

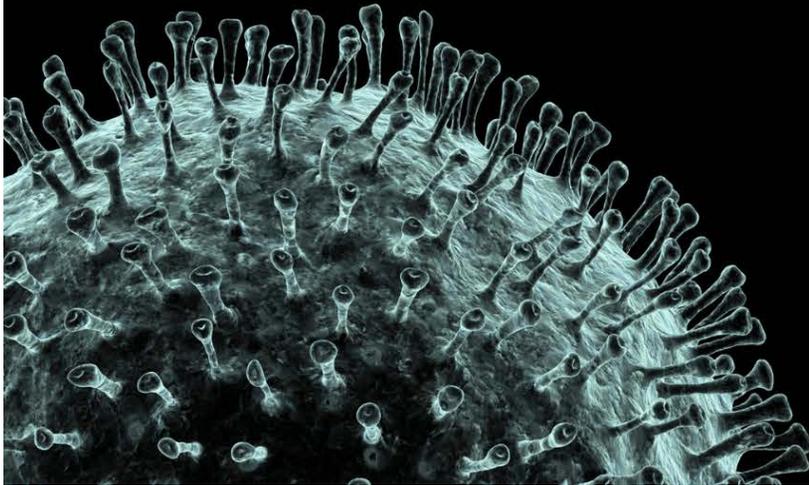
# COVID-19 Conversations



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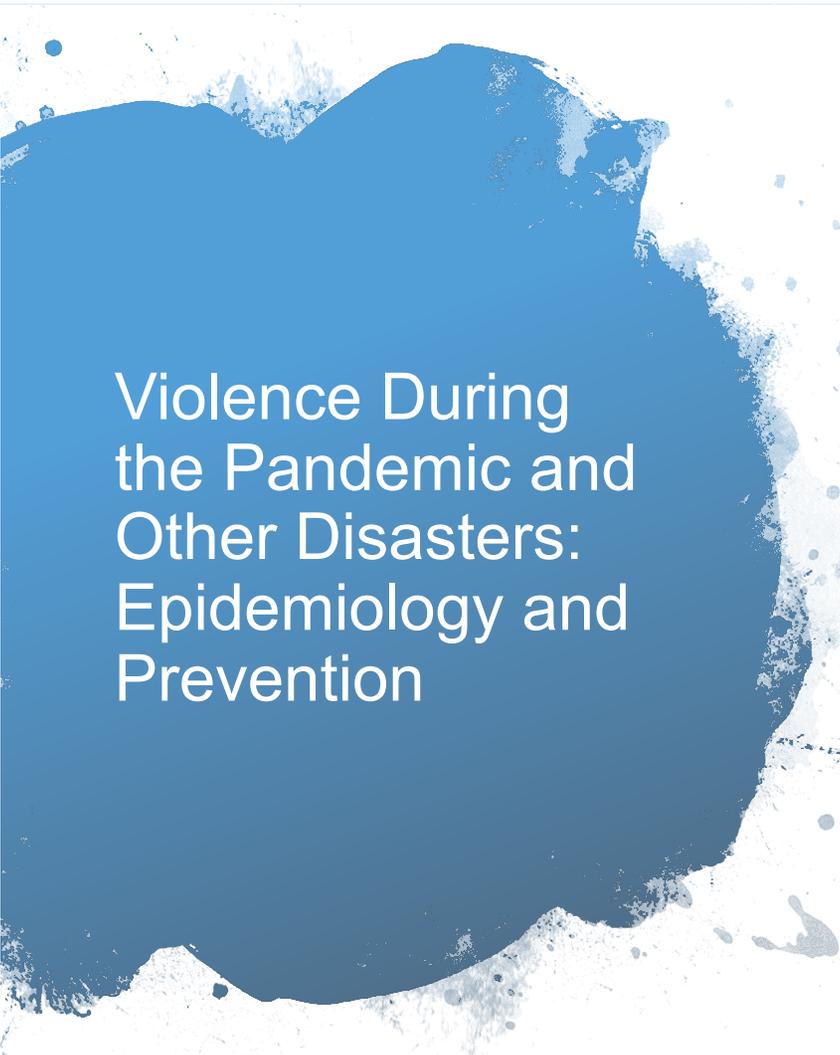
[COVID19Conversations.org](https://COVID19Conversations.org)

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# Violence During the Pandemic and Other Disasters: Epidemiology and Prevention

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# Violence defined

*“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”* (World Health Organization)

## 3 types of violence

- Self-directed – suicide, self-harm
- Interpersonal – intimate partner violence, assaults, homicide, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse and neglect
- Collective – wars, terrorism

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# Violence and Natural Disasters

Evidence suggests that persons exposed to natural disasters may develop mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, suicide risk

Contributing factors affecting mental health and violence risk –

- Personal threats to life
- Loss of loved ones
- Property loss
- Breakdown of social support systems
- Social isolation
- Scarcity of basic provisions
- Failure of law enforcement
- Powerlessness
- Economic stress

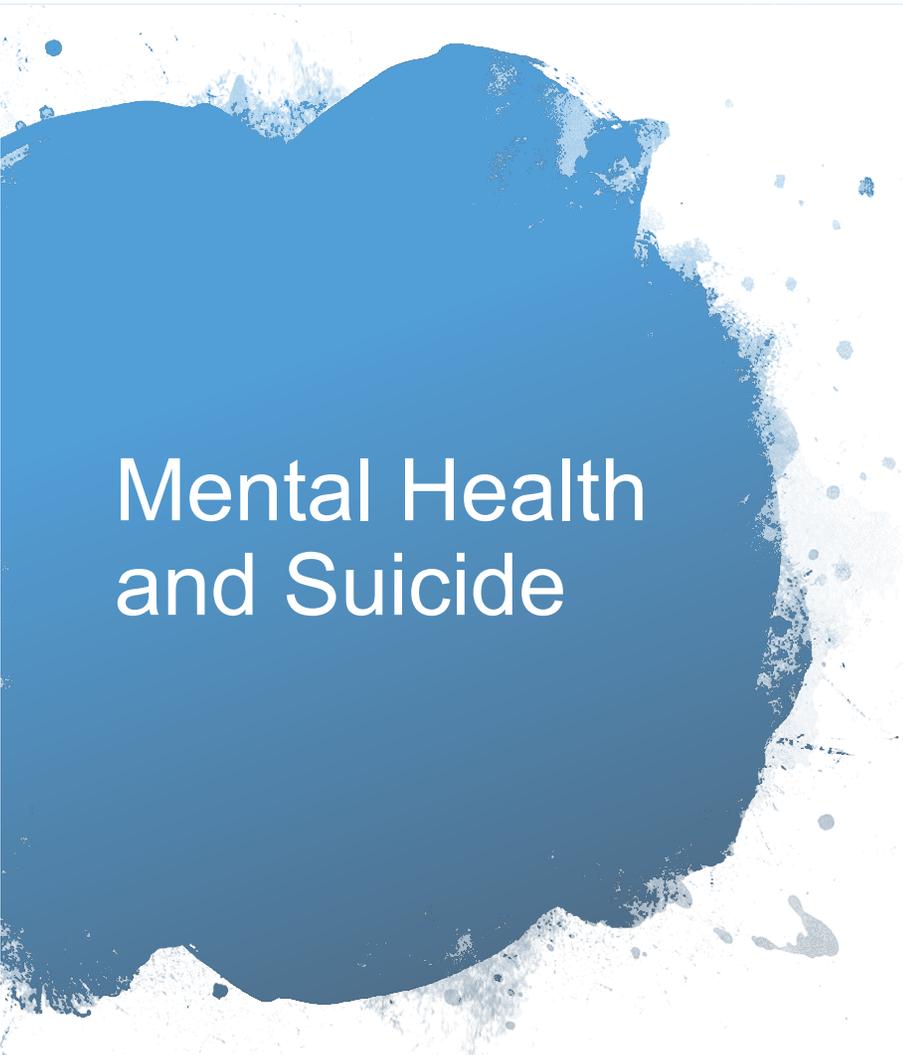
# Domestic Violence and the Pandemic

- At least 142 American cities and counties in 48 states saw significant spikes in calls to domestic violence hot lines, with the highest increase being 274% for the month of April in Alabama
- Stay at home orders and lockdowns
  - May force someone to shelter in place with the perpetrator of violence
  - Make it difficult for someone to leave an abusive relationship
- Shelters are challenged to provide protection from violence as well as protection from spread of the coronavirus



# Assaults

- Assaults on workers who are trying to maintain protections at a place of business
- Fights/disagreements in public places
- Some emergency departments are reporting an increase in the number of visits due to assaults



# Mental Health and Suicide

Specific risk factors for mental health issues:

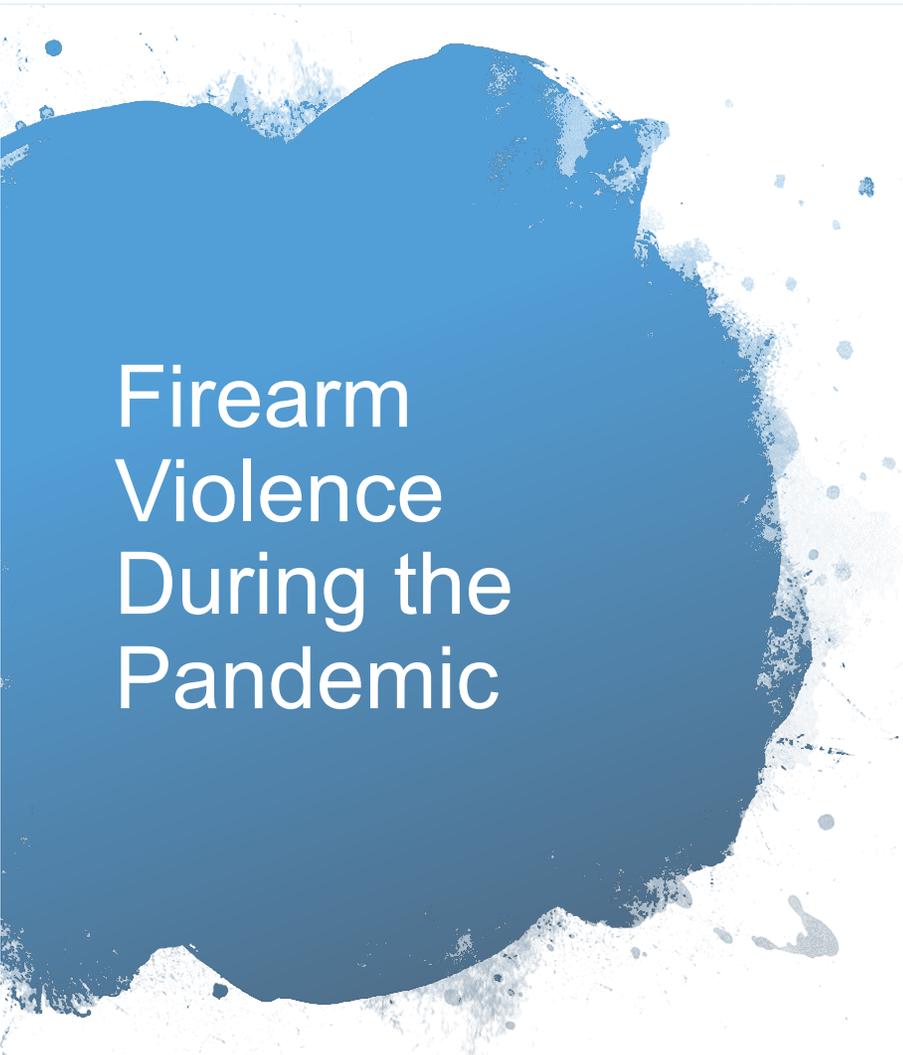
- Social isolation
- Fear
- Stress
- Economic loss

Suicide risk:

- Calls to a suicide hotline in LA increased from 20 to 1800
- Depression
- Health care workers exposure to stresses in taking care of patients with COVID-19

# Firearms and suicide

- Firearm sales in March 2020 represent an 85% increase compared with March 2019 - the highest firearm sales ever recorded in the United States.
- Persons who purchase handguns have a 22-fold higher rate of firearm-related suicide within the first year than those who did not purchase a handgun
- Among men, for every 10% increase in household firearm ownership rates at the state level, there is an increase in firearm suicides of 3.1 per 100 000 persons
- The presence of a firearm in a home is associated with a 2- to 10-times greater risk for suicide than in a home without a firearm.



# Firearm Violence During the Pandemic

- Mass shootings have decreased
- Chicago's deadliest Memorial Day weekend since 2015: 10 shot dead, 39 wounded
- Fatalities from gun violence increased 14 percent in the second week of April this year compared to the same period last year.
- Philadelphia is similarly experiencing a 17% increase in shootings compared to this time last year
- In Baltimore, gun incidents increased so dramatically toward the end of March and Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young begged residents to "put down the guns."
- Many city leaders fear that shootings may increase further once lockdowns are lifted and the weather improves.

# Alcohol and Other Drug Use

1 in 12 US adults has a substance use disorder

Only 7% of physicians can effectively treat opioid addiction

Individuals who smoke, vape, use opiates, or use methamphetamines are more vulnerable to some of the worst outcomes associated with the virus

- Loss of access to usual support systems
- Stress, economic pressures
- Self-medication
- Risk factors for relapse

#### Alcohol

- Alcohol beverage sales increased by 55% in late March
- Alcohol option for takeout food orders
- Online happy hours and meetings
- Difficulty in connecting with support groups/support systems for those in recovery

#### Other drugs

- Social distancing may increase risk of overdose deaths
- Physical effects of drug use can increase risk of complications from COVID-19

***We are dealing  
with the multiple  
public health  
crises during the  
pandemic -  
violence, mental  
health risks, &  
alcohol and other  
drug use***

Planning and prevention are needed to include consideration of the risks for

- interpersonal and self-directed violence
- mental health issues
- increases in alcohol and other drug use