

Firearm Safety in America 2013

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The number of privately owned guns in the U.S. is at an all-time high, upwards of 300 million, and now rises by about 10 million per year.¹ Meanwhile, the firearm accident death rate has fallen to an all-time low, 0.2 per 100,000 population, down 94% since the all-time high in 1904.² Since 1930, the annual number of firearm accident deaths has decreased 81%, while the U.S. population has more than doubled and the number of firearms has quintupled. Among children, such deaths have decreased 89% since 1975. Today, the odds are more than a million to one, against a child in the U.S. dying in a firearm accident.

Firearms are involved in 0.5% of accidental deaths nationally, compared to motor vehicles (29%), poisoning (27%), falls (21%), suffocation (5%), drowning (3%), fires (2%), medical mistakes (1.7%), environmental factors (1.3%), and pedal cycles (0.6%). Among children: motor vehicles (34%), suffocation (27%), drowning (17%), fires (7%), environmental factors (2.3%), poisoning (2.2%), falls (1.5%), firearm (1.5%), pedal cycles (1.4%), and medical mistakes (1.3%).

Education decreases accidents. Voluntary training has decreased firearms accidents. NRA firearm safety programs are conducted by more than 93,000 NRA Certified Instructors nationwide. Youngsters learn firearm safety in NRA programs offered through civic groups such as the Boy Scouts, Jaycees, and American Legion, and schools.³ NRA's Eddie Eagle GunSafe program teaches children pre-K through 3rd grade that if they see a gun without supervision, they should "STOP! Don't Touch. Leave The Area. Tell An Adult." Since 1988, Eddie has been used by 26,000 schools, civic groups, and law enforcement agencies to reach more than 26 million children.⁴

The "cars and guns" myth. In the 1990s, gun control supporters claimed that driver licensing and vehicle registration caused motor vehicle accident deaths to decline between 1968 and 1991, and that gun registration and gun owner licensing would reduce gun accidents. However, vehicle registration and driver licensing laws were not imposed to reduce accidents, and did not do so. Most were imposed between the world wars, but motor vehicle accident deaths increased sharply after 1930 and didn't begin declining until 1970. Also, between 1968 and 1991 the motor vehicle accident death rate dropped only 37% *with* vehicle registration and driver licensing, while the firearm accident death rate dropped 50% *without* registration and licensing. Gun control supporters want registration and licensing only to acquire records necessary to make confiscation of privately owned firearms achievable in the future. Handgun Control, Inc. (since renamed Brady Campaign) once said that registration was the second step in the group's three-step plan for the confiscation of all handguns.⁵

Also, the purchase and ownership of arms is a right protected by the federal and most state constitutions,⁶ whereas driving a car on public roads is a privilege. A license and registration are not required to merely own a vehicle or operate it on private property, only to do so on public roads. Similarly, a license and permit are not typically required to buy or own a gun, or to keep a gun at home, but are usually required when hunting or carrying a gun for protection in public places.

Gun control supporters' "children and teens" deception: In the 1990s and the early part of the 21st century, gun control supporters claimed that firearms (homicides, suicides, and accidents combined) took the lives of a dozen or more "children" daily. To get that figure, they added the number among children (then about 1.7 per day) to the much larger numbers among juveniles (about four per day) and teenage adults (about nine per day), and calling the total "children."⁷ Having been called on the deception, gun control supporters now cite a single number for "children and teens," adding the number for juveniles and teenage adults (now about 10 per day) to the number for children (about one per day).

The CAP law myth: Also in the 1990s, “gun control” supporters pointed to a study (produced by the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, a group active in the HELP Network) claiming that so-called “Child Access Prevention” (CAP) laws (which make it a crime, under some circumstances, to leave a gun accessible to a child who obtains and misuses it), imposed in 12 states between 1989-1993, decreased firearm accident deaths among children.⁸ Its flaws: Firearm accident deaths among children began declining in the mid-1970s, not in 1989, when “CAP” laws were first imposed. Also, such accidents had decreased nationwide, not only in “CAP” states. And it failed to note that also in 1989, NRA’s Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program was introduced nationwide.

1. See BATFE, “Annual Firearm Manufacturers and Export Reports” (www.atf.gov/statistics).
2. Statistics from 1981 forward are available from the National Center for Health Statistics’ “Wisqars” website.

Those prior to 1981 are available from the National Safety Council (www.nsc.org/).

3. For more on NRA training programs, visit www.nrahq.org/ (click “Education and Training”) or call 703-267-1500.
4. For more on the Eddie Eagle program, visit www.nrahq.org/safety/eddie/ or call 800-231-0752.
5. Pete Shields, quoted in *The New Yorker*, “A Reporter At Large: Handguns,” July 26, 1976.
6. See Supreme Court ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008). (www.nraila.org/media/PDFs/HellerOpinion.pdf)
7. NRA-ILA “Not 12 Per Day” fact sheet, www.nraila.org/Issues/FactSheets/Read.aspx?ID=21 .
8. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Oct. 1, 1997.