

# Hidden and Unlocked Firearm Storage among Colorado Firearm Owners

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## BACKGROUND

In 2022, firearm injuries became the leading cause of death among children and adolescents in the United States.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends secure firearm storage within the home - unlocked, unloaded, stored separately from ammunition -, as secure storage is associated with a reduced risk of unintentional and intentional firearm injury and death in children and adolescents.

Anecdotal evidence suggests firearm owners often hide firearms instead of using locking devices.

This study aims to 1) *characterize the proportion of Colorado households of with hidden firearms*, and 2) *assess motivations for firearm ownership and perceptions of firearm-related risks*.

## METHODS

**Design:** 2023 Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Survey (COFIPS) distributed to a sample of 1818 participants (70% response rate) online in English and Spanish.

**Population:** Colorado adults with access to email who were not institutionalized. 432 firearm owners were further queried about firearm ownership and storage practices, motivations for ownership, and perceptions of firearm-related risks.

**Analysis:** 95% CI are presented with survey weights applied such that estimates are representative of the Colorado population of adults.

## RESULTS

Among Colorado firearm owners,

- 47.2% (95% CI: 40.7, 53.9) stored at least one **firearm** hidden and unlocked
- 39.7% (95% CI: 33.3, 46.4) stored at least one **handgun** hidden and unlocked
- 25.7% (95% CI: 20.5, 31.8) stored at least one **long gun** hidden and unlocked
- 31.3% (95% CI: 21.6, 42.9) of **households with children present** stored at least one firearm hidden and unlocked

Proportion of Colorado firearm owners who store firearms hidden and unlocked, by household and sociodemographic characteristics.<sup>(a)</sup>

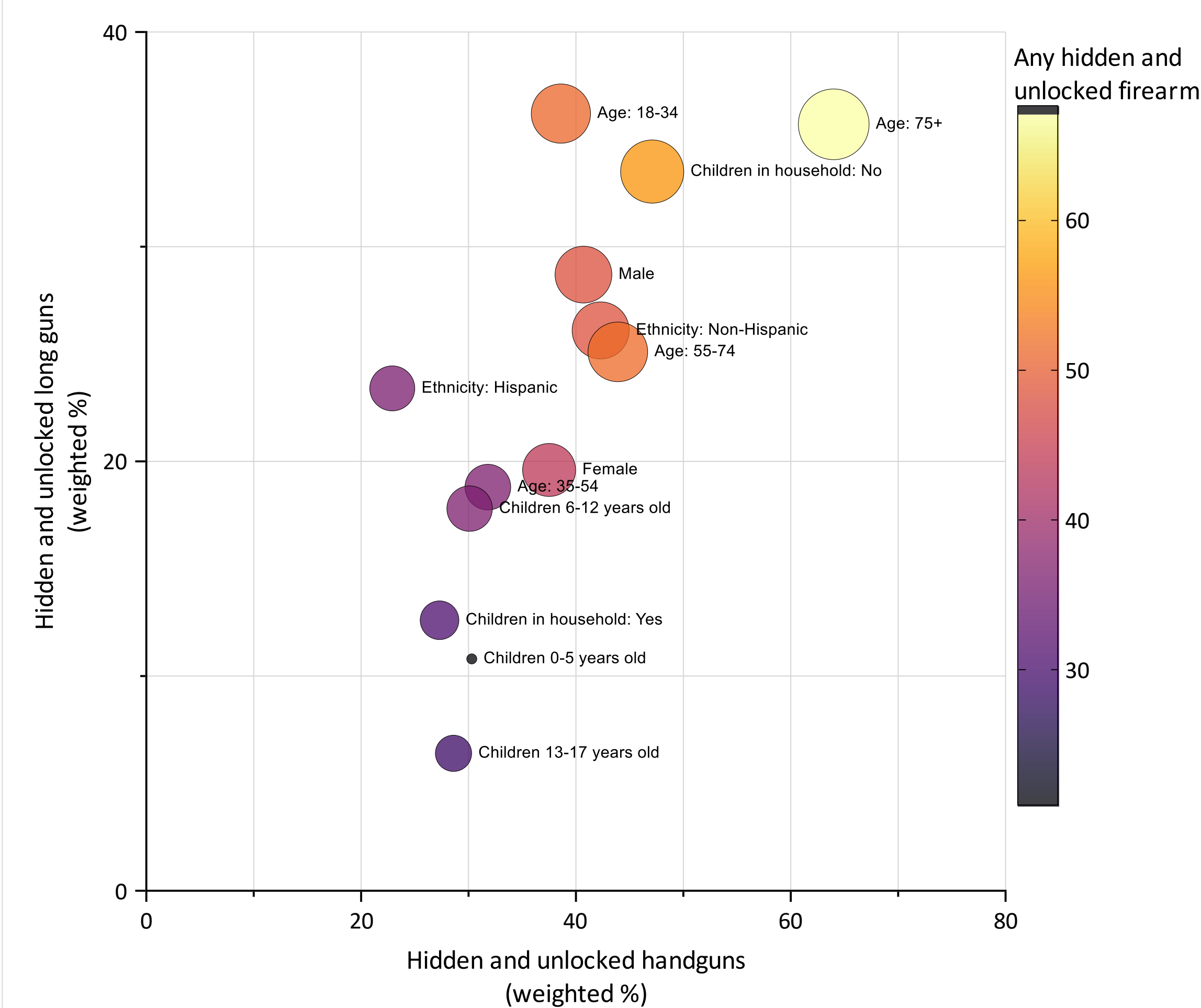
Demographic	n	Any hidden and unlocked firearm(s)		Hidden and unlocked handgun(s)		Hidden and unlocked long gun(s)	
		Weighted % (95% CI)	P value	Weighted % (95% CI)	P value	Weighted % (95% CI)	P value
<b>Total Firearm Owners</b>	432	47.2 (40.7, 53.9)		39.7 (33.3, 46.4)		25.7 (20.5, 31.8)	
<b>Sex</b>			0.396		0.532		0.045
Male	243	48.6 (40.2, 57.1)		40.7 (32.6, 49.4)		28.7 (21.8, 36.7)	
Female	189	44.3 (34.5, 54.5)		37.5 (28.2, 47.9)		19.6 (12.7, 29.0)	
<b>Age (years)</b>			<0.001		0.002		0.009
18-34	66	51.6 (35.2, 67.7)		38.6 (23.6, 56.2)		36.2 (21.9, 53.5)	
35-54	165	37.0 (27.3, 47.8)		31.8 (22.6, 42.8)		18.8 (11.9, 28.5)	
55-74	159	52.1 (41.1, 62.9)		43.9 (33.5, 55.0)		25.1 (17.5, 34.6)	
75+	42	67.6 (44.9, 84.3)		64.0 (41.8, 81.5)		35.7 (19.0, 56.8)	
<b>Race</b>			0.895		0.890		0.987
White	384	47.1 (40.2, 54.1)		40.0 (33.3, 47.2)		25.6 (20.1, 32.1)	
Black or African American	13	N < 30		N < 30		N < 30	
Other	34	45.7 (25.4, 67.6)		37.7 (19.0, 61.0)		26.9 (10.8, 52.8)	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			0.078		0.005		0.660
Hispanic	58	36.4 (21.9, 54.0)		22.9 (12.4, 38.6)		23.4 (11.6, 41.4)	
Non-Hispanic	374	48.9 (41.8, 56.0)		42.3 (35.3, 49.6)		26.1 (20.4, 32.7)	
<b>Presence of children in the household</b>							
Yes	154	31.3 (21.6, 42.9)	<0.001	27.3 (18.2, 38.8)	<0.001	12.6 (6.9, 21.9)	<0.001
No	278	56.7 (48.5, 64.6)		47.1 (38.9, 55.3)		33.5 (26.3, 41.6)	
<b>Ages of children in the household<sup>(b)</sup></b>							
Children 0-5 years old	58	30.9 (15.7, 51.7)	0.951	30.3 (15.2, 51.3)	0.502	10.8 (3.3, 30.0)	0.598
Children 6-12 years old	91	36.8 (23.3, 52.7)	0.066	30.1 (17.6, 46.4)	0.313	17.8 (8.9, 32.5)	0.019
Children 13-17 years old	71	29.6 (16.7, 46.8)	0.697	28.6 (15.9, 46.0)	0.704	6.4 (2.6, 15.0)	0.032
<b>Education</b>			0.229		0.670		0.010
HS graduate or less education	62	37.3 (22.4, 55.2)		33.6 (19.3, 51.7)		18.4 (8.4, 35.6)	
Some college or Associate's degree	136	46.9 (35.6, 58.6)		41.5 (30.4, 53.5)		19.9 (12.2, 30.9)	
Bachelor's degree	153	49.6 (39.0, 60.2)		41.4 (31.3, 52.3)		32.0 (23.0, 42.7)	
Master's degree or above	81	54.3 (39.2, 68.7)		38.1 (24.7, 53.6)		36.5 (23.0, 52.4)	
<b>Income</b>			0.754		0.890		0.433
Under \$24,999	52	37.1 (22.2, 55.0)		33.2 (19.0, 51.3)		17.9 (8.4, 34.1)	
\$25,000 to \$49,999	67	44.6 (28.7, 61.7)		39.6 (24.6, 57.0)		24.6 (13.7, 40.2)	
\$50,000 to \$74,999	89	44.1 (30.0, 59.1)		39.2 (25.6, 54.8)		29.7 (17.0, 46.6)	
\$75,000 to \$99,999	80	52.1 (38.1, 65.8)		44.5 (30.8, 59.2)		32.7 (20.2, 48.1)	
\$100,000 or more	144	48.0 (37.9, 58.3)		38.8 (29.2, 49.3)		23.1 (16.0, 32.2)	
<b>Urbanicity</b>			0.848		0.512		0.762
Urban	156	49.1 (37.8, 60.4)		40.4 (29.5, 52.4)		23.5 (15.2, 34.6)	
Suburban	184	46.9 (37.2, 56.9)		41.5 (32.1, 51.7)		26.4 (18.7, 35.8)	
Rural	92	45.3 (32.0, 59.3)		34.6 (22.9, 48.6)		27.5 (17.0, 41.2)	
<b>Veteran and military service status</b>			0.162		0.199		0.634
Never served/not serving	338	45.2 (37.9, 52.8)		37.9 (30.8, 45.4)		26.3 (20.2, 33.6)	
Previously served/currently serving	94	48.3 (39.1, 66.1)		44.7 (31.4, 58.8)		24.1 (15.1, 36.1)	

Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; HS, high school

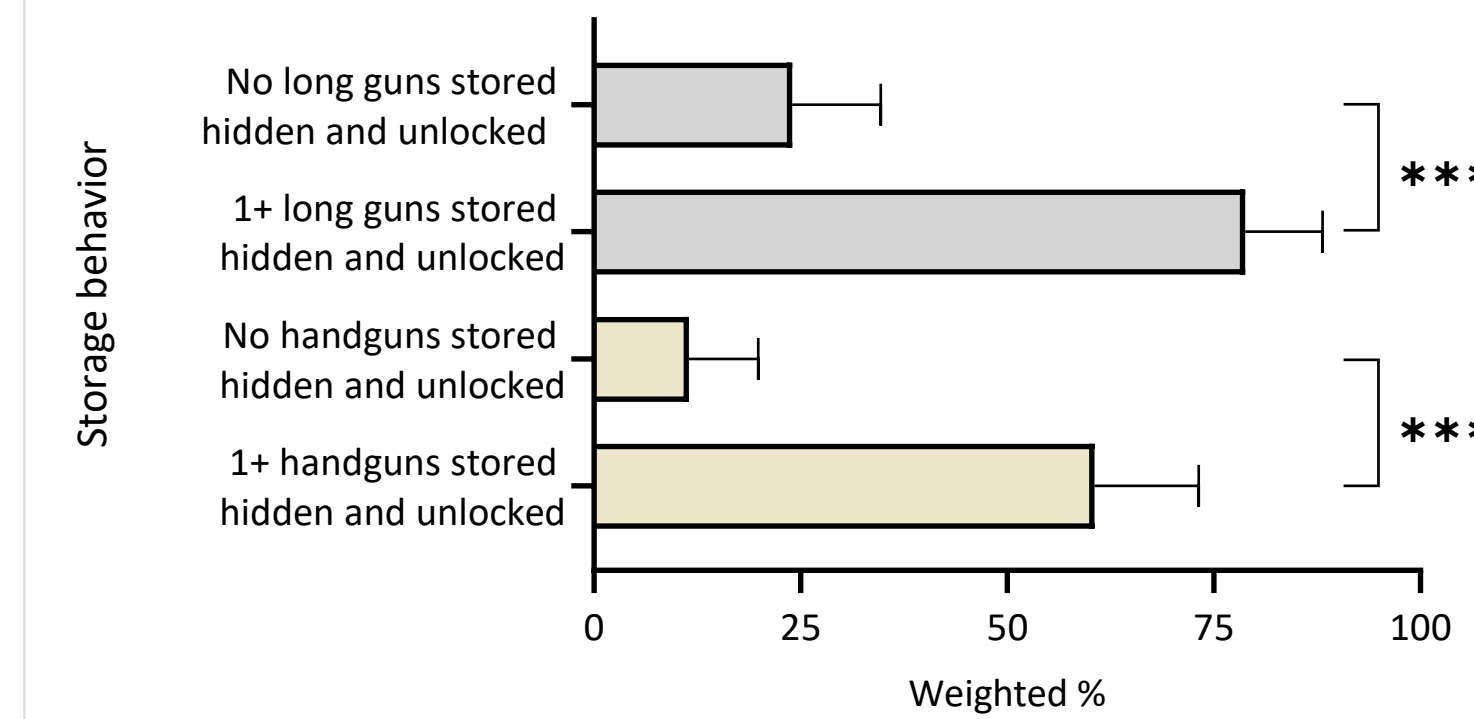
<sup>(a)</sup> Weighted row percentages with denominators of n < 30 are suppressed due to unstable estimation

<sup>(b)</sup> Child age group comparisons are among households with at least one child present. For example, the group "Children 0-5 years old" includes households with children present and at least one child is 0-5 years of age. Groups are not mutually exclusive.

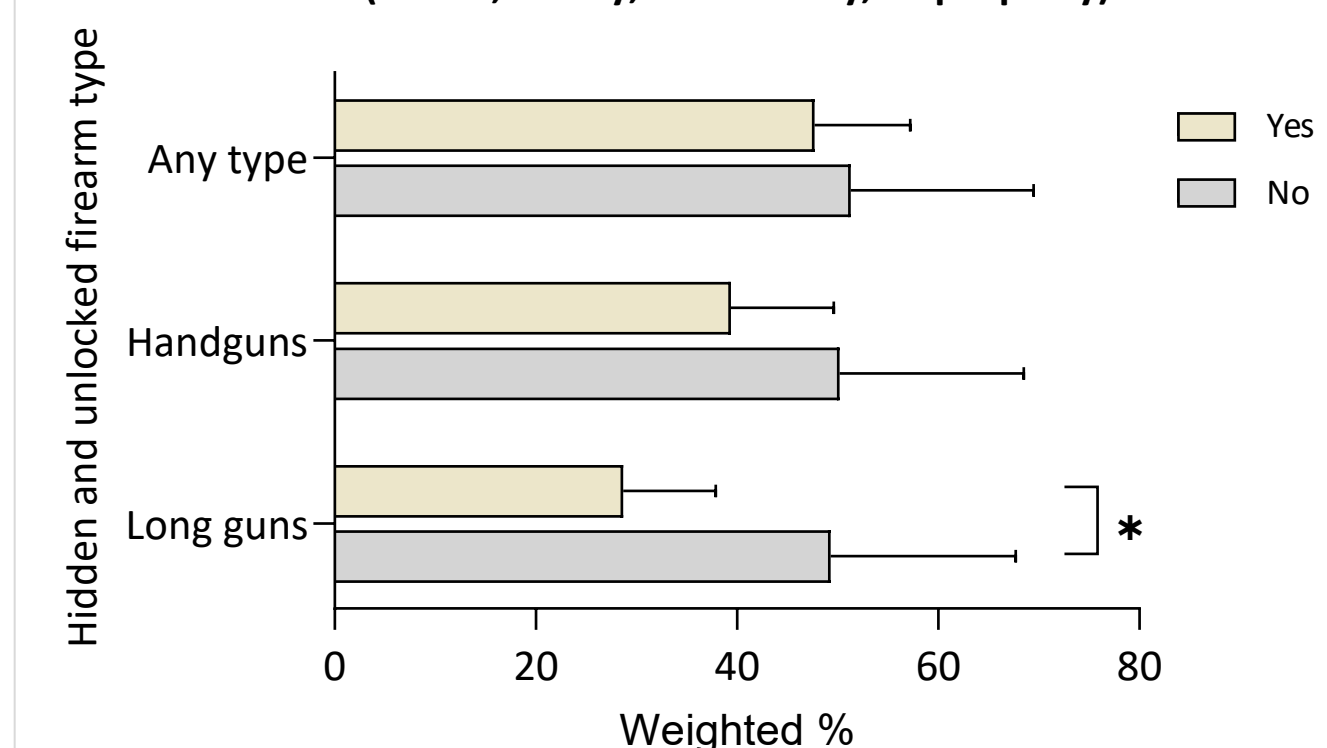
Proportion of Hidden and Unlocked Firearms Among Colorado Firearm Owners by Demographics and Household Characteristics



Firearm Storage Behaviors Among Firearm Owners with Both Handguns and Long Guns



Own Firearms for Protection (of self, family, community, or property)



## DISCUSSION

- Access to firearms is a direct risk factor for firearm injury and death
- Preventing youth access to firearms through secure firearm storage reduces the risk of unintentional firearm injuries and death
- Studies show that parents greatly underestimate child and adolescent access to firearms within the homes
- Storing one type of firearm hidden and unlocked predicts storage of other firearm types in the same manner
- Future research should further characterize the storage practice of hiding firearms and address perceptions of firearm risks to guide public health interventions aimed at increasing secure firearm storage and decreasing youth firearm access

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