

Pennsylvania Gun Violence Fact Sheet

Pennsylvania has been one of the deadliest states over the last 10 years.

- From 2001 through 2010 there were 12,941 gun deaths in Pennsylvania—the fourth-most gun deaths of all 50 states.¹
- In 2010 there were 1,307 gun deaths in Pennsylvania, or roughly one every seven hours.²

Every two days, three people are murdered by guns in Pennsylvania.

- There were 501 gun homicides in the state in 2010.³
- From 2001 through 2010, 5,061 people were murdered by guns in Pennsylvania. That number is as many as all U.S. combat deaths in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined.⁴

The rate of gun homicides among children and teens in Pennsylvania is one of the highest in the country.

- In 2010 Pennsylvania had the fifth-highest rate of gun homicides among children and teens age 19 and under in the country. Almost three of every 100,000 children and teens in the state were murdered by guns.⁵
- With 132 total deaths of children and teens from guns—more than 4 for every 100,000 residents—Pennsylvania had the 10th-highest rate of gun deaths for children and teens age 19 and under.⁶

Pennsylvania has major gaps in its gun-violence prevention legislation.

- The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence gave Pennsylvania received 24 out of 100 possible points on their 2011 state scorecard.⁷
- The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence gave Pennsylvania a “C” for the strength of its gun laws.⁸
- As of October 2011 Pennsylvania’s rate of submitting mental health records to the federal database is nonexistent: The state has submitted exactly one mental health record. These records are used in background checks to deny dangerous people from getting guns.⁹

Weak gun laws result in an increase of illegal guns and gun trafficking by criminals.

- In 2009, 1,777 guns that had been sold in Pennsylvania were recovered in crimes in other states. Pennsylvania is also a net exporter of crime guns, exporting 635 more guns than it imports.¹⁰

The National Rifle Association has been very supportive of Pennsylvania’s federal officeholders and its gun laws.

- Over the last 10 years, the NRA has donated \$305,650 to federal candidates from Pennsylvania.¹¹
- Of the 20 federal officeholders in Pennsylvania, 15 receive an “A” grade from the NRA, one receives a “B+,” and four, all Democrats, receive “F’s.”¹²

Pennsylvanians almost unanimously support universal background checks.

- In a January 30 poll by Quinnipiac University, 95 percent of residents supported “requiring background checks for all gun buyers,” while only 5 percent opposed. Among respondents in gun-owning households, 95 percent supported universal background checks.¹³

Why meaningful gun-violence prevention measures matter:

- No universal background checks allow criminals easy access to guns: In 2011 troubled 30-year-old John Schick attempted to purchase a gun in Portland, Oregon, but failed the background check because he had been committed to a mental institution there. But four months later he was able to purchase two handguns from a private seller in New Mexico without a background check—guns he would then use to kill or wound six people at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic near Pittsburgh before he was fatally shot by police.¹⁴
- Assault weapons are used to kill, and kill quickly: In April 2009 Richard Poplawski murdered three Pittsburgh police officers and wounded two other officers as they were responding to a domestic violence call at the home Poplawski shared with his grandmother. One of the guns used by Poplawski was an AK-47 assault weapon. Poplawski was not a prohibited purchaser. He had an

order of protection against him in 2005 but it expired 18 months later before he purchased the weapons used against the police officers.¹⁵

Questions? Email us at guns@americanprogress.org.

Endnotes

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Fatal Injury Data,” available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html> (last accessed February 2013).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. (War casualties statistic from U.S. Department of Defense, available at <http://www.defense.gov/NEWS/casualty.pdf>.)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, “Brady Campaign 2011 Scorecards: 2011 State Rankings,” available at <http://www.bradiycampaign.org/stategunlaws/scorecard/PA/> (last accessed February 2013).

⁸ Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “Gun Laws Matter 2012: Understanding the Link Between Weak Laws and Gun Violence,” available at <http://smartgunlaws.org/gun-laws-matter-2012-understanding-the-link-between-weak-laws-and-gun-violence/> (last accessed February 2013).

⁹ Mayors Against Illegal Guns, “Fatal Gaps: How Missing Records In The Federal Background Check System Put Guns In The Hands Of Killers” (2011).

¹⁰ Mayors Against Illegal Guns, “Trace the Guns 2010,” available at <http://www.tracetheguns.org/#/states/PA/exports/> (last accessed February 2013).

¹¹ Center for Responsive Politics, “Open Secrets,” available at <http://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/recips.php?id=D000000082&type=P&state=AZ&sort=A&cycle=2012> (last accessed February 2013).

¹² How the National Rifle Association Rates Lawmakers,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 2012, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/12/19/us/politics/nra.html>.

¹³ Quinnipiac University, “Quinnipiac University Poll Finding Near 100% Support For Wider Background Checks For Gun-Buyers,” January 31, 2013, available at <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/institutes-centers/polling-institute/pennsylvania/release-detail?ReleaseID=1843>.

¹⁴ Michael Fuoco and Sadie Gurman, “New Mexico man regrets selling guns used in Western Psych shootings,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 31, 2012, available at <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/neighborhoods-city/new-mexico-man-regrets-selling-guns-used-in-killing-629219/>.

¹⁵ John Schmitz, “Poplawski bought guns through shop in Wilkinsburg,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 7, 2009, available at <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/neighborhoods-city/poplawski-bought-guns-through-shop-in-wilkinsburg-336792/>.