

POLICY FOCUS

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Gun Control Doesn't Keep Us Safer

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HIGHLIGHT

Crime is on the rise and people are looking at how to reverse the trend. Some lawmakers look to restrict gun rights as a prospective solution, but are guns the problem? Public servants should look at the actual causes of the crime increase, and what solutions have been documented to make things better. Public safety should be the first responsibility of elected officials.

INTRODUCTION

We can all agree that we want to see fewer mass killings and less gun violence. The question is whether stricter gun-control laws will improve the situation, or make it worse. Because of the politicized nature of gun policy, it's important to get past the rhetoric and sift through the facts to answer that question.

Here are some of the questions that deserve further scrutiny:

- **Most criminals** don't get their guns from gun stores, so why are so many

regulations targeting the transactions that happen there?

- The 1990s-era so-called “assault-weapon ban” **didn’t reduce crime**, so why do lawmakers continually talk about reinstating it?
- Concealed carriers are the **most law-abiding segment of the community**, responsible for deterring hundreds of thousands of crimes every year, so why are they the target of so much legislation that restricts their rights to carry?

Politics certainly plays a part, as political factions push forward their policy agendas. But the first obligation of any public servant is the safety of the people they serve. If their policies only sound good on paper, or make people *feel* safer even if they don’t actually *make* them safer, then those policies should be discarded. Although it’s difficult to look at horrible crimes and try to distill the facts, it is only by looking at the facts that people can make informed decisions.

GUNS AND CRIME

Crime is up nationwide. It’s easy to ask whether those crimes were committed largely with firearms and come to the conclusion that access to firearms is a problem that needs to be solved. But the problem isn’t that simple.

Since the COVID lockdowns, crime has been **swiftly increasing**. There are many factors that contribute to the rise: unemployment that led to increased **isolation and loneliness**, unchecked mental illness among the youth (including school-aged children who **suffered significantly** under mandated shutdowns), an increase in **lawlessness** that had nothing to do with guns, the defund the police movement, and the **releasing** of prisoners due to COVID.

In the earliest days of the COVID lockdowns, citizens who had never thought of being gun owners before became first-time gun owners, because of the fear of harm coming to their families. These first-time gun purchasers became aware of the laws that delayed their purchase, such as background checks and waiting periods.

According to **The Truth About Guns**, in 2020, there was a 10.5 percent increase in the number of concealed carry permits issued nationwide. A full 8 percent of American adults now have a permit to carry a concealed firearm in their state. And in 2021, women made up 28.3 percent of permit holders in the 14 states that provide data by sex, an increase from 26.4 percent the previous year.

But these new gun owners aren’t the ones committing the crimes.

Everyone should have a choice of how to keep herself and loved ones safe. Some people choose to own firearms:

- Concealed carry permit holders are the **most law-abiding segment** of society.
- **500,000** people annually use firearms in defense of self or others.
- States and cities with the least restrictive laws on gun ownership are **safer** than those with the most restrictive laws.

Adding new restrictions on firearms will not change criminal behavior, but could make law-abiding people less safe:

- The law-abiding are already making good decisions about buying firearms. Keeping their choice in place keeps them as safe as they can be.
- Vulnerable people, including women in unsafe homes or neighborhoods, should

not have to beg for permission to defend themselves.

- The focus of law enforcement should be on those actually committing crimes.

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS

Congress, as well as state legislatures, would have us think that just one more gun-control law will magically reduce crime. But they have been saying that for decades, with no evidence of improvement. Then they offer the same legislation again.

Instead of reducing crime, new gun control legislation would:

- Not change criminal behavior. It only creates a false sense of security.
- Make law-abiding citizens less safe, especially victims of domestic violence.
- Turn law-abiding citizens into instant felons for ordinary, safe behavior.
- Be cost prohibitive for the poorest families to protect themselves.

Some people believe that having more guns in more public places will inevitably lead to more gun violence, but the numbers don't bear that out. A full **94 percent** of mass shootings take place in gun-free zones. Someone intent on mass murder isn't going to be deterred by a sign prohibiting guns. But he may prefer such a place, because he is less likely to face a responsibly-armed citizen.

Some people believe that ordinary citizens shouldn't have to be the ones to defend their families, that it is the job of the police. But law enforcement response times might be 2-15 minutes (in urban areas, and longer in rural areas). If an armed assailant broke in to your home with intent to rape or kill, even two minutes is too long.

Many policies, such as background checks, aim to place gun stores under more scrutiny, purportedly in order to curb crime committed with firearms. But in fact, according to a **study** published in 2019 by the Bureau of Justice Statistics about the source and use of firearms

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Instead, ordinary law-abiding gun owners always bear the burden of the proposed laws. For example: A woman who has recently left a violent relationship would be placed in a far more vulnerable position if she was unable to quickly obtain a firearm, reducing her ability to protect herself or her children.

in crimes, only 1.3 percent of criminals obtained their firearms through retail stores. So, if 98.7 percent of guns are obtained elsewhere—black market, stolen, etc.—then why are retail stores being targeted?

The 1990s era so-called “assault-weapon ban” didn't do anything to reduce crime. According to a **study** by the Department of Justice, there was no evidence that the ban had had any effect on gun violence and stated that, “should it be renewed, the ban's effects on gun violence are likely to be small at best and perhaps too small for reliable measurement.”

In addition, according to [Foundation for Economic Education](#), based on data from [Mother Jones](#):

“Mother Jones’s [database](#) of mass shootings, defined as shootings involving three or more fatalities, shows that between 2007 and 2017, there were 495 people murdered in such events. When breaking down those shootings by the weapons involved, it is revealed that around half of those victims (253) were murdered by a perpetrator with an assault weapon (AW), such as an AR-15.

Over the same timeframe, FBI annual crime reports [show](#) that there were 150,352 homicides in total, of which 103,901 involved firearms. This means that mass shootings involving AWs constitute 0.17 percent and 0.24 percent of all homicides and firearm homicides, respectively.

To further illuminate the relative infrequency of mass shootings with “assault weapons,” consider the fact that in 2017, some 1,590 people were murdered using knives or sharp instruments.”

WHAT ABOUT SELF-DEFENSE?

We don’t often see a headline about someone saving her life, or the life of her family, with a firearm, but it happens more often than we know. Murders get all the headlines, but would it surprise you to know that there are [far more defensive uses of handguns](#) than murders in a given year? And many of these defensive uses of firearms happen without a shot being fired. That should be all over the news every night.

Another surprising statistic is that concealed carriers are the [most law-abiding](#) segment of the population, even more law-abiding than law enforcement itself. If there was a spate of concealed carry holders who were committing crimes with their firearms, it’s certain those stories would make headlines.

School safety is an integral part of the self-defense (and defense of others) discussion. Millions of children go to school every week on their K-12 campus and are utterly defenseless. Schools are federal gun-free zones, but that doesn’t keep children and school personnel from being targeted and murdered there. Criminals aren’t disarmed, but school employees are. These killers who commit mass murder at our nation’s schools have well-planned-out attacks. And they are never deterred because the place they are planning their attack is a federal gun-free zone. They don’t care, they are looking to take as many innocent lives as possible before they are stopped. Armed school staff programs are in place in [34 states](#), and the trend line for shootings in armed schools is flat—at [zero](#).

Aside from saving the lives of children, should people who work in schools have the right to defend their own life from a mass school shooter? We see time and again in these massacres that school employees run toward the sound of the gunfire, and try to save the lives of the children by using their bodies as human shields. [Coach Aaron Feis](#) in Parkland, FL did just that. He is a hero. Shouldn’t he have been able to save the lives of those children, and go home to his family?

WHAT THE POLLS ARE SAYING

A January 2022 Rasmussen poll showed 49 percent of respondents said they were [opposed](#) to stricter gun control.

A June of 2022 Gallup poll, which has polling trends going back to 1990, **shows** a sharp uptick in respondents—66 percent—who want to see more strict gun control. (On May 24, 2022, 19 children and two adults were killed in the Uvalde, TX, shooting at Robb Elementary School.)

Then, an August 2022 poll from Politico **reveals** that gun policies are ranked third in a list of issues most important to voters in the upcoming midterm elections, following only inflation and the economy.

One potential explanation for the disparity is how much time and focus the congressional majority has dedicated to the subject of crime, and how much they relate it to gun control.

Despite a cascade of failures that led up to the tragedy in Uvalde, any one of which might have stopped the killer well ahead of his actual attack on the school, the White House focused only on the firearm that was used.

Get beyond the rhetoric and learn about what has been proven to keep us safer. It's not the many gun-control laws that politicians continue to advocate.

On the school safety front, 49 percent of respondents **approve** of armed school personnel. This number is up 6 points since the Uvalde massacre. But when the poll is of parents with school-aged children at home, that approval goes up to 57 percent.

And a survey of law enforcement members that was conducted after Uvalde reveals that 61 percent believe armed school employees would make schools safer.

IT'S A MATTER OF PERSONAL CHOICE

To be clear, carrying a firearm is a very serious choice, and it's a choice many people

won't make. But that's ok. Everyone's life circumstances are unique to his or her situation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for all of us.

Many women especially choose a firearm because it is "the great equalizer." Women who are victims of violence are statistically smaller in stature than their assailants. There might also be multiple assailants. In those cases, what are her chances of surviving, or avoiding rape? Many women also consider their children. How do they keep their children from being victims of violence while in their care?

The key is choice for self-defense. If a firearm is not the right choice for any individual, then that is their choice. But the government—at any level—should not determine that choice. The individual is the only one who can decide the best way to keep him or herself safe.

So many factors lead many people to choose

a firearm for home defense, and even choose to carry a concealed firearm away from home. In fact, as more people choose to carry, women are responsible for the **largest increase** in concealed carry permits.

It's so important to be active and engaged citizens in all of the areas where public policy affects our lives, and arguably the most important area is in the realm of how we keep ourselves and our families safe. Get beyond the rhetoric and learn about what has been proven to keep us safer. It's not the many gun-control laws that politicians continue to advocate.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Get Informed

Get Informed: Learn more about gun policy and safety. Visit:

- [Heritage Foundation](#)
- [Crime Prevention Research Center](#)
- [FASTER Colorado](#)

Talk to Your Friends

Help your friends and family understand these important issues. Share this information, tell them about what's going on and encourage them to join you in getting involved.

Become a Leader in the Community

Start an Independent Women's Network chapter group so you can get together with friends each month to talk about a political/policy issue (it will be fun!). Write a letter to the editor. Show up at local government meetings and make your opinions known. Go to rallies. Better yet, organize rallies! A few motivated people can change the world.

Remain Engaged Politically

Too many good citizens see election time as the only time they need to pay attention to politics. We need everyone to pay attention and hold elected officials accountable. Let your Representatives know your opinions. After all, they are supposed to work for you!

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