

Fact Sheet: Gun Violence in America

PROBLEM: There are too many victims of gun violence because we make it too easy for dangerous people to get dangerous weapons in America.

DID YOU KNOW? In one year on average, [more than 100,000 people in America are shot or killed with a gun](#).

- Over a million people have been killed with [guns in the United States](#) since 1968, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated ([Childrens' Defense Fund](#), p. 20).
- U.S. homicide rates are 6.9 times higher than rates in 22 other populous high-income countries combined, despite similar non-lethal crime and violence rates. The firearm homicide rate in the U.S. is 19.5 times higher ([Richardson](#), p.1).
- Among 23 populous, high-income countries, 80% of all firearm deaths occurred in the United States ([Richardson](#), p. 1).
- Gun violence impacts society in countless ways: medical [costs](#), costs of the criminal justice system, security precautions such as metal detectors, and reductions in quality of life because of fear of gun violence. These impacts are estimated to cost U.S. citizens \$100 billion annually ([Cook](#), 2000).

DID YOU KNOW? Where there are more guns, there are more gun deaths.

- An estimated 41% of gun-related [homicides](#) and 94% of gun-related [suicides](#) would not occur under the same circumstances had no guns been present ([Wiebe](#), p. 780).
- Higher [household gun ownership](#) correlates with higher rates of homicides, suicides, and [unintentional](#) shootings ([Harvard Injury Control Center](#)).
- Keeping a [firearm in the home](#) increases the risk of suicide by a factor of 3 to 5 and increases the risk of suicide with a firearm by a factor of 17 ([Kellermann](#), 1992, p. 467; [Wiebe](#), p. 771).
- Keeping a firearm in the home increases the risk of homicide by a factor of 3 ([Kellermann](#), 1993, p. 1084).

DID YOU KNOW? On the whole, [guns](#) are more likely to raise the risk of injury than to confer protection.

- A gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used in a [completed or attempted suicide](#) (11x), [criminal assault or homicide](#) (7x), or [unintentional shooting death or injury](#) (4x) than to be used in a self-defense shooting. ([Kellermann](#), 1998, p. 263).
- Guns are used to intimidate and threaten 4 to 6 times more often than they are used to thwart crime ([Hemenway](#), p. 269).
- Every year there are only about 200 legally justified self-defense homicides by private citizens ([FBI](#), Expanded Homicide Data, Table 15) compared with over 30,000 gun deaths ([NCIPC](#)).
- A 2009 study found that people in possession of a gun are 4.5 times more likely to be shot in an assault ([Branas](#)).

DID YOU KNOW? Assaults and suicide attempts with firearms are much more likely to be fatal than those perpetrated with less lethal weapons or means. Removing guns saves lives.

- There are five times as many [deaths from gun assaults](#) as from knife assaults, where the rates of assault with knives and with guns are similar ([Zimring](#), p. 199).

- More than 90 percent of [suicide attempts with a gun](#) are fatal ([Miller](#), 2004, p. 626). In comparison, only 3 percent of attempts with drugs or cutting are fatal ([Miller](#), 2004, p. 626).

DID YOU KNOW? [Guns can be sold in the United States without a background check](#) to screen out criminals or the mentally ill.

- It is estimated that forty percent of gun acquisitions occur in the secondary market. That means that they happen without a Brady background check at a federally licensed dealer ([Cook](#), p. 26).
- Sales from federal firearm licensees (FFLs) require a background check. Sales between individuals, under federal law, do not require a background check. This means that felons can “lie and buy” at [gun shows](#) and other places where guns are readily available.

SOLUTION: We need to make it harder for convicted felons, the dangerously mentally ill, and other prohibited persons to obtain guns by implementing [strong gun laws and policies](#) that will protect our families and communities from gun violence.

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