



# OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Shay Bilchik, Administrator

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## Juveniles and Violence: Juvenile Offending and Victimization

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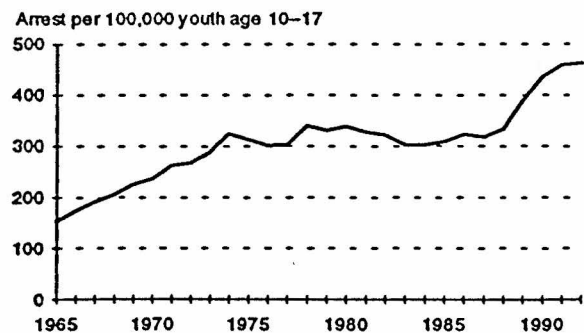
Public concern continues over the escalation in violent juvenile crime. At the same time, national trends indicate that young people are disproportionately the victims of violence. Violence affects the quality of life for those who experience it, witness it, or live in fear of being victimized. When young people are involved in violence its impact is magnified. Research indicates that child maltreatment is a significant risk factor for serious delinquency. The statistical data and trends presented in this report establish the scope and trajectory of the problem and underscore the need to find solutions.

### Juvenile Offending

Current national data do not exist on the actual level of violent crime committed by juveniles. Policymakers and researchers rely on the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports of arrests of youth under the age of 18 as an indicator of the level of juvenile crime in the United States. Although only 6% of all juvenile arrests are for violent offenses, these arrests increased dramatically over the 5-year period from 1988 to 1992.

- The estimated 129,600 Violent Crime Index arrests of juveniles in 1992 was the highest in history, with 3,300 arrests for murder, 6,300 for forcible rape, 45,700 for robbery, and 74,400 for aggravated assault.
- While juveniles accounted for nearly 1 in 5 of all violent crime arrests in 1992, less than 1 in 8 reported violent crimes was cleared by a juvenile arrest.
- Juveniles' use of guns in homicides increased from 64% to 78% between 1987 and 1991. During this period, juvenile arrests for weapons law violations increased 62%.

Juvenile violent Crime Index arrest rates have risen sharply in recent years

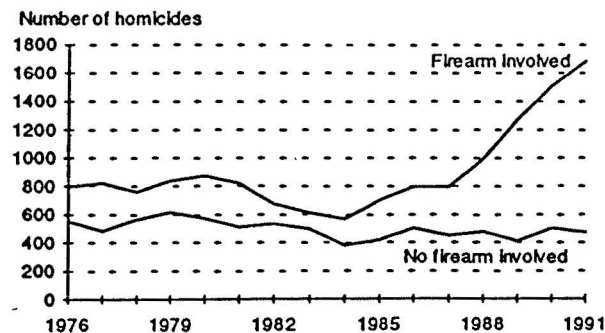


Note: Violent Crime Index offenses include murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault.

Data source: FBI. (1993). Age specific and race-specific arrest rates for selected offenses 1965-1992.

- Between 1988 and 1992, the number of Violent Crime Index arrests of juveniles increased by 47%—more than twice the increase for persons 18 years of age or older. Most alarming, juvenile arrests for murder increased by 51%, compared to 9% for adults.
- Juvenile arrests for violent crime increased 57% between 1983 and 1992, compared to a 50% increase in adult arrests.

Guns are the most common weapon used in homicides by youth



Data source: FBI, Supplemental Homicide Reports 1976-1991 (machine readable data files).

- More than doubling in a decade, the nearly 54,200 juvenile weapons arrests in 1992 accounted for nearly 1 out of 4 weapons arrests. Black youth were arrested for weapons law violations at a rate triple that of white youth.
- The 1992 violent crime arrest rate for black youth was 5 times higher than the rate for white youth (1,598 compared to 294 per 100,000 youth ages 10-17).

**Percent of students saying they carried a weapon in the past month**

	Total	Male	Female
Total	20%	32%	8%
White	17	19	5
Black	27	39	17
Hispanic	26	41	12

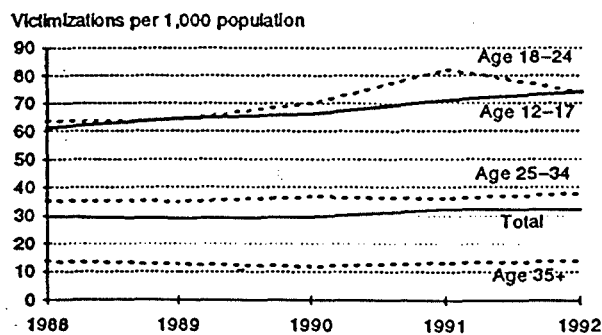
Data source: Centers for Disease Control. (1991). *Youth risk behavior survey 1990.*

- In 1990, one in 5 high school students reported carrying a weapon somewhere, at least once, during the past month. One in 20 had carried a firearm.
- Among students who carried a weapon, knives and razors were carried more often (55%) than were firearms (20%). More than half of the black males who carried a weapon carried a gun.
- A survey of law enforcement agencies found that there were an estimated 5,000 gangs across the country in 1991 with nearly 250,000 members. These gangs were responsible for an estimated 46,000 criminal gang incidents.
- In cities with recently emerging gang problems, the majority of gang members are apt to be juveniles. However, in cities with more established gangs, the majority of gang members are apt to be young adults.

**Juvenile Victims of Violence**

- The National Crime Victimization Survey finds that there were more than 1.55 million violent crimes committed against youth ages 12–17 in 1992, a 25% increase since 1988. The number of violent crimes committed against youth ages 12–17 equaled about one-third of all the violent crimes committed against adults. The actual number and proportion of violent crimes against all juvenile victims - including those below the age of 12 - is substantially higher than these figures, but no comparable survey data are available on crimes committed against persons below age 12.

**Juveniles and young adults are at the greatest risk of violent victimization**

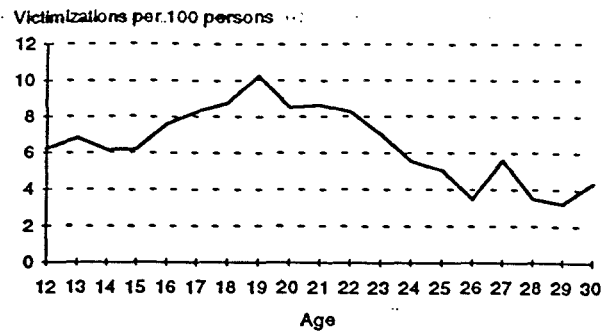


Note: Violent crimes include rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.

Data source: Moone, J. (1994). *Juvenile victimizations: 1987–1992. OJJDP Fact Sheet.*

- In 1992, roughly 1 out of every 13 juveniles reported being a victim of a violent crime. More than half were victims of simple assaults that did not involve a weapon or a major injury.

**Violent crime victimization rates for juveniles in 1991 were greater than for anyone past their mid-twenties**



Note: Violent crimes include rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.

Data source: BJS, *National Crime Victimization Survey, 1991* (machine readable data file).

- In 1991 a 12-year-old was at greater risk of being a victim of a violent crime (i.e., murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, or simple assault) than anyone above the age of 23. The risk of violent victimization for a 17-year-old in 1991 was about double that faced by a 29-year-old.
- In 1991 violent crimes with juvenile victims were nearly as likely to occur at home (25%) as they were in or around school (23%). One out of three of the violent crimes committed against juveniles occurred on the street.

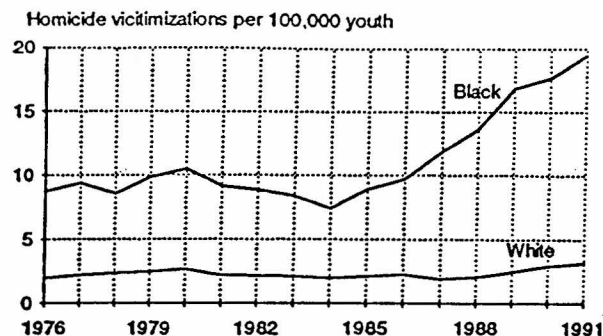
**Students in schools where drugs were available fear attacks at school more than students in schools where drugs were not available**

Drugs at school	Percent of students ever fearing an attack	
	At school	Going to and from school
Available	25%	16%
Not available	13	10

Data source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *School Crime: A National Crime Victimization Survey report, 1991.*

- Schools with gangs have higher victimization rates. Fifteen percent of students said there were street gangs in their school. A total of 12% of the students reporting gangs at school were victimized compared to 8% of those who reported no gang presence.
- According to a 12-state study of rapes reported to law enforcement agencies in 1992, BJS found that more than half of the female rape victims were juveniles under age 18. An estimated 1 in 6 rape victims were girls under age 12.
- FBI data show that in 1992, more than 2,600 youth under age 18 were murdered in the U.S. — an average of more than 7 youth homicide victims per day. Juveniles accounted for 11% of homicide victims.
- Although the prevalence of homicides of children age 13 and under has been relatively stable, teen homicides (age 14–17) have more than doubled — from 4 per 100,000 in 1984 to 11 per 100,000 in 1991.

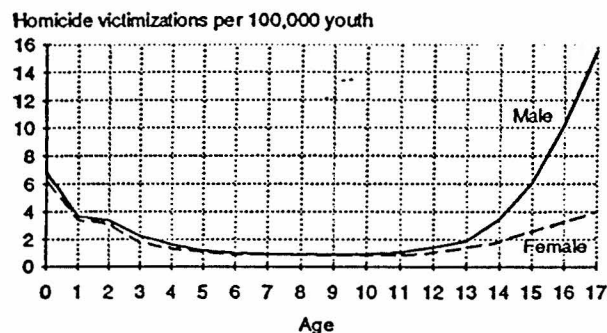
**The homicide victimization rate among black youth has increased substantially in recent years**



Data source: FBI, *Supplemental Homicide Reports 1976-1991* (machine readable data files).

- The 1991 homicide victimization rate among black youth was more than 6 times the rate for white youth.
- Adolescent homicide victims, ages 10-17, are most often killed by a friend or acquaintance (61%).

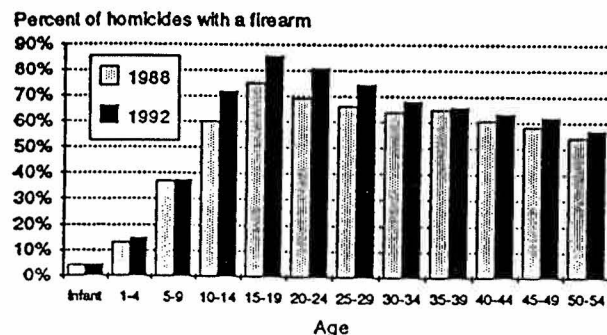
**Homicide victimization rates vary by age and sex**



Note: Rates are based on the 1976-1991 combined average.  
Data source: FBI, *Supplemental Homicide Reports 1976-1991* (machine readable data files).

- More than 70% of teenage homicide victims were shot to death. The overwhelming majority of youth homicide victims in the 10-17 age range are male (73%).
- In 1992, more than 85% of murder victims ages 15-19 were killed with firearms, compared with 68% of all murder victims.

**Homicides of 15-19-year-olds are most likely to involve a firearm**

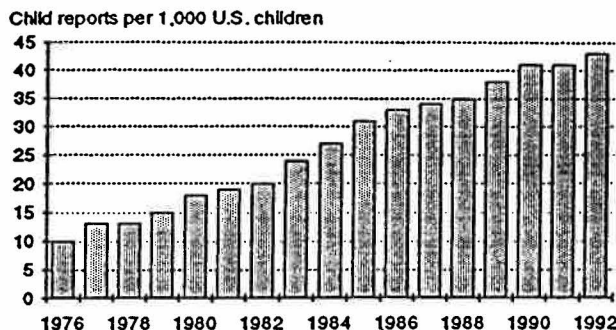


Data source: FBI. (1989 and 1993). *Crime in the U.S. 1988* and *Crime in the U.S. 1992*.

**Child Maltreatment**

- Nationally, in 1992, child protective service agencies received an estimated 1.9 million reports of child abuse and neglect involving an estimated 2.9 million children. In 41% of these reports investigation found the maltreatment substantiated or indicated.

**Child maltreatment reports have increased steadily since the mid 1970s**



Data source: National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. (1994). *Child Maltreatment 1992: Reports From the States to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect*.

- Almost 1,100 children are known to have died as a result of abuse and neglect in 1992 in the 44 States reporting such deaths—more than 1 death per 1,000 substantiated victims.
- OJJDP's Causes and Correlates of Delinquency longitudinal research program reports new findings on the effects of child abuse and neglect on subsequent delinquency. Researchers found that adolescents growing up in homes exhibiting partner violence, generalized hostility, or child maltreatment report engaging in higher rates of violence. The highest rates were reported by youth from multiple violent families, with over three-quarters of these adolescents reporting violent behavior. Children exposed to multiple forms of family violence reported more than twice the rate of youth violence as those from nonviolent families.

**Teen Suicide**

- In 1991, 1,899 youth ages 15-19 committed suicide, a rate of 11 per 100,000 youth in this age group.
- Between 1979 and 1991, the rate of suicide among youth ages 15-19 increased 31%.
- Firearms were used in 6 out of 10 suicides among 15- to 19-year-olds in 1989.

**OJJDP's Comprehensive Response**

The Attorney General, Justice Department policy officials, and OJJDP have called for an unprecedented national commitment of public and private resources, energy and commitment to reversing recent trends in juvenile violence and juvenile victimization in our nation. OJJDP's *Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* is a centerpiece of this call for action. It has two main components: prevention and intervention.

Prevention is the most cost-effective means of dealing with delinquency. The prevention component of the strategy calls for establishing community-based planning teams with broad participation. Collaborative efforts must be made between the

juvenile justice system and other service provision systems, including mental health, health, child welfare, and education. Effective delinquency prevention programs are based on a risk-focused approach in which communities systematically assess their delinquency problem in relation to known risk factors, and implement programs to counteract them.

Simultaneously, protective factors must be increased to counter risk factors or provide protective buffers against them. A key strategy to counter risk factors in young people's lives is to enhance protective factors that fall into three basic categories: 1) individual characteristics (having a resilient temperament or a positive orientation), 2) bonding (positive relationships that promote close bonds), and 3) healthy beliefs and clear standards.

The Comprehensive Strategy's intervention component is based on the recognition that an effective model for the treatment and rehabilitation of delinquent offenders must combine accountability and sanctions with increasingly intensive treatment and rehabilitation. The family must be integrated into treatment and rehabilitative efforts at each stage of this continuum. Aftercare must be a formal component of all residential placements, actively involving the family and the community in supporting and reintegrating the juvenile into the community.

The intervention component calls for establishing a range of graduated sanctions that provides both immediate interventions and intermediate sanctions, including extensive use of non-residential community-based programs. Intermediate sanctions use both nonresidential and residential programming, including intensive supervision programs for repeat serious and many first time violent offenders. The criminal behavior of some serious, violent and chronic offenders requires the use of secure detention and corrections to protect the community and provide a structured treatment environment.

Implementation of a comprehensive strategy at the local level will require all sectors of the community to take part in determining local needs and in planning and implementing programs to meet those needs by providing a continuum of care in the community. To expand the implementation of the Comprehensive Strategy, OJJDP plans to fund additional competitive grants in FY 1995 in both urban and rural communities.

#### **Promising Approaches**

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency and Developmental Research and Programs are completing a review of program models to identify the most effective, promising programs for use in implementing the Comprehensive Strategy. Four reports will be produced on the following topics:

- Effective prevention strategies from conception to age six
- A review of evaluations of selected prevention strategies in childhood, adolescence, and the community
- Promising graduated sanctions programs for serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders, and
- Risk assessment and classification for serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders.

These reports on effective programs will be combined with an operations manual, which jurisdictions can use as a blueprint for assessing their present juvenile justice system and designing and implementing new programs that respond to community needs.

#### **Title V Prevention**

Title V of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended (JJDP Act) establishes a local delinquency prevention program to help communities prevent delinquency and

youth violence through comprehensive planning and program implementation. This new program was initiated in Fiscal Year 1994 through provision of training and technical assistance in risk-focused prevention. Under guidelines issued by OJJDP, those local units of government that are in compliance with JJDP Act mandates, have organized a Prevention Policy Board, and have formulated a risk-focused prevention plan, may apply through their State Advisory Group for an award of funds to implement their plan.

#### **Federal Partnerships**

OJJDP and The Department of Justice are working closely with the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Treasury, Labor, Education, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and other Office of Justice Programs bureaus and offices to develop solutions to youth violence. The 1994 National Conference in Washington, D.C., *Solving Youth Violence: Partnerships that Work*, was jointly sponsored by OJJDP and these federal agencies.

The Office is providing technical assistance and training to four pilot jurisdictions in an Interdepartmental initiative called PACT (Pulling America's Communities Together). These sites, the Denver Metropolitan Area, the District of Columbia, the Atlanta Metropolitan Area, and Nebraska are developing coordinated solutions to violence. Key officials and community leaders in each site are being trained and assisted in assessing their adult and juvenile violence problem, their justice system responses and resources, and in developing systemwide solutions. Sites are also being trained in developing effective delinquency prevention programs using a risk-focused strategy and in establishing a range of graduated sanctions for juveniles in the juvenile justice system.

#### **New Gangs Program**

OJJDP has developed a Comprehensive Gang Program under Part D, Gang-Free Schools and Communities and Community-Based Gang Intervention, of the JJDP Act. This program includes five major components which will be coordinated efforts: 1) A National Gang Assessment Resource Center, 2) testing a Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Program, 3) an independent Evaluation of the Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach, 4) Training and Technical Assistance Regarding the Comprehensive Community Strategy for Dealing with Gangs and Drugs, and 5) Targeted Acquisition and Dissemination of Gang Materials through the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse.

#### **For Further Information**

To obtain copies of *A Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*, by John J. Wilson and James C. Howell, Ph.D., please call the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (800) 638-8736. References for the statistics and other research and programs cited in this report, as well as related readings on juvenile violence, are also available from the Clearinghouse.

*This Fact Sheet replaces the July 1993 OJJDP Fact Sheet #3. It was prepared by Barbara Allen-Hagen, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Melissa Sickmund, Ph.D., and Howard N. Snyder, Ph.D., National Center for Juvenile Justice. The graphics were developed by NCJJ for the forthcoming National Report on Juvenile Offending and Victimization, a product of the Juvenile Justice Statistics and Systems Development Program, funded by OJJDP.*