Trends in Domestic Violence and Firearm Domestic Violence During COVID-19 in Five U.S. Cities

Summary

The associations between the start of the pandemic and reported domestic violence (DV) and firearm-involved domestic violence (FDV) varied among the five cities studied.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic and consequent social and economic disruptions may be related to increased risk of DV. Although gun violence increased dramatically during the pandemic, research on pandemic-era FDV is limited. This study asked: What are the trends in DV and FDV in five US cities before and during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methods

Monthly trends in police-reported incidents of DV and FDV from 01/2018 to 12/2020 across five US cities were examined via an interrupted time series analysis, considering 03/2020 as the onset of the pandemic.

Findings

Big Picture

The increase in FDV compared to pre-pandemic trends is concerning, as abuser firearm access is a risk factor for lethality. Interventions that prohibit firearm access, such as domestic violence restraining orders and extreme risk protective orders, as well as prohibitions associated with misdemeanor DV convictions, may prove valuable to address the risk of FDV.

Domestic violence:

After the start of the pandemic, DV trends decreased in Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Nashville compared with trends prior to the pandemic.

Firearm-involved domestic violence:

There was a relative increase in FDV trends after the start of the pandemic compared to before in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Nashville, and a relative decrease in Kansas City.

Proportion of domestic violence incidents that involved firearms:

Trends in firearm-involved domestic violence as a proportion of overall domestic violence increased after the start of the pandemic relative to trends prior in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Nashville.

Read the full study: Tomsich et al. Journal of Family Violence 2023. DOI: 10.1007/s10896-023-00613-8

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