

~~John~~ Violence -
St. Fisher

Youth Crime and Violence Trends

Youth violent crime skyrocketed in the late 1980s

- **More violent teens.** Juvenile violent crime rates, relatively unchanged during the 1970s and through the late 1980s, spiked sharply during the 6-year period between 1988 and 1994 – increasing steadily by more than 60 percent.
- **More teen victims.** Although homicide rates among other age groups remained stable or declined during this time period, teen homicide rates rose dramatically. Between 1985 and 1993, the homicide victimization rate for 14 to 17-year olds increased by nearly 150 percent.
- **Firearms to blame.** Nearly all of the increase in the murder of juveniles during this decade was firearms related. Between 1985 and 1995, while non-firearms murders of juveniles increased just 9 percent, the number of juveniles murdered with firearms increased 153 percent. In the peak year of 1994, nearly 80 percent of the homicides committed by juveniles were gun-related.

Youth violent crime falls during the Clinton Administration.

- **Violent youth crime down three years in a row.** Between 1994 and 1997, juvenile violent crime rates dropped by 23 percent.
- **Drop in youth gun murders has led the way.** Between 1993 and 1997, the number of juveniles arrested for murder declined by 39 percent – reversing most of the increase experienced over the previous 7 years. The number of juveniles murdered also dropped by a similar percentage – from 2,900 in 1993 to 2,100 in 1997. These declines are mostly attributable to the drop in youth gun murders.
- **Juvenile gun crime also coming down.** Juvenile arrests for weapons offenses have also dropped 23 percent since 1993.

Youth crime and violence still a serious problem

- **Children more likely victims of violent crime.** Teenagers and young people are more likely to become victims of violent crime than older persons. In 1998, about a third of all violent crime victims were ages 12 to 19 – and almost half were under the age of 25.
- **Too many children murdered.** Between 1976 and 1994 an estimated 37,000 children were murdered in America. That is an average of five children murdered every day – or about 1,945 each year. In 1997, 11 percent of all murder victims were under the age of 18.

- **Youth still likely to commit violent crimes.** In 1995, juvenile offenders were responsible for about 14 percent of all homicides. As a result, 2,300 juvenile offenders were implicated in about 1,900 homicides. Overall, the juvenile arrest rates for violent crime and murder remain 20 to 25 percent higher than in the mid 1980s.
- **Youth gun violence remains high.** In 1996, gunfire killed over 4,600 young people (0 to 19 years of age) -- or an average of 13 youth per day. Of the 2,100 juveniles murdered in 1997, 56 percent were killed with a firearm. Older youth are even more likely to be murdered with a gun: while 18 percent of the juveniles murdered with a gun in 1997 were under 13 years of age, 84 percent of those 13 and older were killed with a firearm.

Crime and violence in our schools

- **Students less likely to be victimized but more likely to feel unsafe.** Although the number of multiple homicide events at schools has increased since 1993 (from 2 to 6 -- and with 4 times as many victims), the overall school crime rate has actually dropped (from 164 crimes per 1,000 students in 1993 to about 128 such crimes in 1996). However, the percentage of students reporting that they felt unsafe at or on their way to school has increased.
- **Most schools safer than community at large.** While the overall level of school and non-school crime is about the same (about 3 million crimes in each setting), students are more than twice as likely to experience serious violent crime while out of school. And the very worst violent victimizations -- murders and suicides -- rarely occur in or near schools. Less than 1% of the 7,357 thousand children who were murdered in 1992-93 -- or 63 -- were killed at school.
- **Serious crime and violence concentrated in a small percentage of schools.** Only about 10% of public schools report serious or violent crimes to their local police departments. Nearly half -- or 47% -- of schools report less serious or non-violent crimes to police, and 43% report absolutely no crimes at all.
- **Violence more likely in larger, urban schools and with older students.** One third of large schools (1,000+ students) report serious violent crimes to police, compared with less than one tenth of small schools. Also urban schools are twice as likely as rural schools to report serious violent crimes, and middle and high schools are 4 times more likely than elementary schools to report such crimes.

- **Fist fights and theft the most common crimes.** Overall, physical attacks and fights without weapons are the crimes most often reported to police by middle and high schools. Theft is the most common school crime overall. In 1996, less than 10% of crimes against students were of a serious or violent nature.
- **Fewer weapons in schools.** About 6% of high school seniors -- less than in recent years -- are carrying firearms and other weapons to schools. Also, the percentage of seniors intentionally injured -- with or without weapons -- has not changed significantly over the past 20 years.
- **Gang presence nearly doubled.** Between 1989 and 1995, the percentage of students reporting the presence of street gangs in their schools increased from 15% to 28% -- including large increases at urban, suburban and rural schools.
- **Violence and drugs linked.** Students who reported being the victims of violent crimes at schools were more likely to report the availability of drugs at school. The presence of gangs and guns is also related to school crime and the victimization of students.
- **Teachers often crime victims.** On average, 3% of teachers are the victims of violent crimes, and nearly 5% are the victims of theft at school.

Youth Violence Declines

CDC's National Study Paints a Promising Picture

By KENNETH J. COOPER
Washington Post Staff Writer

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The amount of violence committed by teenagers—both in and out of school—has declined significantly since the early 1990s, according to a study whose findings run counter to the widespread public impression of escalating juvenile violence.

A biennial survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed sharp decreases in several categories of violent activity by teenagers—such as carrying a weapon or fighting—between 1991 and 1997, the most recent year for which data is available. In other categories—such as being threatened with a weapon or having property stolen—the survey found no appreciable change.

"None of the behaviors we studied showed any sign of going up," said Thomas R. Simon, co-author of the study, which surveyed 16,000 students in grades 9 through 12 and was published in today's edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

That overall finding clashes with a public perception of teenagers as increasingly dangerous, a view driven in part by a series of high-profile school shootings over the past two years. That view has pressured lawmakers and prosecutors to crack down on juvenile offenders, often by trying more of them as adults. After the April shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo.,

for example, the House and Senate rushed to pass long-delayed juvenile justice bills.

Nonetheless, for several years, Justice Department reports have shown decreases in crime committed by youth. The CDC study extends that good news to violent behaviors that do not reach the attention of the criminal justice system.

The most dramatic drops recorded in the study involved teenagers carrying guns and other weapons. About 18 percent of those surveyed in 1997 reported carrying a weapon—defined as a gun, knife or club—in the previous month, down from 26 percent in 1991. About 9 percent admitting carrying a weapon at school during the same period, down from almost 12 percent in 1993—the first year that question was asked.

The frequency of fighting also declined, though less precipitously. Of those teenagers surveyed in 1997, 37 percent reported being in a physical fight in the previous year, down from 43 percent in 1991. Students injured in fights seriously enough to need medical attention also declined to below 4 percent, a decline of nearly a percentage point.

There was no statistically significant decrease, however, in the 12 percent of teenagers surveyed who had carried a weapon other than a gun in the previous month. Similarly, there was no change in the proportion who said they had skipped school in the previous month because they felt unsafe (4 percent), who were threatened or injured by a weapon at school (7 percent) or who had their property stolen or damaged at school (33 percent).

The study's authors did not offer their own reasons for the decline in so many categories of youth violence, but cited other research that has focused on the nation's prospering economy, ebbing warfare between gangs that deal in crack cocaine, the shift to community policing, adoption of tougher school discipline policies and an expansion of violence prevention programs. "It's likely we're seeing a payoff," Simon suggested.

Jack Levin, a sociology professor who directs the Brudnick Center on Violence at Northeastern University, emphasized the impact of broad police-community partnerships formed in recent years to attack the problem in many big cities, where juvenile crime has been more prevalent than in suburbs or rural areas. He pointed to a model community partnership that Boston formed in 1992 after clergy were out-

raged by gang members stabbing rivals at a funeral. Levin said the partnership has led to local business leaders generating 11,000 summer jobs, more college students tutoring in the schools, parents volunteering to supervise after-school programs and ministers providing spiritual guidance to gang members.

"For 25 years, we asked our teenagers to raise themselves, and they didn't do a very good job of it," Levin said. "That's why [youth violence has] gone down—the adults are back."

Pamela L. Riley, executive director of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence based in Raleigh, N.C., emphasized the role of anti-violence policies in the schools, noting the increasing number of police officers assigned to schools and a 1995 anti-crime

law that forced schools, in exchange for federal aid, to expel for a year any student caught with a gun. Under that law, 6,100 students were expelled in the 1997-1998 school year.

Despite the encouraging trends, the CDC study warns that "the prevalence of youth violence and school violence is still unacceptably high."

Further breakdowns of the survey results highlighted a few areas of ongoing concern. For example, the study found declining participation in fisticuffs by black and white students, but no such decline among Hispanic students. Both boys and girls were fighting less, but the decrease was sharper among girls. And compared to whites, more blacks and Hispanics were involved in fights.

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Tough Curbs on Water Use Urged in Maryland

For Local Farmers, Parched Conditions Wilting a Livelihood

By DAN EGGEN
and JESSIE MANGALIMAN
Washington Post Staff Writers

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The 130 or so dairy cows that marched through the Williams brothers' milking barn yesterday afternoon were thinner and slower than usual. The worst drought in more than half a century was taking its toll.

The yearlong dry spell means that each cow gives 10 fewer pounds of milk a day, amounting to \$5,000 less each month for the 70-year-old Loudoun County farm. A few have even died unexpectedly, apparent victims of the heat.

The dangerous lack of rainfall also has slashed the amount of hay available for farm animals in Loudoun and throughout the mid-Atlantic, making it even more expensive to keep a herd alive. Corn, soybeans and other crops wither while farm wells are drying up.

If it keeps up much longer, the Williams brothers and other farmers say, they may just have to sell everything and walk away. Some already have.

"The feeding costs haven't gone down," said Donald Williams, 55, chewing on a cigar as he thrust a mechanical milker onto one of his cows. "The labor costs haven't gone down. That money's got to come from somewhere, and that means our pockets. It takes a real bite after a while."

As most Washington residents and suburbanites fret about their dry lawns and dirty cars, those in the countryside whose livelihoods depend on moist, fertile land are beginning to wonder whether they will make it through the year.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman has declared West Virginia and all bordering counties in Maryland and Virginia disaster areas because of the prolonged heat and drought.

Yesterday, Virginia Gov. James S. Gilmore III (R) asked federal agriculture officials to designate three more Virginia counties—Warren, Louisa and Montgomery—as disaster areas, following a similar request Monday by Maryland Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D) to add 14 counties to that state's disaster list.

"The drought is laying a heavy hand on the state," said Roy Seward, spokesman for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Apples, corn, hay, peaches, soybeans, wheat and pine trees were among the hardest hit crops in Virginia. If dry weather persists, farmers statewide face an estimated \$343.7 million in crop losses, according to USDA spokesman Matt Kilbourne.

In Maryland, more than half of the crops are lost already, and farmers in Frederick County are reporting losses of as much as 90 percent. In Southern Maryland, the drought has taken its toll on corn and soybeans—the main crops in the region—but it also has caused tobacco plants to wilt in the heat.

Tobacco plants weather droughts well, and rebound when rains finally come. But a continuing dry spell is likely to affect the quality of leaves, meaning poor prices at the market.

"I have some plants that are scorched, and those are a loss," said Betty Russell, who farms 200 acres of vegetables, tobacco, corn and rye in Clements in St. Mary's County.

Russell irrigated part of her 22 acres of tobacco fields with water from a pond. But the ponds, too, are drying up, farmers said.

Maryland's Emergency Board met yesterday to finalize inclusion of the entire state in the drought disaster area, said Connie Byler-Hsu, program specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency's Maryland office in Columbia. Byler-Hsu said the declaration will make available

emergency loans to farmers across the state affected by the drought.

But, she said, "there is help for farmers who are hurting now, without the disaster declaration," such as other types of loans and federal farm subsidies.

In Virginia, agricultural extension agents and USDA workers are preparing damage assessments for 21 counties and hope to have some completed as early as this week. Don Davis, executive director of Virginia's USDA Farm Service Agency, said Shenandoah, Page and Rockingham counties are among the hardest hit statewide.

"It's the most severe disaster we've ever had in that area of Virginia," Davis said. "We have pastures where you could strike a match and it would burn."

Still, despite the damage being done, many farmers in the region don't plan to apply for the emergency, low-interest loans offered by the federal government as part of its disaster relief effort. Most are jittery at forecasts of continued dry conditions through next year, worrying

that taking on more debt now—even at low rates—will only spell more trouble in the end.

"Why do that? You're just going in the hole," said Moke Anderson, 66, who has been a farmer in Loudoun for most of his adult life. "If it's dry next year, then what? Before long, you're losing the farm and the house and everything else. That's not a real solution."

For Anderson and many others, the solution may be to sell their herds in order to cut their losses.

At Wheatland Farms, where Anderson works, the land yielded half as much hay as usual, and the relentlessly dry summer means no later cutting in most places. At the same time, Anderson and others are feeding more hay than usual to their cattle because they can't graze in parched pastures. The vicious cycle will come to a head this fall and winter.

"We're probably going to have to sell the cows," said Al Burgess, 59, who manages Wheatland. "Otherwise we'll run out of feed, if we don't run out of water first."

In Chaptico in St. Mary's County, farmer Luther Wolfe is losing 300 acres of corn and 300 acres of soybeans to the lack of rain.

Wolfe said the disaster declaration is likely to help many farmers, but he doesn't plan to apply for low-interest emergency loans. "It's made me as contrary as can be," Wolfe joked. "That's what my wife says."

But Mike Russell, who farms 800 acres in Clements, said he plans to

take advantage of the emergency loans, and hopes for emergency farm subsidies as well. Russell said he's losing 60 percent of his corn and soybean crops to drought. He did manage to salvage his 40 acres of tobacco with irrigation water from his ponds.

"Running any business is stressful, and when you have to depend on weather, it's even more stressful," said Russell, who has been farming for 22 years. "I'm relying on past years' savings to stay in business. Without farm subsidies, I'd be out of business."

The drought could have an additional impact in Loudoun, a rapidly developing fringe suburb that ranks as one of the fastest-growing areas in the country. Many say the extended dry spell only increases the pressure on farmers to sell their land for subdivisions. The four Williams brothers, for example, may soon make way for a wave of tract mansions encroaching on the north side of their land.

"For traditional farms, for corn and cattle guys, this is an extremely serious situation," said Warren Howell, a Loudoun haymaker who has already sold out his entire year's stock.

"This is going to be the straw that breaks a lot of families' backs," Howell said. "They just can't make a living anymore."

Staff writer Maria Glod contributed to this report.

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of Youth Violence - Statistics

Violence Among Teens Appears to Be Waning

By RON WINSLOW

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Contrary to the gruesome images that often fill the media, teenagers are fighting less often and carrying fewer lethal weapons, according to a new study.

The findings are based on large national surveys of students by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Researchers said data from the report, being published today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, reflect a broader fall-off in youth-related homicides and other serious crimes. The study also suggests law-enforcement efforts, new regulations, and dozens of community-based efforts launched during the past decade to reduce violent behavior are having a beneficial effect.

The study, covering 1991-1997, doesn't include data from the past two years, when several school shootings garnered tremendous media attention—including the one in April at Columbine High School in Colorado, which left 15 people dead.

Thomas R. Simon, a CDC researcher and a co-author of the report, acknowledges it is possible new data from a recently completed but yet-to-be analyzed 1999 survey will show a rise in the violent behavior he and his colleagues tracked. But such a change would conflict with established trends across a range of studies that violence among adolescents is on the wane. "The type of behaviors that we studied are a better reflection of what's happening with adolescents than the tragedies such as Columbine that we've seen on school property," Dr. Simon says.

The study in the latest issue of *JAMA* found that the number of high-school students who reported they recently carried a weapon at some point during the day de-

clined 30% from 1991 to 1997, while those saying they took a weapon to school fell 28% from 1993 to 1997. Prevalence of fighting, both on and off school grounds, also dropped.

"Youth homicide rates and violent crime rates have been dropping substantially in recent years," he says. "That hasn't been receiving a lot of attention." The stability of the findings among these reports leaves him "cautiously optimistic" that the declining trends will continue.

Indeed, Dr. Simon says other research shows the homicide rate in 1997 among 15 to 19-year-olds was 13.64 per 100,000 people in that age group, down 33% from 1993 when the rate was 20.5 per 100,000. Moreover, he adds, less than 1% of violent deaths among school-age children occur on school property. "When they do occur, they get a lot of attention," he adds. "That inflates our perception of how prevalent they really are."

Still, he says, 18% of high-school students reported carrying a weapon such as a gun, knife or club within 30 days of answering the survey in 1997; nearly 9% had carried one on school property that year. Even with the generally positive trends, he says, "the percentage of youth engaging in these behaviors remains unacceptably high."

The study didn't examine reasons for the trends, but researchers speculated the strong economy and improved job prospects, a decline in the crack-cocaine market, and changes in laws and regulations and law-enforcement practices all may have contributed to a decline in violent behavior.

In another article in the journal, Garen J. Wintemute, director of the Violence Prevention Research Program at University

of California, Davis, cited a comprehensive law-enforcement effort aimed at gang members in Boston that was associated with a 60% decrease in juvenile homicide and a reduction in the practice of carrying weapons.

The CDC report also suggested a large number of community-based youth-violence-prevention programs—including some that seek to teach adolescents constructive ways to express anger and to improve communication and discipline within families—may be bearing fruit.

Dr. Simon cautioned that even with the progress described in the study, homicide remains the second-leading cause of death among adolescents between 15 and 19 years old—after unintentional causes, such as car accidents.

The study's findings were based on nationally representative data gathered in surveys of 11,000 to 16,000 high-school students in 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1997. Nancy D. Brener of the CDC's division of adolescent and school health was lead author of the report.

In a separate study in the same issue of *JAMA*, Duke University researchers calculated that total U.S. medical costs to treat gunshot injuries in 1994 came to \$2.3 billion. About half of that was paid by government programs such as Medicaid.

The researchers used 1994 hospital discharge data from New York and Maryland and 1997 emergency-room records from South Carolina in making their estimates. They found that the average gunshot injury leads to \$17,000 in lifetime medical costs. The study found taxpayers financed 49% of the costs of such injuries while private insurance paid 18% and victims themselves 19%; payment for the remaining 14% came from other sources.

More Clinical Tests of Humans Exposed To Chemicals Are Urged in U.S. Study

By JOHN J. FIALKA

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—A long-awaited government study calls for more clinical tests of humans exposed to pesticides and other chemicals in the environment that have proved harmful to animals to see whether they may be causing lower sperm counts in men, breast cancer in women and other problems believed to be related to abnormal hormonal activity.

The four-year study, likely to influence spending in federal health research programs for years to come, revealed deep divisions on a 16-member panel of experts assembled by the National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

The study notes that while there is much research on poisons, much more must be learned about chemicals in the environment that appear to cause harm by stimulating or retarding the production of hormones—so-called hormonally active agents—in animals and humans. Hormones regulate a number of bodily functions, including the reproductive system.

Ernst Knobil, a physiologist who headed the panel, said it became "extraordinarily difficult" to get the scientists to agree, especially over the possibility that some chemicals in the environment are causing declining sperm counts in men and damage to human reproductive organs.

However, several scientists on the panel said the evidence from the study will help future scientists fill in the many unknown areas, largely requiring long-term studies that follow humans exposed to chemicals from birth to maturity to see whether and when cancers, lowered IQs and other problems develop.

An official at the Environmental Protection Agency, one of the sponsors of the

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study, said the research will help shape the agency's testing program, already under way, to screen hundreds of pesticides and water-purification chemicals it regulates to see if they are hormonally active. Eventually, he said, government and companies may have to test thousands of industrial chemicals now in the environment.

The experts were in relative agreement that DDT, paper plant sewage and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, have caused considerable harm to animals, especially fish and seagulls in the Great Lakes area and alligators around Lake Apopka in Florida. The effects included enlarged thyroids and smaller eggs and sex organs.

"Until we can prove otherwise, we must assume that humans are as much at risk as other species on the planet," asserted Shanna Helen Swan, a panel member and an expert on the human reproductive system at the University of Missouri. "Our re-

ceptor mechanisms aren't all that different [from animals]." Her studies have shown declining sperm counts among men in the U.S. and Europe since 1970, along with unexplained regional differences such as sperm counts that are lower among men in California than in New York.

"I'm probably closer to the end of the spectrum of this panel that sees no huge environmental problem," said James C. Lamb IV, a toxicologist who works for a Reston, Va., consulting firm. He believes that not enough is known about how the chemicals harm animals, let alone humans.

"We have agreed to disagree," said Frederick S. vom Saal, who teaches reproductive biology at the University of Missouri. He noted that one study of children in the Great Lakes area took 11 years to complete. "We need to begin a more systematic collection of human information. This is definitely going to be a long process."

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