



Protect Children Not Guns Factsheet

2017 Child and Teen Gun Deaths

May 2019

A child or teen is killed with a gun every 2 hours and 34 minutes.

- 3,410 children and teens died from guns in the United States in 2017, enough to fill 170 classrooms of 20 children.
- 9 children and teens died from guns each day in America—one every 2 hours and 34 minutes.

2017 marked the greatest number of child and teen gun deaths since 1998.

- 2014 reversed a seven-year trend of declining child and teen gun deaths. 2015, 2016 and 2017 continued that disturbing upward trend.
- 282 more children and teens were killed with a gun in 2017 than in 2016.
- More children and teens were killed with guns in 2017 than in any other year since 1998.

Guns kill more children under 5 than law enforcement officers in the line of duty.

- 93 children under 5 were killed with guns in 2017, compared with 42 law enforcement officers killed by guns in the line of duty.

The majority of child and teen gun deaths are homicides, while the majority of adult gun deaths are suicides.

- Nearly 3 in 5 child and teen gun deaths were homicides, while more than 3 in 5 adult gun deaths were suicides.
- Of the 3,410 child and teen gun deaths in 2017, 1,927 were homicides, 1,296 were suicides, 115 were accidents, and 72 were deaths of undetermined intent.

Black children and teens are disproportionately affected by gun violence.

- In 2017, Black children and teens made up 14 percent of the child and teen population but 41 percent of all child and teen gun deaths.
- 1,397 Black children and teens were killed with guns in 2017, nearly four each day.
- The gun death rate for Black children and teens was nearly four times that for White children and teens and more than 10 times that for Asian and Pacific Islander children and teens.
- 86 percent of Black child and teen gun deaths were homicides. 70 percent of White child and teen gun deaths were suicides.

Child and teen gun death rates remain higher than in the early 1960s.

- In 2017, the child and teen gun death rate was 72 percent higher than in 1963 when data were first collected from all states.
- Between 1963 and 2017, 67,421 Black children and teens were killed by guns—nearly 17 times the number of recorded lynchings of Black people of all ages in the 74 years from 1877 to 1950.
- While Black children and teens have been disproportionately killed by guns since the early 1960s, over half of all recorded child and teen gun deaths since 1963* were among White children and teens.

Since 1963, 3.5 times more children and teens died from guns on American soil than U.S. soldiers were killed by hostilities in wars abroad.

- 186,239 children and teens died from guns on American soil between 1963 and 2017. By contrast, 53,010 U.S. soldiers were killed by hostilities in the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq wars during that same period.

The U.S. has more guns than people.

- U.S. residents make up less than 5 percent of the global population, but own nearly half (46 percent) of all civilian-owned guns in the world.
- U.S. civilians own an estimated 393 million firearms—more than one gun per person. In contrast, U.S. military and law enforcement agencies possess about 5.5 million guns.

A gun in the home increases the risk of homicide, suicide and accidental death.

- Contrary to what many believe, having a gun in the home endangers children and loved ones more often than it protects them. A gun in the home makes the likelihood of homicide three times higher, suicide three to five times higher, and accidental death four times higher. For each time a gun in the home is used in self-defense, there are 11 completed and attempted gun suicides, seven criminal assaults and homicides with guns, and four unintentional gun deaths or injuries.
- More than half of youth who committed suicide with a gun obtained the gun from their home, usually a parent's gun.

* Gun deaths among Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander populations were not recorded until the 1980s and 1990s.

Sources: Gun deaths: CDC WONDER Online Database, <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>. All data are for children and teens ages 0-19 and exclude deaths for interactions with law enforcement. Law enforcement deaths (includes felonious and accidental deaths by firearms): Federal Bureau of Investigation, <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/leoka>. War casualties (as of May 9, 2019): Defense Casualty Analysis System, <https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml>. Lynching: Equal Justice Initiative. 2017. Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror (Third Edition). Note: CDF has previously used data from Tuskegee University for this statistic but EJI's recent research incorporated that work and documented several hundred more lynchings through reviews of local newspapers, historical archives and court records as well as interviews with historians, survivors and victims' descendants. Gun ownership: Small Arms Survey. 2018. "Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers." For other sources, please refer to The Truth About Guns Factsheet at <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/the-truth-about-guns.pdf>.