



Washtenaw County Health Department

For Immediate Release

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Washtenaw County Health Department Releases Firearm Death Report *Local firearm deaths are increasing; majority of firearm deaths are suicides*

**Please take note of the media resources at the bottom of this release for best practices and recommendations for reporting on suicide.*

YPSILANTI, Mich., August 16, 2023 – The Washtenaw County Health Department is releasing a new [Firearm Death Report](#) detailing trends in firearm deaths from 2011-2022. Firearm death rates have been increasing in recent years at the county, state, and national level.

“Unfortunately, firearm deaths are increasing in Washtenaw County” says Juan Marquez, MD, MPH, Washtenaw County Health Department medical director. “There was a 74% increase in firearm deaths in the two five-year time periods we analyzed (2012-2016 and 2017-2021). This report illustrates what many of our community members already know: gun violence is a serious public health issue in Washtenaw.”

This report analyzed data from the Washtenaw County Medical Examiner Office. From 2011-2022, the majority (70%) of firearm deaths in Washtenaw County were suicides, and 30% were classified as homicides. This proportion of suicides is slightly higher than in Michigan overall, where 59% of firearm deaths are classified as suicides, and 38% are classified as homicides.

Men are much more likely to die from firearm-related injury in Washtenaw County: from 2011-2022, men made up 89% of firearm deaths. This overrepresentation of males dying from firearm-related injuries is comparable with statewide trends.

There was a 44% increase in the number of people who died of suicide by firearm in Washtenaw County from the years 2012-2016 to 2017-2021. The rate of firearm suicides appeared higher in rural areas of the county. Of the suicides completed by firearm from 2011 to 2022, 84% were white individuals and 10% were Black/African American individuals.

“We saw a 200% increase in the number of people who died from firearm homicide in Washtenaw from the years 2012-2016 to 2017-2021,” continues Dr. Marquez. “Firearm homicide deaths among residents in Ypsilanti zip codes 48197 and 48198 were higher compared to Washtenaw residents in other zip codes. There were also significant racial disparities in our local firearm homicides: 77% of victims were Black/African American, while only 19% were white.”

Those who died from homicide were significantly younger (averaging 29 years old) as compared to those who died by suicide (averaging 48 years old).

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“It is important to develop and support community-wide violence prevention strategies,” says Jimena Loveluck, MSW, Washtenaw County Health Department health officer. “These local data affirm the importance of collective action to interrupt violence and save lives.”

Washtenaw County Health Department staff also serve on the county's Community Violence Intervention Team. See the team's policy recommendations [here](#) or learn more about the team [here](#). Visit <https://washtenaw.org/firearmviolence> for additional local resources.

Additional data is available in the full report: <https://bit.ly/firearmwc>

Suicide prevention resources

Suicide is preventable, and help is available. Anyone in Washtenaw County can call the Community Mental Health CARES team 24/7 with any mental health questions or concerns: 734-544-3050. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

It's important to know the warning signs for those at risk of suicide, including:

- Talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless or having no purpose, feeling trapped or in unbearable pain, or being a burden to others
- Looking for or talking about ways to kill oneself
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

If someone you know shows warning signs of suicide, assume you are the only one who will reach out. Take them seriously, talk to them in private, and ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. See more recommendations on what to do if someone is at risk for suicide [here](#).

Media resources

Media plays an important role in preventing suicide. We encourage media to consider these [safe reporting recommendations](#) to minimize hopelessness and to increase help-seeking when covering this report and topics related to suicide. For more local data and resources, see www.washtenaw.org/suicide.

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Local public health information and updates are always available at www.washtenaw.org/health. The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpublichealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.

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