

Comparing Civil Rights Data Collection Sexual Victimization and Bullying Data with External Sources: Considerations for Public Users

Research Brief

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The safety of elementary and secondary school students has become a public health concern based upon evidence that victimization impacts students' mental health and well-being as well as their attendance and achievement (Kosciw, Greta, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2015; Rodericks, Vu, Holmes, Ryan, & Sentell, 2018). Bullying and sexual violence are categories of victimization that have been increasingly reported across schools in rural communities, cities, and suburbs. During the last 10 years, bullying prevention policies and programs have increased as cities and states have responded to the need for prevention, monitoring and tracking, and response training for this type of victimization. More recently, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced an initiative to combat sexual assault in K-12 public schools as local, state, and federal advocates against sexual violence have campaigned for better tracking of this type of victimization and for more rigorous training requirements for teachers, administrators, and students.

Highlights

Although the federal data collection programs collect data on similar victimization incidents, the utility and comparability of CRDC data and external sources is affected by differences in data collection purpose, data definition, data source, and data referent period. Findings reveal inconsistent patterns of comparability across states (or regions) and unanticipated directional patterns that can be attributed in part to the following:

- CRDC rape counts do and NIBRS rape counts do not reflect a hierarchy rule in the case of multiple incidents.
- NIBRS counts do and CRDC counts do not include administrative records of incidents occurring outside of school hours and outside of the regular school year.
- CRDC bullying counts do and SCS bullying counts do not reflect when respondents were bullied by nonstudents.
- CRDC counts do and YRBS counts do not ask about the motivating bias behind the bullying reported.
- CRDC counts reflect administrative records of students bullied during the regular school year while YRBS counts reflect self-reported accounts of having been bullied during the prior 12 months.

Relative Difference Threshold

NCES statistical standards for data suppressions provide guidance on estimations as follows: in cases where the standard error exceeds 50% of the estimate, these data are suppressed. Applying that principal here, there will be two thresholds for accepting relative differences: where relative differences above 50% are considered unacceptable and where relative differences between 30% and 50% will be taken with caution.

ED's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) collects data on school safety via the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), which plays a key role in informing what researchers know about sexual violence and bullying in public schools. Other federal tools collect these types of data, including the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS);¹ School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS);² and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).³ This brief compares the CRDC with these data collection programs using

¹ The NIBRS collects data for the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.

² The SCS collects data for ED's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS's).

³ The YRBS collects data for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS).

2017–18 data and documentation⁴ to determine the extent to which external sources can be used to benchmark CRDC rape, sexual assault, and harassment or bullying data.

Comparisons are divided into two major categories: Sexual Violence and Bullying. See Appendix A for a table of CRDC data elements that serve as the national measure for rape, sexual assault, and harassment or bullying in public schools in the United States. Table 1 provides a visual snapshot of the different criteria by which these data elements are reported across the data collection programs.

Table 1. Comparison of Event Specification and Item by Data Collection Program Sexual Violence and Bullying Data Elements

		Sexual Violence			Bullying					
Data Elements		CRDC—Rape	CRDC—Sexual Assault	UCR/NIBRS—Rape	CRDC—H/B Allegations-Sex	CRDC H/B Allegations—Orientation	SCS—Bullying Orientation	CRDC—H/B ¹ Reported - Sex	SCS—Bullying Reported - Sex	YRBS—Bullying Reported
Specification										
Event	Occurred on school property only	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Occurred during the school year	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Was “cleared” (e.g., arrest made)	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Was committed by student(s) only	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
	Was committed against student(s) only	U	U	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Was reported to school employee(s) only	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
	Was reported by alleged victim(s) only	N	N	N	N	N	Y	U	Y	Y

⁴ At the time this brief was written, 2017 was the most recent year for which relevant public data were available across sources.

	Data Elements	Sexual Violence			Bullying					
		CRDC—Rape	CRDC—Sexual Assault	UCR/NIBRS—Rape	CRDC—H/B Allegations-Sex	CRDC H/B Allegations—Orientation	SCS—Bullying Orientation	CRDC—H/B ¹ Reported - Sex	SCS—Bullying Reported - Sex	YRBS—Bullying Reported
Item	Measures number of incidents (or proxy)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
	Measures number of victims	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Collects public school data only	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
	Includes elementary aged students	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N ^a	Y	N ^a	N

Note. H/B = Harassment or Bullying; Y = Yes; N = No; U = Unspecified or Unclear

^a SCS samples students ages 12–18, which includes some fifth-grade students.

CRDC

The Civil Rights Data Collection is a biennial data collection from a universe of public local education agencies (LEAs) and schools used to monitor school- and district-level compliance with civil rights laws and to develop evidenced-based policy recommendations.⁵ The CRDC is a mandatory federal collection administered to all public school districts in the nation for all public schools in the district, including charter schools, alternative schools, schools serving students with disabilities, and long-term secure juvenile justice facilities that serve Grades PK–12. The survey collects data on enrollment, harassment and bullying, sexual assault, course offerings, discipline, and other factors every other year, disaggregated by student gender, race/ethnicity, English proficiency status, and disability status. The number of public schools responding to the 2017–18 CRDC exceeded 96,000. These data serve as a standardized national measure of equity in educational opportunities provided to students within and across public schools, districts, and states.

The CRDC “Offenses” module collects data on the number of incidents involving firearms and other weapons, physical attacks and fights, robbery, rape, sexual assault, and threats of physical attack.⁶ For the 2017–18 data collection, the CRDC collected data on two forms of sexual violence: rape and sexual

⁵ In October 2017, all LEAs were required to respond to the CRDC for the 2017–18 data collection and all subsequent biennial collections.

⁶ This module was required for the first time in the 2015–16 data collection.

assault. The CRDC defines rape as *“forced sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral penetration). This includes sodomy and penetration with a foreign object. Both male and female students can be victims of rape. Rape is not defined as a physical attack or fight”* (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 93). The CRDC defines sexual assault as *“threatened rape, fondling, indecent liberties, or child molestation. Both male and female students can be victims of sexual assault. Classification of these incidents should take into consideration the age and developmentally appropriate behavior of the offender(s)”* (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 93). The CRDC further specifies that rape and sexual assault incident counts should reflect incidents occurring on at school⁷ before, during, or after school hours and whether the incident involved students or nonstudents. Instructions direct respondents to use the hierarchy rule so that *“incidents that could be classified in multiple categories should be reported in the most egregious category.”* The CRDC instructions do not offer specific recommendations on how to rank offenses, leaving that determination to the respondent’s discretion.

The CRDC collects data on harassment or bullying together as one construct. Both harassment and bullying are harmful physically and emotionally, and both involve an imbalance of power; however, harassment is a form of bullying where the target of the bullying behavior is in one or more protected classes that include race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, and national origin (Pacer’s National Bullying Prevention Center, 2016). For the 2017–18 data collection year, the CRDC provided key definitions for three types of *“harassment or bullying,”* including harassment or bullying on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and disability. CRDC language is consistent across these types of harassment or bullying incidents, stating that *“harassing conduct may take many forms, including verbal acts and name calling, as well as nonverbal behavior, such as graphic and written statements, or conduct that is physically threatening, harmful or humiliating. The conduct can be carried out by school employees, other students, and nonemployee third parties”* (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 96).

The data element *“H/B Reported—Sex”* measures the number of students reported as harassed or bullied on the basis of sex, not the number of bullying incidents. The CRDC specifies that students reported harassed or bullied should be counted in each relevant category (e.g., based on sex and based on origin); therefore, there is no unduplicated total number of students reported as harassed or bullied. The data elements *“H/B Allegations—Sex”* and *“H/B Allegations—Ori”* measure the number of allegations that *“harassment or bullying”* occurred (on the basis of sex or on the basis of sexual orientation, respectively), which represent *“harassment or bullying”* incident counts. Throughout this brief, CRDC harassment or bullying reported will be referred to as *“Students Bullied—Sex”* and harassment or bullying allegations will be referred to as *“Bullying Allegations.”*

⁷ According to the CRDC 2017–18 School Form, *“at school”* refers to school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 94).

Sexual Violence⁸: CRDC and the NIBRS

The NIBRS Data Collection Program

The FBI administers the UCR Program, which collects voluntary crime incident data from city, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies nationwide. The UCR Program contains 57 data elements grouped into six categories: (1) Administrative, (2) Offense, (3) Victim, (4) Property, (5) Offender, and (6) Arrestee. The UCR Program is designed to produce reliable data for law enforcement professionals to make decisions on resource allocations, budget formulations, planning, and operations.

UCR Program data are collected from both state UCR programs and through direct submissions to the FBI's UCR Program. The UCR Program currently has two reporting systems: (1) its traditional reporting system (the summary reporting system or SRS),⁹ and (2) the more comprehensive NIBRS (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017a). The NIBRS is designed to provide context and rich detail for individual crime incidents to improve the ultimate quality of crime data collected by law enforcement officials.¹⁰ NIBRS incident data include information on victims, offenders, and property, as well as incident location, incident time of day, and resulting arrests. Unlike SRS data, NIBRS data include more offense types and provide greater detail about the incident (e.g., location type, relationships between victims and offenders). For these reasons, this brief uses NIBRS data, rather than SRS data, for CRDC incident count comparison.

NIBRS data is available at the state level and, in 2017, 24 states had 85% or more agencies reporting incidents to the UCR Program. Table 2 shows these states grouped by the percentage of agencies reporting crime incidents.

NIBRS Caution

Due to the voluntary nature of NIBRS and SRS submissions, the FBI cautions against using UCR Program data to draw conclusions about individual agencies or to make direct comparisons between cities. The agency also cautions against comparing data year-to-year because of changes in participation levels over time.

⁸ The YRBS collects data on sexual violence (e.g., rape and sexual dating violence), but without location information. It cannot be determined if incidents occurred at school. For this reason, a discussion of YRBS sexual violence data is not included in this brief.

⁹ Summary data drawn from the SRS does not specify incident location and other details. Also, the SRS data are grouped into two large categories—violent crimes or property crimes. Within each of these categories, incident counts reflect a hierarchy rule where only the most serious offense per case is counted. For violent crimes, the top of the hierarchy is homicide followed by rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Therefore, if a case of robbery-rape-homicide occurred, the UCR Program would count the incident as one homicide (not rape or robbery).

¹⁰ The NIBRS is one of four UCR Program data collections; however, the FBI has partnered with the BJS to transition the UCR Program to NIBRS-only data collection by 2021.

Table 2. States Submitting NIBRS Data at Rates Exceeding 85%, 2017

Submission Rate	Number of States	State Names
95%–99%	15	Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Kentucky, Michigan, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia
90%–94%	5	Connecticut, Iowa, Montana, South Dakota, Washington
85%–89%	4	Kansas, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oklahoma

Rape and Sexual Assault Definitions

The CRDC and NIBRS measure sexual violence in disparate ways and with varying levels of detail as summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3. CRDC and NIBRS Data Element Comparisons, 2017

CRDC Data Element	NIBRS Data Element
Rape	
Number of incidents of rape at school regardless of disciplinary action	<i>No NIBRS equivalent because rapes are combined with other sexually violent offenses</i>
Sexual Assault	
Number of incidents of sexual assault (includes threatened rape) at school regardless of disciplinary action	<i>No NIBRS equivalent because rape counts are combined with other sexually violent offenses</i>
Rape and Sexual Assault (combined)	
<i>No CRDC equivalent because rape and sexual assault are counted separately</i>	Number of incidents of reported rape and sexual assault that are cleared

Note. In the case of multiple offenses occurring during one incident, CRDC respondents are instructed to report only the "most egregious" offense category, which is determined at the respondent's discretion.

NIBRS rape data¹¹ reflect the aggregate of three sex offenses (rape, except statutory; sodomy; and sexual assault with an object). For the purposes of NIBRS, the UCR Program defines rape as "*The carnal knowledge of a person, without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of his/her age or because of his/her temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity*" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012, para. 2). The NIBRS definition of rape does include verbal threats of rape. This rape classification includes victims of all ages and cases in which the victim is under the age of consent except in the case of nonforcible sexual intercourse with a person who is under the statutory age of consent, which is classified as statutory rape instead.

¹¹ When NIBRS rape data are published by the UCR Program, these offenses are converted to and combined with the UCR Program's SRS rape data.

NIBRS Data Collection and Processing Methods

Law enforcement agencies report offense data to the FBI's UCR Program each month and include incidents reported by victims, discovered by officers, or reported by other sources. Offenses are counted once "cleared," which occurs when law enforcement agencies submit arrestee data (including charges) in connection with the incident or when agencies report other conditions of clearance (i.e., offender is already in custody, offender died, the prosecution declined to pursue the case). In multi-offense cases, the clearance of one offense clears the incident.

UCR national and state crime estimates include all law enforcement agencies participating in the UCR Program (including those submitting less than 12 months of data) (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d., 2018).¹² For agencies that do not report for the entire reporting period, the UCR Program estimates missing data as follows:

- For agencies supplying three to 11 months of data, the national UCR Program estimates for the missing data by following a standard estimation procedure using the data provided by the agency.
- If an agency has supplied less than three months of data, the FBI computes estimates by using the known crime figures of similar areas within a state and assigning the same proportion of crime volumes to nonreporting agencies.

The estimation process considers the following factors: population size covered by the agency, type of jurisdiction (e.g., police department versus sheriff's office), and geographic location. The NIBRS publications typically use these estimations. In some cases, however, the FBI does not use estimation procedures when reporting data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b).¹³

Within the NIBRS dataset, location details can be added to the incident record based on a list of 46 location types (including, but not limited to, elementary and secondary school, shopping mall, restaurant, residence home). Therefore, it is possible to determine the number of sexual violence incidents occurring at school.

CRDC and UCR/NIBRS Comparison

For purposes of this comparison, NIBRS counts of "rape"¹⁴ were compared with CRDC "rape" offense counts, as well as CRDC "rape and sexual assault" offense counts totaled (see Table 4). For the first comparison, three states (Arkansas, Massachusetts, and Oklahoma) had relative differences of less than 30%, ranging from 0% to 18%. It is important to note that some of the high relative difference percentages are due to low counts. For example, three states (Connecticut, Montana, and Iowa) had a difference in count of six or less but relative differences of 50% to 71%. One state (Oregon) had a relative difference between 30% and 50%. Regarding CRDC "rape and assault," four states (New Hampshire, Colorado, Delaware, and South Dakota) had relative differences of less than 30%, ranging from 0% to

¹² Published agency tables report only data from agencies that have submitted 12 months of complete data.

¹³ "Although the program historically uses estimation procedures to account for missing data in presentations such as *Crime in the United States*, it did not apply any estimation procedures to the NIBRS data in this publication to account for data from jurisdictions that did not submit their UCR data via NIBRS or from nonparticipating jurisdictions."

¹⁴ The UCR/NIBRS counts incidents of rape, threats of rape, and sexual assault combined.

28%. One state (Kentucky) had a relative difference between 30% and 50%. There were no identical zero counts across either comparison.

Table 4. NIBRS Submission Rates and Comparison of NIBRS and CRDC Rape and Assault Incident Counts by State, 2017

	NIBRS Submission Rates	NIBRS Rape Counts ^a	CRDC Rape Counts ^b	NIBRS Versus CRDC Incidents	CRDC Rape & Assault Counts	CRDC Versus NIBRS Incidents
States						
Arkansas ^c	100%	19	19	0%	87	358%
New Hampshire ^c	100%	16	0	-	16	0%
South Carolina	100%	57	6	-89%	264	363%
Tennessee	100%	54	4	-93%	123	128%
Kentucky ^d	99%	30	1	-97%	44	47%
Vermont	99%	8	0	-	3	-63%
West Virginia	99%	1	0	-	30	2,900%
Colorado^e	98%	112	3	-97%	81	-28%
Delaware ^c	98%	6	0	-	6	0%
Idaho	98%	0	8	-	58	-
Oregon ^d	97%	27	14	-48%	83	207%
Michigan	96%	169	19	-89%	271	60%
North Dakota	96%	2	0	-	9	350%
Rhode Island	96%	10	3	-70%	100	900%
Virginia	96%	90	26	-71%	519	477%
Montana	94%	7	2	-71%	55	686%
South Dakota ^c	93%	2	0	-	2	0%
Washington	91%	25	40	60%	814	3,156%
Connecticut	90%	9	3	-67%	165	1,733%
Iowa	90%	2	1	-50%	21	950%
Massachusetts^e	86%	38	45	18%	249	555%
Kansas	85%	0	26	-	95	-

	NIBRS Submission Rates	NIBRS Rape Counts ^a	CRDC Rape Counts ^b	NIBRS Versus CRDC Incidents	CRDC Rape & Assault Counts	CRDC Versus NIBRS Incidents
Ohio	85%	78	9	-88%	632	710%
Oklahoma^e	85%	8	9	13%	198	2,375%

^a NIBRS data were collected from January through December 2017. Rape is defined as: Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim. Includes attempts or assaults to commit rape. Excludes statutory rape and incest.

^b CRDC data were collected on the 2017–18 school year. Rape is defined as: Refers to forced sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral penetration). This includes sodomy and penetration with a foreign object. Both male and female students can be victims of rape. Rape is not defined as a physical attack or fight. Assault is defined as: Refers to threatened rape, fondling, indecent liberties, or child molestation. Both male and female students can be victims of sexual assault. Classification of these incidents should take into consideration the age and developmentally appropriate behavior of the offender(s).

^c States with a relative difference of 0% are identified by italic text and a table row entirely shaded gray.

^d States with a relative difference less than 50% are identified by a table row entirely shaded gray.

^e States with a relative difference less than 30% are identified by bold text and a table row entirely shaded gray.

Comparing the CRDC and NIBRS rape counts, there are large differences in the number of incidents reported in some states. For example, in 2017, rape estimates in Michigan ranged from 19 to 143 and in Colorado, from three to 112. In one-fourth of the cases, the NIBRS reported at least one rape incident while there were zero rape incidents reported in the CRDC. In terms of patterns of directionality of differences, in more than three-quarters of cases, the CRDC was less likely to report incidents of rape than the NIBRS (for a total of 69% less incidents reported).

CRDC “rape and sexual assault” counts combined show more relative difference to NIBRS “rape” data than CRDC “rape” counts alone. Interestingly, the three states that matched (New Hampshire, Delaware, and South Dakota) are states with zero incidents of rape reported in the CRDC. It is possible that this is the case because NIBRS counts attempts and assaults to commit rape as rape incidents, but these incidents would count as assaults in the CRDC based on the differences in definitions across the programs. In terms of patterns of directionality of differences, with exception for these three states and Vermont, CRDC counts of rape and sexual assault combined exceed the number of incidents of rape reported in the NIBRS as expected.

Taken together, differences in the data collection programs lead to varying counts of rape incidents, and these differences can be confusing for users. In addition to differences in the definition of terms, several factors shown in the list below may impact observed differences that should be considered when reporting data from either data collection program.

- NIBRS counts reflect administrative records of incidents reported by the general public to local law enforcement. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of incidents reported to school officials.¹⁵

¹⁵ As of 2017, there were no national school crime reporting requirements for K-12 schools. State school crime reporting requirements vary in nature and enforcement and schools’ districts have different policies on reporting incidents to the

- NIBRS counts do not reflect a hierarchy rule that prioritizes reporting in the case of multiple incidents. CRDC counts reflect an undefined hierarchy rule prioritizing the most egregious incident in cases of multiple incidents (although the determination of “most egregious” is left to the reporting official).
- NIBRS counts reflect administrative records of “cleared” incidents. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of incidents reported regardless of disciplinary action.
- NIBRS counts reflect administrative records of incidents occurring on private elementary and secondary school property (i.e., “Institutions for the instruction of children from preschool through 12th grade”). CRDC counts reflect administrative records of incidents occurring at public schools.¹⁶
- NIBRS counts include administrative records of incidents occurring outside of school hours and outside of the regular school year. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of incidents occurring during the regular school year.
- NIBRS data collections are voluntary, and submissions are ongoing from January through December. CRDC data collections are drawn from a universe of public schools and count incidents occurring during the regular school year (August/September through May/June) (six-month overlap).

See Appendix B for a summary table of some of the NIBRS and CRDC methodological differences.

Bullying: CRDC and the SCS

The SCS Data Collection Program

The SCS was codesigned by the NCES and the BJS in 1985 to supplement the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The purpose of the SCS is to provide high-quality data on the prevalence of school-related victimization in the nation, specifically school violence, gang activity, drug use, and bullying affecting youth ages 12–18 years.

Bullying Definitions

The CRDC and SCS collect data on difference aspects of bullying incidents as summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. CRDC and SCS Item Comparison, 2017

CRDC Data Elements	SCS Data Elements
H/B Reported—Sex (Students Bullied—Sex)	Bullying—Sex
Number of students reported to a school employee as harassed because of their sex	Number of students who reported to an adult at school that they were bullied because of their sex

police. Scant research suggests LEAs with school resource officers (SROs) record and report more crimes (Devlin & Gottfredson, 2016).

¹⁶ For CRDC 2017–18, the phrase “incidents at the school” refers to incidents occurring in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at places that hold school-sponsored events or activities.

CRDC Data Elements	SCS Data Elements
—NOT a number of incidents of bullying based on sex; students may have experienced multiple incidents of this	—NOT a number of incidents of bullying based on sex; students may have experienced multiple incidents of this
H/B Allegations—Sex	
Number of allegations of bullying because of sex	<i>No SCS equivalent because number of incidents of bullying is not captured in the questions used in the comparison</i>
—Represents number of incidents of bullying based on sex	
H/B Allegations—Ori	
Number of allegations of bullying because of sexual orientation	<i>No SCS equivalent because number of incidents of bullying is not captured in the questions used in the comparison</i>
—Represents number of incidents of bullying based on sexual orientation	
Bullying—Ori	
<i>No CRDC equivalent because sexual orientation is not included in the item asking for reports of students who were bullied</i>	Number of students who reported to an adult at school they were bullied because of their sexual orientation
	—NOT a number of incidents of bullying based on sexual orientation; students may have experienced multiple incidents of this
Bullying Reported	
<i>No CRDC equivalent because incidents of bullying can be counted in multiple civil rights categories—no unduplicated total number of bullying incidents is available</i>	Student Y/N report of having been bullied at any time during the school year
	—NOT a number of incidents of bullying; students may have been bullied multiple times

Note. All CRDC bullying data also include counts related to harassment, which creates an inconsistency with data from other sources.

The School Crime Supplement—the SCS—to the NCVS collects detailed information on bullying, including how many times participants were bullied, where on school property they were bullied, in what facets of their lives bullying had a negative impact, and the person or people perpetrating the bullying. The 2017 SCS questionnaire captures two components of bullying based on the BJS and ED’s uniform definition of bullying: *repetition* and *power imbalance* (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014). Repetition refers to incidents during which a victim perceives that the bullying will recur or when the bullying has recurred over multiple days or multiple times in a day. Power imbalance refers to incidents in which victims perceive the person bullying as physically bigger or stronger, having more economic capital, or having more social capital, or cases in which victims are bullied by multiple students.

For the 2017 data collection period, the survey asks students to self-report what type of bullying occurred during the school year (e.g., threats of harm, exclusion from activities, name calling). SCS also asks how often any of these occurrences took place, which this brief refers to as “bullying occurrences.” SCS asks a

yes/no question: “Did you tell a teacher or some other adult at school about being bullied?”, which this brief refers to as “Bullying—Reported.” Finally, the SCS asks for the following details about the bullying incidents reported:

- “When you were bullied in school this year, did you ever think it was related to...
 - Your race?
 - Your religion?
 - Your ethnic background or national origin?
 - Any disability you may have—such as physical, mental, or developmental disabilities?
 - Your gender?
 - Your sexual orientation—by this we mean gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight?
 - Your physical appearance?” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020, pp. 8-10).

SCS Caution

The overall unit response rate (calculated as household completion rate and student completion rate multiplied together) varies by race, household income, and urbanicity. The unit nonresponse bias by race, urbanicity, region, and age subgroups was significant, and caution when comparing subgroups is recommended.

For data element comparisons in this brief, only sexual orientation and gender from this multipart item will be included and will be referred to as “Bullying—Sex” and “Bullying—Orientation,” respectively.

SCS Data Collection and Processing Methods

The SCS collects student-level data from a nationally representative sample of students ages 12 through 18 years who are enrolled in public or private schools during at least a portion of the school year and who completed the NCVS.^{17,18} Data is collected in two-year intervals, and household members participate in the NCVS every six months for a total of seven interviews over a three-year period. The SCS is administered to eligible participants between January and June. For the NCVS, the referenced time-period is the six months prior to the interview; however, the SCS uses the current school year as the reference period.

The U.S. Census Bureau takes a stratified, multistage sampling approach. The primary sampling units (PSUs) are counties and groups of counties from which smaller areas called Enumerated Districts are identified and selected. Large PSUs are automatically included in the samples. Other PSUs, however, are combined based on similar geographic and demographic characteristics. Clusters of four households are selected from each Enumerated District. The sampled households are then divided into six discrete groups known as “rotations.” Within each rotation, a different panel of households is interviewed once every six months for three years. Households are phased out of the sample after three years, while new households enter the rotation. The SCS interview is given to eligible household members following administration of the NCVS interview. Data have been collected via two modes: automated

¹⁷ The NCVS excludes families living on military stations and in correctional facilities. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/developer/ncvs/methodology.cfm>

¹⁸ In 2017, in order for students to be included in the SCS, they could not receive homeschooling for the entire school year.

computer-assisted telephone interviews or in-person, paper-and-pencil interviews.¹⁹ Since 2007, however, data collection has been fully automated via a computer-assisted personal interviewing platform and can be completed in person or by phone (NCES, n.d.).²⁰

The SCS corrects for estimate variance resulting from differences in sample distributions based on age, race, and sex. There are no imputation procedures to correct item nonresponse, and the overall item response rate for 2017 exceeded 85% and was 95% or higher on the majority of items (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

CRDC and SCS Comparison

The CRDC state-level data were grouped to match the SCS regional categories (i.e., Northeast, Midwest, South, and West)²¹ for comparability. Also, CRDC data were restricted to Grades 6–12 to approximate outcomes for students ages 12–18 years. For purposes of this analysis, SCS responses from students enrolled in private schools or those enrolled in the fifth grade were dropped.

SCS measures the number students who reported that any bullying incident they experienced was because of their sex (Bullying—Sex), and the CRDC counts the number of students who reported being bullied on the basis of sex to a school official (Students Bullied—Sex). These measures do not count the number of incidents, as students in either case may have been bullied multiple times. Results of the comparison of these two measures show significant differences across regions (Table 6). CRDC counts were substantially higher, with a relative difference ranging from approximately 38,000% to approximately 109,000%. Compared to other regions, the Northeast reported the least number of students bullied based on sex in the SCS but the highest number in the CRDC.

Table 6. Comparison of SCS Bullying and CRDC Harassment or Bullying Incidents by Region, 2017

	SCS	CRDC ¹	Percent Difference
	Bullying—Sex	Students Bullied—Sex	CRDC Versus SCS
Region			
Northeast	10	10,900	108,900%
Midwest	28	9,339	32,103%
South	27	7,545	27,844%
West	24	9,554	38,116%

¹⁹ These two modes were used through 2005.

²⁰ For survey design, see reference.

²¹ The Northeast includes the nine states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Midwest includes the 12 states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The South includes the District of Columbia and the 16 states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The West includes the 13 states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Note. CRDC included 94,755 schools; SCS sample included 6,117 respondents.

¹ CRDC data reflects incidents reported by students in Grades 6–12. The School Crime Supplement sample includes students ages 12–18 and, therefore, might not be representative of students in sixth grade. Comparisons between students in sixth grade and those in other grades should be made with caution.

SCS estimates were derived from interviewing a sample and were subject to a margin of error that was reflected in the standard error of the estimate. For two regions, the South and the West, the standard error estimates are 30 to 50 percent of the estimate's value. CRDC data were drawn from a universe of public schools and were not prone to sampling errors.²² Other factors, shown in the list below, may have impacted the observed differences and should be taken into consideration when reporting data from either data collection programs.

- SCS counts reflect self-reported accounts of having been bullied. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of students reported as bullied.
- SCS counts reflect when respondents were bullied by other students. CRDC counts reflect students bullied by other students or nonstudents.

See Appendix B for a summary table of selected SCS and CRDC methodological differences.

Bullying: CRDC and the YRBS

The YRBS Data Collection Program

The purpose of the YRBSS is to monitor health-related behaviors to develop preventive programs and evaluate existing programs. The CDC established the YRBSS in 1991 to maintain data from its national school-based survey, state-level surveys of schools, surveys of large urban school districts, and territorial and tribal school surveys collected biennially on representative samples of high school students. The YRBS was designed to collect data on six categories of behaviors that create health risks among youth: (1) behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; (2) sexual behaviors that contribute to human immunodeficiency virus infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancy; (3) tobacco use; (4) alcohol and other drug use; (5) unhealthy dietary behaviors; and (6) physical activity (Brener et al., 2013).

Bullying Definitions

The CRDC and YRBS collect data on different aspects of bullying as summarized in Table 7 below.

²² CRDC data submitted may differ from actual value due to non-sampling errors such as respondents' misinterpretation of survey instructions; however, the CRDC data tool automatically performs validation checks and flags potential data errors. See "Addressing Errors" in <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/2015-16-Public-Use-Data-File-Manual.pdf>.

Table 7. CRDC and YRBS Item Comparison, 2017

CRDC Data Elements	YRBS Data Elements
H/B Reported—Sex (Students Bullied—Sex)	
Number of students reported to a school employee as harassed because of their sex	<i>No YRBS equivalent because YRBS does not ask about motivating biases</i>
—NOT a number of incidents of bullying based on sex; students may have experienced multiple incidents of this	
H/B Allegations—Sex	
Number of allegations of bullying because of sex	<i>No YRBS equivalent because number of incidents of bullying is not captured in the questions used in the comparison, and YRBS does not ask about motivating biases</i>
—Represents a number of incidents of bullying based on sex	
H/B Allegations—Ori	
Number of allegations of bullying because of sexual orientation	<i>No YRBS equivalent because number of incidents of bullying is not captured in the questions used in the comparison, and YRBS does not ask about motivating biases</i>
—Represents a number of incidents of bullying based on sexual orientation	
Bullying Reported	
<i>No CRDC equivalent because incidents of bullying can be counted in multiple civil rights categories—no unduplicated total number of bullying incidents is available</i>	Student Y/N report of having been bullied at any time during the school year
	—NOT a number of incidents of bullying; students may have been bullied multiple times

The 2017 Standard High School YRBS defines bullying for the participant as follows: “Bullying is when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., p. 7). The questionnaire then asks the following yes/no question related to bullying: “During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied on school property?” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., p. 7). The YRBS refers to this item as “Bullying at School.”

YRBS Data Processing and Analysis Methods

The state-level, high school YRBS is administered to a representative sample of U.S. students who are enrolled in Grades 9–12 at public and private schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia (U.S. territories are excluded). The data collection period goes from July through June (for example, data collected from July 2018 through June 2019 compose the 2019 YRBSS cycle).

The program carries out multistage sampling, selecting PSUs comprised of large counties and their adjacent counties, and categorizes them based on metropolitan statistical area (MSA) size and the percentage of Black and Hispanic students in the PSU. PSUs are classified as rural if they are not one of the 54 largest MSAs, which are categorized as urban. Schools are then selected from within the PSUs and grouped based on enrollment size of either greater or less than 25 pupils per grade (large and small schools, respectively). For each PSU, three large schools and one small school are selected. Finally, either one or two classes per grade (Grades 9–12) per school are sampled. In the past, Black and Hispanic students have been oversampled in order to conduct a separate analysis of these students. The oversampling is achieved by selecting two classes per grade with high enrollments of Black and Hispanic students instead of one class. Weighting factors are used to adjust for nonresponse and the oversampling of Black and Hispanic students.

It is important to note that the national data are collected separately from the state and school district data using different and sometimes overlapping samples (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017a). For the national survey, schools are selected, and clearances are obtained from state, district, and school leaders. For the state survey, state education agencies and state health agencies can apply for funding to conduct the YRBS. These agencies then sample high school students.

CRDC and YRBS Comparison

While the YRBS dataset does not indicate school type and cannot exclude responses from private school students, the YRBS User Guide advises that the state-level data is “representative of mostly public high school students” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017b, p. 1). For purposes of this comparison, CRDC data were restricted to Grades 9–12.

The YRBS measures if respondents have been bullied during the previous 12 months, and the CRDC counts the number of students who reported being bullied on the basis of sex to a school official (Students Bullied—Sex). These measures do not count numbers of incidents because students in either case may have been bullied multiple times. Further, the YRBS data elements do not disaggregate reporting on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or other characteristics.

In 2017, weighted YRBS data were available for 39 states, and 37 of these states provided bullying data (see Table 8). The number of students reported as bullied varied between CRDC and YRBS across states with over half of the states having high relative differences above 30%. Although the two measures are not equivalent because the YRBS does not ask about the motivating bias behind the bullying reported, six states had relative differences of less than 30%, ranging from 1% to 19%. Also, eight states had relative differences between 30% and 50%.

YRBS Caution

By design, the YRBS standard accuracy level for overall estimates and estimates by race/ethnicity, sex, and grade is at the 95% confidence level; however, some researchers question the usefulness and accuracy of self-reported data on bullying (Nelson, Burns, Kendall, & Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

Table 8. Comparison of YRBS Bullying and CRDC Harassment or Bullying Incidents by State, 2017

	YRBS ^a	CRDC	Percentage Difference
	Bullying Reported	Students Bullied—Sex	CRDC Versus YRBS
States			
Alaska	313	60	-81%
Arizona ^b	410	256	-38%
Arkansas	429	209	-51%
California	315	1483	371%
Colorado	275	122	-56%
Connecticut	435	202	-54%
Delaware	405	19	-95%
Florida	915	35	-96%
Hawaii	1,142	20	-98%
Idaho	477	107	-78%
Illinois^c	906	889	-2%
Iowa ^b	387	246	-36%
Kansas ^b	475	270	-43%
Kentucky	418	116	-72%
Louisiana	285	32	-89%
Maine	2,091	104	-95%
Maryland	10,059	129	-99%
Michigan	385	678	76%
Missouri	446	818	83%
Montana	1,061	93	-91%
Nebraska ^b	327	178	-46%
Nevada ^b	275	405	47%
New Hampshire	2,560	146	-94%
New Mexico	1,022	91	-91%
New York^c	1,827	1721	-6%
North Carolina ^b	602	391	-35%

	YRBS ^a	CRDC	Percentage Difference
	Bullying Reported	Students Bullied—Sex	CRDC Versus YRBS
North Dakota	531	65	-88%
Oklahoma ^b	383	209	-45%
Pennsylvania^c	702	567	-19%
Rhode Island	359	106	-70%
South Carolina	323	108	-67%
Tennessee ^b	423	286	-32%
Texas^c	380	375	-1%
Utah^c	335	285	-15%
Virginia	580	241	-58%
West Virginia	384	48	-88%
Wisconsin^c	490	445	-9%

Note. Data reflects incidents reported for students in Grades 9–12.

^a YRBSS sample sizes ranged from 1,208 to 50,233 with response rates of 66%–90%.

^b States with a relative difference less than 50% are identified by a table row entirely shaded gray.

^c States with a relative difference less than 30% are identified by bold text and a table row entirely shaded gray.

Comparing the two bullying measures, there are large differences in the number of students reported as bullied on the basis of sex and the number of students self-reporting having been bullied. For example, in 2017, the number of students bullied in Maryland ranged from 129 to 10,059 and in Maine, from 104 to 2,091. In terms of patterns of directionality of differences, in all but four states (Nevada, Michigan, Missouri, and California) YRBSS had higher numbers of students reported as having been bullied than the CRDC (as expected based on the measures). Factors that may have impacted the observed differences are listed below.

- YRBS counts reflect self-reported accounts of having been bullied for any reason. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of students reported as bullied specifically on the basis of sex.
- YRBS counts reflect self-reported accounts of having been bullied by other students. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of students bullied by students or nonstudents.
- YRBS counts reflect self-reported accounts of having been bullied during the prior 12 months. CRDC counts reflect administrative records of students bullied during the regular school year (August/September–May/June).

Summary

In this brief, CRDC rape and sexual assault data were compared with NIBRS rape data at the state level, and CRDC bullying data were compared with SCS bullying data at the regional level and to YRBS data at the state level. **In many cases, there were inconsistent patterns of comparability across states (or regions) and in some cases unanticipated directional patterns with unclear causes. Taken together, the results suggest that although the federal data collection programs collect data on similar victimization incidents, they each differ significantly in four main ways that users should consider when using CRDC data: (1) data collection purpose, (2) data definition, (3) data source, and (4) data collection referent period.**

Data Collection Purpose

These data collection programs' victimization data are collected for different purposes. The purpose of the UCR Program is to monitor and track instances of crimes in the United States. The purpose of both the SCS and YRBS is to collect data on the experiences of respondents in terms either of victimization or of risky behavior. The purpose of the CRDC is to monitor and track a wide range of student, school, and district data (including offenses).

Data Definition

The data collection programs discussed in this brief conceptualize sexual violence and bullying in disparate ways and measure different aspects of these phenomena in nuanced processes that may lead to user confusion. For example, the CRDC, SCS, and YRBS collect and report overlapping aspects of bullying, and each system's definition of bullying is specific to behaviors that occur at school. However, CRDC does not collect unduplicated counts of harassment or bullying allegations across basis (e.g., on the basis of sex or orientation). Both the SCS and the YRBS collect respondent self-reports of having been bullied sometime during the school year or the previous 12 months, but they do not collect the number of bullying incidents or the number of times the respondent was bullied.²³ Also, unlike the CRDC, these two programs collect data only on bullying allegedly perpetrated by other students. The CRDC data includes bullying allegedly perpetrated by students, school employees, or third parties.

Data Source

Data collected by the CRDC, SCS, and YRBS come from different sources and go through different administrative and social filtering processes. Both the CRDC and NIBRS provide data that has been filtered through, refined, and recorded by authorities. CRDC data is then reported up to the district or federal level, while NIBRS data is reported up to state or federal levels. Both the SCS and YRBS provide self-reported data directly from students that has not filtered through any administrative or social process and may capture events not routinely reported to school or law enforcement officials.

²³ The SCS asks students the number of days they were bullied and the number of times per day they were bullied. Both questions give categorical response options (e.g., "three to ten days" or "more than fifty times"). This data can be used to derive groupings of estimated rates of bullying but does not provide the number of bullying incidents.

Data Referent Period

Data that is collected across the CRDC, SCS, and YRBS data collection programs reflect phenomena occurring during different time periods. The CRDC and SCS collect data about the school year (prior and current, respectively). The YRBS collects data about events during the previous 12 months. The UCR Program collects data at the time the incident is reported to authorities.

Conclusion

Federal data play a critical role in the evidence-based decision-making of policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and the public. The collection of timely, high-quality federal data helps maintain public trust in subsequent legislative decisions, budget allocations, and program designs and evaluations. Further, accurate federal data help ensure that responses to issues at local, state, and national levels are not due to over- or underestimations of phenomena. Complete and accurate federal data on victimization at school are necessary to better understand and optimize school safety, particularly during a time when bullying and sexual victimization have become public health concerns at the local, state, and national levels. This brief sought to determine the degree to which CRDC's rape, sexual assault, and harassment or bullying data can be compared with external data sources. Unfortunately, the findings demonstrate that issues of comparability continue to challenge the utility of data in the context of federal data collection programs because they limit the ability to make direct—or even relative—comparisons that can help determine the accuracy and reliability of data across sources. To improve comparability for data users without compromising program scope, federal data collection programs could consider modifying definitions or survey items to be more uniform, thus producing a verifiable, comprehensive picture of student victimization and, subsequently, of school safety.

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ESSIN Task 34

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Appendix A. CRDC 2017–18 Data Elements Used for Comparison: Harassment or Bullying, Rape, and Sexual Assault

Topic	Data Element Description	Data Element Name
Rape	Incidents of rape or attempted rape	SCH_OFFENSE_RAPE
Sexual Assault	Incidents of sexual assault (other than rape)	SCH_OFFENSE_BATT
Harassment or Bullying Allegations—Sex	Allegations of harassment or bullying on the basis of sex	SCH_HBALLEGATIONS_SEX
Harassment or Bullying Allegations—Orientation	Allegations of harassment or bullying on the basis of sexual orientation	SCH_HBALLEGATIONS_ORI
Harassment or Bullying Reported—Sex	Students reported as harassed or bullied on the basis of sex: Calculated Male Total	TOT_HBREPORTED_SEX_M
	Students reported as harassed or bullied on the basis of sex: Calculated Female Total	TOT_HBREPORTED_SEX_F

Note. LEP = limited English proficiency; IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Pub. L. 101-476).

Appendix B. CRDC and External Sources Summary of Differences

	Purpose	Collection Source/Method	Population/ Sampling	Referent Period	Public Data Availability	Data Aggregation Level
Data Source						
CRDC	Developed to monitor school compliance with civil rights statutes	School or district administrative records; submitted to online submission system	General population/ Universe submissions from public elementary/ secondary schools and school districts in the U.S.	Collected January–April; referencing prior school year	2000–2018	School, District, State
NIBRS	Developed to monitor and track single crime incidents known to law enforcement, focus on certain high crimes	Individual law enforcement agencies and state UCR Program administrative records; submitted to online system	General population/ Voluntary submissions from law enforcement agencies	Collection ongoing/monthly	1985–2018	State, National
SCS	Developed to collect additional information about school-related victimizations on a national level	Family member self-report; face-to-face or telephone interviews	Sub-sample of families participating in the NCVS/family members ages 12–18 years enrolled in public/private school during previous 6 months	Collected January–June; referencing current school year	1999–2017	Region, National
YRBS	Developed to monitor health behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States	Student self-report; questionnaires administered by trained data collectors	High school population/sample of students enrolled in public/private U.S. high schools in Grades 9–12	Collected February–May; referencing previous 12 months	1999–2019 for sexual assault; 2009–2019 for bullying	State, Territorial, Tribal, Large Urban School District, National



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