What is this research about?
Bullying can cause a number of psychological and social issues in victims such as depression, poor self-image and greater dependency on adults. Bullying is common in elementary and secondary schooling and Canadian schools are no exception. Statistics show that more than one-third of Canadian students are either bullied, involved in bullying someone else, or both. Although there are a number of anti-bullying programs in effect in Canadian schools, reviews show that most have either shown no effect on reducing bullying rates, or in some cases, have actually caused harm. There is agreement that anti-bullying programs could be improved with increased adult supervision in certain areas (i.e. cafeteria, gym, etc.) where students are frequently bullied. This research surveyed elementary and secondary school students to identify such areas.

What did the researchers do?
In their 2010 study, Professor Vaillancourt and her colleagues looked to identify areas in school compounds where students report being frequently bullied. The researchers surveyed 11,152 Canadian students ranging from Grades 4 – 12 from 65 schools in a large public school district in Southern Ontario. The researchers asked the students to identify typical areas in a school where they felt “unsafe”—that is, in danger of being bullied. The respondents were also able to suggest areas that the researchers had not considered.

What you need to know
Elementary school students report being bullied in playgrounds during recess, and elementary and secondary students report feeling unsafe in cafeterias, washrooms and hallways.
What did the researchers find?
The researchers found that elementary school students reported being bullied on the playground and both elementary and secondary students identified cafeterias, washrooms and hallways as areas where they felt “unsafe”.

In terms of actual bullying, 12.3% of responding students were identified as victims of bullying, 5.3% were identified as bullying others, 4.0% were identified as both bullies and victims of bullying. 78.4% of students were identified as “non-involved”.

In a contrasting result, 15.2% of surveyed elementary school students reported being victims of bullying compared to 4.4% of surveyed secondary school students, indicating that bullying is more common in elementary school settings.

How can you use this research?
Increasing adult supervision is important in reducing bullying in schools, and identifying the areas in a school that need adult supervision is an important step in this process. The researchers in this study enabled students to not only give a clearer picture of where they feel most unsafe, but also presented them with a chance to suggest areas that researchers might have missed.

This study may be used to encourage school staff to communicate with students about the areas they feel are “unsafe” in their school and may be used as a starting point for discussions amongst staff about which areas may require greater adult supervision in their school. This research may also be used to as a starting point for discussions on how to increase adult supervision in areas of the school where students feel most vulnerable to bullying.

About the researchers
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References
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About this summary
Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative. This summary reflects findings from this study only and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject.

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This summary has been adapted from the Research Snapshot series developed by York University and Research Impact and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca