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What Gun Safety and Access Policies did Participants Think would be Effective in Preventing Accidental Gun Deaths?

Bridget O'Keefe  
*University of Southern Maine*

Stephen White  
*University of Southern Maine*

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Background

The goal of our research is to collect information on gun safety and access policies that may lead to strategies to prevent accidental gun deaths in children and adults as well as to investigate perceptions of safety in one's own neighborhood.

22.3% of gun-owning households in the United States keep at least one of their guns loaded and of those 22.3%, 60.7% store their loaded weapons unlocked2. 26 million children in the US are living in homes with firearms. Of these children, 22.3% of gun-related deaths occur in homes where the gun is stored loaded and unlocked3.

1 in 3 Veteran firearm owners stores at least one firearm loaded and unlocked1.

“About three-quarters of gun owners who say the community where they live is not too safe or not at all safe (74%) – and 66% of those who say they live in a community that is very or somewhat safe – cite protection as a major reason they own gun.”4

“Men and women are about equally likely to say protection is a major reason they own a gun: 65% and 71%, respectively.”5

Methods

Researchers developed an IRB-approved survey tool that included 7 demographic questions and 6 questions asking participants to rate:

- their feelings of personal safety in their current neighborhood and
- their perceptions of the effectiveness of five gun storage and access prevention policy ideas.

Participants were recruited via Facebook using convenience and snowball sampling. Researchers also directly emailed affiliated agencies.

Researchers administered the survey tool using USM’s SNAPSHOT software to protect the anonymity of respondents.

Of the 1045 total responses collected, 1021 (97.7%) of participants answered at least 11 out of 14 questions. Researchers excluded cases in which three or more answers were left blank. This much missing information made them undesirable for use in quantitative data analysis.

All cases with available data for relevant variables were included in all analyses unless the participant did not answer two or more questions.

Data was analyzed in SPSS using linear regressions.

References


Discussion

Only 6.5% (N = 65) indicated that they did not feel safe in their current neighborhood which is not consistent with findings from Azrael, Miller, Rowhani-Rahbar, and Simoniett (2018)6. Other researchers found most gun owner report that they live in a community that is unsafe. The data collected by these researchers suggests that gun ownership is not associated with [or does not predict] feelings of personal safety when controlling for other demographic variables.

Further research is needed to investigate deeper into the finding that about 2/3 of gun owners cite personal protection as their most important reason to own a gun.7

In further analysis, responses from Non-Veteran participants (N=152) will be compared to responses from White participants (N=445). These researchers also plan to analyze responses from people who grew up in different parts of the US.

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