



Gun Violence and the Path to Reform for American Citizens:

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine state-level gun reforms, including red flag laws, universal background checks, and assault weapons bans. This will include analyzing gun laws in 12 states from 2019 to 2023. This evaluation will use a quantitative study methodology. Out of the 12 states, six have strict gun reform laws, while the other six do not. This study will assess the fatality rates in the six states with strict gun laws and the six states without strict gun laws. The states with strict gun laws include California, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Colorado, and Massachusetts. The states without strict gun law reform are Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Georgia, Idaho, and Texas. The 12 states were randomly selected, ensuring an equal number of states with and without gun control laws. This study will evaluate the impact of gun control laws on homicide, suicide, and mass shootings. Missing data and discrepancies will be identified.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Context and Relevance: Gun violence in the United States has become a serious issue that has prompted intense debates over individual rights and public safety concerns (Iwundu et al., 2022). This paper will show that, when implemented, gun control laws save lives. The first gun reform law to pass in the United States was the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934 (Cramer, 2024). This law was passed with supporters and critics debating their rights under the Second Amendment (Cramer, 2024). The continuing failure to curb gun violence in the United States accentuates a complicated societal challenge that is deeply rooted in political factors. Gun control laws are legal regulations that govern the manufacture, transfer, possession, sale, and use of firearms (McGuire, 2011). States with gun control laws show a substantial decrease in gun violence in comparison to states that have little legislative action in relation to gun reform (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025). Gun violence continues to represent one of the worst health crises within the United States. Every year in the United States, tens of thousands of citizens are killed by firearms (Kessel, 2020). Many of these deaths occur through suicide, accidental discharges, mass shootings, and homicides (Mattson et al., 2021). States such as Delaware and Connecticut have strict gun laws, and the death rates for 2023 were 124 and 225 deaths, respectively. In 2020, the death rates were higher, but due to strict gun laws, there has been a significant decrease. Many advocates have argued that the implementation of red flag laws and assault weapons bans have

decreased firearm mortality rates (Cramer, 2013). Red flag laws are designed to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others (Heflin, 2022). There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that certain types of gun laws are strongly correlated with a reduction in gun violence. Universal background checks, which require that all sales, including private sales, go through a background check, are typically associated with lower firearm homicide rates as well (Siegel, 2019).

Importance of this Project: Despite overwhelming public support for red flag laws and universal background checks, legislators have been limited by what they can legally do (Heflin, 2022). Currently, state laws on gun control vary significantly. This large division has created a fragmented reality to gun control. This sort of disparity has contributed to the various loopholes and challenges associated with gun law enforcement. States that have little to no gun control legislation have left community members vulnerable to gun violence. Implementing changes to gun laws can help prevent this problem. Having comprehensive gun reform policies that are consistent in every state can decrease deaths nationwide. Political will and public opinion have played a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of policy reform (Wright et al., 2017). Analyzing data from states on the efficacy of stricter gun laws will play a vital role. Local governments have implemented gun laws that have shown a rapid decrease in the violence associated with guns. These policies have been established not only to protect individual rights but also to promote public safety. Today, gun control remains a highly contentious topic within the United States and abroad (Hansen & Seppala, 2023). Implementing limitations that are reasonable to all gun owners can help reduce gun violence. These plans can all be

implemented by governing officials without infringing on U.S. citizens' Second Amendment rights.

Project Goal: The purpose of this paper is to address increased levels of gun violence in the United States. We must view this as a public health crisis driven by lax regulations. Additionally, we must examine cultural attitudes regarding firearms and the political polarization surrounding this issue (Kessel, 2020).

Research Question(s): What are the most efficient policies for decreasing gun violence within the United States?

Objectives: To decrease the harm of gun violence, there must be strict legislative reforms in place. Improved gun reform laws should save lives and reduce injuries associated with gun violence (Delgado, 2022). Gun violence reforms are not about taking guns from responsible gun owners. These policies are not about taking away guns used for hunting, recreation, and personal safety. These gun laws aim to create a safe and functional society in which American citizens can live safely and free from harm (Joyce, 2018).

These legislative reforms can be enforced by governing officials while respecting the freedoms protected by the United States Constitution. As Americans, we must consider the safety of all citizens. Currently, in the United States, there are no limits on the number of firearms an individual can own. There must be a balance of rights and regulations. Restrictions and bans on assault rifles need to be the same in every state. Implementing community-based programs and modifying gun laws can be effective in achieving reforms. Gun safety practices will be crucial in reducing gun violence.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Universal Background Checks

Universal background checks require all sales, as well as the transfer of a firearm, to be conducted with a background check. The word "universal" in universal background checks refers to a comprehensive collection of data from all firearm purchases, regardless of the types of transaction. The federal requirement only applies to federally licensed dealers, so this would be an extension of that policy. There have been studies that show extending universal background check laws have reduced the rates of suicides and homicides (Siegel, 2024). Another study found that permit-to-purchase laws reduce firearm homicides by 18.3% (Siegel, 2024). This law requires an individual to obtain a license from a law enforcement agency before purchasing a firearm. Background check laws have been among the most widely supported forms of gun regulation in the United States. Universal background checks decrease gun violence and put limitations on individuals who may be considered dangerous. These limitations apply to convicted felons and mentally ill individuals and keep them from purchasing firearms. Universal background checks increase public safety and restrict impulsive access to weapons (Johnson & Shakya, 2023).

Individuals are still able to access firearms through private sales without going through universal background checks. This enables criminals to bypass background

checks (Siegel, 2024). Although universal background checks have been implemented in various states, they have not been fully implemented at the federal level. The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 required gun dealers who have the proper licensing to conduct background checks on all gun purchases. When a licensed dealer sells a firearm, a background check must be conducted. The requirement for licensed gun dealers to manage background checks began on November 30, 1998. The introduction of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) made this a requirement for all sales by licensed dealers (Rhodes & Solow, 2009). NICS bans specific individuals from purchasing guns (Jacobs, 2004). Those individuals include those who have a mental illness, convicted felons, and individuals with domestic violence convictions. Evaluating the Brady Law, many gun rights advocates argue that the "universal" aspect of background checks is not so universal because the federal law fails to apply to private gun sales (Jacobs, 2004).

As of today, we use universal background checks to determine whether an individual is eligible to purchase a firearm legally (Cole, 1998). Congress passed the Brady Law in 1993, which requires background checks on gun purchases. This law addressed the purchase of firearms at retail gun shops. This law does not address the issue of sales that are made at gun shows or even internet purchases. Two decades ago, individuals with background checks were allowed to purchase firearms at gun shows, gun shops, and flea markets. As of today, there has been little to no attempt to extend this law to non-dealers. Although there is a dividing line in support of universal background checks, there are gun owners who do support background checks for all commercial transactions. The problem with not conducting background checks on all sales is that

firearms can easily end up in the wrong hands. There is no way for a non-licensed dealer to know if they are selling a firearm to a responsible individual who has undergone a background check.

Congress can address the issue of universal background checks by eliminating the word "universal." When this term is used, it tends to make gun owners uncomfortable. Advocates for gun rights often express that if they have sold or given a firearm to their family members without conducting a universal background check, reforming this law could hold them at risk of being unreliable. Gun rights advocates fear that the laws mandating background checks for all gun sales could leave them liable (Anderson, 2024).

Furthermore, the issue surrounding gun control can be addressed by extending Brady background checks to all firearm sales. This extension would encompass all sales, including commercial, internet, flea-market, and gun-show transactions. To comprehensively address all issues, an extension is needed that pertains to personal trade or sales of firearms. The extension would include family, friends, and relatives, with an exemption for the seller to be considered reliable after the transaction has been completed. If there is a transaction in which the seller has doubts, the seller can be given the exact liability protection that gun retailers currently have.

This cross-section shows rates across 48 different states over the past 47 years, from 1976 to 2022 (Siegel, 2024). States that require a universal background check displayed an average gun homicide rate of 4.3 per 100,000; meanwhile, states that did not require a universal background check displayed an average rate of 7.3 per 100,000 (Siegel, 2024). New Hampshire and Vermont were analyzed in January 2024 (Siegel, 2024).

Implementing these changes can help diminish opposition among gun rights advocates, allowing all parties to enact a solid policy (Cole, 1998). By requiring background checks, they can impose extra hurdles on individuals attempting to purchase a firearm. Additionally, these changes would exempt the seller from liability for any actions taken by the buyer after the sale is completed. These changes would make it more difficult for an individual who should not have a weapon. Universal background checks are strongly connected to reducing gun violence because they close the gaps. By incorporating this law, it slows or even denies access to a firearm from getting into the wrong hands. Implementing this law makes obtaining a firearm difficult for high-risk individuals. Universal laws work best when paired with other laws, such as:

- Safe Storage Laws
- Permit-to-purchase laws
- Red flag/ ERPO laws

Creating a comprehensive system enables overlapping protection, further reducing violence. There has been a substantial number of incidents that are centered around gun violence, which includes accidental shootings and suicides (Lott, Jr. & Whitley, 2001). There are several ways to safely secure guns without infringing on individual rights. Storing firearms fully unloaded and locked away can be beneficial in safe storage (Densley et al., 2024). Weapons and ammunition must always be kept separate to facilitate secure storage (Densley et al., 2024). Public safety campaigns can be highly effective in raising public awareness about how to store guns safely. The campaigns for these programs can be disseminated to the public through social media and flyers as an outreach effort to share information. Free public events, such as community

workshops, can demonstrate and teach individuals how to store their firearms safely and securely. Including law enforcement in these types of workshops will be a powerful addition to the community. Having law enforcement or a certified official volunteer to speak and demonstrate safe storage methods for firearms will be vital. Providing free gun locks to community members who are willing to attend the workshops will help increase attendance. Research shows that many incidents due to gun violence often occur due to the unsafety of firearm storage (Lott, Jr. & Whitley, 2001). Encouraging safe storage laws and requirements will be a crucial component in combating and reducing gun violence (Densley et al., 2024). There are clear indicators that show legal firearm storage methods can be implemented in various ways. Legislation, education, and public awareness can help facilitate the safe storage of firearms. These methods can all prevent fatal incidents before they occur (Lott, Jr. & Whitley, 2001).

Unsecured firearms lead to sources of accidental shootings. Keeping firearms stored away properly leads to fewer opportunities for children to access them. School shooters under the age of 18 often obtain firearms from home or a relative. Safe storage laws pair well with Child Access Prevention Laws.

Child Access Prevention Laws

These laws reduce unintentional deaths caused by minors due to improperly stored firearms. There is a significant amount of evidence that shows implementing prevention laws reduces teen suicides, accidental deaths, and firearm-related injuries. The Child Access Prevention (CAP) law also holds gun owners accountable if a child gains access to a firearm that is not safely stored away. This law focuses on reducing unintentional shootings by children, the rate of youth suicide, and school shootings. This

law has been amended to promote safe storage practices by requiring that guns be stored securely (Densley et al., 2024). This law is also implemented so that gun owners keep ammunition in a separate location from the firearm (Gius, 2015). The CAP was first implemented in the state of Missouri in 1981. The implementation of this law sent a motion through other states across the United States. This law prompted other states to enact similar laws in their own states to address suicide and accidental deaths. During the 1980s and 1990s, many states followed Missouri's lead. Additional states have since enacted CAP laws, which were implemented in the mid-1990s. Various other states implemented their own forms of CAP laws, including some that included "recklessness and negligent storage laws." Implementing this law would reduce opportunities for children to access a gun. CAP laws limit access to weapons and assault style weapons. This creates a multifaceted firearm violence prevention combination. Proposed federal legislation, such as the Child Gun Safety and Gun Access Prevention Act of 2009, targets raising the age from 18 to 21. This would also prevent individuals under the age of 21 from purchasing a large capacity magazine or assault weapon.

Assault Weapons & Magazine Bans

The federal assault weapons and magazine ban (AWB) began in September 1994. The AWB prohibited the manufacture, possession, and transfer of semi-automatic firearms. The ban was for firearms that have the capability, as assault weapons, of holding more than 10 rounds in the magazine. This ban lists over 15 specific types of weapons, including any semi-automatic firearm that contains two or more military-style features. These military features included assault style weapons that accommodated detachable magazines. As of today, the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (AWB) is no longer

in effect, but many states still incorporate some of its provisions into their laws. Many supporters of gun control policies argue that banning these types of weapons will decrease mass shootings (Anisin, 2021). Supporters in favor of banning assault style weapons feel that reforming assault style weapons decreases fatalities. One may argue that banning these weapons will decrease school shootings and deaths and limit battlefield-grade weapons from being accessed (Johnson & Shakya, 2023). The reform of this law would also reduce the casualties in public place mass shootings (Anisin, 2021). Many Americans support this reform, stating that it improves safety for first responders. Although there is considerable support for the ban, there are still those who feel the assault weapons and magazines bans have mixed evidence as it relates to homicide reductions (DiMaggio et al., 2024). While there are mixed views, the prohibitions notably agree that banning assault style weapons will result in fewer mass shooting casualties (DiMaggio et al., 2024). Reforming laws surrounding assault weapons will also slow the shooter down, creating fewer casualties.

Assault style weapons continue to remain a highly debated subject when it comes to gun reform laws (DiMaggio et al., 2024). Many gun rights advocates feel that the term "assault weapon" is misleading. Some argue that an assault weapon can be any gun, whether it is an assault weapon or not. Some feel that the term is looked at as a negative connotation, "assault weapon." Many advocates state they carry guns for protection, but some of these guns consist of firearms that are self-loading guns (Kleck, 2017). Self-loading guns fire one bullet at a time, and firearms have been around since the late 1800s. According to research, there are millions of guns in America, and most of those firearms consist of semi-automatic guns that should be regulated (Baker, 2022). Now, when it

comes to fully automatic guns, these guns are machine guns, and they are substantially regulated. Gun control advocates state that outlawing these assault style weapons may lower the crime rate involving these types of firearms.

When it comes to guns, they all share some common features, such as a trigger and a barrel, which make them firearms. These weapons are each capable of causing mass destruction when a bullet is fired in the direction that the barrel is pointed. Some argue that any loaded firearm pointed in the direction of anyone is an assault weapon. Many opposed to gun reform feel that guns are not the problem and that people are the problem. Further argument goes on to state that the problem lies with the person holding the gun. To regulate gun control, we must address the root issues. These root issues can all be addressed by engaging in a healthy dialogue with both sides and asking the right questions.

Assault weapons bans reduce the circulation of guns and fatalities. There are limits to public mass shootings even in states that incorporate Stand Your Ground Laws. Laws, as such, interrelate by affecting the lethality of firearm violence.

AWBs restrict:

- Access to large-capacity magazines
- Restrict access to high-capacity firearms
- Public access to assault-style weapons

Stand Your Ground Laws

Over time, the Stand Your Ground Law has evolved. The term "stand your ground" has gained attention following the passage of a law in Florida in 2005 (Franks,

2016). This law marked a significant legislative movement. Florida was the first state to enact the "stand your ground" law in 2005 (Franks, 2016). This law detaches the duty to retreat before using a gun in a self-defense incident. This law protects individuals who are in imminent danger of harm. This law applies not only to a person's home but also to public places. To utilize the stand-your-ground law, the individual must reasonably believe that using deadly force is necessary. With the implementation of this law, the impact on homicide rates has consistently increased (McClellan & Tekin, 2012). The most significant increase in homicide rates appeared in states where the law has been enacted, such as Florida and Louisiana (Munasib & Guettabi, 2013). Many argue that the implementation of stand- your- ground laws made gun owners trigger-happy (Munasib & Guettabi, 2013). There has also been an increase in emergency room visits due to gunshot wounds associated with this law. By reforming stand-your-ground laws, a balance can be struck to reduce unnecessary deaths. The reforms to stand-your-ground laws are not about taking away self-defense rights, but whether to reduce the rate of unnecessary deaths (Franks, 2016).

Waiting Period Reduces Harm

To reduce harm caused by gun violence, there must be a path to protect the rights of individuals while improving public safety. As of today, the waiting period to purchase a gun can range anywhere from 3 days to 10 days. The inclusion of the waiting period serves several purposes, including decreasing murder rates and providing a cooling-off period (Cramer, 2013). The cooling-off period allows the would-be gun owner to think clearly about whether the purchase of the firearm is to cause harm to oneself or others. The waiting period also allows time for a thorough background check. Reforming gun

laws will serve many purposes, such as saving lives and preventing injuries in the event of gun violence (Delgado, 2022). Gun violence reform is not about removing guns from individuals who are responsible gun owners. This movement is primarily about creating a safe society in which all citizens live in unity with one another (Joyce, 2018). Plans to reform gun laws are to be implemented in a manner that honors and respects the individual rights and freedoms which the United States Constitution guarantees. Influential reform will require a balanced approach that respects the Second Amendment (Malcolm, 2017). There must also be some common-sense steps that are applied to gun reforms. These commonsense steps must apply to universal background checks, red flag laws, and community-based interventions (Heflin, 2022). Implementing these diverse actions can be effective in safeguarding public safety. Using waiting periods alongside other programs, such as Focused Deterrence Programs, can strengthen their impact by reducing the impulsive nature of various firearm crimes.

Focused Deterrence Programs

Focused deterrence programs were developed based on a conceptual framework established in the early 1990s. David Kennedy developed concentrated deterrence programs, but Congress did not pass them into law. The focused deterrence programs began to gain traction. They were subsequently implemented through federal initiatives, such as Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), which was introduced in 2001 to create a comprehensive approach to curb violence (Chung, 2018). The system of focused deterrence programs is recognized by a small number of individuals. These individuals are responsible for the disproportionate amount of violence that occurs. Focused deterrence programs require a collaborative approach involving multiple entities,

including law enforcement and other public safety agencies. These individuals collaborate utilizing a collective approach to reduce gun violence in America. The program must employ a targeted approach to reduce gun violence and collaborate with community members to gather their input on concerns (Johnson, 2003).

Implementing focused deterrence programs can address the adverse effects that gun violence can have on marginalized communities (Charette, 2022). Support and intervention programs can be effective in promoting public safety and building trust amongst communities and law enforcement. When implementing these programs, there must also be consideration for the inclusion of programs that aid in mental health for those who have been impacted by gun violence. There are various impacts associated with gun violence, and that includes the economic cost. Gun violence can result in multiple issues, such as loss of work or even potential loss of income. Focused deterrence programs are crucial for reducing violence and maintaining community safety (Johnson, 2003). Combining Focused deterrence programs with closing loopholes helps reduce the supply of illegal firearms. When high-risk individuals face pressure, deterrence proves effective. Preventing individuals from obtaining guns addresses the loopholes.

The Closing of the Loopholes

The laws in the United States are inconsistent when it comes to universal background checks for obtaining a gun. Some states require universal background checks, while others do not. This inconsistency across states has caused firearms to fall into the wrong hands. The multiple loopholes in gun laws have been a significant problem in the United States (Vernick et al., 2017). With the various cultural attitudes, the division as it relates to gun reform has caused a great division when it comes to gun reform. The efforts

that are needed to reduce gun violence have been a deeply divided issue in America. There is also a political divide over reforming laws to address gaps in current legislation. The contributing factors of these issues have been in contrast with private gun sales and gun shows. Private gun sales do not require background checks, which creates loopholes. These types of problems cause guns to end up in the hands of the wrong individuals. Closing the loophole works hand in hand with the firearm purchasing license. There are regulations regarding the two, such as how guns are obtained and who is allowed to acquire them. By closing loopholes, dangerous individuals cannot evade firearm licensing requirements.

Firearm Purchase Licensing

Reforms are needed that require individuals to obtain a firearms license, which includes lengthy requirements such as completing applications, undergoing fingerprinting, and participating in safety training. Strict background checks being a requirement will promote a reform of gun laws and who is allowed to purchase firearms. Creating polls to measure public opinion on gun control laws will be vital for gathering public input (Wright et al., 2017). Implementing common-sense solutions, such as safe storage laws and restrictions on assault weapons. Currently, there are no laws concerning how many guns an individual is allowed to have. There is no reason that any one citizen should need several firearms. There must be an inclusion of red flag laws that include universal background checks (Heflin, 2022). To acquire a firearm license, an individual must meet specific additional requirements to decrease the issue of guns getting into the hands of irresponsible individuals. In certain states, before purchasing a firearm, individuals must complete firearm training classes to obtain a weapons license. There is

also a mandatory waiting period before receiving a firearm license in various states.

Studies have shown that states with these strict requirements have proven lower rates of gun violence.

Firearm purchasing requirements often require individuals to go through a lengthy process. Individuals are required to go through background checks, fingerprinting, and, in some states, a waiting period. Critics have argued that these requirements infringe on their Second Amendment rights. The various requirements are often seen as barriers to gun ownership.

Addressing the Counterarguments to the Second Amendment

Violence that is associated with guns continues to be an issue in the United States. The never-ending debates concerning gun reform laws have made it seemingly impossible for lawmakers to find a balance. When lawmakers make efforts to implement stricter gun laws, they are often faced with backlash from both sides. Citizens opposed to strict gun laws often cite their rights under the Second Amendment (Lafollette, 2018). This Amendment gives US citizens the right to bear arms (Malcolm, 2017). Currently, in America, we have more guns than people. Studies have shown that rural areas typically own significantly more guns than other areas, such as urban areas. Lawmakers attempt to consider the perspectives of all citizens regarding gun control and crime (Lucas, 2012). To address these issues, special attention must also be given to evaluating the effectiveness of proposed reforms.

Various programs, such as violence interruption programs, emphasize that measures like public safety can coexist with the Second Amendment. This can be aligned

without infringing on legal gun ownership rights. Programs can lower homicides and shootings without violating individual rights. Therefore, violence interruption programs can improve public safety while still respecting constitutional rights.

Violence Interruption Programs

Gun violence continues to cause suffering to millions of families across the United States. We must consider the fact that gun violence does not impact all areas equally. Gun violence can strike one area of the world differently than it does another area. Gun violence has been known to affect vulnerable populations repeatedly. Studies have indicated that urban areas have been linked to high volumes of gun violence. While gun violence leaves every community devastated, there are various ways to approach gun violence. The presence of law enforcement has not seemed sufficient in reducing the root cause of this issue. Numerous programs have been proven effective. There are many programs, such as Advance Peace and Cure Violence, which have been implemented to reduce gun violence. These educational classes are formed to create a path to prevent gun violence (Costa & Azari, 2020). Participants in these training courses learn various tactics to de-escalate conflicts. The classes employ tactics to mediate hostile situations by establishing healthy dialogue. Implementing violence interruption programs creates a path to reduce gun violence (Moss, 2017). Community members in these programs are not only trained to de-escalate situations but also give referral information on social services to individuals who may need them.

Violence interruption programs and modernized background checks operate at two different levels when preventing gun violence. Although the two function at different stages, they complement one another in reducing gun violence. The two approaches

reduce gun violence and promote public safety. They reduce the opportunity for illegal gun access and the risk of using a firearm impulsively.

Expand and Modernize Background Checks

Expanding background checks has proven to reduce gun violence in states that have enacted the law. Gun violence has been known to claim the lives of many individuals throughout America. Modernizing background checks will reduce the number of individuals who are not responsible for guns. Implementing background checks will ensure that guns do not land in the hands of the wrong individuals. Several firearms are obtained through legal loopholes that exploit current background check requirements. Expanding background checks for all individuals will be key to reforming gun control (Siegel, 2024). The expansion of background checks to all states within the United States will ensure that people who pose a risk to society are not able to purchase a firearm. Expanding background checks across the board for firearm purchases reduces loopholes. This expansion, in return, can highlight critical gaps (Siegel, 2024). The implementation will ensure that transactions are processed thoroughly, including private sales and gun shows. With the current laws, private shows are sometimes exempt, and this loophole has played a hand in the problem of guns landing in the wrong hands. The legality of this type of sale depends on whether the seller is a licensed dealer and the state in which they reside, which is why gun reforms are needed for all sales. Background checks must be mandatory on all sales, and that includes private sales and gun shows. Universal background check systems should be in effect for all states to combat the issues associated with gun violence.

Broadening the scope of background checks complements other laws, such as Red Flag Laws. While implementing the two, gun violence is reduced by forming a layered strategy that lessens the likelihood of firearm-related crime. The interrelation of the two is that background checks prohibit certain individuals from purchasing a firearm. While Red Flag Laws act as a safeguard for individuals who already have them, they pose a risk.

Enact Extreme Risk Protection Orders (Red Flag Laws)

Gun violence today continues to claim the lives of an exceedingly high number of Americans each year. Many of these incidents have been associated with gun violence and consist of individuals with clear indicators that they should not have been allowed access to a firearm. Current laws, such as Red Flag Laws, also known as Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), provide intervention approaches that permit family members to petition courts for intervention (Lott & Moody, 2019). The court will employ measures for individuals who are deemed a threat to themselves or society. Red flag laws have been shown to reduce the risk of gun violence in states that employ the law. Red flag laws have also been considered in states that have implemented them within their borders. Several assessments have been conducted on the various states that have implemented red flag laws. The evaluations were conducted in states that had enacted the law. The rates of suicide and mass shootings displayed a clear indication of a reduction in gun-related injuries or deaths. Analysis and case studies were conducted, along with extensive research. The research focused on the potential of red flag laws as a tool for handling gun violence. To implement red flag laws without violating an individual's rights, a balanced approach and legal fairness are required. Many advocates argue that public safety can be

prioritized while including red flag laws without infringing on individual rights (Lott & Moody, 2019).

We must consider that wording matters when proposing laws and that sometimes the words used to phrase a law can cause individuals to rebel. Some gun owners view the term red flag laws as a law stating that the person is "crazy." The term "Red Flag Laws" receives considerable attention (Lott & Moody, 2019). To address the wording issue, we can modify the term. A more effective term to use is the Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO). The term "red flag" can be viewed in many ways, and for me, it symbolizes a notion akin to a "red herring." There is a good reason for red flag laws, but we must find a way that gets everyone comfortable with the wording.

The theory behind red flag laws is sound, and it has great potential if every state agrees to implement them. There are theories associated with red flag laws, and the theory is that some people give clear indicators that they will commit a crime utilizing a gun. Red flag laws serve as indicators of potential criminal activity by an individual. The law is in place so that if we remove the firearms from individuals who are deemed a threat to themselves or society, it can prevent a tragedy. However, this law has put some gun owners in fear, and many feel that lawmakers would be a disadvantage to gun owners. Some advocates state that lawmakers would be able to abuse gun owners' rights by implementing the law. There must be a way to promote the positive aspects of red flag laws. A safeguard system can be established that protects individuals' Second Amendment rights. The system needs to show gun owners that red flag laws are not about taking guns away from responsible gun owners.

ERPOs relate to regulating high-risk firearms by offering a targeted way to temporarily remove weapons that could cause harm. High-capacity magazines and rapid-fire firearms raise the likelihood of impulsive retaliatory acts. ERPOs enable certain members, such as family and the court system, to intervene when an individual poses an imminent risk to themselves or the public. The two laws work together through a layered approach, addressing the behavioral and technical aspects of risk.

Ban or Regulate High-Risk Firearms and Accessories

There has been continuous debate over whether or not to regulate high-risk firearms. The regulations, if implemented, will include measures to ban assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines. These weapons have been associated with weapons of choice by the shooter when it comes to mass shootings. Assault style weapons have caused casualty rates to increase in single-handed crises. Supporters of banning these types of firearms have determined that the ban could remarkably reduce the fatality of gun violence. These findings can be assessed by accessing data analyzed from districts that have implemented these restrictions to support these claims. By adopting a balanced approach that prioritizes both safety and the Second Amendment, it can help reform gun control.

Comprehensive gun data enables policymakers to focus regulations targeting the firearms linked to the greatest harm, which justifies bans and restrictions even more effectively. Banning or restricting certain firearms offers an opportunity to examine how gun policies can improve safety data. Policy interventions produce measurable outcomes that can be captured in research databases, enhancing evidence-based policy development.

Improve Gun Data Collection and Research

Efforts used to address gun violence within the United States have not been enough to provide conclusive results across all states. There have been issues obtaining reliable data because not all laws are uniform across states. The analysis is often limited due to the scarcity of research. The problem with the limited research is related to the causes of gun violence and the prevention (Tanne, 2000). Acquiring federal funding for research is necessary to explore options for incorporating into data-collection research. The findings would be able to recognize the historical barriers that have hindered findings associated with gun violence. Collecting data to inform the reform of gun laws is vital for restructuring evidence-based police practices (Tanne, 2000). Gathering data to reform gun laws is essential to tracing deaths that are related to gun violence. Collecting data will also identify the various risk factors that are associated with gun violence. Improving gun data collection is critical to producing well-informed, productive strategies to decrease gun violence. Gun data collection, as well as research to reform gun violence, can be implemented while safeguarding citizens' constitutional rights.

Hold Dealers and Manufacturers Accountable

Regarding responsibility, many reform debates center on individual responsibility, ownership, and regulation. Currently, there has not been much attention directed at firearm dealers or manufacturers. Many gun reform advocates state that the lack of accountability and weak oversight contribute to the gun reform problems. By not holding gun dealers accountable, guns are being sold to illegal markets, which contributes to the ongoing issues. Nevertheless, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA)

grants legal protection to specific individuals. The (PLCAA) law also puts limitations on victims as it relates to seeking justice if an event occurs (Eitches, 2017).

Holding gun dealers and manufacturers accountable ensures that current laws are upheld. This also ensures that safe practices are followed. It also means that dealers and manufacturers are held responsible for their negligence. Incorporating stricter gun laws, such as universal background checks and restrictions on high-risk firearms. Stronger accountability measures and strict laws promote responsible behavior.

Tougher Gun Laws

A question to ask is whether stricter gun laws can control gun violence. First, it must be determined what the motive is for individuals who cause violence with a gun. Many advocates state that mental illness is an issue and that we must look deeper to address mental health. Reforming the criminal justice system is one area that warrants examination in legislation. Several individuals slip through the cracks when it comes to gun reform. In the United States, we currently have some states with stricter gun laws than others. There must be consistency across the United States to combat the issues concerning gun laws. We must also view violence with guns as a public health crisis. Just as we regarded the pandemic as a public health crisis, we must view gun violence in the same way. We must view statistics and incorporate gun laws that have been proven in those states to save lives. Studies have indicated that only about 50% of gun owners lock their guns up (Ramchand, 2022). Studies also suggest that the other 40%-50% of gun owners are not properly storing their guns away (Ramchand, 2022). To combat these issues, gun owners must be held accountable for their guns. The unmentioned presumption of gun violence is that many people think, "This will not happen to me."

However, the truth in the statement is that gun violence can happen to anyone and that it is only a matter of time for any one of us. Gun advocates state that we can pray that things change, but prayer is not enough when it comes to gun control, and we must act now to reform gun laws. Gun regulations are needed across the board, and there must be a requirement to enforce gun regulations in all public and restricted areas. We cannot assume that law enforcement response will control the issues of gun violence (Costa & Azari, 2020). For instance, when it comes to a school shooting, we cannot expect that a school's security officer is going to have the capability to respond to an active shooter with an assault style rifle. We must ensure that military assault style weapons are not available to people who should not have them.

Gun laws are not meant to take away guns from responsible gun owners. These reforms are intended to prevent individuals who should not possess a gun from doing so. We must treat gun reform as any other health crisis that we have in the United States (Braga, 2022). We can look at car accidents, for instance; in cars, we have seatbelts to lessen fatalities. To combat vehicle accidents, studies were conducted to control vehicle fatalities. Gun violence reform must be viewed the same and studied. Currently, there are limitations in studies on reforms. Whenever the studies are proposed for gun reform, some gun rights advocates state that the survey will take away their rights as gun owners. They also argue that they fear their right to possess guns will be confiscated. Gun reform laws continue to receive pushback from gun rights advocates. These pushbacks have made reforming laws increasingly difficult.

Study indicates there is a way to achieve meaningful gun law reforms, and that must be done by addressing the issue directly and not talking around it. Politics has often

hindered the advancement of gun reform policies. Individuals from both parties usually agree that an individual with specific mental health issues should not be allowed to have access to guns (Johnson & Shakya, 2023). However, it seems politics always gets in the way, which diverts the conversation from general discussion. We must also remain reasonable and understand that there is no single policy that will end every shooting. Although there are no current concrete steps that can totally rid gun violence, there are measures that can be approached to control gun violence. We must shift the narrative and focus on the primary issue of gun violence. The media focuses on specific topics when publishing news to the public surrounding gun violence. Public opinion is on the side of trying to determine what is going on and trying to fix gun violence. Some states have passed laws allowing teachers to carry firearms in their classrooms. Many people believe that this is not the best approach because accidents can still occur. Some argue that you must have a good person with a gun to fight a bad person with a gun.

Implementing stricter gun laws, such as gun-free zones, bans on assault weapons, and restrictions on high-capacity magazines, enhances public safety awareness. Together, these strategies develop a layered approach based on who can access guns and where they can be carried. Tougher laws reduce high-risk individuals carrying guns in gun-free zones.

Gun Free Zones

The Gun Free Zones Act of 1990 has been in effect in the United States for many years. This law prohibits areas where guns are allowed to be carried; this is not permitted by state and federal law. This policy has been in place to reduce the risk of gun violence in areas that are known as sensitive. Those areas include government buildings, schools,

and places of worship (Smotherman, 2022). Even though this policy has been implemented for many years, there is still ongoing debate regarding gun reform laws. There are also opposing views on whether gun-free zones are as effective as they claim to be. Some advocates feel that a gun-free zone act would attract shooters instead of deterring them. We must remember that gun-free zones were not created as a standalone solution, but as part of a broader approach (Smotherman, 2022). The interaction between gun-free zones, gun control, and gun rights highlights the equilibrium between public safety and constitutional protections. Gun-free zones focus on specific places where guns cannot be carried, supplementing broader regulations such as background checks and CAP laws.

Gun Control & Gun Rights Advocates

Mass shootings have begun to occur more frequently, and some argue that it has started to become normal. When a mass shooting occurs, gun rights and gun control advocates sprint to the forefront (Poliquin, 2022). Time after time, efforts are made to persuade citizens to come together for gun reform, but with no agreement, leaving both sides fueled by anger (Poliquin, 2022). Public health arguments are not enough to save lives as they relate to gun violence. The beliefs of the gun rights movement have not persuaded them to change their minds. We must discuss how we will address the problems as a unit. We must remain vigilant; gun control must not appear impossible to control and find common ground (Fay, 2024). Many argue that gun rights groups are still defaming victims, and many advocates state that nothing has seemed to change after all these years. Many gun rights advocates feel that it takes a good individual with a weapon

to stop a bad person with a gun. In response to this statement, gun control advocates disagree.

There must be a basic criminal background check to manage gun control. We must check people before they are allowed to purchase a gun. If we are not conducting at least basic background checks on people, we will never know if that person should have a weapon until it is too late. Congress must put forward policies and make improvements, which can be achieved through background checks. In the United States, it has been shown that we have a much higher rate of firearm suicides than in any other country. Some gun rights advocates argue that the Second Amendment is our most valuable right. We must all keep in mind that with every right in this country comes limitations. To control gun violence, we must be willing to sacrifice some convenience (Franzen & Koch, 2022).

There are ways to debate gun control while using meaningful laws. To address these issues, there must be an opinion that both sides can agree on. The debated regulations must be enforced in a way that does not isolate responsible gun owners. The issue of gun reform requires a more comprehensive approach to universal background checks. To address the problem, we must approach it as both sides being compatriots, rather than viewing them as enemies. There must be a common goal from both sides surrounding the background checks issue. That common goal must coincide with what we can all agree on: that specific individuals, such as the mentally ill, should not own a gun.

Problem in Gun Violence and the Path to Reform

The problem lies in the substantial rate of deaths that have been associated with firearm injuries in the United States (Delgado, 2022). Many states lack reliable data on non-fatal incidents. The primary concern is that gun violence constitutes a serious threat to public safety. The route toward improvement is impeded by political inaction, cultural opposition, and constitutional debates. The problem is also transmissible in legal and cultural diversions. There are also other concerning issues, including the distribution of political power along the path to reform. The National Rifle Association's (NRA) political influence has been rumored to have declined recently due to several factors, including internal corruption and financial issues (Lacombe, 2021). After carefully observing the progressively high rates in the United States, there have been more deaths associated with gun violence than in most other nations.

According to statistics, the recorded rates have been associated with deaths related to accidental discharge of a firearm, mass shootings, suicides, and homicides (Anisin, 2021). The key findings show that enacted background checks have lower rates of deaths related to suicides and homicides. Research has indicated that there are currently more guns in the United States than people living in the United States. The loopholes associated with background checks make obtaining a firearm far too easy (2023). Along with inconsistent state laws, obtaining a gun is unchallenging for those who may pose a risk to citizens (Vernick et al., 2017).

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Evaluation Design

The design will include a quantitative study and will only use non-identifiable data. In this study, publicly available data will be used from the CDC Wonder, U.S. Census Bureau, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting UCR, and Giffords Law Center. This research will focus on existing gun laws, including states that implement red flag laws, universal background checks, and assault weapons bans. This research will go on to explore the rates of suicide, homicide, and mass shootings in 12 different states. The 12 states chosen were selected based on specific criteria, including six that had strict gun laws and six that did not. The evaluation will range from 2019 to 2023. This design is beneficial for my research because it identifies the rates of homicide, suicide, and mass shootings for states with and without gun regulations. Descriptive statistics are often more transparent and straightforward. Descriptive statistics also clearly communicate findings. The central focus of this analysis was more descriptive than causal or predictive. This study used a non-experimental, observational design to compare state policies.

Evaluation Criteria

This research will examine the impact of firearm laws on fatality rates in the selected states. There have been complex issues surrounding the Second Amendment and

how to reform gun laws. The central issue of guns must be addressed as it relates to mass shootings, fatalities, and suicides. Gun owner regulations continue to be a concern when it comes to ensuring public safety. The effectiveness of gun reform laws must be measured across states with strict gun laws and those without. By collecting data on said states, we can determine if reforms are efficient.

This research will examine how certain gun laws impact firearm violence. There are constant issues with how to reform gun laws as they relate to the Constitution. There are central issues concerning whether or not gun reform laws impact suicide rates. Other issues to be addressed are whether certain gun laws impact mass shootings and homicide rates. Policy makers must respect the Second Amendment when reforming gun laws.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore whether states that utilize strict gun laws, such as red flag laws, background checks, and bans on assault weapons, result in fewer deaths associated with guns. This would include mass shootings, homicides, and suicide at the state level (CDC, 2024).

Population and Sampling

The evaluation will consist of 12 different states, six with strict gun laws and six without. This evaluation will explore data on states that have strict gun laws, such as California, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Colorado, and Massachusetts. There will also be an analysis of states without strict gun laws, such as Alabama, Arizona, Indiana,

Georgia, Idaho, and Texas. The particular states were chosen based on the strictness and leniency of their gun laws. These 12 states were selected based on the political context.

Data Sources and Instruments

All data is collected from publicly available sources: CDC Wonder, U.S. Census Bureau, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting UCR, and Giffords Law Center.

Research Questions

Do states that implement gun laws have fewer deaths related to mass shootings, homicides, and suicides?

Hypothesis

States that implement universal background checks tend to have lower gun homicide rates (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2023). States that have implemented red flag laws have lower gun-related suicide rates. States that have banned assault weapons have fewer mass shootings than states that have not.

Data Sources

All data is collected from publicly available sources: CDC Wonder, U.S. Census Bureau, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting UCR, and Giffords Law Center.

Define Variables/ Measures

The independent variable will be represented by states with the following gun laws: assault weapon bans, red flag laws, and universal background checks. Homicide

rates, mass shootings, and suicide will be measured per 100,000 population from the CDC data.

The dependent variable would include incidents that have been related to mass shootings (per 100,000 population), gun homicide will be measured (per 100,000 population) (2023), and the gun suicide rate (per 100,000) (CDC, 2024).

Measurement

Suicide rates in states with and without red flag gun laws: Active Yes/No

Definition: Red flag laws allow the courts to intervene and take away a firearm once a petition is made on an individual who has been deemed a threat to himself or the public.

Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting UCR, Gun Violence Archive (GVA), and Giffords Law Center.

Measurement

Homicide rates in states with and without universal background checks: Active Yes/No

Definition: Laws that require background checks for all firearm transfers, which would include private sales, prohibit individuals from being able to purchase a gun.

In this study, data consistency across the various sources presents several challenges. For example, when looking at the CDC website, mortality data, FBI UCR, and state health departments may categorize firearm deaths or injuries differently. Missing data or discrepancies will be documented, along with the variables and years affected.

Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting UCR, Gun Violence Archive (GVA), and Giffords Law Center.

Measurement

Mass shooting rates in states with and without an assault weapons ban: Active Yes/No

Definition: An Assault weapons ban is a law that prohibits the sale, possession, and manufacture of a semi-automatic firearm. Missing data or discrepancies will be recorded.

Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting UCR, Gun Violence Archive (GVA), and Giffords Law Center.

Data Analysis Plan

The analysis plan is quantitative; it aims to summarize death rates in relation to gun reform laws. There will be an analysis of 12 states, and six of them have strict gun laws. The analysis will determine the rates of deaths due to suicide rate per 100,000 population, homicide rate per 100,000 population, and mass shootings rate per 100,000 population. As for the statistical methods, means, medians, and modes will be calculated to identify gun violence rates for each state, with and without gun laws. Descriptive statistics analysis will be used to test the hypothesis. The descriptive statistics are appropriate because the analysis is exploratory in nature. The hypothesis will be tested by collecting the data from all 12 states. For the 12 states, the six that implemented red flag laws (California, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Colorado, and Massachusetts) for 2019-2023, the homicide rates per 100,000 will be averaged for 2019-2023. The additional six states that did not implement ref flag laws are Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Georgia, Idaho, and Texas. These states will be averaged according to the homicide rate

per 100,000 for the years 2019 to 2023. The 12 states were selected at random, ensuring that six implemented strict gun laws. The additional six states were chosen because they did not implement strict gun laws. Missing data and discrepancies will be handled transparently, with the type of missing data identified. The missing data will also be reported in the study.

The average would include rates that each incident, such as mass shootings, gun homicide, and gun-related suicide, occurred in said state. This study is exempt from IRB, as all information collected is public data. All data is aggregate and non-identifiable.

Ethical Considerations

No subjects will be identified, surveyed, or interviewed. The data contained is publicly accessible and non-sensitive.

Limitations

State policies can vary by state and whether they have gun reforms. In this study, there will be unmeasured factors, such as cultural attitudes and socioeconomic status. Due to data constraints as it relates to mass shootings, data surrounding mass shootings is limited for the states and years in this particular study.

Other limitations of the study include that all information is based on state rather than city data. This study is exempt from IRB, as all information collected is public data. An additional limitation of my study is that the data were collected by the state, rather than the county. This may influence interpretation because Gun rates can vary significantly depending on the county. Missing data will be handled transparently and documented. Data sets will be examined to determine the extent of the missing data.

Chapter 4

Results

Presentation of Data

This study was conducted from 2019 to 2023, and six states implemented universal background checks, red flag laws, and assault weapons bans. Six states do not implement gun reform laws. Six states adopted gun reform laws for all types of guns.

This study showed that states that implement strict gun laws have much lower death rates when it comes to homicide, suicide, and mass shootings. This study states that states that do not implement gun laws have much higher fatality rates when it comes to gun violence. This study showed the importance of implementing gun laws nationwide.

Findings by Evaluation Question

Findings for the evaluation question show rates across 12 states over the past 5 years, from 2019 to 2023. The 12 states were randomly selected, with the option to ensure that six implemented gun reforms and the other six did not. The six states that required red flag laws had an average homicide rate per 100,000 of 6.22. During this time, states that did not require red flag laws displayed an average of 8.1 homicide rates per 100,000. Meanwhile, states that required universal background checks displayed a suicide rate of 11.73 suicides per 100,000. At the same time, states that did not require universal background checks displayed 16.93 suicides per 100,000. As to the mass shootings, the CDC website does not display a specific breakdown of the states for the years studied. The CDC primarily focuses on gun violence stats, but not specifically on mass shootings.

Example: Year of 2020, States that implemented strict gun laws, Homicide rate per 100,000 population: Colorado 5.8 (=Yes), Delaware 9.9 (=Yes), Maryland 11.4 (=Yes), New York 4.7 (=Yes), California 6.1 (=Yes), Massachusetts 2.7 (=Yes) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2025).

Example: Homicide rates without gun laws in the year 2020, rate per 100,000
Alabama 14.2 (=No), Arizona 7.5 (=No), Indiana 9.7 (=No), Georgia 10.5 (=No), Idaho 2.5 (=No), Texas 7.6 (=No) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).

The listed examples are the homicide rates for 2020.

Hypothesis findings

Findings showed that states that implemented red flag laws had lower homicide rates. Meanwhile, the findings showed that states that did not implement red flag laws displayed higher rates of homicide. As to the mass shootings, the CDC website does not display a specific breakdown of the states for the years studied. World Population displayed a total count of mass shootings per year from 2013 through August 2019. Different measures that could be used to check the result of mass shootings are to expand on the research years. Patterns in the state of Alabama consistently averaged 15 to 16 from 2019 to 2023. The state of Massachusetts remained at a rate of 2.3 in 2019 and 2.7 in 2023. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).

Implications for Public Safety

The results of the study show that evidence-based gun laws can be very effective when it comes to reducing firearm-related crime. The findings confirm previous studies,

and policymakers should consider expanding gun laws (Morral, 2019). This expansion should include strengthening and enacting red flag laws in states where they are not currently in place. There should also be an expansion of universal background checks. Policymakers should also review the impact that assault weapons regulations currently have. All these reforms have been effective when they are implemented together as a guide to public safety. These results might influence federal versus state legislation by reducing firearm suicides and lowering rates of gun violence. There may also be more effective interventions in high-risk situations. Advocacy groups and lawmakers could argue for the federal adoption of similar policies. These reforms have also been beneficial and have not led to a significant shift in individuals' rights within the existing legal frameworks.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

This study was able to examine that promoting safe storage can reduce fatalities caused by firearms. Promoting safe storage can reduce gun violence by restricting unauthorized access. Having guns that are not safely stored away gives unauthorized individuals a high risk of access. By keeping firearms locked and stored away, you control who has access. Safe storage is not just about keeping guns locked away; it is an advance towards firearm safety. Red flag laws, assault weapons bans, and background checks each work as population-level storage proposed actions. These actions reduce the

risk of at-risk individuals having access to the firearm. Storing firearms fully unloaded and locked away can improve safe storage (Densley et al., 2024). States with universal background checks showed an average rate of 11.38 suicides per 100,000 people. States without universal background checks showed an average rate of 16.93. Expanding nationally is recommended to decrease gun violence and promote public safety.

Child access prevention laws aim to reduce unauthorized, unsupervised access to prevent harm. Data from studies on child-involved shootings indicate that states with safe storage laws saw shootings by children decrease by 35% (Cannon et al., 2023). Traditionally, these laws focus on children; however, the reasoning also applies to all at-risk individuals, including those in crisis or with violent histories. Limiting access to firearms helps prevent unintentional injuries. The study also indicates a 13 percent reduction in unintentional deaths and injuries among children ages 0-14 (Gun Violence Prevention Experts Release Model Policy Guide for Safe Storage Laws, 2025). It can also stop impulsive acts of violence that lead to homicides. Previous research shows that CAP laws resulted in a 13% reduction in all firearm fatalities among children aged 0-14 (Azad et al., 2020). Data from studies on child-involved shootings indicate that states with safe storage laws saw shootings by children decrease by 24% to 72%.

Regarding waiting periods, also known as the cooling-off period, delaying access to a firearm can decrease the likelihood of impulsive acts. Implementing a waiting period delays access during high-risk times, giving individuals more opportunity to reflect on their actions. Restricting immediate access to firearms lowers the risk of both intentional and unintentional deaths. Concerning focused deterrence programs, there are three main

principles. These programs place targeted restrictions on individuals identified as high risk. They target those most likely to commit violence by accessing a weapon. Since firearm violence tends to focus on a small group of individuals, focused deterrence argues that access to firearms should be limited for those deemed high risk.

Closing loopholes means that firearms policies only work when all gaps are closed. The theory suggests that if violent individuals can exploit loopholes, it leads to increased violence. When enforcement does not block every access point, high-risk individuals will find alternative routes. The theory states that firearm regulations need comprehensive, interconnected protections. Regulations fail when at-risk individuals avoid screening. Universal background checks help cover many loopholes related to private sales, gun shows, and online transactions. Red flag laws close the loophole for situational risk involving criminal records that have not yet appeared. Red flag laws address loopholes during sudden behavioral crises when background checks alone are insufficient. An assault weapons ban closes structural loopholes. The connection between closing loopholes and the assault weapons ban strengthens the policy by preventing bypasses that weaken its purpose.

The firearm purchasing license policy requires individuals to obtain a permit before buying a firearm. This process includes fingerprinting, safety training, and background checks. The policy supports deterrence by making it harder to acquire guns. Firearm licensing adds several steps to the purchasing process. Connecting it with policies like red flag laws increases certainty for high-risk individuals. Universal background checks help ensure that prohibited persons are identified. Linking it with the

assault weapons ban raises the “cost” of acquiring lethal weapons. Firearm purchasing licenses work alongside other policies, such as closing loopholes, implementing waiting periods, and universal background checks. The six states that required red flag laws had an average homicide rate per 100,000 of 6.22. During this time, states that did not require red flag laws displayed an average of 8.1 homicide rates per 100,000. Expanding the closing of the loopholes policy nationally is recommended to decrease gun violence and promote public safety.

Regarding the counterarguments to the Second Amendment, the government has the authority to prevent foreseeable harm. Measures such as red flag laws, universal background checks, and an assault weapons ban set legal boundaries. Red flag laws aim to prevent harm to the public by temporarily removing guns from individuals considered high risk. Assault weapons are often viewed as threatening because of their excessive lethality, which is inappropriate for civilian use. Constitutional case law: In *United States v. Rahimi* (2024), the Supreme Court ruled that individuals who have experienced domestic violence are prohibited from purchasing a firearm (*United States v. Rahimi*, 2024). The court summarized by stating, “when an individual has been found by a court to pose a threat to the physical safety of another person, that individual may be temporarily disarmed consistent with the Second Amendment (*United States v. Rahimi*, 2024).”

Violence interruption programs, as they relate to red flag laws, identify individuals who may be at risk of harming themselves or others. Red flag laws remove firearms at the moment the individual is deemed a risk.

Improving gun data collection is vital for evaluating, designing, and enforcing firearm policies. The framework surrounding red flag laws enables the timely identification of individuals at high risk. Data on prior threats would enable law enforcement and the courts to enforce red flag laws. Regarding the framework for universal background checks, rely on disqualifying indicators. The connection to gun data is that it ensures thorough background checks.

Hold dealers and manufacturers accountable, because access to a firearm depends not only on the individual's behavior but also on the distributor. Red flag laws require dealers to comply with notifications. Dealers ensure that individuals flagged are unable to obtain a firearm. The connection to background checks is that dealers are required to verify and accurately report the purchaser's information. Manufacturers' and dealers' accountability ensures that firearms do not reach the hands of those deemed high risk. When it comes to an assault weapons ban, manufacturers assure that restricted weapons do not end up in the wrong hands.

Gun-free zones restrict firearm access in areas that are considered high risk. Red flag laws in gun-free zones create legal barriers to where firearms cannot be carried. Universal background checks prohibit individuals from acquiring a gun. Gun-free zones prevent individuals from bringing guns into prohibited areas such as schools and places of worship. The findings confirm previous studies and policy implications.

Recommendations

The recommendation for improving red flag laws is to establish clear definitions of imminent risk. This would ensure consistency across each jurisdiction. Due process should also be strengthened. Expanding the list of authorized petitioners, such as coworkers and mental health professionals, to petition the courts. Firearm surrender and tracking can be improved. This would establish a uniform procedure for the removal of firearms, in line with the policy recommendation for universal background checks. Firearms of all types, including those sold privately and online, should require background checks. Ensuring that restraining orders, criminal, and mental health records are reported promptly. Establishing penalties for dealers and for non-compliance with gun laws. Regarding recommendations for an assault weapons ban, establish buy-back programs. Offering incentives for compliance to reduce the circulation of assault weapons. Implement clear penalties for illegal sales of assault style weapons.

Limitations of the Evaluation

The limitations of the evaluation would include inconsistent data. Some websites underreport firearm injuries. There is also no universal gun registry that exists in the United States. Data collection usually lags behind policy implementation. Laws can differ in wording from state to state. Enforcement and penalties regarding gun reform vary by state. Strong gun reforms could fail if gun owners do not follow reporting requirements. Research from a 2020 study found that strong safe storage laws have been found to reduce suicide by 12 percent amongst children (Gun Violence Prevention Experts Release Model Policy Guide for Safe Storage Laws, 2025).

Suggestion for Future Research

Future research could examine whether lawsuits against gun manufacturers and dealers lead to change. There could also be research on whether threats of lawsuits reduce careless sales. Various states have consumer protection statutes, so comparing those protections across different states could give insight. There could also be a study on whether high-profile lawsuits influence public perception toward gun reform. A cross-country comparison of how other countries use gun reform laws. Lastly, a future study on the rate of violence in cities rather than states.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Final Implications

Recommendations for universal background checks and red flag laws are that they will prohibit felons and abusers from bypassing loopholes. According to research, states that have implemented red flag laws and universal background checks have lower homicide rates. There is also a reduction in suicide rates and intimate partner violence. Research shows that states that do not implement the laws tend to experience more illegal firearm transfers and firearm trafficking. A longitudinal study or city analysis can be used to gain insight into the outcomes of gun reform laws across cities.

In this study, 12 states were evaluated, and six of them implemented strict gun laws. The six states that implemented strict gun laws were California, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Colorado, and Massachusetts. The remaining six states, such as Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Georgia, Idaho, and Texas, did not have strict gun laws.

According to the study, findings showed that from 2019 to 2023, states that implemented red flag laws had an average homicide rate of 6.22. Meanwhile, during the same years, states that did not implement strict gun laws displayed an average rate of homicide of 8.1 per 100,000. As to the overall suicide average, states that required universal background checks displayed an average rate of 11.73 for all six states that implemented strict gun laws. As to the states that did not require universal background checks, the overall average was a rate of 16.93 per 100,000 for the suicide rate for the years 2019 to 2023 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).

Massachusetts is a state that has implemented strict gun laws. When it comes to the state of Massachusetts, studies showed that in 2020, the rate of homicide was 2.7. On the other hand, in 2020, the homicide rate in Alabama was 14.2, which is far higher than the rate in the state of Massachusetts. Due to data constraints as it relates to mass shootings, data surrounding mass shootings were limited for the states and years in this particular study.

The hypothesis findings displayed that states that implemented red flag laws had much lower homicide rates. The states that did not implement gun reform laws had significantly higher rates of suicide and homicide. The state of Colorado implemented all gun reform laws except the assault weapons ban for the years studied, 2019-2023. When it came to the study of mass shootings, the information for that was limited to the years studied. The CDC website did not display a state-by-state breakdown for the years studied. World Population displayed the total number of mass shootings per year, 2013-2019 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).

Patterns were observed in the study, such as states like Alabama consistently averaging a rate of 15 to 16 over 2019-2023. The state of Massachusetts' average was 2.3 in 2019 and 2.7 in 2023 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).

Generally, this study renders evidence that when it comes to gun reform laws such as universal background checks, red flag laws, and the banning of assault weapons, it results in lower levels of gun violence. Though not conclusive, these findings add to the increasing evidence of research suggesting that implementing strict gun laws can save lives.

Some recommendations for policy or practice based on the study should include mandatory safety training to purchase a firearm. The Red Flag laws have been shown to reduce the rates of suicide and homicide. The research also showed that requiring universal background checks for all sales, including private sales, reduces the risk of individuals who have been prohibited from purchasing a firearm. Safe storage laws and child access prevention laws that require the gun owner to ensure that their gun is safely stored away reduce the risk of accidental death.

Potential areas for future research would include improved data on firearm deaths associated with violence, and also increased data on tracing gun violence, such as implementing information based on cities to gain better insight. There could also be victimization surveys that could better evaluate the impact on policy.

Laws should also be regularly evaluated to determine whether changes to current regulations are needed to save lives. Assessing the components of current laws over a 5–10-year period will give policymakers enough time to evaluate whether specific policies

are effective. Coordination with various agencies, such as law enforcement, mental health, and the judicial system, should be collaborative. States should also ensure that agencies are coordinating all data in relation to gun violence, as well as all operations.

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