



**WORLD SIKH ORGANIZATION
OF CANADA**

Survey and Analysis Report:

The Experience of Sikh Students in Peel
2016 Update

World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bullying continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing young people. Students of Sikh background in particular face challenges due to their articles of faith. This report aims to bring a better understanding of these challenges.

In July 2016 the World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO) conducted surveys amongst young Sikhs attending summer camps in Peel Region (Ontario, Canada). This survey follows a similar survey that was conducted by the WSO in 2011. The objective of this survey is to measure the prevalence of bullying specifically targeted towards the Sikh identity and remediation options available to schools, parents/guardians, etc.

Included in the report is the following:

- Key bullying statistics of Sikh students
- The motivations of bullying
- Frequency and nature of bullying experienced
- Reasons why they are bullied

The report is oriented for schools, colleges, practitioners, parents/guardians and young people to guide effective. This year, for the first time, we met with and interviewed students individually to explore the impact, frequency and nature of this bullying. We found that of the students surveyed, 27% were bullied because of their Sikh identity. The largest percentages of students bullied were among those who wore either all articles or some visible articles of faith. 34% of students who kept at least one visible article of faith said they had been bullied. Students who did not wear any article of faith reported an 11% bullying rate. 57% of students told staff members at their school about the bullying they faced, which lead to an effective remediation 51% of the time. Many tried to do multiple other things besides just speaking to their parents and/or telling a teacher indicating that students were relatively comfortable seeking assistance and speaking to their teachers and/or staff at their school. In cases where students approached the school, 40% of respondents felt that the school was not effective in addressing the bullying issue.

One student told us that following being bullied, she “*avoided class by pretending to be sick so that I wouldn’t go back to school the next day*”. The WSO hopes to use this information to inform educators of possible remediation actions to further reduce the impact of bullying.

Though even one child being bullied is one too many, we note there is a reduction in the bullying rate from 2011. This is a positive indication that the issue is improving. Our data indicates that changes in policy and diversity initiatives within the Peel District School Board may be drivers of the improved results: school staff were reported to be helpful in solving bullying issues in 36% of bullying instances in the 2011 survey, whereas this year’s report showed them to be helpful in 51% of cases. The ESL program also saw improved responses. 27% of students in ESL programs felt they did not require the class in 2011, as opposed to 8.62% this year.

The results of this survey reveal that bullying remains a significant issue for Sikh students. Many students reported being teased and bullied for looking or speaking differently, keeping visible

articles of faith, or even for their “non-English” names. We found strong correlations that have enabled us to paint a picture of the challenges Sikh students face . It is our firm belief that this research can be used to assist the wider community of practitioners to better understand the dynamics of bullying.

Throughout the years, the WSO has assisted many young students overcoming problems and discrimination due to their articles of faith. We hope that this research is of interest and benefit to you, your organization and the wider community.

World Sikh Organization of Canada

The World Sikh Organization of Canada is a non-profit organization with a mandate to promote and protect the interests of Canadian Sikhs as well as to promote and advocate for the protection of human rights for all individuals, irrespective of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and social and economic status.

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METHODOLOGY

This survey was previously conducted in 2011 when a strong correlation between the number of articles of faith and frequency of bullying was presented. This survey aims to look at how the results have changed from 2011 and present practitioners an update of the status of bullying for Sikhs in 2016.

Students ranging from kindergarten to high school were surveyed to see if age was a factor in the nature or likelihood of the bullying. Students surveyed were attending the following summer camps:

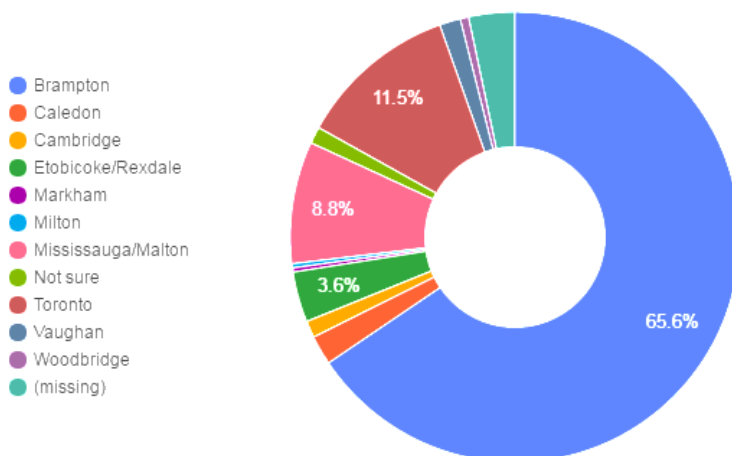
- Ontario Khalsa Darbar’s Summer Gurmat Camp
- Guru Nanak Academy Gurmat Camp
- Gill Summer Camp

All students were surveyed on a personal one-on-one level. The survey was conducted by the World Sikh Organization of Canada. Multiple variables will be considered to see whether there is any correlation between the different variables and bullying. The data can be analyzed by looking at key factors which can categorize students and the issues they face.

Upon completion, the data was cleansed and analysed using standard survey analysis techniques, which enabled us to identify relationships within the data. All respondents were required to have parental consent and all responses were screened regularly to identify any potential safeguarding issues, which were acted upon promptly. There were a total of 332 Sikh students surveyed. 73.1% of the students are enrolled in Peel District School Board.

Figure 1: Respondents’ city of residence

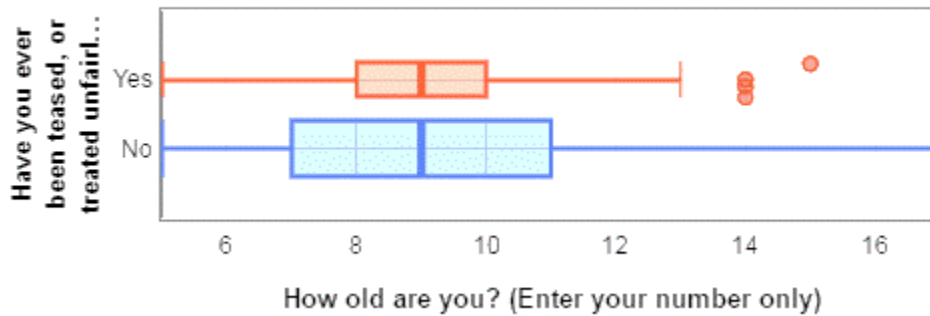
What City do you currently reside in?



AGE

From the 332 students, the youngest age group were students from the age of 5 and the oldest students were 17 years old. The average student was 9 years old. A majority of the students that were bullied happened to be between the ages of 5 and 13.

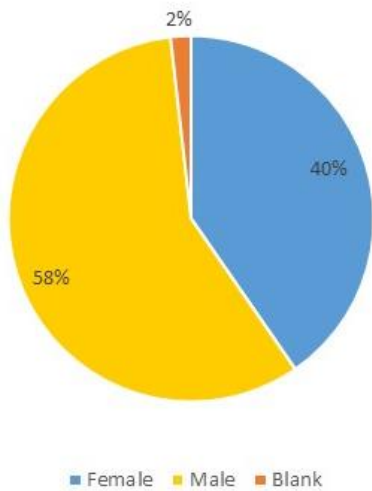
Figure 2: Age Distribution Box-plot



GENDER

58% of the students were male, 40.2% of the students were female and 1.8% of the students did not mention their gender.

Figure 3: Gender Distribution



Though more males were surveyed, there was no significant difference between the frequencies of males bullied versus females in the analysis².

² Q: Have you ever been teased, or treated unfairly in school because of your Sikh Identity?

No	Yes	Did not answer	Total
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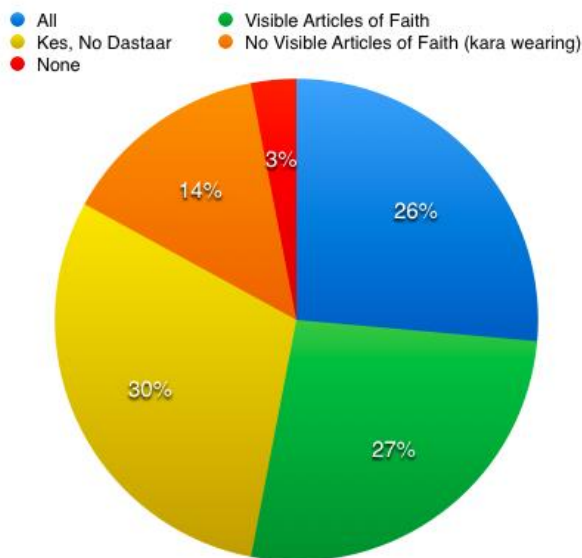
ARTICLES OF FAITH

Initiated Sikhs or practicing Sikhs are often identifiable through the five Sikh articles of faith. However, many Sikhs who have not yet been initiated may still keep some or all of these articles as a personal choice. The articles of faith include the kesh or uncut hair covered by a turban or keski/dastaar; the kara or iron bracelet worn around the wrist; the kangha or a small wooden comb used to keep the hair clean and tidy; the kirpan which is a small sword kept in a sheath and restrained in a belt worn across the torso; and the kachhera, a cotton undergarment, but as it is not visible and thus is not often the cause of bullying or discrimination, it was left out of the survey.

The survey recognized that only three of the articles of faith are visible externally: the keski/dastaar (turban), kara and kesh (unshorn hair)³. The data was separated into the following categories to recognize the impact of the most visible of the articles of faith

1. Wear all articles of faith
2. Wears the dastaar (turban) and/or keeps kesh(unshorn hair)
3. Keeps kesh but does not wear the dastaar (turban)
4. Wears only the kara
5. No articles of faith.

Figure 4: Categorization of Articles of Faith



Female	93 (69.92%)	38 (28.57%)	2 (1.50%)	133
Male	139 (72.4%)	51 (26.56%)	2 (1.04%)	192
No answer	3 (50%)	0	3 (50%)	6

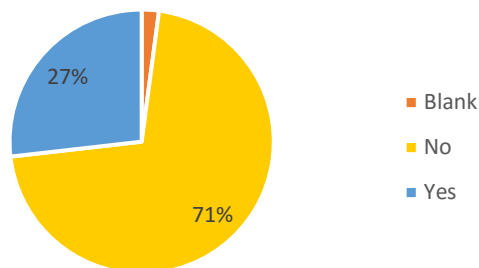
³ The kirpan is often kept underneath clothes.

SURVEY RESULTS

Of the students surveyed, 26.9% were bullied because of their Sikh identity.

Figure 5: Bullying Response

Have you ever been teased, or treated unfairly in school because of your Sikh Identity?



We consider further variables to evaluate the reasons for the bullying. These include age, sex, and visible articles of faith worn. Students were asked about whether they had ever been bullied based on their Sikh identity, in what way they were bullied, how often it happened, whether they told an adult and if so, whether that adult was helpful or not, and whether they ever felt generally uncomfortable in school. Students were also asked questions about the ESL program and if the Sikh faith had been spoken about or taught in class.

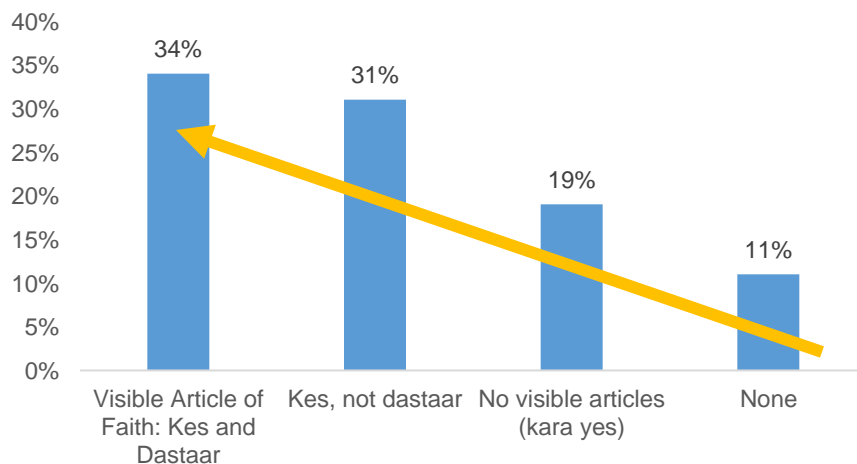
ARTICLES OF FAITH

75 of the total students did not wear any of the identifying Sikh articles of faith while the rest kept either all or some.

Table 1: Bullying Response Distribution

	Total	Yes (Count)	Yes (%)
Visible Article of Faith: Kes and Dastaar	180	62	34%
Kes, not dastaar	78	24	31%
No visible articles (kara yes)	47	9	19%
None	75	8	11%

Bullying Rate Distribution



The largest percentages of students bullied were among those who wore either all articles or some visible articles of faith. 27% students who keep any of the 5 articles said they had been bullied. We believe this represents a surprisingly high proportion, particularly when considering the fact that Brampton and its surrounding cities are heavily populated by Sikhs.

If the Sikh faith is discussed in any school setting, we believe that articles of faith should briefly be discussed to ensure that this bullying is not occurring due to lack of knowledge. If Sikh students approach staff about ongoing bullying because of their articles of faith, the staff member should first educate themselves about these articles through resources such as the World Sikh Organization.

PARENTS/TEACHERS/STAFF

There was also an inquiry into whether staff and teachers of bullied students were helpful. The respondent's methods of action were recorded and the effectiveness of the method was noted. The following are frequency tables that show what students had done, whether the problem was solved as a result, where a teacher or staff member was approached then whether they were helpful and also what they had done as a result of the student's complaint.

Table 2: Bullying Remediation Techniques

What did you do to try to solve the bullying problem?	Frequency	Percentage
I did not tell anyone about this problem	14	15%
I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem	33	34%
I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem , I told my parents	6	6%
I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem, I told my parents, I got back at the person responsible (name-calling, hitting , etc.)	1	1%
I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem , I told my parents , I tried to talk to the person(s) responsible myself	3	3%
I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem , I tried to talk to the person(s) responsible myself	4	4%
I told my parents	12	13%
I told my parents, I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem	3	3%
I told my parents, I tried to talk to the person(s) responsible myself , I told a teacher, guidance counselor or principal about the problem	1	1%
I tried to talk to the person(s) responsible myself	15	16%
I tried to talk to the person(s) responsible myself , I told a teacher , guidance counselor or principal about the problem	4	4%

We note that not all students told someone about the problem and in some cases, talking to the person bullying them solved the problem without further action.

Of the 96 students that answered this question, 57.3% told staff members at their school about the bullying they faced. 23% of students used multiple techniques besides just speaking to their parents and/or telling a teacher. This indicates that students were relatively comfortable seeking assistance and speaking to their teachers and/or staff at their school. 68% of respondents found

the solutions to have been effective. The WSO believes it is essential for teachers and school practitioners create an environment where students feel comfortable approaching them with any issues.

Table 3: School Response Effectiveness

Did the school help in solving bullying?	Frequency	Percentage
The school was helpful but only after a parent stepped in	8	10%
The school was not at all helpful in solving this problem	32	39%
Yes, the school was very helpful in solving this problem	42	51%

Just over half of the students surveyed felt the school were helpful. 40% of students did not feel the school effectively helped solve the problem. The remaining 10% felt their parents needed to push the school in order to help.

Table 4: School Response Technique

How did the school help?	Frequency	Percentage
Nothing has been done	18	25%
They spoke to the person responsible	23	31%
They spoke to the person responsible AND punished them	21	28%
They spoke to the person responsible AND the class as a whole	12	16%

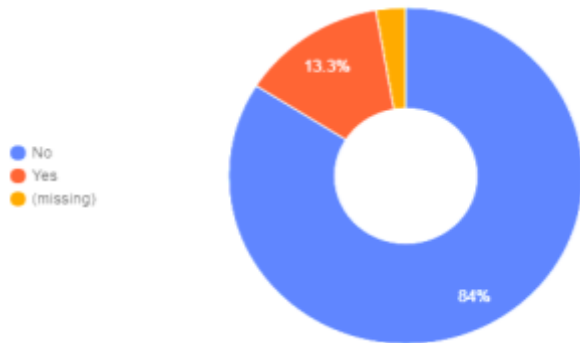
The results reveal that in a majority of the cases, the school spoke to the student responsible or punished the student. 16% of the time the education practitioner spoke to the entire class about the issue.

DISCOMFORT

Besides repeated behaviour that can specifically be labelled as bullying, there could be a general level of discomfort a student may feel in school due to small microaggressions or questions and comments that stem from a lack of knowledge (such as a suggestion to cut one's hair or remove any other article of faith). 13.3% of students felt uncomfortable at school specifically because of their Sikh identity. In the 2011 survey, 20% of students said they felt uncomfortable.

Figure 6: Discomfort Response

Do you ever feel uncomfortable at school because of your Sikh Identity?



These students were asked why they felt this discomfort and the main causes are depicted in the frequency table below.

Table 5: Bullying Techniques

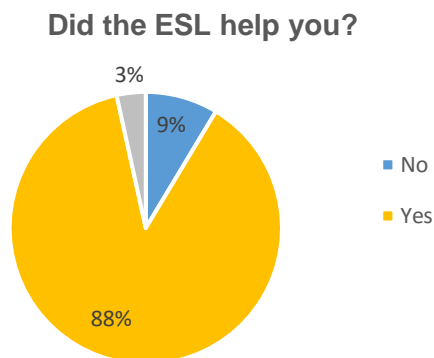
Reason	Frequency	Percentage
I am called names because of how I look/speak	18	33.96%
I am called names because of how I look AND I'm treated different from everyone else	3	5.66%
I am told I should not keep an article of faith	7	13.21%
I am told I should not keep an article of faith AND I am called names because of how I look AND I am treated differently from everyone else	1	1.89%
I am told I should not keep an article of faith AND I am treated differently from everyone else	2	3.77%
I am treated differently from everyone else	21	39.62%
I am treated differently from everyone else AND I am called names because of how I look/speak	1	1.89%

34% of the students who felt uncomfortable were called names based on how they looked or spoke. 40% of the students who felt uncomfortable felt they were treated differently than others. 19% of students felt uncomfortable due to someone telling them they should not keep one or more of their articles of faith. Some forms of bullying are less visible than others, such as the exclusion from games and activities, unfriendly looks, or slightly offensive questions or comments about one’s appearance. Sometimes, these acts are unintentional and stem from a subconscious culture of non-acceptance of anyone or anything that is foreign and unfamiliar.

ESL

Outside of bullying this survey also looked at the effectiveness of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The following contingency table illustrates the amount of students that had been put in ESL and how effective it was in their opinion. Though only 3.3% of students said they were not comfortable reading, writing, and speaking in English, 17.5% were in ESL. In the 2011 survey, 68% of students found the ESL program helpful. In this survey, 88% of the students that had taken ESL found it effective.

Figure 7: ESL Effectiveness



SIKHISM IN THE CLASSROOM

The students were asked whether the Sikh faith had been taught or discussed in their classroom. 37% of students said that the Sikh faith was discussed. The students were asked about the general atmosphere of the school and whether Sikhs are respected at their school – 75% confirmed that the religion and Sikhs are generally respected and viewed favourably. 30% of these students felt that teachers and classmates don't understand the religion (or its tenets), but thought they were still respectful.

88% of students thought it would be helpful for someone to come to their school for a presentation about the Sikh faith to help educate students and teachers. Some students verbally expressed that this could prevent further incidents that occur due to a lack of knowledge. In addition, students expressed that this would be beneficial as they did not always know how to answer questions from their peers and teachers about why they keep their hair, tie a turban, etc.

Figure 8: Sikhism Education Frequency

Count of Has Sikhi ever been taught or discussed in your class or at your school?

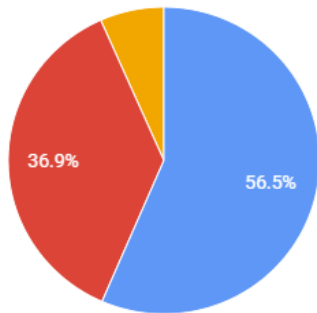
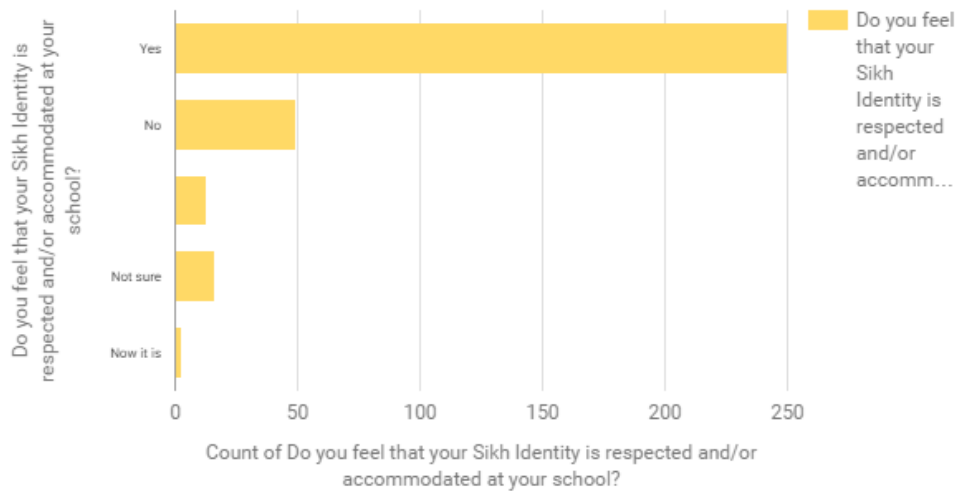


Figure 9: Sikh Identity Perception

Count of Do you feel that your Sikh Identity is respected and/or accommodated at your school?



COMPARISON WITH 2011 SURVEY RESULTS

We compare these results with the 2011 bullying survey that was also completed by the WSO. In that instance there were 340 students surveyed (as opposed to 332 in this case), and 53% of the students who kept articles of faith were victims to bullying, as opposed to 34% in this year's survey.

We note there is a reduction in the bullying rate. This is great news and a positive indication that the issue is improving. We believe there are a few possibilities for this change. First, we note that our data sample is limited and only point-in-time. This makes it difficult to find any significant trends. Our data however indicates there is reason that changes in policy and diversity initiatives within the Peel District School Board may be drivers of the improved results. School staff were reported to be helpful in solving bullying issues in 36% of bullying instances in the 2011 survey, whereas this year's report shows them to be helpful in 51% of cases. The ESL program also saw improved responses. 27% of students in ESL programs felt they did not require the class in 2011, as opposed to 8.62% in 2016.

The results of this survey reveal that bullying remains a significant issue for Sikh students. Many students reported being teased and bullied for looking or speaking differently, keeping visible articles of faith, or even for their names.