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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children  
Families &  
Learning*

*COMMISSIONER:  
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**DANGEROUS  
WEAPONS  
INCIDENTS  
IN  
MINNESOTA  
SCHOOLS**

*MS § 3.197*

*1999-2000*

**SCHOOL YEAR**

*January 2001*

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# **DANGEROUS WEAPONS INCIDENTS IN MINNESOTA SCHOOLS 1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR**

## **ESTIMATED COST OF PREPARING THIS REPORT**

Minnesota Statute § 3.197 requires that a report to the legislature contain, at its beginning, the cost of preparing the report. This report summarizes information that the Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) already collects as a part of its normal business functions. Therefore, the cost information reported here does not include the cost of gathering the data but rather is limited to the estimated cost of analyzing the data and preparing the document. The cost of preparing this report is estimated at \$2,400.

## **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

Under Minnesota Statute §121A.06, school districts are required to report individual incidents involving the use or possession of a dangerous weapon on school grounds by an enrolled student. These individual reports are submitted to CFL and used as the basis for an annual summary of findings. This document summarizes findings from the 1999-2000 school year (the seventh year that information on dangerous weapons has been reported by Minnesota public schools).

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA**

The data summarized in this report are based on confirmed incidents reported by local school districts. As in previous years, it is unknown how many incidents went unreported.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to compare numbers of weapons incidents between districts. This is due to differing district policies concerning disciplinary procedures. Whereas, one district may consider the possession of a nail file grounds for removal, and report it as a weapons related suspension, another district with differing policies may not report this incidents at all. This difference in policy could result in some districts having a comparatively elevated or suppressed number of reported weapons incidents.

## GENERAL FINDINGS

In the 1999-2000 school year, districts were asked to select from the following categories of weapons when reporting a disciplinary incident:

- No Weapon/None Reported
- Handgun
- Long Gun (Rifle/Shotgun)
- B-B Gun
- Replica/Toy Gun
- Knife/Cutting Instrument
- Blunt Object
- Fire/Explosives
- Other Weapon

A disciplinary incident is an out-of-school removal for any disciplinary reason, for example vandalism, physical assault, or possession of tobacco.

CFL received local reports of 1,372 confirmed incidents involving dangerous weapons for the 1999-2000 school year, which is a 14.8% decrease from the 1,611 incidents reported the previous year. This does appear to represent an actual decrease in the number of weapons incidents rather than a decrease in reporting, as the rate of reported disciplinary incidents has increased by only 1.14% since 1997-98, while the rate of dangerous weapons incidents has decreased by a rate of 14.29%. If the decline in the rate of dangerous weapons incident were the result of variation in reporting patterns, one would expect both rates to decline or increase together. See Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 provides a comparison of annual rates for all disciplinary incidents over the last three years. The rate is calculated as (number of incidents/enrollment)\*100.

Table 1 - Disciplinary Incident Rates – Statewide Rates 1997-98 to 1999-2000			
School Year	Total Disciplinary Incidents*	Total Statewide Enrollment	Rate of Disciplinary Incidents
97-98	53,683	853,353	6.29
98-99	57,984	856,455	6.77
99-00	54,300	855,073	6.35

\*Disciplinary Incidents include all out-of-school removals and alternative placements for all disciplinary reasons.

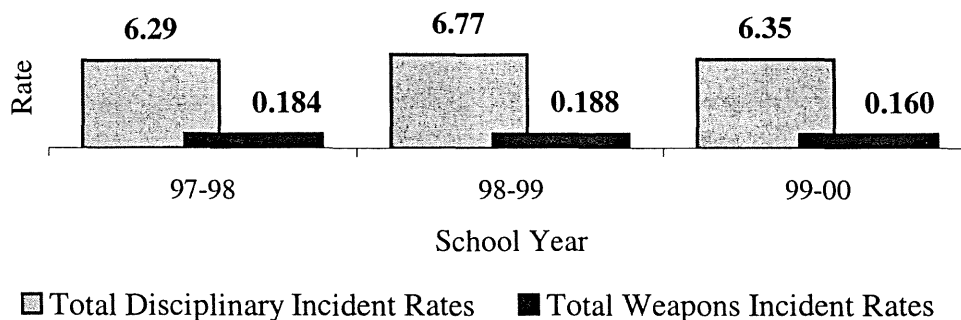
Table 2 shows a comparison of annual total weapon related incidents over the seven years since CFL started receiving reports. Yearly comparisons are limited because some districts have historically underreported or failed to report all incidents.

Table 2 - Dangerous Weapons Incidents Reported Annually 1993-94 to 1999-00			
School Year	Dangerous Weapons Reports	Total Statewide Enrollment	Rate of Dangerous Weapons Incidents
1993-94	872	810,049	0.108
1994-95	1,224	821,163	0.149
1995-96	1,161	834,414	0.139
1996-97	*1,382	846,625	0.163
1997-98	1,568	853,353	0.184
1998-99	1,611	856,455	0.188
1999-00	1,372	855,073	0.160

\*This value was reported as 992 in previous reports because it did not include weapons incidents that did not specify a weapon type.

Chart 1 provides a comparison of the rate of disciplinary incidents as compared to the rate of all dangerous weapons incidents. The rate represents the number of reported incidents per 100 students.

Chart 1 - Comparison of Total Disciplinary Incident Rates to  
Total Weapons Incidents Rates for 1997-98 to 1999-00



## WEAPON TYPE

The 1999-2000 reporting year showed an improvement in the accuracy of reporting in regard to the type of weapon involved. In 1996-97, 28.2% of all weapons incident reports did not identify a specific weapon type. In 1997-98, the rate increased to 40.3%. 1998-99 and 1999-2000 saw marked decreases to 30.4% and 24.1% respectively. In previous years, some larger districts indicated the weapon type as “other weapon” for all weapons incidents. This problem was corrected in 1999-2000, and has given us a better picture of the rate of various types of weapons present in our schools.

Table 3 provides a comparison of the number of unspecified weapon type incidents to the number of weapons incidents overall.

Table 3 - Comparison Of Weapons Incidents with Weapons Type Specified as "Other Weapon" or "Not Reported"				
Weapon Type	Number of Incidents			
	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Not Reported	38	377	163	170
Other Weapon	352	255	326	161
Total Unidentified Weapons	390	632	489	331
Total Weapons Incidents	1382	1568	1611	1373
Rate of Unidentified Weapons	28.2%	40.3%	30.4%	24.1%

Possession or use of a knife or cutting instrument continues to comprise the vast majority of weapons cases, with an 8.5% decrease from last year. Firearms showed a 5.9% decrease from last year. The fire/explosive category (e.g. arson, lighters, fireworks) declined by 36.5%. The category of "other weapon" declined by 50.6%. The only increases were seen in the number of reported "blunt object" weapons, up 11.4%, and "weapon not reported", up 12.5%.

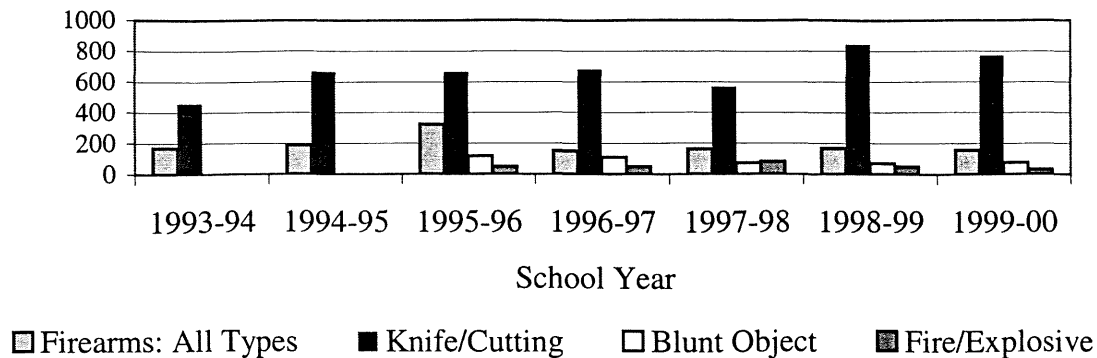
Table 4 contains a comparison of the four major categories of dangerous weapons and the categories of "other weapon," and "weapon not reported."

Table 4 - Comparison of Types of Dangerous Weapon Incidents 1993-94 to 1999-2000							
Weapon Type	Number of Incidents						
	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Firearms: All Types*	172	189	326	152	162	169	159
Knife/Cutting	459	666	665	680	567	843	771
Fire/Explosive	NA	NA	51	50	84	52	33
Blunt Object	NA	NA	119	110	74	70	78
Other Weapon	NA	NA	NA	352	255	326	161
Not reported	241	369	NA	38	426	151	170
Total	872	1224	1161	1382	1568	1611	1372

\*Firearms include handguns, long guns, B-B guns, look-alikes, replicas and toys.

Chart 2 - Comparison of Firearms, Knife/Cutting Instrument, Blunt Object and Fire/Explosive Incidents for 1993-94 to 1999-2000

Chart 2 - Comparison of Weapon Type for 1993-94 to 1999-2000



### LETHAL FIREARMS INCIDENTS

One of the most prominent concerns about violence in schools has to do with firearm incidents that could result in death or serious injury. In Minnesota, most of the incidents categorized as firearms involve toys, replicas, and B-B guns, and relatively few incidents involve lethal firearms (handguns, shotguns and rifles). See Table 5 and Chart 3.

In 1999-2000, 2.7%, or 37 of the 1,372 weapons incidents involved potentially lethal firearms. This is unfortunately a marked increase over the 1998-99 school year, in which 1.8%, or 29 of the 1,611 weapons incidents involved lethal firearms.

Table 5 shows a comparison of the rate of firearm type of 1998-99 to 1999-2000.

Table 5 - Comparison of Firearms Type in Reported Incidents 1998-99 to 1999-2000				
Type of Firearm	1998-99		1999-2000	
	Number of Incidents	% Firearm Incidents	Number of Incidents	% Firearm Incidents
BB Gun	38	22.5%	24	15.1%
Handgun	15	8.9%	26	16.4%
Replica/Toy	102	60.4%	98	61.6%
Shotgun/Rifle	14	8.3%	11	6.9%
TOTALS	169	100%	159	100%

Chart 3 provides a comparison of the rate of firearm type of 1998-99 to 1999-2000.

Chart 3. Comparison of Firearms Type in Reported Incidents  
1998-99 to 1999-2000

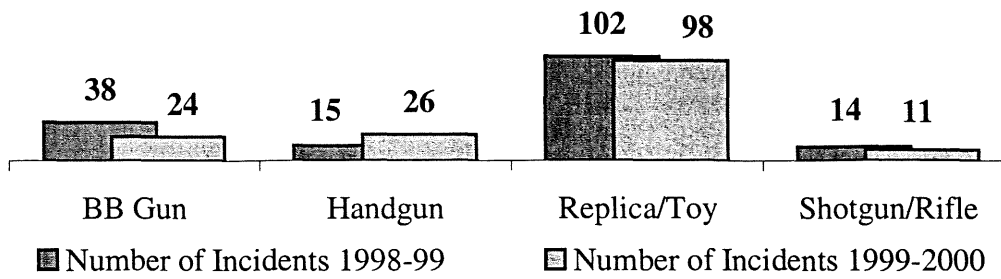
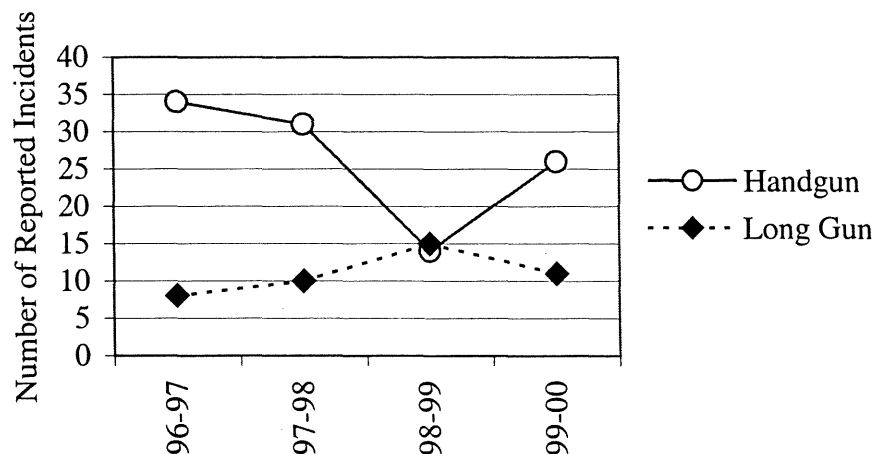


Table 6 and Chart 4 show the count of incidents involving lethal firearms over a four-year period.

Table 6 - Lethal Firearm Incidents, 1996-97 to 1999-00				
Type of Firearm	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Handgun	34	31	14	26
Long Gun	8	10	15	11
TOTALS	52	41	29	37

Chart 4. Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms  
1996-97 to 1999-2000



## WEAPONS, GENDER, RACE/ETHNICITY AND AGE

As in previous years, the majority of incidents involving lethal firearms continue to be committed by white males. White males committed 26 of the 37 incidents, or 70.3%. See Table 7.

Table 7 shows a comparison of the number of incidents involving lethal firearms by race/ ethnicity and gender.

Table 7 - Comparison of Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms by Race and Gender				
Race	Gender	97-98	98-99	99-00
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Female	0	0	0
	Male	1	1	2
Asian or Pacific Islander	Female	0	0	0
	Male	5	0	1
Black, Non-Hispanic	Female	1	0	2
	Male	4	7	3
Hispanic	Female	1	0	0
	Male	2	1	1
White, Non-Hispanic	Female	1	0	2
	Male	26	20	26

The rate of incidents involving lethal firearms among males ((number of incidents / enrollment)\*1000) is highest for American Indian/Alaska Native at 0.229, and lowest for Asian/ Pacific Islander at 0.047 (see Table 9 and Chart 5). However, there were only 2 incidents involving lethal firearms among the 8,747 American Indian/Alaska Native males enrolled in 1999-2000.

There has been a decline in the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms among the Hispanic male and Black male populations. The American Indian/Alaskan Native male, Asian/Pacific Islander male, and White male populations saw increases in the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms from 1998-99 to 1999-2000.

Table 8 gives the statewide enrollment by gender and race/ethnicity.

Table 8 - Statewide Enrollment by Gender and Race/Ethnicity										
Year	American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian or Pacific Islander		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic		White, Non-Hispanic	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
97-98	8,794	8,388	18,925	18,710	24,318	23,146	10,780	10,142	376,984	353,166
98-99	8,800	8,368	20,154	19,864	25,584	24,388	11,658	10,958	375,393	351,288
99-00	8,747	8,398	21,115	20,682	27,285	25,837	13,053	12,080	370,711	347,165

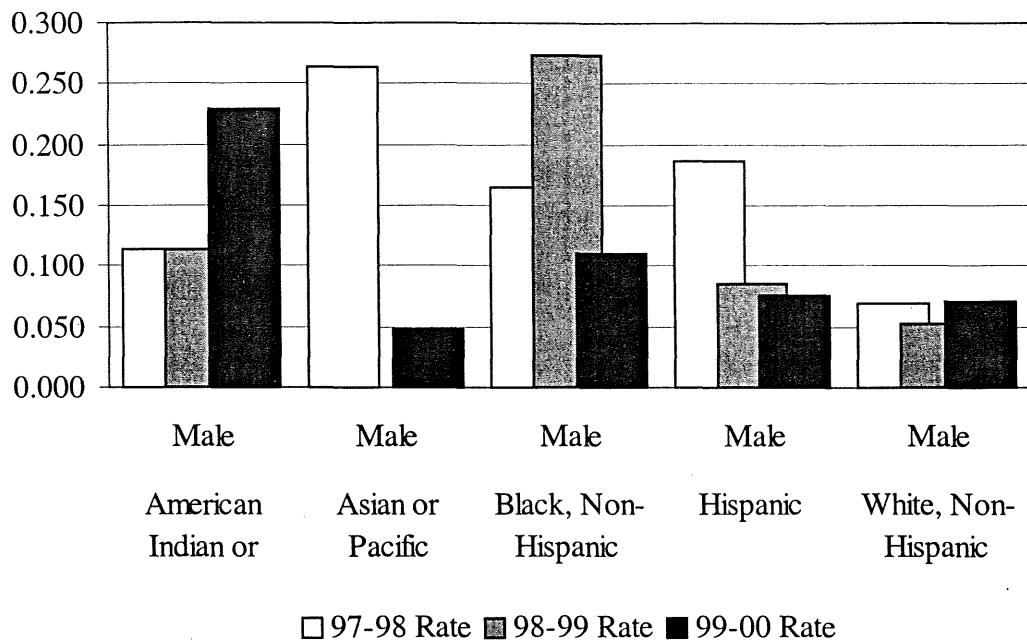


Table 9 shows a comparison of the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms by male student by race/ethnicity.

Table 9 - Comparison of Rates of Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms Possession by Males				
Race	Gender	97-98 Rate	98-99 Rate	99-00 Rate
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Male	0.114	0.114	0.229
Asian or Pacific Islander	Male	0.264	0.000	0.047
Black, Non-Hispanic	Male	0.164	0.274	0.110
Hispanic	Male	0.186	0.086	0.077
White, Non-Hispanic	Male	0.069	0.053	0.070

Chart 5 provides a comparison of the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms by male student by race/ethnicity.

Chart 5 - Rate of Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms Possession by Males by Race 1997-98 to 1999-00



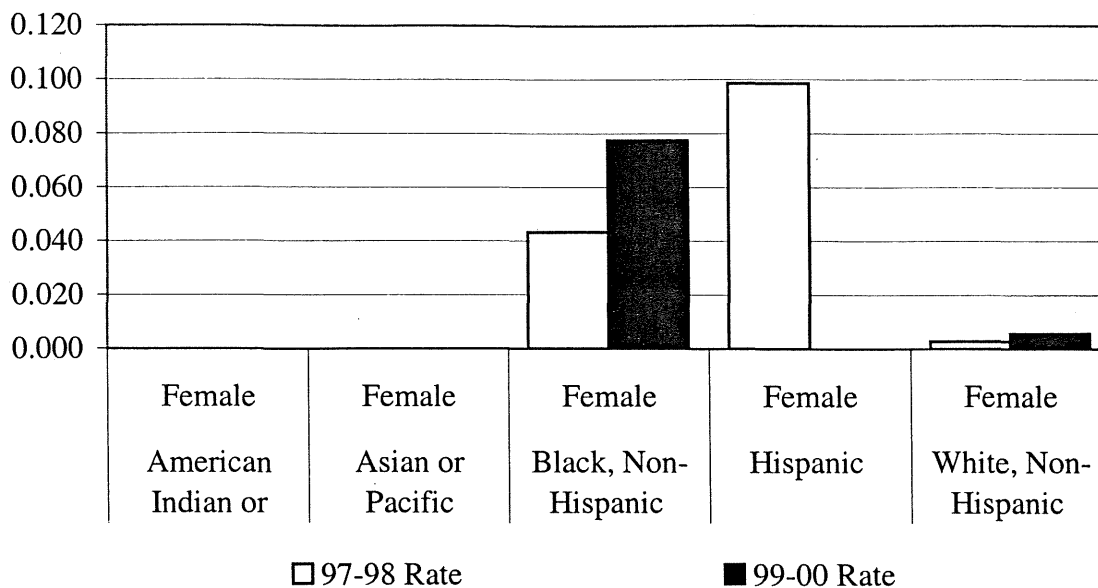
There were no incidents involving the possession of lethal firearms for female students in 1998-99. There have been no incidents for Asian and Pacific Islander, and for American Indian females from 1997-98 to 1999-00. However there has been an increase in the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms among White female and Black female populations in 1999-2000. See Tables 10 and Chart 6.

Table 10 shows a comparison of the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms by female student by race/ethnicity.

Table 10 - Comparison of Rates of Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms Possession By Females				
Race	Gender	97-98 Rate	98-99 Rate	99-00 Rate
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Female	0.000	0.000	0.000
Asian or Pacific Islander	Female	0.000	0.000	0.000
Black, Non-Hispanic	Female	0.043	0.000	0.077
Hispanic	Female	0.099	0.000	0.000
White, Non-Hispanic	Female	0.003	0.000	0.006

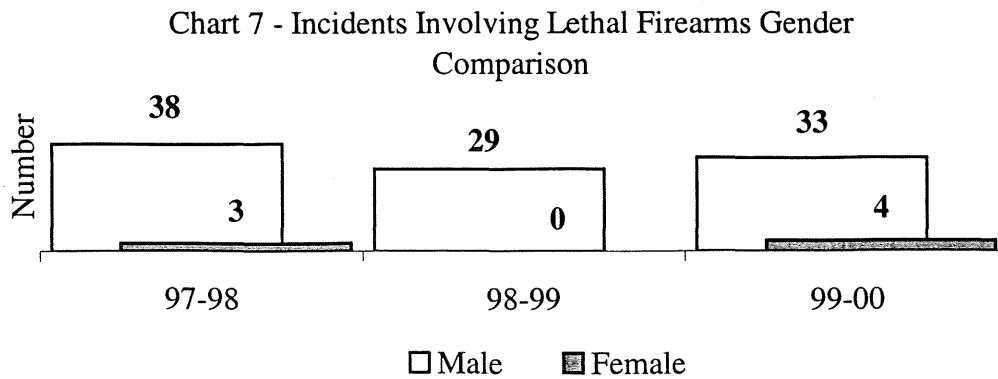
Chart 6 provides a comparison of the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms by female student by race/ethnicity.

Chart 6. Rate of Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms Possession by  
Females by Race 1997-98 to 1999-00



Females continue to represent only a small portion of the offenders involved in incidents with lethal firearms, making up less than 11%.

Chart 7 show a comparison of the number of incidents involving lethal firearms between the genders.



The average age for involvement in a dangerous weapons incident in 1999-2000 is 13.01 years. This is the largest yearly change in average age for all years which data is available. 1996-97 to 1998-99 saw yearly decreases from 13.19 to 12.94 to 12.72 years of age. It will be of interest to compare subsequent year's age data to determine if the increase in offender age in 1999-2000 signifies a continuing pattern, or if it is merely a statistical oddity.

The average age of students involved with potentially lethal firearms also saw an upward shift in 1999-2000 to 15.51 years. This however is following the upward trend from previous years where the average age increased from 14.9 to 15.05 to 15.14 from 1996-97 through 1998-99. The jump of 0.37 years from 1998-99 to 1999-2000 represents the greatest increase.

Chart 8 provides a comparison of the average age of offender for all dangerous weapons incidents and for incidents involving lethal firearms.

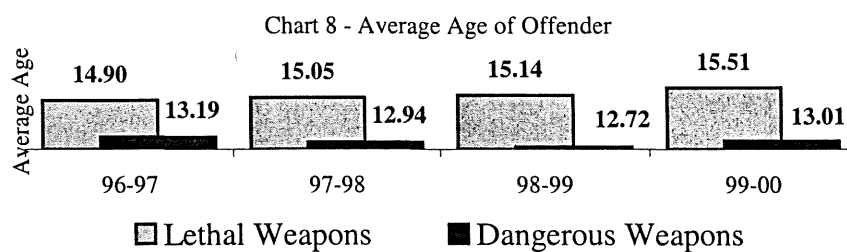


Chart 9 demonstrates the number of dangerous weapons incidents for each age, 1996-97 to 1999-2000.

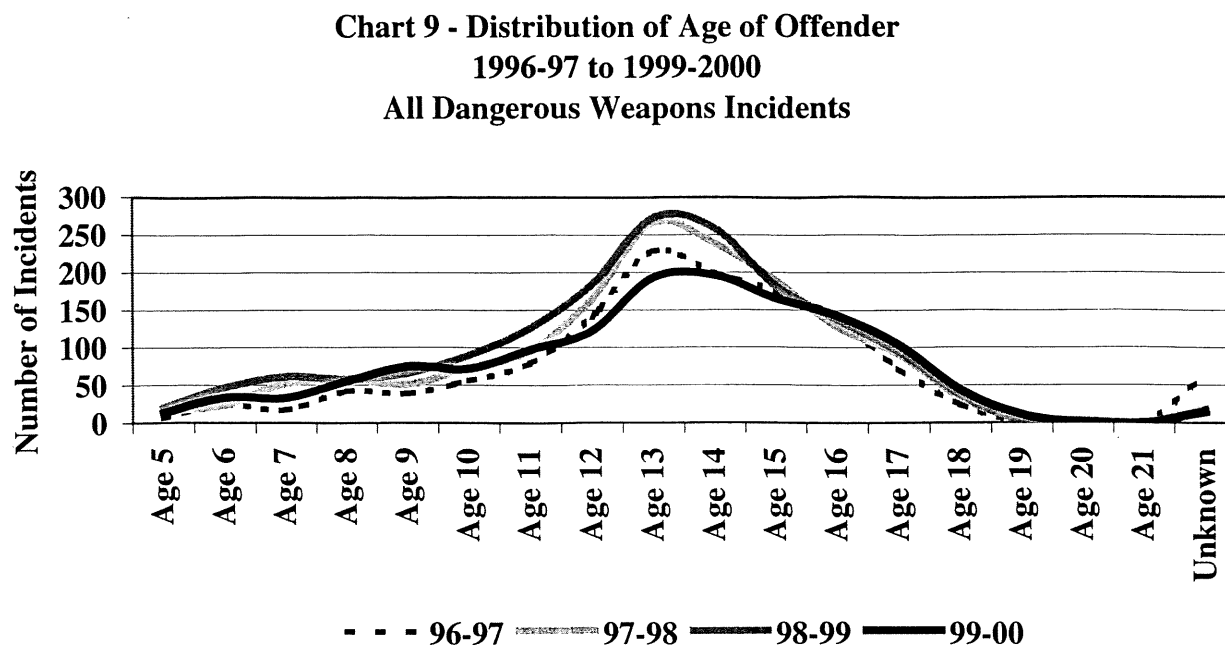
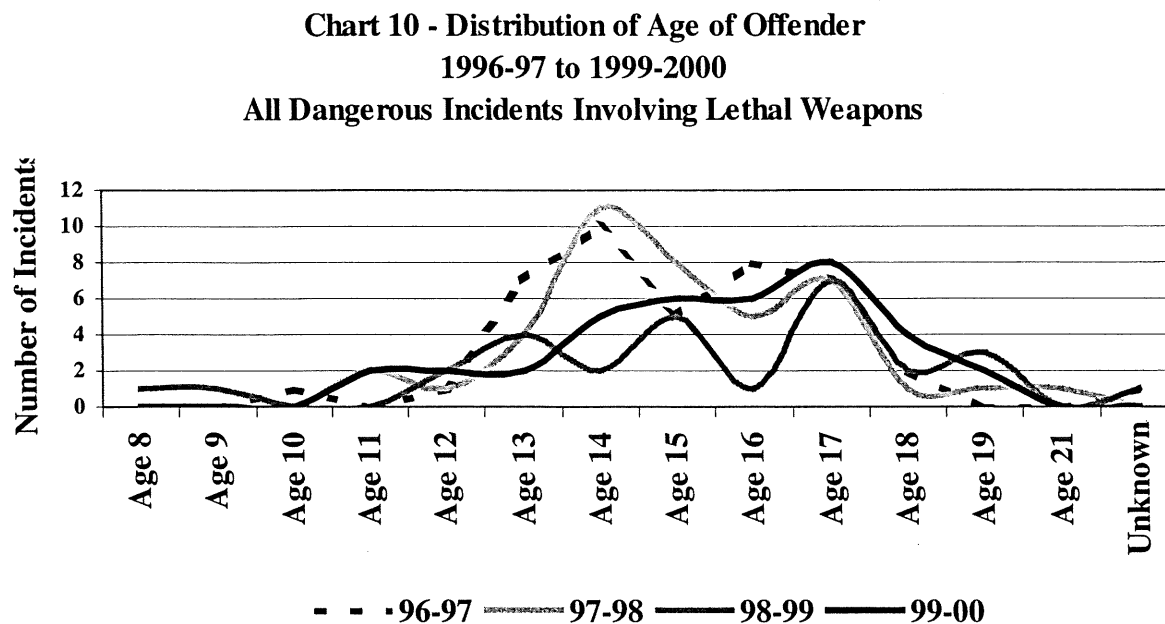


Chart 10 demonstrates the number of incidents involving lethal firearms for each age, 1996-97 to 1999-2000.



## WEAPONS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Having a special education disability classification appears to greatly increase the likelihood of a student being involved in a dangerous weapons incident. Of the 1,372 dangerous weapons incidents in 1999-2000, 479 incidents, or 34.9%, involved students with disabilities. Students with disabilities represent only 12.6% of the total enrollment. However, of the 37 incidents involving lethal firearms, 11 or 29.7%, involved students with disabilities.

Table 11 shows a comparison of the number and rate of dangerous weapons incidents by disability status.

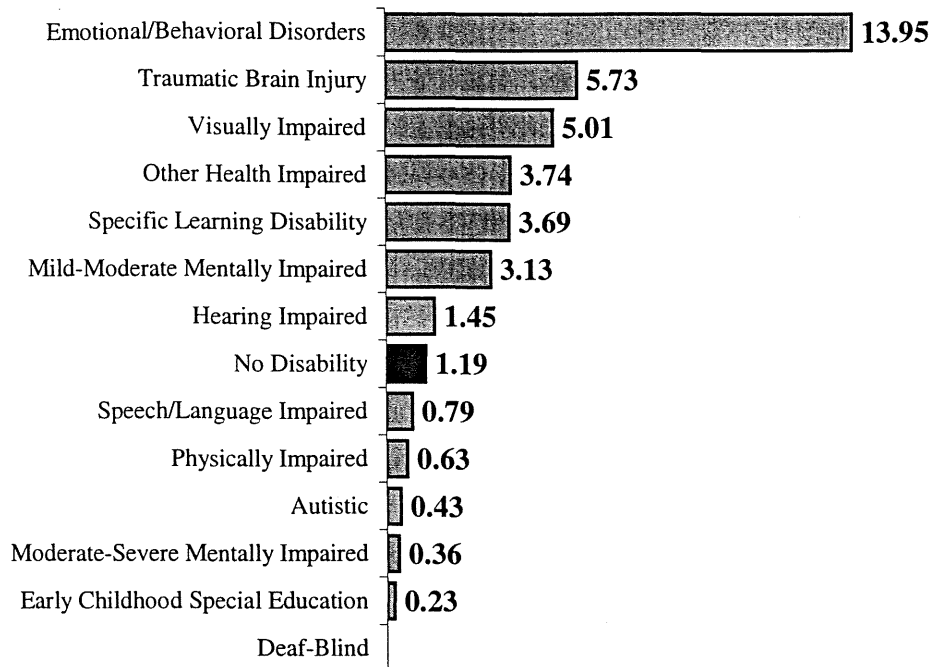
Table 11 – Incident Rates Comparing Students' Disability Status						
Disability Status	Enrollment	Weapons Incidents	Incidents Involving Lethal firearms	Weapons Incident Rate	Incidents Involving Lethal firearms Rate	Lethal firearms/ All Weapons
Students with Disabilities	107,323	479	11	4.46	0.10	22.965
Students without Disabilities	747,750	893	26	1.19	0.03	29.115

When the student disability classification is examined it shows that students who are classified as Speech/Language Impaired, Physically Impaired, Autistic, Moderate to Severely Mentally Impaired, Deaf-Blind, and students having a Early Childhood Special Education classification have rates of dangerous weapons incidents that are lower than the rate for non-disabled students.

Students with disability classifications of Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visually Impaired, Other Health Impaired, Specific Learning Disability, Mild to Moderately Mentally impaired, and Hearing Impaired have rates of weapons incidents exceeding those of non-disabled students.

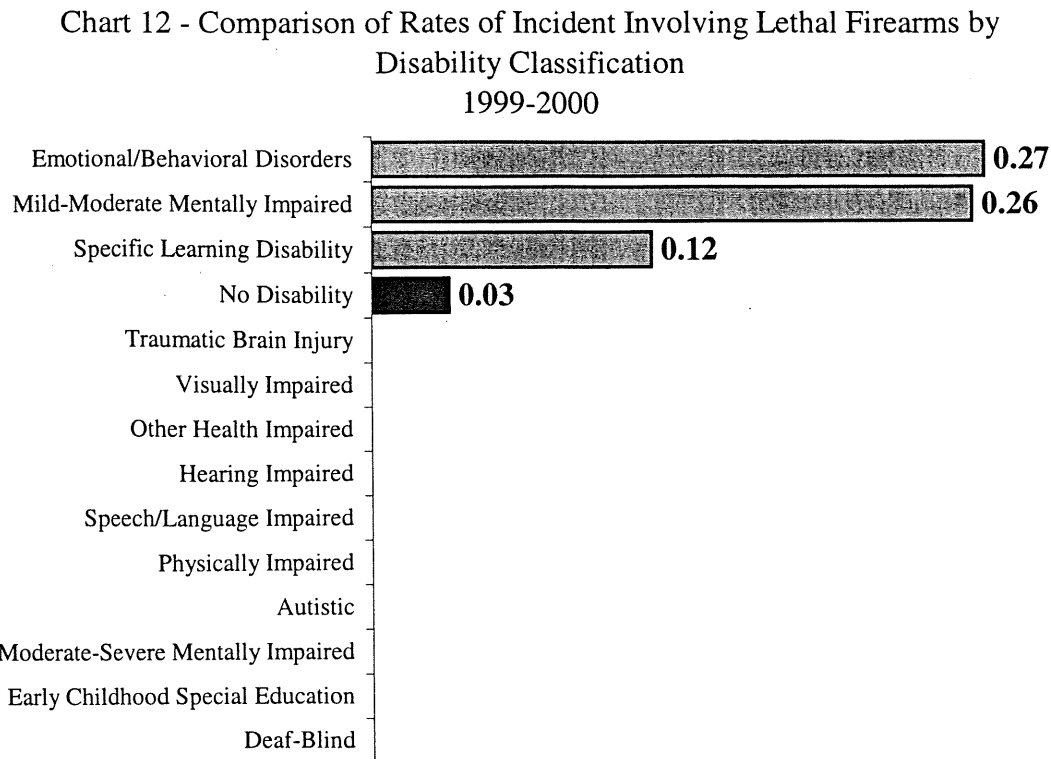
Chart 11 is a comparison of the rate of dangerous weapons incidents for 1999-2000 by disability classification.

Chart 11 - Comparison of Rates of Dangeous Weapons Incident by  
Disability Classification  
1999-2000



Among incidents involving lethal firearms, no disability classification was represented except Emotional/Behavioral Disorder, Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired, Specific Learning Disability, and non-disabled students.

Chart 12 is a comparison of the rate of incidents involving lethal firearms for 1999-2000 by disability classification.



## WEAPONS AND LOCATION

There does not appear to be a discernible pattern to location of incidents involving dangerous weapons incidents. During the period 1996-97 to 1999-2000 there have been reported incidents of weapons in schools in all counties with the exception of Cook, Kittson, Marshall, and Traverse. See Table 10 and Maps 1 – 3.

Table 12 demonstrates the number of dangerous weapons incidents by Minnesota county from 1996-97 to 1999-2000.

Table 12 - Comparison of Dangerous Weapons Incident Reports by County 1996-97 to 1999-2000

County	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
Aitkin	5	4	4	3
Anoka	83	87	106	104
Becker	2	3	7	12
Beltrami	10	15	19	30
Benton	6	11	12	8
Big Stone	0	1	1	4
Blue Earth	13	11	11	11
Brown	0	2	6	2
Carlton	6	15	12	13
Carver	13	2	21	23
Cass	7	11	25	20
Chippewa	2	0	0	0
Chisago	26	11	14	19
Clay	3	4	7	4
Clearwater	2	1	8	4
Cook	0	0	0	0
Cottonwood	0	0	1	8
Crow Wing	15	6	15	6
Dakota	90	93	94	95
Dodge	4	5	2	4
Douglas	2	6	12	1
Faribault	0	2	1	3
Fillmore	4	2	3	1
Freeborn	3	6	5	5
Goodhue	13	31	14	16
Grant	0	1	1	1
Hennepin	245	453	474	318
Houston	8	1	5	1
Hubbard	9	9	12	3
Isanti	4	5	5	11
Itasca	1	5	11	12
Jackson	1	2	3	3
Kanabec	1	1	3	11
Kandiyohi	10	9	7	6
Kittson	0	0	0	0
Koochiching	4	3	2	2
Lac Qui Parle	0	0	1	1
Lake	4	2	9	7
Lake Of The Woods	0	1	6	1
LeSueur	1	4	3	11
Lincoln	0	0	2	1
Lyon	2	5	8	3

Table 12 (cont.) - Comparison of Dangerous Weapons Incident Reports by County 1996-97 to 1999-2000

County	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
McLeod	8	6	13	7
Mahnomen	37	7	3	1
Marshall	0	0	0	0
Martin	7	5	1	4
Meeker	26	13	5	6
Mille Lacs	7	7	9	16
Morrison	17	6	1	8
Mower	5	13	6	12
Murray	1	0	0	1
Nicollet	0	0	10	1
Nobles	5	3	5	1
Norman	0	3	1	0
Olmsted	59	53	99	42
Otter Tail	5	4	6	8
Pennington	1	0	5	7
Pine	4	4	15	10
Pipestone	0	0	0	2
Polk	3	2	4	6
Pope	2	0	3	0
Ramsey	223	200	193	198
Red Lake	0	0	1	1
Redwood	0	6	4	6
Renville	5	1	2	1
Rice	17	15	18	10
Rock	0	0	5	4
Roseau	0	0	5	2
Saint Louis	116	110	84	55
Scott	22	19	25	11
Sherburne	26	25	20	11
Sibley	0	0	3	4
Stearns	28	38	37	51
Steele	4	8	12	12
Stevens	0	1	1	1
Swift	0	0	3	0
Todd	3	3	3	4
Traverse	0	0	0	0
Wabasha	1	5	12	5
Wadena	0	1	6	5
Waseca	1	5	4	8
Washington	32	73	47	33
Watsonwan	4	3	4	1
Wilkin	4	0	0	0
Winona	14	10	11	7
Wright	20	20	17	18
Yellow Medicine	0	4	4	4



Table 13 demonstrates the distribution of incidents involving lethal firearms in Minnesota counties in 1999-2000

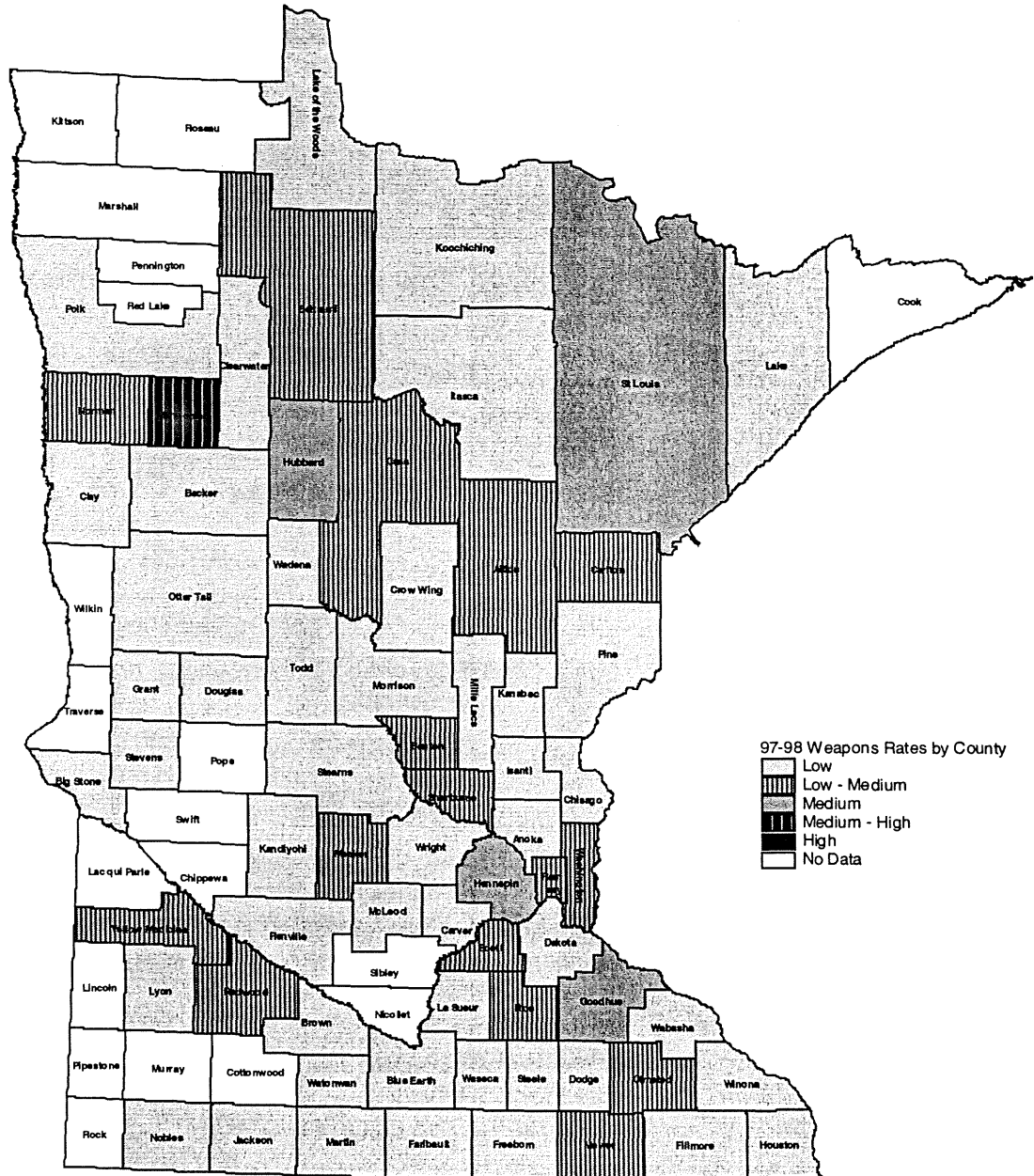
Table 13 - Incidents Involving Lethal Firearms by County in 1999-2000		
County	Handgun Reports	Long Gun Reports
Anoka	3	0
Beltrami	2	0
Blue Earth	1	1
Dakota	1	0
Grant	0	1
Hennepin	6	3
Hubbard	1	0
Lac Qui Parle	1	0
Le Sueur	2	0
Mower	1	0
Olmsted	1	0
Otter Tail	2	1
Ramsey	2	0
Redwood	0	1
Saint Louis	1	0
Scott	1	0
Stearns	0	2
Waseca	1	1
Wright	0	1
Total	26	11

## COMMENTS

1999-2000 marks the first year that *all* school districts submitted dangerous weapons reports to the state, and 95% of disciplinary incident reports were received electronically, either via the Internet or on diskette. In 1996-97, only 49% of reports were received electronically, with 125 school districts going unreported. This marks a tremendous improvement in the effort put forth by the school districts to comply with Minnesota Statute § 3.197. The school districts should be commended for their effort, because reporting their dangerous weapons incidents to the Department does not result in any positive rewards. Funding is not tied to this reporting requirement nor is there recognition of the time and effort that is required on the part of the school districts to record and submit this information. It is unfortunate that this dangerous weapons information is often used by the media to compare one district to another, giving a negative impression of a district that conscientiously complies with this statutory reporting requirement.

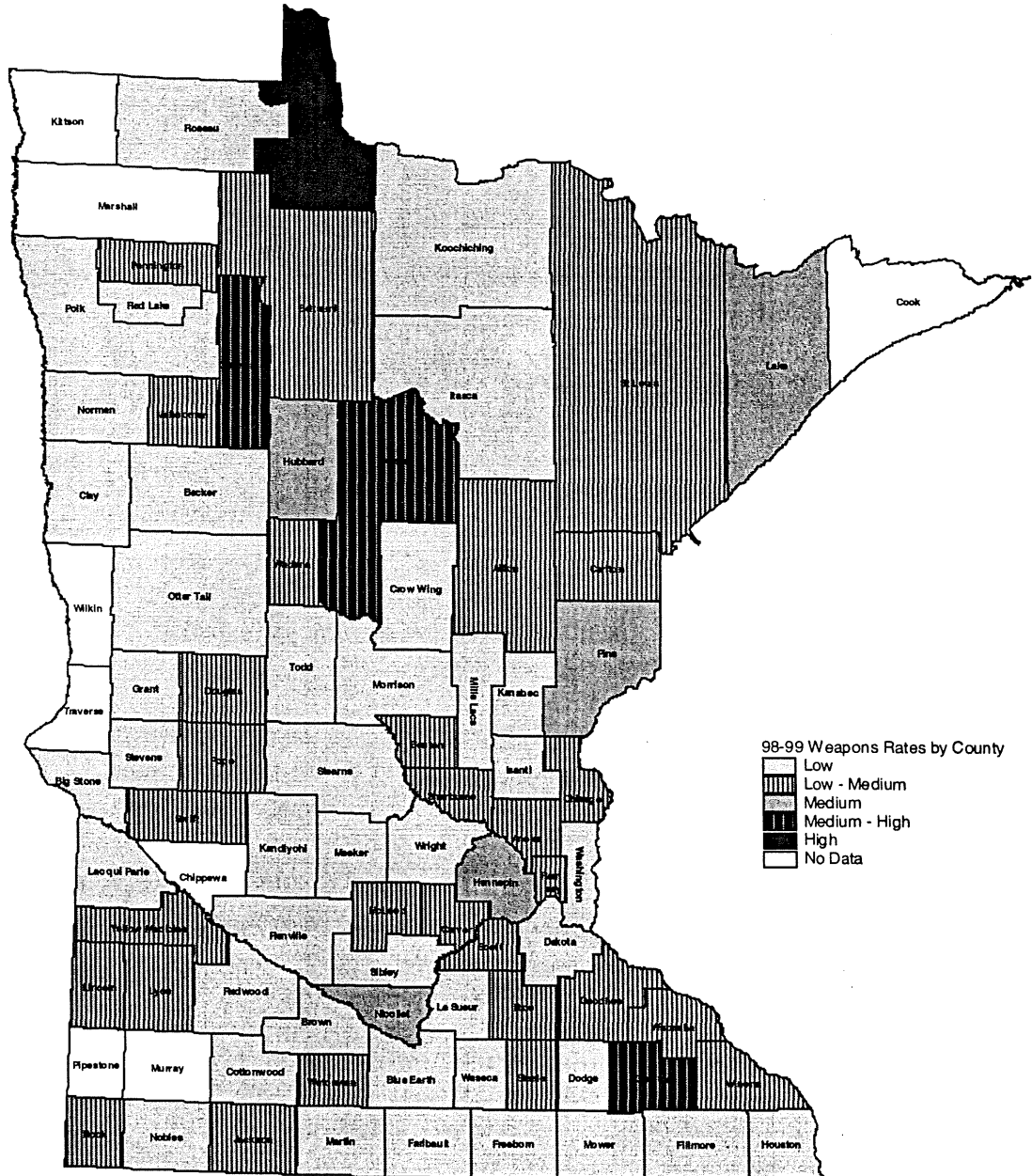
Map 1

# Dangerous Weapons Rates by Minnesota County 1997-98



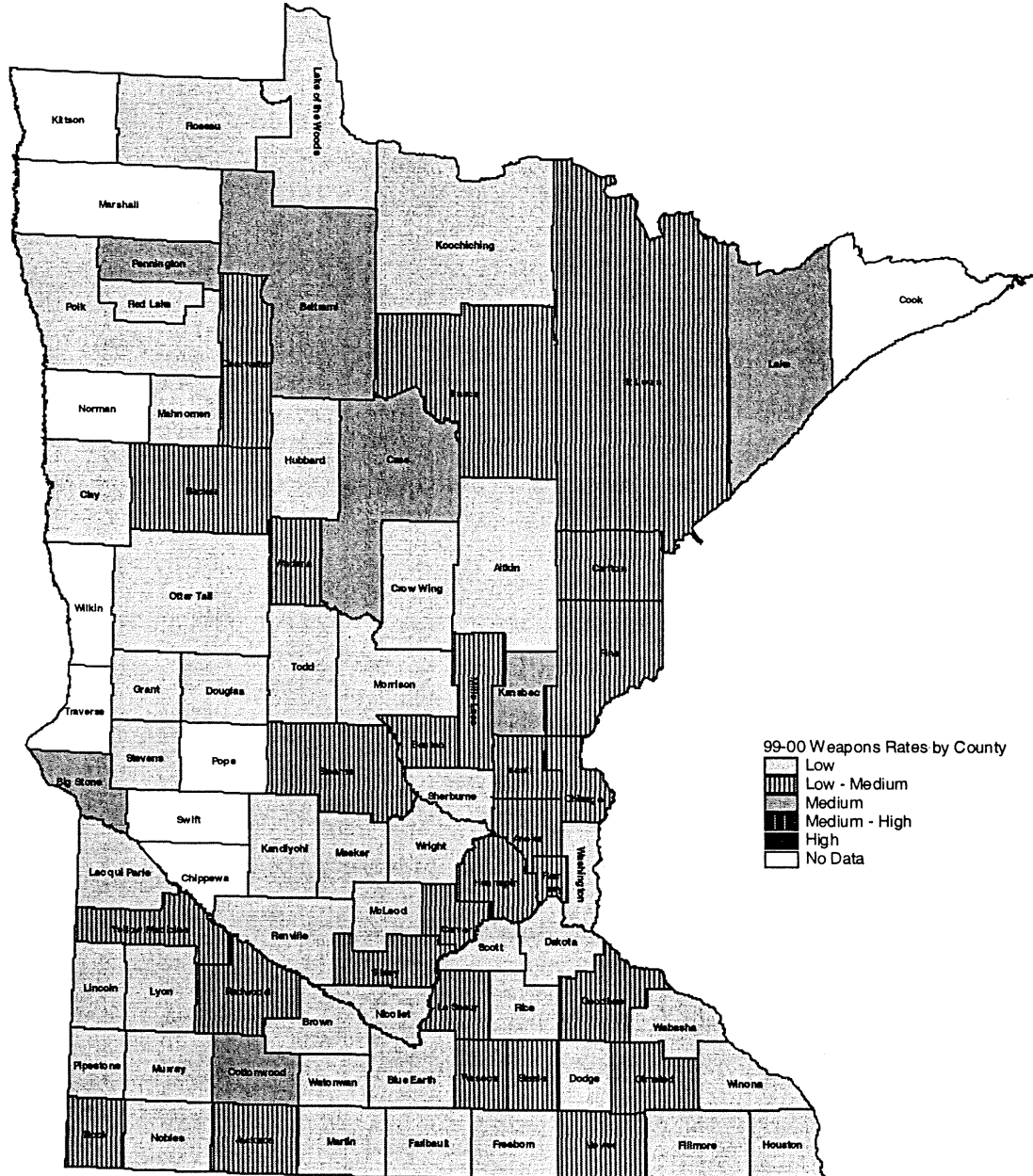
## Map 2

### Dangerous Weapons Rates by Minnesota County 1998-99



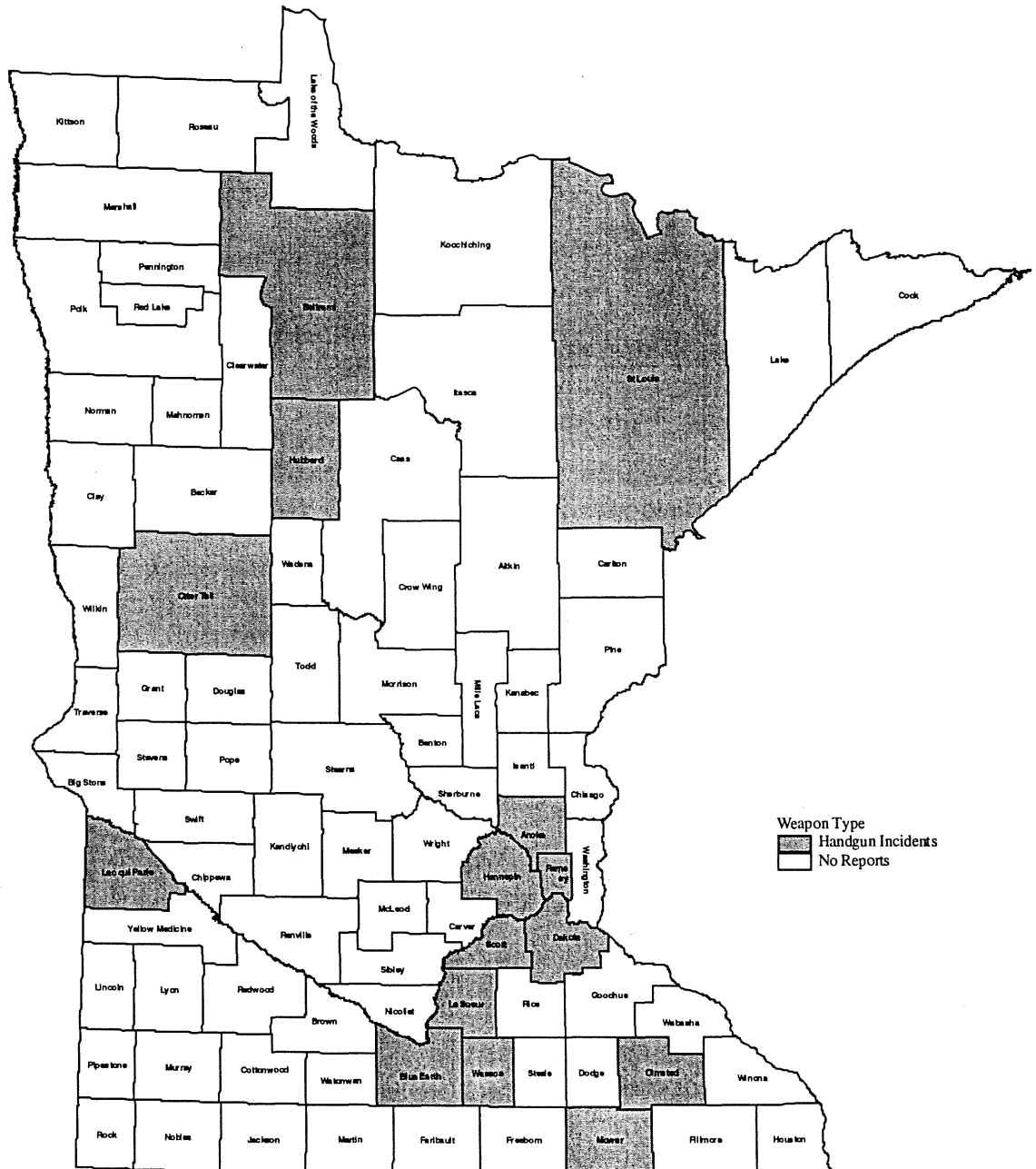
# Map 3

## Dangerous Weapons Rates by Minnesota County 1999-2000



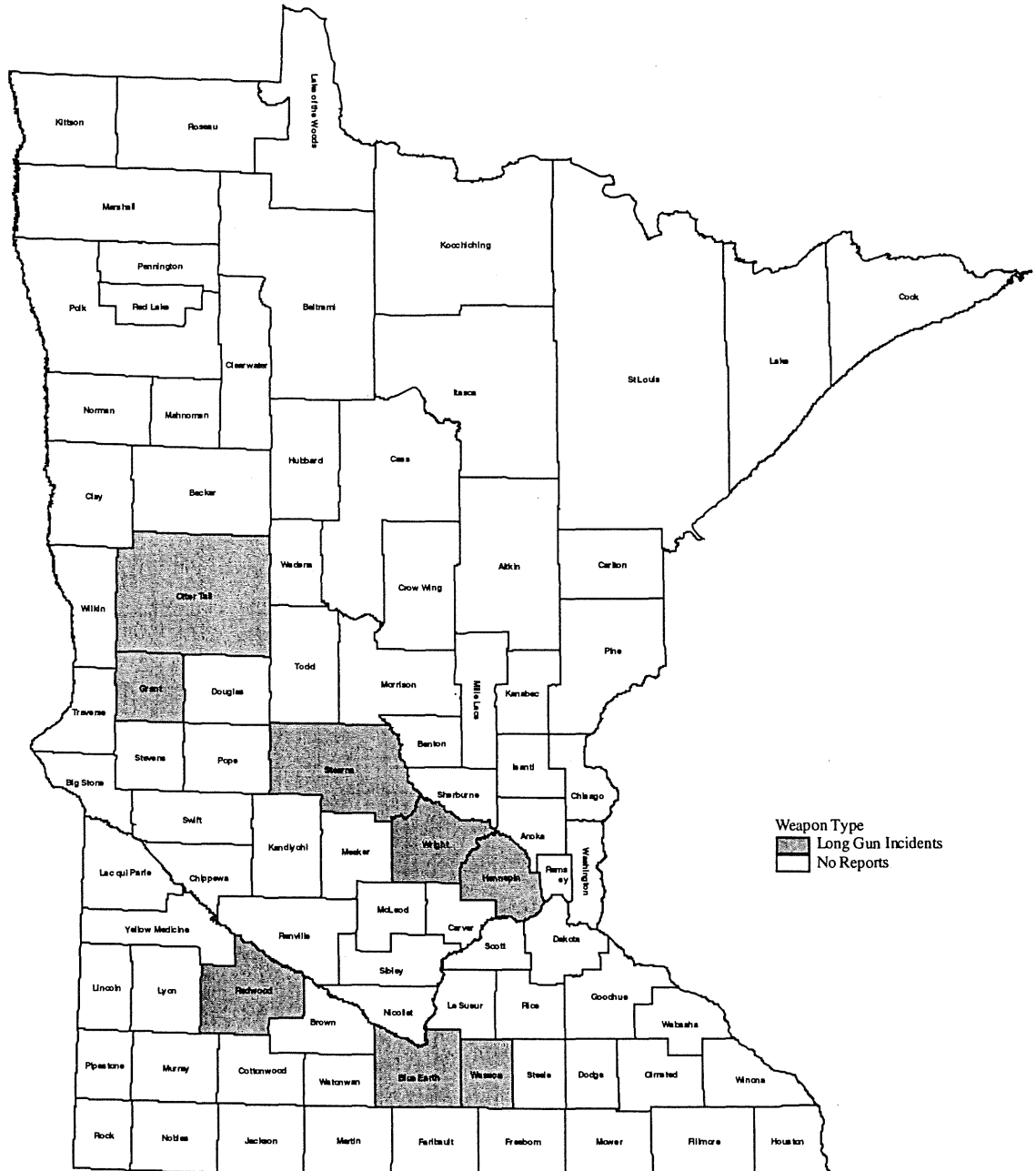
# Map 4

## 1999-2000 Handgun Incidents by County



# Map 5

## 1999-2000 Long Gun Incidents by County



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