



2022 SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

IMPACTS OF FIREARM VIOLENCE



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Firearm violence is a serious problem in California. More than one out of four Californians consider gunshots and shootings a concern in their neighborhood and one out of five Californians know someone who has been shot on purpose.¹

Over 3,400 people die from firearm violence in California each year; about half of these are homicides and just under half of them are suicides.² In addition to the detrimental physical health problems that follow firearm violence – including emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and death – firearm violence can also cause trauma and lead to immediate and ongoing mental health challenges for individuals, families, and communities.

To explore the mental health impacts of firearm violence – and develop strategies to respond to them – the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission formed the Impacts of Firearm Violence Subcommittee at the August 2022 Commission meeting.

The Subcommittee met for the first time on September 28, 2022. At the meeting, staff from the Commission and the California Department of Public Health each made presentations on the problem of firearm violence. Presenters made several key points that illustrated the personal and economic burden of firearm violence in California. These included:

- Firearm-related homicides increased 37% between 2019 and 2020, and continued to increase into 2021.
- Total firearm death rates are roughly seven times higher in men than in women.
- Firearm death rates by homicide are significantly higher for men, for African Americans and Hispanics, and for those in their late teens and early 20s.
- Firearm death rates by suicide are higher in white men and increase rapidly for those in their 60s and older.
- One in five Californians report keeping a firearm in their



house. Of those people, one in 10 of them store their firearm in the least safe way—loaded and unlocked. Unsafe firearm storage is more common among older adults, males, veterans, and those without children in their household.

- Firearm violence costs nearly \$42 billion per year in California – equal to \$1,060 per person – in the form of medical costs, lost wages, police and criminal justice expenses, employer costs, and quality-of-life costs.

Following the presentations, Subcommittee Chair Keyondria Bunch facilitated a public discussion about what activities, organizations, experts, and resources the Commission should engage in and with to save lives, reduce trauma, and address the mental health challenges that result from firearm violence. Several discussion items emerged from participants, including:

- The importance of approaching these projects from a data-driven approach and emphasizing good data collection, particularly to home in on communities that are most at risk.

- A need to collect and review data about the perpetrators of firearm violence (rather than just the victims and survivors) to understand how to intervene most effectively.
- A request that we (and other State agencies) break data down to the county or regional level, as California is a large and diverse state with differing needs by area.
- The importance of focusing on threat and risk assessment (particularly in schools) and intervening prior to violent acts.
- The need to lead with a racial equity-focused approach to avoid further stigmatizing disadvantaged communities.
- The value of involving youth and those who have been involved in past firearm violence to identify effective solutions.
- A focus on lessening the stigma and clarifying that people with mental health challenges are not significantly more likely to commit firearm violence.

NEXT STEPS

The Commission is reaching out to several potential partners in threat assessment and crisis response, among others in the mental health and firearm violence space (including the [Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions](#), [Project AWARE](#), and [READI Chicago](#)). Commission staff are also exploring and evaluating available data sources to understand the full landscape of available data.

Commission staff are also planning further opportunities to engage the public on this project, including youth. These opportunities may include listening sessions, forums, and future Commission and Subcommittee meetings. The Commission is committed to carrying out this work with partner and community engagement at every step, involving those who are most impacted in the information-gathering, analysis, and decision-making processes.

To see speaker bios, presentation slides, and the agenda for this meeting, visit the [subcommittee meeting's webpage](#). The Impacts of Firearm Violence Subcommittee welcomes any further suggestions on direction for this project at courtney.ackerman@mhsoc.ca.gov. More information about the Commission's work can be found at www.mhsoc.ca.gov.

SOURCES

1. Wintemute, G. J., Aubele, A. J., Pallin, R., Schlemmer, J. P., & Kravitz-Wirtz, N. (2022). Experiences of violence in daily life among adults in California: A population-representative survey. *Injury Epidemiology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-021-00367-1>
2. California Department of Public Health. (2022, July 18). EpiCenter: California injury data online. <https://skylab4.cdph.ca.gov/epicenter/>
3. Everytown Research & Policy. (2022, July 19). The economic cost of gun violence. Everytown for Gun Safety. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/#:~:text=Employers%20lose%20an%20average%20of,victims%20and%20their%20families>

