

# **Kamala Harris is a gun owner — but she's still a proponent of stricter gun laws**

2024-2025 VIOLENCE  
oral sessions with C. Hamard

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5 Vice President Harris cited the fact she is a gun owner in Tuesday night's presidential debate, in a move designed to shut down suggestions from former President Donald Trump that she wants to “confiscate your guns.” As gun ownership continues to be a political point for both Republicans and Democrats, here's where the candidates stand.

10 In 2019, Harris said she owns a gun “for personal safety” because she was a “career prosecutor.” But Harris has also been a proponent of stricter gun laws. In 2023, President Biden established the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which Harris oversees. She also supported the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which Biden signed into law in 2022. The act expands background checks, creates new criminal penalties for gun trafficking and for purchasing a gun on behalf of someone banned from doing so. It also invested \$1.4 billion in violence-prevention and intervention programs.

15 "This business about taking everyone's guns away, Tim Walz and I are both gun owners," Harris said on Tuesday night. "We're not taking any of these guns away. So stop with the continuous lying about this stuff."

20 In contrast, Trump has aligned with the National Rifle Association and is expected to have a more hands-off approach to gun restrictions if elected. He has also claimed that gun laws do not work.

25 During one press conference this summer, Trump pointed out that Chicago endured a particularly deadly July 4th weekend this year, with more than 100 people shot and 19 killed, despite Illinois having a record of strong gun control laws. However, Illinois is surrounded by states with much weaker gun restriction laws, like Indiana, where guns can easily cross the border.

There is evidence that gun restriction laws, particularly red-flag laws, work. According to researchers at the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California, Davis, for every 10 to 20 red flag orders issued, the number of suicides falls by one.

30 The data for mass shootings is less clear, because they are much more rare and therefore harder to study, but around a third of shooters who kill four or more people show warning signs ahead of time.

On the flip side, laws that allow more people to have guns, like right-to-carry and concealed-carry laws, appear to result in more violent crimes involving firearms, more assaults with firearms, more workplace homicides and more police shootings. (449 words)

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