



Gun Violence: What Does The Research Say?

Gun violence is a public health crisis in the United States.

- There were **31,672** firearm related deaths in 2010 which amounts to **87 deaths** per day. The most common causes of firearm deaths are suicide (60%) and homicide (35%). There were 10.3 firearm deaths per 100,000 people. This rate has been virtually unchanged for the past 10 years.¹ The firearm homicide rate in the US is **20 times** higher for all individuals and **43 times** higher for 15-24 year-olds than in other industrialized countries.²
- American children less than 15 years old are **12 times** more likely to be killed by a firearm than children in other industrialized countries. American children 5-14 years old are **17 times** more likely to be murdered by a firearm, **10 times** more likely to die by suicide, and **9 times** more likely to die from unintentional firearm injury than children in other industrialized countries.³ Children 5-14 years old are more likely to be killed by a firearm if they live in states with more rather than fewer guns.⁴
- Rather than provide protection, having a gun in the home is associated with an increased risk of completed **suicide**⁵ and **homicide**⁶ in the home. In states with **more firearms**, people of all ages are **more likely to be murdered**, especially with handguns, despite poverty, urbanization, and violent crime rates.⁷

Our gun laws and what we can do to make them stronger:

- **Strengthen the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act** of 1993 requiring licensed firearm dealers to do background checks for handgun sales through the FBI's NICS (National Instant Criminal Background Check System). The Gun Control Act of 1986 prohibits possession of a firearm by categories of individuals including a person who has been adjudicated as "*mental defective or committed to a mental institution*".⁸ The NICS has not resulted in a decrease in firearm homicides due to loopholes like: private sellers are not required to do background checks and states' are not required to submit disqualifying mental health histories to NICS.⁹
Solutions: Mandate background checks on ALL gun sales. Re-institute waiting period. Require states to provide NICS with information needed to do background checks.
- **Renew and strengthen the Assault Weapons (AW) Ban** of 1994 banning some semiautomatic firearms and most ammunition feeding devices holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition (large capacity magazines, LCM). The AW Ban of 1994 has not been renewed since it expired in 2004. The ban was associated in a decrease in gun crimes involving AWs. However, the decline in AW use was offset by the use of other guns equipped with LCMs. The failure to reduce LCM use has likely been due to the immense stock of exempted pre-ban magazines.¹⁰
Solutions: Renew the assault weapon and large capacity magazine ban with no pre-ban exemptions.

Health care and evidenced based solutions to gun violence:

- **Increase access to mental health services.** According to the American Psychiatric Association, most violence is not perpetrated by persons with serious mental disorders. Research indicates that violent behavior attributable to mental disorder accounts for only 4% to 5% of violence and that individuals with mental illnesses engaged in regular treatment are considerably less likely to commit violent acts than those who could benefit from, but are not engaged in, appropriate mental health treatment.¹¹



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- **Support gun violence prevention research.** Current legislation states that “*none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control.*”¹² **Solution:** Remove legislative barriers to science based solutions to gun violence
- **Promote gun safety education by health care professionals.** More than 1/3 of American households own guns. The majority of gun owners keep their guns unlocked and/or loaded.¹³ According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the safest home for children is one without guns. If there are guns in the home, scientific evidence shows the risk of injury is greatly reduced when they are stored unloaded and locked, with the ammunition locked in a separate place.¹⁴ The Affordable Care Act prevents physicians from collecting information on patient gun ownership or use.¹⁵ In 2011, a district judge blocked Florida law prohibiting physicians from counseling patients about gun safety. **Solution:** Make gun safety a public health priority and allow health care providers to provide gun safety education.

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