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**Violence Policy Center**

# **Gun Deaths Outpace Motor Vehicle Deaths in 34 States and the District of Columbia in 2020**

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The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is a national nonprofit educational organization that conducts research and public education on violence in America and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, advocates, and the general public.

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## GUN DEATHS OUTPACED MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS IN 34 STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IN 2020

In 2020, firearm fatalities exceeded motor vehicle fatalities in 34 states and the District of Columbia, the most recent year for which state-level data is available for both products from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>1</sup> That year, gun deaths (including gun suicide, homicide, and fatal unintentional shootings) outpaced motor vehicle deaths in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In just over a decade, the number of states plus the District of Columbia where gun deaths exceed motor vehicle deaths has increased from just 13 in 2010 to 35 in 2020—a jump of 169 percent.

### IN 2010, GUN DEATHS EXCEEDED MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS IN ONLY 12 STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

#### 2010 Gun Deaths and Motor Vehicle Deaths by State<sup>2</sup>

State	Gun Deaths	Gun Death Rate	Motor Vehicle Deaths	Motor Vehicle Death Rate
Alabama	782	16.36	933	19.52
Alaska	144	20.27	71	10.00
Arizona	931	14.56	795	12.44
Arkansas	419	14.37	610	20.92
California	2,935	7.88	2,943	7.90
Colorado	555	11.04	487	9.68
Connecticut	209	5.85	331	9.26
Delaware	88	9.80	111	12.36
District of Columbia	99	16.45	38	6.31
Florida	2,268	12.06	2,547	13.54
Georgia	1,223	12.62	1,327	13.70
Hawaii	45	3.31	126	9.26
Idaho	198	12.63	215	13.71
Illinois	1,064	8.29	1,042	8.12
Indiana	709	10.93	774	11.94
Iowa	213	6.99	401	13.16
Kansas	300	10.51	485	17.00
Kentucky	555	12.79	823	18.97

<sup>1</sup> Source: WISQARS database, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>2</sup> In 2010 there were 31,672 gun deaths nationwide for a rate of 10.26 per 100,000 and 35,498 motor vehicle deaths (both occupant and pedestrian) nationwide for a rate of 11.50 per 100,000. Source: WISQARS database, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

State	Gun Deaths	Gun Death Rate	Motor Vehicle Deaths	Motor Vehicle Death Rate
Louisiana	864	19.06	722	15.93
Maine	113	8.51	171	12.87
Maryland	538	9.32	514	8.90
Massachusetts	270	4.12	388	5.93
Michigan	1,076	10.89	1,063	10.75
Minnesota	365	6.88	520	9.80
Mississippi	475	16.00	683	23.01
Missouri	846	14.13	875	14.61
Montana	164	16.58	192	19.41
Nebraska	152	8.32	213	11.66
Nevada	395	14.63	289	10.70
New Hampshire	118	8.96	135	10.25
New Jersey	456	5.19	583	6.63
New Mexico	301	14.62	331	16.07
New York	1,011	5.22	1,330	6.86
North Carolina	1,123	11.78	1,383	14.50
North Dakota	65	9.66	99	14.72
Ohio	1,148	9.95	1,259	10.91
Oklahoma	538	14.34	716	19.09
Oregon	458	11.95	324	8.46
Pennsylvania	1,307	10.29	1,445	11.38
Rhode Island	49	4.65	92	8.74
South Carolina	648	14.01	812	17.56
South Dakota	75	9.21	144	17.69
Tennessee	932	14.69	1,103	17.38
Texas	2,714	10.79	3,343	13.29
Utah	314	11.36	274	9.91
Vermont	70	11.19	76	12.15
Virginia	875	10.94	728	9.10
Washington	609	9.06	554	8.24
West Virginia	273	14.73	311	16.78
Wisconsin	501	8.81	628	11.04
Wyoming	92	16.32	139	24.66
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>31,672</b>	<b>10.26</b>	<b>35,498</b>	<b>11.50</b>

## BY 2020, GUN DEATHS EXCEEDED MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS IN 34 STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

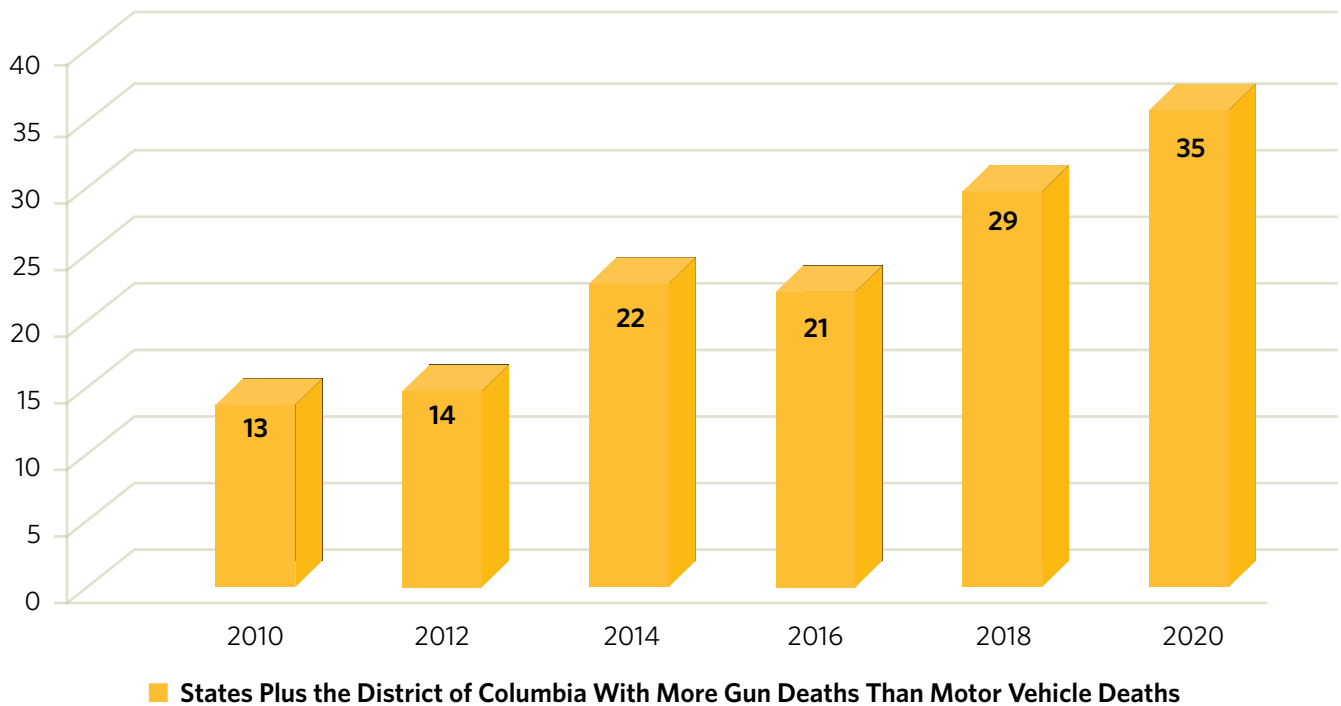
### 2020 Gun Deaths and Motor Vehicle Deaths by State<sup>3</sup>

State	Gun Deaths	Gun Death Rate	Motor Vehicle Deaths	Motor Vehicle Death Rate
Alabama	1,141	23.18	986	20.03
Alaska	175	23.93	83	11.35
Arizona	1,265	17.05	1,053	14.19
Arkansas	673	22.21	689	22.74
California	3,449	8.76	4,505	11.44
Colorado	922	15.88	685	11.79
Connecticut	219	6.16	331	9.31
Delaware	135	13.68	124	12.57
District of Columbia	167	23.43	45	6.31
Florida	3,041	13.99	3,529	16.24
Georgia	1,897	17.71	1,797	16.78
Hawaii	50	3.55	90	6.40
Idaho	321	17.57	246	13.47
Illinois	1,745	13.86	1,325	10.53
Indiana	1,159	17.16	960	14.21
Iowa	351	11.10	368	11.63
Kansas	494	16.95	430	14.76
Kentucky	902	20.15	862	19.25
Louisiana	1,183	25.47	857	18.45
Maine	153	11.33	190	14.07
Maryland	803	13.26	635	10.49
Massachusetts	268	3.89	385	5.58
Michigan	1,454	14.59	1,226	12.30
Minnesota	513	9.07	506	8.94
Mississippi	818	27.57	846	28.52
Missouri	1,426	23.18	1,038	16.87
Montana	238	22.03	208	19.25
Nebraska	197	10.17	245	12.64
Nevada	547	17.43	364	11.60
New Hampshire	128	9.37	124	9.08
New Jersey	443	4.99	629	7.08
New Mexico	479	22.74	424	20.13

<sup>3</sup> In 2020 there were 45,222 gun deaths nationwide for a rate of 13.73 per 100,000 and 42,632 motor vehicle deaths (both occupant and pedestrian) nationwide for a rate of 12.94 per 100,000. Source: WISQARS database, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

State	Gun Deaths	Gun Death Rate	Motor Vehicle Deaths	Motor Vehicle Death Rate
New York	1,052	5.44	1,213	6.27
North Carolina	1,699	16.03	1,774	16.73
North Dakota	100	13.07	105	13.72
Ohio	1,764	15.09	1,383	11.83
Oklahoma	826	20.75	718	18.04
Oregon	592	13.96	531	12.52
Pennsylvania	1,752	13.71	1,244	9.73
Rhode Island	54	5.11	78	7.38
South Carolina	1,131	21.67	1,117	21.41
South Dakota	120	13.44	153	17.14
Tennessee	1,473	21.39	1,270	18.44
Texas	4,164	14.18	4,103	13.97
Utah	429	13.20	329	10.12
Vermont	76	12.19	70	11.23
Virginia	1,174	13.67	934	10.87
Washington	864	11.23	692	8.99
West Virginia	325	18.21	304	17.03
Wisconsin	717	12.29	712	12.21
Wyoming	154	26.45	117	20.09
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>45,222</b>	<b>13.73</b>	<b>42,632</b>	<b>12.94</b>

### STATES PLUS THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WITH MORE GUN DEATHS THAN MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS



These numbers are all the more shocking when one stops to think about the average American's exposure to motor vehicles as opposed to firearms. Nine out of 10 American households have access to a motor vehicle<sup>4</sup> while approximately four out of 10 American households contain a gun.<sup>5</sup>

As Dr. David Hemenway, director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, noted in his 2004 book *Private Guns, Public Health*: "[T]he time Americans spend using their cars is orders of magnitudes greater than the time spent using their guns. It is probable that per hour of exposure, guns are far more dangerous. Moreover, we have lots of safety regulations concerning the manufacture of motor vehicles; there are virtually no safety regulations for domestic firearms manufacture."<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia already experience gun death rates that exceed their motor vehicle death rates. Gun death and injury is an accelerating public health crisis fueled by an unregulated industry that works to develop increasingly lethal firearms and ammunition. It then touts this firepower in its marketing efforts. As with motor vehicles, until the gun industry is held accountable for the harm caused by its products only limited progress can be made to reduce firearms death and injury. Such measures would include comprehensive health and safety regulation of the firearms industry and repeal of the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA).

4 *Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2020*, December 2020, U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, p. 3-1 (<https://rosap.nhtl.bts.gov/view/dot/53936>).

5 According to the Pew Research Center, "Four-in-ten U.S. adults report that there is a gun in their household: Three-in-ten say they personally own a gun, while 11% say that they don't own a gun, but someone else in their household does." *Wide differences on most gun policies between gun owners and non-owners, but also some agreement*, Pew Research Center, August 4, 2021 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/04/wide-differences-on-most-gun-policies-between-gun-owners-and-non-owners-but-also-some-agreement/>).

6 David Hemenway, *Private Guns, Public Health*, University of Michigan Press, 2004, p. 182.





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