



Fact Sheet: Firearms and Suicide

- **Guns in the Home and Suicide:** A gun in the home increases suicide risk by 17 times.ⁱ
 - A study by the Harvard School of Public Health using data from 2001 found that, because of the lethality of guns, 85 percent of suicide attempts with a firearm are fatal, whereas many other means of attempting suicide have only a 5 percent fatality rate.ⁱⁱ
- **Suicide Statistics:** Firearms were used in 19,392 suicides in the U.S. in 2010, constituting almost 62% of all gun deaths in the U.S.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - Over 50% of all suicides are committed with a firearm.^{iv}
 - On average, 49 gun suicides were committed each day for the years 2005-2010.^v
 - White males, about 40% of the U.S. population, accounted for over 80% of firearm suicides in 2010.^{vi}
- **Firearms, Suicide, and Youth:** Firearms were used in nearly 44% of suicide deaths among persons under age 25 in 2010.^{vii}
 - More than 75% of guns used in suicide attempts and unintentional injuries of 0-19 year-olds were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or a friend.^{viii}
- **Suicide in States with High Gun Ownership and Weak Gun Laws:** Suicide rates are higher in regions of the country with weaker gun laws and higher rates of gun ownership.
 - Research into firearm suicides has found a direct correlation between high levels of firearm ownership and the number of gun suicides, finding that states with high levels of gun ownership have suicide rates nearly twice as high as those in states with low levels of gun ownership.^{ix}
 - Alaska, Wyoming, and Montana--states with very weak gun laws and high gun ownership rates--have the highest firearm suicide rates, with between 14 and 15 firearm suicides annually for every 100,000 people.^x
 - New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts--states with very strong gun laws and low gun ownership rates--have the lowest firearm suicide rates, with roughly 2 firearm suicides annually for every 100,000 people.^{xi}
- **Suicide with Firearms in New York City:** In 2010, guns were used in 12% of the city's 503 suicides.^{xii}

- According to the NYC Department of Health, people who have ready access to guns are more likely to kill themselves with guns than people who do not.^{xiii}
- New York City--with strong gun laws and low gun ownership rates--has the lowest rate of suicides by firearm of any other large U.S. city.^{xiv}
- **Firearms Suicide Prevention:** Keeping a firearm unloaded and locked, with the ammunition stored in a locked location separate from the firearm, significantly decreases the risk of suicide and unintentional firearm injury and death involving both long guns and handguns.^{xv}
 - The presence of unlocked guns in the home increases the risk not only of accidental gun injuries but of intentional shootings as well. One study found that more than 75% of the guns used in youth suicide attempts and unintentional injuries were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or a friend.^{xvi}

ⁱWiebe, Douglas J. PhD., "Homicide and Suicide Risks Associated With Firearms in the Home: A National Case Control Study," *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 41(6) (2003): 771-782.

ⁱⁱHarvard School of Public Health, "Firearm access is a risk factor for suicide," available at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/> (last accessed April 2013).

ⁱⁱⁱNat'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 (hereinafter *WISQARS Injury Mortality Reports, 1999-2010*. Note: Users must agree to data use restrictions on the CDC site prior to accessing data)

^{iv}Ibid

^vIbid

^{vi}Ibid

^{vii}Ibid

^{viii}David C. Grossman, Donald T. Reay & Stephanie A. Baker, *Self-inflicted & Unintentional Firearm Injuries Among Children & Adolescents: The Source of the Firearm*, 153 *Archives Pediatric & Adolescent Med.* 875 (Aug. 1999), at <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/153/8/875>.

^{ix}Harvard School of Public Health, "Firearm access is a risk factor for suicide," available at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/> (last accessed April 2013).

^xCenters for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fatal Injury Data," available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (last accessed April 2013).

^{xi}Ibid

^{xii}New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Health Department Announces Suicide Rate in NYC is Half the National Rate and Is Lower than Other Major U.S. Cities. Press Release, February 23, 2012.

^{xiii}Ibid

^{xiv}Ibid

^{xv}David C. Grossman et al., Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries, 293 *JAMA* 707, 711-13 (Feb. 2005)

^{xvi}David C. Grossman, Donald T. Reay & Stephanie A. Baker, *Self-inflicted & Unintentional Firearm Injuries Among Children & Adolescents: The Source of the Firearm*, 153 *Archives Pediatric & Adolescent Med.* 875, 875 (Aug. 1999), at <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/153/8/875>