

Gun suicides keep rising among US youth, study finds

September 5 2023, by Ernie Mundell



Suicides by Americans aged 10 to 24 are continuing to climb and guns

are increasingly the method of choice in these tragedies, a new report finds.

Easy access to firearms can mean suicide is often impulsively done and fatal, the researchers pointed out.

"Prior research has identified the correlation between readily accessible guns in the home and suicide," wrote a team led by Dr. Stephanie Garcia, a resident surgeon at the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine in Tulsa.

The new findings "show that firearm suicide mortality is increasing in this [younger] population," they added.

In the study, Garcia and her colleagues looked at U.S. federal data on all [suicide deaths](#) among people ages 10 through 24 from 2013 to the end of 2020.

A total of more than 49,500 [suicides](#) were recorded during that time for this age group, they reported in the Sept. 5 issue of *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Of those deaths, 79% occurred among [young males](#) and 21% occurred among females.

The researchers also calculated "years of life lost"—a person's life expectancy minus their age at the time of their death.

Focusing on this measurement, 44% of the total years of life lost to suicide among the young involved firearms in 2013, the researchers said. However, that number had risen to half of all years lost to suicide by 2020.

Overall, "our study found almost 3 million years of life lost due to

suicide from 2013 to 2020," the researchers noted. "Suicide by firearm alone accounted for over 1.3 million years of life lost in the study period."

And these numbers only appear to be rising: During 2020, over 200,000 years of life were lost among young Americans—"a significant increase in firearm-related suicide compared with previous years," Garcia's group said.

On average, a young person who lost his or her life to firearm suicide was just over 20 years old.

What can be done to start reversing these numbers?

According to the study team, there's an urgent need for "mental health access, as it is imperative that the public be informed of warning signs of suicide." Also needed: "Proper firearm storage and safety, and risk protection laws that can help prevent [firearm](#) suicide," Garcia and colleagues wrote.

If you or a loved one is in danger of suicide, find help at the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).

More information: Stephanie Garcia et al, Years of Life Lost to Firearm Suicide Among Young People in the US, *JAMA Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.3366](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.3366)

Find out more about proper firearm safety at the [U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives](#).

Copyright © 2023 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Gun suicides keep rising among US youth, study finds (2023, September 5) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-gun-suicides-youth.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.