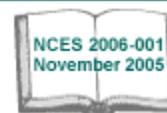




## Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005



[Executive Summary](#)

[Foreword](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Violent Deaths](#)

[Nonfatal Student](#)

[Victimization](#)

[Nonfatal Teacher](#)

[Victimization](#)

[School Environment](#)

[Fights, Weapons, and](#)

[Illegal Substances](#)

[Fear and Avoidance](#)

[Discipline, Safety, and](#)

[Security Measures](#)

[List of Tables](#)

[List of Figures](#)

[References](#)

[Appendix A: Technical](#)

[Notes](#)

[Appendix B: Glossary of](#)

[Terms](#)

 [PDF & Related Info](#)

 [Thomas D. Snyder](#)

### Introduction

Our nation's schools should be a safe haven for teaching and learning 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 both students and teachers, victimization at school can have lasting effects. In addition to experiencing loneliness, depression, and adjustment difficulties ([Crick and Bigbee 1998](#); [Crick and Grotpeter 1996](#); [Nansel et al. 2001](#); [Prinstein, Boergers, and Vernberg 2001](#); [Storch et al. 2003](#)), victimized children are more prone to truancy ([Ringwalt et al. 2003](#)), poor academic performance ([Wei and Williams 2004](#)), and dropping out of school ([Beauvais et al. 1996](#)). For teachers, incidents of victimization may lead to professional disenchantment and even prompt them to leave the profession altogether ([Karcher 2002](#)).

For parents, school staff, and policymakers to effectively address school crime, they need 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 given the large amount of attention devoted to isolated incidents of extreme school violence. Measuring progress toward 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*.

### Purpose and Organization of This Report

*Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005* is the eighth in a series of reports produced by NCES and BJS since 1998 that present the most recent data available on school crime and student safety. The report is not intended to be an exhaustive compilation of school crime and safety information, nor does it attempt to explore reasons for crime and violence in schools. Rather, the report is designed to provide a "first look" at information from an array of data sources and to make data on national school crime and safety accessible to policymakers, educators, parents, and the general public.

*Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005* has been reorganized from the 2004 report into sections that delineate specific concerns to readers, starting with a description of the most serious violent crimes. The sections cover Violent Deaths at School; Nonfatal Student Victimization; Nonfatal Teacher Victimization; School Environment; Fights, Weapons, and Illegal Substances; Fear and Avoidance; and Safety, Security, and Discipline Measures. Each section contains a set of indicators that, taken together, aim to describe a distinct aspect of school crime and safety. Where available, data on crimes that occur outside of school grounds are offered as a point of comparison.<sup>1</sup> Supplemental tables for each indicator provide more detailed breakdowns and standard errors for estimates. A glossary of terms and bibliography of works cited appear at the end of the report.

This report provides updated and revised data on fatal student victimization ([Indicator 1](#)), nonfatal student victimization ([Indicator 2](#)), nonfatal victimization of teachers ([Indicator 5](#)), public school reports of selected crimes ([Indicator 7](#)), and

student avoidance behaviors ([Indicator 18](#)).<sup>2</sup> New to this year's report are two indicators that look at practices that schools use to promote school safety and security (Indicators [20](#) and [21](#)). This year's report also repeats information and provides revised data from the 2004 edition on the prevalence of victimization at school ([Indicator 3](#)), threats to and injuries of students and teachers (Indicators [4](#) and [6](#)), discipline problems reported by public schools ([Indicator 8](#)), student reports of gangs ([Indicator 9](#)), drugs ([Indicator 10](#)), hate-related words and graffiti ([Indicator 11](#)), bullying ([Indicator 12](#)), student reports of fights ([Indicator 13](#)), weapon carrying ([Indicator 14](#)), illegal substances (Indicators [15](#) and [16](#)), student reports of being afraid at school ([Indicator 17](#)), and serious disciplinary actions taken by public schools ([Indicator 19](#)).

Also new to this year's report are references to recent publications relevant to each indicator that the reader may want to consult for additional information or analyses. These references can be found in the "For More Information" sidebars at the bottom of each indicator. In response to requests for state-level information, tables showing available state-level estimates have been added for the indicators based on the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) data. (See [figure A](#) for a list of indicators based on the YRBSS.)

## Data

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 universe data collections from federal departments and agencies, including BJS, NCES, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each data source has an independent sample design, data collection method, and questionnaire design or is the result of a universe data collection.

The combination of multiple, independent sources of data provides a wide perspective on school crime and safety that could not be achieved through any single source of information. However, readers should be cautious when comparing data from different sources. While every effort has been made to keep key definitions consistent across indicators, differences in sampling procedures, populations, time periods, and question phrasing can all affect the comparability of results. For example, both Indicators [20](#) and [21](#) report data on select security and safety measures used in schools. [Indicator 20](#) uses data collected from a stratified random sample of principals about safety and security practices used in their schools during the 1999-2000 school year. [Indicator 21](#), however, uses data collected from 12- through 18-year-olds collected in a rotated panel design of households. These students were asked whether they observed select safety and security measures in their school in 2003, but they may not have known, in fact, if the security measure was present. In addition, different types of analysis approaches will show different perspectives on school crime. For example, both Indicators [2](#) and [3](#) report data on theft and violent crime at school based on the National Crime Victimization Survey and the School Crime Supplement to that survey, respectively. While [Indicator 2](#) examines the number of incidents of crime, [Indicator 3](#) examines the percentage or prevalence of students who reported victimization. Figure A provides a summary of some of the variations in the design and coverage of sample surveys used in this report.

Figure A. Nationally representative sample surveys used in this report

Survey	Sample	Year of survey	Reference time period	Indicators
National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)	Individuals age 12 or older living in households and group quarters	Annually 1992–2003	Incidents during the previous 6 months	2, 5
School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey	Students ages 12–18 enrolled in public and private schools during the 6 months prior to the interview	1995, 1999, 2001, and 2003	Incidents during the previous 6 months	3, 9, 11, 12, 17, and 18
			Not specified	21
School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) <sup>1</sup>	Regular public primary, middle, and secondary schools	1999–2000	1999–2000 school year	7, 8, 19, and 20
Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)	Public and private school K–12 teachers	1993–94 and 1999–2000	Incidents during the previous 12 months	6
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)	Students enrolled in grades 9–12 in public and private schools at the time of the survey	1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2003	Incidents during the previous 12 months	4, 10, and 13
			Incidents during the previous 30 days	14, 15, and 16

<sup>1</sup>Either school principals or the person most knowledgeable about discipline issues at school completed the SSOCS questionnaire.

Several indicators in this report are based on self-reported survey data. Readers should note that limitations inherent to self-reported data may affect estimates (Cantor and Lynch 2000). First, unless an interview is "bounded" or a reference period is established, estimates may include events that exceed the scope of the specified reference period. This may artificially increase reports because respondents may recall events outside of the given reference period. Second, many of the surveys rely on the respondent to "self-determine" a condition. This allows the respondent to define a situation based upon his or her own interpretation of whether the incident was a crime or not. On the other hand, the same situation may not necessarily be interpreted in the same way by a bystander or the offender. Third, victim surveys emphasize crime events as incidents that take place at one point in time. However, victims can often experience a state of victimization in which they are threatened or victimized regularly or repeatedly. Finally, respondents may recall an event inaccurately. For instance, people may forget the event entirely or recall the specifics of the episode incorrectly. These and other reasons may affect the precision of the estimates based on these surveys.

Data trends are discussed in this report when possible. Where trends are not discussed, either the data are not available in earlier surveys or the wording of the survey question changed from year to year, eliminating the ability to discuss any trend. Where data from samples are reported, as is the case with most of the indicators in this report, the standard error is calculated for each estimate provided in order to determine the "margin of error" for these estimates. The standard errors of the estimates for different subpopulations in an indicator can vary considerably and should be taken into account when making comparisons. Some estimates and standard errors have been revised from those provided in earlier editions of *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* and other previously published reports.

The comparisons in the text have been tested for statistical significance to ensure that the differences are larger than might be expected due to sampling variation. Unless otherwise noted, all statements cited in the report are statistically significant at the .05 level. Several test procedures were used, depending upon the type of data being analyzed and the nature of the statement being tested. The primary test procedure used in this report was the Student's t statistic, which tests the difference between two sample estimates. Linear trend tests were used when differences among percentages were examined relative to ordered categories of a variable, rather than the differences between two discrete categories. This test allows one to examine whether, for example, the percentage of students who reported using drugs increased (or decreased) over time or whether the percentage of students

who reported being physically attacked in school increased (or decreased) with age. Finally, in this report, when differences among percentages were examined relative to a variable with ordered categories (such as grade), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for a linear relationship between the two variables.

[Appendix A](#) of this report contains descriptions of all the datasets used in this report as well as a discussion of how standard errors were calculated for each estimate.

Data are currently being collected for the 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to that survey, and the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). The NCVS and SCS will provide updated data on theft and violent crimes against students, bullying, teacher victimization, student fear at school, student avoidance behaviors, hate-related words and graffiti, and the presence of gangs. The YRBSS will provide updated data on students who were threatened or injured with a weapon, engaged in a physical fight, carried weapons, used alcohol or marijuana, and reported drug availability on school property. These findings will be reported in *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2006*.

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<sup>1</sup> Data 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.

<sup>2</sup> Indicators noted as "updated" in their sidebars have been updated to include the most recently available data. Indicators noted as "revised" in their sidebars have been revised to include revisions to data since the last publication or corrections to errors published in prior reports.