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Concerning LD 168 "An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms" and LD 60 "An Act to Require a 72-hour Waiting Period After the Sale of a Firearm".

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety I, William Smith, am giving testimony IN OPPOSITION to LD 168 and LD 60.

People in political discussions continue to sight firearms related deaths are increasing, especially noting those deaths of children and adolescents, with a distribution across homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries. And often they go on to sight that almost half of suicides are indeed from firearms.

The above use of correlative statistical data and non-causal conclusions do not, in my opinion, help the American situation related to firearm deaths.

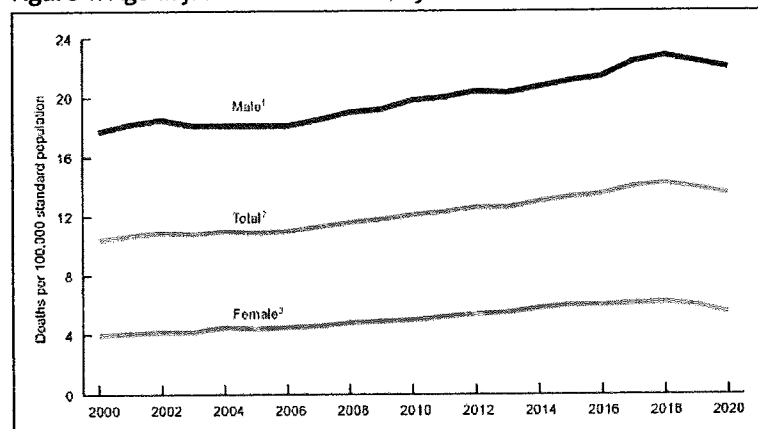
The data for between 2000 and 2020 shows an overall increase in suicides after the Recession of 2008 and then a decreasing trend from 2018-2020 for all three sex categories of suicides: totals, males and females.

Key statistical data [1]:

- Suicides in males showed a stable trend from 2000 through 2006, significant increasing trend from 2006 to 2018, stable trend from 2018 through 2020, $p < 0.05$. The rate in 2020 was significantly lower than the rate in 2018, $p < 0.05$.
- Suicide in females showed a significant increasing trend from 2000 through 2015, with different rates of change over time; a stable trend from 2015 through 2018; significant decreasing trend from 2018 through 2020, $p < 0.05$.
- Suicide in total showed a significant increasing trend from 2000 through 2018, with different rates of change over time; and a significant decreasing trend from 2018 through 2020, $p < 0.05$.

In figure form [2]:

Figure 1. Age-adjusted suicide rates, by sex: United States, 2000–2020



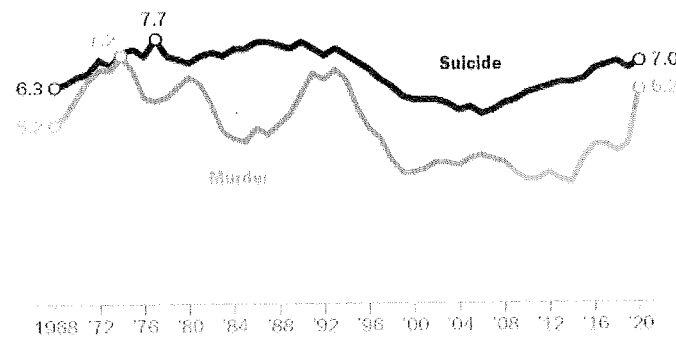
But how do firearms deaths categorically relate?

Suicide data in general, as shown in the above graph, and firearms suicide data trend in a fairly similar manner post 2008 [2 & 3].

And we see that firearm suicide and firearm homicide do not trend together [3]:

U.S. gun suicide and gun murder rates have increased in recent years, but remain below past highs

Gun deaths per 100,000 people (age-adjusted), by type



Note: Gun murders and suicides between 1968 and 1978 are classified by the CDC as involving firearms and explosives; those between 1979 and 2020 include firearms only.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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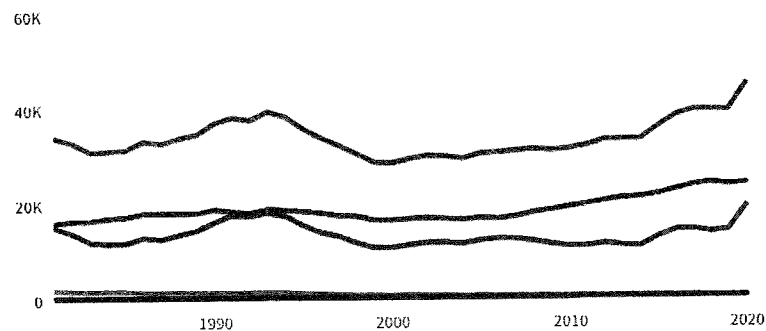
While “suicide by firearms” and “overall firearms deaths” do not trend, “homicide deaths by firearm” and “overall firearm deaths” do [4].

Explore Firearm Deaths in the US: Statistics and Trends

Firearm deaths

SELECT A LINE

■ Firearm deaths ■ Homicide ■ Suicide ■ Unintentional ■ Legal intervention



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [see more](#) ▾

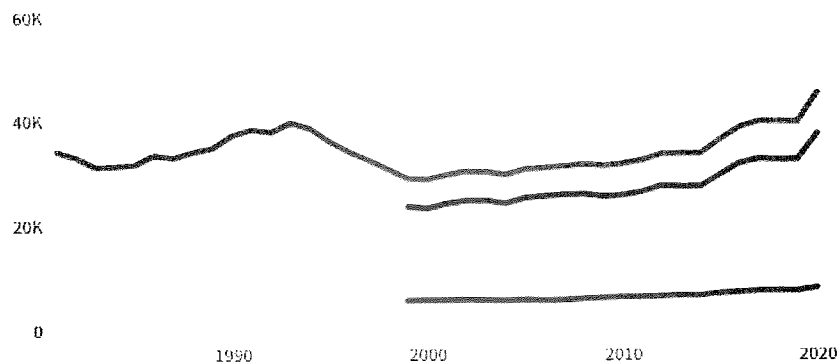
As do “total firearms deaths “ and “metro firearms deaths” [4]:

Explore Firearm Deaths in the US: Statistics and Trends

Firearm deaths

SELECT A LINE

■ Firearm deaths ■ Metro ■ Non-Metro



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [see more](#) ✓

In my opinion what this data continues to expose the fundamental American attitude towards the very real social root cause of the rise in “deaths by firearms”. This situation was well explained in the article “Everything about America’s gun debate is wrong – here’s why” written in 2020 by Abené Clayton and Lois Beckett [6]:

“We see that America’s endless gun debate does not treat shooting victims and their families equitably.”

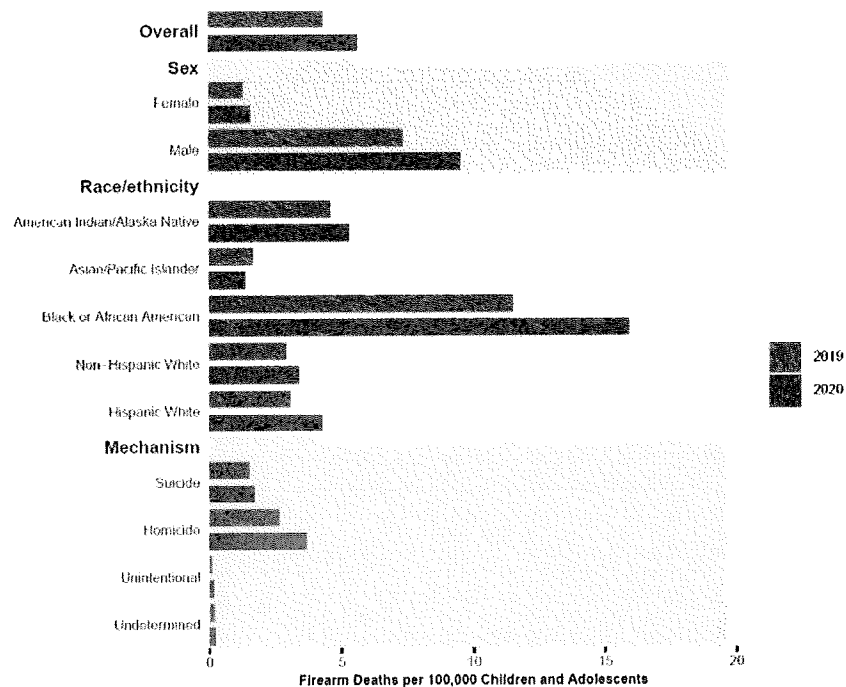
“We only mourn certain tragedies. ... Yet most grief-stricken families, many of them mourning Black and brown victims, grieve outside of the national spotlight.”

“Rarely are stories of grieving Black and brown families and their deceased loved ones granted the same carefulness in language as high-profile mass shootings. Perhaps it’s not surprising then that many Americans still write off shootings that injure and kill multiple people in Black and brown communities as gang violence, a natural byproduct of living in the hood.”

“Gun violence is not talked about as the racial injustice that it is. Year after year, more than half of all American gun homicide victims are Black. Black boys and young men between the ages of 15 and 34 make up just 2% of the population but accounted for 37% of US gun deaths in 2019. By talking about this reality openly and through a lens of racial equality we can better discuss and address the root causes of gun violence.”

The following graph, as an example, clearly supports the view of those two authors [6]:

Figure S1: Rates of firearm mortality per 100,000 persons age 1-19 in the United States in 2019 and in 2020, by sex, race/ethnicity, and mechanism of death.



Reflecting on this tragic “bigger picture” we see that neither adding an extended but arbitrary waiting period for the receipt of a purchased firearm nor requiring a background check for all non-professional/personal sales or transfers of firearms between citizens would alter any of the real causes behind the rise in “death by firearm” in America.

I therefore ask you to deem both LD 168 and LD 60 as “should not pass”.

Thank you for your time.

Resources

- [1] "Suicide Mortality in the United States, 2000–2020, Figure 1" <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db433.htm>
- [2] "Suicide Mortality in the United States, 2000–2020" https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db433.htm#section_3
- [3] "Pew Research Center - What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>
- [4] "USA Facts – Firearm Deaths in the US: Statistics and Trends" <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/security-safety/crime-and-justice/firearms/firearm-deaths/>
- [5] "City Dashboard: Gun Homicide" <https://everytownresearch.org/report/city-data/>
- [6] "Everything about America’s gun debate is wrong – here’s why" <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/25/us-gun-violence-reporters-shootings>
- [7] "Supplementary Appendix Supplement to: Goldstick JE, Cunningham RM, Carter PM. Current causes of death in children and adolescents in the United States. N Engl J Med 2022;386:1955-6. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc2201761" https://www.nejm.org/doi/suppl/10.1056/NEJMc2201761/suppl_file/nejmc2201761_appendix.pdf