

# **ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES GUN DEATHS**

Submitted to

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July 10, 2025

by

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2023, nearly 47,000 gun-related deaths occurred in the United States, with 58% resulting from suicide and 38% from homicide; the remaining deaths were due to accidents, law enforcement actions, and undetermined causes. Although the overall number of gun deaths has declined slightly from the peak recorded in 2021, the per capita rate remains alarmingly high. The data also reveal significant disparities in gun death rates across different states and demographic groups, highlighting the complex and uneven nature of gun violence in the U.S.

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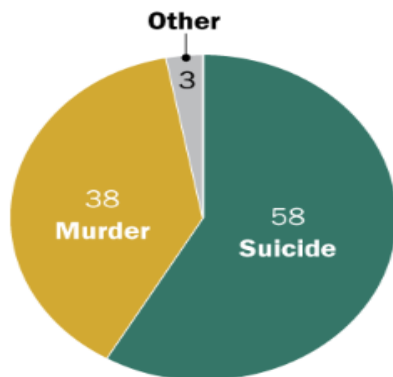
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## 1. OVERVIEW OF TOTAL GUN DEATHS (2023)

Figure 1. Depicting Share of Gun Deaths by Intent shows that Suicides dominate at nearly 60%, homicides at 38%; other categories are negligible.

*% of U.S. gun deaths, by type*



Note: "Other" includes gun deaths that involved law enforcement, were accidental or had undetermined circumstances. Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data last accessed on Feb. 21, 2025.

Table 1. Number of Gun-Related Deaths, 2023

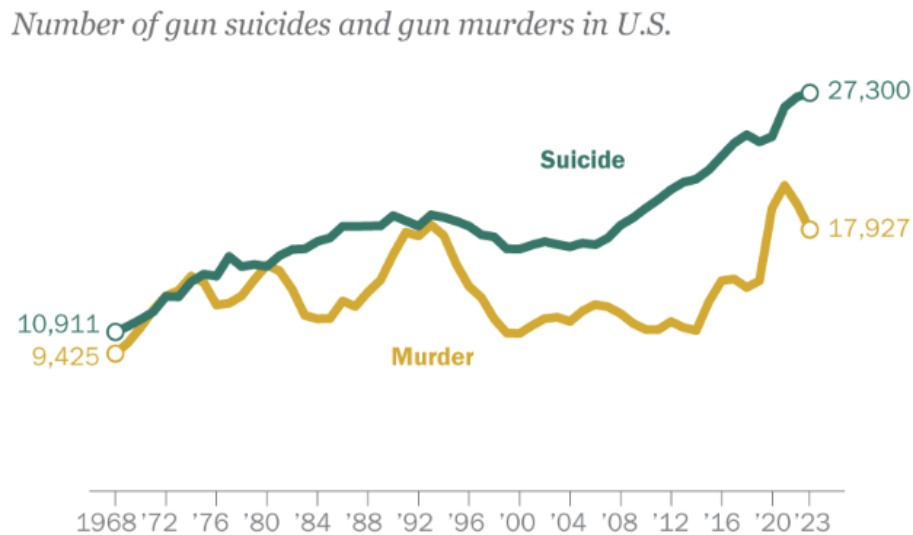
Category	Number of Deaths	Share of Total
Suicides	27,300	58%
Homicides	17,927	38%
Law Enforcement	604	1%
Accidental	463	1%
Undetermined	434	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,728</b>	<b>100%</b>

sorry, but these categories do not match up with the categories on the pie chart

An analysis of firearm-related fatalities in 2023 reveals that suicides accounted for the majority of deaths, with 27,300 cases, representing 58% of the total. Homicides followed as the second-largest category, totaling 17,927 deaths or 38% of all gun fatalities. The remaining categories—law enforcement-related deaths (604), accidental discharges (463), and cases with undetermined intent (434)—each contributed approximately 1% to the overall total. Combined, these five categories resulted in 46,728 gun-related deaths in the United States in 2023, highlighting suicide as the leading driver of firearm mortality.

## 2. TRENDS OVER TIME (1968–2023)

Figure 2. Annual Gun Deaths by Intent (1968–2023)



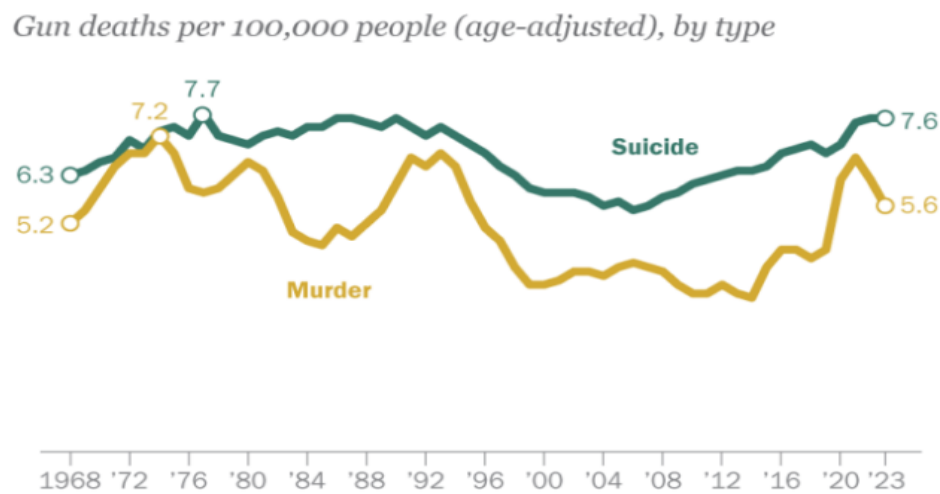
Note: Gun suicides and murders between 1968 and 1978 are classified by the CDC as involving firearms and explosives. Those between 1979 and 2023 involve firearms only.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data last accessed on Feb. 21, 2025.

The visual trend lines illustrate the long-term trends in gun-related suicides and murders in the United States from 1968 to 2023. The data show that suicides have consistently exceeded murders since the early 1980s, with a notable and steady rise from the early 2000s onward. By 2023, gun suicides reached a record high of 27,300, more than doubling their 1968 level of 10,911. In contrast, gun murders—while fluctuating more dramatically over time—peaked during the early 1990s, declined through the 2000s, and surged again around 2020 before dropping slightly in 2023. Overall, the chart underscores a growing public health challenge, with firearm suicides now constituting the dominant form of gun death in the U.S.

### 3. RATES PER 100,000 PEOPLE

Figure 3. Gun Death Rates Over Time: General downward trend in homicide rates since the 1970s; suicide rates near record highs



Note: Gun suicides and murders between 1968 and 1978 are classified by the CDC as involving firearms and explosives. Those between 1979 and 2023 involve firearms only.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data last accessed on Feb. 21, 2025.

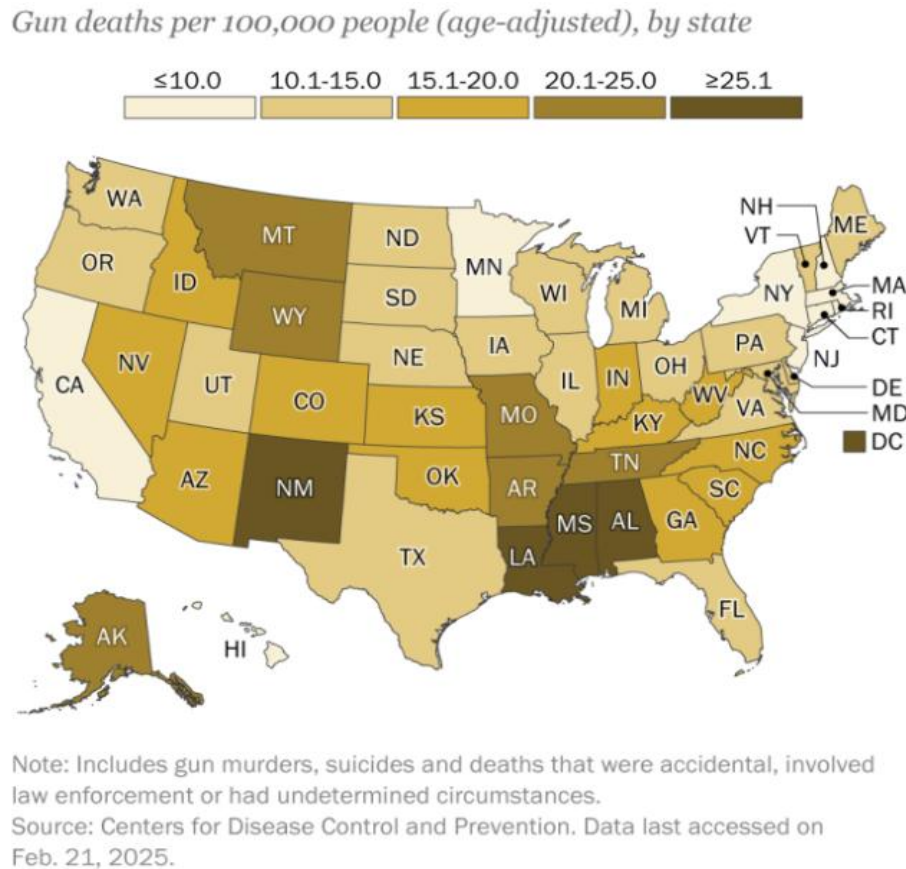
Table 2. Gun Death Rates per 100,000 Population

Year	Total	Homicide	Suicide
2021	14.6	6.7	—
2022	14.2	6.2	—
2023	13.7	5.6	7.6
1974	16.3	7.2	—
1977	—	—	7.7

Analysis of the graph shows that firearm-related death rates per 100,000 population across selected years show notable shifts in both total and category-specific trends. In 1974, the total gun death rate stood at 16.3, with homicides accounting for 7.2 of those deaths—marking one of the highest periods for gun violence. By 2021, the total rate had decreased to 14.6, with homicides contributing 6.7, suggesting a long-term decline in lethal violence. This downward trend continued modestly through 2022 and 2023, when the overall rate dropped to 13.7 and the homicide rate to 5.6. However, in 2023, suicide rates reached 7.6 per 100,000—closely matching the 7.7 rate recorded in 1977—indicating a resurgence in firearm suicides despite the overall decline in gun death rates. This trend highlights a shift in the composition of gun-related fatalities, with suicides becoming a more prominent concern in recent years.

#### 4. STATE-LEVEL COMPARISONS (2023)

Figure 4. Gun Death Rates by State

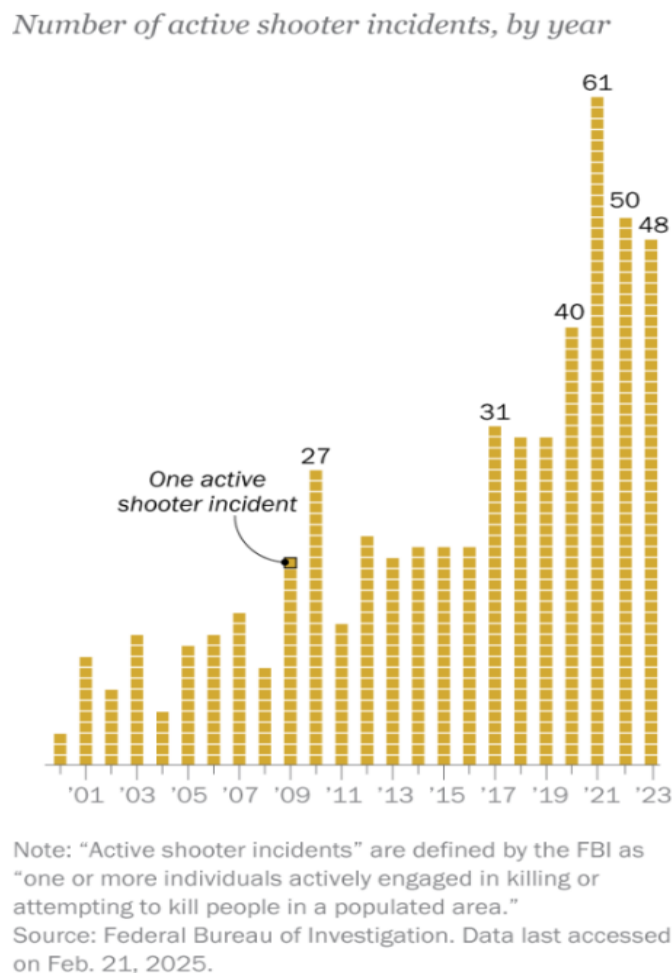


The map shows the age-adjusted gun death rates per 100,000 people across U.S. states, revealing substantial geographic disparities in firearm-related mortality. The highest rates, exceeding 25.1 per 100,000, are concentrated in the Deep South and the District of Columbia, including states such as Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and New Mexico. In contrast, states in the Northeast, including Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey, along with Hawaii and California, report the lowest rates at or below 10.0 per 100,000. The majority of states fall within the intermediate ranges of 10.1 to 25.0, suggesting that while elevated gun death rates are a national issue, certain regions bear a disproportionate burden. This pattern highlights the complex interplay of regional policies, cultural factors, and socioeconomic conditions that influence gun violence and suicide rates across the country.



## 5. MASS SHOOTINGS & FIREARM TYPES

Figure 5. Mass-Shooting Deaths by Definition



The bar chart depicts the number of active shooter incidents in the United States from 2000 through 2023, based on the FBI's definition of an active shooter as "one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area." The data show a substantial increase in such incidents over time. From low single digits in the early 2000s, the number of incidents rose sharply in 2009 (27 incidents) and again in 2017 (31), reaching a peak of 61 incidents in 2021. While the number declined slightly in subsequent years, 2023 still recorded 48 incidents, far above historical averages. Despite the high public visibility of these events, FBI data show that active shooter incidents accounted for 105 deaths in 2023. In contrast, the broader definition used by the Gun Violence Archive (GVA)—which counts any incident in which four or more people are shot—resulted in a much higher death toll of 722. This contrast highlights how varying definitions influence public understanding of the scope and scale of gun violence, particularly in mass shooting contexts.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Gun-related deaths in the United States remain systematically high, with suicides consistently comprising the majority of cases. While homicide rates have declined since their peak in the 1970s, the steady rise in suicides presents an urgent and growing public health concern. Wide variations in gun death rates across states further underscore the uneven distribution of firearm-related harm and its disproportionate impact on certain populations. Although mass shootings receive substantial public attention, they account for only a small fraction of overall gun fatalities. These findings suggest that effective policy responses must take a comprehensive approach, targeting both homicide prevention and the increasing incidence of suicide by firearms.

## REFERENCES

- Geiger, A. (2025, April 24). What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/05/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/>