

Firearm Storage Practices among Vermont Adults

April 2025

Securely storing firearms can reduce the risk of firearm injuries and deaths, including suicide. Firearms should be locked away and unloaded with ammunition stored separately. In Vermont, firearm deaths are mostly due to suicide (86%, about 66 per year). Safe storage can save lives. In Vermont, secure firearm storage is the law for households with children or a “prohibited person”, per [13 V.S.A. § 4024](#) (2023).¹

All data below are from Vermont’s [2023 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(BRFSS\)](#), a survey of Vermont adults.

Key Points

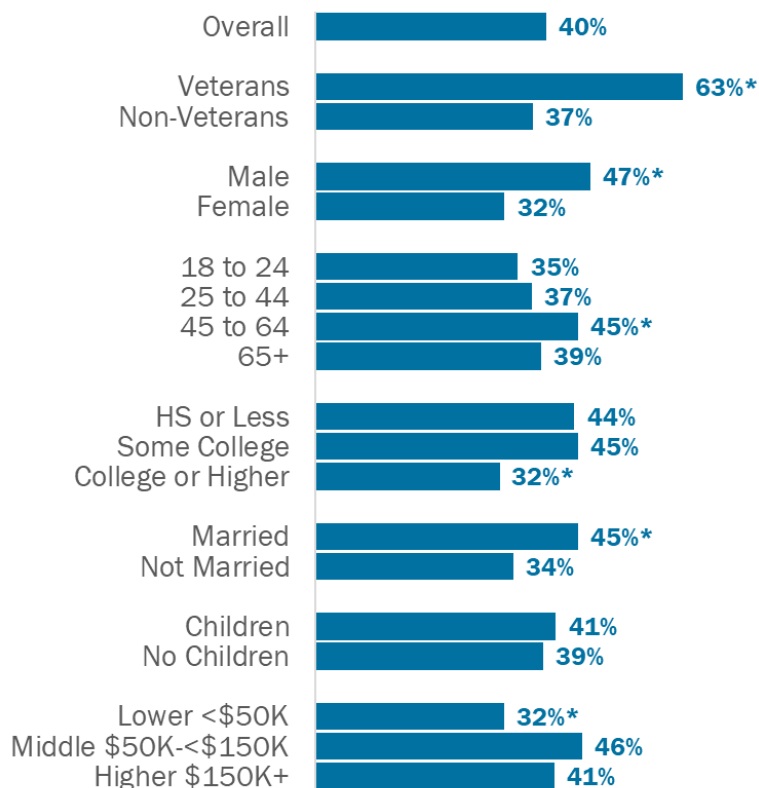
- In Vermont, 40% of all households store at least one firearm in or around the home, and 10% of those households store at least one loaded and unlocked.
- Secure – also referred to as safe – storage is defined as storing all firearms locked and unloaded, with ammunition separate and locked.²

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

Based on data from 2023, there are a few populations that are more likely to store a firearm in or around their home:

- **Veterans** are more than 1.5 times more likely to store a firearm in or around their home compared to non-veterans (63% vs 37%).
- **Men** are more likely to have a firearm compared to women (47% vs 32%).
- Adults between **45-64 years old** are more likely to keep a firearm in or around their home compared to all other age groups.
- Those who are **married** are also significantly more likely to have a firearm at home compared to

Prevalence of Firearms in or Around the Home by Demographics



*Indicates statistical significance.



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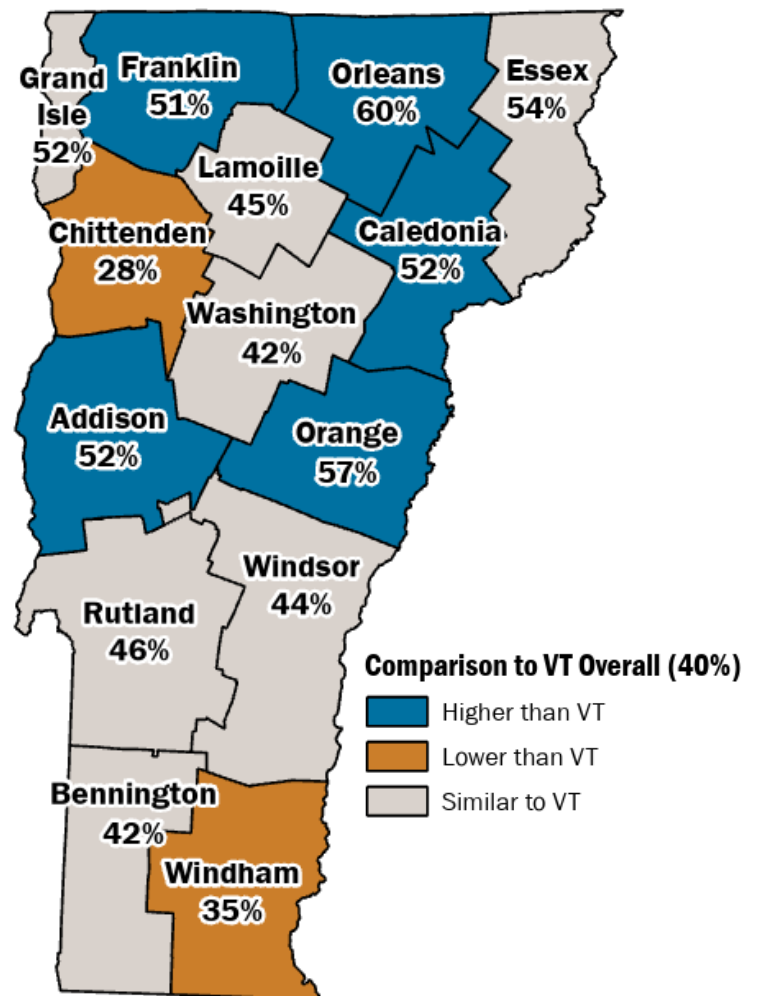
people who are not married (45% vs 34%).

- Vermonters **without a college degree** are statistically more likely to store a firearm in or around their home compared to those with a college degree.
- **Middle- and higher-income** earning households are statistically more likely to have a firearm compared to lower-income earning households.

Overall, 40% of Vermont households store a firearm in or around the home. The percentage of households with a firearm is higher in certain counties compared to Vermont overall.

- Residents living in **Addison, Caledonia, Franklin, Orange, and Orleans** Counties are significantly more likely to have a firearm compared to Vermont residents overall.
- Orleans County residents are the most likely to store a firearm in or around their home out of all counties (60%). Of note, Orleans was the only county with a higher [rate of firearm deaths](#) than Vermont overall in 2023.
- Residents of **Chittenden** and **Windham** Counties are statistically less likely to have a firearm compared to Vermont overall.

Prevalence of Firearms in or Around the Home by County of Residence^

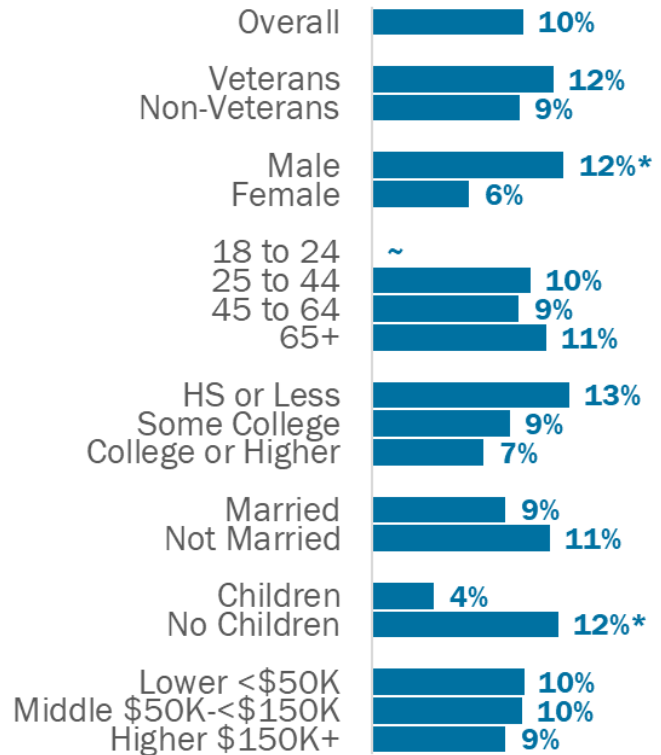


Storage of Firearms

Evidence shows that storing firearms unloaded, separate from ammunition, and in a locked place (or secured with a safety device) reduces the risk of suicide attempts among adolescents.³ Research also suggests that actively providing safety devices (e.g., gun locks) leads to better secure storage practices than counseling alone or giving people money or discounts to buy safety devices themselves.³

- Between 2018-2023, the percentage of households with at least one unlocked, loaded firearm was steady (11% in 2018 and 2020, 10% in 2023).
- In 2023, men and households with no children (13% and 12%) are significantly more likely to have an unlocked, loaded firearm compared to women and households with children (6% and 4%), respectively.
- There are no statistical differences in the rate of households with an unlocked, loaded firearm by veteran status, age, education, marital status, or income.
- The best practice is to store firearms securely, both locked and unloaded. In Vermont, half of households with a firearm stored them in this manner (2020 BRFSS).^{2,4}

Percent of Households with Firearms that Store at Least One Loaded and Unlocked



*Indicates statistical significance.

~Value suppressed because sample size is too small or relative standard error is >30.

For more data on firearm storage practices, see the [2023 BRFSS Summary Report](#).

Best Practices for Secure Firearm Storage^{2,5}



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.²

Key Takeaways

- Suicides account for most firearm-related deaths in Vermont (86%). Secure storage helps put time and space between access to a firearm and may reduce rates of death.
- Forty percent of Vermont residents store a firearm in or around their home, 10% of which store at least one firearm loaded and unlocked.
- Best practice for secure storage is storing firearms unloaded, separate from ammunition, and in a locked place (or secured with a safety device). This reduces the risk of suicide attempts among adolescents and those who may be in crisis.³

Resources

- If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org.
- For more information about getting support, helping others who may be struggling, and getting involved in suicide prevention in Vermont, go to FacingSuicideVT.com.
- The [Vermont Network](https://VermontNetwork.org) has a statewide hotline for domestic abuse that can be reached at 800-228-7395.
- For more information about secure storage, free gun locks, and options for temporary storage, go to GunSafeVT.org or <https://www.healthvermont.gov/firearm-safety>.

References and Notes

1. Vermont's 2023 Secure Storage law ([13 V.S.A. § 4024](https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/13-V.S.A.-4024)), requires gun owners to store all firearms in a locked container or a container equipped with a safety device when a child (under 18 years of age) or "prohibited person" is present and likely to gain access to them. A "prohibited person" is anyone who is not allowed to possess a firearm under state or federal law, or court order.
2. The BRFSS survey includes questions about the presence of a firearm in or around the house, and how it is stored (locked vs unlocked and loaded vs unloaded). The BRFSS does not include questions around how ammunition is stored.
3. [CDC Rural Health Policy Brief](https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealthpolicy/brief)
4. [2020 Firearm Storage Safety Brief](https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealthpolicy/brief) – of note, data related to safe storage of firearms (locked and unloaded) are not available as the 2023 questions do not provide that information.
5. Project Child Safe, [Safe Firearm Storage](https://www.projectchildsafe.org/safe-firearm-storage)

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact:
AHS.VDHSuicideData@vermont.gov.