

# Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School

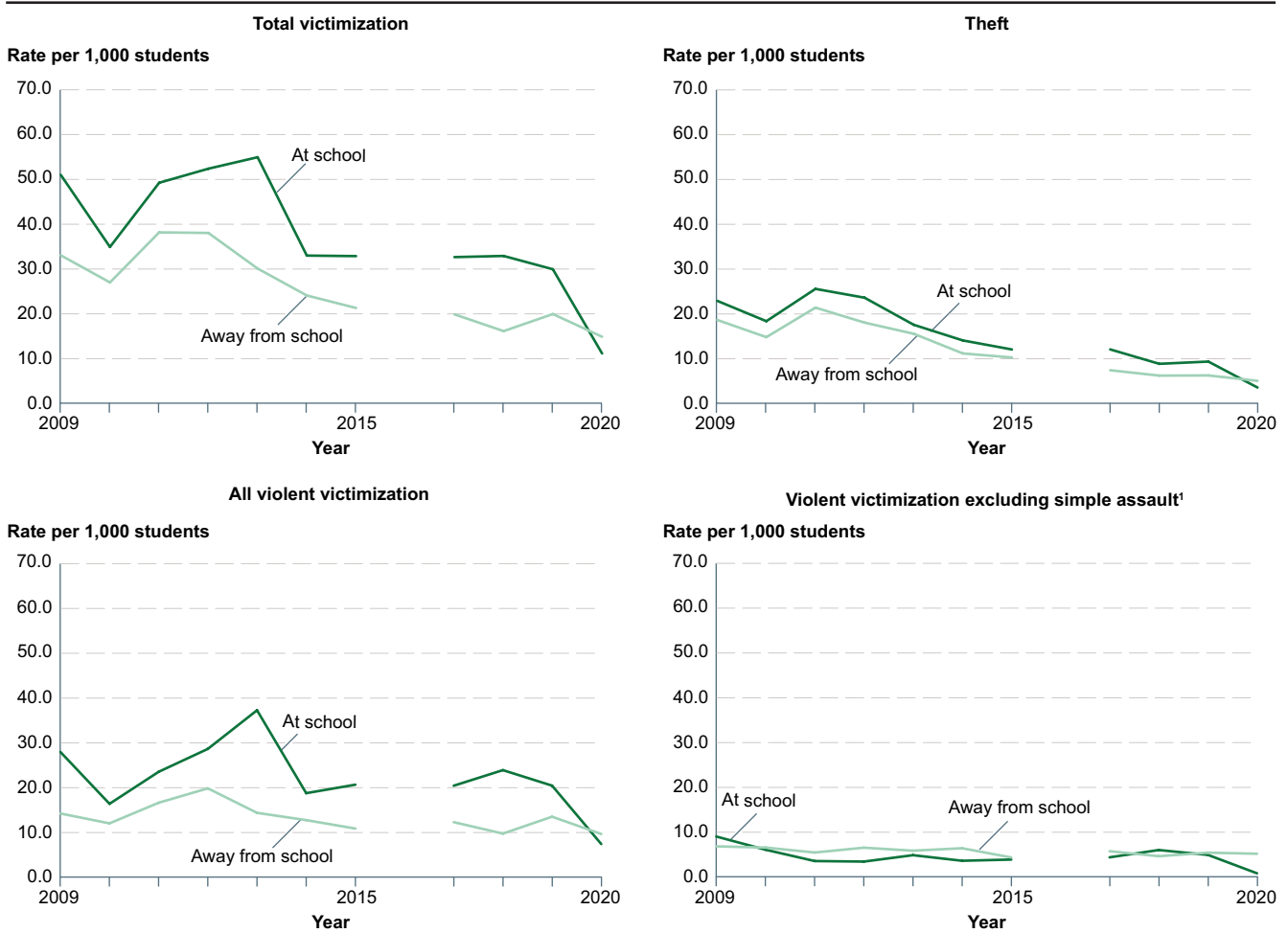
*In 2020, the rate of victimization at school (victimization occurring when students were on school property or on their way to or from school) for students ages 12–18 was 11 victimizations per 1,000 students, and the rate of victimization not in connection with school was 15 victimizations per 1,000 students.*

Data from the 2020 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)<sup>1</sup> indicated that students ages 12-18 experienced 285,400 total victimizations (i.e., thefts<sup>2</sup> and nonfatal violent victimizations<sup>3</sup>) at or on the way to or from school and 380,900 total victimizations not in connection with school.<sup>4</sup> The total victimization rates were 11 victimizations per 1,000 students at or on the way to or from school, compared with 15 victimizations per 1,000 students not in connection with school. (For ease of communication, victimizations taking place in the school building, on school property, or on the way to or from school will hereafter be referred to as “at school,” while

victimizations taking place elsewhere will be referred to as “away from school.”)

The NCVS is a self-reported survey that is administered annually from January 1 to December 31. NCVS estimates are based on the number and characteristics of crimes that respondents experienced during the prior 6 months, not including the month in which they were interviewed. Therefore, the 2020 survey covers crimes experienced from July 1, 2019, to November 30, 2020; the midpoint of the reference period is March 15, 2020. Crimes are classified by the year of the survey, not by the year of the crime.

**Figure 1. Rate of nonfatal victimization against students ages 12–18 per 1,000 students, by type of victimization and location: 2009 through 2020**



<sup>1</sup> In prior reports, "violent victimization excluding simple assault" was labeled as "serious violent victimization." Interpret the 2020 estimate for violent victimization excluding simple assault at school with caution; the coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

NOTE: Every 10 years, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) sample is redesigned to reflect changes in the population. Due to a sample increase and redesign in 2016, victimization estimates among students ages 12–18 in 2016 were not comparable to estimates for other years. "All violent victimization" includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. "Theft" includes attempted and completed purse-snatching, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, with the exception of motor vehicle thefts. Theft does not include robbery, which involves the threat or use of force and is classified as a violent crime. "Total victimization" includes thefts and violent crimes. "At school" includes in the school building, on school property, and on the way to or from school. Although this indicator ("Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School") and the indicator "Prevalence of Victimization at School" present information on similar topics, this indicator is based solely on data collected in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), while the "Prevalence" indicator is based on data collected in the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the NCVS as well as demographic data collected in the NCVS. This indicator uses data from all students ages 12–18 who responded to the NCVS, while the "Prevalence" indicator uses data from all students ages 12–18 who responded to both the NCVS and the SCS. Inclusion criteria for the NCVS and SCS differ slightly. For example, students who are exclusively homeschooled are able to complete the NCVS but not the SCS. Estimates may vary from previously published reports.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2009 through 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.20.

Based on the 2009 to 2020 surveys, the total victimization rate decreased during this time period for students ages 12-18, both at school and away from school.<sup>5</sup> The total victimization rate at school decreased from 51 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2009 to 30 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2019. From 2019 to 2020, the total victimization rate at school continued to decrease to 11 victimizations per 1,000 students—a decrease of more than 60 percent.<sup>6</sup> The total victimization rate away from school decreased from 33 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2009 to 20 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2019. The total victimization rate away from school in 2020 (15 victimizations per 1,000 students) was not statistically different from the rate in 2019.

For theft victimizations at school, the rate decreased from 2009 (23 victimizations per 1,000 students) to 2019 (9 victimizations per 1,000 students). Additionally, from 2019 to 2020, the rate of theft at school decreased more than 60 percent, to 4 victimizations per 1,000 students.

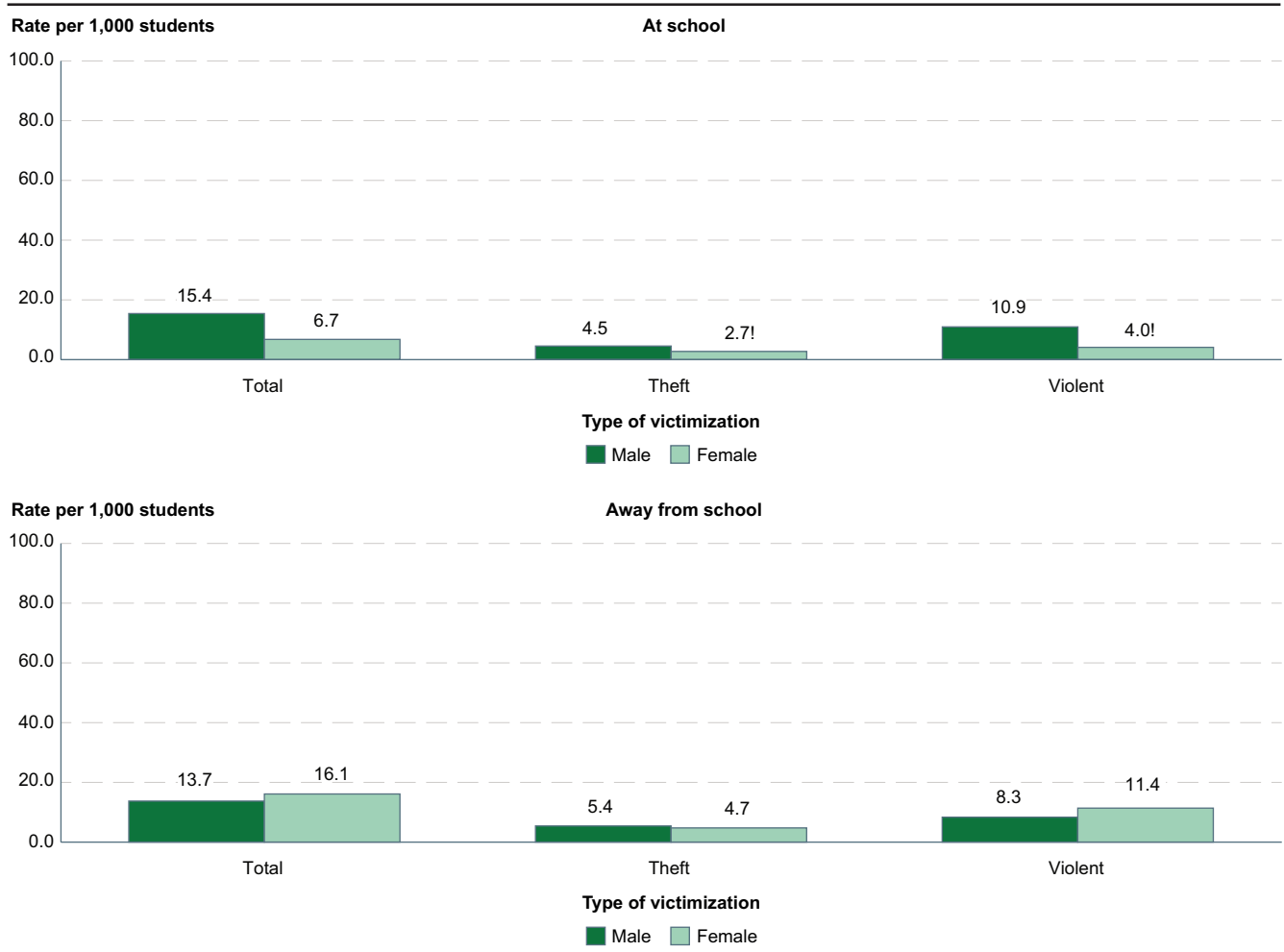
Similarly, the rate of violent victimization at school among students ages 12-18 was lower in 2020 (8 victimizations

per 1,000 students) than in 2009 (28 victimizations per 1,000 students). However, there was no consistent pattern of change in the period between 2009 and 2020. The largest single-year change in percentage terms during this period was between 2019 (21 victimizations per 1,000 students) and 2020 (8 victimizations per 1,000 students).

Away from school, theft decreased from 19 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2009 to 5 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2020, but it did not change significantly from 2019 to 2020. The rate of violent victimization away from school in 2020 (10 victimizations per 1,000 students) was not statistically different from the rate in 2009.

In most years between 2009 and 2019, the total victimization rate at school was higher than the rate away from school.<sup>7</sup> In 2020, the total victimization rate at school was not statistically different from the rate away from school. Similarly, the rates of theft and violent victimization at school were not statistically different from the rates away from school in 2020.

**Figure 2. Rate of nonfatal victimization against students ages 12–18 per 1,000 students, by location, type of victimization, and sex: 2020**

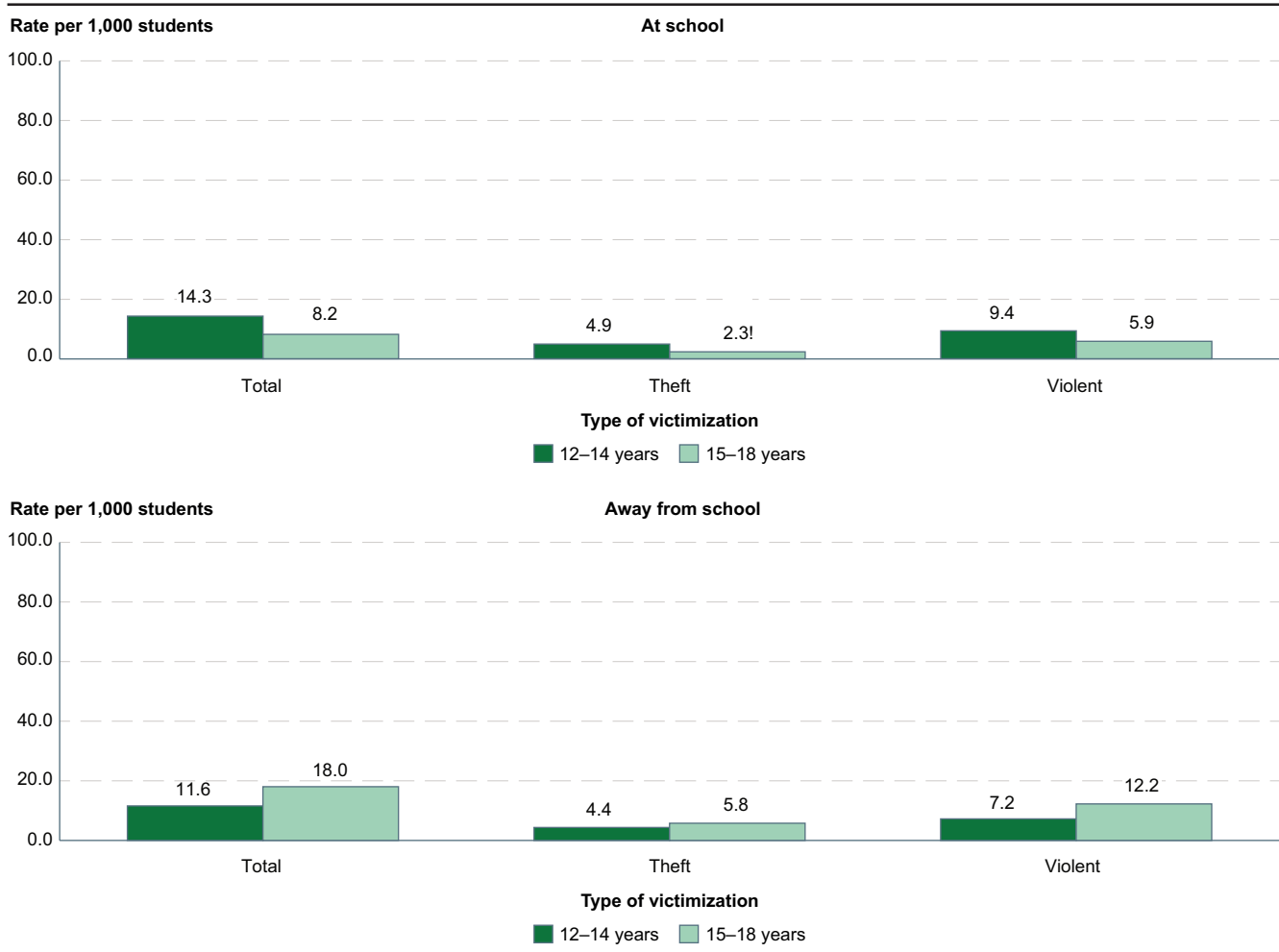


! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.  
 NOTE: "Violent victimization" includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. "Theft" includes attempted and completed purse-snatching, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, with the exception of motor vehicle thefts. Theft does not include robbery, which involves the threat or use of force and is classified as a violent crime. "Total victimization" includes thefts and violent crimes. "At school" includes in the school building, on school property, and on the way to or from school. Although this indicator ("Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School") and the indicator "[Prevalence of Victimization at School](#)" present information on similar topics, this indicator is based solely on data collected in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), while the "[Prevalence](#)" indicator is based on data collected in the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the NCVS as well as demographic data collected in the NCVS. This indicator uses data from all students ages 12–18 who responded to the NCVS, while the "[Prevalence](#)" indicator uses data from all students ages 12–18 who responded to both the NCVS and the SCS. Inclusion criteria for the NCVS and SCS differ slightly. For example, students who are exclusively homeschooled are able to complete the NCVS but not the SCS. The population size for students ages 12–18 was 25,587,500 in 2020. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding and missing data on student characteristics.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.25.

Based on the 2020 survey, the total victimization rate at school for students ages 12-18 was more than two times higher for male students (15 victimizations per 1,000 students) than for female students (7 victimizations

per 1,000 students). There were no statistically significant differences in the rates of total victimization, theft, and violent victimization away from school between male and female students.

**Figure 3. Rate of nonfatal victimization against students ages 12–18 per 1,000 students, by location, type of victimization, and age: 2020**



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.  
 NOTE: “Violent victimization” includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. “Theft” includes attempted and completed purse-snatching, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, with the exception of motor vehicle thefts. Theft does not include robbery, which involves the threat or use of force and is classified as a violent crime. “Total victimization” includes thefts and violent crimes. “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, and on the way to or from school. Although this indicator (“Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School”) and the indicator “Prevalence of Victimization at School” present information on similar topics, this indicator is based solely on data collected in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), while the “Prevalence” indicator is based on data collected in the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the NCVS as well as demographic data collected in the NCVS. This indicator uses data from all students ages 12–18 who responded to the NCVS, while the “Prevalence” indicator uses data from all students ages 12–18 who responded to both the NCVS and the SCS. Inclusion criteria for the NCVS and SCS differ slightly. For example, students who are exclusively homeschooled are able to complete the NCVS but not the SCS. The population size for students ages 12–18 was 25,587,500 in 2020. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding and missing data on student characteristics.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 228.25.

There were no statistically significant differences in the rates of total victimization, theft, and violent victimization at school between students ages 12-14 and students ages 15-18, based on the 2020 survey. This was also true of the corresponding rates away from school.

At school, the total victimization rate in 2020 did not differ significantly between racial/ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup> This was true for both theft and violent victimization rates. Additionally, rates of victimization away from school generally did not vary between racial/ethnic groups.

Similarly, there were no statistically significant differences in the rates of total victimization at school or away from

school by urbanicity (urban, suburban, rural) of the victim’s residence<sup>9</sup> in 2020.

At school, the total victimization rate was higher for students living in households earning between \$25,000 and \$49,999 per year (19 victimizations per 1,000 students) than for students living in households earning \$100,000 or more per year (8 victimizations per 1,000 students).<sup>10</sup> Away from school, the total victimization rate was not statistically different by household income.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Although this indicator (“Incidence of Victimization at School and Away From School”) and the indicator “Prevalence of Victimization at School” present information on similar topics, this indicator is based solely on data collected in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), while the “Prevalence” indicator is based on data collected in the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the NCVS as well as demographic data collected in the NCVS. This indicator uses data from all students ages 12-18 who responded to the NCVS, while the “Prevalence” indicator uses data from all students ages 12-18 who responded to both the NCVS and the SCS. Inclusion criteria for the NCVS and SCS differ slightly. For example, students who are exclusively homeschooled are able to complete the NCVS but not the SCS.

<sup>2</sup> “Theft” includes attempted and completed purse-snatching, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, with the exception of motor vehicle thefts. Theft does not include robbery, which involves the threat or use of force and is classified as a violent crime.

<sup>3</sup> “Violent victimization” includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.

<sup>4</sup> “Students” refers to those ages 12-18 whose educational attainment did not exceed grade 12 at the time of the survey. An uncertain percentage of these persons may not have attended school during the survey reference period. These data do not take into account the number of hours that students spend at school or away from school. “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, and on the way to or from school.

<sup>5</sup> Every 10 years, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) sample is redesigned to reflect changes in the population. Due

to the sample redesign and other methodological changes implemented in 2006, use caution when comparing 2006 estimates with other years. Due to a sample increase and redesign in 2016, victimization estimates among students ages 12-18 in 2016 were not comparable to estimates for other years.

<sup>6</sup> In 2020, schools across the country suspended or modified in-person classes in accordance with federal, state, and local guidance related to the risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Students may have spent less time at school than in previous years due to these modified procedures.

<sup>7</sup> This was true for all but three years (2010, 2011, and 2014), when the rate at school was not different from the rate away from school. The year 2016 was omitted from this comparison because of the sample increase and redesign.

<sup>8</sup> All students who were of a race/ethnicity other than White, Black, or Hispanic were combined for reporting and analyses. These students included those who were Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more races.

<sup>9</sup> Urbanicity refers to location of the victim’s residence and includes urban, suburban, and rural. Areas are categorized based on population size and population density. This differs from previous versions of the indicator because the Bureau of Justice Statistics revised its definition of urbanicity in 2019. For more information, see *Classification of Urban, Suburban, and Rural Areas in the National Crime Victimization Survey*, available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cusrancvs.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Income data for 2020 were imputed. For more information, see *Criminal Victimization, 2020*, available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cv20.pdf>.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 228.20 and 228.25

**Related indicators and resources:** Prevalence of Victimization at School; Criminal Incidents Recorded by Public Schools and Those Reported to Sworn Law Enforcement

**Glossary:** Aggravated assault; At school; Racial/ethnic group; Rape (National Crime Victimization Survey); Robbery (National Crime Victimization Survey); Sexual assault (National Crime Victimization Survey); Simple assault; Theft (National Crime Victimization Survey); Urbanicity (National Crime Victimization Survey); Victimization; Victimization rate; Violent victimization (National Crime Victimization Survey and School Crime Supplement); Violent victimization excluding simple assault (National Crime Victimization Survey and School Crime Supplement)