

# Should america have stronger gun control laws argumentative essay

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



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As of 2010, the current U. S. population is around 310 million people.

According to Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau, approximately 45 % of American households, which are represented by over 65 million people, who own a total of more than 200 million firearms. Every year the amount of arms in private hands continuously increases by 4. 5 million unit (Kleck, 1997, p. 45). The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution of 1791 guarantees Americans the right to keep and bear firearms. There are a number of federal laws, regulating ownership and use of firearms, however, every American state establishes the majority of gun control laws independently. For example, in 46 states there is no limit to the number of guns a person can buy. In 7 out of 50 states there are no age limitations on the purchase of firearms. In 2000 the Open Society Institute compared gun control laws of different states of the U. S. A. Their research showed that Massachusetts and Hawaii have strict laws, while Main, Alaska and Louisiana are distinguished by relatively free use of firearms (Lott, 2010, p. 78).

In addition, Universities and colleges in the U. S. have their own gun policies.

As a result, 82 out of 150 biggest higher educational institutions have totally

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banned firearms from campus (Kleck, 1997, p. 89). Nevertheless, tragedies such as Virginia Tech University mass murder in 2007, shooting at Colorado's Columbine High School in 1999, and thousands of underage Americans dying from firearm injuries every year, raise heated debates regarding gun control laws. This issue is a very controversial and painful one, since politicians are careful to take risk of strengthening gun legislation, which can negatively effect their political career.

In my opinion, America should not have stronger gun control laws, but a balanced legislation, letting adult American people own and use firearms to protect their lives, families and homes, but at the same time introducing wise restrictions to limit the access to firearms for children and teenagers, especially in public places like high schools and colleges.

## **Disadvantages of Stronger Gun Control Laws**

Pro-gun activists, who vote for gun control laws softening, declare that government attempts to limit constitutional rights, allowing Americans to keep and bear firearms, has a negative impact on the entire American legislation. Every small step towards this direction leads to serious and long-term consequences. I personally agree that guns do not kill people, people do. Criminals will always find a way to obtain any form of a hand gun or automatic weapon, while law-abiding citizens will be defenseless against them.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in the states with the least number of gun ownership restrictions have 22 % less of violent crimes, 30%

less murders, and 46% less burglaries. Besides, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that there is no proof that stronger gun control laws result in the decrease of crime level (Poe, 2003, p. 108). For this reason, I believe that in regions with more armed citizens, the level of crime is lower and the level of security is higher. Criminals usually do not tend to attack people, who are able to resist and protect themselves with guns.

### **Advantages of Stronger Gun Control Laws**

On the other hand, pro-gun control activists claim that the Second Amendment to the Constitution does not guarantee the right of all Americans to bear firearms, but is related solely to police and militia members. In their opinion gun is a risk factor by itself: in places with higher private gun ownership more gun injuries and deaths happen. Firearms at home are especially dangerous for children and teenagers. Over 5 thousand young Americans die of gun injuries annually.

Perennial statistics of FBI shows that every year a quarter of violent crimes and 60 to 75 % of murders in the U. S. are committed with the use of firearms. Furthermore, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, in 2004 almost 29. 6 thousand people died as a result of firearms in USA: out of which 11. 6 thousand were murdered and approximately 16. 7 thousand committed suicide. In order to compare, 58. 2 thousand Americans died during the Vietnam War (Poe, 2003, p. 178).

According to the research of Emory University, for every defensive uses of firearms of 22 incidents of unlawful use of firearms including suicide occur.

Availability of guns at home triples the risk of burglary (on the other hand, usually firearms are purchased by people residing in criminal districts), and increases the risk of family member suicide by five times.

In 1986 criminalists Arthur Kellermann and Don Reay published an article in New England Journal of Medicine, proving that an American possessing a firearm has 43 times higher chance to shoot a family member, than a chance to shoot a criminal, who broke into their house. Moreover, it is estimated that for every uses of a gun or a rifle for self-defense, there occur 1. 3 accidental deaths, 4. 6 firearm use in violent crime, and 37 suicides involving the use of firearms (Kleck, 1997, p. 221).

## **Pros and Cons of Stricter Gun Legislation**

Defenders and opponents of “armed America” actively operate with statistics, proving their points of view. Both sides try claim that ideological opponents distort and incorrectly quote referencing research results. However, official data of the Bureau of Justice Statistics reveals that the number of crimes committed with the use of firearms in the U. S. is constantly decreasing since 1993, even though the total amount of guns in private hands is increasing gradually. In 1993 11% of total crimes were committed with the use of guns and rifles, and in 2005 the percentage has fallen to 9% (Poe, 2003. 105). For this reason, there is no proof of direct correlation between the total amount of guns and the number of crimes. Besides, the number of firearm incidents has also decreased. In 1993 over one million of firearm incidents were reported, while in 2005 – only 419 incidents. Thus Lott (2010) has made an example of Brazil, where legal

purchase of firearms is almost impossible, but it does not stop criminals from arranging weekly street shootings where many people are murdered freely (p. 245).

Dave Kopel, a member of Independence Institute, is one of the fiercest critics of Kellermann and Reay research on crimes and suicides involving the use of firearms. He claims that they based their conclusion on limited statistics of just one American county, and their calculations have serious arithmetic shortcomings. The main argument of their critics is that statistics thoroughly considers dead, injured, and arrested citizens. However, it fails to consider all the occurrences of defensive firearm use, because only 20-25% of people who have successfully defended themselves call the police afterwards (Lott, 2010, p. 189). Furthermore, Kopel emphasizes one more important factor: self-murderers will always find a way to kill themselves. For example, in Japan private possession of firearms is prohibited, but nonetheless, their rate of suicide is twice as high as in the USA.

According to the research of Florida State University, Americans use firearms 2.5 million times for self-defense every year. Therefore, undoubtedly, there are real threats and reasons for owning a gun in order to protect oneself, one's family or home, and we cannot deprive American citizens of this right, which brings them a feeling of security and peace. Moreover, legitimate use of firearms occurs 3-5 times more often than illegitimate one, and the majority of people who use rifles for self-defense do not fire it, since 1% of criminals attacking them were injured and only 0.1% was killed (Poe, 2003, pp. 210-211).

Kleck (1997) claims that USA is distinguished by a significantly lower number of hot burglaries, accompanied by violence and threats to house owners in comparison to those countries, where household owners are not allowed to possess guns (p. 67). Thus, hot burglaries in the U. S. comprise 13 % of total crimes, while in Great Britain and Netherlands, where there is a strict anti-gun legislation, they comprise 45% of overall violent crimes. The author proves his point, relying on multiple interviews with arrested burglars, who avoid breaking into homes where owners can use firearms against them.

Another strong point in defense of softer gun control laws is made by Poe (2003), who in his book tries to prove that if Americans renounce their rights to own guns, it will result in disappearance of traditional American culture (p. 126). As he says, a boy becomes a man when his father hands him a rifle and takes him for hunting. In his opinion, gun ban will lead to the decline of American democracy and government dictatorship.

Public opinion surveys, regularly conducted by Gallup service, show that the number of supporters of stronger gun control laws is continuously decreasing starting since 1990. In January of 2007, for the first time in fifteen years pro-gun advocates constituted less than a half (49%) of the total amount of respondents. While the number of people, who support gun laws softening, has reached 14%. A survey, conducted at the end of 2006 showed that the majority of Americans believe that a gun or a rifle makes their home a more secure place. However, 43% of people claimed just the opposite (Kleck, 1997, pp. 320-323).

Taking into account all the arguments proving that stronger gun control laws should not be introduced in America, we must not forget that a gun in the hands of a child or a teenager, who has not reached mental and intellectual maturity, and who may often perceive weapon as a toy without realizing all the damaging consequences of its misuse, is something totally opposite to a gun in the hands of an adult, trying to protect his family and home. I am convinced that massacres in public educational institutions that from time to time strike American nation are not simply the result of soft gun control laws. The access to weapon does not turn young people into murders. We should search for the cause in family and national culture that raises this kind of young generation. However, I think that mass shootings like in Virginia Tech University or Columbine High School could be avoided if there were wise age limitations on firearm purchase, and if students were not allowed to carry guns on campus territory.

## **Conclusion**

The question whether free access to firearms influences the rate of crime and overall security of the society still remains opened. In any case crime in USA is one of the most essential problems of the country. Every year 6 million Americans become victims of crime (Lott, 2010, p. 34). However a wrongful interpretation of crime statistics must not convince people of the need for stronger gun control laws. Numerous researches indicate that disarmament of law-abiding citizens is not a leap forward to a more secure society, but towards crime indulgence. It is a well-known fact that criminals



rarely buy arms legally. On average, only 7 % of criminals legally purchase their weapon (Poe, 2003, p. 285).

For this reason, if there must be stricter gun control laws, they should apply to illegal weapon trade. In the states where citizens are allowed to bear arms the rate of violent crimes is lower, than in the states where people are deprived of this right. Thus, it is wrong to claim that stronger gun control laws lead to crime rate decrease. At the same time absolutely no gun control and regulation would put into danger the most vulnerable American citizens like children and teenagers, who are most likely to misuse firearms and hurt each another. That is why balanced gun legislation must be executed in order to protect every group of American society.