

**P R O J E C T**  
**SAFE**  
**NEIGHBORHOODS**



**America's Network Against Gun Violence**

**Firearm Data**

**Presented to**

**Project Safe Neighborhood Task Force**

**September 2003**

**District of Colorado, United States Attorney's Office**

**Colorado Division of Criminal Justice  
Office of Research and Statistics  
700 Kipling, Suite 3000  
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September 5, 2003

Dear Colorado PSN Task Force:

It is my pleasure to present the first of several reports to the Task Force concerning the nature of gun violence in our state. Although, as this report reflects, Colorado is below the national average in gun-related crimes, it is important that we remain so by being vigilant in our efforts to enforce gun laws and prosecute gun crimes. This report highlights state and national trends, and provides maps of gun-related incidents in Denver. Future reports will focus on other jurisdictions so that Task Force members will have a more complete picture of gun activity in areas of interest to U.S. Attorney Suthers.

I hope you find the contents of this report useful and reinforcing of the major problem we face in terms of gun crime. If you have questions, or are interested in additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Raymond T. Slaughter

Division Director

**Six GOALS of Colorado’s Project Safe Neighborhoods**

- Increasing the number of federal prosecutions of felons in possession of a firearm and the number of state prosecutions of offenders who use guns in the commission of violent crimes and other felonies by coordinating intake of cases with local District Attorneys and by encouraging direct referrals from local police;
- Increasing the number of federal prosecutions of gun dealer violations and false statements resulting from Brady check rejections by working with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to identify, investigate and prosecute the most serious violations;
- Supporting the Colorado Springs Gun Interdiction Unit and the Denver Police Department Gun Task Force by assigning an Assistant U.S. Attorney liaison to review cases for federal prosecution potential;
- Developing and implementing U.S. Attorney’s Office policies regarding declination and plea-bargaining which reflect the priority nature of prosecuting gun-law violations;
- Developing and delivering appropriate training programs for local law enforcement regarding the key provisions of federal firearms statutes, investigative guidelines, current federal law governing search and seizure, and federal intake requirements and procedures; and
- Working with local business and community leaders to develop and implement an aggressive marketing strategy and publicity campaign similar to Richmond’s Project Exile.



☆☆

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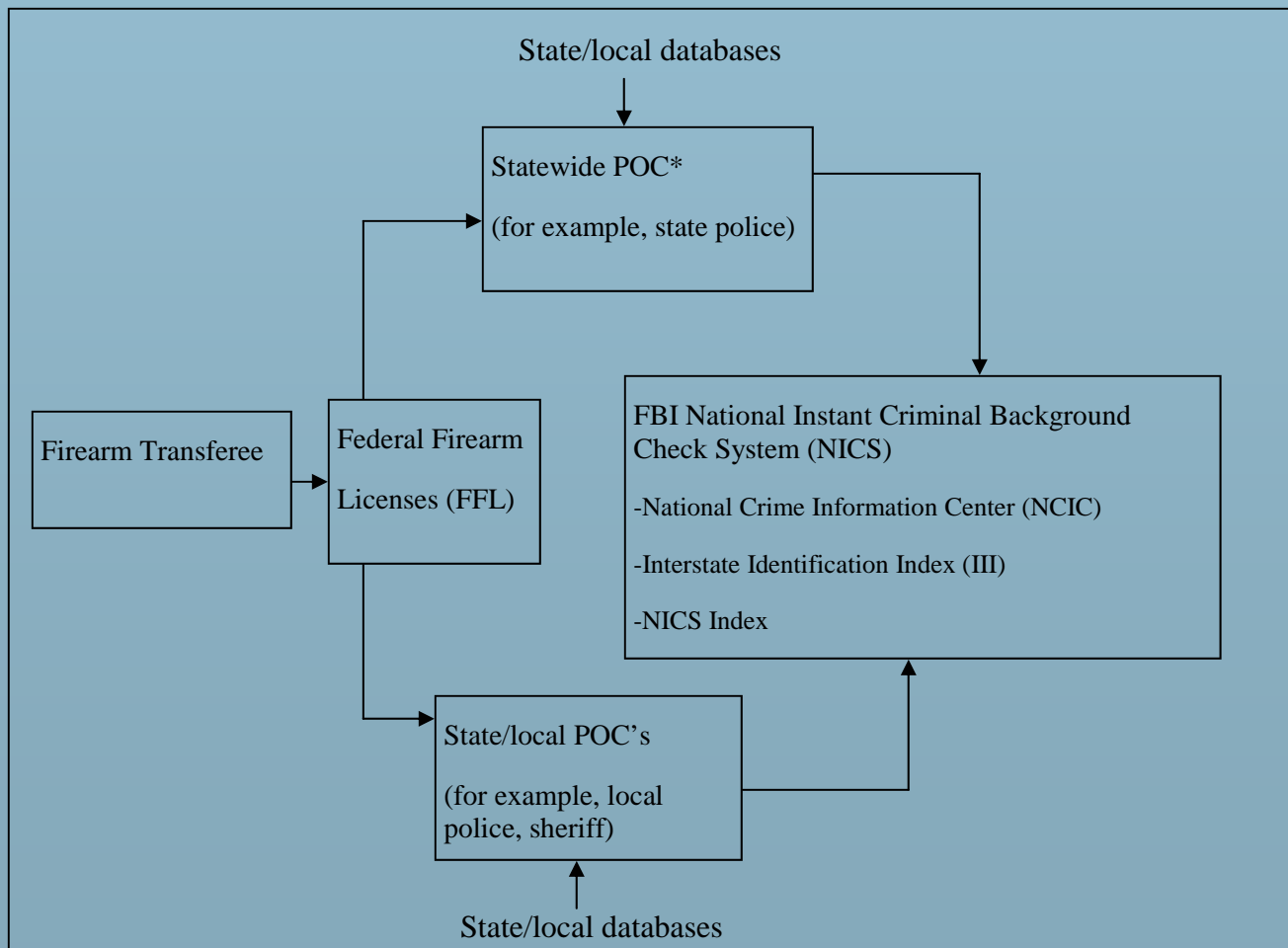
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## Background Checks for Firearm Transfers

The Firearm Inquiry Statistics Program collects data on background checks in certain states. Some relevant information regarding firearm transfers are as follows:

- The total applications for firearm transfers or permits nationwide increased 3% , from 7.7 million in 2000 to 8.0 million 2001.
- In 2001, 151,000 applications for firearm transfers or permits were rejected by the FBI or State and local agencies.
- The number of rejections for reasons other than felonies increased **256%** from the beginning of the Brady Act to year end 2001. This is attributed to greater access to electronic information regarding prohibited persons.

### National Firearm Check System:



\*State point of contact

Source: Bowling, M., Lauver, G., Hickman, M., Adams, D. (2002).

## National, Regional, and Statewide Trends

*Firearm injuries are the second leading cause of death in the United States, killing more than 28,000 people a year since 1972.*

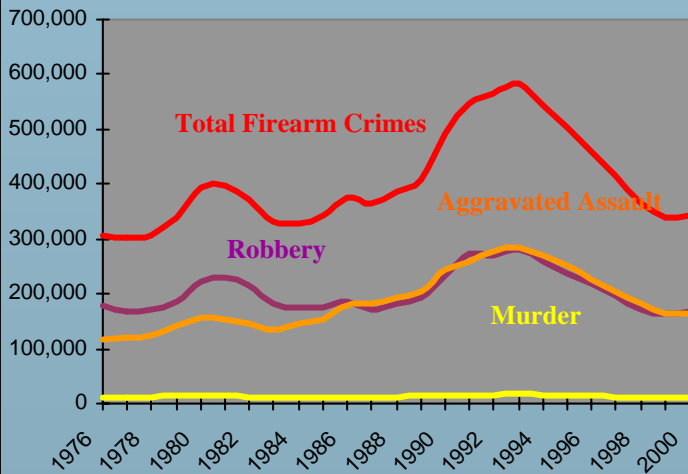
*The cost per firearm fatality is higher than any other type of fatal injury or any other leading cause of death in America (Violence Policy Center <http://www.vpc.org/studies/firecont.htm>).*

In 2000, there were 28,663 firearm deaths in the United States: 16,585 suicides; 11,071 homicides; and 1,006 undetermined or unintentional deaths (Violence Policy Center <http://www.vpc.org>)

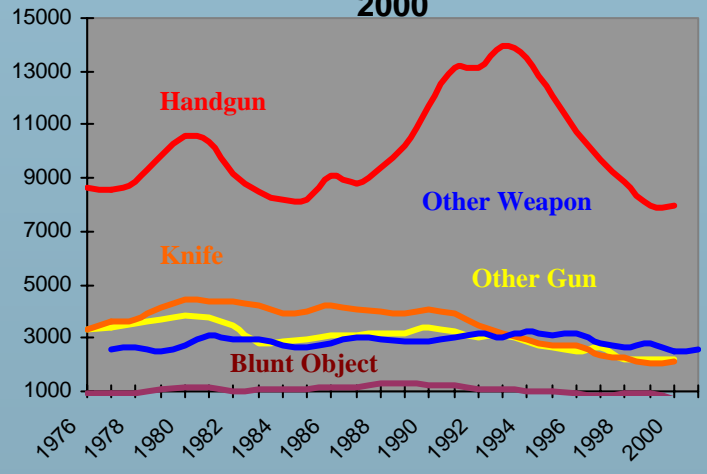
In 2000, 70% of murder victims were killed with a firearm.

Guns are used in the majority of intentional injury deaths: ( 64% of homicides 57% of suicides)

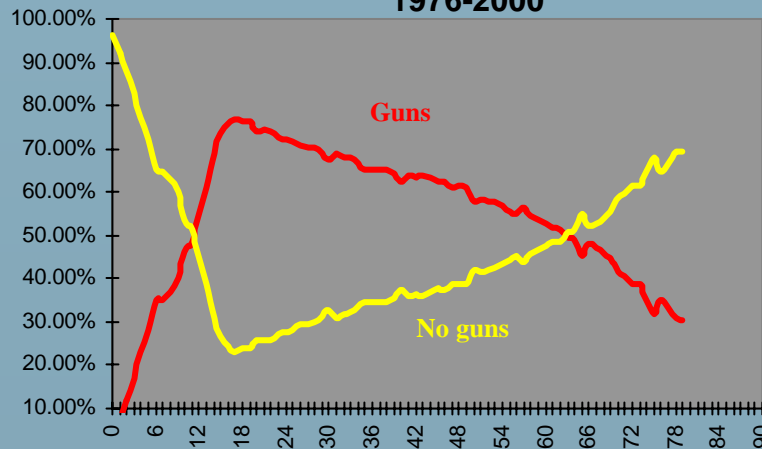
**Crimes Committed with Firearms: 1976-2000**



**Homicides by Weapon Type: 1976-2000**



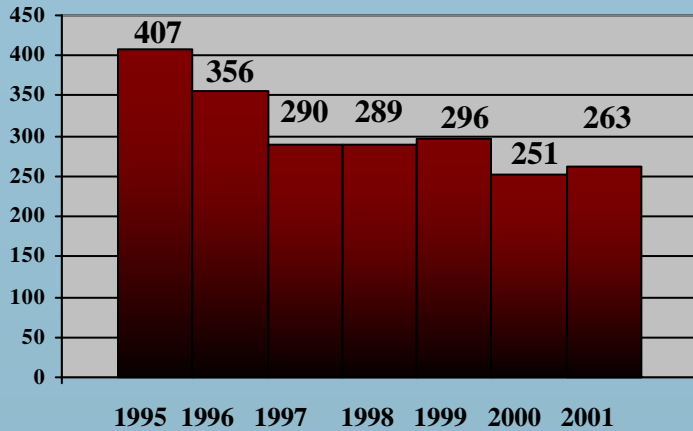
**Percent of Homicides Involving Guns by Age: 1976-2000**



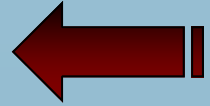
Source: Fox, Zawitz, 2000.

## National, Regional, and Statewide Trends, continued...

**Colorado Hospital Admissions Due To Firearm-Related Injuries; 1995-2001**



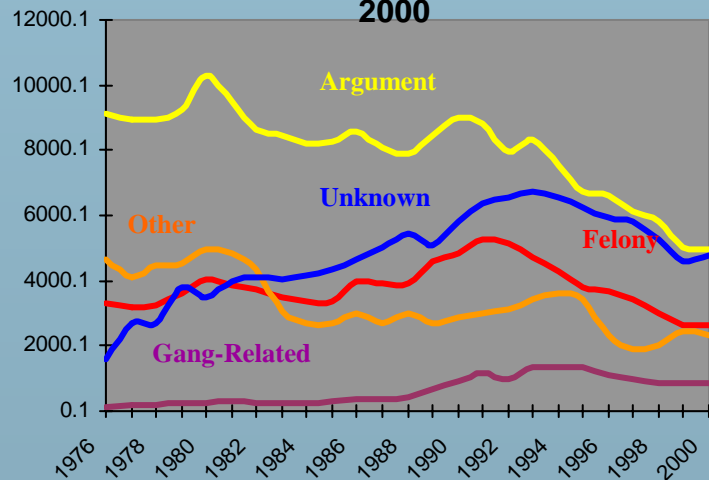
The number of gunshot wounds from assaults treated in hospital emergency departments nationwide fell from 64,100 in 1993 to 39,400 in 1997, a 39% decline. We see the same sort of decline for Colorado:



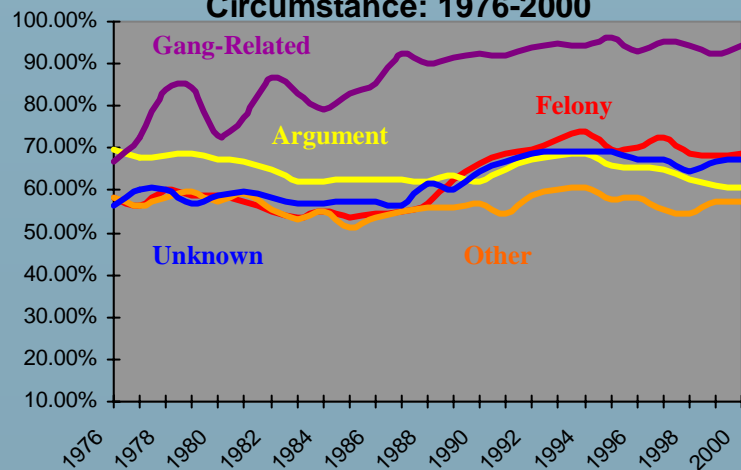
Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/stats.asp>

Gang-related homicides, although relatively few in number, involve guns most of the time. By 2000, guns were used in over 40% of gang-related homicides. Homicides spurred by an argument-while decreasing in number- remained the most frequent homicide circumstance. However, the proportion of homicides due to arguments have remained fairly constant since 1976.

**Number of Homicide Victims by Circumstance: 1976-2000**



**Percent of Homicides Involving Guns by Circumstance: 1976-2000**

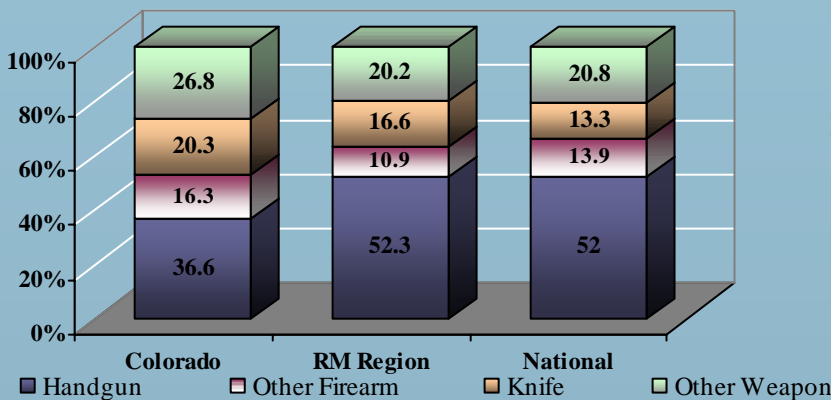


Source: Source: Fox, Zawitz, 2000.

## National, Regional, and Statewide Trends, continued...

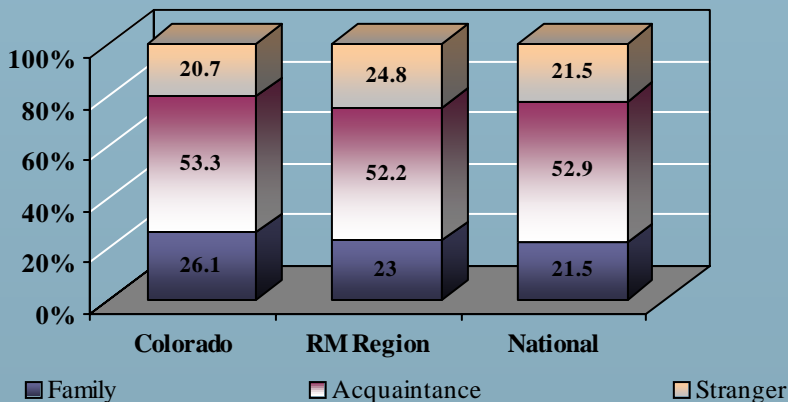
The *Violence in Colorado: A Focus on Homicide* report, originally published in 1993 for the Colorado Department of Public Health by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado at Boulder is being updated. The goal is to report the prevalence of violent crime in Colorado compared to violent crime trends in the Rocky Mountain region (including the states of CO, MT, NV, WY, UT, AZ, and NM) and the entire nation. Data sources included the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports and Supplemental Homicide Reports and data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Composition of Homicide: Type of Weapon Used, 2000**



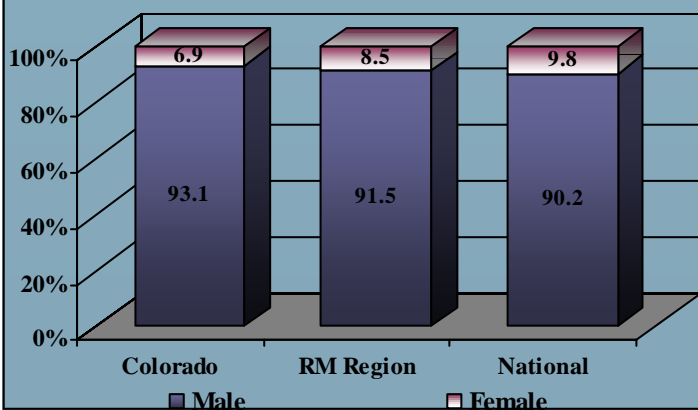
When comparing regional and national data for handguns, other firearms, knives, and other weapons, Colorado had a higher percentage of homicide cases in 2000 for all weapons except handguns.

**Composition of Homicide: Relationship of Victim to the Offender, 2000**



For homicides perpetrated by family members, acquaintances, and strangers, Colorado showed a higher percentage of homicides among family members in 2000. Acquaintance and stranger perpetrated homicides were similar to national and regional rates.

**Composition of Homicide: Gender of the Offender, 2000**



The percentage of Colorado homicide cases in 2000, broken down by gender of the offender, showed a slightly larger number of homicides committed by males and a slightly smaller number committed by females when compared to the region and nation.

Source: Elliott, Williams, Mattson, Haag, Cook, 2003.



## National, Regional, and Statewide Trends continued...



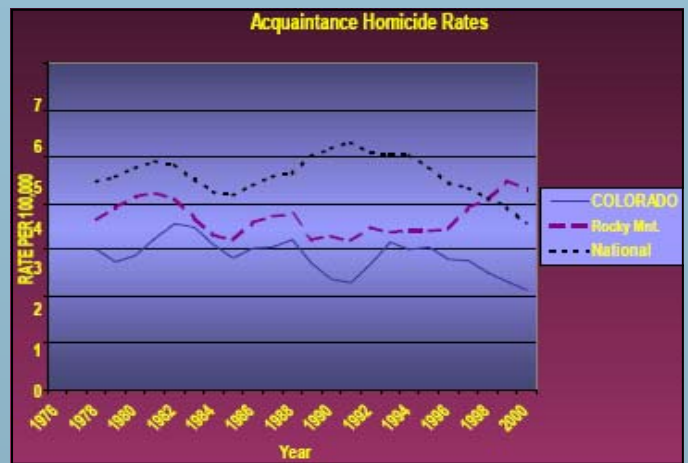
These graphs break down homicide rates of Colorado, the Rocky Mountain region, and the nation by type of weapon used from 1976 to 2000 per 100,000 people.

Colorado shows smaller rates per capita than the rest of the nation for homicides involving handguns and other firearms. Rates for knife-involved homicides are similar across the three location categories.

## National, Regional, and Statewide Trends, continued...



These three graphs represent homicide rates per 100,000 people from 1976 to 2000 by victim-offender relationship. Rates per capita remained slightly lower for Colorado.



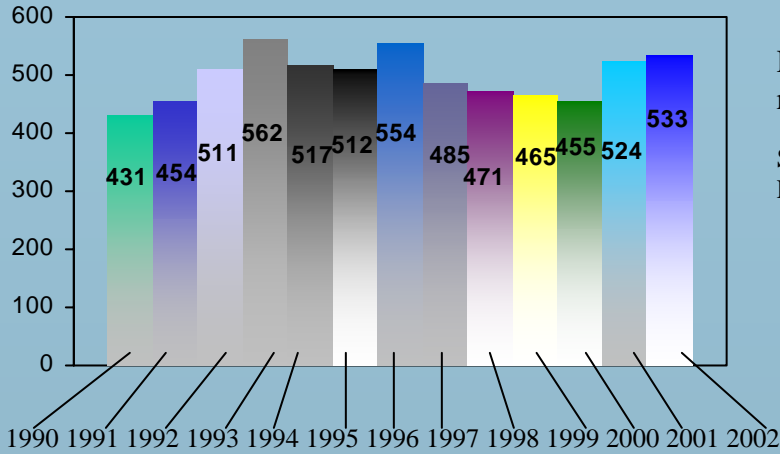
The graphs below show rates of homicide per 100,000 people from 1976-2000 by gender of the offender. Colorado had lower rates of male perpetrated homicide than national and regional rates, while females had



Source: Elliott, Williams, Mattson, Haag, Cook, 2003.

## National, Regional, and Statewide Data, continued...

**Firearm-Related Deaths in Colorado:  
1990-2002**



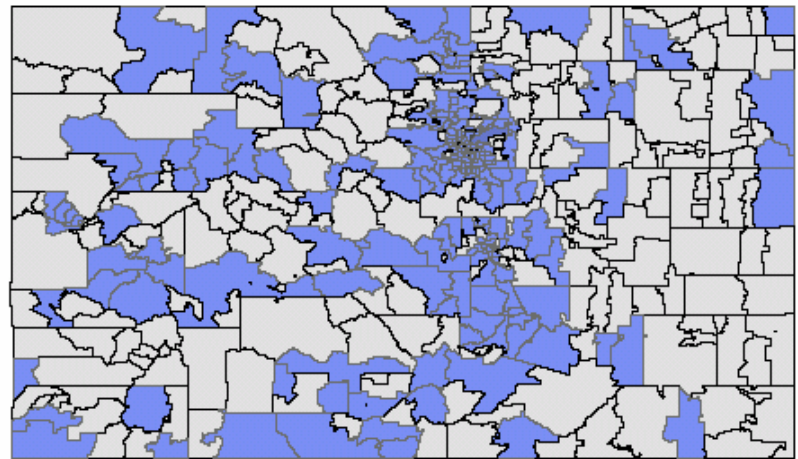
Firearm-related deaths in Colorado have remained fairly stable since 1990.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/stats.asp>).

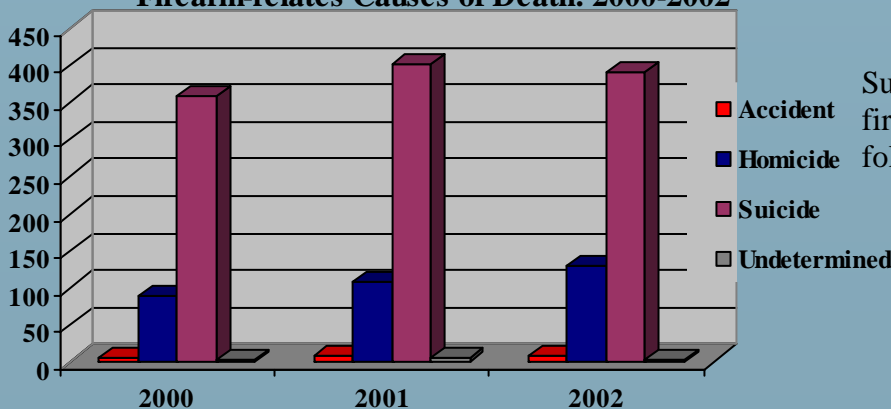
The blue in this map represents zip code areas where one or more firearm-related deaths in Colorado last year. These deaths are distributed throughout the state and include both unintentional and intentional deaths.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/stats.asp>).

**Firearm-related Deaths by Zip Code 2002**



**Firearm-related Causes of Death: 2000-2002**



Suicides remained the highest cause of firearm-related deaths in Colorado followed by homicide.

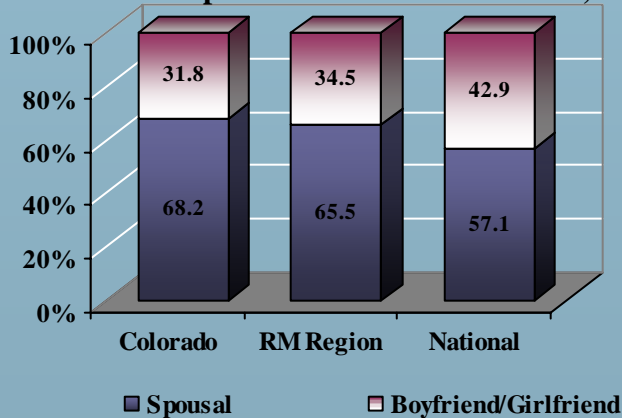
Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/stats.asp>).

# Domestic Violence

- The majority of murder-suicides in the United States are firearm-related. Colorado had twenty incidents in a six month period in 2001.
- Firearm-related domestic assaults are 12 times more likely to be fatal than those not associated with a firearm.
- In 2000, 58% of intimate partner homicide victims were killed with guns and 74% of these victims were killed with handguns.
- There were 331 women shot and killed by either their husband or intimate acquaintance during the course of an argument—nearly one woman a day.
- Firearms were the most common weapons used by males to murder females in 2000.
- 52 percent of female victims (879 out of 1,692) were shot and killed with a gun. Of the females killed with a firearm, nearly two-thirds were murdered by male intimates.
- The number of females shot and killed by their husband or intimate acquaintance (557 victims) was nearly four times higher than the total number murdered by male strangers using all weapons combined (142 victims) in single victim/single offender incidents in 2000. In homicides where males used firearms to kill females, handguns were clearly the weapon of choice over rifles and shotguns.

Source: Violence Policy Center (<http://www.vpc.org/studies/dv5one.htm>).

**Composition of Partner Homicide, 2000**



The percentage of partner homicide cases in 2000 are displayed. Colorado shows a slightly higher percentage of spousal homicide cases compared to regional and national cases.



Rates of spousal homicide per 100,000 people from 1976 to 2000 showed a decrease for all comparison groups. Colorado shows a similar decrease in rates.

Source: Elliott, Williams, Mattson, Haag, Cook, 2003.

## Prisoner and Arrestee Firearm Use and Access

Among prisoners carrying a firearm during the commission of their crimes, 40% of State inmates and 56% of Federal inmates received a sentence enhancement because of the firearm (Regional Justice Information Service, 2003).

According to the 1997 Survey of State Prison Inmates, among those possessing a gun, the source of the gun was from a flea market or gun show for fewer than 2% , a retail store or pawnshop for about 12% , and family, friends, a street buy, or an illegal source for 80%.

- Almost half of all inmates interviewed disclosed that they owned a firearm in the past.
- Approximately half of inmates interviewed reported being shot at or injured by a firearm.
- During the offense that brought them to prison, 15% of State inmates and 13% of Federal inmates carried a handgun, and about 2%, a military-style semiautomatic gun .
- Half of the State inmates interviewed that were carrying a gun during the commission of their crime, fired it. Nearly half of those inmates injured or killed someone.
- Common characteristics in carrying a firearm during criminal activities were being a young adult and male. (BJS, 2001)

Characteristics of inmates who carried firearms in 1997 (BJS, 2001):

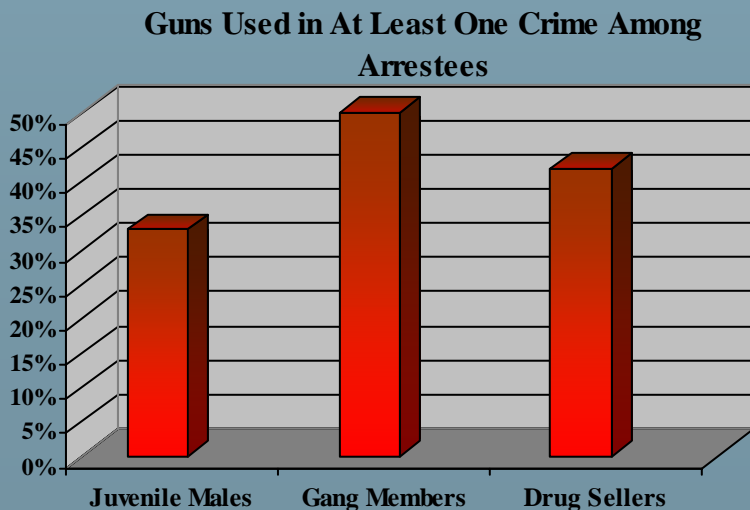
**Criminal History:** first-time offender (22% State inmates, 10% Federal inmates); recidivist (17% State inmates, 18% Federal inmates)

**Offense:** violent (30% State inmates, 35% Federal inmates); Drug (8% State inmates, 9% Federal inmates)

**Age:** 24 or younger (29% State inmates, 19% Federal inmates); 25-34 (17% State inmates, 16% Federal inmates); 35 or older (15% State inmates, 14% Federal inmates).

Findings from an NIJ Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) study conducted for the National Institute of Justice in 1997 of arrestees in 11 urban areas across the US, including Denver, showed that possession of firearms is common and tolerated among their friends.

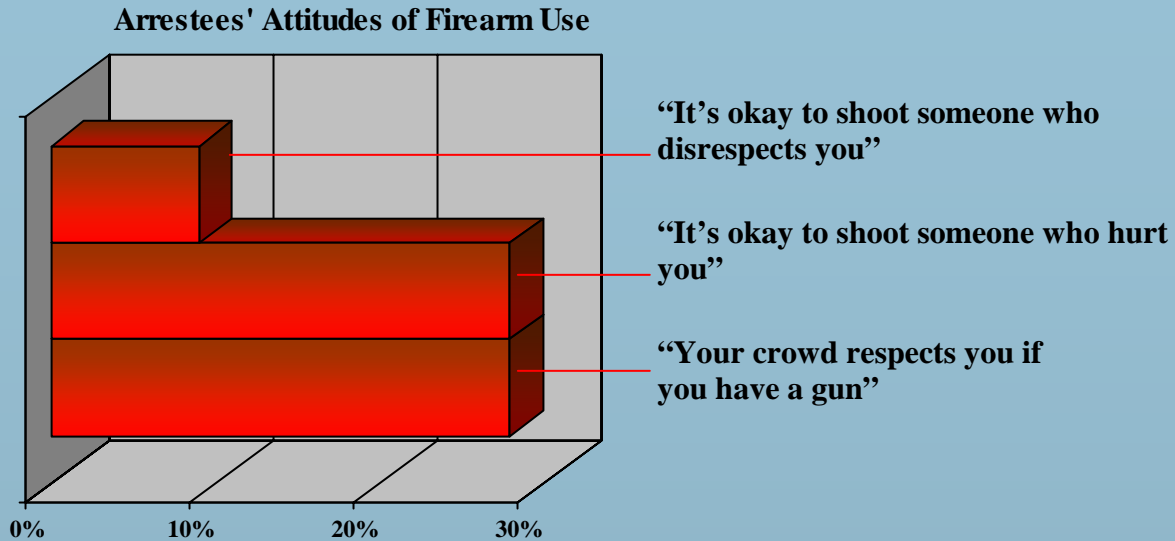
*Selling drugs and belonging to a gang are instrumental in influencing behavior and attitudes towards possession and use of firearms (ADAM, 1997).*



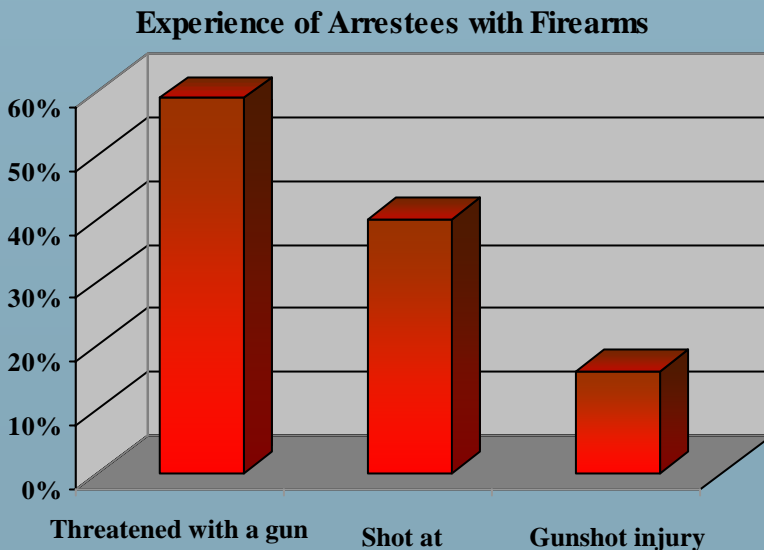
Over one-third of these juveniles reported owning a gun in the past 30 days. Thirty-four percent said they could obtain an illegal gun in less than thirty days (ADAM, 1997).

## Prisoner and Arrestee Firearm Use and Access, Continued...

Arrestees' attitudes regarding firearm use were analyzed. Twenty-eight percent of those sampled believed that owning a gun evoked respect from others.



Thirty-nine percent of arrestees reported ever owning a gun, a higher number than self-reports from the general population, but lower than numbers for serious offenders. Forty-five percent of these individuals obtained their gun illegally; 13% of which admitted to stealing their gun (ADAM, 1997).



Over 50% of responding arrestees had been threatened with a gun, almost 40% has been shot at, and over 10% were actually shot.

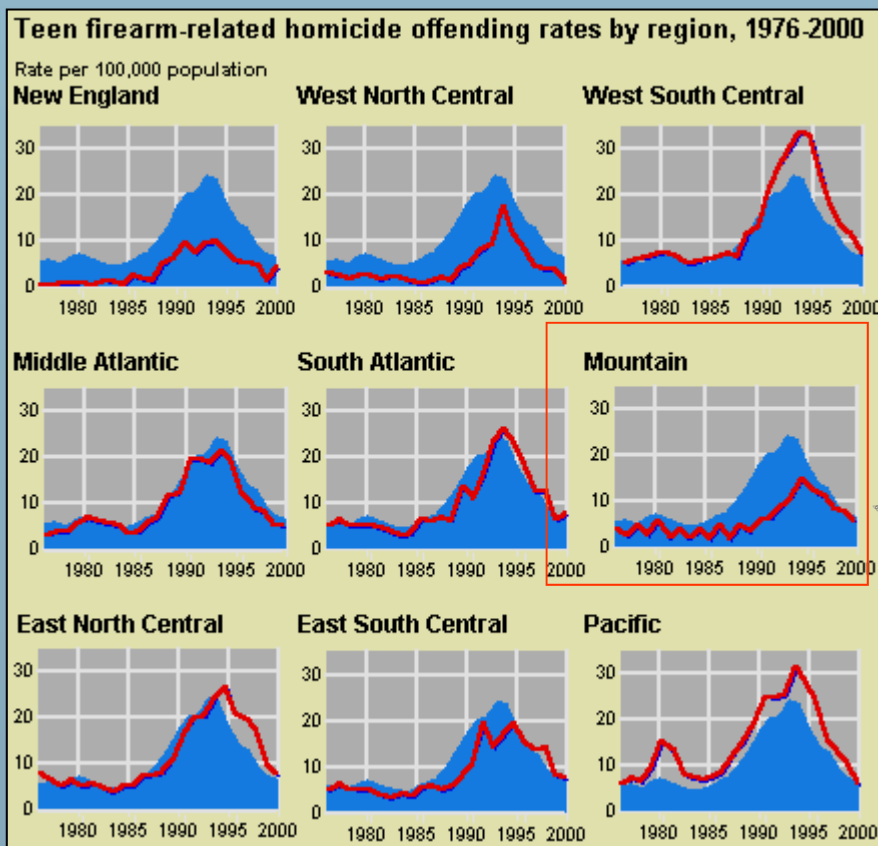
Exposure to violence and victimization was associated with the likelihood of owning a gun.

ADAM, 1997

## Juveniles and Young Adults

- In 2001, 17% of high school students (grades 9-12) reported carrying a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club in the past 30 days. Six percent reported taking a weapon onto school property.
- Juveniles accounted for 24% of weapons arrests in 2000.
- The United States has the highest rate of male adolescent homicide in the industrialized world. Juveniles (ages 17 & younger) were associated with nearly 9 percent of recovered crime guns.
- Youth (ages 18 - 24) were associated with nearly 34 percent of recovered crime guns.
- Gun ownership and use is generally higher among juvenile male arrestees than among adult arrestees.
- African-American and Hispanic youths are disproportionately victims of firearm-related homicides.

Colorado ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in a state ranking by rate of child victims murdered with a handgun between 1995-1999 (Violence Policy Center, <http://www.vpc.org/studies/firecont.htm>).



These graphs compare rates of firearm-related homicides among adolescents by region.

The solid blue area represents the trend for the entire United States while the red lines are the trends for each region.

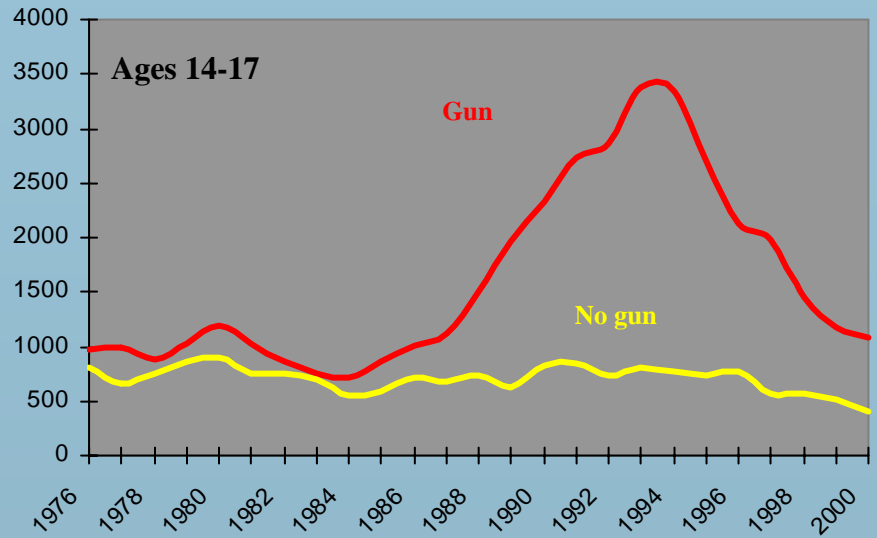
In 2000, the mountain states showed a rate of 4.2 compared to a national rate of 6.7.

## Juveniles and Young Adults, continued...

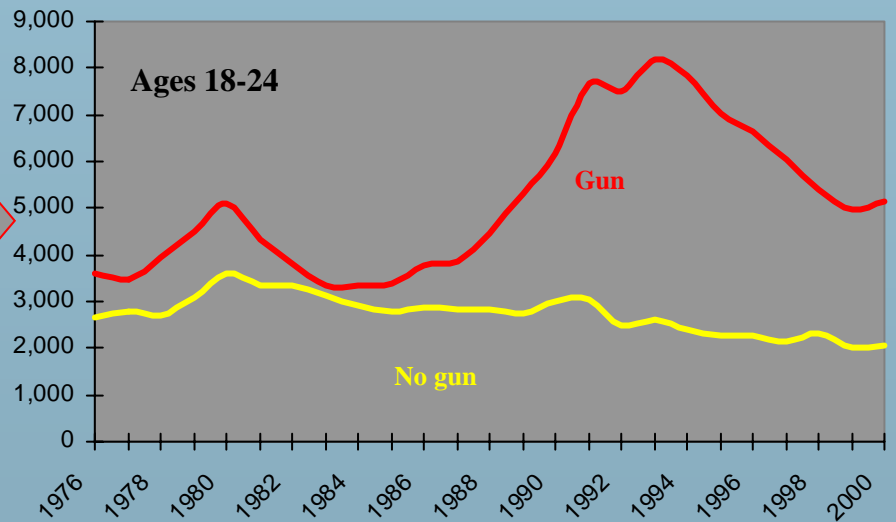
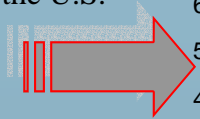
### Homicides by Age of Offender and Use of a Firearm; 1976 to 2000.

(pertains to all three charts)

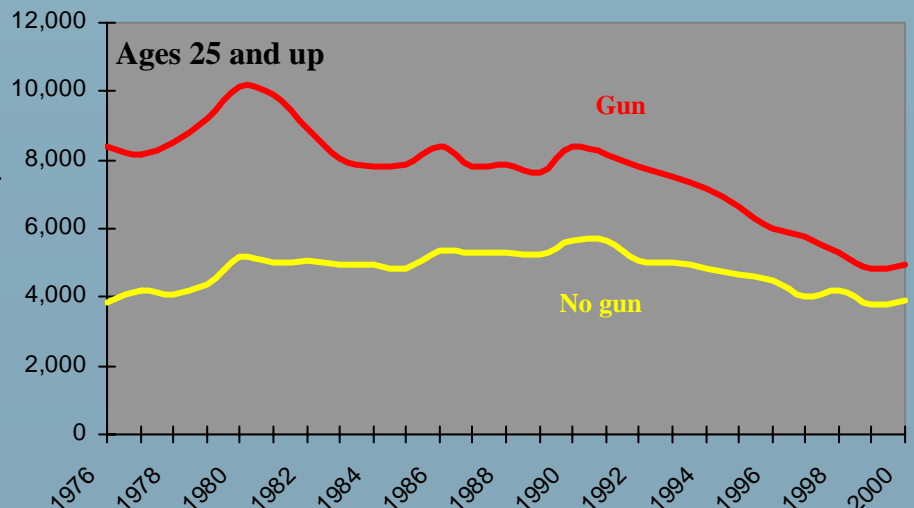
These are national trends of firearm use by juveniles and young adults.



Offenders aged 18 through 24 committed the highest incidents of homicide with a gun in the U.S. in 2000 (N=5,162).



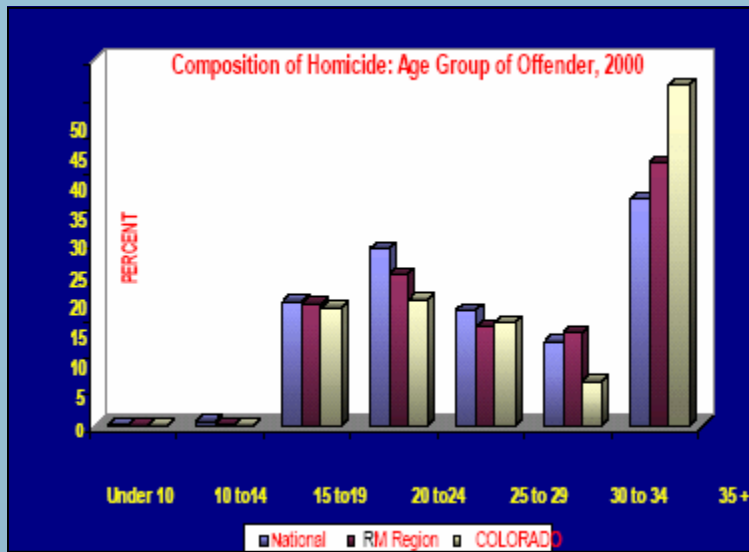
The number of homicides with no guns remained fairly stable over time across these age categories (see yellow line). However, the number of guns across age groups has varied considerably over time.



Source: Fox and Zawitz., 2000.



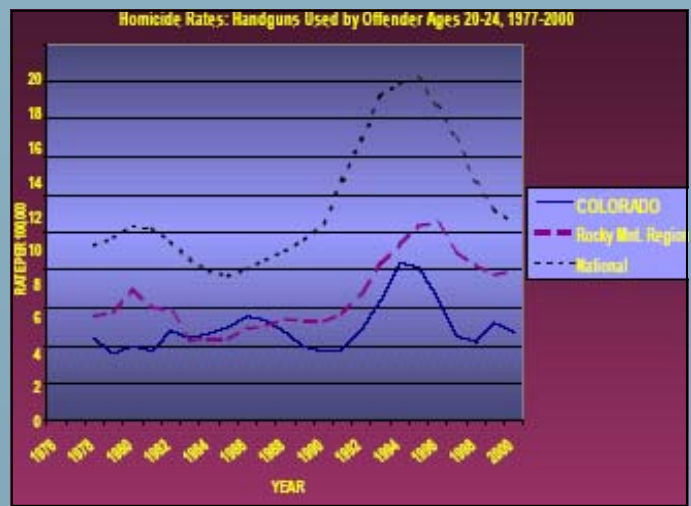
## Juveniles and Young Adults, continued...



Shown here are homicides among different age groups off offenders. National numbers are in red, regional numbers are in blue, and Colorado is represented in yellow.

The second highest number of cases of homicides in 2000 were committed by individuals age 20 to 24 for Colorado, the rocky mountain region, and the nation.

The graphs below show the rates of homicide by handgun among two age groups (15 to 19 and 20 to 24) from 1976 to 2000. Colorado shows trends over time in homicides committed with a handgun that are consistent with rates for the region and the entire nation for both age groups.



Source: Elliott, Williams, Mattson, Haag, Cook, 2003.

## ATF Crime Gun Trace Report for Denver and Aurora

	Number of Requests	% of Requests
Trace Reports	937	100.00
Trace Requests for which Possessor's Age Can Be Determined	645	68.8
Crime Gun Trace Requests With:		
Juvenile Possessor (Ages 17 & Younger)	56	8.7
Youth Possessor (Ages 18-24)	217	33.6
Adult Possessor (Ages 25 & Older)	372	57.7
Trace Requests for which a Possessor Can Be Identified	843	90.0
Trace Requests Identify Possessor's Date of Birth	645	68.8
Trace Request Identify Possessor's Place of Birth	226	24.1
Trace Request Identifies Purchaser	547	58.4
Trace Identifies Both Purchaser and Possessor	528	56.4
Possessor Is Not the Same Individual as the Purchaser	473	89.6

*Few crime gun possessors bought their guns directly from federally licensed dealers (ATF).*

According to the ATF, a small number of federally licensed gun dealers is associated with a large number of crime gun traces from that jurisdiction.

“The concentration of crime gun traces among a few licensed dealers partly reflects the high concentration of legal firearms sales among dealers and does not necessarily mean that a particular dealer is engaged in illegal business practices. However, the concentration of crime gun traces among a small number of licensed dealers provides an important opportunity for law enforcement agencies to focus limited investigative and regulatory resources on identifying potential illegal gun traffickers.”

## ATF Crime Gun Trace Report, continued...

Dealer Trace Information						
City	Number of Traces to a Dealer	Traces		Dealer		
		Percent	Number	Percent	Traces	
Denver/Aurora	1 or more	100.0	356	100.00	191	
	2 or more	57.3	204	20.4	39	
	5 or more	35.7	127	4.2	8	
	10 or more	28.7	102	2.1	4	
	25 or more	14.6	52	0.5	1	
Distance from Dealer to Recovery (in miles):						
0-5	6-10	11-25	26-50	51-100	101-250	250+
83	43	32	6	15	18	74
30%	16%	12%	2%	6%	7%	27%

### “Time-to-Crime”:

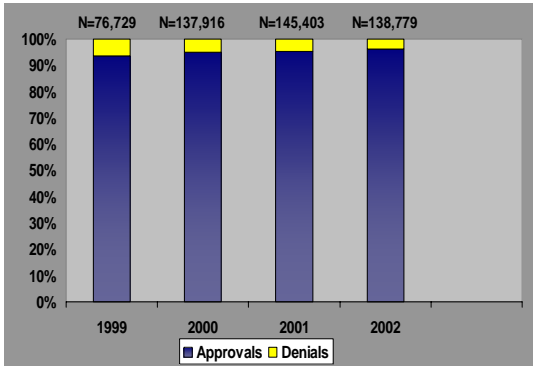
According to the ATF, “the time from retail sale to firearm recovery in a crime is known as time-to-crime. A short time-to-crime is an indicator of illegal diversion or criminal intent associated with the sale. The presence of short time-to-crime guns also shows that many firearm offenses, including violent offenses with firearms, involve new guns. The median time-to-crime for guns traced from Denver and Aurora, where time-to-crime could be determined, was 4.9 years, as compared to the national median of 6.1 years. Older guns may represent an investigative challenge as they may have changed hands several times before acquisition by the criminal possessor. Many crime guns, however, moved more quickly from retail sale to recovery by law enforcement.”

### Additional State Data:

- 66 percent of all traceable crime guns recovered in Denver and Aurora were from Colorado Federal Firearm Licenses (FFL’s).
- 21 percent of crime guns first purchased in Colorado and recovered in Denver and Aurora were from Denver County and Arapahoe County FFL’s.
- Over 46 percent of crime guns recovered in Denver and Aurora were first purchased at FFLs within 10 miles of Denver and Aurora.

## Insta-Check Data on Gun Applications

**CBI Insta-Check Statistics  
Firearm Approvals and Denials**

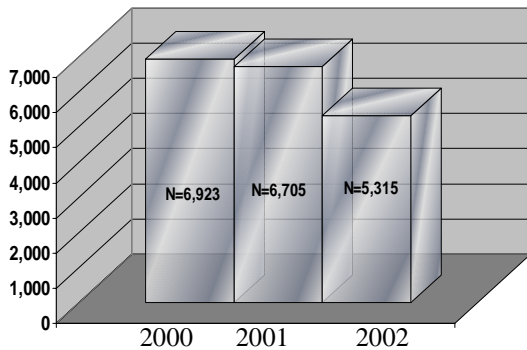


Over 2.2 million background checks were performed by state agencies in 2001. Approximately 2.5% of those were rejected (Bowling et al, 2002). States with higher rejection rates were usually those that instituted an instant approval system on or shortly after the effective date of the Brady Act (November, 1998). These states included Colorado, Tennessee, and Georgia (Bowling et al., 2001).

These two charts compare approvals and denials for firearms in Colorado.

The bottom left chart shows that denials are down from 6,923 in 2000 to 5,315 in 2002.

**CBI Insta-Check Statistics  
Total Firearms Denials**



Denials of firearm requests have decreased between 2000 and 2002 in Colorado, while denials nationwide increased by 256% (see page 5).

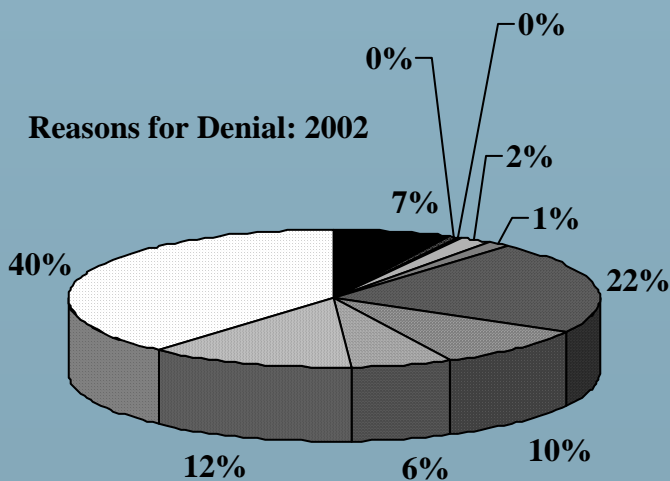
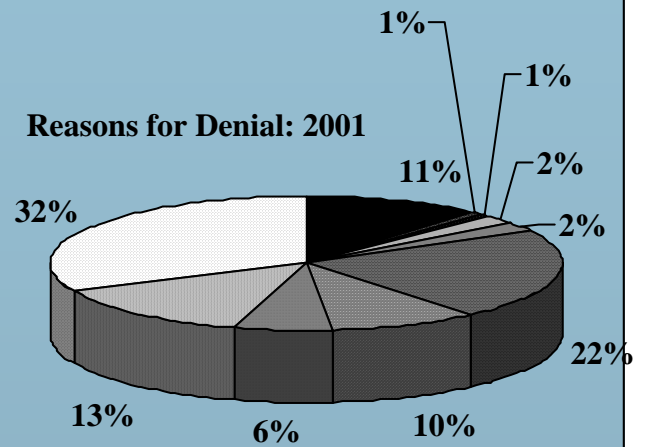
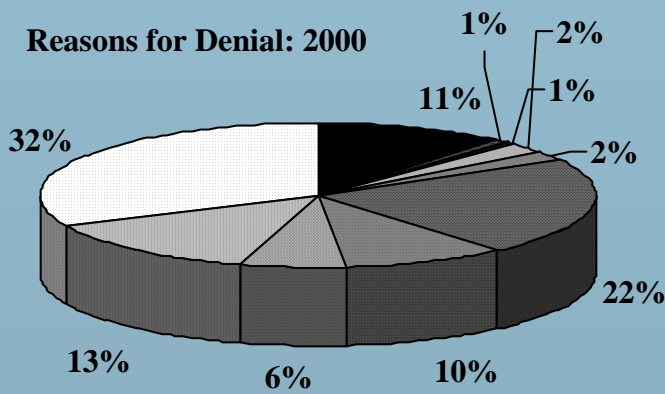
*Between August 1, 1999 and March 31, 2003 there have been 533,811 FFL applications: 508,487 approvals (95%), 25,324 denials (5%), 7,929 appeals, and 4,396 reversals.*

*The national rejection rate was 1.9% in 2001, 2.0% in 2000, 2.4% in 1999 and overall 2.2% in 1994-2001 (Bowling et al, 2002).*

## Insta-Check Data on Gun Applications, continued...

The following charts show reasons the for gun purchase s denial as described by CBI’s Insta-check System for 2000 through 2002. Denials are broken down by the following reasons: restraining order, homicide, kidnapping, sexual assault, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, dangerous drugs, and other. Some examples of reasons for denial listed in the “other” include: military, immigrant, sex offense other than sexual assault, felony gambling, felony weapon charge, smuggling, and crimes against person.

Firearm denials remained fairly constant across the reasons listed in the state Insta-check database.

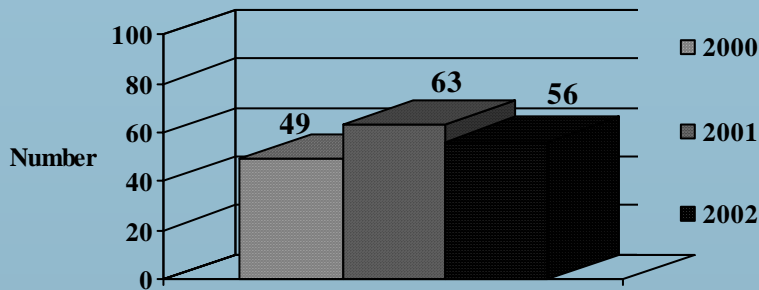


Source: CBI Insta-Check Data; <http://www.cbi.state.co.us/ic/index.asp>

## Insta-Check Data on Gun Applications, continued...

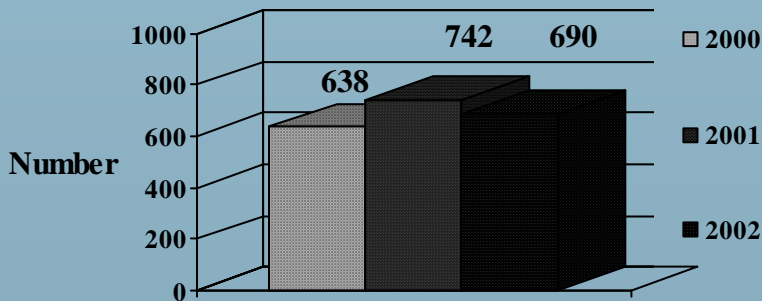
Firearm purchase denials where a crime against another person is the reason for denial is further analyzed below.

**Reasons for Denial: Homicide, 2000-2002**



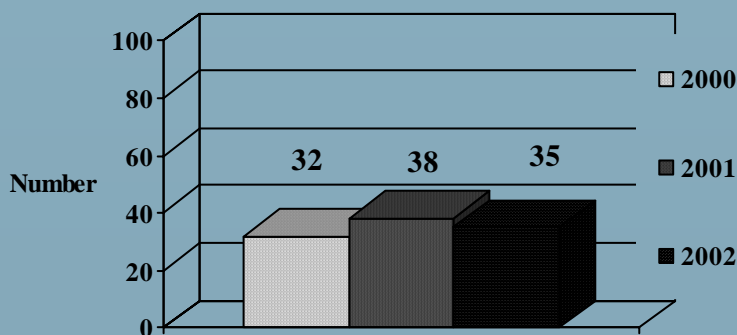
About 50-60 denials per year are due to the fact that the requesting person had a homicide crime on his or her rap sheet.

**Reasons for Denial: Restraining Order, 2000-2002**



Restraining orders account for a significant number of reasons for denial. This could be any type of restraining order in which a judge stipulated that the defendant was not allowed to possess a firearm. Restraining orders are the second most common reason for firearm denials, nationally (Bowling et al., 2002).

**Reasons for Denial: Kidnapping, 2000-2002**

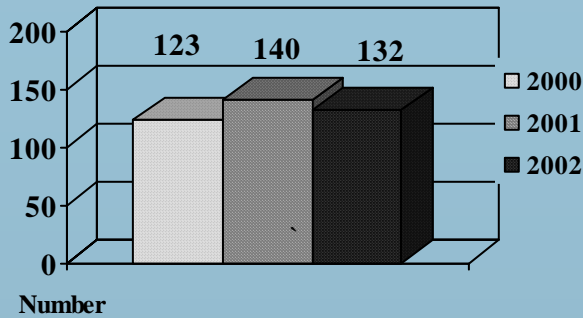


Over the last three years, more than 100 attempts to purchase firearms have been denied because of the person attempting to buy had a recorded kidnapping charge.

Source: Colorado Bureau of Investigation, Insta-Check Statistics (<http://www.cbi.state.co.us/ic/statistic.htm>)

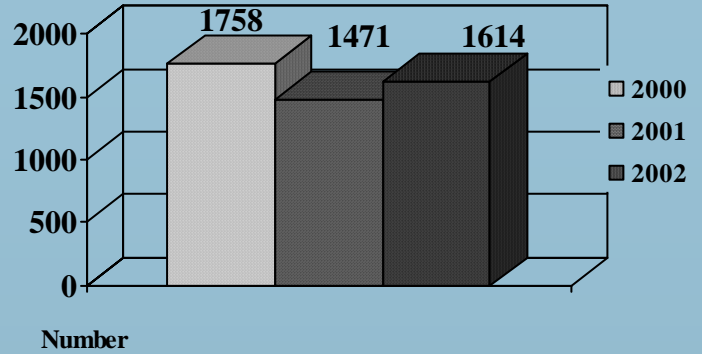
## Insta-Check Data on Gun Applications, continued...

Reasons for Denial: Robbery, 2000-2002



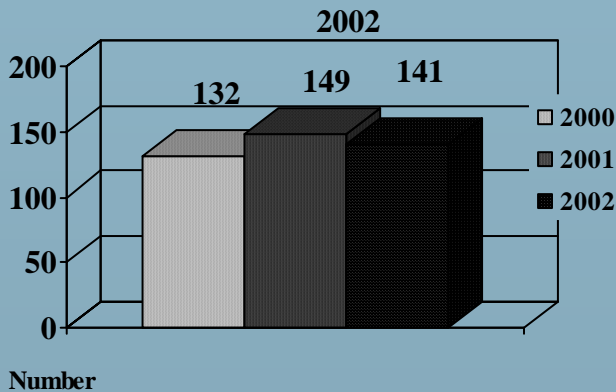
In this three year period, over 350 gun purchase attempts were denied due to criminal history checks indicating robbery.

Reasons for Denial: Assault, 2000-2002



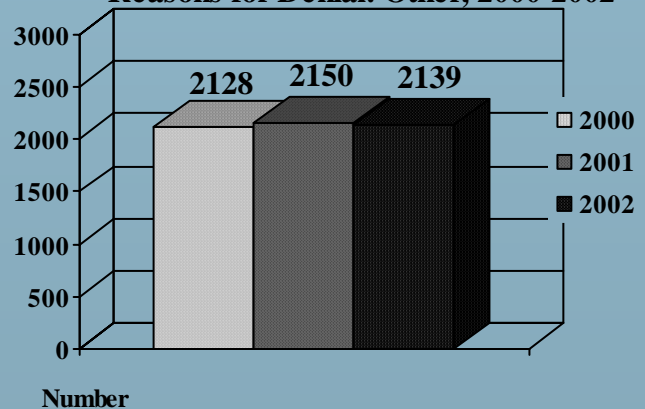
Assault is the most common crime for which the purchase of a grant was denied. Nearly 5,000 attempts were denied for this reason between 2000 and 2003.

Reasons for Denial: Sexual Assault, 2000-



Sexual assault is the most underreported crime. Although it is relatively rare for individuals to be arrested for this, about 140 purchase attempts were denied each year on this basis.

Reasons for Denial: Other, 2000-2002

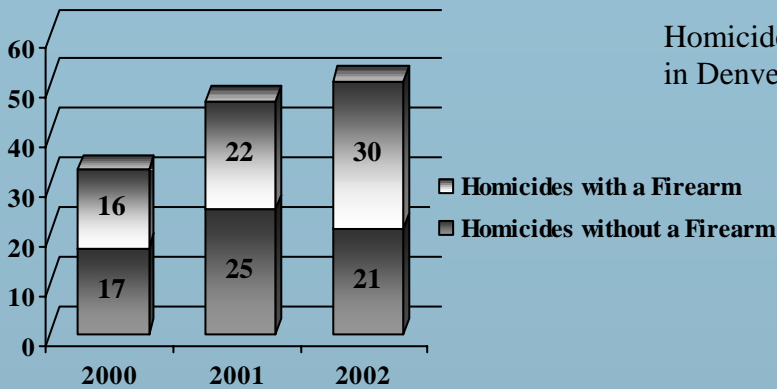


“Other” includes military, immigrant, sex offense other than sexual assault, felony gambling, felony weapon charge, smuggling, and crimes against person.

## Data from the Denver Police Department 2000-2002

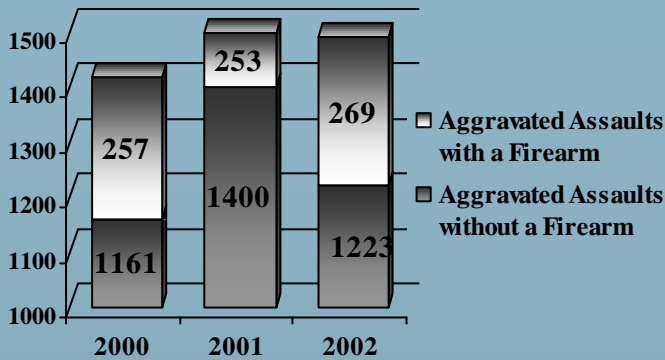
The Denver Police Department PSN researchers with the following incident data on homicide, aggravated assault, and armed robbery.

**Homicides in Denver; 2000-2002**



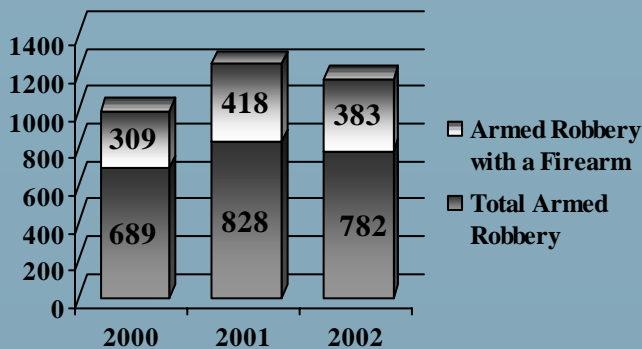
Homicides committed with firearms nearly doubled in Denver between 2000 and 2002.

**Aggravated Assaults in Denver; 2000-2002**



Firearm-related aggravated assaults in Denver have remained fairly stable.

**Armed Robberies in Denver; 2000-2002**



The use of firearms in the commission of a robbery has increased over the last three years.

Source: Denver Department of Public Safety, Office of Planning and Analysis.



# Illegal Weapons Data

**Illegal Weapons Carrying in Denver; 2000-2002: Juvenile and Adult Arrests**

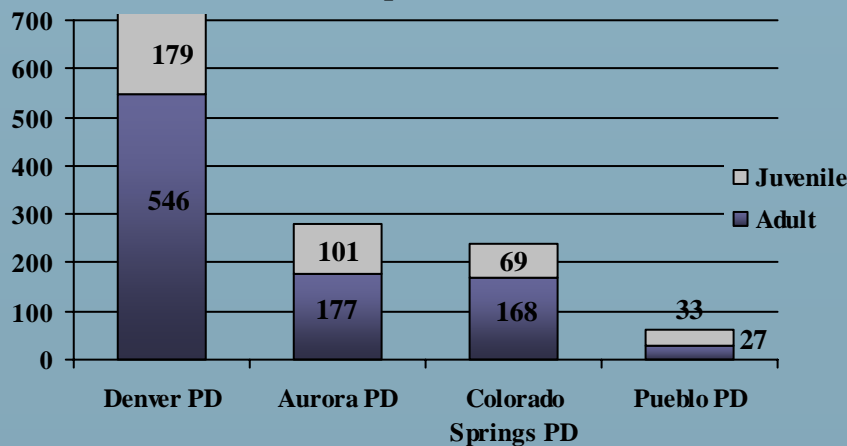


The number of illegal weapons carrying arrests was at its highest in 2000 for adults (708). Juvenile arrests, however, have been increasing somewhat since 2000.

Source: Denver Department of Public Safety, Office of Planning and Analysis.

The graph below shows arrest counts reported by local law enforcement agencies to CBI in 2002.

**Weapons Arrests as Reported to CBI from Local Police Departments; 2002**

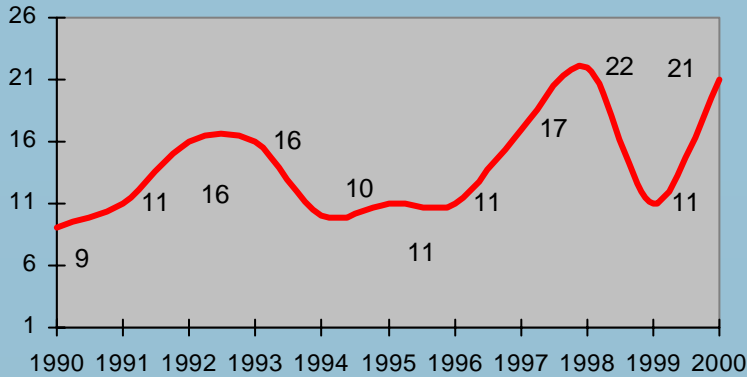


Source: CBI, Crime in Colorado 2002

# Homicides by UCR Count Among Colorado Cities

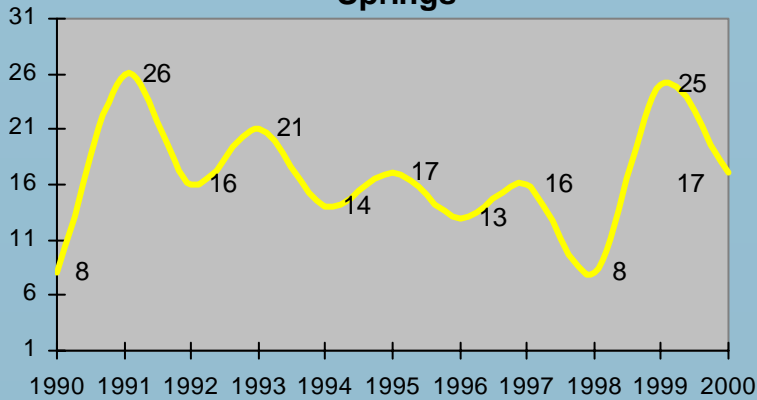
Homicides committed between 1990 and 2000 are shown in the following Colorado cities: Aurora, Colorado Springs, Denver, Lakewood, and Pueblo.

**Homicides by 1990-2000: Aurora**



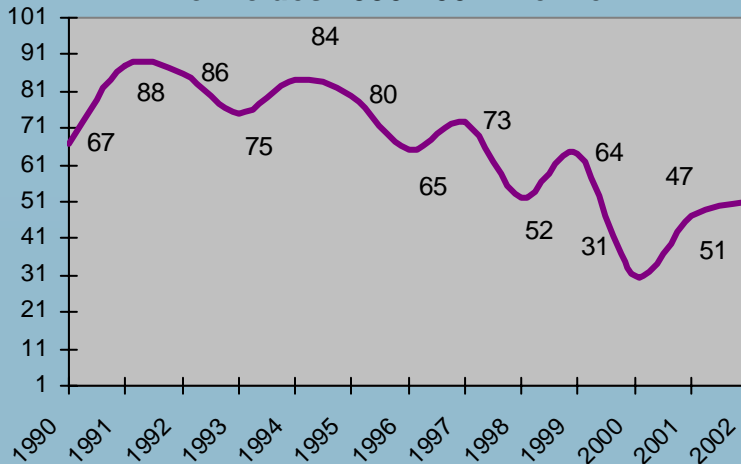
Homicides in Aurora increased over the past decade.

**Homicides 1990-2000: Colorado Springs**



The number of homicides in Colorado Springs has varied significantly over time.

**Homicides 1990-2002: Denver**

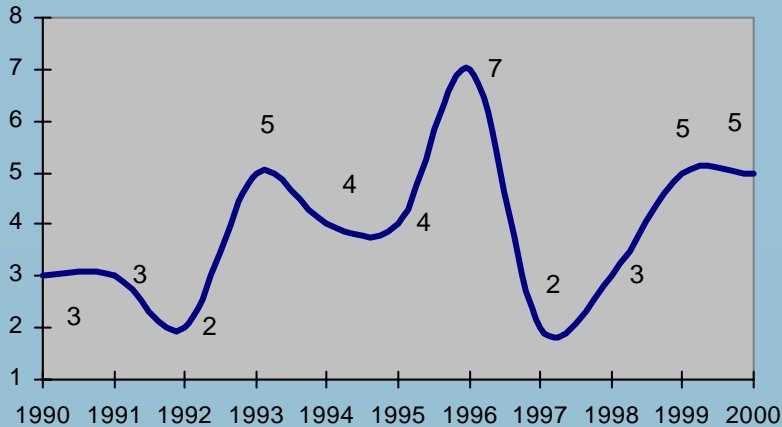


Denver homicides show a decrease of more than 50% from 1999 to 2000.

Source: Elliott, Williams, Mattson, Haag, Cook, 2003, smoothed UCR data. 2000 and 2002 data provided by DDPS Office of Safety Analysis.

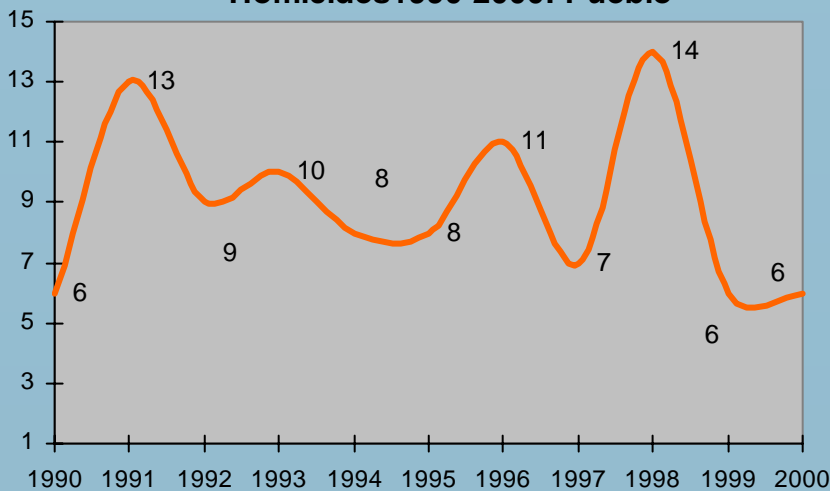
## Homicides by UCR Count Among Colorado Cities, continued...

### Homicides 1990-2000: Lakewood



The number of homicides in Lakewood vary significantly over time, but such variation is common when the annual number of events is relatively small.

### Homicides 1990-2000: Pueblo



The number of homicides in Pueblo varied between 6 and 14 over the eleven years shown here.



## Summary

**Research Strategy**

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