

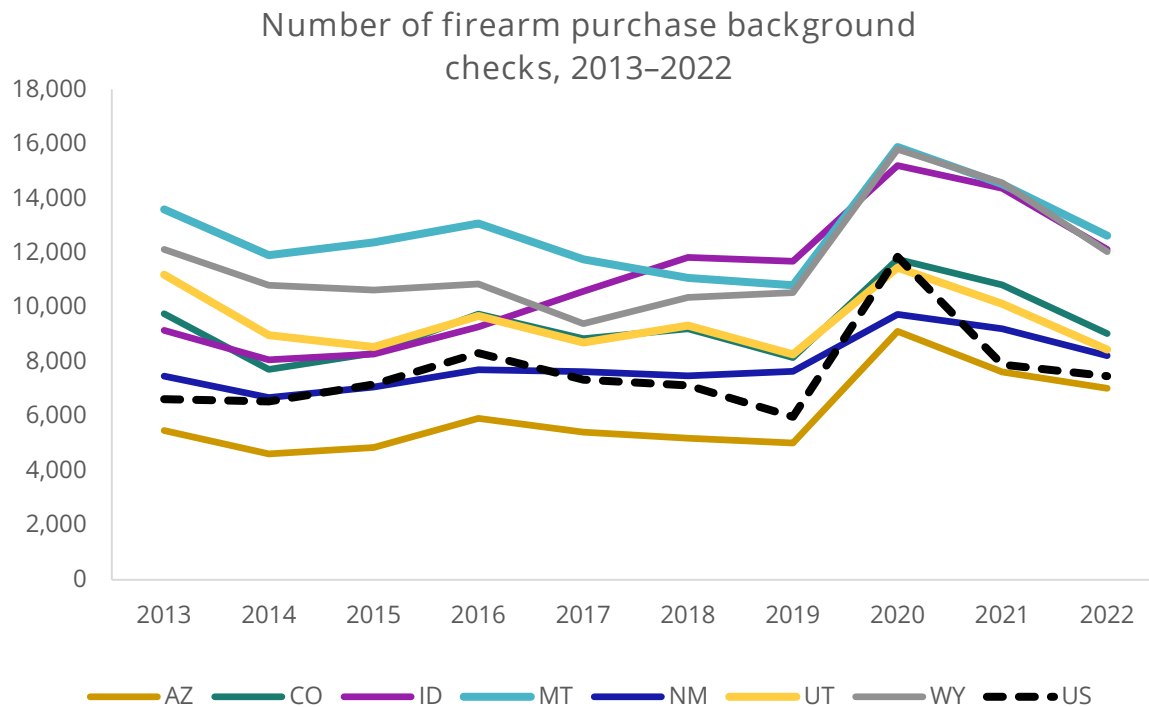
Impact of firearms in Utah

Firearm-related injuries and deaths are a serious public health problem both nationally and in Utah. A total of 2,080 individuals died as a result of a firearm-related injury in Utah from 2017 to 2021¹. Utah was ranked the 24th highest state for age-adjusted firearm death rate (Utah 13.3 per 100,000 population vs 12.4 for the U.S.). It had the 9th highest age-adjusted firearm suicide death rate (Utah 11.1 per 100,000 population vs 7.3 U.S.) from 2016 to 2020². Nonfatal firearm-related injuries led to 1,386 emergency department visits and 603 hospitalizations in Utah from 2017 to 2021^{3,4}. An average of 398 Utahns are injured and 416 die from firearms every year. Many of these are preventable—storing firearms safely and securely when not in use is one way to prevent firearm-related injury and death^{1,3,4}.

Utah was consistently in the top third of the nation for the number of firearm purchase background checks conducted from 2013 to 2022 according to the federal firearm background checks⁵. Utah ranked as high as 8th (2013) and as low as 20th (2021 and 2022) for the number of firearm purchase background checks conducted. Related to other Intermountain West states, Utah was in the middle.

A spike in firearm purchases occurred across the country in 2020⁵. This may be due to unrest and rioting across the country, the run-up to the 2020 presidential election, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and increasing polarity of public opinion and culture.

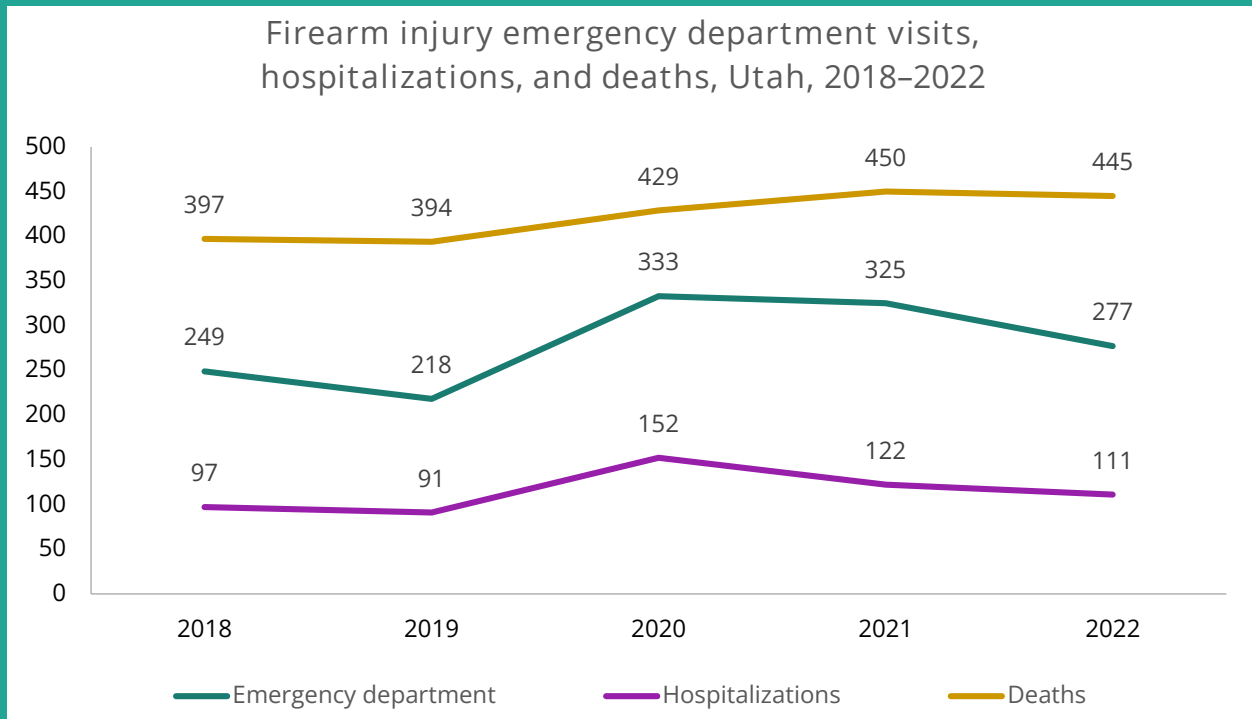
Utah became a constitutional carry state in May of 2021, meaning no permit is required to carry a concealed weapon. The Utah Department of Health and Human Services is studying the effects of this change on firearm-related injury and death.



Quick facts

On average, each year in Utah, there are **398** firearm injuries and **420** firearm deaths^{1,3,4}.

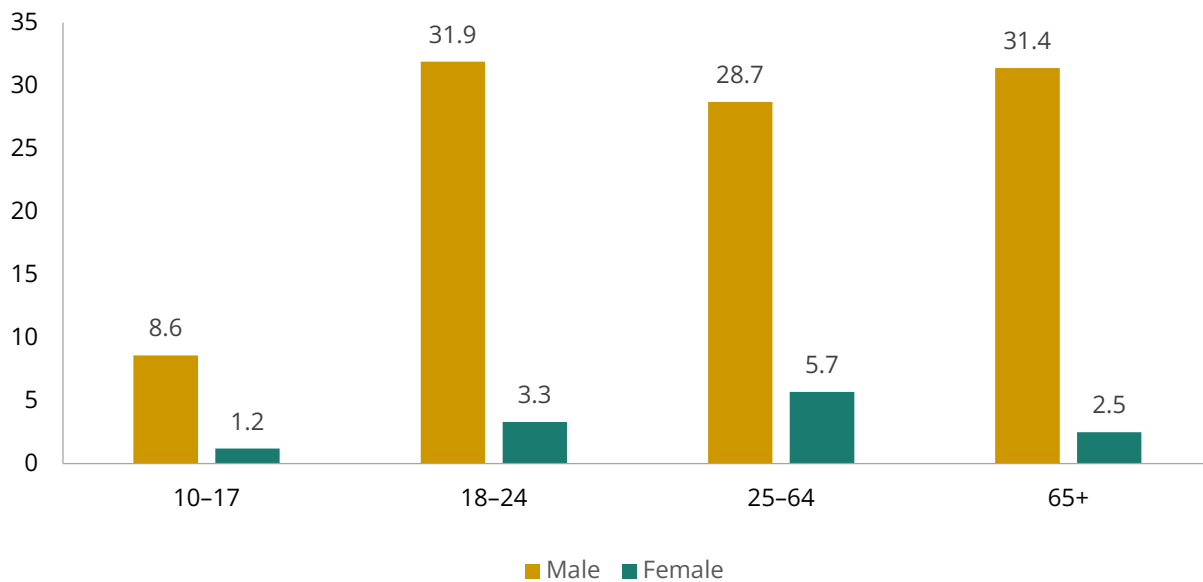
- More than half of all homicide and suicide Utah deaths were firearm-related¹.
- The majority (82.5%) of firearm-related deaths in Utah were the result of suicide¹.
- The majority of firearm-related injuries (86.2%) and deaths (85.8%) were among males^{3,4}.



Males are more likely to die by firearm in Utah than females

- The majority (86.7%) of firearm-related deaths were among males.
- Males aged 18–24 years experienced the highest rate of firearm-related death (32.3 per 100,000 population) than any other age.
- Females aged 25–65 years experienced the highest rate of firearm-related death (5.4 per 100,000 population) for all females.
- Youth aged 10–17 years had the lowest firearm-related death rates for both males and females (8.5 males and 1.1 females per 100,000 population).

Firearm related death crude rates per 100,000 population
sex and age, Utah, 2017–2022

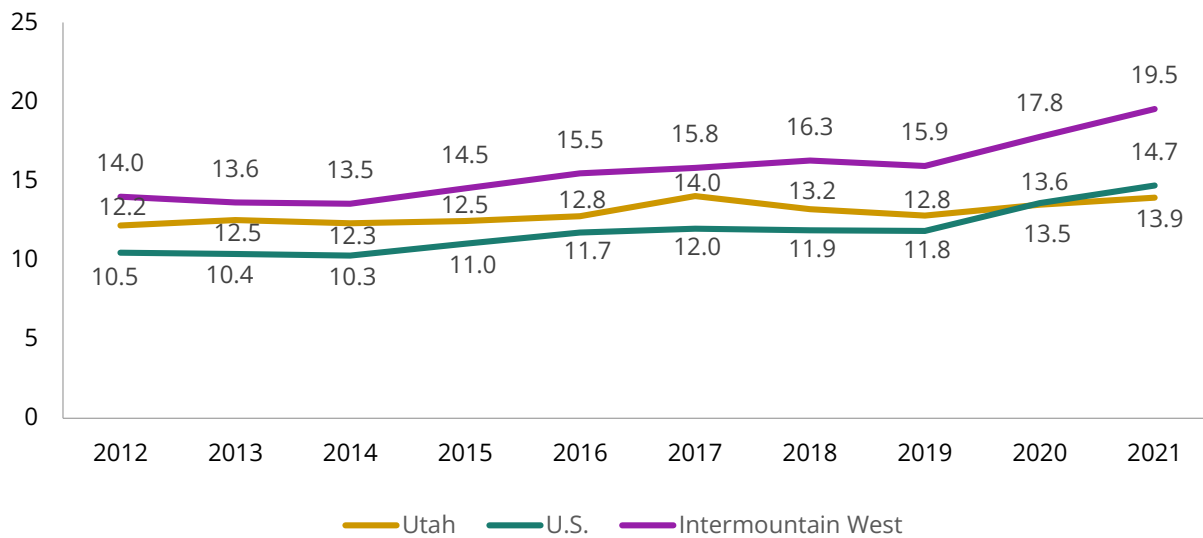


Utah vs. Intermountain West vs. United States

Over the last decade, the rate of firearm-related deaths in Utah has exceeded the national rate 8 out of 10 years. Firearm-related deaths in Utah were at the highest in 2017 (14.0 per 100,000 population), declined slightly for a few years, and then returned to their highest at the end of 2021. The U.S. rate surpassed Utah in 2020 for the 1st time in the last 10 years.

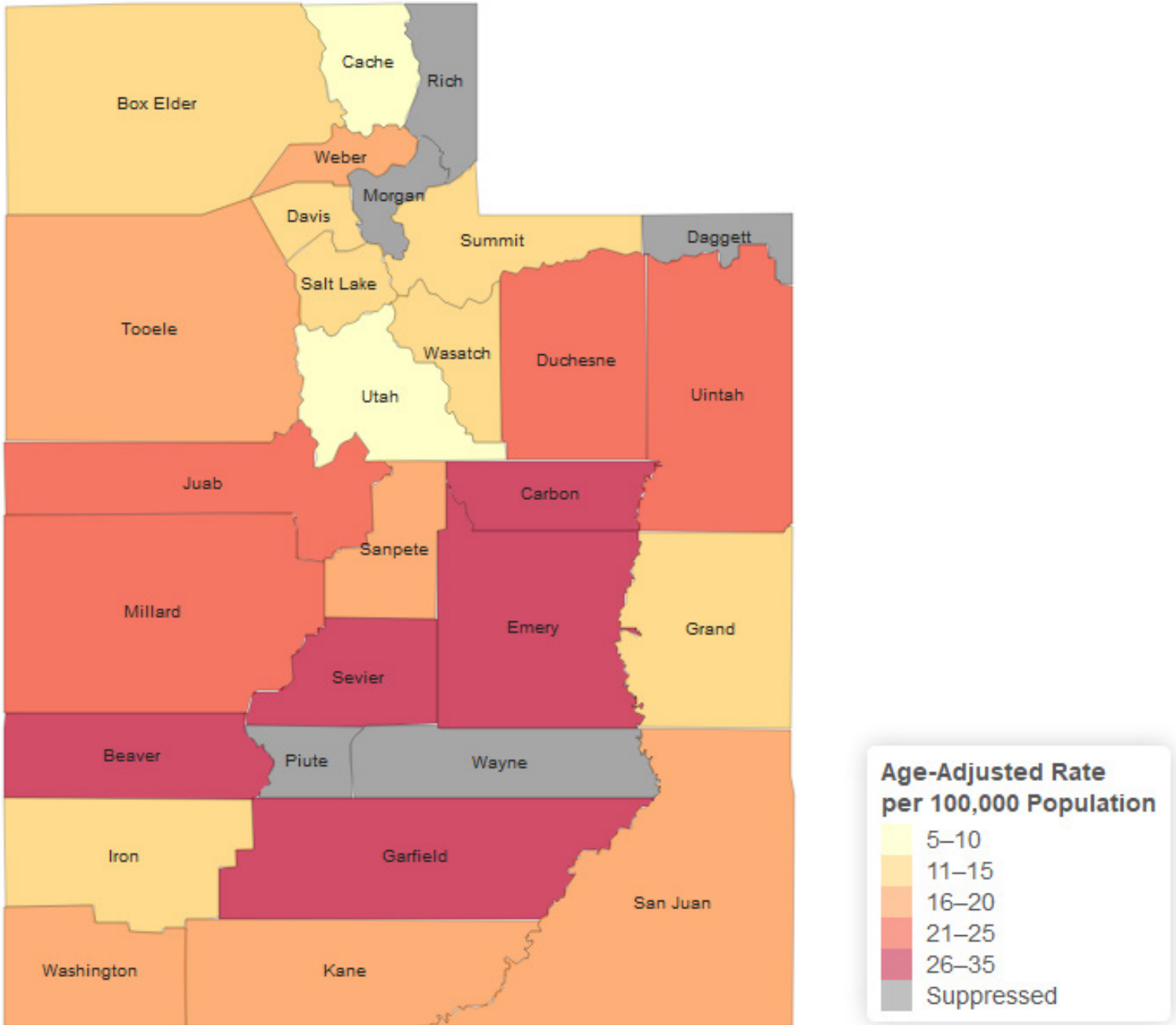
Utah consistently had lower firearm-related death rates compared to other Intermountain West states (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, and Wyoming).

Age adjusted firearm-related death rates per 100,000 population by year, Utah vs. U.S. vs. Intermountain West, 2012–2021



Firearm-related death rates per county in Utah

From 2013 to 2022, the counties with the highest rate of firearm-related deaths included Beaver (32.1 per 100,000 population), Garfield (28.9 per 100,000 population), and Sevier (28.8 per 100,000 population). Rural counties in Utah tend to have higher rates of firearm-related deaths than urban counties. Counties with fewer than 5 firearm-related deaths were suppressed in the graph.



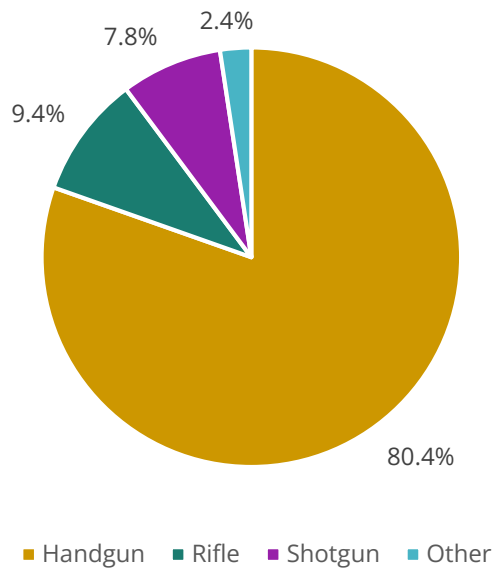
Handguns were used the most in Utah firearm-related deaths

Handguns accounted for 80.4% of firearm-related Utah deaths, followed by rifles (9.4%), and shotguns (7.8%).

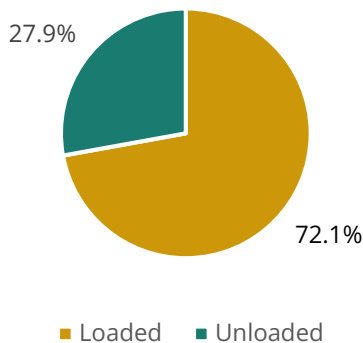
While the specific storage methods of Utahns in most firearm-related deaths remain unknown, the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) has revealed a crucial statistic. In 59.9% of all firearm-related deaths with storage information, the firearms were found to be stored unlocked and loaded. This underscores the need for collective action in improving firearm storage practices to reduce firearm-related deaths.

Only 9.8% of firearms were documented as stored, unloaded, and locked. To prevent future firearm-related deaths, it is crucial that firearms are stored in a safe and responsible manner. This includes storing them unloaded, locked, and in a secure location, separate from ammunition.

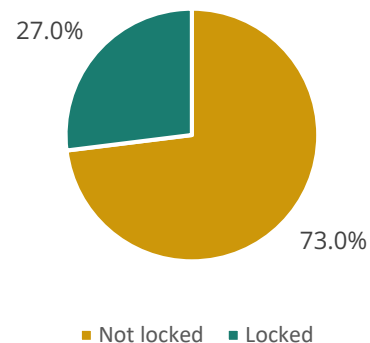
Percentage of firearm deaths by type of firearm, Utah, 2017-2021



Firearm-related deaths by firearm stored loaded, Utah, 2017-2021



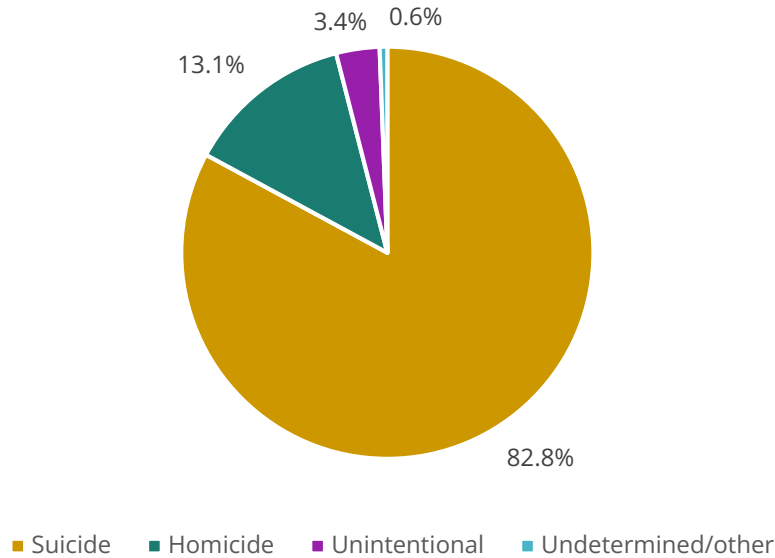
Firearm-related deaths by firearm stored locked, Utah, 2017-2021



Circumstances of firearm-related deaths in Utah

The majority (82.8%) of firearm-related deaths in Utah are the result of suicide, which is more than homicides, legal intervention, and unintentional firearm deaths combined.

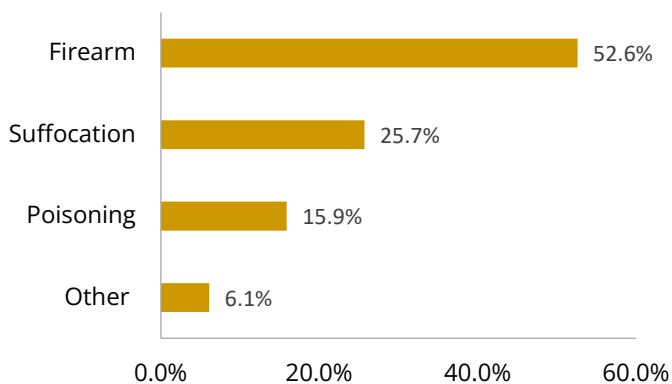
Percentage of firearm-related deaths by circumstance, Utah, 2018–2022



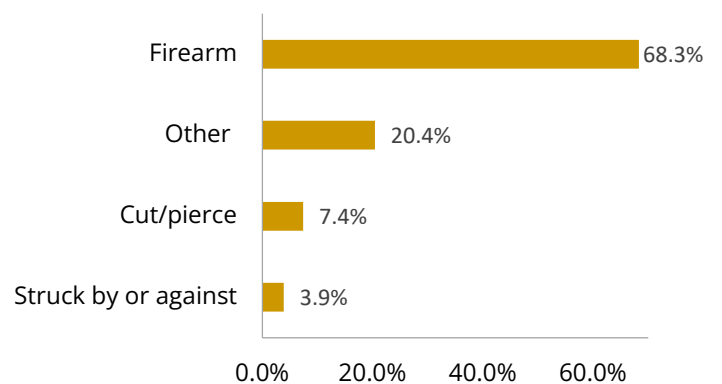
Firearm-related homicides increased at a faster rate than firearm-related suicides in Utah

- While there are more firearm-related suicides than firearm-related homicides in Utah, the percentage of change for firearm-related homicides is increasing at a faster rate than firearm-related suicides.
- From 2018 to 2022, there were 3,330 suicide deaths in Utah, and 52.6% of all suicide deaths were firearm-related.
- From 2018 to 2022, there were 407 homicide deaths, and 68.3% of all homicide deaths were firearm-related.

Suicide deaths by method, Utah, 2018–2022 Percentage



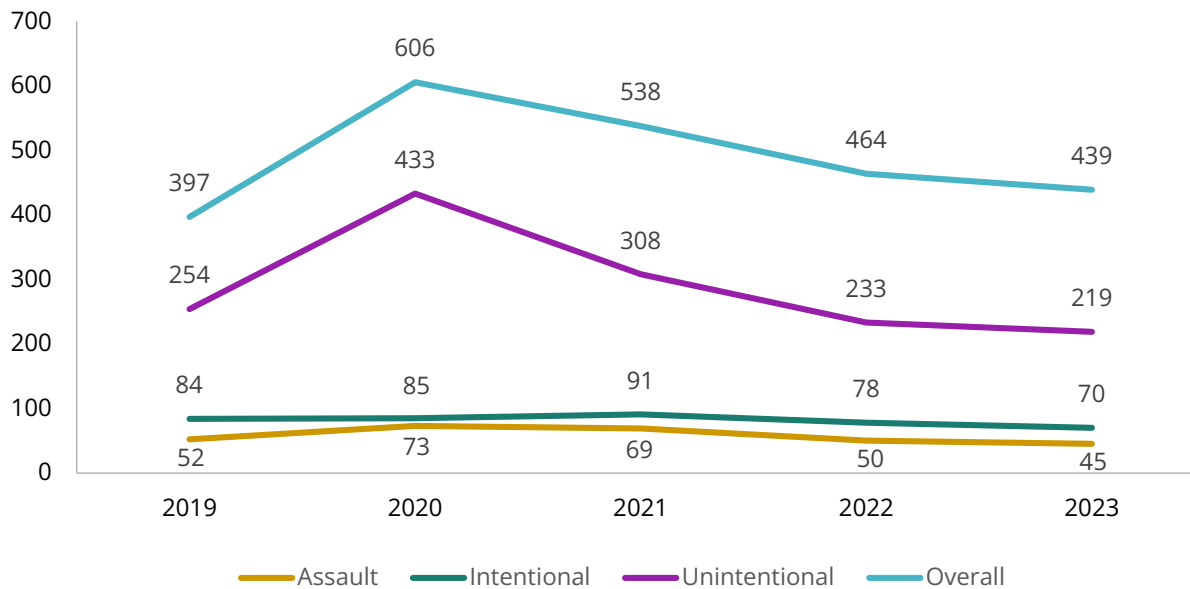
Homicide deaths by method, Utah, 2018–2022 Percentage



Firearm-related injuries in Utah were the lowest in 5 years

Utah surveillance data reveals that firearm-related assault, firearm-related unintentional, and overall firearm-related injuries peaked in 2020, while firearm-related intentional injuries were highest in 2021. All 3 firearm-related injury types reached their lowest numbers in 5 years by the end of 2023.

Number of firearm-related injuries by year and injury type, Utah, 2019–2023*



*Does not include undetermined or missing injury types.

Risk factors for firearm-related unintentional injuries include¹⁰:

- Failure to make sure the firearm is unloaded.
- Mishandling a firearm (pointing it in the wrong direction).
- Being careless with a firearm (dropping, throwing, or playing with it).
- Lack of protective equipment (eye-wear or ear plugs).
- Malfunction of the firearm (this is rare).
- Ricochet of the ammunition (this is rare).

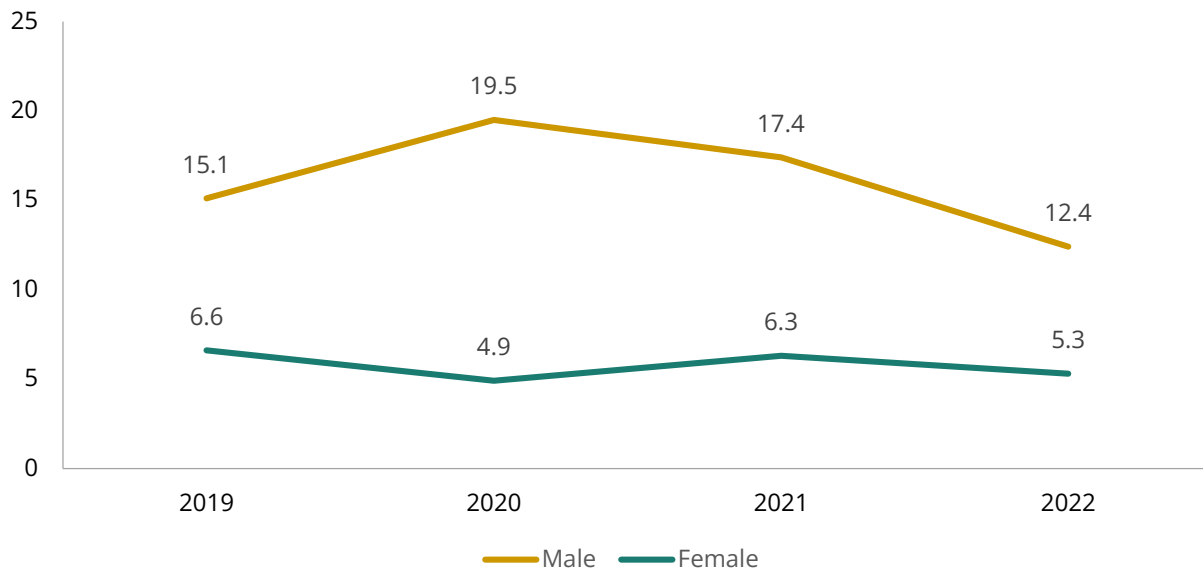
Costs of firearm-related injuries in Utah

Firearm-related hospital and emergency department charges cost more than \$15.5 million in 2022 in Utah^{3,4}. These costs do not include the additional costs associated with lingering physical and mental trauma, follow-up visits and treatments, lost productivity, or witnessing trauma.

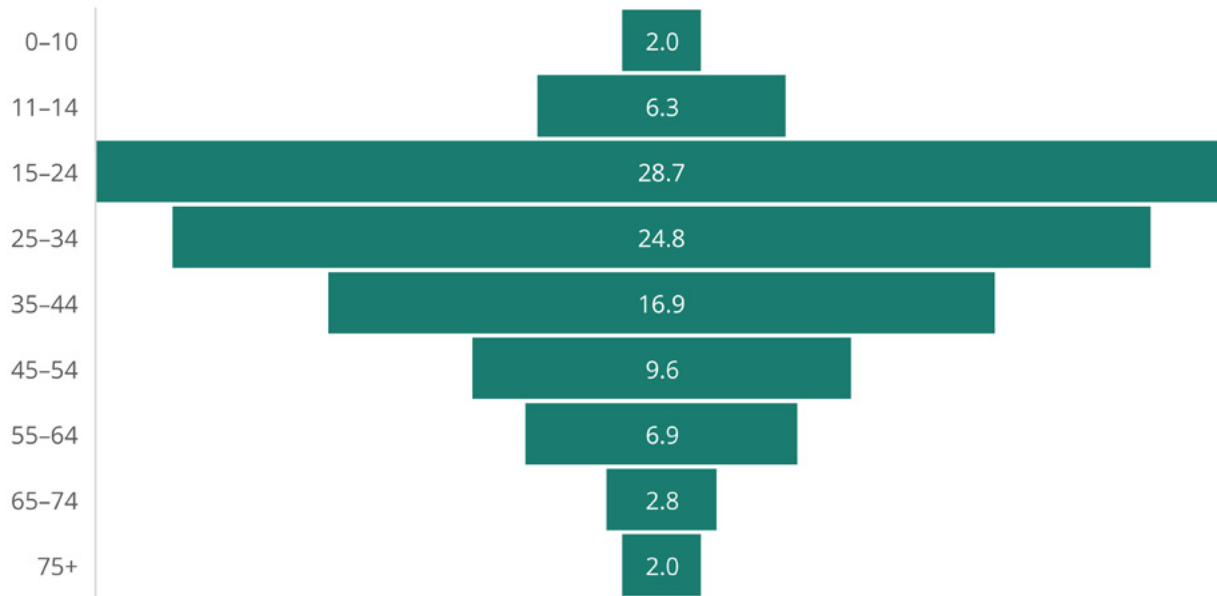
Males are more likely to be injured by firearms than females in Utah

- Males were 2 times more likely to be injured from a firearm than females in Utah from 2019 to 2022.
- The rate of firearm-related injuries among males decreased from 19.5 per 100,000 population in 2020 to 12.4 per 100,000 population in 2022.
- Males (30.7%) and females (28.7%) aged 15–24 years accounted for the most firearm injuries from 2019 to 2022.

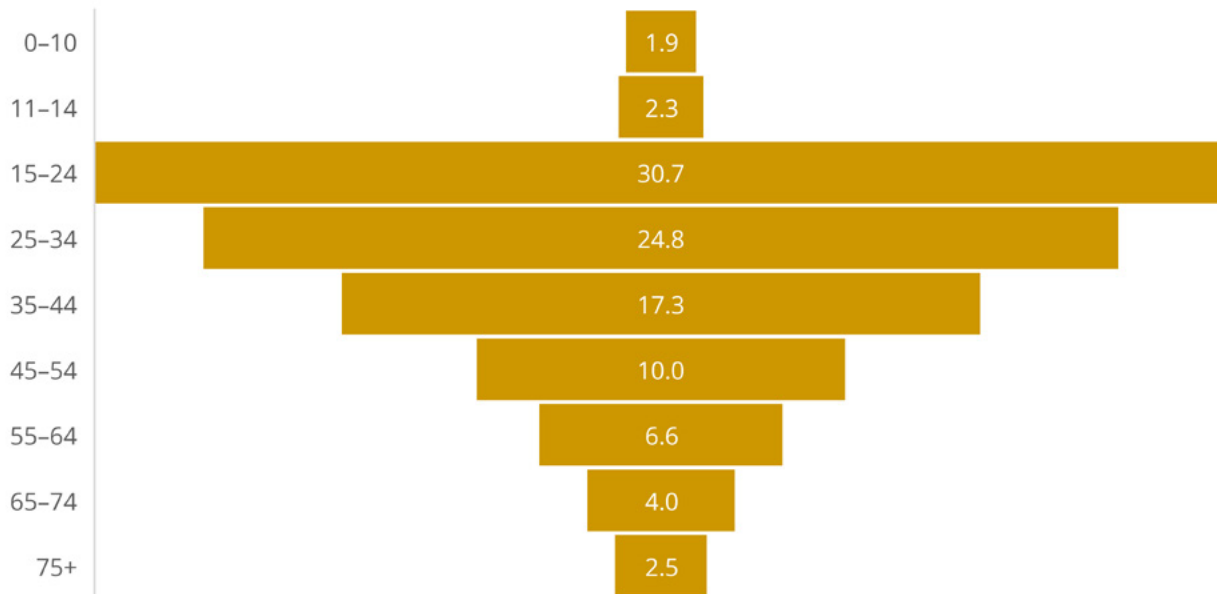
Firearm injury rate per 100,000 population
by sex, Utah, 2019–2022



Percentage of firearm-related injuries among males by age, Utah, 2019–2022

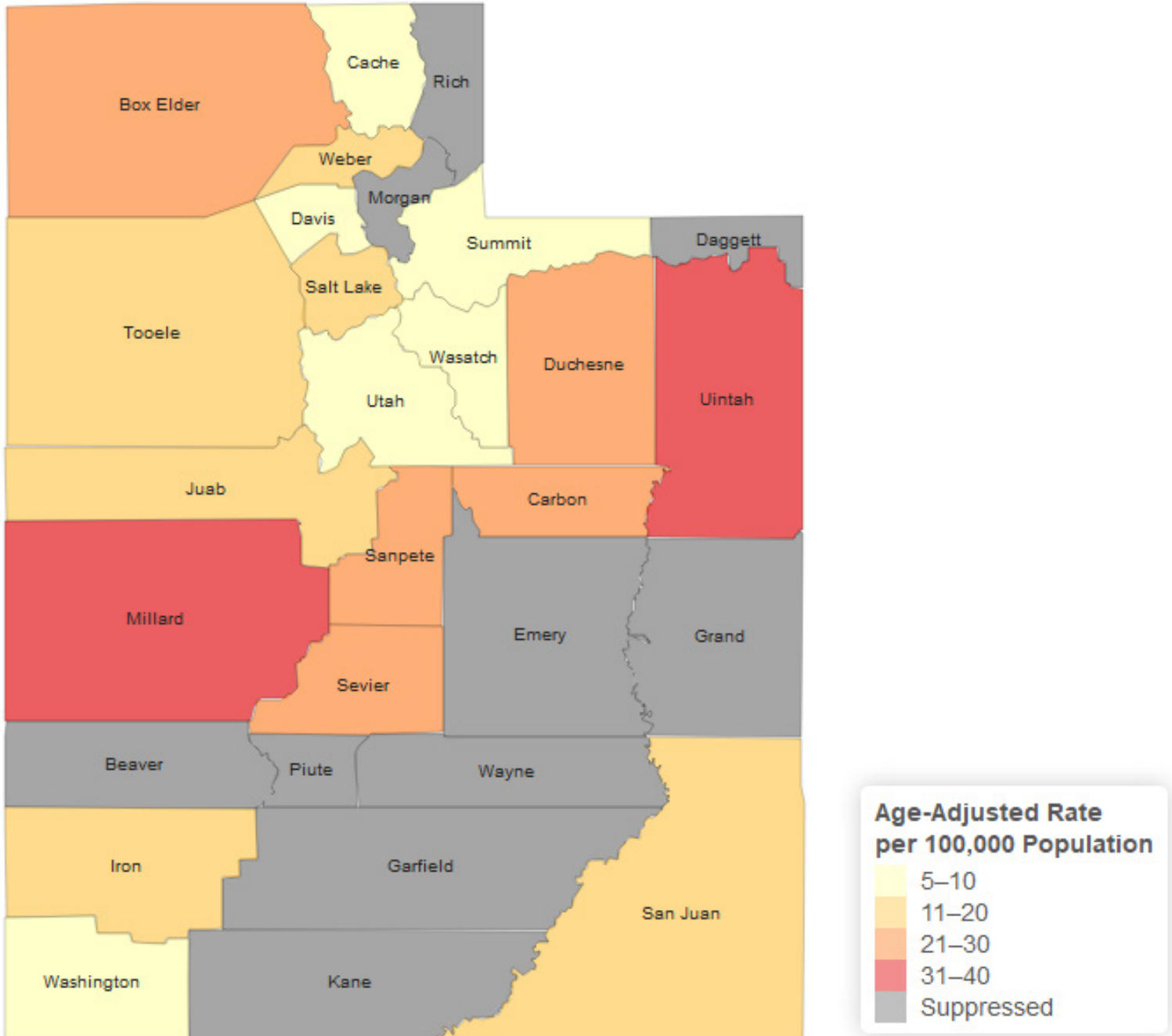


Percentage of firearm-related injuries among females by age, Utah, 2019–2022



Firearm-related injury rates per county in Utah

From 2013 to 2022, the counties with the highest rate of firearm-related injuries included Uintah (33.1 per 100,000 population), Millard (30.0 per 100,000 population), and Sevier (27.1 per 100,000 population). Rural counties in Utah tend to have higher rates of firearm-related injuries than urban counties. Counties with 5 or fewer firearm-related injuries were suppressed in the graph.



Basic firearm safety rules⁶

- Treat all firearms as if they are loaded.
- Never point a firearm at anything you are not willing to destroy.
- Store firearms safely and securely when not in use.
- Lock firearms and ammunition separately.
- Ask a friend or loved one to temporarily hold firearms off-site while someone is struggling with suicidal thoughts until the situation is resolved.

Ways to teach youth about firearm safety

- Relate firearm safety rules to youth.
- Emphasize that youth should never use firearms without adult supervision.
- Practice firearm safety with youth.
- Stress to youth that firearms are not toys.
- Teach youth how to identify a real firearm and avoid unsafe situations properly.
- Attend a hunter education course with your youth.

Firearm safety rules for youth

- If you find a firearm without an adult present. Stop, do not touch the firearm.
- Leave the area and tell a responsible adult what you found.

Know the suicide warning signs⁷

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about being trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious, agitated, or behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Extreme mood swings.

Call or text 988 if you or a loved one needs someone to talk to , someone to help, or somewhere safe to go. The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) provides free confidential help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

References

1. Utah Death Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health and Human Services. Data queried via Utah's Indicator Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) <https://ibis.utah.gov>, [cited 2023 August].
2. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC, and CDC, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and report systems (WISQARS) <https://wisqars.cdc.gov>.
3. Utah Inpatient Hospital Discharge Data, Office of Health Care statistics, Utah Department of Health and Human Services. Data queried via Utah's Indicator Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) <https://ibis.utah.gov>, [cited 2023 August].
4. Utah Emergency Department Encounter Database, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, Utah Department of Health and Human Services. Data queried via Utah's Indicator Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) <https://ibis.utah.gov>, [cited 2023 August].
5. Federal Bureau of Investigation National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Firearm Checks, Month/Year by State Reports for years 2012–2021. Data queried at <http://fbi.gov>, [cited April 2023]. Background checks are used as a proxy to estimate firearm demand. These numbers likely underestimate actual demand for firearms as they do not include private sales between individuals, instances where more than 1 firearm is purchased in a single transaction, and firearm purchases in states where no background check is required for current holders of valid concealed-carry firearm permits.
6. National Rifle Association, <https://gunsafetyrules.nra.org>.
7. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, <http://988lifeline.org>.
8. For years 2000–2019 the population estimates are provided by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) through a collaborative agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau. For years 2020 and later, the population estimates are provided by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, Utah state and county annual population estimates are by single year of age and sex, IBIS version 2021.
9. Utah Violent Death Reporting System, Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Utah Department of Health and Human Services, 2016–2020 data.
10. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Syndromic Surveillance System (NSSP), <https://cdc.gov/nssp> also known as the Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics (ESSENCE).