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Social Norms Research on School Violence in England: Another Look at Misperceived Peer Norms as the Biggest Bully of All

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Professor of Biochemistry

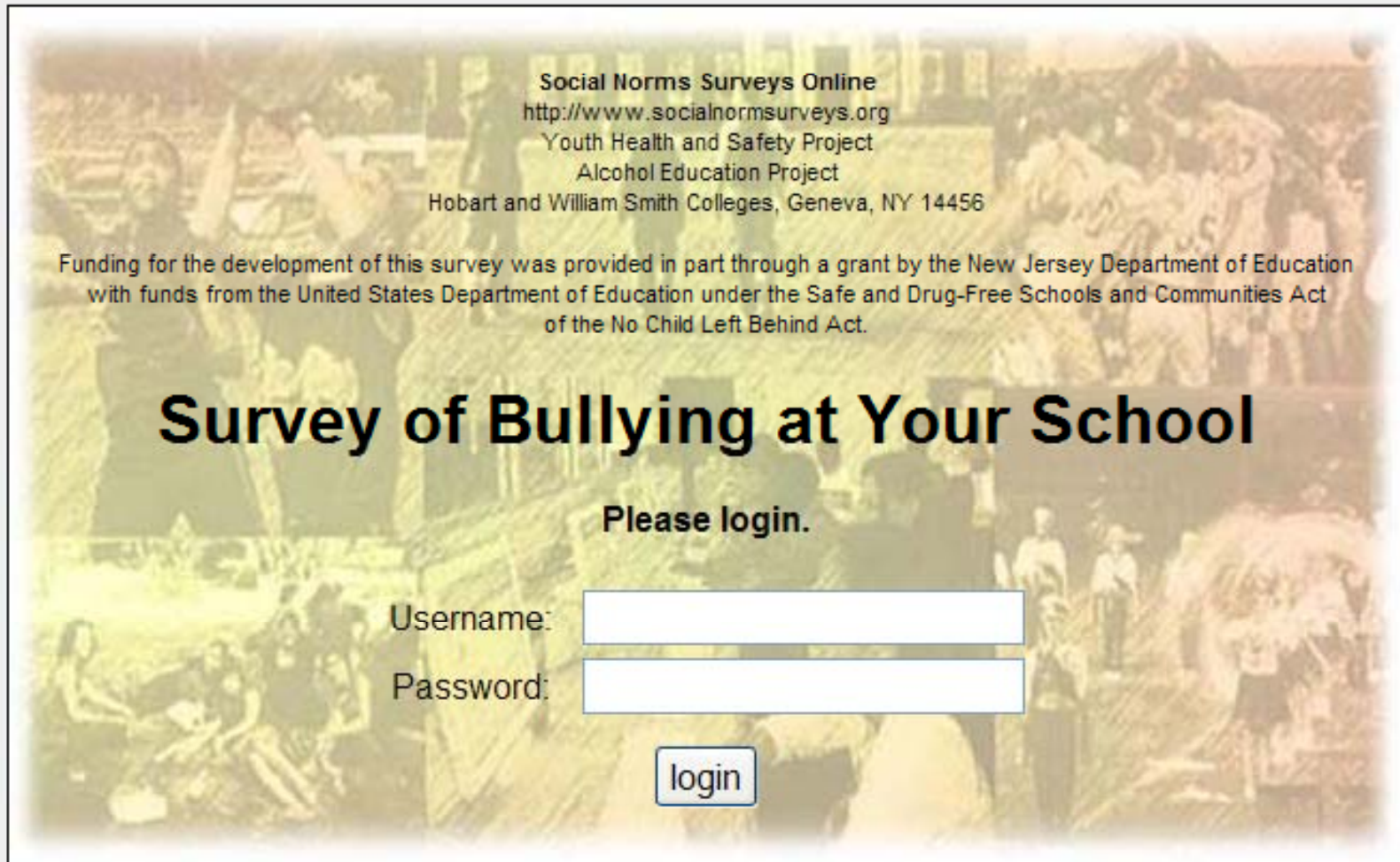
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Geneva, New York 14456

www.youthhealthsafety.org

Abstract

An online survey has been developed for use in assessing bullying in UK secondary schools and for conducting social norms interventions. The survey reveals attitudes about bullying, incidence levels of bullying, and perceived norms regarding peers. Results from 2,745 students attending 17 schools in the Greater London area in 2006 show that while bullying is substantial, it is not the norm. The most common (and erroneous) perception is that the majority engage in and support such behavior. This pattern of massive misperceptions is found across school settings with varying sizes, age distributions, and ethnic composition. These misperceptions are confirmed as the strongest predictor of personal bullying behavior and more influential than actual school-wide norms in the local school setting.

Web-based Survey Instrument



Social Norms Surveys Online
<http://www.socialnormsurveys.org>
Youth Health and Safety Project
Alcohol Education Project
Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY 14456

Funding for the development of this survey was provided in part through a grant by the New Jersey Department of Education with funds from the United States Department of Education under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Survey of Bullying at Your School

Please login.

Username:

Password:

http://www.socialnormsurveys.org/bullyA_UK
(Enter test for the username and password)

UK School Sample Demographics

School Characteristics

Number of Schools	17
School Size - mean (range)	482 (77 – 1,049)
Sample Sizes from Target Grades - mean (range)	162 (18 – 750)
Cohort Response Rate - mean (range)	73% (26% – 100%)

Respondent Characteristics

Number of Respondents	2,761
Females / Males - %	57% / 43%

Grade Levels

5	20%	9	10%
6	18%	10	15%
7	12%	11	11%
8	13%	12-13	1%

Race/Ethnicity

White	42%
Asian	15%
Black	23%
Mixed Race	12%
Other	8%

Age – mean (range)	12.0 (7 – 19)
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Geographic Area

Urban	17%
Suburban	63%
Urban/Suburban	20%

UK Bullying Behavior at School in Last 30 Days: Actual Prevalence and Perceived Norms

(N=2,761)

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Pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or tripping...

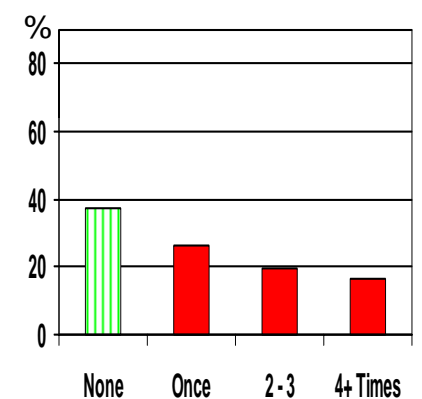
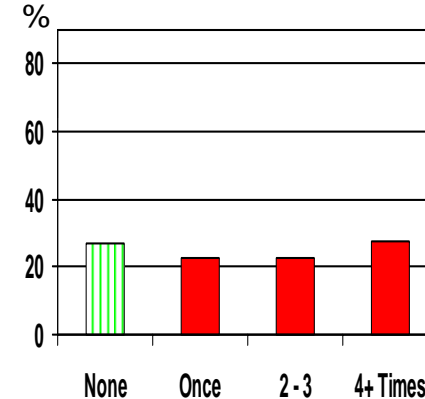
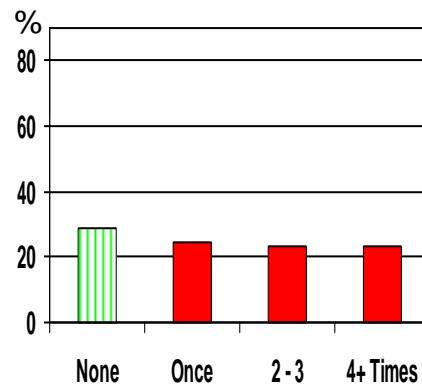
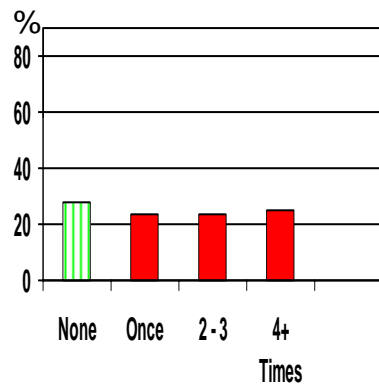
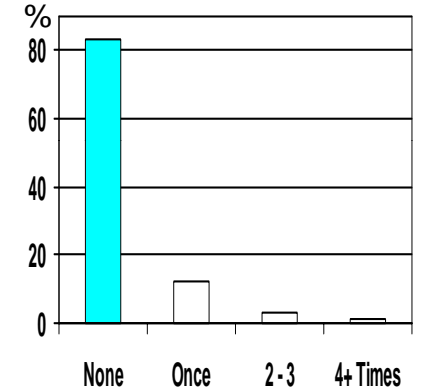
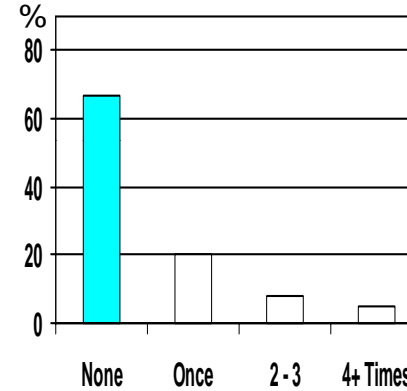
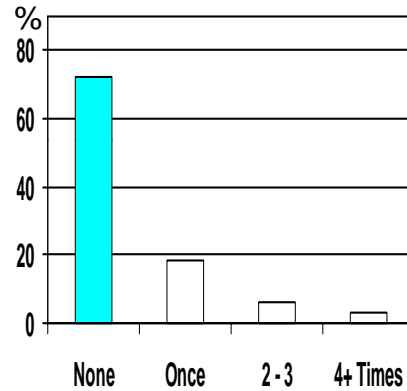
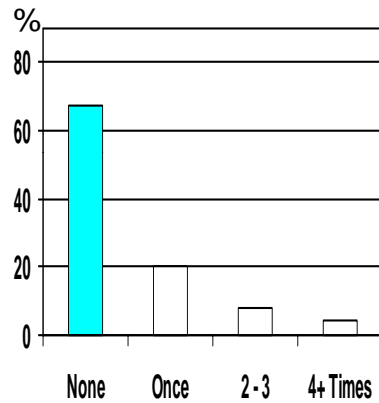
Teasing in an unfriendly way...

Calling hurtful names...

Excluding someone from a group to make them feel bad...

Actual Behaviors

Perceptions of Norm



Legend: ■ actual norm ■ misperceived norm ■ accurately perceived norm

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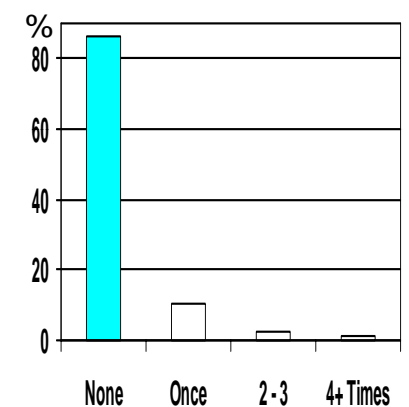
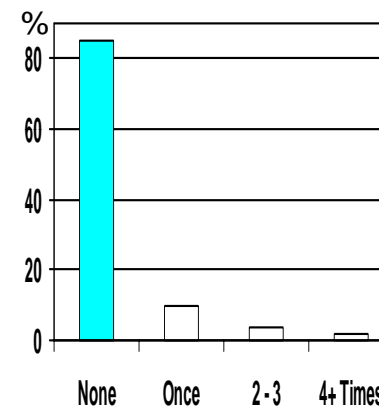
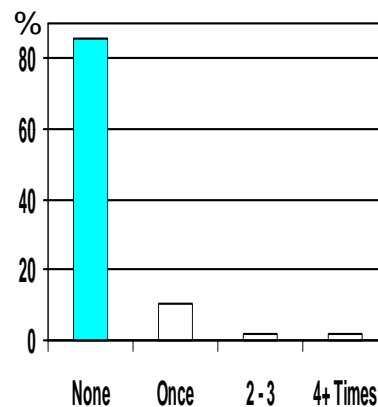
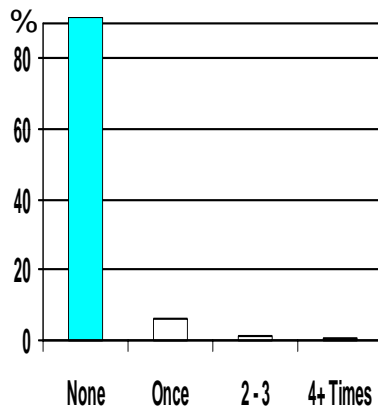
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Spreading unkind stories or rumors about someone else

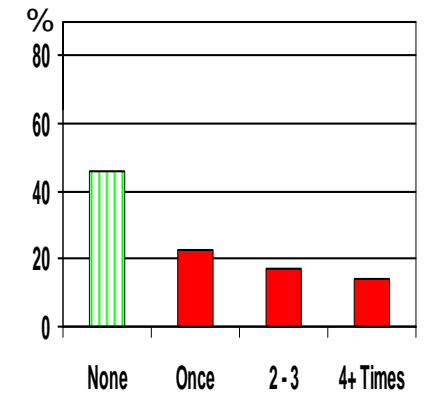
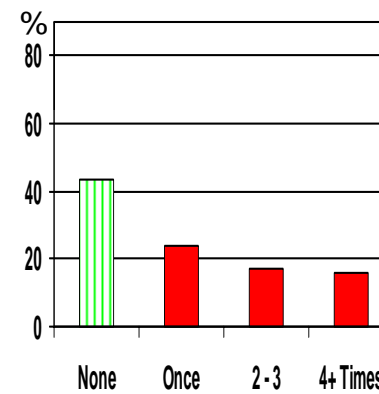
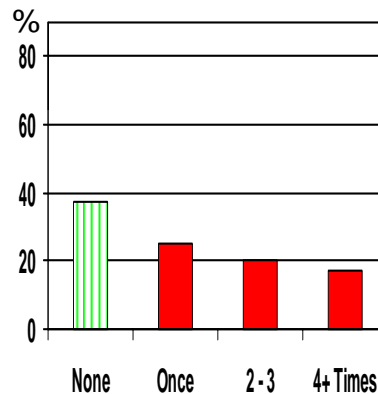
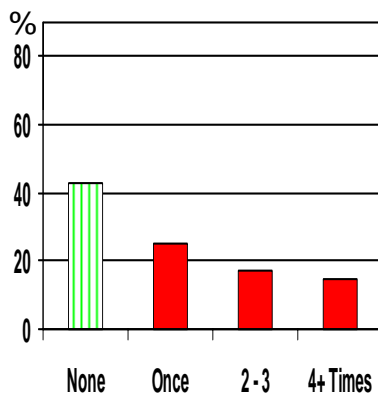
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(UK N=2,761 US N=10,586)

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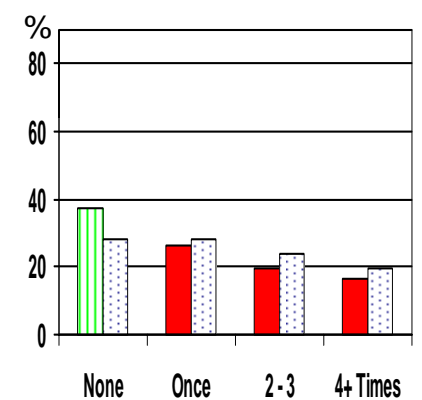
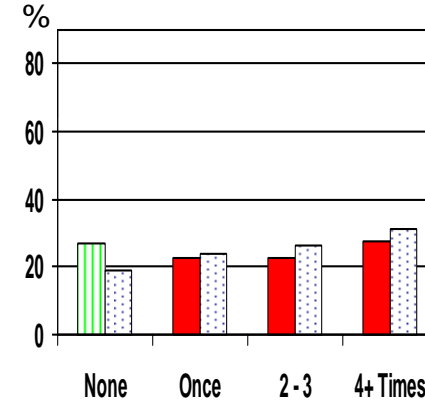
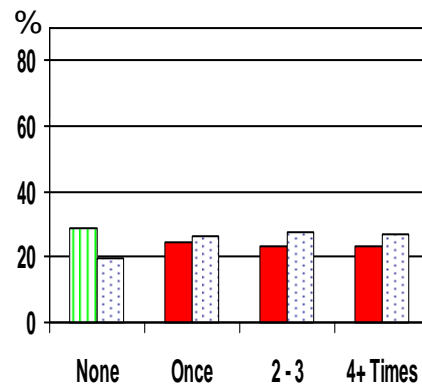
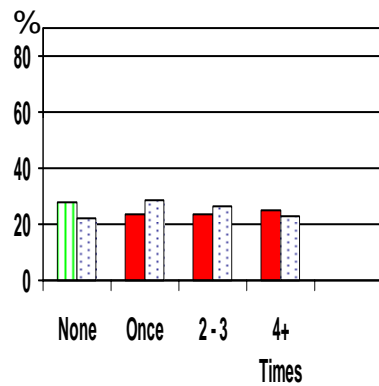
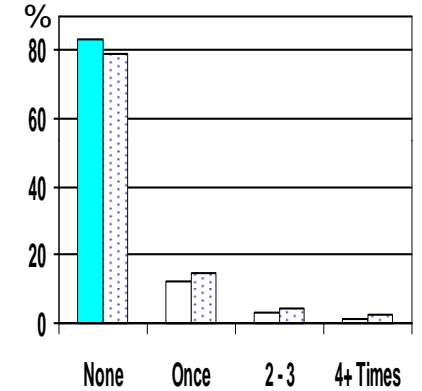
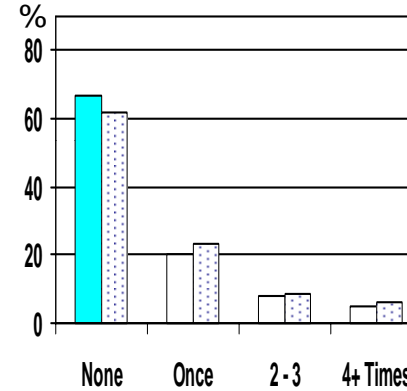
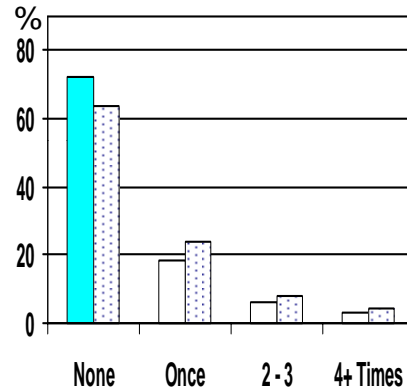
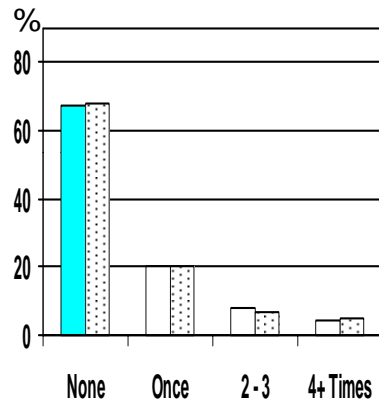
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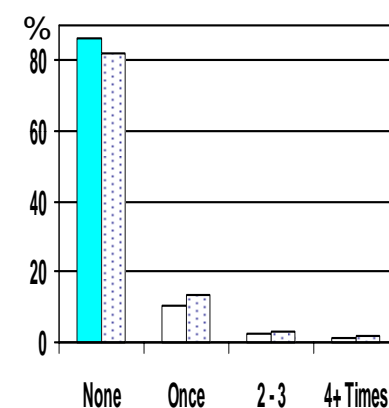
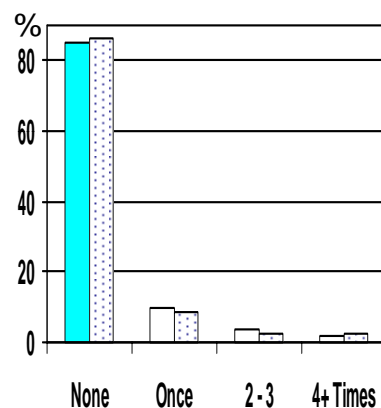
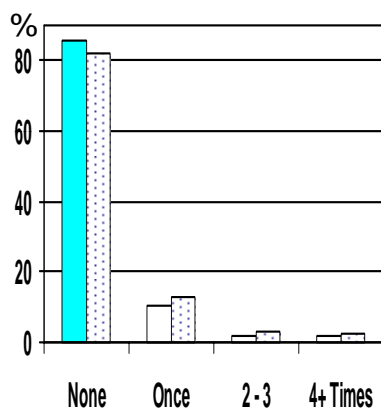
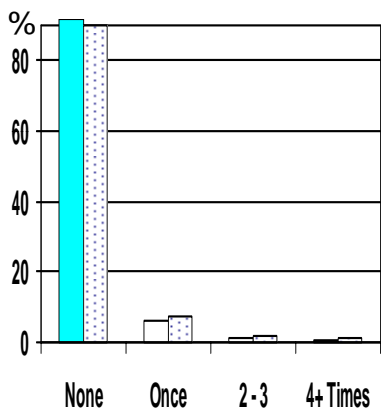
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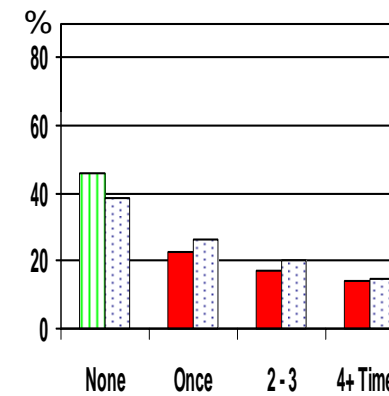
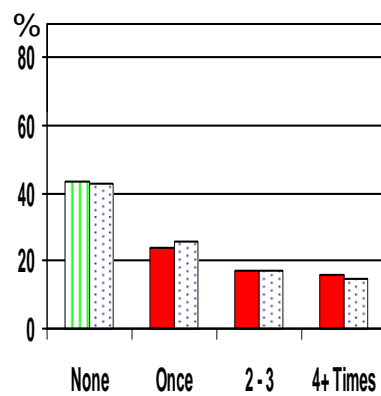
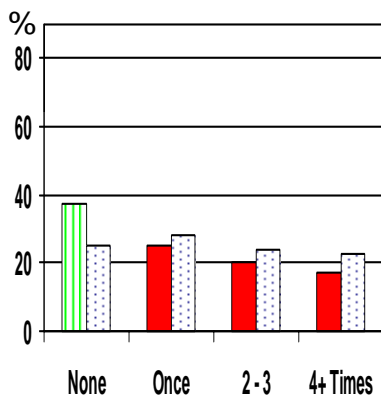
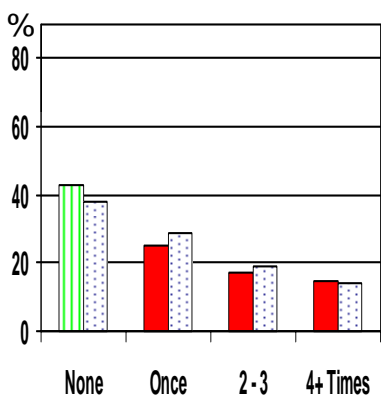
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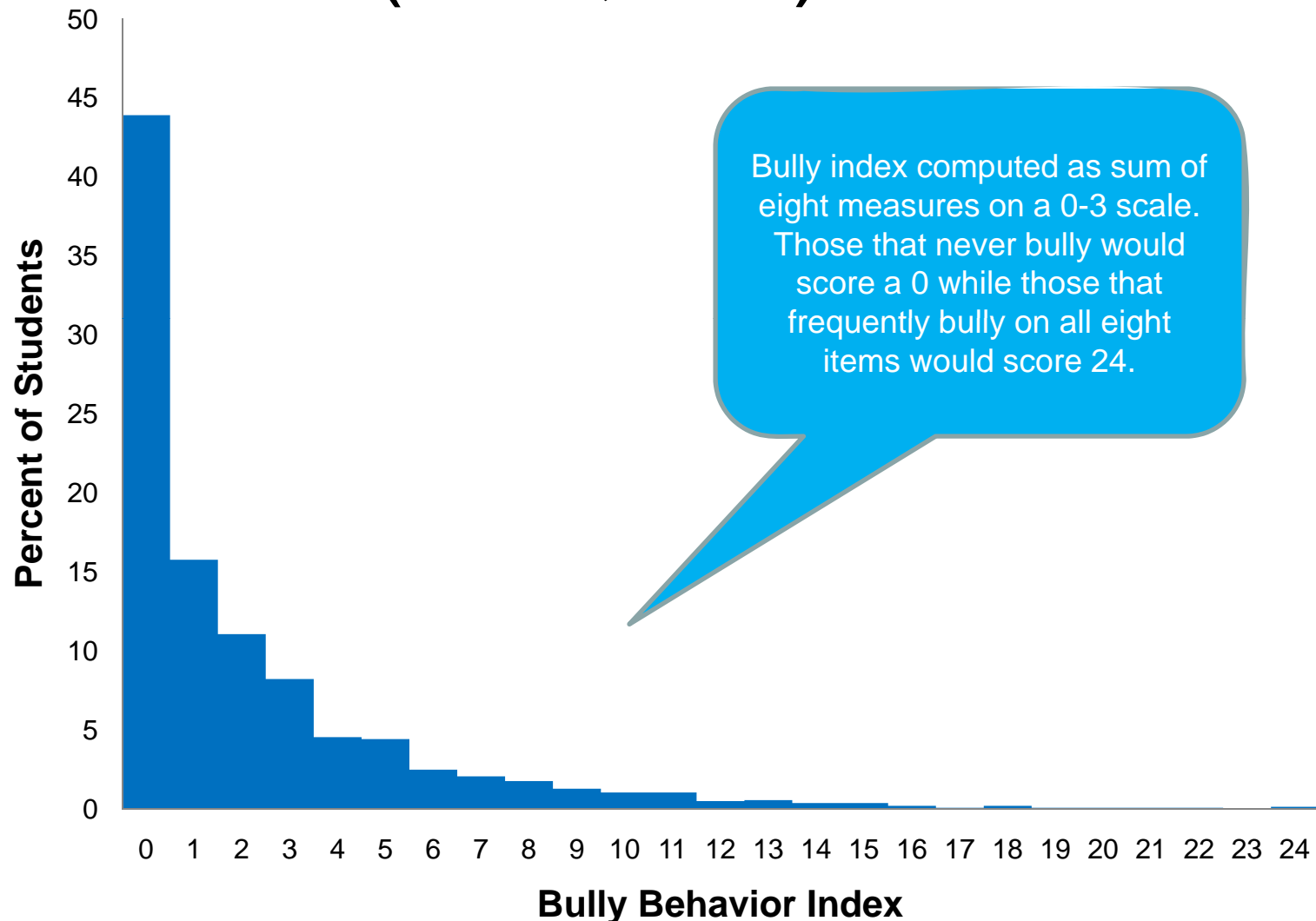
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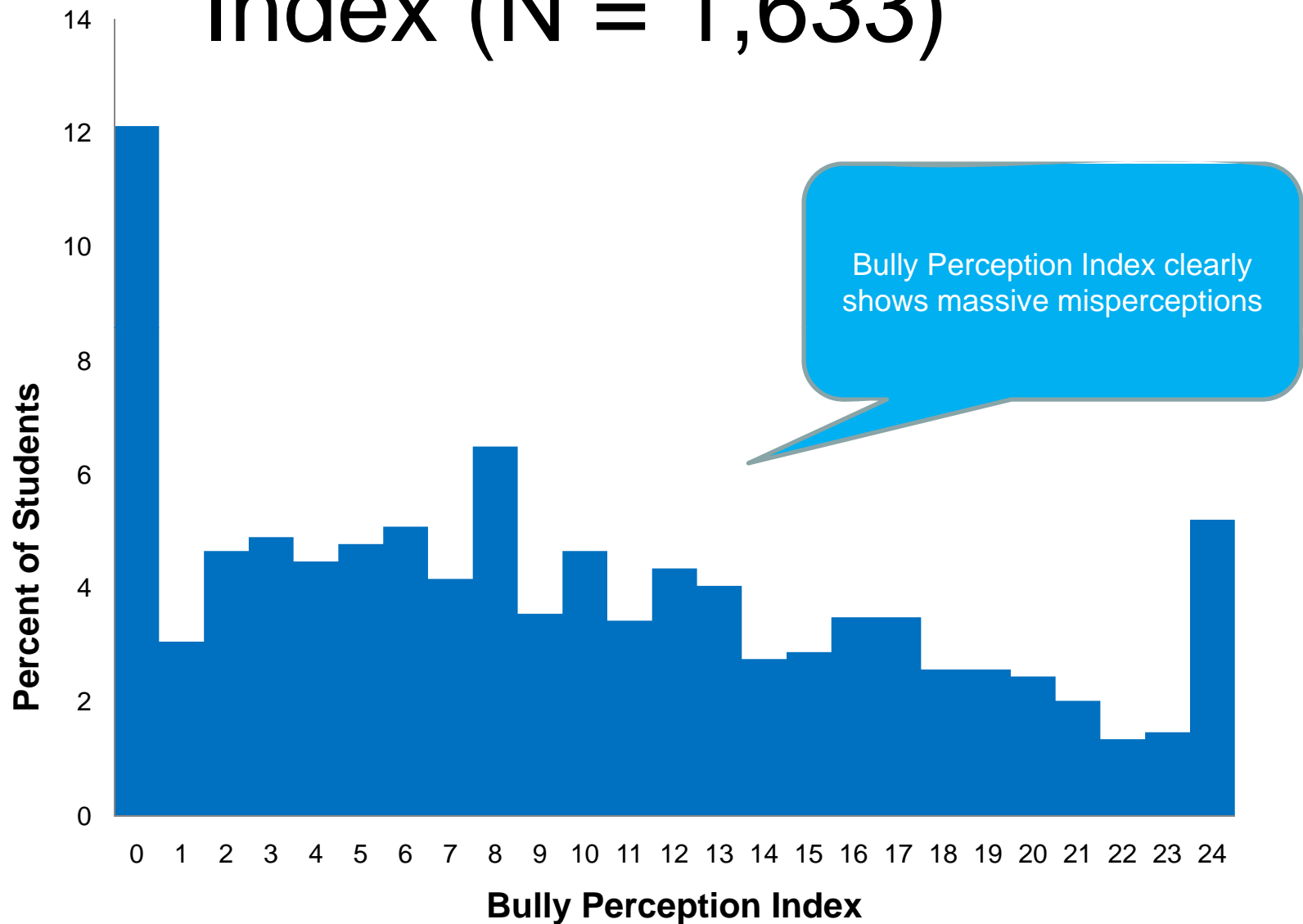
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Distribution of Bully Behavior Index (N=1,656)*



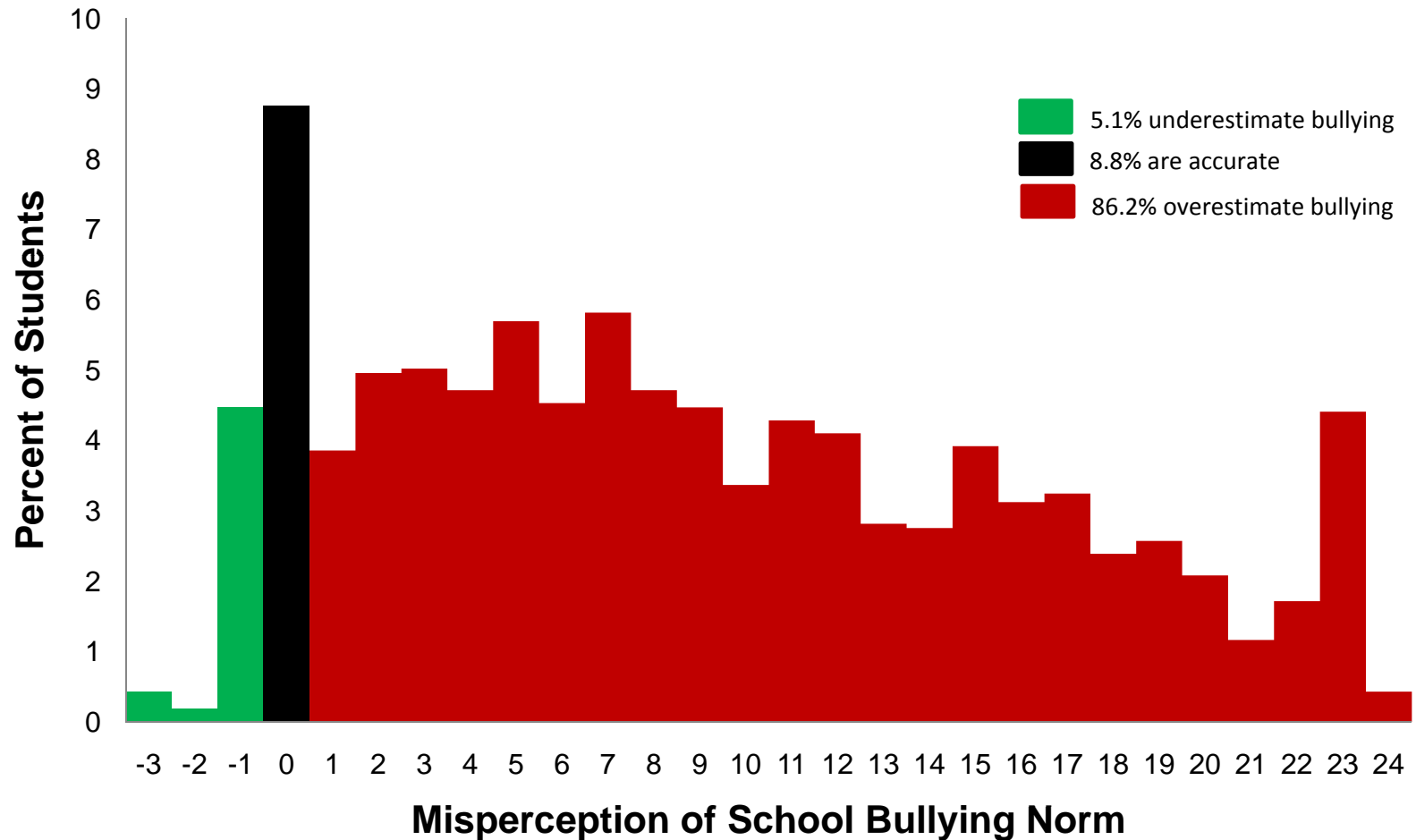
*Includes only schools where at least 79% of students responded overall from the grades surveyed.

Distribution of Bully Perception Index (N = 1,633)*



*Includes only schools where at least 79% of students responded overall from the grades surveyed.

Distribution of Bullying Misperception (N = 1,633)*



*Includes only schools where at least 79% of students responded overall from the grades surveyed.

Standardized regression coefficients predicting bullying behavior in the last 30 days (N=1,432 ^a)

Perception of bullying is
strongest predictor of whether an
individual will bully!

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)
Perception of bullying (index)	.36 **
Actual bullying norm at school (index median)	.07 *
Gender (male vs. female)	.14 **
Age	.03
Race (Asian/Chinese vs white)	-.03
Race (Black vs white)	.06 *
Race (Other/mixed vs white)	.03
School population size	-.05
Socioeconomic status category of school ^b	-.02

^aIncludes only schools where at least 79% of students responded overall from the grades surveyed.

^bSubjective assessment of school administrator coded 1=below average, 2=average, or 3=above average.

* Coefficient is significant at $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$.