

Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021

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Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021

June 2022

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Foreword

Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021 provides the most recent national indicators on school crime and safety. The information presented in this report serves as a reference for policymakers and practitioners so that they can develop effective programs and policies aimed at violence and school crime prevention. Accurate information about the nature, extent, and scope of the problem being addressed is essential for developing effective programs and policies.

This is the 24th edition of *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, a joint effort of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This report provides summary statistics to inform the nation about current aspects of crime and safety in schools.

Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety includes the most recent available data, compiled from a number of statistical data sources supported by the federal government. Such sources include results from the School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the National Vital Statistics System,

sponsored by CDC; the K-12 School Shooting Database, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense; the National Crime Victimization Survey and School Crime Supplement to that survey, sponsored by BJS and NCES, respectively; the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, sponsored by CDC; the School Survey on Crime and Safety, Fast Response Survey System, *EDFacts*, and National Teacher and Principal Survey, all sponsored by NCES; the Teaching and Learning International Survey, sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; and the Campus Safety and Security Survey, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

This report is available as a PDF file at <https://nces.ed.gov> or <https://bjs.ojp.gov>. BJS and NCES continue to work together in order to provide timely and complete data on the issues of school-related violence and safety.

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generously provided data and performed a review of data documentation. We also value the review of this report and the continued support provided by the Office of Safe and Healthy Students.

The authors would like to thank the many individuals who completed the survey instruments that make this report possible. This report would not have been possible without their cooperation.

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Introduction

It is important to establish reliable indicators of the current state of school crime and safety across the nation—and to regularly update and monitor these indicators as new data become available. These indicators can help inform policymakers and practitioners of the nature, extent, and scope of the problem being addressed as they develop programs aimed at violence and school crime prevention. This is the purpose of Indicators of School Crime and Safety, a joint effort by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

The 2021 edition of the *Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety* is the 24th in a series of annual publications. Beginning with the 2020 edition, this report has been redesigned with the intention of increasing its usability for a wider audience. This report does so by highlighting selected findings from 23 indicators on various school crime and safety topics. By synthesizing findings in this way, the report allows users to more efficiently gauge the breadth of the content and make connections across indicators. As in previous editions, the full set of 23 indicators—with each indicator presented as an independent, more detailed analysis of a crime and safety topic—can be [accessed in the online Indicator System](#). Each indicator can be found on the website, and readers can download PDFs of the individual indicators. Indicators online are hyperlinked to tables in the *Digest of Education Statistics*, where readers can obtain the underlying data. The PDF version of the report, however, has been transformed into the *Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, which highlights and synthesizes key findings from the full set of 23 indicators online.

This report covers a variety of topics on school crime and safety. It first examines different types of student victimization, including violent deaths and school shootings, nonfatal criminal victimization, and bullying victimization. Then, the report presents data on measures of school conditions—such as discipline problems, gangs, hate-related speech, possession of weapons, and use and availability of illegal drugs—as well as data that reflect student perceptions about their personal safety at school. This report wraps up the discussion on crime and safety issues at the elementary and secondary level by examining the percentages of teachers who reported having been threatened or attacked by their students.

To minimize these issues that students and teachers could experience, schools across the United States have implemented preventive and responsive measures. This report covers topics such as security practices,

disciplinary actions, and whether schools have plans for scenarios such as active shooters, natural disasters, or a pandemic disease.

In addition to practices and measures addressing specific crime and safety concerns, many schools provide mental health services to promote student well-being and improve school climate. This report examines the prevalence of mental health services in public schools, as well as the limitations to providing mental health services that schools may encounter.

Finally, at the postsecondary level, this report discusses the number of criminal incidents against persons and property that were reported to police and security agencies, as well as hate crime incidents such as those motivated by biases associated with race, sexual orientation, and religion.

A variety of data sources are used to present information on these topics, including national and international surveys of students, teachers, principals, and postsecondary institutions. Users should be cautious when comparing data from different sources. Differences in aspects such as procedures, timing, question phrasing, and interviewer training can affect the comparability of results across data sources.

In this report, where available, data on victimization that occurred away from school are offered as a point of comparison for data on victimization that occurred at school. Indicators of crime and safety are compared across different population subgroups and over time. Across indicators, the year of the most recent data collection varied by survey, ranging from 2016 to 2021. In 2020—and to a lesser extent in 2021¹—schools across the country suspended or modified in-person classes in accordance with federal, state, and local guidance related to the risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Students might have spent less time at school than in previous years due to these modified procedures. Thus, readers are encouraged to interpret the 2020 and 2021 data in the context of these pandemic-related modifications.

Findings described with comparative language (e.g., higher, lower, increase, and decrease) are statistically significant at the .05 level, meaning the probability that the difference occurred by chance is less than 5 percent. Additional information about methodology and the datasets analyzed in this report may be found online in the [Reader's Guide](#) and [Guide to Sources](#).

¹ For data on student enrollment by type of instruction (remote, hybrid, and in-person) in spring 2021, see <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/mss-dashboard/>.

Highlights

Overall, throughout the last decade, several crime and safety issues have become less prevalent at elementary and secondary schools. For instance, between 2009 and 2020, the rate of nonfatal criminal victimization (including theft and violent victimization) decreased for students ages 12-18, from 51 to 11 victimizations per 1,000 students. Although the victimization rate at school was already decreasing prior to the coronavirus pandemic,² changes to school procedures related to the pandemic coincided with a decrease of more than 60 percent in the victimization rate at school from 2019 to 2020. In addition to the decrease in criminal victimization, student behaviors at school that targeted fellow students were also generally less prevalent compared with a decade ago. Lower percentages of public schools in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 reported that each of the following discipline problems occurred at least once a week: student bullying (15 vs. 23 percent), student sexual harassment of other students (2 vs. 3 percent), and student harassment of other students based on sexual orientation or gender identity (2 vs. 3 percent).

In contrast, there were a total of 93 school shootings with casualties at public and private elementary and secondary schools in 2020-21—the highest number since 2000-01. It is important to note, however, that during the coronavirus pandemic, “school shootings” include those that happened on school property during remote instruction. In addition, cyberbullying and student discipline problems related to teachers and classrooms have become more common over time. Specifically, a higher percentage of public schools reported cyberbullying in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 (16 vs. 8 percent). In addition, higher percentages of public schools in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 reported student verbal abuse of teachers (10 vs. 5 percent), student acts of disrespect for teachers other than verbal abuse (15 vs. 9 percent), and widespread disorder in the classroom (4 vs. 3 percent).

To maintain and promote discipline, order, and safety, schools across the United States have implemented preventive and responsive measures. For example, in 2019-20, about 52 percent of public schools reported having a written plan for procedures to be performed in the event of a pandemic disease. This percentage was higher than the percentage reported in 2017-18 (46 percent). Additionally, between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the percentage of public schools reporting the use of the following safety and security measures

increased: controlling access to school buildings (from 92 to 97 percent), the use of security cameras (from 61 to 91 percent), and requiring faculty and staff to wear badges or picture IDs (from 63 to 77 percent). During the same period, the percentage of public schools that reported having one or more security staff present at school at least once a week also increased (from 43 to 65 percent). Meanwhile, the overall percentage of schools taking at least one serious disciplinary action for at least one reported offense was lower during the 2019-20 school year than during the 2009-10 school year (35 vs. 39 percent).³

In 2019-20, about 55 percent of public schools provided diagnostic mental health assessment services to evaluate students for mental health disorders, and 42 percent offered mental health treatment services. Both types of services were more common in 2019-20 than in 2017-18. In 2019-20, the majority of schools (54 percent) reported that their efforts to provide mental health services to students were limited in a major way by inadequate funding.⁴ Forty percent reported inadequate access to licensed mental health professionals as a major limitation.

Regarding safety issues on campuses of postsecondary institutions, between 2009 and 2019, the rate of crime decreased from 23.0 to 18.7 incidents per 10,000 full-time-equivalent students. Despite the general downward trend over this period, the rate of reported forcible sex offenses on campus increased from 1.7 incidents per 10,000 students in 2009 to 8.0 incidents per 10,000 students in 2019.⁵ Forcible sex offenses constituted 43 percent of all criminal incidents reported on campus in 2019.

In 2019, a total of 757 hate crimes were reported on the campuses of postsecondary institutions. More than half of hate crimes at postsecondary institutions were motivated by race or ethnicity.

³ Serious disciplinary actions include out-of-school suspensions lasting 5 or more days, removals with no services for the remainder of the school year, and transfers to alternative schools.

⁴ The survey collected data on limitations in public schools' efforts to provide mental health services regardless of whether the school actually provided mental health services.

⁵ In years prior to 2014, schools only reported a total number of forcible sex offenses, with no breakouts for specific types of offenses. Beginning in 2014, schools were asked to report the numbers of two different types of forcible sex offenses—rape and fondling—and these were added together to reach the total number of reported forcible sex offenses. Although changes in the reporting guidelines for forcible sex offenses in 2014 likely contributed to the largest single-year percentage increase in that year (36 percent, from 5,000 to 6,800), the number of reported forcible sex offenses on campus continued to increase steadily between 2014 and 2018, from 6,800 to 12,400 (an 83 percent increase, or an average increase of about 16 percent per year). In 2019, the number of reported forcible sex offenses was 5 percent lower than in 2018.

² Victimization rate at school decreased from 51 to 30 victimizations per 1,000 students between 2009 and 2019.

Violent Deaths and School Shootings

Violent deaths and shootings at schools are rare but tragic events with far-reaching effects on the school population and surrounding community. Based on the most recent data released by the School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS), there were a total of 39 school-associated violent deaths⁶ in the United States in the 2018-19 school year.⁷ This included 29 homicides and 10 suicides.⁸ Of these 39 school-associated violent deaths, 10 homicides and 3 suicides were of school-age youth (ages 5-18). (*Violent Deaths at School and Away From School and School Shootings*)

In the K-12 School Shooting Database (K-12 SSDB), school shootings are defined as incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired on school property or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims, time of day, day of the week, or reason. During the coronavirus pandemic, this definition includes

shootings that happen on school property during remote instruction. Between 2000-01 and 2020-21, the number of school shootings with casualties per year at public and private elementary and secondary schools ranged from 11 to 93 (figure 1). In 2020-21, there were a total of 93 school shootings with casualties—the highest number since 2000-01. This included 43 school shootings with deaths and 50 school shootings with injuries only. In addition, there were 53 reported school shootings with no casualties. Fifty-nine elementary schools and 57 high schools⁹ had shootings (including those with and without casualties) in 2020-21.¹⁰ An additional 21 middle or junior high schools and 8 schools of other types also had school shootings. The year 2020-21 was the first since data collection began in which fewer than half of schools that had shootings were high schools. (*Violent Deaths at School and Away From School and School Shootings*)

⁶ The SAVD-SS defines a school-associated violent death as “a homicide, suicide, or legal intervention death (involving a law enforcement officer), in which the fatal injury occurred on the campus of a functioning elementary or secondary school in the United States.” School-associated violent deaths also include those that occurred while the victim was on the way to or from regular sessions at school or while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Victims of school-associated violent deaths may include not only students and staff members but also others at school, such as students’ parents and community members.

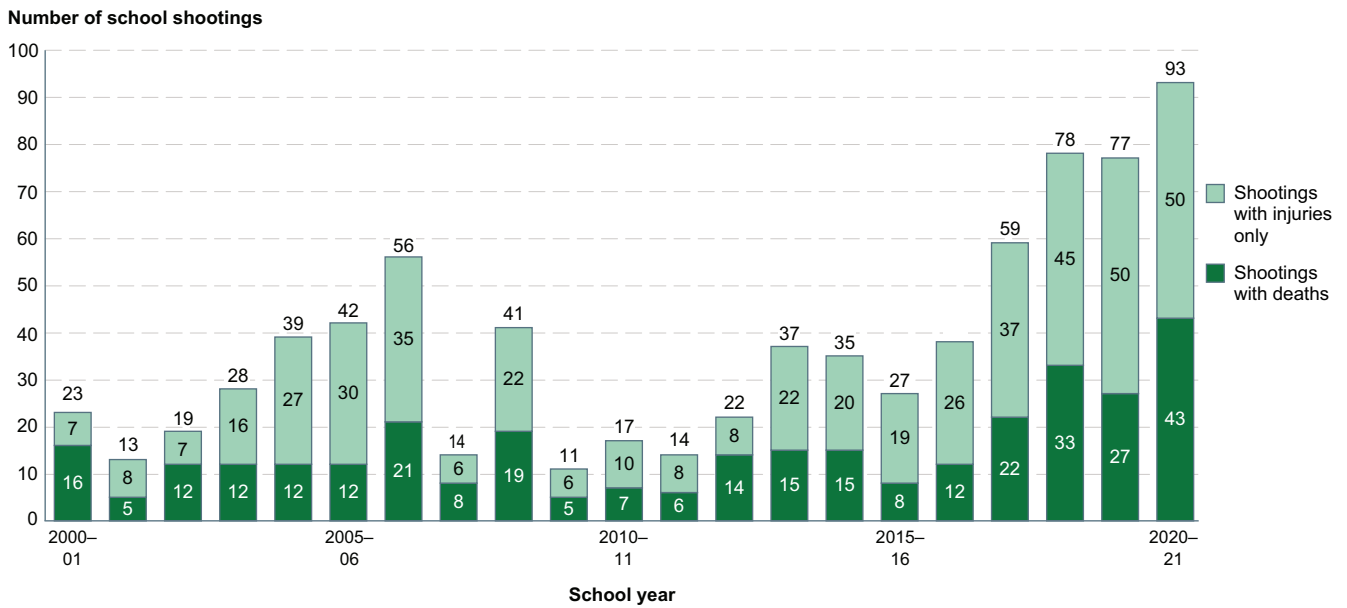
⁷ Defined as the period from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019.

⁸ Data are subject to change until law enforcement reports have been obtained and interviews with school and law enforcement officials have been completed. The details learned during the interviews can occasionally change the classification of a case.

⁹ Including other schools ending in grade 12.

¹⁰ Schools that had multiple shootings in a single year are counted only once in that year’s total.

Figure 1. Number of school shootings with casualties at public and private elementary and secondary schools: 2000–01 through 2020–21



NOTE: “School shootings” include all incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims (including zero), time, day of the week, or reason (e.g., planned attack, accidental, domestic violence, gang-related). All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30. Data in this figure were generated using a database that aims to compile information on school shootings from publicly available sources into a single comprehensive resource. For information on database methodology, see *K–12 School Shooting Database: Research Methodology* (<https://www.chds.us/ssdb/resources/uploads/2020/09/CHDS-K12-SSDB-Research-Methods-Sept-2020.pdf>). Due to school closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, caution should be used when comparing 2019–20 and 2020–21 data with data from earlier years. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, K–12 School Shooting Database. Retrieved September 16, 2021, from <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/>. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.12.

Criminal Victimization Experienced by Students

Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) provide insights on nonfatal criminal victimization experienced by students ages 12-18, according to students' own reports.¹¹ Nonfatal criminal victimization includes theft¹² and violent victimization, the latter of which includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. In 2020, students ages 12-18 experienced 285,400 victimizations at school¹³ and 380,900 victimizations away from school. This translates to a rate of 11 victimizations per 1,000 students at school¹⁴ and a rate of 15 victimizations per 1,000 students away from school (figure 2). (*Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School*)

Between 2009 and 2020, the total victimization rate decreased for students ages 12-18, both at school and away from school (figure 2). Specifically, the total victimization rate at school first decreased from 51 to 30 victimizations per 1,000 students between 2009 and 2019. From 2019 to 2020, the total victimization rate at school continued to decline to 11 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2020—an annual decrease of more than 60 percent.¹⁵ The total victimization rate away from school decreased from 33 to 20 victimizations per 1,000 students between 2009 and 2019. The total victimization rate away from school in 2020 (15 victimizations per 1,000 students) was not statistically different from the rate in 2019. (*Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School*)

¹¹ “Students” refers to those ages 12-18 whose educational attainment did not exceed grade 12 at the time of the survey. An uncertain percentage of these persons may not have attended school during the survey reference period. These data do not take into account the number of hours that students spend at school or away from school.

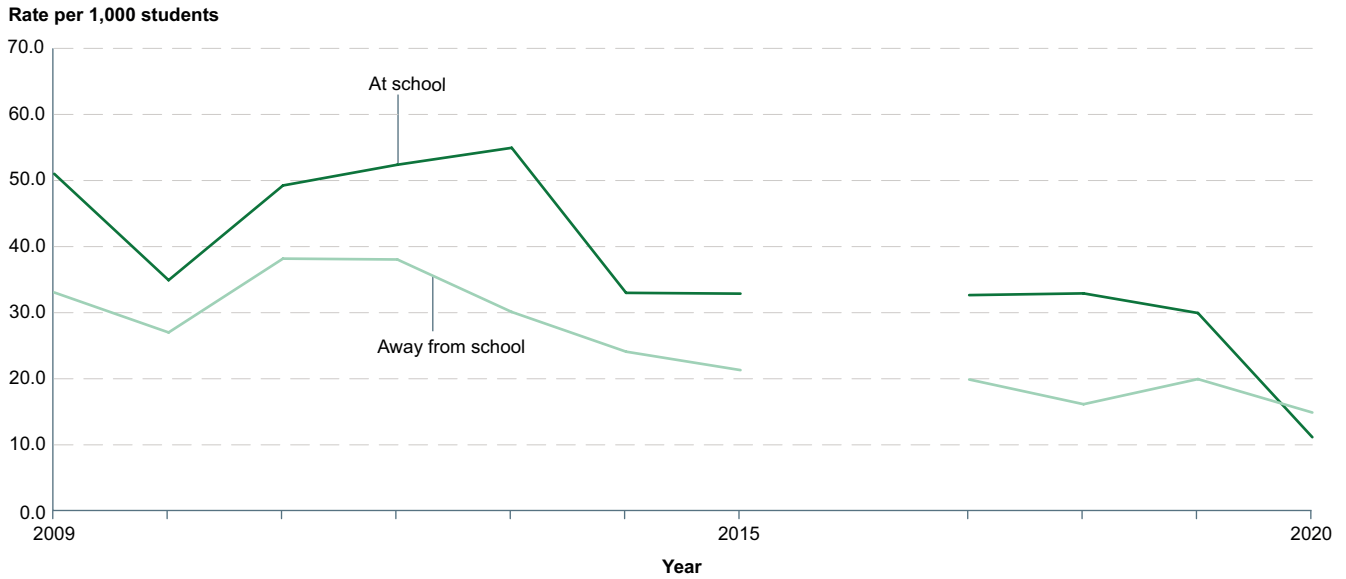
¹² “Theft” includes attempted and completed purse-snatching, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, with the exception of motor vehicle thefts. Theft does not include robbery, which involves the threat or use of force and is classified as a violent crime.

¹³ “At school” is defined to include in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school.

¹⁴ Data on the *percentage of students* ages 12-18 who reported being victimized at school during the previous 6 months are available from the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the NCVS. The latest year for which SCS data are available is 2019. See *Prevalence of Victimization at School* for changes over time in the percentage of students reporting victimization at school, as well as how the percentage varied by selected student and school characteristics.

¹⁵ In 2020, schools across the country suspended or modified in-person classes in accordance with federal, state, and local guidance related to the risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Students may have spent less time at school than in previous years due to these modified procedures.

Figure 2. Rate of nonfatal victimization against students ages 12–18 per 1,000 students, by location: 2009 through 2020



NOTE: Every 10 years, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) sample is redesigned to reflect changes in the population. Due to a sample increase and redesign in 2016, victimization estimates among students ages 12–18 in 2016 were not comparable to estimates for other years. Nonfatal victimization includes theft, rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, and on the way to or from school. The population size for students ages 12–18 was 25,587,500 in 2020. Estimates may vary from previously published reports.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2009 through 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.20.

Student Reports of Bullying Victimization

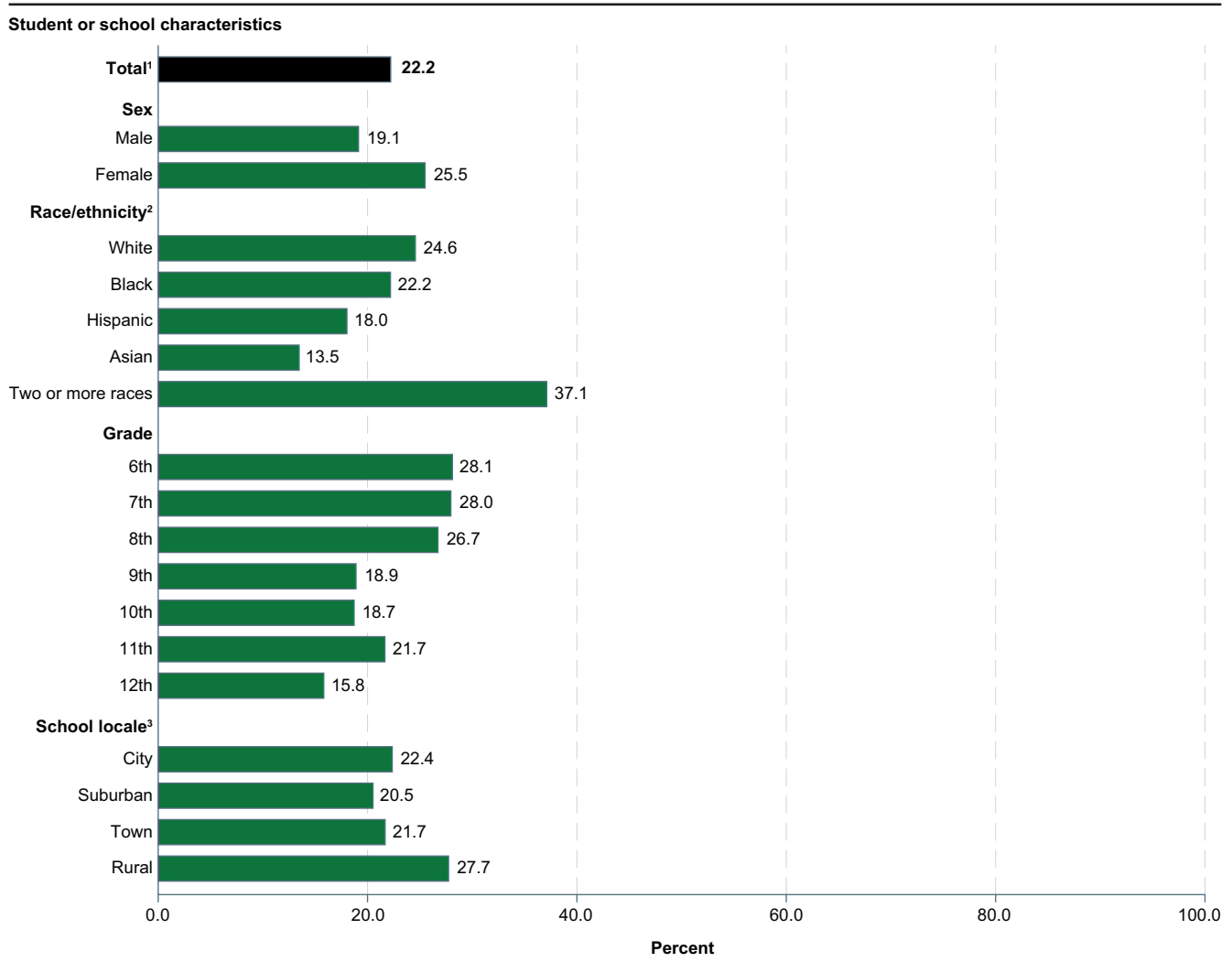
Another type of student victimization that is important to understand is bullying. Previous research has found that students who are bullied are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, have more health complaints, and skip or drop out of school (Swearer and Hymel 2015; Hornor 2018). The involvement of young bullying victims in recent suicides and school shootings has also heightened concerns regarding the public health implications of bullying (Hornor 2018).

According to data from the School Crime Supplement (SCS), during the school year in 2019, about 22 percent of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied¹⁶ at school. This was lower than the percentage who reported being bullied in 2009 (28 percent). Students' reports of being bullied varied based on student and school characteristics in 2019 (figure 3). For instance, a higher percentage of

female students than of male students reported being bullied at school during the school year (25 vs. 19 percent). The percentage of students who reported being bullied at school during the school year was higher for students of Two or more races (37 percent) than for White students (25 percent) and Black students (22 percent); all these percentages were in turn higher than the percentage of Asian students (13 percent). Higher percentages of 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-graders reported being bullied at school during the school year in 2019 (ranging from 27 to 28 percent), compared with 9th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders (ranging from 16 to 19 percent). A higher percentage of students enrolled in schools in rural areas (28 percent) than in schools in other locales (ranging from 21 to 22 percent) reported being bullied at school during the school year. (*Bullying at School and Electronic Bullying*)

¹⁶ “Bullying” includes students who reported that another student had made fun of them, called them names, or insulted them; spread rumors about them; threatened them with harm; tried to make them do something they did not want to do; excluded them from activities on purpose; destroyed their property on purpose; or pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on them. In the total for students bullied at school, students who reported more than one type of bullying were counted only once.

Figure 3. Percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, by selected student and school characteristics: 2019



¹ Total includes race categories not separately shown.

² Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Data for Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students did not meet reporting standards in 2019; therefore, data for these two groups are not shown.

³ Excludes students with missing information about the school characteristic.

NOTE: “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.40.

According to data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), about 16 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported being electronically¹⁷ bullied during the previous 12 months in 2019. The percentage of students who reported being electronically bullied was

higher for gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (27 percent) than for students who were not sure about their sexual identity (19 percent), and both percentages were higher than the percentage for heterosexual students (14 percent).¹⁸ (*Bullying at School and Electronic Bullying*)

¹⁷ Being electronically bullied includes “being bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting” for 2011 through 2015, and “being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media” for 2017 and 2019.

¹⁸ Since 2015, the YRBSS has included a question on students’ sexual identity by asking students in grades 9–12 which of the following best described them—“heterosexual (straight),” “gay or lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “not sure.” In this report, students who identified as “gay or lesbian” or “bisexual” are discussed together as the “gay, lesbian, or bisexual” group. Students were not asked whether they identified as transgender on the YRBSS.

Incidents and Discipline Problems Reported by Public Schools

Incidents and discipline problems at school are important measures of the school environment. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) asked public school principals to report the numbers of various types of criminal incidents that occurred at their school¹⁹ and to indicate how often certain disciplinary problems happened in their school.²⁰ Such school-reported data can complement those data covering similar issues based on students' experience and observation, such as those collected through SCS and YRBSS. These data generally reflect lower percentages of public schools reporting discipline problems that target fellow students *at school* in 2019-20 than in 2009-10, as well as lower percentages of schools reporting more serious criminal incidents in 2019-20 than in 2009-10.

During the 2019-20 school year,²¹ some 77 percent of public schools recorded that one or more incidents of crime²² had taken place, amounting to 1.4 million incidents, or a rate of 29 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled (figure 4). During the same school year, 47 percent of schools reported one or more incidents of crime to sworn law enforcement, amounting to 482,400 incidents, or a rate of 10 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled. The percentage of public schools that recorded one or more incidents of crime was lower in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 (77 vs. 85 percent); the same pattern can be observed for the percentage of public schools that reported one or more criminal incidents to sworn law enforcement (47 vs. 60 percent). (*Criminal Incidents Recorded by Public Schools and Those Reported to Sworn Law Enforcement*)

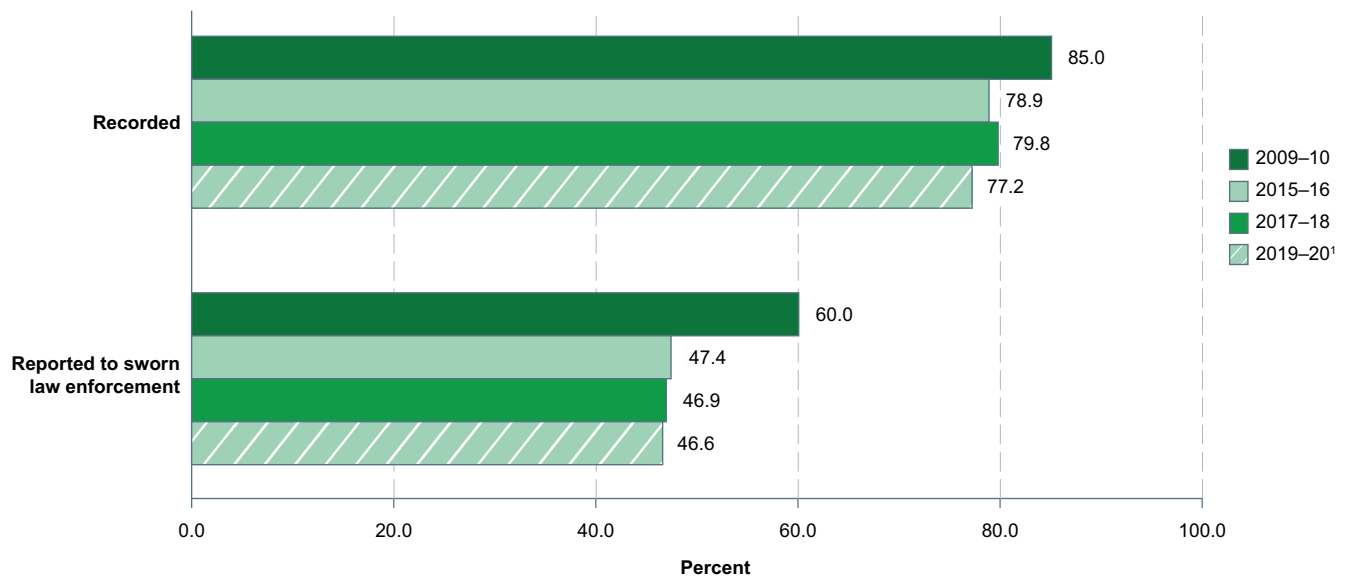
¹⁹ In SSOCS, “at school” was defined for respondents as including activities that happen in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. In the survey questions about criminal incidents, respondents were instructed to include incidents that occurred before, during, or after normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session.

²⁰ Respondents were instructed to include discipline problems only for those times that were during normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session.

²¹ The coronavirus pandemic affected the 2019-20 data collection activities. The change to virtual schooling and the adjusted school year may have impacted the data collected by SSOCS. Readers should use caution when comparing 2019-20 estimates with those from earlier years. For more information, see *Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools in 2019-20: Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety* (NCES 2022-029; forthcoming).

²² In SSOCS, incidents of crime include violent incidents, thefts of items valued at \$10 or greater without personal confrontation, and other criminal incidents. “Violent incidents” include rape or attempted rape; sexual assault other than rape; physical attacks or fights with or without a weapon; threat of physical attacks with or without a weapon; and robbery with or without a weapon. “Other incidents” include possession of a firearm or explosive device; possession of a knife or sharp object; distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs or alcohol; inappropriate distribution, possession, or use of prescription drugs; and vandalism. Note that when referring to criminal incidents, the word “recorded” refers to all incidents that were documented by the school, while “reported” is used to identify incidents that were reported to sworn law enforcement.

Figure 4. Percentage of public schools recording one or more incidents of crime at school and percentage reporting incidents to sworn law enforcement: Selected years, 2009–10 through 2019–20



¹ The coronavirus pandemic affected the 2019–20 data collection activities. The change to virtual schooling and the adjusted school year may have impacted the data collected by the School Survey on Crime and Safety. Readers should use caution when comparing 2019–20 estimates with those from earlier years. For more information, see *Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools in 2019–20: Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety* (NCES 2022-029; forthcoming). NOTE: Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime and safety issues at the school. "At school" was defined as including activities that happen in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. Respondents were instructed to include incidents that occurred before, during, and after normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019–20 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 229.10.

In 2019-20, lower percentages of elementary schools and combined/other schools recorded incidents of violent crime²³ (58 and 60 percent, respectively), compared with middle schools (91 percent) and secondary/high schools (90 percent).²⁴ Similarly, lower percentages of elementary schools and combined/other schools than of middle schools and secondary/high schools reported incidents of violent crime to sworn law enforcement. (*Criminal Incidents Recorded by Public Schools and Those Reported to Sworn Law Enforcement*)

Within the category of noncriminal incidents, student bullying²⁵ and cyberbullying²⁶ were among the most prevalent discipline problems reported by public schools in 2019-20 (figure 5). Specifically, 15 percent of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students at least once a week, and 16 percent reported that cyberbullying occurred among students at least once a week. Student disrespect and verbal abuse of teachers were also relatively common. Ten percent of public schools reported student verbal abuse of teachers, and 15 percent reported acts of student disrespect for teachers other than verbal abuse. In addition, 4 percent of public schools reported widespread disorder in the classroom,

and 4 percent reported student racial/ethnic tensions. Also, 2 percent reported sexual harassment²⁷ of other students and 2 percent reported harassment of other students based on sexual orientation or gender identity.²⁸ (*Discipline Problems Reported by Public Schools*)

A higher percentage of public schools reported cyberbullying in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 (16 vs. 8 percent; figure 5). In addition, higher percentages of public schools in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 reported student discipline problems related to teachers and classrooms, including student verbal abuse of teachers (10 vs. 5 percent), student acts of disrespect for teachers other than verbal abuse (15 vs. 9 percent), and widespread disorder in the classroom (4 vs. 3 percent). In contrast, behaviors at school that targeted fellow students were generally less prevalent. Lower percentages of public schools in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 reported student bullying (15 vs. 23 percent), student sexual harassment of other students (2 vs. 3 percent), and student harassment of other students based on sexual orientation or gender identity²⁹ (2 vs. 3 percent) at school. (*Discipline Problems Reported by Public Schools*)

²³ See previous footnote for the definition of “violent incidents.”

²⁴ Elementary schools are defined as schools that enroll students in more of grades K through 4 than in higher grades. Middle schools are defined as schools that enroll students in more of grades 5 through 8 than in higher or lower grades. Secondary/high schools are defined as schools that enroll students in more of grades 9 through 12 than in lower grades. Combined/other schools include all other combinations of grades, including K-12 schools.

²⁵ The SSOCS questionnaire defines bullying as “any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying occurs among youth who are not siblings or current dating partners.”

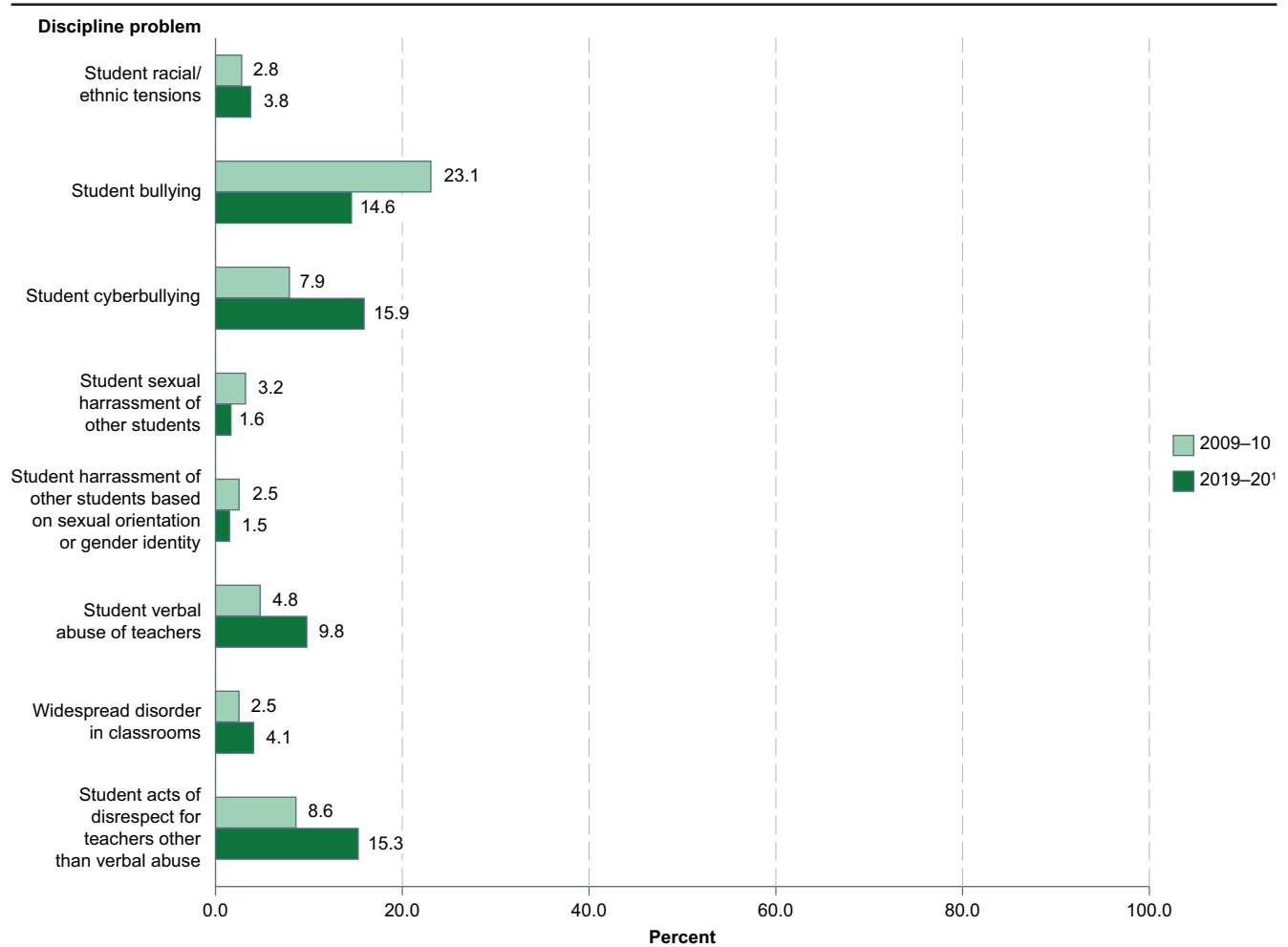
²⁶ “Cyberbullying” was defined for respondents as “occurring when willful and repeated harm is inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices.”

²⁷ Harassment is defined as “conduct that is unwelcome and denies or limits a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from a school’s education program. All students can be victims of harassment and the harasser can share the same characteristics of the victim. The conduct can be verbal, nonverbal, or physical and can take many forms, including verbal acts and name-calling, as well as nonverbal conduct, such as graphic and written statements, or conduct that is physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating.”

²⁸ Sexual orientation means one’s “emotional or physical attraction to the same and/or opposite sex.” Gender identity means one’s “inner sense of one’s own gender, which may or may not match the sex assigned at birth.”

²⁹ Prior to 2015-16, the questionnaire asked about “student harassment of other students based on sexual orientation or gender identity (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning)” in one single item. The 2015-16, 2017-18, and 2019-20 questionnaires had one item asking about “student harassment of other students based on sexual orientation,” followed by a separate item asking about “student harassment of other students based on gender identity.”

Figure 5. Percentage of public schools reporting selected discipline problems that occurred at least once a week: School years 2009–10 and 2019–20



¹ The coronavirus pandemic affected the 2019–20 data collection activities. The change to virtual schooling and the adjusted school year may have impacted the data collected by the School Survey on Crime and Safety. Readers should use caution when comparing 2019–20 estimates with those from earlier years. For more information, see *Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools in 2019–20: Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety* (NCES 2022-029; forthcoming). NOTE: Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime and safety issues at the school. Respondents were instructed to include discipline problems only for those times that were during normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session, unless the survey specified otherwise. For all items except “student cyberbullying,” respondents were instructed to include problems that occur at school. “At school” was defined to include activities that happen in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. For the “student cyberbullying” item, respondents were instructed to include cyberbullying “problems that can occur anywhere (both at your school and away from school).” Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009–10 and 2019–20 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2010 and 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 230.10.

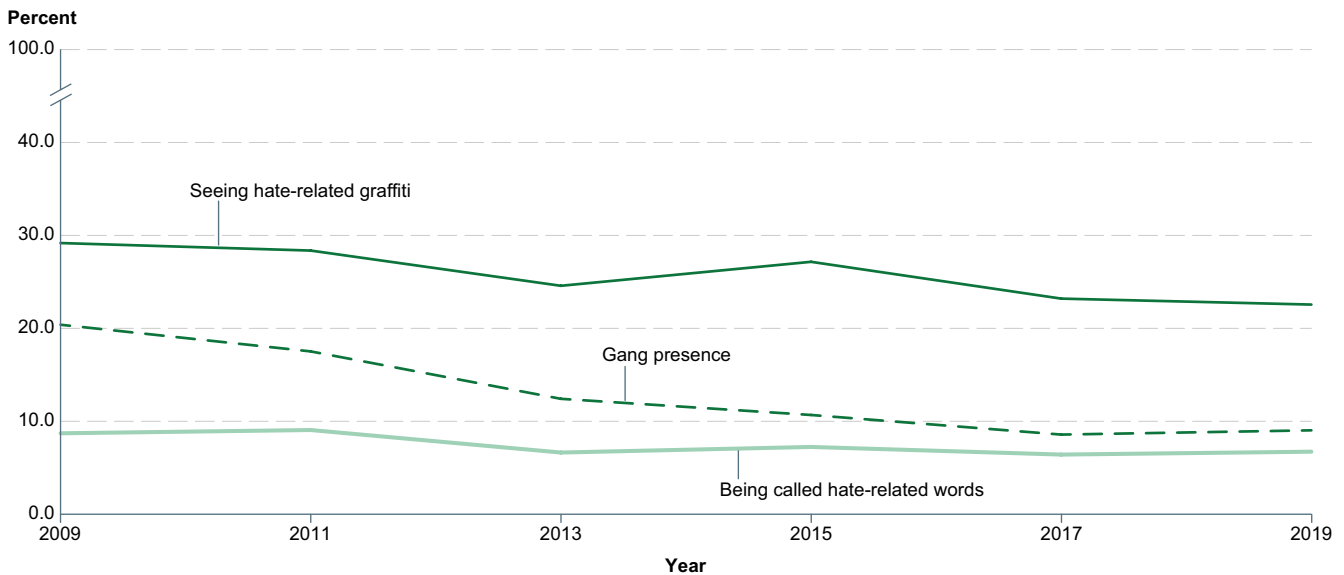
Gangs and Hate-Related Speech

Another measure of the school environment is the extent of unfavorable conditions, such as the presence of gangs and hate-related³⁰ words and graffiti. These data are captured in the SCS based on student reports of conditions at school during the school year.

In 2019, about 9 percent of students ages 12-18 reported a gang presence at their school during the school year, 7 percent reported being called hate-related words, and

23 percent reported seeing hate-related graffiti. These unfavorable conditions were less prevalent than they were a decade prior in 2009 (figure 6), when 20 percent of students reported a gang presence, 9 percent reported being called hate-related words, and 29 percent reported seeing hate-related graffiti. (*Students' Reports of Gangs at School; Students' Reports of Hate-Related Words and Hate-Related Graffiti*)

Figure 6. Percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported a gang presence, being called hate-related words, and seeing hate-related graffiti at school during the school year: Selected years, 2009 through 2019



NOTE: "At school" includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. "Hate-related" refers to derogatory terms used by others in reference to students' personal characteristics.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009 through 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 230.20 and 230.30.

In 2019, there were differences in the reports of these unfavorable conditions by student and school characteristics. For instance, higher percentages of 9th-through 12th-graders (ranging from 10 to 12 percent) than of 6th- through 8th-graders (ranging from 5 to 6 percent) reported observing a gang presence at their school. In contrast, the percentages of students who reported being called a hate-related word at school were lower for 10th- and 12th-graders (5 and 4 percent, respectively) than for 7th- and 8th-graders (8 and 9 percent, respectively), and there were no measurable differences by students' grade level in the percentage of students who reported seeing hate-related graffiti at school. (*Students' Reports of Gangs at School; Students' Reports of Hate-Related Words and Hate-Related Graffiti*)

Students who reported being called hate-related words at school during the school year were asked to indicate whether the derogatory word they were called referred to their race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. In 2019, race was the most frequently reported characteristic referred to by hate-related words. A lower percentage of White students (2 percent) reported being called a hate-related word referring to their race than of students of any other race/ethnicity for which data were available (ranging from 4 percent of Hispanic students to 9 percent of students of Two or more races). (*Students' Reports of Hate-Related Words and Hate-Related Graffiti*)

³⁰ "Hate-related" refers to derogatory terms used by others in reference to students' personal characteristics.

Fights, Weapons, and Illegal Substances

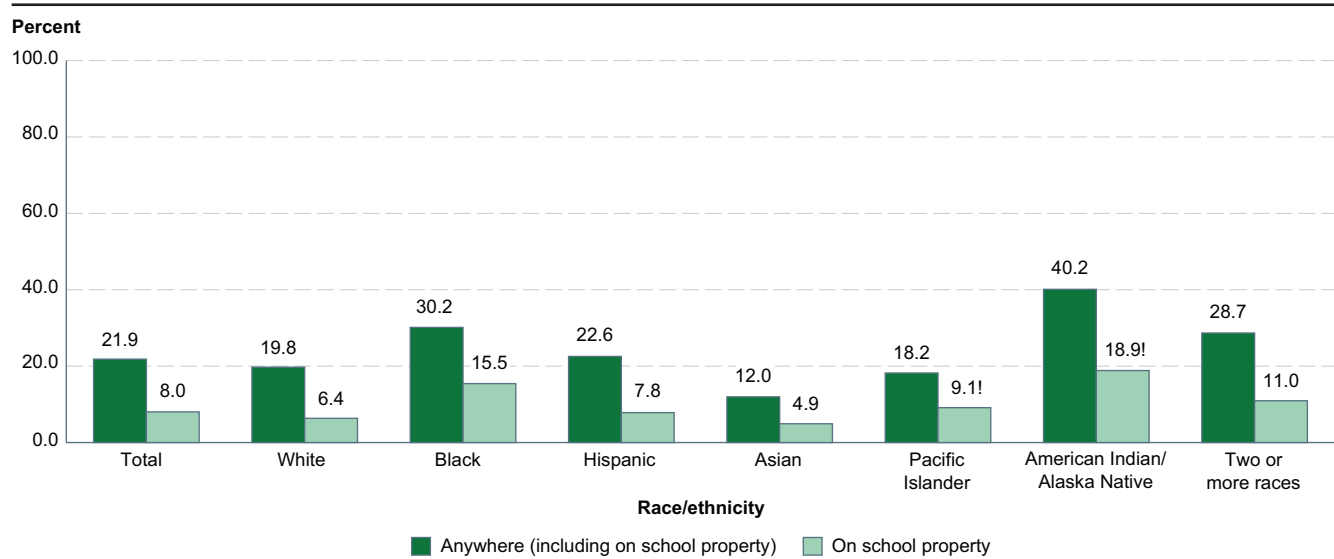
Guns, fights, alcohol, and drugs are other indicators of disorder and incivility at school. Using data mostly from the YRBSS, these indicators examine how the prevalence of these issues has changed over the past decade and whether there are differences by student characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, and grade level.

The YRBSS asked students in grades 9-12 about their involvement in physical fights, both anywhere³¹ and on school property, during the 12 months preceding the survey. Involvement in physical fights includes both aggressors and unwilling participants or victims. The percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported having been in a physical fight anywhere during the previous 12 months was lower in 2019 than in 2009 (22 vs. 31 percent), and the percentage who reported having been in a physical fight on school property in the

previous 12 months was also lower in 2019 than in 2009 (8 vs. 11 percent). The percentage of students who reported having been in a physical fight on school property during the previous 12 months in 2019 was higher for male students than for female students (11 vs. 4 percent); higher for students who were American Indian/Alaska Native (19 percent), Black (15 percent), and of Two or more races (11 percent) than for students who were White (6 percent) and Asian (5 percent; figure 7); higher for Black students than for students of Two or more races and Hispanic students (8 percent); and higher for 9th-graders (11 percent) and 10th-graders (8 percent) than for 11th-graders and 12th-graders (6 percent each). There were no measurable differences by sexual identity in the percentages of students who reported having been involved in a physical fight on school property in 2019. (*Physical Fights on School Property and Anywhere*)

³¹ “Anywhere” includes occurrences on school property. The term “anywhere” is not used in the YRBSS, and the survey did not define “on school property” for respondents.

Figure 7. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been in a physical fight at least one time during the previous 12 months, by race/ethnicity and location: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

NOTE: The term "anywhere" is not used in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) questionnaire; students were simply asked how many times in the past 12 months they had been in a physical fight. In the question asking students about physical fights at school, "on school property" was not defined for respondents. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

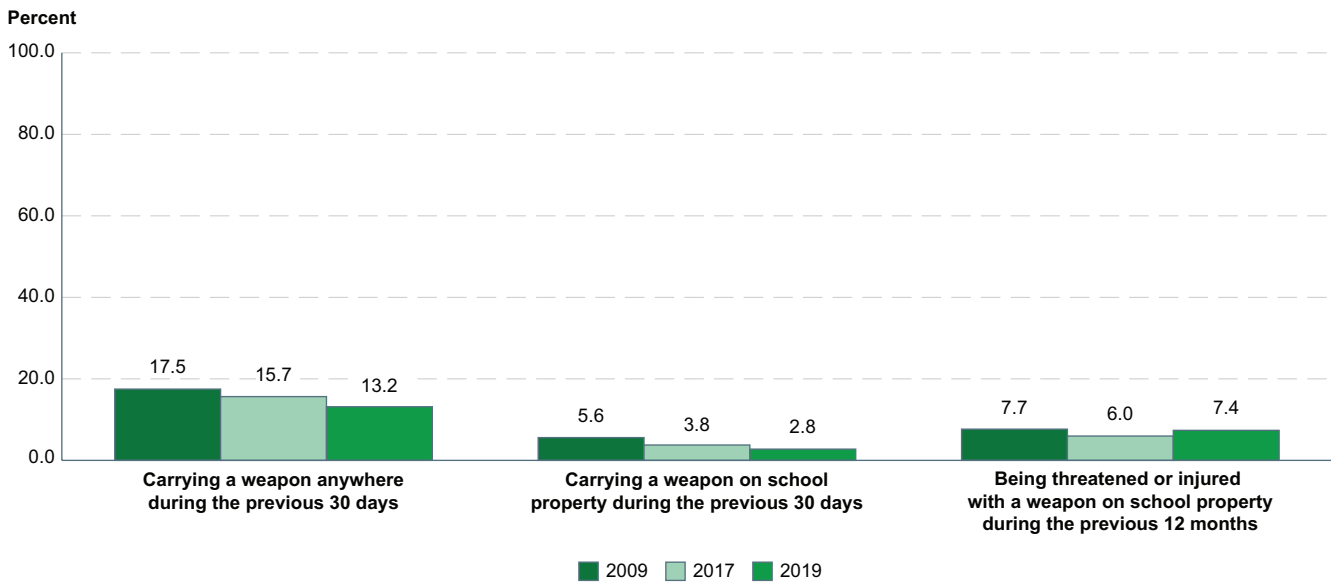
SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 231.10.

On the topic of weapons, data are available for the percentages of students in grades 9-12 who reported carrying a weapon³² anywhere and on school property during the previous 30 days and for the percentage of students who reported having been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the previous 12 months. An examination of these data over the past decade shows that, between 2009 and 2019, the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported carrying a weapon anywhere during the previous 30 days decreased (from 17 to 13 percent), as did the percentage of students who reported carrying a weapon on school

property (decreased from 6 to 3 percent; figure 8). However, for threats and injuries with weapons on school property, there was not a consistent trend from 2009 to 2019. The percentage of students who reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the previous 12 months decreased from 8 percent in 2009 to 6 percent in 2017; the percentage in 2019 (7 percent) was higher than that in 2017 but not measurably different from the percentage in 2009. (*Students Carrying Weapons and Students' Access to Firearms; Threats and Injuries With Weapons on School Property*)

³² Examples of weapons provided for respondents include guns, knives, or clubs.

Figure 8. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported carrying a weapon at least 1 day anywhere and on school property during the previous 30 days, and percentage who reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least one time during the previous 12 months: 2009, 2017, and 2019

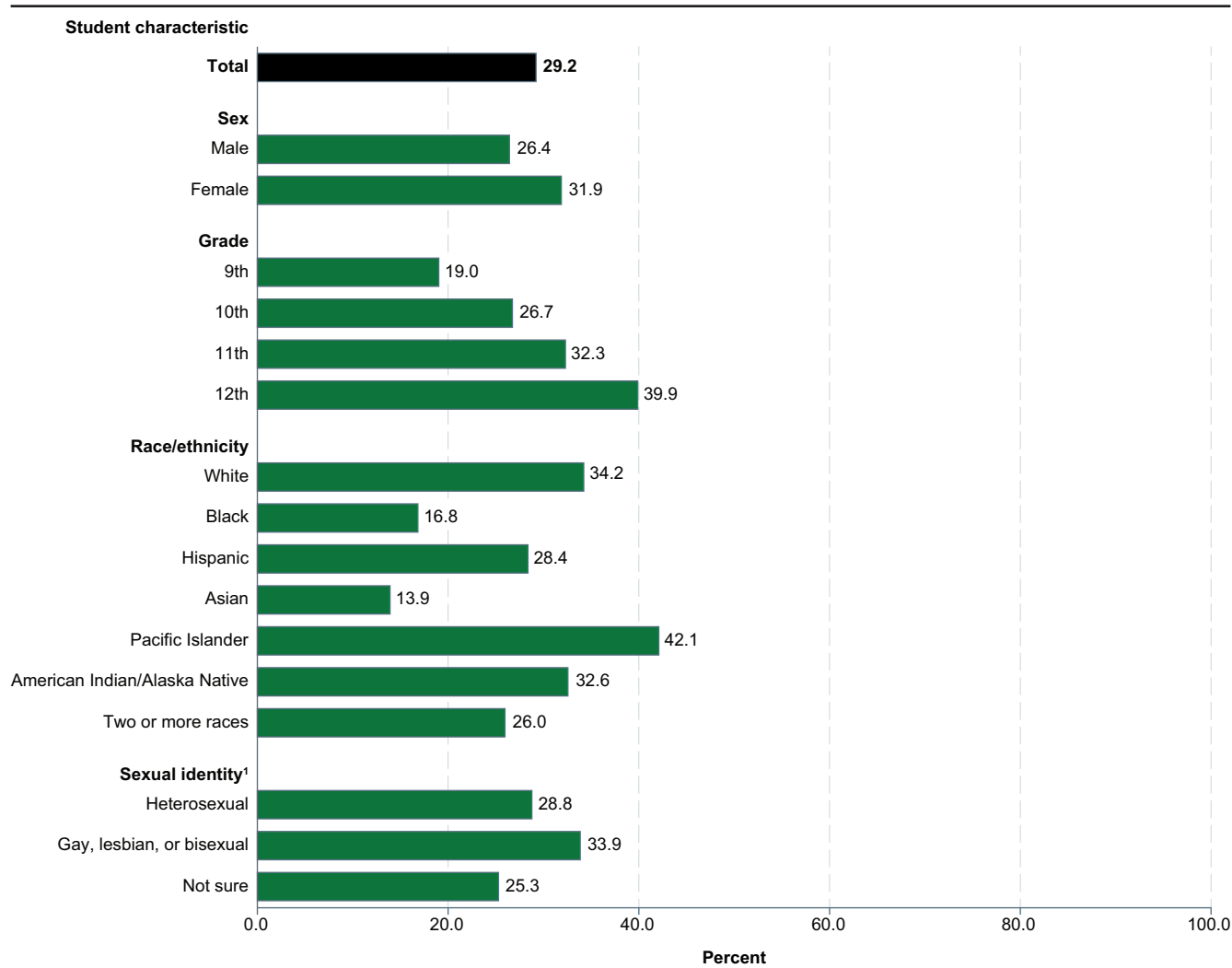


NOTE: Examples of weapons provided for respondents include guns, knives, or clubs. The term “anywhere” is not used in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) questionnaire; students were simply asked how many days they carried a weapon during the past 30 days. “On school property” was not defined for respondents. SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2009, 2017, and 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 228.40 and 231.40.

In the United States, the purchase or public possession of alcohol anywhere is illegal until age 21, except in the company of a parent or legal-age spouse in certain states. Adolescent alcohol use is associated with various negative educational and health outcomes (French and Maclean 2006; Mason et al. 2010; Schilling et al. 2009). The percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported using alcohol on at least 1 day during the previous 30 days decreased from 42 to 29 percent between 2009 and 2019. In 2019, the percentage of students in grades 9-12 reporting this behavior was lower for male students than

for female students (26 vs. 32 percent; figure 9); lower for Asian students (14 percent) and Black students (17 percent) than for students of all other racial/ethnic groups; and lower for heterosexual students (29 percent) and students who were not sure about their sexual identity (25 percent) than for gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (34 percent). In 2019, the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported using alcohol on at least 1 day during the previous 30 days increased with grade level. (*Students’ Use of Alcohol*)

Figure 9. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported using alcohol at least 1 day during the previous 30 days, by selected student characteristics: 2019



¹ Students were asked which of the following—"heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," or "not sure"—best described them.

NOTE: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

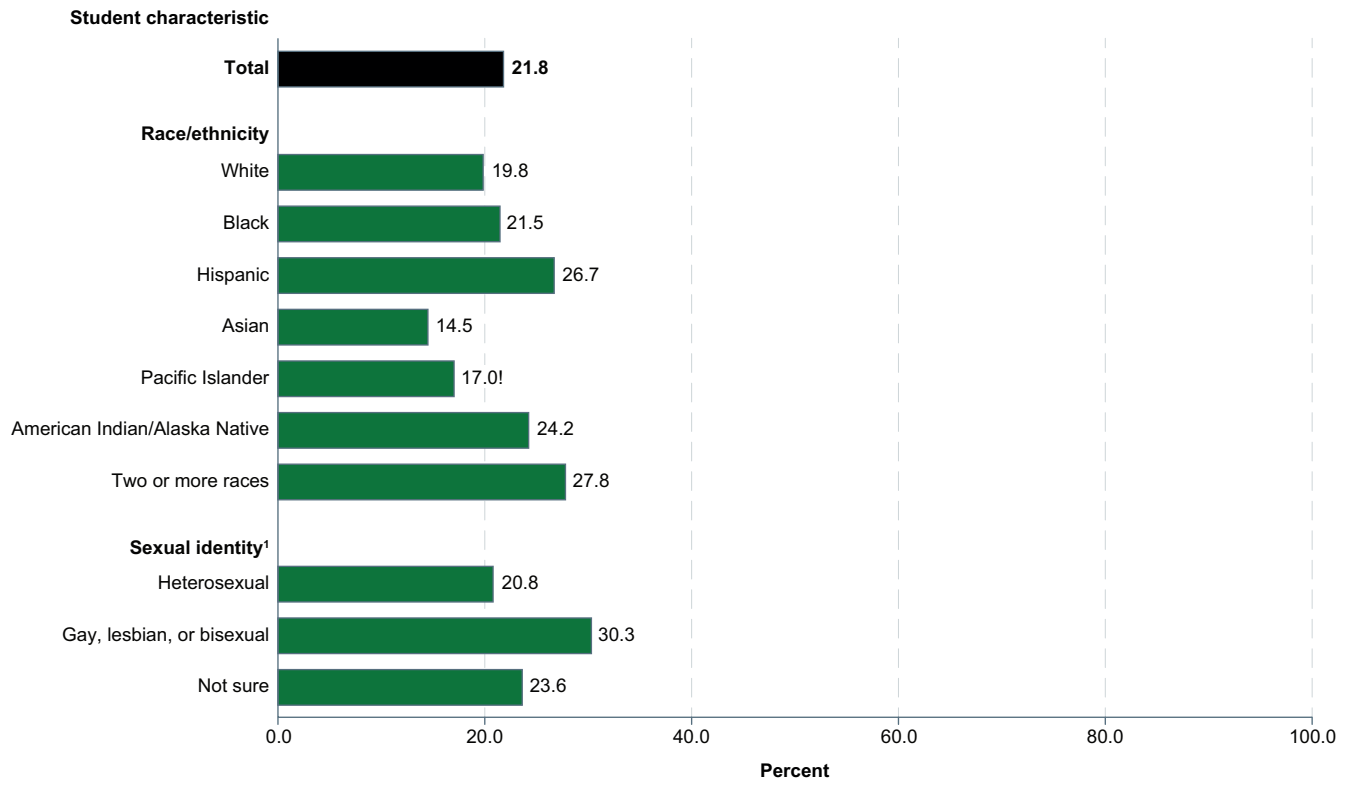
SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.10.

The YRBSS asked students in grades 9–12 about their current use of marijuana anywhere as well as the availability of illegal drugs on school property. In 2019, about 22 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported using marijuana at least 1 time during the previous 30 days; the percentage of students who reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property in the previous 12 months was also 22 percent in 2019. These percentages were not measurably different from their corresponding percentages in 2009.

In 2019, student reports of marijuana use and illegal drug availability varied by student characteristics. For instance, an examination of the data on the availability of illegal drugs on school property reveals differences by student

race/ethnicity and sexual identity. Higher percentages of students of Two or more races (28 percent) and Hispanic students (27 percent) than of Black students (21 percent) and White students (20 percent) reported that illegal drugs were offered, sold, or given to them on school property (figure 10); all these percentages were higher than the corresponding percentage of Asian students (14 percent). Additionally, a higher percentage of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students (30 percent) than of students who were not sure about their sexual identity (24 percent) and students who were heterosexual (21 percent) reported that illegal drugs were offered, sold, or given to them on school property in 2019. (*Marijuana Use and Illegal Drug Availability*)

Figure 10. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported that illegal drugs were made available to them on school property during the previous 12 months, by race/ethnicity and sexual identity: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

¹ Students were asked which of the following—"heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," or "not sure"—best described them.

NOTE: Students were asked if anyone offered, sold, or gave them an illegal drug on school property during the previous 12 months. "On school property" was not defined for respondents. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 232.70.

Student Perceptions of School Safety

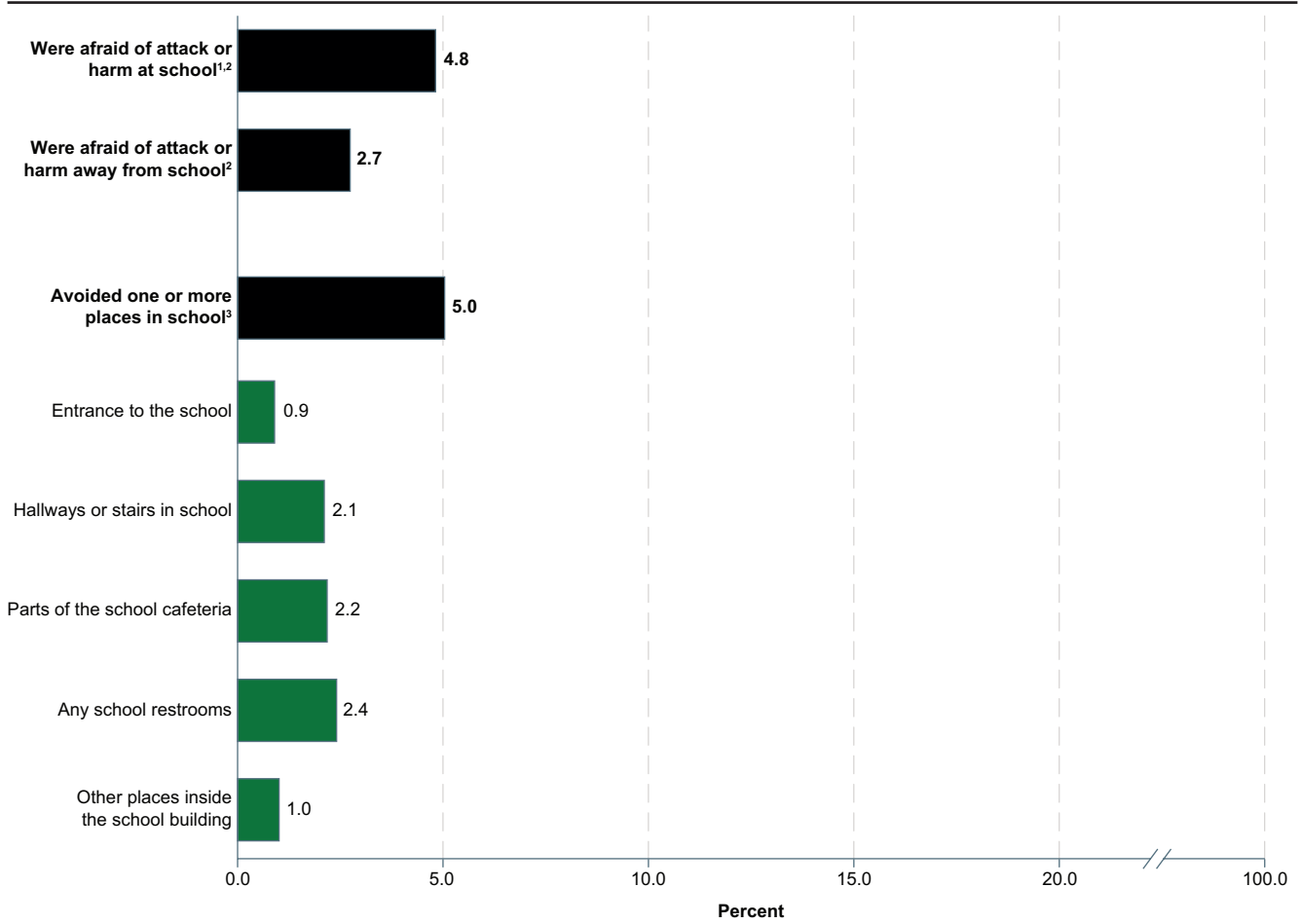
The SCS collected data on student perceptions of school safety by asking students ages 12-18 about their fear of attack or harm at and away from school. In 2019, about 5 percent of students ages 12-18 reported that they had been afraid of attack or harm³³ at school during the school year, which was higher than the percentage of students who reported that they had been afraid of attack or harm away from school (3 percent; figure 11). The percentages of students who reported being afraid of attack or harm at school and away from school in 2019 were not measurably different from those in 2009. The SCS also asked students whether they avoided one or more places in school³⁴ because they were fearful that someone might attack or harm them. In 2019, the percentage of students who reported avoiding one or more places in school during the school year because they thought someone might attack or harm them was 5 percent, which was higher than the percentage who did so in 2009 (4 percent). (*Students' Perceptions of Personal Safety at School and Away From School; Students' Reports of Avoiding School Activities or Classes or Specific Places in School*)

In 2019, there were some measurable differences by student and school characteristics in the percentages of students ages 12-18 who reported fear and avoidance. For example, the percentage of students who reported avoiding one or more places in school because of fear of attack or harm was higher for students of Two or more races (11 percent) than for Hispanic (5 percent), Asian (4 percent), and White (4 percent) students; higher for Black students (7 percent) than for White students; and higher for 7th-, 8th-, and 9th-graders (5, 6, and 7 percent, respectively) than for 12th-graders (3 percent). The percentage of students who reported avoiding one or more places in school was higher for those enrolled in schools in cities than for those enrolled in schools in rural areas (6 vs. 4 percent). In addition, a higher percentage of public school students than of private school students reported avoiding one or more places in school (5 vs. 2 percent). (*Students' Reports of Avoiding School Activities or Classes or Specific Places in School*)

³³ Students were asked if they were “never,” “almost never,” “sometimes,” or “most of the time” afraid that someone would attack or harm them at school or away from school. Students responding “sometimes” or “most of the time” were considered afraid.

³⁴ “Avoided one or more places in school” includes avoiding entrance to the school, hallways or stairs in school, parts of the school cafeteria, any school restrooms, and other places inside the school building. Students who reported avoiding multiple places in school were counted only once in the total for students avoiding one or more places.

Figure 11. Percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being afraid of attack or harm during the school year, and percentage who reported avoiding one or more places in school because of fear of attack or harm during the school year: 2019



¹“At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school.

² Students were asked if they were “never,” “almost never,” “sometimes,” or “most of the time” afraid that someone would attack or harm them at school or away from school. Students responding “sometimes” or “most of the time” were considered afraid.

³ Students who reported avoiding multiple places in school were counted only once in the total for students avoiding one or more places.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 230.70 and 230.80.

Teacher Reports of Victimization and School Order

In addition to evaluating student reports of victimization and perceptions about personal safety at school, it is also important to understand issues of school order and safety from the perspective of teachers. According to data on public school teachers³⁵ from the 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), threats of injury were more common than actual physical attacks. Additionally, both percentages were higher in 2015-16 than in 2007-08: the percentage of public school teachers who reported being threatened with injury by a student from their school was 10 percent in 2015-16, compared with 8 percent in 2007-08; the percentage who reported being physically attacked by a student from their school was 6 percent in 2015-16, compared with 4 percent in 2007-08.³⁶ During the 2015-16 school year, a higher percentage of elementary public school teachers than of secondary public school teachers reported being threatened with injury (11 vs. 9 percent) or being physically attacked (9 vs. 2 percent) by a student from their school (figure 12).³⁷ (*Teachers Threatened With Injury or Physically Attacked by Students*)

In the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) administered in 2018, lower secondary teachers (grades 7-9 in the United States) were asked to rate their ability to manage student classroom behaviors, including controlling disruptive behavior in the classroom, making expectations about student behavior clear, getting students to follow classroom rules, and calming a student who is disruptive or noisy. Eighty percent or more of lower secondary teachers in public schools in the United States reported that they were able to manage various aspects of student behavior quite a bit or a lot in 2018.³⁸ In general, lower percentages of teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience reported being able to manage various aspects of student behavior quite a bit or a lot. (*Teachers' Reports on Managing Classroom Behaviors*)

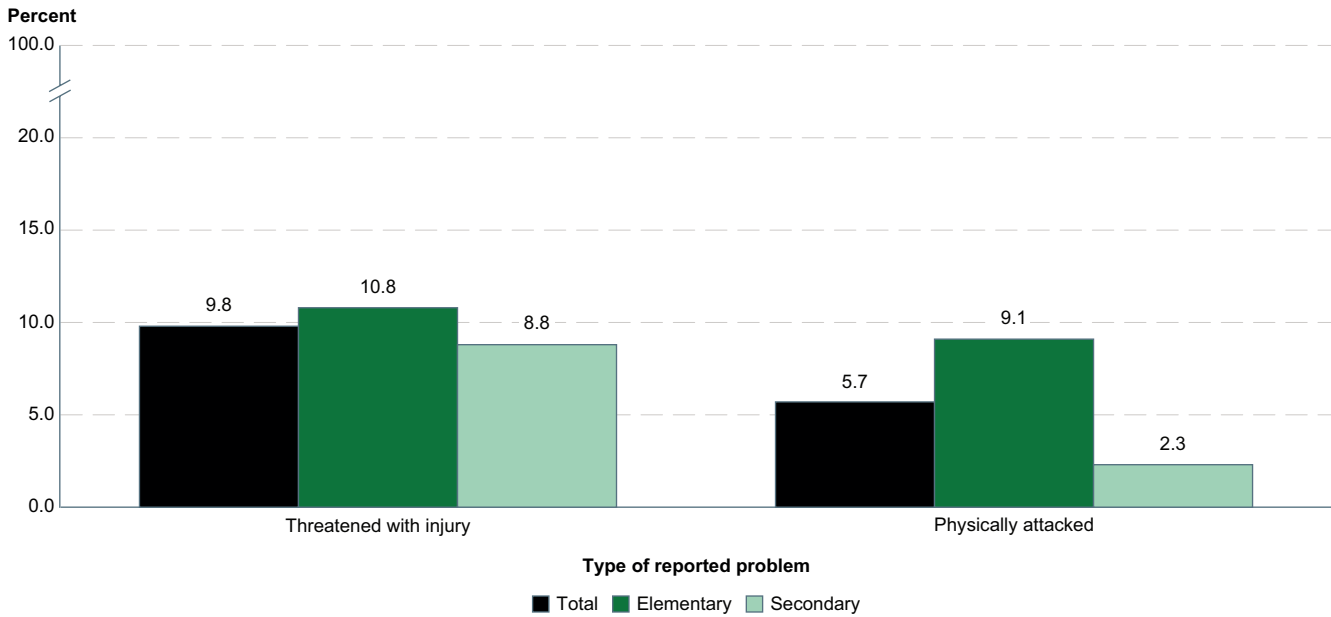
³⁵ Public school teachers surveyed by NTPS include those that teach both in traditional public and public charter schools.

³⁶ The 2007-08 data were collected in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The NTPS was designed to allow comparisons with SASS data.

³⁷ Instructional level divides teachers into elementary or secondary based on a combination of grades taught, main teaching assignment, and structure of teachers' class(es), rather than the level of school in which teachers taught. Teachers with only ungraded classes were classified based on their main teaching assignment and the structure of their class(es). Among teachers with regularly graded classes, elementary teachers generally include those teaching prekindergarten through grade 6 and those teaching multiple grades, with a preponderance of grades taught being kindergarten through grade 6. In general, secondary teachers include those teaching any of grades 7 through 12 and those teaching multiple grades, with a preponderance of grades taught being grades 7 through 12 and usually with no grade taught being lower than grade 5.

³⁸ Teachers were asked "In your teaching, to what extent can you do the following?" For each item, teachers could select one option: "not at all," "to some extent," "quite a bit," or "a lot." This report combines the percentages for "quite a bit" and "a lot."

Figure 12. Percentage of public school teachers who reported that they were threatened with injury or that they were physically attacked by a student from their school during the previous 12 months, by instructional level: School year 2015–16



NOTE: Teachers who taught only prekindergarten students are excluded. Includes teachers in both traditional public schools and public charter schools. Instructional level divides teachers into elementary or secondary based on a combination of grades taught, main teaching assignment, and structure of teachers' class(es), rather than the level of school in which teachers taught. Teachers with only ungraded classes were classified based on their main teaching assignment and the structure of their class(es). Among teachers with regularly graded classes, elementary teachers generally include those teaching prekindergarten through grade 6 and those teaching multiple grades, with a preponderance of grades taught being kindergarten through grade 6. In general, secondary teachers include those teaching any of grades 7 through 12 and those teaching multiple grades, with a preponderance of grades taught being grades 7 through 12 and usually with no grade taught being lower than grade 5. SOURCE: National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 228.70.

Discipline, Safety, and Security Practices

To maintain school discipline, order, and safety, schools across the United States have implemented preventive and responsive measures. Data on school practices were collected through SSOCS by asking public school principals about their school's use of safety and security measures,³⁹ whether their school had written procedures for responding to certain scenarios, and the number of disciplinary actions their school had taken against students for specific offenses. Overall, the percentage of public schools reporting certain safety and security measures in 2019-20 was either higher than or not measurably different from 2009-10, while the percentage reporting taking at least one serious disciplinary action was lower.

The use of certain safety and security measures in public schools has become more prevalent over time. Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the percentage of public schools reporting the use of the following safety and security measures increased: controlling access to school buildings (from 92 to 97 percent), the use of security cameras (from 61 to 91 percent), and requiring faculty and staff to wear badges or picture IDs (from 63 to 77 percent). The percentage of public schools that reported requiring students to wear badges or picture IDs was also higher in 2019-20 than in 2009-10 (10 vs. 7 percent), although there was no consistent pattern of change throughout the period. (*Safety and Security Practices at Public Schools*)

Between 2009-10 and 2019-20, the percentage of public schools that reported having one or more security staff⁴⁰ present at school at least once a week increased from 43 to 65 percent. In 2019-20, greater percentages of secondary/high schools (84 percent) and middle schools (81 percent) reported having any security staff, compared with elementary schools (55 percent) and combined/other schools (53 percent). The percentage of schools reporting the presence of any security staff was greater for schools with higher enrollment sizes; for instance, 96 percent of schools with 1,000 or more students enrolled reported having one or more security staff present, compared with 48 percent of schools with less than 300 students enrolled. (*Safety and Security Practices at Public Schools*)

In 2019-20, about 52 percent of public schools reported having a written plan for procedures to be performed in the event of a pandemic disease (figure 13). This percentage was higher than the percentage reported in 2017-18 (46 percent).⁴¹ In comparison, in 2019-20, over 90 percent of public schools had a written plan for procedures to be performed in the event of each of the following events: a natural disaster (96 percent),⁴² an active shooter (96 percent), bomb threats or incidents (93 percent), and a suicide threat or incident (91 percent). (*Safety and Security Practices at Public Schools*)

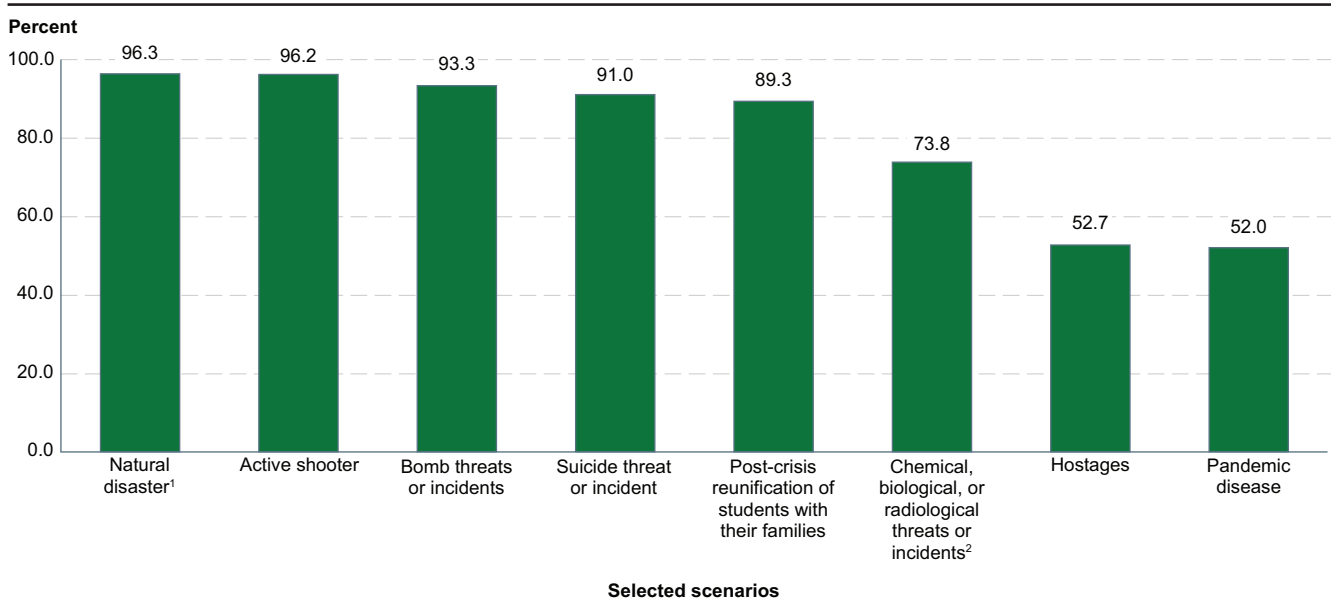
³⁹ In addition to data collected at the school level from SSOCS, data based on student reports of safety and security measures are available from the SCS. The latest year for which SCS data are available is 2019. For information based on students' awareness of a particular measure rather than on documented practice, see *Students' Reports of Safety and Security Measures Observed at School*.

⁴⁰ Includes security officers, security personnel, School Resource Officers (SROs), and sworn law enforcement officers who are not SROs. "Security officers" and "security personnel" do not include law enforcement. SROs include all career law enforcement officers with arrest authority who have specialized training and are assigned to work in collaboration with school organizations.

⁴¹ The first year in which this item was collected in SSOCS was 2017-18.

⁴² For example, earthquakes or tornadoes.

Figure 13. Percentage of public schools with a written plan for procedures to be performed in selected scenarios: School year 2019–20



¹ For example, earthquakes or tornadoes.

² For example, release of mustard gas, anthrax, smallpox, or radioactive materials.

NOTE: Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime and safety issues at the school.

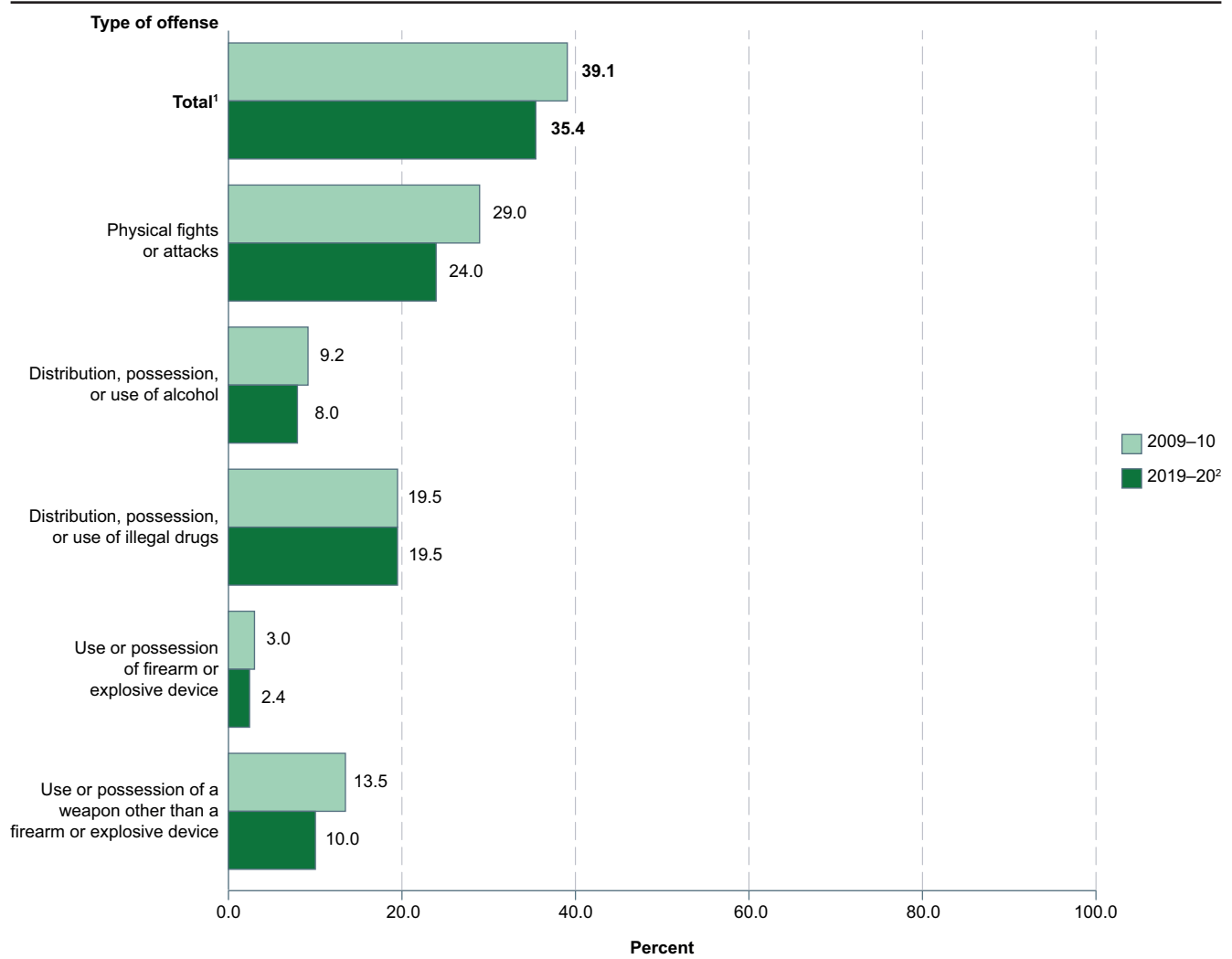
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019–20 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 233.65.

In 2019-20, about 35 percent of public schools (29,500 schools) took at least one serious disciplinary action⁴³ for specific student offenses (figure 14). Out of all offenses reported, physical attacks or fights prompted the largest percentage of schools (24 percent) to respond with at least one serious disciplinary action. In response to other offenses by students, 19 percent of schools took serious disciplinary actions for the distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs, and 10 percent did so for the use or possession of a weapon other than a

firearm or explosive device. Eight percent of public schools took serious disciplinary actions for the distribution, possession, or use of alcohol, and 2 percent did so for the use or possession of a firearm or explosive device. The overall percentage of schools taking at least one serious disciplinary action was lower during the 2019-20 school year than during the 2009-10 school year (35 vs. 39 percent). (*Serious Disciplinary Actions Taken by Public Schools*)

⁴³ Serious disciplinary actions refer to those more exclusionary actions and are defined to include out-of-school suspensions lasting 5 or more days but less than the remainder of the school year; removals with no continuing services for at least the remainder of the school year; and transfers to alternative schools for disciplinary reasons. Schools that took serious disciplinary actions in response to more than one type of offense were counted only once in this total.

Figure 14. Percentage of public schools that took a serious disciplinary action in response to specific offenses, by type of offense: School years 2009–10 and 2019–20



¹ Schools that took serious disciplinary actions in response to more than one type of offense were counted only once in the total.

² The coronavirus pandemic affected the 2019–20 data collection activities. The change to virtual schooling and the adjusted school year may have impacted the data collected by the School Survey on Crime and Safety. Readers should use caution when comparing 2019–20 estimates with those from earlier years. For more information, see *Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools in 2019–20: Findings From the School Survey on Crime and Safety* (NCES 2022-029; forthcoming).

NOTE: Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime and safety issues at the school. Serious disciplinary actions include out-of-school suspensions lasting 5 or more days, but less than the remainder of the school year; removals with no continuing services for at least the remainder of the school year; and transfers to alternative schools for disciplinary reasons. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009–10 and 2019–20. School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2010 and 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 233.10.

Mental Health Services Provided by Public Schools

In addition to practices and measures addressing specific crime and safety concerns, many schools provide mental health services to evaluate and treat students for mental health disorders. Previous studies show that school mental health resources may facilitate mental health service use for children with mental health disorders (Green et al. 2013).

Based on data from the 2019-20 SSOCS survey, 55 percent of public schools (or 45,600 schools) reported providing diagnostic mental health assessment⁴⁴ services to evaluate students for mental health disorders.⁴⁵ Fewer public schools (42 percent, or 35,200 schools) offered mental health treatment⁴⁶ services to students for mental health disorders. The percentages of public schools providing either diagnostic services or treatment services were higher in 2019-20 than in 2017-18 (55 vs. 51 percent for diagnostic services and 42 vs. 38 percent for treatment services). (*Prevalence of Mental Health Services Provided by Public Schools and Limitations in Schools' Efforts to Provide Mental Health Services*)

In 2019-20, both types of mental health services were more prevalent among middle schools and secondary/

high schools than among elementary schools (figure 15). In addition, the percentages of public schools providing these services were often higher for schools with larger enrollment sizes. Also, diagnostic services were more prevalent in schools in cities and suburban areas than in towns and rural areas: 61 percent of schools in cities and 60 percent of schools in suburban areas reported providing diagnostic services to students, compared with 50 percent of schools in towns and 44 percent of schools in rural areas. However, there were no measurable differences by locale in the percentages of schools reporting treatment services. (*Prevalence of Mental Health Services Provided by Public Schools and Limitations in Schools' Efforts to Provide Mental Health Services*)

In 2019-20, the majority of schools (54 percent) reported that their efforts to provide mental health services to students were limited in a major way by inadequate funding.⁴⁷ Forty percent reported inadequate access to licensed mental health professionals as a major limitation. (*Prevalence of Mental Health Services Provided by Public Schools and Limitations in Schools' Efforts to Provide Mental Health Services*)

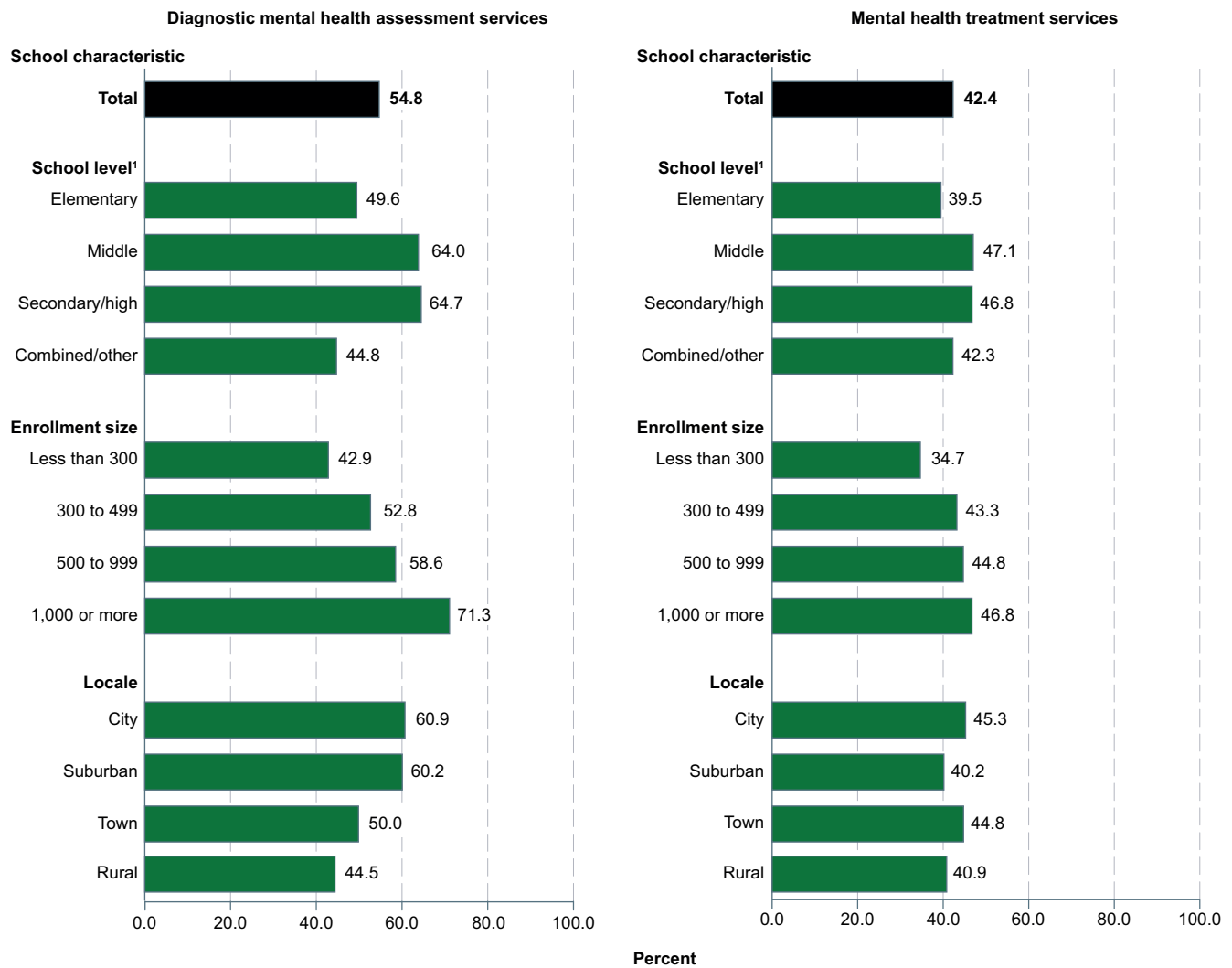
⁴⁴ A diagnostic mental health assessment is an evaluation conducted by a mental health professional that identifies whether an individual has one or more mental health diagnoses.

⁴⁵ Mental health disorders collectively refer to all diagnosable mental disorders or health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.

⁴⁶ Treatment is a clinical intervention—which may include psychotherapy, medication, and/or counseling—addressed at lessening or eliminating the symptoms of a mental health disorder.

⁴⁷ The survey collected data on limitations in public schools' efforts to provide mental health services regardless of whether the school actually provided mental health services.

Figure 15. Percentage of public schools providing diagnostic mental health assessments and treatment to students, by selected school characteristics: 2019–20



¹ Elementary schools are defined as schools that enroll students in more of grades K through 4 than in higher grades. Middle schools are defined as schools that enroll students in more of grades 5 through 8 than in higher or lower grades. Secondary/high schools are defined as schools that enroll students in more of grades 9 through 12 than in lower grades. Combined/other schools include all other combinations of grades, including K–12 schools.

NOTE: A diagnostic mental health assessment is an evaluation conducted by a mental health professional that identifies whether an individual has one or more mental health diagnoses. This is in contrast to an educational assessment, which does not focus on clarifying a student’s mental health diagnosis. Treatment is a clinical intervention—which may include psychotherapy, medication, and/or counseling—addressed at lessening or eliminating the symptoms of a mental health disorder. Schools were instructed to include only services provided by a licensed mental health professional employed or contracted by the school. Mental health professionals were defined for respondents as including providers of mental health services within several different professions, each of which has its own training and areas of expertise. The types of licensed professionals who may provide mental health services may include psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric/mental health nurse practitioners, psychiatric/mental health nurses, clinical social workers, and professional counselors. Mental health disorders collectively refer to all diagnosable mental disorders or health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning. Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about school crime and policies to provide a safe environment.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019–20 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 233.69a.

Postsecondary Campus Safety and Security

At the postsecondary level, a total of 27,300 criminal incidents against persons and property on campuses of postsecondary institutions were reported to police and security agencies in 2019 (figure 16).⁴⁸ This translates to 18.7 on-campus crimes reported per 10,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students.⁴⁹ Among the various types of on-campus crimes reported in 2019, 43 percent—or 8.0 incidents per 10,000 students—were forcible sex offenses. Other commonly reported crimes included burglaries⁵⁰ (33 percent of crimes, or 6.1 incidents per 10,000 students) and motor vehicle thefts (11 percent of crimes, or 2.1 incidents per 10,000 students). (*Criminal Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions*)

Between 2009 and 2019, the overall number of reported on-campus crimes decreased by 20 percent (from 34,100 to 27,300 incidents; figure 16). In addition, the rate of crime, or the number of crimes per 10,000 FTE students, also decreased from 2009 to 2019 (from 23.0 to 18.7 incidents per 10,000 FTE students). Despite the general downward trend over this period, the rate for forcible sex offenses increased from 1.7 incidents per 10,000 students in 2009 to 8.0 incidents per 10,000 students in 2019.⁵¹ Although changes in the

reporting guidelines for forcible sex offenses in 2014⁵² likely contributed to the largest single-year percentage increase in that year (36 percent, from 5,000 to 6,800 incidents), the number of reported forcible sex offenses on campus continued to increase steadily between 2014 and 2018, from 6,800 to 12,400 incidents (an 83 percent increase, or an average increase of about 16 percent per year). In 2019, the number of reported forcible sex offenses was 5 percent lower than in 2018. (*Criminal Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions*)

A hate crime is a criminal offense that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the perpetrator's bias against the victim(s) based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.⁵³ In 2019, of the criminal incidents that occurred on the campuses of postsecondary institutions and were reported to police or security agencies, 757 incidents were classified as hate crimes. The three most common types of hate crimes reported by institutions were intimidation (340 incidents); destruction, damage, and vandalism (295 incidents); and simple assault (85 incidents; figure 17). (*Hate Crime Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions*)

⁴⁸ The *Clery Act* of 1990 specifies seven types of crimes that all Title IV institutions are required to report through the Campus Safety and Security Survey: murder, sex offenses (forcible and nonforcible), robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

⁴⁹ The base of 10,000 FTE students includes students who are enrolled exclusively in distance learning courses and who may not be physically present on campus.

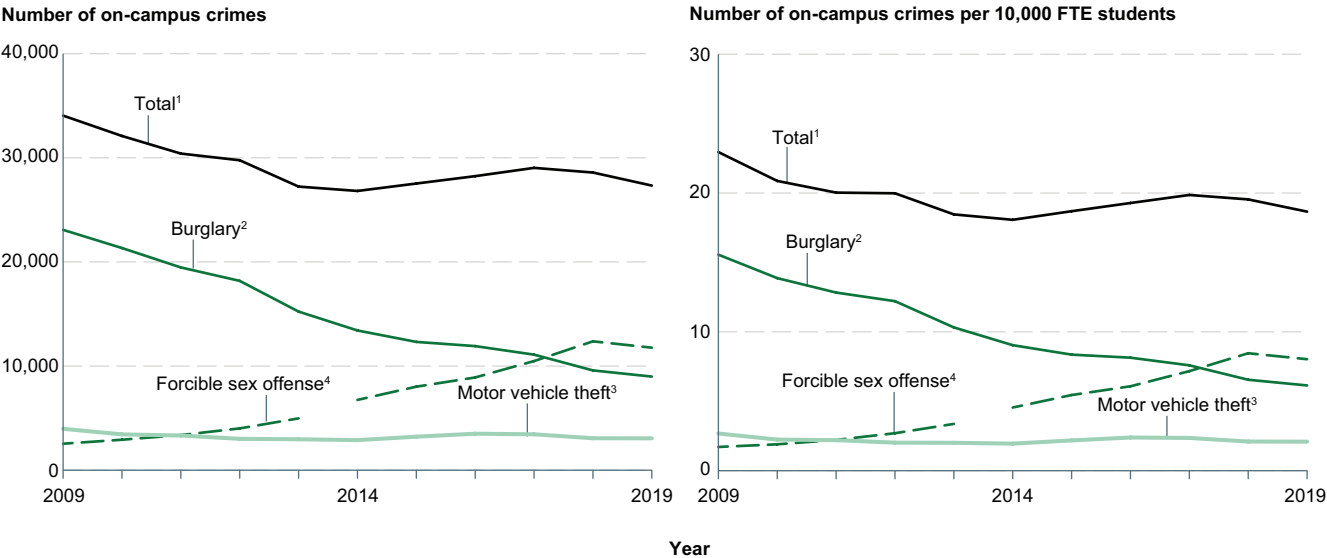
⁵⁰ Refers to the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.

⁵¹ The number of reported forcible sex offenses on campus increased by 363 percent, from 2,500 in 2009 to 11,800 in 2019.

⁵² In years prior to 2014, schools only reported a total number of forcible sex offenses, with no breakouts for specific types of offenses. Beginning in 2014, schools were asked to report the numbers of two different types of forcible sex offenses—rape and fondling—and these were added together to reach the total number of reported forcible sex offenses. For instance, 6,200 rapes and 5,600 fondling incidents were reported in 2019.

⁵³ In addition to reporting data on hate-related incidents for the seven types of crimes already specified in the *Clery Act*, a 2008 amendment to the *Clery Act* requires campuses to report hate-related incidents for four additional types of crimes: simple assault; larceny; intimidation; and destruction, damage, and vandalism.

Figure 16. Number of on-campus crimes reported and number per 10,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by selected type of crime: 2009 through 2019

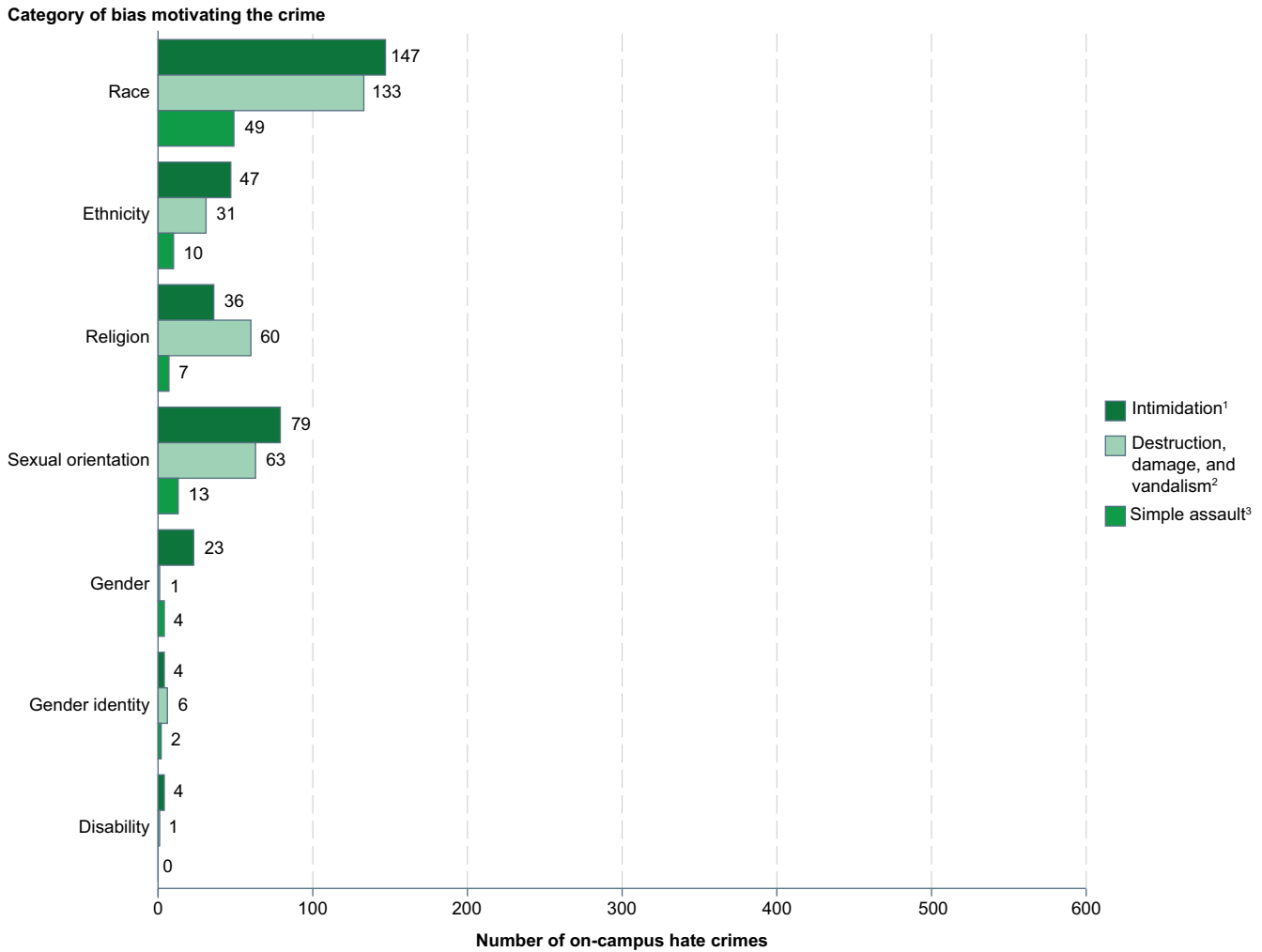


¹ Includes other reported crimes not separately shown.
² Unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.
³ Theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle.
⁴ Any sexual act directed against another person forcibly and/or against that person's will. Data on reported forcible sex offenses have been collected differently since 2014. Beginning in 2014, schools were asked to report the numbers of two different types of forcible sex offenses, rape and fondling, and these were added together to reach the total number of reported forcible sex offenses. In years prior to 2014, schools only reported a total number of reported forcible sex offenses, with no breakouts for specific types of offenses.

NOTE: Data are for degree-granting institutions, which are institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some institutions that report *Clergy Act* data—specifically, non-degree-granting institutions and institutions outside of the 50 states and the District of Columbia—are excluded from this figure. Crimes include incidents involving students, staff, and on-campus guests. Excludes off-campus crimes even if they involve college students or staff. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Campus Safety and Security Reporting System, 2009 through 2019; and National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2010 through Spring 2020, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 329.10 and 329.20.

Figure 17. Number of on-campus hate crimes at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by category of bias motivating the crime and type of crime: 2019



¹ Placing another person in reasonable fear of bodily harm through the use of threatening words and/or other conduct, but without displaying a weapon or subjecting the victim to actual physical attack.
² Willfully or maliciously destroying, damaging, defacing, or otherwise injuring real or personal property without the consent of the owner or the person having custody or control of it.
³ Physical attack by one person upon another where neither the offender displays a weapon, nor the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.
 NOTE: Data are for degree-granting institutions, which are institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some institutions that report *Cleary Act* data—specifically, non-degree-granting institutions and institutions outside of the 50 states and the District of Columbia—are excluded. A hate crime is a criminal offense that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the perpetrator's bias against a group of people based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Includes on-campus incidents involving students, staff, and guests. Excludes off-campus crimes and arrests even if they involve students or staff.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Campus Safety and Security Reporting System, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 329.30.

Race and sexual orientation were the top two categories of motivating bias associated with hate crimes at postsecondary institutions in 2019, accounting for about two-thirds of hate crimes. Race was the motivating bias in 45 percent of reported hate crimes (341 incidents), while an additional 12 percent (94 incidents) were motivated by ethnicity. Together, more than half of hate crimes at

postsecondary institutions were motivated by race or ethnicity. Sexual orientation was the motivating bias in 22 percent of reported hate crimes (167 incidents). The third most common motivating bias was religion, which accounted for 14 percent of reported hate crimes (106 incidents) in 2019. (*Hate Crime Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions*)

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