

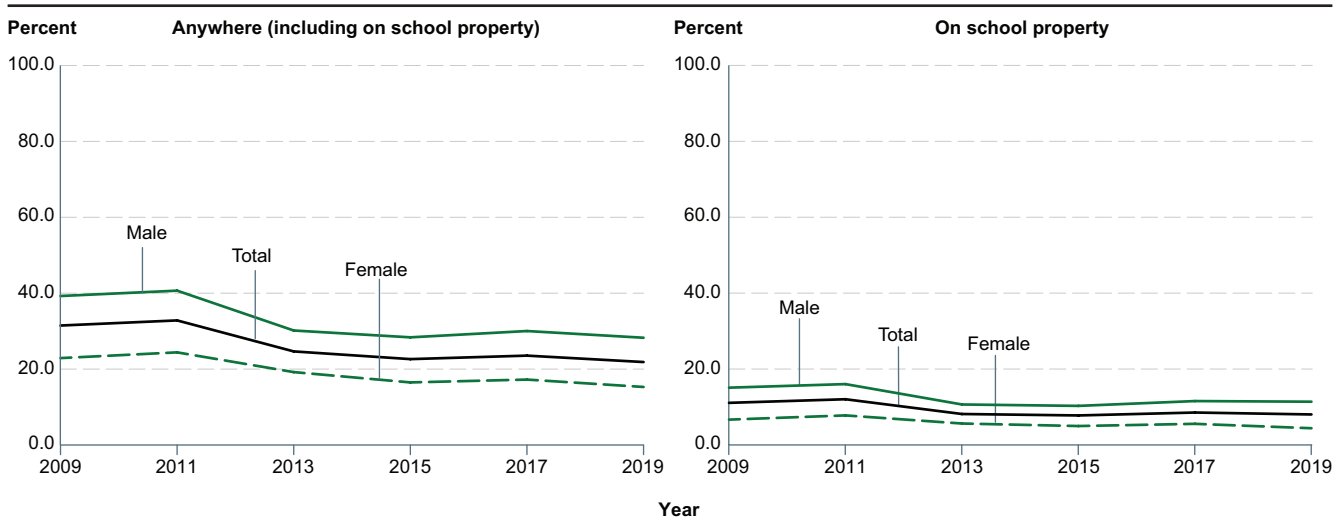
Physical Fights on School Property and Anywhere

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).

In the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), students in grades 9–12 were asked about their involvement in physical fights, both in general (referred to as “anywhere” in this indicator) and on school property, during the 12 months preceding the survey.¹ In this indicator, percentages of students reporting involvement in a physical fight occurring anywhere are used as a point

of comparison with percentages of students reporting involvement in a physical fight occurring on school property. Involvement in physical fights includes both aggressors and unwilling participants, or victims. This indicator examines differences in physical fighting by several characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, and grade-level.

Figure 1. 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 location and sex: Selected years, 2009 through 2019



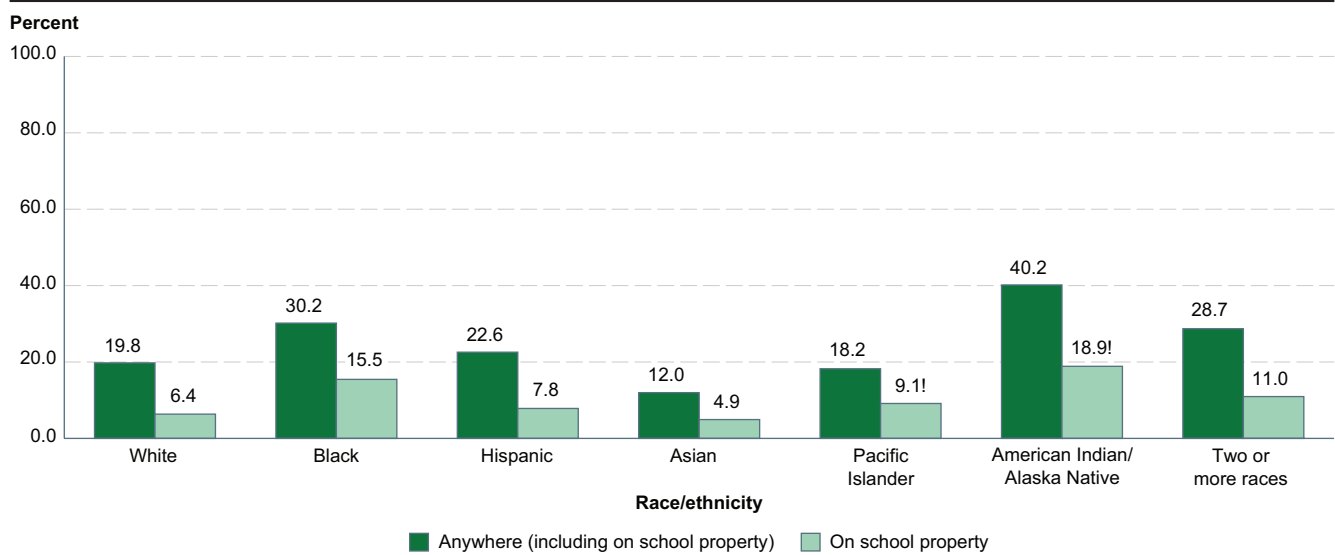
NOTE: The term “anywhere” is not used in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) questionnaire; students were simply asked how many times in the past 12 months they had been in a physical fight. In the question asking students about physical fights at school, “on school property” was not defined for respondents.
 SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2009 through 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 231.10.

In 2019, the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported having been in a physical fight anywhere during the previous 12 months was about 22 percent overall, ranging from 17 percent in Hawaii, Iowa, and Maine to 29 percent in the District of Columbia.^{2,3} The percentage who reported having been in a physical fight on school property during the previous 12 months was 8 percent overall, and it ranged from 6 percent in Maine, Kentucky, South Dakota, and Massachusetts to 15 percent in California.⁴ Overall, 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 of students who reported having been in a physical fight on school property was also lower in 2019 than in 2009 (8 vs. 11 percent).

In every survey year from 2009 to 2019, a higher percentage of male students than of female students

in grades 9-12 reported having been in a physical fight during the previous 12 months, both anywhere and on school property. In 2019, for example, 28 percent of male students, compared with 15 percent of female students, reported having been in a physical fight anywhere; 11 percent of male students, compared with 4 percent of female students, reported having been in a physical fight on school property.

Similar to the pattern for students overall, the percentages of both male and female students in grades 9-12 who reported having been in a physical fight, both anywhere and on school property, during the previous 12 months were lower in 2019 than in 2009. For example, 11 percent of male students reported having been in a physical fight on school property in 2019, compared with 15 percent in 2009; similarly, 4 percent of female students reported having been in a physical fight on school property in 2019, compared with 7 percent in 2009.

Figure 2. 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.

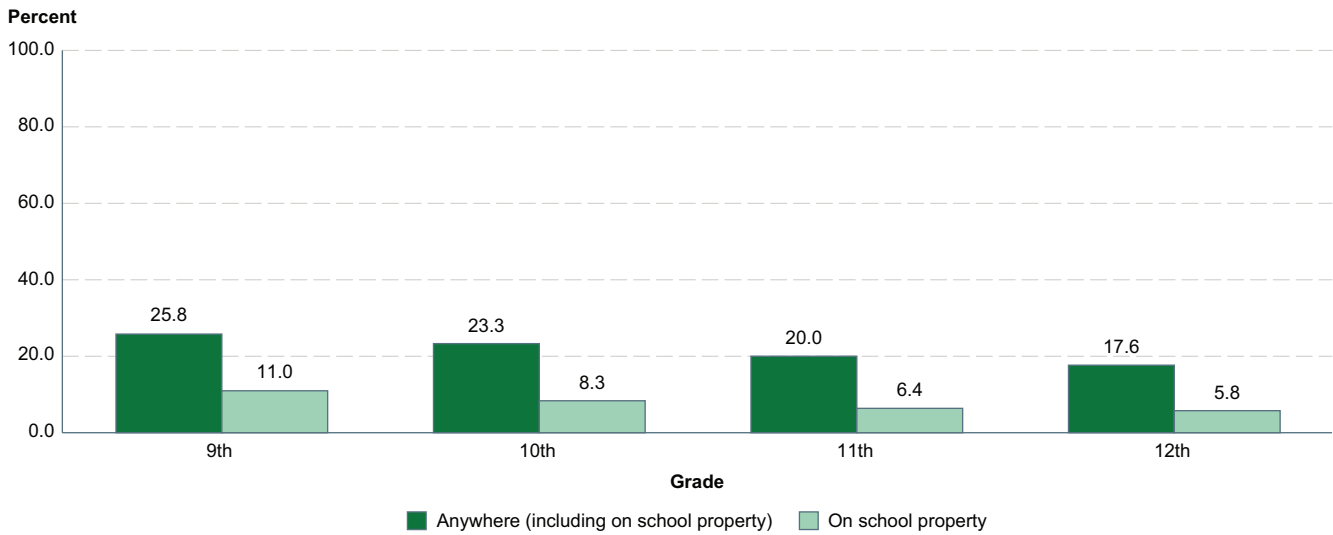
NOTE: The term “anywhere” is not used in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) questionnaire; students were simply asked how many times in the past 12 months they had been in a physical fight. In the question asking students about physical fights at school, “on school property” was not 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.

The percentages of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been in a physical fight, both anywhere and on school property, during the previous 12 months differed by race/ethnicity. For example, in 2019, the percentages of students who reported having been in a physical fight anywhere were higher for American Indian/Alaska Native students (40 percent), Black students (30 percent), and students of Two or more races (29 percent) than for Hispanic students (23 percent) and White students (20 percent); the percentage for Asian students (12 percent) was lower compared with all these groups. In addition, the percentages of students who reported having been in a physical fight anywhere were higher for American Indian/Alaska Native students and Black students than for Pacific Islander students (18 percent). Of students who reported having been in a physical fight on school property, the percentages were higher for those who were American Indian/Alaska Native (19 percent), Black (15 percent), and of Two or more races (11 percent) than for those who were White (6 percent) and Asian (5 percent). In addition, the percentage of students who reported having been in a physical fight on school property was higher for Black students than for students of Two or more races and Hispanic students (8 percent).

The percentages of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been in a physical fight anywhere during the previous 12 months decreased between 2009 and 2019 for White students (from 28 to 20 percent), Black students (from 41 to 30 percent), Hispanic students (from 36 to 23 percent), and Asian students (from 19 to 12 percent). Additionally, for Pacific Islander students, the percentage was lower in 2019 than in 2009 (18 vs. 33 percent) but fluctuated in the intervening years. However, there were no measurable differences between the percentages in these two years for American Indian/Alaska Native students and students of Two or more races. Of students who reported having been in a physical fight on school property, the percentage was lower in 2019 than in 2009 for White students (6 vs. 9 percent) and Hispanic students (8 vs. 14 percent), but there were no measurable differences between the percentages in these two years for the other racial/ethnic groups.

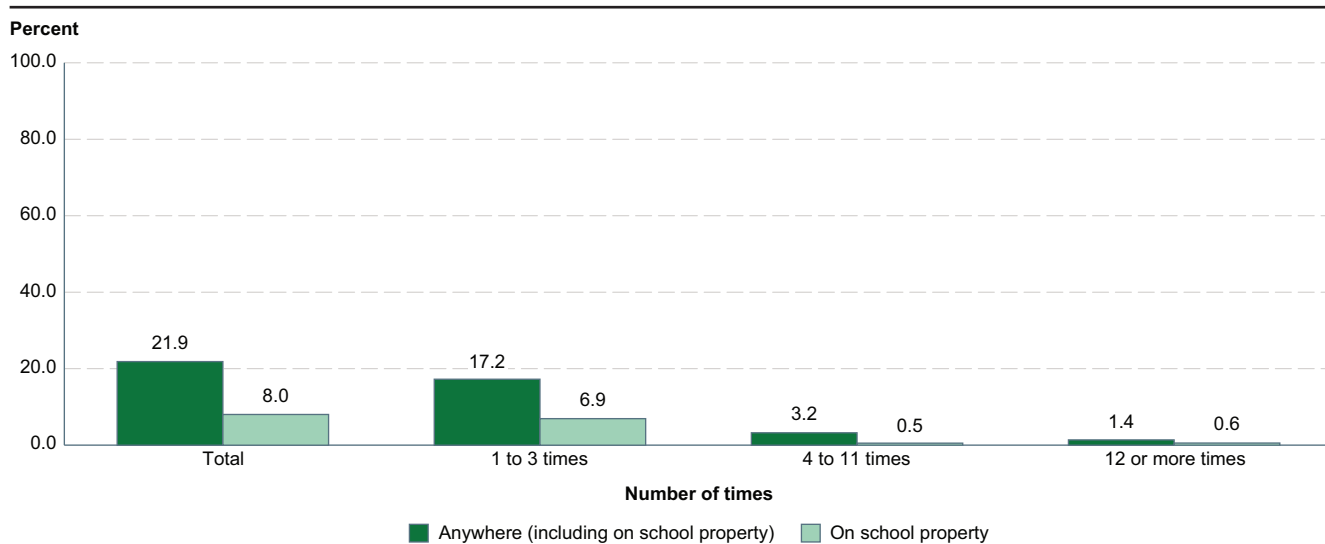
Since 2015, the YRBSS has included a question on students’ sexual identity by asking students in grades 9–12 which of the following best described them—“heterosexual (straight),” “gay or lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “not sure.”⁵ In 2019, there were no measurable differences by sexual identity in the percentages of students who reported having been involved in a physical fight, both anywhere and on school property.

Figure 3. 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 grade and location: 2019

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.
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.

In 2019, the percentages of students in grades 9-12 who reported having been in a physical fight anywhere during the previous 12 months were higher for 9th-graders (26 percent) and 10th-graders (23 percent) than for 11th-graders (20 percent) and 12th-graders (18 percent). Similarly, higher percentages of 9th-graders (11 percent)

and 10th-graders (8 percent) than of 11th-graders and 12th-graders (6 percent each) reported having been in a physical fight on school property in 2019. In addition, the percentage of students who reported having been in a physical fight on school property was higher for 9th-graders than for 10th-graders.

Figure 4. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been in a physical fight during the previous 12 months, by number of times and location: 2019

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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
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 231.20.

Students in grades 9–12 were also asked how many times they had been in a physical fight, both anywhere and on school property, during the previous 12 months. In 2019, about 17 percent of students in these grades reported having been in a physical fight anywhere 1 to 3 times, 3 percent reported having been in a physical fight anywhere 4 to 11 times, and 1 percent reported having

been in a physical fight anywhere 12 or more times. When students in these grades were asked about physical fights on school property, 7 percent reported having been in a physical fight on school property 1 to 3 times, and 1 percent each reported having been in a physical fight on school property 4 to 11 times and 12 or more times.

Endnotes:

¹ “Anywhere” includes fights that occurred on school property. The term “anywhere” is not used in the YRBSS; 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.

² U.S. total data are representative of all public and private school students in grades 9–12 in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. U.S. total data were collected through a separate national survey rather than being aggregated from state-level data. All discussions this indicator, except those at the state level, are based on data from the national survey.

³ In 2019, *state-level* data on the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been in a physical fight *anywhere* were available for 34 states and the District of Columbia (for detailed

information by state, see [the table on physical fighting anywhere for all locations in the YRBSS Youth Online Data Analysis Tool](#)).

⁴ *State-level* data on the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been in a physical fight *on school property* were also available for 34 states and the District of Columbia (for detailed information by state, see [the table on physical fighting on school property for all locations in the YRBSS Youth Online Data Analysis Tool](#)). The group of states with available information on fights on school property was not the exact same group of states with available information on fights anywhere.

⁵ In this indicator, students who identified as “gay or lesbian” or “bisexual” are analyzed together as the “gay, lesbian, or bisexual” group. Students were not asked whether they identified as transgender in the YRBSS.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 231.10 and 231.20

Related indicators and resources: [Serious Disciplinary Actions Taken by Public Schools](#); [Violent and Other Criminal Incidents Recorded by Public Schools and Those Reported to the Police](#); [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2019](#)

Glossary: On school property; Physical attack or fight; Private school; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group; Sexual identity (Youth Risk Behavior Survey System)