

## Practical Findings from the Virginia High School Safety Study

Issue 3

### How Much Teacher Victimization Occurs in Virginia High Schools?

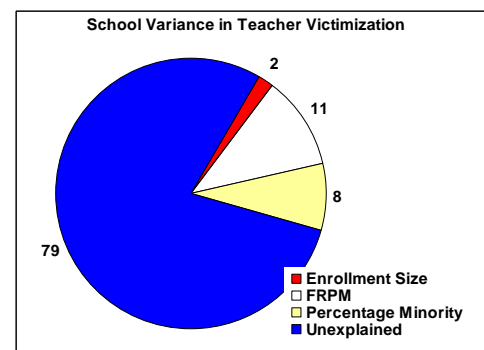
Virginia High School teachers report low rates of serious victimization, although most teachers have had the experience of a student speaking to them in a disrespectful manner. The Virginia High School Safety Study surveyed 2,922 ninth grade teachers (average 10 teachers selected by random number per school) and asked them whether any of eight forms of victimization had occurred to them in school this year (spring 2007).

This year in school have any of the following happened to you personally in the school?	% Answering True
Had a weapon pulled on me.	.4
Was physically attacked and had to see a doctor.	1.1
Was physically attacked, but not seriously enough to see a doctor.	2.9
Damage to personal property worth more than \$10.	13.6
Theft of personal property worth more than \$10.	15.1
Was threatened in remarks by a student.	19.9
Received obscene remarks or gestures from a student.	43.1
Was spoken to in a rude or disrespectful manner by a student.	83.6

Note. Because ninth grade students have a higher rate of disciplinary infractions than other high school students, the victimization rates for these teachers may be higher than for other teachers.

Male teachers were more likely than female teachers to report having a weapon pulled on them, while female teachers were more likely than male teachers to report being spoken to in a rude or disrespectful manner. Teachers with more years of teaching experience reported slightly lower rates of victimization (in most categories) than less experienced teachers.

To examine schoolwide rates of teacher victimization, the eight categories were combined into an overall score, but because physical acts of aggression against teachers were so low, this score is largely a measure of verbal aggression. Multiple regression analyses found school enrollment size accounted for just 2% of the variance in teacher victim rates, the proportion of students eligible for free and reduced price meals (FRPM) accounted for 11%, and the proportion of minority students accounted for 8%. These three school demographics explained approximately 21% of the variance in teacher victimization. Although school demographics are important, there are substantial differences in teacher victimization even among large schools with demographically challenging student bodies.



**Study Overview.** The Virginia High School Safety Study was designed to identify effective policies and practices in Virginia public high schools. Safety conditions were measured using school discipline records, safety audit surveys, and surveys of approximately 7,400 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and 2,900 9<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in 294 schools. This is a correlational study that can support, but not prove, causal relationships. The VHSSS was conducted by Dewey Cornell, Anne Gregory, Xitao Fan, and Peter Sheras of the Curry School of Education in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Center for School Safety of the Department of Criminal Justice Services. The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Study conclusions do not necessarily reflect policies or recommendations of these state and federal agencies. For more information, see the website for the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <<http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>>.