

Comparing Deaths from Gun Violence in the U.S. with Other Countries

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OVERVIEW

With far more people dying of gun-related causes annually in the United States than in other high-income countries, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, M.D., officially declared firearm violence a [public health crisis](#) on June 25, 2024. In his advisory, Murthy noted that over half of U.S. adults have either experienced gun-related violence themselves or have a family member who has. Firearms are the [leading cause of death for children](#) in the U.S. and are the weapons used most often in [domestic violence against women](#).

Leading up to the surgeon general's 2024 declaration, there had already been [248 U.S. mass shootings](#) — incidents where four or more people were shot or killed, excluding the shooter — in just a six-month period. In the preceding year, there were more than 650 mass shootings and more than [43,000 deaths](#) linked to firearms. Mass shootings, despite the publicity they receive, account for fewer than 2 percent of all gun deaths in the U.S.

Gun deaths, which are [largely preventable](#), contribute significantly to rising rates of preventable mortality and continue to [drive down U.S. life expectancy](#). While data limitations make it difficult to calculate accurate numbers of firearm-related injuries, studies suggest the number of firearm-related injuries is [roughly double the number of reported deaths](#) each year.

By some estimates, [firearm violence](#) cost the U.S. around \$557 billion in 2022, with \$2.8 billion spent on health care costs, mental health services, and emergency services. The largest proportion of this total was made up of costs related to quality-of-life, pain and well-being lost by those injured or killed, and costs to families. Combined with billions in other losses, firearm deaths cost roughly \$274,000 per victim and each injury costs over \$25,000 per patient, equaling an average cost of \$1,700 per taxpayer annually.

Previously the Commonwealth Fund compared firearm mortality in the U.S. with [other high-income countries](#), showing [consistently higher U.S. rates](#). In the following charts, we also look at countries whose firearm mortality rates are more comparable to the U.S. The first three exhibits show how the U.S. compares: 1) across all countries and territories around the world; 2) across a subset of countries with a similar firearm mortality rate; and 3) across high-income countries only. We also show how firearm deaths in U.S. states compare to other countries. Data come from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's [Global Burden of Disease](#) study, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WONDER database (see "How We Conducted This Study" for details).

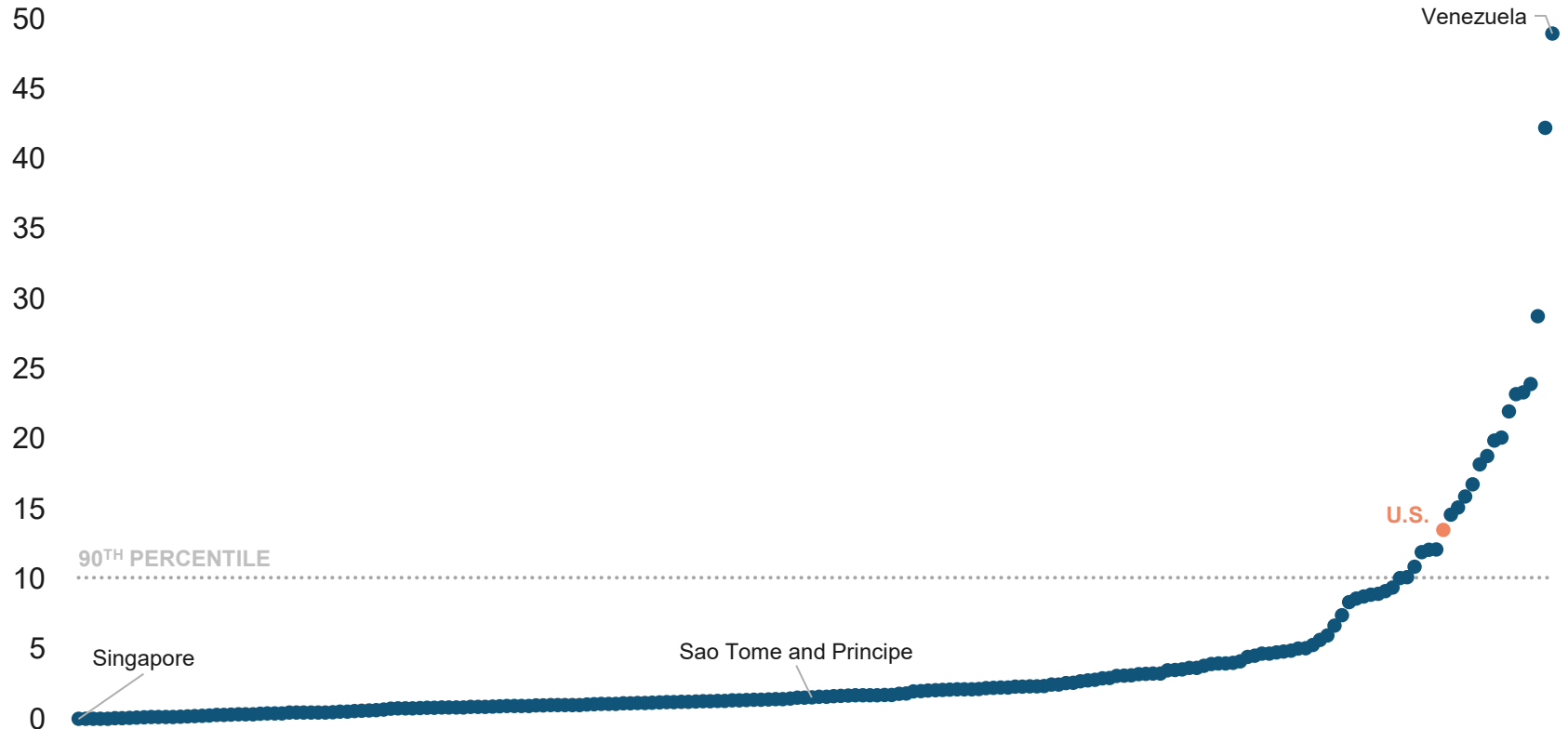
HIGHLIGHTS

- Globally, the U.S. ranks at the 93rd percentile for overall firearm mortality, 92nd percentile for children and teens, and 96th percentile for women.
- The U.S. has among the highest overall firearm mortality rates, as well as among the highest firearm mortality rates for children, adolescents, and women, both globally and among high-income countries.
- Nearly all U.S. states have higher firearm mortality rate than most other countries. The rate of deaths due to physical violence by firearm in U.S. states are closer to rates seen in countries [experiencing active conflict](#).
- Black and American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) people have the highest firearm mortality rates by race or ethnicity.

EXHIBIT 1 – All countries and territories

The U.S. ranks at the 93rd percentile of all countries and territories for overall firearm mortality.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms per 100,000 people



Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 1 – Countries and territories with firearm mortality rates closest to the U.S.

The U.S. ranks 16th out of 204 countries and territories for firearm mortality in the world.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms per 100,000 people



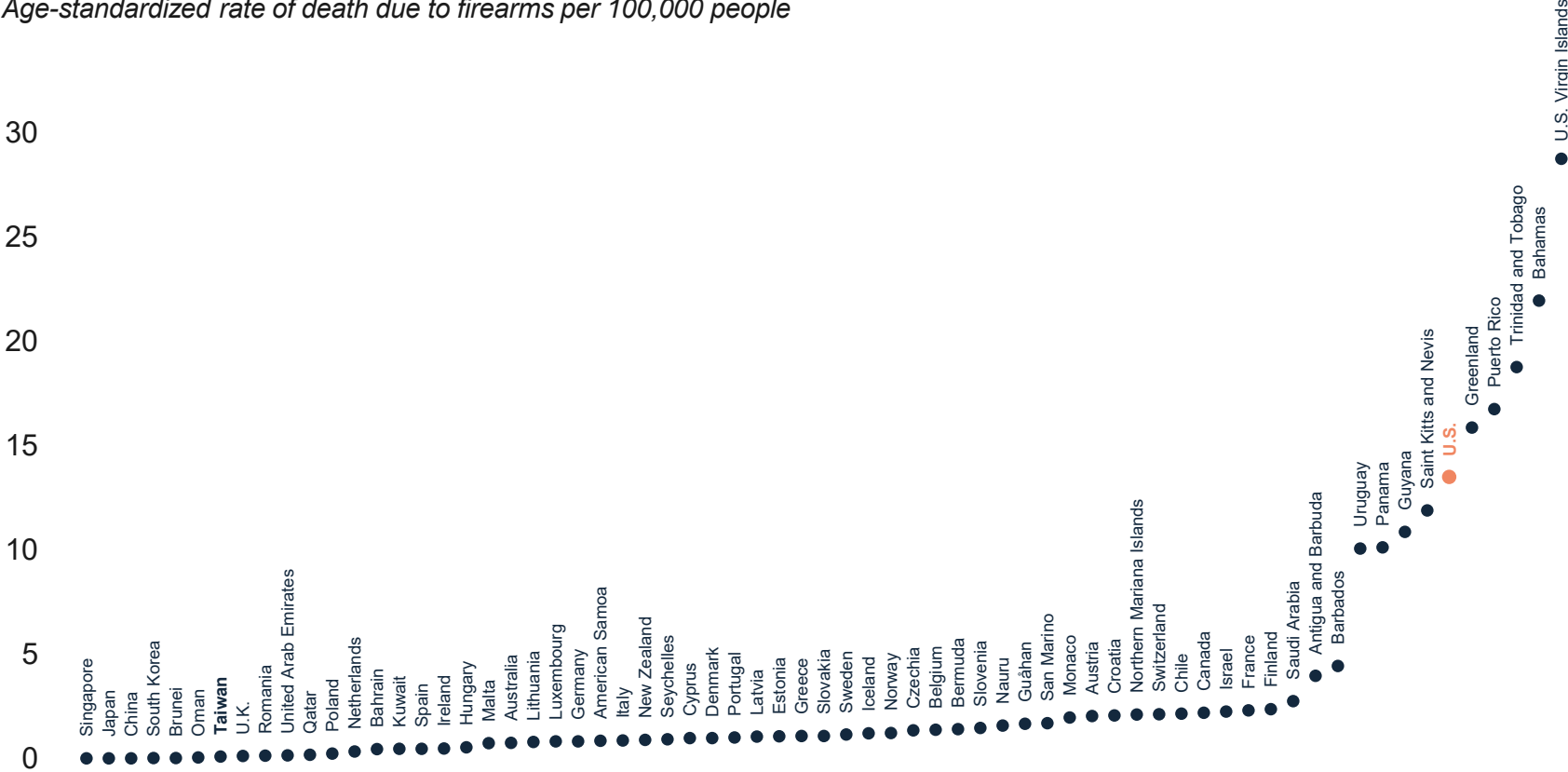
Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. Only countries with firearm mortality rates of over 10.0 per 100,000 were included in this exhibit.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 1 – High-income countries

The U.S. has one of the highest rates of firearm deaths of any high-income country.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms per 100,000 people



Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. High-income countries are defined based on the [World Bank's definition](#) of high-income economies which are defined as those with a gross national income per capita of USD \$13,846 or more.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

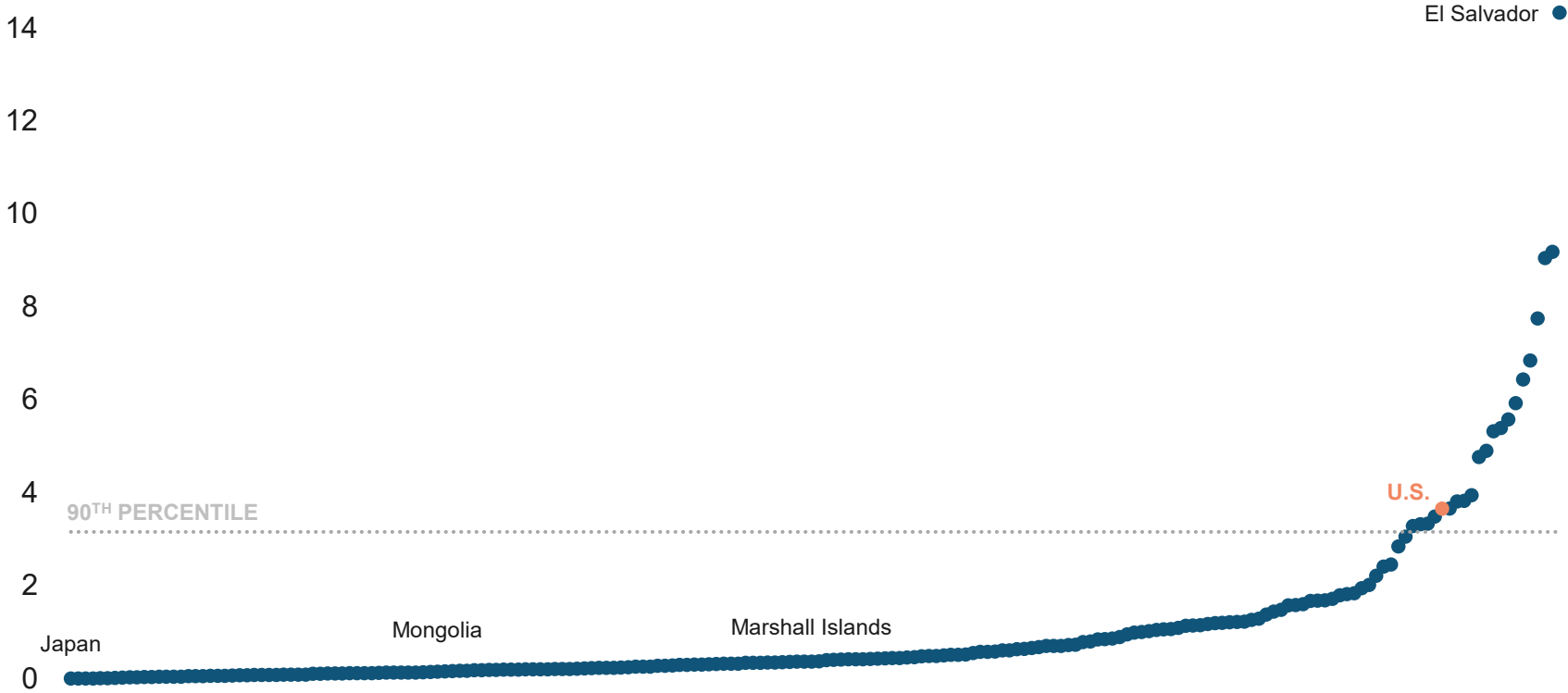


Source: Evan D. Gumas, Munira Z. Gunja, and Reginald D. Williams II, "Comparing Deaths from Gun Violence in the U.S. with Other Countries," chartpack, Commonwealth Fund, Oct. 2024. <https://doi.org/10.26099/1t4e-7h62>

EXHIBIT 2 – All countries and territories

The U.S. ranks at the 92nd percentile of all countries and territories for child and teen firearm mortality.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms among children and teens ages 0–19 per 100,000 people



Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

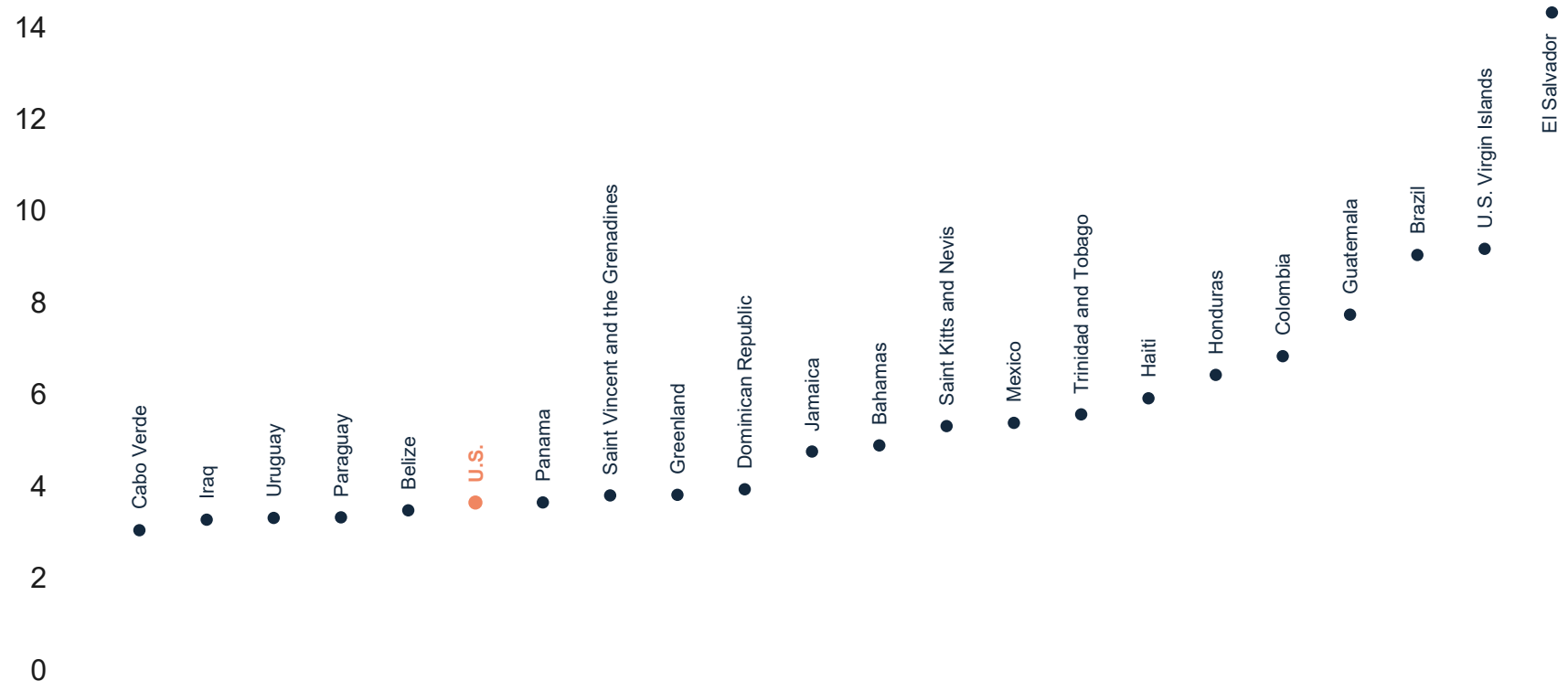


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EXHIBIT 2 – Countries and territories with firearm mortality rates closest to the U.S.

The U.S. has among the highest child and teen firearm mortality rates in the world.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms among children and teens ages 0–19 per 100,000 people



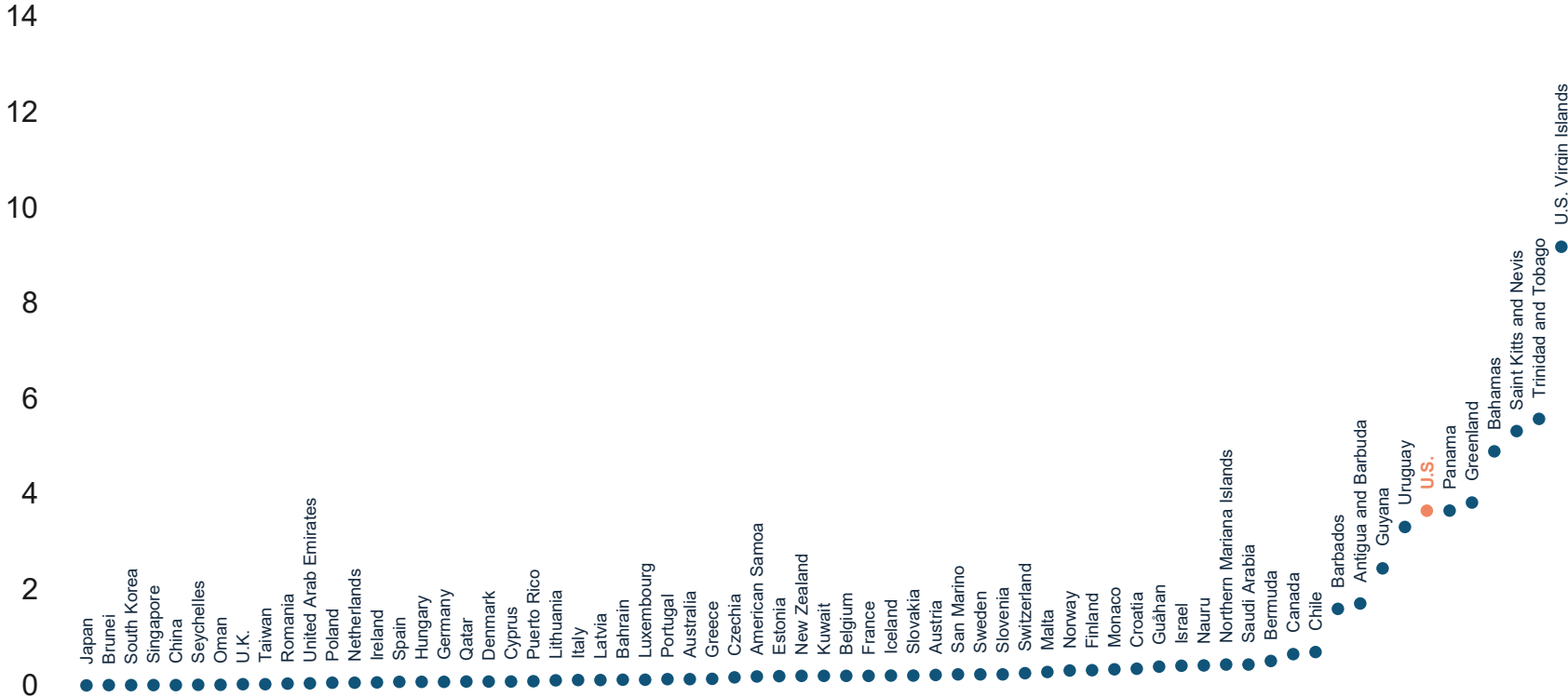
Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. Only countries with firearm mortality rates of over 3.0 per 100,000 were included in this exhibit.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 2 – High-income countries

The U.S. has among the highest rates of child and teen firearm deaths of any high-income country.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms among children and teens ages 0–19 per 100,000 people



Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. High-income countries are defined based on the [World Bank's definition](#) of high-income economies which are defined as those with a gross national income per capita of USD \$13,846 or more.

Data: Global Burden of Disease 2021.

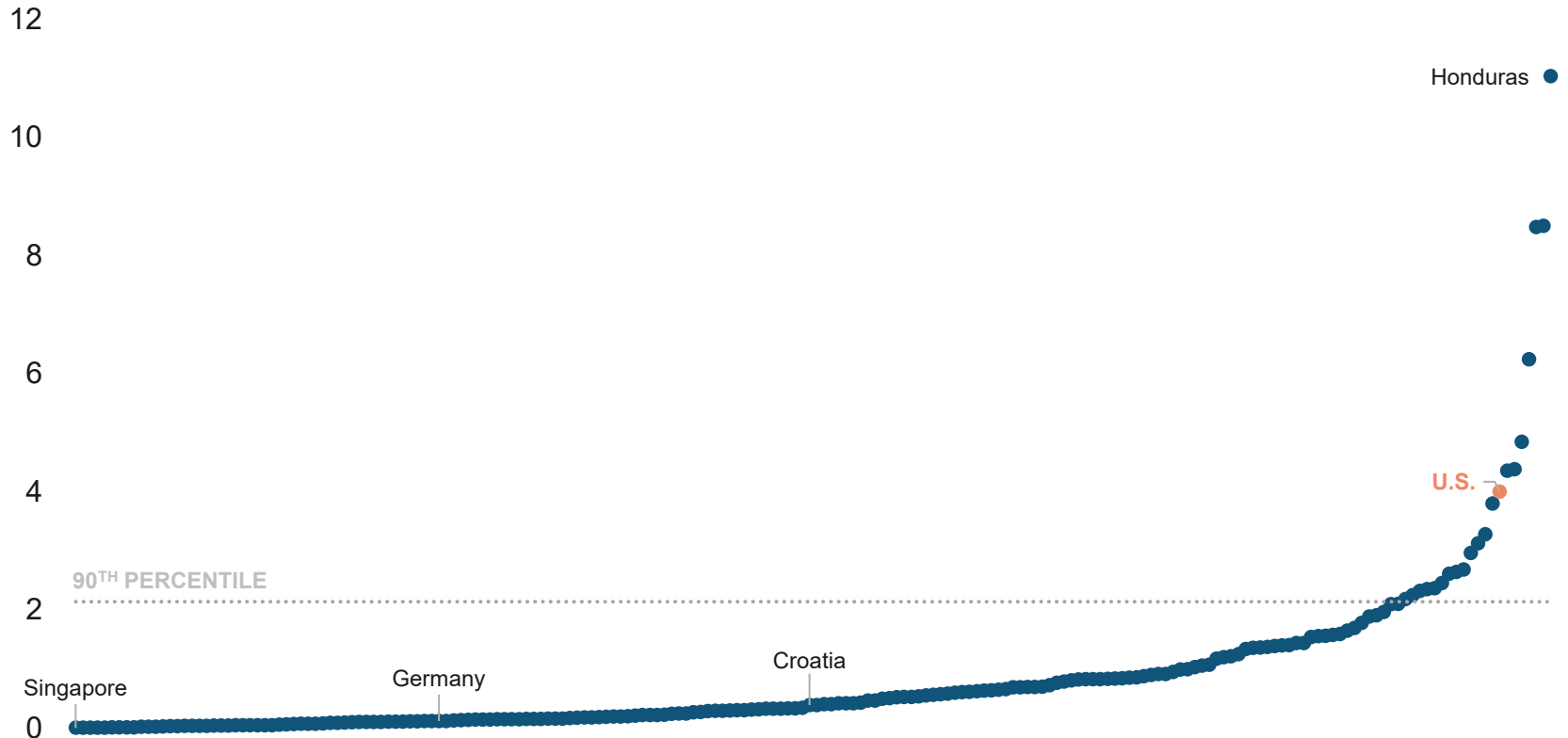


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EXHIBIT 3 – All countries and territories

The U.S. ranks at the 96th percentile of all countries and territories for women’s firearm mortality.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms among women per 100,000 people



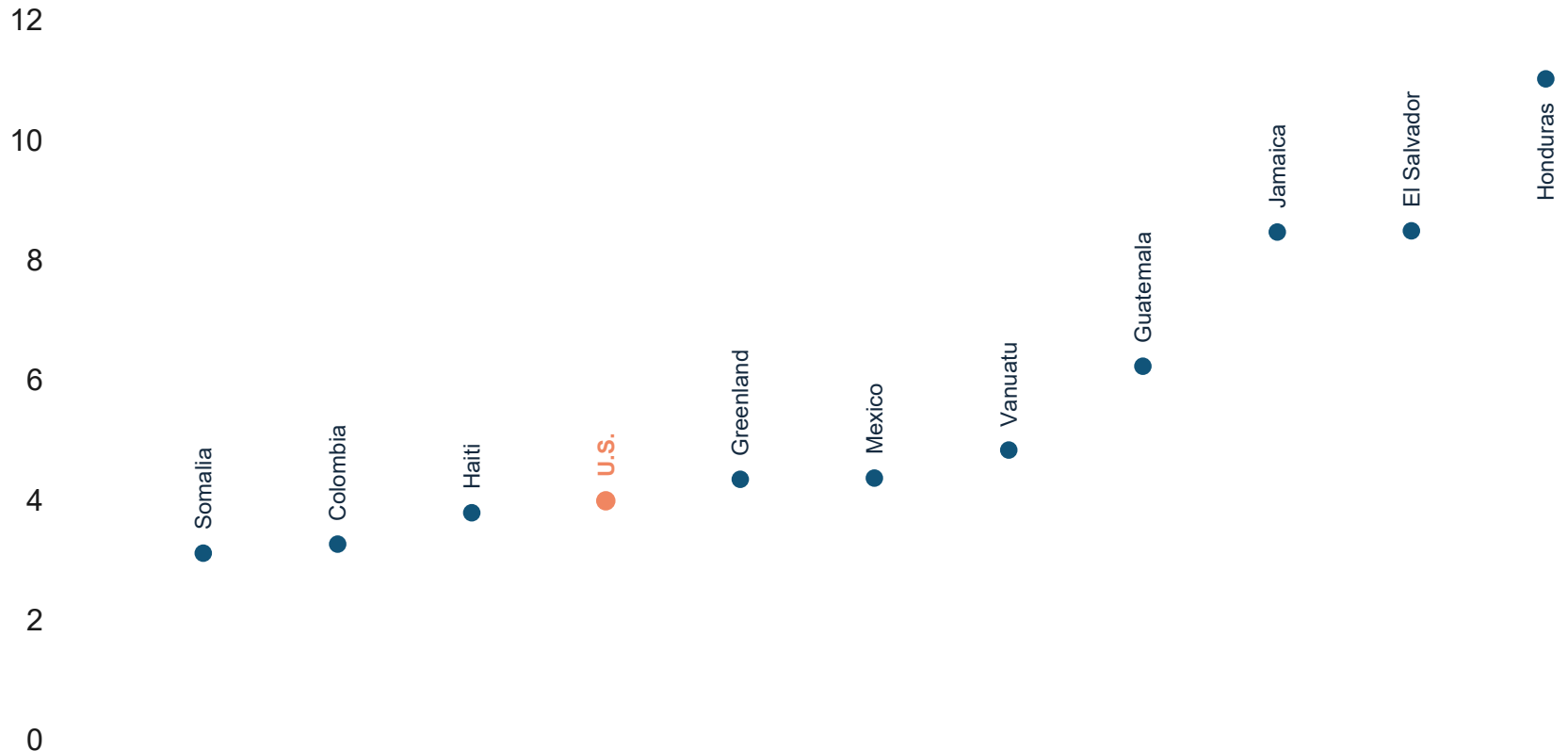
Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 3 – Countries and territories with firearm mortality rates closest to the U.S.

The U.S. has the eighth-highest firearm mortality rate in the world for women.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms among women per 100,000 people



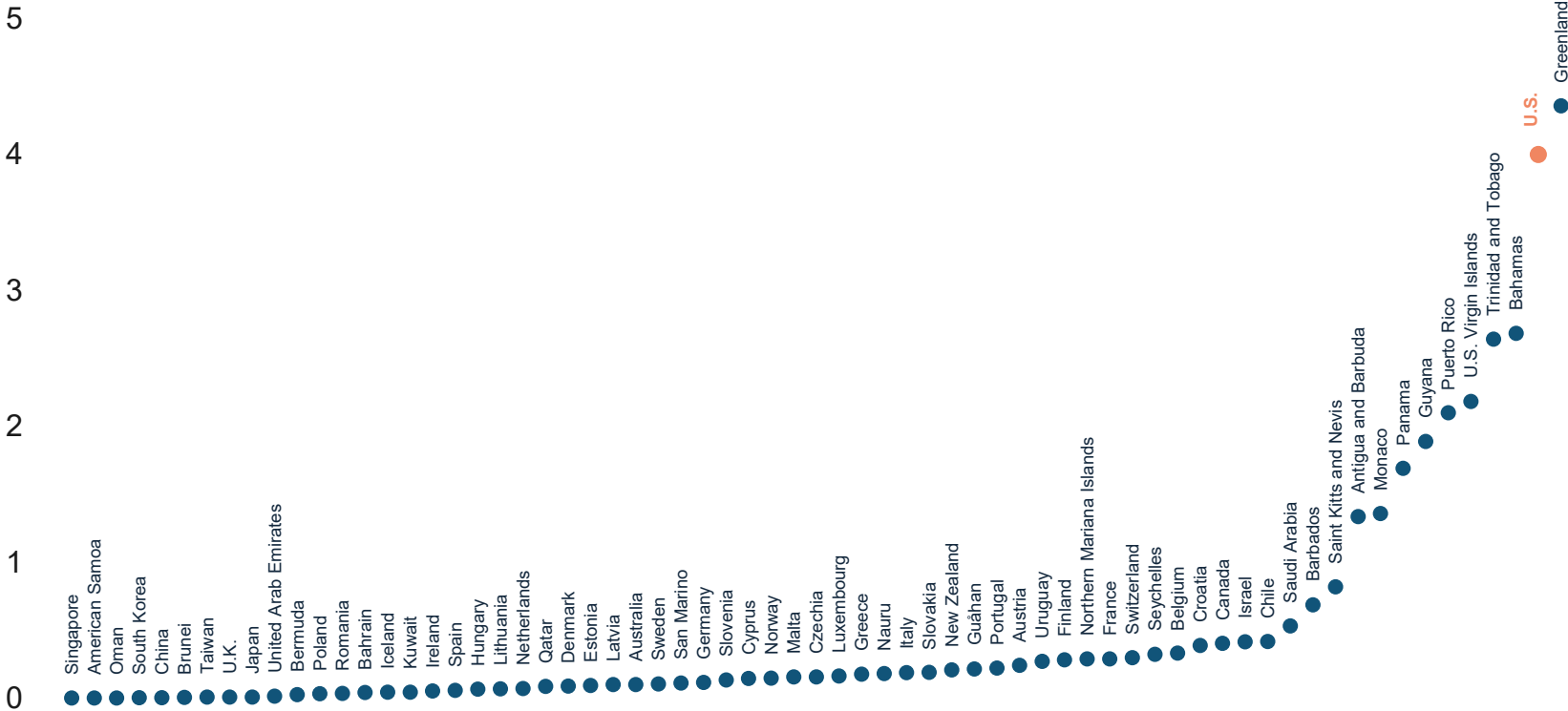
Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. Only countries with firearm mortality rates of over 3.0 per 100,000 were included in this exhibit.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 3 – High-income countries

Among high-income countries, the U.S. has the second-highest firearm mortality rate for women.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms per 100,000 women



Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. High-income countries are defined based on the [World Bank's definition](#) of high-income economies which are defined as those with a gross national income per capita of USD \$13,846 or more.

Data: US – CDC Wonder, 2022. Global Burden of Disease 2021.



Source: Evan D. Gumas, Munira Z. Gunja, and Reginald D. Williams II, "Comparing Deaths from Gun Violence in the U.S. with Other Countries," chartpack, Commonwealth Fund, Oct. 2024. <https://doi.org/10.26099/1t4e-7h62>

EXHIBIT 4

U.S. states have higher firearm mortality rates than most other countries in the world.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms per 100,000 people



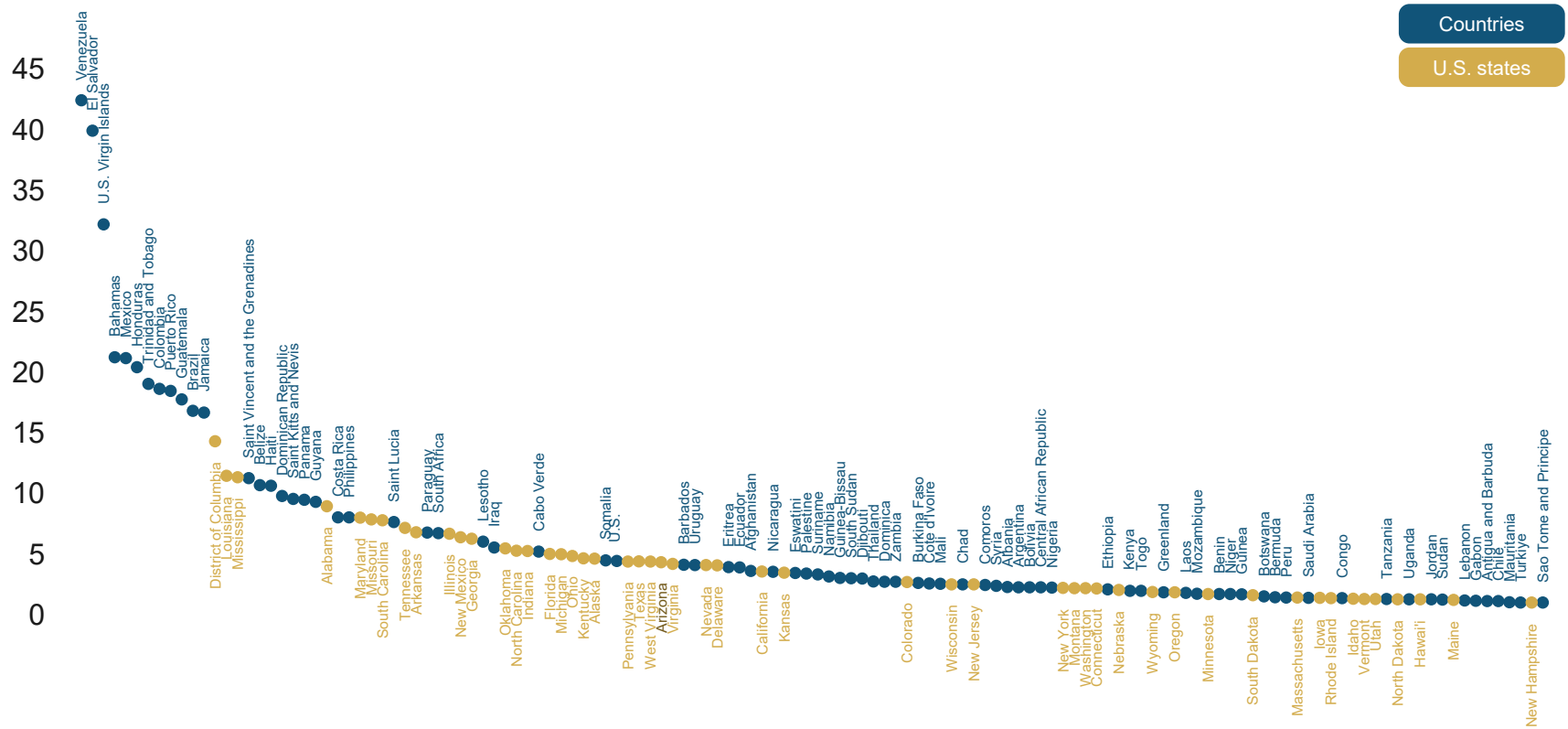
Notes: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries. U.S. and state data 2022, international data 2021. Only countries with mortality rates over 3.00 per 100,000 were included in this exhibit.

Data: US States – CDC Wonder, 2022; International – Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 5

Death rates from physical violence related to firearm in U.S. states are closer to rates seen in countries with the highest mortality rates in the world and experiencing active conflict.

Age-standardized rate of death due to physical violence by firearm per 100,000 people



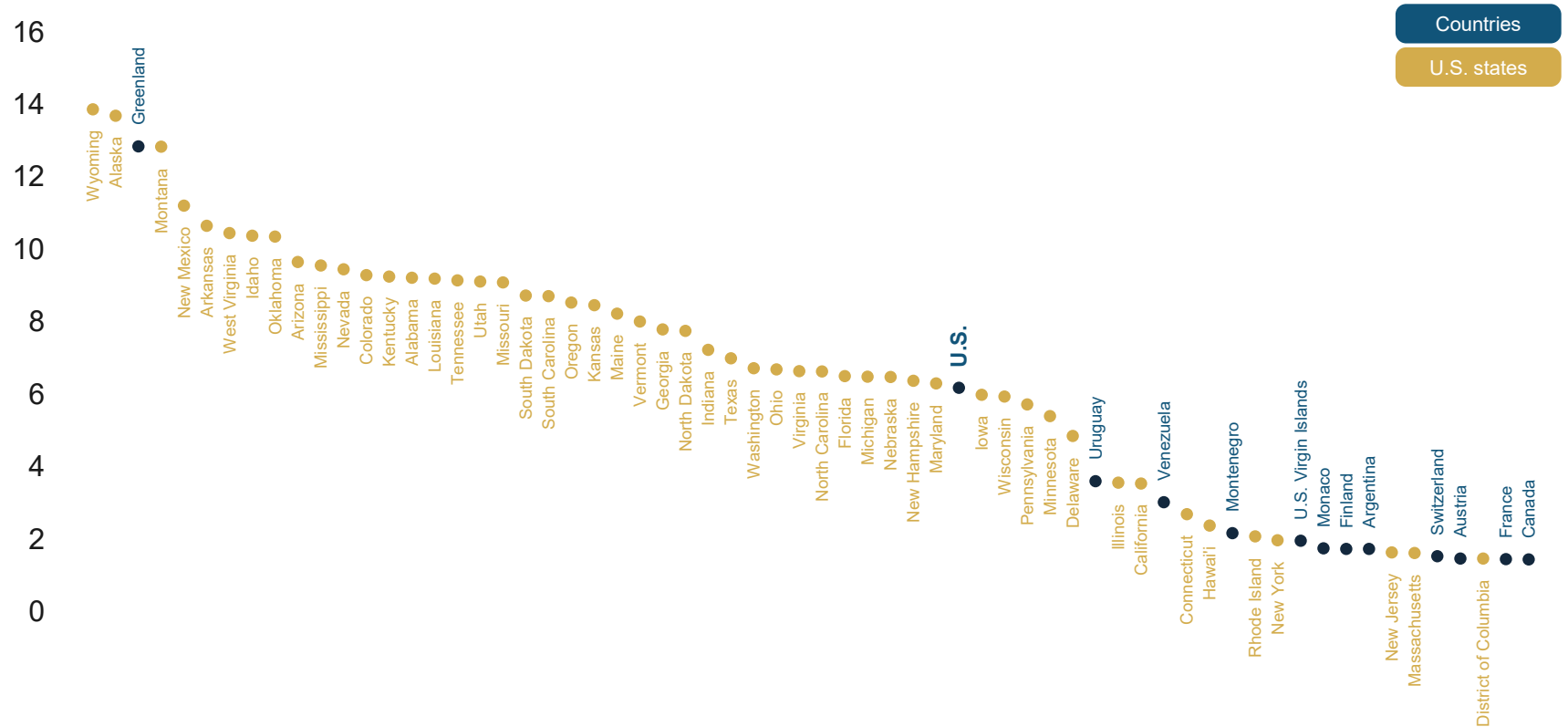
Notes: Only countries with mortality rates over 1.00 per 100,000 were included in this exhibit. Note that the Republic of Korea does not report physical violence by firearm.

Data: Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 6

Only 12 countries have a rate of self-harm by firearm as high as that of the U.S.

Age-standardized rate of death due to self-harm by firearm per 100,000 people



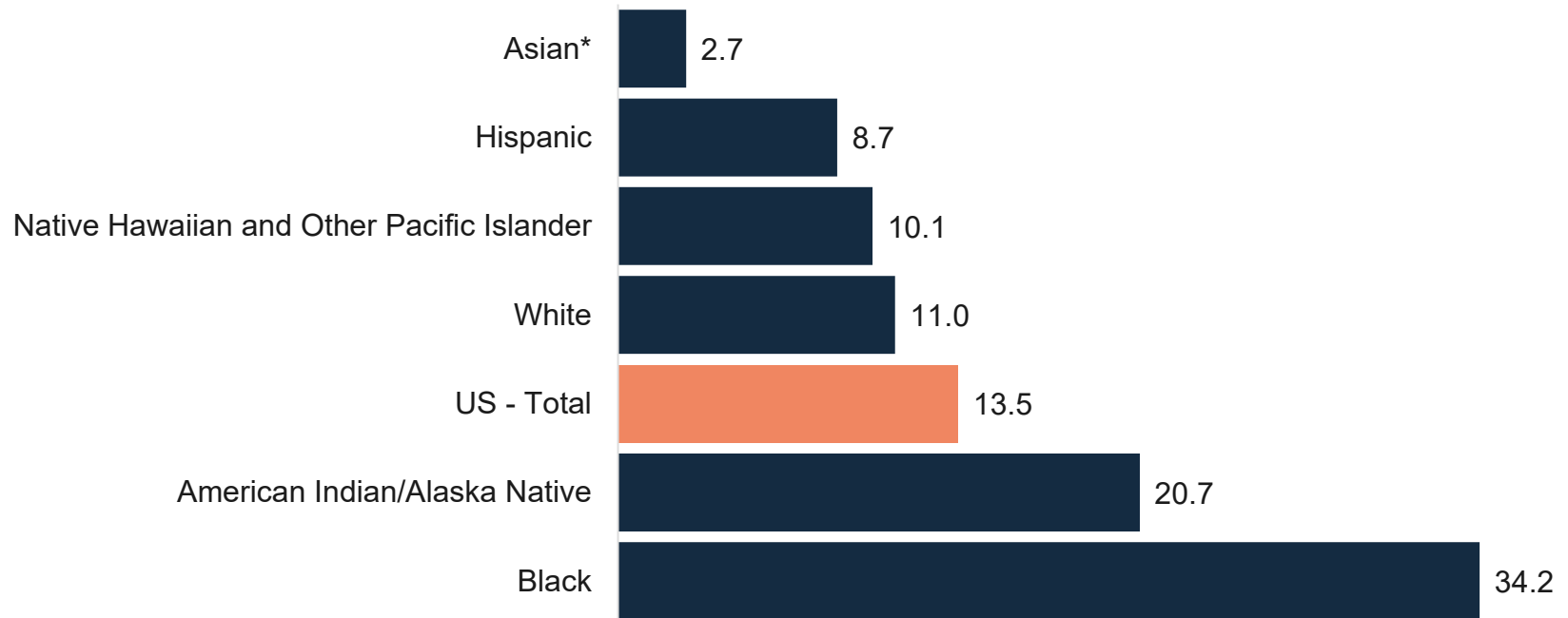
Notes: Only countries with mortality rates over 1.45 per 100,000 were included in this exhibit.

Data: Global Burden of Disease 2021.

EXHIBIT 7

American Indian and Alaska Natives and Black Americans have the highest mortality due to firearms of any racial or ethnic group in the U.S.

Age-standardized rate of death due to firearms, 2022



* The "Asian" racial category includes Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Other Asian. The breakdown of Asian American and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander deaths is as follows: 17% Asian Indian, 15% Chinese, 14% Filipino, 4% Japanese, 10% Korean, 11% Vietnamese, 20% Other Asian, 4% Samoan, and 3% Other Pacific Islander.

Note: Firearm mortality is an aggregate of physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries.

Data: CDC Wonder 2022.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS STUDY

This analysis largely relies on data from the Global Burden of Disease study from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, or IHME. The 2021 Global Burden of Disease study provides a comprehensive picture of mortality and disability across countries, time, age, and sex. It quantifies health loss from hundreds of diseases, injuries, and risk factors. The study calculated firearm mortality from physical violence by firearm, self-harm by firearm, and unintentional firearm injuries across many locations, including in the 204 countries, territories, and U.S. states included in this analysis. The raw numbers of deaths for all three were combined to create an overall firearm mortality number, which was then analyzed and age-standardized to the World Standard Population (WHO 2000–2025). [Details on their methods are available here.](#)

Where possible, we used the latest 2022 mortality data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the United States (Exhibits 1–5, 7) and age-standardized to the World Standard Population (WHO 2000–2025).