

Gun Control and School Shootings

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School shootings might have a large and small numbers of victims; however, they always cover more than one school: it is an issue of a whole state or country. This is an alarming situation that requires immediate actions with the right direction towards primary causes and measures to reduce the possibility of a repetition of a tragedy. Although stricter gun control laws might cause anxiety related to the probability of increasing gun-purchasing intentions, this is the best option that will help to prevent mass school shootings.

The recent research related to the fear that there will be an increase in gun-purchasing has been conducted after the Orlando mass shooting; nevertheless, the findings can be applied to school shootings as well considering the same level of fear for their lives. Stroebe, Leander, and Kruglanski (2017) decided to investigate what had motivated the increase in gun sales and whether gun control concerns had promoted it. The importance of their research lies in the use of data collected after 2016 among gun owners and non-owners. Overall, they found that “there is no support that [gun sales] following the Orlando shooting was motivated by gun owners’ fear that the government would introduce stricter gun control legislation” (Stroebe et al., 2017, p. 12). In other words, the possibility of stricter gun control laws does not have a direct impact on gun sales and an increase in the numbers of mass shootings.

The main issue of introducing stricter gun control laws lies in the fact that it causes polarized debates on the necessity of guns as a means of self-protection, for instance. Apart from that, Newman and Hartman (2017, p. 2) mentioned the words of gun rights activist Wayne LaPierre who offered an ironic situation: “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” Researchers can make hypotheses that the main factors of school shootings are cultural backgrounds, violent content of movies and computer games, and constant

bullying, but teenagers and adults arrange school shootings with guns. It is also interesting to note that views on stricter gun control laws can change radically depending on the living proximity where a mass shooting has occurred (Newman & Hartman, 2017). At the same time, there is a relatively meek response from the US government considering the implementation of new gun control laws that can provoke new mass school shootings along with incidents with a few numbers of injured children and a low death toll.

There is a necessity in appealing to comparative statistics in order to understand the overall picture of the tragedies without stricter gun control laws. In the period from 1966 to 2008, the US had 44 school shootings, whereas in the period from 2013 to 2015, the numbers increased to 154 school shootings (Sheth, 2016, para. 3). Only 11 states had no school shootings; moreover, states with an absence of school shootings or a low level of such incidents “conduct background checks for firearm purchases - outside of those mandated by federal law for firearms purchased from federally licensed firearm dealers” (Sheth, 2016, para. 7). One should remember that, with the total ban on gun sales, there will always be a person who can manage to conduct a new mass school shooting. Nevertheless, proper education and stricter gun control laws besides ones legislated at the federal level will slightly reduce the number of incidents, and the data mentioned above is a striking example of this hypothesis.

The US government and officials sympathize with children’s and adults’ deaths in mass shootings; nevertheless, they rarely respond immediately to the problem with stricter laws as a solution considering the democratic regime and the possible negative reaction of people who want to protect themselves or for whom the gun industry is a way of earning money. Nevertheless, the US is not the only country with an issue of mass shootings, but there are examples of how direct intervention with stricter gun control laws has reduced the number of

incidents with gun involvement significantly. Almost 22 years ago, Australia faced a tragedy when a young man shot 35 people to death and wounded 23 (Lopez, 2018, para. 32). The Australian government responded with legislation for stricter gun control laws, with further confiscation and compulsory registration of all firearm items. For a better understanding of positive consequences, it is important to mention the following: “while 13 gun massacres occurred in Australia in the 18 years before the [Australia gun control law], [...], in the 14 following years, there were no gun massacres” (Lopez, 2018, para. 37). Hence, before entering the debate on the side of gun rights activists, it is essential to refer to the experience of a country that has encountered such an issue, and the Australian government has not been afraid to implement direct and strict measures.

To conclude, there is no guarantee that prohibition or strict gun control laws will prevent another mass shooting either at school or other public places. Nevertheless, it is the US government’s obligation to respond to the issue without further delay and, considering lethal outcomes and a ruined psyche, to legislate stricter gun control laws without excessive emotion towards gun rights activists. With the example of Australia, the confiscation and registration of all firearm items reduced the number of mass shootings to zero. In this way, it is possible to make a firm argument that legislation of stricter gun control laws will prevent school shootings and save many lives along with mental health.

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