



QUICK FACTS: SAFE STORAGE

(from the [Giffords Law Center](#), "[Child Access Prevention and Safe Storage](#)")

Parents Underestimate Ease of Access to Firearms in the Home

4.6 million minors in the US live in homes with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm.^[1] Many children know where their parents keep their guns and have accessed household guns — even if their parents think otherwise.

Many of these children handled guns without their parents' knowledge. Nearly a quarter of parents did not know that their children had handled a gun in their house.^[3]

Access to Guns at Home Linked to School Shootings, Suicides & Unintentional deaths

Studies show that 70 - 90% of guns used in youth suicides, unintentional shootings among children, and school shootings perpetrated by shooters under the age of 18 are acquired from the home or the homes of relatives or friends.^[4]

Several studies have shown that the risk of suicide and unintentional shootings among youth increases in homes where guns are kept loaded and/or unlocked.^[5]

Impact of Safe Storage

Estimates suggest that even modest increases in the number of American homes safely storing firearms could prevent almost a third of youth gun deaths due to suicide and unintentional firearm injury.^[6]

Numerous studies over the past 20 years have found that Child Access Protection laws can reduce suicide and unintentional gun deaths and injuries among children and teens by up to 54%, with the greatest reductions occurring in states which require safe storage of firearms.^[7]

Even among adults, compared with people who stored their firearms unlocked and/or loaded, those who stored their firearms safely were less likely to die by firearm suicide.^[8]

One study found that states with a law in place that required handguns to be locked at least in certain circumstances experienced reduced rates of firearm suicide.^[9]

Safe Storage Decreases Gun Thefts

Unsecured weapons in homes and vehicles are also fueling an epidemic of gun thefts across the country. These guns may be diverted to the underground market, where they are used in crime.

Nationally—representative survey data suggests that approximately 380,000 guns are stolen from individual gun owners each year.^[10]

From 2006 to 2016, the number of guns reported stolen from individuals increased by approximately 60%.^[11] Similarly, many cities have reported alarming spikes in the number of firearms stolen from cars.^[12]

An analysis of more than 23,000 stolen firearms recovered by police between 2010 and 2016 found that the majority of these weapons were recovered in connection with crimes, including more than 1,500 violent acts such as murder, kidnapping, and armed robbery.^[13]

Gun owners who do not safely store their firearms are significantly more likely to have their guns stolen.^[14]

^[1] Deborah Azrael, Joanna Cohen, Carmel Salhi, and Matthew Miller, “Firearm Storage in Gun-owning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey,” *Journal of Urban Health* 95, no. 3 (2018): 295–304.

^[2] Carmel Salhi, Deborah Azrael, Matthew Miller, “Parent and Adolescent Reports of Adolescent Access to Household Firearms in the United States,” *JAMA Network Open*, (2021).

^[3] Frances Baxley and Matthew Miller, “Parental Misperceptions About Children and Firearms,” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 160, no. 5 (2006): 542-547.

^[4] Renee M. Johnson, et al., “Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?,” *Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6 (2010): 609-611; Guohua Li, et al., “Factors Associated with the Intent of Firearm-related Injuries in Pediatric Trauma Patients,” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 150, no. 11 (1996): 1160-1165; John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich, “‘The Gun is Not in the Closet,’” *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2018, <https://wapo.st/2M2HSH6>. See also, Bryan Vossekuil, et al., “The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States,” US Secret Service and US Department of Education, July 2004, <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>; Tawnell D. Hobbs, “Most Guns Used in School Shootings Come From Home,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 5, 2018, <https://on.wsj.com/2Eydv2f>.

^[5] David C. Grossman, et al., “Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries,” *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005): 707–714. See also, Matthew Miller and David Hemenway, “The Relationship Between Firearms and Suicide: a Review of the Literature,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 4, no. 1 (1999): 59–75; Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, “Association Between Youth-focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides,” *JAMA* 292, no. 5 (2004): 594–601.

^[6] Michael C. Monuteaux, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, “Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage With Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths,” *JAMA Pediatrics* (2019).

^[7] Emma C. Hamilton, et al., “Variability of Child Access Prevention Laws and Pediatric Firearm Injuries,” *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery* 84, no. 4 (2018): 613–619. See also, Peter Cummings, David C. Grossman, Frederick P. Rivara, and Thomas D. Koepsell, “State Gun Safe Storage Laws and Child Mortality Due to Firearms,” *JAMA* 278, no. 13 (1997): 1084–1086; Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, “Association Between Youth-focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides,” *JAMA* 292, no. 5 (2004): 594–601; Jeffrey DeSimone, Sara Markowitz, and Jing Xu, “Child Access Prevention Laws and Nonfatal Gun Injuries,” *Southern Economic Journal* 80, no. 1 (2013): 5–25.

^[8] Edmond D. Shenassa, Michelle L. Rogers, Kirsten L. Spalding, and Mary B. Roberts, "Safer Storage of Firearms at Home and Risk of Suicide: a Study of Protective Factors in a Nationally Representative Sample," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 58, no. 10 (2004): 841–848.

^[9] Michael D. Anestis and Joye C. Anestis, "Suicide Rates and State Laws Regulating Access and Exposure to Handguns," *American Journal of Public Health* 105, no. 10 (2015): 2049–2058.

^[10] David Hemenway, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, "Whose Guns are Stolen? The Epidemiology of Gun Theft Victims," *Injury Epidemiology* 4, no. 1 (2017).

^[11] Brian Freskos, "Missing Pieces: Gun Theft from Legal Gun Owners is on the Rise, Quietly Fueling Violent Crime, *The Trace*, November 20, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2izST1h>.

^[12] Martin Kaste, "More Guns In Cars Mean More Guns Stolen From Cars," NPR, May 9, 2019, <https://n.pr/2MdG66e>.

^[13] David Hemenway, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, "Whose Guns are Stolen? The Epidemiology of Gun Theft Victims," *Injury Epidemiology* 4, no. 1 (2017).

^[14] Brian Freskos, "Missing Pieces: Gun Theft from Legal Gun Owners is on the Rise, Quietly Fueling Violent Crime, *The Trace*, November 20, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2izST1h>.