

Issue At A Glance:

Firearm Violence

Firearm injury and death continue to be a significant public health problem across the nation, with over 48,000 firearm-related deaths in 2022. This brief provides an overview of the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on firearm violence, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and the impact of firearms on community and individual health.

Introduction

Firearm violence is a preventable public health crisis that impacts communities nationwide. In 2022 alone, over 48,000 individuals died by firearm in the United States, averaging to one death every 11 minutes. Among these fatalities, nearly 27,000 individuals died by firearm suicide, nearly 19,000 were attributed to firearm homicides, 472 were a result of unintentional firearm injuries, and an estimated 650 were fatally shot by law enforcement.¹ Additionally, more than 200 Americans on average seek emergency medical care every day for nonfatal firearm-related injuries.^{1,2}

Therefore, the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, MD, issued an advisory declaring firearm violence a public health crisis. In the advisory, Dr. Murthy urges for collaboration among healthcare providers, firearm owners, policymakers, and stakeholders to advance gun violence prevention efforts.³

This brief provides an overview of the United States Surgeon General's advisory on firearm violence, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and the impact of firearm on community and individual health.

Key Statistics

- 656** Mass shootings in 2023.⁴
- 327** Individuals are victims of firearm violence each day in the U.S.⁵
- 117** People die each day from firearm violence in the U.S.⁵
- 297** Children aged 0-11 were killed by firearm violence in 2023.⁴
- 1,385** Teenagers aged 12-17 were killed by firearm violence in 2023.⁴
- 23** Minors are shot every day in the U.S.⁵

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Surgeon General's Advisory on Firearm Safety

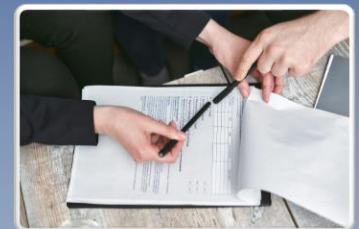
In 2022, over 48,000 individuals died from firearm-related injuries, including unintentional deaths, suicides, and homicides. Furthermore, firearms are the leading cause of death for children and adolescents aged 1-9 in the United States.⁶ On June 24, 2024, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, MD, issued an advisory declaring firearm violence a public health crisis in the U.S.³

This advisory represents the first time the nation's leading public health authority has made an urgent statement about firearm-related deaths.⁷ The report outlines the negative health impacts of firearm violence across the nation and notes that while firearm violence is at an alarmingly high rate, it has been particularly deadly among children and adolescents.⁸ Research has shown that nearly 54% of U.S. adults or their family members have experienced a firearm-related incident. Moreover, the advisory notes that 6 in 10 U.S. adults worry about a loved one becoming a victim daily, resulting in negative impacts on mental health.⁹

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, firearm-related deaths have increased over the years, with more than half resulting from suicide in 2022 and 41% from homicide.¹⁰ Furthermore, firearm violence disproportionately impacts certain communities. Black youth, who only make up 14% of the youth population, account for nearly half of all firearm-related youth deaths. Conversely, white adults over 45 have the highest firearm suicide rate while American Indian and Alaska Native individuals have the highest firearm suicide rate among those under 45.^{10,11} The Surgeon General's advisory advocates for an evidence-based approach, which includes increased investments in research, implementation of prevention strategies, and increased access to mental health services and support.^{6,12}

Coalition to Stop Gun Violence

Founded in 1974, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV) is the nation's oldest firearm violence prevention non-profit organization.¹³ The CSGV is comprised of 47 national organizations working together to reduce firearm violence through the development of data-driven policies and national advocacy efforts.^{14,15} Additionally, the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (Ed Fund) is an affiliate organization of the CSGV that conducts research and education on the causes and impacts of firearm violence in America.¹⁶ The Ed Fund also provides evidence-based educational resources for citizens, students, activists, and the media.¹⁷



Impact of Firearm Violence on Community and Individual Health

Many Americans live with mental illness, with approximately one in five diagnosed each year and one in 25 suffering from a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.¹⁸ Research shows that exposure to trauma, including firearm violence, can lead to increases in the risk of negative health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).¹⁹ Furthermore, research indicates that experiencing interpersonal firearm violence is linked to higher levels of disruptive behaviors and greater likelihood of firearm carry, particularly among adolescents. Individuals who are closer to incidents of interpersonal gun violence have reported more severe mental health effects compared to those who were less directly affected.²⁰ Additionally, the trauma of firearm violence extends beyond the immediate victims, affecting family members, communities, first responders, and healthcare providers, who may suffer from adverse health effects.¹⁸

Community Firearm Violence

Community firearm violence refers to “interpersonal gun violence that takes place between non-intimately related individuals in cities.”²¹ It is heavily concentrated in under-resourced city neighborhoods, often resulting in entire areas being exposed to and affected by the negative health impacts of firearm violence.²¹ Moreover, healthcare workers who frequently treat firearm-related injuries and witness the aftermath of gun violence may experience symptoms of secondary traumatic stress, such as having trouble concentrating or sleeping, feeling

emotionally numb, or reliving the trauma experienced by patients. Furthermore, it significantly strains healthcare systems, leading to a 1,449% increase in hospitalization and a 1,713% increase in healthcare spending for survivors.²²

Impact on Children and Adolescents

Firearm violence has significant health and economic consequences, particularly on children and adolescent survivors.²² Research has shown that children and adolescent are more likely to be killed by a firearm than in a motor vehicle accident.^{6,11} Beyond deaths, there are more youth who are exposed to firearm violence, which can lead to negative behavioral health outcomes.¹¹ Research has shown that exposure to firearm violence among adolescents can lead to declines in health and wellbeing, increased engagement in risky behavior, and worse education and job opportunities as young adults. Additionally, adolescents who have been exposed to school shooting incidents are more likely to avoid attending school due to feeling unsafe.

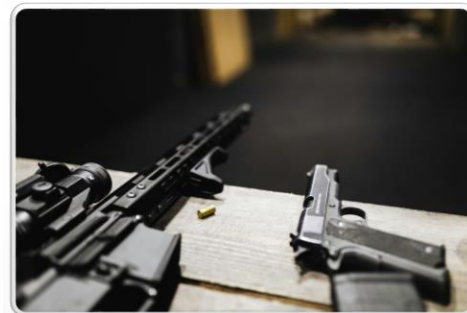
Cumulative exposure to firearm violence and other traumatic experiences can result in poor long-term mental health and behavioral outcomes, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety, regardless of whether they are victims, hear about the crime, or are direct witnesses.⁶ For more information on the impact of firearm violence on children and adolescents, please refer to IHPL’s September 2022 Issue Brief titled [Gun Violence and Children’s Health](#).

Conclusion

Although research shows a gradual decline in firearm homicide since the start of 2023, with recent analysis revealing a 13.1% decrease in national firearm homicides in 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, firearm violence is still elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels.²³ While further research is needed to better understand firearm violence and its impacts, immediate action can be taken through implementing programs, policies, and practices that enhance public safety for Americans.²⁴ Achieving safer conditions, building healthier communities, and saving lives will require a collective effort from all sectors.

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Did you know?

Firearm violence costs the United States more than \$557 billion each year on average.²²



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