



# **BULLYING, VIOLENCE, AND SCHOOL CLIMATE**

ILLINOIS YOUTH SURVEY

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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CENTER FOR PREVENTION  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**2024**





## About the Illinois Youth Survey

The Illinois Youth Survey (IYS) is a statewide, school-based survey administered every two years to 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students. Funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, the IYS gathers self-reported data on substance use, mental health, perceptions of risk, school climate and safety.

The survey has two goals:

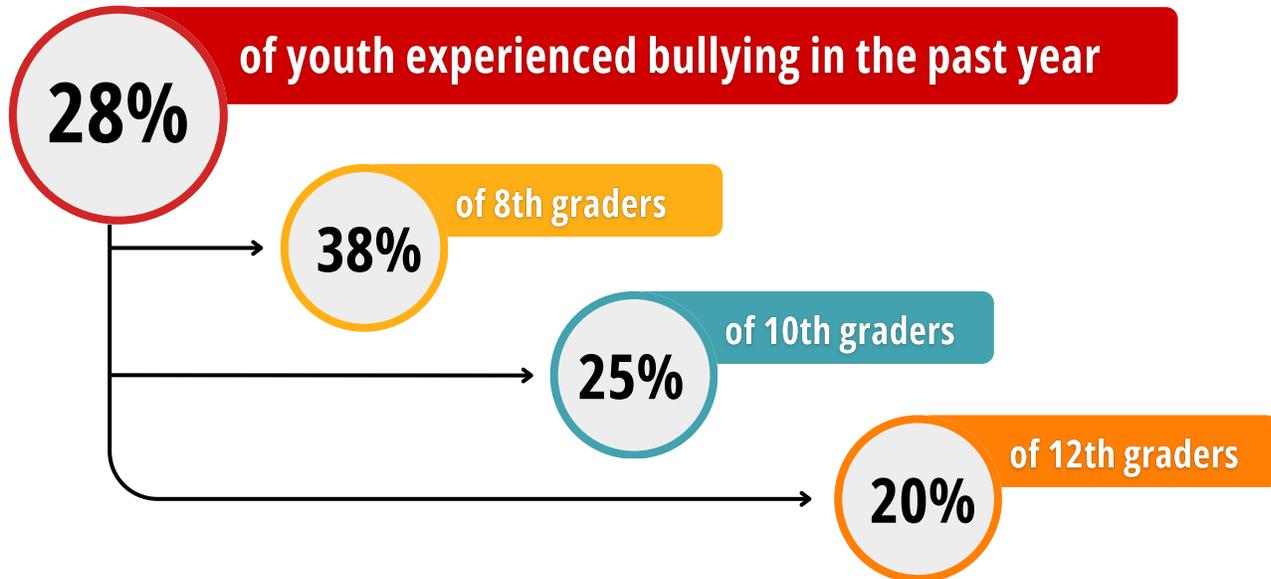
- To provide schools with local data to inform prevention efforts
- To generate reliable statewide estimates on key health indicators

In 2024, more than 172,000 students from 675 schools participated in the IYS. The data presented in this report is based on a scientifically weighted, representative sample of 10,490 students from 153 public schools across Illinois, capturing trends across the 8th, 10th, and 12th grade levels.

|       | Weighted Count |
|-------|----------------|
| 8th   | 3,470          |
| 10th  | 3,639          |
| 12th  | 3,381          |
| Total | 10,490         |

# Bullying

Youth were asked about four types of bullying on the IYS, including being called names, being physically harmed (being hit, kicked, or pushed), threatened, and bullied online through social media or text messages. More than 1 in 4 youth (28%) reported experiencing at least one type in the past year. Bullying was most common among 8th graders and declined with age—reported by 25% of 10th graders and just 20% of 12th graders.



## Types of Bullying by Demographics



**Males** were **threatened** and **physically** harmed at higher rates than **females**. Whereas **females** reported higher rates of **name calling** and **cyberbullying**.

**Multiracial** youth had the highest rates of **all types of bullying**.



## Intense Bullying

Youth were considered 'intensely bullied' if they experienced **all types** of bullying in the past year. Experiencing multiple forms of bullying can suggest that the student was repeatedly singled out.



**5%**

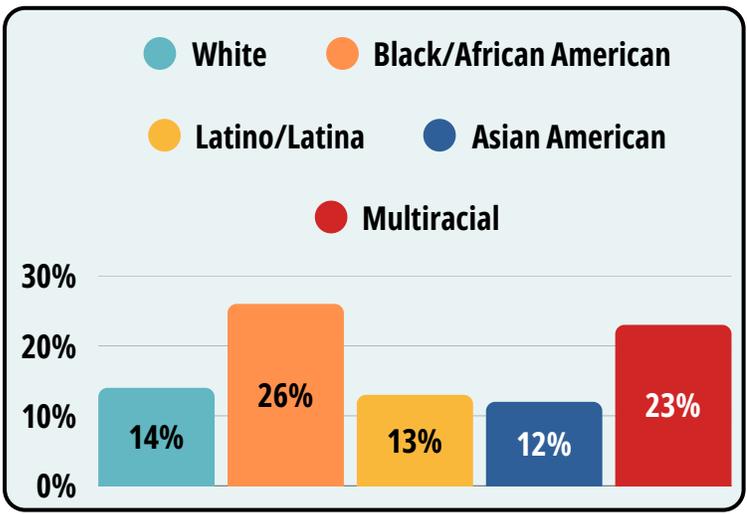
of youth were intensely bullied in the past year

# Safety

## Physical Safety

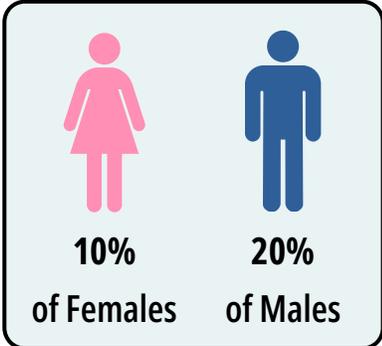
Physical fights were not evenly experienced across groups. Black/African American and Multiracial youth, males, and those from lower-income households were more likely to report being in a physical fight during the past year—revealing notable differences in how conflict shows up in students’ lives.

### Race/Ethnicity



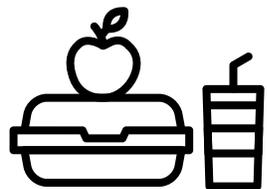
### Gender

Roughly 1 in 5 male students reported being in a physical fight in the past year.



### Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) was determined using lunch program eligibility as a measure for income. Students receiving free or reduced-price lunch were classified as lower income, while those receiving neither were considered higher income.



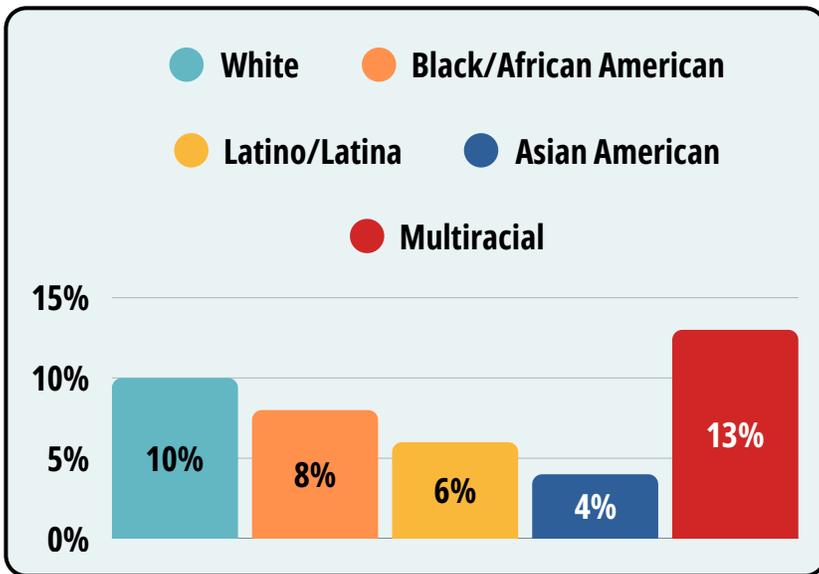
| Lunch Status        | % That Have Been in a Physical Fight |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Free Lunch          | 19%                                  |
| Reduced-Price Lunch | 14%                                  |
| Neither             | 13%                                  |

Youth who qualified for free lunch were more likely to report being in physical fights in the past year compared to their higher-income peers.

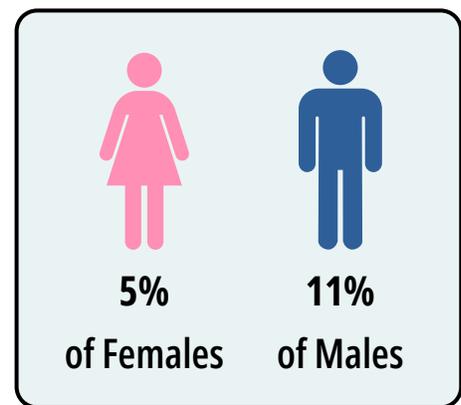
## Weapon Carrying

About 1 in 12 students reported carrying a weapon—such as a handgun, knife, or club—in the past year. While this behavior was not common overall, clear differences emerged across race and gender. Multiracial youth and males reported carrying a weapon most frequently in the past year.

### Race/Ethnicity



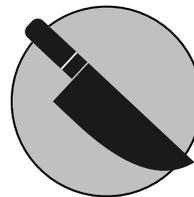
### Gender



## Weapon Carrying and Bullying

Students who experienced bullying were more likely to report carrying a weapon than their peers who were not bullied. This likelihood increased with the severity of bullying.

While 15% of bullied youth reported carrying a weapon, that number rose to 23% among those who experienced more than one type of bullying.



**15%**

of bullied youth carried a weapon



**23%**

of intensely bullied youth carried a weapon

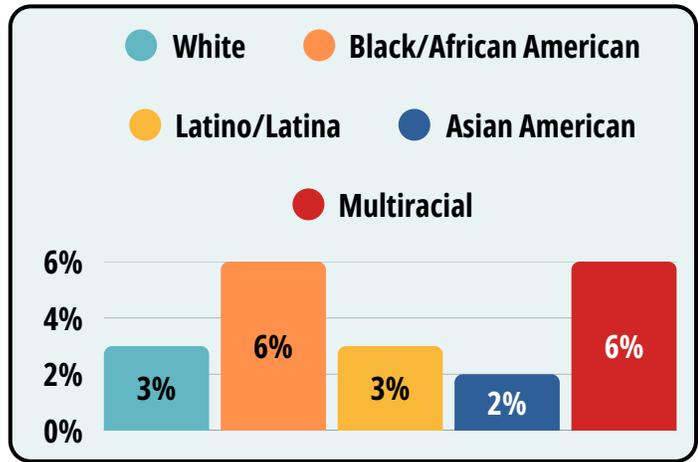
# Dating Violence

Among high school students, approximately 27% of youth said they have not begun to date. Of those who had started dating, the highest rates of physical dating violence were among Black/African American and Multiracial youth. Additionally, the highest rate of emotional control was among Multiracial youth.

## Physical Harm

Youth who responded “Yes” to being slapped, kicked, punched, hit, or threatened in a dating relationship in the past year:

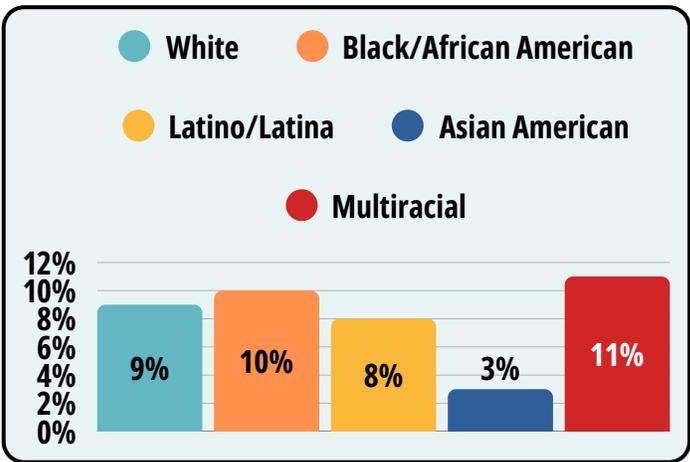
### Race/Ethnicity



## Emotional Control

Youth who responded “Yes” to a romantic partner putting them down or trying to control them:

### Race/Ethnicity



## Closer Look

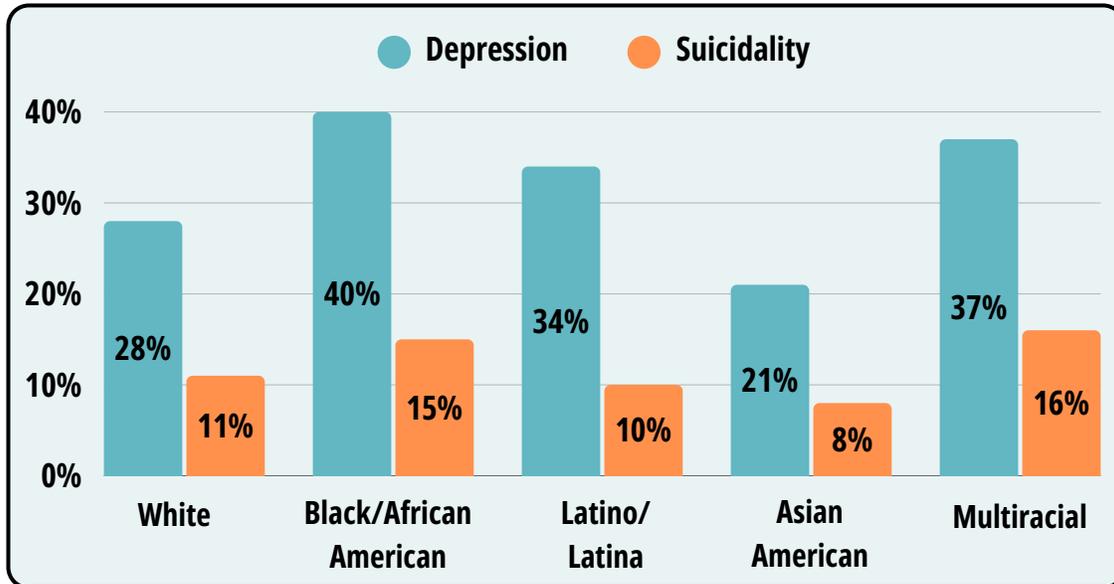


- **Males** were more likely to report physical harm in relationships, whereas **females** reported higher rates of emotional control.
- **Lower income** youth had the highest rates of both physical harm and emotional control in romantic relationships.

# Depression

Many students are quietly struggling with depression and some have even seriously considered suicide. When asked about feeling sad or hopeless for the past two weeks, Black/African American students reported feeling this the most, while Multiracial students reported the highest rates of suicidality.

## Race/Ethnicity

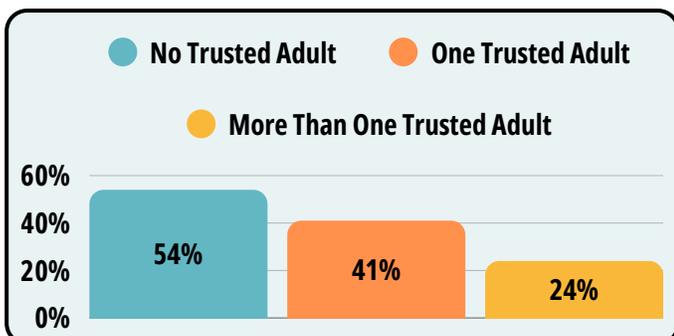


## Adult Support

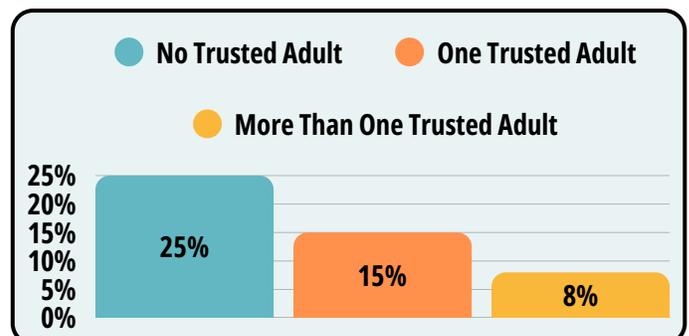
Having a trusted adult to talk to beyond a parent is a powerful protective factor that can make a meaningful difference in a young person's life.

Among youth who reported they did not have a trusted adult, more than half (54%) reported depression and a quarter (25%) reported seriously considering suicide in the past year.

### Depression Rates by Adult Support



### Suicidality Rates by Adult Support



# Academic Performance & School Climate

Academic performance and post-high school plans are closely connected and impacted by bullying and school climate. Improving outcomes starts with understanding who's at risk and where support is most needed.

## Grades

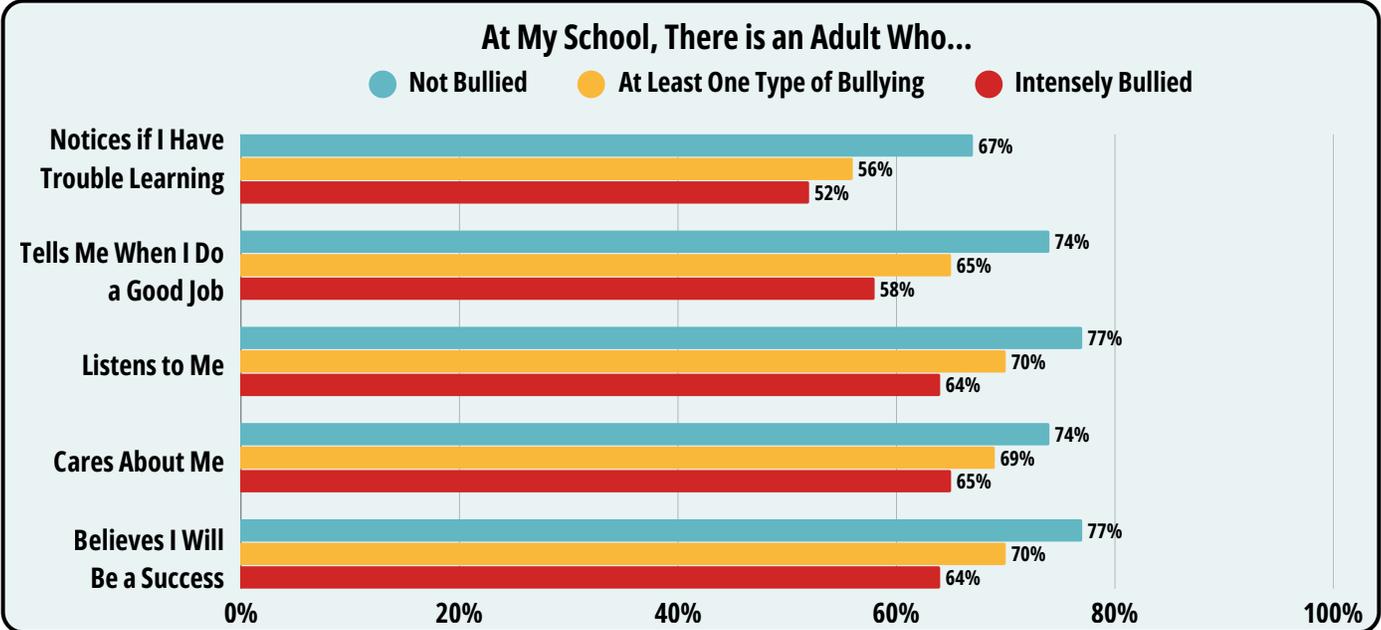
➤ **Black/African American, Latino/Latina, lower income** youth, and **males** were the lowest performers academically.



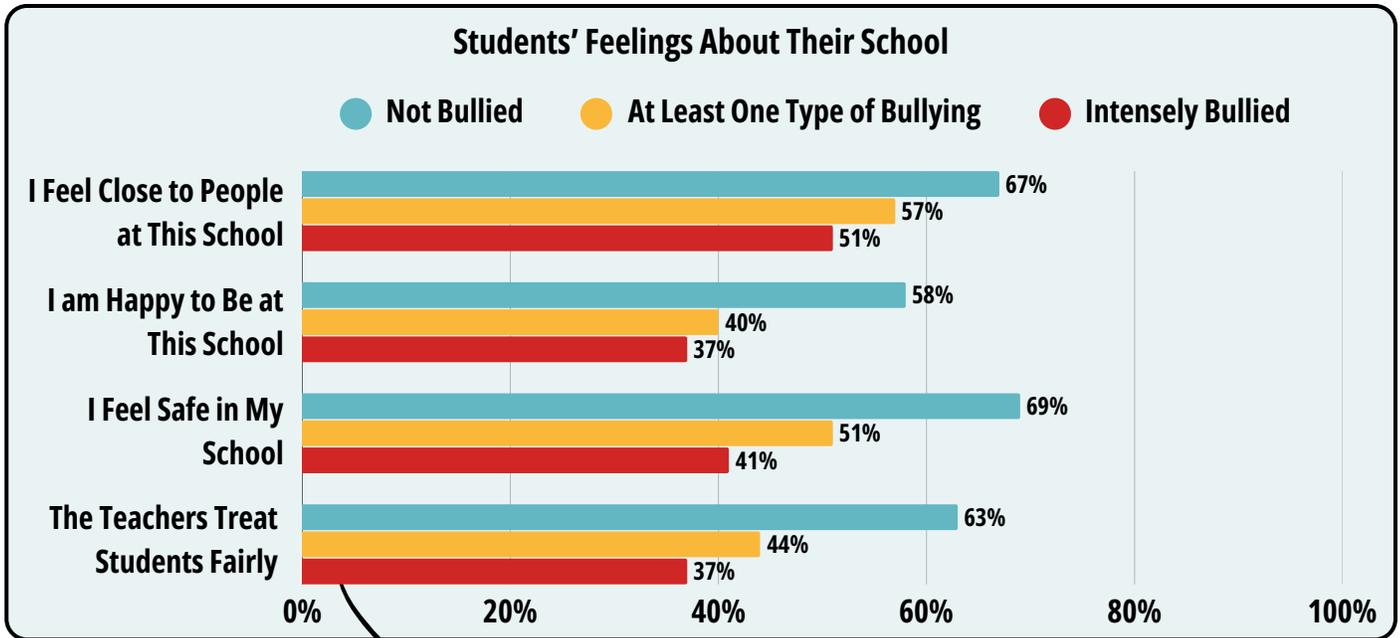
## Post High School Plans

➤ **Latino/Latina, lower-income,** and **males** were less likely to plan on completing education or training after high school.

School climate is not only shaped by safety and respect, but also by the daily encouragement and support students receive. Those who responded, "pretty much true" or "very much true" to the statements about adults at their school are shown below. As bullying intensity increases, students are less likely to say that adults at their school notice when they're struggling, praise their efforts, or believe in their future.



Students were asked their feelings about school. Below are students who reported they “agree” or “strongly agree” with these statements. As bullying increases, students feel less connected to others, less happy to be at school, and less safe in the environment around them. A drop in perceived fairness from teachers adds to the disconnection, suggesting that for many bullied students, school can feel isolating or even hostile.



Only 37% of intensely bullied youth feel the teachers at their school treat students fairly.



### Closer Look



- **Black/African American** and **lower-income** youth largely disagreed with positive statements about their school, reflecting lower connectedness, happiness, and safety.
- **Males** reported feeling happier, safe, and like they were treated fairly more often than females.



# ILLINOIS YOUTH SURVEY