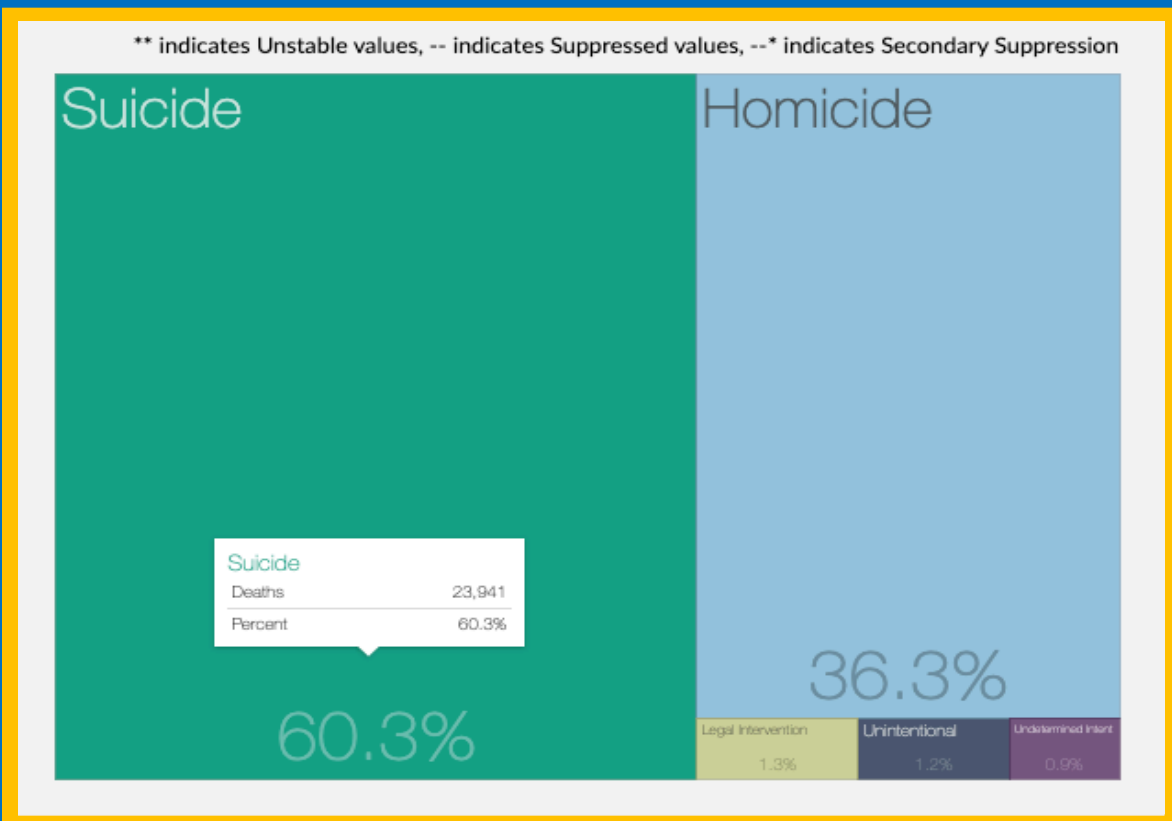




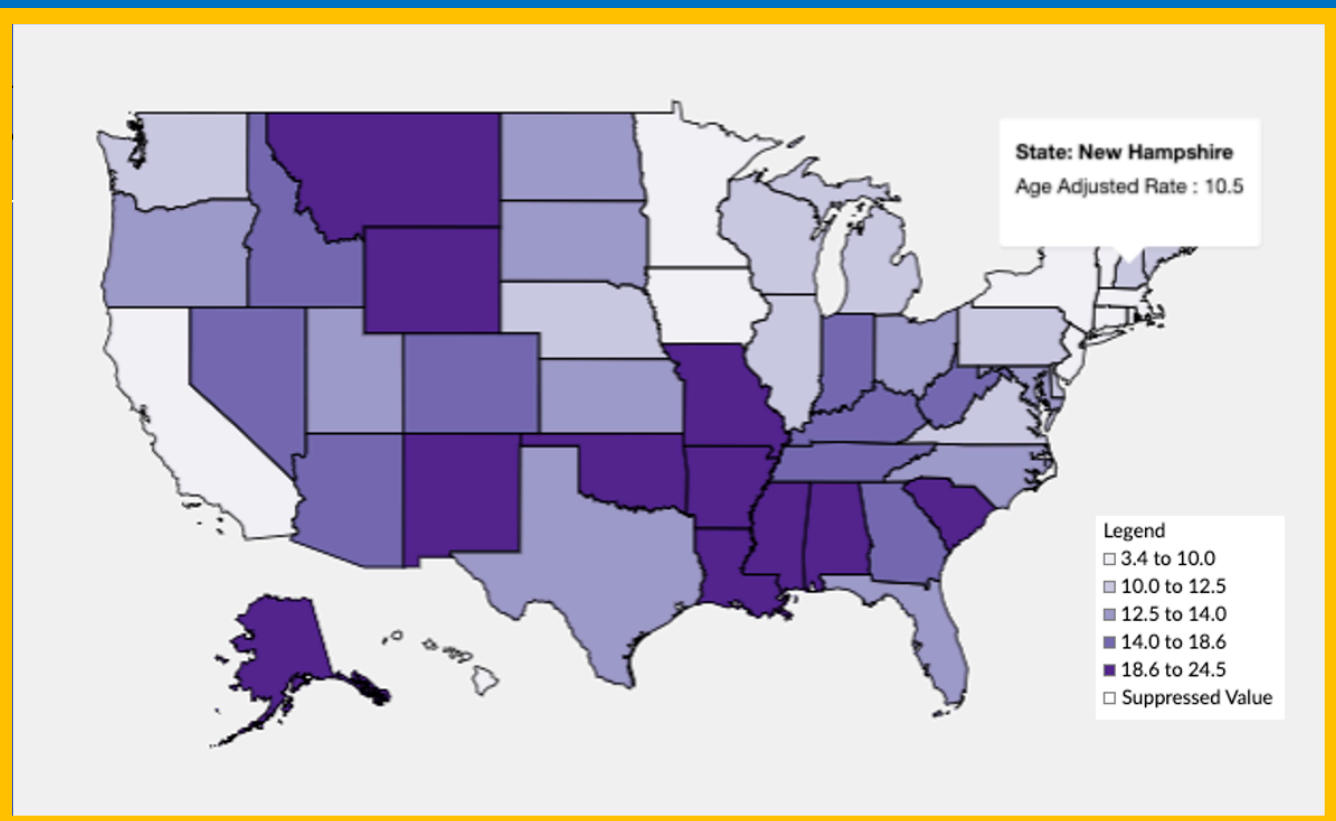
# The Gun Shop Project: Do Firearm Retailers Have a Role in Suicide Prevention?



Gun advocates and health professionals can work together to reduce the burden of firearm-related suicide deaths.



2019 Firearm related deaths grouped by intent  
Source: <https://www.fbi.gov/wireimages/wire.cfm?id=1000000000>



2019 Age-adjusted firearm suicide rate per 100,000 population  
Source: <https://www.fbi.gov/wireimages/wire.cfm?id=1000000000>

## Background

### Stats

- Gun owners and their families are at 2-3 times higher risk of suicide than their non-gun owning peers
- Over half of firearm related deaths are via suicide
- The total number of suicide deaths in the U.S. were 47,511 in 2019—Half of the suicide deaths were caused by firearms alone

### NHFSC

- A coalition of firearm rights advocates and public health professionals developed and mailed suicide prevention materials (posters, brochures, wallet cards) to firearm retailers in New Hampshire to promote to customers the idea of storing household guns away from home (or otherwise inaccessibly) when a family member is at risk for suicide.

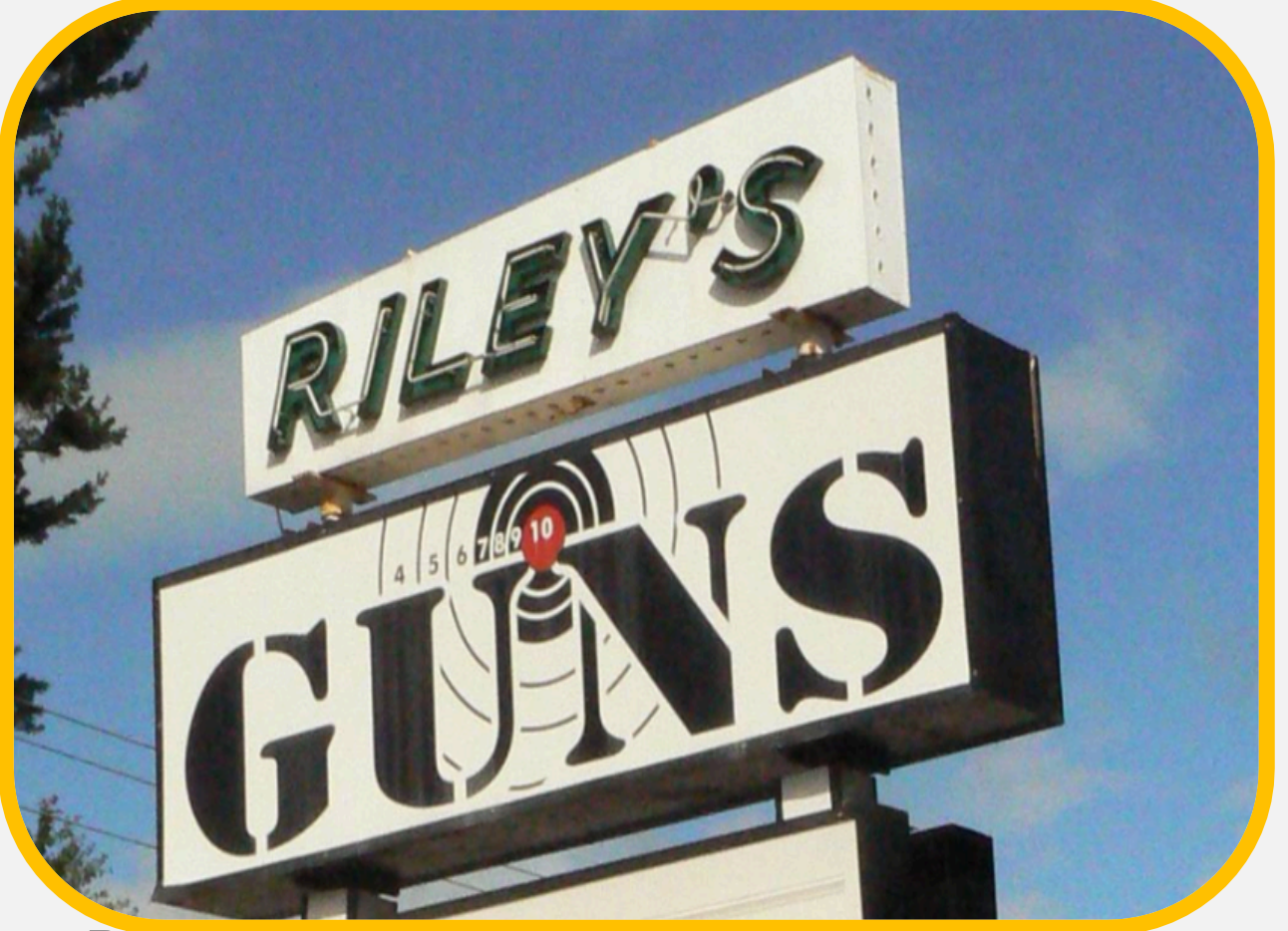


Photo: Riley's Gun Shop sign

## Methods

- We designed a survey instrument and conducted interviews at **28 gun shops** during unannounced, in-person visits to assess:
  - (1) the % displaying materials
  - (2) whether they would store guns for customers at risk for suicide
  - (3) their views on the role of gun shops in suicide prevention

## Results

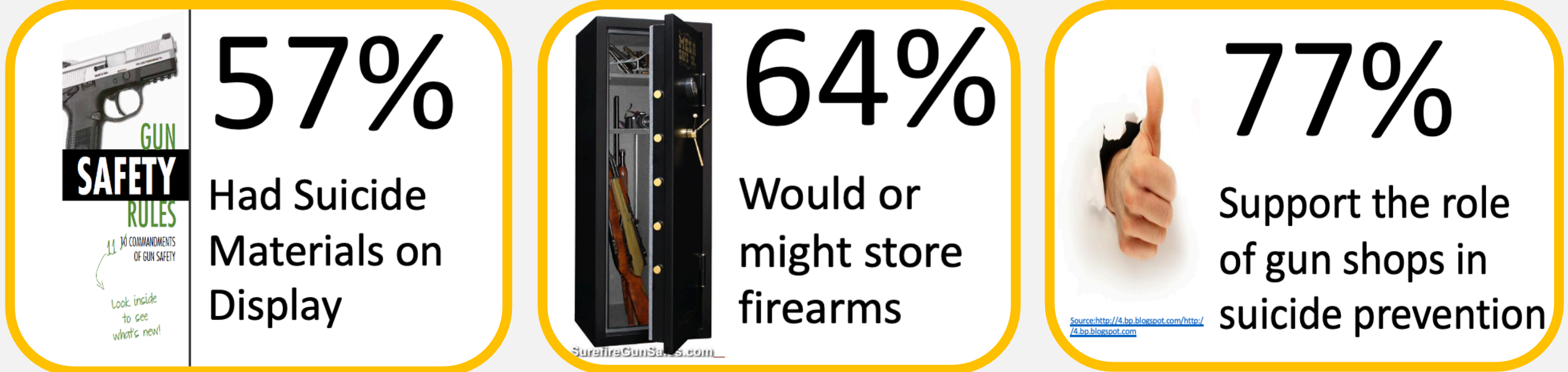


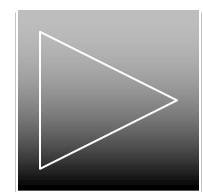
Photo: New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition members

## Discussion

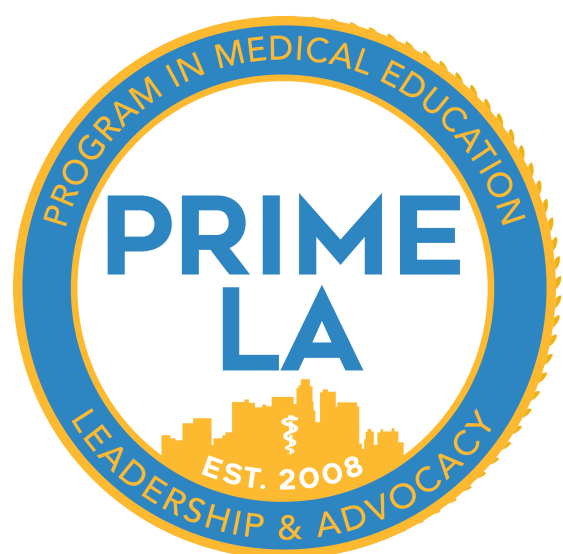
- There is promising potential for the promotion of firearm retailers to provide off-site gun storage for customers that are at higher risk.
- The majority of retailers have a positive attitude about the role of gun shops in promoting suicide prevention.
- Voluntary suicide prevention strategies that involve the collaboration of both gun advocates and health professionals is critical to building trust and reaching gun owners.

## Acknowledgements

- This poster is possible because of the work from members of The New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition and the support of Cathy Barber, MPA, and Dr. David Hemenway.







# The Gun Shop Project: Do Firearm Retailers Have a Role in Suicide Prevention?

## Background

- Harvard Injury Control Research Center at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health collaborates with the [New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition](#) (NHFSC) and gun owners on the issue of suicide prevention to reduce the societal burden of injury and violence—through surveillance, research, intervention, evaluation, outreach, dissemination, and training.
- The coalition consists of firearm retailers, firearm instructors, gun rights proponents, as well as mental health and public health advocates.
- They created the first “[gun shop project](#),” a concept that has spread around the country. And another Injury Center project—[Means Matter](#)—has also created a brief [curriculum and slideshow](#) for use by firearm instructors in basic firearm classes and for presentations at places like gun clubs.

## Methods

### Purpose of practicum study:

To replicate a 2012 study and measure current use of materials by gun shops and assess the proportion of shops that will offer temporary firearm storage services.

- Designed hard copy survey instrument for interviews; designed online Qualtrics instrument for data entry, Google map and Google spreadsheet to distribute shop visits to Coalition members; prepped coalition members on interview strategies
- Evaluations of shops were conducted by coalition members and via unannounced, in-person visits
- Members conducting the visits invited gun shop owners and employees to participate in a research survey to gain feedback on suicide prevention engagement
- Interviews were conducted in Winter 2020; interviews were terminated in March before all were complete due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. n=28 interviews

## Results

- **General Attitudes:** Over three-quarters (77%, N=20) of shops had positive thoughts on the role of firearm retailers spreading awareness about suicide prevention
- **Gun storage:** Nearly two-thirds reported a capacity to store firearms (64%, N=18)
- **Materials on display:** Over half of the gun shops (57%, N=16) had at least one of the materials on display

## Conclusion

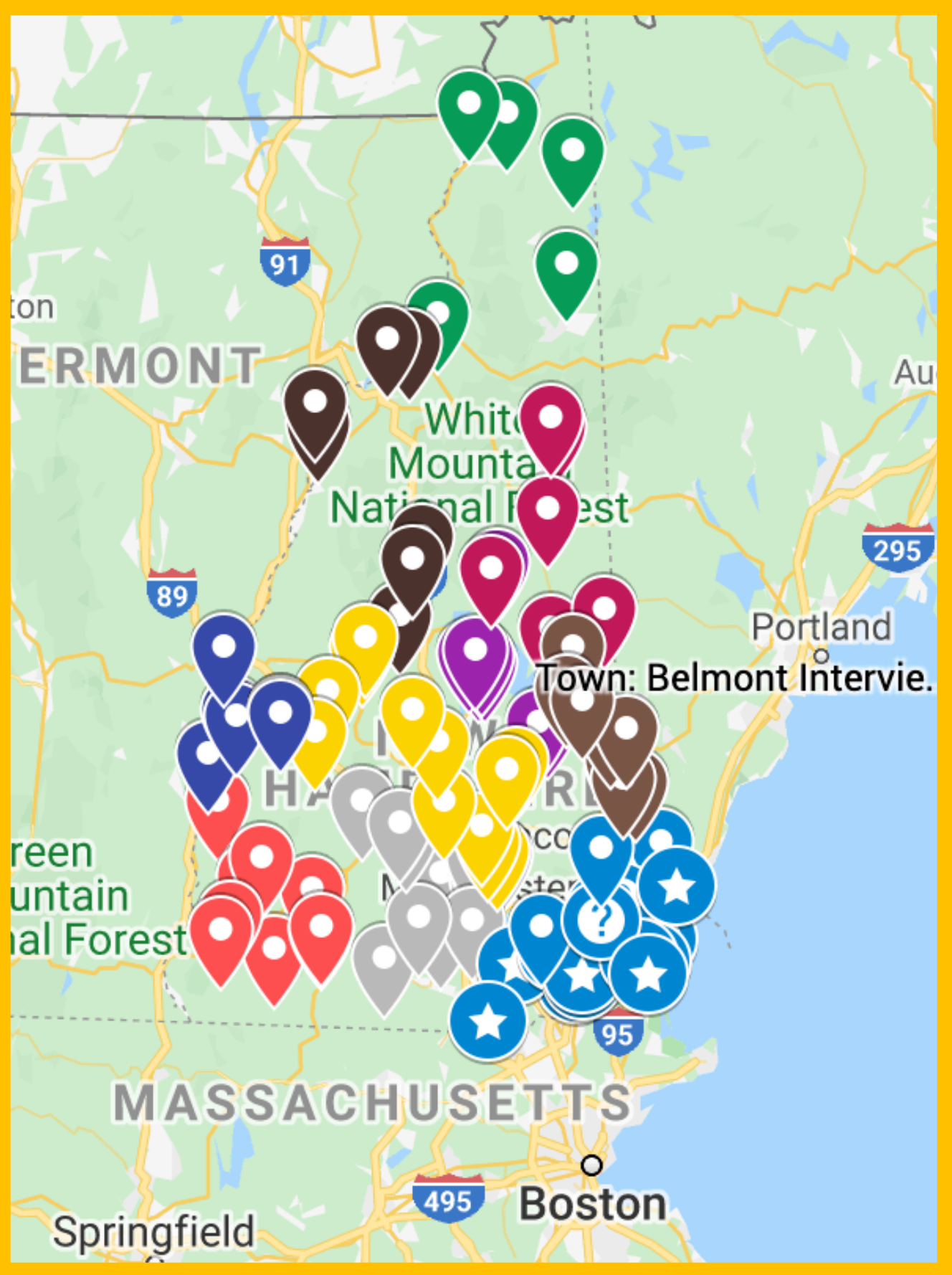
- **Health professionals and the gun community can work together to reduce the burden of the most common cause of firearm-related deaths (suicide)**
- **The gun community has demonstrated a strong willingness to work with public health workers to reduce suicides and voluntary non-legislative approaches are necessary to maintain this cohesive partnership**

### Lessons learned:

- Mailed materials failed to reach many gun stores. Drive and drop off materials to stores during first visit, then invite them to participate in the survey
- Different personalities of interviewers could have dramatic effect on data collected
- COVID-19 travel restrictions resulted in small sample size that may not be representative of all gun shops in NH
- ~~More funding is needed for voluntary collaborative approaches~~

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Google maps: locations of initial list of 93 gun shops in New Hampshire



Suicide prevention material: poster for retailers