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# Chapter 3

## Juvenile offenders

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Public perceptions of juvenile offending have been influenced by attention focused on high-profile incidents. Do these incidents accurately reflect the majority of crimes by juveniles? How many children are involved in law-violating behavior? What proportion of all crime is committed by juveniles? What are the trends? Are there gender differences in the law-violating careers of juvenile offenders? How many murders are committed by juveniles annually, and whom do they murder? What proportion of students are involved in crime at school? Are youth carrying weapons to school? Are students fearful of crime at school? At what time of day are violent crimes by juveniles most likely to occur? What is known about juveniles and gangs? What is the prevalence and incidence of drug and alcohol use? How much does youth crime cost society?

Many offenders are not arrested; and many arrested are not referred to juvenile courts and, thus, are not captured in official law enforcement

or court data. This chapter presents what is known about the prevalence and incidence of juvenile offending. It relies on data developed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey; the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System and its Uniform Crime Reports; the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Monitoring the Future Study, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) National Juvenile Court Data Archive. Also included are summaries of the first wave of self-report data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey. Information on gangs is drawn from the National Youth Gang Survey, supported by OJJDP, and other published and unpublished gang studies. In addition, the chapter includes information from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative.

## Self-reports and official records are the primary sources of information on juvenile offending

### Self-report studies ask victims or offenders to report on their experiences and behaviors

There has been an ongoing debate about the relative ability of self-report studies and official statistics to describe juvenile crime and victimization.

Self-report studies can capture information on behavior that never comes to the attention of juvenile justice agencies. Compared with official studies, self-report studies find a much higher proportion of the juvenile population involved in delinquent behavior.

Self-report studies, however, have their own limitations. A youth's memory limits the information that can be captured. This, along with other problems associated with interviewing young children, is the reason that the National Crime Victimization Survey does not attempt to interview children below age 12. Some victims and offenders are also unwilling to disclose all law violations. Finally, it is often difficult for self-report studies to collect data from large enough samples to develop a sufficient understanding of relatively rare events, such as serious violent offending.

### Official statistics describe the cases handled by the justice system

Official records underrepresent juvenile delinquent behavior. Many crimes by juveniles are never reported to authorities. Many juveniles who commit offenses are never arrested. Or, if they are arrested, they are not arrested for all of their delinquencies. As a result, official records may systematically underestimate the scope of juvenile

crime. In addition, to the extent there is bias in the types of crimes or offenders that enter the justice system, official records distort the attributes of juvenile crime.

### Official statistics are open to multiple interpretations

Juvenile arrest rates for drug abuse violations in recent years are substantially above those of a decade ago. One interpretation of these official statistics could be that juveniles have been breaking the drug laws more often in recent years. National self-report studies (e.g., *Monitoring the Future*), however, find that illicit drug use is substantially below the levels of the mid-1980's. If drug use is actually down, the higher arrest rates for drug crimes may represent a change in society's tolerance for such behavior and a greater willingness to bring these youth into the justice system for treatment or punishment.

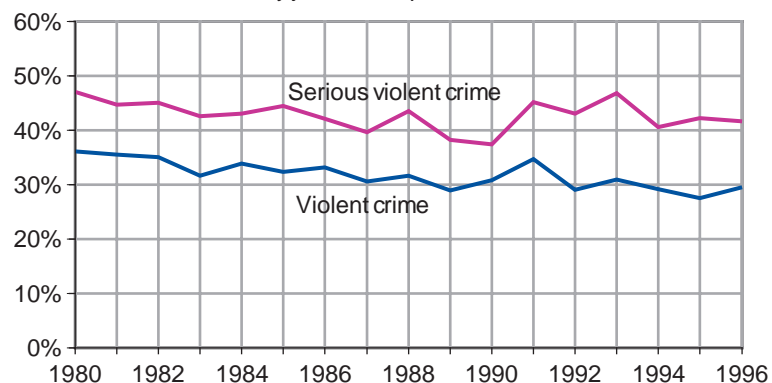
Although official records may be inadequate measures of the level of juvenile offending, they do monitor justice system activity. Analysis of variations in official statistics across time and jurisdictions provides an understanding of justice system caseloads.

### Carefully used, self-report and official statistics provide insight into crime and victimization

As Delbert Elliot has argued, to abandon either self-report or official statistics in favor of the other is "rather shortsighted; to systematically ignore the findings of either is dangerous, particularly when the two measures provide apparently contradictory findings." He argued that a full understanding of the etiology and development of delinquent behavior is enhanced by using and integrating both self-report and official record research.

### The proportion of violent crimes committed by juveniles that victims reported to law enforcement has changed little since 1980

Percent of victimizations by juveniles reported to law enforcement



Note: Serious violent crime includes incidents involving rape and other sexual assaults, robbery, and aggravated assault. Violent crime includes simple assault in addition to the serious violent crime offenses. Data are collected through personal interviews with persons age 12 and older; thus, murder is not included for obvious reasons. Data collected prior to 1992 were adjusted to be consistent with newer data collection procedures.

Source: Authors' analyses of data for the years 1980–1996 from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' *National Crime Victimization Survey* [machine-readable data files].

## In 1997, juvenile homicides were the lowest in the decade but still 21% above the average of the 1980's

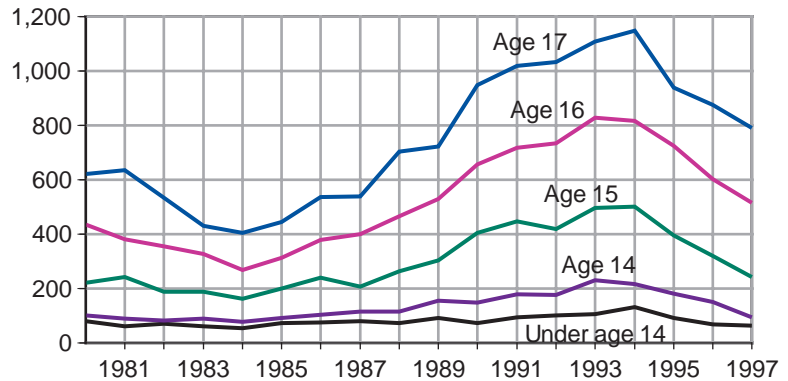
It is difficult to assess the exact number of murders committed by juveniles

Based on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) data, 18,200 persons were murdered in the U.S. in 1997—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 greater than this. In 1997, the FBI had no information on the offender(s) for about 6,900 reported murders (38% of the total). These may have been homicides for which no one was arrested or the offender was otherwise not identified, or these may have been cases for which the local agency did not report complete information to the FBI. Regardless, the number of murders committed by juveniles in 1997 was undoubtedly greater than 1,400, but just how much greater is difficult to determine. If it were assumed that the murders without offender information were similar to those with offender information, then about 2,300 murders (or 12% of all murders) in 1997 had at least one offender who was under the age of 18 at the time of the crime.

The 1,400 murders known to involve a juvenile offender in 1997 involved about 1,700 juveniles and 900 adults. Of all murders involving a juvenile, 31% also involved an adult, and 13% involved another juvenile. In all, 44% of all murders involving a juvenile involved more than one person.

The number of murder offenders in each age group between 14 and 17 increased substantially and proportionately from 1984 through 1993

Known juvenile offenders

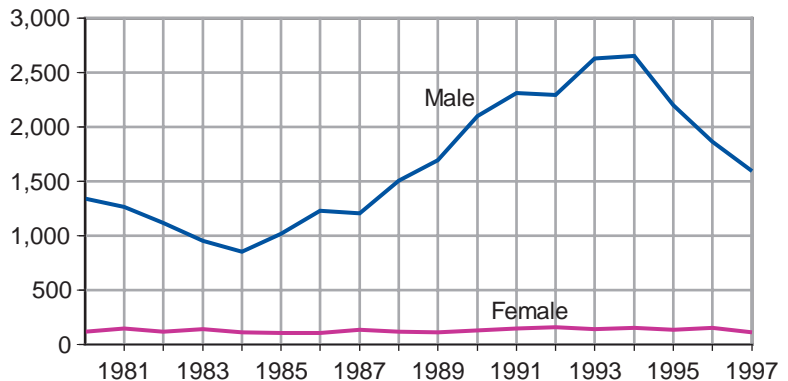


- The declines in the number of offenders were also large and roughly proportionate between 1994 and 1997 in all age groups: under age 14 (51%), age 14 (57%), age 15 (52%), age 16 (37%), and age 17 (31%).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

Between 1980 and 1997, the number of juvenile female offenders implicated in murders remained essentially constant

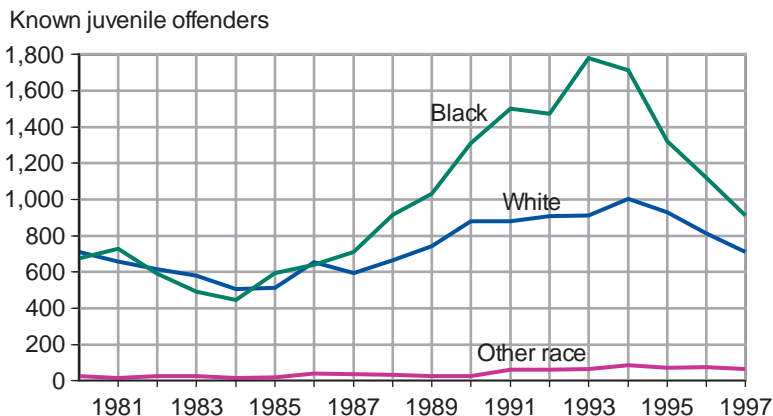
Known juvenile offenders



- Between 1980 and 1997, about 130 juvenile females were implicated in homicides in the U.S. each year.
- Males were responsible for all of the fluctuations in juvenile homicides between 1980 and 1997.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

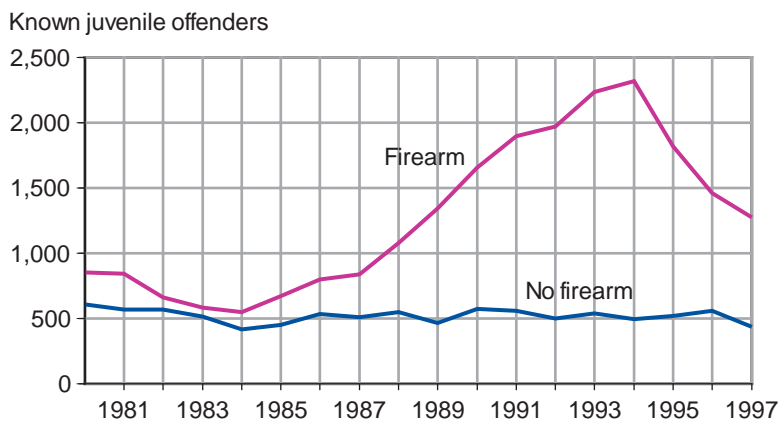
**Between 1980 and 1986, there were roughly equal numbers of white and black juvenile homicide offenders; but after 1986, blacks have outnumbered whites**



- While youth of all races contributed to the growth in homicides by juveniles, black youth were responsible for the majority of the increase between 1986 and 1994—and the majority of the decline thereafter.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

**All of the increase in homicides by juveniles between the mid-1980's and mid-1990's was firearm related**



- Between 1980 and 1987, firearms were used in just over half (54%) of all homicides involving a juvenile offender. Then firearm-related homicides began to increase, so that, by 1994, most homicides by juvenile offenders (82%) involved the use of a firearm.
- The sharp decline in homicides by juveniles between 1994 and 1997 was attributable entirely to a decline in homicides by firearm.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

### Whom do juveniles kill?

Between 1980 and 1997, most victims in homicides involving juveniles were male (83%). Slightly more victims were white (50%) than black (47%). In 27% of homicides by juveniles, the victim was also a juvenile. Victims in 70% of homicides by juveniles were killed with a firearm. Of all victims killed by juveniles, 14% were family members, 55% were acquaintances, and 31% were strangers.

### Who are the juvenile murderers?

Between 1980 and 1997, the large majority (93%) of known juvenile homicide offenders were male. More than half (56%) were black. Of known juvenile homicide offenders, 42% were age 17, 29% were age 16, and 17% were age 15; 88% of juvenile homicide offenders were age 15 or older.

### Murders by the very young are rare

Annually between 1980 and 1997, fewer than 10 juveniles age 10 or younger were identified as participants in murders—a figure that has remained essentially constant over the time period. The majority of these young homicide offenders were male (88%), and more than half (54%) were black. In these cases, the victim was equally likely to be either a family member or an acquaintance (43%). A firearm was involved in 50% of the murders committed by these young offenders.

### Boys and girls tend to kill different types of victims

Between 1980 and 1997, 54% of male juvenile homicide offenders killed an acquaintance, 37% killed a

stranger, and 9% killed a family member. In comparison, the victims of females were more likely to be family members (39%) and far less likely to be strangers (15%).

Between 1980 and 1997, about 1% of male offenders killed persons under age 6, while 18% of the female offenders killed young children. Because there were so many more male offenders than female offenders, however, roughly equal numbers of male and female juvenile offenders were involved in the murder of young children. Annually between 1980 and 1997, about 25 male and 25 female juvenile offenders were tied to the death of a child under age 6.

Males were far more likely than females to kill with a firearm. Between 1980 and 1997, 73% of male juvenile homicide offenders used a firearm, while 14% used a knife. In contrast, 41% of female juvenile homicide offenders used a firearm and 32% used a knife. While 27% of females used other means to kill (e.g., hands or feet, strangulation, drowning, or fire), only 13% of males killed by these means.

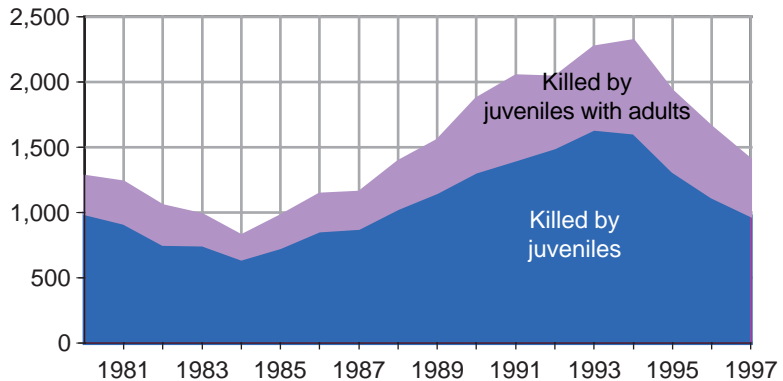
### Black juveniles were more likely to commit murders with firearms than were youth of other races

In the U.S. in 1997, about 1 of every 16,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 17 was identified as participating in a homicide. This is a rate of 56 known offenders for every 1 million youth in the U.S. population ages 10–17. This rate was greater for black youth than youth of other races: black (194), Asian/Pacific Islanders (44), American Indians (34), and whites (30).

Between 1980 and 1997, 72% of black juvenile homicide offenders

### In 1997, juvenile offenders were known to be involved in about 1,400 murders in the U.S.

Homicide victims of known juvenile offenders

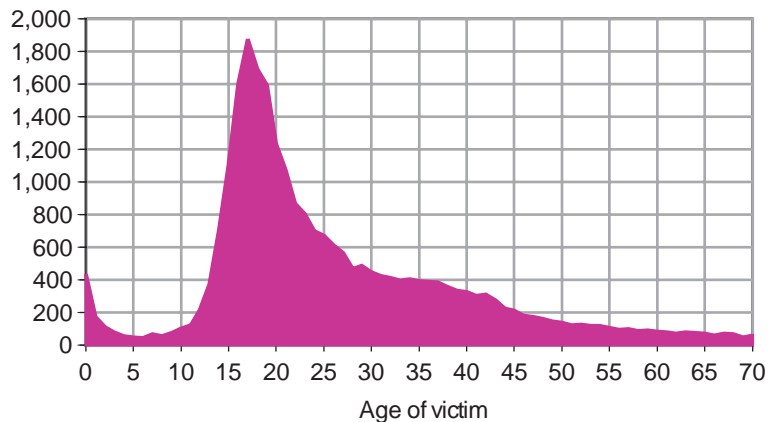


- From the peak year of 1994, the number of murders known to involve juvenile offenders dropped 39%.
- Between 1980 and 1997, 28% of all murders involving a juvenile offender also involved an adult offender.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

### Between 1980 and 1997, about half (51%) the victims of juvenile homicide offenders were ages 13 through 24

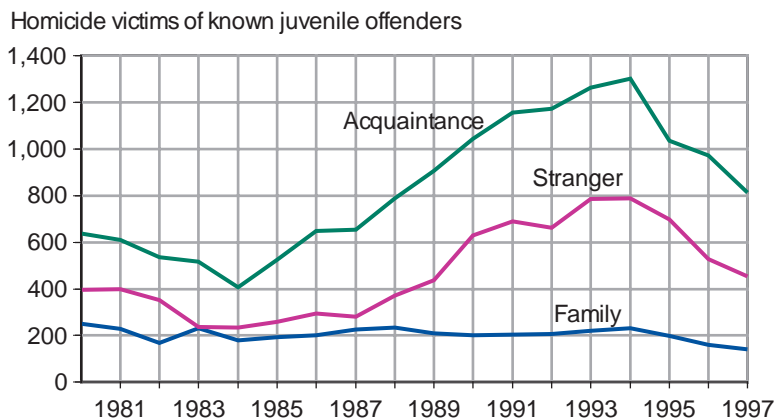
Homicide victims of known juvenile offenders, 1980–1997



- Of all persons murdered by juveniles, 6% were under age 13, 21% were ages 13–17, 30% were ages 18–24, and 10% were age 50 or older.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

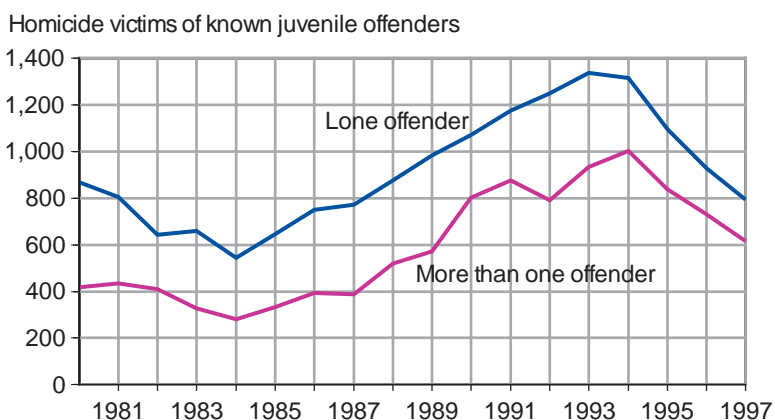
**During the period from 1987 to 1994, while the total annual number of murders by juveniles doubled, murders of family members held constant**



- Murder victims of juvenile offenders are more likely to be acquaintances than strangers. In 1997, 56% of juvenile murder victims were acquaintances and 34% were strangers.
- In 1997, the number of acquaintances and the number of strangers murdered by juveniles were the lowest since 1989.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

**Between 1980 and 1997, there were two or more offenders in 39% of all murders involving a juvenile**



- The proportion of multiple-offender murders involving a juvenile offender increased from the 1980's (35%) to the 1990's (42%).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980–1997 [machine-readable data files].

used a firearm in their crimes. This proportion was higher than that for Asian/Pacific Islander (67%), white (59%), or American Indian (48%) youth.

Youth were most likely to kill persons of their own race. Between 1980 and 1997, 81% of juvenile offenders were involved in murders of persons of their own race. Same-race killing was most common for white youth (90%) and less common for blacks (76%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (58%), and American Indians (48%).

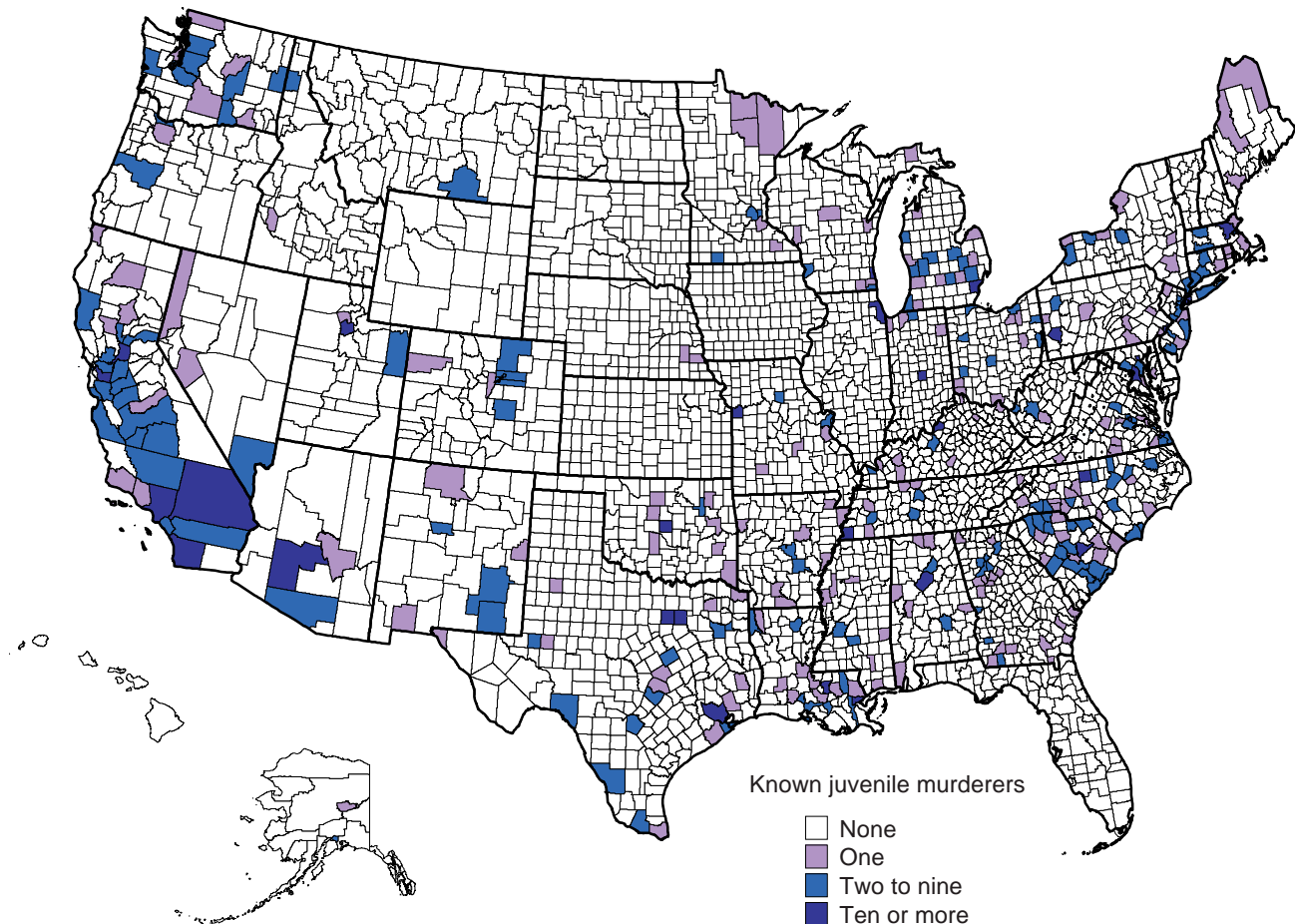
A greater proportion of white youth and American Indian youth killed family members than did youth of other races: American Indian (17%), white (16%), black (7%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (7%).

**Older juveniles are more likely than younger juveniles to commit murders with other juveniles and with adults**

Between 1980 and 1997, half of all juvenile homicide offenders acted alone, while half committed their acts with other juveniles or adults. Older offenders were more likely than younger offenders to commit their acts with adults.

Age of offender	Percent of juvenile homicide offenders		
	Acted alone	With juveniles	With adults
Total	50%	21%	29%
<10	86	11	3
10	72	13	15
11	75	16	9
12	68	20	12
13	58	25	17
14	50	28	22
15	49	25	27
16	49	22	29
17	50	16	34

## More than 1 in 4 identified juvenile murderers in 1997 were in 8 of the Nation's more than 3,000 counties



Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1997 [machine-readable data files].

In 1997, the FBI's Supplemental Homicide Reporting (SHR) Program collected detailed information on 87% of all murder victims known to law enforcement. The map above presents an analysis of these data. Note that no data were reported for the States of Florida, Kansas, and New Hampshire. Many individual counties in other States also under-reported. In addition, an offender was identified in just 62% of the re-

ported homicides. Consequently, many juvenile homicide offenders are not represented on the map.

Based on SHR data, 88% of the more than 3,000 counties in the U.S reported no juvenile murderers in 1997. Another 6% of the counties had just one identified juvenile homicide offender in 1997. In fact, more than 1 in 4 juvenile homicide offenders (26%) in 1997 were in

eight counties. The major cities in these eight counties (beginning with the city in the county with the greatest number of identified juvenile homicide offenders) are Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, New York, Baltimore, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Dallas. As these eight counties contain just 12% of the U.S. population, it is clear that homicide by juveniles is concentrated in a small portion of the U.S. geographic area.

## A new self-report survey documents the deviant and delinquent behaviors of U.S. youth ages 12–16

### A new survey will follow a cohort of youth as they make the transition from school to work

The first wave of the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) interviewed a nationally representative sample of 9,000 youth who were between the ages of 12 and 16 at year-end 1996. The survey asked youth to report whether they had engaged in a variety of de-

viant and delinquent behaviors. Plans are to interview members of this cohort every 2 years to track changes in delinquent and criminal activity over the life course.

### Youth who had ever used or sold drugs were more likely to engage in other problem behavior

One of the strengths of the survey is its ability to assess which delin-

quent behaviors cluster together. Members of the NLSY97 cohort were asked a variety of questions regarding drugs, guns, and gangs, including whether and how recently they had engaged in these activities. Analysis of these items demonstrates the connection between drug use or sale and other problem behaviors, such as carrying handguns, belonging to a gang, and consuming alcohol.

### The proportion of youth engaging in deviant and delinquent behaviors varied significantly by age, sex, and race/ethnicity

Behavior	Total	Ages 12–13	Ages 14–15	Age 16	Male	Female	White	Nonwhite	Rural	Urban
<b>Had sex</b>										
Ever	29%	—	23%	43%	30%	28%	26%	37%	29%	30%
Last 12 months	21	—	16	32	22	21	19	27	21	22
<b>Became pregnant</b>										
Ever	6	—	4	10	—	6	5	9	5	7
<b>Smoked cigarettes</b>										
Ever	42	27	48	58	42	42	45	34	43	41
Last 30 days	20	10	23	33	20	20	22	14	21	19
<b>Drank alcohol</b>										
Ever	39	26	52	68	46	44	48	26	45	45
Last 30 days	21	8	25	37	21	21	23	16	20	21
Before or during school or work in the last 30 days	5	2	6	9	6	4	5	5	5	5
<b>Used marijuana</b>										
Ever	21	8	25	38	22	20	22	19	19	22
Last 30 days	9	4	11	17	10	9	10	8	8	10
Before or during school or work in the last 30 days	4	1	5	7	4	3	4	3	4	4
<b>Ran away from home</b>										
Ever	11	6	12	17	10	11	10	11	10	12
<b>Carried a handgun</b>										
Ever	10	8	11	12	16	3	10	9	11	9
Last 12 months	6	4	6	7	9	2	6	5	6	5
Last 30 days	3	2	3	3	5	1	3	3	3	3
To school in last 30 days	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
<b>Belonged to a gang</b>										
Ever	5	3	6	6	6	3	4	7	5	5
Last 12 months	2	2	2	3	3	1	2	3	2	2
<b>Purposely destroyed property</b>										
Ever	28	25	31	30	37	20	30	25	29	28
Last 12 months	16	14	17	15	20	11	16	14	15	16
<b>Stole something worth over \$50*</b>										
Ever	8	4	10	11	10	5	7	9	7	9
Last 12 months	5	3	6	7	7	3	5	6	4	6



- Youth who had ever used marijuana were more likely to have sold marijuana (24% vs. <1%), carried a handgun (21% vs. 7%), or been in a gang (14% vs. 2%) at some point than youth who never used marijuana.
- Youth who had ever sold marijuana were more likely to have sold hard drugs (i.e., cocaine, LSD, or heroin) (40% vs. 1%), carried a handgun (35% vs. 8%), or been in a gang (24% vs. 4%) than youth who never sold marijuana.
- Active marijuana users (i.e., youth who used marijuana during the month prior to the survey) were more likely to have consumed alcohol (78% vs. 14%) or carried a handgun (12% vs. 2%) during that period than youth who did not use marijuana.
- Youth who had carried a handgun in the last 12 months were also more likely to have been in a gang than youth who did not carry a handgun during this period (15% vs. 1%).

Behavior	Total	Ages 12–13	Ages 14–15	Age 16	Male	Female	White	Nonwhite	Rural	Urban
<b>Stole a vehicle for use or sale</b>										
Ever	1%	< 0.5%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Sold any drugs</b>										
Ever	7	2	9	12	9	5	8	5	7	7
Last 12 months	5	2	7	9	7	4	6	4	5	6
<b>Sold hard drugs</b> (e.g., cocaine, LSD, or heroin)										
Ever	3	1	3	6	3	2	3	3	3	3
<b>Sold marijuana</b>										
Ever	5	2	7	10	7	4	6	4	5	6
<b>Committed assault</b>										
Ever	18	15	19	22	23	12	16	21	17	18
Last 12 months	12	10	13	13	16	8	11	14	12	12
<b>Was arrested</b>										
Ever	8	4	10	12	10	5	7	9	6	9
Number of times										
Once	5	2	6	7	6	3	4	5	4	5
2 or more	3	1	4	5	4	2	3	4	2	4

- Of all youth, 3% had carried a handgun in the month prior to the interview, and fewer than 1 in 200 had carried a handgun to school during that time.
- With a few exceptions, urban and rural youth reported participation in problem behaviors in equal proportions; however, urban youth were significantly more likely than rural youth to have run away from home (12% vs. 10%), ever used marijuana (22% vs. 19%), or ever been arrested (9% vs. 6%).
- Of all youth, 9% used marijuana in the last 30 days, and less than 4% used marijuana before or during school or work hours during this time. Similarly, 21% of all youth drank alcohol in the last 30 days, and 5% drank alcohol before or during school or work hours during this time.
- The proportion of youth who had ever used marijuana increased dramatically with age, from 8% of youth ages 12 and 13 to 25% of youth ages 14 and 15. The proportion of youth ages 14 and 15 who had ever used alcohol (52%) was double that of youth ages 12 and 13 (26%).

Note: Only youth 14 and older were asked about their sexual activity and pregnancy. Only females were asked about pregnancy.

\* Includes stealing a vehicle for use or sale.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997* [machine-readable data file].

**Recent participation (i.e., within the last 12 months or 30 days prior to the interview) in delinquent and deviant acts varied by race and ethnicity for males and females**

Behavior	Males ages 12–16			Females ages 12–16		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
<b>Smoked cigarettes</b>						
Last 30 days	22%	14%	19%	23%	9%	15%
<b>Drank alcohol</b>						
Last 30 days	23	13	22	23	13	20
Before or during school or work in last 30 days	6	4	6	4	3	6
<b>Used marijuana</b>						
Last 30 days	10	9	9	9	5	9
Before or during school or work in last 30 days	4	4	5	3	2	3
<b>Carried a handgun</b>						
Last 12 months	10	8	8	2	2	2
Last 30 days	5	5	4	1	1	1
To school in last 30 days	< 1	1	1	0	0	< 1
<b>Had sex</b>						
Last 12 months*	17	38	26	20	26	19
<b>Belonged to a gang</b>						
Last 12 months	2	6	5	1	2	2
<b>Destroyed property</b>						
Last 12 months	21	18	17	11	10	11
<b>Stole something worth over \$50</b>						
Last 12 months	7	7	8	3	4	4
<b>Committed assault</b>						
Last 12 months	15	21	13	7	12	10

- Black males and females were significantly less likely to drink or smoke cigarettes in the month preceding the interview than their white and Hispanic peers.
- Among youth age 14 and older, a greater proportion of black males and females had sex in the 12 months before the survey than either white or Hispanic males and females.
- In the year preceding the interview, white males were less likely to have been in a gang than black and Hispanic males but more likely to have carried a gun.
- The proportion of youth who used marijuana in the last 30 days was the same for white, black, and Hispanic males, while black females were less likely to have used marijuana in the last month than their white and Hispanic peers.

\*Only youth 14 and older were asked about their sexual activity.

Note: The white and black racial categories do not include youth of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic youth can be of any race.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997* [machine-readable data file].

**Less than one-tenth (8%) of youth ages 12–16 said they had ever been arrested**

Of the 8% of youth who had ever been arrested, a substantial proportion (40%, or 3% of all youth) reported two or more arrests.

**The proportion of youth ever arrested varied significantly by race and ethnicity for males but not for females**

White males (9%) were less likely to have ever been arrested than black males (13%) or Hispanic males (12%). Further, a greater proportion of black males (7%) and Hispanic males (6%) than white males (4%) were arrested more than once.

Equal proportions of white (5%), black (6%), and Hispanic (7%) females had ever been arrested. In addition, white (2%), black (2%), and Hispanic (3%) females were equally likely to have been arrested more than once.

**One-fifth (21%) of 16-year-olds who had been arrested were first arrested by the of age 12**

One of the strengths of the NLSY is its ability to assess the age at which deviant and delinquent behaviors begin. Specifically, these data provide estimates of the proportion of youth who ever engaged in various deviant and delinquent behaviors at ages 12 and 16. Assuming that members of the cohort share common life experiences and that these experiences contribute to participation in specific acts of deviance and delinquency, then one can speculate about what proportion of 16-year-

olds who exhibited this behavior did so by the age of 12.

For example, nearly one-fourth (24%) of 12-year-olds and 30% of 16-year-olds had ever purposely destroyed property. Based on these data, it is estimated that more than three-fourths (79%) of 16-year-olds who had ever destroyed property did so for the first time by age 12.

Similar analyses show that some behaviors appear for the first time early in a youth's life, while others first appear later.

Behavior	Proportion of 16-year-olds engaging in behavior who did so by age 12
Purposely destroyed property	79%
Committed assault	63
Carried a handgun	60
Belonged to a gang	52
Smoked cigarettes	39
Ran away from home	34
Stole something worth over \$50	34
Drank alcohol	31
Was arrested	21
Used marijuana	15
Sold hard drugs (cocaine, LSD, or heroin)	11
Sold any drugs	10

More than half of all 16-year-olds who had ever committed assault, carried a handgun, or belonged to a gang had done so for the first time by age 12. In contrast, less than one-fifth of all 16-year-olds who had ever used marijuana, sold any drugs, or sold hard drugs (i.e., cocaine, LSD, or heroin) had done so for the first time by age 12.

#### Employed and unemployed youth were equally likely to participate in most delinquent behaviors

Behavior	15-year-olds		16-year-olds	
	Unemployed	Employed	Unemployed	Employed
<b>Smoked cigarettes</b>				
Last 30 days	24%	30%	32%	34%
<b>Drank alcohol</b>				
Last 30 days	28	34	35	40
Before or during school or work in last 30 days	7	7	9	9
<b>Used marijuana</b>				
Last 30 days	13	15	18	16
Before or during school or work in last 30 days	5	6	7	6
<b>Carried a handgun</b>				
Last 12 months	5	8	7	6
Last 30 days	3	4	4	3
<b>Had sex</b>				
Last 12 months	21	19	32	32
<b>Belonged to a gang</b>				
Last 12 months	2	2	4	2
<b>Destroyed property</b>				
Last 12 months	16	16	15	15
<b>Stole something worth over \$50</b>				
Last 12 months	7	9	8*	5
<b>Committed assault</b>				
Last 12 months	12	13	14	12

■ Regardless of age, employed youth were significantly more likely to have smoked cigarettes and consumed alcohol during the last month than unemployed youth.

■ Among 15-year-olds, employed youth were significantly more likely to have carried a gun in the last 12 months than unemployed youth.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997* [machine-readable data file].

## Serious violence by juveniles dropped 33% between 1993 and 1997—violence by adults was down 25%

### Victims' survey captures information on violent crime

The Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) asks a nationally representative sample of persons ages 12 and older about violent crimes in which they were the victim. Since 1973, the NCVS has been a national barometer of crime trends. In 1997, NCVS reported that just over 3 million serious violent crimes (rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) occurred in the U.S., while the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program estimated that 1.6 million such crimes were reported to law enforcement. Therefore, the NCVS provides a more complete picture of violent crime trends than the UCR Program, even though it excludes murder and violence against children younger than age 12.

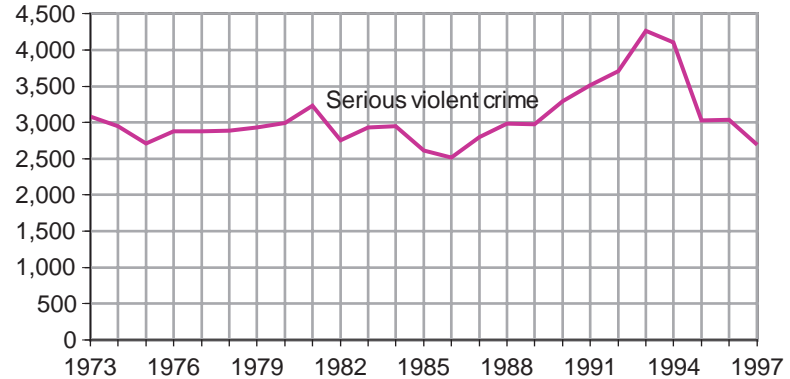
### The drop in serious violence was led by reductions in victimizations by juveniles

According to the NCVS, in 1997 juveniles under age 18 were involved in 27% of all serious violent victimizations, including 14% of sexual assaults, 30% of robberies, and 27% of aggravated assaults.

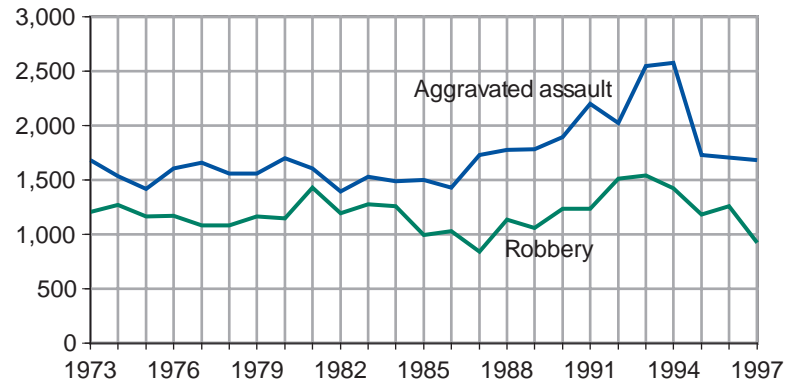
Serious violent victimizations in the U.S. peaked in 1993 at 4.2 million, the highest level since the NCVS began in 1973. Between 1993 and 1997, the number of these victimizations dropped by 27%—to 3 million, the lowest level since the NCVS began. Between 1993 and 1997, the number of serious violent victimizations with at least one juvenile offender dropped 33%, from 1,230,000 to 830,000. Between 1993 and 1997, the number of serious violent victimizations in which all offenders were

The rate at which juveniles committed serious violent crimes changed little between 1973 and 1989, peaked in 1993, then declined to the lowest level since 1986

Victimizations by juveniles per 100,000 persons ages 10–17



Victimizations by juveniles per 100,000 persons ages 10–17

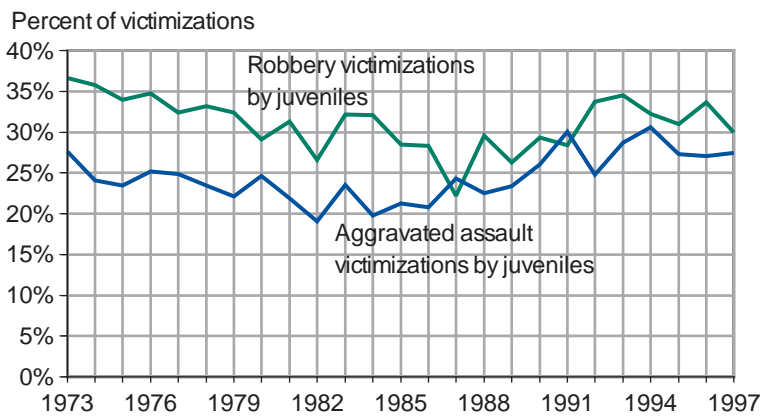
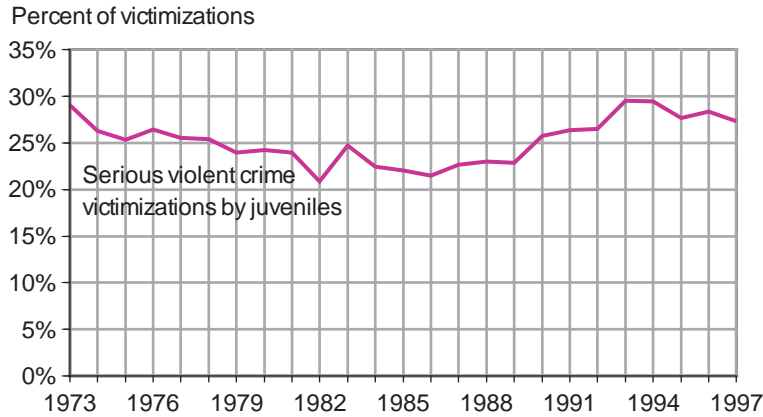


- The rate at which juveniles committed aggravated assaults declined 33% between 1994 and 1995 and remained relatively stable thereafter.
- The rate of robberies by juveniles rose in 1981 and 1993, but by 1997, had dropped below the rates seen in the 1970's.

Note: Serious violent crime includes incidents involving rape and other sexual assaults, robbery, and aggravated assault. Data are collected through personal interviews with persons ages 12 and older; thus, murder is not included for obvious reasons. Data collected prior to 1992 were adjusted to be consistent with newer data collection procedures.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 1973–1997 National Crime Victimization Survey data [Web site data files].

**On average, juveniles were involved in one-quarter of serious violent victimizations annually over the last 25 years**



- Between 1973 and 1997, the juvenile proportion of robbery victimizations ranged from a low of 22% to a high of 37%.
- The juvenile proportion of aggravated assault victimizations peaked at 31% in 1994 before declining to 27% in 1997.

Note: Serious violent crime includes incidents involving rape and other sexual assaults, robbery, and aggravated assault. Data are collected through personal interviews with persons ages 12 and older; thus, murder is not included for obvious reasons. Data collected prior to 1992 were adjusted to be consistent with newer data collection procedures.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 1973-1997 National Crime Victimization Survey data [Web site data files].

adults dropped 25%, from 2,940,000 to 2,190,000.

Juvenile crime dropped more than adult crime between 1993 and 1997 in each of the three individual offense categories in NCVS's serious violence group: robberies (37% vs. 22%), aggravated assault (30% vs. 25%), and violent sexual assaults (45% vs. 37%).

**Juveniles were twice as likely as adults to commit serious violent crimes in groups**

In 1997, multiple offenders were involved in 1 in 2 violent victimizations by youth under age 18. In contrast, just 1 in 5 violent crimes by adults involved multiple offenders.

Type of victimization	Percent of serious violence involving multiple offenders	
	Juvenile	Adult
Serious violence	52%	21%
Rape	23	4
Robbery	60	29
Aggravated assault	49	19

**Fewer than half of serious violent crimes by juveniles are reported to law enforcement**

Many crimes are never reported to police and never become part of official crime statistics. The NCVS found that in 1997, 42% of the serious violent crimes committed by juveniles were ever reported to law enforcement. In 1997, law enforcement agencies learned about 51% of sexual assaults by juveniles, 40% of robberies by juveniles, and 42% of aggravated assaults by juveniles. These percentages have not changed appreciably in the last 20 years.

## Juvenile violence peaks in the afterschool hours on school days and in the evenings on nonschool days

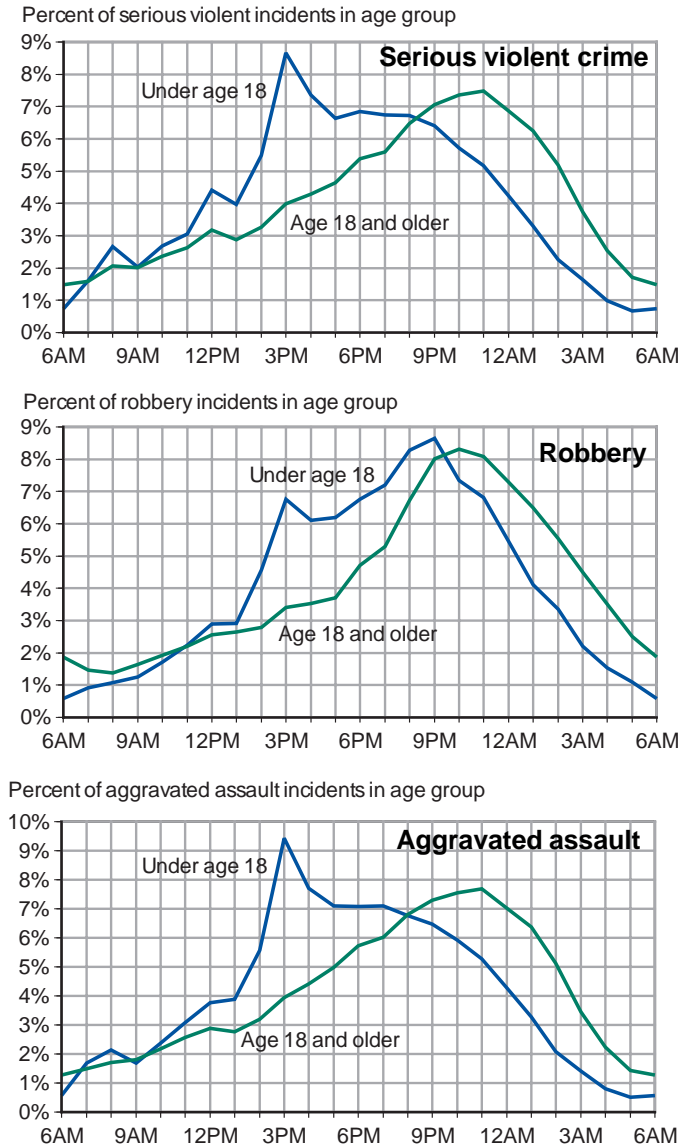
### Juveniles commit crimes at different times than adults do

The FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) collects information on each crime reported to law enforcement agencies, including the date and time that the crime was committed. Analyses of these data document that the most likely time for committing a violent crime is different for juveniles and adults.

A new analysis of NIBRS data using the FBI's master files from 1991 through 1996 confirms earlier findings. In general, the number of violent crimes committed by adults increases hourly from 6 a.m. through the afternoon and evening hours, peaks at 11 p.m., and then drops hourly to a low point at 6 a.m. In stark contrast, violent crimes by juveniles peak in the afternoon between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., the hour at the end of the school day.

The importance of this afterschool period in understanding the patterns of juvenile violence is confirmed when the days of the year are divided into two groups: school days (i.e., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, in September through May) and nonschool days (all days in June through August, all weekends, and holidays). A comparison of the crime patterns for school and nonschool days finds that the 3 p.m. peak occurs only on school days. The time pattern of juvenile violent crimes on nonschool days is similar to that of adults, with a gradual increase during the afternoon and evening hours, a peak between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m., and a decline thereafter. Therefore, on both school and nonschool days, the level of juvenile violence is relatively low during the time period when juvenile curfew laws are in effect.

### While adult robberies and aggravated assaults present similar temporal patterns, the juvenile patterns differ

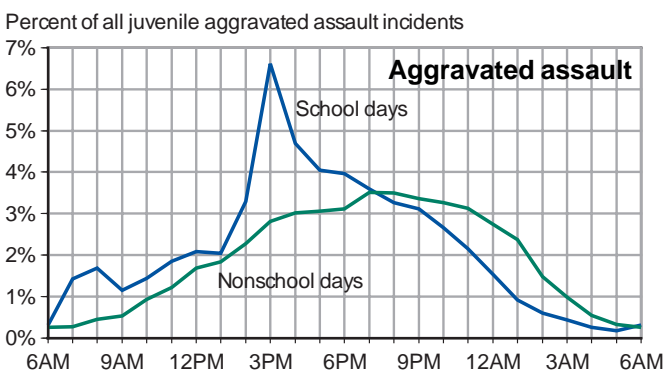
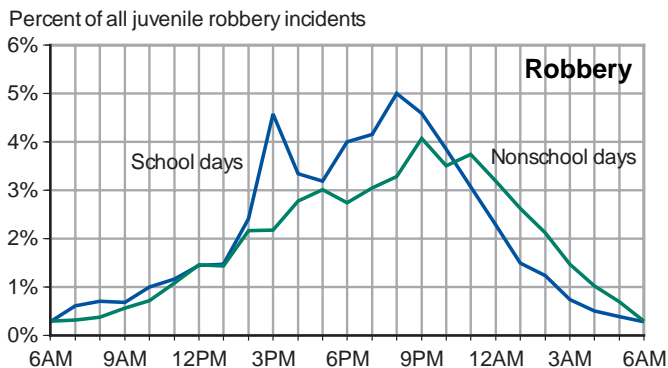
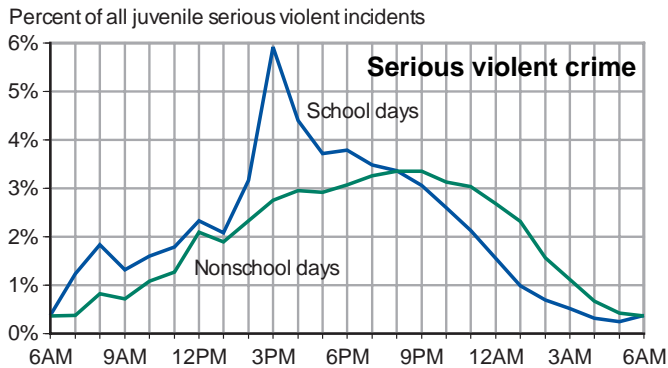


- Aggravated assaults by juveniles are most common around 3 p.m., while the number of juvenile robberies peaks around 9 p.m.
- About two-thirds of all serious violent crimes are aggravated assaults, so they control the overall temporal pattern of serious violent crime.

Note: Serious violent crimes include murder, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Data are from 12 States (Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 1991–1996 [machine-readable data files].

### Serious juvenile crimes cluster in the hours immediately after the close of school



- On school days, robberies and aggravated assaults by juveniles both peak at 3 p.m.; unlike aggravated assaults, robberies also peak at night.
- The temporal pattern of juvenile violence on nonschool days is similar to the overall pattern for adults; juvenile violence peaks at night on nonschool days.

Note: Serious violent crimes include murder, violent sex assaults, robbery, and aggravated assault. Data are from 12 States (Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 1991–1996 [machine-readable data files].

### Afterschool programs have more crime reduction potential than juvenile curfews

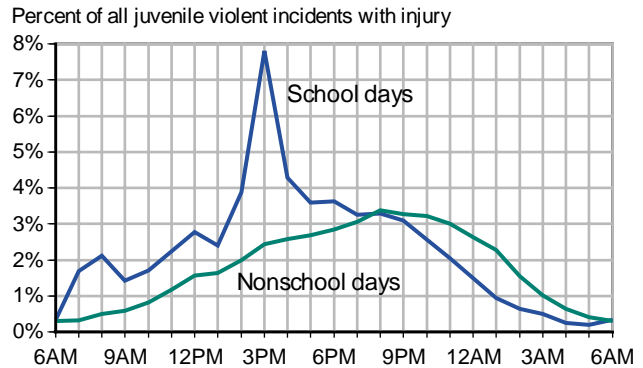
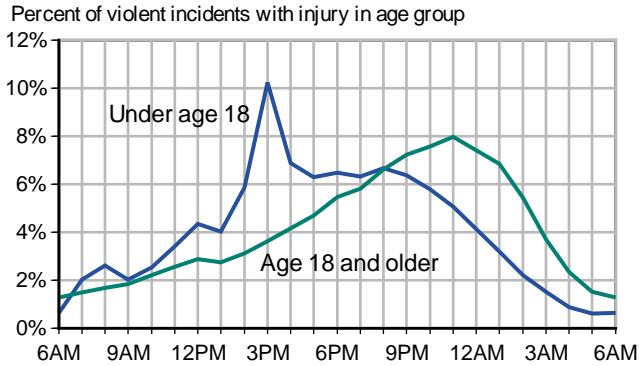
The number of school days in a year is essentially equal to the number of nonschool days in a year. Based on NIBRS data, 57% of all violent crimes by juveniles (i.e., murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated and simple assault) occur on school days. In fact, 19% of all juvenile violent crimes occur in the 4 hours between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on school days. A similar proportion of juvenile violent crime (21%) occurs during the standard juvenile curfew hours of 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. However, the annual number of hours in the curfew period (i.e., 8 hours every day) is four times greater than the number of hours in the 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. period on school days (i.e., 4 hours on one-half of the days in the year). Therefore, the rate of juvenile violence in the afterschool period is four times the rate in the juvenile curfew period. This analysis suggests that the potential for reducing a community's juvenile violent crime rate is greater for efforts to reduce juvenile crime after school than for juvenile curfews.

### Sexual assaults by juveniles peak in the hours after school

The most likely hour of a school day for a juvenile to commit a sexual assault is between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. In fact, more than 1 in 7 sexual assaults by juveniles occur in the 4 hours between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on school days. Unlike other violent crimes, sexual assaults by juveniles on nonschool days are most likely to occur between noon and 1 p.m.

**Juveniles injure more victims in the hours around the close of school than at any other time**

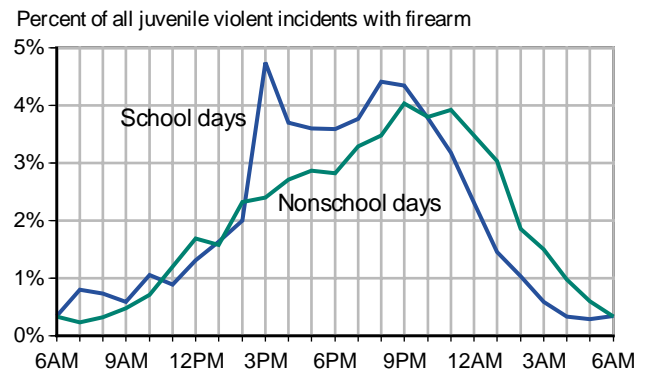
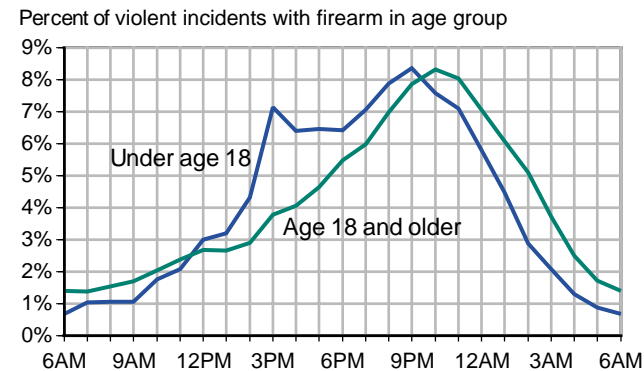
**Violent crime with injury**



■ The number of persons injured by adult offenders increases through the afternoon and evening hours and peaks around 11 p.m.

**In general, the temporal pattern of violent crimes committed by juveniles with firearms is similar to the adult pattern, except for the high proportion of juvenile firearm-involved crimes that occur immediately after school on school days**

**Violent crime committed with a firearm**



Note: Violent crime includes murder, violent sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Data are from 12 States (Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 1991–1996 [machine-readable data files].



# School crime was not uncommon, but fear kept few high schoolers home during a typical month in 1997

## Nearly 4 in 10 high school students were in a physical fight—4 in 100 were injured

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 37% of high school students said they had been in one or more physical fights during the past 12 months. Males were more likely than females to engage in fighting regardless of grade level or race/ethnicity. Males and females in grades 9 and 10 were significantly more likely to fight than those in grade 12.

Percent who were in a physical fight in the past 12 months

	Total	Male	Female
Total	37%	46%	26%
9th grade	45	56	32
10th grade	40	48	30
11th grade	34	44	23
12th grade	29	37	19
White	34	43	21
Black	43	49	38
Hispanic	41	50	30

Hispanics and non-Hispanic blacks were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to fight. This was especially true for females.

Although physical fighting was fairly common among high school students, the proportion of students injured and treated by a doctor or nurse was relatively small (4%).

Percent who were injured in a physical fight in the past 12 months

	Total	Male	Female
Total	4%	5%	2%
9th grade	5	7	3
10th grade	4	5	3
11th grade	3	4	2
12th grade	3	4	2
White	3	3	1
Black	6	7	4
Hispanic	4	6	2

Males were more likely than females to have been injured in a fight. Black and Hispanic students were more likely than white students to suffer fight injuries.

## Fights at high school are fairly common—especially for minority males

Nationwide, 15% of high school students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey. Male students were substantially more apt to fight at school than female students at all grade levels. Males and females in grades 9 and 10 were significantly more likely to fight than those in grade 12.

Percent who were in a physical fight at school in the past 12 months

	Total	Male	Female
Total	15%	20%	9%
9th grade	21	29	12
10th grade	17	22	11
11th grade	13	18	6
12th grade	10	13	5
White	13	19	6
Black	21	25	17
Hispanic	19	25	12

Hispanic and black students were more likely than white students to fight at school. This was especially true for females.

## One-third of high school students had property stolen or vandalized at school

High school students were more likely to experience property crime than fights at school. One-third said they had property such as a car, clothing, or books stolen or deliberately damaged on school property one or more times during the past 12 months. A greater proportion of

male than female students reported such property crimes at school. Students' reports of school property crime did not vary significantly across grade or racial/ethnic groups.

Percent who had property stolen or deliberately damaged at school in the past 30 days

	Total	Male	Female
Total	33%	36%	29%
9th grade	37	40	34
10th grade	35	40	30
11th grade	32	36	28
12th grade	28	30	25
White	33	36	29
Black	34	38	31
Hispanic	32	33	31

## Fear of school-related crime kept 4 in 100 high schoolers home at least once in the past month

Nationwide, 4% of high school students missed at least 1 day of school in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or when traveling to or from school.

Males and females in grade 9 were more likely than those in grade 12 to have felt too unsafe to go to school. Hispanic and black students were more likely than white students to have missed school because they felt unsafe.

Percent who felt too unsafe to go to school in the past 30 days

	Total	Male	Female
Total	4%	4%	4%
9th grade	6	5	6
10th grade	4	4	4
11th grade	4	5	3
12th grade	3	2	3
White	2	2	3
Black	7	8	6
Hispanic	7	7	8

## Half of high school students who said they carried a weapon said they took that weapon to school

### 9% of high school students carried a weapon on school property in the past month

The 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System found that 9% of high school students said that in the past 30 days they had carried a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, or club) on school property. This was half the proportion of students (18%) who said they had carried a weapon anywhere in the past month. Males were more likely than females to say they carried a weapon at school.

Percent who had carried a weapon on school property in the past 30 days

	Total	Male	Female
Total	9%	13%	4%
9th grade	10	15	5
10th grade	8	11	4
11th grade	9	15	3
12th grade	7	10	3
White	8	12	2
Black	9	11	8
Hispanic	10	16	4

### In a year, 7% of high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon at school

The vast majority of students did not report weapon-related threats or injuries during the 12 months prior to the survey. Overall, 7% had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, including 4% of females and 10% of males.

Percent threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past year

	Total	Male	Female
Total	7%	10%	4%
9th grade	10	14	6
10th grade	8	10	5
11th grade	6	9	2
12th grade	6	8	3
White	6	8	4
Black	10	14	6
Hispanic	9	13	5

### Across States, the proportion of high school students carrying weapons to school in 1997 ranged from 5% to 17%

Reporting States	Percent reporting they carried a weapon on school property in the past 30 days			Percent reporting they were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past year		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
U.S. total*	9%	13%	4%	7%	10%	4%
Alabama	11	17	5	8	10	5
Arkansas	12	18	6	8	11	6
<b>California</b> <sup>†</sup>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>
Los Angeles	6	9	3	9	13	5
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>
Connecticut	7	10	3	6	8	5
<b>Delaware</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
Dist. of Columbia	17	19	13	13	18	9
<b>Florida</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
Hawaii	6	9	3	6	8	5
Iowa	9	14	3	7	10	4
Kentucky	15	27	4	7	10	4
Louisiana	7	11	4	8	9	5
Maine	11	19	3	8	9	5
Massachusetts	8	12	4	8	10	4
Michigan	8	13	4	9	13	5
Mississippi	10	15	5	9	13	6
Missouri	10	16	3	8	11	4
Montana	12	19	5	7	9	6
Nevada	10	15	5	9	11	6
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>
New York	9	14	4	7	10	4
<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
North Dakota	8	15	2	6	8	4
Ohio	8	13	3	7	9	5
Rhode Island	8	11	4	8	11	6
South Carolina	10	14	5	9	11	7
South Dakota	9	15	2	5	8	3
<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
Utah	11	18	3	8	11	4
Vermont	12	19	5	7	10	4
West Virginia	11	19	3	8	10	6
Wisconsin	5	8	3	8	9	6
Wyoming	13	22	4	7	11	4

\*U.S. total is based on a national sample.

<sup>†</sup>Data do not include students from the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Note: **Bold** indicates data are unweighted because the overall response rate was less than 60%. Thus, data apply only to respondents.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Kann et al.'s Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 1997, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 47(SS-3).

# 1 in 5 juvenile arrestees carried a gun all or most of the time

## Gun use and crime among male arrestees/detainees is studied

The National Institute of Justice interviewed a sample of arrested and/or detained individuals during the first 6 months of 1995 to learn about gun acquisition and use. Seven of eleven study sites provided data on juvenile males: Denver, District of Columbia, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Phoenix, St. Louis, and San Diego.

Although sites varied, the juvenile males studied were disproportionately black or Hispanic, and most were age 15 or older. Because 5 of the 7 sites limited the study to juveniles in detention rather than all juveniles arrested, the offense profile for juveniles studied was skewed to more serious offenses (crimes against persons ranged from 15% to 29%). Also, the proportion of juveniles who admitted to current membership in a gang ranged from 2% to 41%.

## Juveniles are more likely than arrestees overall to commit a crime with a gun

The proportion of respondents who were charged with a weapons offense ranged from 1% to 12%. Among the juvenile males interviewed, however, 20% said they carried a gun all or most of the time, compared with 14% of arrestees overall.

Juvenile arrestees were nearly twice as likely as arrestees overall to say they had stolen a gun (25% vs. 13%). Gang members and drug sellers were also more likely than other arrestees to have stolen a gun (each about 30%).

Overall, 23% of arrestees who owned a gun had used one in a crime. The proportion was higher for juveniles (33%) and higher still for drug sellers (42%) and gang members (50%).

## Arrestees were often the victims of gun violence

Juvenile males and gang members were more likely than arrestees overall to have been shot at. The proportion who said they had been shot at was about 4 in 10 overall, compared with about 5 in 10 for juvenile males and about 8 in 10 for gang members.

Although juveniles were more likely than adults to be shot at, they were not more likely to suffer gunshot injury. Overall, 16% of arrestees reported gunshot injuries.

## Arrestees say they carry guns for protection and respect

Two-thirds of respondents said they had a gun for protection/self-defense. Almost one-third of arrestees agreed that, "Your crowd respects you if you have a gun." Among drug sellers and gang members, the proportion agreeing was higher (4 in 10). When asked when using a gun was appropriate, 9% of arrestees agreed that, "It is okay to shoot someone who disrespected you." Among juveniles, the proportion agreeing was double (18%). Among drug sellers, 21% agreed; among gang members, 34% agreed.

## More crime guns were recovered from youth ages 16 and 17 than from adults of any age over 26

In 1996, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms established the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative to trace crime guns (i.e., any firearm illegally possessed, used in a crime, or suspected to have been used in a crime) recovered by law enforcement. More than 76,000 crime guns were traced from 27 cities during a 1-year period between 1997 and 1998. Almost one-half (44%) of crime guns were recovered from persons under the age of 25; 11% were recovered from youth age 17 or younger.

Age	Percent of crime guns
All	100%
17 or younger	11
18-24	32
25 or older	56

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## 4 in 5 recovered firearms were handguns

A handgun was the most common type of recovered firearm traced by law enforcement. Of these, a semiautomatic pistol was the most frequently possessed handgun among all age groups (52%). Semiautomatic pistols were more common among youth under age 18 (58%) and those ages 18-24 (60%) than among persons age 25 or older (47%).

Type of gun	Age		
	17 or younger	18-24	25 or older
Total	100%	100%	100%
Semiautomatic pistol	58	60	47
Revolver	29	24	27
Long gun	12	15	25

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

## More than half of high school seniors have used an illicit drug at least once—more have used alcohol

### The Monitoring the Future Study tracks the drug use of secondary school students

In 1998, the Monitoring the Future (MTF) Study asked a nationally representative sample of nearly 50,000 secondary school students in public and private schools to describe their drug use patterns through self-administered questionnaires. Surveying seniors annually since 1975, the study expanded in 1991 to include 8th and 10th graders. By design, MTF excludes dropouts and institutionalized, homeless, and runaway youth.

### More than half of seniors in 1998 said they used illicit drugs

In 1998, 54% of all seniors said they had at least tried illicit drugs. Marijuana was by far the most commonly used illicit drug: in 1998, 49% of high school seniors said they had tried marijuana. About half of those who said they had used marijuana (or 25% of all seniors) said they had not used any other illicit drug. About 3 in 10 seniors (29%) (or slightly more than half of seniors who used illicit drugs) had used an illicit drug other than marijuana. While almost half of high school seniors used marijuana at least once, 37% said they had used it in the past year, and 23% said they used it in the previous month. A large number of seniors used marijuana on nearly a daily basis. MTF asked students if they had used marijuana on 20 or more occasions in the previous 30 days. In 1998, 6% of high school seniors said they used marijuana that frequently.

Sixteen percent (16%) of high school seniors reported using stimulants, making stimulants the

second most prevalent illicit drug after marijuana. Inhalants were the next most prevalent drug: 15% of seniors reported they had used inhalants. Stimulants also ranked second to marijuana in terms of current use.

In 1998, almost 1 in 10 seniors (9%) said they had used cocaine. More than half of this group (6%) reported that they used it in the previous year, and about one-quarter of users (2% of seniors) had used it in the preceding 30 days. About 1 in 20 seniors reported previous use of crack cocaine: about 1 in 40 in the previous year, and about 1 in 100 in the previous month.

Heroin was the least commonly used illicit drug, with 2.0% of seniors reporting they had used it at

least once. MTF found that a greater proportion of younger students (2.3% each for 8th and 10th graders) reported heroin use. These higher rates for younger age groups may reflect the fact that heroin users are more likely than other students to drop out of school before their senior year.

### Alcohol and tobacco use is more widespread than use of any illicit drug

In 1998, 4 in 5 high school seniors said they had tried alcohol at least once; half said they had used it in the previous month. Even among 8th graders, the use of alcohol was high: one-half had tried alcohol, and almost one-quarter had used it in the month prior to the survey.

### More high school seniors use marijuana on a daily basis than drink alcohol daily

	Proportion of seniors who used			
	in lifetime	in last year	in last month	daily*
Alcohol	81.4%	74.3%	52.0%	3.9%
Been drunk	62.4	52.0	32.9	—
Cigarettes	65.3	—	35.1	22.4
Marijuana/hashish	49.1	37.5	22.8	5.6
Stimulants	16.4	10.1	4.6	0.3
Inhalants	15.2	6.2	2.3	0.2
LSD	12.6	7.6	3.2	0.1
Cocaine, not crack	9.3	5.7	2.4	0.2
Tranquilizers	8.5	5.5	2.4	0.1
MDMA (ecstasy)	5.8	3.6	1.5	0.2
Crack cocaine	4.4	2.5	1.0	0.1
PCP	3.9	2.1	1.0	0.3
Steroids	2.7	1.7	1.1	0.3
Heroin	2.0	1.0	0.5	0.1

■ More than 1 in 5 high school seniors smoked cigarettes on a regular basis, with more than 1 in 10 smoking half a pack or more per day.

\*Used on 20 or more occasions in the last 30 days.

—Not included in survey.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman's *Drug use by American young people begins to turn downward*.

Perhaps of greater concern are the juveniles who indicated heavy drinking (defined as five or more drinks in a row) in the preceding 2 weeks: 31% of seniors, 24% of 10th graders, and 14% of 8th graders reported this behavior.

Tobacco use was less prevalent than alcohol use. In 1998, 65% of 12th graders and 46% of 8th graders had tried cigarettes, and 35% of seniors and 19% of 8th graders had smoked in the preceding month. Of more concern is the fact that 22% of seniors, 16% of 10th graders, and 9% of 8th graders were currently smoking cigarettes on a regular basis.

#### **Males were more likely than females to drink alcohol and to use drugs**

Males were more likely than females to drink alcohol at all or to drink heavily. Alcohol use in the past 30 days was reported by 57% of males and 47% of females. Almost 2 in 5 males and more than 1 in 4 females had five or more drinks in a row in the previous 2 weeks.

Males were more likely than females to have used marijuana in the previous year (42% vs. 33%), but the proportions of male and female high school seniors using illicit drugs other than marijuana in the previous year were more similar (22% vs. 18%). Males had higher annual use rates for inhalants, LSD, crack, cocaine, steroids, and heroin. Annual use rates were similar for males and females for stimulants, barbiturates, and tranquilizers.

#### **Blacks had lower drug, alcohol, and tobacco use rates than whites**

In 1998, 42% of white seniors said they had smoked in the past 30 days, compared with 15% of blacks. More than one-half of white seniors reported alcohol use in the past 30 days, compared with one-third of black seniors. Whites were three times more likely than blacks to have had five or more drinks in a row in the previous 2 weeks (36% vs. 12%).

The same general pattern held for illicit drugs. The proportion of seniors who reported using marijuana in the past year was lower among blacks than whites (30% vs. 40%).

Whites were seven times more likely than blacks to have used cocaine in the previous year. White seniors were also three times as likely as blacks to have tried heroin at least once and nine times as likely to have tried LSD.

#### **Fewer than 1 in 10 high school students used alcohol or marijuana at school**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, 6% of high school students said they had had at least one drink of alcohol on school property in the past month. Similarly, 7% said they had used marijuana on school property during the same time period.

#### **Drug use was more common among males than females, and among whites than blacks**

	Proportion of seniors who used in previous year				
	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic
Alcohol*	57.3%	46.9%	57.7%	33.3%	49.8%
Been drunk*	39.0	26.6	39.3	13.8	25.9
Marijuana/hashish	41.7	33.0	39.9	30.0	37.2
Cigarettes*	36.3	33.3	41.7	14.9	26.6
Stimulants	10.3	9.8	12.1	2.8	7.0
Inhalants	7.5	5.1	7.9	1.7	4.5
LSD	9.3	5.7	9.5	1.1	5.9
Cocaine, not crack	6.8	4.5	6.3	0.9	6.7
Barbiturates	6.3	4.8	6.5	1.4	3.3
Tranquilizers	6.3	4.7	6.2	1.0	3.3
Crack cocaine	3.1	2.0	2.6	0.3	3.9
Steroids	2.8	0.3	1.5	0.9	2.4
Heroin	1.4	0.7	1.2	0.4	0.8

Note: Race proportions include data for 1997 in addition to 1998, to increase subgroup sample size and provide more stable estimates.

\*Alcohol and cigarette proportions are based on use in the prior 30 days.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman's *National survey results on drug use from the Monitoring the Future Study, 1975–1998. Volume 1: Secondary school students.*

Overall, males were more likely than females to drink alcohol or use marijuana at school. This was true for all grades and all racial/ethnic groups. Only females showed significant variation across grade levels, with a greater proportion of 9th graders drinking alcohol or using marijuana at school than 12th graders. Hispanic students were more likely than non-Hispanic white students to drink alcohol or use marijuana at school.

Percent who had used on school property in the past 30 days

	Total	Male	Female
<b>Alcohol</b>			
Total	6%	7%	4%
9th grade	6	6	5
10th grade	5	6	3
11th grade	6	8	4
12th grade	6	9	2
White	5	6	3
Black	6	7	4
Hispanic	8	9	8
<b>Marijuana</b>			
Total	7%	9%	5%
9th grade	8	10	7
10th grade	6	8	4
11th grade	8	10	5
12th grade	6	8	3
White	6	7	4
Black	9	13	5
Hispanic	10	14	6

**High school students were three times more likely to use alcohol than to use marijuana before age 13**

	Percent who had used before age 13					
	Alcohol			Marijuana		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	31%	36%	26%	10%	12%	7%
9th grade	42	45	39	15	19	11
10th grade	32	36	28	10	12	8
11th grade	30	35	23	8	11	5
12th grade	23	29	15	6	8	4
White	29	33	24	8	9	6
Black	33	39	27	11	16	7
Hispanic	38	43	32	13	17	8

- Nearly one-third of high school students said they had drunk alcohol (more than just a few sips) before they turned 13; marijuana use before age 13 was reported by 1 in 10 students, and cocaine use before age 13 was reported by 1 in 100.
- Females were less likely than males to have used alcohol or marijuana before age 13. Males and females in grade 9 were more likely than those in grade 12 to have tried alcohol and marijuana before age 13.
- Compared with non-Hispanic white students, a greater proportion of Hispanic students had tried alcohol or marijuana before age 13.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Kann et al.'s Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 1997, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 47(SS-3).

One in three high school students said they had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property at least once during the past 12 months. For all grades and all racial/ethnic groups, males were more likely than females to say they had been offered, sold, or given illegal drugs at school. Hispanic students were more likely than white or black students to report being offered, sold, or given illegal drugs at school.

Percent who had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in past 12 months

	Total	Male	Female
Total	32%	37%	25%
9th grade	31	35	28
10th grade	33	40	25
11th grade	33	39	26
12th grade	29	36	20
White	31	36	25
Black	25	35	17
Hispanic	41	47	34

**Across States, the proportion of high school students who had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the year ranged from 15% to 42%**

	Percent who had used alcohol on school property in the past 30 days			Percent who had used marijuana on school property in the past 30 days			Percent who had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in the past year		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
U.S. Total	6%	7%	4%	7%	9%	5%	32%	37%	25%
Alabama	6	8	5	5	8	2	29	36	23
Arkansas	6	7	4	8	11	4	26	31	21
<b>California*</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>30</b>
Los Angeles	9	9	8	10	13	7	36	42	31
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>
Connecticut	7	8	6	8	10	6	29	33	26
<b>Delaware</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>33</b>
Dist. of Columbia	12	17	7	14	18	9	25	29	20
<b>Florida</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>
Hawaii	9	9	8	13	15	10	41	47	35
Iowa	4	6	3	5	6	3	23	27	18
Kentucky	7	7	6	8	11	4	34	40	28
Louisiana	5	7	4	5	7	3	28	33	23
Maine	6	7	5	10	12	6	41	45	36
Massachusetts	6	8	5	10	13	7	42	47	38
Michigan	7	8	6	9	12	6	36	43	30
Mississippi	7	9	5	5	9	2	24	30	19
Missouri	5	7	4	9	12	5	26	31	20
Montana	8	10	7	9	11	7	35	38	31
Nevada	8	8	8	10	11	8	38	42	33
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>
New York	6	8	5	8	10	5	27	33	22
<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>26</b>
North Dakota	7	8	6	8	8	7	29	31	27
Ohio	4	5	3	7	9	5	28	33	23
Rhode Island	7	9	6	9	12	7	29	34	25
South Carolina	6	8	4	7	10	3	—	—	—
South Dakota	8	11	5	5	8	2	30	34	26
<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>
Utah	5	6	4	5	6	3	27	29	25
Vermont	6	8	4	11	14	7	40	46	34
West Virginia	7	9	4	9	14	5	34	39	29
Wisconsin	4	5	3	8	10	5	28	31	25
Wyoming	7	9	6	8	10	6	32	36	27

\*Data do not include students from the Los Angeles Unified School District.

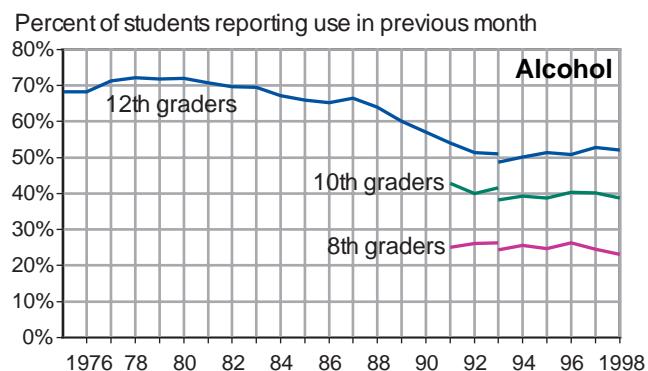
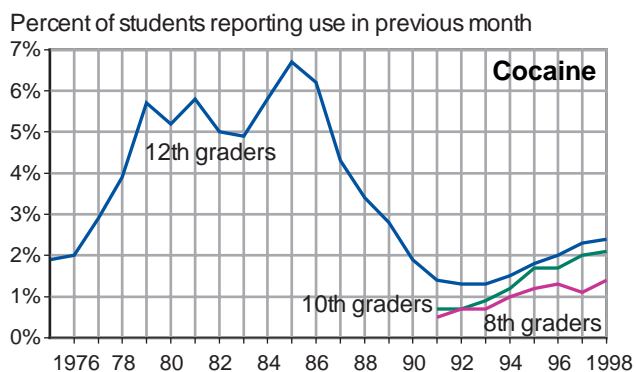
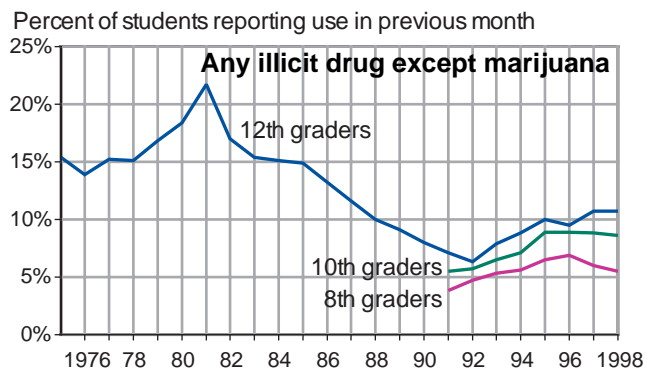
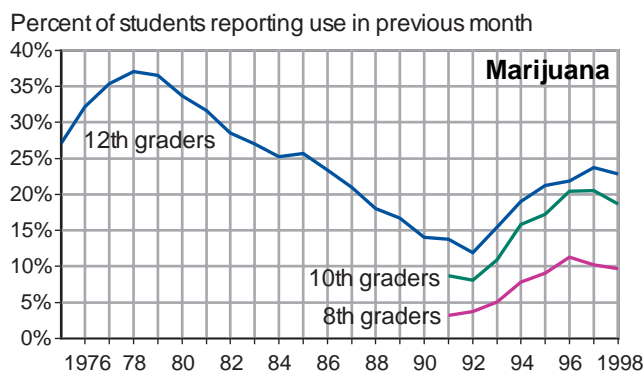
—Data not available

Note: **Bold** indicates data are unweighted because the overall response rate was less than 60%. Thus, data apply only to respondents.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Kann et al.'s Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 1997, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 47(SS-3).

## Illicit drug use by juveniles declined during the 1980's but has increased since 1992

In 1998, the proportion of high school seniors who reported they had used illicit drugs in the previous month, while above the 1992 levels, was well below the levels reported in the early 1980's



- After years of continuous decline, reported drug use by high school seniors grew in several categories after 1992. Similar increases in drug use were reported by 8th and 10th graders, although their levels of use were below those of 12th graders.
- In recent years, the proportion of students reporting use of illicit drugs during the 30 days prior to the survey appears to have stabilized for some categories of drug use. There was a statistically significant decline in reported marijuana use among 10th graders between 1997 and 1998.
- In 1998, the proportion of seniors who said they had used marijuana in the past month was more than double the proportion who reported past-month use of illicit drugs other than marijuana (23% vs. 11%) but less than half the proportion who reported past-month alcohol use (52%).
- Past-month cocaine use among seniors peaked in 1985 at nearly 7%. Although use levels for cocaine have increased recently, the 1998 level is slightly above 2%.
- Between 1997 and 1998, alcohol use among 8th and 10th graders remained unchanged.

Note: The survey question on alcohol use was revised in 1993 to indicate that a "drink" meant "more than a few sips." In 1993, half the sample responded to the original question and half to the revised question. In 1994 through 1998, all respondents were asked the revised question.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman's *Drug use by American young people begins to turn downward*.



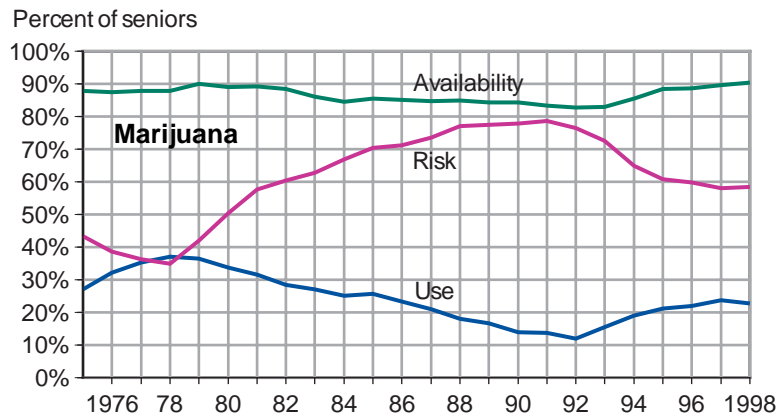
### Change in students' use of marijuana and alcohol is tied to their perception of possible harm from use

The annual Monitoring the Future Study, in addition to collecting information about students' use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, also collects data on students' perceptions regarding the availability of these substances and the risk of harm from using them.

Between 1975 and 1998, the proportion of high school seniors reporting use of marijuana in the 30 days prior to the survey fluctuated, peaking in 1978 and then declining consistently through 1992. Since then, reported use has increased, but the 1998 rate was still far below the peak level of 1978. When the perceived risk of "great harm" from either regular or occasional use of marijuana increased, use declined; when perceived risk declined, use increased. The perception that obtaining marijuana was "fairly easy" or "very easy" remained relatively constant between 1975 and 1998.

Students' reported use of alcohol also shifted from 1975 to 1998. After 1978, alcohol use declined through 1993. Alcohol use fluctuated within a limited range thereafter, but the 1998 rate was far lower than the 1978 rate. As with marijuana, when the perceived risk of "great harm" from either weekend "binge" drinking or daily drinking increased, use declined; when perceived risk declined, use increased.

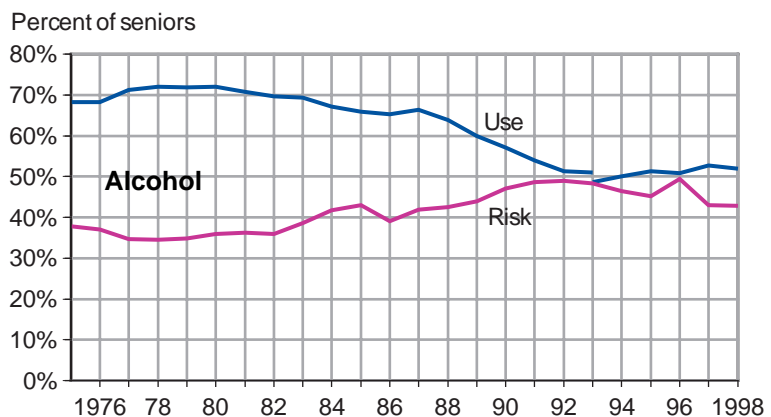
Over the past 20 years, while availability remained constant, changes in marijuana and alcohol use reflected changes in perceived harm



Availability: Percent saying fairly easy or very easy to get.

Risk: Percent saying great risk of harm in regular use.

Use: Percent using once or more in the past 30 days.



Risk: Percent saying great risk of harm in having five or more drinks once or twice each weekend.

Use: Percent using once or more in the past 30 days.

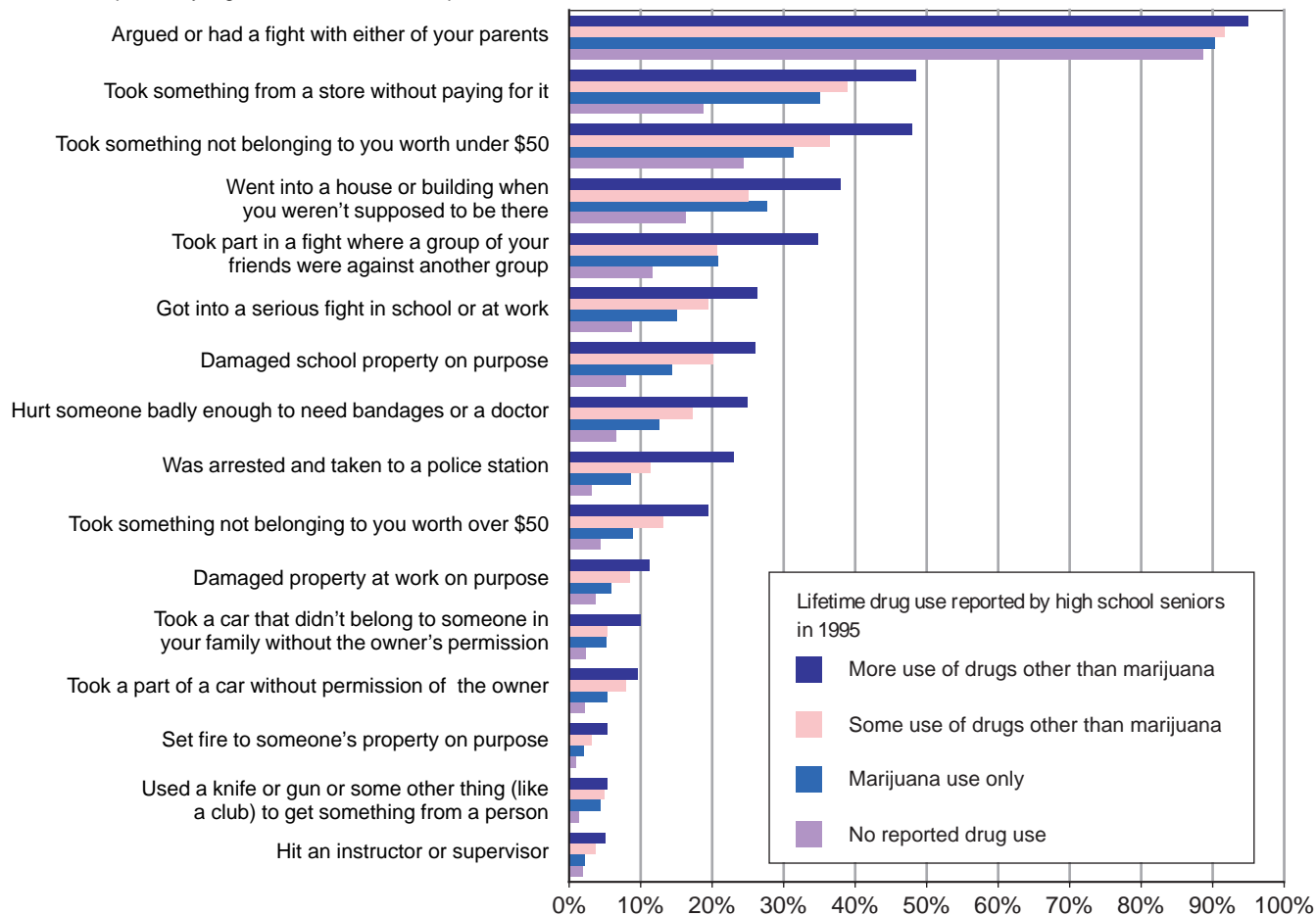
Note: The survey question on alcohol use was revised in 1993 to indicate that a "drink" meant "more than a few sips." In 1993, half the sample responded to the original question. In 1994 through 1998, all respondents were asked the revised question.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman's *Drug use by American young people begins to turn downward*.

## The proportion of seniors who reported breaking the law was greater among drug users than nonusers

### Nearly all high school seniors said they had argued with their parents, and substantial proportions reported breaking the law—law-violating behavior was more common for those who used drugs

Behavior reported by high school seniors in the past 12 months:



- Half of seniors (50%) reported no drug use; 21% reported using only marijuana (or hashish); 11% said they had used drugs other than marijuana (LSD/psychedelics, cocaine, amphetamines, tranquilizers, methaqualone, barbiturates) but had never used any one class of them more than twice and had never used heroin; 14% said they had used drugs other than marijuana three or more times and had never used heroin; and 2% said they had used heroin at least once.
- Nearly 2 in 10 seniors who said they had never used illicit drugs reported that in the past year they had taken something from a store without paying. Among those who had used marijuana only, the figure was more than 3 in 10; for those reporting some use of other drugs, the figure was nearly 4 in 10; for those reporting more use of other drugs, it was nearly 5 in 10.
- Of seniors who said they had used drugs other than marijuana three or more times, 35% reported that in the past year they had taken part in a fight where a group of their friends was against another group; the proportion for those in the "some use" and "marijuana only" categories was 21%; among seniors reporting no drug use the proportion was 12%.

Note: Detailed data for those reporting heroin use are not presented because there were too few cases.

Source: Graph developed from data presented in Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley's *Monitoring the Future, questionnaire responses from the Nation's high school seniors, 1995*.

## Gang problems now affect more jurisdictions than before—including rural and suburban areas

### Information about gangs in the U.S. has increased markedly, but forming an accurate national picture remains difficult

Until recently, no national-level data were collected on the number of gangs or gang members, the juvenile proportion of gang members, or the volume of gang crime. This has begun to change in the past few years. A National Youth Gang Survey is now conducted annually for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention by the National Youth Gang Center. The survey gathers basic data on gangs from police and sheriffs' departments across the country. The 1996 survey, which collected information for the year 1995 from a nationally representative sample of 2,629 law enforcement agencies, was extensive enough to shed considerable

light on the scope of youth gang activity nationwide. In addition, analyses of several large-scale youth surveys have yielded insight into the dynamics of gang involvement and patterns of gang membership and gang crime.

Nevertheless, it remains difficult to form a clear statistical picture of youth gangs in America. While most youth gang definitions share a handful of common elements—a self-formed, recurrently interacting group, a common involvement in crime, communication through symbols, control of a particular territory or enterprise—there are no universally agreed-upon criteria for identifying gangs and gang members. Crucial distinctions between active core members, fringe members, and mere “wannabes” are typically lost in gang membership statistics. Since

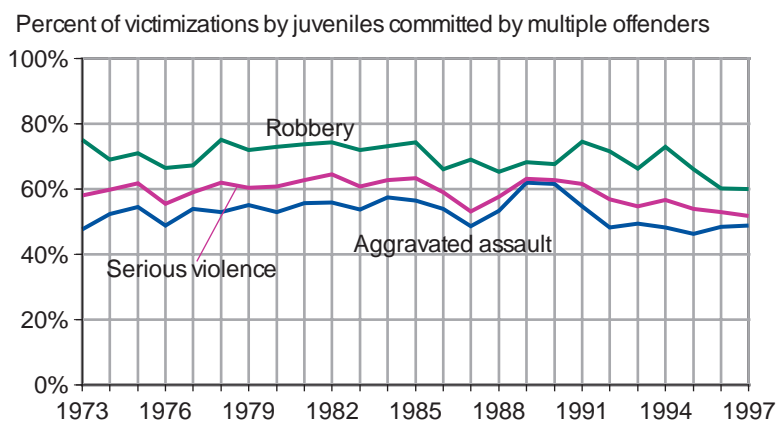
there is no uniform procedure for purging the files of no-longer-active gang members, law enforcement agencies' estimates of the number and age range of gang members in their jurisdictions may be artificially inflated. Also, political pressures to deny or minimize local gang problems—not to mention monetary incentives to exaggerate them—undoubtedly play a role in distorting gang membership statistics.

Estimating the volume of gang crime is also difficult. Some jurisdictions that acknowledge gang problems—even some that maintain files on gangs and gang members—do not keep track of gang-related criminal activity as such in their records. Some do so only for certain kinds of incidents, such as gang-related homicides. Even the definition of “gang crime” varies from place to place. In some cities, gang crime is member defined—all offenses involving gang members as perpetrators or victims, alone or in groups, are counted as gang crimes. In others, gang crime is motive defined—only offenses committed on behalf of the gang, such as crimes committed in defense of territory, retaliations, intimidation of witnesses, and graffiti, are counted.

### The Nation's youth gang problem is substantial and affects all sorts of communities

The 1996 National Youth Gang Survey indicates that an estimated 31,000 gangs were operating in close to 4,800 U.S. cities in 1995. These gangs had more than 846,000 members, half of whom were under age 18. These estimates are higher than those emerging from most previous gang studies. Regardless of whether this reflects actual growth in gang membership, more comprehensive

### The proportion of juvenile crime committed in groups did not change appreciably between 1973 and 1997



Note: It is improper to use these data to estimate the proportion of juvenile crime that is gang crime. Most juvenile crime has been committed in groups over the entire time period represented. It is, however, interesting to note that the large reported increase in juvenile gang activity in the late 1980's and early 1990's did not result in any apparent increase in the proportion of juvenile crime committed in groups.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 1973–1997 *National Crime Victimization Survey* data [Web site data files].

surveying, or other factors, the 1996 survey makes clear that gang problems now affect more jurisdictions than before, including many smaller cities and rural and suburban areas with no previous gang experience. Proportionally more big-city police departments (population 25,000 or more) responding to the survey reported an active gang presence in their jurisdictions in 1995 than did departments in other types of jurisdictions. However, substantial proportions of the police and sheriffs' departments in suburbs, smaller towns (population between 2,500 and 25,000), and even rural counties reported active gangs in 1995.

Type of jurisdiction	Percent reporting active gangs	Average year of gang problem onset
Big cities	74%	1989
Suburbs	57	1990
Small cities	34	1992
Rural areas	25	1993

Gang problems have emerged more recently in rural areas and small towns than in big cities and suburbs.

### The spread of gang problems is not due to gang migration

While it is true that gangs have proliferated in recent years and that the problem has spread from large cities to small towns and rural areas, this does not mean that the physical migration of gang members is the cause. Most studies have concluded that, while such migration does occur, it does not play a major role in gang proliferation. Some exceptionally well-organized gangs are thought to be engaged in interstate drug trafficking and to be deliberately expanding their reach through member relocation. But overall, migrating gang members are relatively

few, and their movements are attributable to normal residential relocation. Most law enforcement agencies regard their local gang problems as "home grown."

### Gang demographics are changing as gangs emerge in new areas

Law enforcement agencies surveyed were asked to report the ages and racial and ethnic backgrounds of gang members in their jurisdictions.

Demographic profile of gang members, 1995	
Total number	846,000 100%
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	90%
Female	10
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	44%
Black	35
White	14
Asian	5
Other	2
<b>Age</b>	
14 or younger	16%
15–17	34
18–24	37
25 or older	13

A comparison between these figures and those emerging from previous surveys suggests that white participation in gangs is on the rise. The change may be associated with the proliferation of gangs in rural counties and small cities, where the white proportion of gang membership (reported at 32% and 31%, respectively) is much higher than in large cities.

The proportion of female gang members, while small, may also be increasing. While respondents reported that in 1995 about 10% of gang members were female, the best

estimate of female gang participation emerging from a similar 1992 survey was only 6%. Here again, part of this change may be associated with the emergence of new gangs in smaller cities, where female gang participation is higher. The change may also be associated with the fact that the percentage of female gang members also increased in nearly three-quarters of the 55 cities that reported female gang members in both the 1992 and 1996 surveys.

It should be noted that there are some marked differences between gang demographic profiles based on law enforcement records (like those described above) and those emerging from youth surveys. Most notably, those who identify themselves as gang members in response to youth surveys tend to include many more females and many more non-minority males than are found in law enforcement records on gangs. For example, in a survey of nearly 6,000 8th graders completed in 1995 as part of a national evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program, 25% of self-reported gang members were white and 38% were female.

### The criminal activities of gang members are extensive and varied

Crimes that are designated "gang-related" in law enforcement agencies' records tend to be overwhelmingly violent. In 93 cities that kept data on gang-related criminal activity in 1992, homicides and other violent crimes accounted for more than half of the recorded gang crimes, while property crimes accounted for less than 15% and drug crimes only about 10%. But this is not necessarily an accurate reflection of

gang members' criminal activities. Law enforcement agencies responding to the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey reported significant youth gang involvement in a range of non-violent crimes in their jurisdictions in 1995, especially larceny, burglary, and auto theft. The types of crimes in which youth gangs were involved varied according to locality, however. Large-city and suburban youth gangs were more prone to aggravated assault and robbery than were those in small towns and rural areas. Gang involvement in burglary was more common in suburban and rural areas than in small and large cities.

In any case, self-report studies indicate that youth gang members are responsible for a disproportionate share of all offenses, violent and nonviolent. For example, in a large-scale survey of Rochester, NY, youth by Thornberry and Burch, gang members making up less than a third of the sample accounted for 69% of the violent acts, 68% of the property crimes, and 70% of the drug sales reported in interviews. Surveys in other cities have yielded even more disproportionate results. Even when compared with similarly situated (that is, comparably at risk) young people—including those

who associate to the same extent with delinquent peers—gang members commit crimes at considerably higher rates than nonmembers.

Also, individual gang members tend to be more deeply involved in crime while active in gangs than either before joining or after leaving. These findings strongly suggest that a gang is much more than a mere association of criminally inclined young people and that the gang structure itself may encourage, facilitate, or even demand a heightened level of criminality among members.

#### **The typical gang member's progress from "wannabe" status to serious crime is gradual**

According to data compiled by Huff from confidential gang interviews in selected urban and suburban communities in Colorado, Florida, and Ohio, the median age for beginning to associate with gangs was 13, while the median age for actually joining—as well as the median age for first arrest—was 14. A companion study tracking the arrest histories of 83 gang members in Columbus, OH, found a clear progression in offense seriousness, beginning with property crimes and moving, within about 1.5 to 2 years, to violent crimes and drug crimes.

#### **The extent of organized gang involvement in drug trafficking is difficult to gauge**

On average, law enforcement agencies canvassed in the 1996 survey reported that gangs were involved in 43% of the illegal drug sales in their jurisdictions. While this percentage is remarkably high, it may be indicative only of the activities of individual gang members or drug-selling cliques within gangs, rather than the gangs themselves. Generally, researchers have concluded that, with some notable exceptions, street gang structures do not organizationally support drug distribution.

#### **Gang presence in schools is increasing**

While the overall amount of school crime reported by students showed no significant increase between 1989 and 1995, the proportion of those students who reported the presence of gangs in their schools increased from 15% to 28%. Moreover, the violent victimization rate for students in schools where gangs were reported was 7.5%, considerably higher than the 2.7% rate for students in schools with no reported gang presence.

## 54% of males and 73% of females who enter the juvenile justice system never return on a new referral

### Official records can highlight gender differences in law-violating behavior

Information on the delinquent behavior of youth captured in the official records of law enforcement agencies and juvenile courts forms the picture of juvenile offenders available to the juvenile justice system. Self-report surveys of offending certainly yield more (and more varied) law-violating behavior. Official records, however, can highlight differences in the behaviors of various categories of juveniles—for example, differences in the law-violating behaviors of males and females.

To investigate gender differences in law-violating behavior, the records of the Maricopa County Juvenile Court (in Phoenix, AZ) were studied. Maricopa County is a large, urban area with a total population of nearly 2.5 million in 1995. The court's automated information system contains a description of each referral made to court intake since 1969. Records studied capture the complete juvenile court careers of more than 150,000 youth born between 1962 and 1977—youth who reached age 18 (and therefore were outside the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court) between 1980 and 1995.

During these years, there was a standing policy in the county that all youth arrested be referred to juvenile court for screening. Therefore, the court records actually provide a complete history of a youth's official contacts with the juvenile justice system.

### 3 in 10 youth with official delinquent careers are female

In this community, 31% of the youth with an official record of delinquency were female. This means that for every two males with an official delinquency record, there was one female whose behavior brought her to the attention of the juvenile justice system.

Males who came to the attention of the justice system were likely to have substantially more court contacts before they became an adult than were females: 46% of males referred to court intake in Maricopa County for the first time were referred at least one more time, compared with only 27% of females. In fact, 19% of males eventually accrued four or more referrals, compared with only 5% of females.

### A smaller proportion of female careers contained a serious offense

Serious offenses include murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, kidnapping, violent sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, serious larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, weapons offenses, and drug trafficking. Female careers were less likely to include a serious crime than were male careers: 16% of female careers and 42% of male careers included at least one serious offense referral. Even for youth with four or more referrals in their careers, a smaller proportion of female (62%) than male (86%) careers included a serious referral. Violent referrals were also found in a smaller proportion of female than

male careers (3% vs. 10%), even in those careers with four or more total referrals (18% vs. 30%).

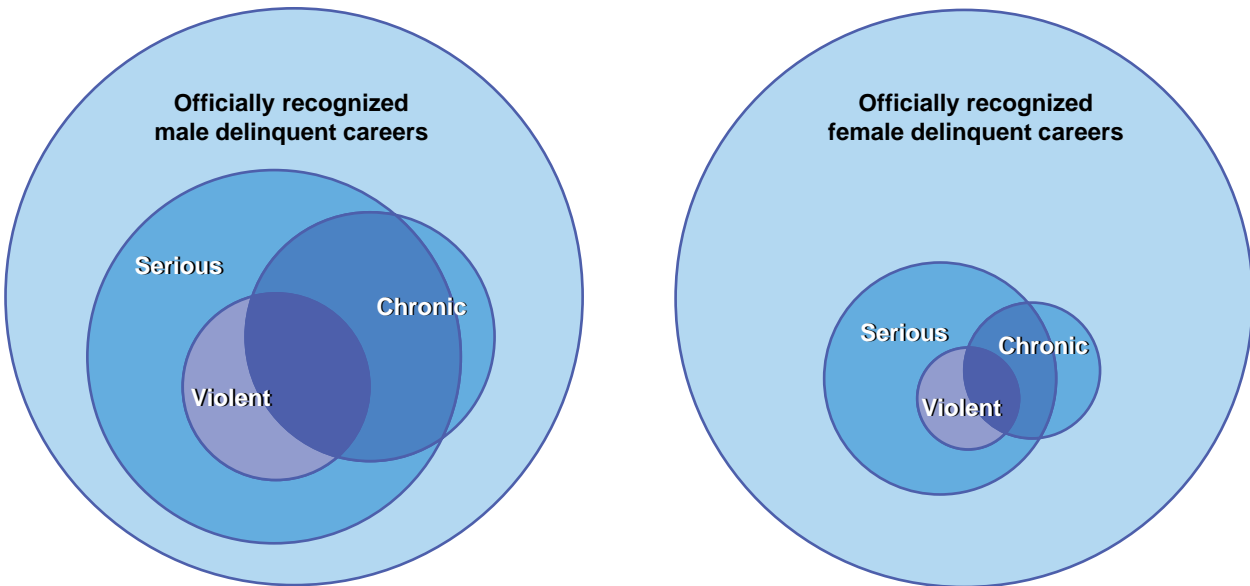
A chronic offender is defined as a youth with four or more referrals to court intake. Male chronic offenders were responsible for 52% of all male delinquency referrals, 62% of all male serious referrals, and 63% of all male violent referrals. In contrast, female chronic offenders were responsible for just 19% of all female delinquency referrals, 32% of all female serious referrals, and 33% of all female violent referrals.

### About 1 in 4 males and females with delinquency records was first referred before age 14

The ages at which females and males enter the juvenile justice system were similar: 28% of males and 23% of females who would eventually have an official juvenile delinquency record were referred for the first time before age 14. A similar proportion of males (21%) and females (19%) had their first referral at age 17.

Youth who were known to the juvenile justice system by age 13 were responsible for a disproportionate share of the serious and the violent careers: 40% of all males with a violent career and 34% of all females with a violent career had been seen by the justice system by age 13. These early-onset offenders were also more likely to have long careers. Of chronic offenders, 52% of males and 53% of females had their first referral by age 13.

**10% of males and 3% of females who had contact with the juvenile justice system for a delinquent offense were charged with at least one violent offense by the time they reached age 18**



- The portion of the large circle not covered by the circles for serious, chronic, and violent offenders represents offender careers with fewer than four referrals and no referrals for a serious offense. Overlaps represent careers with multiple attributes. The circles and their overlaps are drawn in proportion to the number of careers with those attributes.
- **Violent offenses** include murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, kidnaping, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.
- **Serious offenses** include the violent offenses plus burglary, serious larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, weapons offenses, and drug trafficking.
- **Chronic offenders** are youth with four or more referrals to the juvenile justice system.
- The delinquency careers of 1,000 typical males with officially recognized delinquent behavior prior to age 18 had the following characteristics: 557 careers involved fewer than four referrals, with no referrals for a serious offense; 188 careers involved four or more referrals; 416 careers involved a referral for a serious offense; 103 careers involved at least one referral for a violent offense; and 57 careers involved at least four referrals, with at least one for a violent crime.
- The delinquency careers of 1,000 typical females with officially recognized delinquent behavior prior to age 18 had the following characteristics: 821 careers involved fewer than four referrals, with no referrals for a serious offense; 55 careers involved four or more referrals; 158 careers involved a referral for a serious offense; 32 careers involved at least one referral for a violent offense; and 10 careers involved at least four referrals, with at least one for a violent crime.

Note: The data supporting this presentation capture the court careers of all 150,000 youth born between 1962 and 1977 (i.e., youth who turned age 18 between 1980 and 1995) who were referred to the Maricopa County Juvenile Court in Phoenix, AZ, for a delinquent act. Of these youth, 69% were male and 31% were female. The figures above represent the male and female cohorts with circles of equal size for ease of reading. If the two circles were drawn in proportion to the number of youth in each cohort, the male circle would have more than twice the area of the female circle.

Source: Authors' analysis of data supplied to the National Center for Juvenile Justice's *National Juvenile Court Data Archive: Maricopa County Juvenile Court case records, birth cohort 1962–1977* [machine-readable data file].

## Allowing one youth to leave high school for a life of crime and drug abuse costs society \$1.7–\$2.3 million

A 1998 study by Mark Cohen estimated the external marginal costs imposed on society by the average career criminal, heavy drug abuser, and high school dropout. Though necessarily somewhat speculative, cost estimates of this kind help to convey a sense of the actual “waste” involved in a wasted life—as well as the substantial potential benefits to be expected from even modestly successful prevention efforts aimed at high-risk youth.

The portion of the study that focused on crime costs was based on estimates of the number and range of crimes committed by the average career criminal (68–80 crimes of various levels of seriousness, over an active career of about 10 years, including 4 as a juvenile); the tangible and intangible costs that such crimes impose on their victims; the expenses borne by the criminal justice system in connection with investigation, processing, and punishment; and productivity losses caused by incarceration. Discounted to a present-value dollar amount, the total crime costs imposed by a single lifetime of crime were estimated at \$1.3–\$1.5 million.

Note that these are *external* costs borne by those other than the perpetrator—victims, fellow citizens, and taxpayers. About half are intangible costs—pain, suffering, and diminished quality of life—imposed on victims alone and monetized according to widely accepted techniques developed by economists for

Invoice	
<b>To:</b>	<b>American public</b>
<b>For:</b>	<b>One lost youth</b>
Description	Cost
<b>Crime:</b>	
Juvenile career (4 years @ 1–4 crimes/year)	
Victim costs	\$62,000–\$250,000
Criminal justice costs	\$21,000–\$84,000
Adult career (6 years @ 10.6 crimes/year)	
Victim costs	\$1,000,000
Criminal justice costs	\$335,000
Offender productivity loss	\$64,000
<b>Total crime cost</b>	<b>\$1.5–\$1.8 million</b>
<b>Present value*</b>	<b>\$1.3–\$1.5 million</b>
<b>Drug abuse:</b>	
Resources devoted to drug market	\$84,000–\$168,000
Reduced productivity loss	\$27,600
Drug treatment costs	\$10,200
Medical treatment of drug-related illnesses	\$11,000
Premature death	\$31,800–\$223,000
Criminal justice costs associated with drug crimes	\$40,500
<b>Total drug abuse cost</b>	<b>\$200,000–\$480,000</b>
<b>Present value*</b>	<b>\$150,000–\$360,000</b>
<b>Costs imposed by high school dropout:</b>	
Lost wage productivity	\$300,000
Fringe benefits	\$75,000
Nonmarket losses	\$95,000–\$375,000
<b>Total dropout cost</b>	<b>\$470,000–\$750,000</b>
<b>Present value*</b>	<b>\$243,000–\$388,000</b>
<b>Total loss</b>	<b>\$2.2–\$3 million</b>
<b>Present value*</b>	<b>\$1.7–\$2.3 million</b>
* Present value is the amount of money that would need to be invested today to cover the future costs of the youth's behavior.	
Source: Authors' adaptation of Cohen's The monetary value of saving a high-risk youth, <i>Journal of Quantitative Criminology</i> , 14(1).	



purposes of cost-benefit analysis. The analysis, however, includes only marginal cost items—those associated with adding a single individual to the pool of career criminals. No attempt was made to gauge a single criminal's share of *aggregate* crime costs (expenses incurred because of the fear of crime generally, for example), which would have yielded a much higher figure.

#### **Drug abuse and lack of education impose heavy costs on society as well**

The study calculated external marginal costs associated with the average lifetime of heavy cocaine or heroin abuse on the basis of estimated drug treatment and rehabilitation costs, emergency and other medical costs, lost productivity costs, criminal justice costs incurred in connection with drug possession and other drug-defined crime, and the cost of resources diverted away from productive uses and into the drug market itself. The present-value total of all such costs for the average heavy drug abuser was estimated at \$150,000–\$360,000. (This figure does not include costs associated with additional drug-motivated and drug-related crime, which were estimated at \$283,000–\$781,000, or \$220,000–\$606,000 discounted to present value.)

The external marginal costs imposed by the average high school dropout were estimated largely on the basis of productivity losses and other “nonmarket” educational benefits foregone. Discounted to present value, the total loss suffered by society over the lifetime of the average high school dropout came to \$243,000–\$388,000.

#### **Quantitative analysis of this kind suggests the practical wisdom of early investment in high-risk youth**

Adding all of these marginal cost estimates together produces an estimate of the present value of preventing a single youth from leaving school and turning to drugs and crime as a way of life: \$1.7–\$2.3 million.

Obviously, it is not possible to arrive at an estimate of this kind without making a number of assumptions, including some about matters that are at least controversial, if not unknowable. The figures do, however, serve to illustrate that, under almost any reasonable set of assumptions, intervention efforts that are narrowly focused on high-risk youth and that succeed at least some of the time are likely to pay for themselves many times over.

#### **What is present value?**

To determine the savings produced by an action, economists employ the concept of *present value*. Present value is the amount that would have to be set aside today to pay for a related series of events that occur now and in the future. From this pool of funds, amounts can be deducted as expenses are realized. For the case of a criminal career, some expenses occur early in the career (e.g., the costs associated with the first referral to juvenile court). These expenses would be subtracted from the *present value* amount, while the remaining funds accrue interest before they are expended. As a result, the present value of a savings is somewhat less than the total amount of the savings realized by diverting a person from a criminal career.

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