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UConn Center for

Advancing Research Methods and Scholarship in Gun Injury Prevention

A Brief prepared by the UConn ARMS Center
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Lifetime History of Violence Exposure and Attitudes and Behaviors Regarding Firearm Safe Storage and Open Carry: A Person-Centered Analysis

The role of a person's past victimization is widely considered to be a factor in a person's gun ownership and how they perceive guns. However, victimization takes many forms – childhood trauma, intimate partner violence, community violence to name a few – and the ways in which victimization influences a person's behaviors and attitudes is nuanced.

Using data from a nationally representative sample, we use a person-centered analytic approach called latent class analysis (LCA) to help us understand how past victimization impacts if a person owns a gun, supports open carry, and supports safe firearm storage.

The Survey

- Contains responses from 2,007 adult Americans and used probability-based web panels to achieve a representative sample.
- The survey was administered online and by phone when requested from April 21 – May 15, 2022.
- Survey was offered in both Spanish and English.
- In addition to questions about gun ownership and behaviors, it includes a range of demographic variables to aid in analysis.

Victimization and Gun Ownership

- Our data revealed 6 distinct types of victimization categories: people with (1) high exposure, (2) moderate exposure including assault, (3) moderate childhood exposure including intimate partner violence, (4) high exposure including low levels of intimate partner violence, (5) moderate exposure including low levels of intimate partner violence, and (6) low to no exposure to violence.
- Being threatened by gun violence predicts support of gun ownership and open carry.

- Gun owners who report medium to high levels of violence exposure in childhood are more likely to report open carry outside of hunting.
- Low exposure victimization group is the least likely to have ever openly carried a gun. They are also the most likely to securely store a firearm when it's not in use.
- Those that have experienced intimate partner violence are the most likely to have openly carried a gun. They are also the group that is the least likely to securely store a firearm when it's not in use.
- However, those who have experienced IPV as adults are more likely to agree that locked firearm storage should be a requirement.

Key Takeaways

- Past victimization is an important factor in gun ownership and gun behaviors.
- The underlying kind of victimization matters to understanding gun ownership and preferences.
- Trauma-informed interventions may help in increasing uptake of evidence informed gun violence reduction strategies, such as secure firearm storage.
- This analysis is person-centered. A community – centered approach would complement the findings and strategies.

Study Notes

- This study was funded by the National Collaborative for Gun Violence Research. The conclusions and any errors are those of the authors.
- This work was completed by Kerri M. Raissian, Jennifer Necci Dineen, Damion Grasso, and Mitchell Doucette.