

## **The FBI reported nearly 4.7 million background checks for gun purchases in March, revealing a record number of firearms sales in the US**

**Sarah Al-Arshani – Business Insider – June 5, 2021**

Background checks for guns hit a record in March 2021, the FBI reported.

Close to 4.7 million background checks were conducted, a 77% increase compared to March 2019.

Experts told CNN, fear during the pandemic and social unrest is fueling a rise in gun ownership.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations reported close to 4.7 million background checks for new gun purchases in March, the largest on record since the FBI began tracking them 20 years ago, revealing a record number of firearms sales in the US.

The figure is a 77% increase compared to March 2019. The agency conducted over a million more background checks in March 2021 compared to March 2020, which also saw a record number of gun sales.

The New York Times previously reported in March 2020, a record number of Americans were buying guns due to the uncertainty of the pandemic.

"We attribute it mainly to the virus scare," Larry Hyatt, who owns a gun store in North Carolina and saw a record number of sales at the time told the Times.

Hyatt told The Times he's seen similar influxes of people buying guns in the past.

"People have a little lack of confidence that if something big and bad happens, that 911 might not work. We saw it with Katrina," Hyatt said. "People haven't forgotten that a disaster happened, and the government didn't come."

Months with the highest number of FBI background checks like March, June, July, and December show months where there was political or social unrest.

CNN reported there's a record number of first-time gun buyers, like Robin Armstrong who told the outlet the current instability in the country made her want to buy firearms.

"We've also seen, in times of civil unrest, that we see people go out and say that they need to protect themselves," Jack McDevitt, a criminology professor and the director of the Institute on Race and Justice at Northeastern University told CNN. "So they're going to buy guns to protect themselves."

## **Court overturns California's ban on assault weapons, calls it unconstitutional**

**Oriana Gonzalez – Axios – June 5, 2021**

A federal judge on Friday overturned California's more than 30-year-old ban on assault weapons, ruling it unconstitutional.

The state of play: U.S. District Judge Roger Benitez said that AR-15 rifles are like Swiss Army knives, calling them a "perfect combination of home defense weapon and homeland defense equipment." California's

definition of illegal, military-style firearms unlawfully robs law-abiding residents of weapons widely available in most other states and by the U.S. Supreme Court, the judge wrote.

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Flashback: California prohibited the sale of assault weapons in 1989, with the state legislature concluding that an assault weapon "has such a high rate of fire and capacity for firepower that its function as a legitimate sports or recreational firearm is substantially outweighed by the danger that it can be used to kill and injure human beings."

The law was challenged in 2019 by a lawsuit against California Attorney General Rob Bonta, the New York Times reports.

What he's saying: "This case is not about extraordinary weapons lying at the outer limits of Second Amendment protection. The banned 'assault weapons' are not bazookas, howitzers, or machineguns. Those arms are dangerous and solely useful for military purposes," Benitez wrote.

"Instead, the firearms deemed 'assault weapons' are fairly ordinary, popular, modern rifles. This is an average case about average guns used in average ways for average purposes."

The other side: California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) said the "[court's] decision is a direct threat to public safety and the lives of innocent Californians, period."

"[T]he fact that this judge compared the AR-15 – a weapon of war that's used on the battlefield – to a Swiss Army Knife completely undermines the credibility of this decision and is a slap in the face to the families who've lost loved ones to this weapon," he added.

What to watch: Benitez said he granted a 30-day stay of the ruling at Bonta's request "during which time the Attorney General may appeal."

Bonta called the ruling "fundamentally flawed" and vowed to appeal it.