

Gun shows do not increase homicides or suicides

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A new study finds no evidence that gun shows lead to substantial increases in either gun-related homicides or suicides.

The University of Michigan and University of Maryland study also shows that tighter regulation of gun shows does not appear to reduce the number of firearms-related deaths.

"We believe that this analysis makes an important contribution to understanding the influence of gun shows, the regulation of which is arguably the most active area of federal, state, and local firearms policy," said Brian Jacob, a professor at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

"To our knowledge, this is the first study that directly examines the impact of gun shows on gun-related deaths."

Jacob wrote the study with co-authors Mark Duggan and Randi Hjalmarsson from the University of Maryland.

The researchers analyzed data from Texas and California, chosen because they are the nation's two most populated states, have large numbers of gun shows, and are at opposite ends of the spectrum regarding gun show regulation. California has some of the most aggressive gun show regulations, including background checks for all gun show purchasers and a 10-day waiting period to obtain the firearm. Texas has no similar regulations.

Data came from the dates and locations of more than 3,400 gun shows, and firearm-related deaths from 1994 to 2004. More than 105,000 homicides and suicides were reported in the two states during the 11-year period.

To determine the impact of gun shows, the authors traced the number of gun-related deaths in ZIP codes close to where gun shows took place, looking at how the number of deaths changed leading up to and following the shows. Researchers looked at the gun-related deaths in the weeks immediately after gun shows and actually found a small decline in the number of homicides following shows in Texas.

"The absence of gun show regulations does not increase the number of gun-related deaths as proponents of these regulations suggest," said Jacob, director of its Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP).

The researchers offered two caveats to their analyses. The study focused on the geographic areas surrounding the gun shows, and would not capture the effect when weapons were transported more than 25 miles away. In addition, the data tracked the effects only up to four weeks after the gun shows, which would exclude later gun-related deaths.

Provided by University of Michigan

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