



Ammunition in the Gun Control Debate

One strategy that has been proposed to reduce the severity of mass shootings is a ban on the ammunition for assault weapons. This would be difficult, since the modular design of the AR-15 allows the gun to be easily converted from one caliber to another. Moreover, the bullets most commonly used in assault rifles are actually less powerful than the ammunition for most hunting rifles. We emphasize regulations on certain bullet types, rather than specific calibers. See our infographic “One caliber, many bullets” for further explanation.

These are the calibers used for “assault rifles” such as the AR-15 and AK-47, but the same bullets are also used in some hunting rifles.

Typical Ammunition for Vehicle-Mounted Military Weapons

Typical Rifle Calibers

Typical Handgun Calibers

Typical Shotgun Ammunition

Notes:

1. There are many other calibers that are not pictured here.
2. Some rifles fire handgun ammunition and vice-versa.
3. The huge .50 caliber BMG cartridge, designed for long-range sniping and for destroying vehicles, is also used in some civilian-legal rifles (banned only by state and local laws in a few jurisdictions).

