

Individual Project Problem Statement

It is clear from the article that the United States has a gun problem unlike any other country in the world. Adjusting for population, the US has far more deaths than other major countries and it's not even close. America is an outlier because they have so many more deaths caused by guns. The article does a good job using data, visuals, and different perspectives to support this case. The United States as a whole country is compared to other developed countries around the globe. The States are also compared to each other. Mass shooting are covered because of how newsworthy they are but so are the lesser known suicide deaths. Another notorious problem in police shootings is also addressed in the article. It paints a clear picture for the reader.

The article could do a little better addressing the opposite side. It is clear this is a fairly liberal publisher in favor of stricter gun laws. There is a chart showing the firearm deaths have decreased over the decades, but they could have done more. Out of 17 charts, this is the only one that suggests any kind of bright spot or improvement with guns. After reading this article, there are still many arguments gun supporters could have that are not addressed. Many conservatives would simply disregard this article after reading it because they would still be convinced their arguments are legitimate.

For the redesign part of my project, I plan to highlight what I believe are the three most important points, firearm homicide rates by country, homicide rates of states with gun laws vs. states without, and suicide rates compared to gun ownership. These are important points to me because the first two show that gun crime does not have to remain an issue and there are solutions. A natural follow up to these charts would be to take a closer look at the regulations used in the states or countries with low death rates. The graphics used in the article show such a big difference that they really grab the reader's attention. The third point brings awareness to the biggest issue with guns. Mass shooting get more attention in the news, but suicides kill more people. The general public needs to be made aware of this and a graphic could be the best way to get everyone's attention. Mass shootings have painted such a grave image in everyone's minds due to recent events that it has become natural to assume they are the biggest issue. News about suicides flies under the radar, so there needs to be something quick and easy to read that illustrates how big a problem firearm suicides are. These three charts would make the best case supporting stricter gun laws.

For the deception part of my project, I will look into some of those possible arguments and issues not addressed in this article. One example includes violent crime rates by state where the writer talked about police deaths. Their chart simply says more cops die in states with more guns. This seems intuitive but could also be oversimplified. The first thought that comes to my mind is that those states could also have more violent crimes. More crimes means more opportunities for shootings. There are also other possible explanations that I would want to explore. There are also vague definitions to explore such as high/low gun states and mass shootings. Using a different methodology could yield different results without changing any of the data. Right now the definition for mass shootings is four or

more deaths. If this limit were increased, there would be far fewer shootings to report. Since there is no one definition for what constitutes a mass shooting, the limit is really up to whoever analyzes the data. A similar argument holds when defining states with high gun ownership. High and low are subjective terms that can be changed from one interpretation to another. There are also a few line and bar charts that can look very different if I change the axis. Changes would look minimal if the axis wasn't always at zero. The last visual with Democrats and Republicans could look worse if some questions were left out. America would look more divided if only the questions with the largest gaps were kept. There are a number of distortion techniques that could be applied to a number of these graphics.