

## **Who Deserves More Rights? Guns or Humans?**

19,135 people dead, 36,562 injured. These are some of the statistics of gun violence from the year 2023 alone, with many more happening before this year and continuing on after. When it comes to the United States of America, gun violence and gun control are both very contested and heavily debated topics, with gun control being supported on one side to reduce the level of gun violence across the country and the other solely focused on the people's right to bear arms. The opposition believes in the 2nd Amendment of the Bill of Rights, which protects the rights of the people to keep and bear arms in order to defend and protect oneself, property, and family. Strengthening universal background checks and requiring gun permits to obtain a firearm, are two different methods that can most effectively minimize gun violence in the United States.

An increase in gun control laws will allow for the minimizing of gun violence in the United States. With the amounts of deaths, injuries and mass shootings which occur in the United States, the best course of action is increasing the strength of current gun control methods in order to ensure the country is safer and unfearful of losing their life or a loved one. According to Everytown Research and Policy, "States with strong gun laws see [less gun violence](#)." This research is able to clearly show the importance of having strong gun control laws as they are able to provide for a safer environment, as states with weaker gun laws face more gun violence. Experts all agree that gun control measures are the best way to decrease the ever increasing rise of gun violence to include mass shootings. Last year in 2024, the former US surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, who oversaw over 6,000 public health professional officers, declared gun violence to be a public health [crisis](#). The US surgeon general is the nation's top doctor, and at the time of this declaration, agreed that the United States needs to pass stricter gun control laws. Everyone who is educated on the topic and has done actual research into this has all come to the same conclusion, that it needs to be harder to get firearms. One of the best and first ways to establish this is to apply universal background checks and regularly determine if merchants and private sellers are following through with them.

Stronger universal background checks are one of the first steps to ensure the decrease of gun violence in the United States. Due to loopholes in the Brady Bill that was signed in 1993, which require licensed firearm dealers to conduct background checks, many violent people who

should not have access to firearms are still able to get them. According to USAFacts, there are [three main gaps](#) in the federal background check laws that still allow dangerous individuals to obtain firearms which are: “the default proceed, the boyfriend gap, and the misdemeanor stalking gap.” This shows that even though there are current laws which require background checks, they are not airtight, and because of this, violent people are still able to acquire firearms when they should not be able to due to these loopholes. . Not everyone is properly background checked even though the Brady law requires all firearm dealers to conduct one, which leads to a rise in citizens gaining access to firearms, and being able to prevent violent people from obtaining them. According to Matthew Miller, “22% of gun owners who reported obtaining their most recent firearm within the previous 2 years reported doing so [without a background check](#).” This shows that while many people responded to a survey admitting to not getting a background check, it is implied that there may be even more who didn’t admit to it and even violent people and criminals who have been able to gain access to a firearm. While expanding and strengthening universal background checks on anyone that wants to obtain a firearm is important, it is not the only form of gun control that is available to the United States. One other method of gun control to reduce gun violence is to ensure anyone who attempts to purchase a firearm is permitted with the proper licenses and permissions.

Gun permit laws allow for the sale of firearms to those that are able and qualified to obtain them such as going through background checks and firearm safety training, possibly preventing dangerous people from obtaining weapons. When states prevent individuals from obtaining weapons unless they have a gun permit first, they are able to curb gun violence. According to Michael Siegel, “Laws requiring a permit for the purchase of all firearms were associated with [significantly lower](#) overall homicide rates and firearm homicide rates.” This shows that through his research he has found a correlation between both having citizens obtain gun permits prior to obtaining a firearm and lower rates of gun violence, essentially showing how gun control measures actually work. Those that do follow the law and properly obtain their permits are safe owners and do not misuse their firearms. According to RAND, “Properly permitted gun users do [not appear to be directly responsible](#) for increased violence because the available evidence shows that license holders as a group are particularly law-abiding and are rarely convicted for violent crimes.” This shows that reinforcing gun control measures can lead to a proper decrease in overall gun violence and will allow responsible firearm owners to be the

only ones to obtain them. Gun permit laws are essential to adding an extra layer of safety and protections to preventing gun violence. While these protections are important for the safety of citizens and children in the United States, there are many people and groups who believe that gun rights are more important.

Many individuals and groups advocate for less gun control measures imposed by the government and want citizens to be able to own all types of firearms without regulation. The National Rifle Association (NRA) is a gun rights advocacy group which lobbies politicians to prevent a crackdown on gun control, as they believe the 2nd Amendment of the Bill of Rights says gun control is unconstitutional and make arguments towards already existing control measures. According to the NRA-ILA, “...[background checks](#) don’t stop criminals from getting firearms” and “There is no gun show loophole.” The NRA believes that background checks don’t work, because criminals are not the ones that attempt to obtain firearms legally, but many studies have been done, which shows background checks and gun permits, which also require background checks as well, have concluded that it has decreased gun violence in firearm homicides. The opposition believes that the 2nd Amendment, which states that citizens have the right to keep and bear arms and that this right, shall not be infringed. Britannica states, “Gun ownership is an American tradition older than the country itself and is protected by the Second Amendment; [more gun control](#) laws would infringe upon the right to bear arms.” The 2nd Amendment does provide the right to bear arms to US citizens, and that is a guaranteed right, but gun control measures don’t remove that right. Gun control allows those that are responsible to own guns, and ensures a safer America. When the founding fathers were laying the foundations for the country, they made the US Constitution which allows for certain rights which are guaranteed, but it is also the responsibility of the government to ensure everyone is able to live a long life without the fear of a dangerous criminal or someone not mentally well obtaining a firearm and harming them. Growing up, I was oblivious to these issues, being from New York City when the laws on guns were more strict I never knew anything like a mass shooting could occur. Then in December of 2012, the Sandy Hook mass shooting occurred, where 20 children and 6 adults were murdered in cold blood. After that it would always creep into my head, “Is something like that going to happen to me at middle school? Could today be the day it happens? What if I don’t see my parents again?” I was 12 years old. Those should never be the thoughts a child has to carry, but because people believe a gun owner should be more entitled to a gun than

a child to their life, nothing has changed. There has been decades upon decades of gun violence and all we ever see is more and more gun violence.

In order to ensure that everyone is able to live the life they are entitled to, the government has a responsibility to strengthen gun control measures to ensure and allow responsible citizens to own firearms. For decades, there have been instances of criminals committing mass shootings, at public spaces, malls, and all types of schools. There are family members and parents who always live in fear of receiving news of their loved one becoming a victim of gun violence. Due to this mass country wide problem, politicians do not care to resolve the issue, they believe the right to bear arms is more important than allowing citizens and children to be fear free of mass shootings. Many people want background checks and gun control, but due to lobbying from the NRA, politicians fight for gun rights more than human rights. The founding fathers, while yes, believed in the right to bear arms, could not have possibly fathom the extent at which the 2nd Amendment would be abused and misconstrued. They would more want humans to be safe and live as opposed to dangerous people being given the “right” to have a firearm.