Unsafe At School

About one in twenty-five adolescents feared attack at school or on the way to and from school in 2011, compared with about one in nine in 1995.

Importance

When students have fears about personal safety at school, or on the way to and from school, they may miss days of class. [1] Perpetrators and victims of school violence are more likely to experience health problems, social and emotional difficulties, and/or poorer academic performance.[2],[3] Moderate to high levels of school violence diminish the likelihood that students will graduate from high school or attend a four-year college.[4]

Additionally, fear at school can contribute to an unhealthy school climate,[5] and can lead to negative student behaviors. For example, one study found that students who witnessed violence at school were more likely to perpetrate violent behaviors.[6] Students who are fearful may also feel they need to protect themselves through actions that can actually increase the likelihood of violence, such as carrying weapons at school.[7]

Trends
The percentage of youth ages 12 to 18 who feared attack at school, or on the way to and from school, fell by half between 1995 and 2001, from 12 percent in 1995 to six percent in 2001. The proportion remained steady through 2005, before decreasing to four percent in 2011. (Figure 1)

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin[8]

In 2011, there were no significant differences by race or Hispanic origin in the proportion fearing attack at school. However, as recently as 2007, black and Hispanic teenagers were more likely to have such fears. In 1995, 21 percent of Hispanic and 20 percent of black teenagers feared
attack, compared with eight percent of white teenagers. In 2001, the proportions were eleven, nine, and five percent respectively. (Figure 2)

Differences by Age

In 2011, students in the eleventh and twelfth grades were less likely than their younger peers to fear for their safety at school or on the way to and from school. For instance, two percent, each, of eleventh- and twelfth-graders feared for their safety, compared with six percent of sixth-graders. (Figure 3)

Differences by School Type and Location

Compared with students who attend private schools, a higher proportion of students in public schools fear attacks at school or while traveling to and from school. In 2011, four percent of public school students reported such fears, compared with 1.5 percent of private school students. A higher proportion of students attending school in urban areas reported fearing attacks at school or while traveling to and from school. In 2011, five percent of students in urban areas reported fearing attack, compared with three percent, each, of students in suburban and rural areas. (Appendix 1)
State and Local Estimates

Estimates for a related indicator (whether a student stayed home from school for at least one day in the last 30 days because he or she felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school) are available for selected states and metropolitan areas from the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

International Estimates

None available.

National Goals

The Healthy People 2020 initiative has set a goal for increasing the proportion of adolescents whose parents consider them to be safe at school from 86.4 percent in 2007 to 95 percent in 2020. Additionally, there is a goal to decrease the proportion of public schools with a serious violent incident from 17.2 percent in 2007-08 to 15.5 percent in 2020, and to reduce weapon carrying by students on school property.

Additional information is available here (goal AH-8, AH-10) and here. (goal IVP 36)

Related Indicators

- Neighborhood Safety
- Victims of Hate Speech
- High-School Students Carrying Weapons
- Bullying
- Children's Exposure to Violence
- Physical Fighting by Youth

Definition

Students were asked if during the last six months they had feared being attacked at school or on the way to and from school.

Data Source

Raw Data Source

U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/

Appendix A1 - Percentage of Students Ages 12 to 18 Who Feared Attack or Harm At School or on the Way To and From School: Selected Years, 1995-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>White, non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Black, non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other, non-Hispanic^2</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urbanicity</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reporting standards not met. Standard errors are at least 30 percent of the estimates.¹ In 1995 and 1999 students reported fear of "attack or harm" at school or on the way to or from school in the past 6 months. In 2001 onward students reported fear of "attack or threat of attack" at school or on the way to or from school in the past 6 months.

²From 2003 onward, data for 'Other' also include those students who identified as more than one race.


### Endnotes


[8] Hispanics may be any race. However estimates for whites and blacks in this report do not include Hispanics.

[9] Reporting standards not met due to small sample size.

**Suggested Citation:**


*Last updated: August 2013*