

Why is safe storage important?

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%, average of 67 deaths a year). Safe storage of firearms is important because firearms are lethal. Forty one percent of men who die by suicide experience a crisis leading up to death (41%). Safe storage of firearms helps put time and space between an individual accessing a firearm, and therefore may help reduce death for those in crisis.

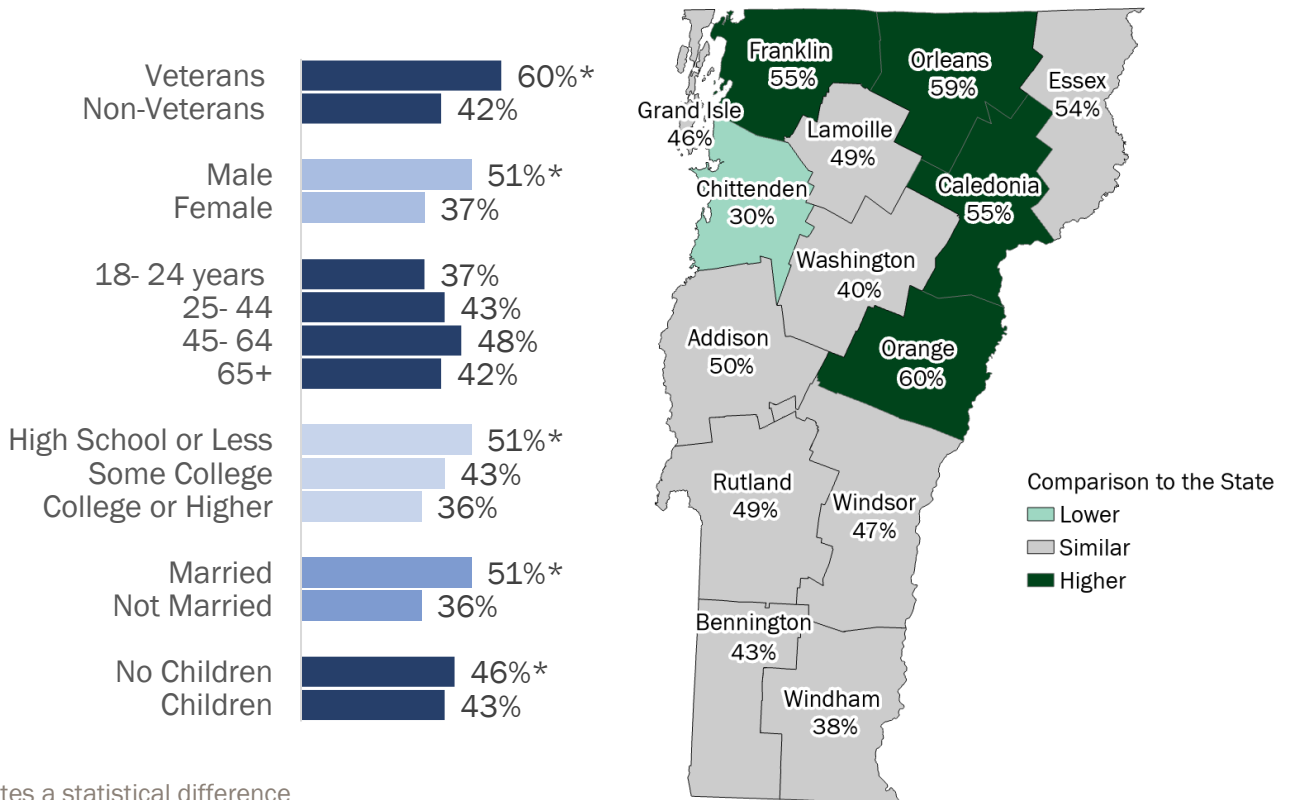
KEY POINTS

- In Vermont, 44% of all households store at least one firearm in or around the home, and most of those households store them locked and unloaded (81%).

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, have married, and households without children are also significantly more likely to have a firearm in the home.

Prevalence of Firearms in or Around the Home




*Notes a statistical difference
Source: (left) BRFSS, 2020; (right) BRFSS 2018-2020


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.

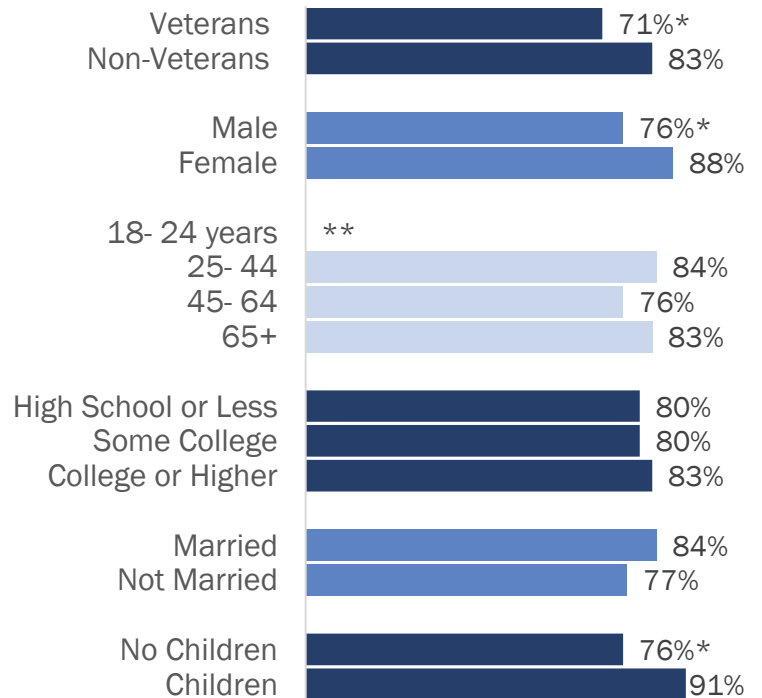


Store ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms.

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 Most households in Vermont store their firearm locked and unloaded (81%). Some populations that are significantly less likely to practice safe storage include veterans, men, and households without children in the home (71%, 76%, 76% store safely). There are no significant differences in the rate of households that store firearms safely by age group, education, or marital status. For more data on firearm storage practices, see the [2019- 2020 BRFSS report](#).

Prevalence of Households with Firearms that Practice Safe Storage



*Notes a statistical difference; **value suppressed, either too few individuals or large standard error.
Source: BRFSS, 2020

References:

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

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For more information on firearm storage safety, visit: www.healthvermont.gov/emergency/injury/firearm-safety

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