

Gun Control: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Gun control is a serious matter in the United States as a result of many recent shootings that have occurred killing many innocent people. This literature review provides an insight about how gun control has been defined in the U.S. and how shootings have brought national attention to gun control laws. Because of the shootings that have occurred many are starting to compare the use of guns to the amount of violent crime in the U.S. and what policies experts recommend to prevent gun related homicide. This literature review also provides the different sides to the argument concerning gun control and how some believe that there isn't a real correlation between guns and homicide. But many continue to argue about guns and how they actually affect society and others argue that they do not harm society as much as gun control advocates believe.

Gun Control: A Review of Literature

Gun control has been a very polarizing issue for the United States, specifically in the past recent years. The public has been very vocal about whether or not certain gun control policies should be issued due to the amount of mass shootings that have occurred recently. However the public is split into two main groups, those that support gun control and those who oppose it. Certain proposals have been suggested by house democrats to regulate the sale of guns. But in order to issue these policies that the democrats have in mind they first need to determine if past events have had a major influence on violent crime in the U.S. Many disagree about whether or not gun control policies should be issued and it would be best to fully understand what this issue of gun control really is before making conclusions about it. Therefore the following questions must be answered:

1. How has the issue of gun control been defined in the United States?
2. What recent events have brought the issue of gun control to national attention?
3. How are the recommendations for new gun control polices being received?
4. Is there a connection between gun control policy and violent crime?

The following literature review will answer these questions through an informative response and provide information regarding gun control. As well as the numerous perspectives and beliefs about those who are concerned with this issue.

How has the issue of gun control been defined in the United States?

Gun control does not have a specific definition for each country in the world but many may interpret it differently depending on the status of its policies in that nation. In the United States, guns have been a result of large amounts of death and crime and due to recent mass

shootings that have occurred many believe that gun control is necessary to protect civilians. The effort to control and regulate the amount of guns is considered gun control in the United States. This definition has become more known and understood by Americans because gun control has become a major issue for the U.S. and gun control advocates realize that stricter gun laws may lead to the decrease of murder that occurs in the U.S. But many believe that gun control is an infringement on their 2nd amendment, the right to bear arms. However there has been some discussion about what the 2nd amendment really means and how ambiguous this law really is. The 2nd amendment can be interpreted in many ways and because of that those who support gun control state that people who own guns and use them for recreational purposes defeat the purpose and meaning of the 2nd amendment. The United States militia is a “natural defense of a free country against sudden foreign invasions, domestic insurrections...” (Joseph. B 2012) most democrats believe because of this statement civilians have no real purpose for owning guns especially automatic rifles. The main target of gun control are automatic weapons because gun control supporters believe they are very dangerous and destructive. Automatic weapons can kill significantly large amounts of people in a small amount of time and this concerns those who are pro-gun control. But those who oppose gun control claim owning these weapons are part of their right and it is not to be taken away.

The definition of gun control has been shaped and aimed at guns but many are debating which guns specifically. Many shootings that have occurred in U.S. history involve high caliber automatic rifles and as a result large amounts of people have been significantly injured or dead. Those in favor of gun control strongly believe that these automatic weapons belong strictly to the military to defend our country and that there is no reason for an individual to own such guns. The second amendment isn't for “...a hunting party or sports clays club” gun control supporters

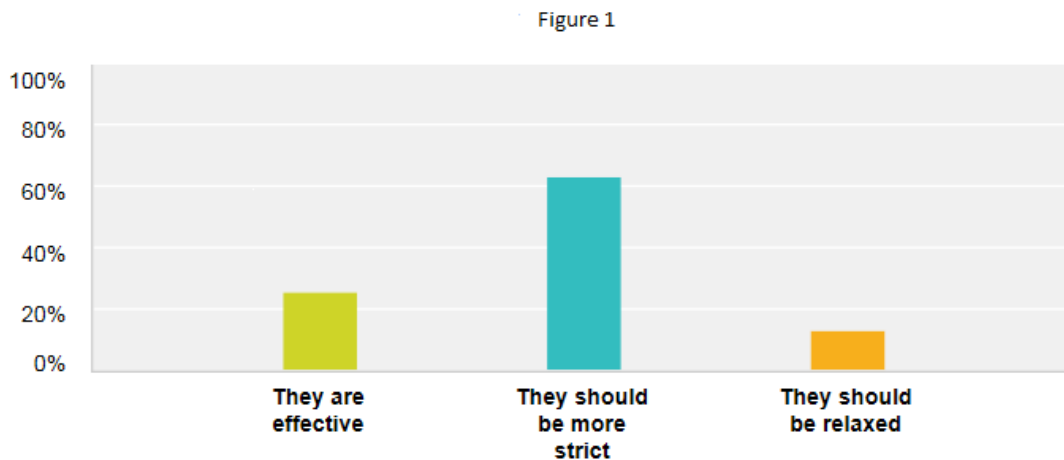
believe “the purpose of the Second Amendment is to secure our ability to oppose enemies foreign and domestic...” (Joseph. B, 2012). This defines what gun control is and defines it because many are not sure the limits of gun control and are debating which guns should be restricted.

Due to the similar interpretations of gun control, and what gun restrictions should be in place, defines how gun control has been understood and made in the U.S. Many believe that automatic weapons are too destructive and only belong in the military and therefore many want these guns to be restricted or even prohibited from the public. But debates continue to rage on concerning gun control and those who oppose it state that it is a violation of their right to bear arms and because of that they are not willing to give up their weapons.

What recent events have brought gun control to national attention?

Gun control has become a major issue for the United States but mainly because of recent events that have occurred and thus bringing attention to the entire nation. It seems as if gun control was not a major problem until the past decade and this concern for it is due to mass shootings that have occurred in public schools to even movie theaters. After the massacre of 20 children and staff members in Sand Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, president Obama decided to “pursue new gun controls” (Michael. S, 2013). President Obama presented a proposal to the public and congress that signed “23 Executive Orders to prevent future gun violence” and proposed “new legislation” (Michael. S, 2013). Obama later stated that the first task as a society should be “keeping the children safe” (Michael. S, 2013). It’s clear that Obamas motivation to push for stronger gun control laws has come from the recent shooting in Newtown. This shooting has impacted the views of many as they sympathize for the parents and

relatives of the children. In fact there are quite a bit of Americans that believe gun control laws should be stricter as shown in figure 1. An online survey was conducted by the author to get a better understanding on what society thinks about gun control. Participants from various demographics and age groups were asked about what they think on current gun control regulations in the U.S. The graph shows that 62.5% of the participants believe gun control laws should be more strict, and 25% believe they are effective, and 12.5% believe gun control laws should be relaxed. A chart depicting survey responses to the question “What do you think of current regulations on gun control in the United States?” Although this survey wasn’t applied to a large amount of people it still shows what a small portion of society believes about the current regulations on gun control.



A month after the shooting in Newtown another shooting occurred at a Texas college which made the headlines in the local paper. An “altercation” between two students at the North Harris campus of Lone Star College in Houston (Christophe. C, 2013). Two innocent people were caught in the crossfire of the shooting leaving them injured and another person suffered a heart attack while this altercation took place. This shooting just like the one in Newtown has brought

“national attention to current gun control laws” and “calls to review current laws to be altered” this is the effect of recent shootings and “murder” that has taken place (Chistophe. C, 2013). Marcos Rael feels that “stricter gun control is inevitable after all these recent shootings” and he would appear to be right (Chistophe. C, 2013). It does appear that eventually the U.S. will enforce certain gun control laws due to all these shootings that occur which leave many innocent victims hurt and injured. Obama has been working on certain laws and proposals that insist “universal background checks in order to purchase a weapon as well as a ban on all assault weapons.” (Chistophe. C, 2013). The shooting at Lone Star College has just added more attention to gun control as it becomes a more pressing issue.

Gun control supporters believe that these shootings that have occurred add national attention to gun control laws and policies to be enforced. But whether or not they will be passed is solely up to congress and the overall opinion of the public. Obama has issued numerous ideas and proposals for gun control laws but it’s not until congress accepts them will these pass and go into effect. At the time the country is split between those who are in favor of gun control laws and those who oppose it. “Guns have become too easy to obtain” (Chistophe. C, 2013) and because of this anyone can buy one and do as they please with it. But the debate still continues, and it’s not until the nation as a whole can decide on gun control laws for them to be in effect.

How are the recommendations for new gun control polices being received?

President Obama seems to be one of the leaders that are pushing for new gun control policies and others are taking his side on this issue. Obama wants an “assault weapons ban” which is a very broad law concerning gun control (Halimah. A, 2013). Obama believes a ban on assault weapons would be a good start in keeping the public safer because there have been

countless occasions in which people have died from assault rifle weapons. Joe Biden the vice president has met with “members of a House Democratic task force on guns” (Halimah. A, 2013) to discuss the gun control debate and determine what can be done. Many democrats in the white house have suggested universal background checks on those who purchase guns. This can help determine who, if anyone, should hold guns and if a background check is not done then people with criminal records may be in possession of these tools to commit crime again. Another policy that Obama wants implemented is the limit of high capacity magazines which come directly from those automatic weapons that the president wants banned as well. Some of the main focuses of new gun control laws include those that prohibit any purchase of automatic weapons and the ammunition for them.

House Democrats have released a proposal for stricter gun control laws including an “affirmation of Democratic support for the second Amendment” and they state that the right to bear arms “is not unlimited” (Ed. O, 2013). It has been stated that “the federal government has the responsibility to take appropriate steps to protect our citizens from gun violence” (Ed. O, 2013). Many believe that the government must take the steps in protecting society from gun violence and this includes the “federal ban on military style assault weapons” (Ed. O, 2013). These weapons not only cause a major threat to society but law enforcement officials as well. Police officers would stand no chance with those who carry automatic assault rifle weapons and are posing a threat to them. It would seem hard for a police officer to defend himself and society if he were to be outgunned by destructive military weapons.

The overall policies that attempt to enforce strong gun control laws are similar as most suggest a ban on military assault rifle weapons. But not only are the restrictions of these weapons

requested but a universal background check on those who purchase guns as well. These proposals appear to the house democrats as well as half of society in the U.S., as an answer to the problem of shootings that have been occurring. However if these proposals do not pass through congress then the U.S. will not advance in being able to protect the civilians of this country. This is why most democrats and half the nation believe gun control policies should be enforced, to protect society.

Is there a connection between gun control policy and violent crime?

Gun control advocates claim that guns have proved to have a direct impact on violent crime in the United States. Because of this gun control advocates strongly believe that murder is a result of people having guns. The FBI statistics have shown that “violent crime is on the rise across America” and because of this gun control supporters believe it’s critical to keep guns away “from the people who should not have them” (Michael. B, 2007). Congress isn’t completely supporting the efforts of the Justice Department to review records and documents of those who purchase guns. Certain laws in the United States prevents police officers from “looking at all the data on guns used in crimes” as well as “where and when were they bought and by whom?” (Michael. B, 2007). This demonstrates that those with possible criminal records are able to buy these guns and use them to their liking and maybe to what got them in trouble with the law in the first place. This is something many want changed, or added, that those who purchase guns be reviewed and to see if they have a criminal record from the past. Many guns are sold “in violation to the federal law” (Michael. B, 2007) and these guns keep turning up in crimes in the U.S. Guns have shown that there is a relation to violent crime in the U.S. but many of these cases occur because these guns fall back into the hands of those with criminal records, an issue the U.S. is trying to deal with.

Although there are many that believe stricter gun laws will prevent crime in the United States there are some that believe gun control laws may not do any good. Gun control supporters believe that guns relate to many murders, suicides, and accidental deaths and there is an average of “36,000 firearms related deaths a year” (Adam. L, 2008). But despite all these deaths resulting from guns it’s not certain gun control laws would have prevented these incidents from occurring. In Washington D.C. handguns are nearly completely banned but since this ban has taken place in 1979 the “districts homicide rate is substantially higher relative to these other cities than it was before the handgun restriction went into place” (Adam. L, 2008).

But a New England Journal of Medicine has shown that the stricter gun ban has actually increased homicide in D.C. It has been shown that the comparison to Washington and its suburbs before the handgun ban, “found that the law was linked to a 25 percent drop in homicides involving firearms” (Adam. L, 2008). This recent finding only applies to gun related homicides and none other. Professor Volokh, a law professor from the University of California at Los Angeles stated “you have to think about the particular kind of gun control at work, and you have to subdivide gun users and gun abusers” (Adam. L, 2008). Volokh stated that denying those who use guns in self-defense increases crime rate and that criminals are most likely to disobey gun control laws. Gun control advocates strongly believe that the result of violent crime in the U.S. is due to the fact that guns end up in the wrong hands and criminals do not obey the law and repeat the violent actions that got them in jail. So it is uncertain that certain gun laws will actually prevent homicide from occurring but it does seem that the amount of gun murder will decrease.

Conclusion

Gun control is an issue that is constantly being debated about in the United States and President Obama is doing his best to implement gun control laws that he believes will protect society. However there are tons of people that strongly disagree with his efforts and believe that it is a violation of their second amendment to take away their right to bear arms. But the second amendment is being interpreted in many ways and due to the uncertainty of this amendment many have been debating back and forth about stricter gun laws and how it should be managed. Gun control advocates believe that mass shootings will continue to occur unless guns are just completely banned and out of the hands of society. But such banishment seems impossible because those who own guns see such a ban as unjust. Gun control supporters are dumbfounded by the fact that an individual with a criminal background are able to purchase a gun or any gun for that matter, and use them however they like. This is why many are suggesting that a universal background check on those who purchase guns be a law that everyone should follow. Evidence has shown how guns impact the United States, in a harmful and positive way, but Obama is pushing for certain gun control laws because he supports them and only time will tell how effective they are.

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