

Men the highest risk group for firearm injuries and death

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Research from the University of Sydney, led by Professor Joel Negin from the School of Public Health, set out to describe the burden, geographic distribution, and outcomes of firearm-related violence in

New South Wales during 2002–2016.

"Firearm-related injuries were recorded for 2,390 people; for 849 people, the injuries were caused by assault (36%), for 797 by intentional [self-harm](#) (33%), and for 506 by accidents (21%)," Negin and colleagues reported.

"Overall rates of firearm injuries were 4.1 per 100,000 males and 0.3 per 100,000 females; the overall rate was higher in outer regional/rural/remote areas (3.8 per 100,000) than in major cities (1.6 per 100,000) or inner regional areas (1.8 per 100,000).

"During 2002–2016, the overall firearm-related [injury](#) rate declined from 3.4 to 1.8 per 100,000 population, primarily because of declines in injuries caused by assault or accidental events.

"The rate of self-harm injuries with firearms was highest for people aged 60 years or more (41.5 per 100,000 population). Local rates of intentional self-harm injuries caused by firearms were strongly correlated with those of licensed gun owners."

The authors wrote that rates of self-harm with firearms "are higher for older people, men, and residents in outer regional and rural/[remote areas](#), while assaults are higher for younger people, men, and residents of major cities."

With regard to self-harm, the authors wrote that "few studies have examined firearm-related risk factors for suicide."

"Recent data on rates and outcomes for people who survive attempted suicide using a firearm have not been published," they wrote.

"Identifying [risk factors](#), including periods of increased risk, is essential for directed interventions for reducing the number of suicide deaths."

Because of Australia's "unique" legislative framework around firearm ownership, more local research was essential, Negin and colleagues concluded.

"A more comprehensive Australian national profile of firearm-related violence, its relationship with socio-demographic factors, its costs, and its impacts would support researchers and policymakers developing and testing interventions and policies for reducing firearm-related violence," they wrote.

More information: Joel Negin et al, Gun violence in Australia, 2002–2016: a cohort study, *Medical Journal of Australia* (2021). [DOI: 10.5694/mja2.51251](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51251)

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