

A strategic response by the federal government is critical to effective firearms policymaking.

Leadership by the federal government, with input from a broad partnership of agencies, should guide data collection at all levels.

Put data at the forefront of evidence-based policymaking reduce firearms violence.

- Historic prohibitions around firearms data collection and research constrict both the collection and analysis of firearms data.
- Recent Congressional appropriations have begun to reverse the trend and improve research on the nature of firearms violence.
- Strategic leadership by the federal government will meaningfully accelerate advances in expanding the firearms research base.

An integrated, coherent, and comprehensive strategy is needed to solve the complex data problems.

Data on firearms death due to suicide, accidents, and intentional injuries are collected by numerous federal agencies for different purposes. Firearm injury data is often missing. Coordinating both the collection and dissemination of these data will speed up the process of improving our understanding of the causes and consequences of firearms violence. A strategic vision for data and evidence-driven policy will improve public safety more quickly than any single program or policy change.

Focused strategies can improve federal firearms coordination.

- **Create a federal interagency workgroup on firearms violence.** With leadership from an independent agency head (e.g. the Chief Statistician of the U.S.) an interagency workgroup can create a national strategy to guide the federal response to firearms violence and improve public safety. Key objectives include:
 - Establishing clear and consistent priorities for firearms data and research,
 - Integrating public health, crime, and firearms data, and
 - Reducing restrictions on data sharing across agencies and the release of data to researchers and the public.

The workgroup would coordinate with other federal workgroups, in particular the Equitable Data working group. This places the firearms interagency workgroup at the center of the federal strategy. A cornerstone of the workgroup mission should be the creation of a pilot project that highlights the diversity of data collected across systems.

- **Integrate data across federal public health and justice systems.** The Criminal Justice Administrative Records System (CJARS) based at the University of Michigan provides a model for the federal government to integrate firearms data from a wide variety of sources. Recommendations include:

- Using modern methods, such as machine learning, to put together data from different sources to increase its value.
 - Creating model data definitions across systems,
 - Diversifying points of entry to firearms data, to improve access for diverse audiences.
- **Updating the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).** The NVDRS is an effective reporting system that has recently been expanded to all 50 states. NVDRS standardizes reporting from law enforcement and medical examiners in violent death investigations. A large and growing body of scholarship also contributes substantially to our understanding of violent deaths. The system could be improved by:
 - Increasing support for researchers to expand the number and types of studies,
 - Creating mechanisms for more timely data releases,
 - Releasing quality metrics to researchers,
 - Making ongoing investments to enhance the system, and
 - Strengthening the underlying local and state systems that contribute data to the NVDRS.

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Expert Panel on Firearms Data Infrastructure

In October 2019, NORC at the University of Chicago announced launched an independent expert panel, funded by Arnold Ventures, to address the current gap in firearms data. The panel is composed of 12 subject-matter scholars who leveraged their experience and expertise to create a blueprint for developing an objective, sustainable firearms data infrastructure for use by local, state, and federal policymakers and their constituents and the research community.

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