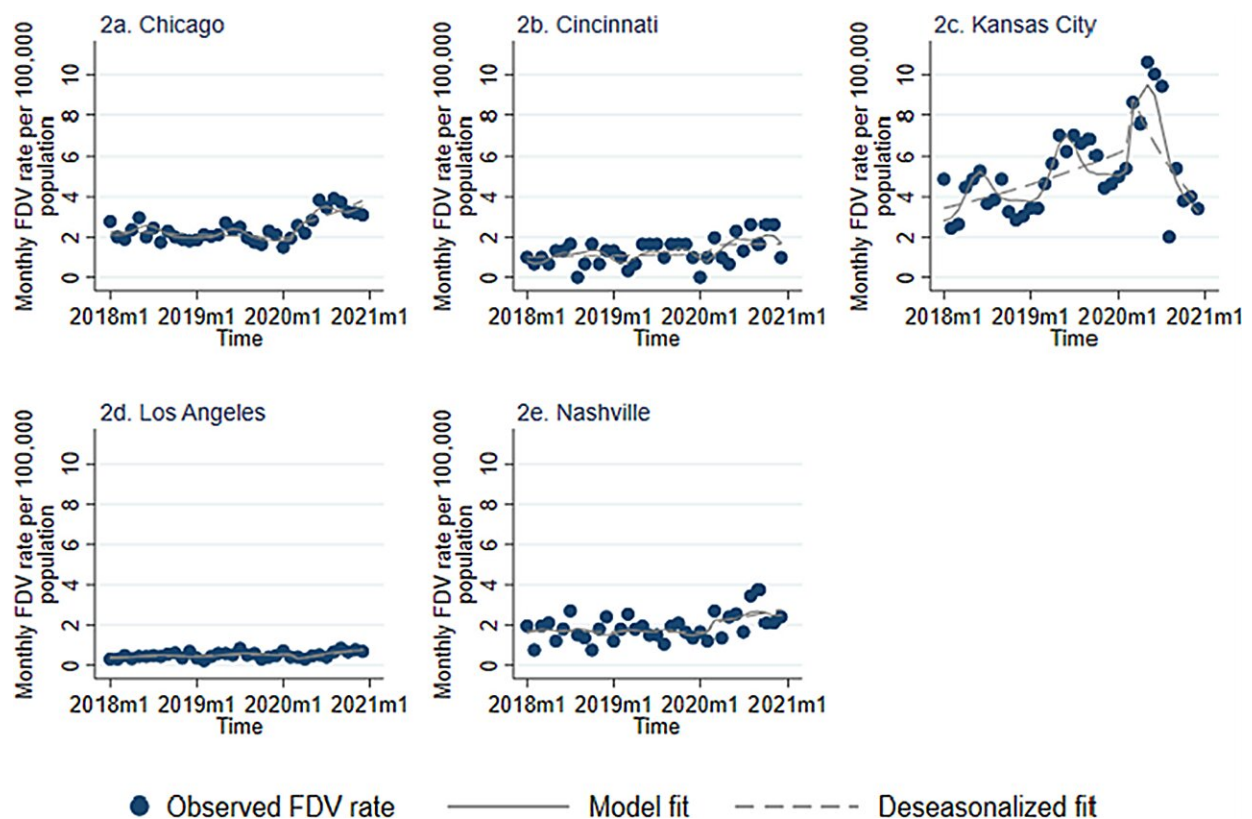


Study finds domestic violence involving firearms increased during COVID-19 pandemic

November 1 2023



Figures show the association between the pandemic onset and firearm domestic violence in five cities from 2018 to the end of 2020. Credit: UC Davis Violence Prevention Research Program

Domestic violence went down or stayed the same during the first 10 months of the COVID-19 pandemic in five major U.S. cities. However, domestic violence involving firearms increased in three of those cities, according to [a new UC Davis study](#) published in the *Journal of Family Violence*.

"The increase in firearm [domestic violence](#) is concerning, as abuser firearm access is a risk factor for lethality," said Elizabeth Tomsich, a research data analyst at the UC Davis Violence Prevention Research Center and first author of the study.

Comparing firearm domestic violence before and during pandemic

Although [firearm purchasing and violence](#) surged dramatically during the pandemic, research on firearm-involved domestic violence has been limited.

To determine the trends in domestic violence and firearm domestic violence before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers used police-reported crime data from Jan. 1, 2018 through Dec. 31, 2020. The onset of the pandemic was considered to be Mar. 20, 2020. The cities examined were Chicago, IL; Cincinnati, OH; Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles, CA; and Nashville, TN. The analysis looked at three main areas:

- domestic violence incidents
- firearm domestic violence incidents
- firearm domestic violence as a proportion of domestic violence incidents

The researchers found variations among all five cities in the reported

data.

- Domestic violence: After the start of the pandemic, police reports of domestic violence decreased in Kansas City, Los Angeles and Nashville and did not change in Chicago and Cincinnati compared with trends before the pandemic.
- Firearm domestic violence: There was a relative increase in reports of firearm domestic violence at the start of the pandemic in Chicago, Los Angeles and Nashville, with a relative decrease in Kansas City; there were no changes in Cincinnati.
- Domestic violence as a portion of overall domestic violence: There was an increase after the start of the pandemic in Chicago, Los Angeles and Nashville, and no changes were observed in Cincinnati and Kansas City.

The researchers noted the decrease in reported domestic violence contrasted with increases in reported firearm domestic violence.

They point out that the results may reflect a decrease in reporting due to barriers from the pandemic rather than an actual decrease in domestic violence. For example, during the lockdown, it may have been harder for those experiencing domestic violence to report to [law enforcement](#) because they were confined with a perpetrator who was monitoring their communications.

By contrast, firearm domestic violence may be less sensitive to pandemic-related forces that may have affected reporting. Among [violent crimes](#), [aggravated assault](#) is the most likely to be reported to law enforcement.

Increases in firearm purchasing during the [pandemic](#) and the reported increases in domestic firearm violence in some cities remain a concern, as firearm access is associated with a [fivefold increase](#) in the odds of intimate partner violence.

"Interventions that prohibit firearm access, such as domestic violence restraining orders and [extreme risk protective orders](#), as well as prohibitions associated with misdemeanor domestic violence convictions, may prove valuable to address the potential increase in the risk of [firearm](#) domestic violence," Tomsich said.

More information: Elizabeth A. Tomsich et al, Trends in Domestic Violence and Firearm Domestic Violence During COVID-19 in Five US Cities, *Journal of Family Violence* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s10896-023-00613-8](#)

Provided by UC Davis

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