



New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Brief

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is an annual telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and several United States Territories. The New York Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is administered by the New York State Department of Health to provide statewide and regional information on behaviors, risk factors, and use of preventive health services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death.

Firearm Violence

New York State Adults, 2023

Introduction

In 2023, over 46,000 people in the United States died from firearm violence, and each year even more individuals suffer nonfatal firearm injuries than those who lose their lives¹. The impact of firearms extends far beyond perpetrators and victims — reaching bystanders, families, and the broader communities in which violence occurs². While the lived experience of firearm violence exposure has been a widespread topic of conversation for several decades, measurable data has only recently begun to capture the true scope of the issue.

In 2023, New York State became the first state to add interpersonal firearm violence exposure questions to its Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, enabling the examination of direct or witnessed firearm violence exposure experiences among New York residents. The experiences have been categorized into three distinct categories: no firearm violence exposure, witnessed firearm violence exposure, and direct firearm violence exposure. Witnessed firearm violence is defined as having only ever seen someone threaten or hurt another person with a gun on purpose. Direct firearm violence is defined as having ever been threatened with a gun, robbed with a gun, shot, or been shot.

Health Equity

The social determinants of health data collected through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System allow researchers to examine how firearm violence exposure intersects with social, health, and occupational disparities. While it is known that minority populations — such as Black and Hispanic communities — are disproportionately represented as victims of firearm violence³, measuring exposure offers a new lens for understanding how firearm violence further impacts marginalized communities beyond injury and death alone.

Key Findings



- Approximately 1 in 6 (17%) New York adults reported lifetime exposure to firearm violence, 12.9% experienced direct firearm violence.
- Men (17.9%) had more than double the prevalence of direct firearm violence exposure compared with women (8.3%).
- Black non-Hispanic adults (18.2%) had higher direct firearm violence exposure than White non-Hispanic adults (11.0%) and Asian non-Hispanic adults (6.4%).
- Veterans experienced the highest prevalence of direct firearm violence exposure (28.6%), more than twice that of non-veterans (11.8%).
- Exposure to direct firearm violence was higher among individuals reporting sexual violence, rape, cannabis use, inability to afford medical care, and fair or poor health.



Figure 1. Prevalence of Firearm Violence Among New York State Adults, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023

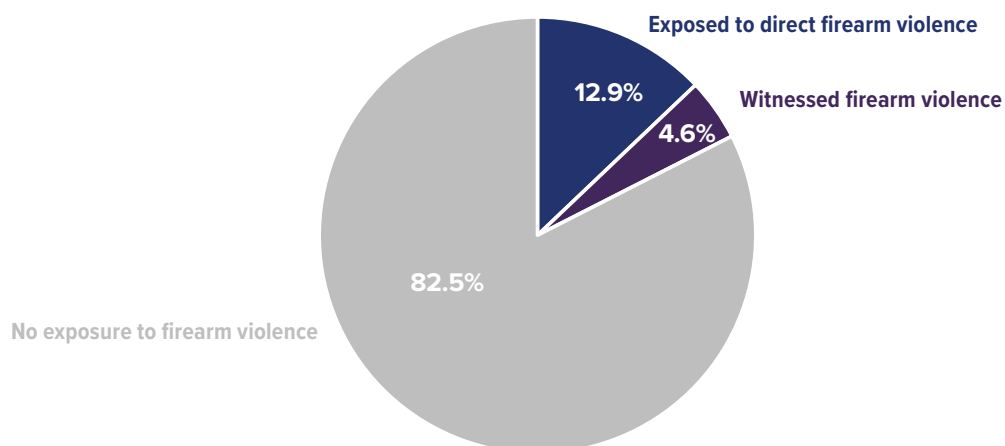


Figure 2. Prevalence of Direct Firearm Violence Among New York State Adults by Sociodemographic Factors Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023

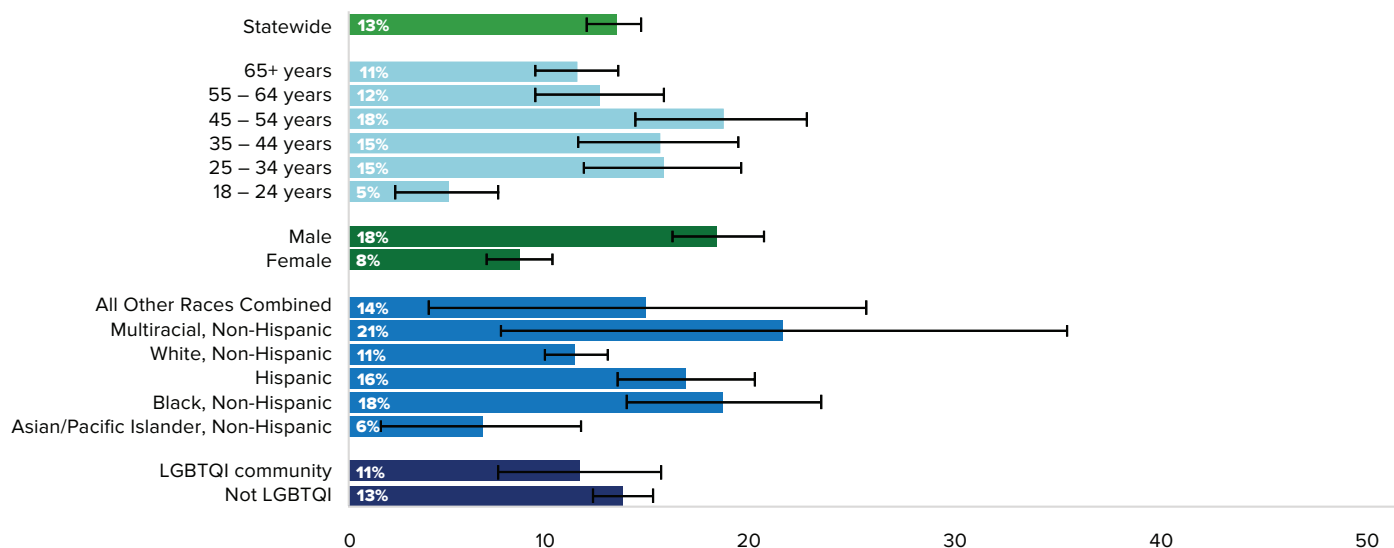
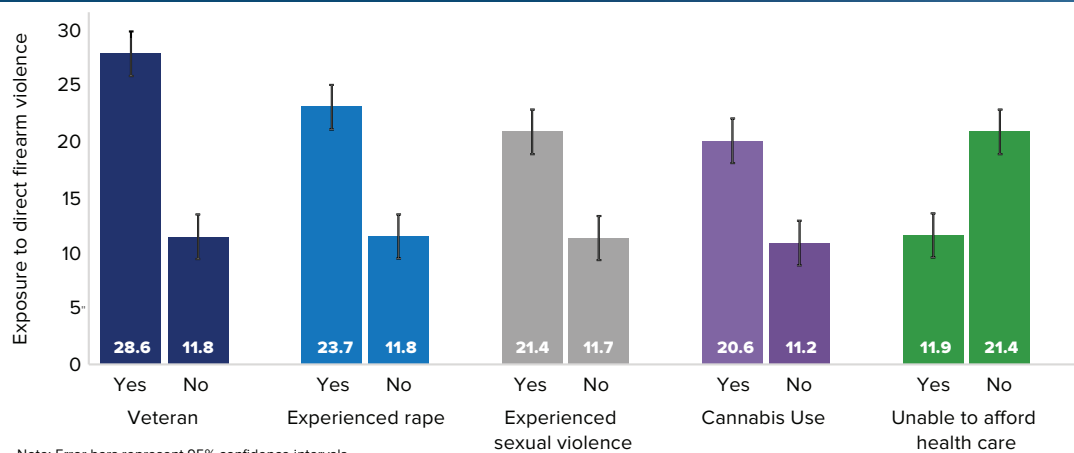


Figure 3. Prevalence of Direct Firearm Violence Among New York State Adults by Social and Behavioral Factors, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023



¹Was there a time in the past 12 months when you needed to see a doctor but could not because you could not afford it?

Table 1. Prevalence of Firearm Violence in New York State, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023

	Direct Firearm Violence		Witnessed Firearm Violence	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
New York State [n=5,625]	12.9	11.5 – 14.2	4.6	3.8 – 5.5
Region				
New York City	14.0	11.8 – 16.1	4.3	3.2 – 5.4
New York State exclusive of New York City	12.2	10.4 – 13.9	4.8	3.6 – 6.1
Sex³				
Female	8.3	6.8 – 9.9	3.5	2.6 – 4.3
Male	17.9	15.7 – 20.1	5.9	4.4 – 7.5
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity⁴				
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and/or intersex	11.3	7.3 – 15.2	4.5	3.6 – 5.4
Heterosexual/straight and cisgender	13.3	11.8 – 14.8	7.4	2.7 – 12.1
Age (Years)				
18 – 24	4.8	2.3 – 7.3	4.5	2.1 – 6.8
25 – 34	15.2	11.4 – 19.0	5.2	2.7 – 7.8
35 – 44	15.0	11.1 – 18.9	6.4	3.4 – 9.5
45 – 54	18.1	13.9 – 22.3	5.6	3.5 – 7.8
55 – 64	12.2	9.1 – 15.3	3.8	2.3 – 5.3
65+	11.0	9.0 – 13.0	3.1	2.0 – 4.3
Race/Ethnicity				
Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	6.4	1.6 – 11.3	2.5	0.5 – 4.4
Black, Non-Hispanic	18.2	13.4 – 22.9	6.4	3.5 – 9.3
Hispanic	16.4	13.1 – 19.7	6.0	4.0 – 7.9
Multiracial, non-Hispanic	21.1	7.3 – 34.8	2.6	0.0 – 6.0
White, non-Hispanic	11.0	9.4 – 12.6	4.4	3.2 – 5.6
All Other race groups combined, non-Hispanic	14.4	3.7 – 25.0	3.6	0.0-7.2
Annual Household Income⁵				
Less than \$25,000	15.0	11.7 – 18.3	6.0	3.5 – 8.6
\$25,000-\$34,999	14.5	10.2 – 18.7	2.3	0.8 – 3.9
\$35,000-\$49,999	13.7	9.2 – 18.1	4.7	2.3 – 7.1
\$50,000-\$74,999	15.4	10.7 – 20.0	5.6	2.7 – 8.5
\$75,000 or more	11.5	9.4 – 13.7	4.7	3.3 – 6.1
Missing	11.3	8.2 – 14.4	4.0	2.0 – 6.0
Educational Attainment				
Less than high school	12.7	7.7 – 17.8	5.7	1.9 – 9.5
High school or GED	14.4	11.4 – 17.4	4.6	2.7 – 6.6
Some post-high school	14.0	11.3 – 16.8	4.5	3.1 – 5.9
College graduate	10.7	9.1 – 12.4	4.5	3.4 – 5.6
Disability⁶				
Yes	17.1	14.4 – 19.8	5.1	3.2 – 7.0
No	11.3	9.7 – 12.9	4.4	3.5 – 5.4

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	Direct Firearm Violence		Witnessed Firearm Violence	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
New York State [n=5,625]	12.9	11.5 – 14.2	4.6	3.8 – 5.5
Employment status				
Employed	12.6	10.9 – 14.4	5.4	4.1 – 6.7
Unemployed	17.4	11.5 – 23.2	3.9	1.4 – 6.5
Not in labor force	11.2	8.1 – 14.2	3.9	2.0 – 5.7
Cannabis use				
Yes	20.6	16.1 – 25.1	7.3	4.8 – 9.7
No	11.2	9.9 – 12.6	4.1	3.2 – 5.0
Frequent mental distress⁷				
Yes	19.9	15.8 – 24.0	5.6	3.4 – 7.8
No	11.6	10.2 – 13.1	4.5	3.5 – 5.4
Current smoking⁸				
Yes	20.8	14.9 – 26.6	6.3	2.0 – 10.6
No	12.0	10.7 – 13.4	4.5	3.6 – 5.3
Binge or heavy drinking⁹				
Yes	14.9	11.2 – 18.6	8.1	5.5 – 10.7
No	12.1	10.8 – 13.5	4.0	3.1 – 5.0

Notes: ¹Estimates are suppressed when there are less than 50 observations in the denominator or less than six observations in the numerator; estimates that have a confidence interval with a half-width of greater than 10, or when the relative standard error (RSE) is greater than 30% are unstable and should be used with caution. ²% = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval; When comparing estimates, the 95% confidence interval (95% CI) provides the statistical range containing the true population percentage with a 95% probability. Although a 95% confidence interval is not a test of statistical significance, categories whose 95% confidence intervals do not overlap can be considered significantly different. ³Based on the respondent's sex at birth. If sex at birth is missing, then the respondent's sex is based on gender identity at time of the interview. ⁴Heterosexual or straight are people who are sexually oriented toward people of the opposite, usually binary, gender; Cisgender is a person whose current gender corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth. ⁵Missing category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income. ⁶All respondents who reported at least one type of disability (cognitive, mobility, vision, selfcare, independent living or deafness). ⁷All respondents who report problems with stress, depression, or emotions on at least 14 of the previous 30 days. ⁸All respondents who have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smoke on at least some days. ⁹Binge drinking is defined as consuming four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men on a single occasion in the past month; heavy drinking is defined as eight or more drinks per week for women and fifteen or more drinks per week for men. Was there a time in the past 12 months when you needed to see a doctor but could not because you could not afford it?

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (WONDER), "Underlying Cause of Death, 2018-2024, Single Race," last accessed December 17, 2025. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/>
2. Schumacher, S., Kirzinger, A., Presiado, M., Valdes, I., Brodie, M. (2023, April 11). Americans' Experiences With Gun-Related Violence, Injuries, And Deaths. *KFF The independent source for health policy research, polling, and news*. <https://www.kff.org/other-health/americans-experiences-with-gun-related-violence-injuries-and-deaths/#531e0144-bdb6-4eb0-83de-531430f4b45e>
3. Garen J. Wintemute. 2015. The Epidemiology of Firearm Violence in the Twenty-First Century United States. *Annual Review Public Health*. 36:5-19. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122535>



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Questions

1. In your life, have you ever been threatened with a gun, robbed with a gun, shot, or shot at?
2. In your life, have you ever seen someone threaten another with a gun, or hurt another person with a gun on purpose?



Suggested Citation



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Program Contributions



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