



# Guns' Hidden Victims

In 2020, suicides made up more than half of U.S. gun deaths in the U.S., which nearly set a record high. Suicide Awareness Month in September is an appropriate time to examine the dangerous relationship between suicidal individuals and access to firearms, and recognize just how significant the impact a gun has on a suicide attempt ending in death.

## Youth suicide & access to guns

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young Americans (ages 10–24), which increased by 53% between 2011 and 2020. Young men are at a higher risk, representing nine out of 10 firearm suicide victims. Among youth, the highest suicide by firearm rate is among Native American/ Alaska Native, white and Black populations.

## Lethal nature of guns

Much of what makes guns so dangerous to individuals following through with suicide is the speed at which a firearm can take a life. In fact, most people who attempt suicide do not die unless they use a gun. Ninety percent of suicide attempts with a gun end in death, while other methods do so only 4% of the time. Pulling a trigger leaves little time to reconsider and low chance for survival.

## Preventing suicide by firearm

The simplest method of suicide prevention is recognizing red flags and acting swiftly to get the person to crisis resources. Loved ones should know that any drastic change in demeanor can point to underlying issues in those with existing mental illness and should be acutely aware of comments regarding firearms or the individual's access to weapons in this state.

**“It’s not that gun owners are more suicidal. It’s that they are more likely to die in the event that they become suicidal...”**

**- Catherine Barber**  
Director of a HICRC Suicide Prevention Campaign



Learn more at  
[ndbh.com/suicide](https://ndbh.com/suicide).

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
**800-273-8255 or dial 988**

Sources: Pew Research Center, CDC, Everytown Research & Policy, Harvard School of Public Health, Be SMART

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