

# The US Gun Industry: Crumbling Empire or Steady Rock?

## Introduction

As the Democratic primary in the US heats up, one of the central topics on Americans minds come election time will be gun control. Beto O' Rourke drew plaudits amongst many liberal pundits, and uproar from conservatives, when he proudly stated in a debate that "We are going to take your guns!" However, despite this big talk from similarly minded Democrat politicians, the numbers tell a different story. In fact, even in most states that have been held by Democrats for years, [gun purchases have been increasing per capita for decades](#).

In this project, I will analyze the complex dichotomy between the political movement in the United States to increase restrictions on gun sales and the stark reality that gun sales have been increasing in almost every state for years. Through this analysis, I hope to first to shed light on the political and social realities surrounding the issue of gun control in the US, before shifting to a business-minded perspective. Given my findings and the current sociopolitical climate, should investors in gun manufacturers be concerned about their money if Democrats take the White House and Senate? And if the gun industry is indeed still growing despite the current societal divide over the issue of gun control, where are most gun shops located, and where can we expect to see more stores grow in the future?

## Data

The FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check (NICS) database has data on state background checks for purchased guns spanning decades. I extracted this data for the last 5 years (2015-2019) for the 49 mainland states of the US (Hawaii was excluded due to inconsistent data). It is important to note that this data cannot be used as an exact count of gun sales because many individuals (possibly 40% of gun purchasers) purchase their firearms privately, meaning they do not go through a licensed store that will run a background check. A special thanks to [Buzzfeed New's Github repository](#) on the topic!

I then compared the number of background checks in each state per year to [Gifford's Law Center's Annual Gun Law Rankings](#), a pro-gun restriction lobbying group in Washington DC. Finally, I examined the number of gun shops in the vicinity of the [30 most populous cities](#) in the United States using API FourSquare data.