

Students Carrying Weapons

Headline

The percentage of high school students carrying weapons in the past 30 days declined from 26 percent to 17 percent between 1991 and 1999, and has remained stable at between 17 and 19 percent through 2007. ([Figure 1](#))

Importance

The presence of a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or club, increases the chances that violent behavior will have serious health consequences. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for teens ages 15 to 19, accounting for 15 percent of all deaths in 2005.¹

Of students carrying weapons, over one quarter report carrying guns,² while one third report carrying a weapon on school grounds.³ One national study found that 43 percent of high school students who reported carrying a weapon in the past year claimed that they carried weapons primarily for protection.⁴ Minor disputes, however, can quickly become much more serious when one or both of the parties involved is carrying a weapon.⁵ The presence of weapons at a school can create an atmosphere that makes both teaching and learning more difficult.⁶

Trends

The percentage of students who report they carried a weapon in the past 30 days decreased from 26 percent in 1991 to 17 percent in 1999. Since the late 1990's the percentage has been fairly stable, and was 18 percent in 2007. ([Figure 1](#))

Differences by Gender

High school males are more than three times as likely as females to carry a weapon (29 percent versus 8 percent in 2007). This difference can be seen for all racial and ethnic subgroups, as well as at each grade. The incidence of both male and female students carrying a weapon, however, has decreased significantly between 1991 and 2007 (41 percent and 11 percent versus 29 percent and 8 percent, respectively). ([Figure 1](#))

Differences by Race and Ethnicity⁷

In 2007, non-Hispanic white males were more likely to carry weapons than non-Hispanic black males (30 percent and 25 percent, respectively). Non-Hispanic white females, however, were less likely than both non-Hispanic black and Hispanic females to carry a weapon (six percent versus ten and nine percent, respectively, in 2007). ([Figure 2](#))

Differences by Age

For both males and females, the likelihood of carrying a weapon decreases slightly as students age. (Table 1) In 2007, 20 percent of ninth graders carried a weapon in the past 30 days, as compared to 16 percent of twelfth graders.

State and Local Estimates

2007 estimates are available for high school students (grades 9-12) by grade and sex for select states and cities from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/>

International Estimates

None Available

National Goals

Through its *Healthy People 2010* initiative, the federal government has set a national goal to decrease the number of adolescents who carry weapons *at school* from 6.9 percent in 1999 to 4.9 percent in 2010. To do this, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages violence prevention programs for youth that focus on reducing both physical fighting at school and weapon carrying.

More information available at:

<http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/document/html/objectives/15-39.htm>

Definition

Youth were asked whether they had carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on one or more occasions in the 30 days preceding the survey.

Data Source

Data for 1991: YRBSS: Youth Online, Comprehensive Results. Retrieved May 24, 2004 from URL: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*:

Data for 1993: March 24, 1995. MMWR 1995; 44 (No. SS-1): Table 4.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4401.htm#00001018.htm>

Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 4.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4504.htm#00001918.htm>

Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR; 47(No. SS-3): Table 4.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4703.htm#00003345.htm>

Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 6.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4905a1.htm#tab6>

Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 6.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab6>
Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No.SS-2): Table 6.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm#tab6>
Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No.SS-5): Table 6.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/SS/SS5505.pdf>
Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007; 57 (No. SS-4) Table 7.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5704.pdf>

Raw Data Source

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

Web location: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm>

Approximate Date of Next Update

Summer 2010

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online]. (2008). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (producer). Available from: URL: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/>. [Cited June 17, 2008].

² MMWR 2007; 57(No. SS-4): Table 7. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5704.pdf>

³ MMWR 2007; 57(No. SS-4): Table 13. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5704.pdf>
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5505a1.htm>

⁴ Garbarino J., Bradshaw, C.P., Vorrasi, J.A. (2002). "Mitigating the Effects of Gun Violence on Children and Youth." *The Future of Children*. http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/tfoc_12-2f.pdf

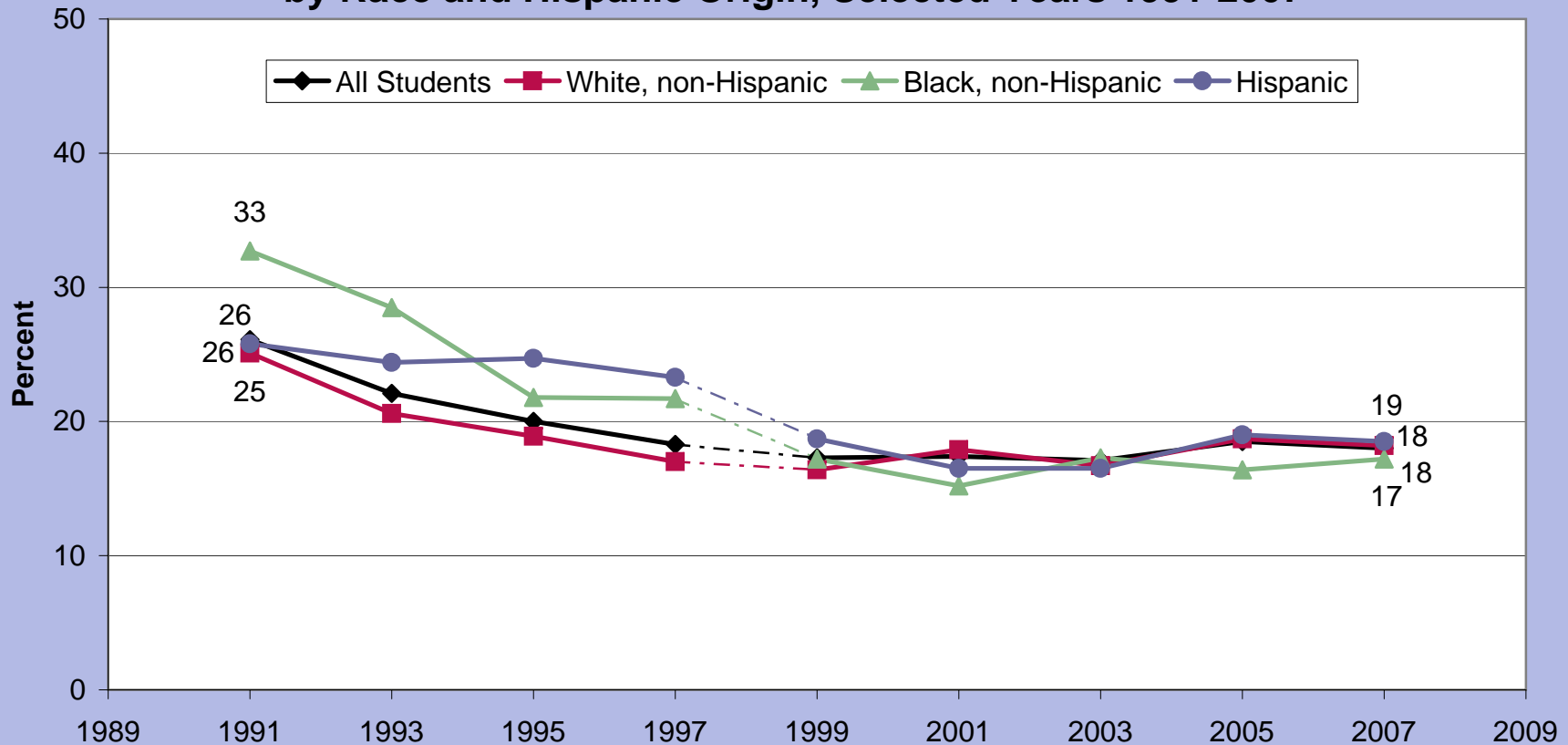
⁵ Blumstein, Alfred. "Youth, Guns, and Violent Crime." *The Future of Children*, Volume 12—Number 2, pages 39-52. <http://www.futureofchildren.org/homepage2824/index.htm>

⁶ DeVoe, J.F., Peter, K., Noonan, M., Snyder, T.D., and Baum, K. (2005). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety:2005* (NCES 2006-001/NCJ 210697). U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006001.pdf>

⁷ Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented here only include respondents who selected one category when choosing their race.

Figure 1

Percentage of High School Students Who Report Carrying Weapons,¹ by Race and Hispanic Origin, Selected Years 1991-2007



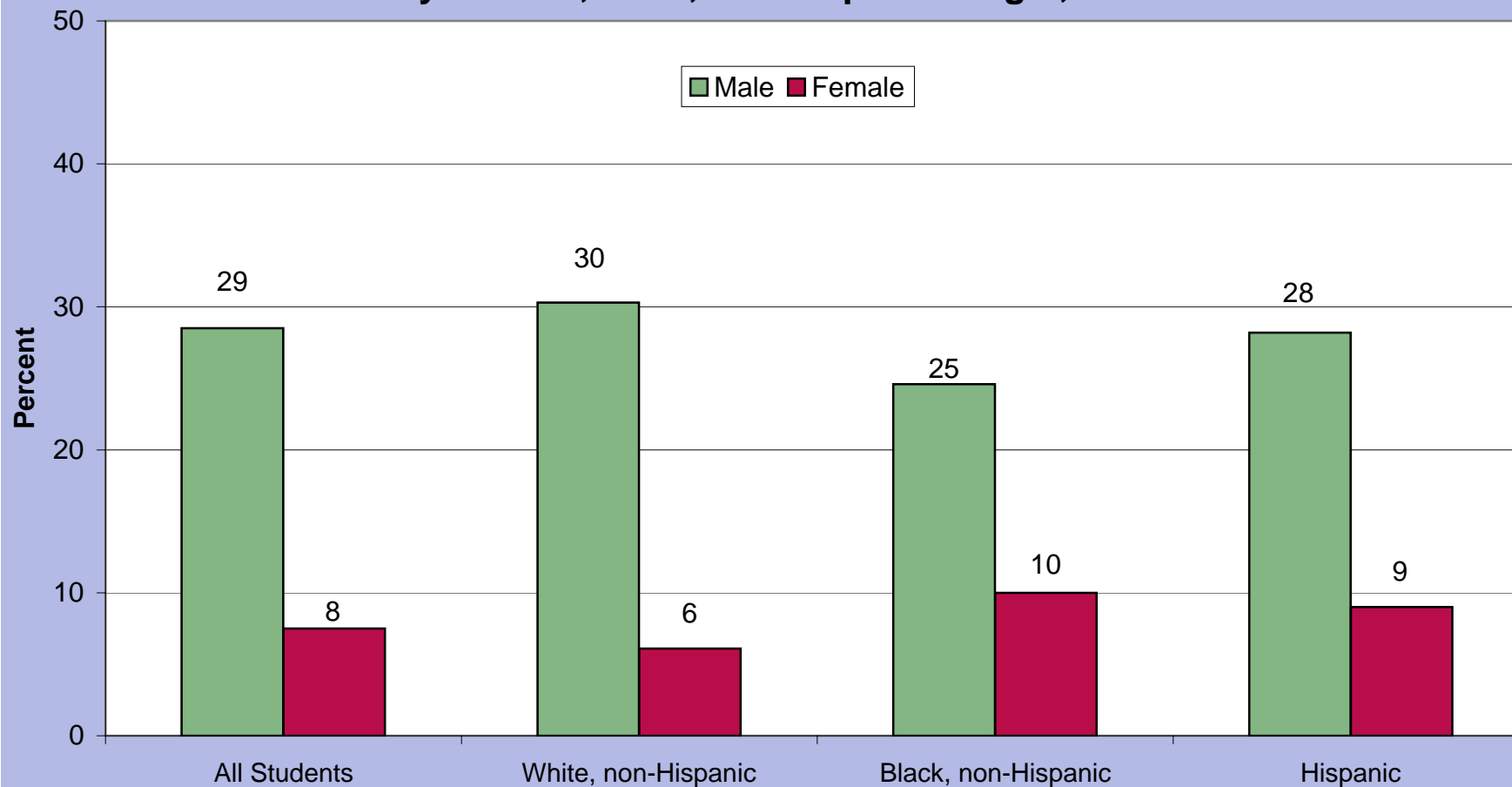
¹ Such as a gun, knife, or club on one or more occasion in the 30 days preceding the survey.

² Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented only include respondents who selected one category when choosing their race.

Source: *Surveillance Summaries*, Data for 1991: Data for 1991: YRBSS: Youth Online, Comprehensive Results. Retrieved May 24, 2004 from URL: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>; Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 4; Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 4. Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR; 47(No. SS-3): Table 4; Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 6. Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 6. Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004;53(No. SS-2): Table 6. Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No.SS-5): Table 6. Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007:57 (No. SS-4). Table 7

Figure 2

Percentage of High School Students Who Report Carrying Weapons,¹ by Gender, Race, and Hispanic Origin,² 2007



¹ Such as a gun, knife, or club on one or more occasion in the 30 days preceding the survey.

² Estimates reported here only include respondents who selected one race category.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*. June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007;57 (No. SS-4). Table 7

Table 1

Weapons: Percentage of High School Students Who Carry Weapons,¹ Selected Years, 1991-2007

	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
All Students	26.1	22.1	20.0	18.3	17.3	17.4	17.1	18.5	18.0
Race/Ethnicity²									
White, non-Hispanic	25.1	20.6	18.9	17.0	16.4	17.9	16.7	18.7	18.2
Black, non-Hispanic	32.7	28.5	21.8	21.7	17.2	15.2	17.3	16.4	17.2
Hispanic	25.8	24.4	24.7	23.3	18.7	16.5	16.5	19.0	18.5
Grade									
9	27.5	25.5	22.6	22.6	17.6	19.8	18.0	19.9	20.1
10	26.8	21.4	21.1	17.4	18.7	16.7	15.9	19.4	18.8
11	29.0	21.5	20.3	18.2	16.1	16.8	18.2	17.1	16.7
12	21.3	19.9	16.1	15.4	15.9	15.1	15.5	16.9	15.5
Male	40.6	34.3	31.1	27.7	28.6	29.3	26.9	29.8	28.5
Race/Ethnicity²									
White, non-Hispanic	41.2	33.4	30.6	27.0	28.6	31.3	27.1	31.4	30.3
Black, non-Hispanic	43.4	38.2	29.6	29.1	23.1	22.4	24.9	23.7	24.6
Hispanic	40.0	37.3	36.6	35.0	29.5	26.0	24.3	29.8	28.2
Grade									
9	44.4	39.0	33.8	33.2	28.7	33.7	26.6	31.6	31.0
10	41.5	32.5	32.4	26.6	30.7	28.4	26.5	30.6	29.3
11	44.0	33.0	32.1	28.8	26.9	28.1	29.2	28.6	27.7
12	33.1	32.6	26.0	23.3	27.3	25.6	25.2	27.6	25.0
Female	10.9	9.2	8.3	7.0	6.0	6.2	6.7	7.1	7.5
Race/Ethnicity²									
White, non-Hispanic	7.5	6.9	5.5	4.4	3.6	5.1	5.5	6.0	6.1
Black, non-Hispanic	23.6	18.9	15.7	14.7	11.7	8.6	9.8	9.4	10.0
Hispanic	12.9	11.5	13.2	9.6	8.4	7.4	8.5	7.8	9.0
Grade									
9	10.4	11.1	9.3	10.9	6.5	7.4	8.8	8.1	8.9
10	11.1	9.8	9.3	6.3	7.1	5.4	5.2	7.8	8.1
11	12.9	9.1	7.7	5.7	5.2	5.9	6.8	6.1	6.0
12	9.5	6.9	6.3	5.3	4.8	5.3	5.2	6.2	6.2

Note: Estimates do not include youth who dropped out of school and therefore may not reflect total national values

"-" Indicates data not available.

¹Such as a gun, knife, or club on one or more occasion in the 30 days preceding the survey.

²Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented only include respondents who selected one category when choosing their race.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, Data for 1991:

YRBSS: Youth Online, Comprehensive Results. Retrieved May 24, 2004 from URL:

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>; Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 4; Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 4. Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR; 47(No. SS-3): Table 4; Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 6; Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51 (No. SS-4): Table 6. Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004:53(No. SS-2): Table 6. Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No.SS-5): Table 6. Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007:57 (No. SS-4). Table 7

