

# Protect Children Not Guns

The latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that 2,867 children and teens died from gunfire in the United States in 2002—one child about every three hours, nearly eight children every day, 55 children every week.

1,830 were homicide victims  
828 committed suicide  
209 died in accidental or undetermined circumstances

1,639 were White  
1,112 were Black  
581 were Latino  
64 were Asian or Pacific Islander  
52 were American Indian or Alaska Native

416 were under age 15  
142 were under 10  
71 were under 5

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

## Children's Defense Fund 2005



## Did You Know?

- Since 1979, gun violence has snuffed out the lives of 95,761 children and teens.
- Sixty-one percent of the 95,761 children and teens killed by gunfire from 1979 through 2002 were White; 36 percent were Black.
- The number of Black children and teens killed by gunfire since 1979 is about 10 times the number of Black citizens of all ages lynched in America.
- While there has been some decline since the peak year of 1994, children are still twice as likely as adults to be victims of violent crime and more likely to be killed by adults than by other children.
- Firearms are the second leading cause of death among 10- to 19-year-olds, after motor vehicle accidents.
- Among children and teens, Blacks are more likely to be victims of firearm homicide and Whites are more likely to commit suicide.
- The firearm death rate for Black males ages 15 to 19 is almost four times that of White males ages 15 to 19.
- Males ages 15 to 19 are more than eight times as likely as females that age to commit suicide with a firearm.
- The number of children and teens killed by guns since 1979 would fill 3,830 public elementary school classrooms averaging 25 students per classroom.
- The number of children and teens killed by guns in 2002 would fill 114 public elementary school classrooms.
- In 2002, 56 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty while 71 preschoolers were killed by firearms.
- The number of brave American soldiers killed in hostile action in Iraq from March 2003 to January 2005 was more than 1,100—less than half the number of children and teens killed by gun violence in 2002.
- The rate of firearm deaths among children under 15 is far higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries *combined*.

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**In 2004, the President and the Congress allowed the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban to expire, returning to the streets military-style semi-automatic weapons designed to kill as many people as possible in the shortest period of time.**

## Firearm deaths by manner and by race, children and teens ages 0–19, 1979-2002 <sup>1</sup>

**Homicide has become the dominant manner of gun deaths among children.  
In 1979, 44 percent of firearm deaths were homicides. In 2002, 63 percent were homicides.**

Year	Manner					Race				
	Total	Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Unknown	Black	White	American Indian, Alaska Native <sup>2</sup>	Asian, Pacific Islander <sup>2</sup>	Hispanic <sup>3</sup>
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113	929	2,700	—	—	—
1980	3,749	1,743	1,214	689	103	944	2,739	—	—	—
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112	944	2,569	49	27	—
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77	811	2,450	55	23	—
1983	2,962	1,238	1,150	504	70	739	2,155	42	25	—
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	552	75	716	2,238	44	32	—
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72	850	2,241	42	36	—
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71	938	2,337	43	31	—
1987	3,400	1,573	1,281	467	79	1,117	2,199	28	54	—
1988	3,974	1,953	1,387	543	91	1,458	2,405	76	53	—
1989	4,384	2,367	1,380	567	70	1,694	2,563	50	76	—
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66	2,047	2,753	47	87	748
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	551	95	2,297	2,878	60	91	883
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90	2,359	2,834	55	105	924
1993	5,715	3,625	1,460	526	104	2,600	2,925	51	139	977
1994	5,793	3,579	1,565	512	137	2,559	3,024	75	135	993
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115	2,153	2,898	73	130	1,005
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92	1,976	2,475	64	98	817
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75	1,687	2,357	59	102	748
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74	1,416	2,197	60	88	661
1999	3,365	1,990	1,078	214	83	1,301	1,934	57	73	605
2000	3,012	1,776	1,007	193	36	1,149	1,762	44	57	568
2001	2,911	1,771	928	182	30	1,128	1,695	49	39	518
2002	2,867	1,830	828	167	42	1,112	1,639	52	64	581
Total	95,761	52,644	30,181	10,964	1,972	34,924	57,967	1,175	1,565	10,028

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

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

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

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

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

## What You Can Do to Keep Children and Teens Safe

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

**1. Support responsible gun control measures.** In 2004, the President and Congress allowed the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban to expire, returning to our streets military-style semi-automatic weapons designed to kill as many people as quickly as possible. More than two-thirds of Americans and virtually all major law enforcement groups supported the ban. It needs to be reinstated immediately. CDF also supports closing the gun show loophole (requiring criminal background checks on purchasers of guns from unlicensed gun dealers) and requiring child trigger locks on handguns.

Stay informed. Contact your elected officials to express your views on the need for common-sense firearm safety measures. For more information, go to <http://capwiz.com/cdf/dbq/officials/> or sign up to receive CDF newsletters and email alerts at <http://capwiz.com/cdf/mlm/>.

**2. Remove guns from your home.** A November 2004 study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* reported that regardless of storage practice, type, or number of firearms in the home, their presence is associated with increased risk of homicide and suicide in the home.

The vast majority of firearms used in unintentional shootings of children and teens come from the victim's home or the home of a relative, friend, or parent of a friend of the victim. An article in the *American Journal of Public Health* reported that 1.4 million homes with 2.6 million children held firearms that were stored in a manner most accessible to children—unlocked and loaded or unlocked and unloaded but stored with ammunition. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that state safe gun storage laws were associated with an 8.3 percent decrease in suicide rates among youth ages 14 to 17 years.

**3. Foster a climate of nonviolent conflict resolution in your home, congregation, school, and community.** Family violence is epidemic: a woman is abused by an intimate partner every 53 seconds; a child is abused or neglected every 35 seconds. Guns turn anger and despair into vio-

lence and death. Children learn from what they see. Organize a nonviolent conflict resolution support group in your congregation or community. An excellent resource is Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith's *Peace by Piece: A Guide for Preventing Community Violence*, based on the experiences of more than 40 exemplary programs across the country.

**4. Encourage nonviolent conflict resolution courses for all students, including the youngest.** The Association for Conflict Resolution has a comprehensive list of educational resources for conflict resolution at <http://acrnet.org/resources/index.htm>. This list includes the CDF-recommended curriculum, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, founded by Linda Lantieri, co-author of *Waging Peace in Our Schools*. CDF also recommends the *Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents*, developed by Prothrow-Stith.

**5. Do not let children watch violent television shows or play violent electronic games.** Write to advertisers who sponsor such television shows and sell violent products to children. Talk to your children about the need to reject violence as a cultural and personal value. Protest and refuse to buy products that glamorize or make violence socially acceptable or fun.

**6. Help focus public attention on child gun deaths.** Each year, encourage your religious leader or organization to read the names of children killed by guns in your community; publish their photos in your congregational bulletin; and take other steps to raise awareness about the problem. Urge local media outlets to publish and broadcast photographs of children and teens killed in your community. Write a letter to the editor or an opinion column about the tragic loss of young lives to gun violence.

**7. Engage in Child Watch<sup>SM</sup> Visitation programs: Visit hospital trauma units and talk with the families who have lost children.** Educate others about the human and financial costs of gun injuries. There are four to five firearm injuries for every gun death of a child. In addition to the enormous toll these injuries take on the lives of

those affected, the annual health care cost is billions of dollars. In a 2004 report, Vanderbilt University researchers concluded that the average cost per gunshot victim, excluding rehabilitative and long-term care, was \$45,000.

A 2004 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that gunshot injuries in the United States produce \$2.3 billion a year in lifetime medical costs, of which about one-half is borne by taxpayers.

**8. Provide children positive alternatives to the streets so that they can feel safe and protected.** Gangs, drugs, and gun dealers are available 24 hours a day for our children. What positive competition for their attention is available in your community? Open your place of worship and school doors with quality summer and after-school programs. Check CDF's Web site at <http://www.childrensdefense.org/> for more information about our Freedom Schools<sup>SM</sup> summer reading and service model that includes nonviolence training.

**Firearm deaths of children and teens, by age, manner, and race/Hispanic origin, 2002**

	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	Total under 20
<b>All Races</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>2,451</b>	<b>2,867</b>
Accident	1	11	14	34	107	167
Suicide	0	0	0	86	742	828
Homicide	9	49	55	150	1,567	1,830
Unknown intent	0	1	2	4	35	42
<b>White</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>1,639</b>
Accident	1	9	10	26	69	115
Suicide	0	0	0	73	632	705
Homicide	3	33	35	71	649	791
Unknown intent	0	0	0	4	24	28
<b>Black</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>1,112</b>
Accident	0	2	3	6	36	47
Suicide	0	0	0	9	78	87
Homicide	6	14	13	68	865	966
Unknown intent	0	1	2	0	9	12
<b>American Indian</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>52</b>
Accident	0	0	1	1	2	4
Suicide	0	0	0	1	17	18
Homicide	0	1	2	5	20	28
Unknown intent	0	0	0	0	2	2
<b>Asian, Pacific Islander</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>64</b>
Accident	0	0	0	1	0	1
Suicide	0	0	0	3	15	18
Homicide	0	1	5	6	33	45
Unknown intent	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Hispanic*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>581</b>
Accident	0	3	3	2	13	21
Suicide	0	0	0	10	88	98
Homicide	0	14	14	26	402	456
Unknown intent	0	0	0	0	6	6

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

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Control and Prevention, WISQARS, at <<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/>>, accessed December 2004. Calculations by the Children's Defense Fund.

## Firearm deaths of children and teens ages 0–19, by manner, 2000-2002

Red boldface type indicates that 21 states and the District of Columbia had an increase in 2002 total child firearm deaths over 2001.

	Total*			Homicide*			Suicide			Accident			Undetermined Intent		
	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>Alabama</b>	52	64	68	31	34	36	17	20	22	3	8	10	1	2	0
Alaska	24	19	18	2	6	7	20	11	10	2	1	1	0	1	0
<b>Arizona</b>	81	81	101	46	49	58	29	25	30	2	6	8	4	1	5
<b>Arkansas</b>	43	30	39	21	13	18	14	12	12	8	5	6	0	0	3
<b>California</b>	402	379	406	319	316	337	66	47	54	16	15	13	1	1	2
Colorado	38	53	53	17	23	20	19	26	30	2	3	1	0	1	2
Connecticut	14	16	15	8	12	10	6	4	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Delaware</b>	2	4	10	1	3	4	1	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0
<b>District of Columbia</b>	28	32	36	28	29	34	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0
<b>Florida</b>	100	111	120	58	65	81	35	38	33	7	5	5	0	3	1
Georgia	106	110	104	67	69	65	28	34	28	8	7	9	3	0	2
Hawaii	1	5	1	1	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	13	25	19	0	3	3	11	17	12	2	5	4	0	0	0
Illinois	186	175	146	157	139	127	23	28	15	5	6	3	1	2	1
<b>Indiana</b>	82	59	69	43	30	31	31	23	28	5	5	9	3	1	1
Iowa	21	27	17	1	3	6	18	22	9	2	2	2	0	0	0
Kansas	31	36	17	16	15	6	13	18	9	2	3	2	0	0	0
Kentucky	35	34	33	11	12	12	17	15	13	7	7	6	0	0	2
<b>Louisiana</b>	94	95	100	63	62	70	22	27	19	9	6	10	0	0	1
Maine	8	5	3	1	1	0	7	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Maryland</b>	79	81	92	59	66	77	18	12	14	1	2	1	1	1	0
<b>Massachusetts</b>	11	24	25	9	18	22	2	5	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
Michigan	100	105	100	66	61	60	26	39	36	5	4	4	3	1	0
Minnesota	36	37	29	11	12	9	23	24	18	2	0	1	0	1	1
<b>Mississippi</b>	67	34	58	31	14	28	23	13	21	13	5	7	0	2	2
Missouri	81	92	72	47	55	45	27	29	25	7	4	2	0	4	0
<b>Montana</b>	18	13	15	3	3	2	11	9	10	3	1	1	1	0	2
Nebraska	23	18	11	12	3	5	10	14	6	0	1	0	1	0	0
Nevada	31	28	25	19	20	19	12	7	6	0	0	0	0	1	0
New Hampshire	7	8	4	2	1	1	5	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>New Jersey</b>	39	25	32	23	19	24	13	5	5	2	1	3	1	0	0
<b>New Mexico</b>	55	27	32	31	14	15	19	11	16	5	2	1	0	0	0
New York	123	135	91	90	102	74	28	27	14	3	6	3	2	0	0
North Carolina	95	86	71	60	48	47	29	31	21	5	7	1	1	0	2
<b>North Dakota</b>	7	2	5	1	1	0	5	1	4	0	0	1	1	0	0
Ohio	75	85	83	40	50	52	30	26	22	4	6	6	1	3	3
Oklahoma	33	41	38	10	18	13	15	16	22	7	7	3	1	0	0
<b>Oregon</b>	27	17	36	3	7	14	22	9	17	2	1	2	0	0	3
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	110	103	113	69	63	73	37	33	35	4	6	4	0	1	1
<b>Rhode Island</b>	10	6	10	8	6	8	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	41	42	40	23	20	26	13	15	9	5	6	4	0	1	1
South Dakota	8	8	7	0	1	0	4	7	4	4	0	2	0	0	1
<b>Tennessee</b>	87	65	79	48	34	47	33	24	22	6	7	8	0	0	2
Texas	252	241	220	117	140	140	108	84	72	21	15	7	6	2	1
Utah	16	27	17	2	7	3	14	20	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vermont	4	3	2	0	2	1	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	72	77	72	41	50	50	26	23	17	3	3	4	2	1	1
<b>Washington</b>	49	38	40	23	17	17	22	20	21	2	1	1	2	0	1
<b>West Virginia</b>	24	13	20	9	5	7	13	5	10	2	3	3	0	0	0
Wisconsin	67	61	49	28	28	24	34	26	23	5	7	2	0	0	0
Wyoming	4	9	4	0	0	1	2	9	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
United States	3,012	2,911	2,867	1,776	1,771	1,830	1,007	928	828	193	182	167	36	30	42

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

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Table III: Deaths from 358 selected causes [2000]; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS, at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/> [2001, 2002]. Calculations by the Children's Defense Fund.



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## Remembering a Few of the Thousands of Young Lives Cut Short

- *Rock Hill, S.C.* – Kenyatta Nicole Dixon, 2, was shot accidentally in the forehead with a .38 caliber handgun by a visiting 3-year-old. The toddler died the following day.
- *Washington, D.C.* – Chelsea Cromartie, 8, was fatally shot in the head by gunshots fired from a passing car as she watched television at the home of her aunt. Police said the gunman had been aiming at someone standing outside her aunt's house.
- *New York City* – Dominick Middleton, 12, and his baby sister, Kristina, were shot to death in their East Harlem apartment by their mother's ex-boyfriend, a former corrections officer who police said had overdosed on antidepressants.
- *Chicago* – Keith Williams, 13, was shot when his 18-year-old brother pulled the trigger of a loaded gun at their home. Chicago police said Keith died instantly after being shot in the head.
- *Moultrie, Ga.* – Juan Carlos Resendez, 3, was fatally shot in the head and left to die in a bedroom at his home, along with his parents and two other adults slain "execution-style." The crime was discovered by neighboring children.



***The number of children and teens killed by guns in the United States since 1979 would fill Boston's Fenway Park nearly three times.***

**Join the Leave No Child Behind® Movement TODAY!  
Call 1 (800) CDF-1200 or log onto <http://www.cdfactioncouncil.org/>**

The mission of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is to Leave No Child Behind and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.



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**[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)**