



## Fact Sheet: Accidental Shootings

- **Guns in the home increase risk:** Rather than being used for self-defense, guns in the home are 22 times more likely to be involved in accidental shootings, homicides, or suicide attempts. For every one time a gun in the home was used in a self-defense or legally justifiable shooting, there were 4 unintentional shootings, 7 criminal assaults or homicides, and 11 attempted or completed suicides.<sup>i</sup>
- **Deaths:** From 2005-2010, almost 3,800 people in the U.S. died from unintentional shootings.<sup>ii</sup> More than a third of the victims were under 25 years of age.
- **Injuries:** In 2010, unintentional firearm shootings caused the deaths of 606 people.<sup>iii</sup>
- **More Guns = More Accidental Shootings:** People of all age groups are significantly more likely to die from unintentional firearm injuries when they live in states with more guns, relative to states with fewer guns.
  - On average, states with the highest gun ownership levels had 9 times the rate of unintentional firearms deaths compared to states with the lowest gun ownership levels.<sup>iv</sup>
  - A federal government study of unintentional shootings found that 8% of such shooting deaths resulted from shots fired by children under the age of six.<sup>v</sup>
- **Youth and Accidental Shootings:** Over 1,300 victims of unintentional shootings for the period 2005–2010 were under 25 years of age.<sup>vi</sup>
  - For kids ages 5 to 14, the mortality rate is 14 times higher in high gun ownership states than low gun ownership states. For infants and toddlers, ages 0 to 4, the mortality rate is 17 times higher in high gun ownership states than low gun ownership states.<sup>iv</sup>
  - The majority of people killed in firearm accidents are under age 24, and most of these young people are being shot by someone else, usually someone their own age. The shooter is typically a friend or family member, often an older brother.

- **Safe Storage of Firearms:** Thirty-three percent of U.S. households contain a gun<sup>vii</sup>, and half of gun-owning households don't lock up their guns, including 40 percent of households with kids under age 18.<sup>viii</sup>
  - Both firearm prevalence and questionable storage practices (i.e. storing firearms loaded and unlocked) are associated with higher rates of unintentional firearm deaths.<sup>ix</sup>
  
- **Preventing Accidental Shootings:** The U.S. General Accounting Office has estimated that 31% of unintentional deaths caused by firearms might be prevented by the addition of two devices: a child-proof safety lock (8%) and a loading indicator (23%).<sup>x</sup>
  - The best way to avoid unintentional shootings, particularly those involving children, is to not keep a gun in the home.

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<sup>i</sup>Kellermann, A. L., "[Injuries and Deaths due to Firearms in the Home](#)," *Journal of Trauma*, 45:2 (1998):263-67

<sup>ii</sup>Nat'l Ctr. for Injury Prevention & Control, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Web-Based Injury Statistics Query & Reporting System (WISQARS) Injury Mortality Reports, 1999-2010, for National, Regional, and States* (Dec. 2012), [http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/dataRestriction\\_inj.html](http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/dataRestriction_inj.html) (hereinafter *WISQARS Injury Mortality Reports, 1999-2010*). Note: Users must agree to data use restrictions on the CDC site prior to accessing data).

<sup>iii</sup>Ibid

<sup>iv</sup>Matthew Miller, Deborah Azrael& David Hemenway, *Firearm Availability and Unintentional Firearm Deaths*, 33 *Accident Analysis& Prevention* 477 (July 2001).

<sup>v</sup>Ibid

<sup>vi</sup>See footnote 2

<sup>vii</sup>Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *2009 Values Survey*, Final Topline, Question e.F2, April 2009, accessed 6/29/2009 at <http://people-press.org/reports/questionnaires/513.pd>. The number of guns in the home is estimated via telephone survey research. The U. S. does not register guns, so it is not possible to count them.

<sup>viii</sup>Johnson, Renee, Tamera Coyne-Beasley, Carol Runyan, "[Firearm Ownership and Storage Practices, U.S. Households, 1992–2002: A Systematic Review](#)," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 27:2 (2007): 173-182

<sup>ix</sup>See footnote 4

<sup>x</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Accidental Shootings: Many Deaths and Injuries Caused by Firearms Could Be Prevented* 17 (Mar. 1991), at <http://161.203.16.4/d20t9/143619.pdf>.