

Given this  
controversial debate  
over gun control, the  
proposed research  
paper wil...

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



The issue of gun control in the United States has long been an incredibly controversial one, with many unique and complex arguments both for and against it. Discussion on the issue has become even more heated and aggressive in the past few years, given the rise of school shootings, gun-related crime, and highly publicized shooting deaths due to gang violence in metropolitan areas. To that end, it is necessary to explore the possibility of enacting stricter gun control measures to address these systemic and troublesome issues. Despite the objectively terrible outcomes of gang violence, crime and shooting deaths, there are those who argue that enacting strict gun control would take away from a vital Constitutional right to bear arms. In this argument, this would make crime increase more than it already has by taking guns from law-abiding citizens to defend themselves from criminals who acquire guns illegally. Conversely, others believe the tenets of gun control would effectively deter crime by lowering the number of guns on the streets, and restricting gun access to those who should not have them. Both sides of the argument have their respective points and evidence to support them, making the issue particularly controversial. However, the major sticking point seems to be whether or not increased gun control will actually lower instances of shooting-related deaths.

Gun violence is often inextricably linked to gang violence, particularly in major metropolitan areas. The Uniform Crime Reports group notes that Chicago, Illinois has an extremely high rate of crime, which increased with each year. In 2010 alone, 436 murders, 1,359 criminal sexual assaults, 14,205 robberies, 74,561 thefts, nearly 20,000 car thefts and more were all committed in Chicago (Chicago Police Crime Summary, 2010). While this is

notably a lower set of numbers than the Chicago crime figures in 2009, the overall trend of crime is increasing. Violent crime is down on the whole, but murders have gone up, particularly as they relate to shooting deaths. The West and South sides of Chicago, in particular, suffer from gang violence, due to the segregated nature of the city driven by systemic poverty and racial discrimination.

In the absence of effective gun control legislation, social initiatives have begun to attempt to act as an alternative way to curb gun violence.

Neighborhood watch organizations and the Chicago Police coordinate to attempt to report and discourage gun violence in neighborhoods, as well as citywide public initiatives to lower gang violence like the CeaseFire Program, amongst other youth pilot programs. The chief goal of these organizations is to treat gun violence as if it were a disease, treating it where it comes from – individual gun violence environments and the people involved in them.

Through certain social initiatives, programs like CeaseFire seek to reduce risk to others by intervening and offering solutions to allow systemic socioeconomic factors to improve to the point where gun violence is less incentivized. Social support systems work with at-risk youth to prevent access to gangs, as well – with these programs and more, it may be possible to lower gun violence without dealing with the issue of restricting Constitutional rights. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains to be seen.

The true solution to how to address gun violence without using gun control has yet to be found; however, some critics believe that stricter gun control would lead to more problems than it starts. For example, Wilson argues that

stronger gun control legislation would just add more paperwork and complications to an already convoluted process, which would solve none of the real problems of getting guns in the hands of criminals: " Legal restraints on the lawful purchase of guns will have little effect on the illegal use of guns" (Wilson, 1994). In essence, his argument is that gun control will simply take the legal guns out of the hands of citizens who acquired them legally, while doing nothing to prevent criminals from getting guns through other means. In instances such as these, gun control opponents believe in offering greater control to the police - by allowing them to take unlicensed firearms, some argue, fewer people will be killed: " The most effective way to reduce illegal gun-carrying is to encourage the police to take guns away from people who carry them without a permit" (Wilson, 1994).

The difficult nature of this issue is that many of these anti-gun control arguments can still technically fall under the purview of ' gun control,' so it may be necessary to provide a clear definition of what exactly is meant by ' stricter gun control.' While many proposed sources will work on slightly different definitions of what constitutes gun control, for the sake of this research paper, the extent of gun control being explored involves stronger, more restrictive background checks, restraints on unlicensed sale of firearms at gun shows, restriction of concealed carry permits, and other related legislation that will be explored in greater detail within the research paper itself. These attributes and more are the primary components of gun control that are being argued about.

- Is there a strong correlation between stricter gun control legislation and lower rates of gun-related deaths?

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## **The hypothesis that has been developed for this research question is:**

- Increased gun control legislation can lead to lower crime and rates of gun-related deaths.

In order to answer the research question this research paper explores, several different types of resources will be referenced and drawn from. Primary sources will include official reports of crime statistics in major metropolitan areas, such as Chicago, Illinois (a city with a reputation for gang violence and high gun usage), in order to gain mathematical data on exactly how bad crime can be in places with more guns. Secondary sources will chiefly include academic journals and case studies exploring the correlation between gun control legislation and gun violence, and/or those which best discuss the ethical and practical ramifications of gun control legislation on gun violence. There will also be a few editorials from reporters for reputable publications like the New York Times to analyze the element of public opinion regarding gun control. With a healthy combination of primary and secondary sources, a reasonable, evidence-based conclusion should be reached which will support (or not support) the proposed hypothesis.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

Brent, David A., et al. "Ending the silence on gun violence." *Journal of the American Academy*

of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 52. 4 (2013): 333.

Brent et al. presents an editorial on gun violence, citing contemporary examples of gun violence and shootings in Newtown Connecticut to push forth gun control legislation. The authors present a reasonable, detailed

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definition of effective gun control that will be used as a basis for the research paper's stance on gun control - these include the approaches of restricted access to firearms, clinical screenings about the availability of firearms and how they are stored in the home, and better access to medical and mental health care/screening for gun owners to assess the potential for violence. This also provides substantial data to link firearms availability to homicide/suicide rates.

Chicago Police Department. (2010). " Crime summary." Chicagopolice. org. 2010.

This crime summary for Chicago crime statistics in the year 2010 provides a comprehensive, detailed rundown of all the violent crime that occurred in the city during that particular year, breaking it down by location and type of crime. This is extremely helpful to point out the rates at which violence is happening in major metropolitan areas, like Chicago, as well as pointing out the percentage of gang violence that occurs and gun-related violence within that rate. This also points out the severely entrenched discrimination and racial disadvantage levied against African-Americans, pointing out the almost inescapable nature of gang violence as a way of life for a subset of city dwellers.

Goss, Kristin A. *Disarmed: The missing movement for gun control in America.* Princeton

This book by Kristen Goss notes the prevalence of gun culture in America, and its effect in contributing to historic school shootings like Columbine. The collective American cultural response is also discussed, relating the

desensitization of Americans to shooting deaths, making the gun control debate more about their individual rights to bear arms than the prevention of horrific violence in places that seem very far away. Gun control opponents are said to have convincing arguments due to their ability to “[accommodate] themselves better to the stubborn realities and political inconveniences of a fragmented, federalist system” as opposed to the naivete of gun control advocates (30). Goss’ work will be used to discuss gun control in gun culture, and how social responses to the debate affect these decisions.

Gostin, Lawrence O., and Katherine L. Record. " Dangerous people or dangerous weapons:

access to firearms for persons with mental illness." JAMA 305. 20 (2011): 2108-2109.

Gostin and Record, in this article, note the deep and systemic connection between mental illness and gun violence. In essence, many people who commit large-scale shootings and gun violence are severely mentally ill, and current gun control legislation is ineffective in preventing them from having this access. While the authors advocate for better gun control, they also advocate for better regulation of the people who purchase them - despite the difficulty of accurately pointing out mentally ill individuals who wish to buy guns. New restrictions on the sale of firearms are sensibly provided, and will be advocated for in the research paper as new gun control legislation to consider in reducing gun violence.

Kates D. B., & Mauser, G. " Would banning firearms reduce murder and suicide? A review

of international and some domestic evidence." *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 30(2) (2007): 649-694.

This comprehensive review of international and domestic evidence on banning firearms provides both objective, numerical data and sociological discussion of the effect of gun control on gun violence. Demographic patterns of gun usage are provided, as well as the influence of social factors and the moral and ethical questions about gun violence. There is also a section advocating for looser gun control legislation as a way to lower crime. One of the most significant arguments made is that gun-controlled nations simply substitute other weapons in the performance of violence.

Kellermann, Arthur L., and Frederick P. Rivara. "Silencing the science on gun research." *JAMA* 309. 6 (2013): 549-550.

Kellermann and Rivara discuss the ways in which the medical community can help to address the effects of gun violence, and point out some of the holes in current gun control legislation. Some of these issues include the presence of private gun sales, which require no background check; still, the effectiveness of background checks and minimum age requirements for gun ownership are presented. The attempts of the pro-gun lobby to silence pro-gun control research is also presented, casting some doubt on anti-gun control legislation and research.

Makarinos, Matthew D., and Travis C. Pratt. "The effectiveness of policies and programs that attempt to reduce firearm violence a meta-analysis." *Crime & Delinquency* 58. 2 (2012): 222-244.



Makarios and Pratt, in their article, perform a meta-analysis of a substantial amount of research data on how effective gun control legislation and other methods of reducing gun violence. According to their results, reducing gun violence is most effective when it is done through “comprehensive community-based law enforcement initiatives,” such as the aforementioned CeaseFire (222). Gun control laws are shown to be effective as well, just not as effective as the aforementioned initiatives.

Rodríguez Andrés, Antonio, and Katherine Hempstead. “Gun control and suicide: The impact of

Rodriguez Andres and Hempstead, in their article, perform an analysis on state level data for crime rates to determine whether or not firearms regulations reduce male suicides, another significant attribute of gun violence. According to their empirical analysis, “firearms regulations which function to reduce overall gun availability have a significant deterrent effect on male suicide”; that being said, this overall targeting of gun control legislation is said to be more effective than legislation only targeting the mentally ill or unstable (95). This further complicates the issue of mental illness and its connection to gun violence, but provides a more even-handed approach to gun control as a means of stopping violence.

Wilson, J. “Just Take Away Their Guns.” New York Times, 1994.

This editorial from James Q. Wilson in the New York Times examines an anti-gun control stance, in which gun control laws are argued to be ineffective in lowering violent crime, even if they occur. In essence, Wilson says that it would take a “Dracnian, and politically impossible, confiscation of legally purchased guns to make much of a difference in the number used by

criminals” (Wilson, 1994). The phenomenon of criminals having handguns is not regulated through control of purchase, as criminals simply steal, borrow or privately purchase guns in ways that legislation cannot touch. This article presents the stark realities and arguments of those who are against gun control, arguing that it is not useful to try because they will not work.

### **Zimring, F. “ Is Gun Control Likely to Reduce Violent Killings?” University of Chicago**

Law Review 35(4) (1968): 721.

This article by Zimring explores the prevalence of gun use and violence, examining the relationship between violence and handguns specifically. According to Zimring, gun use “ increases the death rate from violence by a factor of three to five,” making the need to reduce gun prevalence important. However, what sets Zimring’s article apart from other advocates of gun control is his urging to make sure that gun control is strongly correlated with the reducing of guns in the very nature of violent attacks; furthermore, he notes that it would be an extremely difficult, expensive prospect to accomplish.