



# FACTS ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.

February 2019

***The number of gun deaths in the U.S. since 1968 exceeds the number of U.S. military deaths in all wars in American history.***<sup>1</sup>

**In 2017 (most recent data available), a record number of people in the U.S., 39,733, were killed by firearms, more than were killed by motor vehicle accidents.** Of those 39,733,

- 23,854 were suicides (60% of all firearm deaths and 51% of all suicides),
- 14,542 were homicides (37% of all firearm deaths and 75% of all homicides), and
- 486 were accidental deaths (1% of all firearm deaths and 0.3% of all accidental deaths).<sup>2</sup>

**Also in 2017, 133,895 people in the U.S. sustained nonfatal firearm injuries.** Of those 133,895,

- 5,200 were self-inflicted (4% of all nonfatal firearm injuries),
- 107,002 were assaults (80% of all nonfatal firearm injuries), and
- 20,488 were accidental shooting (15% of all nonfatal firearm injuries).<sup>3</sup>

**The U.S. is an outlier among high-income countries with its much higher rates of gun ownership, gun homicides, and gun suicides, yet not with respect to overall levels of other violence or non-firearm suicides.** Americans are not more prone to violence or suicide than other nations' citizens; they just have much greater access to guns, which make assaults and self-harm more lethal.<sup>4</sup>

**Suicides are often impulsive actions in response to personal crises. Access to a gun increases the risk of a successful suicide attempt,** since guns are more lethal than other suicide methods. Lack of access to a gun often allows the crisis to pass.<sup>5</sup>

**Guns kept in the home are rarely actually used for self-defense against an intruder. They are far more likely to be used against someone in the home, including homicides, suicides, and accidents.** Moreover, guns in a home may actually make it more attractive to burglars.<sup>6</sup>

**Many gun owners favor stronger gun regulations,** including background checks on private gun sales (79%), a ban on assault-style weapons (43%), a ban on high-capacity ammunition clips (41%), a waiting period for purchase of a handgun (77-89%), and mandatory registration of handguns (59-75%).<sup>7</sup>

**Recently, a group of surgeons who are also avid gun owners issued a report calling for enhanced gun safety measures,** including universal background checks, firearm registration, licensure for semi-automatic weapons, gun safety training, firearm storage requirements, extreme risk protective orders, and more research.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Snopes, “Do U.S. Gun Deaths Since 1968 Outnumber Deaths in All American Wars?” Oct. 12, 2107, [www.snopes.com/fact-check/gun-deaths-wars](http://www.snopes.com/fact-check/gun-deaths-wars). According to Snopes, the number of domestic gun deaths from 1968 through 2016 was about 1.6 million, and the total number of U.S. military deaths from 1775 through October 2017 was about 1.5 million. The gap between domestic gun deaths and U.S. military deaths continues to widen each year.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WONDER Database, “Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2017,” Dec. 12, 2018, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>. An additional 533 firearms deaths (1%) were attributed to legal interventions. The CDC has been recording firearm deaths since 1979. Jacquelyn Howard, “Gun Deaths in US Reach Highest Level in Nearly 40 Years, CDC Data Reveal,” CNN, Dec. 14, 2018, [www.cnn.com/2018/12/13/health/gun-deaths-highest-40-years-cdc/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2018/12/13/health/gun-deaths-highest-40-years-cdc/index.html). The CDC reports 38,659 motor vehicle deaths in 2017, which is 1,114 fewer than the number of gun deaths, even though car owners drive their vehicles much more often than gun owners typically use their firearms.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS Database, “Nonfatal Injury Reports, 2000-2017,” <https://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/nfirates.html>. An additional 1,295 firearms injuries (1%) were attributed to legal interventions.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Gabor, *Confronting Gun Violence in America* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7-9, 22, 41, 45-46; Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “Gun Violence in America,” Aug. 8, 2018, and sources cited, <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america>.

<sup>5</sup> Gabor, 98-99; Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “Firearm Suicide in the United States,” Aug. 30, 2018, and sources cited, <https://everytownresearch.org/firearm-suicide>.

<sup>6</sup> Gabor, 152, 168-69; Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “Risks of Having a Gun in the Home,” undated, and sources cited, [www.bradycampaign.org/risks-of-having-a-gun-in-the-home](http://www.bradycampaign.org/risks-of-having-a-gun-in-the-home).

<sup>7</sup> Gabor, 242-43.

<sup>8</sup> “Recommendations from the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma's Firearm Strategy Team (FAST) Workgroup: Chicago Consensus I,” *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, Nov. 6, 2018, [www.journalacs.org/article/S1072-7515\(18\)32155-0/fulltext](http://www.journalacs.org/article/S1072-7515(18)32155-0/fulltext).