

LEARNING FROM STUDENT VOICE:

# BULLYING TODAY

Bullying in the United States is changing, and not in the way we'd hope. To help educators, parents, education funders, and students grapple with the shifting landscape, we went straight to the source for more insight. We asked over 160,000 students across 27 states about their experiences with bullying during the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- 1 Bullying rates have increased.
- 2 Majority white schools have higher rates of bullying.
- 3 In majority white schools, students of color experienced a steeper increase in bullying than white students last year.
- 4 Middle school students experience higher rates of bullying than high school students.

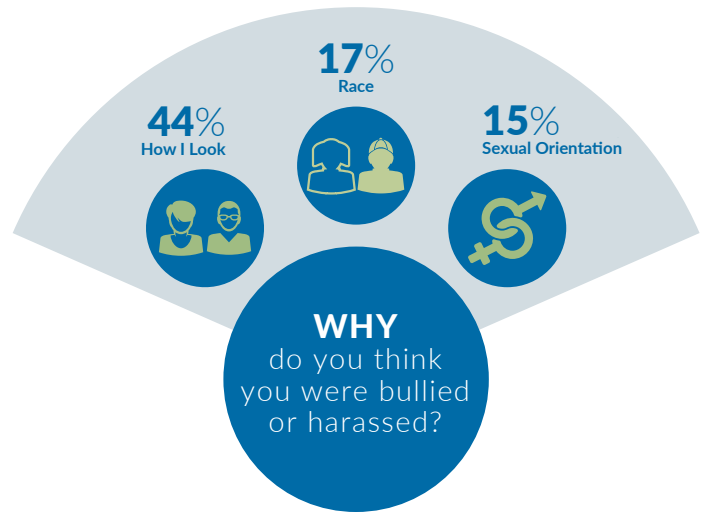
# What do we know about students' experiences with bullying in schools?



Since 2016, YouthTruth has examined student perception data about bullying to contribute to anti-bullying conversations and action in honor of October's National Bullying Prevention Month. Previously, our analysis found that [1 in 4 students are bullied](#) – a broad statistic widely reported elsewhere.

We know students are the true experts about their experiences, and that listening to students is a crucial part of understanding how to decrease bullying. In 2017, we analyzed anonymous feedback from over 180,000 students across 37 states in grades five through twelve. We discovered that [most bullying happens in person](#), and the top three reasons students believe they are bullied include their appearance, their race or skin color, and because other students thought they were gay.

Read the full report in YouthTruth's [Bullying 2017](#) edition of [Learning from Student Voice](#) to learn more.



## WHAT CAN LISTENING TO STUDENTS TEACH US ABOUT BULLYING TODAY?

Recent conversations with our partner educators across the country – leaders committed to creating safe, supportive, and inclusive schools – emboldened us to examine if students' experiences with bullying have changed, and if so, how? Many educators wanted to know: Has bullying increased just at my school, or is this a broader trend? Which students are most likely to be bullied, and why? With this new report, we explore these questions and provide discussion questions and resources to take action.

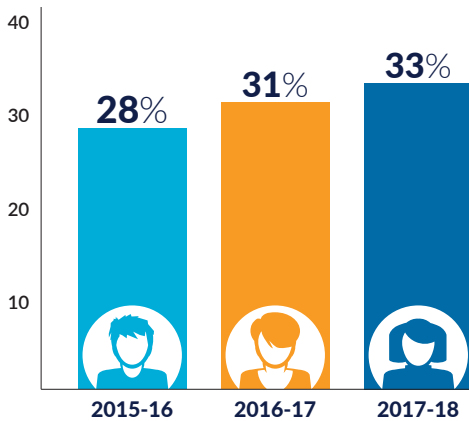
# 1

## Bullying rates have increased.



In the 2017-18 school year, 33 percent of students reported that they had experienced bullying. That's 1 in 3, or nearly 40,000 students.

**1 in 3** students are **bullied**.



### HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The rate of bullying at secondary schools increased by nearly five percentage points over the past two academic years from a baseline of 28 percent in 2015-16.

## ▶ ONE SCHOOL'S STORY



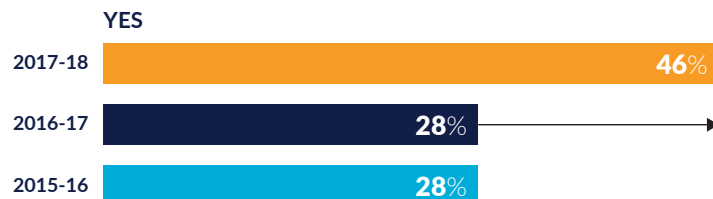
**Quincy School District**  
Opportunities unlimited for all

When school leaders and staff at Quincy Junior High in Washington State surveyed students in the winter of the 2017-18 year, they saw a dramatic increase in bullying.

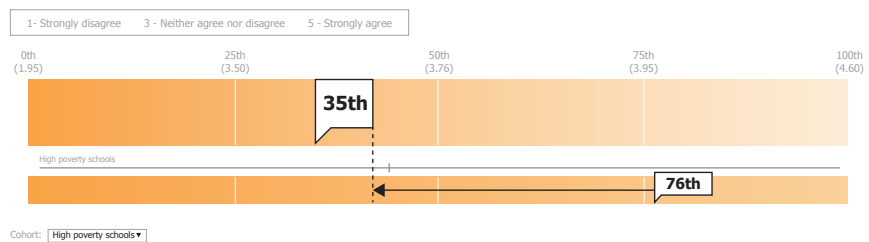
The parent community also reported less favorable ratings about their child's safety from bullying. Parent and guardian belief that their child was safe from bullying dropped from the 76<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years.

"This was not data that could be ignored," shared Principal Scott Ramsey. "We quickly moved from the YouthTruth data to action." The school launched an anti-bullying initiative and created a two-day lesson plan about inclusion for teachers and students. An 8<sup>th</sup> grade class created a video that was shared district-wide and was picked up by the local news station. Click [here](#) to watch the three-minute news coverage, or [watch](#) the full five-minute video.

### In the past school year, have you been bullied?



### My child is safe from bullying at school.



[DOWNLOAD TWO-DAY LESSON PLAN](#) ▶

Alternatively, type this hyperlink into your browser: [bit.ly/2QvW3mh](https://bit.ly/2QvW3mh)

# 2

## Majority white schools have higher rates of bullying.

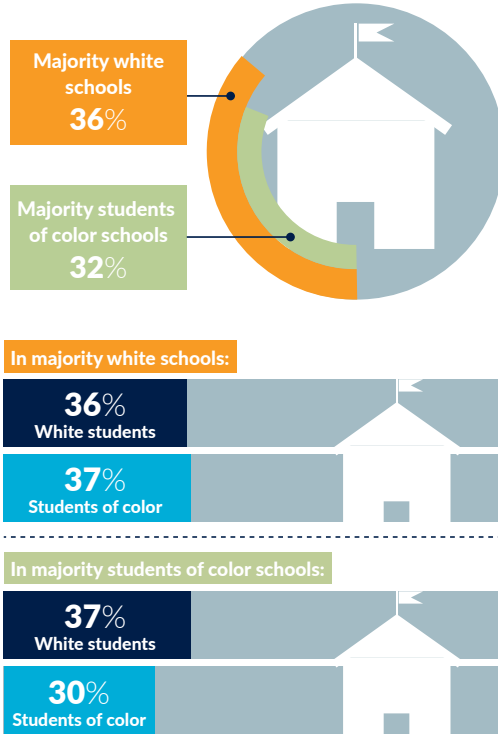


In the 2017-18 school year, the rate of bullying in majority white schools — schools in which white students comprise more than half of the student body — was higher than the rate of bullying at schools with a majority of students of color.

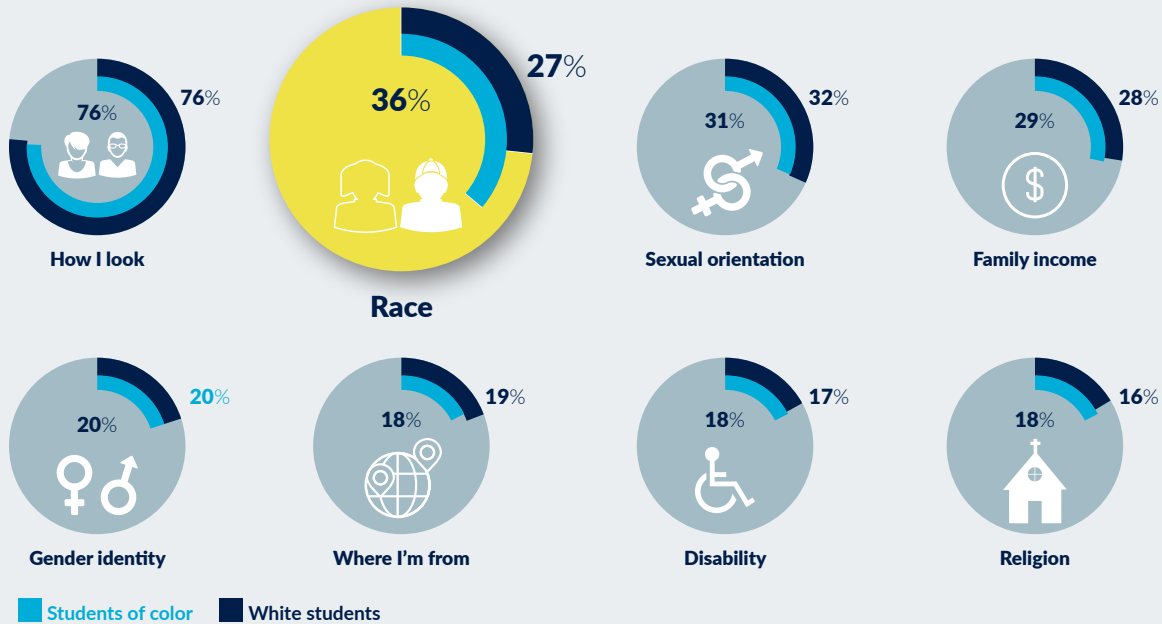
In schools in which students of color comprise more than half of the student body, students of color were less likely to be bullied than white students. In these schools, 30 percent of students of color were bullied, compared to 37 percent of white students. In majority white schools, however, bullying rates are roughly the same — 36 to 37 percent — for both white students and students of color.

Our analysis also found that at schools with a majority of students of color, race is cited as a reason for being bullied more frequently than it is at majority white schools.

### IN THE PAST YEAR HAVE YOU BEEN BULLIED? (2017-18)



### WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WERE BULLIED? (majority students of color schools, 2017-18)



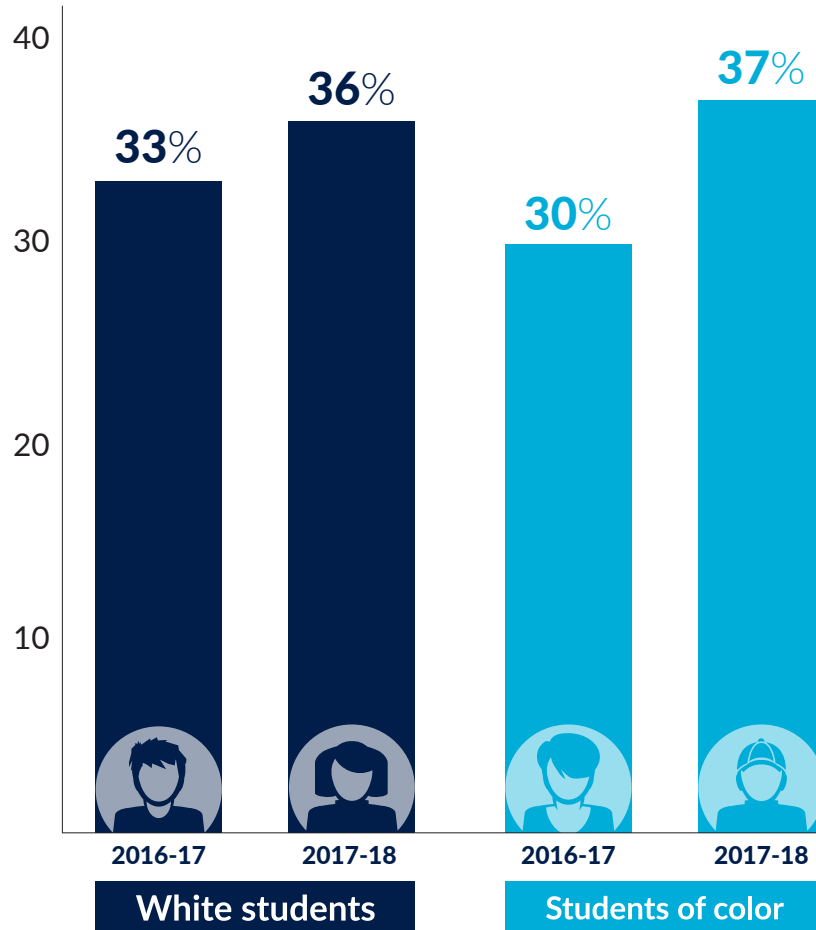
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## In majority white schools, students of color experienced a steeper increase in bullying than white students last year.



Bullying has increased for all students. However, in majority white schools, between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, white students saw an increase in bullying of about 3 percentage points, whereas students of color saw an increase of over 7 percentage points.

### AT MAJORITY WHITE SCHOOLS



Conversely, at schools made up of a majority of students of color, there was virtually no change in the bullying rate between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years for either white students or students of color.

To create more equitable schools, it is important to understand how subgroups of students can experience disparate rates and types of bullying. This data helps shed light on where to target improvements, and the improvement work is worth it. [Research shows](#) that a positive school environment, in which students report high levels of safety and respect, is linked with academic success and can help close the achievement gap.

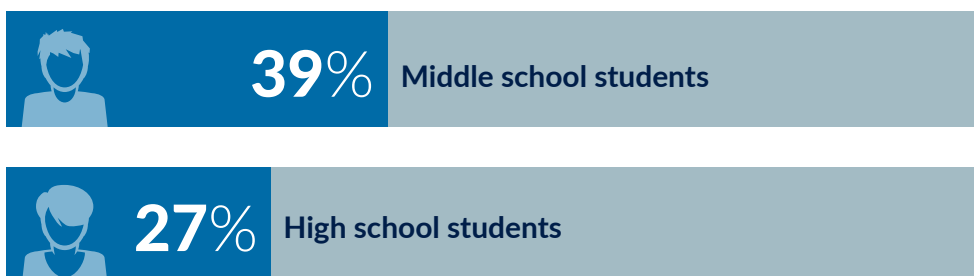


# 4 Middle school students experience higher rates of bullying than high school students.



Among approximately 63,000 high school students and 64,000 middle school students surveyed, a far greater proportion of middle school students experienced bullying than did high school students. While 27 percent of high school students said that they had been bullied, nearly 40 percent of middle school students reported being bullied.

## IN THE PAST YEAR, HAVE YOU BEEN BULLIED? (2017-18)



While all bullying can have a severe and lasting impact on students' health and well-being, name calling, teasing, ostracizing, and the spreading of rumors are [common forms of bullying in middle schools](#). We also know that [most bullying happens in person](#), not online, and that school staff play a crucial role in creating a supportive school culture that encourages safety and inclusion in classrooms and hallways — two of the [most prevalent locations in which bullying occurs](#). In fact, middle school students indicate a preference for a teacher's [intervention through classroom management](#) to curb bullying.

### Listening to students is a key step to decrease bullying.

So much can be learned when adults not only ask students about their experiences, but also listen deeply and react promptly to what they've heard. Listening to students is the first step in generating the awareness, discussion, and action necessary to prevent bullying. All students should feel welcome at school and safe from bullying.

We know that bullying is on the rise, and we now know that certain groups of students experience bullying more than others, and at increasing rates. [Research](#) has shown the lasting consequences when students experience bullying, as well as when students bully others. Preventing bullying today is critical in building equitable schools that prepare all students for success.



**Please use the resources and discussion questions on the next pages to support anti-bullying efforts at your school today.**



# Resources



## [StopBullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov)

Compilation of anti-bullying resources from across the country.

## [826 Digital's Inclusion Storytelling Project](https://www.826national.org/storytelling-project)

Social-emotional learning (SEL) writing curriculum, book-making kits, and student stories, presented by Cartoon Network and 826 National.

## [PromotePrevent from the Education Development Center \(EDC\)](https://www.edc.org/promote-prevent)

Resources for bullying prevention, as well as school and community safety.

## [Committee For Children](https://www.children.com/committees)

Activities, videos, books, and research for educators and families to prevent bullying through social-emotional learning (SEL).

## [National School Climate Center and BullyBust](https://www.nationalclimatecenter.org/bullybust)

Pathways to positively address school culture and climate, and free supports in addressing bullying in schools and classrooms.

## [Teaching Tolerance](https://www.teachingtolerance.org)

Curricula and resources that emphasize social justice and anti-bias practices for K-12 schools and communities.

## [Teacher.org](https://www.teacher.org)

Guides and strategies for educators in combatting and preventing bullying.

## [Usable Knowledge](https://www.usableknowledge.org)

Research stories and strategies for educators on a range of topics connected to school culture, empathy, and social-emotional learning.

## [National Education Association](https://www.nationaleducationassociation.org)

Curriculum resources to address, identify, confront, and stop bullying.

## [No Bully](https://www.nobully.org)

Tools for educators, students, parents, and advocates to ignite compassion to eradicate bullying and cyberbullying worldwide.



# Closing the Feedback Loop: Sample Discussion Questions



## FOR PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

In what ways do these findings feel relevant to what you observe about the experiences of students at our school? How are they similar or different?

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Are there anti-bullying initiatives in place on our campus? How effective do you think they are? Have they incorporated student perspectives?

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How do the culture-building and anti-bullying initiatives at our school work to include all students? What could our school be doing better?

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What questions do you have for our school community after reflecting on this data?

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Commit to one action step you will take to help decrease bullying at your school. What will it be? Tell us about the action you're taking at @Youth\_Truth using the #antibullying hashtag.

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# Closing the Feedback Loop:

## Sample Discussion Questions *(continued)*



### FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN CONVERSATION WITH STUDENTS

How much of a problem do you think bullying is in our school?

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Do you know where students can go to get help if they are being bullied? Do you think students feel comfortable using those resources? Do you have suggestions for how to improve those resources?

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What are you doing to combat bullying at our school? What else could you be doing?

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What questions do you have for our school's leaders, teachers, and fellow students after reflecting on this report?

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### ABOUT YOUTHTRUTH

YouthTruth is a national nonprofit that harnesses student and stakeholder feedback to help educators accelerate improvements. Through validated survey instruments and tailored advisory services, YouthTruth partners with schools, districts, and education funders to enhance learning for all students. To learn more about the research that informs our work, please visit [youthtruthsurvey.org/resources/#research](https://youthtruthsurvey.org/resources/#research).

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