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# Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention

### What is a firearm injury?

A firearm injury is a gunshot wound or penetrating injury from a weapon that uses a powder charge to fire a projectile. Weapons that use a powder charge include handguns, rifles, and shotguns. Injuries from air- and gas-powered guns, BB guns, and pellet guns are not considered firearm injuries as these types of guns do not use a powder charge to fire a projectile.

### What are the different types of firearm injuries?

There are many types of firearm injuries, which can be fatal or nonfatal:

- **Intentionally self-inflicted**
  - Includes firearm suicide or nonfatal self-harm injury from a firearm
- **Unintentional**
  - Includes fatal or nonfatal firearm injuries that happen while someone is cleaning or playing with a firearm or other incidents of an accidental firing without evidence of intentional harm
- **Interpersonal violence**
  - Includes firearm homicide or nonfatal assault injury from a firearm
- **Legal intervention**
  - Includes firearm injuries inflicted by the police or other law enforcement agents acting in the line of duty
    - For example, firearm injuries that occur while arresting or attempting to arrest someone, maintaining order, or ensuring safety
  - The term *legal intervention* is a commonly used external cause of injury classification. It does not indicate the legality of the circumstances surrounding the death.
- **Undetermined intent**
  - Includes firearm injuries where there is not enough information to determine whether the injury was intentionally self-inflicted, unintentional, the result of legal intervention, or from an act of interpersonal violence.

## How common are firearm injuries?

**Firearm injuries are a serious public health problem.** In 2022, there were more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths in the United States according to provisional mortality data – that’s about 132 people dying from a firearm-related injury each day. More than half of firearm-related deaths were suicides and more than 4 out of every 10 were firearm homicides.

**More people suffer nonfatal firearm-related injuries than die.** More than seven out of every 10 medically treated firearm injuries are from firearm-related assaults. Nearly 2 out of every 10 are from unintentional firearm injuries. There are few intentionally self-inflicted firearm-related injuries seen in hospital emergency departments. Most people who use a firearm in a suicide attempt, die from their injury.

**Firearm injuries affect people in all stages of life.** Taking into account all types of firearm injuries—including homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries — firearm injuries were among the 5 leading causes of death for people ages 1-44 in the United States in 2022, and the leading cause of death among children and teens ages 1-19.

**Some groups have higher rates of firearm injury than others.** Men account for 86% of all victims of firearm death and 87% of firearm injuries. Rates of firearm violence also vary by age, race, and ethnicity. Firearm homicide rates are highest among teens and young adults ages 15-34 and among Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Hispanic populations. Firearm suicide rates are highest among adults aged 75 and older and among American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic White populations. These inequities underscore the importance of addressing the social and structural conditions that drive rates of violence and suicide.

## What is defensive gun use? How often does it occur?

Although definitions of defensive gun use vary, it is generally defined as the use of a firearm to protect and defend oneself, family, other people, and/or property against crime or victimization.

Estimates of defensive gun use vary depending on the questions asked, populations studied, timeframe, and other factors related to study design. Given the wide variability in estimates, additional research is necessary to understand defensive gun use prevalence, frequency, circumstances, and outcomes.

## What are the consequences of firearm violence?

People who survive a firearm-related injury may experience long-term consequences. These include problems with memory, thinking, emotions, and physical disability from injury to the brain; paralysis from injury to the spinal cord; and chronic mental health problems from conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

The effects of firearm violence extend beyond victims and their families. Shooting incidents, including those in homes, schools, houses of worship, workplaces, shopping areas, on the street or at community events can affect the sense of safety and security of entire communities and impact everyday decisions.

The economic impact of firearm violence is also substantial. Firearm violence costs the United States tens of billions of dollars each year in medical and lost productivity costs.

## What is CDC's role in firearm violence prevention?

CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) has been the nation's leading public health authority on violence and injury prevention for nearly 30 years. Firearm violence has tremendous impact on American's overall safety and wellbeing. Using a [public health approach](#) is essential to addressing firearm violence and keeping people safe and healthy.

CDC's approach to preventing firearm injuries focuses on three elements: providing data to inform action; conducting research and applying science to identify effective solutions; and promoting collaboration across multiple sectors to address the problem.

## How can firearm violence and suicide be prevented?

Firearm injuries and deaths are preventable—not inevitable—and everyone has a role to play in prevention. [CDC's Violence Resources for Action](#), [Suicide Resource for Action](#), and [surveillance systems](#) can help communities use the best available evidence to prevent violence and suicide. The resources emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to make communities healthier and safer. Some examples of proven prevention activities communities have adopted include:

### **Address the needs of people at greatest risk for experiencing firearm injury and deaths.**

- For example, **street outreach programs** connect populations at highest risk for violence with community services and help to reduce conflicts in the community. They have shown promising results for multiple outcomes. **Gatekeeper programs** train community members to identify people who may be at risk for suicide and to respond effectively with referrals to treatment or other support services, as appropriate.
- When people are injured from violence or experience suicidal ideation or attempts, there can be a window of opportunity to provide help. **Hospital-based violence and suicide intervention programs** can connect them and their families with services. Hospital-based programs have shown promise for reducing risk for future violence as well as reduced suicide and suicide attempts.
- **Therapeutic approaches** such as cognitive behavioral therapy have been shown to prevent suicide risk as well as lessen harms and future risks for people who have experienced violence.

### **Improve the physical conditions within communities.**

- Multiple cities have had success with approaches like **cleaning and maintaining** vacant lots. These approaches increase opportunities for positive social interactions and reduce opportunities for violence. Urban green spaces have been associated with reduced firearm assaults, reduced stress and improved mental health, with particular benefits in areas with the highest poverty.
- Ensuring students have **safe routes** to and from school can keep kids out of harm's way. Programs that place trained community members along these routes to monitor and assist with students' safe travel have shown benefits on school attendance and reductions in overall crime, including lower rates of violent crimes.




### **Address circumstances that contribute to risk.**

- Strengthening **economic and household security** through approaches like housing assistance, childcare subsidies, unemployment insurance, tax credits, and livable wages can help lift families out of poverty, reduce stress, and enhance positive outcomes, which in turn can help reduce the risk for violence and suicide. An analysis of state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) laws, for example, found that higher state EITCs were associated with lower rates of violence and suicide.
- **Secure storage of firearms**, such as in a safe or lock box, can help prevent unauthorized access and use of firearms, including by children and those at risk for harming themselves or others.

## How can you securely store your firearm?

It is important to store all firearms safely when not in use. Putting a firearm out of sight or out of reach is **not safe storage and not enough** to prevent use by children or unauthorized adults.

Resources are available to help firearm owners consider the best options for safely storing firearms:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, has released [Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business: A Toolkit for Safe Firearm Storage](#)  . This toolkit describes methods for safe storage and provides guidance to enhance safe storage practices in your community.
- The National Shooting Sports Foundation's [Project ChildSafe](#)  emphasizes the importance of storing firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition secured separately. They provide safety kits, brochures, tip sheets, and other educational materials and resources.

Please note that these examples are not meant to be a complete list of resources for safe firearm storage and [other resources](#) are available.

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