

Firearm Death Report

Washtenaw County, 2011-2022



Background

- From 2012 to 2021, the rate of firearm deaths increased 39% in the United States (KFF, 2023).
- In the United States in 2020, more than 45,222 individuals died of firearm-related injuries (CDC, 2022). Of these, 54% were classified as suicides and 43% were homicides (Saunders, 2022).
- In Michigan in 2020, 1,431 individuals died of firearm-related injuries. 52% of these deaths have been classified as suicides and 45% as homicides ([Michigan Violence Death Reporting System](#), 2020).

In 2018, the Washtenaw County Board of Health passed a [Resolution](#) “Addressing Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue” in order to urge a response to gun violence using core public health approaches. In 2023, the Board of Health passed an additional [Resolution](#) supporting the Washtenaw County Community Violence Intervention Team’s recommendations to save lives by interrupting violence.

Local firearm death data is challenging to analyze. Firearm deaths are not automatically reportable to health departments, and local death reports require data cleaning and analysis. For this report, the Washtenaw County Health Department analyzed Washtenaw County Medical Examiner data available from 2011-2022 for local firearm-related deaths.

Total Firearm Deaths by Year

Washtenaw-related firearm deaths, 2011-2022

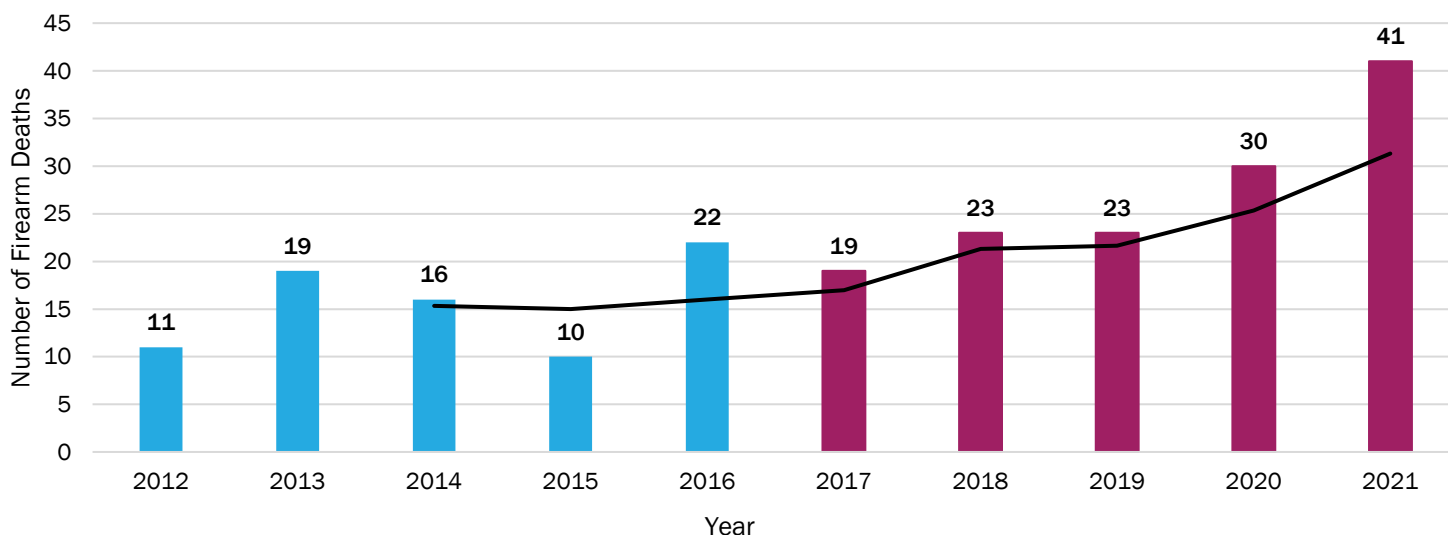


Fig 1. Total Number of Washtenaw-related Firearm Deaths by Year (2012-2021). There is variability from year to year in the number of individuals who die from firearm-related injuries in Washtenaw County. To calculate trends more accurately, we analyzed data from five years (2012-2016, blue bars) and compared to the next five years (2017-2021, purple). The black line shows the 3-year rolling average, which increases from 2012 to 2021.

Firearm deaths are increasing in Washtenaw County

Overall, there was a 74% increase in Washtenaw County-related firearm deaths from 2012-2016 (n=78) to 2017-2021 (n=136). The increase is consistent with state trends, where the number of firearm deaths have increased 30% in Michigan from 2014 (n = 1,098) to 2020 (n=1,431) (MiVDRS, 2023). A direct comparison is difficult given the different time periods being compared.

From 2011-2022, the majority (70%) of firearm deaths in Washtenaw County were suicides, and 30% were classified as homicides. The 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 (MiVDRS, 2023).

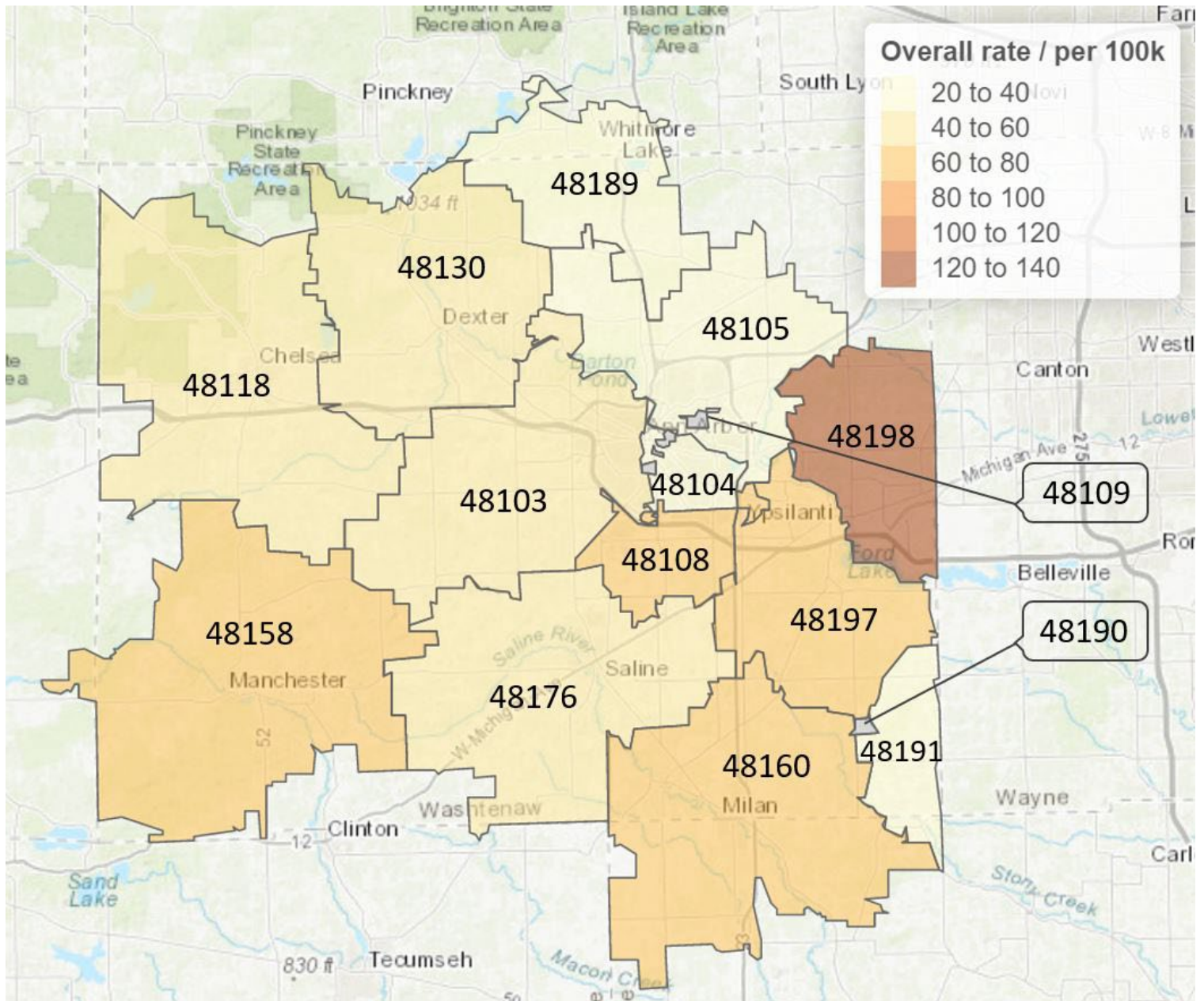


Fig 2. Firearm Death Rates by Individual’s Residential Zip Code, Washtenaw County (2011-2022). This map shows Washtenaw County residents only; people who died in Washtenaw but lived outside of the county are not included.

People from all areas of Washtenaw County die from firearm-related injuries

Figure 2 shows overall firearm death rates by the deceased individual’s Washtenaw County zip code. This map does not indicate the locations of events where the deaths occurred.

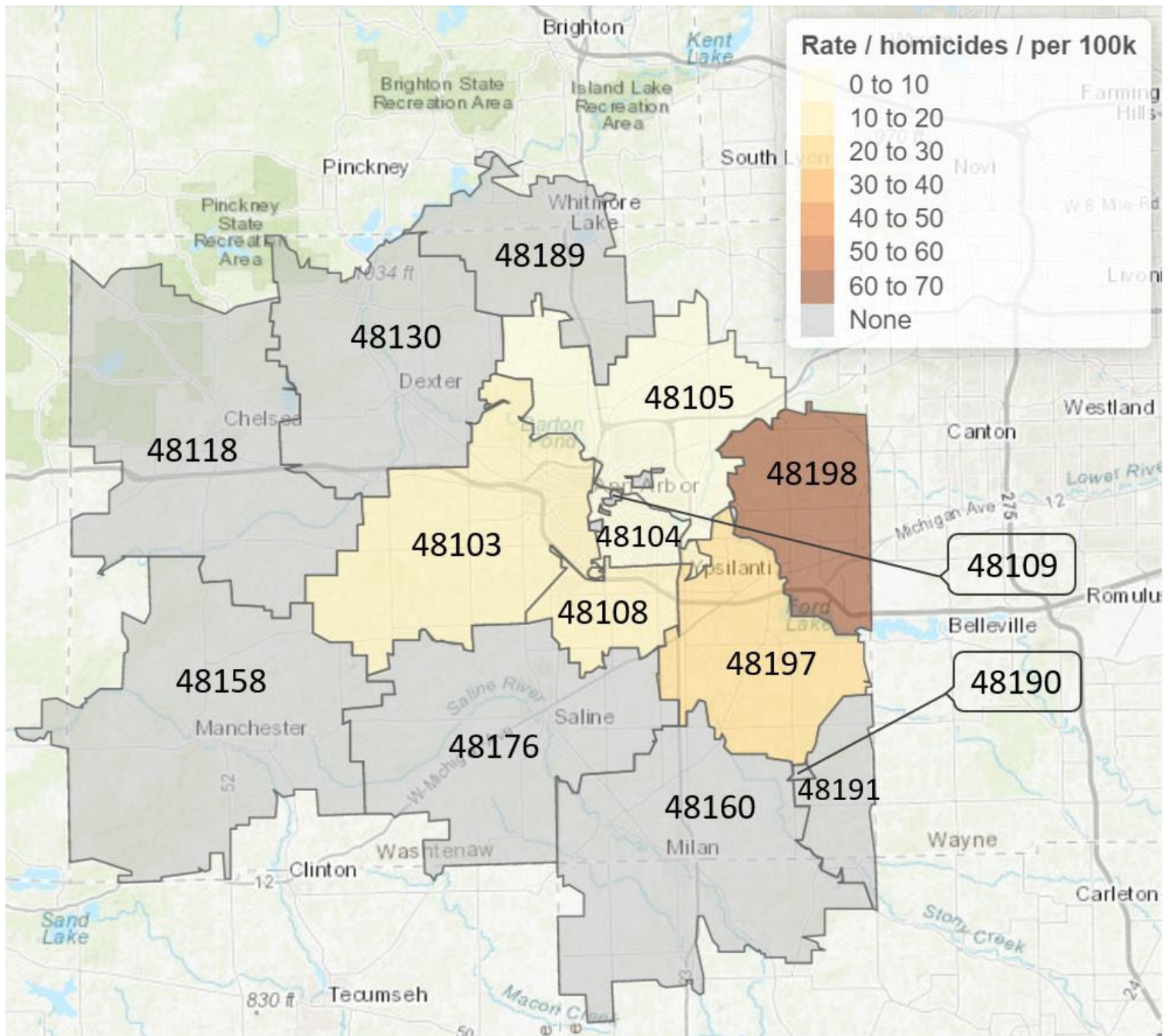


Fig 3. Firearm Homicide Rates by Victim’s Residential Zip Code, Washtenaw County (2011-2022). This map shows Washtenaw County residents only; people who died in Washtenaw but lived outside of the county are not included.

Firearm homicides are increasing in Washtenaw County

There was a 200% increase in the number of people who died from firearm homicide from the years 2012-2016 to 2017-2021 (increasing from 16 to 48 people) in Washtenaw County.

From 2011-2022, firearm homicide deaths occurred among residents living in Ypsilanti zip codes 48197 and 48198 at a disproportionately higher average rate (39.4 per 100,000 people) compared to Washtenaw County residents in other zip codes (average rate of 2.9 per 100,000 people).

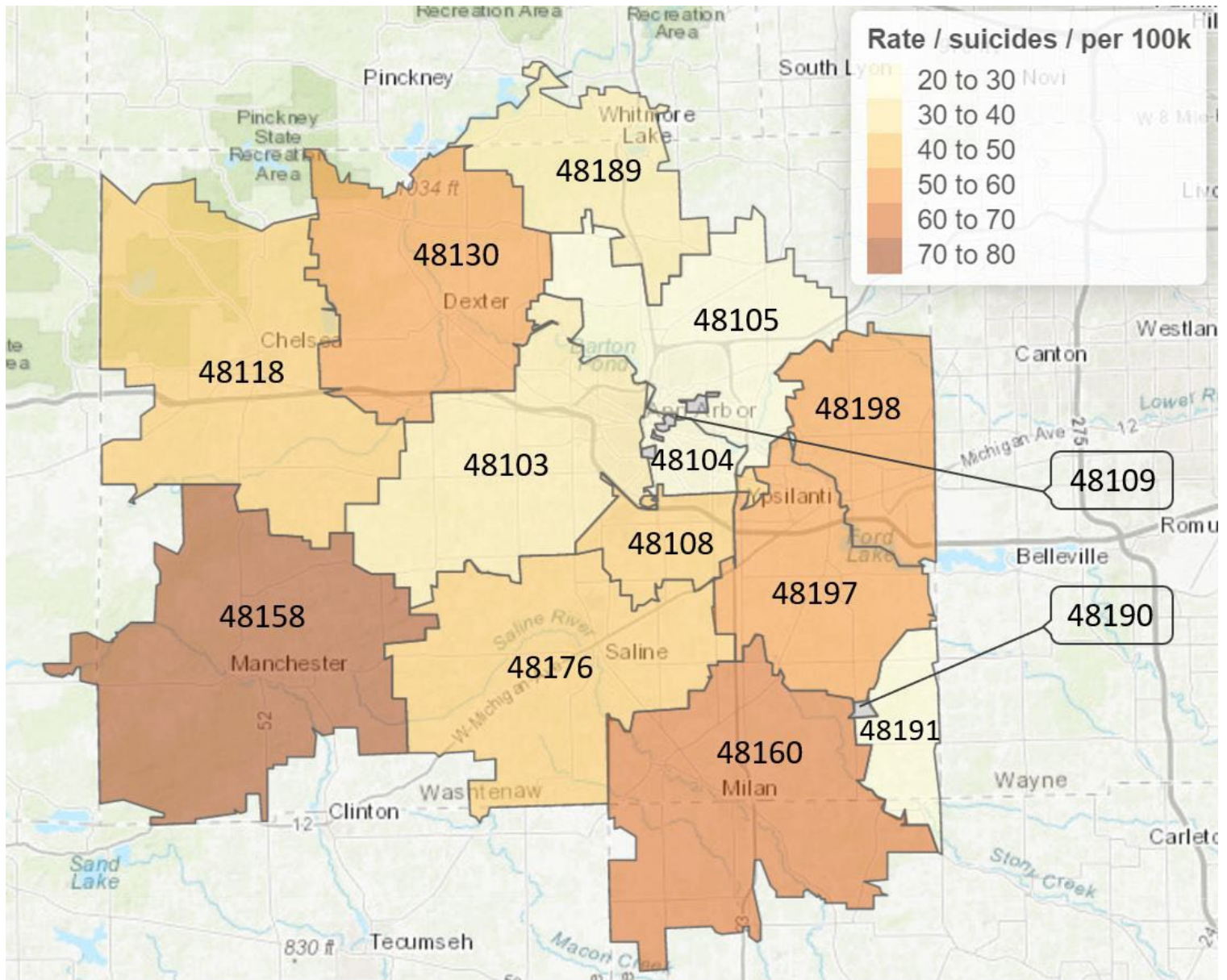


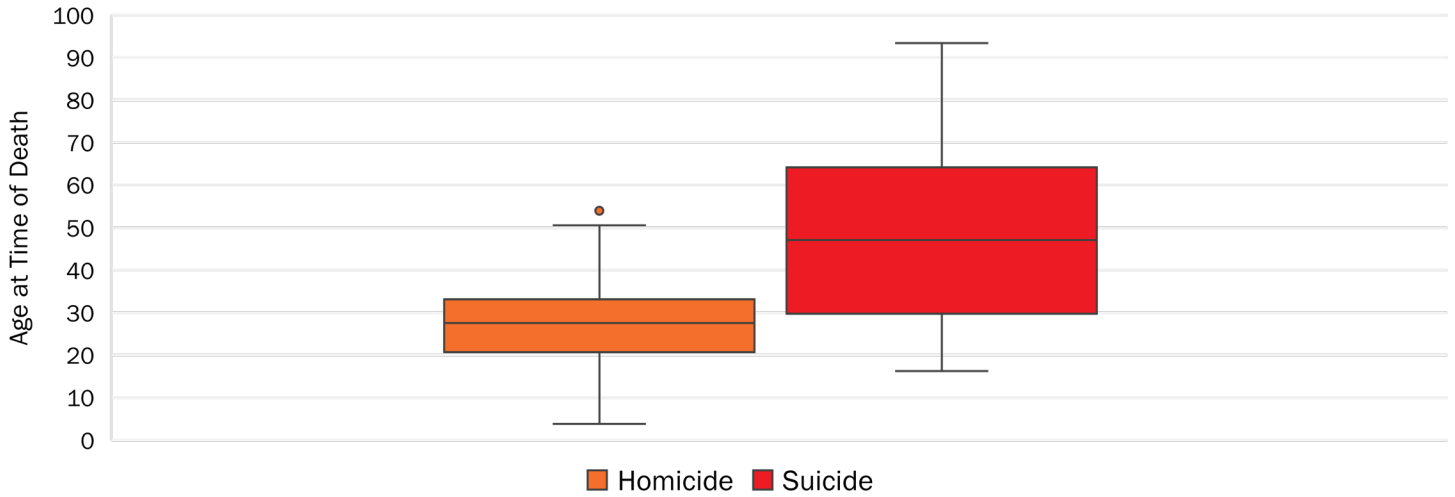
Fig 4. Firearm Suicide Death Rates by Individual's Residential Zip Code, Washtenaw County (2011-2022). This map shows Washtenaw County residents only; people who died in Washtenaw but lived outside of the county are not included.

Firearm suicides are increasing in Washtenaw County

There was a 44% increase in the number of people who died by firearm suicides from the years 2012-2016 to 2017-2021 (increasing from 64 to 92 people) in Washtenaw County. 43% of all suicides among Washtenaw County residents were completed by firearm during the years 2019-2021 (Washtenaw County Health Department, 2023).

Individuals died of suicide using firearms in all Washtenaw County zip codes; however, the rate of firearm suicides appeared higher in rural areas of the county.

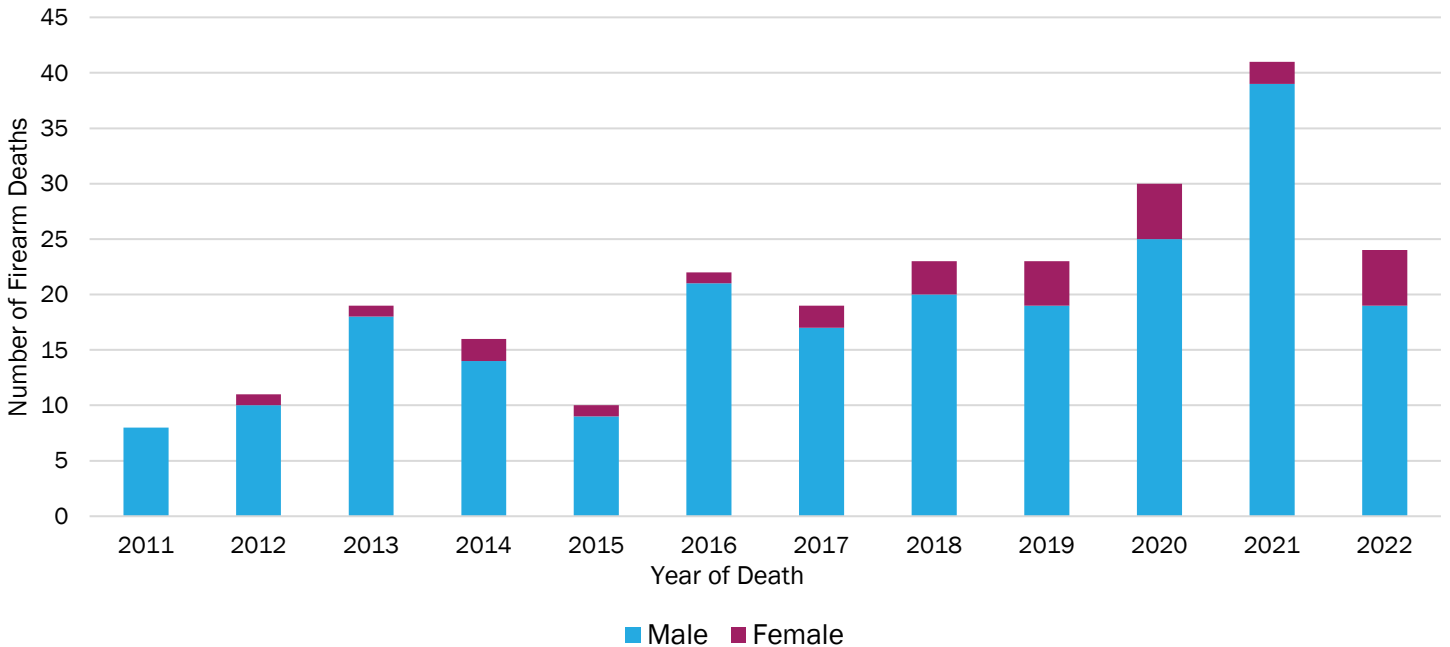
Fig 5. Firearm Deaths by Age and Manner
 Washtenaw-related firearm deaths, 2011-2022



Individuals who die from homicide in Washtenaw tend to be younger than those who die by suicide

Overall, the average age of death from firearm-related injuries was 42 years. When stratified by type of firearm death, people who died from homicide were significantly younger (averaging 29 years old) as compared to those who died by suicide (averaging 48 years old). No individuals older than age 53 died from firearm homicide during this period.

Fig 6. Firearm Death by Year and Sex
 Washtenaw-related firearm deaths, 2011-2022



Men are much more likely to die of a firearm-related injury in Washtenaw

From 2011 to 2022, 89% of people who died of firearm-related injuries in Washtenaw County were male. This is comparable with statewide trends, where 87% of firearm deaths that occurred from 2014-2020 were male (MiVDRS, 2023).

Fig 7. Firearm Homicides by Race

Washtenaw-related firearm deaths, 2011-2022

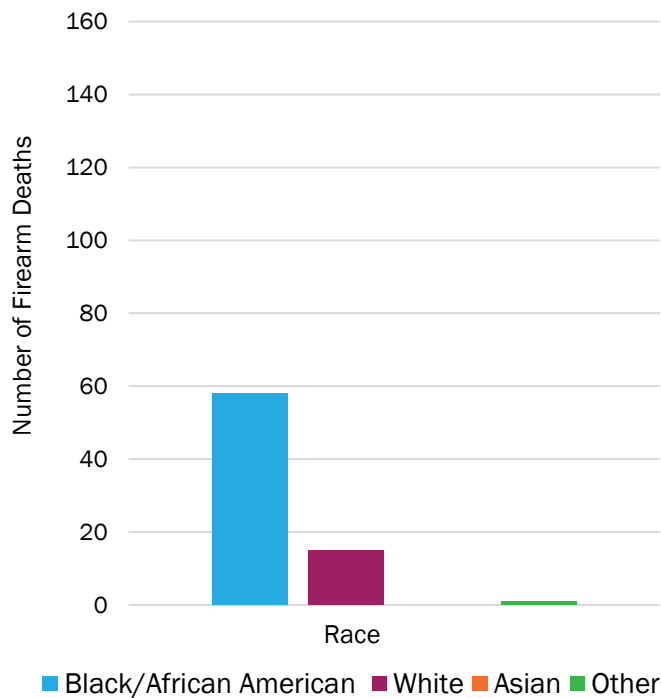
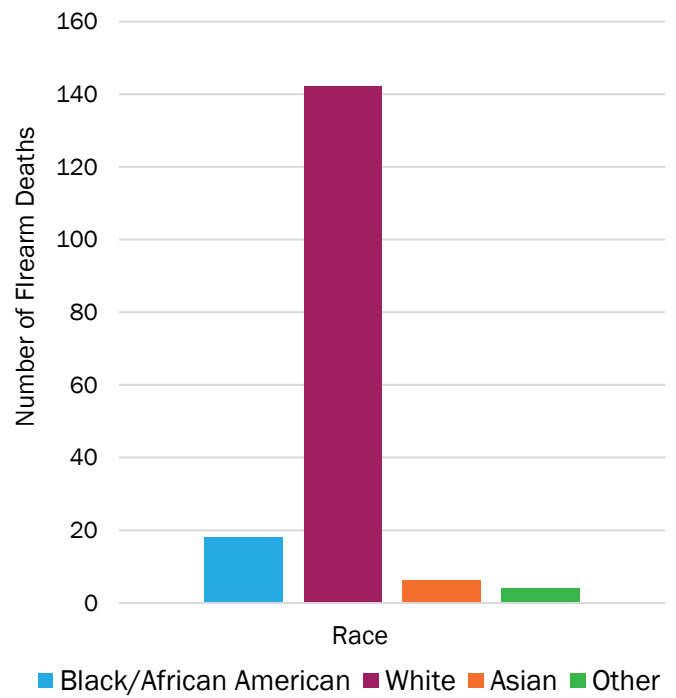


Fig 8. Firearm Suicides by Race

Washtenaw-related firearm deaths, 2011-2022



Most homicide victims were Black/African American; most people who died by firearm suicide were white

Overall, 64% of firearm deaths were in white individuals, while 31% of firearm deaths were in Black/African American individuals. However, Black/African American individuals are overrepresented among firearm homicide deaths: 77% of Washtenaw County firearm homicide victims were Black/African American while only 19% were white.

We see the opposite trend when looking at suicide completions using firearms. 84% of suicides completed by firearm from 2011 to 2022 were white individuals and only 10% were Black/African American individuals.

Table 1. Washtenaw County Firearm Deaths by Race

People who died from firearm-related injuries in Washtenaw County, 2011-2022

Race or Ethnicity	Percent of Firearm Homicide Victims	Percent of Individuals Who Died by Firearm Suicide
Black/African American	77%	10%
White	20%	84%
Asian	N/A	3%
Other/Unspecified	3%	3%
Hispanic	7%	2%
Non-Hispanic	91%	93%

Data Notes

- “People who died from firearm-related injuries in Washtenaw County” includes Washtenaw County residents who died from firearm-related injuries and non-Washtenaw residents who had a fatal firearm injury that occurred in Washtenaw County.
- Data from 2011 and 2022 may be incomplete. While they are used in most analyses in this report, the data for these years was not used for determining trends over time.
- Deaths from firearms are classified as either homicides or suicides by the Washtenaw County Medical Examiner. All firearm-related deaths in this report will use this classification.
- Like all public health data collection and analysis, this data is considered surveillance data. This means that while the data has been carefully cleaned to ensure accuracy, it is subject to change if additional data or information becomes available. Use caution while interpreting.
- This data does not include Washtenaw County residents who may have died outside of the county and were not reported to the Washtenaw County Medical Examiner Office.
- Information about deceased individuals’ mental health status, sexual orientation, veteran status, and substance use and/or substance use disorder status was not available. Circumstantial information (such as perpetrator relationship to victim, interpersonal violence, abuse or neglect by caretaker, legal intervention, and gang-related violence) was not available. Details regarding the owner and legal status of the firearm used in these events are not reported by the Medical Examiner, and therefore, not included.

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 feel suicidal, call 988, text 988, or visit <https://988lifeline.org/chat> for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. You can also text HELLO to 741741 (Crisis Text Line). If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

See more information about suicide warning signs and how to help someone at <https://washtenaw.org/suicide> (scroll down to “How to help someone”).

References

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)(2022) Fast Facts: Firearm Violence Prevention, CDC Violence Prevention. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>

KFF (2023) Deaths Due to Injury by Firearms per 100,000 Population. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/firearms-death-rate-per-100000/>

Michigan Violent Death Reporting System (2020) MiVDRS Data Dashboard: Michigan Firearm Deaths. Available at [MiVDRS \(michigan.gov\)](https://mivdrs.michigan.gov)

Washtenaw County Health Department. (2023) Washtenaw County Health Department Suicide Report. Available at: <https://www.washtenaw.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1199>

Saunders, H. (2022) Do States with Easier Access to Guns have More Suicide Deaths by Firearm?, KFF. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/other/issue-brief/do-states-with-easier-access-to-guns-have-more-suicide-deaths-by-firearm/>

Visit washtenaw.org/firearmviolence for additional resources.