

YOUTH VIOLENCE

In the United States today, children and young adults are at greater risk of becoming victims of violence than any other age group. The adolescent homicide rate has decreased since 1994. However, age, racial, and gender disparities regarding violence continue to be evident.¹

- In 1998, firearm-related injuries were the second leading cause of death for persons aged 15 to 19 (37 percent). These injuries were the leading cause of death for African-American and Hispanic youth.²
- Most victims in homicides involving juveniles were male (83 percent). In 27 percent of homicides by juveniles, the victim was also a juvenile. Victims in 70 percent of homicides by juveniles were killed with a firearm.³
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Supplemental Homicide Report data show that 18,200 persons were murdered in the United States in 1997. This was the lowest number in more than a generation. Of these murders, about 1,400 were determined by law enforcement to involve a juvenile offender; however, the actual number is most likely greater.³
- In the 1990s, violent victimization rates fell significantly for persons ages 12 to 24. This decline is noteworthy because they have historically experienced the highest rates of violent victimization. In 1999, there were 77.4 victimizations per 1,000 adolescents aged 16 to 19. In 2000, there were 60.1 victimizations per 1,000 adolescents aged 16 to 19.¹
- Preliminary data from the School Associated Violent Deaths Study indicate that less than 1 percent of the more than 1,350 children who were murdered in the first half of the 1998-1999 school year were killed at school.⁴

The need for youth violence and substance abuse prevention efforts is overwhelmingly evident when the following facts are examined:

- Alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive substance during adolescence. Its use is associated with:
 - Motor vehicle accidents, injuries, and deaths
 - Problems in school and the workplace
 - Fighting
 - Crime
 - Other serious consequences⁵
- More than any other group, young adults are likely to have been drinking prior to perpetrating or falling victim to fatal or nonfatal violence.⁶
- Data from three studies conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in Denver, Pittsburgh, and Rochester indicated that 38 percent of serious male delinquents were also drug users. In Denver and Rochester, slightly more than

half of drug users were serious delinquents. In Pittsburgh, 70 percent of drug users were serious delinquents. Thus, for males, most serious delinquents were not drug users, but most drug users were serious delinquents.⁷

- A longitudinal study of 1,500 young males in Pittsburgh showed a higher frequency of carrying a concealed weapon in the year they started dealing drugs.⁸
- Among youth drug dealers, gun use steadily increased while the use of other weapons decreased. This increase was even more significant among drug dealers who sold heroin, cocaine, and LSD.⁸

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