State Firearms Laws and Suicide

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A recent analysis found that the suicide rate decreased significantly in states that required both a background check and waiting period before a gun purchase compared to states without such laws. Although the suicide rate decreased in states with just one of these laws in place, the change was not significantly different from that in other states. Open carry restrictions and gun lock requirements were not associated with significant differences in suicide rate changes.

Researchers examined changes in statewide suicide rates between 2013 and 2014 using data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia with and without certain gun laws. The analysis was adjusted for factors that could affect suicide rates, including gun ownership, depression, suicidal ideation, median age in the state, and population density.

According to the authors, policies that provide time to identify and treat people at risk before they acquire a firearm may be more effective at preventing suicide than policies that regulate the carry and storage of handguns that people already own. They suggested that interventions such as lethal means counseling could help prevent suicide among people who already own firearms.


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