

A **firearm injury** is a nonfatal injury caused by the discharge of a firearm by accident, assault, intentional self-harm, or through legal intervention. A **firearm death** is a death caused by the discharge of a firearm unintentionally, in an assault, to complete suicide or through legal intervention. This brief looks at Vermont hospital visits for injuries and deaths due to firearms among Vermont residents. Statistically significant differences will be noted with an asterisk.

KEY POINTS

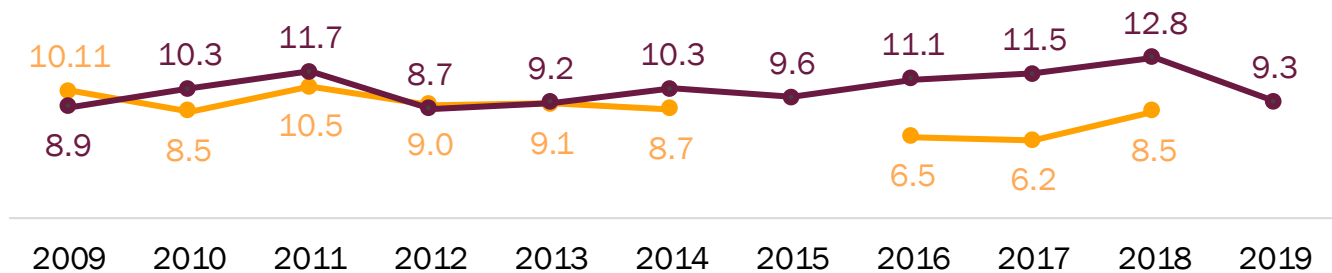
- Firearm injury rates have increased 48% for 15- to 24-year-olds.
- Male suicides account for most firearm deaths.
- Essex County has a significantly higher firearm death rate.
- Franklin County has a significantly higher firearm injury rate.

Firearm Injuries and Deaths

Firearms were responsible for 53 hospital visits in 2018 and 67 deaths in 2019. The trend in firearm injury and death has not significantly changed over the past ten years. There was a decrease from 2018 to 2019 among firearm deaths. At that same time, there was also a decrease in suicide death. This is important because a majority of Vermont firearm deaths are suicide. U.S. firearm death rates were similar to Vermont's in 2018 (U.S. rate 11.9).

The trend in firearm injury and deaths have fluctuated over the past 10 years.

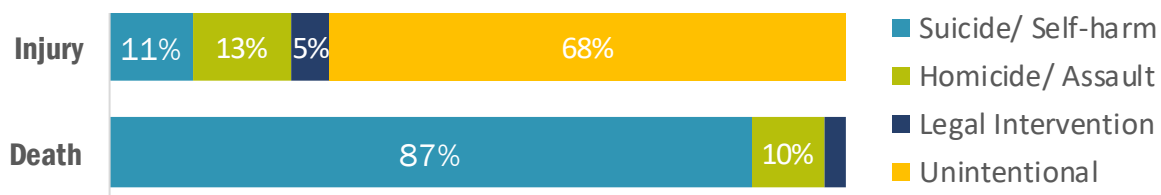
Age-adjusted rates per 100,000 Vermont residents



Intent

Most firearm deaths are suicides (87%). Following suicide, 10% of firearm deaths are due to homicide, and 3% are due to legal intervention. Among hospital visits for firearm injuries, 68% are unintentional, which is an increase from 62% in 2017. Following unintentional injury, 13% of firearm injuries were assault, 11% self-harm, and 5% were from legal intervention.

A majority of firearm injuries are unintentional, while the majority of deaths are suicide.



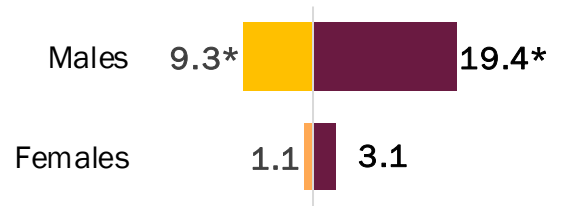
Sex and Age

Males represent a majority of firearm injury (92%) and deaths (88%). Firearm injury rates are significantly higher for males compared to females, 13.5 versus 1.1 per 100,000. Rates for firearm death for males is 6 times higher compared to females, 19.4, versus females 3.1. per 100,000.

Firearm injury and death rates by age are highest among 25- to 44-year-olds. Injury rates are second highest for 15- to 24-year-olds. Additionally, the firearm injury rate among 15–24-year-olds has increased 48% from 7.3 in 2017 to 10.8 per 100,000. Injury rates for those between 45 and 64 and those 65 years and older are 6.8 and 2.8 per 100,000, respectively. Firearm death rates are second highest for adults 65 years and older (14.6), followed by people 45 to 64 (12.8), and 15- to 24-year-olds (9.7).

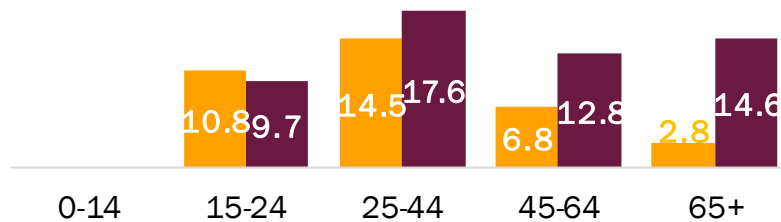
Firearm injury and death rates are significantly higher for males.

Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 Vermonters



Vermonters 25- to 44-year-olds have the highest rates of injury and deaths.

Rate per 100,000 Vermonters

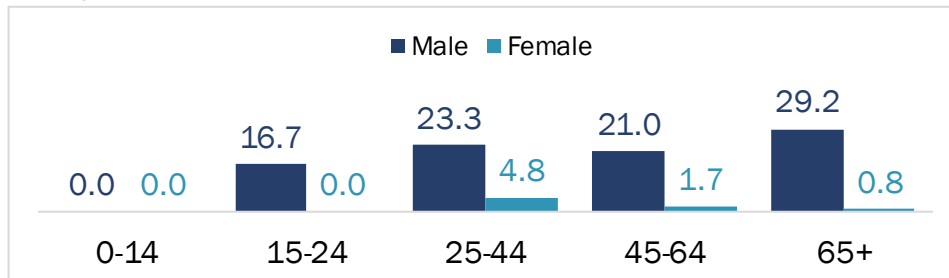


Firearm deaths by suicide

Most firearm deaths are due to suicide and are among males. Suicide firearm death rates are highest for males 65 years and older (29.2 per 100,000), followed by 25- to 44-year-olds (23.3 per 100,000).

Firearm suicide death rates are highest for 65+ year old males.

Rate per 100,000 Vermonters



County of Residence

Although the number of firearm deaths and injuries are small, there is some variation in rates by county for firearm injuries and deaths. Hospital visit rates for firearm injuries are significantly higher in Franklin County, where most of the hospital visits are unintentional (58%). Among firearm deaths, Essex County has a significantly higher rate, and is more than 4 times larger than the state rate. In 2017, most of these were death by suicide. Please note that counties with fewer than 6 firearm hospital visits are suppressed.

Key Takeaways

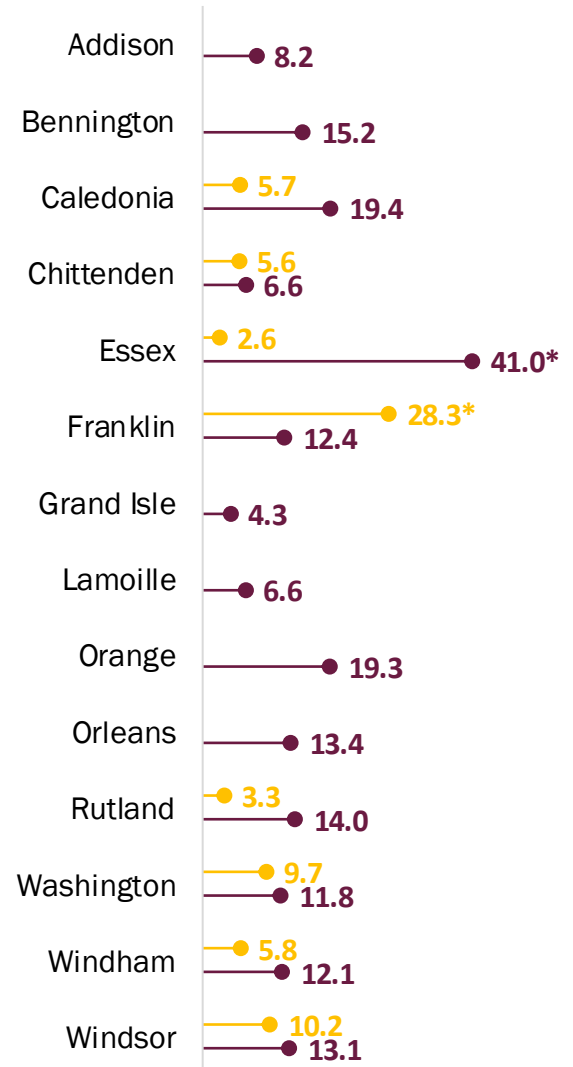
Firearm injury and death is an important

public health issue that can be prevented. While the number of firearm injuries and deaths are relatively small in Vermont, they are preventable through education and policy. We know that 43% of Vermont adults have a firearm in their place of residence, which places them at higher risk for firearm injury and death, primarily for suicide and unintentional injury. Best practice is to have firearms unloaded, locked in a secure location, and have the ammunition stored and locked separated from the firearm.

Most firearm deaths are suicides.

Firearm injury and death rates.

Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 Vermonters



References:

[Firearm Storage Safety, 2019](#)

[Intentional Self-Harm and Suicide, 2019](#)

For more information: Caitlin Quinn, Caitlin.Quinn@vermont.gov