

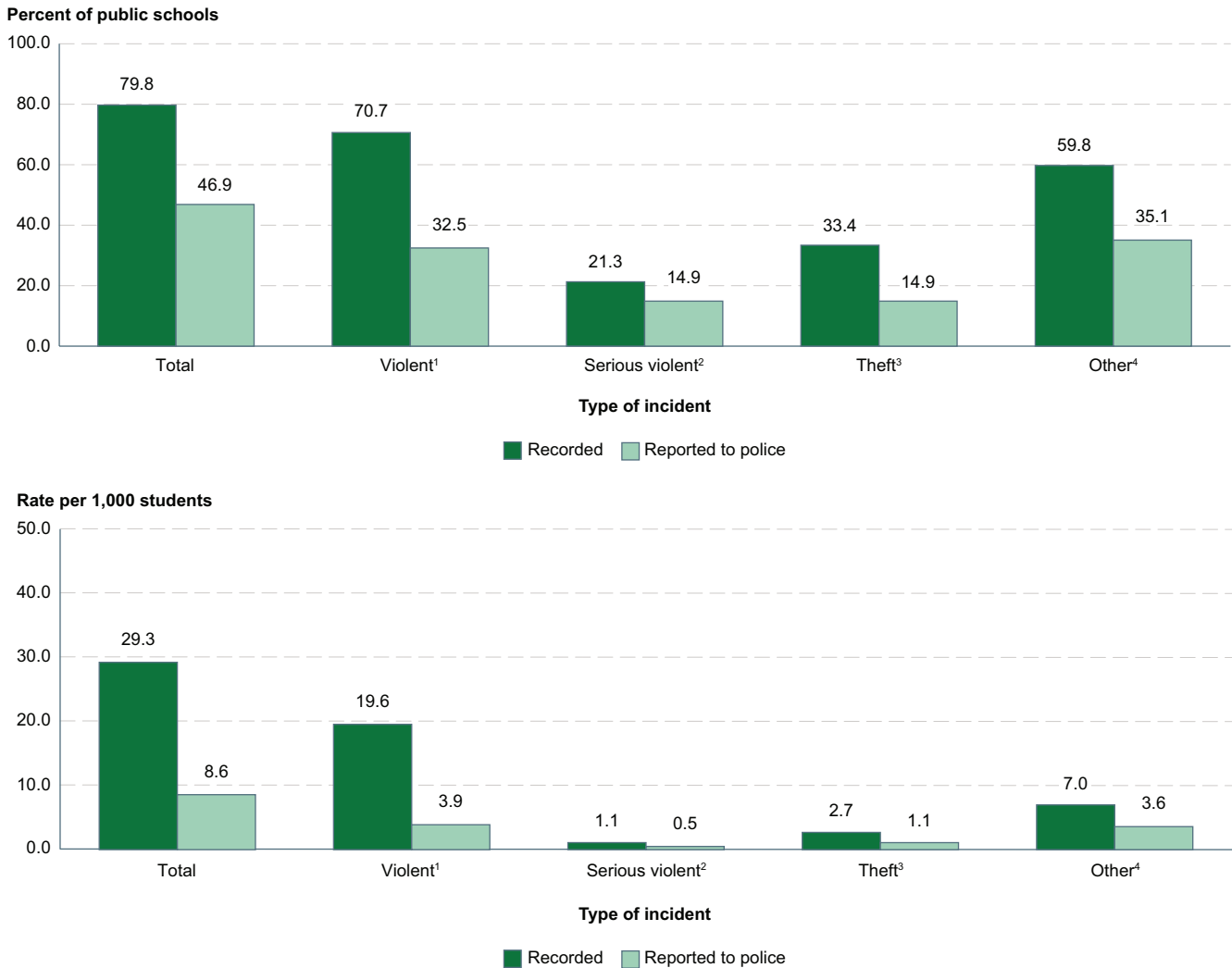
Violent and Other Criminal Incidents Recorded by Public Schools and Those Reported to the Police

In 2017–18, about 71 percent of public schools recorded one or more violent incidents, 21 percent recorded one or more serious violent incidents, and 33 percent recorded one or more thefts.

Between 1999-2000 and 2009-10, as well as in 2015-16 and 2017-18, the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) asked public school principals to provide the number of violent incidents,¹ serious violent incidents,² thefts of items valued at \$10 or greater without personal confrontation, and other criminal incidents³ that occurred at their school.⁴ Public school principals were also asked

to provide the number of such incidents they reported to the police. This indicator presents the percentage of public schools that recorded one or more of these specified incidents, the total number of incidents recorded, and the rate of incidents per 1,000 students. These data are also presented for incidents that were reported to the police.

Figure 1. Percentage of public schools recording incidents of violence, theft, and other crimes at school, percentage reporting these incidents to the police, and rate of these incidents per 1,000 students, by type of incident: School year 2017–18



¹ “Violent incidents” include “serious violent” incidents (see footnote 2) as well as physical attacks or fights without a weapon and threat of physical attacks without a weapon.

² “Serious violent” incidents include rape, sexual assault other than rape, physical attacks or fights with a weapon, threat of physical attacks with a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon.

³ Theft or larceny is taking things worth over \$10 without personal confrontation.

⁴ “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: 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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and because schools that recorded or reported more than one type of crime incident were counted only once in the total percentage of schools recording or reporting incidents.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017–18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2018. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 229.10 and 229.20.

During the 2017-18 school year, 80 percent of public schools recorded that one or more incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes had taken place, amounting to 1.4 million incidents. This translates to a rate of 29 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled in 2017-18. During the same school year, 47 percent of schools reported one or more incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes to the police, amounting to 422,800 incidents, or 9 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled.

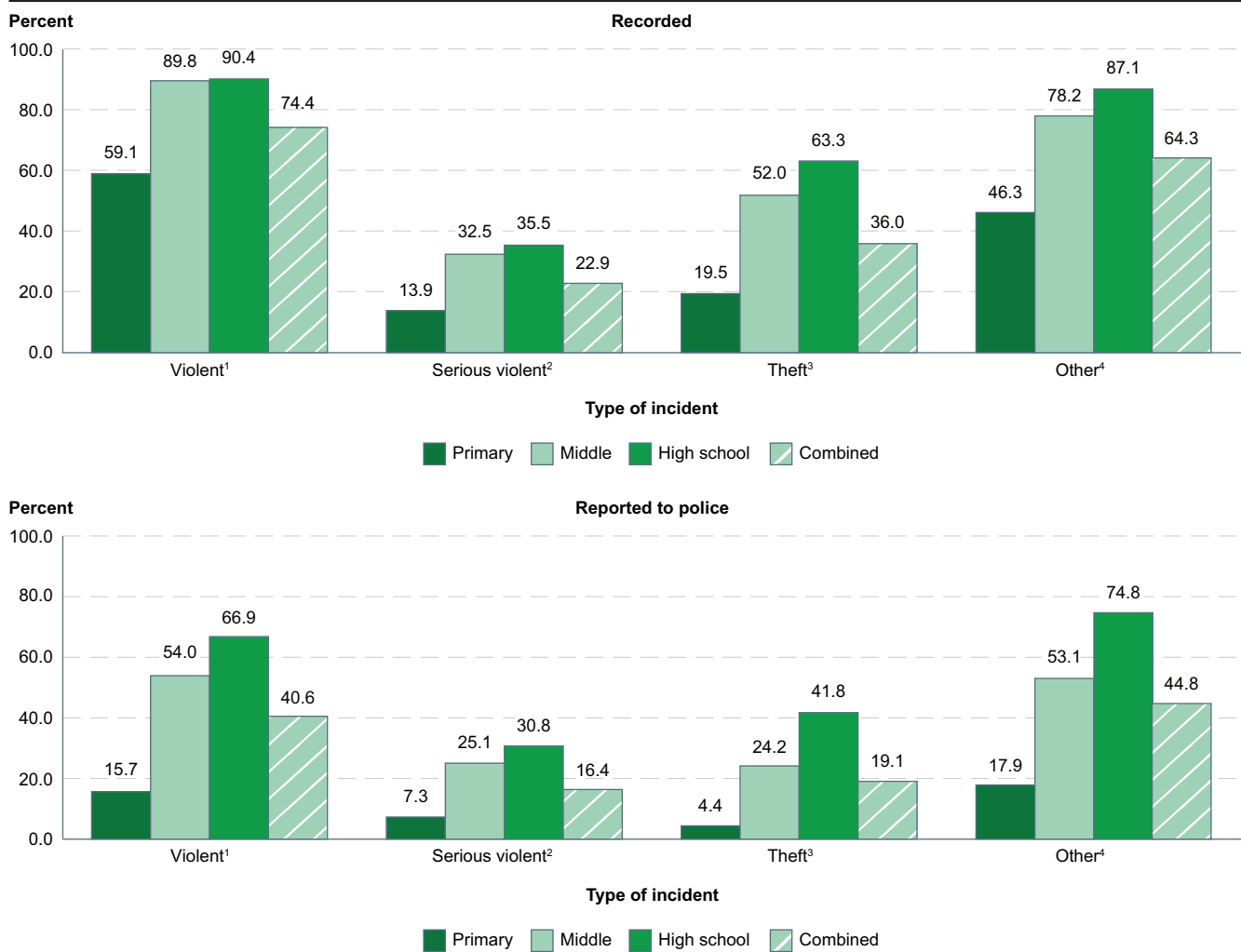
Not all recorded incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes were reported to the police. In 2017-18, across all types of incidents, the percentage of public schools that reported one or more incidents to the police was lower than the percentage that recorded incidents: violent incidents (32 vs. 71 percent), serious violent incidents (15 vs. 21 percent), thefts (15 vs. 33 percent), and other incidents (35 vs. 60 percent). In terms of rates, there were 4 violent incidents per 1,000 students reported to the police by schools compared with 20 violent incidents per 1,000 students recorded by schools; 1 theft per 1,000 students reported compared with 3 thefts per 1,000 students recorded; and 4 other incidents per 1,000 students reported compared with 7 other incidents per 1,000 students recorded.

The percentage of public schools that recorded one or more incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes was lower in 2017-18 (80 percent) than in every survey year between 1999-2000 and 2009-10 (ranging from 85 to 89 percent); however, there was no measurable difference between the percentages in 2015-16 and 2017-18. Similarly, the percentage of schools that reported one or more incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes to the police was lower in 2017-18 (47 percent) than in every survey

year between 1999-2000 and 2009-10 (ranging from 60 to 65 percent); however, there was no measurable difference between the percentages in 2015-16 and 2017-18. The same patterns can be observed for the rates of incidents per 1,000 students recorded by schools and reported to the police by schools. Specifically, schools recorded an average of 29 incidents per 1,000 students in 2017-18, compared with rates ranging from 40 to 48 incidents per 1,000 students between 1999-2000 and 2009-10; schools reported to the police an average of 9 incidents per 1,000 students in 2017-18, compared with rates ranging from 14 to 16 incidents per 1,000 students between 1999-2000 and 2009-10.

Although there were no measurable differences between 2015-16 and 2017-18 in the total percentages of public schools that recorded and reported any incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes, for specific types of crimes, there were some measurable differences between these two years. For instance, the percentage of schools that recorded incidents of theft was lower in 2017-18 than in 2015-16 (33 vs. 39 percent). However, the percentage of schools that recorded serious violent incidents was higher in 2017-18 than in 2015-16 (21 vs. 15 percent). This increase was mostly driven by the increase in the percentages of schools that recorded incidents of sexual assault other than rape (from 3 to 5 percent) and threat of physical attack with a weapon (from 9 to 13 percent). The same patterns can be observed for the percentages of schools that reported thefts and serious violent incidents to the police: the percentage of schools that reported incidents of theft to the police was lower in 2017-18 than in 2015-16 (15 vs. 18 percent), while the percentage of schools that reported serious violent incidents to the police was higher in 2017-18 than in 2015-16 (15 vs. 10 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of public schools recording incidents of violence, theft, and other crimes at school and percentage reporting these incidents to the police, by school level: School year 2017–18



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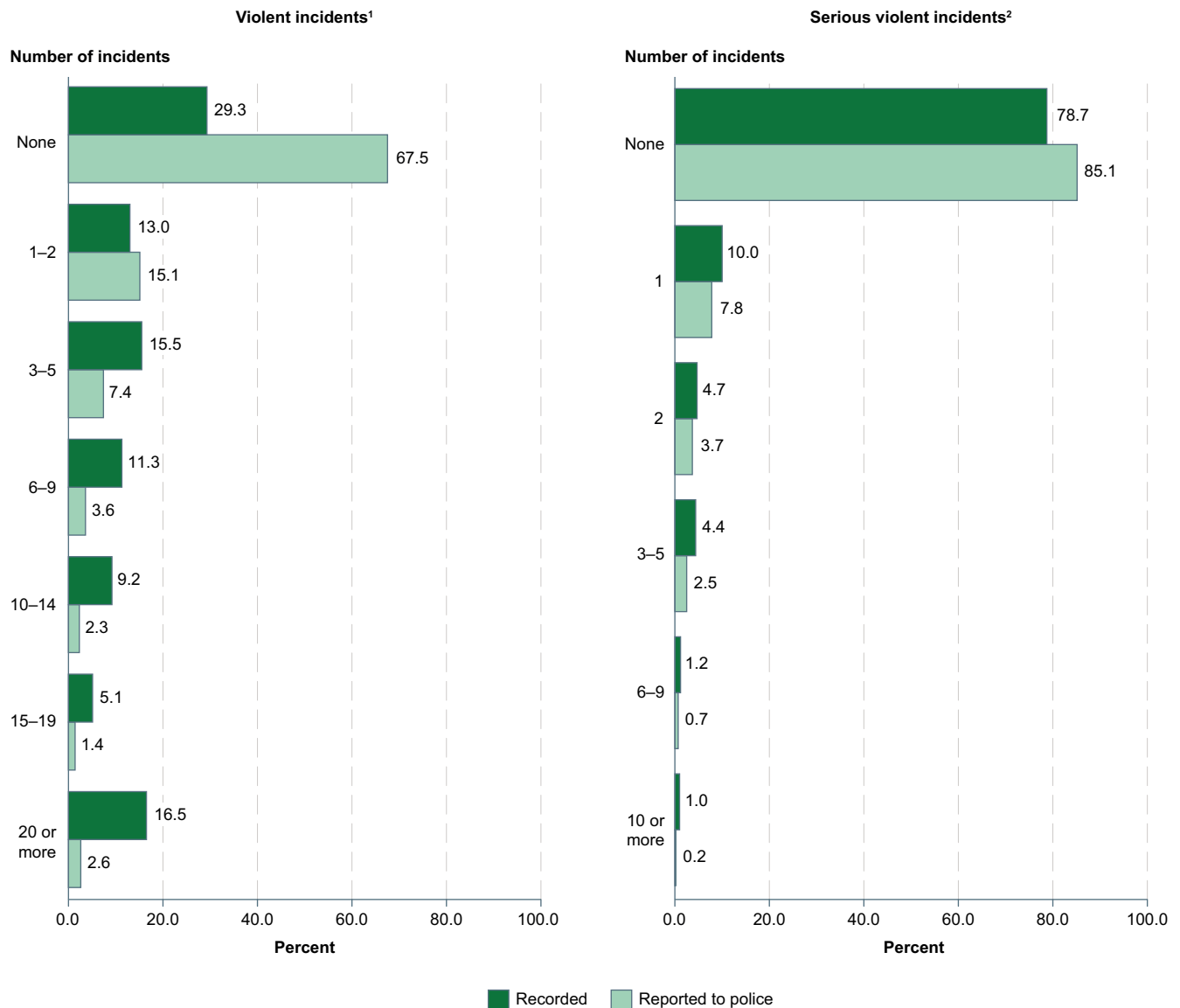
NOTE: Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime and safety issues at the school. “At school” was defined as including activities that happen in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities. Respondents were instructed to include incidents that occurred before, during, and after normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session. Primary schools are defined as schools in which the lowest grade is not higher than grade 3 and the highest grade is not higher than grade 8. Middle schools are defined as schools in which the lowest grade is not lower than grade 4 and the highest grade is not higher than grade 9. High schools are defined as schools in which the lowest grade is not lower than grade 9. Combined schools include all other combinations of grades, including K–12 schools.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017–18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2018. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 229.30 and 229.40.

In 2017-18, lower percentages of primary schools than of middle schools and high schools recorded incidents of violent crime, serious violent crime, theft, and other crimes. For instance, 59 percent of primary schools recorded violent incidents, compared with 90 percent each of middle schools and high schools.

A similar pattern was observed for public schools that reported such incidents of violent crime, serious violent crime, theft, and other crimes to the police. The percentages of primary schools that reported each of these types of incidents to the police were lower than the percentages of middle schools and high schools that did so.

Figure 3. Percentage of public schools recording and reporting to the police violent and serious violent incidents, by number of incidents: School year 2017–18



¹ “Violent incidents” include “serious violent” incidents (see footnote 2) as well as physical attacks or fights without a weapon and threat of physical attacks without a weapon.

² “Serious violent” incidents include rape, sexual assault other than rape, physical attacks or fights with a weapon, threat of physical attacks with a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon.

NOTE: Responses were provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime and safety issues at the school. “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. Respondents were instructed to include incidents that occurred before, during, or after normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017–18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2018. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 229.50 and 229.60.

Data on the number of violent incidents recorded and reported by public schools in 2017-18 were also categorized by the number of incidents. For example, 29 percent of schools did not record any violent incidents, whereas 17 percent of schools recorded 20 or more violent incidents. Sixty-eight percent of schools did not report any violent incidents to the police, while 3 percent of schools reported 20 or more violent incidents to the police. With regard to serious violent incidents, 79 percent of schools did not record any serious violent incidents, while 1 percent of schools recorded 10 or more serious violent incidents. Eighty-five percent of schools did not report any serious violent incidents to the police, while less than 1 percent of schools reported 10 or more serious violent incidents to the police.

The number of violent incidents recorded and reported by public schools by frequency range also varied by school characteristics. For instance, 10 percent of schools in rural areas recorded 20 or more violent incidents in 2017-18,

compared with 16 percent of schools in suburban areas, 17 percent of schools in towns, and 23 percent of schools in cities. Similarly, a lower percentage of schools in rural areas (1 percent) reported 20 or more violent incidents to the police than did schools in suburban areas (3 percent), towns (3 percent), and cities (4 percent). In addition, the percentage of schools that recorded 20 or more violent incidents in 2017-18 was generally lower for schools where a smaller percentage of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL).⁵ For instance, 5 percent of schools where 0 to 25 percent of the students were eligible for FRPL recorded 20 or more violent incidents, compared with 23 percent of schools where 76 percent or more of the students were eligible. The percentage of schools that reported 20 or more violent incidents to the police was lower for schools where 0 to 25 percent of the students were eligible for FRPL (1 percent) than for schools where larger percentages of the students were eligible (3 percent each for schools where 26 to 50 percent, 51 to 75 percent, and 76 percent or more of the students were eligible).

Endnotes:

¹ “Violent incidents” include serious violent incidents (see footnote 2) as well as physical attacks or fights without a weapon and threat of physical attacks without a weapon.

² “Serious violent incidents” include rape, sexual assault other than rape, physical attacks or fights with a weapon, threat of physical attacks with a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon.

³ “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.

⁴ “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. Respondents were instructed to include incidents that occurred before, during, or after normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session.

⁵ The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) programs is a proxy measure of school poverty. For more information on eligibility for FRPL and its relationship to poverty, see the NCES blog post “[Free or reduced price lunch: A proxy for poverty?](#)”

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2019*, tables 229.10, 229.20, 229.30, 229.40, 229.50, and 229.60

Related indicators and resources: [Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School](#); [Marijuana Use and Illegal Drug Availability](#); [Physical Fights on School Property and Anywhere](#); [Prevalence of Victimization at School](#); [Students Carrying Weapons on School Property and Anywhere and Students’ Access to Firearms](#); [Students’ Use of Alcohol](#)

Glossary: At school; Crime; Incident; Locale codes; Public school or institution; Serious violent incidents (Fast Response Survey System and School Survey on Crime and Safety); Theft/larceny (School Survey on Crime and Safety); Violent incidents (Fast Response Survey System and School Survey on Crime and Safety)