

# Arizona Criminal Justice Commission



## AYS Youth Carrying Handguns, 2004-2010 Fact Sheet

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

June 2011

### Background

In 2008, 4.4 percent of homicides reported in Arizona involved one or more 12-17 year-old offenders using a handgun or shotgun as a weapon (FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2008). To gain a better understanding of handgun carrying among Arizona youth, survey items from the Arizona Youth Survey (AYS) are used to analyze handgun carrying and related perceptions and behaviors.

### The Arizona Youth Survey (AYS)

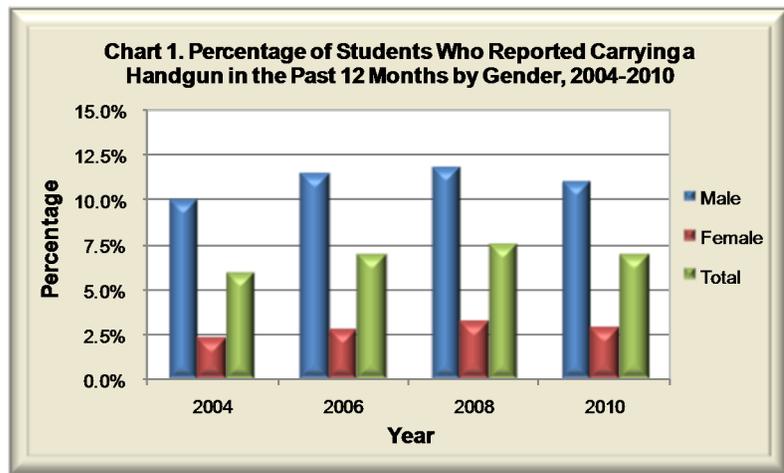
Representative samples of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from Arizona public and charter schools participated in the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 administrations of the AYS. In 2010, 63,784 students in Arizona took the survey. Youth were surveyed on several topics including, but not limited to, self-reported drug use, anti-social behavior, risk and protective factors, and handgun carrying. In its current form, the survey has been administered every two years since 2002.

### Handgun Carrying by Grade and Gender

There has been an increase in the percentage of students carrying a handgun during the 12 months prior to the survey from 6.0 percent in 2004 to 7.0 percent in 2010 (Table 1 and Chart 1). During this time period, the percentage of students who reported carrying a handgun increased within each grade level as well (Table 1). In 2010, the percentage of youth reporting handgun carrying was highest among 10th graders at 7.5 percent, followed by 12th graders (7.1 percent) and 8th graders (6.6 percent).

**Table 1. Percentage of Students Who Reported Carrying a Handgun in the Past 12 Months by Grade Level, 2004-2010**

	2004	2006	2008	2010
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6.5	7.1	7.6	6.6
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5.9	7.1	7.1	7.5
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5.5	6.6	7.9	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>



Increases in youth handgun carrying are also evident by gender (Chart 1). Despite a recent decrease in handgun carrying by gender from 2008 to 2010, the percentage of youth who reported carrying a handgun increased overall from 2004 to 2010 for both male and female respondents.

### Summary of Arizona Revised Statute §13-3111

By statute, Arizona youth under the age of 18 are permitted to carry a firearm when accompanied by a parent, grandparent or guardian. Youth are also permitted to carry at their private residence and in the presence of a proper safety instructor with the permission of a parent or guardian. Unaccompanied youth between the ages of 14 and 17 are permitted to lawfully hunt, partake in shooting events, and perform specific firearm-related agricultural activities. Unaccompanied transportation of unloaded firearms to perform these tasks is also permitted.

### Differences Across Youth Perceptions of Being Caught and Handgun Carrying

Youth perceptions of the likelihood of being caught with a handgun are associated with the likelihood of carrying a handgun. Youth who reportedly felt they would get caught by the police and/or their parents for carrying a handgun were less likely to carry a handgun during the 12 months prior to the survey than those youth who felt they would not get caught (Table 2). In 2010, 3.7 percent of students who felt that "police would catch a kid carrying a handgun" reported carrying a handgun at least once during the previous year. Of the students who felt a kid would not get caught by police for carrying, 8.9 percent reported carrying a handgun.

The findings are similar when the focus turns to parents (Table 2). Of the youth who felt they would get caught carrying a handgun by their parents, 3.9 percent reported carrying a handgun in 2010. The percentage increases to 13.0 percent for youth who felt they would not get caught by their parents.

**Table 2. Youth Perceptions of Getting Caught for Handgun Carrying by Reported Gun Carrying Practices, 2004-2010**

	2004		2006		2008		2010	
	Did Not Carry	Did Carry						
<i>Police Would Catch a Kid Carrying a Handgun</i>	95.6	3.7	92.6	3.6	95.4	4.2	95.9	3.7
<i>Police Would Not Catch a Kid Carrying a Handgun</i>	90.9	8.3	86.4	9.8	89.2	10.2	90.6	8.9
<i>Parents Would Catch You Carrying a Handgun</i>	95.8	3.4	92.5	3.9	95.3	4.2	95.7	3.9
<i>Parents Would Not Catch You Carrying a Handgun</i>	86.5	12.8	82.1	13.6	83.7	15.5	86.4	13.0

## Risk and Protective Factors and Youth Gun Carrying

Individual, school, and community factors can play a significant role in increasing or decreasing the likelihood that youth will carry a handgun. Table 3 presents the four most highly correlated risk factors and the four most highly correlated protective factors with student handgun carrying. Pearson correlation coefficients are available for the eight risk and protective factors by handgun carrying in Table 4. Students at high risk of early initiation of antisocial behavior were more likely to carry a handgun than low risk students. The same relationship is found for students who lived in communities with greater access to handguns, who were involved with gangs, and who interacted with antisocial peers.

In addition, protective factors can work to reduce the likelihood of handgun carrying among Arizona's youth. Students reporting a strong belief in a moral order consistently reported a lower percentage of handgun carrying from 2004 to 2010. A lower probability of handgun carrying was also found among students reporting higher levels of interaction with pro-social peers, greater family rewards for pro-social involvement, and increased opportunities at school for pro-social involvement when compared to students that did not report these higher levels of protection.

**Table 4. Highest Correlation Coefficients for Risk/Protective Factors by Handgun Carrying, 2010**

	Handgun Carrying
<b>Risk Factors</b>	
1. <i>Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior</i>	0.290**
2. <i>Perceived Availability of Handguns</i>	0.227**
3. <i>Gang Involvement</i>	0.206**
4. <i>Interaction with Antisocial Peers</i>	0.172**
<b>Protective Factors</b>	
1. <i>Belief in a Moral Order</i>	-0.151**
2. <i>Interaction with Pro-social Peers</i>	-0.079**
3. <i>Family Rewards for Pro-Social Involvement</i>	-0.062**
4. <i>School Opportunity for Pro-Social Involvement</i>	-0.061**

\*\* Statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level, Pearson's  $r$ .

## Drug Use/Sale and Handgun Carrying

Table 6 shows the relationship between drug use, or drug dealing, and handgun carrying. Students who reported carrying a handgun in the 12 months prior to the survey in 2010 reported higher rates of the use or sale of drugs than youth who did not report carrying a handgun (Table 6). In 2010, 55.9 percent of youth who reported carrying a handgun also reported illegal use of a drug at least once in their lifetime. Of youth who reported carrying a handgun, 35.9 percent reported the illegal use of at least one drug during the 30 days prior to taking the survey and 37.8 percent sold illegal drugs during the same period.

**Table 6. Percentage of Student Drug Use and Sale by Reported Handgun Carrying, 2010**

	Any Drug (Lifetime)	Any Drug (Past 30 Days)	Sold Illegal Drugs
<i>Carried a Handgun</i>	55.9	35.9	37.8
<i>Did Not Carry a Handgun</i>	36.4	18.3	5.8

**Table 3. Percentage of Students Who Reported Carrying a Handgun in the Past 12 Months by Risk/Protective Factor, 2004-2010**

	2004	2006	2008	2010
<b>Risk Factors</b>				
<i>Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior</i>				
<i>High Risk</i>	14.5	16.7	17.4	15.6
<i>Low Risk</i>	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9
<i>Perceived Availability of Handguns</i>				
<i>High Risk</i>	13.5	15.2	16.5	15.0
<i>Low Risk</i>	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.8
<i>Gang Involvement</i>				
<i>High Risk</i>	14.2	17.2	17.5	16.1
<i>Low Risk</i>	3.5	3.7	4.1	3.7
<i>Interaction with Antisocial Peers</i>				
<i>High Risk</i>	9.4	10.9	11.6	10.6
<i>Low Risk</i>	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.0
<b>Protective Factors</b>				
<i>Belief in a Moral Order</i>				
<i>High Protection</i>	2.8	3.3	3.8	3.5
<i>Low Protection</i>	10.0	11.5	13.0	11.1
<i>Interaction with Pro-social Peers*</i>				
<i>High Protection</i>	3.9	4.9	5.3	5.0
<i>Low Protection</i>	7.9	8.9	10.1	9.0
<i>Family Rewards for Pro-Social Involvement</i>				
<i>High Protection</i>	4.7	5.3	5.6	4.9
<i>Low Protection</i>	7.2	8.3	9.3	7.8
<i>School Opportunity for Pro-Social Involvement</i>				
<i>High Protection</i>	4.6	5.5	6.1	5.7
<i>Low Protection</i>	8.3	9.4	9.7	8.9

\* Excludes the religious services attendance question in 2008 and 2010.

## School and Handgun Carrying

The AYS includes survey questions regarding the prevalence of youth handgun carrying in schools. In 2010, 1,052 students (1.6 percent) reported bringing a handgun to school during the 12 months prior to the survey (Table 5). The number of students who reported taking a handgun to school increased 76.5 percent from 2004 to 2010 while the total number of AYS respondents increased by 55.7 percent.

**Table 5. Number of Students Who Reported Taking a Handgun to School in the Past 12 Months by Grade Level, 2004-2010**

	2004	2006	2008	2010
<i>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</i>	284	380	312	370
<i>10<sup>th</sup> Grade</i>	189	295	211	395
<i>12<sup>th</sup> Grade</i>	123	182	177	287
<i>All Grades</i>	596	857	700	1,052
<b>Number of AYS Respondents</b>	<b>40,960</b>	<b>60,401</b>	<b>54,734</b>	<b>63,784</b>

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