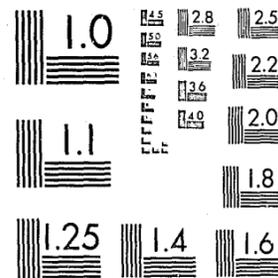


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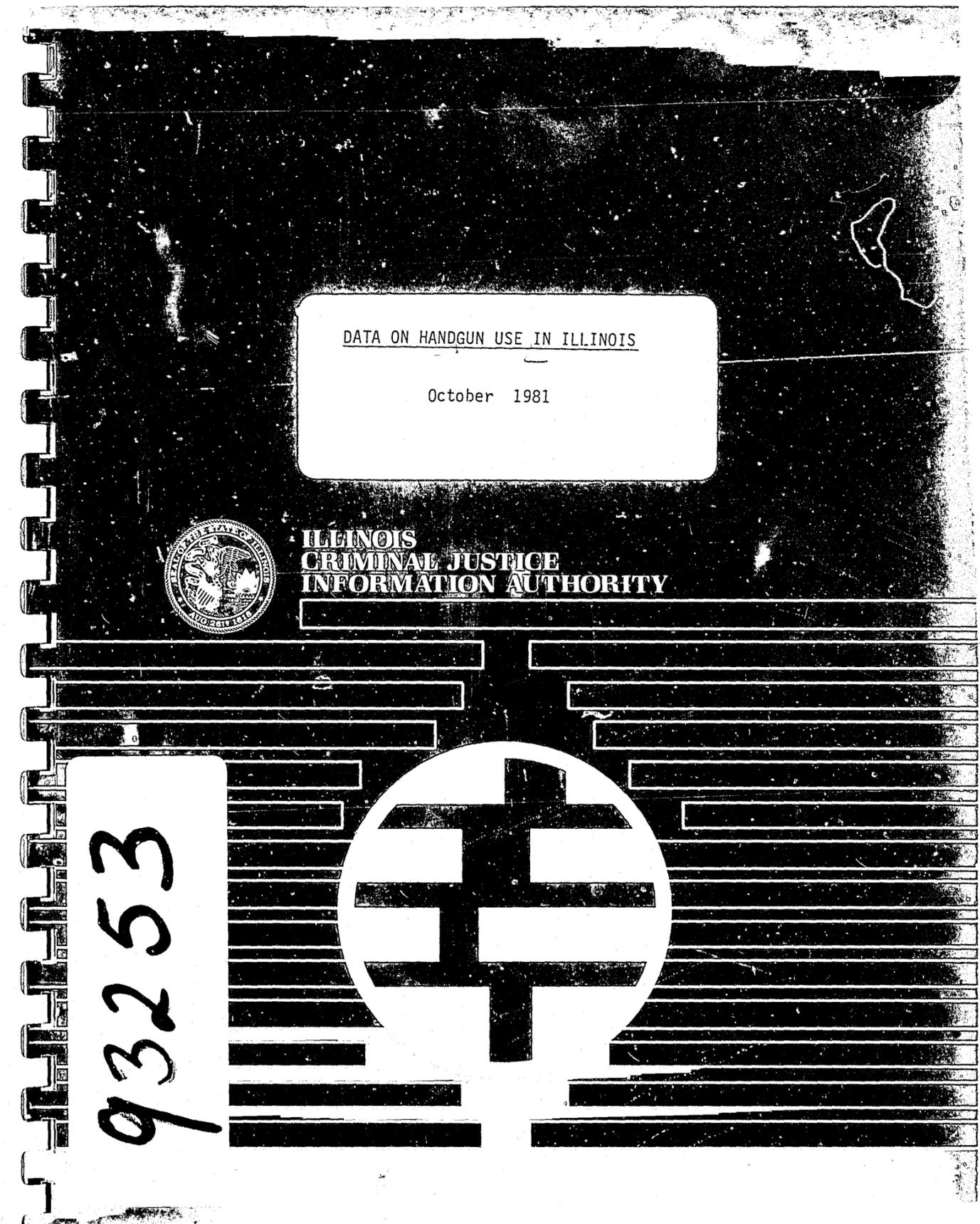
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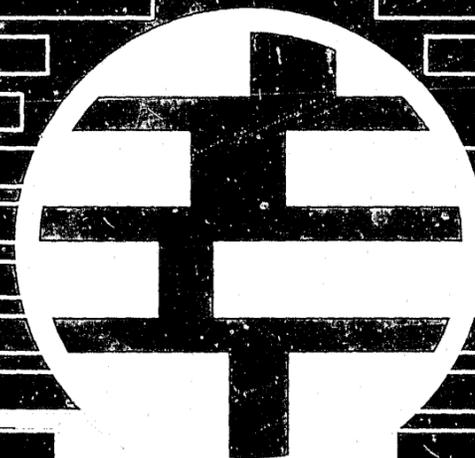
DATA ON HANDGUN USE IN ILLINOIS

October 1981



ILLINOIS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INFORMATION AUTHORITY

93253



DATA ON HANDGUN USE IN ILLINOIS

October 1981

By Carolyn R. Block
and
Louise S. Miller

ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY
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Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	ii
Lost or Stolen Handguns.....	1
Deaths in Firearm Accidents.....	3
Firearm Use to Resist Violent Crime.....	6
NRA Survey Data.....	6
Resisting Robbery.....	9
Resisting Rape.....	14

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INTRODUCTION

This report was written in response to questions raised by the Judiciary II Subcommittee on Handguns of the Illinois General Assembly. The information necessary to answer many of these questions, such as data on stolen handguns, firearm accidental deaths, and the outcome of victims' use of handguns to resist violent crime, are often unavailable or difficult for policy makers or the public to obtain.

In this report, the Statistical Analysis Center attempts to determine what data are available on handgun use in Illinois. If the data are available, the report discusses their quality and provides some examples of the data and some suggestions for their interpretation.

This report could not have been written without the help and cooperation of a number of people, including Larry Dykstra, Sergeant Tim Tidmarsh of the Chicago Police Department, Paul Blackman of the National Rifle Association, Dr. Robert Stein, Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County, Mark Karlin of the Committee for Handgun Control, Jean Spadafora of the National Safety Council, Richard Block, Wes Skogan, M. Joan McDermott, Pauline Bart, and the entire staff of the Statistical Analysis Center.

This report is a response to certain questions on handgun use, and not a comprehensive survey of handgun data. For a survey of Illinois data on firearm availability and firearm owners, see another Statistical Analysis Center report, "Guide to Illinois Firearm Data." For a review of other state and federal laws, see J. Blose and P. J. Cook, "Regulating Handgun Transfers," Center for the Study of Policy Analysis, Duke University, 1980.



ILLINOIS LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

POST OFFICE BOX 1177
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312/733-1500

October 2, 1981

Representative Emil J. Boucek, Chairman
Judiciary II Subcommittee on Handguns
Illinois General Assembly
4428 Harvey Avenue
Western Springs, Illinois 60558

Dear Representative Boucek:

I was grateful for the opportunity to attend the hearings of your subcommittee held on Tuesday, September 15. A recurring theme in the hearings seemed to be the lack of data on the use of handguns. In particular, I noticed people on both sides mentioning the lack of data on the following points:

- The number of handguns kept at home "under the pillow" that are stolen in burglaries in Illinois.
- The number of people killed in handgun accidents in Illinois.
- The number of people in Illinois who successfully defend themselves in a violent crime with a handgun.
- The number of people in Illinois who try to defend themselves in a violent crime with a handgun, but who fail and are injured or killed.

In response to the Subcommittee's interest in such data, the Statistical Analysis Center has found that some accurate and potentially informative data sources do exist. We have compiled some of these data into the attached report.

I hope you will find this information to be useful. If you would like a more detailed analysis of any of the data sets, or if you have additional questions about crime data, please call me.

Sincerely,

Carolyn R. Block

Carolyn Rebecca Block, Ph.D.
Senior Analyst
Statistical Analysis Center

CRB:om
Attachment

LOST OR STOLEN HANDGUNS

The Illinois Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) collects information on the number of reported criminal offenses in which a firearm is stolen, and the number of firearms stolen, from each of the more than one thousand police jurisdictions in Illinois, except Chicago.¹ The data have been collected monthly since 1972, and include information on the type of firearm, such as handgun, and the criminal offense. The Statistical Analysis Center maintains an edition of this DLE file, and can compile reports containing information for total Illinois, any county or court circuit, or any individual jurisdiction.²

Information on handguns stolen in violent and property crimes in the Chicago collar counties (the metropolitan area excluding Chicago) and the downstate counties appears in Table 1. We have separated crimes occurring in residences from crimes occurring elsewhere. In 1978 and again in 1979, about fifteen hundred offenses in which a handgun was stolen were reported to police, and about thirty-five hundred handguns were stolen in these residential crimes. In many of these criminal incidents, more than one handgun was stolen.

¹There are 1070 police jurisdictions in Illinois, 714 of which report data directly to DLE. The rest report through another agency, such as a sheriff's office.

²Lost or stolen firearm data are not available for Chicago.

Table 1

HANDGUNS REPORTED LOST OR STOLEN DURING CRIMINAL OFFENSES^a
Illinois outside of Chicago

	<u>Residential</u> ^b			
	<u>1978</u>		<u>1979</u>	
	<u>Incidents</u>	<u>Handguns Stolen</u>	<u>Incidents</u>	<u>Handguns Stolen</u>
Collar Counties ^c	572	1,200	674	1,385
Downstate ^d	<u>972</u>	<u>2,092</u>	<u>1,105</u>	<u>2,414</u>
Total ^e	1,544	3,292	1,779	3,799

	<u>Commercial/Other</u> ^b			
	<u>1978</u>		<u>1979</u>	
	<u>Incidents</u>	<u>Handguns Stolen</u>	<u>Incidents</u>	<u>Handguns Stolen</u>
Collar Counties ^c	310	2,301	344	645
Downstate ^d	<u>437</u>	<u>1,104</u>	<u>511</u>	<u>1,070</u>
Total ^e	747	3,405	855	1,715

Source: SAC edition of Illinois Uniform Crime Reports Property Loss Data.

^aOffenses include Homicide, Rape, Robbery, Burglary, Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, Arson, Deception, Vandalism. Attempted offenses are excluded. More than one handgun may be stolen in one criminal incident.

^b"Residential" place of occurrence includes private residences (including garage and yard), apartments, mobile homes, and college residence halls. "Commercial/Other" includes all other possible locations.

^c"Collar Counties" include DuPage, Lake, McHenry, Will, and Cook Counties. Chicago Police Department totals are excluded from Cook County due to reporting inadequacies.

^d"Downstate" includes all 97 counties not listed above.

^e"Total" does not include Chicago.

DEATHS IN FIREARM ACCIDENTS

Chicago Data

Little data exist on firearm accidents. Illinois statute (Chapter 38, Section 206-3.2) requires medical personnel to report all firearm injuries known to them to the police. However, the Chicago Police Department does not normally keep tallies of the number of reported firearm accidents. (Due to personnel shortages, police priorities on gunshot injury calls are to determine whether a crime was committed, and that the gun is properly registered.)

However, according to Sergeant Tim Tidmarsh of the Crime Analysis Unit of the Chicago Police Department (744-6240), the police conducted a study in early 1981, to determine the number of non-fatal accidents, fatal accidents, and suicides with firearms in Chicago. The study, which was discontinued for lack of personnel, found the following:

	<u>POLICE PERIOD</u>		
	1 Jan. 1 - Feb. 4, 1981	2 Feb. 5 - March 4, 1981	3 March 5 - April 1, 1981
Accidental injuries with a firearm	15	19	16
Accidental deaths with a firearm	1	2	0

The office of the Medical Examiner of Cook County published yearly accidental deaths and suicides with a firearm totals in its "1977-1979 Annual Report." These numbers are:

	<u>SUICIDES</u>		<u>ACCIDENTAL DEATHS</u>	
	by Gun	Total	by Gun	Total
1977	197	493	6	1,752
1978	106	503	4	1,645
1979	196	431	3	1,660

At present, the Medical Examiner's Office has monthly breakdowns of these data only for Cook County for 1977 and 1978. However, the Office plans to computerize all of its past and present data sometime in 1982. When the system is fully operational, it will be easier for the staff to answer requests for data. In the meantime, special permission is needed to access unpublished information. Write or call:

Roy Dames, Administrative Assistant
Office of the Medical Examiner of Cook County
1828 West Polk
Chicago, Illinois 60612
(312) 443-5010

The Chicago office of the Committee for Handgun Control tries to gather firearm accident data when possible. Call Mark Karlin, at (312) 641-5575.

National Data

The following agencies do not collect or maintain any firearm accident data:

The Chicago Board of Health (Department of Health)
The American Medical Association

However, the National Safety Council publishes a booklet containing data on accidental firearm deaths nationwide. Figure 1 shows the pattern of change from 1968 through 1980 in the number of such deaths.

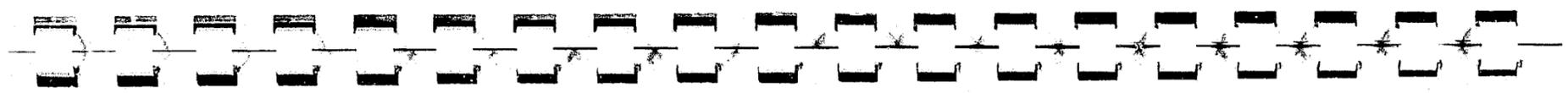


Figure 1

UNITED STATES ACCIDENTAL FIREARM DEATHS, 1968-1980

Source: National Safety Council edition of National Center for Health Statistics death certificate totals. 1979 and 1980 totals are NSC estimates.



5

FIREARM USE TO RESIST VIOLENT CRIME

The most serious violent crimes, those the FBI counts as violent Index crimes, are murder, forcible rape, aggravated assault and robbery. The following section discusses the use of a weapon to resist three of these -- rape, robbery, and those homicides that began as a robbery.

Although we discuss a general survey of "Use of a Gun for Protection", a specific discussion of homicides that began as assaults is beyond the scope of this report. In an assault, what begins as a simple argument may escalate through threat and counter-threat, violence and counter-violence, until someone is injured or killed.¹ It is often difficult to distinguish the victim from the offender, and the question of victim resistance is, therefore, difficult to define. In contrast, because the typical robbery or forcible rape has a clearly defined victim and offender, the question of victim resistance is much more clearly defined.

Resistance occurs when a person who is threatened with rape or robbery by an aggressor attempts to prevent the rape or robbery. This section reviews the data available on the use of a firearm to resist such violent crimes.

NRA Survey Data

The National Rifle Association conducted two surveys in 1978 that included questions about gun use "for protection." Table 2 presents the findings from these surveys. In general, seven per cent of those interviewed said that someone in their household had "ever" used a gun for protection against a person.

¹See R. L. Block, Violent Crime: Environment, Interaction and Death, Lexington Books, 1977, and M. Straus and R. Gelles, Physical Violence in American Families, a 1976 national survey of 2143 households, data available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The figures in Table 2 should be treated very cautiously, however, for the following reasons:

- No response rate is given. We do not know how many people refused to be interviewed or refused to respond to the specific questions on gun use. The seven per cent figure for protection against a person is based on the telephone survey, and response rates to telephone surveys are often very low.
- The samples were households of registered voters. Therefore, the findings can be generalized only to registered voters, not the general public, and only to households, not to individuals.
- The wording of the questions did not bound the answers in time. The householder was asked whether anyone in the household had "ever", in their lifetime, protected himself or herself with a gun. Therefore, these data cannot tell us the percent of people who used a gun for protection in any given year.
- What does "protection" mean? The interview does not define it, and leaves the definition to the person being interviewed. While protection probably includes incidents of protection against a threatened violent crime, it probably also includes incidents having nothing to do with a violent crime, such as frightening a trespasser off your property. It may also include robbers who used a gun to protect themselves while committing a crime.
- The interview questions do not distinguish between handguns and long guns.
- Neither survey obtained information on the outcome of gun use for protection. If the gun were used to resist a threatened violent crime, was the resistance successful? Was the person's property stolen? Was the person injured, and if so, how seriously? Obviously, persons who were killed in such an incident have a reduced chance of being included.

Table 2
 Use of a Gun for Protection
 NRA Surveys, 1978^a

"Have you yourself or a member of your household ever used a gun, even if it wasn't fired, for self-protection or for protection of property at home, at work or elsewhere (except in military and police work)?"

	Used to Protect against a Person or Animal (Per Cent)	Used to Protect against a Person (Per Cent)
Total Sample	14%	7%
Urban/Rural Residence		
Big cities	9	3
Other cities	15	12
Suburbs	12	6
Rural	18	8
Regional Residence		
Northeast	10	4
South	18	11
Midwest	12	3
West	15	10
Total N	2510 ^b	1010 ^c

^aSource: Two national surveys of samples of registered voter households conducted in May-June and December 1978 by Decision Making Information for the National Rifle Association, inserted into the Congressional Record on March 29, 1979, and reprinted by the NRA as "DMI Poll Highlights." The first survey was conducted by personal interview. The second survey was a telephone follow-up conducted to verify the first. There is no information given on the response rate.

^bThese figures are based on combined data from the two surveys.

^cThese figures are based on data from the telephone survey only.

Resisting Robbery

Generally, victim survey data are not suitable to analyze the consequences of a victim's resistance to a violent crime. One possible consequence -- death -- is not measured. Although police aggregate statistics on homicides are, in general, very detailed, they do not include information on the victim's resistance.

A study done in Chicago in 1975 is the only data set we were able to find¹ that contains information on all three stages in the interaction between the victim and offender in a violent crime:

1. The offender's threat, including the weapon and the crime (robbery, rape, etc.)
2. The victim's response, including resistance with a weapon, other forceful resistance, and verbal or other resistance.
3. The eventual outcome, including whether or not the threatened crime was actually carried out and whether or not the victim was injured or killed.

This study analyzed the outcomes of all attempted robberies known to the police that occurred every fifth day of four police periods in Chicago. It did not include commercial robberies, robberies

¹Philip J. Cook, in "The Effect of Gun Availability on Robbery and Robbery Murder," R. Haveman and B.B. Zellner (eds.), Policy Studies Review Annual 3(1979:743-781), compares aggregate robbery and robbery murder data sets, but does not trace each robbery attempt to its outcome, and has no information on resistance to a robbery murder.

occurring to victims who were not residents of Chicago or robberies not reported to the police.¹ The possible property outcomes of each attempted robbery were 1) that the victim's property would be stolen, in which case the attempted robbery would become an actual robbery, or 2) that the victim's property would not be stolen. Possible injury outcomes were 1) no injury, 2) some injury, but not hospitalized, 3) hospitalized and 4) killed, in which case the attempted robbery would become a robbery homicide. The results appear in Tables 3 and 4.

The consequences of resisting a robbery depend upon the offender's weapon. If the offender has a firearm, resistance will increase the victim's chance of being injured or killed from five per cent to 46 per cent. Resisters to a strongarm robbery have almost as high a chance of being injured or killed as resisters to a firearm robbery (42%), but they also stand a good chance of injury even if they do not resist (23%.) Victims of a robbery with a knife or other weapon have a good chance of injury or death if they do not resist (21%), and if they do resist, this chance increases to 64 per cent.

Even though resistance increases the chance of injury or death, it may protect the victim's property. Victims who do not resist are almost certain to have their property stolen (97% to 98%), but 19% of resisters to firearm robberies, 22% of resisters to knife and other robberies and 26% of resisters to strongarm robberies succeed in deterring the robbery attempt.

Does the weapon available to the victim affect the victim's ability to resist a robbery attempt successfully? Is resistance with a gun more effective than resistance with a knife or resistance with no weapon? The answer depends upon the offender's weapon. (See Table 4.)

¹For discussions of robbery victim survey data, see P.J. Cook, "A Strategic Analysis of Robbery", in W. Skogan (ed.) Sample Surveys of the Victims of Crime, Ballinger, 1976, and R.L. Block and C.R. Block, "Decisions and Data", Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, Winter 1980.

Table 3
 CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTING A ROBBERY
 Chicago, 1975

Outcome of Robbery Attempt	Offender's Weapon						Total N
	Firearm		Knife or Other ^a		None (Strongarm)		
	Victim Resistance?		Victim Resistance?		Victim Resistance?		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
<u>Property Stolen?</u>							
Yes	81%	98%	78%	97%	74%	98%	1206
No	19	2	22	3	26	2	82
(Total N) ^b	(83)	(600)	(55)	(115)	(127)	(308)	1288 ^b
<u>Victim Injured?</u>							
Yes ^c	46%	5%	64%	21%	42%	23%	250
No	54	95	36	79	58	77	1035
(Total N) ^b	(83)	(598)	(55)	(115)	(127)	(307)	1285 ^b

^aIncludes knife, blunt instrument, or any other weapon.

^bTotal N is slightly different for Property Stolen and Victim Injured, because it does not include the cases where the outcome or the resistance was unknown. See Table 4.

^c"Injury" includes injured but not hospitalized, hospitalized, and killed.

Source: Coded from Chicago Police Department files of "offenses actually occurring," reported offenses minus those unfounded or referred to another, responsible, jurisdiction. Sample includes all robberies, attempted robberies and robbery homicides occurring every fifth day of police periods 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1975. See Richard Block, *Violent Crime: Environment, Interaction and Death*, Lexington-Heath 1977.

Table 4
 Consequences of Resisting a Robbery
 Chicago, 1975

Types of Resistance	Total N	Outcome of Robbery Attempt					
		Property Stolen?		Victim Injured?			
		No	Yes	No	Some	Hosp.	Death
<u>Offender Weapon: Firearm</u>							
Handgun	3	2	1	0	0	3	0
Long Gun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ^a	80	14	66	45	12	20	3
None	600	11	589	570	13	13	2
Unknown	5	1	4	0	0	1	3
<u>Offender Weapon: Knife or Other</u>							
Handgun	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Long Gun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ^a	54	11	43	19	13	22	0
None	115	3	112	91	7	17	0
Unknown	3	0	3	1	1	0	1
<u>Offender Weapon: None</u>							
Handgun	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Long Gun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ^a	126	32	94	73	29	24	0
None	308	7	301	235	35	37	0
Unknown	1	0	1	1	0	0	0

^a Other resistance includes a weapon other than a gun, physical force, verbal resistance and running away.

Source: Coded from Chicago Police Department files of "offenses actually occurring," reported offenses minus those unfounded or referred to another, responsible, jurisdiction. Sample includes all robberies, attempted robberies and robbery homicides occurring every fifth day of police periods 3,4,5 and 6, 1975. See Richard Block, Violent Crime: Environment, Interaction and Death, Lexington-Heath 1977.

In the entire robbery sample, only five people resisted with a handgun. None resisted with a long gun. Two of these five resisted an offender who did not have a gun. Both of these resistance attempts were successful -- the property was not stolen and the victim was not injured. In contrast, the three who used a handgun to resist an offender with a gun were all injured and required hospitalization. Though they did not escape injury, two of the three did prevent the offender from stealing their property.

Only nine of the 688 attempted robberies resulted in the death of the victim. While the offender had a gun in eight of these, we cannot generalize about the effect of resistance on death, because the "unknown" category of resistance accounts for almost fifty percent of the deaths. The police who investigated these homicides could not determine, from the available evidence, whether or not the victim had resisted, and if so, how. None of the victims known to have resisted with a gun was killed, but some of those "unknown" victims who were killed may have resisted with a gun.

A robbery victim makes a rational decision in response to the age-old question, "Your money or your life?" Resistance may save the victim's property, but it also may endanger the victim's life. The chance of a successful resistance -- saving property without being injured -- depends in part on the strength of the offender's threat.¹ It is no accident that a lower percentage of victims in the sample chose to resist a firearm robbery threat (12%) than a strongarm robbery threat (29%), or a knife or other weapon threat (32%). Only five per cent of firearm robbery victims who did not resist were injured, compared to 21% and 23% of non-resisting knife and strongarm robbery victims.

¹The offender's threat involves more than the weapon. It also involves the number of offenders versus the number of victims, the actual use of the weapon, and so on. See Block (1977.)

In deciding whether or not to resist, the victim must weigh the available means of resistance against the robber's means of attack. Although a victim with a handgun may successfully resist a robber with a less lethal weapon, successful resistance against a robber with a gun is unlikely.

Resisting Rape

Very little data have been collected about victim gun use in resistance to rape. The most comprehensive analysis of this nature comes from victimization and attitude data collected in 1974 and 1975 for the National Crime Survey, and published in a 1979 report entitled "Rape Victimization in 26 American Cities" by M. Joan McDermott. The 26 cities were all urban areas, and thus do not reflect the national rape rate. In the study, victim resistance was categorized into six types, one of which was "Used or Brandished Gun or Knife."

Attached are three tables containing data from the study. Table 5 shows estimated percentages of the number of victims who did and did not resist rape attacks, by whether or not the offender was armed.

Table 6 shows the outcome of rape attempts by whether or not the victim resisted. Clearly, victim resistance increases the chances of rape avoidance in this study by an estimated 48 percent. Table 7 shows the outcome of rape attempts by type of victim resistance. Hardly any women in the survey used or brandished a gun or knife. The survey responses were so few that it was impossible to make a statistically reliable estimate of the number.

In summarizing the findings, McDermott wrote (page 30):

(the data) suggests that in a rape attack, the victim who manages to do something to protect herself has a much better chance of preventing the completion of the attack than the woman who does nothing. However, it is important to note that this finding alone is not sufficient basis for advising potential rape victims to use various methods of (resistance).

Table 5

EFFECT OF ARMED OFFENDERS ON RAPE RESISTANCE
 Estimated Percentages of Use of Rape Resistance by Offender's Weapon Use
 26 Cities Aggregate^a

Offender Armed?	Resistance? ^b		Estimated N ^c
	No	Yes	
Yes	45%	55%	12,969
No	15%	85%	14,851

Source: M. Joan McDermott, "Rape Victimization in 26 American Cities", 1979

^aExcludes rape and attempted rape victimization by nonstrangers and victimization of males.

^bResistance defined as: used or brandished gun or knife, used or tried to use physical force, tried to get help or attract attention, threatened, argued or reasoned, resisted without force, other resistance.

^cEstimated N based on actual numbers found by the survey, multiplied by individual city weighting factors.

Table 6

OUTCOME OF RESISTANCE TO RAPE ATTEMPTS
 Estimated Percentages of Use of Resistance to Rape
 26 Cities Aggregate^a

Resistance?	Outcome		Estimated N
	Rape	Attempted Rape	
No	67%	33%	8,927 ^b
Yes	19%	81%	23,254 ^b

Source: M. Joan McDermott, "Rape Victimization in 26 American Cities," 1979.

^aExcludes rape and attempted rape by nonstrangers, and victimizations of males.

^bThe estimated N of resistance is greater than the sum of the types of resistance in Table 7, because victims could report using more than one type of resistance.

Table 7

OUTCOME OF RAPE ATTEMPTS BY TYPE OF RESISTANCE
26 Cities Aggregate^a

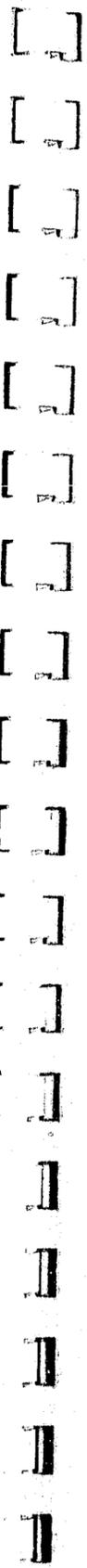
Type of Resistance ^b	Outcome		Estimated N
	Rape	Attempted Rape	
Used or brandished gun or knife ^c	-	-	-
Used or tried to use physical force	26%	74%	10,390
Tried to get help or attract attention	22%	78%	11,242
Threatened, argued or reasoned	24%	76%	5,116
Evasive action	5%	95%	6,730
Other resistance	10%	90%	1,278

Source: M. Joan McDermott, "Rape Victimization in 26 American Cities," 1979

^aExcludes rape and attempted rape by nonstrangers and victimizations of males.

^bThe sum of the estimated N's of the types of resistance is greater than the total estimated N for resistance in Table 6, because victims could report using more than one type of resistance.

^cEstimate, based on about 50 or fewer sample cases, may be statistically unreliable.



A 1980 study, "Avoiding Rape: A Study of Victims and Avoiders" by Pauline Bart, produced similar results. Only one subject was carrying a weapon (mace) when attacked, but she could not get it out of her purse in time to use it. Another victim managed to persuade her attacker into putting down his knife, and then was able to grab it and force him to flee. These are the only two cases, out of a sample size of 94, of women who were armed.

In summary, guns are very rarely used in rape resistance. In both the McDermott and Bart studies, few, if any, victims had a gun, let alone were able to use it. Neither study suggests that having a gun would, in fact, lead to successful resistance of a rape attack.

CONCLUSION

Although data on handgun use are sparse, some data do exist. This report attempts to compile data that may help to answer some of the most commonly asked questions about stolen handguns, accidents with handguns, and the use of handguns to resist robbery and rape.

The report finds that stolen handgun data do exist, for every Illinois area except Chicago. Three to four thousand handguns are stolen from residences each year in Illinois outside of Chicago. Accidental firearm death data exist for Cook County, although accidental injury data do not. There are about five such deaths a year.

The quality of handgun resistance data is uneven, and the results of analysis must be interpreted cautiously. However, the data that do exist indicate that handguns are very seldom used to resist robbery, and almost never used to resist rape. The success of handgun resistance depends to a great extent on the offender's weapon.

END