

## How Firearm Injury Impacts American Children's Biopsychosocial Health

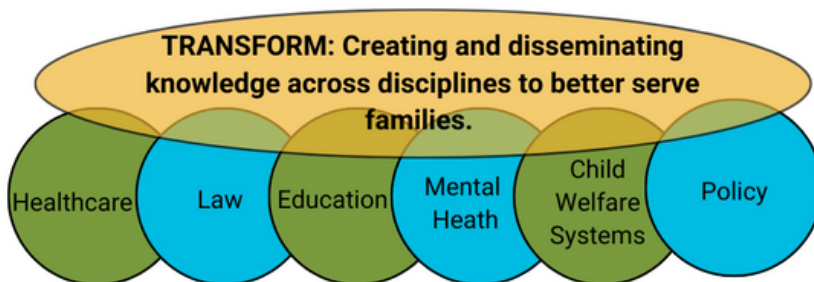
With the drastic increase in gun violence rates over the past decades, research has turned to investigating impacts on the population. This fact sheet outlines how gun violence affects children.

### How Does Firearm Prevalence Impact Children?

Some direct impacts, like injuries and deaths, are obvious. Others are less so. While the public eye is right to focus on the most severe consequences of the gun violence epidemic, it is important to widen our gaze to the secondary impacts of gun violence and injury. Policy work regarding gun control is bigger than just preventing further harm—we also must consider the mental health of those already impacted as well.

### Transdisciplinary Approaches to Improve Safety

- Change gun laws nationally to 21 years old for any firearm.<sup>9</sup>
- Require background checks and licenses for firearms, akin to motor vehicle licenses.<sup>9</sup>
- Teach about safe storage of firearms in licensing.<sup>9</sup>
- Make therapy more accessible to minors.



### Information/Resources

- Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System
- In-Depth Look at the Impact of Gun Violence on Children, Families, & Communities
- The Washington Post: Orphaned by Gun Violence: Two Kids, Two Shootings, Two Parents Gone

### Key Terms/ Words Defined

**Acute Impacts:** Effect of gun violence and injury characterized by suddenness and severity of onset and risk to health.

**Long-Term Impacts:** Effect of gun violence which carries risk to health over a lifetime.

**Injury-Related Death:** The subsection of deaths that would not have occurred if not for an injury sustained. Injury does not need to be intentionally inflicted. This includes categories such as homicides, car crashes, or poisoning, while excluding categories such as natural disease.

**Gun Violence and Injury:** This term refers to any instances of intentional acts of violence through the use of a firearm.

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Psychiatric disorder in people who have experienced a traumatic event. People with PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to their experience that last long after the traumatic event has occurred.<sup>8</sup>

### Acute Impacts - Fatality

From 2001 to 2020, firearms rose to be the leading cause of injury-related death in children under 18, surpassing motor vehicle accidents.

- 2001: Firearms accounted for 14.7% of injury-related minor deaths(2,118).<sup>2</sup>
- 2020: Firearms accounted for 26.0% of injury-related minor deaths(3,230).<sup>2</sup>
- 2020: Motor Vehicle Accidents accounted for 23.8% of injury-related minor deaths(2,954).<sup>2</sup>

### Acute Impacts - Injury

When taking firearm-related injuries into account, five times as many minors are impacted

- More than 15,000 minors are shot and injured a year.<sup>9</sup>
- Wounded adolescents are especially focused on physical scars resulting from their injuries, which serve as daily reminders of their traumatic experiences.<sup>7</sup>

### Long Term Impacts - Exposure

Children exposed to gun violence comprise approximately 1% of the nation's population (330 million).

- An estimated 3 million children are exposed to gun violence a year.
- 5.3% of children have been exposed to a shooting in the past year.<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 41 children lose a parent to gun violence every day in the US.<sup>5</sup>
- Latinx and Black children are impacted by gun violence at higher rates than white children.<sup>9</sup>
- This past year alone, gunfire on school grounds tripled from 62 incidents to 193.<sup>9</sup>

### Long Term Impacts - Mental Health

Children exposed to gun violence have higher levels of anxiety, anger, social withdrawal, aggression, sleep disturbances, survivor's guilt, and PTSD.

- In the 14-days following a shooting, children residing within one-eighth of a mile of the site are 86% more likely to have mental health related emergency department visits.<sup>3</sup>
- Studies show in cases of school shootings, approximately 90% of students in the building develop PTSD symptoms.<sup>6</sup>

## References

1. Finkelhor D, Turner H, Ormrod R, Hamby SL. Violence, abuse, and crime exposure in a national sample of children and youth. *Pediatrics*. 2009;124(5):1411-1423. doi:10.1542/peds.2009-0467
2. WISQARS (web-based injury statistics query and reporting system)|injury center|cdc. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>. Published December 2, 2021. Accessed September 27, 2022.
3. Vasan A, Mitchell HK, Fein JA, Buckler DG, Wiebe DJ, South EC. Association of Neighborhood Gun Violence With Mental Health-Related Pediatric Emergency Department Utilization. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2021;175(12):1244-1251. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2021.3512
4. Collins J, Swoveland E. The impact of gun violence on children, Families, & Communities. CWLA. <https://www.cwla.org/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-families-communities/>. Accessed September 27, 2022.
5. Cox JW. Orphaned by gun violence: Two kids, two shootings, two parents gone. *The Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/interactive/2022/parents-killed-gun-violence-america/?itid=ap\\_johnwoodrowcox](https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/interactive/2022/parents-killed-gun-violence-america/?itid=ap_johnwoodrowcox). Published April 7, 2022. Accessed September 27, 2022.
6. Pynoos RS, Frederick C, Nader K, et al. Life threat and posttraumatic stress in school-age children. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 1987;44(12):1057-1063. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.1987.01800240031005
7. Garbarino J, Bradshaw CP, Vorrasi JA. Mitigating the effects of gun violence on children and youth. *Future Child*. 2002;12(2):72-85.
8. Torres F. What is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)? *Psychiatry.org - What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?* <https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd>. Published August 2020. Accessed September 27, 2022.
9. The long, shameful list of gunfire on school grounds in America. *Everytown Research & Policy*. <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/gunfire-on-school-grounds/>. Published June 14, 2022. Accessed September 27, 2022.