

Wisconsin gun sales spike amid COVID-19 pandemic

Posted on Friday, May 8, 2020

Gun sales in Wisconsin have spiked during the coronavirus pandemic, a new analysis found.

In an analysis of FBI background checks, the organization Everytown For Gun Safety said the estimated number of guns sold in the state rose by 44 percent in April 2020 when compared to last year (43,033 to 29,981).

Additionally, Everytown said sales between both April and March are up 60 percent over the same time in 2019.

DHS Secretary Andrea Palm first claimed there was evidence of COVID-19 community spread in the state on March 17.

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Jennifer Rosen-Heinz, a spokeswoman for Everytown affiliate Moms Demand Action, told WisPolitics.com gun sales tend to spike during times of crisis or tragedy, and that her group is seeing similar numbers in states all around the country.

“It’s not terribly surprising to us, although it is concerning because gun violence doesn’t stop just because more people are staying home,” she said. “People are spending a lot of time together, and tensions are high. Even the most stable of folks may be under significant pressure right now.”

Rosen-Heinz said her group is most concerned with a rise in domestic violence and suicides, as well as how people store their guns to keep them out of the hands of children.

Milwaukee Police Chief Alfonzo Morales last month at a [WisPolitics.com/Milwaukee](https://www.wispolitics.com/Milwaukee)

Press Club/Milwaukee Rotary virtual event did say domestic and intimate partner violence had been “increasing heavily this year,” which had contributed to a spike in city homicides and non-fatal shootings.

But Morales said the upward trend began before the state’s stay-at-home order. He suggested social distancing requirements have slowed police work on addressing the issue.

Rob Kovach, president of the Wisconsin Firearm Owners Association, also agreed the upward trend in gun purchases is “not unexpected” during a national crisis. But he rejected Rosen-Heinz’s suggestion that the firearms could be blamed for any rise in domestic violence or suicide.

“The increases in suicide or domestic violence have more to do with the stress that is caused by the crisis and less so the firearm,” Kovach said. “It’s not unexpected for people to buy more firearms at a time when the news is reporting breakdowns in the food supply, meat shortages and other disruptions.”

He added he can see the upward sales trend continuing for the remainder of the pandemic.

A previous WisPolitics.com story found background checks for handguns had risen by 54 percent, with a total of 60,581 calls placed to the state’s “Handgun Hotline” background check service in the first three months of 2020 compared to 39,141 for the same period in 2019.

See more:

<https://everytownresearch.org/documents/2020/05/guns-sales-by-state-2019-2020.pdf/>

See the previous WisPolitics.com story:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2020/fri-report-gop-leaders-slam-evers-over-call-for-special-session-to-delay-spring-election/>