

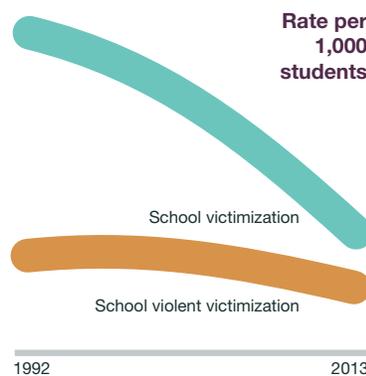


# School Safety: By the Numbers

High-profile incidents of violence at American K-12 schools have raised concerns about the safety of students. Drawing on data from the Department of Education, Department of Justice, and other agencies, the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI) examines some statistics about school safety and violence. Understanding alone won't dispel fears about school violence, but it is a step toward a more informed dialogue and developing an effective response.

## 1 School crime rates are decreasing.

Nationally, school crime rates have decreased since the early 1990s. Though violent crime against students increased from 2010 to 2013, the student victimization rate declined 70 percent between 1992 and 2013. Though most schools report at least one violent crime per school year, serious violent crimes — including sexual violence, threats or physical attacks involving weapons, and robbery — occur in far fewer schools. Student fear of being harmed has also decreased.



Zhang, A., L. Musu-Gillette, and B.A. Oudekerk. 2016. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2015* (NCES 2016-079/NCJ 249758). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

## 2 School shootings are rare.

School shootings are frightening and make headlines. However, today's students are less likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon, including a gun, at school than they were 10 years ago. Since 1992, the percentage of youth homicides occurring at school has not changed, comprising less than 3 percent of the total number of youth homicides. Current data do not report on whether the number of school shootings has increased, but student weapon carrying and weapon-related injuries have decreased.



2003 **9%** 2013 **7%**  
Students ages 12-18 threatened or injured with weapon on school property



**41**  
(31 students, 10 other)  
School-associated homicides (July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013)

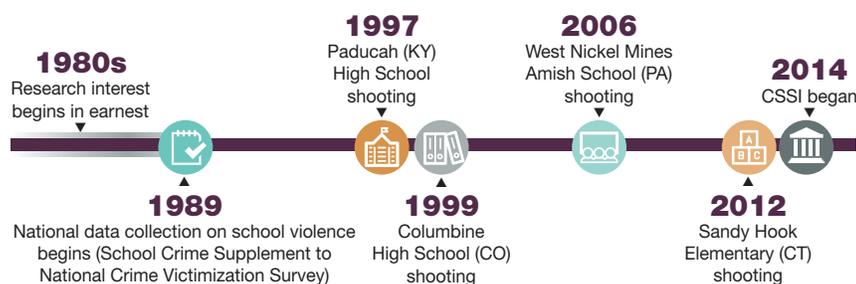


1992 **<3%** PRESENT **<3%**  
Youth homicides occurring at school

Zhang et al., 2016.

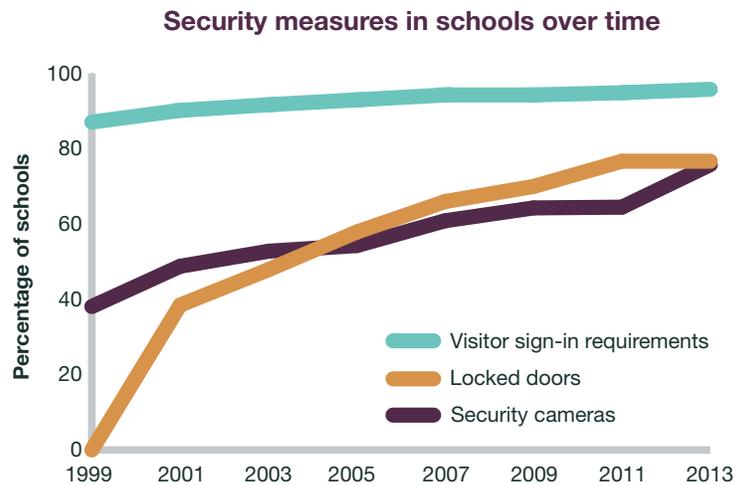
## 3 School violence is not new.

The U.S. began collecting national data on school violence in 1989, and a look at school violence research since 1970 suggests that research interest began in earnest in the 1980s. However, school violence is not so much new as it is something that has gained attention in the past 20 years. This timeline includes select incidents and research highlights, but is not comprehensive.



## 4 Officials are more concerned about shootings today.

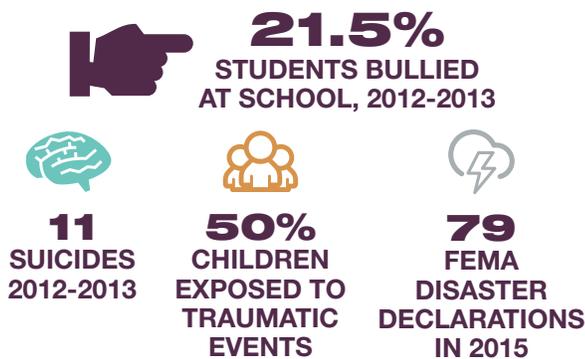
School officials have become more concerned about student safety, in part as a result of high-profile school shootings. School security measures have increased since the Columbine shooting of 1999. Nearly 100 percent of schools serving 12- to 18-year-olds use at least one safety or security measure, such as locked doors, security cameras, hallway supervision, controlled building access, metal detectors, and locker checks. However, school use of these measures varies by factors like population served and location.



Zhang et al., 2016.

## 5 Traumatic events are common at schools.

Violent deaths at schools are rare, but traumatic events are not. The American Psychological Association reports that about half of children in the United States experience a traumatic event in childhood, and many of these events happen at school. Shootings are just one of many traumatic events that children may face at school — students may also be threatened or injured by a weapon, be bullied, or be impacted by natural disasters, fires, or pandemics.



Bullying: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students. 2013. *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Suicide: Zhang et al., 2016.

Trauma exposure: American Psychological Association. 2009. *Children and Trauma: Update for Mental Health Professionals*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Available at: <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/update.pdf>.

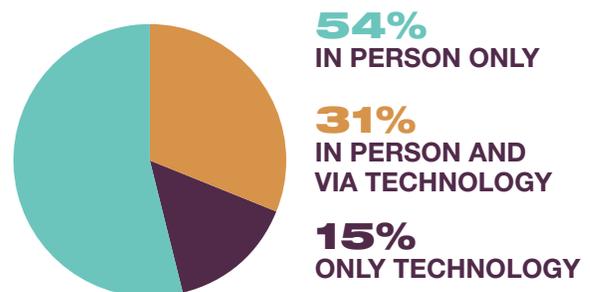
FEMA disaster declarations: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. n.d. "Disaster Declarations by Year." Available at: <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/grid/year>.

## 6 We don't know how often social media is used to make threats.

We don't know whether school violence threats are typically made using social media or other means. There are national data on student cyberbullying and harassment, and some statewide research on social media and electronic threats. However, additional research would help us understand whether social media is a primary vehicle for making school violence threats.



Harassment of youth ages 10-20 by peers, 2013-2014



7% of students cyberbullied: Zhang et al., 2016.

Data about harassment of youth ages 10-20: Mitchell, K.J., L.M. Jones, H. Turner, D. Blachman-Demner, and K. Kracke. 2016. *The Role of Technology in Youth Harassment Victimization* (NCJ 250079). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.