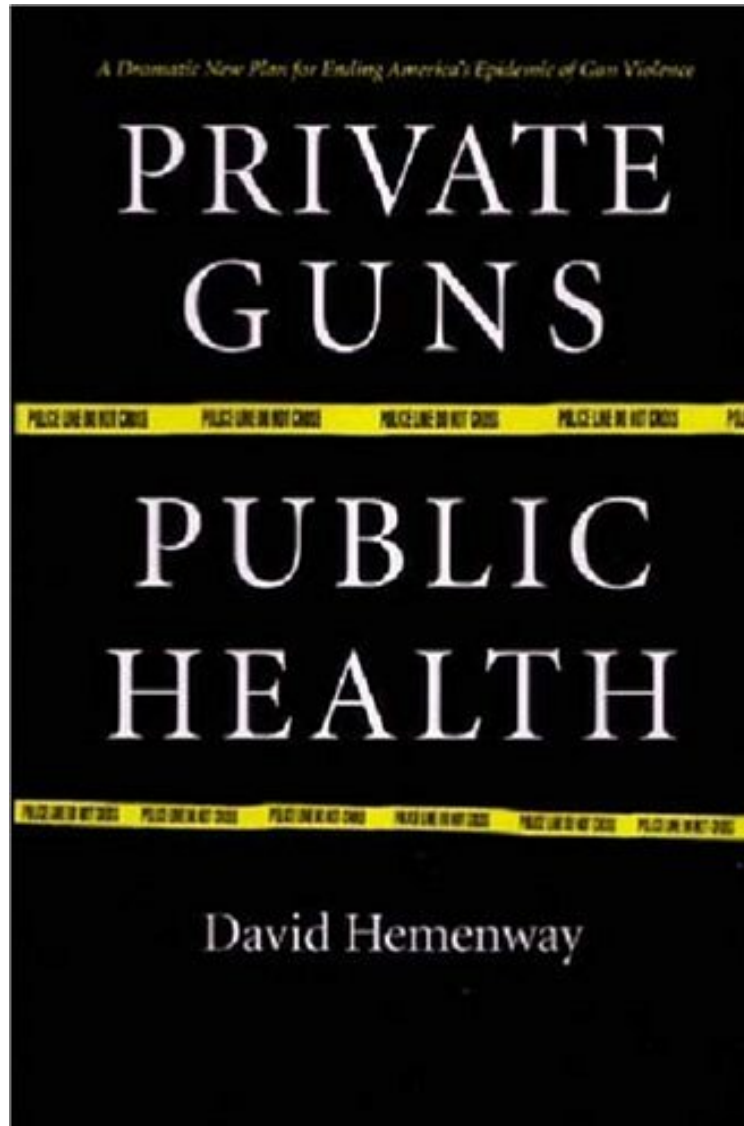


(Read free) Private Guns, Public Health

## Private Guns, Public Health

David Hemenway

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**David Hemenway : Private Guns, Public Health** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Private Guns, Public Health:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent. Data-driven. By ShiraWow. An eye-opening look at gun culture in America within the context of public health. Excellent data culled from reliable sources. Helps me make informed decisions on the subject of firearms. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Readable, hopeful, informative, and non-partisan study should be in every library and school By Judy S. Young Private Guns Public Health

is a highly readable non partisan approach to sharing well documented public health aspects of gun policies. Reading this book changed my position from depression to hope. Hemenway has years of experience in the public health field, and makes very astute comparisons between the idea that teens are just going to die in car crashes frequently, because they are reckless, and the idea that gun deaths in the U.S. will remain many times as high per capita as other developed nations, because Americans are somehow just more violent. The facts show otherwise. Only in the area of gun violence are our numbers high. Hemenway quotes from a variety of reputable studies, and also shows where there are problems with some studies that are less reputable. The number of deaths in car crashes in our country have actually been hugely reduced by shatter proof windshields and seat belts, despite the fact that teens and others still sometimes drive recklessly. Similarly, by instituting sensible gun policies and standards for the manufacturing of safer guns, our gun deaths can be markedly reduced. In the past I have found it depressing to read about this issue, when the information shared was a litany of tragic stories of the people who died. Without lacking concern for the death toll in any way, Hemenway focuses strongly on what can be done about it. I have read about this issue before, but in a few pages I was educated far more usefully with this book. For instance, I had no idea before that although a quarter of American adults own a gun of some kind, 77% of all the guns owned in our country are owned by a mere 10% of our adult population. These gun owners have arsenals, whereas 90% of the population have either no guns or fewer than four. I hadn't realized that 60% of American men and 90% of American women do not own a gun at all. Further, gun owners are much more prevalent in the south and West than in the North-east, which makes it particularly revealing that a far higher percentage of gun deaths occur in the regions that are high in gun ownership. Among other things that became very very clear after reading *Private Guns Public Health*, more guns do not make us more safe. Instead, areas with more guns have substantially more gun deaths. But read this book--there are so many things we can do to reduce this public health epidemic of gun violence. Doctors can help by simply encouraging patients who own guns to store them safely. Manufacturers really must be required to produce guns that at least can pass a simple drop test! The tragedy of people who are killed because they or someone they are with simply dropped a gun, is unthinkable. When that someone is a child, whether the child is the shooter or the victim (often both), the tragedy is further compounded. This may be why pediatricians are the one group of medical professionals who have consistently stood up on this issue. They will ask the parents of the children they treat if there are guns in the home, if there are, they will ask them to store them safely--locked and unloaded. I am currently working with a group of concerned people to ask local doctors to have these conversations, and to provide pamphlets to their patients describing safe storage techniques. This is only one of a number of things that can save lives, not by taking away guns as some fear, but by introducing regulations to make guns safer, and requiring background checks for owners and other common sense measures that are fully supported by studies and shown to be effective. This book is really something that all American citizens should read and learn from. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The information is succinctly presented and easily accessible which is quite a feat considering the ...By Beth in Boston David Hemenways book, *Private Guns, Public Health*, is a phenomenal piece of work. It is an incredibly well researched and documented accounting of all the scientific literature on firearms. The information is succinctly presented and easily accessible which is quite a feat considering the meticulous depth and large amount of information reviewed.

"In this small book David Hemenway has produced a masterwork. He has dissected the various aspects of the gun violence epidemic in the United States into its component parts and considered them separately. He has produced a scientifically based analysis of the data and indeed the microdata of the over 30,000 deaths and 75,000 injuries which occur each year. Consideration and adoption of the policy lessons he recommends would strengthen the Constitutional protections that all of our citizens have to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."-Richard F. Corlin, Past President, American Medical Association "This lucid and penetrating study is essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the tragedy of gun violence in America and-even more important-what we can do to stop it. David Hemenway cuts through the cant and rhetoric in a way that no fair-minded person can dismiss, and no sane society can afford to ignore."-Richard North Patterson, novelist "The rate of gun-related homicide, suicide, and accidental injury has reached epidemic proportions in American society. Diagnosing and treating the gun violence epidemic demands the development of public health solutions in conjunction with legislative and law enforcement strategies."-Kweisi Mfume, President and CEO of NAACP "In scholarly, sober analytic assessments, including rigorous critiques of NRA-popularized pseudoscience, David Hemenway constructs a convincing case that firearm availability is a critical and proximal cause of unparalleled carnage. By formulating such violence as a public health issue, he proposes workable policies analogous to ones that reduced injuries from tobacco, alcohol, and automobiles."-Jerome P. Kassirer, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, *New England Journal of Medicine*, and Distinguished Professor, Tufts University School of Medicine "As a former District Attorney and Attorney General, I know the urgency of providing safe homes, schools and neighborhoods for all. This remarkable tour-de-force is a powerful study of one promising solution: a data-rich, eminently readable demonstration of why we should treat gun violence as an American epidemic."-Scott Harshbarger, Former Attorney General of Massachusetts, President and CEO of Common Cause On an average day in the United States, guns are used to kill almost eighty people, and to wound nearly three hundred more. If any other consumer

product had this sort of disastrous effect, the public outcry would be deafening; yet when it comes to guns such facts are accepted as a natural consequence of supposedly high American rates of violence. *Private Guns, Public Health* explodes that myth and many more, revealing the advantages of treating gun violence as a consumer safety and public health problem. David Hemenway fair-mindedly and authoritatively demonstrates how a public-health approach—which emphasizes prevention over punishment, and which has been so successful in reducing the rates of injury and death from infectious disease, car accidents, and tobacco consumption—can be applied to gun violence. Hemenway uncovers the complex connections between guns and self-defense, gun violence and schools, gun prevalence and homicide, and more. Finally, he outlines a policy course that would significantly reduce gun-related injury and death. With its bold new public-health approach to guns, *Private Guns, Public Health* marks a shift in our understanding of guns that will—finally—point us toward a solution.

From *The New England Journal of Medicine* The public health community began researching gun violence about two decades ago, a late entrant in a field traditionally occupied by criminologists. David Hemenway, an economist at the Harvard School of Public Health and the director of the Injury Control Research Center there, has been a leader in this effort. His book is the first to synthesize the findings in this new field and to reference other literature as well. The book provides an account of the nature of the problem of gun violence and views about what can be done to mitigate it, engaging all the principal controversies. Scholars will appreciate the author's logical caution in drawing inferences from the evidence, as well as the methodologic appendix and superb bibliography. Yet the book is highly readable and will serve advocates and other interested citizens as an accessible, comprehensive briefing on the relevant statistics and arguments. (Figure) Hemenway develops the public health approach as a pragmatic, science-based effort to reduce injuries and deaths from gun violence. The goal is not to assign blame but, rather, to find solutions, with an emphasis on prevention. The canonical example for injury-control investigators is highway safety, in which the comprehensive approach propounded by Bill Haddon, a physician who served as the first director of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, continues to provide the conceptual framework. Haddon sought to direct the focus in highway safety away from improved driving and toward improved design of vehicles and roadways. For gun violence, the analogy is to focus less on the shooters and more on access to guns and their design. Of course, it is not obvious that an approach that has been successful in reducing highway crashes, which are mostly unintentional, will also be successful in curtailing the intentional acts (suicide and assault) that produce most gun injuries and deaths. If shooters were determined, resourceful people with clear and sustained deadly intent, then regulating guns would likely have little effect on the number of homicides and suicides; they would find a way. But in the real world, as Hemenway spells out, a large portion of serious intentional violence would be less deadly if guns were less readily available or less user-friendly. Furthermore, although gun "accidents" make up only a small fraction of the total gun injuries, they are common enough that the Consumer Product Safety Commission would surely give them high priority if it were not barred from doing so by federal law. Another feature separates firearms from vehicles: the possibility of "virtuous use." The belief in the importance of giving civilians a means of self-defense has long been used as an argument for preserving the right to keep handguns in the home. In recent decades, that philosophy has fueled a successful effort to ease state restrictions on carrying concealed weapons in public. This campaign has made great use of the work of criminologist Gary Kleck, who concluded from his analysis of survey data that there are millions of virtuous self-defense uses of guns each year. Hemenway has done more than any other scholar in rebutting that absurd claim. The book includes a summary of his results, which are so definitive as to settle the issue for any open-minded observer. When it comes time to assess the evidence on the effectiveness of particular interventions to reduce gun violence, Hemenway is restrained. He notes, "Unfortunately, there exist few convincing evaluations of past firearms laws." In reviewing the evidence on what works and what might work, he tends to believe that studies support the feasibility of reducing accidents and suicides more than they do the likelihood of cutting down on gun assaults. Here again, he summons a public health core principle: that good data are the precondition for progress. Indeed, he and his center get much of the credit for designing a practical system that is now in the pilot stage in a number of states, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The public health approach rests on the optimistic belief that good science will engender good policy and practice. Optimism is a scarce commodity in the area of gun policy. *Private Guns, Public Health* supplies reason to hope. Philip J. Cook, Ph.D. Copyright 2004 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. The New England Journal of Medicine is a registered trademark of the MMS. . . . essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the tragedy of gun violence in America. . . ."---Richard North Patterson About the Author David Hemenway is Professor of Health Policy at the Harvard School of Public Health, and Director of Harvard's Injury Control Research Center and Youth Violence Prevention Center. A former Pew Fellow on Injury Control, he has been a Senior Soros Justice Fellow and held a Robert Wood Johnson Investigator Award in Health Policy Research.