



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

Firearm Deaths in Colorado 2004-2011

Suicide Prevention Resources

National Suicide Prevention
Lifeline:
800.273.TALK (8255)

Colorado Office of Suicide
Prevention
www.coosp.org

Suicide Prevention Coalition of
Colorado
www.suicidepreventioncolorado.org

American Foundation for Suicide
Prevention
www.afsp.org

American Association of
Suicidology
www.suicidology.org

Suicide Prevention Resource
Center
www.sprc.org

Other Firearm Violence Prevention Resources

Safe to Tell
safe2tell.org

Law Center to Prevent Gun
Violence
smartgunlaws.org

Colorado School Safety Resource
Center
www.colorado.gov/schoolsafetyresourcecenter

Injury, Suicide, & Violence
Prevention Branch

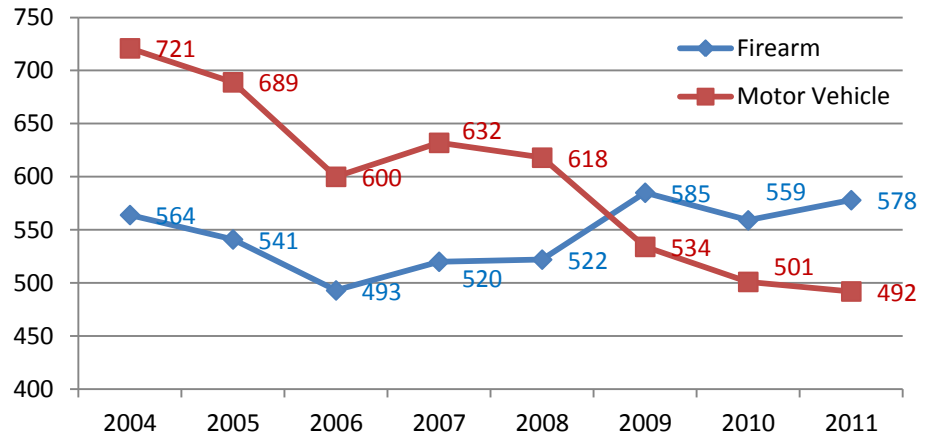
Office of Suicide
Prevention

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Deaths resulting from firearms are an important and complex public health issue in Colorado. In recent years there have been more firearm deaths in Colorado than motor vehicle deaths (Figure 1).¹ The Colorado Violent Death Reporting System is the primary source for the detailed information about firearm deaths presented here.²

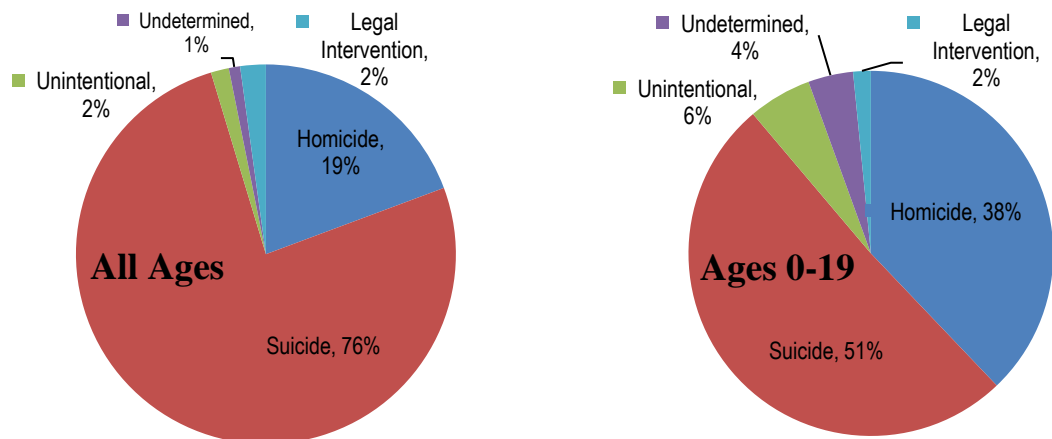
Figure 1. Firearm and motor vehicle deaths: Colorado occurrences, 2004 – 2011



Firearm Deaths

From 2004 through 2011, 4,362 people died in Colorado as a result of firearms (Figure 1). The majority of firearm deaths were among males (86 percent). Handguns were used in 70 percent of firearm deaths and rifles or shotguns in 19 percent. Firearm deaths can be categorized by intent: suicide, homicide, unintentional (or accidental), undetermined and legal intervention. For all ages, firearm suicides outnumbered firearm homicides by nearly four to one. For youth under the age of 20 years killed by firearms in Colorado, 51 percent of were suicides and 38 percent were homicides (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Firearm deaths by intent: Colorado occurrences, 2004-2011



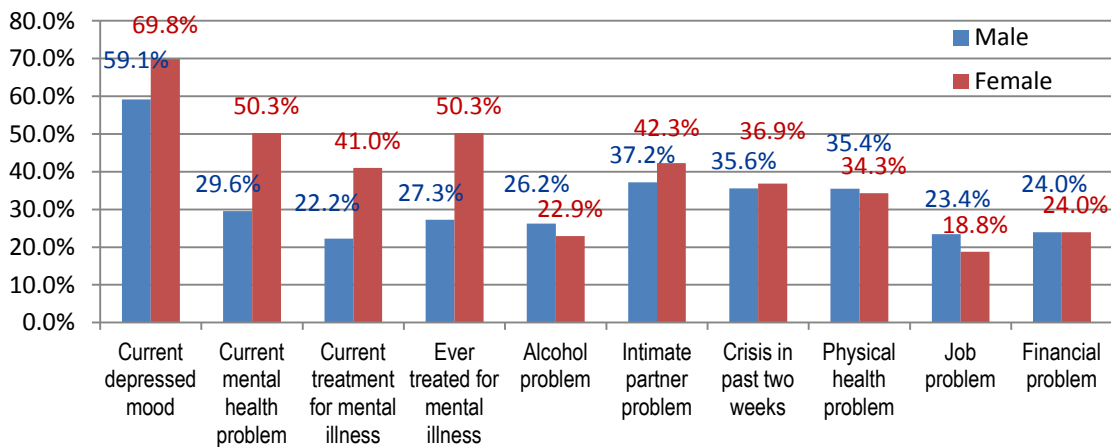
Although White Non-Hispanics make up 71 percent Colorado's population, they accounted for 77 percent of the firearm deaths, primarily due to the high number of suicides in that race/ethnicity group. Of the remaining firearms deaths, 15 percent were among White Hispanics, 6 percent among Blacks and 2 percent among Asians and American Indians.

Suicide by Firearm

More than three-quarters of all firearm deaths in Colorado during 2004-2011 were suicides. Nearly half of all suicide deaths involved the use of a firearm. Suicide deaths by firearm are primarily among males (87 percent) and the White Non-Hispanic racial/ethnic group (88 percent).

In suicide deaths by firearm where the circumstances of the death are known and available, the most common circumstance for both males and females was a perception of depression by family or friends at the time of the death (Figure 3). Females were more likely than males to be reported with current mental health problems or current or past treatment for mental illness. Male suicides were slightly more likely to be associated with problems with alcohol or jobs.

Figure 3: Known circumstances for suicide firearm deaths by gender: Colorado occurrences, 2004-2011



Homicide by Firearm

An average of 105 homicides by firearm occurred annually in Colorado from 2004 through 2011. In homicide deaths by firearm where the circumstances surrounding the death are known and available, the largest percentage was the result of an argument or conflict (41 percent). Another crime precipitated 27 percent of homicides by firearm. Males, White Non-Hispanics and Blacks are disproportionately victims of homicide by firearm. Of homicide firearm deaths in Colorado, 78 percent were male, 40 percent were White Non-Hispanic, 36 percent were Hispanic and 21 percent were Black.

Unintentional Firearm Deaths

There are fewer than 10 unintentional firearm deaths annually in Colorado. From 2004 through 2011, 12 percent of these deaths occurred among children aged 0-14 years and 40 percent occurred among young people aged 15-24 years. Men were the victims of 93 percent of all unintentional firearm deaths.

The small number of unintentional firearm deaths makes it difficult to find meaningful trends in the data that would inform prevention strategies. However, of the unintentional firearm deaths with known and available circumstances, 49 percent of the deaths involved someone playing with the gun, 18 percent involved someone showing the gun to others, 14 percent resulted from loading or unloading a gun, 10 percent were hunting incidents and 8 percent involved cleaning the gun.

1. Health Statistics Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
2. Colorado Violent Death Reporting System.