

BREAKING

Red States Have Higher Gun Death Rates Than Blue States. Here's Why

Arianna Johnson Forbes Staff

I cover the latest trends in science, tech and healthcare.

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TOPLINE A new [study](#) published in *Journal of the American Medical Association's Surgery* found that firearm deaths are more likely in small rural towns than in major urban cities, adding to research that contradicts common belief that Democratic blue areas have higher incidences of gun-related deaths than do Republican red districts.



Firearms on display. GETTY IMAGES

KEY FACTS

- Researchers from Children’s Hospital Philadelphia, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and the University of California examined two decades of mortality rates and cause-of-death data from the National Center for Health Statistics’ National Vital Statistics System to compile the study.
- A Third Way [report](#) found that between 2000 and 2020, Trump-voting states had 12% higher murder rates than did Biden-voting cities.
- [Data](#) shows that in 2020, eight of the ten states with the highest murder rates voted for the Republican presidential nominee in every election in this century.
- In the past, Republicans have made crime a major campaign talking point—in October 2022, one quarter of attack ads on Democrats focused on crime, and in the two months leading up

to the midterms, Fox [aired](#) about 141 crime segments on weekdays, according to the report.

- A [report](#) published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found guns became the leading cause of death for children starting in 2017—motor vehicle-related deaths held the number one spot for 60 years prior.

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SURPRISING FACT

The *JAMA Surgery* study also found that gun suicides are more common than gun homicides, with gun suicides accounting for a large increase in gun deaths in recent years.

BIG NUMBER

45,222. That's how many people died in the U.S. due to gun-related injuries in 2020, [according](#) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of that number, gun suicides account for 54%.

CRUCIAL QUOTE

“Despite the pervasive nature of gun violence, high rates of gun homicide in urban centers have been the sole focus of many policymakers and used as justification to loosen gun laws, when in fact gun violence is an issue in counties of all sizes,” the researchers of the *JAMA Surgery* study said.

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST GUN DEATH RATES

According to [data](#) from the CDC, these are the states with the highest firearm mortality rates per 100,000 in 2021:

1. ● **Mississippi** had a firearm mortality rate of 33.9, making it the state with the highest rate in 2021. The state also used its electoral votes to [vote](#) for then President Trump in the 2020 election.
2. ● **Louisiana** had a firearm mortality rate of 29.1 and voted for Trump.
3. ● **New Mexico** had a firearm mortality rate of 27.8 and voted for President Biden.
4. ● **Alabama** had a firearm mortality rate of 26.4 and voted for Trump.
5. ● **Wyoming** had a firearm mortality rate of 26.1 and voted for Trump.
6. ● **Alaska** had a firearm mortality rate of 25.2 and voted for Trump.
7. ● **Montana** had a firearm mortality rate of 25.1 and voted for Trump.
8. ● **Arkansas** had a firearm mortality rate of 23.3 and voted for Trump.
9. ● **Missouri** had a firearm mortality rate of 23.2 and voted for Trump.
10. ● **Tennessee** had a firearm mortality rate of 22.8 and voted for Trump.
11. ● **South Carolina** had a firearm mortality rate of 22.4 and voted for Trump.
12. ● **Oklahoma** had a firearm mortality rate of 21.2 and voted for Trump.
13. ● **Georgia** had a firearm mortality rate of 20.3 and voted for Biden.
14. ● **Nevada** had a firearm mortality rate of 19.8 and voted for Biden.

15. ● **Indiana** had a firearm mortality rate of 18.4 and voted for Trump.

STATES WITH THE LOWEST GUN DEATH RATES

1. ● **Massachusetts** has a firearm mortality rate of 3.4 and voted for Biden.
2. ● **Hawaii** has a firearm mortality rate of 4.8 and voted for Biden.
3. ● **New Jersey** has a firearm mortality rate of 5.2 and voted for Biden.
4. ● **New York** has a firearm mortality rate of 5.4 and voted for Biden.
5. ● **Rhode Island** has a firearm mortality rate of 5.6 and voted for Biden.
6. ● **Connecticut** has a firearm mortality rate of 6.7 and voted for Biden.
7. ● **New Hampshire** has a firearm mortality rate of 8.3 and voted for Biden.
8. ● **California** has a firearm mortality rate of 9.0 and voted for Biden.
9. ● **Minnesota** has a firearm mortality rate of 10.0 and voted for Biden.
10. ● **Nebraska** has a firearm mortality rate of 10.3 and voted for Trump.
11. ● **Iowa** has a firearm mortality rate of 11.2 and voted for Trump.
12. ● **Washington** has a firearm mortality rate of 11.2 and voted for Biden.
13. ● **Vermont** has a firearm mortality rate of 11.9 and voted for Biden.
14. ● **Maine** has a firearm mortality rate of 12.6 and voted for Biden.

15. ● **Wisconsin** has a firearm mortality rate of 13.5 and voted for Biden.

REPUBLICANS ON GUN CRIMES

Contrary to popular belief, the South is the geographical region with the highest gun-related crime rates, and these states largely have been Republican-run for years. Fifteen of the 20 states with the highest firearm mortality rates are led by Republicans.

However, Republican lawmakers have historically used gun-related crime rates against Democrats. After the May 2, 2022, Robb Elementary school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, that left 21 people dead, Gov. Greg Abbott dismissed suggestions that the state could save lives by implementing stricter gun laws by [saying](#), “Chicago and L.A. and New York disprove that thesis.” In July 2022, Trump [called](#) the U.S. a “cesspool” since he left office, pinpointing New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, and explaining these were places “where the middle class used to flock to live the American dream (but) are now war zones, literal war zones.” Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis [criticized](#) New York for allowing “criminals to run wild,” while praising Florida for having a stricter crime policy.

CONTRA

[Data](#) suggests New York saw significant drops in homicides between 2021 and 2022, while Florida saw significant increases. [According](#) to Third Way, some Republicans argue crime rates in their states are only high because of the blue cities within them. But murder rates have [increased](#) in rural, urban and suburban locales. *Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#). Send me a secure [tip](#).*



Arianna Johnson

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I'm a Texas native covering the latest trends in tech, science and healthcare through explainer pieces on the breaking news team. Previously, I was a Forbes... [Read More](#)

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c **Cb** 

28 April, 2023

Interestingly when you look at 2020 statistics by county, you can see a trend that the blue voting counties align with the counties with highest murder rate per Capita in most cases. But this article has intentionally skewed these statistics by listing them by state. Everyone please vet the informa...

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y **Yo** 

3 July, 2023

1. If this were true then Blue states would be at the top of the list and they're not.
2. They actually took this into account in the Third Way report and removed the major crime blue areas from being factored in and the result was still a 12% higher homicide rate.

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G **guest_user** ...

30 April, 2023

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NW **n w** ...

1 May, 2023

I don't think this article is accurate. Take Tennessee for example. Almost half the homicides come from the dark blue city of Memphis. Also, looking at 'gun deaths' is misleading because a lot of suicides are by gun and if a gun wasn't available they would have just used something else. I thought F...

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Y **Yo** ...

3 July, 2023

They factored that in to the Third Way report. Even if you removed the murders in Memphis, and other heavy blue cities, the rest of the state would still have a much higher murder rate per capita than the average blue state.

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G **guest_user** ...

1 May, 2023

Not even close. Nice try though.

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A **alexhammond1974** ...

1 May, 2023

Red states often contain the very bluest of cities...and guess who runs those? And guess who roams their streets?

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A **aff** ...

1 May, 2023

Not even close. Homicide rates in rural areas of red states are higher than in cities.

(Edited)

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 1 reply

G **guest_user** ...

1 May, 2023

Another uninformed comment. Cities always have more people but when you look at per capita, it's not even a question - gun violence is higher in red states even if you ignore blue cities in said states.

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