

Students Reporting Sexual Violence Victimization on the Minnesota Student Survey, 1992-2016

REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2019

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 (1-3). 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 conducted a student survey for over two decades that includes questions about sexual violence, and is one of the most consistent sources of self-reported sexual violence data in the state. In 2016, 5.6% of youth from the student survey self-reported ever-experiencing sexual abuse -2.6% of males and 8.6% of females (4).

Methods

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS), which began in 1989, is conducted every three years and is Minnesota's counterpart to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Questions about family and non-family contact sexual abuse were introduced on the survey in 1992 for 9th and 11th graders, and additional sexual violence questions were introduced in later years. This report examines the data from the MSS that was administered in 2016, during which 85% of public school districts agreed to participate (5). Student participation is voluntary and 168,733 students participated in 2016 (an estimated 68% of students across the state). This report examines self-reported sexual violence among students between 1992 and 2016 (4,6).

The questions:

Sexual Violence

The three sexual violence questions that were analyzed for this report are listed below. Sexual harm in all its forms includes more than what is measured by these three questions. Therefore, the term "sexual violence" is used in this report to refer to all forms of sexual harm that exist, including the three questions analyzed in this report. The term "sexual abuse" is used throughout this report to refer to the combined results of the two questions about non-family and family contact sexual abuse. "Contact" refers to sexual abuse involving physical touch.

 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 as non-family contact sexual abuse)

- Has any older or stronger member of your family ever touched you or had you touch them sexually? (referred to as family contact sexual abuse)
- 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?

Sex and Gender

Prior to 2016, the survey asked about biological sex (i.e. male, female), but not gender identity. Beginning in 2016, biological sex and gender identity information was captured by two questions on the MSS:

- What is your biological sex? (response options: Male, Female)
- Do you consider yourself transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or unsure about your gender identity? (response options: Yes, No)

Some figures in this report include a category for transgender and non-binary students. For these figures, students who responded "Yes" to the transgender question were classified as "Transgender or non-binary" rather than "Male" or "Female," regardless of how they answered the biological sex question. Three percent of 9th graders (N=1,271) and 2% of 11th graders (N=897) identified as transgender or non-binary in the 2016 survey. Due to the overall small number of students reporting "transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or unsure" as their gender identity, this category was not able to be included in all of the analyses in this report (5). The figures that only present male or female categories use data from the biological sex question and not from the transgender or non-binary gender identity question.

Race and Ethnicity

Some of the results in this report include race and ethnicity data. The results include a multi-racial category for students who selected more than one race on the survey. One important note is that the results presented for each race category are mutually exclusive, meaning that each student is counted only once in these results. The questions about whether students are Hispanic, Somali and Hmong were analyzed separately from the race question, thus students who selected one or more of the race options and one or more of the Hispanic, Somali or Hmong options would be counted more than once between the race and ethnicity figures in the report. In addition, the questions about whether students are Hispanic, Somali or Hmong are not mutually exclusive, thus students may be counted in more than one of these categories.

- What is your race? (If more than one describes you, mark ALL that apply)
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian
 - Black, African or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White
- Are you:
 - Hispanic or Latino/a? (response options: Yes/No)
 - Somali? (response options: Yes/No)
 - Hmong? (response options: Yes/No)

Results

Sexual Abuse: Measured by Family or Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse

Between 1992 and 2016, the percentage of 9th grade students reporting sexual abuse on the survey declined for both females and males, though a greater decrease occurred among females (Figure 1a). In 2016, among 9th grade students whose gender identity was transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or who are unsure about their gender identity, 14.3% reported experiencing sexual abuse. This was the first year transgender or non-binary gender identity information was collected; thus, it is not possible to know whether this is an increase or decrease in abuse experienced by this student population. It is, however, higher than the percentage of females and males who report sexual abuse (6.6% and 1.6%, respectively). Eleventh grade transgender or non-binary identifying students reported even higher percentages of abuse compared to their 9th grade counterparts – 17.8% reported ever experiencing sexual abuse (data not shown in this brief).

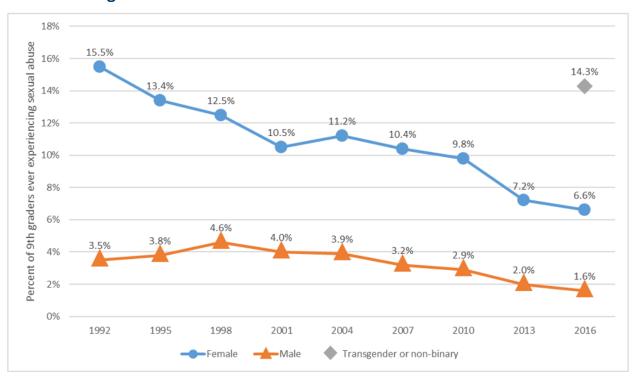
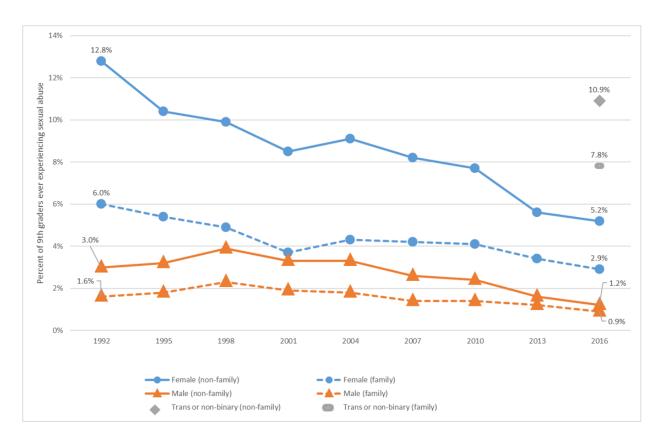


Figure 1a. Sexual Abuse Decreased for Females and Males

Overall, 9th grade students of all genders report non-family contact sexual abuse (solid line) more frequently than family contact sexual abuse (dashed line) (see Figure 1b).

Figure 1b. Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse was More Common than Family Contact Sexual Abuse



Decreases in sexual abuse occurred in all racial and ethnic groups and for both females and males between 1995 and 2016 (see Figures 2a, 2b and Figure 3). However, some of the victimization disparities by race persisted during this time period. In particular, multiracial and American Indian or Alaska Native students consistently reported higher rates of sexual abuse compared to students of other races. These patterns were true for both females and males.

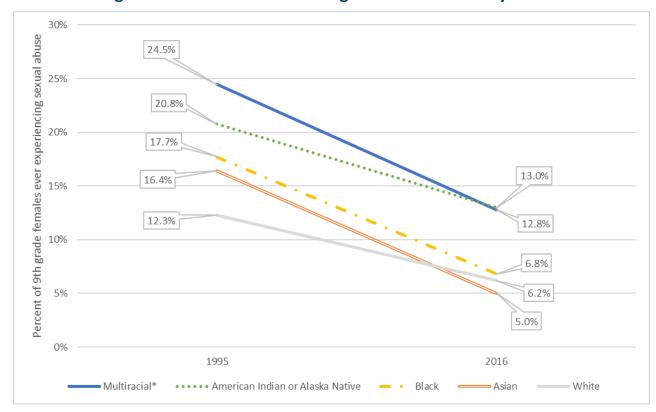


Figure 2a. Sexual Abuse Among Females Differed by Race

^{*}Multiracial category includes students who selected one or more races

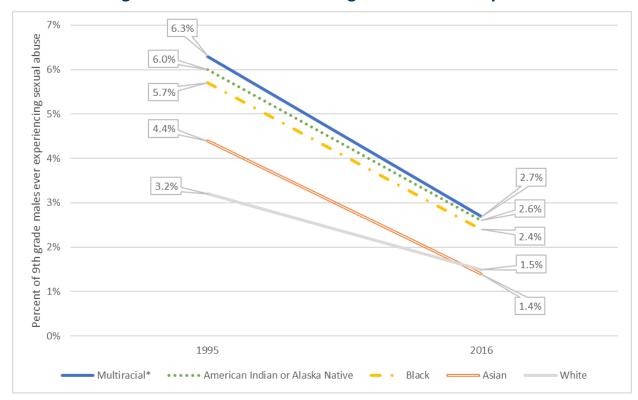
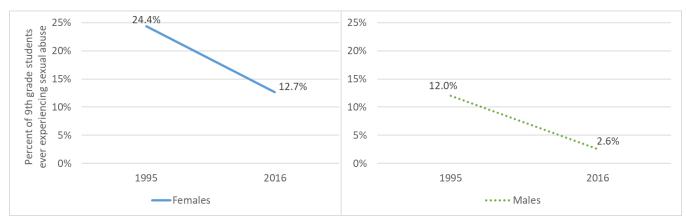


Figure 2b. Sexual Abuse Among Males Differed by Race

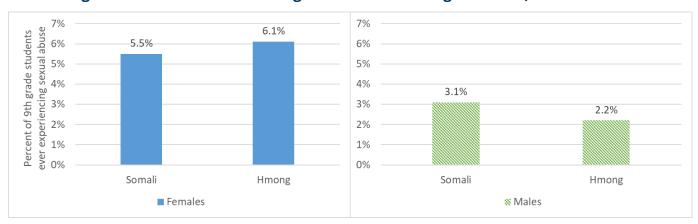
^{*}Multiracial category includes students who selected one or more races

Figure 3. Sexual Abuse Among Hispanic Students Decreased for Both Females and Males



Additionally, sexual abuse reported by Somali and Hmong students in 2016 differed by sex (see Figure 4), with females having a greater likelihood of experiencing sexual abuse.

Figure 4. Sexual Abuse Among Somali and Hmong Students, 2016



For 2013 and 2016, a far greater percentage of 9th grade students who identified as bisexual, gay or lesbian and students unsure about their sexual orientation experienced sexual abuse compared to heterosexual students (see Figure 5). Bisexual and gay or lesbian females reported the highest percentages of sexual abuse (23.3% and 21.9%, respectively). Within the sexual orientation categories of heterosexual and not sure about their sexual orientation, transgender or non-binary identifying students reported the highest percentages of sexual abuse (7.9% and 13.7%, respectively).

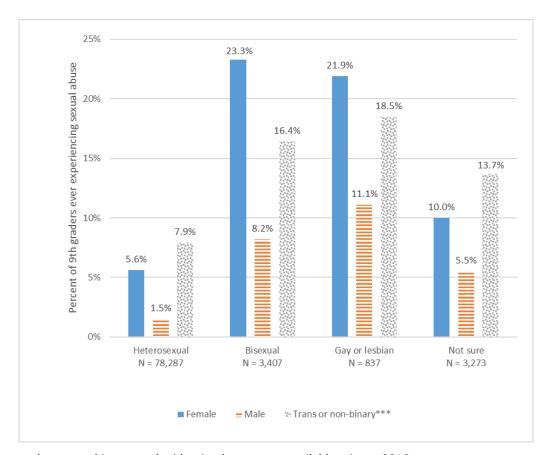


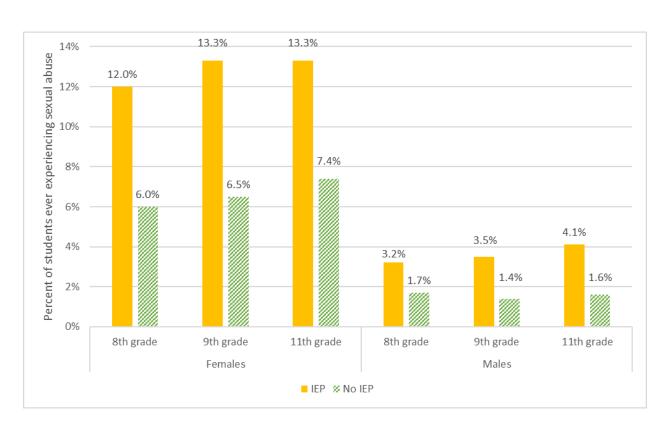
Figure 5. Sexual Abuse Differed by Sexual Orientation

^{***}Transgender or non-binary gender identity data are not available prior to 2016

It is well understood that children with disabilities are at higher risk for sexual abuse (7-9). The MSS includes a question about whether students have an IEP (Individualized Education Program), i.e. receive special education services. It is important to note that this question does not capture all students with disabilities. This question was analyzed for this report because it was the primary question about disability that was available on the survey in 2016. It is also important to note that experiencing trauma, such as sexual abuse, can contribute to the development of certain types of disabilities.

Figure 6 shows that in 2016, approximately twice as many students who had an IEP reported experiencing sexual abuse (illustrated by the solid yellow bars) compared to students who did not have an IEP (patterned green bars). This pattern was consistent across grades and for both females and males.

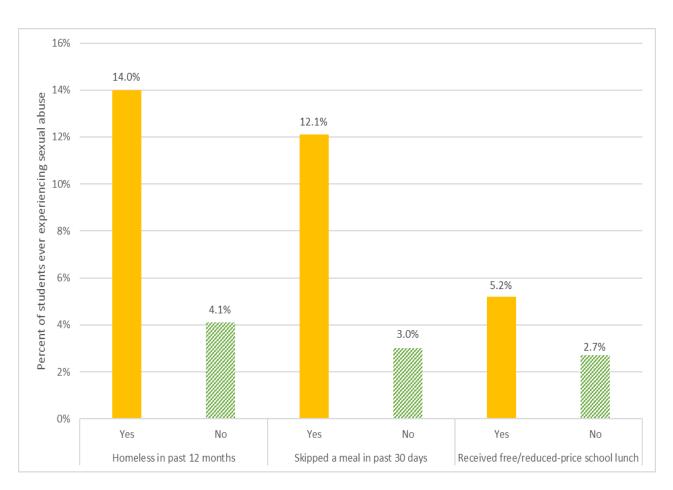
Figure 6. In General, Twice as Many Students with an IEP Experienced Sexual Abuse Compared to Students who did not have an IEP, 2016



The MSS includes data about economic hardship, specifically, if students were homeless during the prior 12 months, skipped a meal in the past 30 days because their family did not have enough money to buy food, or received free or reduced price school lunches. In 2016, 6,504 students (5.5% of all survey participants) reported homelessness during the prior 12 months, 7,509 students (4.6%) reported having skipped a meal in the prior 30 days, and 47,333 students (29.0%) reported receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

Figure 7 illustrates that in 2016, students (8th, 9th and 11th graders) who responded "yes" to the various economic hardship questions (illustrated by the solid yellow bars) were much more likely to report having experienced sexual abuse compared to those who answered "no" to the economic hardship questions (patterned green bars).

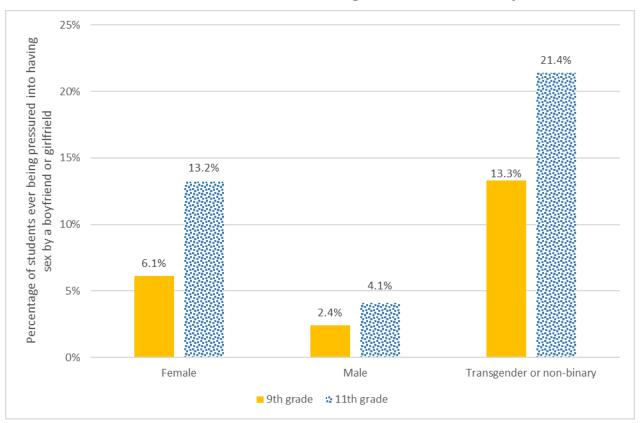
Figure 7. Students with Economic Hardship were Two to Four Times More Likely to have Experienced Sexual Abuse Compared to Students without Economic Hardship, 2016



Sexual Violence: Measured by Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

When students were asked if they had been pressured into having sex by a boyfriend or girlfriend when they did not want to, a higher percentage of females answered "yes" compared to males (see Figure 8). (In Figure 8, the yellow solid bars depict results for 9th grade and the blue dotted bars depict results for 11th grade.) In 2016, more than twice as many 11th grade females reported being pressured into having sex (13.2%) compared to 9th grade females (6.1%). However, students who identified as transgender or non-binary reported the highest percentages of being pressured into having sex by a dating partner (13.3% among 9th graders and 21.4% among 11th graders), compared to their cisgender peers. [Note: the term "cisgender" refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth (10). We will be using the term "cisgender" interchangeably with "not transgender" in this report.]

Figure 8. A Greater Percentage of Transgender and Non-Binary Students
Reported Being Pressured Into Sex by a Boyfriend or Girlfriend Compared to
Students Who Were Not Transgender or Non-Binary



Discussion

The declining trends in the forms of sexual violence victimization observed in the MSS data are consistent with trends seen in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (11); however, it is important to note, there is not a consensus about why these trends may have decreased.

While some forms of sexual violence victimization among Minnesota youth may have decreased in number, the amount of decrease has not been the same for all youth populations, and large disparities in sexual violence victimization still exist between certain youth populations.

Students who identified as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or who were unsure about their sexual orientation were more likely to report sexual abuse compared to heterosexual youth. Students who identified as transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or who were unsure about their gender identity reported much higher percentages of sexual abuse compared to their cisgender peers. Transgender and non-binary students also reported higher percentages of being pressured into having sex by a boyfriend or girlfriend. These findings are consistent with national survey findings that show transgender students report significantly higher percentages of intimate partner sexual violence compared to their cisgender male and cisgender female peers (12).

Additionally, significant racial and ethnic disparities exist with respect to sexual violence. In 2016, both multiracial and American Indian or Alaska Native females were over twice as likely to report sexual abuse compared to White females. Between 1995 and 2016, multiracial females and American Indian or Alaska Native females consistently reported higher percentages of family or non-family contact sexual abuse compared to females of other races. This is consistent with data from the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, which show that women who identify as multiracial and American Indian/Alaska Native have the highest lifetime prevalence of both rape and sexual violence compared to women of other races (13). These racial disparities are also true for male students who reported family or non-family contact sexual abuse on the MSS and men who reported sexual violence on the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey.

While the percentage of Hispanic students who reported sexual abuse decreased drastically for both females and males between 1995 and 2016, the percentage of female Hispanic students who reported sexual abuse remains high. In 2016, female Somali and female Hmong students were much more likely to report sexual abuse compared to their male peers.

Finally, the results of this analysis showed disparities in the prevalence of sexual abuse among youth receiving special education services, as well as disparities in the prevalence of sexual abuse among youth experiencing economic hardship. Youth with an IEP or who received special education services, as well as those with economic hardship, reported much higher percentages of sexual violence. Approximately twice as many students with an IEP reported experiencing abuse compared to students without an IEP. Students who reported homelessness in the prior 12 months were more than three times as likely to report sexual abuse compared to those who were not homeless. Students who reported skipping meals in the prior 30 days were over four times more likely to report ever experiencing sexual abuse compared to those who did not skip meals.

While this report reveals disparities for different youth populations in sexual violence victimization, it is important to note that all youth populations reported experiencing sexual violence. It is not acceptable that any youth, regardless of population, experience sexual violence victimization.

Limitations

The questions about sexual abuse asked on the Minnesota Student Survey provide an indication of the overall problem of sexual violence experienced by youth in Minnesota; however, these data do not provide insight into all forms of sexual violence, including technology-assisted sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking, sexual harassment, number of incidents experienced by each victim, and more.

The data presented in this report have several limitations, including the limitation mentioned above about using IEP status as a way to estimate sexual violence victimization among students with disabilities. Also, some students may not be able to take the survey or understand all of the questions due to disability, language limitation, or other reasons, and thus they would not be represented in these data. Additionally, for some victims and some youth populations, reporting even on an anonymous survey may feel unsafe, preventing them from reporting sexual abuse experiences on the MSS.

The data on sexual abuse by race and ethnicity that are shared in this report are impacted by a number of factors in addition to being impacted by actual reductions in sexual abuse victimization. These data are impacted by changes over time in how youth view and report on their racial and ethnic identities, as well as changes in the racial and ethnic makeup of the Minnesota youth population within each of the racial and ethnic categories measured on the MSS. Additionally, the data are limited in that the large racial categories may obscure subdisparities within some or all of the racial categories. In the future, the inclusion of MSS questions about additional ethnic and/or cultural groups (for example Ethiopian, Vietnamese, and other subcategories) would allow for analyses specific to these youth populations, and it is recommended that the next iteration of this report include such analyses if possible.

Data about sexual violence victimization experienced by transgender or non-binary identifying students, as well as by gay or lesbian students, should be interpreted with caution as these categories contain small numbers of students. However, as mentioned above, national data sources have found similar disparities. Additionally, data collection about being transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or unsure about one's gender identity began with the most recent (2016) survey. Additional years of data will help better document the experience of sexual violence for these groups of students and inform targeted prevention strategies.

Prevention

Sexual violence is a preventable public health issue. Through CDC's Rape Prevention and Education funding and Prevention Block Grant Funding, the Minnesota Department of Health's Sexual Violence Prevention Program engages partners across the state in prevention action. Strategies use available evidence and best practices, are shaped by wisdom about community-specific contexts, and address risk and protective factors for victimization and perpetration at the individual, community, and societal levels. Increased investments in prevention funding, as well as resources and support for culturally and community specific prevention strategies, are needed in order to effectively prevent sexual violence in all communities and to eliminate disparities in Minnesota.

Resources for Sexual Violence

Victims of sexual violence may call the toll free **National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline** at 1-800-656-4673 to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area. The hotline is available 24 hours a day and provides crisis intervention, information about sexual violence and referrals to local services that can help. Visit the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline website at http://www.rainn.org/about-national-sexual-assault-telephone-hotline.

Day One Hotline is a resource in Minnesota for victims of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 1-866-223-1111. Visit their website at http://dayoneservices.org/.

Additional resources include:

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault - https://www.mncasa.org/

Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition - http://miwsac.org

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women - https://www.mcbw.org/

Mending the Sacred Hoop - https://mshoop.org/

For a list of additional resources, go to the Minnesota Department of Health's Sexual Violence Prevention Program website: https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/svp/

Minnesota Student Survey Data

MSS data are available online through the Minnesota Department of Education's website. Youth in juvenile justice facilities also participate in the MSS; contact the Department of Public Safety to learn about MSS results for these youth.

Suggested Citation

Wiens T, Raguet M, Roesler J. Report: Students Reporting Sexual Violence Victimization on the Minnesota Student Survey, 1992-2016. September 2019. Injury and Violence Prevention Section, Minnesota Department of Health.

References

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STUDENTS REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION ON THE MSS

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5449. Printed on recycled paper.

Appendix

Table for Figure 1a

Table 1a- Sexual Abuse Decreased for Females and Males

Sex / Gender	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
Female	15.5%	13.4%	12.5%	10.5%	11.2%	10.4%	9.8%	7.2%	6.6%
Male	3.5%	3.8%	4.6%	4.0%	3.9%	3.2%	2.9%	2.0%	1.6%
Transgender or non-binary	No data	14.3%							

Table for Figure 1b

Table 1b- Non-Family Contact Sexual Abuse Was More Common Than Family Contact Sexual Abuse

Sex / Gender and Type	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
Female, Family Sexual Abuse	6.0%	5.4%	4.9%	3.7%	4.3%	4.2%	4.1%	3.4%	2.9%
Female, Non-Family Sexual Abuse	12.8%	10.4%	9.9%	8.5%	9.1%	8.2%	7.7%	5.6%	5.2%
Male, Family Sexual Abuse	1.6%	1.8%	2.3%	1.9%	1.8%	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	0.9%
Male, Non-Family Sexual Abuse	3.0%	3.2%	3.9%	3.3%	3.3%	2.6%	2.4%	1.6%	1.2%
Transgender or non- binary, Family Sexual Abuse	No data	7.8%							
Transgender or non- binary, Non-Family Sexual Abuse	No data	10.9%							

Table for Figure 2a

Table 2a- Sexual Abuse Among Females Differed by Race

Race	1995	2016
Multiracial	24.5%	12.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	20.8%	13.0%
Black	17.7%	6.8%
Asian	16.4%	5.0%
White	12.3%	6.2%

Table for Figure 2b

Table 2b- Sexual Abuse Among Males Differed by Race

Race / Ethnicity	1995	2016
Multiracial	6.3%	2.7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6.0%	2.6%
Black	5.7%	2.4%
Asian	4.4%	1.4%
White	3.2%	1.5%

Table for Figure 3

Table 3- Sexual Abuse Among Hispanics Decreased for Both Females and Males

Sex	1995	2016
Females	24.4%	12.7%
Males	12.0%	2.6%

Table for Figure 4

Table 4- Sexual Abuse Among Somali and Hmong Students, 2016

Sex	Somali	Hmong
Females	5.5%	6.1%
Males	3.1%	2.2%

Table for Figure 5

Table 5- Sexual Abuse Differed by Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Female	Male	Transgender or Non-binary
Heterosexual (N=78,287)	5.6%	1.5%	7.9%
Bisexual (N=3,407)	23.3%	8.2%	16.4%
Gay or Lesbian (N=837)	21.9%	11.1%	18.5%
Not Sure (N=3,273)	10.0%	5.5%	13.7%

Table for Figure 6

Table 6- In General, Twice as Many Students With an IEP Experienced Sexual Abuse Compared to Students Who Did Not Have an IEP, 2016

Grade Level	IEP	No IEP
8 th Graders, Females	12.0%	6.0%
8 th Graders, Males	3.2%	1.7%
9 th Graders, Females	13.3%	6.5%
9 th Graders, Males	3.5%	1.4%
11 th Graders, Females	13.3%	7.4%
11 th Graders, Males	4.1%	1.6%

Table for Figure 7

Table 7- Students With Economic Hardship Were Two to Four Times More Likely to Have Experienced Sexual Abuse Compared to Students Without Economic Hardship, 2016

Economic Hardship Indicator	Percent Experiencing Sexual Abuse
Homeless at times in past 12 months: Yes	14.0%
Homeless at times in past 12 months: No	4.1%
Skipped meal in past 30 days: Yes	12.1%
Skipped meal in past 30 days: No	3.0%
Free/reduced price school lunch: Yes	5.2%
Free/reduced price school lunch: No	2.7%

Table for Figure 8

Table 8- A Greater Percentage of Transgender and Non-Binary Students
Reported Being Pressured Into Sex by a Boyfriend or Girlfriend Compared to
Students Who Were Not Transgender or Non-Binary

Sex / Gender	9 th Graders	11 th Graders
Female	6.1%	13.2%
Male	2.4%	4.1%
Transgender or Non- Binary	13.3%	21.4%