

Fast Facts: Firearm Violence 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 power 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.

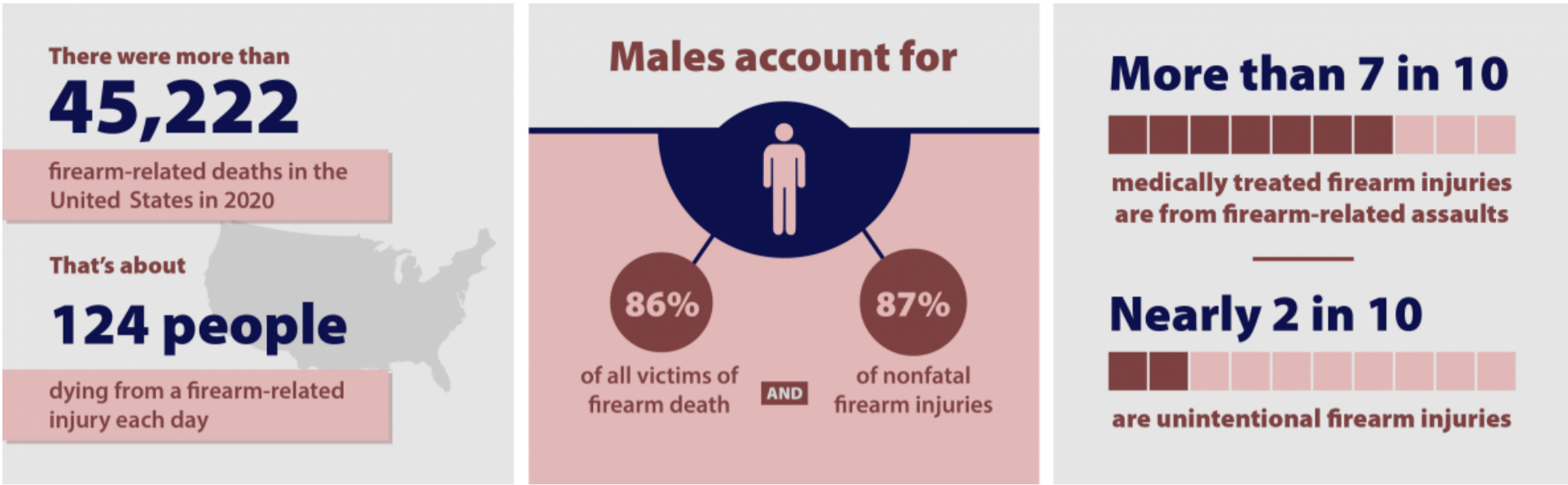
How common are firearm injuries?

Firearm injuries are a serious public health problem. In 2020, there were 45,222 firearm-related deaths in the United States – that’s about 124 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. In 2020, firearm-related injuries were among the 5 leading causes of death for people ages 1-44 in the United States.

Some groups have higher rates of firearm injury than others. Men account for 86% of all victims of firearm death and 87% of nonfatal firearm injuries. Rates of firearm violence also vary by age and race/ethnicity. Firearm homicide rates are highest among teens and young adults 15-34 years of age and among Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Hispanic or Latino populations. Firearm suicide rates are highest among adults 75 years of age and older and among American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic white populations.



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 you safely 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. For example, the [National Firearm Safety Institute](#) collaborates with the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) and the [National](#)

veteran's Administration, 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.

References



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