

Summary

It is very unlikely that active shooters are targeting gun-free zones to commit crimes. Gun-free zones may be protective against active shootings.

Background

Gun rights activists often blame gun-free zones for active shootings, prompting debates around repealing gun-free zones and likely influencing public perceptions about them. However, no prior research studied the impact of gun-free zones on firearm violence.

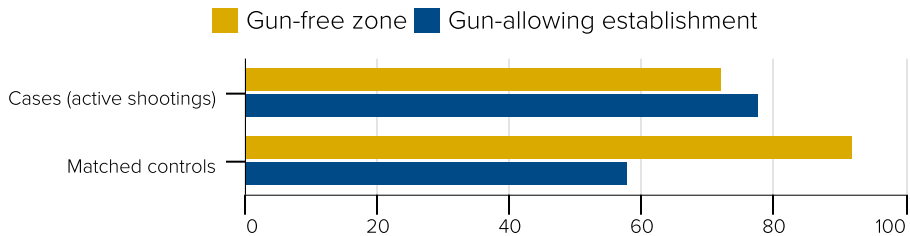
Methods

A pair-matched case-control study was used to compare the gun-free status of places ("establishments") that had an active shooting from 2014-2020 to places that did not have an active shooting. Cases and controls were matched by establishment type (bar, restaurant, business, public park) and county (a proxy for firearm norms and ownership).

Findings

Gun-free zones may be protective against active shootings.

After accounting for matched pairs, the conditional odds of an active shooting in gun-free establishments were **0.38 times** those in non-gun-free establishments.



Of 150 active shooting cases, **48%** (72 shootings) occurred in a gun-free zone.

Of 150 controls where no active shooting occurred, **61%** (92 establishments) were gun-free zones.

GUN-FREE ZONE



Active shootings were **62.5% less likely** to occur in gun-free zones than in gun-allowing establishments.

This study asked:

What is the impact of gun-free zones on the occurrence of active shootings?

Big Picture

These findings challenge the proposition of repealing gun-free zones based on safety concerns and suggest that gun-free zone policies should not be repealed.

Findings can be used to dispel misinformation about the impact of gun-free zones on active shootings. Findings can further inform advocates and policy makers and ground political discourse in evidence.

This was the first study to estimate the association between gun-free zones and the occurrence of active shootings. More research is needed to replicate and expand upon these findings.