



University of Wisconsin
Population Health Institute
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Firearms and Crisis Lines: Data Trends, Intervention Strategies, and Resource Integration

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Disclaimer

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About Us



About UWPHI

The University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute (UWPHI) collaborates with partners at the local, state, and national level **to help communities identify, evaluate, track, and shape the many factors what influence people's health and well-being.**

UWPHI uses **evidence-based approaches** to inform and strategize public health practices and initiatives. Our projects and teams support government, health departments, and community organizations within Wisconsin and around the nation.

Our team has worked closely with **Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin and WI DHS** to evaluate the implementation of 988 in Wisconsin.



Our Team



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Poll: Who's joining us today? What is your role?





Presentation Overview



Today we will discuss...

- Suicide & firearm data trends
- The importance of multi-sector collaboration in firearm violence prevention & the role of crisis lines in this work
- A strategy library documenting the available literature on evidence-based strategies, best practices & actionable guidelines





Suicide & Firearm Data Trends



National data:

- 2020: 45,222 total firearm-related deaths in the US.
 - An average of 124 people killed with a firearm each day.
- 2020: 54% of firearm deaths were suicide deaths.
- 2010-2020: In the US, rates of suicide deaths by firearms increased approximately 44%.
- 2010-2020: Firearm homicides increased approximately 70%.
- Since 2010: Firearms have been used in approximately 50% of all suicide deaths and 72% of all homicides.
- Firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens.
- Firearm deaths disproportionately affect people of color.
- In the US, 46% of households report owning a firearm.



Sources: [CDC WISQARS](#), 2023; [Center for Gun Violence Solutions](#), 2024; [PEW Research Center](#), 2024.

Impact:

Evidence is clear that firearm injury and death, including homicide and suicide, can have significant mental health and social impacts on victims, their family and friends, and their communities.



Sources: [Coen et al.](#), 2024; [Magee et al.](#), 2022; [Smith et al.](#), 2020; [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), 2024.

National actions:

- 2020: [The American Public Health Association](#) declared that gun violence is a ‘major public health problem and a leading cause of premature death.’
- 2024: The U.S. Surgeon General declared gun violence as [a public health crisis](#).

GUN VIOLENCE
IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS



In the United States, gun violence is a major public health problem and a leading cause of premature death. Preventing death, disability and injury from gun violence requires a public health approach that involves data collection and surveillance, research to understand which policies and programs are effective in decreasing gun violence, initiatives to implement those measures that are shown to work and continued surveillance and evaluation.

Burden of Gun Violence

The burden of gun violence in the United States vastly outpaces that in comparable countries:

- Of all firearm deaths in nearly two dozen populous, high-income countries including Australia, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, 82% occur in the U.S., and 91% of children ages 0-14 killed by firearms in this group of nations were from the United States.¹
- Each year, more than 39,000 people in the United States die as a result of gun violence, and tens of thousands more suffer non-fatal gun injuries.²

Gun violence affects people of all ages and races in the U.S. but has a disproportionate impact on young adults, males and racial/ethnic minorities:

- Among U.S. residents ages 15-24, homicide is the fourth leading cause of death for non-Hispanic whites, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics and the leading cause of death for non-Hispanic blacks.³

Guns are a weapon of choice for homicide and suicide:

- Guns are the leading method of suicide in the U.S., accounting for half of all suicide deaths. 60% of firearm-related deaths in the U.S. are suicides. Attempts of suicide by firearm result in death 85% of the time, compared to just 3% for other methods such as drug overdose. This is significant because nearly 90% of people who survive an attempted suicide do not attempt suicide a second time.⁴
- While most gun violence does not involve a mass shooting, in 2019 there were 418 mass shootings, killing 464 people and injuring another 1,710.⁵

Gun violence costs the U.S. \$280 billion annually:⁶

- The societal costs of firearm assault injury include work loss, medical/mental health care, emergency transportation, police/criminal justice activities, insurance claims processing, employer costs and decreased quality of life.

Gun Violence is Preventable

Gun violence is not inevitable. It can be prevented through a comprehensive public health approach that keeps families and communities safe.

A public health approach to preventing gun violence recognizes that violence is contagious and can become epidemic within a society.⁷ Primary prevention involves the use of core public health activities



Wisconsin data:

- 2019-2022: Suicide rates have been increasing steadily each year.
- 2022: 932 deaths by suicide in Wisconsin.
- 2022: Firearms were the leading method of death by suicide (56.7% of suicides).
- 2022: Suicide rates were higher for rural residents and veterans.
- 2019-2022: Homicide rates have been increasing steadily each year.
- 2022: 848 deaths by firearm in Wisconsin. This was the highest reason for violent death in Wisconsin by far.



Wisconsin actions:

- 2022: Public Health Madison & Dane County released a [position statement](#) that identified violence as a public health crisis and declared [firearm violence as a public health crisis](#).
- 2025: Governor Evers' State of the State address included announcing [efforts to prevent gun violence](#).

State of Wisconsin sent this bulletin at 01/22/2025 07:40 PM CST



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 22, 2025

Contact: GovPress@wisconsin.gov

2025 State of the State Address Gov. Evers Announces New Efforts to Reduce Crime and Keep Kids, Families, and Communities Safe by Preventing Gun Violence

Governor proposes comprehensive plan to address crime across Wisconsin while enacting commonsense measures to prevent gun violence to keep kids, families, and communities safe
MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers tonight, during his 2025 State of the State address, announced his upcoming 2025-27 Executive Budget will include a comprehensive plan to address crime, keep kids, families, and communities safe, and enact commonsense measures to prevent gun violence.

Relevant excerpts from Gov. Evers' 2025 State of the State address are available below:

"... We have work to do. We can start with the basics—making sure our kids are safe at home, at school, and in our communities is an area where we have much room for improvement.

"Last week, I created our new Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention. We're going to work across law enforcement agencies and local governments and with school districts, nonprofits, and firearm dealers to help keep our kids, families, and communities safe. I also announced my budget will include sustainable, ongoing funding to make the Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention permanent so we can take a statewide approach to preventing crime and violence across our state.

"I will, again, be proposing significant investments in our next state budget to expand access to mental and behavioral health services across our state. Those investments should receive bipartisan support. And we





The Importance of Multi-Sector Collaboration in Violence Prevention



Why a multi-sector approach?

Multiple sources recommend a 'comprehensive approach' to focus on:

- Supporting responders
- Identifying & addressing risk factors
- Focusing on laws/rules related to access



Source: [NIH](#), 2024.

The CDC recommends a 4-Step public health approach to firearm injury and violence prevention:

- Step #1: Define and monitor the problem.
- Step #2: Identify risk & protective factors.
- Step #3: Develop & test prevention strategies to determine their effectiveness in preventing injuries.
- Step #4: Widespread adoption strategies through dissemination & implementation.

Source: [NIH](#), 2024.



The Role for Crisis Lines



Where do crisis lines fit?

- Crisis lines or other agencies providing crisis support serve as a resource for people when they may be thinking about suicide.
- In the U.S., access to firearms is associated with elevated risk of suicide.
- Firearms are more lethal than other suicide means.
- In one study looking at text and chat crisis conversations, suicide-related issues were likely to appear in conversations mentioning firearms.

Sources: [Harvard](#), 2025; [Miller et al.](#), 2024.

Where do crisis lines fit?

- Uvalde incident study:
 - Firearm-related crisis conversations following the school shooting significantly increased.
 - Also saw increase in grief-related conversations that mentioned firearms and decrease in suicide-related conversations that mentioned firearms.
 - These results were broader than the specific location of the mass shooting.
- Practice examples:
 - 988 mentioned as resource after local news stories.
- Other opportunities for crisis lines and crisis-adjacent professionals
- More study needed in this area

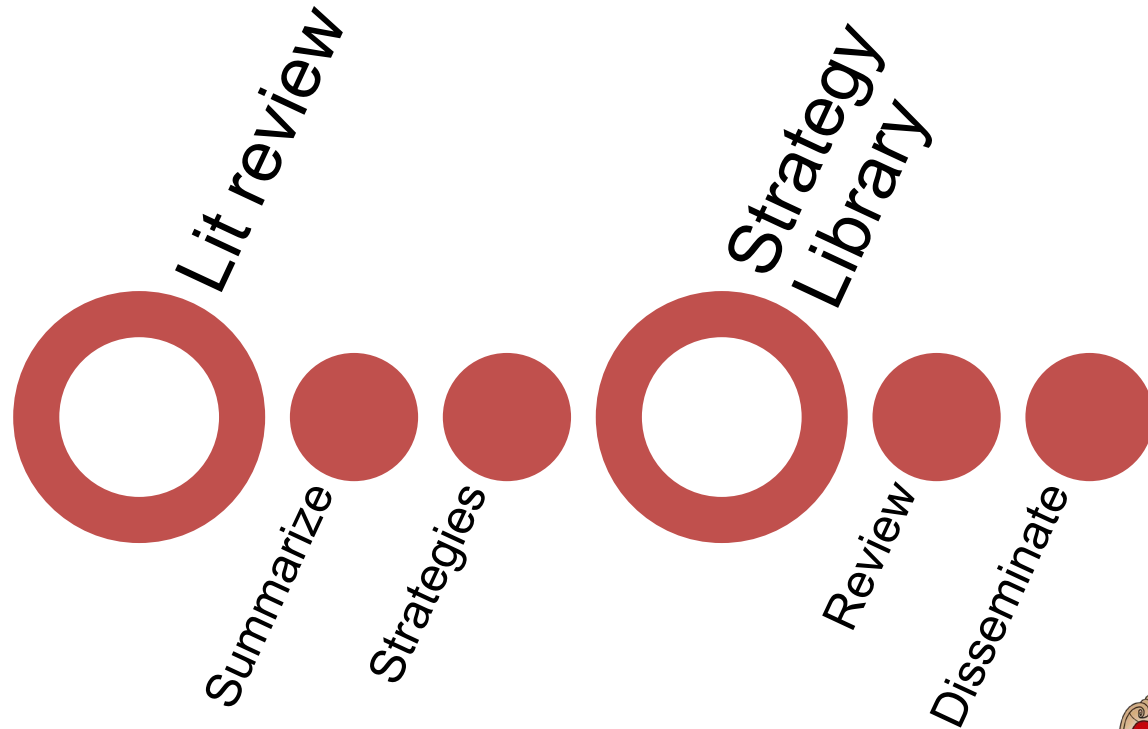
Sources: [NIH](#), 2023.



The Strategy Library



Strategy Library: Process for creation



Strategy Library: Purpose and goals

- Document and summarize available information
- Provide recommendations to WI 988 Lifeline & other crisis professionals
- Provide actionable steps/actions for crisis lines & other crisis professionals at multiple levels
- Provide resources for additional information to support implementation

Strategy Library: Live demonstration

<https://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/evaluation-research/current-evaluation-projects-2/firearmcrisisstrategylibrary/>

Questions? Comments?





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THANK YOU.

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