

Study results may help improve firearm safety messaging to prevent suicides

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Although firearms do not cause someone to develop thoughts of suicide, risk for suicide increases when a firearm is present in the home, and it may increase further when the firearm is stored unsafely. A study in

Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior reveals subgroups of firearm owners within the United States and who they deem credible to discuss safe firearm storage for suicide prevention. The findings may help to improve the effectiveness of firearm safety messaging, which may ultimately reduce suicide rates.

The study identified the following classes of firearm owners: a class comprised of individuals who owned shotguns, rifles, and handguns, and owned two to four firearms; another class that owned one firearm that was either a shotgun or a rifle; a third class that owned shotguns, rifles, and handguns, and owned five or more firearms; and lastly a class that only owned one firearm, which was a handgun.

Although many of the classes differed in the ranking of credible sources to discuss firearm safety for [suicide prevention](#), a combination of The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, law enforcement officers, and family members were ranked as credible sources among all classes.

"It's important to understand differences among firearm owners so we can have conversations around safe firearm storage that can be more individualized and relevant to different firearm owners," said lead author Allison Bond, from The New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center at Rutgers University. "Prioritizing voices—like their [family members](#) and [law enforcement officers](#), who they trust to discuss safe [firearm](#) storage—can help increase safe storage."

More information: Allison E. Bond et al, Determining subgroups that exist among US firearm owners, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/sltb.12844](https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12844)

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