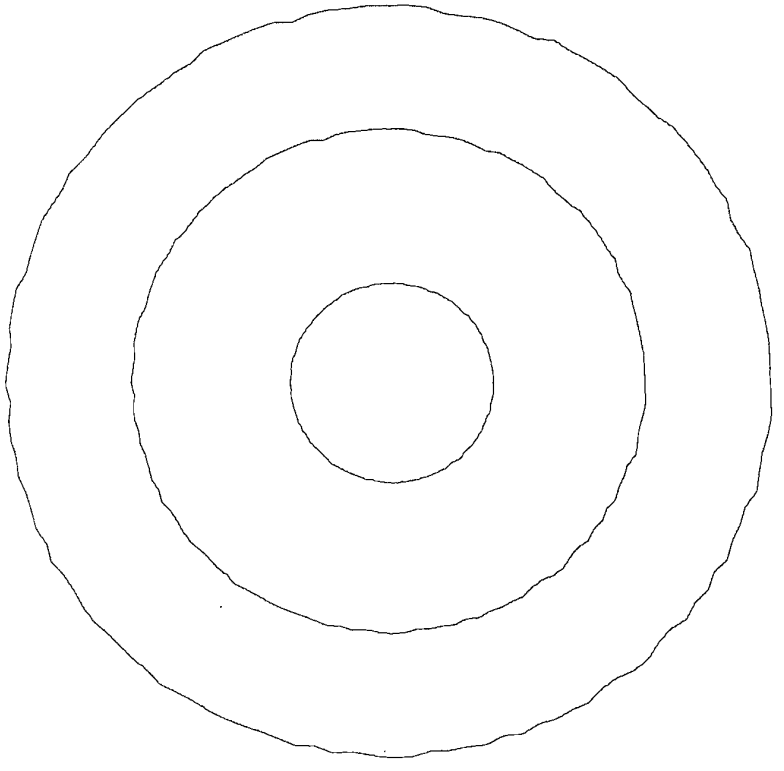
Armed with Data

Creating a Multistate Perspective

MARCH 1998

Multistate Project: Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota



The Multistate Project studied the use of firearms in the commission of crime by examining criminal history, death record, Supplementary Homicide Report and Uniform Crime Report data, along with 1996 firearm-related statutes in four states. Project members were LaLonnie Erickson and Susan Roth of Minnesota, Wanda Fergen and Kari Stulken of South Dakota, Thomas Murphy and Gary Leonardson of Montana, and Michael Overton and Marilyn Keelan of Nebraska.

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Upon request, *Armed with Data: Creating a Multistate Perspective* will be made available in an alternate format, such as Braille, large print or audio tape.

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An electronic copy of *Armed with Data: Creating a Multistate Perspective* is available on the Minnesota Planning World Wide Web site: www.mnplan.state.mn.us.

Armed with Data

Glossary

Below are generally accepted definitions for terms used in this report.

Adult. Any individual age 18 or older.

Aggravated assault. The attempted or actual use of force, through the use of a weapon or physical attack, intended to inflict severe bodily injury upon another person. This category does not include assaults committed with intent to rape or rob, simple assaults or assault and battery.

Armed robbery. The threatened, attempted or actual use of a weapon to forcibly take property belonging to another person. This category excludes the use of personal weapons.

Arrest. Any individual taken into custody by law enforcement for committing unlawful acts, including someone merely warned and released without formal charges. In Minnesota, this term is used only to refer to adults age 18 or older, while *apprehension* refers to youth under 18. For the purposes of this report, *arrest* applies to both adults and juveniles.

Disposition. Final judgment of a criminal or juvenile court regarding the proceedings of a case.

Firearm. A device that is designed to or may be readily converted to expel any type of projectile. Types of firearms are handguns, rifles, shotguns, machine guns, homemade guns, and air, BB or pellet guns.

Firearm-related deaths. In relation to death record data, these include all deaths resulting from accidents, suicides, homicides, undetermined causes and legal interventions involving firearms.

Homicide. The willful, premeditated killing of another person. Also referred to as murder.

Justifiable homicide. Willful killing classified as excusable. The only justifiable homicide is the killing of a criminal by either a peace officer in the line of duty or a private citizen when the criminal is committing a crime.

Juvenile. Any individual under age 18.

Knife or cutting instrument. Knife, broken bottle, razor, ice pick, screwdriver or other cutting and stabbing instrument employed as a weapon or means of force.

Legal intervention. Death caused by law-enforcing agents, including on-duty members of the military, in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order and undertaking other legal actions. This category includes legal executions performed at the behest of the judiciary or ruling authority.

Multistate region. The states of Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Natural causes. This phrase characterizes a death resulting from disease or medical disorder, including infectious and parasitic diseases; circulatory, nervous, respiratory and digestive system diseases; and neoplasms.

Negligent manslaughter. A death occurring as a result of nonwillful, gross negligence by some person other than the victim. This category does not include traffic fatalities.

Nonnegligent manslaughter. The willful but not premeditated killing of another person.

Operations of war. This phrase characterizes deaths to military personnel and civilians caused by war and civil insurrections. This category excludes accidents during military training and war material manufacturing or transport, unless attributable to enemy action.

Other weapon. Any weapon other than a firearm, knife or cutting instrument, or personal weapon. This category includes acid, intact bottles, bricks, clubs, explosives, scalding water, tire irons and any other item employed as a weapon or means of force.

Personal weapons. Arms, feet, fists, hands, teeth and other body members employed as weapons or means of force.

Robbery. The threatened, attempted or actual taking of other people's property against their will by using force or putting them in fear. The types of robbery include armed and strong-arm.

Strong-arm robbery. Muggings and similar offenses in which personal weapons are used to forcibly deprive people of their property.

Suicide. The voluntary, intentional, self-inflicted killing of oneself.

Undetermined death. This phrase characterizes deaths in which a determination of whether the injuries were accidental, suicidal or homicidal could not be made in an investigation by a medical examiner, coroner or other legal authority. This category includes self-inflicted injuries — except poisoning — that are not specified as accidental or intentional.

Unintentional injury. This phrase characterizes accidental deaths resulting from some environmental event, circumstance or condition. Included are deaths directly caused by motorized and nonmotorized vehicles; poisoning from drugs, medicinal substances, other solid and liquid substances, and gases and vapors; surgical and medical care or procedures; falls; fire; natural and environmental factors; and submersion, suffocation and foreign bodies.

Victim-offender relationship. This information describes each victim's relationship to offenders involved in a single incident of homicide.

Weapon. Any object used to constitute force or the threat of force.

Weapon offenses. A category primarily regulatory in nature that includes the following criminal offenses: the manufacture, sale or possession of deadly weapons or silencers; carrying deadly weapons, concealed or openly; furnishing deadly weapons to minors; the possession of deadly weapons by aliens; and all attempts to commit any of these offenses.

Summary

Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota teamed together in fall 1996 to form the Multistate Project to examine gun crime and current firearm-related statutes across the four north-central states. *Armed with Data: Creating a Multistate Perspective* details important findings from the project.

No single data set exists that can provide comprehensive information about firearm use in the commission of crime. The Multistate Project used a number of data sets, including criminal history files, death records, Supplementary Homicide Reports and Uniform Crime Reports. Each of these data sets offers distinct, albeit limited, insights into the characteristics of gun use in particular situations.

Noteworthy findings from combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995 include:

Death record data

- Firearm involvement accounted for only 1 percent of the 326,239 deaths occurring between 1991 and 1995. Guns were the most common weapons used in homicides and suicides, causing more than half of these deaths.
- Males, whites and people age 50 or older accounted for a majority of all types of death except for natural causes, where females comprised the largest share.
- Between 1991 and 1995, the number of homicides of females involving a gun increased two times that of males, while the number of gun-related homicides of nonwhites went up three times that of whites.
- Twenty- to 24-year-old adults had the highest proportion — 20 percent — of firearm-related deaths compared to all other age groups. Children under age 5 and adults age 65 and older had the smallest proportions of deaths involving a firearm, at 0.2 percent each.

Uniform Crime Reporting program offense and arrest data

- Murders, robberies and aggravated assaults involving a firearm totaled about one-fifth of all reported violent crimes and 2 percent of all serious crimes.
- More than 50 percent of murders were committed with a firearm, compared to about 25 percent of robberies and 25 percent of aggravated assaults.
- Most arrests for weapon violations were of white adult males. Whites and adults each accounted for two-thirds of these arrests, while males made up nine out of 10.

Supplementary Homicide Report data

- Fifty-three percent of homicide incidents were firearm-related. Seventy-five percent of the firearms were handguns, followed by shotguns at 12 percent.
- Most homicide offenders and victims were white males age 18 or older.
- Regardless of the weapon used, murders tended to occur among members of the same demographic group; although females were more likely to kill males, and juveniles were more likely to murder adults.
- Seven out of 10 homicide victims were murdered by someone they knew. No differences were found in the prevalence of gun use by offenders known to victims versus those who were strangers: more than half of each group used a firearm to kill their victim.
- A majority of all homicides occurred as the result of an argument. Of argument-related homicides, two-thirds involved nonfamily members, 27 percent involved family members and 7 percent were over money or property.

This project also provided the opportunity for Montana and Nebraska to focus on analyzing their criminal history data. Lack of time, personnel and monetary resources had hindered this activity in the past. Due to differences in data set structures, these two states were not able to conduct uniform analyses. Montana examined only weapon violation offenses, while Nebraska analyzed all offenses that involved a weapon. Less than 1 percent of all arrest charges in Montana over the five-year period were for weapon violations. Three percent of criminal history file records in Nebraska involved weapon-related crimes. Both states found that a majority of arrests were of white males ages 18 to 25.

Some of the most revealing project findings came in the form of lessons learned on how states can carry out such cooperative endeavors, particularly in terms of melding data and information into one perspective. The project shows that completing thorough groundwork is integral to ensuring a smooth progression of tasks and sound results. Other insights highlight the importance of developing and following a detailed work plan, maintaining open communication and following timelines.

Multistate Project studies firearm use in crime

In a number of states, research on the use of firearms in crime often is neither timely nor extensive. This problem occurs for two major reasons: resource and personnel constraints, and limitations related to data reporting, collection and storage.

Most states have a federally funded statistical analysis center that conducts criminal and juvenile justice research and provides this information to policy-makers and the public. Many of these centers have only one to five staff people and are unable to fully address all of the justice issues important to their states. In addition, some states — such as Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota — have relatively small populations and large geographic areas and have not recorded long-term, high levels of crime. To help such states conduct gun crime research, grants were offered through the federal National Criminal History Improvement Program.

Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota jointly obtained NCHIP funding and formed the Multistate Project to analyze gun crime and compile current firearm-related statutes.

The project explored gun use in crime through four data sources: criminal history files, death records, Supplementary Homicide Reports and Uniform Crime Reports. Components of the project focused on ascertaining firearm data availability, providing basic data analysis and compiling firearm laws into an easy-to-use reference tool.

A number of research questions were formulated to guide project activities. Primary areas of interest were weapon involvement — specifically firearms by type — within each of the data sets; weapon use according to demographic factors such as age, gender and race; and comparison of firearm statutes among the states. The project also had hoped to study the role of alcohol and drug use in weapon-related mortality and crime, but data limitations prevented this activity.

The nature of gun use nationwide

A 1994 nationwide telephone survey by the National Institute of Justice estimated that one-third of American households own 192 million guns — a number that has been declining since 1960. More than two-thirds of these guns were rifles and handguns, with shotguns making up the rest. Individuals who reported owning guns usually have several: 74 percent possess two or more.

In addition, 70 percent of respondents said they use guns for hunting or target shooting. The remaining 30 percent own guns for self-protection, with three-fourths of these possessing handguns. One out of five gun-owning households reported keeping their gun unlocked and loaded — a practice four times more common among owners of handguns than among those who have rifles or shotguns.

Other recent national research points to additional areas of concern in crime and weapon use:

- Most firearm deaths are suicides or homicides.
- Twenty- to 24-year-olds have the highest rates of firearm-related death, while people 75 and older led all age groups in firearm-related suicides.
- Gun use in youth suicides and homicides has been multiplying as the number of homicides due to other weapons has held steady.

Overall firearm-related deaths minimal

Percent of all deaths within each region

Cause of death	Minnesota	Montana	Nebraska	South Dakota	Multi-state
Natural causes	94%	92%	94%	94%	94%
Accident	4	5	4	5	4
Suicide	1	2	1	1	2
All firearm-related	1	2	1	1	1
Homicide	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4
Undetermined	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1

No significant variations were found among the four states.

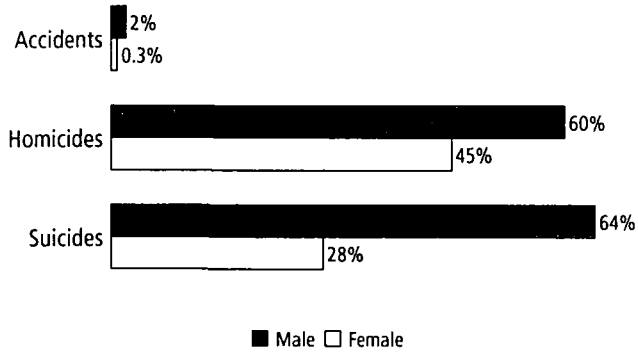
Note: Firearm-related deaths include all those resulting from accidents, suicides, homicides, undetermined causes and legal interventions. Deaths due to legal intervention are not included because they comprise less than one-10th of all deaths. Only one death was attributed to operations of war. Therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Calculations were performed on combined data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Death record data from the Minnesota Department of Health, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and South Dakota Department of Health

- African American males have the highest overall gun-related death rate followed by white males at a much lower level.
- One-third of all murders, robberies and aggravated assaults involve a firearm.
- Women are far less likely than men to violate the law, but female involvement in crime has been rising faster than that of males in recent years.
- Weapons offense arrests have increased, especially among 15- to 19-year-olds, and the rate for youth is growing faster than that for adults.
- Most weapons offense arrests involve white males age 18 and older, although the rate of such arrests based on population is five times greater for African Americans.
- Juvenile court cases for weapon violations have risen more than for any other offense but still only account for a small percentage of all delinquency cases.
- Homicides involving firearms have been the leading cause of death since 1968 for African American males age 15 to 19.
- Family members using a weapon other than a firearm commit the majority of the murders of juveniles under age 12, whereas most 12- to 17-year-old homicide victims are killed by strangers using firearms.

Females less likely to use guns in suicide

Percent of firearm use within each category of death



Proportions of gun-related homicides were similar among the genders.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because deaths resulting from legal intervention, operations of war and undetermined causes are not included. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Death record data from the Minnesota Department of Health, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and South Dakota Department of Health

- Murders of 12- to 17-year-olds rose 10 times faster between 1985 and 1995 than those for children under 12; all this growth was firearm-related, as was the small decline that occurred in 1995.

Gun use examined in four states

Because of data limitations, not all aspects of crime and weapon use mentioned in the previous section could be considered within the four states participating in the Multistate Project. The data sets analyzed were death records, Uniform Crime Reports, Supplementary Homicide Reports and criminal history files for 1991 to 1995. Not all states were able to provide the same components for each data set. Montana and Nebraska also explored their criminal history files. Special conditions affecting the interpretation of this data are detailed in the appendix on data set limitations.

Guns were a minor cause of death

Firearms caused 1 percent of the total 326,239 deaths recorded in the multistate region between 1991 and 1995. Causes of death include natural causes, accidents, suicides, homicides, legal interventions, undetermined causes and operations of war. Ninety-four percent of deaths resulted from natural causes such as cancer, heart disease and pneumonia. Firearm-related deaths include accidents, suicides, homicides, legal interventions and undetermined causes.

Mortality due to guns increased in both Minnesota and Montana by 6 percent and 9 percent, respectively, during the five-year period. It went down in Nebraska by 2 percent and in South Dakota by 10 percent. The number of deaths caused by specific gun types could not be determined because this information generally was not noted on death records.

Firearms were used in most of the homicides and suicides. Less than half of these deaths resulted from other means such as drugs, hanging, knives or blunt objects. Firearm-related homicides rose 43 percent — the largest increase of any type of death — in the multistate region between 1991 and 1995. While all four states registered an increase in these murder types, Minnesota and South Dakota each saw their totals grow by about half. Nebraska had the highest proportion of gun homicides at 64 percent; South Dakota ranked last with 32 percent.

All four states had similar percentages of firearm-related accidents. Only 1 percent of all accidents in the region were due to firearms, which declined over the five-year period. Two-thirds of all suicides involved guns in Montana and South Dakota, compared to 51 percent in Minnesota and 60 percent in Nebraska.

Males led in all categories of death except natural causes. Females were the victims in only one out of 10 firearm deaths; although their number of firearm-related homicides went up 90 percent — double the increase for males — during the five years. Homicides by other means increased slightly for women in the region, while those for men declined.

Comparing genders across the states, a higher proportion of females than males in Montana and Nebraska were murdered with a gun; the other two states documented larger numbers for males in this category. Percentage change between states for gender and other demographic factors was not presented due to some states having too small a number of cases in these categories.

Due to their population size, Minnesota and Nebraska tended to make up the largest components of multistate totals in most categories. The least populous state, South Dakota, nevertheless ranked second in the number of female accidental firearm deaths, while the second smallest, Montana, was second in female gun suicides. Minnesota, the largest state, was first in both categories.

Whites accounted for a majority of all types of death. Nine out of 10 people who died from an accident, suicide, firearm-related suicide or natural cause were white. Of all gun-related deaths, whites constituted 86 percent. Other races, taken together, were much closer to whites in the categories of murder and firearm-related murder, comprising more than 40 percent. Analysis by specific racial classification was not possible because Montana identifies race in death records only as white and "other."

More than half of all homicides of both whites and other races in the region involved the use of a gun. In contrast to regional findings, only about 30 percent of homicides occurring to other races in Montana and South Dakota involved a firearm. Firearms were used in 58 percent of all suicides of whites in the four-state region, compared to 47 percent of those involving other races. Firearm-related fatal accidents were more likely to occur to people of other races than to whites: 3 percent versus 1 percent.

Not surprisingly, the most populous state among the four, Minnesota, had the largest share of the total deaths of whites and other races. While Nebraska ranked second in

Whites rank highest in deaths from natural causes

Percent of all deaths within each race category

Cause of death	Whites	Other races
Natural causes	94%	83%
Accident by any means	4	10
Homicide by any means	0.2	5
All firearm-related	1	4
Homicide with a firearm	0.1	3
Suicide by any means	1	2
Suicide with a firearm	1	1
Accident with a firearm	0.1	0.2

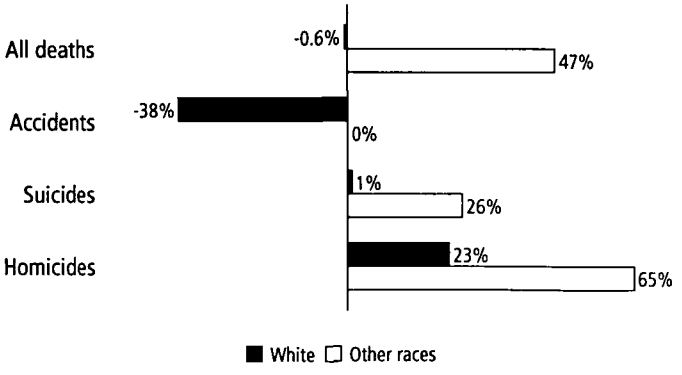
Firearms were a factor in 4 percent of all deaths involving other races.

Note: Deaths resulting from legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes are not included. Therefore, percentages do not add to 100. "Other races" includes all nonwhite race groups. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Death record data from the Minnesota Department of Health, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and South Dakota Department of Health

Gun-related deaths rise for minorities

Percent change in firearm-related deaths from 1991 to 1995 in each category



The increase in gun-related murders involving other races was three times more than those for whites.

Note: Deaths resulting from accidents, suicides, homicides, legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes not involving guns are not included. Therefore, percentages do not add to 100. "Other races" includes all nonwhite race groups. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Death record data from the Minnesota Department of Health, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and South Dakota Department of Health

most cases, South Dakota had the second highest number of accidents, firearm-related accidents, suicides and firearm-related suicides involving other races, with the numbers in each category comprising about 25 percent of multistate totals.

About nine out of 10 deaths of all types occurred to people age 50 or older. Most of these resulted from natural causes, followed by accidents and suicides. More than two-thirds of the suicides among people age 55 or older involved guns, compared to 56 percent in the 50-to-54 age group. Fifty-eight percent of homicides in the 50-to-54 group involved guns, compared to 37 percent in those age 55 and older. Three out of 10 gun deaths involved people age 50 or older. Multistate totals only are used in the discussion of type of death by age group because of the small number of cases in some states.

Children age 9 and younger accounted for 2 percent of all deaths and almost 1 percent of all deaths due to guns. Children under age 5 were most likely to die from natural causes, whereas those ages 5 to 9 were as apt to die from accidents as they were from natural causes. Only three suicides were documented among children up to age 9; those individuals were between ages 5 and 9.

The leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 19 was accidents, which accounted for about half of all deaths. Natural causes were cited in 36 percent of the deaths of 10- to 14-year-olds and in 20 percent of those ages 15 to 19. Gun-related deaths for the 15-to-19 age group were slightly less, at 19 percent, than the proportion of deaths from natural causes. Most firearm-related deaths were suicides. Three-fourths of all homicides and about 60 percent of suicides of 10- to 19-year-olds involved guns. Eight percent of accidental deaths of youth ages 10 to 14 involved a gun, the highest rate of all age groups. Ten- to 19-year-olds accounted for the smallest proportion — 1 percent — of all deaths and 13 percent of all deaths caused by guns.

While 20- to 29-year-olds made up 2 percent of all deaths, they comprised 24 percent of gun-related deaths. Deaths due to accidents were two times more likely than those from natural causes for people age 20 to 24. By comparison, accidental and natural-causes deaths were the

Suicides and homicides by gun more likely among people age 20 to 24

Percent of deaths within each age group

Age	Accidents	Firearm accidents	Suicides	Firearm suicides	Homicides	Firearm homicides
Under 5	9%	0.1%	0%	0%	2%	0.2%
5 to 9	46	2	0.5	0	3	2
10 to 14	48	4	10	6	6	4
15 to 19	53	2	19	11	7	5
20 to 24	48	1	21	13	8	6
25 to 29	36	0.7	19	11	8	5
30 to 34	28	0.3	15	8	5	3
35 to 39	20	0.2	12	6	3	2
40 to 44	14	0.2	8	4	2	1
45 to 49	9	0.1	5	2	1	0.6
50 to 54	6	0	3	2	0.4	0.3
55 to 59	4	0.1	2	1	0.4	0.1
60 to 64	3	0	1	0.7	0.1	0.1
65 and older	2	0	0.3	0.2	0	0

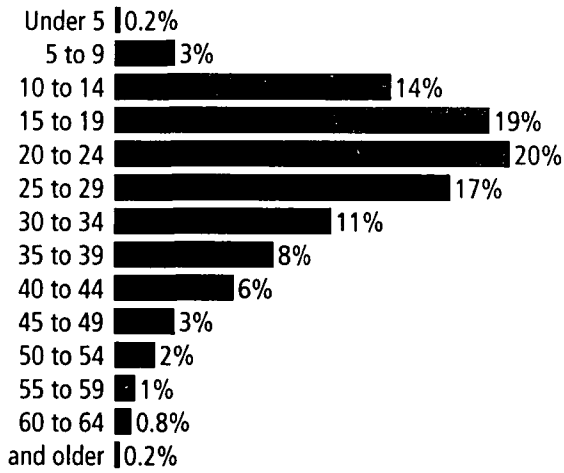
Ten- to 14-year olds had the largest percentage of firearm-related accidents.

Note: Deaths resulting from natural causes, legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes are not included. Therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Death record data from the Minnesota Department of Health, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and South Dakota Department of Health

One-fifth of deaths of 20- to 24-year-olds due to firearms

Percent of firearm-related deaths within each age group



Children under 5 and adults age 65 and older had the smallest proportions of deaths involving a firearm.

Note: Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Death record data from the Minnesota Department of Health, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and South Dakota Department of Health

same proportion — 36 percent — for the 25-to-29 age group. For both groups, suicides were about 20 percent of deaths and homicides 8 percent — higher than for all other groups. About 60 percent of suicides involved guns. Although guns were the most common weapon used in homicides of both groups, they were more prevalent in murders of 20- to 24-year-olds — 71 percent compared to 58 percent for the 25-to-29 group.

Beginning with the 30-to-34 age group, deaths from natural causes again gradually started to outnumber all other types, increasing from 50 percent to more than 90 percent by age 50. At the same time, accidental deaths, suicides and homicides steadily declined. Accidents involving firearms accounted for 1 to 2 percent of the deaths for age groups between 30-to-34 and 45-to-49. Suicides for each group within this range were slightly less likely to involve firearms than homicides. More than half of suicides were committed by other means, except in the 40-to-44 age group, where other means accounted for 49 percent.

Firearm involvement in offenses and arrests

Uniform Crime Reports document gun data only for the offenses of murder, robbery and aggravated assault. Additional weapon-related information is submitted by some states for weapon violation offenses such as possession of a silencer, carrying a concealed weapon or transferring weapons to a minor. However, this information is not required in Uniform Crime Reports and is not broken down by specific offense or weapon types.

Offenses become known to law enforcement through complaints made by victims or witnesses, or through discovery by officers in the course of duty. They are recorded whether or not someone is arrested. The Multistate Project was unable to examine reported offenses for weapon violations because this data is not collected in Nebraska and South Dakota.

Violent crimes — murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault — accounted for 7 percent of the 1,652,808 serious offenses committed in the four states between 1991 and 1995. Serious or Index crimes include violent offenses as well as burglary, larceny, automobile theft and arson. Six

Gun-related murders small share of all violent crimes

Percent of all reported violent crimes within each region

Offense category	Minnesota	Montana	Nebraska	South Dakota	Multi-state
Aggravated assault	50%	67%	74%	69%	58%
Robbery	32	16	17	10	26
Firearm-related aggravated assault	12	19	16	13	14
Firearm-related robbery	8	5	6	3	7
Murder	0.9	2	0.5	0.9	0.9
Firearm-related murder	0.5	1	0.3	0.3	0.5

The most common gun-related violent crime in the four states was aggravated assault.

Note: Rape and firearm-related rape are not included. Each of the firearm subcategories is counted within the respective offenses of murder, robbery and aggravated assault. Therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Violent crimes include the offenses of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Calculations were performed on combined data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Uniform Crime Report offense data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

Murders with guns least common in South Dakota

Percent of weapon use within each category of offense

	Minnesota	Montana	Nebraska	South Dakota
Murder				
Firearm	53%	52%	58%	36%
Knife	22	19	11	25
Other weapon	15	22	21	29
Personal weapon	10	7	11	11
Robbery				
Firearm	24%	31%	35%	29%
Knife	9	16	11	13
Other weapon	8	8	7	7
Personal weapon	59	45	48	52
Aggravated assault				
Firearm	25%	29%	22%	19%
Knife	27	20	16	25
Other weapon	28	18	33	21
Personal weapon	21	33	29	35

Unlike in Minnesota and Nebraska, most aggravated assaults in Montana and South Dakota involved personal weapons.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Calculations were performed on combined data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Uniform Crime Report offense data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

out of 10 violent crimes committed were aggravated assaults; robbery was the second most common violent crime, at 26 percent. Firearm-related murders, robberies and aggravated assaults totaled about one-fifth of all violent offenses and 2 percent of all serious crimes. Percentage change across years is not presented due to fluctuations in the number of agencies reporting over the five-year period.

Among the four states, Minnesota had the most reported offenses in each category, followed by Nebraska in all but one case. Montana had a greater number of knife-related murders than Nebraska.

Types of weapons used in murders, robberies and aggravated assaults in the four states varied. More than half of all murders were committed with a gun, compared to about one-quarter of robberies and one-quarter of aggravated assaults. Fifty-seven percent of robberies were strong-arm, that is, situations in which offenders used personal weapons such as hands and fists to forcibly take someone's property. Aggravated assault data was evenly distributed among guns, knives and personal weapons; it was slightly higher, at 29 percent, for other weapons such as bottles, bricks or tire irons.

While reported crimes relate to events, arrests relate to people. Uniform Crime Report arrest data does not include whether a weapon or gun was involved; therefore, statistics for weapon offenses only are presented. From 1991 to 1995, a total of 23,559 arrests for weapon offenses were recorded in the multistate region. Minnesota alone accounted for more than half, while Nebraska and Montana comprised 28 and 14 percent, respectively. More than 90 percent of arrests for weapon offenses were of males. Of the four states, Minnesota had the highest number of weapon arrests for both males and females.

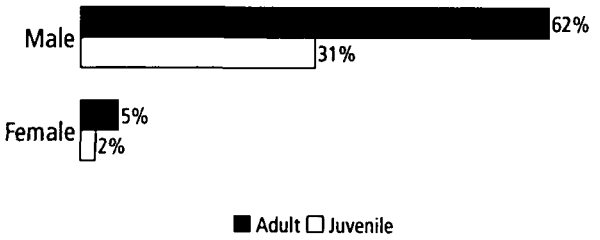
Juveniles were less likely than adults to be arrested for weapon offenses. Adults comprised more than two-thirds of these arrests. The difference between adults and juveniles in Minnesota and South Dakota was much smaller than in the other project states: 60 percent for adults versus 40 percent for juveniles in both states. For both Montana and Nebraska, the difference was 78 percent for adults versus 22 percent for juveniles.

People between the ages of 10 and 24 were more likely than other age groups to be arrested for a weapon offense; they accounted for six out of 10 of the total arrests in the project states. Fifteen- to 19-year-olds were 33 percent of the total alone, followed by those age 20 to 24. Across the states, these figures did not vary significantly, although 10- to 14-year-old juveniles comprised the second largest percentage among the age groups in South Dakota. After age 24, weapon offense arrest proportions followed a steady decline.

American Indians and Asians accounted for the smallest shares of weapon arrests, for a combined total of 8 percent. More than two-thirds of weapon-offense arrests involved whites. Racial breakouts by juvenile and adult are not presented because this information is not accessible in South Dakota.

Most weapon offense arrests involved adult males

Percent of weapon offense arrests within each category



The smallest number of weapon offense arrests was recorded for juvenile females.

Note: Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Uniform Crime Report arrest data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

Weapon offense arrests vary by race

Percent of all weapon offense arrests within each region

Race category	Minnesota	Montana	Nebraska	South Dakota
African American	31%	3%	37%	4%
American Indian	4	15	2	18
Asian	3	0.2	0.6	0.8
White	62	78	60	77

Asian arrests were minimal in each of the four states.

Note: "Other" and "unknown" race categories are not included; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Calculations were performed on combined data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Uniform Crime Report arrest data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

Describing the incidence of homicide

Supplementary Homicide Reports document information on willful and justifiable homicide, and negligent manslaughter. Specific data is recorded from each incident, including the number of victims and offenders involved (known as "situation"), weapon used, offender and victim demographics, victim-offender relationship and the event surrounding or leading up to the homicide (known as "circumstance"). The Multistate Project focused on willful homicides only; that is, murders that involved purposeful, premeditated aforethought.

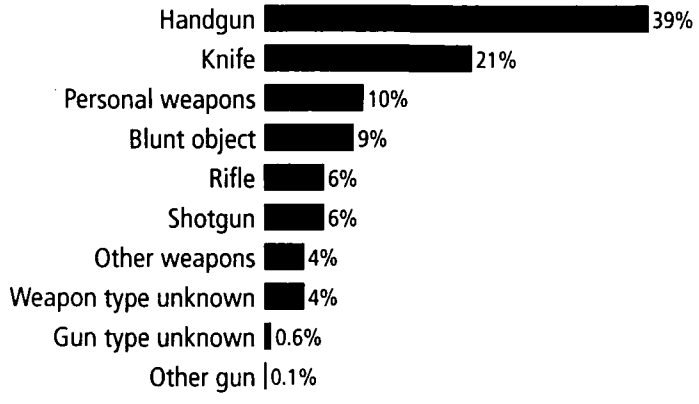
In most cases, percentage change and state-by-state comparisons are not presented. The number of agencies within each state that submitted Supplementary Homicide Reports from 1991 to 1995 fluctuated. Nebraska is missing data for Omaha — the state's most populous city — and South Dakota is missing data for 1991. In addition, some states had too few cases in various categories for meaningful comparison.

Overall, a total of 936 incidents of homicide were recorded in the region from 1991 to 1995. Most — about one-fifth — occurred in the months of October and July. Fifty-three percent of homicide incidents involved firearms, with a majority of the weapons being handguns or shotguns. Other means of homicide included knives, personal weapons, poison, strangulation and fire. Minnesota accounted for 72 percent of all homicides, followed by Montana at 12 percent. South Dakota had the lowest proportion at 4 percent.

A single incident may be comprised of multiple victims and multiple offenders. Between 1991 and 1995, the four states documented a total of 1,116 homicide offenders and 1,008 homicide victims. Seventy percent of all homicide incidents involved only one offender, and 94 percent involved only one victim. A larger share of firearm-related incidents involved more than one offender or more than one victim.

Most homicide offenders were white males over 18 years of age. Roughly 14 percent of offender demographic information was unknown in each category of race, gender and age. Whites totaled 46 percent of offenders, and African Americans comprised slightly less than one-third. Asians made up the smallest proportion of offenders, at 4 percent. More than three-fourths of offenders were male, and 72 percent were adult. Among specific age groups, 15- to 19-year-olds represented the largest proportion of

Four out of 10 weapons used in willful homicides were handguns



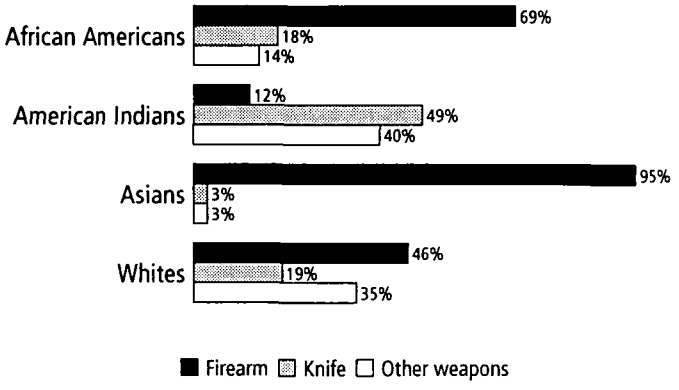
Knives followed handguns as the second most common murder weapon.

Note: "Other weapons" include poison, pushing out of a window, explosives, fire, drugs, drowning, strangulation and asphyxiation. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Supplementary Homicide Report data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

American Indian homicide offenders were least likely to use firearms

Percent of weapon use within each racial group



More than nine out of 10 weapons used by Asian homicide offenders were guns.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. "Other weapons" includes personal weapons, blunt objects, poison, pushing out of a window, explosives, fire, drugs, drowning, strangulation and asphyxiation. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Supplementary Homicide Report data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

offenders, at 21 percent. Individuals ages 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 each accounted for 20 and 11 percent, respectively.

Interesting differences were found within each demographic group in the types of weapons that offenders used. Of the racial groups, 95 percent of Asian offenders and 69 percent of African American offenders used a firearm. More than half of all men used a gun to commit homicide, compared to 18 percent who used knives. By a small margin, knives were the most common weapon used by women, totaling 35 percent. Gun use by females followed both knives and other weapons at 32 percent. Seven out of 10 juvenile offenders used a gun, compared to half of all adults. Juvenile use of knives followed firearms at 16 percent, while adult use of other weapons was second after firearms, at 29 percent.

A majority of homicide victims were white males age 18 or older. Only one percent of victim demographic information was unknown. Fifty-nine percent of all victims were white, compared to about 30 percent who were African American. Asians made up the smallest portion of murder victims at 3 percent. Sixty-seven percent of victims were male, and 84 percent were over 18. Homicide victims tended to be somewhat older than homicide offenders. The largest proportion of victims — each comprising 14 percent — were 20- to 24-years-old and 30- to 34-years-old, followed by those age 25 to 29 at 13 percent.

In all racial groups except American Indians, most victims were murdered with a firearm. More than two-thirds of African American and Asian victims were killed with a gun, as were about half of white victims. Knives were the most common weapon used in American Indian homicides, totaling 36 percent. Other weapons accounted for the second largest percentages of white and American Indian murders, while knives were second for African American and Asian murders.

Gun-related homicides were predominant for both genders as well as for adults. The proportion of firearm use in homicides of males, however, was greater than in those of females — 58 percent compared to 43 percent. Fifty-six percent of adult victims were killed with guns; knives and other weapons were equally likely to be used, each comprising 22 percent. On the other hand, almost half — 46 percent — of juvenile victims were murdered by other weapons, followed by firearms at 40 percent.

Regardless of the weapon used, murders tended to occur among members of the same demographic group. Within each of the racial categories, more than half of all offenders targeted victims of their same race. About seven out of 10 male offenders killed males. In contrast, 77 percent of all female offenders murdered males. Eighty-six percent of adult offenders murdered adults, while 78 percent of juvenile offenders had adult victims.

Seven out of 10 homicide victims were murdered by someone they knew, either a significant other, family member, friend or acquaintance. Only about 20 percent of victims were killed by a stranger. The remaining 10 percent of victims had unknown relationships to the offender. No differences were found in the prevalence of

Juvenile victims of adult offenders least often killed by strangers and least often killed with firearms

Percent of each type of willful homicide situation

	Adult victims of adult offenders	Adult victims of juvenile offenders	Juvenile victims of adult offenders	Juvenile victims of juvenile offenders
Victim-offender relationship				
Family member	17%	24%	39%	12%
Other known to victim	63	43	53	68
Stranger	18	30	4	16
Murder weapon				
Firearm	51%	76%	21%	64%
Knife	24	18	17	15
Other weapons	13	2	17	8
Personal weapons	9	4	40	8

Homicides with adult victims and juvenile offenders were the most likely to involve stranger relationships and gun use.

Note: The victim-offender relationship indicates the victim's relationship to the offender. Unknown victim-offender relationships and unknown weapons are not pictured; therefore, percentages may not add to 100. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Supplementary Homicide Report data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

gun use by offenders known to victims versus strangers: more than half in each group used a firearm to kill their victim.

Of victims who knew their offenders, 56 percent were acquaintances, 17 percent were significant others and 15 percent were family members. Most homicides — 68 percent — involving African American offenders and white victims were stranger relationships. About 20 percent of all male offenders murdered a stranger, while female offenders did not murder anyone whom they did not know. A majority of male offenders targeted victims who were either acquaintances, significant others or other nonfamily members such as friends or neighbors. Sixty-five percent of all female offenders who killed females were family members; none of these homicides involved the use of a gun.

Thirty-five percent of all homicides occurred as the result of an argument, 19 percent occurred during the commission of unspecified nonfelony crimes, 15 percent had unknown circumstances, and 6 percent were robbery-related. The remaining 25 percent included such circumstances as alcohol- and drug-induced brawls, drug law violations, burglary, gangland killings, rape and lovers' triangles. Of argument-related homicides, two-thirds involved nonfamily members, 27 percent involved family members, and 7 percent were over money or property.

Data on the circumstances surrounding homicide is somewhat limited. Montana uses only nine categories — argument, domestic abuse, alcohol- or drug-induced brawl, homicide, burglary, sexual offense, murder-suicide, other and unknown — for coding this information, while other project states use the standard 37 Uniform Crime Reporting program categories.

Two states focus on weapon use as part of criminal history

The Multistate Project gave Montana and Nebraska an opportunity to examine their criminal history data and related weapon use. Because of differences in the structure of data sets, and collection and coding practices, uniform analysis was not possible. Findings from each state are presented separately.

Montana. Only felony and misdemeanor weapon violations occurring from 1991 to 1995 were analyzed. Because of the data structure of Montana's criminal history file, no specific variable indicates weapon use by type of crime. It is assumed that most weapon offenses involve firearms. Disposition information is not available in electronic format. Therefore, specific information regarding such elements as sentence lengths and fine amounts was not readily accessible.

Greatest percentage of gun use was in gangland killings

Percent of firearm use within each homicide circumstance

Gangland killings	93%
Part II felony crimes	86
Arguments over money or property	79
Nonfelony crimes	53
Arguments, total	52
Arguments with a nonfamily member	50
Arguments with a family member	49
Alcohol- or drug-related brawls	41
Part I felony crimes	34

Part I felony crimes had the lowest proportion of gun involvement compared to other homicide circumstances.

Note: This table does not show all homicide circumstances; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Calculations were performed on combined multistate data for the years 1991 to 1995. Part I felony crimes involved in homicide circumstances include only rape, robbery, burglary, larceny, automobile theft and arson. Part II felony crimes include only prostitution, other sex offenses, drug law violations and gambling.

Sources: Supplementary Homicide Report data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

Most Montana weapon violations were misdemeanors

	Number	Percent of total
Misdemeanor weapon offenses	**659**	**89%**
Carrying a concealed weapon	537	73
Unlawful discharge of a firearm	91	12
Possession of a sawed-off shotgun	30	4
Carrying a deadly weapon with intent to assault	1	0.1
Felony weapon offenses	**78**	**11%**
Carrying a concealed weapon	63	9
Possession of a deadly weapon by an inmate	10	1
Possession of a machine gun	3	0.4
Possession of a silencer	2	0.3

The least prevalent offenses were carrying a deadly weapon with intent to assault and possession of a silencer.

Note: Calculations were performed on combined Montana data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Source: Criminal history file data from the Montana Board of Crime Control

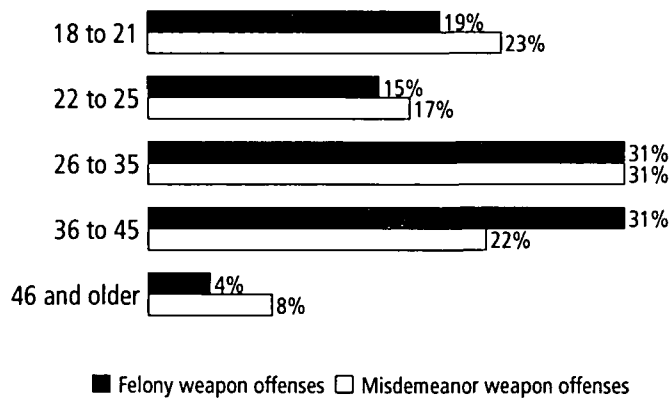
Less than 1 percent of all arrest charges — a total of 737 — occurring from 1991 to 1995 were for weapon violations, such as carrying a concealed weapon, unlawful discharge of a firearm or possession of a sawed-off shotgun. More than three-fourths of these were for carrying a concealed weapon. Nine out of 10 concealed-weapon charges were misdemeanors.

Males were arrested more frequently than females for weapon violations. Females accounted for five of 108 charges in 1991 and 10 of 195 charges in 1995 — constituting 5 percent of all offenses over the five-year period. Almost all felony-level violations — 97 percent — involved males. Prison sentences exceeding one year may be imposed for felony offenses in Montana.

Ninety-three percent of Montana's population is white, while 86 percent of arrests for weapon offenses were of whites. American Indians and African Americans were over-represented in these violations, since they comprise 6 and 0.3 percent of the state's population but 11 percent and 3 percent, respectively, of arrests. More than 80 percent of felony and misdemeanor charges were filed against whites.

18- to 25-year-olds charged most often with misdemeanors in Montana

Percent of age group within each offense level



Individuals ages 36 to 45 accounted for a larger proportion of felony than misdemeanor charges.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Juvenile data was not analyzed. Calculations were performed on combined Montana data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Source: Criminal history file data from the Montana Board of Crime Control

People age 18 to 25 were most likely of all age groups to be arrested for weapon violations, comprising 39 percent of the total from 1991 to 1995. Eighteen- to 21-year-olds alone accounted for about one-fifth of these charges. Only 8 percent of arrests for weapon offenses were of people age 46 or older.

Nebraska. Information is based on felony and misdemeanor arrests indicating weapon or firearm use for which there was a subsequent court disposition for the years 1991 to 1995. A breakdown by weapon type is provided where possible. According to the Nebraska State Patrol, most weapon-offense violations such as carrying a concealed weapon or illegal possession typically involve firearms.

Comparison of arrest charge and final disposition (or court judgment) was not possible for all offenses; many remained the same, but a lack of complete information due to the possibility of charges being changed during prosecution and other factors prohibited drawing conclusions. It also was not possible to separate the data by specific charge types (i.e., felony or gross misdemeanor), so these analyses were not completed.

Violent crimes with guns made up 6 percent of Nebraska weapon-related offense charges

Offense category	Number	Percent of total
Carrying a concealed weapon	292	33%
Possession of a prohibited weapon	223	25
Aggravated assault with a weapon	171	19
Unlawful discharge of a firearm	47	5
Other weapon violations	36	4
Aggravated assault with a gun	34	4
Robbery with a weapon	20	2
Alteration of a gun identification number	18	2
Use of a gun to commit a felony	15	2
Robbery with a gun	11	1
Homicide with a weapon	10	1
Homicide with a gun	6	0.7
Sexual assault with a gun	1	0.1

Seven out of 10 arrest charges were for one of the weapon violation offenses.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding. Data pertains to charge at arrest. Violent crimes with guns include the offenses of aggravated assault, robbery and homicide. Weapon violation offenses are primarily regulatory in nature and include: manufacture, sale or possession of deadly weapons or silencers; carrying deadly weapons, concealed or openly; furnishing deadly weapons to minors; possession by aliens of deadly weapons; and all attempts to commit any of the above offenses. Calculations were performed on combined Nebraska data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Criminal history file data from the Nebraska State Patrol and Nebraska Crime Commission

From 1991 to 1995, weapon-related crimes accounted for only 3 percent of all 29,841 criminal history files in Nebraska. The most common charge at arrest over the five years was carrying a concealed weapon, which constituted 33 percent of all charges. Possession of a prohibited weapon followed at about 25 percent, and aggravated assault comprised 23 percent.

Almost two-thirds of all individuals arrested for committing weapon-related offenses were convicted. Twenty-five percent of cases were dismissed, and only 1 percent resulted in acquittal.

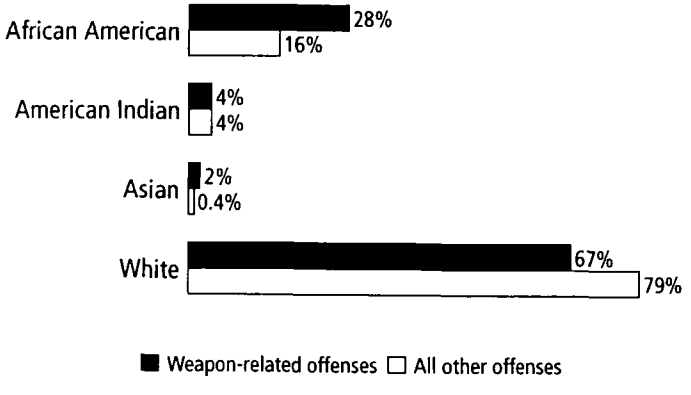
Females were less likely than males to be arrested for committing crimes with a weapon. Males accounted for more than 90 percent of weapon-related arrests but 83 percent of all other offenses.

Whites made up a majority of the weapon-offense arrests and are 94 percent of Nebraska's population. African Americans accounted for almost three out of 10 of these arrests, though they constitute only 4 percent of the population.

People between the ages of 18 and 25 were the most likely to be arrested for weapon-related crimes. Half of all arrests involved this age group, compared to 31 percent for 26- to 35-year-olds. Juveniles accounted for one percent of the arrests; this proportion may reflect more widespread use of informal processing of youth through the court system or possibly greater involvement in lesser misdemeanor level offenses.

Most arrests involved whites in Nebraska

Percent of racial group within each offense type



The proportion of African Americans and Asians arrested for weapon-related offenses exceed their share of arrests for all other types of offenses.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because data for the "other" race category is not included. Calculations were performed on combined Nebraska data for the years 1991 to 1995.

Sources: Criminal history file data from the Nebraska State Patrol and Nebraska Crime Commission

Regulating firearms

Firearm regulations typically focus on export, import or manufacture; sales; and use or possession. While federal guidelines dictate minimum national standards, many states and municipalities have enacted more restrictive legislation. Because only statutes were examined, the information presented here is not exhaustive. Other governmental entities such as state natural resources departments have authority to impose firearm-related regulations, which are not documented in statute. Copies of firearm statutes from each project state may be obtained by contacting one of the project members listed on the inside front cover.

Federal laws primarily apply to the manufacture, importation, exportation and transfer of guns by licensed dealers. Although manufacture is not highly regulated, strict guidelines are imposed on imported guns. Some states have imposed additional standards, but these apply only to guns manufactured within those states.

The federal government regulates gun sales through licensed firearm dealers. These laws mainly identify particular types of firearms that dealers cannot sell or groups of people to whom dealers cannot transfer guns. In many cases, these regulations do not apply to transactions occurring between private citizens.

Certain conditions under which a person may possess and use a firearm also are covered by federal law. These regulations pertain to the carrying of concealed firearms, storing and transporting guns, and hunting; they also provide for enhanced sentences for individuals who commit a crime with a gun.

Federal law also mandates gun control policies for schools. The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 requires states to establish mandatory expulsion policies for students bringing guns, bombs, grenades, rockets or missiles to school. School districts are required to report the number of students expelled and the types of weapons used in any incident on school grounds. States may expand their policies to include other weapons as well.

Gun dealers and makers must be licensed

All firearm dealers and manufacturers are required to obtain a federal license. Applicants for a dealer's license must be at least 21 years old, legally able to engage in interstate or foreign commerce of firearms and ammunition, not have violated any provision of the federal Gun Control Act, certify that their business will comply with state and local laws, and notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency of their application. Prospective dealers are photographed, fingerprinted and submit to a criminal background check.

Dealership licenses are good for three years and cost $200 for the first issuance and $90 for renewal. Firearm manufacturers pay $50 for a three-year license, while manufacturers of ammunition pay $10 per year. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms maintains a list of all licensed dealers and manufacturers.

Licensed dealers are required to keep records and report on certain firearm transactions. These activities include:

- Documenting the purchaser's name, age and place of residence
- Notifying the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and state and local law enforcement agencies of the sale to any one individual of two or more handguns at one time or during any five consecutive business days. Law enforcement agencies may keep these records only for up to 20 days.
- Turning over all records to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms upon going out of business
- Reporting any theft of firearms to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms within 48 hours of its occurrence
- Responding immediately to gun trace requests from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

Possession governed by federal law

The primary federal law governing firearms, the 1968 Gun Control Act, seeks to restrict the possession of firearms based on a person's age, criminal background or mental incompetence; to channel trade in firearms through federally licensed dealers; and to ban the importation of certain firearms not suitable for sporting purposes, as well as handguns known as "Saturday night specials."

The act was amended in 1986 to ban the importation of individual parts for Saturday night specials, along with the sale, transfer and possession of machine guns. Buyers of machine guns made before 1986 must complete an application process that includes a transfer tax of $200 per weapon.

In 1994, the Brady Bill established a five-day waiting period before the sale or transfer of a handgun can be completed through a federally licensed dealer. It also called for law enforcement agencies to conduct background checks on purchasers during the waiting

Minnesota has the longest waiting period to purchase firearms

	Minnesota	Montana	Nebraska	South Dakota
Waiting period	7 days	5 days	2 days	2 days
Firearm type	Handguns and semiautomatic military-style assault weapons	Any firearm	Handguns	Handguns
Background check	Yes	Conducted at the discretion of local law enforcement	Yes	Yes
Background check conducted by	Law enforcement agency	Law enforcement agency	Law enforcement agency	Law enforcement agency
Fee charged	None	None	$3 to $5	None

Nebraska has a statutory provision for implementing an automated background check system; however, funds are lacking to institute this system.

Note: The fee charged in Nebraska is contingent upon whether the individual applies through a licensed dealer or local law enforcement agency.

Sources: 1996 Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota statutes

period, to determine whether they fall within a federally prohibited category, but the U.S. Supreme Court recently held this requirement to be unconstitutional. The dealer must still file the purchase application with the appropriate law enforcement agency and wait five days before issuing the handgun.

Laws spell out prohibited categories

Federal regulations stipulating the manufacture, sale or possession of certain types of guns are broad and define specific firearms by characteristics rather than name. Prohibited guns include any that are not detectable by airport security devices; not registered as required by the National Firearms Act, which covers certain firearms considered to be "gangster weapons;" not readily adaptable or recognized as being suitable for sporting purposes, including Saturday night specials and assault rifles; machine guns made after 1986; semiautomatic weapons; and magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition.

Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota do not go far beyond federal guidelines. All four states require guns to have a serial number or manufacturer's identification mark. In addition, all have outlawed the use of silencers. Montana and South Dakota specifically

Sentence enhancements vary for committing a crime with a gun

	Minnesota	Montana	Nebraska	South Dakota
Assault of a family member while in possession of a gun	Offender's firearms are forfeited and right to possess a gun may be restricted for 3 years or more	Gun is seized by law enforcement agency and further possession may be restricted by the court	None listed in statute	None listed in statute
Use or possession of a gun by anyone under 18	Felony punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment, a $10,000 fine or both	Misdemeanor punishable by 60 months imprisonment, a $500 fine or both for a parent or guardian to allow a child under 14 to carry or use a firearm unless under their supervision	Misdemeanor punishable by up to 3 months imprisonment, a $500 fine or both	Misdemeanor punishable by up to 1 year imprisonment, a $1,000 fine or both
Possession of a gun within a school zone	Felony punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment, a $5,000 fine or both	Misdemeanor punishable by 6 months imprisonment, a $500 fine or both	Misdemeanor punishable by a fine from $100 to $500, with the gun being forfeited for evidence and later destroyed	Misdemeanor punishable by up to 1 year imprisonment, a $1,000 fine or both
Giving false information on an application to purchase a gun	Misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days imprisonment, a $1,000 fine or both	Misdemeanor punishable by 6 months imprisonment, a $500 fine or both if the application was a sworn document	Felony punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment, a $10,000 or both	Felony punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment, a $2,000 fine or both
Possession of a gun by a convicted felon	Felony punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment, a $30,000 fine or both for a felon convicted of a crime of violence to possess a gun up to 10 years after final discharge	Felony punishable by 2 to 10 years imprisonment if the crime involved the use of a firearm	Felony punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment, a $25,000 fine or both	Felony punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment, a $2,000 fine or both for a felon convicted of a crime of violence to possess a gun up to 15 years after final discharge

Sources: 1996 Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota statutes

prohibit short-barreled shotguns, and Montana bars possession of any machine gun.

Federal law also prohibits certain categories of people from shipping, transporting, receiving or possessing firearms or from having guns transferred to them by licensed dealers. These categories include people who:

- Are adjudicated to be mentally incompetent
- Are controlled substance users or addicts
- Have been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence
- Have been dishonorably discharged from the military
- Are fugitives from justice
- Are illegal aliens
- Have been indicted or convicted of crimes punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding one year
- Have renounced their U.S. citizenship
- Are subject to a court order restraining them from harassing, stalking or threatening another person or their children
- Are younger than 18 years old

The age restriction may be waived in all four project states for individuals who are under adult supervision or are participating in training classes, hunting or target practice. Minnesota and South Dakota have statutes restricting gun possession by people convicted of violent crimes. Minnesota alone bars possession by people convicted of drug-related crimes, while South Dakota prohibits possession by those who commit a crime with a firearm. South Dakota also has a residency requirement. Montana requires individuals to complete a firearms safety course or have a valid permit to carry a firearm from another state to possess a firearm legally; they also must not have any outstanding warrants.

States regulate carrying of concealed weapons

Three of the project states — Minnesota, Montana and South Dakota — grant permits for carrying concealed weapons after the applicant has been cleared through a criminal history background check. These permits allow people to carry a handgun on or about their person, except in locations specifically prohibited by statute such as a school or state building. Only law enforcement officers are allowed to carry concealed weapons in Nebraska; however, the state statute does provide a defense for circumstances qualifying as self-defense or protection of family or property.

The criminal history background check for a concealed weapon permit must be completed within 21 days in Minnesota, 60 days in Montana and five days in South Dakota. In each of these states, applicants must not fall within one of the prohibited categories. Minnesota residents also must complete a firearm safety course and demonstrate a compelling occupational or personal safety hazard to obtain a permit. In Montana, applicants must be residents of the state for at least six months. Both Montana and South Dakota are "shall-issue" states, which means that the permit will be issued as long as the applicant meets all criteria. In Minnesota, law enforcement agencies have the discretion to turn down any applicant, even those who satisfy all conditions.

Training required for hunting

All four of the project states require completion of a firearm safety course before certain individuals may use a firearm for hunting. In Minnesota, all hunters must provide proof of firearm safety knowledge to obtain a hunting license. Completion of a firearms safety course is required in Montana for people under the age of 18 and in Nebraska for people born after January 1, 1977. In South Dakota, youths between ages 12 and 16 cannot hunt with a firearm unless they have a certificate of competency, a hunter safety certificate from another state or a hunting license from a previous year and are accompanied by a parent, guardian or other responsible adult.

Lessons learned

Not all results of the Multistate Project were statistically or statutorily related. Many of the most significant findings came in the form of lessons on how states can carry out such cooperative endeavors. In addition, the project yielded practical knowledge on the nature of research and data analysis in general. Some of the key lessons learned were:

Make a commitment. Any research project requires dedication and numerous hours of work to complete. These issues are especially significant for small organizations such as the Statistical Analysis Centers involved in the Multistate Project. Agencies contemplating a similar cooperative endeavor need to evaluate their own goals and objectives for participating as well as associated benefits. Current or upcoming projects need to be

considered in committing to a project that could require hiring additional staff.

Designate a leader. One person should be designated to coordinate project activities. This person serves as a central contact, information provider, facilitator and manager responsible for keeping the project and all members on track. If the project is supported through a grant, the funding agency will rely on this person to direct its concerns or provide updates on the work in progress.

Confirm expectations and define roles. Successful ventures begin with consistent expectations and clear roles for all involved. Group development of a proposal with well-defined and agreed-upon goals and objectives will help create a consistent focus and lay out specific tasks for each participant. Even when there is no opportunity for a preliminary examination of data sets, project members can still determine study variables and research questions, along with other possible outcomes. This initial groundwork can help solidify project direction.

Have a plan of action. A work plan and timeline detailing step-by-step tasks and specific dates for completing each project component are essential. Having participating states submit portions of project work at different intervals may be preferable to having all work come in at the same time, toward the end of the project. The budget and expectation of funding to accomplish goals and objectives need to be realistic. If additional staff or contractors are needed, these are best obtained early on so they have ample time to become familiar with the project and complete their tasks.

Ascertain technological compatibility. Computer systems and software packages may vary across organizations and even divisions within the same organization. This information needs to be documented for all project members, along with each member's familiarity with various systems and programs, before budgetary needs for equipment and software are determined. Access to uniform technology will make everyone's work easier. Internet and e-mail capabilities can enhance communication and the transfer of products.

Research data availability. Be specific about data sets intended for analysis and availability, especially if the data is housed in another agency. Not all states have access to the same types of data and may or may not need the aid of a programmer to compile the appropriate data. Commitment from source agencies to either provide a data file or complete analysis runs is integral to the project's success. The process of obtaining data from other agencies should begin as soon as possible because it may require significant time and refinement. In this way, adjustments can be made to the project if a source agency cannot fulfill the request for data or can supply only a portion. Computer programmers also should be involved early on so the extracted file can be examined.

Complete detailed examination of data sets. Each data set should be reviewed thoroughly. This process is aided by creating a variables list or code book that includes: data source; time frame; a listing of all variables and attributes; definition of variables and pertinent terms; explanation of data recording and collection methods; data set limitations; and any additional information essential for proper interpretation. Ongoing communication with source agencies is critical at this juncture to fully understand their data and to be aware of caveats. This inspection process may point to areas needing additional information, clarification or programming.

Compile metadata for interpretation. Metadata — or background information — is essential for understanding any data set. For a variety of reasons, agencies often overlook the need to compile "data about data." To outside users or a new employee, information such as data source, time frame, description, definitions and limitations are basic and essential. Lack of this information severely reduces data value and lessens confidence in analytic findings. Using a standardized system to record uniform information about data sets has a number of benefits: consistency and ease of use; increased opportunities for sharing data with others in or outside of a particular field; confidence in data interpretation; less need for user technical assistance and employee training; and avoidance of data misuse.

Recognize that common data sets are not always uniform. Even if states have access to the same data set, they may not always record the same elements or attributes. Variations occur in how and what data is collected; these differences can affect analysis decisions. Documentation of background information can play a key role in the comparison of data sets across states.

Formulate consistent analyses. Data set variables lists can be used to determine commonalities and differences among the states. Once it is ascertained whether all research questions can be addressed with available information, appropriate analyses can be developed. Providing diskettes containing complete data files or tables for inputting raw numbers can be useful in some situations.

Be aware that issues of importance vary across states. Issues receiving policy attention differ among states, in part because each state has a unique composition based on such factors as population size and demographics, culture, diversity, urbanization and citizen mobility, as well as prominent events such as a series of murders by youths. As a result, some states may not have a need for collecting certain data elements because of their relevance.

Follow timelines. By completing work according to schedule, project members will make discoveries along the way that may suggest different paths of research. Staying on schedule also allows solutions to be found to problems that arise. Participants will be able to keep pace with each other and make determinations along the same continuum instead of reaching conclusions at different points in time. Last-minute work can lead to errors, oversights and incompleteness, which take time to resolve and make results less grounded and solid.

Allow ample time for completing products. Adequate time needs to be built into the project work plan for data analysis, report writing, editing and, most important, clarifying issues and resolving questions. This is particularly critical for multistate endeavors, where geographic distance presents a possible obstacle: for example, faxing a 50-page document is seldom feasible or e-mail systems may not be compatible. A number of rounds of review may be needed before products are finalized, and these ideally should incorporate some form of direct verbal or face-to-face communication. Each state also should have an opportunity to review project work independently and make conclusions.

Keep communication lines open. Communicating across state lines presents difficulties. Means of interaction are limited and usually less rich than face-to-face meetings. Budgets should incorporate costs for conference calls and face-to-face meetings at crucial points in the project to talk about progress and barriers. Regular contact through letters, e-mail and faxes is critical for sharing ideas. Contact opportunities should be used to draw on the knowledge and expertise of members, elicit input from everyone, review analyses and documents, and highlight important timeline dates.

Expect difficulty in getting an accurate picture of weapon-related crime. Each of the data sets used by the Multistate Project had various barriers to delineating specific weapon information. Death record data only pertains to the decedent and does not necessarily provide information regarding crime. While Supplementary Homicide Report data provides incident-level offender and victim information, it only describes one offense. Due to the structure of Nebraska's data set, weapon involvement could only be obtained for certain criminal history file offenses. In the case of Montana, data for weapon offenses was the only information retrievable and could not be broken out by type. With Uniform Crime Report data, it is difficult to determine which offenses involve weapons and what types of offenders use them. Weapon use in reported offenses is recorded for three crimes: murder, robbery and aggravated assault. The same information for arrests is not collected at all. Data gathering and recording methods as well as fluctuating numbers of agencies participating in the Uniform Crime Reporting program also make it troublesome to get an accurate picture of weapon-related crime.

Be aware of the lack of some information. Except for Supplementary Homicide Reports, data sets used for analysis in the Multistate Project did not provide detailed information on firearm types. In most cases, death records listed firearm types as unknown. Furthermore, firearm statistics are not published in annual reports and were acquired via special request. As noted already, criminal history files either could not yield any weapon information or could not break out guns by type. Similarly, Uniform Crime Report data does not separate this data by type. Without detailed information, it was impossible to examine differences in how various types of guns are being used.

The relationship of the use of controlled substances to firearm-related death and crime is difficult to examine. Vital statistics reports do not include data on this subject, and analyzing death certificates is complex because up to five additional contributing causes of death can be listed. Supplementary Homicide Report data does have a field for this information. The Multistate Project found the incidence of alcohol and drug use in homicide to be low. This could be a result of miscoding, a lack of information when the Supplementary Homicide Report form is filled out or multiple circumstances contributing to one event. This information is not recorded in Uniform Crime Report or criminal history file records.

Over the past decade, many law enforcement agencies have been moving toward incident-based reporting of crime and arrest data. This automated system collects information on an expanded number of offense categories, victim and offender demographics, and other elements such as weapon use, residential status of the victim and the offender, and involvement of controlled substances. Full-

scale implementation of the National Incident Based Reporting System has been slow because of problems with utility, efficiency, cost, changes in existing practices, personnel training and computer software incompatibilities. Despite these issues, the National Incident Based Reporting System can provide much richer data than other crime-related data sets for understanding the true nature of crime.

Appendix

Data set limitations

Caveats specific to death record, Uniform Crime Report, criminal history file and Supplementary Homicide Report data are presented below. These special conditions are essential for a practical interpretation of data findings presented in *Armed with Data: Creating a Multistate Perspective.* Analysis of all data sets was completed on the combined years 1991 to 1995. The number of cases was too small in many subcategories to produce reliable results. Questions and requests for data files or a full listing of firearm-related statutes should be directed to any of the four contact people listed on the inside front cover of this report.

Death records

Minnesota. Data for 1991 to 1995 was obtained from the Minnesota Department of Health. It includes all Minnesota resident deaths resulting from natural causes, accidents, suicides, homicides, legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes. Deaths of Minnesota residents occurring outside of the state were included as well. Causes of death were coded according to the International Classification of Disease adopted by the World Health Organization.

Firearm-related data is not published in the Health Department's annual vital statistics reports. Data was obtained through special analysis completed by the department. Although fields are provided for designating the type of firearm involved in the death, a majority were recorded as "type unknown." It is unclear whether this information is known but not commonly entered or whether access to pertinent information is limited. The analysis in this report does not break out guns by type because Minnesota and Nebraska most often code it as "type unknown" and Montana does not categorize firearm type.

Although it was an objective of this project to study the relationship of alcohol and drug use to firearm-related mortality and crime, a lack of data made this impossible. Information regarding these issues is not published in annual reports; in addition, up to five contributing causes of death can be listed on the death certificate along with the immediate cause. This data also was not readily available in the other project states and would have required a significant amount of additional time and attention to analyze. Future projects could focus specifically on this phenomenon. Whether substance abuse can be easily identified, however, is uncertain, which may limit the facts known and documented on death certificates.

Gender, age and limited race analysis is presented in the report. Specific data by the racial categories of African American, American Indian, Asian and white is collected but was not presented to be consistent with information available in Montana, which categorizes data by white and "other." Ethnicity data is obtainable but also was not presented for this reason. Race and ethnicity are treated as two different elements on death certificates and recorded for each individual. A person of Hispanic descent may be of any race. Categorization of race and ethnicity is based on the accounts of family members or ascertained by the medical professional filling out the death certificate; it is not matched to birth certificate information.

Montana. The Montana Department of Health provided 1991 to 1995 data for all deaths due to natural causes, accidents, homicides, suicides, legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes. Data is based on deaths of Montana residents occurring inside and outside of the state. While it was possible to obtain data for all firearm-related deaths, breakouts by type of firearm were not available. Gun information is listed on Montana death certificates as "firearm," but specific categories such as handgun, rifle and shotgun are not provided. For this reason, and because Minnesota and Nebraska most often code firearm type as "unknown," the analysis in this report does not break out guns by type.

Gender, age and limited race analysis is presented in the report. Race data was collected only for the categories of white and "other," the latter including all races except white. Some ethnicity data was available but was not presented because Nebraska and South Dakota do not have this information. Race and ethnicity are treated as two different elements on death certificates and recorded for each individual. A person of Hispanic descent may be of any race. The Hispanic population in Montana is so small that ethnicity is not a pressing issue. However, American

Indians make up a significant proportion of the state's population, and the lack of data for this group is problematic.

Nebraska. Death record data for 1991 to 1995 was obtained from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Data includes all in-state deaths due to natural causes, accidents, suicides, homicides, legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes.

The department publishes an annual vital statistics report with limited data breakouts. The numbers are too small in various race and age categories to maintain confidentiality and could make records traceable to particular individuals or locales. Special runs were necessary to obtain firearms-related data. While information on firearm type was available, "type unknown" frequently was recorded. Because Minnesota tends to code this way, too, and because Montana does not categorize firearm type, the analysis in this report does not break out guns by type.

Gender, age and limited race analysis is presented in the report. Specific data by the racial categories of African American, American Indian, Asian and white is collected but was not presented to be consistent with information available in Montana, which categorizes data by white and "other." Ethnicity data is not recorded.

South Dakota. Resident mortality data for 1991 to 1995 was acquired from the South Dakota Department of Health, including deaths of South Dakota residents occurring on Indian reservations and in other states or countries. The data contains all deaths resulting from natural causes, accidents, suicides, homicides, legal interventions, operations of war and undetermined causes. Causes of death were coded according to the International Classification of Disease adopted by the World Health Organization.

The death certificate does not list any secondary factors that may have contributed to the death. In certain situations, the primary cause of death may have been prompted by additional circumstances. This practice makes it impossible to ascertain alcohol or drug use in firearm-related mortality, a phenomenon the Multistate Project had hoped to examine.

Gender, age and limited race analysis is provided in the report. Specific data by the racial categories of African American, American Indian, Asian and white is collected but was not presented to be consistent with information available in Montana, which categorizes data by white and "other." Ethnicity data is not recorded.

Uniform crime reports

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting program collects standardized aggregate data on known offenses and individuals arrested. Data is voluntarily submitted by law enforcement agencies nationwide. Program goals are aimed at generating reliable statistics for use by law enforcement agencies and examination of crime levels in the United States. Uniform Crime Report information includes number and types of criminal acts, number of crimes cleared, demographics of people arrested, law enforcement disposition of juveniles and law enforcement employee information.

Under the Uniform Crime Report program, certain crimes were grouped for reporting and consistent definitions adopted so that crime statistics could be compiled in a single classification system. Eight offenses comprise the Part I or "serious" crimes, while 21 make up Part II. Known offenses are recorded only for Part I crimes, and arrest data is collected for both Part I and Part II offenses. Not all law enforcement agencies report to the program, and the number submitting information may vary from year to year. In addition, some agencies do not provide all requested data.

Gender, age, race and ethnicity data is collected for Part I and Part II arrests only. Breakouts of data on age and gender, as well as age and race, are available. Race and ethnicity are treated as two different elements and are recorded for each individual. A person of Hispanic descent may be of any race.

The Multistate Project focused on firearm-related murders, robberies and aggravated assaults, along with the Part II offense, weapon violations. The use of a weapon, including a firearm, is recorded in offense data only for murder, robbery and aggravated assault. This data is not recorded for arrests. Because of differences in reporting Part II offenses, the project was able to study weapon violations only in terms of arrests. The arrest analysis was further limited because not all project states had data broken out by age and race.

Offenses become known to law enforcement through complaints made by victims, witnesses or other sources, or through discovery by officers in the course of duty. They are recorded whether or not someone is arrested. Complaints determined to be unfounded by subsequent investigation are eliminated from the count. One criminal incident may involve several crimes, several offenders and several victims. Under Uniform Crime Report guidelines,

however, if an incident involves more than one offense, only the most serious is counted.

While reported crimes relate to events, arrests relate to people. As noted above, one criminal incident may involve multiple crimes and multiple offenders. The same "hierarchy rule" applies: if an offender commits more than one crime during an incident, only the most serious is recorded. In addition, one individual may be arrested for the same or different offenses in a given year and would be counted each time. Multiple offenders involved in the commission of one offense each would be recorded as well. Therefore, the data reflects the number of instances in which people are taken into custody for an offense and not the number of individuals. Juveniles are counted in arrests when they commit an offense for which, if it had been committed by an adult, an arrest would be made. Many times youthful offenders are handled informally and therefore go unreported in the count of arrests.

The total crime picture is influenced by many variables. Valid assessments are only possible through focused attention on the unique conditions affecting each law enforcement jurisdiction. Levels and severity of crime can be shaped by a number of factors, such as:

- Undercounting of offenses through the "hierarchy rule"
- Legislative changes defining criminal offenses
- Population density and size, and degree of urbanization
- Stability of the population, including commuters, seasonal and other transient types
- Composition of the population in terms of age, gender and race
- Regional educational, familial, economic, recreational and religious characteristics
- Climatic conditions, including seasonal weather variations
- Administrative and investigative efficiency of local law enforcement, including the degree of adherence to crime reporting standards
- Policies of local law enforcement agencies, prosecuting officials and the courts
- Modifications to records procedures, incomplete reporting or changes in a jurisdiction's boundaries
- Public attitudes toward crime, reporting of crime — especially concerning minor offenses — and law enforcement
- Lack of crime reporting due to the perception that law enforcement will be of little help or fear of embarrassment, threat, blackmail or retaliation for participating in an offense considered against societal norms

Minnesota. Offense and arrest data from 1991 to 1995 was obtained from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Minnesota Department of Public Safety. All law enforcement agencies relay offense and arrest data for both Part I and Part II crimes, with the exception of the St. Paul Police Department, which provides information only for the Part II offense, "other assaults." Information provided through the Uniform Crime Report program is distinct and cannot be linked to data contained in other types of data sets or tracked from the incident through subsequent activity in the criminal justice system.

The BCA has developed Uniform Crime Report program goals and objectives aside from the nationwide principles. The overall goal of the state's program is to provide statistical information on the volume and effect of crime and to better assist concerned individuals and agencies in solving the state crime problem. Among additional BCA objectives is to provide statistics on crime in Minnesota that can be used by the Governor, the Legislature, the Crime Control Planning Board, law enforcement agencies and personnel, and other concerned individuals; that include specific criminal offenses for use in the FBI's national crime reports; that break out the age, gender and race of offenders to determine the proper focus for crime prevention and enforcement; that can be used by researchers to discover the roots of criminality within a biological, sociological or psychological framework; and that measure the workload and effectiveness of the state criminal justice system and can be used to help improve the efficiency and performance of justice agencies.

Racial and ethnic data should be examined carefully because of the varying circumstances under which it is documented. For example, birth records list the child's race or ethnicity based on that of the mother, regardless of the father's race or ethnicity. These characteristics also may be recorded from observation or self-identification, or may reflect social custom rather than heredity. Moreover, research controlling for factors such as education level, family status, income, housing density and residential mobility has shown that race and ethnicity are not predictive of criminal behavior.

Montana. Law enforcement agencies submit data to the Montana Board of Crime Control. Offense and arrest data fluctuated over the 1991-to-1995 period because the number of law enforcement agencies reporting varied from

Law enforcement agencies reporting to the Uniform Crime Reporting program

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Minnesota					
Number of law enforcement agencies in the state	290	284	285	286	299
Number of law enforcement agencies reporting to the UCR	288	281	281	280	294
Percent of law enforcement reporting to the UCR	99.3%	98.9%	98.6%	97.9%	98.3%
Total state population estimate	4,375,099	4,432,000	4,480,000	4,567,000	4,567,000
Population covered by law enforcement agencies reporting	4,369,833	4,426,285	4,471,299	4,553,692	4,546,524
Percent of total population covered by agencies reporting	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%	99.7%	99.6%
Montana					
Number of law enforcement agencies in the state	95	97	101	101	102
Number of law enforcement agencies reporting to the UCR	79	83	81	82	96
Percent of law enforcement reporting to the UCR	83.2%	85.6%	80.2%	81.2%	94.1%
Total state population estimate	808,000	824,000	839,000	856,000	870,000
Population covered by law enforcement agencies reporting	745,082	757,109	779,383	819,653	761,045
Percent of total population covered by agencies reporting	92.2%	91.9%	92.9%	95.8%	87.5%
Nebraska					
Number of law enforcement agencies in the state	265	265	265	265	265
Number of law enforcement agencies reporting to the UCR	163	163	163	163	163
Percent of law enforcement reporting to the UCR	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total state population estimate	1,593,000	1,606,000	1,607,000	1,623,000	1,637,000
Population covered by law enforcement agencies reporting	1,593,000	1,606,000	1,607,000	1,623,000	1,637,000
Percent of total population covered by agencies reporting	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
South Dakota					
Number of law enforcement agencies in the state	180	180	180	180	180
Number of law enforcement agencies reporting to the UCR	96	89	75	64	72
Percent of law enforcement reporting to the UCR	53.3%	49.4%	41.7%	35.6%	40.0%
Total state population estimate	696,004	696,004	696,004	696,004	696,004
Population covered by law enforcement agencies reporting	626,404	612,484	577,683	542,883	556,803
Percent of total population covered by agencies reporting	90.0%	88.0%	83.0%	78.0%	80.0%
Multistate region					
Number of law enforcement agencies in the region	728	724	729	730	744
Number of law enforcement agencies reporting to the UCR	626	616	600	589	625
Percent of law enforcement reporting to the UCR	86.0%	85.1%	82.3%	80.7%	84.0%
Total region population estimate	7,472,103	7,558,004	7,622,004	7,742,004	7,770,004
Population covered by law enforcement agencies reporting	7,334,319	7,401,878	7,435,365	7,539,228	7,501,372
Percent of total population covered by agencies reporting	98.2%	97.9%	97.6%	97.4%	96.5%

Note: The multistate region includes Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska and South Dakota. Population data listed was obtained from annual crime reports in each state and may not match yearly U.S. Census Bureau estimates. Nebraska has a total of 265 law enforcement agencies in the state; 163 agencies report directly to the Uniform Crime Reporting program. The remaining 102 agencies — which reside in cities or towns having a population of 1,500 or less — report to the UCR program indirectly by submitting their data to county sheriffs' departments.

Sources: Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Montana Board of Crime Control, Nebraska Crime Commission and South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center

year to year. Some agencies recently purchased computer software for submitting their crime data and need to perform additional programming to be compatible with statewide reporting guidelines. In addition, a number of agencies do not have computer access and still submit information on paper. These paper reports list counts for offenses and arrests but do not always contain requested demographic information. In 1998, Montana will be enforcing a reporting policy by denying Board of Crime Control grants to agencies that do not adhere to the policy.

The state does not collect ethnicity data in addition to race. Hispanic is a category within the race field. Therefore, individuals are listed as being African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic or white.

Nebraska. Uniform Crime Report statistics are maintained by the Nebraska Crime Commission. Data used in this report covers 1991 to 1995. Offense data is collected for all Part I crimes and the Part II crime of simple assault. Law enforcement agencies, however, report arrests for all Part I and Part II crimes. Ten law enforcement agencies submit data through the National Incident Based Reporting System. Since Nebraska has not been certified by the FBI for NIBRS submissions, this data also is entered into the regular Uniform Crime Report system. Ethnicity data is not reported.

South Dakota. The South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center collects offense and arrest data from state law enforcement agencies. Crime statistics are submitted voluntarily for up to 12 months in a given year. The number of agencies reporting Uniform Crime Report data from 1991 to 1995 fluctuated from year to year. Because statistics from Indian reservations are reported to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a significant portion of the state's crimes and arrests are not represented in Uniform Crime Report statistics. The state is in the process of implementing the National Incident Based Reporting System. Offense and arrest data collected through that system is converted into Uniform Crime Report data following guidelines published in the *1984 Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook*.

Data for all Part I crimes and the Part II crime of simple assault is collected for known and reported offenses, while statistics for both Part I and Part II crimes are recorded for arrests. Offense and arrest data for 1991 was incomplete, but the totals are accurate because they were compiled from the *Crime in South Dakota 1991* publication.

Because the mandatory collection of data on ethnic origin ended in 1988, ethnicity information is not available. Racial breakouts for adult and juvenile arrests also are not available due to the format of reporting forms and the structure of the Uniform Crime Report database.

South Dakota Uniform Crime Report statistics should not be compared to the estimates produced by the FBI and published in *Crime in the United States*. The FBI deadline to submit data for publication in that report is the first week of April, while South Dakota's deadline is in July. Data published by the state is more accurate, complete and up-to-date.

Supplementary homicide report data

Supplementary Homicide Report incident-level data is voluntarily submitted by law enforcement agencies nationwide through the Uniform Crime Report program. Information collected through Supplementary Homicide Reports pertains to negligent manslaughter, and willful and justifiable homicide. Deaths caused by traffic fatalities, accidents and suicides are not included. Attempts to kill are considered aggravated assaults.

A single incident of homicide may include multiple victims and multiple offenders. Detailed demographic data on each is recorded. Additional elements documented include victim-offender relationship, circumstance, weapon used and situation. Incident characteristics are determined through police investigation.

Age, gender, race and ethnicity data is recorded for all victims and offenders. If any of these attributes are unknown, they may be estimated by examining the victim-offender relationship. Race and ethnicity are treated as two different elements and are recorded for each victim and offender. A person of Hispanic descent may be of any race. The victim-offender relationship should be recorded for each separate offender. For example, an incident involving a woman murdered by her husband and son would record the victim-offender relationship as "wife" and "mother." The circumstance pertains to the event surrounding the death.

Minnesota. A homicide data file for 1991 to 1995 was acquired from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Minnesota Department of Public Safety. Justifiable homicide and negligent manslaughter data is available but was not included in the analyses. Information provided through Supplementary Homicide Reports is distinct and cannot be linked to data contained in other types of data sets or tracked from the incident through subsequent activity in the justice system. Some victim and offender data was missing in the database, so the number of cases analyzed does not match totals published by the BCA.

There also was a significant amount of unknown offender data.

The victim-offender relationship is supposed to be recorded for each offender involved in an incident. Examination of the data file revealed that this information is not always recorded correctly, especially in situations involving multiple victims or offenders. Law enforcement agencies may simply repeat the same code for all victims involved — in most cases, the first victim listed — or may not record all victim-offender relationships. For example, an incident involving two victims and two offenders should have a total of four victim-offender relationships listed, but often only two were recorded.

Further miscoding arises regarding the situation. In some cases, single victim-unknown offender situations were listed as having a single offender. Law enforcement agencies sometimes indicated that offender information was unknown, when only part of the demographic information was missing. In other cases, one-offender situations occasionally were recorded as multiple-offender incidents.

Caution is required in analyzing the BCA database file. Record-by-record review is necessary because some cases are out of order, especially single victim-multiple offender and multiple victim-single offender situations. The law enforcement agency number, incident number and incident date of the record can be matched for accuracy.

Racial and ethnic data needs to be examined carefully because of the varying circumstances under which it is documented. For example, birth records list the child's race or ethnicity based on that of the mother, regardless of the father's race or ethnicity. These characteristics also may be recorded from observation or self-identification, or may reflect social custom rather than heredity. Moreover, research controlling for factors such as education level, family status, income, housing density and residential mobility has shown that race and ethnicity are not predictive of criminal behavior.

Montana. The Montana Board of Crime Control maintains Supplementary Homicide Report data for the Uniform Crime Reporting program. Law enforcement agencies consistently submitted Supplementary Homicide Reports during the project time period of 1991 to 1995. Justifiable homicide and negligent manslaughter data is available but was not included in the analyses.

The homicide "circumstance" variable describes the event surrounding or leading up to the homicide, such as a "drug-induced brawl." In some cases, law enforcement personnel misinterpret this variable as a description of the murder and document information, such as a "blow to the head." Additional training may be needed to improve the coding of this variable.

Some differences exist between Montana and FBI coding of Supplementary Homicide Report data with respect to the "weapon," "circumstance" and "victim-offender relationship" variables. Montana's Supplementary Homicide Report form has fewer categories for weapon and circumstance than the FBI form; in addition, the victim-offender relationship is documented as a text field instead of with numeric codes. Recoding of these variables is necessary to ensure consistency with the FBI data format. Analyses including circumstance will be limited due to the small number of categories on the Montana form. The difference in number of categories is less of an issue with the weapon variable, because the "other" category generally contains information that coincides with FBI categories.

In most instances, specific racial breakouts are not available because this information is recorded in the data set as white, American Indian and "other." Obtaining detailed breakouts required reviewing the original Supplementary Homicide Report forms filled out by law enforcement personnel. Ethnicity data is reported, although a majority of this information is documented as "unknown."

Nebraska. Supplementary Homicide Report data for 1991 to 1995 was obtained from the Nebraska Crime Commission, which administers the state Uniform Crime Reporting program. Justifiable homicide and negligent manslaughter data is available but was not included in the analyses. Homicide reports are completed by law enforcement personnel and coded for data entry by the crime commission. Offender information obtained after the report has been submitted is updated in the data file. Revised information is not forwarded to the FBI; therefore, data published by the state is more accurate, complete and up-to-date.

The Omaha Police Department did not submit homicide reports in 1993, 1994 and 1995. As a result, the project data set analyzed includes only reports from law enforcement agencies that submitted reports for all five years: 1991 to 1995. About 79 percent of the state population is covered by agencies that submitted reports. In addition, law enforcement agencies are not required to document ethnicity data, so much of this information is entered as "unknown."

South Dakota. The South Dakota Criminal Statistics Analysis Center maintains Supplementary Homicide Report data for the Uniform Crime Report program. Justifiable homicide and negligent manslaughter data is available but was not included in the analyses. Homicide statistics are submitted voluntarily for up to 12 months in a given year. The number of agencies reporting from 1991 to 1995 fluctuated from year to year. Because statistics from Indian reservations are reported to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a significant portion of the state's crimes and arrests are not represented in Supplementary Homicide Report statistics. The state is in the process of implementing the National Incident Based Reporting System. Offense and arrest data collected through this system is converted into Uniform Crime Report data following guidelines published in the *1984 Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook.*

Because the mandatory collection of data on ethnic origin ended in 1988, ethnicity information is not available, although the ethnicity field is mandatory in the National Incident Based Reporting System.

The homicide rate in South Dakota is very low. When dealing with low crime rates and low population, chance events can cause yearly crime statistics to deviate from the norm. Homicides increased in 1993, fueled by an incident involving four victims and one offender.

South Dakota Supplementary Homicide Report statistics should not be compared to the estimates produced by the FBI and published in *Crime in the United States*. The FBI deadline to submit data for their publication is the first week of April, while South Dakota's deadline is in July. Data published by the state is more accurate, complete and up-to-date.

Criminal history file records

Montana. The criminal history file data provided by the Montana Identification Bureau includes felony- and misdemeanor-level weapon offenses occurring from 1991 to 1995. Data in this report pertains to cases and does not necessarily provide information on individuals: the same person could have been involved in more than one type of weapon offense or the same offense over time and would be recorded for each.

Because no formal coding scheme exists for entering court disposition information, this data is recorded as a text field and consequently is not readable electronically. As a result, analysis of such topics as sentence length and fine amounts was not possible.

Further limitations involve weapon type by offense information. The data file did not document information for weapons used in all types of offenses (i.e., homicide and robbery) or break out data by type of weapon. Only weapon violations such as illegal possession, carrying a concealed weapon and so on were included. It was assumed that weapon violations primarily involve firearms as opposed to other weapon types.

Gender, race and age group analysis is presented in this report. However, analysis by age was not broken out by the same categories used in analysis of other Multistate Project data sets because the number of cases was too small. Age groups were expanded to include a larger number of cases and ensure more accurate analysis. Ethnicity data is not available in the criminal history file database.

Nebraska. The data file was extracted from the Nebraska State Patrol and Nebraska Crime Commission computerized criminal history database and contains felony and upper misdemeanor arrests. Records were obtained for all weapon-related offenses that had a known court disposition in the years 1991 to 1995. All other offenses involving weapons of any type not resulting in a court disposition were not included. Nebraska statutes do not codify gross misdemeanor offenses. Data is consistent with the national Offender Based Tracking System reporting standards developed by SEARCH and follows National Crime Information Center coding. Most of the offenses came from codes 5200 to 5299, excluding explosives.

Each record was extracted from a single incident that could have involved more than one offender. Resulting data pertains to cases and does not necessarily provide information on individuals: the same person could have been involved in more than one type of weapon-related offense or the same offense over time and would have been recorded for each. In addition, if an offender was arrested for committing more than one type of offense, only the most serious is recorded.

Analysis by weapon type is provided where possible, although the Nebraska State Patrol stated that most weapon-offense violations typically involve firearms. Gender, race and age information is included as well; juveniles, however, account for a smaller portion of cases. This may be attributed to more widespread use of informal processing of youth through the court system or possibly greater youth involvement in misdemeanor-level offenses. Ethnicity data was not available.

An attempt was made to compare arrest offenses with the final offense charge at disposition. While many remained

the same, information was not always available to complete this examination. Therefore, no conclusions regarding changes in offense charges were drawn. It also was not possible to separate the data by specific charge types (i.e., felony or misdemeanor), so these analyses were not completed.

Fewer records were obtained for 1995 due to lag time in collecting, entering and processing the full year's information. Only a slice of activity is presented, and changes in the data over time must be viewed with caution. While significant work has been done to improve the level and quality of reporting, criminal history data is still keyed in according to the most serious offense. In addition, data may be influenced by differences in coding and reporting over time. Events such as changes in personnel might result in statute violations being translated and coded under different National Crime Information Center offense codes.

State population estimates

State-by-state and multistate region population estimates for the combined years 1991 to 1995 are provided to aid in data examination. Overall totals as well as specific gender, race and age group breakouts are provided.

Multistate region combined 1991 to 1995 population estimates

	Minnesota		Montana		Nebraska		South Dakota		Multistate region		Percent change 1991 to 1995
State total	22,616,191		4,199,575		8,075,114		3,582,630		38,473,510		4.3%
Average yearly population	4,523,238		839,915		1,615,023		716,526		7,694,702		NA
Gender											
Female	11,491,011	50.8%	2,112,182	50.3%	4,128,273	51.1%	1,815,899	50.7%	19,547,367	50.8%	3.9%
Male	11,125,180	49.2%	2,087,393	49.7%	3,946,841	48.9%	1,766,731	49.3%	18,926,146	49.2%	4.7%
Race											
White	21,308,253	94.2%	3,905,987	93.0%	7,620,642	94.4%	3,274,761	91.4%	36,109,646	93.9%	3.5%
Other	1,307,938	5.8%	293,588	7.0%	454,472	5.6%	307,869	8.6%	2,363,867	6.1%	16.5%
African American	557,612	2.5%	14,243	0.3%	305,730	3.8%	20,003	0.6%	897,588	2.3%	17.5%
American Indian	271,777	1.2%	255,513	6.1%	68,382	0.8%	268,752	7.5%	864,424	2.2%	7.9%
Asian	478,549	2.1%	23,832	0.6%	80,360	1.0%	19,114	0.5%	601,855	1.6%	28.6%
Age group											
Under 5	1,650,815	7.3%	291,362	6.9%	584,223	7.2%	269,342	7.5%	2,795,742	7.3%	-4.9%
5 to 9	1,741,368	7.7%	322,739	7.7%	613,178	7.6%	285,376	8.0%	2,962,661	7.7%	-0.8%
10 to 14	1,751,459	7.7%	343,672	8.2%	633,343	7.8%	300,893	8.4%	3,029,367	7.9%	8.7%
15 to 19	1,547,168	6.8%	320,034	7.6%	587,552	7.3%	274,298	7.7%	2,729,052	7.1%	13.7%
20 to 24	1,523,300	6.7%	266,113	6.3%	560,417	6.9%	246,574	6.9%	2,596,404	6.7%	-1.4%
25 to 29	1,673,377	7.4%	240,404	5.7%	549,106	6.8%	232,141	6.5%	2,695,028	7.0%	-12.8%
30 to 34	2,023,115	8.9%	308,072	7.3%	647,388	8.0%	271,900	7.6%	3,250,475	8.4%	-4.5%
35 to 39	1,959,052	8.7%	352,960	8.4%	653,153	8.1%	279,778	7.8%	3,244,943	8.4%	8.6%
40 to 44	1,738,245	7.7%	341,812	8.1%	598,748	7.4%	252,738	7.1%	2,931,543	7.6%	12.5%
45 to 49	1,366,733	6.0%	273,260	6.5%	471,097	5.8%	194,482	5.4%	2,305,572	6.0%	28.1%
50 to 54	1,080,413	4.8%	217,158	5.2%	374,303	4.6%	158,079	4.4%	1,829,953	4.8%	17.9%
55 to 59	898,034	4.0%	185,730	4.4%	335,634	4.2%	145,794	4.1%	1,565,192	4.1%	8.5%
60 to 64	838,294	3.7%	179,160	4.3%	334,250	4.1%	149,750	4.2%	1,501,454	3.9%	-2.7%
65 and over	2,824,818	12.5%	557,099	13.3%	1,132,722	14.0%	521,485	14.6%	5,036,124	13.1%	3.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, July 1 population estimates from 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995

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