

Why Expanded Age Restrictions for Firearms are Necessary

- **Data shows that restricting young people's access to firearms can prevent gun violence:**
 - [One study](#) found that state laws raising the minimum legal age to purchase firearms to 21 years were associated with a 9% decline in rates of firearm suicides among 18-to-20-year-olds.
- **Young people are more likely to make risky decisions:**
 - The prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for impulse control, judgment, and long-range planning, is [not fully developed until at least age 26](#); this, and hormonal changes that adolescents often experience, can affect decision making, emotions, risk-taking behaviors, and aggressive impulses.
 - People aged 18-25 have the [highest prevalence of mental illness](#) of any age group. Biological factors that influence this place adolescents and post-adolescents at elevated risk of causing firearm injury or death to themselves or others.
- **The amount of violent crime perpetrated by young people is growing:**
 - A [disproportionate amount of violent crime](#) in the United States is committed by individuals between the ages of 12 and 24. 12 to 24 year olds make up only one fifth of the population, but perpetrate nearly half of all firearm homicides.
 - FBI data shows [young people disproportionately commit gun homicides](#). 18-20 year olds make up just 4% of the US population, but comprise 17% of known homicide offenders.
 - Individuals aged [18 to 20 years old](#) commit gun homicides at a rate nearly 3 times greater than adults 21 and over.
- **Mass shootings are increasingly carried out by young people:**
 - People under 21 years old seek to use weapons that will cause the greatest harm. A [study](#) revealed 41 percent of public mass shooters under the age of 25 in the US from 1982 - 2018 used an assault weapon or semiautomatic rifle, compared to 25 percent of mass shooters over 25 years old.
 - [Six of the nine](#) deadliest mass shootings from 2018 to 2022 were carried out by individuals under 21.
 - From 1966 to present, the [median age of school shooters](#) is 18.
 - The gunman who killed 21 people and injured 17 others in 2022 at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, [waited until his 18th birthday](#) to legally purchase two assault weapons. He carried out the attack just eight days after he turned 18.
 - Similarly, in the 2022 mass shooting in a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, an 18-year-old killed 10 people and injured three others with an AR-15-style rifle which [he legally purchased](#).

- **Young men are especially susceptible to gun violence and are targeted by the industry:**
 - There is a [disproportionate representation](#) of young men amongst the most destructive mass shooters in American history, including in Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Boulder, in which the shooters were aged 17 & 18, 20, and 21, respectively.
 - [A study](#) of how firearms affect college aged men's testosterone and aggression showed that giving the participants a firearm made them significantly more aggressive.
 - [The gun industry targets male adolescents](#) through predatory marketing practices, feeding into their pre-conditioned susceptibility to product advertising, and, in particular, receptivity to advertisements that depict impulsive, thrill-seeking behavior.
 - Brady, Everytown, and Fred Guttenberg, gun safety advocate and father of Parkland victim Jaime Guttenberg, [have called](#) on the Federal Trades Commission to investigate Smith and Wesson for their dangerous marketing practices in targeting young men.

Current Policy Landscape

- **Federal law sets the minimum age at 18 for most guns:**
 - [Federal law requires](#) individuals to be 21 to purchase handguns from a licensed dealer, but allows anyone 18 and older to purchase long guns, which include assault weapons.
 - For purchases from unlicensed sellers, [the law is even weaker](#). There is an 18-year old minimum age for purchasing handguns, and no minimum age for long guns.
- **The majority of Americans are in favor of raising the minimum age to 21 for all gun purchases:**
 - The most recent [poll from Pew Research](#) shows that 79% of all Americans support increasing the minimum age for buying all guns to 21 years old, 59% of whom strongly favor this measure.
 - This measure has bipartisan support— a [2022 Quinnipiac poll](#) shows that a majority of Democrats (91%) and Republicans (59%) are in favor of raising the minimum age to 21 for all gun purchases.

Access to Firearms in a Home Make it Less Safe

- Access to guns in the home [increases the risk of suicide by 300%](#).
- Each day, [8 children and teens](#) (aged 0 to 17) are unintentionally injured or killed by family fire, and [4.6 million children](#) live in a home with an unlocked, loaded firearm.

- Although 70% of parents reported that adolescents could not independently access firearms in their household, over one-third of children belonging to those households [reported being able to access the firearm in less than five minutes](#).
- [92% of guns](#) used in accidental shooting deaths among children were left unlocked and loaded.
- [89% of unintentional shooting deaths](#) by children occur in the home.
- [70-90% of firearms](#) used in unintentional shootings, school shootings, and suicides by minors are acquired from the home, or from the homes of friends or relatives.
- In [75% of youth firearm suicides](#) for which the gun storage method could be identified, the gun was stored loaded and unlocked.