



# Protect Children Not Guns

The latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that 2,827 children and teens died from gunfire in the United States in 2003—one child or teen about every three hours, nearly eight every day, 54 children and teens every week.

- 1,822 were homicide victims
- 810 committed suicide
- 195 died in accidental or undetermined circumstances
  
- 2,502 were boys
- 325 were girls
  
- 1,554 were White
- 1,172 were Black
- 553 were Latino
- 51 were Asian or Pacific Islander
- 50 were American Indian or Alaska Native
  
- 378 were under age 15
- 119 were under age 10
- 56 were under age 5

In addition to this horrific child death toll, four to five times as many children and teens suffered non-fatal bullet wounds.

**Children's Defense Fund 2006**

## Did You Know?

The number of children and teens killed by gun violence in 2003 alone exceeds the number of American fighting men and women killed in hostile action in Iraq from 2003 to April 2006.

In 2003, 56 preschoolers were killed by firearms. In the same year, 52 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty.

The number of children and teens in America killed by guns in 2003 would fill 113 public school classrooms of 25 students each.

More 10- to 19-year-olds die from gunshot wounds than from any other cause except motor vehicle accidents.

Almost 90 percent of the children and teens killed by firearms in 2003 were boys.

Black children and teens are more likely to be victims of firearm homicide. White children and teens are more likely to commit suicide.

The firearm death rate for Black males ages 15 to 19 is more than four times that of White males the same age.

A Black male has a 1 in 72 chance of being killed by a firearm before his 30th birthday. A White male has a 1 in 344 chance of being killed by a firearm before his 30th birthday.

In 2003, there were more than nine times as many suicides by guns among White children and teens as among Black children and teens.

Males ages 15 to 19 are more than eight times as likely as females that age to commit suicide with a firearm.

Although there has been a decline in child gun deaths since the peak year of 1994, children and teens are still twice as likely as adults to be victims of violent crime and are more likely to be killed by adults than by other children.

The rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 is far higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries *combined*.

Since 1979, gun violence has snuffed out the lives of 98,588 children and teens in America. Sixty percent of them were White; 37 percent were Black.

The number of Black children and teens killed by gunfire since 1979 is more than 10 times the number of Black citizens of all ages lynched in American history.

The number of children and teens killed by guns since 1979 would fill 3,943 public school classrooms of 25 students each.

Since 1993, when CDF launched its campaign to protect children against gun violence, the death rate of children and youth by gunfire has declined from almost 16 a day to just under eight a day. This is still a morally obscene statistic for the world's most powerful country, which has more resources to address its social ills than any other nation.

### Firearm Deaths by Manner and by Race/Hispanic Origin, Persons under Age 20, 1979-2003

	Manner					Race/Hispanic Origin				
	Total <sup>1</sup>	Homicide <sup>1</sup>	Suicide	Accident	Unknown	Black	White	American Indian, Alaska Native <sup>2</sup>	Asian, Pacific Islander <sup>2</sup>	Hispanic <sup>3</sup>
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113	929	2,700	—	—	—
1980	3,749	1,743	1,214	689	103	944	2,739	—	—	—
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112	944	2,569	49	27	
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77	811	2,450	55	23	—
1983	2,962	1,238	1,150	504	70	739	2,155	42	25	—
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	552	75	716	2,238	44	32	—
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72	850	2,241	42	36	—
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71	938	2,337	43	31	—
1987	3,400	1,573	1,281	467	79	1,117	2,199	28	54	—
1988	3,974	1,953	1,387	543	91	1,458	2,405	76	53	—
1989	4,384	2,367	1,380	567	70	1,694	2,563	50	76	—
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66	2,047	2,753	47	87	748
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	551	95	2,297	2,878	60	91	883
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90	2,359	2,834	55	105	924
1993	5,715	3,625	1,460	526	104	2,600	2,925	51	139	977
1994	5,793	3,579	1,565	512	137	2,559	3,024	75	135	993
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115	2,153	2,898	73	130	1,005
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92	1,976	2,475	64	98	817
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75	1,687	2,357	59	102	748
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74	1,416	2,197	60	88	661
1999	3,365	1,990	1,078	214	83	1,301	1,934	57	73	605
2000	3,012	1,776	1,007	193	36	1,149	1,762	44	57	568
2001	2,911	1,771	928	182	30	1,128	1,695	49	39	518
2002	2,867	1,830	828	167	42	1,112	1,639	52	64	581
2003	2,827	1,822	810	151	44	1,172	1,554	50	51	553
Total	98,588	54,466	30,991	11,115	2,016	36,096	59,521	1,225	1,616	10,581

<sup>1</sup> Excludes legal (police or corrections) intervention.

<sup>2</sup> Data for American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander not available for 1979–1980.

<sup>3</sup> Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race. Hispanic data not available prior to 1990. For 1990 to 1996, a small number of states with small Hispanic populations did not include Hispanic identifiers in their reporting to the federal government.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WONDER, at <<http://wonder.cdc.gov/mortSQL.html>>, accessed December 2004; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Control and Prevention, WISQARS, at <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccipc/wisqars/>>, accessed December 2004 and January 2006. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

Additional tables on violence and firearms are available at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).



# What You Can Do to Keep Children and Teens Safer from Gun Violence

It is up to adults to protect children from firearms in our homes, schools, communities, and nation. We can:

## **1. Support Common Sense Gun Safety Measures.**

The legislative record on gun safety is mixed but more bad than good. Congress continued to ignore the expiration of the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban and also enacted a gun manufacturers' immunity bill that gives an unprecedented legal pass to the gun industry for liability in firearm injuries and deaths. The bill will take most lawsuits by victims of gun violence off the table. Thanks to the efforts of common sense gun safety advocates in the Senate, however, Congress passed a measure that requires child trigger locks with the sale of handguns. Now, Congress must enact legislation that closes the gun show loophole by requiring criminal background checks on those who purchase guns from unlicensed gun dealers.

Stay informed. Contact your elected officials to express your views on the need for gun measures to protect children. Call the White House at (202) 456-1414 or your members of Congress at (202) 224-3121. To learn how your members of Congress voted on this and other important issues, go to the *2005 CDF Action Council® Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard* at <http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org/scorecard2005.pdf>.

## **2. Remove Guns from Your Home.**

A November 2004 study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* reported that, regardless of storage practice, type, or number of domestic firearms, the presence of guns increases the risk of homicide and suicide in the home.

The vast majority of firearms used in accidental shootings of children and teens come from the victim's home or the home of a relative or friend. A 2004 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that state safe gun storage laws helped achieve an 8.3 percent decrease in suicide rates among youth ages 14 to 17 years.

## **3. Foster a Climate of Nonviolent Conflict Resolution in Your Home, Children's School, Congregation, and Community.**

America is becoming a society where family violence is epidemic, child abuse and neglect are widespread, and children are being raised on TV programs crammed with scenes of brutality.

Concerned parents should organize nonviolent conflict resolution support groups in their congregations, schools and communities. Some excellent resources include: Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith's *Peace by Piece: A Guide for Preventing Community Violence*, based on the experiences of more than 40 exemplary programs across the country, and *Violence Prevention Curriculum for*

*Adolescents*. The Association for Conflict Resolution provides a comprehensive list of educational resources for conflict resolution at <http://acenet.org/resources/index.htm>. This list includes the CDF recommended curriculum, *Resolving Conflict Creatively*, created by Linda Lantieri, co-author of *Waging Peace in Our Schools*.

## **4. Monitor the Television Programs Your Children Watch and How They Use the Internet, and Don't Buy Them Violent Video Games.**

Write to advertisers who sponsor violent television shows and sell violent electronic products to children. Talk to your children about the need to reject violence as a cultural and personal value. Protest and refuse to buy products that glamorize or make violence socially acceptable or fun.

## **5. Help Focus Public Attention on Child Gun Deaths.**

Each year, encourage the reading of the names of children in your community killed by guns at your place of worship; publish their photos in your congregational bulletin. Urge local newspapers and radio and television stations to publish and broadcast photographs of children and teens killed in your community. Write a letter to the editor or an opinion column about the tragic loss of young lives to gun violence, and take other steps to raise awareness of violence against children.

## **6. Engage in Child Watch<sup>SM</sup> Visitation Programs.**

Visit hospital trauma units and support the families who have lost children. Educate others about the human and financial costs of gun injuries. There are four to five nonfatal firearm injuries for every gun death of a child or teen. In addition to the enormous toll these injuries take on the lives of those affected, the annual health care costs are in the billions of dollars. A 2004 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that gunshot injuries in the United States add up to \$2.3 billion a year in lifetime medical costs of which about half is borne by taxpayers.

## **7. Provide Children Positive Alternatives to the Streets So They Can Feel Safe and Protected.**

Gangs, drugs, and gun dealers are available to children 24 hours a day, seven days a week. What positive competition for their attention is available in your community? Make your schools and places of worship venues of quality summer and after-school programs. Check CDF's Web site at <http://www.childrensdefense.org> for more information about CDF Freedom Schools<sup>SM</sup> reading and service model, which includes nonviolence training.

**8. Organize a Ceasefire Initiative in Your Community.** Gun violence is out of control in many American communities, particularly poor, urban neighborhoods. But some cities are addressing the problem by organizing programs modeled on Boston's successful Ceasefire initiative, which became known as "The Boston Miracle." Ceasefire brings families, faith groups, social service providers and the police together to halt the killing of teens by other teens. Boston's innovative and collaborative strategy resulted in a nearly 67 percent drop in youth homicides. At the heart of the Ceasefire approach is

the belief that we are all responsible for what happens in our communities and that young people, given the opportunity, will choose a path away from violence. But to do so, they must have resources and caring adult support. Ceasefire programs are operating in a dozen communities across the country. For more information about beginning a Ceasefire initiative in your community, contact David Kennedy, Director, Center for Crime Prevention and Control, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, [dkennedy@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:dkennedy@jjay.cuny.edu) or (212) 484-1323.

### Firearm Deaths of Children and Teens, by Age, Manner, and Race/Hispanic Origin, 2003

	Under 1	Ages 1-4	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19	Total under age 20
<b>All Races</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>2,449</b>	<b>2,827</b>
Accident	0	7	13	36	95	151
Suicide	0	0	1	73	736	810
Homicide	8	40	48	139	1,587	1,822
Undetermined intent	0	1	1	11	31	44
<b>White</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>1,337</b>	<b>1,554</b>
Accident	0	4	10	28	72	114
Suicide	0	0	1	64	638	703
Homicide	2	20	22	59	604	707
Undetermined intent	0	0	0	7	23	30
<b>Black</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>1,028</b>	<b>1,172</b>
Accident	0	3	3	6	22	34
Suicide	0	0	0	7	67	74
Homicide	6	19	23	72	932	1,052
Undetermined intent	0	1	1	3	7	12
<b>American Indian, Alaska Native</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>50</b>
Accident	0	0	0	2	1	3
Suicide	0	0	0	1	21	22
Homicide	0	0	2	2	20	24
Undetermined intent	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Asian, Pacific Islander</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>
Accident	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suicide	0	0	0	1	10	11
Homicide	0	1	1	6	31	39
Undetermined intent	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Hispanic*</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>553</b>
Accident	0	0	4	4	17	25
Suicide	0	0	0	9	83	92
Homicide	1	9	6	25	386	427
Undetermined intent	0	0	0	3	6	9

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

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Control and Prevention, WISQARS, at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars>, accessed January 2006. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

## Firearm Deaths of Children and Teens, by Manner, 2001-2003

	<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>			<b>Homicide<sup>1</sup></b>			<b>Suicide</b>			<b>Accident</b>			<b>Undetermined Intent</b>		
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Alabama	64	68	59	34	36	34	20	22	17	8	10	7	2	0	1
Alaska	19	18	26	6	7	10	11	10	13	1	1	2	1	0	1
Arizona	81	101	64	49	58	38	25	30	21	6	8	3	1	5	2
Arkansas	30	39	27	13	18	11	12	12	9	5	6	5	0	3	2
California	379	406	429	316	337	355	47	54	55	15	13	15	1	2	4
Colorado	53	53	32	23	20	20	26	30	10	3	1	1	1	2	1
Connecticut	16	15	12	12	10	10	4	4	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Delaware	4	10	10	3	4	6	1	3	3	0	3	0	0	0	1
District of Columbia	32	36	28	29	34	28	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Florida	111	120	109	65	81	81	38	33	23	5	5	3	3	1	2
Georgia	110	104	83	69	65	58	34	28	24	7	9	1	0	2	0
Hawaii	5	1	1	2	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	25	19	13	3	3	4	17	12	9	5	4	0	0	0	0
Illinois	175	146	158	139	127	131	28	15	20	6	3	7	2	1	0
Indiana	59	69	54	30	31	32	23	28	15	5	9	6	1	1	1
Iowa	27	17	12	3	6	1	22	9	11	2	2	0	0	0	0
Kansas	36	17	26	15	6	10	18	9	13	3	2	3	0	0	0
Kentucky	34	33	34	12	12	9	15	13	13	7	6	10	0	2	2
Louisiana	95	100	88	62	70	57	27	19	22	6	10	8	0	1	1
Maine	5	3	9	1	0	1	4	3	7	0	0	1	0	0	0
Maryland	81	92	80	66	77	67	12	14	13	2	1	0	1	0	0
Massachusetts	24	25	22	18	22	17	5	1	5	1	2	0	0	0	0
Michigan	105	100	79	61	60	49	39	36	25	4	4	2	1	0	3
Minnesota	37	29	40	12	9	17	24	18	19	0	1	3	1	1	1
Mississippi	34	58	38	14	28	23	13	21	8	5	7	7	2	2	0
Missouri	92	72	53	55	45	32	29	25	18	4	2	1	4	0	2
Montana	13	15	14	3	2	5	9	10	9	1	1	0	0	2	0
Nebraska	18	11	17	3	5	6	14	6	10	1	0	1	0	0	0
Nevada	28	25	27	20	19	13	7	6	12	0	0	1	1	0	1
New Hampshire	8	4	5	1	1	0	7	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	1
New Jersey	25	32	36	19	24	35	5	5	1	1	3	0	0	0	0
New Mexico	27	32	35	14	15	18	11	16	15	2	1	1	0	0	1
New York	135	91	131	102	74	94	27	14	32	6	3	5	0	0	0
North Carolina	86	71	100	48	47	59	31	21	33	7	1	7	0	2	1
North Dakota	2	5	7	1	0	4	1	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Ohio	85	83	75	50	52	49	26	22	21	6	6	5	3	3	0
Oklahoma	41	38	34	18	13	12	16	22	21	7	3	1	0	0	0
Oregon	17	36	15	7	14	7	9	17	7	1	2	0	0	3	1
Pennsylvania	103	113	130	63	73	81	33	35	41	6	4	4	1	1	4
Rhode Island	6	10	6	6	8	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
South Carolina	42	40	50	20	26	36	15	9	10	6	4	3	1	1	1
South Dakota	8	7	9	1	0	0	7	4	8	0	2	1	0	1	0
Tennessee	65	79	58	34	47	32	24	22	19	7	8	6	0	2	1
Texas	241	220	244	140	140	146	84	72	85	15	7	10	2	1	3
Utah	27	17	25	7	3	3	20	14	18	0	0	4	0	0	0
Vermont	3	2	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
Virginia	77	72	83	50	50	58	23	17	22	3	4	2	1	1	1
Washington	38	40	48	17	17	17	20	21	25	1	1	3	0	1	3
West Virginia	13	20	14	5	7	7	5	10	6	3	3	1	0	0	0
Wisconsin	61	49	63	28	24	31	26	23	26	7	2	5	0	0	1
Wyoming	9	4	11	0	1	2	9	2	7	0	0	2	0	1	0
United States	2,911	2,867	2,827	1,771	1,830	1,822	928	828	810	182	167	151	30	42	44

<sup>1</sup>Total firearm deaths and homicide firearm deaths exclude firearm deaths by legal (police or corrections) intervention.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Table III: Deaths from 358 Selected Causes, 2001–2002; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS, at <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccipc/wisqars/>>, data accessed February 2006. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.



## Gunshot Deaths: What Johns Hopkins University Hospital Trauma Surgeon Edward Cornwell Sees

**T**he grim realities behind gunshot death statistics are even more depressing when seen from a front-line urban hospital trauma center. Dr. Edward Cornwell, Professor of Surgery and Chief of Adult Trauma at Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, sees dozens of gunshot victims each year. In 2005, the hospital's Level 1 trauma center booked 88 deaths, mainly from penetrating wounds—gunshots or stabbings. Most of the victims were Black male teenagers. Sixty-one were dead on arrival (DOA).

Victims of gunshot wounds and stabbings between the ages of 15 and 24 make up 70 percent of the center's trauma patients. Since Dr. Cornwell came to Johns Hopkins in 1998, major steps have been taken to upgrade the trauma center with resources that would enable it to improve its record in saving the lives of gunshot victims. More lives have been saved among patients with blunt injuries from motor vehicle crashes and serious falls.

Yet, there have been no improvements in the number of lives saved among gunshot victims. In fact, according to Dr. Cornwell, while the number of assaults in Baltimore remains unchanged, the number of shooting deaths has gone up. "I've seen a disturbing increase in the number of deaths caused by a single gunshot at close range to the head or chest. What's most alarming," says Dr. Cornwell, "is the high volume among these instant fatalities of youths under the age of 21. In one week last year, on each of five consecutive nights, we saw a 20-year-old DOA. All of them were shot in the head or chest."

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*"I've seen a disturbing increase in the number of deaths caused by a single gunshot at close range to the head or chest."*

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About half of the victims who do not die from bullet wounds have head injuries so severe that they are brain dead. The few survivors often undergo multiple surgeries, followed by intensive care and long courses of physical therapy and medication.

Dr. Cornwell is unapologetically blunt about condemning what he sees as some of the major causes of Baltimore's gun violence. The easy availability of guns is high on the list. He also blames what he calls the city's "broken school system," noting that "60 percent of the Black men who go to jail are school dropouts. An overarching contributor to gun violence," he says, "is popular culture that condones underachievement and glamorizes brutality." Dr. Cornwell is angry as he describes the futility in stitching up a teenager with 15 stab wounds who had "Thug Life" tattooed on his forehead and "Kill or Be Killed" across his chest. "We saved his life, but he's going to be dead in five weeks or five months," he states. "This has got to stop because it's tearing at the fabric of our communities across the country."

### States with the Most and Fewest Child Gun Deaths

The seven states with the most firearm deaths of children and teens in 2003:

**California**  
**Texas**  
**Illinois**  
**New York**

**Pennsylvania**  
**Florida**  
**North Carolina**

These states accounted for 1,301, or 46 percent, of all firearm deaths among children and teens in 2003. There were more deaths than in 2002 in six of these states; Florida showed a decrease.

The seven states with the fewest firearm deaths of children and teens in 2003:

**Hawaii**  
**Vermont**  
**New Hampshire**  
**Rhode Island**

**North Dakota**  
**Maine**  
**South Dakota**

These seven states accounted for only 41 firearm deaths of children and teens in 2003. Hawaii had the best record with only one youth firearm death.

WHAT DOES  
IT TAKE FOR A  
KID TO BUY A  
\$50 HANDGUN?



ABOUT \$50.

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And greedy gun dealers. And, of course, a lack of support for gun control.

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