

Firearm Injury and Death in North Carolina, 2021

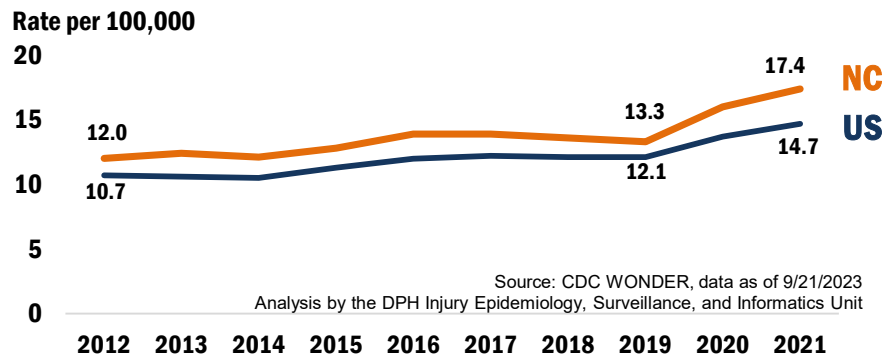
Note: some data are provisional and subject to change

5 people a day die from firearm injury in NC.

There were **more than 1,750 firearm-related deaths** among North Carolina (NC) residents in 2021.

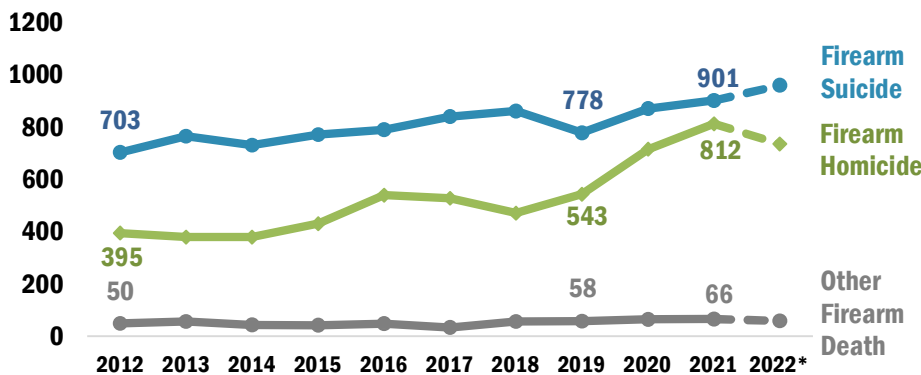
The number of firearm deaths in NC has increased by 55% over the past 10 years, with a **29% increase from the start of the pandemic**, from 1,379 deaths in 2019 to 1,779 deaths in 2021.

The rate of firearm injury death is higher in NC than across the US. NC has experienced a greater increase in firearm deaths since 2019.



Just over half (51%) of NC firearm deaths in 2021 were suicides, and 46% of were homicides.

Number of Firearm Deaths by Manner, NC-VDRS, 2012-21; Death Certificate Data, 2022*



If you or someone you know needs support call or text **988** or chat **988lifeline.org**

Firearm suicides have increased by 28% over the past 10 years to just over 900 deaths in 2021. Provisional data project a continued increase in 2022*.

Firearm homicides increased by 106% over the past 10 years, and by 50% since the start of the pandemic (2019 to 2021).

Other firearm death includes unintentional firearm deaths (1.8% in 2021), legal intervention (1.4%), and other firearm deaths of undetermined intent (<1%).

* 2022 Death Certificate Data are provisional and subject to change, data as of 8/1/2023; Limited to NC residents
Source: NC Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS), 2013-2021; NC State Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificate Data, 2022*; Analysis by the DPH Injury Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Informatics Unit

The rate of firearm death was almost 6 times higher for males than females (23.3 and 4.1 per 100,000, respectively).

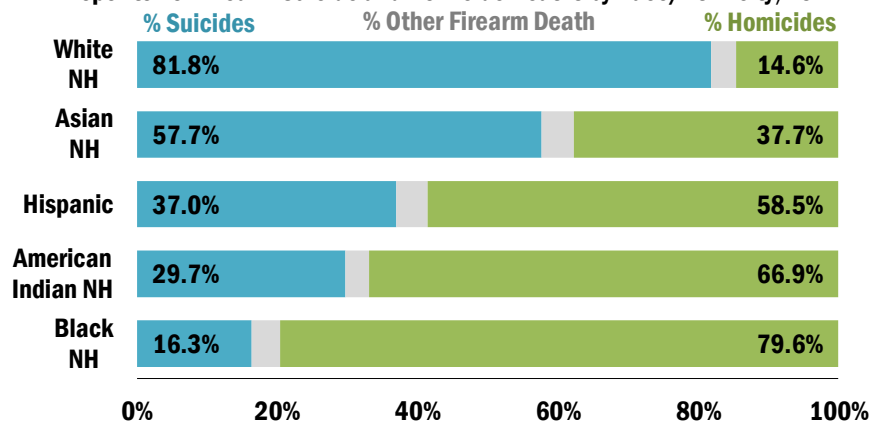
Rates of firearm death were highest among males ages 18-24 (55.8 per 100,000) and 25-34 (49.4 per 100,000).

By race/ethnicity, rates of firearm-related death were highest among non-Hispanic (NH) American Indian males and NH Black males, followed by NH white males (59.9, 56.7, and 23.7 per 100,000, respectively).

The manner of firearm-related death differs by race/ethnicity.

Most firearm deaths among NH Black, NH American Indian, and Hispanic residents were **homicides**, where most firearm-related deaths among NH Asian and NH white residents were **suicides**.

Proportion of Firearm Suicide and Homicide Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, 2021



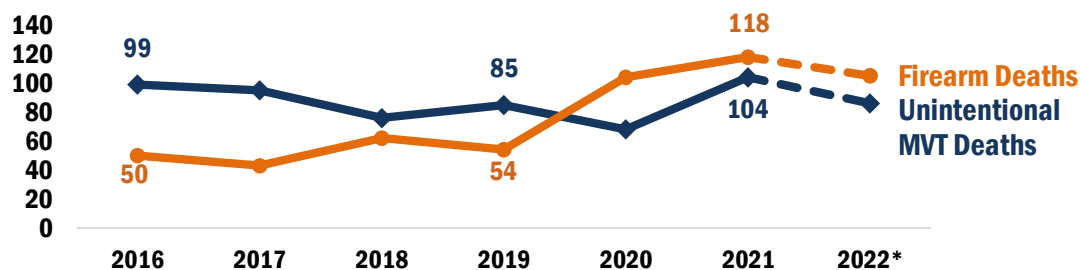
Limited to NC residents; suicides limited to residents ages 10 and older.
Source: NC-VDRS, 2021; Analysis by the DPH Injury Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Informatics Unit

Firearm deaths are a health equity issue.

Generations of social, economic, and environmental inequities contribute to disparities in injuries, including from firearms. When interpreting data, it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge these systemic, avoidable, and/or unjust factors.

Child firearm deaths surpassed the number of child deaths from motor vehicle traffic (MVT) crashes for the first time in NC in 2020 and remain the leading cause of child injury death in 2022* (provisionally).

Number of Child Deaths



More than 100 children ages 0-17 died from a firearm injury in NC in 2021. Child firearm injury deaths increased over 119% from 2019 to 2021.

* 2022 Death Certificate (DC) data are provisional and subject to change, data as of 8/1/2023; Limited to NC residents ages 0-17
 Source: NC-VDRS, 2016-2021; NC State Center for Health Statistics, DC Data, 2022*
 Analysis by the DPH Injury Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Informatics Unit

Firearm deaths are preventable.

Storing firearms safely, locked and unloaded, can greatly reduce the risk of firearm-related injury and death.



1/3 of youth suicides and unintentional deaths are prevented by securing firearms.
Monuteaux, Azrael, Miller, JAMA Pediatr. 2019

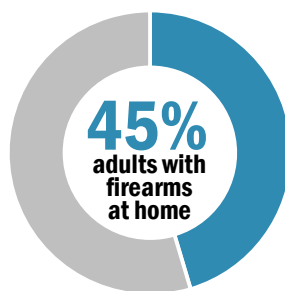


Storing ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms can reduce the risk of firearm injury, especially in households with children.

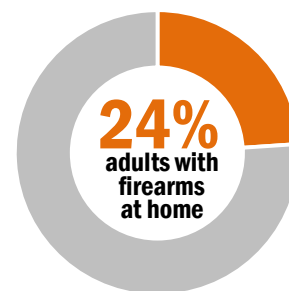
More than 1.5 Million (42%) of NC adults have a firearm in or around the home.

Nearly half of adults store their firearm(s) **loaded** and 1 in 4 adults store their firearm(s) **both loaded and unlocked**.

Firearms Stored Loaded



Firearms Stored Loaded & Unlocked



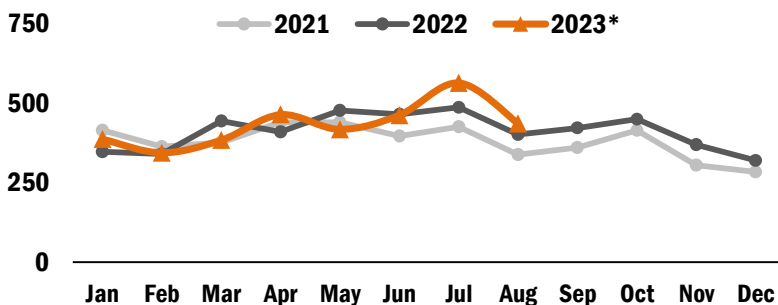
Firearm deaths are just the tip of the iceberg

For every 1 firearm death, there were 2 emergency department (ED) visits coded for firearm injury in NC.

NC-FASTER (Firearm Injury Surveillance Through Emergency Rooms) provides surveillance data in near-real time on ED visits for nonfatal firearm injuries based on diagnosis codes and free-text chief complaint information.

2023* Firearm injury ED visits increased in July, though trends are similar to previous years.

Number of NC-FASTER Firearm ED Visits by Month, 2021-2023*



* 2023 NC FASTER ED visit data are provisional and subject to change, data as of 9/22/2023;
 Source: NC DETECT ED visit data, 2021-2023*, Firearm Injury - All Intentions CDC V2
 Analysis by the DPH Injury Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Informatics Unit

In 2022, males, young adults (18-24), and NH Black residents experienced a higher than expected burden of firearm-related injury ED visits.

- 79%** Males made up 79% of ED visits vs. 49% of the state population.
- 29%** 18-24 year olds made up 29% of ED visits but only 9% of the population.
- 62%** NH Black residents made up 62% of ED visits vs. 22% of the population in NC.

NC-FASTER quarterly fact sheets with provisional data on nonfatal firearm injury ED visits are available [here](#) on the NC DETECT website.

NC Injury and Violence Prevention Branch Resources

- <https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/safestorage/index.htm>
- <https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/preventionResources/Suicide.htm>

National Resources

- The Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <http://www.sprc.org/>
- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <https://afsp.org/>

State Resources & Partners

- NC Office of Violence Prevention <https://www.ncsafe.org>
- NC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner <https://www.ocme.dhhs.nc.gov/>
- NC Division of Child and Family Wellbeing <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/division-child-and-family-well-being>



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
 Division of Public Health