



Reporting on Violence:

New Ideas for Television, Print and Web

Written by Jane Ellen Stevens

Edited by Lori Dorfman, DrPH

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Reporting on Violence Project,
supported by a grant from
The California Wellness Foundation.

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For streaming media broadcast examples, see:
<http://www.newslab.org>
“Covering Crime in Context”

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Preface

The Reporting on Violence Project began in 1994, with a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to produce *Reporting on Violence: A Handbook for Journalists*. The book put data, resources, case studies, and crime stories that added a prevention or public health approach to the law enforcement and criminal justice points of view in the hands of more than 950 journalists in 131 news outlets, journalism programs or affiliated organizations across the country. (The original handbook is available online at <http://www.pcvp.org>, click “Reporters.”)

A subsequent grant from The California Wellness Foundation enabled us to work with California newspaper editors and reporters face-to-face. We teamed up with Dr. Esther Thorson, associate dean at the Graduate Studies Center of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and presented Reporting on Violence workshops at the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Sacramento Bee* and the *San Jose Mercury News*. In addition, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* brought us in with its own money to do a workshop. At each workshop, we presented new techniques for violence reporting and brought in local violence epidemiologists to inform reporters about available violence data outside the law enforcement and criminal justice arenas.

All five newspapers began mining the violence epidemiology for sources and stories. The *San Jose Mercury News* took the biggest step and began a weekly public safety column. It also put more resources into domestic violence reporting. It produced an award-winning series on domestic violence. One of the reporters of that series began covering domestic violence issues regularly.

At this writing, we’re extending our project to include local television news. We’ve met with TV news directors in San Diego and the San Francisco Bay area. In collaboration with NewsLab, we’ve developed TV news stories that illustrate how to include a public health approach in a typical local TV news timeframe. Reporting on Violence workshops at local TV stations are being planned now. A teaching guide for journalism professors will be posted at <http://www.bmsg.org>.

This handbook includes ideas from the previous edition, and goes one step further. Here, we’ve added illustrations focused on how newspapers and TV stations can make use of the World Wide Web. With the Web, news organizations can give their readers and viewers an accurate picture of how violent crime is affecting them and their communities, to equip them with information to prevent the types of violent incidents that cause them and their communities the greatest harm. We hope news organizations will find these ideas a useful stimulus for creating more effective crime reporting of their own.

Lori Dorfman
Jane Ellen Stevens
October, 2001

Modernizing Crime Reporting

From January 1998 through March 1998, the San Jose Police Department recorded 966 aggravated assaults in San Jose, California. Most of those assaults were domestic violence. During those same three months, the *San Jose Mercury News* reported on five aggravated assaults. None were domestic violence.

In March 1998, at least 67 murders, 175 rapes and 4,042 aggravated assaults occurred in Los Angeles County. During that same time, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on 24 murders, three rapes and 39 aggravated assaults. In San Francisco, over a three-month period in 1997, there were 19 murders, 955 aggravated assaults and 55 rapes. The *Examiner* covered 8 homicides, 7 aggravated assaults, and none of the rapes. An analysis of newspaper crime stories compared with crimes committed found comparable data in Philadelphia and Sacramento.

Generally speaking, newspaper and television journalists report a small percentage of individual violent incidents at great length and with great precision. But, overall, the media provide their readers and viewers an inaccurate picture of crime in their communities, and how this violence affects their communities economically and emotionally. In addition, journalists rarely provide any information in daily or feature reporting about local violence prevention efforts.

The effect of these approaches is profound. Research shows that news organizations report violent crime in a way that scares readers and viewers. It also shows that readers and viewers feel helpless about reducing violence in their communities.

Crimes reported to law enforcement versus crimes reported in newspapers		
January–March 1998	San Jose Police	<i>San Jose Mercury News</i>
Homicide	9	11 *
Aggravated Assault	966	5
Rape	86	5
March 1998	Los Angeles Police	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Homicide	67	24
Aggravated Assault	4,042	39
Rape	175	3
February–April 1998	Sacramento Police & Sheriff	<i>Sacramento Bee</i>
Homicide	22	22
Aggravated Assault	854	23
Rape	128	1

*the newspaper reported stories from outside the police department's jurisdiction

The new face of violence

In the late 1970s, a new medical and scientific field emerged that studies violence as an epidemic and a public health issue. Specialists in this new discipline employ the same tools used in other epidemics such as lung cancer and heart disease: They study the interaction among the victim, the agent of injury or death, and the environment. They define risk factors so that they can develop methods to prevent injury and death.

For more than 15 years, epidemiologists have been identifying violence risk factors. These factors include the ready availability of firearms and alcohol, racial discrimination, unemployment, violence in the media, lack of education, abuse as a child, witnessing violent acts in the home or neighborhood, isolation of the nuclear family, and belief in male dominance over females.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention initiated a program on violence prevention in 1983. In 1984, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared that violence was as much a public health issue for today's physicians as smallpox was for the medical community in previous generations. Hundreds of states and city public health departments have established offices of violence prevention in public health departments. Thousands of community violence prevention organizations have been established; many have had stunning results.

Boston

In 1990, a coalition of parents, clergy, community violence prevention, law enforcement, and criminal justice organizations set out to reduce youth violence. They closely monitored at-risk young probationers (Operation Night Light). They began a neighborhood-policing project (Strategic Planning and Community Mobilization Project). They reduced the flow of guns, met with gang ringleaders to warn them off violence and came down hard on those who continued to be violent (Operation Ceasefire). They helped other gang members go straight (Youth Service Providers Network). Youth homicides dropped from 152 in 1990 to 23 in 1997.

National Crime Prevention Council | <http://www.ncpc.org/boston.htm>

Oakland

Youth ALIVE! was established in 1991 to reduce violent injuries to young people. They helped found the East Oakland Partnership to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence, a collaborative of 25 public and non-profit agencies dedicated to reducing the high rate of juvenile gun violence in East Oakland. Programs were established to help teenagers who ended up on probation for violent offenses or in the emergency room as a result of being shot, stabbed or beaten, and to educate teens about the effects of violence in their communities, as well as violence prevention. Over the last 10 years, the rate of youth gun homicide victims declined by 88 percent while the rate of youths arrested for gun homicides declined by 83 percent.

Deane Calhoun | 510.594.2588 | dcalhoun@youthalive.org

Breaking tradition

So far, the journalism community has not taken advantage of the new data, research and resources in this emerging field. For the most part, reporters continue to cover crime and violence by talking only to law enforcement and criminal justice officials and experts. They leave out public health experts who can provide violence prevention data, research and resources that readers and viewers can use to prevent the types of violent incidents that cause them and their communities the greatest harm.

In addition, news organizations report many fewer violent incidents than occur in their communities. “That’s what we do,” journalists respond. “We report the unusual.” Yes, but that’s not all we report. Newspapers regularly report the status of sports, business, political campaigns, weather and local entertainment. Television stations report the status of political campaigns, the hometown sports teams, and weather, albeit with a broader brush-stroke.

By reporting the status of violence, and adding information about the public health response to violence, journalists can uncover the two major hidden stories about crime:

It’s the bulk of “ordinary” violent incidents that harm communities the most and cause cities to spend huge chunks of their budgets (hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars) on police, medical and rehabilitation expenses.

People are developing predictable, effective methods to reduce and prevent violence.

This approach isn't new. Remember how reporters covered car crashes?

Until the 1960s, traffic deaths and injuries were typically blamed on “the nut behind the wheel.” The car and the road were ignored, until public health experts and injury control scientists systematically looked at auto deaths and injuries. Since 1975, the U.S. Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) has gathered information on the vehicle, the environmental conditions, and the driver involved in every U.S. auto fatality.

As a result of those data, subsequent research and political pressure, manufacturers added collapsible steering columns, seat belts, shoulder harnesses, roll bars, padded dashboards, anti-lock brakes, airbags and safety glass to automobiles. Highway engineers improved the safety of roads and intersections. States passed seat-belt laws and created stiff penalties for people driving drunk. Without these changes, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 people would be dying on the roads each year, instead of 40,000. Today, when the news media report on auto crashes, they usually include information about seat belts, alcohol, and environmental conditions.

Journalists made a similar shift in covering tobacco issues. It used to be only the smoker's fault if he or she died of lung cancer. All the stories about research that linked smoking with lung cancer and heart disease were required to quote researchers from the now-defunct Tobacco Research Institute. Today, news organizations report about how tobacco companies share in the responsibility for deaths and illness by manufacturing, marketing and selling a product that they know to be harmful and addictive.

fact: *Even with the recent decrease in homicide, the United States still ranks first among industrialized nations in its rate of violent deaths.*

World Health Organization Statistics Annual 1997–1999
http://www-nt.who.int/whosis/statistics/whsa/whsa_table4.cfm?path=statistics.whsa.whsa_table4&language=english

The first challenge to modernizing the crime beat:

How do journalists include a public health point of view in stories about crime and violence? How do they report crime as a preventable problem?

Violence is a public health issue. The same questions can be asked about violence as are asked about disease:

How many people are dying or being injured in this type of violence? How much is this type of violence costing individuals, their families and communities, economically and emotionally? Who's looking for a cure? What are the risk factors that contribute to this type of violence? What are city, state, national governmental authorities doing to prevent it? Is enough money being spent on research? What do people need to know to prevent the violence in their homes, neighborhoods, communities, cities, and states? What violence prevention programs are working in other neighborhoods, communities, cities, and states? If this type of violence could be reduced by 25 percent, how much money would that save a community?

The second challenge to modernizing the crime beat:

How can news organizations change their crime reporting to provide an accurate picture of how crime is affecting readers/viewers and their communities?

They certainly can't do a story on every violent incident that occurs in their communities. But they can use their Web sites.

A "violence information shell" on a news organization's Web site can provide standing information that puts violent incidents into context. This information includes links to local, state and national crime data; violence prevention resources; the latest violence prevention research; and information about how much crime is costing a community. For example, the site can provide links to interactive graphics that show how much of the city's budget is spent on the police department (often, the department that eats up the biggest portion of a community's budget), and how much funding might be diverted to schools and parks if crime and violence were decreased. The site can link to maps that compare alcohol outlet density with crime levels. The site becomes a tool for those in and outside the newsroom.

The violence "shell" also offers an aspect unique to the Web: interactivity. This includes violence quizzes, forums with local violence prevention experts and grass roots organizations, and chat areas where readers can exchange information. The site can also host Webcasts of local town hall meetings or violence prevention events, and associated school projects in which students can share information on projects such as mapping their communities to identify areas that can be improved to reduce violent incidents.

This approach to covering crime and violence breaks with journalists' traditional coverage. "Journalists are not accustomed to thinking much about effects," wrote Frank Denton, editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison, in "The Local News Handbook." "In fact, some suggest that our job is merely to report the facts and let others worry about the fallout." But which facts? asks Denton. Why them and not others? "The answers inevitably lead back to thinking about effects — that is, why we do journalism in the first place," he answers. "For example, do we cover crime so much 'just to sell newspapers,' as our critics often charge? Or do we cover crime to inform the public so, in our democratic system, citizens can do something about it?"

What Does Crime News Look Like — and Why Does it Matter?

by Lori Dorfman, DrPH

The news media should help as many citizens as possible make sense of the world around them. But does the current approach to covering youth and crime maximize public understanding of reality? What information on youth and violence does the news media present to the American public? And how does that information affect audiences?

The research on news content is clear and consistent. Studies spanning almost 100 years — from 1910 through 2001 — indicate that depictions of crime in the news are not reflective of the rate of crime generally, the proportion of crime which is violent, the proportion of crime committed by people of color, or the proportion of crime committed by youth. The problem is not the inaccuracy of individual stories, but that the cumulative choices of what is included in the news — or not included — presents the public with a false picture of higher frequency and severity of crime than is actually the case.

Research has established three clear patterns. First, and most consistent over time, is that newspapers and television emphasize violent crime. Second, the more unusual the crime, the greater the chance it will be covered. Third, the rate of crime coverage increased while real crime rates dropped. While all media emphasize violence in their news, newspapers do it to a lesser degree than network television, which does it less than local TV news.

Presumably, if the emphasis on crime is satisfying viewers' desire to know about it, then print and broadcast journalists would also be explaining it. Yet most crime news is episodic, describing crime events as if they are isolated from larger social, historical, or environmental contexts. Research consistently finds that news on crime describes the basic facts with little reporting about what could be done to prevent it.

The research on race and crime is somewhat mixed, but most studies that have looked closely find that a disproportionate number of perpetrators on the news are people of color, especially African Americans. African American perpetrators are depicted as dangerous and indistinguishable as a group, and they appear more frequently in crime news stories than whites. The strongest evidence shows that people of color, again primarily African Americans, are underrepresented as victims in crime news. Interracial crime is also covered disproportionately.

The few studies of youth and violence in the news show that youth may fare worse than their elders when it comes to news portrayals. Studies of network and local television, for example, have found that when youth appear in the news it is most often related to violence. Unlike adults, youth do not appear in all sections of the newspaper or broadcast. There are few nonviolent depictions for readers and viewers to see young people.

Each study's findings, taken alone, may not be cause for alarm. After all, crime is a serious problem that demands news attention and political action.

But if news audiences are taking the crime coverage at face value, they are accepting a serious distortion. They are likely to believe that most crime is extremely violent and that perpetrators are black and victims, white. If news audiences have little contact with young people, they are likely to believe that youth are dangerous threats, in part because there are so few other representations of youth in the news to the contrary.

Indeed, this seems to be the case. The consistent emphasis on unusual violent crime affects readers and viewers. Research shows that they overestimate the frequency of different classes of crime and violence; their levels of fear increase; they fail to register the fact that crime has decreased in the last few years; and they encourage support of punitive and discourage support for preventive crime policies. Although violent crime by youth in 1998 was at its lowest point in the 25-year history of the National Crime Victimization Survey, 62% of poll respondents felt that juvenile crime was on the increase. According to a 1998 Harris poll, nearly seven in ten Americans (68%) say violent crime in the United States is on the increase, and only a quarter (24%) say the nation is making progress in battling crime. These opinions persist despite annual FBI reports on the steady decrease in crime since 1993. In a *Los Angeles Times* poll, 80% of respondents stated that the media's coverage of violent crime had increased their personal fear of being a victim.

The public's decisions about what to do to prevent violence depend, in large part, on the picture the public sees in the news. Content audits show crime as anti-urban, inevitable, random and victim-blaming by misrepresenting the frequency of crime and violence, exaggerating and sensationalizing crime, ignoring the causal and contextual processes producing crime patterns, and fostering stereotypes, especially racial stereotypes. Violence is also commonly framed as being under the sole purview of criminal justice and law enforcement. There is abundant evidence that citizens respond to this picture of violence by fearing their world and remaining ambivalent about the best course of preventive action. Despite sharp declines in youth crime, the public expresses great fear of its young people.

Ultimately, individual news workers make decisions about what to include in the news of the day based on whether they personally care about the story. Reporters, editors, and producers have finely honed internalized mechanisms that are triggered by their personal values and emotional responses, tempered by news judgement, experience, and expectations of audience response. Standard selection criteria for news stories — controversy, conflict, novelty, proximity, significance, timeliness, visual appeal, practicality — are processed through journalists' personal filters.

The overwhelming evidence is that in the aggregate, crime coverage is not reflecting an accurate picture of who the victims and perpetrators are. The most consistent finding across media and across time is the gross distortion of the types of crime reported in the news. Rather than informing citizens about their world, the news is reinforcing stereotypes that inhibit society's ability to respond to the problem of crime, including juvenile crime. This is an admittedly difficult problem to fix, given the many constraints of daily journalism. Nonetheless, it is way past time to try to create a more accurate picture of crime, who suffers from it, and what can be done to prevent it.

The First Challenge to Modernizing the Crime Beat:

How do journalists include a public health point of view in stories about crime and violence? How do they report crime as a preventable problem?

The following pages feature two stories — a TV story about a youth homicide, and a newspaper story about annual crime data — as they were presented originally, and after a public health perspective was included.

Because violence is a public health issue, the same questions can be asked about violence as are asked about disease. For example: How many people are dying or being injured in this type of violence? How much is this type of violence costing individuals, their families and communities? Who's looking for a cure? What are the risk factors that contribute to this type of violence? What are city, state, national governmental authorities doing to prevent it? Is enough money being spent on research? If this type of violence could be reduced by 25 percent, how much money would that save a community?

Local TV Story on Youth Violence: **As Aired**

[NATS] (Remark: CHOIR WALKING IN)

TODAY, A CONGREGATION IN MOURNING IS COMING TOGETHER TO FIND STRENGTH IN EACH OTHER.

[SOT] “There weren’t too many young men in the church, there are five, were five of us, now there’s four. We just have to stay closer together and lift each other up.”

IN THIS ROOM ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL TELL YOU 15-YEAR-OLD DEVIN GROSS ISN’T JUST SOME TRAGEDY TO SHAKE YOUR HEAD OVER AND FORGET ABOUT. THIS WAS A YOUNG, BRIGHT LIFE...CUT SHORT...AND NOBODY HERE CAN UNDERSTAND WHY. ESPECIALLY NOT HIS SISTER...

[SOT] My brother never did anything to nobody. I don’t understand why nobody can say anything like who. Everyone pretends like no one knows what happened. It happened in broad daylight and they want to be quiet and shield these people. It doesn’t make any sense.

IT DOESN’T MAKE ANY SENSE. DEVIN WAS SHOT TO DEATH FRIDAY AFTERNOON AT MCALLISTER AND BUCHANAN IN THE WESTERN ADDITION NEIGHBORHOOD OF SAN FRANCISCO. POLICE SAY HE WAS WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ARGUED WITH ANOTHER GROUP. ONE OF THEM CAME BACK WITH A GUN AND KILLED DEVIN.

LAST NIGHT...THE MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH HELD AN EMOTIONAL VIGIL...A CALL FOR ACTION...A CRY FOR ANSWERS.

[SOT] We lost a member of this church, this was a life and this was a good young man, not a gangbanger or anything else.

TODAY...THE YOUTH DIRECTOR OF THE CHURCH WONDERS WHERE ALL THE CITYWIDE OUTRAGE IS OVER THIS DEATH AND WHY THERE ISN’T MORE SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY...

[SOT] If people don’t look at us as people and give us the same type of services they did those people that shot up that school and those kids that were grieving. We saw last night young people grieving at McAllister and Buchanan streets last night.

[SOT] I don’t know what happened. I can’t explain. He was always a very wonderful young man.

Local TV Story on Youth Violence: **Script Revised**

The story revision added 57 seconds.

[NATS] (Remark: CHOIR WALKING IN)

TODAY, THE CONGREGATION OF COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH MOURNS THE DEATH OF ONE OF THEIR OWN: 15-YEAR-OLD DEVIN GROSS.

[SOT] “There weren’t too many young men in the church, there are five, were five of us, now there is four. We just have to stay closer together and lift each other up.”

PEOPLE HERE SAY DEVIN’S DEATH IS A GREAT TRAGEDY FOR HIS FAMILY AND HIS COMMUNITY. THIS WAS A BRIGHT LIFE...CUT SHORT...AND NOBODY HERE CAN UNDERSTAND WHY. ESPECIALLY HIS 21-YEAR-OLD SISTER.

[SOT] My brother never did anything to nobody. I don’t understand why nobody can say anything like who. Everyone pretends like no one knows what happened. It happened in broad daylight and they want to be quiet and shield these people. It doesn’t make any sense.

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LAST NIGHT...THE MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH HELD AN EMOTIONAL VIGIL...A CALL FOR ACTION...A CRY FOR ANSWERS.

[SOT] We lost a member of this church, and this was a life and this was a good young man that was not a gangbanger or anything else.

GUN-DEATHS AMONG CALIFORNIA TEENAGERS HAVE BEEN DROPPING. BUT MORE TEENAGERS ARE STILL KILLED BY GUNS—INCLUDING SUICIDE AND ACCIDENTAL SHOOTINGS—THAN IN CAR CRASHES.

[Eric Gorovitz, policy director, Million Mom March] What we need to do to prevent gun death and injury is to have a system of responsible gun laws, which we don’t have.

TO PREVENT CHEAP HANDGUNS REACHING THE ILLEGAL MARKET, WHERE TEENAGERS CAN BUY THEM FOR LESS THAN A PAIR OF ATHLETIC SHOES, PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS RECOMMEND:

- * REGISTRATION OF ALL GUNS
- * LIMITS ON NUMBER OF GUNS PEOPLE CAN BUY
- * PRODUCT SAFETY STANDARDS

DEVIN GROSS IS JUST THE LATEST VICTIM. THE YOUTH DIRECTOR OF HIS CHURCH WONDERS WHERE ALL THE OUTRAGE IS OVER THIS DEATH, AND WHY THERE ISN’T MORE SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY.

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DR. LORI DORFMAN, A PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCHER, SAYS THE MEDIA PAY MORE ATTENTION TO EVENTS LIKE THE COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN COLORADO THAN TO THOSE THAT OCCUR IN THEIR OWN BACK YARD. AND WITHOUT PUBLIC CONCERN, SHE SAYS, THE VIOLENCE PROBLEM WON’T GO AWAY.

[Dr. Lori Dorfman, director Berkeley Media Studies Group] We don’t know the names of the last 13 kids shot in San Francisco. What do the experts think about them? What have their families experienced? What are their communities and neighbors doing about it? There’s a lot that we could learn from what is going on right here in our own communities that would help us solve the problems. And I think that the news media have a responsibility to tell that story as well as they tell the different story, the exciting story, the outrageous story like Columbine.

The Second Challenge to Modernizing the Crime Beat:

How can news organizations change their crime reporting to provide an accurate picture of how crime is affecting readers/viewers and their communities?

Integrating the Web

Local newspapers and television stations were once the primary source for information about the community and the outside world. With the advent of the Internet, information sources have mushroomed, and local media face more competition.

To remain a community's gateway to the outside world, local news organizations are beginning to expand their local reporting. News organizations traditionally cover the status of local sports, local politics and government, entertainment, obituaries, business and some aspects of housing (classifieds). Some news organizations have already created data and resource "shells" around sports and business in their Web pages. (See the New York Times:

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/sports/index.html> and

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/business/index.html>)

News organizations are beginning to expand that type of in-depth information to other areas — crime and violence, health, safety, transportation, education, environmental issues, etc. — by tapping into local databases, as well as providing a place for community members to exchange information and ideas.

A "Community Health and Safety" page within the Local or Metropolitan page can provide links to data and resources in health, safety and crime. The homepage on crime would contain the main crime and violence stories of the day, with links to:

Crime data: Local, state and national data that provide context, including maps of neighborhoods that link crime rates to such risk factors as alcohol outlets.

Resources: Links to violence prevention programs in the community and government agencies, including the courts, police, and public health.

Research: Links to the latest research in violence epidemiology

Crime costs: Price tags for current levels of crime in the community

This data and resources "shell" would also offer interactive elements, such as:

What's Your Risk?: Readers/viewers put local violence into personal context

Violence Clock: Ticks off community crimes and associated costs

Violence IQ Test: Quizzes about violence and associated risk factors

Risk Assessment Tests: For warning signs of dating, family, youth violence, etc.

Town Forums: Where people exchange information on issues

School Violence Prevention Projects: Student mapping projects that identify potential community resources for violence prevention, such as abandoned buildings or lots that can be turned into youth centers or parks.

Tell Your Story: Readers/viewers tell their own stories

NEWS on the Web



World | National | Sports | Business | Entertainment | Home | Classifieds

Community
Health & Safety:
Crime

DATA

- Local
- State
- National

RESOURCES

- Violence Prevention Programs
- Courts
- Police
- Public Health
- Laws

RESEARCH

- Risk Factors
- Publications
- Academic Research Centers
- Researchers

COSTS

- Budgets
- This crime
- Community
- Family

YOUR TURN

- What's Your Risk?
- Violence Clock
- Violence IQ Test
- Risk Assessment Tests
- Town Forums
- School Violence Prevention Projects
- Tell Your Story

Breaking News From Our Television Partner: YOUTH HOMICIDE

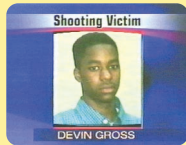


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Shooting Victim

DEVIN GROSS

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- *LIMITS ON NUMBER OF GUNS PEOPLE CAN BUY
- *PRODUCT SAFETY STANDARDS

DEVIN GROSS IS JUST THE LATEST VICTIM. THE YOUTH DIRECTOR OF HIS CHURCH WONDERS WHERE ALL THE OUTRAGE IS OVER THIS DEATH, AND WHY THERE ISN'T MORE SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY.

[SOT] If people don't look at us as people and give us the same type of services they did those people that shot up that school and those kids that were grieving. We saw young people grieving last night at McAllister and Buchanan.

DR. LORI DORFMAN, A PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCHER, SAYS THE MEDIA PAY MORE ATTENTION TO EVENTS LIKE THE COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN COLORADO THAN TO THOSE THAT OCCUR IN THEIR OWN BACK YARD. AND WITHOUT PUBLIC CONCERN, SHE SAYS, THE VIOLENCE PROBLEM WON'T GO AWAY.

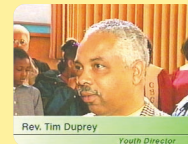
[Dr. Lori Dorfman, director Berkeley Media Studies Group] We don't know the names of the last 13 kids shot in San Francisco. What do the experts think about them? What have their families experienced? What are their communities and neighbors doing about it? There's a lot that we could learn from what is going on right here in our own communities that would help us solve the problems. And I think that the news media have a responsibility to tell that story as well as they tell the different story, the exciting story, the outrageous story like Columbine.

RELATED STORIES

- Father and Son Recovering from Family-Fight Gunfire
- Tearful Teen Gets 15 Years to Life for 1993 Slaying
- Woman Fatally Shot in Home; Husband Held
- East Palo Alto 3rd on FBI's Crime List
- Crime in State Continues to Fall

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Feature local projects here
- Hotlink to other projects here



Rev. Tim Duprey
Youth Director



Eric Gorovitz
Policy Director, Million Mom March

Modernizing Crime Reporting: The San Jose Mercury News

When the Violence Reporting Project held a workshop at the *San Jose Mercury News*, reporter Michelle Guido had been lobbying editors for nine months to do a series on domestic violence. Up to that point, their response had been, “So what’s new?”

After the journalists and editors in the workshop saw that domestic violence felony assault was the No. 1 violent crime in San Jose, and that the paper had not reported on any one of the hundreds that occurred in a three-month period, they approved the series.

The series told the story of domestic violence through several victims. It provided context, explored the economic and emotional consequences of domestic violence, presented research into risk factors, and investigated the efficacy of intervention and prevention programs. The series received several awards.

Doing the series produced two results. The first was that Guido realized that the newspaper should be “writing about this stuff all the time,” she said. She could see, as research has pointed out, that the effects of domestic violence are far-reaching, affecting levels of gang violence, producing another generation of batterers and victims, and influencing the health of communities. “I had a list of a dozen follow-up stories that I wanted to do immediately,” she said.

The second was that because she was equipped with the knowledge derived from spending a year putting together the series, Guido could ask questions that she wouldn’t have thought to ask before. For example, when a police officer murdered his ex-girlfriend and then killed himself, Guido knew that it was likely that the officer had a history of violence.

“People are always being murdered. And usually we report that someone ‘just snapped.’ But that’s not true,” she said.

She found that the officer had had two restraining orders issued against him, one that was issued by the parents of the women he murdered, and another by a family of a teenage girl that the officer had assaulted. With that knowledge, she was able to uncover the story of a troubled, violent man, instead of the nice guy that the media had first portrayed him to be.

MERCURY

BATTERED LIVES

a special report

by Michelle Guido
and Carole Rafferty

RESOURCES

HOTLINES

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, call a hotline number near you

STAYING SAFE

What victims of domestic violence can do to ensure their safety.

AVOIDING VIOLENCE

Counselors offer batters specific advice to head off violent confrontations.

PERSPECTIVE

A PICTURE, AND A WOMAN'S STORY

Tina Hughes talks about her mother's abuse

A DEFENDER SPEAKS

Public defender Seth Flagsberg handles many of Santa Clara County's domestic-violence cases.

FACTS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-RELATED DEATHS

Santa Clara County figures for 1998 and 1999

LEGISLATIVE TIMELINE

A look at the state's treatment of domestic violence over the last three decades

SITE & PROJECT CREDITS



Santa Clara Sheriff's Sergeant Edward Perry photographs Alva Jean Lepper's injuries at Valley Medical Center. *Mercury News photo by Meri Simon*

PART 1

Domestic violence arrests have soared, but batterers spend little time in jail and the criminal justice system lacks the resources to keep victims safe.

Stories

- [The face of abuse](#)
- [Employers step forward to help](#)

Graphics

- [Arrest Comparison](#)
- [Restraining orders](#)

PART 2

Counseling programs are the cornerstone of sentences given to most convicted batterers, but many question whether the programs work.

Stories

- [Mandatory counseling for batterers: Solution or Sham?](#)
- [Arrests don't quell victims' fears](#)
- [Defiance, remorse at therapy session](#)

Graphics

- [Map: 911 calls](#)

PART 3

Activists say domestic violence cuts across all racial economic lines. But statistics show that convicted batterers are overwhelmingly poor and non-white.

Stories

- [Background of batterers](#)
- [Reaching ethnic communities](#)

Graphics

- [Economics and race](#)
- [Arrests by ethnicity vs. population](#)

Subsequent Stories

Michelle Guido continued to cover domestic violence in *San Jose Mercury News* after the series appeared in September 1999. The stories included in-depth coverage of domestic-violence related homicides, feature stories, standard news stories of domestic-violence related legislation, and follow-up stories related to the September 1999 series.

10/26/1999

Getting Tough on Batterers Proves Difficult

Small Gains Made in Legislature

11/11/1999

Shock, Disbelief in Wake of Tragedy
Friends and Family Members Wonder: Did They Miss Some Sign of the Impending Violence that Claimed the Lives of Lisa Munoz and Phillip Garcia?

11/12/1999

Piecing Together the Puzzle

Slaying-Suicide: Family Hopes to Help Women Avoid Similar Situations

11/13/1999

Killer's Troubled Past Revealed

Garcia Had Faced Two Restraining Orders over Girls

11/14/1999

Family is Urged to Learn from Loss

As hundreds of people crowded St. Mary Church in Gilroy on Saturday morning for the funeral Mass for 23-year-old Lisa Munoz, her priest struggled not only to bring comfort to her family and friends, but also to encourage them to learn from their grief and pain...

11/14/1999

Hwy. 101 Chase Heard in 911 Calls

The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department has released excerpts of 911 calls made Monday night in the moments immediately before and after Phillip Garcia chased Lisa Munoz down Highway 101, ran her off the road and shot her to death....

11/21/1999

Police Fail to Check Records in Hiring Background:

Many Agencies Don't Study Files that Could Show Applicants' Family-, Civil-Court Troubles

11/24/1999

Police Officers' Backgrounds Should Get Closer Scrutiny

The tale of Lisa Munoz's death is a horror. Chased down on the freeway by her ex-boyfriend, Phillip Garcia, she was run off the road and shot to death. Then Garcia killed himself...

2/25/2000

County Tries to Break Cycle of Domestic Violence Early

Pioneering Justice System Gives Special Attention to Juveniles Who Batter

3/10/2000

Plea Ends S.J. Domestic Violence Case

Six-Year Term Expected for Man Who Kept Girlfriend Imprisoned in Garage

4/7/2000

Former Deputy Convicted

Jury Agrees He Tried to Kill His Ex-Wife

5/12/2000

New Approach Against No. 1 Source of Violent Felony Arrests

Hairdressers Emerge as Help for Battered Women

5/14/2000

Road to Recovery

Like Her Mother before Her, Alva Jean Lepper was a Battered Woman. Now She's Working to Break the Cycle of Domestic Violence – for her Granddaughter's Sake.

5/20/2000

Husband Held in P.A. Slaying Murder Charge:

Police Say Man Bludgeoned, Strangled Wife, Then Tried to Make Homicide Appear to be an Accidental Fall Down Stairs at Home

9/15/2000

Postcards Provide Lifeline from Violence

In free postcard racks on the walls of bars and cafes throughout Silicon Valley, patrons next month will find cards with innocuous tropical beach scene on the front and the numbers of a local domestic violence hotline on the back....

Local Newspaper Story on Crime Rates: **As Published**

Crime in State Continues to Fall

'99 Drop was 5th in Row; Chicago Homicides Fewest Since '72

By Raoul V. Mowatt
Tribune Staff Writer
Sunday, June 25, 2000
Page 1, Metro Chicago

For the fifth consecutive year, reports of major crime in Illinois declined in 1999, with Chicago recording its fewest homicides in more than a quarter-century.

The downturn comes on the heels of steady, incremental decreases throughout most of the 1990s, and the cumulative effect is dramatic: The number of serious crimes reported in the state has dropped by more than 20 percent since its peak in 1991, even as the population grew by nearly 6 percent.

The downward trend, reflected in the newly released 1999 Illinois State Police Crime Report, appears to be part of a nationwide reduction in crime that many experts attribute to the robust economy, harsher prison sentences and the effects of community-policing strategies.

Across Illinois, reports of serious crime plummeted by almost 8 percent compared with the 1998 level, the seventh time in the last eight years the state has experienced a decrease. Not only did reports of crime fall in each of the eight major categories, but the tally of statewide crimes reported last year also was the lowest since 1982, said Mark McDonald, a state police spokesman.

"It's an indication we're living in a safer time than a decade ago," McDonald said.

The downward trend began in 1991 and was interrupted only by a

small upturn in 1994. But the declines were not universal. McHenry County, for example, saw reported crime increase by 11 percent from 1998 to 1999. Moreover, police and experts caution that the statewide drops in crime reports will not continue forever.

To a certain extent, crime is "a social phenomenon that ebbs and flows like everything else," said Arthur Lurigio, chairman of the criminal justice department at Loyola University Chicago.

Despite the declines, someone reported being the victim of a serious crime somewhere in the state an average of about every minute of 1999. About 17 sexual assaults were reported each day. A vehicle was reported stolen about every 10 minutes, and about 78 people were slain each month.

In Chicago, the 641 slayings reported were the fewest since the state police began keeping track in 1972. The previous low was 661 homicides in 1988, according to the state police.

The 1999 total was 61 fewer than in 1998, a drop of almost 9 percent. Early figures from 2000 indicate that the drop may be continuing. Chicago police had tallied 244 slayings as of Wednesday, 48 fewer than in the comparable period of 1999.

From 1998 to 1999, reports of robbery in Chicago declined by 11 percent, aggravated assault by 11 percent and sexual assault by 5 percent. Since 1995, there has been a 23 percent drop in reports of violent crime in the city. There were almost 10,000 fewer reported robberies in

1999 than in 1995.

Lauri Sanders, a Chicago police spokeswoman, credited the city's community-policing program for much of the decline. Over the last eight years, police have increased efforts to team up with residents, businesses and other city departments to identify and solve problems.

"We are very fortunate in that the work we are doing is paying off," Sanders said. "It goes back to the partnerships. That's the driving force."

Statewide, reports of robbery dropped the most, by almost 12 percent. Next came aggravated assault, which fell about 9 percent, and slayings about 8 percent. Criminal sexual assault showed a drop of about 2 percent. Reports of property crimes also fell in Illinois. Burglary was off by nearly 12 percent from the previous year, theft by 7 percent, motor vehicle theft by about 4 percent and arson by about 3 percent.

In Chicago and for all Cook County last year, overall crime dropped by about 9 percent. Violent crime dropped more sharply, by about 11 percent in both areas.

In a statement, Gov. George Ryan called the statistics "welcome news" and attributed the downturns to anti-crime laws and the work of criminal-justice agencies, government officials and citizens.

But some experts warn that the numbers tell an incomplete story. By definition, the tally does not include unreported crimes. Some victims are unwilling to come forward, perhaps out of a reluctance to contend with

the justice-system bureaucracy, a belief that police will be unable to solve the crime, or even the desire to spare themselves embarrassment. In particular, experts say sexual assault is widely underreported.

In areas with small numbers of reports, even a minor change can translate into a misleading jump or fall when expressed as a percentage. Figures also can be skewed because residents of one area may be far more likely to summon police for a given problem than those in another region. And the number of reports of crime can vary because of police policies, from starting a task force to cracking down on particular offenses to presenting incorrect data.

"There have been a number of cities that have been cited for deep-sixing reports," said Michael Maltz, a criminal justice professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "People cook the books in order to achieve certain goals.... They want to show less crime for the most part."

The crime rates in fast-growing communities also can be misleading, because the true population might be larger than the population figure used by the state.

But experts say that reports of crime, as imperfect as they can be, remain a fairly accurate yardstick to compare crime by community.

"Since reporting seems to be getting better and better, it's probably a pretty good indicator of what's been happening," Maltz said.

For most Cook County municipalities, reports of crime declined slightly. Chicago police tallied 230,979 serious crimes in 1999,

about 82 for every 1,000 residents. In 1998, there were 253,607 reports of crime, or about 90 for every 1,000 residents.

Even with the falloff, an average of six people reported being the victims of violent crime in Chicago each hour in 1999. Chicago accounted for about 62 percent of the state's violent crime in 1999, slightly less than it did in 1998. Chicago has about 23 percent of the state's population.

A number of other Cook County communities had large declines in reports of serious crime. La Grange posted a 36 percent drop between 1998 and 1999. Palos Heights had a 28 percent; Hanover Park, 27 percent; Winnetka and Bellwood, about 26 percent; and Des Plaines and Glencoe, about 25 percent. About a score of Cook County cities deviated from the statewide trend and saw overall increases from 1999 to 1998, fueled largely by boosts in recorded property crimes.

For example, Crestwood had a 63 percent increase. Tinley Park and Barrington both saw a rise of 53 percent. Inverness, Lemont and Barrington Hills saw surges of 49 percent, 35 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

Gary Slutkin, director of the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention, said the latest figures seem a reason for optimism. "It should encourage us to do more because ... reductions even greater than this are achievable," he said. "If we all stay together, the image I have is of a Chicago where people can go for a walk wherever they want."

Local Newspaper Story on Crime Rates: Revised

Crime in State Continues to Fall

'99 Drop was 5th in Row; Chicago Homicides Fewest Since '72

Sunday, June 25, 2000
Page 1, Metro Chicago

For the fifth consecutive year, reports of major crime in Illinois declined in 1999, with Chicago recording its fewest homicides in more than a quarter-century.

The downturn comes on the heels of steady, incremental decreases throughout most of the 1990s, and the cumulative effect is dramatic: The number of serious crimes reported in the state has dropped by more than 20 percent since its peak in 1991, even as the population grew by nearly 6 percent.

The downward trend, reflected in the newly released 1999 Illinois State Police Crime Report, appears to be part of a nationwide reduction in crime that many experts attribute to the robust economy, [the increasing emphasis on violence prevention since the late 1980s](#), including community-policing strategies; [the mushrooming number of neighborhood violence prevention projects](#); and harsher prison sentences.

Across Illinois, reports of serious crime dropped by almost 8 percent compared with the 1998 level, the seventh time in the last eight years the state has experienced a decrease. Not only did reports of crime fall in each of the eight major categories, but the tally of statewide crimes reported last year also was the lowest since 1982.

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"It's an indication we're living in a safer time than a decade ago," said Mark McDonald, a state police spokesman.

The downward trend began in 1991 and was interrupted only by a small upturn in 1994. But the declines were not universal. McHenry County, for example, saw reported crime increase by 11 percent from 1998 to 1999. Although two in three districts in Chicago reported a decrease in homicide, in five districts – the 17th, 25th, 11th, 10th and 21st – crime rates increased from 11 to 86 percent.

These areas contain many factors identified by violence epidemiologists as contributing to crime: high unemployment rates, poor housing, poverty, relatively few businesses, lack of city or county services, poor health services, and poor schools.

The state report shows that domestic violence dropped by only four percent statewide, and by 3.5 percent in Chicago. But some experts believe that incidents are under-reported.

"Across the nation, domestic violence is not decreasing," said Jeri Linas, assistant director of Chicago Mayor Daley's Office on Domestic Violence. In fact, one-third of all crimes in Cook County last year –

85,000 out of 230,000 — involved domestic violence. Another 24,500 of the total were crimes against children.

With the increasing recognition by the research community that domestic violence leads to other types of violence, including gang violence, the city has instituted a massive domestic violence-prevention effort in Chicago's neighborhoods, said Linas.

Piggybacking on the CAPS program (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy), which has had success in reducing drug and gang violence in some districts, domestic violence subcommittees have been founded in 19 of the city's 25 districts. "They make the connection that even though the crime is private, it's actually a community affair," said Linas. "Lots of violence originates in the home, and you have kids leaving the home and looking for alternative sources of support, such as gangs."

The city's police department has also begun staffing the districts with half-time domestic violence liaison officers, whose duties range from educating teenagers about dating violence to informing police officers about changes in domestic violence law.

The city's health department has begun training hundreds of local clergy in steps to take to help a parishioner who asks for assistance. In addition, the city is working with businesses to establish guidelines for workplace violence, to provide counseling and assistance for victims and

batterers, and to provide a safe haven for victims. The city's 24-hour hotline received more than 11,000 calls for assistance last year from 9,000 people.

Many of the city's violence prevention experts credit the five-year-old CAPS program and the 12 to 14 percent of Chicago's residents who have become involved in the program with the drop in crime. In each of the city's districts, CAPS officers conduct beat meetings in which police and residents work together to solve the community's problems. CAPS has failed abysmally in some districts, and successfully reduced crime rates in others. Generally, there's more participation in neighborhoods that have high rates of violence, according to Dr. Wesley Skogan, a researcher at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University. These are most often the city's poorer neighborhoods populated by minorities, he noted.

CAPS program participants have used computerized mapping programs to identify trouble spots, ordinances that crack down on gangs and drug houses, demolish abandoned houses and train landlords, and have pushed hard on problem liquor outlets.

Lauri Sanders, a Chicago police spokeswoman, credited the city's community-policing program for much of the decline. "We are very fortunate in that the work we are doing is paying off," Sanders said. "It goes back to the partnerships. That's the driving force."

Statewide, reports of robbery dropped the most, by almost 12 percent. Next came aggravated assault, which fell about 9 percent, and slayings about 8 percent. Criminal sexual assault showed a drop of about 2 percent. Reports of property crimes also fell in Illinois. Burglary was off by nearly 12 percent from the previous year, theft by 7 percent, motor vehicle theft by about 4 percent and arson by about 3 percent.

In a statement, Gov. George Ryan called the statistics "welcome news" and attributed the downturns to anti-crime laws and the work of grass-roots violence prevention organizations, criminal-justice agencies, public health experts and law enforcement.

Despite the declines, someone reported being the victim of a serious crime somewhere in the state an average of about every minute of 1999. About 17 sexual assaults were reported each day. A vehicle was reported stolen about every 10 minutes, and about 78 people were slain each month.

And some experts warn that the numbers tell an incomplete story. By definition, the tally does not include unreported crimes. Some victims are unwilling to come forward, perhaps out of a reluctance to contend with the justice-system bureaucracy, a belief that police will be unable to solve the crime, or even the desire to avoid embarrassment. In particular, experts say sexual assault is widely underreported, [as is domestic violence](#).

fact: *In the 1998–2000 school year—the year of the shootings at Columbine High School—29 students were killed on or near schools. During the same time period, 29 young people were killed every ten days by their parents or guardians.*

School deaths from pages 21–29 of the National School Safety Center's *Report on School Associated Violent Deaths*, <http://www.nssc1.org>

1999 child abuse deaths from *Current Trends in Child Abuse Prevention, Reporting, and Fatalities: The 1999 Fifty State Survey*, revised August 28, 2001, National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, http://www.preventchildabuse.org/research_ctr/fact_sheets/1999_50_survey.PDF

Percent of children killed by parents or guardians from pages 54–56, USDHHS, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment 1999*, <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cm99/cm99.pdf>

Youth Violence Case Study

Youth ALIVE!

Deane Calhoun, Executive Director
 3300 Elm Street | Oakland, CA 94609 | 510.594.2588
 mail@youthalive.org | <http://www.youthalive.org>

In 1988, when Deane Calhoun was assistant director at the Trauma Foundation, an injury-prevention organization in San Francisco, two students were shot in a junior high school in Oakland. She joined a task force to look into the situation, and discovered two bits of information that changed her life and lives of many youth who live in Oakland: Nine out of ten children murdered in the world die in the United States. One out of ten children murdered in the world die in California. Guns were used in almost all of the murders.

The task force soon dwindled from 75 to four members. Nevertheless, with a \$5,000 grant from the Koret Foundation, Calhoun founded Teens on Target to train youth to become violence prevention advocates. Youth ALIVE! was established as a nonprofit agency in 1991 to reduce violent injuries to young people by equipping them with knowledge about violence, and asking them to help develop solutions.

The members of Teens on Target, which became part of Youth ALIVE!, identified the problems that contributed to violence in Oakland. These included remarkably easy access to handguns, lack of jobs, poor schools, and an overabundance of alcohol outlets.

“Prevention and advocacy were twins [in the organization’s early days],” says Calhoun. “Intervention came later.”

Data and Polling in Context:	Reality	Public Perception
The decrease in school associated violent deaths between school year 1997–1998 and 1998–1999	40%	49% The increase in poll respondents who fear a school shooting in their community, from 1998 to 1999
The chance that a school-aged child would die in a school in 1998–1999	1 in 2million	71% The portion of poll respondents who thought a school shooting was “likely” to happen in their community
The decline in juvenile homicide arrests between 1993 and 1998	56%	62% The portion of poll respondents who believe that juvenile crime is on the increase
The portion of juvenile homicides that occur in rural areas	4%	1 st The rank of rural parents in fear for their children’s safety in schools vs. urban and suburban parents

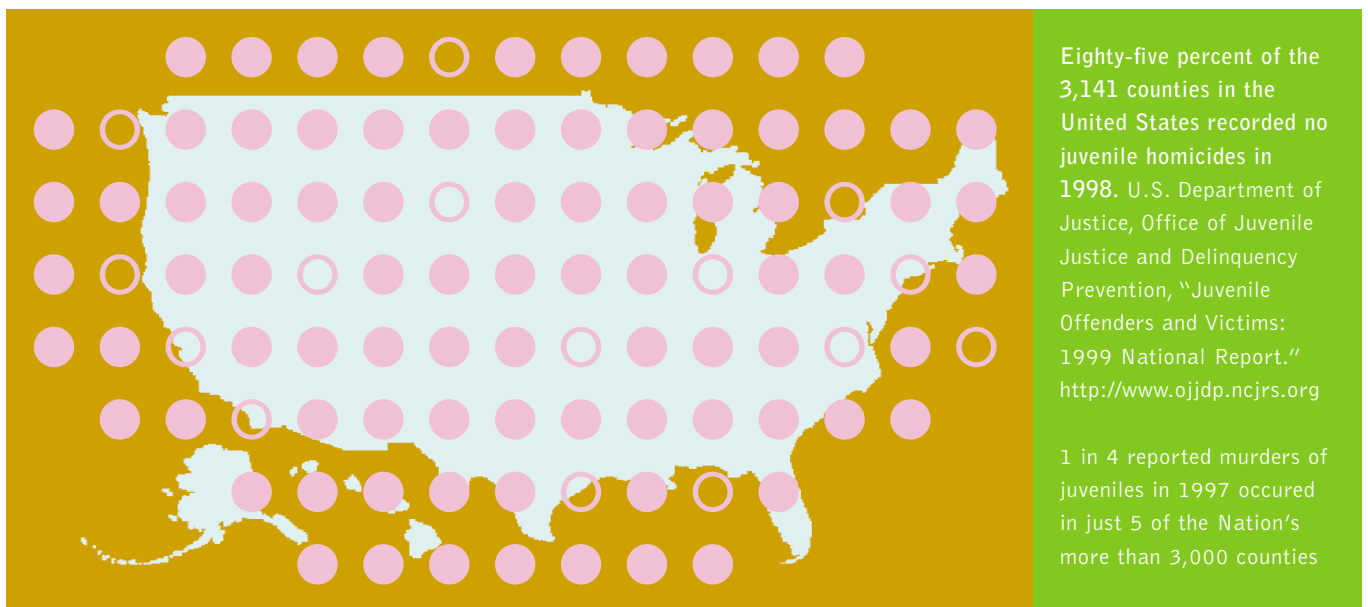
In 1994 Youth ALIVE! founded Caught in the Crossfire, when the staff of a local hospital called Teens on Target to see if they could provide peer support to survivors of violence. Crisis counselors meet and offer assistance to youth who end up in the city's main hospital emergency room after being shot, stabbed, or beaten by family, friends or strangers. The counselors also intervene in the lives of kids referred by the city's probation department, and provide peer support and resources to the young person, her or his family and friends. From this program evolved the East Oakland Partnership to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence, a collaborative of 25 public and non-profit agencies dedicated to reducing the high rate of juvenile gun violence in East Oakland.

Today, Youth ALIVE! has 20 staff, 40 part-time youth workers, and an annual budget of \$1 million. The organization trains 3,000 youth every year in violence prevention. It also documents and disseminates information about the incidence, cost, impact and solutions for violence to policy makers, the media, public institutions and community leaders. Youth ALIVE! is funded by foundations, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and individual and corporate donors.

In 1995, The California Wellness Foundation awarded a \$25,000 Peace Prize to Calhoun. "It's a hard time to be working on violence prevention," she said in her acceptance speech, "when state and national leaders believe that poverty is a crime, prison is a housing program, guns are a right and education is a privilege."

Since Youth ALIVE! was founded, says Calhoun, the rate of youth gun homicide victims declined by 88 percent in Oakland, while the rate of youths arrested for gun homicides declined by 83 percent. But more important, East Oakland now offers youth more after-school programs, more violence prevention classes in schools, more leadership opportunities, and more involvement in city and local communities.

As a result, Oakland residents have become more hopeful about reducing violence. "They're less afraid of kids," she says. "People have common goals. They want kids to do well. They don't want to feel fear. They want a healthy community."



Caught in the Crossfire

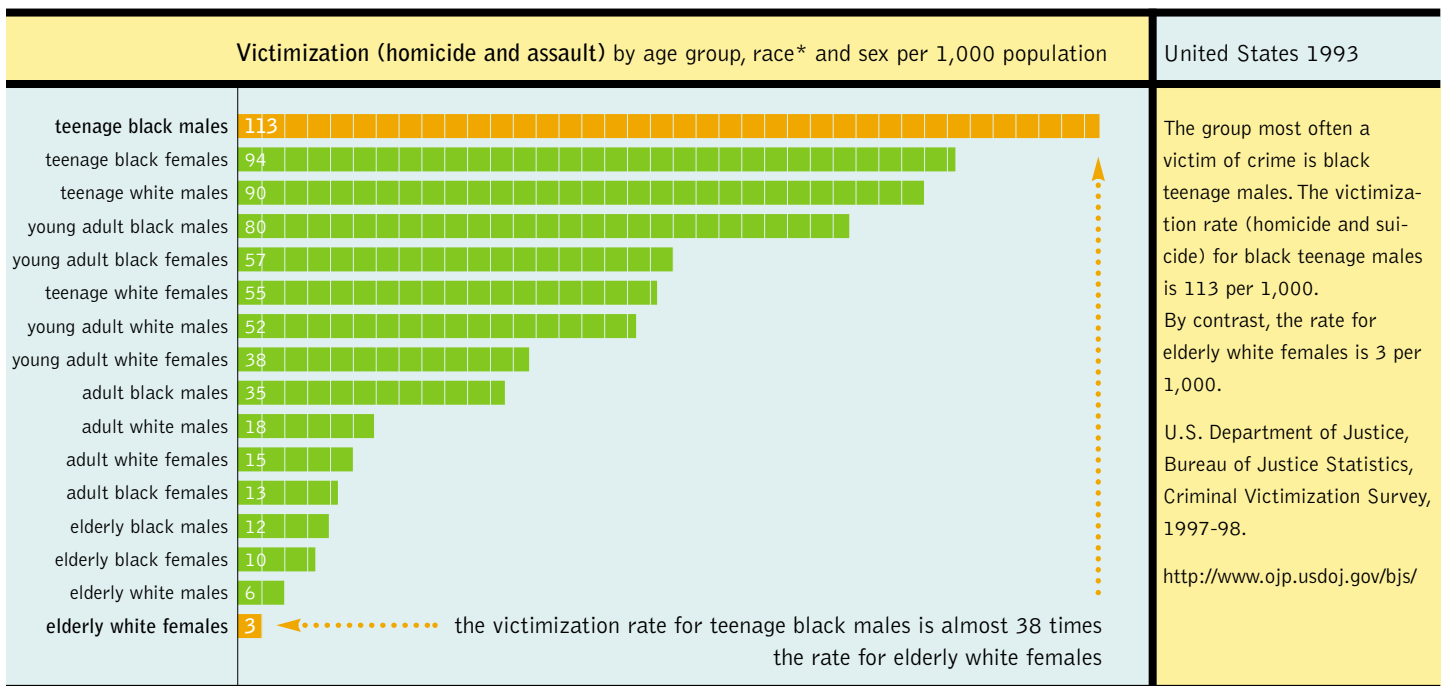
Every year, about 150 youth ages 12 to 20 end up in the emergency room of Oakland’s Highland Hospital. They’ve been shot, stabbed or beaten by acquaintances, friends, or family members and a few by strangers. Several hundred others end up on probation for violent offenses. To stop them from taking revenge or being reinjured or arrested, Highland Hospital/Alameda Medical Center, University of California Davis-East Bay Department of Surgery and Youth ALIVE! formed Caught in the Crossfire. The Alameda County probation department also joined the effort. Each of the organization’s crisis counselors help 25 kids and their families.

Within a half-hour after a young person is admitted to the hospital, the hospital calls a counselor from Caught in the Crossfire to her or his bedside. The counselor offers comfort and help in finding ways to cope with his or her injury other than retaliation. When the Alameda County probation department refers a youth on probation, a counselor visits the youth at home and works with the youth to develop a plan to stay safe and out of trouble.

Counselors are available to the youth for at least a year, and help them set goals to make their lives violence-free and healthy. They assist them in finding jobs or going back to school. They provide emergency food and clothing, psychological counseling, housing, transportation, court advocacy, referrals to social services, and a support system to achieve their goals.

Since 1994, Caught in the Crossfire has assisted 284 youth. Of the 130 victims that were admitted to the emergency room since July 1998, only 1 percent ended up back in the hospital and none retaliated against those who attacked them. Of the 70 on probation, only 25 percent committed another offense, compared with 62 percent of youth supervised only by the probation department. In 1998, 106 juveniles were arrested for firearm offenses in Oakland. In 1999, only 46 were.

The average cost for each youth assisted is \$3,000 for one year. It costs taxpayers \$27,000 to keep a young person incarcerated in the California Youth Authority for one year.



*Victim race categories are black and white only
 teenage=age 12-19 | young adult=age 20-34 | adult=age 35-64 | elderly=age ≥ 65

Teens on Target

Youth ALIVE! trains about 40 high school students to be violence prevention educators. In turn, they teach about 3,000 other students in Oakland high schools and middle schools. The members of Teens on Target, who receive a monthly stipend for their work, attend three to four after-school meetings each week, lead workshops on violence prevention for younger students, attend youth and community events, and lead special advocacy campaigns. Last year, students helped convince the Oakland Tribune that its handgun advertisements were making guns appear more accessible to young people. The Tribune changed its advertising policy to exclude handguns and automatic weapons.

Teens on Target serves a population of 8,354 students in eight schools — two high schools and six middle schools. The students are 37.4% African American, 37.4% Latino, 9.7% Asian American, 1.5% Pacific Islander, 0.6% Filipino, 0.8% Caucasian, and 0.4% other.

In the East Oakland neighborhood where many of the students live, there are 10 liquor stores per square mile, compared to 1.3 liquor stores in more affluent neighborhoods. The largest-volume gun dealer west of the Mississippi borders on East Oakland. In 1999, all Oakland juvenile gun murders occurred in East Oakland. Nearly all of the Teens on Target youth leaders graduate from high school; the graduation rates in the schools they attend average 40 percent.

The most important part of the teens' work is educating their peers about violence and violence prevention. During the year, the teens visit every middle school class to present a six-session curriculum on guns, gangs, drugs and alcohol, and family and dating violence. They present data and statistics about youth violence and combine it with their own experiences. The teens explain how violence affects their communities: it hurts kids (gun deaths are the leading cause of death to youth aged 16-20 in California), families and friends, makes neighbors scared of each other, makes their community poorer because businesses move out, makes more people buy guns, and costs families in long-term medical care (gun injuries cost about \$329 million each year in California).

Firearm deaths of children and teens, by age, race, and manner, 1998*

Age	All Firearm Deaths			Homicide			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	All Races	White	Black	All Races	White	Black	All Races	White	Black	All Races	White	Black	All Races	White	Black
< 1	5	4	1	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-4	78	45	30	58	32	24	0	0	0	19	12	6	1	1	0
5-9	96	65	25	60	46	11	1	0	1	34	19	12	1	0	1
10-14	430	309	97	191	110	68	153	131	14	68	53	12	18	15	3
15-19	3,152	1,774	1,263	1,870	732	1,075	1,087	907	131	141	102	38	54	33	19
Total	3,761	2,197	1,416	2,184	924	1,179	1,241	1,038	146	262	186	68	74	49	23

< 1
1-4
5-9
10-14
15-19



*Data are for persons ages 0-19. The figures for All Races include races other than White and Black. Separate tabulations for these other races are not available from NCHS's unpublished tabulations. Source: National Center for Health Statistics. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/gunreport.pdf>

► All firearm deaths, all races, by age

Youth Violence Resources

Data

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/>

OJJDP's 1999 National Report on Juvenile Offenders and Victims is a myth-busting read
<http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/nationalreport99/toc.html>

Youth Risk Behavior Trends, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/trend.htm>

National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/>

WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System — injury and death data by state, gender, age, race, manner and intent), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/default.htm>

U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>

Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports
<http://www.fbi.gov>

Research

American Journal of Public Health
<http://ajph.org>

Journal of Family Violence
<http://www.nisso.nl/Tijdschr/jofv.htm>

Journal of Public Health Policy
<http://members.aol.com/jphpterris/jphp.htm>

Journal of the American Medical Association
<http://jama.ama-assn.org>

New England Journal of Medicine
<http://www.nejm.org>

Resources

Pacific Center for Violence Prevention

<http://www.pcvp.org/>

Funded by The California Wellness Foundation, PCVP is the policy center for the 10-year, \$60-million effort to prevent youth violence in California. Web site contains links to local, state and national resources in youth violence prevention, data, news and research.

National Crime Prevention Council

<http://www.ncpc.org/ncpc1.htm>

On-line resource center provides good information on what local communities are doing to prevent crime. Has section for teens.

National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention

<http://www.nfcvp.org/home/>

Site links to eleven projects around the country that focus on community-based youth violence-prevention.

Keep Schools Safe

<http://www.keepschoolssafe.org/>

A project of the National Association of Attorneys General and the National School Boards Association, this site offers good details on community-based crime-prevention strategies that have resulted in a decrease in crime.

Resources for Youth

<http://www.preventviolence.org>

A public education campaign funded by The California Wellness Foundation, this site includes fact sheets, profiles of activists working in violence prevention, examples of prevention strategies, violence prevention news and events, as well as a list of resources, including success stories.

Background

Diverting Children from a Life of Crime

<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR699/>

This RAND report examines the cost to the U.S. of several different approaches to keep children and youth from becoming involved in crime and violence.

Family Violence Case Study

In California, the No. 1 violent felony arrest is domestic violence. In 1997, there were more than 63,000 arrests for domestic violence in the state. In Santa Clara County, the heart of California’s Silicon Valley, 3,016 people were arrested. National data can only be estimated; the FBI does not have a separate category of domestic violence; all reported incidents are included in the category of aggravated assaults.

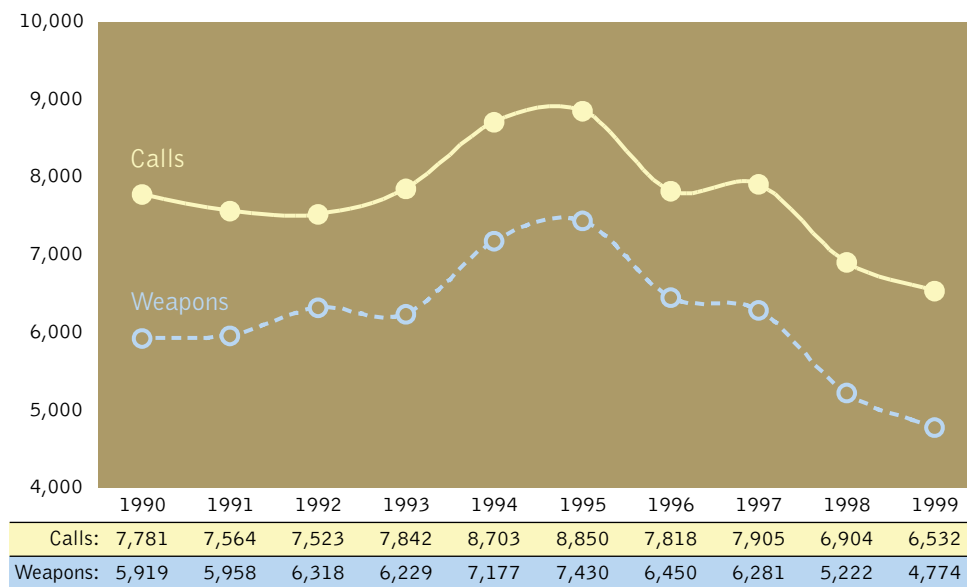
Family violence is the hidden part of the violence iceberg. Research shows that it spawns youth violence, it is at the root of much adult violence and crime, and it goes hand-in-glove with child abuse and neglect. There were 19,228 reports of child abuse or neglect in fiscal 1998-1999 in Santa Clara County, whose largest city is San Jose.

Domestic violence experts in Santa Clara County still think that many incidents of family violence go unreported. However, the issue is not as hidden as it was in 1991, when the county board of supervisors founded the Domestic Violence Council. A task force created in 1990 to investigate domestic violence found that it was a significant problem, and various agencies of the county were dealing with it in a disjointed fashion.

Domestic Violence-Related Calls to Police

Santa Clara County, 1990–1999

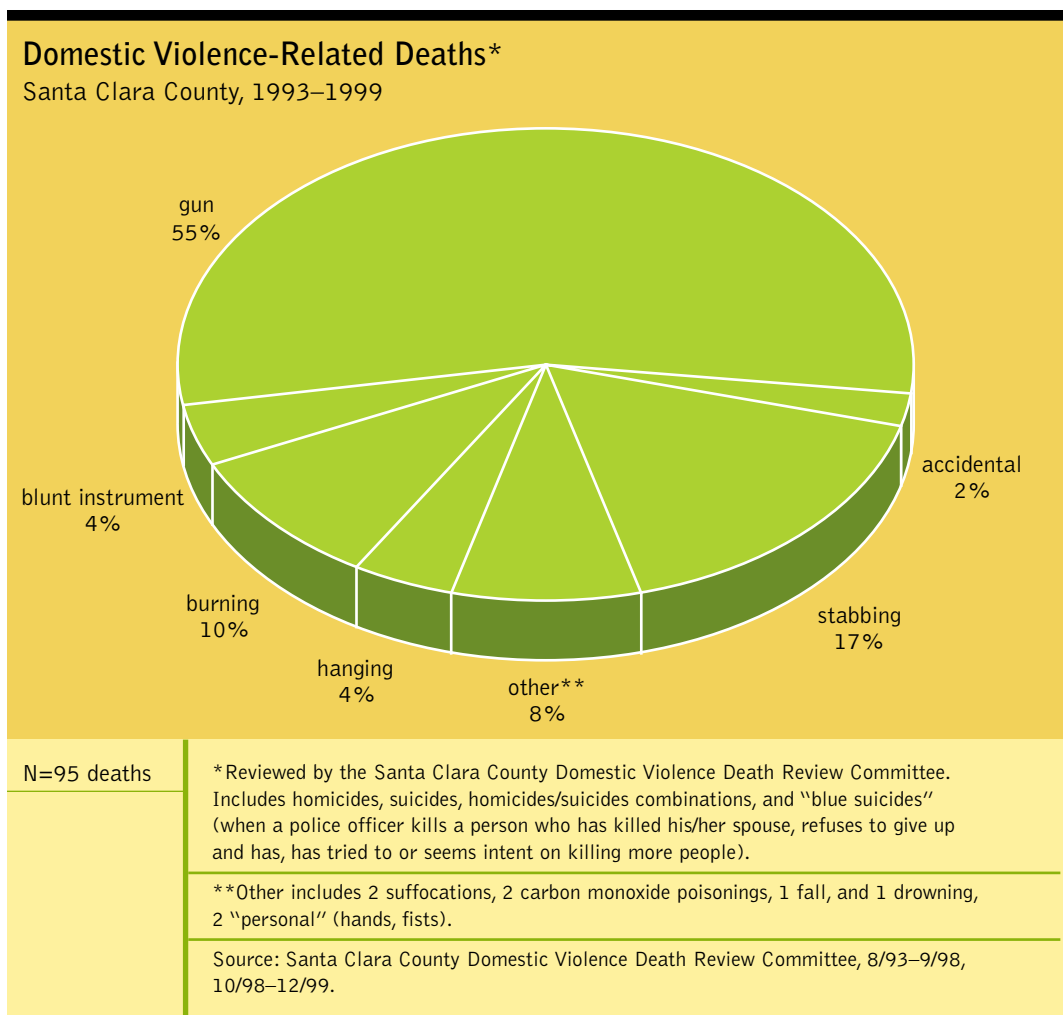
Of calls which had specified the involvement of weapons, most involved the use of “personal” weapons such as hands, fists, and feet. “Other” dangerous weapons, such as baseball bats or automobiles, comprised the second highest proportion of cases with weapons.



Source: California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center. California Criminal Justice Profile, Santa Clara County, 1990–1999.

The council set up several committees, which grew to 13, with additional subcommittees. The council developed a county-wide pro-arrest, no-drop protocol for law enforcement and criminal justice systems, which is reviewed annually. The protocol says that if police called to a home see any evidence of abuse, the accused must be arrested. The decision to prosecute is put in the county attorney’s hands, not the victim’s. If the victim requests assistance, police are to take her to a temporary shelter. If the abused makes bail, a two-day emergency restraining order is to be issued, which the victim can renew. The council established a system so that police could share information about restraining orders across jurisdictions to better protect victims who work in a different city than where they live.

The council developed a protocol for health care providers, including physicians, nurses, social workers, dentists, and chiropractors. They are required to report any domestic violence injuries to police, refer the injured person to domestic violence agencies, and help the patient call a domestic violence hot line. Valley Medical Center recently established a violence intervention program that screens patients to detect abuse in its early stages.

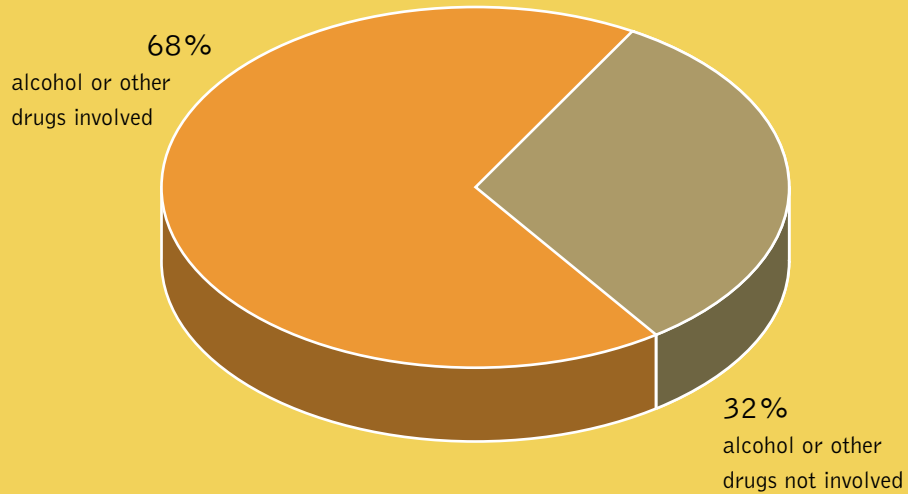


The council also developed information and referral information. It assesses housing and shelter for victims of domestic violence and set standards for batterers programs and certification. It developed guides for workplace violence prevention programs, and established a domestic violence death review committee.

Despite this intense effort, domestic violence hasn't decreased at the same rate as other types of violence. Last year, the county established a domestic violence court, whose two judges were to hear cases two days a week. The demand was so great that now three judges handle cases five days a week. Gaps in reporting still exist: People in higher income brackets have more resources to hide domestic violence incidents, and private health care providers don't like to report their long-time patients to police. Although most batterers who complete a required 52-week treatment program stop abusing their spouses or partners, too many drop out of the program. There aren't nearly enough shelters. Too many people fall through the large cracks in the system.

Valley Medical Center Violence Intervention Program

Over six months in 1998, VIP staff saw 173 patients. Of the 110 patients who accepted help, 68 percent reported that alcohol or drugs were a factor in domestic violence.



N=110 patients

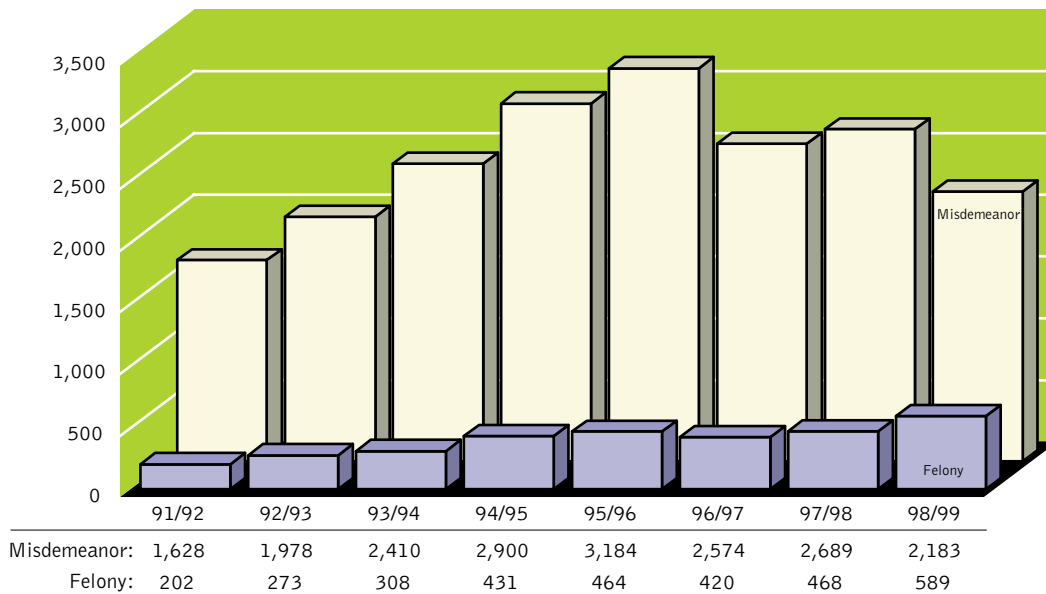
The 110 patients reported that 133 children were living with domestic violence.

Source: Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Council, Annual Data Report 1999, page 4.

In addition, the general Santa Clara community isn't well informed about the profound economic and emotional effect of this type of violence on its community, or whether local experts and elected officials are doing enough or have enough resources to reduce domestic violence. The police department does not separate domestic violence battery from the general data on battery, so the problem goes underreported. Although the effort in intervention is outstanding, the county has fewer resources to put into prevention, a situation that is reflected at the state level. For the last two years, the governor of California has vetoed bills requiring domestic violence and dating violence education in elementary, middle and high schools.

District Attorney's Office Domestic Violence Prosecutions*

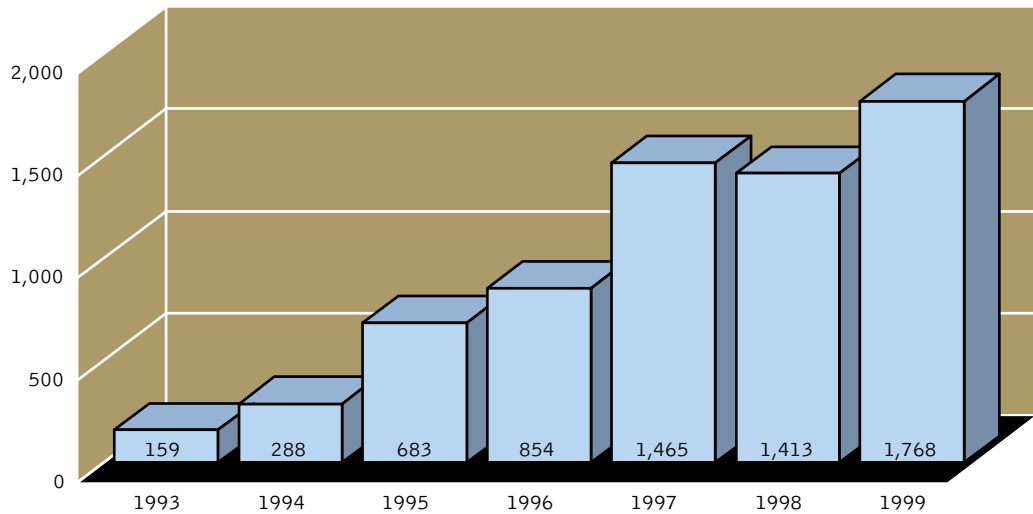
Santa Clara County, February 14, 1991–December 31, 1999



*Data for the year 1998/99 are preliminary — prosecutions from February 15, 1998 to December 31, 1998 are not included.
 Source: Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office, 2/14/91–2/14/99, 1/1/99–12/31/99.

The area’s largest newspaper, the *San Jose Mercury News*, published an outstanding in-depth series on domestic violence in 1999. Once the series was completed, the newspaper reporter who covered the story wanted to make it a regular beat, with one or two stories a week. Although the editors decided against making it a regular beat, the reporter has produced at least one story a month, and is better informed to cover high profile stories.

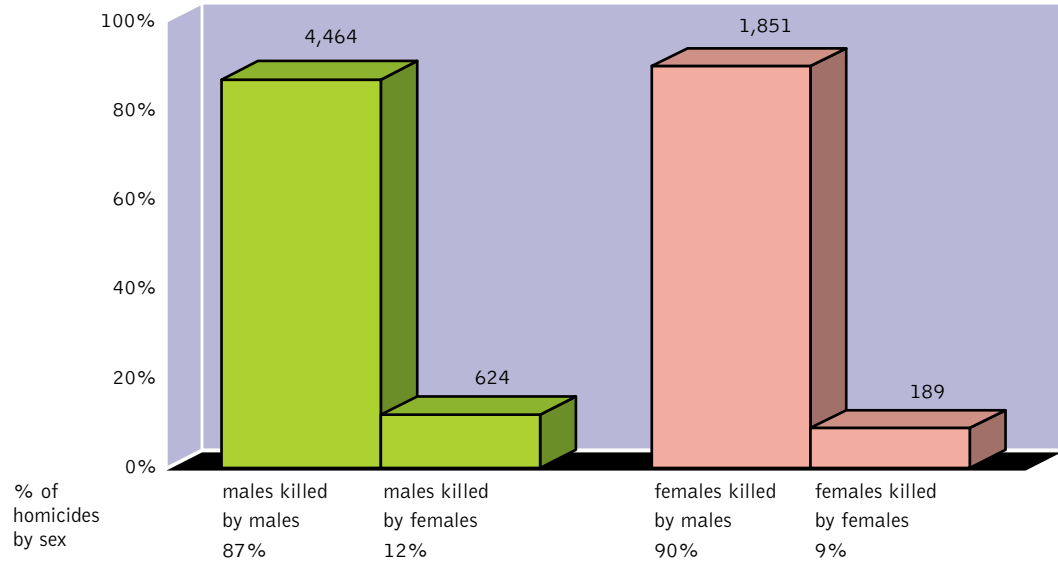
Emergency Protective Restraining Orders Issued
 Santa Clara County, 1993–1999



Source: Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Council, Police/Victims Relation Committee, 1993–1999.

Homicides by Sex of Victim and Offender

U.S. 1998



In 1% of the cases with male victims, the sex of the offender is unknown.

In 1% of the cases with female victims, the sex of the offender is unknown.

Source: Crime in the United States 1998, Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.fbi.gov>

Distribution of Adult Rape and Physical Assault Victims by Victim-Perpetrator Relationship and Sex of Victim



Women Victims	76.0%	8.6%	16.8%	14.1%
Men Victims	17.9%	6.8%	32.3%	60.0%

Violence against women is mostly partner violence. Seventy-six percent of women raped and/or physically assaulted since age 18 said that they were assaulted by an intimate partner, compared with 18 percent of men. <http://ncjrs.org/pdffiles/172837.pdf>, on page 8 of 16, Exhibit 9

^a Intimate partner includes current and former spouses, same-sex cohabitating partners, opposite-sex cohabitating partners, dates, and boyfriends/girlfriends.

^b Differences between women and men are statistically significant: p-value ≤ .001.

^c Differences between women and men are statistically significant: p-value ≤ .01.

Note: Total percentages by sex of victim exceed 100 because some victims had multiple perpetrators.

Family Violence Resources

Data

- WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System), National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars>
- Family and Intimate Violence Prevention Program, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/fivpt/fivpt.htm>
- U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports
<http://www.fbi.gov>
- Family Violence Prevention Branch, Injury Surveillance and Epidemiology Section, California Department of Health Services
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/epic/html/dvpp.html>
- U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics — Report on Intimate Partner Violence
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/ipv.htm>
- U.S. Department of Justice National Institute of Justice/Centers for Disease Control report on “The Crime of Stalking: How Big Is the Problem?”
<http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/fs000186.pdf>
- National Violence Against Women Office
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo>
Part of the U.S. Department of Justice, the office works to enforce federal criminal statutes of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, and administers more than \$270 million a year in grants to states, tribes and local communities.
- Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse: Men and Violence Electronic Clearinghouse
<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/mensissu.asp>
This site lists articles, books, and Web links that relate to men and violence, including links to organizations such as Men Against Domestic Violence and Men Overcoming Violence.
- Johns Hopkins Population Report: Ending Violence Against Women
<http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/L11edsum.stm>
An in-depth report on violence against women in the United States and other countries, with recommendations on violence prevention, published in January 2000.
- National Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research, National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse
http://www.preventchildabuse.org/research_ctr/index.html

Research

American Journal of Public Health

<http://www.ajph.org>

Journal of Family Violence

<http://www.nisso.nl/Tijdschr/jofv.htm>

Journal of Public Health Policy

<http://members.aol.com/jphpterris/jphp.htm>

Journal of the American Medical Association

<http://jama.ama-assn.org>

New England Journal of Medicine

<http://www.nejm.org>

Violence Against Women

<http://www.sagepub.co.uk/>

Resources

California Family Violence Referral Directory — Family Violence Prevention Branch, Injury Surveillance and Epidemiology Section, California Department of Health Services

<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/edc/epic/documents/dvrefer.pdf>

Domestic Violence Information Center

<http://www.feminist.org/other/dv/dvhome.html>

Feminist Majority Foundation's detailed site lists resources for women victims of domestic abuse. Resources include hot lines, and list of state domestic violence centers.

Domestic Violence Project of Santa Clara County

<http://www.growing.com/nonviolent/>

Family Violence Prevention Fund

<http://www.fvpf.org/>

With a focus on domestic violence education, prevention, and public policy reform, the site provides fact sheets, personal stories, information for advocacy action, and a "celebrity watch" section that tracks celebrity involvement in domestic violence.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

<http://www.ncadv.org/>

Since 1978, this national information and referral center sponsors national conferences and several innovative projects, including linking victims of domestic abuse with plastic surgeons, dentists and dermatologists.

Violence Against Women Office, U.S. Department of Justice

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/>

Background Reports

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/papers/factoid.htm>

Richard J. Gelles' clarification of domestic violence myths. Gelles is director of the University of Rhode Island Family Violence Research Program.

<http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/crimdom.pdf>

The Criminalization of Domestic Violence: Promises and Limits by Jeffrey Fagan, then visiting professor at Columbia University School of Public Health and professor of criminal justice at Rutgers University. Published in 1995, this is a good background report on effectiveness of batterer treatment, restraining orders, etc. and history of development of these programs.

<http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/alldom.pdf>

Domestic and Sexual Violence Data Collection. Justice Research and Statistics Association, 1996. Good background report on what's happening in the states.

Suggestions for Public Health Departments

by Lori Dorfman, DrPH

Violent incidents usually are not isolated, independent events but are linked to larger social, economic, and political forces. But if journalists are to make those links in news stories, they'll need help from public health epidemiologists and others with access to data and information about trends and prevention. They'll need help selecting and interpreting appropriate data — on deadline.

Make data available. Journalists need local data to make national problems relevant for their audiences. Work to resolve problems with confidentiality and other barriers to sharing information so journalists can learn about local patterns, incorporate that information into daily stories, and give citizens the information they need to make better decisions about violence prevention policy.

Data can tell reporters what percent of violent offenders are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs when they commit crimes, how often handguns are the cause of death for children and youth, whether homicides happen between people known to each other, and if a small number of offenders commit a large portion of crimes. Such data demonstrate that crime and violence are not random occurrences. Routinely incorporating social data would help place news stories about violence in the context of economics, education, criminal justice, and known risk factors such as the widespread availability and promotion of firearms and alcohol.

Make yourself available. Health professionals and members of community-based organizations are among the least quoted sources in crime stories. To be heard more often in stories, they need to make themselves and their resources known to journalists. This includes providing background on prevention, “real people” sources, and evidence-based information. Without new sources that actively seek them out, journalists will rely on their traditional contacts based in the courthouse and the police station. Those traditional sources currently dominate the perspective in stories about youth and violence. They need to be augmented with sources that can talk about new perspectives on prevention, risk factors, and patterns of violence.

Public health professionals should establish relationships with journalists; let them know what resources are available from public health sources; provide background; and be available when journalists are on tight deadlines with breaking news. If public health workers educate journalists about violence risk factors, reporters could then ask better questions: Did the people know each other? Was alcohol involved? Where was it obtained? How was the weapon obtained? Were victims and perpetrators employed? Did they have histories of child abuse or battering? What preventive action is being taken by law enforcement, public health agencies, and community organizations?

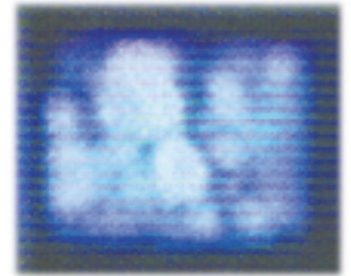
Pitch interesting stories. If community-based prevention is having an effect, those doing the prevention should tell journalists about it. Public health practitioners can learn to recognize the newsworthy aspects of the health department's activities and make contact. Police departments fre-

quently issue news releases and hold news conferences to take credit for recent declines in violence. Yet we know that just as violence has many causes, there is no one solution. Credit for declines is also due to the efforts in communities to reduce access to firearms, control alcohol, and provide programs for young people that engage them in communities and involve them with adults. Reporters can't write about it if public health practitioners don't tell them about it.

Prepare spokespeople from throughout the health department, then give them the opportunity to speak. Health departments can provide training to researchers and advocates, so they can speak confidently about local violence trends and the work they are doing to improve their communities for themselves and others. Spokespeople need not be limited to the Public Information Officer and head of the department. Reporters will get a more vivid picture of prevention efforts if they hear directly from the people conducting them.

The population affected most by violence is seldom heard from in news stories about crime. Public health practitioners can include members of the community in training and events where they can meet reporters and build relationships with them.

Public health issues are debated and decided in the news media; public health practitioners must be aware of and involved in that process. Without a change in crime and violence reporting, and the willingness of public health departments to support that process, the chance for widespread support for public health solutions to violence will be diminished.



Rate of serious crimes reported in the state has dropped by 10 percent since its peak in 1991 as the population grew by 10 percent.

downward trend,

since its peak in 1991
population grew by