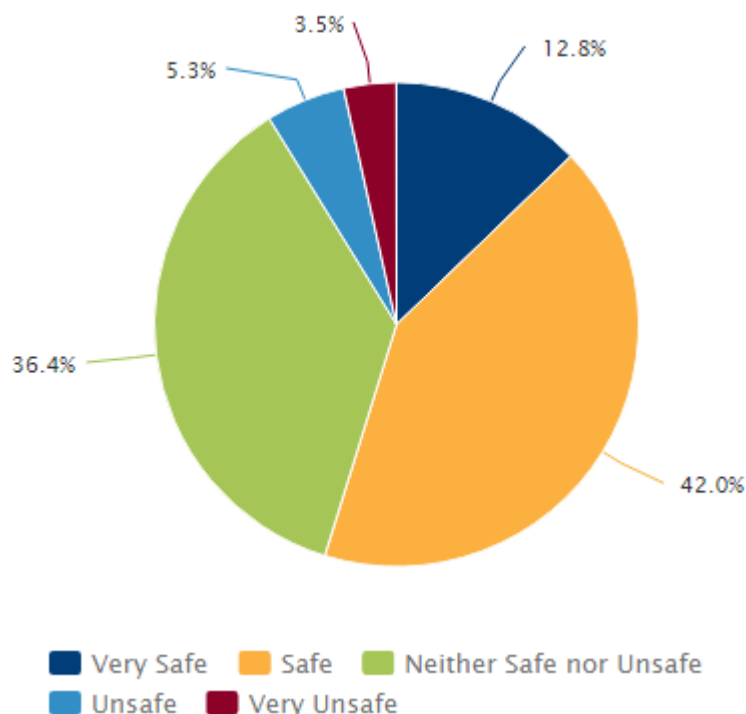


School Safety in California

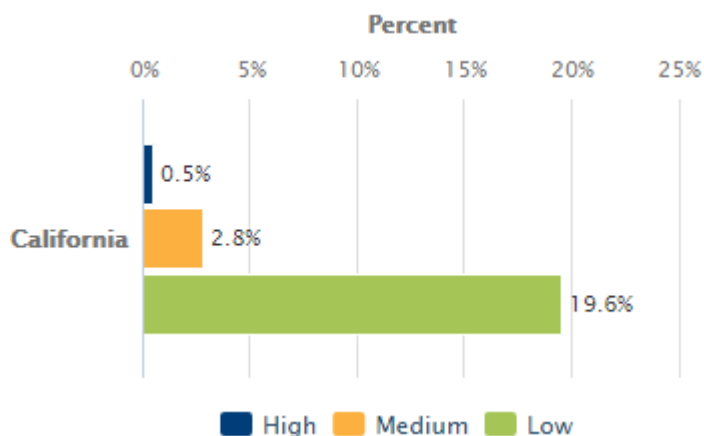
9th Graders' Perceived Level of Safety When at School: 2017-2019 California



Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who feel safe and unsafe at school, by grade level and level of safety (e.g., in 2017-2019, 12.8% of California 9th graders felt very safe at school).

Data Source: WestEd, [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) & [Biennial State CHKS](#). California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

Students Who Feel Very Unsafe at School, by Level of School Connectedness: 2017-2019



What It Is

On kidsdata.org, indicators of school safety are based on student reports regarding:

- Their perceived level of safety when at school, from very safe to very unsafe
- The number of times in the previous year they were afraid of being beaten up, were in physical fights, carried a gun, and carried a weapon other than a gun at school

Why This Topic Is Important

The safety and supportiveness of young people's school environments play a crucial role in their development and academic success. Students who feel safe and supported at school tend to have better emotional health and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Exposure to violence in schools and school neighborhoods is associated with many negative outcomes for youth, including poor academic performance, truancy, substance use, violent behavior, depression-related feelings, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Experiencing violence during childhood or adolescence also increases the likelihood of long-term physical, behavioral, and mental health problems in adulthood. Further, school violence not only affects the individuals involved but also can adversely impact teachers, bystanders, and surrounding communities.

Unfortunately, school safety is often compromised. According to a 2019 survey, nearly half (44%) of U.S. high school students had one or more violent experiences in the previous year, such as bullying, physical fighting, being threatened with a weapon at school, dating violence, or sexual violence. Females and LGBTQ students were significantly more likely to experience multiple types of violence when compared with males and heterosexual students, respectively. In addition, studies show that reports of hate crimes and mass casualty events in schools have increased in recent years.

How Children Are Faring

According to a 2017-2019 survey, less than a quarter of California public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs felt very safe when at school. Across survey years, boys are more likely to feel very safe at school than their female counterparts, as are students whose parents have a college degree when compared with those whose parents have lower educational attainment.

Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who feel safe and unsafe at school, by level of school connectedness and level of safety (e.g., in 2017-2019, 6.9% of California students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs with low levels of school connectedness felt very safe at school).

Data Source: WestEd, [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) & [Biennial State CHKS](#). California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

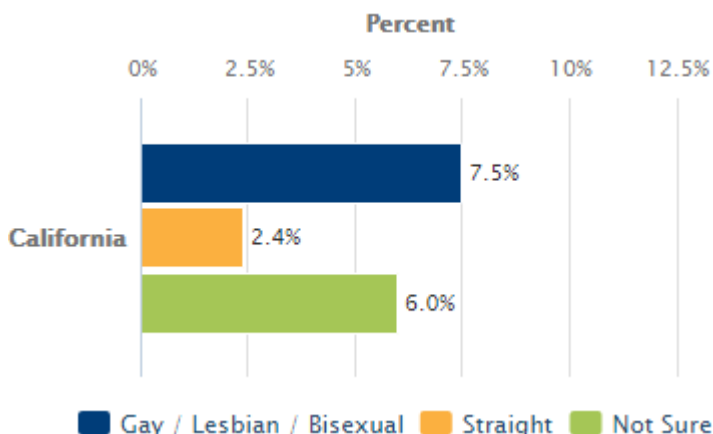
Students Who 4 or More Times in the Previous Year Were in Physical Fights at School, by Race/Ethnicity: 2017-2019

California	Percent
Race/Ethnicity	4 or More Times
African American/Black	3.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	3.8%
Asian	1.0%
Hispanic/Latino	2.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2.6%
White	1.2%

Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who were in physical fights at school in the previous year, by race/ethnicity and number of occasions (e.g., in 2017-2019, 87.9% of Hispanic/Latino students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had not been in physical fights at school in the previous year).

Data Source: WestEd, [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) & [Biennial State CHKS](#). California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

Students Who 4 or More Times in the Previous Year Were Afraid of Being Beaten Up at School, by Sexual Orientation: 2017-2019



Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who were afraid of being beaten up at school in the previous year, by sexual orientation and number of occasions (e.g., in 2017-2019, 74.1% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had not been afraid of being beaten up at school in the previous year).

Data Source: WestEd, [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) & [Biennial State CHKS](#). California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

In 2017-2019, an estimated 16% of 7th graders, 10% of 9th graders, 7% of 11th graders, and 11% of non-traditional students statewide had been in at least one physical fight on school property in the previous year. Among racial/ethnic groups with data, 6% of Asian youth were in physical fights at school in the previous year, compared with 12% of their Hispanic/Latino and 20% of their African American/black peers.

Across measures, it is more common for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students and those with low levels of school connectedness to feel unsafe, fear victimization, and engage in violence-related risk behaviors when compared with other youth. For example, the share of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth who on more than one occasion in the previous year were afraid of being beaten up at school (15%) was three times higher than for straight youth (5%) in 2017-2019. In the same period, an estimated 20% of students with low levels of school connectedness felt very unsafe at school, compared with less than 1% of students with high levels of connectedness.

In 2017-2019, an estimated 4% of students in non-traditional programs had carried a gun at school at least once in the previous year and 6% had carried another type of weapon at least once—down from 12% and 21%, respectively, in 2011-2013. By comparison, in 2017-2019 1% of students in traditional 11th grade had carried a gun and 4% had carried another type of weapon. Across all student groups with data in 2017-2019, less than 6% of youth had carried a gun at school in the previous year and less than 9% had carried a weapon other than a gun.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:

<https://santabarbara.kidsdata.org/topic/70/school-safety/summary>



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