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SCHOOL VIOLENCE RATE STABLE **LOWEST LEVEL IN A DECADE**

WASHINGTON, D.C – Violent crime rates in the nation’s public and private schools in 2003 remain unchanged and continued at about half those recorded in 1992, according to a joint study published today by the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. The study examined a variety of school crime and safety indicators, including self-reported victimization data gathered from students aged 12-18 years old who were attending public and private schools.

Among students nationwide, an estimated 5 percent experienced a crime at school — about 4 percent reported a crime of theft and 1 percent reported having been a violence victim at school. This equals an estimated 1.2 million crimes of theft against students and about 740,000 violent crimes, including an estimated 150,000 of the most serious violent victimizations (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault). Students also reported that about two-thirds of the serious violent crimes they experienced did not occur at school.

In 2003 students also reported less fear at school than in earlier years as well as declining rates of being involved in school fights and lower percentages of students bringing weapons to school.

However, access to illegal drugs at school, bullying behavior, and the presence of gangs at school appears to have not changed in recent years. Other study findings included:

- During the 2002 school year there were 17 homicides and 5 suicides of school-age children at school.
- There were an estimated annual 119,000 thefts from teachers and 65,000 violent offenses against teachers at school, which is a per capita rate of 25 thefts and 14 violent crimes per 1,000 teachers. High school teachers were the most vulnerable to violence at school.

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- About one in eight students (12 percent) reported that someone had used hate-related words against them at school.
- Approximately 5 percent of students reported in 2003 that they had either skipped school or avoided specific places at school because they were fearful, which was a lower percentage than in recent years.
- During 2003, 21 percent of public and private students said street gangs were present at their schools. Urban students were more likely than their suburban or rural peers to report the presence of gangs in their schools in 2003 (31 percent vs. 18 percent and 12 percent respectively).
- In 2003, 29 percent of students in public and private schools reported that someone had offered, sold or given them illegal drugs on school property in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Seven percent of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied at school during the last 6 months. Public school students were more likely to report being bullied than private school students (7 percent compared to 5 percent).

The study, "Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005," was written by Jill F. DeVoe, Margaret Noonan and Thomas D. Snyder, of the Department of Education; BJS Statistician Katrina Baum and Katharin Peter, of MPR Associates, Inc. Following publication it can be found at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/iscs05.htm.

It is the eighth in an annual series and is organized as a series of indicators, with each indicator presenting data on a different aspect of school crime and safety.

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics statistical reports programs, please visit the BJS website at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

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