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## Firearm Deaths in the Mountain West, 2020

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## FIREARM DEATHS IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST, 2020

Criminal Justice Fact Sheet No. 9 | September 2023

Prepared by Lana Kojoian, Annie Vong, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

### PURPOSE:

This fact sheet examines data from the RAND Corporation report “Understanding Firearm Deaths by State—and How to Reduce Them,” which provides data on state and national rates of firearm related deaths, including suicides and homicides for 2020.<sup>1</sup> This fact sheet includes firearm death data for five Mountain West states: Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

### ABOUT THE DATA:

The original report provides data from 2020 on all 50 U.S. states, with each state’s firearm death statistics broken down into the following categories: firearm deaths, firearm suicides, and firearm homicides. Each of these categories are examined by total population, gender, race, age, and location (urban or non-urban). Additionally, the report provides details on the firearm laws in each state, including child-access prevention, stand-your-ground, universal background checks, shall-issue concealed carry, and minimum age for purchase.

RAND researchers analyzed the effects of gun policies, and restrictive and liberal gun laws, including ownership, storage, use, and carry. The mortality rates reported within the original data report are found in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Wide-Ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (CDC WONDER). Select metrics are presented in this fact sheet.

### KEY FINDINGS:

1. All Mountain West states have higher rates of firearm suicides when compared to national rates, with firearm suicides in New Mexico reported 95% higher than national rates. Among Mountain West states, Utah had the lowest firearm suicide rate in 2020, where suicide by firearm rates were 41% higher than national rates.
2. In 2020, New Mexico had the highest rate of firearm deaths (22.7 per 100,000), firearm suicides (14.4 per 100,000, tied with Utah), and firearm homicides (7.1 per 100,000, tied with Utah) in the Mountain West.
3. In 2020, the Mountain West state with the highest rate of firearm homicides was New Mexico (20% higher than national rates). Utah had the lowest rate (61% lower than national rates).
4. Women and men in Nevada both experience 25% more firearm deaths compared to national rates, but men experience more firearm deaths per capita (30.1 per 100,000) than women (3.7 per 100,000).
5. In 2020, white, non-Hispanic individuals in Nevada experienced deaths caused by firearms at a rate 81% higher than national rates. Firearm deaths were 35% higher than national rates for individuals living in non-urban areas in Nevada in 2020, and 73% higher than national rates for individuals above the age of 45.

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<sup>1</sup> “Understanding Firearm Deaths by State—and How to Reduce Them” (2020). *RAND Corporation*. Retrieved from [www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html](http://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html).

Table 1 shows the total firearm deaths, firearm suicides, and firearm homicides per 100,000 people for each Mountain West state. Additionally, for each state the percentage of firearm homicides, firearm suicides, and firearm homicides compared to national rates are provided.

Among Mountain West states, New Mexico has the highest rate of total firearm deaths per 100,000 people, at 22.7. Utah has the lowest rate, at 13.2 per 100,000 people. Every state in the Mountain West has a higher percentage of firearm suicides compared to national rates. In the Mountain West, New Mexico has the highest percentage of firearm-related deaths in each category compared to national rates: 66% more firearm deaths, 95% more firearm suicides, and 20% more firearm homicides.

**Table 1: Firearm Deaths, Suicides, and Homicides in the Mountain West, 2020**

State	Firearm Deaths		Firearm Suicides		Firearm Homicides	
	Deaths per 100k people	Percentage Compared to National Rates	Deaths per 100k people	Percentage Compared to National Rates	Deaths per 100k people	Percentage compared to National Rates
Arizona	17.0	+24%	5.1	+52%	5.1	-13%
Colorado	15.9	+16%	11.3	+53%	4.0	-31%
Nevada	17.4	+27%	11.9	+61%	4.7	-20%
New Mexico	22.7	+66%	14.4	+95%	7.1	+20%
Utah	13.2	-4%	14.4	+41%	7.1	-61%
<i>U.S. Rate</i>	<i>13.7</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>5.9</i>	<i>--</i>

\* Adapted from “Understanding Firearm Deaths by State—and How to Reduce Them.” RAND Corporation. [www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html](http://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html)

Table 3 displays firearm-related death rates per 100,000 people and percentage of firearm deaths, suicides, and homicides compared to the national rate, separated by gender. Women and men in Nevada both experience 25% more firearm deaths compared to national rates, but men experience more firearm deaths per capita (30.1 per 100,000) than women (3.7 per 100,000). Women in Nevada experience firearm suicides 61% more than national rates and men in Nevada experience firearm suicides 58% more than national rates. Men in Nevada experience more firearm suicides (20.7 per 100,000 people) than women in Nevada (3.0 per 100,000 people). Both men and women in Nevada experience 21% less firearm homicides compared to national rates.

**Table 2: Firearm Deaths, Suicides, and Homicides in Nevada by Gender, 2020**

	Firearm Deaths		Firearm Suicides		Firearm Homicides	
	Deaths per 100k people	Percentage Compared to National Rates	Total per 100k people	Percentage Compared to National Rates	Total per 100k people	Percentage Compared to National Rates
Nevada Women	3.7	+25%	3.0	+61%	1.4	-21%
<i>U.S. Women</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>--</i>
Nevada Men	24.0	+25%	20.7	+58%	10.1	-21%
<i>U.S. Men</i>	<i>30.1</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>13.1</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>8.0</i>	<i>--</i>

\* Adapted from “Understanding Firearm Deaths by State—and How to Reduce Them.” RAND Corporation. [www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html](http://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html)

Table 3 displays firearm death rates per 100,000 people and the percentage of firearm deaths compared to the national rate, separated by subgroups of individuals based on select racial/ethnic groups, age, and location (urban/non-urban). In 2020, white, non-Hispanic individuals in Nevada experienced deaths caused by firearms at a rate 81% higher than national rates. Additionally, individuals located in non-urban areas experienced more firearm casualties nationally (15.5 per 100,000 people) compared to their urban counterparts (12.3 per 100,000 people).

Firearm deaths were 35% higher than national rates for individuals living in non-urban areas in Nevada in 2020. Firearm deaths were 73% higher than national rates for individuals above the age of 45 in Nevada in 2020. In Nevada, the 24 to 44 age group experienced 5% less firearm deaths than the national rate.

**Table 3: Firearm Deaths in Nevada by Race/Ethnicity, Age, and Location, 2020**

	National Rate of Firearm Deaths per 100k people	Rate of Firearm Deaths per 100k people in Nevada	Percentage of Firearm Deaths in Nevada Compared to National Rates
<b>Black, non-Hispanic</b>	32.4	28.9	-11%
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>	12.4	22.4	+81%
<b>Hispanic</b>	8.2	8.7	+6%
<b>14-24</b>	20.7	22.2	+7%
<b>24-44</b>	19.8	18.8	-5%
<b>45+</b>	12.7	21.9	+73%
<b>Urban</b>	12.3	16.2	+31%
<b>Non-Urban</b>	15.5	20.9	+35%

\* Adapted from "Understanding Firearm Deaths by State—and How to Reduce Them." *RAND Corporation*. [www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html](http://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/firearm-law-effects-mortality-explorer.html)