



NYC Vital Signs

Teen Safety in New York City

According to New York City crime incident reports, the number of assaults has fallen in New York City schools, and fewer weapons have been brought onto school property in recent years. Nonetheless, self-reports from teens indicate that violence still affects young people.

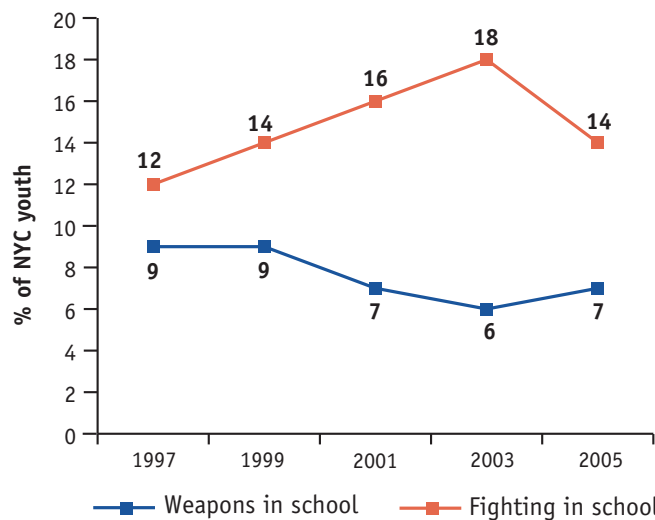
Violence perpetration and victimization can disrupt teens' lives and development, interrupt education, and compromise mental and physical health. Assault is a leading cause of death among

young people ages 13–19 both across the United States and in New York City, with 60 assault deaths in 2005 among NYC teens.

This report highlights trends in violence-related experiences among youth and how these experiences impact young people's lives and health. It identifies youth at high risk for violence and victimization and presents associated health effects. Recommendations on how to reduce and prevent violence in teens are featured on page 4.

Fighting and carrying weapons on high school property vary over time

- Fighting at school dropped significantly in New York City between 2003 and 2005, decreasing from 18% to 14% and reversing an increasing trend that had started in 1997.
- The 2005 prevalence of past-year fighting at school in NYC was the same as the national rate (14%). In Los Angeles, CA, another large urban area, 16% of youth reported fighting at school.
- The percent of youth who report carrying a weapon to school decreased from 9% in 1997 to 7% in 2005, which is similar to levels in Los Angeles (6%) and the U.S. overall (7%).



This report is based on data from the 2005 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire adapted for New York City from protocols developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey has been conducted every other year since 1997 by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the NYC Department of Education. The sample, taken from New York City public high schools, provides prevalence data for the city as a whole, each borough, and the three NYC DOHMH District Public Health Office target areas in the South Bronx, North and Central Brooklyn, and East and Central Harlem. For full details, see the "My Community's Health" section at nyc.gov/health.

Indicators of threats to teen safety

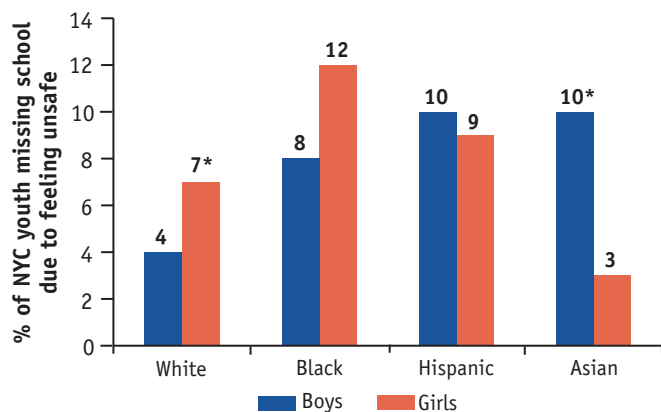
- Approximately 1 in 15 NYC teens (7%) reports carrying a weapon to school in the past month — a nearly 25% decrease since 1997. One in 24 (4%) reports carrying a gun. Carrying weapons is more common among boys than girls.
- 14% of youth report having been in a physical fight at school. Boys are more likely to report fighting than girls (17% vs. 11%).
- One in 12 NYC teens (8%) reports being threatened or injured with a weapon at school, with boys more likely to report this type of victimization than girls.
- Since 1999, dating violence has increased more than 40% to meet national prevalence levels in 2005, with 1 in 10 NYC teens (10%) reporting physical violence from a partner. Girls are no more likely than boys to have been physically hurt by a partner, but girls are twice as likely to have ever been forced to have sex (10% vs. 5%).

Violence and victimization experiences reported by youth in New York City, 2005

	Percent boys	Percent girls	Percent overall
Carried any weapon to school in past month	10	4	7
Carried a gun in past month	7	1	4
In physical fight at school in past year	17	11	14
Injured in physical fight in past year	7	4	5
Did not go to school because felt unsafe on the way to or at school in past month	9	9	9
Threatened or injured with any weapon on school property in past month	11	5	8
Hit, slapped or physically hurt by boyfriend/girlfriend in past year	9	11	10
Ever physically forced to have sex	5	10	7

Missing school due to feeling unsafe on the way to school or at school varies by gender and racial/ethnic group

- The proportion of NYC youth (approximately 9%) who report missing school because they feel unsafe has remained steady since 1997. In comparison, 13% of Los Angeles teens and 6% of all U.S. teens reported missing school due to feeling unsafe in 2005.
- Black, Hispanic, and Asian boys are more likely than white boys to miss school due to feeling unsafe (black: 8%, Hispanic: 10%, Asian: 10% vs. whites: 4%).
- Black girls are more likely to miss school due to feeling unsafe than black boys (12% vs. 8%).

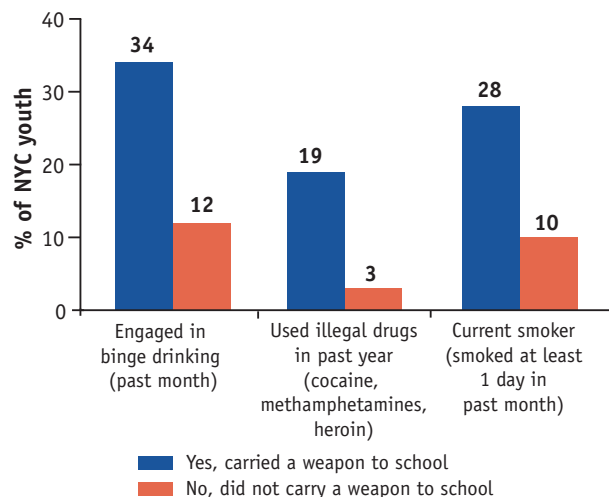


*Due to small numbers, estimates should be interpreted with caution.

Feeling unsafe and carrying a weapon. NYC youth who carry a weapon to school are more likely than those who don't to say that they missed school because of feeling unsafe on their way to school or at school. Among the estimated 19,000 teens (7%) who report carrying a weapon to school in the past month, 1 in 4 (24%) also reports missing school in the past month due to feeling unsafe. In contrast, among the 260,000 teens (93%) who do not report carrying a weapon, only 1 in 12 (8%) reports missing school because they feel unsafe.

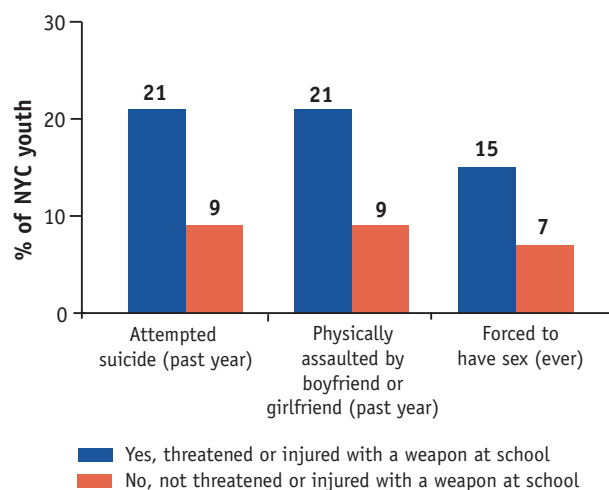
Substance use is related to carrying a weapon to school among youth

- Binge drinking is more than twice as common among NYC youth who report carrying a weapon to school than those who don't (34% vs. 12%).
- Youth who carry weapons to school are more than six times as likely to have used illegal drugs in the past year as those who don't carry weapons to school (19% vs. 3%).
- Smoking is nearly three times more common among youth who carry weapons to school than among other youth (28% vs. 10%).



Being victimized with a weapon is associated with other violent experiences

- NYC youth who have been threatened or injured with a weapon at school are more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide as those who have not (21% vs. 9%).
- Being physically assaulted by a boyfriend or girlfriend is also more than twice as common among youth who report being victimized with a weapon as among those who don't (21% vs. 9%).
- Youth who report being threatened or injured with a weapon are more than twice as likely to have ever been forced to have sex compared to other youth (15% vs. 7%).



Similar health concerns are associated with both aggression and victimization.

Violent experiences can affect the well-being of young people, regardless of their role in the event. Youth who report carrying weapons to school and those who report being threatened or injured with a weapon at school face similar health risks.

- **Substance Use:** NYC youth who carry weapons to school and those who have been victimized with a weapon report similar rates of ever using illegal drugs (17% and 19%).
- **Suicide Attempts:** Past-year suicide attempts are also reported at similar rates among youth who carry weapons and those who have been threatened or injured with weapons at school (25% and 21%).

Recommendations

Schools and communities play important roles in preventing and reducing the harms of violent behavior and victimization.

- Keep teens safe with effective anti-violence programs, curricula and campaigns. For more information, see the MMWR article on the effectiveness of school-based violence intervention programs (2007) at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5607a1.htm>.
- Identify school staff to ask youth who have been identified for disciplinary action due to violence about any victimization experiences, substance use, and suicidality, and make appropriate referrals to mental health services.
- Actively encourage safe home and school environments with zero tolerance for bullying and violence among young people.

Pediatricians, adolescent medicine physicians and mental health providers can identify youth at risk.

- Ask questions about violence and victimization experiences when assessing youth for mental health concerns, substance use, and relationship violence to inform care and subsequent referrals.

Parents have a key role in identifying violent behavior and victimization experiences in their children's lives.

- Know where your children are, what they are doing (at home, away from home, and on the Internet), and who their friends are.
- Be prepared to respond quickly if you notice troubling changes in your children's behavior, including violence, depression or possible substance use. If you are concerned, discuss the possibility of violent experiences with your child and seek appropriate mental health services. For information and help with mental health problems, call 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638) or call 311 and ask for LifeNet.
- Talk to school staff and health care providers about coordinated violence prevention strategies, such as school conflict resolution programs.

Youth can help reduce and prevent violence.

- Find an adult you trust and tell him/her if you or a friend is being threatened or hurt.
- Never carry guns or other weapons to or around school, and stay away from people who do.

A report from the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey



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