



Understanding the Broader Impacts of Gun Violence

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The United States has long suffered from an epidemic of gun violence, drawing national and international attention to its devastating human costs. From mass shootings to daily acts of community violence, firearms claim tens of thousands of lives each year and leave countless others injured and traumatized. While immediate impacts are more visible through the media, I co-authored a new review that examines 25 years of research that reveals how the effects of gun violence are often hidden and extend far beyond the initial incident. These effects shape the long-term health and well-being of individuals and their communities.

It has long been understood that being physically injured in a shooting can have lasting effects. This review confirms that survivors often live with psychological trauma, chronic pain, and physical disabilities, but it also brings to light deeper social issues. Many survivors, especially those in racially marginalized communities, face enduring stigma and social isolation long after their physical wounds have healed. When the focus expands beyond individuals to their relationships and communities, the impacts become even more complex. In communities that are disproportionately exposed to gun violence, the result is often persistent fear and a reduced sense of safety.

What's Missing From the Research

Despite growing concern about the impacts of gun violence, significant gaps remain in the research. Much of the existing literature focuses on rare but high-profile mass shootings, leaving out more common but equally devastating forms of violence like domestic shootings and street violence. This skews not only public understanding but also policy responses, leading to misallocated resources that often bypass those most impacted by everyday gun violence. Without better data, it's difficult to craft interventions that are proportionate, culturally responsive, or sustained.

Notably, the review found that over half of the studies did not clearly define the type of gun violence being studied. This lack of specificity is a problem because different contexts (e.g., a school shooting versus violence in the home) can affect people in different ways and require targeted responses. More precise categorization would allow researchers and policymakers to tailor support strategies, better understand the root causes, and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches that may not meet the needs of survivors.

There is also a relative lack of data on the long-term effects of gun violence. Few studies follow survivors over time to assess the ongoing impacts on their quality of life, physical health beyond emergency care, or the financial burdens they face. Even fewer examine how specific groups, such as LGBTQ+ communities or communities of color, may experience the aftermath of gun violence differently. This absence of inclusive, longitudinal data leaves the most vulnerable populations (e.g., people with disabilities, undocumented individuals, and formerly incarcerated persons) without visibility in the evidence base and, therefore, often

excluded from solutions.

Another critical gap presents itself with respect to how communities recover (or struggle to recover) after acts of gun violence, as well as how survivors' close relationships are altered in the aftermath. The indirect effects of trauma, such as prolonged fear or emotional distress among witnesses and neighbors, are often overlooked. Similarly, the role of media coverage remains underexplored in its potential to influence people's mental health, sense of safety, or even their identity as survivors. In today's digital world, where images and stories spread quickly, this is an emerging research topic that demands more attention.

A Call to Action on Gun Violence

Together, these gaps in research point to an urgent need for more inclusive, tailored, and longitudinal research to inform policy and support systems that reflect the full scope of gun violence and its enduring consequences. The review highlights how gun violence does not just harm individuals; it sends shockwaves through families, neighborhoods, and entire communities with ripple effects that can persist and change over time.

To better support survivors and reduce the long-term harm, my co-authors and I support calls for the funding of interventions that move beyond immediate, emergency care. We call for better mental health support, stronger social safety nets, and health policies that are informed by survivors' experiences rather than solely on simplified statistics.

These recommendations could take the form of investing in trauma-informed mental health services embedded within community health centers and expanding access to survivor-led peer support networks. In addition, providing stable housing and income assistance for those recovering from injury and mandating the inclusion of community violence in public health surveillance systems would help address the long-term consequences of gun violence. Policies that prioritize care and community reintegration can help prevent retraumatization and offer meaningful pathways to recovery.

One of the most urgent needs is to expand services for those impacted by less-visible but more frequent forms of violence: shootings involving young adult Black men, communities disproportionately affected by shootings, and domestic violence incidents with firearms. Sustainable support systems are essential as the psychological and social impacts of trauma often persist long after short-term assistance (e.g., financial aid, medical treatment, and initial outreach) has ended. This necessitates reforming restrictive victim compensation programs, many of which require extensive documentation and have lengthy wait times. A more equitable approach to gun violence policy must reflect the real, everyday nature of this crisis and the communities who endure it.

Read the original study here: [10.1016/j.lana.2025.101091](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2025.101091)