

Arizonans' Perspectives on Gun Control



Charles Katz, Ph.D.

Professor & Director

Center for Violence Prevention
and Community Safety
Watts College of Public Service
and Community Solutions

Arizona State University

More people die from gunshot wounds in the United States than [any other country](#) in the world besides Brazil. When taking population sizes into consideration, [the U.S. experiences](#) 72 times the number of violent gun deaths as the United Kingdom (4.43 versus 0.06 per 100,000), nine times the number of violent gun deaths as Canada (0.47 per 100,000), and after excluding casualties from armed conflicts, the violent gun death rate in the U.S. is about 25% higher than in Iraq (3.54 per 100,000) and about 11% higher than in Afghanistan (3.96 per 100,000).

Within the U.S., however, there is a great deal of variation in gun death rates by state. California, Hawaii and states in the Northeast tend to have lower rates of gun-related deaths. Arizona is [well above average](#) in gun-related deaths, ranking 17th in terms of the rate of persons who die as a result of gunshot wound. According to the Arizona Violent Death Reporting System (AZ-VDRS), between 2015 and 2017, 69.1% of homicides and 59.0% of suicides were perpetrated with guns, and there were an additional 42 unintentional firearm deaths during the same period. [Data from the AZ-VDRS](#) also shows that these numbers are on the rise.

The Morrison Institute poll suggests that Arizona residents largely support the enactment of legislation aimed at reducing gun violence. As seen in Exhibit 1, about 60% of Arizona residents believe that laws covering the sale of guns should be stricter. More than 50% of men and roughly two-thirds of women support stricter gun laws. About two-thirds of Asian American/

Pacific Islander and Hispanic respondents, about 60% of African American respondents, and about 58% of white, non-Hispanic respondents support stricter gun laws. Those living in urban areas (65.1%), earning \$100,000-150,000 (70%), and having completed a four-year college degree (69.3%) are more supportive of stricter laws covering the sale of guns. Those with less than a high school degree (43.6%) and Republicans (39.7%) were the least likely to support stricter gun sales laws.

Arizona residents were even more supportive when asked about specific gun legislation. More than 83% of residents support requiring background checks for all gun buyers, with men (80%) and women (85.6%) responding with similar support. The strongest support for background checks came from AAPI and white, non-Hispanic respondents (88.1% and 85.6%, respectively), followed by Hispanic residents (81.5%). African American residents expressed the least support but were still 70% in favor of universal background checks. More than 83% of both urban and rural residents were in favor, and more than three-quarters of suburban residents favored background checks. All levels of household income were more than 82% in favor, and only those with less than a high school education were less than 80% in favor of background checks. About 80% of Republican residents supported universal background checks.

The Morrison Institute poll data indicate that Arizona's Legislature is out of step with public sentiment regarding gun violence legislation and suggest that a series of legislative actions should be considered to reduce the number of gun-related deaths in Arizona. There is clear and overwhelming support for universal background checks in Arizona and as such, legislation requiring universal background checks should be immediately considered. Additionally, given public support for stricter laws covering the sale of guns, the Legislature should consider establishing a waiting period between when a gun is purchased and when the person can take possession of that gun to prevent spontaneous acts of gun violence.

Support for stricter gun laws and background checks, by respondent characteristics

	Support stricter laws covering the sale of guns	Support background checks for all gun buyers
Total	59.8	83.3
Males	52.0	80.0
Female	65.4	85.6
Caucasian	58.1	85.6
Hispanic	66.5	81.5
African American	60.0	70.0
Asian	66.7	88.1
Other	50.0	79.4
Urban	65.1	82.9
Rural	50.2	84.1
Suburban	59.9	76.2
Less than \$25,000	56.9	82.1
\$25,000- \$50,000	62.8	83.1
\$50,001 - \$75,000	59.6	84.2
\$75,001 - \$100,000	56.4	83.0
\$100,001 – \$150,000	70.0	90.0
Greater than \$150,000	55.3	84.2
Less than high school	43.6	71.8
High school or GED	53.3	80.9
Two-year college or technical degree	60.4	84.5
Four-year college graduate	69.3	84.3
Master’s degree or higher	67.0	90.2
Republican	39.7	79.7
Democrat	80.9	90.9
Independent	57.4	84.5