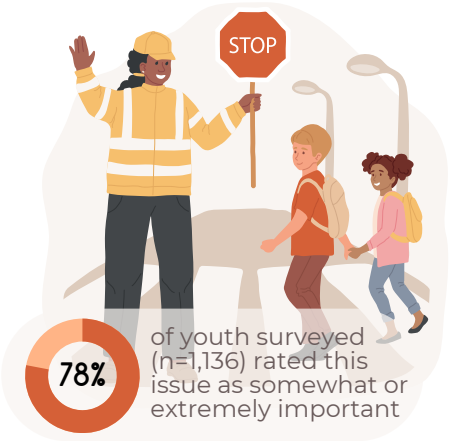


Youth Perspectives on:

Physical & Psychological Safety

Overview

This theme captures young people's lived experiences and concerns about safety across their schools, neighborhoods, and daily lives. Students shared over 675 times that safety is not only about protection from violence, but also about being respected, included, and supported in their environments. While some students described feeling secure, many raised concerns about bullying, fights, harassment, gun violence, and inadequate adult responses to these issues.

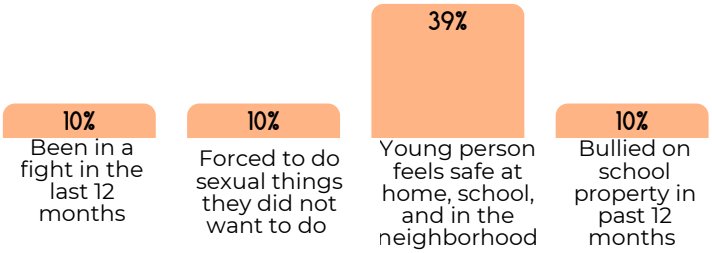
WHY IT MATTERS

A safe environment is foundational to youth development, learning, and well-being. When students feel unsafe, whether due to physical violence, emotional neglect, or systemic inequities, their ability to concentrate, connect with others, and engage meaningfully in their communities is diminished. Creating physically and psychologically safe spaces requires more than rules and protocols; it requires responsive relationships, equitable systems, and environments that affirm the dignity and humanity of every young person.

WHAT THE DATA SAY

Youth Safety Measures

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Alexandria, 2023



WHAT YOUTH WANT

30+ mentions — **Bullying Prevention**

"My ideal Alexandria is for bullying to be more of a concern so kids feel safer going to school."

- Bully-free environments with clear, consistent responses from adults
- Peer cultures rooted in dignity, inclusion, and kindness

115+ mentions — **Safe & Walkable Neighborhoods**

"No crime."

"Safer crosswalks."

- Neighborhoods that feel safe to walk through, with good lighting and infrastructure
- Less exposure to crime and greater investment in safe public spaces

75+ mentions — **Interpersonal & School-Based Violence Prevention**

"More afterschool clubs so kids can be in a community and have a safe space."

"More safe spaces for queer/trans youth."

- Reduced exposure to gun and gang violence, abuse, and school fights
- Trusted systems for reporting and responding to violence and harassment

55+ mentions — **School Safety & Security**

"Security guards fighting with students."

- School safety strategies that are effective, fair, and student-centered
- Trusting relationships with school security and staff

WHAT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

65+ mentions — **Bullying**

"Bullying isn't taken seriously."

- Persistent bullying, often unaddressed or inconsistently handled
- Cyberbullying, name-calling, and social exclusion

90+ mentions — **Neighborhood Safety**

"Kids are afraid to go outside (especially at night)."

- Fear of walking alone, especially at night
- Concerns about theft, vandalism, and poorly maintained public areas

150+ mentions — **Interpersonal & School-Based Violence**

"People are sexually assaulted in bathrooms and cannot report."

- Firsthand accounts of violence in school and community
- Concerns about intimate partner and sexual violence
- Desire for help but uncertainty about where to turn

80+ mentions — **School Safety & Security**

"Security guards fighting with students."

"Only one entrance for lunch makes me late and miss food."

- Mixed feedback on safety protocols; some feel protected, others feel restricted or surveilled
- Frustration with facility issues and single-entry access policies
- Reports of uneven treatment from school security personnel