

## Physical Fighting by Youth

### Headline

The percentage of students in grades 9-12 who had been in at least one physical fight in the past year decreased from 43 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2003, and was 36 percent in 2007. ([Figure 1](#))

### Importance

Physical fighting by youth can lead to serious injury and even death.<sup>1</sup> Risk factors that predict violence by youth include substance abuse by the youth, conflict and abuse in the home, harsh or inattentive parenting, antisocial and delinquent peers, and neighborhoods where crime and drug use are prevalent.<sup>2</sup> Youth who are involved in physical fighting are also often engaged in other high risk activities such as illegal drug use, binge drinking, carrying weapons, and having unsafe sex.<sup>3</sup>

Youth attending schools where fighting is common may be unable to maintain the focus necessary for academic success.<sup>4</sup> Adolescents who are victims of violence are also more likely to be a victim or perpetrator of violence during adulthood.<sup>5</sup> The likelihood of drug use, property offenses, and stress during adulthood also increase with youth violence.<sup>6</sup>

A high grade point average, religiosity, and connectedness to family and peers have all been cited as protective factors against youth violence.<sup>7</sup>

### Trends

The percentage of students in grades 9-12 who had been in at least one physical fight in the past year decreased from 43 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2003, and was 36 percent in 2007. ([Figure 1](#))

### Differences by Gender

Girls are much less likely than boys to be in a physical fight. In 2007, 44 percent of boys reported physical fighting compared with 27 percent of girls. ([Figure 1](#)) This trend is consistent across race, ethnicity, and age groups. ([Table 1](#))

### Differences by Race and Ethnicity<sup>8</sup>

In 2007, non-Hispanic black and Hispanic females were more likely than non-Hispanic white females to have reported being in a physical fight (39 and 34 percent respectively, versus 22 percent). ([Figure 2](#)) Non-Hispanic black and Hispanic males are also more

likely than non-Hispanic white males to report physically fighting. In 2007, 50 percent of non-Hispanic black males and 47 percent of Hispanic males reported being in a physical fight versus 42 percent of non-Hispanic white males. ([Figure 2](#))

### **Differences by Age**

Physical fighting decreases with age. In 2007, 28 percent of twelfth grade students reported being in a physical fight in the past year, compared with 41 percent of ninth grade students. ([Table 1](#))

### **State and Local Estimates**

2007 estimates are available for high school students (Grades 9-12) by grade and sex for selected states and cities from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs>

### **International Estimates**

None available

### **National Goals**

Through its *Healthy People 2010* initiative, the federal government has set a national goal to reduce reports of physical fighting in the previous 12 months by youth in grades 9 through 12 from 36 percent in 1999 to 32 percent by 2010.

More information available at:

<http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/document/html/objectives/15-38.htm>

(See Goal 15-38)

### **Definition**

Physical fighting is defined as being in a physical fight one or more times in the year preceding this survey.

### **Data Source**

Data for 1991: YRBSS: Youth Online, Comprehensive Results. Retrieved May 24, 2004 from URL: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*:

Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 6.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4401.htm#00001020.htm>

Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 6.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4504.htm#00001920.htm>

Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR 1998; 47(No. SS-3): Table 6.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4703.htm#00003347.htm>

Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 8.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4905a1.htm#tab8>

Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 8.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab8>

Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No. SS-2): Table 8.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm#tab8>

Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5): Table 8.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5505a1.htm>

Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007; 57 (No. SS-4) Table 9.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5704.pdf>

## Raw Data Source

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm>

## Date of Next Update

Summer 2010

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<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2005 State and Local Standard High School Questionnaire: Item Rationale*. [www.k12.wy.us/HS/yrbs/yrbs\\_2005/2005ItemRationale.pdf](http://www.k12.wy.us/HS/yrbs/yrbs_2005/2005ItemRationale.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, SAMHSA. *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/>

<sup>3</sup> *Physical Fighting Facts and Statistics*. (2003). National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. Available at: <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/physfightstats.asp>

<sup>4</sup> Kaufman, P., Chen, X., Choy, S.P., Peter, K., Ruddy, S.A., Miller, A.K., Fleury, J.K., Chandler, K.A., Planty, M.G., and Rand, M.R. (2001). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2001*. U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. NCES 2002-113/NCJ-190075. Washington, D.C. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/crime2001/>

<sup>5</sup> Menard, Scott. (2002). *Short and Long Term Consequences of Adolescent Victimization*. Youth Violence Research Bulletin. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 191210. Available at: [http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/yv\\_2002\\_2\\_1/contents.html](http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/yv_2002_2_1/contents.html)

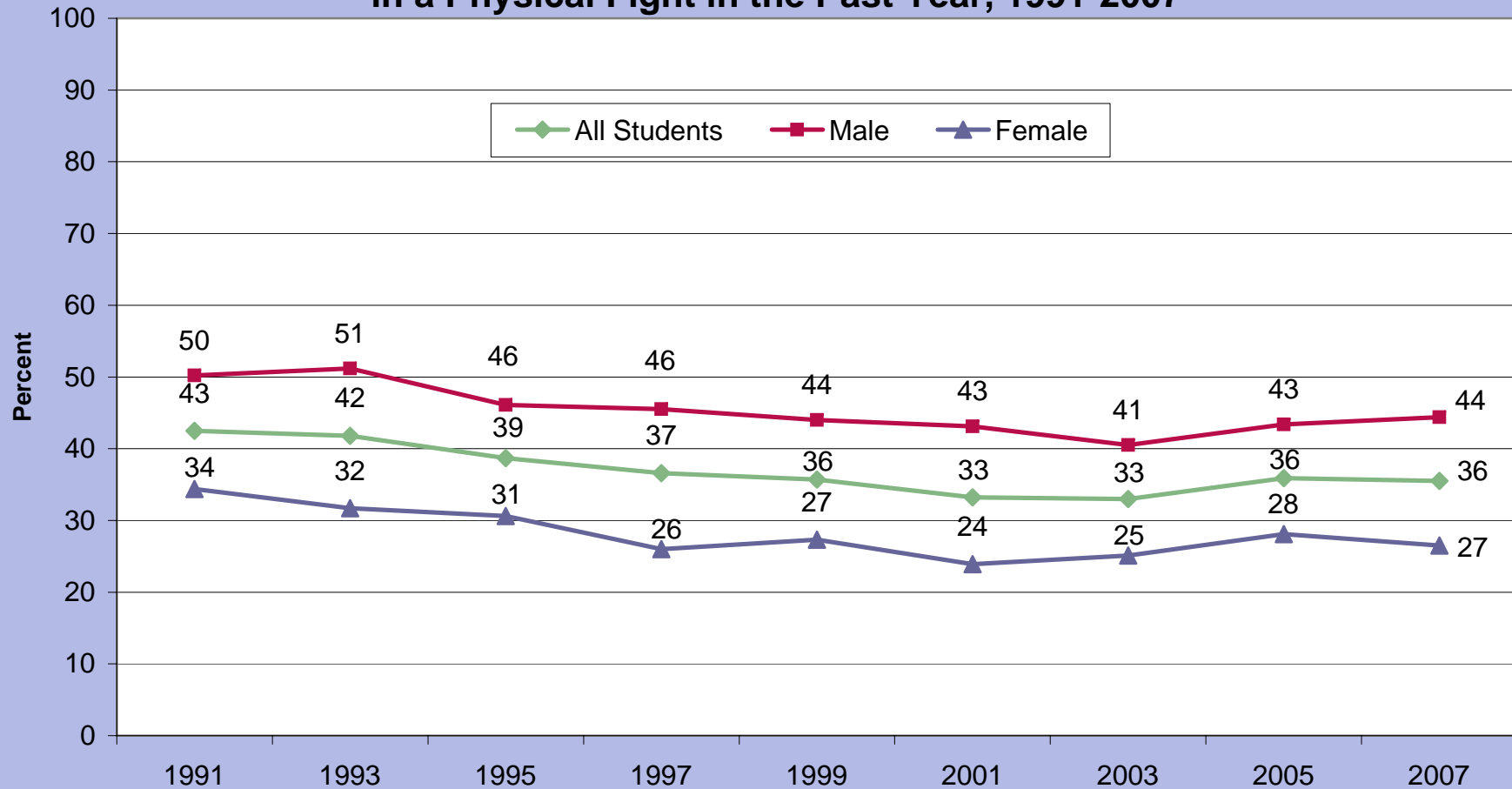
<sup>6</sup> Menard, Scott.

<sup>7</sup> *Youth Violence: Fact Sheet*. (2006). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/yvfacts.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented here only include respondents who selected one category when choosing their race.

Figure 1

## Percent of Students in Grades 9 through 12 Who Reported They Were in a Physical Fight in the Past Year, 1991-2007



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, Data for 1991: YRBSS: Youth Online, Comprehensive Results. Retrieved May 24, 2004 from URL: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>. Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 6. Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 6. Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR 1998; 47(No. SS-3): Table 6. Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 8; Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51 (No. SS-4): Table 8. Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No. SS-2): Table 8. Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5): Table 8. Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007; 57 (No. SS-4) Table 9



Figure 2

### Percent of Students in Grades 9 through 12 Who Reported They Were in a Physical Fight in the Past Year, by Race and Hispanic Origin,<sup>1</sup> 2007



<sup>1</sup> Estimates reported here only include respondents who selected one race category.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007: 57 (No. SS-4) Table 9

Table 1

**Percentage of Students in Grades 9-12 Who Report Being in a Physical Fight in the Past Year, Selected Years, 1991-2007**

	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
<b>All Students</b>	42.5	41.8	38.7	36.6	35.7	33.2	33.0	35.9	35.5
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>									
White, non-Hispanic	41.0	40.3	36.0	33.7	33.1	32.2	30.5	33.1	31.7
Black, non-Hispanic	50.6	49.5	41.6	43.0	41.4	36.5	39.7	43.1	44.7
Hispanic	41.3	43.2	47.9	40.7	39.9	35.8	36.1	41.0	40.4
<b>Grade</b>									
9	50.5	50.4	47.3	44.8	41.1	39.5	38.6	43.5	40.9
10	43.1	42.2	40.4	40.2	37.7	34.7	33.5	36.6	36.2
11	43.0	40.5	36.9	34.2	31.3	29.1	30.9	31.6	34.8
12	33.9	34.8	31.0	28.8	30.4	26.5	26.5	29.1	28.0
<b>Male</b>	50.2	51.2	46.1	45.5	44.0	43.1	40.5	43.4	44.4
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>									
White, non-Hispanic	49.1	50.0	44.0	43.4	43.2	43.1	38.4	41.2	41.9
Black, non-Hispanic	58.4	57.5	49.3	48.7	44.4	43.9	45.6	48.9	50.3
Hispanic	48.5	52.2	55.9	49.5	50.5	42.4	42.6	49.5	47.3
<b>Grade</b>									
9	57.8	58.9	55.0	56.0	49.5	50.0	44.8	49.6	49.6
10	50.2	52.0	46.0	48.2	46.0	45.0	41.8	45.2	45.1
11	51.0	51.8	45.6	43.5	38.9	38.0	38.5	38.2	46.3
12	42.3	42.7	38.0	36.6	39.0	36.5	35.0	38.0	34.3
<b>Female</b>	34.4	31.7	30.6	26.0	27.3	23.9	25.1	28.1	26.5
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>									
White, non-Hispanic	32.2	29.5	26.8	21.4	22.3	21.7	22.1	24.7	21.5
Black, non-Hispanic	43.8	41.8	34.9	37.7	38.6	29.6	34.0	37.7	39.4
Hispanic	34.8	34.1	40.4	30.3	29.7	29.3	29.5	32.5	33.5
<b>Grade</b>									
9	42.9	41.3	37.4	32.4	32.5	30.3	31.9	37.2	31.8
10	35.4	31.9	34.4	30.4	29.4	24.9	25.0	27.6	27.2
11	34.5	28.0	27.5	23.0	23.4	20.3	23.0	25.0	23.5
12	25.4	26.5	24.1	18.9	21.9	16.9	17.7	20.3	21.8

Note: Estimates do not include youth who dropped out of school and therefore may not reflect total national values.

<sup>1</sup> Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented only include respondents who

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, Data for 1991: YRBSS:

Youth Online, Comprehensive Results. Retrieved May 24, 2004 from URL:

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>. Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 6.

Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 6. Data for 1997: August 14,

1998. MMWR 1998; 47(No. SS-3): Table 6. Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5):

Table 8; Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51 (No. SS-4): Table 8. Data for 2003: May 21,

2004. MMWR 2004;53(No. SS-2): Table 8. Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5):

Table 8. Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007; 57 (No. SS-4) Table 9

