

# As Kenosha and Minneapolis Burn, Millions of Americans Buy Guns

It's increasingly clear to even the average American that if riots come to your neighborhood, you're on your own. The message received is increasingly be this: if your plan is to wait until the police show up to provide "protection," be prepared to wait a long time. Consequently, as violence appears to surge in America's cities, millions of Americans have become first-time gun owners.

## Government Officials Aren't Keeping Us "Safe"

There are two trends at work which are making Americans doubt that government law enforcement is reliable and effective.

On the one hand, the public is witnessing nightly displays of looting, rioting, and general civil unrest. At the same time, many police officers don't appear particularly able or willing to defend the public against looters and rioters. Homicide rates in New York, for example, have surged among accusations of a "[police slowdown](#)." A number of police departments (including those in [Los Angeles](#) and [Atlanta](#)) are rumored to be using strategies such as the "[blue flu](#)" in which police personnel pretend to be ill as a negotiating tactic for obtaining political favors from lawmakers. But even when police personnel are able, there are not enough of them in most cases to truly address the ongoing nightly violence in many cities. And in some cases, elected officials, like in Portland and Chicago, appear uninterested in confronting rioters with much enthusiasm at all.

It is easy to see how ordinary Americans could look on current events with increasing alarm. On August 29, a man was allegedly murdered by at least one protestor among the many who have been protesting, rioting, and looting in Portland for more than three months. Two weeks ago, a truck driver sustained serious injuries, also in Portland, when he was attacked by a group of “protestors” while reportedly [attempting to help a woman who was being robbed](#). Last week in Kenosha, protestors [were seen attacking a teenager](#) who had been attempting to protect businesses from looting and vandalism. The teen reportedly opened fire in self-defense. In Washington, DC, a mob threatened restaurant patrons, and in Minneapolis, dozens of [businesses have been burned and looted](#).

But even before the current rash of arson, looting, and violence, the police response to serious crime was never terribly impressive. For violent crimes, studies have shown police may [take up to an hour to respond more than one-third of the time](#). (This summer, [response times for the NYPD are up by four minutes](#) compared to last year.) And if one survives an attack from violent criminals, one shouldn't assume justice will be done. [Fewer than half of violent crimes are ever “solved”](#) in the United States.

## Gun Purchases Are Growing

Meanwhile, [gun purchases have surged](#).

According to [new estimates](#) from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), using the FBI's National Instant Background Check System (NICS), “there were over 12 million guns bought in the first seven months of 2020 – up more than 70 percent over the same time span in 2019. This number is likely to include nearly 5 million first-time gun owners so far this year.”

Moreover, as noted in an unsigned editorial at *The Wall Street Journal*,

*The FBI's most recent gun-sale figures are stunning. They show that in July the bureau carried out 3.6 million background checks, the third highest month on record. [T]his translates to 1.8 million gun sales for July 2020—a 122% increase over July 2019. The 12,141,032 gun sales through this July is just shy of the 13,199,172 sales for all of 2019.*

Gun retailers saw a [95 percent increase in firearm sales and a 139 percent increase in ammunition sales](#) in the first six months of this year compared with the same period in 2019.

Statistically, it remains unclear that life for the average American is much more dangerous this year than it has been over the past five years. After all, in 2014, [the homicide rate in America hit a 51-year low](#). But the American public has never been one to sit back and conclude everything is fine just because homicides are relatively low.

After all, gun purchases were already surging even before the apparent killing of George Floyd touched off a wave of protests followed by riots and looting. Gun purchases that had been fueled by general uncertainty and anxiety over the COVID-19 panic soon became gun purchases fueled by far more immediate fears of violent crime.

Also notable is that many new gun owners are outside of groups known as the usual suspects when it comes to gun purchases. The NSSF reported that 58 percent of the new firearms purchases were by black men and women, while [“women comprised 40% of first-time gun buyers.”](#)

## **Millions Aren't Buying the Usual Gun Control Claims**

Needless to say, these trends are going very much against the grain of the usual narrative employed by gun control

advocates, a narrative that generally employs several main tenets we've seen many times. They include:

- Government police agencies provide better protection than a private firearm ever could.
- If you're in danger, it's best to call 911 and then wait.
- If you buy a gun, the gun is more likely to kill someone you love than to stop a criminal.
- America would be safer if fewer people had guns.
- People who buy guns are mostly just right-wing hayseeds. Hillary Clinton calls these people "deplorables."

And while opponents of private gun ownership rarely say this explicitly, the sum total of their narrative is this: only police and military personnel should own guns. The basic idea here is that private gun owners cannot be trusted, and that government officials will keep us safe. But as so often occurs when there are riots – as happened in Ferguson (in 2014) and as is happening in Kenosha police officers and other government "public safety" personnel mostly just protect government property. The private sector must just fend for itself.

Many Americans appear to have gotten the message.

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