Utah firearm-related death rate was consistently higher than the national rate over the last decade.

More than half of all homicide and suicide deaths were with a firearm.

The majority (84.1%) of firearm-related deaths in Utah were the result of suicide.

The majority (85.5%) of firearm-related deaths were among males.

Handguns were the most common type of firearm used in all firearm deaths (77.1%).
Over the last decade, the Utah firearm-related death rate was consistently higher than the national rate. Cases peaked in 2017 which had an increase of 35% in Utah since 2009 compared to an increase of 19% in the U.S. (Figure 1).\textsuperscript{1,2} This difference is likely due to the increase in Utah’s suicide rate over the past few years.

Utah has had a higher prevalence of high school students reporting that they carried a gun at least one day in the past month compared to the U.S. since 2005.\textsuperscript{3}
Violent Deaths by Method

From 2014 to 2018, there were a total of 344 homicide deaths in Utah and 60.8% of all homicide deaths were by a firearm (Figure 2). Likewise, out of 3,104 suicide deaths 50.5% were by a firearm (Figure 3).¹

**Figure 2: Homicide Deaths by Method, Utah, 2014-2018¹**

- Firearm: 60.8%
- Suffocation: 6.1%
- Cut/Pierce: 9.0%
- Struck By or Against: 3.2%
- Other*: 20.9%

*Other includes fire/flame/smoke, other land transport - non-traffic not motor vehicle, poisoning, and other specified and unspecified.

**Figure 3: Suicide Deaths by Method, Utah, 2014-2018¹**

- Firearm: 50.5%
- Suffocation: 25.4%
- Poisoning: 19.1%
- Other*: 5.2%

*Other includes fall, fire/flame/smoke, cut/pierce, drowning/submersion other land transport - non-traffic not motor vehicle, and other specified and unspecified.

¹Other includes fire/flame/smoke, other land transport - non-traffic not motor vehicle, poisoning, and other specified and unspecified.
Firearm Deaths in Utah, 2020

Firearm Deaths by Intent

The majority (84.1%) of firearm-related deaths in Utah are the result of suicide (Figure 4) which is more than homicides, legal intervention, and unintentional shootings combined.¹

Figure 4: Percentage of firearm-related deaths by intent, Utah, 2014-2018¹

- Suicide: 84.1%
- Homicide: 11.2%
- Unintentional: 0.9%
- Undetermined: 0.9%
- Other*: 2.8%

*Other includes legal intervention by police or other authority.

¹ Other includes legal intervention by police or other authority.
Firearm-related Death Rates by Age and Sex

The majority of firearm-related deaths were among males (85.5%). The firearm-related death rate per 100,000 population peaked among men ages 65 and older (31.9), while the rate among women peaked across ages 25-64 (5.5). Youth (10-17 years old) had the lowest rates for both males and females (Figure 5).  

![Figure 5: Firearm-related Death Rates per 100,000 Population by Sex and Age, Utah, 2014-2018](image-url)
Firearm Deaths by Firearm Type

Handguns were the most common type of firearm used in violent deaths (77.1%) followed by rifles (12.0%) and shotguns (9.6%) (Figure 6). The semi-automatic pistol and revolver were the two types of handguns most used.4

*Other includes unknown and other handmade gun

Figure 6: Firearm deaths by Firearm type, Utah, 2013-20174
Firearm Ownership and Storage

Properly storing firearms can save lives. In Utah, the majority of deaths from firearms involved a firearm that was stored loaded (62.4%) (Figure 7) and unlocked (57.7%) (Figure 8).4

Nearly half of Utah households have firearms, with ownership highest in rural areas. Garfield County (90.7%) had the highest number of Utah households which own a firearm followed by Piute County (78.0%).6

5.6% of youth reported carrying a gun to school. Males reported significantly higher number than females (8.6% vs. 2.4%).3

Figure 7: Firearm deaths by firearm stored loaded, Utah, 2013-20174

Figure 8: Firearm deaths by firearm stored locked, Utah, 2013-20174
Firearm Safety Tips

Basic principles of gun safety include:
- Always point your gun in a safe direction (away from people, animals, etc.)
- Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
- Keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.
- Be sure of your target and what is beyond.
- Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons.
- Store ammunition in a separate and locked location.
- Lock all firearms when not in use.

Firearms and Suicide Prevention

- Easy access to firearms is a risk factor for suicide.
- Multiple studies show individuals who died by suicide compared to those who did not were more likely to live in homes with guns.
- Many high gun ownership states, including Utah, have higher firearm suicide rates compared to low gun ownership states, even though non-firearm suicides were equal.
- Firearm access is a risk factor for suicide for adolescents and for both males and females.
- Firearms are more lethal than other suicide means. About 85% of attempts with a firearm are fatal. That is a much higher case fatality rate than for nearly every other method.
- Proper storage of firearms may help eliminate some risk of suicide. Under the Utah Safe Harbor Law (53-5c-201), a gun owner or spouse can store their firearms free of charge with law enforcement if they believe someone at home is a danger to self or others.
Firearms and Homicide Prevention

The Prevention Institute recommends the following guidelines to reduce gun violence.

Sensible gun laws:

• Reduce easy access to dangerous weapons
• Establish a culture of gun safety.
  - Reduce firearm access to youth and individuals who are at risk of harming themselves or others.
  - Insist on mandatory training and licensing for owners.
  - Require safe and secure gun storage.
• Recognize gun violence as a critical and preventable public health problem.
• Invest in communities to promote resilience and mental health and wellbeing.
• Support healthy norms about masculinity.
• Promote equitable access to education programs, job training, and employment programs.
• Advance gun safety and self-defense technology.13

References