

Federal Funding for Gun Violence Research

THE ISSUE

The United States continues to face an epidemic of gun violence. Gun deaths are hitting record levels, whether by homicide, suicide or accident. More than 45,000 people died from firearm injuries in 2020.¹ Firearms have also become the leading cause of death for children. Despite the toll there is limited rigorous research to guide evidence-based, data-driven policies to reduce homicides and nonfatal shootings. The national systems that track gun injuries and deaths are incomplete. For years the federal government has under-invested research into gun violence, especially when compared to other leading causes of death. We spent about \$63 in research dollars per life lost to gun violence, compared to roughly \$1,000 per life lost to car crashes and nearly \$7,000 per life researching sepsis.² As a result, policymakers lack objective data and research that could help them craft laws and policies that can save lives.

THE CASE FOR FEDERAL FUNDING

For more than 20 years, the federal government failed to properly support research into gun violence, leaving us with a massive gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of gun policies.³ Firearms policy requires a widely shared set of facts. Unfortunately, a lack of objective and transparent data infrastructure has made it all too difficult to assemble those facts.

Congress should step up to fund gun violence research and invest in a robust data infrastructure at a level necessary to fill this knowledge gap. Such investments will help researchers find effective policies that save lives while respecting Second Amendment rights. Only the federal government is in a position to support this research at scale.

While Congress has already authorized \$50 million over the last two budgets for the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control to research gun safety policies, more is needed to confront the true scale of the problem.⁴

A range of federal agencies are set up to carry out this important research, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute of Health, Veterans Affairs Department, Department of Defense, and Department of Justice. These agencies can promote objective, high-quality research that will inform policymakers from both political parties, as well as gun safety and gun rights advocates.

45,000 PEOPLE

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\$63/LIFE LOST

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20 YEARS +

For more than 20 years, the federal government failed to properly support research into gun violence, leaving us with a massive gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of gun policies.⁶

\$600 MILLION

The estimated amount that it would cost over the next five years to fully fund a robust gun violence research and data infrastructure agenda.⁵

NEXT STEPS

An [independent study](#) produced by Health Management Associates, with support from the Joyce Foundation and Arnold Ventures, estimated that it would cost approximately \$600 million over the next five years to fully fund a robust gun violence research and data infrastructure agenda.⁵

Most of the proposed funding—roughly \$475 million—would be used to address the 100 critical gun research questions identified by a Joyce Foundation Expert Advisory Panel. The remaining \$125 million would support implementation of the NORC Expert Panel’s recommendations for improving U.S. firearms data infrastructure at a state and federal level. With support from AV, NORC at the University of Chicago recommended 13 action items for the federal government to improve data collection and distribution at the federal, state, and local levels. This includes vital steps for obtaining a full picture of gun violence in America, such as tracking nonfatal gunshot injuries, supporting local compliance with the National Incident-Based Reporting System, and improving the timeliness of available data.

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/injury.htm>
- 2 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01966-0>
- 3 <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/decades-long-gap-gun-violence-research-funding-lasting/story?id=80646946>
- 4 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/26/now-government-is-funding-gun-violence-research-it-years-behind/>
- 5 <https://www.arnoldventures.org/stories/new-report-from-av-joyce-foundation-calls-for-600-million-to-close-gun-policy-research-gap>
- 6 <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/decades-long-gap-gun-violence-research-funding-lasting/story?id=80646946>