

Do more privately owned firearms lead to more firearm violence?

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Do more privately owned firearms lead to more firearm violence? This question is widely discussed and studied, in particular in the US, where firearm injuries are one of the leading causes of death. European

research on the link between firearm availability and firearm violence is rare, according to a new study by University researchers Katharina Krüsselmann, Pauline Aarten and Marieke Liem. After systematically examining 1958 studies on the topic, they found mixed evidence for the relationship between firearm availability and firearm violence.

Mixed evidence for a relationship

Whereas a law regulating access to firearms in Austria was linked to a decrease of almost 10 percent in [firearm](#) homicides, a similar law in Norway had no such effect. Other studies show restricting firearm availability might only have an effect on a specific group of potential victims, such as women.

National variations and cultural perspectives

The authors of this systematic review discuss several explanations for these differences in results: First, although all countries of the European Union follow a similar legislative framework regarding firearms, there are national variations in the law, as well as cultural perspectives on firearms that might explain differences. Secondly, access to firearm is difficult to measure, due to unregistered, illegal firearms circulating on the European black market.

More research is necessary

Consequently, the question whether firearms in the hands of citizens lead to more [violence](#) in Europe cannot be answered based on existing research yet. More rigorous research addressing the issue of measuring firearm availability and its link to various kinds of fatal and non-fatal violence in Europe is needed.

More information: Katharina Krüsselmann et al. Firearms and violence in Europe—A systematic review, *PLOS ONE* (2021). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0248955](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0248955)

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