

# Study shows 1 in 6 gun deaths for women occur in or around pregnancy

March 13 2024, by Carole Tanzer Miller

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A woman's risk of intentional death by firearm rises during and shortly

after pregnancy, new research shows.

About 1 in 6 intentional firearm-related deaths in [women of childbearing age](#) occurred during pregnancy or within a year of childbirth, the study found.

Dr. Naima Joseph, of the Boston Medical Center, led the inquiry, which included data on women between 14 and 44 who died by suicide or homicide involving a firearm between 2008 and 2019.

That period saw 4,204 firearm-related homicides and deaths by suicide nationwide.

Of the 2,098 homicides of women listed in the National Violent Death Reporting System, 22% were pregnancy-related. Among 2,106 gun-related deaths that were classed as suicides, 11% of them were pregnancy-related.

Writing recently in the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#), researchers expressed fear that the trends may get even worse.

"There is concern that the current national political landscape will serve to worsen the risks of [intimate partner violence](#) for pregnant individuals, through both restriction of access to abortions and limiting states' abilities to restrict firearms," they wrote.

Researchers found several notable trends:

- On average, women who died by pregnancy-associated homicide were 22.2 years of age and 54.8% were Black women. Those who died by pregnancy-associated suicide were older — 28.5 years on average, and 80.5% were [white women](#)
- 61.6% of pregnancy-related suicides were tied to ongoing

- conflict with or violence by a current or former partner, compared to 51.9% of homicides unrelated to pregnancy
- 4.2% of pregnancy-related suicides occurred in women who had recently experienced intimate partner violence.

"The findings are concerning and indicate that enhanced strategies supporting [mental health treatment](#), effective interventions addressing interpersonal violence and strategic public health interventions addressing firearm safety are urgently needed to prevent needless [pregnancy](#)-associated violent deaths," the authors wrote.

**More information:** The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has a policy statement on [gun violence and safety](#).

Naima T. Joseph et al, Pregnancy-Associated Firearm Mortality in the United States, 2008- 2019, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2024.02.022](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2024.02.022)

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Citation: Study shows 1 in 6 gun deaths for women occur in or around pregnancy (2024, March 13) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-03-gun-deaths-women-pregnancy.html>

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