PERMITLESS CARRY

Historically, nearly every state has enhanced the safety of its residents by requiring people to qualify for a permit in order to carry concealed firearms in public spaces. Alarmingly, the number of states that allow carry without a permit has grown in recent years—a dangerous trend that threatens public safety. The gun lobby has pressured states to eliminate this fundamental safety standard, allowing people who have never passed a background check or fired a gun in their lives to carry hidden, loaded guns in public crowds as soon as they buy them.

States that allow permitless carry

An April 2021 poll found that only 20% of Americans—and just 35% of Republicans—support a policy that would allow people to carry concealed guns without a permit.

More guns in public = More gun assaults

Public carry is dangerous enough even when the people carrying those guns have passed a background check and obtained a permit. Researchers have found that states which have weakened their firearm permitting systems experience a 13 to 15% increase in violent crime and an 11% increase in handgun homicide rates.
Policy Background
Claims that permissive concealed carry weapon (CCW) laws lead to decreases in crime—by sending the message to would-be attackers that any potential victim might be packing heat—are simply untrue. No credible statistical evidence exists to show that permissive CCW laws reduce crime.

In fact, the evidence suggests that permissive CCW laws actually increase the frequency of violent crime, including gun homicides. Additionally, one analysis found that people who carried guns were 4.5 times as likely to be shot and 4.2 times as likely to be killed compared with unarmed citizens. This research supports the conclusion that more guns in public create more opportunities for injury and death, not fewer.

Federal Law
No federal concealed carry law exists, requiring individual states to implement strong and responsible permitting laws for individuals who wish to carry weapons in public.

State Law
Historically, almost every state prohibited or strictly limited the carrying of concealed, loaded weapons in public places. These restrictions were among the earliest gun laws adopted in the United States. However, many states have weakened those permit requirements in recent years. Twenty states have eliminated their CCW permit requirements since 2003, with 17 eliminating these standards in the last decade.

States with CCW permitting laws traditionally require people to pass a thorough background check and receive safety training to qualify. Many also have higher eligibility standards for public carry, making some people who can legally possess a gun in their homes ineligible to carry that weapon in public based on their criminal history. Some states also give law enforcement the authority to deny permits to people at elevated risk of causing harm, such as those with a history of arrests for violence or harassment. In permitless carry states, anyone who can legally buy a firearm under weak state laws may be authorized to carry hidden guns around public streets, buildings, restaurants, parks, and businesses.

Additionally, only one of the 21 permitless carry states requires a person to pass a background check or receive any safety training in order to buy a gun. This means that the vast majority of permitless carry states take almost no steps to prevent people with serious histories of violence and dangerous behavior from acquiring and carrying hidden, loaded weapons in public.

For more details and underlying research, visit lawcenter.giffords.org/concealed-carry

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