

Risk Factors of Shootings

Summary of Key Factors: Drug trade; At-risk housing developments; Gang activity; Gun availability; Criminal history.

Aim: To assist analysts with the identification of risk factors for the production of risk terrain maps. Specifically, this brief provides an annotated review of the factors related to gun shootings and the settings and times for which some factors may be most relevant. This information should be especially useful to help choose a time period for creating risk terrain maps (i.e., Stepⁱ 3), to identify aggravating and mitigating risk factors to include in your risk terrain model (i.e., Steps 5 and 6), and to inform the operationalization of your risk factors to risk map layers (i.e., Step 7).

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Operational Definition

For the purpose of this research brief, a shooting is defined as “when bullets are shot from guns or other weapons.”ⁱⁱ

Aggravating/Mitigating Risk Factors Based on a Review of Empirical Literature

Drug Trade

Violent disputes are often linked with drug dealing and drug trafficking due to enforcement of drug debts, arguments with competitors, and establishing control over territory. Much of the violence associated with gang activity is due to their engagement in drug trafficking and drug sales.ⁱⁱⁱ

At-Risk Housing Developments

Violent crime in public housing dramatically exceeds levels of violence in other disadvantaged nonpublic housing neighborhoods. Residents of public housing are twice as likely to be victims of gun violence than individuals who do not reside in public housing facilities. The design hypothesis theorizes that the environment and structure of housing projects increases opportunities to offend and thus increases the offending rates of public housing residents as compared to nonpublic housing residents.^{iv}

Gang Activity

Gangs are responsible for a large percentage of the crime in many urban and some suburban communities in the United States.^v Gangs often engage in drive-by shootings, when an individual or group of individual fires a weapon from a vehicle at another vehicle, person, or structure, to intimidate or threaten rivals or to establish their gang’s turf. Research shows that at-risk youth who are not involved in gang activity are less likely to engage in drive-by shootings than involved gang members. Gang involvement may encourage drive-by shootings due to gun accessibility and condoning of violent behavior.^{vi}

Gun Availability

Greater firearm availability not only increases the rates of homicide, but also increases the rates of other types of felony gun use.^{vii}

Criminal History

Perpetrators of weapon-related offenses are more likely to have extensive criminal histories.^{viii} In addition, youth gun violence is disproportionately present in youths with criminal backgrounds including violent offenses, disorder offenses, and drug offenses.^{ix}

Demographic Factors

Gun violence is concentrated among young minority males who live in socially and economically disadvantaged communities.^x

Setting Effects

Urban locations see higher levels of gun violence, both fatal and non-fatal. This increase may be due to the urban area's higher levels of gang conflicts, drug markets, and gun availability.^{xi}

Temporal Effects

The Kansas City Gun Experiment found that the majority of gun violence occurred between 7 p.m. and 1 a.m.^{xii} Drive-by shootings frequently occur at night because darkness serves to conceal offenders.^{xiii}

Endnotes

ⁱ For steps of risk terrain map production, download the RTM Manual at www.riskterrainmodeling.com

ⁱⁱ Shooting. (2011). In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/shooting>

ⁱⁱⁱ U. S. Department of Justice, National Gang Intelligence Center. (2009). *National gang threat assessment*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Gang Intelligence Center.

^{iv} U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (1999). *In the crossfire: The impact of gun violence on public housing communities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

^v U. S. Department of Justice, National Gang Intelligence Center. (2009). *National gang threat assessment*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Gang Intelligence Center.

^{vi} Dedel, K. (2007). *Drive-by shootings*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

^{vii} Roth, J. (1994). *Firearms and violence*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

^{viii} Blumstein, A., & Wallman, J. (Eds.). (2000). *The crime drop in America*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

^{ix} Braga, A. A. (2003). *Gun violence among serious young offenders*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

^x Papachristos, A. V., Braga, A. A., & Hureau, D. (2011). *Six-degree of violent victimization: Social networks and the risk of gunshot injury*. Retrieved February 26, 2011 from Social Science Research Network website: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1772772

^{xi} Braga, A. A. (2003). *Gun violence among serious young offenders*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

^{xii} Sherman, L. W., Shaw, J. W., & Rogan, D. P. (1995). *The Kansas City gun experiment*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

^{xiii} Dedel, K. (2007). *Drive-by shootings*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.