

# US gun deaths reach new highs

October 7 2022, by Steven Reinberg

---



Murders and suicides involving guns have reached an all-time high in the United States, health officials reported Thursday.

From 2020 to 2021, the rate of firearm homicides increased by more than 8%, as did the rate of firearm suicides, according to the report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"It's worth noting that firearms were used in the vast majority of all homicides [81%] in 2021," said report author Thomas Simon, associate director for science in the Division of Violence Prevention at the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention. "That's up from 79% in 2020. And this is, overall, the highest percentage that we've seen in a long time, and we're able to go back more than 50 years."

The news was similarly bad for [suicides](#): Guns were used in 55% of these deaths in 2021. "That's up from 53% in 2020, which is the highest percentage that we've seen since 2001," Simon noted.

"The highest firearm suicide rates among those ages 44 and younger were for American Indian, Alaskan Native people. The highest rates for those ages 45 and older were among [white people](#)," he said.

Simon thinks that many factors are driving these increases in [gun violence](#), including stresses from the pandemic that include [social isolation](#), job loss and economic pressures.

Increased murder rates may also reflect the broken relationships between the public and the police.

"It could have affected [law enforcement](#) practices in some communities and the willingness of community members to engage with law enforcement as well," Simon explained.

"These results really underscore the importance of a comprehensive approach, comprehensive public health approach to preventing violence," Simon said. "We've seen success in many communities with

outreach programs."

These programs focus on changing norms about violence, connecting people at the highest risk for violence with [community services](#) and helping de-escalate conflicts, he said.

"We've also seen benefits of hospital-based programs, where they can connect people at risk for violence or who are experiencing [suicidal ideation](#) with services. These types of programs have been shown to reduce the risk for future victimization, as well as perpetration and [suicide](#) attempts," Simon said.

"We also need to address the underlying conditions that contribute to us for violence," he noted. "There are policies that can help strengthen economic and household stability like housing assistance, child care subsidies, tax credits and livable wages. These approaches can help lift families out of poverty and reduce stress and enhance positive outcomes."

Simon wouldn't comment on whether [tougher gun laws](#) might also prevent murders and suicides.

"We know that communities are seeing some promising benefits from violence prevention strategies, and we've learned a lot about what works," he said. "The public health approach to [violence prevention](#) complements the work of law enforcement, to make the community safer and make their [police's] job easier."

The report was published Oct. 7 in the CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#).

**More information:** For more on preventing gun deaths, see the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Copyright © 2022 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: US gun deaths reach new highs (2022, October 7) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-10-gun-deaths-highs.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.