

# Who military service members see as credible to discuss secure firearm storage for suicide prevention

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Secure firearm storage—storing a firearm unloaded, locked and separate from ammunition—can help reduce the risk for suicide, but many military service members store their firearms unsecured.

In a new Rutgers Health study, researchers asked firearm-owning service members who they view as the most credible sources to discuss secure firearm storage for [suicide prevention](#).

The researchers, whose study [appears](#) in the journal *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviors*, examined data from 719 U.S. service members.

"There is no single voice that will appeal to all firearm-owning service members, but certain groups are widely seen as credible overall and our results provide a sense of how to best reach different groups of service members to effectively encourage them to store their firearms more securely," said Michael Anestis, executive director of the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center and senior author of the study.

Overall, these service members said the most credible sources to discuss secure firearm storage for suicide prevention were [law enforcement officers](#), [military service members](#) and veterans. The least credible sources were celebrities and casual acquaintances. Firearm lobbying groups, firearm dealers and other groups often affiliated with firearm ownership and culture (e.g., hunting and outdoor magazines) were not seen as particularly credible sources. These findings were consistent for those who identified as white.

Among people who identified as Black, law enforcement officers, veterans and members of the National Rifle Association were deemed to be the most credible. American Indian and Alaskan Native individuals ranked firearm manufactures, service members and veterans as the most credible sources. Asian individuals ranked family members, service members and veterans as highly credible sources.

"Many military service members do not engage in secure [firearm storage](#), which may be contributing to the high rates of firearm suicide within this population," said Allison Bond, a [clinical psychology](#) doctoral

candidate with the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center at Rutgers and lead author of the study.

"To help increase secure storage, messages should leverage credible sources like law enforcement officers," Bond said. "Our results show that there can't be a one-size fits all approach to secure storage messaging, and we need to promote sources and voices that are credible to those from all racial backgrounds."

**More information:** Allison E. Bond et al, Determining who military service members deem credible to discuss firearm safety for suicide prevention, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/sltb.13070](https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.13070)

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