

Is Artificial Intelligence Good for Society?

Artificial intelligence (AI) uses “computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind,” according to IBM. artificial intelligence is used for a variety of simple implementations, including facial recognition software, online shopping algorithms, search engines, digital assistants like Siri and Alexa, translation services, automated safety functions on cars (and the promised self-driving cars of the future), cybersecurity, airport body scanning security, poker playing strategy, and fighting disinformation on social media, among others.

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AI can make everyday life more convenient and enjoyable, improving our health and standard of living.

Why sit in a traffic jam when a map app can navigate you around the car accident? Why fumble with shopping bags searching for your keys in the dark when a preset location-based command can have your doorway illuminated as you approach your now unlocked door? [23]

Why scroll through hundreds of possible TV shows when the streaming app already knows what genres you like? Why forget eggs at the grocery store when a digital assistant can take an inventory of your refrigerator and add them to your grocery list and have them delivered to your home? All of these marvels are assisted by AI technology. [23]

AI-enabled fitness apps boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic when gyms were closed, increasing the number of AI options for at-home workouts. Now, you can not only set a daily steps goal with encouragement reminders on your smartwatch, but you can ride through the countryside on a Peloton bike from your garage or have a personal trainer on your living room TV. For more specialized fitness, AI wearables can monitor yoga poses or golf and baseball swings. [24] [25]

AI can even enhance your doctor’s appointments and medical procedures. It can alert medical caregivers to patterns in your health data as compared to the vast library of medical data, while also doing the paperwork

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AI will harm the standard of living for many people by causing mass unemployment as robots replace people.

AI robots and other software and hardware are becoming less expensive and need none of the benefits and services required by human workers, such as sick days, lunch hours, bathroom breaks, health insurance, pay raises, promotions, and performance reviews, which spells trouble for workers and society at large. [51]

48% of experts believed AI will replace a large number of blue- and even white-collar jobs, creating greater income inequality, increased unemployment, and a breakdown of the social order. [35]

The axiom “everything that can be automated, will be automated” is no longer science fiction. Self-checkout kiosks in stores like CVS, Target, and Walmart use AI-assisted video and scanners to prevent theft, alert staff to suspicious transactions, predict shopping trends and mitigate sticking points at checkout. These AI-enabled machines have displaced human cashiers. About 11,000 retail jobs were lost in 2019, largely due to self-checkout and other technologies. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a self-checkout manufacturer shipped 25% more units globally, reflecting the more than 70% of American grocery shoppers who preferred self or touchless checkouts. [35] [52] [53] [54] [55]

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<p>tied to medical appointments so doctors have more time to focus on their patients, resulting in more personalized care. AI can even help surgeons be quicker, more accurate, and more minimally invasive in their operations. [26]</p> <p>Smart speakers, including Amazon's Echo, can use AI to soothe babies to sleep and monitor their breathing. Using AI, speakers can also detect regular and irregular heartbeats, as well as heart attacks and congestive heart failure. [27] [28] [29]</p>	<p>found 43% of businesses surveyed planned to reduce workforces in favor of automation. Many businesses, especially fast-food restaurants, retail shops, and hotels, automated jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. [35]</p> <p>Income inequality was exacerbated over the last four decades as 50-70% of changes in American paychecks were caused by wage decreases for workers whose industries experienced rapid automation, including AI technologies. [56] [57]</p>
<p>AI can offer accessibility for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Artificial intelligence is commonly integrated into smartphones and other household devices. Virtual assistants, including Siri, Alexa, and Cortana, can perform innumerable tasks from making a phone call to navigating the internet. Those who are deaf and hearing impaired can access transcripts of voicemails or other audio, for example. [20]</p>	<p>AI repeats and exacerbates human racism.</p> <p>Facial recognition has been found to be racially biased, easily recognizing the faces of white men while wrongly identifying black women 35% of the time. One study of Amazon's Rekognition AI program falsely matched 28 members of the US Congress with mugshots from a criminal database. 40% of the errors were people of color. [22] [36] [43] [44]</p>
<p>Artificial intelligence can improve workplace safety.</p> <p>AI doesn't get stressed, tired, or sick, three major causes of human accidents in the workplace. AI robots can collaborate with or replace humans for especially dangerous tasks. For example, 50% of construction companies that used drones to inspect roofs and other risky tasks saw improvements in safety. [14] [15]</p>	<p>Artificial intelligence poses dangerous privacy risks.</p> <p>Facial recognition technology can be used for passive, warrantless surveillance without knowledge of the person being watched. In Russia, facial recognition was used to monitor and arrest protesters who supported jailed opposition politician Alexei Navalny]. Russians fear a new facial recognition payment system for Moscow's metro will increase these sorts of arrests. [36] [37] [38]</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should Breed-Specific Legislation (“Pit Bull Bans”) Be Enacted?

Breed-specific legislation (BSL) is a “blanket term for laws that regulate or ban certain dog breeds to decrease dog attacks on humans and other animals,” according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The laws are also called pit bull bans and breed-discriminatory laws. [1] Fighting dogs arrived in the United States in 1817, whereupon Americans crossbred several breeds to create the American Pit Bull. The United Kennel Club endorsed the fights and provided referees. Dog fighting was legal in most US states until the 1860s, and it was not completely outlawed in all states until 1976. Today, dog fighting is a felony offense in all 50 states, though the fights thrive in illegal underground venues. [3] [4]

More than 700 cities in 29 states have breed-specific legislation, while 20 states do not allow breed-specific legislation, and one allows no new legislation after 1990, as of Apr. 1, 2020.

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<p>BSL makes communities safer. One goal of BSL is to prevent dog attacks on humans, dogs, and other animals before they happen. According to DogsBite.org, enacting BSL “regulate[s] a small group of breeds that have a genetic propensity to attack and inflict severe, disfiguring injuries so that first attacks by these breeds can be averted. First attacks by pit bulls, for instance, almost always result in severe injury. In some cases, the first bite by a pit bull or [R]ottweiler is fatal.” [5]</p> <p>Data collected by DogsBite.org shows at least 433 deaths due to dog bites between Jan. 1, 2005 to Dec. 31, 2017. Of those deaths, 284 were attributed to pit bulls, 45 to Rottweilers, 20 to German Shepherds, 15 to American Bulldogs, and 14 to Mastiffs, all frequently banned breeds. [6]</p> <p>Prior to BSL enactment in Prince George’s County, Maryland, there were 853 dog bites reported (108 from pit bulls) in 1996. 14 years into the ban (2010), overall dog bites had decreased 43% and pit bull bites were down 35%. [7]</p> <p>In Pawtucket, Rhode Island, BSL was</p>	<p>There is no evidence BSL makes communities safer. BSL is ineffective because it treats the result (a dog bite) instead of the cause (bad animal owners). For example, Miami-Dade County, Florida, has had a pit bull ban since the 1980s, but the county still euthanizes about 800 illegally owned pit bulls per year. Aragon, Spain, saw no changes in dog bite numbers five years before and five years after BSL was enacted. [13]</p> <p>People who are breeding or training dogs for illegal fighting or to protect illegal activities will simply turn to another dog breed if pit bulls are banned. For example, following a 2005 pit bull ban in Council Bluff, Iowa, Boxer and Labrador Retriever bites increased, as did overall dog bites. [14]</p> <p>In 1990 when pit bulls were banned in Winnipeg, Canada, Rottweiler bites immediately increased. When the city changed the law in 2000 to be breed-neutral, all dog bites decreased. [14]</p>

<p>overturned by a judge in 2013, resulting in a tenfold increase in pit bull attacks between 2013 and 2019. [8]</p>	
<p>Pro 2</p> <p>BSL is a humane way to discourage pit bull breeding and fighting.</p> <p>An estimated 80% of all dogs are spayed or neutered. However, only about 20% of pit bulls are sterilized. And only about 38% of animal shelter admissions are pit bulls, but the dogs account for 63% of shelter euthanizations. [9]</p> <p>Bans of pit bulls are an effective way to prevent more pit bulls from being bred and, thus, more pit bulls from being confiscated and killed in shelters, not to mention preventing the dogs from being tortured in fighting rings. [9]</p> <p>Pit bulls are more likely to be confiscated or surrendered to a shelter because they are disproportionately selectively bred for fighting, and, therefore, more likely to injure or kill a human, another dog, or other animals. [10]</p>	<p>BSL is a distraction from legislation and policies that could actually accomplish safety goals.</p> <p>According to a study of fatal dog bites between 1979 and 1996, “Although fatal attacks on humans appear to be a breed-specific problem (pit bull-type dogs and Rottweilers), other breeds may bite and cause fatalities at higher rates. Because of difficulties inherent in determining a dog’s breed with certainty, enforcement of breed-specific ordinances raises constitutional and practical issues.</p> <p>Fatal attacks represent a small proportion of dog bite injuries to humans and, therefore, should not be the primary factor driving public policy concerning dangerous dogs. Many practical alternatives to breed-specific ordinances exist and hold promise for prevention of dog bites.” [18]</p>
<p>Pit bulls and some other dogs are genetically dangerous.</p> <p>As Daphna Nachminovitch, Senior Vice President of Cruelty Investigations for PETA, explained, “Pit bulls are a breed-specific problem, so it seems reasonable to target them. The public is misled to believe that pit bulls are like any other dog. And they just aren’t. These dogs were bred to bait bulls. They were bred to fight each other to the death. Just because we’re an animal-rights organization doesn’t mean we’re not concerned about public safety.” [9]</p>	<p>BSL is expensive to enact.</p> <p>Nationwide, BSL would cost an estimated \$476 million per year, including enforcement of the law, related vet and shelter care, euthanization and disposal, and legal fees. There are about 4.5 million dog bites per year, resulting in about 40 deaths, making each death cost taxpayers about \$11.9 million. [15]</p> <p>That’s a steep cost for a relatively small, albeit important, issue. There are about 78 million dogs in the United States, meaning less than 17% of dogs bite less than 1.4% and kill less than 0.00001% of the US population. [15][16][17]</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should we ban homework for students in K-12 education?

From [dioramas](#) to book reports, from [algebraic](#) word problems to research projects, whether students should be given homework, as well as the type and amount of homework, has been debated for over a century. [1] In the early 1900s, progressive education theorists, championed by the magazine *Ladies' Home Journal*, decried homework's negative impact on children's physical and mental health, leading California to ban homework for students under 15 from 1901 until 1917. In the 1930s, homework was portrayed as child labor, which was newly illegal, but the prevailing argument was that kids needed time to do household chores. [1][2][45][46] Beginning in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic complicated the very idea of homework as students were schooling remotely and many were doing all school work from home. *Washington Post* journalist Valerie Strauss asked, "Does homework work when kids are learning all day at home?" While students were mostly back in school buildings in fall 2021, the question remains of how effective homework is as an educational tool. [47]

Homework improves student achievement.

Studies have shown that homework improved student achievement in terms of improved grades, test results, and the likelihood to attend college.

Research published in the *High School Journal* indicated that students who spent between 31 and 90 minutes each day on homework "scored about 40 points higher on the SAT-Mathematics subtest than their peers, who reported spending no time on homework each day, on average." [6]

Students in classes that were assigned homework outperformed 69% of students who didn't have homework on both [standardized tests](#) and grades. A majority of studies on homework's impact – 64% in one meta-study and 72% in another – showed that take-home assignments were effective at improving academic achievement. [7][8]

Research by the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) concluded that increased homework led to better GPAs and higher probability of college attendance for high school boys. In fact, boys who attended

Too much homework can be harmful.

A poll of California high school students found that 59% thought they had too much homework. 82% of respondents said that they were "often or always stressed by schoolwork." High-achieving high school students said too much homework leads to sleep deprivation and other health problems such as headaches, exhaustion, weight loss, and stomach problems. [24][28][29]

Alfie Kohn, an education and parenting expert, said, "Kids should have a chance to just be kids... it's absurd to insist that children must be engaged in constructive activities right up until their heads hit the pillow." [27]

Emmy Kang, a mental health counselor, explained, "More than half of students say that homework is their primary source of stress, and we know what stress can do on our bodies." [48]

Excessive homework can also lead to cheating: 90% of middle school students and 67% of high school students admit to copying someone else's homework, and 43% of college students engaged in "unauthorized collaboration" on

<p>college did more than three hours of additional homework per week in high school. [10]</p>	<p>out-of-class assignments. Even parents take shortcuts on homework: 43% of those surveyed admitted to having completed a child's assignment for them. [30] [31] [32]</p>
<p>Homework helps to reinforce classroom learning, while developing good study habits and life skills. Students typically retain only 50% of the information teachers provide in class, and they need to apply that information in order to truly learn it. Abby Freireich and Brian Platzer, co-founders of Teachers Who Tutor NYC, explained, "at-home assignments help students learn the material taught in class. Students require independent practice to internalize new concepts... [And] these assignments can provide valuable data for teachers about how well students understand the curriculum." [11] [49]</p>	<p>Homework exacerbates the digital divide or homework gap. Kiara Taylor, financial expert, defined the digital divide as "the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology and those that don't. Though the term now encompasses the technical and financial ability to utilize available technology—along with access (or a lack of access) to the Internet—the gap it refers to is constantly shifting with the development of technology." For students, this is often called the homework gap. [50] [51]</p>
<p>Homework allows parents to be involved with children's learning. Thanks to take-home assignments, parents are able to track what their children are learning at school as well as their academic strengths and weaknesses. [12]</p> <p>Data from a nationwide sample of elementary school students show that parental involvement in homework can improve class performance, especially among economically disadvantaged African-American and Hispanic students. [20]</p>	<p>Homework does not help younger students, and may not help high school students. We've known for a while that homework does not help elementary students. A 2006 study found that "homework had no association with achievement gains" when measured by standardized tests results or grades. [7]</p> <p>Fourth grade students who did no homework got roughly the same score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math exam as those who did 30 minutes of homework a night. Students who did 45 minutes or more of homework a night actually did worse. [41]</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should Parents or Other Adults Be Able to Ban Books from Schools and Libraries?

The American Library Association (ALA) has tracked book challenges, which are attempts to remove or restrict materials, since 1990. In 2020, the ALA recorded 156 reported book challenges in the United States, a significant decrease from the 377 reported challenges in 2019 perhaps due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, challenges jumped to an all-time high in 2021 with 729 challenges, containing a total of 1,597 books. [22] [27] [28]

In most years, about 10% of the reported challenges result in removal or ban from the school or library. However, in 2016, five of the top ten most challenged books were removed. The ALA estimates that only about 3% to 18% of challenges are reported to its Office for Intellectual Freedom, meaning that the actual number of attempts to **ban books** is likely much higher. [1] [24]

Sexually explicit content, offensive language, and “unsuited to any age group” are the top three reasons cited for requesting a book be removed. The percentage of Americans who thought any books should be banned increased from 18% in 2011 to 28% in 2015, and 60% of people surveyed believed that children should not have access to books containing explicit language in school libraries, according to The Harris Poll. A 2022 poll found 71% disagreed with efforts to have books removed, including 75% of Democrats, 58% of independents, and 70% of Republicans. [1] [3] [28]

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<p>Parents have the right to decide what material their children are exposed to and when.</p> <p>Having books with adult topics available in libraries limits parents’ ability to choose when their children are mature enough to read specific material. “Literary works containing explicit [scenes, as well as] vulgar and obscene language” were on the approved reading list for grades 7-12, according to Speak up for Standards, a group seeking age-appropriate reading materials for students in Dallas, Texas. [4]</p> <p>If books with inappropriate material are available in libraries, children or teens can be exposed to books their parents wouldn’t approve of before the parents even find out what their children are reading. [16]</p>	<p>Parents may control what their own children read, but don’t have a right to restrict what books are available to other people.</p> <p>Parents who don’t like specific books can have their kids opt out of an assignment without infringing on the rights of others.</p> <p>The National Coalition against Censorship explained that “Even books or materials that many find ‘objectionable’ may have educational value, and the decision about what to use in the classroom should be based on professional judgments and standards, not individual preferences.” [6]</p> <p>In the 1982 Supreme Court ruling on Board of Education v. Pico, Justice William Brennan wrote that taking books off of library shelves could violate students’ First Amendment rights, adding that “Local school boards may not remove books from school libraries simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books.” [21]</p>

Children should not be exposed to sex, violence, drug use, or other inappropriate topics in school or public libraries.

Books in the young adult genre often contain adult themes that young people aren't ready to experience. Of the top ten most challenged books in 2020, one had LGBTQ+ content, two were sexually explicit, five dealt with racism and anti-police opinions, and others had profanity and drug use. [18] [27]

According to Jenni White, a former public school science teacher, "Numerous studies on the use of graphic material by students indicate negative psychological effects," including having "more casual sex partners and [beginning] having sex at younger ages." [19]

Many frequently challenged books help people get a better idea of the world and their place in it.

Robie H. Harris, author of frequently challenged children's books including *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing up, Sex, and Sexual Health*, stated, "I think these books look at the topics, the concerns, the worry, the fascination that kids have today... It's the world in which they're living." [8]

Many books that have long been considered to be required reading to become educated about literature and American history are frequently challenged, such as: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. [9]

Keeping books with inappropriate content out of libraries protects kids, but doesn't stop people from reading those books or prevent authors from writing them.

Peter Sprigg of the Family Research Council noted that removing certain books from libraries is about showing discretion and respecting a community's values, and doesn't prevent people from getting those books elsewhere: "It's an exaggeration to refer to this as book banning. There is nothing preventing books from being written or sold, nothing to prevent parents from buying it or children from reading it." [20]

Books are a portal to different life experiences and reading encourages empathy and social-emotional development.

One study found that reading J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, which is frequently challenged for religious concerns about witchcraft, "improved attitudes" about immigrants, homosexuals, and refugees. [11]

Another study found that reading narrative fiction helped readers understand their peers and raised social abilities. [12][13]

A study published in *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* found that people who read a story about a Muslim woman were less likely to make broad judgments based on race. [14]

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should More Gun Control Laws Be Enacted?

The United States has 120.5 [guns](#) per 100 people, or about 393,347,000 guns, which is the highest total and per capita number in the world. 22% of Americans own one or more guns (35% of men and 12% of women). America's pervasive gun culture stems in part from its [colonial history](#), revolutionary roots, frontier expansion, and the Second Amendment, which states: "A well regulated [militia](#), being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Proponents of more [gun control](#) laws state that the Second Amendment was intended for militias; that gun violence would be reduced; that gun restrictions have always existed; and that a majority of Americans, including gun owners, support new gun restrictions.

Opponents say that the [Second Amendment](#) protects an individual's right to own guns; that guns are needed for self-defense from threats ranging from local criminals to foreign invaders; and that gun ownership deters crime rather than causes more crime

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<p>The Second Amendment is not an unlimited right to own guns.</p> <p>In the June 26, 2008 <i>District of Columbia et al. v. Heller</i> US Supreme Court majority opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia, LLB, wrote, "Like most rights, the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited... nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms." [3] On June 9, 2016 the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 7-4 that "[t]he right of the general public to carry a concealed firearm in public is not, and never has been, protected by the Second Amendment," thus upholding a law requiring a permitting process and "good cause" for concealed carry licenses in California. [145][146]</p>	<p>The Second Amendment of the US Constitution protects individual gun ownership.</p> <p>The Second Amendment of the US Constitution reads, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." Gun ownership is an American tradition older than the country itself and is protected by the Second Amendment; more gun control laws would infringe upon the right to bear arms. Justice Antonin Scalia, LLB, in the June 26, 2008 <i>District of Columbia et al. v. Heller</i> US Supreme Court majority opinion syllabus stated, "The Second Amendment protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with service in a militia, and to use that arm for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense within the home." [3]</p>

More gun control laws would reduce gun deaths.

There were 572,537 total gun deaths between 1999 and 2016: 336,579 suicides (58.8% of total gun deaths); 213,175 homicides (37.2%); and 11,428 unintentional deaths (2.0%). [162] Guns were the leading cause of death by homicide (67.7% of all homicides) and by suicide (51.8% of all suicides). [162] A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that firearms were the second leading cause of deaths for children, responsible for 15% of child deaths compared to 20% in motor vehicle crashes. [30] A study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that “legal purchase of a handgun appears to be associated with a long-lasting increased risk of violent death” [6] According to a Mar. 10, 2016 *Lancet* study, implementing federal universal background checks could reduce firearm deaths by a projected 56.9%; background checks for ammunition purchases could reduce deaths by a projected 80.7%; and gun identification requirements could reduce deaths by a projected 82.5%.

Gun control laws do not deter crime; gun ownership deters crime.

A study in *Applied Economics Letters* found that “assault weapons bans did not significantly affect murder rates at the state level” and “states with restrictions on the carrying of concealed weapons had higher gun-related murders.” [103] While gun ownership doubled in the twentieth century, the murder rate decreased. [53] John R. Lott, Jr., PhD, author of *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws*, stated, “States with the largest increases in gun ownership also have the largest drops in violent crimes... The effect on ‘shall-issue’ [concealed gun] laws on these crimes [where two or more people were killed] has been dramatic. When states passed these laws, the number of multiple-victim shootings declined by 84 percent. Deaths from these shootings plummeted on average by 90 percent and injuries by 82 percent.” [54] More than two-thirds of gun owners cite protection as a major reason for owning a gun. [55]

More gun control laws are needed to protect women from domestic abusers and stalkers.

Five women are murdered with guns every day in the United States. [10] A woman’s risk of being murdered increases 500% if a gun is present during a domestic dispute. [11] During the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, 5,364 US soldiers were killed in action between Oct. 7, 2001 and Jan. 28, 2015; between 2001 and 2012 6,410 women were killed with a gun by an intimate partner in the United States.

Gun control laws, especially those that try to ban “assault weapons,” infringe upon the right to own guns for hunting and sport.

In 2011, there were 13.7 million hunters 16 years old or older in the United States, and they spent \$7.7 billion on guns, sights, ammunition, and other hunting equipment. [65][66] High-powered semiautomatic rifles and shotguns are used to hunt and in target shooting tournaments each year. [67]

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should Bottled Water Be Banned?

Americans consumed 14.4 billion gallons of bottled water in 2019, up 3.6% from 2018, in what has been a steadily increasing trend since 2010. In 2016, bottled water outsold soda for the first time and has continued to do so every year since, making it the number one packaged beverage in the United States. 2020 revenue for bottled water was \$61.326 billion by June 15, and the overall market is expected to grow to \$505.19 billion by 2028. [50] [51] [52]

Globally, about 20,000 plastic bottles were bought every second in 2017, the majority of which contained drinking water. More than half of those bottles were not turned in for recycling, and of those recycled, only 7% were turned into new bottles. [49]

In 2013, Concord, MA, became the first US city to ban single-serve plastic water bottles, citing [environmental](#) and waste concerns. Since then, many cities, colleges, entertainment venues, and national parks have followed suit, including San Francisco, the University of Vermont, the Detroit Zoo, and the Grand Canyon National Park. [17] [26] [44]

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<p>Pro 1</p> <p>Banning bottled water would reduce waste and protect the environment.</p> <p>About 70% of plastic water bottles bought in the United States were not recycled in 2015, which means the majority end up in landfills or in the oceans, harming the ecosystem and poisoning animals.[1]</p> <p>Plastic water bottles were the third most commonly collected trash during the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup behind cigarette butts and plastic food wrappers. By 2050, estimates suggest there will be more plastic waste by weight in the oceans than fish. [3] [4]</p> <p>Almost all plastic water bottles are made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET), the raw materials for which are derived from crude oil and natural gas. The Pacific Institute found that producing enough plastic for the bottles of water consumed</p>	<p>Banning bottled water removes a healthy choice and leads to increased consumption of unhealthy sugary drinks.</p> <p>Increased consumption of zero-calorie bottled water in place of high-calorie juices and sodas has cut trillions of calories from American diets. [25]</p> <p>Michael C. Bellas, Chairman and CEO of the Beverage Marketing Corporation, says "Imagine a person cutting 161 hot dogs, 126 chocolate doughnuts or 87 cheeseburgers from their diet last year. That's the kind of difference we're talking about when we quantify the number of calories saved due to this widespread shift to bottled water." [25]</p> <p>In Aug. 2017, the National Park Service discontinued its policy that encouraged national parks to ban sales of plastic water bottles stating that, "The ban removed the healthiest beverage choice... while still allowing sales of bottled</p>

<p>by Americans in 2006 took about 17 million barrels of oil. Since 2006, American consumption of bottled water has increased 65% from 8.3 billion gallons in 2006 to 13.7 billion gallons in 2017, increasing the need for more plastic water bottles and thus more oil and gas. [5] [6] [7][8]</p>	<p>sweetened drinks.” [28]</p> <p>The International Bottled Water Association noted, “research shows that if bottled water isn’t available, 63 percent of people will choose soda or another sugared drink – not tap water.” [27]</p>
<p>Banning bottled water is good for your health.</p> <p>Bottled water is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration and requires weekly testing; tap water is more stringently regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency through multiple daily tests. [9]</p> <p>A study by Orb Media and the State University of New York found bottled water samples contained nearly twice as many pieces of micro-plastic per liter (10.4) than the tap water samples (4.45) with 93% of bottles showing some sign of micro-plastic contamination. [10] [11]</p>	<p>Other types of beverages have plastic containers that are more harmful than plastic water bottles, and bans don't necessarily reduce waste.</p> <p>Plastic water bottles contain much less polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic than soft drink bottles that require a thicker plastic container due to the drinks’ carbonation – 9.89 grams of PET v. 23.9 grams for a 16.9oz bottle. [8]</p> <p>A study by Quantis found that between 2007 and 2015, bottled water providers reduced the amount of material used in 8oz-2.5 gallon plastic water bottles by 42.8% – PET plastic is the most common material used in these bottles. [40]</p>
<p>Banning bottled water would save money, and public water fountains are convenient and plentiful.</p> <p>Bottled water is expensive. It can cost between 400 to 2,000 times more than tap water, four times more than a gallon of milk, and three times more than a gallon of gasoline. [1] [15]</p> <p>Mathematicians at Penn State University estimate that spending \$20 on a reusable water bottle can save the average American up to \$1,236 a year. For a family of four that amounts to nearly \$5,000. [16]</p>	<p>Bottled water is a practical emergency water supply.</p> <p>If tap water is not drinkable, then bottled water is a necessary replacement, making its availability essential to public health.</p> <p>Ready.gov, the Department of Homeland Security’s preparedness website on how to prepare for natural and man-made disasters, recommends everyone “buy commercially bottled water and store it in the sealed original container in cool, dark place.” [46]</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should Animals Be Used for Scientific or Commercial Testing?

An estimated 26 million animals are used every year in the United States for [scientific](#) and commercial testing. Animals are used to develop medical treatments, determine the toxicity of medications, check the safety of products destined for human use, and other [biomedical](#), commercial, and health care uses. Research on living animals has been practiced since at least 500 BC.

Proponents of animal testing say that it has enabled the development of many life-saving treatments for both humans and animals, that there is no alternative method for researching a complete living organism, and that strict regulations prevent the mistreatment of animals in laboratories.

Opponents of animal testing say that it is cruel and inhumane to experiment on animals, that alternative methods available to researchers can replace animal testing, and that animals are so different from human beings that research on animals often yields irrelevant results

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<p>Animal testing contributes to life-saving cures and treatments.</p> <p>The California Biomedical Research Association states that nearly every medical breakthrough in the last 100 years has resulted directly from research using animals. [9] Animal research has contributed to major advances in treating conditions such as breast cancer, brain injury, childhood leukemia, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis, tuberculosis, and more, and was instrumental in the development of pacemakers, cardiac valve substitutes, and anesthetics. [10][11][12][13]</p>	<p>Animal testing is cruel and inhumane.</p> <p>According to Humane Society International, animals used in experiments are commonly subjected to force feeding, food and water deprivation, the infliction of burns and other wounds to study the healing process, the infliction of pain to study its effects and remedies, and “killing by carbon dioxide asphyxiation, neck-breaking, decapitation, or other means.” [47] The US Department of Agriculture reported in Jan. 2020 that research facilities used over 300,000 animals in activities involving pain in just one year. [102]</p>
<p>Animal testing is crucial to ensure that vaccines are safe.</p> <p>Scientists racing to develop a vaccine for coronavirus during the 2020 global pandemic need to test on genetically modified mice to ensure that the vaccine doesn’t make the virus worse. [133] [119] Nikolai Petrovsky, professor in the College of Medicine and Public Health at Flinders University in Australia, said testing a coronavirus vaccine on animals is</p>	<p>Scientists are able to test vaccines on humans volunteers.</p> <p>Unlike animals used for research, humans are able to give consent to be used in testing and are a viable option when the need arises. [142] The COVID-19 (coronavirus) global pandemic demonstrated that researchers can skip animal testing and go straight to observing how vaccines work in humans. One company working on a COVID-19</p>

<p>“absolutely essential” and skipping that step would be “fraught with difficulty and danger.” [133]</p>	<p>vaccine, Moderna Therapeutics, worked on developing a vaccine using new technology: instead of being based on a weakened form of the virus, it was developed using a synthetic copy of the COVID-19 genetic code. [143]</p>
<p>There is no adequate alternative to testing on a living, whole-body system.</p> <p>A living systems, human beings and animals are extremely complex. Studying cell cultures in a petri dish, while sometimes useful, does not provide the opportunity to study interrelated processes occurring in the central nervous system, endocrine system, and immune system. [9] Evaluating a drug for side effects requires a circulatory system to carry the medicine to different organs. [15]</p> <p>Conditions such as blindness and high blood pressure cannot be studied in tissue cultures. [9] Even the most powerful supercomputers are unable to accurately simulate the workings of the human brain’s 100 billion interconnected nerve cells. [132]</p>	<p>Alternative testing methods now exist that can replace the need for animals.</p> <p>Other research methods such as <i>in vitro</i> testing (tests done on human cells or tissue in a petri dish) offer opportunities to reduce or replace animal testing. [15] Technological advancements in 3D printing allow the possibility for tissue bioprinting: a French company is working to bioprint a liver that can test the toxicity of a drug. [16] Artificial human skin, such as the commercially available products EpiDerm and ThinCert, can be made from sheets of human skin cells grown in test tubes or plastic wells and may produce more useful results than testing chemicals on animal skin. [15][50][51]</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should the Death Penalty Be Legal?

Since 1977, one year after the US Supreme Court reaffirmed the constitutionality of the **death penalty**, more than 1,480 people have been executed, primarily by means of lethal injection. Most death penalty cases involve the execution of murderers although capital punishment can also be applied for **treason**, **espionage**, and other crimes.

Proponents of the death penalty say it is an important tool for preserving law and order, deters crime, and costs less than life imprisonment. They argue that retribution or “an eye for an eye” honors the victim, helps console grieving families, and ensures that the perpetrators of heinous crimes never have an opportunity to cause future tragedy.

Opponents of capital punishment say it has no deterrent effect on crime, wrongly gives governments the power to take human life, and perpetuates social injustices by disproportionately targeting people of color (racist) and people who cannot afford good attorneys (classist). They say lifetime jail sentences are a more severe and less expensive punishment than death.

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<p>Charles Stimson, JD, Acting Chief of Staff and Senior Legal Fellow of the Heritage Foundation, in a Dec. 20, 2019 article, “The Death Penalty Is Appropriate,” available at heritage.org, stated:</p> <p>“Death penalty opponents, quite understandably, note that there have been a number of death row inmates who have been exonerated through groups like the Innocence Project. Sadly, mistakes can happen. Indeed mistakes can happen on both sides when it comes to the death penalty.</p> <p>However, acknowledging that mistakes can occasionally occur in capital cases does not render the death penalty unjust any more than imposing a sentence of incarceration for a term of years is not rendered unjust simply because mistakes occasionally occur in non-capital cases.</p> <p>Today, there are built-in checks and balances in the criminal justice system, from jury selection to the penalty phase to</p>	<p>Jared Olsen, JD, Wyoming State Representative (R), in a July 29, 2019 article, “I’m a Republican and I Oppose Restarting Federal Executions,” available at nytimes.com, stated:</p> <p>“And let’s be honest: Few conservatives trust the government to get it right. Since 1973, 166 people on state death rows have been exonerated and freed. Conservatives are now in the vanguard of the movement to end the death penalty. A recent report by Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty showed a sharp increase in the number of state Republican lawmakers sponsoring repeal legislation; so far this year, such bills have been introduced in 11 states.”</p>

<p>the appeals process that are designed to provide fair process for each defendant. The system is not perfect, and we must work to make it better for everyone involved.</p>	
<p>Michele Hanisee, JD, Deputy District Attorney for the County of Los Angeles stated, "Those in support of abolishing the death penalty point to the possibility of an innocent person being executed... The innocent can take solace in knowing that a unanimous jury of 12 citizens must render the death verdict after an exhaustive trial where the accused murderer is represented by two highly competent attorneys and overseen by an independent judge who ensures a fair trial.</p>	<p>Ernie Chambers, JD, Nebraska State Senator, stated, "I want to get as many votes as I can to abolish this death penalty. . . [O]ver 150 people in the last few years have been taken off death row because they were innocent. I know there are people who want to believe that no innocent person has ever been executed in this country. But when you have this many people conclusively proved by DNA evidence to be actually innocent, there is no escaping the conclusion that innocent people have been executed</p>
<p>Ronald Eisenberg, JD, Deputy District Attorney for Philadelphia, stated: "[T]he factual basis for the Illinois moratorium is even more suspect. Governor Ryan claims that, more than half the time, Illinois capital defendants were actually innocent: twelve men executed; thirteen freed. But in reality there have been 247 death-sentenced defendants in Illinois, not just 25. Of the thirteen 'innocents,' five were acquitted on retrials – which means not that they were really innocent, but that they were not proven guilty beyond all reasonable doubt. In the other eight cases, prosecutors dismissed charges without a retrial because of evidence problems. Only one of the thirteen has been clearly established as innocent.</p>	<p>George Ryan, former Governor of Illinois, in a Dec. 27, 2000 speech aired on <i>Democracy Now</i>, in support of his decision to impose a state-wide moratorium on executions, stated: "Like a lot of other elected officials, I believed that there were crimes that were so heinous – and I believe that today – that the death penalty sentence is the only proper societal response. I supported the death penalty when I was in the Illinois General Assembly. I spoke for the death penalty. I voted for the death penalty. And I believed in the death penalty... But since those days, a lot has happened to shake my faith in the death penalty system...</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Should Abortion Be Legal?

The debate over whether abortion should be a legal option has long divided people around the world. Split into two groups, pro-choice and pro-life, the two sides frequently clash in protests.

Proponents of legal abortion believe abortion is a safe medical procedure that protects lives, while abortion bans endanger pregnant people not seeking abortions, and deny bodily autonomy, creating wide-ranging repercussions.

Opponents of legal abortion believe abortion is murder because life begins at conception, that abortion creates a culture in which life is disposable, and that increased access to birth control, health insurance, and sexual education would make abortion unnecessary.

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<p>Abortion is a safe medical procedure that protects lives.</p> <p>The death rate for legal abortions is 0.7 deaths for every 100,000 abortions. By contrast, there are one to two deaths per 100,000 plastic surgery procedures, three deaths for every 100,000 colonoscopies, and three to six deaths per 100,000 tonsillectomies. Childbirth has nine deaths per 100,000 deliveries. [236]</p> <p>The “abortion pill” (Mifeprex) has a better safety record than common over-the-counter drugs including Tylenol, as well as prescriptions like penicillin and Viagra. Medication abortion (a combination of Mifeprex and Misoprostol) has a mortality rate of 6.5 deaths per one million patients. [237] [238]</p> <p>Pregnancy-related maternal deaths could increase 20% in US states with abortion bans. Amanda Stevenson, Sociology Professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, explained, “People with resources are more likely to make it out of state or find out about medication abortions. People who can’t are more likely to have health issues, to live in poverty and have less access to resources.” People of color are especially</p>	<p>Life begins at conception, making abortion murder.</p> <p>Conception is the moment a sperm cell fertilizes an egg cell, which begins the process of cell division that creates a human. [256]</p> <p>Tara Sander Lee, Senior Fellow and Director of Life Sciences at the Charlotte Lozier Institute, stated, “life begins from the moment of conception when the sperm fertilizes the egg, because there is the creation of a new, totally distinct, integrated organism or a human being, which is going to be biologically distinct from all other life forms on this planet.” The first cell is biologically distinct because it has its own DNA that is different from either biological parent and all other humans. [257]</p> <p>Ending a life is murder legally and ethically, even a life that is only a few growing cells at the time of death.</p> <p>Pope Francis explained, “Abortion is murder. Those who carry out abortions kill.... At the third week after conception, often even before the mother is aware (of being pregnant), all the organs are already (starting to develop). It is a human life.</p>

<p>likely to be in the latter category and, thus, negatively impacted by abortion bans. [239]</p>	<p>Period. And this human life has to be respected. It is very clear.... Scientifically, it is a human life.” [258]</p>
<p>Abortion bans endangers healthcare for those not seeking abortions. Medical treatment for nonviable pregnancies is often exactly the same as an abortion. [241] [242] [243]</p> <p>Ectopic pregnancies occur when a fertilized egg implants somewhere other than the uterine cavity. About one in 50 pregnancies are ectopic, and they are nonviable. Bleeding from ectopic pregnancies caused 10% of all pregnancy-related deaths, and ectopic pregnancies were the leading cause of maternal death in the first trimester. [241] [244] [245] [246]</p>	<p>Legal abortion promotes a culture in which life is disposable. Echoing a 2014 remark by Pope Francis that connected abortion to “throwaway culture,” Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, stated, “abortion represents a failure to recognize the sanctity of human life and promotes a culture in which human life in its most vulnerable moment is perceived as disposable. Such a proposal targets poor women as needing an expedient solution to a complex problem.” [260]</p> <p>Tobin previously declared legal abortion a “brutalization of the American heart” on par with the “dehumanization of the undocumented” immigrants. [261]</p>
<p>Abortion bans deny bodily autonomy, creating wide-ranging repercussions. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stated, “eliminating the rights of women to make decisions about when and whether to have children would have very damaging effects on the economy and would set women back decades.... In many cases, abortions are of teenage women, particularly low-income and often Black, who aren’t in a position to be able to care for children, have unexpected pregnancies, and it deprives them of the ability often to continue their education to later participate in the workforce.” [250]</p>	<p>Increased access to birth control, health insurance, and sexual education would make abortion unnecessary. Abortion rates in the United States have fallen at what the CDC called a “slow yet steady pace” since a peak in 1981. That year there were 29.3 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44. The rate fell to 11.4 abortions per 1,000 women in 2019. [264] [265]</p> <p>Experts largely contribute the decline in abortions in the United States and elsewhere to the improved safety and availability of LARC (long-acting reversible contraception) including IUDs and contraceptive implants that can last up to 10 years. [264] [266] [267]</p>

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org

Do Violent Video Games Contribute to Youth Violence?

Around 73% of American kids age 2-17 played [video games](#) in 2019, a 6% increase over 2018. Video games accounted for 17% of kids' entertainment time and 11% of their entertainment spending. The global video game industry was worth contributing \$159.3 billion in 2020, a 9.3% increase of 9.3% from 2019.

Violent video games have been blamed for [school shootings](#), increases in [bullying](#), and violence towards women. Critics argue that these games desensitize players to violence, reward players for simulating violence, and teach children that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts.

Video game advocates contend that a majority of the research on the topic is deeply flawed and that no causal relationship has been found between video games and social violence. They argue that violent video games may provide a safe outlet for aggressive and angry feelings and may reduce crime.

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<p>Playing violent video games causes more aggression, bullying, and fighting.</p> <p>60% of middle school boys and 40% of middle school girls who played at least one Mature-rated (M-rated) game hit or beat up someone, compared with 39% of boys and 14% of girls who did not play M-rated games. [2]</p> <p>A 2014 peer-reviewed study in the <i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i> found that habitual violent video game playing had a causal link with increased, long-term, aggressive behavior. [2]</p> <p>Several peer-reviewed studies have shown that children who play M-rated games are more likely to bully and cyberbully their peers, get into physical fights, be hostile, argue with teachers, and show aggression towards their peers throughout the school year. [2] [31] [60] [61] [67] [73] [76] [80]</p>	<p>Studies have shown violent video games may cause aggression, not violence. Further, any competitive video game or activity may cause aggression.</p> <p>Lauren Farrar, Producer for KQED Learning's YouTube series <i>Above the Noise</i>, stated: "Often times after tragic mass shooting, we hear politicians turn the blame to violent video games, but the reality is that the research doesn't really support that claim... In general, violence usually refers to physical harm or physical acts that hurt someone— like hitting, kicking, punching, and pushing. Aggression is a more broad term that refers to angry or hostile thoughts, feelings or behaviors. So everything that is violent is aggressive, but not everything that is aggressive is violent. For example, getting frustrated, yelling, talking back, arguing those are all aggressive behaviors, but they aren't violent. The research on the effects of violent video games and behavior often looks at these milder forms of aggressive behavior." [140]</p>

Simulating violence such as shooting guns and hand-to-hand combat in video games can cause real-life violent behavior.

Video games often require players to simulate violent actions, such as stabbing, shooting, or dismembering someone with an ax, sword, chainsaw, or other weapons. [23]

Game controllers are so sophisticated and the games are so realistic that simulating the violent acts enhances the learning of those violent behaviors. [23]

A 2015 peer-reviewed study found “compelling evidence that the use of realistic controllers can have a significant effect on the level of cognitive aggression.” [118]

Violent video games are a convenient scapegoat for those who would rather not deal with the actual causes of violence in the US.

Patrick Markey, PhD, Psychology Professor at Villanova University, stated: “The general story is people who play video games right after might be a little hopped up and jerky but it doesn’t fundamentally alter who they are. It is like going to see a sad movie. It might make you cry but it doesn’t make you clinically depressed... Politicians on both sides go after video games it is this weird unifying force. It makes them look like they are doing something... They [violent video games] look scary. But research just doesn’t support that there’s a link [to violent behavior].” [138]

Many perpetrators of mass shootings played violent video games.

Kevin McCarthy, US Representative (R-CA), stated: “But the idea of these video games that dehumanize individuals to have a game of shooting individuals and others – I’ve always felt that is a problem for future generations and others. We’ve watched from studies shown before of what it does to individuals. When you look at these photos of how it [mass shootings] took place, you can see the actions within video games and others.” [146]

Simple statistics do not support the claim that violent video games cause mass shootings or other violence.

Katherine Newman, PhD, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University, explained: “Millions of young people play video games full of fistfights, blazing guns, and body slams... Yet only a minuscule fraction of the consumers become violent.” [84] [86] [87] [91] [92]

A report by the US Secret Service and US Department of Education examined 37 incidents of targeted school violence between 1974 and 2000. Of the 41 attackers studied, 27% had an interest in violent movies, 24% in violent books, and 37% exhibited interest in their own violent writings, while only 12% showed interest in violent video games. [35]

For more arguments and specific citations of all facts, quotes and statistics, see procon.org