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Topic 1: Discussing the Accessibility of Weaponry to the Masses

Introduction

Brazil tops the list as the country with the most gun violence deaths, with the United States shortly following. The number of homicides has increased in the whole world, and in the US alone 12,500 were killed in the year 2021. Many people think it is due to the Right to bear arms written in the United States’ constitution while others believe it is simply the misuse of guns by the general population which has caused this. Nevertheless, guns in the United States have certainly been a problem in the past years, causing mass school shootings and general violence in the streets, making the country a less safe place to live in, and having more breaches of human rights.

Definition of Key Terms

**Mass shootings**: incidents involving several victims of firearm-related violence.

**Gun Violence Archive (GVA)**: American non-profit group which keeps count of, and categorises, every incident of gun violence in the United States.

General overview

Even though mass shootings in the United States contribute to a huge portion of gun-involved violence, six out of ten gun violence related crimes in the united states are suicides, one of the highest suicide rates among wealthy nations.

**The facts**:

1. Federal law requires background checks on those who buy guns from federally licensed firearm dealers. The Democratic-controlled House [has passed](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8) legislation requiring universal background checks — which would cover private sales by unlicensed individuals, including some sales at gun shows and over the internet. But President Trump [signalled](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/saphr8hr1112hr_20190225.pdf) that he would veto the legislation if it ever passed, and the bill [has stalled](https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/democrats-push-gun-background-check-bill-in-us-senate-1691710/) in the Republican-controlled Senate.[[1]](#footnote-1)
2. The number of mass school shootings has been increasing exponentially in the past few years, showing many recent spikes in data which are resulting in injuries and fatalities.
3. President Biden claims to implement the “red flag” laws which state that a police officer or a family member who recognises another person as a potential initiator of gun violence (either homosides or suicides) is to petition a court in their jurisdiction in order to remove the firearms from their possession claiming it is a danger to the person themselves or to people around them.
4. There are around 112.6 guns owned for each 100 residents of the United States, which makes American residents the most people with access to guns in the world.
5. Fewer guns do not necessarily correlate with deaths by guns. According to UN statistics cited by the BBC of Brazil, Brazilians own 15 million firearms compared to 270 million held by Americans, and yet gun violence in Brazil continues to top that of the USA while having, not only less guns, but less citizens.

Major parties involved

***United Nations:***

The United Nations Charter commits nations to maintain international peace and security, and to collectively prevent and remove threats to peace. To limit the proliferation of illicit firearms, the nearly-200 Member States of the United Nations have agreed to implement a range of measures to 'prevent, combat and eradicate' the harmful effects of small arms and light weapons around the world. These include the UN Firearms Protocol, the UN small arms Programme of Action (UNPoA), the UN Register of Conventional Weapons, and the UN Arms Trade Treaty.

***United States:***

The U.S has the highest number of guns per capita compared to any other country in the world. Unlike other countries with recent mass shootings, gun ownership in the U.S. is ingrained in the nation’s history, pop culture, and core identity. But the majority of Americans support at least some regulation of gun ownership. The right to bear arms is ingrained into the U.S. Constitution and supported by the absence of nationwide licensing mandates. However, experts argue that reform can be achieved through alternative interpretations of the Constitution which require applying the document to today’s society. Introducing restrictions and registration rules on gun ownership won’t violate the right to bear arms, but will account for the kind of powerful assault weapons which are readily available today and used by mass shooters to inflict maximum harm.

***United Kingdom:***

The U.K. government introduced a near total ban on handguns within a few years , which was subsequently extended to cover all handguns. the British government initiated a gun buy-back program, which was credited with taking 20,000 weapons out of circulation. In the years following the law change in 1997, markedly lower gun deaths were recorded. The U.K. hasn’t experienced a mass shooting since Dunblane in 1996.

Timeline of Key events

Number of incidents of **mass school shootings** in the United States in the 21st century

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Years | Number of incidents |
| 2000-2009 | 68 |
| 2010-2019 | 232 |
| 2020-present | 91 |

Previous attempts to resolve this issue

***Bradley bill:*** a law Which requires a person wishing to purchase a handgun to wait five business days while the authorities check on their background, after that, the sale is prohibited or accepted based on an established criteria.

***February 4, 1987:*** The Brady Bill was introduced for the first time in the 100th Congress.

***September 15, 1988:*** the Brady Bill was defeated in the House by a vote.

***March 1991*:** the Bill was introduced again into the House of Representatives but was never brought to a vote.

***February 22, 1993***: the bill was reintroduced for the final time, the final version being passed in the 103rd Congress on November 11, 1993. It was signed into law by President [Bill Clinton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Clinton) on November 30, 1993, and the law went into effect on February 28, 1994.

Possible Solutions

As complicated as this topic has become, it is hard to see how simple the solutions might be. Some look at this topic as black and white. The question has always been: Do we ban the guns or not? Many bills and attempts to control this threat to humanity have been discussed but the attacks only grew more and more frequent. A lot of the school shootings, especially in the USA have been linked to poor mental health. Closing the gaps in mental health care, or at least attempting to, might be a step to preventing these shootings. Approaching this issue would simply be more effective on the latent level. Instead of trying to secure schools, preventing these shootings would definitely be a more effective approach.

Useful Resources:

* [What other countries show us about America's gun violence epidemic - ABC News (go.com)](https://abcnews.go.com/US/countries-show-us-americas-gun-violence-epidemic/story?id=80495637)
* [Firearm Suicide in the United States | Everytown Research & Policy](https://everytownresearch.org/report/firearm-suicide-in-the-united-states/)
* [Easy Availability of Weapons Multiplies Probability of Death, Grave Human Rights Violations in Communities throughout World, Biennial Meeting Told | UN Press](https://press.un.org/en/2010/dc3249.doc.htm#:~:text=The%20easy%20availability%20of%20firearms%20multiplied,halfway%20mark%20of%20its%20week-long%20session.&text=The%20easy%20availability%20of,of%20its%20week-long%20session.&text=availability%20of%20firearms%20multiplied,halfway%20mark%20of%20its)
* [What about Gun Violence in Brazil? - The American TFP](https://www.tfp.org/what-about-gun-violence-in-brazil/)
* <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/united-nations>
* [Why Gun Violence is a Human Rights Crisis (amnestyusa.org)](https://www.amnestyusa.org/why-gun-violence-is-a-human-rights-crisis/)

1. [Politics of Gun Violence - FactCheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org/2019/08/politics-of-gun-violence/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)