



North Carolinians Against Gun Violence

North Carolina's Pistol Purchase Permitting System Works

For decades, this Permit-to-Purchase (PTP) law has been the backbone of public safety in North Carolina, keeping handguns out of the hands of felons, domestic abusers, and people experiencing a mental health crisis. With gun violence surging in nationally and in NC,¹ now is not the time to dismantle a system that works and saves lives.

Why State Handgun Purchaser Licensing Laws are Critical

- Federal law requires prospective firearm purchasers to pass a background check verifying that they meet all eligibility requirements – but only if the seller is a federally licensed firearm dealer.²
- Prohibited persons or anyone who does not want records linking themselves to a gun can acquire firearms from unlicensed private sellers, who have no legal obligation to verify that the prospective purchaser can legally possess a firearm. This includes gun shows, online purchases and private transfers to an individual. This would be dangerous for NC: An estimated 22 percent of firearms are purchased without a background check.³
- It gets worse: The same study found that in states without regulations on private firearm sales 57% of firearms purchases from a private seller did not include a background check.⁴ If we repeal our Pistol Purchase Permit system, many people in NC who now undergo background checks could buy handguns at gun shows or online – no questions asked.
- In states with PTP laws, like North Carolina, both licensed and unlicensed firearm sellers can only legally sell a handgun to someone if the purchaser has a valid permit or license.^{5,6}

Purchase permitting laws reduce amount of guns trafficked within states and diverted for criminal misuse:

- A study of 2006-2016 ATF data on crime guns showed that states with PTP laws were associated with a lower percentage of in-state crime guns recovered by police, meaning that fewer of the guns recovered by police after a crime had been trafficked from an in-state source.⁷

¹ Fowler H. Gun deaths in US surged in 2020, data shows. North Carolina's spike was even bigger. Charlotte Observer. 2021 Mar 29. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article250197690.html>

² Aldrige J. Firearms Laws and Permits. North Carolina Sheriffs' Association. 2018 Nov. <https://ncdoj.gov/download/98/concealed-carry-handgun/16346/firearms-publication-november-2018>

³ Miller M, et al. Firearm acquisition without background checks. Annals of Internal Medicine. 2017 Feb 21; 166(4):233-239. <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M16-1590>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Aldrige J. Firearms Laws and Permits. North Carolina Sheriffs' Association. 2018 Nov. <https://ncdoj.gov/download/98/concealed-carry-handgun/16346/firearms-publication-november-2018>

⁶ NC GS 14-402. Sale of certain weapons without permit forbidden.

https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_14/gs_14-402.html

⁷ Collins T, Greenberg R, Siegel M, Xuan Z, Rothman EF, Cronin SW, Hemenway D. State Firearm Laws and Interstate Transfer of Guns in the USA, 2006-2016. Journal of Urban Health. 2018 Jun;95(3):322-336. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5993697/>



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- A study with 25 cities found that "States with... licensing systems appear to do a better job than other states of keeping guns initially sold within the state from being recovered in crimes."⁸

Handgun Purchaser Licensing Linked to Lower Gun-Related Deaths

- After Missouri repealed its PTP law in 2007, its annual gun homicide rate spiked by 23% during the period 2008 – 2010. None of the states bordering Missouri nor the nation as a whole saw significant increases in firearm homicide rates during the same period.⁹⁻¹⁰ The state's repeal was also associated with a 16% increase in firearm suicide rates.¹¹
- Connecticut's PTP law, passed in 1995, was associated with a 40% homicide decline in the first 10 years.¹² A subsequent study over a longer period (1996 – 2017) and using a slightly different methodology found the state's law was associated with a 28% decline in the firearm homicide rate and a 33% decline in the firearm suicide rate.¹³
- States with the strongest gun laws – including states with PTP laws – tend to have lower firearm death rates than states without these laws, after controlling for economic, demographic, and other differences across states.¹⁴
- A study of homicide in large urban counties found that PTP laws were associated with an 11% reduction in firearm homicide.¹⁵

Public Support for Laws Licensing Handgun Purchasers

- Public support of these laws is high, especially in states like NC that have them: 84% of adults and 77% of gun owners in states with licensing laws support this policy.¹⁶

⁸ Webster DW, Vernick JS, Hepburn LM. Relationship between licensing, registration, and other gun sales laws and the source state of crime guns. *Injury Prevention*. 2001 Sep;7(3):184-9. <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/7/3/184>

⁹ Webster D, Crifasi CK, Vernick JS. Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser licensing law on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2014 Apr; 91(2): 293-302. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24604521/>

¹⁰ Erratum (with corrected overall percentage) to above study: Webster D, Crifasi CK, Vernick JS. Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser licensing law on homicides. Erratum in: *Journal of Urban Health*. 2014 Jun;91(3):598-601.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24604521/#&gid=article-figures&pid=fig-1-uid-0>

¹¹ Crifasi CK, et al. Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates. 2015 Oct;79:43-9. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26212633/>

¹² Rudolph KE, et al. "Association Between Connecticut's Permit-to-Purchase Handgun Law and Homicides.," *American Journal of Public Health*. 2015 Aug;105(8):e49-54. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4504296/>

¹³ McCourt A, Crifasi C, Vernick J, Kagawa R, Wintemute G & Webster D. Purchaser licensing, point-of-sale background check laws, and firearm homicide and suicide in 4 US states, 1985–2017. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2020. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305822>

¹⁴ Fleegler EW, et al. Firearm legislation and firearm-related fatalities in the United States. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 2013 May 13;173(9):732-40. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23467753/>

¹⁵ Crifasi CK, et al. Correction to: Association between Firearm Laws and Homicide in Urban Counties. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2018 Oct;95(5):773-776. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6181823/>

¹⁶ Crifasi CK, et al. Differences in Public Support for Handgun Purchaser Licensing. *Injury Prevention*. 2020 Feb;26(1): 93–95. (epub ahead of print 2019) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7040850/#R16>.