

ABSTRACT

Purpose: To determine the proportion of Colorado firearm owners who store firearms hidden and unlocked by firearm owner, firearm-related, and household characteristics, including the presence of children and adolescents in the household.

Methods: Data are from the 2023 Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Survey, an online state-representative survey. Sociodemographic characteristics, motivations for firearm ownership, number and type of firearms owned, and storage practices were assessed for respondents who reported owning at least one firearm (n=432). The primary outcome was the proportion of firearm owners who reported storing any firearm hidden and unlocked. Findings are presented as weighted percentages and 95% confidence intervals (CI).

Results: Among Colorado firearm owners in 2023, 47.2% (95% CI: 40.7, 53.9) stored at least one firearm of any type hidden and unlocked, 39.7% (95% CI: 33.3, 46.4) stored at least one handgun hidden and unlocked, and 25.7% (95% CI: 20.5, 31.8) stored at least one long gun hidden and unlocked. Among households with children present, 31.3% (95% CI: 21.6, 42.9) stored at least one firearm hidden and unlocked. The proportion of firearm owners who stored at least one firearm hidden and unlocked was significantly higher among those who were older and did not have children in the household.

Discussion: Storing firearms hidden and unlocked is common among firearms owners in Colorado, including in households with children present. Efforts to prevent firearm injuries, especially by children and adolescents, should emphasize the risks of relying solely on hiding firearms to prevent unauthorized access.

Key words: firearms, firearm storage, injury prevention, suicide, adolescent health