

**15 TRUTHS**  
ABOUT KIDS AND GUNS



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# GUNS ARE THE #2 KILLER OF CHILDREN AND TEENS IN THE U.S.



Gun deaths involving children are devastating, yet they continue with alarming frequency in the United States. Firearm-related injuries and violence account for 1 in 7 child deaths nationwide, making guns the second leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 19. Every year, on average, 2,500 children and teens are killed by guns—that's like losing two classrooms full of children every week.

Nearly two-thirds, or 62 percent, of gun deaths among youth under age 20 are homicides. The majority of victims are black children and teens. Suicides account for 31 percent of firearm deaths, most of them among white males. And nearly two children every week are killed in unintentional shootings. Most of these deaths are caused by kids finding and playing with unsecured guns.

Injuries far outnumber deaths from firearms and, in some ways, impose a greater burden. For every child killed with a gun, 6 others are injured. Children who survive a firearm injury often face serious, long-term consequences.

The combination of deaths and injuries represent a staggering cost. Yet the consequences of gun violence are even more far-reaching, affecting individuals, families and entire communities. Exposure to violence has been linked with a range of psychiatric, emotional, and behavioral problems, including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, anger, nervousness, substance abuse, and delinquency. The economic impact of gun violence is enormous, resulting in substantial medical costs and loss of productivity, declining property values, and reduced quality of life.

Despite significant progress in reducing child gun deaths, many challenges remain. CDC data shows that guns were second only to cars in the number of children and teens killed in 2013. And the gap between the two is narrowing. Motor vehicle deaths are on the decline, thanks largely to improvements in education, safety equipment, vehicle design, and road conditions. At the same time, gun deaths have remained relatively stagnant over the past decade.

These numbers are troubling, especially since so many of these deaths and injuries could have been prevented. Too many are caused by children's easy access to unsecured firearms in their own homes and in homes where they visit and play. But the good news is that we know what works to prevent gun violence right now. It is vital, therefore, that we give this issue the urgent attention it deserves.

# KIDS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE KILLED BY A GUN IN A HOME THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.



Parents worry endlessly about their children's safety on the Internet, in the schoolyard, and even at the local playground. Yet with so much focus on the dangers to children on the outside, parents often forget the safety hazards lurking inside their homes. Each year, more than 2,500 children and teens are killed with guns, and nearly 60% occur in a home. Highly publicized shootings in schools and shopping malls may raise the public's fears, but the biggest threat to children's safety are the guns commonly found inside our own homes.

Many people own guns and keep them in the home for protection. A 2014 Gallup poll found that 63% of Americans believe that a gun in the home makes it safer, while just 30% said a gun makes it more dangerous. But far from making you safer, guns in homes pose a serious risk to families.

Research has shown that firearms increase the risk of homicide, suicide and unintentional death, not only for the gun owner but also for other members of the household. A meta-analysis of 15 studies revealed that people with access to firearms were three times more likely to die of suicide and nearly twice as likely to be the victim of a homicide. A case control study found that the risk of unintentional gun death was three times higher for individuals in households with a gun.

Children are more likely to be killed by a gun in a home than anywhere else. This includes homicides, suicides and unintentional shootings, according to the CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System. The overwhelming majority (81%) of firearm suicides among youth ages 10-19 occur in a home, often with an unlocked gun. Similarly, 75% of unintentional shootings among youth under age 20 take place at home. Most of these deaths occur when children are unsupervised, find a gun and play with it. And, contrary to public opinion, firearm homicides among youth under age 20 also frequently occur in the home, with 39% of male victims and 64% of female victims killed at home.

The reason so many youth gun deaths take place in a home is because millions of children live in homes where guns are easily accessible. Because these guns are often brought into homes for protection, it is not surprising that many parents do not fully appreciate the risks to themselves and to their children.

**1 IN 3 HOMES  
WITH CHILDREN  
HAVE A GUN  
AND ONLY ABOUT  
A THIRD ARE  
SAFELY STORED.**



Today's parents are extremely conscientious, particularly when it comes to their children's safety. They want the best for their children, and most undoubtedly try to make their homes as safe as possible. But even the most safety-minded parents fail to take simple precautions to keep guns away from their children.

Researchers surveyed 1,081 adults bringing a child younger than 7 years into an emergency department. Of the 221 adults who were gun owners, 92% reported that they keep poisonous substances out of children's reach, 90% always keep children restrained when in cars, and 82% have the number for a poison control center. However, this safety consciousness did not extend to firearms. Twenty-seven percent of participants reported having an unlocked gun at home, 20% reported a loaded gun, and 7% reported a loaded and unlocked gun.

Every year, over 2,500 children and teens die from guns and many more are seriously injured. Experts agree that the best way to prevent gun-related injuries and deaths is to keep guns out of homes. If parents choose to store their firearms at home, they recommend storing them unloaded and locked where children can't get to them. Yet, research shows that a third of U.S. homes with children have at least one firearm, despite the risks. In fact, guns are just as likely to be present in homes with children as in homes without. And only 39% of families store their guns in the manner that makes them least accessible to children: unloaded and locked, with ammunition stored separately.

This is puzzling given the well-known risks to children of having guns in the home. One possible explanation is that parents tend to overestimate their children's ability to stay safe around guns, and this influences decisions about storage. Studies have shown that many parents assume their children will behave responsibly with guns. A survey of parents of 5- to 15-year-old children revealed that 87% believe their child would not play with a gun if given the opportunity. The majority of parents, including both gun owners and non-gun owners, reasoned that their children are "too smart" or "know better" than to play with or touch guns they find. Others felt that their children wouldn't touch guns because they had been told not to.

In a perfect world kids can always be counted on to brush their teeth, eat their vegetables, and stay away from guns. But this is just not realistic. To keep kids safe, parents must treat guns with the same care as they would other home safety hazards like fires and falls.



# LOCKING UP GUNS AND MEDICATIONS CAN HELP PREVENT SUICIDE.



When children are young, parents take all sorts of measures to protect them from harm. Covering electrical sockets, adding safety latches to cabinets, and keeping medicines and other hazardous products out of reach, are just a few. As children get older and become more independent, they face new challenges. But parents still need to be vigilant about protecting their safety.

The statistics on teen suicide are alarming. Each year, one in six high school students seriously contemplate suicide. About 1 million—8 percent—make an attempt. And approximately 2,000 teens die annually.

Research shows that the risk of suicide increases dramatically when teens have access to firearms at home. The reason is that a gun makes it much more likely that a suicide attempt will be fatal. Nearly half of suicides by young people in the U.S. are by firearm. Tragically, most of these guns come from parents or other family members.

It's not difficult to understand why parents often feel frustrated and overwhelmed when dealing with suicide. The reasons behind a teen's suicide or suicide attempt are complex. The warning signs can be difficult to spot. And many attempts occur with little or no planning. However, suicide is preventable.

The Suicide-Proof Your Home Campaign provides simple, practical steps that parents can take to reduce their child's risk of suicide, such as disposing of or locking up firearms and medications. Much like locking kitchen and bathroom cabinets can keep curious toddlers safe from harmful chemicals, locking a gun and securing ammunition separately can keep a troubled teen from making a deadly mistake.

Limiting access to the methods that people use to kill themselves is a proven strategy for preventing suicide. It is based on research that shows the method someone uses to attempt suicide plays a key role in whether they live or die. "Means restriction" has proven to be effective in reducing suicide rates by as much as 30-50% in other countries—and not only with gun suicides. Other examples include placing barriers on bridges, detoxifying domestic gas in homes, and limiting prescription medications.

Suicide-Proof Your Home was developed through an innovative partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Health to educate families about the risks of guns in the home. An evaluation of the first two years revealed that 97 percent of parents surveyed believed the program's message was important and more than half had already made changes or planned to make changes to suicide proof their home. It is currently being implemented in locations across the country, helping to make homes, families, and entire communities safer.

STATES WITH  
HIGH RATES  
OF GUN  
OWNERSHIP



HAVE THE  
HIGHEST RATES OF  
CHILD GUN  
DEATHS.

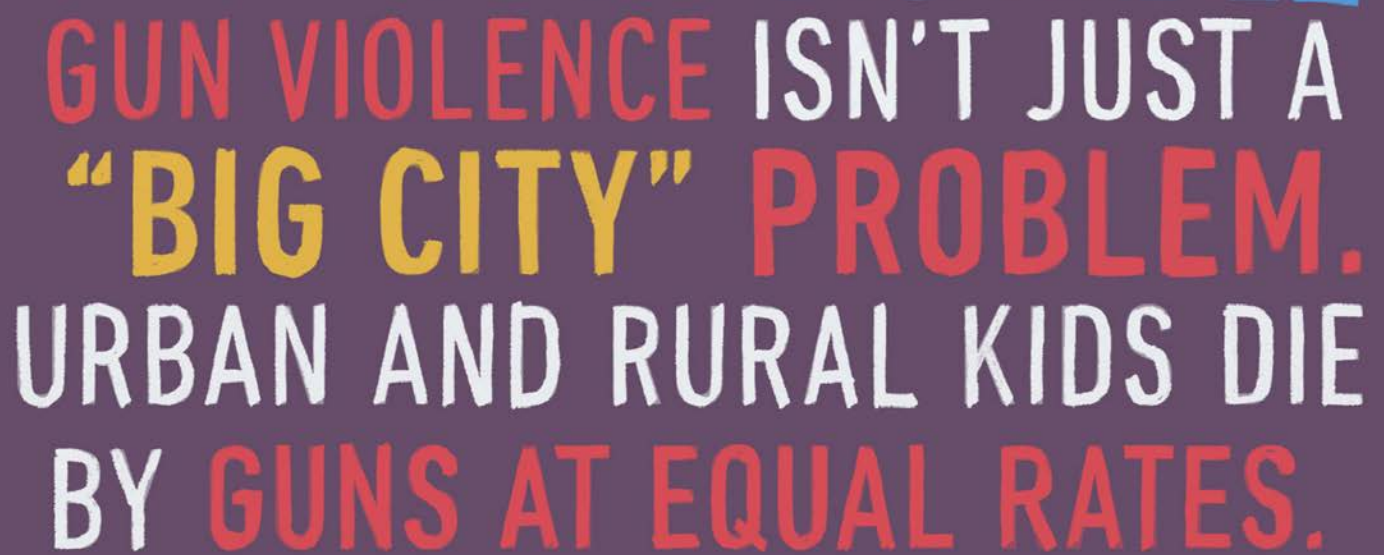
The risk of being killed with a gun varies dramatically for children and teens in the United States, depending on where they grow up. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that there are wide variations in rates of gun-related violence—including homicides, suicides and unintentional shootings—regionally and from state to state. And the depth of these divisions is striking: the chance of dying by gunfire can vary by as much as 94% for youth under age 20.

At both ends of the spectrum, a clear pattern emerges in which child gun deaths rise as the number of gun-owning households increases. Put more simply, more guns equal more gun deaths. Overall, states with higher gun ownership have the highest rates of child and teen gun deaths in the country. At the same time, states with the lowest gun death rates have lower gun ownership.

Louisiana, with gun owners in nearly half of households, has the highest rate of firearm death among youth under age 20. Between 2004 and 2013, the state saw 7.67 deaths per 100,000 population, which is significantly above the national average of 3.45 deaths per 100,000. Hawaii, the state with the lowest gun ownership, has the lowest gun deaths per 100,000 with 0.39.

Along with Louisiana, the states with the highest rates of child and teen gun deaths are Alaska, Missouri, Montana and Mississippi, each with a rate 43% higher or more than the national average. They also had some of the nation's largest percentages of gun-owning households. By contrast, the five safest states—Hawaii, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut—each have gun ownership rates far below the national average.

These findings were confirmed in a national study examining the relationship between gun access and firearm deaths among children 5 to 14 years old. It revealed that children living in states with high gun ownership were 16 times more likely to die from unintentional injury, 7 times more likely to die from firearm suicide, and 3 times more likely to die from firearm homicide than those in states with low gun ownership. However, a similar relationship was not found between state gun levels and either non-firearm homicide or non-firearm suicide among 5 to 14 year old children. This suggests that children living in high-gun states were not more violent than those living in low-gun states. Rather, the study authors concluded, "where there are more guns, violence is more likely to turn lethal."



# GUN VIOLENCE ISN'T JUST A "BIG CITY" PROBLEM. URBAN AND RURAL KIDS DIE BY GUNS AT EQUAL RATES.

When people across the country think of gun violence, they tend to think city, not town and country. But gun violence is pervasive and affects children everywhere, from big cities to small, rural towns. The truth is children and teens in the most rural parts of the U.S. are just as likely to die by gunfire as those in the largest cities.

This was the major finding of a study of nearly 24,000 firearm-related deaths among children and teens 19 and younger between 1999 and 2006. Researchers analyzed 15,190 firearm homicides, 7,082 firearm suicides, and 1,377 unintentional shooting deaths for the 8-year period. They found that the most rural counties, like Dunn County in North Dakota, that are far from cities or have fewer than 2,500 people, had a gun death rate of 4.04 deaths per 100,000 population. They found practically the same rate, 4.64 per 100,000, in the most urban counties, like Baltimore County in Maryland, with populations of more than 1 million.

However, the research also revealed that gun violence affects children in urban and rural areas differently. And, not surprisingly, each comes with its own particular set of challenges. Young people in the most urban counties were at greater risk of firearm homicide, but this was offset by higher rates of gun-related accidents and suicides among kids in the most rural counties.

Children and teens in urban areas were 5 times more likely to be the victims of firearm homicide compared with their rural counterparts, 3.83 versus 0.78 deaths per 100,000. On the other hand, youth in the most rural areas experienced disproportionately high rates of firearm suicide, exceeding those in the most urban counties by 75%. Likewise, the rate of unintentional gun death was considerably higher in the most rural counties as compared to the most urban ones: 0.51 and 0.11 deaths per 100,000, respectively.

Suicide rates have historically been higher in rural versus urban areas. But a new study of nearly 67,000 suicide deaths occurring between 1996 and 2010 found that the gap is widening for young people aged 10 to 24. Data indicated that male suicide rates increased in rural areas, while decreasing in urban areas, causing inequality to rise. For females, the increase in rural suicide rates outpaced that of urban areas. The study also revealed that, although the use of firearms in suicides declined, they still accounted for more than half of suicide deaths.



# 87% OF CHILDREN AND TEENS KILLED BY GUNS ARE BOYS.



Boys are far more likely than girls to be injured or killed with a gun in the United States. In 2013, 2,149 boys under age 20 died of a firearm related injury. Among girls, the number was substantially lower, 316. However, this gender gap is nothing new. From 2009 to 2013, boys accounted for 87% of firearm related deaths among children and teens. Indeed, boys were 7 times more likely than girls to be injured by a gun during that period.

These gender differences persist across all manner of gun injury, including homicides, unintentional shootings and, most markedly, suicides. But, the question is, why? Certainly boys' propensity for risk-taking comes into play. But guns too seem to hold a powerful attraction for boys.

Boys are much more likely than girls to be killed or injured in an unintentional shooting. Among children under age 20, boys account for 85% of unintentional gun deaths and injuries. In 2013 alone, boys were killed at a rate more than 5 times that of girls.

Studies have shown that, in the large majority of unintentional shootings involving children, someone other than the victim fired the shot. Not surprisingly, these shooters were also overwhelmingly boys. Research also shows that many boys just can't resist the temptation to play with guns.

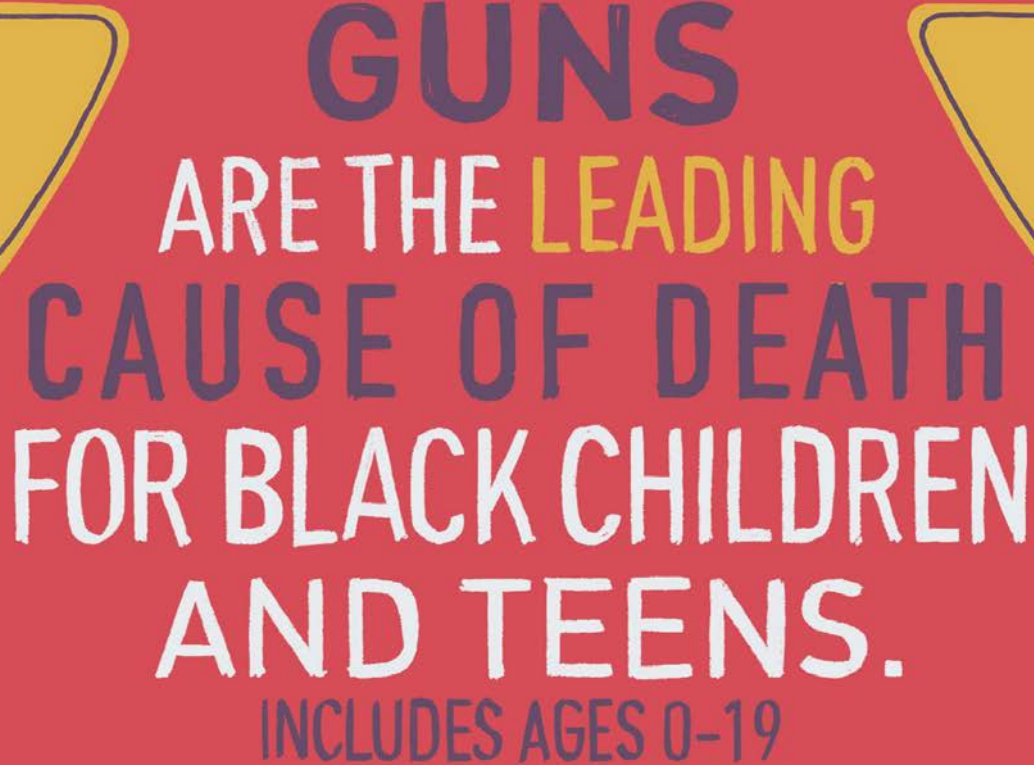
Between 2009 and 2013, nearly two-thirds of homicide deaths among children and teens under age 20 involved a firearm. What's more, boys far outnumbered girls as victims of firearm homicide, making up 86% of deaths in this age group. In fact, boys were nearly six times more likely than girls to be killed in a gun-related homicide.

Surprisingly, boys and girls under age 10 are almost equally likely to become victims of firearm homicide. However, as children age, the gender gap widens. Among children and teens, the greatest disparity exists among 15 to 19 year olds: boys in this age group are 8 times more likely than girls to die in a gun-related homicide.

Although girls are more likely to have considered, planned and attempted suicide, boys die by suicide nearly four times as often. The reason is that boys tend to use more lethal methods of suicide, such as firearms, hanging and jumping from heights. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to choose less fatal methods, such as overdose.

From 2009 to 2013, half of all suicide deaths for males aged 10-24 involved a firearm, compared to 25% of suicides for similarly aged females. Even more striking, boys accounted for 89% of firearm suicides among adolescents and young adults during that period.





# GUNS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR BLACK CHILDREN AND TEENS. INCLUDES AGES 0-19

In America, black children and teens suffer a vastly disproportionate share of the nation's gun violence burden. Although they represent just 17% of the total child population (0-19), black youth account for 45% of gun deaths and injuries. In contrast, white children and teens account for 54% of gun violence victims, but 76% of the population.

Gun violence is the second leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1-19 in the U.S., behind motor vehicle accidents. For African-American youth though, it is the leading cause of death. Black children and teens are nearly two times more likely to be killed with a gun than in a motor vehicle crash. In 2013, 1,009 black youth under age 20 were killed with guns. There were 604 deaths from motor vehicles that year.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, black youth are killed with guns at more than 3 times the rate of white children and teens. The rate is highest among black males; in 2013, 25.94 out of every 100,000 African-American males aged 15-19 were killed with a gun. This is nearly quadruple the rate of 6.70 per 100,000 for white males of the same age group.

The majority (89%) of gun deaths among black children and teens are homicides. In 2013, 883 African-American youth under age 20 were victims of firearm homicide. This translates to a rate of 6 deaths per 100,000, which is strikingly lower than at the epidemic's peak in the mid-1990s. Compared with 1993, when firearm homicides were at their highest, the rate for black youth was 66% lower in 2013. The steepest declines occurred in the late 1990s, reflecting a broader trend in violent crime. More recently, however, progress has slowed considerably.

Despite significant declines over the past 20 years, firearm homicide continues to have a devastating impact on black youth. Between 2009 and 2013, 6,893 black children and teens were the victims of homicide, including 1,431 under age 10. Among all youth, 75% were killed with a gun.

While the numbers of children killed in unintentional shootings are less staggering, the disparities between black and white are no less present. Between 2009 and 2013, African-American youth had the highest rate of unintentional gun deaths (.24), followed closely by American Indian and Alaska Natives (.22). Much lower rates were found among whites (.13) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (.03). Black males aged 15 to 19 had the highest rate of unintentional firearm deaths among all race/gender groups, more than 3 times the national average.

# ON AVERAGE, 2 ADOLESCENTS KILL THEMSELVES WITH A GUN EVERY DAY.



Adolescence can be a difficult time. Teens are often moody and their behavior erratic and unpredictable. When combined with easy access to a gun, the consequences can be tragic.

The availability of a gun makes it easy for a vulnerable teen to act on their suicidal feelings. Suicide is often an impulsive act, particularly among adolescents. In fact, suicide attempts typically follow a surprisingly brief period of contemplation. One out of four young people deliberate less than 5 minutes before attempting to kill themselves. This is according to a study of 154 survivors of near-fatal suicide attempts. Seventy percent of those interviewed decided in less than an hour.

Research also shows that suicide is often the result of a crisis. For some teens, a situation like a fight with a parent, a problem at school, or the end of a romantic relationship can seem overwhelming and like suicide is the only way to escape. In one study, at least a third of young people under 18 who died by suicide had experienced a crisis within 24 hours of taking their life.

Each year, over 2,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 die as a result of suicide. Many more seriously consider suicide, make plans, or attempt to kill themselves.

Access to firearms makes it much more likely that an adolescent's suicide attempt will be deadly. The reason is that guns are far more lethal than other commonly used methods of suicide. About 85% of suicide attempts with firearms are fatal versus less than 5% for the most widely used methods, including cutting and overdose. And, unlike other methods, guns don't leave time for someone to reconsider their actions or get help.

On average, 2 children and teens kill themselves with a gun every day. A common misconception is that suicidal people will find a way to kill themselves, with or without a gun. But studies suggest that this is not always the case. If those in a crisis can't access a gun quickly, they may not attempt suicide at all. Suicidal impulses tend to be short-lived; thus, delaying access to a gun may allow time for the crisis to pass. Yet, even if another method is used, the chances of survival are increased. And most people—9 out of 10—who survive an attempt do not go on to die by suicide.

# 82% of GUNS USED BY TEENS TO KILL THEMSELVES

**BELONG TO A PARENT  
OR FAMILY MEMBER.**



Suicide is a leading cause of death for children and youths ages 10 to 24 in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among that age group, firearms are the top method of suicide; nearly half (45%) of those who die by suicide use a firearm.

Studies show that youth often have easy access to the guns they use to kill themselves. Indeed, the vast majority of young people—8 out of 10—use a firearm belonging to a family member, usually a parent. In a recent study, a third of teens reported living in a home with a gun. Of those, 41 percent said they had easy access and the ability to shoot that firearm. Even more disturbing, teens with a history of mental illness or suicidal behavior were just as likely to report access to firearms at home.

This is not surprising, given that parents of adolescents tend to store their guns less safely than parents of younger children. Research has shown that, compared to households with younger children, households with adolescents are significantly more likely to store a firearm loaded and unlocked. Parents of adolescents are more likely to believe their children are old enough to behave responsibly and exercise good judgment around guns.

Yet there is considerable evidence linking access to firearms with increased suicide risk, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Research shows that keeping a gun in the home, regardless of how it's stored, increases the likelihood of suicide. The odds are even higher if the gun is kept loaded and/or unlocked. But gun owners are no more likely than non-gun owners to have a mental illness or to become suicidal. A suicide attempt with a gun is just far more lethal.

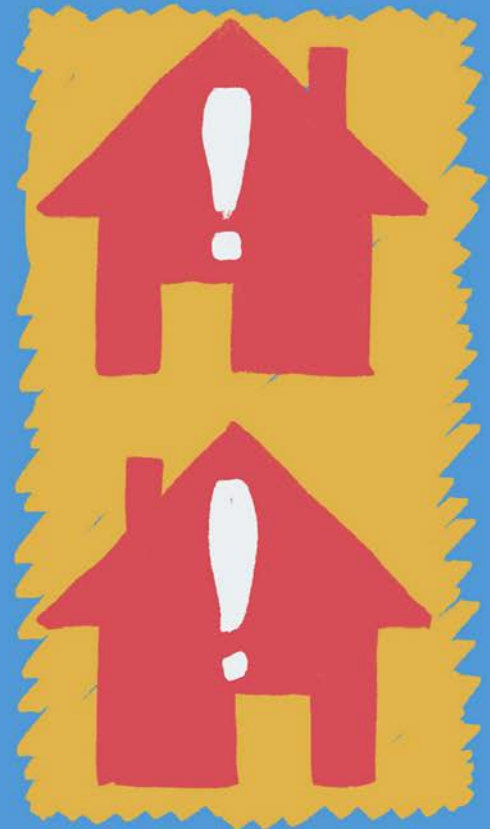
Many parents just can't imagine that their child may be at risk for suicide. But it's something that all parents should be concerned about. Teen suicide is often unpredictable, and may not be preceded by warning signs. Ensuring that teens do not have access to firearms is particularly important. Research has shown that, for youth under 16, access to guns is a greater risk factor for suicide than mental illness. In fact, as many as 40% of youth under age 16 who kill themselves had no known mental illness. For them, the availability of a gun is more critical in predicting the likelihood of suicide.



# MOST SCHOOL SHOOTERS

# USE A GUN

# FROM THEIR HOME OR A RELATIVE'S HOME.



As a nation, we have become too accustomed to shootings and other acts of violence in our schools. Images from Columbine and Sandy Hook have scarred our collective memories and ripped at our hearts. Gun related injuries and school violence both ranked in the top 10 U.S. children's health concerns rated as a problem by adults in 2014. Furthermore, a recent poll found that over one in four parents feared for their oldest child's physical safety in school.

Each new tragic event elicits national attention, around-the-clock media coverage, and a fresh examination of why they take place. We focus on bullying, mental illness, and locking down our schools with police officers, armed guards, or metal detectors. However we rarely look at where the guns came from? The fact is, in most cases, we already know. The U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education found that over two-thirds (68 percent) of school shooters acquired the gun(s) used from their own home or that of a relative. This was one of the few similarities that the shooters shared.

While the most widely reported incidents are mass shootings, youth gun suicides on school grounds are far too common. Suicidal acts at schools can place classmates, teachers, and other school officials in danger in instances of homicide-suicide events, and all school-related youth suicides have a severe emotional effect on the school community. Additionally, an analysis of school-associated violent deaths found that over 75 percent of guns used by a student to commit suicide came from their own home.

The ease with which young people can access unsecured guns is deeply troubling. One in twenty high school students carry a gun at some point each month. Just like how they can find their way into their parents' liquor cabinets, kids know where the guns are in the home and many report having easy access to them. In a 2002 survey, 24 percent of youth surveyed reported having easy access to a gun in the home, just shy of the 27 percent who reported that they could easily obtain alcohol. Access to guns was highest among kids who are White, who live with two parents, and who have a mother with at least a high school degree.

To reduce shootings and other violent incidents at school, the effort must begin at home. The onus is on parents and caregivers to recognize the risks of unsecured guns in the home and make safer choices about gun access and storage.

# 9 CHILDREN AND TEENS ARE SHOT EVERY DAY IN GUN ACCIDENTS.



While believed to occur sporadically, gun accidents happen at an alarming frequency. Over 3,000 youth ages 19 and under are injured and killed in gun accidents every year—that's 9 children and teens every day. And studies show that the true number is likely higher. Since intent can be hard to prove in gun accidents, coroners often classify these deaths as homicides.

Gun accidents have a disproportionate affect on America's youth. Five percent of all firearm deaths among America's youth are gun accidents. When looking at adults ages 20 and over, gun accidents decrease to less than 0.2% of all firearm deaths.

The circumstances surrounding accidental firearm death also change as an individual ages from youth to adulthood. When a child dies due to a firearm accident, they are overwhelmingly shot by another person—such as a friend or family member (primarily a sibling). Once an individual enters adulthood, the biggest risk for gun accident is shooting oneself.

Gun accident deaths tend to follow general patterns. Among youth under 20, these deaths mostly occur in a home (75%), yet often it is not the victim's home. Males are most likely to be both the shooter and victim, specifically young males; approximately 81% of shooters who accidentally kill another person are younger than 25.

The cause is also disturbingly similar in many of these shootings. Over half of accidental youth gun deaths occur because someone was playing with a firearm (51%). This can largely be attributed to children's inability to tell the difference between real, deadly firearms and the toy guns with which they often play.

These deaths and injuries have long-term negative connotations for America's youth. Research shows that exposure to violence with a highly lethal weapon (like a firearm) can lead to psychological problems including anger, depression, and anxiety. This is often compounded by life-long guilt for harming or killing a friend or family member.

Fortunately, the general patterns of gun accidents show how they can be prevented. Many parents intuitively believe that talking to their children and educating them about firearm safety is the best way to keep them safe. However, neither talking to children about firearms, nor hiding firearms is enough. Kids are curious, and many cannot resist the temptation to handle or play with a firearm they come across. Rather, the data demonstrates that firearms need to be absent from youth's homes or stored securely around children - locked, unloaded, and stored separately from ammunition.

# 3 IN 4 KIDS



# KNOW WHERE GUNS ARE KEPT IN THEIR HOME.

Do your children know where your guns are? The answer is likely yes, according to a study investigating children's access to household firearms. Through surveys of 314 parent-child pairs, researchers found that 76% of children, some as young as 5 years old, knew the storage location of their parent's guns. But, even more troubling, the study revealed that parents often underestimate their children's knowledge and handling of guns in the home.

To determine what parents really know about their children's behavior around household firearms, researchers interviewed the pairs separately then compared their responses. Overall, they found that there was significant discrepancy in parents' and children's reports. Two-fifths of parents who said that their children did not know the location of household guns were contradicted by their children. And of the children who reported ever handling firearms in their homes, only 60% were correctly identified by their parent as having done so.

Possibly the most important finding was that parents who had taken safety precautions, such as talking with their children or locking household guns away, were just as likely to be contradicted by their children's reports. This is particularly troubling as education is often touted as the best way to ensure children's safety around guns. Advocates claim that educating children takes the mystery out of guns and helps diminish children's curiosity. But studies have shown that firearm safety programs are ineffective in deterring children's gun play.

The most widely used program, the NRA's Eddie Eagle GunSafe, teaches elementary school age children to "STOP! Don't touch. Run away. Tell a grown up." If they see a gun. Since its 1988 inception, over 28 million children have been taught gun safety using the Eddie Eagle program. Yet, in a 2004 study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, researchers found that children could repeat the simple safety message but were unable to apply those skills when put in real-life scenarios. Studies of other "Just Say No" approaches have yielded similar results.

What makes these findings particularly worrisome is that gun safety programs seem to give parents a false sense of security regarding their children's safety. Programs, like Eddie Eagle, put the burden on children to keep themselves safe. But the problem is that children just aren't mature enough to exercise good judgment around guns. Even if they are told over and over again not to touch a gun, many won't be able to resist the temptation.



# 80% OF FIREARM DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN AGED 5 TO 14 IN HIGH INCOME COUNTRIES OCCUR IN THE U.S.



America's problem with gun violence is not new. Every day, on average, 90 people are killed with guns—including 7 kids under age 20. Yet in the wake of each high profile tragedy, comes renewed debate about gun safety, rights and restrictions. Almost inevitably, any discussion of gun violence leads to a look at how the U.S. stacks up against other countries. However, comparisons with other high-income countries show that the U.S. is unique with respect to this problem.

In addition to owning more guns than anyone else, the U.S. also has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world – an average of 88 per 100 people, according to the 2007 Small Arms Survey. Despite ranking second, Yemen had a significantly lower rate – 54.8 guns per 100 people. Among high-income countries, Switzerland ranked second with 46 guns per 100 people.

Research shows that compared to other high-income countries, firearm death rates in the United States are disproportionately high. A 2003 study compared the United States with 22 other high-income countries, including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. According to the findings, 80 percent of all firearm deaths in this group occurred in the United States and 87 percent of all children ages 0 to 14 killed by firearms were U.S. children.

Overall, the data showed that children ages 5 to 14 in the U.S. were killed by guns at more than 10 times the rate as children in the other 22 countries included in the study. Higher rates were observed for U.S. children across all manner of gun deaths, including suicides, homicides, and unintentional shootings. They were 13 times more likely to die in a firearm homicide than their similarly aged counterparts, 11 times more likely to die in an unintentional shooting, and 8 times more likely to die in a firearm suicide.

**19** MILLION  
PARENTS  
ARE ASKING  
ABOUT GUNS  
WHERE THEIR  
KIDS PLAY.

ARE YOU?



Many youth gun deaths and injuries are the direct result of our children having unsafe access to firearms in the home. These include the unintentional shootings, suicides, and homicides that happen across our nation every day. Fortunately, there are simple, tangible steps that parents can take to prevent many of these tragedies and create a safer future for our nation's children.

The ASK (Asking Saves Kids) Campaign promotes a successful, proven action that both gun-owning and non-gun-owning parents alike can take. ASK encourages parents to ask: "Is there an unlocked gun in your house?" before their child visits, or plays at another home. Parents ask all sorts of safety questions before their children visit other homes, such as questions about allergies, Internet access, and supervision. ASK proposes parents add one more safety question to this conversation. It's a simple one, but it can save a child's life.

The goal of ASK is to change our nation's social norms around firearm ownership and access by presenting both as a matter of responsible parenting. When parents ASK they help marginalize firearm behaviors that put our children at risk, namely having unlocked firearms accessible where children play, and promote behaviors that lead to child safety. Ultimately, ASK aims to encourage parents to store guns safely or remove them altogether, greatly diminishing or eliminating the possibility that those guns will cause an unintentional shooting, murder, or suicide.

Similar social norm change campaigns such as 'Secondhand Smoke Kills' and 'Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk' have successfully combated smoking and drinking & driving, respectively. ASK is doing the same, and making extraordinary progress with preventable youth gun deaths and injuries. Since ASK began there are 900 fewer children and teenagers killed with guns each year, and unintentional youth gun deaths have decreased by more than a third.

For more than a decade, the ASK Campaign and its supporters have partnered with over 400 grassroots organizations to spread this life-saving message in neighborhoods nationwide—and it's working! According to national polling of parents with children between the ages of 5-14, in the first three years of the campaign alone, ASK successfully inspired more than 19 million parents to begin asking if there were guns where their children play. ASK is making parents everywhere aware of the risks associated with unsafe youth access to guns, and creating a sense of cultural intolerance for this behavior.

The ASK Campaign is a collaboration between the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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