



Gun Control and Violence

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## **Introduction**

With each and every gunshot fired, there are ripples of pain and pleas for justice, mandating that we address the nation's perspective on weapons and security. The dispute surrounding firearm ownership is deeply rooted in the assumption that possessing a handgun enhances personal safety, providing individuals and families with a means of defense in a frightening, dangerous situation. However, as gun ownership rises, so do cases of gun-related violence and accidents, raising concerns about whether more firearms truly create a safer environment. Households with firearms are more likely to have accidental discharges, domestic violence, and even suicide than those without firearms. Rather than minimizing violence, gun ownership increases the chance of victimization since situations that can normally get de-escalated can turn deadly with a gun. While people argue that owning a gun enhances personal safety, it has been found that increased gun ownership has increased dangers and risks for people and families.

## **Historical Context - Gun Control Over The Years**

Gun control has an extended history, as both governments and society has had difficulty achieving a balance between safety and personal freedom. The Second Amendment was signed into law on December 15, 1791. This amendment reads as follows: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." In the late 18th century, this right was created in order to allow people to guard themselves and the communities they live in. This historical setting set the stage for the current argument over whether weapons provide personal safety or increase the likelihood of violence (Gray, 2018).

As the world evolved, so did the tension about gun-related crimes in the early twentieth century. The National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934, the first federal gun control law, was passed in response to "gangland crimes" such as the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The National Firearms Act established strict regulations, including a hefty taxation on certain kinds of arsenals. This legislation constituted an unprecedented change in federal engagement in gun

control, suggesting that the government recognized some level of restriction as important for public safety (Gray, 2018).

Following the death of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the year 1968, widespread support for more powerful gun controls caused the enactment of the Gun Control Act (GCA). This law reinforced prohibitions by prohibiting the entry of firearms with "no sporting purpose" and forbidding certain groups, such as convicts and the mentally ill, from acquiring firearms. It also mandated that all weapons be serialized so they can be traced and located. The GCA symbolized an increasing recognition that, while the right to carry weapons is important, it must be controlled with measures that ensure that guns do not end up in the hands of people who may endanger public safety (Gray, 2018).

With that said, in 2010, President Obama agreed upon a law allowing licensed gun owners to carry firearms in national parks. However, by 2013, the The Undetectable Firearms Act was renewed to ensure guns remain detectable by security machines, addressing issues related to growing numbers of plastic firearms (Longley 2023). During the 2016 Orlando and 2017 Las Vegas shootings, which made use of assault firearms, Congress started looking into it. Senator Dianne Feinstein urged criminalizing bump stocks to prevent semi-automatic firearms from shooting as quickly as fully automatic ones. While this bill did not pass, the Trump administration later prohibited bump stocks following the 2018 Parkland shooting, triggering new discourse regarding military-style guns (Longley 2023). Congress introduced the Bipartisan Background Checks Act in 2019, which widened background investigations to cover private purchases. However, it endured opposition in the Senate, illustrating the difficulty of implementing comprehensive federal gun legislation. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, signed into law in 2022, is the most substantial federal gun legislation in decades. The bill enhanced background checks for young consumers and backed "red flag" legislation that temporarily removes firearms from violent individuals in question (Longley 2023).

## **Method**

To collect sufficient evidence for my research paper, I applied a variety of ways of verifying that the data was complete, correct, and credible. My goal was to determine whether owning a gun makes people safer from violence or puts them at greater risk. To accomplish this, I undertook significant research using a number of resources and techniques.

First, I consulted with professors from John Jay College of Criminal Justice who specialize in forms of criminology, law, and sociology. These conversations gave me invaluable creative insights into gun violence and safety. They also directed me to trustworthy sources and papers that I could use in my research.

Second, I visited the library on my campus numerous times to read books, peer-reviewed papers, and public publications about gun ownership and its impact on safety. The library's databases proved very valuable for discovering detailed statistics and case studies. This helped me comprehend the overall patterns and trends in gun-related incidents. I did this to get an understanding of my topic and research.

In addition, I reviewed numerous internet articles and websites from credible sources, such as news outlets like CNN AND ABC NEWS, research organizations, and non-profit groups dedicated to public safety and the control of guns. I compared my findings with a variety of different sources to guarantee their accuracy and avoid depending on biased or outdated information.

To gain a clearer and more visual understanding, I watched experts deliver presentations, speeches, debates, and personal stories from individuals affected by gun violence or gun ownership. These firsthand accounts added a powerful human element to my research, helping me connect with the real-world impact and experiences behind the issue.

Finally, I methodically checked the reliability of the facts and data utilized in my paper. To ensure my arguments were well-supported and credible, I triple-checked every figure, statement, and claim. This approach increased my confidence in presenting my results and conclusions. By combining these

methodologies, I was able to gain a comprehensive grasp of the subject and answer the question of whether possessing a gun improves safety or increases risk.

## **Findings**

The belief that firearms provide security is well embedded in American culture, with many people perceiving firearms as an effective tool to defend themselves and their family. However, studies and current data reveal an alarming picture. Gun possession, rather than enhancing safety, has been shown in research to raise the risk of injury, increasing the likelihood of unintentional injuries, domestic violence occurrences, and suicide. Contrary to the general impression concerning firearms as dependable tools for private safety, they frequently turn into causes of danger, not only for the gun owners but for everyone in the household as well. By cultivating a culture of gun ownership, we may unconsciously expose ourselves to more danger, creating a vicious cycle where the very weapon intended for our safety has the opposite effect.

According to research, carrying a gun at home drastically increases danger. People who live in households with handguns are "twice as likely to die by homicide and three times more likely to die by suicide" than those who live in gun-free homes (Jordan 2024). By placing a weapon at home, it can increase the likelihood of injury and death taking place. Imagine a household facing domestic dispute, and in an argument where words or even physical altercations could have been the worst result, the presence of a gun rapidly turned an argument into a deadly confrontation. The gun raises the level of danger, making it much easier for anger or fear to escalate into catastrophic results. Similarly, for someone suffering from mental illness, particularly depression, having a firearm at arm's reach can turn an instant of pain into a tragedy that leaves loved ones devastated. Guns in the home, particularly ones that are left unsecured or loaded, pose an imminent danger to kids and adolescents. The numbers are alarming: "74% of firearms used in school shootings were obtained from the shooter's or a relative's home" (Jordan 2024). This implies that guns, which are intended to provide security, are frequently the very tools that end up resulting in unfathomable despair. When firearms are easy to acquire, they can easily fall into the wrong hands, whether it's a curious toddler, a distraught teen, or even someone with malicious intent.

Accidental shootings are an additional unfortunate reality. Children are inherently curious, and when they come across a gun, they typically have no idea the risks associated with it. What may begin as harmless exploration—finding a pistol in a drawer, on a shelf, or even underneath a bed—can promptly become lethal. A child could mistake a gun for a toy or underestimate that it is loaded. According to research, children who reside in homes with guns are at a much increased risk of unintentional shootings, with the results leading families to be irrevocably heartbroken (Hopkins 2023). Even if no incidents occur, simply keeping a gun in the house can create an unpleasant and highly dangerous issue. With that said, an unattended loaded gun could result in a moment of rage, fear, or despair into an irreversible accident.

It came to light that owning a firearm contributes to the chance of violence rather than reducing it. Contrary to common belief, having a gun increases the risk of homicide, suicide, and accidental death. This is concerning because most gun owners fail to safeguard their firearms correctly. An estimated 4.6 million children live in households with loaded and unsecured firearms, raising the possibility of unintentional shootings or access by people in distress (Hopkins 2023). 4.6 million children is a significant amount of children present in homes with unsecured guns. Not only is this not safe but extremely reckless as this puts children at a consistent and daily risk.

Out of the millions of accidents to choose from, one of the most staggering was the school shooting of Sandy Hook. On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, a 20-year-old male, executed one of the bloodiest school shootings in the history of the US at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Before leaving the house, Adam shot and killed his mother, Nancy Lanza, using one of her own firearms (Ray 2021). Not only did he murder his mother in cold blood, he used her gun to do it. Nancy had lawfully acquired many firearms, including an AR-15-style rifle that Adam used in the attack (Ray 2021). As if this was not chilling enough, after murdering his mother, he drove to Sandy Hook Elementary, forced his way inside, and opened fire. Within minutes, Adam tragically killed 26 individuals, including 20 first-grade students aged 6 and 7, as well as 6 adult staff members who attempted to protect them (CNN 2013). Many children and staff were shot and killed in cold blood. After shooting the innocent children and adults, the gunman then turned the handgun on himself, taking his own life.

The attack rattled the nation and destroyed families and communities. It also raised serious concerns about how someone with acknowledged mental health issues could have access to such deadly guns. After events like this, schools started focusing more on safety drills and security measures, hoping to better protect students from future threats. At the same time, it highlighted an additional problem: mental health care. While guns are easily accessible, mental health care can be more difficult to access. This brings up a crucial question: Why is it simpler to purchase a gun than it is to get mental health treatment? Gun availability and mental health care both contribute to violence prevention, but one is significantly more accessible than the other. Thus, to improve mental health care may be as vital as adopting stricter gun regulations in preventing future tragedies. With that said, the Sandy Hook tragedy became a symbol of the necessity for stricter gun regulations and attempts to avoid future mass shootings.

## **Discussion**

Upon analyzing all of the facts and data, it's apparent to me that guns are harmful, and having them often makes matters worse. A lot of people feel that owning a gun will protect them, but the truth is far more difficult. The research demonstrates that having a gun around raises the likelihood of something awful happening—whether it's an accident, a heated debate that turns life-threatening, or someone causing harm to themselves.

One of the most concerning things I discovered was how frequently weapons in the home have been used in accidental shootings. Families believe they are protecting themselves, but too often, guns are misfired or end up in the wrong hands. When emotions run high, such as during an argument, having a weapon nearby can transform an undesirable situation into a fight for life and death. Take a look at the Sandy Hook shooting as it was completely unnecessary and avoidable. People and children died that day but in a way, so did their siblings, parents and friends. Hundreds if not thousands left scarred and left with memories of their loved ones. You would think that this would be the start of reform but it was not. Since then there have been countless school shootings and regular shootings.

Additionally, I learnt about the relationship between guns and suicides. Guns are so deadly that when they are used in a time of despair, there is almost no room for second thoughts or intervention. Having a gun close by makes it extremely easy for someone in a crisis to make a final decision in the heat of the moment.

The belief that firearms protect victims of crime is not as strong as many people believe. Yes, some people have used guns to defend themselves, but this is unusual given how frequently guns are misused or stolen. The truth is that guns in the home are more likely to be dangerous to the people who live there than to put off an invader.

On a wider spectrum, I observed that regions with more guns experience more gun violence. It was found that "higher rates of firearm-related deaths among youth in high-poverty counties indicate that increased exposure to guns does not enhance safety but rather contributes to heightened violence, including homicides and accidental deaths (Johnson 2021)." The data presented here shows the correlation between poverty, gun prevalence, and higher firearm-related death among children. The fact that a small fraction of young people from high-poverty regions are responsible for an overabundance of gun-related deaths suggests that more weapons in vulnerable groups intensify rather than prevent violence. This demonstrates that having more weapons in a community does not make it safer—it makes it increasingly dangerous. Guns intensify tensions and create a never-ending cycle of violence.

Many gun owners claim that owning a gun makes them feel safer, however the research does not support this. The risks of owning a gun, such as accidents, theft, or emotional decisions, outweigh the likelihood of needing to use it for self-defense. Safer alternative options, such as improved home security or non-lethal instruments, make sense in far more ways.

Finally, based on all of the facts, I believe that weapons cause more issues than they solve. They make everyday circumstances more dangerous, cause avoidable deaths, and fail to provide the safety that people expect. I believe that decreasing gun ownership and developing wiser ways to stay safe is the best way ahead for families and communities.



## Conclusion

The current state of gun control and its impact on safety are extremely important given that it directly affects the lives and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. At its foundation, this study investigated whether owning a gun makes people safer or increases their risk of harm. This is an important topic since gun violence, unintentional shootings, and suicides are recurrent and severe issues that have long-term consequences for society. Understanding the role of gun ownership in these tragedies is imperative for developing solutions that save lives and make communities safer for every person.

The assumption that possessing a gun ensures personal safety is universal, but data suggests the opposite and disturbing reality. Guns pose considerable risks, including as unintentional discharge, abuse during times of conflict, and access by children or individuals facing mental health crises. These risks outweigh the apparent benefits of owning a handgun for defense. Instead of promoting safety, weapons regularly intensify situations, making debates deadly and converting moments of despair into irreparable tragedies.

The biggest takeaway from this investigation is clear: while weapons can provide a sense of assurance, they do more harm than good. Key themes such as the association between gun ownership and an increased risk of homicide, suicide, and accidental death illustrate the dangers of relying on firearms for protection. Non-lethal weapons and enhanced safety precautions offer more secure ways to protect oneself and loved ones.

In conclusion, this investigation demonstrates that Minimizing gun ownership while implementing stricter safety measures are both essential steps toward creating safer homes and communities. This topic concerns everyone since the existence of guns in our society has a direct effect on our daily lives. Understanding the true risks of gun ownership and encouraging safer alternatives can help us strive toward a future in which fewer lives are lost and more families are protected.

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