



STATE BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS AND RATES OF FIREARM HOMICIDE AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Loopholes in federal and state law make it easy for dangerous people to get guns. But Everytown’s research shows that common-sense public safety laws can help reduce gun violence against law enforcement and save lives. Simply put, background check laws make cops safer: Law enforcement officers are 48 percent less likely to be killed with handguns in states that require background checks for unlicensed, “private” handgun sales than in states that do not.

METHODOLOGY

Everytown compared the number of law enforcement officers killed with handguns that were not their own over a twelve-year period (2000-11) in states that did or did not require background checks for unlicensed, “private” handgun sales.

Data on deaths were obtained from the FBI’s Law Enforcement Officers Killed in Action database. The database includes detailed information on every duly sworn officer – including city, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal officers – killed in the line of duty going back to 1980. To qualify, officers must have been working in an official capacity (on or off duty), had full arrest powers, ordinarily worn or carried a badge and a firearm, and been paid from governmental funds specifically appropriated for law enforcement officers.¹

Data on the population of law enforcement officers were obtained from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports.² The population of law enforcement officers in the District of Columbia was not available, so the District was excluded from the analysis.

RESULTS

During the study period, 13 states required all gun buyers to undergo a background check before buying a handgun in an unlicensed sale, and 36 states did not.³ Between 2000-11, the FBI reported that 676 law enforcement officers were killed in action in these states, of whom 551 (82 percent) were killed with firearms, and 347 were killed with handguns that were not the officers’ own. Adjusting for population, there were 48 percent fewer law enforcement officers killed with handguns that were not their own in states that require background checks for all handgun sales than in states that do not.

	Law enforcement officers (LEO) - average	LEO killed in action	LEO killed with firearm	LEO killed with handgun not officer’s own	LEO killed with handgun not their own per 100,000 officers
Total	665,129	676	551	347	52.2
States that require a background check for private handgun sales	322,163	272	184	114	35.4
States that do not require a background check for private handgun sales	342,966	404	367	233	67.9
				Difference	-48%

1. See <http://1.usa.gov/1BpHxSL> (last accessed November 13, 2014) for a detailed explanation of the criteria required.

2. FBI, Crime in the United States, Table 77, available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1CmPZhV>

3. Missouri repealed its background check requirement in 2007, and was excluded from this analysis.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS KILLED IN ACTION, 2000-2011

	2000-2011					
	BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIRED FOR ALL HANDGUN SALES?	LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS (LEO) - AVERAGE	LEO KILLED IN ACTION	LEO KILLED WITH FIREARM	LEO KILLED WITH HANDGUN NOT THEIR OWN	LEO KILLED WITH HANDGUN NOT THEIR OWN PER 100,000 OFFICERS
ALABAMA	NO	10,229	19	18	10	97.8
ALASKA	NO	1,201	5	4	1	83.3
ARIZONA	NO	11,744	20	20	13	110.7
ARKANSAS	NO	5,499	8	8	5	90.9
CALIFORNIA	YES	75,670	55	50	28	37.0
COLORADO	NO	10,909	7	7	5	45.8
CONNECTICUT	YES	8,096	1	1	0	0.0
DELAWARE	NO	2,242	2	1	1	44.6
FLORIDA	NO	42,844	36	34	28	65.4
GEORGIA	NO	22,228	27	27	21	94.5
HAWAII	YES	2,870	2	2	2	69.7
IDAHO	NO	2,553	3	3	2	78.3
ILLINOIS	YES	36,297	23	22	17	46.8
INDIANA	NO	10,606	15	15	10	94.3
IOWA	YES	5,096	1	1	0	0.0
KANSAS	NO	6,887	7	7	6	87.1
KENTUCKY	NO	7,790	8	6	1	12.8
LOUISIANA	NO	15,371	27	26	18	117.1
MAINE	NO	2,220	0	0	0	0.0
MARYLAND	YES	15,103	14	12	9	59.6
MASSACHUSETTS	YES	16,110	2	2	2	12.4
MICHIGAN	YES	19,737	23	20	11	55.7
MINNESOTA	NO	8,424	7	6	5	59.4
MISSISSIPPI	NO	5,201	15	10	4	76.9
MONTANA	NO	1,662	2	2	0	0.0
NEBRASKA	YES	3,418	1	1	1	29.3
NEVADA	NO	5,226	3	3	0	0.0
NEW HAMPSHIRE	NO	2,285	2	2	2	87.5
NEW JERSEY	YES	30,925	8	6	4	12.9
NEW MEXICO	NO	3,978	7	6	6	150.8
NEW YORK	YES	61,343	90	18	12	19.6
NORTH CAROLINA	YES	21,160	23	21	11	52.0
NORTH DAKOTA	NO	1,196	1	1	1	83.6
OHIO	NO	21,873	19	17	15	68.6
OKLAHOMA	NO	7,297	5	4	1	13.7
OREGON	NO	5,595	5	3	1	17.9
PENNSYLVANIA	YES	23,820	28	27	17	71.4
RHODE ISLAND	YES	2,517	1	1	0	0.0
SOUTH CAROLINA	NO	10,215	20	19	8	78.3
SOUTH DAKOTA	NO	1,365	3	3	2	146.5
TENNESSEE	NO	15,306	20	17	11	71.9
TEXAS	NO	50,453	58	50	26	51.5
UTAH	NO	4,665	5	5	2	42.9
VERMONT	NO	1,049	0	0	0	0.0
VIRGINIA	NO	17,448	22	20	15	86.0
WASHINGTON	NO	10,133	15	14	8	79.0
WEST VIRGINIA	NO	3,258	3	3	2	61.4
WISCONSIN	NO	12,677	8	6	3	23.7
WYOMING	NO	1,339	0	0	0	0.0