



## Seattle Office of City Auditor

**DATE:** December 23, 2024

**TO:** Councilmember Robert Kettle, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, Seattle City Council

**FROM:** David G. Jones, City Auditor, and IB Osuntoki, Assistant City Auditor

**RE:** Gun Safe Storage Ordinance: Statistical Report on 2023 Data

[Ordinance 125620](#) directs the Seattle City Auditor to work with Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) and the Chief of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) to produce a series of reports over a five-year period containing descriptive statistics on:

1. Firearm-related hospitalizations and deaths in Seattle for the overall population and among youth, and
2. Guns reported to or recorded by SPD as stolen in Seattle.

This is the final report required by the ordinance, which we are producing in collaboration with PHSKC and SPD. PHSKC obtained and analyzed data on firearm-related deaths from the Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH), and SPD used its records to generate the data on guns (firearms) reported or recorded as stolen.

Similar to last year's report, we are unable to include the 2023 firearm-related hospitalizations data in this report due to a new data suppression policy adopted by WA DOH starting with the 2022 data.

The previous reports we produced are:

- [Gun Safe Storage Ordinance: Baseline Statistical Report](#) that used 2017 data, the year before the ordinance took effect
- [Gun Safe Storage Ordinance: Statistical Report on 2019 Data and Updated 2017 Data](#)
- [Gun Safe Storage Ordinance: Statistical Report](#) reported on 2020 data
- [Gun Safe Storage Ordinance: Statistical Report on 2021 and 2022 Data](#)

Since this is the final report the City Auditor will produce in response to Ordinance 125620, we included links to resources for future firearm-related data on page 6. Please contact us if you have any questions about the information provided in this memo.

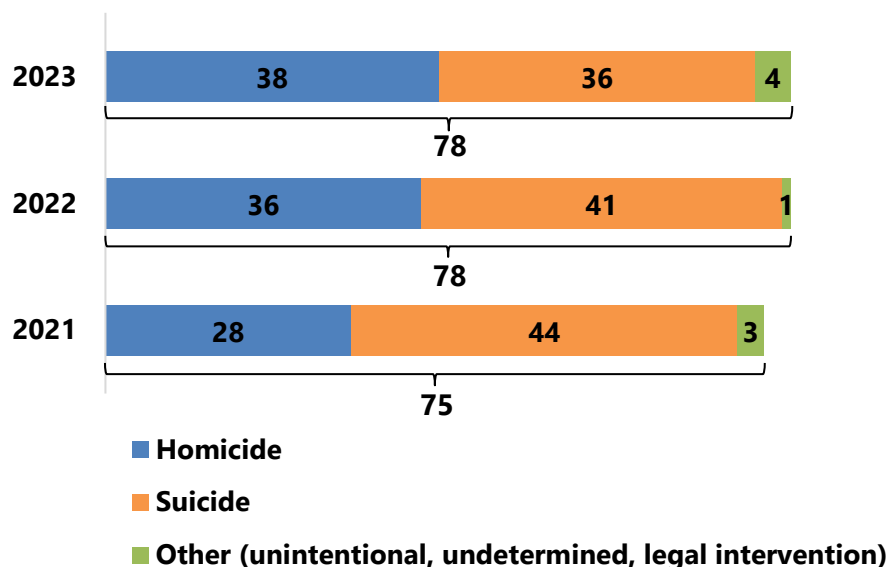
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## Key Takeaways

The number of firearm deaths among Seattle residents was 78 in 2023, which was the same number as in 2022 (see Exhibit 1). In 2023, firearm homicides accounted for 49% (38 out of 78) and firearm suicides accounted for 46% (36 out of 78) of all firearm deaths among Seattle residents.

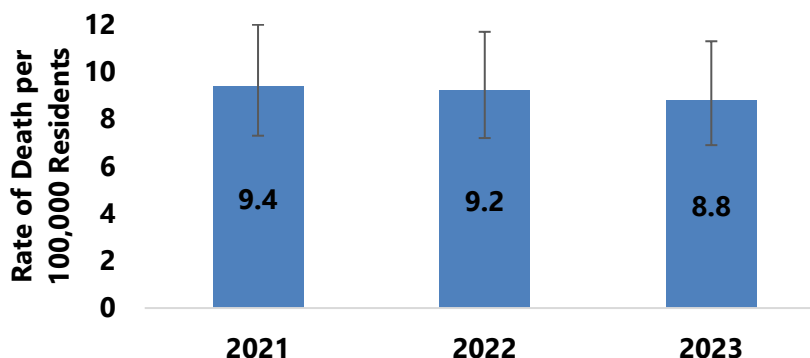
**Exhibit 1: Firearm-related Deaths by Intent<sup>1</sup> (Manner) of Injury among Seattle Residents All Ages**



Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of PHSKC data

The rate of firearm deaths has been steady for the past three years at about 9 deaths per 100,000 Seattle residents (see Exhibit 2). While the estimates suggest a decrease over time, the confidence intervals overlap and noted changes based on small numbers are unstable and should be interpreted with caution.

**Exhibit 2: Rate of Firearm-related Deaths Among Seattle Residents, All Ages (Rate per 100,000 Seattle Residents)**



Error bars indicate 95% Confidence Intervals

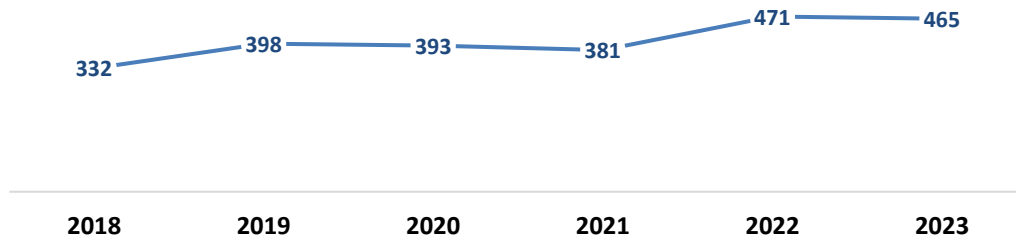
Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of PHSKC data

<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines intent of injury as whether an injury was caused by an act carried out on purpose by oneself or by another person(s), with the goal of injuring or killing.

In 2023, there were no firearm deaths among Seattle youth under 18 years old. There were two firearm deaths among Seattle youth under age 18 in 2021 and three in 2022. Changes over time based on small numbers are unstable and should be interpreted with caution since estimates are imprecise when based on small numbers.

The number of guns (firearms) reported to or recorded by SPD as stolen was 465 in 2023. Exhibit 3 shows the six-year trend for guns reported to or recorded by SPD as stolen.

**Exhibit 3: Guns (Firearms) Reported or Recorded as Stolen**



Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of SPD Data on Stolen Guns

## 2023 Firearm-related Deaths and Hospitalizations Data for Seattle

Exhibit 4 shows the 2023 data from PHSKC on firearm deaths for the overall and youth populations in Seattle. PHSKC was unable to include the firearm-related hospitalizations data for 2022 and 2023 due to a new data suppression policy adopted by WA DOH starting with the 2022 data.

**Exhibit 4: 2023 Data on Firearm Deaths for the Overall and Youth Populations in Seattle**

	All Ages — Seattle, WA, 2023					Youth (< 18 years) Seattle, WA, 2023				
	Number	Population	Rate ^	Lower CI	Upper CI	Number	Population	Rate ^	Lower CI	Upper CI
<b>Firearm deaths</b>										
Total	78	779,200	8.8	6.9	11.3	0	107,739	0	0	3.5
Homicide	38	779,200	3.9	2.7	5.7	0	107,739	0	0	3.5
Suicide	36	779,200	4.4	3.1	6.3	0	107,739	0	0	3.5
Other (unintentional, undetermined, legal intervention)	4	779,200	0.5	0.1	1.7	0	107,739	0	0	3.5
<b>All injury deaths</b>	971	779,200	117.5	110.02	125.4	7	107,739	6.5	2.6	13.4
<b>Firearm non-fatal hospitalizations*</b>	Beginning in 2022, WA DOH (which processes and releases hospitalization data to local health departments in WA State) implemented a new approach to protecting the privacy of hospitalized patients with a substance use disorder (SUD). In accordance with 42 CFR Part 2 (federal law governing the disclosure of identifiable SUD treatment data), DOH has begun removing ZIP code and county of residence information for all hospitalization records with a SUD diagnosis. With this in mind, Public Health has put a pause on using hospitalization data since 2022 until they can find a solution with DOH.									
Total										
Assault										
Unintentional										
Other (self-inflicted, undetermined, legal intervention)										
<b>All injury non-fatal hospitalizations</b>										

\*As of October 1, 2015, medical data coded using the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) requires coders to assign unintentional intent when the intent is not stated in the medical record. This may lead to an overcount of unintentional injuries and an undercount of intentional injuries, such as assaults and self-inflicted.

^Unstable rate; interpret with caution, sample size is small, so estimate is imprecise.

CI = 95% Confidence Interval. The CI is the range of values that include the true rate 95% of the time.

### Notes:

Non-fatal hospitalizations exclude instances of deaths that occur while hospitalized and reflect instances of hospitalizations and not distinct injured individuals or injuries. Numbers of non-fatal hospitalizations may differ from those reported in prior reports and elsewhere as we used a new methodology implemented with 2021 data reporting as our new standard approach.

Rate is per 100,000 Seattle residents and age-adjusted to 2000 U.S. population. Rates for youth (< 18) are not age-adjusted.

Geographic definition for Seattle used in 2021 and onward may differ from definition of Seattle in other published reports.

Small numbers (< 10) reported with approval from Washington State Department of Health.

### Data Sources:

Deaths: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificate Data, 1990-2023

Population estimates: Washington State Office of Financial Management Small Area Estimates Program, December 2024. For more details see <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-estimates/small-area-estimates-program>

**Prepared by:** Public Health — Seattle & King County, Assessment, Policy Development & Evaluation, 12/06/2024

PHSKC summarized its findings from the 2023 data as follows:

1. Similar to 2021 and 2022 data, the overall firearm death rate remains steady at about 9 deaths per 100,000 Seattle residents.
2. In 2023, firearm suicide accounted for less than half of all firearm deaths among Seattle residents, at 46%; whereas in 2021 and 2022 firearm suicides were more than half of firearm deaths, at 59% and 53%, respectively.
3. In 2023, the firearm suicide death rate was 1.1 times higher than the firearm homicide death rate among Seattle residents. However, the estimates are imprecise and should be interpreted with caution.
4. Of the 7 total injury deaths among Seattle resident youth under 18 years in 2023, none were due to firearms.
5. Among all Seattle residents, there were 78 firearm deaths (8% of all injury deaths) in 2023.

PHSKC noted that due to changes in methodology, it is not appropriate to compare the firearm deaths and hospitalizations data for 2021, 2022, and 2023 to those of prior years as presented in our first three reports. The specific reasons are:

- The 2021, 2022, and 2023 data use population interim estimates based on 2020 census data.
- The 2021 injury hospitalizations are defined to be consistent with U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for injury surveillance using coded hospitalization discharge data, which identifies hospitalizations due to an injury (narrow definition) rather than with an injury (broad definition).
- As of October 1, 2015, medical data coded using the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) requires coders to assign unintentional intent when the intent is not stated in the medical record. This may lead to an overcount of unintentional injuries and an undercount of intentional injuries, such as assaults and self-inflicted, in reported hospitalization data.

## Seattle Police Department Data on Stolen Guns (Firearms)

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According to data provided by the SPD, the number of guns (firearms) reported or recorded as stolen was 465 in 2023. As we reported last year, the number of guns reported to or recorded by SPD as stolen increased from 381 in 2021 to 471 in 2022.

### Exhibit 5: Guns (Firearms) Reported or Recorded as Stolen by SPD

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Guns Reported or Recorded as Stolen</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>465</b>

Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of SPD Data on Stolen Guns

SPD noted that:

- The property status for 2023 data is as of October 28, 2024. Property status for data from prior years was as of the date noted in previous reports.
- Property status updates are based on reporting and/or investigative updates. For example, a gun reported stolen can be updated to “recovered” later and will no longer be listed as stolen or reflected in the data.
- This report does not count firearms recovered in 2023 if they were reported as stolen in the previous year.
- The “Report Created Date” on the Property Report with which the qualifying stolen gun item record is associated, was used as the qualifying date instead of “Submitted Date” as seen in previous reports.
- This report excludes Ammunition, BB/Pellet guns, Gas/Air guns, Tasers, and Unknown firearm types.

## Future Firearm-related Data

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This is the final report that the City Auditor will be producing in response to Ordinance 125620 and in collaboration with PHSKC and SPD. Future data on firearm-related deaths and hospitalizations and guns reported to or recorded as stolen in Seattle can be accessed through the following resources from PHSKC and King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office (KCPAO).

1. [Safe firearm storage and reports of stolen firearms to law enforcement agencies](#): This PHSKC dashboard displays data on firearm storage practices and lost and stolen firearms in Seattle and King County.
2. [The impact of firearms in King County](#): This PHSKC dashboard displays firearm-related death and injury data in Seattle and King County, including firearm-related deaths, non-fatal firearm-related hospitalizations, and firearm injuries that were treated by the Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
3. [King County gun violence data](#): KCPAO analyses and produces quarterly reports on firearm violence in King County.