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# Gun Violence: How Big Is The Problem In Maine

December 8th, 2004



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# “Gun violence” includes the following:

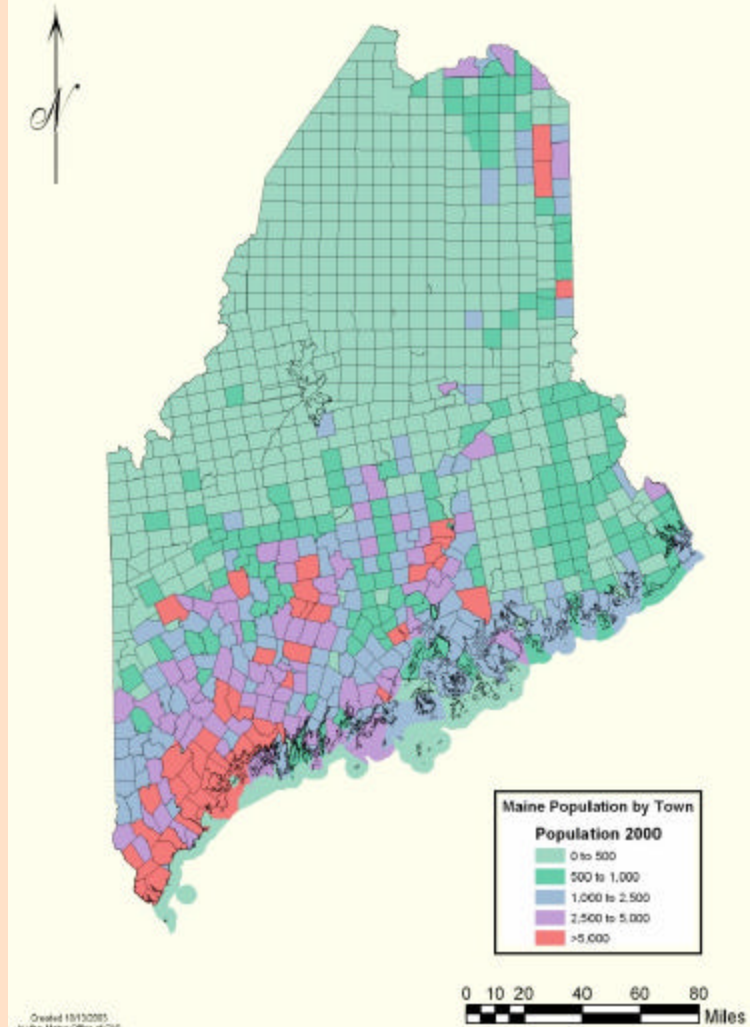
- Violent Crimes with Guns
  - Homicides, Robberies, Aggravated Assaults
- Domestic Violence Where Guns Are Present or Used to Threaten or Intimidate
- Illegal possession of firearms
- Suicides

# Data Sources and Methodology

- Violent Crimes with Guns
  - FBI – Uniform Crime Reports
  - Maine Department of Public Safety
- Domestic Violence Where Guns Are Present or Used to Threaten or Intimidate
  - Maine Department of Public Safety
  - U.S. Attorney's Office research
- Illegal possession of firearms
  - Examination of pre-sentencing reports of federal firearm cases from 2002-2003
- Suicides
  - Maine Medical Center – CDC
  - Maine DHHS, Bureau of Health, Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics

# Gun Culture in Maine

- 1,277,284 population
- 1,250,122 total guns
- **1 gun per person**
  - 71% long guns (rifles, shotguns, etc.)
  - 29% handguns
  - At least one firearm in almost half of the 626,000 households



\* Statistics based on 2000 statewide survey

# Gun Culture in Maine

- Gun Usage
  - Sporting and recreation
  - Hunting
    - 172,626 hunting licenses issued in 2000
    - Traditional part of family life





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# Violent Crimes with Guns



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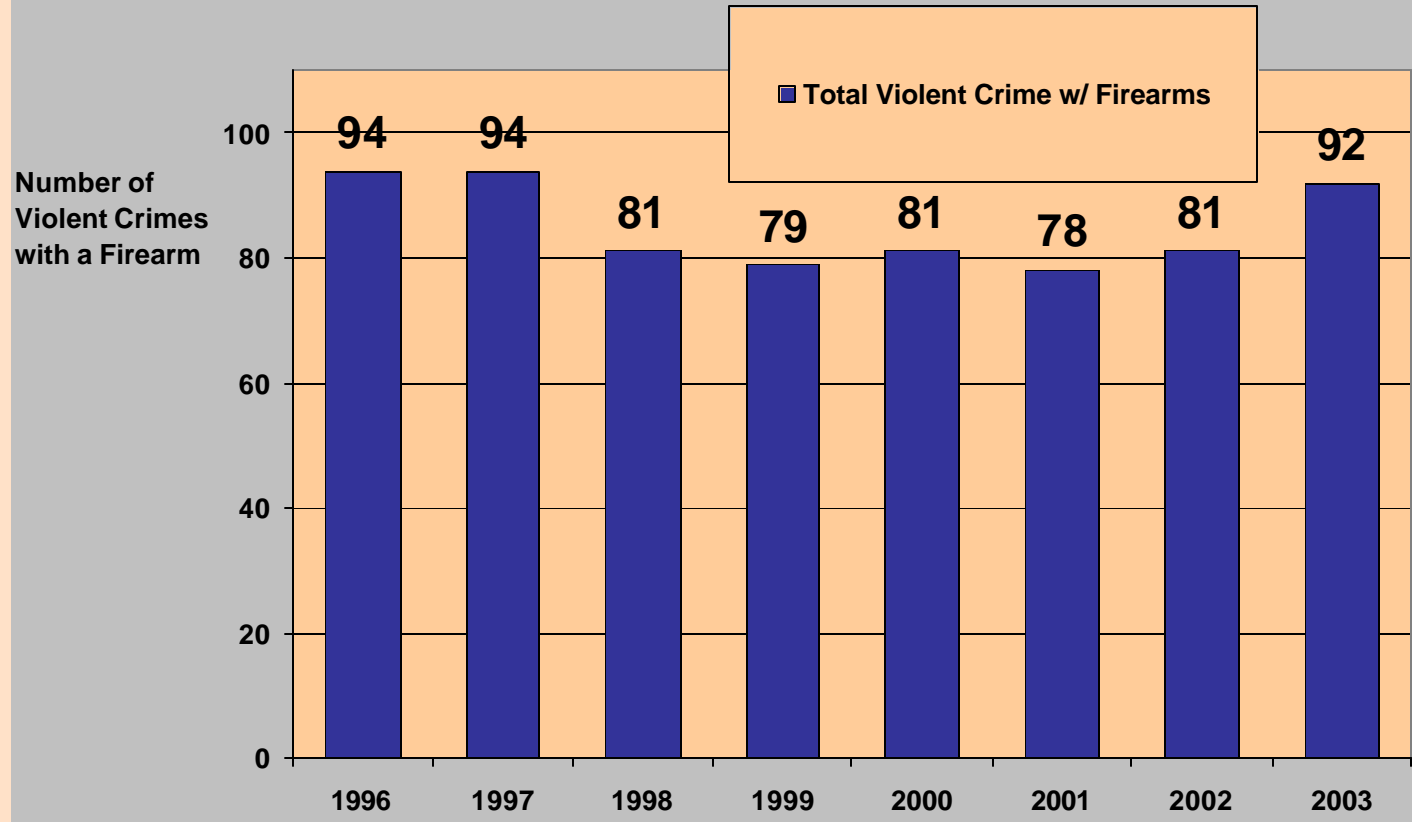
# In 2003, Maine had the lowest rate of firearm use in violent crimes in the country

State	Total # of firearm crimes	Percent of violent crimes w/ firearm	Overall chance of being a firearm victim
<b>Maine</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>1 in 14,136</b>
Vermont	77	19.4%	1 in 6,212
New Hampshire	184	21.3%	1 in 4,823
United States*	252,645	27.5%	1 in 853

\* - excluding Florida, Illinois, DC, Kentucky

Since 1996, the annual number of violent crimes with a firearm in Maine has remained under 100

### Violent Crime with a Firearm in Maine, 1996-2003



Source: Maine Department of Public Safety 1996-2003



# Over the last 8 years, more than half the violent crimes with a firearm in Maine have been robberies

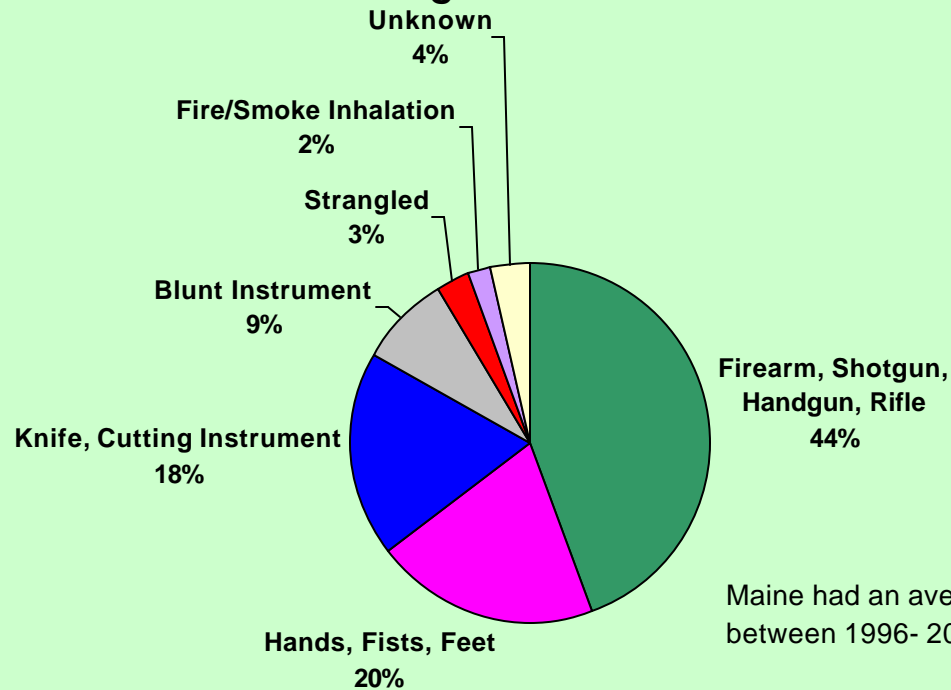
## Percent of Total Violent Crimes w/ Firearms, 1996-2003

<i>Year</i>	<i>Murder w/ Firearm</i>	<i>Robbery w/ Firearm</i>	<i>Agg. Assault w/ Firearm</i>	<i>% of Total Violent Crimes w/ Firearm</i>
<b>8 yr. Ave</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>7%</b>

Source: Maine Department of Public Safety 1996-2003

# Since 1996, nearly half the homicides in Maine were committed with a firearm

## Homicide by Type of Weapon, 8 Year Avg. 1996-2003



Maine had an average of 21 Murders between 1996- 2003

Source: Maine Department of Public Safety 1996-2003



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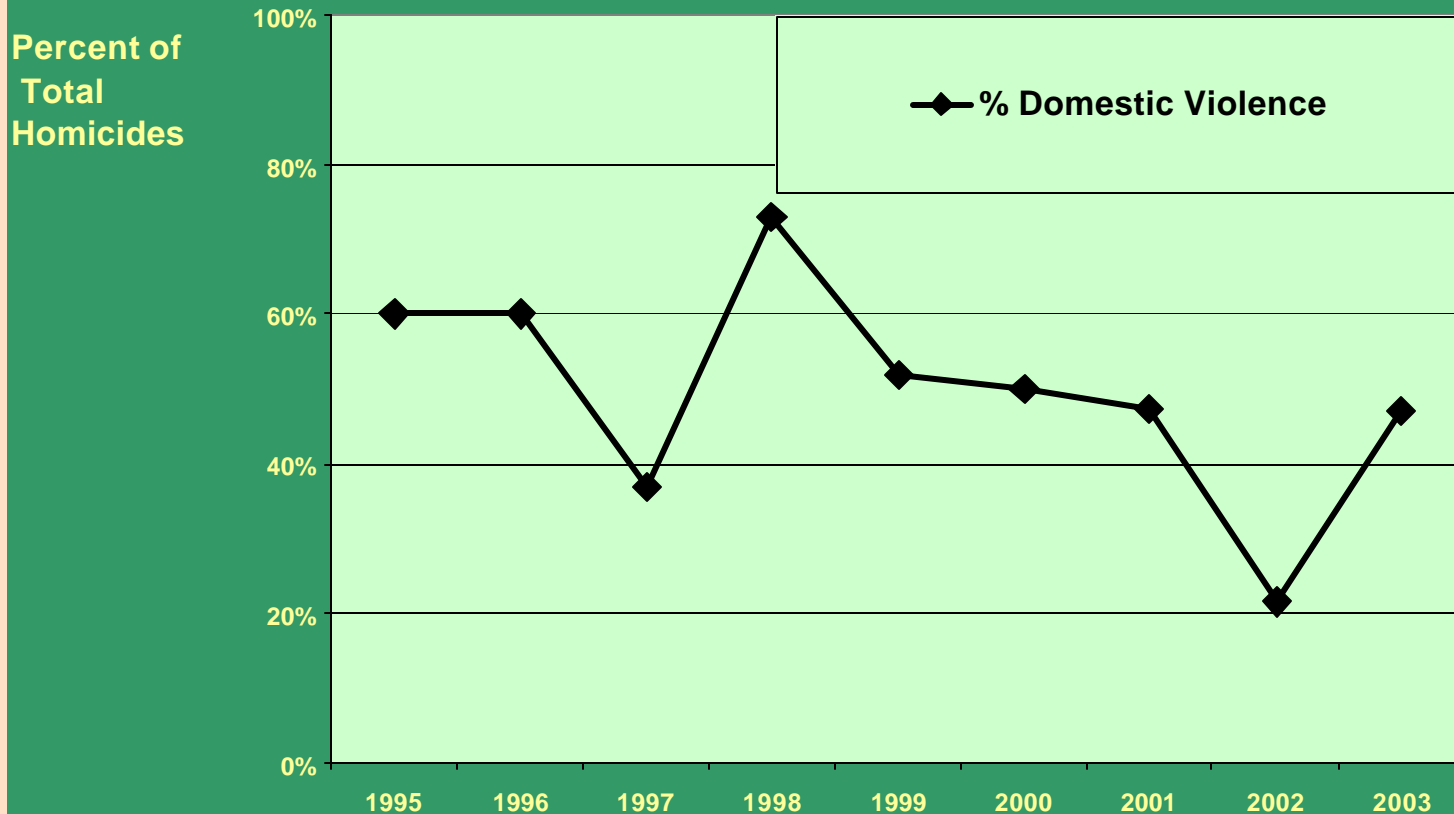
# Domestic Violence Where Guns Are Present or Used



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# Between 1996-2003, more than half the homicides in Maine were DV related

## Domestic Violence Homicides, 1995-2003



Source: Maine Department of Public Safety 1996-2003

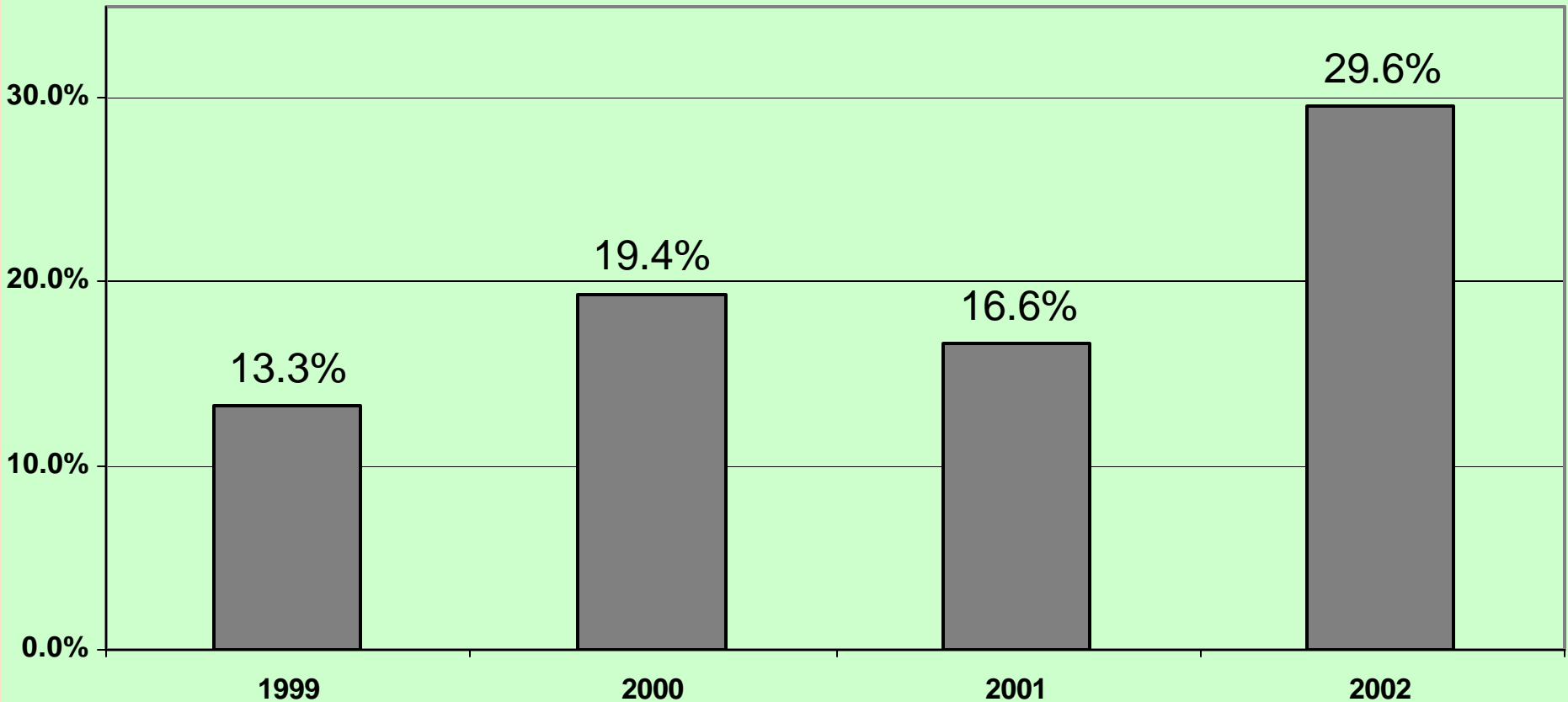
# Firearm violence in households with a domestic violence abuser

- ***What is a Protection from Abuse Order?***  
A PFA is a court order which provides legal protection for a person in or just out of an abusive relationship.
- In a limited study of 5 courts during 6 mos. in 2003-2004, 18% of individuals against whom Protection from Abuse Orders were issued threatened to use a firearm against their victims.

# Extrapolating firearm violence in households with a domestic violence abuser

- In FY 2003 there were 6,502 Protection from Abuse orders in Maine
- 18% of 6,502 Protection from Abuse Orders (n=1170 PFAs) where the defendant threatened to use a firearm.

# Since 1999, the percent of NICS denials for persons with a DV conviction and/or a PFA order has increased





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# Suicides



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# Suicides in Maine

- Between 2000-2002 nearly 90% (481) of violent deaths in Maine were suicides
- The teen suicide rate in Maine is the 8<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation, at 14.74 suicides per 100,000 residents aged 15-24

# Firearms and suicide in Maine

- Firearms accounted for 57% of suicide deaths in Maine between 2000-2002 (91 per year).
- Since 1998, more suicides with a gun than violent crimes with a gun in any year
- As of 2001, firearm suicide death rates are higher in Maine (6.7 per 100,000 individuals) than the national average (5.9).

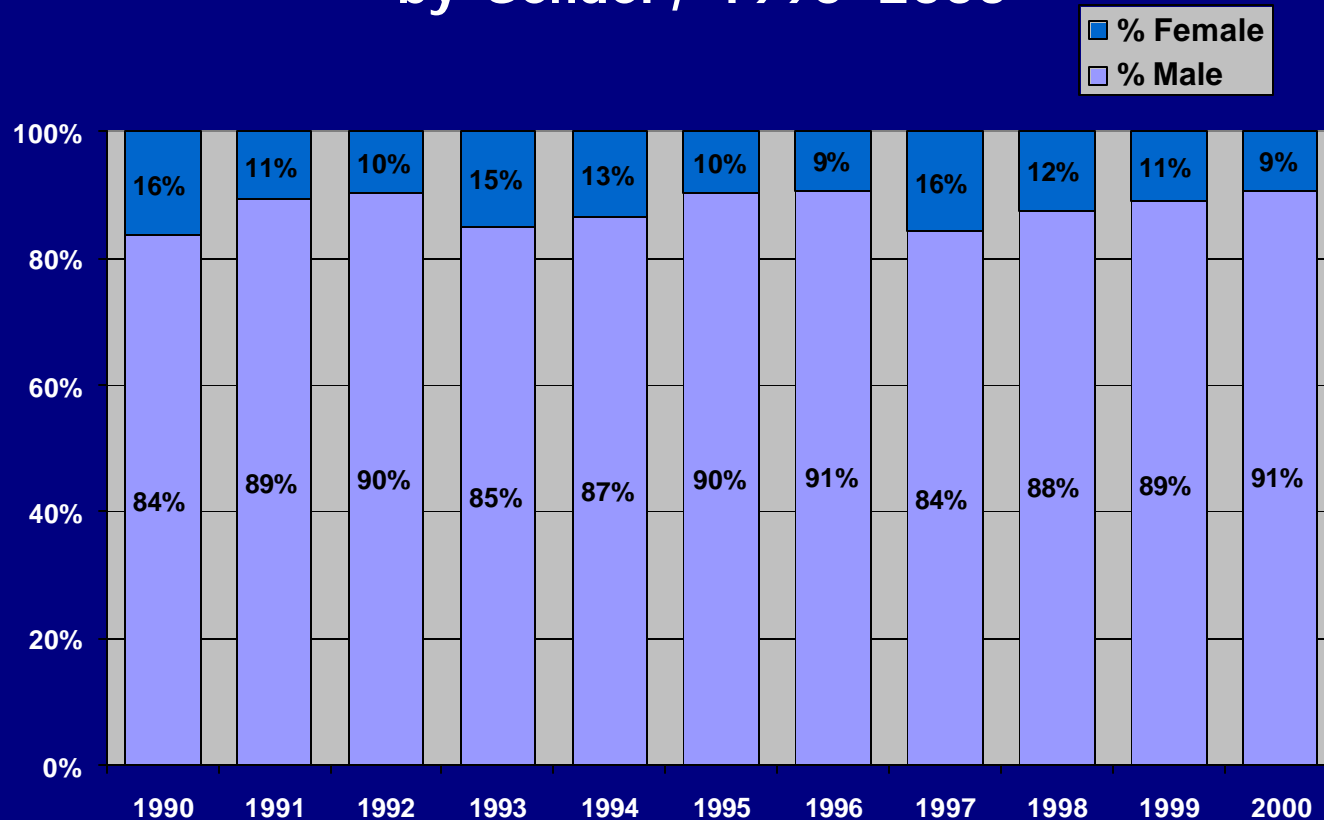
# Guns and Suicide

## Suicide Rate 1994-1998 per 100,000

State	Households with Firearms	Firearm Suicides	Nonfirearm Suicides
<b>Maine</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>5.6</b>
Vermont	48%	7.9	4.4
New Hampshire	33%	6.8	5.3
Connecticut	21%	3.7	5.2
Rhode Island	16%	3.0	5.3
Massachusetts	14%	2.4	5.8
New Jersey	12%	2.4	4.9

# Men commit the overwhelming majority of firearm suicides

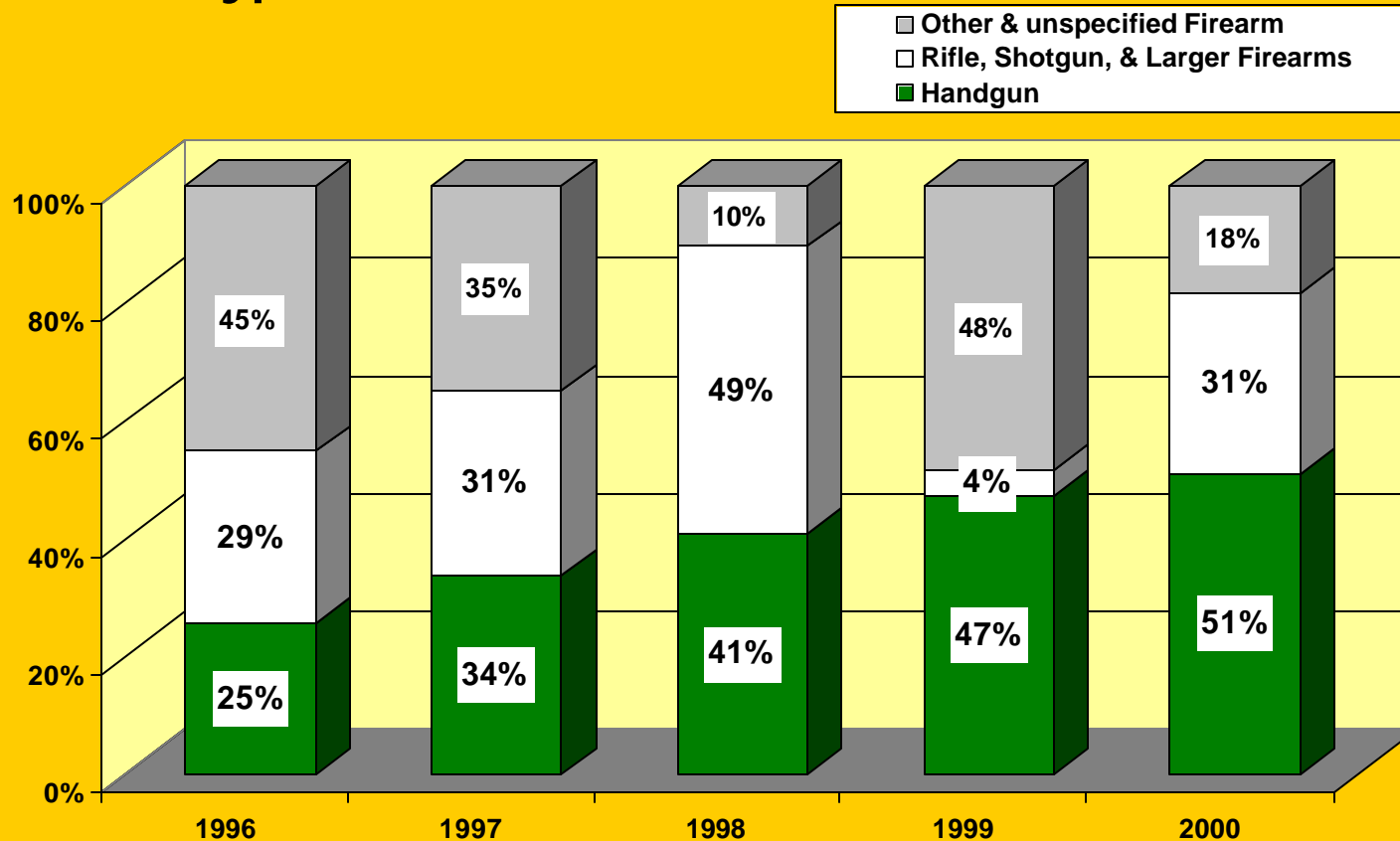
## Maine Suicide Deaths w/ a Firearm by Gender, 1990-2000



Source: Center for Disease Control

# Handguns have become the leading cause of self-inflicted firearm injury deaths in Maine

## Self-Inflicted Firearm Injury Deaths by Type of Firearm in Maine, 1996-2000

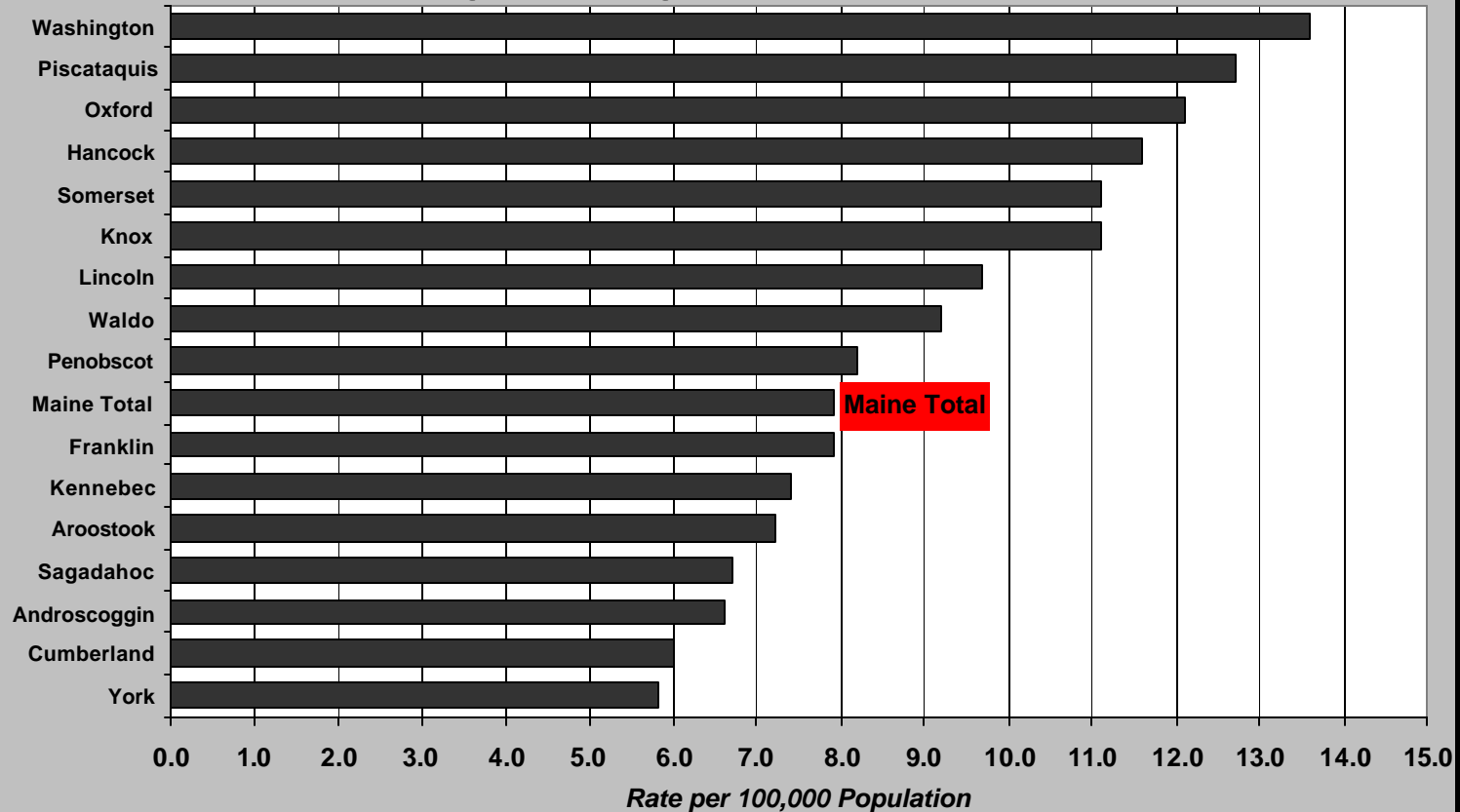


Maine DHS, Bureau of Health, Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics

# Rural counties tend to have higher rates of firearm suicides

## Self-Inflicted Firearm Injury Deaths by County, 1991-2000

Maine DHS, Bureau of Health, Office of  
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# Characteristics of Gun Crimes and Offenders



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# PSN Research Agenda

## 4 questions

- 1) What are the characteristics of the gun offender?
- 2) What is the geographic distribution of gun offenses?
- 3) What are the characteristics of the gun incident (circumstances, relationship to victim, etc.)?
- 4) What are the characteristics of the gun?



# Previous Reports and Methodology

- 1) Examination of 93 state crime incidents with a firearm from 2002-03
  - Descriptive analysis of the following:
    - Offense type and circumstance
- 2) Examination of 120 federal firearm offender characteristics from 2002-03
  - Demographic profile of offender

# Characteristics of state gun crimes n=93

- **21% of the cases were DV related**
- **42% were drug/alcohol related offenses**
- **64% of the offenses were committed with a handgun**

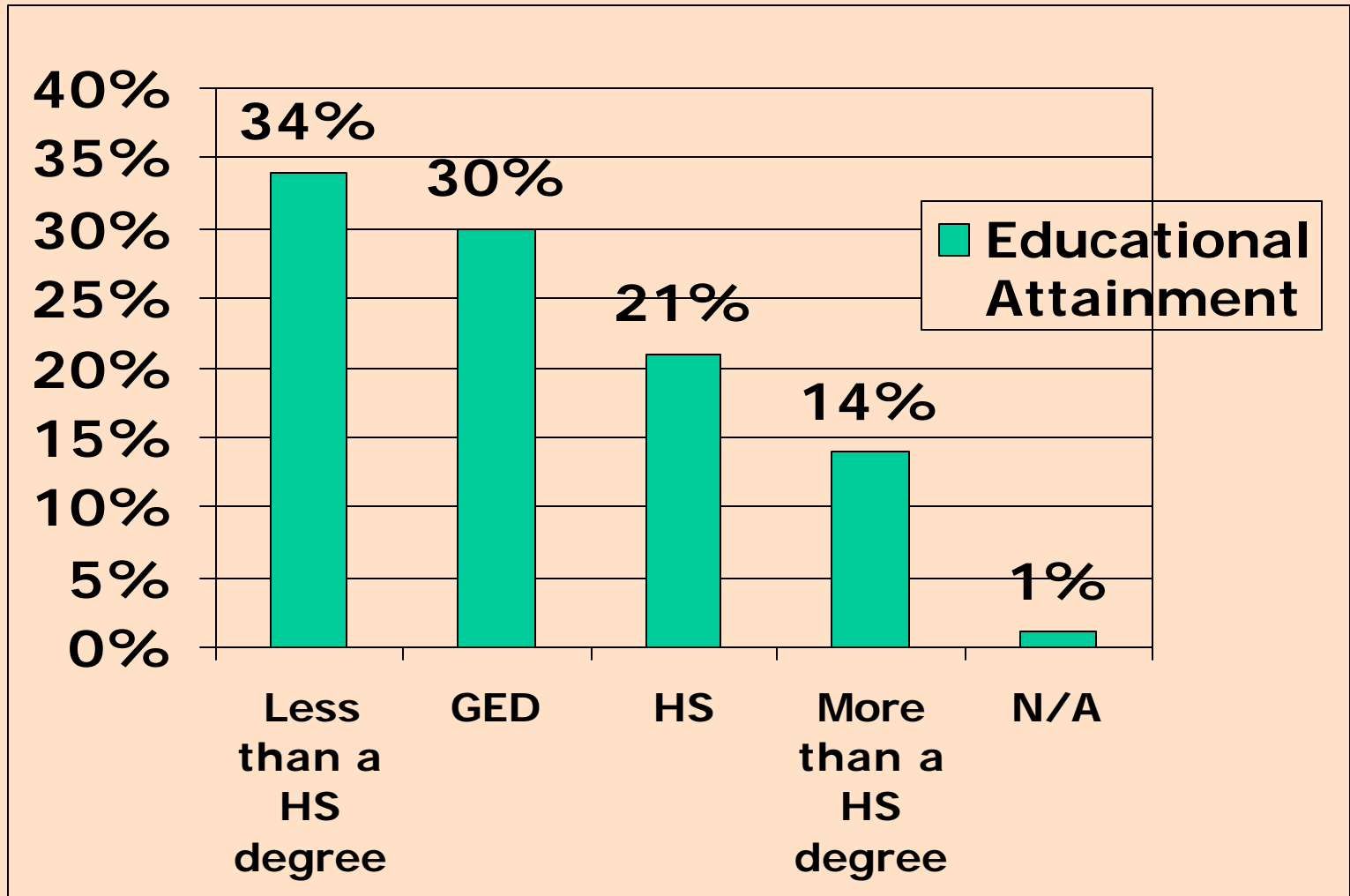
# Characteristics of state gun crimes cont'd

- The three highest state firearm charges were the following:
  1. Robbery (30%)
  2. Burglary (12%)
  3. Assault (11%)
- 60% of the firearm charges were against a person (i.e. robbery, assault, murder)
- 24% of the firearm charges were property crimes (burglary, theft)
- 12% of the cases the victim was the spouse or boyfriend/girlfriend of the offender

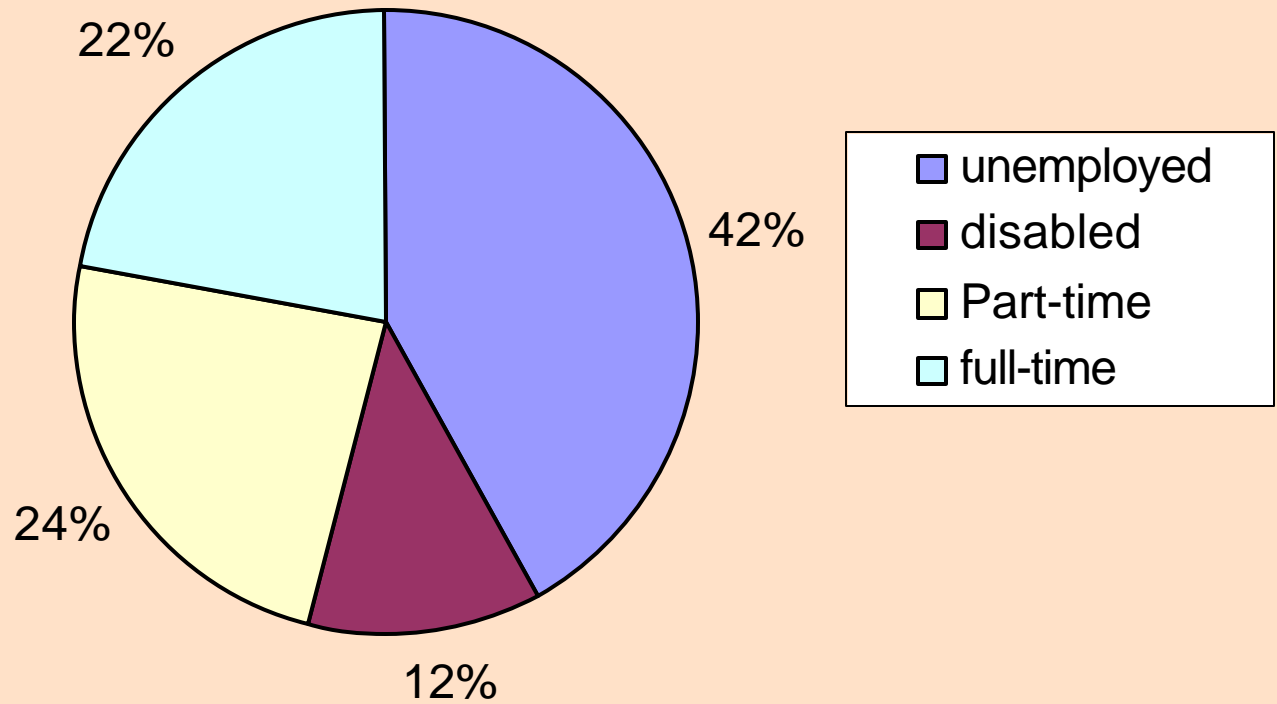
# Who is committing gun crimes in Maine? (n=121)

- Nearly 90% (89.1) are white males
- Average age: 34
- More than half (53%) are either unemployed or disabled
- 85% have at most a HS/GED degree
- Most have a prior criminal record (87%)

# Educational Attainment of Federal Firearm Offenders



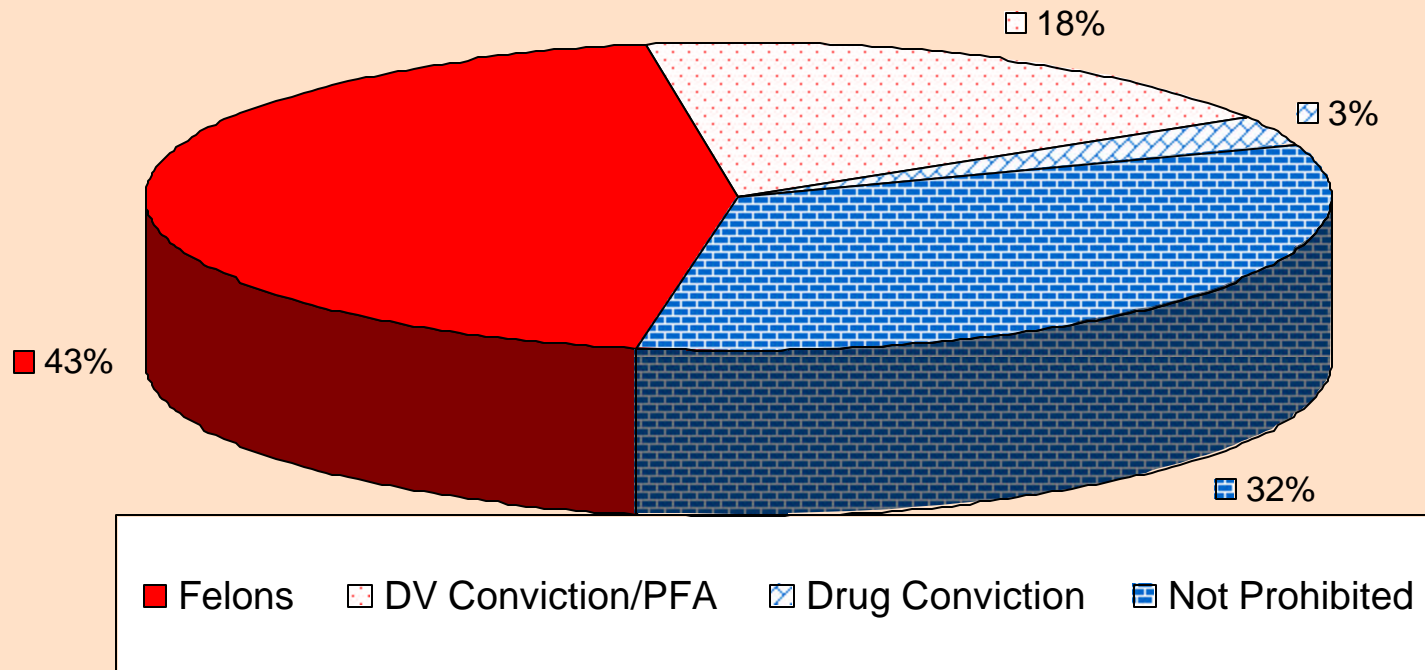
# Less than ¼ of the offenders work full-time



# History of the Offender

- History of alcohol/drug abuse (76%)
- Many have a history of mental illness (43%)
- 34% have a history of both alcohol/drug abuse and mental illness

# At the time of arrest, the majority of offenders were prohibited from owning a firearm







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# Maine Statistical Analysis Center

[http://muskie.usm  
.maine.edu/justice  
research](http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justice_research)



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