

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NONFATAL SHOOTINGS

Gun crime is a major concern for communities and their police agencies. Gun crime affects not only the immediate victims and their families, but the community as a whole. Timely first responders, advanced medical care — and perhaps the poor aim of the shooter — mean saved lives, making shootings that were once fatal events now nonfatal events. Although there is no central repository or data collection system that measures nonfatal shootings, it is nevertheless important that law enforcement expand its focus to include nonfatal shootings.

Criminal nonfatal shootings can be defined by two general criteria: First, the crime should meet the UCR/NIBRS definition of an aggravated assault (criminal intent), and second, the incident should include a physical injury from a firearm.

To the right are five points that can help law enforcement and their partners to understand the steps for collecting, analyzing, and evaluating nonfatal shooting data with the goal of increasing community and officer safety.

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1

DEFINE NONFATAL SHOOTINGS

There is no agreed-upon national definition for a nonfatal shooting. Agencies should be deliberate and consistent when defining a nonfatal shooting. The definition should include those criminal elements that are meaningful to the agency.

2

LOOK BEYOND HOMICIDES

Homicides are rare events. In 2016, homicides made up just 1.4% of all violent crime. Recent research suggests that nonfatal shootings are at least four times more prevalent than gun homicides. Law enforcement agencies should consider looking beyond homicides to include nonfatal shootings.

3

COLLECT DATA ON NONFATAL SHOOTINGS

Most law enforcement agencies do not collect nonfatal shooting data because there is no federal crime reporting requirement to do so. Neither the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) nor the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) has a category for nonfatal shootings. To fill the gap, law enforcement agencies should make a concerted effort to collect data on nonfatal shootings.

4

GET STARTED BY BUILDING DATA CAPACITY

Collecting data on nonfatal shootings is labor intensive. Nonfatal shootings cannot be extracted from most law enforcement Record Management Systems (RMS). The mechanisms for collecting and coding data on nonfatal shootings should be clear and consistent, timely and reliable. A research partner or crime analyst can assist with setting up the process.

5

IMPROVE POLICY, PRACTICE, AND STRATEGY

Nonfatal shooting analyses should be part of a larger crime reduction strategy. People, places, and situations associated with nonfatal shootings and homicides are closely related. Comprehensive nonfatal shooting data can help law enforcement understand the context of local gun violence and thereby better inform policy and practice.

RESOURCES

Very little research has been done on nonfatal shootings, primarily because of the lack of systematic data specifically on nonfatal shootings and, more globally, on gun violence. For examples of how practitioners and researchers have used nonfatal shooting data, please see the following articles: Hipple and Magee contrast gun homicide and nonfatal shooting victim and incident characteristics in a recent article in *Violence and Victims* entitled *The Difference Between Living and Dying: Victim Characteristics and Motive Among Nonfatal Shootings and Gun Homicides*. Hipple, McGarrell, O'Brien, and Huebner describe how comprehensive data collection on nonfatal shootings can be used to improve police agency operations in their article *Gun Crime Incident Reviews as a Strategy for Enhancing Problem Solving and Information Sharing*, published in the *Journal of Crime and Justice*.

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