

# Gun Control Policies: Overview, Debate, and Challenges

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# What is Gun Control?

Definition: refers to domestic and international attempts to regulate, and harmonize the regulation of, the private and industrial manufacture, trade, possession, use, and transport of a class of weapons typically identified as small arms.



# Current Gun Control Policies

National Firearms Act (1934): Regulated certain firearms like machine guns and silencers and also imposed a tax and required registration.

Gun Control Act (1968): Expanded federal regulations on firearms in response to high-profile assassinations and growing concerns about gun violence.

Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (1993): Introduced mandatory background checks for firearm buyers.

Assault Weapons Ban (1994-2004): Reduced mass shootings and banned specific semiautomatic weapons and high-capacity magazines.

# Gun Control Debates

## Arguments For Gun Control:

**Reducing Gun Violence and Mass Shootings:** Advocates argue that stricter gun laws, such as universal background checks and assault weapon bans, can help decrease gun-related deaths.

**Preventing Firearms from Reaching Criminals:** Background checks aim to stop guns from falling into the hands of individuals with criminal records or severe mental illness.

**Public Health Benefits:** Supporters view gun violence as a public health issue, pointing to research linking stricter gun control to lower homicide rates.

## Arguments Against Gun Control:

**Second Amendment Rights:** People may think the Second Amendment guarantees an individual's right to bear arms, which should not be infringed.

**Self-Defense and Personal Security:** They emphasize the importance of firearms for self-defense and argue that gun-free zones can make people more vulnerable to attacks.

**Ineffectiveness of Stricter Laws:** Critics often claim that criminals will find ways to obtain guns regardless of legislation and that gun control laws only disarm law-abiding citizens.

# Mass Shootings

## Statistics and Case Studies:

Frequency of Mass Shootings: According to the Gun Violence Archive, there were over 600 mass shootings in the U.S. in 2023 alone.

## High-Profile Incidents:

Sandy Hook (2012): Resulted in the deaths of 20 children and 6 adults.

Las Vegas (2017): Deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history with 58 people killed.

Parkland (2018): Led to the deaths of 17 students and staff members.

# Effectiveness of Gun Control Policies

## International Comparisons:

Australia: Following the Port Arthur massacre (1996), strict gun laws, including a gun buyback program, led to a significant reduction in gun-related deaths.

United Kingdom: Firearm ownership is heavily restricted, resulting in lower rates of gun homicides compared to the U.S.



## Studies on Background Checks and Assault Weapon Bans:

Background Checks: States with universal background checks often have lower gun violence rates.

Assault Weapon Bans: Evidence suggests mixed results, with some studies indicating a modest reduction in mass shooting deaths.

Role of Gun Ownership Rates: Higher rates of gun ownership correlate with higher rates of gun-related homicides and suicides, according to studies by the RAND Corporation and others.



# Recent Legislative Efforts

**Enhanced Background Checks:** Buyers under 21 now undergo more rigorous scrutiny, including juvenile records.

**Funding for Mental Health and School Security:** Increased resources for mental health services and improved security in schools.

**State-Level Initiatives:**

**Extreme Risk Protection Orders ("Red Flag" Laws):** Allow authorities to temporarily remove firearms from individuals deemed a risk to themselves or others.

**Bans on "Ghost Guns":** Crackdowns on untraceable firearms assembled from kits without serial numbers.



# Challenges and the Future of Gun Control

## Challenges:

**Political Polarization:** Deep political divides prevent the passage of comprehensive gun control laws. The NRA and other gun rights groups exert significant influence.

**Enforcement of Existing Laws:** Patchwork enforcement and lack of resources often undermine the effectiveness of existing laws.



## Future:

**Expansion of Federal Background Checks:** Calls for universal background checks are growing.

**National Consensus on "Red Flag" Laws:** Support for such laws has bipartisan backing but faces resistance over due process concerns.

**Technological Advancements (Smart Guns):** Smart gun technology could improve safety, but uptake remains limited.



# References

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