



Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report

Chapter 2: Juvenile victims	19
Juvenile homicide victims	20
Firearm-related homicides of juveniles	23
Juvenile suicide	25
Victimization survey of juveniles	27
Victims of school crime	29
Victimization risk factors	30
Juvenile victims of reported violent crimes	31
Offenders who victimize juveniles	33
Time-of-day analysis of juvenile victimization	34
Location of juvenile victimization	36
Juvenile victims of statutory rape	37
Juvenile victimization on the Internet	38
Juvenile kidnap victims	40
Missing children	42
Runaway and throwaway children	45
Missing children trends	46
Child maltreatment case processing	47
Child maltreatment trends	51
Child maltreatment demographics	54
Child maltreatment perpetrators	55
Child maltreatment fatalities	56
Foster care	57
Adoption	59
Chapter 2 sources	60

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National Center for Juvenile Justice
3700 S. Water Street, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15203-2363

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Chapter 2

Juvenile victims



Juveniles of all ages are the victims of violent crime. Some of their offenders are family members; this is often the case for very young victims. Some juveniles are the victims of abuse and neglect at the hands of their caregivers. Research has shown that child victimization and abuse are linked to problem behaviors that become evident later in life. So an understanding of childhood victimization and its trends may lead to a better understanding of juvenile offending.

This chapter summarizes what is known about the prevalence and incidence of juvenile victimizations. It answers important questions to assist policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and concerned citizens in developing policies and programs to ensure the safety and well-being of children. How often are juveniles the victims of crime? How many are murdered each year? How often are firearms involved? Who are their offenders? How many youth commit suicide? How many children are victims of crime at school? What are

the characteristics of school crime? When are juveniles most likely to become victims of crime? What is known about missing and runaway youth? How many children are abused and neglected annually? What are the trends in child maltreatment?

Data sources include the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Supplementary Homicide Reporting Program and its National Incident-Based Reporting System. School victimization data are drawn from both the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Child maltreatment is reported by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. Data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children are presented, as well as suicide information from the National Center for Health Statistics.

On average, between 1980 and 2002 about 2,000 juveniles were murdered annually in the U.S.

Homicide is one of the leading causes of juvenile deaths

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reports that homicide was the fourth leading cause of death for children ages 1–11 in 2002. Only deaths caused by unintentional injury, cancer, and congenital anomalies were more common for these young juveniles. That same year, homicide was the third leading cause of death for juveniles ages 12–17, with the more common causes of death being unintentional injury and suicide.

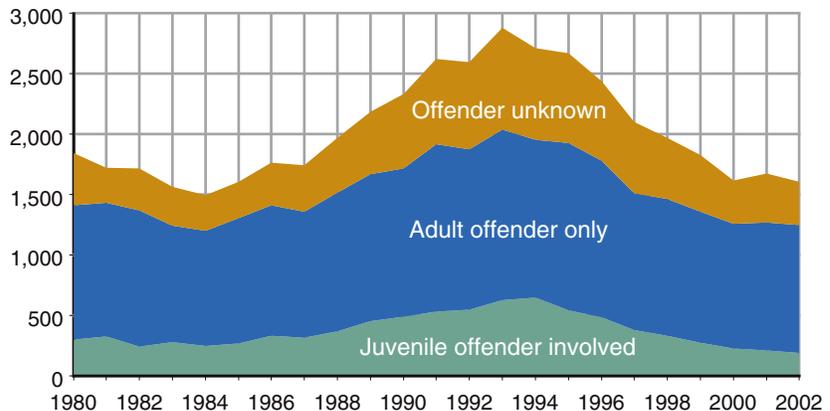
The FBI and NCHS maintain detailed records of murders

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Reporting Program asks local law enforcement agencies to provide detailed information on all homicides occurring within their jurisdiction. These Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHRs) contain information on victim demographics and the method of death. Also, when known, SHRs capture the circumstances surrounding the death, the offender's demographics, and the relationship between the victim and the offender. Although not all agencies report every murder every year, for the years 1980 through 2002, the FBI received SHR records on more than 90% of all homicides in the U.S.

For 2002, the FBI reported that law enforcement identified the offender in 64% of murders nationwide, which means that for many of these crimes, the offenders remain unknown. Based on SHR data from 1980 through 2002, an offender was not identified by law enforcement in 24% of the murders of persons under age 18, in 34% of the murders

The number of juvenile homicides in 2002 was 44% below the peak year of 1993 and at its lowest level since the mid-1980s

Juvenile homicide victims

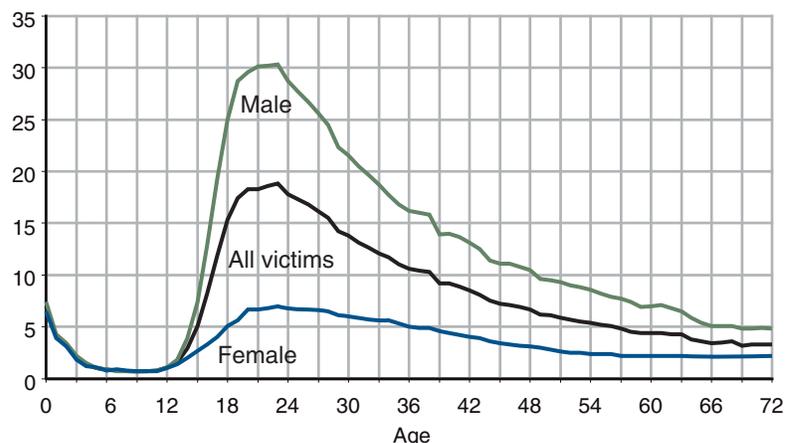


■ Between 1980 and 2002, juvenile offenders participated in 1 of every 4 homicides of juveniles in which the offenders were known to law enforcement. In about one-sixth of the juvenile homicides in which juvenile offenders participated, adult offenders were also involved.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

Between 1980 and 2002, the likelihood of being a murder victim peaked for persons in their early twenties, although for females, the first year of life was almost as dangerous

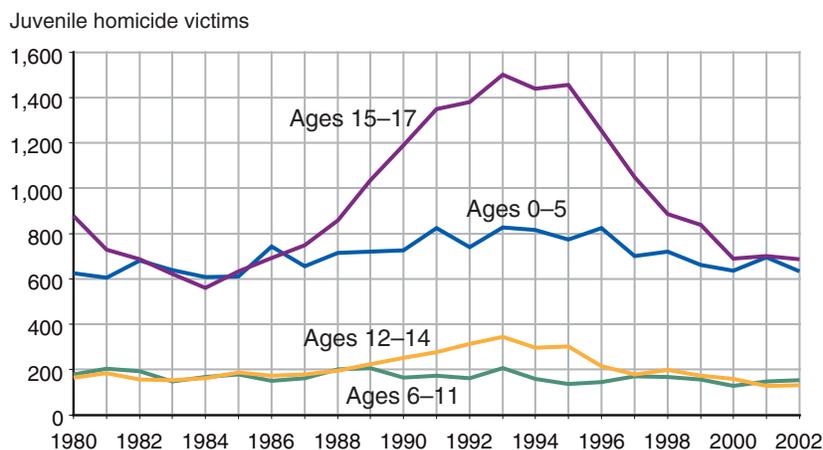
Homicide victims per 100,000 persons in age/sex group, 1980–2002



■ Until their teen years, boys and girls were equally likely to be a homicide victim.

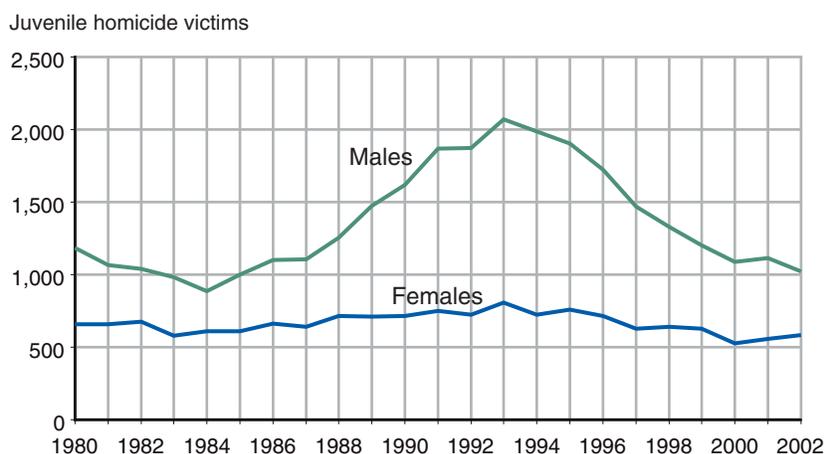
Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

The large increase in juvenile homicides between 1984 and 1993 and the subsequent decline were nearly all attributable to changes in homicides of older juveniles



Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

In terms of gender, the large increase in juvenile homicides between 1984 and 1993 and the subsequent decline were nearly all attributable to changes in homicides of male juveniles



- Unlike the number of male victims, the annual number of juvenile females murdered has not differed substantially between 1980 and 2002.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

of adults, and in 33% of murders overall.

Within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) maintains the National Vital Statistics System. This system receives reports on homicides from coroners and medical examiners. Annual estimates of juvenile homicides by NCHS tend to be about 10% higher than those from the FBI. The reasons for this difference are unclear but are probably related to inconsistent reporting and/or to differences in definitions, updating procedures, and/or imputation techniques.

A critical aspect of this Report is the delineation of patterns among victim and offender characteristics. Because the NCHS data capture no offender information, the discussion that follows is based on the FBI's SHR data.

The likelihood of being murdered in 2002 was the same as in 1966

According to FBI estimates, 16,200 murders occurred in the U.S. in 2002. When compared with trends over the last 40 years, the number of murders in the U.S. was relatively stable between 1999 and 2002, with the 2002 FBI estimate just 4% above the estimate for the historically low year of 1999—when the FBI estimated that 15,500 persons were murdered.* Before 1999, 1970 is the most recent year with fewer murders than in 2002.

However, the U.S. population grew 40% between 1970 and 2002. So, although the number of murders in

* The 3,047 victims (9 of whom were under age 18) of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, are not in the counts of murder victims.

1970 and 2002 was about the same, the murder rate in 2002 was actually about 40% lower than in 1970. Before 1999, the most recent year with a murder rate comparable to 2002 (5.6 murders/100,000 persons in the U.S. population) is 1966. This means the probability that a U.S. resident would be murdered was less in 2002 than in nearly all of the previous 35 years.

In 2002, on average, 4 juveniles were murdered daily in the U.S.

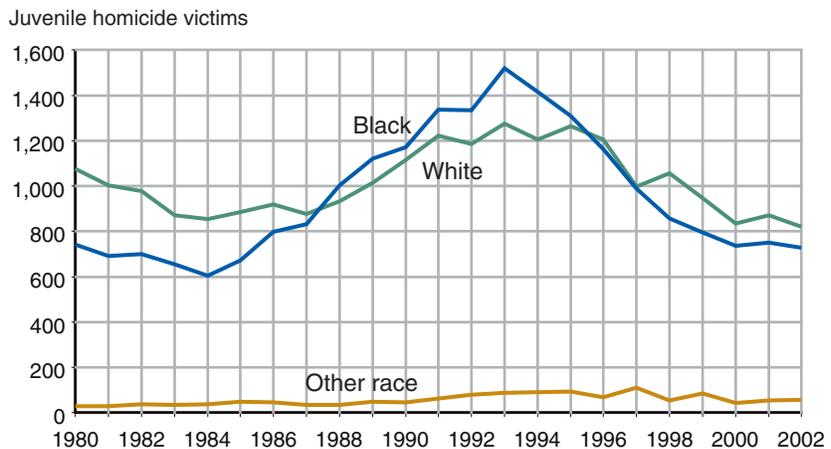
An estimated 1,600 persons under age 18 were murdered in the U.S. in 2002—10% of all persons murdered that year. About one-third (36%) of these juvenile murder victims were female. About 4 in 10 (39%) of these victims were under age 6, 1 in 10 (10%) were ages 6–11, 1 in 10 (8%) were ages 12–14, and 4 in 10 (43%) were ages 15–17.

More than half (51%) of juvenile murder victims in 2002 were white, 45% were black, and 4% were either American Indian or Asian. Given that white youth constituted 78% of the U.S. resident juvenile population in 2002 and black youth 16%, the murder rate for black youth in 2002 was more than 4 times the white rate. This disparity was seen across victim age groups and increased with victim age:

Victim age	2002 homicide rate*		Black to white rate ratios
	White	Black	
0–17	1.4	6.0	4.2
0–5	1.9	6.5	3.4
6–11	0.4	1.6	3.6
12–14	0.7	2.8	4.4
15–17	3.3	18.1	5.5

* Homicide rates are the number of homicides per 100,000 juveniles in the age group.

Between 1984 and 1993, while homicides of white juveniles increased 50%, homicides of black juveniles increased 150%



- Black youth accounted for 16% of the juvenile population between 1980 and 2002, but were the victims in 47% of juvenile homicides
- In the early 1980s, the homicide rate for black juveniles was 4 times the rate for white juveniles. This disparity increased so that by 1993 the black rate was 6 times the white rate. The relatively greater decline in black juvenile homicides between 1993 and 2002 dropped the disparity in black-to-white homicide rates back to 4-to-1.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

Of the 46,600 juveniles murdered between 1980 and 2002, most victims under age 6 were killed by a parent, while parents were rarely involved in the killing of juveniles ages 15–17

Offender relationship to victim	Age of victim					Victim ages 0–17	
	0–17	0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Males	Females
Offender known	74%	88%	81%	72%	64%	72%	88%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Parent/stepparent	31	62	40	11	3	26	61
Other family member	7	7	15	11	5	6	7
Acquaintance	47	28	30	58	66	50	29
Stranger	15	3	15	20	25	18	3
Offender unknown	26%	12%	19%	28%	36%	28%	12%

- Over the 23-year period, strangers were involved in *at least* 15% of the murders of juveniles. This figure is probably greater than 15% because strangers are likely to account for a disproportionate share of crimes in which the offender is unknown.

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

Between 1980 and 2002, at least 3 of every 4 murder victims ages 15–17 were killed with a firearm

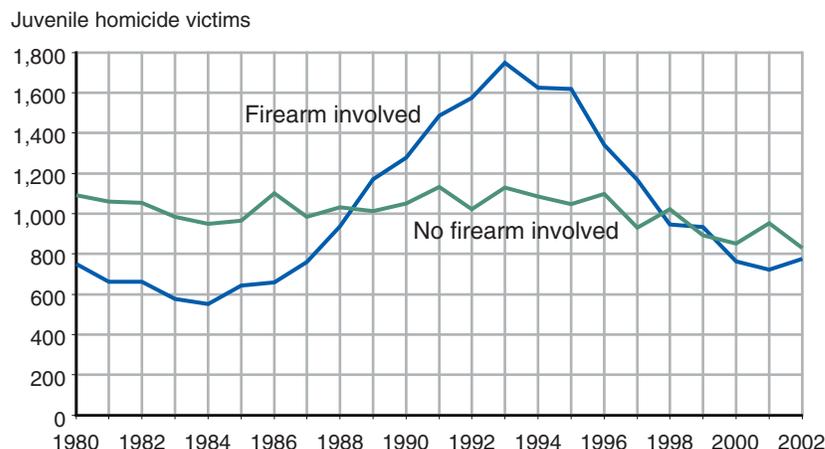
Trends in the number of juvenile homicides are tied to homicides involving firearms

Almost half (48%) of all juveniles murdered in 2002 were killed with a firearm, 22% were killed by the offender's hands or feet (e.g., beaten/kicked to death or strangled), and 11% were killed with a knife or blunt object. The remaining 19% of juvenile murder victims were killed with another type of weapon, or the type of weapon used is unknown.

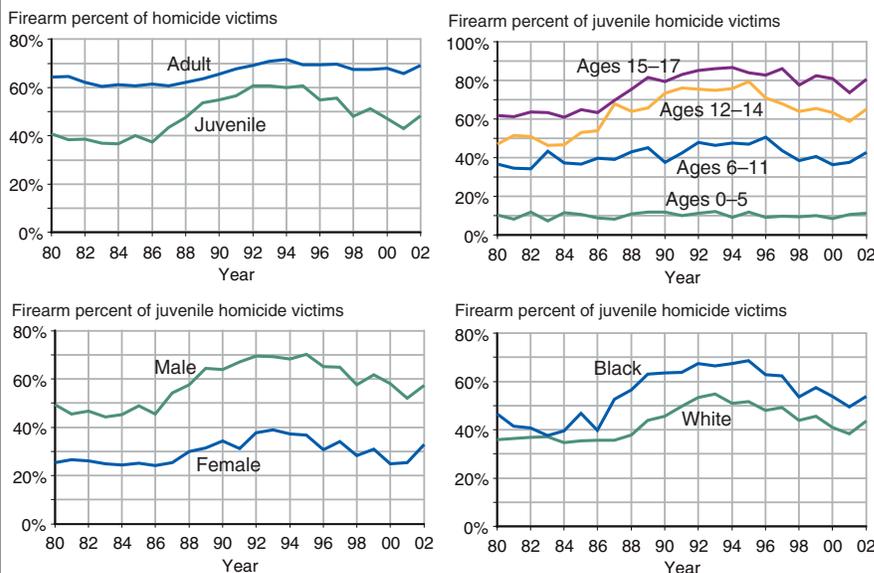
Firearms were used less often in the killings of young children. In 2002, firearms were used in 17% of murders of juveniles under age 12 but in 78% of the murders of juveniles ages 12–17. In 2002, a greater percentage of black than white juvenile murder victims were killed with a firearm (54% vs. 44%). In 2002, firearms were used more often in the murders of juvenile males (57%) than in the murders of juvenile females (33%).

Between 1980 and 2002, the deadliest year for juveniles was 1993, when an estimated 2,880 were murdered. Within the period, 1993 was also the year when the proportion of murdered juveniles killed with a firearm was the largest (61%). In fact, across the period, the annual number of juveniles murdered by means other than a firearm generally declined—a remarkable pattern when compared with the large increase and subsequent decline in the number of firearm-related murders of juveniles. Except for killings of young children and killings of juveniles by family members, murder trends in all demographic segments of the juvenile population between 1980 and 2002 were linked primarily to killings by firearms.

The large drop in the number of juveniles killed with a firearm after 1993 resulted in the overall number of juvenile homicides in 2002 falling to its lowest level since 1984



The proportion of homicides committed with firearms differed with victim demographics



- More so than for adults, the period from 1980 through 2002 saw big changes in the use of firearms in the murders of older juveniles.
- The proportions of firearm-related murders of male and female juveniles showed similar growth and decline patterns over the period.
- Although firearms were involved in a greater proportion of black juvenile homicides than white, trends in the proportion of firearm-related homicides were similar for the racial groups.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

Young children are killed by family members—older juveniles by acquaintances

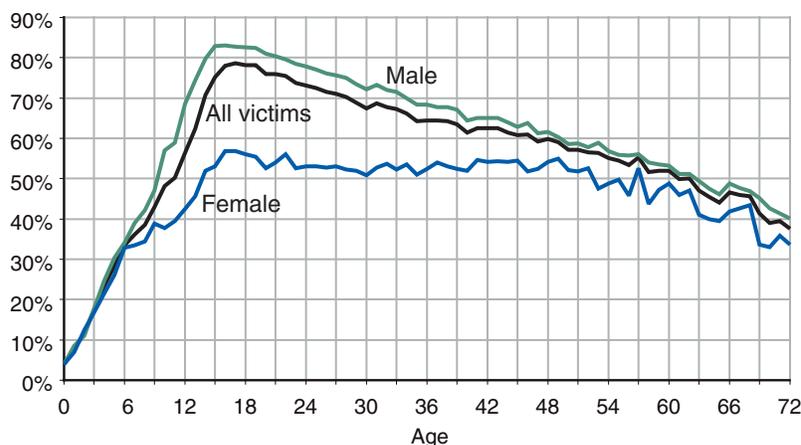
In the 2002 SHR data, the offender information is missing for 27% of juvenile murder victims either because the offender is unknown or because the information was not recorded on the data form. The proportion of unknown offenders in 2002 increased substantially with victim age: ages 0–5 (13%), ages 6–11 (15%), ages 12–14 (21%), and ages 15–17 (43%).

Considering only murders in 2002 for which the offender is known, a stranger killed 4% of murdered children under age 6, while parents killed 61%, other family members 7%, and acquaintances 28%. Older juveniles were far more likely to be murdered by nonfamily members. Five percent (5%) of victims ages 15–17 were killed by parents, 5% by other family members, 32% by strangers, and 58% by acquaintances.

Differences in the characteristics of the murders of juvenile males and juvenile females are linked to the age profiles of the victims. Between 1980 and 2002, the annual numbers of male and female victims were very similar for victims at each age under 13. However, older victims were disproportionately male. For example, between 1980 and 2002, 84% of murdered 17-year-olds were male. In general, therefore, a greater proportion of female murder victims are very young. So, while it is true that female victims were more likely to be killed by family members than were male victims (51% vs. 32%), this difference goes away within specific age groups. For example, for victims under age 6, 68% of males and 70% of females were killed by a family member between 1980 and 2002.

Between 1980 and 2002, murder victims most likely to be killed by firearms were those age 16, regardless of gender

Firearm percent of homicide victims, 1980–2002



Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

Of the 46,600 juveniles murdered between 1980 and 2002, half (50%) were murdered with a firearm

Weapon	Age of victim					Victim ages 0–17	
	0–17	0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Males	Females
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Firearm	50	10	41	66	78	60	30
Knife/blunt object	14	11	19	17	14	13	17
Personal	19	48	11	5	2	15	27
Other/unknown	17	31	29	12	6	12	26

- Nearly half (48%) of murder victims under age 6 were killed by offenders using only their hands, fists, or feet (personal).
- More than three-fourths (78%) of victims ages 15–17 were killed with a firearm.
- Juvenile male victims were twice as likely as juvenile female victims to be murdered with a firearm.

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980 through 2002 [machine-readable data files].

Persons ages 7–17 are about as likely to be victims of suicide as they are to be victims of homicide

Since the early 1980s, for every 1 juvenile female suicide there were 4 juvenile male suicides

Through its National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), NCHS collects information from death certificates filed in state vital statistics offices, including causes of death of juveniles. NVSS indicates that 23,900 juveniles ages 7–17 died by suicide in the U.S. between 1981 and 2001. For all juveniles ages 7–17, suicide was the fourth leading cause of death over this period, trailing only unintentional injury (140,600), homicide (30,300), and cancer (27,600)—with the numbers of homicide, cancer, and suicide deaths being very similar. Suicide was the third leading cause of death for males ages 7–17 and the fourth leading cause of death for females in that age group.

Between 1981 and 2001, 79% of all juvenile suicide victims were male, with the annual proportion remaining remarkably stable over the period. Consequently, suicide trends were similar for juvenile males and females.

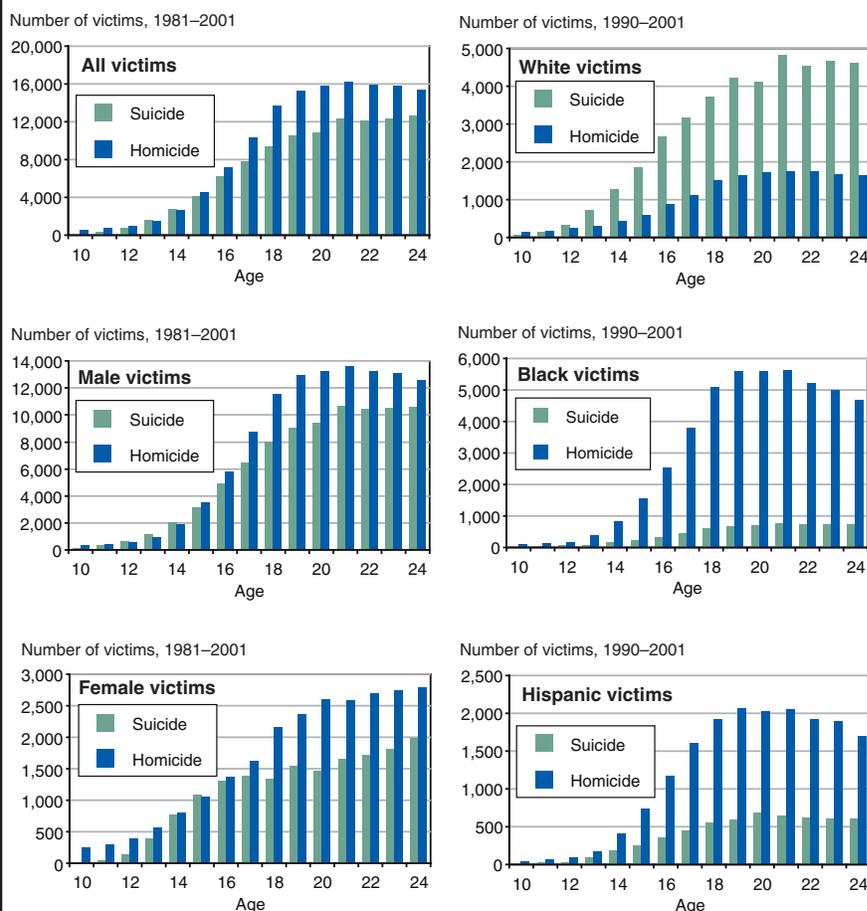
Sixty percent (60%) of all juvenile suicides between 1981 and 2001 were committed with a firearm, 27% by some form of suffocation (e.g., hanging), and 9% by poisoning. The method of suicide differed for males and females, with males more likely than females to use a firearm and less likely to use poison.

Method of suicide by persons ages 7–17, 1981–2001:

Method	Male	Female
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Firearm	63.5	49.0
Suffocation	27.7	23.2
Poisoning	5.6	22.5
Other	3.3	5.3

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Between 1981 and 2001, juveniles ages 12–15 were about as likely to be a suicide victim as they were to be a murder victim

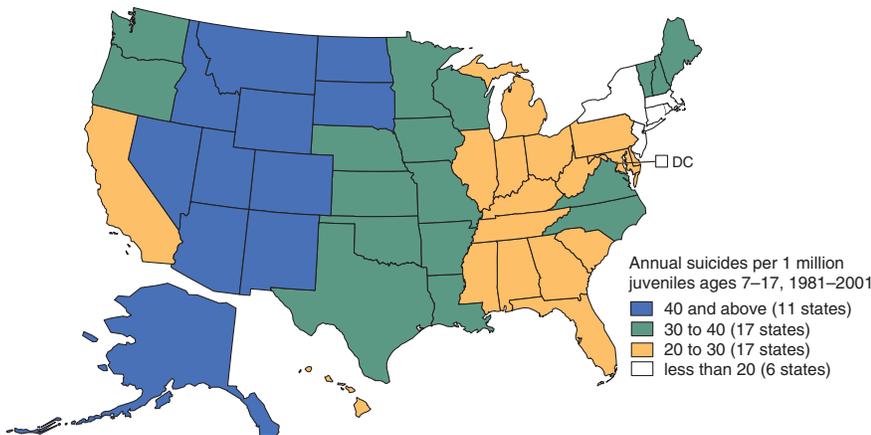


- Far more males than females ages 12–16 were victims of suicide or murder between 1981 and 2001. However, for each gender, the number of suicides was about the same as the number of murders.
- Between 1990 and 2001, suicide was more prevalent than homicide for non-Hispanic white juveniles, while the reverse was true for Hispanic juveniles and non-Hispanic black juveniles.
- At each age between 12 and 24, suicide was more common than murder for non-Hispanic whites between 1990 and 2001, in sharp contrast to patterns for Hispanics and non-Hispanic blacks. More specifically, for every 10 white homicide victims ages 10–17 there were 26 suicide victims (a ratio of 10 to 26); the corresponding ratio was 10 to 1 for black juveniles and 10 to 3 for Hispanic juveniles.

Note: White victims and black victims are not of Hispanic ethnicity.

Source: Authors' analysis of the National Center for Health Statistics' WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) [interactive database system].

Between 1981 and 2001, juvenile suicide victims outnumbered juvenile murder victims in 33 states



State	Suicide rate 1981–2001	Suicide/homicide ratio	State	Suicide rate 1981–2001	Suicide/homicide ratio
Total U.S.	28.1	0.79	Missouri	30.2	0.71
Alabama	28.2	0.79	Montana	60.5	3.21
Alaska	74.7	2.37	Nebraska	34.5	1.86
Arizona	43.6	1.04	Nevada	41.7	1.03
Arkansas	36.6	1.02	New Hampshire	32.7	3.84
California	22.3	0.41	New Jersey	14.2	0.61
Colorado	46.4	1.81	New Mexico	56.4	1.34
Connecticut	19.0	0.64	New York	15.4	0.37
Delaware	26.0	1.58	North Carolina	30.1	1.02
Dist. of Columbia	15.3	0.05	North Dakota	50.0	8.77
Florida	26.0	0.72	Ohio	25.4	1.25
Georgia	26.9	0.73	Oklahoma	36.9	1.20
Hawaii	23.4	2.05	Oregon	37.1	2.04
Idaho	59.3	4.98	Pennsylvania	25.6	1.07
Illinois	22.5	0.36	Rhode Island	18.2	0.85
Indiana	28.6	1.14	South Carolina	25.7	0.89
Iowa	35.4	3.49	South Dakota	56.3	4.90
Kansas	35.3	1.43	Tennessee	29.2	1.01
Kentucky	28.0	1.66	Texas	32.0	0.76
Louisiana	32.2	0.57	Utah	50.2	3.38
Maine	36.9	4.17	Vermont	31.0	3.11
Maryland	23.8	0.49	Virginia	30.0	1.07
Massachusetts	17.3	0.92	Washington	32.4	1.33
Michigan	28.3	0.62	West Virginia	29.1	1.49
Minnesota	36.4	2.74	Wisconsin	35.7	1.77
Mississippi	28.1	0.73	Wyoming	63.1	4.14

Notes: The suicide rate is the average annual number of suicides of youth ages 7–17 divided by the average annual population of youth ages 7–17 (in millions). The suicide/homicide ratio is the total number of suicides of youth ages 7–17 divided by the total number of homicides of youth ages 7–17. A ratio of more than 1.0 indicates that the number of suicides was greater than the number of homicides.

Source: Authors' analysis of the National Center for Health Statistics' *WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System)* [interactive database system].

American Indians have the highest juvenile suicide rate

Beginning with the 1990 data, NVSS distinguished fatalities by the victim's Hispanic ethnicity, enabling racial and ethnic comparisons of juvenile suicides. Between 1990 and 2001, the juvenile suicide rate for white non-Hispanic youth (i.e., suicides per million persons ages 7–17 in this race/ethnicity group) was 30.9. The suicide rates were substantially lower for Hispanic (20.0), black non-Hispanic (18.6), and Asian non-Hispanic (17.9) juveniles ages 7–17. In contrast, the suicide rate for American Indian juveniles (59.5) was nearly double the white non-Hispanic rate and triple the rates for the other racial/ethnic groups.

Over the period 1981 to 2001, the juvenile suicide rate rose and fell

The juvenile suicide rate grew almost 50% between 1981 and 1988. The increase over this period was similar for males and females but was much larger for black than for white juveniles. The juvenile suicide rate remained essentially constant between 1988 and 1994 and then began to fall. By 2001, the overall rate had returned to its levels of the early 1980s. This general pattern was reflected in the trends of white and black juveniles and those of males and females. The proportion of juvenile suicides committed with a firearm peaked in 1994 at 69% and then fell so that by 2001 less than half (44%) of juvenile suicides involved a firearm.

The nonfatal violent victimization rate of youth ages 12–17 in 2003 was half the rate in 1993

NCVS tracks crime levels

Since 1973, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has used the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to monitor the level of violent crime in the U.S. NCVS gathers information on crimes against persons ages 12 or older from a nationally representative sample of households. For those interested in juvenile justice, NCVS is critical for understanding the volume and nature of crimes against juveniles ages 12–17 as well as trends in these crimes. A major limitation, however, is that crimes against youth younger than age 12 are not captured.

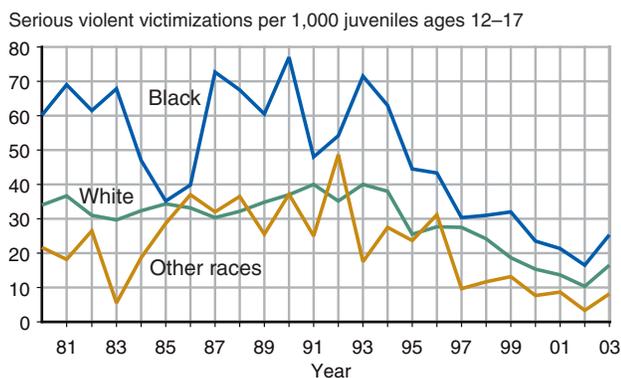
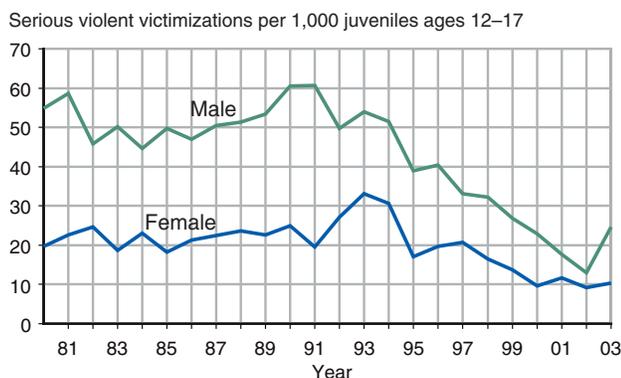
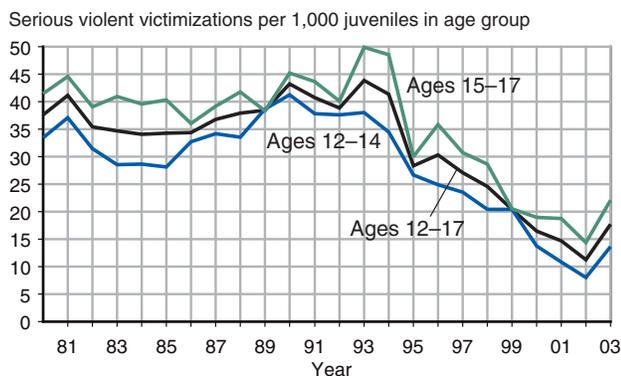
Juveniles are more likely than adults to be victims of violence

NCVS monitors nonfatal violent victimizations (i.e., the crimes of rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault). A 2005 BJS report summarized NCVS data for the years 1993–2003 to document the trends in nonfatal violent victimizations of youth ages 12–17. The report found that these youth experienced relatively high levels of violent crimes during these years and that their rate of nonfatal violent victimization had declined substantially over the period.

On average from 1993 through 2003, juveniles ages 12–17 were about 2.5 times more likely than adults (i.e., ages 18 and older) to be the victim of a nonfatal violent crime. That means that in a typical group of 1,000 youth ages 12–17, 84 experienced nonfatal violent victimizations, compared with 32 per 1,000 persons ages 18 and older.

The victimization rate from 1993 to 2003 was higher among juveniles than adults for each nonfatal violent crime. Compared with adults, youth ages 12–17 were twice as likely to

The large decline in the serious violent victimization rate between 1993 and 2003 was experienced by youth ages 12–14 and 15–17, male and female youth, and white and black youth



- From 1980 through 2003, the serious violent crime victimization rate for youth ages 15–17 averaged about 25% more than the rate for youth ages 12–14, the average rate for juvenile males was more than double the female rate, and the rate for black juveniles averaged 67% above the white rate.

Notes: **Serious violent crimes** include aggravated assault, rape, robbery, and homicide. Aggravated assault, rape, and robbery data are from NCVS and homicide data are from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics' *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2005*.

be robbery or aggravated assault victims, 2.5 times as likely to be victims of a rape or sexual assault, and almost 3 times as likely to be victims of a simple assault.

Between 1993 and 2003, most offenders whose victims were youth ages 12–14 and ages 15–17 were acquaintances or others well known to the victim (61% and 47%, respectively). For these two age groups, a small proportion of offenders were family members or intimates (5% and 10%, respectively). Youth ages 12–14 were less likely than youth ages 15–17 to experience nonfatal violent victimizations in which the offender was a stranger (34% vs. 43%).

Between 1993 and 2003, a weapon (e.g., firearm, knife, or club) was involved in 23% of violent crimes with victims ages 12–17, with the proportion being greater for youth ages 15–17 (27%) than youth ages 12–14 (18%). Older youth were 3 times as likely as younger youth to be victims of crimes involving firearms (9% vs. 3%). In 28% of the violent victimizations of both younger and older youth, an injury (mostly minor) occurred. Serious injuries (including rape injury) occurred in 2.5% of violent crimes with younger victims and 4.5% of crimes with victims ages 15–17.

School was the most common setting for violent victimizations: 53% of the victimizations of youth ages 12–14 and 32% of victimizations of youth ages 15–17 occurred at or in school. The NCVS data also showed that the riskiest period for youth ages 12–17 was after school (between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.). Finally, between 1993 and 2003, 57% of the offenders of victims ages 12–14 and 40% of the offenders of victims ages 15–17 were the victims' schoolmates.

From 1993 to 2003, about one quarter of all nonfatal violent victimizations against youth ages 12–14 were reported to law enforcement. About one-third of similar victimizations against youth ages 15–17 were reported

Victimization rates are higher for juvenile males and urban youth

From 1993 through 2003, the nonfatal violent victimization rate for males ages 12–17 (100.4) was about 50% greater than that for females (66.4). Over this 11-year period, urban youth ages 12–17 had a significantly higher nonfatal violent victimization rate (98.5) than did suburban (83.4) and rural (65.9) youth.

Over the 1993–2003 period, the nonfatal violent victimization rates of non-Hispanic white (86.7) and non-Hispanic black (87.0) youth ages 12–17 were similar, and these rates were somewhat higher than the Hispanic rate (76.9). However, when the crime of simple assault was excluded from the victimization rate (a statistic that BJS labels the serious violent victimization rate), the rate for black youth was more than 50% greater than the rate for white youth.

Declines in violent victimizations were similar for juveniles and adults

To study trends in juvenile violent victimization over the 1993–2003 period, BJS compared the average rate for 1993–1995 to the average for 2001–2003. The rate of nonfatal violent victimization for youth ages 12–17 decreased about 55%, similar to the decline experienced by adults (52%). More specifically, the declines over the 1993–2003 period in robbery and simple assault victimization rates were similar for

juveniles and adults; in contrast, the aggravated assault victimization rate declined more for juveniles than for adults. Between 1993 and 2003, the rape/sexual assault victimization rate for youth ages 12–17 fell 46%. The percent change in the overall adult rape/sexual assault victimization rate was not specifically reported, but the declines in the rates for persons ages 18–24 (42%) and for older adults (55%) imply that the overall decline in the adult rate was similar to that for youth ages 12–17.

Percent change in victimization rate from 1993–1995 to 2001–2003:

Type of crime	Ages 12–17	Ages 18 and older
Nonfatal violence	–55%	–52%
Rape/sex assault	–46	NA
Robbery	–59	–59
Aggravated assault	–64	–55
Simple assault	–52	–50

Declines in the nonfatal violent victimization rates were also similar for juveniles and adults within subpopulations (i.e., male, female, white, black, Hispanic, urban, suburban, rural).

The nonfatal violent victimization rate from 1993 through 2003 declined more for youth ages 12–14 (59%) than for youth ages 15–17 (50%), a pattern replicated in robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault victimizations.

Percent change in victimization rate from 1993–1995 to 2001–2003:

Type of crime	Ages 12–14	Ages 15–17
Nonfatal violence	–59%	–50%
Robbery	–66	–53
Aggravated assault	–69	–61
Simple assault	–57	–46

Note: NCVS samples were too small to produce reliable estimates of rape/sexual assault trends for these two age groups.

In 2001, students were safer in school and on their way to and from school than they were in 1992

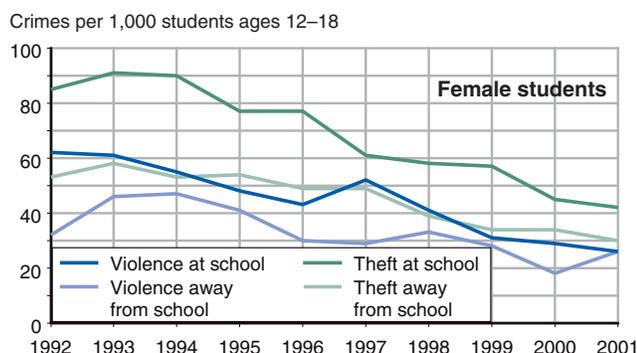
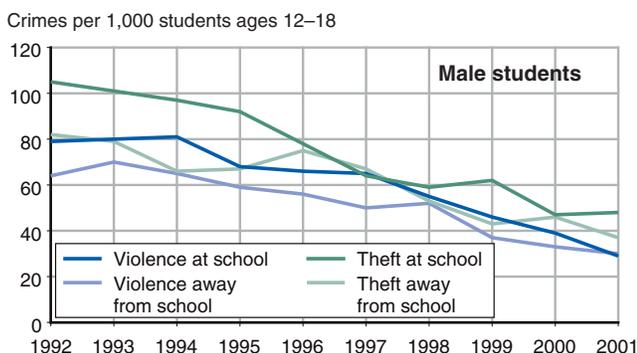
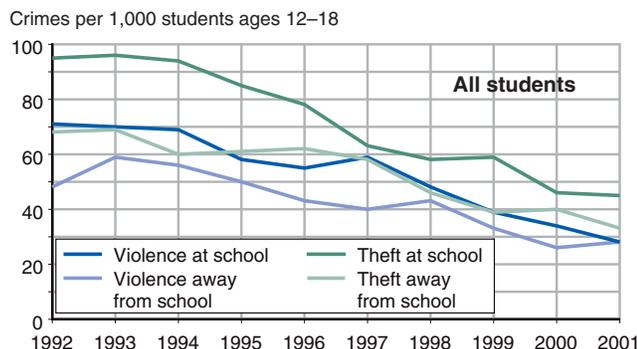
Crimes against juveniles fell substantially between 1992 and 2001 both in and out of school

For several years, a joint effort by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics has monitored the amount of nonfatal crime that students ages 12–18 experience when they are in (or on their way to and from) school and when they are away from school. Findings indicate that between 1992 and 2001, the rates of violent crime and theft each declined substantially both in and away from school.

From 1992 to 2001, the rate of non-fatal crimes against students ages 12–18 occurring away from school fell about 60%, while the violent crime rate in school fell about 40%. In 2001, these youth experienced roughly equal numbers of violent crimes in and out of school. From 1992 to 2001, the rate of theft against students ages 12–18 fell about 50% both in and out of school. During this period, about 3 in 5 thefts occurred in school.

In 2001, the violent victimization rate in school did not differ significantly for males and females; for whites, blacks, and Hispanics; or for students living in urban, suburban, and rural areas. In comparison, while the violent victimization rate out of school was again similar for males and females, it was greater for students living in urban areas than for those living in other areas and greater for black students than for white students. In 2001, white students experienced significantly more theft in school than did black or Hispanic students, while male and urban students experienced more theft out of school.

Both male and female students ages 12–18 experienced far fewer crimes of violence and theft in their schools in 2001 than in 1992



- Male and female students also experienced large declines in victimizations outside of school over the same period.
- In 2001, about half of all violent crimes experienced by male students and by female students (and almost 3 of every 5 thefts) occurred in school or on the way to and from school.
- Serious violence accounted for about 20% of all violent victimization as measured by NCVS. In 2001, 35% of all serious violent crimes experienced by male and female students occurred in school or on the way to and from school.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' *National Crime Victimization Survey* for the years 1992 through 2001.

A youth's risk of being a violent crime victim is tied to family and community characteristics, not race

Factors related to the risk of juvenile victimization are difficult to disentangle

Research has shown that a juvenile's risk of becoming a victim of a violent crime is potentially related to many factors. In general, factors can be grouped under three categories: individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, lifestyle, and friendship patterns); family characteristics (e.g., family structure, income, and level of supervision); and community characteristics (e.g., crime and poverty levels and the age profile of the community's population). Even though researchers know these factors predict victimization, it has been difficult to determine their relative importance. For example, when juveniles report higher levels of violent victimization, is it mostly due to their individual factors, to their family factors, or to their community factors? To assess the relative impact of these various factors, research must capture information on the factors simultaneously, and this has been hard to do. But if it could be done, some factors (such as race) might be shown to be no longer predictive once other factors are taken into account.

New research documents the large influence of community characteristics on victimization

A recent study by Lauritsen has succeeded in looking at individual, family, and community factors simultaneously. With expanded access to the 1995 National Crime Victimization Survey data, the researcher linked self-reports of youth ages 12–17 and their family information with data on the communities in which the youth lived.

The study found that youth in single-parent families experienced a 50% greater risk of violence than youth in two-parent families. Youth were also more likely to be the victim of a violent crime if they lived in disadvantaged communities (i.e., high percentages of persons living in poverty, single-parent families with children, unemployment, and households receiving public assistance). The research found that youth were at greater risk if they lived in communities with a high concentration of single-parent families and young persons and when they lived in families who had recently moved into the community.

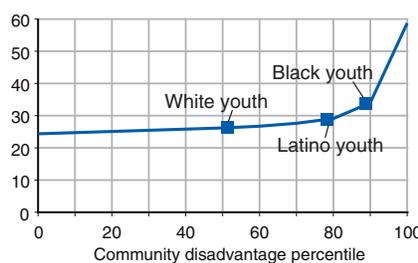
Most importantly, the study found that after controlling for family and

community influences, there were no racial or ethnic differences in the risk of violent victimization. Also, income was not related to victimization risk. This is important because it suggests that youth in single-parent families are not at greater risk because they are poor.

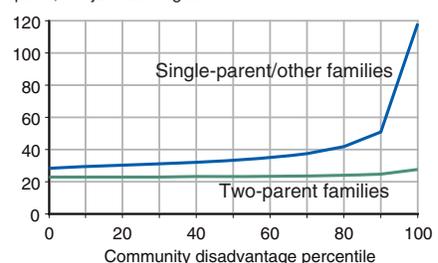
These findings indicate that prevention programs should be located on the basis of areas' family and age composition rather than racial, ethnic, or economic factors. Youth are at greater risk when they have lower levels of supervision, live in a community with high proportions of young people, and have not yet learned the neighborhood's rules and problem areas because they are new to the community.

Living in a disadvantaged community strongly influences a youth's risk of victimization only if the community is severely disadvantaged

Neighborhood violent victimizations per 1,000 juveniles ages 0–17



Neighborhood violent victimizations per 1,000 juveniles ages 0–17



- The different types of communities in which youth live can explain racial and ethnic differences in juvenile victimization.
- Unlike youth from single-parent families, youth living in two-parent families appear to be much better protected from the negative consequences of living in the most disadvantaged areas.

Note: Community disadvantage is an index that captures the relative level of socioeconomic disadvantage in an area. The average community disadvantage index for white youth, black youth, and Latino youth is indicated.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Lauritsen's How families and communities influence youth victimization, *OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin*.

1 in 4 violent crime victims known to law enforcement is a juvenile, and most juvenile victims are female

Juvenile victims are common in violent crimes handled by law enforcement

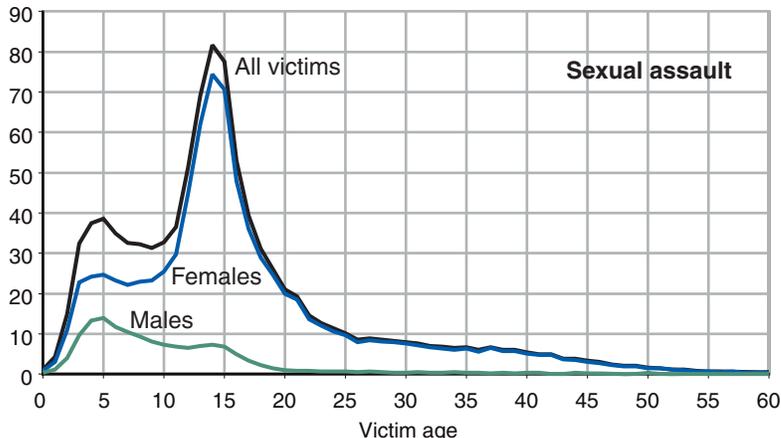
Not all crimes committed are reported to law enforcement. Those that are reported can be used to produce the portrait of crime as seen by the nation's justice system. As noted earlier, based on the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports, 10% of all persons murdered in 2002 were under age 18 and 36% of these murdered juveniles were female. No other data source with comparable population coverage characterizes the victims of other violent crimes reported to law enforcement. However, data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) covering incidents in 2000 and 2001 capture information on more than 418,000 violent crime victims known to law enforcement in 22 states. From these data, an arguably representative description of violent crime victims can be developed.

Sexual assaults accounted for just over half of the juvenile victims of violent crime known to law enforcement

Defining violent crime to include murder, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault, NIBRS indicates that 26% of the victims of violent crime reported to law enforcement agencies in 2000 and 2001 were juveniles—persons under age 18. More specifically, juveniles were the victims in 10% of murders, 70% of sexual assaults, 11% of robberies, and 17% of aggravated assaults reported to law enforcement. Of all juvenile victims of violent crime known to law enforcement, fewer than one-half of 1% were murder victims, 8% were robbery victims, 39% were victims of aggravated assault, and 52% were victims of sexual assault.

In sexual assaults reported to law enforcement, 67% of female victims and 88% of male victims were under age 18

Victims (per 1,000 total sexual assault victims)

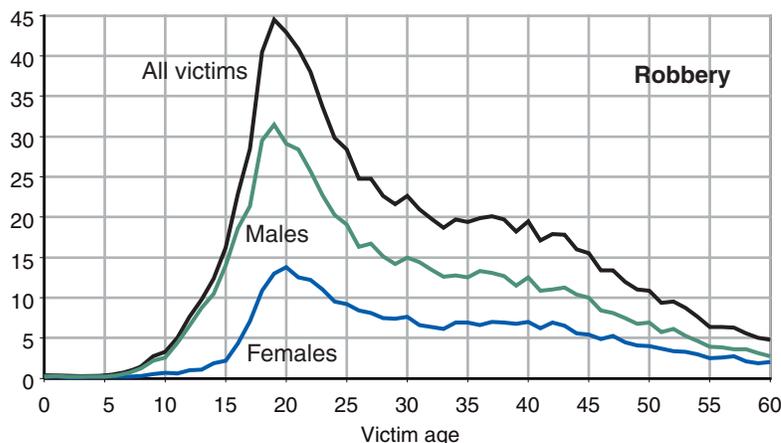


■ The modal age for sexual assault victims was age 14 for female victims but age 5 for male victims.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

The number of robbery victims known to law enforcement increased with age through the juvenile years, peaking at age 19

Victims (per 1,000 total robbery victims)

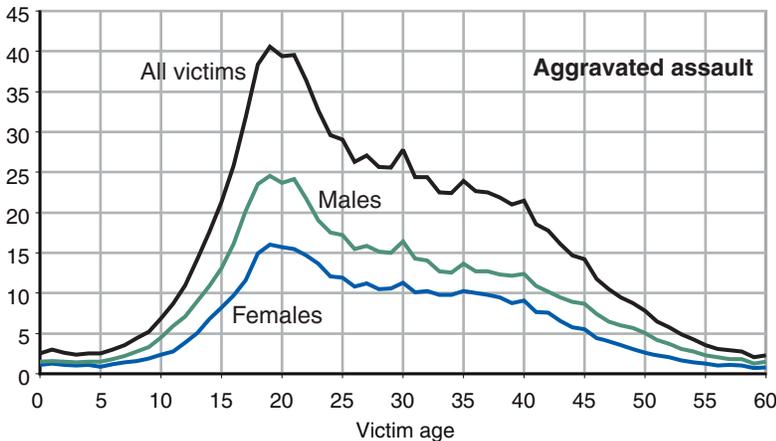


■ Persons under age 18 accounted for 14% of all male robbery victims and 6% of all female robbery victims.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

In aggravated assaults reported to law enforcement, 18% of male victims and 16% of female victims were under age 18

Victims (per 1,000 total aggravated assault victims)

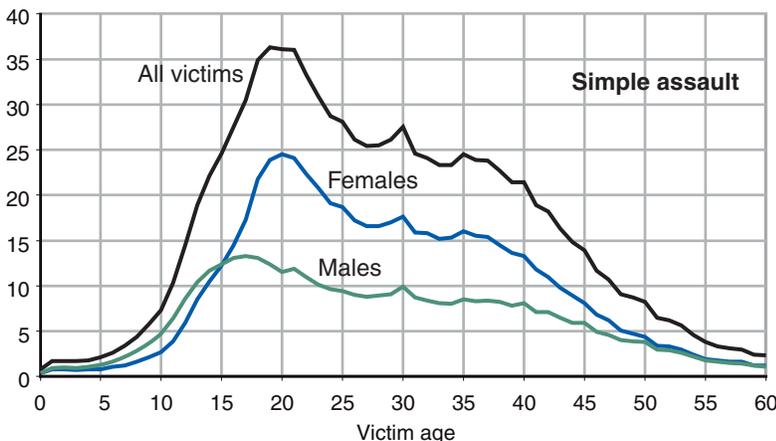


■ Unlike the pattern for simple assaults, more males than females were victims of aggravated assault at each victim age.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

In simple assaults reported to law enforcement, a greater proportion of male victims than female victims were under age 18 (24% vs. 14%)

Victims (per 1,000 total simple assault victims)



■ Until age 16, more simple assault victims were male; at age 20, twice as many females as males were simple assault victims, a pattern that continued until at least age 50.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

Sexual assault accounted for 3 in 4 female juvenile victims and 1 in 4 male juvenile victims of violent crime

The majority (59%) of the juvenile victims of violent crimes known to law enforcement in 2000 and 2001 were female. Victims under age 18 accounted for 32% of all female victims of violent crime known to law enforcement but only 21% of all male victims. The types of violent crimes committed against male and female juvenile victims differed. For juvenile female victims, 72% of the crimes known to law enforcement were sexual assaults, 25% were aggravated assaults, and just 3% were robberies. In contrast, for juvenile male victims, 59% of crimes were aggravated assaults, 16% were robberies, and 24% were sexual assaults.

More than one-third of the juvenile victims of violent crime were under age 12

The age profile of juvenile victims became clearer with the introduction of NIBRS. Other sources of information on victims had to limit their focus to persons old enough to respond reliably to the questions of interviewers or items on survey instruments. NIBRS data for 2000 and 2001 show that 17% of the juvenile victims of violent crimes known to law enforcement were younger than age 6, 20% were ages 6–11, 27% were ages 12–14, and 36% were ages 15–17. Victims under age 12 represented half (50%) of all juvenile murder victims, 47% of juvenile sexual assault victims, 14% of juvenile robbery victims, and 28% of juvenile victims of aggravated assault.

As juveniles age, offenders who violently victimize them are less likely to be family members

Offenders in juvenile victimizations are likely to be adults

Analyses of the 2000 and 2001 NIBRS data files provide an understanding of the offenders who victimize juveniles in violent crime incidents known to law enforcement. Although these data may not be nationally representative, the NIBRS sample, which includes incidents involving more than 328,000 juvenile victims of violent crime (including simple assault), is large enough to give credence to patterns derived from NIBRS data.

Based on NIBRS data, an adult (i.e., a person over age 17) was the primary offender against 60% of all juvenile victims of violent crime (i.e., murder, kidnapping, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) known to law enforcement in 2000 and 2001. Adult offenders were more common in juvenile kidnappings (90%), murders (86%), and sexual assaults (63%) and less common in juvenile aggravated assaults (53%), robberies (51%), and simple assaults (48%).

The proportion of adult offenders in juvenile victimizations varied with the juvenile's age. In general, the proportion was greater for the youngest juveniles (under age 6) and the oldest juveniles (ages 15–17) than for those between ages 6 and 14. This pattern held for juvenile murder, aggravated assault, simple assault, and robbery (although robbery of the youngest juveniles was very rare). The pattern was different for sexual assaults of juveniles (the proportion of adult offenders generally increased with victim age) and for kidnapping (the proportion declined consistently with victim age). Due in part to these age and offense variations, female juvenile violent crime victims were more likely than male victims to have an adult offender.

Who are the offenders of juvenile violent crime victims?

Victim-offender relationship by offense	Percent of all offenders						
	All juvenile victims	Victim age				Juvenile victim gender	
		0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Female	Male
Violent crime	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Family	31	59	43	23	17	33	27
Acquaintance	57	37	49	66	65	59	56
Stranger	12	5	8	11	17	8	17
Sexual assault	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Family	35	56	47	24	19	34	41
Acquaintance	60	42	49	71	74	61	55
Stranger	5	2	3	5	7	5	3
Robbery	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Family	1	*	1	1	1	1	0
Acquaintance	35	*	34	40	34	29	37
Stranger	64	*	66	59	66	70	63
Aggravated asslt.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Family	27	59	33	24	20	33	23
Acquaintance	61	31	58	65	66	58	63
Stranger	12	10	9	11	15	9	14
Simple assault	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Family	27	65	30	22	25	31	24
Acquaintance	65	30	63	70	67	64	66
Stranger	7	4	7	7	8	6	9

Offense	Percent of juvenile offenders						
	All juvenile victims	Victim age				Juvenile victim gender	
		0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Female	Male
Violent crime	40%	34%	45%	46%	33%	34%	49%
Sexual assault	37	47	43	35	22	33	51
Robbery	49	*	76	68	35	30	53
Aggravated asslt.	47	12	53	62	42	41	50
Simple assault	52	14	56	68	45	47	57

- Although relatively uncommon overall, the proportion of juvenile victims victimized by strangers is greater in robberies than in other violent crimes.
- Aggravated and simple assaults of juvenile females are more likely to involve a family member than are assaults of juvenile males.
- In crimes reported to law enforcement, the youngest juveniles (those under age 6) are far more likely than the oldest juveniles (those ages 15–17) to be assaulted by a family member: sexual assault (56% vs. 19%), aggravated assault (59% vs. 20%), and simple assault (65% vs. 25%).

* Too few victims in sample (fewer than 100) to obtain reliable percentage.

Source: Author's analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

Some violent crimes with juvenile victims are most common after school, others around 9 p.m.

Juveniles' risk of victimization varies over a 24-hour period

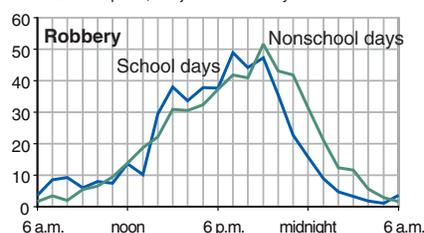
To understand the nature of juvenile victimization, it helps to study when different types of crimes occur. To this end, the authors analyzed the FBI's NIBRS data for the years 2000 and 2001 to study the date and time of day that crimes known to law enforcement occurred. Confirming prior analyses, the daily timing of violent crimes differed for juvenile and adult victims. In general, the number of violent crimes with adult victims increased hourly from morning through the evening hours, peaking between 9 p.m. and midnight. In contrast, violent crimes with juvenile victims peaked between 3 and 4 p.m., fell to a lower level in the early evening hours, and declined substantially after 9 p.m.

The 3 p.m. peak reflected a unique situational characteristic of juvenile violence and was similar for both male and female victims. This situational component was clarified when the hourly patterns of violent crimes on school and nonschool days were compared. For adult victims, the school- and nonschool-day patterns were the same. On nonschool days, the juvenile victimization pattern mirrored the general adult pattern, with a peak in the late evening hours. But on school days, the number of juvenile violent crime victimizations peaked in the after-school hours between 3 and 4 p.m.

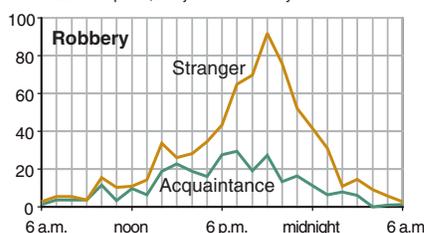
Based on violent crimes reported to law enforcement, juveniles were 140% more likely to be victimized between 3 and 4 p.m. on school days than in the same time period on nonschool days (i.e., weekends and the summer months). On school days, juveniles were over 90% more likely to be violently victimized in the 4 hours between 3

The timing of violent crimes with juvenile victims differs on school and nonschool days and varies with the victim's relationship to the offender

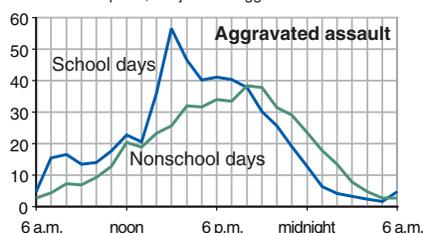
Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile robbery victims



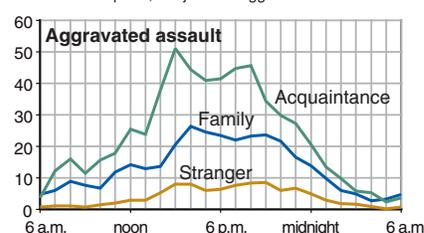
Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile robbery victims



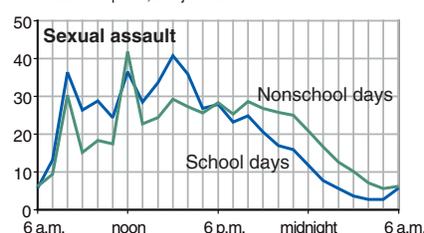
Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile aggravated assault victims



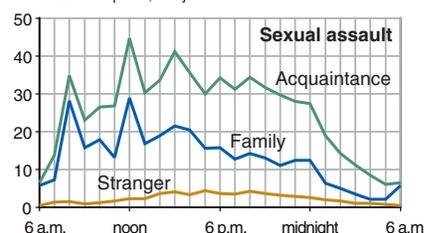
Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile aggravated assault victims



Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile sexual assault victims



Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile sexual assault victims

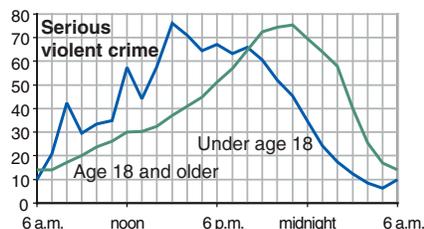


- Sexual assaults with juvenile victims are more frequent in the late evening hours on nonschool days than on school days. Sexual assaults of juveniles have mealtime peaks on both school and nonschool days and a marked peak at 3 p.m. on school days.
- Time-of-day patterns of robberies with juvenile victims are the same for school and nonschool days and do not exhibit an afterschool peak.
- Unlike robbery offenders, sexual assault and aggravated assault offenders who are strangers to their juvenile victims are far less common than offenders who are acquaintances or family members.
- Sexual assaults by acquaintances or family members are most common at 8 a.m. and noon (i.e., mealtimes) and in the hour after school.
- For all violent crimes against juveniles, crimes by acquaintances peak in the hour after school, while crimes by strangers peak around 9 p.m.

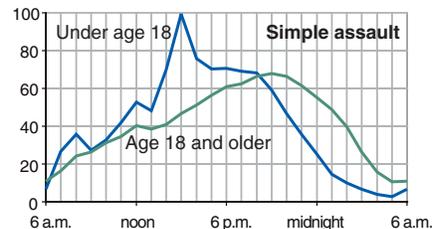
Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

The timing of crimes with juvenile victims differs from that of crimes with adult victims

Victimizations per 1,000 serious violent crime victims in age group



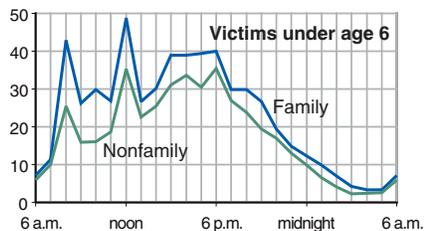
Victimizations per 1,000 simple assault victims in age group



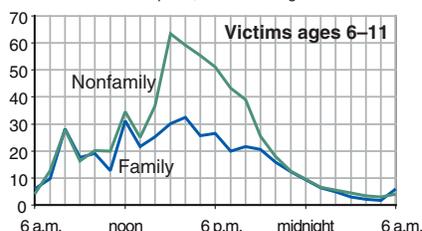
- The afterschool peak in juvenile victimizations is found in serious violent crimes as well as simple assaults.

Children under age 6 are at high risk of violent victimization at mealtimes (i.e., 8 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m.) by both family and nonfamily offenders.

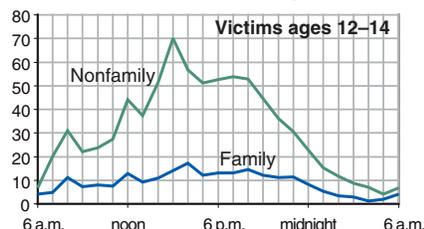
Violent victimizations per 1,000 victims under age 6



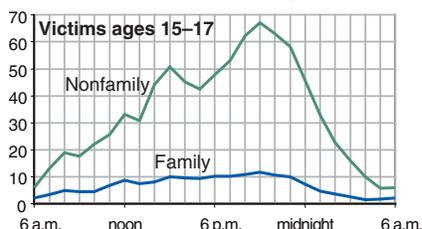
Violent victimizations per 1,000 victims ages 6–11



Violent victimizations per 1,000 victims ages 12–14



Violent victimizations per 1,000 victims ages 15–17



- The afterschool peak in victimizations for juveniles ages 6–14 is a result of crimes committed by nonfamily members.
- The timing of violent crimes with juvenile victims ages 15–17 reflects a transition between the pattern of younger teens (with the afterschool peak) and adults (with the 9 p.m. peak).

Note: Serious violent crimes include murder, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. Violent crimes include serious violent crimes and simple assault.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

and 7 p.m. than they were in the 4 hours between 8 p.m. and midnight. Similarly, the risk of violent juvenile victimization was 60% greater in the 4 hours after school than in the 8 p.m.-to-midnight period on non-school days.

Peak hours for juvenile victimization varied with victim age. The hour of the day that violent crimes against older juveniles (ages 15–17) were most common was 9 p.m., with a slight peak in the afterschool hour of 3 p.m. Violent crimes against juvenile victims ages 6–14 showed a clear peak in the afterschool hour. For younger victims, the peaks were at mealtimes (8 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m.).

The timing of juvenile violence is linked to offender characteristics

It is informative to consider when various types of offenders victimize juveniles. When the offenders of juvenile victims are divided into three classes (i.e., family members, acquaintances, and strangers), different timing patterns emerge. Most violent offenders were acquaintances of their juvenile victims. The timing of crimes by acquaintances reflected the afterschool peak, indicating the importance this time period (and probably unsupervised interactions with other juveniles) has for these types of crimes. Crimes by family members were most frequent at noon and in the hours between 3 and 7 p.m., although, unlike acquaintance crime, there was no conspicuous peak at 3 p.m. Violent crimes committed by strangers against juvenile victims peaked at 9 p.m. but were relatively frequent throughout the 3–11 p.m. period.

About two-thirds of violent crimes with juvenile victims occur in a residence

Where juvenile violence occurs varies with crime and victim age

A portrait of violence against juveniles requires an understanding of where these crimes occur. The NIBRS data capture locations of crimes reported to law enforcement agencies. The 2000 and 2001 data show that the location of violent crime against juveniles varies with the nature of the crime and the age of the victim.

Overall, 64% of violent crimes (i.e., murders, sexual assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults) with a juvenile victim occurred in a residence, 19% occurred outdoors, 10% in a commercial area, and 6% in a school. Most sexual and aggravated assaults occurred in a residence (81% and 51%, respectively) and most robberies occurred outdoors (51%).

Location	Sexual assault		Aggravated assault	
	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residence	81	17	51	
Outdoors	6	51	30	
Commercial	7	27	11	
School	6	4	8	

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

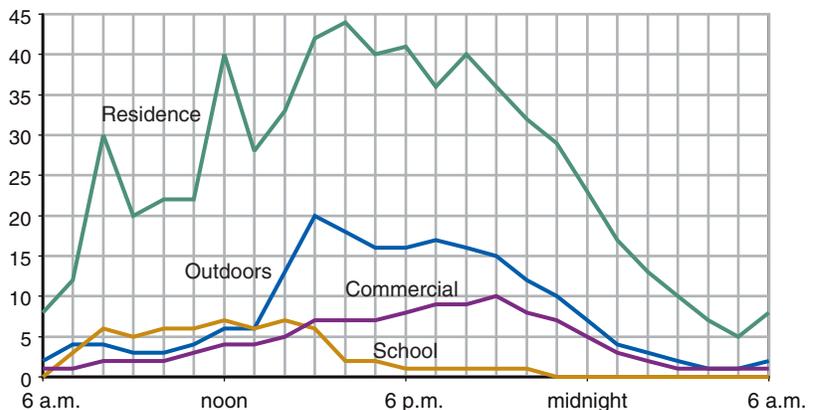
The location of juvenile violence varied with victim age. For example, 88% of violence with victims under age 6 occurred in residences, compared with 50% of crimes with victims ages 15–17. Compared with other juveniles, victims ages 12–14 had the largest proportion of crimes committed in schools.

Location	Under age 6	Ages 6–11	Ages 12–14	Ages 15–17
	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residence	88	75	59	50
Outdoors	6	15	21	26
Commercial	5	5	9	17
School	2	4	10	7

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Violent crime with juvenile victims peaked in residences in the afterschool hours

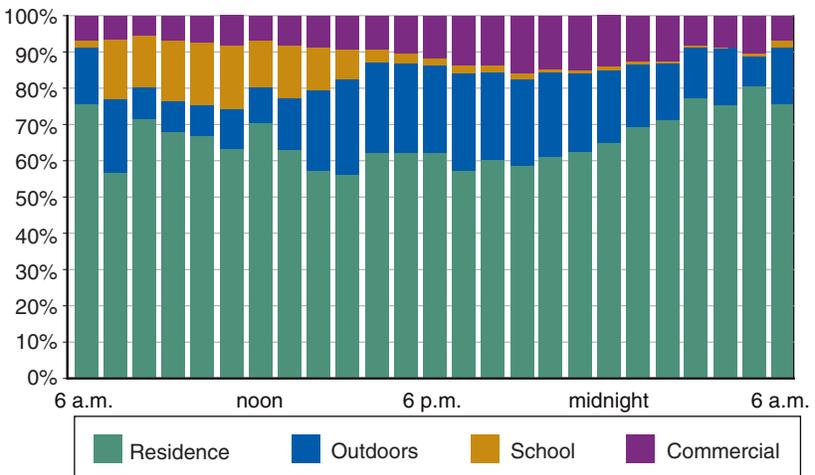
Victimizations per 1,000 juvenile violent crime victims



- Violent victimization of juveniles outdoors also peaked between 3 and 4 p.m.
- Violent victimization of juveniles in commercial areas peaked between 9 and 10 p.m.

The proportion of juvenile victimizations occurring outdoors remained relatively constant between 3 and 10 p.m.

Percent of violent crimes with juvenile victims within hour



Note: The detailed NIBRS coding structure of location can be simplified for analyses into four general locations: a residence (that may be the victim's, the offender's, or someone else's); the outdoors (streets, highways, roads, woods, fields, etc.); schools (including colleges); and commercial areas (such as parking lots, restaurants, government buildings, office buildings, motels, and stores).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System master files* for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

Few statutory rapes reported to law enforcement involve both juvenile victims and juvenile offenders

Statutory rape victims are considered incapable of giving informed consent

Statutory rape occurs when individuals have voluntary and consensual sexual relations and one is either too young or otherwise unable (e.g., mentally retarded) to legally consent to the behavior. The victims of statutory rape are primarily juveniles, and the crime has some attributes of child abuse.

A recent study exploring the victim and offender characteristics in statutory rapes known to law enforcement analyzed the 1996 through 2000 data from the FBI's NIBRS. In that work, the FBI's definition of statutory rape was used: nonforcible sexual intercourse with a person who is under the statutory age of consent.

To develop a rough idea of the annual number of statutory rapes in the U.S., the researchers counted the number of statutory rapes and the number of forcible rapes with juvenile victims in the NIBRS data. They found 1 statutory rape for every 3 forcible rapes. If this ratio holds nationally, then an estimated 15,700 statutory rapes were reported to law enforcement in 2000.

The majority of victims were females ages 14 or 15

Although a small proportion (5%) of statutory rape victims were male, most were female. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of female victims and 56% of male victims were either age 14 or age 15, with roughly equal proportions in each age group.

Some of the attributes of statutory rape incidents and forcible rape

incidents are similar. For example, the vast majority of forcible rapes (83%) and statutory rapes (85%) took place in a residence. (From the data, it is impossible to tell if the residence is that of the victim, an offender, or someone else.) Locations of the other statutory rapes (from most frequent to least frequent) were hotels/motels, fields/woods, streets/highways, parking lots, and schools.

Male offenders were much older than their female victims

In the NIBRS data for 1996 through 2000, almost all (over 99%) of the offenders of female statutory rape victims were male, while 94% of the offenders of male victims were female.

Numerous incidents undoubtedly involve underage juveniles having consensual sexual relations with persons close to their ages, but these are not the typical statutory rape incidents reported to law enforcement. Overall, 82% of the offenders of female victims were age 18 or older (i.e., adults). The offender was an adult in 99% of the incidents involving a 17-year-old female victim. The proportion of adult offenders declined as the victim's age declined: age 16 (98%), age 15 (87%), and age 14 (86%). Even for the youngest female victims (under age 14), two-thirds (68%) of the offenders in statutory rape incidents were adults.

Not only were most offenders adults, most were substantially older than their victims. Almost half (48%) of the offenders of 17-year-old females were over age 24—at least a 7-year difference in age. About 4 of every 10 (42%) of the offenders of

16-year-old female victims were age 24 or older, as were 1 in 4 (25%) of the offenders of 15-year-old victims. In general, about half of the male offenders of female victims in statutory rapes reported to law enforcement were at least 6 years older than their victims. For male victims, the difference was even larger; in these incidents, half of the female offenders were at least 9 years older than their victims.

The probability of arrest increased with offender age

In the NIBRS data used in this study, an arrest occurred in 35% of forcible rape incidents and 42% of statutory rape incidents. The probability of arrest in statutory rape incidents was related to several factors. First, the younger the victim, the more likely the offender was arrested. For example, arrests occurred in 30% of incidents with 17-year-old victims and 42% of incidents with 14-year-old victims. The probability of arrest increased with offender age. For example, 37% of offenders ages 15–17 were arrested, compared with 45% of offenders over age 20.

Arrest was also related to the nature of the relationship between the victim and the offender. In statutory rape incidents, law enforcement coded the victim/offender relationship as boyfriend/girlfriend in 3 of every 10 (29%) of the incidents, as acquaintances in 6 of every 10 (62%), and as a family member in about 1 of every 10 (7%). Incidents involving boyfriends and girlfriends were less likely to result in arrest than were those involving acquaintances or family members (37%, 44%, and 47%, respectively).

Many youth are subjected to inappropriate and potentially dangerous experiences on the Internet

Study highlights several different types of online victimization

In 1999, the Youth Internet Safety Survey collected information about incidents of possible online victimization. The survey conducted telephone interviews with a national sample of 1,500 youth ages 10–17 who used the Internet at least once a month for the prior 6 months. More than three-quarters of the respondents said they had used the Internet in the past week. About half of the respondents were male (53%); most were non-Hispanic whites (73%), 10% were black, and 2% were Hispanic. The survey addressed three main issues: sexual solicitations and approaches, unwanted exposure to sexual material, and harassment.

Unwanted or inappropriate online sexual solicitations of youth were relatively common

Although nearly 1 in 5 Internet users ages 10–17 surveyed said they had received an unwanted sexual solicitation in the past year, none of the solicitations led to an actual sexual contact or assault. Most of the youth who were solicited appeared to brush off the encounter, treating it as a minor annoyance. A small proportion (5%) of the surveyed youth said they received a solicitation that made them feel very or extremely upset or afraid. A smaller proportion (3%) were solicited by someone who asked to meet them somewhere, called them on the telephone, or regularly sent them something (mail, money, or gifts). Females were twice as likely as males to be solicited; females accounted for 2 in 3 youth solicited. Most of those who were solicited were teens 14–17 years old (76%), but younger youth (ages 10–13) were more likely to be upset by the solicitation.

The majority of these unwanted solicitations happened when the youth was using a computer at home (70%), and most of the remaining 30% happened at someone else's home. Chat rooms accounted for the bulk of solicitations (66%), and 24% were received through instant messages (e-mail messages sent and received in real time).

Solicitors often did not fit the stereotype of an older male predator

Youth reported that most of the solicitors were strangers (97%). Because identities are easy to disguise on the Internet, the solicitors may not have been the age or gender they claimed to be. According to the youth, adults (age 18 or older) made 24% of all solicitations and 34% of aggressive solicitations. Juveniles made 48% of all solicitations and 48% of aggressive solicitations. The age of the solicitor was unknown in the remaining incidents. Two-thirds of all solicitations came from males. One-quarter of aggressive solicitations came from females.

Youth often did not tell anyone about unwanted solicitations

In almost half of incidents (49%), the youth did not tell anyone about the solicitation. In 29% of incidents, the youth told a friend or sibling, and in 24% the youth told a parent. In most incidents, the youth ended the solicitations, using strategies like logging off, leaving the site, or blocking the person. Only 10% were reported to an authority such as a teacher, an Internet service provider, or a law enforcement agency. Even with aggressive episodes, youth did not tell anyone in 36% of incidents and only 18% were reported to an authority.

What is online victimization?

People can be victimized online in many ways. The Youth Internet Safety Survey asked respondents about three kinds of victimization that have been prominent in discussions of youth and the Internet: sexual solicitation and approaches, unwanted exposure to sexual material, and harassment.

Sexual solicitations and approaches: Requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or give personal sexual information that were unwanted or, whether wanted or not, made by an adult.

Aggressive sexual solicitation: Sexual solicitations involving offline contact with the perpetrator through regular mail, by telephone, or in person or attempts at or requests for offline contact.

Unwanted exposure to sexual material: When doing online searches, surfing the Web, or opening e-mail or e-mail links, and without seeking or expecting sexual material, being exposed to pictures of naked people or people having sex.

Harassment: Threats or other offensive behavior (not sexual solicitation) sent online to the youth or posted online about the youth for others to see.

Not all such incidents were distressing to the youth who experienced them. **Distressing incidents** were episodes in which youth rated themselves as very or extremely upset or afraid as a result of the incident.

Unwanted exposure to sexual material via the Internet was more common than unwanted solicitation

One-quarter of the surveyed youth said they had been exposed to sexually explicit pictures online in the past year without seeking or expecting it. Most of these exposures occurred while the youth was searching or surfing the Internet (71%), and 28% happened while the youth was opening e-mail or clicking on links in e-mail or instant messages. More than 60% of the unwanted exposures happened to youth age 15 or older. Seven percent (7%) happened to 11- and 12-year-old youth. None of the 10-year-olds reported unwanted exposures to sexual images.

Approximately one-quarter of both boys and girls were exposed to unwanted sexual material. To what sorts of images were youth exposed?

- 94% of the images were of naked persons.
- 38% showed people having sex.
- 8% involved violence, in addition to nudity and/or sex.
- 23% of the incidents of unwanted exposure were described as very or extremely upsetting; however, most incidents were not reported to be distressing.

In 67% of the incidents, youth were at home when the unwanted exposure occurred; in 15%, they were at school; in 13%, they were at someone else's home; and in 3%, they were at a library. Youth reported 39% of episodes to parents; 44% of incidents were undisclosed.

Most families did not use filtering or blocking software

At the time of the survey, most of the families with youth who used the Internet regularly did not use filtering or blocking software. Thirty-eight percent (38%) had used such software at some time in the past year, but 5% had discontinued its use.

Some youth experienced online harassment

A small proportion of the survey respondents (6%) reported harassment incidents (threats, rumors, or other offensive behavior) during the past year. Two percent (2%) of the surveyed youth reported episodes of distressing harassment (i.e., the incident made them feel very or extremely upset or afraid).

The harassment took the form of instant messages (33%), chat room exchanges (32%), and e-mails (19%); 76% of incidents occurred when the youth was logged on at home. Boys and girls were about equally likely to say they were harassed (51% and 48%). Seven in 10 episodes happened to youth age 14 or older;

fewer than 2 in 10 targeted youth were age 12 or younger. Most harassment perpetrators were reported to be male (54%), but 20% were reportedly female. In 26% of instances, the gender was unknown.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of harassment perpetrators were other juveniles. Almost a quarter (24%) of harassment perpetrators lived near the youth (within an hour's drive). In distressing episodes, 35% of perpetrators lived near the youth. In contrast to the sexual solicitation episodes, where only 3% of perpetrators were known to the youth offline, 28% of the harassment episodes involved known perpetrators. Of the harassment episodes involving perpetrators who were not face-to-face acquaintances of the youth, 12% included an actual or attempted contact by telephone, regular mail, or in person.

Parents were told about harassment episodes half the time. Slightly more than a third of youth told friends. More than one-quarter of the episodes were reported to Internet service providers, teachers, or a law enforcement agency, but one-quarter were undisclosed. It is noteworthy that, compared to sexual solicitations and unwanted exposures, a larger proportion of the harassment episodes were reported to parents and authorities. As with solicitation, in most incidents, the harassment ended when the youth used strategies like logging off, leaving the site, or blocking the person.

One-third of all kidnap victims known to law enforcement are under age 18

NIBRS provides insight in kidnappings

The FBI defines kidnapping as the unlawful seizure, transportation, and/or detention of a person against his or her will. For minors (who are legally too young to provide consent), kidnapping includes situations in which a minor is transported without the consent of the custodial parent(s) or legal guardian. Although there is no accepted annual estimate of kidnappings reported to law enforcement, NIBRS can depict the characteristics of a large number of these crimes and provide a rough national estimate of them (see box on next page). (A national study of missing children discussed later in this chapter provides even more insight into the prevalence and characteristics of kidnapping cases.)

In the 2000 and 2001 NIBRS data on kidnapping incidents, it was the

only offense in about half of the incidents. In the remaining incidents, the kidnapping occurred along with other crimes, such as sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. About 3 of every 4 kidnap victims (72%) were female, but this ratio varied with victim age. Among kidnap victims under age 6 known to law enforcement, the numbers of male and female victims were essentially equal. For victims ages 12 to 17, the ratio was almost three female victims for each male victim. For victims ages 25–34, the ratio was almost 4 to 1.

One of every 5 kidnap victims known to law enforcement (19%) was under age 12, and 1 of every 3 (35%) was under age 18—a juvenile. A greater proportion of male than female kidnap victims were under age 18. Almost half (47%) of male kidnap victims known to law enforcement were juveniles, compared with 30% of female kidnap victims.

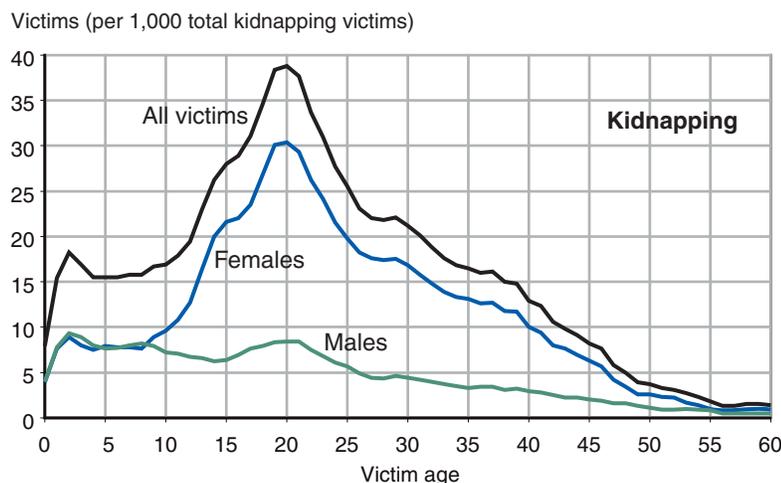
Characteristics of kidnappings vary with victim age

In more than half (55%) of adult kidnappings known to law enforcement, the offender was an acquaintance. Twenty-two percent (22%) of adult victims were kidnapped by a family member and 23% by a stranger. In 97% of adult kidnappings, the offender was also over age 17. In 67% of adult kidnappings, another crime occurred; in 24% the offender possessed a firearm; and in 41% the adult victim was injured. Finally, 47% of offenders in adult kidnappings were arrested.

In contrast, most kidnappings of juvenile victims were committed by a family member (50%). Thirty percent (30%) were kidnapped by an acquaintance and 20% by a stranger. In 90% of juvenile kidnappings, the offender was over age 17. In just 23% of juvenile kidnappings, another crime occurred; in 8% the offender possessed a firearm; and in 12% the juvenile victim was injured. Finally, 26% of offenders in juvenile kidnappings were arrested.

The attributes of the kidnappings of younger and older juveniles differed. Compared with kidnappings of victims ages 12–17, kidnappings of victims under age 12 were less likely to involve another crime (9% vs. 41%), more likely to involve an adult offender (95% vs. 84%), more likely to involve an offender who was a family member (70% vs. 22%), and less likely to involve an offender who was a stranger (15% vs. 28%). Younger juvenile victims were less likely to be injured (5% vs. 21%), and their victimizations were less likely to involve a firearm (4% vs. 12%). Finally, offenders in the kidnappings of younger juveniles were less likely to be arrested (21% vs. 31%).

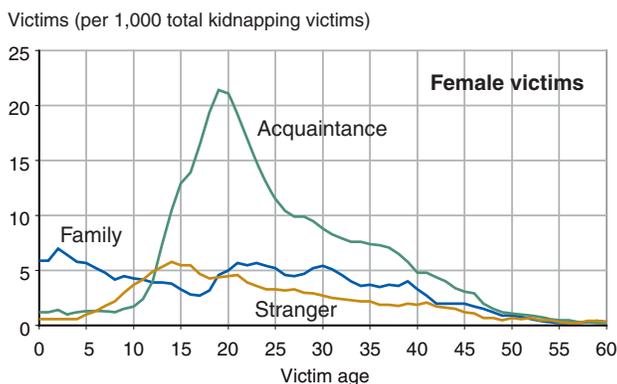
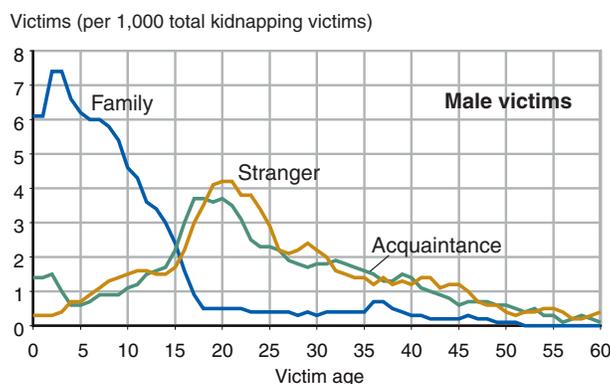
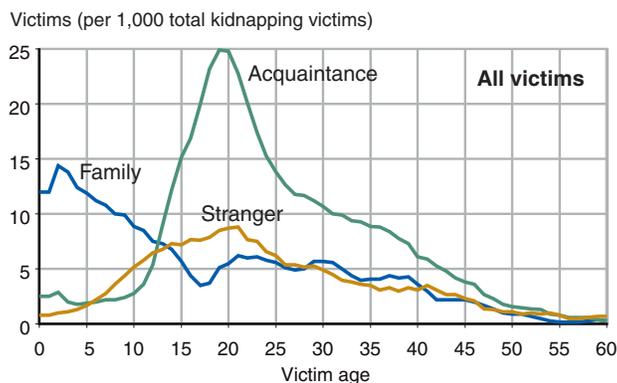
The risk of kidnapping increased substantially for juvenile females after age 9; the risk for males remained essentially constant



■ The risk of kidnapping peaked at age 20 for females and at age 2 for males.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

The kidnappings of persons under age 12 were most likely to be committed by a family member—primarily a parent



- About two-thirds of female victims ages 15–17 were kidnapped by an acquaintance, and one-quarter by a stranger.
- The kidnappings of males and females under age 6 are similar in both volume and offender type.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 2000 and 2001 [machine-readable data files].

NIBRS can provide a rough estimate of juvenile kidnappings

The NIBRS data for the years 2000 and 2001 can be used to develop an estimate of kidnappings reported to law enforcement in the U.S. once an assumption is made. The assumption is this: the ratio of the estimated number of reported crimes in the FBI's *Crime in the United States (CIUS)* report to the number of crimes in the NIBRS data is similar for all offenses.

This assumption can be tested by first calculating the ratio of the FBI's estimate of reported aggravated assaults in 2001 to the number reported in the 2001 NIBRS data. This ratio is 6.5—meaning for every 1 aggravated assault reported in the 2001 NIBRS file, the FBI estimated there were 6.5 aggravated assaults in the U.S. When this same ratio is calculated for forcible rape, it is 5.5. The two ratios are not equal, but they are close enough to indicate the ratio has some value for developing a “rough estimate” of kidnappings.

Based on an average 2001 *CIUS*-to-NIBRS ratio of 6 to 1, and the 8,700 kidnappings reported in the 2001 NIBRS file, a rough estimate of kidnappings reported to law enforcement in the U.S. in 2001 is about 50,000. NIBRS data show that about 35% of all kidnappings involve juvenile victims. Therefore, roughly 17,000 kidnappings of persons under age 18 were reported to law enforcement in the U.S. in 2001.

Only a small fraction of missing children are abducted—most by family members

A child can be “missing” because of a range of circumstances

The stereotypical missing child scenario involves a nonfamily abduction where the child is transported at least 50 miles away, held overnight or for ransom, abducted with the intent to keep the child permanently, or killed. This scenario is a parent’s worst nightmare and attracts much media attention, but it represents an extremely small proportion of all missing children.

The most recent National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART–2) provided national estimates of missing children based on surveys of households, law enforcement agencies, and juvenile residential facilities. In conceptualizing the missing child problem, NISMART–2 researchers noted that, “fundamentally, whether a child is ‘missing’ depends on the knowledge and state of mind of the child’s caretaker, rather than the child’s actual condition or circumstance.” They counted two basic categories of missing children:

Caretaker missing. The child’s whereabouts were unknown to the primary caretaker and the caretaker was alarmed for at least 1 hour and tried to locate the child.

Reported missing. The child’s whereabouts were unknown to the primary caretaker and the caretaker contacted police or a missing children’s agency to locate the child.

NISMART–2 researchers considered several different types of episodes that might cause a child to become missing: nonfamily abductions (including stereotypical kidnappings); family abductions; runaway/throwaway; missing involuntary, lost, or injured; and missing benign explanation. (See box.)

The types of missing-child episodes that were counted in NISMART–2 ranged from abduction-homicides to benign situations involving caretaker-child miscommunication

Nonfamily abduction. A nonfamily abduction occurs when a nonfamily perpetrator takes a child by the use of physical force or threat of bodily harm or detains a child for at least one hour in an isolated place by the use of physical force or threat of bodily harm without lawful authority or parental permission; or when a child who is younger than 15 years old or is mentally incompetent, without lawful authority or parental permission, is taken or detained by or voluntarily accompanies a nonfamily perpetrator who conceals the child’s whereabouts, demands ransom, or expresses the intention to keep the child permanently.

Stereotypical kidnapping. A stereotypical kidnapping occurs when a stranger or slight acquaintance perpetrates a nonfamily abduction in which the child is detained overnight, transported at least 50 miles, held for ransom, abducted with intent to keep the child permanently, or killed.

Family abduction. A family abduction occurs when, in violation of a custody order, a decree, or other legitimate custodial rights, a member of the child’s family, or someone acting on behalf of a family member, takes or fails to return a child, and the child is concealed or transported out of state with the intent to prevent contact or deprive the caretaker of custodial rights indefinitely or permanently. (For a child 15 or older, unless mentally incompetent, there must be evidence that the perpetrator used physical force or threat of bodily harm to take or detain the child.)

Runaway/throwaway. A runaway incident occurs when a child leaves home without permission and stays

away overnight; or a child 14 years old or younger (or older and mentally incompetent) who is away from home chooses not to return when supposed to and stays away overnight; or a child 15 years old or older who is away from home chooses not to return and stays away two nights. A throwaway incident occurs when a child is asked or told to leave home by a parent or another household adult, no adequate alternative care is arranged for the child by a household adult, and the child is out of the household overnight; or a child who is away from home is prevented from returning home by a parent or another household adult, no adequate alternative care is arranged for the child by a household adult, and the child is out of the household overnight.

Missing involuntary, lost, or injured. A missing involuntary, lost, or injured episode occurs when a child’s whereabouts are unknown to the child’s caretaker and this causes the caretaker to be alarmed for at least one hour and try to locate the child, under one of two conditions: (1) the child was trying to get home or make contact with the caretaker but was unable to do so because the child was lost, stranded, or injured; or (2) the child was too young to know how to return home or make contact with the caretaker.

Missing benign explanation. A missing benign explanation episode occurs when a child’s whereabouts are unknown to the child’s caretaker and this causes the caretaker to (1) be alarmed, (2) try to locate the child, and (3) contact the police about the episode for any reason, as long as the child was not lost, injured, abducted, victimized, or classified as runaway/throwaway.

Source: Sedlak et al.’s National estimates of missing children: An overview.

In 1999, the annual missing child rate was 19 per 1,000 children ages 0–17 in the general population

According to NISMART–2, in 1999, an estimated 1.3 million children were missing from their caretakers. This figure includes those who were reported missing and those who were not. It represents a rate of 19 per 1,000 children ages 0–17. An estimated 797,500 children were reported missing (11 per 1,000). Thus, about 60% of children missing from caretakers were reported missing to police or a missing children’s agency.

According to NISMART–2 researchers, “only a fraction of 1 percent of the children who were reported missing had not been recovered by the time they entered the study data. Thus, ... although the number of caretaker missing children is fairly large and a majority come to the attention of law enforcement or missing children’s agencies, all but a very small percentage are recovered fairly quickly.”

Children may not be where they are supposed to be, but may not be considered “missing”

For example, NISMART–2 estimated that there were 1,682,900 runaway or throwaway children in 1999, but only 37% were counted as caretaker missing and 21% were reported missing. The others may have run away, but either their caretakers did not realize they were gone, knew they were away from home but knew where they were, or were not alarmed or did not try to find them.

Runaway/throwaway episodes were the most common type of missing children episode, accounting for almost half of cases

Episode type	National estimate	95% confidence interval*	Percent	Rate per 1,000
Caretaker missing	1,315,600	1,131,100–1,500,100	100%	19
Runaway/throwaway	628,900	481,000–776,900	48	9
Missing benign explanation	374,700	289,900–459,500	28	5
Missing involuntary, lost, or injured	204,500	131,300–277,800	15	3
Family abduction	117,200	79,000–155,400	9	2
Nonfamily abduction**	33,000	2,000–64,000	3	<1
Reported missing	797,500	645,400–949,500	100%	11
Runaway/throwaway	357,600	238,000–477,200	45	5
Missing benign explanation	340,500	256,000–425,000	43	5
Missing involuntary, lost, or injured	68,100	24,800–111,300	8	1
Family abduction	56,500	22,600–90,400	7	1
Nonfamily abduction**	12,100	<100–31,000	2	<1

- 48% of caretaker missing children and 45% of reported missing children were missing because of a runaway/throwaway episode.
- The second most common category was children who became missing because of benign explanation circumstances (28% of caretaker missing and 43% of reported missing).
- Children abducted by family members were less than 10% of missing children (9% of caretaker missing and 7% of reported missing children).
- The least common category was children abducted by nonfamily members. Nonfamily abductions accounted for just 3% of caretaker missing children and 2% of reported missing children.

Note: Estimates are rounded to the nearest 100. Detail sums to more than totals because children could experience more than one episode type.

*The 95% confidence interval indicates that if the study were repeated 100 times, 95 of the replications would produce estimates within the ranges noted.

**Estimates of nonfamily abductions are based on an extremely small sample of cases; therefore, their precision and confidence intervals are unreliable.

Source: Authors’ adaptation of Sedlak et al.’s National estimates of missing children: An overview; and Sedlak et al.’s National estimates of children missing involuntarily or for benign reasons.

NISMART–2 profiles family abduction episodes

NISMART–2 estimated that family members abducted 203,900 children during 1999. Of these, 117,200 were considered missing by their caretakers; 56,500 of them were reported to authorities. The remaining children abducted by family members (86,700) were not considered missing because their caretakers knew of their whereabouts but were unable to recover them.

NISMART–2 family abduction caretaker screening questions

- Was there any time when anyone tried to take the child away from you against your wishes?
- In the past 12 months, did any family member outside your household, such as a spouse, an ex-spouse, an ex-partner, brother, sister, parent, in-law, or any other person you consider a family member or someone acting for them, do any of the following things:
 - ◆ Take or try to take the child in violation of a custody order, an agreement, or other child living arrangement?
 - ◆ Keep or try to keep the child from you when you were supposed to have him/her even if for just a day or weekend?
 - ◆ Conceal the child or try to prevent you from having contact with him/her?
 - ◆ Kidnap or try to kidnap the child?

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hammer et al.'s Children abducted by family members: National estimates and characteristics.

Most children abducted by family members were taken by a perpetrator acting alone (61%), in most cases their biological father (53%). Many family-abducted children were younger than 6 (44%); substantially fewer were age 12 or older (21%). Nearly half were gone less than 1 week (46%), and very few had not been returned by the time of the survey.

Characteristics of family abductions	Percent
Total (n=203,900)	100%
Age of child	
0–2	21
3–5	23
6–11	35
12–17	21
Gender of child	
Male	49
Female	51
Race/ethnicity of child	
White, not Hispanic	59
Black	12
Hispanic	20
Other/no information	10
Perpetrators	
One	61
Two or more	35
No information	4
Relationship to child	
Father	53
Mother (or her boyfriend)	27
Grandparent	14
Stepparent/other relative	7
Child's prior location	
Own home/yard	36
Other home/yard	37
Other location	28
Duration of episode	
Less than 1 day	23
1–6 days	23
1 week–1 month	24
1 month or more	21
Located, but not returned	6
No information	3

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hammer et al.'s Children abducted by family members: National estimates and characteristics.

Stereotypical kidnappings of children are extremely rare

NISMART–2 researchers caution that nonfamily abductions are so rare that “the estimates of the number of caretaker missing and reported missing children abducted by a nonfamily perpetrator are not very reliable and have very large confidence intervals.” As noted earlier, the stereotypical kidnapping is the type of nonfamily abduction that receives the most public attention; however, these kidnappings account for a tiny proportion of all missing children. Most nonfamily child abductions do not include the elements of the extremely alarming kind of crime that comes to mind when we think about kidnapping by strangers. According to NISMART–2, an estimated 115 of the children abducted by nonfamily members were stereotypical kidnappings (with the true figure somewhere between 60 and 170) and 90 of those were reported missing (with the true figure somewhere between 35 and 140). (Even stereotypical kidnappings might not be reported if no one notices the child is missing or if the discovery of the child's body is the first evidence of the episode.)

Contrary to public perceptions, NISMART–2 found that the majority of victims of stereotypical and other nonfamily abductions were teens—not younger children—and most were kidnapped by someone they knew somewhat—not by strangers or slight acquaintances. The NISMART–2 researchers point out the implications these findings have for prevention efforts, which have tended to focus on “stranger danger” and have targeted young children.

An estimated 1.7 million youth had a runaway or throwaway episode; fewer than 4 in 10 were “missing”

Most runaway/throwaway youth were older teens

Teens ages 15–17 accounted for 68% of the estimated 1.7 million youth in 1999 who were gone from their homes either because they had run away or because their caretakers threw them out. Males and females were equally represented. Most runaway/throwaway youth were non-Hispanic whites (57%).

Characteristics of runaways/throwaways	Percent
Total (<i>n</i> =1,682,900)	100%
Age of child	
7–11	4
12–14	28
15–17	68
Gender of child	
Male	50
Female	50
Race/ethnicity of child	
White, not Hispanic	57
Black	17
Hispanic	15
Other/no information	11
Season	
Summer	39
Fall	20
Winter	20
Spring	20
Police contact	32
Miles traveled	
Not more than 1	8
More than 1 to 10	30
More than 10 to 50	31
More than 50 to 100	10
More than 100	13
No information	9
Duration of episode	
Less than 1 day	19
1–6 days	58
1 week to less than 1 month	15
1 month or more	7
Located, but not returned	<1
Not located	<1

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hammer et al.'s Children abducted by family members: National estimates and characteristics.

The most common time of year for youth to run away was the summer (39%). Less than one-quarter of runaways/throwaways traveled 50 miles or more from home; 9% left their home state. The vast majority of youth who ran away or were thrown away were gone less than 1 week (77%).

Runaway/throwaway episodes vary greatly in their seriousness or dangerousness

The stereotype of a runaway is a youth roaming the streets of a large, unfamiliar city alone or in the company of drug dealers or pimps. NISMART–2 data show that not all runaway/throwaway youth experience episodes filled with such dangers. Some youth stay with friends or relatives who care for them.

For 21% of the 1.7 million runaway/throwaway youth, their episode involved abuse (physical or sexual) at home prior to their leaving or fear of abuse upon their return. For these youth, being returned home may increase rather than decrease their risk of harm.

Substantial numbers of youth were considered endangered during their episode because they reported that they were substance dependent (19%), were in the company of someone known to abuse drugs (18%), or were using hard drugs (17%). Youth were also considered endangered if they spent time in a place where criminal activity was known to occur (12%) or engaged in criminal activity during the course of the episode (11%). Runaway/throwaway youth may also be at risk of physical assault—7% were with a violent person, 4% were victims of assault (actual or attempted). Four percent (4%) of youth had previously attempted suicide, which also put them at risk of harm. A substantial

NISMART–2 runaway/throwaway caretaker screening questions

In the last year, did the child leave home without permission and stay away for at least a few hours?

Did the child stay away for at least one night?

Did the child choose not to come home from somewhere when he/she was supposed to, and stay away for at least two nights?

Did you or any adult member of your household force or tell the child to leave home, or decide not to allow him/her back in the home?

Did the child leave for at least one night?

Was there any time when having the child in your home became a lot of trouble and he/she left?

Other than anything you have already told me about, has there been any time, either currently or during the past 12 months, when you did not know where the child was living?

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hammer et al.'s Runaway/throwaway children: National estimates and characteristics.

number of runaway/throwaway youth missed at least 5 days of school (70,500 or 4%).

Fewer than 1% of youth reported that they exchanged sex for money, drugs, food, or shelter. One percent (1%) of runaway/throwaway youth reported that they were victims of sexual assault (actual or attempted) and 2% were with a sexually exploitative person. NISMART–2 estimated that 38,600 youth were at risk of some form of sexual endangerment or exploitation because they were runaways/throwaways.

Comparisons of NISMART–1 and –2 find no evidence of an increase in the incidence of missing children

NISMART–2 enabled comparisons of missing children for 1988–1999

NISMART–1 provided estimates of children reported missing for 1988. NISMART–2 provided estimates for 1999. Although researchers changed definitions and methodology for the second study based on what was learned in the first study, they also conducted analyses using the original definitions to permit comparisons between 1988 and 1999 for family abductions, runaways, and lost, injured, or otherwise missing children. Nonfamily abductions and throwaway children were excluded from the trend analyses because differences between the NISMART–2 and NISMART–1 definitions of these

categories of missing children and the methods used to develop incidence estimates could not be reconciled.

Incidence rates for broadly defined family abductions and lost, injured, or otherwise missing children declined

The incidence rate for children who experienced broadly defined family abductions went from 5.62 per 1,000 children ages 0–17 in 1988 to 4.18 in 1999—a statistically significant decline. For the broadly defined category of lost, injured, or otherwise missing, the incidence rate drop from 1988 to 1999 was also

statistically significant (from 6.95 per 1,000 children to 3.40).

Although the incidence rate for broadly defined runaways in 1999 (5.28) was lower than the rate for 1988 (7.09), the difference was not statistically significant. The observed difference in estimated rates may have resulted merely from chance (or sampling error) and not from a decline in the actual rate.

None of the incidence rates for more serious types of family abductions, runaways, and lost, injured, or otherwise missing children showed a statistically significant change from 1988 to 1999.

NISMART–1 definitions used in trend analysis distinguished two levels of seriousness for several types of missing child episodes

Broadly defined:

Parental/family abduction

A family member took a child or failed to return a child at the end of an agreed-upon visit in violation of a custody agreement/decreed, with the child away at least overnight.

Runaway

A child who left home without permission and stayed away at least overnight or who was already away and refused to return home.

Otherwise missing

Children missing for varying periods depending on age, disability, and whether the absence was due to injury.

Defined as serious:

A family member took the child out of state or attempted to conceal/prevent contact with the child, or an abductor intended to keep the child or permanently change custodial privileges.

A runaway who during a runaway episode was without a secure and familiar place to stay.

An otherwise missing child case where police were called.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Finkelhor, Hotaling, and Sedlak's *Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children in America. First Report: Numbers and Characteristics, National Incidence Studies.*

The NISMART trends are encouraging, but ...

The authors of the NISMART–2 trends bulletin comment that, “The period between 1988 and 1999 saw a significant mobilization on behalf of missing children. Law enforcement officers received special training, and public awareness grew as a result of media coverage and educational programs disseminated to schools and families . . . Although the findings reported [here] are encouraging, they are no cause for complacency. The . . . estimates for 1999 . . . reveal large numbers of children and youth still caught up in circumstances of crisis and vulnerability. The family and community problems these statistics reflect are unlikely to disappear anytime soon.”

Source: Authors' adaptation of Hammer et al.'s National estimates of missing children: Selected trends, 1988–1999.

Most abuse and neglect cases enter the child welfare system through child protective services agencies

What are child protective services?

The term “child protective services” generally refers to services provided by an agency authorized to act on behalf of a child when parents are unable or unwilling to do so. In all states, laws require these agencies to conduct assessments or investigations of reports of child abuse and neglect and to offer rehabilitative services to families where maltreatment has occurred or is likely to occur.

Although the primary responsibility for responding to reports of child maltreatment rests with state and local child protective services (CPS) agencies, prevention and treatment of abuse and neglect can involve professionals from many disciplines and organizations.

States vary in the way child maltreatment cases are handled and in the terminology that is used to describe that processing. Although variations exist among jurisdictions, community responses to child maltreatment generally share a common set of decision points and can thus be described in a general way.

State laws require many professions to notify CPS of suspected maltreatment

Individuals likely to identify maltreatment are often those in a position to observe families and children on an ongoing basis. This may include educators, law enforcement personnel, social services personnel, medical professionals, probation officers, daycare workers, mental health professionals, and the clergy, in addition to family members, friends, and neighbors.

Professionals who come into contact with children as part of their

jobs, such as medical and mental health professionals, educators, childcare providers, social services providers, law enforcement personnel, and clergy, are required by law to notify CPS agencies of suspicions of child maltreatment. Some states require reporting by any person having knowledge of child maltreatment.

CPS or law enforcement agencies usually receive the initial referral alleging abuse or neglect, which may include the identity of the child, information about the nature and extent of maltreatment, and information about the parent or other person responsible for the child. The initial report may also contain information identifying the individual suspected of causing the alleged maltreatment, the setting in which maltreatment occurred, and the person making the report.

CPS agencies “screen in” most referrals as reports to be investigated or assessed

Protective services staff must determine whether the referral constitutes an allegation of abuse or neglect and how urgently a response is needed. If the intake worker determines that the referral does not constitute an allegation of abuse or neglect, the case may be closed. If there is substantial risk of serious physical or emotional harm, severe neglect, or lack of supervision, a child may be removed from the home under provisions of state law. Most states require that a court hearing be held shortly after the removal to approve temporary custody by the CPS agency. In some states, removal from the home requires a court order.

Some referrals are out-of-scope for CPS and may be referred to other

agencies. Other referrals lack sufficient information to enable followup. Agency workload and resources may also influence screening decisions. For these and other reasons, CPS agencies “screen out” about a third of all referrals.

Once a referral is accepted or “screened in,” CPS must determine whether the child was maltreated. CPS may initiate an investigation or assessment of the alleged incident, or it may pursue an alternate response. Whether the agency investigates or seeks another response, it must decide if action is required to protect the child. The CPS agency also determines if the child and family are in need of services and which services are appropriate.

The initial investigation involves gathering and analyzing objective information from and about the child and family to determine if the allegations are substantiated. Protective services agencies may work with law enforcement and other agencies during this period. Caseworkers generally respond to reports of abuse and neglect within 2 to 3 days. A more immediate response may be required if it is determined that a child is at imminent risk of injury or impairment.

Following the initial investigation, the protective services agency decides whether the evidence substantiates the allegations. Should sufficient evidence not exist to support an allegation of maltreatment, additional services may still be provided if it is believed there is risk of abuse or neglect in the future. In a few states, the agency may determine that maltreatment or the risk of maltreatment is indicated even if sufficient evidence to conclude or substantiate the allegation does not exist. Some states use an alternative response system that provides for

responses other than substantiated, indicated, and unsubstantiated. In these states, children may or may not be determined to be maltreatment victims.

CPS agencies assess child and family needs before developing case plans

Protective services staff attempt to identify the factors that contributed to the maltreatment and determine what services would address the most critical treatment needs.

CPS staff then develop case plans in conjunction with other treatment providers and the family in an attempt to alter the conditions and/or behaviors resulting in child abuse or neglect. Together with other

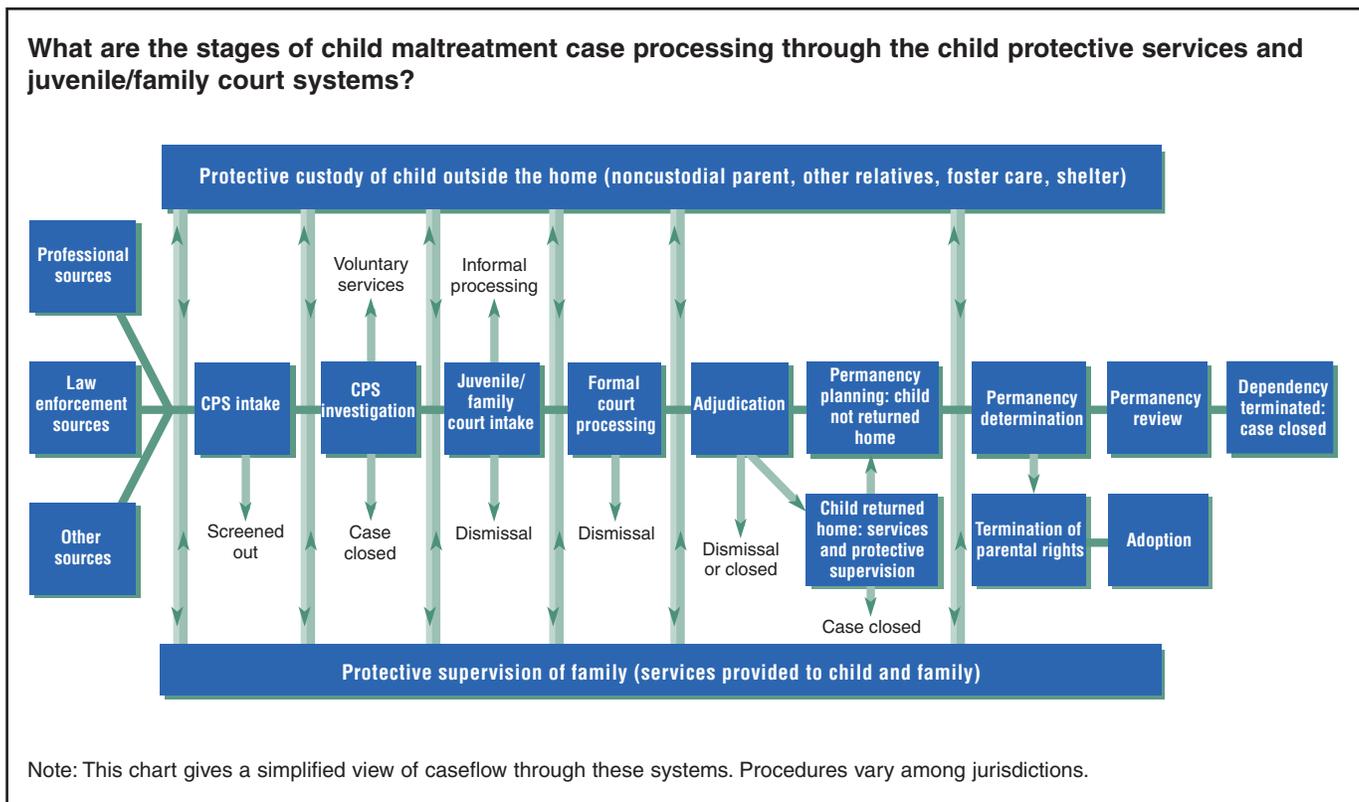
treatment providers, CPS staff then implement the treatment plan for the family. If the family is uncooperative, the case may be referred for court action.

Protective services agencies are also responsible for evaluating and monitoring family progress

After the treatment plan has been implemented, protective services and other treatment providers evaluate and measure changes in family behavior and the conditions that led to child abuse or neglect, assess changes in the risk of maltreatment, and determine when services are no longer necessary. Case managers often coordinate the information from several service providers when assessing a case's progress.

CPS agencies provide both preventive and remedial services

Preventive services are targeted toward families with children at risk of maltreatment and are designed to improve caregivers' child-rearing competencies. Types of preventive services include such things as respite care, parenting education, substance abuse treatment, home visits, counseling, daycare, and homemaker help. CPS agencies offer postinvestigation (remedial) services on a voluntary basis. Courts may also order services to ensure children's safety. Postinvestigation services are designed to address the child's safety and are typically based on an assessment of the family's strengths, weaknesses, and needs. These services might include counseling, in-home family



preservation services, foster care services, or other family-based or court services.

Some cases are closed because, although the family resists intervention efforts, the child is considered to be at low risk of harm. Other cases are closed when it has been determined that the risk of abuse or neglect has been eliminated or sufficiently reduced to a point where the family can protect the child from maltreatment without further intervention.

If it is determined that the family will not be able to protect the child, the child may be removed from the home and placed in foster care. If the child cannot be returned home to a protective environment within a reasonable timeframe, parental rights may be terminated so that a permanent alternative for the child can be found.

One option available to child protective services is referral to juvenile court

Substantiated reports of abuse and neglect may not lead to court involvement if the family is willing to participate in the CPS agency's treatment plan. The agency may, however, file a complaint in juvenile court if it thinks the child is at serious and imminent risk of harm and an emergency removal (without parental consent) is warranted or if the parents are otherwise uncooperative.

Emergency removals require the scheduling of a shelter care hearing typically 1 to 3 working days before removal. If an emergency removal is not requested, the timing of court proceedings is more relaxed—often 10 days or more after the filing of court documents alleging child

maltreatment. The juvenile court holds a preliminary hearing to ensure that the child and parent(s) are represented by counsel and determine whether probable cause exists, whether the child should be placed or remain in protective custody, the conditions under which the child can return home while the trial is pending, and the types of services (including visitation) that should be provided in the interim. At this stage, the parents may decide to cooperate, and the court may agree to handle the case informally.

Adjudicatory hearings focus primarily on the validity of the allegations—dispositional hearings address the case plan

If sufficient probable cause exists, the petition is accepted. The court will hold an adjudicatory hearing or trial to determine whether the evidence supports the maltreatment allegations and the child should be declared a dependent of the court.

If petition allegations are sustained, the court proceeds to the disposition stage and determines who will have custody of the child and under what conditions. The disposition hearing may immediately follow adjudication or may be scheduled within a short time period (typically no longer than 30 days). Although adjudication and disposition should be separate and distinct decisions, the court can consider both at the same hearing. Preferred practice in many jurisdictions is to hold a bifurcated hearing where dispositional issues are addressed immediately after adjudication.

If the court finds that the child is abused or neglected, typical dispositional options include both short-

term and long-term aspects and address the basic issue of whether the child should be returned home and if not, where the child should be placed:

- Reunification or protective services provided by protective services agencies are designed to enable the child to return home safely—subject to specific conditions including ongoing case involvement and/or supervision by the agency.
- Custody may be granted to the state child protective agency, the noncustodial parent or other relative, or foster care if the court decides that returning the child home could be dangerous.

At the disposition hearing, the agency presents its written case plan, which addresses all aspects of the agency's involvement with the family. In many states, statutes require the court to approve, disapprove, or modify provisions contained in the plan. These include changes in parental behavior that must be achieved, services to be provided to help achieve these changes, services to be provided to meet the special needs of the child, terms and conditions of visitation, and the timelines and responsibilities of each party in achieving individual case plan objectives.

Juvenile courts often maintain case oversight responsibility beyond the disposition hearing

Although not all abuse and neglect cases come before the court, the juvenile court is playing an increasingly significant role in determining case outcomes. In the vast majority of instances, the court will keep continuing jurisdiction of the case after disposition and monitor efforts by the agency to reunify the family.

The Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96–272) required greater judicial oversight of CPS agency performance. This legislation was passed in an attempt to keep children from being needlessly placed in foster care or left in foster care indefinitely. The goal of the legislation was to enable the child to have a permanent living arrangement (e.g., return to family, adoption, or placement with other relatives) as soon as possible. More recently, the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 (Public Law 103–89) amended the federal foster care law to make safety and permanency the primary focus of the law. ASFA was enacted to remedy chronic problems with the child welfare system. The regulations went into effect in March 2000.

Courts routinely conduct review hearings to revisit removal decisions and assess progress with agency case plans both before and after a permanency plan has been

developed. The court must also decide whether to terminate parental rights in cases involving children unable to return home. Courts maintain ongoing involvement until the child either is returned home; placed in a permanent, adoptive home; or reaches the age of majority.

Federal law establishes permanency preferences

After the initial disposition (placement of the child, supervision of the child and family, and services delivered to the child and family), the court holds review hearings to assess the case service plan and determine if the case is progressing. After 12 months, during which time the child and family receive services and the family must comply with conditions set forth by the court, the court must make a permanency determination. The court considers five basic permanency choices in the following hierarchy:

1. Reunification with the family is the preferred choice.
2. Adoption is considered when family reunification is not viable (termination of parental rights is required).
3. Permanent legal guardianship (a judicially created relationship that includes certain parental rights) is considered when neither reunification nor adoption is possible .
4. Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative is considered if reunification, adoption, and guardianship are not feasible.
5. An alternative planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA) may be found, but the agency must document “compelling reasons” why the other four choices are not in the best interests of the child.

APPLA placements may be independent living arrangements that include the child’s emancipation. Although ASFA doesn’t define these types of placements, they are nevertheless intended to be permanent arrangements for the child. APPLA placements are not foster care placements that can be extended indefinitely.

In many states, the juvenile court will continue to conduct post-permanency review hearings at periodic intervals to ensure that the permanency plan remains satisfactory and that the child is safe and secure. This is in addition to any termination of parental rights, guardianship, and/or adoption finalization hearings that may be required to accomplish the selected permanency goal. The final action the court makes is to terminate the child’s status as a dependent and close the case.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) establishes deadlines courts must meet in handling dependency cases

ASFA requirement	Deadline	Start date
Case plan	60 days	Actual removal
Reasonable effort to prevent child’s removal from the home	60 days	Actual removal
6-month periodic review	6 months	Foster care entry*
Permanency determination	12 months	Foster care entry*
Reasonable efforts to finalize permanency plan	12 months	Foster care entry*
Mandatory filing of a termination of parental rights petition	15 months [†]	Foster care entry*

* Foster care entry is the earlier of the date the court found the child abused or neglected or 60 days after the child’s actual removal from the home.

[†] A termination of parental rights petition must be filed when a child accrues 15 months in foster care within a 22-month period. Time when the child is on a trial home visit (or during a runaway episode) does not count toward the 15-month limit.

Source: Authors’ adaptation of Ratterman et al.’s *Making Sense of the ASFA Regulations: A Roadmap for Effective Implementation*.

Child protective services agencies receive 50,000 maltreatment referrals weekly—18% are substantiated

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System monitors the child protective services caseloads

In response to the 1988 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the Children's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services developed the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) to collect child maltreatment data from state child protective services (CPS) agencies. The Children's Bureau annually collects and analyzes both summary and case-level data collected under NCANDS. For 2003, 43 states and the District of Columbia reported case-level data on all children who received an investigation or assessment by a CPS agency. These states accounted for 79% of the U.S. population younger than 18. The case-level data provide descriptive information on cases referred to CPS agencies during the year, including:

- Characteristics of the referral of abuse or neglect made to CPS.
- Characteristics of the victims.
- Alleged maltreatments.
- Disposition (or findings).
- Risk factors of the child and the caregivers.
- Services provided.
- Characteristics of the perpetrators.

The remaining seven states that are unable to provide case-level data submit aggregate counts of key indicators that are used with the case-level data to develop national estimates.

In 2003, referrals were made to CPS agencies at a rate of 39 per 1,000 children

In 2003, CPS agencies in the U.S. received an estimated 2.9 million referrals alleging that children were abused or neglected. An estimated

5.5 million children were included in these referrals. This translates into a rate of 39 referrals for every 1,000 children younger than 18 in the U.S. population. The referral rate for 2003 was up slightly from the 2002 referral rate of 36 per 1,000.

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System counts several different aspects of child maltreatment

Referral: Notification to the CPS agency of suspected child maltreatment. This can include one or more children. It is a measure of "flow" into the CPS system.

Report: A referral of child maltreatment that was accepted for an investigation or assessment by a CPS agency.

Investigation: The gathering and assessment of objective information to determine if a child has been or is at risk of being maltreated. It results in a disposition as to whether the alleged report is substantiated.

Assessment: The process by which CPS determines if a child or other person involved in a report of alleged maltreatment needs services.

Alleged victim: Child about whom a report regarding child maltreatment has been made to a CPS agency.

Victim: Child having a maltreatment disposition of substantiated, indicated, or alternate response.

Substantiated: Investigation disposition that concludes that the allegation of maltreatment (or risk of maltreatment) was supported by or founded on state law or state policy. This is the highest level of finding by a CPS agency.

Indicated: Investigation disposition that concludes that maltreatment cannot be substantiated under state law

or policy, but there is reason to suspect that the child may have been maltreated or was at risk of maltreatment. Only a few states distinguish between substantiated and indicated dispositions.

Alternate response system: A maltreatment disposition system used in some states that provides for responses other than substantiated, indicated, and unsubstantiated. In these systems, children may or may not be determined to be maltreatment victims. These systems are also referred to as "diversified" or "in need of services" systems.

Unsubstantiated: Investigation disposition that determines that there is not sufficient evidence under state law to conclude or suspect that the child has been maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment. Included in this category are intentionally false allegations.

Court action: Legal action initiated by the CPS agency on behalf of the child. This includes authorization to place the child in foster care, filing for temporary custody or dependency, or termination of parental rights. As used here, it does not include criminal proceedings against a perpetrator.

Alleged perpetrator: Person who is alleged to have caused or knowingly allowed the maltreatment of a child.

Perpetrator: Person who has been determined to have caused or knowingly allowed the maltreatment of a child.

Professionals were the most common source of maltreatment reports

Professionals who come in contact with children as a part of their occupation (e.g., teachers, police officers, doctors, childcare providers) are required by law in most states to notify CPS agencies of suspected maltreatment. Thus, professionals are the most common source of maltreatment reports (57%). Sources other than professionals account for the remaining 43% of reports.

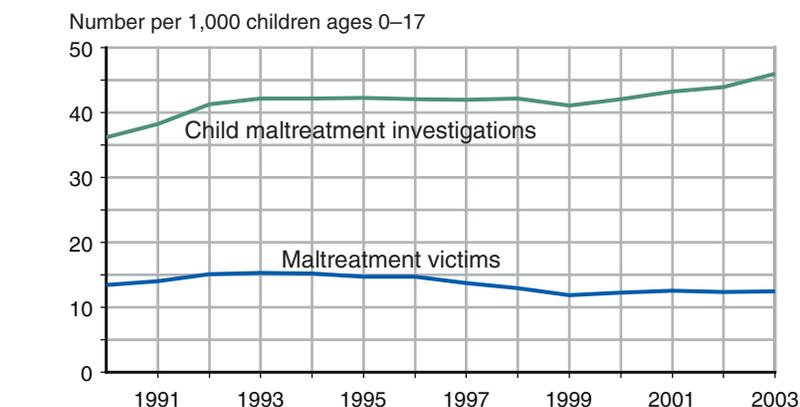
Source	Percent of total
Professional	57%
Educator	16
Law enforcement	16
Social services	12
Medical	8
Mental health	3
Child daycare provider	1
Foster care provider	1
Family and community	43%
Relative—not parent	8
Parent	7
Friend or neighbor	6
Anonymous	9
Other*	13

*Includes alleged victims, alleged perpetrators, and sources not otherwise identified.

CPS response times vary, but average 3 days

CPS agencies receive referrals of varying degrees of urgency; therefore, the time from referral to investigation varies widely. State response time standards also vary. Some states set a single standard and others set different standards depending on the priority or urgency of the case. Many specify a high-priority response as within 24 hours; some specify 1 hour. Lower priority responses range from 24 hours to 14 days. In 2003, the average

The child maltreatment investigation rate increased 27% from 1990 to 2003, but the child maltreatment victimization rate declined 7%



■ In 2003, CPS agencies conducted investigations or assessments involving 3,353,000 children. This translates to an investigation rate of 45.9 per 1,000 children ages 0–17.

■ An estimated 906,000 children were found to be victims—about 26% of all children who received an investigation or assessment in 2003 (or about 18% of initial referrals).

■ In 2003, the national rate of maltreatment victimization was 12.4 victims per 1,000 children ages 0–17.

Note: A child was counted as a victim each time he or she was found to be a victim of maltreatment.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Walter R. McDonald and Associates' *Child Maltreatment 2003*.

response time for states that reported this information was 3 days.

CPS agencies investigate more than two-thirds of referrals

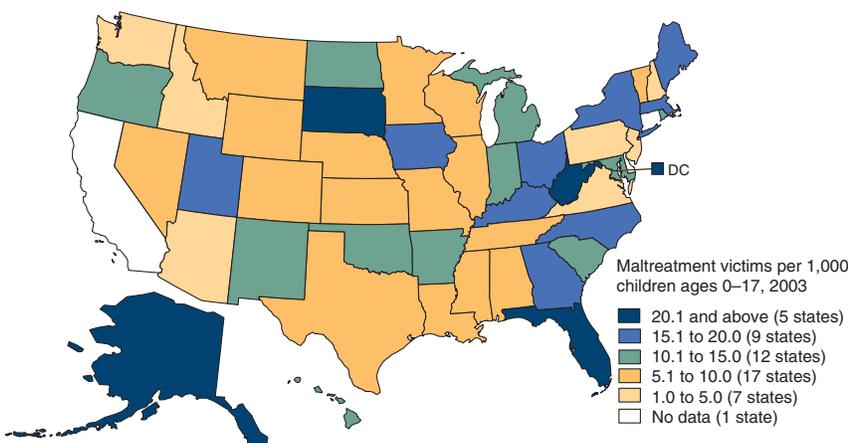
In 2003, CPS agencies screened in 68% of all referrals received. Thus, CPS agencies conducted investigations or assessments in an estimated 1.9 million reports in 2003 involving more than 3.3 million children.

Once a report is investigated or assessed and a determination is

made as to the likelihood that maltreatment occurred or that the child is at risk of maltreatment, CPS assigns a finding to the report—known as a disposition. States' dispositions and terminology vary but can be summarized into the following categories: substantiated, indicated, alternate response (victim and nonvictim), and unsubstantiated (terms defined in box on previous page).

Nationally, 26% of investigated reports were substantiated, 4% were

State child maltreatment victimization rates varied substantially in 2003



- Child maltreatment victimization rates ranged from a low of 1.6 to a high of 42.2 per 1,000 children ages 0–17.
- Half of states had child maltreatment victimization rates lower than 10.4 per 1,000 children ages 0–17.

Note: A child was counted as a victim each time he or she was found to be a victim of maltreatment.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Walter R. McDonald and Associates' *Child Maltreatment 2003*.

indicated, and 57% were unsubstantiated. Dispositions of alternate response victim accounted for less than 1% and dispositions of alternate response nonvictim were 6% of investigated reports.

Law enforcement or other legal/justice personnel were the referral source for 27% of substantiated reports and 11% of unsubstantiated reports. Educators accounted for 14% of substantiated and 18% of unsubstantiated reports.

The average CPS investigator handled about 63 investigations in 2003

In most sizable jurisdictions, different CPS personnel perform screening and investigation functions. In smaller agencies, one staff person may perform both functions. In 2003, the average yearly number of investigations or assessments per investigation worker was 63. Among states with specialized screening

and investigation workers, the investigation workers outnumbered the screening workers nearly 7 to 1. Even in locations with specialized personnel, CPS staff typically perform numerous other activities and some CPS workers may be responsible for more than one function.

Neglect was the most common form of maltreatment for victims in 2003

Many children were the victims of more than one type of maltreatment, but if categories of maltreatment are considered independently, 61% of victims experienced neglect (including medical neglect), 19% were physically abused, 10% were sexually abused, 5% were emotionally or psychologically maltreated, and 17% experienced other forms of maltreatment such as threats of harm, abandonment, and congenital drug addiction. The rates of most types of abuse remained relatively stable from 1998 through 2003.

Different types of maltreatment have different source-of-referral patterns

Nearly half of all physical abuse victims were reported by education (22%) or law enforcement/justice system (21%) personnel. Law enforcement/justice system personnel also accounted for substantial proportions of victims reported to CPS for neglect (26%), sexual abuse (26%), and psychological maltreatment (30%). Medical personnel reported 27% of medical neglect victims.

Rates of child maltreatment victimization varied across demographic groups

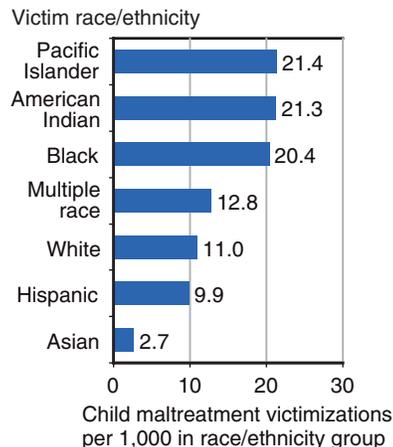
Girls' victimization rate was higher than the rate for boys

In 2003, girls made up a slightly greater share of maltreatment victims than did boys (52% vs. 48%). The victimization rate for girls was 13.1 per 1,000 girls younger than age 18, and the rate for boys was 11.6 per 1,000 boys younger than age 18.

More than half of all victims of child maltreatment were white

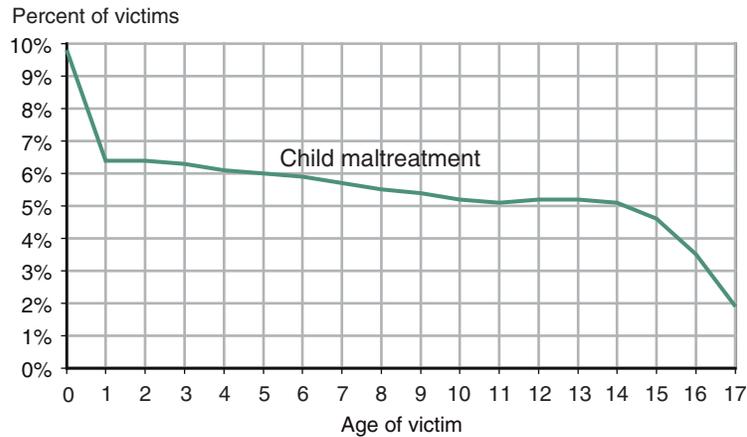
In 2003, white children made up the largest share of child maltreatment victims (54%), followed by black children (26%) and Hispanic children (12%). American Indian/Alaska native children (2%) and Asian/Pacific Islander children (1%) made up substantially smaller proportions of maltreatment victims.

Although they accounted for a small share of victims, Pacific Islanders and American Indians had higher child maltreatment victimization rates than other race/ethnicity groups—nearly double the rate for white children. Similarly, the rate for black children was well above the rate for white children.



Note: Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race.

The rate of maltreatment victimization was inversely related to age—the youngest children had the highest rate



- Infants younger than 1 accounted for 1 in 10 victims of maltreatment in 2003. One-year-olds accounted for 6% of victims, as did each age through age 7—about the proportion expected if victimization were spread evenly over all ages. The proportion of victims dropped off sharply for older teens; 17-year-olds accounted for just 2% of victims.
- Infants and toddlers were victimized at a rate of 16.4 per 1,000 children age 3 or younger. The victimization rate decreased steadily with age: 13.8 for ages 4–7, 11.7 for ages 8–11, 10.7 for ages 12–15, and 5.9 for ages 16–17.

Note: A child was counted as a victim each time he or she was found to be a victim of maltreatment.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Walter R. McDonald and Associates' *Child Maltreatment 2003*.

The overwhelming majority of child maltreatment perpetrators are parents of the victims

Women are overrepresented among both caregivers and maltreatment perpetrators

Child maltreatment is by definition an act or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm or serious risk of harm to a child. Incidents where children are harmed by individuals who are not their parents or caregivers would generally not come to the attention of child protective services agencies, but rather would be handled by law enforcement.

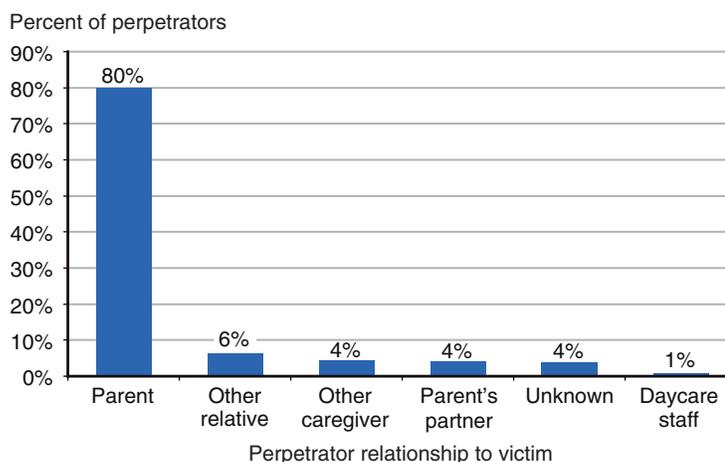
Compared to their share of the population (51%), women are overrepresented among child caregivers. Within families, mothers usually are the primary caregivers, and women far outnumber men in caregiver occupations. Women account for more than 90% of childcare providers and early childhood teachers, more than 80% of nonphysician healthcare workers, and more than 70% of recreation workers and teachers below college level. In 2003, females made up more than half of maltreatment perpetrators (58%). This proportion is lower than their proportion among child caregivers

Among perpetrators, females tended to be younger than males. Half of all female perpetrators were younger than 31 years old; half of all male perpetrators were older than 34. A higher proportion of female than male perpetrators were in their 20s.

Perpetrator age profile:

Age	Perpetrator		
	Total	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%	100%
Younger than 20	5	6	4
Ages 20–29	34	27	40
Ages 30–39	39	38	39
Ages 40–49	17	22	14
Older than 49	5	7	4
Median age	32	34	31

The vast majority of perpetrators were parents (80%), including birth parents, adoptive parents, and stepparents



- Nonparental relatives, unmarried partners of parents, and daycare providers each made up small proportions of child maltreatment perpetrators in 2003. Foster parents, residential facility staff, and legal guardians each made up less than 1% of all maltreatment perpetrators.

Notes: A child was counted as a victim each time he or she was found to be a victim of maltreatment. A victim can have more than one perpetrator. "Other caregivers" are camp counselors, school employees, hospital staff, etc.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Walter R. McDonald and Associates' *Child Maltreatment 2003*.

Parents were less likely to commit sexual abuse than were other types of perpetrators

Types of maltreatment	Total	Perpetrator relationship to victim					Facility staff
		Parent	Parent's partner	Other relative	Foster parent	Daycare	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Neglect	57	62	38	38	50	48	46
Physical abuse	11	11	17	10	17	13	19
Sexual abuse	7	3	11	30	6	23	11
Psychological or other abuse	9	9	14	6	7	2	8
Multiple types	16	15	20	16	20	13	15

- Perpetrators who were nonparental relatives had the highest proportion of sexual abuse maltreatment (30%) and parents the lowest (3%).

Notes: A child was counted as a victim each time he or she was found to be a victim of maltreatment. A victim can have more than one perpetrator and can suffer more than one type of maltreatment. Total includes relationships not detailed. Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Walter R. McDonald and Associates' *Child Maltreatment 2003*.

Reported child maltreatment fatalities typically involve infants and toddlers and result from neglect

The youngest children are the most vulnerable child maltreatment victims

Although children younger than 1 year old were just 10% of all maltreatment victims in 2003, they accounted for 44% of maltreatment fatalities. Similarly, children younger than 4 were 28% of all victims but 79% of maltreatment fatalities.

Maltreatment victim age profile:

Victim age	Fatalities	All victims
Total	100%	100%
Younger than 1	44	10
1	16	6
2	13	6
3	7	6
4–7	10	24
8–11	5	21
12–17	6	25

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Several factors make infants and toddlers younger than 4 particularly vulnerable, including their dependency, small size, and inability to defend themselves.

Infant boys had the highest maltreatment fatality rate in 2003

Boys younger than 1 year old had a maltreatment fatality rate of 17.7 deaths per 100,000 boys of the same age in the population. For infant girls, the rate was 14.1 per 100,000. For both males and females, fatality rates declined with children's age.

Maltreatment fatality rate per 100,000 children in age/gender group:

Victim age	Male	Female
Total	2.2	1.9
Younger than 1	17.7	14.1
1	5.8	5.7
2	5.2	4.0
3	2.4	2.9
4–7	1.1	0.9
8–11	0.6	0.4
12–17	0.4	0.3

Mothers were the most common perpetrators in child maltreatment fatalities

Nearly 4 in 10 maltreatment fatalities resulted from neglect alone. Physical abuse accounted for 3 in 10 fatalities, and about the same proportion resulted from multiple forms of maltreatment in combination.

Mothers were involved in 59% of maltreatment fatalities. Fathers were involved in 39% of maltreatment fatalities.

Fatality perpetrators	Percent
Total	100%
Mother alone	30
Mother and other than father	8
Mother and father	20
Father alone	18
Father and other than mother	1
Nonparent	18
Unknown	4

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Most maltreatment fatality victims were previously unknown to the CPS agency

Most child maltreatment fatalities involved families without a recent history with CPS. Of all child maltreatment fatalities, 11% involved children whose families had received family preservation services from a CPS agency in the previous 5 years and 3% involved children who had been in foster care and reunited with their families in the previous 5 years.

Is the child maltreatment fatality rate increasing?

The rate of child maltreatment fatalities increased from 1.85 per 100,000 in 2000 to 2.00 in 2003. Estimates of maltreatment fatalities are based on data reported by CPS agencies and data from other sources such as health departments and child fatality review boards. Child maltreatment fatalities, particularly those resulting from neglect, are thought to be underreported. Some studies have estimated that as many as 50% of maltreatment deaths are not recorded. Some child fatalities recorded as "child homicides," accidents, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) might be attributed to maltreatment if more comprehensive investigations were conducted and if coding of maltreatment on death certificates were more uniform.

An estimated 1,500 children died from abuse or neglect in 2003. In 2000, the figure was 1,300. It is not clear whether this increase represents an actual increase in maltreatment fatalities or is the result of improved reporting.

Increases in children exiting foster care led to a drop in the foster care rolls between 1998 and 2003

AFCARS data track trends in foster care and adoption

Foster care is defined in federal regulations as 24-hour substitute care for children outside their own homes. Foster care settings include, but are not limited to, family foster homes, relative foster homes (whether payments are being made or not), group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child-care institutions, and preadoptive homes.

Under federal regulation, states are required to submit data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), which collects case-level information on all children in foster care for whom state child welfare agencies have responsibility and on children who are adopted under the auspices of state public child welfare agencies. AFCARS also includes information on foster and adoptive parents. Data are reported for 12 months as of September 30th of each year.

Children ages 11–15 make up the largest share of foster care entries

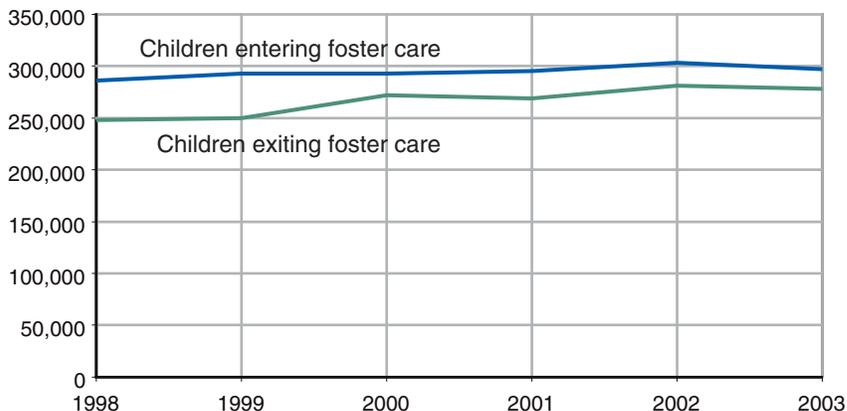
The median age of children who entered foster care in 2002 was 8.6 years. Logically, the average age of the standing foster care population is greater than the average age of children entering foster care. The average age of children in foster care in 2002 was 10.8 years.

Age profile of children entering foster care:

Age	1998	2002
Total	100%	100%
Younger than 1	13	14
1–5	25	26
6–10	22	20
11–15	29	29
16–18	11	11

Between 1998 and 2003, entries into foster care remained relatively stable and exits increased slightly

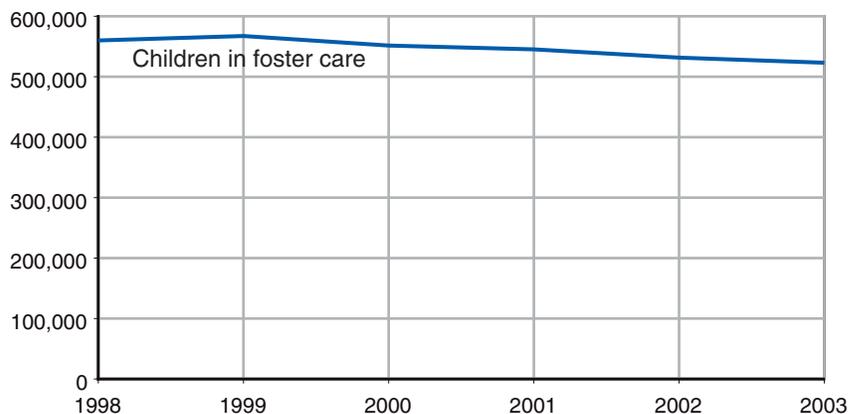
Number during 12-month period



- An estimated 297,000 children entered foster care in 2003. Between 1998 and 2003, foster care entries remained stable—around 300,000 per year. The number of children exiting foster care annually increased from an estimated 248,000 to roughly 278,000.

The number of children in foster care has decreased steadily since 1999

Number on September 30th



- An estimated 523,000 children were in foster care on September 30, 2003, down 7% from the 1998 figure.
- Despite the drop in the number of children in foster care, child welfare agencies reported little change in the number of children served during the year. For every two children in foster care, three children received services. In 2003, child welfare agencies served an estimated 800,000 children.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's *National adoption and foster care statistics*.

Minority youth are overrepresented in foster care

In 2002, minority youth were 22% of the U.S. population ages 0–17. In comparison, 60% of children in foster care in 2002 were minority youth.

Race/ethnicity profile of children in foster care:

Race/ethnicity	1998	2002
Total	100%	100%
White	36	40
Minority	64	60
Black	45	38
Hispanic	16	17
American Indian	2	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1
Two or more races	NA	3

NA = data not available

Note: Youth of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.

Half of children in foster care on September 30, 2002, entered foster care before April 2001

On September 30, 2002, half of children in foster care had been in foster care for 18 months. On September 30, 1998, the median time in foster care was 21 months.

Profile of children in foster care on September 30th:

Median time in foster care	1998	2002
Total	100%	100%
Less than 1 month	4	5
1–5 months	15	18
6–11 months	15	16
12–17 months	11	12
18–23 months	9	8
24–29 months	7	7
30–35 months	5	5
3–4 years	16	13
5 years or more	18	16

For children who exited foster care during 2002, the median time in foster care was 12 months. The figure for those who exited in 1998 was 11 months.

Reunification was the permanency goal for 45% of children in foster care in 2002

Permanency goal	Profile of children in foster care				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reunify with parent(s)	40	42	43	44	45
Adoption	20	19	20	22	21
Guardianship	3	3	3	3	3
Live with other relative(s)	3	5	5	5	5
Long-term foster care	7	8	9	8	9
Emancipation	5	6	6	6	6
Goal not yet established	23	18	15	11	10

■ Reunification with parents was the most common permanency goal (45% in 2002); adoption was the second most common goal (21% in 2002). Other permanency goals together accounted for less than one-quarter of children in foster care in 2002.

■ The proportion of children in the “goal not yet established” category changed substantially from 1998 to 2002. In 1998, children without permanency goals were 23% of those in foster care. By 2002, the figure had dropped to 10%.

The most common placement setting for children in foster care in 2002 was the home of an unrelated foster family

Placement setting	Profile of children in foster care				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Foster family (nonrelative)	48	47	47	48	46
Foster family (relative)	29	26	25	24	23
Institution	8	10	10	10	10
Group home	8	8	8	8	9
Preadoptive home	3	4	4	4	5
Trial home visit	3	3	3	3	4
Runaway	1	1	2	2	2
Supervised independent living	1	1	1	1	1

■ Nearly half of all children in foster care on September 30, 2002, were living in the home of an unrelated foster family (46%). Relative foster families had 23% of children in foster care.

■ Other placement settings were less common, each accounting for no more than 10% of children in foster care.

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's *National adoption and foster care statistics*.

The number of children adopted from public foster care increased 40% from 1998 to 2003

Most children adopted from foster care were adopted by their foster parents

In 2002, foster parents adopted approximately 32,500 (61%) of the children adopted from foster care. Relatives accounted for 24% of adoptions, and the remaining 15% of adoptions involved nonrelatives. The proportion of children adopted by relatives in 2002 (24%) was greater than in 1998 (15%).

Married couples adopted the majority of children adopted out of foster care (66%), although many were adopted by single females (30%). Single males and unmarried couples each accounted for about 2% of children adopted out of foster care. The family structures of adoptive families showed a similar profile in 1998.

The race profile of adoptions changed between 1998 and 2002, but the median age did not

Minority youth were about the same proportion of children adopted out of foster care (60%) as children in foster care (59%). Compared with 1998, adoptions in 2002 had a smaller proportion of black children and a larger proportion of Hispanic children. The median age of children adopted out of foster care was 6.3 years in 2002—the same as in 1998.

Race/ethnicity profile of children adopted:

Race/ethnicity	1998	2002
Total	100%	100%
White	38	41
Minority	62	59
Black	46	37
Hispanic	13	17
American Indian	1	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1
Two or more races	NA	3

NA = data not available

Note: Youth of Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race.

Reunification was the most common outcome for children exiting foster care in 2002

Outcome	Profile of children exiting foster care				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reunify with parent(s)	62	59	57	57	56
Adoption	14	16	17	18	18
Live with other relative(s)	9	10	10	10	10
Emancipation	7	7	7	7	7
Transfer to another agency	3	3	3	3	4
Runaway	3	2	2	2	3
Guardianship	2	3	4	3	2

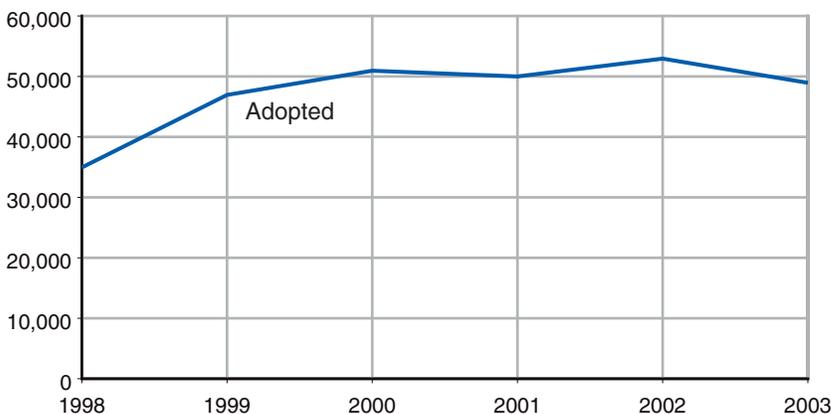
- In 2002, more than half (56%) of children exiting foster care were reunited with their parent(s) and 18% were adopted. Compared with 1998, a smaller proportion were reunited and a greater share were adopted in 2002.

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's *National adoption and foster care statistics*.

An estimated 53,000 children were adopted from the public foster care system in 2002; in 2003, the figure was 49,000

Number of children



- Adoption requires termination of parental rights for the child's parents. In 2003, parental rights were terminated for the parents of an estimated 67,000 children in foster care.

- For half of all adopted children, less than 1 year passed between termination of parental rights and adoption.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's *National adoption and foster care statistics*.

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