

RESEARCH ROUNDUP: An Analysis of Gun Violence Publication Trends in 2021

Scientific research is a crucial component of a public health approach to gun violence prevention. Yet a 2017 study found that gun violence research receives less than two percent of the federal funding it would be expected to receive based on the scope and toll of the problem.

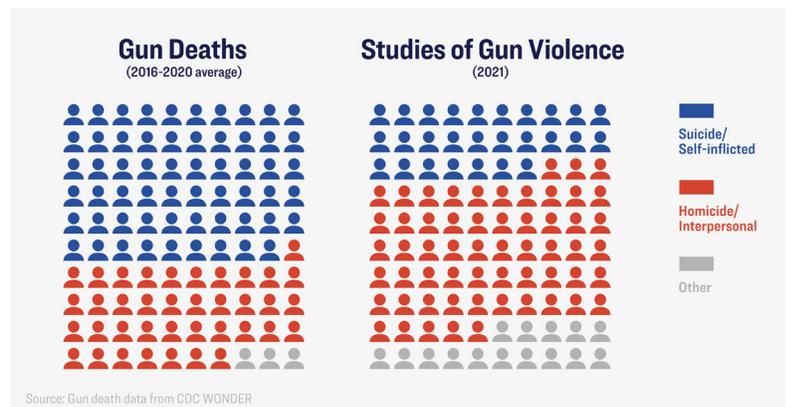
In a first-of-its-kind study, we analyzed 493 research articles published in 2021 to identify trends in gun violence research publications, better understand areas of current scientific attention, and identify gaps that would benefit from additional resources going forward.

Types of Gun Violence Studied

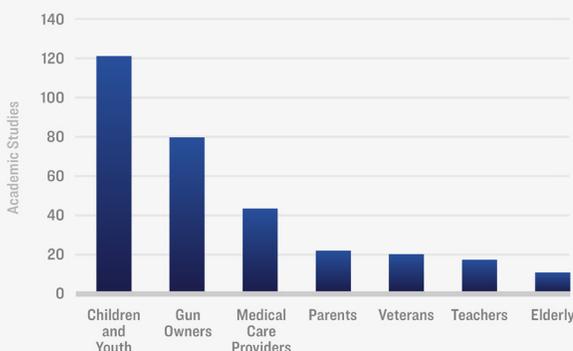
Twenty-seven percent of articles provided specific focus on gun suicide—roughly half as many articles as those that provided specific focus on gun homicide, despite the fact that roughly three in five gun deaths in the US are gun suicides.

Outcomes Studied

The majority (70%) of studies in our review were focused on describing the problem of gun violence and the factors that impacted the likelihood of gun violence occurring. A smaller number of articles studied policy or programmatic solutions to gun violence, with only three percent of studies evaluating the impact of policy on gun injury or death.



Groups of people studied (2021)



Groups of People Studied

Ten times as many articles were published on children and youth as older adults and the elderly in 2021. Sixteen percent of articles provided new data or specific analysis of gun owners, while four percent examined veterans, often considered an important subset of gun owners given their heightened risk for firearm suicide.

Research Field

Less than one-third (32%) of studies tracked were available on open-access, meaning that they are free of cost and other barriers. Researchers at the three established state-funded research centers in operation in 2021 produced 15% of all the research studies included in the analytic sample.

Recommendations

Based on our review, we identified several areas to be addressed within the field of gun violence research, including:

- 1 Increase overall funding for gun violence research:** We encourage Congress to include \$50 million for gun violence research in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2022—the same amount included in both House and Senate FY2022 appropriations bills and the amount requested by President Biden. Additionally, we recommend that more states establish state-funded gun violence research centers.
- 2 Improve gun violence data collection:** More funding should be allocated to create and scale data collection efforts, such as the collection of nonfatal shooting data. Additionally, the federal government should actively encourage, facilitate, and provide guidance for data-linkage efforts across state and federal public health and criminal justice agencies.
- 3 Prioritize gun violence prevention policy and program evaluations:** Our review shows the need for more research that helps to identify solutions to, rather than simply describes, the problem of gun violence. Funders and researchers should prioritize policy and program evaluations in the coming years, with a focus on shoring up our understanding of how certain policy and programmatic solutions impact gun violence.
- 4 Publish more responsive research:** Despite spikes in hate-motivated violence as well as renewed national focus on police shootings, these topics received little scholarly attention in 2021. It is critical that the field of research publish studies that are responsive to urgent issues and policy discussions of the times.
- 5 Create more community-research partnerships:** Research that is open to and inclusive of community members can help to elevate these perspectives and encourage community participation in action for change. Researchers and funders should prioritize research that equitably partners with community members.
- 6 Make the field of research more accessible:** Disseminating scientific research to those responsible for crafting, designing, and implementing solutions is essential to reducing gun violence. When possible, funders should provide specific monies to make articles available on open access, and academic journals should prioritize making these articles easily accessible.



Gun deaths have reached some of their highest levels ever in the past few years. The research field needs to be as strong and responsive as it can be in order to end our current crisis.

We hope this review will help researchers, funders, policymakers, and stakeholders in their efforts to produce the kind of actionable, equitable research needed to help save lives.