

2018 California Safety and Wellbeing Survey details firearm ownership in the state

12 November 2018

Fourteen percent of California adults, or roughly 4.2 million individuals, personally own firearms. While the majority (54 percent) of owners have just one or two firearms, 10 percent own 10 or more firearms, which combined account for roughly half of all civilian-owned firearms in the state.

These are among the initial findings of the 2018 California Safety and Wellbeing Survey, a comprehensive, web-based survey of more than 2,500 Californians age 18 and older on a wide range of topics related to firearms and violence. The results will be presented at the [American Public Health Association annual meeting](#) in San Diego on Sunday, Nov. 11, from 3 to 4 p.m. PST.

Conducted in October 2018 by the UC Davis Violence Prevention Research Program (VPRP), with funding from the state of California for the UC Firearm Violence Research Center, the landmark survey fills an important need, researchers say.

According to the California Department of Public Health, nearly 3,200 people died of a firearm-related injury in California in 2017. "But much remains unknown about the details surrounding firearm violence," said Nicole Kravitz-Wirtz, a VPRP researcher who led the survey.

"Accurate and up-to-date information that could be used to develop effective policies and programs to decrease deaths and injuries from firearms is critically needed, particularly at the state and local levels," she said. "In fact, the last major firearm survey of this kind in California was a Field Poll conducted more than 40 years ago."

The California Safety and Wellbeing Survey found that 25 percent of California adults live in households with firearms (11 percent of them do not personally own firearms but live with someone who does), and 40 percent of these households with firearms include children age 12 and younger.

Five percent of firearms owned in California are rifles of the type sometimes called "assault rifles," "modern sporting rifles" or "modern tactical rifles," such as AR rifles, AK rifles and SKS rifles. Fifty percent are other types of long guns (rifles or shotguns), and 45 percent are handguns. Among those surveyed who recently acquired a firearm, handguns were the most popular, and they were most often obtained for the purpose of protection against people.

"We also found, unexpectedly, that roughly 25 percent of those who purchased their most recent firearm in California reported that they did not undergo a background check," Kravitz-Wirtz said.

The California Safety and Wellbeing Survey polled more than 2,500 adult Californians who were sampled to allow state-representative estimates. Participants were drawn from GfK's KnowledgePanel, the largest, longest-standing, all-online [survey](#) research panel in the country.

Provided by University of California - Davis Health

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