

Firearm violence impacts young people disproportionately

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Although the magnitude of firearm deaths has remained constant since 2001, a new study has found that deaths have increased since 2014.

An examination of years of life lost due to guns showed there has been a slow increase in years of life lost due to guns since 1999 with a sudden and large increase since 2014. "A constant mortality rate with increasing percentage of years of potential life lost indicates that although the magnitude of firearm deaths remained the same, the deaths were increasingly premature or among [younger people](#) across time," explained corresponding author Bindu Kalesan, Ph.D., MPH, assistant professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM).

Researchers from BUSM, Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH), University of Florida and Columbia University used national and state data from the Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System database to explore the patterns of gun deaths and the life years lost.

Previous studies showed that certain populations experience more burden in terms of violence, particularly men and Non-Hispanic black populations. This new study additionally showed that the jump in national rates was driven principally due to increases among men, non-Hispanic black populations, Hispanic white populations and due to homicides. This study also found that 21 U.S. states mirrored the national increase. In contrast, gun deaths declined during the 18 years only in two states, New York and Arizona. Additionally, the shift in increasing burden of gun deaths to younger Americans was noted in 14 states.

According to the researcher, these alarming shifts indicate a wide variation in emerging patterns of gun deaths in America. "Not only did the amount of gun deaths vary by states and within different [population](#) groups, there were also unique changes in burden of gun deaths with time. The public health crisis of gun deaths in this country is therefore not unidimensional, but is complex and multidimensional with distinctive risk profiles," added Kalesan, who is also assistant professor of community health sciences at BUSPH.

The researchers believe that in an era of increasing and complex pattern of gun deaths, it is imperative to understand the state-specific and subgroup specific changes additional to national changes so as to combat them in the future based on the unique features. "Future interventions, programs and policies should be created to address this shifting burden locally and should bear in mind the populations that are being most affected by shifts in firearm [death](#)," said Kalesan.

These findings appear in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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