



# Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2004

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, publishing, and disseminating statistical information about crime, its perpetrators and victims, and the operation of the justice system at all levels of government. These data are critical to federal, state, and local policymakers in combating crime and ensuring that justice is both efficient and evenhanded.

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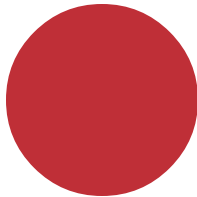
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For youth to fulfill their potential in school, schools should be safe and secure places for all students, teachers, and staff members. Without a safe learning environment, teachers may have difficulty teaching and students may have difficulty learning. Gauging the safety of the school environment, however, may be difficult given the large amount of attention devoted to isolated incidents of extreme school violence nationwide.

Ensuring safer schools requires establishing good indicators of the current state of school crime and safety across the nation and periodically monitoring and updating these indicators. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* is designed to provide an annual snapshot of specific crime and safety indicators, covering topics such as victimization, fights, bullying, classroom disorder, teacher injury, weapons, and student perceptions of school safety. In addition to covering a wide range of topics, the indicators are based on information drawn from a wide range of sources, including surveys of students, teachers, and principals, and data collections by federal departments and agencies such as the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the report are presented below.

#### ***Violent Deaths at School***

From July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2000, there were 32 school-associated violent deaths in the United States (*Indicator 1*). Twenty-four of these violent deaths were homicides and 8 were suicides. Sixteen of the 24 school-associated homicides involved school-aged children. These 16 homicides are a relatively small percentage (1 percent) of the total of 2,124 children ages 5–19 who were victims of homicide over the same period. Six of the 8 school-associated suicides from July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2000, involved school-aged children. Away from school, there were a total of 1,922 suicides of children ages 5–19 during the 2000 calendar year.

#### ***Nonfatal Student Victimization—Student Reports***

The victimization rate for students ages 12–18 generally declined both at school and away from school between 1992 and 2002; this was true for the total crime rate as well as for thefts, serious violent crimes (including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault), and violent crimes (that is, serious violent crime plus simple assault) (*Indicator 2*). While this overall trend indicates a decline during this time frame, no difference was detected between 2001 and 2002 in the total crime rate, the rate of theft, or the rate of violent victimization either at or away from school.

- In 2002, students ages 12–18 were more likely to be victims of nonfatal serious violent crime away from school than at school (*Indicator 2*).<sup>1</sup> Students in this age range were victims of about 309,000 serious violent crimes away from school, compared with about 88,000 at school.
- In 2002, younger students (ages 12–14) were more likely than older students (ages 15–18) to be victims of crime at school, while older students were more likely than younger students to be victims away from school (*Indicator 2*).
- In 2003, 5 percent of students ages 12–18 reported being victims of nonfatal crimes, 4 percent reported being victims of theft, and 1 percent reported being victims of violent incidents (*Indicator 3*).
- The percentage of students in grades 9–12 who have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property fluctuated between 1993 and 2003, but without a clear trend (*Indicator 4*). In all survey years from 1993 to 2003, 7–9 percent of students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property in the preceding 12 months.
- Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported being in a fight anywhere declined from 42 percent to 33 percent (*Indicator 5*). Similarly, the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported fighting on school property declined over this period, from 16 percent to 13 percent.
- In 2003, 7 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that they had been bullied at school. The percentage of students in this age range who had been bullied increased from 5 percent in 1999 to 8 percent in 2001, but no differences were detected between 2001 and 2003 (*Indicator 6*).
- In 2003, public school students were more likely than private school students to report being bullied (7 vs. 5 percent) (*Indicator 6*). In the same year, rural students were more likely than their urban and suburban counterparts to report being bullied (10 percent of rural students vs. 7 percent each of urban and suburban students).

### ***Violence and Crime at School—Public School Reports***

In 1999–2000, 20 percent of all public schools experienced one or more serious violent crimes such as rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Seventy-one percent of public schools reported violent incidents and 46 percent reported thefts (*Indicator 7*). This report also provides the number of disciplinary actions taken by school principals for reasons not related to academics. About 54 percent of public schools reported taking a serious disciplinary action in the 1999–2000 school year. Of those disciplinary actions, 83 percent were suspensions lasting 5 days or more, 11

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<sup>1</sup>These data are not adjusted by the number of hours that students spend on school property and the number of hours they spend elsewhere.

percent were removals with no services (i.e., expulsions), and 7 percent were transfers to specialized schools (*Indicator 8*).

- Secondary schools were more likely than other schools to experience a violent incident during the 1999–2000 school year (92 vs. 61–87 percent for elementary, middle, and combined schools) (*Indicator 7*).
- Two percent of public schools took a serious disciplinary action for the use of a firearm or explosive device, and 4 percent did so for the possession of a firearm or explosive device (*Indicator 8*).

### ***Nonfatal Teacher Victimization at School—Teacher Reports***

Annually, over the 5-year period from 1998 to 2002, teachers were the victims of approximately 234,000 total nonfatal crimes at school, including 144,000 thefts and 90,000 violent crimes (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) (*Indicator 9*).

- Over the 5-year period from 1998 to 2002, senior high school and middle/junior high school teachers were more likely than elementary school teachers to be victims of violent crimes (most of which were simple assaults) (30 and 26 crimes, respectively, vs. 12 crimes per 1,000 teachers) (*Indicator 9*).
- Teachers were differentially victimized by violent crimes at school according to where they taught (*Indicator 9*). Over the 5-year period from 1998 to 2002, urban teachers were more likely than rural and suburban teachers to be victims of violent crimes.
- In the 1999–2000 school year, 9 percent of all elementary and secondary school teachers were threatened with injury by a student, and 4 percent were physically attacked by a student (*Indicator 10*).

### ***School Environment***

The percentage of students who reported being afraid of being attacked at school or on the way to and from school decreased from 12 percent in 1995 to 6 percent in 2001. No difference was detected between the most recent survey years, 2001 and 2003, in the percentage of students who feared such an attack (*Indicator 12*). In 1999 and 2001, students were more likely to be afraid of being attacked at school or on the way to and from school than away from school; however, in 2003, no difference was detected in the percentage of students who reported fear of an attack at school and those fearing an attack away from school.

- Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported carrying a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property within the previous 30 days declined—from 12 percent to 6 percent (*Indicator 11*).
- In 2003, 4 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that they had avoided one or more places in school (*Indicator 13*). Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students ages 12–18 who avoided one or more places in school decreased from 9 to 5 percent, but no difference was detected in the percentage of students who did so in 1999, 2001, and 2003 (between 4 and 5 percent in each year).
- In 2003, 12 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them (*Indicator 14*). That is, in the previous 6 months, someone at school had called them a derogatory word related to race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. During the same period, about 36 percent of students ages 12–18 saw hate-related graffiti at school.
- In 2003, 21 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that street gangs were present at their schools (*Indicator 15*). Students in urban schools were the most likely to report the presence of street gangs at their school (31 percent), followed by suburban students and rural students, who were the least likely to do so (18 and 12 percent, respectively).
- In 1999–2000, public school principals were asked to report how often certain disciplinary problems occurred at their schools. Twenty-nine percent reported that student bullying occurred on a daily or weekly basis and 19 percent reported that student acts of disrespect for teachers occurred at the same frequency (*Indicator 16*). Additionally, 13 percent reported student verbal abuse of teachers, 3 percent reported occurrences of student racial tensions, and 3 percent reported widespread disorder in the classrooms on a daily or weekly basis.
- In 2003, 5 percent of students in grades 9–12 had at least one drink of alcohol on school property in the 30 days prior to the survey, and 45 percent of students had at least one drink anywhere (*Indicator 17*).
- In 2003, 22 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported using marijuana anywhere during the previous 30 days, and 6 percent reported using marijuana on school property (*Indicator 18*).
- In 2003, 29 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property in the 12 months prior to the survey (*Indicator 19*).