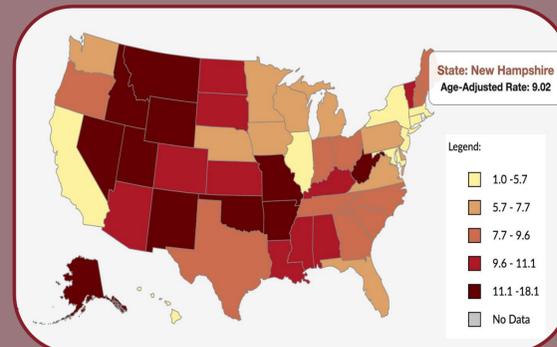


Gun advocates and public health professionals can work together to reduce the burden of firearm-related suicide deaths.



2018 US Firearm related deaths grouped by intent
Source: <https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov>



2018 Age-adjusted firearm suicide rate per 100,000 population
Source: <https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov:8006/>

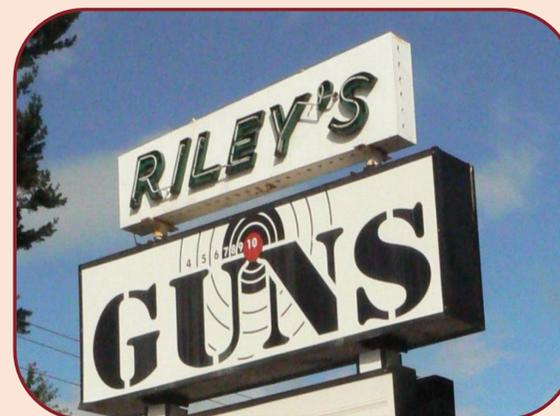


Photo: Riley's Gun Shop sign



Photo: New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition members

Background

Stats

- Gun owners and their families are at 2-3 times higher risk of suicide than their non-gun owning peers
- The majority of firearm related deaths are via suicide
- The total number of suicide deaths in the U.S. was 48,344 in 2018—**Half** of the suicide deaths were caused by firearms

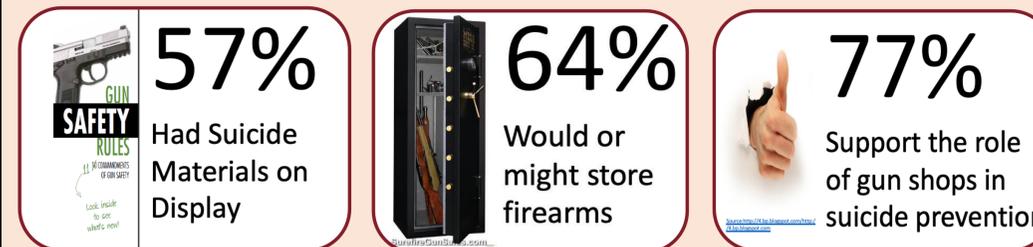
NHFSC

- A coalition of firearm rights advocates and public health professionals developed and mailed suicide prevention materials (posters, brochures, wallet cards) to firearm retailers in New Hampshire to promote to customers the idea of storing household guns away from home (or otherwise inaccessibly) when a family member is at risk for suicide.

Methods

- We designed a survey instrument and conducted interviews at 28 gun shops during unannounced, in-person visits to assess
 - (1) the % displaying materials,
 - (2) whether they would store guns for customers at risk for suicide
 - (3) their views on the role of gun shops in suicide prevention

Results



Discussion

- There is promising potential for the promotion of firearm retailers to provide off-site gun storage for customers that are at higher risk.
- The majority of retailers have a positive attitude about the role of gun shops in promoting suicide prevention.
- Voluntary suicide prevention strategies that involve the collaboration of both gun advocates and public health professionals is critical to building trust and reaching gun owners.

Acknowledgements

- This work is possible because of the work from members of The New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition and the support of Cathy Barber, MPA, and Dr. David Hemenway.



John Hoang, BS, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Department of Health Policy and Management

Background

- Harvard Injury Control Research Center collaborates with the [New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition](#) (NHFSC) and gun owners on the issue of suicide prevention to reduce the societal burden of injury and violence— through surveillance, research, intervention, evaluation, outreach, dissemination, and training.
- The coalition consists of firearm retailers, firearm instructors, gun rights proponents, as well as public health and mental health people. They created the first “[gun shop project](#),” a concept that has spread around the country. An Injury Center project—[Means Matter](#)—has also created a brief [curriculum and slideshow](#) for use by firearm instructors in basic firearm classes and for presentations at places like gun clubs.

Methods

Purpose of practicum study:

To replicate the 2012 study and measure current use of materials by gun shops and the proportion of shops that will offer temporary firearm storage services.

- Designed hard copy survey instrument for interviews; designed online Qualtrics instrument for data entry
- Designed Google map and Google spreadsheet to distribute shop visits to Coalitions members; prepped coalition members on interview strategies
- Continually updated list to reflect retailer closures and new retailer openings and yielded 28 shops with 16 owners and 2 managers
- Evaluations of shops were conducted by coalition members and practicum student via unannounced, in-person visits
- Members conducting the visits invited gun shop owners and employees to participate in a research survey to gain feedback on suicide prevention engagement
- Interviews were conducted in Winter 2020; interviews were terminated in March before all were complete due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. n=28 interviews

Results

- **General Attitudes:** Over three-quarters (77%, N=20) of shops had positive thoughts on the role of firearm retailers spreading awareness about suicide prevention
- **Gun storage:** Nearly two-thirds reported a capacity to store firearms (64%, N=18)
- **Materials on Display:** Over half of the gun shops (57%, N=16) had at least one of the materials on display

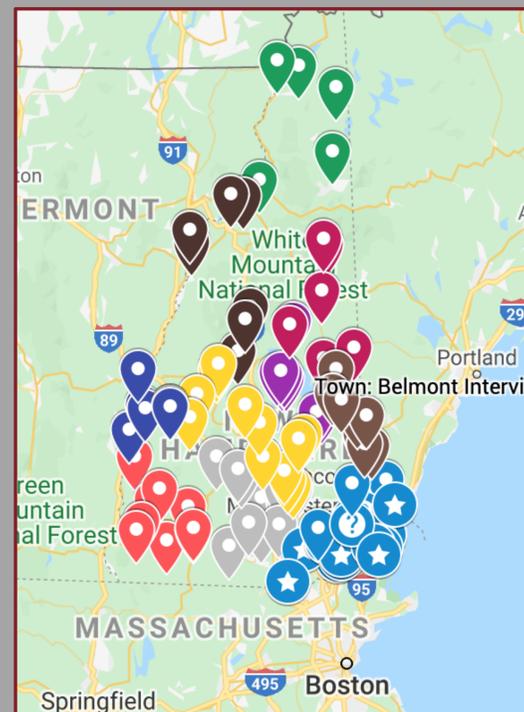
Conclusion

Lessons learned:

- Mailed materials failed to reach many gun stores. Drive and drop off materials to stores during first visit, then invite them to participate in the survey
- Underestimation of brick and mortar store closures. Call to speak to gun shop owner ahead of time
- Different personalities of interviewers could have dramatic effect on data collected
- COVID-19 travel restrictions resulted in small sample size that may not be representative of all gun shops in NH
- More funding is needed for voluntary collaborative approaches

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Google maps: locations of initial list of 93 gun shops in New Hampshire



Suicide prevention material: poster for retailers