

Firearm-related suicides among 10-24 year olds in Washington State from 1999-2007

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Background

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youths aged 10-24 years in the United States

Firearms are the most common method for committing suicide and the most lethal of all means

Understanding the epidemiology of firearm suicide is necessary for creating effective prevention strategies

Previous studies have focused primarily on national data, leaving a need for analysis of Washington State-specific data

Methods

Data from the following sources were used:

- (1) Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Center for Health Statistics, Death Records, 1999-2007
- (2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 1999-2006
- (3) Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), 2002, 2004, and 2008, Grades 8-12

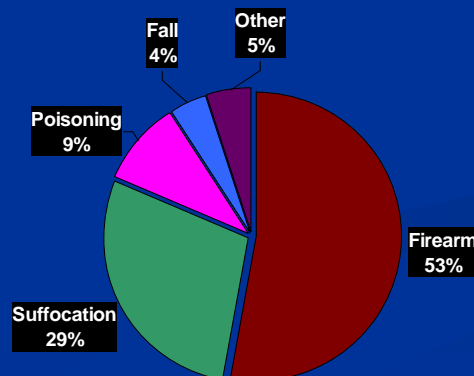
Crude rates per 100,000 were calculated using population information from the Washington State Office of Financial Management

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Table. Firearm-related suicides among 10-24 year olds, Washington State, 1999-2007

Category	n (%)	Crude rate (per 100,000)
Sex		
Male	430 (85.8)	7.1
Female	71 (14.2)	1.2
Age		
10-14	17 (3.4)	0.4
15-17	81 (16.2)	3.4
18-19	110 (22.0)	6.9
20-24	293 (58.5)	7.6
Race		
White, non-Hispanic	408 (81.4)	4.8
Black, non-Hispanic	21 (4.2)	4.4
Hispanic	27 (5.4)	2.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	22 (4.4)	2.9
American Indian/ Alaska Native	23 (4.6)	10.7
Total	501	4.3

Figure. Method of Suicide, 10-24 year olds, Washington State, 1999-2006



Results

From 1999-2007, 501 youth aged 10-24 years committed suicide by firearm in Washington State (Table)

Firearm suicide rates were highest among males, 20-24 year olds, and AI/AN youth

Whites made up the greatest percentage of firearm suicides of all races

No clear trend in rates over the study period was seen. Crude rates per 100,000 per year ranged from a low of 3.6 in 2007 to a high of 5.9 in 1999, while the average yearly rate was 4.3 (data not shown)

Firearms accounted for 53% of youth suicides, more than all other methods combined (Fig.)

Students participating in HYS who reported depression or suicidal behavior were more likely to report gun carrying than those who didn't report those behaviors (data not shown)

Conclusion

Education and prevention programs should focus on high-risk groups that had increased rates of firearm suicide or were disproportionately affected by them

Programs are needed to reduce the availability of firearms to youth so that numerous youth suicides can be prevented.

