

Safe Communities:

Reducing Gun Violence While Respecting 2nd Amendment Rights

December 2025



Top Line

- 1. The US and Texas have an extremely high rate of gun violence**
 - The US gun death rate is more than 10 times higher than the average of other large, advanced countries, and Texas is even higher.
 - 4,561 Texans were killed by guns in 2023, more than 12 a day.
- 2. Gun violence especially affects young adults (age 15 – 34) and children.**
Firearms are now the number one cause of death of children age 1 – 17.
- 3. Texas gun deaths have jumped over 60% since Governor Abbott took office just 10 years ago.**
- 4. Gun laws matter** - Laws to limit the availability and access of guns help to reduce gun death rates.
- 5. There are many specific actions, which most Texans support, that can reduce gun violence while still respecting Second Amendment rights, including:**
 - Expanding background checks to keep guns out of the wrong hands
 - Banning the sale and possession by people with Domestic Violence restraining orders
 - Implementing “Extreme Risk” orders (aka “Red Flag Laws”)
 - Raising the age for all gun purchases to 21
 - Investing more in mental health

We can reduce gun violence while respecting the Second Amendment, by taking reasonable actions that a large majority of Texans support.

Backup

1. The US and Texas have an extremely high rate of gun violence

- a. Nearly 47,000 people died of gun-related injuries in the United States in 2023, according to the latest available statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (1) That is over 125 every day.
- b. As shown in the table below, the death rate (per 100,000 people) in the US was 13.5 in 2021, far higher than any other large, advanced country. (2)
 - We are more than 10 times higher than the average of the other countries, and almost 6 times higher than the second highest country, France (at 2.32).
 - If our gun death rate was equal to these other countries, over 40,000 American lives would be saved every year.

Firearm Death Rate by Country - 2021
(per 100,000 people)

Country	Total Firearm Death Rate
Australia	0.76
Austria	2.05
Belgium	1.39
Canada	2.21
Czechia	1.36
France	2.32
Germany	0.84
Israel	2.26
Italy	0.88
Japan	0.02
Korea (Republic of)	0.03
Netherlands	0.35
Spain	0.48
Sweden	1.16
Switzerland	2.14
United Kingdom	0.13
United States	13.50
Average excluding US	1.15
Multiple of US to the other large advanced countries	11.75

Source: Commonwealth Fund, "Comparing Deaths from Gun Violence in the U.S. with Other Countries", 10/30/24,
<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2024/oct/comparing-deaths-gun-violence-us-other-countries>

- c. Texas' gun rate is even higher than the US average. (3)
 - As shown in Appendix 1, the Texas gun death rate in 2023 was 14.9 per 100,000, above the US average of 13.7
 - And the gun death rate in Texas has increased faster than the US average - rising by 2.7 since 2018, while the US rate went up 1.8.
- d. Most gun deaths are suicides, not murders. (4)
 - Though they tend to get less public attention than gun-related murders, suicides have long accounted for the majority of U.S. gun deaths.
 - In 2023, 58% of all gun-related deaths in the U.S. were suicides (27,300), while 38% were murders (17,927).
 - About eight-in-ten U.S. murders in 2023 – 17,927 out of 22,830, or 79% – involved a firearm.
 - More than half of all suicides in 2023 – 27,300 out of 49,316, or 55% – also involved a gun.

2. Gun violence especially affects young adults (age 15 – 34) and children.

- a. As shown in the table below, gun death rates are much higher for young people aged 15 -34 than other age groups. (5)

Gun Death Rates by Age Group
(Deaths per 100,000 people)

Age Group	Gun Death Rate		
	2014	2023	% Change
5 - 14	0.9	1.6	77.80%
15 - 24	14	20.3	44.90%
25 - 34	14.7	21.1	43.50%
35 - 44	12.1	17.8	47.10%
45 - 54	12.2	14.6	19.70%
55 - 64	11.4	13.2	15.80%
65 - 74	11.5	11.8	2.60%
75 - 84	13.9	15.9	14.40%
85+	15	17.7	18.00%
Total	10.7	14.9	39.30%

Source: National Safety Council, Injury facts,
<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/guns/data-details/>

- In addition, the death rate has grown most rapidly in those age groups. (5)
 - Among those younger age groups, most gun deaths are from homicide. For older age groups, suicide becomes the most common form of gun death.
 - For adults aged 55 and older, suicides account for 86% of gun deaths. (5)
- Gun deaths of children (17 and under) are very high in the US compared to other countries. (6)
 - In 2020, firearms passed motor vehicles as the number one cause of death of children age 1 – 17 in the US.
 - In no other large, advanced country are firearms in the top four causes of death for children and teens, let alone the number one cause as in the US.
 - Gun laws make a difference. The U.S. states with the most lenient gun laws have higher rates of child and teen firearm deaths than states with stricter gun laws. Specifically, states with the least firearm law provisions had a childhood gun death rate of 8.7 per 100,000, compared with 4.3 for the states with the most firearm law provisions. (6)

3. Texas gun deaths have jumped over 60% since Governor Abbott took office just 10 years ago.

- a. We lost 2,848 Texans to guns in 2014. By 2023, this number had surged to 4,561, a 60% increase. (7)
- b. The gun death rate also shot up, from 10.7 in 2014 to 14.9 in 2023, up 39%.

Gun Deaths by Year in Texas

	Deaths per 100,000	Number of Deaths
2014	10.7	2,848
2015	11.7	3,203
2016	12.1	3,353
2017	12.4	3,513
2018	12.2	3,522
2019	12.7	3,683
2020	14.2	4,164
2021	15.6	4,613
2022	15.3	4,630
2023	14.9	4,561
Change over past 9 years	4.2	1,713
% Change	39.3%	60.1%

Source: Centers for Disease Control,
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/state-stats/deaths/firearms.html>

- c. Greg Abbott became Texas Governor in 2015. One might think that reducing gun deaths would have been a priority, given these stark statistics and the very visible mass shootings we have experienced. But instead, Republicans in the Texas Legislature have passed, and Governor Abbott has signed, laws to make guns even more prevalent in our communities. Here are a couple of examples:
- During the 2025 legislative session, Governor Abbott signed Senate Bill 1362, which **bans the recognition of red flag orders or extreme protective orders.** (8) Extreme protective orders allow a judge or magistrate to temporarily restrict a person's access to firearms during a personal crisis. The Anti-Red Flag Act would prevent authorities from using a red flag order to confiscate a person's guns during a civil case. (Red Flag Laws are supported by 88% of Texans.) (9)
 - Governor Abbott also signed House Bill 3053, which **bans local governments from operating gun buyback programs.** (8) (57% of Texans support allowing local governments to operate gun buyback programs. Only 22% of Texans oppose this.) (9)

Texans are concerned about gun violence and want our leaders to do something about it. As noted below, a very large majority of Texans support common-sense actions to start to reduce gun violence.

4. Gun laws matter - Laws to limit the availability and access of guns help to reduce gun death rates.

- Data clearly shows that states with more "gun friendly" laws have far higher rates of gun violence.
 - Gun Friendliness rankings are provided by Guns & Ammo, a pro-gun publication. The most recent rankings are for 2023.
 - In general, states that are the least gun friendly have laws like registration requirements, Red Flag laws, and prohibitions against high-capacity magazines. The most gun friendly states do not have these limits and allow for things like permitless carry of firearms. (10)

- b. As shown in Appendix 2, the most gun friendly states have much higher rates of gun violence than the least gun friendly states
 - The average gun death rate in 2023 for the 10 most gun friendly states was 17.3 per 100,000.
 - The average for the 10 least gun friendly states was 7.5
 - The least gun friendly states still have a gun death rate far higher than any advanced country, in part because guns can easily be transported across state lines.
 - Texas, which is in the top 10 for gun friendliness, had a gun death rate of 14.9 in 2025, twice as high as the least gun friendly states.
- c. Looking at this another way, the Rand research organization has done extensive research into the evidence about gun laws and gun deaths. (11)
 - Their research shows that while in many cases the correlations are small, there is supportive evidence that some gun laws reduce gun violence.
 - For example, they found supportive evidence that Minimum Age Requirements reduce suicide rates, and that Concealed Carry laws increase homicide rates.

5. There are many specific actions that can reduce gun violence while still respecting Second Amendment rights.

None of these actions will immediately eliminate gun violence, because there are so many guns already in circulation. However, they have been shown to work and can begin to reduce the epidemic of gun violence in the US and Texas. Most of these can be implemented at the Federal or state level.

To paraphrase an old saying, the best time to have implemented these policies would have been 20 years ago. If we had, we may have avoided the 60% increase in gun deaths in the 10 years since Abbott has been in office, and some of the most horrific mass shootings may have been avoided or reduced. But we don't have that option. We do have the option to elect leaders who will take action now. **The second-best time to implement these policies is now.**

Effective policies, which are supported by most Texans, include:

- a. **Expand background checks to keep guns out of the wrong hands.** Analysis of multiple studies by the Rand organization found that there is moderate evidence that universal background check laws reduce total homicides (11). 89% of Texans support background checks on all gun sales. Only 11% oppose them. (9)
- b. **Ban sale and possession for people with a Domestic Violence restraining order.** This seems like common sense, and Texans agree - 90% of Texans support this. (9)
- c. **Implement “Extreme Risk” orders (aka “Red Flag Laws”).** These laws allow courts, through due process, to temporarily take firearms from people whom family, friends, police officers or others report as potentially dangerous to themselves or others.
 - 19 states already have these.
 - A recent study from researchers at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health found that Florida’s red flag gun law, which was enacted in response to the 2018 Parkland mass shooting, was associated with an 11 percent reduction in firearm homicide rates from 2019 to 2021. (12)
 - They have also been shown to reduce suicide rates. (13)
 - And 88% of Texans support Red Flag Laws. (9)
- d. **Allow local government gun buy-back programs.** These give gun owners a safe alternative to dispose of guns. 57% of Texans support this, and only 22% oppose it. (9)
- e. **Raise the age for all gun purchases to 21.** Gun violence disproportionately involves young people - both as victims and perpetrators.
 - The shooter who killed 21 people at Robb Elementary in Uvalde in 2022 purchased the gun he used just days after turning 18. (14)
 - The Rand organization also finds that there is supportive evidence that raising the age to purchase a gun reduces suicides. (11)
- f. **Invest in mental health.** The National Institutes of Health reports that the link between mental health and violence is weak. However, "mental health professionals play a critical role in assessing their patients for violence risk,

counseling about firearm safety, and guiding the creation of rational and evidence-based public policy that can be effective in mitigating violence risk."

(15)

- NIH also reports that "mental illness is strongly associated with increased risk of suicide, which accounts for over half of US firearms-related fatalities."
- Texas severely underinvests in mental health. On average the US had 284 mental health providers per 100,000 people in 2021. Texas had 133, less than half as many. Texas has the second lowest number of mental health providers relative to our population. (17)

- g. **Be willing to study the issue and look for solutions.** Solving gun violence will take multiple actions over time. We need legislators who recognize the problem, are willing to take reasonable actions, and to learn from experience.

We can reduce gun violence and save lives, while still respecting the Second Amendment, by taking reasonable actions that a large majority of Texans support.

More Information

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2. KFF, Analysis of the effect of gun violence on children and teens, 7/18/23, <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/>

Sources

1. Pew Research, "What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.", 3/5/25, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/05/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/>
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3. KFF - <https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/state-indicator/firearms-death-rate-by-raceethnicity/?dataView=1¤tTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22collId%22%3A%22Location%22,%22sort%22%3A%22asc%22%7D>
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10. Guns & Ammo, "Best States for Gun Owners, 2023", 1/4/2024, <https://www.gunsandammo.com/editorial/best-states-for-gun-owners-2023/488509>
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12. Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, 8/28/24, <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/news/red-flag-laws-may-reduce-growing-burden-firearm-homicides>
13. Harvard Kennedy School, 11/30/22, <https://journalistsresource.org/criminal-justice/mass-shootings-red-flag-laws-update/>
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15. NIH, 1/25/18, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5784421/>
16. NIH, 5/25/15, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4211925/>
17. Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, <https://www.c-uphd.org/mental-health-provider-rate-per-100000-population-in-the-united-states.html>

Appendix 1 – Gun Death Rate by State

Gun Death Rates by State

(Deaths per 100,000)

Location	2018	2023	Change
United States	11.9	13.7	1.8
Mississippi	22.9	29.4	6.5
Louisiana	21.4	28.3	6.9
Alabama	21.8	25.6	3.8
New Mexico	20.7	25.3	4.6
Alaska	21.0	23.5	2.5
Tennessee	17.8	22.0	4.2
Arkansas	18.9	21.9	3.0
Montana	17.3	21.5	4.2
Wyoming	21.5	21.5	0.0
Missouri	21.5	21.4	-0.1
Oklahoma	16.8	19.9	3.1
South Carolina	17.6	19.1	1.5
Georgia	15.7	18.6	2.9
Arizona	15.3	18.5	3.2
Kentucky	16.9	18.4	1.5
Nevada	17.9	18.4	0.5
Indiana	14.7	18.3	3.6
Idaho	16.6	17.9	1.3
West Virginia	18.2	16.8	-1.4
Colorado	15.2	16.6	1.4
North Carolina	13.3	16.4	3.1
Kansas	14.8	16.3	1.5
Ohio	13.1	15.0	1.9
Texas	12.2	14.9	2.7
Utah	13.2	14.8	1.6
Oregon	11.7	14.2	2.5
Maine	10.3	14.0	3.7
Michigan	12.9	13.9	1.0
Virginia	11.8	13.8	2.0
Florida	12.9	13.7	0.8
Pennsylvania	12.5	13.6	1.1
Illinois	10.9	13.5	2.6
Washington	10.4	13.0	2.6
North Dakota	11.5	12.8	1.3
Wisconsin	10.1	12.7	2.6
Maryland	11.7	12.3	0.6
South Dakota	13.6	12.3	-1.3
Delaware	11.6	12.0	0.4
Vermont	12.8	12.0	-0.8
Nebraska	9.0	10.6	1.6
Iowa	8.7	10.5	1.8
New Hampshire	10.8	9.6	-1.2
Minnesota	7.8	8.9	1.1
California	7.5	8.0	0.5
Connecticut	4.9	6.2	1.3
Hawaii	4.0	4.9	0.9
Rhode Island	3.3	4.8	1.5
New York	4.1	4.7	0.6
New Jersey	4.8	4.6	-0.2
Massachusetts	3.5	3.7	0.2

Source: KFF - <https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/state-indicator/firearms-death-rate-by-raceethnicity/?dataView=1¤tTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

Appendix 2 – Gun Death Rates Relative to Gun Friendliness

	2023 Gun Death Rate (per 100,000)	2023 Gun Friendliness
Wyoming	21.5	1
Idaho	17.9	2
Montana	21.5	3
Utah	14.8	4
North Dakota	12.8	5
Arizona	18.5	6
South Dakota	12.3	7
Tennessee	22	8
Texas	14.9	9
Kansas	16.3	10
Alaska	23.5	11
Oklahoma	19.9	12
Georgia	18.6	13
Kentucky	18.4	14
Indiana	18.3	15
Arkansas	21.9	16
Alabama	25.6	17
New Hampshire	9.6	18
Missouri	21.4	19
West Virginia	16.8	20
Mississippi	29.4	21
Florida	13.7	22
Ohio	15	23
South Carolina	19.1	24
Wisconsin	12.7	25
North Carolina	16.4	26
Louisiana	28.3	27
Nevada	18.4	28
Maine	14	29
Nebraska	10.6	30
Michigan	13.9	31
Pennsylvania	13.6	32
Iowa	10.5	33
New Mexico	25.3	34
Virginia	13.8	35
Oregon	14.2	36
Vermont	12	37
Colorado	16.6	38
Minnesota	8.9	39
Washington	13	40
Illinois	13.5	41
Delaware	12	42
Rhode Island	4.8	43
Maryland	12.3	44
Connecticut	6.2	45
Massachusetts	3.7	46
California	8	47
Hawaii	4.9	48
New Jersey	4.6	49
New York	4.7	50

Average of the
10 states with the
most lenient gun
laws

17.3

Average of the
10 states with the
strictest gun
laws

7.5

Source: Guns & Ammo, "Best States for Gun Owners, 2023",
1/4/2024, <https://www.gunsandammo.com/editorial/best-states-for-gun-owners-2023/488509>