



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Leah Gunn Barrett, [nyagv@nyagv.org](mailto:nyagv@nyagv.org), [212-679-2345](tel:212-679-2345), cell: [240-535-5083](tel:240-535-5083)  
Avery Palmer, Violence Policy Center, [202-822-8200 x104](tel:202-822-8200), [apalmer@vpc.org](mailto:apalmer@vpc.org)  
Cathie Whittenburg, States United to Prevent Gun Violence, [207-318-0771](tel:207-318-0771), [cathie@ceasefireusa.org](mailto:cathie@ceasefireusa.org)

## **New York State has 3rd Lowest Gun Death Rate in the Nation, New Data for 2013 Confirms**

### *New York's Strong Gun Laws are Working to Save Lives*

New York, NY--Thursday, January 29, 2015--New York State's gun death rate improved from the 4th to 3rd lowest in the nation according to newly available data for 2013. A Violence Policy Center (VPC) analysis of the data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control shows that states like New York with strong gun violence prevention laws and lower rates of gun ownership have the lowest overall gun death rates in the nation.

In 2013, New York was the first state to strengthen its gun laws in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in December 2012. A bipartisan legislature enacted and Governor Cuomo signed the NY SAFE Act on January 15, 2013. "The improvement in New York's gun death rate from 4.99 to 4.39 per 100,000 people during 2013 shows that our strong gun safety laws are saving lives by making our communities safer," says Leah Gunn Barrett, Executive Director of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence (NYAGV).

Meanwhile, states with the highest overall gun death rates have higher rates of gun ownership and some of the weakest gun violence prevention laws in the nation.

The VPC analysis refers to overall gun death rates in 2013, the most recent year for which data is available. A table of the states with the five lowest gun death rates and the five highest gun death rates is below. A list of gun death rates in all 50 states can be seen [here](#).

States with the Five Lowest Gun Death Rates			
Rank	State	Household Gun Ownership	Gun Death Rate per 100,000
50	Hawaii	9.7 percent	2.71
49	Massachusetts	12.8 percent	3.18
<b>48</b>	<b>New York</b>	<b>18.1 percent</b>	<b>4.39</b>
47	Connecticut	16.2 percent	4.48
46	Rhode Island	13.3 percent	5.33

States with the Five Highest Gun Death Rates

Rank	State	Household Gun Ownership	Gun Death Rate per 100,000
1	Alaska	60.6 percent	19.59
2	Louisiana	45.6 percent	19.15
3	Alabama	57.2 percent	17.79
4	Mississippi	54.3 percent	17.55
5	Wyoming	62.8 percent	17.51

New York requires such common sense measures as background checks on all gun and ammunition sales, a ban on military-style assault weapons and high capacity magazines, five year recertification of gun permits and enhanced protections for victims of domestic violence. "New York is proof that smart gun laws work. Our laws respect an individual's right to have a gun for hunting, recreation and self-defense while also safeguarding our communities by keeping guns out of the hands of felons, terrorists, domestic abusers, and the seriously mentally ill. We will continue our efforts to protect New Yorkers, especially our children, from the preventable scourge of gun violence. That's why we are working to pass [Nicholas's Law](#) that would require gun owners to lock up their guns so that children can't gain access to them," says Barrett.

The five states with the highest per capita gun death rates in 2013 were Alaska, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Wyoming. Each of these states has extremely lax gun violence prevention laws as well as a higher rate of gun ownership.

"Reducing exposure to firearms and having stronger gun laws saves lives," says VPC Legislative Director Kristen Rand. "Each year, the data consistently show that states with strong gun violence prevention laws and low rates of gun ownership have the lowest gun death rates in the nation. The highest gun death rates are in states with weak gun violence prevention laws and easy access to guns."

"This report should be a wake-up call to state legislators," says Cathie Whittenburg, communications director of States United to Prevent Gun Violence. "There is no higher priority for elected officials than enacting laws that keep families safe from death and injury."

The nationwide gun death rate was 10.64 per 100,000. The total number of Americans killed by gunfire rose to 33,636 from 33,563 in 2012, whereas the number of **New Yorkers** killed by gunfire **fell** from 977 in 2012 to 863 in 2013, a decline of 12 percent.

America's gun death rates - both nationwide and in the states - dwarf those of other industrialized nations. In 2011, the gun death rate in the United Kingdom was 0.23 per 100,000 and in Australia the gun death rate was 0.86 per 100,000. (Data for these countries is available at GunPolicy.org, hosted by the Sydney School of Public Health at the University of Sydney in Australia.)

State gun death rates are calculated by dividing the number of gun deaths by the total state population and multiplying the result by 100,000 to obtain the rate per 100,000, which is the standard and accepted method for comparing fatal levels of gun violence.

The VPC defined states with 'weak' gun violence prevention laws as those that add little or nothing to federal law and have permissive laws governing the open or concealed carrying of firearms in public. States with 'strong' gun violence prevention laws were defined as those that add significant state regulation that is absent from federal law, such as restricting access to particularly hazardous and deadly types of firearms (for example, assault weapons), setting minimum safety standards for firearms and/or requiring a permit to purchase a firearm, and restricting the open and concealed carrying of firearms in public.

State gun ownership rates were obtained from the September 2005 *Pediatrics* article "Prevalence of Household Firearms and Firearm-Storage Practices in the 50 States and the District of Columbia: Findings from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002," which is the most recent comprehensive published data available on state gun ownership.

#####

**New Yorkers Against Gun Violence** is a statewide advocacy group working to reduce gun violence through advocacy and education designed to encourage action, influence public opinion and lead to policy change. With a primary focus on New York State, the organization also advocates at the local and national levels for sensible gun laws, policies and practices that protect New York State residents from gun violence. [www.nyagv.org](http://www.nyagv.org); Twitter: @NYAGV1; <https://www.facebook.com/nyagv>

**The Violence Policy Center** is a national educational organization working to stop gun death and injury, [www.vpc.org](http://www.vpc.org); @VPCinfo

**States United to Prevent Gun Violence** is a national non-profit organization working to support state-based gun violence prevention groups and help build new state-led organizations. States United believes that all Americans deserve to live in a country free from the fear, threat, and devastation caused by gun violence. [www.CeasefireUSA.org](http://www.CeasefireUSA.org)