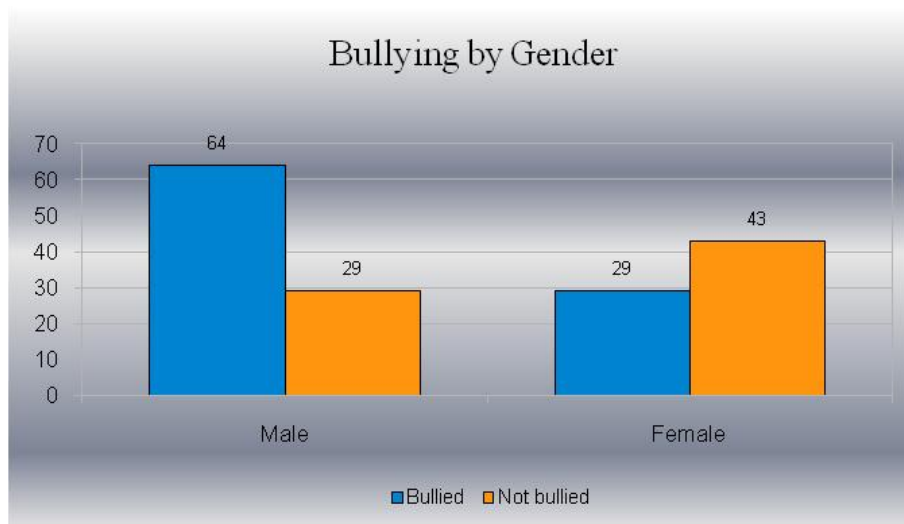


In 2010, UNITED SIKHS undertook four projects to identify the impact of bullying on Sikh children: 1) Bullying Prevention Survey; 2) Youth Needs Assessment Focus Group; 3) Global Sikh Civil & Human Rights Survey 2010; and 4) Anti-Bullying Truth Commission. The goal of these projects was to illuminate the pervasiveness of bullying in the Sikh community and the importance of addressing bullying as a civil rights issue.

**Bullying Prevention Survey:** Preliminary results (ongoing project) of the Bullying Prevention Survey in the Greater New York Area (n=165) reveal that Sikh children are disproportionately impacted by bullying. Nationally, around one third (33.33%) of students reported being bullied at schools,<sup>1</sup> however, UNITED SIKHS survey revealed that **56.4%** of Sikh children have experienced being bullied. We also found a significant relationship between genders; of those who reported being bullied, 68.8% were Sikh males.<sup>2</sup>



**Youth Needs Assessment Focus Group Findings:** UNITED SIKHS conducted a youth needs assessment of community members from Richmond Hill, NY. Bullying and bias-based harassment was a significant part of middle and high school Sikh student's experience. Specifically, two major findings came from focus group participants:

1. Bullying is vastly under-reported, and mainly, the apathy of adults is the largest contributing factor. Even if students report incidents of bullying, teachers treat these situations as common playground clashes and ignore the important religious or cultural education that is needed to ameliorate bullying. Rather, teachers and administrators focus only finding a temporary solution (i.e. suspension, punishment etc.).
2. Participants unanimously identified a dire need to increase religious and cultural awareness to deal with bullying and other related issues in the school context.

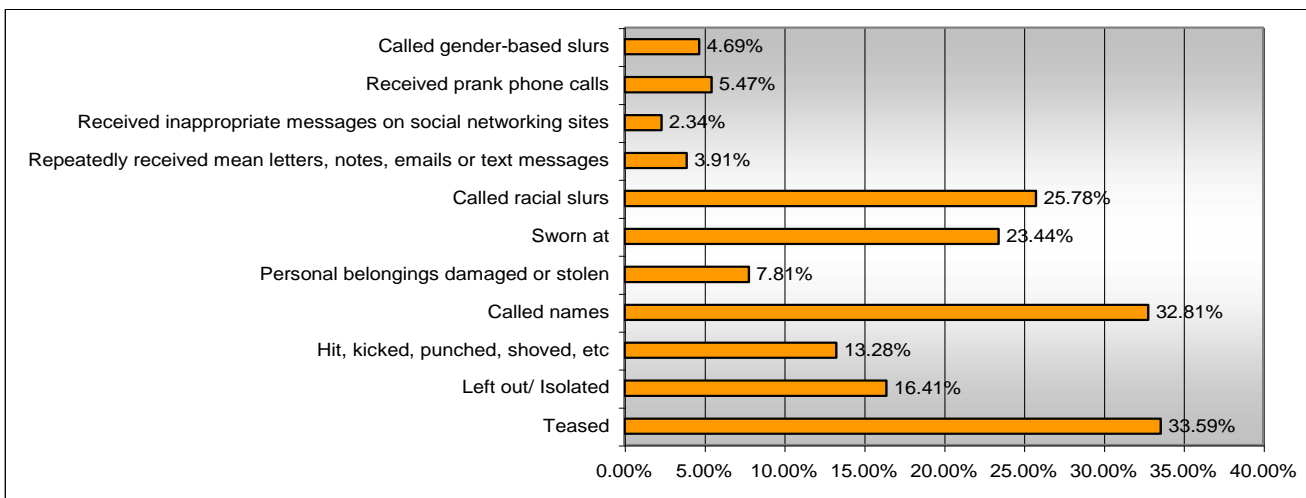
<sup>1</sup> Bullying Statistics, *Bullying Statistics 2009*, last accessed Jan. 18, 2011, <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/bullying-statistics-2009.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Crosstabs between Gender and Reports of being bullied revealed a significant relationship. ( $\chi^2 = 13.44$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .009$ )

**Global Sikh Civil & Human Rights Survey 2010:** As part of UNITED SIKHS ongoing advocacy for Sikh civil and human rights, community members from all over the world participated in a global survey where they weighed in on issues most important to the community, including bullying. Participants from the United States (n=129) reported:

- Over **60% of the participants** have identified bullying as a form of hate crime/ discrimination
- **50% of the participants** have personally experienced or have kids who have experienced bullying
- Bullying was addressed by most participants in one of three ways: (1) It was not brought up by parents/guardians (2) It was brought up by parents but not acted upon by schools (3) Parents took it upon themselves to go to schools and educate other students about the Sikh culture and practice

**Types of Bullying Experienced by Survey Respondents in the United States**



**Anti-Bullying Truth Commission:** UNITED SIKHS' data collection on bullying experiences in the community included truth-commission like sessions where young Sikh students shared their experiences with their peers. Students reported being isolated, teased, called racial slurs, and taunted for their head coverings, long un-cut hair, and other religious practices. These are not isolated incidents, the Sikh community has experienced a collective trauma from bullying, most notably, when Sikh youth begin to discard their distinctive religious identity. Included below are a few poignant examples from Sikh students:

*“In my old school in Pennsylvania my friend was Sikh and this boy always tried to bully her and try to cut her hair and one day she got caught and ended up getting her hair cut by that guy. Then I went to the principle with the girl and I told the principle that you shouldn’t cut someone’s hair because they are Sikh. Then that kid got suspended but I would never forget that day because it really hurt my heart.”*

*“One time I was in school next to my locker and then this kid just came up to me and said you look like Osama’s brother. I said no I am not. Then he started calling me a terrorist and then everyone started calling me a terrorist.”*

In a post 9/11 environment, Sikh children are not merely compared with cartoon characters as they had been in the past; they are now compared with terrorists. One cannot even fathom the devastating impact on a young child’s psyche. A Sikh’s external religious identity should be a source of great spiritual strength, but in the current environment, it has become a source of extreme alienation and bias-based harassment.