

2025 STATE OF THE POLICY

Colorado's Safe Storage Laws



Firearm Injury
Prevention Initiative

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Colorado has two laws designed to promote secure firearm storage in homes and vehicles: **Safe Storage of Firearms (HB21-1106)** and **Secure Firearm Storage in a Vehicle (HB24-1248)**. Throughout this brief, we use the term “secure storage” when referring to the practice of physically storing firearms in a manner that prevents unauthorized access. We use “Safe Storage” when explicitly referring to the Safe Storage of Firearms law.

SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS



Effective as of July 1, 2021, this law requires firearm owners to securely store firearms – using a locking device, gun safe, or gun cabinet – to prevent unauthorized access by children and those prohibited from possessing firearms under state or federal laws. Violations result in criminal charges.



Research shows that laws that prevent unauthorized access to firearms by children are associated with fewer youth suicides, unintentional shootings, and violent crimes across all age groups. These policies help keep families and communities safer.^{1,2}

SECURE FIREARM STORAGE IN A VEHICLE



Effective as of January 1, 2025, this law prohibits people from leaving firearms in unattended vehicles unless they are stored in a locked container that is placed out of view and the vehicle itself is locked. Violations result in civil charges.



This law is intended to reduce the amount of firearms stolen from vehicles. Stolen firearms are often trafficked and later used in violent crimes, which disproportionately harm Black and Latino youth. This law aims to protect impacted communities and promote safer environments for all.^{3,4}

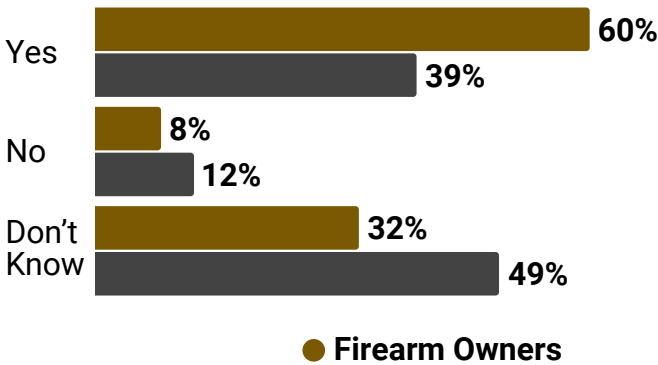


Colorado is one of 35 states, and the District of Columbia, with a Safe Storage Law, which sometimes include Child Access Prevention (CAP) Laws. Laws related to carriage and storage of firearms in vehicles vary by state.

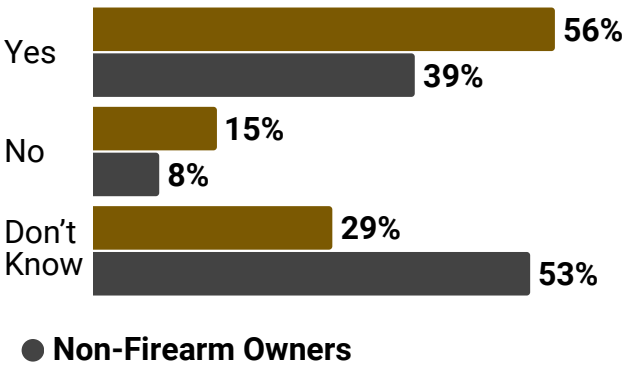
Education and public messaging are critical to helping raise awareness about the existence of these laws and what they mean for Coloradans. Data from the 2025 Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Survey (COFIPS) show that while many Coloradans are aware of the state’s secure storage laws, over a third of firearm owners and over half of non-firearm owners either don’t know or don’t believe these laws exist in Colorado. This tells us that more education is needed about these laws.

WE ASKED COLORADO ADULTS, DOES COLORADO HAVE A LAW...

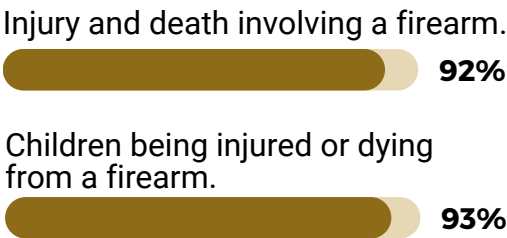
with consequences for firearm owners if they store their firearms in a way that allows access by unsupervised children?



requiring that firearms in vehicles are stored in a locked container out of plain view?



COLORADANS AGREE SECURELY STORING FIREARMS CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF:



79%

of Coloradans with children and firearms in the home state a **primary reason** why they keep their firearms locked and unloaded is to prevent unauthorized access by children.

HOW DO COLORADANS STORE THEIR FIREARMS?

HANDGUNS



LONG GUNS



In Colorado, **37% of households with firearms** store one or more of their handguns unlocked and **35%** store one or more of their long guns unlocked.

THE USE OF SAFE STORAGE LAWS IN COLORADO

To assess how Colorado's secure storage laws are being used to discourage firearm owners from leaving firearms unlocked—whether in homes with unauthorized or prohibited users or in unattended vehicles—we reviewed court records involving charges filed for violations of each law.

118

Safe Storage cases filed between April 2021 and December 2024.

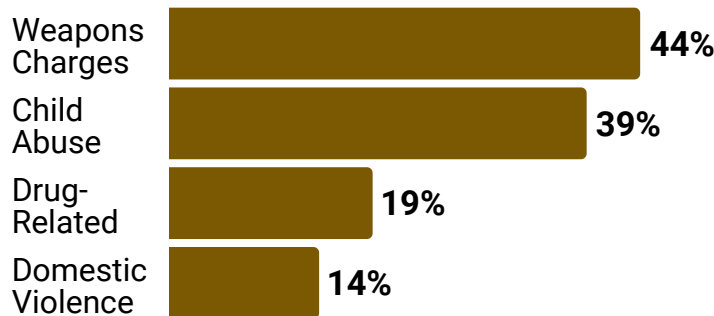
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Secure Storage in Vehicle cases filed between the law's implementation in January 2025 and when we obtained court records in June 2025. We plan to update this count annually as we receive new data.

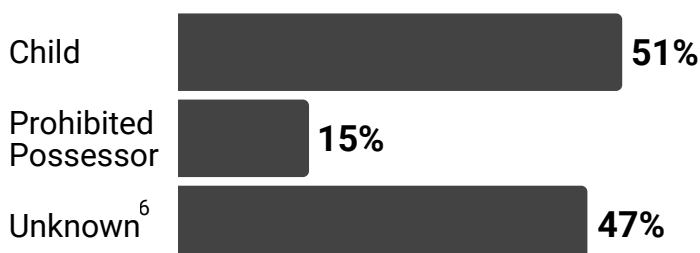
We were able to obtain court records for 102 of the 118 Safe Storage cases that were filed. Of the 102 cases that we analyzed:

Safe Storage charges were the **primary charge** made in 30 cases (29%). In 59 cases (58%), Safe Storage charges were a **secondary charge**, meaning they were made at the same time as another, related charge. In 13 cases (13%), it was **unknown** whether Safe Storage charges were the primary or secondary charge.

Other charges occurring at the same time of the Safe Storage charge included:⁵



Violations of the Safe Storage law involved the following groups accessing firearms:⁵



WHERE WERE SAFE STORAGE CASES FILED?

Top 5 counties with the highest number of cases filed:

12 Larimer
11 Douglas
11 Weld
10 El Paso
8 Adams

Top 5 counties with the highest rates of cases filed per 100,000 residents:

15 Rio Grande
13 Douglas
13 Weld
12 El Paso
12 Adams

WHAT DOES THIS POLICY MEAN FOR COLORADANS?

Colorado's secure storage laws are designed to prevent unauthorized access to firearms — especially by children and individuals prohibited from possessing them.

For Colorado residents, this means reinforcing the need to take steps to store firearms securely at home and in vehicles. Firearm trade organizations and medical professionals recommend that firearms be stored locked and unloaded, with ammunition stored separately. Individual storage decisions will be influenced by a variety of factors.

These laws aim to reduce unintentional shootings, suicides, and theft, which can lead to violent crime. By promoting and normalizing responsible firearm ownership, these policies can help protect families and communities statewide.

Unless otherwise mentioned, all data comes from the 2025 Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Survey and the abstraction of secure storage laws in Colorado.



Learn how we collected & analyzed data.

The University of Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Initiative (FIPI) is a nonpartisan, multidisciplinary research center dedicated to reducing firearm-related injuries and deaths through science, education, and collaboration across a range of perspectives. FIPI does not support or oppose any of the laws discussed in this brief. The goal of sharing this information is to help people learn more about how certain laws are being implemented in Colorado.

RESOURCES

Learn more about Safe Storage/Child Access Prevention laws.



Learn more about the rationales for secure storage and options for secure storage in your household.



Explore secure storage resources in Colorado and nationally.



REFERENCES & NOTES

1. RAND, <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/child-access-prevention.html#state-implementation-of-childa->
2. Athey, A., Nestadt, P. S., Rogers M. L., Dunton, Z., McCourt, A. & Wilcox, H. C. (2024). A national evaluation of the impact of child access prevention laws on rates of youth suicide and other youth firearm deaths. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2024.11.009>
3. Billings SB. Smoking gun? Linking gun ownership to crime victimization. *Journal of Public Economics*. 2023;222:104874. doi:10.1016/j.jpubeco.2023.104874
4. Laqueur HS, McCort C, Smirniotis C, Robinson S, Wintemute GJ. Trends and Sources of Crime Guns in California: 2010–2021. *J Urban Health*. 2023;100(5):879–891. doi:10.1007/s11524-023-00741-y
5. It's possible that there were multiple charges filed or multiple unauthorized/prohibited users identified in a case, therefore these responses were not mutually exclusive.
6. "Unknown" includes cases in which no unauthorized or prohibited user was noted.