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 find their environment a difficult one in which to learn.

Priorities set by schools, local authorities, and state and federal government have prompted the nation to focus on improving the safety of American schools. The effort toward providing safer schools requires establishing good indicators of the current state of school crime and safety, and periodically monitoring and updating these indicators. Student safety is of concern outside of school as well. In fact, as the data in this report show, a larger number of serious violent victimizations happen away from school than at school. In 2000, students were more than twice as likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school than at school.

In 2000, students ages 12 through 18 were victims of about 1.9 million total crimes of violence or theft at school. In that same year, students in this age range were victims of about 128,000 serious violent crimes at school (i.e., rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault). There were also 47 school-associated violent deaths in the United States between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999, including 38 homicides, 33 of which involved school-aged children.

The total nonfatal victimization rate for students ages 12 through 18 generally declined between 1992 and 2000, from 144 per 1,000 students in 1992 to 72 per 1,000 students in 2000. The percentage of students being victimized at school also has declined over the last few years. Between 1995 and 2001, the percentage of students who reported being victims of crime at school decreased from 10 percent to 6 percent. This decline was due in large part to the decrease in the percentage of students reporting being victims of theft at school, which declined from 7 percent in 1995 to 4 percent in 2001.
SAMHSA Unveils Data on Youth Violence

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released new data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse showing that in 2001 more than 4 million youths (19 percent of those age 12-17) participated in a serious fight at school or work, and over 3 million (15 percent) took part in a group-against-group fight. Almost 2 million youths (8 percent) attacked others in the past year with the intent of seriously hurting them.

This data shows that serious fights, while up from 17.9 percent in 2000, are still significantly below the 21.9 percent of youth that participated in a serious fight in 1999, the first year this data was collected. Group fighting declined from 8.4 percent 1999 to 7.5 percent in 2000, and has not changed statistically in 2001. The SAMHSA data show that about 28 percent of youths engaged in at least one of these violent behaviors in 2001. This compares to 31.4 percent engaging in at least one of these behaviors in 1999 and 26.3 percent in 2000.

The 2001 data indicate that the most violent years for youth are ages 14 or 15, when 9 percent fought with intent to inflict serious harm. Younger and older youth engage in less violence, with 8 percent of 16 or 17 year olds intending serious harm and 7 percent of 12 and 13 year olds intending to seriously hurt their victims. In 2001, Asian youths were less likely to have attacked others with the intent of seriously hurting them in the past year (4 percent) compared with black youth (13 percent) and Hispanic or white youth (7 percent). Of those engaging in two or more types of violent behaviors in 2001, over 40 percent used illicit drugs and over 50 percent used alcohol.

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse is a national survey of almost 70,000 people aged 12 and older, conducted annually by SAMHSA. The 2001 survey polled over 23,000 youth aged 12-17, who reported their substance use and related behaviors.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the lead federal agency for improving the quality and availability of substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment and mental health services in the United States. Information on SAMHSA's programs is available on this website, www.samhsa.gov.
School-Related Violence

Nationwide, 6.6% of students had missed >1 days of school during the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Overall, Hispanic and black students (10.2% and 9.8%, respectively) were significantly more likely than white students (5%) to have missed school because they felt unsafe. This significant racial/ethnic difference was identified for both male and female students. Overall, students in grade 9 (8.8%) were significantly more likely than students in grades 11 and 12 (5.9% and 4.4%, respectively) to report this behavior. Prevalence across state surveys varied sixfold from 3% to 16.9% (median: 7.3%) (Table 11). Prevalence across local surveys ranged from 6.6% to 17% (median: 11.4%).

Among students nationwide, 6.4% carried a weapon on school property on >1 of the 30 days preceding the survey. Male students (10.2%) were significantly more likely than female students (2.9%) to have carried a weapon on school property. This significant sex difference was identified for white and Hispanic students and students in all the grade subpopulations. Prevalence of carrying a weapon on school property varied fourfold from 2.4% to 10.3% (median: 6.2%) across state surveys and ranged from 4.1% to 9.3% (median: 5.5%) across local surveys.

Nationwide, 8.9% of students had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property >1 times during the 12 months preceding the survey. Male students (11.5%) were significantly more likely than female students (6.5%) to have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property. This significant sex difference was identified for white and black students and students in all the grade subpopulations. Overall, students in grade 9 (12.7%) were significantly more likely than students in grades 10, 11, and 12 (9.1%, 6.9%, and 5.3%, respectively) to have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and students in grade 10 (9.1%) were significantly more likely than students in grade 12 (5.3%) to report this behavior. Prevalence of being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property ranged from 5.9% to 11.2% (median: 8.5%) across state surveys and from 7.9% to 14.8% (median: 9.8%) across local surveys.

Nationwide, 12.5% of students had been in a physical fight on school property >1 times during the 12 months preceding the survey. Male students (18%) were significantly more likely than female students (7.2%) to have been in a physical fight on school property. This significant sex difference was identified for all the racial/ethnic and grade subpopulations. Overall, black students (16.8%) were significantly more likely than white students (11.2%) to have been in a physical fight on school property. Black and Hispanic female students (12.7% and 11%, respectively) were significantly more likely than white female students (5.4%) to report this behavior. Overall, students in grades 9 and 10 (17.3% and 13.5%, respectively) were significantly more likely than students in grades 11 and 12 (9.4% and 7.5%, respectively) to have been in a physical fight on school property, and students in grade 9 (17.3%) were significantly more likely than students in grade 10 (13.5%) to report this behavior. Across state surveys, prevalence of having engaged in a physical fight on school property ranged from 8.8% to 14.2% (median: 11.8%). Across local surveys, prevalence ranged from 11.2% to 21.5% (median: 14%).