

High Yield Data on Gun Violence and Strategies for Reduction

Prepared by Ashley Hink, MD, MPH

hink@musc.edu

Violence and Firearm Related Data

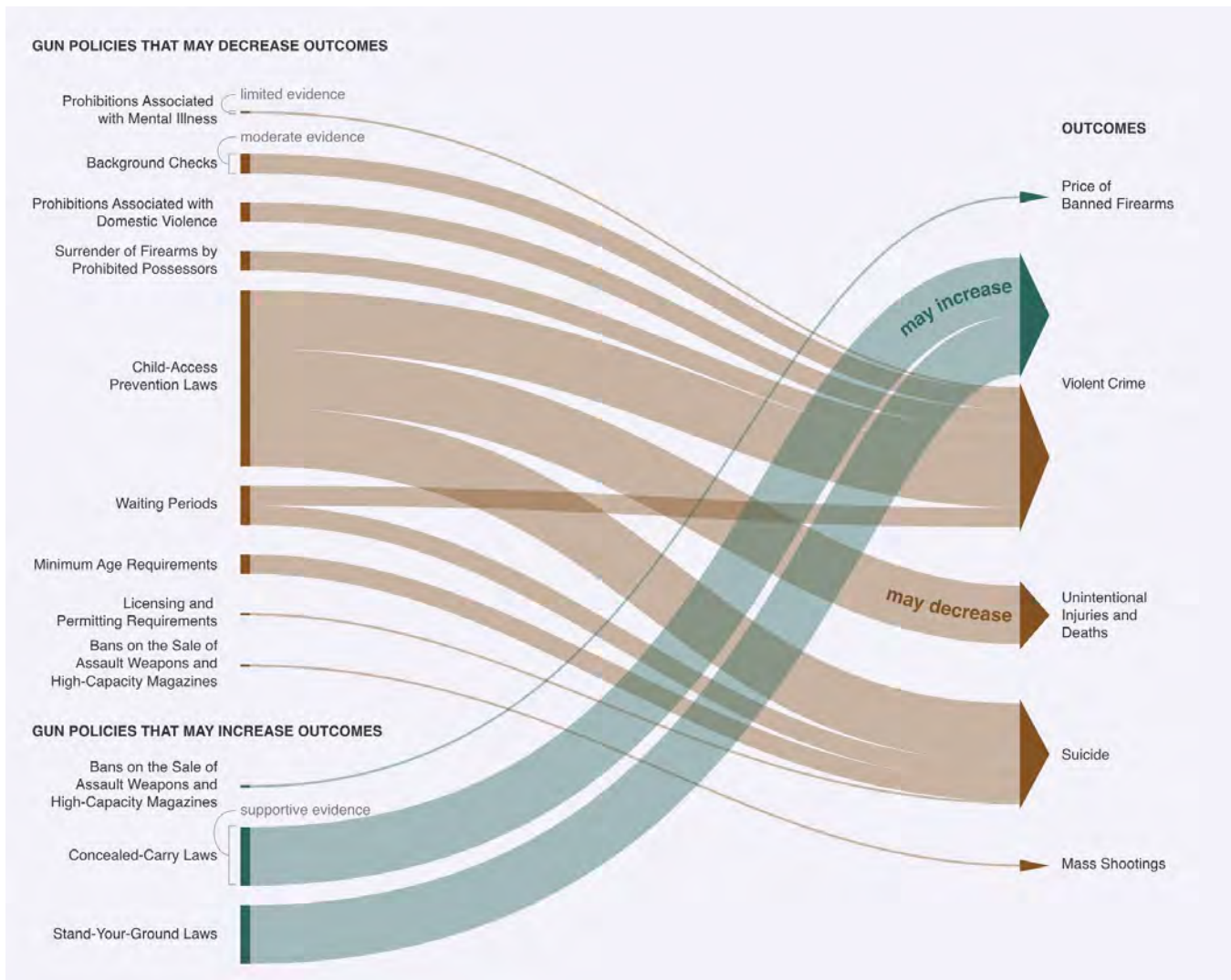
- According to CDC data, there were 48,830 firearm deaths in the US in 2021
 - 54% of firearm deaths were suicide
 - 43% of firearm deaths were homicide
- According to CDC data, SC is an outlier for intentional violence. SC has the 4th highest firearm homicide rate among states in the US. The firearm homicide rate in SC has doubled in the last decade.
- Firearms are used in 80% of all homicides and 51% of suicides. Firearms are lethal in 90% of suicide attempts, and 22% of firearm assaults. Survivors of firearm assaults are at high risk of disabilities, depression and PTSD, suicidality, poor education and economic outcomes, and further violent injury.
- Most gun violence and deaths related to firearm homicide are related to interpersonal violence and community violence – active shooter events make up a very small portion of firearm homicides but have increased in recent years.
- There are multiple risk factors for experiencing firearm violence that exist at multiple levels: the individual, relationships (family, friends), community, systems, and policies. See the Table in the *Additional Information* section.
- Access to a firearm in the home more than doubles the risk of homicide and increases the risk of suicide more than three-fold.
- For the first time on record, firearms became the leading cause of death for children and teens in both SC and the U.S. in 2020, surpassing motor vehicle collisions. Homicides make up the majority of these deaths, and there is a disproportionate burden on Black and Hispanic youth.
- The cost of firearm injury and death in SC is nearly \$14 billion annually according to a 2022 study released by Everytown. This amounts to \$2,716 per resident in our state.

There are multiple evidence-based policies, public health and healthcare strategies that can reduce firearm violence.

1. Firearm safety policies: There are many policies that aim to reduce firearm access for individuals that are high risk of hurting themselves and other people, and policies that hold owners accountable for safe storage practices. These are some of the policies that research demonstrates can reduce firearm violence.
 - a. Universal background checks

- b. Mandatory surrender of firearms by prohibited possessors
- c. Prohibitions of firearm ownership by convicted intimate partner violence offenders
- d. Child access prevention laws

To learn more about these policies and others can also help reduce suicide, and policies that actually increase gun violence, see the Rand Gun Policy in America report. It has interactive tools to explore the impact of policies and state level differences. <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy.html>



Source: Rand Gun Policy in America, 2023

2. Community-based violence prevention and intervention programs that aim to reduce risk for individuals and communities
 - a. Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIP's): programs that provide immediate support and long-term comprehensive wrap-around services to reduce risks to individuals that experience violent injury and improve their outcomes after injury

- b. Community greening and urban improvement: Targeted neighborhood greening and improvement of the physical environment in areas with high crime rates.
 - c. Community violence intervention (CVI) programs: Trusted community members serve as violence interrupters to help break cycles of violence and retaliation, and help change community norms of violence
 - d. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT): Disseminating CBT in multiple settings (mental health, survivorship support, healthcare, schools, non-profits, etc.) to help change behaviors and norms of violence and conflict
3. Other meaningful strategies:
- 1. Promote policies and programs that are “upstream” to violence and counter the impact of structural racism including equitable access to employment, livable income, childcare, education, safe housing and healthcare.
 - 2. Community-building efforts in high-risk communities/populations (increase connections, social capital, empathy, mentorship)
 - 3. Effective law enforcement and criminal justice practices
 - 4. Investment in firearm injury prevention research, which has historically been underfunded compared to the burden of injury and death

To learn more about these and other strategies, see the reports from the CDC and Council on Criminal Justice:

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7119e1.htm?s_cid=mm7119e1_w
<https://counciloncj.org/meeting-bulletin-4-community-based-responses/>

In order to prevent and reduce violence, there has to be intention and investment to do so through policies, programs and reducing the root causes of gun violence. Multiple states have reduced gun violence with a comprehensive approach and investment, some of which are outlined in this report and below.

<https://files.giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Investing-in-Intervention-02.14.18.pdf>

Additional Information

For more information on firearm homicide and suicide, including data, risk factors, and prevention strategies, visit the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFGSV) from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions:

<https://efsgv.org/firearm-suicide/>

<https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/firearm-homicide/>

Risks for firearm related violence and suicide

TABLE 2. Major Contributors and Risk Factors for Firearm Homicide and Suicide

	Personal	Interpersonal	Community	Policy*
Assault and Homicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male¹ • Black, Hispanic race/ethnicity^{1,37-39} • Ages 15-34¹ • Involvement with juvenile criminal system⁴⁰ • Access to firearms^{12,41} • Retaliation beliefs^{37,42} • Illegal gun carrying³⁷ • PTSD^{37,42} • Alcohol and illicit substance abuse^{37,40,42} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous assault (victim or perpetrator)^{37,40,42-44} • Gang affiliations⁴⁰ • IPV⁴⁵⁻⁴⁹ • Single parent households (adolescents)³⁹ • Knowing victims or perpetrators of firearm violence⁴⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rates of concentrated community violent crime^{38,39,50} • Urban areas⁵¹ • Poverty^{38,39} • High unemployment³⁹ • High firearm ownership in the community⁴⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residing in states with <i>less</i> restrictive firearm laws such as⁵²⁻⁵⁶: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal background checks • Waiting periods • Permit-to-purchase • Strict penalties of firearm crimes • Restriction of firearms for IPV perpetration • Stand-your-ground laws⁵⁷
Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male¹ • White, Native American¹ • Access to firearms^{41,58-60} • Storing firearms loaded, unlocked⁶¹ • Depression, PTSD^{18,62,63} • Veteran or active military^{64,65} • Alcohol abuse⁶⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of job, economic distress^{63,67} • Interpersonal, relationship stressors^{63,67} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural areas⁶⁸ • High unemployment⁶⁸ • Publicized suicides in community (contagion effect)⁶⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residing in states with <i>less</i> restrictive firearm laws such as^{52,55,56,70}: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal background checks • Waiting periods • Permit-to-purchase • Child access laws

*Definitions of included policies: *Universal background checks* encompass background checks for *all* firearm sales or exchanges, not just sales from federally licensed dealers that are mandated to perform background checks under federal law. *Waiting periods* involve a mandatory period of time between applying to purchase a firearm and receiving the firearm. There is variability in the period from state to state, but most evidence favors a 30-day waiting period. *Permit-to-purchase* typically includes passing a mandatory background check for all firearm purchases, but states frequently have additional permit requirement such as mandatory firearm training, application and registration of the firearm with local authorities, and renewal of the permit after a specified period of time. *Strict penalties* of firearm crimes can encompass a number of prosecutorial efforts, but there is evidence that imposing mandatory minimum sentences for violent offenses involving firearms may reduce firearm assaults. *Restriction of firearms for IPV perpetration* includes not only prohibiting misdemeanor or felony offenders of IPV perpetration from purchasing firearms, but also taking currently owned firearms away from perpetrators who have domestic violence protective orders against them or are convicted of IPV-related offenses. *Stand-your-ground laws* allow for individual to use firearms to protect or defend themselves when under perceived and real threats, and data suggest are associated with increased firearm assaults and homicides. *Child access laws* vary by state, but impose criminal liability on adults for negligent storage of firearms in the event of a child gaining access to the firearm.

Source: Hink, A., Bonne, S., Levy, M., Kuhls, D., Allee, L., Burke, P., Sakran, J., Bulger, E. & Stewart, R. (2019). Firearm injury research and epidemiology: A review of the data, their limitations, and how trauma centers can improve firearm injury research. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 87 (3), 678-689.

Learn more about Hospital Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs) from the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention:

<https://www.thehavi.org/>

To obtain more information on clinical tools for recognizing warning signs for violence and self-harm, and counseling on safe firearm ownership, visit the BulletPoints Project:

<https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/>

For a recent report on mass shootings:

<https://everytownresearch.org/mass-shootings-in-america/>

Strategies for Reducing Gun Violence in American Cities

https://centerforimprovinginvestigations.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/StrategiesReducingGunViolenceAmericanCities_2016.pdf

Examples of city strategic plans to reduce violence:

- National Offices of Violence Prevention (OVP): <https://ovpnetwork.org/>
- Specific city comprehensive plans:
 - Charlotte: <https://www.mecknc.gov/HealthDepartment/Pages/ViolencePrevention.aspx>
 - Albuquerque: <https://www.cabq.gov/vip>
 - Chicago: <https://counciloncj.org/violent-crime-working-group/>
 - New Orleans: <https://www.nola.gov/next/gun-violence-prevention/home/>
 - Washington D.C.: <https://counciloncj.org/violent-crime-working-group/>
 - Baltimore: <https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Baltimore%20City%20Comprehensive%20Violence%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf>

What other hospitals and academic medical centers are doing:

<https://www.northwell.edu/center-for-gun-violence-prevention>

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/departments/health-policy-and-management/research-and-practice/center-for-gun-violence-solutions>

<https://hiprc.org/firearm/>

<https://health.ucdavis.edu/vprp/UCFC/index.html>

<https://gunviolenceresearchcenter.rutgers.edu/>

Sources for cited data:

Updated CDC data on epidemiology of firearm related deaths, injury and economic burden by intent (assault, suicide, unintentional) via Everytown: <https://everystat.org/#cost>, <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-South-Carolina.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/149/3/e2021052739/184887/Pediatric-Firearm-Injury-Mortality-Epidemiology?autologincheck=redirected>

<https://efsgv.org/>

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/>