

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 deaths and hospital visits due to firearms among Vermont residents.. Statistically significant differences are noted with an asterisk.

### KEY POINTS

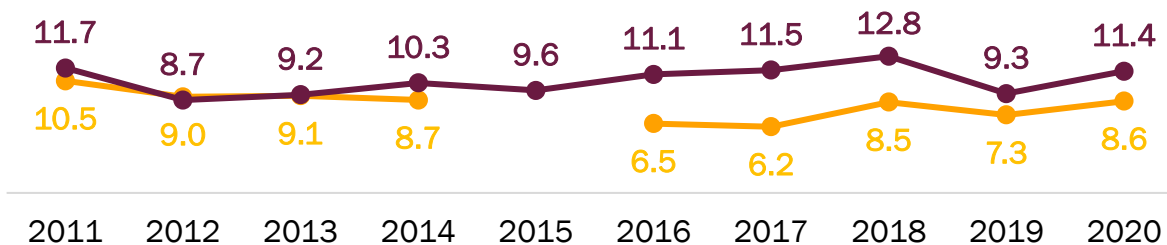
- **Firearm injury rates have increased 23% for 15- to 24-year-olds.**
- **Male suicides account for most firearm deaths.**

## Firearm Injuries and Deaths

Firearms were responsible for 49 hospital visits and 75 deaths in 2020. The trend in firearm injury and death has not significantly changed over the past ten years. There was an increase from 2019 to 2020 among firearm deaths. At that same time, there was also an increase in suicide death. U.S. firearm death rates are similar to Vermont's in 2019 (U.S. rate 11.8).<sup>1</sup>

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

Age-adjusted rates per 100,000 Vermont residents

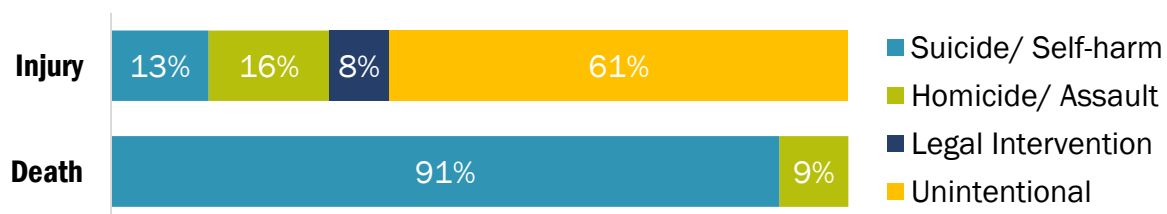


Source: Vermont Vital Statistics, Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set

## Intent

Most firearm deaths are suicides (91%), which is an increase from 87% in 2018. Following suicide, 9% of firearm deaths are due to homicide. Among hospital visits for firearm injuries, 61% are unintentional, which is a decrease from 68% in 2018. Following unintentional injury, 16% of firearm injuries were assault, 13% self-harm, and 8% were from legal intervention.

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



Source: Vermont Vital Statistics 2020, Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set 2019-2020

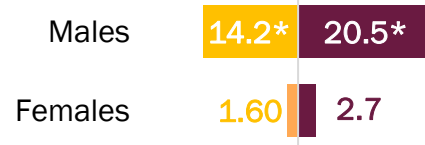
# Firearm injury and death

## Sex and Age

Males represent a majority of firearm injury (91%) and deaths (89%). Firearm injury rates are significantly higher for males compared to females, 14.2 versus 1.6 per 100,000. Rates for firearm death for males are nearly 8 times higher compared to females, 20.5, versus females 2.7 per 100,000.

**Firearm injury and death rates are significantly higher for males.\***

Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 Vermonters

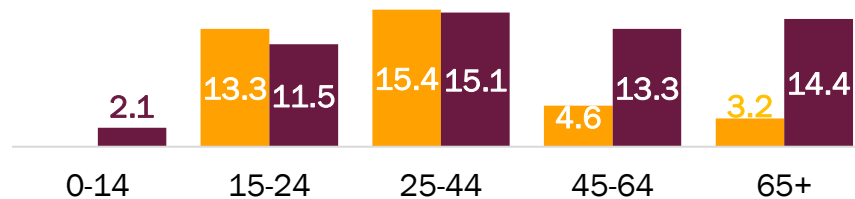


Source: Vermont Vital Statistics 2020, Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set 2019-2020

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 23% from 10.8 in 2018 to 13.3 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).

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

Rate per 100,000 Vermonters



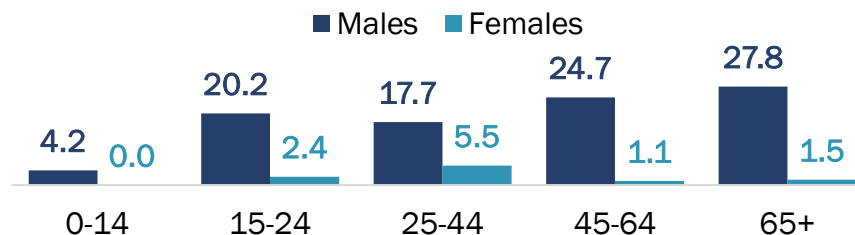
Source: Vermont Vital Statistics 2020, Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set 2019-2020

## Suicide Deaths by Firearm

Most firearm deaths are due to suicide and are among males. Suicide firearm death rates are highest for males 65 years and older (27.8 per 100,000), followed by 45 to 64-year-olds (24.7 per 100,000).

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

Rate per 100,000 Vermonters



Source: Vermont Vital Statistics 2020

## County of Residence

Firearm injury and death rates are statistically similar by county. Firearm injury rates are highest in Orleans, Addison, and Rutland County. Firearm death rates are highest in Orleans and Orange County. Please note that counties with fewer than 6 firearm hospital visits are suppressed and not shown.

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.**

## Methodology

Firearm injuries are defined using hospital billing (ICD-10) codes from emergency department and hospitalizations. Firearm deaths are defined using ICD-10 codes. The death statistics in this brief are among Vermont residents, firearm injury statistics are among Vermont residents treated at Vermont hospitals. Please note at the time of publication the rate denominators reflect 2019 population estimates. Overall rates, and rates by biological sex, and county are age adjusted. Firearm injury rates were calculated using 2019 and 2020 combined due to small numbers.

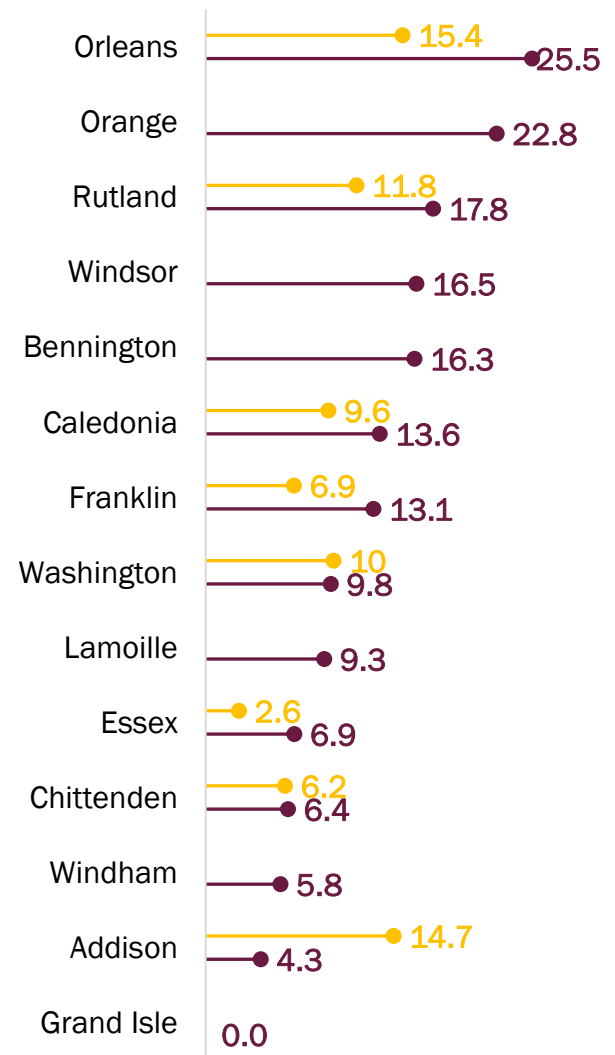
References:

1. United States rates of firearm injury and death: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/facts.html>
2. [Firearm Storage Safety, 2019](#)

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## Firearm injury and death rates.

Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 Vermonters



Source: Vermont Vital Statistics 2020, Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set 2019-2020