

Bullying common in Mass. schools

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BOSTON, April 22 (UPI) -- A survey of 6,000 students at 138 Massachusetts schools find 25 percent of middle school students and 16 percent of high school students report being bullied.

The 2009 survey released Thursday by state health officials included questions about bullying for the first time, The Boston Globe reported. It was the first such survey in the country.

Researchers say there is a link between being either a bully or a victim, and being exposed to other types of violence, including physical abuse at home.

Elizabeth Englander, a psychologist at Bridgewater State University and head of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, said much family violence is not reported.

"These children are learning in their families and behaving the same way in their social relationships with their peers," she said.

Bullies and victims are also more likely than other students to report they have tried or considered suicide and to say they use alcohol or drugs.

"Sometimes, people who we have thought of as perpetrators are actually very vulnerable themselves," Public Health Commissioner John Auerbach said.

The state conducts the surveys of student health and wellbeing every two years. In 2009, students at 138 middle and high schools filled out a questionnaire.

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