

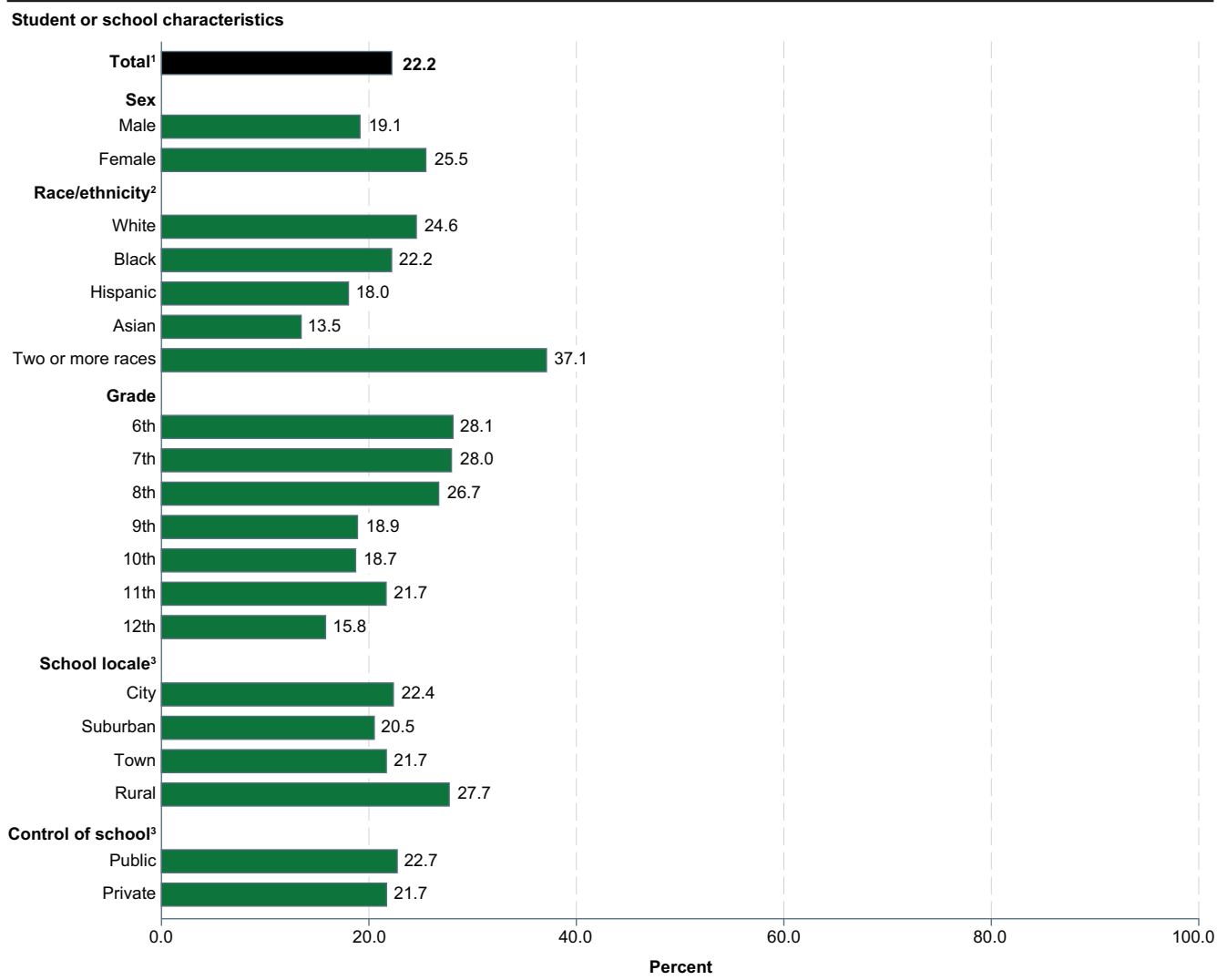
Bullying at School and Electronic Bullying

In 2019, about 22 percent of students ages 12–18 reported being bullied at school during the school year, which was lower than the percentage reported in 2009 (28 percent). In 2019, about 16 percent of students in grades 9–12 reported being electronically bullied during the previous 12 months.

The School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey collected data on bullying¹ by asking students ages 12-18 if they had been bullied at school² during the school year. Students were also asked about the types and frequencies of bullying they had been subjected to and where the bullying occurred. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) also collected data on students in grades 9-12 who reported being bullied

on school property³ or electronically bullied⁴ during the previous 12 months. This indicator first discusses bullying at school using the SCS data. It then uses the YRBSS data to discuss electronic bullying by student characteristics and electronic bullying and bullying on school property by state. Readers should take note of the differing populations of interest, contexts, reference periods, and terminology across these data sources.

Figure 1. Percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, by selected student and school characteristics: 2019



¹ Total includes race categories not separately shown.

² Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Data for Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students did not meet reporting standards in 2019; therefore, data for these two groups are not shown.

³ Excludes students with missing information about the school characteristic.

NOTE: “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.40.

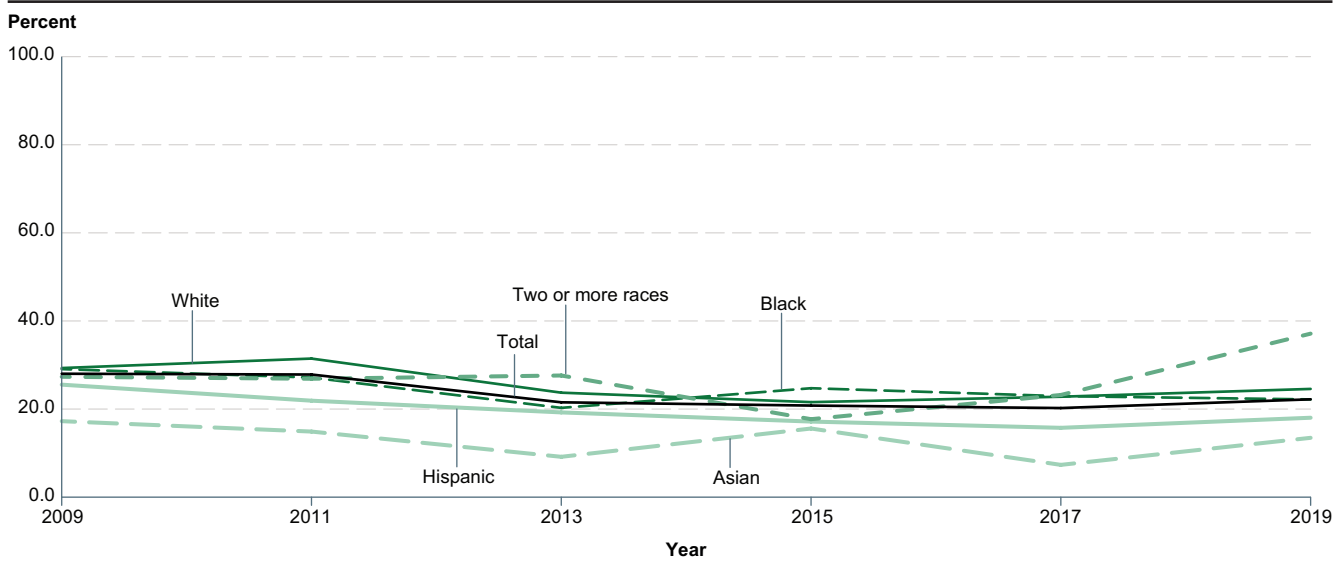
Based on data from the SCS, about 22 percent of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied at school during the school year in 2019.⁵ Students' reports of being bullied varied based on student characteristics such as sex, race/ethnicity, and grade level. Specifically, a higher percentage of female students than of male students reported being bullied at school during the school year (25 vs. 19 percent). The percentage of students of Two or more races (37 percent) who reported being bullied was higher than the corresponding percentages for White students (25 percent) and Black students (22 percent), which were in turn higher than the percentage of Asian students (13 percent) who reported being bullied. In addition, higher percentages of students of Two or more races and White students than of Hispanic students (18 percent) reported being bullied at school during the school year. A comparison of student bullying by grade level shows that the percentages of students who reported being bullied

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at school during the school year in 2019 were higher for 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-graders (ranging from 27 to 28 percent) than for 9th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders (ranging from 16 to 19 percent). The percentage was also higher for 7th-graders than for 11th-graders (28 vs. 22 percent) and higher for 11th-graders than for 12th-graders (22 vs. 16 percent).

When the prevalence of bullying is examined by school characteristics,⁶ it can be observed that the percentage of students who reported being bullied at school during the school year was higher for students enrolled in schools in rural areas (28 percent) than for students enrolled in schools in other locales (22 percent each for those enrolled in schools in cities and in towns, and 21 percent for those enrolled in schools in suburban areas). However, there were no measurable differences between public and private school students in the percentage of students who reported being bullied.

Figure 2. Percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 2009 through 2019



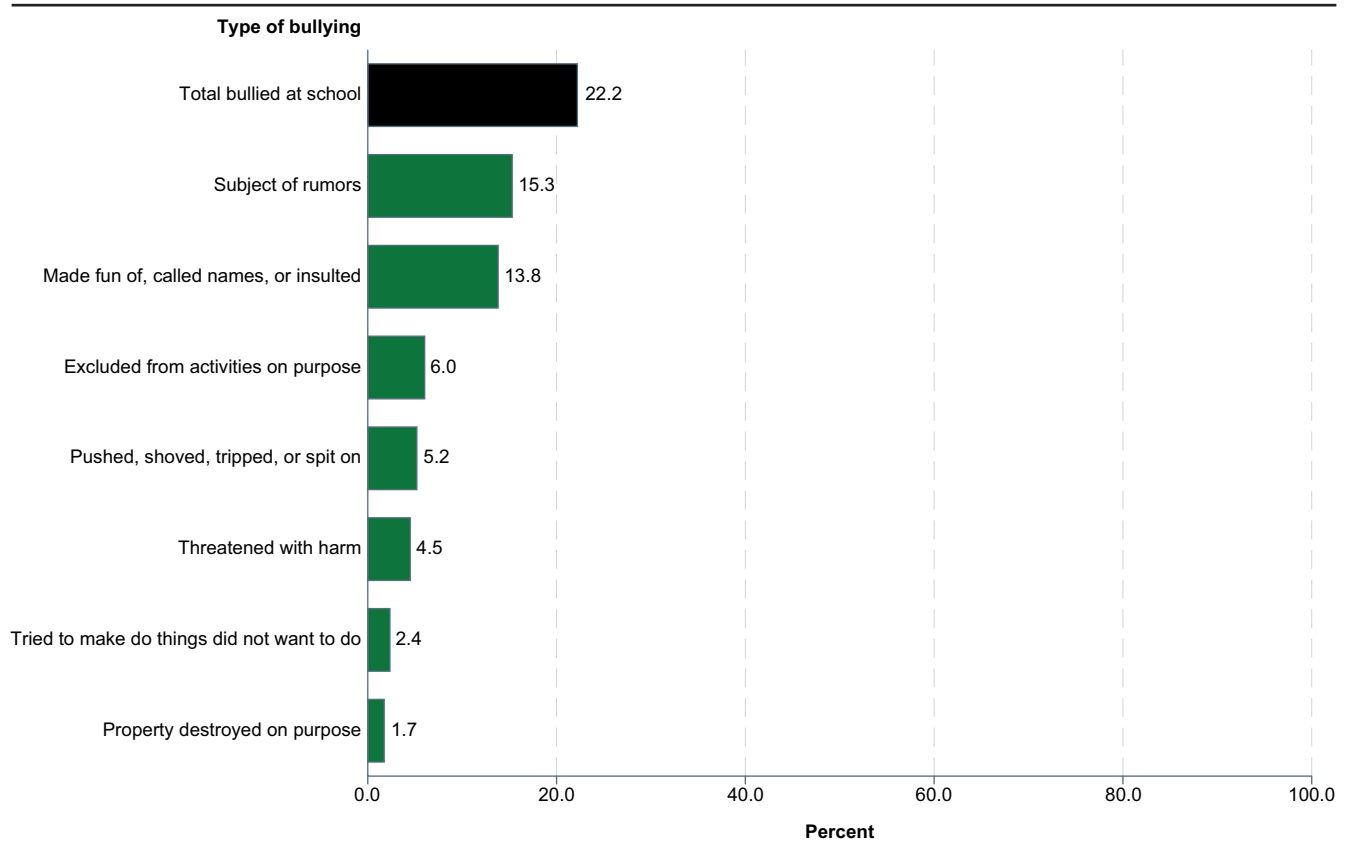
NOTE: “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native are included in the totals but omitted from this figure, because data for these two groups did not meet report standards for all or some of the years.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009 through 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.40.

The total percentage of students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year was lower in 2019 than in 2009 (22 vs. 28 percent). The same pattern can be observed for many student subgroups. Specifically, lower percentages of students reported being bullied at school in 2019 than in 2009 for the following subgroups: male students (19 vs. 27 percent); female students (25 vs. 29 percent); White students (25 vs. 29 percent); Black students (22 vs. 29 percent); Hispanic students (18 vs. 26 percent); 6th-graders (28 vs. 39 percent); 9th-graders (19 vs. 28 percent); and 10th-graders (19 vs. 27 percent).

For the locale and control of students’ schools, comparable data have only been available since 2015.⁷ The percentage of students enrolled in schools in rural areas who reported being bullied at school during the school year was higher in 2019 than in 2015 (28 vs. 20 percent). Generally, for other student subgroups—including students enrolled in schools in other locales, as well as subgroups by sex, race/ethnicity, grade level, and control of school—there were no measurable differences between 2015 and 2019 in students’ reports of being bullied at school.⁸

Figure 3. Percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, by type of bullying: 2019



NOTE: “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. Students who reported experiencing more than one type of bullying at school were counted only once in the total for students bullied at school.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.45.

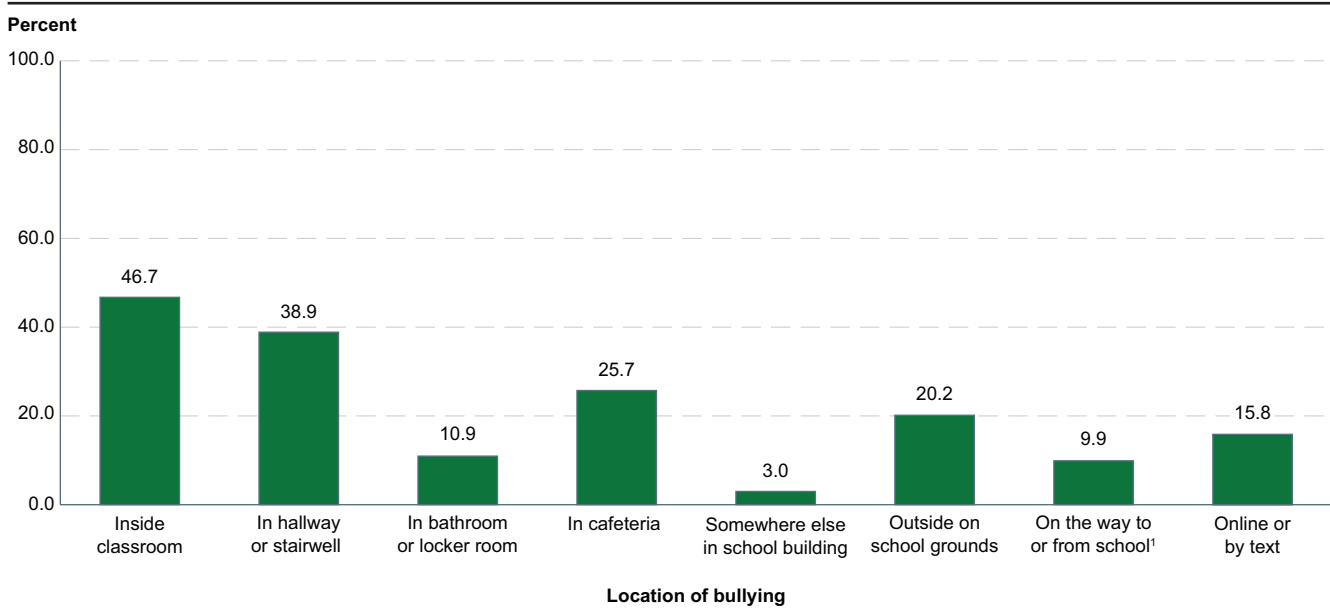
Data were available by the specific type of bullying that students were subjected to. In 2019, of students ages 12-18, about 15 percent reported being the subject of rumors; 14 percent reported being made fun of, called names, or insulted; 6 percent reported being excluded from activities on purpose; and 5 percent reported being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on. Additionally, 4 percent of students reported being threatened with harm, and 2 percent each reported that others tried to make them do things they did not want to do and that their property was destroyed by others on purpose.

When the specific types of bullying are examined, patterns similar to total bullying can be observed by grade level and school locale.⁹ For example, generally students in the lower grades were more likely to report being bullied in certain ways than students in higher grades. Higher percentages of 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-graders than of 10th-, 11th-, and 12th-graders reported being

made fun of, called names, or insulted (17 to 20 percent vs. 9 to 11 percent) and being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on (7 to 8 percent vs. 2 to 3 percent). In addition, the percentages of students who reported specific types of bullying were generally higher for students enrolled in schools in rural areas than for their peers enrolled in schools in some of the other locales.

Differences were observed between male and female students in their reports of several types of bullying. Specifically, a higher percentage of female students than of male students ages 12-18 reported being the subject of rumors (19 vs. 12 percent); being made fun of, called names, or insulted (16 vs. 12 percent); and being excluded from activities on purpose (9 vs. 4 percent). In contrast, a higher percentage of male students than of female students reported being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on (6 vs. 4 percent).

Figure 4. Among students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, percentage who reported being bullied in various locations: 2019

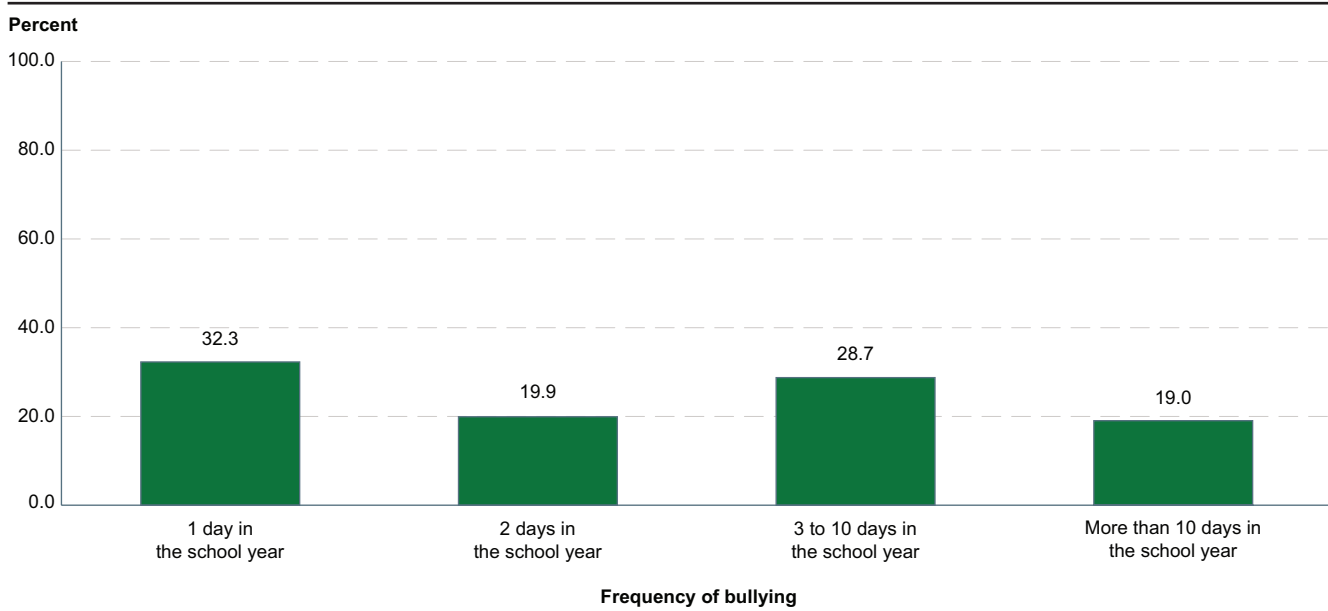


¹ Examples provided to the respondent include on a school bus or at a bus stop.
 NOTE: “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. Students who reported being bullied at school were also asked whether the bullying occurred “online or by text.” Location totals may sum to more than 100 percent because students could have been bullied in more than one location. Excludes students who indicated that they were bullied but did not answer the question about where the bullying occurred.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.50.

The SCS also asked students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year to indicate the location where they had been bullied. In 2019, of students who reported being bullied at school, 47 percent reported being bullied inside the classroom, 39 percent reported being bullied in the hallway or stairwell at school, and 26 percent reported being bullied in the cafeteria. About 20 percent of students who were bullied reported being bullied outside on school grounds, 16 percent reported

being bullied online or by text, 11 percent reported being bullied in the bathroom or locker room, 10 percent reported being bullied on the way to or from school, and 3 percent reported being bullied somewhere else in the school building. Few measurable differences were observed by student and school characteristics in the locations where students ages 12-18 reported they were bullied during the school year.

Figure 5. Among students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, percentage reporting various frequencies of bullying: 2019



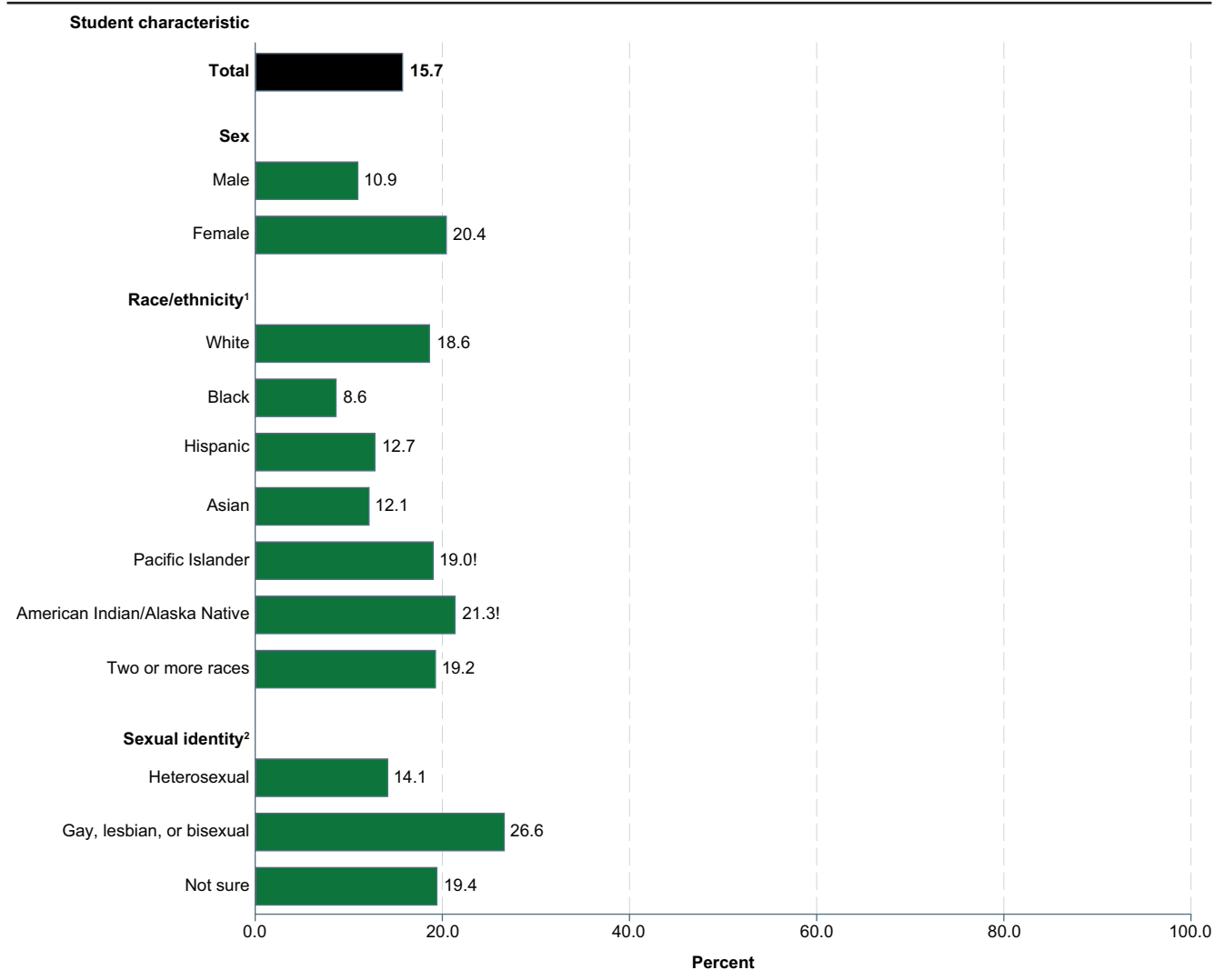
NOTE: "At school" includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school. Students who reported being bullied during the school year were asked to report whether they were bullied on 1 day in the school year, 2 days in the school year, 3 to 10 days in the school year, or more than 10 days in the school year. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.60.

In 2019, about 32 percent of students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year indicated that they were bullied on 1 day in the school year, 20 percent indicated that they were bullied on 2 days in the school year, 29 percent indicated that they were bullied on 3 to 10 days in the school year, and 19 percent indicated that they were bullied on more than 10 days in the school year. When frequencies of bullying are examined across student subgroups, few measurable differences are observed except by grade level. Specifically, the percentage of students who reported being bullied on more than 10 days during the school year was lower for 6th-graders (7 percent) than for students of all other grades (ranging from 17 to 28 percent).

Among students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year in 2019, about 46 percent

reported notifying an adult at school¹⁰ about the incident. A higher percentage of Black students than of White students reported notifying an adult at school (61 vs. 47 percent), and both percentages were higher than the percentage for Hispanic students (35 percent). Moreover, the percentage of students who reported notifying an adult at school after being bullied was higher for 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-graders (ranging from 49 to 57 percent) than for 12th-graders (28 percent); the percentage was also higher for 7th-graders (57 percent) than for 9th- and 10th-graders (39 and 40 percent, respectively). About 60 percent of students who reported being bullied on more than ten days in the school year reported notifying an adult at school after being bullied, compared with 43 percent for those who were bullied on two days in the school year and 35 percent for those who were bullied on one day in the school year.

Figure 6. Percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported having been electronically bullied during the previous 12 months, by selected student characteristics: 2019



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

¹ Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

² Students were asked which of the following—"heterosexual (straight)," "gay or lesbian," "bisexual," or "not sure"—best described them.

NOTE: Electronic bullying includes "being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media."

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 230.55.

As mentioned in the introduction, the YRBSS collected data on electronic bullying for students in grades 9-12. In 2019, about 16 percent of students in grades 9-12 reported being electronically bullied during the previous 12 months.¹¹ This percentage was not measurably different from the percentages reported in any of the earlier survey years since 2011 (the first year of data collection for this item).

There were some measurable differences by student characteristics in the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported being electronically bullied in 2019. The percentage of students who reported being electronically bullied was higher for female students than for male students (20 vs. 11 percent). The percentages of students who reported being electronically bullied were higher for students of Two or more races and White students (19 percent each) than for Hispanic (13 percent) and Asian (12 percent) students; all these percentages were higher than the percentage of Black students who reported being electronically bullied in 2019 (9 percent). Additionally, the percentage of students who reported being electronically bullied was higher for gay, lesbian, or bisexual students

(27 percent) than for students who were not sure about their sexual identity (19 percent), which was in turn higher than the percentage for heterosexual students (14 percent).¹²

The YRBSS also collected data on electronic bullying anywhere and bullying on school property at the state level. In 2019, data on the percentages of students in grades 9-12 who reported being electronically bullied during the previous 12 months were available for 44 states and the District of Columbia.¹³ Among these jurisdictions, the percentages of students who reported being electronically bullied ranged from 11 percent in the District of Columbia, Georgia, and Florida to 20 percent in New Hampshire. A similar range was observed across states in the percentages of students in grades 9-12 who reported being bullied on school property during the previous 12 months. These data were available for 43 states and the District of Columbia.¹⁴ Among these jurisdictions, the percentages of students who reported being bullied on school property ranged from 13 percent in the District of Columbia to 26 percent in Alaska.

Endnotes:

¹ “Bullying” includes students who reported that another student had made fun of them, called them names, or insulted them; spread rumors about them; threatened them with harm; tried to make them do something they did not want to do; excluded them from activities on purpose; destroyed their property on purpose; or pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on them. In the total for students bullied at school, students who reported more than one type of bullying were counted only once.

² “At school” includes in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, and going to and from school.

³ In the YRBSS, bullying was defined for respondents as “when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again.” “On school property” was not defined for respondents.

⁴ Being electronically bullied includes “being bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting” for 2011 through 2015 and “being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media” for 2017 and 2019.

⁵ The 2019 SCS survey included a split sample design to compare two versions of an updated questionnaire on bullying. Approximately 60 percent of the sample received version 1, which was consistent with prior years; the remaining 40 percent received version 2, which included changes such as removing the word “bullying.” The 2019 estimates in this indicator are based on the 60 percent of the sample who received version 1 of the questionnaire. Similarly, the 2015 SCS survey also included a split sample design, which was to compare two versions of an updated questionnaire on bullying that would provide data on repetition and power imbalance aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s uniform definition of bullying. Half the sample received version 1, and the other half received version 2. Any 2015 estimates in this indicator are based on the 50 percent of the sample who received version 1 of the questionnaire.

⁶ Analyses by school locale and control of school exclude students with missing information about the school characteristic.

⁷ For 2013 and prior years, the four-category school locale information (city, suburban, town, and rural) was not available

and data by the control of school (public or private) were based on school information provided by the respondent. Beginning in 2015, data by the control of school were based on school information collected in the Common Core of Data and the Private School Universe Survey, which was appended to the School Crime Supplement data file and disaggregated at the student level; therefore, these data may not be entirely comparable with figures for earlier years.

⁸ The only exception was that the percentage of students of Two or more races who reported being bullied at school during the school year was higher in 2019 than in 2015 (37 vs. 18 percent).

⁹ Comparisons by race/ethnicity and control of school are omitted because estimates for some of the subgroups often did not meet reporting standards.

¹⁰ “Adult at school” refers to a teacher or other adult at school.

¹¹ U.S. total data are representative of all public and private school students in grades 9-12 in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. U.S. total data were collected through a separate national survey rather than being aggregated from state-level data. In this indicator, all YRBSS discussions about bullying, except those at the state level, are based on data from the national survey.

¹² Since 2015, the YRBSS has included a question on students’ sexual identity by asking students in grades 9-12 which of the following best described them—“heterosexual (straight),” “gay or lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “not sure.” In this indicator, students who identified as “gay or lesbian” or “bisexual” are discussed together as the “gay, lesbian, or bisexual” group. Students were not asked whether they identified as transgender in the YRBSS.

¹³ For detailed state-level data on the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported being electronically bullied during the 12 months preceding the survey, see [table in the YRBSS Youth Online Data Analysis Tool](#).

¹⁴ For detailed state-level data on the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who reported being bullied on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey, see [table in the YRBSS Youth Online Data Analysis Tool](#).

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 230.40, 230.45, 230.50, 230.55, and 230.60

Related indicators and resources: [Discipline Problems Reported by Public Schools](#); [Students’ Perceptions of Personal Safety at School and Away From School](#); [Students’ Reports of Gangs at School](#); [Students’ Reports of Hate-Related Words and Hate-Related Graffiti and Schools’ Reports of Hate Crimes](#); [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2019](#)

Glossary: At school; Bullied (School Crime Supplement); Locale codes; On school property; Private school; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group; Sexual identity (Youth Risk Behavior Survey System)