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Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005





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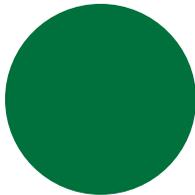
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our nation's schools should be a safe haven for teaching and learning and be free of crime and violence. Even though students are less likely to be victims of a violent crime at school than away from school (*Indicators 1 and 2*), any instance of crime or violence at school not only affects the individuals involved but also may disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself, and the surrounding community (Henry 2000).

For parents, school staff, and policymakers to address school crime effectively, they must possess an accurate understanding of the extent and nature of the problem. However, it is difficult to gauge the scope of crime and violence in schools without collecting data, given the large amount of attention devoted to isolated incidents of extreme school violence. Ensuring safer schools requires establishing good indicators of the current state of school crime and safety across the nation and periodically monitoring and updating these indicators. This is the aim of *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*.

Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005 is the eighth in a series of annual reports produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the U.S. Department of Justice that present the most recent data available on school crime and student safety. The indicators in this report are based on information drawn from a variety of independent data sources, including national surveys of students, teachers, and principals, and data collections from federal departments and agencies, including BJS, NCES, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All the comparisons described in this report are statistically significant at the .05 level. More information about methodology and the datasets analyzed in this report may be found in appendix A.

KEY FINDINGS

In the 2002–03 school year, an estimated 54.2 million students in prekindergarten through grade 12 were enrolled in about 125,000 U.S. elementary or secondary schools (U.S. Department of Education 2004b). Preliminary data on fatal victimizations show youth ages 5–19 were victims of 22 school-associated violent deaths from July 1, 2001, through June 30, 2002 (17 homicides and 5 suicides) (*Indicator 1*). In 2003, students ages 12–18 were victims of about 1.9 million nonfatal crimes at school, including about 1.2 million thefts and 740,000 violent crimes (simple assault and serious violent crime)—150,000 of which were serious violent crimes (rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) (*Indicator 2*).¹ These figures represent victimization rates of 45 thefts and 28 violent crimes, including 6 serious violent crimes, per 1,000 students at school in 2003.

¹The total number of students ages 12–18 enrolled during the fall 2003 school year was 26.4 million.

Students were more likely to be victims of serious violence or a homicide away from school.² In 2003, students ages 12–18 reported being victims of serious violence at a rate of 12 crimes per 1,000 students away from school and 6 crimes per 1,000 students at school. Similarly, in each school year from July 1, 1992, through June 30, 2002, youth ages 5–19 were over 70 times more likely to be murdered away from school than at school.

For several measures, data show trends in student victimization decreasing over the last decade. The nonfatal victimization rate for students ages 12–18 at school generally declined between 1992 and 2003; this was true for the total crime rate and for thefts, violent crimes, and serious violent crimes (*Indicator 2*). However, when looking at the most recent years, no differences were detected between 2002 and 2003 in the rates of total victimization, violent victimization, or theft at school. For fatal victimization, between July 1, 1992, and June 30, 2002, the number of homicides of school-age youth at school declined as well (*Indicator 1*). Specifically, between the 1998–99 and 1999–2000 school years, the number of homicides of school-age youth at school declined from 33 to 14 homicides. Since then, there have been between 12 and 17 homicides in each school year through 2001–02.

Violent Deaths

- From July 1, 2001, through June 30, 2002, there were 17 homicides and 5 suicides of school-age youth (ages 5–19) at school (*Indicator 1*).³ Combined, this figure translates into less than 1 homicide or suicide of a school-age youth at school per million students enrolled during the 2001–02 school year.

Nonfatal Student Victimization

- In 2003, students ages 12–18 were more likely to be victims of theft at school than away from school and were more likely to be victims of serious violence away from school than at school (*Indicator 2*). That year, 45 thefts per 1,000 students occurred at school and 28 thefts per 1,000 students occurred away from school, while students reported being victims of serious violence at a rate of 12 crimes per 1,000 students away from school and 6 crimes per 1,000 students at school.
- In 2003, 5 percent of students ages 12–18 reported being victimized at school during the previous 6 months: 4 percent reported theft, and 1 percent reported violent victimization (*Indicator 3*). Less than 1 percent of students reported serious violent victimization.
- In 2003, male students in grades 9–12 were more likely than female students to report being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past year (12 vs. 6 percent) (*Indicator 4*).

²Data in this report are not adjusted by the number of hours that youth spend on school property and the number of hours they spend elsewhere.

³Due to missing data for suicides for the 2002–03 school year, the findings for this indicator reflect data through the 2001–02 school year.

Nonfatal Teacher Victimization

- Annually, from 1999 through 2003, teachers were the victims of approximately 183,000 total nonfatal crimes at school, including 119,000 thefts and 65,000 violent crimes (*Indicator 5*). On average, these figures translate into an annual rate of 39 crimes per 1,000 teachers, including 25 thefts and 14 violent crimes (including 2 serious violent crimes) per 1,000 teachers.
- Annually, from 1999 through 2003, senior high school teachers were more likely than elementary school teachers to be victims of violent crimes and thefts (22 vs. 9 violent crimes and 36 vs. 20 thefts per 1,000 teachers) (*Indicator 5*).
- In 1999–2000, teachers in central city schools were more likely to have been threatened with injury or physically attacked during the previous 12 months than teachers in urban fringe or rural schools (*Indicator 6*). That is, 11 percent of teachers in central city schools had been threatened with injury by students, compared with 8 percent each in urban fringe and rural schools. Five percent of teachers in central city schools had been attacked by students, while 3 percent each of teachers in urban fringe and rural schools had experienced such attacks.

School Environment

- In 1999–2000, 71 percent of public schools experienced one or more violent incidents and 36 percent of public schools reported violent incidents to the police (*Indicator 7*). Twenty percent of public schools experienced one or more serious violent incidents, and 15 percent reported serious violent incidents to the police.
- In 1999–2000, 19 percent of public schools reported weekly student acts of disrespect for teachers, 13 percent reported student verbal abuse of teachers, 3 percent reported student racial tensions, and 3 percent reported widespread disorder in classrooms (*Indicator 8*). Nineteen percent of public schools reported any undesirable gang activities, and 7 percent reported any undesirable cult or extremist activities during the 1999–2000 school year.
- Middle schools were more likely than primary and secondary schools to report racial tensions, bullying, verbal abuse of teachers, and widespread disorder in classrooms in 1999–2000 (*Indicator 8*). For example, 43 percent of middle schools reported daily or weekly student bullying, compared with 26 percent of primary and 25 percent of secondary schools.
- In 2003, 21 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that street gangs were present at their school during the previous 6 months (*Indicator 9*). Students in urban schools were the most likely to report the presence of street gangs at their school (31 percent), followed by suburban students and then rural students, who were the least likely to report them (18 and 12 percent, respectively).

- In 2003, 29 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property in the 12 months before the survey (*Indicator 10*).
- In 2003, 12 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them (*Indicator 11*). Four percent of respondents reported that the hate-related words concerned their race, about 2 percent each reported that the words concerned their ethnicity or gender, and 1 percent each reported that the words were related to their religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
- In 2003, 36 percent of students ages 12–18 reported they had seen hate-related graffiti at their school (for example, hate-related words or symbols written in classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, or on the outside of the school building) (*Indicator 11*).
- In 2003, 7 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that they had been bullied (for example, picked on or made to do things they did not want to do) at school during the previous 6 months (*Indicator 12*). Public school students were more likely to report being bullied than private school students (7 vs. 5 percent).

Fights, Weapons, and Illegal Substances

- In 2003, 33 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported having been in a fight anywhere, and 13 percent said they had been in a fight on school property during the preceding 12 months (*Indicator 13*). Forty-one percent of males said they had been in a fight anywhere, compared with 25 percent of females, and 17 percent of males said they had been in a fight on school property, compared with 8 percent of females.
- In 2003, 17 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported they had carried a weapon anywhere, and about 6 percent reported they had carried a weapon on school property (*Indicator 14*). Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of students who reported carrying a weapon anywhere generally declined from 22 to 17 percent. Similarly, the percentage of students who carried a weapon at school also declined during this period—from 12 to 6 percent.
- In 2003, 45 percent of students in grades 9–12 consumed at least one drink of alcohol anywhere in the last 30 days, and 5 percent consumed at least one drink on school property in the last 30 days (*Indicator 15*). In 2003, 22 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported using marijuana anywhere in the last 30 days, and 6 percent of students reported using marijuana on school property in the last 30 days (*Indicator 16*).

Fear and Avoidance

- In 1999 and 2001, students ages 12–18 were more likely to report they were afraid of being attacked at school or on the way to and from school than away from school; however, in 2003, no such difference was detected (*Indicator 17*). In 2003, 6 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that they had been afraid of attack at school or on the

way to and from school, and 5 percent reported that they had been afraid of attack away from school.

- In 2003, students ages 12–18 in urban schools were more likely than students in suburban and rural schools to fear being attacked both at school or on the way to and from school and away from school. Ten percent of students in urban schools feared being attacked at school, compared with 5 percent each of their peers in suburban and rural schools (*Indicator 17*).
- In 2003, public school students ages 12–18 were more likely than private school students to fear an attack at school or on the way to and from school (6 vs. 3 percent), but no such difference was detected when they were asked whether they feared an attack away from school (5 percent each) (*Indicator 17*).
- The percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported that they either skipped school activities or avoided specific places in school because they were fearful decreased from 7 percent in 1999 to 5 percent in 2003 (*Indicator 18*).
- In 2003, students ages 12–18 in urban areas were the most likely to avoid specific places in school because they were fearful: 6 percent of urban students reported that they had done so, compared with 4 percent of suburban and 3 percent of rural students (*Indicator 18*).

Discipline, Safety, and Security Measures

- In 1999–2000, about 54 percent of public schools took at least one serious disciplinary action against a student, amounting to about 1,163,000 actions (*Indicator 19*). Of those serious disciplinary actions, 83 percent were suspensions for 5 days or more, 11 percent were removals with no services, and 7 percent were transfers to specialized schools.
- In 1999–2000, during school hours, 75 percent of schools controlled access to school buildings by locking or monitoring doors, and 34 percent of schools controlled access to school grounds with locked or monitored gates (*Indicator 20*).
- In 1999–2000, 14 percent of primary schools, 20 percent of middle schools, and 39 percent of secondary schools used one or more security cameras to monitor the school (*Indicator 20*).
- The percentage of students ages 12–18 who observed the presence of some school security measures increased between 1999 and 2003 (*Indicator 21*). The percentage of students who reported using visitor sign-in increased from 87 to 92 percent during this period, and the percentage who reported the presence of locked entrance or exit doors during the school day increased from 38 to 53 percent. Over the same period, there was also an increase in both the percentage observing security guards and/or police officers and the percentage observing other school staff or adult supervision in the hallway (from 54 to 70 percent and from 85 to 91 percent, respectively).