

ABSTRACT

Firearm related Fatalities and Injuries in Jamaica.
A Ten-Year Epidemiological Assessment (1984-1993)

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The public health impact of firearm-related injuries and fatalities in Jamaica is enormous. This study examines secondary data on firearm-related fatalities and injuries in Jamaica for the period 1984-1993. Costs incurred to patients was also explored. During this period there were 4,682 firearm-related deaths classified as accidents, homicides, suicides and fatal shooting.

Firearm-fatalities in Jamaica was the sixth leading cause of death in 1984, accounting for 5% of all deaths, and eighth in 1993 accounting for 3.71% of all deaths. An overall average of 92% of fatalities were males and 8% females. For every female there were 11 males killed, the majority between the ages of 20-39 years. Fatal shooting by the police accounted for 48% of the total fatalities over the period, with a notable increase over the last 5 years.

The incidence of firearm-related injuries requiring hospitalization, like that of firearm-related fatalities is greatest among adolescents and young adults.

Geographic location, sex and age-group are the major risks factors for firearm-related fatalities and injuries.

Available national public health data sources and standard epidemiological techniques, should be employed to identify the geo-demographics of at-risk populations and stimulate further research toward improving our understanding of the factors involved, and developing interventions and strategies.

Public health agencies; central, regional, and local, can play a much-needed role in documenting the presence of firearm violence, as a community health problem and in coordinating efforts to develop preventive solutions.