

Colorado's Public Health Roundtable on Firearm-Related Violence Prevention

Firearm-Related Death Overview

Below is a summary of the firearm-related death data available from the CDC and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

- In 2020, firearm-related deaths in Colorado were the third most common cause of death due to injury. Drug poisoning and falls were more common. Firearm-related deaths are more common than motor vehicle-related deaths (**Figure 1**).
- In 2021, there were 1,059 firearm-related deaths in Colorado. As seen in **Figure 2**, the largest proportion of these are due to suicide. This is compared with 510 deaths in 2001. Rates have risen by 58% when adjusted for population over the course of two decades (**Figure 4**, see page 2).
- When it comes to age, the largest fluctuations over two decades are related to older adults. For instance, in 2020 the highest rates are for 20- to 24-year-olds. The next three highest rates are all 75 and older. In 2014 however, the four highest rates are for people aged 70 and older. Over the last several years, when looking at raw numbers of deaths, 20- to 34-year-olds are closely clustered as having the highest number.
- Black and American Indian / Alaskan Native death rates are among the highest due to firearm-related violence (**Figure 3**).

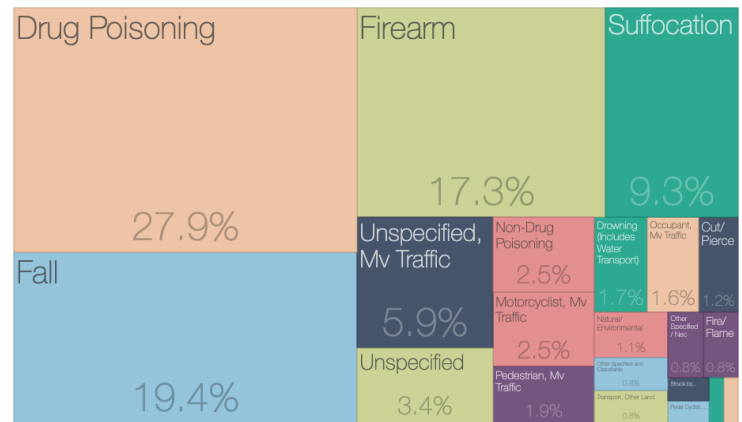


Figure 1. Mechanism of injury deaths in Colorado, 2020. Source: [CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Visualization Tool](#)

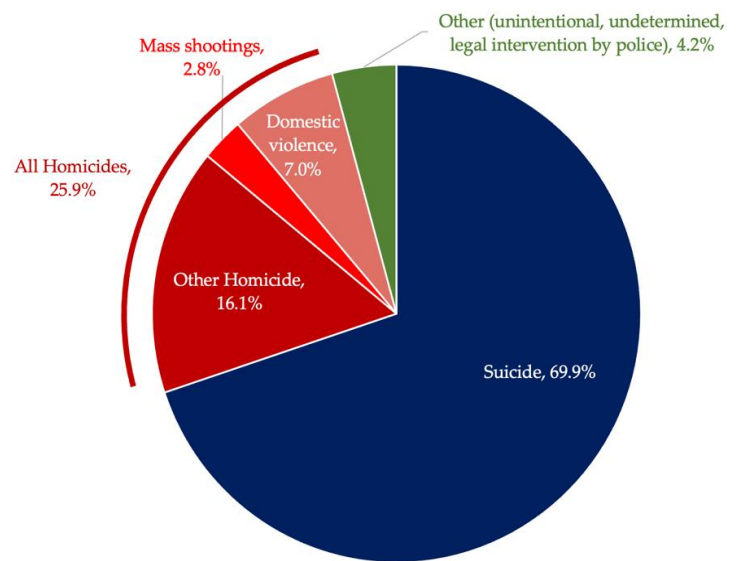


Figure 2. 2021 Firearm-Related Deaths by Type. Source: [Colorado Violent Death Reporting System](#). Graphic by Wellstone.

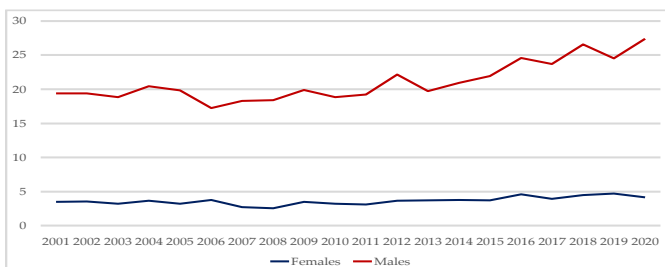


Figure 4. Death rates per 100,000 by gender, 2020. Source: [CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Visualization Tool](#). Graphic by Wellstone.

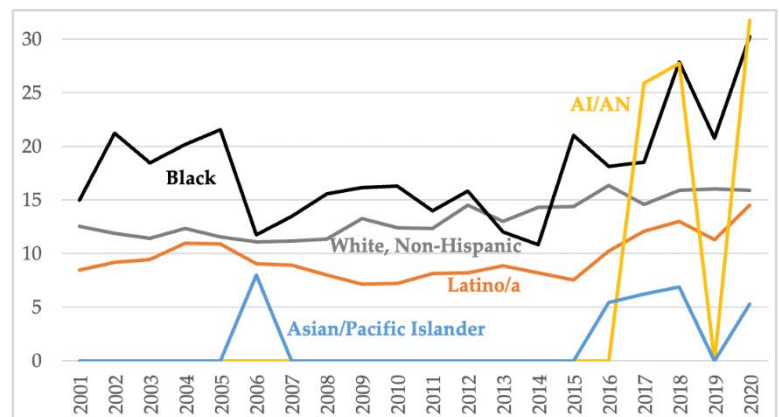


Figure 3. Death rates per 100,000 by race and ethnicity, 2020. Source: [CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Visualization Tool](#). Graphic by Wellstone.

Unintentional Firearm Death Overview

One of the aspects that are not being covered explicitly at the roundtable are unintentional firearm-related deaths. This is not to say that these deaths are not tragic. This issue deserves attention. For that reason, we are providing some information about these deaths and will welcome additional thoughts in the post survey.

Focus 1. Define & Monitor the Problem

According to the CDCs Fatal Injury Data Visualization tool:

- 1% of firearm-related deaths in Colorado from 2010 through 2020 were unintentional. Altogether, 78 people in Colorado died unintentionally as a result of a gunshot wound. Nationally, there were 5,781 unintentional deaths during that same period.
- Because these events are rare in Colorado, the CDC has scrubbed much of the demographic information, including age. However nationally, the highest crude rates in 2020 of unintentional fire-arm related death are for 20–24-year-olds (0.34 per 100,000), followed the age categories of 15-19 (0.27), 25-29 (0.22), and 0-4 (0.21). The lowest rates are among people aged 65 and older.
- Deaths in 2011, 2012, and 2016 were high enough in Colorado to provide gender demographics. All of these deaths were male individuals. Nationally, males are much more likely to die from unintentional gunshot wounds. For instance, in 2020 rates were 7.5 times higher.
- In 2011, deaths were high enough to provide race/ethnicity demographics. All of these deaths were White, Non-Hispanic individuals. Nationally this trend doesn't hold. American Indians and Alaskan Natives had the highest rates of death from unintentional shootings, with a crude rate of 0.41 per 100,000. Comparatively, Black individuals had a rate of 0.3 and White, Non-Hispanic individuals, 0.17.
- Overall, death rates due to unintentional gunshot wounds have declined since 2001.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some people who have injured themselves report that they were shot by another person.

Focus 2: Develop Understanding of Risk & Protective Factors

The highest risk factors are likely easy access to a loaded firearm and a lack of knowledge for how to appropriately handle a gun.

Focus 3: Engage the Community to Promote Multi-Sector Prevention Strategies

Initial community-based strategies are safe gun storage practices and increased safety education. One method discussed are physician to parent or gun shop to customer education initiatives.

