



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

Focus 1. Define & Monitor the Problem

In 2021, 70% of all firearm-related deaths were suicide deaths.

Below is a summary of data provided in the [Colorado Violent Death Reporting System's Suicide Dashboard](#).

- **740** Coloradans died by suicide using a firearm in 2021. Firearm-related suicide accounts for 54% of all suicide fatalities in the state.
- Colorado consistently ranks in the top 10 nationwide for suicide deaths.
- Populations at higher risk for suicide, include the LGBTQ+ community, youth, young adults, veterans, middle-aged men, and older adults.
- **People 75** and older have the highest rate of suicide by firearm (27 per 100,000 in 2021). The next highest age categories are 25-34 (17 per 100,000), 20-24 (16), and 55-64 (15). 25-34 year-olds accounted for 20% of all firearm-related suicide fatalities in 2021.
- **84%** of all firearm-related suicide deaths in Colorado were among White, not Hispanic people (2021). That is a rate of 14 per 100,000 people. This is followed by a rate of 10 per 100,000 for Black individuals, 8 for multi-racial individuals, and 8 for those who identify as Latino/a or Hispanic.
- **87%** of firearm-related suicide decedents in 2021 were male.
- **15.4%** of all people who died by suicide by firearm in 2020 were in the construction trades. Another 8.4% of people either didn't work or were not paid for their work (see Figure 1).

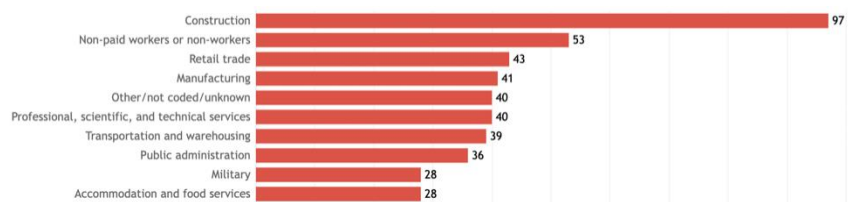


Figure 1. Colorado Firearm-related Suicides by occupation, 2020 Source: [Colorado Suicide Death Reporting System](#)

Focus 2: Develop Understanding of Risk & Protective Factors

Risk Factors: Based on data tracked in the Colorado Suicide Fatality Dashboard, there are several common contributing circumstances associated at the individual and environmental levels. Percent figures are provided based on prevalence in 2020 data. There are a number of other factors, as suicide is complex and firearm-related suicide may have additional risk factors.

Individual Risk Factors: The following are common individual contributing circumstances:

1. History of suicidal thoughts or plans (49%)



2. Current diagnosed mental health problem (48%)
3. Current depressed mood (44%)
4. Ever treated for mental health problem (36%)
5. Contributing physical health problem (34%)
6. Recently disclosed suicidal intent (33%)
7. Problem w/ alcohol (32%; alcohol present in 42% of deaths)
8. Previous suicide attempt (16%)
9. Substance use problem other than alcohol (16%; marijuana, opiates, or amphetamines present in 41% of deaths)

Environmental Factors: The following are common environmental contributing circumstances:

1. Crisis two weeks prior to death (43%)
2. Contributing intimate partner problem (39%)
3. Recent argument (29%)
4. Contributing job problem (19%)

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

Below are potential community public health strategies identified to address firearm-related suicides. [Y] indicates youth focused strategy. Additional solutions addressing Black male suicide can be found [here](#).

Upstream (e.g., root cause & SDoH)

- Social-emotional skill development (includes addressing toxic masculinity, isolation, and school climate).ⁱ (e.g., Sources of Strength) [Y]
- Access to effective and culturally appropriate behavioral health (including substance abuse).ⁱ
- Support positive school environment, especially for highest risk youth (LGBTQ, Native American, those who have high ACES scores, those with a history substance abuse, etc.).ⁱ [Y]
- Supporting those with chronic diseases or pain. Connectedness to a caring adult who can listen and help navigate tough situations, peers, family, community, and social institutions.ⁱ [Y]
- A strong sense of cultural identity for those in marginalized communities.ⁱ

Direct Prevention

- Interdisciplinary and integrated team including youth & family that looks across the system to identify actions (e.g., COACT).ⁱ [Y]
- Lethal means safety / safe gun storage practices (education from providers, gun shops, firing ranges, safety instructors; or policy).ⁱ
- Supportive services for those with high ACES scores, especially sexual abuse.ⁱ
- Comprehensive suicide prevention policies and practices for schools & districts (incl. teacher training to recognize suicidal ideation).ⁱⁱ
- Suicide-specific training for behavioral health providers.ⁱⁱ
- Normalizing having the conversation.ⁱ
- Reach middle-aged men to provide mental health resources (i.e., The Man Therapy website).ⁱⁱ
- Develop policies, culture, and train a competent, confident and caring workforce.ⁱⁱ
- Health systems quality improvement framework (e.g., Zero Suicide).ⁱⁱⁱ
- School suicide assessments and referrals to appropriate and effective care.ⁱⁱ [Y]
- Screening and assessment to identify individuals experiencing suicidal despair.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Integrated follow-up after someone has experienced suicidal despair.ⁱ
- Wraparound services for stability (e.g., childcare, housing, food, job supports).ⁱ



- Gatekeeper trainings for community members to refer those w/ suicidal despair to the support and care they need (e.g., Question, Persuade, Refer, or Mental Health First Aid).ⁱⁱ

Intervention

- Anonymous reporting for youth w/ integrated response system (e.g., Safe2Tell).ⁱ [Y]
- Family level interventions.ⁱ [Y]
- Suicide prevention and crisis hotline (e.g., Colorado Crisis Services: 1-844-493-8255)
- Develop a suicide care management plan for at-risk individuals.ⁱⁱⁱ

Preparedness and Response

- School crisis teams for preparedness and response.ⁱ [Y]
- Ambulance / Police co-responder model (incl. mental health specialist).ⁱ
- Transition individuals through care w/ warm hand-offs.ⁱⁱⁱ

Recovery / Learning

- Mental health supports.ⁱ
- Child fatality review teams.ⁱ [Y]
- Welcoming a person back into school / community protocols after a suicide attempt.ⁱ
- Follow-up and support after experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis or suicide attempt (e.g., Colorado Follow-up Project).ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Bornstein, Jacob. (2023) *Youth Protection in Every Neighborhood Project*. Wellstone Collaborative Strategies.

ⁱⁱ Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention supported priority or program or personally communicated strategy.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Zero Suicide Approach](#)

