Data Visualization Final Project Article

When we think of gun deaths in America, we tend to jump to the sensational TV headlines about the multitude of mass shootings that have plagued this country. However, gun deaths from mass shootings are only a tiny fraction of the total, which is made up most of homicides and suicides. We will take you through how the American people are affected by gun deaths, namely those who are disproportionately affected and where these incidents tend to occur.

Firstly, though men are almost always the perpetrators of gun violence, 98% of the time, they are also much more often the victims of gun violence. The fact that men more often commit gun violence stems from the overwhelming pressure of toxic masculinity on men’s actions. Very often men are expected to prove their masculinity through force and what better way to do that than through the power of a gun. Similarly, men are usually having to prove their masculinity to other men, which points that exertion of force right at other men. This can be seen with our pie chart, which shows quite clearly that men are at a much higher risk of dying through gun violence than women.

Another small misconception about gun violence is that though suicide is understandably occurring most often in the home, homicide also tends to happen in the home more than other places. Our bar graph shows this clearly if you select the homicide option.

The next two trends we would like to point out involve who is most affected by homicide and suicide respectively. Starting with homicide, if you select homicide and select through the multiple ages, you’ll see in our bubble graph, showing rates of deaths per 100,000 people, that black people are disproportionately the victims of homicides. This comes from the higher rates of black people being pushed into gangs and police run ins since they are more often in lower income communities. Most notably if you select the age range of 15-34 you’ll see that black people have a dramatically higher rate of homicide gun deaths. This lines up with the coverage of young black men in the news and the police brutality that has added to those numbers.

The other major trend we would like you to notice is that of the suicide rates of white people. If you select suicide, you’ll see that as you move through the age ranges, white people consistently have a much higher rate of suicide than all other. Particularly, the senior age range of 65+ shows that older white people are at least 4 times as likely to commit suicide with a gun than any other race. This lines up with the fact that older white men are much more likely to own guns than anyone else, and having easy access to guns allows people to use them against themselves more often.

Now that we’ve stepped through some of the major trends of gun violence in America, if you select All Deaths you’ll see that even when all deaths are accounted for, spread across ages, you can see the major spikes in deaths from black people at around the age of 15 and white people at around 50. And though for all deaths it shows that white people are much more often the victims of gun violence, they also make up an extremely large portion of the population and the disproportionate levels of gun violence for other races is the key take away from our line graph. Now if you select the options for homicide and suicide separately, you’ll see these trends much clearer.

Though we should always take care to acknowledge that gun violence affects all races and genders in the US, we also need to be careful to recognize that those effects are not equal. Men are targeted gun violence due to the toxicity of masculinity in our society. The home continues to be the most dangerous place for people in regards to guns. White men are much more likely to commit suicide using a gun but young black men are incomparably and disproportionately more likely to fall victim to homicides involving guns.