Growing Up in Ireland
National Longitudinal Study of Children

Impact of Bullying on Psychological & Educational Outcomes of 9-Year-Olds

Dr. Elizabeth Nixon & Prof. Mona O'Moore

Outline

- Background
  - Definition and age-related patterns in involvement in bullying
  - Recap on GUI findings on prevalence and nature of bullying
  - Emergence of distinct bully status groups in the literature
- Research questions for presentation
- Overview of design and methods
- Findings on educational and psychological outcomes associated with different types of involvement in bullying
- Discussion and conclusions

Background

- Bullying refers to aggression characterized by a repeated, willful and systematic abuse of power (Olweus, 1999; Smith & Sharp, 1994)

- **Age-related patterns** in nature and involvement in bullying
  - Physical aggression (esp among boys) declines into the early childhood period
  - Verbal and relational aggression (manipulation in the social setting of the victim) seem to increase
  - Decline in reports of victimisation over middle childhood and into adolescence (except around transition to secondary school)
  - However, tendency to perpetrate bullying remains stable over time

- **Risk factor** for physical and psychological ill health and poor academic achievement (O'Moore, 2010; Boulton et al., 2008; Kumpulainen et al., 2000)

# Prevalence of Victimisation among 9-year olds in Ireland
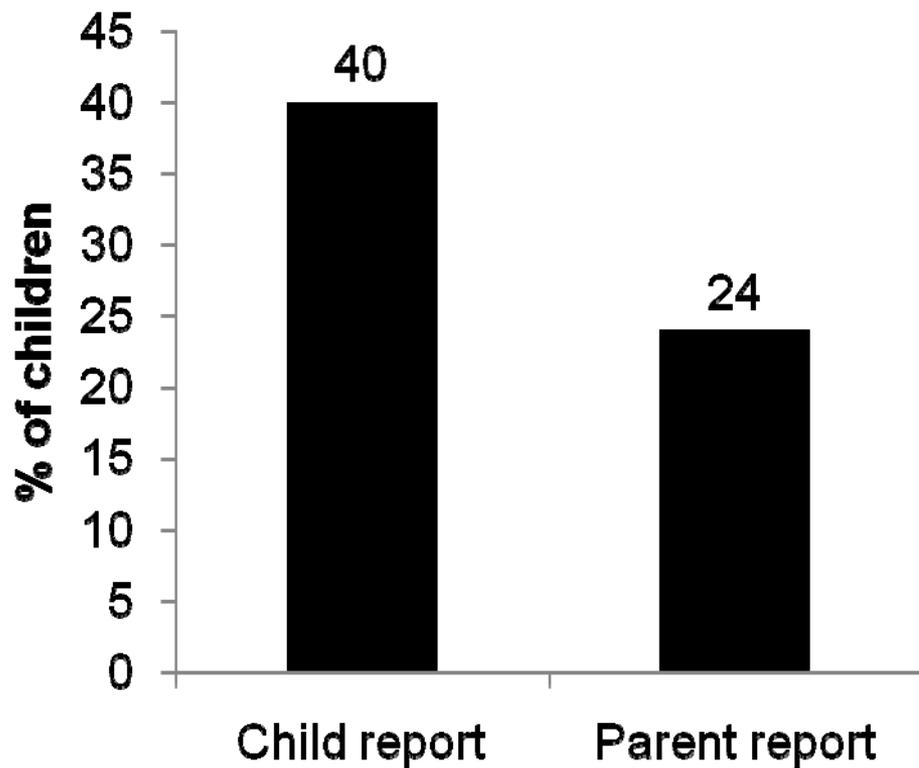
- Similar prevalence rates for boys and girls
- Many primary caregivers are unaware that their child has experienced bullying in the past year
- For the 40% of children who had been bullied, 61% of primary caregivers were unaware of their child's victimisation
- Girls were more likely to report feeling upset as a result of the bullying than boys
- Few social class differences

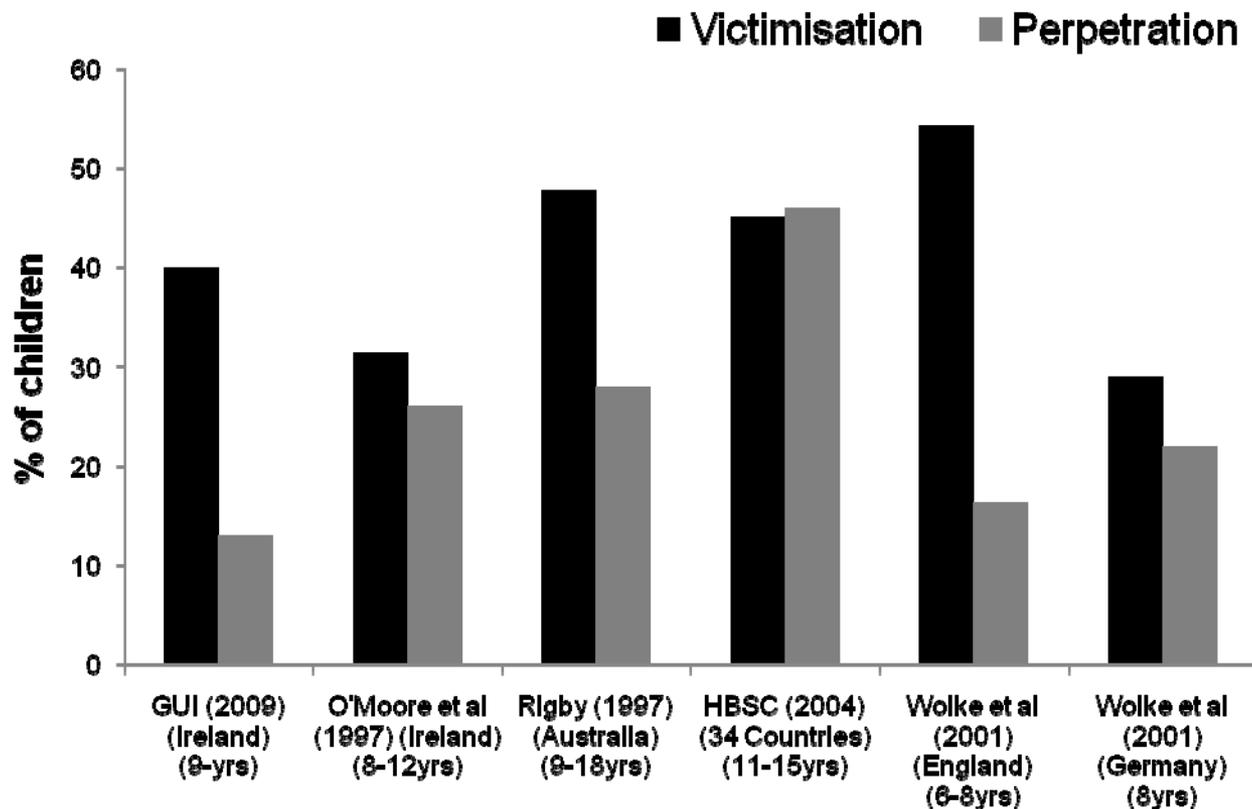Sex-Related Patterns in Victimisation Experiences
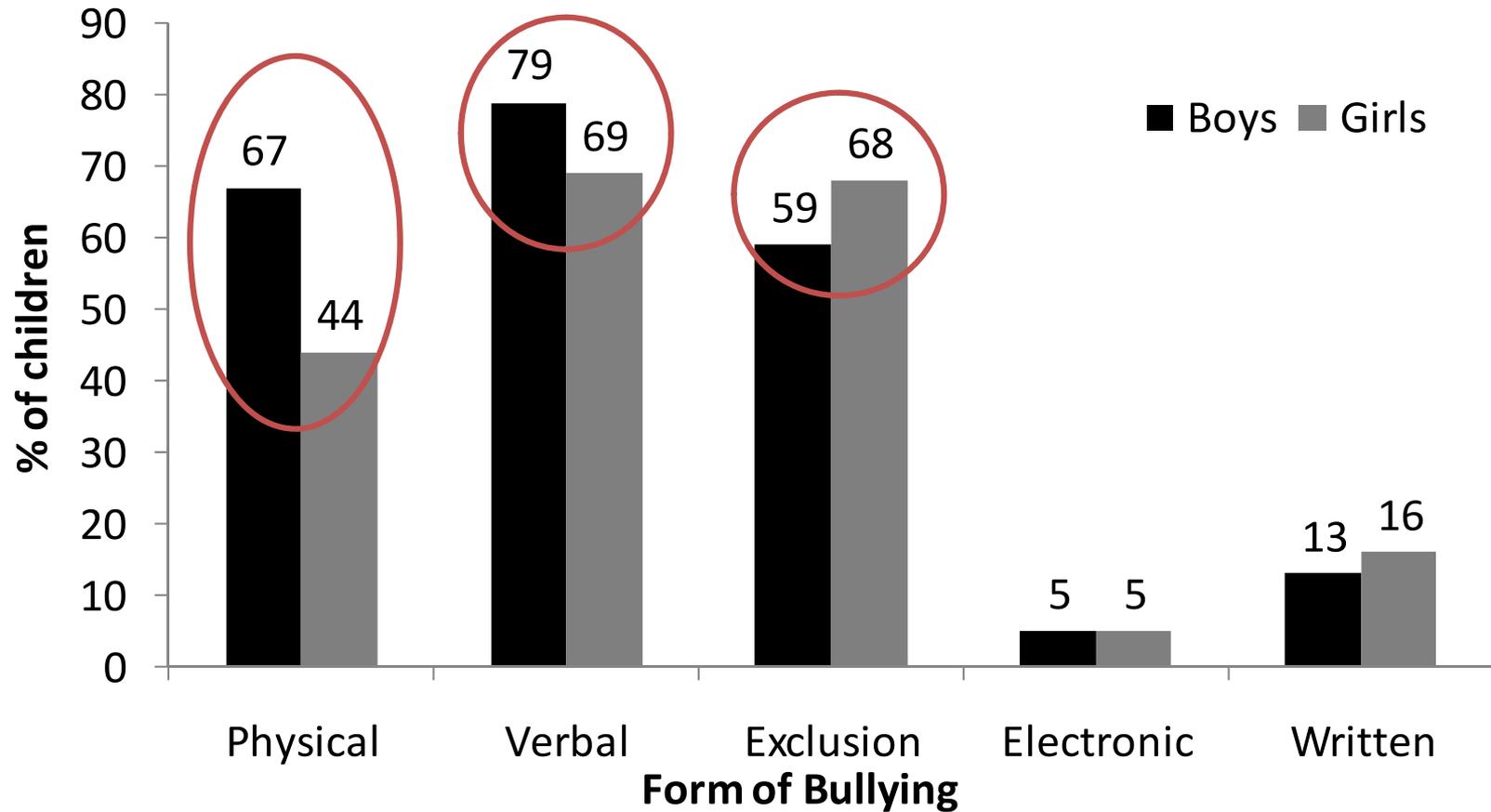
Sex-Related Patterns in Perpetration Experiences
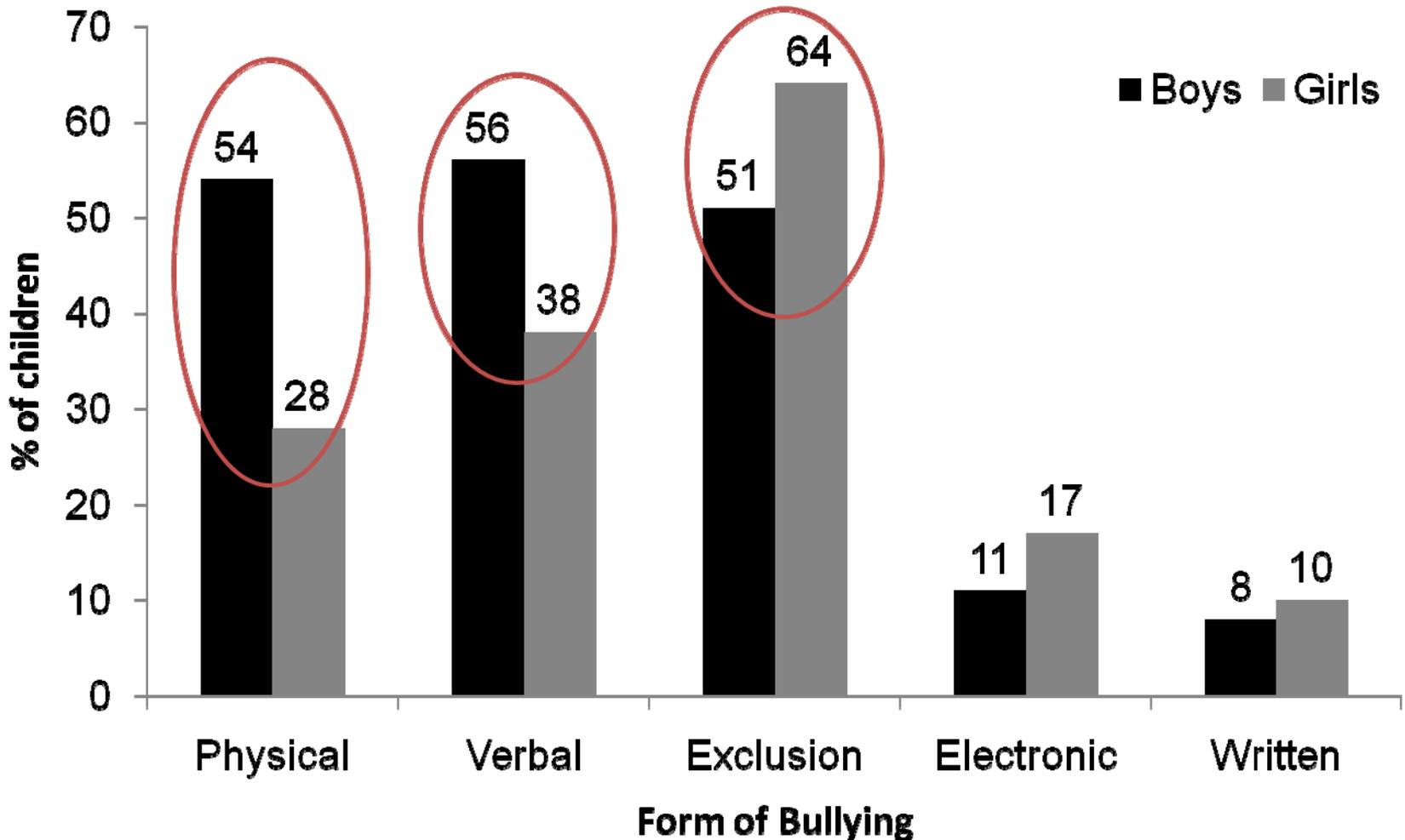
Comparison of GUI Prevalence Rates with Literature

Challenge of comparing across studies due to methodological differences (sample profiles, time-frames and definitions used)

- Tendency in the research to dichotomise children into two groups involved in bullying: victims and perpetrators
- **Bully/victims** are those who both bully and are bullied by others
- May be distinct outcomes associated with being a bully/victim, bully, or victim – risk of adverse outcomes may be greater for bully victims than other bullies or victims (DeMaray & Malecki, 2003, Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003)
- Common and distinct patterns of predictors of the three bully status groups (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010)

Predictor	Bully Status Group
Poor academic performance	Bully & Bully/victim but not Victim
Negative attitudes about others	Bully & Bully Victim but not Victim
Negative attitudes about self	Victim & Bully/victim but not Bully
Rejected & Isolated by peers	Victim & Bully/victim but not Bully
Negatively influenced by peer group	Bully & Bully/victim but not Victim

Do Bully/victims face the most significant challenges?

What are the psychological and educational outcomes associated with involvement in bullying?

Are there distinct patterns among bullies, victims and bully-victims in terms of:

- Educational attainment
- Engagement with and liking of school
- Self-esteem
- Externalising and internalising problems (Strengths & Difficulties)

Design & Methods

- Representative sample of 910 schools participated; the sample of children and their families was drawn from within the schools

- Sample of 8570 nine-year old children, and their families

- Data collected from primary caregiver (mother), teacher and child

Parent	Teacher	Child
Ratings of academic performance	Ratings of academic performance, performance in reading and maths	Involvement in Bullying
Number of friends and how often their child spends time with friends	Child's attendance at school and reasons for absence from school	Liking for school, teachers and subjects
Specific Learning Difficulties, Emotional/ Behavioural Difficulty	Need for Special Help/Resources in School	Self-esteem (based on Piers Harris) & Body Image
Rating of total internalising/ externalising difficulties (SDQ)	Rating of total internalising/ externalising difficulties (SDQ)	

Design & Methods

18. Thinking back over the last year would you say that you picked on someone (either a child or an adult)?

Yes............☐₁   No.......☐₂   (If you have answered no, please skip to Question 20)

19. How did you pick on them?   Yes   No

a. By shoving, pushing, hitting ....☐₁....................☐₂

b. Name calling, slagging ....☐₁....................☐₂

c. Text messaging, emails, Bebo etc ....☐₁....................☐₂

d. Written messages / notes etc...........................☐₁....................☐₂

e. Leaving them out of games / chats ....☐₁....................☐₂

f. In other ways [please write it down]_____ ☐₁....................☐₂

20. Thinking back over the last year would you say that anyone (either a child or an adult) picked on you?

Yes............☐₁   No.......☐₂   (If you have answered no, please skip to Question 22)

21. A. How did they pick on you?   Yes   No

a. By shoving, pushing, hitting ....☐₁....................☐₂

b. Name calling, slagging ....☐₁....................☐₂

c. Text messaging, emails, Bebo etc ....☐₁....................☐₂

d. Written messages / notes etc..☐₁....................☐₂

e. Leaving you out of games / chats ....☐₁....................☐₂

f. In other ways [please write it down]_____ ☐₁....................☐₂

21. B. If you were picked on, did this upset you?

A lot   A little   Not at all

☐₁ ....☐₂..................☐₃

| Victims	Bullied Others	
	Yes	No
Yes	10%	30%
No	3%	57%

Comparisons among three bully status groups and those uninvolved in bullying in terms of:

1. Presence of Developmental Disability/Disorder

2. Attitudes to and engagement with school
   Liking of school & teacher, looking forward to school, homework completion, being late for school, absenteeism

3. Ratings of academic performance
   Parents' and teachers' perceptions of child's performance on a range of subjects

4. Social & emotional outcomes
   Self-esteem (Piers Harris), number of friends and contact with friends, parents' and teachers' ratings of emotional and behavioural problems (SDQ)

Presence of developmental disorders/ disabilities

- Victim & Bully/Victim Groups: More likely to be identified as having a specific learning difficulty, communication disorder or co-ordination disorder
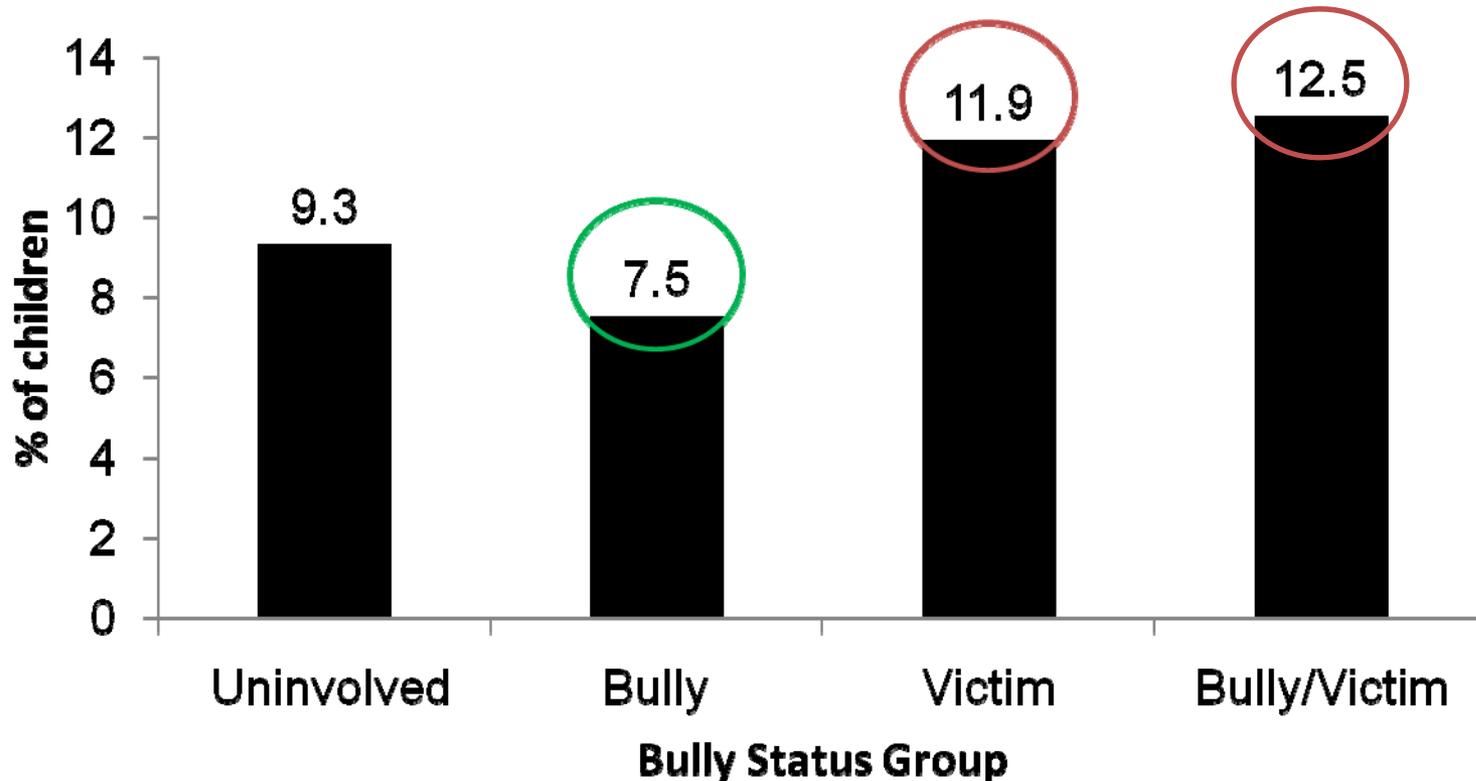
# Negative attitudes to and disengagement from school

- **All three bully status groups**
  - More likely to dislike their teacher
  - More likely to dislike maths
- **Bully/Victim Group**
  - Less likely to look forward to school than Bully, Victim or Uninvolved
  - More likely to dislike reading
- **Victim & Bully/Victim Group**
  - More likely to occasionally or regularly not have homework completed
- **Bully & Bully/Victim Group**
  - More likely to dislike school
  - More likely to be late for school
  - More likely to dislike Irish
- But few clear patterns in terms of **absenteeism**

Perceptions of Academic Performance

- **Parents' Ratings**
  - No differences across the groups on reading and maths performance
- **Teachers' Ratings**
  - No differences across the groups on reading or comprehension
  - No differences across the groups on creativity or communication
  - Uninvolved more likely to be rated as above average in Maths
  - Bully and Bully/Victim more likely to be rated as below average in writing
- **Children's Ratings**
  - Bully/Victim more likely to believe they are doing 'poorly' in school

Growing Up in Ireland
National Longitudinal Study of Children
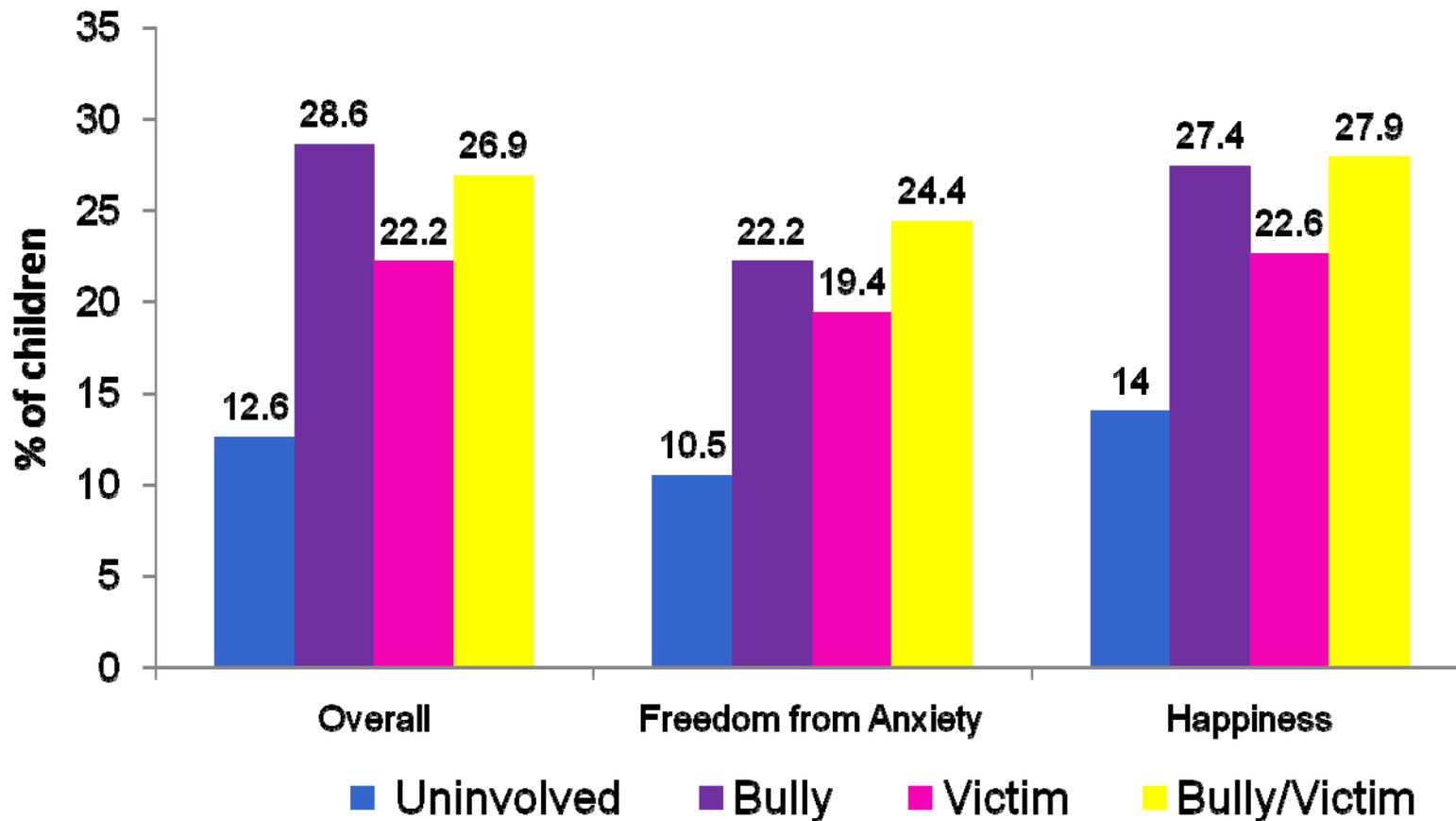
Number of close friends (parent report)
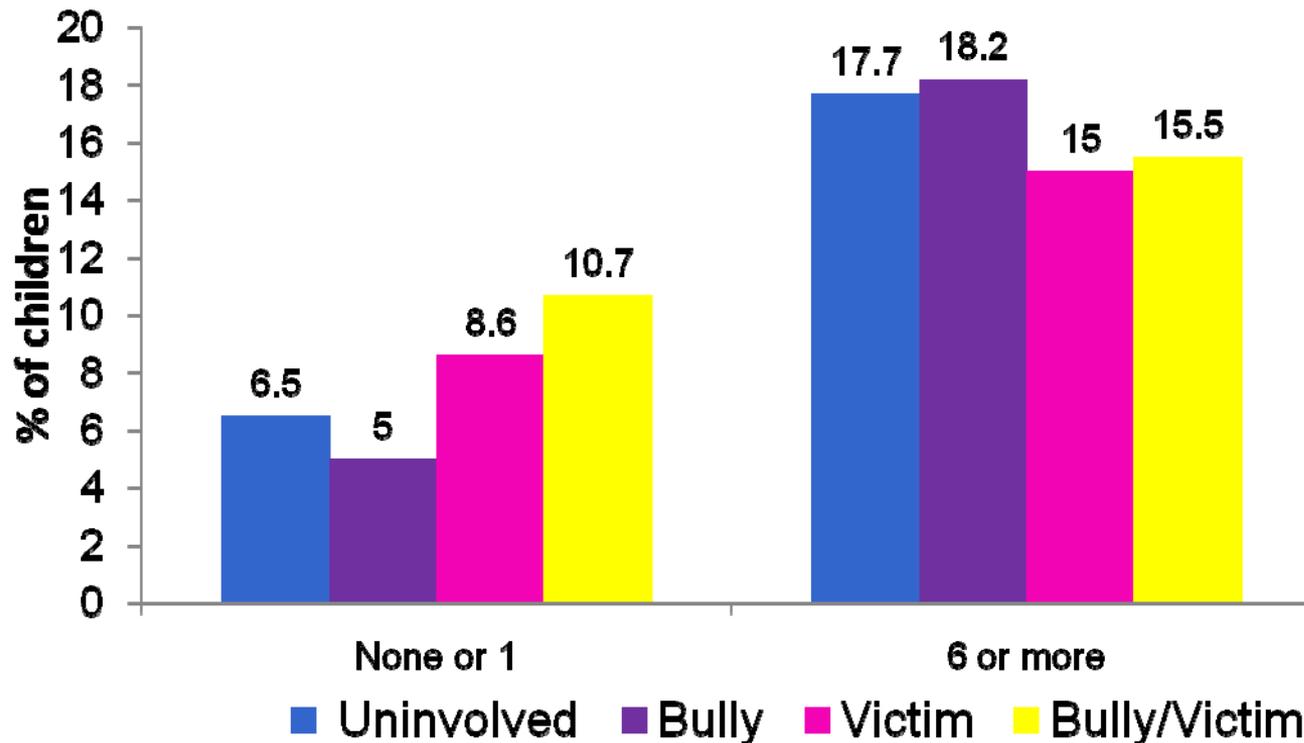
Few patterns in terms of contact with friends – except bully group **almost twice as likely to 'never' do something with friends** (9% v 5%)

Social & Emotional Outcomes Self Concept
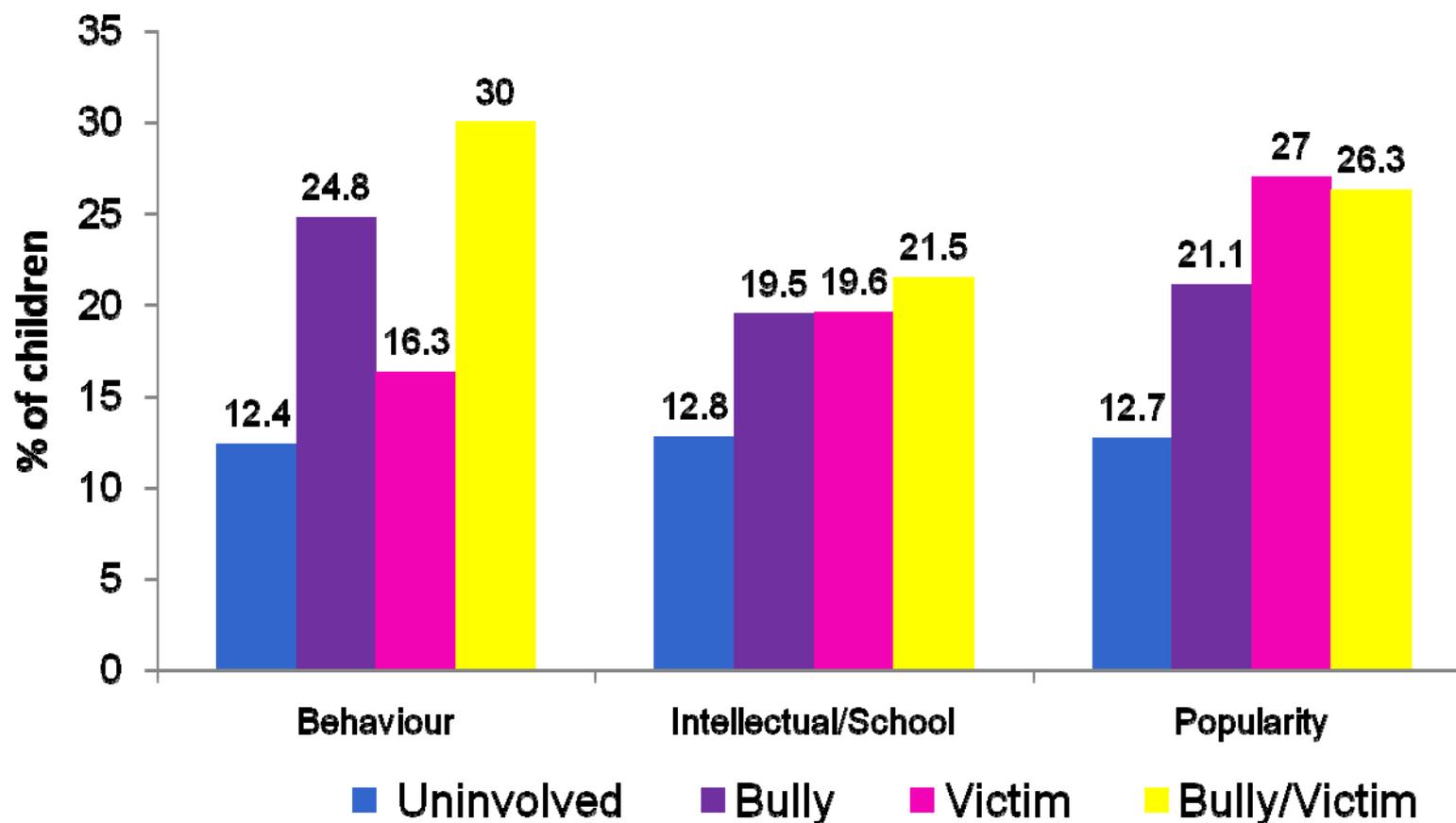
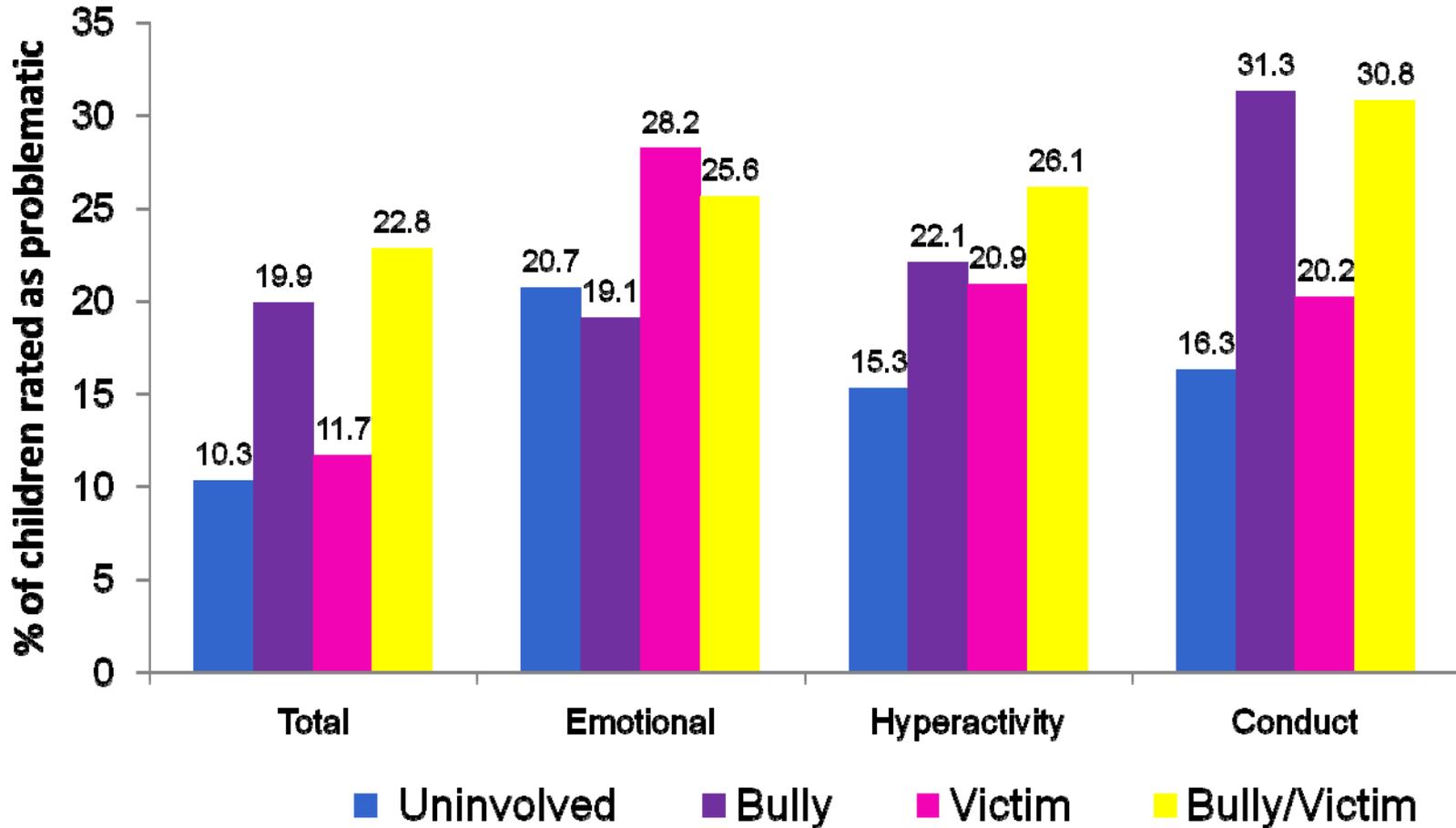**Child's Perception of Self - Very Low/Low**

Social & Emotional Outcomes
Self Concept

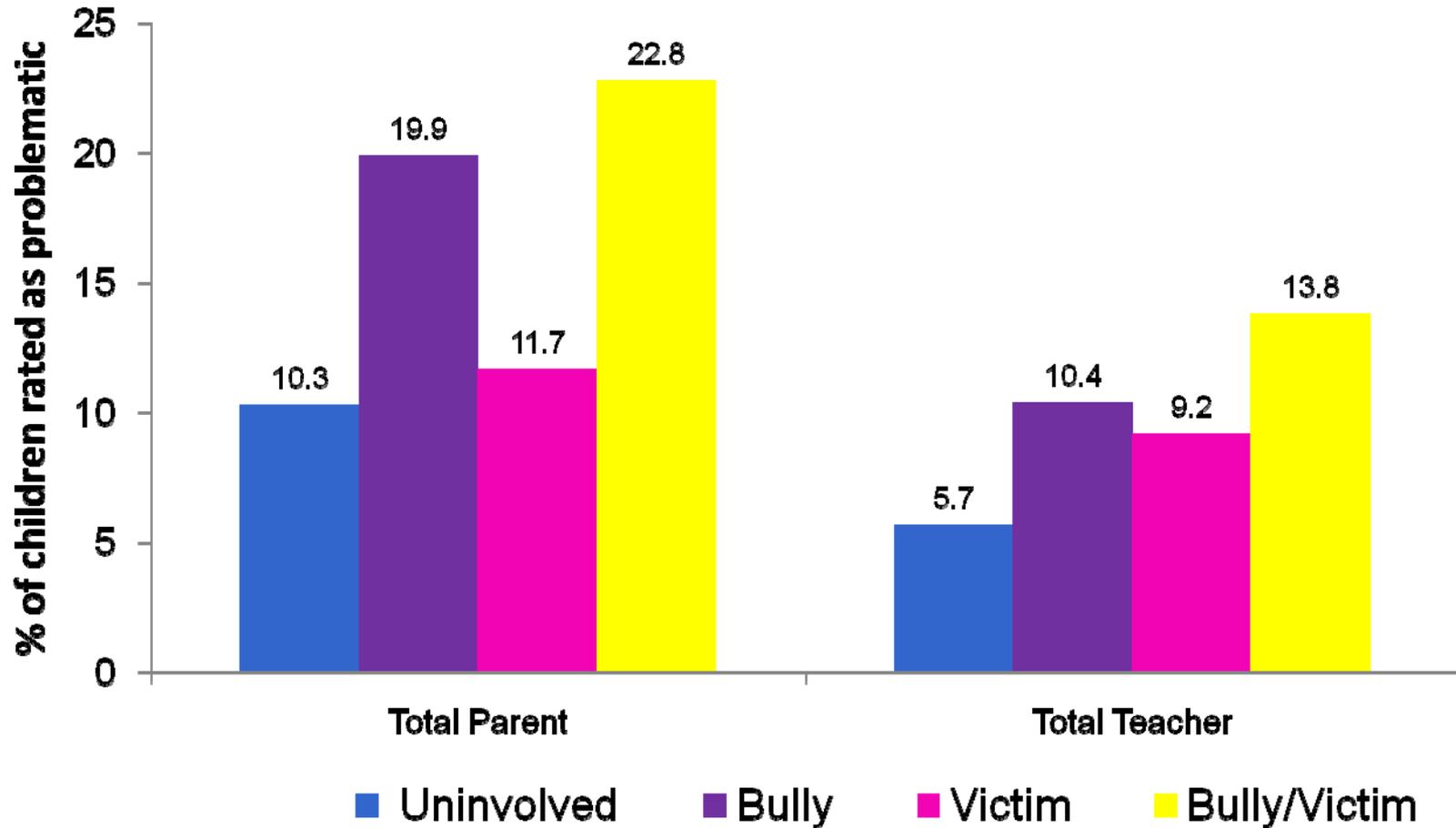**Child's Perception of Self - Very Low/Low**

Social & Emotional Outcomes Parent Report (SDQ)

Social & Emotional Outcomes Teacher Report (SDQ)

Conclusions

- Bully, Victim and Bully/Victim Groups display:
  — More negative attitudes towards school
  — Higher levels of disengagement from school
- Higher proportion of those involved in bullying display Very Low/Low Self-Concept
- Higher proportion of those involved in bullying categorised as problematic on strengths and difficulties questionnaire
- Bully/Victim Group experience the "worst of both worlds"
  — Outcomes common with both the Victim Group and Bully Group
  — Outcomes unique to the Bully/Victim Group
- Findings largely consistent with international literature (DeMaray & Malecki, 2003, Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010)

Implications

- Importance of identifying and responding to the needs of different bully status groups
  — Children from Bully/Victim group may not get as much support, but may be those most in need of support
- Importance of developing close partnership between parents and teachers/schools
  — Parents may not be aware of their child's involvement in bullying
  — Parents and teachers may have a different insight into outcomes
- Importance of promoting self-esteem of children
  — Making children more resilient and able to withstand abusive behaviour at the hands of other children
  — Less likely to attribute victimisation to a fault of their own, and thus may be more likely to report abuse