

# Weapons and Oregon Teens:

What is the Risk?

Oregon Department of Human Services  
Health Division  
Center for Disease Prevention and Epidemiology  
Center for Health Statistics



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# INTRODUCTION

*We need to find the children who are at risk and help them become successful citizens. We need to do this before they hurt themselves or someone else.*

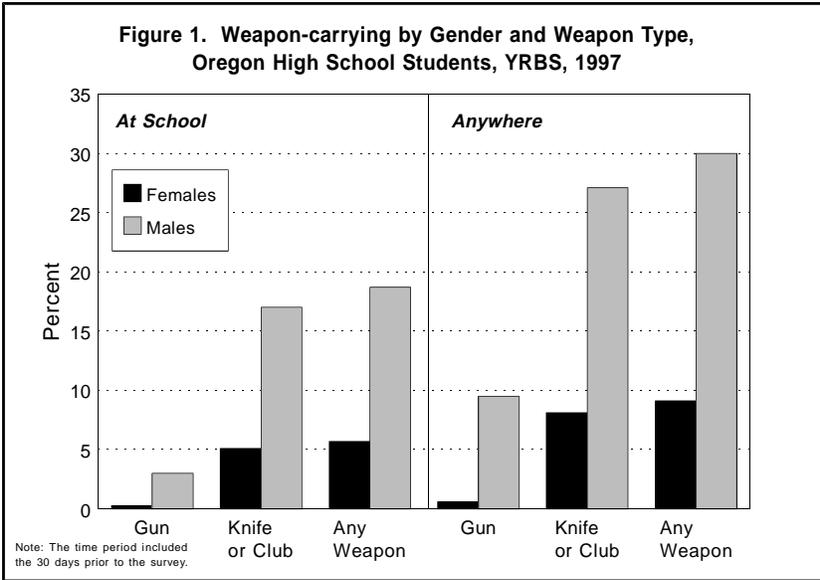
—John Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

An American child dies of gunshot wounds every one and one-half hours — the equivalent of an entire school classroom every two days.<sup>1</sup> Knives, clubs, and other weapons claim additional youth. An Oregon high school-aged youth is fatally shot about once every 10-11 days, either intentionally or unintentionally.<sup>2</sup> Oregon death certificate data show a 42 percent increase in the gunshot death rate for Oregon 14- to 18-year-olds between 1984-86 and 1994-96 and a 105 percent increase for fatal injuries from handguns.

***More Oregon high school-aged students died from gunshot injuries than from all natural causes combined.***

During the 1997 school year, no fewer than 19,000 Oregon high school students are estimated to have carried guns, knives, and/or clubs to school (at least once) for use as weapons.<sup>3</sup> Thirty thousand carried weapons at school or elsewhere. Especially likely to carry weapons were males (Figure 1). This report presents information about the demographic and behavioral characteristics of weapon carriers, and more specifically focuses on two aspects of weapon-carrying: 1) overall weapon-carrying (guns, knives, bats, etc.), and 2) gun-carrying in the schools. Self-reported

***Percentage increase in gunshot death rates for Oregon 14- to 18-year-olds between 1984-86 and 1994-96:  
Suicides - 31;  
Unintended Injuries - 47;  
Homicides - 88.***



data from the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show that risk factors from multiple domains (demographic, environmental, and behavioral) are associated with weapon-carrying both in and out of school, and that risk-taking behaviors cluster in adolescents in an array of problem behaviors: adolescents who participate in one form of risk-taking behavior are more likely to also be involved in other forms of risky behavior. Also included in this report are overviews of firearm deaths, homicides, and gun safety practices (see appendices). A previous report, *Suicidal Behavior: A Survey of Oregon High School Students, 1997*, explored the topic of teen suicide.

This report is intended to provide an empirical foundation (based on the YRBS) for understanding one aspect of the potential for violence in our schools: weapon-carrying.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- One in five Oregon students (19 percent) carried a gun, knife, and/or a club for use as a weapon at least once during the 30 days prior to the survey; one in eight (12 percent) carried weapons to school.
- Every fiftieth student (2 percent) had taken a gun to school at least once during the previous 30 days, every ninth student (11 percent), a knife or club.<sup>1</sup>

### **Demographic Characteristics**

- Males were three times more likely than females to carry weapons anywhere, and five times more likely to carry guns to school.
- Although freshmen were more likely than seniors to carry weapons anywhere, in the school environment there was little difference in the frequency of gun-carrying by grade.
- By race/ethnicity, African American and American Indian students more often reported weapon-carrying, and especially at school where they were four to five times more likely to carry guns than were non-Hispanic whites.

### **Student Environments**

- Students who have no adults to turn to to discuss their problems were more likely to report weapon-carrying, particularly to school, where they were three times more likely to take guns compared to students who had at least two adults they could talk to about their problems.

- Students attending lower socioeconomic status schools were about one-third more likely to carry weapons anywhere compared to those in the highest socioeconomic schools and were almost twice as likely to carry guns to school than students attending schools in the highest socioeconomic category.

### **Student Behavior**

- One of the most observable warning signs that a student may be a weapon-carrier is heavy cigarette smoking. Two-thirds of students who smoked a pack or more a day also carried weapons, more than a four-fold difference compared to non-smokers.
- Heavy smokers were 34 times more likely to take a gun to school than non-smokers. (As with most of the behavioral and demographic characteristics described here, the relationships are not necessarily causal.)
- Both acute and chronic alcohol abuse, and particularly binge drinking (more than five drinks within a two-hour period), were associated with weapon-carrying; frequent bingers were 47 times more likely to have taken a firearm to school than were abstainers.
- Frequent users of inhalants and/or cocaine were about four times more likely to carry weapons than were nonabusers; they were also about 20 times more likely to take guns to school than were abstainers.
- Compared to students who reported never having had sexual intercourse, those who had multiple sexual partners during the three months preceding the survey were almost three times more likely to have carried weapons during the previous month and 46 times more likely to have taken guns to school.

### **School Violence**

- One in fifteen (6.8 percent) students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon during the previous 12 months while at school.
- Students who said they had been physically threatened or injured with a weapon while at school during the previous 12 months were over four times more likely to carry a weapon anywhere and 40 times more likely to carry a gun to school.

- Students involved in eight or more fights during the previous 12 months were five times more likely to carry weapons anywhere (compared to those who were not in fights) and 58 times more likely to bring a gun school. Among students involved in physical fights, weapon-carrying was associated with an increased likelihood of serious injury.

**Safety and Firearm Deaths**

- Firearms are present in one-half of Oregon homes, and in those where both children and guns are present, children are at risk in 16 percent because of unsafe storage practices (i.e., unlocked loaded guns).
- More high school-aged youth died from gunshot injuries than from all natural causes combined.
- Resident African Americans ages 10-19 were 13 times more likely to be homicide victims than similarly-aged whites.
- Counties with a high prevalence of household gun ownership were more likely to also have high rates of gunshot fatalities.
- Gunshot fatality death rates were generally higher in coastal regions and east of the Cascade Mountains.

## METHODOLOGY

Three data sources were used to describe the characteristics of weapon carriers and weapon-related fatalities in this report: the Oregon Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the Oregon death certificate-based mortality file, and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WONDER system.

### YRBS

The YRBS consists of self-reported demographic and behavioral data from Oregon high school students; it is the counterpart to the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, a survey of Oregonians 18 or older. The survey has been conducted in the spring of odd-numbered years since 1993.<sup>4</sup> Fifty high schools were randomly selected, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocol, to participate in the 1997 YRBS. Because only 24 agreed to participate, the sample was insufficient to meet CDC random sample guidelines. Instead, results from a convenience sample consisting of 78 volunteer schools and the 24 schools that originally agreed to participate are included in this year's data. (All school superintendents for each of Oregon's 233 public schools having grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 were invited to participate in the 1997 YRBS; participating schools are listed in Appendix A.) In the strictest statistical sense, these data cannot be referred to as typical of Oregon teens as the schools were not randomly chosen. (For more information, see *1997 Oregon Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Summary Report*.) Although some large school districts declined to participate, the geographic representation of the sample was the most widespread of any Oregon YRBS. Ultimately, about one in five high school students were surveyed; 34,933 surveys were returned.

School participation in the YRBS required permission at both district and school levels. In addition, schools were required to notify parents of the survey and give parents the option to withdraw their child/children from participation. Finally, students themselves could decline to take the survey.

***The 1997 YRBS included almost 35,000 students, more than any previous survey.***

***Throughout this report, and in their own words, are statements made by the students; they are reproduced as written (except for expletives) and placed in quotes.***

*"I think this [the survey] is a great idea. I appreciate that someone is willing to spend the time to do this kind of thing. It's a concern of many and I'm glad that we have this opportunity."*

*"Whoever wrote this survey obviously based it on a 'stereotypical' teenager. I resent the implication that all teenagers are on a hormonal rampage, rebelling against their parents and society by leading a high-risk lifestyle including sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Most teenagers will try risky behavior at some point. I believe this is Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, and this rebellious stage is only a genetic way to rid the human race of the truly stupid. Most people survive their teens, because teens do have a small amount of common sense, and a survival instinct."*

This report focuses on the results of four questions:

1. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun as a weapon?
2. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun as a weapon on school property?
3. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon (other than a gun) such as a knife or club?
4. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon (other than a gun) such as a knife or club on school property?

The first and third, and the second and fourth, questions were combined for statistical purposes to measure total weapon-carrying prevalence. Knife- and/or club-carrying is not discussed in this report; however, the results of the question relative to the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the respondents are shown in Appendix B. A list of the of YRBS questions discussed in this report is shown in Appendix C.

In order to verify the accuracy of responses, surveys were checked visually and then by computer for consistency between questions. Three percent (1,100 surveys) were not counted because of answers to a verification question (a question to which an affirmative answer should not occur). Five percent of the surveys were removed because they had more than 10 inconsistencies (e.g., drank more alcohol in the last month than they had drunk in their life), out-of-range answers (e.g., answered "H" on a question with "A" to "D" responses allowed), and multiple answers where only one answer was allowed. Another 434 surveys were unusable in final tabulations because gender or grade was missing. A total of 7.3 percent of the surveys (2,555) were eliminated for the above reasons. All inconsistent pairs, out-of-range answers, and multiple answers were counted as missing on the remaining surveys. The final sample included 32,378 usable surveys, representing 21 percent of the state's 157,769 high school students.

For tabulations, the survey data were weighted to more accurately represent Oregon's population of high school students. Each student's survey was assigned a weight based on size and socioeconomic rank of his or her school.

The YRBS included a large number of Oregon students; the results will be useful in tracking trends and changes in the health risk behaviors of youth in our state, but may not be representative of those who dropped out of school, declined to participate in the survey, or were enrolled in private or home schools.

This report describes demographic, environmental, and behavioral characteristics associated with weapon-carrying, identifying those that are associated with increased risk of weapon-carrying behavior among Oregon's public high school youth. Few of the variables are causative (e.g., being a freshman does not cause weapon-carrying), although some may be more directly related to subsequent weapon-carrying behavior (e.g., poor home environment). Many weapon-carrying youth have a constellation of risk factors, some of which arise in the home; however, few of the questions included in the YRBS directly pertain to the home environment.

As high as the prevalence of weapon-carrying appears to be, it may in fact be even higher. There is some evidence that risky behavior may be under-reported in surveys based on paper booklets. Turner found that the percentage of adolescent respondents who reported carrying a gun was 57 percent higher among those surveyed via a computer than those surveyed via a paper booklet.<sup>5</sup>

## **MORTALITY DATA**

Two data sources were used to describe Oregon and the nation's homicide and gunshot victims: 1) the state death certificate-based mortality file, and 2) CDC's WONDER (Wide-ranging On-line Data for Epidemiological Research) system.<sup>6</sup> Because a statistically insufficient number of deaths occur in any one year to allow meaningful analysis for many of the variables, most data for high school-aged students are for the three-year period 1994-96. Death rates for Oregon counties are based on a larger number of years (1987-96), because many counties have small populations and hence few deaths. Even so, there were an insufficient number of deaths to calculate meaningful rates for several small population counties. Unless otherwise noted, national comparison data are for the period 1994-96, the most recent data available from CDC's WONDER system. All death rates are per 100,000 population.



# RESULTS

In a 1995 national survey of 11- to 17-year-olds, 24 percent cited gangs, violence, and guns as being the biggest threats to their health.<sup>7</sup> Data from the 1997 Oregon YRBS provide a sense of why these fears arise – the prevalence of weapon-carrying in our schools is substantial. Thousands said they carried weapons to schools. Based on these data, an estimated 19,000 Oregon public high school students carried a gun, knife, club or other weapon to school at least once during the prior 30 days – 3,000 carried a gun. Thirty thousand carried weapons at school or elsewhere; three in ten of these students carried firearms (Figure 2).

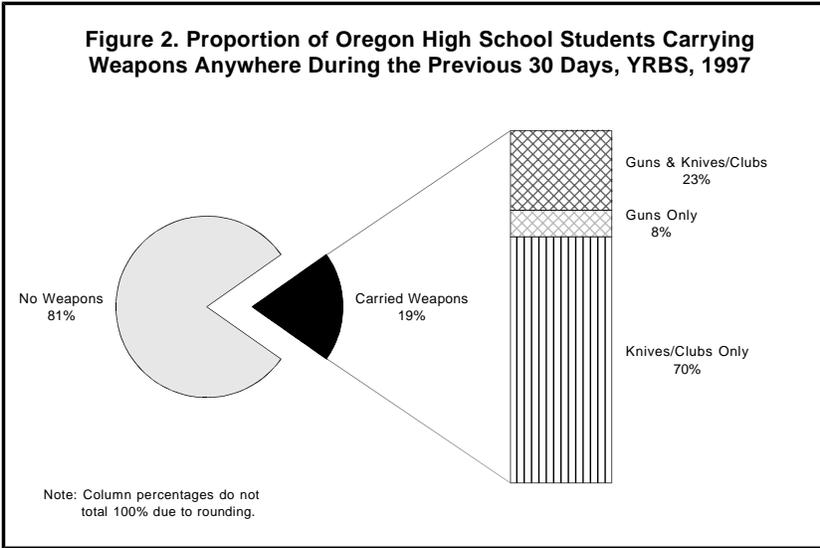
***An estimated 9,000 high school students carried guns to school or elsewhere for use as a weapon during the prior month.***

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Gender

Males of all ages more often engage in risky behaviors than females of a similar age, and this penchant is apparent in the prevalence of weapon-carrying. Thirty percent of male high school students reported carrying guns, knives or clubs for use as weapons during one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey, compared to just 9 percent of females (Table 1).

About one-third of students who carried guns for use as a weapon, took them to school, 3.0 percent of males and 0.6 percent of females (Table 2).



*The youngest child known to have taken a gun to school in the Portland School District was a fourth grader.<sup>8</sup>*

*"Just last week I heard of a gun threat right outside my high school."*

**Grade**

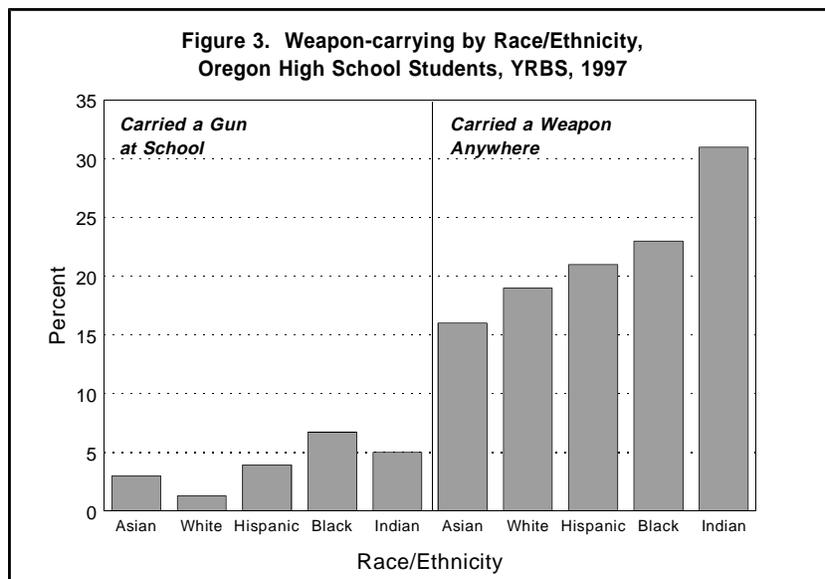
Ninth graders were a third more likely to carry weapons than were twelfth graders (22 percent vs. 17 percent). Among freshman boys, one-third carried a weapon during the previous month.

Although the frequency of gun-carrying overall declined with increasing grade, in the school environment there was little difference in the frequency of gun-carrying between freshmen and seniors (Table 2).

**Race/ethnicity**

Two groups, American Indians and African-Americans, were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to carry weapons anywhere (31 percent and 23 percent, vs. 19 percent), but it is worth noting that African American males did not report carrying weapons anymore frequently than did non-Hispanic white males. The higher overall weapon-carrying prevalence among black students is a consequence of the elevated weapon-carrying rates among females. Among males the figures were 44 percent, 28 percent, and 30 percent, respectively; but, among females there was more than a twofold difference (18 percent and 17 percent vs. 8 percent).

African-Americans and American Indians were more than twice as likely as whites to carry guns anywhere, but were four to five times more likely to carry them to school, 6.7 percent and 5.0 percent, respectively, compared to 1.3 percent (Figure 3). Although Black and Indian males



were about equally likely to carry guns to school, Black females were over four times more likely to do so than their Indian counterparts and 17 times more likely than their white counterparts.

## THE STUDENT'S ENVIRONMENT

### School Characteristics

**School Size.** Contrary to what might be expected, weapon-carrying was more common among students in small schools than larger ones. Three in ten students who attended school where the student body was less than 100 carried weapons compared to two in ten where the student body numbered 800 or greater (29 percent vs. 19 percent).<sup>9</sup>

Students in schools with a student body numbering less than 100 were more than half-again as likely to take guns to school than were those in schools where the student body totaled 1,200 or more (2.5 percent vs. 1.6 percent).

**Socioeconomic Status.** Poverty and behavior are linked. The Oregon Department of Education assigns a numeric rank to each school in the state based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, the student mobility rate, student attendance rate, and the level of education of the most educated parent. Students attending schools in the three lowest socioeconomic groups were about one-third more likely to carry weapons than were those in the highest socioeconomic group (21-23 percent vs. 16 percent), and were almost twice as likely to carry guns to school than were those in the highest group (2.2 percent vs. 1.2 percent).

### Home Environment

Although most students are brought up in healthy and nurturing environments, many are not. Just one survey question asks directly about the student's home environment, but it and three other questions provide an indication of the student's experiences while growing up. Students who had no adults they could go to discuss their problems, who had been physically and/or sexually abused,<sup>10</sup> and lived in homes where tobacco smoke was present (a risk factor for respiratory disorders and an indicator of socioeconomic status) were more likely to be weapon carriers than were others. A fuller discussion of

***Students in small schools and lower socioeconomic schools more often carried weapons.***

*"I think this school fails to meet the needs of the students. It's not only the school, but the whole community. I believe that [city name] is a disgrace of a town, because I don't feel that anyone cares about the kids or is willing to do anything for them. This is frustrating and incredibly discouraging."*

*"I think it's mainly family problems that make teens the way they are. Believe me, there's a lot of people out there with problems."*

<b>TABLE 1. Percentage of Students Who Carried Weapons During the Previous 30 Days, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997 (Part 1)<sup>1</sup></b>							
Characteristic	% with Characteristic	Carried a Weapon Anywhere			Carried a Weapon to School		
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	19	30	9	12	19	6
<b>GRADE</b>							
9	30	22	33	10	12	19	6
10	28	20	30	11	13	19	7
11	23	18	29	8	12	19	5
12	19	17	26	7	11	18	5
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>							
White	84	19	30	8	12	18	5
Black	2	23	28	18	18	20	15
Hispanic	5	21	30	12	13	18	8
Asian	3	16	26	6	10	15	5
Indian	2	31	44	17	21	30	11
Other	4	25	35	15	17	24	11
<b>ENROLLMENT LEVEL</b>							
<100	2	29	42	15	18	28	8
100 - 399	13	21	33	10	13	21	5
400 - 799	15	22	34	10	14	22	6
800 - 1199	18	18	29	8	12	18	5
1200+	53	19	28	9	12	17	6
<b>SCHOOL SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS<sup>2</sup></b>							
1 (lowest)	12	21	33	10	14	21	6
2	24	23	35	10	14	22	6
3	28	21	32	9	13	20	6
4 (highest)	36	16	24	8	10	15	5
<b>CARING ADULTS</b>							
None	16	28	39	15	19	25	11
1	19	18	30	10	12	20	6
2+	65	17	27	7	10	16	4
<b>EVER PHYSICALLY ABUSED</b>							
No	73	14	23	5	8	14	3
Yes	27	30	44	19	20	30	12
<b>SMOKERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD</b>							
None	63	17	27	8	11	17	5
Yes - but not inside	18	21	33	10	13	20	6
Yes - inside	19	25	37	13	16	24	8
<b>NUMBER OF CIGARETTES ON DAYS SMOKED</b>							
0	77	15	24	6	9	14	4
<1- 5	16	26	42	15	18	28	10
6 - 20	6	35	49	22	25	35	14
20+	1	65	72	46	50	60	21
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS DRANK ALCOHOL</b>							
0	54	13	21	5	7	12	3
1 - 5	32	21	34	10	13	21	7
6 - 19	13	35	48	21	25	34	14
20+	2	53	62	33	41	50	22
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS BINGED ON ALCOHOL<sup>3</sup></b>							
0	69	15	24	6	9	14	4
1 - 5	24	26	39	14	17	25	9
6 - 19	6	39	51	23	27	37	13
20+	1	65	70	44	53	58	30
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES USED COCAINE</b>							
0	98	18	29	8	11	18	5
1 - 9	2	51	66	37	38	50	27
10+	<1	66	81	42	50	69	21

<b>TABLE 1. Percentage of Students Who Carried Weapons During the Previous 30 Days, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997 (Part 2)<sup>1</sup></b>							
Characteristic	% with Characteristic	Carried a Weapon Anywhere			Carried a Weapon to School		
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES SNIFFED INHALANTS</b>							
0	95	18	28	8	11	17	5
1 - 9	4	42	58	28	29	41	18
10+	1	67	74	55	59	67	46
<b>NUMBER OF DRUGS USED<sup>4</sup></b>							
0	69	15	24	6	9	14	3
1	16	24	36	12	15	23	8
2	10	31	43	18	20	28	12
3	3	44	60	30	32	44	21
4+	1	73	82	60	59	72	42
<b>NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS (LAST THREE MONTHS)</b>							
Never had sex	65	15	23	6	8	13	4
Yes, but over 3 mos. ago	12	28	39	14	18	25	8
1	19	23	38	12	15	26	7
2	3	35	51	20	25	35	15
3+	2	55	64	35	41	49	25
<b>HARASSED AT SCHOOL</b>							
No	69	15	25	6	9	15	3
Yes	31	28	41	16	18	27	10
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES THREATENED OR INJURED WITH A WEAPON AT SCHOOL</b>							
0	93	17	27	8	10	16	5
1 - 5	6	47	57	31	33	40	22
6+	1	77	82	58	64	69	48
<b>NUMBER OF PHYSICAL FIGHTS AT SCHOOL</b>							
0	87	15	25	7	9	14	4
1	9	38	44	25	25	30	16
2 - 3	3	49	53	37	35	38	29
4 - 7	1	74	77	65	59	63	45
8+	1	79	80	74	70	72	60
<b>NUMBER OF FIGHTS REQUIRING TREATMENT BY AN MD OR RN</b>							
0	97	18	28	8	11	17	5
1	2	54	58	45	38	43	28
2+	1	72	73	67	55	57	48
<b>ATTEMPTED SUICIDE</b>							
No	91	17	27	7	10	16	4
Yes	9	34	58	24	25	45	16
<b>NUMBER OF RISK FACTORS<sup>5</sup></b>							
0	14	8	13	3	4	6	1
1	28	12	20	4	6	10	2
2	18	18	29	7	11	17	4
3 - 5	33	26	39	12	17	26	8
6 - 7	7	44	58	30	30	40	20
8+	1	80	92	63	65	75	51

1. Based on 32,378 weighted cases from 102 schools.  
 2. The Oregon Department of Education assigns a numeric value to each school in the state based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, student mobility rate, student attendance rate, and the level of education of the most educated parent.  
 3. Binging is defined as consuming five or more drinks within a two-hour period.  
 4. The number of drugs used by students was measured with six questions. Affirmative responses to the use of injection drugs, cocaine, steroids (not under the doctor's care), marijuana, inhalant use (glue/paint sniffing, huffing), and "any other type of illegal drug" were counted.  
 5. Risk factors included emotional problems, physical abuse, sexual abuse, suicide attempts, fewer than two adults to talk to about problems, smoking by the student or household members, alcohol use, illicit drug use, and sexual activity within the last three months.

**Percentage of students who:**  
**Have no caring adult they can talk to - 16%;**  
**Have been physically abused - 27%;**  
**Live with a smoker - 37%.**

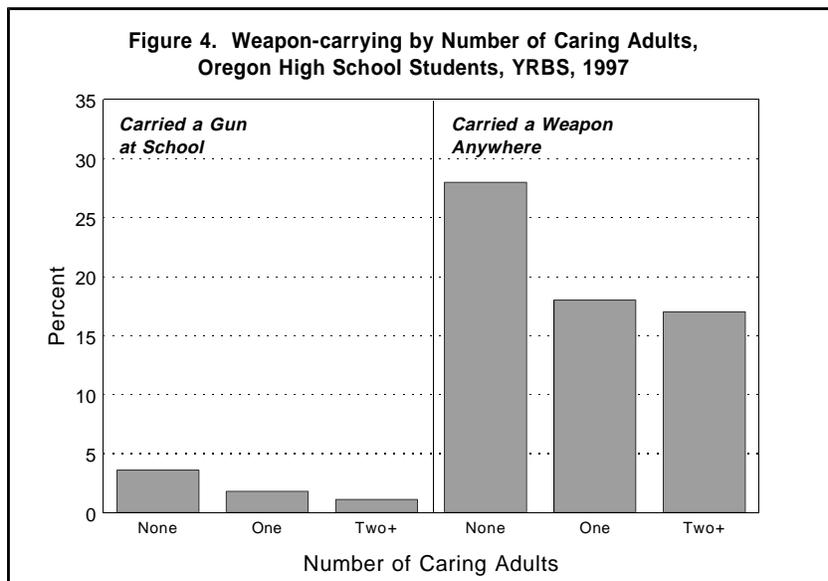
*"Survey—ask about family life—that's where most problems begin—lots of teens parents are drunk everyday of their life—mine are—that's where my probs are—we fight everyday because my dad is constantly drunk."*

the relationship between the home environment and student behavior is included in the recent report *Suicidal Behavior: A Survey of Oregon High School Students, 1997*, also published by the Center for Health Statistics.

Caring Adults. Not surprisingly, the stronger the adult social support network, the less likely children were to carry weapons (Figure 4). While 17 percent of high school students who had two or more adults they could go to to discuss their problems carried weapons somewhere during the previous month, 28 percent who had no adults to go to carried weapons.

The disparity was even greater for gun-carrying in the schools. Those with no adults to discuss their problems, and provide guidance, were over three times more likely to take guns to school (3.6 percent vs. 1.1 percent of those with at least two caring adults). Other studies have shown strong links between violence and low academic orientation with lack of parental affection and support.<sup>11</sup>

Physical Abuse. National studies have shown that most physical abuse (72 percent) is perpetrated by the natural parents of a child while other parents and parent substitutes account for most of the remainder (21 percent).<sup>12</sup> The one in four students who had been physically abused were twice as likely to carry weapons somewhere during the previous month as were their counterparts who had not been abused (30 percent vs. 14 percent). The more recent the abuse the more likely the students would be armed (Figure 5).



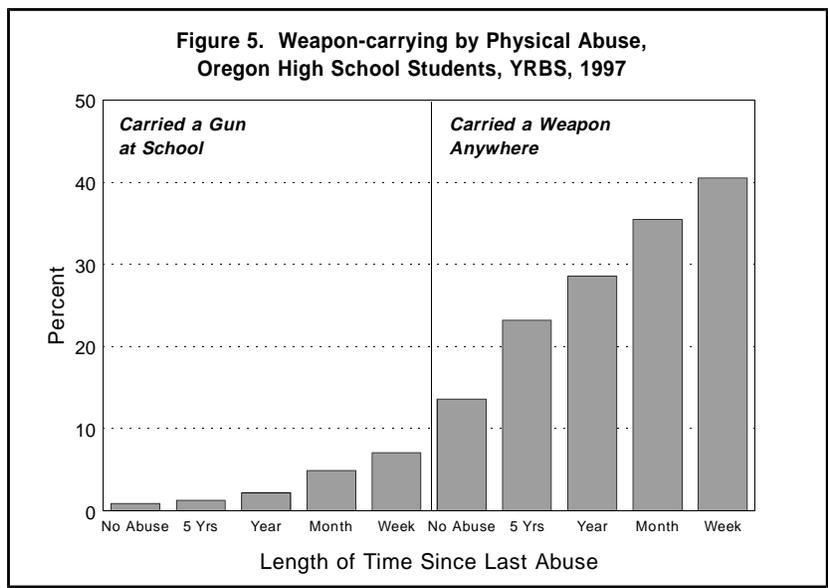
Physically abused students were more than three times as likely to take guns to school as were those free of abuse (3.1 percent vs. 0.9 percent).

*Environmental Tobacco Smoke.* Growing up in a home where secondhand tobacco smoke is present puts children at risk of developing respiratory disorders; cigarette smoking also serves as a marker of a poorer socioeconomic environment as it is associated with a lower levels of education and income. Students in these environments were more apt to carry weapons than those in smoke-free households (25 percent vs. 17 percent).

Gun-carrying at school was twice as common among students living amidst secondhand tobacco smoke than those living in smoke-free homes (2.9 percent vs. 1.3 percent).

In a study published earlier this year, researchers concluded that maternal smoking was a predictor of persistent criminal behavior in males.<sup>13</sup> Even after controlling for other health, demographic, and behavioral characteristics of the parents during and after pregnancy, there was a dose-response relationship between maternal smoking and violent and nonviolent criminal behavior of the child – the more the mother smoked, the more likely her son was to engage in criminal behavior. This increased likelihood of criminal behavior persisted until at least age 34. In another study, individuals whose mother smoked during pregnancy were twice as likely to have criminal record at age

***Researchers have linked maternal smoking with subsequent violent and criminal behavior by their children.***



<b>TABLE 2. Percentage of Students Who Carried Guns During the Previous 30 Days, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997 (Part 1)<sup>1</sup></b>							
Characteristic	% with Characteristic	Carried a Gun Anywhere			Carried a Gun to School		
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	6	10	2	1.8	3.0	0.6
<b>GRADE</b>							
9	30	7	11	2	1.8	3.0	0.6
10	28	6	9	2	1.8	2.8	0.7
11	23	5	9	2	1.8	3.3	0.4
12	19	5	9	1	1.6	2.8	0.5
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>							
White	84	5	9	1	1.3	2.4	0.3
Black	2	12	17	8	6.7	8.3	5.1
Hispanic	5	9	14	5	3.9	5.8	2.0
Asian	3	7	11	2	3.0	5.3	0.5
Indian	2	11	17	4	5.0	8.5	1.2
Other	4	9	14	4	3.3	4.9	1.6
<b>ENROLLMENT LEVEL</b>							
<100	2	11	17	5	2.5	3.6	1.3
100 - 399	13	8	13	2	1.8	3.2	0.4
400 - 799	15	7	11	2	1.7	3.0	0.5
800 - 1199	18	6	10	2	2.1	3.7	0.7
1200+	53	5	8	2	1.6	2.6	0.6
<b>SCHOOL SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS<sup>2</sup></b>							
1 (lowest)	12	7	13	2	2.2	3.7	0.6
2	24	7	11	2	2.2	3.7	0.7
3	28	7	11	2	1.9	3.2	0.6
4 (highest)	36	4	6	1	1.2	2.0	0.4
<b>CARING ADULTS</b>							
None	16	10	15	4	3.6	5.4	1.4
1	19	5	10	2	1.8	3.6	0.6
2+	65	5	8	1	1.1	2.0	0.3
<b>EVER PHYSICALLY ABUSED</b>							
No	73	4	7	1	0.9	1.6	0.3
Yes	27	9	16	3	3.1	5.7	1.0
<b>SMOKERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD</b>							
None	63	5	8	1	1.3	2.2	0.4
Yes - but not inside	18	7	12	2	2.0	3.7	0.5
Yes - inside	19	8	12	3	2.9	4.7	1.1
<b>NUMBER OF CIGARETTES ON DAYS SMOKED</b>							
0	77	4	7	1	0.8	1.4	0.2
<1- 5	16	7	13	3	2.8	5.1	1.1
6 - 20	6	11	19	4	5.4	9.2	1.5
20+	1	42	50	23	27.3	35.8	5.2
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS DRANK ALCOHOL</b>							
0	54	3	5	1	0.5	0.8	0.2
1 - 5	32	5	10	2	1.2	2.4	0.3
6 - 19	13	13	19	5	5.0	7.6	2.0
20+	2	33	43	14	20.4	26.8	7.8
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS BINGED ON ALCOHOL<sup>3</sup></b>							
0	69	3	6	1	0.7	1.2	0.2
1 - 5	24	8	14	3	2.5	4.2	0.8
6 - 19	6	15	22	6	6.9	10.2	2.4
20+	1	49	53	30	33.1	36.9	16.1
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES USED COCAINE</b>							
0	98	5	9	2	1.3	2.3	0.4
1 - 9	2	13	38	12	14	21.4	7.4
10+	<1	37	52	15	26.2	41.1	2.8

TABLE 2. Percentage of Students Who Carried Guns During the Previous 30 Days, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997 (Part 2) <sup>1</sup>							
Characteristic	% with Characteristic	Carried a Gun Anywhere			Carried a Gun to School		
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES SNIFFED INHALANTS</b>							
0	95	5	9	2	1.4	2.5	0.4
1 - 9	4	13	21	6	4.9	8.6	1.7
10+	1	37	46	21	25.7	32.4	14.9
<b>NUMBER OF DRUGS USED<sup>4</sup></b>							
0	69	4	7	1	0.7	1.2	0.2
1	16	8	13	2	2.8	4.8	0.7
2	10	8	13	3	3.2	5.5	0.8
3	3	16	26	6	6.5	10.6	2.9
4+	1	41	51	27	27.4	36.0	15.8
<b>NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS (LAST THREE MONTHS)</b>							
Never had sex	65	3	5	1	0.5	0.9	0.2
Yes, but over 3 mos. ago	12	8	13	2	2.2	3.5	0.7
1	19	7	14	2	2.4	4.7	0.7
2	3	15	24	5	7.6	13.0	2.4
3+	2	35	43	18	23.0	29.0	10.2
<b>HARASSED AT SCHOOL</b>							
No	69	5	8	1	1.1	1.9	0.3
Yes	31	8	13	3	3.0	5.1	1.0
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES THREATENED OR INJURED WITH A WEAPON AT SCHOOL</b>							
0	93	4	7	1	0.9	1.6	0.3
1 - 5	6	19	26	9	8.7	11.7	3.9
6+	1	49	57	28	35.9	40.8	21.9
<b>NUMBER OF PHYSICAL FIGHTS AT SCHOOL</b>							
0	87	4	7	1	0.7	1.4	0.2
1	9	11	14	5	3.5	4.1	2.3
2 - 3	3	19	22	10	8.7	9.8	5.4
4 - 7	1	37	41	24	25.5	28.6	15.0
8+	1	60	63	46	40.8	44.2	27.0
<b>NUMBER OF FIGHTS REQUIRING TREATMENT BY AN MD OR RN</b>							
0	97	5	8	2	1.2	2.1	0.4
1	2	25	29	16	11.9	15.2	5.5
2+	1	45	49	33	30.7	32.1	25.0
<b>ATTEMPTED SUICIDE</b>							
No	92	5	8	1	1.2	2.1	0.3
Yes	8	12	27	6	6.3	15.3	2.3
<b>NUMBER OF RISK FACTORS<sup>5</sup></b>							
0	14	2	3	1	0.1	0.1	0.0
1	28	3	4	1	0.3	0.3	0.2
2	18	5	8	1	1.0	1.7	0.3
3 - 5	33	8	13	2	2.4	4.2	0.6
6 - 7	7	17	26	7	7.0	11.4	2.6
8+	1	45	60	26	31.0	43.7	13.8

1. Based on 32,378 weighted cases from 102 schools.  
 2. The Oregon Department of Education assigns a numeric value to each school in the state based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, student mobility rate, student attendance rate, and the level of education of the most educated parent.  
 3. Binging is defined as consuming five or more drinks within a two-hour period.  
 4. The number of types of drugs used by students was measured with six questions. Affirmative responses to the use of injection drugs, cocaine, steroids (not under the doctor's supervision), marijuana, inhalant use (glue/paint sniffing, huffing), and "any other type of illegal drug" were counted.  
 5. Risk factors included emotional problems, physical abuse, sexual abuse, suicide attempts, fewer than two adults to talk to about problems, smoking by the student or household members, alcohol use, illicit drug use, and sexual activity within the last three months.

22 years as were age-matched controls.<sup>14</sup> Maternal pre-natal smoking has also been associated with other externalizing behaviors, including impulsivity, truancy, conduct disorder, and attentional difficulties.<sup>15, 16</sup>

**STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH**

No question on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey directly asks students about their psychological health, but questions about suicidal behavior are asked and can serve as a surrogate indicator of students' emotional well-being. Nine percent of high school students reported attempting suicide during the previous year, while 22 percent considered suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death of 10- to 19-year-olds.

**Suicidal Behavior**

Depressed juveniles can present a threat to both themselves and others. Students who attempted suicide within the previous 12 months prior to the survey were twice as likely to carry weapons anywhere (35 percent vs. 18 percent) and more than five times as likely to take a gun to school (6.3 percent vs. 1.2 percent).

Among weapon-carriers, 15.6 percent reported having attempted suicide versus to 6.8 percent of non-carriers.

**STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

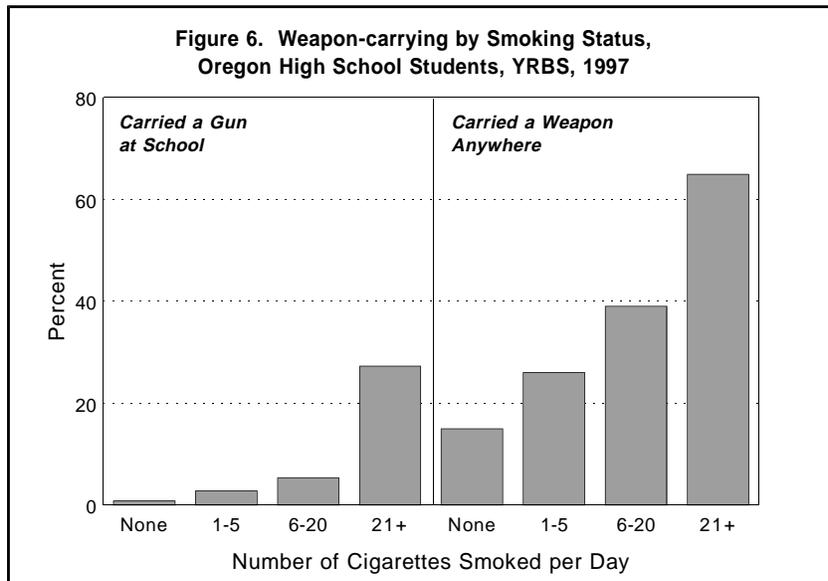
Weapon-carrying is strongly associated with a constellation of high-risk personal behaviors. Among the best warning signs (as revealed by the YRBS) are licit and illicit substance use, and sexual activity. Other studies have

***During 1997, 31 Oregon teens and preteens committed suicide; another 736 were reported to have attempted suicide.***

*"I'm scared of the world, there are to many death traps amongst us. I can't avoid them my entire life. HELP ME."*

**Average number of risky behaviors<sup>17</sup> per student by weapon-carrying:**

**No weapons - 1.52**  
**Knives/Clubs - 2.75**  
**Guns - 3.20**  
**Both - 3.42**



identified such deviant behaviors as selling drugs, committing nonviolent felonies, and engaging in delinquency.<sup>11</sup>

**Cigarette Smoking**

Almost one-quarter (23 percent) of Oregon high school students smoked cigarettes and the more cigarettes a student smoked, the more likely he or she was to also carry weapons. Heavy smoking (20 cigarettes or more daily) is one of the most observable of warning signs that a high school student may carry weapons; nearly two-thirds of students (65 percent) who smoked a pack or more a day also carried weapons sometime during the 30 days prior to the survey compared to 15 percent of non-smokers, more than a four-fold difference (Figure 6).

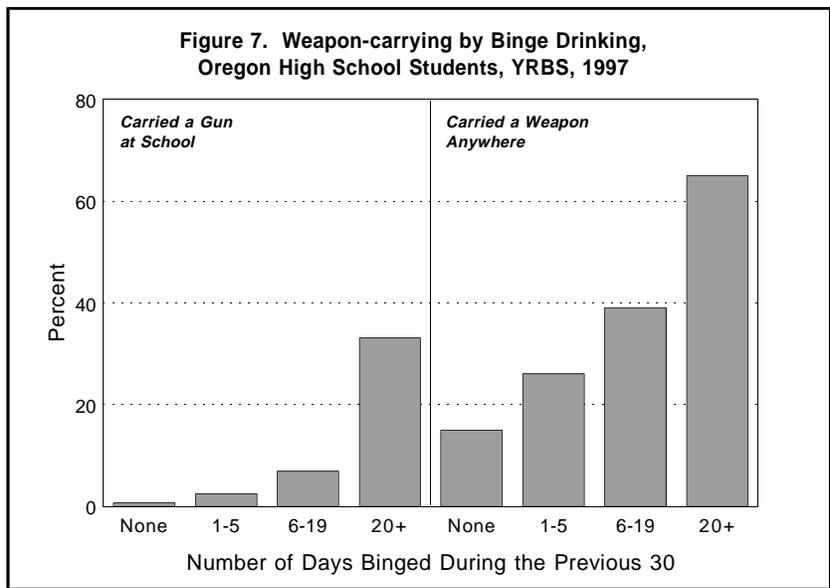
The odds of a heavy smoker taking a gun to school were far greater; 27.3 percent of pack-a-day (or more) smokers took guns to school compared to 0.8 percent of non-smokers — a 34-fold difference.

**Alcohol Use**

Alcohol use of any kind of is associated with weapon-carrying, but binge drinking (drinking five or more drinks within a two-hour period) in particular is strongly linked with weapon-carrying and is especially concerning given the potential effect of alcohol on the drinker’s judgment. Frequent binge drinkers (binge drinking on 20 or more of the previous 30 days) were four times more likely to carry a weapon of any type with them, 65 percent compared to 15 percent of non-bingers (Figure 7).

**Percentage of Oregon students who drank alcohol during the previous month - 46 percent (73,000); who binged - 31 percent (49,000); who binged and carried a weapon - 8.7 percent (14,000).**

**Two-thirds of Oregon students who reported bingeing on alcohol during 20 or more of the previous 30 days also carried weapons to school or elsewhere.**



**Percentage of Oregon weapon-carrying youth that reported binge drinking: 47.**

Students who binged on 20 or more of the 30 days preceding the survey were 47 times more likely to have taken a firearm to school than were abstainers (33.1 percent vs. 0.7 percent).

A study published by the National Center for Health Statistics showed that in about 65 percent of all homicides, the perpetrators, the victims or both had been drinking. Half of youth homicide victims had elevated blood alcohol levels at autopsy.<sup>18</sup>

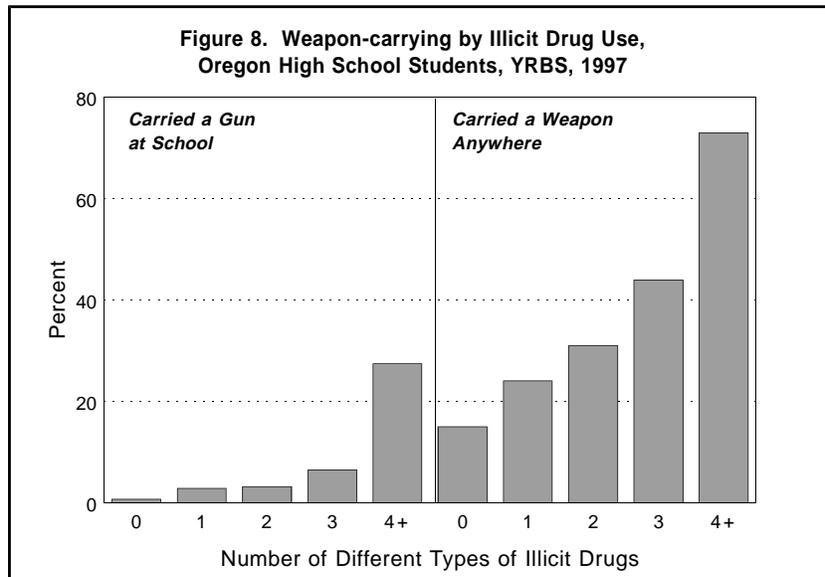
**Illicit Drug Use**

Almost one-third of students (31 percent) reported having used illicit drugs (including the use of inhalants such as glue or paint). Most strongly associated with weapon-carrying was the frequent use of inhalants and/or cocaine (although any use whatsoever was linked with a marked increase in the likelihood of weapon-carrying). The minority of students (about 1 percent) who used these substances on 10 or more of the preceding 30 days were about four times more likely to carry weapons anywhere than were non-abusers (66-67 percent vs. 18 percent).

**Students who frequently used cocaine or inhalants more often took guns to school than others.**

Furthermore, both the heavy users of cocaine and inhalants were about 20 times more likely to take guns to school than were abstainers.

Just as the frequent use of a given drug is associated with weapon-carrying, so too is the use of multiple drugs.<sup>19</sup> The risk of weapon-carrying at school increased greatly among multi-drug users, and although the proportion was



highest among males, the difference between multi-drug users and abstainers was greatest for adolescent females. Figure 8 shows that students who used four or more types of drugs were five times more likely to carry a weapon anywhere (73 percent vs. 15 percent) and 39 times more likely to take a gun to school than were non-drug users (27.4 percent vs. 0.7 percent).

***Among students who used four or more types of illicit substances, one in four took guns to school.***

### **Sexual Behavior**

Students who had multiple sexual partners during the three months preceding the survey were also more likely to have carried weapons during the previous month; more than half of those (55 percent) with three or more sexual partners carried weapons compared to 15 percent of those who had never had sex.

*"Why you think so many teens turn to sex, drugs, and violence? It's a way of coping with their fear and confusion."*

These recent multi-partner youth were 46 times more likely to take guns to school than were the majority of the students, who had not had sexual relations (23.0 percent vs. 0.5 percent).

### **SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

Some researchers have reported that students carry weapons for personal safety, but others believe that neither victimization nor fear for safety in schools is associated with weapon-carrying. Some adolescents carry guns because they may be disproportionately more likely to lead risky lives or associate with violent people.<sup>20-21</sup> Other studies have suggested that carrying a weapon does not make a student safer from harassment or violence — in fact, just the opposite appears to be the case.

***Among students in a fight, weapon carriers were six times more likely to be seriously injured than were non-carriers.***

Among Oregon students involved in a physical fight, weapon-carrying was associated with increased likelihood of injuries requiring medical treatment by a doctor or nurse; 8.4 percent of weapon carriers were seriously injured compared to 1.4 percent of non-carriers.

### **Harassment**

Nearly one-third of students (31 percent) reported being harassed at school during the previous 30 days. The data from the survey do not show whether weapon carrying by a student occurred before or after being harassed, but in any case, compared to their non-harassed peers, harassed students were two times more likely to carry weapons anywhere (28 percent vs. 15 percent) and three times more likely to take guns to school (3.0 percent vs. 1.1 percent).

*"My friends and I are constantly been threatened/provoked at school. We had started carrying weapons for self-defense, knowing that the other people often carried knives. Of course, the school caught US with the weapons. They told some of us that our knives were for inflicting self-harm (?!), and that the threateners were not real. I'd just like to say that I've never seen such poor handling of a bad situation in my life. No matter what, it seems like the real 'problem-people' get away with ANYTHING In my opinion, our school should get to the bottom of the problem, instead of saying, "It's only in your head."*

***In a class of 30 students, two were threatened or injured with a weapon during the previous year.***

Among harassed students, those who were harassed for their race or for their perceived sexual orientation were most likely to carry guns to school, 10.4 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively.

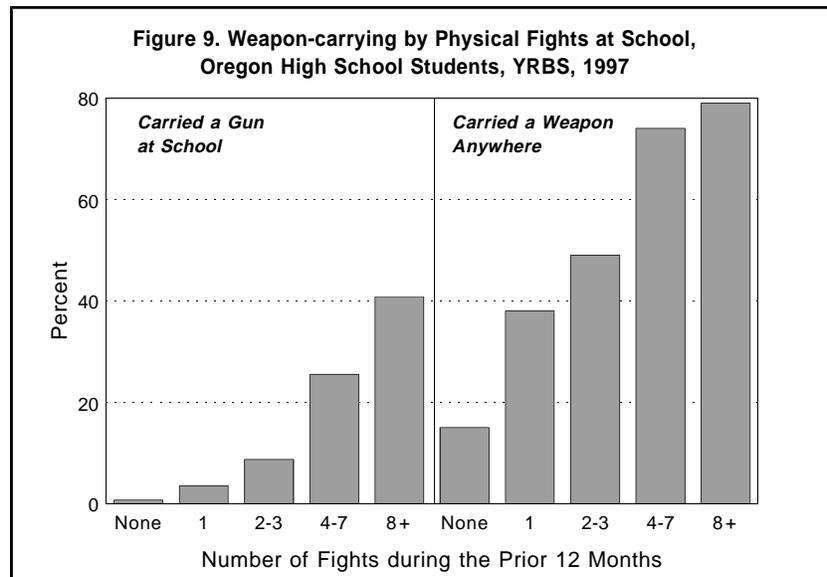
**Threats and Injuries**

Seven percent of students reported being physically threatened or injured with a weapon while at school during the previous 12 months. Those who had been threatened or injured on six or more occasions were over four times more likely to carry a weapon anywhere, and 40 times more likely to carry a gun to school (35.9 percent vs. 0.9 percent).

Students are not the only ones who are threatened; nationally, an estimated 900 teachers are threatened daily and 40 are physically attacked.<sup>22</sup> On average during 1992-96, 124,000 violent crimes against teachers at school were reported annually; an additional 192,000 thefts from teachers were also reported.<sup>23</sup>

**Physical Fights**

Thirteen percent of students reported being in a physical fight at school during the previous 12 months, and they too were more apt to carry a weapon, particularly at school (Figure 9). Those involved in eight or more fights, were 58 times more likely to carry a gun at school (40.8 percent vs. 0.7 percent). While females were generally much less likely to carry weapons than males, those involved in a large number of fights were nearly as likely to carry weapons



anywhere as were fight-prone males (Table 1). Physical fighting is often a precursor to other violent interactions and may become potentially fatal in the presence of a weapon.

***Students involved in frequent fights were 58 times more likely to carry guns to school.***



# CONCLUSIONS

Many high school students behave in ways that put them, and others, at risk for intentional and unintentional injuries. Reducing these risk behaviors is a critical step in preventing injury and promoting school safety.

Data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate that thousands of Oregon high school students have carried guns, knives and/or clubs during the previous month. These weapons, particularly firearms, are a danger not only to other students, but to all Oregonians: the potential for a tragedy exists whenever a student has access to a weapon. Every year, tens of teens and hundreds of Oregonians of all ages die from gunshot wounds; suicide is most common, followed by homicide and unintentional injury. Improper firearm storage has led to countless tragedies among Oregon families.

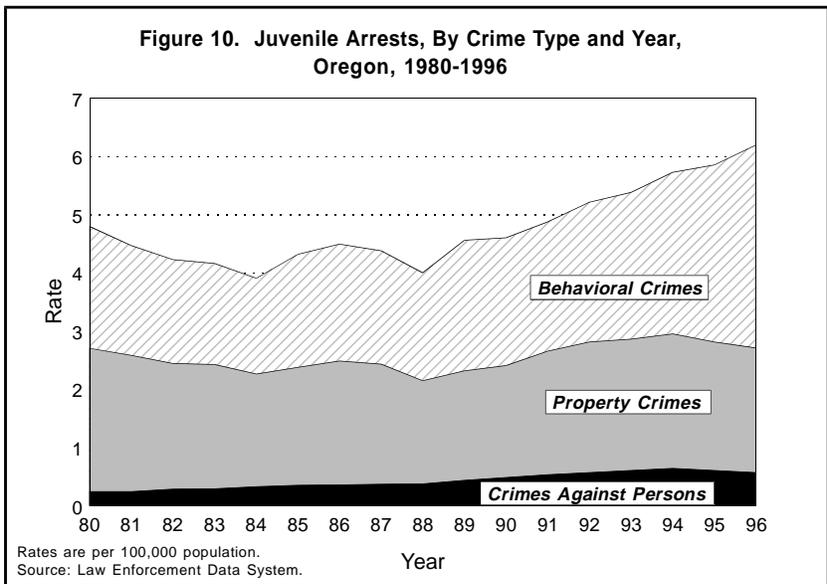
***The deaths of nearly one in four 14-18 year old Oregonians resulted from gunshot wounds (102 of 445 deaths).***

## OREGON DATA

### Weapon-carrying

Not all students who carry weapons will ultimately kill someone, but the risk is clearly there. At least once during the 30 days prior to survey, one in five students (19 percent) carried weapons somewhere. One of every nine students (11 percent) carried a knife or club to school for use as a weapon and about one in fifty (1.8 percent) carried a gun. The fear of being assaulted at school should be

*"If I would have had a gun I would have shot him rite in the knee."*



Percentage Increase in Juvenile Crime Rates, Oregon, 1984-86 and 1994-96	
Crime Type	Percent
Total	40
Against Persons	77
Against Property	9
Behavioral	66

the furthest thing from the mind of a 14-year-old, but the odds are that he or she is in a school where some students carry guns or other concealed weapons. Fears for personal safety are bound to affect academic growth.

### Gun Availability

Half of all Oregon households contained firearms, and in one in six of the households where both children and guns were present, the guns were loaded and unlocked (Appendix F). Access to firearms is an absolute prerequisite cause of gun-related tragedies among Oregon's youth.

### Serious Juvenile Crime

Juveniles constitute more than one-fourth of all Oregon arrests. Between 1984-86 and 1994-96, the rate of serious juvenile crime in Oregon increased 40 percent. The Oregon State Police reported the following number of crimes committed by juveniles during 1997: willful murder, 13; kidnaping, 14; forcible rape, 65; robbery, 305; weapons laws, 516; aggravated assault, 587.<sup>24</sup> Figure 10 shows the change in overall juvenile arrest rates since 1980.

Juvenile crime costs Oregonians \$800 million per year, or \$257 per person.<sup>25</sup> Further, the juvenile arrest rate is expected to be 38 percent higher by 2003 than it was in 1995.<sup>25</sup>

Two Oregon researchers, Kissler and Fore, using cohort size and a measure of stress on families, concluded: "If the relationship [between an index of family stress and juvenile crime rates] continues, we would expect the increased stress on families for children born between 1985

*"I am a low down gangstr set tripin 'banga' and my homies is down so don't arouse my anger fool death ain't nothin but a heart beat away I'm livin life do or die what can I say I'm 23 no but will I live to see 24 the way things is goin I don't know"*

YRBS respondent quoting from "Gangster's Paradise" rap music.

### Juveniles in Oregon's youth correctional facilities share certain commonalities:

- ◆ 82 percent have a learning disability or special education need;
- ◆ 73 percent have a parent convicted of crime;
- ◆ 55 percent have a sibling convicted of a crime;
- ◆ 35 percent flunked a grade;
- ◆ 32 percent have attempted suicide;
- ◆ 23 percent have a gang affiliation; and
- ◆ 13 percent are parents.<sup>25</sup>

and 1995 to lead to an increase in Oregon’s juvenile arrest rate during the first decade of the 21st century. Whether that increase is to 65 per thousand, 70 or 75 is less important than our belief that it will not move towards the target of 30 per thousand set by the Oregon Progress Board.”<sup>26</sup>

**Homicides Among High School-aged Youth**

In just one decade (1984-86 to 1994-96), the risk of being murdered for Oregon 14- to 18-year-olds nearly doubled, from 3.4 per 100,000 population to 6.2. Most of the victims were shot to death with handguns.

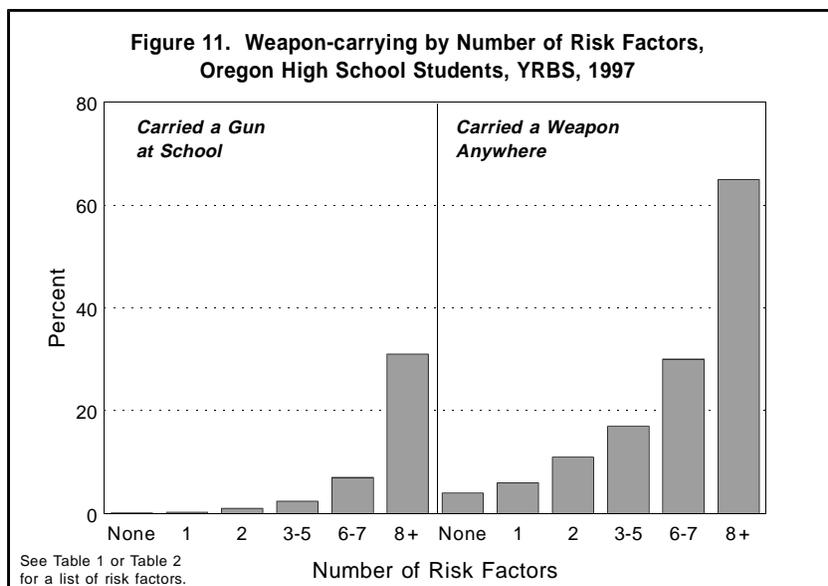
Unfortunately, the Oregon Law Enforcement Data System does not collect data on gun- and other weapon-related crimes by juveniles, so the number and rate of homicides committed by teenage perpetrators cannot be evaluated.<sup>27</sup>

***All of the increase in the homicide rate among Oregon 10- to 19-year-olds between 1984-86 and 1994-96 resulted from firearm violence.***

**YRBS**

The survey data do not tell us why Oregon youth carry weapons, but do offer clues. The home environment precedes any risky behavior that a child may eventually engage in, and many studies have shown that a child’s earliest environmental experiences affect their later behavior. Only a few questions in the YRBS relate to the students’ home environment, but taken together, indicate that the family’s socioeconomic status, communication within the family, and treatment of the child are linked to subsequent weapon-carrying and a constellation of other risky behaviors by the child; as the number of risk factors increases so does the likelihood of weapon-carrying (Figure 11).

*“Most of the time at school I feel safe, but only with my club and gun.”*



### Adolescents and Guns: Developmental Issues

The social context surrounding firearm use is complex. The extent of firearm deaths among adolescents is a uniquely American problem, not found in adolescents anywhere else in the world. The overall violence in American society and the glorification of violence in the media are influences. Issues of race, poverty, urbanization, family disruption, and the erosion of basic law and order are also involved. Within this context, however, adolescents are especially vulnerable to firearm death and injury because of the following developmental issues inherent in the age group.

**Identity and Rite of Passage.** Gun ownership or use, especially for males, may be seen as an American tradition associated with initiation into manhood. Carrying a gun may be seen as “macho” or brave, resulting in instant adult identity.

**Belief in Invincibility.** In defense against emerging fears of inadequacy and fallibility, adolescents may react with reckless bravado, or daredevil, defiant behavior that results in unsafe gun practices.

**Independence and Autonomy.** After puberty, teenagers have increasing amounts of freedom, privacy, and time unsupervised by adults, as well as a desire to challenge adult rules, which may also result in unsafe gun practices.

**Curiosity.** Young teenagers in particular have an irresistible curiosity about firearms, seeking them out of “safe” places, handling them, and showing them off to friends.

**Peer Group Influence.** Pressures exerted by friends struggling with their own insecurities may prompt teenagers to possess, carry, flaunt, or use a gun in ways they might otherwise resist.

**Immaturity.** Safety often is learned from experience. A teenager’s lack of experience, and subsequent lack of judgment and self-control, often result in dangerous experimentation.

**Impulsiveness.** Both homicidal and suicidal thoughts are related directly to impulsive, ambivalent behavior, during which access to a gun creates a potentially lethal situation for vulnerable youth.

**Substance Abuse.** Experimentation with alcohol and drugs, which also occurs during adolescence, increases the likelihood of risk-taking behavior and long has been associated with increased risks of injury, including suicide and violence.

**Perceived Need for Protection.** Adolescents increasingly view their environment as dangerous (perhaps reinforced by news, television, and media messages). Because they have limited coping skills for conflict resolution, they may respond by carrying or using weapons.<sup>28</sup>

**Domestic violence**

Viewing domestic violence increases the likelihood that a child will also develop violent and other anti-social behavior. A recently released state survey found that 13 percent of women interviewed were the victims of physical assault, coercion, or injury during the past year. In 60 percent of these homes, children 17 or younger witnessed the violence, and two-thirds of these saw or heard the abuse at least once per month.<sup>29</sup>

**OTHER STUDIES**

**Gun Availability**

The widespread prevalence of gun ownership in the United States is a factor in juvenile weapon-carrying and its resulting consequences (i.e., intentional and unintentional gunshot fatalities): the increasing availability of firearms in recent years has made youth violence more lethal.<sup>30-32</sup> Results of a Washington state study showed a dramatic increase in the handgun purchase rate between 1950 and 1992 ; at the midpoint of the Twentieth Century there were 169 handgun purchases per 100,000 adult residents, but by 1992 the figure had risen more than 12-fold to 2,076 per 100,000 persons.<sup>33</sup> The greatest increase in the rate of legal handgun purchases in Washington state during the last ten years of the study was among the youngest purchasers.

In a national survey of 2,508 American youth grades 6-12, 59 percent reported that they could “get a handgun if they wanted” and 35 percent maintained that they could get the gun in less than an hour.<sup>34</sup> In a study of Seattle high school students, 34 percent said they had easy access to handguns and of the 6.4 percent who owned handguns, 33 percent said they had fired at someone.<sup>35</sup>

Analysis of the growing number of domestically produced handguns available for sale in the U.S. compared to the (increasing) age-adjusted firearm homicide and suicide rates have shown a strong association; the correlation coefficients for handgun availability vs. firearms homicide and firearms suicide were 0.913 and 0.937, respectively.<sup>36</sup>

In a survey of North American and European countries, the United States had the highest household gun ownership rate.<sup>37</sup> According to a 1994 survey, an estimated 44 million Americans owned 192 million firearms, 65 million

***Number of children 17 or younger witnessing domestic violence against women in Oregon households:  
During the last year – 123,400;  
At least once a month during the last year – 81,400.***

***For every fatal firearm injury, there are an estimated 2.6-7.0 times as many non-fatal injuries, many, nameless victims who live out shortened lives as paraplegics or in a permanent vegetative state.<sup>39-41</sup>***

***Nationally, juveniles (ages 14-17) are more likely to commit murder than any other age group except for 18- to 24-year-olds.<sup>38</sup>***

***American males ages 15-24 are 44 times more likely to be murdered than their counterparts in Austria (the European country with the lowest youth homicide rate).***

*"Guns are cool."*

of which were handguns. Although there were enough guns to provide every U.S. adult with one, only 25 percent of adults actually owned firearms; 74 percent of gun owners possessed two or more.<sup>21</sup>

### **U.S. Juvenile Crime**

In 1997, juveniles (under age 18) were responsible for 17 percent of all violent crimes recorded by the law enforcement system, and 19 percent of all arrests.<sup>42</sup> They were involved in 14 percent of all murder and aggravated assault arrests, 37 percent of burglary arrests, 30 percent of robbery arrests, 24 percent of weapons arrests, and 14 percent of all drug abuse arrests. As high as these figures are, the number of arrests of juveniles for serious violent crimes has declined during the past several years. Nationally, the number of juveniles arrested for committing a homicide peaked in 1993 and has fallen since then, but still 11 percent more murders were committed by juveniles during 1997 than a decade earlier. Despite declines in recent years, the juvenile violent crime index increased by 49 percent during the past decade.<sup>42</sup>

### **Homicide Rates**

A comparison of homicide rates for males ages 15-24 in the United States and 21 other developed countries showed that the U.S. homicide rate (21.9 per 100,000) was more than four times higher than the next highest rate (Scotland, 5.0); most countries had rates between 1 and 3 per 100,000. The lowest rates were in Austria and Japan, 0.5 and 0.3, respectively.<sup>43</sup> Three-fourths of the homicides in the U.S. resulted from the use of firearms in contrast to less than a quarter of all homicides in the comparison countries.<sup>43</sup> Another study, this of 27 industrialized nations, found that U.S. children 14 or younger were 16 times more likely than those in other nations to die in a firearm-related homicide.<sup>44</sup>

### **Why Students Carry Weapons**

Students have been asked in many surveys why they carry weapons, but researchers have also looked beyond their answers.

*What Students Say.* A Harris survey of students reported that when asked "What is the single most important reason some students carry a weapon?" 41 percent of students answered "for protection against possible attacks by other people"; 34 percent said to "show off and

impress their friends"; 10 percent responded "because it makes them feel important"; 10 percent indicated "because they are angry and want to hurt someone"; and 4 percent answered "because their friends carry weapons."<sup>34,45</sup> A survey by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company reported that students carry weapons for four main reasons: for protection while going to school; for impressing their friends; for self-esteem; and for protection in school.<sup>46</sup>

What Researchers Say. Other studies have gone beyond the answers given by the adolescents themselves. One showed that weapons are not brought to school because of a heightened need for protection, but instead may be in response to normative influences in school.<sup>20</sup> Several showed that weapon-carrying at school was more strongly associated with use of violence ("beating up someone") and use of substances at school than with previous victimization and fear of attending school.<sup>48,49</sup> A study of fifth-, seventh-, and ninth-grade students in the Cleveland public school system, found that: students perceived guns as fun; students believed that safety is achieved primarily through personal power, not by relying on adults to change the environment; students displayed confidence in aggression and lack of confidence in their own interpersonal skills such as negotiation, assertiveness, and conflict resolution; many students believed that shame which results from an insult can be undone only through aggression.<sup>46</sup>

In a study of junior high school students, gun-carrying appeared to be a component of highly aggressive delinquency rather than a purely defensive behavior; it was associated with an arrest record, starting fights, and being willing to justify shooting someone.<sup>50</sup> Further, 74 percent of illegal gun owners committed street crimes and 41 percent used drugs.<sup>50</sup> A multi-city study concluded that while many students feel that weapons confer safety, those students who actually carry weapons are much more likely to fight.<sup>51</sup>

After reviewing multiple studies, the U.S. Department of Justice stated that "handguns are more likely to be owned by socially maladjusted youth, dropouts, drug dealers, and individuals with prior records of violent behavior than by more socially adjusted youth, even in those sections of the country in which firearms and hunting are fairly common."<sup>32</sup>

***Firearms are second only to motor vehicles in claiming the lives of Oregonians ages 14 to 18.***

*"And I take my varmit rifle to school but that is just to shoot varmints after school and re-stain it in Wood shop."*

***Weapon carrying is more common among those who report having "beat up" someone.***

***Parental expectations, beliefs, and behaviors are linked to the use of violence by their children.***

*"Many of my friends suffer from either depression, family problems, or other problems. We do not feel that there is anywhere to go for counseling or other treatment without telling our parents, for fear of rising more problems. I think that in our school, Counselors should be more available with out consent of parents."*

### **The Family**

There is no more important social context for a child than its relationship with its family. The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health has shown that a strong parent/family connectedness was protective against multiple potential risk behaviors; for example, parental expectations regarding school achievement were associated with a reduced likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors and parental disapproval of early sexual debut was associated with a later age of onset of intercourse. On the other hand, access to substances in the home was linked to the use of licit and illicit drugs while access to guns at home was associated with suicidal behavior.<sup>51</sup>

A study of seventh-grade students in three dissimilar U.S. communities found a child's willingness to use violence was significantly influenced by parental behaviors and violence: students whose parents used nonviolent disciplinary techniques fought less often than those whose parents relied on hitting and more violent disciplinary methods; fighting was significantly more common among students who believed that their parents wanted them to fight if insulted; and, students who reported that they tried to stay out of fights usually succeeded.<sup>52</sup>

### **Economic Costs**

No estimates have been made of the economic cost of weapon-related injuries in Oregon, but national estimates of firearm-related injuries suggest the costs are substantial. The cost of health care and lost productivity resulting from firearm-related injuries has been estimated at \$20 billion per year, while direct expenditures for treating firearm-caused injuries was estimated to be \$4 billion for the United States during 1995.<sup>60,61</sup> The demographics of persons injured by firearms are such that government programs pay for the majority of these medical care costs. In a San Francisco study, public funds paid for 86 percent of hospital costs (excluding physicians fees), while private sources paid only 14 percent.<sup>62</sup> Other studies have reported that public financing was used to pay for treating 56 percent to 96 percent of the hospitalization costs of persons injured with firearms.<sup>63-65</sup>

All studies agree that there is a marked psychopathology in virtually all families of homicidal adolescents. Frequently the adolescent has been abused, either physically, sexually, or through neglect (including rejection and discontinuity of care).<sup>53</sup>

Low and Andrews summarized the studies of families whose children were suicidal: "Families of suicidal adolescents have been characterized as chronically disorganized, chaotic and unstable with higher prevalences of family break-up, violence and suicidal tendencies. . . . Parents of suicidal adolescents have shown a greater prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse, chronic psychiatric illness, especially affective disorders. . . . Suicidal adolescents have also experienced a higher incidence of physical and sexual abuse in their families." They further noted that "interactions among families of suicidal children and adolescents have shown that high levels of hostility, rejection, and disapproval are directed towards the suicidal youth, with concurrent withdrawal of support, leaving adolescent children feeling 'expendable' to the family."<sup>54</sup>

Recent research has indicated that brain development, particularly beginning before birth and up to age two, is crucial in determining how a child relates to the world and to the people in it.<sup>55</sup>

### Video

Many researchers have concluded that exposure to violence as "entertainment" increases the risk of violent behavior of children.<sup>56</sup> The National Institute of Mental Health has stated "there is increasing consensus among the research community that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs."<sup>57</sup> It is believed that viewing violence on television has a significant effect on the beliefs and attitudes of children and adolescents concerning conflict resolution, violence, and physical aggressiveness.<sup>58</sup> Physicians and others have reported that exposure to media violence correlates with aggression, callousness, and an appetite for violence among both adults and children (who have a harder time distinguishing reality from fiction) — particularly, with the viewing of "reality" television shows (e.g., *Cops*).

The widespread exposure to violence of America's youth and easy availability of guns is thought to have a

***Numerous studies have shown that violent youth most often grow up in dysfunctional families.***

*"Because my life is my life, It is the only life I will ever have because I am not a superstitious . . . who is scared to die. Let me be sad, let me not care"*

### Television, Movies, and Violence

- ◆ Over 1,000 studies have indicated that media violence can lead to aggressive behavior in children.
- ◆ By age 18, the average American child will have viewed about 200,000 acts of violence on television alone.
- ◆ The level of violence during Saturday morning cartoons is higher than the level of violence during prime time. There are 3-5 violent acts per hour in prime time versus 20-25 acts per hour on Saturday morning.
- ◆ Media violence is especially damaging to young children (under age 8) because they cannot easily tell the difference between real-life and fantasy. They can be traumatized by viewing these images.
- ◆ Media violence affects children by:
  - increasing aggressiveness and anti-social behavior;
  - increasing their fear of becoming victims;
  - making them less sensitive to violence and to victims of violence;
  - increasing their appetite for more violence in entertainment and real-life.
- ◆ Media violence often fails to show the consequences of violence. As a result, children learn that there are few, if any, repercussions for committing violent acts.
- ◆ Parents can reduce the effect media violence has on children by:
  - limiting the amount of television children watch to one to two hours per day;
  - monitoring the programs children watch and restricting children's viewing of violent programs;
  - monitoring the music videos and films children see, as well as the music children listen to, for violent themes;
  - teaching children alternatives to violence.
- ◆ Parents can help children develop media literacy skills by:
  - helping children distinguish between fantasy and reality;
  - teaching them that real-life violence has consequences.<sup>47</sup>

predictable outcome: children who see their “heroes” in the entertainment industry resolve problems with automatic weapons are more likely to see violence as a solution to their own problems.<sup>57</sup> One 22-year study showed that the more television an eight-year-old watched, the greater the likelihood at age 30 that he or she would be: aggressive when drinking; to commit serious crimes; and to punish his/her own children harshly (even after controlling for other factors).<sup>59</sup>

*“I think many people close their eyes to the visible. Things that their children are screaming silently.”*

Viewing violence on the screen has been reported to have the following negative effects: it increases the viewer’s fear of becoming a victim of violence, with a resultant increase in self-protective behaviors and increased mistrust of others; it desensitizes the viewer to violence, resulting in a callous attitude toward violence; it increases the viewer’s appetite for becoming involved with violence; it often demonstrates how desirable commodities can be obtained through the use of aggression and violence.<sup>66</sup> Sexual violence in X- and R-rated videotapes are widely available to teenagers and has also been reported to cause an increase in male aggression against females.<sup>66</sup> Other studies have suggested that children who are heavy viewers of television are: more pessimistic, more apt to be overweight, less imaginative, less sympathetic, and less capable students than their lighter-viewing counterparts.<sup>57</sup>

One researcher concluded “children learn what they see — and unfortunately, in our country through news reports, movies, television, and everyday life . . . children see violence; and they do not learn that violence is bad. Too often, they learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict; furthermore, many children, because of their home and neighborhood environments, have little opportunity to learn about alternative ways to settle disputes.”<sup>67</sup>



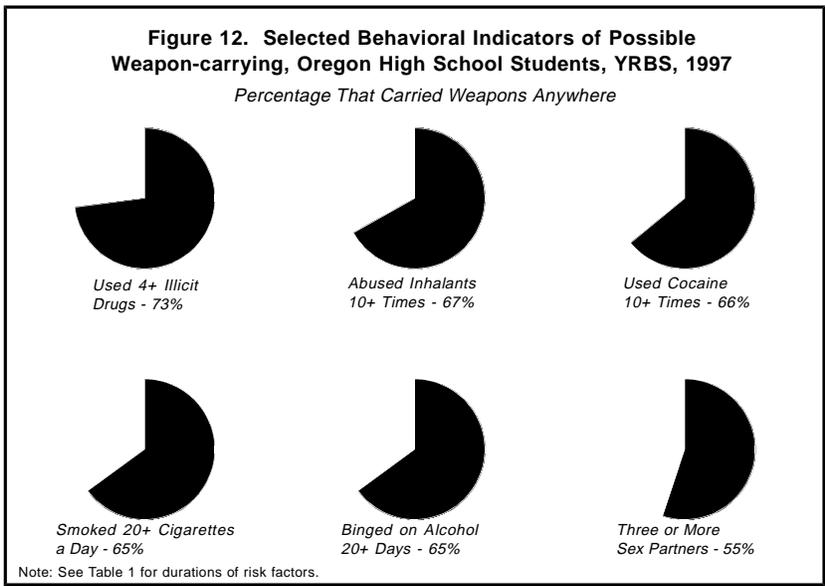
# PREVENTION

Despite a decline in national youth crime statistics in recent years, many researchers expect an increase in crime rates early in the next century. Wexler summarized the outlook for the future: "There are now 40 million children in this country under the age of 10, a larger amount than has existed for several decades. This 'baby boomerang' of youngsters will soon reach their adolescence. It is estimated that by the year 2005, the number of teens, ages 14 to 17, will have increased 20 percent over its 1994 level. This new population will likely result in more crime and other social problems. The statistics may seem grim, but the tide can be turned around. . . . However, most [experts] will likely agree that with the number of teenagers projected to increase . . . there will indeed be a new surge in juvenile crime."<sup>68</sup> Other researchers are, however, more sanguine. Zimring believes that there is no scientific basis for any of the alarming predictions, and that the most important influences on the rate of criminal homicide by young persons are events that have not yet occurred.<sup>30</sup>

**Nearly two-thirds (64%)  
of the firearm fatalities  
among Oregon  
14- to 18-year-olds  
were caused by  
handgun injuries.**

Parents , school staff, and students should be aware of the potential warning signs of youth violence and weapon-carrying and should tell those in a position to help if they see or hear someone at risk of committing violence. Figure 12 shows some behaviors identified from YRBS data linked to weapon-carrying.

*"Needs to be more drug education also more ways to prevent people from breaging gun to school by themself and also cars I know peepke that cary guns in there cars to school and that scares me."*



### **The Role of Athletics**

Encouraging participation in athletics has been widely regarded as a means of reducing risky behaviors. However, recent studies have cast doubt on that belief.<sup>69</sup> Oregon data, too, show little evidence that participation in team sports (outside of PE classes) has a meaningful role in preventing or reducing the prevalence of gun-carrying in the schools; 1.7 percent of students who did not participate in team sports carried guns to school, compared to 1.6 percent of those who did participate.

The National School Safety Center summarized the many firearm injury prevention strategies available. These include: reducing the availability of firearms, legislative relief, maintaining a positive school climate, community education, public awareness, teaching non-violence, conflict resolution training, peer assistance, firearms safety courses, weapon-free school zones, and counseling centers.<sup>46</sup>

## **GUN LETHALITY, RISK, AND AVAILABILITY**

### **Lethality**

Guns are more likely to kill than other weapons. In a study of 16,000 violent assaults, attacks with a gun were found to be five times more likely to result in fatalities than attacks with a knife.<sup>70</sup> A study of family and intimate assaults showed firearms to be three times more likely to result in death than assaults involving knives (or other cutting instruments), and 23 times more likely to result in death than assaults involving other weapons or bodily force.<sup>71</sup>

### **Potential Warning Signs of Violence in the Adolescent**

- ◆ Consistently does not listen to authority figures.
- ◆ Pays no attention to the feelings or rights of others.
- ◆ Cruel or violent towards pets or other animals.
- ◆ Mistreats people.
- ◆ Relies upon physical violence or threats of violence to solve problems.
- ◆ Often expresses the feeling that life has treated him or her unfairly.
- ◆ Does poorly in school and often skips class.
- ◆ Gets suspended from, or drops out of, school.
- ◆ Joins a gang, gets involved in fighting, stealing, or destroying property.
- ◆ Drinks alcohol and/or uses drugs or inhalants.
- ◆ Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons.
- ◆ Detailed threats of lethal violence.
- ◆ Possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons.<sup>72</sup>

## Risk

In a recent study of fatal and non-fatal gunshot injuries occurring in three large metropolitan areas, researchers found that for every time a gun in the home was used in self-defense or legally justifiable shooting, there were four unintentional shootings, seven criminal assaults or homicides, and 11 attempted or completed suicides.<sup>73</sup>

Gun owners must be made aware of the risks of injury posed by loaded guns to unsupervised children and adolescents.<sup>1</sup> Adolescents living in homes where there is easy access to guns have been shown to be more likely to be involved in violent behavior. They are more likely to act violently towards others and are at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and attempts.<sup>51</sup>

Even if the number of violent events remained unchanged, a drop in the proportion of these events in which guns were used would decrease the lethality of violence, resulting in fewer deaths and serious injuries. Thus efforts to reduce the numbers of deaths and injuries from firearms must focus on the firearms themselves, as well as on the root causes of violence.<sup>1</sup>

## Availability

Public education should be directed toward teaching safe gun storage and use, and increasing public awareness about the risks of having a gun in the home. People have loaded firearms because they believe guns promote home safety; yet, studies have shown that although firearms are often kept in the home for protection, they are rarely used in self defense.<sup>75,76</sup>

There is evidence that gun safety laws have a beneficial effect. States that have passed laws making gun owners criminally liable if someone is injured because a child gains unsupervised access to a gun have subsequently experienced a 23 percent decrease in unintentional shooting deaths among children 15 or younger; gun-related homicide and suicide rates showed smaller declines.<sup>77</sup>

## GUN-FREE SCHOOLS

### Legislation

In 1994, the federal Gun Free Schools Act was signed into law. The act requires that: schools expel for at least one year students who were caught carrying a gun; public schools that receive federal funding adhere to the gun-free

***During the first seven years of the 1990s, 29 Oregon infants, toddlers, and pre-teens were fatally shot:  
Homicides - 14;  
Unintentional Injuries - 10;  
Suicides - 4;  
Undetermined Manner - 1.***

***Half of all Oregon households contain guns.***

***More than 75% of the guns used by youth 18 or younger in suicide attempts and unintentional injuries were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or friend.<sup>74</sup>***

### A New Law

*This past summer, Gov. Kitzhaber signed into law SB 344. It requires that employees of public school districts, education service districts, and private schools report to the appropriate authority any person they believe has unlawfully possessed a firearm or destructive device on school grounds within the previous 120 days. Law enforcement agencies are required to conduct an investigation. The law also allows courts to detain any youth believed to have carried a firearm or destructive device on public property if probable cause exists. A mental health assessment or screening of a youth may be ordered (during which time the youth may be detained for a period not to exceed seven days).*

### OREGON LAW

#### Weapon-carrying at School

Oregon has a gun-free schools law. State law requires that a student taking a weapon to school be expelled for at least a year. If the student is caught with a weapon, parents are contacted and the school is required to refer the matter to law enforcement officials. The school district superintendent has the authority to modify the one-year expulsion requirement, on a case-by-case basis. The first step in expelling the student is suspension, followed by a pre-expulsion hearing consistent with due process rights. Although the decision to expel the student rests with the school board, the board's decision is subject to judicial review. In Oregon, district school boards are required to offer expelled students an alternative program of instruction combined with counseling (ORS 339.250).<sup>79</sup>

#### Other Oregon Laws

The following summarizes other Oregon weapons laws and is highly abbreviated. For additional information on the Oregon Revised Statutes, see <http://landru.leg.state.or.us/ors/166.html>. Preemption Law. Except as authorized by Oregon state statute, the authority to regulate the sale, acquisition, transfer, ownership, possession, storage, transportation, or use of firearms or any element relating to firearms, including ammunition, is vested solely in the legislative assembly.

Carrying Concealed Weapons Law. Oregon law requires authorities to issue to citizens licenses that allow them to carry a loaded, concealed gun, unless he/she is in a prohibited category (e.g., convicted felon).

Juvenile Possession Law. Oregon law prohibits possession of firearms except "temporarily for hunting, target practice or other lawful purpose." In the case of firearms other than handguns, minors may possess with the permission of a parent or guardian. A juvenile may not possess a firearm if convicted of the equivalent of an adult felony or misdemeanor of violence.

Waiting Period for a Handgun Purchase. Instant check; if the Oregon State Police fail to provide before the close of the dealer's next business day the approval or rejection of the sale, the dealer may deliver the handgun to the purchaser.<sup>80</sup>

Other State's Laws. The following are laws enacted in other states, but not in Oregon: secondary/private sales law,<sup>81</sup> state ban on Saturday night specials, state ban on assault weapons, record of sale law,<sup>82</sup> registration law, one-gun-a-month law.<sup>83</sup>

policy (or risk losing their funding); and schools report campus gun incidents to their state education agencies (including the number of incidents on campus each year and what type of guns were used). It also gives schools discretion to modify the expulsion policy on a case-by-case basis should extenuating circumstances exist, and strengthens existing local and state laws punishing students who bring guns to school.

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Education provides evidence that the legislation is working; a total of 6,093 students were intercepted with dangerous weapons and expelled during the 1996-97 school year. In the majority of cases, the weapon involved was a gun.<sup>78</sup>

Last year, U.S. Senators Wyden and Smith introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate that required that students who bring guns to school be held for 72 hours and undergo psychological evaluation.<sup>84</sup> (The Thurston High School assailant was suspended the day before the shootings for bringing a gun to school, but was not held by the police.) The bill did not pass Congress, but may be reintroduced this year.

### Detection and Confiscation of Weapons

Schools have employed various strategies to confiscate weapons and deter students from bringing weapons on to school grounds, including random locker searches, walk-throughs with metal detectors, and policies requiring clear plastic or mesh book bags so that weapons cannot be easily hidden. During the 1997-98 school year, 135 Oregon students were expelled for carrying firearms and/or explosive devices to school.<sup>85</sup> An additional 392 students were expelled for carrying other weapons such as knives and clubs to school.<sup>85,86</sup>

Yet despite these and other actions, an estimated 1,600 students stayed home from school at least once during the month prior to the YRBS because they felt unsafe.

Not all potentially violent students carry weapons, but when violent or potentially violent students are identified (whether weapon-carriers or not), they should be screened. The U.S. Department of Justice has concluded that "every effort should be made in this assessment process to avoid the stigmatization of children through negative labels. It is

***Number of Oregon students expelled for weapons offenses during the 1997-98 school year:***  
*handguns - 54;*  
*rifles/shotguns - 8;*  
*other guns/bombs - 73;*  
*other weapons - 392.<sup>85</sup>*

***Number of weapons recovered by the Portland School District during the 1997-98 school year:***  
*handguns - 8;*  
*rifle - 1;*  
*BB/air guns - 7;*  
*knives - 14.<sup>8</sup>*

### One Physician's View

“The major setting for violence in America is the home. Intrafamilial abuse, neglect and domestic battery account for the majority of physical and emotional violence suffered by children in this country. Despite this, a majority of our entertainment, media and public policy efforts focus on community or predatory violence. Understanding the roots of community and predatory violence is impossible unless the effects of intrafamilial violence, abuse and neglect on the development of the child are examined. Indeed, the adolescents and adults responsible for community and predatory violence likely developed the emotional, behavioral, cognitive and physiological characteristics which mediate these violent behaviors as a result of intrafamilial violence during childhood. . . .

“Children exposed to chronic violence are more likely to be violent. This is related to many factors, including modeling and learning that violent aggression is acceptable, and a preferable and honorable, solution to problems. . . .

The presence of a strong supportive family network or a strong stable adult figure is critically important. Children exposed to violence benefit from the presence of a stable adult even outside the home. . . .

“We need to change our childrearing practices, we need to change the malignant and destructive view that children are the property of their biological parents. Human beings evolved not as individuals, but as communities. Despite Western conceptualizations, the smallest functional biological unit of humankind is not the individual — it is the clan. No individual, no single parent-child dyad, no nuclear family could survive alone. We survived and evolved as clans — interdependent — socially, emotionally and biologically. Children *belong* to the community, they are *entrusted* to parents. American society, and its communities have failed parents and children alike. We have not provided parents with the information and resources to optimize their children's potential and, when parents fail, we act too late and with impotence to protect and care for maltreated children.”<sup>90</sup>

essential not to overlook how a child feels and reacts when he or she is viewed as a violent predator. Just as a child who is told he or she is ignorant may lose the incentive to learn, a child who is categorized as violent may be inclined to live out that reputation.<sup>87</sup>

Schools should be encouraged to incorporate possible weapons possession situations into their school crisis plans, including the development of crisis response teams. Educators should be provided training and guidelines on how to handle individuals on campus who may be armed. Common sense would suggest that safe schools go hand in hand with safe communities; schools that build alliances within their communities are more likely to achieve a weapon- and violence-free environment.<sup>88</sup>

## THE FAMILY

Programs that teach parenting skills to help parents of young children provide a nurturing home environment, and that model nonviolent methods of resolving conflict and mediate disputes, are believed to be among the most promising strategies to reduce violence among youth.<sup>89</sup> Parents of anti-social children often need additional assistance in developing one or more of the following skills: monitoring the whereabouts of the child, disciplining the child, negotiating in solving the problems within the family, and modeling effective social skills.<sup>89</sup>

## PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Researchers at the University of Oregon's Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior last year published the results of an evaluation of an intervention program (First Step to Success) that they developed for kindergartners who showed early signs of anti-social behavior. Consisting of multiple components (including universal screening of all kindergartners, school intervention involving the teacher, peers and the target child, and parent/caregiver training and involvement to support the child's school adjustment), the program appears to have promise for achieving secondary prevention outcomes for at-risk kindergartners.<sup>91</sup> Walker and his colleagues noted that strong "evidence suggests that anti-social children and youth follow a developmental trajectory in which the anti-social acts they engage in become more serious. Early identification and exposure to interventions designed to divert at-risk children and youth from this path is clearly in the public

***Seventy-one percent of all fatal gunshot injuries to youth occurred in a home.***

*"It all starts in the home, not in the school."*

interest. As public policy, the strategy could save millions of dollars in later incarceration costs. However, it requires major changes in how schools respond to this population. Part of this change, if it is to be effective, will necessitate concentration of prevention-intervention resources at the point of school entry."<sup>91</sup>

*"If you want to find the real problem look at family values and bonds. Ask students how they feel about their family, how close they are to their family, and what do their parents teach them about the world. The kinds who aren't close to their family are going to be the ones with the most problems."*

Many other violence prevention programs exist. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has noted "we are beginning to understand young people's attraction to particular types of guns; the impact of cultural influences, particularly media violence and notions of manliness, on young people's behavior; the impact of drugs and the illicit drug market on youth gun violence; the effect of deviant behavior, gun socialization, and attitudes toward law enforcement on youth gun violence; the age when boys are most prone to the lure of guns; and the detrimental effect of the cycle of fear and lack of viable opportunities in many communities on gun youth violence."<sup>32</sup> With this understanding has come the development of numerous violence prevention strategies aimed not only at reducing gun violence but other forms of violence as well.

The OJJDP has concluded that violence reduction programs must be comprehensive in nature: "From legislative mandates to further research, from intervention to prevention and alternative treatment programs, from hospital-based prevention programs to grassroots and

#### **Raising Children to Resist Violence: What You Can Do**

- ◆ Give your children consistent love and attention.
- ◆ Make sure your children are supervised.
- ◆ Show your children appropriate behaviors by the way you act.
- ◆ Don't hit your children.
- ◆ Be consistent about rules and discipline.
- ◆ Make sure your children do not have access to guns.
- ◆ Try to keep your children from seeing violence in the media, home and community.
- ◆ Teach your children ways of avoiding becoming victims of violence.
- ◆ Help your children stand up against violence.<sup>92</sup>

youth-based collaborative efforts, each holds the key to making our homes, streets, and neighborhoods safe for our children.” For further information about these types of programs see the OJJDP report *Reducing Youth Gun Violence: An Overview of Programs and Initiatives*.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the recent tragedies in Springfield, Oregon, Littleton, Colorado, and elsewhere, schools should not be singled out as especially dangerous places. Rather, schools should be the focus of community collaborations that create safe learning environments for all students. Because the risk of being assaulted is reportedly an important motivation for weapon-carrying, programs should attempt to reduce the perceived or actual risk of victimization that underlies the need many students feel to carry weapons for self-protection.<sup>93</sup>

Last year Governor Kitzhaber issued Executive Order No. EO 98-09 to develop high-risk juvenile crime prevention partnerships. State, county, and community agencies will target youth with more than one of the following risk factors:

- ◆ School failure;
- ◆ Substance abuse;
- ◆ Negative peer association;
- ◆ Anti-social behavior;
- ◆ Poor family function or support; and;
- ◆ Who are clearly demonstrating at-risk behaviors.

Violence and weapon-carrying are not simply school problems. Only by integrating efforts by diverse disciplines to address different facets of the problem can we shift the focus from reacting to violence to addressing its root causes. These causes are social, environmental, biological, genetic, and behavioral in origin; they include poverty, weak family structure, schools of varying quality, exposure to violence (in the media, home, and society), victimization, mental health problems, anger and poor impulse control, racism, alcohol and drug use, abuse and neglect, ready availability of firearms (e.g., poor gun storage practices by adults), and many other factors.<sup>1</sup> Resolving these issues requires cooperation among not only public and private agencies, but the average citizen as well.

*“My dad has plenty of guns & rifles. So if you watch the news and see a teacher shot to death before school is out. You’ll know why he died.”*

*The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people.*

*-Ashanti proverb*



# APPENDIX A.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Oregon's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior survey (YRBS) was coordinated by the Oregon Department of Human Resources' Health Division (Center for Health Statistics) and the Oregon Department of Education.

The Oregon Health Division and the Oregon Department of Education sincerely appreciate the superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, and nurses who gave their time and energy to administer this survey. Thanks also go to the students at the following schools who participated in the survey. The Oregon Health Division and Oregon Department of Education are releasing YRBS data only on a statewide basis.

<b>BAKER</b> Baker High School*	<b>COOS</b> Myrtle Point High School	<b>HARNEY</b> Burns High School
<b>BENTON</b> Alea High School Corvallis High School Crescent Valley High School Monroe High School Philomath High School	<b>CROOK</b> Crook County High School	<b>HOOD RIVER</b> Cascade Locks High School Hood River High School
<b>CLACKAMAS</b> Colton High School Estacada High School Gladstone High School Lake Oswego High School Lakeridge High School Sandy High School	<b>CURRY</b> Gold Beach High School	<b>JACKSON</b> Ashland High School* Crater High School* North Medford High School Phoenix High School South Medford High School
<b>CLATSOP</b> Jewell High School Seaside High School	<b>DESCHUTES</b> Bend High School LaPine High School Marshall High School Mountain View High School	<b>JEFFERSON</b> Madras High School
<b>COLUMBIA</b> Clatskanie High School Knappa High School Rainier High School St Helens High School Vernonia High School	<b>DOUGLAS</b> Days Creek High School North Douglas High School Oakland High School Reedsport High School Roseburg High School* South Umpqua High School Yoncalla High School	<b>JOSEPHINE</b> Illinois Valley High School*
	<b>GRANT</b> Dayville High School Grant High School* Prairie City High School	<b>KLAMATH</b> Klamath Union High School
		<b>LAKE</b> Paisley High School

## LANE

Churchill High School  
 Junction City High School  
 Mapleton High School  
 North Eugene High School\*  
 South Eugene High School\*

## LINCOLN

Eddyville High School  
 Newport High School  
 Taft High School\*  
 Toledo High School\*  
 Waldport High School

## LINN

Central Linn High School  
 Lebanon High School  
 South Albany High School

## MARION

Cascade High School  
 Gervais High School  
 Jefferson High School  
 North Marion High School  
 Silverton High School  
 Woodburn High School

## MORROW

Heppner High School  
 Ione High School  
 Riverside High School

## MULTNOMAH

Centennial High School  
 Gresham High School  
 Jefferson High School\*  
 Lincoln High School  
 Marshall High School\*  
 Madison High School\*  
 Parkrose High School  
 Roosevelt High School\*  
 Sam Barlow High School  
 Wilson High School

## TILLAMOOK

Neah-Kah-Nie High School  
 Nestucca High School  
 Tillamook High School

## UMATILLA

Echo High School  
 McLoughlin High School  
 Pendleton High School\*  
 Pilot Rock High School

## UNION

Cove High School  
 Elgin High School  
 Union High School

## WASCO

Petersburg High School  
 The Dalles High School  
 Wahtonka High School

## WASHINGTON

Forest Grove High School

## WHEELER

Mitchell High School

## YAMHILL

Amity High School  
 Dayton High School  
 Sheridan High School  
 Willamina High School\*

\* Schools that have a school-based health center.

## APPENDIX B.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO CARRIED KNIVES AND/OR CLUBS

<b>TABLE B. Percentage of Students Who Carried Knives, Clubs, or Other Non-gun Weapons in the Last 30 Days, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997 (Part 1)<sup>1</sup></b>							
Characteristics	% with Characteristic	Carried a Knife/Club Anywhere			Carried a Knife/Club to School		
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	17	27	8	11	17	5
<b>GRADE</b>							
9	30	19	30	9	11	17	5
10	28	18	27	10	12	17	6
11	23	16	26	7	11	18	4
12	19	14	23	6	10	16	4
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>							
White	84	17	27	8	11	17	5
Black	2	19	22	15	15	16	13
Hispanic	5	18	27	10	10	15	6
Asian	3	13	21	5	7	12	3
Indian	2	27	37	15	19	26	10
Other	4	22	31	14	16	21	10
<b>ENROLLMENT LEVEL</b>							
<100	2	25	37	12	16	24	7
100 - 399	13	19	29	8	12	19	5
400 - 799	15	20	31	9	13	20	5
800 - 1199	18	16	26	7	10	16	4
1200+	53	17	26	8	11	16	5
<b>SCHOOL SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS<sup>2</sup></b>							
1 (lowest)	12	19	30	8	12	19	5
2	24	20	32	9	13	20	6
3	28	19	28	8	12	18	5
4 (highest)	36	14	22	7	9	13	5
<b>CARING ADULTS</b>							
None	16	25	34	13	17	23	10
1	19	16	28	9	10	18	5
2+	65	15	24	6	9	15	4
<b>EVER PHYSICALLY ABUSED</b>							
No	73	12	21	4	7	12	2
Yes	27	28	41	17	19	28	11
<b>SMOKERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD</b>							
None	63	15	24	7	10	15	4
Yes - but not inside	18	19	30	9	12	19	6
Yes - inside	19	23	34	12	15	22	7
<b>NUMBER OF CIGARETTES ON DAYS SMOKED</b>							
0	77	13	21	5	8	12	3
<1- 5	16	24	39	13	17	27	9
6 - 20	6	32	44	20	23	32	14
20+	1	57	66	33	46	57	20
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS DRANK ALCOHOL</b>							
0	54	11	19	4	7	11	3
1 - 5	32	19	31	9	12	19	6
6 - 19	13	33	44	19	23	31	13
20+	2	47	56	28	36	44	19
<b>NUMBER OF DAYS BINGED ON ALCOHOL<sup>4</sup></b>							
0	69	13	21	6	8	13	3
1 - 5	24	24	35	12	16	23	9
6 - 19	6	36	47	21	24	34	12
20+	1	58	63	38	48	52	30
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES USED COCAINE</b>							
0	98	17	26	7	10	16	5
1 - 9	2	46	59	35	34	45	25
10+	<1	59	76	32	47	64	19

<b>TABLE B. Percentage of Students Who Carried Knives, Clubs, or Other Non-gun Weapons in the Last 30 Days, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997 (Part 2)<sup>1</sup></b>							
Characteristics	% with Characteristic	Carried a Knife/Club Anywhere			Carried a Knife/Club to School		
		Total	M	F	Total	M	F
<b>NUMBERS OF TIMES SNIFFED INHALANTS</b>							
0	95	16	26	7	10	16	4
1 - 9	4	40	55	27	27	38	17
10+	1	63	69	502	54	61	43
<b>NUMBER OF DRUGS USED<sup>4</sup></b>							
0	69	13	21	5	8	13	3
1	16	22	33	10	14	21	7
2	10	29	40	17	19	26	11
3	3	41	55	28	30	40	21
4+	1	68	77	54	54	66	37
<b>NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS (LAST THREE MONTHS)</b>							
Never had sex	65	13	21	6	8	12	3
Yes, but over 3 mos. ago	12	25	35	12	16	23	8
1	19	41	35	10	14	24	6
2	3	32	46	18	22	31	13
3+	2	49	58	31	38	44	25
<b>HARASSED AT SCHOOL</b>							
No	69	14	22	5	8	13	3
Yes	31	25	38	14	17	25	9
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES THREATENED OR INJURED WITH A WEAPON AT SCHOOL</b>							
0	93	15	24	7	9	15	4
1 - 5	6	43	52	28	29	35	20
6+	1	70	76	52	58	64	42
<b>NUMBER OF PHYSICAL FIGHTS AT SCHOOL</b>							
0	87	14	22	6	8	13	4
1	9	35	41	22	23	28	14
2 - 3	3	46	49	34	33	35	27
4 - 7	1	68	71	59	54	57	41
8+	1	72	76	507	65	67	54
<b>NUMBER OF FIGHTS REQUIRING MEDICAL TREATMENT BY AN MD OR RN</b>							
0	97	16	25	7	10	16	5
1	2	50	55	39	35	40	25
2+	1	67	69	62	48	50	42
<b>ATTEMPTED SUICIDE</b>							
No	92	16	25	6	10	15	4
Yes	8	32	54	22	24	42	16
<b>NUMBER OF RISK FACTORS<sup>5</sup></b>							
0	14	7	11	2	3	6	1
1	28	11	17	4	6	9	2
2	18	15	26	6	9	16	4
3 - 5	33	23	35	11	15	24	7
6 - 7	7	41	53	28	28	37	19
8+	1	76	88	60	61	69	49

1. Based on 32,378 weighted cases from 102 schools.

2. The Oregon Department of Education assigns a numeric value to each school in the state based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, student mobility rate, student attendance rate, and the level of education of the most educated parent.

3. Binging is defined as consuming five or more drinks within a two-hour period.

4. The number of types of drugs used by students was measured with six questions. Affirmative responses to the use of injection drugs, cocaine, steroids (not under the doctor's supervision), marijuana, inhalant use (glue/paint sniffing, huffing), and "any other type of illegal drug" were counted.

5. Risk factors included emotional problems, physical abuse, sexual abuse, suicide attempts, fewer than two adults to talk to about problems, smoking by the student or household members, alcohol use, illicit drug use, and sexual activity within the last three months.



# APPENDIX C.

## YRBS QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

2. **What is your sex?**
    - a. Female
    - b. Male
  3. **In what grade are you?**
    - a. 9th grade
    - b. 10th grade
    - c. 11th grade
    - d. 12th grade
    - e. Ungraded or other
  4. **How do you describe yourself?**
    - a. White - not Hispanic
    - b. Black - not Hispanic
    - c. Hispanic or Latino
    - d. Asian or Pacific Islander
    - e. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    - f. Other
- The next questions ask about safety and violence.*
12. **During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun as a weapon?**
    - a. 0 days
    - b. 1 day
    - c. 2 or 3 days
    - d. 4 or 5 days
    - e. 6 or more days
  13. **During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun as a weapon on school property?**
    - a. 0 days
    - b. 1 day
    - c. 2 or 3 days
    - d. 4 or 5 days
    - e. 6 or more days
  14. **During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon (other than a gun) such as a knife or club?**
    - a. 0 days
    - b. 1 day
    - c. 2 or 3 days
    - d. 4 or 5 days
    - e. 6 or more days
  15. **During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon (other than a gun) such as a knife or club on school property?**
    - a. 0 days
    - b. 1 day
    - c. 2 or 3 days
    - d. 4 or 5 days
    - e. 6 or more days
  16. **During the past 30 days, on how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to or from school?**
    - a. 0 days
    - b. 1 day
    - c. 2 or 3 days
    - d. 4 or 5 days
    - e. 6 or more days
  17. **During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?**
    - a. 0 times
    - b. 1 time
    - c. 2 or 3 times
    - d. 4 or 5 times
    - e. 6 or 7 times
    - f. 8 or 9 times
    - g. 10 or 11 times
    - h. 12 or more times
  18. **During the past 12 months, how many times has someone stolen or deliberately damaged your property such as your car, clothing, or books on school property?**
    - a. 0 times
    - b. 1 time
    - c. 2 or 3 times
    - d. 4 or 5 times
    - e. 6 or 7 times
    - f. 8 or 9 times
    - g. 10 or 11 times
    - h. 12 or more times

**20. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight in which you were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?**

- 0 times
- 1 time
- 2 or 3 times
- 4 or 5 times
- 6 or more times

**21. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?**

- 0 times
- 1 time
- 2 or 3 times
- 4 or 5 times
- 6 or 7 times
- 8 or 9 times
- 10 or 11 times
- 12 or more times

*The next two questions ask about harassment at school. Harassment can include bullying; name calling or obscenities; offensive notes or graffiti; exclusion from groups; and unwanted attention or unwanted touching.*

**23. During the past 30 days have you been harassed at school by another student?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**24. In the past 30 days, what were you harassed about? (If more than one reason, what was the most upsetting or offensive to you?)**

- I was not harassed
- Race or national origin
- Unwanted sexual attention or comments
- Perceived sexual orientation (gay/lesbian/bisexual)
- Physical disability
- Other not listed
- Don't know why I was harassed

*The following three questions are about physical abuse.*

**25. Have you ever been physically abused (hit, kicked or struck by someone when you were not involved in a fight)?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*The next three questions are about sexual abuse.*

**28. Have you ever been sexually abused (For example: touched sexually when you did not want to be, or forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to)?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*Sometimes people feel so depressed and hopeless about the future that they may consider attempting suicide, that is, taking some action to end their own life.*

**31. During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?**

- Yes
- No

*The next fourteen questions ask about tobacco use.*

**36. During the past 30 days, on the days you smoked, how many cigarettes did you smoke per day?**

- I did not smoke cigarettes during the past 30 days
- Less than 1 cigarette per day
- 1 cigarette per day
- 2 to 5 cigarettes per day
- 6 to 10 cigarettes per day
- 11 to 20 cigarettes per day
- More than 20 cigarettes per day

**43. Does someone living in your house (other than you) smoke cigarettes?**

- Nobody smokes
- Someone smokes, but not inside the house
- Someone smokes inside the house.

*The next five questions ask about drinking alcohol. This includes drinking beer, wine, wine coolers, and liquor such as rum, gin, vodka, or whiskey. For these questions, drinking alcohol does not include drinking a few sips of wine for religious purposes.*

**50. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?**

- 0 days
- 1 or 2 days
- 3 to 5 days
- 6 to 9 days
- 10 to 19 days
- 20 to 29 days
- All 30 days

- 51. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours?**
- 0 days
  - 1 day
  - 2 days
  - 3 to 5 days
  - 6 or 9 days
  - 10 to 19 days
  - 20 or more days
- 64. During your life, how many times have you used a needle to inject any illegal drug into your body?**
- 0 times
  - 1 or 2 times
  - 3 to 9 times
  - 10 to 19 times
  - 20 to 39 times
  - 40 or more times

*The next four questions ask about the use of marijuana, which is also called grass or pot.*

- 55. During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana?**
- 0 times
  - 1 or 2 times
  - 3 to 9 times
  - 10 to 19 times
  - 20 to 39 times
  - 40 or more times

*The next nine questions ask about cocaine and other drug use.*

- 59. During the past 30 days, how many times have you used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase?**
- 0 times
  - 1 or 2 times
  - 3 to 9 times
  - 10 to 19 times
  - 20 to 39 times
  - 40 or more times

- 61. During the past 30 days, how many times have you sniffed glue, or breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high?**
- 0 times
  - 1 or 2 times
  - 3 to 9 times
  - 10 to 19 times
  - 20 to 39 times
  - 40 or more times

- 63. During your life, how many times have you used any other type of illegal drug, such as LSD, PCP, ecstasy, mushrooms, speed, ice, or heroin?**
- 0 times
  - 1 or 2 times
  - 3 to 9 times
  - 10 to 19 times
  - 20 to 39 times
  - 40 or more times

*The next sixteen questions ask about sexual behavior.*

- 73. During the past 3 months, with how many people did you have sexual intercourse?**
- I have never had sexual intercourse
  - I have had sexual intercourse, but not during the past 3 months
  - 1 person
  - 2 people
  - 3 people
  - 4 people
  - 5 people
  - 6 or more people

*The last questions ask about health care and community resources.*

- 104. During the past 12 months, did you have any of the following health care needs? (On your answer sheet MARK ALL THAT APPLY.)**
- Check-up or sports physical
  - Injury or accident
  - Illness
  - Immunization
  - Reproductive health services (exam or birth control/condoms)
  - Pregnancy test or sexually transmitted disease test
  - Alcohol or other drug problem
  - Personal or emotional problem
  - Other need not listed
  - I had not health care needs
- 110. When you are scared, worried or concerned about yourself or your friends, is there a caring adult you can talk to?**
- No, there is not adult
  - Yes, 1 adult
  - Yes, 2 or 3 adults
  - Yes, 4 or more adults



# APPENDIX D.

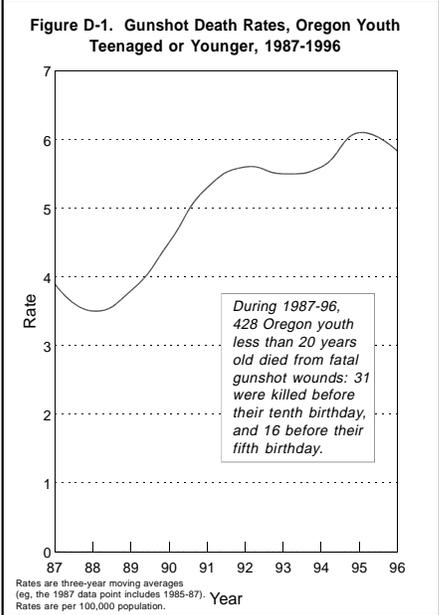
## FATAL FIREARM INJURIES, OREGON AND THE U.S.

Both gun deaths in general, and homicides in particular, have become increasingly common in Oregon during the past decade. Although the increases in the state are not as large as those seen nationally, they are dramatic, nonetheless. Between 1984-86 and 1994-96, the death rate for Oregon youth ages 10-19 dying from gunshot wounds increased 26 percent (Table D-1). Nationally, the figure was 65 percent. Had Oregon's gunshot death rate remained unchanged since 1984-86, 29 fewer Oregon youth would have been shot to death during 1994-96. Although higher than a decade earlier, the death rate has edged downward recently (Figure D-1).

Year	Oregon			United States		
	10-14	15-19	10-19	10-14	15-19	10-19
1984-86	3.9	12.6	8.4	2.7	13.4	8.3
1994-96	3.2	18.2	10.6	3.2	24.6	13.7
% Change	-18	44	26	19	84	65

Statistics from half a century earlier did not include information specifically on gunshot fatalities, probably because there were so few. However, data from the 1946 Vital Statistics Annual Report do provide a sense of the role of firearms in the deaths of adolescents because most suicides and homicides are committed with firearms. Whether any of the small number of intentional injury deaths during 1946 (Table D-2) involved guns is unknown.

Both Oregon youth ages 10-19 living east of the Cascade Range and those living in coastal counties were 39 percent more likely to be shot to death than those residing in non-coastal western Oregon counties (Tables D-3 and D-4). This greater risk was present among Oregonians of all ages; those residing east of the Cascade Range and in coastal counties were over a third more likely (39 percent and 35 percent, respectively) to die from gunshot wounds than were Oregonians residing elsewhere in the state, with the greatest disparity occurring among accidental



**During 1990-96, four times as many Oregon infants and toddlers were shot to death than were police officers who died in the line of duty.<sup>94</sup>**

**Table D-2. Leading Causes of Death for Oregon 10- to 19-year-olds, 1946 and 1996**

1946		1996	
Accidents	120	Accidents	120
Infectious Disease	26	Suicide	38
Heart Disease	12	Cancer	15
Cancer	6	Homicide	13
Suicide	3	Heart Disease	5
Homicide	3		

***Gunshot mortality rates were highest in coastal counties and east of the Cascade Range.***

**Table D-3. Gunshot Death Rates by County of Residence, All Ages and 10- to 19-year-olds, Oregon, 1987-96**

County	All Ages		Ages 10-19	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Oregon	3,987	13.6	397	9.7
Baker	43	27.2	5	21.7
Benton	56	7.7	7	6.0
Clackamas	302	10.5	21	4.8
Clatsop	50	14.8	6	12.4
Columbia	39	10.2	3	*
Coos	105	17.2	12	13.6
Crook	26	17.7	2	*
Curry	62	30.5	4	*
Deschutes	127	15.7	10	8.8
Douglas	153	16.0	20	14.0
Gilliam	1	*	0	*
Grant	21	26.0	0	*
Harney	11	15.4	2	*
Hood River	17	9.7	3	*
Jackson	240	15.7	13	6.1
Jefferson	21	14.8	5	23.3
Josephine	147	22.3	11	12.4
Klamath	120	20.2	13	14.8
Lake	17	23.1	4	*
Lane	355	12.3	40	9.7
Lincoln	59	14.8	6	12.0
Linn	134	14.3	12	8.7
Malheur	34	12.6	2	*
Marion	297	12.5	29	8.7
Morrow	11	13.5	1	*
Multnomah	907	15.1	104	14.7
Polk	61	11.8	7	9.4
Sherman	4	20.8	1	*
Tillamook	36	16.2	2	*
Umatilla	89	14.5	8	8.6
Union	41	17.1	6	15.9
Wallowa	20	28.0	3	*
Wasco	42	19.2	5	14.9
Washington	258	7.8	20	4.4
Wheeler	6	40.8	1	*
Yamhill	75	11.1	9	8.7
Coastal Counties	312	17.6	30	12.5
Other Western	3,024	12.7	296	9.0
East of Cascades	651	17.1	71	12.5

Note: Rates are per 100,000 population; rates are not shown for counties with <5 deaths.

shootings (Table D-5). Multiple factors probably play a part in these higher rates, including the higher prevalence of household gun ownership, less readily available medical care for gunshot trauma, and local culture.

During 1987-96, the gunshot death rates among Oregonians of all ages ranged between 7.7 per 100,000 population in Benton County to 40.8 in Wheeler County, a five-fold difference; the state rate was 13.6 (Table D-3).<sup>96</sup> At the same time, the gunshot death rate among 10- to 19-year-olds, ranged from 4.4 per 100,000 10- to 19-year-olds in Washington County to 23.3 in Jefferson County, also a five-fold difference; the Oregon rate was 9.7.

Fatal unintentional gunshot injuries were three times more likely to claim 10- to 19-year-olds living east of the Cascades compared to those residing in the non-coastal counties of western Oregon.<sup>97</sup> Death rates for suicide with a gun were 76 percent higher in coastal counties and 58 percent higher east of the Cascade Range. The rate for homicidal gunshot fatalities, however, was highest in the non-coastal counties of western Oregon; the high homicide rate among young Multnomah County African-Americans is an important contributor to this elevated rate.<sup>98</sup>

***In 1990, firearms surpassed motor vehicles as the nation's largest single cause of death associated with traumatic brain injury.<sup>95</sup>***

**Table D-4. Injury Death Rates, Firearm-related Compared to All Others, by Region, Oregon Residents Ages 10-19, 1987-1996**

Region	Total		Accidents		Suicides		Homicides	
	Guns	Other	Guns	Other	Guns	Other	Guns	Other
<b>Total</b>								
Number	397	1395	54	1196	229	126	94	52
Rate	9.7	34.1	1.3	29.2	5.6	3.1	2.3	1.3
<b>Coast</b>								
Number	30	404	3	92	21	5	5	6
Rate	12.5	43.4	*	38.4	8.8	2.1	2.1	2.5
<b>Other Western Oregon</b>								
Number	296	1021	34	888	163	101	86	40
Rate	9.0	31.1	1.0	26.5	5.0	3.1	2.7	1.2
<b>East of the Cascades</b>								
Number	71	270	17	236	45	20	8	6
Rate	12.5	47.5	3.0	41.5	7.9	3.5	1.4	1.1

Note: Rates per 100,000 population.



# APPENDIX E.

## HOMICIDES, OREGON AND THE U.S.

Some Oregon youth are at far greater risk of being murdered than others. During 1994-96 males were 83 percent more likely to die from homicide than were females, and African Americans were 13 times more likely than whites (Table E-1).

Between 1984-86 and 1994-96, the homicide rate for Oregon 10- to 19-year-olds increased 24 percent; the national rate was up 83 percent (Table E-2). Both nationally and in Oregon, the homicide epidemic has been greatest among 15- to 19-year-olds with gunshot wounds accounting for *all* of the increase. In fact, the non-gunshot death rate fell for 15- to 19-year-olds during this period. The rate of homicides from firearm violence in this age group has risen 78 percent in Oregon and 160 percent in the U.S.

The increasing homicide rate has not affected all demographic groups equally. Between 1984-86 and 1994-96, the homicide rate among African-American youth ages 10-19 more than tripled while the rate among white youth remained unchanged. But even these figures are eclipsed by the change in the homicide *gunshot* rate (Table E-3); in

**Table E-1. Homicide Deaths and Rates by Race and Sex, Oregonians Aged 10-19 years, 1994-96**

Race/Sex	Rate
State (55)	4.1
Males (36)	5.3
Females (19)	2.9
Blacks (13)	41.3
Males (11)	68.2
Females (2)	*
Whites (39)	3.1
Males (22)	3.4
Females (17)	2.8

Rates per 100,000 population.  
\* Insufficient data.

**Table E-2. Total Homicide Rate and Gun Homicide Rate by Age, Oregon and the United States, 1984-86 and 1994-96**

Total Homicide Rate						
Year	Oregon			United States		
	10-14	15-19	10-19	10-14	15-19	10-19
1984-86	1.4	5.1	3.3	1.5	8.9	5.4
1994-96	0.9	7.4	4.1	2.0	18.0	9.9
% Change	-36	45	24	33	102	83
Gun Homicide						
Year	Oregon			United States		
	10-14	15-19	10-19	10-14	15-19	10-19
1984-86	0.9	3.2	2.1	0.9	6	3.6
1994-96	0.6	5.7	3.1	1.6	15.6	8.4
% Change	-33	78	48	77	160	133

The firearm homicide death rate increased 78 percent between 1984-86 and 1994-96 for Oregon youth ages 15-19.

***Even BB guns and pellet guns are used in assaults. In one study, 14% of the injuries from these guns resulted from assaults.<sup>99</sup>***

***The youngest child murdered with a gun during 1994-96 was two months old.***

Year	All Races		White		Black		Black/White Ratio	
	Total	Guns	Total	Guns	Total	Guns	Total	Guns
1984-86	3.3	2.1	3.1	2.0	13.1	8.7	4.2	4.4
1994-96	4.1	3.1	3.1	2.2	41.3	38.1	13.3	17.3
%Change	24	48	0	10	215	338	-	-

just half a generation, the increase in the risk of Black youth being murdered with a firearm rose *34 times* more quickly than the risk among white youth (338 percent vs. 10 percent).

The epidemic of homicidal gun violence among Black youth can also be seen in the ratio of death rates between African-Americans and whites: the risk among African American youth of being intentionally shot to death is 17 times greater than for white youth.

A common misperception is that teen homicides largely are related to crime, gang activity, or premeditated assault, yet the majority of shootings are committed by friends or relatives. The most common event precipitating a shooting is an argument, often over something later seen as trivial. Such shootings are usually impulsive, unplanned, and instantly regretted. As with suicide, the lethal factor in teenage homicide is the immediate availability of a firearm.<sup>28</sup>

# APPENDIX F

## GUN SAFETY AND OREGONIANS

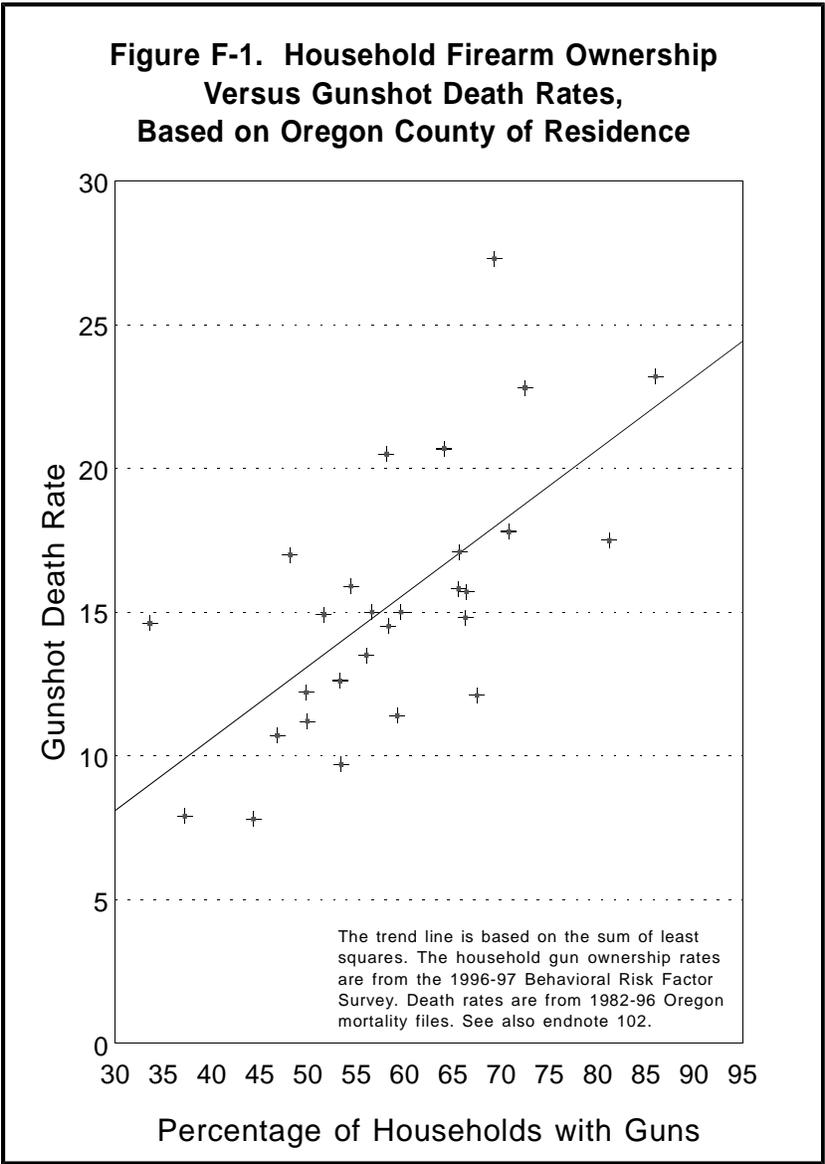
The deaths of 26 Oregon children ages 0-17 resulted from gunshot wounds during 1997. Investigations of these deaths by Child Fatality Review Teams found that 19 occurred where there was access to, or lack of safe storage of, firearms.<sup>100</sup> In other words, they may have been preventable.

Firearms are present in 51 percent of all Oregon homes, including homes where children are present.<sup>101</sup> In 23 percent of all homes with guns, and 16 percent of

**Table F-1. Percentage of Homes Where Guns Were Kept Loaded and Unlocked, by Age of Child/Children in the Home, Oregon BRFS, 1996-97**

Child Presence & Age of Child	Percent Unsafe <sup>1</sup>	Percent of Oregon Homes <sup>2</sup>
No children	23	63
Children	16	37
0-4 years	12	15
5-11 years	16	21
12-17 years	18	16

1. Among homes with firearms.  
 2. Percentage of all Oregon homes with and without children.



**Counties with a high rate of gun ownership are more likely to also have a high gunshot death rate.**

**Table F-2. Household Gun Ownership and Gun Storage Practices by County of Residence, Oregon Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1996-97**

County	% of homes with guns	% of gun homes with guns stored unsafely
Oregon	51	23
Baker	86	29
Benton	44	17
Clackamas	47	24
Clatsop	56	23
Columbia	68	22
Coos	66	31
Curry	69	22
Deschutes	54	19
Douglas	66	22
Hood River	53	22
Jackson	57	17
Josephine	58	35
Klamath	64	29
Lane	53	21
Lincoln	52	18
Linn	58	31
Malheur	60	21
Marion	50	22
Multnomah	34	24
Polk	59	15
Tillamook	48	15
Umatilla	66	19
Wasco	66	21
Washington	37	19
Yamhill	49	15
<b>Combined Counties</b>		
Crook & Jefferson	71	30
Grant & Wheeler	78	20
Union & Wallowa	81	37
Harney & Lake	73	26
Sherman, Gilliam & Morrow	91	17

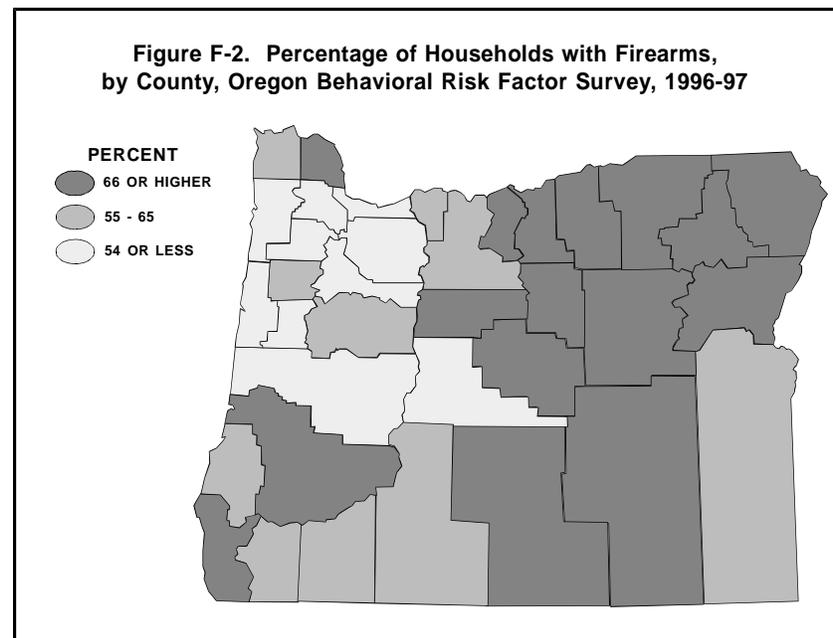
Note: Unsafe gun storage means the guns are loaded and unlocked.

homes where both children and guns were present, the guns were kept loaded and not locked-up (Table F-1). These self-reported survey data further showed that firearms were more likely to be kept in an unsafe manner by high school dropouts, people with poor mental health, and those who engaged in other risky behaviors such as infrequent seatbelt use and binge drinking.

Elevated community gun ownership rates appear to be associated with an increased risk of a gunshot death of members within the community. The scattergram showing the prevalence of household gun ownership in a county versus the gunshot death rate for the same county shows a marked positive association (Figure F-1).<sup>102</sup> In general, gun ownership rates were highest east of the Cascade Range and lowest in the Willamette Valley (Table F-2 and Figure F-2).

In a policy statement<sup>28</sup> issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the physicians noted that "the risks posed by guns in the home are often unrecognized. Parents often state they own handguns for 'piece of mind and personal protection,' yet the most credible published studies confirm that guns endanger rather than protect the household. In a six-year study in King County Washington, a gun in the home was 43 times more likely to kill a family member or friend than to be used to kill an intruder."<sup>103</sup>

**Figure F-2. Percentage of Households with Firearms, by County, Oregon Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1996-97**



When a youth fatally fires a gun in the home, the victim will most often be the youth (35%), a friend (34%), a sibling (25%), or a parent or other relative (6%).<sup>[104]</sup>

Children and teenagers injured by firearms, even accidentally, have been reported to be at greater risk of becoming psychosocially disadvantaged and criminal as adults.<sup>104</sup>

The national Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms data show that Oregon is among the upper tier of states with a high rate of Federal Firearm Licensees (individuals or businesses granted a federal license to sell firearms), and that the rate is increasing. Data published in 1998 showed that Oregon's rate of Federal Firearm Licensees had risen to 73.4 per 100,000 population, the ninth highest rate among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.<sup>106</sup>

Two recent national surveys found strong public support, even among gun owners, for innovative strategies to reduce the number of firearm injuries, including: child-proofing, personalization (devices that permit firing only by an authorized person), magazine safety devices (that prevent firing after the magazine or clip is removed), and loaded-chamber indicators.<sup>107</sup>

***Young persons are most likely to make impulsive suicide attempts. When made with household medications, the attempts are seldom fatal; when made with guns they usually are.***



## APPENDIX G.

### BULLIES AND THIEVES

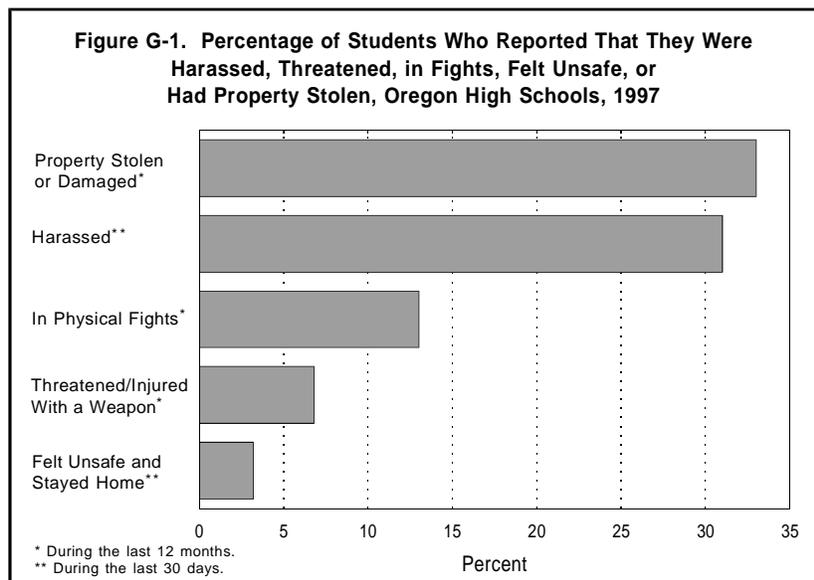
Weapon-carrying is just one measure of school safety and the learning environment experienced by Oregon youth. Five other questions in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey also provide insight into the school environment. Thievery, harassment, physical fights, injuries, and students' perception of safety are summarized here.

#### Theft

***Demographic Characteristics.*** One-third of students (33 percent) reported having their property stolen at school during the 12 months prior to the YRBS survey (Table G-1). Males were one-quarter more likely than females to report the theft of their property (37 percent vs. 29 percent), while freshman were only somewhat more likely to do so than seniors (35 percent vs. 30 percent). Relatively little difference existed by race/ethnicity, but American Indian and "other" students had the highest theft rates (36 percent).

***One-third of students had their personal property stolen at school during the prior 12 months.***

***School Characteristics.*** Neither school size nor school socioeconomic status (SES) were predictors of thievery. Differences between subsets of these two variables were small.



<b>TABLE G-1. Thievery, Harassment, Fights, Threats, and Perceived Personal Safety at School, by Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics, Oregon YRBS, 1997<sup>1</sup></b>						
Characteristic	Percent with Characteristic	Property Stolen	Harassed	In Physical Fights	Threatened or Injured	Stayed Home
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	33	31	13	6.8	3.2
<b>GENDER</b>						
Male	50	37	30	19	8.8	3.5
Female	50	29	32	8	4.9	3.1
<b>GRADE</b>						
9	30	35	38	18	8.1	4.3
10	28	33	34	14	7.6	3.6
11	23	31	27	11	5.9	2.7
12	19	30	22	8	4.6	2.0
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>						
White	84	33	31	13	6.3	2.8
African American	2	33	30	19	9.2	6.4
Hispanic	5	29	26	16	7.6	5.5
Asian/Pacific Isl.	3	29	25	14	7.3	5.2
American Indian	2	36	40	22	12.9	6.8
Other	4	36	39	19	11.3	5.8
<b>ENROLLMENT LEVEL</b>						
<100	2	35	33	21	7.1	3.0
100 - 399	13	31	33	15	5.6	3.0
400 - 799	15	34	33	15	6.7	3.5
800 - 1199	18	30	30	11	6.3	3.7
1200+	53	34	31	13	7.3	3.2
<b>SCHOOL SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS<sup>2</sup></b>						
1 (lowest)	12	32	32	16	8.1	5.2
2	24	34	33	15	7.0	3.8
3	28	33	32	14	7.5	3.2
4 (highest)	36	32	30	11	5.7	2.4
<b>NUMBER OF CARING ADULTS</b>						
0	16	38	38	17	11.2	5.5
1	19	33	33	14	6.8	3.9
2 +	65	31	29	11	5.3	2.2
<b>PHYSICAL ABUSE</b>						
Yes	27	44	50	22	13.3	6.1
No	73	27	22	9	3.4	1.6
<b>EMOTIONAL PROBLEM</b>						
Yes	6	43	49	17	10.3	5.8
No	94	32	30	13	6.6	3.1
<b>ATTEMPTED SUICIDE</b>						
Yes	8	45	56	28	19.5	12.0
No	92	31	29	12	5.4	2.3
<b>NUMBER OF ILLICIT DRUGS USED</b>						
None	69	30	29	10	4.5	2.4
1	16	37	36	19	9.3	4.3
2	10	38	35	21	11.5	4.7
3	3	45	50	31	19.8	8.9
4+	1	53	58	52	34.1	16.6
<b>CARRIED A WEAPON</b>						
Yes	88	49	48	36	21.3	9.8
No	12	31	29	10	4.8	2.4

1. Based on 32,378 weighted cases from 102 schools. 2. The Oregon Department of Education assigns a numeric value to each school in the state based on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, the student mobility rate, student attendance rate, and the level of education of the most educated parent.

*Home Life and Student Behavior.* Perhaps the most important determinant of student behavior is the life he or she experiences at home. While many young Oregonians grow up in a loving and nurturing environment, others do not. Students who were physically abused and/or who did not have at least two adults they could go to to discuss personal problems were more likely to report indicators of poor emotional well-being than were students who had never been physically abused and who had at least two adults with whom they could talk.<sup>108</sup> And the emotional well-being, in turn, is often revealed in the behaviors of a child. Youths who experienced a harsh home life were more likely to report seeking treatment for emotional problems, using multiple illicit drugs, and having attempted suicide than were those with a better home life — behaviors more likely to set them apart from their peers. (For additional information about risky behavior and harsh home environments, see the Center for Health Statistics publication *Suicidal Behavior: A Survey of Oregon High School Students, 1997.*)

In a nationally representative survey of students, another measure of family stability was found to be strongly correlated with criminal victimization: students living in families who had moved three or more times in the preceding five years were nearly twice as likely to have experienced a criminal victimization as students who had moved no more than once and three times more likely to suffer a violent victimization than students who had not moved.<sup>109</sup>

Students who had been physically abused were nearly two-thirds more likely to have had their property stolen at school, 44 percent vs. 27 percent.<sup>109</sup> Students who said they sought treatment for emotional problems were victims of theft one-third more often than students who did not report emotional problems (43 percent vs. 32 percent). Nearly one-half of the students (45 percent) who reported attempting suicide had their property stolen compared to 31 percent of those who did not report an attempt. Drug-using and weapon-carrying students were also more likely to lose property to theft than other students.

***Fifty-five percent of males who were harassed at school for their sexual orientation reported being physically abused.***

### Harassment

*Demographic Characteristics.* One-third of students (31 percent) reported being harassed at school during the 30 days prior to the YRBS survey (Table G-1). Although there was little difference in the prevalence of reported harassment by gender, younger children were clearly more apt to be the target of bullies than older children; in fact, freshman were almost twice as likely to report harassment than were seniors (38 percent vs. 22 percent). By race/ethnicity, American Indians were most likely to report being harassed (40 percent), while Asian/Pacific Islanders were least likely (25 percent).

***Harassed students were three times more likely to attempt suicide.***

*School Characteristics.* Neither school size nor school socioeconomic status were predictors of harassment. Differences between subsets of these two variables were minimal.

*Home Life and Student Behavior.* Physically abused students were more than twice as likely to be harassed at school compared to unabused youth (50 percent vs. 22 percent). Further, half of students (49 percent) who said they had sought treatment for emotional problems were victims of harassment compared to less than a third (30 percent) who did not report emotional problems. More than half of the students (56 percent) who reported attempting suicide had been harassed at school compared to 29 percent of those who did not report an attempt. Drug-using and weapon-carrying students were also more likely to report being harassed.

*Reason for Harassment.* Unwanted sexual attention was the most common form of harassment. One in 13 students (7.5 percent) reported being sexually harassed, but it was much more common among females than males (12.6 percent vs. 2.4 percent). Even more striking was the disparity in levels of harassment between females who reported being sexually abused compared to those who had not (22.1 percent vs. 9.2 percent). And, although a much smaller proportion of males reported being sexually abused (5.1 percent compared to 25.4 percent of females), those who did were nine times more likely to also report unwanted sexual attention than their non-abused counterparts (15.0 percent vs. 1.7 percent).

***Percentage of Students Reporting Racial Harassment:***  
***White - 0.8;***  
***Black - 7.6;***  
***Hispanic - 9.0;***  
***Asian/Pac. Isl. - 8.2;***  
***American Indian - 5.5;***  
***Other - 5.4.***

About one in fifty students (1.9 percent) reported racial harassment, the second most common type of

harassment. Not surprisingly, nonwhite and Hispanic students reported this with much greater frequency than whites. Among all racial/ethnic groups, males more often reported this form of harassment than did females.

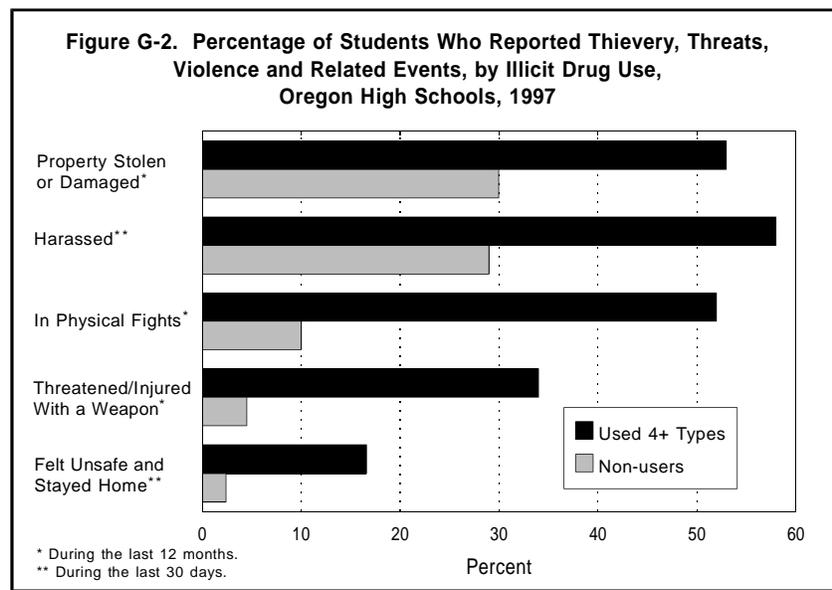
Nearly as many students (1.8 percent) reported being harassed because they were perceived as being gay, lesbian, or bisexual as were harassed because of their race. This form of harassment was nearly twice as common among males (2.3 percent vs. 1.3 percent of females). About 1 in 20 (4.7 percent) physically abused males reported being harassed for their perceived sexual orientation compared to 1.3 percent of those who had not been. For females, the figures were 2.5 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively.<sup>111</sup>

A physical disability was the fourth most common reason for harassment. Nearly one of every hundred students (0.8 percent) was harassed for this reason. Because the number of students with physical disabilities is unknown, it is not possible to calculate what proportion of physically disabled students were harassed because of their impairment.<sup>111</sup>

**Physical Fights**

*Demographic Characteristics.* One in eight (13 percent) high school students were involved in physical fights during the 12 months prior to the survey, but there was a strong sexual dichotomy; one of every five males reported fighting compared to one of every twelve females. The

**Number of Oregon public school students expelled for brawling, violence, and intimidation during the 1997-98 school year: 449.<sup>85</sup>**



*"There's nothing wrong with a good fair fight to settle differences but don't let them get out of hand."*

older the student, the less likely he or she was to be in a fight; 18 percent of freshman reported fights compared to 8 percent of seniors. Fights were reported least often by whites (13 percent) and most often by American Indians (22 percent).

*School Characteristics.* Perhaps contrary to expectation, fights were reported more often in smaller schools than in larger schools (with at least 800 students). Students attending schools in lower socioeconomic areas were also more likely to be in physical fights; those in the lowest the SES category were 45 percent more likely to report being a fight participant than were students attending schools in the highest SES category.

*Home Life and Student Behavior.* Students who had been physically abused were more than twice as likely to be participants in physical fights than those who had not (22 percent vs. 9 percent). These at-risk children were also more apt to report emotional problems, suicide attempts, and other behaviors that were associated with an increased risk of involvement in physical fights.

### Threats and Injuries with a Weapon

*Demographic Characteristics.* During the 12 months prior to the survey, one in 15 (6.8 percent) students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, club), while at school. As with physical fights, this was more common among males than females (8.8 percent vs. 4.9 percent). By grade, freshmen were at greatest risk and seniors at least risk (8.1 percent vs. 4.6 percent).

*School Characteristics.* Little difference was reported by school size, but weapon threats and injuries were reported 42 percent more often by students attending the lowest SES schools compared to those attending the highest SES schools (8.1 percent vs. 5.7 percent).

*Home Life and Student Behavior.* Physically abused children were four times more likely to report that they been threatened or injured with a weapon at school than were nonabused respondents (13.3 percent vs. 3.4 percent). As with previous measures of school safety, students with emotional problems and deviant behaviors more often reported being threatened or injured at school.

***Among Oregon students involved in six or more physical fights during the prior 12 months, frequent gun-carriers were 33 times more likely to be injured than were non-carriers.<sup>112</sup>***

**Absence and Safety**

*Demographic Characteristics.* On average, one student in a classroom of about 30 students (3.2 percent) reported not going to school for at least one of the previous 30 days because he or she felt unsafe at school or going to school. Males were somewhat more likely than females to report this (3.5 percent vs. 3.1 percent). Fear for their safety led freshmen to stay away from school in greater numbers than older students (Table G-1).

*School Characteristics.* Relatively little difference was evident by school enrollment level, but there was an inverse relationship between school socioeconomic status and perceived school safety by the students. Those attending schools in the lowest SES category were twice as likely to stay away because they felt unsafe as those attending schools in the highest SES category (5.2 percent vs. 2.4 percent).

**National Crime Victimization Survey**

The National Crime Victimization Survey includes a nationally representative sample of households, interviewing residents 12 or older about the violence experienced since their last interview. Data are collected on rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Among the findings:

- ◆ Juveniles ages 12-17 were nearly three times as likely as adults to be the victims of violent crimes.
- ◆ The violent victimization rate for juvenile males was about 50 percent greater than for juvenile females.
- ◆ The violent victimization rate for younger juveniles (ages 12-14) was comparable to that of older juveniles (15-17).
- ◆ The overall violent victimization rate for white juveniles was similar to that of black juveniles.
- ◆ More than two-thirds of juvenile violent victimizations were not reported to law enforcement.<sup>113</sup>

*Home Life and Student Behavior.* Fear for their safety (at or going to school) was greater among physically abused children than among their unabused peers (6.1 percent vs. 1.6 percent). Students who reported emotional problems, attempting suicide, using illicit drugs, and weapon-carrying were all more likely to report staying home from school because they felt unsafe.

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3. Because the Youth Risk Behavior Survey questions asked about weapon-carrying during just the 30 days prior to the survey, this figure may be an underestimate.
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9. The pattern of increased likelihood of gun-carrying in smaller schools existed in nearly every region of the state.
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17. The average number of risk behaviors was based on a count of the following: smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol, binged, used marijuana, cocaine, inhalants (glue/paint sniffing, "huffing"), steroids (not under a doctor's direction), injection drugs, or other drugs, had sexual intercourse within the last three months, attempted suicide within the last 12 months. See Appendix C for survey questions.

18. Adams PF, Schoenboern, CA, Moss AJ. High risk behaviors among our nation's youth: United States, 1992. National Center for Health Statistics. DHHS Publication No. 95-1520. Hyattsville, MD. 1994.
19. The number of types of drugs used by a student was measured with six questions. Affirmative responses to the use of injection drugs, cocaine, steroids (not under a doctor's direction), marijuana, inhalant use (glue/paint sniffing, huffing), and "any other type of illegal drug" were counted. See Appendix C for the survey questions.
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