

# PROTECT CHILDREN INSTEAD OF GUNS 2001



The latest deadly numbers about children and gun violence in a single year show:

- 3,365 children and teens were killed by gunfire
- 1,990 were murdered by gunfire
- 1,078 committed suicide with a firearm
- 214 died from an accidental shooting
- 1,934 were White
- 1,301 were Black
- 605 were Hispanic
- 488 were under age 15
- 153 were under age 10
- 73 were under age 5
- More children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined.



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he latest data released in 2001 show that in a single year, 3,365 children and teens were killed by gunfire in the United States—which is one child every two and a half hours, nine children every day, more than 60 children every week. And, every year, four to five times as many

children and teens suffer from non-fatal firearm injuries.

Despite these alarming numbers, child and teen gun deaths continue to decline. After peaking in 1994 at more than 5,700 young lives, child and teen firearm deaths have dropped 42 percent overall. Additionally, the number of Black children and teens killed by guns has decreased 49 percent, and the number of Whites has dropped 36 percent. Although it is encouraging that the number of child gun deaths per year has dropped below 3,500 for the first time since 1987, the number remains disturbingly high. We are still losing too many children. When compared to other industrialized countries, the numbers are even more staggering. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 is almost 12 times higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. American children are 16 times more likely to be murdered with a gun, 11 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun, and nine times more likely to die in a firearm accident than children in these other countries. The needless loss of young lives to gun violence continues to be one of America's silent tragedies.

**Firearms deaths, by manner, persons under age 20, 1979-1999**  
(excludes legal intervention)

Year	Total	Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Unknown
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113
1980	3,749	1,743	1,214	689	103
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77
1983	2,962	1,238	1,150	504	70
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	552	75
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71
1987	3,400	1,573	1,281	467	79
1988	3,974	1,953	1,387	543	91
1989	4,384	2,367	1,380	567	70
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	551	95
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90
1993	5,715	3,625	1,460	526	104
1994	5,793	3,579	1,565	512	137
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74
1999	3,365	1,990	1,078	214	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,971</b>	<b>47,267</b>	<b>27,418</b>	<b>10,422</b>	<b>1,864</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations; and *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 49, No. 8, "Deaths: Final Data for 1999" (September 21, 2001), Table 17. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

## Did you know?

- Children are twice as likely as adults to be victims of violent crime and more likely to be killed by adults than by other children.
- 61 percent of the more than 87,000 youths killed by gunfire between 1979 and 1999 were White; 36 percent were Black.
- Black children and teens are more likely than their White counterparts to be victims of firearm homicide. White children and teens are more likely than their Black counterparts to use a firearm to take their own life.
- The firearm death rate for Black males between the ages 15 to 19 is four times that of White males of the same ages.
- Boys, ages 15 to 19, are more than seven times more likely than girls to commit suicide with a firearm.

In 1999, homicide accounted for 1,990, or 59 percent, of gun deaths among children age 19 and younger. Although most child gun deaths are homicides, two out of every five young firearm deaths are the result of suicide or an accidental shooting. Thirty-two percent of young people killed by guns take their own lives. In 1999, gun suicide accounted for 1,078 child and teen deaths—an average of three young people every day. Guns are used in two out of three youth suicides and, unlike other attempted methods, are the most likely to be fatal. An analysis of the state data also shows that children and youths in rural states are more likely to be victims of gun suicides and accidents, while children and youths in states with large urban populations are more likely to be victims of gun homicides.

Accidental shootings accounted for just over 6 percent of child firearm deaths in 1999; 214 children and teens lost their lives in accidental shootings. As with adolescent suicide, a vast majority of firearms used in unintentional shootings of children and teens come from the victim's home or the home of a relative, friend, or parent of a friend of the victim. A study reported in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that 1.4 million homes, which include 2.6 million children, had firearms that were stored unlocked and loaded or unlocked and unloaded but stored with ammunition. A separate study published in *Injury Prevention* compared firearm ownership in rural and urban areas and found that the prevalence of loaded, unlocked guns in farm households was about twice the level in town households.

Between 1979 and 1999, gunfire killed more than 87,000 children and teens in America. In the United States, firearms outnumber children by a margin of almost three to one. It's time to stop protecting the approximately 200 million firearms in this country and do more to protect the nearly 75 million American children and teens under age 20.

**It's time to protect children, instead of guns.**

## Firearms deaths of children and teens ages 0-19, by manner, 1997-1999

	Total*			Homicide*			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
Alabama	93	86	83	57	47	44	23	24	26	10	11	10	3	4	3
Alaska	23	16	23	9	3	9	10	10	11	2	3	1	2	0	2
Arizona	117	102	86	53	49	55	52	43	30	5	6	0	7	4	1
Arkansas	55	69	40	28	36	15	18	24	20	7	3	3	2	6	2
California	594	493	402	457	372	320	106	102	66	26	13	8	5	6	8
Colorado	57	60	63	22	29	34	31	26	24	4	4	3	0	1	2
Connecticut	21	23	18	17	15	13	4	6	5	0	2	0	0	0	0
Delaware	7	2	5	2	2	1	5	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
District of Columbia	65	30	45	59	27	41	4	3	3	1	0	1	1	0	0
Florida	165	154	137	108	80	86	44	65	43	12	8	4	1	1	4
Georgia	129	111	117	70	61	67	35	39	41	20	10	5	4	1	4
Hawaii	3	4	0	2	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	26	27	23	2	3	7	21	18	13	3	5	3	0	1	0
Illinois	254	264	228	211	206	182	29	40	37	10	13	7	4	5	2
Indiana	79	92	91	47	57	57	21	27	27	8	7	6	3	1	1
Iowa	33	26	23	8	6	2	20	15	17	3	5	2	2	0	2
Kansas	53	54	31	28	28	12	17	22	14	7	3	3	1	1	2
Kentucky	57	44	39	34	17	21	16	23	11	7	3	5	0	1	2
Louisiana	154	124	93	98	74	52	39	35	27	15	15	11	2	0	3
Maine	13	10	9	3	2	2	10	7	5	0	1	1	0	0	1
Maryland	104	108	98	91	89	78	11	13	16	2	2	0	0	4	4
Massachusetts	24	28	20	17	19	10	6	8	9	0	1	0	1	0	1
Michigan	156	135	116	103	87	66	41	43	40	10	3	7	2	2	3
Minnesota	55	34	45	26	12	15	25	22	27	4	0	3	0	0	0
Mississippi	81	55	72	41	28	37	28	19	17	11	7	11	1	1	7
Missouri	97	89	92	48	52	47	34	32	34	13	4	7	2	1	4
Montana	16	17	19	4	3	2	8	12	12	3	2	5	1	0	0
Nebraska	26	30	18	12	13	6	13	15	11	1	2	1	0	0	0
Nevada	34	48	26	21	26	15	13	20	10	0	1	1	0	1	0
New Hampshire	2	9	4	1	0	1	1	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	53	49	32	43	35	25	7	13	6	3	1	0	0	0	1
New Mexico	40	47	45	22	25	24	14	14	17	3	8	4	1	0	0
New York	146	123	132	107	88	101	33	28	25	4	5	5	2	2	1
North Carolina	92	88	93	45	43	54	37	30	33	9	13	4	1	2	2
North Dakota	8	7	9	0	2	2	8	4	6	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ohio	95	100	81	49	48	38	36	41	30	8	11	10	2	0	3
Oklahoma	82	61	62	48	22	28	29	30	21	3	6	12	2	3	1
Oregon	38	30	33	13	10	7	19	13	21	3	4	5	3	3	0
Pennsylvania	167	123	124	108	79	77	49	34	39	9	4	5	1	6	3
Rhode Island	4	5	8	2	4	6	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	54	60	51	32	30	22	16	23	20	5	7	8	1	0	1
South Dakota	12	12	14	0	2	1	7	9	9	5	1	3	0	0	1
Tennessee	117	109	85	64	53	47	37	38	22	12	16	12	4	2	4
Texas	377	322	254	194	176	141	139	108	89	39	29	21	5	9	3
Utah	35	32	21	10	12	3	24	19	17	0	1	0	1	0	1
Vermont	4	5	3	2	0	0	1	5	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
Virginia	114	97	86	68	46	48	39	39	35	5	9	3	2	3	0
Washington	83	66	62	35	28	20	36	32	34	8	5	6	4	1	2
West Virginia	23	19	19	9	5	8	10	12	10	3	1	0	1	1	1
Wisconsin	58	53	74	31	30	41	26	18	27	1	5	6	0	0	0
Wyoming	10	9	11	1	1	0	7	6	11	2	1	0	0	1	0
<b>United States</b>	<b>4,205</b>	<b>3,761</b>	<b>3,365</b>	<b>2,562</b>	<b>2,184</b>	<b>1,990</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>1,241</b>	<b>1,078</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>83</b>

\*Total firearms deaths and homicide firearms deaths exclude firearms deaths by legal (police or corrections) intervention and deaths by air rifles.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table III: Deaths from 282 selected causes [1997 and 1998]; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Table III: Deaths from 358 selected causes [1999]. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

## Firearms deaths of children and teens, by age, manner, and race/Hispanic origin, 1999

	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	Total under 20
All races*	8	65	80	335	2,877	3,365
Accident	0	12	19	57	126	214
Suicide	0	0	0	103	975	1,078
Homicide	8	50	61	163	1,708	1,990
Unknown intent	0	3	0	12	68	83
White	4	32	41	248	1,609	1,934
Accident	0	5	9	48	88	150
Suicide	0	0	0	94	817	911
Homicide	4	26	32	95	662	819
Unknown intent	0	1	0	11	42	54
Black	2	27	32	73	1,167	1,301
Accident	0	7	9	8	36	60
Suicide	0	0	0	5	120	125
Homicide	2	18	23	59	991	1,093
Unknown intent	0	2	0	1	20	23
Hispanic**	2	6	11	58	528	605
Accident	0	0	0	3	15	18
Suicide	0	0	0	13	94	107
Homicide	2	5	11	41	410	469
Unknown intent	0	1	0	1	9	11

\*Includes races other than White or Black.

\*\*Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 49, No. 8, "Deaths: Final Data for 1999" (September 21, 2001), Table 17; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table 210A, Deaths from 113 selected causes. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

The mission of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is to *Leave No Child Behind*<sup>®</sup> and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment before they get sick, into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants, and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.



Children's Defense Fund<sup>®</sup>

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