

# Guns in America: Assessing the impact of state firearm legislation on homicide and suicide rates in US metropolitan statistical areas

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## Abstract:

In recent years, gun control policy has dominated the American political agenda. Today, political pundits on both sides of the aisle regularly cite gun statistics supporting either a pro or anti-gun control stance. While billions of dollars are spent on firearm policies that either tighten or relax current laws, little is known about the actual effectiveness of many of the firearm laws being implemented. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Americans continue to die from gun violence each year. In this thesis, I seek to clarify the gun control debate by assessing the impact of restrictive gun control legislation on various categories of firearm deaths across US metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) while controlling for a number of relevant variables. More specifically, I conduct a multivariate regression analysis correlating the restrictiveness of state firearm laws with firearm homicide and suicide rates while controlling for age, poverty, education, and location in a Southern state. All homicide and suicide data were drawn from the 2013-2015 Center for Disease Control and Prevention Wonder Database, while all other control variables were drawn from 2010-2014 US Census Bureau statistics. My results reveal that restrictive firearm laws have a small but statistically significant tendency to produce lower suicide rates, but have no decipherable correlation with homicide rates. The findings for this study underscore the importance of conducting additional research on this complex but highly salient topic.

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