

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission



AYS Youth Carrying Handguns Fact Sheet

Our mission is to sustain and enhance the coordination, cohesiveness, productivity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Arizona

Background

March 2010

In 2005, 74 percent of all homicides involving a 14-17 year-old offender were committed using a gun as the fatal weapon (FBI: Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2005). This statistic, despite its narrow focus on fatal gun crime alone, reveals a portion of the prevalence of handgun violence among

today's youth. To gain a better understanding of handgun carrying among Arizona youth, survey items in the Arizona Youth Survey (AYS) that capture handgun carrying and related perceptions and behaviors are analyzed.

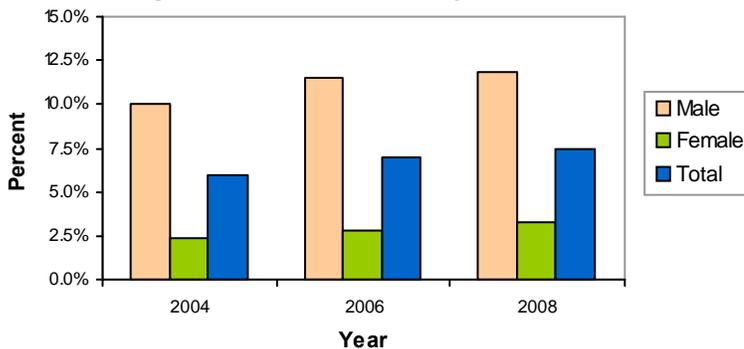
The Arizona Youth Survey (AYS)

Representative samples of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders from Arizona schools participated in the 2004, 2006, and 2008 administrations of the AYS. The representative state samples of youth were surveyed on several topics including, but not limited to, self-reported drug use, deviant behavior, risk and protective factors, and handgun carrying. The survey has been administered every two years since 2002.

Table 1. Percentage of Students Who Reported Carrying a Handgun in the Past 12 Months by Grade Level, 2004-2008

	2004	2006	2008
8 th Grade	6.5	7.1	7.6
10 th Grade	5.9	7.1	7.1
12 th Grade	5.5	6.6	7.9
Total	6.0	7.0	7.5

Chart 1. Percentage of Students Who Reported Carrying a Handgun in the Past 12 Months by Gender, 2004-2008



Handgun Carrying by Grade and Gender

Table 1 and Chart 1 show an increase in the percentage of students carrying a handgun over the 12 months prior to the survey from 6.0 percent in 2004 to 7.5 percent in 2008. During this period, the percentage of students who reported carrying a handgun declined or stayed the same as grade level increased, with the exception of the 12th grade students in 2008 (Table 1). In contrast, youth handgun carrying within each grade increased from 2004 to 2008. Increases in youth handgun carrying are also evident by gender (Chart 1). The percentage of youth who reported carrying a handgun increased over all three reporting periods for both male and female respondents.

Differences Across Youth Perceptions of Being Caught and Handgun Carrying

Youth perceptions of the likelihood of being caught with a handgun are associated with the likelihood of carrying a handgun. Table 2 shows that youth who reportedly felt they would get caught by the police and/or their parents for carrying a handgun were less likely to carry a handgun during the 12 months prior to the survey than those youth who felt they would not get caught. In 2008, 4.2 percent of students who felt, %police would catch a kid carrying a handgun,+reported carrying a handgun at least once over the previous year. Of the students who felt a kid would not get caught for carrying, 10.2 percent reported carrying a handgun.

The findings are similar when the focus turns to parents (Table 2). Of the youth who felt they would get caught carrying a handgun by their parents, only 4.2 percent reported carrying a handgun in 2008. The percentage increases to 15.5 percent for youth who felt they would not get caught by their parents. Table 2 shows the same data for 2004 and 2006.

Table 2. Youth Perceptions of Getting Caught for Handgun Carrying by Reported Gun Carrying Practices, 2004-2008

	2004		2006		2008	
	Did Not Carry	Carried a Handgun	Did Not Carry	Carried a Handgun	Did Not Carry	Carried a Handgun
<i>Police Would Catch a Kid Carrying a Handgun</i>	95.6	3.7	92.6	3.6	95.4	4.2
<i>Police Would Not Catch a Kid Carrying a Handgun</i>	90.9	8.3	86.4	9.8	89.2	10.2
<i>Parents Would Catch You Carrying a Handgun</i>	95.8	3.4	92.5	3.9	95.3	4.2
<i>Parents Would Not Catch You Carrying a Handgun</i>	86.5	12.8	82.1	13.6	83.7	15.5

Risk and Protective Factors and Youth Gun Carrying

Individual, school, and community factors can play a role in increasing or decreasing the likelihood that youth will carry a handgun. For example, students who were at a high risk of early initiation of antisocial behavior were more likely to carry a handgun than low risk students (Table 3). The same is found for students who lived in communities with easy access to handguns, who are gang involved, and who interact with antisocial peers.

Table 3. Percentage of Students Who Reported Carrying a Handgun in the Past 12 Months by Risk/Protective Factor, 2004-2008

	2004	2006	2008
<i>Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior</i>			
<i>High Risk</i>	14.5	16.7	17.4
<i>Low Risk</i>	0.7	0.7	0.8
<i>Perceived Availability of Handguns</i>			
<i>High Risk</i>	13.5	15.2	16.5
<i>Low Risk</i>	2.2	2.5	2.7
<i>Gang Involvement</i>			
<i>High Risk</i>	14.2	17.2	17.5
<i>Low Risk</i>	3.5	3.7	4.1
<i>Interaction with Antisocial Peers</i>			
<i>High Risk</i>	9.4	10.9	11.6
<i>Low Risk</i>	1.6	1.9	2.1
<i>Family Attachment</i>			
<i>High Protection</i>	4.5	5.4	5.8
<i>Low Protection</i>	7.1	7.8	8.6
<i>School Rewards for Pro-social Involvement</i>			
<i>High Protection</i>	4.6	5.3	5.7
<i>Low Protection</i>	7.6	8.9	9.4
<i>Interaction with Pro-social Peers</i>			
<i>High Protection</i>	3.9	4.9	5.3
<i>Low Protection</i>	7.9	8.9	10.1

In addition, protective factors can work to reduce the likelihood of handgun carrying among Arizona youth. Students reporting higher attachment to their family consistently reported a lower percentage of handgun carrying from 2004 to 2008. A lower probability of handgun carrying was also found among students reporting higher levels of school rewards for pro-social involvement as well as greater interaction with pro-social peers when compared to students that did not report these higher levels of protection.

Drug Use/Sale and Handgun Carrying

Table 4 shows the relationship between drug use/dealing and handgun carrying. Students who reported carrying a handgun in the 12 months prior to the survey in 2008 were more likely to use or sell drugs than youth who did not report carrying a handgun. In 2008, 61.3 percent of youth who reported carrying a handgun also reported illegal use of a drug at least once in their lifetime. Of youth who reported carrying a handgun, 38.6 percent reported the illegal use of at least one drug thirty days prior to the survey. Of all youth who carried a handgun, 33.5 percent sold illegal drugs during the same period. These percentages of drug use/dealing for youth carrying a handgun are higher than the reported percentages for Arizona youth that reportedly did not carry a handgun in 2008 (Table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of Student Drug Use and Sale by Reported Handgun Carrying, 2008

	Any Drug (Lifetime)	Any Drug (30 Days)	Sold Illegal Drugs
<i>Carried a Handgun</i>	61.3	38.6	33.5
<i>Did Not Carry</i>	34.4	16.2	5.2

School and Handgun Carrying

The AYS also allows for the exploration of the prevalence of youth handgun carrying in schools as well as the connection between handgun carrying and academic achievement. In 2008, 1.3 percent of Arizona youth reported bringing a handgun to school during the 12 months prior to the survey (Table 5). This is a 0.2 percent decrease from 2004.

Table 5. Percentage of Students Who Reported Taking a Handgun to School in the Past 12 Months by Grade Level, 2004-2008

	2004	2006	2008
<i>8th Grade</i>	1.5	1.4	1.2
<i>10th Grade</i>	1.5	1.5	1.3
<i>12th Grade</i>	1.3	1.3	1.4
Total	1.5	1.4	1.3

Gun carrying among Arizona youth also varies across student academic achievement. Students who received mostly As had the lowest prevalence of gun carrying in the 12 months prior to taking the survey (Table 6). The percentage of youth reporting carrying a handgun gradually increased as academic achievement declined. The highest percentage of youth gun carrying was reported among youth who received mostly Fs.

Table 6. Percentage of Students Who Reported Carrying a Handgun in the Past 12 Months by Academic Performance, 2004-2008

	2004	2006	2008
<i>Mostly As</i>	3.6	3.9	4.2
<i>Mostly Bs</i>	5.4	6.1	6.7
<i>Mostly Cs</i>	8.2	9.8	10.6
<i>Mostly Ds</i>	11.5	13.7	14.1
<i>Mostly Fs</i>	15.8	18.2	19.8
Total	6.0	7.0	7.5

Handgun carrying was also found among students reporting mostly Bs, Cs, Ds, and Fs. The percentage of youth reporting carrying a handgun gradually increased as academic achievement declined.

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