

# WEAPON CARRYING AND FIGHTING

## WEAPON-CARRYING

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### ***U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES***

- 7.01 Reduce homicides to no more than 7.2 per 100,000 people
- 7.10 Reduce weapon carrying to 86 incidents per 100 students aged 14-17

### ***OREGON BENCHMARKS YEAR 2000 GOALS***

- 66. Reduce to 15 percent the percentage of students who carry weapons
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The next six questions measure the occurrence of weapon carrying and violence-related behavior among Oregon high school students.

Firearms dramatically increase the consequences of violent behavior by the likelihood of severe or fatal injury.<sup>1</sup> An increased likelihood of attempting suicide has been associated with adolescents who know someone who has been murdered or who have witnessed a stabbing.<sup>2</sup> Increased alcohol use has been associated with adolescents who have witnessed a shooting.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1990 and 1998, there were 406 gunshot deaths among Oregonians aged 19 or younger. Over 80 percent of these deaths were suicides and homicides, mostly among high-school aged youth.<sup>3</sup> In 1998, 22 children ages 13-18 died from firearms in Oregon. Fifty percent of these were suicides, 36 percent were homicides, nine percent were undetermined and four percent were unintentional.<sup>4</sup>

Hospital discharge and other available morbidity data indicate a higher rate of non-fatal injuries involving weapons. In 1997, 135 Oregon children ages 13-18 were hospitalized for stabbings or being struck.<sup>5</sup> Sixty-nine percent were unintentional, 30 percent were assaults/intentional harm by others, and one percent were intentional self-harm. Forty-three children were hospitalized for firearm injuries in 1997. Fifty-three percent of these injuries were reported as intentional assaults by others, 30 percent were unintentional, and 9 percent were suicide attempts.<sup>5</sup>

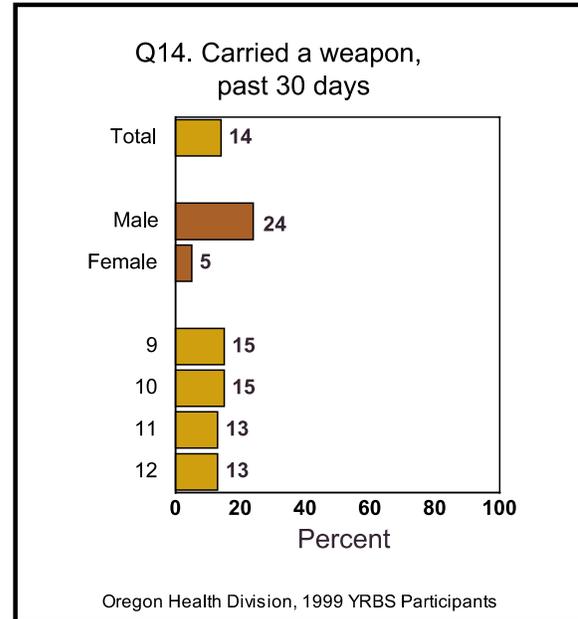
In the 1996/1997 school year, 10 percent of United States public schools reported at least one serious violent act to law enforcement. These acts of violence included murder, rape/sexual battery, suicide, physical attack/fight with a weapon, or robbery.<sup>6</sup> During the 1997-98 school year, 135 Oregon students were expelled for carrying firearms and/or explosive devices to school, while an additional 392 were expelled for carrying other weapons to school. Oregon's expulsion rate was tied for second highest among the states.<sup>7</sup> Weapon-carrying among youth is associated with other high risk behaviors, including heavy alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, fighting, and risky sexual activity.<sup>8</sup> Data from other surveys indicates that two major reasons for weapon-carrying cited by students are a perceived need for protection, or wanting to impress their friends.<sup>8</sup> Other research indicates that weapon-carrying at school is strongly associated with the perpetration of violence and substance use at school.<sup>9</sup>

## WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

**Q14. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife or club?**

Fourteen percent of participants had carried a weapon on one or more of the preceding 30 days.

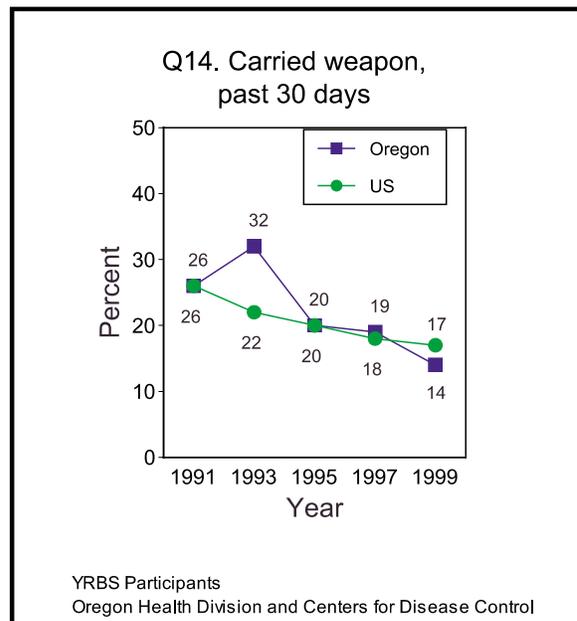
In Oregon, almost five times as many males as females (24 vs. 5 percent) had carried a weapon. Nationally, male students were over four times as likely as females to have carried a weapon (29 vs. 6 percent).



## Q14. DATA TRENDS

The percent of Oregon students who reported carrying a weapon in the past 30 days has decreased by 46 percent from 1991 to 1999. The weapon-carrying proportion of Oregon students is similar to the national proportion reported in the past three years.

Over the years, this question has changed in wording. In years 1991 and 1999, the wording of this question is identical. In 1993, the question states “Excluding hunting for game animals...”. For years 1995 and 1997, Oregon divided the question into two. The proportion for overall weapon-carrying was derived by combining two questions (“Have you carried a gun in the past 30 days” with “Have you carried a weapon (other than a gun) in the past 30 days”).

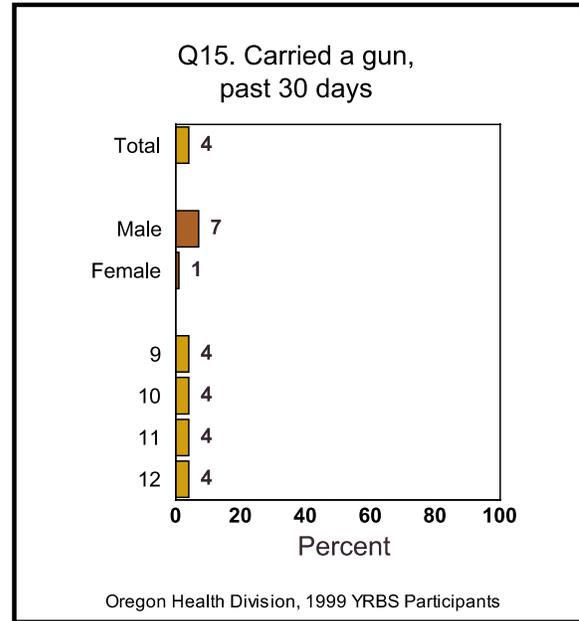


**Q15. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun?**

Four percent of 1999 YRBS participants had carried a gun on one or more of the preceding 30 days. More males than females (7% vs. 1%) reported recent gun-carrying. Nationally, almost 5 percent of students reported carrying a gun, and boys were nine times more likely than girls to carry one (9% vs. 1%).

In 1997, six percent of Oregon YRBS students and six percent of the national YRBS participants carried a gun in the past 30 days.

The proportion of gun-carrying is slightly higher among young adults than among older people. In 1999, 5.5 percent of 18 to 24 year olds versus 3.6 percent of older respondents surveyed in the Oregon BRFSS reported carrying a gun for protection at some point in the thirty days preceding the survey.

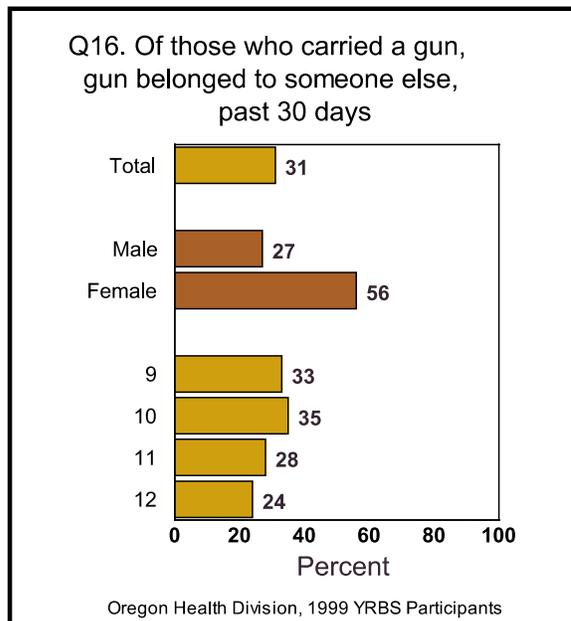


**Q16. If you carried a gun in the last 30 days, who did the gun belong to?**

Sixty-nine percent of the 1999 YRBS students who carried a gun in the past 30 days, or 748 students, said that the gun they carried belonged to them.

More males than female gun-carriers (74 vs. 44 percent) reported that the gun belonged to them. The proportion of gun-carrying students who reported that the gun belonged to them increased 13 percent from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

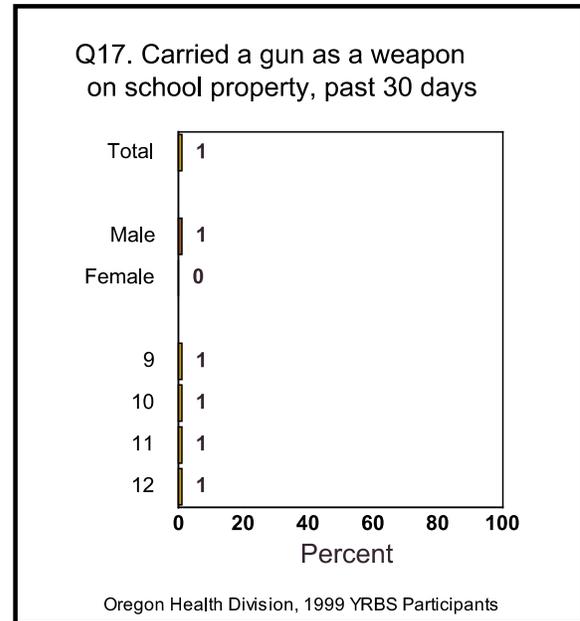
Oregon's Juvenile Possession Law prohibits the possession of firearms by minors except "temporarily for hunting, target practice or other lawful purposes."<sup>5</sup>



**Q17. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun as a weapon on school property?**

On one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey, one percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported carrying a gun as a weapon on school property. Although only a small proportion, it should be noted that one percent represents over 200 Oregon students.

More males than females reported gun-carrying on school property; some girls did report this behavior, but the total was considerably less than 1 percent. In 1997, three percent of males and less than one percent of females reported carrying a gun as a weapon on school property at some time during the 30 days prior to taking the survey.



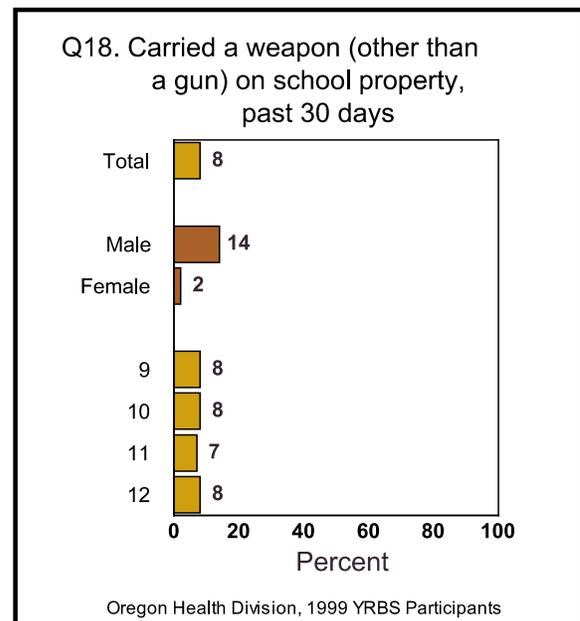
It should be noted that Oregon has a gun-free schools law which requires that students who take a weapon to school be expelled for at least one year. Legislation passed in 1999 also requires reporting and investigation of any unlawful possession of a firearm on school grounds.<sup>5</sup>

**Q18. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon (other than a gun) such as a knife or a club on school property?**

On one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey, eight percent of Oregon YRBS participants had carried a weapon other than a gun on school property.

Males were seven times more likely than females to have carried a weapon other than a gun on school property. (14 vs. 2 percent). The differences among grades were negligible.

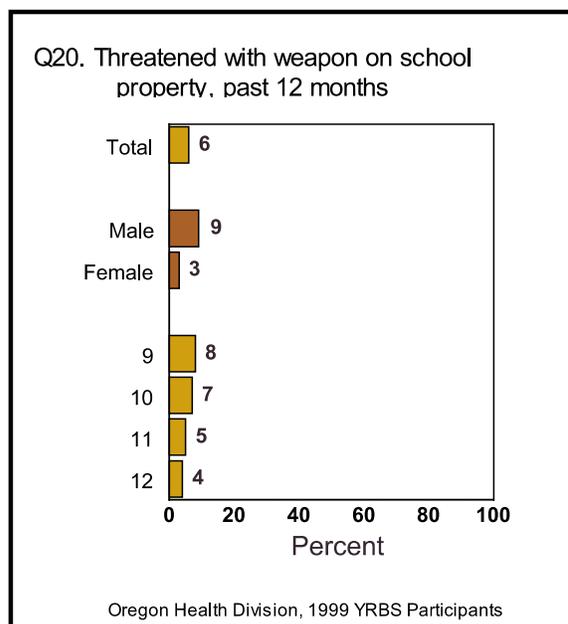
In 1997, 11 percent of students participating in the Oregon YRBS reported carrying a weapon (other than a gun) on school property. Nine percent of the 1997 national YRBS participants carried some type of weapon (including a gun) on school property in the past 30 days.



**Q20. During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?**

Six percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the 12 months prior to the survey.

Three times more males than females were threatened or injured.(9 vs. 3 percent). As grade level increased from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>, threats and injuries on school property in the past year decreased by half.

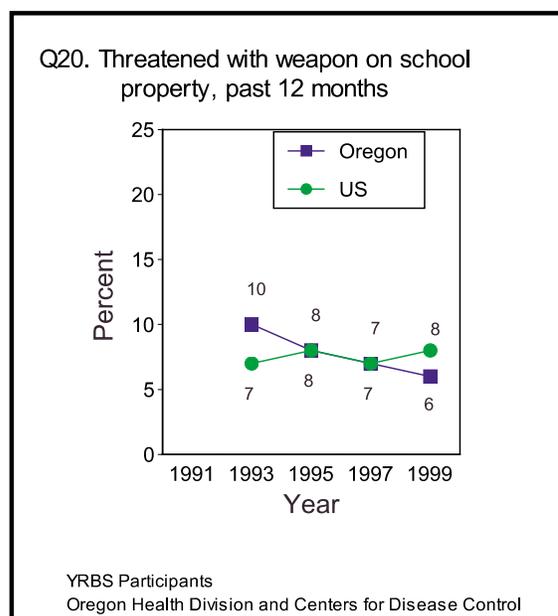


**Q20. DATA TRENDS**

The proportion of Oregon high school students reporting that they have been threatened by someone with a weapon on school property in the preceding 12 months decreased by 40 percent between 1993 and 1999. Nationally, there appears to be no downward trend.

During the 1996/1997 school year, public schools nationwide reported 10,950 incidents of physical attacks or fights in which weapons were used.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1996 Oregon Adult Behavior Risk Factor Survey (BRFSS), 17 percent of the survey respondents ages 18-24 reported being threatened with a weapon in the past year.



## WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE

"I live in a rural setting so carrying a gun or knife is common. I carry a knife myself but I don't use it as a weapon or to protect myself."

"I think that it's pretty sad we can't come to school and feel safe."

"...if violence is getting worse then maybe the adults of this country should take a look at themselves and see what they are doing wrong!!!"

"The violence questions make me feel good because our school is so safe I was able to mark no for all of them."

"It is very easy to get weapons, drug, alcohol, etc...for teenagers. If you have the money, you can get anything you want."

"I think that threats from other students should be handled better."

"I'd feel a lot better if I knew that it would be impossible for a loaded gun to enter this school."

"The kids do it for attention. If the media didn't make such a big deal about it, it would calm down."

"I believe there needs to be more personal counseling available in the schools (esp in light of the Denver tragedy) – all we have is college and drug counseling."

"I'm confident that my school has very little violence problems, and I feel very safe here."

# PHYSICAL FIGHTING

## U.S. HEALTHY PEOPLE YEAR 2000 OBJECTIVES

### 7.9 Reduce physical fighting to 110 incidents a month per 100 youths aged 14 to 17

The next three questions measure the frequency and severity of physical fights among Oregon high school students.

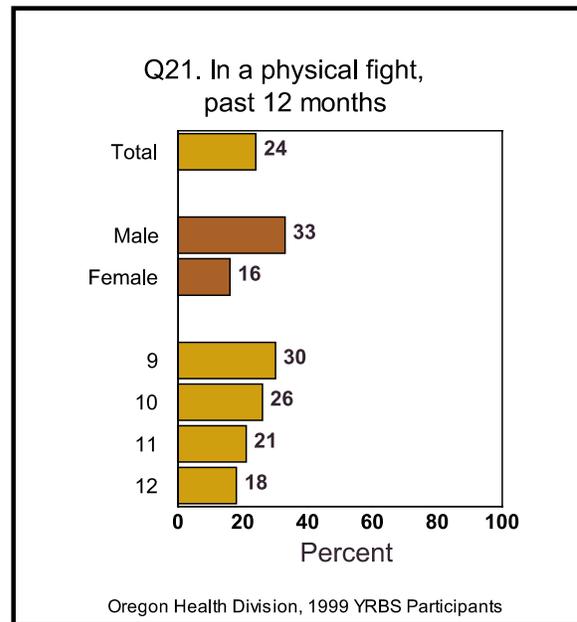
Physical fighting is the most common form of violence for teenagers.<sup>10</sup> The National Center for Education reported 187,890 fights without weapons on public school property during the 1996 to 1997 school year.<sup>6</sup> Physical fighting may not always lead to injuries but fighting is associated with risk for injury, exposure to intimidation and threats, and feelings of fear and vulnerability.<sup>11</sup>

### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS REPORTED

#### **Q21. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight?**

Twenty-four percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants were in a physical fight one or more times during the 12 months prior to the survey.

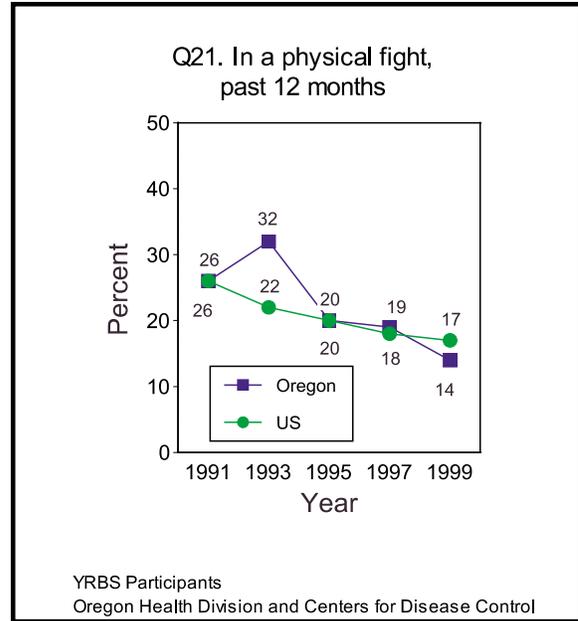
About twice as many males as females (33 vs. 16 percent) reported they were in a physical fight. Fighting declined by almost half from 9<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



**Q21. DATA TRENDS**

The proportion of Oregon YRBS participants who have been in a physical fight in the past year has decreased since 1993 by 38 percent. Nationally, the linear trend shows a modest but significant decrease.

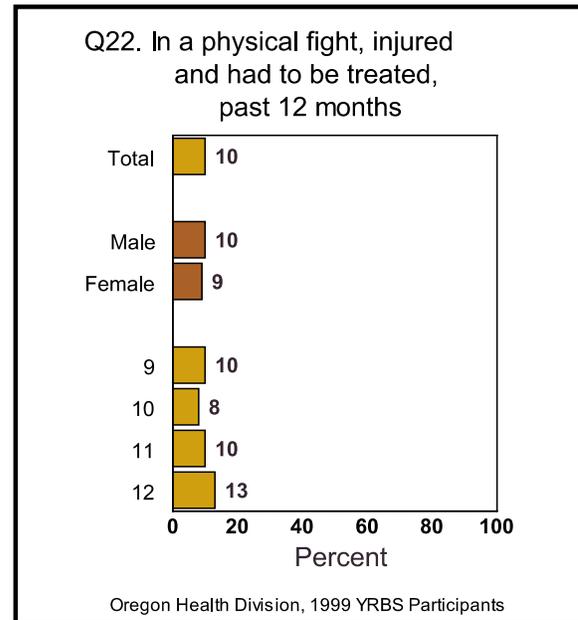
Over 20 percent of the 1996 Oregon Adult Behavior Risk Factor Survey (BRFSS) respondents ages 18-24 stated they had been involved in physical violence in the past year.



**Q22. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight in which you were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?**

Ten percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants were treated by a doctor or nurse for an injury received in a fight during the preceding year.

There was little difference between genders. However, somewhat more 12<sup>th</sup> graders than students from any other grade had to be treated by a medical provider for an injury from fighting.

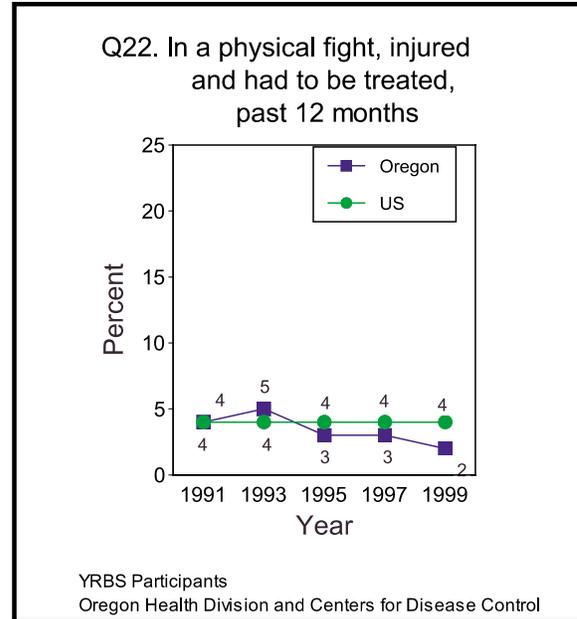


## Q22. DATA TRENDS

This graph shows the trend for students injured from fighting. It differs from the previous graph because it includes all students in the denominator, instead of only students who fought in the past year.

The Oregon and national rates do not differ much from each other nor over time.

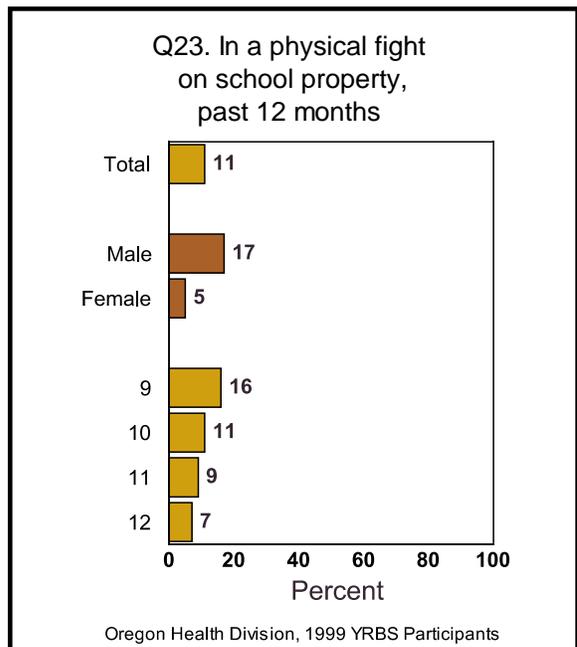
Over 30 percent of the 1996 Oregon Adult Behavior Risk Factor Survey (BRFSS) ages 18-24 reported an injury from the most recent episode of physical violence. Of those injured from a fight, 23 percent were treated by a medical provider.



## Q23. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?

Eleven percent of Oregon 1999 YRBS participants were in a physical fight on school property during the year preceding the survey.

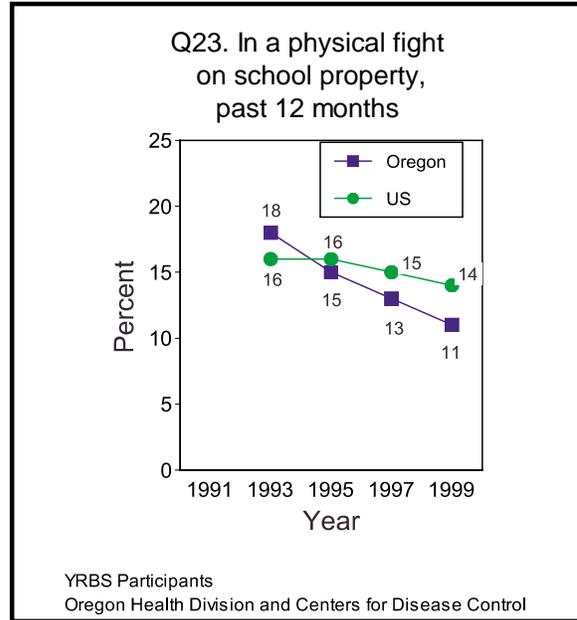
Slightly over three times more male than female students (17 vs. 5 percent) fought on school property. The percentage of physical fighting decreased by 56 percent from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



### Q23. DATA TRENDS

The Oregon 1999 YRBS indicates roughly a 40 percent decrease in physical fighting on school grounds since 1993. National data also indicate a downward trend in fighting on school grounds.

During the 1996-1997 school year, twenty-eight percent of the United States public high schools reported one or more physical fights on school property that did not involve weapons, versus six percent of schools reporting fights that did involve weapons. Percentages for schools in the Western states were somewhat higher, with 32 percent reporting fighting incidents without weapons, and 8 percent reporting fighting incidents involving a weapon.<sup>6</sup>



### WHAT OREGON STUDENTS WROTE

“Some teachers don’t care about whether a student smokes or fights.”

“Some people might want to let you know about what is going on in schools, such as fighting, so you could ask things like why they were involved and what caused them to be involved in the fight.”

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