

Firearms Deaths in Colorado

Issue Backgrounder

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This Issue Backgrounder provides data about firearms fatalities involving young people in Colorado. The paper presents data for accidents, homicides, and suicides. All data come from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

I. Accidents

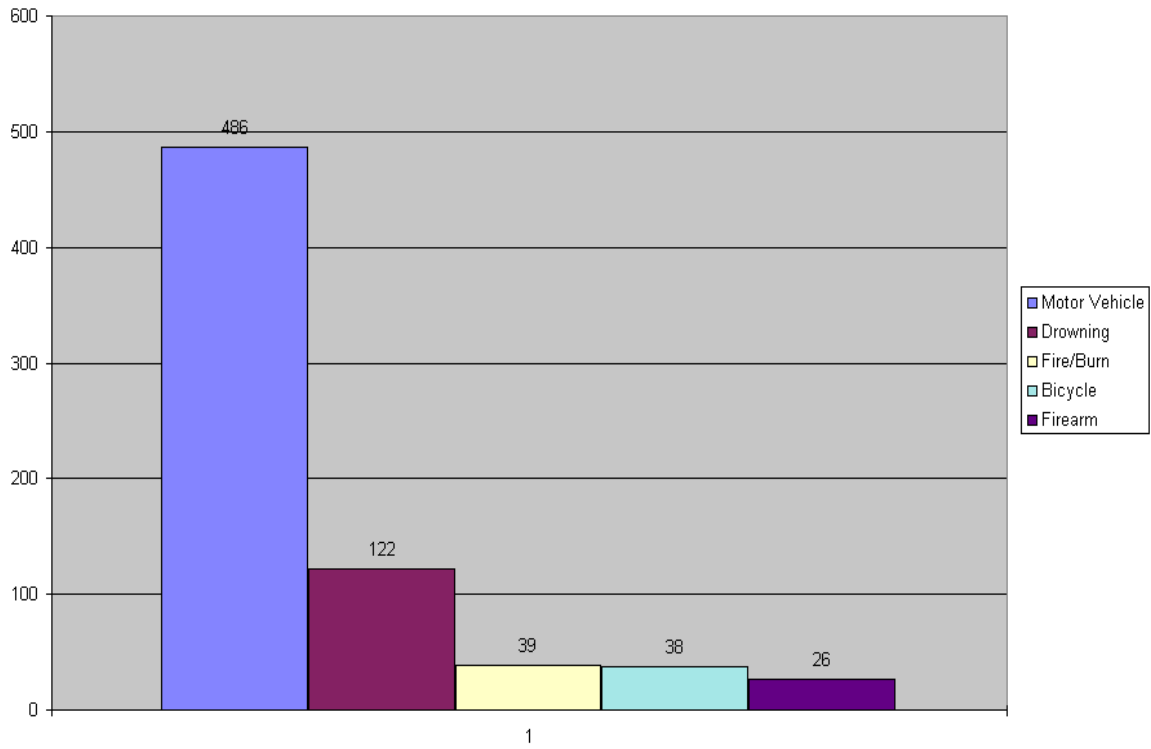
We do not know the exact number of families in Colorado that own guns. What we do know is the exact number of accidental firearms deaths. From 1990 to 1998 there were a total of eight accidental firearms deaths for young children between infant and 10 years old. Of these deaths, three were between infant and five years old and five were between six and 10 years old. In other words, **the most recent data from the Colorado Department of Health Statistics shows that during a nine year period there were eight accidental firearms deaths for young children.**

There were a total of six accidental firearms deaths for 11- and 12-year-olds. The most recent data also shows that there were a total of 12 accidental firearms deaths for teenagers between the ages of 13 and 15 years old. There were a total of 23 accidental firearms deaths for older teenagers ages 16 to 19 years old.

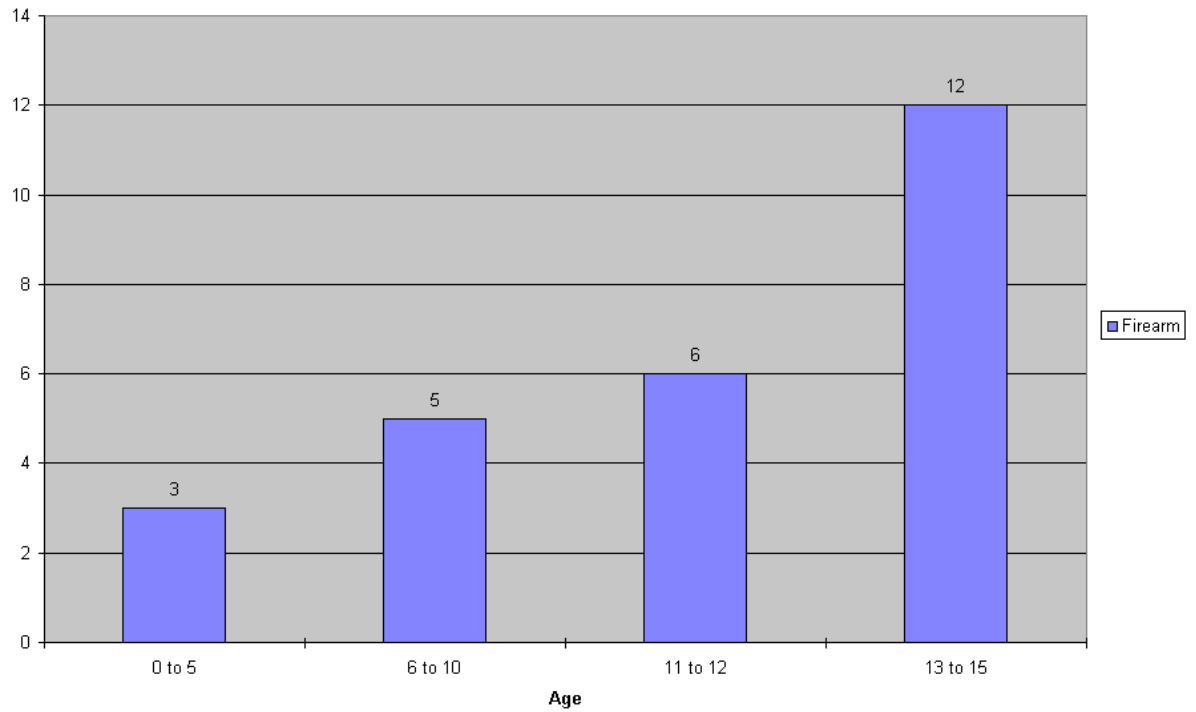
During the same nine-year period, 162 young children between infant and five years old died in motor vehicle accidents. For those between six and 10 years old, there were 96 accidental motor vehicle deaths. There were 52 deaths for 11- and 12-year-olds and 176 deaths for teenagers between 13 and 15 years old. In other words, during a nine-year period there were 258 motor vehicle accident deaths for young children.

As the data indicate, the largest cause of accidental deaths of children in Colorado is motor vehicle accidents. Water (including drowning in pools and bathtubs) is the next largest cause. After that comes fire/burns, followed by bicycle accidents. **Bicycles are the cause of about 50% more accidental child deaths in Colorado than are firearms.**

Colorado Accidental Deaths 1990-1998 Ages 0-15 Years Old



Colorado Accidental Firearms Deaths 1990 - 1998



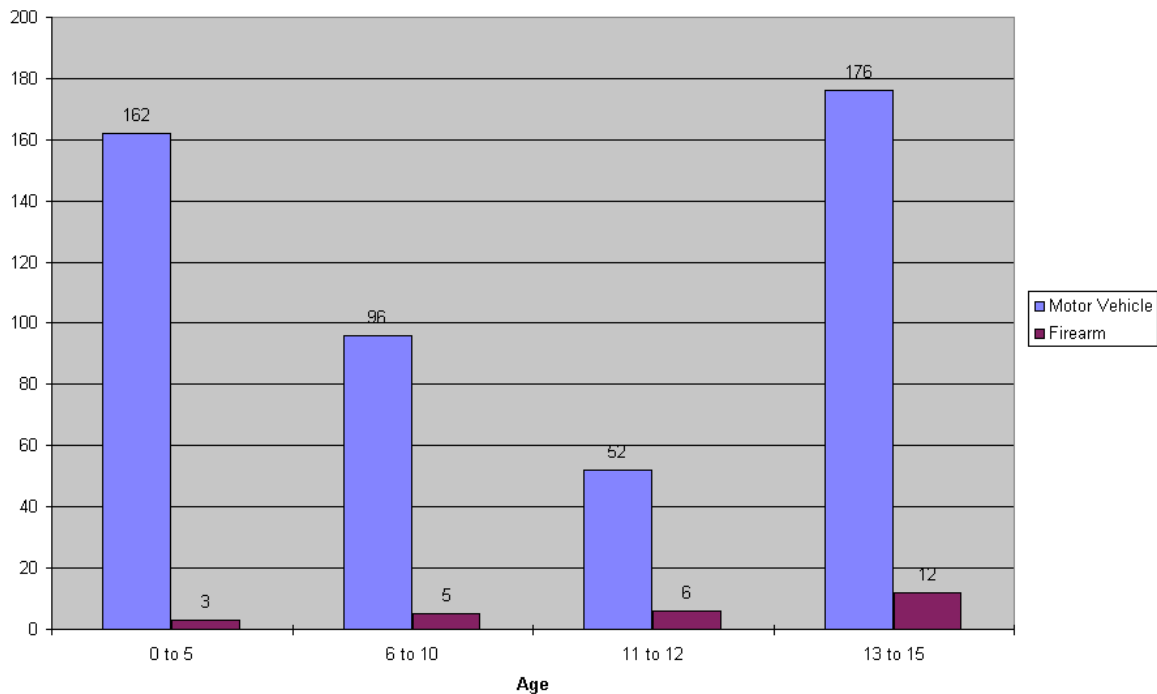
Colorado Accidental Firearms Deaths

Age	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
0 to 5	1	0	0	0	1
6 to 10	1	1	2	0	0
11 to 12	1	0	2	0	0
13 to 15	0	1	0	4	0
16 to 19	1	4	4	3	2

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment data do not show how many of these accidental deaths occurred in the home, who owned the firearm or who fired the gun.

Again we do not know the exact number of gun owning families in Colorado but polling data suggest that many hundreds of thousands of households contain a firearm -- approximately half of all Colorado households. This suggests that the vast majority of gun-owning households store and handle their firearms in ways which are safe and appropriate for the family's circumstances.

Colorado Accidental Deaths 1990-1998 Motor Vehicle and Firearm



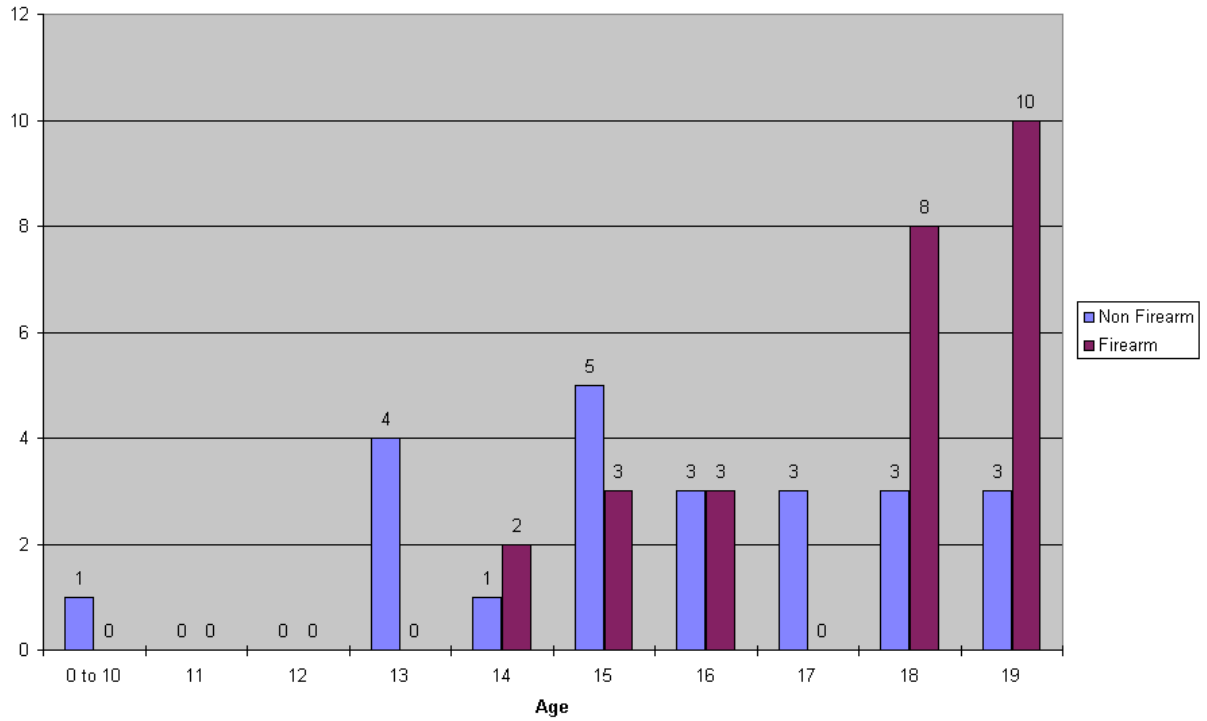
Colorado Accidental Deaths 1990 - 1998

Age	Motor Veh.	Firearm
0 to 5	162	3
6 to 10	96	5
11 to 12	52	6
13 to 15	176	12

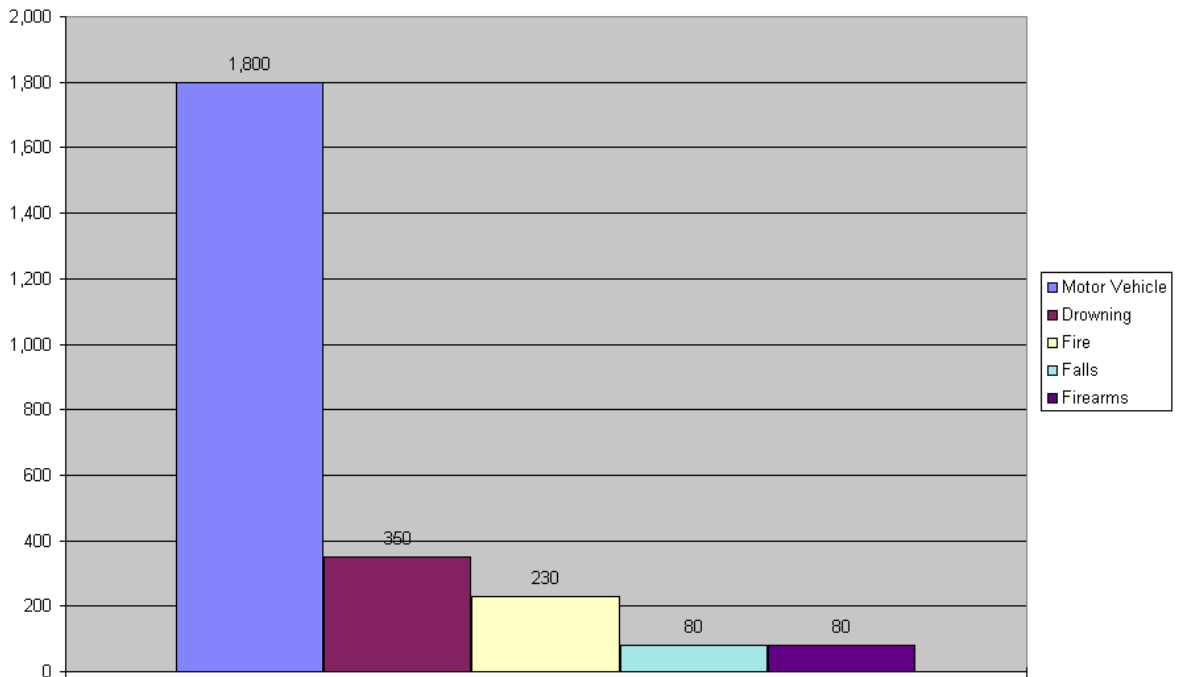
II. National Trends for Accidents

In the United States as a whole, firearms accident figures are generally similar to Colorado's. Accidental deaths with firearms have been decreasing for decades and are now at an all-time annual low among the U.S. population on the whole and among children in particular. Since 1930, the annual number of such accidents has decreased 73%, while the U.S. population has more than doubled and the number of privately owned guns has quintupled. Accidental firearms deaths decreased 42% during the decade 1989-1998, and continued falling to record annual lows almost every year thereafter. Between 1998-1999 they declined another estimated 13%. Among children, fatal firearm accidents have decreased 78% since 1975. (National Center for Health Statistics and National Safety Council).

Colorado 1998 Suicide Ages 0 to 19 Years Old



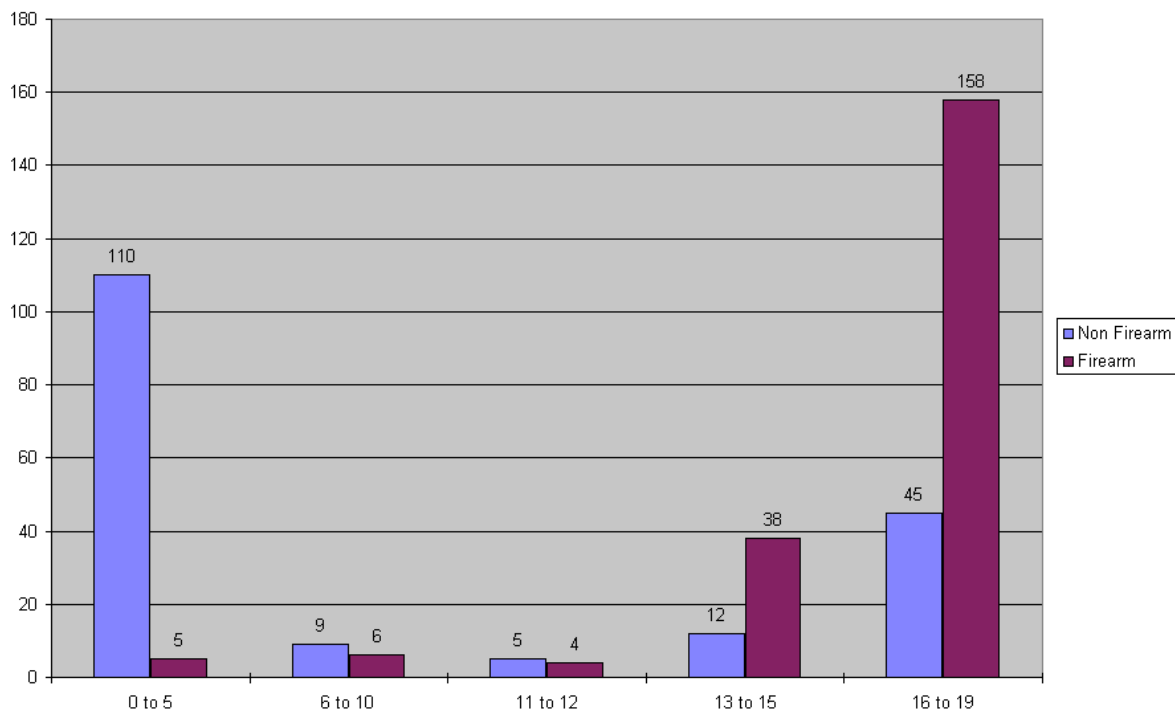
1998 USA Accidental Deaths for Ages 5-14 Years Old



III. Homicide in Colorado

For young people in Colorado, two age groups have by far the highest homicide victimization rates: small children aged 0 to 5, and teenagers aged 16-19. For the former group, firearms are rarely used in homicides. For teenagers, firearms are used in about 3/4 of Colorado homicides.

Colorado Homicide 1990 - 1998 Ages 0 to 19



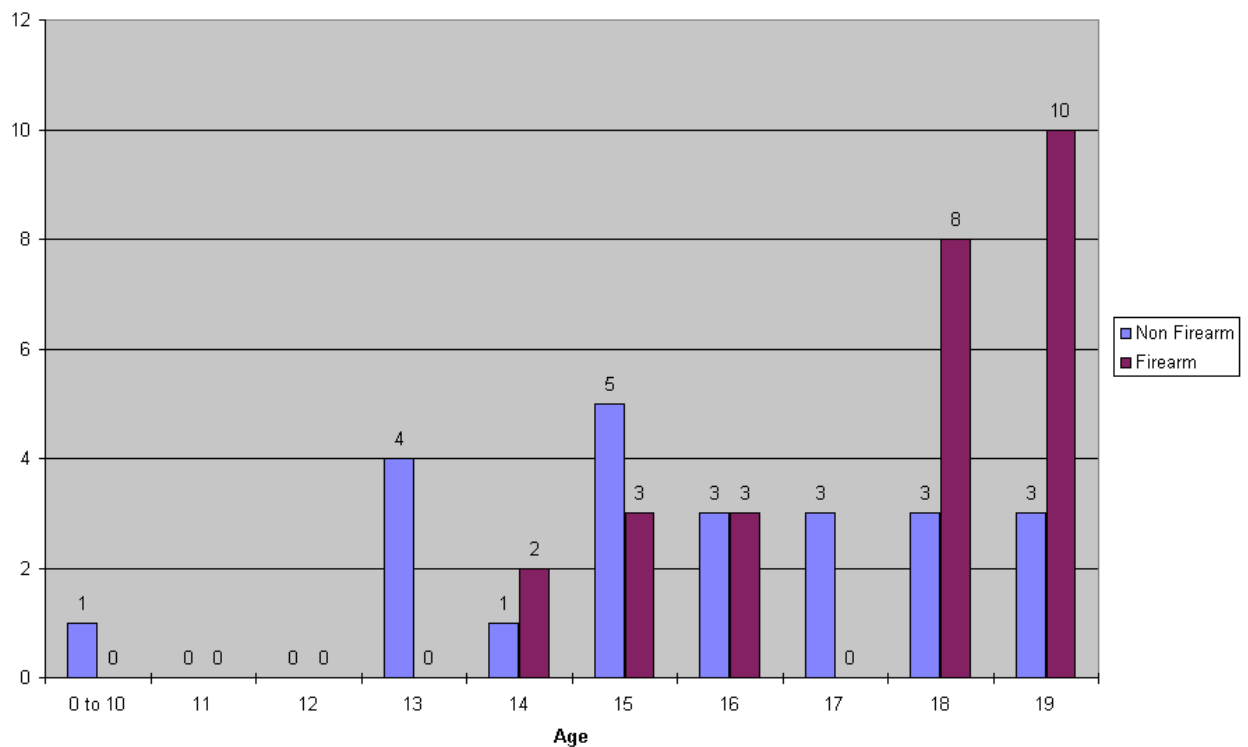
Colorado Firearm and Non Firearm Homicide 1990 - 1998 Ages 0 to 19

Age	Non-gun	Gun
0 to 5	110	5
6 to 10	9	6
11 to 12	5	4
13 to 15	12	38
16 to 19	45	158

IV. Suicide in Colorado

Suicide rates tend to increase with age, with the highest rates among elderly males. For Colorado teenagers, homicide occurs at a much higher rate than does suicide. For young people aged 18 to 19, firearms are the predominant method of suicide. For people 17 and younger, firearms are used in about a third of suicides.

Colorado 1998 Suicide Ages 0 to 19 Years Old



Colorado 1998 Suicide Ages 0 to 19 Years Old

Age	Non-gun	Gun
0 to 10	1	0
11	0	0
12	0	0
13	4	0
14	1	2
15	5	3

16	3	3
17	3	0
18	3	8
19	3	10

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