The Prevalence of Bullying and Cyberbullying in Rural Illinois Schools

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Significance and Prevalence of Bullying

- The experience of bullying can negatively impact student social development, self esteem, mental health, and academic achievement (Felix et al., 2009; Van Lier et al., 2012).
  - Students who experience bullying are at higher risk for **depression, anxiety**, poor academic performance and avoiding or **dropping out of school** (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011; Nansel et al., 2001; Perguero, 2011).
  - Related **negative effects can persist into adulthood** (Rigby, 2003).

- National data compiled from the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance survey (2015) suggest that approximately **20%** of participating students experienced one or more forms of bullying.

- Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra & Runions (2013) reported an average victimization rate of **35%** based on a meta-analytic review of 80 studies .

Forms of Bullying

- **Physical** - pushing, tripping, hitting, taking or breaking someone's belongings on purpose

- **Verbal** - calling someone names, teasing or making fun of them, insulting, humiliating, or threatening someone

- **Social** - refusing to play with or include someone, saying bad things about them to others, or making them look foolish

- **Electronic** (Cyberbullying) - using the Internet or a cell phone to e-mail or send text messages or pictures in order to threaten someone, hurt their feelings, embarrass them or make them look bad, or spread rumors or tell secrets about them

Prevalence of Cyberbullying

- Prevalence rates for cyberbullying as reported by the CDC are generally lower than those indicated for physical and other forms of social bullying, approximately 15% (Kann et al., 2016).

- Hase et al., (2015) noted that 93% of students who experience online victimization experienced other forms of bullying at school.

Key Issues

- Most studies have focused on students in metropolitan areas, and relatively few have assessed **rural youth** (Evans, Smokowski, & Cotter, 2014; Hong, 2009)

- Media reports suggest that **cyberbullying** is on the rise, a question for continued empirical focus.

- Many researcher have observed that youth may be involved as victims, perpetrators and as both - **"bully-victims"** (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). This has important implications for intervention.

Purpose of this study

- To assess rates of physical, social and cyberbullying in **rural** Southern Illinois Schools

- To assess the relations among the different forms of bullying, and between **victimization and perpetration**

- To examine differential rates and relations by gender

Method

- Data collection for this presentation occurred March – May 2016
- Surveys were collected from 24 middle and high schools
- Measure: School Climate Survey (Ontario Ministry of Education)
- Procedure:
  - Students completed the surveys anonymously in classes at times/days designated by administrators.
  - Parental consent and youth assent was obtained.

Schools

- All schools are served by the Regional Office of Education #30 and located in one of the following counties: Jackson, Perry, Union, Pulaski and Alexander

- Each school is listed according to one of the following classifications by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

  13 - Small City

  31, 32, 33 - Town (Fringe, Distant, Remote)

  41, 42, 43 – Rural (Fringe, Distant, Remote)

- The majority of districts are classified as 42-Rural, Distant.

School Samples

- Grades 7 to 12
 - Total N = 2428
  - Schools = 24
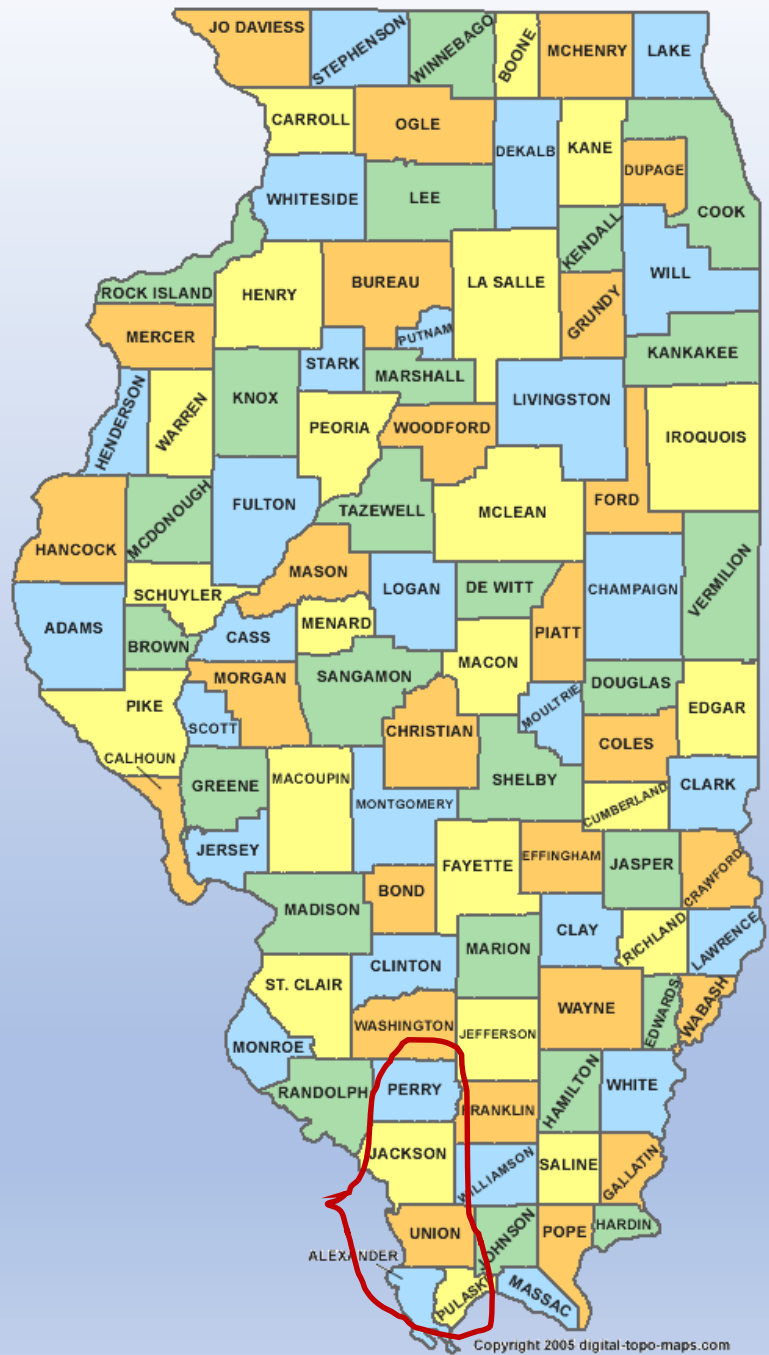
Definitions

Actions meant to hurt another person's feelings or to put a person down are called **bullying/harassing** behaviors. Bullying is a form of harassment.

In this section, we will be using the words "bullying/harassment" for behaviors such as:

- saying hurtful things to someone about their appearance, their intelligence, or their abilities;
- posting hurtful comments about someone online;
- hurting someone by hitting, kicking, or pinching them, or in some other physical way;
- leaving someone out or treating them badly because of who they are.

The same person or group of people is often bullied or harassed over and over again.
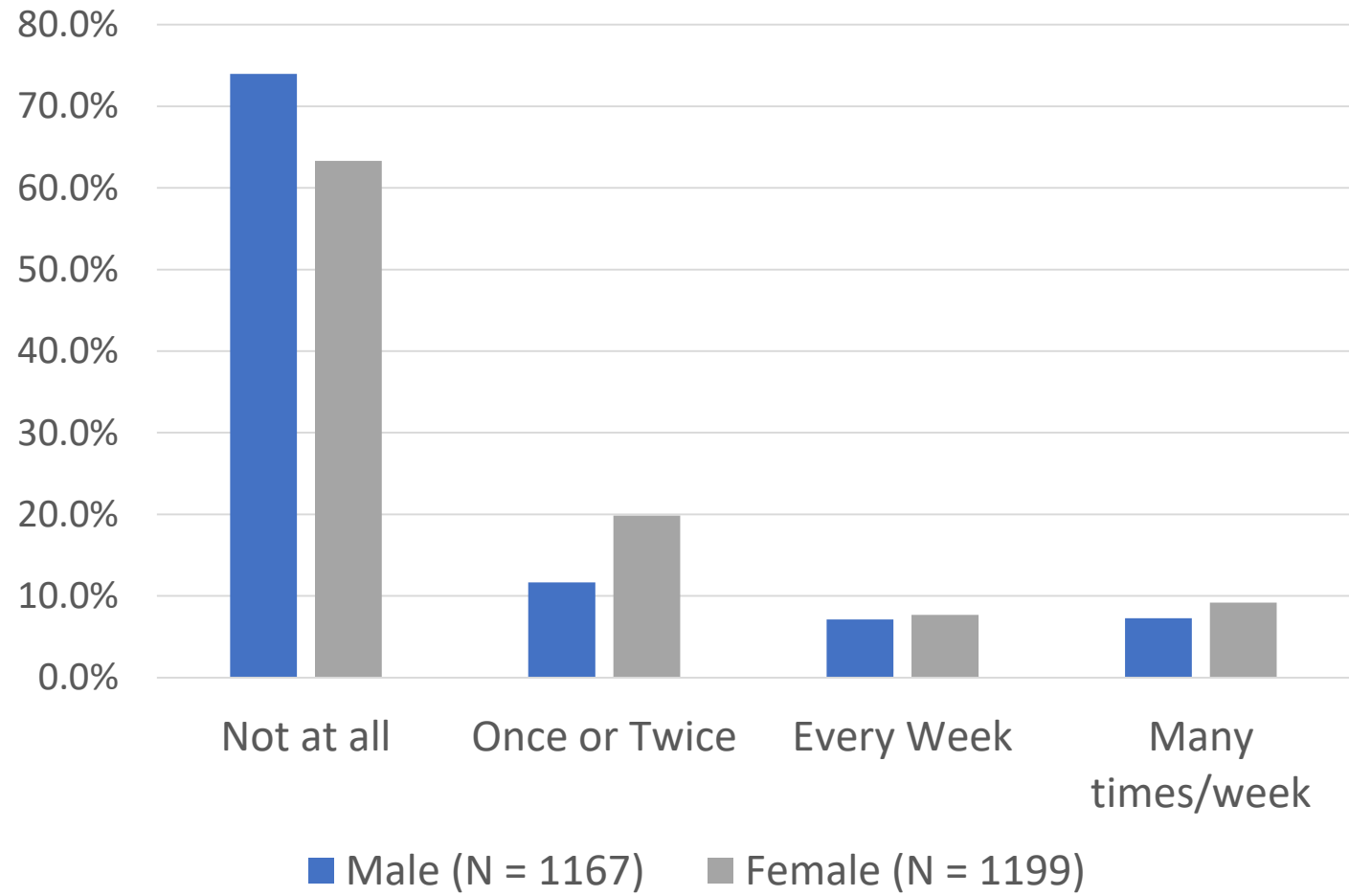This can happen on or off school grounds.
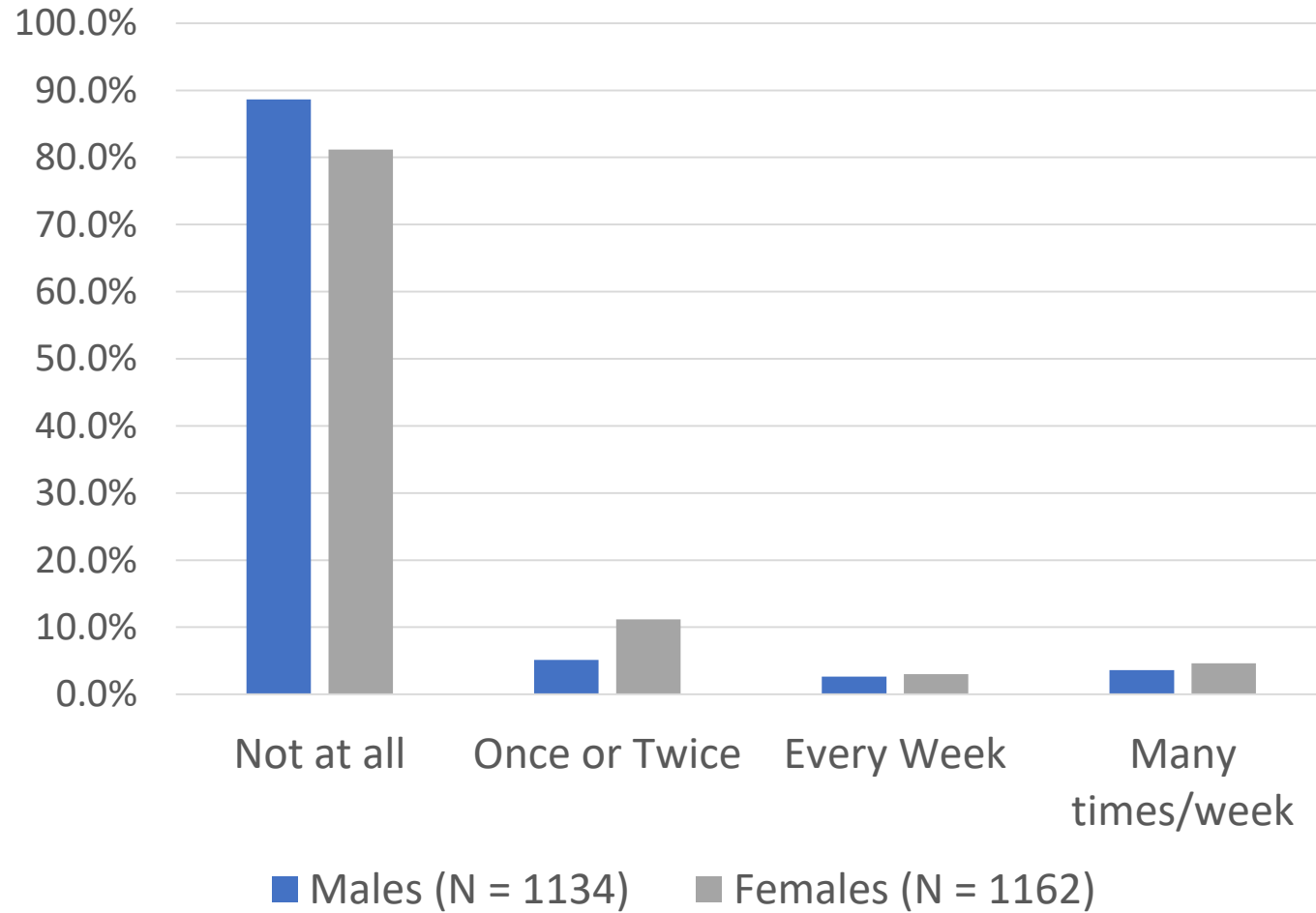
Frequency of Physical Bullying
by Gender

Male (n = 1192) Female (n = 1175)
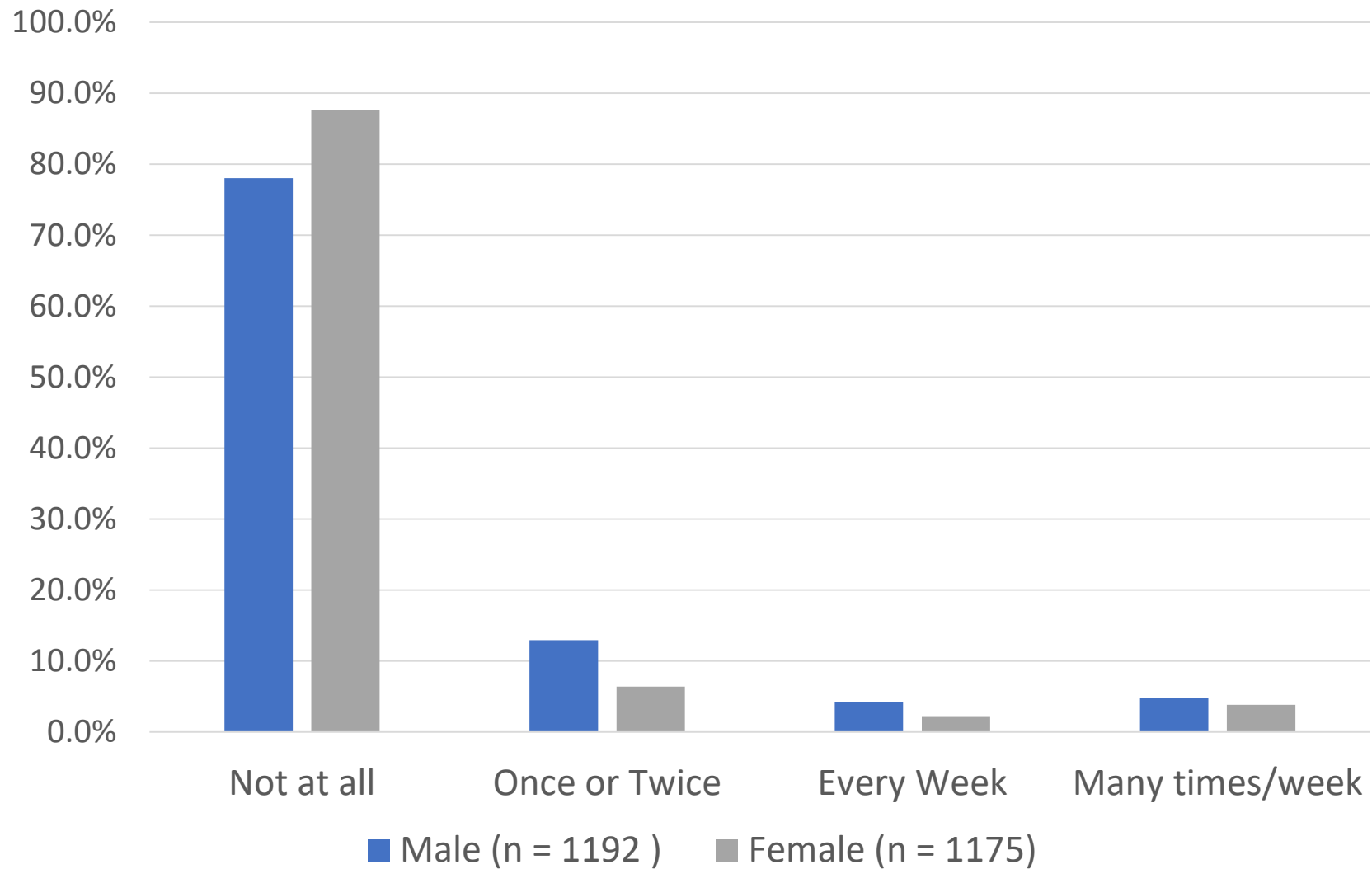
Frequency of Verbal Bullying By Gender
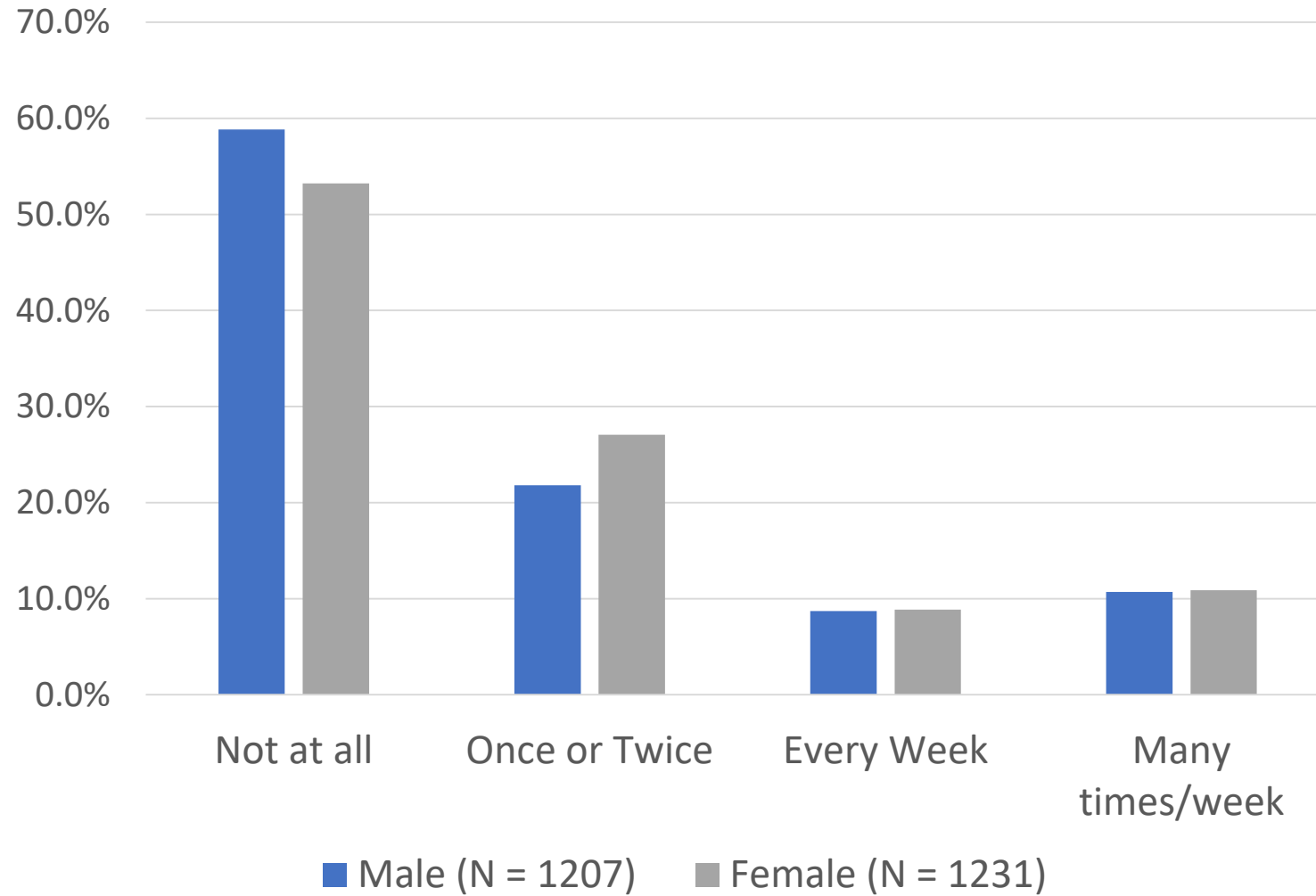
Frequency of Social Bullying by Gender

Frequency of Electronic Bullying by Gender

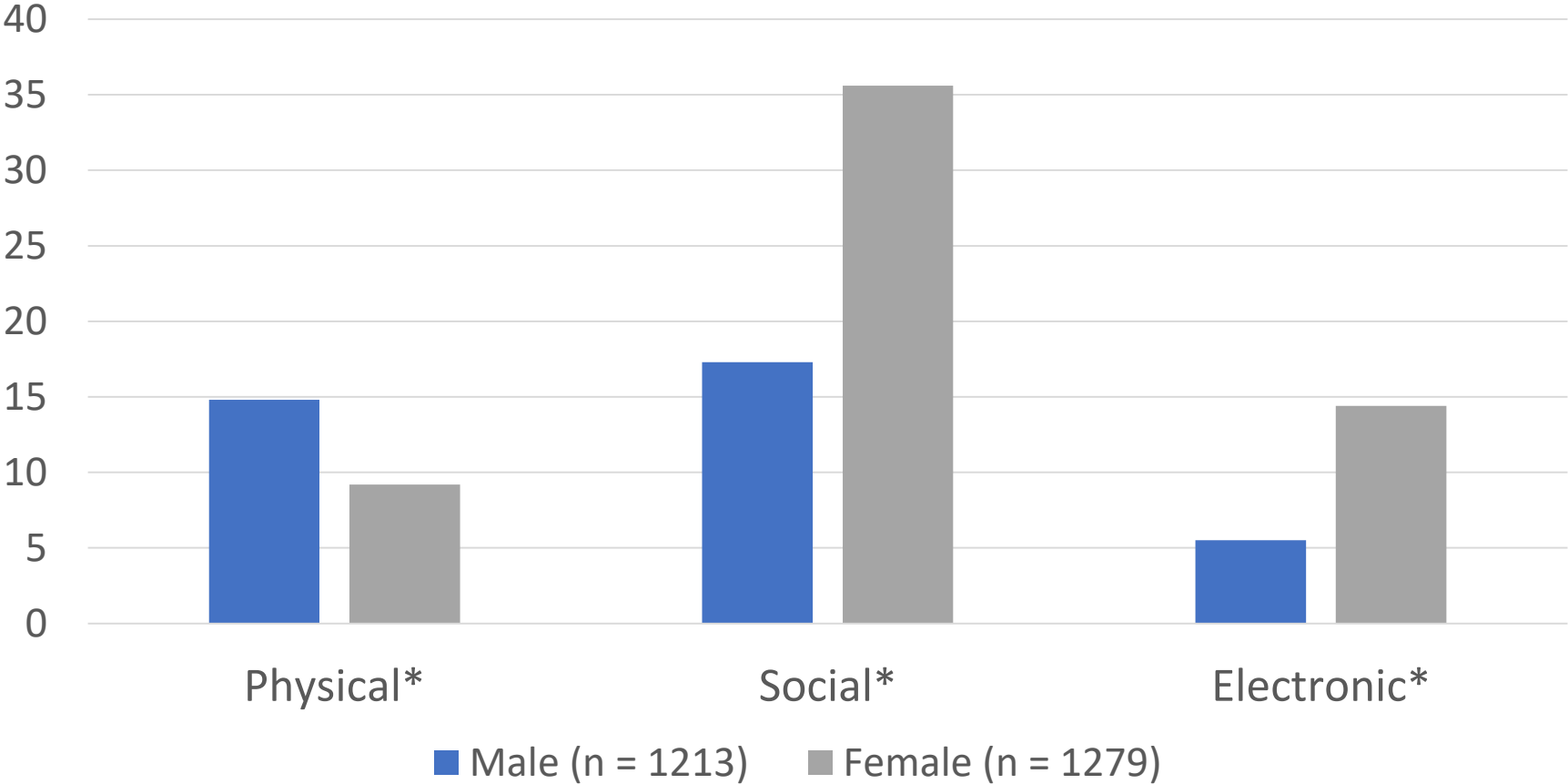# Correlations Among Types of Bullying Victimization by Gender

Males

	Physical	Verbal	Social
Verbal	0.64		
Social	0.66	0.74	
Electronic	0.60	0.49	0.61

Females

	Physical	Verbal	Social
Verbal	0.50		
Social	0.47	0.74	
Electronic	0.44	0.54	0.62

Note: all correlations $p < .001$

Percent Reporting Bullying Victimization By Gender

* *p* < .001

Male (n = 1213)   Female (n = 1279)

Percent Bully-Victims by Gender
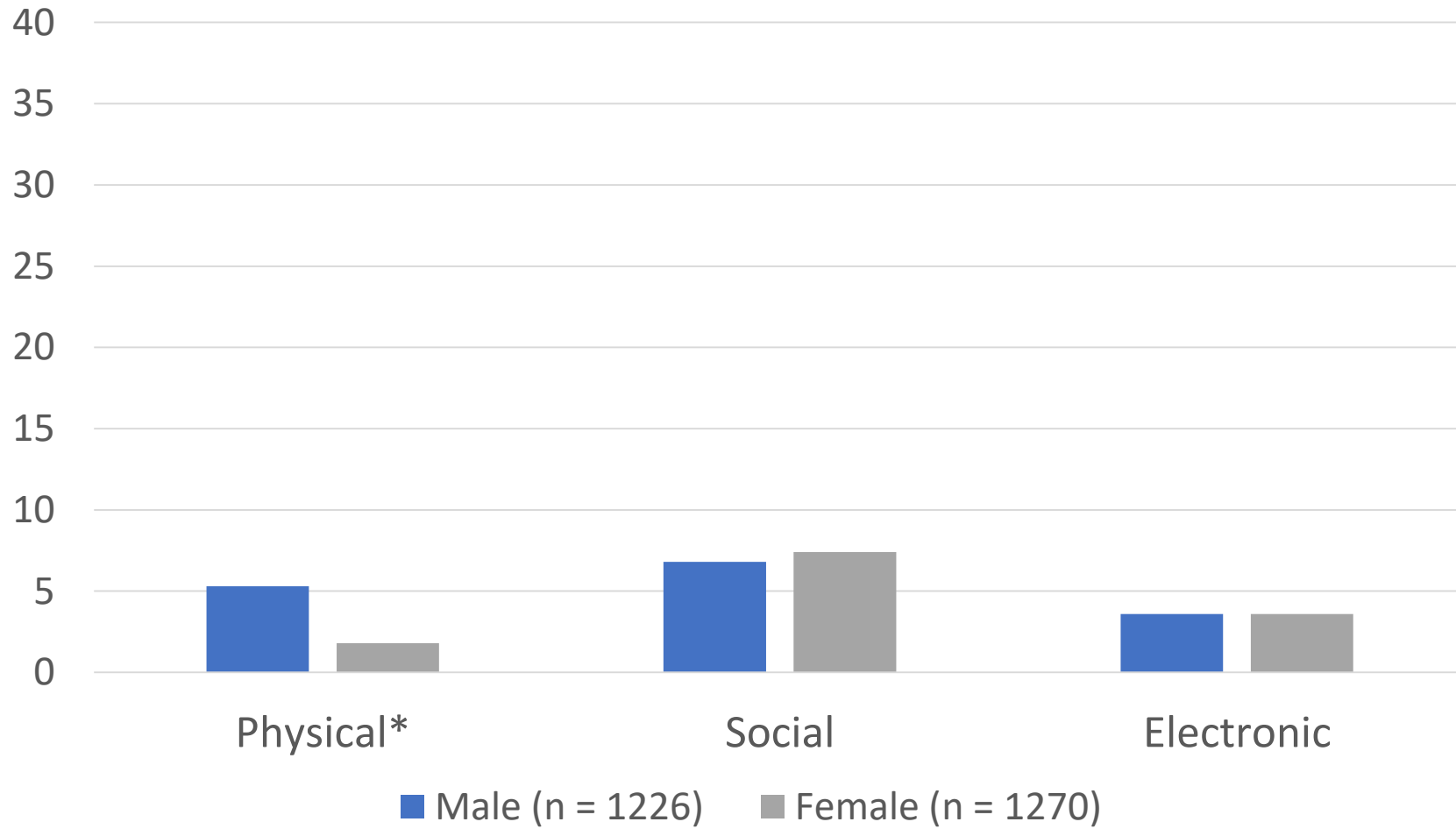
Percent Victims (Only) and Bully-Victims by Gender

Males

Form	Victim	Bully-Victim	N
Physical	70.8	29.2	212
Social	68.7	31.3	243
Electronic	58.4	41.6	101

Females

Form	Victim	Bully-Victim	N
Physical	81	19	121
Social	77.9	22.1	394
Electronic	76.6	23.4	188

Conclusions

- Rates of bullying victimization in rural schools across Southern Illinois are generally comparable to those reported for metropolitan areas and national samples (ranging from approximately 15-35%).

- We observed significant gender differences in physical, social and electronic bullying; males reported more physical and females reported more social and electronic victimization.

- Reported rates of electronic (cyber) bullying were significantly lower than other rates of direct verbal and social bullying, but females reported higher rates than males.

- Significant percentages (>20%) of victims acknowledged engaging in similar bullying behaviors.

Implications

- Bullying prevention and intervention is clearly a national issue and one that rural schools need also address.

- The experience of cyberbullying is related to other forms; efforts to address bullying in general may have an impact on electronic bullying.

- Because many youth who reported engaging in bullying behaviors have experienced it, "zero tolerance" policies may punish many of those who were initially victims.

- The data collectively underscore the need for school climate enhancement approaches that promote general safety, respect and inclusiveness.