

Firearm Deaths in Utah, 2020



Utah firearm-related death rate was consistently higher than the national rate over the last decade.



More than half of all homicide and suicide deaths were with a firearm.



The majority (84.1%) of firearm-related deaths in Utah were the result of suicide.



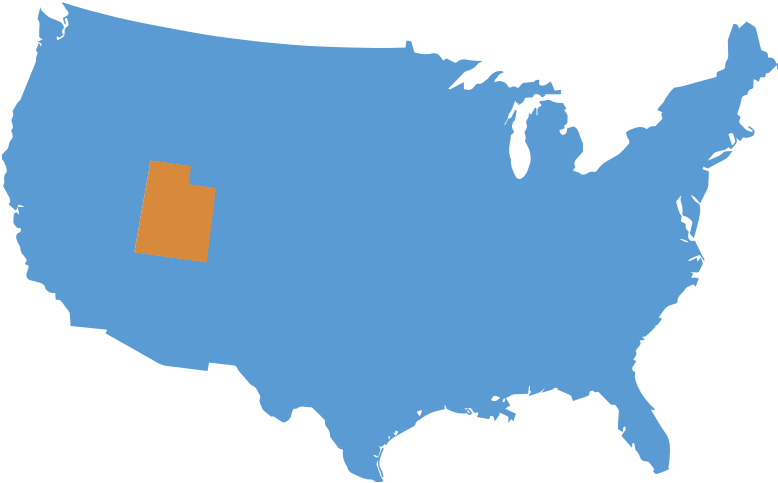
The majority (85.5%) of firearm-related deaths were among males.



Handguns were the most common type of firearm used in all firearm deaths (77.1%).

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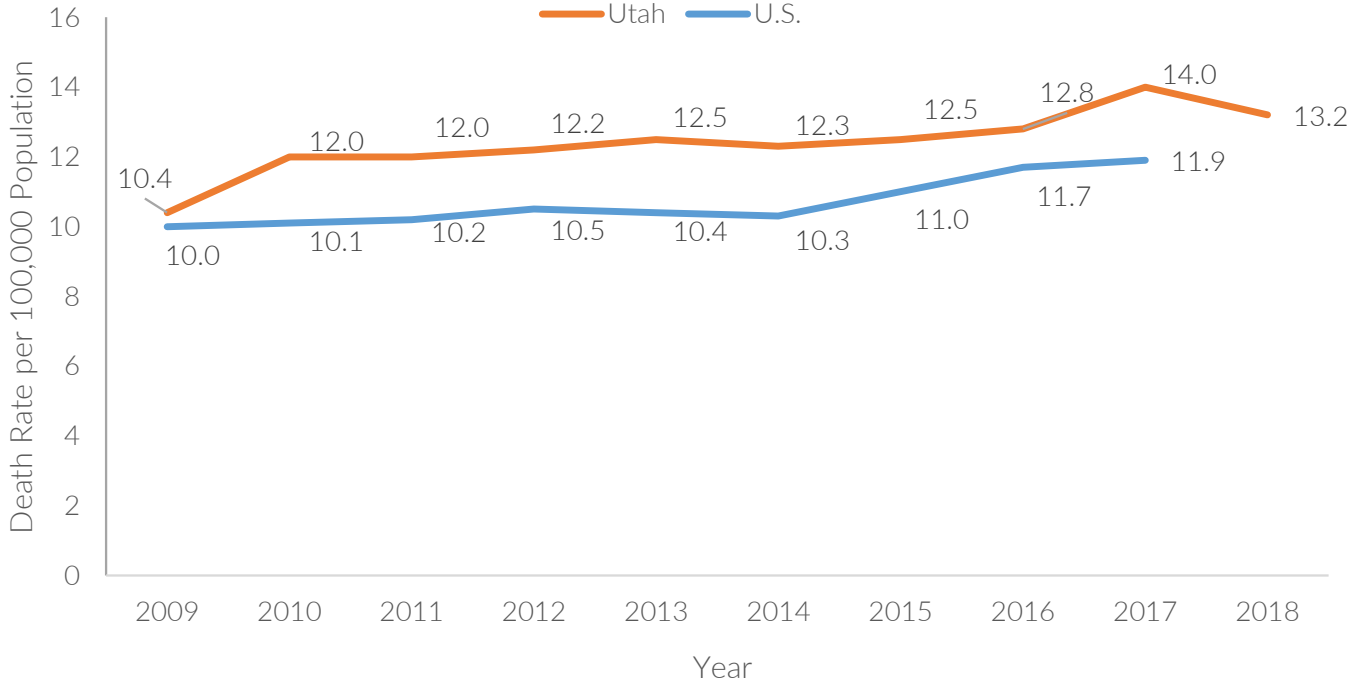
Utah vs. U.S.



Over the last decade, the Utah firearm-related death rate was consistently higher than the national rate. Cases peaked in 2017 which had an increase of 35% in Utah since 2009 compared to an increase of 19% in the U.S. (Figure 1).^{1,2} This difference is likely due to the increase in Utah's suicide rate over the past few years.

Utah has had a higher prevalence of high school students reporting that they carried a gun at least one day in the past month compared to the U.S. since 2005.³

Figure 1: Age Adjusted Firearm-Related Deaths per 100,000 population by Year, Utah and U.S., 2009-2018^{1,2}

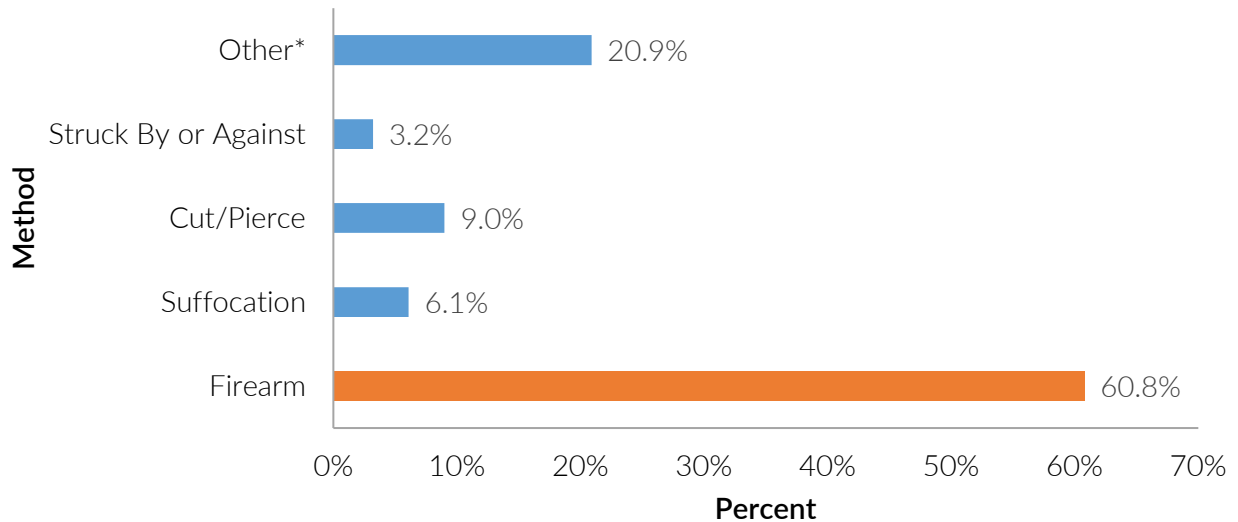


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Violent Deaths by Method

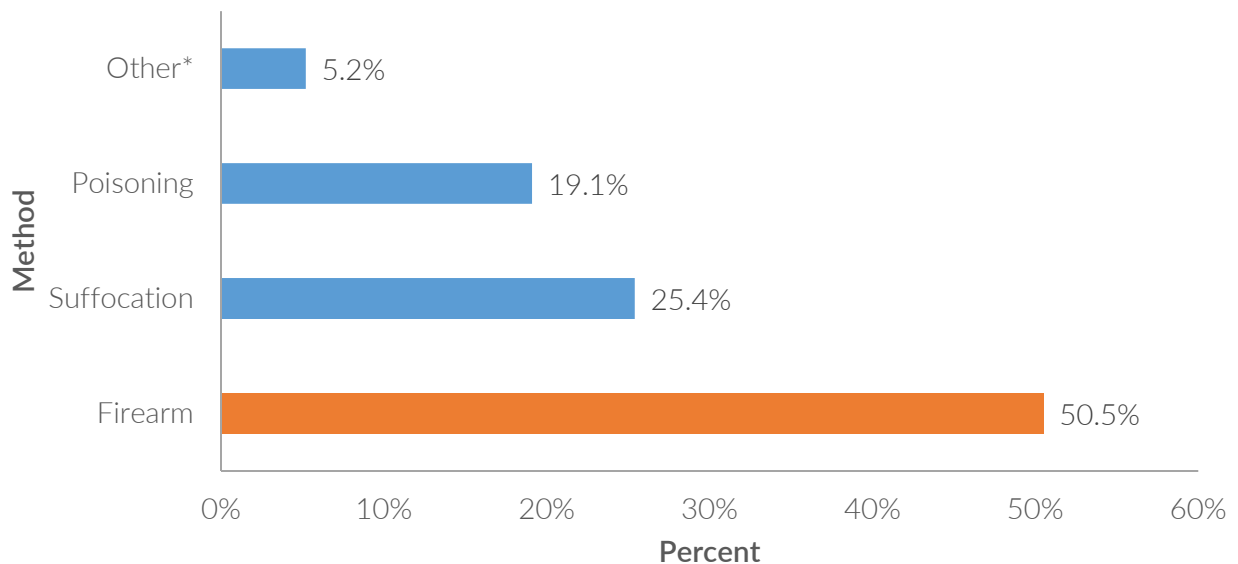
From 2014 to 2018, there were a total of 344 homicide deaths in Utah and 60.8% of all homicide deaths were by a firearm (**Figure 2**). Likewise, out of 3,104 suicide deaths 50.5% were by a firearm (**Figure 3**).¹

Figure 2: Homicide Deaths by Method, Utah, 2014-2018¹



*Other includes fire/flame/smoke, other land transport - non-traffic not motor vehicle, poisoning, and other specified and unspecified

Figure 3: Suicide Deaths by Method, Utah, 2014-2018¹



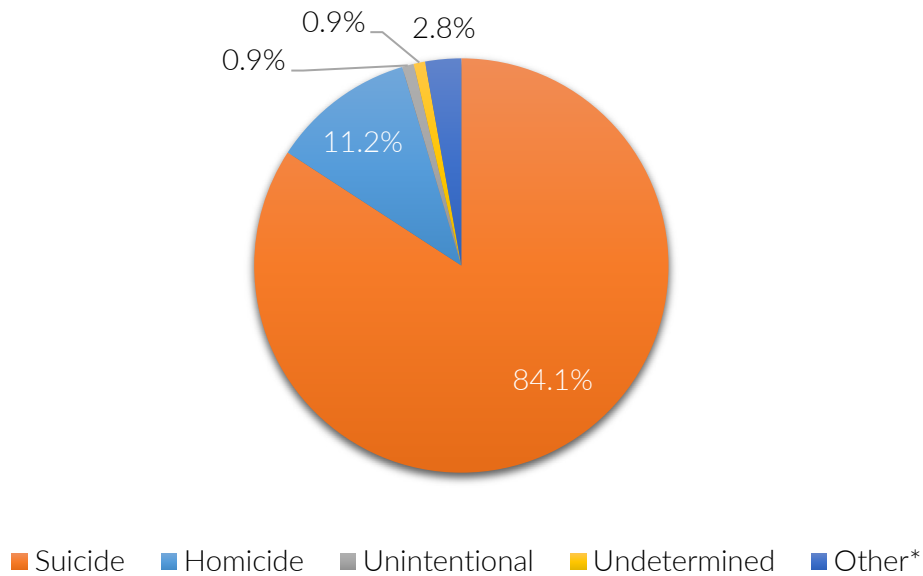
*Other includes fall, fire/flame/smoke, cut/pierce, drowning/submersion other land transport - non-traffic not motor vehicle, and other specified and unspecified.

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Firearm Deaths by Intent

The majority (84.1%) of firearm-related deaths in Utah are the result of suicide (Figure 4) which is more than homicides, legal intervention, and unintentional shootings combined.¹

Figure 4: Percentage of firearm-related deaths by intent, Utah, 2014-2018¹



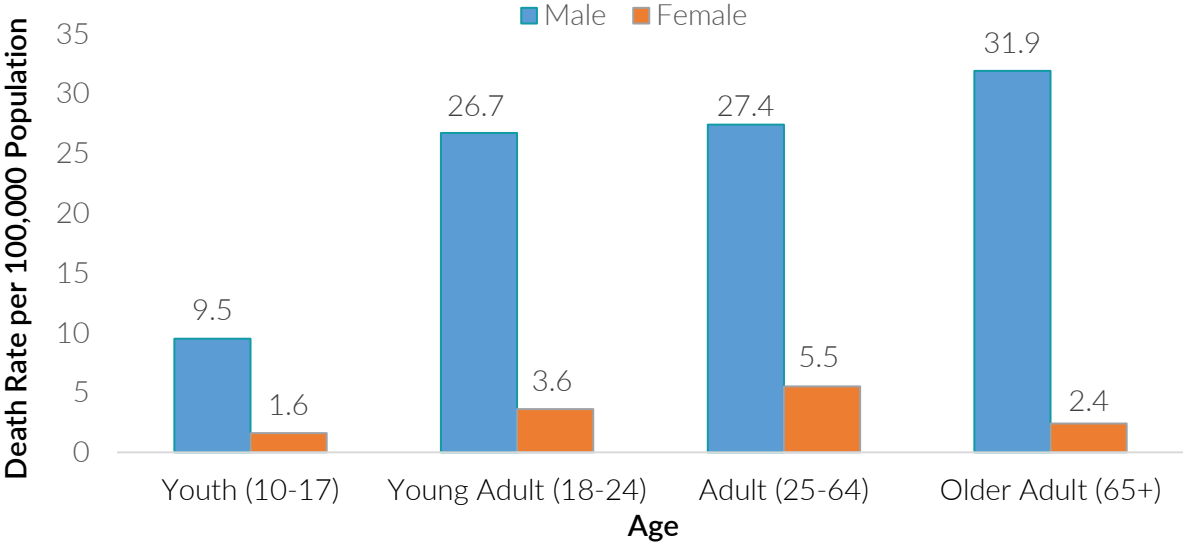
*Other includes legal intervention by police or other authority.

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Firearm-related Death Rates by Age and Sex

The majority of firearm-related deaths were among males (85.5%). The firearm-related death rate per 100,000 population peaked among men ages 65 and older (31.9), while the rate among women peaked across ages 25-64 (5.5). Youth (10-17 years old) had the lowest rates for both males and females (Figure 5).¹

Figure 5: Firearm-related Death Rates per 100,000 Population by Sex and Age, Utah, 2014-2018¹

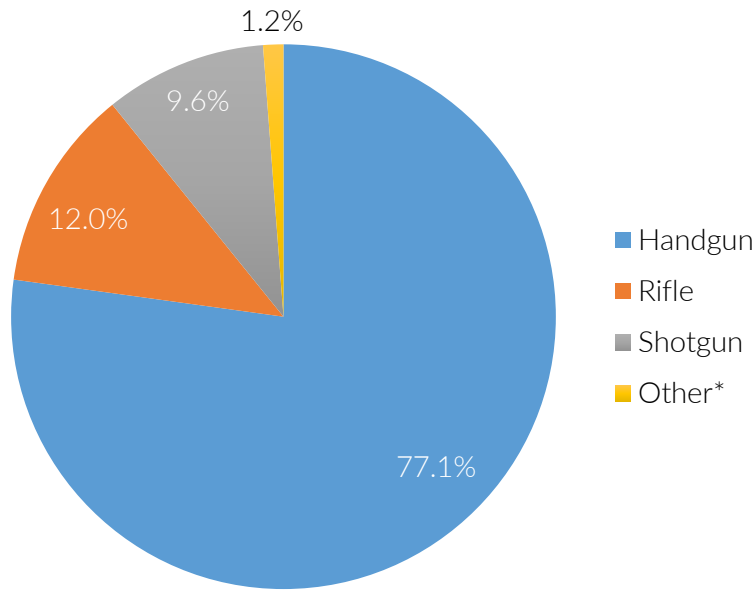


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Firearm Deaths by Firearm Type

Handguns were the most common type of firearm used in violent deaths (77.1%) followed by rifles (12.0%) and shotguns (9.6%) (**Figure 6**). The semi-automatic pistol and revolver were the two types of handguns most used.⁴

Figure 6: Firearm deaths by Firearm type, Utah, 2013-2017⁴



*Other includes unknown and other handmade gun

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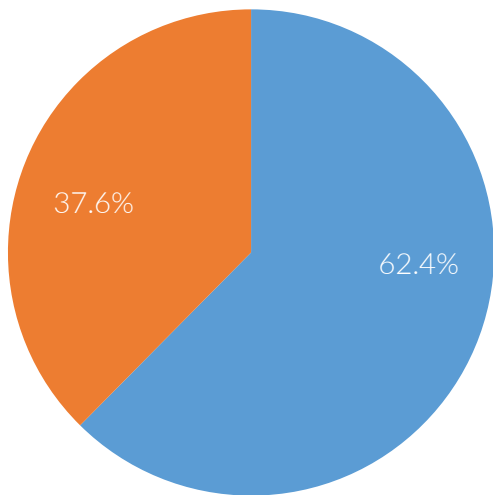
Firearm Ownership and Storage

Properly storing firearms can save lives. In Utah, the majority of deaths from firearms involved a firearm that was stored loaded (62.4%) (Figure 7) and unlocked (57.7%) (Figure 8).⁴

Nearly half of Utah households have firearms, with ownership highest in rural areas. Garfield County (90.7%) had the highest number of Utah households which own a firearm followed by Piutte County (78.0%).⁶

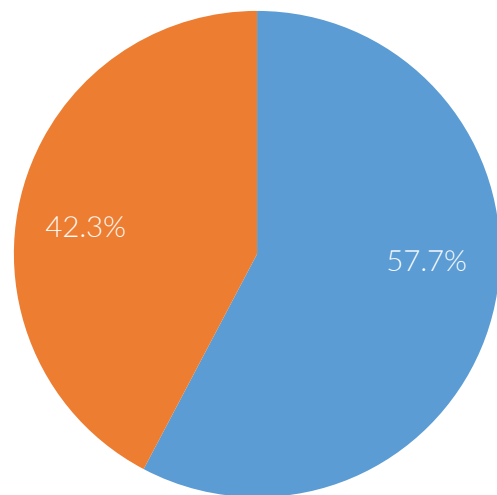
5.6% of youth reported carrying a gun to school. Males reported significantly higher number than females (8.6% vs. 2.4%).³

Figure 7: Firearm deaths by firearm stored loaded, Utah, 2013-2017⁴



■ Loaded ■ Unloaded

Figure 8: Firearm deaths by firearm stored locked, Utah, 2013-2017⁴



■ Not locked ■ Locked

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Firearm Safety Tips

Basic principles of gun safety include:

- Always point your gun in a safe direction (away from people, animals, etc.)
- Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
- Keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.
- Be sure of your target and what is beyond.
- Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons.⁸
- Store ammunition in a separate and locked location.
- Lock all firearms when not in use.

Firearms and Suicide Prevention

- Easy access to firearms is a risk factor for suicide.⁹
- Multiple studies show individuals who died by suicide compared to those who did not were more likely to live in homes with guns.⁹
- Many high gun ownership states, including Utah, have higher firearm suicide rates compared to low gun ownership states, even though non-firearm suicides were equal.¹⁰
- Firearm access is a risk factor for suicide for adolescents and for both males and females.¹¹
- Firearms are more lethal than other suicide means. About 85% of attempts with a firearm are fatal. That is a much higher case fatality rate than for nearly every other method.¹²
- Proper storage of firearms may help eliminate some risk of suicide.⁷ Under the Utah Safe Harbor Law (53-5c-201), a gun owner or spouse can store their firearms free of charge with law enforcement if they believe someone at home is a danger to self or others.⁷



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Firearms and Homicide Prevention

The Prevention Institute recommends the following guidelines to reduce gun violence.

Sensible gun laws:

- Reduce easy access to dangerous weapons
- Establish a culture of gun safety.
 - Reduce firearm access to youth and individuals who are at risk of harming themselves or others.
 - Insist on mandatory training and licensing for owners.
 - Require safe and secure gun storage.
- Recognize gun violence as a critical and preventable public health problem.
- Invest in communities to promote resilience and mental health and wellbeing.
- Support healthy norms about masculinity.
- Promote equitable access to education programs, job training, and employment programs.
- Advance gun safety and self-defense technology.¹³

References

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