

YOUTH VIOLENCE FACTS

The Impact of Violence on Youth, Families, and Communities

August, 2009

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Throughout this report, you will see the winning artwork and poetry from a contest run at two Phoenix middle schools in May 2009. Based on the theme “Keep Your Family Safe: Stop Gun Violence,” the goal of the contest was to educate youth on the dangers of gun violence, and ways to prevent it. The contest resulted in over 200 poster and poetry entries and was coordinated by Arizonans for Gun Safety. The contest focused on schools in two communities with high numbers of firearm-related deaths and injuries, including a disproportionate impact on youth 15 to 19 years of age.

Introduction

This report was compiled by members of the Injury Prevention Advisory Council Subcommittee on Violence. Its purpose is to present an overview of youth violence in Arizona, using data from the health care and criminal justice systems. Presenting both the health care and criminal justice perspectives presents a more comprehensive picture of youth violence and provides greater opportunities for developing solutions.

Youth violence is a serious problem in Arizona and the nation that saps the energy, vitality, and promise from our greatest treasure – our young people. But youth violence is not an intractable problem. We have the knowledge and tools needed to reduce or even prevent much of the most serious youth violence. What we need is the resolve to confront the problem systematically.

Information contained in this report is designed to help program managers, social service providers, policy makers, and elected officials better understand the impact of youth violence in order to improve program, policy, and resource decisions. It is intended to serve as a resource for program planning, responding to funding opportunities, and decision making affecting Arizona youth and communities.

A review of relevant research indicates the following factors are critical when considering solutions to youth violence.

Belief in Prevention. Violence and serious crime are preventable problems, particularly among youth. Scientific evidence demonstrates that the use of violence is a behavior learned from family interactions, school situations, in the community, and in the media¹.

Understanding the Problem. In order to address any problem, it is vitally important to understand the nature, extent, and magnitude of that problem and related issues in the community. It is also important to understand the science behind risk and protective factors, as well as becoming aware of proven or promising prevention programs to reduce violence. Appreciating these issues is essential for developing effective responses to youth violence.

Developing an Array of Strategies and Programs. Complex problems – such as violence and crime prevention – demand multifaceted and creative solutions. There is no single effective approach. One example of a new approach is the Unity Model, in which stakeholders come together to prioritize strategies to prevent youth violence *before* it occurs². Another is the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention/Ceasefire being replicated around the country to develop and implement strategies to reduce and prevent youth violence, particularly gang-related shootings and killings³.

Building a Broad-Based Coalition of Support. Prevention efforts should be inclusive of all key stakeholders involved in the health and safety of our youth, including community leaders, law enforcement personnel, public health officials, social service providers, faith-based leaders, educators, and especially the youth themselves.

¹ United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Surgeon General. Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2001.

² Sherman, Lawrence W., Gottfredson, Denise C., MacKenzie, Doris L., Eck, John, Reuter, Peter, and Bushway, Shawn D. Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, National Institute of Justice Research in Brief, July 1998.

³ Mulvey, Edward P., Porter, Maryfrances, Chung, He Len. Building Pathways Out of Crime and Delinquency for Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders. 2002 Arizona Juvenile Justice Symposium, 2002.

Focusing Efforts on Risk Factors. Risk factors increase the probability that a young person will become violent (e.g. witnessing violence, availability of firearms) while protective factors buffer the young person against those risks (e.g. commitment to school). Approaches that focus on risk factors help to organize prevention efforts and, in most cases, taking a strength-based approach provides a substantial foundation for prevention efforts.

The Silver Bullet

The **gun** felt sweaty in his **trembling** hand
As he pulled the trigger
"No one would get **hurt**" at least that's what he figured
His mind went blank - just for a second -
As the **bullet** flew into the pitch-black air.
Little did he know someone's life became a **nightmare**
The **silver bullet** flew into the sky
While his friends laughed by his side
Less than a block away
A girl walked thinking she had time
Never even thinking about what would happen to her that night
The **bullet** then found a place to **cease**
Puncturing her life, ending all her **dreams**
Her legs collapsed right underneath her
And she fell onto the ground
One last **gasp** for air...her life is over now

Her family cries and tears sting their eyes
Her life has ended and no one knows why
But...he does...it never leaves his mind
The time he shot the **silver bullet** into the night sky
Guilt and anger towards himself
Take over his feelings
The only thought in his mind
Is how he took away her **life**.
One night he finds himself with more **guilt**
Than the day before
And his **heart** feels very sore
The **gun** lies on top of his bed
And the thought of taking his own **life** fills his head.
He wants to end the **guilt**
The **anger** he has built...
The **gun** feels sweaty in his **trembling** hand
As he pulls the trigger
His problems would be over now; at least that's what he figured
One last **gasp** for air...his life is over now
-Anna Flores



"The Silver Bullet" Anna Flores • Pueblo Del Sol School

Arizona Youth Involved in Violence: The Health Care Perspective

The following data show various health care-related information based upon injuries sustained through intentional interpersonal violence to Arizona youths 24 years of age and younger. It is important to note that unless otherwise specified, only information about the injured youth recorded through medical coding is provided; such data cannot be linked to perpetrator data at this time. All of the data found in this section comes from the Arizona Department of Health Services death certificate database, hospital discharge database, or Arizona Child Fatality Review Program.

Youth Violence Facts

Assault-Related Injuries Involving Arizona Residents 24 Years and Younger

- A total of 8,342 assaults involved Arizona residents 24 years and younger in 2007.
- 196 of the total assaults involving young people resulted in death.
- 713 of the total assaults involving young people resulted in non-fatal injuries serious enough to warrant hospitalization.
- 7,433 of the total assaults involving young people resulted in less serious non-fatal injuries, but still required emergency department visits.
- Arizona residents 24 years and younger spent a total of 3,334 days hospitalized as the result of non-fatal assault-related injuries. Hospital charges totaled \$36.3 million.

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services.
2007 Mortality Database, 2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

Figure 1. Percent of Assaults Involving Young People 24 Years and Younger by Age Group and Sex, Arizona 2007 (n=8,342)

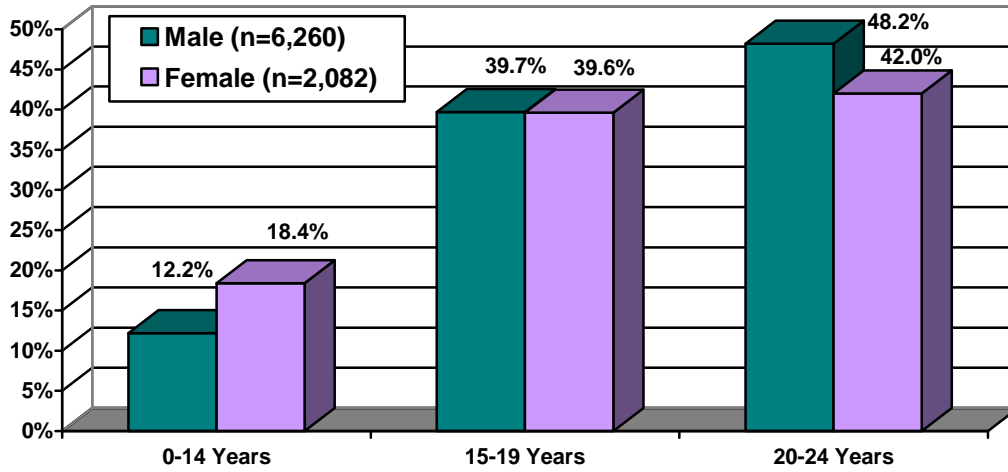
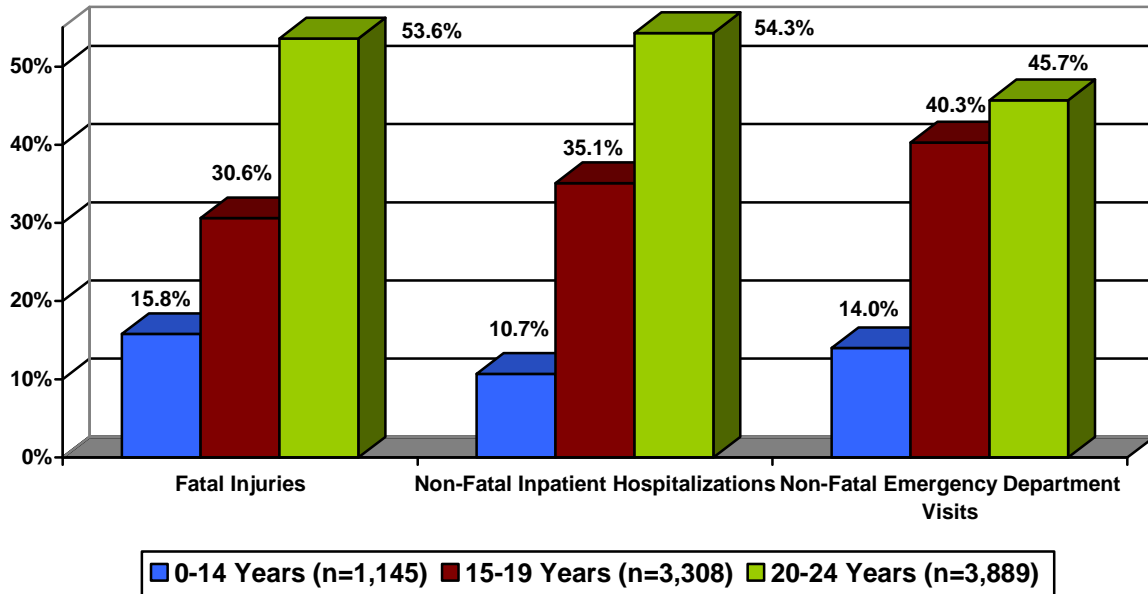


Figure 2. Percent of Assaults Involving Young People 24 Years and Younger by Age Group and Severity of Injury, Arizona 2007 (n=8,342)



Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services.
2007 Mortality Database, 2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

Youth Violence Facts

Fatal Assaults Involving Arizona Residents 24 Years and Younger

- 196 Arizonans 24 years of age and younger died as a result of an assault in 2007.
- More than half of fatal assaults (54%, n=105) involved young adults ages 20-24 years.
- Almost a third of fatal assaults (31%, n=60) involved teens 15-19 years old.
- 31 fatal assaults involved children ages 0-14 years.
- Most fatal assault victims 24 years of age and younger were males (79%), and more than two-thirds (70%) involved a firearm as the mechanism of injury.

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services.
2007 Mortality Database, 2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

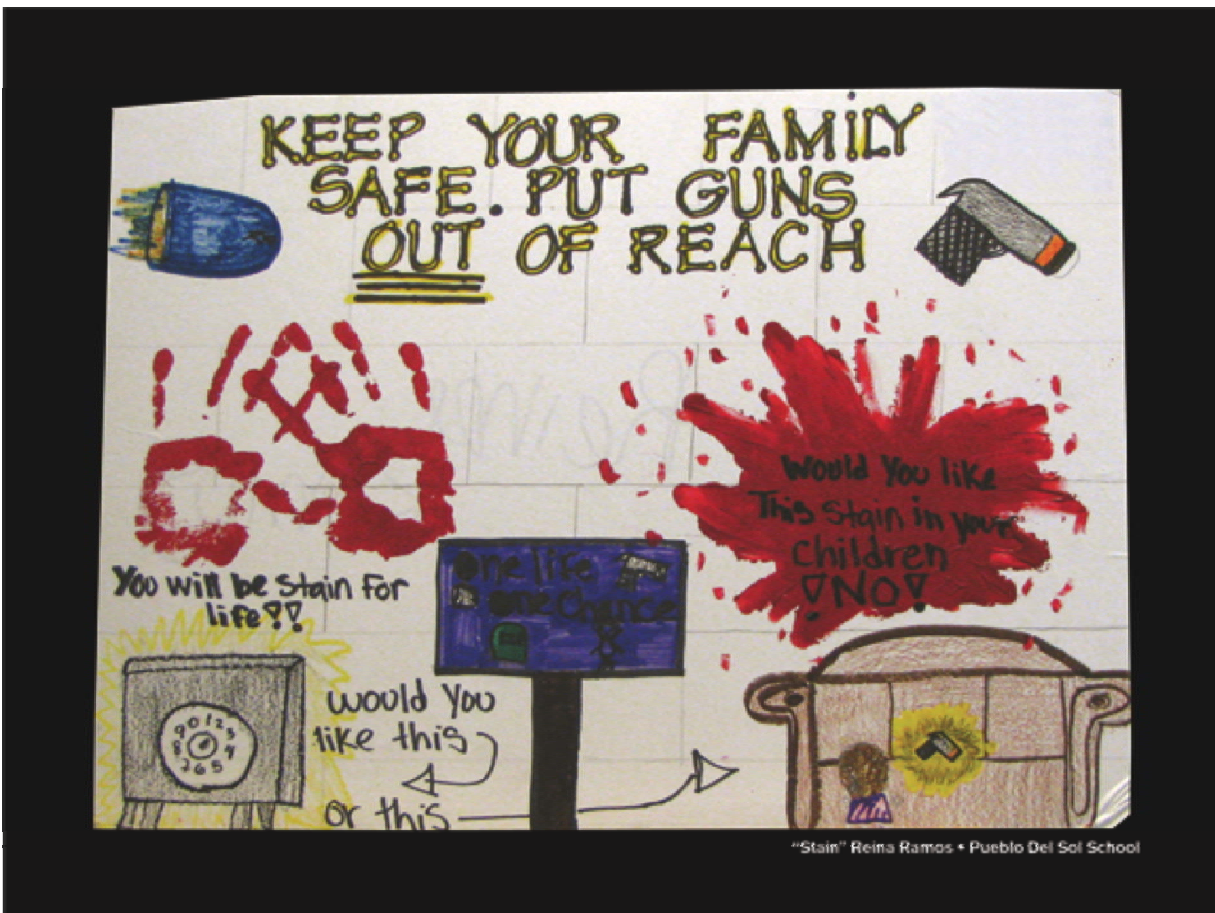


Figure 3. Percent of Homicides Among Young People 24 Years and Younger by Sex and Age Group, Arizona 2007 (n=196)

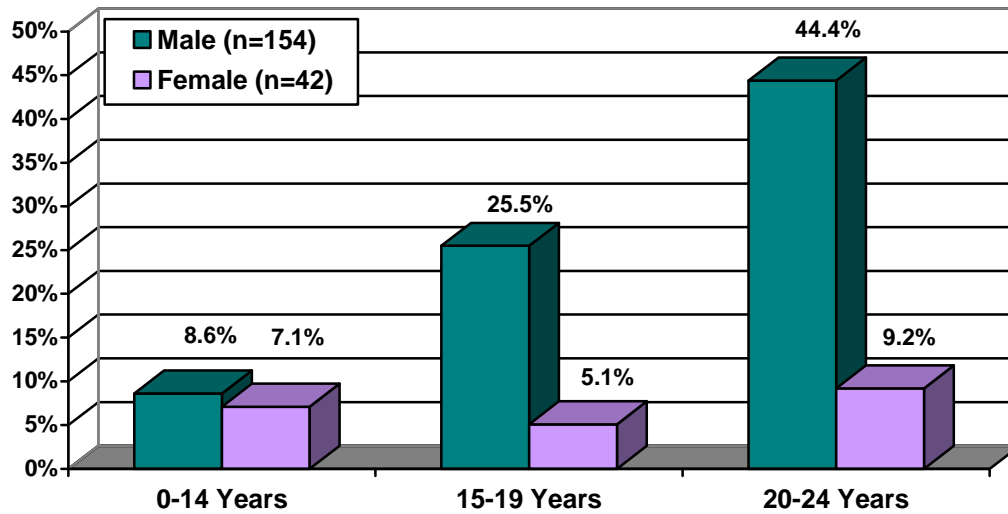
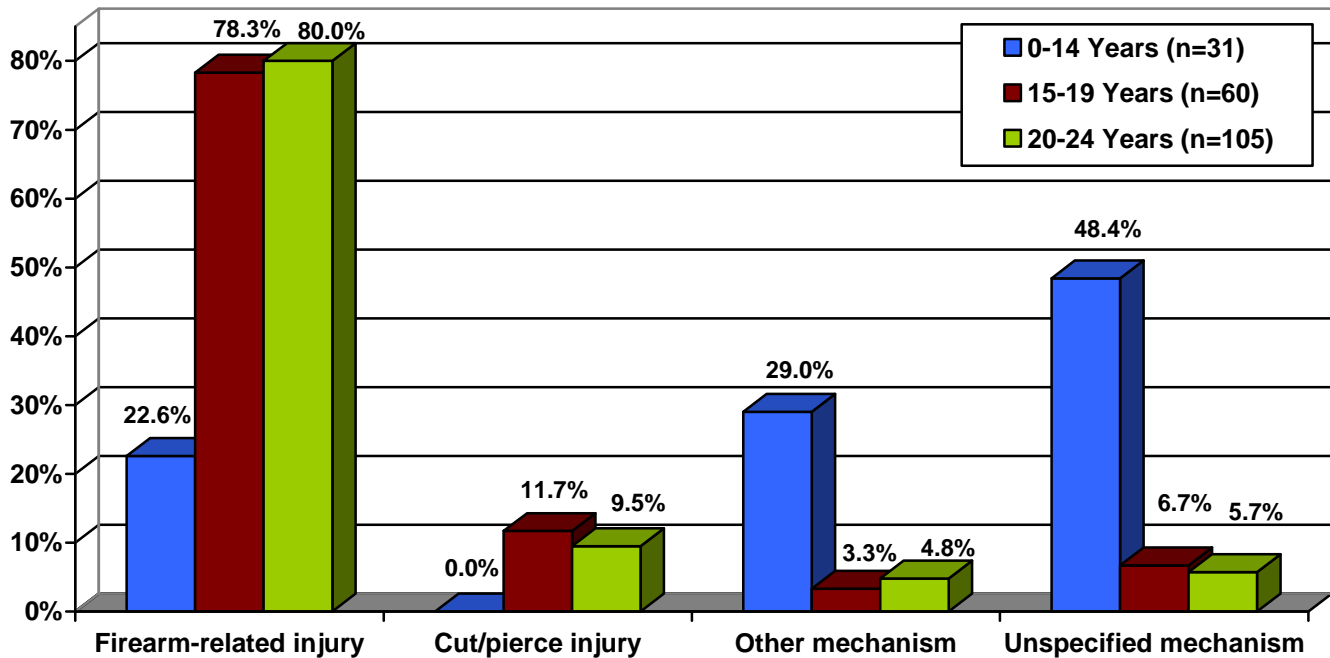
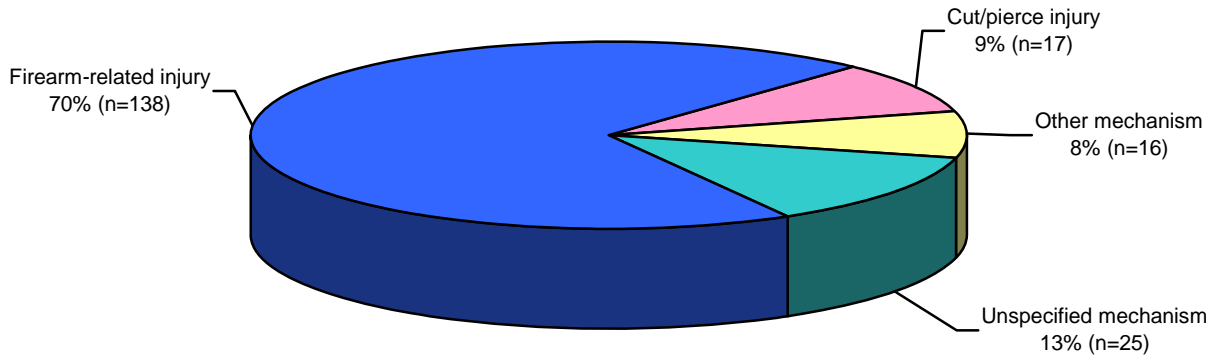


Figure 4. Percent of Homicides Involving Young People 24 Years and Younger by Mechanism of Injury and Age Group, Arizona 2007 (n=196)



Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. 2007 Mortality Database.

Figure 5. Homicides Involving Young People 24 Years and Younger by Mechanism of Injury, Arizona 2007 (n=196)



Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. 2007 Mortality Database.

Youth Violence Facts

Statewide Non-Fatal Assaults Involving Residents 24 Years and Younger

- The most common mechanisms of injury in serious assaults were firearms (33%), cutting or piercing objects (21%), unarmed fights or brawls (19%), and blunt or thrown objects (11%).
- Firearm-related injuries had the longest average hospital stay (6.9 days) and the highest average total hospital charges (\$81,166 per hospitalization).
- Young people spent a combined total of 3,334 days hospitalized for assault-related injuries, totaling \$36.3 million in hospital charges.
- Young people with less serious assault-related injuries accrued \$19.6 million in hospital charges for emergency department visits.

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services.
2007 Mortality Database, 2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

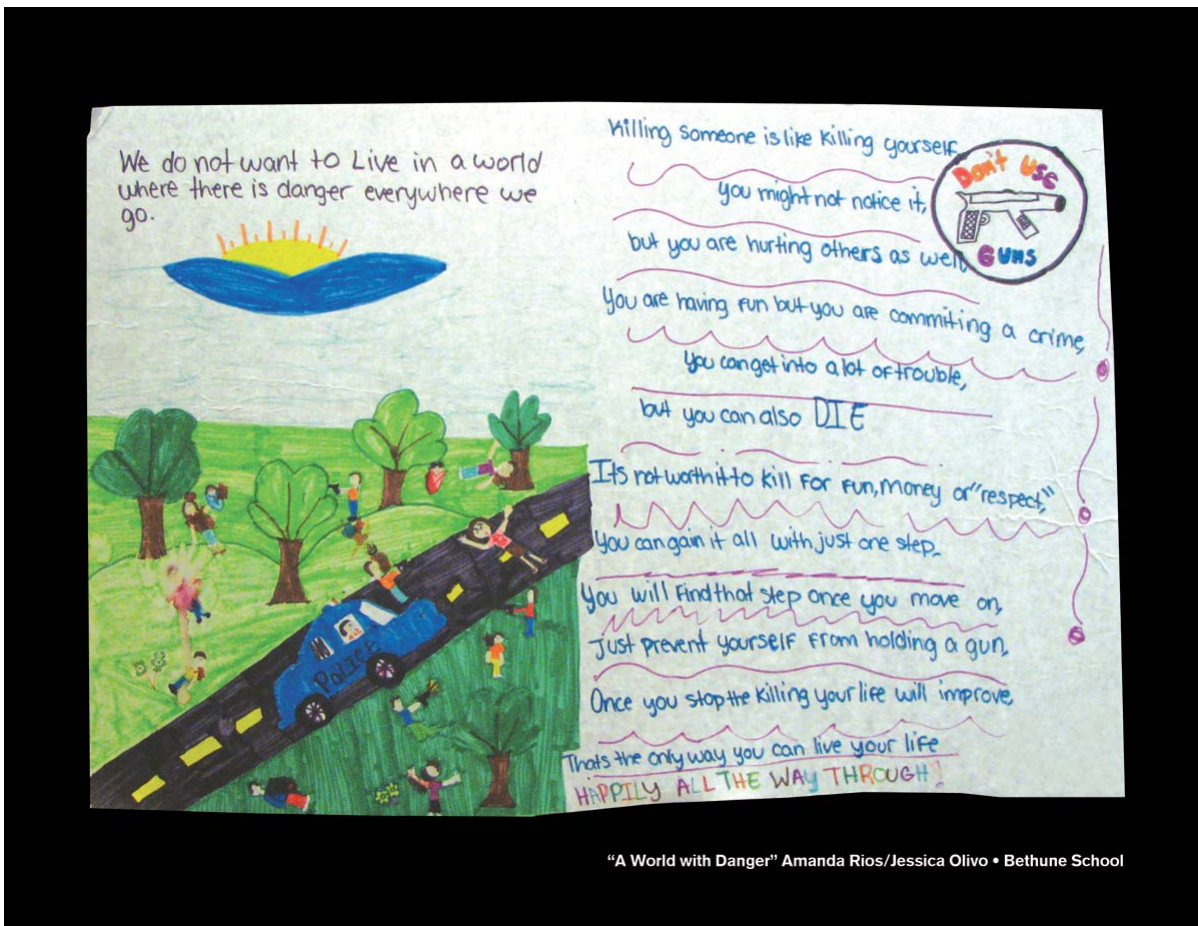


Figure 6. Non-Fatal Inpatient Hospitalizations due to Assaults by Mechanism of Injury, Arizona 2007 (n=713)

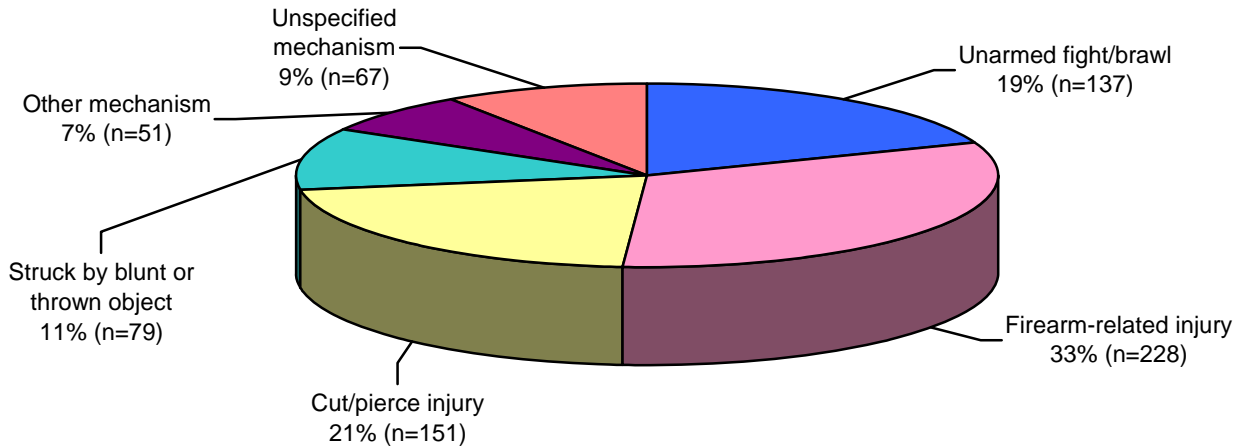
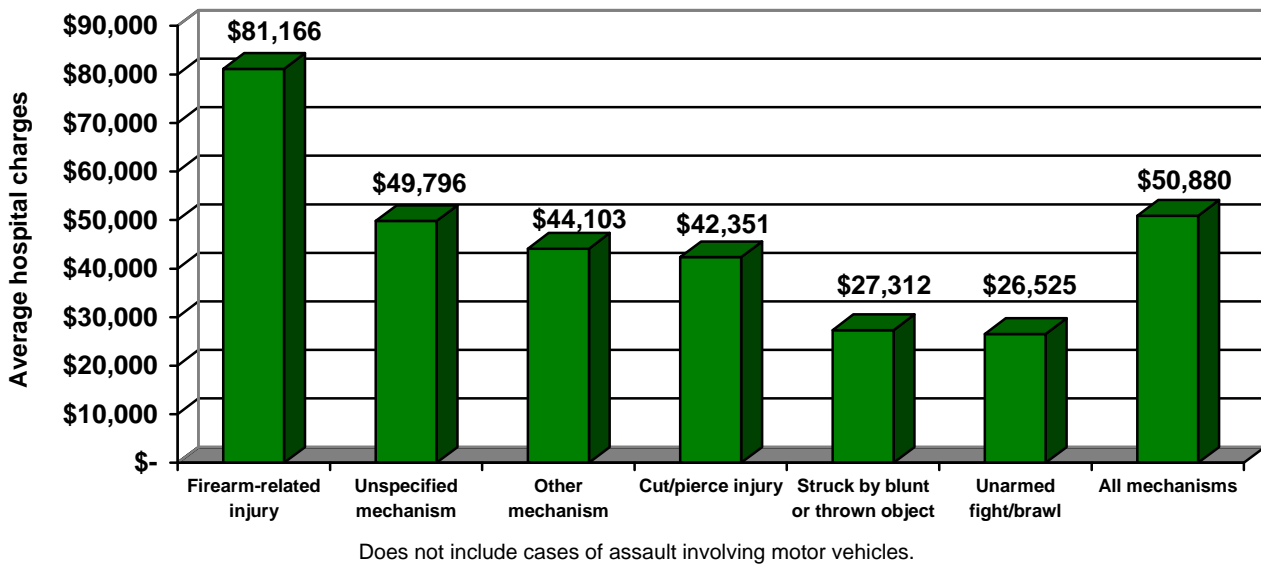


Figure 7. Average Total Hospital Charges for Non-Fatal Inpatient Hospitalizations for Assaults Among Residents 24 Years and Younger by Mechanism of Injury, Arizona 2007 (n=713)



Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. 2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

Youth Violence Facts

Firearm-Related Deaths and Injuries Involving Arizona Teens 15-19 Years of Age

- A total of 71 teens 15-19 years old died from firearm-related injuries in 2007.
- Most teen firearm deaths (68%) were due to homicide, 24% were due to suicide, and 2% resulted from unintentional injuries.
- Over half (52%) of teen firearm deaths were among Hispanic youth and 15% were among African American youth – both percentages are substantially higher than the proportion of these teens in the general population.
- The firearm-related death rate for Arizona teens 15-19 years was 16.0 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2007. In comparison, the firearm death rate for all Americans in 2006 was 10.3 deaths per 100,000 residents. The 2007 firearm death rate for all Arizonans was 14.3 deaths per 100,000 residents.
- There were 59 non-fatal hospitalizations among teens 15-19 years due to serious firearm-related injuries.
- There were another 232 emergency department visits by teens 15-19 years due to less serious firearm-related injuries.

Comparing Teen Firearm-Related Deaths to All Firearm-Related Deaths Among All Arizonans

Table 1. Firearm-Related Deaths to Teens 15-19 Years and All Arizonans by Intent and Race/Ethnicity, Arizona 2007 (n=71)		
Intent	Teen Firearm-Related Deaths	All Firearm-Related Deaths
Homicide	65%	36%
Suicide	24%	58%
Unintentional Injuries	2%	1%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic	52%	30%
White, Non-Hispanic	30%	59%
African American	15%	7%
Native American	3%	3%

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. 2007 Mortality Database, 2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

Rates of Firearm-Related Violence, Arizona Compared to the United States

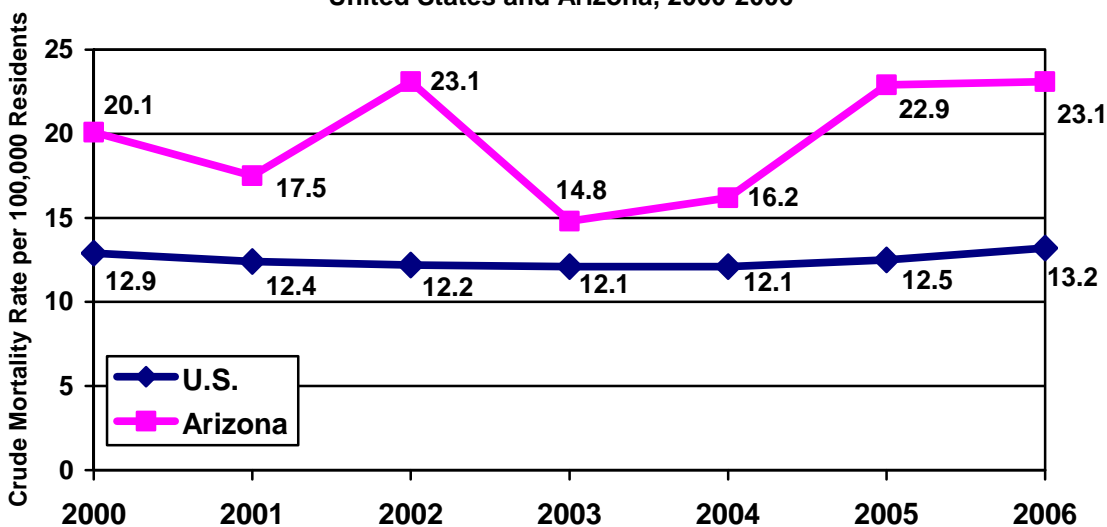
United States⁴

- 30,896 firearm-related deaths of any intent in 2006
- 10.3 firearm-related deaths per 100,000 (all ages, crude rate)
- 13.2 teen firearm-related deaths per 100,000 (15-19 year olds)
- 69,863 non-fatal firearm-related injuries in 2007

Arizona

- 921 firearm-related deaths of any intent in 2007
- 14.3 firearm-related deaths per 100,000 (all ages)
- 16.0 teen firearm-related deaths per 100,000 (15-19 year olds)
- 1,611 non-fatal firearm-related injuries in 2007

Figure 8. Firearm-Related Deaths Among Teens 15-19 Years Old, United States and Arizona, 2000-2006



Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. 2007 Mortality Database, 2007 Hospital Discharge Database. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WISQARS. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>.

⁴ 2006 is the latest national data available for firearm-related fatalities.

Youth Violence Facts

Firearm-Related Deaths and Injuries Involving Children Under 18 Years

- A total of 48 children died in Arizona from firearm-related injuries in 2007.
- 83% of the firearm-related deaths among children in Arizona involved a handgun.
- In 25% of the firearm-related deaths among children, the owner of the fatal weapon was the victim's parent or step-parent.
- In 21% of the firearm-related deaths among children in Arizona, the owner of the fatal firearm was a friend or relative of the victim.
- There were 76 hospitalizations among children younger than 18 years as a result of serious, but non-fatal, firearm-related injuries.
- There were an additional 133 emergency department visits by children younger than 18 years for less serious firearm-related injuries.

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. (2009).
15th Annual Report on 2007 Deaths. Phoenix, AZ.
Retrieved from <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/pdf/cfr2008.pdf>.
2007 Hospital Discharge Database.

Firearm-Related Deaths Involving Children Younger Than 18 Years, 2007 (n=48)

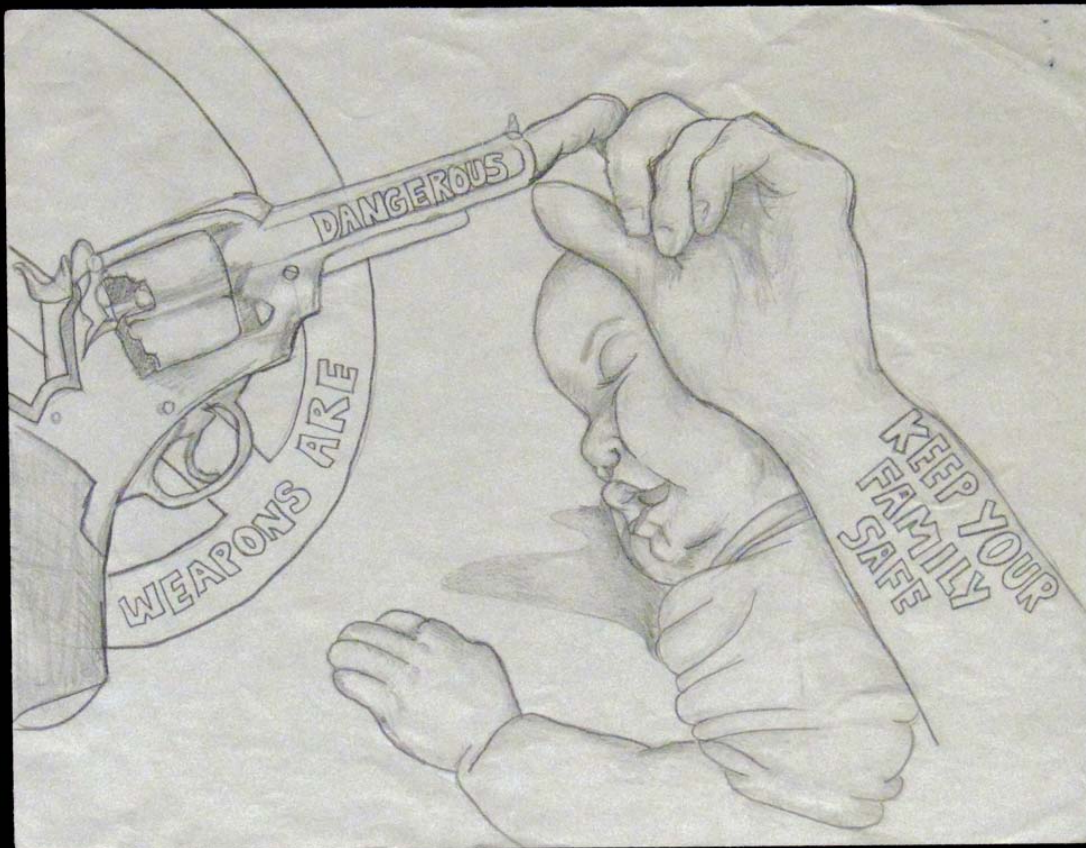
Type of Firearm Involved

Handgun	83%
Shotgun	6%
Assault Rifle	4%
Hunting Rifle	2%

Owner of Firearm Involved

Parent/Step-parent	25%
Friend/Acquaintance	13%
Other Relative	8%

Data Source: Arizona Department of Health Services. (2009).
15th Annual Report on 2007 Deaths. Phoenix, AZ.
Retrieved from <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/pdf/cfr2008.pdf>.



"Weapons are Dangerous" Jennifer Tanori • Pueblo Del Sol School

Youth Involved in Violence: The Criminal Justice Perspective

Moving away from victims of violence, the following data show total arrest numbers of youth up to 24 years of age suspected of Part I violent crimes and various other crimes in Arizona. The following excerpt from the *2007 Crime in Arizona Report* must be noted regarding the data:

It should be kept in mind that arrest totals do not indicate the number of different offenders involved in the commission of a crime...Also, arrest totals do not indicate the number of charges placed against an offender at the time of the arrest. (p.10)

All data found in this section comes from the Arizona Department of Public Safety's *Crime in Arizona Report (2003-2007)*.

Youth Violence Facts

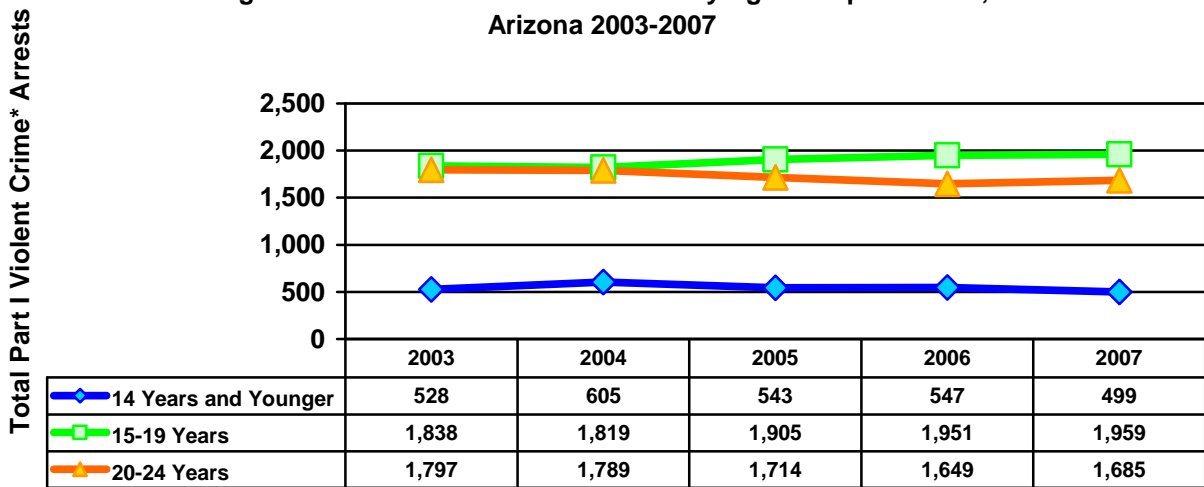
Arizona Youth Involved in Violent Crime In 2007

- A total of 4,143 arrests for Part I violent crimes* involved people 24 years and younger. These youth arrests represented 47% of all Part I violent crime arrests in 2007.
- More than 47% of the youth-involved Part I violent crime* arrests involved teens 15-19 years old in 2007.
- 125 arrests for murder/non-negligent manslaughter involved young people 24 years and younger, representing 42% of all murder/non-negligent manslaughter arrests in 2007.
- The majority of murder/non-negligent manslaughter arrests involved young people 20-24 years old (59%, n=74), followed by teens 15-19 years old (39%, n=49).
- In 2007, young people were involved in 2,043 arrests for weapons offenses (carrying, possessing, attempts, etc.), 2,785 arrests for aggravated assaults and 10,582 arrests for simple assaults.
- Overall, youth-involved arrests for Part I violent crimes* decreased 0.5% from 2003 to 2007. During this same time period however, Part I violent crime arrests involving teens 15-19 years old increased 6.6% and were higher than other youth age groups by 2007.

* Part I violent crimes include murder/non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

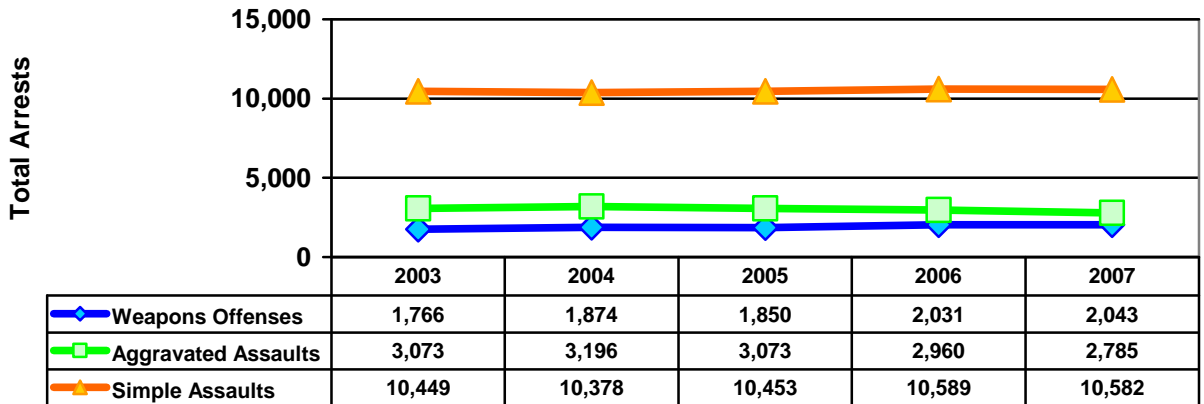
Data Source: Arizona Department of Public Safety. (2003-2007).
Crime in Arizona Report. Phoenix, AZ.
Retrieved from <http://www.azdps.gov/crimereport/default.asp>.

Figure 9. Part I Violent Crime* Arrests by Age Group and Year, Arizona 2003-2007



* Part I violent crimes include murder/non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Figure 10. Arrests Among Youths 24 Years and Younger for Weapons Offenses, Aggravated Assaults, and Simple Assaults by Year, Arizona 2003-2007



Data Source: Arizona Department of Public Safety. (2003-2007).
Crime in Arizona Report. Phoenix, AZ: Author.
 Retrieved from <http://www.azdps.gov/crimereport/default.asp>.

Figure 11. Aggravated and Simple Assault Arrests by Age Group, Arizona 2007 (n=31,559)

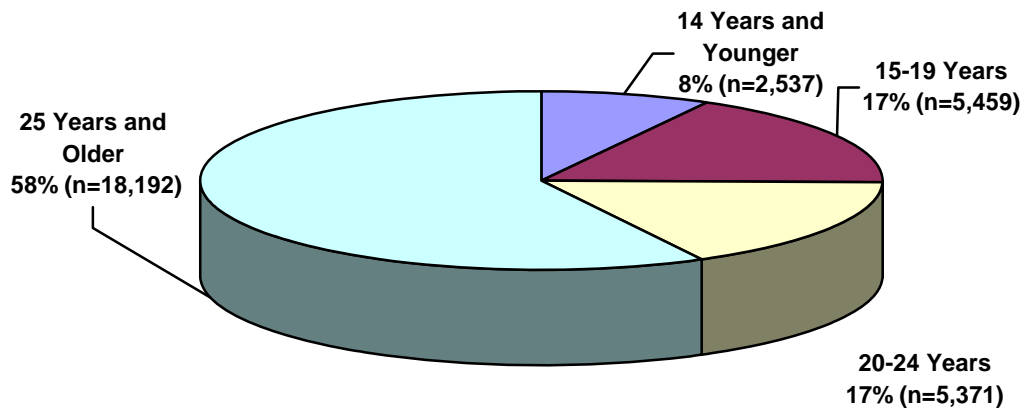
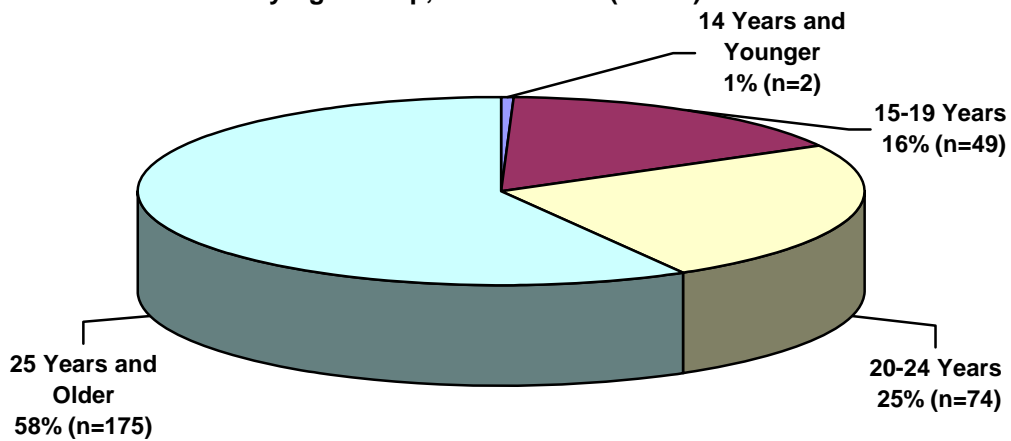


Figure 12. Murder/Non-Negligent Manslaughter Arrests by Age Group, Arizona 2007 (n=300)



Data Source: Arizona Department of Public Safety. (2003-2007).
Crime in Arizona Report. Phoenix, AZ: Author.
 Retrieved from <http://www.azdps.gov/crimereport/default.asp>.

Resources

- **Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
<http://www.azcadv.org>
Contact the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence for a toolkit of information and prevention strategies regarding teen dating violence.
- **Arizona Firearm Injury Prevention Coalition**
<http://www.afipc.org/>
This website offers information and statistics specific to Arizona, and the coalition provides free firearm locks.
- **Arizonans for Gun Safety**
<http://www.azfgs.com/>
Arizonans for Gun Safety offers outreach materials and programs, including training for middle and high school students.
- **Break The Cycle**
<http://www.breakthecycle.org/resources.html>
Break the Cycle offers a curriculum and informational downloads on dating and domestic violence.
- **CeaseFire**
<http://www.ceasefirechicago.org/>
The CeaseFire campaign originated in Chicago as a public health model for reducing firearm violence.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control**
<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/index.html>
The CDC's NCIPC serves as a national resource on various violence-related focus areas, including youth and school violence.
- **Common Sense About Kids And Guns**
<http://www.kidsandguns.org/>
This website offers an extensive resource database, action steps for community members, and tips for safe firearm ownership.
- **National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center**
<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/index.asp>
This federally-sponsored website includes statistics, reports, articles, and links to violence prevention program models.
- **United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**
http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/gun_violence/contents.html
The OJJDP has compiled a list of promising practices, including contact information and details about particular programs.
- **Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY)**
<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/unity.html>
The well-respected UNITY model provides assessment and evaluation tools, as well as program curricula aimed at metropolitan populations.

Appendix A: Sample Fact Sheet

Youth Violence Facts The Impact of Violence on Youth, Families, and Communities

Background:

The Injury Prevention Advisory Council Subcommittee on Violence prepared a report on youth violence in Arizona. The group used health care and criminal justice data to compile a comprehensive statistical picture of youth violence in Arizona.

Key Findings:

Incidence:

- ◆ A total of 8,342 assaults occurred to people aged 24 and younger in 2007.
- ◆ 713 of the total assaults resulted in serious injuries that warranted hospitalization.
- ◆ 196 of the total assaults resulted in death.

Victims:

- ◆ In most youth homicides, the victim was male (78.6%), aged 20-24 years (53.5%). Victims aged 15-19 comprised 30.6% of the homicides among youth.
- ◆ Over half (52%) of teen firearm-related deaths involved Hispanic youth and 15% involved African American youth; both rates are substantially higher than their percentages in the general population.

Mechanism:

- ◆ Firearms were the most common mechanism of injury in both serious non-fatal assaults (33%) and homicides (70%).

The Financial Cost:

- ◆ Arizonans 24 years and younger spent a total of 3,334 days hospitalized as the result of non-fatal assault-related injuries. Hospital charges for these assaults totaled \$36.3M.
- ◆ An additional \$19.6M in hospital charges was accrued for non-fatal assault-related emergency department visits in 2007.

Recommendations:

Practical solutions to youth violence start with a belief in prevention and an understanding of the problem. Communities should develop an array of strategies and programs to break down their particular barriers and to meet their particular needs. A broad-based coalition involving community leaders, law enforcement, social service providers, faith-based leaders, schools, and parents can develop a multi-faceted approach. Youth should be involved in the planning process, as they are the experts on their situation. An analysis of risk and protective factors can help ascertain community assets and pitfalls and can guide prevention work.

Visit www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch to access the full report, including resources.