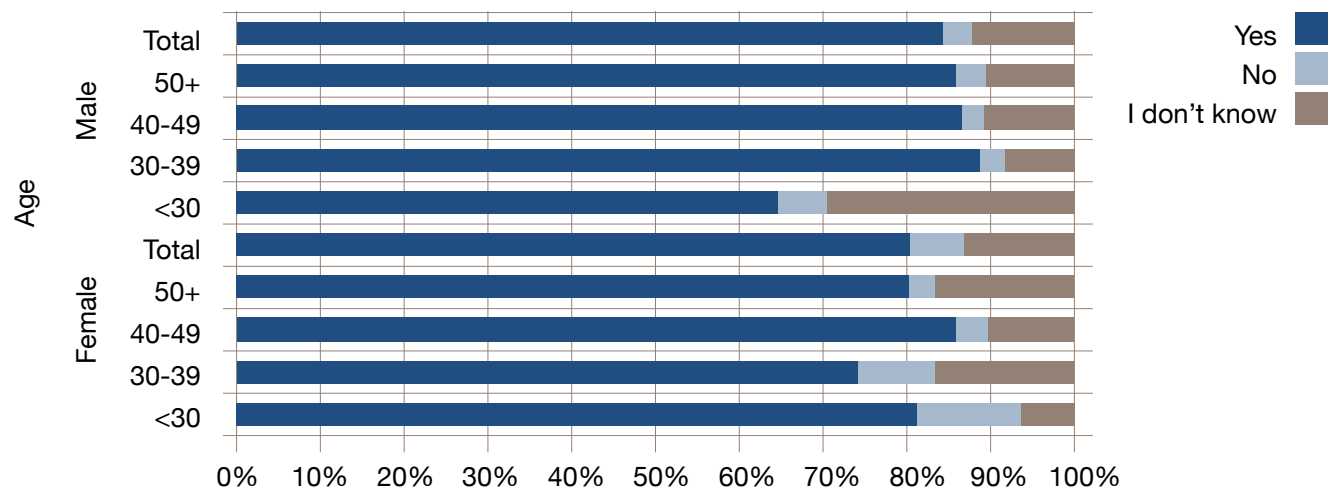


**Figure 5.6: Do most teachers consider ‘students using other students’ screen names or passwords’ to hurt others to be bullying, male and female staff responses**





**Figure 5.7: Do most teachers consider ‘students sending or posting mean or nasty comments or pictures about other students to websites’ to be bullying, male and female staff responses**







## 5.4.5 Teacher attitudes towards bullying behaviour

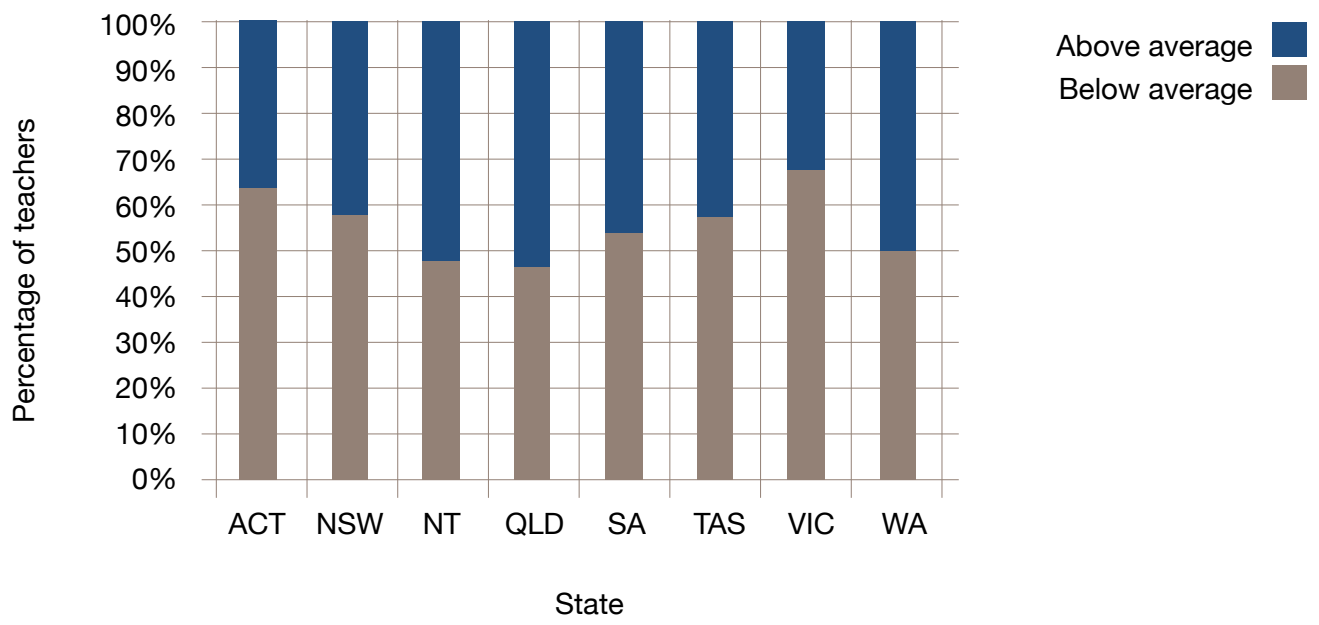
Staff attitudes towards bullying were explored using an adapted version of the Peer Relations Assessment Questionnaire Form C <sup>[3]</sup>. The scale included 16 items (Q9) measuring pro-victim and pro-bully attitudes. In general, staff tended to express pro-victim attitudes and saw a need to address covert bullying. The data from these questions are analysed in two ways within this report.

Firstly, two sub-scale scores were produced, measuring acceptance of bullying and the perceived role of staff in taking responsibility for preventing bullying. The items for each sub-scale were multiplied by existing factor scores, and summed. Staff were classified as above average or below average in relation to the mean scores of the survey participants. A score of above average for 'responsibility' and below average for 'acceptance of bullying' is desirable, indicating that staff take a higher responsibility for addressing bullying and do not accept bullying. The mean levels were quite high for responsibility, and low for acceptance, as the majority of staff were non-accepting of bullying behaviour. Secondly, some of the tables for individual items are included and examined.

The item responses showed that the vast majority of staff indicated they do not accept bullying, and do see staff as having a responsibility to prevent bullying and assist students who are being bullied. Primary school staff were more likely to score below the average for acceptance of bullying behaviours (41% compared with 49%) and slightly more likely than high school staff to score above average on responsibility (51% compared with 47%). Figures 5.8 to 5.11 show comparisons by state and age on acceptance of bullying and perceived responsibility of staff.

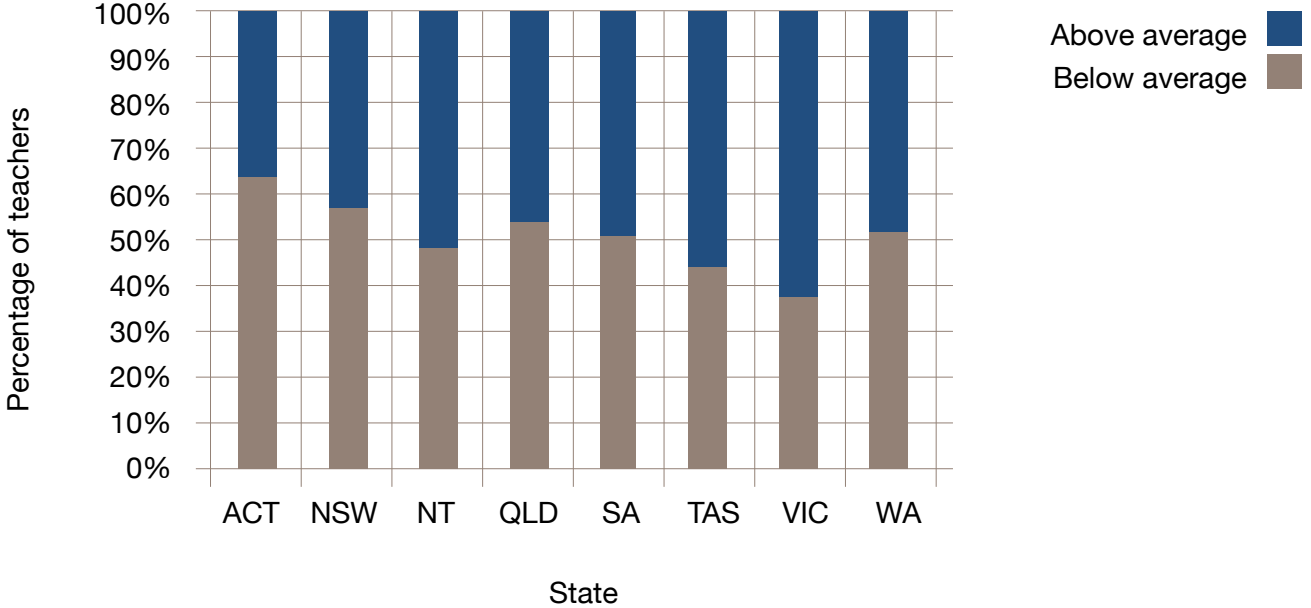


**Figure 5.8: Percentage of staff scoring above or below the mean for acceptance of bullying, by state**



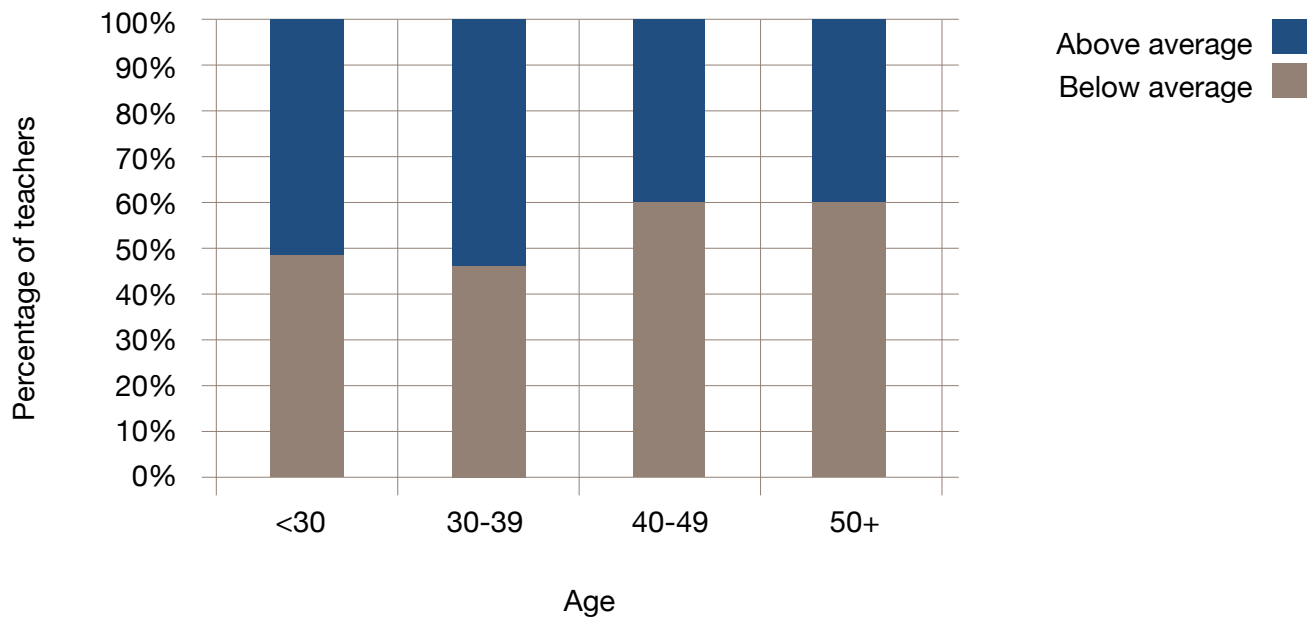


**Figure 5.9: Percentage of staff scoring above or below the mean for staff responsibility/role, by state**



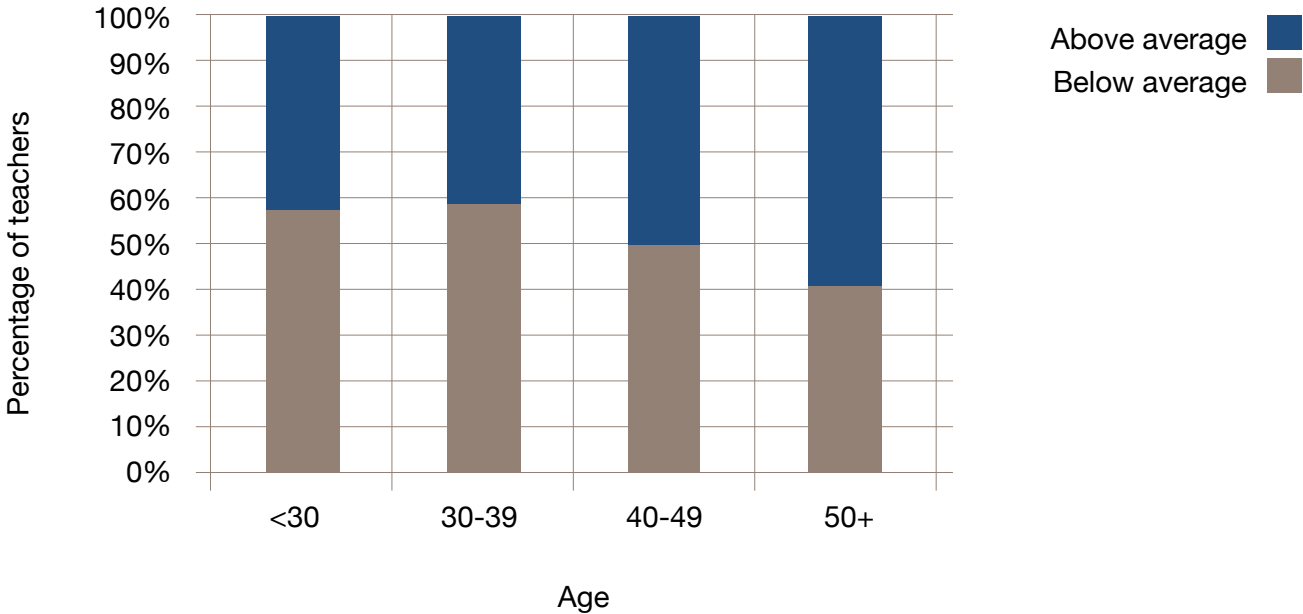


**Figure 5.10: Percentage of staff scoring above or below the mean for acceptance of bullying, by age**





**Figure 5.11: Percentage of staff scoring above or below the mean for staff responsibility/role, by age**



As can be seen in Figures 5.10 and 5.11, staff scored more highly on responsibility and lower on acceptance of bullying as age increased. Table 5.55 shows that the vast majority of staff across all age groups agreed that staff should help students deal with covert bullying. It is interesting to note, however, that the highest level of difference is among the older group of staff, with 4% of female staff and 7% of male staff over the age of 50 years disagreeing with this statement.

**Table 5.55: Percentage of staff agreeing with statement ‘Teachers should help students deal with covert bullying’ by gender and age**

Gender	Age	Teachers should help students deal with covert bullying			Total
		Broadly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Broadly agree	
Female	<30	0.0%	2.1%	97.9%	100.0%
	30-39	3.0%	3.0%	93.9%	100.0%
	40-49	0.0%	1.3%	98.7%	100.0%
	50+	4.2%	1.0%	94.8%	100.0%
	Total	2.1%	1.7%	96.2%	100.0%
Male	<30	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	30-39	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	40-49	0.0%	8.1%	91.9%	100.0%
	50+	7.0%	1.8%	91.2%	100.0%
	Total	2.7%	2.7%	94.6%	100.0%
	Total		66.7%	65.3%	19.7%

Table 5.56 shows that staff in the older age brackets are also slightly more likely to be unsympathetic to students experiencing covert bullying. Although the numbers are not large, the fact that 5% of female staff aged over 50, and 4% of male staff aged over 50 agreed with the statement that students who are covertly bullied usually deserve what they get, is of concern.

The apparent incongruence between older staff members scoring lower than average on the ‘acceptance of bullying’ sub-scale, and yet also being the only group to have a small number showing an actual acceptance of bullying at an item level, is related to response tendencies. While the vast majority of all age groups responded that they did not accept bullying and they take responsibility for addressing bullying, older staff tended to use the ‘strongly disagree’ category compared with younger teachers, who tended to choose ‘disagree’. The small number of older staff who showed acceptance of bullying (i.e. agreeing with statements such as ‘students who are covertly bullied usually deserve what they get’) was outweighed by the larger number who chose the strongly disagree rather than disagree response.

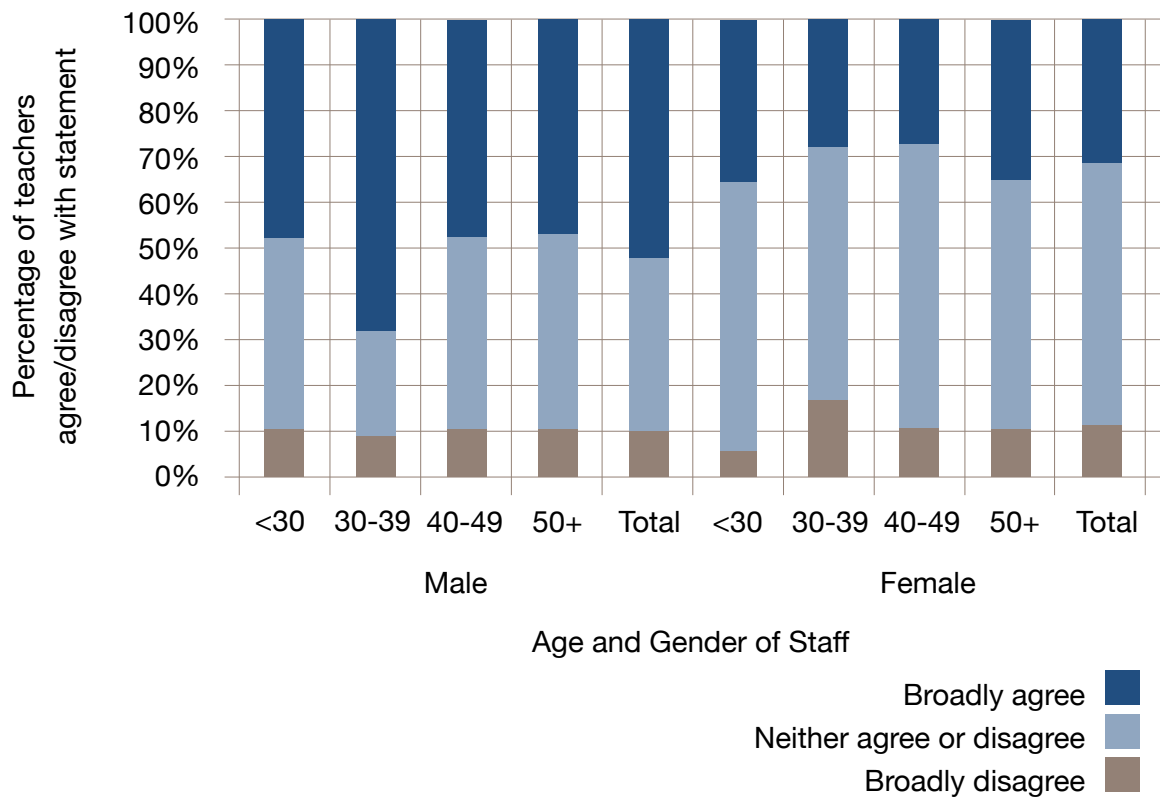
**Table 5.56: Percentage of staff agreeing with statement ‘Students who are covertly bullied usually deserve what they get’ by gender and age**

Gender	Age	Students who are covertly bullied usually deserve what they get			Total
		Broadly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Broadly agree	
Female	<30	93.8%	6.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	30-39	95.5%	4.5%	0.0%	100.0%
	40-49	93.6%	5.1%	1.3%	100.0%
	50+	93.8%	1.0%	5.2%	100.0%
	Total	94.1%	3.8%	2.1%	100.0%
Male	<30	94.1%	5.9%	0.0%	100.0%
	30-39	97.2%	2.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	40-49	94.6%	5.4%	0.0%	100.0%
	50+	94.7%	1.8%	3.5%	100.0%
	Total	95.2%	3.4%	1.4%	100.0%
	Total		66.7%	65.3%	19.7%

For many of the items relating to staff attitudes about bullying, results were similar for male and female staff. There were gender differences in responses to the statement ‘Covert bullying is usually more hurtful than overt bullying’, with 52% of female staff agreeing compared with 31% of males (see Figure 5.12). Male staff members were somewhat more likely than female staff to consider punishment the best response to covert bullying (18% and 13%, respectively, see Figure 5.13).



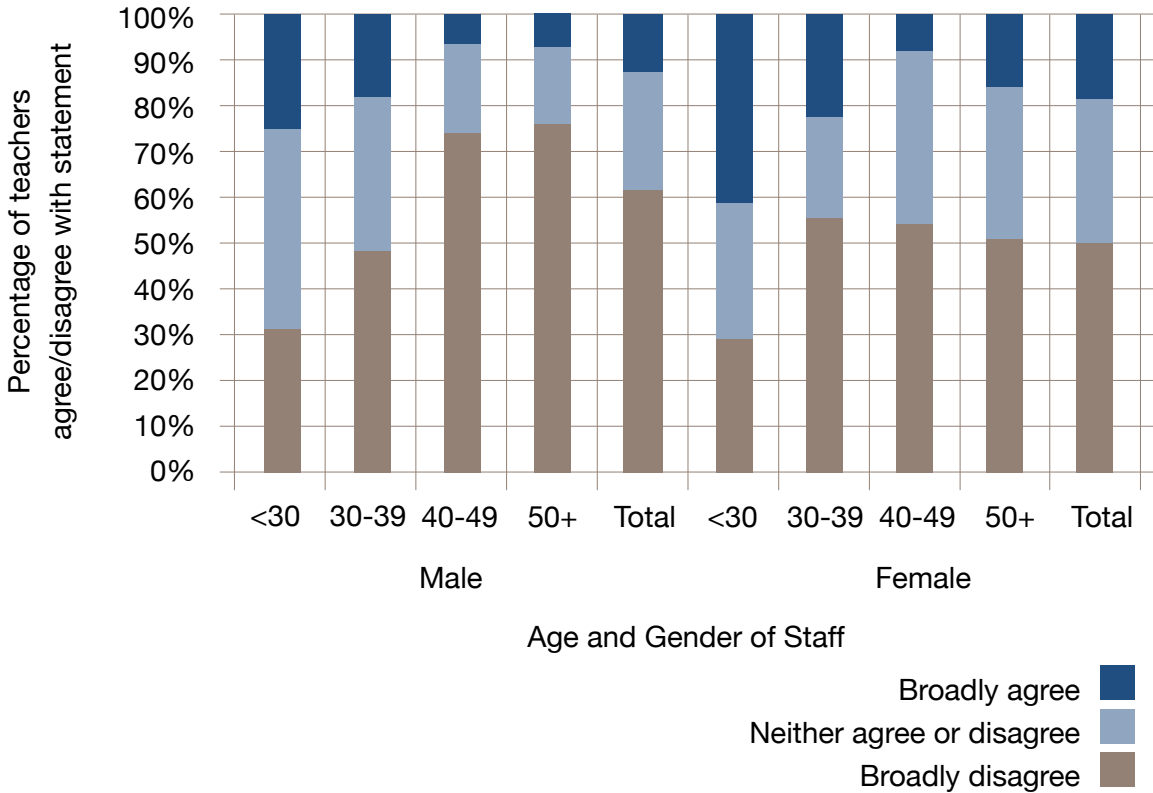
**Figure 5.12: Percentage of staff agreeing with statement ‘Covert bullying is usually more hurtful than overt bullying’ by gender and age**







**Figure 5.13: Percentage of staff agreeing with statement ‘Punishment is the best way to respond to a student who is covertly bullying others’ by gender and age**





## 5.4.6 Teacher perceptions of prevention and intervention strategies used in schools

Staff were asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of strategies aimed at preventing or addressing covert bullying. The overall ratings are shown in Figure 5.14. The strategies most frequently rated as effective or very effective in their school were ‘Principal and other senior staff commitment to covert bullying prevention’ (77%), ‘Developing clear actions for all staff to help manage covert bullying incidents’ (76%), and ‘Developing an ethos that actively discourages bullying’ (76%).

Most of the strategies were rated as effective or very effective by a higher percentage of primary school staff than secondary school staff. The supervisory strategies (supervising students or electronic devices during recess and lunch breaks, and confiscating electronic devices when not used in accordance with school policy) had the largest gap between primary and secondary staff, with primary staff much more likely to find these strategies effective. Secondary staff were slightly more likely than primary staff to rate as effective strategies incorporating school health services or the school behaviour management / pastoral care committee.

Staff from metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools generally gave fairly similar ratings for the strategies. There were, however, differences in the percentage of staff rating the strategies as effective or very effective in relation to the following:

- ensuring covert bullying is included among the behaviours addressed by the school behaviour management / pastoral care committee (metropolitan 73%, non-metropolitan 61%);
- incorporating covert bullying prevention into the school planning processes (metropolitan 67%, non-metropolitan 56%); and
- consistently involving school health services in covert bullying management (e.g. school psychologist, school chaplain) (metropolitan 66%, non-metropolitan 58%).

The strategies showing the greatest difference in teacher ratings by sector were:

- supervising students during school recess and lunch breaks to prevent or respond to covert bullying at school (Government 44%, non-Government 64%);
- supervising electronic devices during school recess and lunch breaks to prevent or respond to covert bullying at school (Government 46%, non-Government 58%); and
- consulting with the whole school community (e.g. staff, students and parents) on ways covert bullying can be prevented (Government 45%, non-Government 56%).

**Figure 5.14: Effectiveness of covert bullying (CB) prevention strategies: Staff ratings**

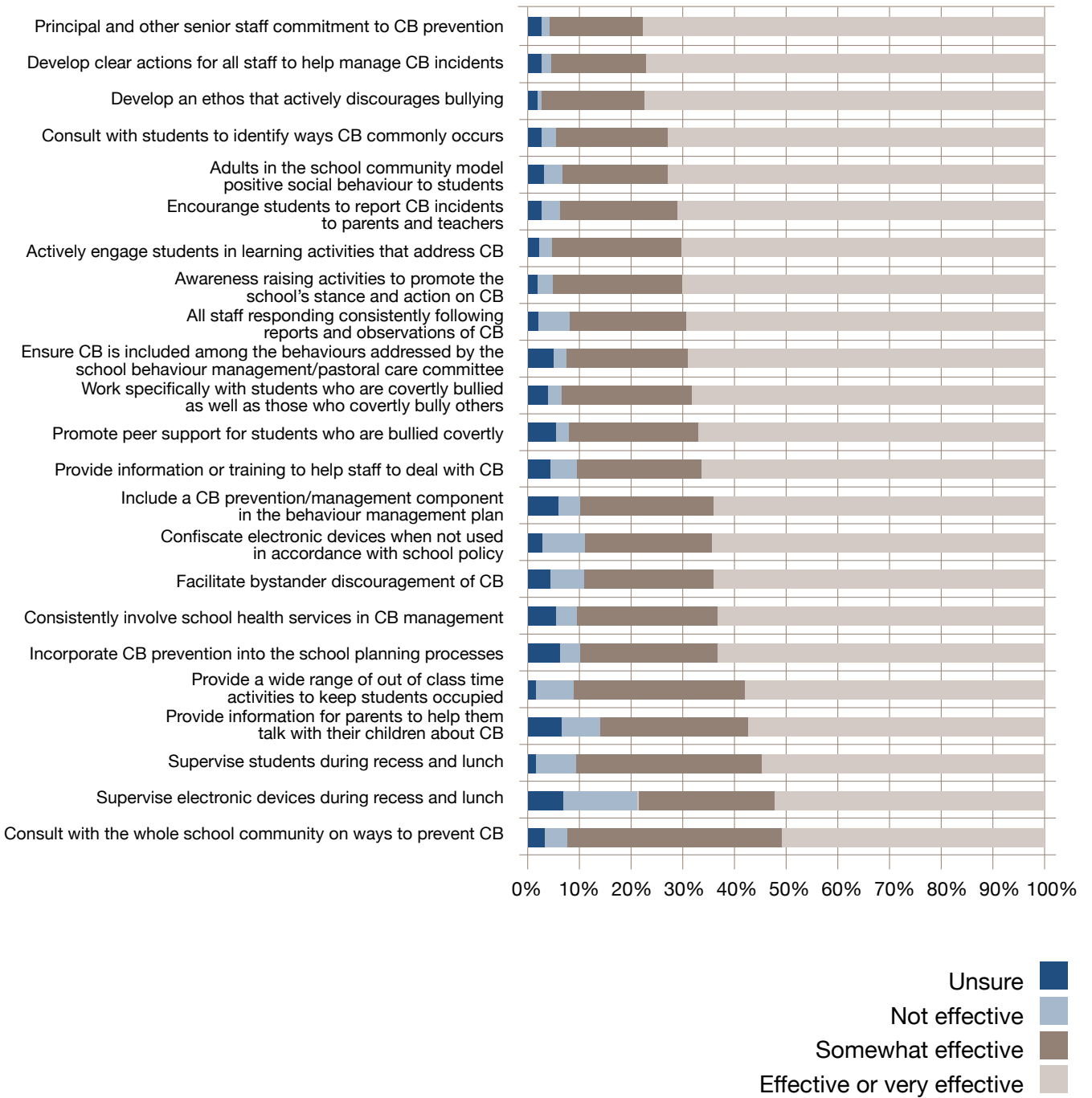


Table 5.57 shows staff ratings of the effectiveness in reducing covert bullying of their current whole school bullying prevention strategies. The majority of staff indicated that the current strategies they were using are at least moderately effective at reducing covert bullying (57%), however a sizeable minority indicated the strategies were only slightly effective (21%), and a further 5% indicated the strategies were ineffective. Three percent indicated there were no whole school bullying strategies in place.

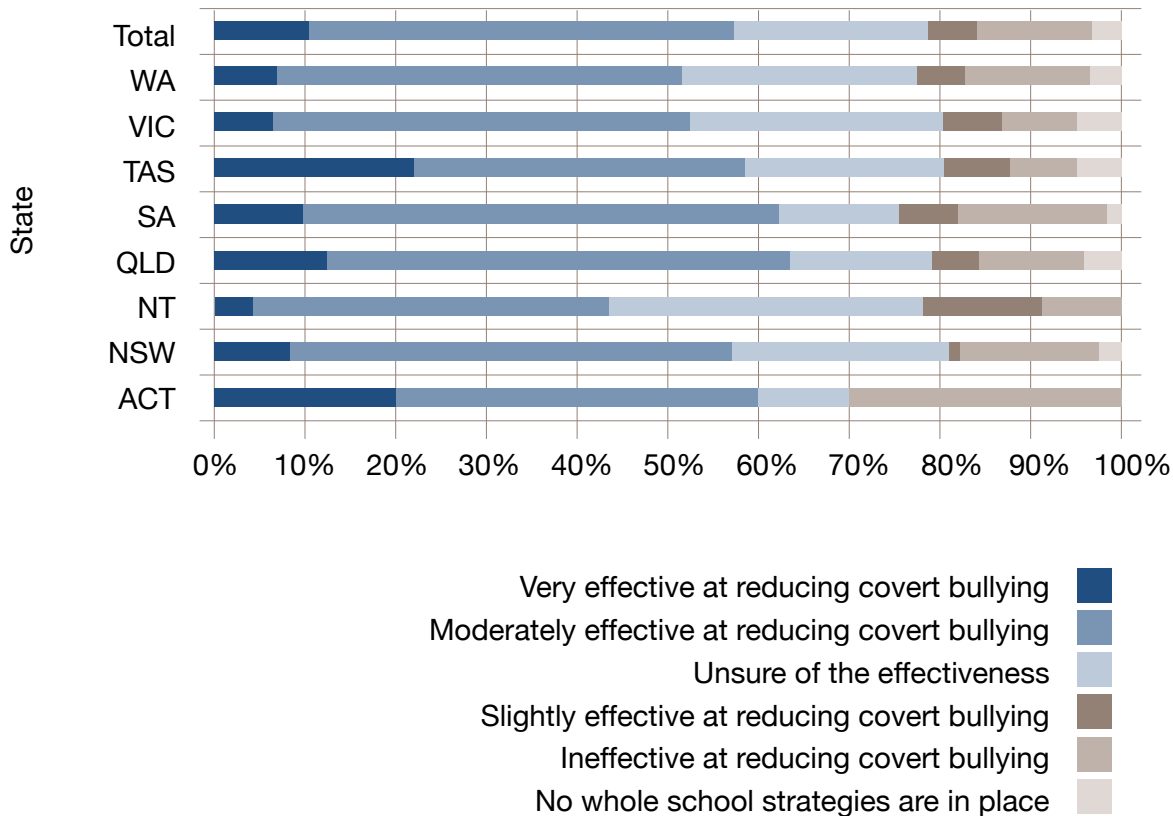
**Table 5.57: Teacher ratings of the effectiveness of current strategies in reducing covert bullying**

<b>How effective are the current WHOLE SCHOOL bullying prevention strategies in your school at reducing COVERT bullying</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very effective at reducing covert bullying	10.4%
Moderately effective at reducing covert bullying	47.0%
Slightly effective at reducing covert bullying	21.4%
Ineffective at reducing covert bullying	5.3%
Unsure of the effectiveness	12.7%
No whole school strategies are in place	3.2%
Total	100.0%

Figure 5.15 shows these ratings presented by State. Staff in the ACT and Tasmania were the most likely to rate the current strategies in place as very effective, whereas staff in the Northern Territory were least likely to rate the strategies highly. Across all States, 'moderately effective' was the most common rating.



**Figure 5.15: Effectiveness of current whole school strategies in reducing covert bullying, by State**





## 5.4.7 Teacher perceptions of the effects of bullying

Staff were asked how many students in their class this term had been noticed displaying a range of behaviours as a result of bullying. Responses of 'A few of them' through to 'Most of them' were grouped together as having observed these effects of bullying, with 'None of them' and 'I don't know' responses making up the remainder. The percentage of staff who had observed these effects of bullying are shown in Table 5.58. These percentages need to be interpreted in the light of the differences in prevalence of bullying between the different groups.

Social withdrawal was the most commonly observed behaviour (73%), however at least half the staff indicated they had noticed each of the other behavioural effects – nervousness at school, depression, and reduced academic engagement and performance. With the exception of depression and social withdrawal, which was observed at a similar rate by male and female staff, males were more likely to indicate they had noticed the other behaviours than females.

Although there was consistency across States in that social withdrawal was the most commonly noticed behavioural response, differences were noted in some of the other areas. For example, in the Northern Territory social withdrawal (84%) and nervousness (76%) at school were noticed by a high percentage of staff (higher than in the other States), whereas academic effects were not particularly high (52% and 48%) in comparison. In the ACT, emotional effects and academic effects were noticed at a similar rate (between 50 and 60%).

All of the behavioural effects of bullying were noticed more often by staff at Government schools than non-Government schools, and in non-metropolitan areas compared with metropolitan areas i.e. a higher percentage of the teachers reported that they had noticed students displaying these types of behaviours as a result of being bullied. Staff in secondary schools were more likely to have noticed these effects in their students than those in primary schools. The gap between primary and secondary staff observations of behavioural impacts of bullying were highest for academic engagement and performance, and lowest for nervousness at school.

**Table 5.58: Percentage of staff who noticed students displaying negative behaviours as a result of bullying this term**

		<b>Percentage of staff who observed negative impact on students bullied this term</b>				
		<b>Socially withdrawn</b>	<b>Nervous</b>	<b>Depressed</b>	<b>Academic engagement decline</b>	<b>Academic performance decline</b>
Age						
Female	<30	75.0%	50.0%	60.4%	47.9%	37.5%
	30-39	65.2%	55.4%	56.9%	60.6%	51.5%
	40-49	75.6%	60.3%	65.4%	51.3%	48.7%
	50+	72.6%	58.9%	58.5%	46.3%	47.4%
	Total	72.1%	57.0%	60.4%	51.2%	47.0%
Male	<30	70.6%	64.7%	76.5%	58.8%	52.9%
	30-39	77.8%	75.0%	61.1%	58.3%	61.1%
	40-49	78.4%	67.6%	62.2%	64.9%	62.2%
	50+	66.7%	56.1%	54.4%	54.4%	50.9%
	Total	72.8%	64.6%	60.5%	58.5%	56.5%
State						
	ACT	70.0%	50.0%	60.0%	50.0%	60.0%
	NSW	74.1%	58.8%	64.0%	45.3%	41.9%
	NT	84.0%	76.0%	60.0%	52.0%	48.0%
	QLD	66.7%	59.4%	56.3%	54.2%	46.9%
	SA	70.8%	55.4%	60.0%	53.8%	49.2%
	TAS	73.2%	65.9%	61.0%	68.3%	68.3%
	VIC	79.7%	59.4%	63.5%	57.8%	56.3%
	WA	71.0%	59.0%	63.9%	51.6%	50.0%
Sector						
	Government	77.5%	68.3%	68.2%	62.4%	57.8%
	non-Government	68.3%	52.0%	54.3%	45.5%	43.3%
Location						
	Metropolitan	69.3%	54.6%	58.9%	50.9%	48.3%
	Non-metropolitan	78.1%	68.0%	64.4%	57.9%	53.4%
School Type						
	Primary	67.4%	57.2%	51.9%	42.1%	39.4%
	Secondary	77.7%	62.5%	69.7%	64.4%	60.5%
	Total	72.8%	60.0%	61.1%	53.7%	50.3%




### 5.4.8 Amount of time staff use to deal with bullying

Staff members were also asked to record the average amount of time they spent managing bullying and covert bullying incidents per week during the 2007 school year. These responses were examined in relation to other variables, such as school sector and location, to allow patterns in the management of bullying and covert bullying to be identified (Table 5.59).



**Table 5.59: Average hours spent weekly managing bullying incidents**

		Average time spent managing bullying incidents with students or parents each week					
		All Bullying			Covert Bullying		
		<1hr	1-3hrs	>4hrs	<1hr	1-3hrs	>4hrs
Age							
Female	<30	60.4%	29.2%	10.4%	85.4%	10.4%	4.2%
	30-39	50.0%	36.4%	13.6%	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%
	40-49	53.8%	34.6%	11.5%	65.4%	24.4%	10.3%
	50+	44.3%	34.0%	21.6%	59.2%	27.6%	13.3%
	Total	50.9%	33.9%	15.2%	66.2%	23.8%	10.0%
Male	<30	82.4%	5.9%	11.8%	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%
	30-39	61.1%	27.8%	11.1%	69.4%	25.0%	5.6%
	40-49	45.9%	24.3%	29.7%	67.6%	24.3%	8.1%
	50+	59.6%	26.3%	14.0%	71.9%	22.8%	5.3%
	Total	59.2%	23.8%	17.0%	72.1%	21.8%	6.1%
State							
	ACT	72.7%	18.2%	9.1%	80.0%	10.0%	10.0%
	NSW	54.0%	28.7%	17.2%	64.4%	26.4%	9.2%
	NT	32.0%	44.0%	24.0%	60.0%	24.0%	16.0%
	QLD	59.8%	25.8%	14.4%	71.1%	22.7%	6.2%
	SA	60.9%	31.3%	7.8%	73.8%	20.0%	6.2%
	TAS	51.2%	31.7%	17.1%	65.9%	26.8%	7.3%
	VIC	43.8%	40.6%	15.6%	67.2%	23.4%	9.4%
	WA	50.8%	27.9%	21.3%	63.9%	24.6%	11.5%
Sector							
	Government	41.7%	36.7%	21.6%	56.6%	30.1%	13.2%
	non-Government	64.2%	25.4%	10.3%	78.4%	17.3%	4.3%
Location							
	Metropolitan	58.8%	27.9%	13.2%	73.2%	19.9%	7.0%
	Non-metropolitan	44.9%	35.4%	19.7%	59.6%	29.2%	11.2%
School Type							
	Primary	50.2%	34.1%	15.7%	67.0%	25.2%	7.8%
	Secondary	56.2%	27.9%	15.9%	68.5%	22.0%	9.5%
	Total	53.3%	30.9%	15.8%	67.8%	23.6%	8.7%



Staff members from Government schools typically spend more time per week managing bullying incidents with 37% of Government school staff spending an average of one to three hours per week compared with 25% of non-Government school staff, while 22% of Government school staff use an average of more than four hours per week compared with just 10% of non-Government school staff.

As for general bullying, Government school staff typically spend more time dealing with covert bullying incidents than their non-Government school colleagues, with 78% of staff from non-Government schools spending less than an hour per week managing these incidents, while 43% of staff from Government schools spend an hour or more per week dealing with covert bullying. In particular, 13% of staff from Government schools spend, on average, more than four hours per week managing covert bullying incidents compared with just 4% of staff from non-Government schools.

Staff from non-metropolitan schools generally spend a greater amount of time managing bullying incidents than staff from metropolitan schools, with 20% of staff at non-metropolitan schools spending more than four hours and 35% spending between one and three hours managing bullying incidents on average per week compared with, respectively, 13% and 28% of staff at metropolitan schools. Variations between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools are also evident with regard to the management of covert bullying incidents. Eleven percent of staff from non-metropolitan schools compared with 7% of metropolitan school staff spent an average of more than four hours per week managing covert bullying. Furthermore, 29% of non-metropolitan school staff spent an average of between one and three hours per week dealing with covert bullying while only 20% of metropolitan school staff used this amount of time.



### 5.4.9 Professional development needs of staff

To gain an understanding of the professional development needs of staff, the respondents were asked to record whether or not they agreed with each of a series of statements regarding professional development needs relating to covert bullying. The statements are as follows:


I think teachers in my school need more training to enhance their skills to:

- Discuss covert bullying with students;
- Discuss covert bullying incidents with parents whose children are involved;
- Deal with covert bullying incidents;
- Encourage students to help someone who is being covertly bullied;
- Address covert bullying within the curriculum;
- Identify students who are being covertly bullied;
- Identify students who covertly bully others;
- Encourage more parents to take action to help prevent covert bullying;
- Contribute to the development of the school's bullying policy.

Overall, the majority of staff responses indicated broad agreement with each of these statements, with over 67% of staff members giving responses in this category for each statement. Relatively few staff disagreed with these statements with, for each statement, less than 13% of respondents recording broad disagreement.

The plots in Figure 5.16 to Figure 5.24 provide a summary of the responses presented by school sector for each statement respectively. Figure 5.16 shows that staff members from both Government and non-Government schools agree that teachers at their school need more training to enhance their skills to 'discuss covert bullying with students' (77 % and 78% respectively).

A similar percentage of non-Government and Government school staff members broadly agreed that teachers need more training to 'discuss covert bullying incidents with parents whose children are involved' (Figure 5.17), although a slightly larger percentage of non-Government school staff broadly disagreed with this statement (9%) than did Government school staff (4%).



Fewer non-Government school staff agreed that the teachers at their school need more training to 'deal with covert bullying incidents' (Figure 5.18) than did their Government school colleagues (77% and 83% respectively). In addition to this, a larger percentage of non-Government school staff disagreed with this statement than did Government school staff (10% and 5% respectively).

Government school staff generally agreed more often with the statement regarding teachers needing training 'to encourage students to help someone who is being covertly bullied' (Figure 5.19) than their non-Government school counterparts (81% of Government school staff compared with 74% of non-Government school staff).

A considerably larger percentage of Government school staff agreed with the statement: 'I think teachers in my school need more training to enhance their skills to address covert bullying within the curriculum' (Figure 5.20) than did staff from non-Government schools (81% and 70% respectively).

A slightly higher percentage of Government school staff also agreed that teachers need more training in identifying students who are bullied covertly (Figure 5.21) than did non-Government school staff (78% and 72% respectively). A slightly higher percentage of non-Government school staff disagreed with this statement (13%) than did Government school staff (10%).

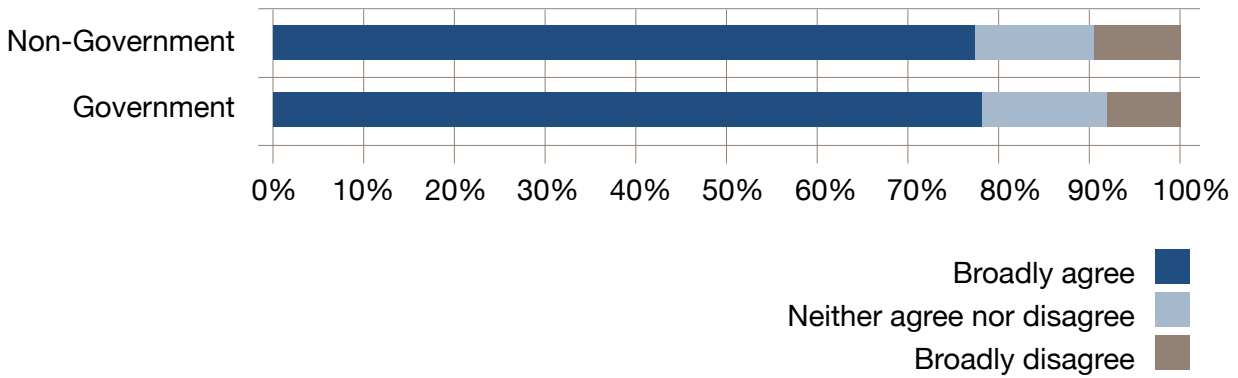
A larger percentage of Government school staff members than those in non-Government schools indicated they agreed that teachers need more training to identify students who covertly bully others (Figure 5.22) (78% and 72% respectively).

A larger percentage of Government school staff agreed that teachers need more training to encourage parents to take action to help prevent covert bullying (Figure 5.23) than do their non-Government school colleagues (88% and 77% respectively).

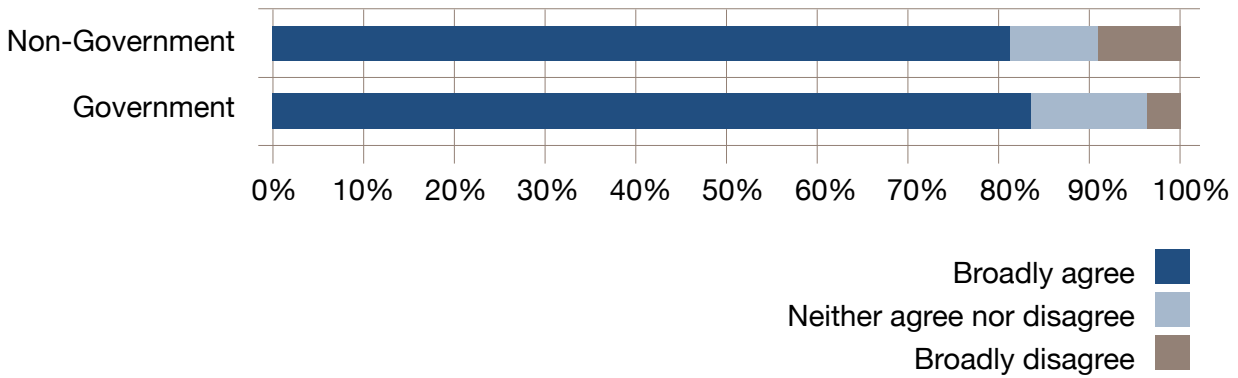
The percentages of staff members who agreed and disagreed that teachers need more training to contribute to the development of the school's bullying policy differed substantially between school sectors (Figure 5.24). In particular, 74% of Government school staff agreed with this statement as opposed to 61% of non-Government school staff. In addition to this, a somewhat greater percentage of non-Government school staff disagreed with this statement than did Government school staff (13% and 9%).



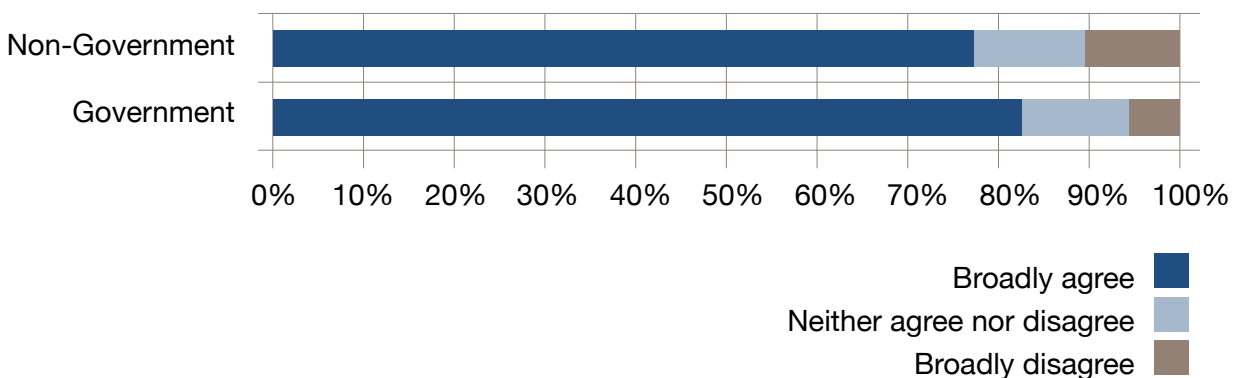
**Figure 5.16: Teachers need more training to discuss covert bullying with students, staff responses**



**Figure 5.17: Teachers need more training to discuss covert bullying with parents, staff responses**

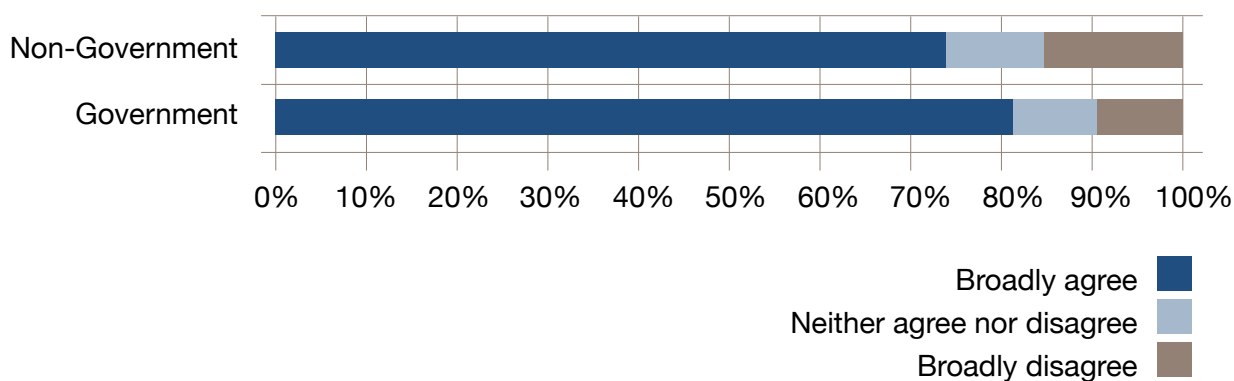


**Figure 5.18: Teachers need more training to deal with covert bullying incidents, staff responses**

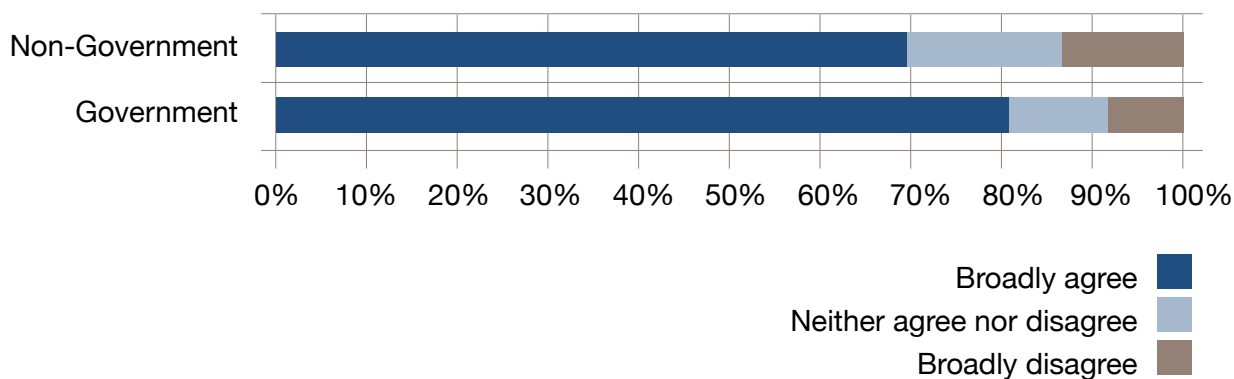




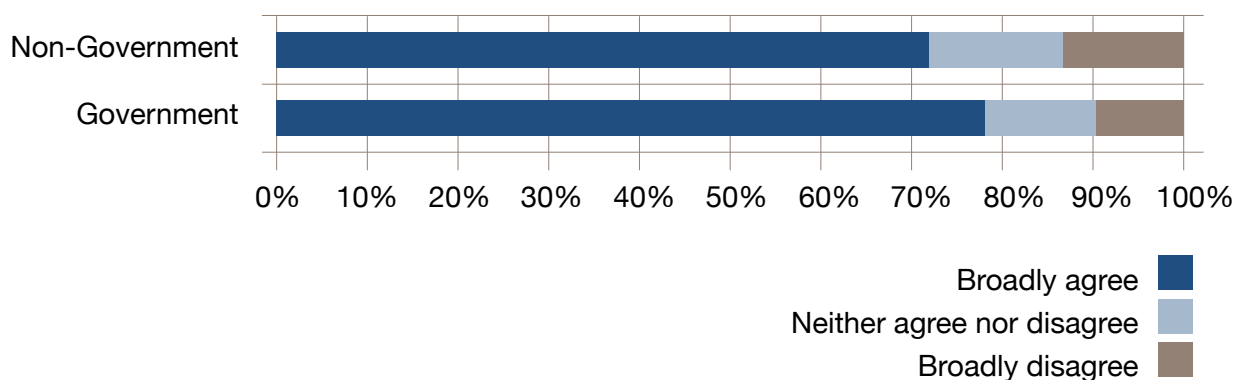
**Figure 5.19: Teachers need more training to encourage students to help someone who is covertly bullied, staff responses**



**Figure 5.20: Teachers need more training to address covert bullying within the curriculum, staff responses**

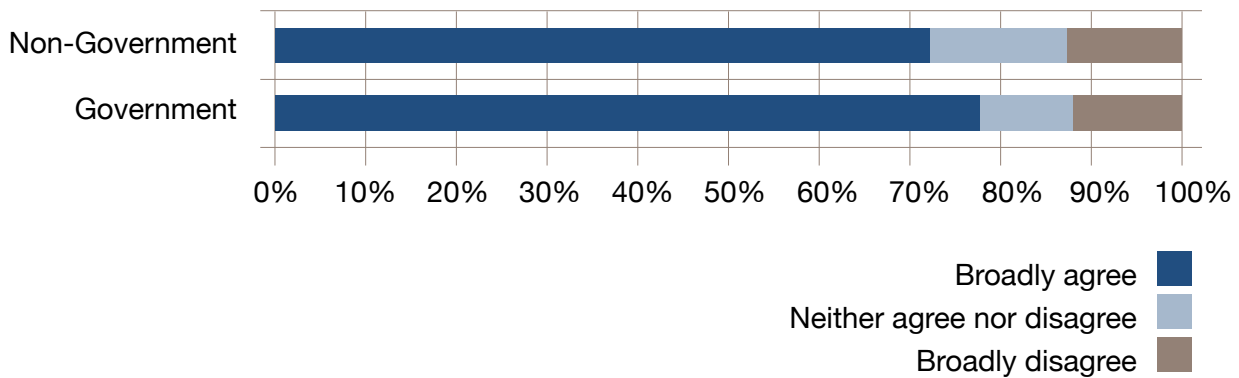


**Figure 5.21: Teachers need more training to identify students who are bullied covertly, staff responses**

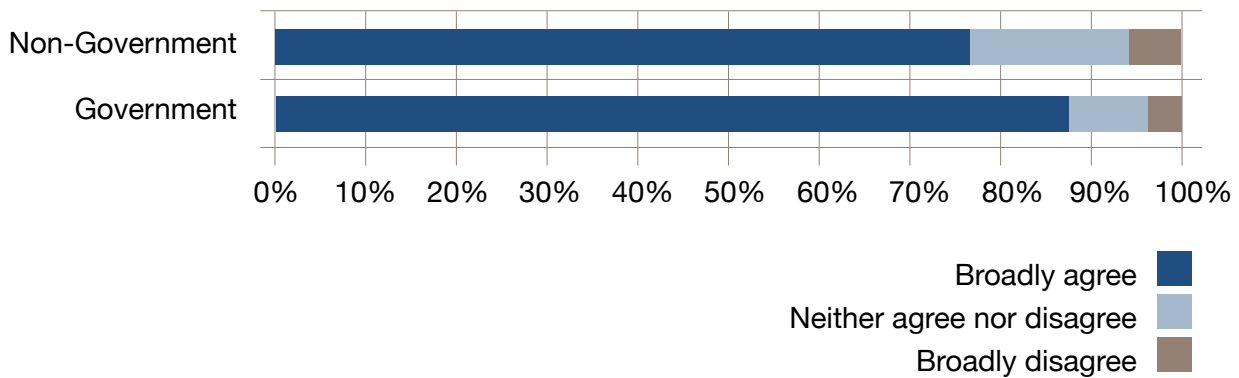




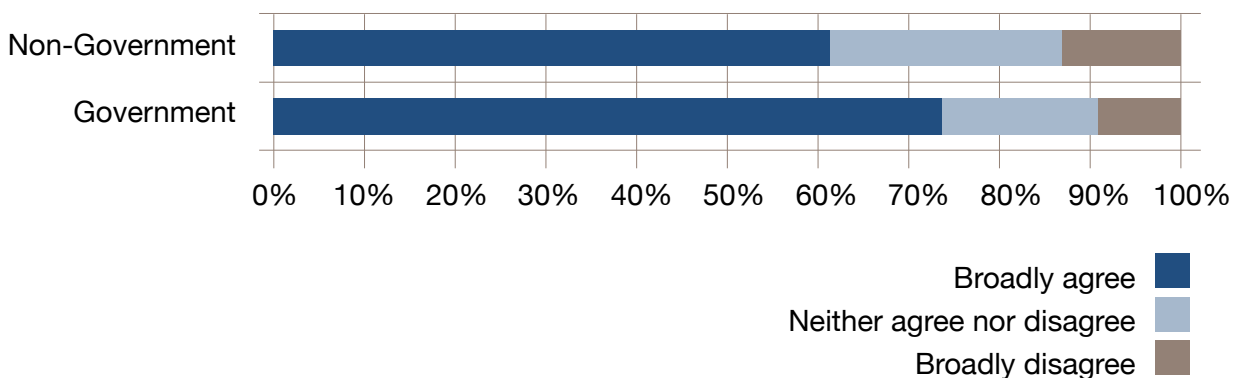
**Figure 5.22: Teachers need more training to identify students who covertly bully others, staff responses**



**Figure 5.23: Teachers need more training to encourage parents to take action to help prevent covert bullying, staff responses**



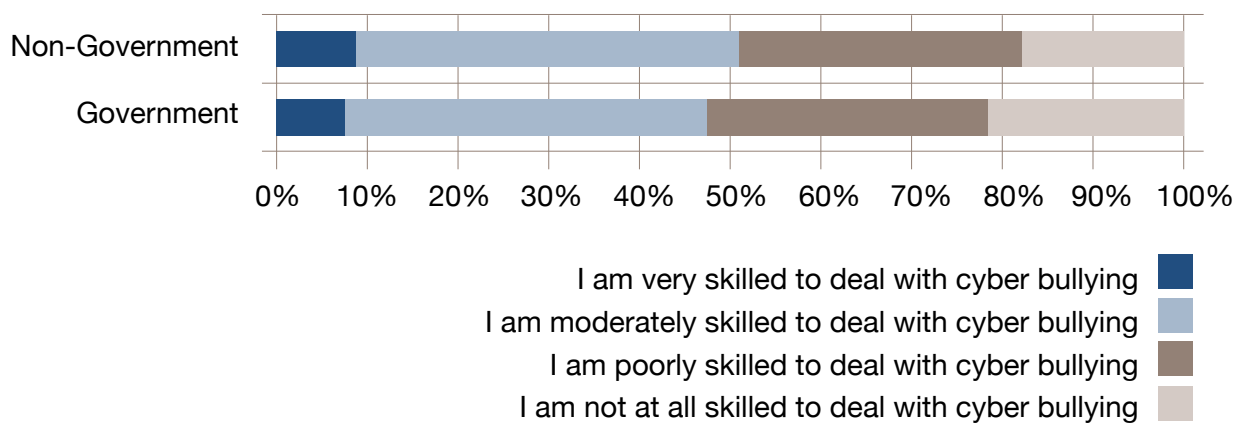
**Figure 5.24: Teachers need more training to develop school bullying policies, staff responses**





Staff were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they were skilled to deal with cyber bullying. A high percentage of staff indicated they lacked skills to deal with cyber bullying. Summaries of the responses to this question are displayed in Figure 5.25 and Figure 5.26 by school sector and State respectively. These plots show that staff from non-Government and Government schools report having similar skills to deal with cyber bullying.

**Figure 5.25: The extent to which staff felt they were skilled to deal with cyber bullying by school sector**

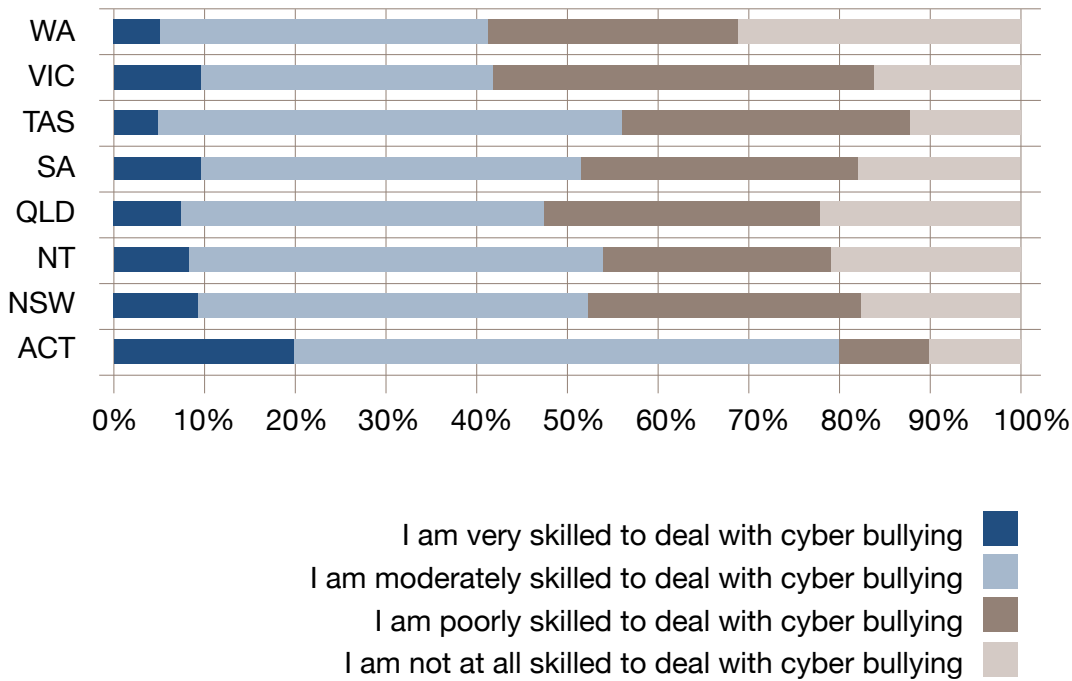


Some notable differences between the States are observed (Figure 5.26). Staff from the ACT recorded much higher percentages of the 'I am very skilled' and 'I am moderately skilled' to deal with cyber bullying responses than staff from other States, however, this may arise from the comparatively small number of respondents who were from the ACT. After the ACT, Victoria and SA had the highest percentage of 'I am very skilled' responses (10% each) while Tasmania recorded the lowest percentage (5%). The largest percentage of 'I am not at all skilled' responses were recorded by staff members from WA schools at 31% with only 12% of Tasmanian staff giving this response.





**Figure 5.26: The extent to which staff felt they were skilled to deal with cyber bullying by State**

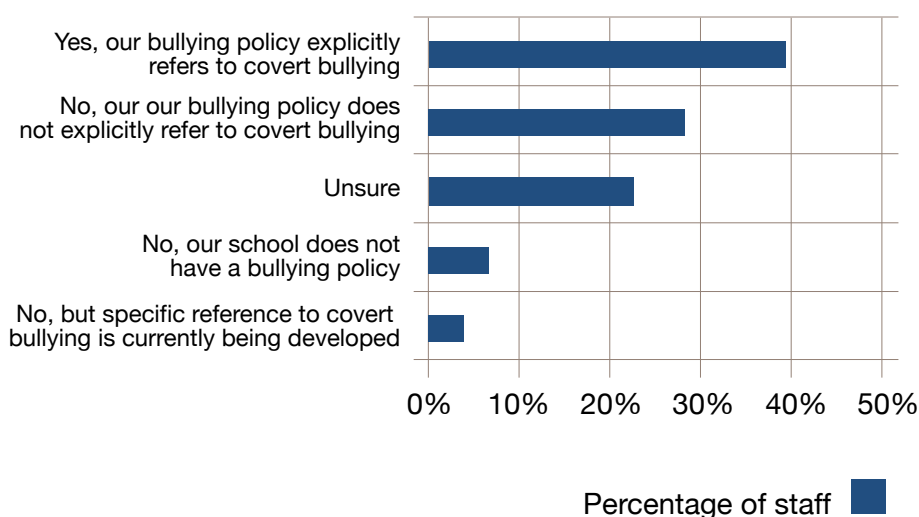


## 5.4.10 Policies and strategies used to address covert bullying

This section examines the types of policies and strategies in place at schools of which staff were aware and whether they incorporate a specific component addressing covert bullying.

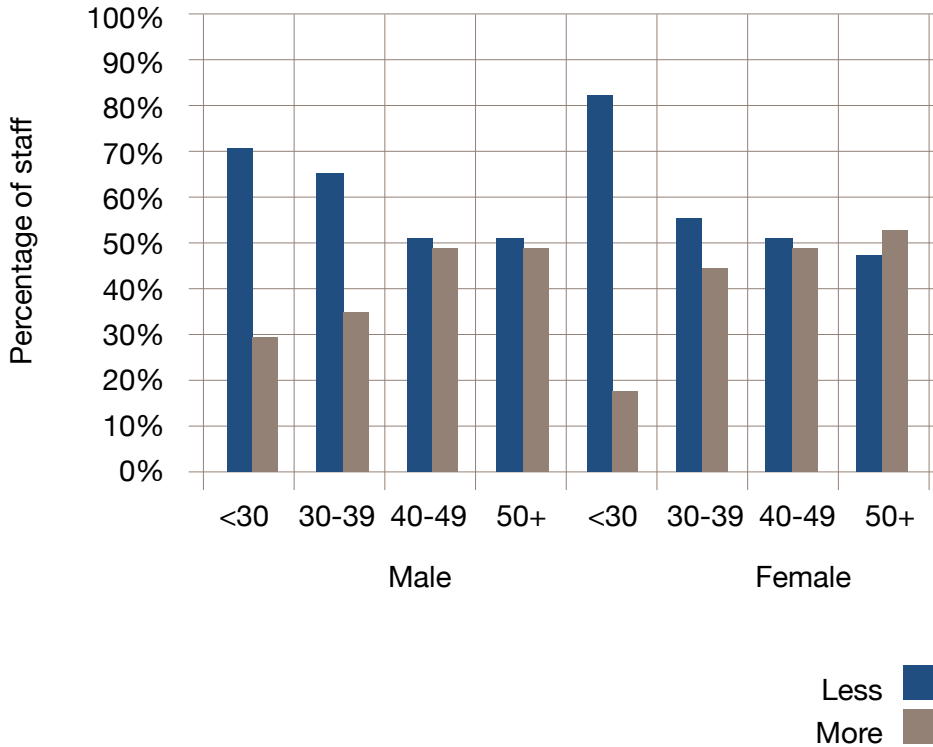
Less than 10% of staff reported that there was no bullying policy at their school, while nearly 25% of staff were unsure whether there was a school policy (shown in Figure 5.27). Just over two thirds (67%) of staff said their school had a bullying policy – 39% with and 28% without explicit reference to covert bullying.

**Figure 5.27: Staff were asked whether their school has a behaviour management plan or a bullying policy that incorporates covert bullying**



Staff were asked to indicate to what extent their school had adopted a list of strategies to reduce covert bullying (Figure 5.28). Six options were given: not adopted, don't know, not likely to be adopted, planned, in the process of being adopted and has been adopted. There were 23 strategies listed and, based on their responses to these, each teacher was given a score of 'less' or 'more', where 'more' equated to the staff member indicating that 12 or more strategies had been adopted at their school and 'less' equated to less than 12 strategies having been adopted. Overall, 57% of staff indicated their school was doing less than 12 strategies or fell in the 'less' category.

**Figure 5.28: Percentage of staff who stated whether or not bullying strategies had been adopted (aggregated into less/more) by age and gender**



The results in Figure 5.28 show a distinct trend among both female and male staff and a large discrepancy between younger and older staff members. The percentage of staff members who reported that 12 or more strategies had been adopted increased across the age groups. More females under the age of 30 indicated that less than 12 of the strategies had been adopted than males of the same age but there was little difference between the genders in the other age groups.

Nearly half of the staff at non-Government schools felt that 12 or more strategies had been adopted compared with one third of Government schools, while more staff (48%) in metropolitan areas indicated that their school had adopted more strategies compared with non-metropolitan areas (35%).

**Table 5.60: Responses to strategies listing the top three (over 75%) and lowest three (under 50%)**

<b>Bullying behaviour strategy</b>	<b>Not applied</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Been or being adopted</b>
Confiscating electronic devices when not used in accordance to school policy	10%	7%	1%	81%
Students actively encouraged to report covert bullying incidents to parents and teachers.	6%	9%	5%	79%
Staff supervision of students during school recess and lunch breaks, to prevent or respond to covert bullying	11%	10%	2%	77%
Providing information or training to help staff to deal with (prevent and manage) covert bullying	20%	21%	13%	46%
Consultation with the whole school community (e.g. staff, students and parents) on ways covert bullying can be prevented	24%	25%	9%	42%
Providing information for parents to help them to talk with their children about covert bullying	20%	29%	13%	39%

The top three strategies that were being adopted or had already been adopted to address covert bullying are shown in Table 5.60 and include the confiscation of electronic equipment; students encouraged to report bullying; and staff supervision during recess and lunch breaks. Over 75% of staff stated that these strategies had been adopted or were being adopted. According to staff responses, the three strategies of staff training, consultation with the whole community and providing information to parents were adopted to the least extent within their schools. Nevertheless, relatively high percentages of the respondents indicated that they did not know whether these three strategies had been adopted. In comparison, the remaining three strategies had lower percentages of 'don't know' responses in relation to whether the strategies had been adopted.



## 5.5 Limitations

The results presented above need to be interpreted in light of the following:

- The data were collected using self-completion questionnaires. Thus, reports of being bullied and bullying others may be under- or over-estimates of these outcomes depending on the nature of the behaviour concerned and the age and literacy skills of the students involved. The survey was designed to suit students with a Year 4 vocabulary and reading level.
- When recruiting students for this component of the ACBPS, five State education systems (WA, SA, QLD, NSW, VIC) allowed only active consent for students' participation, while other States and Territories (TAS, NT, ACT) allowed active-passive consent. As a result the student sample in the three active-passive consent States may be more heterogeneous than those States that allowed active consent only. Hence, it could be assumed that reported rates of bullying may be higher as a function of their sampling procedure in those States that allowed more students to participate in the survey (using the active/passive consent procedures) compared with those that allowed active consent students only.
- The questionnaires were administered by school staff. While the staff were sent a strict protocol for questionnaire administration, the mode of administration may have had an impact on students' responses.
- The cross-sectional nature of the data precludes conclusions from being drawn on the causal nature of the relationships between the bullying outcomes and the other variables. Where differences are observed, it is unclear which variable is leading to changes in the other. For example, are feelings of connectedness to school a result or a cause of being involved in bullying behaviours?
- Some of the percentages presented are based on relatively few students, specifically when looking at estimates within small strata. This is particularly true for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Northern Territory, where relatively small samples of schools/students completed the surveys compared to other States. Hence, these two samples may be less representative of their state population of students from which the sample was taken. As a result all values presented need to be interpreted in conjunction with their confidence intervals, to assess the precision of the estimates and thus the extent to which they are an accurate reflection of rates in the population to which they refer.
- For some sampling it was only possible to recruit one school. In these instances, confidence intervals for the percentages presented could not be calculated for these strata, and confidence intervals for any estimates which include schools in these strata are underestimated.



## 5.6 Summary of findings

### Prevalence of bullying generally

- Being bullied every few weeks or more often (considered to be frequent) overtly and/or covertly during the last term at school is a fairly common experience, affecting approximately one in four Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students (27%). Frequent school bullying was highest among Year 5 (32%) and Year 8 (29%) students. Hurtful teasing was the most prevalent of all bullying behaviours experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them.
- The majority of students (61%) who had been bullied in any way had also experienced covert bullying (either on its own or in conjunction with overt bullying). Of students who had experienced covert bullying, 60% had also been teased in 'nasty' ways, 24% had been physically hurt, and 13% had been sent nasty messages on the internet. Slightly over half (53%) of students who said that they bullied others had engaged in covert bullying (either on its own or in conjunction with overt bullying).
- Both overt and covert bullying were commonly observed by staff, with about 70% observing or having both these types of bullying reported to them in the term the survey was conducted.
- Less than one in ten students (9%) reported that they generally bullied others every few weeks or more often, with 11% of boys reporting they bullied others more frequently. By comparison, only 7% of girls reported that they bullied others frequently.

### Prevalence of covert bullying

- One in six students (16%) reported being bullied covertly every few weeks or more often in the term the survey was conducted. Students in Years 5, 6 and 8 were most likely to report being bullied in this way (18-20%) and those in Year 9 least likely (12%). This form of bullying was experienced slightly more often by girls (18%) compared with boys (15%) and in Government schools (17%) more often than non-Government schools (14%).
- Very few students reported that they covertly bullied others (5%). Although just over a half (53%) of students who said they bullied others also engaged in covert bullying (either on its own or in conjunction with overt bullying).



## Prevalence of cyber bullying

- The vast majority of Year 4 through Year 9 students had not experienced cyber bullying, with only 7-10% of students reporting they were bullied by means of technology over the school term.
- Slightly higher rates of cyber bullying were found among secondary students and students from non-Government schools.
- Cyber bullying was not observed by or reported to as many staff members as other forms of bullying, but it was not rare (20%).

## Covert bullying and gender of students

- Covert bullying appears to increase in frequency starting in the late primary school years among girls and then early secondary school years among the boys.
- Covert bullying most often occurs between students of the same gender, with boys more likely to be covertly bullied by another boy (47%) or a group of boys, and girls more likely to be bullied by another girl (48%) or a group of girls. However, nearly a third of boys (32%) and approximately a quarter of girls (28%) were bullied by both boys and girls.

## Covert bullying and age of students

- While many teachers reported the prevalence of covert bullying to be highest in the late primary and early high school years, some staff were unsure of how many, and at what age, students were covertly bullied or covertly bullied others.

## Effects of covert bullying

- Students who were covertly bullied or who covertly bullied others reported lower levels of connectedness to their school, higher levels of loneliness at school, felt less safe at school and were more likely to experience difficulties such as emotional symptoms, conduct problems, inattention and peer relationship problems compared with students who were not covertly bullied.
- Important differences were found between Year 7 students who had moved to high school and been covertly bullied and Year 7 students in primary schools who were covertly bullied. The covertly bullied Year 7 students in secondary schools reported feeling much less safe at school (22.6% vs. 3.6%); had higher risk difficulties scores (27.9% vs. 9%); were more likely to feel lonely (75.8% vs. 46.7%); and were more likely to do nothing in response to being covertly bullied (51.3% vs. 37.2%) compared to Year 7 students who were covertly bullied but still located in primary schools.



## Identity of person bullying in covert ways

- Most of the students (88%) who experienced covert bullying, knew the person(s) who bullied them (or at least one of the people if they were bullied by more than one person). However, half (48%) of the students in Year 7 in secondary schools and one third (32%) of the students in Year 6 were bullied or also bullied covertly by someone they did not know.
- Year 9 students (compared with other year levels) were more likely to have been bullied over the internet, both by someone they had met while on the internet (12%) and by someone they did not know (17%).
- Students were most likely to be covertly bullied by students in their own year group (91%) or students in the year above them (50%).


## Responding to covert bullying

- Most students who were covertly bullied indicated that they responded by walking away (75%), staying away from the person(s) or the place where it happened (74%), ignoring the student(s) involved (72%), or becoming angry (72%).
- Friends (64%) followed by parents or guardians (57%) and then teachers and other staff members (46%) were the people students most commonly went to for help to deal with a bullying problem. Whereas boys (33%) were more likely than girls (23%) to not ask anyone for help, over half (56-57%) had spoken with friends or a parent.
- Seeking help from an adult was not always effective, with more students indicating they had sought help from an adult but the bullying had stayed the same or got worse (45%) than had improved (28%).

## Staff attitudes to covert bullying

- The vast majority of staff were not accepting of bullying behaviours, and see themselves as having a responsibility to prevent bullying and to assist students who are being bullied.
- Female teachers (52%) were more likely to consider covert bullying to be more hurtful than overt bullying compared with male teachers (31%).
- Overt and covert bullying were both commonly observed by staff. Around 70% of staff observed or had each type of bullying reported to them in the term the survey was conducted. Teachers perceived the prevalence of covert bullying to be highest in the late primary and early high school years, but many staff were unsure of how many students were covertly bullied or covertly bullied others.



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- The majority of staff surveyed had observed a negative impact on students who had been bullied in the current term. Social withdrawal was the behavioural effect most commonly reported as being observed by staff (73%). Nervousness at school, depression, and declines in academic engagement and performance had all been observed by at least half of the staff during the term.

## Strategies to reduce covert bullying in schools

- Over half of the teachers surveyed rated the current whole school bullying prevention strategies in place in their school as moderately or very effective in reducing covert bullying (57%) with 21% indicating the strategies were only slightly effective, and 5% indicating they were ineffective.
- Strategies such as supervising students during lunch breaks were seen as more effective amongst primary school staff, whereas secondary staff were slightly more likely to rate strategies incorporating the school health services or the school behaviour management/pastoral care committee as more effective. Differences were also evident between staff in metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools and Government and non-Government schools.
- There was slightly less recognition of, and more uncertainty by, teachers about how to address bullying involving technology compared with other forms of bullying.

## Management of school bullying

- Government school teachers indicated that they spent more time managing bullying incidents with students or parents each week compared with non-Government school teachers, for both general bullying (22% and 10%) and covert bullying (13% and 4%).
- Teachers were more likely to intervene on overt bullying than covert bullying.

## School needs to address bullying

- The majority of staff (67%) felt other teachers at their school needed more training to enhance their skills to deal with a range of issues related to covert bullying, such as dealing with incidents or addressing covert (including cyber bullying) within the curriculum. Actions and motives underlying covert bullying behaviours need to be understood to know how to intervene and prevent.



## 5.7 References

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