

GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

2018 data brief

January 2020



OVERVIEW

Gun violence is a public health epidemic in the United States. In 2018, 39,740 Americans died by gun violence, including 24,432 by suicide and 13,958 by homicide. The number of gun deaths remained relatively steady from 2017 to 2018, with 33 fewer deaths in 2018 compared to 2017. Gun violence continues to be a major cause of premature death.

This brief report outlines gun death data from 2018, the most recent year of data available, and shows trends over 10 years. The purpose of the report is to share data in an accessible and user-friendly format. All data were accessed using the Centers for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Online Data Portal, Mortality Multiple Cause Files released January 2020, which contains data based on death certificates for United States residents. This data release focuses on raw numbers of fatalities and does not include rates; as such, this brief will be reissued when more comprehensive data become available, including age-adjusted rates, demographics, and state-by-state breakdowns.

Major findings based on the 2018 data currently available include:

- 39,740 Americans died by gun violence in 2018, which is 33 fewer than in 2017. In other words, gun violence death totals remained relatively steady from 2017 to 2018.
- An average of 109 people died of gun violence each day in 2018, bringing the most recent five-year average (2014-2018) to 103 gun deaths per day.
- 13,958 Americans were murdered by firearm in 2018, more than 38 people every day. While firearm homicides have increased over the last decade, 2018 registered a notable decrease of 584 deaths as compared to 2017.
- 24,432 Americans died by firearm suicide in 2018, 67 people every day. This marks an increase of 578 deaths compared to 2017, continuing a trend of annual increases in firearm suicide deaths since 2006.
- 458 people died by unintentional firearm injuries in 2018, more than 1 person daily. Unintentional firearm deaths have decreased over the past decade.
- 539 people died by legal intervention by firearm in 2018, more than 1 person daily. Note that this is likely an undercount.
- 353 firearm deaths were documented in 2018 for which the intent was undetermined, nearly 1 person daily.

While gun death data are the most reliable type of gun violence data currently available (and are the focus of this report), it is important to emphasize that gun deaths are only the tip of the iceberg of gun violence. In addition to gun deaths, many more people are shot and survive their injuries, are shot at but not hit, or witness gun violence. Many experience gun violence in other ways, for example by living in impacted communities, losing loved ones to gun violence, or being threatened with a gun. It is our mission to share the most accurate and recently available data related to gun deaths while we advocate to get more and better data related to nonfatal gun violence. Ultimately, we strive to apply these data to create and implement life-saving policies and programs that will end the gun violence epidemic.

GUN DEATHS

FAST FACTS

2018 & 5-YEAR AVERAGES

GUN DEATHS, 2018

Gun violence is a uniquely American problem. In 2018, 39,740 Americans were killed by gun violence, including 13,958 who were murdered, 24,432 who died by suicide, 458 who died unintentionally, 539 who died by legal intervention, and 353 who died by an undetermined intent. Every day in 2018, nearly 109 Americans were killed by guns, including 38 Americans who were murdered and 67 who died by suicide.

	Gun deaths, 2018	Average daily gun deaths, 2018
Homicide	13,958	38
Suicide	24,432	67
Unintentional	458	1
Legal Intervention	539	1
Undetermined Intent	353	1
Overall	39,740	109

GUN DEATHS, 2014-2018

Using the most recent CDC data, the following averages are based on years 2014-2018. Every year, an average of 37,603 Americans are killed by guns, including 13,380 who are murdered and 22,926 who die by suicide. This equates to 103 gun deaths every single day.

	Average annual gun deaths, 2014-2018	Average daily gun deaths, 2014-2018
Homicide	13,380	37
Suicide	22,926	63
Unintentional	478	1
Legal Intervention	510	1
Undetermined Intent	310	1
Overall	37,603	103



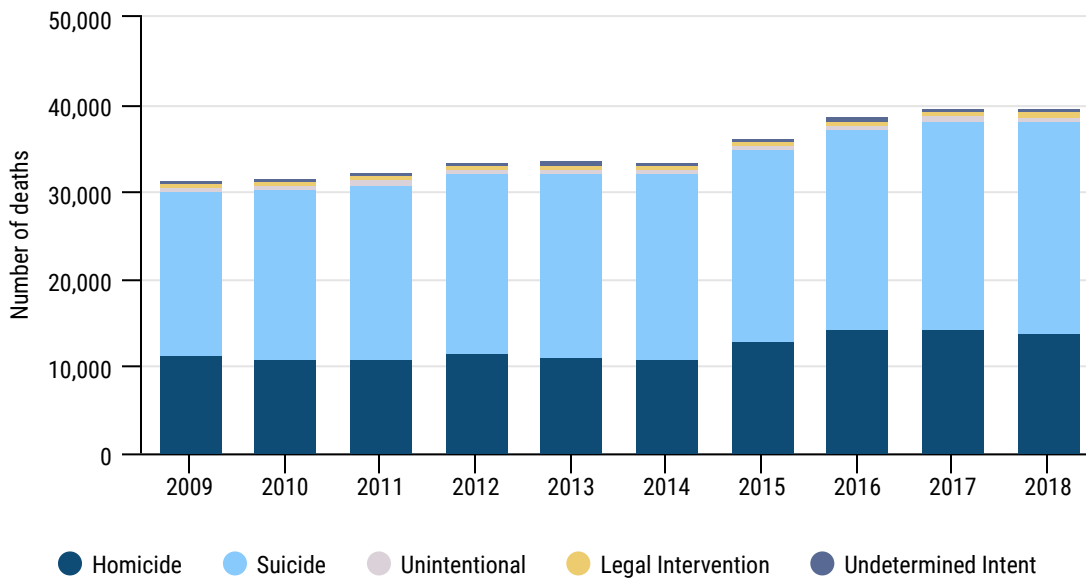
GUN DEATH IN ALL ITS FORMS

GUN DEATHS

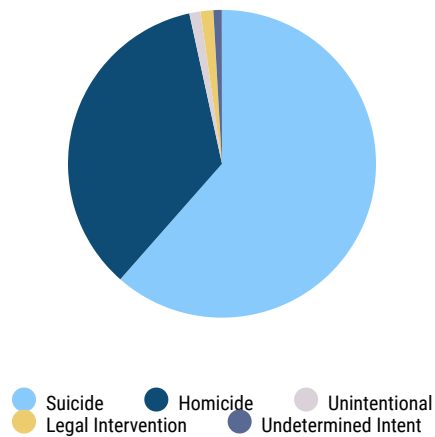
In 2018, 39,740 Americans died by gun violence. While this is a decrease of 33 deaths from 2017, it is still far too many. In 2018:

- 13,958 Americans were murdered
- 24,432 Americans died by suicide
- 458 Americans were killed unintentionally
- 539 Americans were killed by legal intervention
- 353 Americans were killed, intent undetermined

GUN DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2009-2018



GUN DEATHS, 2018



- 61.48% suicide
- 35.12% homicide
- 1.15% unintentional
- 1.36% legal intervention
- 0.89% undetermined intent

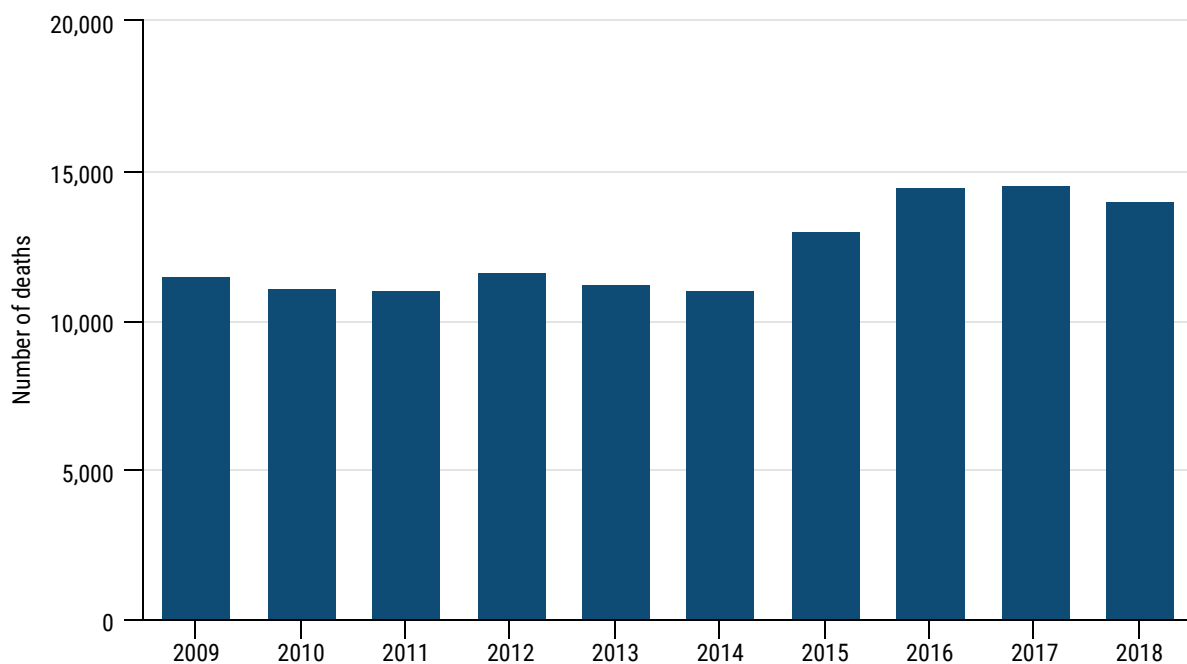


FIREARM HOMICIDE

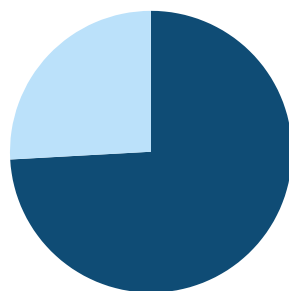
In 2018, 13,958 Americans were murdered by firearm, representing 35% of all gun deaths and 74% of all homicides. On average, more than 38 people were murdered by firearm every day in 2018.

Five hundred eighty-four fewer people died by firearm homicide in 2018 than in 2017. While the number of firearm homicides has increased over the last 10 years, the steep increases seen from 2014-2017 is not reflected in the 2018 data.

FIREARM HOMICIDE DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2009-2018



HOMICIDE DEATHS BY METHOD, 2018



- 74.13% firearm
- 25.87% other methods

● FIREARM ● OTHER

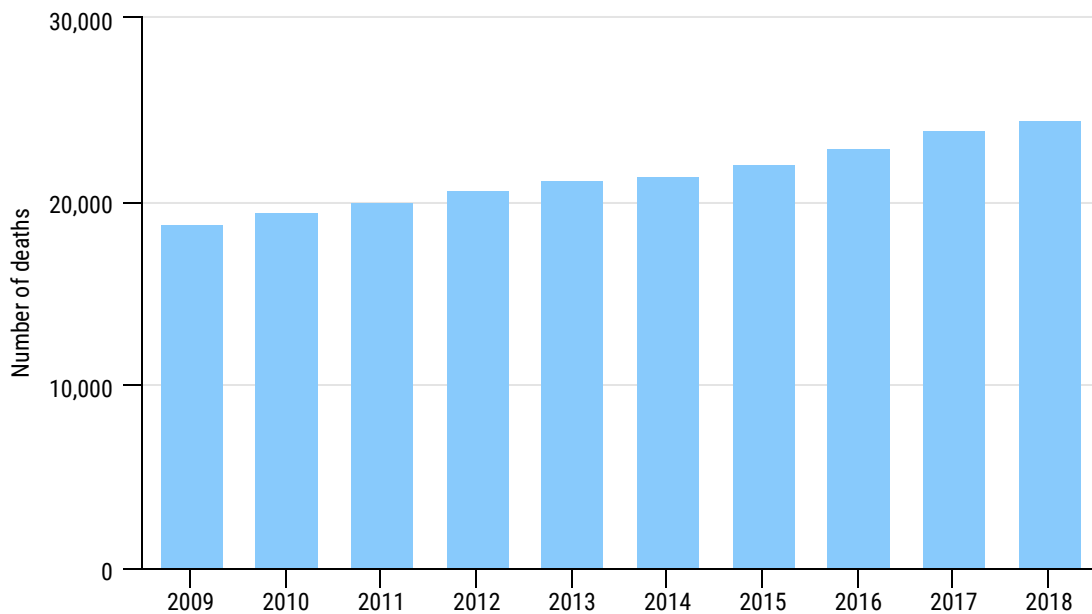


FIREARM SUICIDE

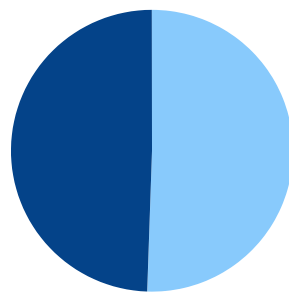
In 2018, 24,432 Americans died by firearm suicide, representing more than 61% of all gun deaths and half of all suicides. On average, 67 people died by firearm suicide every day in 2018.

The firearm suicide epidemic is growing -- 578 more people died by firearm suicide in 2018 than in 2017. In fact, the number of firearm suicides has increased every year since 2006.

FIREARM SUICIDE DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2009-2018



SUICIDE DEATHS BY METHOD, 2018



- 50.54% firearm
- 49.46% other methods

● Firearm ● Other Methods



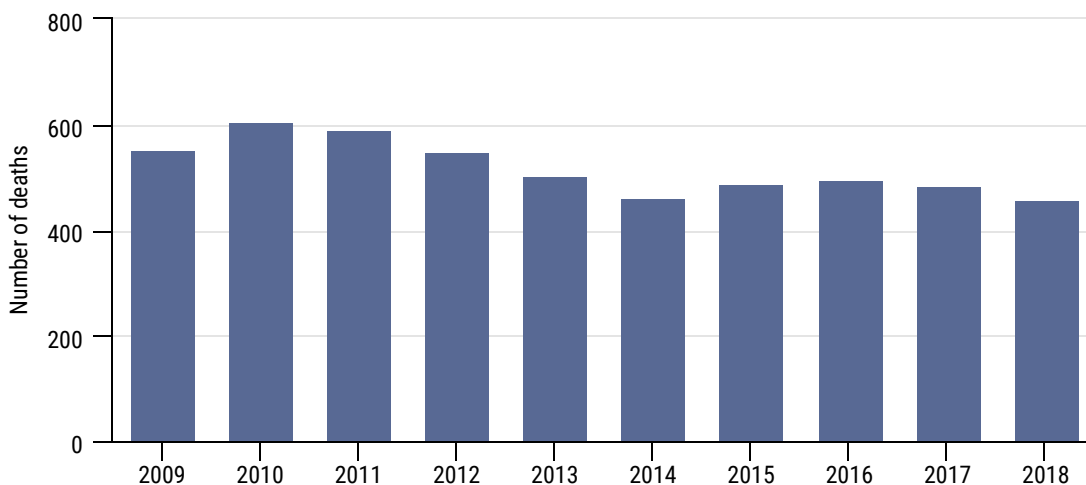
UNINTENTIONAL DEATHS

"Unintentional" is the description used for a death that was not caused purposely. In gun violence, examples include fatal injuries that occur when a weapon misfires or is mishandled by a child and results in the victim being shot (in contrast with homicide and suicide, both of which involve an intent to pull the trigger and cause harm).

Unintentional injuries and deaths are often called "accidents," which can imply that nothing could be done to stop them from happening; we do not use "accident" terminology because gun violence is preventable. Easy access to firearms, particularly unsecured firearms and the presence of firearms in risky situations, increases risk of unintentional injury and death by firearm. Mitigating access with safer storage practices and through evidence-based policy prevents unintentional gun violence.

In 2018, a total of 458 people died by unintentional firearm injuries, or more than 1 person daily. In the course of the past decade, the number of unintentional firearm deaths has decreased. In the first half of the decade (2009-2013), there were nearly 561 annual unintentional firearm deaths; in contrast, in the second half of the decade (2014-2018), there were nearly 478 annual unintentional firearm deaths, a 15% decrease. The expansion of interventions to improve safer firearm storage and handling practices may contribute to further decreases in unintentional firearm deaths in the years to come.

UNINTENTIONAL FIREARM DEATHS, 2009-2018



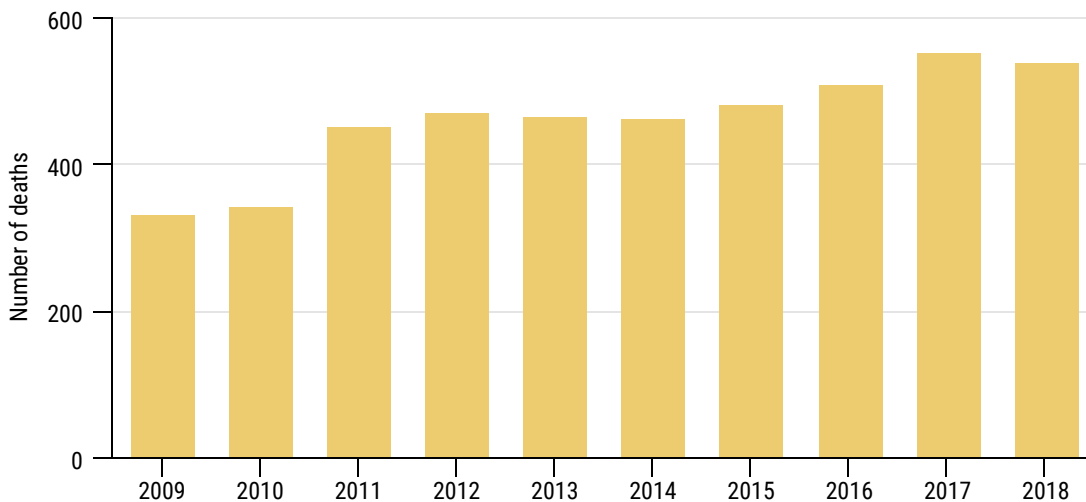


LEGAL INTERVENTION

"Legal intervention" is the description used by the CDC for injuries inflicted by the police or other law enforcement agents, including military on duty, in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order, and other legal actions. In gun violence, these are also known as police-involved shootings. In 2018, a total of 539 people died by legal intervention by firearm, or more than 1 person daily.

A cautionary note about these data: Strong evidence suggests that the government's data (including the CDC data presented here) provide a substantial under-count of police-involved injuries and deaths. To address this gap, a number of media sources have tracked police-involved shootings in recent years, most notably the Washington Post's Fatal Force database, finding more than double the number of police-involved fatal shootings than are reported in FBI and CDC databases. Ultimately, better data on police-involved injuries and deaths are sorely needed. Compulsory and comprehensive data collection at the local level, reporting to the federal government, and transparency in public dissemination of data will be critical for understanding this unique kind of gun violence and developing evidence-based solutions to minimize police-involved shootings.

LEGAL INTERVENTION FIREARM DEATHS, 2009-2018



For more information:

Feldman, J. M., Gruskin, S., Coull, B. A., & Krieger, N. (2017). Quantifying underreporting of law-enforcement-related deaths in United States vital statistics and news-media-based data sources: A capture-recapture analysis. *PLoS Medicine*, 14(10), e1002399. DOI:10.1371/journal.pmed.100239

Peeples L. (2019). What the data say about police shootings. *Nature*, 573(7772):24-26. DOI: 10.1038/d41586-019-02601-9.

The Washington Post's Fatal Force database is available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>

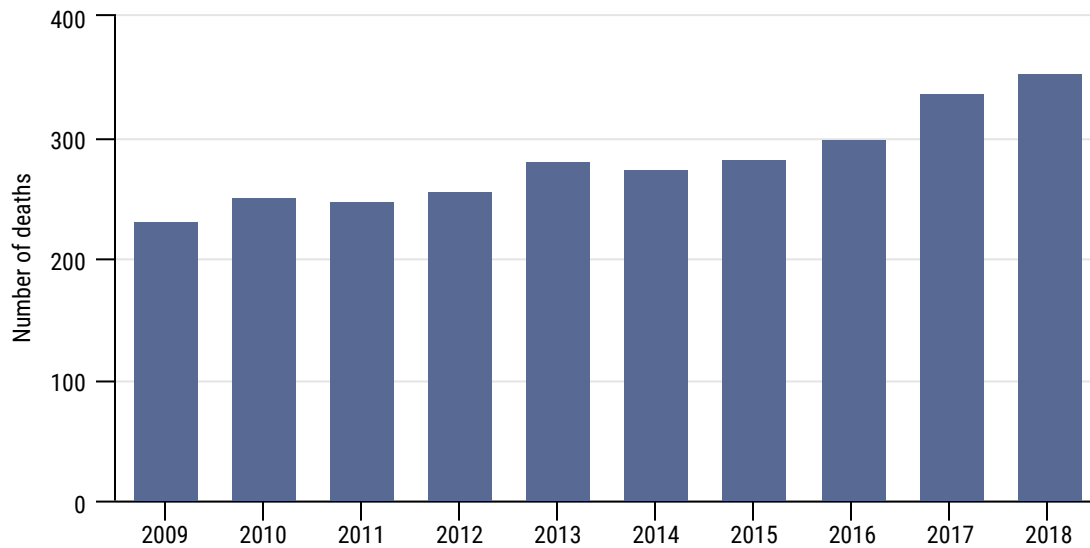


UNDETERMINED INTENT

While the intentionality of the injury that caused a person's death is most often known or determined in the course of death investigations, there are some cases wherein the available information is insufficient to enable the medical or legal authority to make a distinction between an unintentional injury, self-harm (suicide), or assault (homicide). These cases are described as having an undetermined intent.

In 2018, a total of 353 people died by firearm, undetermined intent, or nearly 1 person daily.

UNDETERMINED FIREARM DEATHS, 2009-2018





APPENDIX

U.S. Gun Deaths, 2009-2018

	Homicide	Suicide	Unintentional	Legal intervention	Undetermined intent	Total gun deaths
2009	11,493	18,735	554	333	232	31,347
2010	11,078	19,392	606	344	252	31,672
2011	11,068	19,990	591	454	248	32,351
2012	11,622	20,666	548	471	256	33,563
2013	11,208	21,175	505	467	281	33,636
2014	11,008	21,386	461	464	275	33,594
2015	12,979	22,018	489	484	282	36,252
2016	14,415	22,938	495	510	300	38,658
2017	14,542	23,854	486	553	338	39,773
2018	13,958	24,432	458	539	353	39,740

Glossary

Homicide: Injuries inflicted by another person with intent to injure or kill, by any means. Excludes injuries due to legal intervention and operations of war. The ICD-10 cause of death codes for firearm homicide include X93 Assault by handgun discharge; X94 Assault by rifle, shotgun and larger firearm discharge; X95 Assault by other and unspecified firearm and gun discharge; and *U01.4 Terrorism involving firearms.

Legal Intervention: Injuries inflicted by the police or other law-enforcing agents, including military on duty, in the course of arresting or attempting to arrest lawbreakers, suppressing disturbances, maintaining order, and other legal actions. Excludes injuries caused by civil insurrections. The ICD-10 cause of death code for legal intervention by firearm is Y35.0 Legal intervention involving firearm discharge.

Suicide: Intentionally self-inflicted injury that results in death. The ICD-10 cause of death codes for firearm suicide are X72 Intentional self-harm by handgun discharge; X73 Intentional self-harm by rifle, shotgun and larger firearm discharge; and X74 Intentional self-harm by other and unspecified firearm and gun discharge.

Undetermined Intent: Events where available information is insufficient to enable a medical or legal authority to make a distinction between accident, self-harm and assault. The ICD-10 cause of death codes for firearm deaths of undetermined intent are Y22 Handgun discharge, undetermined intent; Y23 Rifle, shotgun and larger firearm discharge, undetermined intent; and Y24 Other and unspecified firearm discharge, undetermined intent.

Unintentional: Unintentional injury that results in death. The ICD-10 cause of death codes for unintentional firearm deaths are W32 Accidental handgun discharge and malfunction; W33 Accidental rifle, shotgun and larger firearm discharge; and W34 Accidental discharge and malfunction from other and unspecified firearms and guns.



ABOUT

EDUCATIONAL FUND TO STOP GUN VIOLENCE

The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (Ed Fund) seeks to make gun violence rare and abnormal. Founded in 1978, the Ed Fund is a nonprofit organization that makes communities safer by translating research into policy to prevent gun violence and engaging impacted communities in the policy making process. The Ed Fund is the gun violence prevention movement's premier research intermediary and founder of the Consortium for Risk-Based Firearm Policy, a group of researchers and experts who collaborate to develop innovative recommendations for policymakers. The Ed Fund's affiliate organization, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, has advocated for stronger gun laws since 1974. Together, they have paved the way for the gun violence prevention movement to advance research and support evidence-based gun violence prevention programs and policies.

CONTRIBUTORS

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SOURCE

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Statistics Online Data Portal, Mortality Multiple Cause Files released January, 2020. Accessed at https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/Multiple_Cause_Record_Layout_2018-508.pdf on January 30, 2020.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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