BULLYING & SOCIAL MEDIA

New Indiana data on what students experience at school and online.

Know the Basics

What bullying is

Teasing, threatening, spreading rumors or hurting another student over and over. It isn't bullying when two students of about equal strength argue or fight.

At school and online

Electronic bullying happens through texts, apps and social media, and it can follow students home.

Bystanders matter

Most bullying happens with peers watching. When bystanders step in or get help, bullying often stops quickly.

Social media is nearly universal

Most Indiana students use social media, and many check it several times a day or more.

BY THE NUMBERS

71–88%

of Indiana 7th–12th graders were **not** bullied at school in the past year. Rates drop with each grade.

29% to 12%

of students were bullied at school, from 7th to 12th grade. Electronic bullying ranged from 15% to 10%.

About 1 in 4

Indiana students use social media more than once an hour.

2026 Indiana Youth Survey

Data Check: Using These Numbers Right

- **New questions, no trend yet.** 2026 is the first year Indiana asked these questions. It's a baseline, so don't describe anything as rising or falling.
- **Definitions matter.** The survey defines bullying as repeated behavior. Campaign messages should use the same meaning.
- **Target the grade.** Bullying is highest in middle school, so messages for 7th graders and 12th graders should differ.

Laws & Safety in Indiana

- **Indiana schools must have anti-bullying policies** and a way for students to report bullying.
- **Tell a trusted adult** or use your school's reporting system. Save screenshots of online bullying.
- **In crisis?** Call or text 988 any time.

Campaign Angles

- **Upstander norms:** "Most of us would help a classmate being bullied." Check your local data first.
- **Lead with the majority** who weren't bullied, without minimizing those who were.
- **Social media:** promote balance, not shame.

Sources: 2026 Indiana Youth Survey, Prevention Insights, IU School of Public Health-Bloomington; Indiana Department of Education; StopBullying.gov; 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.