

# Suicide & Homicide Deaths -- and the Role of Firearms

Gun Death 5 Slide Series, Volume 1

July 15, 2024

**The Menges Group**

Strategic Health Policy & Care Coordination Consulting

# Introduction of a New 5 Slide Series Branch

- The Menges Group’s staff team has a strong interest in elevating public health. This includes producing objective information to support sound decision-making at all levels -- by policymakers, public and private organizations, employees, and within households.
- This summer, we are presenting many of our recent tabulations on gun violence deaths, suicides, and homicides.
  - This is a special “branch” of our 5 Slide Series – the original series will continue concurrently.
  - This first edition provides some key findings.

# Sources and Methodology

- To conduct our analysis of firearm deaths, we used the CDC's Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) database alongside RAND's state-level estimate of gun ownership dataset.
- Using the RAND data, we grouped each state into four distinct quartiles based on the state's percent of households that own 1+ guns, with Q1 having the lowest proportion of gun ownership and Q4 having the highest.
- With both the RAND and WISQAR data, we compared the suicide and homicide death counts and corresponding death rates per 100,000 population within and along quartile lines. These comparisons strongly indicate that firearm ownership is a risk-factor that leads to higher rates of both homicide and suicide deaths.
- We have focused on 2021 as this is the most recent year where all the above data were available. While typically not presented in our slides (in the interest of brevity), we also looked at the most recent non-COVID year, 2019, and found closely similar results.

# While Homicides Often Receive Greater Media Attention, Suicides Represent Far More Deaths

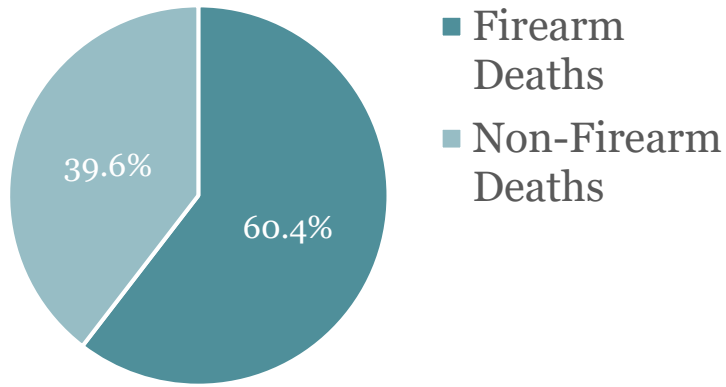
2021 Homicides in USA: 25,808

2021 Suicides in USA: 48,137

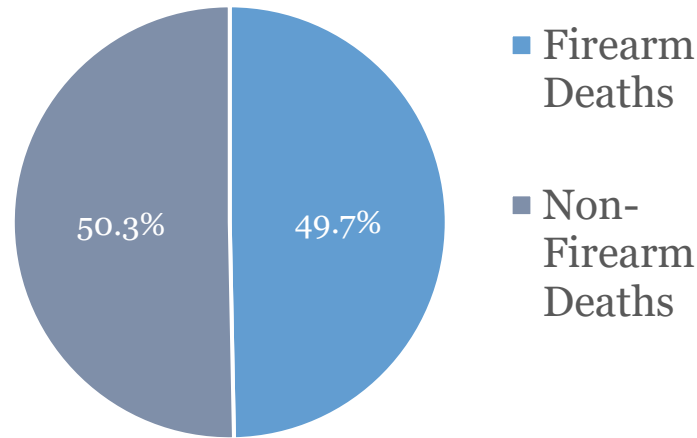
The USA averaged 132 suicide deaths per day during 2021; one such death every 11 minutes. The suicide rate was nearly double (87% above) the homicide rate.

# Firearms Provided the Means for 80% of Homicides and Half the Suicides During 2021

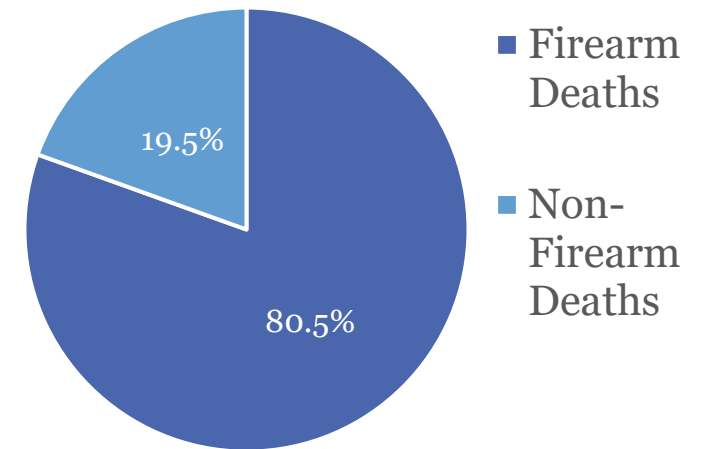
Combined Homicide and Suicide Deaths in 2021



Total Suicide Deaths in 2021



Total Homicide Deaths in 2021



- Guns were used for more suicide deaths during 2021 (23,919) than for homicides (20,774). Compounding the relatively high risk of in-home gun suicide, most suicides occur at home whereas most homicides occur outside of the victim's home.
- Across both homicide and suicide deaths, guns were used 60.4% of the time.
- A gun was used for either homicide or suicide every 11 minutes, on average, during 2021.

# From a Public Health Perspective, Suicides and Homicides are Particularly Devastating Due to the Average Victim Age

- 2022 Average Victim Age
  - Homicide: 34.4
  - Suicide: 47.3
- Based on the USA's average life expectancy of 76.3 years we lose, on average, *41.9 years of life* per homicide and *29.0 years of life* per suicide.
- Most other high-volume causes of death have a much older age distribution. For example:
  - 82% of cardiovascular deaths occur in the 65+ age cohort.
  - The average age of an initial cancer diagnosis in the USA is 65.

# 5 Slide Series Overview

Our 5 Slide Series is typically a monthly publication whereby we briefly discuss/address a selected topic outside the confines of our client engagements. The Menges Group has developed a variety of datasets that we use to support our 5 Slide Series and client projects.

To be added to our list to receive these as they are published (or to be removed), please email us at [pcall@themengesgroup.com](mailto:pcall@themengesgroup.com). If you have questions about the content or data sources we have available, please email us at [jmenges@themengesgroup.com](mailto:jmenges@themengesgroup.com) or call 571-312-2360.

Address: 4001 9th Street N., Suite 227, Arlington, VA 22203

Website: [www.themengesgroup.com](http://www.themengesgroup.com)