RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE
NONFATAL FIREARM INJURY DATA

The federal government should provide easily accessible and reliable estimates of nonfatal firearm injuries to the public. The government can do this by allocating dedicated resources to federal agencies to improve nonfatal firearm injury surveillance and reporting systems. A number of leading firearm violence prevention researchers have outlined potential ways to make more reliable data available, including the three recommendations listed below.

Expand the number of hospitals in the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) database the CDC currently uses:

The NEISS database includes data on consumer product-related injuries in select hospitals and is used to produce nationwide estimates of injuries. There are currently 100 hospitals within the NEISS database,[1] yet in 2017 only 60 were used to calculate the CDC's nonfatal firearm injury estimate. In a May 3, 2019 letter addressed to Congress, the Director of the CDC stated that the agency is investigating the feasibility of reporting nonfatal firearm injury from all of the NEISS hospitals. This letter also outlined the possibility of expanding the roster of NEISS hospitals.[2]

Incorporate the Nationwide Emergency Department Sample (NEDS) data into CDC's WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) database to adjust the current online estimate:

NEDS yields national estimates of hospital-owned emergency department visits, including for nonfatal firearm injuries. Dr. Guohua Li, the editor-in-chief of *Injury Epidemiology* and Director of Columbia University's Center for Injury Epidemiology and Prevention, suggested incorporating NEDS data into CDC's WISQARS database and told *The Trace* that he thinks that this approach is feasible and could resolve the issue of the CDC's unreliable estimates "within a few months."[3] Dr. Li also suggested expanding the CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) to include nonfatal firearm injuries, stating most of the infrastructure is already in place.[4] NVDRS is state-based reporting system that includes data on all types of violent deaths in a user-friendly database.

Create a nonfatal shooting category in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program:

The Director of the Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Daniel Webster, outlined an approach to creating reliable estimates of nonfatal firearm injuries through the FBI's UCR program. The UCR is a crime reporting program used by the vast majority of law enforcement agencies across the country. The UCR program already collects data on violent crimes and lists the type of weapon used in the crime. However, in cases where firearms are used, the UCR program does not distinguish whether the victim was shot at but not hit or whether they suffered a nonfatal firearm injury. The UCR could collect reliable nonfatal firearm injury data by adding nonfatal shootings to the UCR as a subcategory of aggravated assaults and robberies.[5]

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[1] National Electronic Injury Surveillance System. Healthy People, ODPHP.
[2] Letter from Director of the CDC Robert Redfield to members of Congress. May 3, 2019.
[3] The CDC's explanation of inaccurate gun injury data 'falls short,' senators say. *The Trace.*
[4] Campell S & Nass D (2018). The CDC is publishing unreliable data on gun injuries. People are using it anyway. *FiveThirtyEight.*
[5] Webster D. A critical gap in gun violence data. *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg American Health Initiative.*