

Firearm-Related Injury and Death

Background of Problem in Washington State

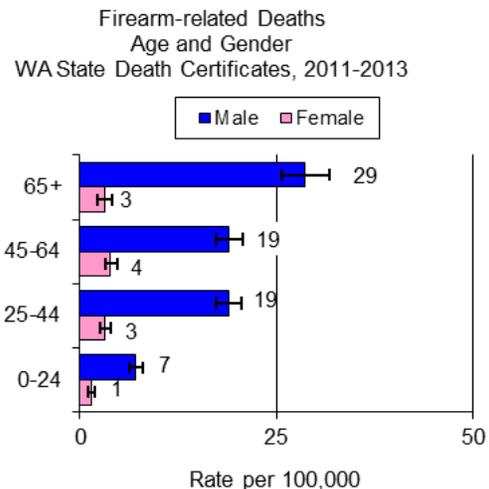
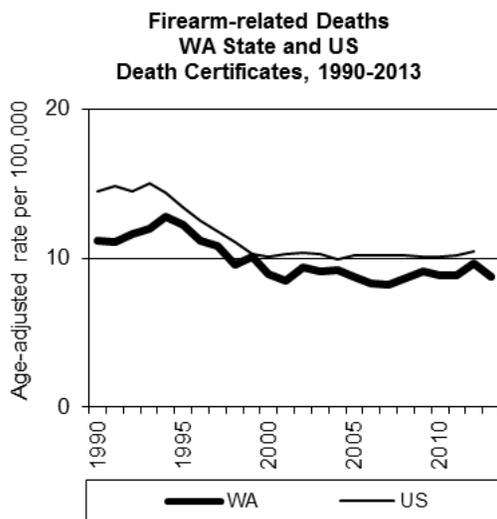
In 2013, firearms were the third leading cause of injury-related death in Washington behind deaths from poisoning and falls. Motor vehicle traffic death is often thought of as the leading cause of injury death; however, since 2008 there have been more deaths from firearms than motor vehicle traffic. In 2013, there were 620 firearm deaths and 454 motor vehicle traffic deaths.

The firearm death rate in Washington has been relatively stable since 2000, and is slightly lower than the national rate:

- Between 2009 and 2013, about 625 Washington residents died each year from firearms.
- Between 2009 and 2013, about 200 Washington youth ages 19 and under died from firearms.
- In 2013, firearms were involved in 1 in 6 (18 percent) of all deaths among youth ages 15 – 24.

Of the 620 firearm deaths that occurred in Washington in 2013:

- 77 percent were suicides.
- 18 percent were homicides.
- 5 percent were either unintentional, legal intervention or a death of undetermined intent.



Between 2009 and 2013, there were about 300 firearm-related nonfatal hospitalizations each year to Washington residents.



Guns in the Home

In 2013:

- 36 percent of Washington households had at least one firearm.
- 18 percent had an unlocked firearm.
- 12 percent of households had a loaded firearm
- 7 percent of households had a loaded and unlocked firearm.

Economic Costs of Firearm-Related Injuries and Death

Based on 2010 data, the estimated total lifetime cost of firearm hospitalizations and deaths that occurred in 2010 in Washington is \$781 million. This is due to medical expenses and lost productivity. Medical costs were \$7 million and work loss accounted for \$ 774 million.ⁱ

Prevention Strategies

Safe storage of firearms is an evidence-based strategy shown to reduce unintentional and suicide firearm deaths among youth. Twenty-seven states have Child Access Prevention laws requiring owners to store their firearms locked or unloaded — or both — in the home to keep guns out of the hands of children. In states with such laws unintentional firearm deaths were reduced by 23 percent among children 15 years or younger.

Criminal background checks of buyers and limiting the number or types of firearms that can be sold and bought at shows may also help prevent firearm injuries. In December 2014, Washington State enacted a gun-purchase background check law, which expands background checks to private sales and transfers.

More data on firearm injuries are needed to develop effective interventions to prevent firearm injuries. These could include:

- safe storage practices
- alcohol and drug use
- perpetrator-victim relationships
- crime involvement

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and Child Death Review are examples of systems that currently collect this additional information. In 2014, the Washington State Department of Health received a grant to begin collected data for NVDRS.

For More Information

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ⁱ Firearm deaths and non-fatal hospitalization cost data comes from CDC WISQARSTM Cost of Injury Module.