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DOCTOR'S VIEW ARCHIVE

Gun Deaths - United States Tops The List



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The United States leads the world's richest nations in gun deaths -- murders, suicides, and accidental deaths due to guns - according to a study published April 17, 1998 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the International Journal of Epidemiology.

The U.S. was first at 14.24 gun deaths per 100,000 people. Two other countries in the Americas came next. Brazil was second with 12.95, followed by Mexico with 12.69.

Japan had the lowest rate, at 0.05 gun deaths per 100,000 (1 per 2 million people). The police in Japan actively raid homes of those suspected of having weapons.

The 36 countries in the study were the richest in the World Bank's 1994 World Development Report, having the highest GNP per capita income.

The United States accounted for 45 percent of the 88,649 gun deaths reported in the study, the first comprehensive international scrutiny of gun-related deaths.

The gun-related deaths per 100,000 people in 1994 by country were as follows:

- U.S.A. 14.24
- Brazil 12.95
- Mexico 12.69
- Estonia 12.26
- Argentina 8.93
- Northern Ireland 6.63
- Finland 6.46
- Switzerland 5.31
- France 5.15
- Canada 4.31
- Norway 3.82

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- Austria 3.70
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- Belgium 2.90
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- Slovenia 2.60
- Italy 2.44
- New Zealand 2.38
- Denmark 2.09
- Sweden 1.92
- Kuwait 1.84
- Greece 1.29
- Germany 1.24
- Hungary 1.11
- Ireland 0.97
- Spain 0.78
- Netherlands 0.70
- Scotland 0.54
- England and Wales 0.41
- Taiwan 0.37
- Singapore 0.21
- Mauritius 0.19
- Hong Kong 0.14
- South Korea 0.12
- Japan 0.05

Health officials believe that guns in the U.S. could become the leading cause of death attributed to injury by the year 2003, surpassing injuries due to motor vehicle crashes.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) termed the study shoddy because it did not examine all causes of violent deaths. "What this shows is the CDC is after guns," the Associated Press quoted Dr. Paul Blackman from the NRA.

Following are gun safety recommendations of the National Rifle Association which MedicineNet editors suggest those using guns note.

The three fundamental rules of gun safety must always be applied simultaneously when handling or using a gun:

1. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
2. Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
3. Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

The following gun safety rules should also be observed when using or storing a gun:

- Know your target and what is beyond.
- Be sure the gun is safe to operate.
- Know how to use the gun safely.
- Use only the correct ammunition for your gun.



- ▣ Wear hearing and eye protection as appropriate.
- ▣ Never use alcohol or drugs before or while shooting.
- ▣ Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons.
- ▣ Be aware that certain types of guns and many shooting activities require additional safety precautions.

Last Editorial Review: 4/5/2002

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