

# Guns in the home provide greater health risk than benefit

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Despite the fact that nearly one-third of American households have a firearm, studies show that having a gun in the home poses a household a greater health risk than a potential benefit. A new study released in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* (published by SAGE) examined scientific research on both sides of the debate to put hard numbers to this on-going discussion.

Author David Hemenway studied the various risks of having a gun in the home, including accidents, suicide, homicide, and intimidation. Additionally, the benefits of having a firearm in a household were also examined and those benefits included deterrence, and thwarting crimes (self-defense). From this in-depth look, it was concluded that homes with guns were not safer or deter more crime than those that do not. In fact, it was found that in homes with children or women, the [health risks](#) were even greater.

"Whereas most men are murdered away from home," wrote Hemenway. "Most children, [older adults](#), and women are murdered at home. A gun in the home is a particularly strong risk factor for female homicide victimization."

It's not just the increased risk by others in a home with a gun, but also an increased risk of suicide.

"Even though [suicide attempts](#) with guns are infrequent, more Americans kill themselves with guns than with all other methods combined," wrote Hemenway. "That is because among methods commonly used in suicide attempts, firearms are the most lethal."

After weighing the evidence on both sides, the review concluded that the risks greatly outweighed the benefits or perceived benefits.

"There is compelling evidence that a gun in the home is a risk factor for intimidation and for killing women in their homes, and it appears that a gun in

the home may more likely be used to threaten intimates than to protect against intruders," wrote Hemenway. "On the potential benefit side, there is no good evidence of a deterrent effect of firearms or that a gun in the home reduces the likelihood or severity of injury during an altercation or break-in."

**More information:** [ajl.sagepub.com/content/early/.../396294.full.pdf+html](http://ajl.sagepub.com/content/early/.../396294.full.pdf+html)

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