

# Overview of the UMSL Comprehensive School Safety Initiative

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UMSL CSSI Fact Sheet #1 - August 2019 update

## Project Description

The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI) is a federally-funded program administered by the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. Funding for the CSSI was a response to high-profile acts of school violence, most notably the mass shooting at Sandy Hook in December 2012. Since then, Congress has invested almost \$250 million toward understanding the causes of school violence and developing strategies for increasing school safety.

In 2015, a team of researchers from the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri – St. Louis (UMSL) was awarded one of the highly competitive grants. The UMSL CSSI investigates the causes and consequences of a range of issues associated with school safety, including behaviors such as property theft, minor assault, bullying and cyberbullying, as well as other factors that contribute to school safety including disciplinary practices, measures for enhancing school safety, and the availability and utilization of victim services.

The information produced by this research will help to generate a clearer understanding of the root causes of violence and victimization in schools as well as their consequences for students, their families, and the learning environment. To date, the research team has produced a number of fact sheets that provide overviews of issues associated with school safety.

**Table 1. Sample Characteristics**

	Wave 1 (N=3,640)	Wave 2 (N=3,165)	Wave 3 (N=2,753)
	%	%	%
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	47	46	46
Female	53	54	54
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White	38	40	42
Black	42	40	39
Other	20	20	18
<b>Age</b>			
12 & younger	20	<1	<1
13	48	20	<1
14	30	48	21
15	2	30	48
16 & older	<1	<2	30
<b>Grade level</b>			
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	50	---	---
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	50	52	---
9 <sup>th</sup> grade	---	48	51
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	---	---	49

## Research Design

The research design calls for three annual surveys of two cohorts of students from schools located in St. Louis County (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2016-2017). These grades were selected to assess developmental changes during a critical period of adolescence. The longitudinal design allows us to investigate the causes and consequences of positive and negative school experiences as well as the effects of transitioning from middle school to high school on a range of topics (the same students were surveyed as 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2017-2018). The final year of data collection was in 2018-2019 when the students were 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

- Started with 12 middle schools across six districts
- Schools can be categorized as high, moderate, and low risk based on factors such as percent eligible for free and reduced lunch
- Obtained parental consent from 3,663 students, which is 78% of all students within the 12 schools
- Surveyed 3,640 students during winter/spring of 2017 (99% of eligible students)
- In the second year, we surveyed 3,165 students (86%) enrolled in over 30 middle & high schools.
- During the third year (winter/spring of 2019), we surveyed 2,753 students (75% of eligible students).

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