

Ban “Assault weapons”? Facts, not fear.

“All recent mass shootings have been perpetrated with “assault rifles””

The school shooting with the highest body count remains Virginia Tech in 2007, which was perpetrated with two handguns. To think that even if you could effectively remove all scary-looking rifles, killers will stop killing, is very naïve. Serious movement is needed on the many facets of the issue – identification, intervention, accessibility, security, effective defense. ‘Assault weapons’ bans have not and will not measurably impact any of these, and the energy invested in pushing and fighting them prevents forward movement on the things which could.

Why don’t they work? Rifles (of any kind) are used in at most 3% of homicides (about half as many as hands and feet) according to [FBI crime statistics](#) ^[1], and guns typically classed as “assault rifles” around 1%. So even if you could ban and collect all “assault” rifles, and assuming everyone actually abided by the ban and didn’t bring them in from out of country (neither of which are possible in America), and assuming perpetrators would not just use other firearms, you would have *at most* a 1% success rate. But of course these other things *would* and *do* happen, and “assault rifle” bans therefore have *no chance* of ever producing a measurable decrease in murder.

A 2004 DOJ [study](#) ^[2] on the 1994-2004 U.S. ‘Assault Weapons ban’ found that “Should it be renewed, the ban’s effects on gun violence are likely to be small at best and perhaps too small for reliable measurement.”

“They are no good for self-defense”

False. They have been used many times for home defense:

Tampa, FL (2019) – 8-month pregnant wife uses AR-15 to [save her husband’s life](#) by killing one of two armed and violent attackers.

Summerfield, FL (2019) – 61-year-old homeowner with AR-15 [defeats](#) ^[3] four armed home invaders.

Here’s a few from [heritage.org](#) ^[4]:

Catawba County, North Carolina (2018) — a 17-year-old successfully fought off three armed attackers with his AR-15.

Ferguson, Missouri (2014) — African American men protected a white man’s store from rioters by standing outside armed with AR-15s.

Texas (2013) — a 15-year-old boy used an AR-15 during a home invasion to save himself and his 12-year-old sister.

And of course we all know about Steven Williford using a modern rifle to stop the [church shooting](#) ^[5] in Sutherland Springs TX in November 2017. In that case, nothing *other than* a modern rifle would have been a safe defense tool, as the attacker had military experience and a modern rifle.

The Common Defense

It is important for Americans to be familiar with modern rifles because we are *all* the militia for purposes of common defense. If circumstances become serious enough, such as a foreign invasion or large insurrection from within such as the civil war was, with a need to reinstate the draft, the modern rifle is exactly the tool we would all need to be able to use effectively with just as little training time as possible - not just the very few who serve in the National Guard. The NRA was founded in 1871 by two Union Army officers who were shocked at what poor marksmen the Northern army draftees were, compared to the Southern boys who were more likely to have grown up hunting. The original focus of the NRA was to maintain civilian competence.

“You can’t hunt with them”

This is absurd. Of course you can, and millions of Americans do. They are perfect for varmints like groundhogs and coyotes as well as control of feral pigs, and the standard AR-15 .223 round is legal to hunt deer with in 37 states.

“Assault rifles are weapons of war”

This statement is a dismissal of the millions of men and women who use them for hunting, shooting sports and competition. The AR-pattern rifle and variants are very popular both with military and civilians because they are small and lightweight and can be effectively handled by smaller people, and also because they are modular, meaning you can easily customize one to suit your specific needs. They are simply the most recent incantation of the rifle.

They are NOT more powerful than common civilian-owned rifles – they are actually less powerful than the standard deer rifles that tens of millions of Americans own. The standard AR-15 .223 round is *too small* to legally hunt deer with in 12 states.

The military version of the modern rifle is capable of fully automatic fire. These are not available for civilian purchase, for any price.

“Australia banned guns and hasn’t had a mass shooting since.”

Australia didn’t “ban guns.” They spent \$500 million on a mandatory “buyback” of 650,000 semi-auto rifles and semi-auto and pump-action shotguns in 1996 under the National Firearms Act or ‘NFA.’ In 2002, 70,000 handguns were collected under the ‘National Handgun Agreement.’ But Aussies have been buying replacements ever since, and as of October 2016 had purchased over one million new guns, at least equaling the pre-ban total number of firearms in Australia, according to University of Sydney public health researcher [Philip Alpers](#) ^[6].

Most of the newer *legal* guns are single-shot, not the semi autos which were subject to the buyback, but single shot guns can also be used to commit murder. However, *Australians’ murder rate didn’t react to the NFA*. Annual murders per 100,000 population remained constant at 1.6-1.8 from 1993 to 2002 ^[7], then decreased to 1.1 between 2002 and 2013 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics ^[8].

The U.S. murder rate [dropped in half](#)^[9] during this same period while firearm ownership *grew* with *almost* no restrictions on gun type. So there is not a correlation between gun availability and crime rates. [Law enforcement](#), is what reduces crime.

Furthermore, [homicide using firearms as a percentage of total homicides has been dropping in Australia since about 1968](#)^[10], according to the Australian Institute of Criminology. So concluding that the NFA is responsible for the decrease in the Australian murder rate is false. A 2008 University of Melbourne [study](#)^[11] found that “the high expenditure incurred to fund the 1996 gun buyback has not translated into any tangible reductions in terms of firearm deaths.”

On “mass” shootings, Australia had 11 mass shootings in the 20 years prior to the NFA and 3 in the 20 years after, according to Wikipedia (excluding gang shootouts and ‘familicide’). Some say that the NFA is what *reduced* (not *eliminated*) mass shootings but the 2008 study referenced above, which in turn also referenced several other studies on the topic, found otherwise. ‘Societal factors’ were as likely as the NFA to have produced the observed data.

But murder is only a part of the violent crime topic. From 1996 to 2005, reported assaults increased from 114,000 to 166,000 or 45%, and sexual assaults increased from 14,000 to 18,000 or 28% according to the [Australian Institute of Criminology](#)^[12], while population only increased 11%. Why? *When law abiding people are denied firearms for protection, person-to-person crime goes up*. Look at the U.K.:

“Britain bans guns and has very low gun homicide”

First, Britain has always had low firearm homicide rates. This was true before the gun bans of the 20th century. It just isn’t their style to kill with guns. If a Brit wants to kill you, they usually use a knife. So the important question isn’t ‘does the criminal have a gun’, but rather do YOU, the intended victim?

Second, the UK does not count a homicide until there is a conviction. The FBI counts a homicide in the U.S. when there is a dead body and sign of foul play. So a comparison is not helpful. What one needs to know in order to understand the effects of gun laws is: in a given country with all other factors the same, what were the crime rates *before* and *after* a given law was instituted?

Violent crime has skyrocketed in the UK. According to the [Telegraph](#)^[13], total violent crimes roughly *doubled* from 652,974 in 1998 to 1.15 million in 2007, or 2,000 per 100,000 population. The 2007 U.S. rate was 466 according to [2007 FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics](#)^[14], meaning the UK had over *four times* the violent crime rate the United States did as of 2007.

On firearm violence, according to the [Daily Mail](#)^[15], Government figures show that the total number of firearm offences in England and Wales increased from 5,209 in 1998/99 to 9,865 in 2008 – *an increase of 89 percent* in the first decade following the handgun ban of 1996. Due to reductions in police, in 2017 [London topped New York in violent crime](#)^[16].

Violent crime in the UK, including murder, has gone *up*, markedly, since the handgun bans of 1996.

“This is a problem unique to America.”

No, it isn’t. The United States was in 28th place on firearm homicide rate at [2.97 per 100,000 population as of 2011, according to the UN office of drugs and crime](#)^[17].

“Higher gun ownership leads to higher firearm violence.”

Patently false. In fact, *exactly opposite* of true:

1. The number of guns in private hands in America increased from around 200 million in 1993 to over 300 million now. Again, at the same time, over the last 25 years violent crime rates have dropped to half of what they were then^[9].

2. [The places with the highest gun ownership in the U.S. are the more rural areas](#)^[18], and these also have very low crime in general, including homicide. Homicide is a city problem, not a gun ownership problem, with [over half the murders occurring in just 2% of counties](#)^[19].

Has it worked in any U.S. states?

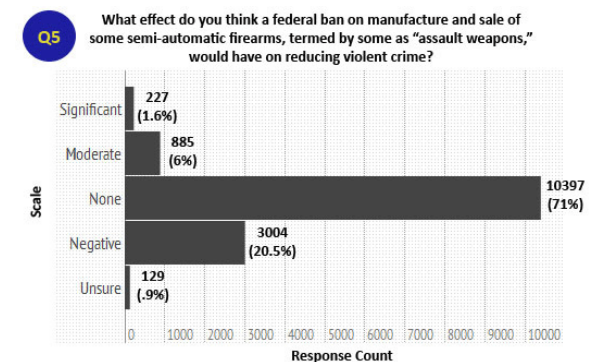
No. The San Bernardino husband and wife murderers were still able to procure modern rifles, as was the Sandy Hook, Connecticut perpetrator - who murdered his mother to get access to the rifle he used.

Does it work in other countries?

No. Look at two countries where it is essentially impossible for citizens to have modern rifles – Mexico and France. In Mexico the drug cartels are still able to procure not only semi-auto rifles but *full-auto* military-grade weapons which they use to kill and terrorize communities all across the nation. In France, citizens are not allowed modern rifles but the attackers at Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan concert hall still managed to have them. [Laws just don’t stop them](#). What does, is someone else with a gun.

What do law enforcement officers think?

In March 2013, more than 15,000 verified law enforcement professionals took part in a Police One member [survey](#)^[20] about gun control laws. This was their answer on restricting “assault weapons.” Note that 20% answered that it would actually lead to an *increase* (Negative) in violent crime:



1. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/expanded_homicide_data_table_8_murder_victims_by_weapon_2011-2015.xls
2. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf>
3. <https://www.wftv.com/news/local/1-suspect-dead-2-detained-after-summerfield-home-invasion-deputies-say/965840718> (the text of the article doesn't mention the homeowner's AR-15 but the video does)
4. <https://www.heritage.org/firearms/report/fact-sheet-gun-violence>
5. <https://www.libertynation.com/texas-proves-a-good-guy-with-a-gun-does-exist/>
6. <http://www.smh.com.au/national/investigations/record-gun-sales-bring-australias-firearm-arsenal-to-highest-level-since-the-port-arthur-massacre-20160427-goftbj.html>
7. Recorded Crime, Australia, 2001 - [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/9A58BD5A4617CFDFCA256BC900057A53/\\$File/45100_2001.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/9A58BD5A4617CFDFCA256BC900057A53/$File/45100_2001.pdf) - Table 8
8. Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia, 2005 - <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4510.02005?OpenDocument> - Table 1
2008 - <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4510.02008?OpenDocument> - Table 2.1
2016 - <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4510.02016?OpenDocument> - Table 1
9. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/tables/1tabledatadecoverviewpdf/table_1_crime_in_the_united_states_by_volume_and_rate_per_100000_inhabitants_1994-2013.xls
10. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/facts/2005/selected-crime-profiles>
11. https://ssaa.org.au/assets/news-resources/research/2008-08_the-australian-firearms-buyback-and-its-effect-on-gun-deaths.pdf
12. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/facts/2006/crime-and-justice-statistics>
13. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/5712573/UK-is-violent-crime-capital-of-Europe.html>
14. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2007>
15. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1223193/Culture-violence-Gun-crime-goes-89-decade.html>
16. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/20/london-now-dangerous-new-york-crime-stats-suggest/>
17. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/jul/22/gun-homicides-ownership-world-list>
18. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/15/the-demographics-and-politics-of-gun-owning-households/>
19. <https://crimeresearch.org/2017/04/number-murders-county-54-us-counties-2014-zero-murders-69-1-murder/>
20. <https://www.policeone.com/Gun-Legislation-Law-Enforcement/articles/6183787-PoliceOnes-Gun-Control-Survey-11-key-findings-on-officers-thoughts/>