



Michael R. Boh Center for Child Development

Mental Health & Violence In Schools

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Disclosure

Dr. Creveling has no financial disclosures or conflicts of interests with the material provided in this presentation.

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Learning Goals: Overview

- Mental Health of Children
- Youth Violence in Schools
- How to Identify Children in Need of Mental Health Services
- What Schools Can Do To Help?

Mental Health of Children



Mental Health of Children

Positive mental health indicators:

- Affection
- Resilience
- Positivity
- Self-control
- Curiosity



CDC, 2016-2019

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The U.S. has a *Youth Mental Health Crisis*

1 in 5 youth (20%) have a mental health problem

1 in 11 youth attempted suicide

1 in 5 (22%) high school students seriously considered attempting suicide

Youth Mental Health Crisis

Only 30-50% of children with mental health problems are treated

Children who do not receive mental health treatment may act out in school

National Institute of Justice, A Comprehensive School Safety Framework: Report to the Committee on Appropriations, January 2020.

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Youth Mental Health Crisis

In 2020, Suicide was the **2nd leading cause of death** for ages 10-14 (NIMH)

About 7,126 young people ages 10 to 24 **die each year by suicide** (CDC, 2023)






Youth Mental Health Crisis

42% of youth suicide deaths are *gun-related*

Kolbe LJ. School Gun Violence in the United States. *J Sch Health*. 2020; 90; 245-253. DOI: 10.1111/josh.12866

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PROGRESS AT-A-GLANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE VARIABLES*

THE PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO:	2009 Total	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	Trend
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	26.1	28.5	29.9	29.9	31.5	36.7	
Seriously considered attempting suicide	13.8	15.8	17.0	17.7	17.2	18.8	
Made a suicide plan	10.9	12.8	13.6	14.6	13.6	15.7	
Attempted suicide	6.3	7.8	8.0	8.6	7.4	8.9	
Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse	1.9	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.5	

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2009-2019
 *For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix.



In wrong direction








No change



In right direction

MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE VARIABLES*

The Percentage of High School Students Who:*	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	2021 Total	Trend
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	28	30	30	31	37	42	
Experienced poor mental health†	–	–	–	–	–	29	–
Seriously considered attempting suicide	16	17	18	17	19	22	
Made a suicide plan	13	14	15	14	16	18	
Attempted suicide	8	8	9	7	9	10	
Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse	2	3	3	2	3	3	

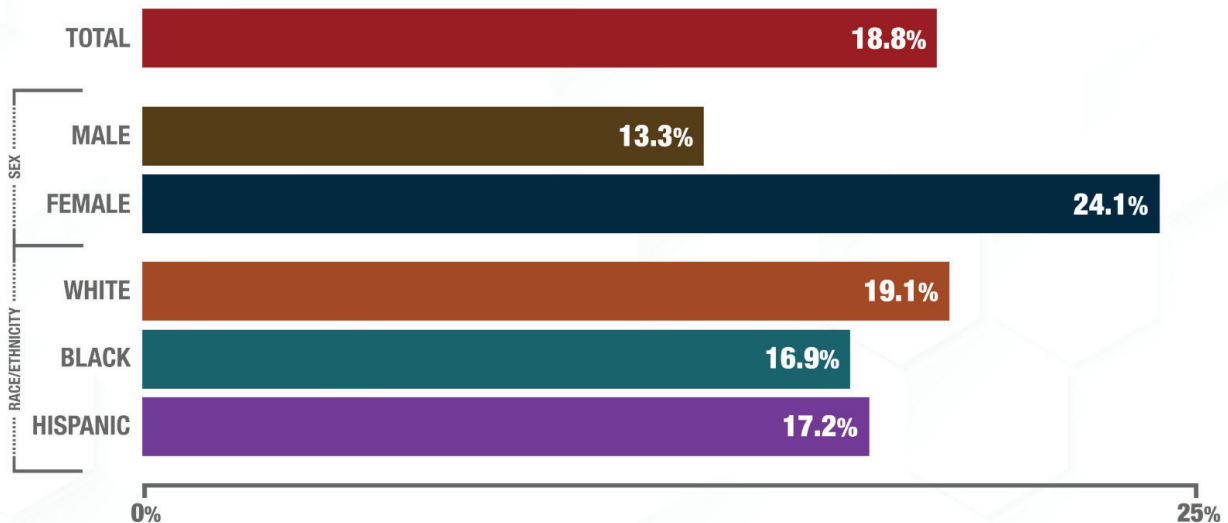
Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys 2011-2021
 *For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix.

LEGEND

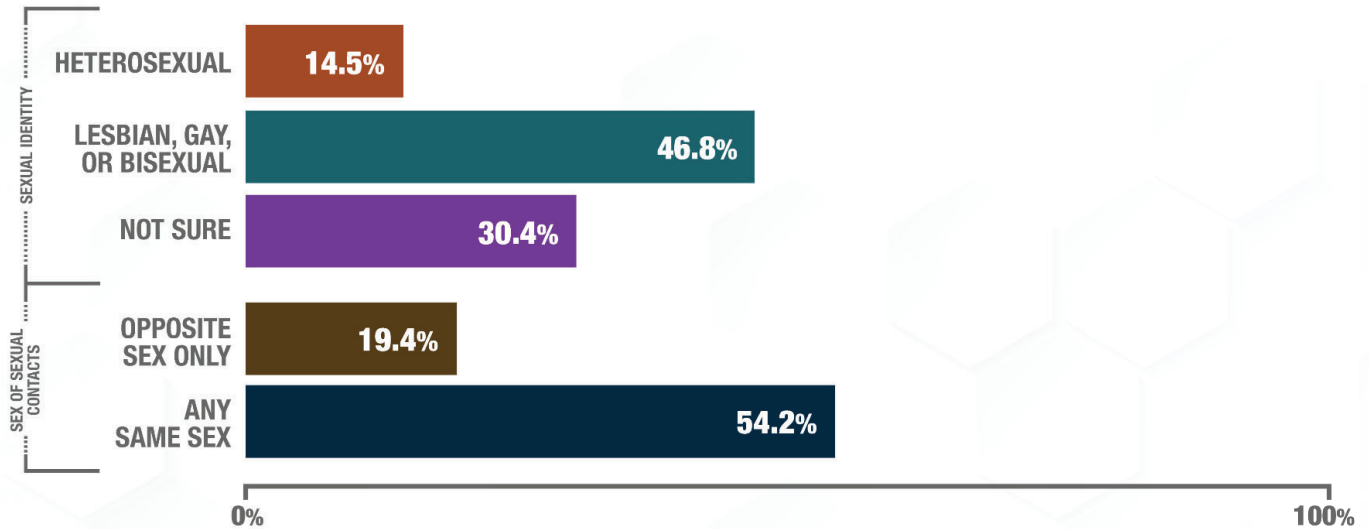


PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO

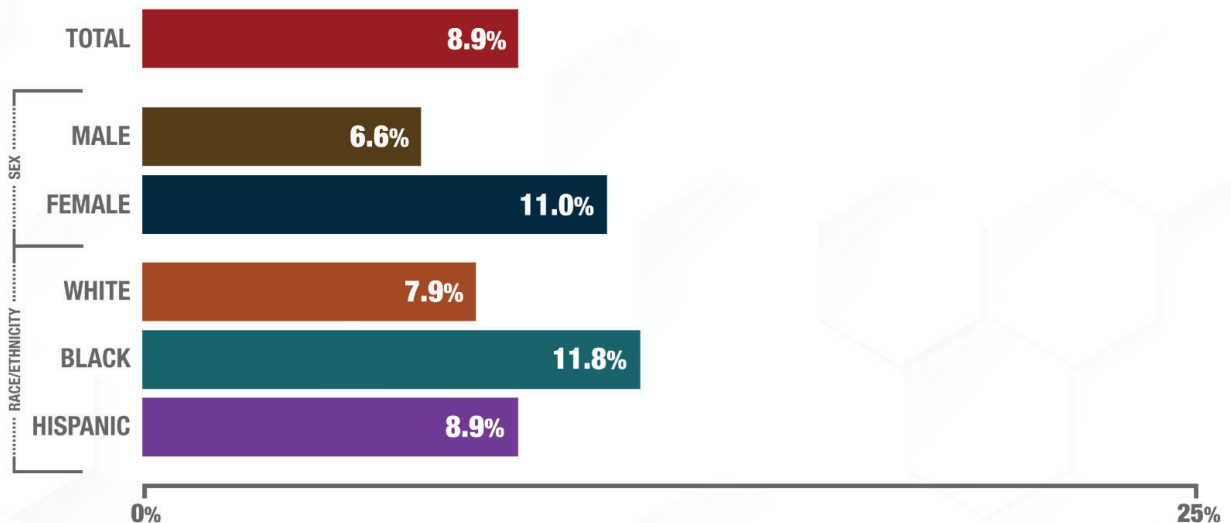
SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE DURING THE PAST YEAR, BY SEX & BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2019



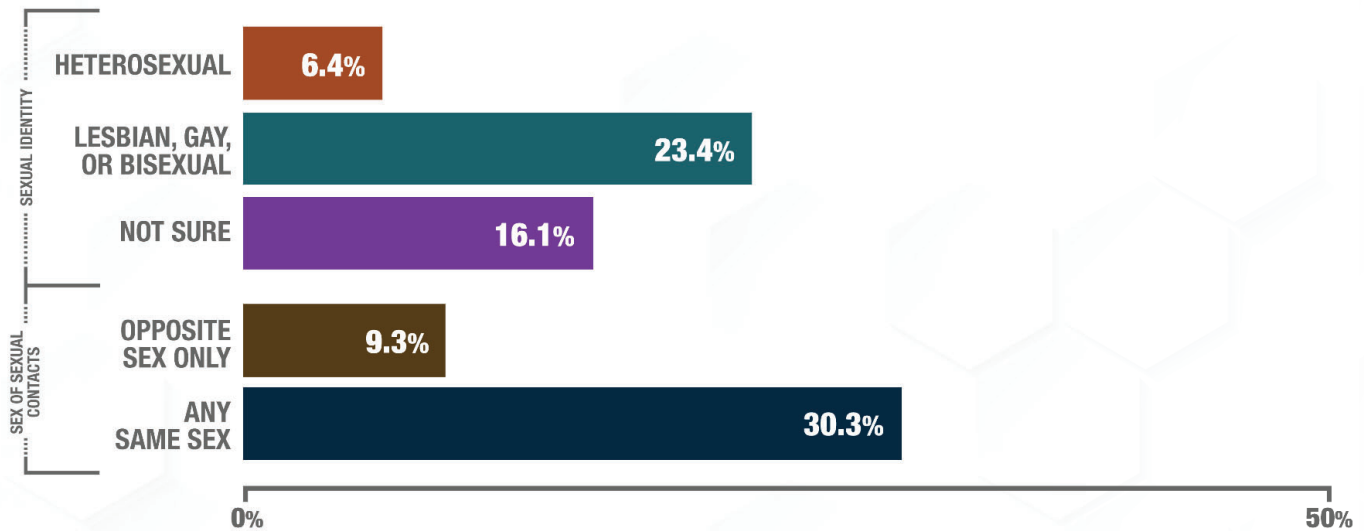
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SEXUAL IDENTITY & BY SEX OF SEXUAL CONTACTS, 2019



PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO
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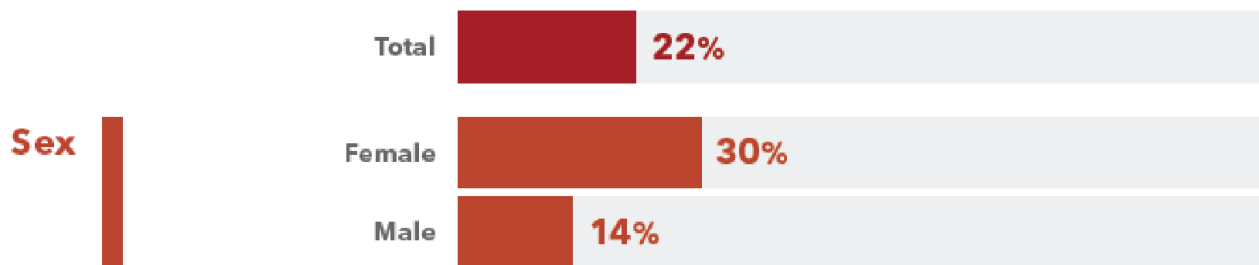


PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO
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AND BY **SEX OF SEXUAL CONTACTS**, UNITED STATES, YRBS, 2019



2021

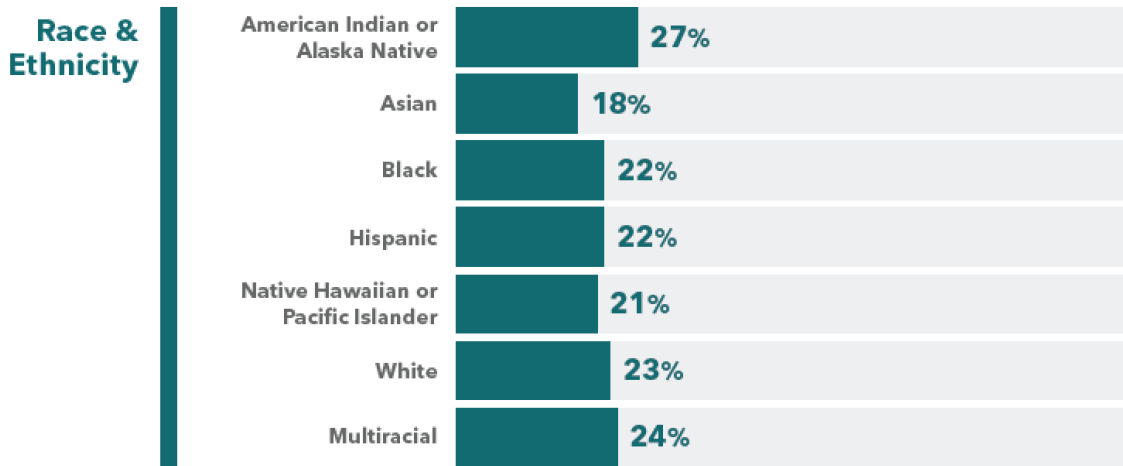
Percentage of High School Students Who
Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide during the Past Year,
by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021



YRBS 2019: 20% Female

2021

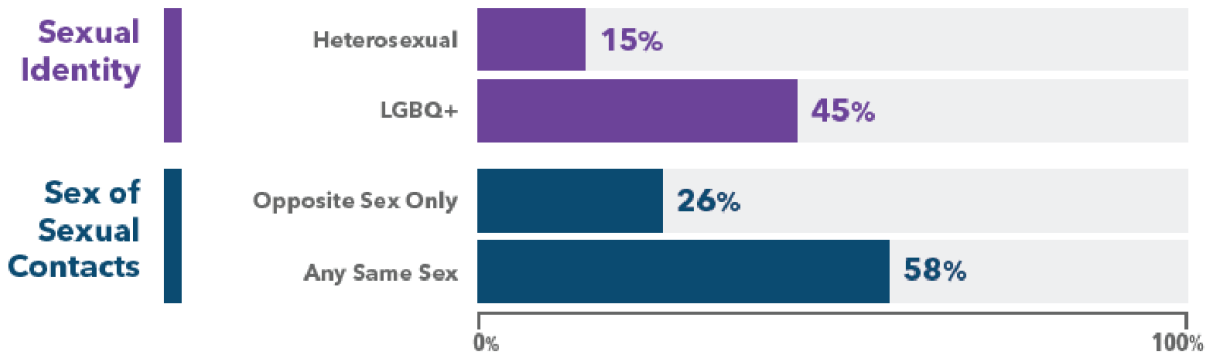
Percentage of High School Students Who Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide during the Past Year, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021



YRBS 2019 = 8% Black, 12% White, & 9% Hispanic

2021

Percentage of High School Students Who Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide during the Past Year, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021

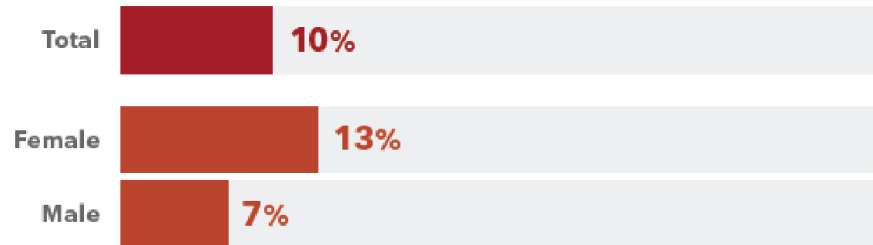


YRBS 2019: 23% LGBQ+ & 30% Any Same Sex

2021

Percentage of High School Students Who
Attempted Suicide during the Past Year,
by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021

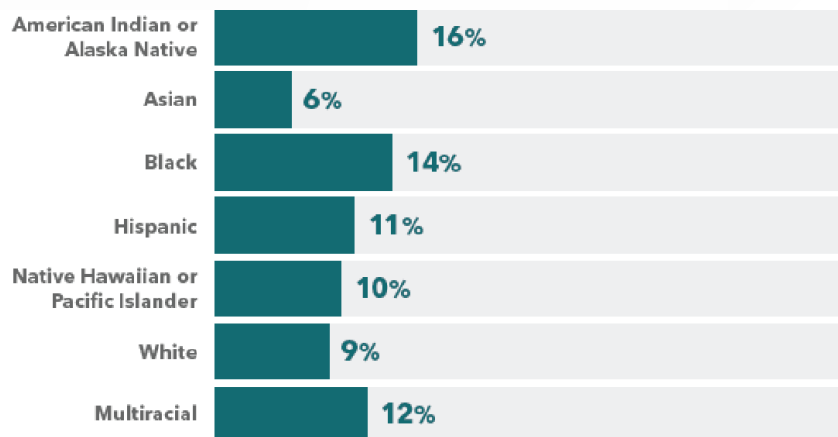
Sex



2021

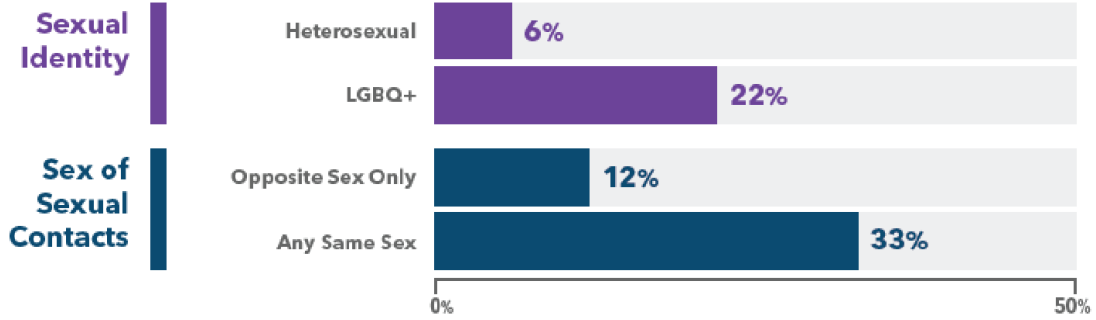
Percentage of High School Students Who
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by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021

Race & Ethnicity



2021

Percentage of High School Students Who Attempted Suicide during the Past Year, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021



Breathe...



Suicide Is Preventable

- When individuals, schools, & communities join forces to address suicide, they can save lives.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center, [Role of High School Teachers Revised FINAL v2 6-14-19.pdf \(sprc.org\)](#)

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Suicide Risk Factors

- Depression & other mental health problems
- Alcohol or drug use
- Feelings of social isolation
- Difficult life situations (domestic violence, abuse, bullying, poverty)

[Adolescents | Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(sprc.org\)](#)

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Suicide Risk Factors

- Depression & other mental health problems
- Alcohol or drug use
- Feelings of social isolation
- Difficult life situations (**domestic violence**, abuse, bullying, poverty)

[Adolescents | Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(sprc.org\)](#)

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Suicide Protective Factors

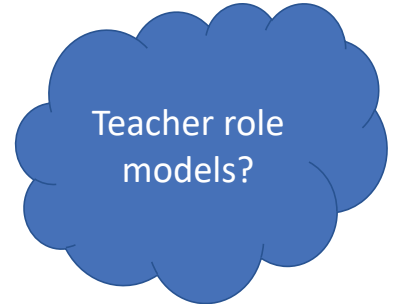
- Life skills (problem-solving, coping)
- Social support from family, friends, & others
- Positive school experiences
- Development of positive mental health indicators:
 - Affection
 - Resilience
 - Positivity
 - Self-control
 - Curiosity

[Adolescents | Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(sprc.org\)](#) & CDC 2019

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Suicide Protective Factors

- Life skills (problem-solving, coping)
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[Adolescents | Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(sprc.org\)](https://www.sprc.org/) & CDC 2019

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Suicide Warning Signs

Warning signs that someone may be at **immediate risk** for attempting suicide include:

- Talking about ...
 - Wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves
 - Feeling empty or hopeless or having no reason to live
 - About death often
 - About being a burden to others
- Withdrawing from family & friends
- Giving away important possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends & family
- Risk-taking behaviors that could lead to death (e.g., fast/reckless driving)

[NIMH » Suicide Prevention \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/)

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Suicide Warning Signs

Other serious warning signs:

- Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy
- Making a plan or looking for ways to kill themselves, such as searching for lethal methods online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling great guilt or shame
- Using alcohol or drugs more often
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Changing eating or sleeping habits
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge

[NIMH » Suicide Prevention \(nih.gov\)](#)

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School Connectedness

- Making positive changes to the school climate can result in improved academic achievement & healthy behaviors among students.

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](#)

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How Schools Can Help Prevent Suicide?

- Protocols for helping students at risk of suicide
- Protocols for responding to suicide death
- Universal screenings
- Staff & Parent education & training
 - Suicide prevention
 - How to recognize/respond to students at risk
 - Designated staff to support referral & student follow up

SAMSHA Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools
[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/2k16/preventing-suicide)

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2 Essential Components for Schools

1. Protocols for helping students at risk of suicide
2. Protocols for responding to suicide death (& thus preventing additional suicides)

SAMSHA Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools
[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/2k16/preventing-suicide)

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Engage Staff in Suicide Prevention

- *Educate all staff about the importance of suicide prevention*
- Training all staff to recognize *suicide risk*
- Training selected staff to assess & refer students at risk to appropriate services

SAMSHA Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health-toolkit/suicide-prevention)

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Implement Additional Protocols

- Educate PARENTS about how to promote behavioral health & prevent suicide
- Educate STUDENTS about how to promote behavioral health & prevent suicide
- Screen students for suicide risk

SAMSHA Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health-toolkit/suicide-prevention)

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Suicide Prevention Resources

Professionals or youth/parents can contact during a crisis

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** provides 24/7, free & confidential support for people in distress, prevention & crisis resources for you or your loved ones, & best practices for professionals in the United States.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**
 - Text HOME to 741-741
 - Chat: suicidepreventionlifeline.org
 - Spanish language: 1-866-628-9454
 - Deaf & hard of hearing: 1-800-799-4889
- **The Trevor Project: 1-855-488-7386**
 - TrevorText (M-F 3-10PM): (202) 304-1200
 - TrevorChat (7 days/week 3-10PM): www.thetrevorproject.org
- **Kids in Crisis: 203-661-1911**
 - National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
 - National Parent Helpline: 1-855-427-2736



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Just Breathe...



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Youth Violence in Schools



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Youth Violence

- When youth (ages 10-24) use intentional physical force or power to threaten or harm others
- Includes fighting bullying, threats with weapons & gang-related violence
- Involvement may be as a victim, offender, or witness

Youth Violence is a Serious Public Health Problem

Is an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

Leading cause of death & nonfatal injuries in U.S. adolescents

Has long-term impact on health & well-being

Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2021; CDC Vital Signs MMWR, February 2021
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

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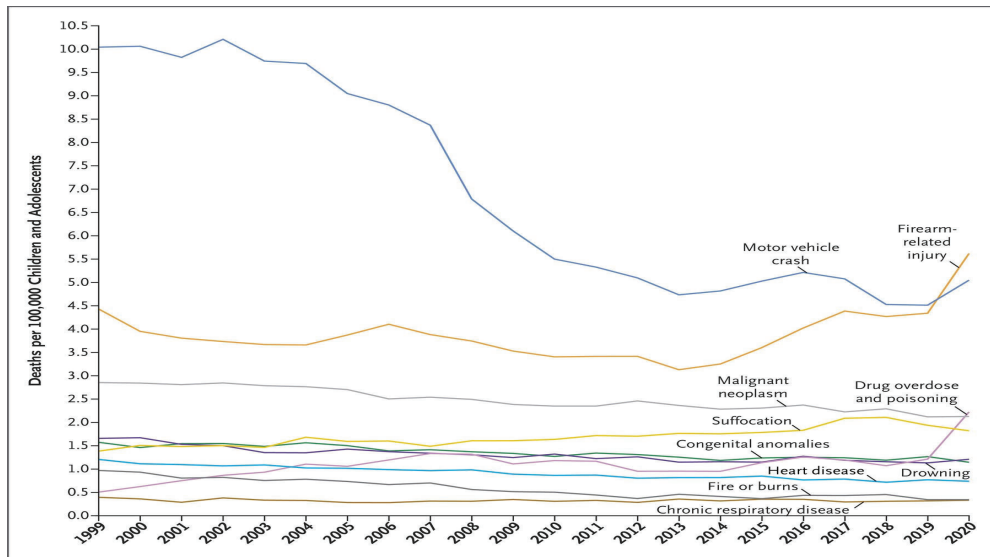
Youth Violence is a Serious Public Health Problem

Homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in teens

87% of these deaths were *firearm* related

Majority of school homicides are *firearm* related

Cause of Death for U.S. Youth, 1999-2020



Current Causes of Death in Children & Adolescents in the United States | NEJM

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School Violence

- Occurs in the school setting
 - On (or on the way to/from) school or school-sponsored event
- Disrupts learning & has a negative effect on students, teachers, schools, & the broader community
- Examples
 - Bullying/cyberbullying
 - Fighting (e.g., punching, slapping, kicking)
 - Weapon use
 - Gang violence
 - Sexual violence

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High School Violence








- Approx. 1 in 5 H.S. students reported being bullied at school in the last year
- 8% of H.S. students had been in a physical fight at school 1+ times during the 12 months before the survey
- > 7% of H.S. students had been threatened or injured with a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, club) at school 1+ times during the 12 months before the survey
- Almost 9% of H.S. students had not gone to school 1+ days within the 30 days before the survey, *because they felt they would be **unsafe at/to/from school***

2019, CDC's [Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#) : [YRBSS Overview](#) | [YRBSS](#) | [Adolescent & School Health](#) | [CDC](#)

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PROGRESS AT-A-GLANCE FOR

2019 EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE VARIABLES*

THE PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO:	2009 Total	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	Trend
Were threatened or injured with a weapon at school	7.7	7.4	6.9	6.0	6.0	7.4	
Did not go to school because of safety concerns	5.0	5.9	7.1	5.6	6.7	8.7	
Were electronically bullied	—	16.2	14.8	15.5	14.9	15.7	
Were bullied at school	19.9	20.1	19.6	20.2	19.0	19.5	
Were forced to have sex	7.4	8.0	7.3	6.7	7.4	7.3	
Experienced physical dating violence	—	—	10.3	9.6	8.0	8.2	
Experienced sexual dating violence	—	—	10.4	10.6	6.9	8.2	











LEGEND

	In wrong direction
	No change
	In right direction

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2009-2019

*For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix.

2021 EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE VARIABLES*

	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	2021 Total	Trend
 Were threatened or injured with a weapon at school	7	7	6	6	7	7	
Did not go to school because of safety concerns	6	7	6	7	9	9	
Were electronically bullied	16	15	16	15	16	16	
 Were bullied at school	20	20	20	19	20	15	
 Were ever forced to have sex	8	7	7	7	7	8	
 Experienced sexual violence by anyone†	–	–	–	10	11	11	

LEGEND

	In wrong direction
	No change
	In right direction

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2009-2019
 *For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix.

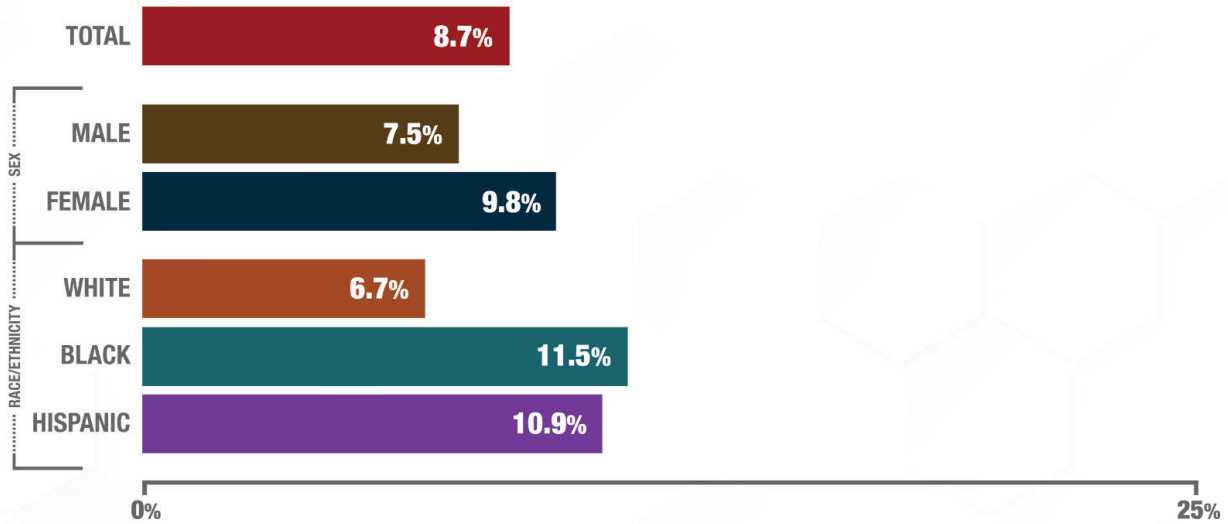
YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY DATA SUMMARY & TRENDS REPORT: 2011-2021

Some Youth Are
At Greater Risk



PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO

DID NOT GO TO SCHOOL AT LEAST ONCE DURING THE PAST 30 DAYS BECAUSE OF SAFETY CONCERNS, BY SEX & BY RACE/ETHNICITY, UNITED STATES, YRBS, 2019



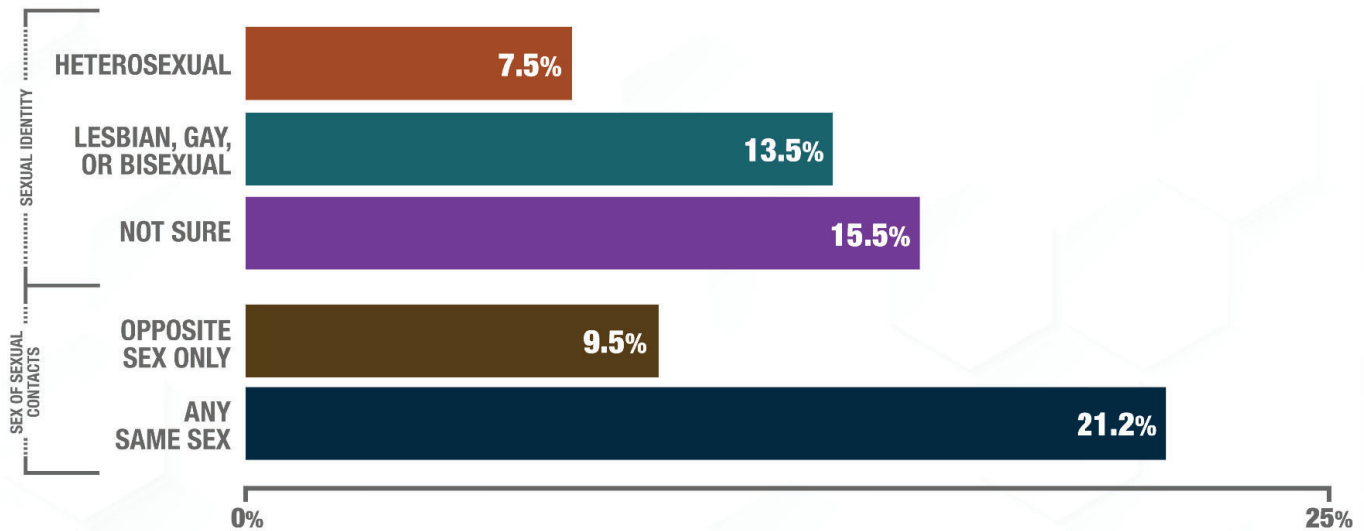
YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY DATA SUMMARY & TRENDS REPORT: 2009–2019

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Some Youths are at Greater Risk

Sexual minority teens are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence compared to heterosexual peers

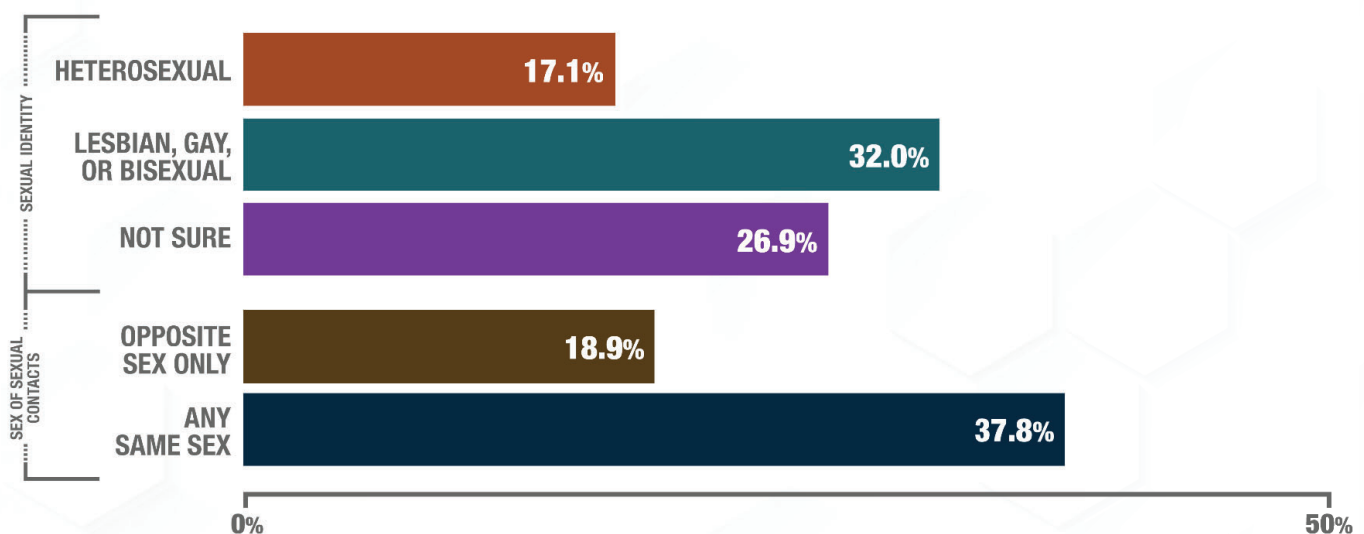
PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO
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CONCERNS, BY SEXUAL IDENTITY & BY SEX OF SEXUAL CONTACTS, UNITED STATES, YRBS, 2019



Compared to 8% of all youth

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY DATA SUMMARY & TRENDS REPORT: 2009–2019

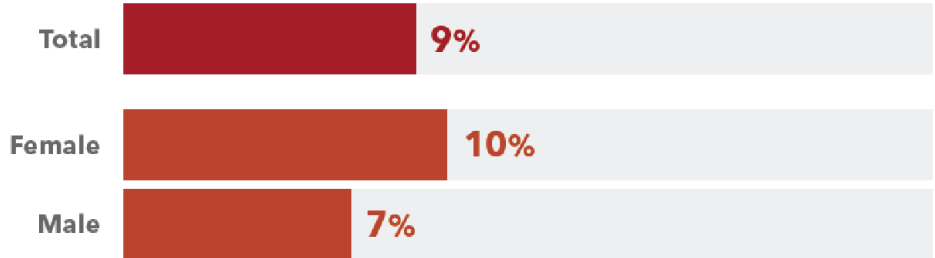
PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO
WERE BULLIED AT SCHOOL DURING THE PAST YEAR, BY SEXUAL
IDENTITY & BY SEX OF SEXUAL CONTACTS, UNITED STATES, YRBS, 2019



2021

Percentage of High School Students Who Did Not Go to School Because of Safety Concerns during the Past 30 Days, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021

Sex

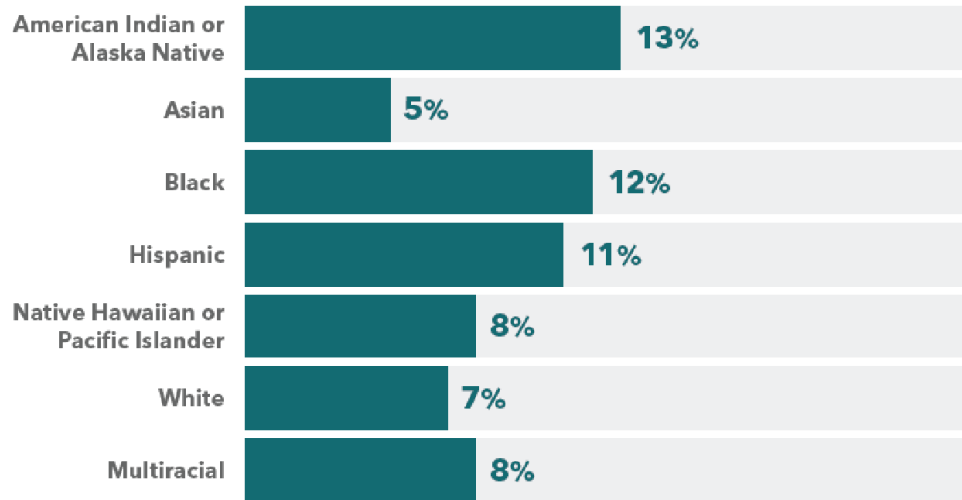


YRBS 2019: 8.9% Female

2021

Percentage of High School Students Who Did Not Go to School Because of Safety Concerns during the Past 30 Days, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021

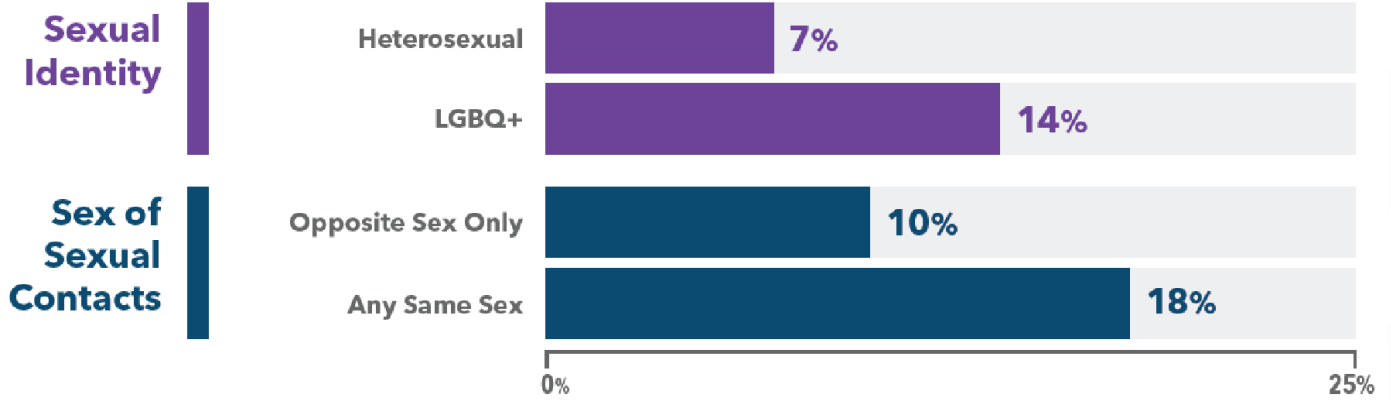
Race & Ethnicity



Compared to 2019: 7% White, 12% Black, & 11% Hispanic

2021

Percentage of High School Students Who Did Not Go to School Because of Safety Concerns during the Past 30 Days, by Demographic Characteristics, United States, YRBS, 2021



Compared to 2019: 14% LGBTQ+, 21% Any Same Sex

YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY DATA SUMMARY & TRENDS REPORT: 2011-2021

Why Do Schools Feel Unsafe?

- Bullying
- Homicide
- Violence



Bullying

- Peer-victimization
- Deliberate & unsolicited action with the intent of inflicting social, emotional, physical, &/or psychological harm
- Bullying typically happens repeatedly & is a form of aggression & harassment
- The harmful effects of bullying may be exacerbated by the frequency, pervasiveness, & severity of the behavior

Bullying

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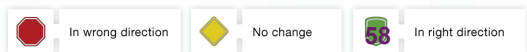
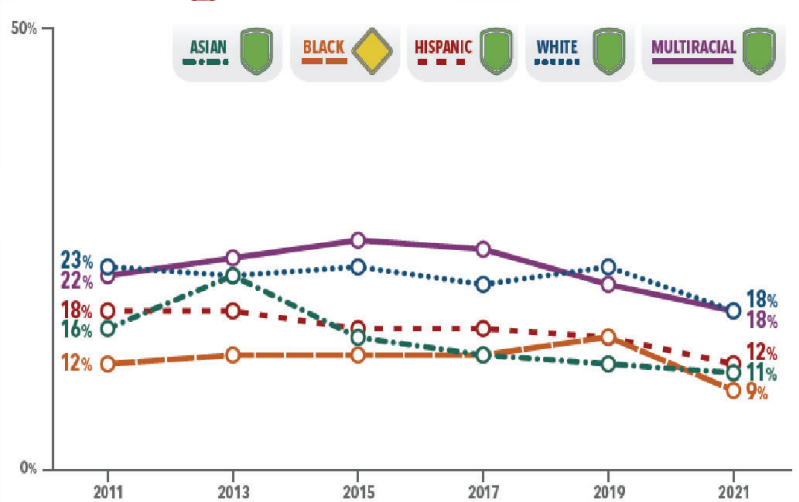
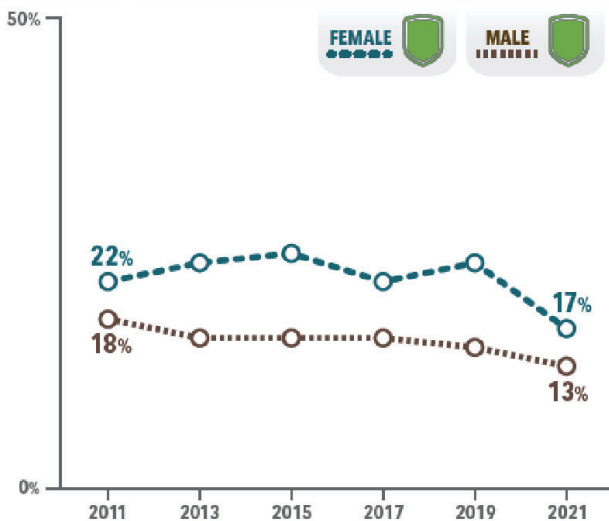
Types of Bullying

- **Physical**
(e.g., hitting, tripping, kicking)
- **Verbal**
(e.g., name calling, teasing, taunting, threatening, & sexual comments)
- **Social**
(e.g., spreading rumors, embarrassing someone in public, being purposefully exclusive)
- **Cyberbullying**
(e.g., sending negative, harmful, &/or false content electronically)

PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO

WERE BULLIED AT SCHOOL DURING THE PAST YEAR (2011-2021)

10-YEAR TREND BY SEX & RACE/ETHNICITY



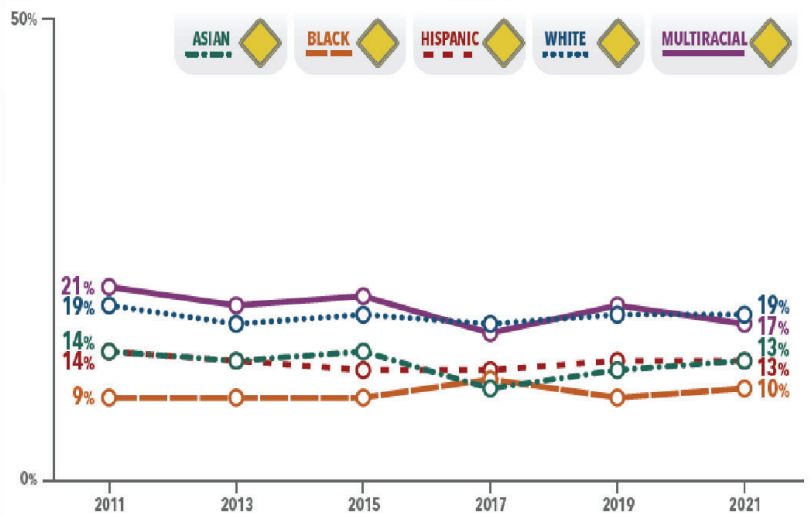
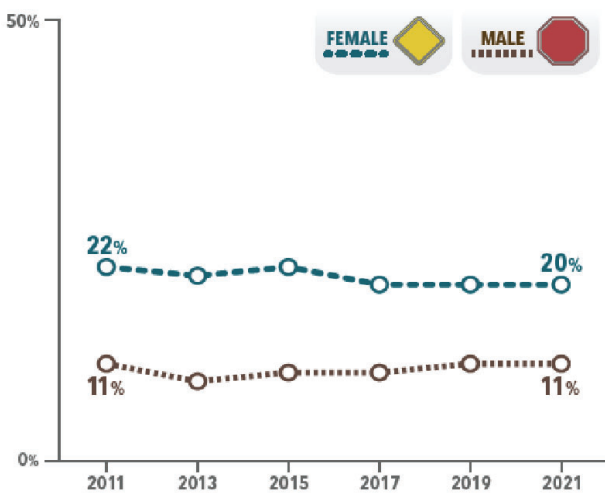
Celebrate!



PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO

WERE ELECTRONICALLY BULLIED DURING THE PAST YEAR (2011-2021)

10-YEAR TREND DESCRIPTION BY Sex & Race/Ethnicity



LEGEND

- In wrong direction
- ◆ No change
- 60 In right direction

School Homicides

- Single victim incidents (most often)
 - 90% of school-related youth homicide incidents (from 1994-2016)
 - **Victims: Male, racial/ethnic minority, occur in urban settings**
- Multiple-victim incidents
 - 10% of all school-associated youth homicide incidents (from 1994-2016)
 - Account for 18% of youth homicide victims

CDC: School Associated Violent Death Study,
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/SAVD.html>

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School-Related Homicides

- Multiple-victim homicide incidence rates **increased significantly** (2009-2018)
- **95%** of multiple-victim youth homicides associated with **firearm-related injuries** (1994-2018)
- **Firearms** used in school-related *homicides & suicides* came primarily **from perpetrator's home, friends, or relatives**
- Nearly **50%** of **homicide perpetrators** gave some type of **warning sign** before the event (e.g., made a threat, left a note).

CDC: School Associated Violent Death Study
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/SAVD.html>

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Perpetrators of K-12 Mass Shooting?

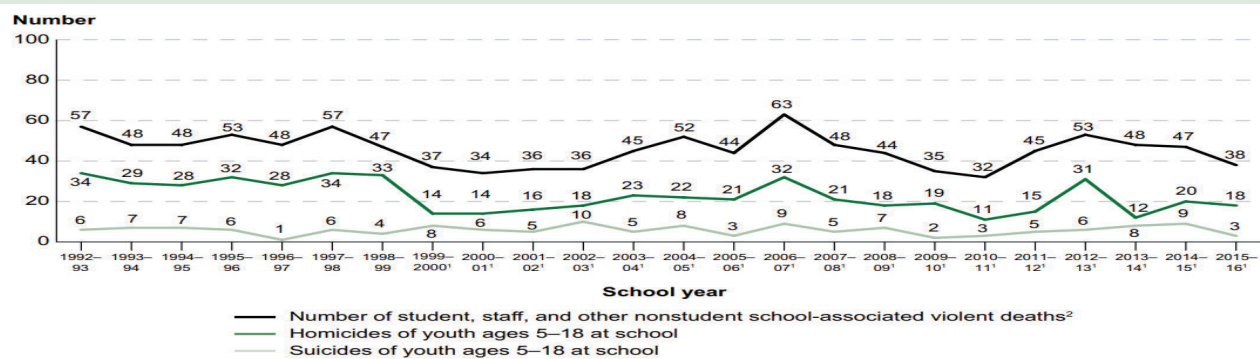
- Typically **minors** who have been the **target or perpetrator of bullying**
- Many have experienced **acute or chronic rejection from peers**

K-12 School Shootings: Implications for Policy, Prevention, & Child Well-being; Reeping et al, (2021)

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Violence In Schools: School Associated Violent Deaths

Figure 1.1. Number of student, staff, and other nonstudent school-associated violent deaths, and number of homicides and suicides of youth ages 5–18 at school: School years 1992–93 to 2015–16



¹ Data from 1999–2000 onward 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. For more information on this survey, see appendix A.
² A school-associated violent death is defined 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,” 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 may include not only students and staff members, but also others at school, such as students’ parents and community members.
 NOTE: “At school” includes on the property of a functioning elementary or secondary school, on the way to or from regular sessions at school, and while attending or traveling to or from a school-sponsored event. In this indicator, the term “at school” is comparable in meaning to the term “school-associated.” All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30.
 SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1992–2016 School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS) (partially funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students), unpublished tabulation (October 2018).

Effects of School Gun Violence

- Death
- Physical injuries (may be chronic &/or debilitating)
- Psychological consequences
 - Grief/anxiety/depression/traumatic symptoms
 - Impacts development (Acquired Adverse Childhood Experience)
 - Impact functioning (Worries about gun violence in their own school)
- Effects on students
 - Decreased performance on standardized math/English tests
 - Lower grades
 - Increased disruptive behaviors
- Effects on staff: Increased rates of illness/burnout/career change/divorce
- Increased costs for schools to purchase safety training/security staff/services/etc.

Kolbe LJ. School Gun Violence in the United States. *J Sch Health*. 2020; 90; 245-253. DOI: 10.1111/josh.12866

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Addressing Mental Health, Suicide, & Violence

- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015)** explicitly recognizes that **feeling safe & supported** are **necessary conditions** for students **to learn & achieve**
- The federal law provides multiple opportunities to create these conditions by implementing comprehensive school safety measures that **balance physical & psychological safety**

ESSA (2015) reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and revised many provisions of what was known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

[Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-abuse-mental-health-services-administrations-suicide-prevention-toolkit-for-high-schools)

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2023) [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) School Safety for School Psychologists](https://www.naspschoolsafety.org/)

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Violence Can Disrupt Teens' Physical Health & Development

- Violence prevention is key to promoting teen physical health
- Reduces risk of developing cancer & heart disease as an adult
- A teen's brain is still growing. Experiencing violence during this time of life can contribute to:
 - Impaired decision-making
 - Learning challenges
 - Decreased connections to peers & adults
 - Trouble coping with stress

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>

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Teens Who Experience Violence Exhibit Risky Behaviors

- Miss school due to safety concerns
- Low academic grades
- Carry a weapon
- Suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Risky sexual behavior
- Substance use
- Overweight or obesity

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>

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CDC Violence Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

1. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Facts, risk & protective factors, prevention, etc.
2. Child abuse & neglect
3. Child sexual abuse
4. Community violence prevention
5. Elder abuse
6. Firearm violent prevention
7. Intimate partner violence
8. Sexual violence
9. Youth violence
10. Coping with stress
11. Communication resources (infographics, videos, etc.)
 - Violence Education Tools Online (VETO)

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How To Identify Youth In Need of Mental Health Services?



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Situations that can be traumatic

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Domestic abuse, abandonment/betrayal of trust, &/or neglect
- Death or loss of a loved one
- Life-threatening illness (self or caregiver)
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Automobile & other serious accidents
- Bullying
- Witnessing/experiencing community violence (e.g., drive by shooting, fights, robbery)
- Witnessing police activity
- Having a close relative incarcerated
- Life-threatening natural disasters
- Acts or threats of terrorism

Trauma Reactions Vary

Students who have experienced traumatic events

- May have behavioral or academic **problems**, OR
- Their suffering ***may not be apparent at all***

Trauma Reactions in *Preschool*

- Separation anxiety/clinginess to caregivers/teachers
- Milestone regressions (e.g., baby talk, bedwetting/accidents)
- Sleep problems
- Increased distress, new fears, anxiety about safety
- Statements or questions about death or dying
- Traumatic play

Trauma Reactions in *Middle School*

- Anxiety, fear, worries about safety or violence
- Changes in behavior (e.g., increased activity, decreased attention/concentration, withdrawal, anger, absenteeism)
- Mistrust of others/authority
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, etc.
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., stomachaches, headaches)
- Hyperarousal, avoidance, emotional numbing

Trauma Reactions in *High School*

- Anxiety, worries about safety of self & others
- Changes in behavior (e.g., withdrawal, irritability, anger outbursts, decreased attention, absenteeism, academic decline)
- Discussion of traumatic events, reviewing details, etc.
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, etc.
- Increased risk of substance misuse/abuse
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares, disturbing & intrusive memories)
- Hyperarousal, avoidance, emotional numbing

Ways Schools Can Help



10 Essential Actions to Improve School Safety

<https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/content.ashx/cops-w0891-pub.pdf>

1. Comprehensive school safety assessment
2. School climate
3. Campus/building/classroom security
4. Anonymous reporting systems
5. Coordination with first responders
6. Behavior threat assessment & management team
7. School-based law enforcement
8. Mental health resources
9. Drills
10. Social media monitoring

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Lockdown Drills

"Everytown, AFT, & NEA do not recommend these *drills* for students & believe that schools should carefully consider impacts before conducting live drills that involve students & educators."

*Feb 2020 – Joint Research Report from
Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown),
American Federation of Teachers (AFT), & National Education Association (NEA)*

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Lockdown Drills

Are They Worth It?

- Limited evidence of effectiveness
- May be counter-productive
 - Inform future perpetrators of procedures
 - Can make children feel less safe at school
- Can cause Psychological Harm

Lockdown Drills: Considerations

If a school chooses to have Lockdown Drills:

1. Avoid drills for young children (cannot differentiate fantasy & reality)
2. Do not include simulations of an actual incident
3. Always provide advance notice to
 - Families
 - Educators
 - Students

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Lockdown Drills: Considerations

If a school chooses to have Lockdown Drills (continued):

4. Include *trauma-informed* approaches during & after the drill
 - Remind students of other measures of protection at school
 - Train teachers to detect signs that a student is traumatized or needs support
 - Devise a plan to support children who are traumatized
 - Allow students with a history of trauma to opt out

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Children Have a Right to Thrive & Learn In a Safe School Environment

Schools are intended to be **safe spaces** within which children should be able to **thrive** & foster their **physical, social & emotional development**.

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Public Health Approach



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School Violence is Preventable

- Define & monitor school gun violence problems & implement interventions to prevent it
- Identify risk & protective factors
- Develop & test effectiveness of interventions
- Assure widespread adoption of the most effective interventions

Kolbe LJ. School Gun Violence in the United States. *J Sch Health*. 2020; 90; 245-253. DOI: 10.1111/josh.12866

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Interventions to Prevent School *Gun Violence*

1) Primary prevention/interventions

- *Decrease likelihood* of school gun violence

2) Secondary interventions

- *Reduce severity* of effects when school gun violence occurs

3) Tertiary interventions

- Help students, staff & families who experience school gun violence *recover*

Kolbe LJ. School Gun Violence in the United States. *J Sch Health*. 2020; 90; 245-253. DOI: 10.1111/josh.12866

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Schools Can

- Adopt policies & practices that create safe & supportive environments
- Provide quality early childhood education
- Build social-emotional skills
 - Teach students skills to navigate social & emotional challenges
- Foster connectivity to build strong bonds between students &...
 - Staff
 - Caring adults
 - Health & mental health services

[A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence & Associated Risk Behaviors \(cdc.gov\)](#)

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More broadly,
trauma can be
mitigated.

Prevention/interventions:

Primary (*decrease likelihood*)

Secondary (*reduce severity*)

Tertiary (*recover*)



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Posttraumatic Stress

WHAT TEACHERS & EDUCATORS CAN DO:

If a child discloses trauma:

- Provide praise for disclosing & seeking help
- Be emotionally available
- Inform others to coordinate services
- Answer questions in a developmentally appropriate way
- Make a referral when necessary, involve the family

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Posttraumatic Stress

Evidence-Based Treatments

- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)
- Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- Trauma & Grief Component Therapy (TGCT)
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET)

Goals for Trauma-Focused EBTs

- Educate about the impact of trauma
- Help children & caregivers re-establish a **sense of safety**
- Teach skills to **cope with overwhelming emotional reactions**
- Provide safe/accepting space to talk about & make sense of trauma
- Involve caregivers in the healing process, when possible

Domestic Violence

Parent-child, sibling, & partner abuse

YOU can ASK...

- “How are things going at home for you?”
- “Is it hard for you when your parents argue?”
- “What happens when they get mad at each other?”
- “Does anyone at your house ever hurt anyone’s feelings or frighten anyone?”
- “Would you like to tell me (or counselor) about that?”

Youth need to HEAR...

- “**It’s not your fault** if someone in the family says mean things/hurts someone.”
- “It’s not your (or your Mom/Dad’s) fault if someone treats you/her/him badly.”
- “**No one should ever blame you** for being mean to you or hurting you.”
- “A child can’t really protect his/her mother/father & it isn’t the child’s job.”

Bancroft, Lundy. *Why Does He Do That? : inside the Minds of Angry & Controlling Men*. New York :Berkley Books, 2003.

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Domestic Violence

How do I support someone living with domestic violence?

***** Your goal is to be the OPPOSITE of what their abuser is... *****

If the ABUSER:	YOU should:
Pressures	Be patient
Talks down	Address them with respect
“Knows better”	Treat them as an expert in their own life
Dominates conversation	Listen more & talk less
Believes they have the right to control	Respect their right to self-determination
Assumes they know best	Assume they are competent
Thinks <i>for</i> them	Think <i>WITH</i> them

***** Ask the empowering question, “What do you want to do?” *****

Bancroft, Lundy. *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry & Controlling Men*. New York: Berkley Books, 2003.

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School violence can be prevented

- CDC's [Technical Packages for Violence Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/communicationresources/pub/technical-packages.html) to help communities & states prioritize prevention strategies based on the best available evidence
- Strategies & approaches shape individual behaviors AND the cultural, relationship, family, school, community, & societal factors that influence risk & protective factors for violence
- Meant to work together & be used in combination in a multi-level, multi-sector efforts to prevent violence

Technical Packages for Violence Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/communicationresources/pub/technical-packages.html>



Thank You!

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CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

2009-2019 & 2011-2021

- National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a school-based survey conducted biennially by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
- The survey monitors categories of health risk behaviors among a nationally representative sample of U.S. high school students
- More info about the national YRBS at www.cdc.gov/yrbs
- YRBS 2011-2021 (https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/YRBS_Data-Summary-Trends_Report2023_508.pdf)

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For More Information

Web: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth

Twitter: [@CDC_DASH](https://twitter.com/CDC_DASH)

E-mail: nccddashinfo@cdc.gov

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 www.cdc.gov



The findings & conclusions in this report are those of the authors & do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

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Thank You!

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