gun violence

IN AMERICA

BRIEFING BOOKS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Unbiased information on the contributing factors to gun violence in America.
CUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

BRIEFING

BOOKS

ABCT IS DEDICATED TO BRIDGING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC AND CLINICAL MEMBERS AND THE MEDIA AS WELL AS THE PUBLIC.
The Briefing Books initiative is the brainchild of David Teisler, CAE, Director of Communications & Deputy Director at ABCT, and Emily L. Rilet, Ph.D., ABPP, of the Public Education and Media Dissemination (PEMD) committee.

The Briefing Books project provides journalists and members of the public with accessible & evidence-based information. PEMD The committee is responsible for all ABCT outreach to public and journalists.

In addition, it coordinates projects with the Publications Committee and handles press relations for ABCT.

The driving force behind Briefing Books was the desire to provide resources for media and the public who want quick access to materials that explain surrounding evidence-based treatments for recommendations relating to major topics of mental health.
LOVE

SHOULDN'T

HURT
ABOUT US

A premier organization for everything CBT 65 years of evidence-based research and practice. Welcome to the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT). ABCT and its members strive to alleviate human suffering through the application of scientific principles.

The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) is a multidisciplinary organization committed to the enhancement of health and well-being by advancing the scientific understanding, assessment, prevention, and treatment of human problems through the global application of behavioral, cognitive, and biological evidence-based principles.

ABCT is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in all its activities, including employment. ABCT does not discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, or veteran status.
we support our mission by

- responding to media inquiries about CBT-related topics by connecting interested journalists, writers, and producers with relevant ABCT experts.
- developing initiatives to assist ABCT members in communicating with the public about science and evidence-based practice. Possible videos.
- developing resources to help communicate with the media for ABCT members, journalists, and the public at large offer compendiums of relevant resources ("Briefing Books") that provide information about the current science presented in layman's terms.
NO
HUMAN BEING
IS
ILLEGAL
THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION

BRIEFING BOOK CONTRIBUTORS

Gun Violence Contributors

Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) would like to thank our dedicated contributors without whom this project could not have happened. Our organization is strengthened by your contribution and commitment to supporting our mission and vision.

The wider community benefits daily from your efforts to support evidence-based research and your commitment to those in your care.
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GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

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GUN VIOLENCE IN
AMERICA.”

- ABCT.ORG
Welcome to the 2021 edition of the Briefing Books (BB) initiative. The BB initiative is an effort by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) to provide easily accessible information on a range of temporally sensitive topics that affect everyone.

Following on from our 2020 edition on Suicide Across the Lifespan, this year we are exploring another sensitive and sensitive topic - gun violence.

ABCT will look to add additional topics in the coming months and years on topics that are of interest to our community.
Community violence is exacerbated by firearm policies that facilitate access to guns and perpetuate gun violence.
EDITOR’S NOTE

Our second Briefing Book is being released at a time when our communities continue to experience unprecedented turmoil. The global coronavirus persists, and although the availability of vaccination has enabled many restrictions that were in place in 2020 to be lifted, all Americans are trying to make sense of the amplified political, economic, social, and racial tensions of the last few years.

Underfunded schools, cuts in healthcare, social and economic inequalities, paired with discriminatory policies, exclusionary social zoning, and financial redlining, have created a perfect storm for civil unrest and violence.

The violence is exacerbated by firearm policies that facilitate access to guns and perpetuate gun violence.

Regrettably every year thousands of Americans die from firearms, be it through suicide, police brutality, or the headline-grabbing mass shootings including the Tree of Life synagogue on my birthday in 2018.

As a mother, the statistics that every day 50 American children aged 0 to 17 years are shot with a firearm and that every 2 hours and 36 minutes a child dies, is heartbreaking.

The widespread nature of gun violence, and the urgent need for unbiased information on the contributing, exacerbating, and perpetuating factors for gun violence, we decided to devote the topic of our 2021 Briefing Books series to gun violence in America.
DIVERSE COMMUNITY AT GREATER RISK OF EXPERIENCING GUN VIOLENCE

LGBTQ+ POPULATION

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LGBTQ
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people, and those who identify with other expansive sexual orientations and gender identities represent approximately 5.6% of the US population.

The proportion of Americans who identify as LGBTQ+ is growing rapidly.

Gallup polling data from 2020 found that more than 1 in 6 members of Generation Z (those born 1997 to 2002) identify as LGBTQ+—compared to fewer than 1 in 25 members of Generation X (those born 1965- to 1980).

It is important to recognize that there is a vibrant diversity of experiences within the LGBTQ+ population with LGBTQ+ people spanning all genders, ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, geographic locales, religions, and nationalities.
APPROXIMATELY

5.6%

of Americans identify as LGBTQ+
LGBTQ+ POPULATION AT GREATER RISK OF GUN VIOLENCE

Why is it important to consider the LGBTQ+ population in conversations regarding gun violence?

Although LGBTQ+ people represent a relatively small proportion of the total US population, they are at greater risk of experiencing gun violence.

For example, LGBTQ+ Americans are disproportionately more likely to:

- Be targets of assault, violence, and hate crimes;
- Report suicide attempts and;
- Experience intimate partner violence than heterosexual and cisgender (non-LGBTQ+) Americans.

Additionally, when a gun is involved in an anti-LGBTQ+ violent attack, suicide attempt, or violent incident with an intimate partner, the risk of the encounter becoming deadly is magnified.
VICTIMIZATION

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE MAGNIFIES THE POTENTIAL FOR FATAL GUN VIOLENCE AMONG LGBTQ+ POPULATIONS

LGBTQ+ Americans are more likely to be targets of assault, violence, and hate crimes than heterosexual and cisgender (non-LGBTQ+) Americans.

These risks are especially pronounced for LGBTQ+ people who also identify as racial/ethnic minorities, as transgender or another gender diverse identity, and who are younger.

Additionally, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience school-based violence than non-LGBTQ+ youth.

Lastly, although rare, LGBTQ+ people have also been targeted in mass shootings, as in the Pulse Nightclub Shooting in 2016.
LGBTQ+

HIGH HATE CRIME RISK

LGBTQ+ people more likely to experience hate crimes than any other group in America.

According to the FBI 2018 Hate Crime Statistical report, nearly 1 in 5 hate crimes were motivated by anti-LGBTQ+ bias: 16.7% of hate crime victims were targets of anti sexual orientation bias, and 2.7% were victims of anti-transgender or anti-gender non-conformity bias.

Hate crime statistics are often underreported and underestimated due to difficulty in proving bias motivation, data collection problems, and law enforcement reluctance; thus, the toll of anti-LGBTQ+ violent attacks reported in FBI data is probably underestimated. However, in recent years there has been an increase in anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes and the proliferation of hate groups. Between 2017 and 2018, the proportion of all hate crimes committed based on anti-LGBTQ+ bias increased from roughly 17% to 19%. Further, the Southern Poverty Law Center documented that the number of anti-LGBTQ+ hate groups increased 48% in 2018 alone.
PULSE NIGHTCLUB

The Pulse Nightclub mass shooting killed or injured more than 100 LGBTQ+ community members.

LGBTQ+ people were targets of a mass shooting on June 12, 2016, when an armed gunman killed 49 people and injured 53 more at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

The nightclub was having a “Latin Night” and more than 90% of fatalities were Latinx LGBTQ+ individuals and allies.

The Pulse Nightclub Massacre represents the deadliest violent attack against LGBTQ+ people in US history, and it is the greatest mass-casualty terrorist attack in the US since September 11, 2001.
BLACK TRANSGENDER GUN VIOLENCE

Black transgender women are being killed by guns and this epidemic of violence is increasing.

Anti-transgender stigma – including a hostile political climate, cultural marginalization, family rejection, and denial of opportunity in employment and housing – drives a culture of violence toward transgender people.

Using news reports, court records, and interviews with police, advocates, and prosecutors, the Washington Post identified 140 transgender women who were killed nationwide between 2015 and 2020. According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the number of transgender people murdered in 2021 has already exceeded the number of transgender people killed in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019 combined.

As of September 2021, HRC has recorded 87 murders of transgender people.

According to the 2017-2019 Transgender Homicide Tracker, nearly 80% of homicides of Black transgender women involved a gun. In total, 78% of confirmed murders of transgender people are gun deaths.

Black transgender women, who face compounding forces of oppression at the nexus of racism, sexism, and transphobia, are at severe risk of experiencing deadly violence. Black transgender women represent 4 in 5 transgender homicides; most of these murders involve a gun.

Often, transgender people are misgendered in media, law enforcement, and coroner reports, demonstrating an injustice toward the victims and hampering efforts to accurately track the burden of violence against this population.
Exposure to Violence Fear for Safety

In 2017, YRBS data showed that transgender youth are substantially more likely to be bullied or cyberbullied than their cisgender peers.

Nearly a quarter of transgender students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past year compared to 6.4% of cisgender boys and 4.1% of cisgender girls.

Reflecting this difference, transgender youth were more than five times more likely to report feeling unsafe at school than their cisgender peers.

LGBTQ+ youth more likely to face violence at school, be threatened with a weapon

LGBTQ+ youth are frequent targets of bullying and anti-LGBTQ+ motivated bias at school. Nationally representative data from the 2015-2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) demonstrates that LGBTQ+ teens are more likely to report feeling unsafe at school and experience bullying and cyberbullying and their heterosexual peers.

Troublingly, LGBTQ+ teens are also more than twice as likely to have been threatened or injured with a weapon at school compared to their heterosexual classmates.

Perhaps because of this exposure to violence and fear for safety, a higher proportion of LGBTQ+ youth in the YRBS from 2009 to 2015 reported carrying a weapon at school including “a gun, knife, or club” than heterosexual youth. In total, 14.0% of heterosexual, 21.8% of gay/lesbian, and 18.3% of bisexual teens reported carrying a weapon at school in the past month.
HIGHER SUICIDE RATES

LGBTQ+ people report substantially higher rates of suicide attempt than heterosexual, cisgender people.

The US Surgeon General and the National Institutes of Health consider LGBTQ+ people as comprising a high-risk population for suicide. Indeed, population-based studies demonstrate that LGBTQ+ people report substantially higher rates of suicide attempts than their cisgender and heterosexual peers, both in adolescence and adulthood.

In 2019, 23.4% of surveyed LGBTQ+ students in the YRBS had attempted suicide in the past year, compared to 6.4% of heterosexual students. Nearly half of the LGBTQ+ student population seriously considered attempting suicide, compared to 14.5% of heterosexual students.

These trends in suicide risk extend to transgender youth. More than one-third of transgender youth in the 2017 YRBS reported a past-year suicide attempt, and 16.8% experienced a serious suicide attempt that required medical treatment.
LGBTQ+ PEOPLE MAY OWN GUNS DUE TO FEAR OF VIOLENCE"
Approximately 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people has a gun in the home and nearly one quarter of transgender youth in a state-level survey carried a gun in the past year.

Whether or not any suicide attempt will be lethal depends primarily on the method used in a suicide attempt.

Nearly 80% of gun suicide attempts result in death compared to 13.5% of drug poisoning attempts. Thus, understanding LGBTQ+ people’s access to guns is paramount to understanding the population’s risk for suicide mortality.

Nationally representative findings from the 2010–2016 General Social Survey showed that approximately 21.5% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual respondents reported a gun in the home compared to 39.7% of heterosexuals. While, overall, sexual minority participants reported lower access to a gun in the home than heterosexuals, a higher proportion of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women reported personally owning a gun than heterosexual women.

One study using state-level representative data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey for California and Texas found that transgender respondents were substantially less likely to own a gun than non-transgender respondents.

In another study on gun ownership in California, more than 70% of LGBTQ+ handgun owners reported that their primary reason for owning a gun was for protection against other people.
There have been few studies that reported on access to guns among LGBTQ+ youth. However, a special report from the 2019 Nevada YRBS demonstrated strong disparities in the proportion of high schoolers who reported carrying a gun in the 12 months prior to the survey (not including carrying a gun for hunting or for sport, such as target shooting).

Overall 9% of LGBTQ+ youth reported carrying a gun compared to 4.3% of heterosexual youth.

Among transgender youth, this disparity was magnified: 21.6% of transgender teens reported carrying a gun in the past 12 months compared to 4.4% of cisgender youth.

One study has investigated sexual orientation differences in lethal methods used in suicide. From a sample of 59,075 adult suicides recorded in a CDC database - the National Violent Death Reporting System - most sexual minorities used hanging (38%), followed by firearm (30%) and drug or poison ingestion (20%). LGBTQ+ suicide victims were more likely than heterosexuals to be younger, female, and Black/African American.

A recent qualitative study with 22 LGBTQ+ adults who had made a near-fatal suicide attempt in the past 18 months investigated participants' motivations for choosing a particular method of suicide.

Participants' motivations encompassed five key reasons: accessibility, perceived lethality, familiarity, concerns about pain and violence involved with other methods, and not having access to a firearm.

The latter theme highlights that the lower proportion of gun ownership among LGBTQ+ adults compared to their heterosexual, cisgender peers may introduce a benefit of preventing lethal suicide attempts, but this requires more research.

For example, it is unknown whether or to what extent 'lethal means counseling' and restriction efforts - such as encouraging suicidal patients to lock up guns and store guns and ammunition separately - are employed by LGBTQ+ focused medical and mental health providers (e.g., practicing within LGBTQ+ community health centers).

LGBTQ+ suicide is more likely in young, Black/African American women.
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

LGBTQ+ people experience intimate partner violence (IPV) at a rate equal to or higher than the average U.S. citizen, but it is difficult to quantify the extent of such violence as sexual orientation or gender identity is often not accurately recorded in law enforcement reports.

However, existing surveys and other data collection methods provide information on the burden of IPV on LGBTQ+ people.

An in-depth literature review of 84 studies on the prevalence and correlates of IPV across gender and sexual orientation found that the lifetime prevalence of IPV against heterosexual male victims ranges from 7.3% to 32% compared with 50.3% to 65.2% against heterosexual female victims, depending on the type of violence specified by research measures.

The same study found the lifetime prevalence of IPV against gay men to range from 15.4% to 51%. In studies of IPV among young gay and bisexual men, IPV is bidirectional (i.e., both partners are abusers and victims) and physical injury is common.
EXCESSIVE RISK

OVER HALF OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE EXPERIENCE IPV IN THEIR LIFETIMES

BISEXUAL WOMEN EXPERIENCE HIGH RATES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Bisexual women also experience higher rates of IPV than lesbian and heterosexual women.

A report by the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) found that 61% of bisexual women reported being raped, assaulted, or stalked by an intimate partner over their lifetime, compared to 44% of lesbian women and 35% of heterosexual women.

Another study reports that bisexual women are highly exposed to IPV perpetrated by male partners. Furthermore, the risk of intimate partner homicide increases in the presence of a gun. The NISVS found that 15% of bisexual women, compared to 4.4% of heterosexual women, reported that their partner used a knife or a gun during an IPV encounter.
TRANSGENDER YOUTH MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE COMPARED TO CISGENDER YOUTH
VULNERABLE POPULATION

Research consistently finds that transgender people in the US experience IPV at significantly elevated rates relative to the general population. Estimates from the US Transgender Survey, the largest national sample of transgender people in the US, suggest that over half (54%) of transgender people experience IPV in their lifetimes. IPV victims who are transgender are two times more likely to experience violence by a former partner than survivors who are cisgender.

An understudied issue within IPV research is the links between experiences of teen dating violence, gun violence, and IPV as an adult. Among adolescents, the odds of physical abuse victimization are 2.5 times higher and sexual abuse 3.4 times higher among transgender versus cisgender youth. These risks increased further for racial-ethnic minority youth.
CONCLUSION
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

LGBTQ+ people face significant violence-related concerns in key domains of life, including community victimization, suicide, and intimate partner violence. In each of these domains, LGBTQ+ people have unique risk factors for exposure to gun violence related to their sexual and gender minority status.

In several contexts, transgender and other gender minority individuals experience extreme forms of victimization that may involve a firearm, making this a priority population for gun violence research, prevention, and intervention. Importantly, there are significant gaps in research and data availability for assessing exposure to gun violence among LGBTQ+ communities and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies.

Too often, data on gun violence do not collect sexual orientation or gender identity or do not disaggregate exposure to violence by type of weapon used (if any). Additionally, despite being at significantly elevated risk of victimization, LGBTQ+ communities and individuals are frequently left out of studies on gun violence.

Prevention of and interventions in gun violence among LGBTQ+ communities also require a tailored approach due to concerns about bias in reporting and response from law enforcement, avoidance of services delivered on the basis of binary gender categories, and other barriers experienced by community members when accessing mental health, medical, and legal services.

LGBTQ UNIQUE RISKS
- victimization and gun violence
CONTACT ABCT PRESS OFFICE

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MEDIA FINDING EXPERTS

ABCT has a list of speakers and subject matter experts on topics such as PTSD, anxiety, suicide, and more. Further details are available on the website or by contacting the ABC Press Office.

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES

About: Brady Organization research and statistics on gun violence in America and conducts research, community, and community organizing on issues around gun control.
Learn more: www.bradyunited.org

About: Wear Orange, raises awareness of the impact of gun violence on communities by calling attention to the impact of guns.
Learn more: www.wearorange.org

About: Everytown for Gun Safety is an American nonprofit organization that advocates for gun control and against gun violence.
Learn more: www.everytown.org

About: Amnesty International is a global organization that campaigns for global human rights, by investigating and exposing the facts of abuse whenever and wherever abuses happen.
Learn more: www.amnesty.org

About: The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence is an affiliate charitable organization of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. EFSGV identifies and implements evidence-based policy solutions and programs to reduce gun violence in all its forms.
Learn more: www.efsgv.org

About: The Child Welfare League of America is a coalition of private and public agencies that serve children and families across America who are vulnerable. CWLA provides expertise, leadership, and innovation on policies, programs, and practices.
Learn more: www.cwla.org
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

About: Children’s Defense Fund support policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to health care, quality education and a moral and spiritual foundation.
Learn more: www.childrensdefense.org.

About: HealthyChildren.org provides the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) approved information on issues relevant to children’s development and physical and psychological wellbeing.
Learn more: www.healthychildren.org

About: Firearm Safety Among Children and Teens (FACTS) at the University of Michigan supports research focused on the prevention of firearm injury in children and teens.
Learn more: www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/pages/facts/index.html
JOURNALISTS RESOURCES

About: New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center, Rutgers School of Public Health, provides high-quality, multi-disciplinary research on gun violence causality and prevention and translates this research into clear and actionable policies and programs.

Learn more: gunviolenceresearchcenter.rutgers.edu

About: Centers for Disease Control, conducts research and disseminates information on firearm violence and prevention.

Learn more: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/

About: Prevention Institute is a national nonprofit whose mission is to build prevention and health equity to ensure the places where all people live, work, play and learn foster health, safety, and wellbeing.

Learn more: www.preventioninstitute.org

About: The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry provides a range of resources on the psychiatric impact of stressful circumstances for children, including an extensive library on guns and violence.

Learn more: www.aacap.org

About: The RAND Corporation provides research data and an extensive library on guns and violence. RAND's reports are free to download and from anywhere in the world.

Learn more: www.aacap.org

About: The Gun Violence Archive (GVA) provides freely accessible research data and reports on gun violence, including mass shootings and police related fatalities.

Learn more: www.gunviolencearchive.org
GUN VIOLENCE
STATISTICS

The association of suicidal ideation with firearm purchasing during a firearm purchasing surge


Are individuals who purchased firearms during the 2020-2021 purchasing surge more likely than firearm owners who did not purchase during the surge and non-firearm owners to have experienced thoughts of suicide?

**Figure notes:** 1 & 4: Data were matched to Census demographic draws from NJ, IL, and NY. Data were collected January-June 2021.

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**

New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center

An examination of preferred messengers on firearm safety for suicide prevention

Who do firearm owners and non-firearm owners deem most credible to discuss safe firearm storage for suicide prevention? Do demographic differences within the sample of firearm owners impact the ranking of sources?

A total of 6,200 United States residents participated in the study. Participants matched to 2010 Census data.

**WHAT WAS FOUND?**

**Firearm owners and non-firearm owners:**
- Top three most credible sources to discuss firearm safety for suicide prevention: law enforcement, current military personnel, military veterans.
- Least credible sources to discuss firearm safety for suicide prevention: celebrities, acquaintances, and physicians/medical professionals.

**Female and male firearm owners:**
- Top three most credible sources to discuss firearm safety for suicide prevention: law enforcement, current military personnel, military veterans.
- Least credible sources to discuss firearm safety for suicide prevention: celebrities, acquaintances, and physicians/medical professionals.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

The similar ranking of the top three sources shows that the groups agree on the relative credibility of many sources, but the average level of credibility for particular sources varies. The findings highlight that the effectiveness of messaging on safe firearm storage for suicide prevention may depend on the identity of the individual delivering the message. Not every individual will find the same messenger equally credible, even if the message itself remains the same. It is vital to ensure that both the content of the message and the individual delivering the message reflect the needs and perspective of the intended audience.

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65.2% White
51.0% Female
Firearm type and number: Examining differences among firearm owning suicide decedents

Among firearm owners, are the type of firearms owned and the number of firearms owned associated with dying by suicide using a firearm rather than by another method?

Participants

112 suicide decedents who owned at least one firearm

91.7% men

93.4% white

What was found?

Handgun ownership was associated with being died by suicide using a firearm...

88.8%

Shotgun ownership was associated with being died by suicide using a firearm...

81.8%

What do the findings mean?

For example: If handguns were owned primarily for protection, they may be stored unsafely, and therefore more easily accessible during a time of crisis. Safe storage of all firearms should be encouraged in order to put time and distance between an individual in crisis and the most lethal method for suicide.

Conclusions

The handgun sample in our sample yields interesting results. However, more research is needed to understand the reasons for handgun ownership and how it may affect suicide rates.

Please cite this article as: Bond, A. E., & Anestis, M. D. (2021). Firearm type and number: Examining differences among firearm owning suicide decedents. Archives of Suicide Research.
Firearm Safety for Families

Studies show children are naturally curious, even about a firearm they’ve been warned not to touch.

Kids are safer when:
Firearms are in a lockbox or safe, unloaded. Ammunition is locked away separately.

Kids are safest when:
Firearms are stored outside the home.

Keep the "safe" in firearm safety
Hiding a gun is not enough! Kids are curious, and studies show they usually know where a family keeps a gun.

Gun safes can lower the risk a curious child will be hurt:

- Safe or lockbox for handguns
- Locked gun safe for rifles
- Gun trigger locks—inexpensive and effective
- Lock box for ammo

## Fast Facts: 2019 and 5-Year Averages

**Gun Deaths, 2019**

In 2019, nearly 40,000 Americans were killed by gun violence, including over 14,400 by homicide and nearly 24,000 by suicide. Gun violence killed nearly 109 Americans daily, including 39 by homicide and 66 by suicide. This is a horrifying reality for our country — one we must change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gun deaths total, 2019</th>
<th>Average daily gun deaths, 2019</th>
<th>Gun death rate, 2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homicide</strong></td>
<td>14,414</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.59</td>
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<td><strong>Suicide</strong></td>
<td>23,941</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6.84</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unintentional</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<td><strong>Legal Intervention</strong></td>
<td>520</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Undetermined Intent</strong></td>
<td>346</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39,707</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.86</strong></td>
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</table>

Note: Rates listed are age-adjusted to allow for accurate comparisons between populations with different age distributions.

*A cautionary note about "legal intervention" data: Strong evidence shows that the government's data (including the CDC data presented here) provides a substantial under-count of police-involved injuries and deaths.* To address this gap, several media sources have tracked police-involved shootings in recent years, most notably the Washington Post's Fatal Force database, finding more than twice the number of police-involved fatal shootings than are reported in FBI and CDC databases. The Fatal Force database reported that 9,999 and 1,000 Americans were shot and killed by police in 2019 and 2020 respectively, nearly double the number that the CDC reported. Ultimately, better data on police-involved injuries and deaths are sorely needed. Compilations and comprehensive data collection at the local level, reporting to the federal government, and transparency in the public dissemination of data will be critical for understanding this unique kind of gun violence and developing evidence-based solutions to minimize police-involved shootings.

**Gun Deaths Among Children and Teens, 2019**

Tragically, more than 3,300 children and teens (ages 0-19) were killed by gun violence in 2019, including over 2,000 by homicide and 1,100 by suicide. An average of nine children and teens were killed by gun violence daily in 2019, including six by homicide and three by suicide.

<table>
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<th>Child and teen gun deaths total, 2019</th>
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<td>1,167</td>
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<td><strong>Unintentional</strong></td>
<td>117</td>
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<td><strong>Legal Intervention</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Unreliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undetermined Intent</strong></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,390</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


Source: A Public Health Crisis in the Making: Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021
The following averages are based on the most recent five years of CDC data, 2015-2019.

**Average Number of Gun Deaths, 2015-2019**

Every year from 2015 through 2019, an average of nearly 40,000 Americans were killed by guns, including over 14,000 by homicide and 23,000 by suicide. This totals more than 100 gun deaths every single day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average annual gun deaths, 2015-2019</th>
<th>Average daily gun deaths, 2015-2019</th>
<th>Average gun death rate, 2015-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>14,062</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>23,437</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentional</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Intervention</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined Intent</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38,826</strong></td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.73</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Rates listed are age adjusted to allow for accurate comparisons between populations with different age distributions.*

**Average Number of Gun Deaths Among Children and Teens, 2015-2019**

On average, over 3,200 children and teens (ages 0-19) were killed by guns annually from 2015-2019, including over 1,800 by homicide, 1,100 by suicide, and 115 unintentionally. Nine children and teens died from gun violence every day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>1,855</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentional</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Intervention</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined Intent</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,231</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>3.94</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gun Deaths in the United States: 2019 and Trends Over Time

Gun violence was a leading cause of death in 2019. On average, 109 individuals died from gun violence every day in 2019. For the year in total:

- 39,707 people died from gun violence in the U.S., a small decrease of 33 gun deaths from 2018. 2,112 more Americans died by gun violence (39,707) than by car crashes (37,595).
- It was the third consecutive year of nearly 40,000 gun deaths, capping a decade during which the overall gun death rate increased 17% (10.1 to 11.86 deaths per 100,000, age-adjusted, 2010-2019).
- Males were disproportionately impacted across all forms of gun violence and accounted for 86% of gun death victims. Black males were at especially high risk, with the highest rate of gun death among demographic groups (43.09 deaths per 100,000).

Gun violence comes in many forms and that was true in 2019:

- The proportion of homicides upticked slightly as compared to the previous year, representing 36% of all gun deaths. More than 14,400 individuals were firearm homicide victims in 2019, including 2,023 children and teens (ages 0-19). This equated to an average of 39 firearm homicides every day.
- Suicides continued to make up 60% of all gun deaths. Nearly 24,000 individuals died by firearm suicide, including 1,167 children and teens (ages 0-19). This equated to an average of 66 lives lost every day.
- While the majority of gun deaths are homicides and suicides (combined 96%), people died by other forms of gun violence too, including unintentional, legal intervention, and undetermined intent.

Sources: A Public Health Crisis: Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EDFSGV), 2021

**FIGURE 1**
Number of Gun Deaths by Intent, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentional</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Intervention</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 "Unintentional" is the category used for deaths that were not caused purposely by a gun violence, such as accidental (e.g., for the suicide victim who unintentionally shot himself while participating in a suicide attempt). Unintentional victims are generally described as accidents, which can imply that nothing could be done to prevent their happening. We do not use "accidental" terminology because gun violence is preventable. Every accidental firearm-related injury and death by firearm is a failure of firearm storage practices and a failure to enforce laws and regulations designed to prevent unintentional gun violence.

3 "Legal Intervention" is the category used by the CDC for deaths inflicted by law enforcement officers or other law enforcement agents, including military or navy duty, in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest law violators, protecting civilians, maintaining order, and other law enforcement. Cases in which police or other law enforcement officers discharge a firearm are described as police officers or officer-involved deaths.

4 While the majority of the reported deaths by unintentional, legal intervention, and undetermined intent in the course of death investigations, there are some cases where there is no available information that is sufficient to enable the medical or legal authority to make a distinction between unintentional injury and firearm-suicide or assault (homicide). These cases are described as having an "undetermined intent."
The Lethality and Accessibility of Firearms Drives Up Homicides and Suicides

Due to their high lethality and ease of accessibility, firearms are often the method of choice for both homicides and suicides.

FIGURE 2
Homicide and Suicide by Injury Method (Firearm vs. Non-Firearm), 2019

In 2019, 75% of all homicides were committed by firearm:

- While only 22% of attempted homicides with a gun are lethal, guns are still an incredibly lethal means that may also result in nonfatal but very serious injuries.  
- Guns are used in homicides nearly nine times more than the second most common method of homicide (cutting/piercing) and more than 30 times more than suffocation.

In 2019, 50% of all suicides involved firearms:

- While poisoning is the most commonly used suicide attempt method (used in approximately 60% of all suicidal acts), firearms, which account for less than 10% of all suicidal acts, account for half of all suicide deaths.
- While poisoning is lethal less than 3% of the time, 90% of suicide attempts involving firearms are lethal.
- The second most lethal suicide attempt method is drowning (56% of suicidal acts by drowning result in death), yet it is far less likely to happen. There were nearly 46 times more firearm suicide deaths than deaths by drowning in 2019.

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
**FIGURE 3**
Homicide Rates, by Method, 2019

- Firearm
- Cut/Pierce
- Unspecified Injury
- Specified (not elsewhere classified) Injury
- Suffocation
- Other specified, classifiable injury
- Struck by or against
- Poisoning
- Fire/Flame
- Drowning
- Other land transport

**FIGURE 4**
Suicide Rates, by Method, 2019

- Firearm
- Suffocation
- Poisoning
- Fall
- Cut/Pierce
- Other specified, classifiable injury
- Drowning
- Other land transport
- Fire/Flame
- Specified (not elsewhere classified) Injury

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021
Two Decades of Gun Violence

One way to better understand gun violence is to explore its changes and impacts on communities over time. By examining the last two decades of gun death data, we see that gun violence deaths have escalated in recent years, driven by a significant spike in firearm homicides and steady growth in firearm suicides.

Gun Violence Trends, 2000-2019

Nearly 40,000 people died by gun violence in 2019, part of a three-year cluster in which there were nearly 40,000 annual gun deaths. This capped a two-decade period during which nearly 570,000 lives were lost to gun violence -- similar to the entire population of Wyoming.

- Over the last 20 years, the most recent five years have been the deadliest. The highest gun death rate occurred in 2017, followed by 2018, 2019, 2016, and 2015.
- The largest single-year increase in the overall gun death rate was from 2014 to 2015; this substantial 7.3% jump can be directly attributed to the astronomical increase in the firearm homicide rate that year.
- The lowest gun death rate over the last 20 years occurred in 2004, 13 years prior to the peak. The next lowest gun death rates occurred in 2009, 2010, 2000, and 2011.
- The increase from the lowest to highest gun death rate (occurring in 2004 and 2017, respectively) was 20%.

Firearm Homicide Trends, 2000-2019

More than 14,000 people were killed by firearm homicide in 2019, capping two decades during which more than 200,000 lives were lost to firearm homicide, more Americans than were lost in World War I and Vietnam combined.

- After years of decline (from 2006-2011), the firearm homicide rate fluctuated before an astronomical rise from 2014 to 2015.
- Over the last 20 years, the most recent four years have been the deadliest. The highest firearm homicide rate occurred in 2017, followed by 2016, 2019, 2018, and 2006.
- The largest single-year increase in the firearm homicide rate was from 2014 to 2015, when the rate increased 18%. Another substantial jump in the firearm homicide rate occurred the following year, from 2015 to 2016, when the rate increased 11%.
- The lowest firearm homicide rate over the last 20 years was in 2014, three years prior to the peak. The next lowest firearm homicide rates occurred in 2011, 2013, 2010, and 2000.
- The increase from the lowest to highest firearm homicide rate (occurring in 2014 and 2017, respectively) was 31%.

Source: A Public Health Crisis in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021
Firearm Suicide Trends, 2000-2019

Nearly 24,000 Americans died by firearm suicide in 2019, capping two decades during which more than 340,000 people were lost to firearm suicide, 50,000 more than the number of U.S. troops killed in World War II.

- Overall, the firearm suicide epidemic has been growing, despite the year 2019 showing a slight reprieve, with the rate dropping by nearly 3% from 2018.

- Over the last 20 years, the most recent five years have been the deadliest. The highest firearm suicide rate occurred in 2018, followed by 2017, 2019, 2016, and 2015.

- The largest single-year increase in the firearm suicide rate was from 2015 to 2016, when the rate increased 3.7%. The single-year increase was similar (3.6%) from 2007 to 2008. The change in the firearm suicide rate from year to year has been consistently and steadily increasing, with only a few exceptions.

- The lowest firearm suicide rate over the last 20 years occurred in 2006, 12 years prior to the peak. The next lowest gun death rates occurred at the start of the new millennium, in 2007, 2004, 2005, and 2003.

- The increase from the lowest to highest firearm suicide rate (occurring in 2006 and 2018, respectively) was 27%.

Figure 5

Number of Gun Deaths, 2000-2019

FIGURE 6

Gun Death Rates by Intent, 2000-2019

Disproportionate Impacts

Gun Violence Overall by Demographics

While nobody is immune from gun violence, some demographic groups are at much higher risk than others:

By sex:
- Males are six times more likely to die by gun violence (any intent) than females, making up 86% of U.S. firearm deaths in 2019 (84% of homicides and 87% of suicides).

By age:
- Gun deaths impact both younger and older generations. In fact, the age groups most impacted by gun deaths are young adults (ages 15-34) followed by older adults (ages 75 and older). This is primarily due to homicide victims being disproportionately young and suicide decedents skewing more elderly.

By race/ethnicity among males:
- Black males are disproportionately impacted and have by far the highest rate of gun death, nearly twice as high (1.8x) as the second-highest (and also disproportional) rate of gun death among American Indian/Alaska Native males. Continuing in order descending by rate are White, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders. Black males were more than twice as likely to die by firearms than White males in 2019.

By race/ethnicity among females:
- The highest firearm death rate is among American Indian/Alaska Natives, followed closely by Black females. Continuing in order descending by rate are White, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders. American Indian/Alaska Native females were 1.4 times more likely to die by firearms than the White females in 2019.

To stop gun violence in all its forms, broad prevention efforts to reduce risk to the population as a whole must be implemented together with tailored solutions for high-risk populations. Understanding how risk differs across the population by sex, race/ethnicity, and age, and broken down by gun death intent (homicide and suicide), is critical for designing these interventions.

Demographic categories:
The CDC WONDER database allows mortality data to be broken down into the following demographic categories: age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin. The four race categories are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, and White. Hispanic origin is considered an ethnicity, which is why it is not considered a race category. For example, a person may be classified as American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hispanic, Asian and Hispanic, Black and Hispanic, or White and Hispanic. Hispanic origin is classified as "Hispanic or Latino" or "Not Hispanic or Latino.

For our analysis, we chose to use "Hispanic or Latino" as a distinct category regardless of race, and selected "Not Hispanic or Latino" for each of the race categories. This ensured that individuals were not counted twice in different demographic group and follows common practice used by the CDC for data analyses.

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
Homicide by Demographics

There was a 66x difference in risk of firearm homicide between Black males and Asian females (the highest and lowest risk demographics, respectively). A closer look at demographic data reveals:

**By sex:**
- More than eight in ten U.S. firearm homicide victims were male (84%) in 2019. Males were five times more likely to be victims than females.

**By age:**
- Firearm homicide victims are disproportionately young. Across the population -- all races combined, all sexes -- the highest risk age for dying by firearm homicide was 15-24 years old. Separated by race/ethnicity, this young age (15-24) is the highest risk age for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islanders, but the risk is highest at slightly older ages for American Indian/Alaska Native (25-34) and White (35-44) populations.

**By race/ethnicity among males:**
- Fifty-three % of all firearm homicide victims (63% of male victims) in 2019 were Black males. Across all ages, Black men were nearly 8 times more likely to die by firearm homicide than the general population (all sexes) and 14 times more likely to die by firearm homicide than White men. Black males were followed by (in order of decreasing risk): American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino/Hispanic, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander males.
  - Young Black males (15-34) are especially disproportionately impacted, making up 2% of the population but accounting for 37% of all gun homicide fatalities in 2019. Their rate of firearm homicide was more than 20 times higher than White males of the same age group.

**By race/ethnicity among females:**
- Black females had the highest risk of firearm homicide among females of all other races and ethnicities, followed by (in order of decreasing risk): American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino/Hispanic, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander females. Black females and American Indian/Alaska Native females also were both at greater risk of firearm homicide than both White and Asian/Pacific Islander males. Black females were more than four times more likely to be firearm homicide victims than White females.

Suicide by Demographics

There was a 38.5x difference in firearm suicide risk between White men and Asian women (the highest and lowest risk demographics, respectively). A closer look at demographic data reveals:

By sex:
- Nearly nine in ten U.S. firearm suicide decedents are male (87% in 2019), reflecting the increased risk of firearm suicide for males as compared to females across all races/ethnicities and age groups. Males were nearly seven times more likely to die by firearm suicide than females.

By age:
While the overall data shows that firearm suicide victims were disproportionately elderly (75+ is the highest risk age group for the population as a whole), this was skewed by White men, the highest risk demographic.
- The risk for White males increased across the lifespan and peaked at ages 75+.
- Among males of each racial and ethnic identity other than White, the risk of suicide by firearm peaked much younger, among men ages 15-34.
- The risk of firearm suicide for White females peaked at ages 45-54 in 2019.
- Among females of each racial and ethnic identity other than White, the risk of suicide by firearm peaked younger, among women ages 25-34.

By race/ethnicity among males:
- The majority of all firearm suicide decedents are White males (73%). White males had the highest firearm suicide rate overall, followed by (in order of decreasing risk): American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander males.
- Across all ages, White men were more than twice as likely to die by firearm suicide than the general population (all sexes). American Indian/Alaska Native males also have a disproportionately high rate of firearm suicide (11.16 deaths per 100,000), although there are far fewer suicide deaths among this demographic due to the smaller size of the population as a whole. In 2019, 17,427 White males and 152 American Indian/Alaska males died by firearm suicide.
- White males were at the highest risk for firearm suicide at all ages except 15-34, during which the risk was highest for American Indian/Alaska Native males.

By race/ethnicity among females:
- The majority of all female firearm suicide decedents are White females (86%). White females had the highest firearm suicide rate both overall and within each age group, followed by (in order of decreasing risk): American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander females.

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
FIGURE 7
Gun Death Rates by Demographic Groups, 2019

Geographic Variations

Overall gun death rates at the state level show substantial variation, such as the seven-fold difference in risk between the states with the lowest and highest overall gun death rates (Massachusetts and Alaska in 2019, respectively). In 2019, by urbanization level:

- The total gun death rate was highest in the most rural counties, driven largely by having the highest rate of firearm suicide as compared to other urbanization levels.
- Homicide rates, on the other hand, were highest in urban counties (large central metro and medium metro counties), but much more evenly distributed across urbanization levels, with a smaller spread between the lowest and highest rates.
- The total gun death rate was lowest in the suburbs (large fringe metro counties), a combination of having the lowest homicide rate and second-lowest suicide rate.

A person's geographic location is directly connected to the risk of gun violence. For example, in Maryland in 2019, someone living in Baltimore City was 13 times more likely to die by firearm than someone living 40 miles down the road in Montgomery County. Understanding these differences adds critical context to gun violence prevention efforts.

Why use rates of deaths?

While numbers of gun deaths can help illustrate the burden of gun violence in a particular community, because the total population varies significantly by geographic area, firearm death rates (the number of gun deaths per 100,000 total population) provide an important measure for comparison. For example, Cook County (Chicago), Illinois has by far the highest number of firearm homicides out of any county in the country, averaging over 600 each year. However, because Cook County has a population of 5.2 million residents, the firearm homicide rate is lower than many other large metro counties with smaller populations. In fact, Cook County’s firearm homicide rate is, on average, 12.12 deaths per 100,000 people, ranking it 72nd in the country and a fraction of the homicide rate in the highest rate counties, such as Macon County, Alabama, which had the highest firearm homicide rate from 2015-2019 -- 44.44 deaths per 100,000 people -- an average of eight gun homicides per year in a population less than 20,000 people. Clearly, the sheer number of firearm homicides illustrates that Cook County is in the midst of a gun violence crisis, but this crisis is not unique to Chicago; it is equally devastating in cities across the United States and among more rural counties, as well.

Sources: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
FIGURE 8
Gun Death Rates by State, Ranked Lowest to Highest, 2019

- Suicide proportion
- Homicide proportion
- Other gun death proportion

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFS GV). 2021
Overall Gun Violence Rates Across the States

The five states with the highest overall gun death rates in 2019 were Alaska, Mississippi, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Alabama. Alaska had the highest gun death rate for 7 of the last 10 years, which in 2019 was seven times higher than Massachusetts, which had the lowest rate. Mississippi ranked in the five highest overall gun death rates in the country every year in the last decade, while Alabama and Louisiana did so for all but one year.

On the other end of the spectrum, the five states with the lowest overall gun death rates in 2019 were Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Hawaii, and Rhode Island. Hawaii, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island each ranked in the five lowest overall gun death rates for all of the last 10 years.

Figure 8 displays how the 50 states and District of Columbia fared with gun deaths in 2019, ranking them from lowest to highest gun death rate. It additionally shows the proportion of deaths attributed to homicide, suicide, and other intents (law enforcement intervention, unintentional, and unclassified).

**FIGURE 9**

*Gun Death Rates by State, 2019*
A Closer Look: Gun Violence by Intent Across Counties and Urbanization Levels

Looking more closely at gun violence at the county level, separated by intent (homicide and suicide), helps to better understand the burden of gun violence in a specific community. We looked at 2019 data by county urbanization level and individual county data using five-year averages from 2015-2019 (just one year of data would not produce a reliable rate of gun homicide or suicide for comparison).

While county-level data layers valuable context on top of state data, data at an even more local level — census tracts — is much needed to truly understand concentrations of gun violence. Because county size varies significantly within and between states, data at this level does not consistently portray the most accurate representation of the local areas most impacted by gun violence. Taking a closer look at Los Angeles (LA) County, CA, which has a population of 10 million, we find that it had 670 firearm homicides in 2019, a rate of 6.47 deaths per 100,000 people, which is above the national average but below the state average. Stopping here, however, would be insufficient, as LA County county comprises neighborhoods and cities with populations larger than many U.S. counties and extremely disparate firearm homicide rates. For example, Burbank and Compton, cities in LA County with populations of approximately 100,000 each, had one and sixteen firearm homicides in 2019, respectively. They shoulder very different burdens of gun violence and require different approaches to prevention.

About urbanization levels:
The CDC classifies counties by level of urbanization using a six-level urban-to-rural classification scheme. The most urban category consists of "central" counties of large metropolitan areas and the most rural category consists of nonmetropolitan "noncore" counties. The six classification levels for counties from most urban to most rural are large central metro (≥1 million population and covers a principal city), large fringe metro (≥1 million population but does not cover a principal city, akin to suburbs), medium metro (≥250,000 but <1 million population), small metro (<250,000 population), micropolitan (nonmetro; has an urban cluster of ≥10,000 but <50,000 population), and noncore (nonmetro; most rural). See the Glossary for formal definitions of each.

FIGURE 10
Gun Death Rates by Urbanization, 2019

![Graph showing gun death rates by urbanization level.](https://example.com/graph)


FIGURE 11
Counties with the Highest Rates of Firearm Homicide and Suicide, 2015-2019

Counties with the Highest Firearm Suicide Rates, 2015-2019
- Park County, CO
- La Paz County, AZ
- Sevier County, UT
- Morgan County, WV
- Lincoln County, MT
- Elko County, NV
- Duchesne County, UT
- Humboldt County, NV
- Silver Bow County, MT
- McDowell County, WV
- Uinta County, WY
- Curry County, OR
- Marion County, AR
- Gunnison County, CO
- Lumpkin County, GA
- Park County, WY
- Macon County, TN
- Dawson County, GA
- Idaho County, ID
- Polk County, AR

Counties with the Highest Firearm Homicide Rates, 2015-2019
- Macon County, AL
- Petersburg City, VA
- St. Louis City, MO
- Phillips County, AR
- Baltimore City, MD
- Dallas County, AL
- Washington County, MS
- Orleans Parish, LA
- Holmes County, MS
- Coahoma County, MS
- Jefferson County, AR
- Leflore County, MS
- Adams County, MS
- Hinds County, MS
- Darville City, VA
- Mississippi County, AR
- Vance County, NC
- Colleton County, SC
- Robeson County, NC
- Hampton County, SC

See appendix 6 for the list of counties with the highest firearm homicide rates and suicides with accompanying data.

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021
Geography of Homicide

By urbanization level:
When clustered by urbanization level, the highest rate of firearm homicide in 2019 was in large central metro counties (most urban), 1.3 times higher than the national average and 1.8 times higher than large fringe metro counties (suburbs), where the homicide rate is lowest. The next highest rates were in medium metro and then noncore metro (most rural) counties. As compared to firearm suicide rates, the firearm homicide rate was more evenly distributed across all types of counties; the difference between the most urban and most rural counties was much smaller, and there was no clear trend to track rates as counties became more rural or urban. Because of their higher rates and large populations, the vast majority — 89% — of firearm homicides occur in metropolitan areas (large, medium, and small metro and large fringe metro).

Looking at specific counties:
When looking at individual counties rather than consolidated by urbanization, a different pattern emerges. Of the 20 counties with the highest rates of firearm homicide, the majority are rural (14/20 were noncore or micropolitan non-metro) and only the remaining 6 are metropolitan (large, medium, and small metro, and large fringe metro). While high rates in sparsely-populated counties represent small total numbers of deaths, these rates are alarmingly high and indicate a significant burden on communities. Notably, 19 of the top 20 are in the South.

See appendix 6 for the list of counties with the highest firearm homicide rates.

FIGURE 12
Proportion of Firearm Homicides by Urbanization Level, 2019

- 42.7% Large Central Metro
- 17.7% Large Fringe Metro
- 20.7% Medium Metro
- 7.5% Small Metro
- 6.7% Micropolitan (Nonmetro)
- 4.7% NonCore (Nonmetro)
**Geography of Suicide**

**By urbanization level:**
The firearm suicide rate increases as counties become more rural. When clustered by urbanization level, in 2019, noncore (non-metro, most rural) counties had the highest rate of firearm suicide, 1.7 times higher than the national average and 2.6 times higher than large central metro (urban, big city) counties, where the firearm suicide rate was lowest. Because the total population is concentrated in cities and large suburbs as compared to more rural areas, the majority of firearm suicides -- 78% -- still occur in metropolitan areas (large, medium, and small metro, and large fringe metro), despite the lower rates.

**Looking at specific counties:**
The 20 counties with the highest rates of firearm suicide from 2015-2019 were mostly rural (17/20 were noncore or micropolitan nonmetro) and nearly all clustered in the Mountain West (12/20) and South (7/20).

See appendix 7 for the list of counties with the highest firearm suicide rates.

**Figure 13**
Proportion of Firearm Suicides by Urbanization Level, 2019

- 20.5% Large Central Metro
- 21.7% Large Fringe Metro
- 23.3% Medium Metro
- 12.4% Small Metro
- 12.1% Micropolitan (Nonmetro)
- 9.9% NonCore (Nonmetro)
Gun Violence as a Leading Cause of Death

A Leading Cause of Death Among Young People

Unlike other leading causes of death, such as cancer or heart disease, gun violence disproportionately impacts children and young adults.

Children and teens 1-19 years:
Firearms were the leading cause of death in 2019 for American children and teens ages 1-19, prematurely taking the lives of nearly 3,400 Americans -- the second-highest total in twenty years -- and accounting for nearly one in ten deaths in this age group. Of these youngest victims, 44% were Black. More than half of all Black teens (15-19) who died in 2019 -- a staggering 57% -- were killed by gun violence. While suicides are 60% of all gun deaths across the whole U.S. population, homicides are the most common type of gun death among children and teens -- 60% of child and teen gun deaths were homicides and 34% were suicides.

Young adults 20-39 years:
Firearms are the leading cause of death for young adults ages 20-24 as well, accounting for almost one in four deaths in this age group and overall half of the deaths among young Black men, specifically. While firearms drop to be the second leading cause of death for the general population for ages 25-34, they hold their position as the leading cause of death among Black men through age 39.

Total population under 40 years:
In total, 19,524 Americans under the age of 40 died by gun violence in 2019 -- 49% of all gun deaths. But while we know the numbers, the loss is immeasurable. When a young person is shot and killed, they lose decades of potential: the potential to grow up, have a family, contribute to society, and pursue their passions in life. Families lose a child, parent, or other loved one; the loss is felt across neighborhoods and communities. Despite the enormous toll gun violence inflicts on Americans, scant attention and only minimal funding is allocated to study and prevent this leading cause of death among young people.

FIGURE 14
Leading Causes of Death for Americans, Ages 1-39
By Injury Mechanism and all Other Leading Causes

Poisoning
Firearm
Motor Vehicle Crash
All other diseases
Cancers
Heart Diseases
Suffocation
Other clinical anomalies
Liver Diseases
Drowning

Note: We choose not to include infant deaths in our analysis as infants (under age 1) account for the majority of gun deaths in the first 7 days of life and are generally not regarded as firearm-related.

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making. Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
Firearm Fatalities Compared to Other Forms of Fatal Injuries

Injuries make up a substantial burden of premature death in the United States, and among injury mechanisms, firearms are one of the deadliest. In 2019, poisonings, falls, firearms, motor vehicle crashes, and suffocation were the five leading causes of injury-related death. Gun deaths outnumbered all the remaining causes of injury-related death combined.

Compared to car crashes:
The burden of firearm injury is often compared to car crashes, and their numbers are similar. In the last three years, however, for the first time more Americans died by guns than by car crashes (in 2019, 39,707 and 37,595 deaths, respectively). Reducing motor vehicle injuries and their severity has long been a focus of injury prevention policy; while there is clearly more work to do, substantial reductions have been made. A similarly comprehensive approach to gun violence prevention also holds promise.

FIGURE 15
Firearm Deaths and Motor Vehicle Traffic Deaths, 2000-2019

Other notable injury death comparisons:
- 14 times as many Americans died by a gunshot than by cutting/piercing (knife, etc.)
- Nearly 9 times more Americans died by a gunshot than by drowning
- Nearly 13 times more Americans died by a gunshot than in a fire

Sources: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021
FIGURE 16
Total Injury Deaths by Mechanism, 2019

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
Policy Recommendations to Stop Gun Violence

Gun violence is an ongoing yet preventable public health tragedy affecting communities all over the United States. It is also a complex issue that requires many approaches to its prevention, starting with the collection and timely dissemination of data. The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence are committed to advancing evidence-based policies, programs, and practices and ensuring that these preventative measures are designed and implemented equitably. Fortunately, there are a myriad of effective options at the federal, state, and local levels.

To improve how firearms data are collected and disseminated, we recommend all levels of government:

- Collect more comprehensive gun violence data for fatal and non-fatal firearm injuries, shootings that may not involve physical injuries, police-involved shootings, and firearm-involved crimes where no shots were fired, including domestic violence-related threats.
- Make data publicly available where possible, particularly to researchers studying gun violence and its prevention.
- Invest in resources to support the timely release of firearms injury and fatality data.

To stop gun violence in all its forms, we recommend:

- Apply the public health approach, with an equity lens, for effective gun violence prevention.\(^2\)
- Fund and conduct gun violence research, and improve data infrastructure, which is fundamental for effective gun violence prevention.
- Enact and implement a true universal background check law that requires background checks on all gun sales and transfers, including private and online sales, and eliminate “default proceed” sales.
- Enact and implement state firearm licensing laws and support equitable implementation through local, state, and federal funding.
- Enact and implement state extreme risk laws to prevent tragedy before it occurs and support robust implementation through federal funding.
- Invest in community violence intervention and prevention programs and address the underlying social and economic inequalities that drive firearm violence.
- Support implementation of healthcare professional training on lethal means safety counseling so they are prepared to ask patients about firearm access and provide effective and respectful counseling when appropriate.
- Expand both federal and state domestic violence firearm prohibitions to reduce abusers’ access to firearms and improve collection and reporting of domestic violence-related data.

• Reinstate the federal ban on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines.
• Prohibit the manufacture, purchase, and possession of "ghost guns."
• Repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA).
• Require that new semi-automatic pistols manufactured, sold, or imported into the U.S. are equipped with microstamping technology.
• Enact and implement state prohibitions on the open carry of firearms in public and strongly regulate concealed carry of firearms to help protect public safety.
• Repeal state-level stand your ground laws, which run counter to centuries of self-defense doctrine and make it legal for individuals to kill another even when they can easily and safely retreat.
• Improve police accountability and strengthen police legitimacy through procedurally just policing practices.

**APPENDIX 1:**

*United States Gun Deaths by Intent, 2000-2019*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Gun Deaths</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Deaths</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Deaths</th>
<th>Unintentional Gun Deaths</th>
<th>Legal Intervention Deaths*</th>
<th>Gun Deaths by Undetermined Intent</th>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>323</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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</table>

**A cautionary note about "legal intervention" data: Strong evidence shows that the government’s data (including the CDC data presented here) provide a substantial under count of police-involved injuries and deaths.** To address this gap, several media sources have tracked police-involved shootings in recent years, most notably the Washington Post's Fatal Force database, finding more than double the number of police-involved fatalities than are reported in FBI and CDC databases. The Fatal Force database reported that 999 and 3,000 Americans were shot and killed by police in 2019 and 2020, respectively, nearly doubling the number that the CDC reported. Ultimately, better data on police-involved injuries and deaths are sorely needed. Comprehensive and consistent data collection at the local level, reporting to the federal government, and transparency in the public dissemination of data will be critical for understanding this unique type of gun violence and developing evidence-based solutions to minimize police-involved shootings.

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*Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making. Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021*
## APPENDIX 2:

**United States Gun Death Rates, by Intent, 2000-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gun Death Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
<th>Unintentional Gun Death Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>3.79</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.91</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<td>5.62</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
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<td>5.67</td>
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<td>0.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>11.06</td>
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</table>

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV). 2021
### APPENDIX 3:
United States Gun Death Numbers by Demographic Groups, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Gun Deaths</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Deaths</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (all races/ethnicities)</td>
<td>5,666</td>
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<td>3,216</td>
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### APPENDIX 4:
United States Gun Death Rates by Demographic Groups, 2019

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Gun Death Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</th>
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<td>Female (all races/ethnicities)</td>
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<td>5.09</td>
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Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
## APPENDIX 5:
State Variations, 2019

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>TOTAL GUN DEATHS</th>
<th>FIREARM HOMICIDES</th>
<th>FIREARM SUICIDES</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Ranking, Highest to Lowest Total Gun Death Rate</td>
<td>Total Gun Deaths</td>
<td>Total Gun Death Rate (age adjusted) per 100,000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>District of Columbia</td>
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</tr>
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<td>958</td>
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<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>15.27</td>
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</table>

Source: A Public Health Crisis: Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGY). 2021
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Gun Deaths</th>
<th>Total Gun Death Rate (age per 100,000)</th>
<th>Total Gun Deaths Among Children and Teenagers (Ages 0-19)</th>
<th>Child and Teen Gun Death Rate per 100,000</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Deaths</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Rate (age adjusted per 100,000)</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Deaths</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Rate (age adjusted per 100,000)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<td>156</td>
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<td>Suppressed</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes where the state firearm homicide or suicide rate is unreliable and cannot be compared.

### APPENDIX 6:
Counties with the Highest Firearm Homicide Rates, 2015-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking, Highest to Lowest Firearm Homicide Rate</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Urbanization</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Deaths (2015-2019)</th>
<th>Population (per year)</th>
<th>Firearm Homicide Rate (age adjusted, five-year average) per 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Macon County, AL</td>
<td>NonCore (Nonmetro)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18,666</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Large Fringe Metro</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
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<td>647</td>
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APPENDIX 7:
Counties with the Highest Firearm Suicide Rates, 2015-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking, Highest to Lowest Firearm Suicide Rate</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Urbanization</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Deaths (2015-2019)</th>
<th>Population (per year)</th>
<th>Firearm Suicide Rate (age adjusted, five-year averaged per 100,000)</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>25.35</td>
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<td>20,104</td>
<td>21.76</td>
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</table>

Source: A Public Health Crisis Decades in the Making, Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), 2021
OVERVIEW

- Black youth represented less than 15 percent of the total youth population but 52 percent of youth prosecuted in adult criminal court in 2018. Black youth are nine times more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence, American Indian/Alaska Native youth are almost two times more likely, and Hispanic youth are 40 percent more likely.

**GUN VIOLENCE:** Child and teen gun deaths hit a 19-year high in 2017 and have remained elevated since.
- Gun violence was the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1-19 in 2018, surpassing motor vehicle accidents for the first time.
- In 2019, 3,371 children and teens were killed with guns—one every 2 hours and 36 minutes.
- Black children and teens had the highest gun death rate, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native children and teens. Black children and teens were 4 times more likely to die from gun violence than their white peers.
- The United States has more guns than people—and nearly 1 in 5 are sold without background checks.

**IMMIGRANT CHILDREN:** Family separation and anti-immigrant policies are dangerous to children’s health, development, and well-being.
- Nearly 1 in 4, approximately 18 million, U.S. children lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2018.
- More than 1 in 4 immigrant children did not have health coverage in 2019, 25.5 percent compared to 5.1 percent of native-born citizen children.
- An estimated 6.9 million children lived with undocumented parents. Chronic uncertainty and distress about the threat of enforcement activity destroy children’s sense of safety and their mental health.

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**Each Day in America**

- 2 mothers die from complications of childbirth.
- 5 children are killed by abuse or neglect.
- 8 children or teens die by suicide.
- 9 children or teens are killed with a gun.
- 20 children or teens die from accidents.
- 46 children or teens are injured with a gun.
- 59 babies die before their first birthday.
- 121 children are arrested for violent crimes.
- 223 children are arrested for drug crimes.
- 514 public school students are corporally punished.*
- 678 babies are born without health insurance.
- 827 babies are born into extreme poverty.
- 860 babies are born with low birthweight.
- 1,541 babies are born into poverty.
- 1,785 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
- 1,909 children are arrested.
- 2,906 high school students drop out.*
- 14,206 public school students are suspended.*

*Based on 180 school days a year

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GUN VIOLENCE

IN 2019, A CHILD OR TEEN WAS KILLED WITH A GUN EVERY 2 HOURS AND 36 MINUTES.

Even before COVID-19, another epidemic was killing our children at higher rates: gun violence. Gun violence was the leading cause of death for all children and teens ages 1-19 in 2018, surpassing motor vehicle accidents for the first time in history. Children and teens are far more likely to die from gunfire than COVID-19, yet our leaders continue to allow gun violence to go uncurbed and gun laws to go unchanged.

After years of congressional inaction, a growing number of children are paying with their lives. In 2019, 3,371 American children and teens were killed with guns—enough to fill more than 168 classrooms of 20 (see Table 35).

- Child and teen gun deaths hit a 19-year high in 2017 and have remained elevated since. In 2019, nine children and teens were killed with guns each day in America—one every 2 hours and 36 minutes.
- Guns killed more children and teens than cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, HIV/AIDS, and opioids combined.
- While mass shootings grabbed fleeting public and policymaker attention, routine gunfire took the lives of more children and teens every week than the Parkland, Sandy Hook, and Columbine massacres combined.
- Since 1963, nearly 193,000 children and teens have been killed with guns on American soil—more than four times the number of U.S. soldiers killed in action in the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq wars combined.

Shamefully, gun deaths reflect only part of the devastating toll of America’s growing gun violence epidemic. Many more children and teens are injured than killed with guns each day in our nation.

- For every child or teen fatally shot, another 5 suffered non-fatal gunshot wounds.
- An estimated 16,644 children and teens were injured with guns in 2018—one every 32 minutes.

Gun violence affects all children, but children of color, boys, and older youth are at greatest risk.

- Black children and teens had the highest gun death rate in 2019 (11.9 per 100,000) followed by American Indian/Alaska Native children and teens (6.4 per 100,000).
- Although Black children and teens made up only 14 percent of all children and teens in 2019, they accounted for 43 percent of child and teen gun deaths.
- Black children and teens were four times more likely to be killed with guns than their white peers.
- Eighty-six percent of children and teens who died from gunfire in 2019 were boys. Boys were six times more likely to be killed than girls to die in gun homicides. Black boys were 18 times more likely to be killed in gun homicides than white boys.
- Eighty-five percent of child and teen gun deaths occurred among 15- to 19-year-olds, but infants and toddlers were far from immune. Guns killed more preschoolers than law enforcement officers in the line of duty. In 2019, 86 children under 5 were killed with guns compared with 51 law enforcement officers in the line of duty.

No child is safe in a nation with easy access to deadly weapons. Even before the pandemic drove up fear and gun sales, there were too many firearms in our homes and streets—and a shocking number were sold without background checks.

- As of 2017, American civilians owned 393 million firearms—more than one gun per person.
- In contrast, U.S. military and law enforcement agencies possessed 5.5 million.
GUN VIOLENCE

- Americans accounted for less than five percent of the global population, but owned nearly half (46 percent) of all civilian guns in the world.16
- Nearly 1 in 5 guns are sold without a background check due to a loophole in federal law exempting sales at gun shows, online, or between private individuals.16

Children are learning there are no safe spaces in our gun-saturated nation. Many children even live in homes with loaded, unlocked guns and know where they are kept. Too often, this leads to tragic accidents and preventable deaths. With a growing number of children learning and playing at home during COVID-related closures, the risk of gun accidents and suicides has only increased.
- A third of households with children have a gun and nearly half of gun-owning households with children do not store all of their firearms safely.17
- An estimated 4.6 million children live in homes with at least one unlocked and loaded gun—and most children know where these guns are kept.18 About 3 in 4 children ages 5-14 with gun-owning parents know where firearms are stored and more than 1 in 5 have handled a gun in the home without their parents’ knowledge.19
- Guns in the home are more likely to endanger than protect loved ones. The presence of a gun in the home makes the likelihood of homicide three times higher, suicide three to five times higher, and accidental death four times higher.20
- Eight children and teens are killed or injured in accidental shootings involving an improperly stored gun each day in America.21

It is long past time for leaders to end America’s gun violence epidemic. Congress must urgently pass common-sense gun safety measures like universal background checks and child access prevention laws to protect children from firearms in their homes, schools, and communities. All children deserve the chance to live, learn, and play safely—free from violence and fear.

COVID-19 is Magnifying Our Gun Violence Epidemic and Highlighting the Need for Immediate Reform

The pandemic has created and exacerbated so many crises for children and families and gun violence is no exception. Unprecedented increases in gun sales—coupled with financial insecurity, social isolation, and other stressors—are magnifying America’s gun violence crisis.
- Nearly two million guns were sold in March 2020 alone—the second highest number of guns ever sold in a single month—and this disturbing trend continued in the months that followed.22
- Even with much of the country on lockdown, mass shootings hit a record high in 2020. Children witnessed, suffered, or died in 611 mass shootings in 2020—up from 417 in 2019.23
- Gun accidents in the home have also surged during the pandemic. School and child care closures have exacerbated children’s risk of dying in gun accidents at home. Between March and May 2020, accidental gun deaths by children increased by 30 percent relative to rates over the past three years.24
- The pandemic has also intensified factors that contribute to gun-related domestic violence and community violence: job losses and financial insecurities have left victims of domestic violence more vulnerable to harm as well as fueling community gun violence.25

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the consequences of our nation’s longstanding failure to pass policies to keep children safe where they live and learn. Our leaders must not only advance meaningful solutions to address the COVID-19 crisis but also the ongoing gun violence crisis in America. We cannot allow children to die at the hands of these crises.
REFERENCES BY SECTION

List of resources and references used by authors in each section
REFERENCES


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- Trends in Violence Victimization and Suicide Risk by ... https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/su/pdfs/su6901a3-H.pdf.
