

## DESCRIPTION

Youth not feeling safe in school or in their community hurts well-being, development and undermines academic achievement.<sup>1</sup> Youth who fear for their safety within their neighborhoods, at home, or at school are more likely to develop health problems, social and emotional problems, skip class and have poor academic performance. Additionally, fear at school can contribute to an unhealthy school climate, and can lead to negative student behaviors.<sup>2</sup> For example, one study found that students who witnessed violence at school were more likely to perpetrate violent behaviors.<sup>3</sup> Students who are fearful may also feel they need to protect themselves through actions that can actually increase the likelihood of violence, such as carrying weapons at school.<sup>2</sup>

Having a safe neighborhood is important for positive child and youth development.<sup>4</sup> Neighborhoods that are unsafe are associated with high rates of infant mortality and low birthweight, juvenile delinquency, high school dropout, child abuse and neglect, and poor motor and social development among pre-school children.<sup>5</sup> People can be exposed to violence in many ways. They may be victimized directly, witness violence or property crimes in their community, or hear about crime and violence from other residents.

## HOW WE ARE DOING

In 2016, most Ramsey County students felt safe at home with over 97 percent of students in 5th, 8th, 9th or 11th grade agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement “I feel safe at home” which is very similar to what Minnesota students in those grades report. Ramsey County youth feel a little less safe when the setting is their neighborhoods with about 90 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel safe, which compares to statewide results of 95 percent. In school settings, 93 percent of Ramsey County students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “I feel safe at school”, which is very similar to the Minnesota results.<sup>6</sup>

## DISPARITIES

In Minnesota, students of color are more likely than white students to have missed school due to concerns for their safety. Males are more likely to report strong feelings of safety than females.<sup>6</sup> Ramsey County students who self-identified as transgender or a gender minority were less likely than other students to feel safe at school. In 2016, Ramsey County African-American 9th graders reported the lowest levels of feeling safe. Ramsey County 5th graders report feeling safest going to and from school, at school and at home, although they reported feeling most unsafe in their neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup>

## RISK FACTORS

Fearing for personal safety is associated with missing school activities or classes.<sup>1</sup> Exposure to poverty is associated with youth feeling unsafe at school.<sup>5</sup> Nationally, foreign-born children and native-born children with foreign-born parents are about twice as likely as the children of native-born parents to live in a neighborhood that is described as never or only sometimes safe.<sup>4</sup>

## Information to note

- In school, at home or in their neighborhood, over 90% of 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders in 2016 reported feeling safe or very safe.
- Ramsey County youth who self-identified as transgender or a gender minority were less likely than other students to feel safe at school.

## Community voice

*“No parks where I live, no playground, unsafe.”*  
- Asian Female, age 10-14

Children recognized the effect safety has on their health and associated safety with physical activity and health.

<sup>1</sup>When Youth Feel Unsafe. America's Promise Alliance. <http://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/POV-WhenYouthFeelUnsafe.pdf>. Published February 2018. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Unsafe at School: Indicators of Child and Youth Well Being. Child Trends. [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/38\\_Unsafe\\_At\\_School.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/38_Unsafe_At_School.pdf). Updated December 2015. Accessed July 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Flannery D, Wester K, Singer M. Impact of exposure to violence in school on child and adolescent mental health behavior. *Am J Community Psychol*. 2004;32(5):559-573. DOI: 10.1002/jcop.20019.

<sup>4</sup>Neighborhood Safety: Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being. Child Trends. <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/neighborhood-safety>. Accessed July 2018.

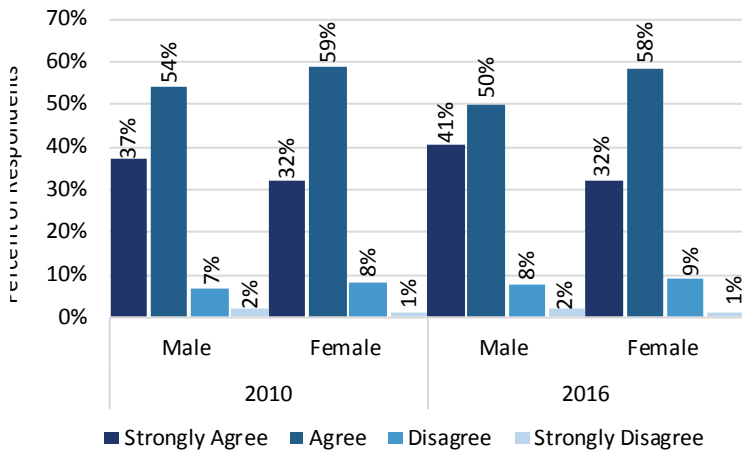
<sup>5</sup>Cote-Lussier C, Fitzpatrick C, Seguin L, Barnett TA. Poor, Unsafe, and Overweight: The Role of Feeling Unsafe at School in Mediating the Association Among Poverty Exposure, Youth Screen Time, Physical Activity, and Weight Status. *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 2015;182(1):67-79. doi: 10.1093/aje/kwv005.

<sup>6</sup>Minnesota Student Survey. Minnesota Department of Education. <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=242>. Accessed July 2018.

## WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

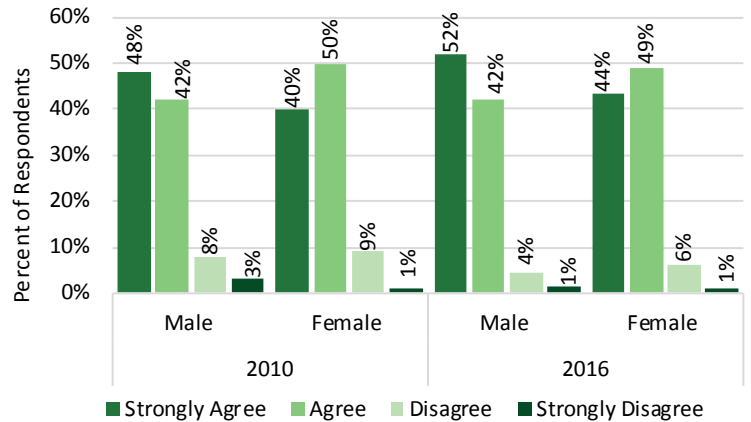
Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health provides data monitoring and reporting for this topic in order to better understand the overall health and current conditions in the community. The information may help inform community partners, policy makers or county program leadership

### Students Feeling Safe in School, 9th Graders, Ramsey County



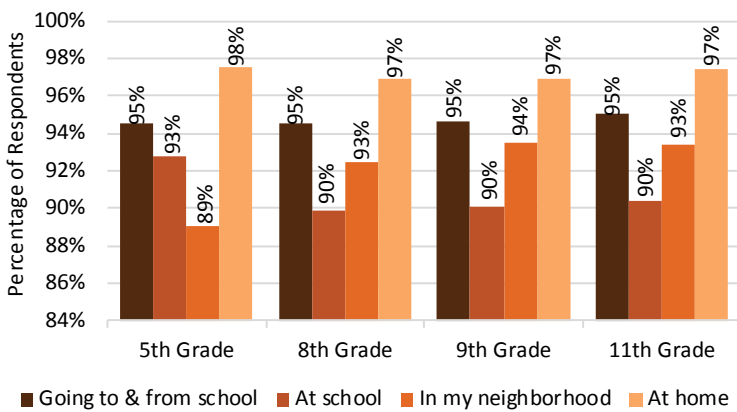
Source: Minnesota Student Survey<sup>7</sup>

### Students Feeling Safe in Neighborhood, 9th Graders, Ramsey County



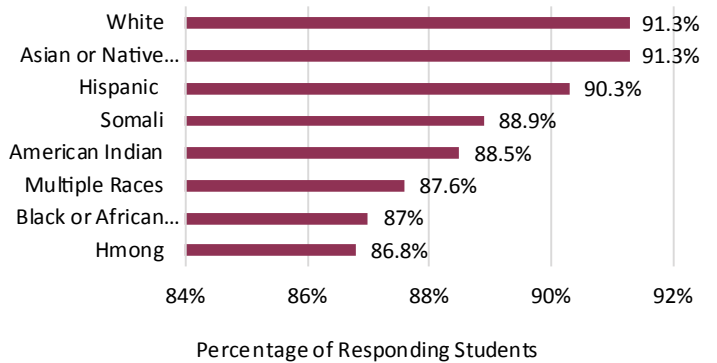
Source: Minnesota Student Survey<sup>7</sup>

### Students Feeling Safe by Setting, Ramsey County, 2016



Source: Minnesota Student Survey<sup>7</sup>

### Students Feeling Safe at School by Race/Ethnicity, 5th, 8th, 9th, 11th Graders, Ramsey County, 2016



Source: Minnesota Student Survey<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Minnesota Student Survey. Minnesota Department of Education Website. <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=242>. Accessed July 2018.