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Violence Policy Center

Hispanic Victims of Lethal Firearms Violence in the United States

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DEFINITIONS

The terms and definitions for race and ethnicity in this report are derived from U.S. Census Bureau definitions.

Race and ethnicity are two separate designations. Federal data commonly uses the term “Black” rather than “African American” and “Hispanic” instead of “Latino” or “Latinx.” For the purposes of this report the definitions below will be used.

Race

American Indian or Alaska Native — A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian — A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East (e.g., China, Japan), Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnam, Thailand) or the India subcontinent (e.g., India, Pakistan). This report includes those commonly referred to as “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands) in this category.

Black — A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

White — A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Ethnicity

Hispanic — A person of any race having origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America, or other Spanish cultures.

As noted above, the definitions used in this study are dictated by the terms utilized by government agencies in the collection of information. The Violence Policy Center recognizes the role played by language and the importance of identity language. The VPC understands that the population included within the term “Hispanic” may not identify with this label. While this term is used throughout this study to remain consistent with the data as reported, the VPC’s intent is not to reiterate or endorse any implications that may accompany it. Hopefully, in the near future, data collection will become more sensitive and responsive to relevant terminology and identity language.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

- **In 2021, more than 5,700 Hispanics were killed by guns.** That year, 3,455 Hispanics died in gun homicides, 2,037 died in gun suicides, 65 died in unintentional shootings, and 184 died in other circumstances (including legal intervention and undetermined intent).
- **Nearly 75,000 Hispanics were killed by guns between 2001 and 2021.** During this period, 47,119 Hispanics died in gun homicides, 23,686 died in gun suicides, and 1,184 died in unintentional shootings.
- **Most Hispanic murder victims are killed with guns.** In 2021, guns were used in more than three-quarters of the homicides where the victims were Hispanic. The latest data show that for homicides where the victim was Hispanic and a gun was used, 64 percent of these shootings involved a handgun — the highest percentage of all races and ethnicities.
- **The homicide victimization rate for Hispanics in the United States is higher than the homicide victimization rate for whites.** The Hispanic homicide victimization rate in 2021 was 6.9 per 100,000. In comparison, the homicide victimization rate for whites was 4.3 per 100,000.
- **Homicide is the second leading cause of death for Hispanics ages 15 to 24.**
- **As a result of the limitations in current data collection, the total number of Hispanic victims is almost certainly higher than the reported numbers suggest.** Government agencies often report data on race but not on ethnic origin. Recognizing the changing demographic landscape in the United States, it is clear that fully documenting such victimization is a crucial step in preventing it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governmental agencies that collect data on death and injury should obtain complete information on the ethnic origin of individuals in addition to their race. This will ensure complete and accurate data collection on Hispanic victims of lethal violence.

- Individual-level ethnic origin information should be captured by all governmental agencies, regardless of department, and at all levels — local, state, and national — for all pertinent users and subjects of agency services.
- Individual-level ethnic origin information should be self-reported and not based solely on a person's surname or other measure.
- All public access data and published reports issued by governmental agencies should include information on ethnic origin in addition to race.

- The U.S. Department of Justice should issue periodic or special reports on Hispanic victimization.
- States with a substantial proportion of Hispanic residents should issue periodic or special reports on Hispanic victimization and deaths due to all causes, including violence.

Improved data collection is essential to fully understanding the scope of lethal firearms violence against Hispanics and helping develop effective measures to reduce such violence. At the same time additional efforts, both supporting current programs and activities as well as identifying new violence-reduction opportunities and approaches, should include the following:

- Support for community-based violence intervention programs that are holistic and encourage participation by all stakeholders.
- Educational efforts to better inform Hispanics of the risks associated with bringing a firearm into the home as measured by increased risk for homicide, suicide, and unintentional firearm deaths compared to how rarely guns are used in justifiable homicides. This is especially important in the face of current coordinated efforts by the gun industry targeting Hispanics as potential first-time gun buyers.¹
- Improved access to resources for victims and survivors of domestic violence.
- Identification of anti-trafficking measures that could help interrupt the flow of illegal firearms into impacted communities.

1 For more information, please see the January 2021 Violence Policy Center study *How the Firearms Industry and NRA Market Guns to Communities of Color* (<https://vpc.org/how-the-firearms-industry-and-nra-market-guns-to-communities-of-color-contents/>).

INTRODUCTION

FOCUS ON HISPANICS

In 2001, the United States experienced a historic demographic change. For the first time, Hispanics became the largest minority group in the nation, exceeding the number of Black residents.² With a population in 2020 of 62.1 million, Hispanics represent 18.7 percent of the total population of the United States.³

This study is intended to report on Hispanic homicide victimization and suicide in the United States, the role of firearms in homicide and suicide, and overall gun death figures. Recognizing this demographic landscape, the importance of documenting such victimization is clear. Indeed, studies have found that Hispanic individuals are more likely to die by firearm homicide compared to white, non-Hispanic individuals.^{4, 5, 6}

AVAILABLE NATIONAL DATA ON HISPANIC LETHAL VICTIMIZATION

This study utilizes primarily public health data to describe the impact of lethal firearm violence on the Hispanic population in the U.S. in 2021. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services maintains national public health data as recorded by death certificates and compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).⁷ The CDC collects mortality data that includes homicides, suicides, and unintentional deaths, as well as those of undetermined intent. While CDC data is the most comprehensive available to measure total fatal victimization in each cause of death category as well as age and race/ethnicity, it lacks information about homicides previously reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR).⁸

Homicide-related information previously reported by the SHR that is not provided by publicly available CDC mortality data includes: age and sex of the offender, circumstances surrounding the homicide, relationship of the victim to the offender, and detailed information on the type of weapon used, including type of firearm. Unfortunately, the information contained in the SHR is limited as it does not include data on suicides or unintentional deaths. Additionally, information about victim ethnicity is limited. In 2020, information on the Hispanic ethnicity of homicide victims was available for only 44 of the 50 states (as recently as 2015 the number of states reporting Hispanic ethnicity to the SHR was only 24). The year 2020 is the last year for which SHR data are available. In January of 2021, the FBI changed the way crime data are collected in the U.S., and this transition has negatively impacted the reliability of subsequent crime data. The new data collection and reporting system, the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), will eventually provide much more comprehensive and robust crime data

2 "Hispanics Now Largest Minority, Census Shows," *New York Times*, January 22, 2003.

3 United States 2020 Census. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>.

4 Weigend VE, Hsieh H, Lee DB, et al. Firearm homicides among Hispanics and white non-Hispanics: measuring disparities. *Injury Prevention* 2023;29:437-441.

5 QuickStats: Age-Adjusted Rates of Firearm-Related Homicide, by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2023 Jun 30;72(26):737. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7226a9. PMID: 37384572.

6 Trigylidas TE, Schnitzer PG, Dykstra HK, et al. Firearm Deaths among Youth in the United States, 2007-2016. *Children* (Basel). 2023 Aug 8;10(8):1359.

7 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/reports/>.

8 The CDC also funds and maintains the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), a state-based reporting system that captures comprehensive information about homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm, legal intervention, and undetermined intent deaths. While valuable details about the circumstances of these violent deaths are collected in the system, very limited information is available to the public. For example, information about the sex of homicide offenders is not publicly available. Another limitation of NVDRS data is the significant delay in making data publicly available. As of October 4, 2023, NVDRS data from 2021 were not yet available. Additional information about NVDRS can be found at: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nvdrs/NVDRS-Overview_factsheet.pdf.

compared to the SHR. However, as many law enforcement agencies did not transition to NIBRS in 2021, data for that year are not suitable for analysis and use in this report. While the future utility of FBI crime data is as of yet undetermined, this report will present homicide weapon information from the previous year’s SHR data (2020).⁹

SECTION ONE: PUBLIC HEALTH DATA

In 2021, the most recent year for which complete data is available, more than 5,700 Hispanics were killed by firearms in the United States. Between 2001 and 2021, nearly 75,000 Hispanics were killed by guns (Table 1).

TABLE 1: HISPANIC FIREARM DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2001 — 2021

Year	Firearm Homicide	Firearm Suicide	Unintentional Firearm Deaths	Other Firearm Deaths*	Total Firearm Deaths
2001	2,123	798	86	80	3,087
2002	2,168	834	60	81	3,143
2003	2,316	835	71	97	3,319
2004	2,241	888	56	93	3,278
2005	2,453	824	95	97	3,469
2006	2,472	817	66	109	3,464
2007	2,385	931	65	111	3,492
2008	2,260	863	39	94	3,256
2009	2,115	955	47	85	3,202
2010	1,919	962	37	90	3,008
2011	1,831	946	52	118	2,947
2012	1,870	1,023	48	120	3,061
2013	1,750	1,034	49	118	2,951
2014	1,746	1,116	32	116	3,010
2015	2,021	1,162	37	112	3,332
2016	2,287	1,313	58	113	3,771
2017	2,268	1,423	50	143	3,884
2018	2,191	1,601	49	177	4,018
2019	2,301	1,534	60	163	4,058
2020	2,947	1,790	62	204	5,003
2021	3,455	2,037	65	184	5,741
Total	47,119	23,686	1,184	2,505	74,494

* Other firearm deaths include legal intervention and undetermined intent.

For the general population in 2020, violent causes of death ranked 12th (suicide) and 16th (homicide) among all leading causes of death.¹⁰ These data for the general population, however, mask stark racial and ethnic differences.

9 For more information about this issue, please see the VPC publication *The Negative Impact of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Transition on Gun Violence Research*, available at: <https://www.vpc.org/studies/NIBRS.pdf>.

10 At time of writing, WISQARS cause of death rankings for 2021 were not available.

HOMICIDE

In 2021, there were 4,453 Hispanic victims of homicide by all means in the United States. The Hispanic homicide victimization rate for that year was 6.9 per 100,000 (the firearm homicide rate for Hispanics was 5.2 per 100,000). In comparison, the overall homicide victimization rate for that year was 8.2 per 100,000 (firearm homicide rate of 6.6 per 100,000), the Black homicide victimization rate was 31.6 per 100,000 (firearm homicide rate of 28.0 per 100,000), and the white homicide victimization rate was 4.3 per 100,000 (firearm homicide rate of 3.1 per 100,000).

While nationally homicide ranked 16th among all leading causes of death in 2020, it ranked 13th for Hispanic victims, seventh for Black victims, and 19th for white victims (Table 2). Looking at youth and young adults, however, in 2020 homicide ranked as the second leading cause of death for Hispanics ages 15 to 24. Homicide ranked as the leading cause of death for Blacks in this age group, third for American Indian/Alaska Natives and whites, and fourth for Asian/Pacific Islanders.

TABLE 2: RANKING OF HOMICIDE AS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2020

Race or Ethnicity for Both Sexes, All Ages	Ranking of Homicide, Any Means, Leading Cause of Death	Ranking of Homicide, Any Means, Leading Cause of Death, ages 15 to 24
General Population	16	2
Hispanic	13	2
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	3
Asian/Pacific Islander	18	4
Black	7	1
White	19	3

In 2021, 78 percent of Hispanic homicide victims were killed with firearms. During the period 2001 to 2021, more than two-thirds of all Hispanic homicide victims were killed with firearms (70 percent) (Table 3). The percentage of Hispanic homicide victims killed with a firearm steadily increased during this period, from 64 percent in 2001 to 78 percent in 2021 (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF HOMICIDES DUE TO FIREARMS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2018 — 2021

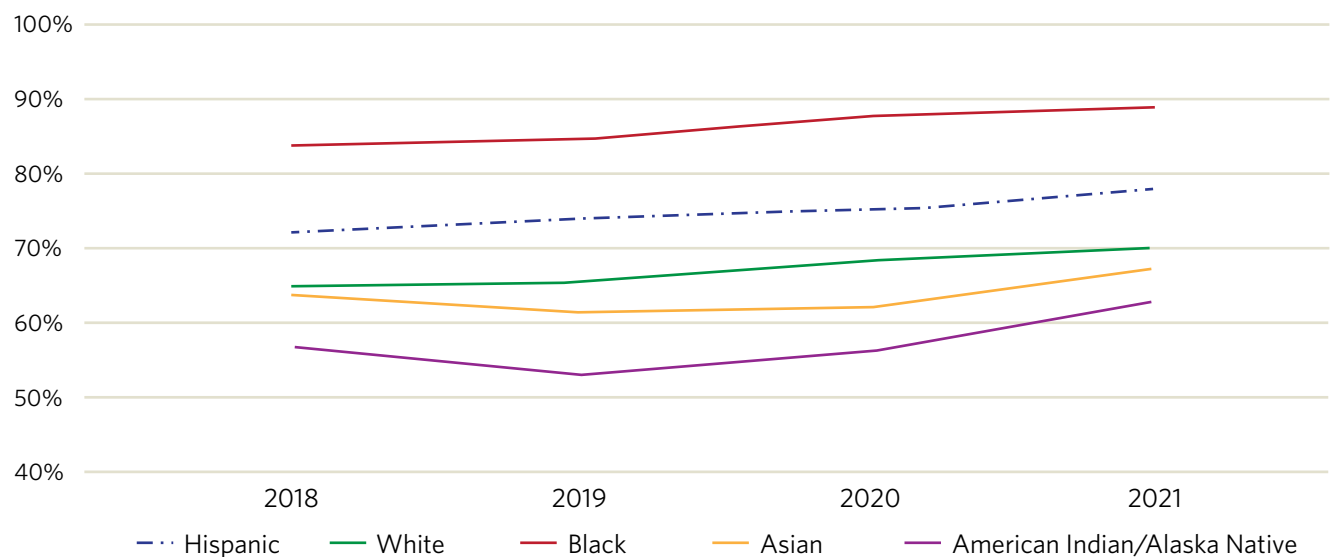


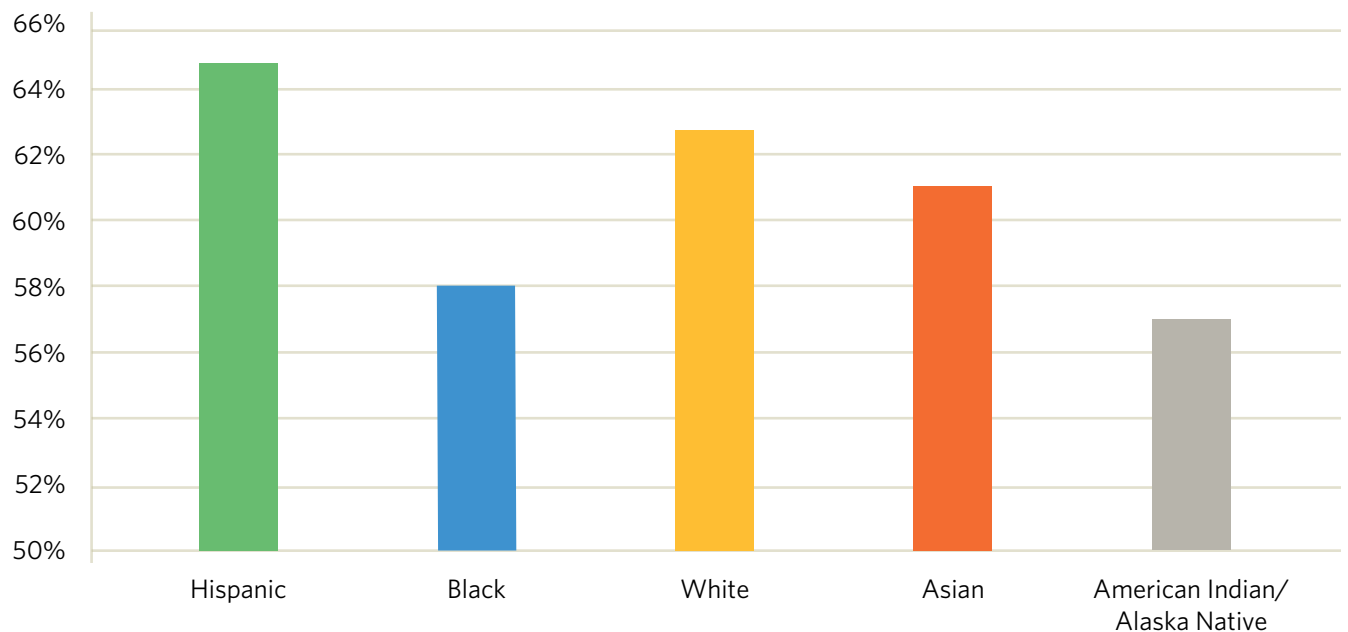
TABLE 3: NUMBER OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS, HOMICIDE RATE, AND PERCENTAGE KILLED WITH A FIREARM, HISPANIC VICTIMS, 2001 — 2021

Year	Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate* per 100,000	Percentage Killed With a Firearm
2001	3,331	8.1	64%
2002	3,129	7.2	69%
2003	3,355	7.6	69%
2004	3,271	7.1	69%
2005	3,520	7.4	70%
2006	3,524	7.1	70%
2007	3,466	6.8	69%
2008	3,331	6.4	68%
2009	3,179	6.0	67%
2010	2,890	5.3	66%
2011	2,759	5.0	66%
2012	2,740	4.9	68%
2013	2,571	4.5	68%
2014	2,610	4.5	67%
2015	2,886	4.9	70%
2016	3,187	5.3	72%
2017	3,186	5.2	71%
2018	3,045	4.9	72%
2019	3,122	5.0	74%
2020	3,920	6.1	75%
2021	4,453	6.9	78%
Total	67,475	5.9	70%

* Rate is adjusted for age

According to FBI crime data, in 2020 (the most recent year for which reliable crime data are available from the agency), where the type of weapon used in the homicide could be determined, for Hispanic victims 64 percent of all gun homicides involved a handgun (Figure 2). In comparison, handguns were used in 58 percent of Black homicides involving a gun and 62 percent of white homicides involving a gun. Overall, handguns were the most prevalent firearm used in homicides in 2020 (60 percent).

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF FIREARM HOMICIDES INVOLVING HANDGUNS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2020



Hispanic victims of firearm homicide are overwhelmingly male. In 2021, 87 percent of Hispanic victims of firearm homicide were male (Table 4). In comparison, 79 percent of white firearm homicide victims were male, as were 87 percent of Black victims, 82 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native victims, and 74 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander victims.

TABLE 4. FIREARM HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY RACE, ETHNICITY, AND SEX, 2021

	Male Victims	Percent	Female Victims	Percent	Total Victims
Ethnicity					
Hispanic	2,992	87%	463	13%	3,455
Not Hispanic	14,578	83%	2,894	17%	17,472
Race					
American Indian/Alaska Native	183	82%	41	18%	224
Asian/Pacific Islander	190	74%	66	26%	256
Black	11,281	87%	1,640	13%	12,921
White	5,692	79%	1,541	21%	7,233

Hispanic males experience much higher homicide and firearm homicide rates compared to Hispanic females. Since 2014, both overall homicide and firearm homicide rates have increased substantially among Hispanic males, from 7.2 per 100,000 in 2014 to 11.1 per 100,000 in 2021 for overall homicide and 4.9 per 100,000 in 2014 to 8.8 per 100,000 in 2021 for firearm homicide (Table 5). Rates have also increased among Hispanic females, though less drastically. For Hispanic females, the overall homicide rate increased from 1.7 per 100,000 in 2014 to 2.5 per 100,000 in 2021 and the firearm homicide rate increased from 0.9 per 100,000 in 2014 to 1.5 per 100,000 in 2021.

TABLE 5. HISPANIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS AND FIREARM HOMICIDE VICTIMS BY SEX, 2001 — 2021

Year	Male				Female			
	Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate* per 100,000	Firearm Homicide Victims	Firearm Homicide Rate* per 100,000	Homicide Victims	Homicide Rate* per 100,000	Firearm Homicide Victims	Firearm Homicide Rate* per 100,000
2001	2,756	12.7	1,892	8.0	575	3.1	231	1.2
2002	2,635	11.6	1,942	8.1	494	2.5	226	1.2
2003	2,809	12.1	2,069	8.3	546	2.7	247	1.2
2004	2,782	11.5	2,031	8.0	489	2.3	210	1.0
2005	3,008	12.0	2,211	8.4	512	2.3	242	1.1
2006	3,004	11.6	2,223	8.2	520	2.3	249	1.1
2007	2,926	11.0	2,133	7.7	540	2.2	252	1.1
2008	2,777	10.3	2,003	7.1	554	2.3	257	1.1
2009	2,635	9.7	1,881	6.6	544	2.2	234	0.9
2010	2,435	8.7	1,706	5.8	455	1.8	213	0.9
2011	2,279	8.0	1,595	5.4	480	1.8	236	0.9
2012	2,277	7.9	1,649	5.5	463	1.7	221	0.8
2013	2,132	7.3	1,530	5.1	439	1.6	220	0.8
2014	2,122	7.2	1,499	4.9	488	1.7	247	0.9
2015	2,391	7.9	1,761	5.6	495	1.8	260	0.9
2016	2,657	8.6	1,996	6.2	530	1.8	291	1.0
2017	2,588	8.2	1,936	6.0	598	2.1	332	1.1
2018	2,491	7.9	1,880	5.8	554	1.9	311	1.0
2019	2,534	7.9	1,955	5.9	588	2.0	346	1.2
2020	3,277	10.0	2,572	7.6	643	2.1	375	1.2
2021	3,694	11.1	2,992	8.8	759	2.5	463	1.5

* Rate is adjusted for age

SUICIDE

Nationally, suicide ranked 12th among all leading causes of death in 2020 and also ranked 12th for Hispanic victims (Table 6).

Suicide ranked ninth for American Indian/Alaska Native victims, 11th for white victims, 12th for Asian/Pacific Islander victims, and 15th for Black victims. Looking at youth and young adults, however, in 2020 suicide ranked as the third leading cause of death for Hispanic victims ages 15 to 24. Suicide also ranked as the third leading cause of death for Black victims, and second leading cause of death for American Indian/Alaska Native victims, Asian/Pacific Islander victims, and white victims in this age group.

TABLE 6. RANKING OF SUICIDE AS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2020

Race or Ethnicity for Both Sexes, All Ages	Ranking of Suicide, Any Means, Leading Cause of Death	Ranking of Suicide, Any Means, Leading Cause of Death, ages 15 to 24
General Population	12	3
Hispanic	12	3
American Indian/Alaska Native	9	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	12	2
Black	15	3
White	11	2

In 2021, 42 percent of suicides in the Hispanic population involved firearms. During the period 2001 to 2021, more than one-third of all suicides in the Hispanic population involved firearms (38 percent) (Table 7).

TABLE 7. NUMBER OF SUICIDE VICTIMS, SUICIDE RATE, PERCENTAGE KILLED WITH A FIREARM, HISPANIC VICTIMS, 2001 — 2021

Year	Suicide Victims	Suicide Rate*	Percentage Killed With a Firearm
2001	1,850	5.7	43%
2002	1,954	5.8	43%
2003	2,007	5.6	42%
2004	2,207	5.9	40%
2005	2,188	5.6	38%
2006	2,177	5.3	38%
2007	2,465	6.0	38%
2008	2,345	5.5	37%
2009	2,573	5.8	37%
2010	2,661	5.9	36%
2011	2,720	5.7	35%
2012	2,837	5.8	36%
2013	2,865	5.7	36%
2014	3,246	6.4	34%
2015	3,303	6.2	35%
2016	3,668	6.7	36%
2017	3,933	6.9	36%
2018	4,313	7.5	37%
2019	4,331	7.3	35%
2020	4,571	7.5	39%
2021	4,907	7.9	42%
Total	63,121	6.3	38%

* Rate is adjusted for age

For all races, victims of firearm suicide are overwhelmingly male. In 2021, 88 percent of Hispanic victims of firearm suicide were male (Table 8), as were 87 percent of Black victims, 86 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native victims, 87 percent of white victims, and 88 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander victims.

TABLE 8. FIREARM SUICIDE VICTIMS BY RACE AND SEX, 2021

	Male Victims	Percent	Female Victims	Percent	Total Victims
Ethnicity					
Hispanic	1,795	88%	242	12%	2,037
Not Hispanic	21,104	87%	3,142	13%	24,246
Race					
American Indian/Alaska Native	226	86%	36	14%	262
Asian/Pacific Islander	355	88%	48	12%	403
Black	1,922	87%	290	13%	2,212
White	20,175	87%	2,978	13%	23,153

Hispanic males experience much higher suicide and firearm suicide rates compared to Hispanic females. Since 2015, both overall suicide and firearm suicide rates have increased among Hispanic males, from 10.0 per 100,000 in 2015 to 12.8 per 100,000 in 2021 for overall suicide and 4.1 per 100,000 in 2015 to 5.9 per 100,000 in 2021 for firearm suicide (Table 9). Rates have also increased among Hispanic females — the overall suicide rate increased from 2.7 per 100,000 in 2015 to 3.0 per 100,000 in 2021 and the firearm suicide rate increased from 0.5 per 100,000 in 2015 to 0.8 per 100,000 in 2021.

TABLE 9. HISPANIC SUICIDE VICTIMS AND FIREARM SUICIDE VICTIMS BY SEX, 2001 — 2021

Year	Male				Female			
	Suicide Victims	Suicide Rate* per 100,000	Firearm Suicide Victims	Firearm Suicide Rate* per 100,000	Suicide Victims	Suicide Rate* per 100,000	Firearm Suicide Victims	Firearm Suicide Rate* per 100,000
2001	1,576	10.1	731	4.8	274	1.6	67	0.4
2002	1,651	10.1	763	4.9	303	1.8	71	0.4
2003	1,711	9.9	774	4.6	296	1.7	61	0.3
2004	1,840	10.0	799	4.5	367	2.0	89	0.5
2005	1,841	9.6	756	4.1	347	1.8	68	0.3
2006	1,813	9.0	752	3.9	364	1.8	65	0.3
2007	2,078	10.3	855	4.5	387	1.8	76	0.4
2008	1,955	9.5	786	4.1	390	1.8	77	0.4
2009	2,135	9.9	863	4.3	438	2.0	92	0.4
2010	2,168	9.8	868	4.2	493	2.1	94	0.4
2011	2,224	9.5	857	3.9	496	2.0	89	0.4
2012	2,292	9.6	920	4.1	545	2.2	103	0.4
2013	2,279	9.3	910	3.8	586	2.3	124	0.5
2014	2,584	10.4	996	4.1	662	2.5	120	0.5
2015	2,587	10.0	1,017	4.1	716	2.7	145	0.5
2016	2,944	10.9	1,158	4.4	724	2.6	155	0.6
2017	3,175	11.3	1,252	4.6	758	2.7	171	0.6
2018	3,469	12.1	1,431	5.1	844	2.9	170	0.6
2019	3,445	11.6	1,350	4.6	886	3.0	184	0.6
2020	3,701	12.2	1,586	5.3	870	2.8	204	0.7
2021	3,967	12.8	1,795	5.9	940	3.0	242	0.8

* Rate is adjusted for age

SECTION TWO: FIREARM MARKETING TO HISPANICS

Historically, the primary demographic targeted by the gun industry in its marketing efforts has been white males. This is now changing as a result of the fact that this traditional customer base is aging and dying off and gunmakers, to paraphrase a tobacco industry term, have failed to recruit a sufficient number of ‘replacement shooters’ to fill their thinning ranks.

While children¹¹ and women have been the default targets of the industry in the wake of stagnation of the white male market, there has also been a growing focus on marketing guns, primarily for self-defense, to Hispanic, Black, and Asian Americans.

Historically, Blacks and Hispanics in the United States have relatively low rates of gun ownership.¹² Yet, the majority of both Blacks and Hispanics, like most Americans, falsely believe “that a gun in the home is much more likely to be used to protect, rather than harm, members of the household.” One survey found that 75 percent of Blacks and 73 percent of Hispanics felt that it was more likely that a gun would be “used to protect members of the home.” Only 18 percent of Blacks and 22 percent of Hispanics felt that it would be more likely that the gun would be “used to harm someone in the home, either accidentally or on purpose.”¹³ This is despite the fact that guns, in any hands, are rarely used to kill criminals or stop crimes and that both the Black and Hispanic communities are disproportionately impacted by lethal gun violence.

This combination — low gun ownership coupled with a mistaken belief in the efficacy of the self-defense handgun — is the sweet spot for the gun industry and its financial partners in the National Rifle Association (NRA). Additionally, just as important as future sales are the potential political benefits outreach to minority communities may represent. Compared to whites, Blacks and Hispanics show stronger support for gun violence prevention measures.¹⁴ Recognizing the continuing growth of the U.S. Hispanic population, the potential political benefits of increased gun ownership among this group are clear.

11 For an in-depth overview of firearms industry and gun lobby marketing efforts focused on children and teens, see the 2016 Violence Policy Center study “Start Them Young”- *How the Firearms Industry and Gun Lobby Are Targeting Your Children* (<http://www.vpc.org/publications/start-them-young/>).

12 According to data from the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, in both 1980 and 2018, the percentage of Blacks who reported personally owning a gun was 16 percent. During this period, personal gun ownership for Blacks ranged from a low of eight percent to a high of 23 percent. Overall, personal gun ownership by Blacks during the period surveyed has not appreciably changed. In 2000 (the first year in which Hispanic gun ownership was measured by the GSS), five percent of Hispanics reported personally owning a gun. In 2018, this percentage was reported as 12 percent. During this 19-year period for which Hispanic gun ownership was measured, the percentage fluctuated between five and 13 percent. This is due in part to the relatively small sample surveyed by the GSS. Overall, personal gun ownership by Hispanics is estimated to be approximately in the 10 percent range and has not appreciably changed during the period surveyed. For more in <http://vpc.org/studies/ownership.pdf>.

13 The Intersection of Gun Violence, Policing and Mass Incarceration in Communities of Color: Research Results,” Benenson Strategy Group, April 28, 2016. (http://www.joycefdn.org/assets/images/Memo_on_Communities_of_Color_Survey_Results_FIN.pdf).

14 For example, according to the Benenson Strategy Group survey, 87 percent of Blacks and 90 percent of Hispanics strongly supported a federal measure to “Require everyone to pass a background check before buying a gun, no matter where they buy it, including online gun sales, private gun sales and sales at gun shows.”



Gun industry must become less racist to survive in the 21st century

The discussion of the need to focus on Black and Hispanic Americans is not new. As far back as 1997, a column in the gun industry publication *Shooting Sports Retailer*, bluntly titled “Gun industry must become less racist to survive in the 21st century,” warned:

[A]ll of the usual customers the industry reaches (people of Northern European descent) who wanted a gun, now have one.

The numbers of hunters, the mainstay of the industry, is not growing. Reliance on the time-honored method of indoctrination of father-to-son in the hunting tradition can no longer be counted on with the growing urbanization of America.

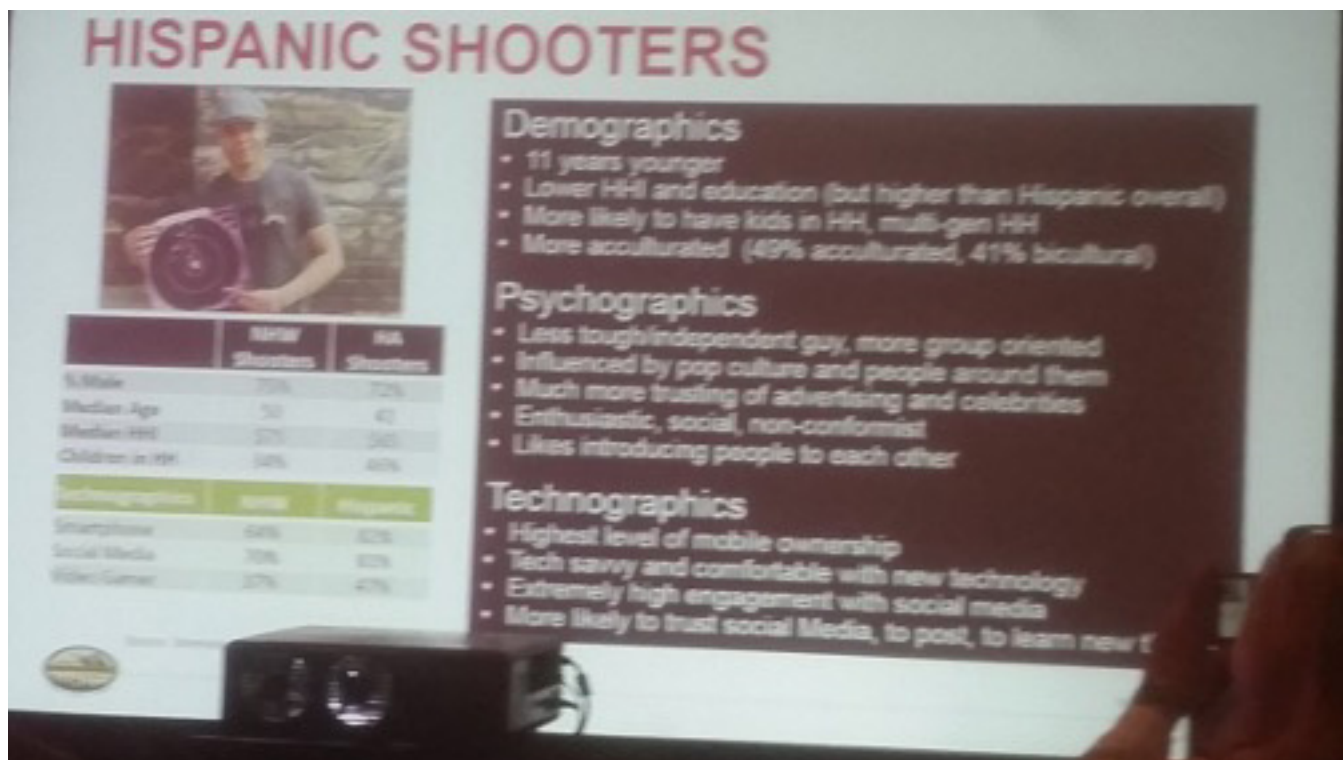
It is time for a pro-active approach to include those who have not traditionally participated in the shooting sports...A major effort needs to be made to include those groups who are presently referred to as America’s racial and ethnic minorities, but who are rapidly becoming the majority. And there is tremendous potential within this largely untapped market.¹⁵

In 2015, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), the official trade association for the firearms industry, launched a long-term, organized, and coordinated effort targeting non-white potential gun owners. The birthplace of this marketing shift was the 2015 NSSF Industry Summit. As a press release issued by NSSF after the event explained:

The central theme of the 2015 Industry Summit, diversity, is one that proved the industry is preparing to significantly change the way it does business. ‘We’ve talked loosely about diversity for years,’ said Chris Dolnack, NSSF Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, ‘but there’s never been a cohesive effort across the industry as a whole to address this subject and innovate change. This year’s Industry Summit showed us that we’re about to experience a ground-swell shift in that attitude. Summit attendees came fully prepared, arriving with focused, on-point questions about what changes they need to make in their businesses to embrace a new consumer audience.’¹⁶

15 “Gun Industry Must Become Less Racist to Survive 21st Century,” *Shooting Sports Retailer*, January 1997.

16 “2015 NSSF Industry Summit Hits High Notes,” National Shooting Sports Foundation, press release, June 4, 2015 (<https://www.nssf.org/2015-nssf-industry-summit-hits-high-notes/>).



As seen by presentation slides shared on then-Twitter by Summit attendees, speakers offered overviews of the potential shooters they were targeting, breaking racial and ethnic groups down by “demographics,” “psychographics,” and “technographics.”

The demographics for “Hispanic Shooters” included: “11 years younger; Lower HHI [household income] and education (but higher than Hispanic overall); More likely to have kids in HH [household], multi-gen HH; More acculturated (49% acculturated, 41% bicultural.” Psychographics were listed as: “Less tough/independent guy, more group oriented; Influenced by pop culture and people around them; Much more trusting of advertising and celebrities; Enthusiastic, social, non-conformist; Likes introducing people to each other.” Technographics were listed as: “Highest level of mobile ownership; Tech savvy and comfortable with new technology; Extremely high engagement with social media; More likely to trust social Media, to post, to learn new [missing word].”

Following the Summit, NSSF Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Chris Dolnack discussed the trade association’s marketing efforts:

[O]ver the years many of us have discussed how to expand shooting participation numbers beyond the traditional predominance of Caucasian males. We’ve made tremendous strides in welcoming women into the sport in the past couple decades, but we haven’t been as successful when it comes to ethnic diversity. And the thing is, there are legions of African-American, Hispanic and Asian recreational and competitive shooters out there, as well as hunters, but they aren’t part of the greater family of gun enthusiasts most are familiar with. We need to change that, need to create the avenues that will welcome these shooters into the fold, and that’s what this year’s Summit focused on.¹⁷

Or as NSSF president and CEO Steve Sanetti summarized, “What a difference this is from just a few years ago when the industry was lamenting that it was becoming stale, male and pale.”¹⁸

17 “NSSF Industry Summit Earns Rave Reviews,” NSSF Blog, June 12, 2015 (<https://www.nssf.org/nssf-industry-summit-earns-rave-reviews/>).

18 “Shooting Industry Must Talk the Talk with New Generation,” *Shooting Sports Retailer*, October 2015.

NSSF® REPORT

A HISPANIC MARKET STUDY

FIREARMS AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS



TOBINTEL
MARKETING RESEARCH & BUSINESS INTEL

Conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation by
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Cover of NSSF research report “A Hispanic Market Study: Firearms and the Shooting Sports”

That same year, on its *NRA Family* website, under the headline “American Hispanics: The Newest Second Amendment Enthusiasts,” the National Rifle Association enthusiastically cited the findings of NSSF’s research on Hispanics:

There is a market out there that is 57 million strong, has a buying power approaching \$1 trillion and, for many, have a positive interest in firearms and the shooting sports. Can you guess who it might be? The answer might surprise you: our American Hispanic population. The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) commissioned a study to learn more about Hispanics’ interests in firearms and the shooting sports. The study showed that, of the Hispanics surveyed,

18 percent own firearms and 25 percent would like to, 41 percent have been to a shooting range and 42 percent would attend a training class or seek firearms instruction...This is valuable information! This survey has informed us of a barely tapped population that can broaden our pro-gun community, increase participation in the shooting sports and boost NRA membership and our political presence.¹⁹

While the majority of industry advertising targeting communities of color has focused on Black Americans, efforts targeting Hispanics continues, as seen by this Kel-Tec magazine ad below.



A magazine ad from gun manufacturer Kel-Tec for its KS7 shotgun targets Hispanic women in its marketing

19 "American Hispanics: The Newest Second Amendment Enthusiasts," *NRAFamily*, August 13, 2015.

SECTION THREE: CONCLUSION

Hispanics in the United States are disproportionately affected by lethal firearms violence. Because of limited data collection, the true scale of gun violence's effect on Hispanic men, women, and children is not fully known. What cannot be denied is that due to these limits in data collection, the total number of Hispanic victims of gun violence is almost certainly higher than the reported numbers suggest.

Comprehensive, reliable, and continuing public health and criminal justice data is necessary for effective violence prevention policies to save lives, protect families, and ensure healthy communities. This is true not only for the Hispanic population, but for all Americans.

Recognizing this, governmental agencies that collect data on death and injury should obtain complete information on the ethnic origin of individuals in addition to their race. This will ensure complete and accurate data collection on Hispanic victims of lethal violence, aid in violence prevention policies, and save lives. Specific recommendations toward this goal include the following:

- Individual-level ethnic origin information should be captured by all governmental agencies, regardless of department, and at all levels — local, state, and national — for all pertinent users and subjects of agency services.
- Individual-level ethnic origin information should be self-reported and not based solely on a person's surname or other measure.
- All public access data and published reports issued by governmental agencies should include information on ethnic origin in addition to race.
- The U.S. Department of Justice should issue periodic or special reports on Hispanic victimization.
- States with a substantial proportion of Hispanic residents should issue periodic or special reports on Hispanic victimization and deaths due to all causes, including violence.

Improved data collection is essential to fully understanding the scope of lethal firearms violence against Hispanics and helping develop effective measures to reduce such violence. At the same time additional efforts, both supporting current programs and activities as well as identifying new violence-reduction opportunities and approaches, should include the following:

- Support for community-based violence intervention programs that are holistic and encourage participation by all stakeholders.
- Educational efforts to better inform Hispanics of the risks associated with bringing a firearm into the home as measured by increased risk for homicide, suicide, and unintentional firearm deaths compared to how rarely guns are used in justifiable homicides. This is especially important in the face of current coordinated efforts by the gun industry targeting Hispanics as potential first-time gun buyers.
- Improved access to resources for victims and survivors of domestic violence.
- Identification of anti-trafficking measures that could help interrupt the flow of illegal firearms to impacted communities.

APPENDIX: HISPANIC FIREARM DEATH DATA BY STATE, 2021²⁰

State	Firearm Deaths	Firearm Death Rate* per 100,000
Alabama	24	10.1
Alaska	11	17.5
Arizona	358	14.8
Arkansas	15	5.7
California	1,321	8.0
Colorado	232	17.4
Connecticut	34	5.0
Delaware	--	--
District of Columbia	--	--
Florida	392	6.6
Georgia	102	8.6
Hawaii	--	--
Idaho	21	7.7
Illinois	208	8.4
Indiana	57	10.2
Iowa	--	--
Kansas	62	16.1
Kentucky	29	14.6
Louisiana	26	10.0
Maine	--	--
Maryland	47	6.7
Massachusetts	37	3.6
Michigan	61	11.0
Minnesota	24	7.6
Mississippi	--	--
Missouri	28	10.0
Montana	--	--
Nebraska	15	7.4
Nevada	119	12.1
New Hampshire	--	--
New Jersey	68	3.3
New Mexico	294	28.1
New York	143	3.6
North Carolina	108	9.6
North Dakota	--	--

20 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s WISQARS (Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) database (<http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>).

Ohio	52	9.9
Oklahoma	41	8.2
Oregon	54	8.2
Pennsylvania	124	10.8
Rhode Island	11	5.3
South Carolina	34	10.5
South Dakota	--	--
Tennessee	61	14.5
Texas	1,234	10.2
Utah	50	11.1
Vermont	--	--
Virginia	56	5.7
Washington	89	7.8
West Virginia	--	--
Wisconsin	36	7.3
Wyoming	--	--
Total	5,741	8.9

* Rate is adjusted for age

-- State level counts and rates based on fewer than 10 deaths have been suppressed by the National Center for Health Statistics.



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