



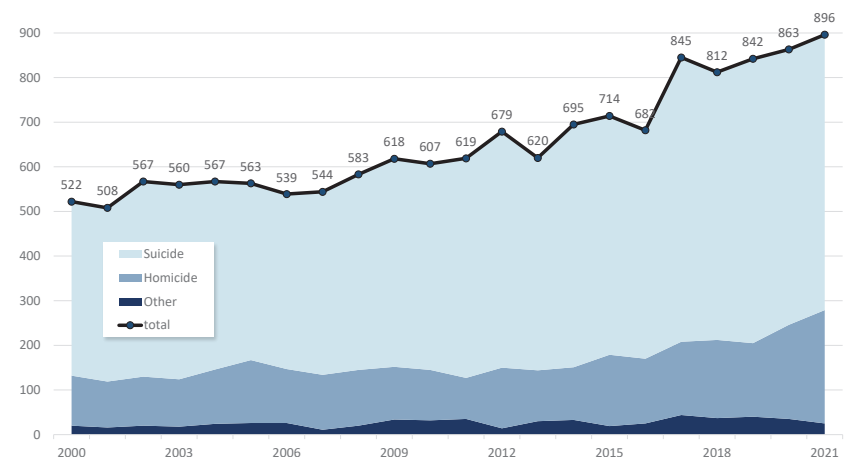
Washington's recent work has helped solidify the state as a national leader in reducing firearm violence. The state continues to take a public health approach to reduce gun violence and is implementing specific strategies that address specific causes and types of violence.

Improving public safety by reducing gun violence

Washington's gun-fatality rate is below the nationwide average, but gun violence still takes a tragic toll on our state and has disproportionate impacts on certain communities and populations. While statistics cannot capture the scale of the pain and suffering wrought by firearms in our state, they do illustrate the magnitude of this public health crisis.

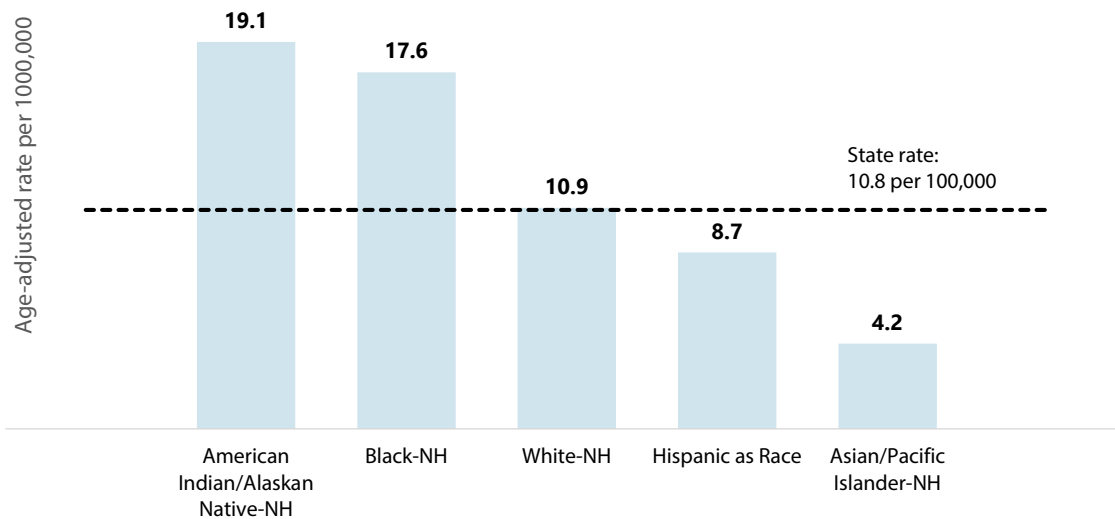
- Between 2017-21, an average of **852 Washingtonians were killed by firearms** each year – raising sharply to 896 in 2021.
- In 2021, a **Washington resident died by firearm about every 10 hours**.
- In 2021, nearly **69% of all gun deaths** in Washington **were suicides and about 28% were homicides**.
- More Washingtonians are **killed by guns** each year **than in traffic-related accidents**.
- Guns are the **leading cause of death for Washington teens** between 15-19 years old.
- In 2021, **gun violence was a key driver in the overall increase of violent crime** in Washington. This trend coincides with an increase in gun sales nationwide.

Firearm deaths by intent



**This section includes firearm deaths ruled as 'other,' 'unintentional,' or 'undetermined.'
Data source: WA DOH Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT)*

All firearm deaths per 100,000 people in Washington, 2018-20



NH = Non-Hispanic

Data source: WA DOH Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT)

Gun violence impacts all communities in Washington. Black, Indigenous, and people of color are much more likely than white Washingtonians to be killed by a gun.

Since 2014, Washington has taken significant strides to address all types of gun violence. We have strengthened domestic violence protections and suicide prevention policies. We have enacted policies to prevent high-risk individuals from purchasing firearms, including requiring background checks on all gun sales and an enhanced background check, safety training and waiting period for the purchase of semi-automatic assault rifles. Washington also prohibited untraceable, undetectable “ghost guns” and banned the sale of bump stocks and high-capacity magazines.

In 2016, Inslee issued an [executive order](#) calling for a public health approach to reduce gun-related violence and implement a statewide suicide prevention plan. Then, nearly two years ago, Washington launched the [Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention](#) at the Department of Commerce to support and coordinate evidence-based firearm

violence intervention and prevention strategies across the state. Working in tandem with policymakers, public health officials, law enforcement, people impacted by gun violence, researchers and others, the office serves as a hub for research, education, data collection, victim support and funding for community violence intervention programs.

Despite the progress Washington made in recent years, gun deaths rates in Washington increased 24% from 2011 to 2020. The risks of gun violence also increased dramatically during the pandemic. In 2020, homicides increased by 47% to a record high in Washington, mirroring a trend seen across the nation. In 2021, gun violence was a key driver in the [overall increase of violent crime](#) in Washington.

These trends coincided with skyrocketing gun sales nationwide. About a third of Washingtonians report having a firearm in their household, and nearly two-thirds of firearm-owning households do not keep their guns secured and unloaded, according to research by the University of Washington School of Public Health.

Ban the sale of assault weapons

Assault weapons, designed to fire more accurately and rapidly than a typical hunting rifle, are far more likely than handguns to be used in mass shootings and to kill law enforcement officers. The governor and Attorney General Bob Ferguson are jointly requesting legislation to prohibit the sale, manufacture and import of dangerous assault weapons in Washington. The legislation exempts law enforcement and the military from this ban and does not prohibit possession of assault weapons. Eight states have passed similar laws banning assault weapons and those bans have been upheld in court.

Hold the firearm industry accountable

While federal law shields gun manufacturers and sellers from liability in some circumstances, Congress has exempted state laws that regulate firearm sales and marketing practices. Inslee and Ferguson are requesting legislation that requires those in the firearm industry to establish, implement and enforce reasonable controls on the sale and marketing of firearms and related products. Under the legislation, individuals and family members injured or killed due to illegal conduct by a member of the firearms industry can sue for liability.

Several other states have passed similar laws that establish standards and increase accountability for the firearm industry.

Require a permit to purchase in Washington

Inslee proposes a new 'permit to purchase' law that builds on the enhanced background check and safety training requirement for semi-automatic assault rifles that was passed via initiative in 2018. This is similar to our state's concealed pistol license process. The process includes an in-person application and identity verification. The applicant also must verify that they have completed safety training and go through a 10-day waiting period before receiving a firearm.

Many states have passed laws requiring licenses to purchase or possess firearms, and those laws have been shown to reduce gun violence.

Pre-violence intervention measures

In addition to the legislation, the governor's 2023-25 budget greatly expands the capacity of the recently established Office of Firearm Safety & Violence Prevention at the Department of Commerce. First, the budget increases grant funding for a successful, existing program that invests in evidence-based violence reduction strategies in heavily impacted communities. Second, the budget funds new initiatives and prevention programs. Finally, funds will support safe storage giveaway programs as well as suicide prevention outreach and education efforts across the state. (\$12 million, General Fund-State)