

Gun Ownership, Youth, and Suicide Rates: What We Know

September 2023

In the past few years, a few things have happened at once. Many young people are struggling with their mental health and Gen Z reports being decidedly less happy than older generations. At the same time, gun ownership is increasing - roughly 1 in 5 American households purchased a gun during the pandemic. But while protection is the main reason people buy guns, having a gun at home makes families less safe - not safer. With more guns in homes and more teens in crisis, the risk of suicide by gun also rises. Here's what we know.

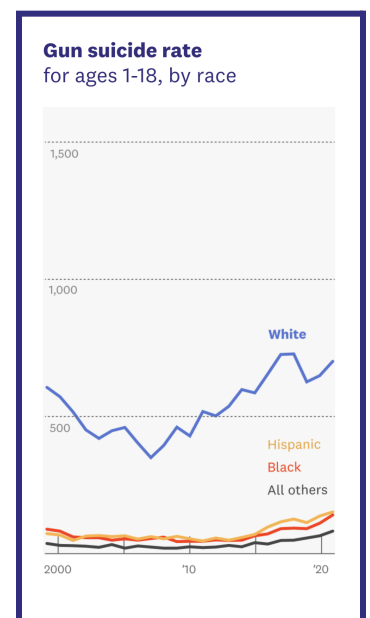
Gun Ownership x Suicide Risk

- Having a gun in a home more than triples the risk of suicide for people in the home.
- The year after someone buys a handgun, their leading cause of death is suicide.
- The risk of suicide for women who own guns is 35x higher than for women who don't.
- Men who purchased a handgun are nearly 8 times more likely to end their own lives with a firearm.
- Roughly 85% of gun suicide victims are male.



Guns x Youth Suicide

- Suicide rates are four times higher for kids who live in homes with guns.
- Nine out of ten youth gun suicides were with guns taken from the youth's home or a relative's home.
- Gun suicides among children and teens are at a 20-year high.
- In the past decade, 40% of the children and teen suicides were carried out with a gun.
- Over the past decade, the firearm suicide rate among children and teens has increased by 66%.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender kids have the highest risk of attempting suicide.



If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health or experiencing suicidal ideation, call or text 988 to reach the free Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.



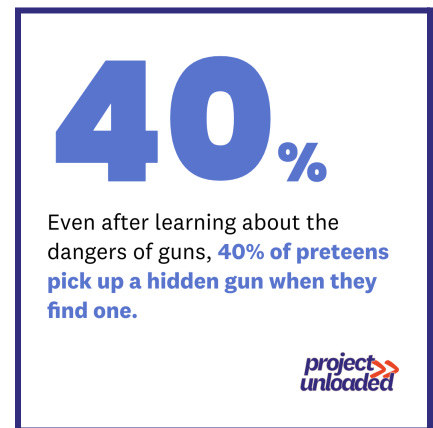
Youth of Color x Suicide Risk

- Black youth have the fastest growing suicide rate compared to their peers of other racial and ethnic groups, and firearms are the most common method of suicide among Black boys aged 19 and younger.
- Asian and Pacific Islander young people have the fastest-rising firearm suicide rate of any group, growing by 168% between 2011 and 2020.
- Overall, suicide among young people of color jumped 25 percent between 1999 and 2020.

Secure Storage x Preventing Suicide

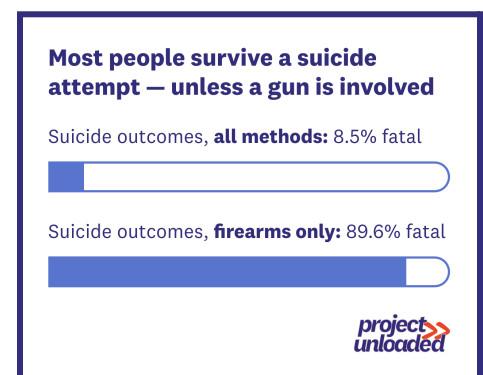
If you have a gun, it's important to store it locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition. But most people don't follow that advice all the time.

- More than half don't store all of their guns safely and nearly 5 million kids and teens live with unsecured guns.
- Additional studies have shown that nearly 40% of parents in homes with guns believe their kids can't access a gun, but the kids can.
- Even after learning about the dangers of guns, 40% of preteens in a recent study picked up a hidden gun when they found one.



Access to Guns x Suicide Fatalities - Debunking a Myth

- Nine of 10 people who attempt suicide survive, and people who survive a suicide attempt overwhelmingly do not go on to die by suicide.
- The exception, of course, is when someone tries to kill themselves with a gun. When a firearm is involved, 90 percent of suicide attempts end in death.



Simply put, the presence of a gun makes suicide attempts more deadly. Zooming out on the data, states with more guns have more gun suicides and higher suicide rates overall. Homes without guns are safer. For more information, please visit: projectunloaded.org/get-the-facts/

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