

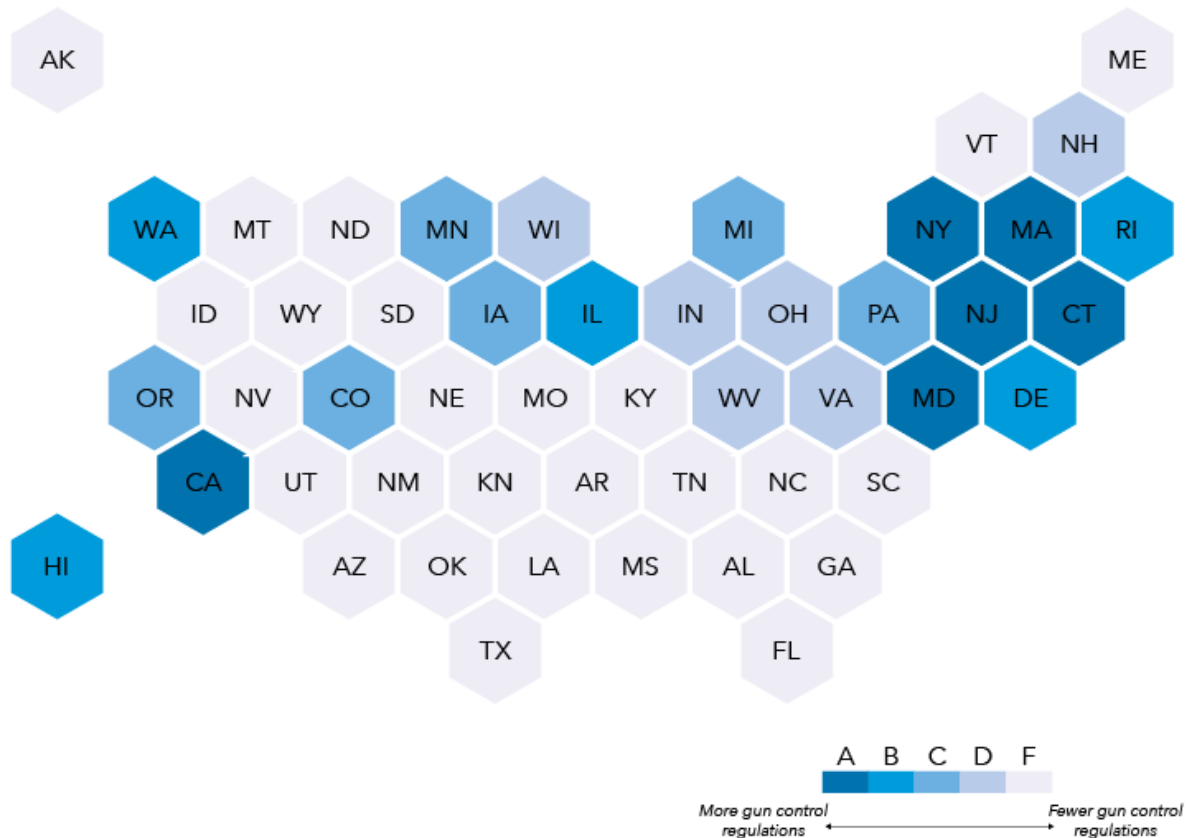
# The State of Gun Control after Orlando (and San Bernardino, and Sandy Hook)

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- Following the nightclub shooting of 49 people in Orlando, Florida, media coverage has focused on relaying breaking news, victims stories, and the shooter's motives. Amid this coverage was a small but telling reaction to the shooting; in the initial aftermath, many journalists did not write new stories about gun control. They simply republished the stories they wrote following San Bernardino (for example [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#) ).
- Brief summary of attack
  - what occurred,
  - who were the victims
  - possible motivations of the shooter
  - how it compares to the deadliest most recent shootings (namely San Bernardino, Sandy Hook, Aurora, etc).
- President Obama addressed the nation with his message on gun control
  - Excerpts from speech related to gun control
  - This is the 16th time the president has addressed the nation following a violent shooting (for excerpts from those speeches, see [here](#)).
  - Effect of these speeches: still nothing has happened

# Two thirds of states have failing gun control grades

## GUN LAW GRADES BY STATE

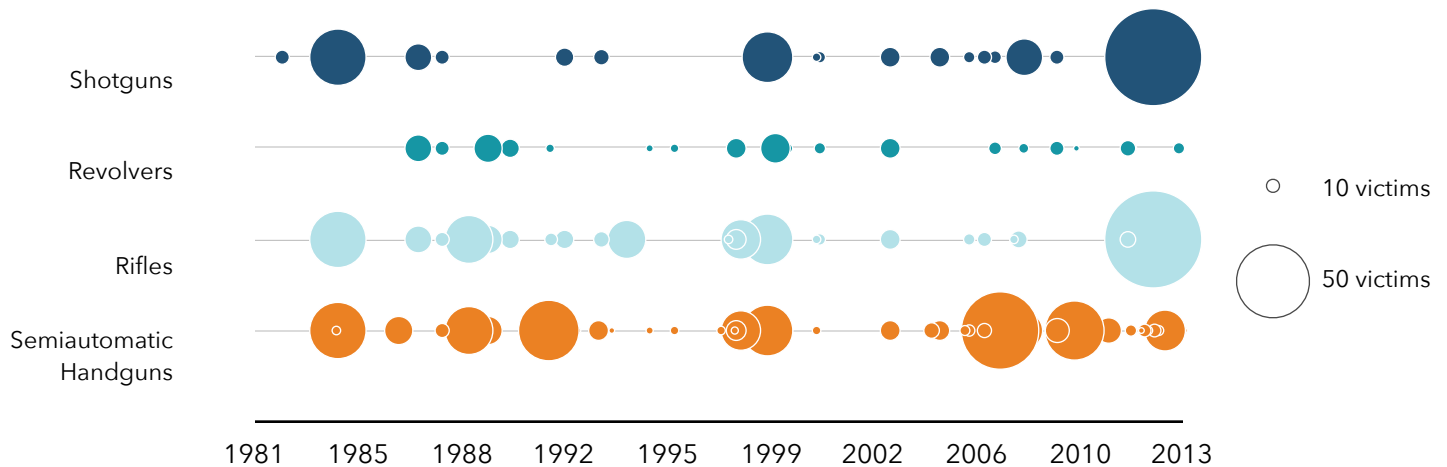


**Source:** [Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence 2015 Gun Law State Scorecard](#)

- Gun control laws vary tremendously state by state and in some cases are less stringent than federal laws. While violators of federal gun laws can be prosecuted, state and local law enforcement are not legally compelled to enforce those laws.
- To evaluate state laws, the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence created the Gun Law State Scorecard, which assigns a letter grade A (most strict) through F (least strict) to each state.
- **Findings:** In 2015, more than half of all states received a score of 'F' and only a third passed. States lost points for laws that weakened public safety, such as not requiring universal background checks, and gained points for effective laws, such as preventing domestic violence offenders from purchasing firearms.

# The last time Congress passed gun control legislation was 22 years ago.

## MASS SHOOTINGS VICTIMS BY WEAPON TYPE



**Note:** If a shooter used multiple weapons victim counts are repeated in multiple categories.

**Source:** [Mother Jones](#), US Mass Shootings, 1981-2013. Mass shootings are defined as shootings perpetrated by a lone shooter who takes the lives of at least four people in a public place. If the shooter dies, he is not included in the count. Crimes primarily related to gang activity, armed robbery, or domestic violence in homes are not included. For more details see [here](#).

- Despite incremental gains at the state level, Congress hasn't passed major gun control legislation since the Federal Assault Weapons Ban in 1994.
- Description of the ban:
  - Prohibited manufacture of semi-automatic weapons and large capacity magazines for 10 years.
  - Included a limited definition of semi-automatic weapons and large capacity magazines; gun manufacturers were able to make small changes to existing assault weapons to make them technically legal but just as deadly as banned firearms
  - Did nothing to address the 1.5 million existing assault weapons and 25-50 million large-capacity magazines that were exempt from the ban
  - According to [a 2003 report issued by the Department of Justice](#) and [FactCheck.org](#), the results of the ban have been mixed;
    - "Although the ban has been successful in reducing crimes with AWs [Assault Weapons], any benefits from this reduction are likely to have been outweighed by steady or rising use of non-banned semiautomatics with LCMs [large-capacity magazines], which are used in crime much more frequently than AWs. Therefore, we cannot clearly credit the ban with any of the nation's recent drop in gun

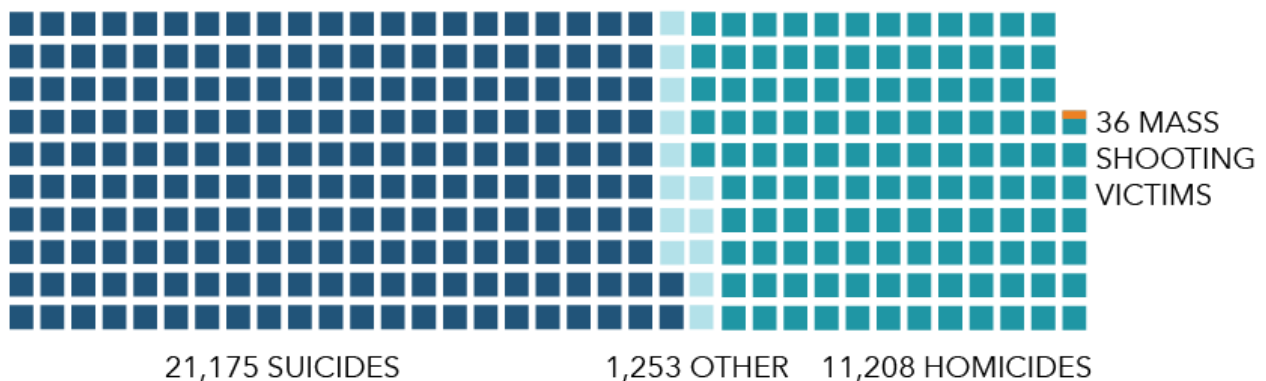
violence... there has been no discernible reduction in the lethality and injuriousness of gun violence” —Christopher S. Koper, 2004

- However, Koper does suggest that there may be some long term positive effects if the ban were to extend beyond 10 years.
- (Preliminary) Findings: According to data from Mother Jones, between 1981 and 2013, over 80% of all victims were involved in shootings where at least one semiautomatic hand gun was used (*see appendix*).
- Message: the previous ban on assault rifles did little to combat overall gun violence
- In 2014, there were enough firearms in America for every man, woman, and child to own a gun. Gun ownership has become more concentrated in fewer households over the past four decades, with only 32% of households owning guns, down from a high of 50% in 1977.

**There are enough firearms in America for every man, woman, and child to own a gun.**

#### FIREARMS DEATHS

### 33,636 DEATHS FROM GUNS



One square represents 100 deaths.

**Source:** [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Number of deaths, death rates, and age-adjusted death rates for injury deaths, by mechanism and intent of death: United States, 2013. Mass shootings deaths from [Mother Jones](#) (*see figure above for definitions*).

- Gun purchases are only increasing; according to a recent analysis by the New York Times, gun purchase rates increase with the threat of gun control legislation, after mass shootings and terrorist attacks, and even after the lifting of gun control regulations and the election of President Obama.
- Guns are harmful outside of mass shootings:

- **Findings:** The majority of gun-related deaths (63%) are suicides. Even amongst firearm homicides, mass shootings are outliers. In 2013, mass shootings constituted less than 1% of all homicides and fourteen times as many people died of unintentional firearm deaths than as a result of mass shootings.
- Mass shootings are devastating for the nation and for victims' loved ones. But gun violence happens every day, not just when it's in the national spotlight or when more than four people are killed at once. Gun violence kills more than three people per hour. Gun violence costs America \$229 billion or \$700 per person annually, more than Medicaid or obesity.

## Will there be next steps?

- We thought Newtown changed everything; following the deaths of 26 people, 20 of whom were 6 and 7 year olds, many assumed substantive gun control reform would finally happen.
- Following the shooting, Connecticut and a few other states successfully passed gun control legislation but a proposed federal ban on assault weapons, similar to the 1994 ban, failed to pass the senate.
- Despite bipartisan support for greater gun control measures, there has been no new gun control legislation in the six months following the San Bernardino massacre.
- Unlike other developed nations, such as Australia, America has not taken decisive steps towards preventing future massacres, like the one in Orlando, or trying combat the larger problem of gun violence.
- Why? The current political climate is, needless to say, divisive and the lobbying power of gun rights entities such as the National Rifle Association has only increased. Since 1996, there has been no substantive study of gun violence at the federal level. Given the lackluster results following the federal ban of automatic weapons and the fact that states with strong gun control laws (such as California) still experience mass shootings, it begs the question: what is the right response?
- After Newtown, we asked ourselves how many more of these shootings needed to happen before we agreed to do something about it. Perhaps the answer is Orlando. And maybe next time this happens, journalists will be able to return to their previous gun control pieces and add something new.

# Appendix

## Visualization Methods

All visualizations were created by the author.

Gun law grades by state:

- Tilemap based on [this article](#) from NPR. The District of Columbia was removed as it did not receive a ranking.
- Created in Adobe Illustrator
- As an interactive graphic: keep state labels (important given abstraction of geographic units), mouseover to show qualitative description of states' scores

Mass shootings victims by weapon type:

- Inspired by [this article](#) from the New York Times
- Remake: graphic would likely be more effective if could add transparency to each bubble to show overlap. Circle diameter currently sized by number of victims; could use circle area instead. Semiautomatic weapons are currently not standing out as much as they could
- Created in Mac's Numbers
- As an interactive graphic: on mouseover, show shooting details

FireArms deaths

- Cartogram; inspired by [this article](#) from the Oregonian
- Created in Adobe Illustrator
- As an interactive graphic: not sure if it makes sense to make a cartogram have hover-over, could highlight the entire block (instead of using static labels)

## Data Notes

Gun law grades by state:

- 'Rounded' letter grades for greater clarity; e.g. A+ and A- both became A

Mass shootings victims by weapon type:

- Mother Jones only has weapon type categorizations up to 2013. The data exists to manually update the remaining mass shootings. A more interesting visualization might be to categorize shootings involving assault rifles and/or high capacity magazines vs those which don't. A quick and dirty way to do this would be to query the full weapons description field for the words "assault" or "high capacity" and assign a boolean value of true if either term were found. This is certainly not a perfect method, and given the relatively small number of data points (<100), it could be worth manually checking each shooting

#### FireArms deaths

- Combined data from the CDC for 2013 and Mother Jones mass shootings data, assuming those 36 victims were counted amongst the ~11,000 other firearm homicides