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Late Assignment

**Bowling for Columbine**

Being born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, which is the city with one of the highest casualty rates caused by gun violence in the United States, all I hear on the news had to do with gun violence in the city. The topic of gun violence has been a huge topic, not only in Chicago, but all over the country over the past decade. Over 31,000 people a year die in the United States due to gunshot wounds. In addition to these deaths, in 2010 there was an estimated 337,960 non-fatal violent crimes committed with guns and 73,505 people treated in hospital emergency departments for non-fatal gunshot wounds. The firearm homicide rate is twenty time greater in the United States than any other high-income countries.

Many people wonder why there is such a gap between the United States and other countries when it comes to gun violence; however, nobody knows an exact answer as to why this is true. Many people have a theory that the higher percentage of gun ownership and the much less restrictive gun lawns are important reasons why gun violence in the United States is much greater than any other country with similar incomes.

The theory that the higher percentage of gun ownership is a cause of higher gun violence in the United States was disproved in Michael Moore’s film *Bowling for Columbine*. In Moore’s film, him and his team visited Canada, who ranks 13th on the list comparing firearms per residents. In the United States, for every 100 residents, 89 of them own a fire arm. In Canada, it was proven that for every 100 residents, 31 of them own a firearm. Canada might not be the highest on the list; however, this number of gun owners is still significantly high. When comparing homicide rates between these two countries the numbers are on completely different levels. According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, in 2011 there were roughly 11,000 homicides in the United States cause by firearms. In Canada there had been 158. According to Statistics Times, the United States is ranked 8th on GDP per capita and Canada is ranked 17th. Both countries are high income countries and they both have high firearm ownership; therefore, the reason for the high gun violence in the United States cannot be due to the United States high percentage of gun ownership.

Gun restrictions in the United States have increased significantly over the past decade due to gun violence. In the United States, the debate on gun control often drifts toward arguments on whether having a gun will make us safer or less safe. Current gun control policies do not focus on disarming adults over the age of 21 from owning a gun. Instead, the gun control law focuses on: define conditions that prohibit a person from possessing firearms, implement regulations to prevent prohibited persons from possessing firearms, restrict carrying of concealed firearms outside the home, and regulate the design of firearms to enhance public and personal safety. These four focuses on gun control can be justified based on a collection of data that proves these cause a greater chance of gun violence.

A huge topic on gun control is the age restriction of buying a gun. Currently, most state laws allow youths from 18 to 20 years of age to legally possess a handgun; however, it has been proven that youth of these ages have some of the highest homicide ratings. According to the Supplement Homicide Reports, Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Department of Justice, homicide rates by firearms from the age of 17 to 20 is over 17 causalities per 100,000 population. Raising the age limit on purchasing from 18 to 21 will have an impact, however, it won’t have a very big one. One of the big topics on gun control has to do with preventing the next mass shooting and many people are claiming that if the age limit on owning a firearm had increased, then the shooting Parkland, Florida would have prevented. This might have been the case in this circumstance, however, according to Rachel Wolfe, writer of Vox.com, 156 of the last mass shootings between 2009 and 2016 have been caused by people over the age of 21.

There has been a huge debate as to whether stopping gun violence in the United States would be more effective if the gun laws were stricter, less strict, or kept as they are. For example, Chicago has some of the strictest gun laws in the United States; however, the gun violence is one of the highest in the country as well. Many actions have taken place over the last few decades to improve gun regulations such as better background checks, having better regulations and oversight on gun sellers, regulating the design of guns, and prohibiting firearm sales for high-risk groups; however, the gun violence rates are still extremely high. A recent survey of gun owners was conducted, and it stated that more than half of the respondents believed that background checks are required for all gun sales. 82 percent favored mandatory background checks for all firearms sales, not just for those by licensed dealers. 68 percent supported laws mandating reporting of gun thefts, and support of stricter standards for issuing permits to carry concealed firearms than are in place in most states.

Even though a lot of media reports claim most people are against changing the gun law, much of the public, including gun owner, want to improve the weakness in our gun laws; however, there many political hurdles in improving new gun laws. This would involve reforming the constitution, which will start a huge controversy between the country.