

Students Reporting Sexual Violence Victimization on the Minnesota Student Survey, 1992-2013

DATA BRIEF

Introduction

Tracking sexual violence is challenging. Most victims do not report to law enforcement, and most victims do not go to the hospital for treatment. Victim advocacy programs track and report on the number of victims they serve, but there is still a need for states to invest in gathering surveillance data on prevalence and incidence rates over time, disparities, risk factors, and more. Minnesota has been conducting a student survey for over a decade that includes questions about sexual violence.

Methods

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is conducted collaboratively by several state agencies and is Minnesota's counterpart to CDC's Youth Behavioral Risk Survey. In 2013, an estimated 67% of students in grade 5, 8, 9, and 11 across the state participated in the survey (162,034 students). We examined the prevalence of self-reported sexual violence among respondents between 1992 and 2013.

The Questions:

1. Has any adult or other person outside of the family ever touched you sexually against your wishes or forced you to touch them sexually? (referred to in this data brief as *non-family contact sexual abuse*)
2. Has any older or stronger member of your family ever touched you or had you touch them sexually? (referred to in this data brief as *family contact sexual abuse*)
3. Have you ever had a boyfriend or girlfriend in a dating or serious relationship who pressured you into having sex when you didn't want to? (referred to in this data brief as *intimate partner sexual violence*)

Results

Between 1992 and 2013, the percentage of students experiencing family and non-family contact sexual abuse declined across grade levels. The greatest decline was seen for 9th graders, who experienced a 53% decrease in non-family contact sexual abuse between 1992 and 2013, and a 40% decrease in family contact sexual abuse. For 12th graders, those percent decreases were 47% and 33%, respectively, between 1992 and 2010. For 6th graders, those percent decreases were 14% and 17%, respectively, between 1992 and 2010. Interestingly, the

STUDENTS REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION ON THE MSS

percentages reported by 12th graders were similar to, and in many cases less than, the percentages for 9th graders. Decreases occurred across all the racial and ethnic groups included in Figure 5 below. Males and females both experienced decreases, although the decrease was greater for females. A greater percentage of bisexual, lesbian, gay, and questioning students experienced sexual abuse, compared to heterosexual students.

Both male and female students in the 9th and 11th grades in 2013 answered yes to the question about being pressured by a boyfriend/girlfriend into having sex, however the percentage of females reporting yes was higher (3.5% compared to 9.2% for 9th graders, and 4.8% compared to 13.7% for 12th graders). Trends are unavailable, because the wording of the question has changed over time.

Figure 1: Students Who Ever Experienced Family or Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse, by Grade

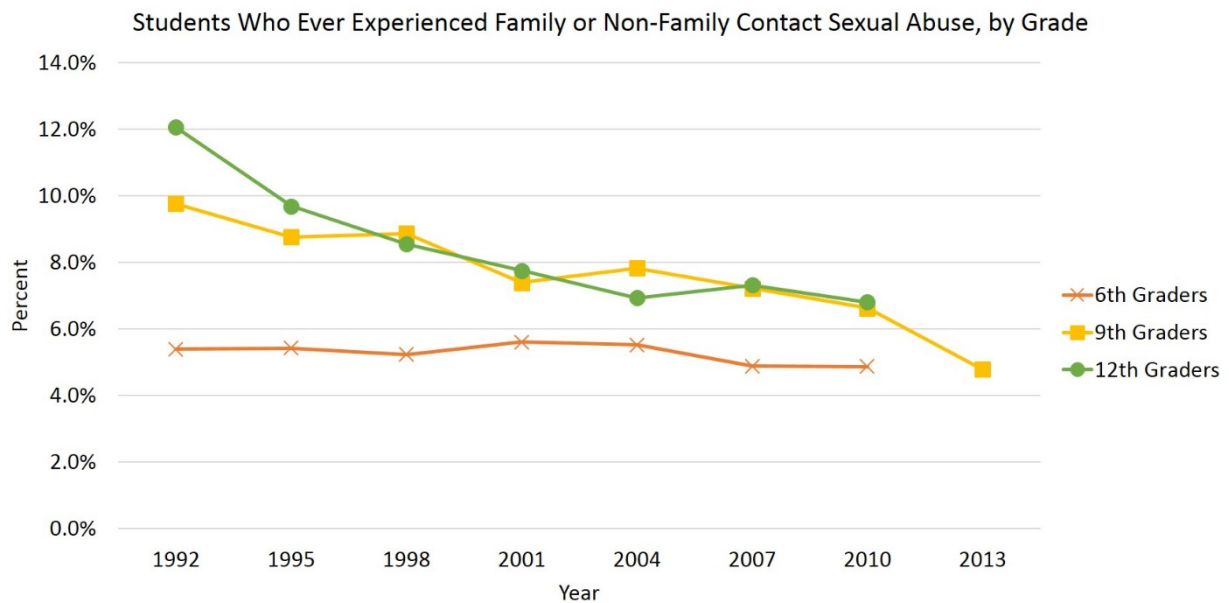


Figure 2: Percent Decrease for Family and Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse by Grade

Percent Decrease		
	Non-family	Family
6th Grade (1992-2010)	13.64%	17.39%
9th Grade (1992-2013)	53.09%	40.00%
12th Grade (1992-2010)	47.00%	32.61%

STUDENTS REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION ON THE MSS

Figure 3: Students Who Ever Experienced Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse, by Grade

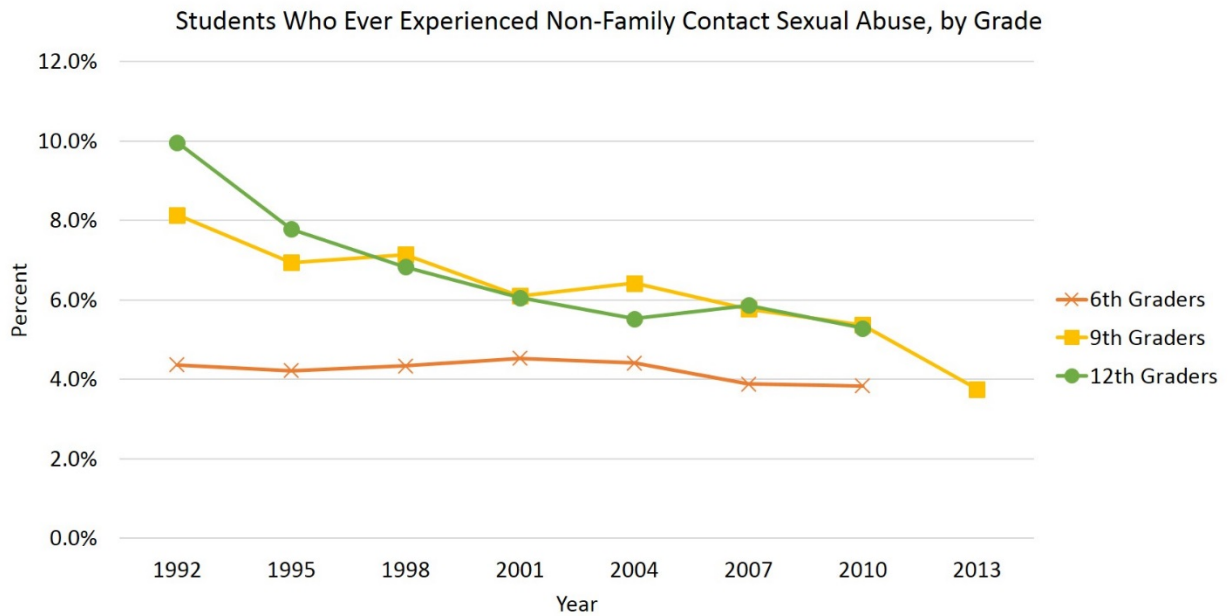
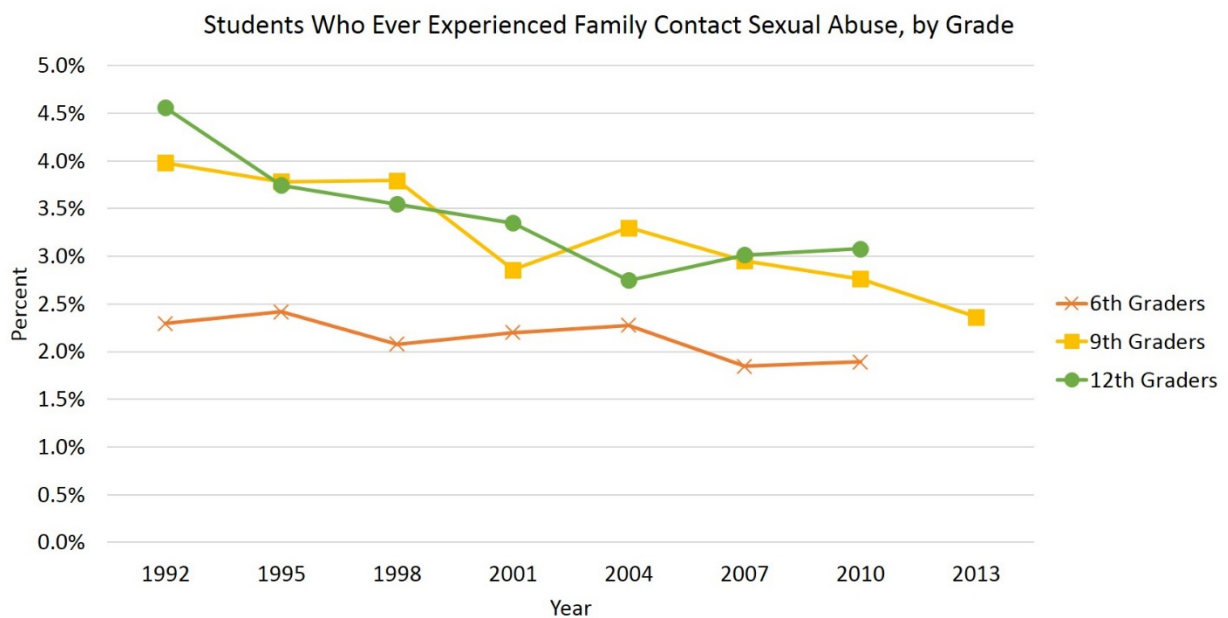


Figure 4: Students Who Ever Experienced Family Contact Sexual Abuse, by Grade



STUDENTS REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION ON THE MSS

Figure 5: 9th Graders Who Ever Experienced Family or Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse, by Race and Ethnicity

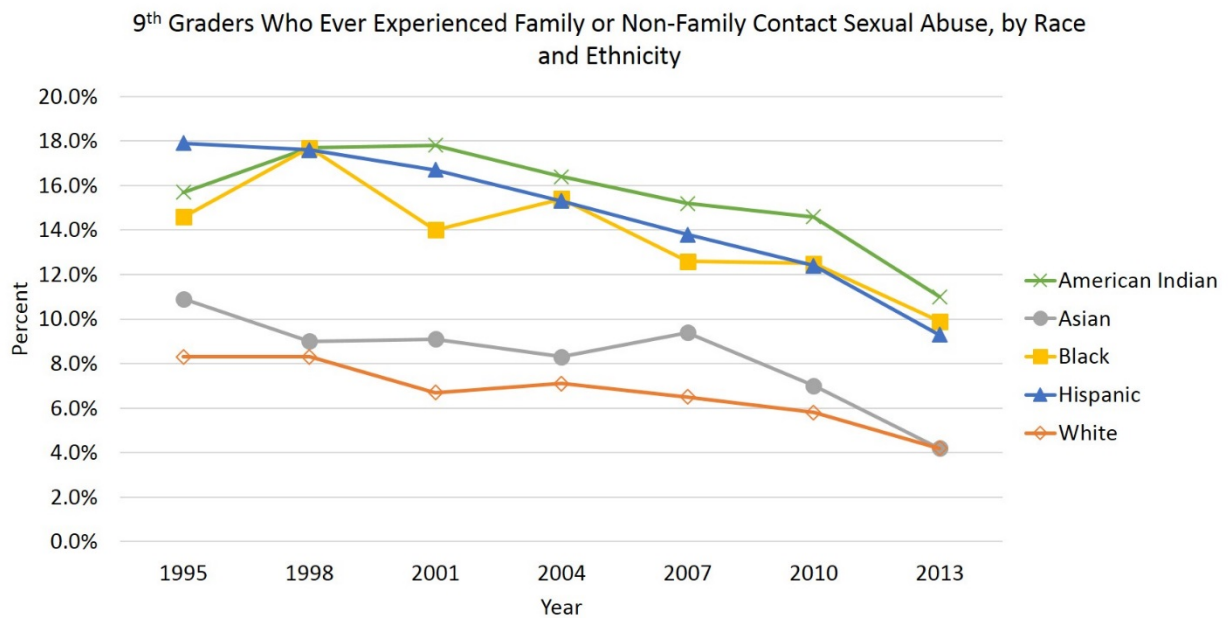
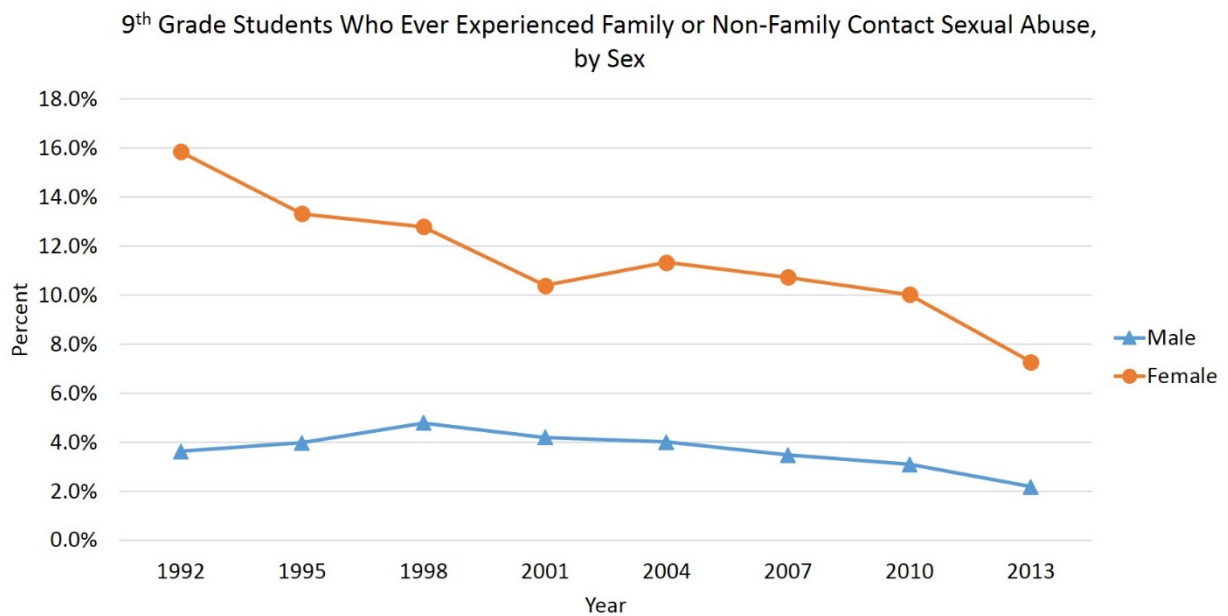


Figure 6: 9th Grade Students Who Ever Experienced Family or Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse, by Sex



STUDENTS REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION ON THE MSS

Figure 7: 9th Grade Students Who Ever Experienced Family or Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse, by Sexual Orientation

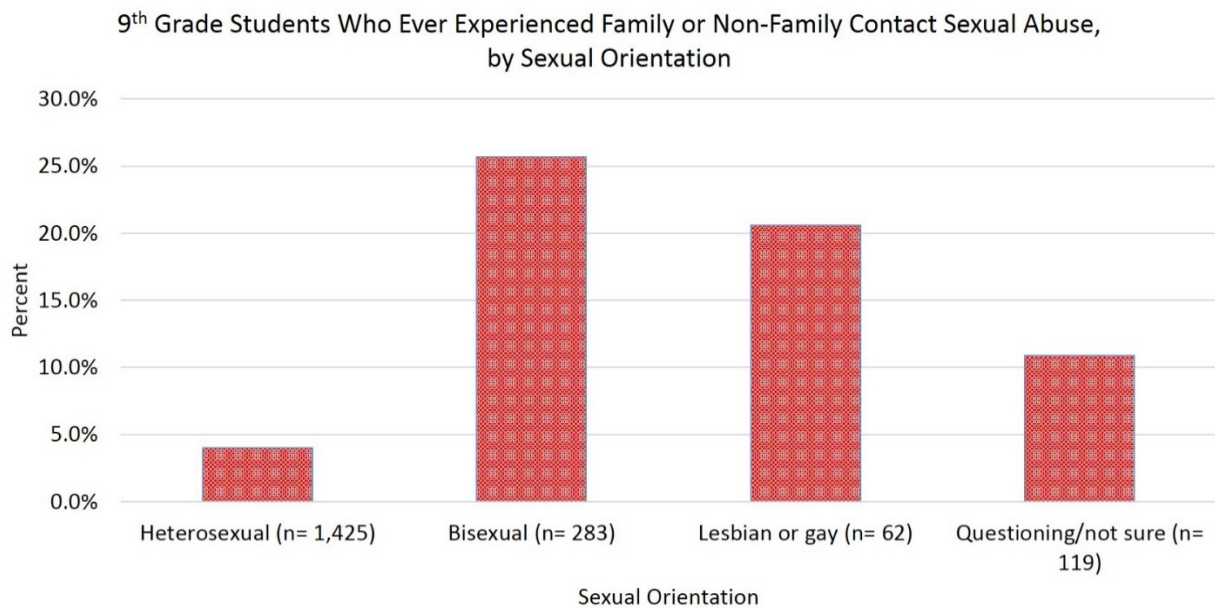
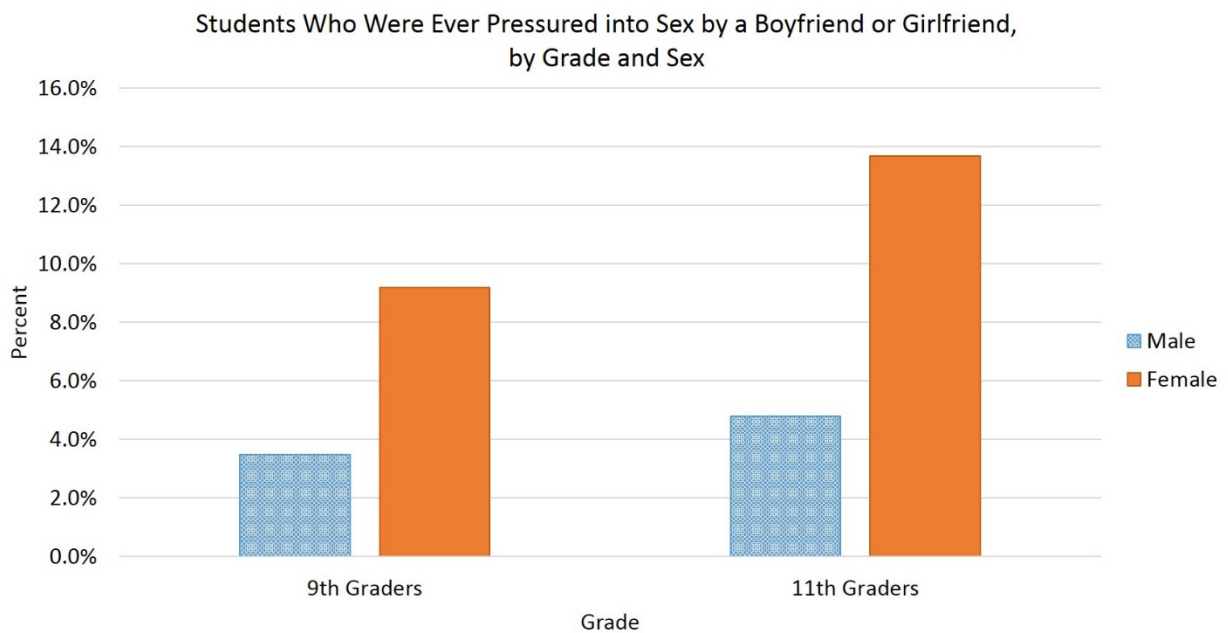


Figure 8: Students Who Were Ever Pressured into Sex by a Boyfriend or Girlfriend, by Grade and Sex (2013)



Discussion

The declining trends seen in the MSS data are consistent with trends seen in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, which publishes statistics from state child protection agencies, as well as with other data sources around the country (Justice Department, 2004). Researchers have found that data suggest other crimes against children have also been declining, such as physical abuse; data on neglect have shown only a slight decline (Justice Department, 2004). There is currently little consensus about why sexual abuse has been decreasing, and there are several hypotheses. The possibility that a real decline occurred is heartening and could point the way to more effective prevention strategies.

Limitations

The questions are indicators of the larger problem of sexual violence, and they do not capture data on all forms of sexual violence. Thus, a decrease in sexual violence may be occurring for family and non-family contact sexual abuse but not for other types. For example, the Internet and cell phones have allowed for new ways in which sexual abuse can occur, and new questions are needed to gather data about these experiences of technology-assisted sexual abuse. Also, sexual exploitation and trafficking may also not be captured by these questions. Another limitation regarding the family and non-family contact sexual abuse questions is that they may not capture well any peer or partner-perpetrated sexual abuse where the perpetrator is a similar age to the victim, or situations where the victim is of similar or greater physical strength than the perpetrator. Also, sexual orientation data was not collected prior to 2013, thus those trends are unknown. As noted above, the intimate partner sexual violence question has been changed over time, thus the trend for this type of sexual violence in Minnesota is unknown. Another limitation is that none of the questions capture number of victimizations experienced by each victim. In 2013, the grade levels surveyed changed to 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th grade. Thus, 6th and 12th grade data will be unavailable in 2013 onward.

Key Messages

- Sexual violence is a public health issue, and it is preventable.
- The MSS is a valuable tool for gathering surveillance data on sexual violence victimization.
- The MSS shows declining trends in family and non-family contact sexual abuse; data sources in other states and nationally show declining trends as well.
- The data show large disparities in sexual violence victimization based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and sex.
- Additional data is needed to better understand sexual violence victimization in MN.

Resources

- [MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program](#)
- State coalitions: [Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#), [MN Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition](#), [Mending the Sacred Hoop Coalition](#), [MN Coalition for Battered Women](#), and the [MN Alliance on Crime](#).

References

1. MN Student Survey, 1992-2013.
2. Justice Department. (2004). Explanations for the decline in child sexual abuse cases. Juvenile Justice Bulletin.

Recommended Citation

Raguet M, Roesler J, Kinde M: Data Brief: Students Reporting Sexual Violence Victimization on the Minnesota Student Survey, 1992-2013. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Health. October 2016.

Minnesota Department of Health
Injury and Violence Prevention Unit
Sexual Violence Prevention Program
PO Box 64882, St. Paul, MN 55164
www.health.state.mn.us/injury/topic/svp



October 2016

*To obtain this information
in a different format, call:
651-201-5484
Printed on recycled paper.*