Gun Violence reframed as a Public Health issue

Public Health officials have a legitimate interest in preventing gun violence, which costs more than $700 per American a year, or $229 billion in total. That’s according to a Mother Jones report that the NRA doesn’t want you to see, The True Cost of Gun Violence in America. I’m not convinced that the medical industrial complex (hospitals, insurers, drug companies, testing companies, and equipment providers) wants you to see the report or fix the problem either, because they profit more from treating gun injuries and long-term disabilities than preventing them.

The Mother Jones report digs into the long-term costs of serious injury and disability, where we spend more on the results of gun violence than on obesity, and almost as much as we spend on Medicaid. And in this article, I’ll use these costs to justify sensible solutions that have worked elsewhere.
In the video below, Jennifer Longdon tells us how she faced financial ruin after being shot in the spine years ago. Her all-too-common story tells of the hidden costs that “must” be included in debates over gun safety reform.

Jennifer was among the 750,000 Americans injured by gunshots over the last decade. She’s lucky not to be one of the 320,000 killed. The Mother Jones report says that each year more than 11,000 people are murdered with firearms, and another 20,000 others commit suicide with a gun. They don’t all get media attention; in fact, most don’t.

Beyond the mass shootings, each week brings news of another accidental shooting with an unsecured gun as hundreds of children die from firearms. Sadly, even as violent crime has declined in recent years, gun deaths and injuries are up since 2011, at 11% and 4% respectively. That’s largely because of mass shootings, yet much of the cost inflicted on victims, their employers, and the nation go unreported.

Nobody doubts that gun violence is a serious problem, except maybe the NRA and gun lobbyists. But it doesn’t seem to matter whether we believe that “guns kill people” or “people kill people,” the result is the same: a public health crisis.

**Solving this Public Health Crisis begins with Data.**

The US government has spent hundreds of billions researching other public health problems. The Department of Transportation (DOT), for example, studied deadly car crashes and then took measures to reduce the causes and the number of deaths and injuries per million miles driven went down significantly. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) studied the health impact of pollution, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) studied the costs of domestic violence. But Congress, through a funding measure called The Dickey Amendment, has prevented the CDC and National Institutes of Health (NIH) from studying the medical and lost-work cost of gun violence.

To address this gun-related public health crisis, Congress must overcome NRA objections and get the facts straight. They need to better understand the scope, scale, and cost of the gun violence problem. But not only do politicians fear reprisal from the NRA for actions taken against the powerful gun lobby; so do the researchers. Academic researchers fear personal attacks that could result in funding cuts for other important research, such as heart disease and obesity.
What Statistics do we have So Far, and why do we need them?

Admitting that you have a problem, and measuring its size and impact is the first step toward fixing it. We’ve fixed other public health problems and should be able to fix gun violence too – if we can agree on the data.

1967 – Jane Mansfield was killed when her car ran under the rear end of a tractor-trailer. Since then, all trailers have a DOT bar at the rear to keep cars from going under.

1982 – Seven people died when Tylenol packaging was tampered with. Since then, it takes a Ph.D., channel locks, and a sharp object to get into a bottle of pills.

1995 – When bomb using ammonium nitrate fertilizer killed 168 people, the government imposed severe restrictions on the purchase of that fertilizer.

2001 – Ever since one person tried to blow up a plane with a shoe bomb, we must take off our shoes for scanning to get through security.

Since 1968 – Well over 1.5 million people have died from guns on U.S. soil, which is well over 100 a day. But our only government reaction so far has been to send “Thoughts and Prayers.”

Our unforgivable gun problem is largely because of the lack of agreed upon facts and the willful ignorance of gun enthusiasts. The table above is another example, comparing willingness to do disease research but not study gun violence.

“Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-income OECD Countries, 2010,” American Journal of Medicine, 2015
Statistics from Varied Sources

Federally funded research on gun violence is extremely limited, but here are some stats from other sources. Any discrepancy between data shown here and other sources is likely the result of working with different base data, and that highlights the need for federally funded research so we can all work from the same facts.

- With more than 350,000,000 guns in the U.S., there are now more guns than people.
- We own nearly half of all the guns in the world, but that’s nothing to brag about when you consider the consequences.
- 300 Americans are shot every DAY, and 100 of them die as a result.
- 38,000 US gun deaths were reported by the CDC in 2016, which is slightly more than the number of people who died from car wrecks.
- In Europe, which has twice the population, just 18 die per day from gun violence.
- Japan has only about 10 gun deaths per YEAR.
- 280,000 Americans were killed by guns in that last 10 years, and over 1.5 million were killed since 1968. About half of those deaths were from suicide.
- Mass shootings may only account for about 2% of all gun deaths nationally, but still there were 385 U.S. mass shootings in 2016, resulting in 257 deaths and 1546 injuries, according to MassShootingTracker.org.
- 427 mass shootings in 2017 resulted in 594 deaths and 1981 injuries, which is a 28% increase in deaths and well over one mass shooting per day.
- The profile of a mass shooter is young men who display anti-social behavior or domestic violence before committing their act. Most of them obtained their weapons legally.
- 64% of the victims of mass shootings are women and children, and 67% are black.
- Only 3% to 5% of all violence, including firearm violence, is attributable to serious mental illness. People with serious mental illness are rarely violent, and they’re far more likely to be victims of violence than the perpetrators (12 times higher).
- More than 30 studies in the U.S. and abroad have shown that more guns increase gun violence and homicides.

Mass Shooting Tracker

MassShootingTracker.org is an excellent reference, because it accounts for ALL mass shooting incidents, including those that don’t get reported in the mainstream media or match the FBI’s “mass gun violence” definition as three or more people murdered in one event. That definition unfortunately ignores those who survive a shooting but may be left with life long disabilities and trauma. Those costs are too often ignored and would be substantially higher if all gun victims and their families could actually afford and seek counseling and treatment.

Costs like these are what keep big city mayors awake at night, but they are hardly studied at all. We tend to not account for the legal fees, and the fear that stunts neighborhood growth or prompts schools to harden their campus and deploy armed guards. These are just some of the hidden costs of gun violence that the Mother Jones report touches upon.
Funding for Research on Gun Violence compared to Other Leading Causers of Death

Source: JAMA
Automobiles as a Model for Regulating Guns

Enthusiasts who fear that Liberals want to ban guns and confiscate them often say cars kill about as many people as guns, and we don’t ban cars. No, but owning and driving a car is regulated, and that offers a reasonable public health model for regulating guns, improving safety, and reducing deaths.

As the following chart shows, deaths per 100 million vehicle miles driven dropped 95% through regulation, operator licensing, registration, and required liability insurance.

![Deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled chart](chart.png)

**What if we Regulated Guns Like Cars?**

1. **License gun owners** like we license drivers, with **age limits** and **periodic renewal**. A driver’s license gives you “permission” to drive and own a car; it does not grant you a “right” to do so. And just as with driving, a judge can revoke your license if the privilege is abused or laws are broken.

2. **Test knowledge** of laws and gun safety, and require a **proficiency exam** before granting a license.

3. **Consider different proficiency levels** like we do with a driver’s license, starting with a Learner’s Permit, and progressing to something the equivalent of a Commercial Driver’s License to show the increased responsibility and skill to use more powerful weapons.
4. **Require criminal background checks** (22% of guns are obtained without one) and a least 3-day waiting period as a condition of obtaining a license and purchasing a gun. Prohibit gun sales to anyone with a felony criminal conviction, history of mental illness or domestic abuse, or listed on the FAA’s No Fly list.

5. **Close the gun show loophole.** Watch this 13-year-old boy try to buy beer, cigarettes, adult magazines and lottery tickets with no luck, and see how he just walked into a gun show and walk out with a gun. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB7MwvqCtIk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB7MwvqCtIk))

6. **Allow protection orders** with due process that would authorize authorities to intervene when a person becomes a threat to others and temporarily confiscate guns they can use to cause harm. When a driver is charged with reckless driving, most states allow local police to impound the car until a judge determines that it’s safe to return it.

7. **Require Liability Insurance** covering gun owners, as we do for drivers. Insurance companies, through free-market competition would set rates through the actuarial process, and gun owners could then decide when and if they want to move up to more firepower, including higher caliber and semi-automatic weapons, or higher quantities of ammunition, knowing that more stringent testing, storage, inspection, and insurance would be required.

8. **Consider bans on the most dangerous firearms**, such as those designed for military purposes to kill the most people in the shortest time possible, or at least restrict how they are used and who gets to use them. Certain types of cars, such as those designed for racing, are not “street legal,” but we don’t prohibit them. On the other hand, we don’t allow private ownership of tanks and fighter jets. The same concept could apply to guns too if approached in a common sense way with real data rather than emotion. Add-on accessories, such as bump stocks, that turn consumer weapons into the equivalent of weapons of war could be included in such bans.

9. **Register each gun** to make it easier to return them if lost or stolen, and require periodic inspection to make sure safety features are in working order, and safe storage requirements are followed. Charge an annual registration tax as we do for motor vehicles, to help pay the cost administrative costs of gun regulations, like we do with car registration.

10. **Require updates to registration and insurance** when a gun is disposed of in a private sale, like we do with cars. That would end the gun show loophole that now is used to avoid background checks.

11. **Require safe storage** and security measures designed to prevent unintentional access to guns and ammo by unlicensed people, including children.

12. **Limit quantities** of guns and ammo except under tightly restricted and regulated circumstances, such as with collectors and shooting ranges that rent weapons for use there. There’s no justification for people to amass private arsenals. We don’t limit the number of cars one can own, and Jay Leno is an example of that, but the higher cost of cars discourages such collection naturally.
13. **Research “smart gun” technologies** that prevent accidental discharge except by the owner, through a PIN number or biometric sensor like a fingerprint. If someone steals my iPhone, it’s useless, and if the same were true with guns, it would reduce the number of guns stolen each year, now about 200,000, which are then available to criminals. It would also prevent a child from firing dad’s gun or a criminal from using a policeman’s gun against him. Note that auto manufacturers complained each time government imposed new rules like seat belts and air bags, but the result has greatly improved safety.

14. **Repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA)**, which prevents the gun manufacturing industry from being held liable in civil court for crimes “resulting from the criminal or unlawful misuse of firearms or ammunition.” We don’t give the auto industry such immunity.

15. **Explore buy-back options** to help cut the total number of guns on the street, since studies worldwide show that fewer guns result in fewer deaths.

Did any of these “restrictions” slow car sales or impose undue restrictions on car ownership? Of course not, and the government hasn’t used registration to confiscate cars either.

**75% of Americans want Congress to do more to reduce gun violence.**

American voters support stricter gun laws by a 2:1 margin (66% v. 31%), including most gun owners, according to a new Quinnipiac University poll. These results are up considerably from a negative 47:50 percent measure of support in 2015. 97% support universal background checks, 83% support a mandatory waiting period, and 70% favor registering all guns with the police.

**Won’t Gun Registration Lead to Confiscation?**

Bring up the topic of gun registration, and die-hard gun enthusiasts, including some of the 5 million NRA members, will likely tell you about Adolf Hitler, Nazi gun laws, gun confiscation, and the Holocaust. The NRA has used this argument for decades: one of the first things Hitler did when he seized power was to impose gun registration laws to make it easier for his troops to disarm his opponents. But PolitiFact.com rates that claim as FALSE and a misrepresentation of history on two levels.

“First, German citizens as a whole were not disarmed by the Nazis. Jews and other supposed enemies of the state were subject to having their weapons seized. But for most German citizens, the Nazi period was one in which gun regulations were loosened, not tightened. Second, a lack of guns was not the issue. If the majority of Germans had wanted to use these guns to fight the Nazis, they could have. But they didn’t.”

**Fear and distrust of government** are central to NRA’s strategy, and this tactic ignores the fact that the Nazis enjoyed significant popular support, or at least, broad acquiescence; and that, not gun control, is what really led to the Holocaust. Clearly, the NRA argument against gun
control or registration attempts not to clarify history but to protect their hardline interpretation of the 2nd Amendment, and the profits of gun manufacturers.

“A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

Know that gun manufacturers profit from each mass shooting and each new “gun control” threat to the 2nd Amendment that causes people think someone wants to confiscate their guns, because market demand increases. They also profit from gun show loopholes and a black-market that drives up demand and prices.

**Times have changed, and guns have changed.**

The 2nd Amendment language is clear, but Willful Ignorance keeps some people from even reading it, and others from believing its purpose, which was never meant to apply to military assault weapons. When our Bill of Rights was written, the common weapon of the time was the mussel-loaded musket, which could only fire 1-2 rounds per minute.

No, There’s no 2nd Amendment right to AR-15s.

The idea that our Constitution grants us a right to have firearms appeals disproportionately to white, working class, and mostly rural men who are sometimes called “the Bubba vote,” “NASCAR dads,” or “guys with Confederate flags in their pickup trucks.”

In contrast, the anti-guns group is largely “urban, eastern, Catholic or Jewish, female, and African-American,” according to the well-researched paper, *On Gun Registration, the NRA, Adolf Hitler, and Nazi Gun Laws: Exploding the Gun Culture Wars*. The paper argues that to avoid a pitched culture war between sharply divided viewpoints, we need more research, scholarship, and critical thought.

I’d add that Public Health could center that conversation and help us to review our priorities.

Which do we value most: the lives of our children, or the fun we have shooting lots of rounds with a high-powered weapon of war at a gun range? Can we still justify public ownership of weapons not well suited for hunting or personal protection? Maybe a well-regulated firing range can simply rent the guns for that purpose.
What about Mental Health?

Mental illness refers to a lot of conditions or disorders that negatively affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Examples include depression, schizophrenia, addictive behaviors, and anxiety and eating disorders.

We seem to all agree that someone diagnosed with a serious mental illness, or a criminal history, should not be able to get their hands on a gun, especially not one designed to kill the most people in the least time possible. But People can display mental health concerns intermittently from time to time and never be diagnosed or reported.

To use mental illness as a way to avoid debating common sense gun control measures is dangerous and does little for families of victims, or to prevent future deaths.

We know that those suffering from diagnosed mental illness are far more likely to be victims of violent crime than perpetrators, and only 4% of violence in the US can be traced to mental illness.

Obviously, mental illness itself is not the cause of our nation’s gun violence problem. Other nations have just as many mental health problems, but they don’t have nearly the number of gun deaths as we do. So is this why the CDC and NIH can’t study the problem? Does Congress not want you to know the truth?

No matter how you define it, if you think that mental illness is the cause of our gun violence problem, then why did President Trump repeal the Obama-era order designed to prevent the mentally ill from buying a gun? And why did Republicans spend a year working to gut Medicaid, the biggest payer of mental health care in this nation? This makes no sense from a public health and safety perspective.

If mentally ill people aren’t committing mass murder, who is?

Here are the Top 10 Reasons why one person kills another with a gun, according to one source:

10. Mercy killing
9. Road rage
8. Greed
7. Anger
6. Self-defense
5. Religion arguments
4. Alcohol & drugs
3. Revenge
2. Money
1. Domestic violence

According to psychiatrist Michael H. Stone, “Mass murder is an almost exclusively male phenomenon (male:female ratio is 24:1).” This reflects our genetic evolution, where men are naturally more aggressive than women. They tend to define themselves and their masculinity by their job or sport,
and increasingly by their guns. [Might guns substitute for feeling less relevant as women gain influence and power?] Women, on the other hand, define themselves by family and relationships. Stone says most mass murders are planned well in advance, usually as acts of revenge or retribution for perceived slights and wrongs. Overwhelming hopelessness is often present, and this helps explain how nearly half of the perpetrators either commit suicide or are killed by police in the immediate aftermath of the event.

A 2003 study in the journal World Psychiatry said, “the major determinants of violence continue to be socio-demographic and socio-economic factors such as being young, male, and of lower socio-economic status.” About 85% of those committing mass murder are working class and under age 44.

I expect gun violence and mass murder incidents will get worse with the widening wealth gap, divisive politics, and Trump administration. That’s because more and more people are feeling depressed and hopeless, and because of our broken healthcare system that makes getting mental health treatment in our nation difficult and expensive. The economic incentives work against the field of psychiatry, which is far less lucrative than other medical specialties.

What about Arming Teachers?

On his MSNBC program, Laurence O’Donnell told us why arming teachers is a stupid idea. President Trump hinted that a well-trained military veteran like General Kelly would have had no trouble stepping up to oppose a school shooter. But even Kelly would not order troops armed with handguns to attack an enemy with the superior firepower of military style weapons, much less go into that situation himself.

Hardening the physical structure of schools and employing school marshals may help in some cases, but we’ve already seen how easy it was for the Parkland shooter to time his attack to coincide with the end of school and set off the fire alarm to make sure everyone started leaving at once. We also learned that an armed and well-trained deputy sheriff stayed safely outside of the school rather than engage the shooter inside.

If we are to rely on teachers, who will train them, provide their weapons, and pay to harden the schools when so many teachers are already paying for pencils and school supplies themselves? How will first responders know if the teacher with a gun is a good guy and not the perpetrator? Who will pay to settle the wrongful death lawsuits that will certainly occur when students are shot by mistake in the crossfire?

And what about our churches (Sutherland Springs, TX – 2017), movie theaters (Aurora, CO – 2012), shopping malls (Cascade Mall, Burlington, WA – 2016), restaurants (Luby’s, Killeen, TX – 1991), offices (San Bernardino, CA – 2015), and universities (Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA – 2007)? It’s incredibly difficult to stop an angry and revengeful person with suicidal thoughts, as we saw in 2009 when an Army major killed 13 people in Ft. Hood, TX with a concealed semi-automatic pistol.

What about the Morality Movement?

Just as the first women who came forward in the #MeToo movement showed immense courage, so too have the survivors of the Parkland school shooting. They are showing the adults that they’ve had enough, with their own #NeverAgain and #WhatIf campaigns. They’ve challenged the NRA directly. And they’ve demanded that politicians no longer take NRA campaign contributions.
It looks like this “morality movement” is gaining momentum and is having an effect in Hollywood, business, and (increasingly) in politics. A long list of powerful men in the entertainment and sports industries have been shamed, lost their jobs, and were jailed, including Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacey, Matt Lauer, and Dr. Larry Nassar, former USA Gymnastics team doctor.

Likewise, corporations are turning against the NRA, including United and Delta Airlines; Hertz, Avis, National, Alamo, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car; and MetLife. Wal-Mart and Dick’s Sporting Goods said they will no longer sell a gun to anyone under the age of 21, and they stopped selling assault-style guns altogether. Companies sticking with the NRA are being shamed in social media with posts like, “Hey @LifeLock why do you support the NRA? #NeverForget.”

It’s too soon to see how the morality movement will affect politics and the mid-term elections, but Roy Moore, Al Franken, and Trump Campaign Manager Corey Lewandowski already lost their jobs over sexual abuse or harassment. This could be a big opportunity for Democrats, given President Trump’s own behavior and history – 19 women accused him of sexual misconduct – and how the Republican Congress has turned a blind eye.

What about our Cultural Problem?

We have a Gun problem, not a culture problem. Other countries have secular religious freedom but don’t have a gun violence problem, so it’s not a lack of God in our lives. Other countries watch violent movies and play violent video games but don’t have a gun violence problem. People in other countries get angry and want to hurt people too, and they have alcoholism and substance abuse, but what they don’t have is easy access to guns. So to anyone who claims that we have a unique cultural problem, I call “B.S.” So do the surviving students of the Florida school massacre.

It gives me hope for the future of our nation when student survivors like Delaney Tarr, David Hogg, Emma Gonzalez, and Cameron Hasky show more courage and leadership than the leaders who act like children and cower to NRA bullies. But it makes me angry when gun enthusiasts label them as “paid crisis actors” and send them death threats.

WFAA’s Dale Hansen, a Dallas-area sports reporter, recorded the following video editorial about the most recent school shooting in Florida, where the adults only sent “thoughts and prayers”. The have more in mind, and that’s a good thing.
During a PBS News Hour in 2016, a gentleman asked President Barak Obama why he wants to restrict gun access for all owners, and not just the bad guys. His answer is worth watching, as it hits all of the various actions our nation took to reduce auto fatalities.

If, after reading this article and watching these videos, you still think assault weapons are a human right, but healthcare is not, then YOU are what’s wrong with America today. Maybe you can tell me why people with pre-existing mental health conditions have access to Firearms but not Healthcare.
Related Articles & Videos

1. **The True Cost of Gun Violence in America** (Mother Jones, 4/15/2015, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america/) features charts and videos that the NRA doesn’t want you to see.

2. **What I Saw Treating the Victims From Parkland Should Change the Debate on Guns** (The Atlantic, 2/22/2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/what-i-saw-treating-the-victims-from-parkland-should-change-the-debate-on-guns/553937/) They weren’t the first mass-shooting victims the Florida radiologist saw—but their wounds were radically different.


4. **Mass Shooting Tracker** (https://www.MassShootingTracker.org/data) accounts for all mass shooting incidents, including those that don’t get reported in the mainstream media.

5. **Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue** (Science-Based Medicine, 2/21/2018, https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/gun-violence-as-a-public-health-issue/) “Gun violence is a serious public health issue in America but is not getting the research that it deserves. This needs to change.”


7. **America’s gun laws are already weak — and a growing loophole is making them even weaker** (Vox, 2/28/2018, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/2/28/17060024/background-check-guns-charleston-loophole) When federal background checks aren’t completed in 3 days, the sale can close without one.

8. **How to Reduce Shootings** (Nicholas Kristof, New York Times, 2/20/2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/opinion/how-to-reduce-shootings.html) “People all over the world become furious and try to harm others, but only in the United States do we suffer such mass shootings so regularly; only in the United States do we lose one person every 15 minutes to gun violence.”


12. **On Gun Registration, the NRA, Adolf Hitler, and Nazi Gun Laws: Exploding the Gun Culture Wars** (Fordham Law Review, June 2004, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=557183) This exceptionally well-researched paper concludes that we need more historical research of gun violence and serious scholarship to find out what proposals can have the most success in reducing gun violence and deaths in America.

13. **HISTORY: Why the NRA Was Founded** (TIME Magazine, 11/17/2015, http://time.com/4106381/nra-1871-history/) “The N.R.A. was founded in 1871 by a group of former Union Army officers dismayed that so many Northern soldiers, often poorly trained, had been scarcely capable of using their weapons.” For a century the NRA focused on hunting, conservation and marksmanship, even teaching Boy Scouts how to shoot safely. But in 1977 their mission changed from education to political lobbying on behalf of gun manufacturers.


17. **America’s Complex Relationship With Guns** (PEW Research, 2/22/2017, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/06/22/americas-complex-relationship-with-guns/) is an in-depth look at public attitudes and experiences. The represented survey of almost 4,000 U.S. adults found that 44% of them personally know someone who has been shot, either accidentally or intentionally. 23% said someone with a gun has intimidated them or someone in their family. And half saw gun violence as a very big problem needing solutions. The report found that gun owners and non-owners have divergent views on different policy proposals, even though there was general agreement on the need for some restrictions, such as preventing access for those with mental illness or on the federal watch list.

18. **VIDEO: No, there’s no 2nd Amendment right to AR-15s** (5:29 min by Ari Melber, MSNBC, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql1ItqMvqzU)
19. **VIDEO: Why Arming Teachers Is A Fantasy War Game** (16:31 min by Lawrence O’Donnell on MSNBC, 2/21/2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC1VAPJ5cgE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC1VAPJ5cgE))

20. **VIDEO: Everyone should have guns. That’s right. EVERYONE.** (2:38 min of sarcasm aimed at the NRA, 2/14/2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flPsGNjk2J8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flPsGNjk2J8))


25. **The real reason the NRA’s money matters in elections** (Vox, 2/27/2018, [https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/2/27/17051560/money-nra-guns-contributions-donations-parkland](https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/2/27/17051560/money-nra-guns-contributions-donations-parkland)) This well-written article provides important insight into how big money corrupts the political process in ways that go unnoticed, and how the NRA uses its rating system to threaten lawmakers with promises to support competitors if they don’t maintain an A-rating. It adds to the message of my own article on **Political Investments with High ROI** ([http://ramona4tx.com/roi/](http://ramona4tx.com/roi/)).

Related Quotes

1. **The need for research** – “There’s evidence [that] arming more people is typically good for the gun industry and bad for society. And there’s some evidence that certain types of gun laws, like universal background checks, may be useful. [But] There’s no evidence at all about raising the age to 21, and certainly no evidence about arming teachers.” (David Hemenway, a Harvard professor who has written extensively about gun safety)

2. **Defunded research** – “The CDC researches all threats to the health of Americans, and being shot dead is a significant risk to health. The CDC also researches deaths from car crashes, and how to mitigate those deaths, for example.” (Steven Novella, Science Based Medicine)

3. **Incomplete data** – “We have to extrapolate from what limited data we have, from different states or countries with different laws. Generalizing from this data is difficult, but we can still craft thoughtful policy based upon the data we have and plausibility. Then track the results of those policies and adjust them as necessary.” (Dr. Steven Novella, a Yale Medical School professor and executive editor at Science-Based Medicine)

4. **Thanks to NRA opposition** – “CDC research funding for gun violence fell by 96 percent between 1996 and 2012. Major public research funding for gun violence prevention is estimated at $2 million annually. By contrast, in 2011, the National Institutes of Health devoted $21 million to the study of headaches.” (Everytown for Gun Safety, a group that backs gun control)

5. **School Shootings** – “Are we prepared to say that such [gun] violence visited on our children year after year after year is somehow the price of our freedom? (President Obama in 2012 after 20 first-graders were massacred at Sandy Hook Elementary.

6. **Horrific damage** – “Even for those who manage to survive gun violence involving these weapons [assault rifles], the severity and lasting impact of their wounds, disabilities and treatment leads to devastating consequences.” (David Barbe, AMA President, in essay after Parkland, Florida)

7. **Challenging the powerbrokers** – “We get out there and make sure everybody knows how much money their politician took from the NRA.” (David Hogg, one of the surviving students of Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School in Parkland, FL.

8. **Morality movement** – “Make no mistake. This is all about power — a powerful political lobby that has bullied America for too long, powerful men who haven’t been held accountable for their behavior, police who for too long have been unconstrained. A moral movement is growing against the violence perpetrated by all of them, making it necessary for both government and business to take action. It is being led [not by politicians, but] by people whose moral authority cannot be denied: students whose friends have been murdered, women who have been abused, the parents and partners of black men who have been slain. It is already having a profound impact on America.” (Robert Reich)

9. **My rights versus yours** – “Why was my son’s rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness not as important as your right to bear arms?” (A mother whose son died during the Parkland shooting posed this question to an NRA representative.)

10. **AR15 as a right** – “If someone tells you that we have to live with these weapons because of
the 2nd Amendment, either they don’t know what they’re talking about, or they think you don’t.” (Ari Melber, MSNBC)

11. Mental health – “If you’re talking [about] people with mental health issues or mental illness, you’re talking 1 in 5 Americans, and to equate mental illness with violence is to say that 1 in 5 [20%] of people are violent, and that’s not the truth.” (Patricia Woods, outgoing president of the Mental Health Association)

12. Male phenomenon – “Mass murder is an almost exclusively male phenomenon (male:female ratio is 24:1) — a reflection of evolutionarily driven tendency for males to be more aggressive than females. Most mass murders are planned well in advance of the outburst, usually as acts of revenge or retribution for perceived slights and wrongs. Overwhelming hopelessness is often present: this may help explain how nearly half the persons committing mass murder either commit suicide or are killed by the police in the immediate aftermath of the event.” (psychiatrist Michael H. Stone, MD)

About the Author

Wayne Caswell is a retired IBM technologist, market strategist, futurist, consumer advocate, and founding editor of Modern Health Talk (www.mhealthtalk.com). He brings a unique Big Picture perspective and Holistic approach to his articles on healthcare policy, future directions, and solutions for independent living. That perspective caused him to become a strong advocate of progressive policies and candidates.