

Gun Violence Research Statement by NAMI

Where We Stand...

NAMI believes that public policy should be guided by credible, evidence-based research. NAMI supports funding for research to understand the causes and effects of gun violence in the U.S., including self-directed violence, and opposes restrictions on gun violence research.

Why We Care...

When tragic acts of gun violence occur, people with mental illness are often unfairly drawn into the conversation. The truth is that the vast majority of violence is not perpetrated by people with mental illness — in fact, they are **more likely** to be victims of violent crime or self-inflicted injury. The myth that people with mental illness are violent perpetuates stigma and distracts from the real issues. One of which being that each year, most firearm deaths are suicides, and firearm deaths are the **most common** method used in suicides.

Unfortunately, federal policy has restricted research that could create a better understanding about how to prevent gun violence. Since 1996, the “Dickey Amendment” has severely limited federal financing to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for gun violence research. By barring funds “to advocate or promote gun control,” the field of gun violence research has been severely underfunded. Thankfully, in 2019, Congress clarified that the ban on federal dollars did not extend to a ban on research and has created an opportunity for the federal government to learn more about the causes of gun violence.

NAMI believes that to meaningfully reduce gun violence in the U.S., including self-directed gun violence, the federal government must invest in research to help us better understand this pressing public health issue and develop evidence-based practices on how to prevent it.

How We Talk About It...

- Suicide and gun violence are public health crises in America.
- When acts of gun violence occur, people with mental illness are often unfairly drawn into the conversation.
- Mental health conditions are common around the globe, yet no other country comes close to the level of gun violence our country experiences.
- The mistaken belief that people with mental illness are violent unfairly contributes to stigma. It also distracts from the fact that the majority of firearm deaths each year are suicides, and that firearms are the most common method used for suicide.
- Self-directed gun violence is fueling our nation’s suicide epidemic, with suicide being the **second** leading cause of death for people ages 10-34.
- Nearly half** of people who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental health condition. And **90%** of people who die by suicide have experienced symptoms of a mental health condition.
- Suicide doesn’t just affect the person who dies; it shatters families and devastates communities.
- We need to stop the misguided conversation that people with mental illness are violent and focus on preventing more deaths by suicide.
- Our leaders should invest in research that guides policymaking and helps us understand and prevent all types of gun violence in America, including self-directed violence.

What We've Done...

- NAMI [statement](#) on the mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas
- NAMI [statement](#) on the mass shooting in Buffalo, N.Y.
- NAMI [statement](#) on mass shootings in Texas and Ohio
- NAMI [statement](#) on the Parkland School Shooting
- NAMI [testimony](#) to U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on Extreme Risk Protection Orders
- NAMI [report](#) *Preparing for the Unimaginable: How chiefs can safeguard officer mental health before and after mass casualty events*
