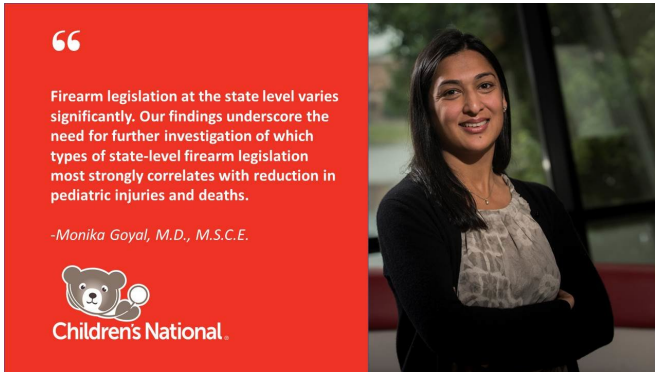


Stricter state firearms laws associated with lower pediatric mortality rates from firearms

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Monika Goyal, M.D., M.S.C.E., director of research in the Division of Emergency Medicine and Trauma Services at Children's National Health System and lead author of the research paper. Credit: Children's National Health System

States with stricter firearm laws have lower rates of firearm-related deaths in children, according to cross-sectional analyses to be presented during the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) 2018 annual meeting. The Children's-led research team also found that states with laws that mandated universal background checks prior to firearm and ammunition purchase were associated with lower rates of firearm-related mortality in children, compared with states that lacked these laws.

"Injuries due to firearms are the nation's third-leading cause of pediatric death," says Monika Goyal, M.D., M.S.C.E., director of research in the Division of Emergency Medicine and Trauma Services at Children's National Health System and lead author of the research paper. "Firearm legislation at the state level varies significantly. Our findings underscore the need for further investigation of which types of state-level firearm legislation most strongly correlates with reduction in pediatric injuries and deaths."

The research team analyzed data from the 2015 Web-based [injury](#) statistics query and reporting system maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to measure the association between Brady Gun Law Scores—a scorecard that evaluates how strict firearms legislation and policies are in all 50 states—and state-based rates of firearm-related death among [children](#) 21 years and younger.

In 2015, 4,528 children died from firearm-related injuries. Eighty-seven percent were male; 44 percent were non-Latino black; their mean age was 18.

State-specific firearm-related mortality rates among children were as low as 0 per 100,000 to as high as 18 per 100,000. Median mortality rates were lower among the 12 states requiring universal background checks for firearm purchase at 3.8 per 100,000 children compared with 5.7 per 100,000 children in states that did not require background checks. Similarly, the five states with this requirement had a lower median mortality rate, 2.3 per 100,000 children, when compared with states that did not require background checks for ammunition purchase, 5.6 per 100,000 children.

"Newtown. Orlando. Las Vegas. Parkland. Those are among the mass shootings that have occurred across the nation in recent years. While these tragedies often are covered heavily by the news media, they represent a subset of overall pediatric injuries and deaths due to firearms. Pediatric firearm-related injuries are a critical [public health](#) issue across the U.S.," Dr. Goyal adds.

"Pediatricians have helped to educate parents about other public health concerns, such as the danger posed by second-hand exposure to tobacco smoke or non-use of seat belts and car seats. In addition to presenting our most recent study results, members of our research group are also hosting a workshop at PAS aimed at inspiring

pediatric clinicians to similarly tackle this latest public health challenge and to advocate for firearm safety," she says.

Provided by Children's National Medical Center

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