



# Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: 2022 National Report

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# Chapter 2

## Youth victims

## 2

This chapter summarizes what is known about the prevalence and incidence of youth victimizations. It answers important questions to assist policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and concerned citizens in developing policies and programs to ensure the safety and well-being of children. How many children are abused and neglected? What are the trends in child maltreatment? How often are youth the victims of crime? How many children are victims of crime at school and what are the characteristics of school crime? When and where are youth most likely to become victims of crime? How many youth are murdered each year? How often are firearms involved in youth murders and who are their offenders? How many youth commit suicide?

Research has shown that child victimization and abuse are linked to negative outcomes, such as antisocial and

criminal behavior. So an understanding of childhood victimization and its trends may lead to a better understanding of youth offending.

Data sources include child maltreatment data reported by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, and foster care and adoption information from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. Self-reported victimization data are presented from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey and its School Crime Supplement, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Official victimization data is reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System and its Supplementary Homicide Reporting Program. Suicide information is presented from the National Center for Health Statistics.

# In 2019, child protective services agencies received about 84,600 maltreatment referrals each week

## The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System monitors 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 voluntarily submitted by state child protective services (CPS) agencies. The Children's Bureau annually collects and analyzes both summary and case-level data reported to

NCANDS. For 2019, 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico reported case-level data on all children who received an investigation or assessment by a CPS agency. 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 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 more than one child. This is a measure of "flow" into the CPS system.

**Report:** A referral of child maltreatment that was accepted, or "screened in," for an investigative response or an alternative response 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 and to determine if a CPS response is needed. An investigation typically involves an in-person meeting with the alleged child victim and results in a disposition as to whether or not the alleged maltreatment occurred.

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

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

**Alleged perpetrator:** Person who is named in a referral to have caused or knowingly allowed the maltreatment of a child.

**Victim:** A child having a maltreatment disposition of substantiated or indicated. This includes a child who died and the death was confirmed to be the result of child abuse and neglect.

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

**Substantiated:** An 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.

**Unsubstantiated:** An investigation disposition that determines that there is insufficient evidence under state law to conclude or suspect that the child has been maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment.

**Indicated:** A disposition that concludes that maltreatment could not 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. Few states distinguish between substantiated and indicated dispositions.

**Alternative response:** The provision of a response other than an investigation that determines a child or family is in need of services. A determination of maltreatment is not made and a perpetrator is not determined.

**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.

## In 2019, referrals were made to CPS agencies at a rate of 59 per 1,000 children

In 2019, CPS agencies in the U.S. received an estimated 4.4 million referrals alleging that children were abused or neglected. An estimated 7.9 million children were included in these referrals. This translates to a rate of 59 referrals for every 1,000 children younger than 18 in the U.S. population. The 2019 rate was 14% above the referral rate in 2015 (52.3).

## Professionals were the most common source of maltreatment reports

Professionals who come into 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 (69%).

Profile of maltreatment reports, 2019:

Source	Percent of reports
<b>Professional</b>	<b>68.5%</b>
Educator	21.0
Law enforcement	19.1
Medical	11.0
Social services	10.3
Mental health	6.0
Child daycare provider	0.7
Foster care provider	0.4
<b>Family and community</b>	<b>21.8</b>
Parents	5.9
Other relatives	5.9
Friend or neighbor	3.5
Anonymous	6.5
<b>Other*</b>	<b>9.6</b>

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

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

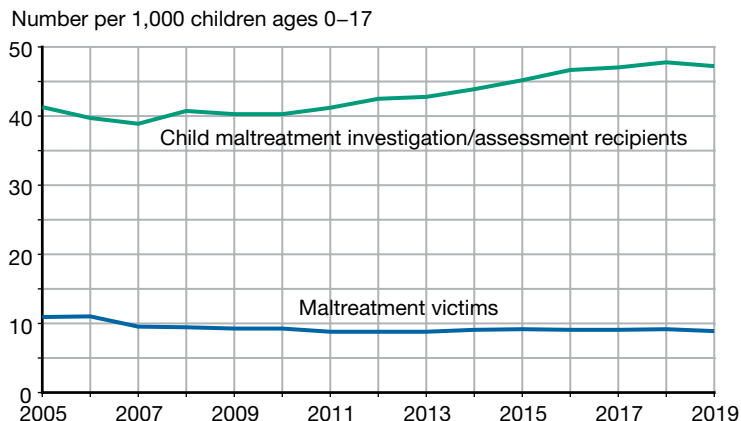
**The typical CPS response time was 4 days in 2019**

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 several days. In 2019, the average response time for states that reported this information was 4.3 days.

**CPS investigated or provided an alternative response to more than half of all referrals**

In 2019, CPS agencies screened in 54% of all referrals received. Thus, CPS agencies conducted investigations or alternative responses for more than 1.9 million reports in 2019. 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

**The child maltreatment response rate increased 17% in the last 10 years, while the maltreatment victimization rate changed little**



- In 2019, CPS agencies responded to reports involving nearly 3.5 million unique child victims, or 47.2 per 1,000 children ages 0–17 in the United States. These responses included formal investigations, family assessments, and other alternative responses.
- An estimated 656,000 unique children were found to be victims—19% of all children who received an investigation or assessment in 2019.
- The national child victimization rate in 2019 was 8.9 victims per 1,000 children ages 0–17, 4% below the rate 10 years prior.

Note: a child was counted once regardless of the number of times they received a CPS response or the number of times they were found to be a victim during the reporting year.

Sources: Authors’ adaptation of the Children’s Bureau’s (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) annual *Child Maltreatment Reports* for 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2015–2019.

and terminology vary but generally fall into the following categories: substantiated, indicated, alternative response (victim and nonvictim), and unsubstantiated (see the box on the previous page).

**Most subjects of reports are found to be nonvictims**

Of children who were the subject of at least one report of maltreatment, most were found to be nonvictims: 56.5% had dispositions of unsubstantiated, 10.6% had dispositions of no alleged maltreatment, and 13.8% had dispositions of alternative response. About one in six (17%) children who were the subject of at least one report were

found to be victims of maltreatment. The most common disposition for victims of maltreatment was substantiated (16%), and 1% of victims received a disposition of indicated.

**The average CPS investigator handled about 71 reports in 2019**

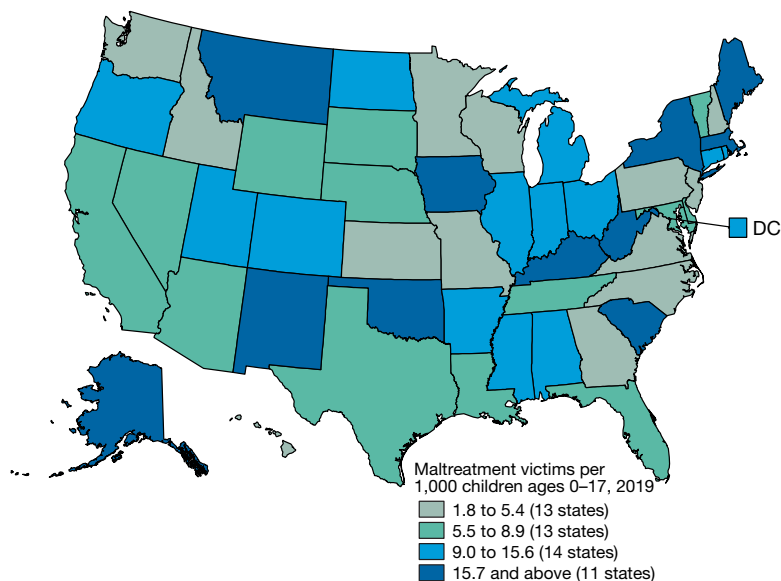
In most sizable jurisdictions, different CPS personnel perform screening and investigation functions. In smaller agencies, one staff person may perform both functions. In 2019, the average yearly number of investigations or assessments per investigation worker was 71. Among states with specialized screening and investigation workers, the investigation workers outnumbered

the screening workers nearly 6 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 type of maltreatment for victims in 2019

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, 10% were physically abused, 7% were sexually abused, 2% psychologically or emotionally maltreated, and 4% experienced other forms of maltreatment, such as threats of harm, abandonment, and congenital drug addiction. Child victims of multiple forms of maltreatment accounted for about 16% of victims in 2019. Thirty states and the District of Columbia reported that more than 50% of victims experienced neglect in 2019.

### Child victimization rates varied considerably by state in 2019



- State-level child maltreatment victimization rates ranged from a low of 1.8 per 1,000 children ages 0–17 in Pennsylvania to a high of 20.1 in Kentucky.
- 26 states had child maltreatment victimization rates below the national average (8.9).

Note: a child was counted once regardless of the number of times they received a CPS response or the number of times they were found to be a victim during the reporting year.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) annual *Child Maltreatment Reports* for 2019.

### There are several different types of child maltreatment

Child maltreatment occurs when a caretaker (a parent or parental substitute, such as a babysitter) is responsible for, or permits, the abuse or neglect of a child. The maltreatment can result in actual physical or emotional harm, or it can place the child in danger of physical or emotional harm. A child may be a victim of multiple types of maltreatment. The following types of maltreatment are collected as part of NCANDS.

**Medical neglect:** caused by failure of the caregiver to provide for the appropriate health care of the child although financially able to do so, or offered financial or other resources to do so.

**Neglect or deprivation of necessities:** failure by the caregiver to provide needed, age-appropriate care although financially able to do so or offered financial or other means to do so. This includes not meeting a child's educational needs.

**Physical abuse:** includes physical acts that caused or could have caused physical injury to the child, including excessive corporal punishment.

**Psychological or emotional maltreatment:** acts or omissions, other than physical abuse or sexual abuse, that caused or could have caused conduct, cognitive, affective, or other behavioral or mental disorders. Frequently occurs as verbal abuse or excessive demands on a child's performance.

**Sexual abuse:** the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator, including contacts for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, or other sexually exploitative activities.

**Sex trafficking:** refers to the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. States have the option to report to NCANDS any sex trafficking victim who is younger than 24 years. Prior to 2018, sex trafficking was reported as a form of sexual abuse.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) annual *Child Maltreatment Reports* for 2019.

# Maltreatment victimization rates were highest for girls, children under age 1, and American Indian children

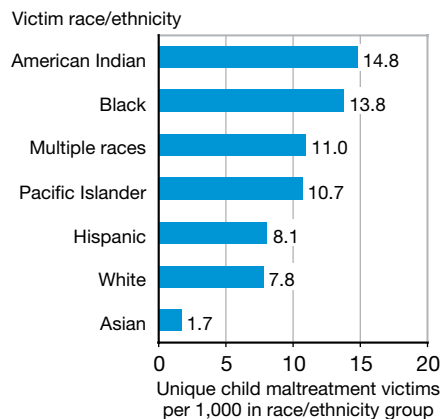
## Girls are more likely to experience maltreatment than boys

More than half (51%) of victims of child maltreatment in 2019 were female. The victimization rate for girls was 9.4 per 1,000 girls younger than age 18, and the rate for boys was 8.4 per 1,000 boys younger than age 18.

## White children accounted for the largest share of maltreatment victims

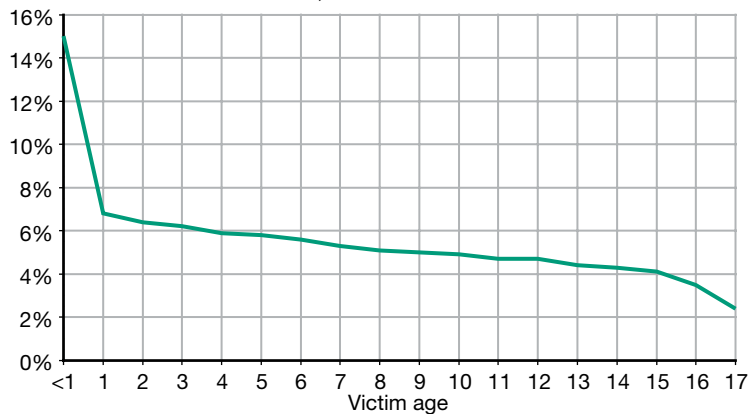
In 2019, most victims of maltreatment were White (44%) children, followed by Hispanic (23%) and Black (21%). Children of multiple races (5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.2%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (1%) children accounted for a substantially smaller proportion of victims.

American Indian/Alaskan Native children had the highest child maltreatment victimization rate in 2019, 14.8 per 1,000 children, followed closely by Black children (13.8). The rate for American Indian/Alaskan Native children was nearly twice the rate for Hispanic (8.1) and White children (7.8).



## More than one-third of child victims of maltreatment in 2019 were younger than age 4

Percent of maltreatment victims, 2019



- In 2019, infants younger than 1 accounted for 15% of victims of maltreatment, 1-year-olds accounted for 7%, and youth ages 2–6 each accounted for 6%—about the proportion expected if victimizations were spread evenly over all ages. Youth ages 16 and 17 accounted for relatively small proportions (3% and 2%, respectively).
- Victimization rates for infants younger than age 1 (25.7 per 1,000 children) were twice the rates for youth ages 1–6, triple the rates for youth ages 7–14, and 4 to 6 times the rates for youth ages 15–17.

Note: a child was counted once regardless of the number of times they received a CPS response or the number of times they were found to be a victim during the reporting year.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) annual *Child Maltreatment Reports* for 2019.

## What is known about child victims of sex trafficking?

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to require states update their current definitions of child abuse and neglect to include victims of sex trafficking to continue receiving CAPTA funding. Specifically, the Act requires that states make a finding of “child abuse and neglect” and “sexual abuse” if the child is also found to be a victim of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is a type of maltreatment that refers to the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

who is younger than age 24. At the end of the 2019 federal fiscal year, 877 unique victims were reported to NCANDS by 29 states. Based on these reports:

- Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) victims were female, and 76% of victims were ages 14–17.
- Half of all victims of sex trafficking were not victims of other forms of maltreatment. Among those that did experience other forms, the two most common types were sexual abuse and neglect.
- For most victims (51%), the relationship to the perpetrator was unknown, in 41% it was a nonparent, and in 14% a parent.

States have the option to report to NCANDS any sex trafficking victim





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

## There were more than 525,300 known perpetrators in 2019

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 generally do not come to the attention of child protective services agencies, but rather would be handled by law enforcement.

In 2019, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) identified 525,319 unique perpetrators of child maltreatment. A perpetrator was counted once, regardless of the number of children the perpetrator was associated with maltreating or the number of records associated with a perpetrator.

## Women are overrepresented among maltreatment perpetrators

Compared with 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 95% of childcare providers and 99% of preschool and kindergarten teachers. They also make up 85% of healthcare support occupations. In 2019, females made up more than half of maltreatment perpetrators (53%).

More than two-thirds (69%) of perpetrators in 2019 were adults ages 25–44, while 17% were under age 25.

### Profile of maltreatment perpetrators, 2019:

Perpetrator age	Percent of perpetrators
Total	100%
Younger than 18	2
Ages 18–24	15
Ages 25–34	42
Ages 35–44	27
Ages 45–54	9
Age 55 and older	4
Unknown age	2

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Nearly half of perpetrators were White (49%), about one-fifth were Black (21%), and one-fifth were Hispanic. This distribution is similar to the race profile of victims of child maltreatment.

### Profile of maltreatment perpetrators, 2019:

Perpetrator race/ethnicity	Percent of perpetrators
Total	100%
White	49
Black	21
Hispanic	20
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	1
Multiple race	2
Unknown/missing	6

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

## Parents are the most common perpetrators of abuse and neglect

The overwhelming majority (78%) of perpetrators in 2019 were a parent to the victim; relatives (7%) accounted for the most common nonparent perpetrator relationship, followed by other nonparental relationships (e.g., friends, neighbors, and legal guardians).

### Profile of maltreatment perpetrators, 2019:

Perpetrator relationship to victim	Percent of perpetrators
Total	100%
Parent	78
Other relative	6
Unmarried partner of parent	3
Other nonparent*	5
Professional**	1
Multiple relationships***	4
Unknown/missing	2

\*Other nonparent includes friends, neighbors, legal guardians, and nonrelative foster parents.

\*\*Professional includes adults who care for children as part of their employment duties, such as child daycare providers, foster parents, group home staff, and other professionals.

\*\*\*Multiple relationships include perpetrators with different relationships to child victims, e.g., a perpetrator may be the parent of one victim in a report but have a different relationship to another child victim in the same report.

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

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

## Child fatalities have increased since 2015

In 2019, an estimated 1,840 children died as a result of some form of maltreatment, 11% more than the 1,660 child fatality victims reported in 2015. The number of fatality victims in 2019 corresponds to a rate of 2.5 fatalities for every 100,000 children under the age of 18, compared with a rate of 2.2 in 2015.

Child fatalities, 2019:

Year	Estimated number	Rate (per 100,000)
2019	1,840	2.5
2018	1,780	2.4
2017	1,710	2.3
2016	1,730	2.3
2015	1,660	2.2

## Children younger than age 4 accounted for more than three-quarters of maltreatment fatalities

Although children younger than 1 year old were just 15% of all maltreatment victims in 2019, they accounted for 46% of maltreatment fatalities. Similarly, children ages 1–3 were 19% of all victims but 31% of maltreatment fatalities.

Profile of maltreatment victims, 2019:

Victim age	Percent of total fatalities	Percent of all victims
Total	100%	100%
Younger than 1	46	15
Age 1	14	7
Age 2	11	6
Age 3	6	6
Ages 4–7	11	23
Ages 8–11	6	20
Ages 12–15	5	17
Ages 16–17	2	6

Note: Detail may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

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

## Boys had the highest maltreatment fatality rate in 2019

Boys had a maltreatment fatality rate of 2.98 deaths per 100,000 boys of the same age in the population. For girls, the rate was 2.20 per 100,000. Although most victims of maltreatment fatalities were White (44%), Black children had the highest fatality rates, 5.08 per 100,000 black children. Asian children had the lowest fatality rate in 2019 (0.70 per 100,000 children). The fatality rate for Black children was more than twice the rate for White (2.18), American Indian/Alaskan Native (2.08), and Hispanic (1.89) children.

## Mothers were the most common perpetrators in child maltreatment fatalities

Among child fatalities in 2019, nearly 3 in 4 (73%) suffered from neglect and more than 4 in 10 (44%) experienced physical abuse, either exclusively or in combination with another maltreatment type.

The overwhelming majority (80%) of child fatalities in 2019 involved parents

acting alone, together, or with others. Mothers (acting alone or with others) were involved in 39% of fatalities, while fathers (acting alone or with others) were involved in 16%.

Profile of fatality perpetrators, 2019:

Perpetrator relationship to victim	Percent of perpetrators
Total	100%
Mother only	29
Two parents of known sex	23
Father only	14
Mother and nonparent(s)	10
Father and nonparent(s)	2
2 parents of known sex and nonparent	2
Nonparent	17
Unknown	4

Note: Detail may not sum to 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. About one-third (34%) of maltreatment fatalities had at least one previous contact with CPS in the 5 years prior to their death; 7% of child fatality victims were previously substantiated as a victim of maltreatment, 21% had a prior contact that was not substantiated, and 6% had prior contacts that received both substantiated and unsubstantiated dispositions.





# The number of children in foster care has increased 8% since 2012

## AFCARS data track trends in foster care and adoption

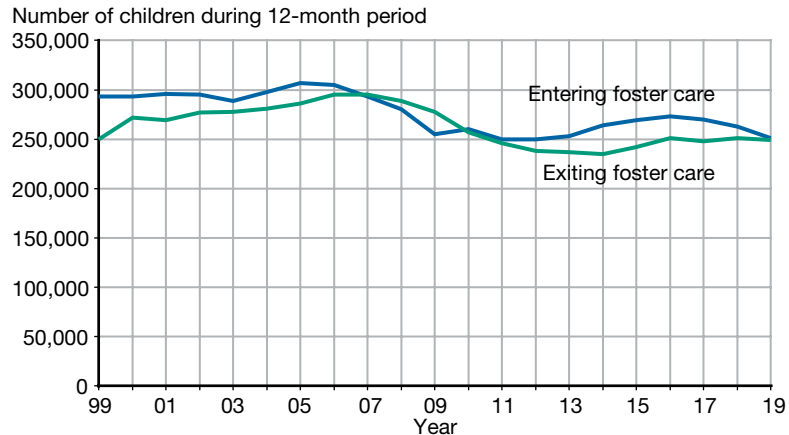
Foster care is defined in federal regulations as 24-hour substitute care for children outside their own homes. Foster care settings include, but are not limited to, family foster homes, relative foster homes (whether payments are being made or not), group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities,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

Under federal regulation, states and tribal Title IV-E agencies are required to submit data semi-annually 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. AFCARS also collects data on children who are adopted under the auspices of state public child welfare agencies, as well as information on foster and adoptive parents. Data are reported for the federal fiscal year, which runs from October 1st through September 30th.

## Nearly half of all children entering foster care were younger than 6

Children younger than 1 were the single age that accounted for the greatest share of children entering foster care—19% in 2019. Children between the ages of 1 and 5 were 30% of foster care entries in 2019, making them the largest age group of children entering foster care (of 5-year age groupings for children ages 1–20). Prior to 2005, the 11–15 age group made up the greatest share of youth entering foster care. The median age of children who entered foster care in 2019 was 6.3 years and the average age was 7.2 years. Logically, the average age of the standing foster care population is greater than the average age of children entering foster care. The median age of children in foster care in 2019 was 7.7 years and the average age was 8.4 years.

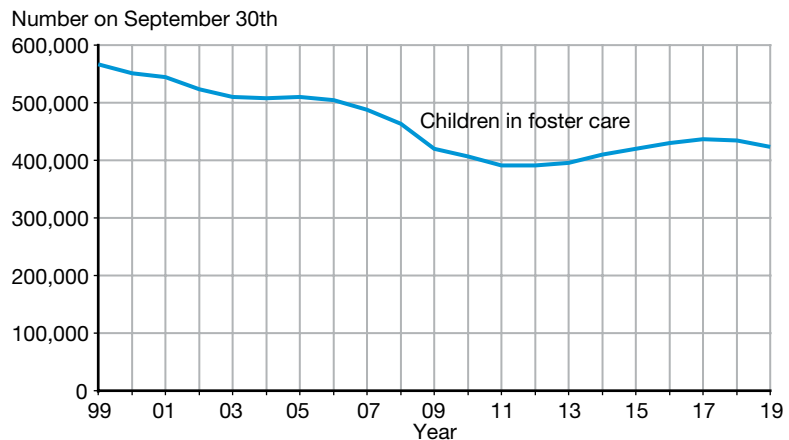
## Since 2015, foster care entries declined while exits increased



- The number of children entering foster care fell 7% between 2015 and 2019, while the number of children exiting foster care increased 3% during the same period.
- In 2019, the number of children who exited foster care (249,000) was about the same as the number of children who entered foster care (251,000).
- The number of children entering foster care decreased 18% since its peak of 305,000 in 2005 and the number of children exiting declined 16% from its 2007 peak (295,000).

Sources: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) AFCARS Report Final Estimates for FY1998 through FY2002; Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY2002–FY2012; and Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY2010–FY2019.

## The number of children in foster care has grown in recent years



- An estimated 424,000 children remained in foster care on September 30, 2019, 25% fewer than the 1999 peak of 567,000 but 8% more than the 2012 low point (392,000).

Sources: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) AFCARS Report Final Estimates for FY1998 through FY2002; Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY2002–FY2012; and Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FY2010–FY2019.

Profile of children entering foster care:

Age	2000	2010	2019
Total	100%	100%	100%
Younger than 1	13	16	19
1 to 5	24	31	30
6 to 10	20	18	21
11 to 15	30	23	21
16 to 20	11	12	9

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

**Black, Hispanic and mixed race children were overrepresented in foster care**

In 2019, Hispanic (25%), Black (14%), and mixed race (4%) children combined to account for 43% of the U.S. population ages 0–20. In comparison, 52% of children in foster care in 2019 were Black (23%), Hispanic (21%), or mixed race (8%). The proportion of the foster care population involving White and mixed race children has grown since 2010, while the proportion involving Black children has declined.

Profile of children, 2019:

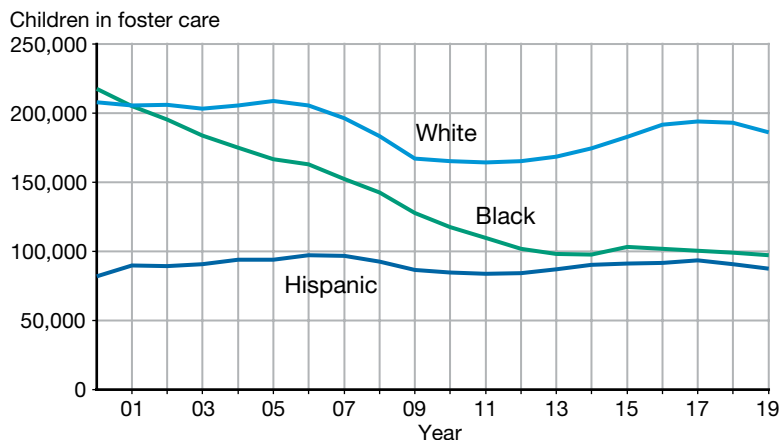
Race/ethnicity	In foster care	U.S. population
All races	100%	100%
White	44	51
Black	23	14
Hispanic	21	25
American Indian	2	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	5
Mixed race	8	4

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

**Half of children in foster care on September 30, 2019, entered one year prior**

On September 30, 2019, half of children in foster care had been in care for at least 13 months. This is down from the median time in both 2005 (15.5 months) and 2000 (19.8 months).

**The number of Black children in foster care was cut in half between 2000 and 2019**



- On September 30, 2019, 97,142 Black children were in foster care, 55% fewer than the number in foster care in 2000.
- While the total number of youth in foster care fell 25% from 2000 to 2019, Black children accounted for more than 80% of this decrease.

Sources: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) *The AFCARS Report: Final Estimates for FY1998 through FY2002*; and *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary Estimates*, for fiscal years 2003–2019.

Profile of children in foster care:

Length of stay in foster care	2000	2010	2019
Total	100%	100%	100%
Less than 1 month	4	5	5
1–5 months	16	21	21
6–11 months	15	19	20
12–17 months	12	13	16
18–23 months	9	9	11
24–35 months	13	12	13
3–4 years	15	11	9
5 years or more	17	11	5

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

**Reunification was the permanency goal for most foster care children**

In 2019, more than half of children in foster care (55%) had a permanency goal of reunification with their parents and more than one-fourth (28%) had a

goal of adoption. The proportion of children without a permanency goal changed considerably from 2000 to 2019. In 2000, 17% of children in foster care did not yet have permanency goals; by 2019, 4% of children in foster care did not have permanency goals.

Profile of children in foster care:

Permanency goal	2000	2010	2019
Total	100%	100%	100%
Reunification with parents	41	51	55
Adoption	21	25	28
Emancipation	6	6	4
Guardianship	3	4	4
Live with other relative(s)	4	4	3
Long-term foster care	8	6	2
Goal not yet established	17	5	4

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



# The most common outcome for children exiting foster care was reunification with their parents

Although the most common outcome, the proportion of foster care exits resulting in reunification has decreased since 1999

More than half of children who exit foster care are reunified with their parents or primary caretakers; however, the frequency of this outcome has decreased in the past decade. In 2010, an estimated 51% of children exiting foster care were reunified with their parents or primary caretakers; by 2019, this figure dropped to 47%. The second most common outcome for youth exiting foster care in 2019 was adoption (26%). Other outcomes for children include living with other relatives, emancipation, guardianship, transfer to another agency, and running away, which, combined, accounted for less than a third of exits.

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

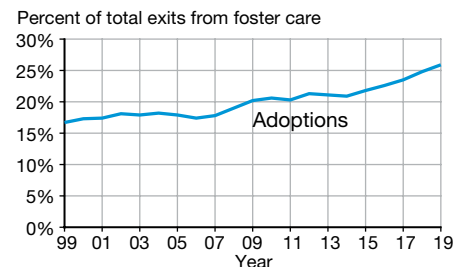
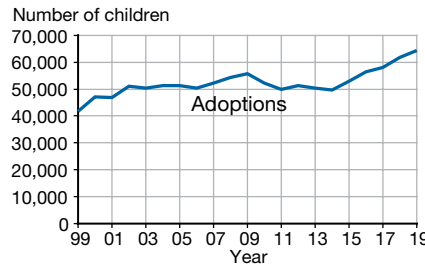
Most children adopted from foster care (52%) in 2019 were adopted by foster parents. About one-third (36%) were adopted by relatives, and the remaining 11% were adopted by nonrelatives. The proportion of children adopted by relatives in 2019 (36%) was greater than in 2010 (32%) and 2000 (21%).

The family structure of adoptive families has remained almost unchanged since AFCARS data collection began in 1998. Married couples adopt the majority of children adopted from foster care (68%), followed by single females (26%). The remaining 6% of children were adopted by unmarried couples and single males.

## Children younger than 6 accounted for more than half of adopted children

The gender profile of adopted children has changed little since 2000, but the race/ethnicity profile of adopted children has shifted. In 2000, White children

In 2019, 64,415 children were adopted from foster care—55% more than were adopted from foster care in 1999



- The proportion of children exiting foster care to adoption has steadily increased, from less than one in five (17%) in 1999 to more than one in four (26%) in 2019.
- Adoption requires the termination of parental rights. Of the more than 122,200 children waiting to be adopted as of September 30, 2019, 58% had their parental rights terminated

Sources: Authors' adaptation of the Children's Bureau's (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) *AFCARS Report Final Estimates for FY1998 through FY2002*; and *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary Estimates*, for fiscal years 2003–2019.

dren accounted for 38% of adopted children; by 2019, White children accounted for half adopted children. The age profile of adopted children has also changed. In 2000, children under age 6 accounted for 47% of adopted children; by 2019, 56% of adopted children were under age 6. The median age of children adopted out of foster care has decreased over the past decades, from 6.4 in 2010 to 5.2 in 2019.

### Profile of adopted children:

Demographic	2000	2010	2019
Gender	100%	100%	100%
Male	50	51	51
Female	50	49	49
Race	100%	100%	100%
White	38	43	50
Black	38	24	18
Hispanic	15	21	20
Age	100%	100%	100%
Less than 1	2	2	2
1 to 5	45	54	54
6 to 10	36	27	27
11 to 15	16	14	14
16 to 20	2	3	3

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding and because of racial categories that are not displayed.

## Reunification was the most common outcome for children exiting foster care

Of the children exiting foster care in 2019, 117,010 were reunited with their parents and 64,415 were adopted. Compared with prior years, a smaller proportion of children were reunited with their parents upon exit from foster care and a greater share were adopted.

### Profile of children exiting foster care:

Outcome	2000	2010	2019
Total	100%	100%	100%
Reunification with parents	57	51	47
Adoption	17	21	26
Guardianship	3	6	11
Emancipation	7	11	8
Live with other relative(s)	10	8	6
Transfer to other agency	3	2	1
Runaway	2	1	0

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

# The serious violent victimization rate of youth ages 12–17 in 2019 was 83% less than the rate in 1994

## NCVS tracks crime levels

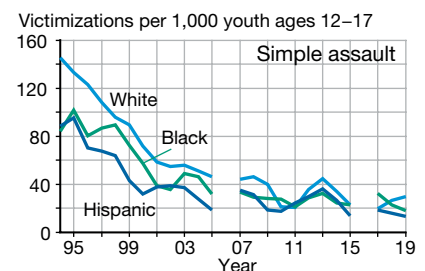
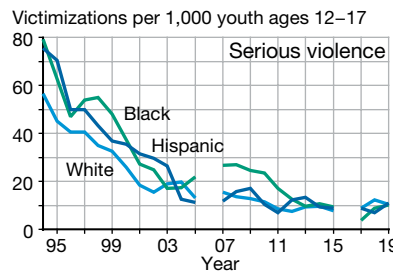
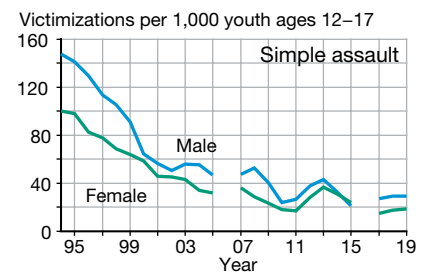
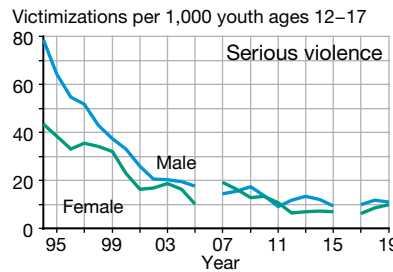
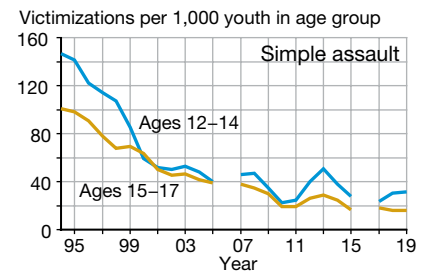
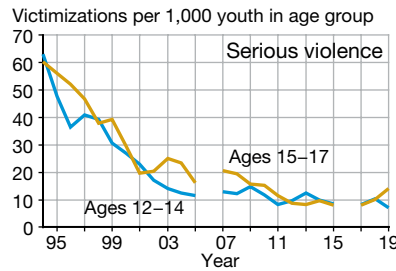
Since 1973, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has used the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to monitor the level of violent crime in the U.S. NCVS gathers information on crimes against persons ages 12 and older from a nationally representative sample of households. NCVS monitors nonfatal serious violence (i.e., rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) and simple assault victimization. These data serve a critical role for understanding the volume and nature of crimes against youth ages 12–17 as well as trends in these crimes. A limitation, however, is that crimes against youth younger than age 12 are not captured.

Analysis of these data show that youth experienced relatively high levels of violent crimes during the mid-1990s but their rate of victimization has since declined: between 1994 and 2019, rates of serious violence and simple assault against youth declined more than 80%.

## Male and female youth were equally likely to be victims of serious violence in 2019

In 1994, male youth were nearly twice as likely to be victims of serious violence as were females (78.8 per 1,000 vs. 43.5 per 1,000, respectively). However, following the relatively larger decline in the serious violence victimization rate among male youth (down 86%, compared with 77% for females), victimization rates for male and female youth were about the same in 2019 (11.0 vs. 10.0, respectively). In contrast, 2019 victimization rates for simple assault showed greater gender disparity, as male youth were 50% more likely to be victimized than females (29.0 vs. 18.7).

## Victimization rates for serious violence and simple assault were lower in 2019 than in 1994 for all youth



- Most of the decline in both serious violence and simple assault victimization took place between 1994 and 2005. During this period, the rate of serious violence against youth ages 12–17 fell 77% and simple assault fell 68%, compared with 25% and 39%, respectively, between 2005 and 2019.
- The relative decline in simple assault victimization rates between 1994 and 2010 was about the same for male (80%) and female (81%) youth, while the decline in the serious violence rate for males (86%) outpaced that of females (77%).
- For most years, Black youth were at greater risk of serious violence than White or Hispanic youth. However, in 2019, rates of serious violence were about the same for each group. Conversely, White youth were at greater risk of simple assault victimization than Black or Hispanic youth most years during the 1994–2019 period. In 2019, White youth were 60% more likely to experience simple assault than Black youth, and more than twice as likely as Hispanic youth.

Notes: Serious violence includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. To improve stability and reliability, rates are based on two-year rolling averages. Due to methodological changes, victimization estimates for 2006 and 2016 are not comparable to other years.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' *National Crime Victimization Survey Dashboard* for 1994 through 2019.

## Rates of serious violence declined for White, Black, and Hispanic youth

The rate of serious violent victimization declined for all race/ethnicity groups between 1994 and 2019, but the decline was greater for Black non-Hispanic youth (87%) and Hispanic youth (86%) than for White non-Hispanic youth (82%). The net result of these declines was that, by 2019, rates of serious violence against Black (10.3), White (10.4) and Hispanic (10.9) youth were about the same.

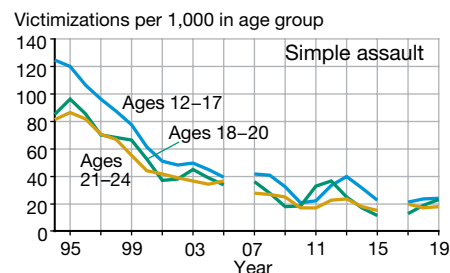
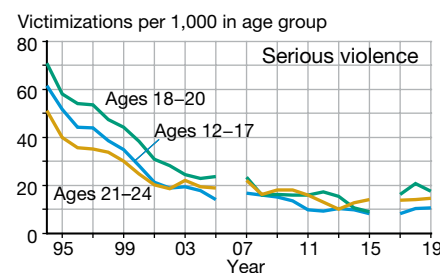
Simple assault victimization rates also declined considerably for each group between 1994 and 2019, but the decline was greater for Hispanic youth (85%) than for White youth (80%) and Black youth (78%). Despite these declines, however, White youth (29.5) were more likely to experience simple assault in 2019 than were Black youth (18.1) or Hispanic youth (13.1).

## Most youth were victimized by someone they know

In 1994, youth ages 12–17 experienced comparable rates of serious violence committed by nonstrangers (e.g., family member, relatives, acquaintances, and other persons known to the victim) and strangers (32.0 vs. 28.1 per 1,000, respectively). Between 1994 and 2019, the rate of serious violent crimes committed by strangers declined 91%, while the rate for nonstrangers fell 77%. As a result, by 2019, the rate of serious violence committed by nonstrangers was nearly 3 times the rate committed by strangers (7.3 vs. 2.5).

The rate of simple assault committed by nonstrangers was, on average, more than twice the rate committed by strangers between 1994 and 2019. The rates of simple assault committed by nonstrangers and strangers declined similarly between 1994 and 2019, 84% and 83%, respectively. In 2019, the rate of simple assault committed by non-

## With few exceptions, annual rates of serious violent victimization were greater for young adults than for youth ages 12–17



- Each year since 1994, young adults ages 18–20 were at greater risk of serious violent victimization than youth ages 12–17, while adults ages 21–24 were at greater risk than youth for most years since 2001. In 2019, young adults were 67% more likely to experience serious violence than youth, and adults were 39% more likely than youth.
- In contrast to the pattern for serious violence, the risk of simple assault victimization was greater for youth ages 12–17 than for young adults for most years between 1994 and 2019.

Notes: Serious violence includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. To improve stability and reliability, rates are based on two-year rolling averages. Due to methodological changes, victimization estimates for 2006 and 2016 are not comparable to other years.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' *National Crime Victimization Survey Dashboard* for 1994 through 2019.

strangers (13.8) was 2.4 times the rate committed by strangers (5.8).

## Weapon use in nonfatal serious violence against youth has declined

Between 1994 and 2019, rates of serious violence against youth that involved a weapon (e.g., firearm, knife, or club) decreased by 91% (from 40.5 per 1,000 to 3.6). By 2019, nearly two-thirds (65%) of serious violence victimizations reported by youth did not involve a weapon, compared with one-third in 1994, and less than 1 in 10 (9%) involved a firearm.

The rate of injury among youth victims of serious violence declined 77% between 1994 and 2019. As a result, the 2019 injury rate for youth victims of serious violence was one-fourth the rate in 1994. Of those who were in-

jured as the result of serious violence, most youth did not report receiving treatment. On average between 1994 and 2019, 45% of injured youth reported not receiving treatment, but the proportion varied by year, ranging from a low of 29% to a high of 68%.

## Declines in serious violence were similar for youth and young adults

From 1994 to 2019, rates of serious violence against youth ages 12–17 declined considerably, a pattern that was replicated among young adults ages 18–20 and adults ages 21–24. Most of the decline took place between 1994 and 2010; during which time the rate of serious violence fell 78% for youth, 77% for young adults, and 64% for adults. Similarly, rates of simple assault victimization declined 83% for youth, compared with 78% for young adults and 79% for adults.



# Students were less likely to experience nonfatal victimization in and on their way to and from school in 2019 than in 1992

## Nonfatal victimizations of youth ages 12–18 fell substantially between 1992 and 2019 both in and out of school

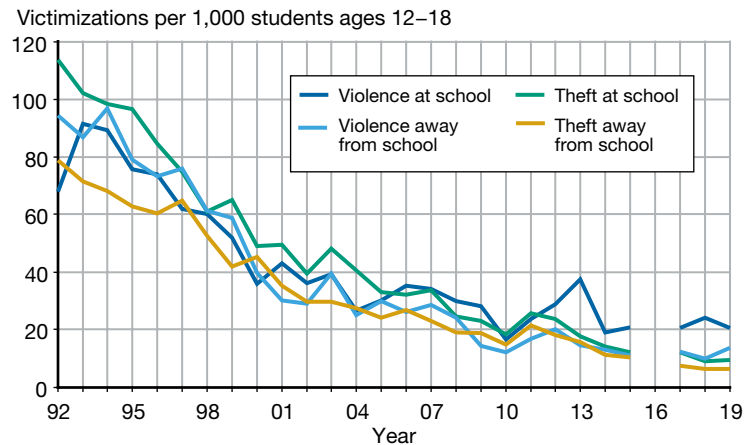
For more than 2 decades, the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics have jointly produced the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* report which, among other things, monitors the amount of crime students ages 12–18 experience when they are in (or on their way to/from) school and when they are away from school. Findings indicate that the rates of violent crime and theft—in school and away from school—each declined substantially between 1992 and 2019.

In 2019, more nonfatal victimizations (theft and violent crime) were committed against students ages 12–18 at school than away from school. Students at school experienced an estimated 764,600 nonfatal victimizations, compared with 509,300 away from school, representing overall victimization rates of 30 per 1,000 students at school and 20 per 1,000 students away from school.

From 1992 to 2019, the rate of violent crimes against students ages 12–18 occurring away from school fell 86% (from 94 victimizations per 1,000 to 14), while the rate at school fell 70% (from 68 to 21). In 2019, youth experienced more thefts at school than away from school, but the relative decline in the rate of theft was the same for students at school and away from school (down 92% for both). Annually since 1992, the rate of theft at school was higher than the rate of theft away from school.

In 2019, students residing in urban and rural areas had higher rates of theft and violent victimization at school and away from school than students residing in suburban areas.

Since 2012, students ages 12–18 were more likely to experience violent crime at school than theft crime at school



Notes: Violence includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Due to a sample increase and redesign in 2016, victimization estimates for 2016 are not comparable to estimates for other years.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the National Center for Education Statistics' *Digest of Education*, Table 228.20.

## In 2019, female students and students ages 15–18 were more likely to experience violence away from school than at school

Student demographic	Victimizations per 1,000 students ages 12–18, 2019			
	Violence		Theft	
	At school	Away from school	At school	Away from school
Total	20.6	13.7	9.4	6.3
Male	28.9	8.1	10.9	7.6
Female	11.7	19.5	7.8	5.0
Ages 12–14	26.4	6.9	9.4	4.9
Ages 15–18	14.9	20.2	9.3	7.6
White	21.1	19.2	10.0	5.9
Black	18.8	8.0	8.0	5.9
Hispanic	22.7	5.4	10.1	5.6

■ In 2019, students experienced an estimated 864,100 violent victimizations—60% of these occurred at school.

Note: Violence includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.

Source: Authors' adaptation of the National Center for Education Statistics' *Digest of Education*, Table 228.25.





# In 2019, nearly 1 in 5 students reported having been bullied at school and about 1 in 6 reported having been cyberbullied

## Nationwide, 19.5% of high school students said they were bullied at school in 2019

According to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), nearly 1 in 5 (19.5%) high school students reported having been bullied at school at least once during the 12 months prior to the survey. The YRBSS defines bullying as “when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again.” Regardless of grade level, females were more likely than males to be victims of bullying, and White, Hispanic, and multiple race females were more likely to report bullying than their male peers. Likewise, heterosexual females were more likely than males to report bullying. No other differences were significant between males and females.

Percent of high school students who reported being bullied on school property in the past year, 2019:

Demographic	Total	Male	Female
Total	19.5%	15.4%	23.6%
9th grade	22.4	18.0	27.0
10th grade	21.3	17.4	25.3
11th grade	16.9	12.4	21.2
12 grade	16.7	12.8	20.5
White	23.1	18.0	28.3
Black	15.1	13.3	17.2
Hispanic or Latino	14.8	10.9	18.6
Asian	12.0	11.3	12.7
Multiple race	21.3	15.0	26.4
Heterosexual	17.1	14.0	20.8
Gay, lesbian, or bisexual	32.0	31.7	32.0
Not sure	26.9	23.7	28.0

The proportion of students who were bullied at school in 2019 was about the same as the proportion in 2009 (19.9%).

## Classrooms, hallways and stairwells are the most common locations of bullying at school

The School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) collects data from

students 12–18 years old, i.e., grades 6th through 12th, and their reports of being bullied at school. “At school” includes the school building, on school property, the school bus, or going to and from school. “Bullying” includes being made fun of; being the subject of rumors; being threatened with harm; being pressured into doing

things they did not want to do; excluded from activities on purpose; having property destroyed on purpose; and being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on along with injury as a result of the incident.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics’ analysis of the

## In 2019, female high school students were more likely to report being bullied at school or experience electronic bullying than their male peers

Youth characteristic	Percent of students, 2019	
	Bullied on school property	Electronically bullied
All high school students	19.5%	15.7%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	15.4	10.9
Female	23.6	20.4
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
White*	23.1	18.6
Black*	15.1	8.6
Hispanic or Latino	14.8	12.7
American Indian/Alaska Native*	32.1	21.3
Asian*	12.0	12.1
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*	NA	NA
Multiple race*	21.3	19.2
<b>Grade</b>		
9th	22.4	16.5
10th	21.3	16.0
11th	16.9	14.4
12th	16.7	15.4
<b>Sexual identity</b>		
Heterosexual	17.1	14.1
Gay, lesbian, bisexual	32.0	26.6
Not sure	26.9	19.4

- In 2019, White high school students were more likely than Black, Hispanic, and Asian students to experience bullying at school and electronic bullying.
- While electronic bullying was similar across grade levels, 9th and 10th graders were more likely to experience bullying at school than 11th and 12th graders.
- Students who identify as heterosexual were significantly less likely to experience either form of bullying than students who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and those who are not sure of their sexual orientation.

NA: Too few cases to develop a reliable estimate.

\*Excludes persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic youth can be any race.

Notes: The reference period was 12 months prior to the survey. Electronic bullying includes being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media.

Source: Author’s analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1991–2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data.

SCS data, about 22% of students ages 12–18 reported being bullied at school during the 2019 school year. Females were more likely than males to be made of or be the subject of rumors, while males were more likely to report being pushed, shoved, or spit on.

Percent of students ages 12–18 bullied at school, 2019:

Bullying problem	Total	Male	Female
Total	22.2%	19.1%	25.5%
Made fun of	13.8	11.8	15.9
Subject of rumors	15.3	11.9	18.9
Excluded from activities	6.0	3.7	8.5
Threatened	4.5	4.7	4.3
Pressured to do things	2.4	2.5	2.2
Property destroyed	1.7	1.8	1.6
Pushed/shoved/spit on	5.2	6.2	4.1

### Victims of cyberbullying are likely to report:

- Being bullied in person
- Being afraid or embarrassed to go to school
- Skipping school
- Academic failure
- Low self-esteem
- Health problems
- Alcohol and drug use
- Family problems
- Delinquent behavior
- Suicidal thoughts or actions

Source: Authors' adaptation of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services online information, available at [www.Stopbullying.gov](http://www.Stopbullying.gov).

Students who were bullied during the 2018-2019 school year also reported the location in which they had been victimized. Classrooms, hallways/stairwells, and the cafeteria were the three most commonly reported locations. Females were more likely than males to report being bullied in the hallway or stairwell, while males were more likely to experience bullying in a locker room or bathroom than females.

Among students ages 12–18 who were bullied, percent by location, 2019:

Location	Total	Male	Female
Inside classroom	46.7	47.5	46.1
Hallway or stairwell	38.9	33.6	43.1
Bathroom or locker room	10.9	12.5	9.7
Cafeteria	25.7	25.9	25.6
Somewhere else in school	3.0	2.4	3.4
Outside on school grounds	20.2	21.3	19.2
On the way to or from school	9.9	9.8	10.0
Online or by text	15.8	7.6	22.4

Students from suburban schools reported higher rates of being bullied in the hallway or stairwell (39%) than did students from urban schools and rural schools (37%, each). In contrast, a higher percentage of students from rural schools (30%) than students from urban schools (22%) and suburban schools (26%) reported being bullied in the school cafeteria.

### Nearly 1 in 5 students report being bullied more than 10 days in the school year

Data from SCS asks students to report how often they experienced bullying during the school year. Among students who report being bullied, 52% were bullied one or two days in the school year, 29% were bullied 3–10

days in the school year, and 19% were bullied more than 10 days. Females (20%) were more likely than males (17%) to report being bullied 10 or more times a year, and White (20%) and Hispanic (21%) students were more likely to report being bullied 10 or more times than Black (13%) students.

### In 2019, 1 in 5 females were cyberbully victims—1 in 9 males were victims

In 2019, the YRBSS found that, nationwide, 16% of students reported being electronically bullied during the past year through text messages and social media platforms. Regardless of grade level, females were significantly more likely than males to be victims of electronic bullying, and White, Black, Hispanic, and multiple race females were significantly more likely to report electronic bullying than their male peers.

Percent of high school students who reported being electronically bullied in the past year, 2019:

Demographic	Total	Male	Female
Total	15.7%	10.9%	20.4%
9th grade	16.5	11.9	21.3
10th grade	16.0	11.0	21.1
11th grade	14.4	8.6	20.3
12th grade	15.4	11.9	18.6
White	18.6	12.0	25.3
Black	8.6	6.1	11.1
Hispanic or Latino	12.7	9.3	15.9
Asian	12.1	11.1	13.2
Multiple race	19.2	14.4	23.0
Heterosexual	14.1	9.9	19.1
Gay, lesbian, or bisexual	26.6	25.5	27.1
Not sure	19.4	16.8	20.1

The proportion of students who experienced electronic bullying in 2019 was about the same as the proportion in 2011 (16.2%).



# Youth younger than 18 accounted for more than 1 in 5 victims of serious violent crime known to law enforcement

## Child victims are common in violent crimes handled by law enforcement

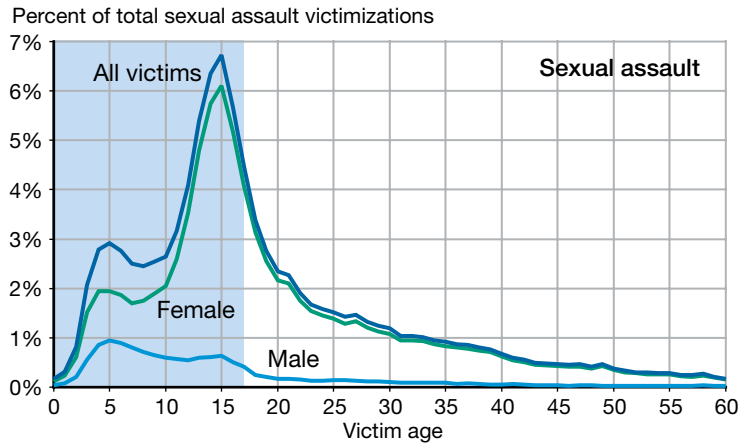
Not all crimes committed are reported to law enforcement. Those that are reported can be used to produce a portrait of crime as seen by the nation's justice system. Based on the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports*, 8% of all persons murdered in 2019 were under age 18 and 27% of these child victims 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 2018 and 2019 capture information on more than 1 million victims of serious violent crime (i.e., murder, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) known to law enforcement agencies in 45 states and the District of Columbia, representing 45% of the U.S. population. The number of reporting agencies and proportion of the state reporting varies by state; however, from these data an arguably representative description of violent crime victims can be developed.

## Sexual assault victims accounted for more than half of all child victims of serious violent crime

NIBRS data indicate that 22% of the victims of serious violent crime reported to law enforcement agencies in 2018 and 2019 were children under age 18. More specifically, children were the victims in 9% of murders, 58% of sexual assaults, 8% of robberies, and 13% of aggravated assaults. Of all child victims of serious violent crime, less than one-half of 1% were murder victims, 7% were robbery victims, 35% were victims of aggravated assault, and 57% were victims of sexual assault.

Among youth victims of serious violence, nearly 3 in 4 females and more

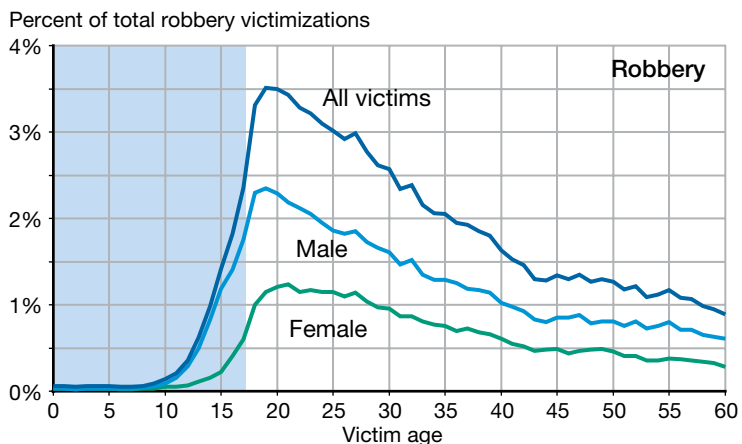
## In sexual assaults known to law enforcement, 55% of female and 74% of male victims were younger than 18



- The modal age for sexual assault victims was age 15 for female victims and age 5 for male victims.
- Overall, female child victims of sexual assault outnumbered male victims by nearly 5 to 1. However, among older child victims, those age 12–17, female victims outnumbered male victims by 9 to 1.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.

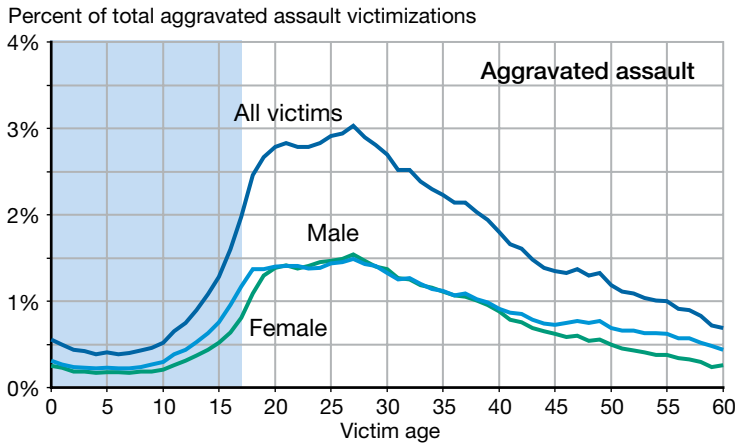
## Robbery victimization increased through the childhood years to reach a peak at age 19 for male victims and age 21 for female victims



- Children under age 18 accounted for 10% 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 2018 and 2019.

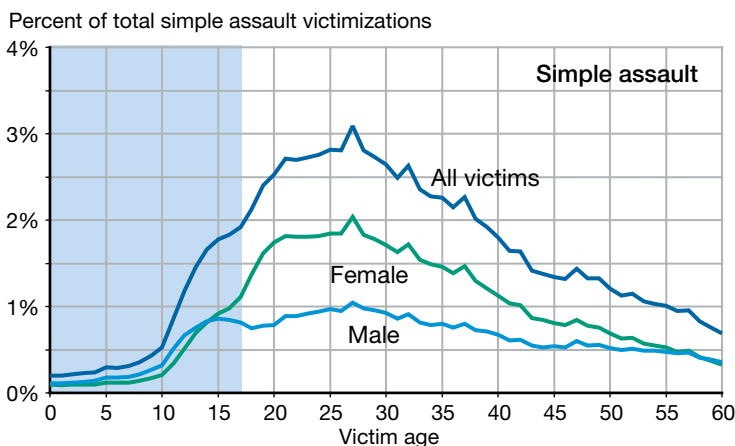
**Male victims of aggravated assault outnumbered female victims from ages 9 through 18, after which the number of victims were about the same through age 40**



- The number of male and female victims of aggravated assault were about the same through age 8.
- In aggravated assaults reported to law enforcement, 14% of male and 12% of female victims were under age 18.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.

**Until age 14, more simple assault victims were male than female; by age 19, twice as many females as males were simple assault victims**



- Unlike the pattern for aggravated assault, more females than males were victims of simple assault from age 15 through age 50.
- Among male victims of simple assault, 18% were younger than 18, compared with 11% of female victims.

Source: Authors' analysis of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.

than 1 in 4 males were victims of sexual assault

The majority (63%) of the youth victims of serious violent crimes known to law enforcement in 2018 and 2019 were female. Victims under age 18 accounted for 26% of all female victims of serious violent crime but only 17% of all male victims. The types of serious violence committed against male and female child victims differed. For female youth, 74% of the serious violent crimes were sexual assaults, 23% were aggravated assaults, 3% were robberies, and less than 0.5% were murders. In contrast, for male youth, 56% of serious violent crimes were aggravated assaults, 27% were sexual assaults, 16% were robberies, and about 1% were murders.

Among both male and female child victims of sexual assault, forcible fondling was the most common offense.

Offense profile of juvenile sexual assault victims, 2018–2019:

Offense	Male	Female
Sex offense	100%	100%
Rape	6	35
Sodomy	30	7
Sexual assault with an object	3	4
Fondling	61	54

**More than 40% of child victims of serious violence were younger than age 12**

NIBRS data for 2018 and 2019 show that 17% of the child victims of serious violent crime were younger than 6, 24% were ages 6–11, 25% were ages 12–14, and 35% were ages 15–17. Victims younger than 12 represented 51% of all youth murder victims, 43% of youth sexual assault victims, and 42% of youth aggravated assault victims.

# As youth age, those who violently victimize them are less likely to be family members

## Youth victims of violence are likely to be harmed by adults

Analyses of the 2018 and 2019 NIBRS data files provide an understanding of the persons who victimize youth in violent crime incidents known to law enforcement. Although these data are not nationally representative, the NIBRS sample, which includes incidents on more than 490,000 youth victims of violent crime (murder, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault), is large enough to give credence to patterns derived from NIBRS data.

Based on NIBRS data, more than half (57%) of all youth violent crime victims known to law enforcement were harmed by an adult (i.e., a person over age 17). The proportion of youth victims harmed by adults varied by offense. Adults were more commonly involved in murders (83%), aggravated assaults (72%), and sexual assaults (62%) against youth than in robberies (52%) and simple assaults (52%) against youth.

The proportion of youth victimized by an adult varied with the youth's age. Overall, youth younger than age 6 and those ages 6–11 were more likely to experience violence by an adult than were youth age 12 or older, a pattern that held for murder, aggravated, and simple assault. For violent sex offenses, youth ages 15–17 were most likely to be victimized by an adult, followed by youth younger than age 6.

## Among youth sexual assault victims, those younger than age 12 were more likely to be harmed by a family member than were victims age 12 or older

Victim-offender relationship	Relationship profile						Victim ages 0–17	
	Age of victim					Male	Female	
	0–17	0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17			
Violent crime	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Family	40	69	54	32	29	39	41	
Acquaintance	53	26	41	62	62	52	54	
Stranger	7	5	5	6	9	9	5	
Sexual assault	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Family	44	66	60	35	24	50	42	
Acquaintance	53	32	38	61	71	47	54	
Stranger	3	2	2	4	5	3	3	
Robbery	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Family	1	*	2	1	1	1	2	
Acquaintance	44	*	31	48	46	45	41	
Stranger	54	*	67	51	53	54	56	
Aggravated assault	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Family	42	64	52	37	27	40	45	
Acquaintance	43	24	34	50	56	44	42	
Stranger	15	13	14	13	17	16	13	
Simple assault	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Family	39	73	51	30	32	39	40	
Acquaintance	55	23	45	65	62	55	56	
Stranger	5	3	4	5	6	6	4	

■ In crimes known to law enforcement, the youngest victims (younger than age 6) are far more likely than the oldest victims (ages 15–17) to be assaulted by a family member: sexual assault (66% vs. 24%), aggravated assault (64% vs. 27%), and simple assault (73% vs. 32%).

\*Too few victims in sample to obtain reliable percentage.

Notes: Violent crime includes murder, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. In this data set, the term "offender" is used to describe the person identified by law enforcement as having committed the crime. Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System: Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.

## Across violent crimes against youth, males were more likely to be victimized by a juvenile than were females

Offense	Percent of youth victims victimized by youth ages 0–17						
	Age of victim					Victim ages 0–17	
	0–17	0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Male	Female
Violent crime	43%	15%	38%	58%	43%	46%	40%
Sexual assault	38	37	41	42	33	47	37
Robbery	48	11	47	66	44	52	34
Aggravated assault	28	5	24	45	34	31	24
Simple assault	48	6	39	65	48	49	46

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System: Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.



# Violence involving youth victims is most common at the end of the school day

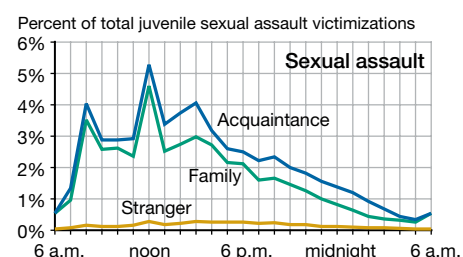
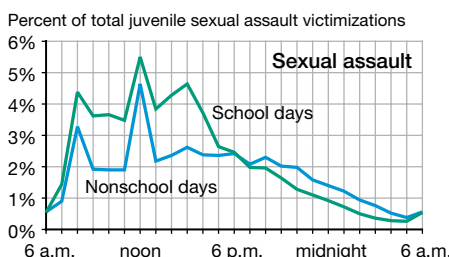
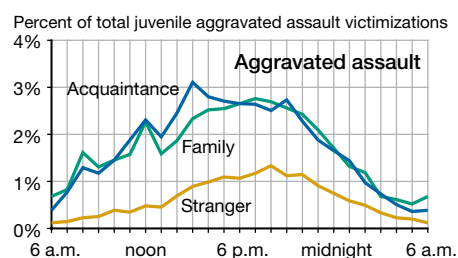
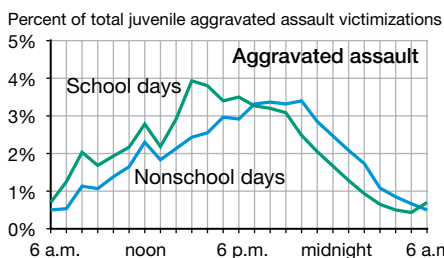
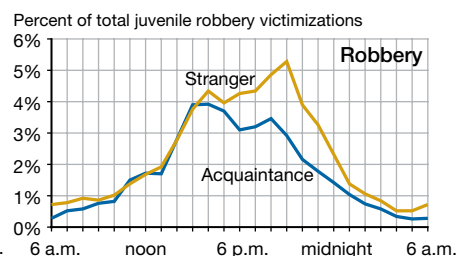
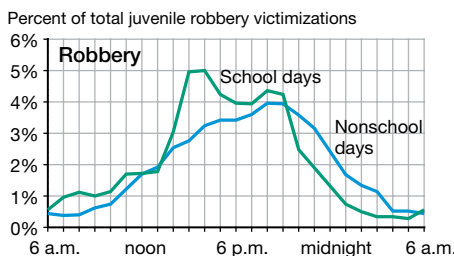
## The risk of violence varies over a 24-hour period

To understand the nature of youth 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 2018 and 2019 to study the date and time of day that crimes known to law enforcement occurred. Consistent with prior analyses, the daily timing of violent crimes (i.e., murder, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) differed for youth and adult victims. In general, the number of violent crimes with adult victims increased hourly from morning through the evening hours, peaking around 9 p.m. In contrast, violent crimes with youth victims peaked at 3 p.m., fell to a lower level in the early evening hours, and declined substantially after 8 p.m.

The 3 p.m. peak reflected a unique situational characteristic of youth 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 similar. On nonschool days, the youth victimization pattern mirrored the general adult pattern, with a peak in the late evening hours. But on school days, the number of youth violent crime victimizations spiked at 8 a.m. and at noon, and reached a peak in the afterschool hours between 3 and 4 p.m.

Based on violent crimes reported to law enforcement, youth were more than twice as likely to be victimized between 3 and 4 p.m. on school days as in the same time period on nonschool days (i.e., weekends and the summer months). On school days, youth were nearly twice as likely to be the victims of violence in the 4 hours between 3 and 7 p.m. as they were in the 4 hours between 8 p.m. and midnight.

## The timing of violence against youth varies on school and nonschool days and varies with the youth's relationship to who harmed them

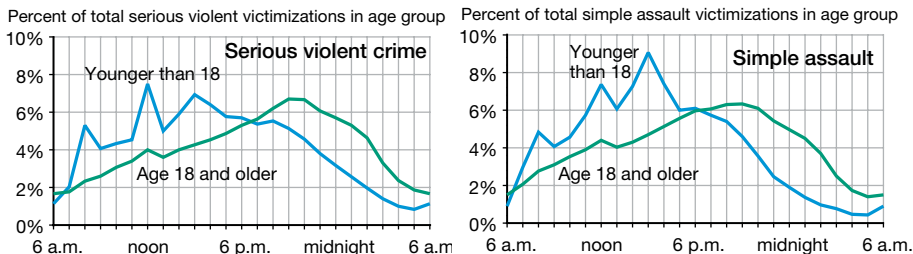


- Time-of-day patterns of robberies with youth victims increase steadily on nonschool days, reaching a peak between 8 and 10 p.m. On school days, however, robberies involving youth victims peak between 3 to 5 p.m. and increase again between 8 and 10 p.m.
- While the risk of sexual assault victimization peaked at noon on school and nonschool days, the risk of victimization was relatively high at 8 a.m. on both days, and at 3 p.m. on school days.
- Unlike robberies against youth victims, sexual assaults and aggravated assaults against youth are less likely to involve strangers.
- Sexual assaults by acquaintances or family members are most common at 8 a.m. and noon, and in the hour after school (3 p.m.).
- Aggravated assaults committed by family members or acquaintances follow a similar pattern through the middle of the day, but victimizations by an acquaintance peak at 3 p.m. while the risk of victimization by a family member continues to increase, reaching a peak at 7 p.m.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.



## The timing of violent crime with youth victims differs from that of crimes with adult victims



- Serious violent crime against youth peaked at noon while simple assault with youth victims peaked at 3 p.m. For adults, the risk of adult victimization increases throughout the day, peaking at 9 p.m. for both offenses.

Note: Serious violent crime includes murder, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

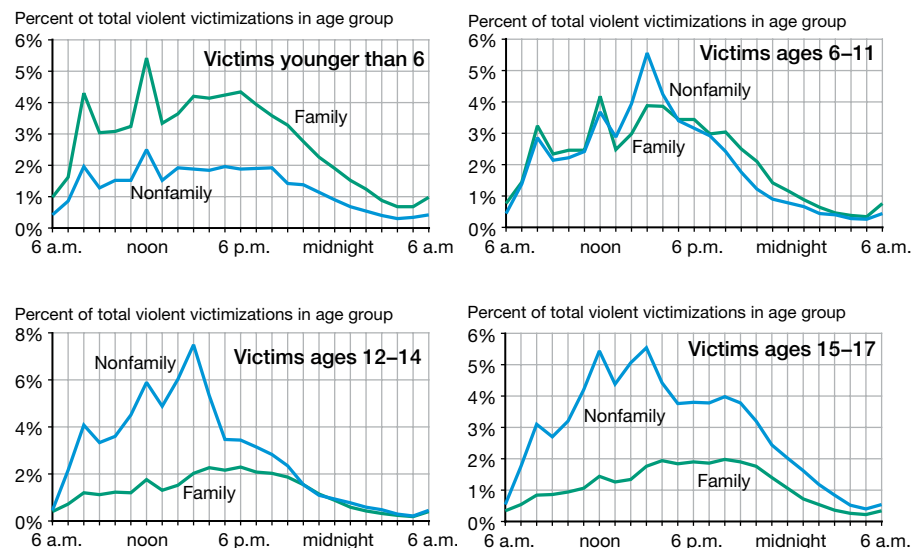
Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.

Peak hours for youth victimization varied with victim age. For victims ages 6–11 and 12–14, violent crime victimization peaked at 3 p.m., the hour associated with the end of the school day. Conversely, for older victims ages 15–17, noon and 3 p.m. were the peak times for victimization. Among the youngest victims, those under age 6, the peak was at noon.

## The timing of youth violence victimization is linked to their relationship with who harmed them

The daily timing of youth violence victimization varies with the relationship (i.e., family members, acquaintances, and strangers) between youth victims and those who harm them. Most of those who commit violence against youth were acquaintances of their victims. The timing of violent crimes by acquaintances reflected the afterschool peak, indicating the importance this time period (and probably unsupervised interactions with other youth) has for these types of crimes. Violent crimes by family members were most frequent at noon and in the hours between 3 and 7 p.m., although, unlike crimes committed by an acquaintance, there was no obvious 3 p.m. peak. Violent crimes committed by strangers peaked at 3 p.m. and remained at a relatively high level until 9 p.m.

## Throughout the day, youth under age 6 are most likely to be victimized by family members



- The afterschool peak in victimizations for youth ages 6–17 is a result of crimes committed by nonfamily members.

Note: Violent crime includes murder, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System Master Files* for 2018 and 2019.

# Nearly 6 in 10 violent crimes with youth victims occur in a residence

## The location of youth violence varies with crime and victim age

The portrait of violence against youth requires an understanding of not only when these crimes occur but also where. Data from NIBRS includes the locations of crimes reported to law enforcement agencies. Data from 2018 and 2019 show that the location of violent crime against youth varies with the nature of the crime and the age of the victim.

Overall, 58% of youth victims of violence were harmed in a residence, 19% were victimized at school, 14% were harmed outdoors, and 8% in a commercial area. Most assaults occurred in a residence—79% of sexual assaults, 60% of aggravated assaults, and 50% of simple assaults—while nearly half (47%) of robberies occurred outdoors.

Location profile of juvenile victimizations, 2018–2019:

Location	Sexual assault		Aggravated assault	
	Robbery	Sexual assault	Robbery	Aggravated assault
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Residence	79	21	60	60
Outdoors	6	47	23	23
Commercial	5	27	9	9
School	9	5	8	8

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

The location of youth violence also varied with victim age. For example, 81% of victims under age 6 were harmed in a residence, compared with 51% of victims ages 15–17. Youth ages 12–14 were more likely to be victimized at school than youth of other ages.

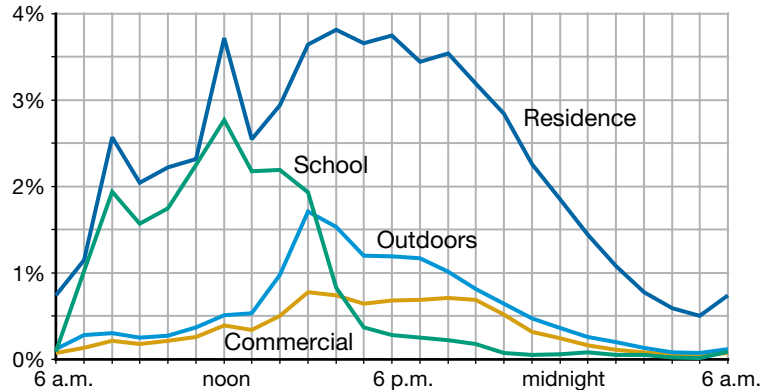
Location profile of juvenile victimizations, 2018–2019:

Location	Under age 6	Ages 6–11	Ages 12–14	Ages 15–17
	Total	100%	100%	100%
Residence	81	69	48	51
Outdoors	8	11	15	17
Commercial	7	5	7	12
School	4	14	30	19

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

## Violent crime with youth victims peaked in residences at noon and again between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

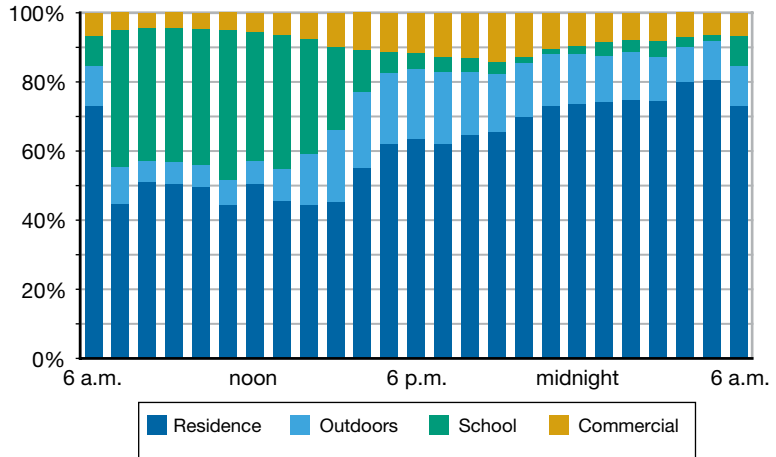
Percent of total juvenile violent crime victimizations



- Violent victimization of youth outdoors exhibited a distinct peak at 3 p.m., while victimizations in commercial areas were relatively high from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m.

## The hourly proportion of violent victimizations involving youth that occurred in residences was 60% or more from 5 p.m. through 6 a.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 (the victim's, the offender's, or someone else's); the outdoors (streets, highways, roads, woods, fields, etc.); schools (including colleges); and commercial areas (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 2018 and 2019.

# On average, 1,334 youth under age 18 in the U.S. were murdered each year between 2010 and 2019

**Homicide is one of the leading causes of death for youth younger than 18**

In 2019, 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. Only deaths caused by unintentional injury, cancer, and congenital anomalies were more common for these youth. That same year, homicide was the third leading cause of death for youth ages 12–17, behind unintentional injury and suicide.

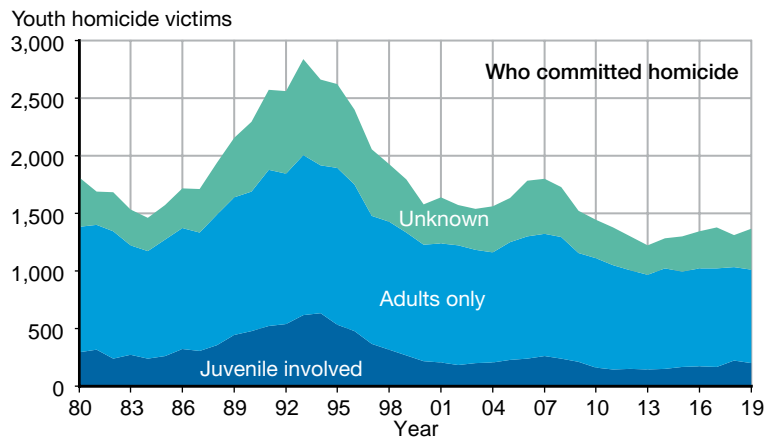
## The FBI and NCHS maintain detailed records of murders

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 jurisdictions. These Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) contain information on victim demographics and the method of death. Also, when known, SHR captures the circumstances surrounding the death, the demographics of the individual(s) who committed the act, as well as their relationship to the victim. Although not all agencies report every murder every year, for the years 1980 through 2019, the FBI received SHR records on 90% of all homicides in the U.S.

For 2019, the FBI reported that law enforcement identified who committed the crime in 68% of murders nationwide, which means that for many of these crimes, the person who committed the crime was not known to law enforcement.

Based on SHR data from 1980 through 2019, the person who committed the act was unknown to law enforcement in 22% of the murders of persons under age 18, in 32% of the

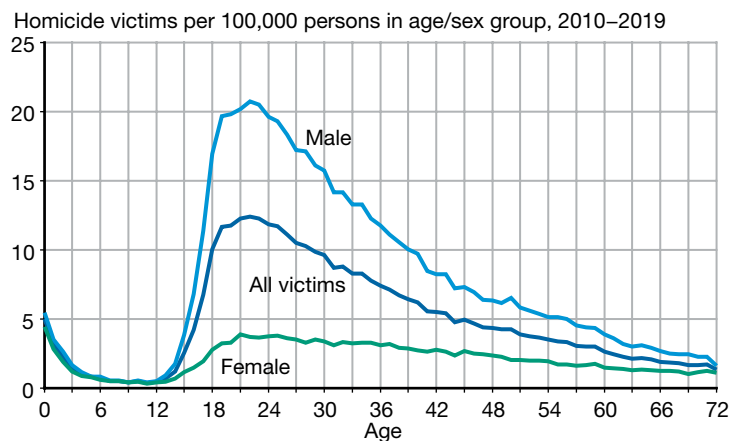
The number of youth homicide victims in 2019 was 52% below the peak year of 1993 and 12% above the 2013 low point



- Between 2010 and 2019, there were 13,340 youth homicide victims — an average of 1,334 per year, compared with an annual average of 1,638 in the 2000s and 2,375 in the 1990s.
- Among homicides committed by persons known to law enforcement, 17% of youth victims were killed by juveniles (acting alone or with other juveniles or adults) between 2010 and 2019. In 28% of youth homicides committed by juveniles, adults were also involved.

Source: Authors’ analyses of the FBI’s *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

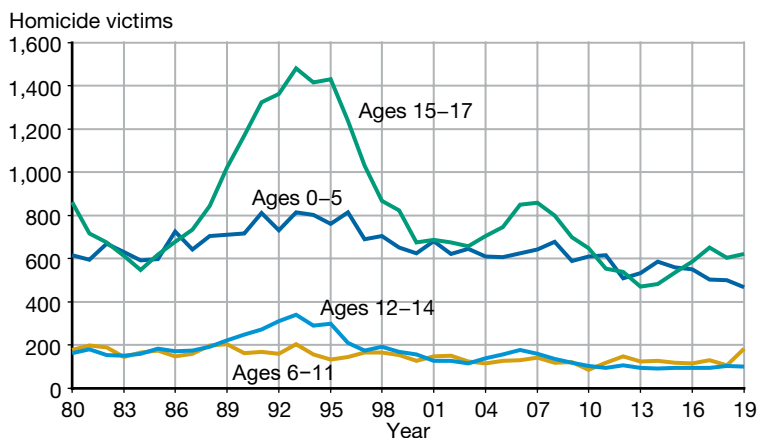
## Between 2010 and 2019, the likelihood of being a murder victim peaked for persons in their early twenties, but for females, the first year of life was the most dangerous



- Girls and boys were equally likely to be homicide victims until their teenage years.

Source: Authors’ analysis of the FBI’s *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 2010 through 2019.

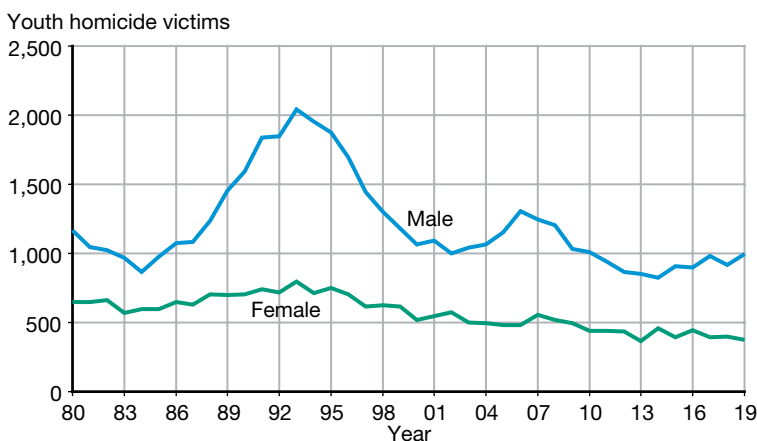
**The large increase and subsequent decline in youth homicides was nearly all attributable to changes in homicides of older youth**



- Victims ages 15–17 accounted for 68% of the increase of youth murdered between 1984 and 1993 and 58% of the decline between 1993 and 2019.
- Murder is most common among the oldest and youngest youth. Of the estimated 1,366 youth homicide victims in 2019, 34% were under age 6, 13% were ages 6–11, 7% were ages 12–14, and 45% were ages 15–17.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

**Homicides involving males accounted for 85% of the increase in youth homicides between 1984 and 1993 and 71% of the decline between 1993 and 2019**



- Unlike the number of male victims, the annual number of female homicide victims was relatively stable between 1980 and 2019.

Source: Authors' analysis of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

murders of adults, and in 31% 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. Between 2010 and 2019, NCHS annual estimates of youth homicides tended to be about 18% 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.

An important component of this report is the delineation of the characteristics of homicide victims and those who commit homicide. Because the NCHS data do not capture information on those who commit homicide, the discussion that follows is based on the FBI's SHR data.

**The likelihood of being a homicide victim has increased in recent years**

According to FBI estimates, 16,669 murders occurred in the U.S. in 2019 — 5.1 murders for every 100,000 U.S. residents. During the 1980–2019 period, the number of murders reached a peak in 1991 at 24,703 victims, fell 37% through 1999, increased through 2006, then fell to a historic low in 2014, 43% below the 1991 peak. The period of decline was briefly interrupted as the number of homicides increased through 2016, and then declined. By 2019, the number of homicide victims was 33% below the 1991 peak and 18% above the 2014 low point.

The 2019 homicide victimization rate of 5.1 was 14% above the level in 2014 — the year with the lowest homicide rate (4.4) and the fewest homicides of

the 1980–2019 period — and nearly half the rate of the 1991 peak (10.1).

### An estimated 1,366 youth homicide victims were reported in 2019 — about 4 per day

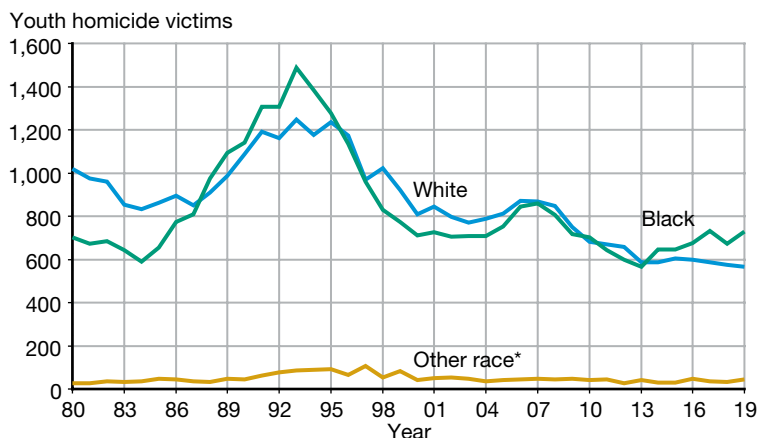
In 2019, there were an estimated 1,366 persons under age 18 murdered in the U.S. — 8% of all persons murdered that year. More than one-fourth (27%) of these youth victims were female. More than one-third (34%) of these victims were under age 6, 13% were ages 6–11, less than 1 in 10 (7%) were ages 12–14, and more than 4 in 10 (45%) were ages 15–17.

Black youth accounted for more than half (54%) of youth homicide victims in 2019, 42% were White, and 3% were either American Indian or Asian. By way of comparison, White youth constituted 75% of the U.S. resident youth population under age 18 in 2019 and Black youth 17%. The homicide rate for Black youth in 2019 was more than 5 times the White rate. This disparity was seen across victim age groups and increased with victim age.

Homicides per 100,000 youth, 2019:

Victim age	White	Black	Black to White rate ratio
0–17	1.0	5.9	5.6
0–5	1.4	4.8	3.5
6–11	0.5	1.8	3.5
12–14	0.5	2.2	4.6
15–17	2.1	20.1	9.8

### Since 2013, the number of homicides of White youth fell 4% while homicides of Black youth increased 28%



- Black youth accounted for about 17% of the youth population between 2010 and 2019 but were the victims in half (50%) of youth homicides in the last 10 years.
- The disparity between murder rates for Black youth and White youth peaked in 1993, when the Black rate was 6 times the White rate. The relatively greater decline in homicides of Black youth between 1993 and 1999 (down 48%, compared with a 26% decline for White youth) dropped the disparity in Black-to-White homicide rates to 4 to 1. However, since 2013, homicides of Black youth have been on the rise, while the homicides of White youth declined. As a result, the 2019 homicide rate for Black youth was nearly 6 times the White rate.

\* Other race includes American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Source: Authors' analysis of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

### Between 2010 and 2019, nearly half (49%) of all homicide victims under age 6 were killed by a parent, while parents were rarely involved in the killing of youth ages 15–17

Relationship between victim and person committing homicide	Age of victim					Victim ages 0–17	
	0–17	0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Known	60	80	56	51	44	56	69
Parent/stepparent	24	49	30	12	1	20	33
Other family member	5	6	7	5	2	4	7
Acquaintance	24	23	12	21	28	24	23
Stranger	7	2	6	12	12	8	5
Unknown	40	20	44	49	56	44	31

- During the 10-year period from 2010 to 2019, female victims were far more likely than male victims to have been killed by a parent/stepparent or other family member.
- Strangers were involved in at least 7% of the murders of youth between 2010 and 2019. This figure is probably greater than 7% because strangers are likely to account for a disproportionate share of crimes in which information about who committed the crime is unknown.

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

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

# In 2019, 9 of every 10 murder victims ages 15–17 were killed with a firearm

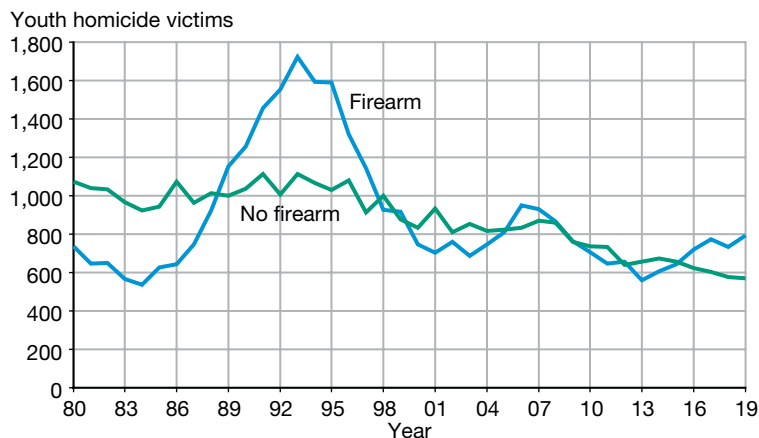
## Trends in the number of youth homicides are tied to homicides involving firearms

More than half (58%) of all youth homicide victims in 2019 were killed with a firearm, 14% were killed by the offender's hands or feet (e.g., beaten/kicked to death or strangled), and 7% were killed with a knife or blunt object. The remaining 20% of victims were killed with another type of weapon, or the type of weapon used was unknown.

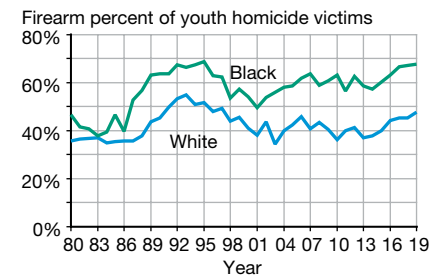
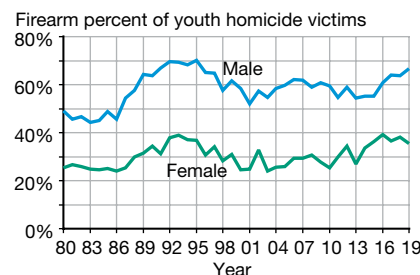
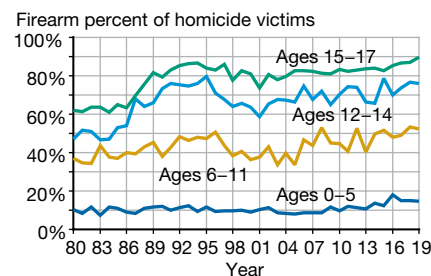
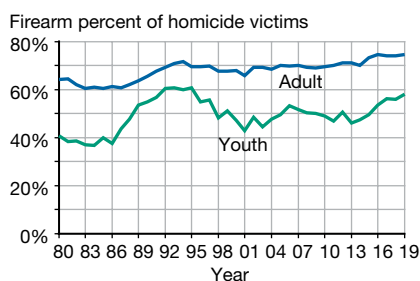
Firearms were used less often in the killings of young children. In 2019, firearms were used in 15% of murders of youth under age 6 but in 76% of the murders of youth ages 12–14, and 90% involving youth ages 15–17. In 2019, a greater percentage of Black than White youth murder victims were killed with a firearm (68% vs. 48%), and homicides of male youth were more likely to involve a firearm than those involving female youth (67% and 35%, respectively).

Across the 40-year period between 1980 and 2019, the deadliest year for youth was 1993, with an estimated 2,840 youth victims. A relatively large proportion of youth were killed with a firearm in the early 1990s: 60% of youth homicide victims were killed with a firearm each year from 1992 to 1995. In fact, over the 40-year period, the annual number of youth killed 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 youth. Except for homicides of children under age 6 and of youth by family members, homicide trends in all demographic segments of the youth population between 1980 and 2019 were related to killings with firearms.

Since 2013, youth homicides increased 12% but the number involving a firearm increased 42%



## The proportion of homicides involving firearms varied by demographics

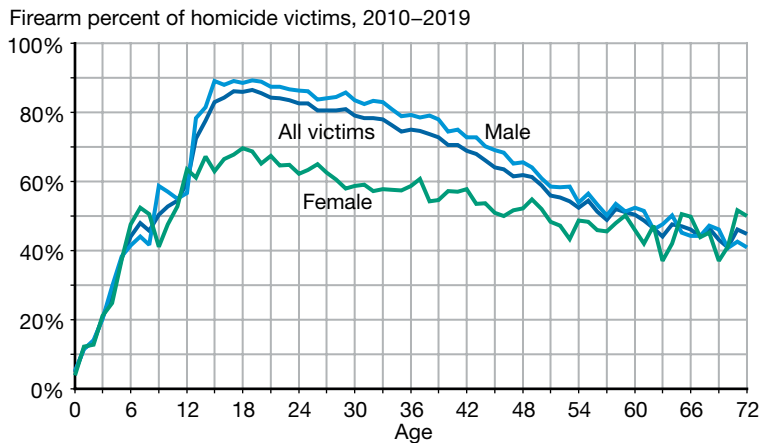


- While firearms were involved in a greater proportion of adult than youth homicides, youth ages 15–17 were more likely than adults to be killed by a firearm.
- Trends in the proportions of firearm-related murders of male and female youth showed similar growth and decline patterns over the period.
- Firearms were involved in a greater proportion of Black than White youth homicides each year since 1980, and between 2010 and 2019, Black youth were about 50% more likely than White youth to be killed by a firearm.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.



**Between 2010 and 2019, 16- and 17-year-old murder victims were among the most likely to be killed with firearms, regardless of gender**



- Boys and girls under age 6 were equally likely to be killed with a firearm. In the teen years, however, boys were considerably more likely to be killed with a firearm: 88% of boys ages 14–17 were killed with a firearm, compared with 66% of females in the same age group.

Source: Authors' analysis of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

**Children under 6 are killed by family members—older youth are killed by acquaintances**

In the 2019 SHR data, information about who committed the crime is missing for 24% of youth homicide victims either because the information about who committed the crime is unknown or because the information was not recorded on the data form. The proportion of unknown offenders in 2019 generally increased with victim age: ages 0–5 (9%), ages 6–11 (12%), ages 12–14 (13%), and ages 15–17 (40%).

Considering only murders in 2019 for which information about who committed the crime is known, a stranger killed about 2% of murdered children under age 12, while family members killed 75% and acquaintances 23%. Older youth were far more likely to be killed by nonfamily members: 7% of victims ages 15–17 were killed by family members, 27% by strangers, and 66% by acquaintances.

Differences in the characteristics of the murders of male and female youth are linked to the age profiles of the victims. Between 2010 and 2019, 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, since 2010, 86% of 17-year-old homicide victims were male. In general, therefore, a greater proportion of female murder victims were very young. While it is true that female victims were more likely to be killed by family members than were male victims (59% vs. 42%), this difference goes away within specific age groups. For example, between 2010 and 2019, for victims under age 6, 68% of males and 71% of females were killed by a family member.

**More than half of the 13,340 youth homicide victims between 2010 and 2019 were killed with a firearm**

Weapon	Age of victim					Victim ages 0–17	
	0–17	0–5	6–11	12–14	15–17	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Firearm	51	13	49	73	85	60	34
Knife/blunt object	11	12	16	11	8	9	13
Personal*	19	42	10	3	1	16	25
Other/unknown	19	34	26	13	5	15	28

- More than 4 in 10 (42%) homicide victims under age 6 were killed by offenders using only their hands, fists, or feet (personal).
- More than 8 in 10 (85%) victims ages 15–17 were killed with a firearm.
- Overall, males were more likely than females to be killed by a firearm (60% vs. 34%), while personal weapons were more common in the killing of females (25%) than males (16%).

\*Personal includes hands, fists, or feet.

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

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for 1980 through 2019.

# Since 2009, suicides have outnumbered homicides among youth ages 10–17

## Suicide was the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10–17

The National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) within the Centers for Disease Control collects information from death certificates filed in state vital statistics offices, including causes of death of children. NVSS indicates that 35,805 youth ages 10–17 died by suicide in the U.S. between 1990 and 2019. For all youth ages 10–17, suicide was the second leading cause of death between 2015 and 2019, trailing only unintentional injury, while homicide was the third leading cause of death for youth ages 10–17 during the same period. Since 2015, suicide was the leading cause of death for Asian/Pacific Islander youth, the second leading cause of death for male, female, White, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan Native youth, and third for Black youth (homicide was first).

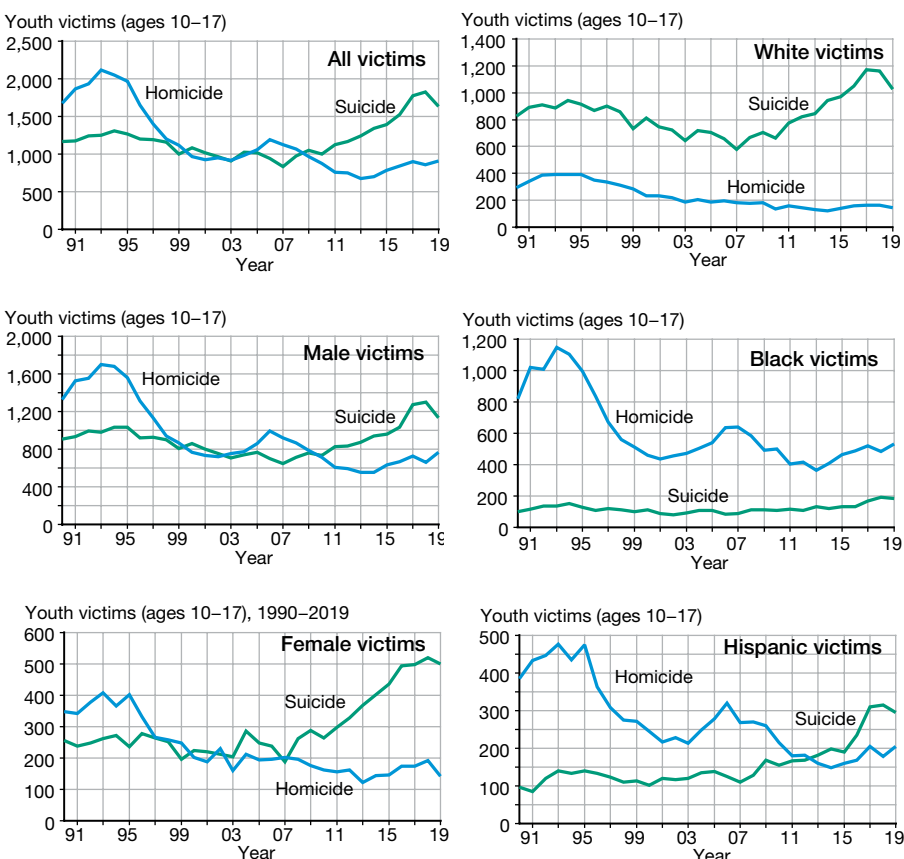
Since 1990, males have outnumbered females among youth suicide victims, but the female proportion of suicide victims has grown in recent years. For example, through 2009, female youth accounted for 22% of suicide victims; since 2010, however, females accounted for 29% of youth suicide victims.

## The method of suicide has changed

Between 1990 and 2000, most youth suicides (62%) involved a firearm; each year since, suicides by suffocation have outnumbered those involving a firearm. During the 10-year period from 2010 to 2019, for example, half of all youth suicides involved suffocation, while firearms were involved in 40%. Firearm-related suicides in 2019 were more common among male (49%) than female youth (21%), and suicides among White youth were more likely to involve a firearm (46%) than were those of Black (35%) or Hispanic (27%) youth.

The method of suicide varies considerably by gender, with suffocation being

## Since 1990, suicide was more prevalent than homicide for non-Hispanic White youth but the reverse was true for non-Hispanic Black youth

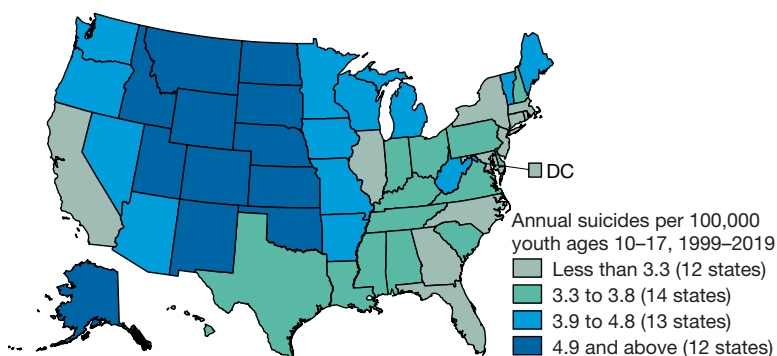


- Youth homicide victims (ages 10–17) outnumbered youth suicide victims through 1999. More recently, however, the trend reversed as suicide victims outnumbered homicide victims annually since 2009. In 2019, the number of suicide victims was 80% above the number of homicide victims.
- Suicide and homicide victimizations have been on the rise in recent years for both males and females, but the increase in suicides started earlier (2010) than the increase in homicides (2013). Since 2010, the number of suicides increased 54% for males and 89% for females. Comparatively, since 2013, the number of homicide victims increased 38% for males and 17% for females.
- The annual number of White suicide victims exceeded the annual number of homicide victims each year since 1990, and the gap has grown in recent years. The ratio of suicides to homicides was 2.5 to 1 in the 1990s, but grew to more than 6 to 1 in the last 5 years. Conversely, the annual number of Black homicide victims exceeded the annual number of suicide victims each year since 1990, but the gap has narrowed in recent years. The ratio of homicides to suicides was 7 to 1 in the 1990s but fell to 3 to 1 in the last 5 years.
- Since 2015, suicides outnumbered homicides among Hispanic youth by a ratio of 1.5 to 1, while homicides outnumbered suicides by more than 3 to 1 in the 1990s.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Centers for Disease Control's WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System).

### Between 1999 and 2019, youth suicide victims outnumbered youth homicide victims in 38 states

State	1999–2019		State	1999–2019	
	Suicide rate	Suicide/homicide ratio		Suicide rate	Suicide/homicide ratio
U.S. total	3.5	1.3	Missouri	4.6	1.2
Alabama	3.3	0.9	Montana	8.5	6.6
Alaska	12.1	4.0	Nebraska	5.0	2.7
Arizona	4.8	1.6	Nevada	4.7	1.5
Arkansas	4.7	1.8	New Hampshire	3.6	NA
California	2.2	0.6	New Jersey	1.8	1.0
Colorado	6.9	3.8	New Mexico	8.3	2.3
Connecticut	2.3	1.6	New York	2.1	0.9
Delaware	3.4	1.4	North Carolina	3.2	1.2
Dist. of Columbia	2.0	0.1	North Dakota	7.8	8.3
Florida	2.7	0.9	Ohio	3.8	1.6
Georgia	3.2	1.0	Oklahoma	5.3	2.0
Hawaii	3.3	NA	Oregon	4.5	4.4
Idaho	7.2	11.2	Pennsylvania	3.4	1.3
Illinois	2.9	0.6	Rhode Island	2.4	1.5
Indiana	3.8	1.3	South Carolina	3.7	1.2
Iowa	4.8	4.6	South Dakota	11.7	10.2
Kansas	4.9	2.7	Tennessee	3.6	1.1
Kentucky	3.7	2.0	Texas	3.7	1.5
Louisiana	3.7	0.6	Utah	6.5	8.2
Maine	4.0	6.0	Vermont	4.3	5.8
Maryland	2.7	0.6	Virginia	3.5	1.5
Massachusetts	2.2	1.6	Washington	4.2	2.5
Michigan	4.2	1.4	West Virginia	4.0	2.6
Minnesota	4.6	3.7	Wisconsin	4.5	2.3
Mississippi	3.4	0.9	Wyoming	9.5	5.0



NA: Too few homicides to calculate a reliable ratio.

Notes: The suicide rate is the average annual number of suicides of youth ages 10–17 divided by the average annual population of youth ages 10–17 (per 100,000). The suicide/homicide ratio is the total number of suicides of youth ages 10–17 divided by the total number of homicides of youth ages 10–17. A ratio of more than 1.0 indicates that the number of suicides was greater than the number of homicides.

Source: Authors' analyses of the Centers for Disease Control's WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System).

more likely for females than for males. While firearms were involved in the majority of female suicides through 1999, suffocation has been more common each year since. For example, since 2010, 61% of youth female suicides involved suffocation, compared with 45% for males. Conversely, during the same period, 48% of male suicides involved a firearm, compared with 21% of female suicides.

#### Method of suicide, 2010–2019:

Method	Male	Female
Total	100%	100%
Firearm	48	21
Suffocation	45	61
Poisoning	3	11
Other	6	6

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

#### After reaching a low point in 2007, the youth suicide rate has been on the rise

Following a period of relative stability through the mid-1990s, the youth suicide rate fell 44% between 1994 and 2007. Since the 2007 low point, the youth suicide rate grew substantially, increasing 124% to reach a new peak in 2018, then declined 10% through 2019. This general pattern of decline followed by considerable growth was reflected in the trends of White, Black, and Hispanic youth as well as males and females. Between 2007 and 2018, the male youth suicide rate more than doubled, the female rate nearly tripled, and the rate for White, Black, and Hispanic youth more than doubled; across all groups, these increases were followed by a one year decline through 2019.

#### American Indians have the highest youth suicide rate

Beginning with the 1990 data, NVSS distinguished fatalities by the victim's Hispanic ethnicity, enabling racial and ethnic comparisons of youth suicides. The risk of suicide was highest for American Indian/Alaskan Native youth

each year since 1990, and the disparity has grown in recent years. During the 1990s, the average annual suicide rate (i.e., suicides per 100,000 persons ages 10–17) for American Indian/Alaskan Native youth (8.1) was nearly twice the rate for White youth (4.3), and about three times the rates for Black (2.7), Hispanic (3.0), and Asian (2.5) youth. By the 2010s, the average annual rate for American Indian/Alaskan Native youth increased to 13.1, more than twice the rate for White youth (5.1), and more than four times the rates for Black (2.8), Hispanic (2.8), and Asian (2.9) youth.

### Nearly 10% of high school students indicated they attempted suicide in the past year

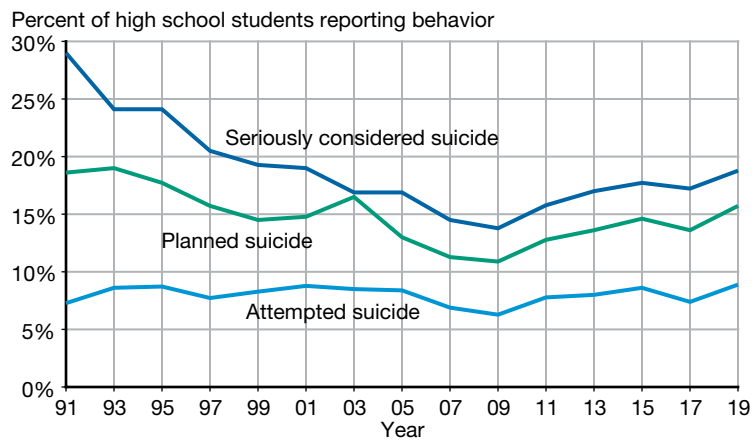
The national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors priority health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. The YRBSS is administered by the Centers for Disease Control in odd-numbered years to a nationally representative sample of high school students in public and private high schools throughout the United States. Among the range of self-reported behaviors captured by YRBSS are four questions related to suicide. In particular, respondents are asked if they considered suicide, made a plan about committing suicide, attempted suicide, and were injured by such an attempt. Based on the 2019 YRBSS, about 1 in 5 (19%) high school students indicated they had “seriously considered attempting” suicide in the past year, and about 1 in 10 (9%) indicated they attempted suicide in the past year.

### Since 2009, the proportion of high school students who report attempting suicide increased

The percent of high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide fell significantly between 1991 and 2009 (from 29.0% to 13.8%), then increased to 18.8% in 2019. Despite the recent increase, the percent of high school students who considered at-

tempting suicide in 2019 was well below the 1991 level. The percent of high school students who attempted suicide reached a low point in 2009 (6.3%), then increased through 2019 (8.9%) to its highest level since 1991, while the percent of high school students who attempted suicide that resulted in injury stayed within a limited range (1.7% to 2.9%) during this period.

### After reaching a low in 2009, the percent of high school youth who considered, planned, or attempted suicide increased significantly through 2019



- The percent of high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide fell significantly between 1991 and 2009 (from 29% to 14%). Despite the recent increase, the percent of high school students who considered suicide in 2019 was well below the 1991 level.
- The percent of high school students who attempted suicide fluctuated between 6% and 9% between 1991 and 2019, and the percent of high school students who attempted suicide that resulted in injury stayed within a limited range (1.7% to 2.9%) during this period.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 1991–2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data.

## In 2019, female high school students were more likely to report suicide-related behaviors than their male peers

Youth characteristics	In the last 12 months:			
	Considered suicide	Planned suicide	Attempted suicide	Injured after an attempt
All high school students	18.8%	15.7%	8.9%	2.5%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	13.3	11.3	6.6	1.7
Female	24.1	19.9	11.0	3.3
<b>Race/ethnicity*</b>				
White	19.1	15.7	7.9	2.1
Black/African American	16.9	15.0	11.8	3.3
Hispanic or Latino	17.2	14.7	8.9	3.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	34.7	24.2	25.5	NA
Asian	19.7	16.1	7.7	1.7
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA
Multiple race	25.7	22.3	12.9	4.1
<b>Grade</b>				
9th	17.7	14.8	9.4	2.3
10th	18.5	15.4	8.8	2.7
11th	19.3	16.4	8.6	2.3
12th	19.6	16.2	8.5	2.7
<b>Sexual identity</b>				
Heterosexual	14.5	12.1	6.4	1.7
Gay, lesbian, bisexual	46.8	40.2	23.4	6.3
Not sure	30.4	23.9	16.1	5.2

- In 2019, Black high school students were less likely to have considered suicide than White students, but more likely to have attempted suicide than White students; White youth were less likely than American Indian/Alaskan Native and multi-racial youth to have considered or attempted suicide.
- The proportion of high school students reporting suicide-related behaviors did not vary by grade in 2019.
- Students who identify as heterosexual were significantly less likely to report suicide-related behaviors than students who identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual, and those who are not sure of their sexual orientation.

\* Racial categories (White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and multiple race) do not include persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity can be any race.

NA = Too few respondents to develop a reliable estimate.

Notes: The reference period for each question was 12 months prior to the survey. Survey questions asked:

Did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?

Did you make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?

How many times did you actually attempt suicide?

Did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdoses that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?

Source: Authors' analyses of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 1991–2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data.



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