



FACT SHEET

The Impact of Gun Violence on Latinx Communities

9.15.2021

LEER EN ESPAÑOL

El impacto de la violencia con armas de fuego en las comunidades latinx



Introduction



Raymond “RJ” Pantoja

Lisa Espinosa’s 26-year-old son, Raymond “RJ” Pantoja, was shot and killed on April 10, 2016, in a senseless act of gun violence after he tried to stop an altercation outside a nightclub in Philadelphia. He died a hero. In honor of her son’s life, and particularly his love of music, Lisa founded Ray’s Rhythm for Justice Foundation, which provides performing arts scholarships for children who are affected by gun violence.

Latinx people in the United States are dying from gun violence every day and at rates disproportionate to their white peers. Increasingly, they are the target of hate-motivated violence, including in August 2019, when the devastating mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, laid bare the deadly consequences of hate and rhetoric against the Latinx community.

WHY WE USE LATINX

Developed within queer and trans communities, the term Latinx is a gender-neutral word designed to be inclusive of gender-fluid, gender nonconforming, and/or gender nonbinary people, as well as other queer and trans communities on the gender spectrum.

Often used interchangeably, “Latinx” and “Hispanic” have different meanings: Latinx refers to people of Latin American origin, while Hispanic refers to people of Spanish-speaking origin. Latinx is used here when we are referring to both Hispanic and Latinx communities, and Hispanic is used otherwise.

Gun Violence in Latinx Communities

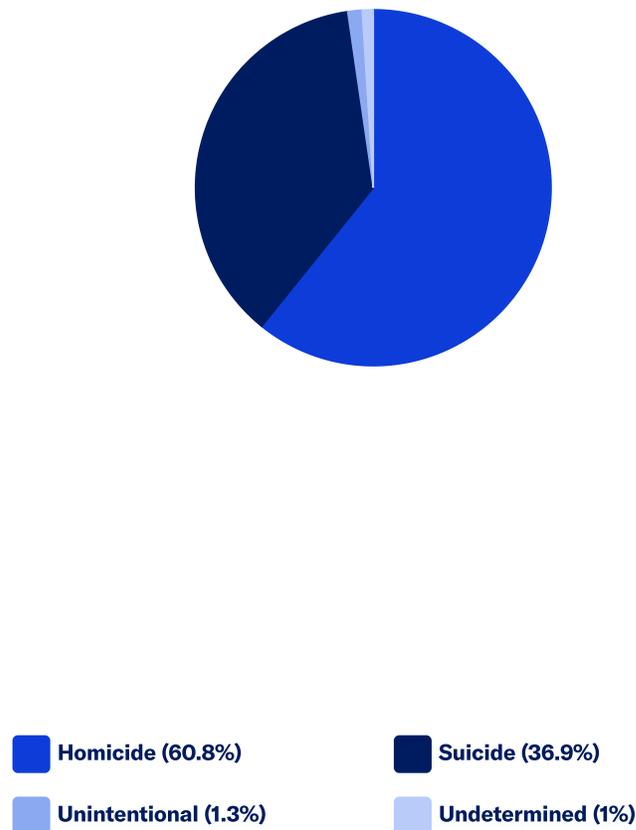
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Each year, 3,800 Latinx people die from gun violence in the US.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Onlin...

Each year, 3,800 Latinx people die from gun violence in the United States—an average of 10 deaths every day—and 13,300 are shot and wounded.¹ Nearly two-thirds of all gun deaths among Latinx people in the United States are homicides, and Latinx people are twice as likely to die by gun homicide and four times as likely to be wounded by an assault with a gun as white people.² In cities, the majority of gun homicides affect young Black and Latino men in historically underfunded neighborhoods.³ During the Covid pandemic, when gun violence surged in 2020,⁴ Latinx communities experienced an even greater burden; an analysis of nine US cities found that more than 85 percent of the increase in gun violence in those cities occurred in predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods.⁵

Gun Deaths Among Latinx People



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Causes of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of the most recent available data: 2015 to 2019.

The burden of gun violence is also borne by Latinx children and teens, who are three times more likely to be killed by gun homicide than their white peers⁶ and are also more likely to be exposed to violence in cities.⁷ Latinx youth are also increasingly impacted by firearm suicide. Each year, nearly 400 young Latinx

people die by firearm suicide, and the rate of gun suicide among this population has increased 63 percent over the past decade—higher than the increase among young people overall.⁸

Latinx people in the US have historically been impacted by discriminatory policies and attitudes⁹ and were victimized by hate-motivated violence long before the mass shooting in El Paso. Research has found that increases in anti-Hispanic hate crimes followed increases in Hispanic immigration.¹⁰ A Department of Justice report found that Hispanic people experienced a higher rate of violent hate crime victimization than both white and Black people in the last five years studied.¹¹ Bias against Latinx people, amplified by anti-immigrant policies and language from the past presidential administration, causes direct harm. A 2019 report found that 10 percent of Latinx adults had been victimized by a hate crime in the past year, though only 8 percent of those victimized felt comfortable reporting the crime to police.¹²

While gun violence clearly disproportionately affects Latinx people in the United States, the true scope of the impact is difficult to see. Hispanic people are more likely to have their ethnicity miscategorized in mortality data than white or Black people, and this issue is compounded for certain Hispanic identities.¹³ Additionally, the diversity of Hispanic or Latinx identities—it is the largest US ethnic group¹⁴ and includes people of all races—means that understanding exactly how gun violence impacts specific Latinx communities is limited by insufficient collection of race and ethnicity data.¹⁵ Consequently, the full impact of gun violence among Latinx people in cities, states, and communities across the United States is unknown.

The Disproportionate Impact of Police Violence

Latinx people are also disproportionately impacted by police violence. In an average year, police shoot and kill over 170 Latinx people, and at a rate higher than white people.¹⁶ And police are more likely to threaten or use physical force during encounters with Latinx people than with white people.¹⁷ As a

consequence, many Latinx people may not feel assured that law enforcement would protect them, and Latinx people generally report less confidence in police than white people.¹⁸

Deteriorated relationships between Latinx communities and law enforcement also present challenges in reporting and solving crimes. Police violence dramatically reduces public confidence in law enforcement, leading community members to see them as part of the problem.¹⁹ Additionally, certain cultural elements shared by many members of the Latinx community, including histories of dictatorial leadership in Latin America and demographic status in the US, make many Latinx people wary of law enforcement.²⁰

Aggressive federal immigration policies have caused a chilling effect on willingness to talk to police among Latinx people, and law enforcement's role in immigration enforcement also erodes Latinx trust in police.²¹ Hispanic immigrants, particularly undocumented Hispanic immigrants, are less likely to report being victimized by a crime,²² and fear of police inquiries into their immigration status or the status of someone they know has also made US-born Latinx people less likely to report victimization.²³ Practices like Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers appearing at hearings for protective orders have made immigrant domestic abuse survivors less likely to report the abuse.²⁴

Policymakers Can Act to Protect Latinx Communities

Policymakers should address the disproportionate impact of gun violence on Latinx people in the United States with action, including by:

- Funding community-based violence intervention programs that identify individuals who are at the highest risk of shooting or being shot and work to reduce violence through targeted support and interventions. Local governments can utilize American Rescue Plan funds to support city gun violence prevention.

- Implementing policies that reduce police gun violence. Law enforcement agencies should have strong guardrails on when police may use force against civilians, ensure police are held accountable when force is used, and prioritize de-escalation, dignity, and respect. Cities may also consider implementing alternative dispatch programs, which connect people in crisis with mental health and social services in difficult situations that police might not have the training to address.
- Prohibiting all people convicted of hate crimes from having guns. While a felony conviction prohibits gun possession under federal law, a hate crime misdemeanor conviction does not. This means that in much of the country a person convicted of a violent hate crime could legally pass a background check and buy a gun.
- Passing Extreme Risk laws, which allow family members and law enforcement to ask a judge for an order to temporarily remove guns from a person who poses a serious risk of injuring others (or themselves) with a gun. This gives people in crisis a chance to seek help. Extreme Risk laws are proven to reduce rates of suicide and have shown success in preventing potential mass shootings.²⁵
- Creating permanent state and local offices dedicated to gun violence prevention and research institutes with a mission to study and recommend policy solutions to combat gun violence, and putting a premium on new data collection infrastructure that can help policymakers to evaluate not only homicide, but also unintentional shootings, nonfatal assaults, and suicide.

Everytown Research & Policy is a program of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, an independent, non-partisan organization dedicated to understanding and reducing gun violence. Everytown Research & Policy works to do so by conducting methodologically rigorous research, supporting evidence-based policies, and communicating this knowledge to the American public.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of the most recent available data: 2015 to 2019; Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “A More Complete Picture: The Contours of Gun Injury in the United States,” December 2020, <https://every.tw/33Hto3F>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of the most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Homicide includes shootings by law enforcement; Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “A More Complete Picture: The Contours of Gun Injury in the United States,” December 2020, <https://every.tw/33Hto3F>.

³ Everytown for Gun Safety, “City Gun Violence,” accessed September 1, 2021, <https://www.everytown.org/issues/city-gun-violence>.

⁴ Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “Gun Violence and COVID-19 in 2020: A Year of Colliding Crises,” May 7, 2021, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-violence-and-covid-19-in-2020-a-year-of-colliding-crises/>.

⁵ Weihua Li and Beth Schwartzapfel, “Murders Rose Last Year. Black and Hispanic Neighborhoods Were Hit Hardest,” Marshall Project, April 8, 2021, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2021/04/08/murders-rose-last-year-black-and-hispanic-neighborhoods-were-hit-hardest>.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of the most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Children and teenagers ages 0–19; homicide includes shootings by law enforcement.

⁷ Gregory M. Zimmerman and Steven F. Messner, “Individual, Family Background, and Contextual Explanations of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Youths’ Exposure to Violence,” *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 3 (March 2013): 435–42, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2012.300931>.

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using five years of the most recent available data: 2015 to 2019. Percent change calculated from 2010 to 2019. Youth defined as ages 10 to 24.

⁹ Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, “More Latinos Have Serious Concerns about Their Place in America Under Trump,” Pew Research Center, October 25, 2018, <https://pewrsr.ch/2GHgqfH>. See also Mary G. Findling et al., “Discrimination in the United States: Experience of Latinos,” *Health Services Research* 54 (October 30, 2019): 1475-6773, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1475-6773.13216>; Joanna Almeida et al., “The Association between Anti-Immigrant Policies and Perceived Discrimination among Latinos in the US: A Multilevel Analysis,” *Population Health* 2 (December 2016): 897-903, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352827316301471>.

¹⁰ Michele Stacey, Kristin Carbone-López, and Richard Rosenfeld, “Demographic Change and Ethnically Motivated Crime: The Impact of Immigration on Anti-Hispanic Hate Crime in the United States,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 27, no. 3 (August 2011): 278-98, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1043986211412560?journalCode=ccja.

¹¹ Madeline Masucci and Lynn Langton, “Hate Crime Victimization, 2004-2015,” US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, June 2017, <https://bit.ly/2ZmfP9X>.

¹² Carlos A. Cuevas et al., “Understanding and Measuring Bias Victimization against Latinos,” National Criminal Justice Reference Service, October 2019, <https://bit.ly/3jiDgbq>.

¹³ Elizabeth Arias, Melonie Heron, and Jahn K. Hakes, “The Validity of Race and Hispanic-Origin Reporting on Death Certificates in the United States: An Update,” August 2016, <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/45533>.

¹⁴ US Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: United States,” accessed August 21, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Ed8bqU>.

¹⁵ US Census Bureau, “Research to Improve Data on Race and Ethnicity,” accessed August 21, 2020, <https://bit.ly/34mE8HN>. See also Mark Hugo Lopez, Jens Manuel Krogstad, and Jeffrey S. Passel, “Who Is Hispanic?” Pew Research Center, November 11, 2019, <https://pewrsr.ch/3aSkR2s>.

¹⁶ Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund analysis of Mapping Police Violence 2013–2019, accessed June 4, 2020; “National Population by Characteristics: 2010–2019,” US Census Bureau, accessed June 4, 2020. On average, police shot and killed 177 Hispanic/Latino Americans per year; this is a rate of 2.95 fatal police shootings per million Hispanic/Latino Americans. During the same time, police shot and killed an average of 453 non-Hispanic white Americans each year; this is a rate of 2.29 per million non-Hispanic whites. This may underestimate the true rate, as race was unknown for approximately 10 percent of the reported deaths.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Davis, Anthony Whyde, and Lynn Langton, “Contacts between Police and the Public, 2015,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 2018, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpp15.pdf>; *Floyd v. City of N.Y.*, 959 F. Supp. 2d 540 (United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, August 12, 2013).

¹⁸ Jens Manuel Krogstad, “Latino Confidence in Local Police Lower Than among Whites,” Pew Research Center, August 24, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/28/latino-confidence-in-local-police-lower-than-among-whites/>.

¹⁹ Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “Gun Violence and the Police,” June 29, 2020, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-violence-and-the-police/>.

²⁰ See, e.g., Nicole Santa Cruz, Ruben Vives, and Marisa Gerber, “Why the Deaths of Latinos at the Hands of Police Haven’t Drawn as Much Attention,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 2015, <https://lat.ms/2DHWXKH>.

²¹ Hamutal Bernstein et al., “Adults in Immigrant Families Report Avoiding Routine Activities Because of Immigration Concerns,” Urban Institute, July 2019, <https://urbn.is/3bJuErK>; Kelle Varrick “Latino Confidence in the Police: The Role of Immigration Enforcement, Assimilation, and Immigration Status.” *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice* 12, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 289–307,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15377938.2014.893218>; . Krogstad, “Latino Confidence in Local Police Lower Than among Whites.”

²² Stefano Comino, Giovanni Mastrobuoni, and Antonio Nicolò, “Silence of the Innocents: Illegal Immigrants’ Underreporting of Crime and Their Victimization,” SSRN Scholarly Paper, Social Science Research Network, October 31, 2016, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2861091>.

²³ Nik Theodore, “Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement,” Department of Urban Planning and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, May 2013, <https://bit.ly/3m7Vnk3>.

²⁴ Tahirih Justice Center et al., “Immigrant Survivors Fear Reporting Violence,” June 2019, <https://bit.ly/2IWgp5U> (national survey finding that three out of four advocates and attorneys reported that immigrant domestic abuse survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to the abuser/offender, and over 76 percent reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about contacting the police).

²⁵ Aaron J. Kivisto and Peter Lee Phalen, “Effects of Risk-Based Firearm Seizure Laws in Connecticut and Indiana on Suicide Rates, 1981–2015,” *Psychiatric Services* 69, no. 8 (August 2018): 855–62, <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201700250>; Jeffrey W. Swanson et al., “Implementation and Effectiveness of Connecticut’s Risk-Based Gun Removal Law: Does It Prevent Suicides?,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 80 (2017): 179–208, <https://bit.ly/3gidLYO>; Jeffrey W. Swanson et al., “Criminal Justice and Suicide Outcomes with Indiana’s Risk-Based Gun Seizure Law,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online* 47, no. 2 (2019): 188–97, <http://hdl.handle.net/1805/22638>; Garen J. Wintemute, “Extreme Risk Protection Orders Intended to Prevent Mass Shootings: A Case Series,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 171 (2019): 655–58, <https://doi.org/10.7326/M19-2162>.