



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW ANALYSIS OF FBI DATA SHOWS FEDERAL BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM WORKS IN WASHINGTON STATE: MORE THAN 40,000 GUN SALES BLOCKED TO PROHIBITED PURCHASERS, INCLUDING 24,000 SALES TO FELONS AND MORE THAN 6,000 SALES TO DOMESTIC ABUSERS

[Analysis](#) by Everytown Also Shows the Share of Denied Gun Purchases Fell by More Than Half between 2000 and 2013, Suggesting That Prohibited Purchasers May be Seeking Guns from Unlicensed Sellers to Evade Background Checks

Initiative 594, Washington State's Ballot Initiative to Keep Guns out of the Hands of Dangerous People, Would Close Background Check Loophole That Allows Prohibited Purchasers to Get Guns

*****Law Enforcement, Moms and Gun Violence Survivors Available for Interview*****

Today Everytown for Gun Safety released a new analysis of FBI data showing that the federal background check system is working in Washington State, blocking more than 40,000 gun sales to prohibited purchasers since 1998 including at least 24,000 gun sales to felons and more than 6,000 gun sales to domestic abusers. Everytown's analysis also shows that the share of denied gun purchases fell by half between 2000 and 2013, suggesting that criminals may be seeking guns from unlicensed sellers—such as in transactions online, at gun shows and even in parking lots from strangers—to evade background checks. Initiative 594, the Washington State ballot measure to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, would close the background check loophole that allows these prohibited purchasers to get their hands on guns. Today's analysis, [available online here](#), is the first of a number of Washington-specific reports on background checks to be released by Everytown in coming days.

Background Checks

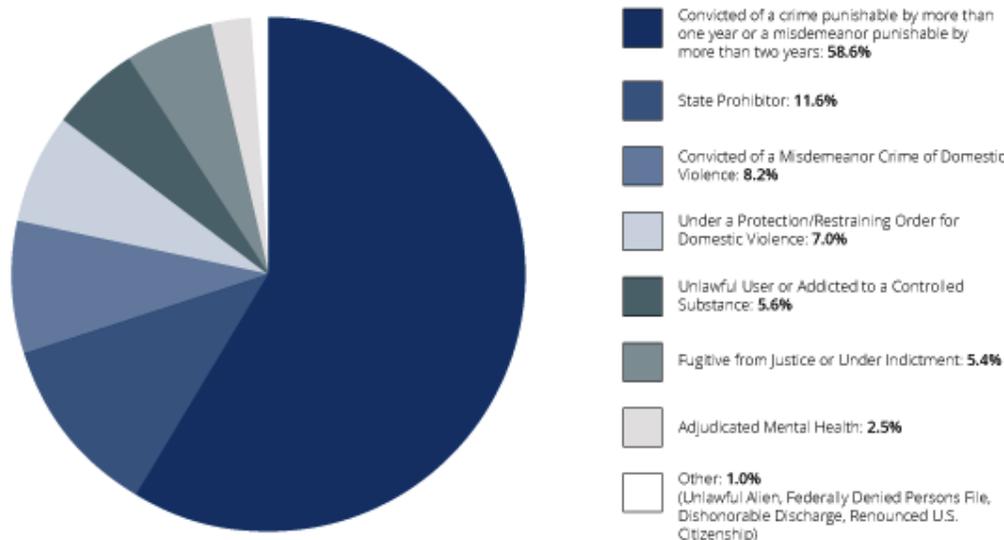
Since 1998, federal law has required licensed gun dealers to conduct a background check for every firearm purchase. Prospective gun buyers are screened against the FBI's

National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), which blocks gun sales to those people deemed too dangerous to possess firearms under federal law—including felons, domestic abusers, and the severely mentally ill.¹

Details of the Analysis

Today’s analysis from Everytown shows that since 1998 the federal background check system has blocked 40,976 gun sales to prohibited people in Washington State, including 24,028 gun sales to felons and 6,227 gun sales to people convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors or subject to domestic violence protection orders.² The numbers of denials by each category are listed in an appendix to this release.

IN WASHINGTON, BACKGROUND CHECKS HAVE BLOCKED MORE THAN 40,000 GUN SALES TO DANGEROUS PEOPLE



Between 1998 and 2013, the number of background checks conducted each year in Washington has increased, reflecting an increase in the number of gun sales by licensed firearm dealers. **The background check system blocked more gun sales to prohibited Washington buyers in 2013 than in any previous year.**

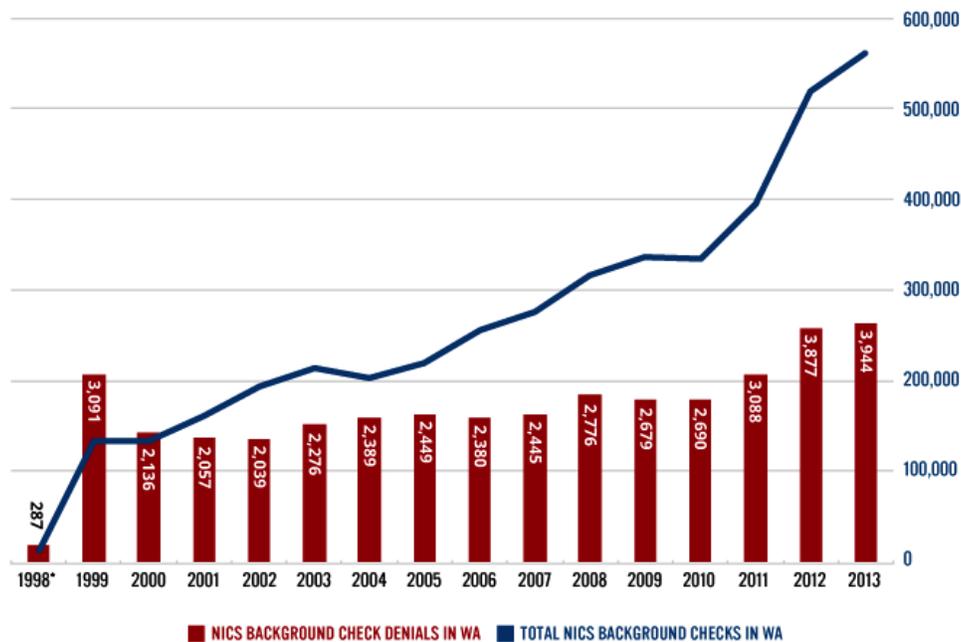
However, between 2000 and 2013, the share of total background checks denied fell by more than half, from 1.6% to 0.7%. This is consistent with the hypothesis that criminals are increasingly aware that a background check will block them from buying guns at licensed dealers—and are seeking guns from unlicensed sellers online and at gun

¹ The FBI releases a monthly report of Federal denials nationwide but does not publicly release data for individual states or over time. Between the inception of the NICS system in 1998 and July 31, 2014, 1,123,342 gun sales were federally denied (<http://1.usa.gov/1veK3Ek>). In addition, between 1998 and 2010, state and local agencies issued a total of 945,915 denials, and it is estimated they have issued 225,000 denials in the three years since data was last released (<http://1.usa.gov/Z8vYsa>). Thus, a total of more than 2.3 million federal and state denials have been made since the NICS system was implemented.

² Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI data, obtained February 12, 2014.

shows, where no background checks are required under current law. In a September 2013 investigation of illegal online gun sales, *Felon Seeks Firearm*, Everytown found that 1 in 30 people seeking guns from unlicensed sellers on the national website Armslist.com had a criminal record or domestic violence history that prohibited gun ownership. This is nearly four times the share of people seeking firearms at licensed dealers who are prohibited and blocked by the background check system.

More background checks are conducted in Washington than ever before, but the share of checks that are denied is falling



The number of gun transfers conducted in Washington without a background check is unknown, but national surveys of private firearm ownership suggest that some 40 percent of gun transfers are conducted between parties that would not be subject to a background check under current law.³

Closing the Background Check Loophole in Washington State: Initiative 594

In November, Washington State voters will have a chance to close this loophole by voting Yes on Initiative 594. Initiative 594 would apply the currently used criminal and public safety background checks by licensed dealers to all firearm sales and transfers, including gun show and online sales, with specific exceptions. Under Initiative 594, everyone in Washington would be required to pass the same background check, regardless of where they buy a gun and from whom they buy it.

³ Philip J. Cook & Jens Ludwig, *Guns in America*, 1996, available at <http://www.policefoundation.org/pdf/GunsinAmerica.pdf>.

“Everytown’s analysis proves what we already know: That Washington’s existing background check system is working, with gun sales to more than 40,000 prohibited purchasers, including at least 24,000 felons and more than 6,000 domestic abusers, already blocked,” **said Eileen Bennhoff, a member of the Washington chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.** “Still, with prohibited gun purchasers continuing to buy guns illegally through unlicensed sellers—such as online, at gun shows or from strangers in parking lots—we can do more to keep our kids, schools and communities safer from gun violence by voting Yes on Initiative 594 this fall. Initiative 594 will close the dangerous loophole in Washington’s background check system by making sure everyone undergoes the same background check when buying a gun—regardless of where they buy it and who they buy it from.”

Method and Appendix — Full Data

The data, which was obtained from the FBI by Everytown through a Freedom of Information Act request, analyzed the number of gun sales in Washington State that were denied between 1998 and 2013, by type and over time.

Criteria for prohibiting firearm ownership	Denials	Share of total
Convicted of a crime punishable by more than one year or a misdemeanor punishable by more	24,028	59%
Misdemeanor Crime of Domestic Violence Conviction	3,375	8%
Protection/Restraining Order for Domestic Violence	2,852	7%
Unlawful User/Addicted to a Controlled Substance	2,296	6%
State Prohibitor	4,765	12%
Fugitive from Justice	1,874	5%
Under Indictment	356	1%
Adjudicated Mental Health	1,037	3%
Illegal/Unlawful Alien	274	1%
Federally Denied Persons File	84	0%
Dishonorable Discharge	31	0%
Renounced U.S. Citizenship	4	0%
Total	40,976	

**Paid for by Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund for I-594; PO Box 21214,
Seattle, WA 98111.**

Top contributors: Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund.

About Everytown for Gun Safety

Everytown for Gun Safety is a movement of Americans fighting for common-sense policies that will reduce gun violence and save lives. Everytown is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country with more than two million supporters including moms, mayors, survivors, and everyday Americans who are fighting for reforms that respect the Second Amendment and protect people. At the core of Everytown are Mayors Against Illegal Guns, founded in 2006 by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Boston Mayor Tom Menino, and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a grassroots movement of American mothers founded on the day after Newtown. Learn more at www.everytown.org and follow us @Everytown

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