

**43%** of all Vermont households store firearms in or around the home.

**17%** of households with firearms in the home keep a firearm loaded.

**65%** of households with a loaded firearm in the home keep a firearm unlocked.

Most non-fatal firearm injuries in Vermont are accidental (62%) and most deaths involving firearms are due to suicide (88%).<sup>1</sup> This highlights the importance of firearm storage safety and education.

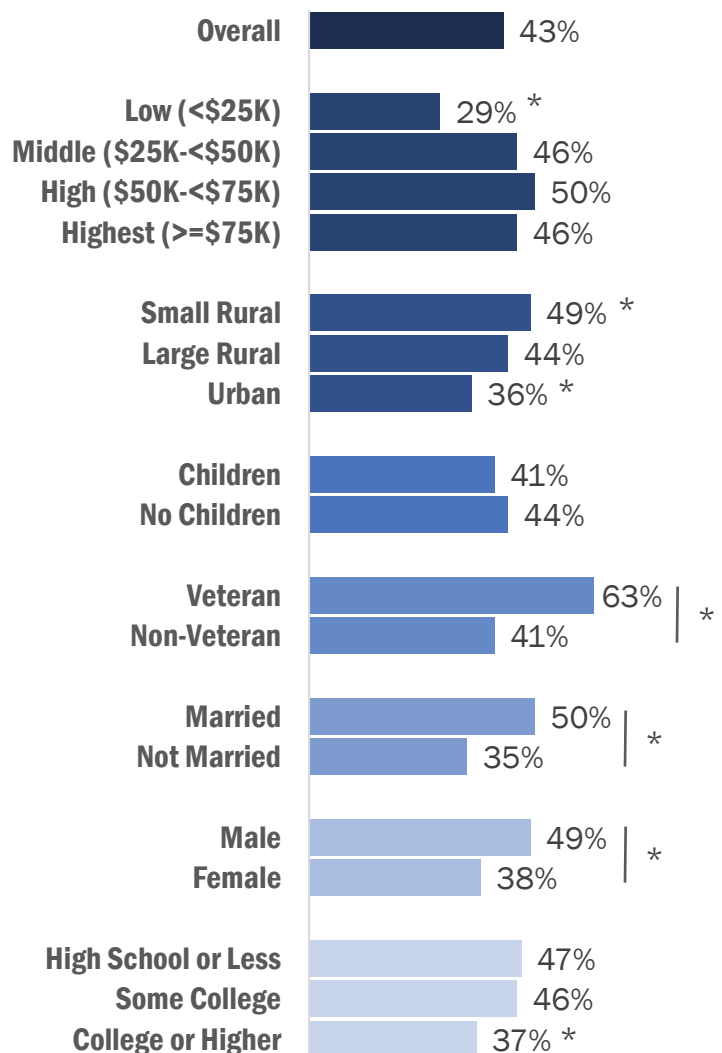
In Vermont, **43% of all households store at least one firearm in or around the home.** (This may include weapons such as pistols, shotguns and rifles, and they may be kept inside or in a garage, outdoor storage area or motor vehicle.) The VT BRFSS last asked this question in 2004. A similar proportion (44%) reported storing a firearm in the home.

### Firearms in the Home

Households with annual incomes of at least \$25,000 are 1.5 times as likely to store firearms in the home than those with lower incomes. Households located in small rural towns/cities of Vermont<sup>2</sup> are significantly more likely than those in urban towns/cities to keep a firearm in the home (49% vs. 36%). Households without children are more likely to store firearms in the home than those with children (44% vs. 41%), although this finding is not statistically significant.

More than three in five veterans (63%) keep firearms in the home, a significant difference from non-veterans (41%). Half of married adults keep firearms in the home, a significant difference from those who are not married (35%). Almost half of male adults (49%) store firearms in the home, a significant difference from females. Adults with college degrees or higher are significantly less likely to keep firearms in the home (37%) than those with less education.

### Prevalence of Firearms in the Home Vermont Households, 2018



\* Notes statistical difference.

# Firearm Storage Safety

## Loaded and Unlocked Firearms in the Home

Among the 43% of households that have firearms in or around the home, **17% keep a firearm loaded.**

This represents 7% of all households in Vermont.

Male adults with firearms in the home are

significantly more likely than females to keep their

firearm loaded (22% vs. 11%). Similarly, veterans

with firearms in the home are significantly more likely than non-veterans to keep their firearm

loaded (24% vs. 16%). Couples who are not married are significantly more likely than those who are married to keep their firearm loaded (22% vs. 14%).

Among households that have loaded firearms in or around the home, **65% keep a firearm unlocked,** meaning a key or combination is not needed to retrieve the firearm or to fire it. This represents 5% of all Vermont households.

**7% of all Vermont households have a loaded firearm in the home.**

**5% of all Vermont households have a loaded firearm in the home that is unlocked.**

## Firearms in the Home and Other Risk Factors

About one in five adults with firearms in the home binge drank in the past month (22%), currently use marijuana (19%), and have a depressive disorder (20%). Half as many say they rarely or never receive emotional and social support (9%). Among adults with a loaded and unlocked firearm in the home, 28% binge drank in the past month, 27% currently use marijuana, 22% have a depressive disorder and 14% rarely or never receive emotional and social support. To gain a better understanding, these findings should be explored further.

One in three adults (33%) who have seriously considered attempting suicide within the past year and have a firearm in the home keep it loaded, while two in three adults (66%) with suicidal thoughts and a firearm in the home keep it loaded and unlocked.

Data from the National Violent Death Reporting System indicate that many of the risk factors for suicide are similar to those for unsafe firearm storage. Among Vermont deaths by suicide in 2015 and 2016, 20% had a substance use issue, 48% had a depressive disorder, 32% were currently enrolled in mental health treatment at the time of their death and 16% had a previous suicide attempt.<sup>3</sup>

### Best Practices for Safe Firearm Storage<sup>4</sup>



**Store unloaded firearms in a locked location inaccessible to children and unauthorized users, such as a safe.**



**Lock firearms with a device that requires a key or combination to access or fire it.**



**Store ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms.**

For more information about the data: Kate Emmons, [kate.emmons@vermont.gov](mailto:kate.emmons@vermont.gov)

For more information about firearm storage safety: Stephanie Busch, [stephanie.busch@vermont.gov](mailto:stephanie.busch@vermont.gov)

For more information about the VT BRFSS, visit [www.healthvermont.gov/brfss](http://www.healthvermont.gov/brfss)

<sup>1</sup> Vermont Department of Health, [Firearm Injury and Death in Vermont](#).

<sup>2</sup> Geographic classification was determined using Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes which classify U.S. census tracts using measures of population density, urbanization and daily commuting. VT towns were stratified into three tiers (Categorization B): urban, large rural town (large rural), and small/isolated rural town (small rural) ([depts.washington.edu/uwruca/ruca-uses.php](https://depts.washington.edu/uwruca/ruca-uses.php)).

<sup>3</sup> Vermont Department of Health, [Intentional Self-Harm and Death by Suicide Brief](#), NVDRS 2015-2016.

<sup>4</sup> Project ChildSafe, [Safe Firearm Storage](#).