Who…Are You: The Case for Background Checks for Guns

By "Coach Vance" Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States should require universal background checks   
for all gun sales and transfer of ownership.***

Gun violence in America kills tens of thousands every year. Much of it may be unavoidable, and a complete ban on guns is unrealistic and would violate the 2nd Amendment. But that doesn’t mean there’s nothing we can do. Background checks, where we verify a gun buyer’s history for criminal or mental health issues, is a proven step we can take that will keep at least some guns from getting into the hands of people likely to use them badly. It won’t solve for all gun violence, but it will save a significant number of lives, and we ought to do it.

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PRO: Background Checks for Guns

We affirm that: The United States should require universal background checks for all gun sales and transfer of ownership. Gun violence in America claims a terrible death toll every year, and background checks are a proven, common sense way of reducing them. We explain why in 4 Contentions.

CONTENTION 1. The outrageous death toll.

We should be outraged at the death toll from guns: 92 deaths per day, over 1.4 million since 1970

Nicholas Kristof 2016 (journalist) NEW YORK TIMES, Some Inconvenient Gun Facts for Liberals 16 Jan 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/opinion/sunday/some-inconvenient-gun-facts-for-liberals.html>

Yet this, too, must be said: Americans are absolutely right to be outraged at the toll of guns. Just since 1970, [more Americans have died](http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2015/aug/27/nicholas-kristof/more-americans-killed-guns-1968-all-wars-says-colu/) from guns than all the Americans who died in wars going back to the American Revolution (about 1.45 million vs. 1.4 million). That gun toll includes suicides, murders and accidents, and these days it amounts to 92 bodies a day.

In fact, the problem is more than 1000 times bigger than terrorism. Nicholas Kristof in 2016 continues in the same context:

Nicholas Kristof 2016 (journalist) NEW YORK TIMES, Some Inconvenient Gun Facts for Liberals 16 Jan 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/opinion/sunday/some-inconvenient-gun-facts-for-liberals.html>

We spend billions of dollars tackling terrorism, which killed 229 Americans worldwide from 2005 through 2014, according to the State Department. In the same 10 years, including suicides, some 310,000 Americans [died from guns](http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/oct/05/viral-image/fact-checking-comparison-gun-deaths-and-terrorism-/).

CONTENTION 2. Guns in the wrong hands

Guns by themselves aren’t the problem, but the threat happens when weak laws let guns get into the wrong hands

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

Guns don’t kill people by themselves, but guns substantially increase the ability of people to kill others and themselves. Many people own firearms and pose no threat to public safety. But when individuals with a history of violence, substance abuse, or serious mental illness can access firearms due to our weak gun laws, the risk of lethal violence increases greatly.

Guns get into the wrong hands because current laws leave many gun sales without background checks

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

The Brady Law created a system of background checks, but it applies only to licensed dealers. If you're not a licensed dealer and want to sell a gun directly to somebody, then you don't need to run a background check. Some people call this the "gun show loophole," but it applies to all private sales—including, for example, those that take place over the internet. Criminals and gun traffickers learned long ago how to take advantage of this provision.

CONTENTION 3. Background checks are necessary and reasonable

40% of guns are purchased without a background check, and they're the most important step we could take

Nicholas Kristof 2016 (journalist) NEW YORK TIMES, Some Inconvenient Gun Facts for Liberals 16 Jan 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/opinion/sunday/some-inconvenient-gun-facts-for-liberals.html>

Research suggests that the most important practical step would be to keep guns away from high-risk individuals, such as criminals, those who abuse alcohol, or those who beat up their domestic partners. That means universal background checks before somebody acquires a gun. [New Harvard research](http://www.thetrace.org/2015/10/private-sale-loophole-background-check-harvard-research/) confirms a long-ago finding that 40 percent of firearms in the United States are acquired without a background check. That’s crazy. Why empower criminals to arm themselves?

The Supreme Court agrees we can uphold the 2nd Amendment while stopping felons and the mentally ill from obtaining guns

Justice Antonin Scalia 2008. Opinion of the Court in the case of District of Columbia v. Heller, 26 June 2008 <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/07-290.ZO.html>

Although we do not undertake an exhaustive historical analysis today of the full scope of the [Second Amendment](https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct-cgi/get-const?amendmentii) , nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.

CONTENTION 4. Background checks reduce gun violence

Empirical evidence shows that when background checks have been tried, they are effective at reducing violence.

A Johns Hopkins University study in Missouri found background checks significantly reduced gun homicides

Nora Caplan-Bricker 2014 (journalist) NEW REPUBLIC "The Strongest Evidence We Have that Background Checks Really Matter" <https://newrepublic.com/article/116657/johns-hopkins-gun-control-study-background-checks-really-work>

The study, from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, found the murder rate in Missouri jumped 16 percent—an additional 55 to 63 murders a year—after the repeal in 2007 of a state law that required anyone purchasing a handgun to obtain a permit showing they had passed a background check. (Though federal law mandates background checks by licensed dealers, private dealers don’t have to perform them in [all but 14 states](http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2014/02/15/3297141/study-proves-background-checks-save-lives/).) "This study provides compelling confirmation that weaknesses in firearm laws lead to deaths from gun violence," said Daniel Webster, the study’s lead author, [in a statement](http://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/repeal-of-missouris-background-law-associated-with-increase-in-states-murders.html).

END QUOTE. And the British peer-reviewed medical journal LANCET went on to point out in 2016 that…

Universal Background Checks would reduce firearm deaths from 10.35 to 4.46 deaths per 100,000 population in the U.S.

B. Kalesan, M.E. Mobily, O. Keiser, J.A. Fagan, and S. Galea 2016 (Kalesan - Department of Medicine, Boston University. Mobily - Department of Epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia Univ. Keiser - Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Bern, Switzerland. Fagan - Columbia Law School and Department of Epidemiology, Columbia Univ. Galea - School of Public Health, Boston Univ.) LANCET April 2016 “Firearm legislation and firearm mortality in the USA: a cross-sectional, state-level study.” (brackets in original)

We constructed a cross-sectional, state-level dataset from Nov 1, 2014, to May 15, 2015, using counts of firearm-related deaths in each US state for the years 2008-10 (stratified by intent [homicide and suicide]) from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, data about 25 firearm state laws implemented in 2009, and state-specific characteristics such as firearm ownership for 2013, firearm export rates, and non-firearm homicide rates for 2009, and unemployment rates for 2010. Our primary outcome measure was overall firearm-related mortality per 100,000 people in the USA in 2010. We used Poisson regression with robust variances to derive incidence rate ratios (IRRs) and 95% CIs. FINDINGS: 31,672 firearm-related deaths occurred in 2010 in the USA (10·1 per 100,000 people; mean state-specific count 631·5 [SD 629·1]). Of 25 firearm laws, nine were associated with reduced firearm mortality, nine were associated with increased firearm mortality, and seven had an inconclusive association. After adjustment for relevant covariates, the three state laws most strongly associated with reduced overall firearm mortality were universal background checks for firearm purchase (multivariable IRR 0·39 [95% CI 0·23-0·67]; p=0·001), ammunition background checks (0·18 [0·09-0·36]; p<0·0001), and identification requirement for firearms (0·16 [0·09-0·29]; p<0·0001). Projected federal-level implementation of universal background checks for firearm purchase could reduce national firearm mortality from 10.35 to 4.46 deaths per 100,000 people, background checks for ammunition purchase could reduce it to 1·99 per 100,000, and firearm identification to 1.81 per 100,000. INTERPRETATION: Very few of the existing state-specific firearm laws are associated with reduced firearm mortality, and this evidence underscores the importance of focusing on relevant and effective firearms legislation. Implementation of universal background checks for the purchase of firearms or ammunition, and firearm identification nationally could substantially reduce firearm mortality in the USA.

And fewer dangerous people will have guns, even if criminals try to bypass the background check regulations

**Specifically advocating in context for universal background checks, Prof. Daniel Webster in 2014 said QUOTE:**

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

Yes, some criminals will be able to steal or purchase guns already in circulation. But many of the estimated 300 million guns in civilian hands can’t be easily acquired by criminals. Lots of gun owners lock their guns in safes or have other ways to secure their firearms, practices that can be increased by laws and educational campaigns. And it’s not as easy or risk free for criminals to buy guns in the [underground market](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2007.02098.x/abstract) as is commonly believed. Duke economist Philip Cook has studied Chicago’s underground gun market and said, “there may be a lot of guns, but there is a shortage of trusted sellers.” With greater accountability measures and choking the supply of new guns into the underground market, street prices will rise and fewer dangerous people will have guns.

END QUOTE. And finally, the American Medical Association’s publication J.A.M.A. INTERNAL MEDICINE published a study in 2017 that reached an astounding conclusion. After reviewing 5 different public policies that have all been tried in various places, they found that …

A background check before being allowed to purchase a firearm is the only policy that is effective at reducing gun violence.

J.A.M.A. INTERNAL MEDICINE 2017 (published by the American Medical Association. Individual authors were: L.K. Lee, E.W. Fleegler, C. Farrell and M.C. Monuteaux with Division of Emergency Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital. E. Avakame with Harvard Medical School. S. Srinivasan with Division of Emergency Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital, Houston. D. Hemenway, with Department of Health Policy and Management, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health.) January 2017 “Firearm Laws and Firearm Homicides: A Systematic Review.” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27842178>

EVIDENCE REVIEW: We evaluated peer-reviewed articles from 1970 to 2016 focusing on the association between US firearm laws and firearm homicide. We searched PubMed, CINAHL, Lexis/Nexis, Sociological Abstracts, Academic Search Premier, the Index to Legal Periodicals and Books, and the references from the assembled articles. We divided laws into 5 categories: those that (1) curb gun trafficking, (2) strengthen background checks, (3) improve child safety, (4) ban military-style assault weapons, and (5) restrict firearms in public places and leniency in firearm carrying. The articles were assessed using the standardized Guide to Community Preventive Services data collection instrument and 5 additional quality metrics: (1) appropriate data source(s) and outcome measure(s) were used for the study, (2) the time frame studied was adequate, (3) appropriate statistical tests were used, (4) the analytic results were robust, and (5) the disaggregated results of control variables were consistent with the literature. FINDINGS: In the aggregate, stronger gun policies were associated with decreased rates of firearm homicide, even after adjusting for demographic and sociologic factors. Laws that strengthen background checks and permit-to-purchase seemed to decrease firearm homicide rates. Specific laws directed at firearm trafficking, improving child safety, or the banning of military-style assault weapons were not associated with changes in firearm homicide rates. The evidence for laws restricting guns in public places and leniency in gun carrying was mixed. CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE: The strength of firearm legislation in general, and laws related to strengthening background checks and permit-to-purchase in particular, is associated with decreased firearm homicide rates. High-quality research is important to further evaluate the effectiveness of these laws. Legislation is just 1 part of a multipronged approach that will be necessary to decrease firearm homicides in the United States.

**END QUOTE. Thus, we urge an Affirmative ballot for proven results at reducing gun violence.**

PRO-AT: Background Checks for Guns

A/T “Gun death rates going down”

Still 20 times higher than other countries, and the decline happened in the ‘90s, no progress since then

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

In the United States, firearms are used in about 31,000 deaths per year. [About 11,000](http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate10_us.html) of those deaths are due to homicides. Firearm homicide rates are about half as high now as they were in the early 1990s when homicide rates peaked in the U.S. But nearly all of that decrease [occurred](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fv9311.pdf) in the late 1990s. We’ve made relatively little progress since then and our firearm homicide rate is [nearly 20 times as high](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20571454) as that of the average high-income country.

A/T “Already tried and failed”

Actually, we haven’t tried federal gun control yet

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

We have yet to implement truly meaningful gun control at the federal level. In fact, during the past 20 years, Congress has mostly weakened already weak gun laws. Some states (Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York) have comprehensive gun sales regulations that set stricter rules for who may own a gun, establish more comprehensive background checks, and require premits. These laws reduce the diversion of guns to criminals, and states lacking these safeguards are far more likely to supply criminals with guns, both in the state in which the guns were [initially sold](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2704273/) as well as in [other states](http://jhupress.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/1421411113_updf.pdf).

Loopholes in current law are letting felons buy guns all the time

Walter Hickey 2013 (journalist) BUSINESS INSIDER “Why Universal Background Check May Be The Most Important Gun Control Measure There Is” 30 Jan 2013 <http://www.businessinsider.com/study-data-gun-show-loophole-felons-buy-guns-2013-1>

The report found that many non-licensed gun traders — the kind that don't need to carry out background checks — often made that a selling point for people looking to avoid the check:  
Many non-licensees entice potential customers to their tables with comments such as, “No background checks required; we need only to know where you live and how old you are.” Many of these unlicensed vendors actively acquire firearms from other vendors to satisfy a buyer's request for a specific firearm that the vendor does not currently possess. Some unlicensed vendors replenish and subsequently dispose of their inventories within a matter of days, often at the same show  
What's more, the ATF reviewed 314 investigations involving gun shows throughout the country. Felons buying or selling guns were involved in more than 46 percent of these investigations, and straw purchases, illegal sales, avoided background checks, and failure to keep accurate records were alarmingly common.

A/T “Can’t define mentally ill”

SQ federal law already has a clear definition of mental illness disqualifying for a gun purchase

NEW YORK TIMES 2016 (journalist Alicia Parlapiano) 6 Jan 2016 “Why People With Mental  
Illness Are Able to Obtain Guns” <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/06/us/how-people-with-mental-illness-are-able-to-obtain-guns.html>

According to federal law, individuals cannot buy a gun if a court or other authority has deemed them a “mental defective” or committed them involuntarily to a mental hospital. Only a handful of states prohibit broader categories of people with mental illness from obtaining a gun.

A/T "Mentally ill pass background checks"

SQ fails to do them "universally" like the resolution says. Some states don't participate

CNN 2013. (journalist Jen Christensen) 5 Feb 2013 "How the violent mentally ill can buy guns" <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/30/health/mental-illness-guns/index.html>

Generally, background checks have kept more than 1.5 million guns out of the wrong hands, according to federal records. This law has now been in place for about five years, but a federal investigation last July, in addition to the [in-depth study](http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/downloads/pdf/maig_mimeo_revb.pdf) from the Mayors Against Illegal Guns, found the vast majority of states fail to pass on mental health records to the federal system. That means the mentally ill may still easily buy guns. As of October 2011, 23 states and the District of Columbia had submitted fewer than 100 mental health care records. Seventeen submitted fewer than 10 records, and four states hadn't reported a single record to the federal background check system, according to the federal investigation, conducted by the Government Accountability Office. As of October 2012, [Oklahoma](http://www.demandaplan.org/FatalGaps) had submitted only three mental health records to the NICS Index, according to the mayors' group. When study researchers wanted to find out why, they spoke with an unnamed Oklahoma official who said there were no state privacy laws or logistical hurdles blocking record submission in Oklahoma, as there are in other states. Rather, a "lack of political will appears to be the only barrier to submission," according to the unnamed official cited in the study.

A/T "Violates civil rights / 2nd Amendment"

74% of NRA members advocate universal background checks

Nicholas Kristof 2016 (journalist) NEW YORK TIMES, Some Inconvenient Gun Facts for Liberals 16 Jan 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/opinion/sunday/some-inconvenient-gun-facts-for-liberals.html>

One of the puzzles of American politics is that most voters want gun regulation, but Congress resists. One poll found that 74 percent [even of N.R.A. members](http://www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2015/mar/18/lena-taylor/most-nra-members-back-background-checks-all-gun-pu/) favor universal background checks to acquire a gun.

Background checks don’t violate civil rights, that’s bogus. Doesn’t take anything away from law-abiding people

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

This is a bogus argument that has worked extremely well for the gun lobby’s fundraising and been instrumental in its success in fending off common-sense gun laws. Requiring a background check of prospective purchasers does not take away guns from law abiding people, nor does close regulation and oversight of gun dealers.

Background checks don’t lead to confiscation, and no threat to law-abiding citizens

Prof. Daniel Webster 2014 (prof. of public health at Johns Hopkins University) 25 June 2014 NEW REPUBLIC Guns Kill People. And If We Had Universal Background Checks, They Wouldn’t Kill So Many <https://newrepublic.com/article/118286/facts-about-gun-control-and-universal-background-checks>

The gun lobby says that background checks will lead to registries of gun ownership—and, eventually, the confiscation of weapons.  But federal law forbids anything resembling a federal gun registry, we’ve had background check requirements for sales by license dealers since 1994 without registries or gun confiscation, and states that do have their own gun registries have never used them to remove guns from law abiding citizens.

No obligation to let felons have guns even after they serve their sentence. It’s not the same as restoring voting rights

LOS ANGELES TIMES 2015. “Editorial - Should felons be able to own guns?” 11 June 2015 <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-gun-rights-for-ex-felons-20150611-story.html>

In general, it is unfair to continue punishing people who have paid their debt to society, and it makes sense to change laws and rules that make it difficult for released inmates to find work or a place to live. Nor is there a good reason to withhold voting rights. But guns are a different matter. A Justice Department study last year found that of more than 400,000 felons released in 30 states in 2005, 3 in 4 had been re-arrested within five years, and 27% of those arrests were in connection with a violent crime. That's a sobering set of statistics.

Background checks reduce gun deaths

A/T “Missouri study flawed” - Even if not perfect, it still shows clear link between background checks and gun deaths

Nora Caplan-Bricker 2014 (journalist) NEW REPUBLIC "The Strongest Evidence We Have that Background Checks Really Matter" <https://newrepublic.com/article/116657/johns-hopkins-gun-control-study-background-checks-really-work> (brackets in original)

And the study isn’t perfect: Missouri also enacted a “stand your ground” law in 2007, creating some challenges in disentangling the effects. But Cook said he is confident that background checks played a major role because the authors tracked an increase in guns that went directly from dealers to criminals—exactly the scenario background checks are designed to prevent. The study also [notes](http://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/repeal-of-missouris-background-law-associated-with-increase-in-states-murders.html) an uptick in guns “purchased in Missouri that were subsequently recovered by police in border states that retained their [permit-to-purchase] laws.”

Colorado example: Universal Background Checks (UBC) reduce improper gun sales and violent deaths

Jon S. Vernick, Ted Alcorn & Joshua Jorwitz 2017. (Vernick, J.D., M.P.H., is a Professor and Co-Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Alcorn, M.H.S., is the Director of Innovation at Everytown for Gun Safety. Horwitz, J.D., is the Executive Director of the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence) Background Checks for all Gun Buyers and Gun Violence Restraining Orders: State Efforts to Keep Guns from High-Risk Persons. JOURNAL OF LAW AND MEDICAL ETHICS March 2017 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28661309>

There were more than 36,000 firearm-related deaths in the U.S. in 2015. Under federal law, a background check is required only for gun purchases from licensed dealers. Research suggests that some persons prohibited from owning a gun turn to private sellers, including those identified online, to attempt to obtain a firearm. State-level approaches to make it more difficult for high-risk persons to purchase or possess firearms include universal background check (UBC) and gun violence restraining order (GVRO) laws. UBC laws, on the books in 18 states as of the end of 2016, can reduce both homicide and suicide rates. After Colorado adopted a UBC law in 2013, the number of background checks conducted by private sellers for sales occurring at places other than gun shows steadily increased.

Univ. of Alabama-Birmingham Study: State data show background checks reduce gun deaths

B. Sen and A. Panjamapirom 2012 (both are with School of Public Health, Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham) PREVENTIVE MEDICINE Oct 2012 “State background checks for gun purchase and firearm deaths: an exploratory study.” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22850436>

OBJECTIVE: This study examines the relationship between the types of background-information check required by states prior to firearm purchases, and firearm homicide and suicide deaths. METHODS: Negative binomial models are used to analyze state-level data for homicides and suicides in the U.S. from 1996 to 2005. Data on types of background information are retrieved from the Surveys of State Procedures Related to Firearm Sales, and the violent death data are from the WISQARS. Several other state level factors were controlled for. RESULTS: More background checks are associated with fewer homicide (IRR:0.93, 95% CI:0.91-0.96) and suicide (IRR:0.98, 95% CI:0.96-1.00) deaths. Firearm homicide deaths are lower when states have checks for restraining orders (IRR:0.87, 95% CI:0.79-0.95) and fugitive status (IRR:0.79, 95% CI:0.72-0.88). Firearm suicide deaths are lower when states have background checks for mental illness (IRR:0.96, 95% CI:0.92-0.99), fugitive status (IRR:0.95, 95% CI:0.90-0.99) and misdemeanors (IRR:0.95, 95% CI:0.92-1.00). It does not appear that reductions in firearm deaths are offset by increases in non-firearm violent deaths. CONCLUSIONS: More extensive background checks prior to gun purchase are mostly associated with reductions in firearm homicide and suicide deaths. Several study limitations are acknowledged, and further research is called for to ascertain causality.

A/T “Lack of data makes checks ineffective”

More funding would solve

Nora Caplan-Bricker 2014 (journalist) NEW REPUBLIC "The Strongest Evidence We Have that Background Checks Really Matter" <https://newrepublic.com/article/116657/johns-hopkins-gun-control-study-background-checks-really-work>

The findings at least begin to fill a gap in the research that last year’s debate exposed. Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Michael Bloomberg’s gun control group, found that the shortage of data stems from a [shortage of funding](http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/c1/6/1017/3/access_denied.pdf)—especially federal funding. In 1996, the National Rifle Association and the gun lobby pushed Congress to eliminate the $2.6 million appropriation that underwrote the Center for Disease Control’s research on firearm injuries.

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