

PA Act 79 of 2018

Qualitative Research Initiative

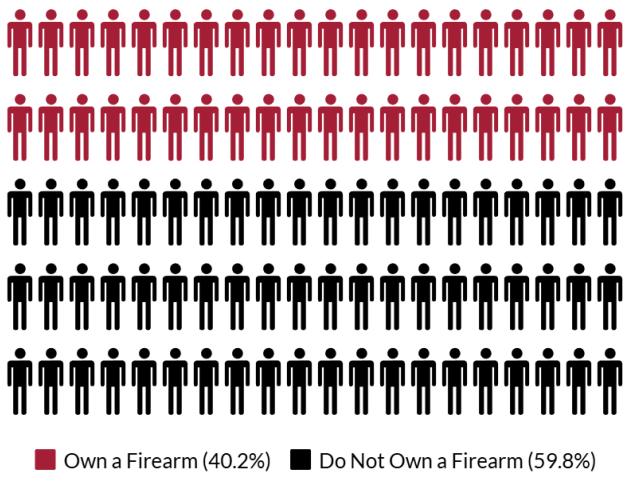
Background

In 2024, gun violence was declared a public health crisis by the U.S. Surgeon General

48,830

people across the U.S. died from firearm-related injuries in 2021

Pennsylvanians Owning a Firearm



Governor Tom Wolf of PA signed Act 79 into law in 2018

Judges are required to order the relinquishment of firearms, other weapons, and ammunition after a final protection from abuse order is entered by a court or when a person is convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence¹

Relinquishment must be made to a sheriff or other law enforcement agency, licensed firearms dealer, third party that is a commercial armory, or an attorney within 24 hours

From 2024-2026, researchers at Temple University College of Public Health will attempt to figure out why there are significant differences among Pennsylvania counties regarding prevalence of protection from abuse cases, percentage of cases that end with a final PFA order, percentage of cases with relinquishment requests, percentage of final orders/consent agreements that include a weapons relinquishment order, and weapon retrieval rates.

85%

Median PA county retrieval rate

11 counties have retrieval rates that are less than 60%

Sheriffs' Offices conduct over 65% of weapon and ammunition retrievals in PA

Our Study

From 2024-2026, researchers at Temple University Barnett College of Public Health will attempt to figure out why there is such a difference in retrieval rates by:



Analyzing Procedural Documents



Conducting Court Observations



Interviewing Judges, Sheriffs, Victim Advocacy Groups, and Survivors

in 10 counties.

The 8 selected counties vary with respect to urbanicity and rurality, political leanings, population size, and Act 79 implementation.

Findings will be shared in 2026 through a dedicated website, publications, webinars, conferences, and other channels.

1. Relinquishment can be ordered under a temporary protection from abuse order or as part of a consent agreement but it is not mandatory. Magisterial district judges and other members of the minor judiciary do not have the authority to order relinquishment during an emergency hearing.

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