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Child and Adolescent Firearm Deaths: National Trends and Variation by Demographics and States

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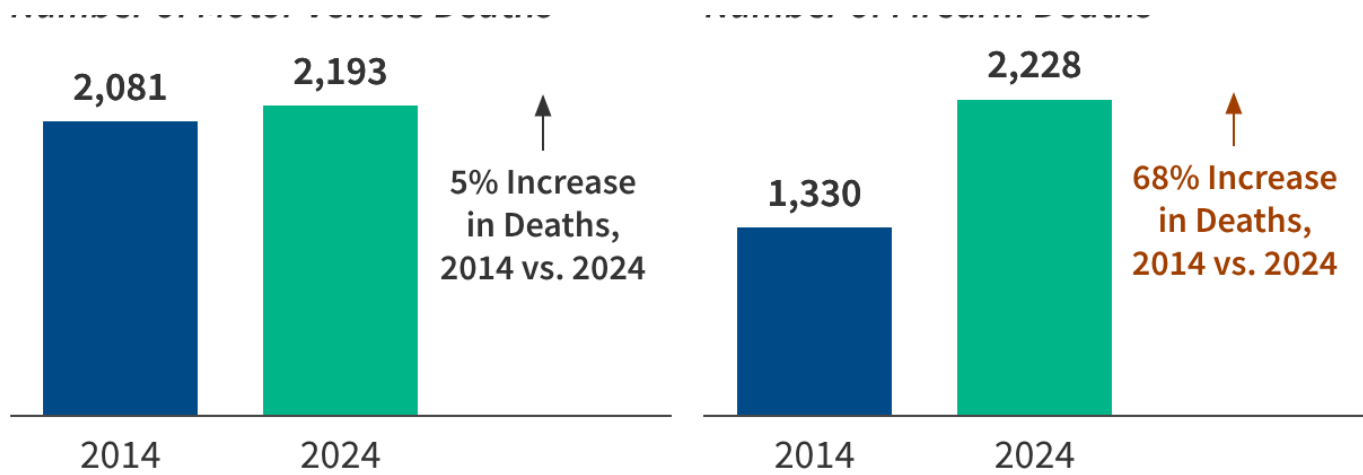
Youth gun violence sharply increased in the United States in recent years. At the same time, a [growing body](#) of [research links](#) gun violence to adverse impacts on the [mental health and well-being of youth](#). However, understanding the full scope of the youth [gun violence epidemic](#) is limited by the lack of data on nonfatal firearm injuries. Estimates find that for every firearm fatality, there are [at least two](#) survivors of firearm injuries. Over the past decade, the number of youth who died by firearm increased by 68% (Figure 1), suggesting that many more youth have experienced nonfatal firearm injuries or some other exposure to gun violence which may impact their mental health (for example, school shootings have increased over time, as has [exposure](#) of school-aged children to these shootings).

Figure 1

Firearm Deaths Among Children and Adolescents Have Sharply Increased Over the Past Decade and Surpassed Motor Vehicle Deaths

Number of Motor Vehicle Deaths

Number of Firearm Deaths



Note: Death counts are shown for individuals ages 17 and younger. Beginning in 2020, annual firearm deaths among youth exceeded motor vehicle deaths. The crude rates are as follows: Motor Vehicle Deaths - 2.8 per 100,000 individuals ages 17 and younger in 2014 and 3.0 in 2024; Firearm Deaths - 1.8 in 2014 and 3.0 in 2024. Causes of death attributable to firearm mortality include ICD-10 Codes W32-W34, X72-X74, X93-X95, Y22-Y24, and Y35.0.

Source: KFF analysis of CDC Wonder Data, 2014-2024

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Beginning in 2020, firearm deaths among youth (ages 17 and younger) surpassed motor vehicle deaths for the first time. Motor vehicle deaths – a longstanding leading cause of death among youth – have [decreased](#) over several decades and levelled off in recent years, largely as a result of nationwide efforts to improve safety. However, firearm deaths remain elevated in recent years and a number of safety efforts put forth in the previous Biden administration are being [rolled back](#) during the [second Trump administration](#). This includes dismantling the [White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#); building a [Second Amendment Section](#) under the Department of Justice, focused on expanding gun-rights [protections](#); and reducing a number of funds through the Department of Justice and [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#) (BSCA), which were intended for improving safety and mental health resources for children. The BSCA also allocated funds to support states with Extreme Risk Protection Order policies – a red flag law linked to a [reduction](#) in suicide deaths – however, it is unclear how this funding will be impacted going forward. Separately, a [KFF poll](#) found that 44% of parents with children below 18 have a gun in their home; and large shares of these parents said a gun is stored loaded (32%), stored in an unlocked location (32%), or any gun in is

stored in the same location as ammunition (61%).

This brief explores the impacts of gun violence on children and adolescents (ages 17 and below), including changes in death rates over time and by demographics, methods of gun violence exposure, and how gun violence can impact mental health and well-being. Key findings include:

Firearm death rates among children and adolescents increased with the onset of the pandemic, primarily driven by gun assaults. From 2021 to 2023, the firearm death rate held steady at 3.5 per 100,000 children and adolescents, before declining to 3.0 in 2024, but remaining above pre-pandemic levels.

Firearm deaths are more common among adolescents (ages 12-17) than younger children; Black and American Indian and Alaska Native children and adolescents than their White peers; and male children and adolescents than female.

States vary widely by firearm death rate, although high rates are more common in Southern states.

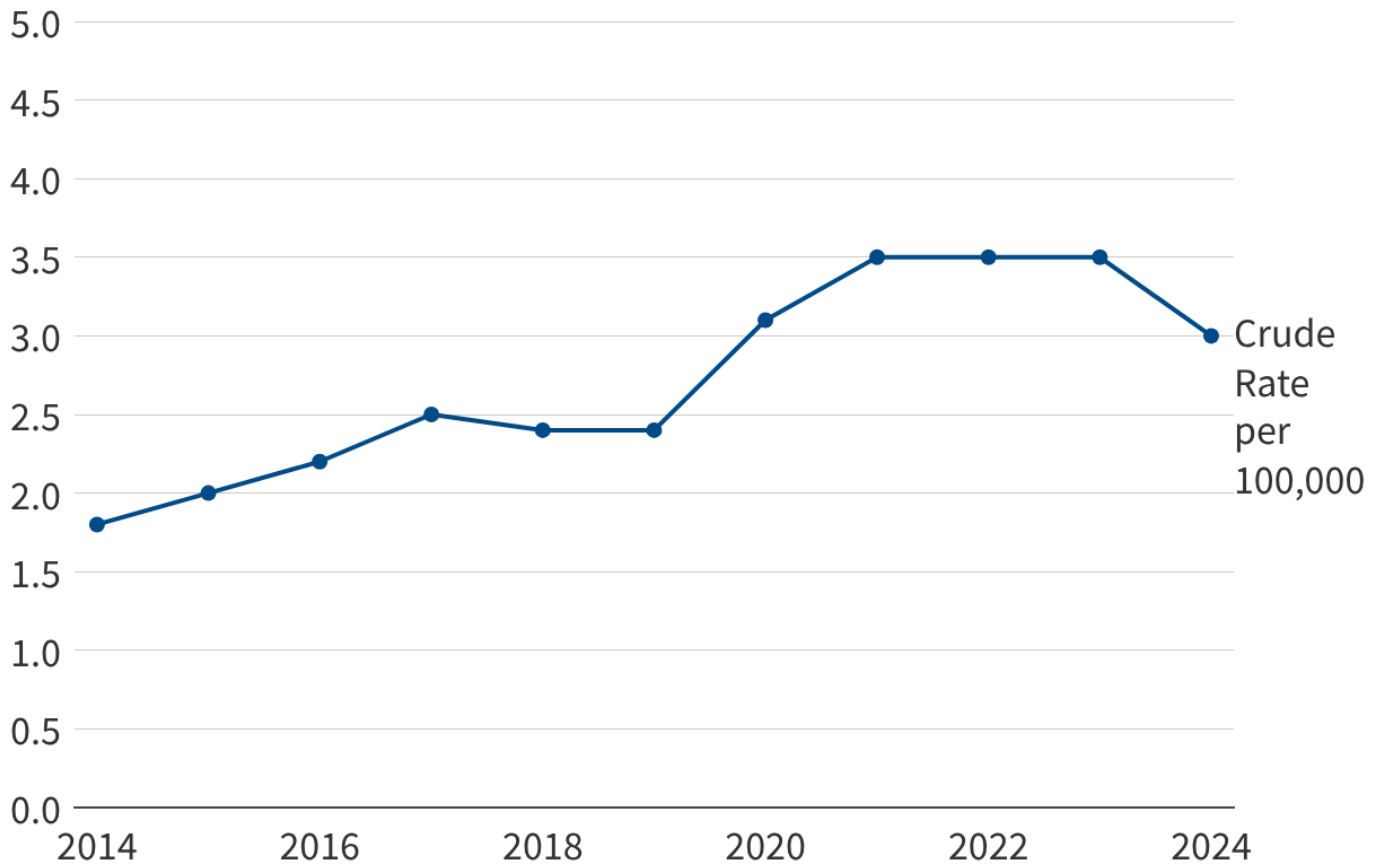
How have firearm deaths changed in recent years among children and adolescents?

Firearm-related death rates among children and adolescents sharply increased in 2020, alongside the onset of the pandemic; however, the latest CDC data shows a decline from 2023 to 2024 (Figure 2). From 2014 to 2024, nearly 22,000 youth ages 17 and younger died by firearm.¹ During this period, firearm death rates gradually rose until 2017, held steady for a few years, and then quickly increased during the pandemic (Figure 1). While the death rate remains higher than pre-pandemic rates, there was a decrease from 2023 to 2024 (3.5 vs. 3.0 firearm-related deaths per 100,000 children and adolescents).

Figure 2

Firearm-Related Death Rates Among Children and Adolescents

Firearm-Related Death Rates Among Children and Adolescents Declined in 2024 but Remain Above Pre-Pandemic Rates



Note: Reported rates are crude rates per 100,000 individuals ages 17 and below. Causes of death attributable to firearm mortality include ICD-10 Codes W32-W34, X72-X74, X93-X95, Y22-Y24, and Y35.0.

Source: KFF analysis of CDC Wonder, 2014-2024, Online Database

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The increase in firearm deaths in recent years was driven by gun assaults, which accounted for at least three out of five firearm deaths among children and adolescents since 2020. Gun assault deaths among children and adolescents increased over the past decade, peaking in 2022 with 1,674 deaths, before decreasing to 1,337 deaths in 2024 (Figure 3). The number of suicide deaths by firearm among children and adolescents increased overall in the past decade; and, in 2024, accounted for 31% of firearm deaths.

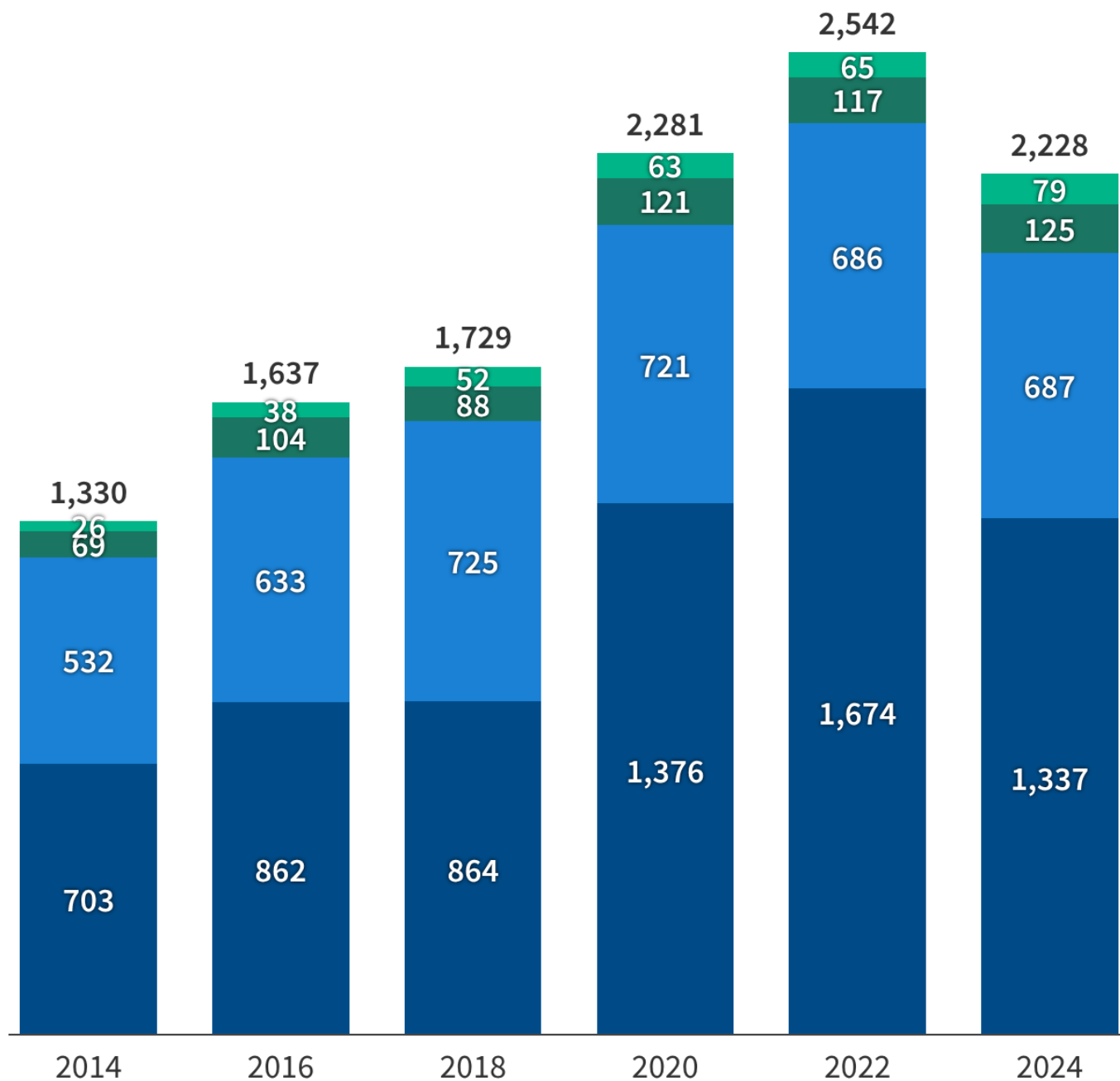
Figure 3

Gun Assaults Accounted For At Least Three Out of Five Firearm

GUN ASSAULTS ACCOUNTED FOR AT LEAST THREE OUT OF FIVE FIREARM DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS SINCE 2020

Firearm Deaths Among Children and Adolescents, by Type, 2014-2024

■ Assault ■ Suicide ■ Accidental ■ Undetermined/Other



Note: Death counts are for children ages 17 and below. The crude rates over the period for total firearm deaths are: 1.8 in per 100,000 individuals ages 17 and younger in 2014 and 3.0 in 2024. Firearm death types are identified by the following ICD-10 codes: X93-95 (assault), X72-X74 (suicide), W32-34 (accidental), and Y22-24 and Y35.0 (undetermined/other).

Source: KFF analysis of CDC Wonder Data, 2014-2024

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By 2024, 68% of total assault deaths among children and adolescents involved a firearm; and 45% of total suicide deaths involved a firearm (Figure 4). From 2014 to 2024, the share of total assault deaths involving a firearm increased from 49% (703 out of 1,439 deaths among children ages 17 and younger) to 68% (1,337 out of 1,959 deaths). During the same period, the share of total suicide deaths involving a firearm also increased but to a lesser extent compared to firearm assaults. In 2024, 45% of suicide deaths involved a firearm (687 out of 1,530 deaths among children ages 17 and younger) compared to 40% in 2014 (532 out of 1,344 deaths).

Figure 4

The Majority of Assault Deaths and Nearly Half of Suicide Deaths Among Children and Adolescents Involved a Firearm in 2024

Among Children and Adolescents, the Share of All Assault and Suicide Deaths Involving a Firearm, 2014 vs. 2024

■ Other Means ■ Firearm-Related

Assault Deaths

2014 (1,439 Total Assault Deaths)



2024 (1,959 Total Assault Deaths)



Suicide Deaths

2014 (1,344 Total Suicide Deaths)



2024 (1,530 Total Suicide Deaths)



Note: Data shown are for individuals ages 17 and below. Firearm death types are identified by the following ICD-10 codes: X93-95 (assault), X72-X74 (suicide). Suicides, by all means, were identified using the ICD-10 112 Cause List: intentional self-harm (U02, X60, X64, X67, 0).

identified using the ICD-10 113 Cause List; intentional self-harm (U03, X60-X84, Y87.0). Assault deaths, by all means, were identified using the same 113 cause list; assault (U01-U02, X85-Y09, Y87.1).

Source: KFF Analysis of CDC Wonder Data, 2014-2024



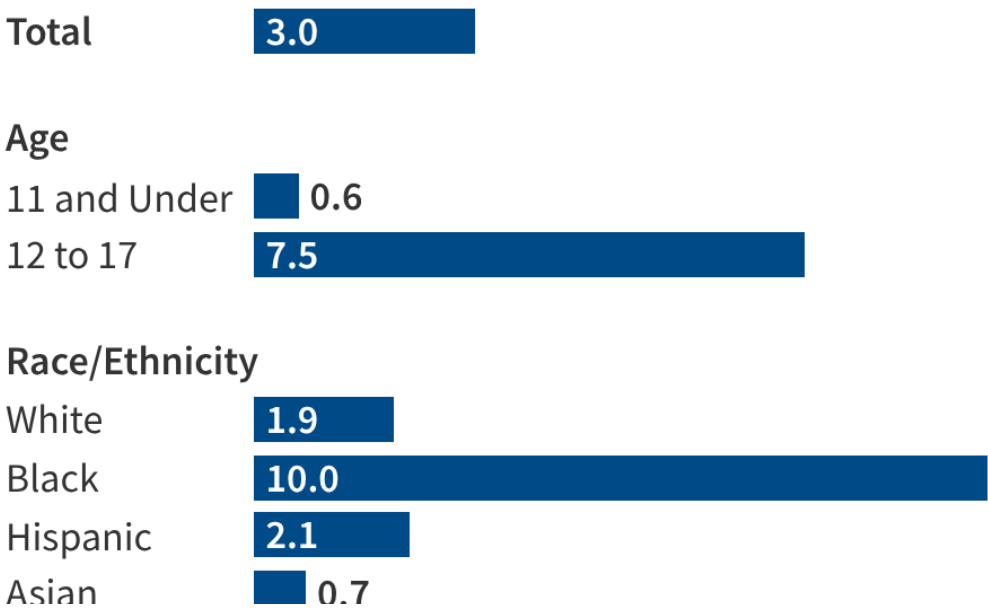
How do youth firearm deaths vary by demographic characteristics?

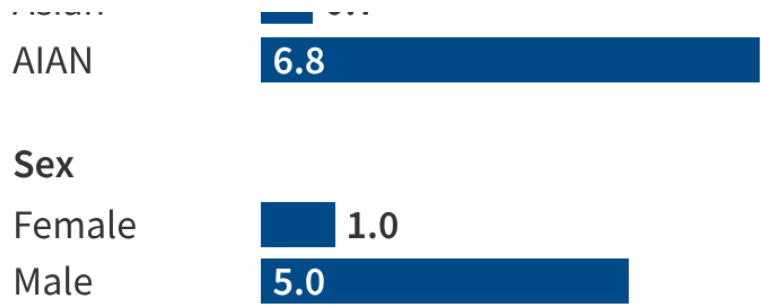
In 2024, firearm death rates were highest among adolescents (ages 12-17), Black and American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) youth, and male youth (Figure 5). The adolescent (ages 12-17) firearm death rate was 7.5 per 100,000 compared to 0.6 for children ages 11 and below. Black and AIAN youth experienced a significantly higher firearm death rate (10.0 and 6.8 per 100,000) compared to their White peers (1.9). Males ages 17 and below were five times more likely than their female peers to die by firearm (5.0 per 100,000 vs. 1.0 in 2024).

Figure 5

Firearm Death Rates Are Highest Among Adolescents (Ages 12-17), Black and AIAN Youth, and Male Youth

Rates are per 100,000 children and adolescents and are presented by category: age group, race/ethnicity, and sex.





Note: Reported rates are crude rates per 100,000 children and adolescents ages 17 and below. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic for this analysis; other groups are non-Hispanic. AIAN refers to American Indian and Alaska Native people. Data for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander people is not available. Causes of death attributable to firearm mortality include ICD-10 Codes W32-W34, X72-X74, X93-X95, Y22-Y24, and Y35.0.

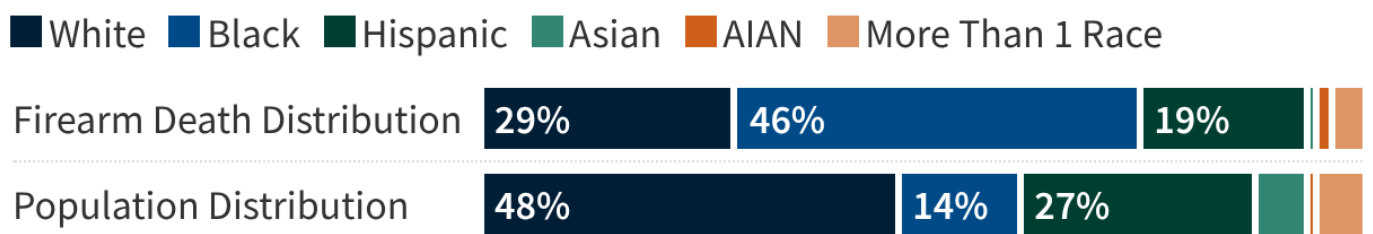
Source: KFF analysis of CDC Wonder Online Database - Provisional Mortality Statistics, 2024 **KFF**

In 2024, Black youth accounted for 46% of all youth firearm deaths although they made up only 14% of the U.S. youth population (Figure 6). In contrast, White youth accounted for 29% of all youth firearm deaths and they made up nearly half (48%) of the youth population in 2024.

Figure 6

Black Youth Accounted for 46% of All Youth Firearm Deaths Although They Made Up Only 14% of the U.S. Youth Population

Child and Adolescent Firearm Death Distribution vs. Population Distribution, by Race and Ethnicity, 2024



Note: Children and adolescents includes individuals ages 17 and below. AIAN refers to American Indian and Alaska Native people. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic for this analysis; other groups are non-Hispanic. Data for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander people is not available. ICD-10 codes for firearm mortality

include W32-W34, X72-X74, X93-X95, Y22-Y24, and Y35.0.

Source: KFF analysis of CDC Wonder Online Database - Provisional Mortality Statistics, 2024

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How do youth firearm deaths vary across states?

Firearm death rates among children and adolescents range from a high of 10.1 per 100,000 in the District of Columbia to a low of 0.7 in Massachusetts; however, many states with high rates are concentrated in the south (Figure 9). From 2020 to 2024 the states with the highest firearm death rates among children and adolescents were the District of Columbia, Mississippi, and Louisiana (10.1, 8.7, and 8.4 per 100,000 respectively for combined years, 2020-2024). Almost all states experienced an increase in firearm death rates over the decade, with the largest increases seen in North Carolina and Mississippi (109% and 107% respectively) (see Appendix). The states with the lowest firearm death rates were Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York (0.7, 0.9, and 1.1 per 100,000 respectively for combined years, 2020-2024). States also vary widely in their provisions on gun safety, including [child access prevention laws](#) and [Extreme Risk Protection Order](#) (ERPO) policies.

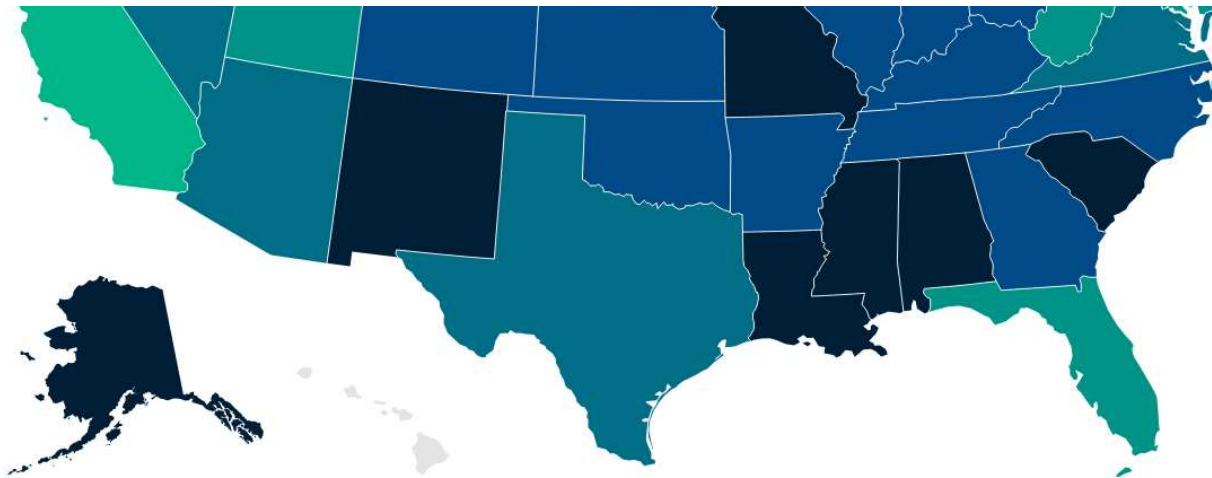
Figure 7

States Vary by Youth Firearm Death Rate, Although High Rates are More Common in Southern States

Rates Are Per 100,000 Children and Adolescents, For The Years 2020-2024

■ < 2.5 ■ 2.5–3.2 ■ 3.2–4.1 ■ 4.1–5.7 ■ ≥ 5.7





Note: Firearm death rates are crude rates per 100,000 children and adolescents (ages 17 and below). Data were not available for the following states: HI, NH, RI, and VT. ICD-10 codes for firearm mortality include W32-W34, X72-X74, X93-X95, Y22-Y24, and Y35.0.

Source: KFF analysis of CDC WONDER data, 2020-2024

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1

State-by-State Shifts in Firearm Death Rates Among Children and Adolescents Over Time

State	2015-2019 Death Rate	2020-2024 Death Rate	Percent Change in Rates
Alabama	3.7	6.2	68%
Alaska	6.6	6.3	−5%
Arizona	2.2	3.6	64%
Arkansas	3.5	5.6	60%
California	1.2	1.6	33%
Colorado	3.2	4.1	28%

Connecticut	0.8	1.3	63%
Delaware	2.2	2.8	27%
District of Columbia	6.0	10.1	68%
Florida	2.3	2.9	26%
Georgia	3.1	5.2	68%
Hawaii	NA	NA	NA
Idaho	2.9	3.3	14%
Illinois	3.3	4.2	27%
Indiana	2.9	4.1	41%
Iowa	1.9	2.2	16%
Kansas	2.7	4.8	78%
Kentucky	3.1	4.5	45%
Louisiana	4.8	8.4	75%
Maine	1.6	1.8	13%

Additional 31 rows not shown.

Note: Firearm death rates are crude rates per 100,000 children and adolescents (ages 17 and below). The percent change calculation uses child and adolescent firearm death rates from the first half of the decade (pre-pandemic) compared to the second half (2020-2024). Data were not available for the following states: HI, NH, RI, and VT. ICD-10 codes for firearm mortality include W32-W34, X72-X74, X93-X95, Y22-Y24, and Y35.0.

Source: KFF analysis of CDC WONDER data, 2015-2024.

KFF

1. KFF analysis of youth firearm mortality is based on data from Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Wonder injury and mortality database. In this analysis, firearm-related deaths are defined as gun assault deaths, suicide deaths by firearm, deaths due to accidental firearm discharge, legal intervention leading to firearm death, and firearm deaths from an undetermined cause. [↩](#)