



Gun Violence and Racism are Public Health Crises in America

Statement in Response to the Multiple Shootings this Past Weekend

May 17, 2022 (Washington, DC) – This weekend, the nation was traumatized again by acts of gun violence. Families and the surrounding communities in Buffalo, New York; Laguna Woods, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Houston, Texas, are now faced with caring for the injured and mourning the devastating loss of life as a result of these mass shootings. As more details are uncovered in each of these tragedies, it has been reported that the shooting outside of [Buffalo](#) was a racially motivated hate crime targeting the black community and the targeted Taiwanese church in [Laguna Woods](#) was a politically-motivated hate crime. The horrific events of this weekend are a stark reminder that racism, gun violence, and mass shootings remain public health crises that must be addressed.

The evidence is clear that gun violence affects the public's health broadly.^{1,2} For many years, the American Academy of Nursing (Academy) has consistently called for action on gun violence and this continues to be a priority issue area for the Academy's [Expert Panel on Violence](#).^{3,4,5} The Academy supports policy solutions such as the expansion of background checks as well as increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.⁶ Funding is urgently needed to conduct national research and public health surveillance on firearm-related injuries.⁷

"The senseless loss of life to gun violence, particularly when individuals are sought out and targeted based on the color of their skin and ethnicity, is unconscionable," said Academy President Kenneth R. White, PhD, AGACNP, ACHPN, FACHE, FAAN. "For too many years, the nation has failed to address the glaring public health crises of gun violence and racism. The Academy will continue to call on policy makers to save lives."

The number of incidents of gun violence has escalated at an alarming rate since the start of the pandemic.⁸ Additionally, the number of racially-motivated acts of violence has increased in the past two years.⁹ Racism has long been a determinant of health and it is clear that there is an intersection between gun violence and race. The Academy knows how important it is to implement policies aimed at

¹Rosa M. Gonzalez-Guarda, Elizabeth Burgess Dowdell, Marie Ann Marino, Jocelyn C. Anderson, Kathryn Laughon. (May 2018). American Academy of Nursing on policy: Recommendations in response to mass shootings. *Nursing Outlook*. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(18\)30197-0/fulltext](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(18)30197-0/fulltext).

² Karen Cox. (May 2018). President's Message: A public health crisis: Recommendations to reduce gun violence in America. *Nursing Outlook*. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(18\)30232-X/fulltext](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(18)30232-X/fulltext)

³ American Academy of Nursing. (September 26, 2019). American Academy of Nursing Supports Efforts to Reduce Gun Violence [Press release]. Retrieved from: https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/AANNET/c8a8da9e-918c-4dae-b0c6-6d630c46007f/UploadedImages/Press_Release_American_Academy_of_Nursing_Supports_Efforts_to_Reduce_Gun_Violence.pdf.

⁴ Angela Amar, Linda Beeber, Kathryn Laughon, and Michael J. Rice. (May 2013). American Academy of Nursing on Policy: Reducing firearm violence. *Nursing Outlook*. Retrieved from: [https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(13\)00057-2/fulltext](https://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(13)00057-2/fulltext).

⁵ American Academy of Nursing. (August 2019). Academy sent a letter to Congressional leadership calling on them to act to prevent future gun violence. Retrieved from: https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/AANNET/c8a8da9e-918c-4dae-b0c6-6d630c46007f/UploadedImages/Academy_Letter_to_Address_Gun_Violence_August_2019.pdf.

⁶ Letter to the Biden Transition Team. (December 2020). Retrieved from: https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/AANNET/c8a8da9e-918c-4dae-b0c6-6d630c46007f/UploadedImages/FINAL_Biden_Transition_Letter.pdf.

⁷ Letter to U.S. House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. (April 28, 2022). Retrieved from: https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/AANNET/c8a8da9e-918c-4dae-b0c6-6d630c46007f/UploadedImages/GVP_Research_Funding_Letter_FY2023_Final.pdf.

⁸ Sun S, Cao W, Ge Y, Siegel M, Wellenius GA. Analysis of Firearm Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the US. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2022;5(4):e229393. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.9393

⁹ "Hate Crime Statistics." The United States Department of Justice. (May 9, 2022). <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics>.

eliminating bias, inequity, and violence. President Biden and the First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, traveled to Buffalo today to mourn with the community. The Academy calls on the Administration and Congress to place gun violence on the national policy agenda as a priority. As the White House stated in its [release on May 14th](#), "A racially motivated hate crime is abhorrent to the very fabric of this nation." Racism that leads to hate crimes are a public health crisis. As the Academy strives to achieve its vision of healthy lives for all people, the organization will remain vigilant in supporting proposals to reduce all forms of violence, enhance cross-cultural humility, and eliminate the structures of racism.¹⁰

###

About the American Academy of Nursing

The American Academy of Nursing serves the public by advancing health policy through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. Academy Fellows are inducted into the organization for their extraordinary contributions to improve health locally and globally. With more than 2,900 Fellows, the Academy represents nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia.

Contact

Caroline Kane | 202-777-1173 | ckane@aannet.org

¹⁰ American Academy of Nursing. (June 1, 2020). Racism Affects Health and Wellness and It Must Be Addressed [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://www.aannet.org/news/press-releases/position-statement-on-racism>.