



## **America's Gun Industry**

- 1) In 1997, America's gun industry domestically produced 3.6 million guns— 1.4 million handguns, and 2.2 million rifles and shotguns. In addition, the United States imported 980,000 guns and exported 272,000 guns.
- 2) According to a 1996 Police Foundation study, in 1994, 44 million Americans owned 192 million firearms, 65 million of which were handguns. Only 25 percent of adults own firearms.
- 3) The wholesale value of guns manufactured in the United States in 1997 totaled more than \$900 million. The value of handguns manufactured that year totaled \$344 million, while the value of rifles and shotguns totaled \$565 million. The value of ammunition manufactured totaled \$430 million. The combined wholesale value of both manufactured guns and ammunition in 1997 was more than \$1.3 billion.
- 4) In 1980, pistols—semi-automatic handguns—accounted for only 32 percent of the 2.3 million handguns produced in the United States. The majority was revolvers. By 1994 this ratio had reversed itself; pistols accounted for 77 percent of the 2.6 million handguns produced that year.
- 5) To counteract the sales slump of the 1980s, gun makers began to expand the market with niche marketing campaigns aimed at women and youth. And they began to redesign and expand their product line focusing on firepower (assault weapons, a new generation of high-powered Saturday Night Specials, and higher-caliber weapons), and technology (laser sights, caseless ammunition, and the increased use of plastics).
- 6) Another trend within the handgun market has been a decrease in handgun size, due to changes in state laws permitting the carrying of concealed handguns. Labeled "pocket rockets" by the gun industry, these handguns have greater firepower in increasingly smaller sizes.
- 7) In the long gun market, sniper rifles are the latest trend. Radically different from typical hunting firearms, sniper rifles boast breathtaking accuracy, range, and power. The weapon is capable of pinpoint shots from distances of up to 2,000 yards—or the length of 20 football fields. Even at such long range, the bullets can penetrate armor.
- 8) The number of retail gun dealers has decreased dramatically in the last eight years. In 1992 the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) estimated that the 74 percent of America's quarter million retail gun dealers did not operate storefront businesses, such as gun stores or sporting goods outlets. Rather, most gun dealers operated out of their homes—often in violation of state and local laws. An unknown number of these "kitchen-table" dealers were involved in high-volume, criminal gun trafficking. Due to new licensing and renewal criteria contained in 1993's Brady Law and 1994's federal crime bill, enhanced ATF enforcement, and state and local initiatives, as of January 2000, the percentage of dealers has dropped and there are now approximately 70,000 dealers.
- 9) In most states, a private gun owner may legally sell his or her gun without proof that the buyer has passed a criminal history check, whereas federally licensed gun dealers must perform Brady background checks on all gun sales. The discrepancy between licensed dealers and private sellers has been highlighted recently by the "gun-show loophole" debate. Current law exempts private individuals who sell at gun shows from performing a background check while licensed dealers selling at gun shows must comply with the background check requirement. This loophole has made gun shows a key source of crime guns.
- 10) Guns are virtually the last consumer products to remain federally unregulated for health and safety.