

# The Impact of State and Federal Assault Weapons Bans on Public Mass Shootings

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# Review of Findings

This report detailed a study that, using data from 1982 to 2011, identified the effects that state and federal bans on assault weapons have on mass shootings in America. The Congressional Research Service defines a mass shooting by four criteria: occurred in a public place, caused four or more deaths, its victims were killed randomly, and shooting occurred not after a robbery or act of terrorism. Examples of such events cited in this piece include those that transpired at Columbine, Virginia Tech, Fort Hood, Aurora, and Sandy Hook.

Data from news outlet *Mother Jones* and the United States Department of Justice were used to show that there were 57 mass shootings, as defined by the aforementioned Congressional Research Service, from 1982-2011. During the period when the federal assault weapons ban – which was included as a major plank of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 – was in effect and when several states had their own assault weapons bans in place, there were 24 mass shootings. When there were no bans in place, that number increased to 33 mass shootings.

Although the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act provided for a relatively narrow definition of assault weapons that only captured 118 models of firearms, its prohibitions were multi-pronged: Specific features were listed as barred under the provisions of the law, including a ban on large-capacity magazines, or those that held more than 10 rounds of ammunition. Yet, the federal law was weakened by numerous loopholes, which are documented in further detail in the report, but are generally held to include the grandfathering-in provision, the limited applicability of the features test, and more.

In addition, during times when a ban is in place, the average number of deaths decreases from 8.6 deaths to 7.5 deaths when there is no ban. The research indicated that assault weapons bans, whether federally-enforced or operated at the state level, are an effective tool in curbing gun deaths overall.

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