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Bans on Assault Weapons and Large Capacity Magazines

As of this writing Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, California, Connecticut, New York, Illinois, Rhode Island, Hawaii, Washington, and the District of Columbia have bans on assault weapons. There is no longer a federal ban on assault weapons in the United States. The federal Assault Weapons Ban of 1994, a provision within the *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*, had prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transfer of certain semi-automatic firearms and large capacity magazines.¹ The federal ban included a 10-year sunset provision. It expired on September 13, 2004.

In the federal ban ‘semiautomatic assault weapons’ referred to semi-automatic and large capacity firearms. Semi-automatic firearms were defined in two ways: a list of named firearms and a two-feature test applied to other semi-automatic firearms. The three categories of semi-automatic firearms included: rifles, pistols and shotguns.² Large capacity magazines (LCMs) are defined as ammunition feeding devices for firearms, which allow for a greater number of rounds to be fired before having to reload.³ The states which have an outright ban on assault weapons include provisions to ban LCMs.

The purpose of this report is to outline the elements of assault weapons bans at the federal and state level and report on research that assesses their effectiveness.

1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban

The federal assault weapons ban was included within the *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*.⁴ The intention of the act was “to make unlawful the transfer or

¹ U.S Congress, House, *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*, HR 3355, 103rd Cong., 2d sess., Enacted September 13, 1994. Public Law No: 103-322. <https://www.congress.gov/103/statute/STATUTE-108/STATUTE-108-Pg1796.pdf>.

² Christopher S. Koper, Daniel J. Woods, and Jeffrey A. Roth, “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003” *Report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice*, June 2004 <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf?lv=true>.

³ Louis Klaveras, Andrew Conner, David Hemenway, “The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 109 (November 6, 2019): 1754-1761.

⁴ The federal assault weapons ban fell under Title XI, “Firearms,” Subtitle A, “Assault Weapons,” as the *Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act*; H.R.4296 U.S Congress, House, *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*.

possession of assault weapons.⁵ Under Section 2 of the broader crime bill the ban is described as a “restriction on manufacture, transfer, and possession of certain semiautomatic assault weapons and large capacity magazines.”⁶ These firearms were deemed illegal if they possessed two or more of the features in Table 1.

Table 1: Federal Ban Two Feature Test⁷

Weapon Category	Military-Style Features
Semiautomatic pistols accepting detachable magazines:	1) ammunition magazine that attaches outside the pistol grip 2) threaded barrel capable of accepting a barrel extender, flash hider, forward handgrip, or silencer 3) heat shroud attached to or encircling the barrel 4) weight of more than 50 ounces unloaded 5) semiautomatic version of a fully automatic weapon
Semiautomatic rifles accepting detachable magazines:	1) folding or telescoping stock 2) pistol grip that protrudes beneath the firing action 3) bayonet mount 4) flash hider or threaded barrel designed to accommodate one 5) grenade launcher
Semiautomatic shotguns:	1) folding or telescoping stock 2) pistol grip that protrudes beneath the firing action 3) fixed magazine capacity over 5 rounds 4) ability to accept a detachable ammunition magazine

There have been attempts to renew the federal ban on assault weapons. Most recently, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2025 (H.R. 3115) was introduced by Representative Lucy McBath, a Democrat representing Georgia’s 6th Congressional District. The bill was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary on April 30, 2025. It aims to regulate assault weapons, establish limits on the right to keep and bear arms, and address related purposes. It also outlines the specific definitions of firearms to which it applies in Section 2.118.⁹

State Assault Weapons Bans

To compile accurate and up-to-date accounts of state-level assault weapon bans across the United States, we used a two-step research process combining secondary data collection with primary legal verification. First, we consulted Giffords Law Center’s database on assault weapon

⁵ U.S. Congress, House, *Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act*, 1.

⁶ U.S. Congress, House, *Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act*, 2.

⁷ Koper et al., “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003.”

⁹ U.S. Congress, House, *Assault Weapons Ban of 2025*, HR3115, 119th Congress, Introduced in House April 30, 2025, <https://www.congress.gov/119/bills/hr3115/BILLS-119hr3115ih.pdf>

laws, which provides a comprehensive overview of regulations by state. This source served as an initial point of reference in identifying the states which currently have bans in place and the statutory language and models of the specific legislation enacted. Next, we cross-checked each state's entry against the legislative sources to ensure the accuracy and confirm the collection of data. This verification process involved accessing each state official legislative or statutory website, titled as “[State] Legislature” or “[State] Code,” and reviewing the relevant firearm or weapons statutes. We confirmed the presence, scope, and language of each assault weapons ban by examining enacted bills, codified statutes, or official summaries. Throughout, we prioritized the official state legislative records as the authoritative source of law, relying on Giffords as a starting reference. When discrepancies appeared between Giffords and the state code, the state legislative text was treated as definitive.

As of 2024, 11 states and the District of Columbia have enacted broad bans on the sale, manufacture, and transfer of “assault weapons.”¹⁰ The specific definitions and prohibitions vary by state. The states which have enacted an outright ban include California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington. Minnesota and Virginia have implemented limited safety regulations and ownership restrictions on certain semiautomatic firearms but have not enacted comprehensive statewide bans on the sale or manufacture of assault weapons.¹¹

The key legislative elements of the state assault weapons ban currently enacted (as seen in Table 2) followed the federal ban often include definitions based on specific features that characterize or indicate assault weapons. These definitions may use either a one-feature or two-feature test to classify firearms. While a generic feature test is the most comprehensive approach, some laws instead ban weapons by name, allowing a governmental official or agency to add or modify models on the list as needed. These definitions often extend to firearm parts that can be assembled into a complete assault weapon.¹²

All state bans follow one of three models to prohibit assault firearms: bans by name, by feature, or a combination of both. Prohibitions on specific named firearm models, such as a particular type of AK-47 and AR-15 variants, or weapons that are determined to be duplicates or “copycats” of those named firearm models (NJ). Some states instead use prohibitions on firearms that possess a certain number or combination of specified “characteristics” or “features.” These include a pistol grip, a collapsible stock, or flash suppressor, indicative of assaultive purposes (NY, and RI). Remaining states use both methods by prohibiting named models in addition to other firearms that meet a feature-based definition or test (CA, CT, DE, IL, MD, MA, WA, D.C). Of all states that use an assaultive features test some restrict weapons that meet a one-feature requirement (CA, CT, D.C., IL, NY, RI*, and WA). Others follow a two-feature variant (DE, HI, MD). A one-feature test is inclusive of more assault weapons as it adheres to a stricter definition

¹⁰ California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and the District of Columbia. See Calif. Penal Code § 30505; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53-202b; Del. Code Tit. 11 § 1466; Hawaii Rev. Stat. Ann. § 134-4; Ill. Compiled Statutes 720 ILCS 5/24-1 (a)(11-16); Md. Code Ann. § 4-303; Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 140 § 131M; N.J. Stat. Ann. § 2C:39-1 and 39-5; N.Y. Penal Law § 265.02; Wash. Rev. Code 9A.10.010; 9A.10.001; D.C. Code Ann. § 7-2502.02.

¹¹ Giffords Law Center, “Assault Weapons,” Giffords, accessed October 13, 2025, https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/hardware-ammunition/assault-weapons/#footnote_21_5603.

¹² Giffords Law Center, “Assault Weapons.”

of AWs. A two-feature test applies to a lesser range of firearms. All states with an enacted ban include a provision on high-capacity magazines which hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition at a time. Delaware is the only exception, banning magazines which hold more than 17 rounds. In addition, some states ban LCMs but not AWs. This is the case in 3 states; Colorado, Oregon and Vermont, which all implement LCM bans but not outright AWBs (though Colorado has regulations on certain semiautomatic weapons).¹³ Colorado bans magazines of 15 or more rounds, Oregon 10 or more, and Vermont 10 rounds for long Guns; and 15 for handguns. Colorado bans the sale, possession, and transfer while allowing the possession of legacy LCMs. Oregon prohibits the manufacture, sale, import, possession, use, and purchase of LCMs but exempts legacy LCMs with certain restrictions on possession. Vermont limits the purchase or sale of high-capacity magazines, but possession and transfer remains legal.¹⁴

Assault weapons bans differ in what conduct is regulated. State law in California broadly restricts the sale or offer for sale, purchase, transfer, loan, transportation, distribution, importation, and manufacture of assault weapons. Strict laws which prohibit the possession of assault weapons can also include regulation of legacy weapons acquired before the weapon law was enacted. In some states people who owned legacy assault weapons prior to the ban must register or record their weapon with state law enforcement (CA, CT, HI, IL, NJ, and NY). The weapon must also be securely stored when not in use and used only in specific authorized locations such as the owner's private property or shooting ranges such as in California, Connecticut and Illinois. In addition, licensing of legacy weapons is required in New Jersey and Massachusetts. New Jersey only allowed weapons to be registered if they were used for target-shooting purposes. Some states prohibit the transfer of legacy weapons (CA, CT, HI, IL, MD, NY, RI), while some include a limit on the places of possession (CA, CT, DE). The process of registering firearms and licensing can be found in specific states to which these provisions apply. The only states which do not impose qualifications on the possession of pre-ban assault weapons are Rhode Island and Washington.¹⁵

Legislative justification for the bans cites the enhanced lethality of assault weapons, and that banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines would reduce casualties in mass shootings. Delaware cites the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, Texas where 19 children and two teachers were murdered with an AR-15-style semi-automatic assault weapon, and the fatal shooting 10 days earlier in a grocery store in Buffalo, New York using the same style of weapon to kill 10 people. In addition to the “dozens more” mass shootings within the last decade.¹⁶ It is from these cited shootings that the Delaware Legislature found and declared that the “proliferation and use of assault weapons poses a threat to the health, safety, and security” of all state citizens.¹⁷

¹³ Colorado, Oregon, Vermont. See Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 18-12-301, CO SB 3 (2025), 302, 303. 2022 Oregon Ballot Measure 114, SEC. 11. Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 13, § 4021 (enacted by 2017 VT S 55, Sec. 8).

¹⁴ Giffords Law Center, “Assault Weapons.”

¹⁵ Giffords Law Center, “Assault Weapons.”

¹⁶ State of Delaware, *Delaware Lethal Firearms Safety Act* (2022).

¹⁷ State of Delaware, *Delaware Lethal Firearms Safety Act* (2022).

Table 2: State Bans on Assault Weapons¹⁸

State(s)	Description of Assault Weapon Law	Bans on High-Capacity Magazine	Specific Weapon Models Banned by Name	Ban on Assaultive Features	Legacy Weapon Provision
California	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (One-Feature)	Requires registration, prohibits transfer, possession only in specified locations
Connecticut	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (One-Feature)	Requires registration, prohibits transfer, possession only in specified locations
Delaware	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >17 rounds.	Yes	Yes (Two-Feature)	Does not require registration, transfers to family members only
District of Columbia	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (One-Feature)	Did not exempt pre-ban assault weapons
Hawaii	Bans assault pistols only. Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	No	Yes (Two-Feature)	Requires registration, prohibits transfer
Illinois	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (One-Feature)	Requires registration, prohibits transfer, possession only in specified locations
Maryland	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (Two-Feature)	Does not require registration, prohibits transfer
Massachusetts	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (Two-Feature)	Requires registration, does not prohibit transfer, license required
New Jersey	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	No	Requires registration, does not prohibit transfer, license required
New York	Bans possession, sale, and transfer.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	No	Yes (One-Feature)	Requires registration, prohibits transfer
Rhode Island	Bans sale and transfer. Does not ban possession.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	No	Yes (One-Feature)	Does not require registration, prohibits transfer
Washington	Bans sale and transfer. Does not ban possession.	Bans magazines >10 rounds.	Yes	Yes (One-Feature)	Does not require registration, does not prohibit transfer

¹⁸ Giffords Law Center, “Assault Weapons.”

While the precise classification, a misdemeanor, a felony, or a wobbler offense, meaning a type of crime that can be charged as either a felony or a misdemeanor, mandatory minimums, maximum prison terms, and fine amounts differ across state jurisdictions, the common statutory approach is 1) to criminalize covered possession, sale, transfer, and manufacture; 2) to authorize forfeiture/destruction of the weapon or magazine; and 3) to impose multi-thousand-dollar fines and multi-year incarceration for many violations under the cited state and district codes.¹⁹

In sum, there are differences among the state bans regarding which firearms are classified as restricted “assault weapons.” The states also vary in how conduct involving these weapons is regulated or prohibited (such as their sale, manufacture, or possession). Their differences also extend to the exemptions that apply to legacy assault weapons acquired before the ban took effect. States also vary in whether they require owners of legacy assault weapons to register their firearms with law enforcement, as well as in the rules that govern how and where owners may use or carry these weapons.²⁰

Rates of Violence Associated with Assault Weapons and Large Capacity Magazines

Mass Shootings

The FBI definition of mass shootings is those with four or more fatalities, excluding the perpetrator. Robert Spitzer, one of the top Political Science experts on gun policy, documented the role of assault weapons and large capacity magazines in mass shootings in his most recent book. Spitzer lists mass shootings that involved assault weapons such as: the “Stockton, California elementary school shooting in 1989; the Columbine High School shooting in 1999; the Aurora, Colorado movie theater shooting and the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting, both in 2012; the Orlando night club shooting in 2016; the Las Vegas shooting in 2017; and the Parkland shooting in 2017.”²¹ Spitzer presents data from a number of sources documenting the use of assault weapons and LCMs in mass shootings.²² He writes that accounting for the “number of shooting incidents” over a third of mass shootings involved assault weapons, though he notes that attackers often possessed more than one firearm. Additionally, Spitzer provides data showing that mass shootings have increased over time, in terms of both numbers of incidents, fatalities, and number of injured. He also discusses the lethality of assault weapons compared with other firearms.²³ Spitzer concludes that the fact that mass shootings have become more lethal is attributable to the “wider availability and use” of both assault weapons and LCMs, in both public and non-public spheres.²⁴

¹⁹ CA Penal Code § 30600 (2024); CT Gen Stat § 53-202b. (2024); 11 DE Code § 1466 (2024); DC Code § 7–2507.06 (2023); HI Rev Stat § 134-8 (2024); Ill. Compiled Statutes 720 ILCS 5/24-1 (b); MD Criminal Law Code § 4-304, 306 (2024); MA Gen L ch 140 § 131m (2023); NJ Rev Stat § 2C:39-9 (2024); N.Y. Penal Law § 265.00(22), 265.02(7), 265.10, 400.00(16-a);; R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-47-26; WA Rev Code § 9A.1.390 (2024).

²⁰ Giffords Law Center, “Assault Weapons.”

²¹ Spitzer, Robert J., *The Gun Dilemma: How History Is against Expanded Gun Rights*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 46.

²² Paige Williams, “American Vigilante,” *The New Yorker*, 2021.

²³ Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*.

²⁴ Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*, 48.

An open-source database compiled by *Mother Jones* of 62 public mass shootings from 1982 to 2012 found that 49.6% of the 143 firearms used in the events were assault weapons, with 34% of them weapons that would have been restricted under an assault weapons ban proposed in Congress in 2013.²⁵ A 2015 Congressional Research Service study of mass shooting from 1999 to 2013 conducted by William J. Krouse and Daniel J. Richardson concluded that assault rifles were used in 27% of public mass shootings, having increased by three percent, as compared with data from 1982.²⁶ Another Congressional Research Service study of mass shootings from 2000 to 2017 found that semi-automatic assault rifles were used in 25% of active shooter events, a disproportionate level considering the percentage of fire arms that are assault weapons.²⁷

Killings of Police

Spitzer cites a number of sources that analyzed data on the role of assault weapons and LCMs in police shootings.²⁸ He references a Violence Policy Center report using FBI data, that found 20% of police officers killed in the line of duty from 2016 to 2017 died from assault weapons.²⁹ Additional data from 2009 found that 18% of 45 officers killed by firearms nationwide were killed by assault weapons.³⁰ A study conducted by Koper et al., reported that assault weapons and LCMs were “disproportionately” more likely to be used in police killings from 2003 to 2014, with about 13-16% of murders using assault weapon and over 40% involving LCMs.³¹ Spitzer notes that police organizations, such as the International Associations of Chiefs of Police have “long supported restrictions on assault weapons.”³²

Gang and Criminal Gun Violence

After the expiration of the federal assault weapons ban, the Police Executive Research Forum noted that 37% of police agencies reported seeing a “noticeable increase of criminals’ use of assault weapons.”³³ A study conducted by the National Gang Crime Research Center in the

²⁵ Mark Follman, Gavin Aronsen, and Deanna Pan, “A Guide to Mass Shootings in America,” *Mother Jones*, 2013, accessed November 17, 2025, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/>.

²⁶ William J. Krouse and Daniel J. Richardson, “Mass Murder with Firearms” Congressional Research Service Report, 2015, https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R44126/R44126.5.pdf.; Micheal S. Rosenwald, “Why Banning AR-15s and Other Assault Weapons Won’t Stop Mass Shootings,” *Washington Post*, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2016/06/16/why-banning-ar-15s-and-other-assault-weapons-wont-stop-mass-shootings/>.

²⁷ Alex Yablon, “Most Active Shooters Use Pistols, Not Rifles, According to FBI Data,” *The Trace*, 2018, <https://www.thetrace.org/newsletter/mass-shooting-gun-type-data/>.

²⁸ Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*.

²⁹ “Officer Down,” Violence Policy Center, accessed October 15, 2025 <https://www.vpc.org/studies/officer%20down.pdf>.

³⁰ Violence Policy Center, “New Data Shows One in Five Law Enforcement Officers Slain in the Line of Duty in 2016 and 2017 Were Felled by an Assault Weapon,” 2019, accessed October 15, 2025.

³¹ Christopher S. Koper, William D. Johnson, Jordan L. Nichols, Ambrozie Ayers, Natalie Mullins, “Criminal Use of Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Semiautomatic Firearms: An Updated Examination of Local and National Sources,” *Journal of Urban Health*, 95(3) (2018):313-321.

³² Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*, 49.

³³ Police Executive Research Forum, “Guns and Crime: Breaking New Ground By Focusing on the Local Impact,” accessed October 15, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/guns%20and%20crime%20-%20breaking%20new%20ground%20by%20focusing%20on%20the%20local%20impact%202010.pdf.

American Midwest found that over 43% of gang members interviewed reported owning an assault rifle, compared to 15% of criminals that did not belong to a gang.³⁴ Within the same study 28% of gang members reported using assault rifles during crime compared to 4% of non-gang member criminals. A report on self-styled militia and extremist groups conducted by the FBI found that such groups typically had assault-type weapons in their arsenal.³⁵

Utility of Assault Weapons in Self-Defense

Existing evidence does not support claims that assault weapons are good for use in self-defense.³⁶ Spitzer explains that for self-defense purposes assault weapons have clear limitations, the “length and weight” of assault guns compared with a handgun makes it difficult to deploy within the “often-tight confines of a home” and it requires two hands to handle and operate. The higher velocity of smaller caliber bullets fired by assault weapons means that there are higher chances that rounds fired will “over penetrate” into surroundings like buildings or cars, causing inadvertent damage, injury, or death. In the confines of a home, long guns are not known for accuracy.³⁷

Further, in civilian gun self-defense situations, the firing of multiple rounds (10 shots or more) without reloading is uncommon. This point was testified to by a supplemental expert report and declaration in two separate district court cases by the National Economic Research Associates (NERA) study of self-defense shootings which examined data from the NRA’s “armed citizen” accounts. The NERA study found that in the period from 1997 to 2001 civilian defenders fired an average of 2.2 shots, and in 28% of these instances defenders did not fire any shots (they merely displayed their weapon). Between 2011 to 2013 the average number of shots was 2.1, with no shots fired in 16% of encounters. In the later period there were no instances where 10 shots or more were fired by a defender.³⁸ The study was later extended to 2011 to 2017, finding that defenders fired an average of 2.2 shots. Out of 736 incidents of firing, there were two instances where a defender fired more than 10 rounds.³⁹

Assault Weapons and LCM Damage Assessment

Various studies have examined the damage caused by assault weapons and LCMs compared to incidents involving other firearms. A study of FBI data on 248 shooting incidents from 2007 to 2017 found that more people were killed or wounded in situations where assault weapons were used compared to incidents involving other firearms.⁴⁰ Another study examining 248 active

³⁴ George W. Knox et al., “Gangs and Guns,” National Gang Crime Research Center (2001), 35, 36 <https://www.ngcrc.com/ngcrc/page12.htm>.

³⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Military Extremists,” December 8, 2011, as cited in Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*.

³⁶ Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*.

³⁷ Spitzer, *The Gun Dilemma*, 56.

³⁸ Lucy P. Allen, Declaration Submitted in the case of *Kolbe et al. v. O’Malley et al.*, Case No. 1:13-cv-02841-CCB, U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, filed February 14, 2014.

³⁹ Declaration of Lucy P. Allen (19-cv-1537 BEN-JLB), *Miller v. Becerra*, in the United States District Court for the Southern District of California, filed January 23, 2020.

⁴⁰ Elzerie de Jager et al., “Lethality of Civilian Active Shooter Incidents With and Without Semiautomatic Rifles in the United States,” *JAMA Network*, September 11, 2018, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2702134>.

shootings concluded that the use of an assault rifle in a shooting doubles the chance of death or injury compared to other firearms.⁴¹ Data from medical professionals explain that this is because assault weapons “deliver a more devastating blow to bones and organs” due to the fact that once the bullet enters the body, “they fragment and explode, pulverizing bones, tearing blood vessels, and liquefying organs.”⁴² An assault rifle bullet is small, but it moves at a speed greater than other firearms. This generates a large amount of kinetic energy, causing “devastating injury” that often deviates from the bullet’s original path.⁴³

Effectiveness of Assault Weapons Bans

Effectiveness of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban

Researchers working for The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) produced a study of the effects of the 1994 assault weapons ban and found that following the implementation of the assault weapons ban, criminal usage of assault weapons declined.⁴⁴ The NIJ researchers also found that by 1995 gun murders declined 10.3% in states that did not already have existing assault weapons bans. This was after the NIJ researchers, Roth and Koper, controlled for external factors such as state and federal juvenile handgun possession bans, murder trends, demographic and economic changes, and other overlapping state initiatives. The rate of gun murders remained unchanged in states that had assault weapons bans prior to the federal ban. Their research did not find a decrease in the average number of victims per overall gun murder incident or multiple gunshot wound victims.⁴⁵

Researchers produced additional research for the NIJ on the effects of the 1994 assault weapons ban in 2003. The researchers found that across cities in the United States the share of gun crimes involving assault weapons declined in rates between 17% to 72%.⁴⁶ This was due primarily to a decrease in the use of assault pistols, with no clear decline in the use of assault rifles “though assessments are complicated by the rarity of crimes with these weapons and by substitution of post-ban rifles that are very similar to the banned AR models.”⁴⁷ The ban failed to decrease the amount of large capacity magazines used in crimes “likely been due to the immense stock of

⁴¹ Dina Fine Maron, “Data Confirm Semiautomatic Rifles Linked to more Deaths, Injuries,” *Scientific American*, September 11, 2018, <https://scientificamerican.com/article/data-confirm-semiautomatic-rifles-linked-to-more-deaths-injuries/>.

⁴² Jon Schuppe, “America’s Rifle: Why So Many People Love the AR-15,” *NBCNews.com*, December 2, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/america-s-rifle-why-so-many-people-love-ar-15-n831171>; Ryan Hodnick, “Penetrating Trauma Wounds Challenge EMS Providers,” *Journal of Emergency Medicine Services*, March 30, 2012 <https://www.jems.com/patient-care/emergency-trauma-care/penetrating-trauma-wounds-challenge-ems/>.

⁴³ Sarah Zhang, “What an AR-15 Can Do to the Human Body,” *Wired*, June 17, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/06/ar-15-can-human-body/>.

⁴⁴ Jeffery A. Roth and Christopher S. Koper, “Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-96,” National Institute of Justice, March 1999: 1-12, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/173405.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Roth and Koper, “Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban.”

⁴⁶ Christopher Koper, Daniel Woods, and Jeffrey Roth, “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003,” accessed December 1, 2025, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Koper et al., “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban,” p. 2.

exempted pre-ban magazines, which has been enhanced by recent imports.”⁴⁸ However, the effects of the ban were expected to kick in over time. At the time of publication, the authors argued that renewing the ban would have a small impact on gun violence based upon the lack of clarity on how much gun violence outcomes are dependent on the ability of offenders to fire more than ten shots. They continue that reducing the number of LCMs imported from foreign countries would help increase the effectiveness of the ban. Koper et al. predicted that if the ban were to be lifted, assault weapons and LCMs would be reintroduced to the market in large numbers. This would also reduce the value of pre-ban assault weapons and increase the amount in secondhand markets. Assault weapons in secondhand markets are accessed by “high risk users” (criminals, terrorists, and other potential mass murderers).⁴⁹

Another study by DiMaggio et al. focused on the impact the federal assault weapons ban had on mass shooting deaths in the United States from 1994 to 2004. Their estimate of 9 fewer mass shooting–related deaths per 10,000 homicides would mean the assault weapons ban would have prevented 314 of the 448 or 70% of the mass shooting deaths during the non-ban periods. In sum, DiMaggio et al. conclude that the federal assault weapons ban reduced the number of mass shooting related homicides during the decade it was in effect.⁵⁰

According to another study of the period between 1990 and 2017 by Klaveras et al., high fatality mass shootings in the United States increased after the expiration of 1994 assault weapons ban.⁵¹ High fatality mass shootings are events where six or more victims are shot and killed. During the 10-year federal ban on assault weapons and LCMs, 12 high-fatality mass shootings were recorded resulting in 89 deaths. This was an average of 1.2 high fatality incidents and 8.9 deaths per year. After the ban’s expiration, 48 high-fatality mass shootings occurred resulting in 527 deaths. This was an average of 3.6 incidents and 39.6 deaths per year.⁵² This is visually represented in Figure 1. Klaveras et al. concluded that the federal ban on LCMs was associated with lower incidences of high-fatality mass shootings. Large capacity magazine bans were also found to lower fatality rates overall during shooting incidents.⁵³

⁴⁸ Koper et al., “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban,” p. 2.

⁴⁹ Koper et al., “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban.”

⁵⁰ Charles DiMaggio, Jacob Avraham, Cherisse Berry, Marko Bukur, Justin Feldman, Michael Klein, Noor Shah, Manish Tandon, Spiros Frangos, “Changes in US mass shooting deaths associated with the 1994–2004 federal assault weapons ban: Analysis of open-source data,” *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 86 (January 2019): 11-19.

⁵¹ Louis Klaveras, Andrew Conner, David Hemenway, “The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 109 (November 6, 2019): 1754-1761.

⁵² Klaveras et al., “The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017.”

⁵³ Klaveras et al., “The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017.”

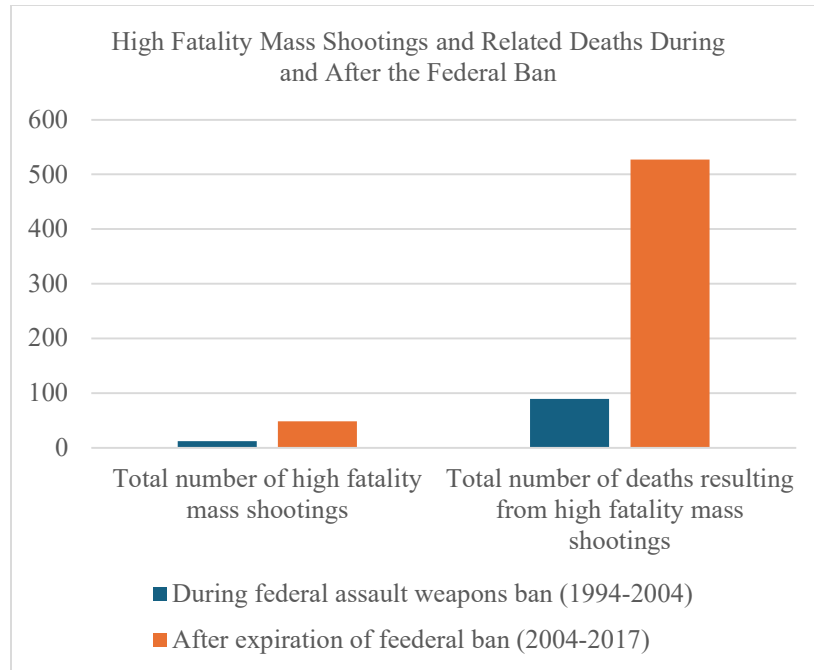


Figure 1: High Fatality Mass Shootings and Related Deaths During and After the Federal Ban⁵⁴

Effectiveness of Assault Weapons Bans at the State Level

Below are a series of studies examining the effectiveness of state level assault weapon bans in both reducing overall firearm incidents as well as incidents related to mass shootings. The studies examine individual state level data as well as the aggregate. While some research specifies effect of large capacity magazine (LCM) bans, all twelve states with assault weapon bans include a ban on large capacity magazines. Therefore, all research studies which cite LCM bans for their effectiveness are citing the effectiveness of the broad assault weapons bans that are currently enacted in the 11 states including the District of Columbia.

According to research examining data from the Gun Violence Archive between 2014-2021, the effect of assault weapon bans on mass shootings (4 or more homicides) is inconclusive.⁵⁵ The study found that having an assault weapon ban in just one state does not seem to reduce an individual states' shooting fatalities or the prevalent of assault weapons. However, when several neighboring states all have assault weapon bans, there is evidence to suggest that bans help reduce the number of deaths from shootings. Beaulieu-Jones et al also concluded that multiple neighboring states with bans reduces the overall presence of assault weapons.⁵⁶ Later research examined firearm related incidents in the state of Washington involving assault weapons in the

⁵⁴ Klaveras et al., "The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017."

⁵⁵ Brendin R. Beaulieu-Jones, "Nearly 20 Years Since the Federal Ban: Can State-Level Assault Weapon Prohibitions Fill the Void? Comparative Analysis of Case Fatality and Assault Weapon Recovery in States with and without an Assault Weapon Ban," *Journal of Surgical Research*, 300 (August 2024): 458-466.

⁵⁶ Beaulieu-Jones, "Nearly 20 Years Since the Federal Ban."

years following their assault weapons ban. Data from 2016-2021 showed that both overall firearm violence and assault weapon related incidents decreased after the law was put into effect.⁵⁷

LCM Bans have been found to be related to a reduction in mass shootings. Research by Klarevas et al. found that between 1990 and 2017 64% of mass shootings were carried out with LCM firearms and 77% of mass shootings occurred in states that did not have a ban on LCMs.⁵⁸ Another study by Webster et al. found that states with LCM bans had a 48% reduction in mass shooting incidents and a 33% reduction in fatalities.⁵⁹ Siegel et al. found that LCM bans were associated with 38% fewer fatalities and 77% fewer non-fatal injuries during mass shootings.⁶⁰ The authors of these studies conclude that bans on LCMs seem to reduce the incidence of fatal mass shootings as well as the number of fatalities in mass shootings.⁶¹ Another study found that states with bans on LCMs had a 63% lower rate of mass shootings. They concluded that “whether a state has a large capacity ammunition magazine is the single best predictor of the mass shootings in that state.”⁶²

Assault weapon bans have been found to be related to a decrease in firearm related homicides. Research by Gius determined a suggestive effect consistent with assault weapon bans and decreasing firearm-related homicides.⁶³

The research findings on the impact of state bans on assault weapons and LCMs are complex. One study found that the effect of state assault weapons bans on mass shootings depends on whether neighboring states also ban assault weapons and LCMs.⁶⁴ Two studies found that state assault weapons bans are effective at reducing the incidence of mass shootings and were associated with fewer fatalities.⁶⁵ All four of the studies that looked at bans on LCMs concluded

⁵⁷ A. Bhullar et al., “Washington State Assault Weapon Firearm Violence Before and After Firearm Legislation Reform,” *The American Surgeon* 90, no. 10 (2024): 2384–2388, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031348241244644>.

⁵⁸ Klarevas et al., “The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017.”

⁵⁹ Daniel W. Webster, Alexander D. McCourt, Cassandra K. Crifasi, Marisa D. Booty, and Elizabeth A. Stuart, “Evidence Concerning the Regulation of Firearms Design, Sale, and Carrying on Fatal Mass Shootings in the United States,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 19, no. 1 (2020): 171–212.

⁶⁰ Michael Siegel, Max Goder-Reiser, Grant Duwe, Michael Rocque, James Alan Fox, Emma E. Fridel, “The Relation between State Gun Laws and the Incidence and Severity of Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1976–2018,” *Law and Human Behavior* 44, no. 5 (2020): 347–360.

⁶¹ Webster et al., “Evidence Concerning the Regulation of Firearms Design, Sale, and Carrying on Fatal Mass Shootings in the United States.”

⁶² Sam Petulla, “Here is the 1 Correlation Between State Gun Laws and Mass Shootings,” *CNN.com*, October 5, 2017.

⁶³ Gius, Mark. “The Impact of State and Federal Assault Weapons Bans on Public Mass Shootings.” *Applied Economics Letters* 22, no. 4 (2015): 281–84.

⁶⁴ Beaulieu-Jones, “Nearly 20 Years Since the Federal Ban: Can State-Level Assault Weapon Prohibitions Fill the Void? Comparative Analysis of Case Fatality and Assault Weapon Recovery in States with and without an Assault Weapon Ban.”

⁶⁵ DiMaggio et al., “Changes in US Mass Shooting Deaths Associated with the 1994–2004 Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Analysis of Open-Source Data.”; A. Bhullar et al., “Washington State Assault Weapon Firearm Violence Before and After Firearm Legislation Reform,”

that they were associated with lower incidents and fatalities of mass shootings.⁶⁶ The one study that covered the effect of assault weapons bans and firearms related homicides declared a suggestive effect with a decrease in firearm-related homicides.⁶⁷ According to one study on LCMs and firearm-related homicides, large capacity magazine bans have an uncertain effect on overall firearm-related homicides.⁶⁸

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⁶⁶ Klaveras et al., “The Effect of Large-Capacity Magazine Bans on High-Fatality Mass Shootings, 1990–2017.”; Webster et al., “Evidence Concerning the Regulation of Firearms Design, Sale, and Carrying on Fatal Mass Shootings in the United States.”; Siegel et al., “The Relation between State Gun Laws and the Incidence and Severity of Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1976-2018.”; Petulla, “Here is the 1 Correlation Between State Gun Laws and Mass Shootings.”

⁶⁷ DiMaggio et al., “Changes in US Mass Shooting Deaths Associated with the 1994–2004 Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Analysis of Open-Source Data.”

⁶⁸ Siegel et al., “The Relation between State Gun Laws and the Incidence and Severity of Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1976-2018.”