

# Predicting and Preventing Gun Violence: Experimental Evidence from READI Chicago

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## Abstract :

Gun violence is the most pressing public safety problem in American cities. We report results from a randomized controlled trial (N=2,456) of a community-researcher partnership—the Rapid Employment and Development Initiative (READI Chicago)—which provided 18 months of a supported job alongside cognitive behavioral therapy and other social supports. Three different referral methods identified men with strikingly high scope for gun violence reduction: for every 100 people in the control group, there were over 11 shooting and homicide victimizations during the 20-month outcome period. Take-up and retention rates were comparable to programs for people facing far lower mortality risk. There is no statistically significant change in an index combining three measures of serious violence, the study's primary outcome. But one index component, shooting and homicide arrests, shows a large, suggestive decline ( $p=0.11$ ). Enormous declines in both arrests and victimizations for shootings and homicides occur within one referral pathway (a pre-specified subgroup) and remain statistically significant even after multiple testing adjustments. Because shootings are so costly, even imprecise overall declines imply a benefit-cost ratio that is conservatively 3.4:1. Given the dearth of causal evidence on how to reduce shootings without more policing, these results are promising enough to merit continued study of how similar approaches might be targeted and refined to help save lives.