

# Record gun checks, sales for Christmas 2012

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CAPTION

By Scott Olson, Getty Images

Along with millions of Kindles, Angry Birds and gift cards, Santa left a record number of guns under Americans' Christmas trees, especially in Kentucky, according to FBI statistics on background checks.

In the six days before Christmas, gun dealers submitted nearly half-a-million names for checks on criminal records and mental health issues, with 20% coming Dec. 23, according to news reports. That was the second-busiest gun-buying day in history, topped only by firearm purchases on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, [The London Telegraph](#) says.

Final tallies for the entire month haven't been released, but December gun purchases will eclipse November. As of last week, 1,534,414 names had been sent to the [National Instant Criminal Background Check System](#), [The New York Times](#) reported in [an editorial](#). About 1% of buyers are typically rejected, the paper said.

The FBI cautions there is not a one-to-one correlation between background checks and the number of guns sold because of "varying state laws and purchase scenarios." Many customers bought multiple weapons. Exact sales are neither reported nor recorded.

For the first 11 months of 2011, the FBI did a record 14.6 million checks, an increase of more than 70% from the 8.5 million in 2003. Kentucky led the nation, with more than 2 million background checks conducted through November, double the No. 2 gun-check state, Texas. The Bluegrass State, with a population of about 4.3 million, has been tops in background checks the past five years and has the most checks of any state since 1998 -- more than 12.6 million ([pdf](#)).

Here's the FBI's state-by-state breakdown through November ([pdf](#)).

The background checks were instituted with passage of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993.

Why the growing popularity of guns?

The [National Rifle Association](#) told the *Telegraph* that in the face of police budget cuts and layoffs, Americans were concerned about self-defense. The NRA told [CBS News](#) that sport shooting is more popular.

Gun dealers cite fear of crime tied to a bad economy, expanded concealed-carry laws or the fear that the federal government will either restrict ownership or confiscate firearms.

"There are a lot of people concerned about pending gun legislation and the sense about the current administration. People think future availability will be limited, and there's a feeling of get it while you can," Dave LaRue of *Legendary Guns* in Phoenix told the *Telegraph*, noting that sales were up 25% from last Christmas.

There are similar stories in Ohio and [New Mexico](#), according to news reports.

"The first-time gun buyers are the ones worried about someone breaking into their home," dealer Jeff Miller told [The Dayton Daily News](#). "People (who already own guns) are kind of hoarding a little."

Jim Irvine, chairman of the [Buckeye Firearms Association](#), cited several reasons, including "relaxed conceal-and-carry laws in Ohio, more women learning about guns and the pro-gun message resonating," the *Daily News* writes.

"Owning a gun for self-defense is like owning a fire extinguisher or smoke detectors for safety," Irvine said. "All of the fears about all of the nonsense about guns, they're really myths that are falling by the wayside."

Gun control advocates note that fear about crime appears to be greater than actual crime, which FBI statistics show has been declining. They accuse the NRA of fear-mongering.

"It's a false sense of security, but they might go purchase a gun," said Toby Hoover, executive director of the [Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence](#). "I'm bothered by, especially at the holiday time, how many people think that these things ought to be holiday gifts, Christmas gifts for their families and their children. We're seeing more of that, which means it's becoming sort of an accepted thing. Firearms and weapons don't seem to go with holidays and peacefulness to me. I think we have a problem."