



Examining the Effectiveness of Gun Policies

Arguments in both sides of the gun policy debate are often based on emotion. In our effort to seek out informed and unbiased data we turn to a recently released study by the **RAND Corporation** that seeks to shed light on what is known and what is not. RAND is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that operates free of political and commercial pressures.

RAND initiated its **Gun Policy in America** project to provide unbiased information to support the development of fair and effective gun policies. First, RAND reviewed thousands of studies to identify evidence demonstrating the effects of 13 gun policies on eight potential outcomes (see below.)

RAND studied 13 classes of gun policies. To analyze the data RAND used a large research team with psychologists, economists, epidemiologists, criminologists, statisticians, legal experts, and mathematicians.

Next, RAND surveyed 95 experts to determine areas of agreement for a path forward (see next page.)

Findings from Studying the Research

Perhaps the RAND projects biggest conclusion is that there is currently not enough research evidence to draw conclusions for many key proposed policies. RAND stated, *“This does not mean that these policies are ineffective; they might well be quite effective but there is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions.”*

The study did show:

- There is supportive evidence that child access prevention laws decrease suicide and unintentional injuries
- There is moderate evidence that background checks reduce suicide and gun homicide rates
- Prohibiting people adjudicated mentally ill from purchasing guns may reduce violent crime (moderate evidence) and suicide (limited evidence)
- There is moderate evidence that having “stand your ground” type laws increases violent crime
- There is limited evidence that “shall issue” policies (PA is a “shall issue” state) for concealed-carry may *increase* violent crime and unintentional injuries and death

“With a few exceptions, there is a surprisingly limited base of rigorous scientific evidence concerning the effects of many commonly discussed gun policies. This does not mean that these policies are ineffective; they might well be quite effective. Instead, it partly reflects shortcomings in the contributions that science has made to policy debates.” 2018 RAND Report

Some states are funding their own gun violence research centers. We think any one of a number of Pennsylvania’s fine public schools could put some funding to good use in this regard.

In Search of Common Ground: Expert Judgments on Gun Policy

RAND surveyed 95 experts from both sides of the debate. The goal was to better understand where policy experts agree or disagree on the effects of gun laws.

Among those surveyed were:

- National Rifle Association
- The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
- The National Shooting Sports Foundation
- Everytown for Gun Safety.

What Did RAND Learn?

- RAND found there is universal agreement among experts on the **common goal to reduce gun violence**. Experts disagree on *what will be the real effects of various gun policies*.
- Survey responses showed that participants fell into two groups:
 - Those who support restrictive gun policies
 - Those who support more permissive policies

Key Findings...

When they examined each group's overall opinions, there was **comparatively strong agreement for the following policies**:

- Expanded Mental Health Prohibitions
- Required Reporting of Lost Or Stolen Firearms
- A Media Campaign to Prevent Child Access
- Surrender of Firearms by Prohibited Possessors

What to Make of These Findings?

Gun Sense Chester County seeks common ground solutions to reduce gun violence. While the RAND study does not offer solutions it identifies some data to guide our decisions as well as key areas of agreement among the experts.

We will be sharing this information with our elected officials and seeking to build on this data and these areas of consensus to drive change.

To Read the Complete RAND study:

<https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy.html>