

Firearm exposure associated with poorer health in communities around the US

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Gun violence is tied to poverty, unemployment, broken families, disengaged youth and racial segregation, according to a study by the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center at Rutgers.

Published in the *Journal of Urban Health*, [the study](#) found that people

living in disadvantaged communities face gun violence at higher levels that are harmful to the [health](#) and well-being of whole neighborhoods.

"Many of America's most disadvantaged neighborhoods are stuck in a vicious cycle of violence and [collateral damage](#) that is almost impossible to escape," said lead author Daniel Semenza, director of interpersonal research at the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center and assistant professor in the Department of Urban-Global Public Health at the Rutgers School of Public Health and in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice at Rutgers University-Camden.

"Directly addressing [gun violence](#) can be a key means of reducing [health inequalities](#) where people are suffering the most."

In the study, researchers examined close to 16,000 neighborhoods in 100 cities in the United States from 2014 to 2019.

The researchers measured shootings and neighborhood health using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention over a six-year period. The [health outcomes](#) included mental and [physical health](#) as well as health behaviors throughout the community including smoking cigarettes, participation in physical activity or exercise and amount of sleep.

They outlined a series of evidenced-based solutions to reduce gun-related violence, including policing initiatives, community-based street outreach programs, community environment improvement and addressing poverty and residential segregation. Long-term investments are paramount for reducing firearm-related violence and improving health in disadvantaged communities.

Semenza said reducing shootings in disadvantaged communities is integral to addressing broader disparities in health throughout the nation.

Estimates from previous research indicate that firearm violence costs Americans more than \$550 billion annually, including losses related to quality of life.

"We have accepted too much violence in too many communities for far too long," said Semenza. "We are seeing the impact it has on many aspects of well-being. The longer we choose to bury our heads in the sand and ignore the problem, the more damage will be done to Americans all over the nation."

More information: Daniel C. Semenza et al, Reciprocal Neighborhood Dynamics in Gun Violence Exposure, Community Health, and Concentrated Disadvantage in One Hundred US Cities, *Journal of Urban Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s11524-023-00796-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-023-00796-x)

Provided by Rutgers University

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