

To prevent gun violence, we need to invest in state and local government data systems.

Local police and hospitals generate most data about injuries from gun violence—investing locally is key to creating sustainable solutions.

Fixing firearms data means first fixing national crime statistics

As of January 1, 2021, a new data system, the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) replaced the existing Summary Reporting System (SRS) that generates the national crime statistics reported by the FBI in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). This change may be premature.

Police are not reporting data.

- The new crime statistics program (NIBRS) will collect data from far fewer law enforcement agencies than does the current system.
- In a typical state, only 50 percent of law enforcement agencies report data to NIBRS.
- States and big cities such as New York, California, and by extension New York City and Los Angeles, CA, do not report to NIBRS.

The lack of data leaves us blind.

While NIBRS data will eventually provide far richer data than the current system, the 2021 national crime statistics will be limited.

- Only national crime estimates will be generated. In 2021, there will be:
 - No city-level data
 - No local or state trend data
 - Substantial uncertainty around statistical estimates instead of accurate count data

- There will be little use for the additional data NIBRS collects on victims, offenders, the context of a crime, the value of lost property and other situational features.

NIBRS can be improved with relatively small investments...

- **Add firearms crimes and firearms injuries to NIBRS.** The current system (SRS) counts firearms crimes only if a firearm was used in the crime. This includes threatening to use a firearm, brandishing a firearm, hitting someone with a firearm, and shootings. NIBRS includes information about injuries, but not whether someone was shot by a firearm.
- **Continue the SRS program.** In 2020, national crime statistics were a combination of SRS data and NIBRS data. Continuing to use both data sources will improve 2021 crime estimates.
- **Fund NCS-X.** The FBI and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) are jointly funding a sample of 400 cities to be used to make national estimates from the NIBRS data. Currently, only 52 percent of those agencies are reporting data. An immediate investment is needed to generate national estimates.

...But permanent solutions require a substantial investment.

- **Most local police cannot meet the NIBRS burden.** Local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) have limited staff and budgets for

analysis and reporting. The International Association of Crime Analysts reports a target of one analyst per 100 police officers, yet half of LEAs have fewer than 10 officers.

- NIBRS reporting is substantially more complicated than SRS reporting.
- NIBRS requires new data systems for many local law enforcement agencies.
- The solution is to implement a large-scale investment in local law enforcement.
 - Local NIBRS implementation requires:
 - o Support for software purchases and systems enhancements,
 - o Training and technical assistance on the new systems,
 - o Implementation supports to create sustainable systems, including quality control processes,
 - o Research into police data systems.
- **Fully fund the Bureau of Justice Statistics.**

The Bureau of Justice Statistics in the Department of Justice is the statistical agency responsible for federal justice data. We need to expand its funding and resources to effectively collect crime data for a nation of 330 million Americans. The reality of collecting data on 330 million Americans means that crime can no longer simply be counted as has been done through the FBI's SRS since 1930.
- The needs of a modern criminal justice system require the support of a statistical agency with the capacity to process complex data and the capability to apply advanced methods to solve data problems.

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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 14 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.

For more information:

Eric Young
NORC at the University of Chicago
young-eric@norc.org
(703) 217-6814

