

US gun sales in 2016 appear to have already set single-year record

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Hand guns for sale at a gun shop in Merrimack, N.H.

By Matt Rocheleau

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It appears more guns were sold in the United States during just the first 11 months of 2016 than in

any previous year.

More than 24.7 million criminal background checks for gun transactions were processed between the start of this year and the end of November, according to [data](#) from the FBI's [National Instant Criminal Background Check System](#), or NICS.

By comparison, about 23.1 million such checks were processed in all of 2015, which was the highest total ever for a single year dating back to the late 1990s, when the NICS began.

Those figures do not show how many guns were sold (no data like that exists), but the background check numbers are considered the best available indicator of gun sale trends.



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The total number of checks for 2016 will likely grow significantly once the final month of the year is in the books. In most previous years, December was the busiest month for background checks. Last year, a record 3.3 million checks were processed in December.

Each of the past 19 months have set new monthly records for background checks, and Black Friday this year set a new record for the highest number of checks in a single day.

A total of 185,713 checks were processed on Black Friday, which narrowly edged out Black Friday last year when 185,345 checks were processed, the [data](#) show.

The increasing numbers of checks in recent years has been

attributed to fears that lawmakers might impose further restrictions on gun ownership, particularly in the wake of high-profile [mass shootings](#) and increased attention to how the US experiences an unusually high amount of gun violence compared to other developed nations.

For Massachusetts, 2016 will likely go down as the second-highest total number of background checks.


Through November, 206,370 checks had been processed, which would rank as third-highest all time for the state. Once December's numbers come in, they will likely push this year past the 210,453 checks processed statewide in 2012. But this year is unlikely to eclipse the record 251,361 checks in 2013.

State data has also shown a [rise](#) in recent years in the number of active gun licenses in Massachusetts.

Nationally, the percentage of American households owning at least one gun has [declined](#) in recent decades, but the total number of guns owned in the country has increased significantly over the years as some gun owners have [amassed stockpiles](#) of firearms, studies have found.

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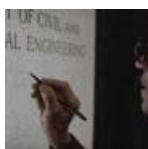
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