

# Gun Control Legislation: The Motivations and Factors Influencing a Multi-Faceted Issue

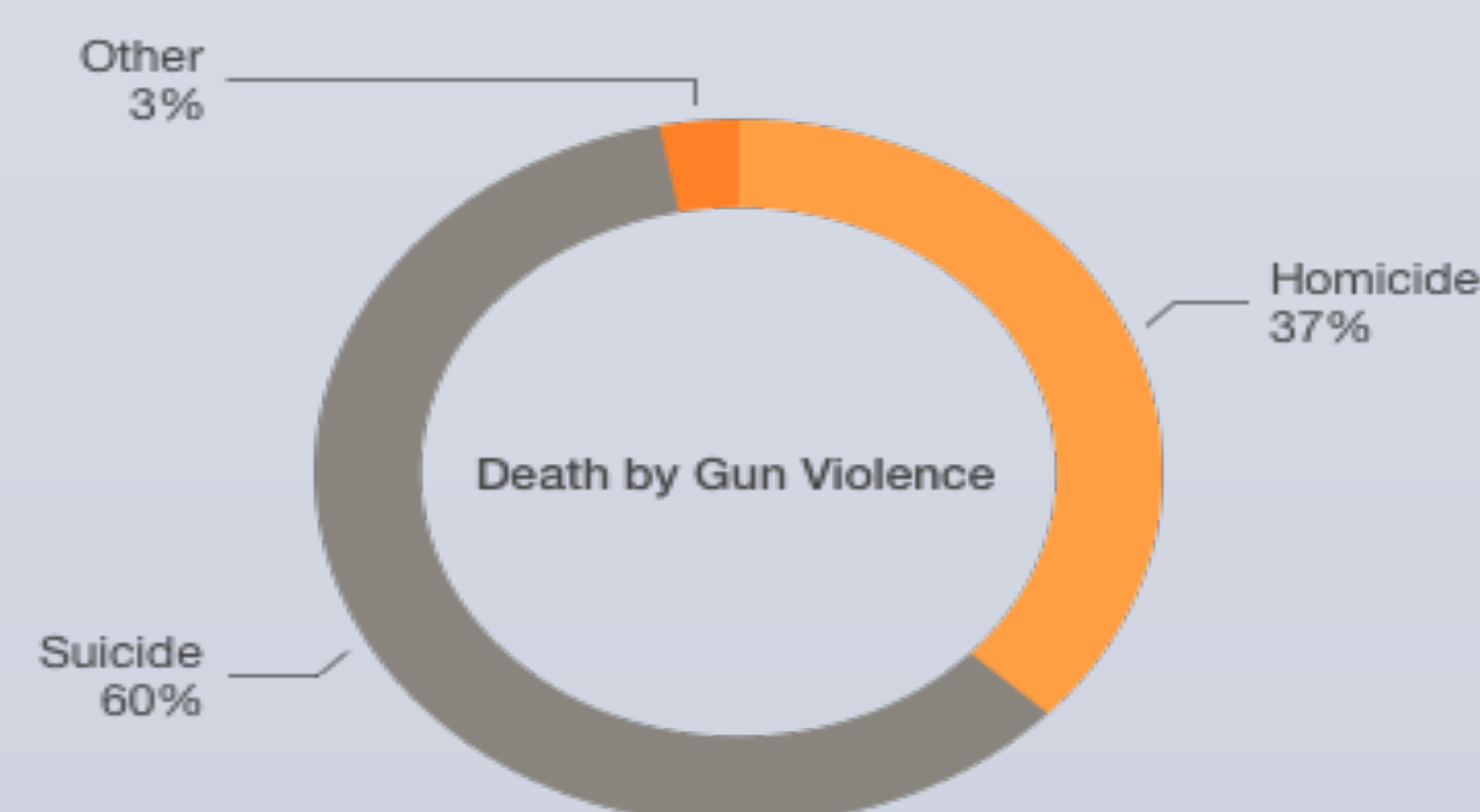
Kelsey McNulty-Kowal & Kristine M. Jacquin

## INTRODUCTION

- ❖ The United States had the largest quantity of firearms and gun-related deaths per capita among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries in 2013 (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- ❖ Gun law legislation across the United States has been debated for years with little progress toward a consensus.
- ❖ Congress has been reluctant to regulate gun control under both Republican and Democrat administrations (Campion et al., 2017).
- ❖ Second Amendment rights and differences in state laws and regulations has led to inaction at both state and federal levels (Mann & Michael, 2016)
- ❖ Reluctance to establish any legislative action could be because of economic, social, and psychological factors.

## KEY FACTORS

- ❖ **Income Inequality**
- ❖ **Anxiety and Fear**
- ❖ **Rural vs. Urban communities**
- ❖ **Second Amendment**
- ❖ **Dickey Amendment – 1996**



## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

- ❖ Anxiety and fear surrounding potentially losing the right-to-own increases gun ownership interests.
- ❖ The current form of gun control debate leads these individuals to believe that any change will bring a worsened outcome (Gunn et al., 2018)
- ❖ Fear of losing Second Amendment rights and necessary means for self-protection (Gunn et al., 2018)
- ❖ Media reports on mass shootings tend to produce feelings of hysteria, panic, and fear amongst the US population. (Kwon & Cabrera, 2019)

## THE MEDIA

- ❖ Several studies have shown that the media plays a large role in instilling fear across the nation (Wallace, 2015).
- ❖ Individuals perceive and react differently to mass shootings shown by the media.
- ❖ Some individuals fearfully react by purchasing more firearms as a form of self-protection (Wallace, 2015).
- ❖ Individuals are afraid their guns will be taken away by the government and therefore purchase more guns.
- ❖ Strobe and colleagues (2017) studied the effect of government calling for stricter gun laws on pro-gun owners. Individuals became fearful that their protection (guns) would be taken away.
- ❖ Other individuals react in the other direction, wanting to ban all guns.
- ❖ Therefore, a standstill occurs, and a consensus cannot be reached.

## SUICIDE & HOMICIDE GUN DEATHS

- ❖ Gun ownership significantly increases the rate for homicide and suicide (Lippmann, 2010; Siegel et al., 2019).
- ❖ Gun-shot suicides happen much more often than all other shooting deaths combined (Lippmann, 2010).
- ❖ Firearms being readily available increases the lethality of impulsive behaviors (Lippmann, 2010).
- ❖ Rural areas – increased suicide rates; Urban areas – increased homicide rates (Crifasi, 2018)
- ❖ Gun violence claims nearly 100 lives in the US everyday, a fact that is often obscured by the focus on more rare events such as mass shootings (Crifasi, 2018)

## SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

- ❖ Immediate increases in purchases of firearms occur after a mass shooting (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- ❖ After a mass shooting takes place, the price of guns – as well as stock prices for gun manufacturers – drop significantly (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- ❖ It could be hypothesized that because of the amount of money going into the economy from the purchasing of guns, the government is influenced to not take the legislative action needed.
- ❖ Income inequality can produce hostile, unstable social environments with individuals who are frustrated, anxious, resentful, and stressed (Kwon & Cabrera, 2019)

## CONCLUSION & SOLUTIONS

- ❖ Stricter gun laws need to be implemented across the United States. Gun legislation is a multifaceted issue that requires a consensus on all sides.
- ❖ The reasoning behind individuals' perceptions on gun control legislation is important to study when attempting to come to a consensus.
- ❖ Many factors come into play such as socioeconomic influences, family upbringing, and psychological factors such as fear and anxiety.
- ❖ After a 20-year ban, the US government has allocated \$25 million of federal funds for research on gun control for 2020
- ❖ Funds will be split between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- ❖ Conducting research on solutions surrounding anxieties about gun reform would provide helpful background for gun legislation.

## REFERENCES

- ❖ Campion, E. W., Morrissey, S., Malina, D., Sacks, C. A., & Drazen, J. M. (2017). After the mass shooting in Las Vegas – Finding common ground on gun control. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 377(17), 1679-1680.
- ❖ Crifasi, C. (2018). Gun policy in the United States: Evidence-based strategies to reduce gun violence. *Applied Health Economics and Health Policy*, 16, 579-581. doi:10.1007/s40258-018-0413-7
- ❖ Gopal, A., & Greenwood, B. N. (2017). Traders, guns, and money: The effects of mass shooting on stock prices of firearm manufacturers in the U.S. *PLoS one*, 12, 1-29. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0177720
- ❖ Gunn, L. H., Horst, E., Markossian, T. W., & Molina, G. (2018). Online interest regarding violent attacks, gun control, and gun purchase: A causal analysis. *PLoS ONE*, 13, 1-15. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0207924
- ❖ Kwon, R., & Cabrera, J. F. (2019). Income inequality and mass shootings in the United States. *BMC Public Health*, 19, 1-8. doi:10.1186/s12889-019-7490-x
- ❖ Lippmann, S. (2010). Guns: Dangerous, especially for suicide, and costly for America. *Psychiatry*, 7(2), 14-15.
- ❖ Mann, J. J., & Michael, C. A. (2016). Prevention of firearm suicide in the United States: What works and what is possible. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 173, 969-979. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.2016.16010069
- ❖ Siegel, M., Pahn, M., Xuan, Z., Fleegler, E., & Hemenway, D. (2019). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide and suicide deaths in the USA, 1991-2016: A panel study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 34, 2021-2028. doi:10.1007/s11606-019-04922-x
- ❖ Strobe, W., Leander, N. P., & Kruglanski, A. W. (2017). The impact of the Orlando mass shooting on fear of victimization and gun-purchasing intentions: Not what one might expect. *PLoS one*, 12, 1-15. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0182408
- ❖ Wallace, L. N. (2015). Responding to violence with guns: Mass shootings and gun acquisition. *The Social Science Journal*, 52, 156-167. doi:10.1016/j.soscij.2015.03.002