

# Gun control policies in usa

[Law](#), [Gun Control](#)



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The USA has established several measures to regulate how Americans own and use guns. Currently, the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA) regulates the ownership of firearms in the country at the federal level (In Carter, 2015). The act states that only people aged 18 years and above can legally buy shotguns, rifles, and ammunition. Legal residents and American citizens must be at least 21 years to acquire handguns and other firearms. There are over 200 laws that regulate gun ownership and use across the USA. The Second Amendment of the Constitution provides the legal basis of owning firearms in the country. Other gun laws, state and federal, must adhere to the provisions of the constitution (In Carter, 2015). However, this does not mean that the country has effective gun control laws. Some Americans support the idea of having strict gun control laws while others call for lenient gun control policies. The country should establish standard and strict gun control laws to reduce cases of mass shootings and people who use their guns irresponsibly.

Gun control is one of the most controversial issues in American history. The country is divided into two halves when it comes to how to regulate the ownership and use of firearms. Those calling for strict gun laws argue that

many people misuse firearms, and they are a threat to public safety. The increased cases of mass shootings in the country are among the factors that have made a section of Americans to support strict gun control laws.

Proponents of stricter gun laws argue that the American population is heavily armed, and it is essential to regulate how people use their guns (Cook & Goss, 2014). Small Arms Survey of 2011 showed that there is an average of 88 guns in every 100 people in the USA. According to the report presented by Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, about 115, 994 people are shot in America every year. This includes suicides, accidents, murders, assaults, and police intervention. This is a clear indication that most of Americans misuse their guns.

Some Americans do not support the idea of having strict gun control laws. Other Americans feel that strict gun control laws will reduce the safety of Americans. This is mainly because most of the civilians in America acquire guns for self-protection (Carter, 2019). Thus, imposing strict laws to regulate the use of guns will leave citizens with no means to protect themselves.

Some Americans argue that citizens should own guns so that they can be able to protect themselves from the government, in the case where it turns against the people. The issue of gun control policies is divisive among politicians. Some of them support the idea of strict gun control policies while others support lenient gun control laws. Currently, gun control regulations vary from state to state.

## **The History of Gun Control Policies**

Gun control policies are not new to Americans. The country has established several policies over the century to regulate how people acquire and use guns. However, the country has never had a general agreement about ownership and use of guns (Cook & Goss, 2014). The first gun control policy was established in 1931 after Al Capone established a gang that used guns to commit crimes. Congress made it mandatory for dealers to record gun sales to the national registry. The move aimed at regulating ownership of firearms in the country. Years later, a single gunman killed 13 people in Camden, New Jersey, and the country had to re-think how it could curb gun violence. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther in 1968 made most Americans call for stricter gun control laws (In Carter, 2015). Many citizens were worried that some people used guns for illegal activities, thus compromising public safety. This led to the establishment of the Gun Control Act of 1968, which became a law in the same year.

The act prohibited all the mentally sick, drug users, and convicted felons from acquiring guns. It also banned the selling of mail-order guns and changed the legal age of owning a gun to 21 years. President Lyndon B. Johnson noted that the Gun Control Act alone could not solve the problem of gun violence in the country. He requested Americans to be more responsible when using guns in order to enhance public safety. However, his calls for additional gun control regulation did succeed (Cook & Goss, 2014). President Johnson had proposed stricter laws to regulate the sale of guns and the number of guns in the country. However, the crime rate continued to

escalate, and most of the Americans saw the need to have strict gun control laws (In Carter, 2015). Proponents of strict gun laws argued that the crime rate was on the rise because people could easily acquire guns. Another section of the Americans maintained that citizens should acquire guns freely for personal protection. Surprisingly, white Americans argued that the crime rate was on the rise because many black Americans had acquired guns.

Concerns for the safety of Americans forced the National Rifle Association (NRA) to use the Second Amendment and its political influence on the lobby for the abolition of the previously established gun control policies. Notably, the NRA did not oppose efforts to control gun ownership and use. It even supported the establishment of the Gun Control Act of 1968. However, it changed its stand after many Americans began buying guns. The association lobbied to have gun ownership as part of the American freedom and a right for all American citizens. NRA used its influence to convince the American people that owning a gun was their constitutional right and not just a tool of enhancing personal safety. The efforts of NRA led to the establishment of the Firearms Owners' Protection Act of 1986 (In Carter, 2015). The new law diluted most of the provisions of the previous gun laws, including the Gun Control Act of 1968. For instance, the new law eliminated the requirement to register all gun sales in the national registry. The abolition of the national registry for gun owners became a big hindrance to the country's effort to control ownership and use of guns.

NRA has continued to fight for minimum laws for regulating gun ownership since the 1986 Firearms Owners' Protection Act. The association heads

campaigns to convince Americans that it is their constitutional right and patriotic culture to own guns. However, the USA has also continued to experience cases of mass shootings in different parts of the country. Reports from law enforcers show that most of the guns used in mass shootings were acquired illegally (Spitzer, 2018). Others were sold to people that are not legally qualified to own guns, especially those with criminal histories and those with mental illnesses. It has become a routine for politicians to use the issue of gun control policies in their campaigns. However, Congress has failed, or it is unwilling or unable to pass gun control laws. Gun politics has remained a controversial issue in the USA every election year.

The topic of gun control policies has become a taboo to many leaders in the USA because they do not want to lose the support of voters. Therefore, politicians have perfected the game of telling voters things they want to hear (Wilson, 2007). It is common for leaders to talk about gun control regulations in public places but do nothing at the Congress level. The existing gun control policies are not adequate to safeguard the safety of Americans. The current policies are lenient, and they allow some Americans to use guns to hurt other Americans legally and illegally (Carter, 2019). The fact that Americans glorify guns has made citizens to ignore the magnitude of the harm that guns cause to fellow Americans. The USA needs to learn from history because guns have caused more harm than happiness to many Americans. It is high time for Americans to review previous gun control policies and establish more standard and effective laws/policies.

## **Analysis of the Gun Policy**

All past gun control policies have failed to achieve the intended objectives. This is mainly because Americans associate closely with firearms; thus, they are not committed to establishing strict gun control laws (Vernick & Webster, 2013). All the previous gun control policies have faced equal opposition from people who feel that it is their constitutional right and patriotic culture to own and use guns. Initially, Americans were free to acquire and use firearms. However, trends changed, and some of them started to use guns illegally and irresponsibly. Gun crimes increased, and the country had to establish laws to control ownership and use of guns. Proponents of gun rights opposed the move to regulate guns, but the rise of cases of gun-related crimes led to the establishment of the Gun Control Act of 1968.

The new policy (Gun Control Act) aimed at regulating gun ownership in the country to ensure only qualified people have access to guns. Unfortunately, more Americans continued to acquire guns, and the National Rifle Association (NRA) was able to dilute the provision of the Gun Control Act of 1968. The Firearms Owners' Protection Act of 1986 further weakened the provisions of the Gun Control Act. For instance, NRA pushed for the removal of the legal requirement to have all gun sales registered in the national registry (In Carter, 2015). This shows that America does not have the goodwill to establish and implement strict gun control policies. Previous gun control policies have failed because citizens do not support their implementation.

Other factors that have hindered the effectiveness of previous gun control policies are the lack of support from political leaders. The political class has

mastered the art of telling voters sweet words in order to win their votes (Wilson, 2007). Consequently, the gun control debate has become a divisive issue in American politics. Gun-related crimes have continued to rise, and cases of mass shootings have become rampant. More people continue to lose their lives because of mass shootings irrespective of the fact that the USA has over 200-gun control laws across all states. This is a clear indication that existing gun control policies are not adequate to enhance public safety. I feel that previous gun control laws/policies in the USA have failed to achieve the desired goals because of political influence. Some leaders in the country made Americans believe that it was their constitutional right to own guns (Carter, 2019). The fact that many Americans have a close attachment with firearms has complicated the implementation of gun control policies. These policies could be more effective if members of the public were educated about their importance. Similarly, such policies could be more effective if leaders did not use them to gain political mileage.

## **Conclusion**

The USA should establish standard and strict gun control laws to reduce cases of mass shootings and the use of guns irresponsibly and for illegal activities. It is clear that the USA has failed to control gun ownership and use among civilians. All past gun control policies have failed to achieve the intended objectives. The fact that each state can establish its gun control policies makes it difficult for the federal government to regulate the use of guns in the country. Gun control is one of the most controversial issues in American history. The country is divided on how to regulate ownership and use of firearms. Those who advocate for strict gun laws argue that many



people misuse firearms, which is a threat to public safety. Conversely, those who oppose strict gun control laws argue that the move contravenes their constitutional rights. Thus, the government should establish strict gun control policies that are standardized throughout the country. Leaders should also stop politicizing the issue of gun control. On the contrary, they should lobby for the establishment of policies that will regulate how Americans acquire and use firearms.