

Feb. 7, 2023

When a shooting takes place in our country, we are all affected. It hits us more profoundly when we hear about school shootings. We, as adults, are meant to protect our children.

When children are in the school building, the responsibility of protection is transferred from family to staff and administration. We have been fortunate in that we have had no mass shootings in our VT schools, but we have seen it happen in many communities across our country in towns and cities, varying greatly in size. They did not expect it, either, I am sure.

We need to do all we can to keep our students and school staff safe. I truly believe that each of us affects the world through small actions and interactions. My request to the school board is simple. Would you please send home information on safe gun storage? If there is a gun in the home, it should be stored so it does not fall into the hands of a child in the household or someone who is visiting.

We saw this in Virginia. It can happen here. Many homes in our community have guns. We need to remind owners how to store them safely.

I can help with the wording of any message that is sent home. I am leaving material with you - newsletters that were sent from other school districts in our area. It need not be long. Gun safety can be reduced to three things: unload guns; lock guns; separate guns from ammunition . (Hiding guns is not the same as locking them!)

I think the three rules of safe gun storage are better outlined in the newsletter that went home from MMUUSD than the VT health department. They are clearer.

I have checked with the sheriff's office and gun locks are available there.

Statistics:

1. In VT, 44% of households have guns. Of these. 49% store them locked and unloaded
2. Suicide: 88% of gun deaths in VT are suicides. Safe storage helps to put time between access to a firearm and decision and may reduce death for those in crises.
3. Up to 80% of shooters on school grounds obtained their guns from either their homes or the homes of family or friends.
4. According to the US Secret Service, addressing student access to guns is a critical component of any school-based threat assessment intervention plan.

Thank you,



Mary Jo McCarthy

North Hero, VT

863-6330

maryjomccartay@gmail.com

Gun Safety Information for Families and Caregivers

Dear MMUUSD Families,

Ensuring that students and staff in the Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District have a safe educational environment remains one of our top priorities, and as we move into the next portion of the school year, we want to remind you of a few ways to keep our community and schools safe.

Every year, 350 children under the age of 18 in the United States unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else, and 88% of gun deaths in Vermont are suicides. As COVID-19 has changed almost every aspect of our lives, we have to realize the stress and isolation this has caused in our children, and take extra steps to ensure their safety and the safety of their peers.

Research has shown that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children, compared to those that locked neither. In order to protect our children from the horrors that often ensue from the misuse of a firearm, we must secure all firearms that may be present in our homes.

In the interest of protecting our community and schools, we urge you to do the following: *these are clear!*

Unload - Gun owners should remove ammunition from the firearm, including removing any chambered rounds.

Lock - Unloaded firearms should be secured with a firearm locking device, such as a jacket lock or a locked storage location, like a safe or lock box. Locking devices, safes, and lock boxes are equipped with keys, combinations, or biometric technology that limit access.

Separate - Ammunition and firearms should both be stored in safe locations, but separately.

Storing firearms securely protects any child in the home as well as students throughout the school district and community. You can learn more and download helpful resources including a secure storage fact sheet, talking to your children about guns, and facts and resources on child firearm suicide at [BeSMARTforKids.org/resources](https://www.be-smartforkids.org/resources).

Thank you so much for keeping our community safe!

Sincerely,
MMUHS Student Action Committee



MMUUSD

New in this version: The proportion of households with firearms in or around the home that store firearms locked and unloaded has been updated. This analysis now looks at **all Vermont households with a firearm**.

The proportion of those households who store firearms **locked and unloaded** is 49%.

Why is safe storage important?

Safe storage of firearms is important because firearms are lethal. Safe storage of firearms can reduce the risk of suicide by separating at-risk individuals from easy access to lethal means. In Vermont, firearm deaths are mostly due to suicide (91%, avg 67 per year). Safe storage helps put time and space between access to a firearm and may help reduce death for those in crisis.

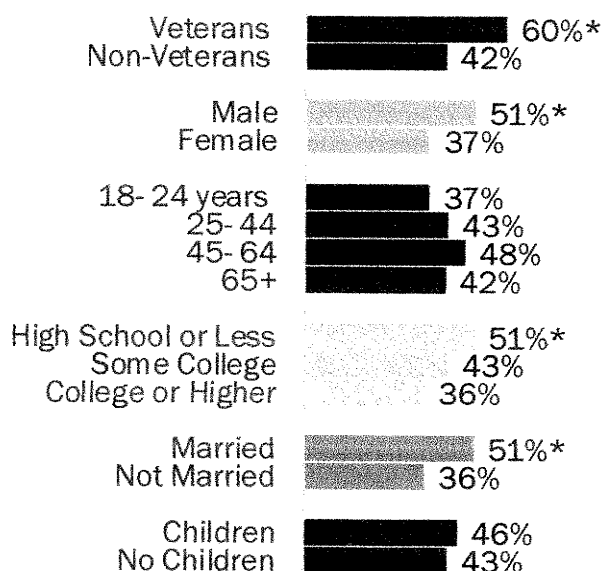
Who is more likely to store a firearm in their home?

Based on data from 2020, there are a few populations that are more likely to store a firearm in or around their home. Veterans are nearly 1.5 times more likely to have a firearm compared to non-veterans (60% vs. 42%). Residents living in Caledonia, Franklin, Orange, and Orleans County are also significantly more likely to have a firearm (55%, 55%, 60%, and 59% vs. state rate 44%). Adults with a high school education or less, who are male, and have married are also significantly more likely to have a firearm in the home.

KEY POINTS

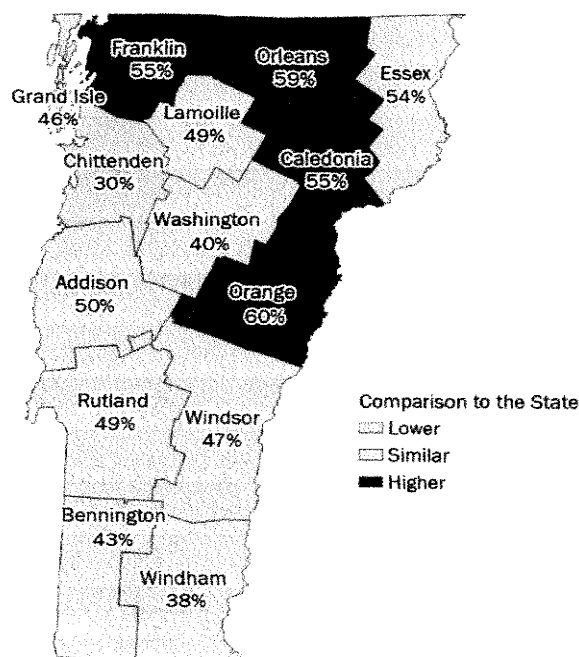
- In Vermont, 44% of all households store at least one firearm in or around the home, and half of those households store them locked and unloaded (49%).

Prevalence of Firearms in or Around the Home



*Notes a statistical difference

Source: (left) BRFSS, 2020; (right) BRFSS 2018-2020



Firearm Storage Safety

Best Practices for Safe Firearm Storage¹



Store unloaded firearms in a locked location inaccessible to children and unauthorized users, such as a safe.



Lock firearms with a device that requires a key or combination to access or fire it.



Store ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms.

I think less sales but you may disagree

Who is practicing safe storage?

Evidence shows that storing firearms unloaded, separate from ammunition, and in a locked place (or secured with a safety device) reduces the risk of attempting suicide among adolescents.² Research also suggests that actively providing safety devices leads to better safe storage practices than counseling alone or giving people money or discounts to buy safety devices themselves.² Half of households in Vermont store their firearm(s) safely – both locked and unloaded (49%). The remaining 51% of households in Vermont store at least one firearm loaded and/or unlocked. Some populations that are significantly less likely to practice safe storage include veterans, men, and households without children in the home (38%, 44%, 44% store their firearm(s) locked and unloaded). People age 45 to 64 are significantly less likely than adults with a firearm age 25 to 44 to store their firearm(s) locked and unloaded. There are no significant differences in the rate of households that store firearms safely by education or marital status. For more data on firearm storage practices, see the [2019-2020 BRFSS report](#).

References:

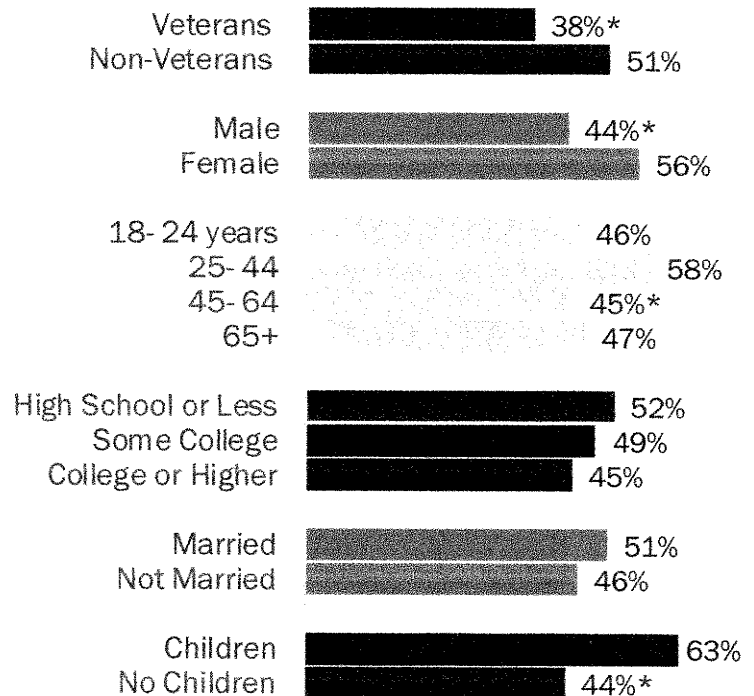
1. Project Child Safe, [Safe Firearm Storage](#).
2. [Rural Health Policy Brief](#)

For more information about the data: Caitlin Quinn, Caitlin.Quinn@vermont.gov

For more information on firearm storage safety: www.healthvermont.gov/firearm-safety

For more data on firearm and suicide in Vermont, visit: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/surveillance-reporting-topic/injuries>

Prevalence of Households with Firearms that Store them Locked and Unloaded.



*Notes a statistical difference

Source: BRFSS, 2020