



What is gun control?

Additional information

Are there any gun control laws in Washington state about to be implemented?

Three major gun control laws were passed in Washington state in 2022:

- Washington became the 10th state to [ban the sale](#) (but not the possession) of high-capacity magazines that can hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. The law goes into effect July 1, 2022.
- Washington state adopted [House Bill 1705](#), which restricts the manufacture, assembly, sale, transfer, purchase, possession, transport, and receipt of **ghost guns**, which are guns that are bought from private sellers and assembled at home. They are not marked with a serial number, making them untraceable.
- [House Bill 1630](#) prohibits open carry at local government meetings and restricts firearms at school board meetings and election-related offices and facilities in order to prevent the use of open carry to intimidate citizens from participating in government proceedings.

Have loopholes been found in gun control laws? In what ways have they been addressed?

- [The Lautenberg Amendment](#), passed in 1996, prevents people who have been convicted of domestic abuse or are the subject of a restraining order from owning guns. However, abusers who are not a parent, guardian, or legal spouse to their victims face no such restrictions. This gap has become known as the "[boyfriend loophole](#)."
- Federal law and some states [allow juveniles to purchase long guns](#), such as rifles and shotguns, from an unlicensed firearms dealer (this is not the case in Washington state).
- [Gaps in federal legislation](#) can allow people to buy guns who may not otherwise meet the legal requirements. The background check requirement, for example, can be avoided by purchasing from an unlicensed seller who does not perform these checks. While referred to as the "[gun show loophole](#)," these sales can take place online or in places other than gun shows. Temporary loans of firearms are typically allowed as are transfers of weapons that are inherited or given as gifts. While unlicensed gun transfers are acceptable within one's own state, interstate sales are prohibited.
- Underreporting and underfunding have contributed to the [National Instant Criminal Background Check System \(NICS\) database lacking substantial data](#) in many categories, resulting in multiple instances of sales of weapons to unauthorized persons who then used the weapons to commit crimes. A former member of the U.S. Air Force legally purchased a firearm and killed 26 people at a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Following the shooting, the Air Force acknowledged that they failed to report the shooter's military court-martial conviction for domestic violence to civilian authorities. In response, Congress passed the [Fix NICS Act of 2017](#) to penalize federal agencies that do not meet NICS reporting requirements.

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- In 2015, a gunman who was still undergoing a background check shot and killed nine Black worshippers at a Charleston church in South Carolina. Sellers are allowed to give a buyer the weapon if the check takes more than three days. The House of Representatives passed a bill in 2021 to extend background checks from 3 days to 10 days, allowing more time for a full check to be completed. Known as the "["Charleston loophole" bill](#)", as of January 2022, the Senate had not voted on the legislation.
- In 2021, President Joe Biden issued a [series of executive orders](#) aimed at eliminating many of the loopholes in gun control laws. The orders focus on regulating specific types of firearms and gun modifications; funding research on firearms trafficking in the U.S.; and encouraging states to pass "**red flag**" laws. Red flag laws allow for the temporary removal of firearms from a person identified as a potential danger by law enforcement or family members, who can petition for a court order.

Why is gun control especially controversial in the United States?

- The U.S. is the only country that guarantees "[the right of the people to keep and bear Arms](#)" listed in the **Second Amendment** of the Constitution. Proponents of gun control often see this as a collective right, which is not violated unless arms are taken from the American people as a whole. Opponents of gun control often interpret this as an individual right, which is violated when restrictions are placed on the arms an individual can own or carry. Firearm laws are often [stricter in other nations](#) because the right to bear arms is not a part of their foundational documents.
 - Four in ten U.S. adults say they live in a household with a gun, including 30 percent who say they personally own one, according to a [Pew Research Center survey](#) conducted in June 2021. Personal protection is the most common reason listed for gun ownership. In 2021, U.S. citizens bought [19.9 million](#) guns, and there are [more guns in the U.S. than there are people](#).
 - Roughly half of Americans (53 percent) favored stricter gun laws, and 14 percent favored less strict laws, according to the [Pew April 2021](#) survey, but Americans have differing opinions on which laws would make an impact and whether those laws impinge too much on individual freedoms:
 - 87 percent favor preventing people with mental illnesses from purchasing guns
 - 81 percent favor subjecting private gun sales and sales at gun shows to background checks
 - 66 percent support the creation of a federal database tracking all gun sales
 - 64 percent support bans on **high-capacity magazines** (those holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition), and 63 percent support bans on **assault-style weapons** (those firing a full magazine round of ammunition every time the trigger is pulled)
 - 43 percent said there would be fewer mass shootings if guns were difficult to legally obtain, 42 percent said it would make no difference, and 9 percent said there would be more shootings

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