

# Gun Violence Would Plummet If We Just Called off the Drug War

With the horrific shooting that recently took place in Las Vegas, debates over gun control have been given center stage in our media and politics once again.

And while every pundit seems to have their own surefire way of combatting gun violence, they all gloss over the elephant in the room. Which is, although mass shootings have taken on a repulsive popularity recently, the gun violence surrounding the War on Drugs has created more casualties than every mass shooting in the US combined. And despite the fact that these commentators tirelessly argue the merits and faults of one another's ideas, one thing is certain; we can and should end the Drug War, immediately.

## What the Numbers Say

News outlets and politicians currently promulgating their agendas would like you to believe that every public venue in America carries an overt risk of involving you in the next mass shooting. The truth, however, is quite different.

There has been an average of 32,000 gun fatalities in [America each year from 2003 to 2010](#). Of those deaths, 63% were suicides and accidents, leaving approximately [11,000 homicides](#) a year. Of which, more than [13% were gang-related](#). Of the remaining homicides, victims of mass shootings made up only [1.5%](#) – equating to 0.1% of all gun deaths and 0.3% of all homicides.

Now, if we are to believe the intentions of those pushing for an end to gun violence, it should be glaringly obvious that focusing on mass shootings, an issue that is responsible for

one hundred times fewer deaths than gang-related homicides is an illogical way of achieving their goal.

Luckily, the immediate and long-term effects of ending the War on Drugs would have a significant impact on the number of gun fatalities across the board. The most immediate of these would result from reducing the number of people who are imprisoned for victimless crimes, thereby drastically cutting the number of children who grow up in single-parent households.

Currently, [46% of our federal prison populations](#) consists of non-violent drug offenders, while a massive [70% of gang members](#) grow up in broken homes. Even if only 5% of those who are currently imprisoned for drug crimes return to have a positive impact on their families, that's over 100,000 fewer recruits for gangs across the country.

The Drug War has created an endless cycle, whereby people unnecessarily are thrown in prison, often leaving children behind to grow up [impoverished in single-parent households](#) and far more susceptible to join gangs. In this way, the War on Drugs ultimately contributes to more gun violence, more people ending up in prison, and the perpetuation of a generational cycle.

### **Decreasing Drug Trafficking and Mass Shootings**

Not only would ending the Drug War break the cycle of poverty and subsequent gang recruitment, but it would also vastly cut into what has become the primary funding mechanism for gangs: drug trafficking.

Drug trafficking brings in as much as [\\$750 billion in the US each year](#). Much of that money goes to gangs which have immersed themselves from start to finish in creating, smuggling, and selling drugs throughout the country. If you purchase drugs in any major city in the US, chances are, they have passed through a gang [at some point](#). Combine this with gangs' inability to resolve disputes through the courts and

other non-violent means, and it becomes obvious why gangs, gun violence, and drug culture are so entwined.

However, if you're still dead set on combatting mass shootings, ending the Drug War would have a positive impact there as well. Many of the recent mass shooters in America were [prescribed psychotropic antidepressants](#) before going on their rampage; this type of medication has a [well-documented history](#) of causing hostility and homicidal ideation.

As you know, opening up the market to previously outlawed alternatives gives pharmaceutical companies an incentive to innovate medications for treating mental disorders that have less volatile and potentially violent side effects. This will lead to an eventual decrease in the number of dangerous, [over-prescribed](#) drugs that are currently used and the fatal effects that accompany them.

Unfortunately, most Americans don't realize the positive impact that ending the War on Drugs would have on gun violence, making it unlikely that we will see this gain traction in any meaningful way.

Our politicians' fetish for solutions that criminalize non-violent citizens guarantees that an ineffective solution that exerts more government control they will put forth long before they'll consider an effective policy that might scale it back. Instead, they will choose to prey on the public's emotions by shifting the focus toward sensational stories, just as we see today.

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*original article.*

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