



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

# Firearm Deaths in Colorado 2005-2012

## Suicide Prevention Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:  
800.273.TALK (8255)

Colorado Office of Suicide  
Prevention  
[www.coosp.org](http://www.coosp.org)

Suicide Prevention Coalition of  
Colorado  
[www.suicidepreventioncolorado.org](http://www.suicidepreventioncolorado.org)

American Foundation for Suicide  
Prevention  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

American Association of Suicidology  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

Suicide Prevention Resource  
Center  
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

## Other Firearm Violence Prevention Resources

Safe to Tell  
[safe2tell.org](http://safe2tell.org)

Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence  
[smartgunlaws.org](http://smartgunlaws.org)

Colorado School Safety Resource  
Center  
[www.colorado.gov/schoolsafetyresourcecenter](http://www.colorado.gov/schoolsafetyresourcecenter)

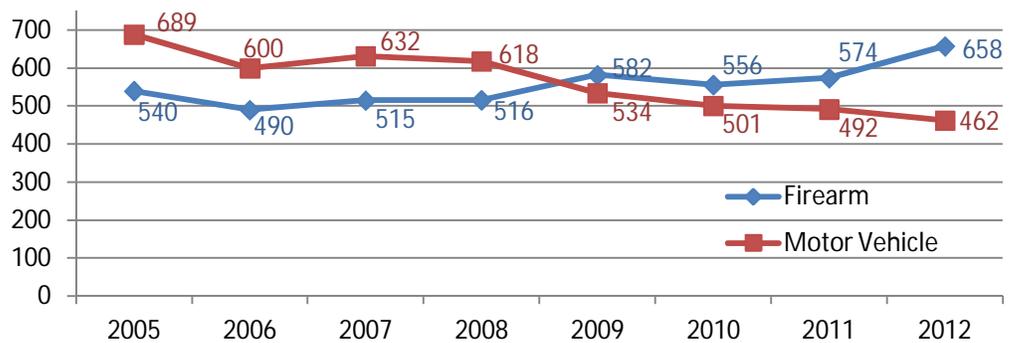
## Injury, Suicide, & Violence Prevention Branch

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Deaths resulting from firearms are an important and complex public health issue in Colorado. In recent years there have been more firearm deaths in Colorado than motor vehicle deaths (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> From 2011 to 2012, Colorado experienced a nearly 15 percent increase in firearm deaths, the majority of which were due to increases in firearm suicides.

**Figure 1. Firearm and motor vehicle deaths: Colorado occurrences, 2005 – 2012**

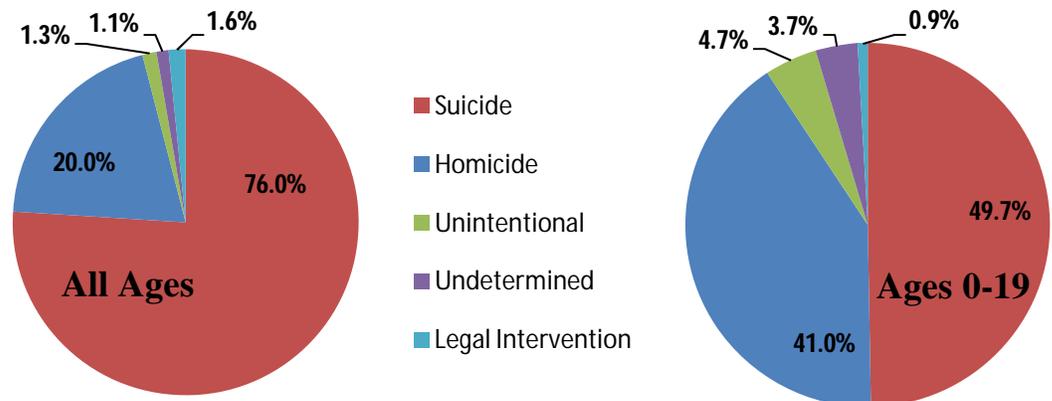
Source: CDPHE Health Statistics Section



## Firearm Deaths

From 2005 through 2012, 4,431 people died in Colorado as a result of firearms (Figure 1). The majority of firearm deaths were among males (84 percent). Handguns were used in 68 percent of firearm deaths, rifles or shotguns in 18 percent, and the remaining 14 percent were other or unknown firearms. Firearm deaths can be categorized by intent: suicide, homicide, unintentional (or accidental), undetermined and legal intervention. For all ages, firearm suicides outnumbered firearm homicides by nearly four to one. For youth under the age of 20 years killed by firearms in Colorado, almost 50 percent were suicides and 41 percent were homicides (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 2. Firearm deaths by intent: Colorado occurrences, 2005-2012.** Source: CoVDRS



Persons whose race and ethnicity are White, non-Hispanic accounted for 77 percent of the firearm deaths, primarily due to the high number of suicides in that group. Of the remaining firearms deaths, 14 percent were among persons whose race and ethnicity are White, Hispanic, 6 percent among persons whose race is Black and 2 percent among persons whose race is Asian or American Indian.<sup>1</sup>

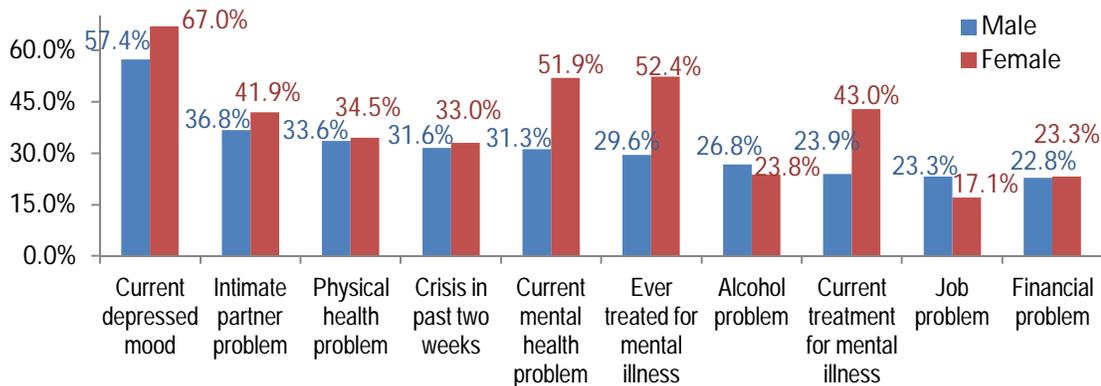
## Suicide by Firearm

More than three-quarters of all firearm deaths in Colorado during 2005-2012 were suicides. Of those suicide deaths by firearm, most are among males (84 percent) and the White, non-Hispanic racial/ethnic group (88 percent).<sup>2</sup>

In suicide deaths by firearm where one or more circumstances of the death are available (over 91 percent), the most common circumstance for both males and females was depressive mood identified by family or friends at the time of the death (Figure 3).<sup>2</sup> Females were more likely than males to be reported with current mental health problems or current or past treatment for mental illness. Male suicides were slightly more likely to be associated with problems with alcohol, job troubles, or financial problems.

**Figure 3: Known suicide firearm death circumstances by gender: Colorado occurrences, 2005-2012**

Source: CoVDRS



## Homicide by Firearm

An average of 108 homicides by firearm occurred annually in Colorado from 2005 through 2012.<sup>2</sup> In homicide deaths by firearm where the circumstances surrounding the death are available, the largest percentage was the result of an argument (48 percent).<sup>2</sup> Another crime precipitated 40 percent of homicides by firearm. Males and persons whose race and ethnicity are Hispanic or Black are over represented as victims of homicide by firearm, compared to the size of these groups in the Colorado population. Of homicide firearm deaths in Colorado, 78 percent were male, 35 percent were Hispanic and 21 percent were Black.<sup>2</sup>

## Unintentional Firearm Deaths

**For every 1 unintentional firearm death,**  
**there were 15 firearm homicides**  
**and 57 firearm suicides.**

There are fewer than 10 unintentional (often referred to as accidental) firearm deaths annually in Colorado.<sup>2</sup> Of the 58 unintentional firearm deaths from 2005 through 2012, just 26 percent occurred among children and youth aged 0-19 years, and 88 percent of these unintentional firearm deaths were among men of all ages.<sup>2</sup>

For every unintentional firearm death from 2005-2012, there were approximately 15 firearm homicides and 57 firearm suicides.<sup>2</sup>

1. Source: Health Statistics Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 03JAN2014

2. Source: Colorado Violent Death Reporting System, Health Statistics Section, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 03JAN2014