

MINIMUM AGE FOR PURCHASING A FIREARM

Senate Bill 1162 raises the age for which individuals can purchase a firearm from a licensed dealer from 18 to 21

Well-established research indicates that the brain is not fully developed at age 18, particularly in the areas of risk assessment, decision making, and impulsivity.¹

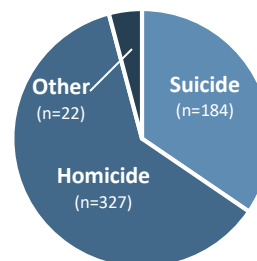
Youth Aged 18 to 20 Are at Heightened Risk for Firearm Violence

- According to 2016 FBI arrest data, youth aged 18 to 20 perpetrate a disproportionate percentage of overall homicides (16%) and violent crime (10%).²
- A survey of youth with firearm convictions from thirteen states found that nearly a quarter of these individuals would have been prohibited from owning a firearm if the minimum age for possessing a firearm was 21.³
- Researchers find that the association between firearm availability and suicide is strongest among adolescents and young adults.⁴
- Evidence suggests that teenage suicides are often impulsive; lives can be saved by restricting easy access to firearms.⁵
- Access to firearms increases the risk of suicide; having a gun in the home increases suicide risk by nearly 5-fold.⁶

Firearm Fatalities in Virginia

- Over the last decade (2008-2017) 533 youth aged 18 to 20 died by firearms in Virginia; 327 were murdered and 184 died by suicide.⁷
- Nearly one in five adults arrested for homicide in Virginia in 2017 were 18 to 20.⁸
- Over half of individuals 18 to 20 who died by suicide in Virginia in the last decade used a firearm.⁹

Firearm Deaths in Virginia 2008-2017
Youth Aged 18-20



Bottom Line:

Youth aged 18 to 20 are at increased risk for firearm violence. SB1162 will help reduce suicides and homicides among these youth by raising the firearm purchasing age from 18 to 21.

¹ Arain, M., Haque, M., Johal, L., Mathur, P., Nel, W., Rais, A., Sandhu, R., ... Sharma, S. (2013). Maturation of the adolescent brain. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, 9, 449-61.
² U.S. Dep't of Justice & Fed. Bureau of Investigation. *Crime in the United States 2016, Table 20: Arrests by Age*. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-20>
³ Vitte, K. A., Vernick, J. S., & Webster, D. W. (2013). Legal status and source of offenders' firearms in states with the least stringent criteria for gun ownership. *Injury Prevention*, 19(1), 26-31.
⁴ Birckmayer, J., and D. Hemenway, (2001) Suicide and Firearm Prevalence: Are Youth Disproportionately Affected? *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, Vol. 31, No. 3pp. 303-310. Cited in: The Effects of Minimum Age Requirements. Gun Policy in America. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/minimum-age.html>
⁵ Bridge, J. A., Goldstein, T. R., & Brent, D. A. (2006). Adolescent suicide and suicidal behavior. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, 47(3-4), 372-394.
⁶ Kellermann, A. L., Rivara, F. P., Simes, G., Reay, D. T., Francisco, J., Banton, J. G., ... & Hackman, B. B. (1992). Suicide in the home in relation to gun ownership. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 327(7), 467-472.
⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December 2018. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>
⁸ Virginia Uniform Crime Reporting. Crime in Virginia 2017. Adult Arrests Group A Offenses By Age. P69.
⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December 2018. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>