What works to prevent the bullying of refugee and newcomer children and youth?

There is strong evidence that school-delivered anti-bias programs can improve outgroup attitudes towards refugee and immigrant youth.

- A meta-analysis found 31 interventions, implemented in schools to address attitudes toward ethnic outgroup members, showed significant effects on outgroup attitudes among children and youth.

Moderate evidence indicates that students may benefit from peer-led ethnic bullying prevention programs.

- An evaluation of a peer-led anti-bullying program, focused on ethnic victimization, found that the program was most effective when at least one student with an immigrant or refugee background played an educative role.

Evidence suggests that multicultural school environments and cross-ethnic peer interactions can play a significant role in preventing the bullying of students who come from refugee or immigrant backgrounds.

- Ethnically diverse classrooms and positive inter-ethnic interaction can significantly decrease victimization. Evidence suggests these factors may be positively associated with bystanders' willingness to intervene in incidents of bullying targeting refugee or immigrant youth.

- Findings suggest that teachers' non-tolerance of ethnic victimization may also have an impact on bystander intervention.

More anti-bullying programs, focused specifically on preventing ethnic victimization of refugee and newcomer children and youth, ought to be designed, developed, and evaluated.

- Too few studies evaluate anti-bullying programs specifically focused on reducing victimization of refugee and immigrant children and youth. The studies included in this evidence summary provide insight about what factors to consider when developing and delivering interventions of this nature, as well as recommendations for future research on the subject.

Purpose of this summary

This document summarizes the state of available evidence on anti-bullying programs and strategies for preventing ethnic victimization of refugee, newcomer, and immigrant youth. In addition to the many acculturative stressors that refugee and immigrant youth experience, ethnic bullying can exacerbate distress from resettlement and negatively impact mental health and wellbeing. This evidence summary describes the current research on anti-bias and anti-bullying prevention efforts, as well as the environmental and social factors that contribute to safer and more inclusive classrooms for refugee and newcomer children and youth.

What is meant by bullying?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define bullying among youth as "any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated" (CDC, 2014). Bullying occurs in a variety of contexts, including at school, in neighborhoods where youth live, or on the Internet. Bullying that occurs using technology is considered electronic bullying. Bullying includes behavior that occurs directly in the presence of targeted youth, such as physical aggression or written communication; bullying can also occur indirectly, such as by spreading rumors electronically. Types of bullying include physical, verbal, relational (i.e., behaviors designed to harm the reputation or relationships of targeted individuals), and damage to property (CDC, 2014).

What is meant by ethnic bullying or victimization?

Ethnicity is a social construct and category of identity based on common language, religion, nationality, and other cultural characteristics (Basilici et al., 2022). Ethnic bullying is a subtype of bullying that refers to targeting an individual because of their presumed ethnic background. Perpetrators express aggression in both direct (racial taunts and slurs, derogatory references to culture) and indirect (exclusion from social groups) forms (McKenney et al., 2006). Ethnic victimization is certainly not a phenomenon exclusive to immigrant and refugee youth; however, given that these youth are more likely to belong to an ethnic minority, they may be more likely to experience victimization than native-born youth (Ali et al., 2018). Ethnic bullying can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of victims. The mental health-related

problems that may result from ethnic victimization include depression and engagement in risky behaviors (Zambuto et al., 2022).

What does the evidence show?

There is strong evidence that school-delivered anti-bias programs can improve outgroup attitudes towards refugee and immigrant youth.

- Ülger et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis of 50 studies which evaluated the effect of anti-bias intervention programs, delivered in schools, on outgroup attitudes. In addition to analyzing the overall effectiveness of such programs, the study also aimed to identify moderators that may impact the effectiveness of the interventions, such as participant status, target outgroups, strategy, and delivery. The authors define outgroup members as "members of different ethnic or religious backgrounds or different age groups, persons with either physical or mental disabilities, or persons with other distinctive features." The study included 31 interventions which were specific to addressing attitudes toward ethnic outgroup members. Other interventions examined target outgroups such as individuals with disabilities, individuals of a different age, and individuals of another religion. The overall sample-weighted effect for all 50 interventions shows that the anti-bias interventions generally improved outgroup attitudes among the participating schools, with interventions specifically addressing interethnic attitudes to showing statistically significant improvements. Additionally, in exploring moderators for program outcomes, interventions conducted by researchers were found to be likely more effective than teacher-delivered and online platform programs. The study also found that the interventions were effective for both younger and older children, but more effective for middle and high school-aged youth.

Moderate evidence indicates that students may benefit from peer-led ethnic bullying prevention programs.

- Zambuto et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of a peer-led online and school-based ethnic anti-bullying program called NoTrap! in Italy. The study investigated whether the NoTrap! program reduced ethnic bullying and victimization, examining the role of peer educators in the effectiveness of the intervention. The NoTrap! program is designed for adolescents in middle and high school and involves three phases over the course of one year. The first phase involves bringing more awareness to the issue of ethnic bullying through a psychologist-led educational presentation, after which four to five students in each class are voluntarily recruited as peer educators. The second phase involves training these students to be effective peer educators; in the third phase, these peer leaders conduct workshops in the classroom. These workshops focused on empowering victims and promoting cohesion among classmates. A total of 1,570 students in 24 control classes and 50 experimental classes were involved in the study. Twenty of these experimental classes had at least one peer educator with an immigrant background. The results from the study revealed that the program showed effectiveness in reducing self-reported ethnic victimization in classes in which at least one peer educator came from an immigrant or refugee background. While the specific dynamics behind why a peer educator from this background would have a larger impact on victimization demand further exploration, the NoTrap!

anti-bullying program demonstrates a promising approach in bringing awareness and education about ethnic bullying and victimization to classroom environments.

Evidence suggests that multicultural school environments and cross-ethnic peer interactions can play a significant role in preventing the bullying of students who come from refugee or immigrant backgrounds.

- A non-systematic review conducted by Xu et al. (2020) identified protective factors and efforts that may help decrease the bullying of refugee and immigrant children and youth. The review found that cross-ethnic friendships and multicultural classroom environments predicted decreases in victimization and led to increased social support among peers. Additionally, having an overall positive school environment had a positive impact on decreasing interracial perpetration and victimization. A positive school environment is defined as having "greater disciplinary structure, teacher support, and academic expectations" (Xu et al., 2020).

- A study by Walsh et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between immigrant and refugee school composition and peer violence among 51,636 adolescents in 11 countries. Results found that positive classmate support including the "acceptance and assistance offered to adolescents by classmates"(Walsh et al., 2016) was related to lower physical fighting, bullying perpetration, and victimization, indicating that the classroom environment may have more of an effect on ethnic victimization than the composition of the class itself.

- A study in Sweden with 1,065 adolescents examined the factors which may contribute to bystander intervention in cases of ethnic victimization (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2022). Specifically, the study looked at types of bystander intervention such as comforting the victim, talking to the teacher, and asking the perpetrator to stop. The measured factors included adolescents' positive attitudes towards immigrants, positive inter-ethnic contact norms and cooperation in class, teachers' non-tolerance of ethnic victimization, and adolescents' responses to ethnic victimization. Positive inter-ethnic norms, such as inclusion and respect to others, were positively associated with intentions to comfort the victim; teacher's non-tolerance of ethnic victimization was positively related to intentions to ask the perpetrator to stop and to talk to the teacher.

- Another study in Sweden with 963 adolescents (Bayram Özdemir & Özdemir, 2020) specifically investigated the possible impact that classroom norms had on engagement in ethnic victimization. Findings indicated that adolescents who reported positive outgroup attitudes and high positive contact norms with refugees and immigrants were less likely to engage in ethnic victimization. Also, having teachers who reacted to ethnic victimization and fostered a culturally competent classroom environment was linked to a reduced likelihood to engage in ethnic victimization.

- Hitti et al. (2023) studied adolescent motivation and bystander response to bias-based bullying with immigrant-origin youth. The study also specifically compared responses to Arab and Latine victims. Data was collected from 168 ninth graders from two diverse public high schools in the U.S. The surveys used bias-based bullying scenarios to learn more about whether contact with immigrants and desires for social contact with immigrants made a difference in motivation and bystander response. Results found that having a desire for social contact with immigrants was a

predictor for bystander intervention for bullying incidents for both Latine and Arab immigrant victims. The study also found that contact with immigrants was associated with more positive bystander responses involving Latine-origin peers compared to Arab-origin peers.

What are the implications for practice and research?

More anti-bullying programs, focused specifically on preventing ethnic victimization of refugee and newcomer children and youth, ought to be designed, developed, and evaluated.

- More school-based anti-bullying programs should be evaluated for their specific impact on ethnic victimization and outgroup attitudes in order to better understand which interventions may be the most effective for decreasing bullying incidents of refugee and newcomer youth.

- Anti-bullying and anti-bias programs would benefit from focusing on building positive school environments and increasing social support in their curricula. Additionally, promoting bystander intervention in classroom environments merits further exploration.

- Schools should identify or develop and implement anti-bias and anti-bullying programs based on the practical considerations of their environment. For example, the meta-analysis previously mentioned found evidence that one-on-one delivery could be highly effective in changing outgroup attitudes, but classroom delivery may be more feasible for most school settings given varying time and resources (Ülger et al., 2018).

- Peer-led interventions deserve consideration in planning ethnic anti-bullying interventions.

- Additional research is needed on the positive strategies that contribute to protective factors, such as classmate support and teachers' non-tolerance of ethnic victimization. Specific strategies should be identified and studied further in relation to their effects on bullying of refugee and immigrant youth.

- Further research should examine the relationship between bullying prevention and bystander response for specific ethnic groups, to identify any differences in effect, as seen in the study by Hitti et al. (2023) between Latine and Arab immigrant-born youth. Given that there are many different refugee and newcomer groups who arrive in the U.S., it is also important to determine if some ethnic communities may be more susceptible to ethnic victimization and negative outgroup attitudes in schools than others, in order to best address the needs of new arrivals.

How did we identify evidence for this summary?

Included Studies

The Switchboard evidence database includes the following types of studies, categorized by the strength of their evidence:

Strong Evidence

Meta-analyses: systematic analyses of sets of existing evaluations of similar programs

Systematic reviews: syntheses of the best available evidence on specific research questions, which use narrative synthesis focused on evaluations of the impacts of at least one specific policy, program, or intervention

Moderate Evidence

Published individual **impact evaluations** using randomized controlled trials (RCTs/C-RCTs), natural experiments, quasi-experimental techniques such as difference-in-difference (DID), instrumental variables (IV), regression discontinuity design (RDD), and propensity score matching (PSM) or other forms of synthetic matching, as well as fixed effects techniques with interaction terms

Suggestive Evidence

Published studies using methods including non-systematic literature review, uncontrolled before and after tests, post-test only, interrupted time series (ITS), cross-sectional regressions, longitudinal panels, cohort and case-controls, and purely qualitative techniques

Excluded Studies

Case studies, unpublished suggestive research, opinion papers, descriptive studies, and unpublished literature reviews

Search Protocol

Studies included in the database focused on high-income or upper-middle-income countries, including but not limited to the U.S. Studies included must have been published since 2014. To identify evidence, we searched the following websites and databases using the following population, methodology, and target outcome terms:

Websites and Databases	Population Terms	Methodology Terms	Target Outcome Term
Pubmed PsycInfo WebofScience ASSIA Social Service Abstracts Social Work Abstracts Migration Policy Google Scholar	"refugee OR immigrant OR asylee" AND "child OR youth OR student OR adolescent"	evaluation OR impact OR program OR intervention OR policy OR project OR training OR review OR meta-analysis OR synthesis	bullying OR victimization OR ethnic victimization

For databases or websites that permitted only basic searches, free-text terms and limited term combinations were selected from the lists above, and all resultant studies were reviewed for relevance. Conversely, for databases or websites with advanced search capability, we used relevant available filters. All search terms were examined in the title and abstract fields only to exclude studies that made only passing mention of the topic under consideration.

After initial screening, Switchboard evidence mapping is prioritized as follows: first priority is given to meta-analyses and systematic reviews, followed by individual impact evaluations when no meta-analyses or systematic reviews are available. Evaluations that are rated as impact evidence are considered before those rated as suggestive, with the latter only being included for outcomes where no evidence is available from the former.

Studies Included

A total of 130 studies were identified through database and website searching. After removing duplicates, 127 were then screened. Of these, 116 were deemed to be irrelevant to this search. Eleven full text articles were assessed for eligibility. Four full text articles were excluded due to not meeting one or more of the inclusion criteria pertaining to resettlement country, year of publication, population, methodology, or target problem. Eight studies were eligible for inclusion. A list of studies may be found below with hyperlinks to the abstracts or full text (when available).

Meta-Analyses and Systematic Reviews

Ülger, Z., Dette-Hagenmeyer, D. E., Reichle, B., & Gaertner, S. L. (2018). Improving outgroup attitudes in schools: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of School Psychology*, *67*, 88–103. Full Text

Impact Evaluations

Zambuto, V., Stefanelli, F., Palladino, B. E., Nocentini, A., & Menesini, E. (2022). The effect of the NoTrap! antibullying program on ethnic victimization: When the peer educators' immigrant status matters. *Developmental Psychology*, *58*(6), 1176–1187. Abstract

Suggestive Studies

Bayram Özdemir, S., & Özdemir, M. (2020). The Role of Perceived Inter-Ethnic Classroom Climate in Adolescents' Engagement in Ethnic Victimization: For Whom Does it Work? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *49*(6), 1328–1340. Full Text

Bayram Özdemir, S., Yanagida, T., & Özdemir, M. (2022). Bystanders of ethnic victimization: Do classroom context and teachers' approach matter for how adolescents intend to act? *Child Development*, *93*(5), 1540–1558. Full Text

Hitti, A., Gönültaş, S., & Mulvey, K. L. (2023). What motivates adolescent bystanders to intervene when immigrant youth are bullied? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *33*(2), 603–617. Abstract

Walsh, S. D., De Clercq, B., Molcho, M., Harel-Fisch, Y., Davison, C. M., Rich Madsen, K., & Stevens, G. W. J. M. (2016). The Relationship Between Immigrant School Composition, Classmate Support and Involvement in Physical Fighting and Bullying among Adolescent Immigrants and Non-immigrants in 11 Countries. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *45*(1), 1–16. Full Text

Xu, M., Macrynikola, N., Waseem, M., & Miranda, R. (2020). Racial and ethnic differences in bullying: Review and implications for intervention. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 50*, 101340. Full Text

Supplemental Resources

The following studies did not meet the criteria to be included in the evidence summary but may provide additional context, guidance, or understanding of the topic.

Ali, J., & Larsson, K. (2018). Ethnic victimization as a potential explanation for poor school adjustment among immigrant youth. Full Text

Basilici, M. C., Palladino, B. E., & Menesini, E. (2022). Ethnic diversity and bullying in school: A systematic review. *Aggression and violent behavior, 65*, 101762. Full Text

Clayton HB, Kilmer G, DeGue S., et al. (2021). Dating Violence, Sexual Violence, and Bullying Victimization Among High School Students- Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States. MMWR. Full Text

Gladden, R.M., Vivolo-Kantor, A.M., Hamburger, M.E., & Lumpkin, C.D. (2014). Bullying Surveillance Among Youths: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements, Version 1.0. Atlanta, GA; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Education. Full Text

McKenney, K. S., Pepler, D., Craig, W., & Connolly, J. (2006). Peer victimization and psychosocial adjustment: The experiences of Canadian immigrant youth. Full Text

Sapouna, M., De Amicis, L., & Vezzali, L. (2023). Bullying victimization due to racial, ethnic, citizenship and/or religious status: a systematic review. *Adolescent research review*, 8(3), 261-296. Full Text