CJ bulletin

Criminal Justice Research Division, SANDAG

San Diego Violent Crime Victims and Suspects in 2007

September 2008

Sandy Keaton, M.A.
Cynthia Burke, Ph.D.

SANDAG

401 B Street
Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 699-1900

A SANDAG CJ BULLETIN

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SAN DIEGO VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS IN 2007

INTRODUCTION

This SANDAG CJ Bulletin, which is part of a three-part series presenting 2007 annual crime information, includes data from local law enforcement agencies regarding characteristics of violent crime[1] victims (crime data) and suspects (arrest data). Analyses are presented regarding which population subgroups were more likely to report being a victim of violent crime in 2007, as well as how victims and suspects differed by offense type in terms of their ethnicity, age, and gender. This information, which is provided nearly one year prior to the release of similar national data, is useful to those interested in better understanding who is affected by violent crime in our region and helping develop more targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

Due to two issues that affect the reliability in the property crime victimization data, this year's Criminal Justice Bulletin focuses exclusively on violent crime. Specifically, there has historically been less reliability in who is listed as a property crime victim (e.g., multiple individuals in a household could be victimized and a business and other entities could be victimized). In addition, in 2007 there were changes in the data collection process (i.e., a shift to an electronic system) regionwide that created some additional inconsistency in reporting property crime. Because of these two issues only data on violent crime victims and suspects are presented.

FAST FACTS
2007 VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS

- **Gang activity was responsible for nearly half (47%) of homicides in which motive was known.**
- **Blacks and Hispanics were over-represented as victims of homicide, rape, robbery, and assault in comparison to their representation in the population.**
- **Over one in four (28%) rape victims were under the age of 18.**
- **Children and young teens were suspects in one-third (33%) of robberies.**
- **Overall, females comprised 50 percent of violent crime victims, but 23 percent of suspects.**

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO REPORT BEING A VIOLENT CRIME VICTIM?

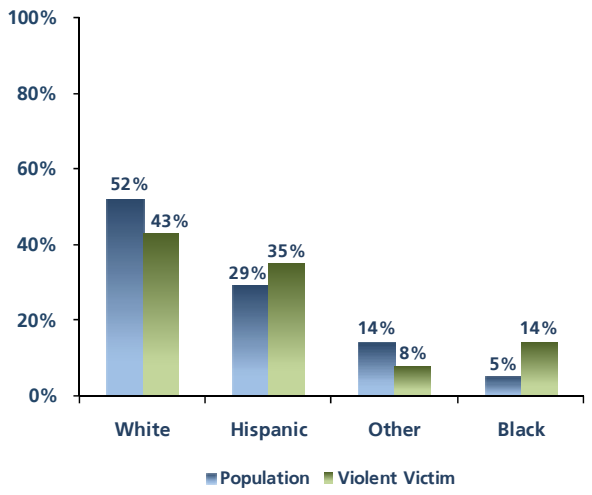
Ethnicity

In 2007, over half (52%) of the San Diego region's population were non-Hispanic White, around one-quarter (29%) were Hispanic, 14 percent represented "other" ethnicities, and 5 percent were non-Hispanic Black (Figure 1). However, these proportions differed from the ethnicity of violent crime victims. In general, Whites and Hispanics accounted for the greatest percentage of violent crime victims, but Hispanics and Blacks were overrepresented in comparison to their representation in the population.

Specifically, Blacks were nearly three times as likely to be a victim of a violent crime compared to their representation in the population (14% versus 5%) and Hispanics comprised just over one-third (35% versus 29%) of violent crime victims. However, Whites were under-represented (43% versus 52%) as violent crime victims, as were individuals of "other" ethnicities (8% versus 14%).

[1] Violent crime includes homicide, rape, robbery, and both simple and aggravated assault.

Figure 1
Percentages of Victimization Differ Across Ethnicities



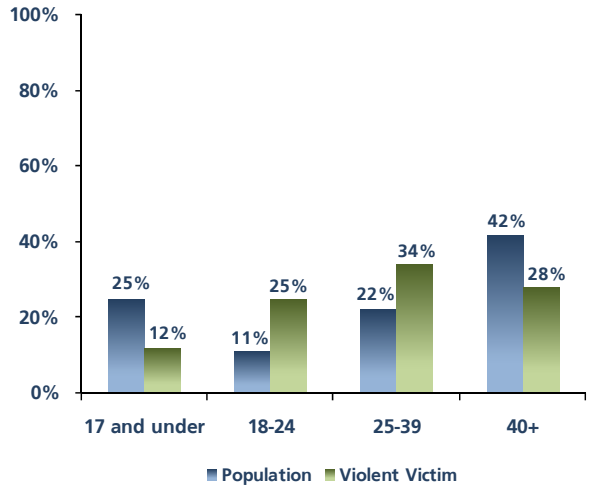
SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) and SANDAG 2007 Statistics

A closer examination of ethnicity revealed differences among the different types of violent crimes. Specifically, Blacks were four times more likely to be a victim of homicide (20%), twice as likely to be a victim of rape[2] (13%), and three times as likely to be assaulted (15%) than their representation in the population (5%) (Table 1, pg. 8). Additionally, Hispanics accounted for over two out of five homicide (43%) and robbery (39%) victims, in comparison to comprising just over one-quarter (29%) of the population.

Age

As with ethnicity, there were differences in victimization by age, with young adults comprising a higher proportion of victims in comparison to their representation in the general population. Specifically, individuals ages 25 to 39 accounted for the largest percentage of violent victims (34%), which was higher than their proportion in the population (22%) (Figure 2). Additionally, individuals 18 to 24 years old were over twice as likely to be victims of a violent crime compared to their proportion in the population (25% versus 11%, respectively). Individuals 40 years of age and older were underrepresented as violent crime victims (28% versus 42%). Also underrepresented were children and teens 17 and under (12% of victims and 25% of population).

Figure 2
Young Adults at Greatest Risk of Victimization of a Violent Crime



NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) and SANDAG 2007 Statistics

Closer examination by violent crime type showed that younger individuals were over twice as likely compared to their proportion in the population to be victims of rape (28% aged 17 and under compared to 13%[3] of population; and 34% of 18 to 24 year-olds compared to 11% of population) and were twice as likely to be victims of assault or robbery. In contrast, older individuals (40 and over) were under-represented in each of the four crime groups (Table 1).

[2] According to Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) guidelines for the crime of rape, all victims are females and all suspects are male.

[3] Population for rape victims excludes males and children under 10 years old. Therefore, the total percentage for this age group is smaller than the general population numbers.

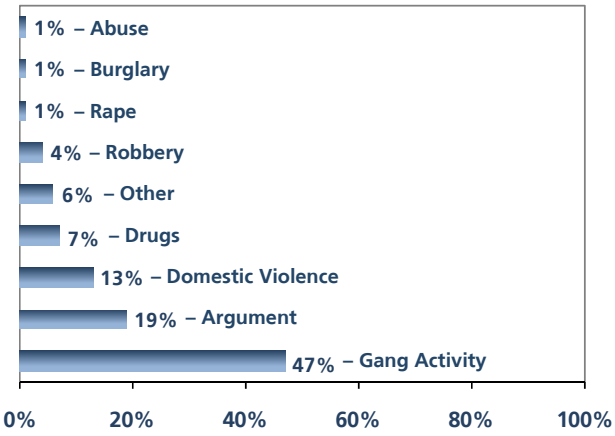
Gender

In 2007, half (50%) of the region's population were male and half (50%) were female. Overall, there was no difference between this proportion and the percent who were violent crime victims (50% female and 50% male) (not shown). However, there were notable differences among each of the crime types. Specifically, males were overrepresented as victims of homicide (83%) and robbery (67%) in comparison to their representation in the population. Assault was the only crime where both females and males had similar representation (53% of females and 47% of males) (Table 1).

WHAT WERE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN 2007?

Because both the tragedy associated with the loss of a human life, and the fact that homicide is one of the most reliable indicators of violent crime, more detailed information is provided on the 105 individuals who died as a result of criminal homicide in 2007. Unlike previous years, homicide motivation data were obtained directly from each local jurisdiction, rather than from the California Department of Justice (DOJ).[4] For the 88 (i.e., 84%) homicides that occurred in 2007 for which motive could be determined, 47 percent were attributed to gang activity, 19 percent to an argument, 13 percent to domestic violence, 7 percent to drug activity, 6 percent to other motives,[5] 4 percent to robbery, and 1 percent each to child abuse, burglary, or rape (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Gang Activity Leads the List of Known Motives for Homicide in 2007



NOTE: Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Local Law Enforcement Agencies' Homicide Motive Data

While the change in data collection methods prohibits comparisons over time, the high percentage of gang-related homicides in 2007 does differ from data reported by the State in past years. However, the increase is consistent with the overall gang activity recorded by local law enforcement which suggests that the effect of gang violence was more severe. Specifically, gang tension was high last year, additional gangs not known for using firearms engaged in shootings, and while there was not a substantial increase in shooting incidents, there was a change in the type of shootings with fewer drive-bys and more close range shootings. These anomalies garnered a swift and targeted response from law enforcement. In addition to aggressively targeting "hot spot" areas, other efforts included securing state and federal grant monies to increase gang prevention, intervention, and suppression activities in the neighborhoods most impacted by gang-related violence.

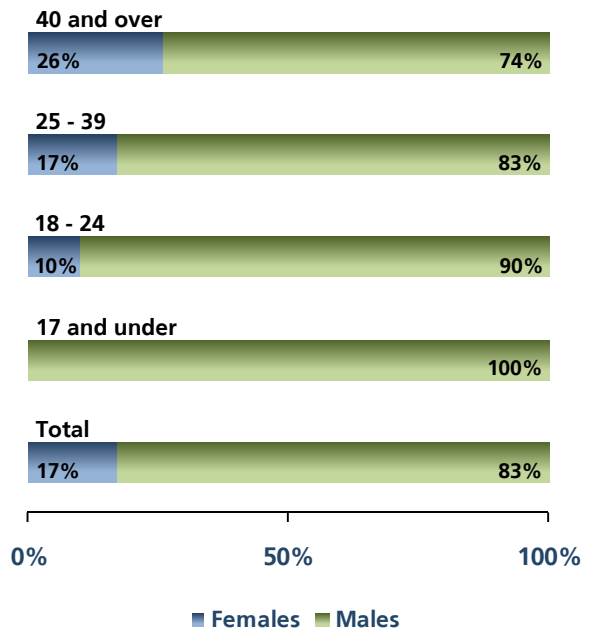
[4] Due to changes in the 2007 California DOJ reporting system, a significant number of homicide motives were unknown and more complete data were available locally.

[5] The "other" category includes homicides precipitated by events which could include a variety of circumstances leading up to the homicide such as arson, larceny, or elder abuse.

Age and Gender

Closer examination of homicide victims in 2007 provides more insight about their characteristics. As noted earlier, slightly more than eight out of ten (83%) victims were male, with males overrepresented in every age group (Figure 4). This was especially true for males aged 24 and younger, who comprised all homicide victims 17 years of age and younger and 90 percent of victims ages 18 to 24.

Figure 4
Male Disparity as Homicide Victims Decreases with Age



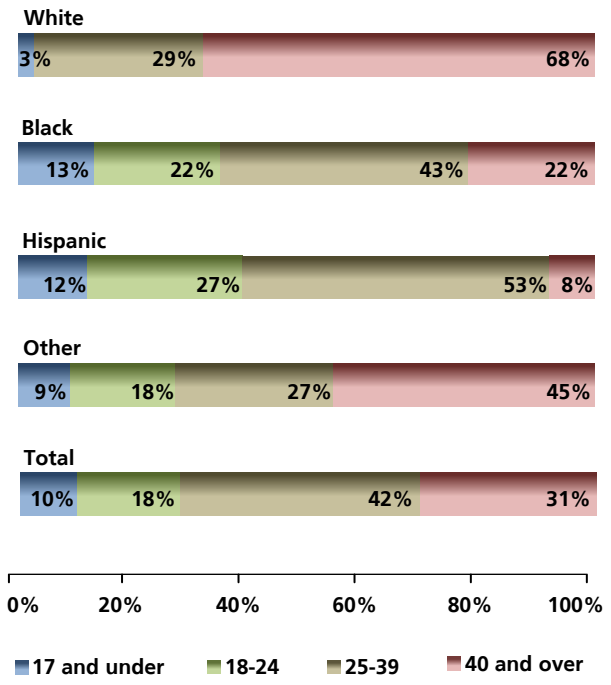
SOURCE: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) and SANDAG 2007 Statistics

Age and Ethnicity

In addition to age and gender, there was a difference in homicide victims' ethnicity in comparison to their representation in the population. As previously noted, Hispanics and Blacks were overrepresented and Whites were underrepresented. More specifically, just over two in five homicide victims were Hispanic (43% versus 29% population), around one quarter were White (27% versus 52%), one in five were Black (20% versus 5%), and one in ten were individuals of other ethnicities (10% versus 14%) (Table 1).

Reflecting the population, most homicide victims were 25 years of age and older (Figure 5). However, an examination by ethnicity reveals differences among the ethnic groups. That is, among Whites and individuals of other ethnicities individuals 40 and older were more likely to be homicide victims (68% and 45%, respectively), while the highest proportion of Hispanic victims were adults aged 25 to 39, followed by individuals 18 to 24 years old (53% and 27%, respectively).

Figure 5
Homicide Victims Vary by Age and Ethnicity



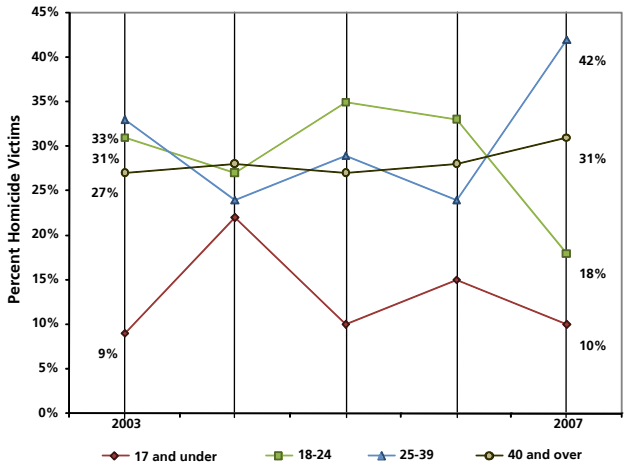
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: California Department of Justice 2007 Statistics

WERE THERE CHANGES IN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS OVER TIME?

Analyses of the characteristics of violent crime victims over the past five years reveal very little change in general and by each offense category (Appendix Table 1 through Table 5). This is true for homicide victims as well except when examining the victim's age (Figure 6). Specifically, while there is little difference in the proportion of homicide victims 40 years or older during the past five years, variation is evident among youth and young adults.

For example, individuals 18 to 24 years old accounted for approximately one-third of homicide victims during a four-year period, but only 18 percent in 2007. In contrast, adults age 25 to 39 saw a spike in homicide victimization in 2007 (42%), rising 18 percent from a five-year low of 24 percent (Figure 6). Unfortunately, motivational data cannot be directly linked to victim characteristics; however, it is interesting that this spike in victims age 25 to 39 occurred in a year when 47 percent of known homicide motives can be attributed to gang activity.

Figure 6
Adults Age 25 to 39 Experience Largest One-Year Increase Among Homicide Victims



SOURCE: California Department of Justice 2007 Statistics

WHAT WERE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS FOR EACH OF THE VIOLENT CRIME TYPES?

As with victimization, the pattern of suspect characteristics (i.e., ethnicity, age, and gender) can vary across crime type. These data, along with all victimization characteristics, are provided in more detail in Table 1. Some noticeable differences include:

- Males represented half (50%) of all violent crime victims but three-quarters (77%) of violent crime suspects (not shown).
- Children and young teens accounted for one-third (33%) of robbery suspects.
- Females represented over half (53%) of assault victims, but only 25 percent of assault suspects.
- Females represented half (50%) of all violent crime victims but less than one-quarter (23%) of violent crime suspects (not shown).
- Over one in four (28%) female rape victims was under the age of 18.

Table 1
Violent Crime Victim and Suspect Characteristics 2007

	HOMICIDE		RAPE		ROBBERY		ASSAULT	
	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects
White	27%	29%	54%	27%	38%	23%	43%	38%
Black	20%	23%	13%	26%	10%	35%	15%	19%
Hispanic	43%	39%	25%	38%	40%	36%	34%	37%
Other	10%	9%	8%	9%	12%	7%	8%	7%
17 and under	10%	8%	28%	11%	19%	33%	11%	16%
18 to 24	18%	39%	34%	26%	28%	35%	25%	23%
25 to 39	42%	30%	26%	41%	26%	21%	35%	36%
40+	31%	23%	12%	21%	27%	11%	28%	25%
Male	83%	88%	N/A	100%	67%	87%	47%	75%
Female	17%	13%	100%	N/A	33%	13%	53%	25%

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) and SANDAG 2007 Statistics

SUMMARY

Understanding who is at greatest risk for being a victim of violent crime provides a fuller picture of how crime impacts the community. Best practices in the field today require that efforts to reduce crime involve a multifaceted approach, including a strong prevention component. An example of this approach is evident in the local jurisdictions' aggressive efforts to reduce gang membership and gang-related crime. Specifically, law enforcement throughout the region is actively partnering with communities, schools, researchers, and non-profit agencies to employ a comprehensive model to address gang problems.

Overall, data on violent crime victims and suspects in San Diego county indicate that young males, identified as Black or Hispanic, are at greatest risk for victimization. In addition, the risk of being a victim of a violent crime decreases with age. The exception is among homicide victims, in which Whites over 40 were overrepresented in comparison to victims of other ages and ethnicities. Gang activity accounted for the largest proportion of homicides in 2007, followed by arguments and domestic violence. Suspect data also highlight the need for continued early interventions, as young individuals (under 18 years old) were found to be committing serious violent crimes, such as robbery, assault, and rape.

METHODOLOGY

- The numbers of victims and suspects presented in this report were provided by the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) and derived from the Crime Analysis Statistical System (CASS). A few qualifications should be considered when interpreting this information.
- Information regarding crime victim characteristics was available from incident reports that were completed when a crime was reported to law enforcement. It should be noted that not all crimes are reported to law enforcement and that

some sectors of the population may be more likely to report crime than others.[6]

- Information regarding suspect characteristics was available from arrest reports. Obviously, descriptives from individuals who committed a crime but were not arrested are not included; and it is possible that some individuals in the suspect sample did not commit the crime for which they were arrested.

- Because of changes in the California Department of Justice's crime reporting system, more inclusive data on homicide motives was gathered from local jurisdictions. Unlike past years, gathering the data locally may have allowed for more accurate and complete motive information because local data are more likely to be updated as new information about the homicide is discovered. As such, comparisons of motive data across time were not feasible.

- The number of victims reported in this bulletin varies from the number of crimes reported in other publications because of missing information for some crimes, multiple victims reported for one crime, the inclusion of simple assault, and the inclusion of some crimes later determined to be unfounded.

- With the exception of homicide, for a victim's or suspect's information to be included in these statistics, all three variables (ethnicity, age/date of birth, and gender) had to have valid information entered into the ARJIS database.

[6] The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

Appendix Table 1

Percent of Homicide Victims by Race and Age Group, 2003 to 2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change 2003-07	Change 2006-07
By Ethnicity							
White	28%	22%	19%	31%	27%	**-1%**	**-4%**
Black	24%	26%	26%	21%	20%	**-4%**	**-1%**
Hispanic	40%	46%	45%	38%	43%	**3%**	**5%**
Other	8%	6%	10%	10%	10%	**2%**	**0%**
By Age Group							
14 and under	2%	2%	1%	7%	4%	**2%**	**-3%**
15-17	7%	20%	9%	7%	6%	**-1%**	**-1%**
18-24	31%	27%	34%	33%	18%	**-13%**	**-15%**
25-39	33%	24%	29%	24%	42%	**9%**	**18%**
40 and older	27%	28%	28%	28%	31%	**4%**	**3%**
***Ages 0-17**	**9%**	**22%**	**10%**	**15%**	**10%**	**1%**	**-5%**

*Due to rounding, percents for ages 0-17 may not equal 15-17 plus 14 and under.

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS); SANDAG

Appendix Table 2

Percent of Rape Victims by Race and Age Group, 2003 to 2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change 2003-07	Change 2006-07
By Ethnicity							
White	53%	52%	54%	52%	54%	**1%**	**2%**
Black	12%	13%	13%	11%	13%	**1%**	**2%**
Hispanic	27%	28%	26%	31%	25%	**-2%**	**-6%**
Other	7%	8%	7%	6%	8%	**1%**	**2%**
By Age Group							
14 and under	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	**-1%**	**3%**
15-17	22%	19%	19%	18%	19%	**-3%**	**1%**
18-24	34%	35%	35%	35%	34%	**0%**	**-1%**
25-39	23%	24%	22%	26%	26%	**3%**	**0%**
40 and older	11%	12%	15%	15%	12%	**1%**	**-3%**
***Ages 0-17**	**32%**	**28%**	**28%**	**24%**	**28%**	**-4%**	**4%**

*Due to rounding, percents for ages 10-17 may not equal 15-17 plus 14 and under.

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS); SANDAG

Appendix Table 3
Percent of Robbery Victims by Race and Age Group, 2003 to 2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change 2003-07	Change 2006-07
By Ethnicity							
White	41%	41%	41%	41%	38%	**-3%**	**-3%**
Black	11%	12%	11%	10%	9%	**-2%**	**-1%**
Hispanic	35%	35%	37%	38%	39%	**4%**	**1%**
Other	12%	11%	12%	12%	14%	**2%**	**2%**
By Age Group							
14 and under	7%	7%	7%	5%	6%	**-1%**	**1%**
15-17	9%	8%	10%	9%	10%	**1%**	**1%**
18-24	28%	29%	29%	31%	28%	**0%**	**-3%**
25-39	30%	30%	27%	27%	29%	**-1%**	**2%**
40 and older	26%	25%	28%	28%	27%	**1%**	**-1%**
***Ages 0-17**	**16%**	**16%**	**17%**	**14%**	**16%**	**0%**	**2%**

*Due to rounding, percents for ages 0-17 may not equal 15-17 plus 14 and under.

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS); SANDAG

Appendix Table 4
Percent of Assault Victims by Race and Age Group, 2003 to 2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change 2003-07	Change 2006-07
By Ethnicity							
White	45%	43%	44%	44%	43%	**-2%**	**-1%**
Black	15%	16%	15%	15%	15%	**0%**	**0%**
Hispanic	32%	33%	33%	33%	34%	**2%**	**1%**
Other	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	**0%**	**0%**
By Age Group							
14 and under	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	**-1%**	**0%**
15-17	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%	**0%**	**0%**
18-24	24%	24%	25%	25%	25%	**1%**	**0%**
25-39	37%	37%	37%	36%	35%	**-2%**	**-1%**
40 and older	26%	26%	27%	27%	28%	**2%**	**1%**
***Ages 0-17**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**11%**	**-1%**	**-1%**

*Due to rounding, percents for ages 0-17 may not equal 15-17 plus 14 and under.

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS); SANDAG

Appendix Table 5

Percent of Violent Crime Victims by Race and Age Group, 2003 to 2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change 2003-07	Change 2006-07
By Ethnicity							
White	44%	43%	43%	43%	43%	**-1%**	**0%**
Black	15%	16%	15%	14%	14%	**-1%**	**0%**
Hispanic	32%	33%	34%	34%	35%	**3%**	**1%**
Other	8%	8%	9%	8%	8%	**0%**	**0%**
By Age Group							
14 and under	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	**-1%**	**0%**
15-17	6%	7%	6%	7%	7%	**1%**	**0%**
18-24	25%	25%	25%	26%	25%	**0%**	**-1%**
25-39	37%	36%	35%	35%	34%	**-3%**	**-1%**
40 and older	26%	27%	27%	27%	28%	**1%**	**2%**
***Ages 0-17**	**12%**	**13%**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**0%**	**0%**

*Due to rounding, percents for ages 0-17 may not equal 15-17 plus 14 and under.

SOURCES: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS); SANDAG