

from the author of MORE GUNS, LESS CRIME

JOHN R. LOTT, JR.

GUN CONTROL MYTHS



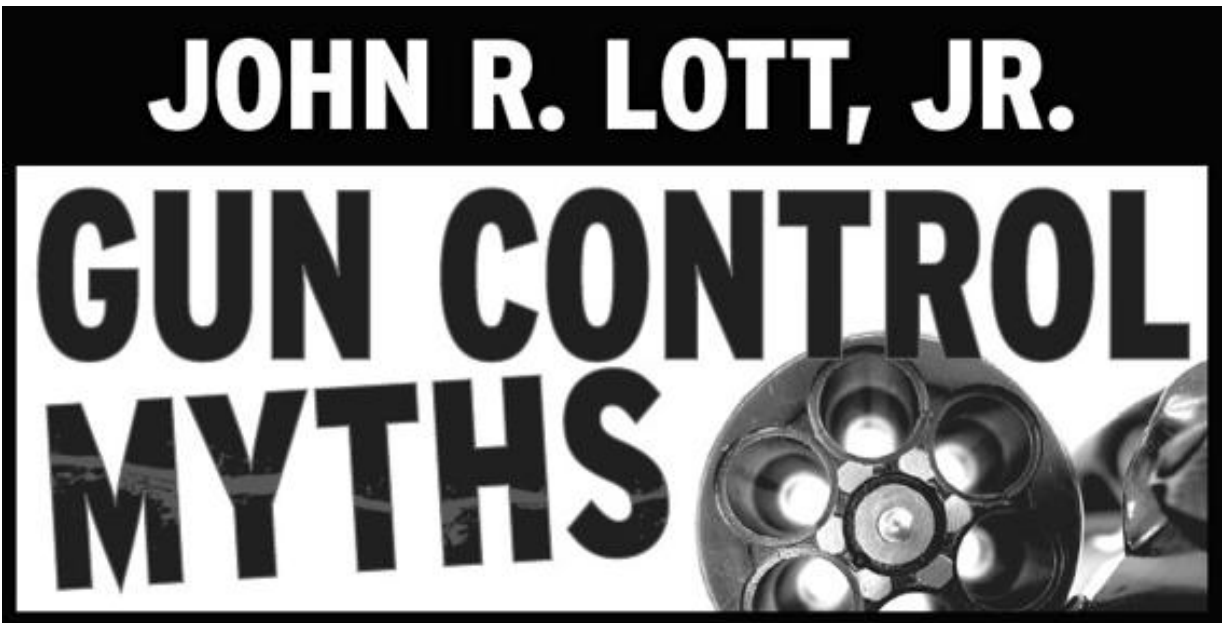
How politicians, the media, and botched "studies" have twisted the facts on gun control. Learn the actual facts that debunk them.

FOREWARD BY ANDREW POLLACK

JOHN R. LOTT, JR

**GUN
CONTROL
MYTHS**

FOREWARD BY ANDREW POLLACK



"John Lott has been giving us the facts about guns for decades. Finally clear to all that one party in America has an anti-Second Amendment platform and wants to disarm you. Now you need to arm yourself with the Truth. Buy and read Gun Control Myths today. Before it's too late."

***Sebastian Gorka Ph.D.,
host of AMERICAN First,
former Strategist to President Trump***

"We have John Lott to thank for once again providing factual and empirical based research to counter the anti gun movement's well funded and organized campaign based on nothing more than slogans, myths and propaganda designed to demonize supporters of our cherished Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms."

***David Clarke
Sheriff(RET) Milwaukee County***

"John Lott is the go-to expert when it comes to protecting the second amendment. Without the second amendment Americans could be stripped of our right to arm ourselves against aggressors. Arm yourselves with knowledge by reading "Gun Control Myths" and join me in protecting the Second Amendment."

***Eric Bolling
Host "AMERICA This Week"
Sinclair Broadcast
President and Chairman "JanOne"***

“John Lott shows that the media and many politicians are biased against guns. For example, many stories are written in the media about shooters, but very few about defensive uses of guns. Similarly, he shows that some gun control policies are actually counterproductive. Shooters seek out gun-free zones. If we banned “assault” weapons, shooters might shift to larger hunting guns. The book is copiously footnoted. It is full of statistical and graphical analysis, so that his points are easily grasped and persuasive. Anyone who advocates gun control and does not seriously consider John’s work is negligent. Any journalist who does not at least consider John’s work is committing journalistic malpractice.”

Paul H. Rubin
Dobbs Professor of Economics Emeritus,
Emory University

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my children Maxim, Ryan, Roger, Sherwin and Dagny. It is for them and because of them that I am motivated to try to figure out what policies will make people safer.

Acknowledgement

I want to thank Roger Lott and Rujun Wang for their work and help in putting this book together.

Dagny Lott and Carl Moody provided valuable counsel on many parts of this book.

This book would not have been possible without the time of all these individuals.



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Table of Contents

[Foreward by Andrew Pollack](#)

[Chapter 1: Introduction](#)

[Chapter 2: Gun Control Myths](#)

[Chapter 3: Debunking Myths about Mass Public Shootings](#)

[Chapter 4: The Heroes that the News Media Doesn't Cover](#)

[Chapter 5: Politicizing the FBI](#)

[Chapter 6: How a Botched Study Fooled the World About the U.S. Share of Mass Public Shootings: U.S. Rate is Lower than Global Average](#)

[Chapter 7: The Myth of the Lack of Funding for Public Health Research on Firearms](#)

[Chapter 8: Why is it that so much money from the government and Michael Bloomberg goes to funding public health research?](#)

[Chapter 9: Conclusion](#)

[Appendixes](#)

Forward

I was never a big Second Amendment supporter until my daughter Meadow was murdered on the third floor of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in the Parkland school shooting.

For readers who just follow the news casually, that should sound like a crazy statement. After all, the Parkland shooting captured the news cycle for months thanks to a handful of kids who attacked the National Rifle Association and argued that we should ban AR-15s.

For my part, I just wanted to know what went wrong and why. If the facts had suggested that there was some tie to some pro-gun policy, or that the kind of gun used made a difference, I would have been right there with those gun control kids. But when I looked into it, I realized that a lack of “gun control” wasn’t the problem. The laws on the books should have been enough to stop the shooter. Yet every local official failed every step of the way. It was the most avoidable mass murder in American history. You wouldn’t know this, though, because the media had its narrative before it knew any of the facts – and they sure as hell weren’t going to let the facts get in their way.

Still, all the debate about gun control got me interested. I wanted to learn a lot more about it. It had nothing to do with the Parkland shooting, but maybe some of the policies the kids were advancing could have helped with others. Maybe, I thought, it’s still a good idea that I should support.

So I reached out to experts from both sides. First thing I want to tell you is that, arguments aside, John Lott is a good and honest man who was extremely supportive of me and my family. But more to the point, one thing he told me stuck with me and still seems to shock everyone I tell it to. After every shooting, maybe the number one thing you hear from gun control groups is that we need to close the “gun show

loophole” and “regulate private sales.” It’s the kind of proposal that sounds like it makes a lot of sense.

But did you know that not one single mass shooting in the 20th century was perpetrated with a gun acquired through that so-called loophole?

I didn’t. I’ll admit it. I was actually kind of shocked. It seemed almost like the conventional narratives about guns had absolutely no relationship to reality. And when you read this book, I suspect you’ll feel a similar sense of shock turning through each page.

I don’t want preview too much of John’s findings, arrived at through painstaking research and clear-headed analysis. So rather than tell you what you’ll read in this book, I want to tell you why you should read this book.

My daughter knew that she heard gunshots coming from downstairs. But when her teacher heard the fire alarm go off and told her to go into the hallway on the third floor, she did. Two security staff on the first floor charged the shooter, trying to take him down with their bare hands. They died trying. The school was, after all, a “gun-free zone.” Except, of course, for the gun the shooter had. My daughter was in that hallway. Defenseless. Knowing what was coming. Unable to do anything to stop it.

You hear gun control advocates say all the time “guns kill people.” And you hear a lot of Second Amendment advocates say “no, people kill people.” But what you have to understand, and what you will understand after reading this book, is: gun control kills people.

You probably won’t be like me. You’ll probably never have a loved one who was murdered but could have been saved if not for gun control policies. But you might.

That’s why you have to read this book and use the facts in it as ammunition in the fight to keep your family and loved ones safe. They want a world where everyone is defenseless. Where the only people armed are the criminals and the murderers. You can’t let that happen. You need to learn the facts.

Andrew Pollack

*Author of **Why Meadow Died: The People and Policies That Created the Parkland Shooter and Endanger America's Students.***

— CHAPTER 1 —

Introduction

“It may be true that someone in the congregation had their own gun and killed the person who murdered two other people, but it’s the job of law enforcement to have guns and to decide when to shoot. You just do not want the average citizen carrying a gun in a crowded place....”^{[1](#)}

—Michael Bloomberg, January 2, 2020

“Hell yes, we’re going to take your AR-15,”

— Beto O’Rourke, who former Vice President Joe Biden says

“will be the one who leads” his gun-control effort, September 10, 2019.^{[2](#)}

After each mass shooting, we get a lot of debate, we get a lot of passion, and then all of a sudden it goes away. Why does it go away like this?

If only the discussion would continue past the initial heat of the moment, we could have a more reasonable discussion. But that’s what the 24-hour television news cycle gives us.

There is something else going on here. Take two school shootings that occurred just three months apart in 2018, in Parkland, Florida and

Santa Fe, Texas. The Parkland attack got massive news coverage for months, but the Santa Fe shooting didn't. Why?

CNN quickly organized a town hall event after the Parkland shooting, but there was no town hall after Santa Fe.

After Parkland, I had a text message exchange with CNN's Jake Tapper, to whom I expressed concern about how lopsidedly pro-gun control the media coverage had been. Tapper told me that it wasn't surprising given the liberal politics of Broward county, where the shooting occurred.

Immediately after the Santa Fe shooting, I reached out to Tapper again, suggesting a town hall event that would reflect Texas' more conservative politics. But this time, I didn't get a response. Perhaps CNN didn't want to deal with a more pro-gun town hall audience.

In the two months following the attacks, the Parkland school shooting received over 11 times more news coverage than did the Santa Fe attack.^{[3](#)}

And sometimes, the media just decides to leave out part of the story.

Based on the news, you would only know that Kate Nixon was one of the 12 victims of the shooting in Virginia Beach on May 31, 2019. The 42-year-old was described as "always helping others," and worked as a compliance manager on the second floor of Operations Building 2 in the Virginia Beach Municipal Center.^{[4](#)}

As far as the national media was concerned, that's all you needed to know about her.

But in the evening of Thursday, May 30, the night before the attack, Kate expressed fear that DeWayne Craddock and another employee were dangerous. She conferred with her husband, Jason, about whether she should hide a pistol in her handbag.^{[5](#)} Kate decided not to, because the city bans public employees from having permitted concealed handguns at work.

Not all municipal governments in Virginia ban employees from carrying guns. If Kate had worked in Bedford or Campbell County, she would have been able to carry her pistol to work.

There was no prohibition on non-government workers from entering the Operations Building with a permitted concealed handgun,

but the building was not a place for the public. By using his employee keycard to access employee-only locations, the killer ensured that no one present would be carrying a concealed firearm.⁶ This gave him a chance to kill more people, without anyone firing back. Also, the shooter gained time because the police had trouble entering the area without a keycard.

“In Virginia, it is legal to carry guns into public buildings, with a few exceptions,” noted The Wall Street Journal in the aftermath of the Virginia Beach attack.⁷ While literally true, it is journalistic malpractice not to explain that one of those exceptions forbids Virginia Beach employees from carrying guns in public buildings.

These killers aren’t as stupid or impetuous as some people imagine. They want to maximize casualties, so they deliberately attack gun-free zones. Unlike all of his law-abiding colleagues, the Virginia Beach killer didn’t obey the ban.

Yet, after the mass public shooting the Virginia Beach City Council’s response was to create more gun-free zones.⁸ In the beginning of 2020, when the Democrats took control of the Virginia state legislature, one of the first pieces of legislation was to ban guns in the Richmond state Capitol. The response to mass public shootings was to create more gun-free zones.⁹

Between 1950 and June 2019, 94 percent of mass public shootings in the United States occurred in places where general citizens were banned from carrying.¹⁰ But the mainstream media continually refuses to mention when an attack occurs in a gun-free zone.

The national media also ignores stories of armed private citizens preventing massacres. On the rare occasions that publications do cover the stories, they get them wrong.

There have been dozens of such cases in recent years.¹¹ Last fall, at a back-to-school event in Titusville, Florida, more than 200 students were present when a man opened fire on the crowd. Fortunately, a vendor with a concealed handgun permit stepped in and shot the attacker, seriously injuring him. “This person stepped in and saved a lot of people’s lives,” said Titusville Police Sgt. William Amos. “He’s a hero.”

A racially-motivated shooting at a Kroger grocery store in Louisville, Kentucky last year received particular attention. National media outlets noted that the killer had told another white man, “Whites don’t kill whites.”¹² NBC’s Meet the Press gave it prominent coverage.¹³

It sounded as if the killer was merely reassuring a bystander that he had nothing to worry about. But the media had omitted the crucial, first part of the quote. The killer said, “Don’t shoot me. I won’t shoot you. Whites don’t shoot whites.”¹⁴ The other white person was pointing a permitted concealed handgun at the killer.

With biased news coverage like this, it is hardly surprising that people want to ban guns. The media’s refusal to talk about the dangers of gun-free zones has a huge impact on the gun control debate. Media outlets refuse to provide balanced reporting that doesn’t fit their agenda.

On the subject of gun control, television news shows spout little more than propaganda. In June 2019, seven million Americans watched CBS’s “60 Minutes” explain why “AR-15s are the choice of our worst mass murderers.”¹⁵ It was the most-watched television program that day.

In the worst mass public shooting, a killer in Las Vegas used AR-15s – a type of semi-automatic rifle – to murder 58 people in 2017. The second worst attack occurred at an Orlando nightclub in 2016, and the killer used both an AR-15 style rifle as well as a very common type of handgun. In the third-worst attack, at Virginia Tech, the killer only used two handguns to claim 32 lives.

From 1998 to June 2019, out of all mass public shootings where shots were fired, handgun shootings averaged 8.3 murders. Rifle shootings averaged 13.3. Attacks in which both handguns and rifles were fired resulted in more deaths – 21.4, on average.

“60 Minutes” tried to argue that the AR-15 is the weapon of choice for mass public shooters because its “ammunition travels three times the speed of sound” and does more damage to the human body. “60 Minutes” filmed the impact that AR-15 bullets have on gelatin, and compared this to the impact from a 9mm handgun. “So, you can see why

the AR-15's high velocity ammo is the fear of every American emergency," claimed CBS's Scott Pelley.

But AR-15's are in no way specifically designed for warfare. In fact, bullets from rifles always travel faster than those from handguns. The AR-15 is no different than any rifle.

"A bomb went off on the inside [of the gelatin] because of the velocity of these [AR-15] high velocity rounds," Pelley noted. The shock wave that a bullet produces when it hits a body can do lethal damage, but again, there is nothing special about the AR-15. Larger bullets create larger shock waves, and the AR-15's .223-caliber bullets are actually rather small. Many states prohibit use of these bullets for deer hunting because an animal that is merely wounded is likely to suffer more. These 223-caliber bullets are best for hunting small-game animals.

"It is not just the speed of the bullet, but how quickly hundreds of bullets can be fired," said Pelley. But the AR-15 fires bullets at the same rapidity as any other semi-automatic gun (one bullet per pull of the trigger). The vast majority of guns in the US are semi-automatic guns.

Semiautomatic weapons are also used to protect people and save lives. Single-shot rifles that require reloading by hand may not do people a lot of good when they are facing multiple criminals. The first shot may also miss or fail to stop an attacker. People wanting to protect themselves and their families might not have the luxury of time to reload their guns.

CBS gives wall-to-wall coverage to mass public shootings, whether they be the attacks at the Pittsburgh synagogue, Sutherland Springs church, New Zealand mosque, or Stoneman Douglas High School. But nowhere in their coverage do they mention that all of these places were gun-free zones where people couldn't defend themselves.

The ultimate irony is that if CBS and other gun control advocates succeeded in banning .223-caliber AR-15 rifles, larger-caliber hunting rifles would become more popular. These guns are actually more deadly, and such a ban would probably make Americans less safe.

Entertainment television shows are no less one-sided.

Americans use guns defensively about 2 million times a year — about 5 times more frequently than guns are used to commit crimes.

But don't expect to see gun owners saving the day on television. Instead, gun owners are depicted as bigoted, hot-headed, and dangerous.

In March 2019, ABC's *The Rookie* had a scene where an armed neighborhood watch group goes on patrol.¹⁶ A Caucasian man in a red baseball cap picks up a Hispanic man who is trimming a hedge in his yard. He "looks guilty as hell to me" says the white man. The police arrive and tell the patrol members to put away their guns because protecting the neighborhood is a "job for law enforcement."

CBS's *SWAT* had a similar theme. After a hit-and-run driver injures gay men, and others are threatened, a gay "gun rights group" tries arming itself for protection (February 21, 2019, Season 2, episode 16).¹⁷ The police explain that the job of protecting people is their own, and that the gay men are just "amateurs." Letting people defend themselves is described as "shooting up the streets."

An April 1st episode of CBS's *Bull* begins with a man shooting his wife in the back and then successfully persuading a jury that he thought that she was an intruder (Season 3, episode 18). The jury consists of gullible Texans. The show accepts the misleading rhetoric from gun control groups about spousal violence, and makes it look like anyone can just snap and kill someone else.

In a recent episode of NBC's *Chicago PD*, a criminal leaves a gun at a crime scene and a gun registration system allows the police to eventually trace the gun back to him (March 27, 2019, Season 6, episode 17).¹⁸ This may work nicely in theory, but reality never works this way. Registration systems are just a lazy device for writers to solve crimes, as we've seen for many years on NBC's *Law & Order*.

In real life, crime guns are very rarely left at the scene of incidents, and the only exceptions occur when criminals have been seriously injured or killed. Also, crime guns are very rarely registered. In the exceedingly rare instances that they are, they aren't registered to the person who committed the crime. That's why police in such diverse places as Chicago, Hawaii, DC, Pennsylvania, and Canada can't point to any crimes that have been solved as a result of registration.

In “The Rookie,” police discuss how instrumental gun registration and buybacks are to improving safety in Los Angeles (January 21, 2019, Season 1, episode 11).^{[19](#)} But PoliceOne, the largest private organization of police officers in the US, recently asked its 450,000 members, “Do you believe gun buyback or turn-in programs can be or have been effective in reducing the level of gun violence?” Only 11.2% of police answered “yes,” whereas 81.5% said “no.”^{[20](#)}

In NBC’s Chicago MED, doctor Natalie (played by Torrey DeVitto) asks Will (Nick Gehlfuss) to move back in with her (March 24, 2019, Season 4, Episode 12).^{[21](#)} But she has a condition: he must give up his handgun. Will’s handgun has been a major stumbling block in their relationship, and Natalie has frequently warned him about the dangers of owning a gun. This time, Will finally relents and promises to turn in his gun to the police. But Will fails to follow through, and his gun is stolen shortly afterward. The criminal who stole the gun shoots a young man, seriously injuring him.

The lesson is clear: If Will had only listened to Natalie and gotten rid of his dangerous gun, there would have been no shooting. But criminals in Chicago don’t need to steal guns from law-abiding citizens. They obtain guns from drug gangs about as easily as they get drugs from those very same gangs.

Sure, things going wrong with guns makes for good entertainment. But so does law-abiding citizens heroically stopping attackers, which happens many times every year in real life. The one-sidedness of our entertainment shows and downright preachiness of some scenes betray a strong political agenda. Our entertainment shows should be a form of escapism, and political agendas ruin that for a lot of us.

Media bias isn’t just limited to traditional, mainstream news and entertainment. For two months in 2019, Twitter locked my personal Twitter account. I am also the president of the Crime Prevention Research Center, and they locked the organization’s account for almost a month. We weren’t able to post anything or read messages from other users.^{[22](#)}

Twitter offered to unlock the accounts if I agreed to a post saying that “your Tweet is no longer available because it violated the Twitter

Rules.” But we don’t believe that it actually violated the rules, and Twitter refuses to explain why it locked the accounts.

In March, I tweeted from my personal account that the perpetrator of the New Zealand mosque shooting was “a socialist, environmentalist, who hates capitalists & free trade.” I also wrote that the killer believed his attack would “lead to more gun control” in New Zealand and the United States.

After Twitter locked my account, I wrote about it in a New York Daily News article.²³ Twitter then locked the Crime Prevention Research Center account for linking to the Daily News article.

What I tweeted was entirely accurate, and the New York Daily News also fact-checked my op-ed piece.

In both cases, Twitter identified the offending tweets and then wrote, “We determined this Tweet violated the Twitter Rules, specifically for:” but the messages ended there. Appeals produced no additional information.

Upon logging into either account, the only thing that I could see was the offending Tweet. Twitter hasn’t bothered to provide me with an official explanation for their actions. Through a connection, I was finally able to speak with a Twitter representative. She wrote me: “Due to the safety of Twitter users and regulations abroad, Twitter does not allow linking to content that includes excerpts of manifestos of mass shooters.”

The explanation seems simple enough, but there is a problem. Lots of other accounts have tweeted a link to that same New York Daily News piece, including the paper itself to its over 700,000 followers.²⁴ More than 80 other accounts retweeted the link, some with many more followers than the CPRC. But there is no indication that any of these other accounts have been locked or had posts removed for linking to the article.

The Twitter representative’s only possible explanation was that someone “reported” the CPRC tweet, but that no one reported the other accounts’ tweets. “Specifically, the new Australian law prompted Twitter to take a very aggressive approach on materials related to Christchurch. Companies can be fined up to 10% of their annual

revenue.” The Twitter representative told me that once someone reports a tweet that violated those countries’ rules, they were powerless to ignore the complaint because the Australian and New Zealand governments would have been alerted to the violation.

So, with both of my Twitter accounts locked, I did something that I had never considered doing before. I asked people to report those tweets that had linked to my News piece. But nothing happened.

Why weren’t the other accounts treated similarly? Twitter has refused to explain, and stated that its decision is final.

A quick search reveals countless articles that contain excerpts of mass shooters’ manifestos. Many, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), have tweeted out a Kansas City Star article that quotes the New Zealand killer’s manifesto at length on 12 occasions. But the article focuses on the killer’s racism and claims, “Modern white supremacy is an international threat that knows no borders.”^{[25](#)} By contrast, my piece mentioned that the killer “frequently disparages minorities, but his racism stems from environmentalist concerns.”

The Star calls the killer a “right-winger” several times, and I argued that he was in no way “right-wing.” Perhaps the censors at Twitter don’t like to admit that a socialist/environmentalist can also be a racist.

Canada’s National Post used 13 quotes and concentrated on the killer’s racism without citing his explanations concerning overpopulation and high minority birth rates.^{[26](#)}

The Twitter representative I spoke with said that any quotes from the manifesto would violate Australian and New Zealand censorship rules. But these and many other news articles shared more quotes from the manifesto than did my piece for the Daily News.

After the El Paso shooting in August 2019, a New York Times article quoted extensively from the killer’s manifesto.^{[27](#)} It was tweeted and retweeted thousands of times, but Twitter ignored this violation of its supposed rules.

The CPRC’s account was blocked for tweeting the El Paso killer’s statement that: “In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto.”

So we are supposed to publicly agree that our “Tweet is no longer available because it violated the Twitter Rules” when Twitter refuses to treat others similarly? But we want to get information out to people, so we finally agreed to Twitter’s terms.

It’s ridiculous that a government halfway around the world could censor American political debates, effectively interfering in our democratic process. It becomes scary when this censorship is selectively applied only to tweets by conservatives, and Twitter feels no need to explain its biases.

Let me give one more example of media bias. In the media, I am constantly referred to as a “gun rights advocate,” while people on the other side of the debate are referred to as violence prevention advocates. It makes it appear that I care about guns per se, while the other interviewees care about saving lives and preventing injuries. But I never got into this research just so that people could own guns. I want to help make the world a better place, and it turns out that letting people defend themselves makes society safer.

But gun control advocates don’t even give us the benefit of the doubt. CNN host Jake Tapper made a big deal about Republican politicians refusing to appear on his show after the El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio shootings in August 2019.^{[28](#)} He took this as evidence that Republicans weren’t willing to do anything to stop these attacks. But many politicians, who are not experts on the subject, might not have felt that it would be productive to appear on a show with Tapper, who at one point in his life worked for Handgun Control. But Tapper knows that Congressman Thomas Massie (R-KY), who heads the Second Amendment Caucus in Congress, would have been happy to appear. He also knows that I would have done so, and that various gun rights organizations would have been thrilled to be on his show.

Conservative television host Eric Bolling invited representatives from many national gun control groups to appear on his show, “America This Week.” It is broadcast by over 200 stations across the country. But the Brady Campaign, Americans for Responsible Solutions, Third Way, the Community Justice Action Fund, and many others all declined to participate.^{[29](#)} It is one thing for politicians to decline such a debate appearance, but it is something quite different for representatives from

gun control organizations to do that. After all, they are immersed in all of the details about the issue.

Most gun control proponents would rather just keep funding and spreading propaganda rather than engaging in a real debate. Michael Bloomberg, whose net worth is over \$60 billion, spent \$110 million on U.S. House elections in 2018 and at least as much on state legislative races that year.^{[30](#)} By contrast, the National Rifle Association's PACs donated just \$880,521 to all congressional elections. The NRA's total additional spending to help these candidates was \$9.5 million.^{[31](#)}

From 2013 to 2016, Bloomberg donated a total of \$48 million to candidates running for federal office. The NRA's PACs and others associated with it contributed a measly \$2.1 million.

This imbalance has existed for several congressional cycles. If money can really buy votes, then gun control measures should easily be passing Congress.

Democrats keep telling us that 95% of Americans support background checks on private transfers of guns. But that's not how people vote. A ballot initiative in Maine was defeated by 4 percent, and another passed in Nevada by just 0.8 percent. In Nevada, voters assumed that the federal government would pick up the costs of these background checks. The initiative never took effect because the Obama administration refused to pick up the tab.

Even these meager results were only obtained after massive campaign spending by Bloomberg. In Nevada, Bloomberg spent \$20 million. This amounts to a remarkable \$35.30 per vote — triple the amount spent by opponents of the initiative. In Maine, Bloomberg outspent his opponents by a factor of six.

Bloomberg was responsible for more than 90 percent of the funding in support of these ballot measures. He also gives \$50 million a year to Everytown for Gun Safety to push for regulations — 2 1/2 times the amount spent by the National Rifle Association on political activities. And gun control advocates should hardly need advertising, given all of the free news coverage in support of their cause.

What exactly is their cause? Well, the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary has shown just how unified Democrats are on certain issues. Of

the 19 Democrat presidential candidates that were still running as of October 2019, every single one supported bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. They were also united in their support for red-flag laws that would allow people's guns to be taken away without a hearing, and for closing the so-called "boyfriend" and "Charleston" loopholes.^{[32](#)}

These "loopholes" don't actually exist. Even a misdemeanor conviction for a violent crime bans someone — a romantic partner or anyone else — from owning a gun for life.

The candidates' promises to close the so-called "Charleston Loophole" is just as misleading.^{[33](#)} Supposedly, if the government would only have had more time to check Dylann Roof's background, he would have been stopped from buying a gun.

But Roof, who pleaded guilty to murdering nine people at a church in Charleston, S.C., in 2015, had only been charged with misdemeanor drug possession prior to the church shooting. So Roof would not have been barred from buying a firearm even if the federal background check system had detected his criminal history. So there is no loophole to be closed here either.

Democrats' differences are few. The candidates debate whether there should simply be a ban on "assault weapon" purchases, or whether police should conduct home invasions to confiscate them. And most, but not all, of the nineteen candidates support requiring a license to own a gun.

There is probably a certain groupthink at work in the Democrat primary. Candidates will be disowned by their own party if they deviate too far from the standard thinking. In 2019, Fox News' Greg Gutfeld explained to me what he called "the prison of two ideas." He told me that no one can seriously talk to or even be perceived as working with people on the "other side" of the debate, or they will be disowned by their own side. This applies not only to the media but also to politics generally.

This surely explains much of the lack of civil, productive debate on guns.

But that's never how I have worked. As an academic, I had to get used to working with people who disagree with me.

So, I want to reach across the aisle and find some kind of common ground. Here are a few background check reforms that reasonable people should be able to agree on:

- 1) Eliminate false positives that overwhelmingly discriminate against poor and middle-income blacks and Hispanics. Stop getting names mixed up with each other by using middle names and social security numbers. Conduct background checks in the same way that private companies are required to do so when hiring new employees.
- 2) Help assure concerned Americans that background checks will not be used to create a national registry. If licensed dealers have to keep a record not only of all guns they sell but also of all background checks that they perform on private transfers, the government will soon be able to create a pretty comprehensive list of all law-abiding gun owners. A future Democrat President and Congress could require that the information be sent to the Washington, and this would form the basis of an instant national registration system.

To ensure the privacy of people's information, there needs to be a limit on how long licensed dealers are required to keep those records. Currently, the federal government is only allowed to retain information on background checks for 24 hours after the check is completed. The limit wouldn't have to be quite that short, but even a maximum of six months or so would allay fears that a gun registry would be set up to confiscate people's guns.

- 3) Laws on private transfers require a background check anytime that you loan someone a gun. The only exceptions are at an approved firing range or if someone is in "imminent danger." But what if you know a woman who is being stalked but is not in "imminent danger" at that very moment? You would be committing a felony by loaning her a gun. One simple reform could be the adoption of a "reasonableness" standard for whether the person needs a gun for self-defense.

But gun control advocates will fight against any of these suggestions, which has convinced me that they aren't committed to creating an efficient, fair background check system. They are philosophically opposed to gun ownership and want to make it costly for law-abiding Americans to own guns. But gun control advocates don't feel the need to make any reasonable concessions.

Background check fees can create a real burden for lower-income Americans. It's almost as if some Democrats want to use these fees to disarm poor minorities — the very people who are the most likely victims of violent crime. A few years ago, when Colorado was passing expanded background checks, Republican state legislators proposed to exempt people below the poverty line from paying the new state tax on private transfers. In the Colorado House of Representatives, all but two Democrats voted against this amendment. Normally, Democrats are happy to fight for tax breaks for the poor.

If background checks really reduce crime for everyone, they should be paid for out of general tax revenue.

The point of this book, as with all my books, is to try to educate people on the true facts about gun ownership. I examine both the costs and benefits, and explode myths that actually endanger people's safety.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Brad Polumbo, "Michael Bloomberg's outrageous response to the Texas church shooting," Washington Examiner, January 4, 2020 (<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/michael-bloombergs-outrageous-response-to-the-texas-church-shooting-is-an-insult-to-hero-jack-wilson>).
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— CHAPTER 2 —

Gun Control Myths

A Vox article has gained the spotlight for illustrating America's "unique gun violence problem" in 17 maps and charts.¹ Before my CNN appearance with author Gene Lopez in March 2018, Lopez bragged to me in the green room at CNN that his graphs had been used in high schools across the country and viewed some 30 million times.²

We will address the mistaken assumptions behind Vox's graphs. Often, Lopez cites just one or two public health studies to make a particular point, without discussing any of the known weaknesses with the studies. For balance, it is important to acknowledge and critique research that has come to the opposite conclusions.

We will also dissect the claims made by Nicholas Kristof in his oft-cited New York Times opinion piece, "How to Reduce Shootings" and an article by the BBC titled "America's gun culture in charts."³

Before diving into the claims, here are a few points to bear in mind.

It is total deaths that need to concern everyone. If you take away guns, people might substitute other methods for suicide or murder. But the Vox article focuses exclusively on gun deaths without looking at the larger picture.

There are many countries that have higher gun homicide rates than the United States, but simply don't report the data. Many of these countries satisfy the membership criteria of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development).

Although 192 countries report total homicides, only 116 of them report firearm homicides.⁴ Among countries that don't release firearm homicide data, their combined homicide rate is 11.1 per 100,000. This

is far above both the US rate and the global average. If these high-homicide countries were to report their firearm homicide rates, they would almost surely outrank the US.

Homicides include not only murders, but also justifiable homicides in which civilians or law enforcement officers kill in self-defense. In the five years from 2011 to 2015, the US experienced 11,577 firearm homicides and 8,786 firearm murders.^{5,6}

The gap between these two numbers is much larger in the US than in other countries. So, comparing homicide rates gives a more unfavorable impression of the US than if we looked only at murder rates.

Murder isn't a nationwide problem in the United States; there are vast swathes of the country that don't experience any murders. It's only a big problem in certain urban areas. In 2014, the worst 2 percent of counties accounted for 52 percent of the murders. Five percent of counties accounted for 68 percent of the murders. Even within these counties, there are large regions without any murders.

Clearly, drug gangs have been major contributors to the violent crime problems in America's cities. Drug dealers use guns to protect their expensive merchandise, and they supply guns just like they sell drugs. Unfortunately, it is just as difficult to stop drug dealers from getting guns as it is to stop them from obtaining illegal drugs.

The popular press likes to compare crime rates in different places at the same point in time. Gun control advocates often compare the US and the UK, pointing out that the UK has both stricter gun control and lower homicide rates than does the US. Omitted is the fact that the UK's homicide rate rose after its gun control laws were enacted.⁸ The UK's homicide rate is lower than the US's, but this is despite the country's counterproductive gun control laws, not because of them. The UK's homicide rate was very low before it had any gun control laws.

Academics are aware of the limitations of such simple comparisons. To understand the effects of laws, we have to observe how homicide rates change before and after their implementation. Then, we can compare these changes in crime rates with the changes in places that didn't reform their laws. This is a method that we will come back to many times.

Gun control advocates such as Vox never mention that every single time that guns are banned — either all guns or all handguns — homicide/murder rates rise.⁹ This is a remarkable fact. One would think that just due to random chance, one or two countries would have experienced a drop in homicides after banning guns.

Vox begins its discussion on mass public shootings using data collected by Jaclyn Schildkraut of the State University of New York-Oswego and H. Jaymi Elsass, a researcher at Texas State University. When, in December 2015, I pointed out that their list was missing a lot of cases, Washington Post “Fact Checker” reporter Michelle Lee wrote me: “[Schilkraut] said they are still adding cases, and that it’s not a complete database.”

Schilkraut and Elsass had already gone public with their findings about how the U.S. compared to other countries. They did so with full knowledge that they were missing many shootings in foreign countries. Vox also presents a total for each country instead of giving the numbers on a per capita basis. It is remarkable that Vox puts other numbers in per capita terms, but not these numbers.

In Chapter 3, we will examine the international statistics on mass public shootings. Here are responses to claims made by Vox and the New York Times:

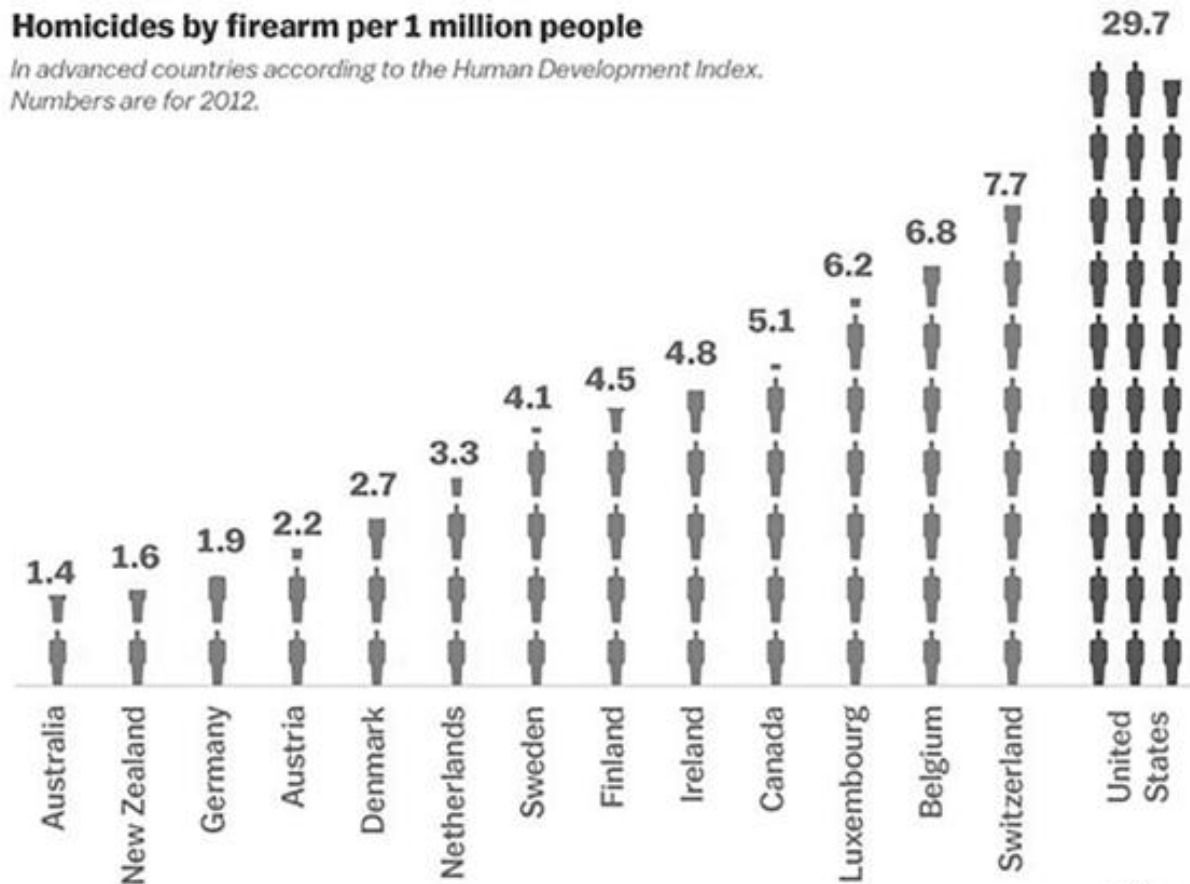
1) [Vox.com’s](#) Claim #1 ([Figure 1](#)) and New York Times Claim #1 ([Figure 2](#)): “America has six times as many firearm homicides as Canada, and nearly 16 times as many as Germany”

Vox offers no explanation for why it compares only these 14 countries, nor does the New York Times explain why it looks at just 11. The New York Times graph is also mislabeled, as it clearly concerns firearm homicides, not murders.

Here ([Figure 3](#)) are overall homicide rates across all 219 countries for which data is available.¹⁰ Even disregarding the problems of homicides being underreported in many countries, the US homicide rate is under the median rate and far less than half of the mean average for all countries.

Homicides by firearm per 1 million people

In advanced countries according to the Human Development Index.
Numbers are for 2012.



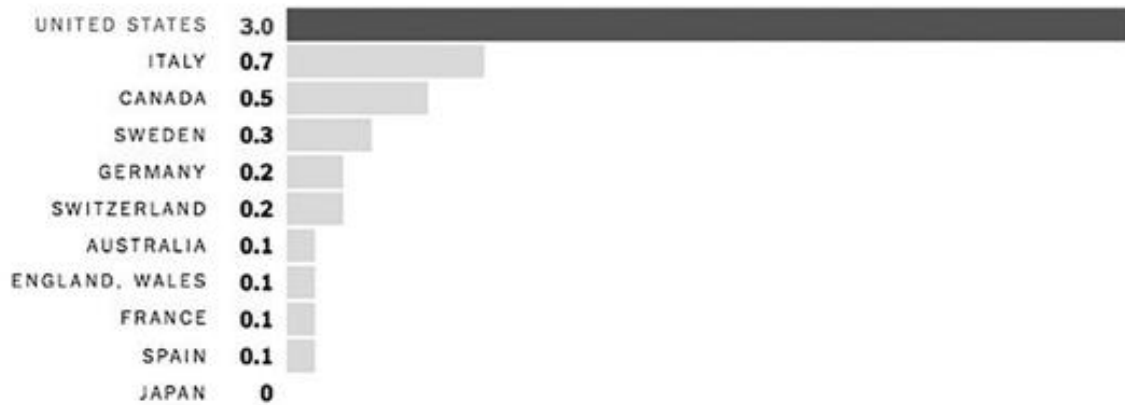
SOURCE: UNODC, Small Arms Survey, via The Guardian.

Vox

FIGURE 1

Gun murders per 100,000 people

America's private arsenal is six times as lethal as Canada's, and 30 times worse than Australia's.



The New York Times | Sources: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (gun murders); Small Arms Survey (guns per 100 people) | Murder data for U.S., Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia and Spain from 2015 and latest available for other countries; 2007 data for guns per 100 people.

FIGURE 2

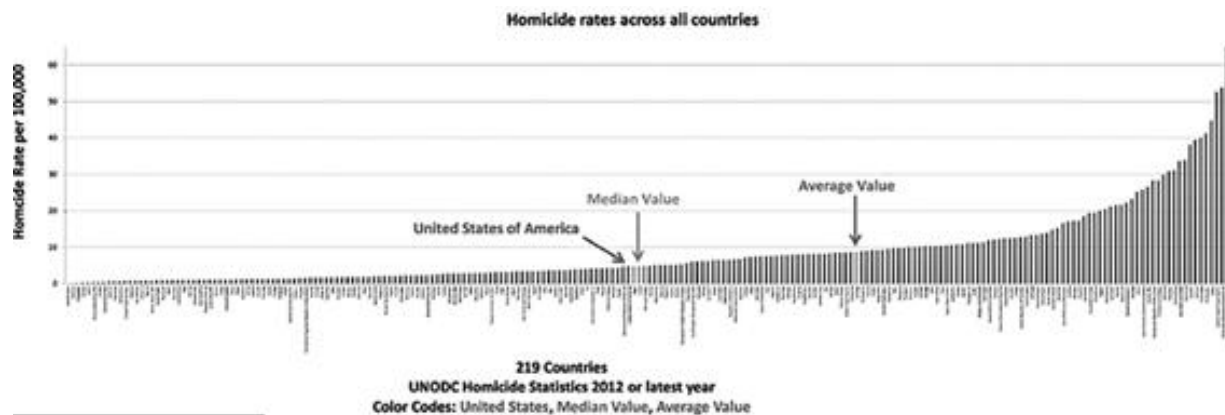
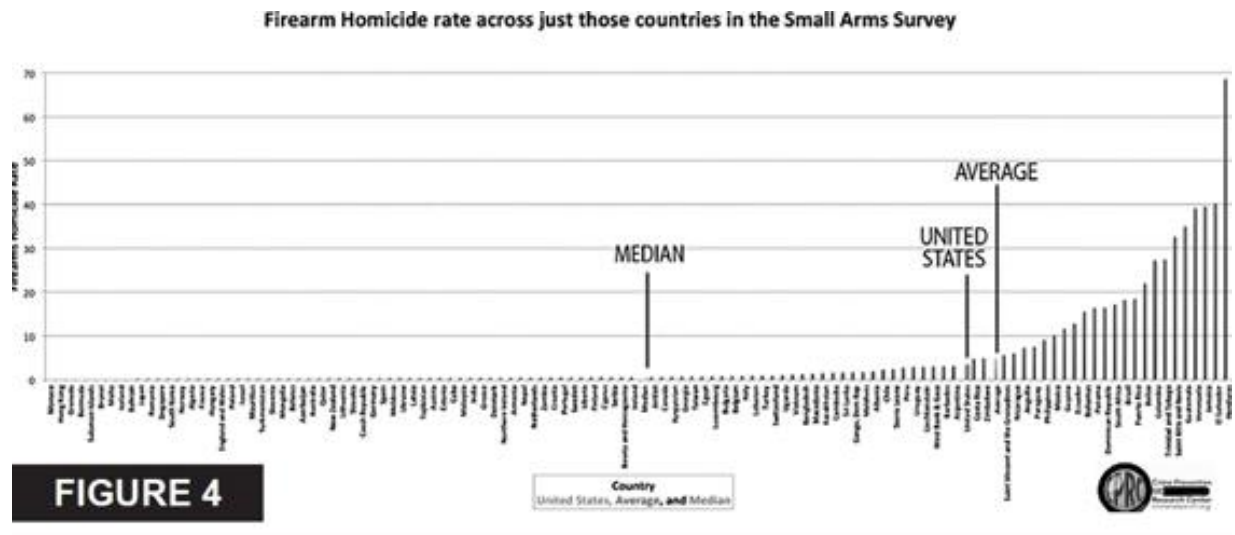


FIGURE 3



Now let's look at the much smaller number of countries that report firearm homicide rates ([Figure 4](#)). About 45% of the countries that report homicide numbers don't report firearm homicide data. The US rate looks much higher relative to other countries, but that is primarily because the countries with the highest homicide rates are the ones that don't report firearm homicides.

[Figure 5](#) shows how homicide rates vary among the 36 OECD-member nations.^{[11](#)}

The countries with the highest homicide rates don't even report firearm homicides, and these same countries have very strict gun control regulations. In Brazil, there are only 330,000 licensed firearm owners in a country of 152 million adults – just 0.22 percent of the adult population.^{[12](#)}

But Brazil has a homicide rate that is more than five times that of the US.^{[13](#)} Only about 1 percent of Mexican adults legally own a gun, but Mexico has a homicide rate that also dwarfs the US rate.

The US homicide rate is high, but the pertinent question here is how gun ownership affects homicide rates. In claim #6 of its article, Vox tries to compare firearm homicide data among developed countries.

(OECD 2012 or latest year)

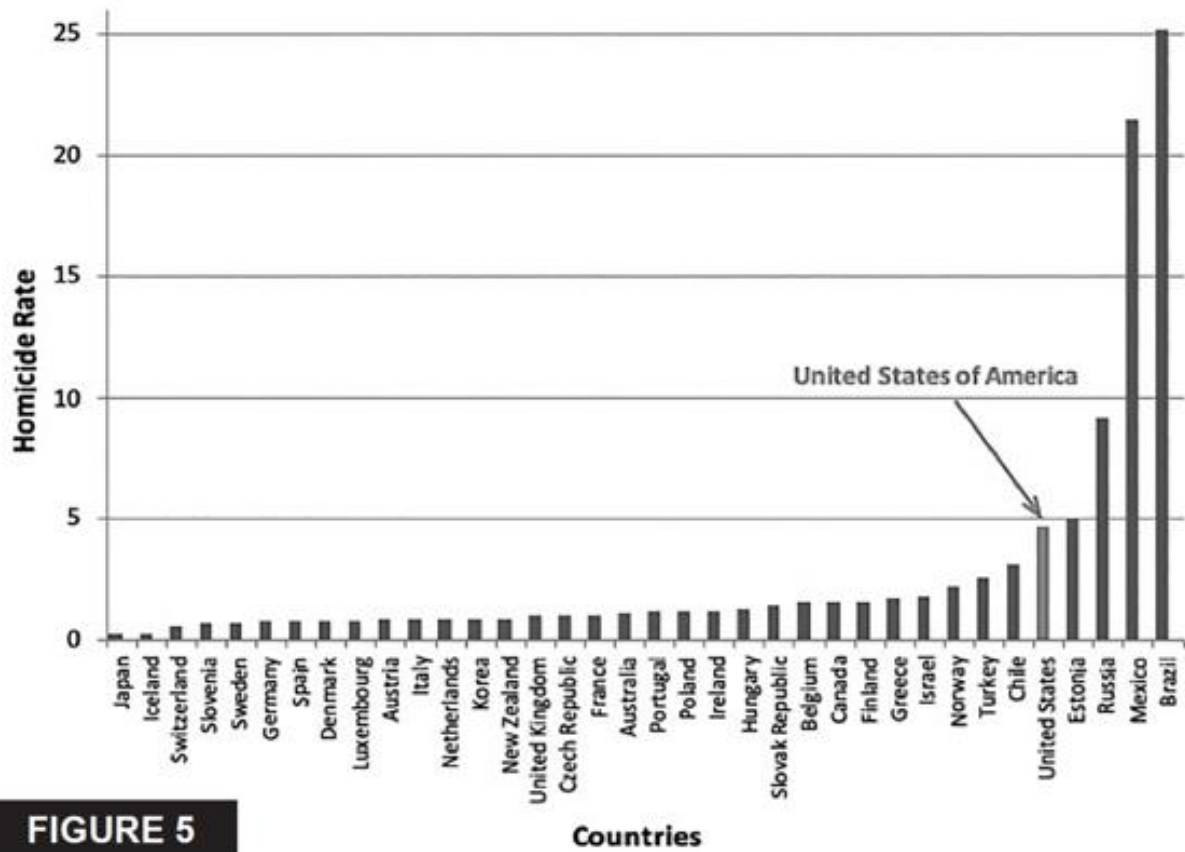


FIGURE 5

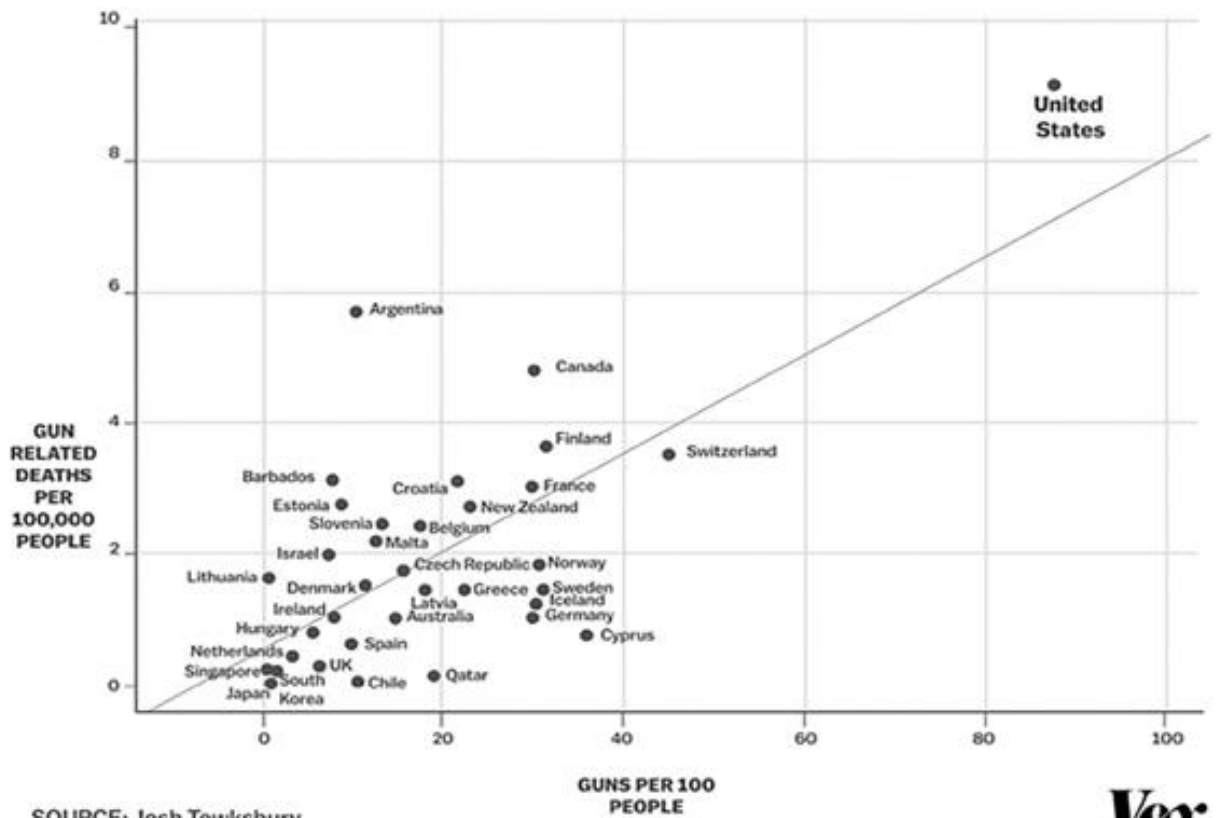


FIGURE 6

2) Claim #6: “It’s not just the US: Developed countries with more guns also have more gun deaths”

[Figure 6](#) is Vox’s figure showing per capita firearm homicide rates among OECD-member countries, without Brazil, Mexico, and Russia. I reproduce the same figure for homicides generally. It uses data from the Small Arms Survey, despite the survey’s dramatic underestimation of gun possession rates in countries such as Israel and Switzerland, where it is common for individuals to possess guns that are technically owned by the government — sometimes for decades.¹⁴ Whether or not someone actually possesses a gun is what matters here.

The Small Arms Survey fails to provide sources for about 85% of the countries for which it presents numbers. We will later show how these problems bias the results towards what Vox, Kristof, and the BBC want to show.

The Small Arms Survey measures gun ownership by the number of guns per 100 people ([Figure 7](#)), but a much better measurement is the percentage of the population that owns guns. The total number of guns in a country is the same whether one percent of the population owns a hundred guns each, or whether every person in the country each owns a single gun. While the total number of guns is the same in both scenarios, the chances of self-defense are much greater if everybody owns one gun.

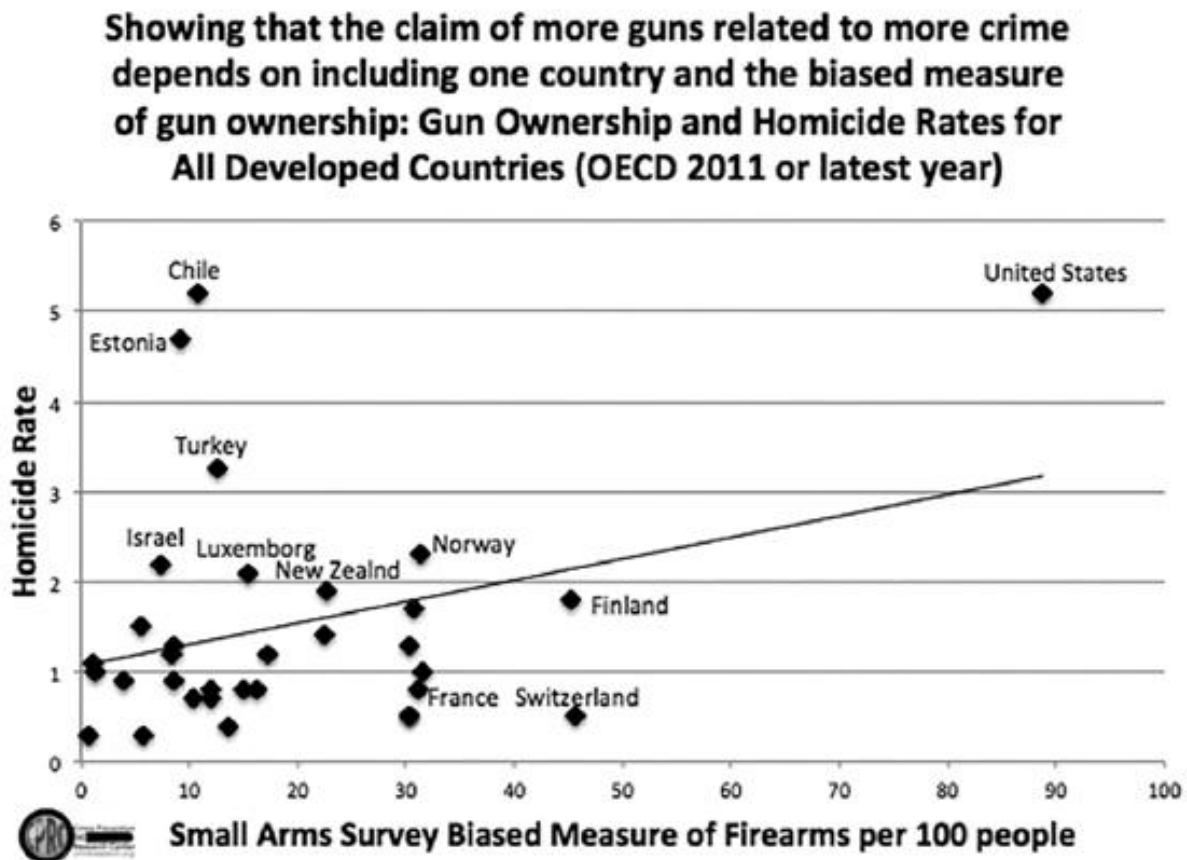


FIGURE 7

**What can the US learn from other developed countries?:
Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates for All Developed
Countries (OECD 2011 or latest year)**

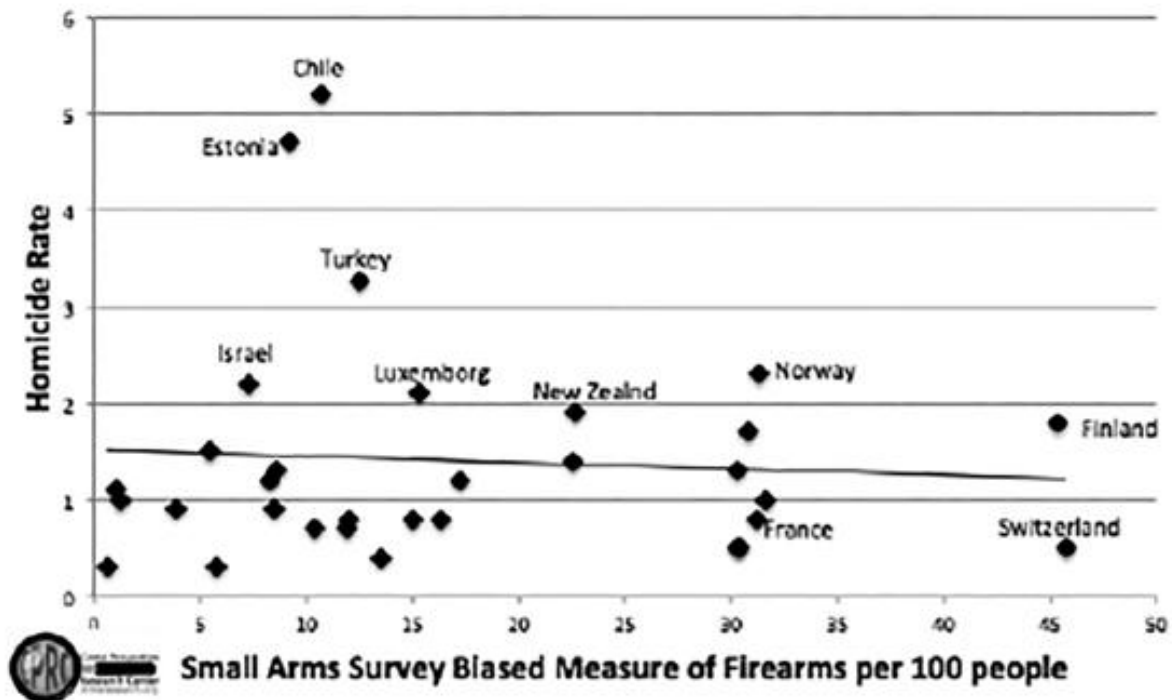


FIGURE 8

Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates for All Developed Countries (OECD 2011 or latest year)

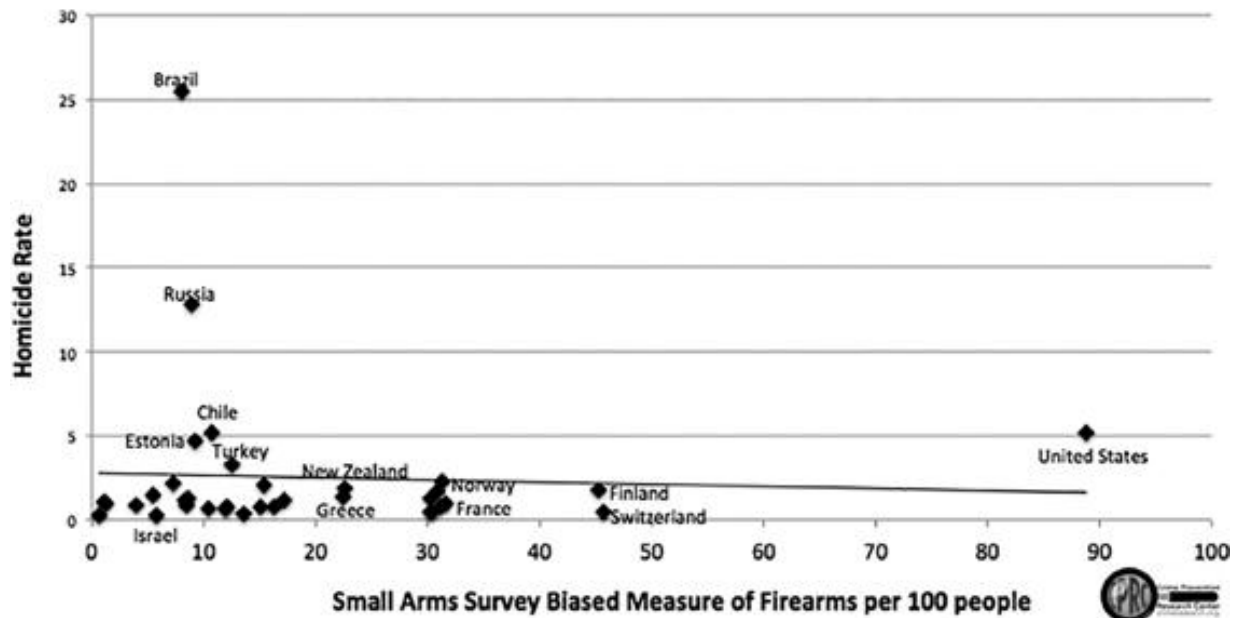


FIGURE 9

Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates for All Developed Countries (OECD 2011 or latest year)

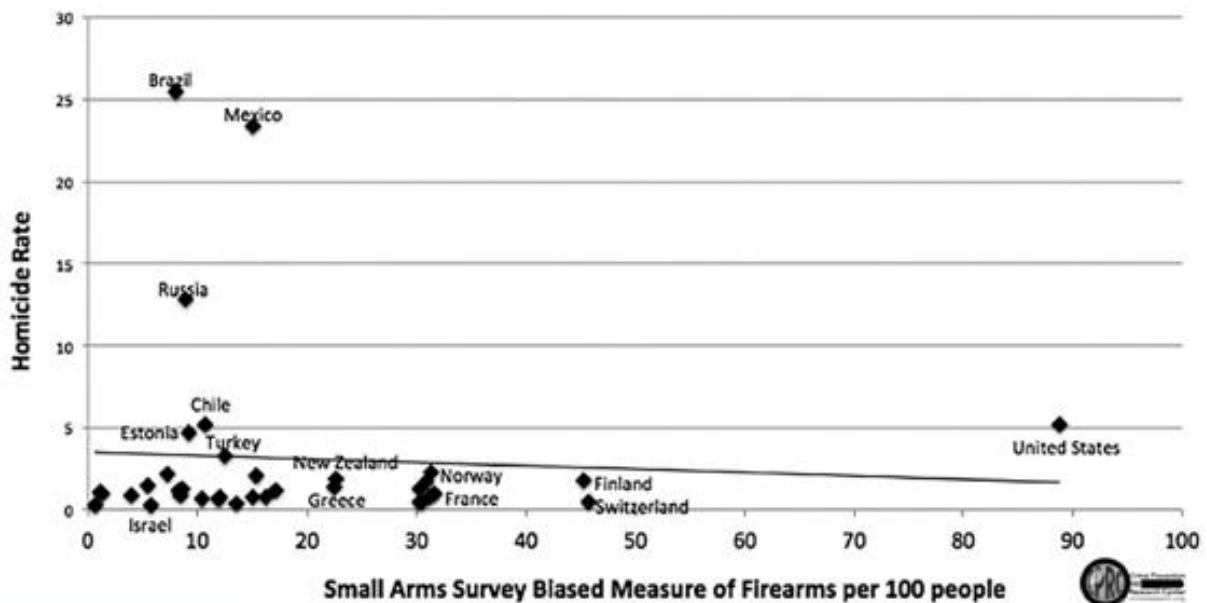


FIGURE 10

Small Arms Survey measure of Gun Ownership and Homicide Rate for the selective countries covered by survey

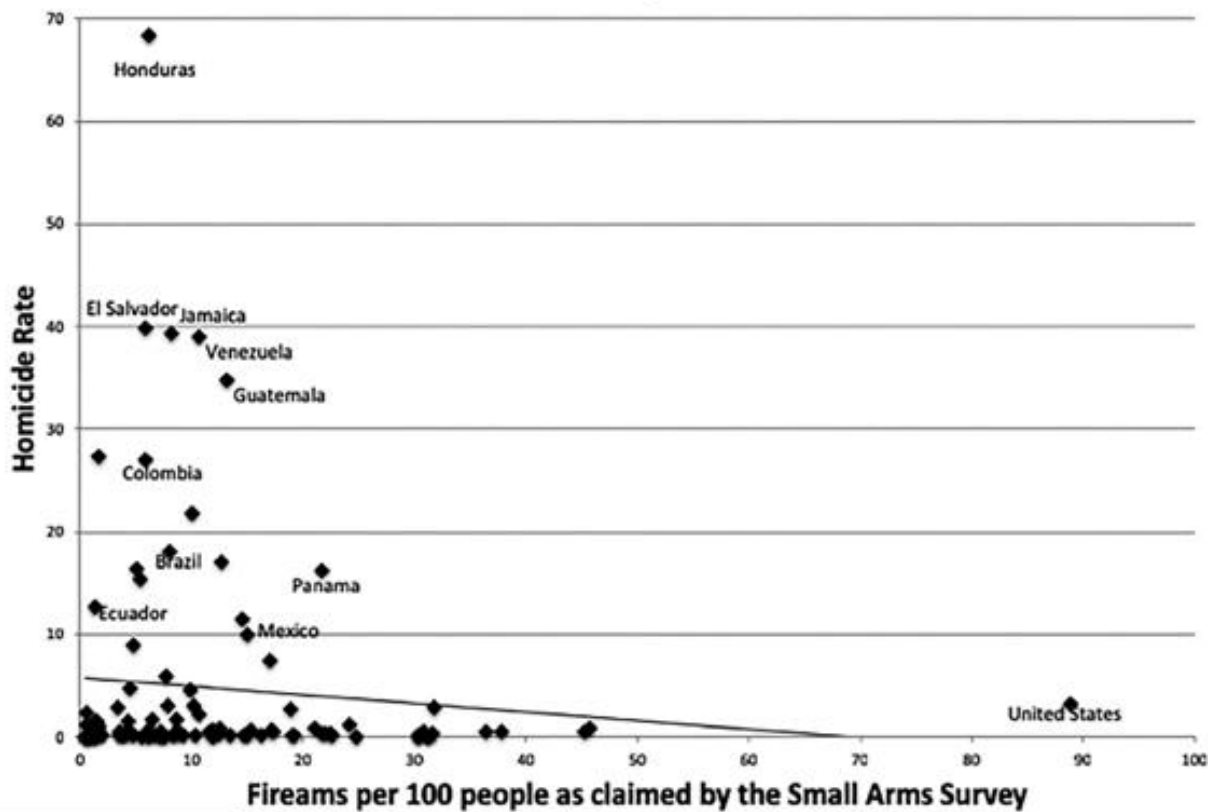


FIGURE 11

Small Arms Survey measure of Gun Ownership and Firearm Homicide Rate for the selective countries covered by survey

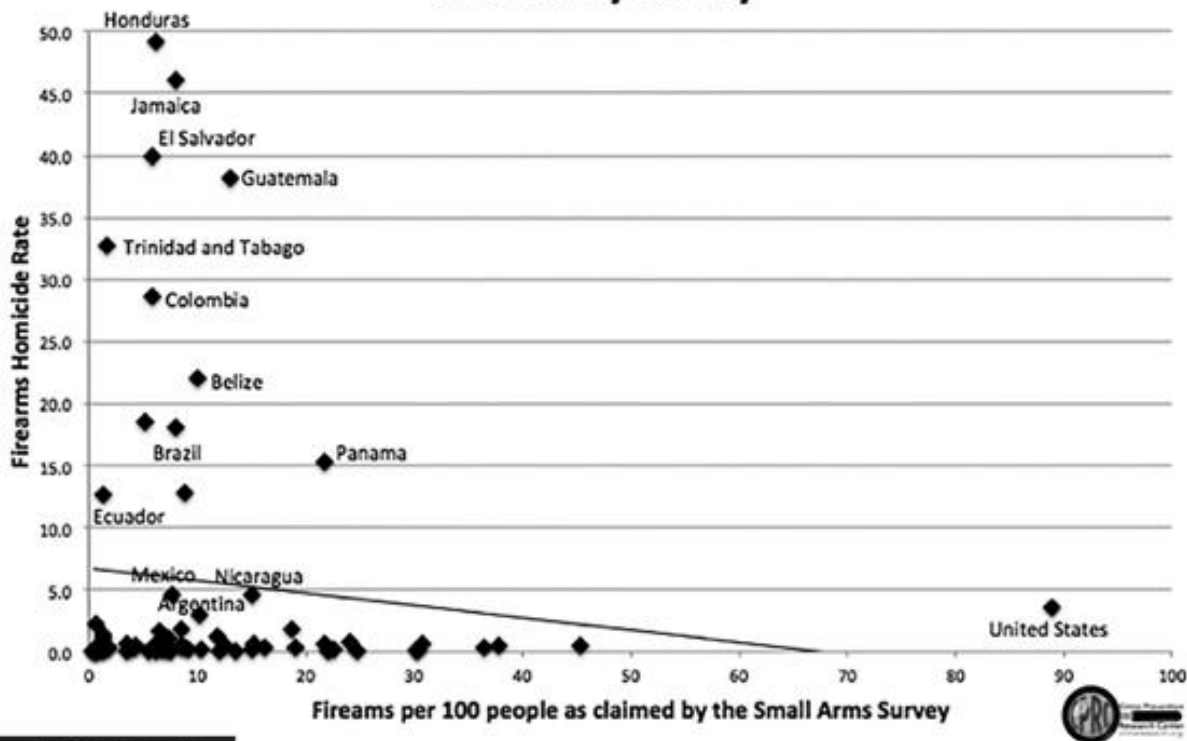


FIGURE 12

Excluding the US, it's not true that there is an association between more guns and more gun deaths. In fact, higher gun ownership rates are associated with lower homicide rates ([Figure 8](#)). Even including the US, there is a negative association once Brazil and Russia are included ([Figure 9](#)). Some might object to including OECD-member Mexico as a developed country, but including it produces an even more negative relationship ([Figure 10](#)).

Similarly, increasing the reported number of firearms per 100 people for Israel and Switzerland (to reflect the possession of guns at home) also makes this relationship negative — even when the US is included and Brazil, Mexico, and Russia are excluded.

When we look at all of the surveyed countries, the Small Arms Survey shows a slight association between more guns and fewer homicides ([Figure 11](#)).

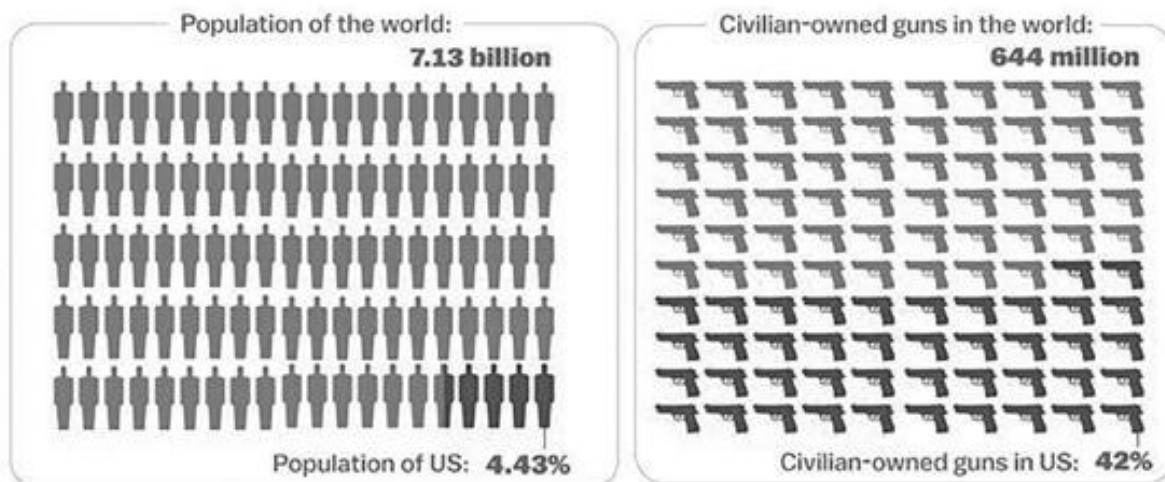
The same is true for the much smaller set of countries that report firearm homicides ([Figure 12](#)).

3) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #2: "America has 4.4 percent of the world's population, but almost half of the civilian-owned guns around the world" ([Figure 13](#))

As mentioned earlier, countries such as Israel and Switzerland have a lot more civilian-possessed guns than civilian-owned guns. In these two countries, the household gun possession rate is certainly higher than in the US.

There is a major accuracy problem in using surveys or registration lists to count gun ownership. There is strong evidence that most guns are never registered.

Americans own a ridiculous number of guns



SOURCE: UNODC, Small Arms Survey, via The Guardian.

Vox

FIGURE 13

When Canada tried in the late 1990s to register its estimated 15 to 20 million long guns, about 7 million were actually registered.^{[15](#)} In the 1970s, Germany registered 3.2 million of the country's estimated 17 million guns.^{[16](#)} In the 1980s, England registered only about 50,000 of

the estimated 300,000 pump-action and semiautomatic shotguns in the country.¹⁷

In many countries where gun ownership is illegal, surveys continually show zero gun ownership even when that is clearly not the case.¹⁸ Even in the US, there is evidence that surveys of gun ownership rates are not very accurate.¹⁹

On top of all that, the Small Arms Survey provides sources for only about 12 percent of the countries. In 2014, I first asked them for their sources for the other countries. For a while, they ignored my inquiries. When I finally got a response from Aaron Karp, he seemed helpful, promising to get me the material the next week.²⁰ But he didn't send the list of sources. When I followed up with him a few weeks later, he said that he had been busy but would soon get back to me. A month later I again asked for the information, but all I got was a vague email saying: *"Regarding how countries and territories are covered, much depends on specific registration rules and reporting practices. A lot of countries publicly report annual retail sales, seizures and disarmament, or public registration figures. Others routinely see annual data reported in the press. We also get reports by asking. That kind of thing gives official annual inflation/deflation."*²¹ But he never gave me a list of sources for each country. There was no way to actually check the numbers.

The bottom line is that the number of guns in the rest of the world is underestimated relative to the number in the United States. So 42% is likely a huge overestimate of the US's true share of guns worldwide.

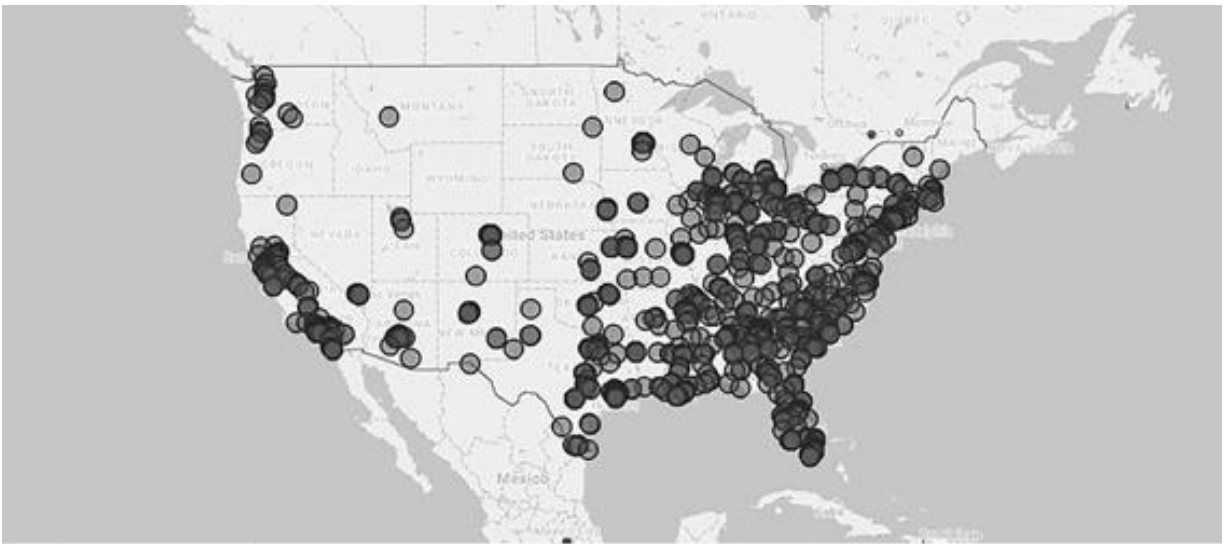


FIGURE 14

4) [Vox.com's](#) Claims #3 and #4: “There have been more than 1,600 mass shootings since Sandy Hook” and “On average, there is around one mass shooting for each day in America” ([Figure 14](#))

As Vox notes: “The tracker uses a fairly broad definition of ‘mass shooting’: It includes not just shootings in which four or more people were murdered, but shootings in which four or more people were shot at all (excluding the shooter).”

This definition comes from a research group called the Gun Violence Archive.

Their definition is for mass shootings, not just public ones. Mass shootings, as defined by the FBI, require three or more fatalities. Mass public shootings have the added requirement that the event occur in a public setting. The FBI also excludes fatal gang fights and robberies in order to focus on those cases where the point of the attack was to kill people, not to gain territory or merchandise ([Figure 15](#)). These are the types of mass public shootings that we hear about on the news — at schools, malls, and other public places. They are a far cry from the sorts of events documented by Vox.^{[22](#)}

Public Shootings where two or more people were killed during first seven months of 2015, re-evaluating the Washington Post's claims about Mass Shootings

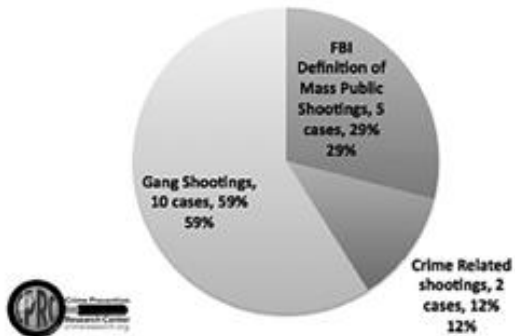
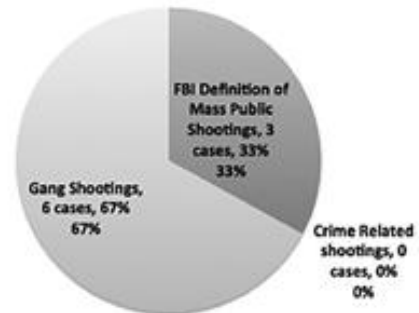


FIGURE 15

Public Shootings where three or more people were killed during first seven months of 2015, re-evaluating the Washington Post's claims about Mass Shootings



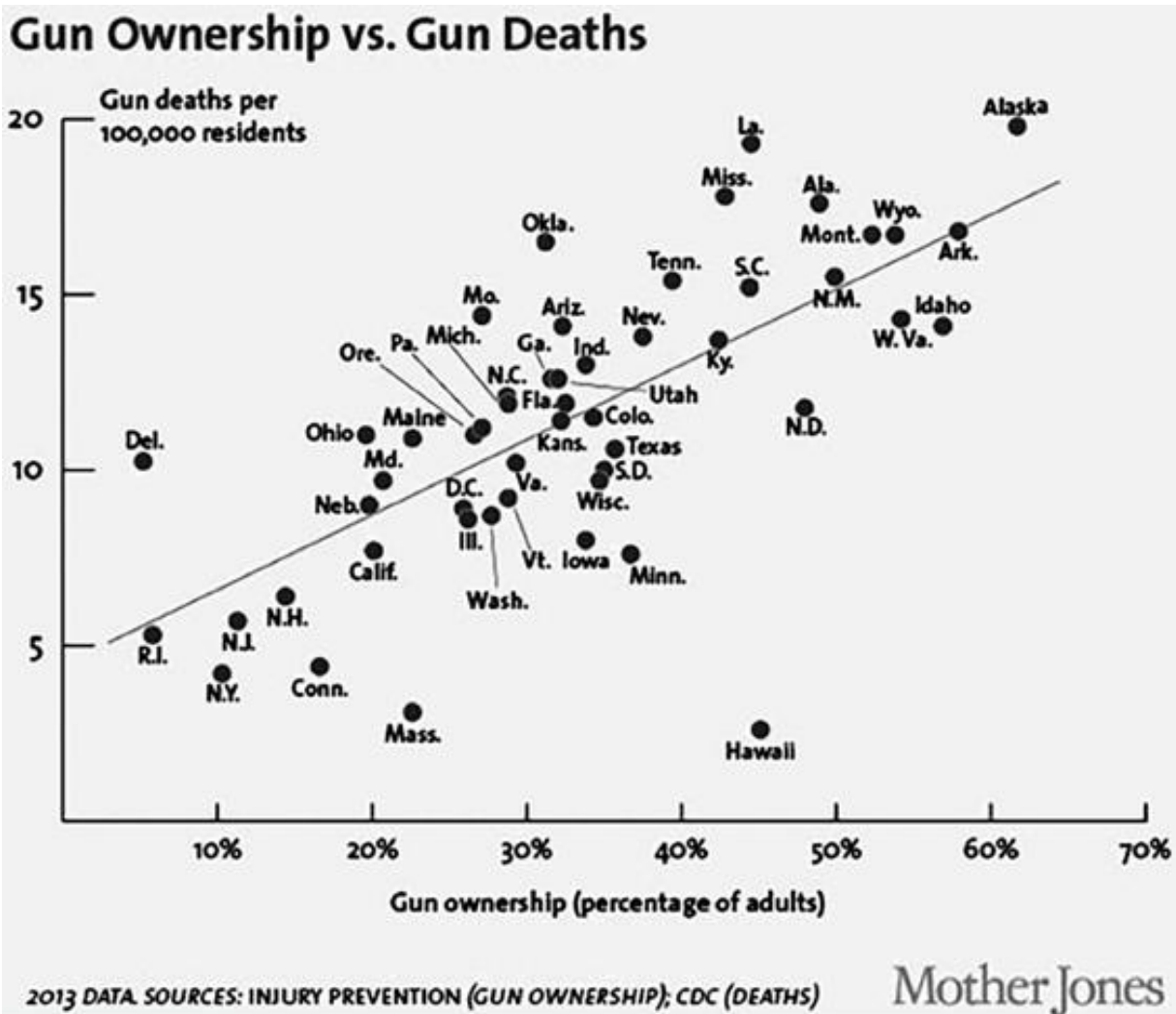


FIGURE 16

5) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #5: "States with more guns have more gun deaths" ([Figure 16](#)) and New York Times' Claim #3: "Fewer Guns = Fewer Deaths" ([Figure 17](#))

These figures only compare states at a single point in time. But to do a proper analysis, one has to see how crime rates vary over time across all of the states. Did the states that experienced the biggest increases in gun ownership also have the biggest increases or decreases in crime rates? I tried to answer this question in my book, *More Guns, Less Crime* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).^{[23](#)}

Fortunately, more consistent data are available to investigate the relationship between total gun ownership in the United States and crime. In chapter 3, I presented poll data from general-election surveys that offer consistent polling across states, showing how gun ownership varied across states for 1988 and 1996. There is broad variation in gun ownership across states, and the crime rates also vary across states and over time. Even with rather few observations, however, these data suggest that we may be able to answer an obvious question: Is the crime rate higher in states with more guns?

To test the relationship between gun ownership and crime, I attempted to examine the relationship between the percentage of the adult population owning guns and the crime rate after accounting for the arrest rate, real personal income, population per square mile, state dummy variables, the percentage of blacks among each state's population, and a variable to pick up the average change in crime rates between 1988 and 1995. This last variable was also intended to help pick up any differences in the results that arise from the slightly different poll methods in the two years. Ideally, one would want to construct the same type of cross-sectional, time-series data set over many years and states that was used in the earlier discussions; unfortunately, however, such extensive poll data on gun ownership are not available. Because we lack the most recent data for the above-named variables, all the variables except for the percentage of the state's adult population that owns guns is for 1995.

Estimated Percent of Households With Guns, by State

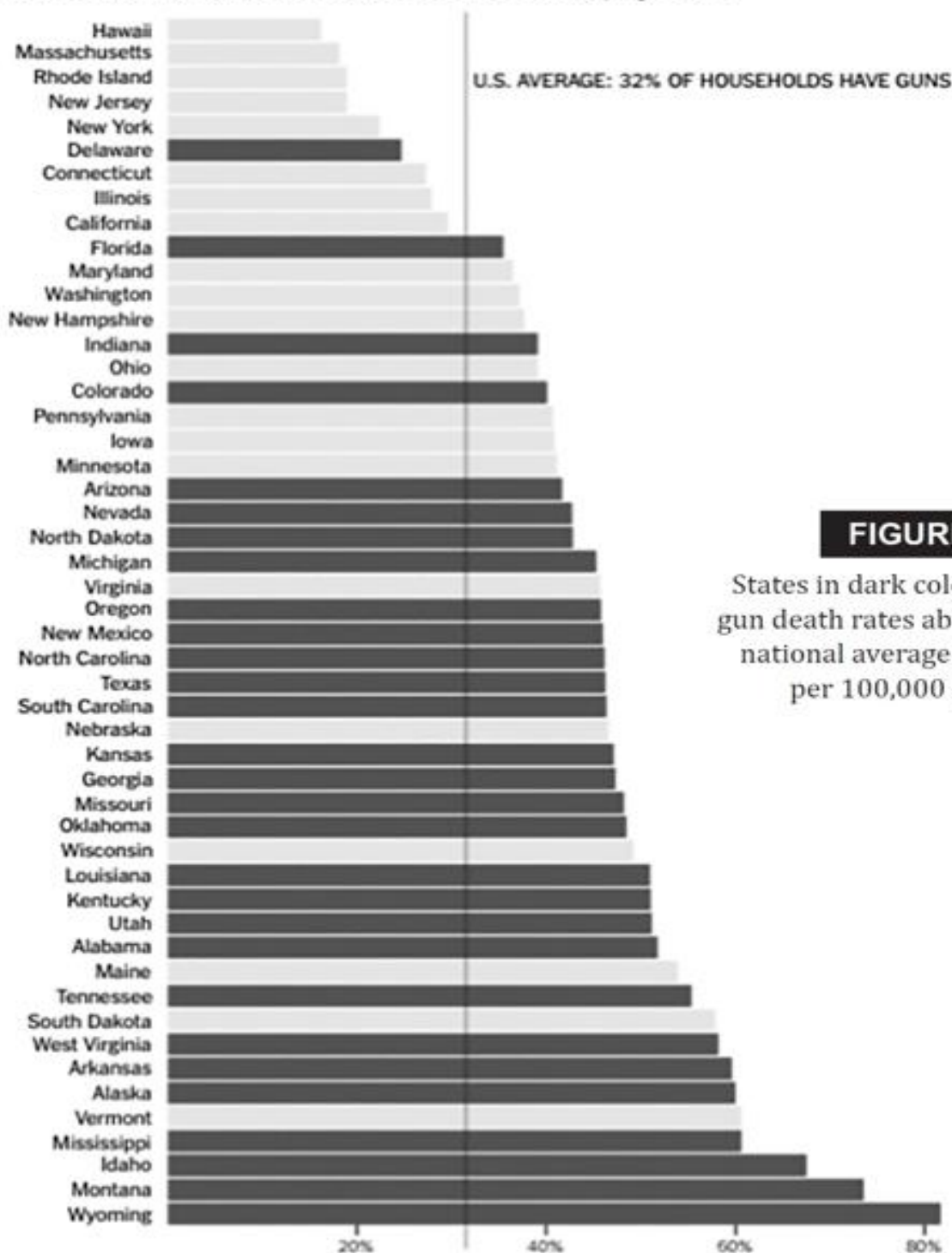


FIGURE 17

States in dark color have gun death rates above the national average of 10.5 per 100,000 people.

Note: There are no hard data on gun ownership in the United States. This household gun ownership proxy was created by taking a weighted average of the percentage of suicides committed with a firearm — a widely used proxy for firearm ownership — and the hunting license rate in each state. It improves upon earlier models by accounting for the prevalence of hunting rifles, which are typically not used in suicides. The new proxy improves the correlation with survey-measured gun ownership from 0.80 to 0.95, suggesting increased accuracy. Source: Michael Siegel, Boston University School of Public Health

As [table 5.7](#) shows, from my book *More Guns, Less Crime* with the University of Chicago Press, a strong negative relationship exists between gun ownership and all of the crime rates except for rape, and the results are statistically significant for seven of the nine categories. Indeed, the effect of gun ownership on crime is quite large: a 1 percent increase in gun ownership reduces violent crime by 4.1 percent. The estimates from the National Institute of Justice of the costs to victims of crime imply that increasing gun ownership nationwide by 1 percent would reduce victim costs by \$3.1 billion, though we must bear in mind that these conclusions are based on a relatively small sample. Similar estimates for accidental gun deaths or suicides reveal no significant relationships.

Table 5.7 The relationship between state crime rates and the general election poll data on the percent of the state's adult population owning guns

Crime rates	Percent change in the crime rate from a 1 percentage point increase in a state's gun ownership rate	Estimated change in victim costs from a 1 percent increase in the number of guns nationwide
Violent crime	-4.1*	
Murder	-3.3*	\$2.7 billion
Rape	0	
Aggravated assault	-4.3*	\$44 million
Robbery	-4.3*	\$200 million
Property crime	-1.5**	
Burglary	-1.6*	\$54 million
Larceny	-1.3	\$38 million
Auto theft	-3.2*	\$17 million
Total savings		\$3.1 billion

Note: While the other coefficient values are not reported here, these regression results control for the arrest rate, real personal income, population per square mile, state dummy variables, the percent of the state's population that is black, and a year-dummy variable for 1996 to pick up the average change in crime rate between the years. All regressions use weighted least squares, where the regressions are weighted by the state populations.

*The result is statistically significant at the 1 percent level for a two-tailed *t*-test.

The New York Times' Kristof cites a ridiculously low estimate of how often deadly force is used in self-defense:

"One study by the Violence Policy Center found that in 2012 there were 259 justifiable homicides by a private citizen using a firearm."^{[24](#)}

Gun control advocates are apt to point out that the number of murders with firearms completely dwarfs the number of justifiable homicides with guns. Putting aside the Violence Policy Center's demonstrated lack of credibility, the problems with this claim are as follows.

1) The existing data on justifiable homicides is fragmentary and anything but comprehensive. The few jurisdictions that report this statistic tend to use the FBI's very limited definition, as defined in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Handbook (pp. 17-18):

NOTE: Justifiable homicide, by definition, occurs in conjunction with other offenses.²⁵ Therefore, the crime being committed when the justifiable homicide took place must be reported as a separate offense. Reporting agencies should take care to ensure that they do not classify a killing as justifiable or excusable solely on the claims of self-defense or on the action of a coroner, prosecutor, grand jury, or court.

The following scenario illustrates an incident known to law enforcement that reporting agencies would not consider Justifiable Homicide:

17. While playing cards, two men got into an argument. The first man attacked the second with a broken bottle. The second man pulled a gun and killed his attacker. The police arrested the shooter; he claimed self-defense.

Only about 1 percent of police departments report justifiable homicides by law enforcement officers, and the numbers are even lower for justifiable homicides by civilians. Even the places that report these data don't really have any incentive to get the numbers correct.

Officially, there were 117 justifiable homicides involving civilians in Michigan from 2000 to 2010.²⁶ Police committed another 95 justifiable homicides, according to the statistics. There is a simple reason for these low numbers, as one newspaper chain in the state found.²⁷ Police initially report justifiable homicides as criminal homicides. When the use of force is later determined to be justifiable, they rarely bother changing electronic records, even though they are easy to recode. It's as simple as changing a "1" to a "4."

That was the case in Kalamazoo County, where FBI statistics show only one justifiable homicide between 2000 and 2010. MLive found that there were at least eight – three by civilians and five by police.

“It’s all a data-input problem,” Kalamazoo Public Safety Chief Jeff Hadley said. “What happens is when the initial reports are generated, it’s coded as a homicide. It never gets recoded.”

While more than half of the states report a justifiable homicide number, that figure is compiled from very few jurisdictions within those states.^{[28](#)}

2) Murders will happen with or without guns. If there were a thousand firearm homicides every year, magically making all guns disappear would not save a thousand lives. The fact that murders outnumber justifiable homicides doesn’t mean anything about the consequences of legalizing gun ownership. The fact of the matter is that every time that there has been a ban on all guns or all handguns in a country that releases data on murder rates, the reported rates have increased.^{[29](#)}

3) The claim that guns are rarely used in self-defense comes from only counting defensive actions that result in the death of the attacker. But by any measure, only a fraction of one percent of defensive gun uses result in the criminal attacker being killed or wounded. In 95% of the cases, merely brandishing a firearm is enough to fend off an attacker. These innumerable cases are completely missed by focusing only on justifiable homicides.

4) Research shows that women benefit much more than men from using guns for self-defense. The reason is simple — women tend to be physically weaker than the male criminals who attack them. Having a gun makes a much bigger difference in a woman’s ability to fight a man, than it does for a man fighting a woman. With a gun, a woman can keep her distance from the attacker. If a woman comes into physical contact with a male attacker, she will likely find herself in trouble. My peer-reviewed research finds that a woman getting a concealed carry permit causes a 3 to 4 times larger reduction of the female murder rate, as compared with the effect a man’s concealed carry permit has on the male murder rate.^{[30](#)}

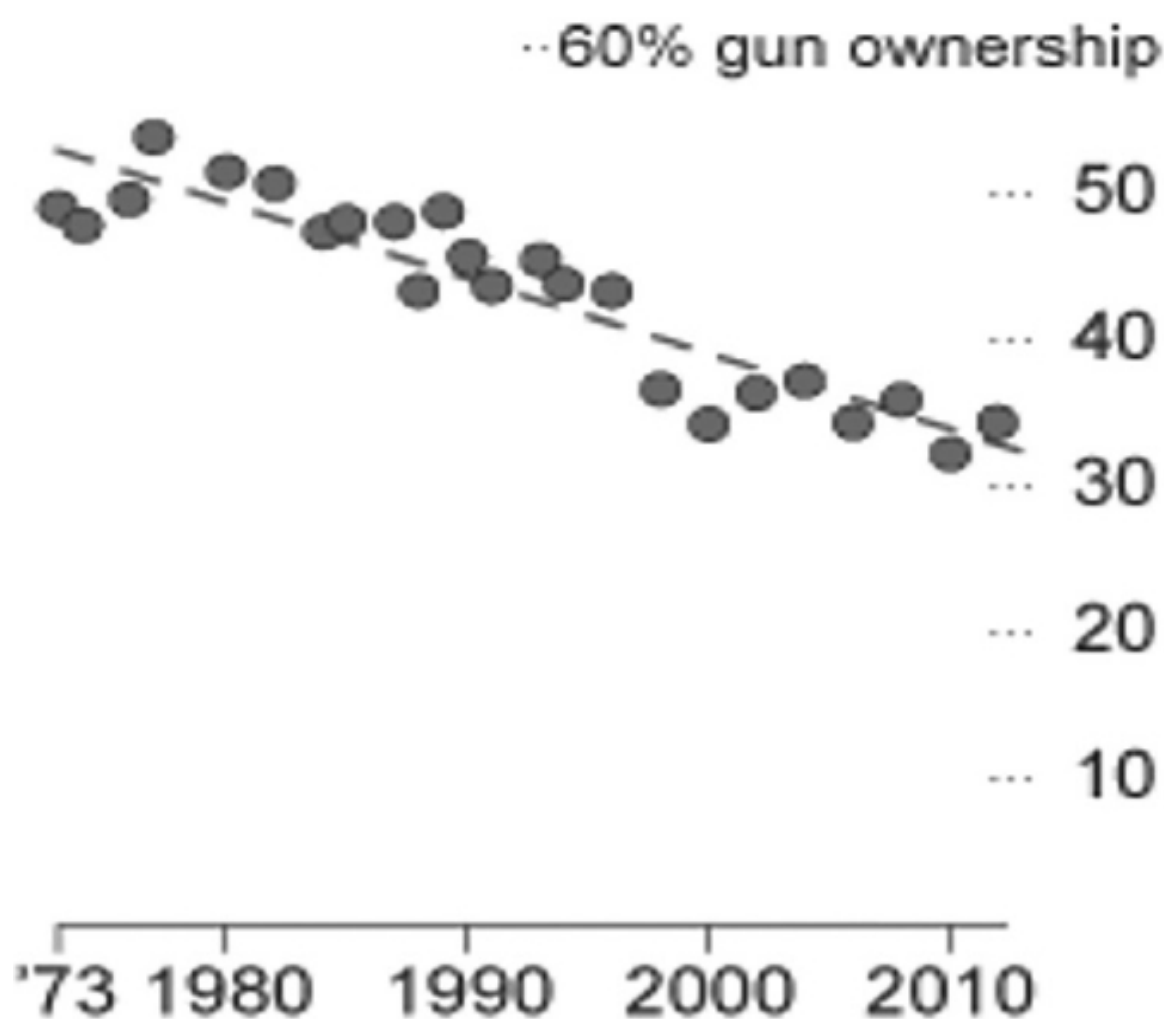
5) New York Times: Gun ownership in the US is declining and only “32% of households have guns” ([Figure 18](#))

In late 2013, ABC News producer Lauren Pearle contacted me about a special that Diane Sawyer was going to do on kids and guns.^{[31](#)} Referring to the General Social Survey (GSS), Pearle pointed to the dramatic fall in gun ownership and wondered whether gun owners would someday be only a “fringe” group. But I pointed out to her how strange it is that ABC News wouldn’t use its own survey, which shows that gun ownership hasn’t been falling. Pearle was skeptical that such a poll existed until I sent her the links to ABC’s polling data ([Figure 19](#)). Needless to say, Diane Sawyer’s report never mentioned the ABC survey and instead focused solely on the General Social Survey.^{[32](#)}

A NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey ([Figure 20](#)), conducted in August 2019, shows that gun ownership increased and then leveled off at 46%.^{[33](#)}

Guns at Home

Rates of gun ownership have declined in American households in the past four decades.



Source:

General Social Survey

THE NEW YORK TIMES

FIGURE 18

Do you or does anyone in your home own a
gun or not?

ABC News/Washington Post Poll

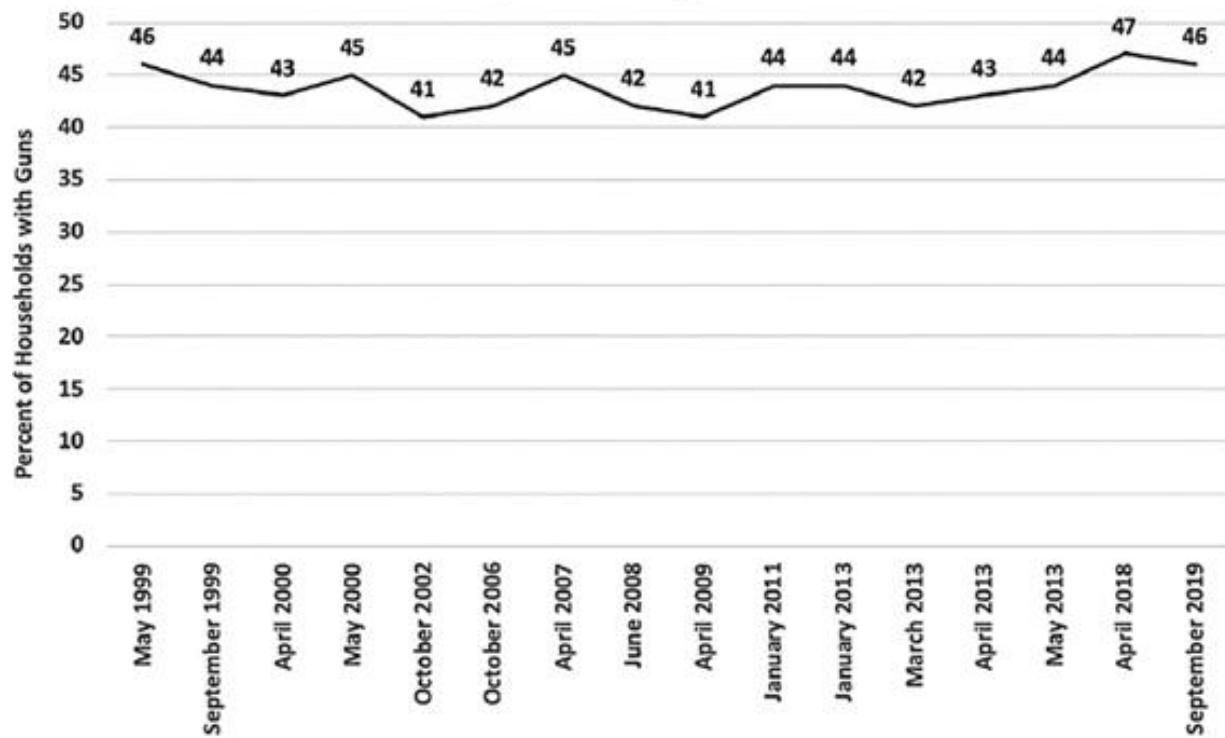


FIGURE 19

Percentage of Adult Americans Owning Guns in their Homes

NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey

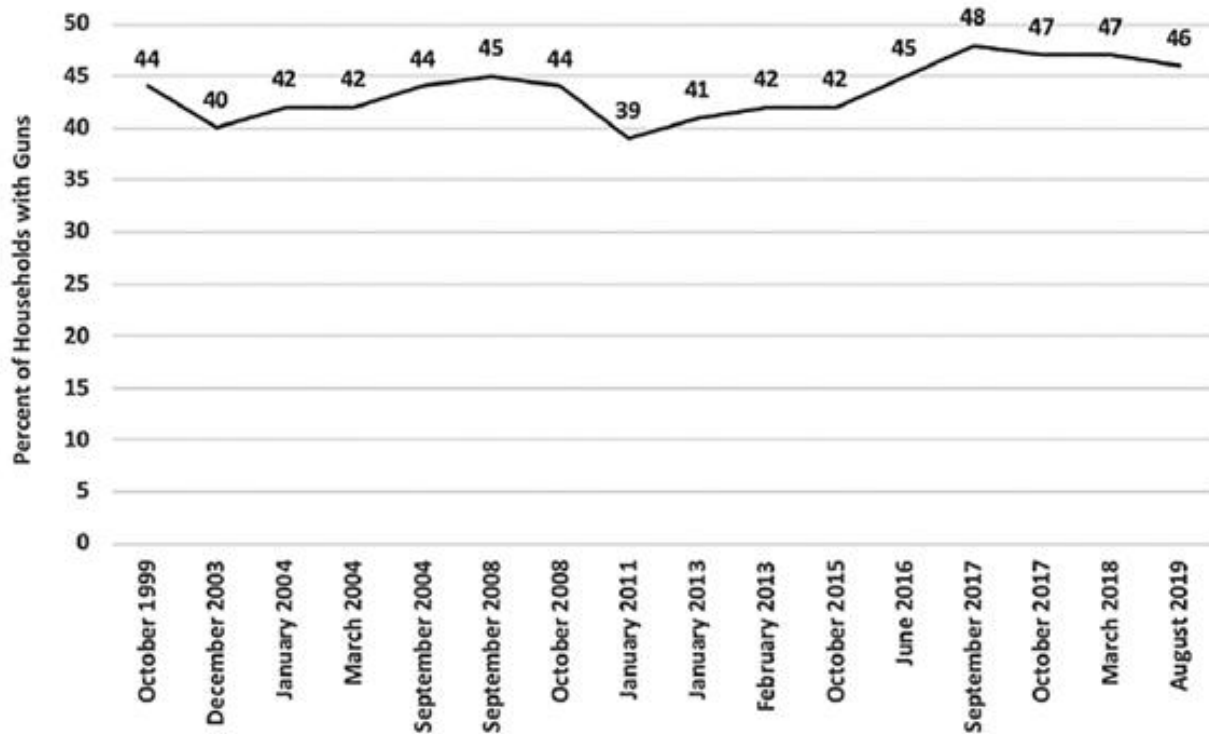


FIGURE 20

A Monmouth University Poll from the next month asked: “Do you or anyone in your household own a gun, rifle, or pistol?” Forty-four percent answered “yes” and another 5% were unsure or refused to answer, so if half of those who refused to answer own a gun, it is quite plausible that almost half of all households own guns.^{[34](#)} Similarly, the PEW Research Center found an ownership rate of 44% in August 2016, and a rate of 42% in March to April 2017.^{[35](#)}

Still, numerous articles in the New York Times claim that gun ownership has been falling and that only 32% of American households now own guns.^{[36](#)}

The NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey results imply that there were about 60 million households with guns in 2019. With an average household size of 2.53, we can infer that approximately 150 million people were living in households with guns.

The following chart shows the most recent polling data on gun ownership rates, up through the end of 2019. One can see what an outlier the General Social Survey (GSS) is. Even the next lowest survey's estimate of 40% represents a 18 percent higher gun ownership rate.

The graph displays three numbers for each survey. The first line shows the percentage of households that say they own a gun, the second line represents those who refuse to answer or are unsure, and the third line shows what the gun ownership rate would be if those who decline to answer can be apportioned according to the share of gun ownership generally. That is, we assume that roughly 50% of people who decline to answer actually own guns.

Surveys on Household Gun Ownership

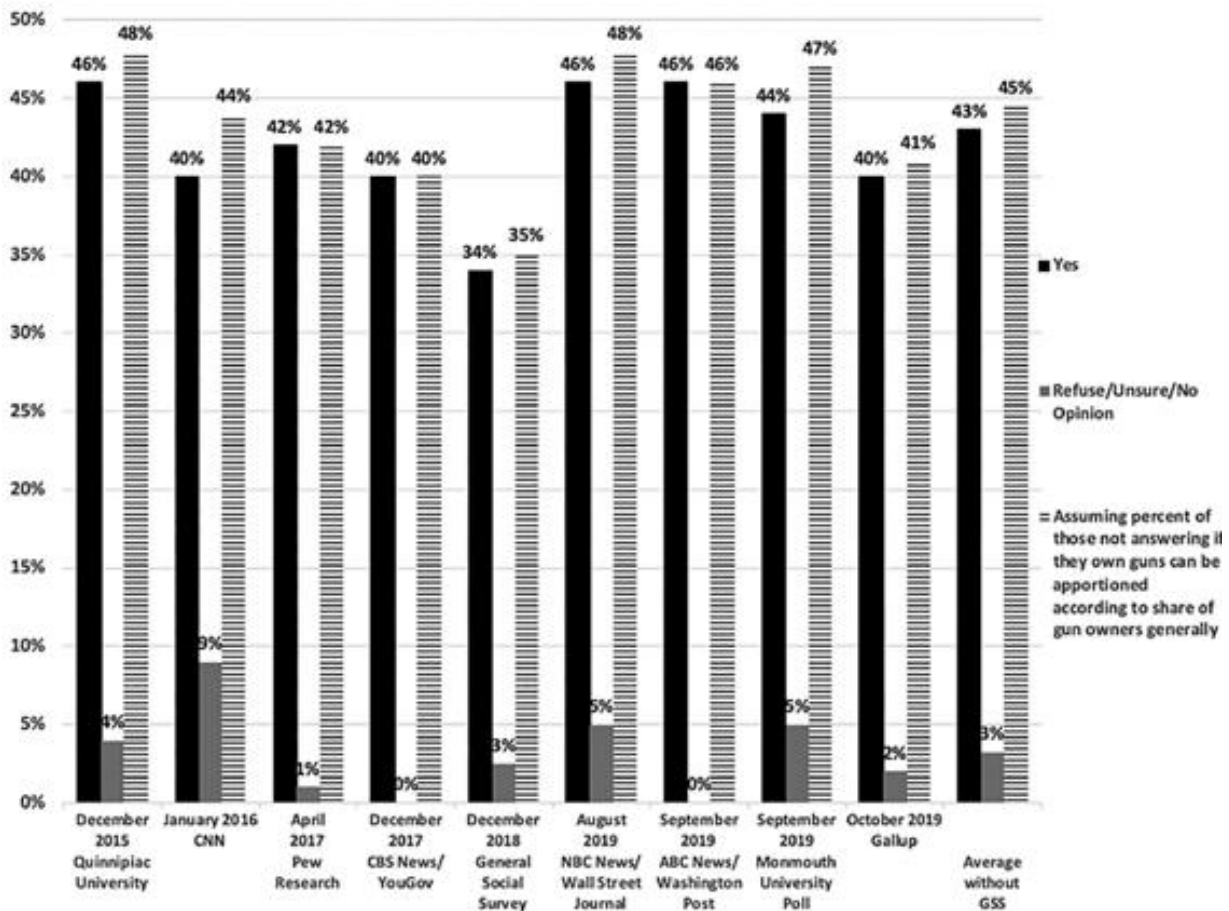


FIGURE 21

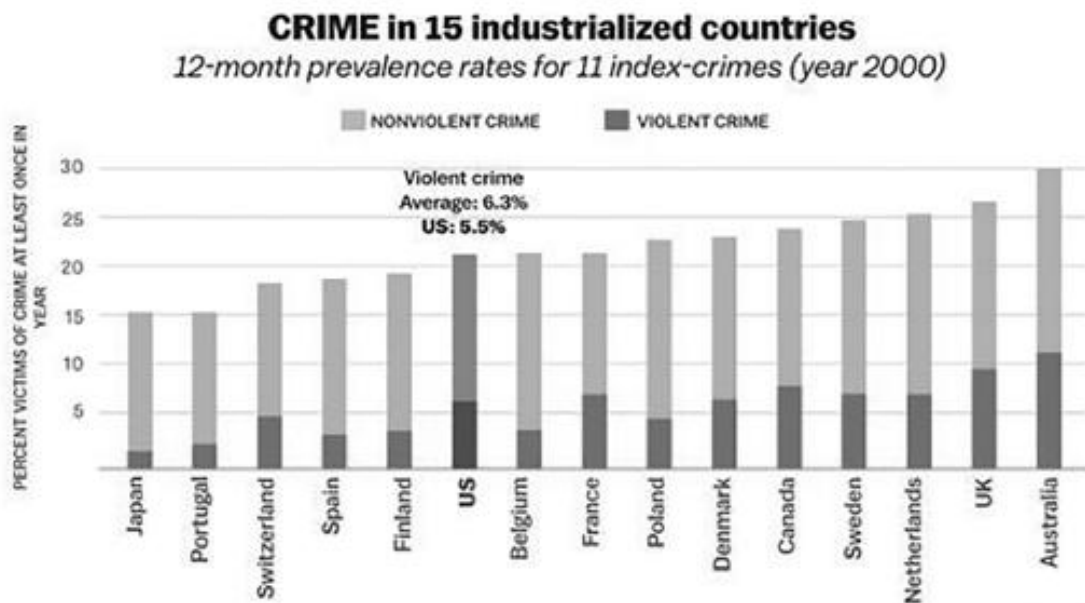
There are lots of reasons to suspect that these surveys underestimate the percent of households that own guns. For example, a Zogby/O’Leary survey ([Figure 21](#)) indicates that gun owners told pollsters that they were less willing to honestly answer questions about gun ownership than non-gun owners.³⁸

6) [Vox.com’s](#) Claim #7: “America is an outlier when it comes to gun deaths, but not overall crime”

Vox uses [Figure 22](#) to support its claim that, “The US appears to have more lethal violence — and that’s driven in large part by the prevalence of guns.” The United States has a relatively low violent crime

rate compared to other developed countries ([Figure 23](#)).³⁹ But compared to these other countries, the United States does have a relatively high homicide rate. Vox doesn't consider the most obvious explanation: that the US has a bad drug gang problem.

7) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #8: "States with tighter gun control laws have fewer gun-related deaths" ([Figure 24](#))



SOURCE: Jeffrey Swanson. International Crime Victims Survey. Gallup Europe.

Vox

FIGURE 22

**International Crime Victimization Survey for Violent Crime
(percentage victimised one or more times in 2000)**

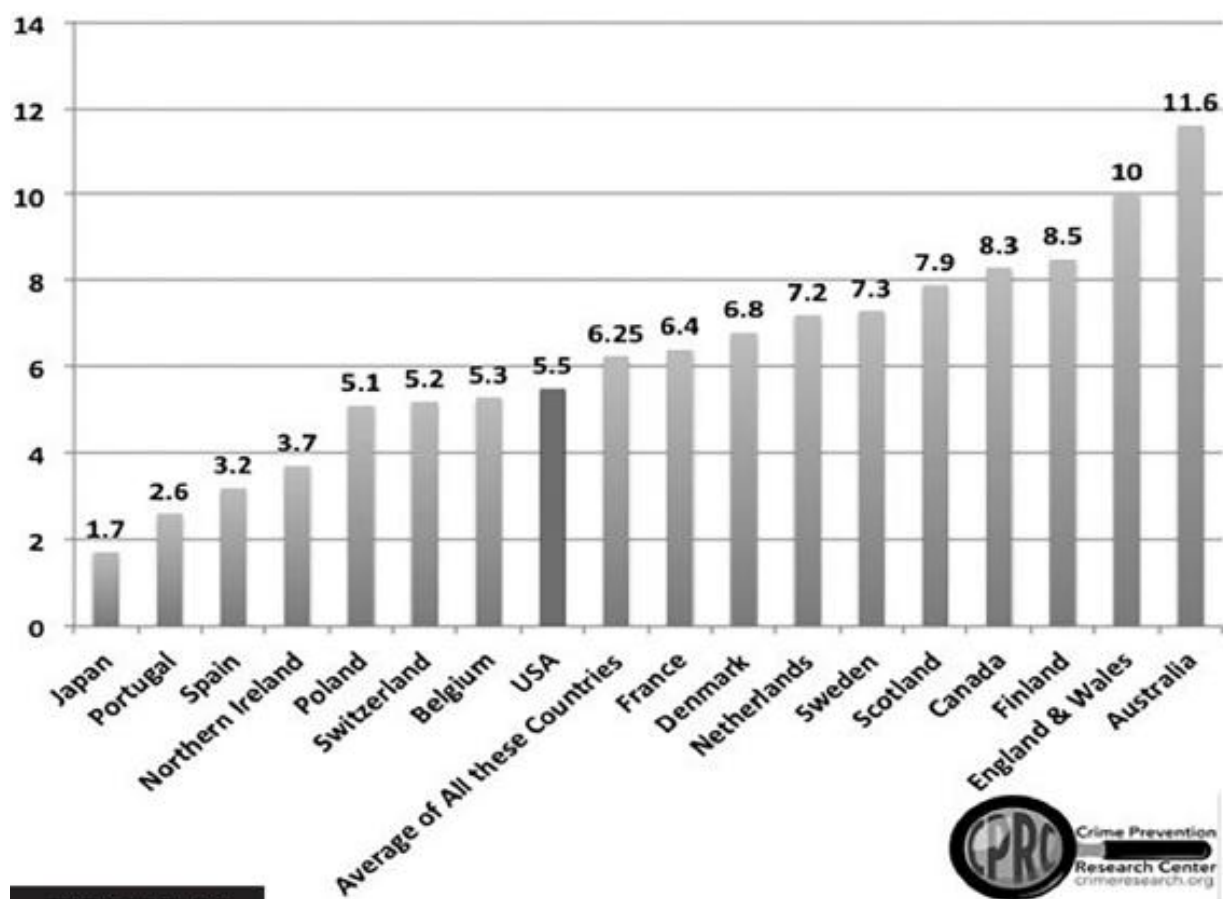


FIGURE 23

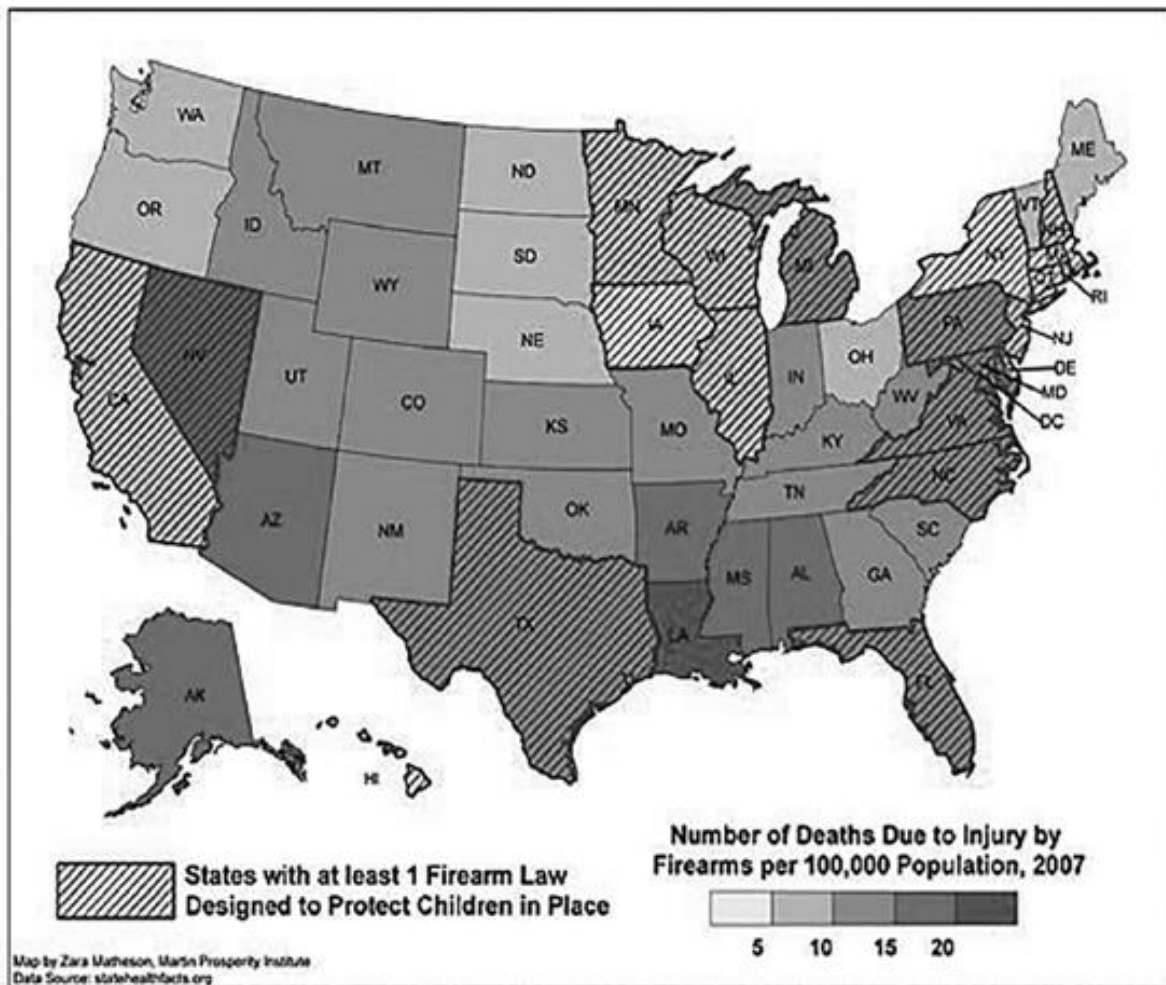


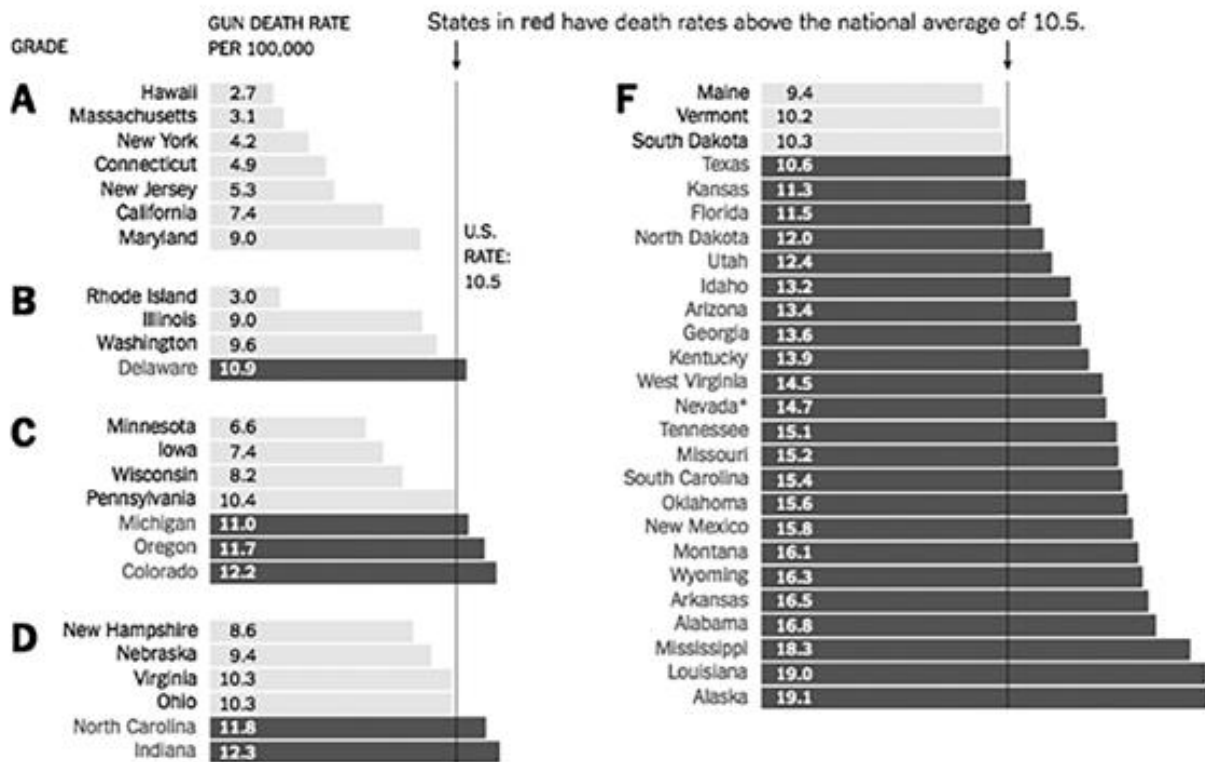
FIGURE 24

[Figure 25](#) is from [Vox.com](#). Kristof illustrates this differently, but they are both trying to make the same point: that states with more gun control laws have lower gun death rates (firearm homicides + firearm suicides). As we've seen earlier, however, comparing states or countries at just one point in time can be very misleading.

The Brady Campaign has been collecting information on the number of gun control laws by state in each year from 2001 to 2013, with the exception of 2005. The organization used a different scale in 2014, so I omit that year for the sake of convenience.

Gun Law 'Grades' and Gun Death Rates

The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence finds that states where guns are more regulated tend to have lower gun death rates. In its grading system, the strongest gun regulations get an "A;" the weakest, an "F."



*Nevada's grade of F would improve to a C-minus if a recently passed ballot initiative mandating universal background checks is implemented. So far, the state has failed to do so. Source: Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

FIGURE 25

Do Stricter Gun Control Laws Lower Firearm Death Rates? Comparing Brady Campaign State Gun Ratings for States from 2001 to 2013

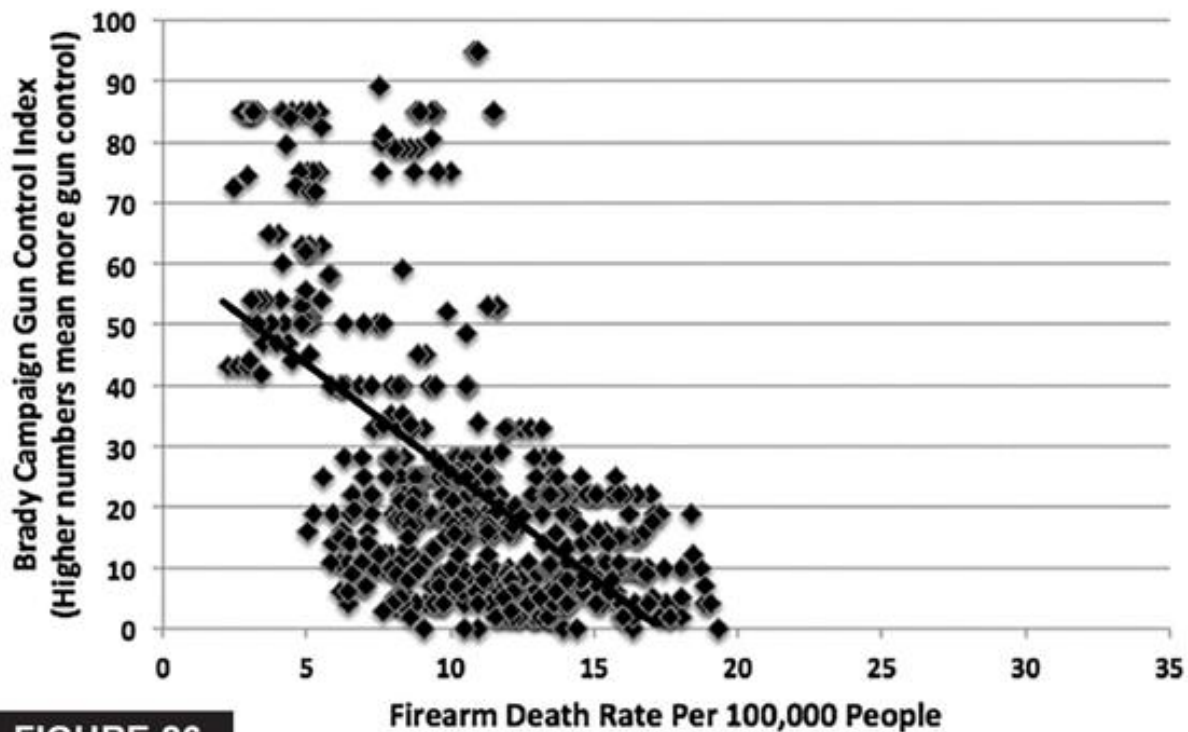


FIGURE 26

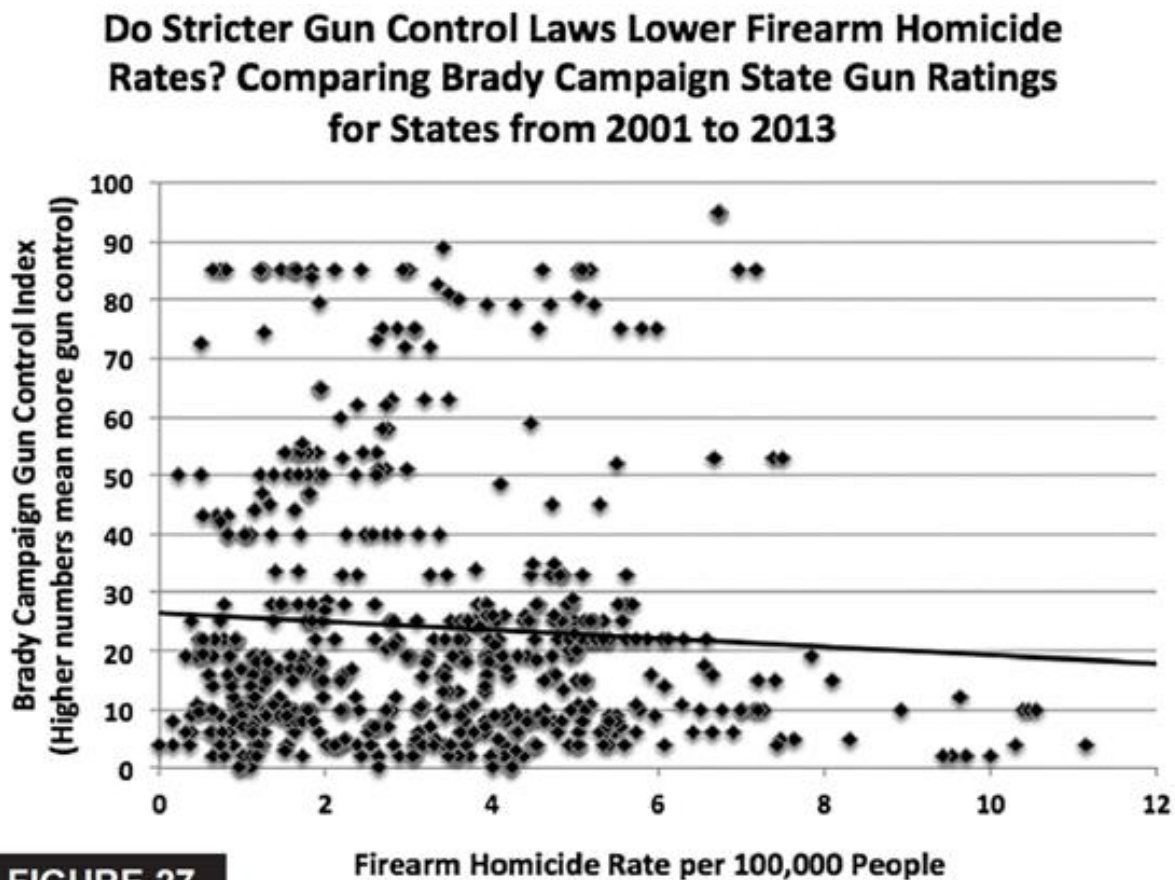
The average state Brady Index score from 2001 to 2013 was 24.1, with ratings ranging from 0 to 95 (standard deviation of 22.5). When we create graphs using the Brady Campaign's data ([Figure 26](#)), the results mirror [fig. 25](#).^{[40](#), [41](#)} States with more gun control laws tend to have lower gun death rates.

But now we break down firearm deaths into two categories: firearm homicides ([Figure 27](#)) and firearm suicides ([Figure 28](#)). While more gun laws mean fewer of both kinds of deaths, only the relationship for firearm suicides is statistically significant.^{[42](#)} The number of gun laws is only very weakly related to the number of firearm homicides, and explains only about 3% of the differences in firearm homicide rates.^{[43](#)}

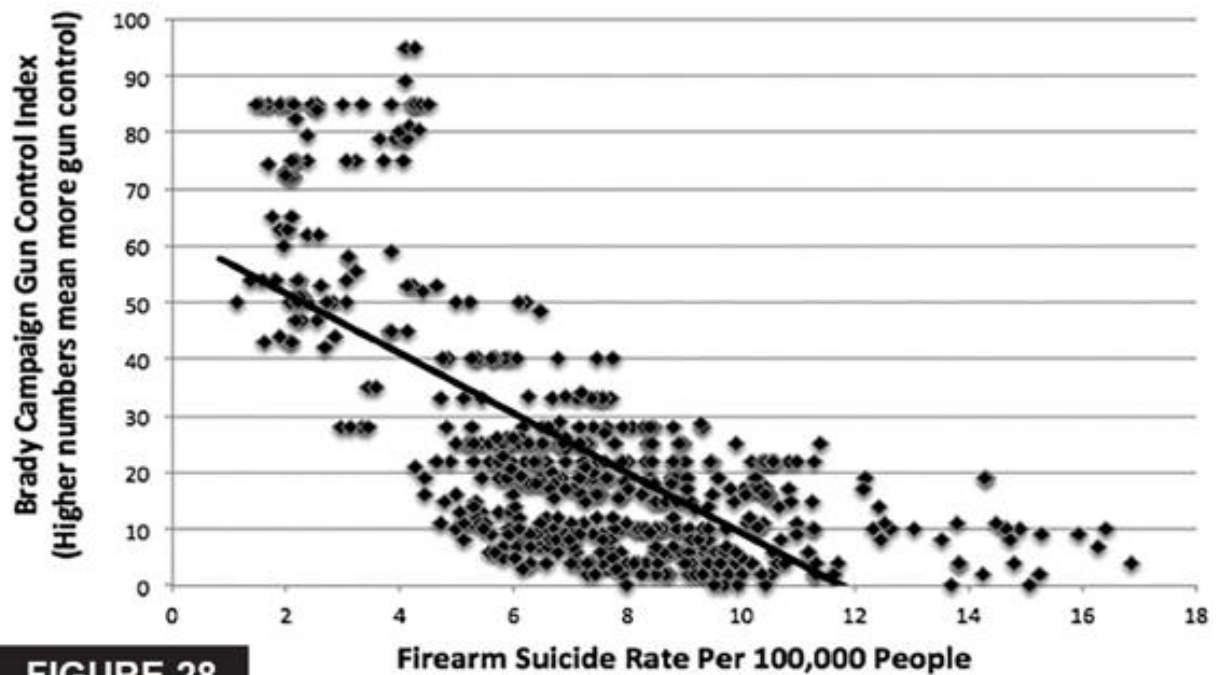
So the result is driven by the apparent relationship between stricter gun laws and fewer firearm suicides. But stricter gun laws are also

correlated with fewer non-firearm suicides ([Figure 29](#)), and this relationship is actually more statistically significant.⁴⁴

It is hard to explain why stricter gun laws would mean fewer non-firearm suicides. If gun control laws were to reduce firearm suicides, then it would follow that non-firearm suicides may increase as a result of people having to switch to other methods of taking their lives. So the results imply that something else is explaining both firearm and non-firearm suicides.



Do Stricter Gun Control Laws Lower Firearm Suicide Rates? Comparing Brady Campaign State Gun Ratings for States from 2001 to 2013



**Do Stricter Gun Control Laws Lower Non-Firearm
Suicide Rates? Comparing Brady Campaign State Gun
Ratings for States from 2001 to 2013**

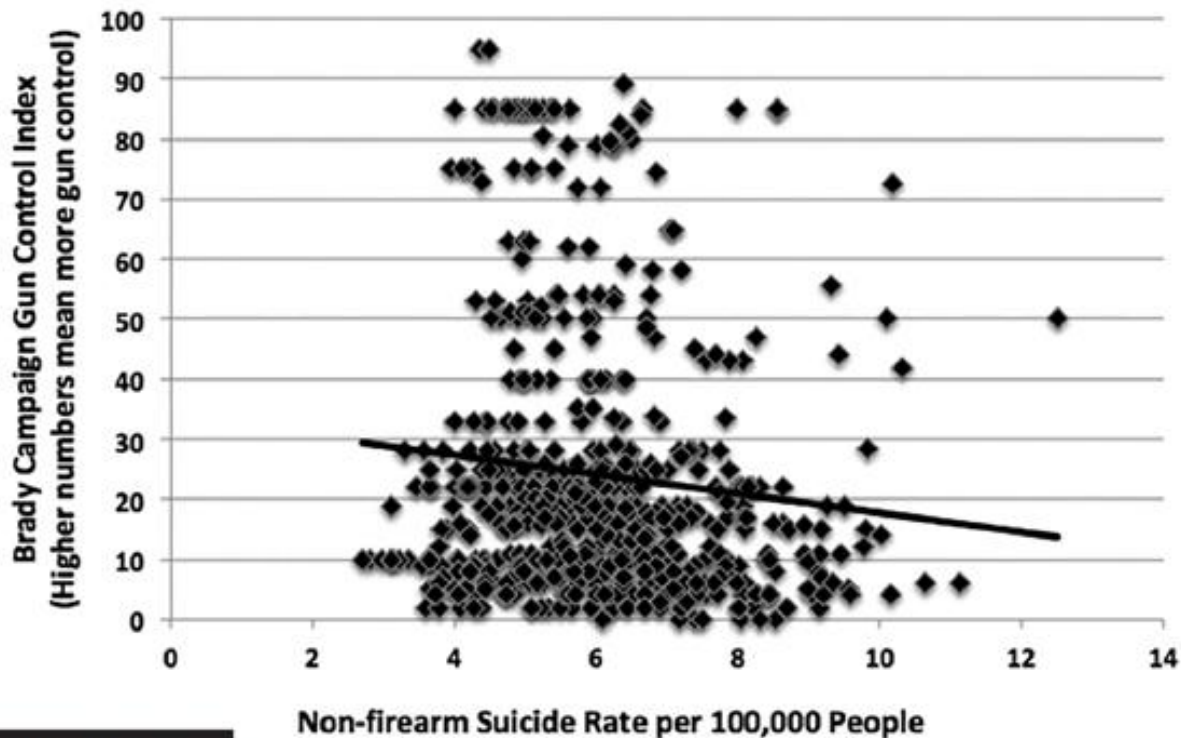


FIGURE 29

Most likely, stricter gun control laws happen to be associated with other factors that in turn lead to a less suicide-prone environment. In a relatively famous economics paper on suicide, Cutler, Glaeser, and Norberg found that rural areas have both more gun ownership and a gender imbalance that leads to high numbers of older, single men.⁴⁵ This, the authors argue, explains the greater frequency of suicide in rural areas, which also have higher gun ownership rates.

It is very important to remember that correlation does not necessarily mean causation. Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that high-crime states are the ones that most frequently adopt the most stringent gun control laws. What if gun control actually lowered crime, but not by enough to reduce rates to the same low levels prevailing in most states that did not adopt the laws? With a simple comparison across states, it would then falsely appear that stricter gun control

resulted in higher crime. But in fact, the adoption of the policy was a reaction to other events — in this case, crime.

To try to determine causation, one must examine how the high-crime areas that chose to adopt the controls changed over time — not only relative to their own past levels, but also relative to areas that did not enact the laws.

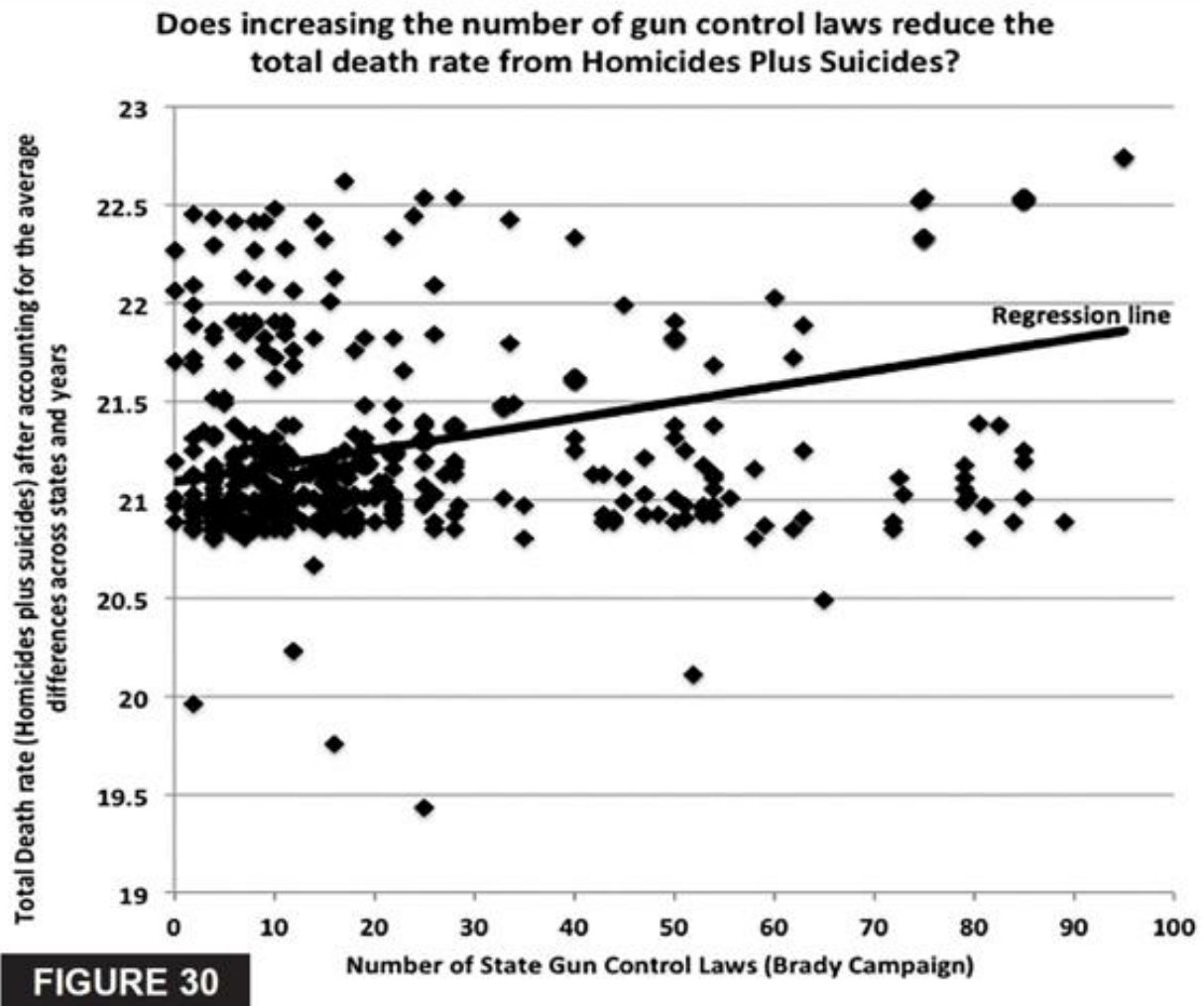
To see the effects of a state's new policies on matters such as the death penalty, academics follow different states over time. They can then make comparisons with states where the policies were not modified.

In this case, rather than examining the death penalty, we are looking at the impact of all of the different gun control laws in the Brady index.

Crime rates in a state may change simply due to nationwide trends, not because of new gun laws. To control for this, we have to observe whether the states that are changing their laws experience a larger or smaller drop in crime relative to the states that aren't changing their laws.

In other words, we are looking not at the differences between states, but at the changes in those differences. When we do this, we find that the correlation between gun control laws and gun deaths goes from being negative (implying that more gun control laws mean fewer deaths) to positive (implying that more gun control laws mean more deaths) for both firearm homicides and firearm suicides, though in neither case is the effect statistically significant.^{[46](#)} How many gun control laws that a state has potentially explains about 3% of the changes in its total number of firearm deaths.^{[47](#)}

The ultimate question is whether total deaths, not just firearm deaths, go up or down as a result of more gun control. As we touched on earlier, people who lack access to firearms may substitute other methods of homicide or suicide.



What is the relationship between the number of gun laws and deaths from all types of homicides and suicides? I found there to be a statistically significant relationship between more gun control laws and more total suicides ([Figure 30](#)). Gun control is also associated with more homicides, although the effect is not statistically significant.^{[48](#)}

A 20 percent increase in the number of gun laws in a state is associated with an increase of 0.4 per 100,000 people in the total rate of death from homicides and suicides. This finding stands in stark contrast to the claims being made by the New York Times and others.

8) BBC claim #5: Attacks in US have become deadlier

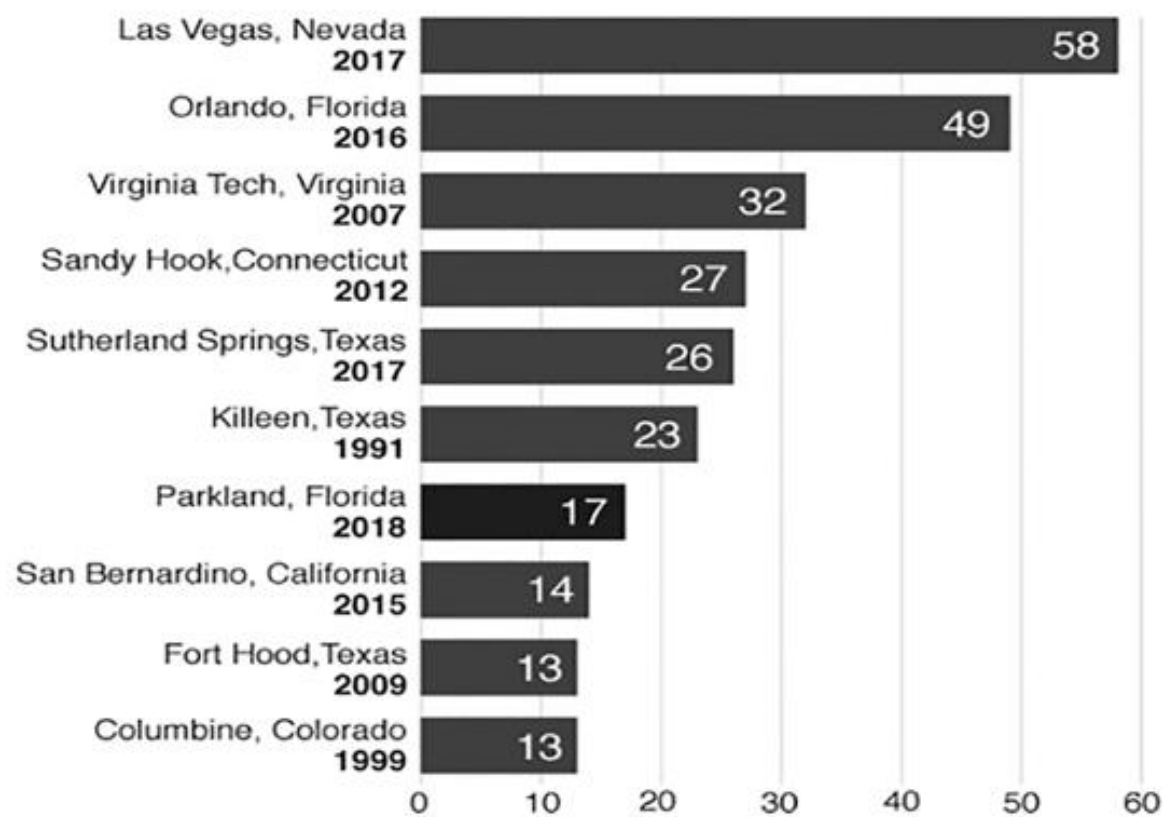
The BBC provides [Figure 31](#) to try to illustrate the increasing severity of mass public shootings in the US.

What if we include Western Europe in the chart? The worst US shootings are suddenly eclipsed.

[Figure 32](#) includes all of the cases where at least 13 people were killed. It appears that the BBC could have ran the caption: “Attacks in Western Europe become deadlier at a faster rate than in the United States.”

Worst mass shootings in the US since 1991

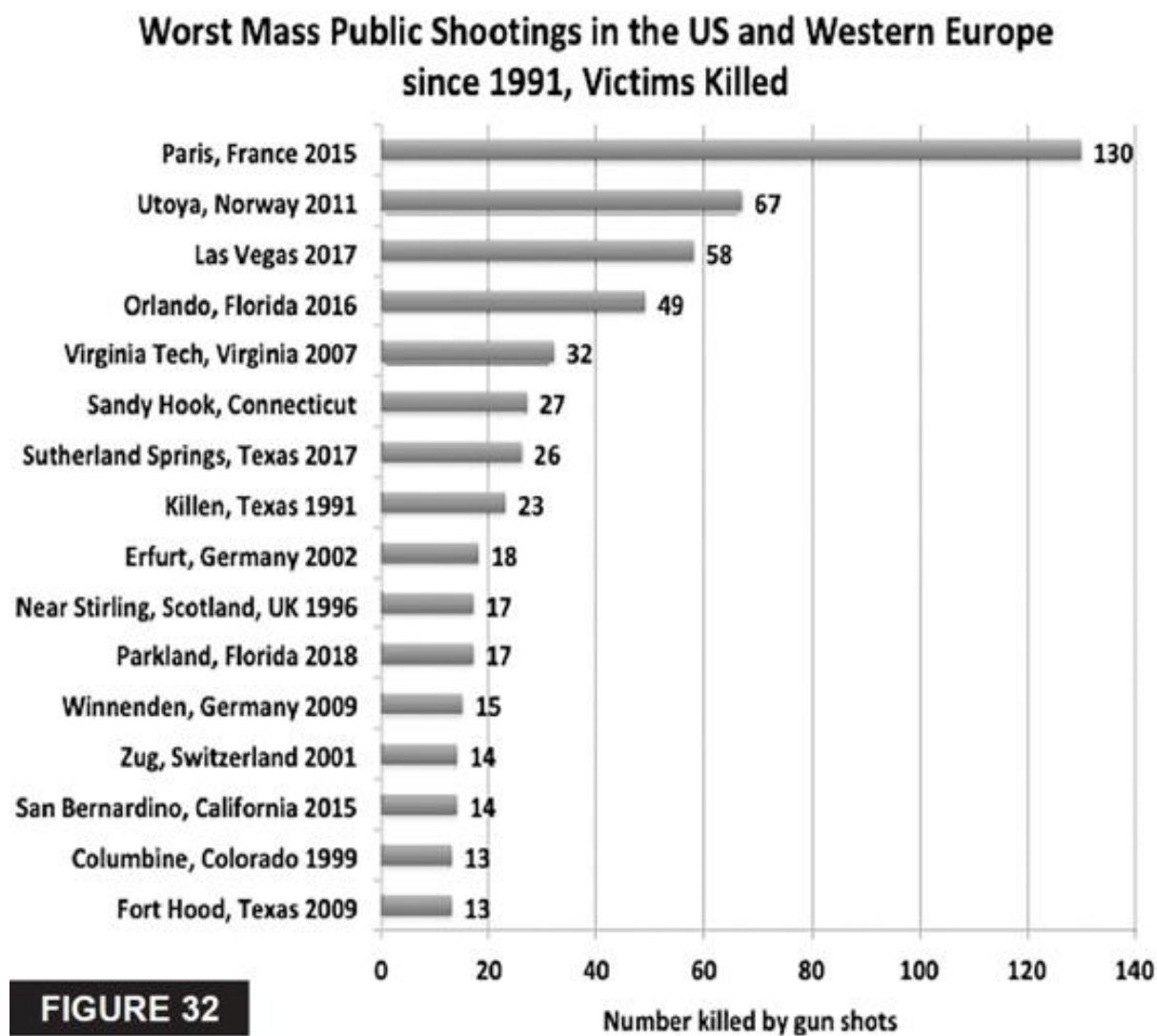
Victims killed



Source: FBI/Las Vegas police

BBC

FIGURE 31

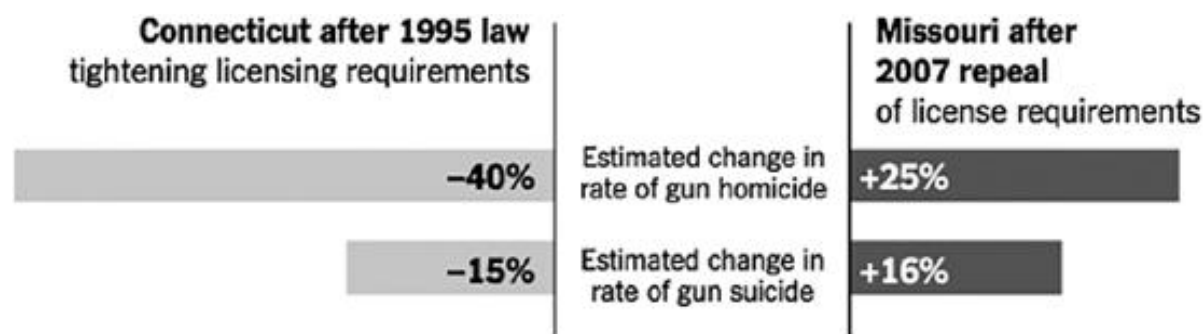


As we will show in the chapter on mass public shootings, the US is far from having the deadliest attacks, and the frequency and deadliness of attacks is increasing much faster in the rest of the world.

9) New York Times' Claim #6: "Tightening Gun Laws Lowered Firearm Homicide Rates" ([Figure 33](#))

Ten states currently require gun ownership licenses, at least under some circumstances: Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia).⁴⁹ Other states have expanded background checks. But the New York Times chooses to study only Connecticut and

Missouri, selectively deciding what years and types of crime rates to study.



The New York Times | Source: Johns Hopkins School of Public Health

FIGURE 33

Connecticut's Firearm Homicide Rate Relative to Rest of US and Northeast

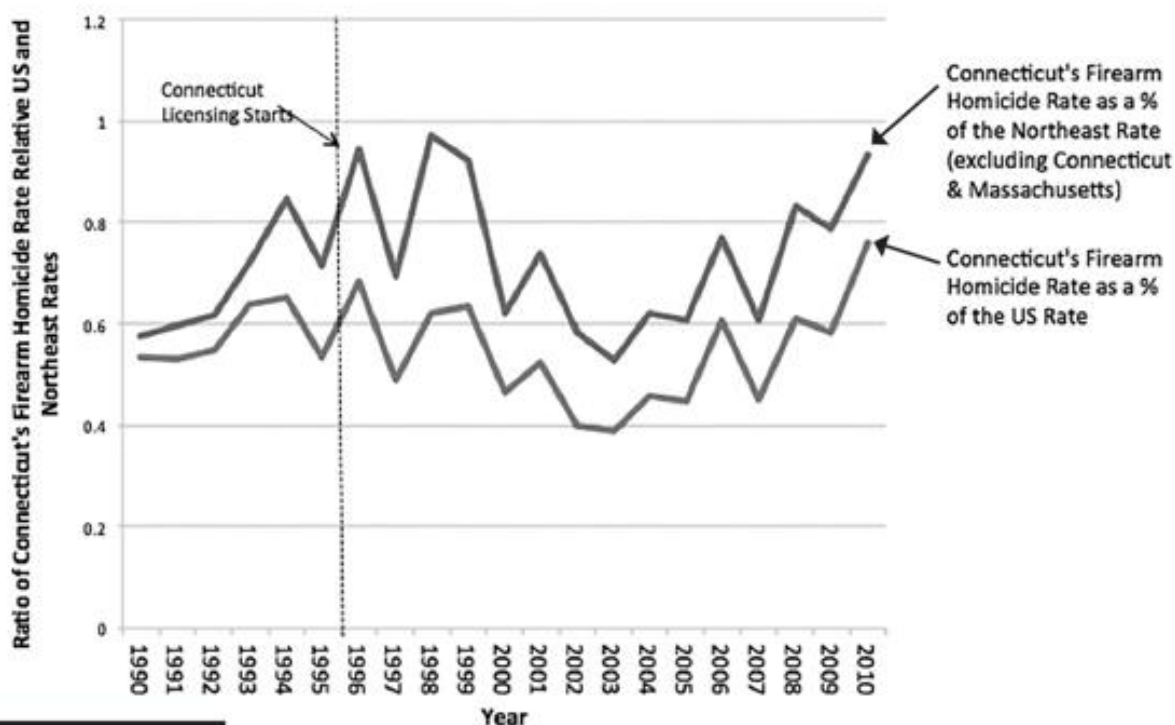


FIGURE 34

The Times discusses a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health. They looked at Connecticut's firearm homicide rate right before the state's gun licensing law went into effect in 1995, and compared this to a later year when the rate was at its lowest subsequent point relative to other states. But in three of the four years following implementation, the state's firearm homicide rate rose relative to the rates of other Northeastern States.

The Times simplistically picks one later year for comparison, instead of trying to explain the fluctuation in Connecticut's firearm homicide rate. It first rose relative to the other Northeastern states, then fell relatively for six years, and finally rose relatively for four of the next five years. Maybe the full truth of the matter is harder to fit into a snappy headline ([Figure 34](#)).

Unlike the study on Connecticut, which compares just two points in time, the study on Missouri looks at average crime rates before and after a change in gun control policy. But this can also be totally misleading. After Missouri eliminated a handgun licensing law in 2007, the next five years saw the state's murder rate rise 17 percent relative to the rest of the US. But the rate had already been increasing before the law was repealed. In the five years prior to the change, the murder rate increased by 32 percent. The more pertinent question here is why the rate of increase slowed down.

Ratio of Murder Rate in Missouri Relative to rate in the rest of the US: Comparing five years before and after the law (2002-2012)

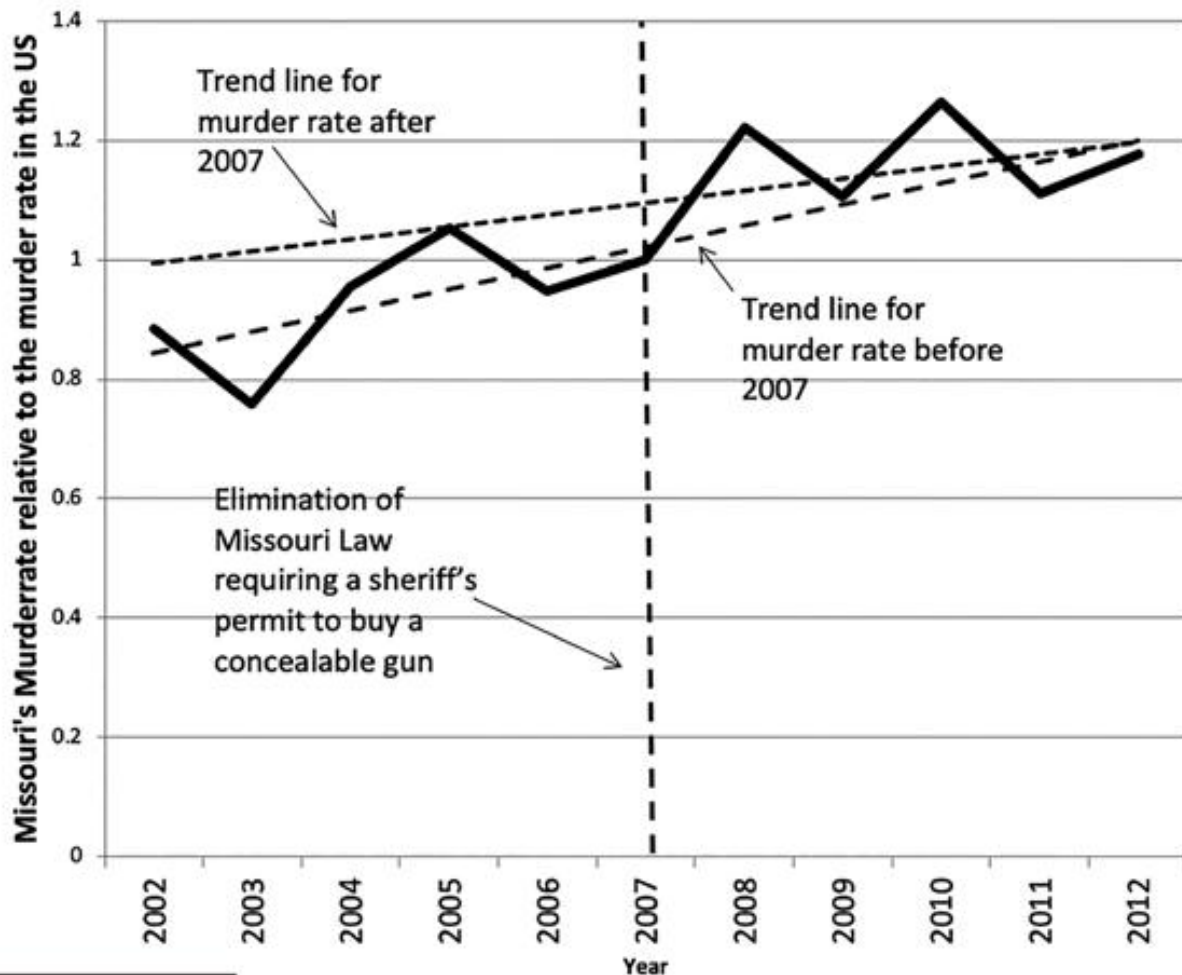


FIGURE 35

[Figure 35](https://tinyurl.com/yc9d2vbz) covers the same period of time that is examined in Webster's study. The data for Missouri are available at <https://tinyurl.com/yc9d2vbz>⁵⁰ and national data (excluding Missouri) can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/qtj24>.⁵¹

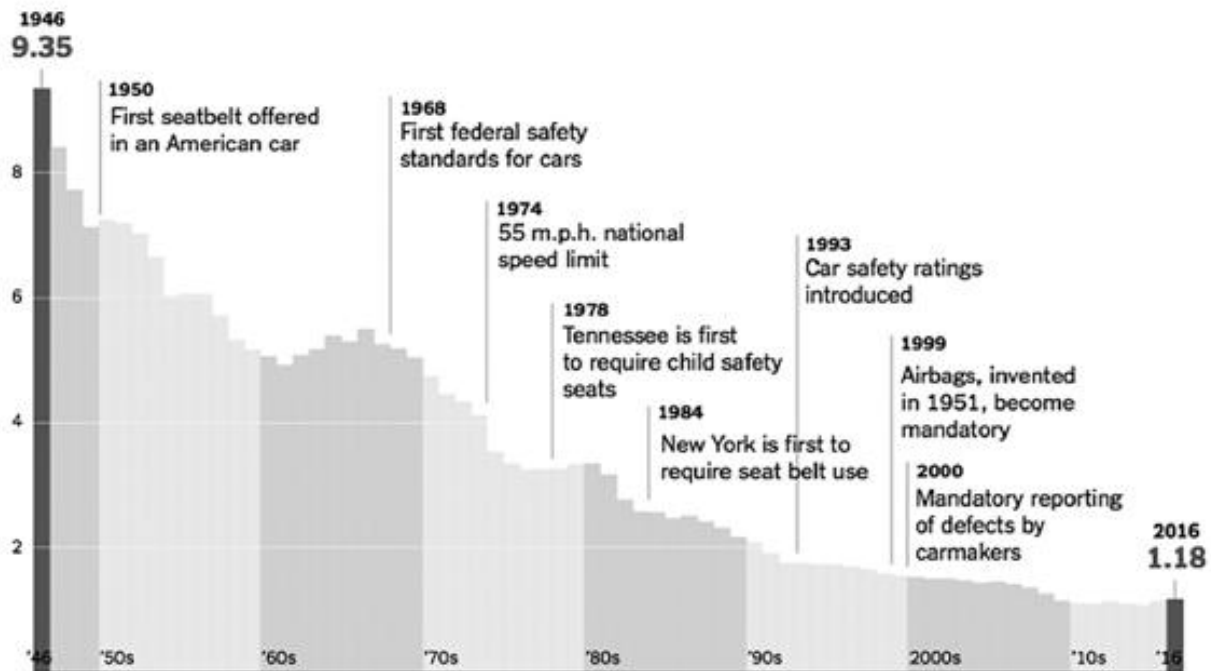
Much more detailed discussions on Connecticut and Missouri are available in my book, *The War on Guns*.

10) New York Times' Claim #2: "We Have a Model for Regulating Guns: Automobiles"

“Over fifty years, we reduced per-mile driving deaths by almost 80% and prevented 3.5 million automobile deaths. And we’re still at it. . . . My goal as President, and our goal as a society, will be to reduce that number by 80%^{53, 54} (Senator Elizabeth Warren, August 10, 2019).”

Kristof believes that automobile regulation serves as a model for gun regulations. He argues that automobile safety regulations saved lives and that gun control can do the same ([Figure 36](#)).

Deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled



The New York Times | Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

FIGURE 36

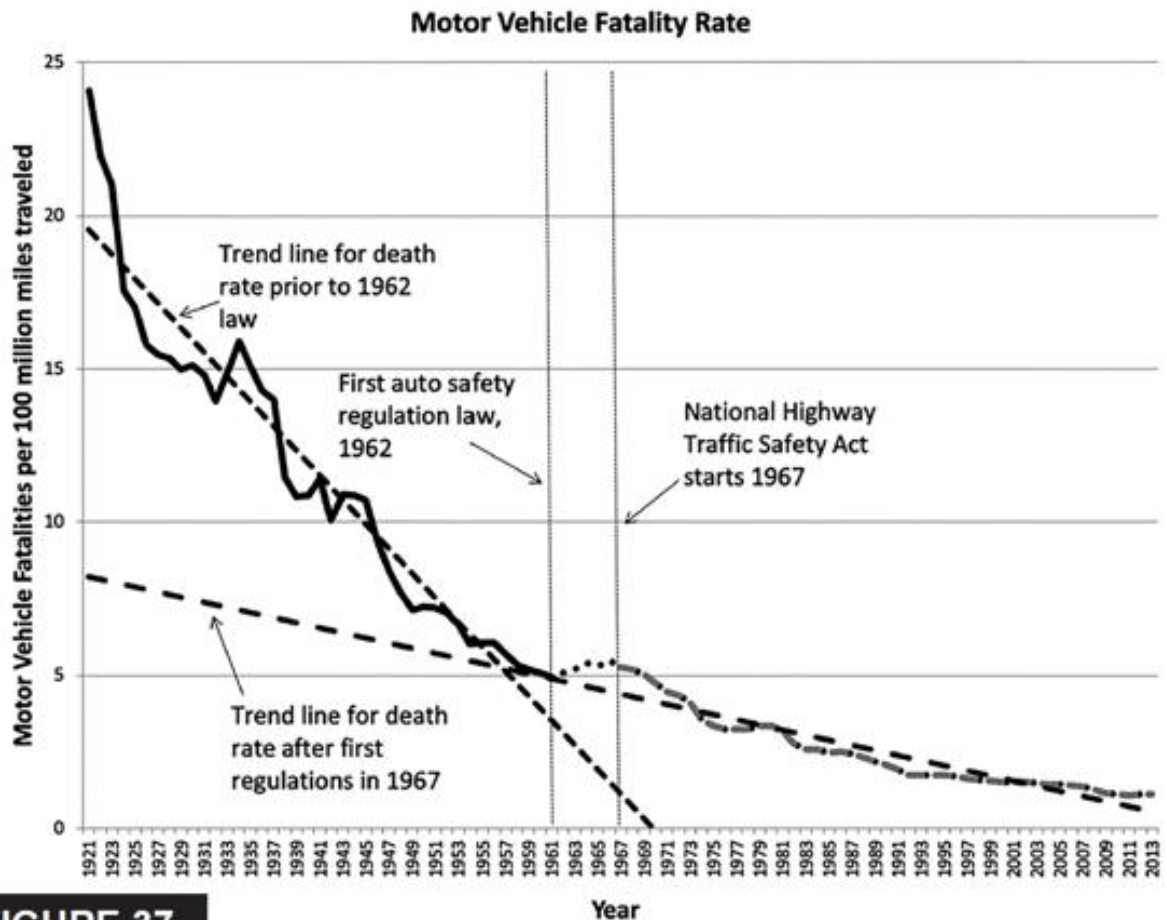


FIGURE 37

Kristof's graph makes it appear as if the drop in motor vehicle deaths only started to occur around the time when seatbelts were first introduced in cars. As indicated by the figures from my previous book, *The War on Guns*:⁵⁵ 1) using the same data source as Kristof, it is easy to see ([Figure 37](#)) that cars were getting safer from the time the very first data was released in 1921 and 2) when you look over the entire period, the rate at which car safety improved actually slowed down after the federal government started regulating car safety. The first seatbelts were introduced in 1950 by car companies that were figuring out on their own how to make cars safer. But the New York Times' graph doesn't show the even faster drop in vehicle deaths per-mile-traveled that occurred before 1946.

Accidental deaths of all types have fallen over time. Companies competed with each other to come up with innovations such as seat belts, shatter proof glass, padded dashboards, and safety cages. They

started doing so long before the federal government got involved in regulating auto safety.

Regulations slowed down safety innovations for a simple reason: government micromanaged how companies would meet those safety improvements. It isn't just that the government mandated the use of airbags in cars; it is that the government would tell the companies exactly how to make those bags and how to install them. So, to ensure compliance, car companies waited to install these safety features until the federal government told them how to do it. If the companies didn't wait, they may have to devote massive resources to redesigning everything and starting all over.

Government delays in approving safety products haven't just affected automobile safety. They have probably also increased deaths and injuries from skin cancer.

"Americans have access only to older generations of sunscreen that prevent sunburn – not the deeper damage that can cause skin cancer. That's because the FDA stubbornly refuses to approve the sale of superior new sunscreens that can safeguard our health."⁵⁶

11) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #9: "Still, gun homicides (like all homicides) have declined over the past couple decades"

This is correct.

12) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #10: "Most gun deaths are suicides" ([Figure 38](#))

Most firearm deaths are indeed suicides, and it's important to distinguish these from murders. Vox and other gun control advocates ought to also distinguish between justifiable homicides and murders, instead of lumping them together into the category of "firearm homicides." A victim killing a criminal is obviously very different from a criminal killing a victim, but gun control advocates are happy to pad their numbers with justifiable homicides. Excluding justifiable homicides, firearm suicides make up about 70% of firearm deaths (Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y8srcpv4> for murder data,⁵⁷ and <https://tinyurl.com/zc4qmgf> for suicides and accidental deaths⁵⁸).

Firearm suicides versus homicides

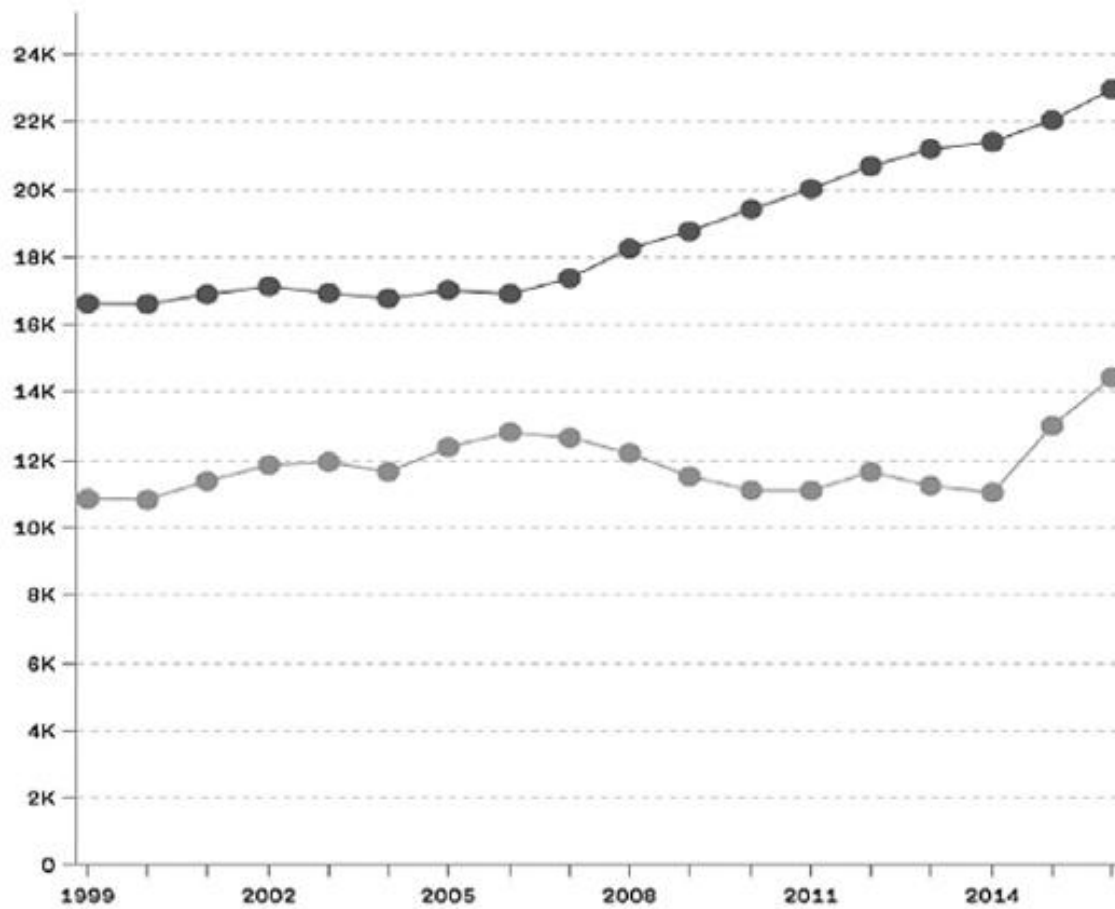


FIGURE 38

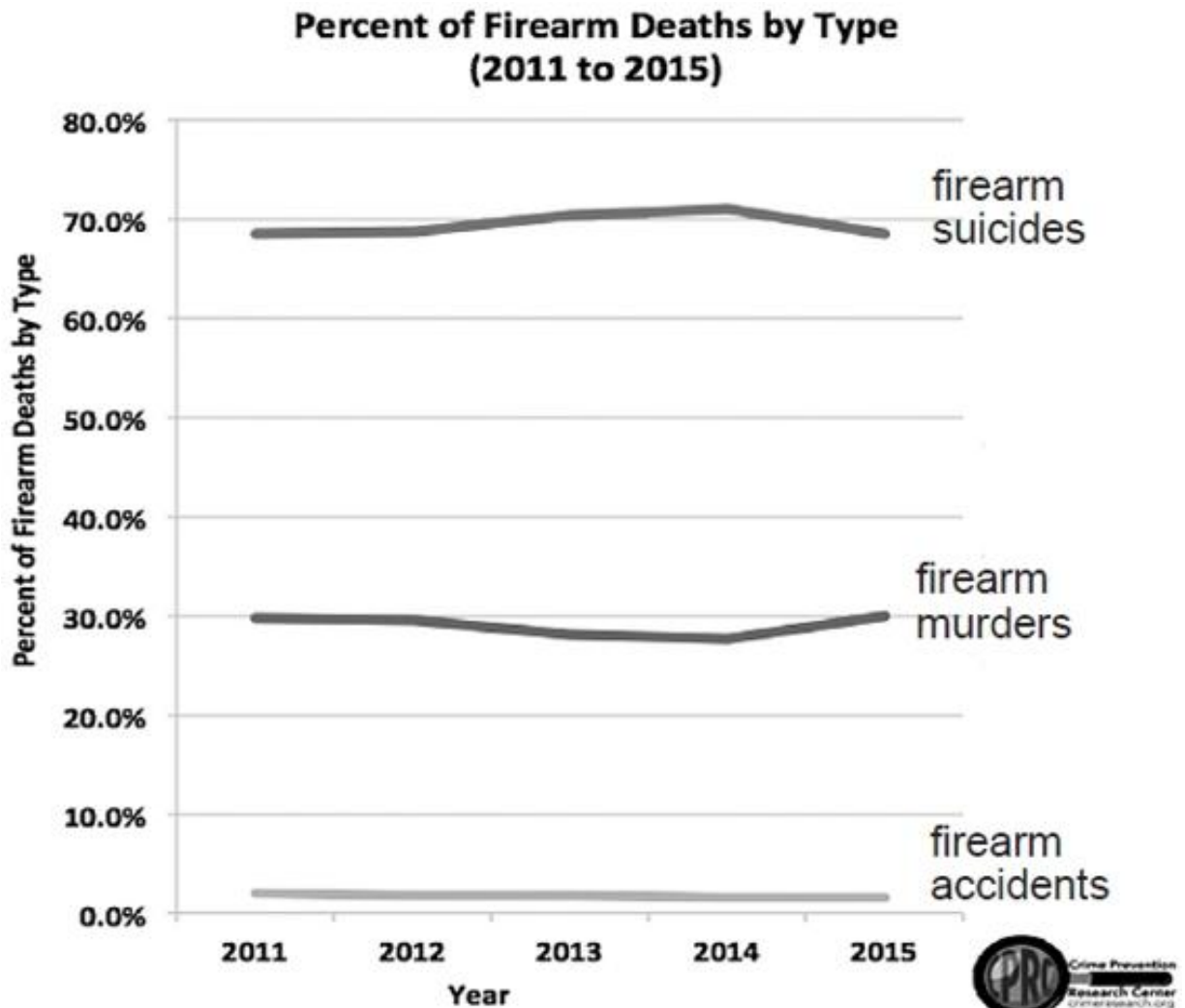


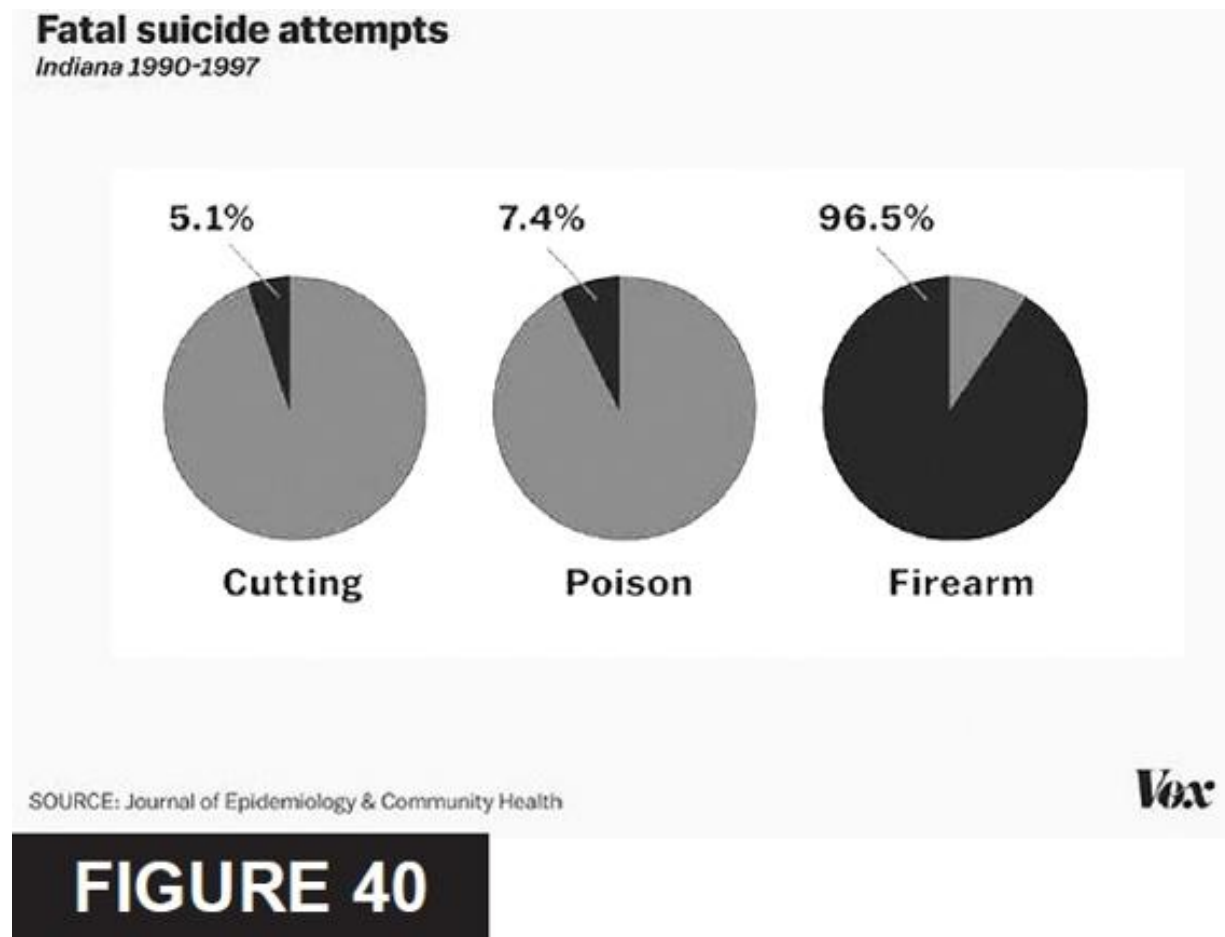
FIGURE 39

13) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #11: "The states with the most guns report the most suicides" ([Figure 39](#))

Vox tries to show that states with high gun ownership have high suicide rates, but they ought to consider that other factors may be at work. As mentioned earlier, a notable economics paper on suicide found that rural areas (where gun ownership tends to be more common) suffer from a gender imbalance that leads to a high prevalence of partnerless, older men.

Instead of relying on surveys of gun ownership, we can use the number of concealed handgun permits as a proxy for ownership. And when we follow states over time⁵⁹, we see no association between suicides and the number of concealed handgun permits.

There is a strong tendency for states with more gun control laws to have lower gun ownership rates. But doing the research properly, we find that having more gun laws is associated with more total suicides and is unrelated to firearm suicides.⁶⁰



14) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #12: "Guns allow people to kill themselves much more easily" ([Figure 40](#))

Vox argues: "Perhaps the reason access to guns so strongly contributes to suicides is that guns are much deadlier than alternatives like cutting and poison."

But Vox gives a very misleading impression of the effectiveness of different suicide methods. A 1995 study ([Figure 41](#)) looked at 4,117 cases of completed “successful” suicide in Los Angeles County during the period 1988-1991, and found that the success rate for being hit by a train is virtually the same as for a gunshot to the head or a shotgun to the chest. The study also estimated that the amount of pain and discomfort from being hit by a train was about half that of the other two methods.⁶¹

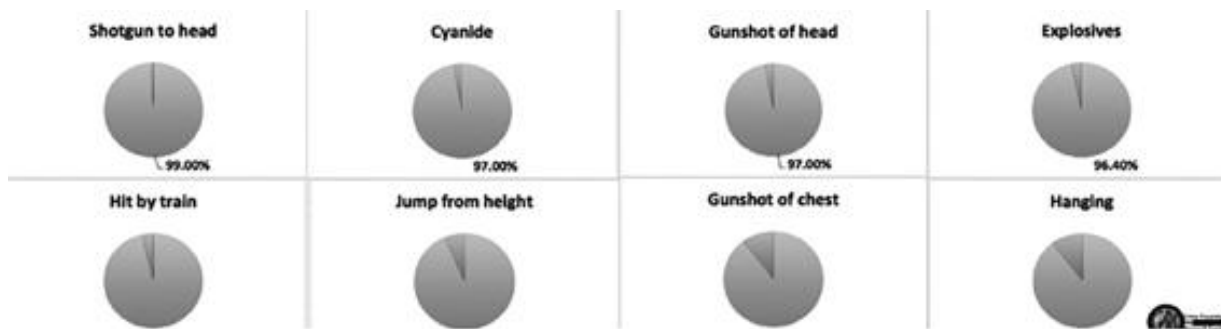


FIGURE 41

The second problem with these numbers is that not everyone who attempts suicide wants to do so successfully. So people’s reticence can affect the success rate of the method. They may take a few extra pills, but not enough to actually kill themselves.

15) [Vox.com’s](#) Claim #13: “Policies that limit access to guns have decreased suicides”

Vox cites two studies which claim that gun control laws can reduce suicides. One study concerns Australia’s 1996/97 gun buyback and another is about Israel. But cherry-picking two studies isn’t very useful. Vox just ignores research that doesn’t support its conclusions ([Figure 42](#)).

Looking at simple before-and-after averages of gun deaths in Australia is misleading.⁶² Firearm homicides and suicides were falling from the mid-1980s onwards, so you could pick out any subsequent year and firearm homicide and suicide rates would have fallen.

The pertinent question is whether the rate of decline changed after the gun buyback law went into effect. But the decline in firearm homicides and suicides actually became less steep after the buyback.⁶³

Australia's buyback resulted in almost 1 million guns being handed in and destroyed. But afterwards, private gun ownership once again steadily increased. Now, ownership exceeds pre-buyback levels.

Since 1997, gun ownership in Australia has grown from 2.5 million to 5.8 million guns — outpacing population growth by a factor of three.^{64, 65}

Gun control advocates, by their logic, should have predicted a sudden drop in firearm homicides and suicides after the buyback, and then an increase as the gun ownership rate increased again. But that clearly didn't happen.

The study on Israel is poorly done.⁶⁶ Starting in 2006, Israeli soldiers were no longer allowed to take their guns home with them on weekends. There was a sharper drop in suicides from 2007-2008 compared to 2003-2005, but a better study would have compared soldiers who were able to take their guns home with those who couldn't. Like the aforementioned study on Australia, this one also uses only simple before-and-after averages. No month-to-month data are provided, so it isn't clear exactly when the drop in suicides started and if it coincided with the new policy.

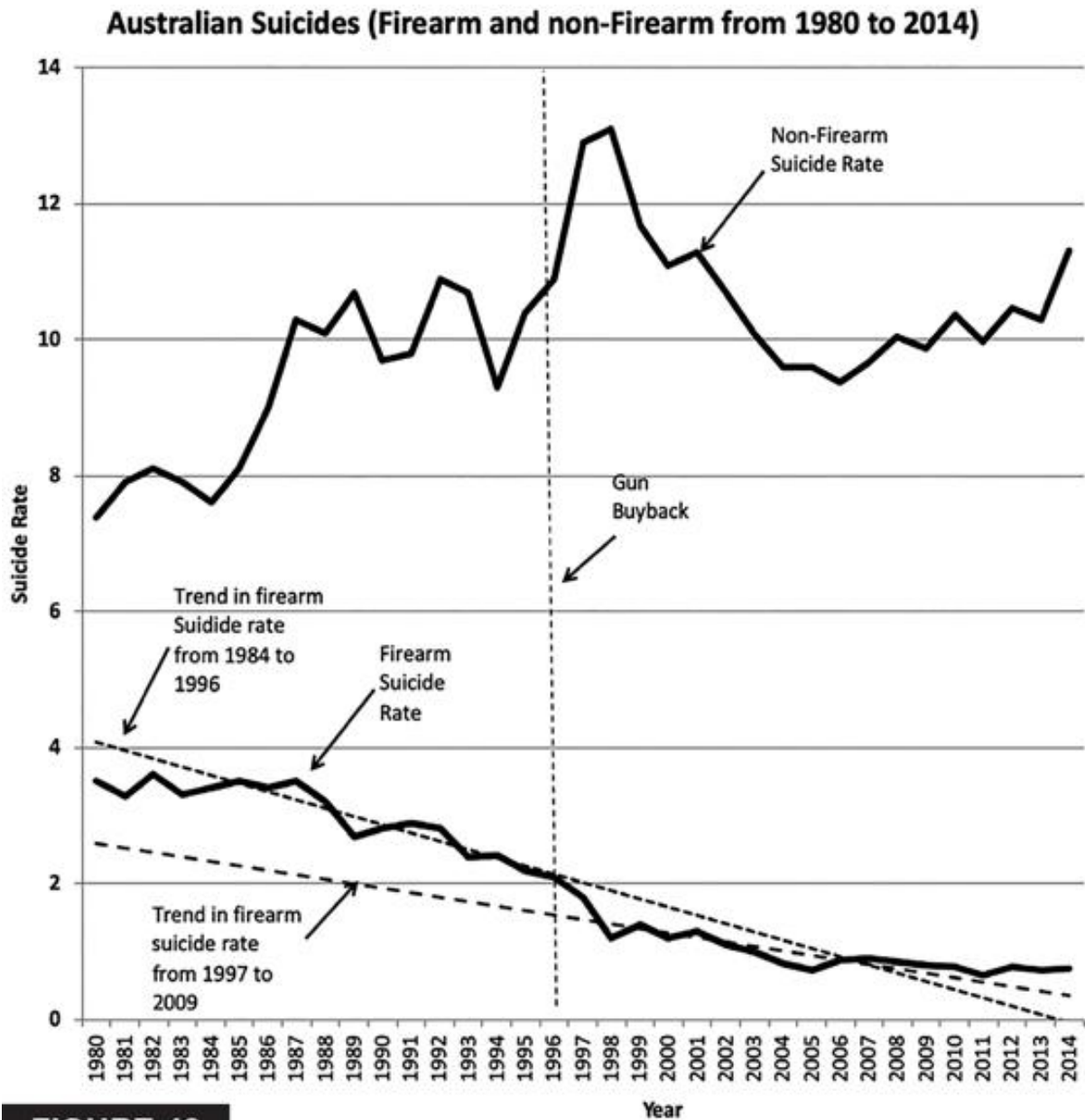


FIGURE 42

The issue has already been tested in another way. Permitted concealed carry is analogous to soldiers being able to take their guns home with them. And the research finds no increase in suicides when people are allowed to carry their handguns with them.⁶⁷

Vox selectively picks research and ignores the reality that some gun control regulations, such as gunlock laws, actually cause an increase in

total deaths.⁶⁸ In the case of locks, guns are made less accessible for self-defense.

16) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #14: "In states with more guns, more police officers are also killed on duty"

Vox cites a study in the American Journal of Public Health which claims that states with higher gun ownership rates also have a higher percentage of cops that die in the line of duty. But this study is particularly flawed.⁶⁹ This study only accounts for the average differences across places, not across years. If both factors were accounted for, as should always be done in this kind of research, the authors would have obtained the **opposite** results.

17) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #15: "Support for gun ownership has sharply increased since the early 2000s"

This is correct. There are a number of surveys that show support for gun ownership was at a record low around 1998 and 1999. The Pew survey that Vox cites is just one such survey – The Gallup and CNN surveys are available at <https://tinyurl.com/yd4yvjpX>.⁷⁰ Why Vox cut off the survey data in 2000 and didn't go back further is a puzzle that only Vox can answer.⁷¹

18) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #16: "High-profile shootings don't appear to lead to more support for gun control in the long term"

The key phrase here is "long term." Support for gun control definitely appears to increase in the immediate aftermath of these attacks, which is why proponents consistently try to seize on the political opportunity.

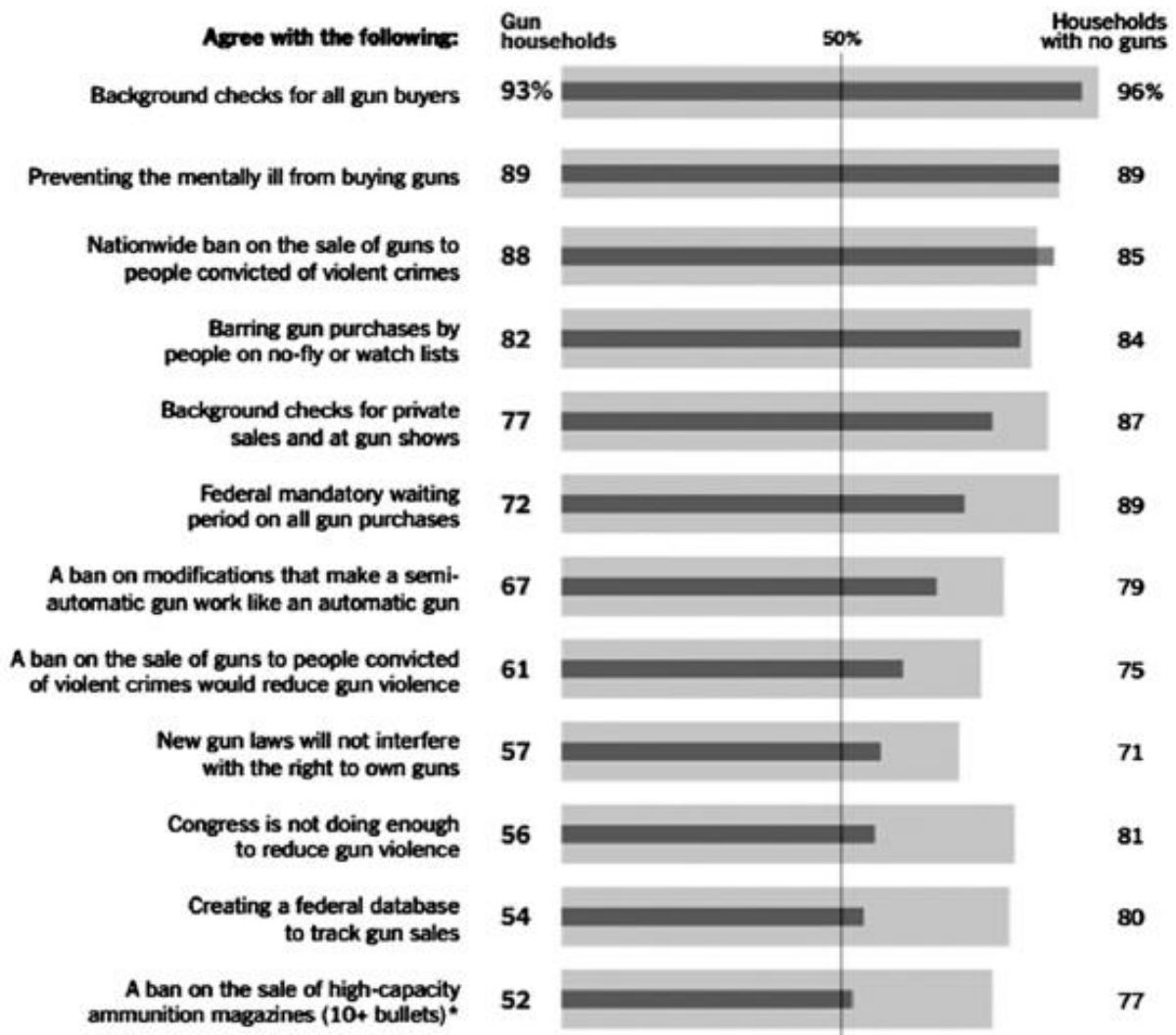
19) [Vox.com's](#) Claim #17: "Specific gun control policies are fairly popular" and New York Times' Claim #9: "A Way Forward: On Some Issues, Majorities Agree" ([Figure 43](#))

Given the supposed 90% support that the media tells us exists for expanded background checks,⁷¹ one would think that Michael Bloomberg's well-funded ballot initiatives in 2016 in Nevada and Maine

would have been slam dunks. Yet, Bloomberg lost in Maine by 4 percent and won in Nevada by just 0.8 percent. The Nevada initiative only eked out a win because of the false promise that it wouldn't cost the state anything.⁷³ \$20 million was spent in support of it, amounting to an incredible \$35.30 per vote. Bloomberg outspent his opponents by a factor of three. In Maine, the \$8 million he spent outdid the other side by a factor of six.

20) New York Times' Claim #7: "There Is a Shocking Lack of Research on Guns"

The problem is quality, not quantity. There is an abundance of very low quality public health research. Indeed, most of the research seems to be driven by political goals. For the government to fund this research is no better than giving money directly to Bloomberg's gun control organizations.



The New York Times | Sources: Pew Research Center survey conducted in March and April (questions on mental illness, no-fly lists, background checks for private sales and federal database); Quinnipiac University National Poll conducted Oct. 5-10 (all other questions) | *A Pew Research Center survey found only 44 percent of gun owners favored such a ban.

FIGURE 43

21) New York Times' Claim #8: "The Right Type of Training Could Go a Long Way"

Training is valuable, but there is no evidence that permit holders are in remedial need of it. Concealed handgun permit holders rarely get into any type of trouble with their concealed handguns. Their permits are revoked for any reason at rates of thousandths or tens of thousandths of one percent. Permit holders are convicted of firearms violations at a lower rate than police are,⁷⁴ and the revocation rate has

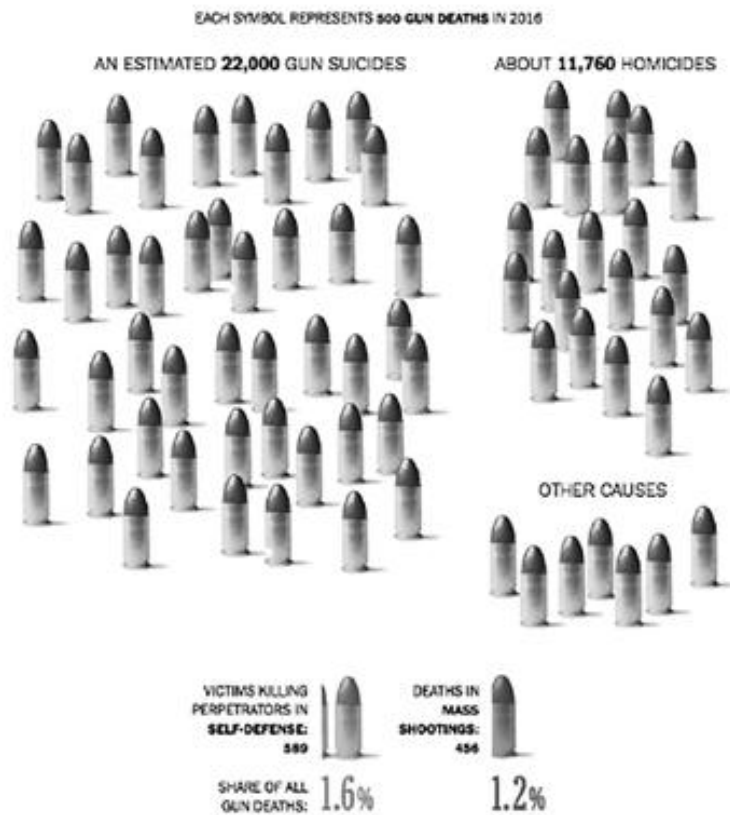
remained stable over many years (*More Guns, Less Crime* [University of Chicago Press, 2010]).

22) New York Times' Claim #4: "Mass Shootings Are Not the Main Cause of Loss of Life" ([Figure 44](#))

The Las Vegas attack that claimed 58 lives is hardly a typical mass public shooting, but Kristof cites it as an example and then lumps it in with 398 other mass shooting deaths. In fact, most of these other deaths have little to do with the mass public shootings that capture media attention.

The self-defense numbers are based on the justifiable homicides by a private citizen using a firearm, and, as we discussed above, these numbers are fatally flawed. Justifiable homicides are woefully underreported.

There are obviously many other false claims in the media, but I hope that this overview is at least enough to make people skeptical of what they hear in the news. ❖



The New York Times | Source: Gun Violence Archive

FIGURE 44

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```
. reg firearmhomicide brady, robust
```

Linear regression

Number of obs = 550
F(1, 548) = 2.40
Prob > F = 0.1221
R-squared = 0.0043
Root MSE = 2.0507

firearmhom~s	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	-.0059765	.0038593	-1.55	0.122	-.0135573	.0016043
_cons	3.435237	.1391755	24.68	0.000	3.161854	3.708619

```
. reg firearmsuicide brady, robust
```

Linear regression

Number of obs = 550
F(1, 548) = 631.82
Prob > F = 0.0000
R-squared = 0.4860
Root MSE = 2.1337

firearmsui~s	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	-.0920539	.0036622	-25.14	0.000	-.0992476	-.0848601
_cons	9.429632	.1404182	67.15	0.000	9.153808	9.705455

43. This is from comparing the adjusted R2 with and without the index for the number of gun laws

44.

```
. reg Nonfirearmsuicides brady, robust
```

Linear regression

Number of obs = 550
F(1, 548) = 7.84
Prob > F = 0.0053
R-squared = 0.0120
Root MSE = 1.5341

Nonf~uicides	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	-.0075094	.0026817	-2.80	0.005	-.0127771	-.0022418
_cons	6.234741	.0987208	63.16	0.000	6.040824	6.428659

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46.

```
. xi:reg firearmdeaths brady i.state i.year, robust
i.state      _Istate_1-51      (_Istate_1 for state==ALABAMA omitted)
i.year       _Iyear_2001-2013  (naturally coded; _Iyear_2001 omitted)
note: _Istate_8 omitted because of collinearity
note: _Iyear_2005 omitted because of collinearity
```

```
Linear regression                               Number of obs =      550
                                                F( 60,   489) =   305.20
                                                Prob > F       =   0.0000
                                                R-squared      =   0.9531
                                                Root MSE      =   .86138
```

firearmdea~s	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	.007481	.0062306	1.20	0.230	-.0047611	.0197231
_Istate_2	1.275025	.5818505	2.19	0.029	.131789	2.41826
_Istate_3	-1.117446	.425649	-2.63	0.009	-1.953773	-.2811193
_Istate_4	-1.29855	.2811367	-4.62	0.000	-1.850934	-.7461646
_Istate_5	-7.857895	.5579137	-14.08	0.000	-8.954099	-6.761691
_Istate_6	-5.109647	.292998	-17.44	0.000	-5.685337	-4.533956
_Istate_7	-11.33157	.4446209	-25.49	0.000	-12.20517	-10.45796

```
. xi:reg firearmhomicides brady i.state i.year, robust
i.state      _Istate_1-51      (_Istate_1 for state==ALABAMA omitted)
i.year       _Iyear_2001-2013  (naturally coded; _Iyear_2001 omitted)
note: _Istate_8 omitted because of collinearity
note: _Iyear_2005 omitted because of collinearity
```

```
Linear regression                               Number of obs =      550
                                                F( 60,   489) =   263.02
                                                Prob > F       =   0.0000
                                                R-squared      =   0.9489
                                                Root MSE      =   .49196
```

firearmhom~s	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	.0048539	.0036598	1.33	0.185	-.002337	.0120447
_Istate_2	-3.276366	.3081486	-10.63	0.000	-3.881825	-2.670907
_Istate_3	-1.459322	.3460328	-4.22	0.000	-2.139217	-.7794273
_Istate_4	-1.725888	.2203225	-7.83	0.000	-2.158783	-1.292992
_Istate_5	-2.653347	.360288	-7.36	0.000	-3.36125	-1.945443
_Istate_6	-4.530394	.2006865	-22.57	0.000	-4.924708	-4.13608
_Istate_7	-4.859443	.3138411	-15.48	0.000	-5.476087	-4.2428

```
. xi:reg firearmsuicides brady i.state i.year, robust
i.state      _Istate_1-51      (_Istate_1 for state==ALABAMA omitted)
i.year       _Iyear_2001-2013  (naturally coded; _Iyear_2001 omitted)
note: _Istate_8 omitted because of collinearity
note: _Iyear_2005 omitted because of collinearity
```

```
Linear regression                               Number of obs =      550
                                                F( 60,   489) =   261.15
                                                Prob > F       =   0.0000
                                                R-squared      =   0.9511
                                                Root MSE     =   .69691
```

firearmsui~s	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	.0026271	.0045392	0.58	0.563	-.0062916	.0115458
_Istate_2	4.551391	.5873622	7.75	0.000	3.397325	5.705456
_Istate_3	.3418759	.1958783	1.75	0.082	-.0429912	.726743
_Istate_4	.4273382	.199014	2.15	0.032	.0363102	.8183662
_Istate_5	-5.204548	.3615712	-14.39	0.000	-5.914973	-4.494123
_Istate_6	-.5792526	.1798307	-3.22	0.001	-.9325888	-.2259163
_Istate_7	-6.472122	.3005728	-21.53	0.000	-7.062695	-5.881548

[47.](#) This is from comparing the adjusted R2 with and without the index for the number of gun laws

[48.](#) Using variables to account for differences across states and years (so-called fixed state and year effects), more gun control laws are associated with more homicides.

<pre> . xi:reg homicides brady i.state i.year, robust i.state _Istate_1-51 (_Istate_1 for state==ALABAMA omitted) i.year _Iyear_2001-2013 (naturally coded; _Iyear_2001 omitted) note: _Istate_8 omitted because of collinearity note: _Iyear_2005 omitted because of collinearity </pre>						
Linear regression			Number of obs = 532 F(60, 471) = 224.80 Prob > F = 0.0000 R-squared = 0.9473 Root MSE = .62693			
homicides	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
brady	.007066	.0048886	1.45	0.149	-.0025401	.0166721
_Istate_2	-2.992851	.3232748	-9.26	0.000	-3.62809	-2.357612
_Istate_3	-1.162384	.3830477	-3.03	0.003	-1.915078	-.4096901
_Istate_4	-1.66368	.2352679	-7.07	0.000	-2.125984	-1.201375
_Istate_5	-3.308408	.4220715	-7.84	0.000	-4.137784	-2.479032
_Istate_6	-5.215983	.207227	-25.17	0.000	-5.623187	-4.80878
_Istate_7	-5.98232	.3684752	-16.24	0.000	-6.706379	-5.258262

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— CHAPTER 3 —

De-bunking Myths about Mass Public Shootings

“Hell yes, we’re going to take your AR-15, your AK-47.”¹

— Beto O’Rourke, former Congressman and Democratic Presidential Candidate, September 12, 2019

“Kamala Harris laughs when Biden tells her she can’t ban guns with an executive order,”²

— Headline at Fox News, September 14, 2019

“AR-15s are the choice of our worst mass murderers.”³

— CBS’s “60 Minutes,” June 23, 2019

“Assault weapons are weapons from the military.”⁴

— Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), during Democrat Presidential debate, June 27, 2019

“The weapon was a Bushmaster AR-15 semiautomatic rifle adapted from its original role as a battlefield weapon. The AR-15, which is

designed to inflict maximum casualties with rapid bursts, should never have been available for purchase by civilians” (emphasis added).⁵

—*New York Times Editorial, March 4, 2016*

“Assault weapons were banned for 10 years until Congress, in bipartisan obeisance to the gun lobby, let the law lapse in 2004. As a result, gun manufacturers have been allowed to sell all manner of war weaponry to civilians, including the super destructive .50-caliber sniper rifle”⁶ (emphasis added)

—*New York Times Editorial, December 11, 2015*

Shortly after the 2012 shooting at an elementary school in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, Wolf Blitzer asked me on CNN’s *State of the Union*: “Why do people need a semi-automatic Bushmaster to go out and kill deer?”⁷ The answer was simple: It is a hunting rifle that has been made to resemble a military weapon. The AR-15 and civilian version of the AK-47 are similar to military guns in their cosmetics, but not in the way that they operate.

The original federal assault weapons ban of 1994 prohibited the sale of semi-automatic versions of these military guns. These aren’t the “machine guns” used by armies, which do fire bursts of bullets.

Smaller-caliber bullets have benefits for the military. They are lighter, allowing soldiers to carry many more of them. The smaller bullets produce less recoil, making them easier to shoot accurately.

The military may also stand to benefit from using .223-caliber bullets, because wounding rather than killing enemy troops slows

down their comrades. Typically, about seven other soldiers have to slow down to take care of a wounded soldier.

These considerations don't apply to mass public shooters. They are more interested in killing their victims than in wounding them. They aren't carrying their ammunition over long distances, so weight isn't much of a consideration. And most of their shooting is done over very short ranges, so precision accuracy isn't necessary.

Sure, it's harder to commit a mass shooting using a single-shot rifle instead of a semi-automatic. But it's also harder to protect people and save lives.

It is hard to debate guns if you don't know much about the subject. And it is not surprising that gun control advocates who live in New York City know very little about guns.

Semi-automatic guns don't fire "rapid bursts" of bullets. Fifty-caliber sniper rifles were never covered by the federal assault weapons ban. Such weapons may be "super destructive," but the *New York Times* neglects to mention that there is no recorded instance of one being used in a murder, and certainly not in a mass public shooting.⁸ "Urban assault vests" may sound like they are bulletproof, but they are actually just nylon vests with a lot of pockets.⁹ These are just a few of the many errors that the *New York Times* made in their news article.¹⁰

If the *Times* really believes that it has a strong case, it shouldn't feel the need to constantly hype its claims. But the paper refuses to even run corrections for these errors.

So are there more fatalities when "assault weapons" are used? The 2017 Las Vegas attacker managed to fire more than 1,100 rounds, but only with the aid of a bumpstock. In his attack on Fort Hood in 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan managed to fire at least 220 shots using just a revolver and a semi-automatic handgun.¹¹

The average number of rounds fired by attackers using high-capacity magazines is actually very similar to the number fired without them (71 to 65). That fact is not too surprising, given that it takes very little time to change a magazine.¹²

There were 71 mass public shootings from 1998 through June 2019, with 74 shooters. Forty-one percent of attacks involved multiple guns, and 70 percent involved large-capacity magazines. The average number of people killed per attack was very similar (12.7 where multiple guns were used, and 11.2 with large capacity magazines) ([Figure 1](#)), and that pattern remains unchanged when we exclude the devastating Las Vegas shooting (11 deaths where multiple guns were used, and 9.9 fatalities when shooters used large capacity magazines). When you compare cases with multiple guns and no large capacity magazines, versus large capacity magazines and just a single gun, one finds that more people are actually killed in the former scenario (7.7 versus 6.7).

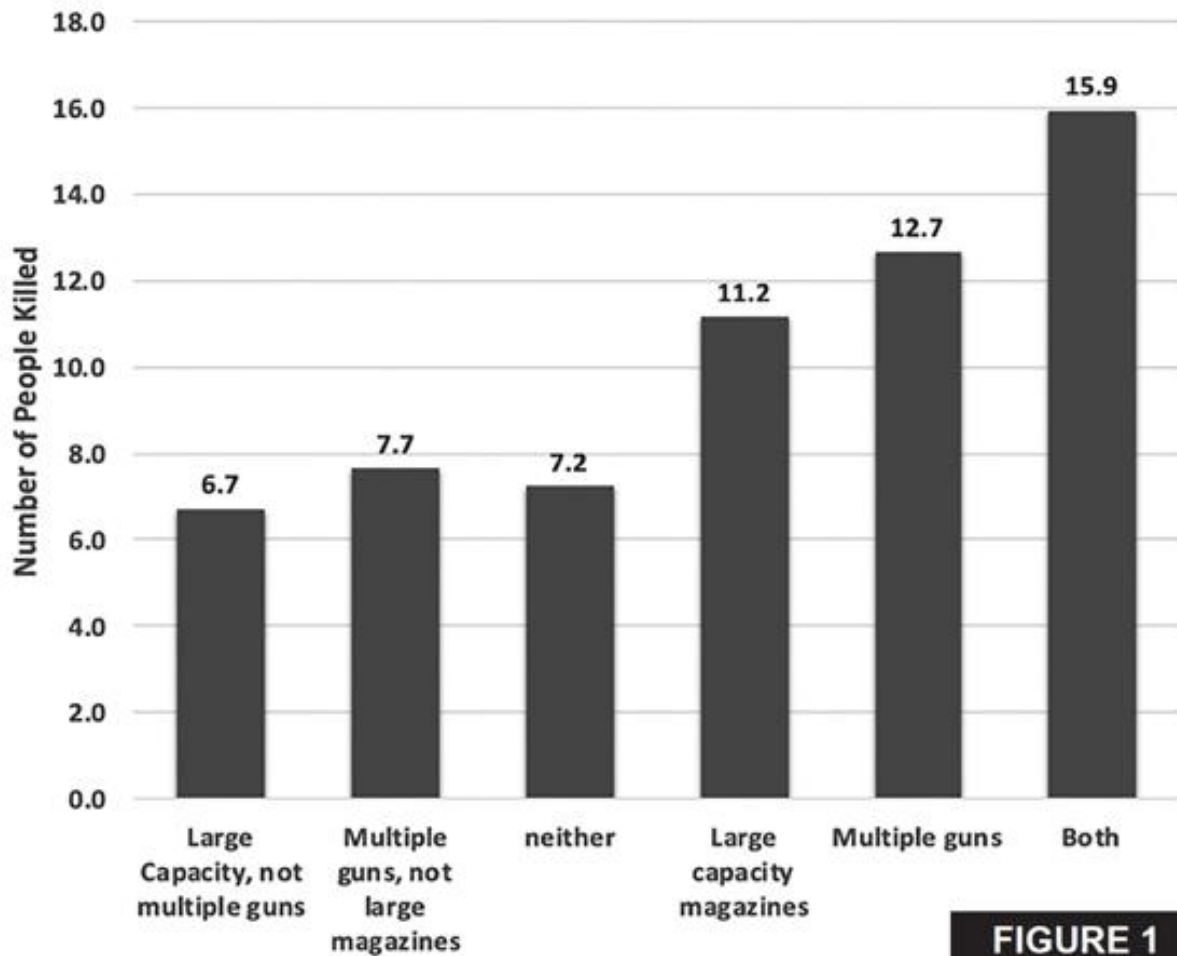
In two cases — the 2012 movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado and the Gabby Giffords shooting in Tucson, Arizona — the attackers' guns jammed because of the large-capacity magazines that were used.^{[13](#)} Large magazines require exceptionally strong springs, and sometimes the last few bullets don't get loaded properly if the spring has lost even a little strength (this can happen as a result of people leaving bullets stored in the magazines).

It's not surprising that large magazines aren't necessary for committing mass slaughter. Shooters can fire many rounds simply by switching between loaded guns. Or they can bring extra magazines and change them in as little as a couple of seconds.

The column suggests that multiple guns result in more fatalities than do large capacity magazines, although the differences aren't statistically significant.^{[14](#)} But the results indicate that banning large capacity magazines will do nothing to reduce fatalities.

There is a common perception that so-called "assault weapons" can hold larger magazines than hunting rifles. In fact, any gun that can hold a magazine can hold one of any size. This is true of both handguns and rifles.

Number of People Killed in Mass Public Shootings by Magazine size and number of guns: 1998 to June 2019



A magazine, which is basically a metal box with a spring, is trivially easy to make and virtually impossible to stop criminals from obtaining. They can be made with simple tools, or efficiently assembled with 3D printers.

Bans on large-capacity magazines are more or less exclusively obeyed by law-abiding citizens, and will prevent concealed handgun permit holders from carrying many bullets in their guns.¹⁵ Concealed handgun permit holders usually don't carry multiple guns or magazines, whereas attackers often arm themselves to the teeth.

Magazine limits mean that criminals are more likely to out-gun law-abiding citizens.

Even if magazines could somehow be banned, there is no way to effectively stop people from obtaining multiple guns. It is one thing to completely ban a particular item, and quite another thing to stop people from obtaining multiple copies of an item that is legal. The numbers show that attackers are able to kill at least as many people by simply using multiple guns.

Did the Federal Assault Weapons ban reduce mass public shootings?

"Who wants to tell @JohnRLottJr that if my assault weapons ban AND buy-back had been in place BEFORE Sandy Hook or Parkland, those children wouldn't have been killed?"^{[16](#)}

— Congressman Eric Swalwell, June 29, 2019

"Americans across the nation are asking Congress to reinstate the federal ban on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. If we're going to put a stop to mass shootings and protect our children, we need to get these weapons of war off our streets."^{[17](#)}

— Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), January 9, 2019

"We must follow New Zealand's lead, take on the NRA and ban the sale and distribution of assault weapons in the United States."^{[18](#)}

— Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), March 20, 2019

Many politicians argue that if only we could ban "assault weapons" and "weapons of war," the United States wouldn't have these mass public shootings. But as we have noted, it doesn't make any sense to ban "military-**style**" weapons, as Senator Feinstein calls them, when there are other, functionally identical semi-automatic hunting rifles available.

There's no evidence that crime rates were affected by the 1994 federal ban on magazines that hold more than 10 bullets. Even the left-

leaning Urban Institute, with funding from the Bill Clinton administration, was unable to find any such evidence.^{[19](#)} In that report, criminologists Chris Koper and Jeff Roth concluded: “The evidence is not strong enough for us to conclude that there was any meaningful effect (i.e., that the effect was different from zero).” Koper and Roth found in a 2004 follow-up report: “We cannot clearly credit the ban with any of the nation’s recent drop in gun violence. And, indeed, there has been no discernible reduction in the lethality and injuriousness of gun violence.”

Even a 2014 survey by the equally left-leaning ProPublica found no compelling evidence that the federal assault weapons ban had any impact on any type of crime.^{[20](#)}

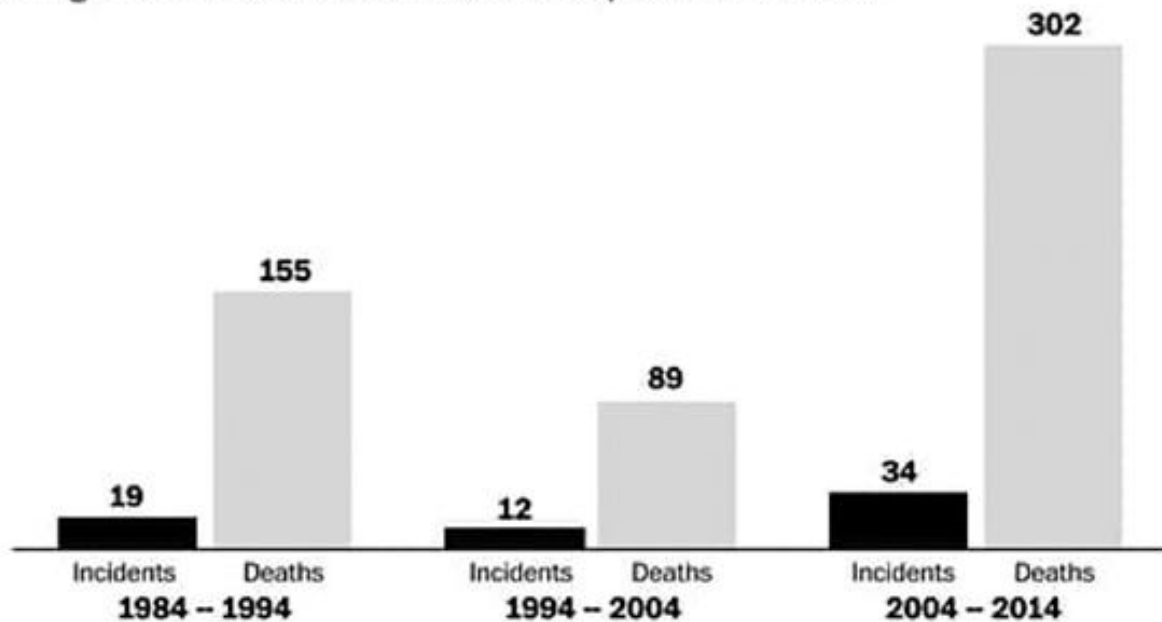
But a book titled *Rampage Nation* by Louis Klarevas has been cited by gun control advocates and politicians, including Senator Feinstein.^{[21](#)} Klarevas limits his research to shootings with 6 or more fatalities. I don’t know of any other study that does this, and Klarevas provides no explanation for it. Nor does he explain why he lumps in public shootings with gang shootings, failing to draw any distinction.

Here is a Washington Post graph that makes use of Klarevas’ numbers ([Figure 2](#)). Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) showed President Trump this diagram when she met with him shortly after the Parkland school shooting in Florida in February 2018.^{[22](#)}

Few academics would make the types of comparisons that Klarevas makes. They would instead observe how death rates changed in states where the federal ban actually affected the ability of citizens to own assault weapons. Then they would compare these states with other states where the law effectively remained unchanged because state-level bans were already in place. That is the way that Koper and Roth did it in their studies, and as I have done so in my own research. These studies did not find any impact from assault weapon bans.

Gun massacres fell during the assault weapons ban

Gun massacre (6+ deaths) incidents and fatalities in the decades before, during and after the federal assault weapons ban of 1994



Source: Louis Klarevas
WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

FIGURE 2

The rate of mass shootings or mass public shootings may rise or fall over time for many reasons. If assault weapons bans reduced these attacks, the share of attacks committed with “assault weapons” should have decreased.

For the sake of argument, let’s follow Klarevas in looking at the total number of attacks before, during, and after the assault weapons ban. We will use the cases that Klarevas identifies in his book as mass shootings (pp. 72 and 73), as well as mass public shootings collected by Mother Jones and the CPRC. Klarevas doesn’t provide any breakdown of shootings committed with assault weapons, even though the 1994 assault weapons ban is the subject of his research.

In an email to writer Jon Stokes, Klarevas identified seven mass shootings with assault weapons over the ten years from 1984 through 1993.^{[23](#)} Using Klarevas’ definition, we identified only two cases involving assault weapons in the ten years during which the federal

Assault Weapons Ban was in effect – September 1994 to September 2004. The two attacks were the 1999 Columbine shooting and a 2000 shooting in Wakefield, Massachusetts that involved an AK-47). Our numbers will differ slightly from Klarevas' simply because we look at the 10-year periods from September 1984 to August 1994, September 1994 to August 2004, and September 2004 to August 2014 ([Figure 3](#)). We only include part of 1984 and 2014 in our time range, whereas Klaveras includes both years in their entirety.

**Changes in Number of Mass Shootings Before, During, and After
the Federal Assault Weapons Ban
(Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data)**

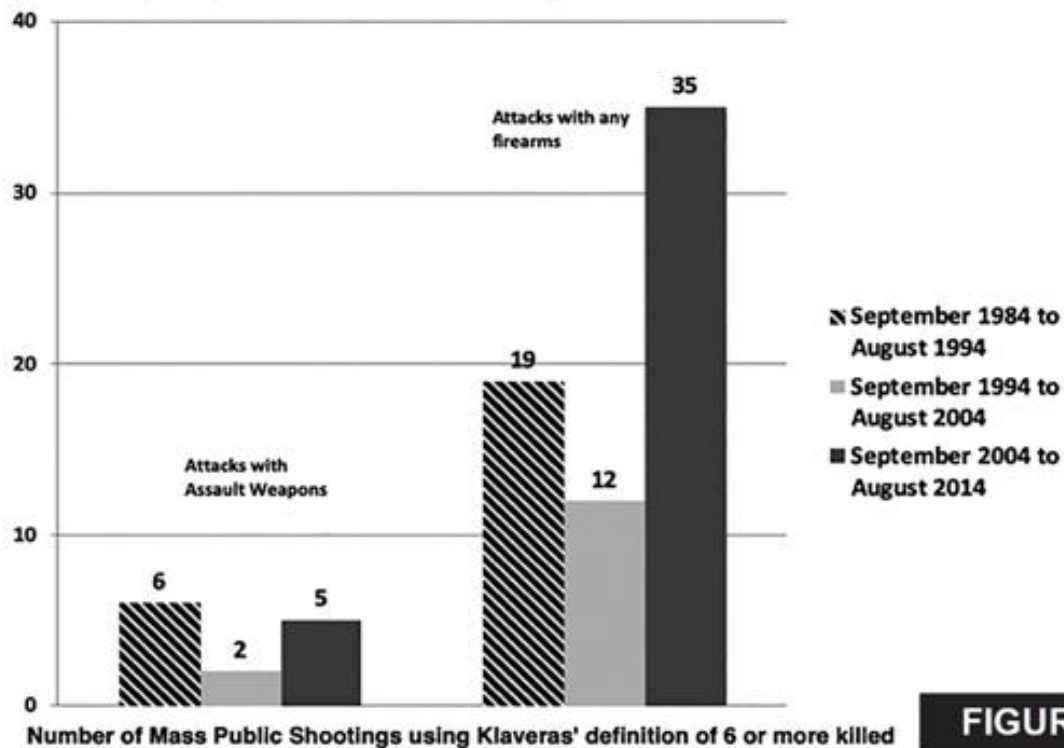


FIGURE 3

**Changes in Number of Mass Public Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**

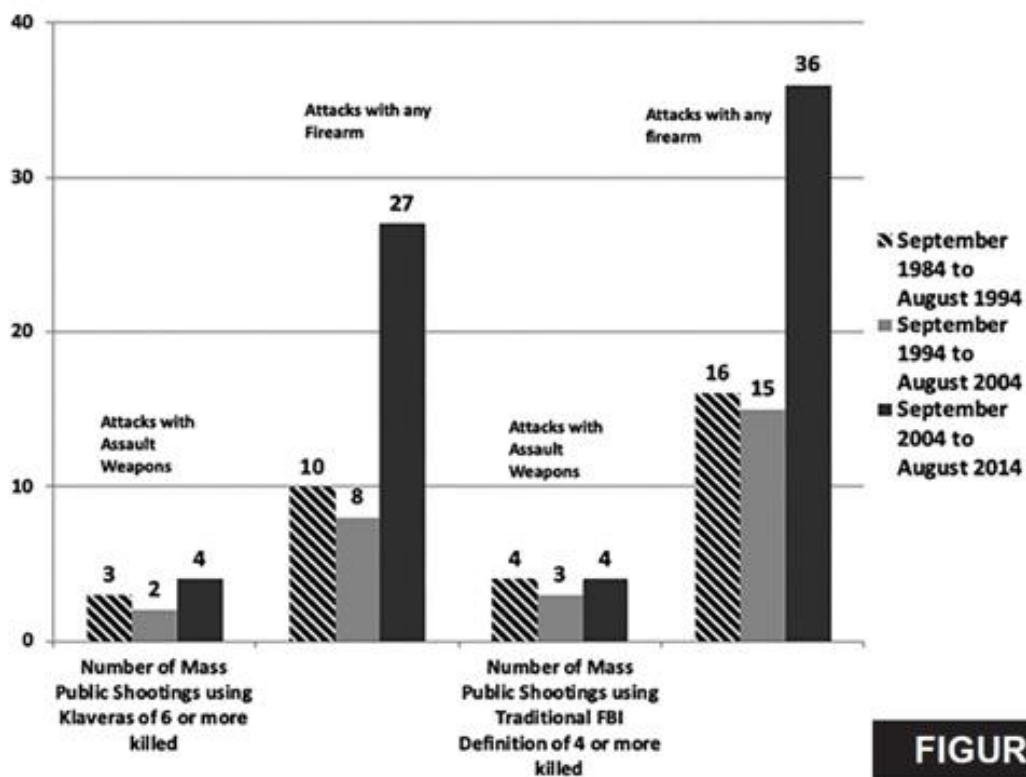


FIGURE 4

**Changes in Number of Mass Public Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban
(Using CPRC Mass Public Shooting data)**

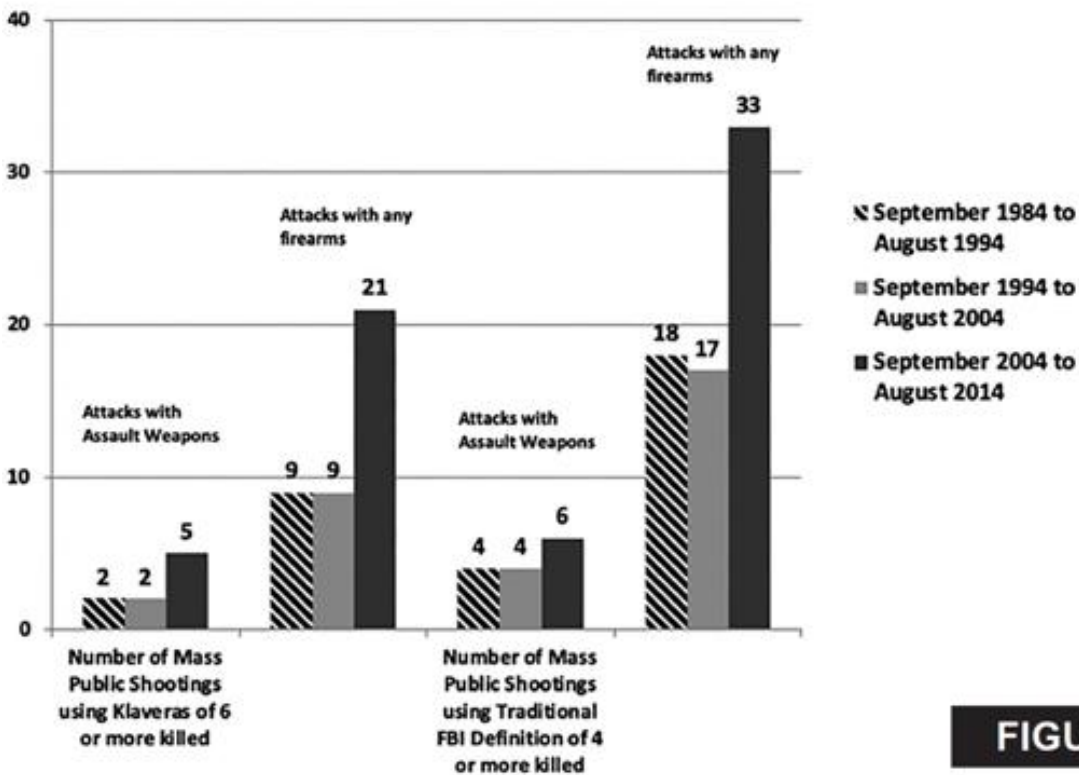


FIGURE 5

We utilize *Mother Jones* magazine's mass shootings dataset, even though it includes cases that don't meet the FBI's definition of mass public shootings. But since it is a widely cited source of cases, we have used it for our comparisons.

No matter which dataset we use, the number of mass shootings committed with assault weapons is very small compared to the total number of mass shootings. Looking at the number of attacks with assault weapons, the *Mother Jones* list shows a difference of only one or two between each of the three, ten-year periods ([Figure 4](#)). This holds true whether we use the traditional FBI definition of 4-or-more killed or Klaveras' definition of 6-or-more killed. The Crime Prevention Research Center (CPRC) data are similar, showing differences of either zero, two, or three attacks between the ten-year periods ([Figure 5](#)). None of these changes are large enough to prove that the ban had any impact on the frequency of attacks.

Looking at attacks committed with any type of firearm, the disparities that Klarevas finds between the pre-ban and ban periods either completely disappear or are still differences of just one or two attacks.

When we instead look at the number of fatalities instead of the number of mass public shootings, we see again that there is very little evidence of any benefit from the assault weapons ban ([Figure 6](#)). Using the Mother Jones list of cases, we find that compared to the preceding ten years, there was a drop of only four deaths in the decade of the assault weapons ban ([Figure 7](#)).

The CPRC data actually shows that there was a slight increase in deaths when the ban was in effect, even for mass shootings with 6 or more fatalities ([Figure 8](#)).

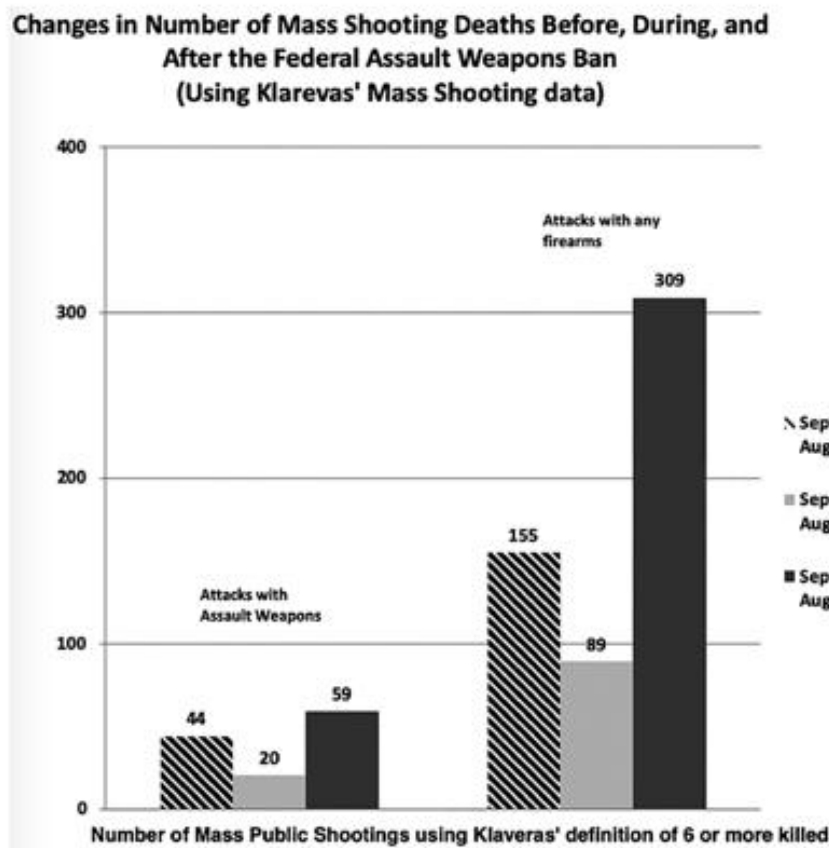


FIGURE 6

**Changes in Number of Mass Public Shooting Deaths Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**

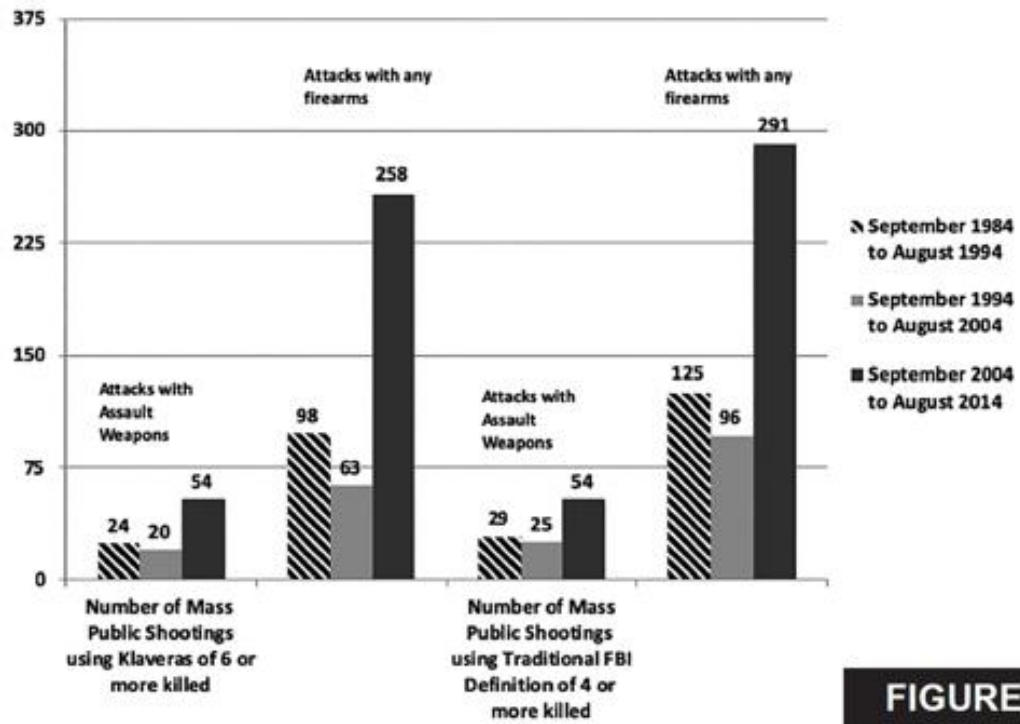
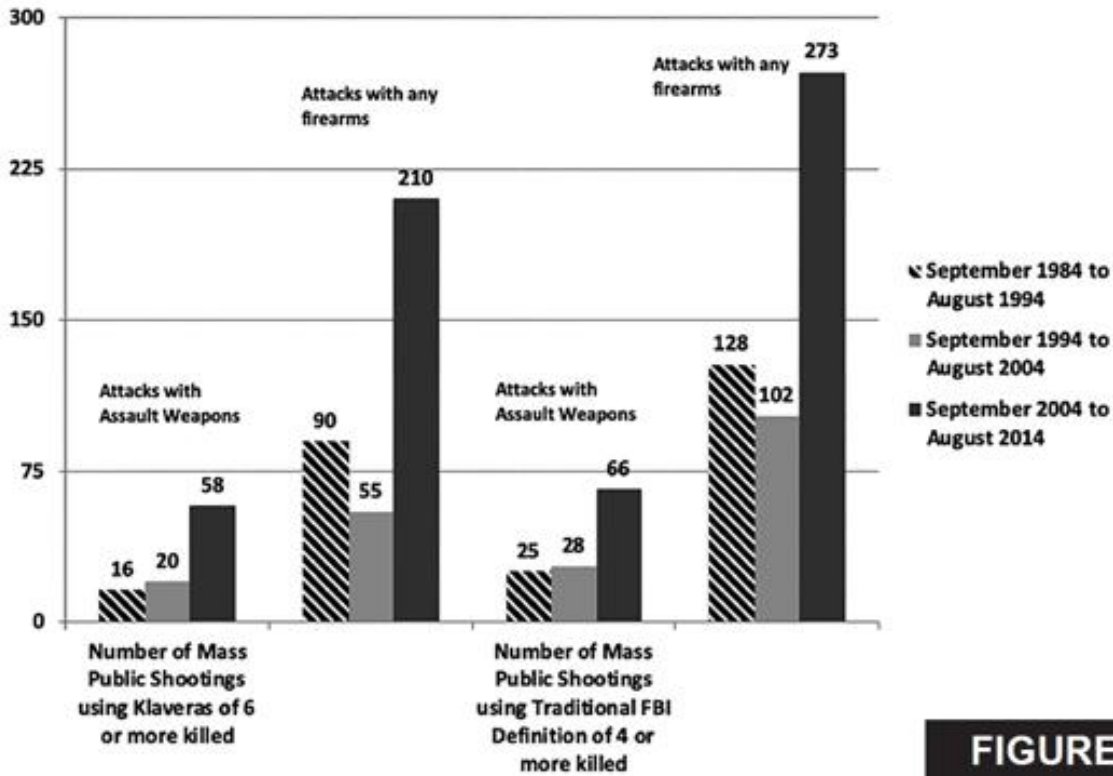


FIGURE 7

**Changes in Number of Mass Public Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban
(Using CPRC Mass Public Shooting data)**



Klarevas' own data show a decline over time that continued after the assault weapons ban expired. The Mother Jones and CPRC data show even steeper post-ban declines. Gun control advocates would probably expect the decade of the assault weapons ban to have a lower share of deaths from assault weapons than the succeeding decade, but in reality we find just the opposite. This is true whether one uses the traditional FBI definition of 4-or-more killed or Klarevas' definition of 6-or-more killed.

Again, the assault weapons ban should have caused the number of attacks with assault weapons to have declined relative to attacks committed using other types of firearms. Testing for this seems to be the best way of evaluating the effectiveness of the ban.

Regardless of which of the datasets or definitions we use, none of the results are consistent with what gun control advocates would predict. The share of attacks involving assault weapons did not reach its

lowest point during the federal assault weapons ban. In both the Klarevas and Mother Jones datasets, the ten years after the end of the assault weapons ban (September 2004 to August 2014) saw the lowest share of shootings involving assault weapons ([Figures 9](#) and [10](#)). The CPRC data with the traditional breakdown of 4 or more people murdered shows assault weapons making up even a slightly higher share of shootings during the federal ban ([Figure 11](#)).

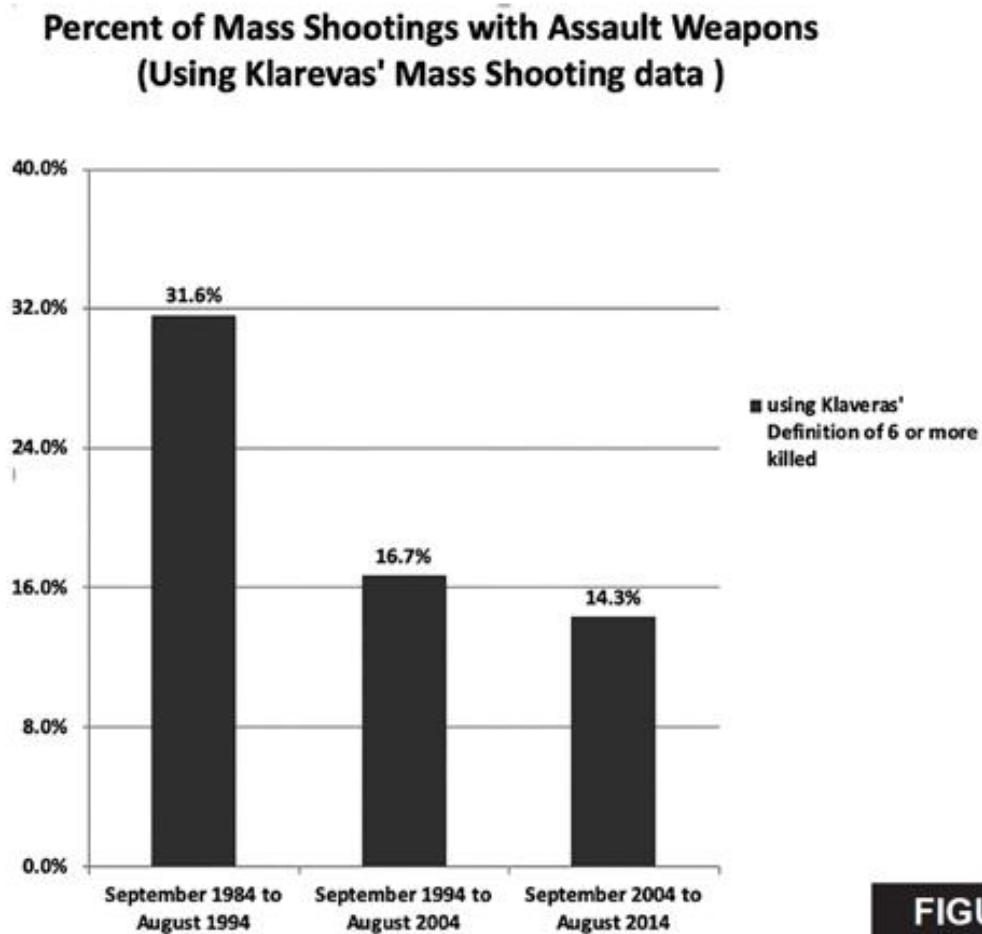


FIGURE 9

**Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault
Weapons
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**

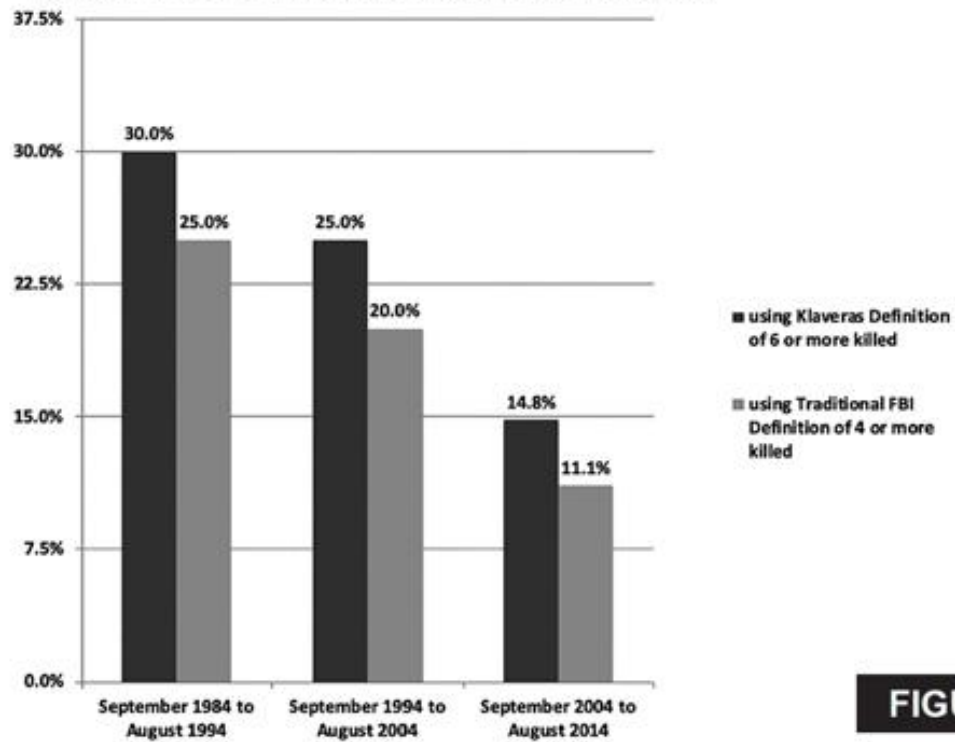


FIGURE 10

**Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault Weapons
(Using CPSC Mass Public Shooting data)**

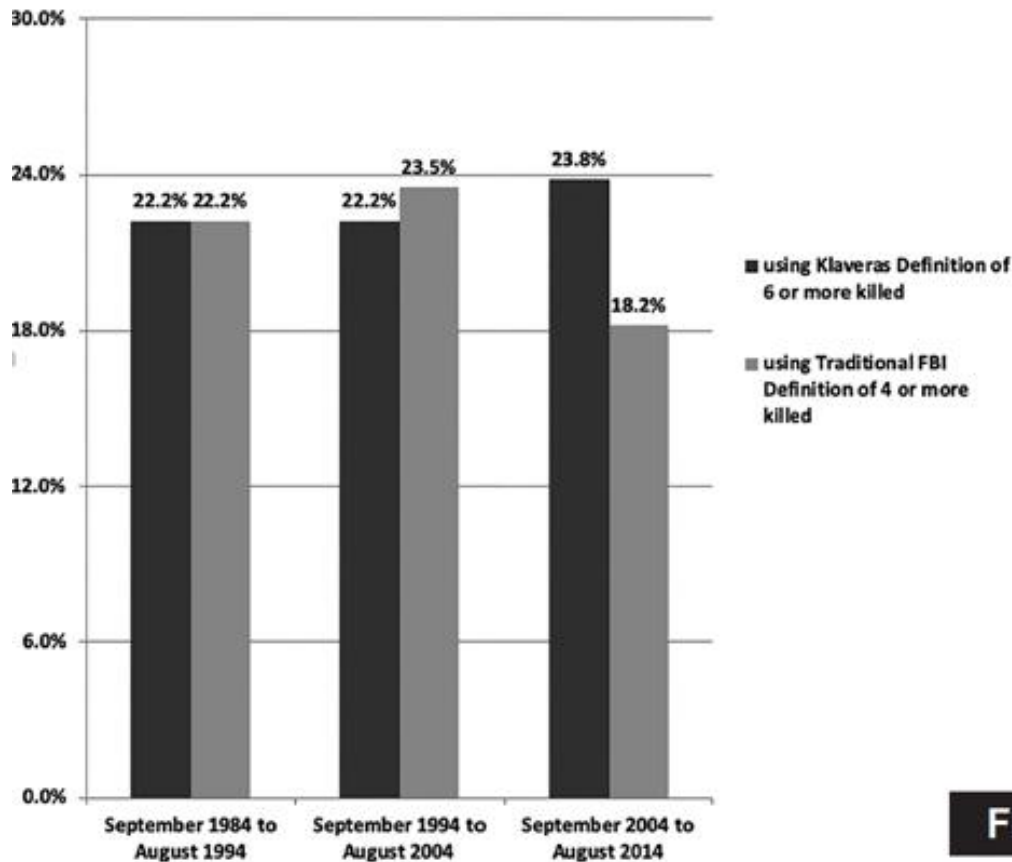


FIGURE 11

Understanding the weapons used in mass public shootings

“Without the weapons of mass murder, 50 New Zealand worshipers would still be alive; 17 Parkland, Fla., schoolchildren and staff members would still be alive; nine Charleston, S.C., churchgoers would still be alive; 11 Pittsburgh congregants would still be alive; 58 Las Vegas concertgoers would still be alive; 26 Newtown, Conn., first graders and adults would.

...”[24](#)

— Nicholas Kristof on the need to follow New Zealand’s example and ban guns. (*The New York Times*, March 20, 2019)

The New York Times' Nicholas Kristof's list of "weapons of mass murder" doesn't just include traditional "assault weapons," but all semi-automatics. The gun used in the Charleston, S.C. church shooting was just a typical handgun, but Kristoff apparently considers it a weapon of mass destruction.

Only recently have Democrats begun discussing banning all semi-automatic guns. But it has been much harder for gun control advocates to push a ban on semi-automatic guns, because most guns owned in the United States fall into this category.

*"An assault rifle is designed to deliver fatal wounds to multiple individuals within a short time period; it has no other purpose. The AR-15, the civilian version of the military assault rifle (M16 or M4), has become the most commonly used rifle in US mass shootings ..."*²⁵

— NBC News, February 15, 2018

For all of the emphasis on assault weapons, 72% of mass public shootings don't involve any long guns. Eighty-three percent of shootings involve handguns, 28% rifles, and 19% shotguns (more than one type of weapon can be used in an attack) ([Figure 12](#)).

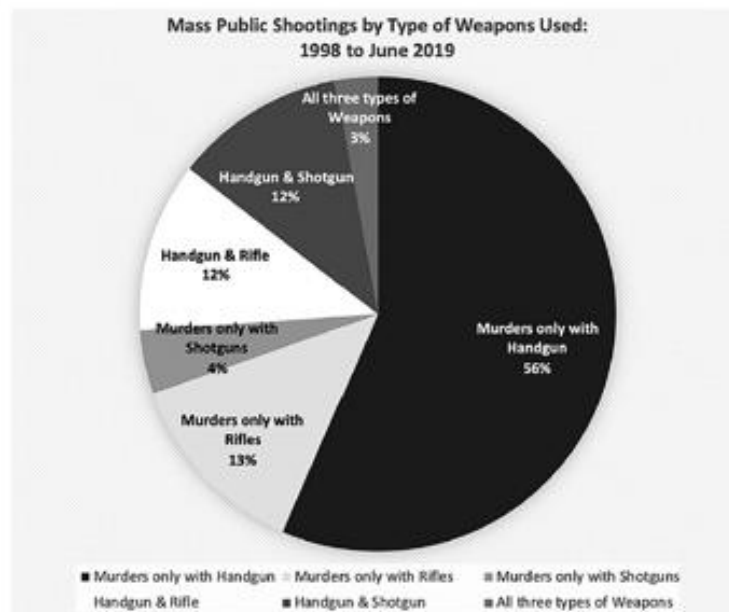


FIGURE 12

Killers Choose Gun-free Zones

*"I do not recommend that [the policy banning soldiers from carrying guns on military bases] be changed. We have adequate law enforcement on those bases to respond.... You take the Fort Hood incident number two, the one where I was the commander of Third Corps, those police responded within eight minutes and that guy was dead. So that is pretty quick...."*²⁶

**—General Mark Milley, US Army Chief of Staff, April 7, 2016
(emphasis added)**

*"Many of these shooters don't really care whether it's a gun-free zone or not, they're there just to kill people and they expect to die in their event, either by their own gun or at the hands of police. So I don't think mass shooters are likely to be as responsive to the legislation as sort of a careful, calculating, rational person might be."*²⁷

**—Adam Winkler, UCLA Law Professor, 2014 (audio at 13:20
<https://crimeresearch.org/2014/04/debate-over-gun-free-zones-on-souther-california-public-radio/>)**

What might be an "adequate" and "pretty quick" response time to General Milley may seem like an eternity to those present at these attacks. During the second Fort Hood attack in April 2014, eight minutes was long enough for Ivan Lopez to fire at least 35 shots with a semi-automatic pistol and leave 3 dead and 14 injured.²⁸ That's just one shot every 14 seconds. In the first Fort Hood shooting in November 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan took 10 minutes to kill 13 people and wound another 32.²⁹ With his two handguns, he fired about 220 shots (approximately one shot every 2.7 seconds).³⁰

Both attacks came to an abrupt end once police arrived, but the shootings could have been stopped so much sooner if someone with a gun had been there to begin with. These attacks aren't unusual in terms of their length or the rapidity of fire.³¹

Since 1998, there have been seven mass public shootings in areas where concealed carry was allowed: the Radisson Hotel in Tampa, Florida on December 30, 1999; the IHOP restaurant in Carson City, Nevada on September 6, 2011; the Gabrielle Giffords shooting in Tucson, Arizona on January 8, 2011; the fatal shooting of five Dallas police officers on July 7, 2016; the shooting at a Cracker Barrel restaurant in Kalamazoo, Michigan on February 20, 2016; Las Vegas shooting on October 1, 2017; the First Baptist Church in tiny Sutherland Springs, Texas on November 5th, 2017; and a Melcroft, Pennsylvania attack that left four dead on January 28, 2018.

But these cases are very rare. From 1950-2010, only one mass public shooting is known to have occurred in an area where general civilians were allowed to carry guns. Over the entire period from 1950 through July 2019, 6% of mass public shootings occurred in such areas ([Figure 13](#)). If you look at only the period since 1998, that figure is still a mere 8% ([Figure 14](#)).

Mass killers have even explicitly talked about their desire to attack places where civilians can't defend themselves. One need only listen to the February 2016 wiretap of an ISIS supporter who was planning an attack on one of the biggest churches in Detroit. Khalil Abu-Rayyan explained his choice of target this way: "A lot of people go there. Plus, people are not allowed to carry guns in church. Plus, it would make the news. Everybody would've heard."³² Fortunately, Abu-Rayyan's father alerted the FBI.

**Mass Public Shootings in Gun-free Zones:
1950 to June 2019**

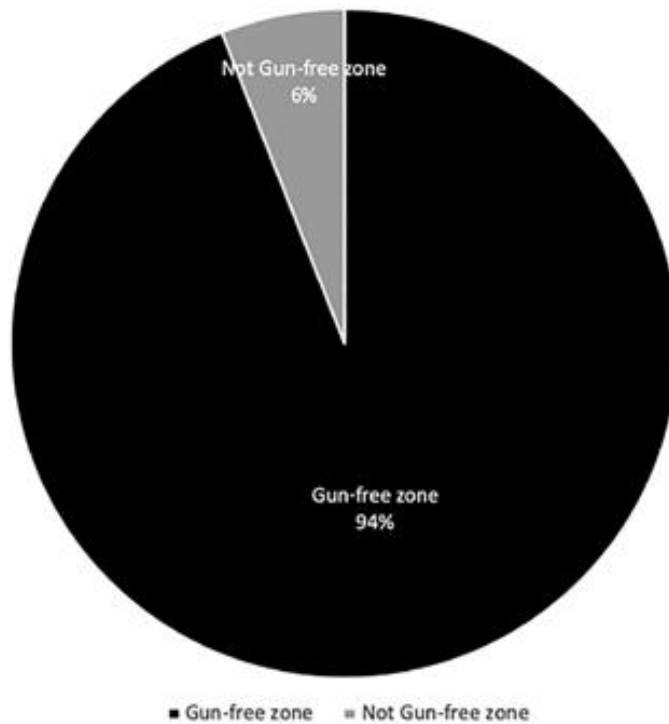
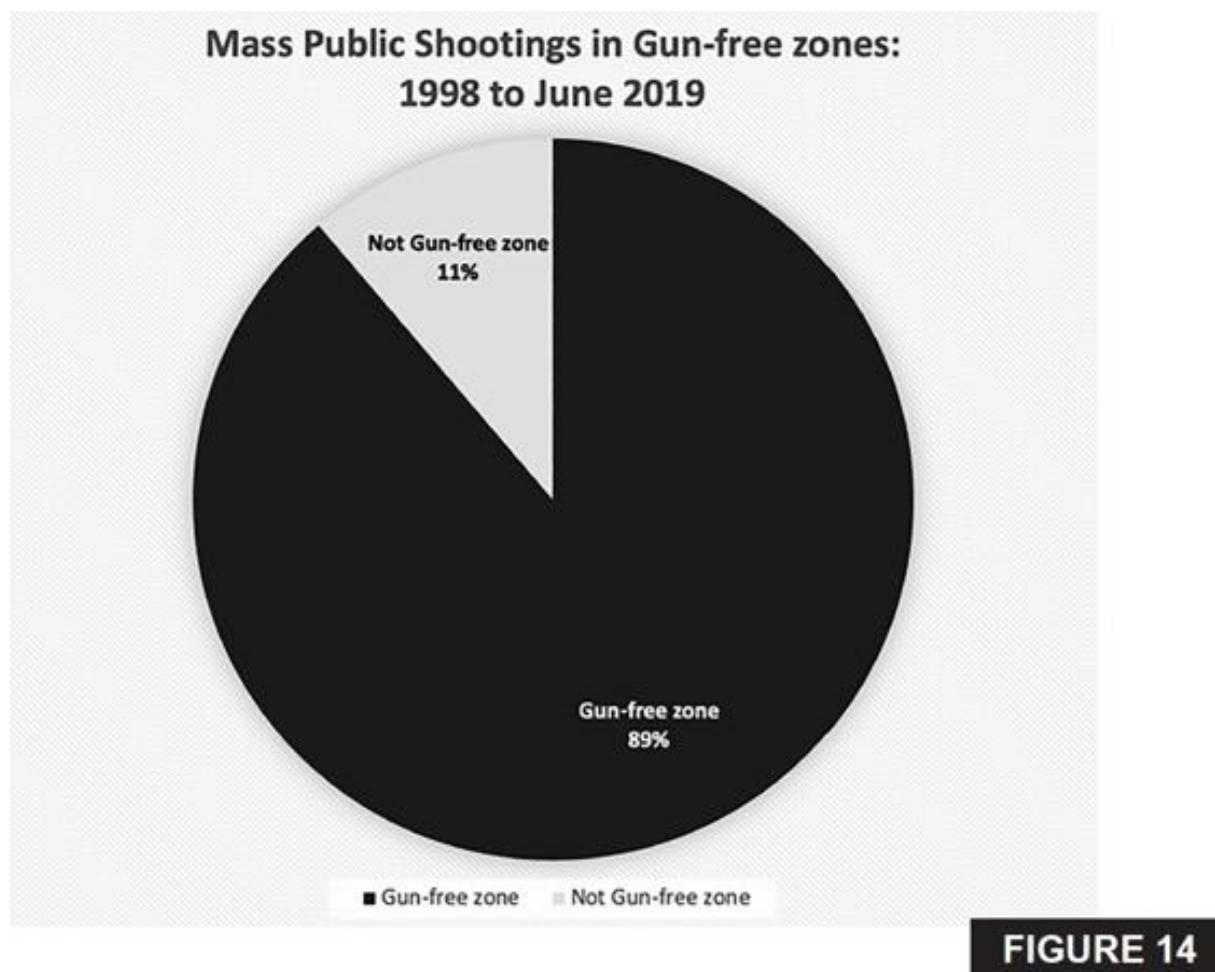


FIGURE 13



The infamous 2015 Charleston, South Carolina church shooting was originally going to be a college shooting. But Dylann Roof changed plans after realizing that the College of Charleston had armed guards.

James Holmes, the perpetrator of the 2012 movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado, initially considered attacking an airport. In his diary, Holmes explained that he decided against it because of “substantial security.”³³ He then selected the only theater within 20 minutes of his apartment that banned permitted concealed handguns.³⁴ There were six other theaters that Holmes could have gone to. The one he picked wasn’t even the one with the largest auditorium or the one that was closest to his home.³⁵

Or take Elliot Rodger, who fatally shot three people in 2014, near the campus of UC Santa Barbara. Rodger ruled out various targets where he

thought that someone with a gun might be able to stop his killing spree.^{[36](#)}

Justin Bourque, who shot to death three people in Canada in 2014, even posted to Facebook a cartoon of a defenseless victim explaining to his killer that guns are prohibited.^{[37](#)}

It's normal to imagine that mentally ill killers would tend to be less than careful planners. UCLA Professor Adam Winkler echoes that sentiment in the quote at the beginning of this section. Some people have a hard time imagining deranged individuals considering such issues as gun-free zoning, especially because it's not a topic that comes up much in media reports. But the cold truth of the matter is that many of these mentally ill people have left documents laying out their intentions.

Adam Lanza, the Newtown killer, spent two-and-a-half years putting together a report on mass public shootings. Law enforcement described, "A sickeningly thorough 7-foot-long, 4-foot-wide spreadsheet with names, body counts, and weapons from previous mass murders and even attempted killings. 'It sounded like a doctoral thesis, that was the quality of the research,' an anonymous law enforcement veteran said."^{[38](#)} Lanza also collected information on media coverage of each killing. He observed that attacks with more deaths received greater media coverage.

Lanza may have been out of his mind, but he clearly knew what he wanted to accomplish and how he was going to do it. Take this report from *CBS Evening News*:

Sources say Lanza saw himself as being in direct competition with Anders Breivik, a Norwegian man who killed 77 people in July 2011....

Two officials who have been briefed on the Newtown, Conn., investigation say Lanza wanted to top Breivik's death toll and targeted nearby Sandy Hook Elementary School because it was the "easiest target" with the "largest cluster of people."^{[39](#)}

James Holmes was also mentally ill. But state-appointed psychiatrist Dr. William Reid, who performed Holmes' sanity evaluation after the attack, testified that Holmes carefully planned not only the theater to attack but also minutiae such as security details and crowd sizes.^{[40](#)}

Over and over again, mentally ill killers invest a lot of time and energy into planning their attacks. Many start thinking about their attacks a year or two in advance. It is rare to discover cases involving less than six months of planning.

Some, such as Everytown for Gun Safety, object to how I and others have defined what is a gun-free zone.⁴¹ They argue that if police are allowed to carry a gun in an area, it can't be classified as a gun-free zone. Of course, since police are allowed to carry virtually everywhere, such a definition would mean that there are very few gun-free zones. Some people also argue that places of residence should not be excluded from the list, though our count explicitly looks at mass "public" shootings.

Police and security guards play an important role in stopping crime, but their uniforms put them at a disadvantage in these terrorist-type attacks. Knowing that the officer is the only person with a gun makes things quite simple for attackers. They need only kill him first. It is the equivalent of wearing a neon sign saying "shoot me first."

Alternatively, mass public shooters can wait for the officer to leave the area, or can pick a target where no guards are present.

Killers will always have the strategic advantage of surprise, but the presence of unidentifiable concealed handgun permit holders can turn the tables on attackers.

Some might find it strange that military bases (such as the two attacks at Fort Hood) are counted as gun-free zones. But soldiers are in fact banned from carrying guns on base, and military police often have to patrol areas that are the size of a large town.

Michael Bloomberg's Everytown for Gun Safety claims that most shootings occur in places that allow guns, but this is only true if you count attacks in residences. Unlike mass public shooters, home invaders rarely intend to take as many lives as possible. They may also know if a gun is owned in the home, and who might have access to it. By contrast, when an attack occurs in a public place, the attackers don't know who might use a gun to stop them.

Jake Berry, a reporter with the *Nashua Telegraph* (New Hampshire), concluded after a 2013 interview with gun control researchers: "On the whole, Lott's colleagues—both in the media and academia—don't

dispute his findings [on gun-free zones].”⁴² Here is even what a couple of gun control advocates have said on the topic:

—David Hemenway, a public health researcher at Harvard, explained: *“I suspect that most places that mass public shootings could logically occur are ‘gun-free zones,’ either determined by the government (schools) or by private businesses and institutions.”*

—Dan Webster, a public health researcher at Johns Hopkins, said: *“Schools might be a likely target because that is where a mass of people congregate and those people involve a lot of troubled adolescents who may harbor bad feelings toward the people there who bullied them, were unfair to them, etc. The shooters in these instances didn’t say, ‘Hey, I’ll find a gun-free zone where I can shoot a lot of people.’ No, they went to a place for reasons wholly unrelated to gun-free zones.”*

While the vast majority of schools are gun-free zones, a number of large public universities as well as some K-12 schools do not ban guns. Most movie theaters and malls don’t ban guns. Indeed, businesses in many states aren’t allowed to ban customers from carrying guns.

But we haven’t been seeing attacks in those schools or businesses that allow people to carry.

James Holmes of Colorado wasn’t the only killer to pick a gun-free movie theater. In Lafayette, Louisiana in 2015, John Houser attacked one of only two movie theaters in his area that banned permitted concealed handguns.⁴³ There is no known instance of a shooting at a movie theater that allowed concealed carry.

Likewise, the Westroads Mall in Omaha, Nebraska and the Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City, Utah were the only gun-free indoor malls in their areas, and were the sites of mass public shootings.⁴⁴ These killers had the choice of attacking theaters or malls where guns were allowed, but they consistently went out of their way to attack those particular places where guns weren’t allowed.

Here is a list of other gun-free businesses where mass shootings have occurred: a Korean spa in Norcross, Georgia (February 22, 2012); a nursing home in Carthage, North Carolina (March 29, 2009); the Tacoma Coffee Shop in Lakewood, Washington (November 29, 2009); and the Yoyito-Cafe restaurant in Hialeah, Florida (June 6, 2010).

Some of these attacks are surely motivated by hatred for a boss or colleague, and not so much by a desire for publicity. But there are also hateful employees at businesses that allow guns, and there is a curious lack of attacks in such places. Once again, the casualties are occurring in gun-free zones.

Attackers have good reason to target gun-free zones. As shown in the first chapter, concealed carry permit holders have stopped many attacks. In addition to the cases listed earlier, mass public shootings have been stopped in Pearl, Mississippi; Edinboro, Pennsylvania; Grundy, Virginia; Memphis, Tennessee; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; and Salt Lake City, Utah. It has happened at colleges, in busy downtowns, in churches, in malls, and outside of apartment buildings. Concealed carry saves lives everywhere.

Mass public shooters avoid places where victims can defend themselves. That way, they can keep shooting until police arrive. And, with a higher death toll, they are more likely to fulfill their dreams of infamy.

Mental Illness

Major Garrett: *Do you believe the [mental health] legislation the Senate did not pass would have made any difference in this case [Elliot Rodger's Santa Barbara attack]? . . .*

Senator Richard Blumenthal: *I am going to urge that we bring back those bills, maybe reconfigure them to center on mental health, which is a point where we can agree that we need more resources to make the country healthier and to make sure that these kinds of horrific, insane, mad occurrences are stopped and the Congress will be complicit if we fail to act.*^{[45](#)}

Forty-three percent of mass public shooters were seeing mental health care professionals *prior* to their shootings ([Figure 15](#)). The *New York Times* came up with a slightly higher number when it analyzed mass public shootings from 1949 to 1999.⁴⁶ The results confirm something that we have known for a long time — it is very difficult for psychiatric professionals to know who will actually commit mass murder.

**Did Mass Public Shooter see Mental Health
Care Professional Prior to Attack: 1998
through June 2019**

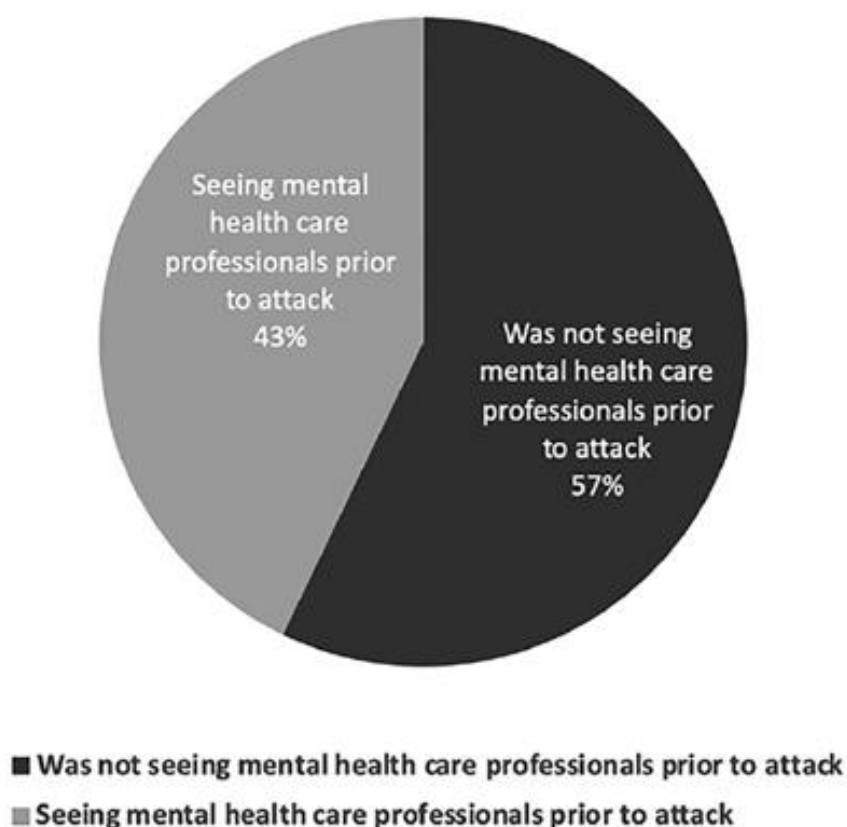


FIGURE 15

The issue of mental health was brought back into focus by the Santa Barbara killings of May 23, 2014. But there is a certain irony that this

was the attack which spurred Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) to push for more resources on mental health.⁴⁷ The killer, Elliot Rodger, had already been receiving top-quality mental-health counseling for years. One of his psychiatrists, Dr. Charles Sophy, is nationally known and serves as medical director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.⁴⁸ But in his 141-page manifesto, Rodger shows a real pride in being able to deceive these experts.⁴⁹

Santa Barbara County deputies visited Rodger's home on April 30 to investigate a complaint. Sheriff Bill Brown says the deputies described Rodger as appearing "quiet and timid... polite and courteous." "He was able to make a very convincing story that there was no problem, that he wasn't going to hurt himself or anyone else, and he just didn't meet the criteria for any further intervention at that point," said Brown.⁵⁰

Some blame the sheriff's deputies for not doing more to investigate the initial complaint, but the psychiatrists also bore responsibility for ensuring that Rodger received proper treatment.⁵¹ Even Rodger's father said, "There is no way I thought that this boy could hurt a flea we didn't see this coming at all."⁵²

Other mass killers who were already seeing psychiatrists include Ivan Lopez (the recent 2014 Fort Hood shooter), Adam Lanza (Sandy Hook elementary), James Holmes (Colorado movie theater), and Seung-Hui Cho (Virginia Tech).⁵³

The Army psychiatrist who last saw Ivan Lopez found no "sign of likely violence, either to himself or to others."⁵⁴ James Holmes' psychiatrist warned University of Colorado officials about her patient's violent fantasies, but "rejected the idea" that the threat was sufficiently serious for him to be taken into custody.⁵⁵

Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech killer, was subject to a commitment hearing.⁵⁶ Licensed psychologist Roy Crouse performed an independent evaluation and found Cho to be "mentally ill," but concluded, "he does not present an imminent danger to (himself/others)... he does not require involuntary hospitalization." A staff psychiatrist at Carilion St. Albans Psychiatric Hospital recommended outpatient counseling and determined that Cho "is not a

danger to himself or others.” The judge accepted these findings and determined not to have Cho involuntarily committed.⁵⁷

These mass killers certainly didn’t lack mental health care. The problem is that even top psychiatrists failed to identify them as real threats. And it’s not as though psychiatrists lack incentives to get the diagnosis right. Beyond their reputation, professional pride, and desire to help, psychiatrists also have a legal obligation to inform authorities of threats. Families of the Aurora movie theater victims sued Holmes’ psychiatrist for not recommending that his patient be confined.⁵⁸

Psychiatrists frequently underestimate threats to safety, sometimes struggling to accept that their own patients could actually pose a serious violent threat. The problem is well-known in the psychiatric profession, and an entire body of academic literature is devoted to the subject. Some people suggest that it’s simply hard to predict these extremely rare mass shootings. Others argue that psychiatrists are trying to prove their fearlessness.

The rarity of these attacks certainly makes the first explanation plausible. There are roughly 1.6 million people with schizophrenia alone. From 2013 through 2015, mentally ill individuals perpetrated 15 out of 25 mass public shootings. Even if all 15 individuals had schizophrenia (and that is clearly not the case), this comes to one mass public shooting for every 100,000 schizophrenics. To stop one person who is truly going to do something terrible, you may have to confine thousands of people who seem dangerous.

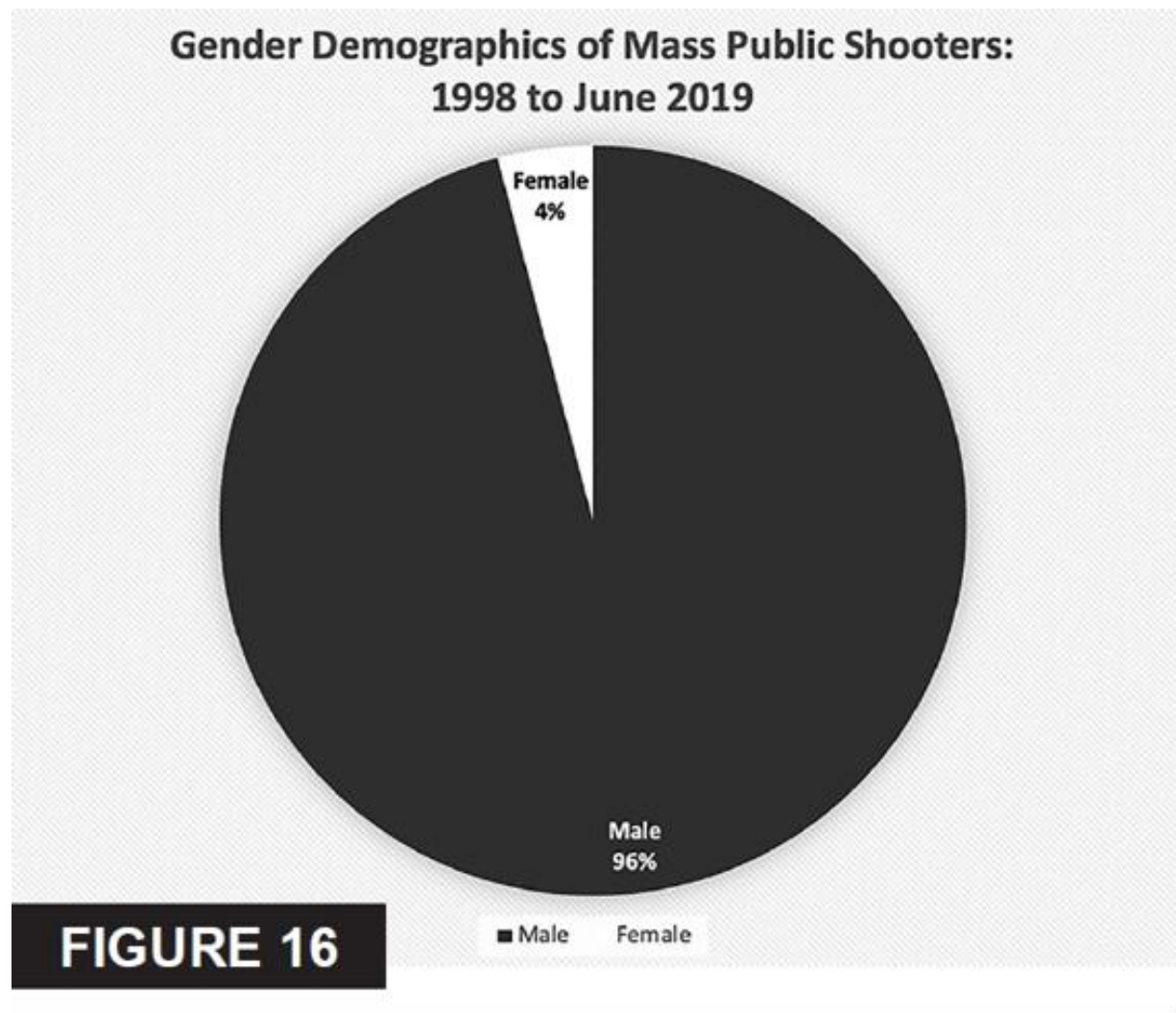
“People with mental illness are far more likely to be victims of violence ... the majority of individuals with mental illness will never be violent toward others,” rightly points out Dr. Renee Binder, President of the American Psychiatric Association and herself an ardent gun control advocate.⁵⁹ The mentally ill already have a hard enough time in our society, and treating them as potential murderers will not help matters.

If we really believe that a mentally ill individual poses a danger to others, simply prohibiting that person from buying a gun isn’t likely to solve anything. If someone can get their hands on illegal drugs, they can also get their hands on illegal guns. Indeed, drug gangs usually sell both.

If someone is really a danger to others, the most effective solution is to send him to a secure mental health facility.

A Closer Look at Mass Public Shooters

Virtually all mass shooters are men (96%) ([Figure 16](#)). Men are also somewhat more likely to be victims of mass public shootings (59% to 41%) ([Figure 17](#)).



Most of the killers are also white (58%), but that is below their share of the US population (64%, as of 2015) ([Figure 18](#)).⁶⁰ Middle Easterners are by far the most overrepresented among mass public

shooters, given that they represent about 1% of the US population and 8% of mass public shooters. Blacks, Asians, and American Indians are also overrepresented among mass public shooters. Hispanics are the most underrepresented, committing attacks at a rate that is little more than a third of their share of the population.

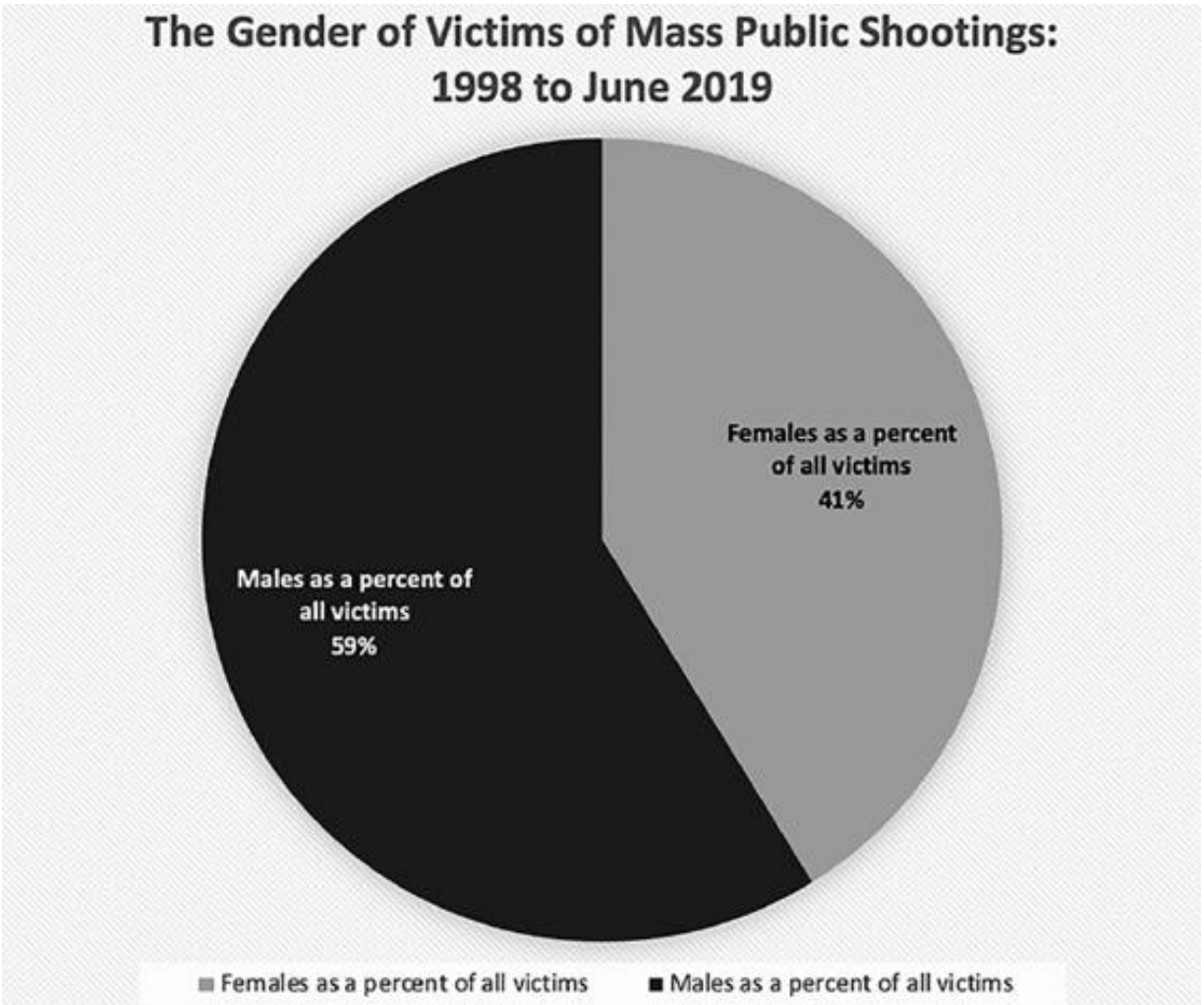


FIGURE 17

Because of 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz's attack at the high school in Parkland, Florida, a number of states have pushed to raise the minimum age for owning firearms to 21. Of the 74 Americans who have committed mass public shootings since 1998, 10 were under age 21. Five were under 18, making them too young to purchase a gun under existing law.

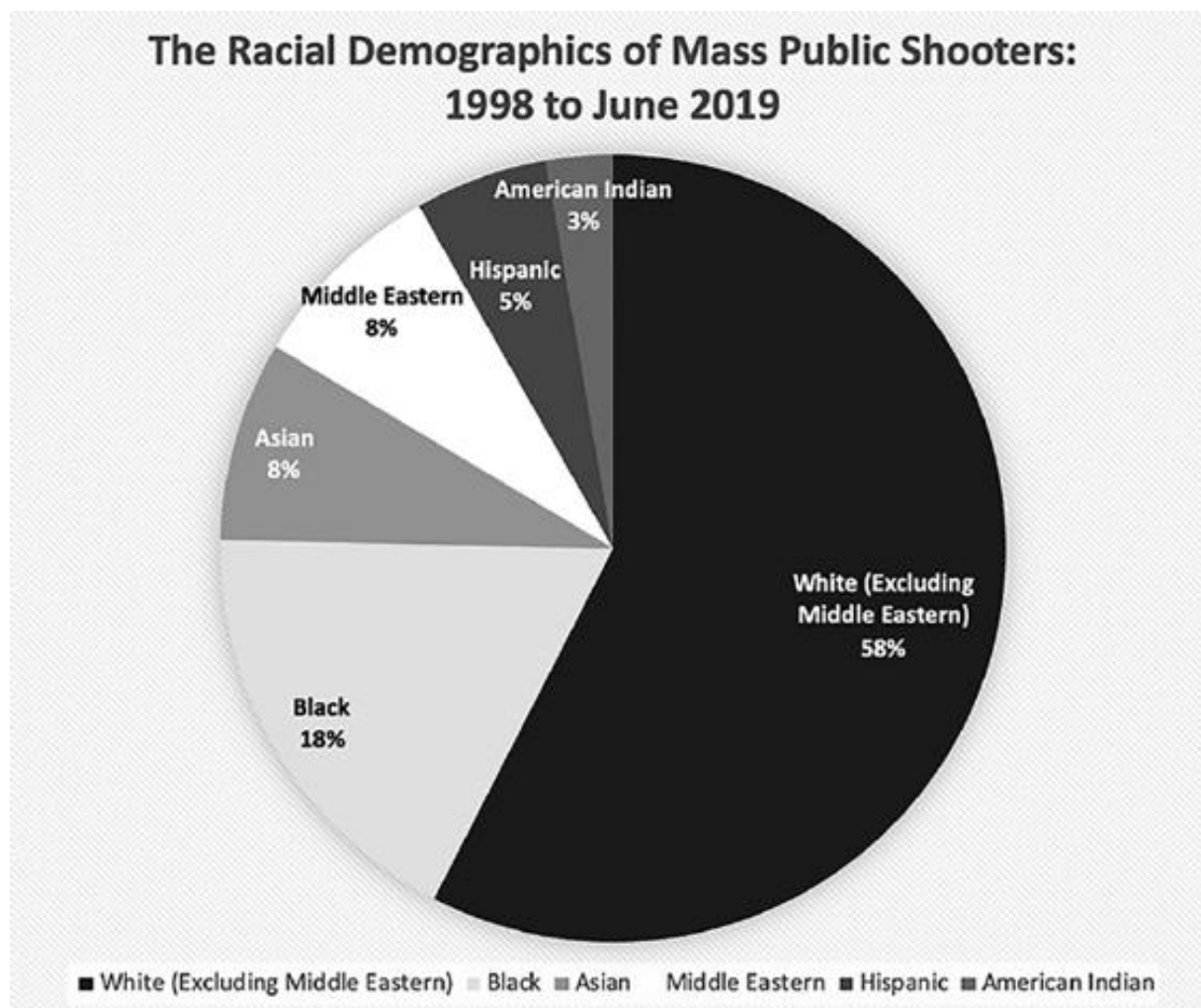


FIGURE 18

So, there are five cases since 1998 where raising the age limit could conceivably have made an impact ([Figure 19](#)). But it is likely that the shooters would have instead obtained a weapon illegally, as so many other attackers do.

Age Distribution of Killers in Mass Public Shootings: 1998 to June 2019

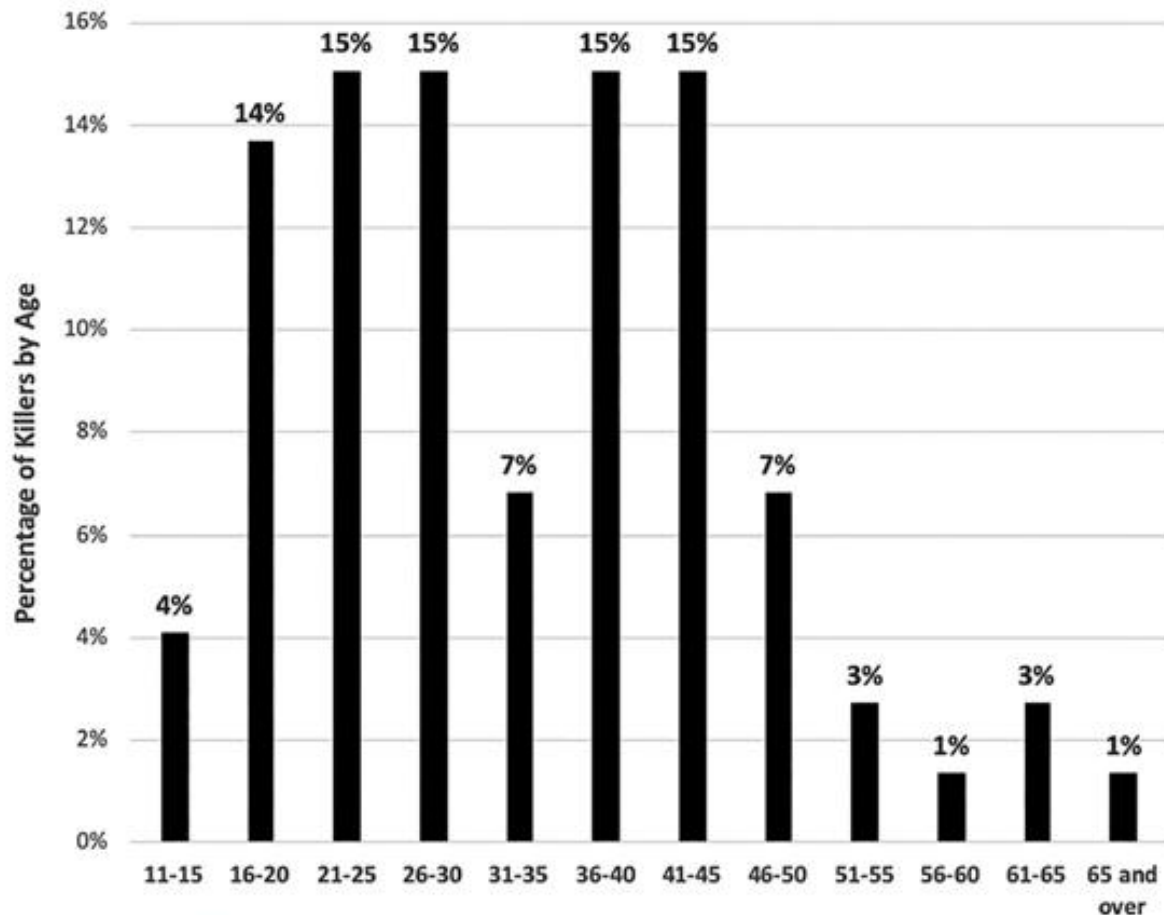


FIGURE 19

Age Distribution of Mass Public Shooters

Prior to 1994, there was no federal age requirement for buying a rifle, although some states had their own. The only peer-reviewed study on the federal age requirement was conducted by Thomas Marvell in the *Journal of Law and Economics*.⁶¹ Marvell concluded: “Where the 1994 laws seem to have an impact, the suggestion is almost always that crime increases; thus, there is no evidence that these bans had their intended effect.” In fact, Marvell found that the higher age requirement was associated with a 6 percent increase in firearm homicides.

The average age of shooters is 33 years and 5 months. Thirty-three years is also the median age for shooters, meaning that half of the attackers are older than 33.

Things get particularly distorted when it comes to the political and religious views of killers. The media and others often assume that if someone is a racist, they are a right-winger. For example, the Washington Post called the New Zealand mosque shooting in 2019, “One of the worst cases of right-wing terrorism in years.”⁶²

This was apparently the only narrative that was acceptable to social media outlets such as Twitter, which was deluged with posts calling the killer a “right-winger”. In March 2019, immediately after the New Zealand attack, I tweeted that the shooter was “a socialist, environmentalist, who hates capitalists & free trade.”⁶³ I also wrote that the killer believed his attack would “lead to more gun control” in New Zealand and the United States. Twitter locked my account for two months so that I couldn’t post anything or even read messages from other users.

No account seems to have ever been suspended for calling someone a “right-winger.”

Right-wingers don’t normally declare that “conservatism is dead” and that “global capitalist markets are the enemy of racial autonomists.” Tarrant calls himself an “Eco-fascist.” Have you ever met a right-winger who pontificates about the need for “furthering the unionization of workers” or minimum-wage increases? Or one who denounces “the ever-increasing wealth of the 1% that exploit the people for their own benefit”?

Tarrant writes: “The nation with the closest political and social values to my own is the People’s Republic of China.” The political figure with whom he most closely identifies? England’s Sir Oswald Mosley, who self-identified as a member of the “left” and a proponent of “European Socialism.”⁶⁴

Tarrant frequently disparages minorities, but his racism stems from environmentalist concerns. “The environment is being destroyed by over population, [and] we Europeans are one of the groups that are not over populating the world. The invaders are the ones over populating the world. Kill the invaders, kill the overpopulation and by doing so save the environment.”

Unlike the New Zealand killer, most mass public shooters have no obvious political leanings. According to the CPRC's sample of US killers, 72% had no known political point of view. The remainder were comprised of Islamic extremists (10%), conservatives or Republicans (3%), liberals or Democrats (3%), "right-wingers" (3%), and left-wingers (1%). The remaining 8% consists of other groups that each account for no more than 1% of shooters.⁶⁵ Similarly, few were religious: 68% had no apparent religion, 10% were Muslim, 6% were Christian, and 3% were anti-Christian.

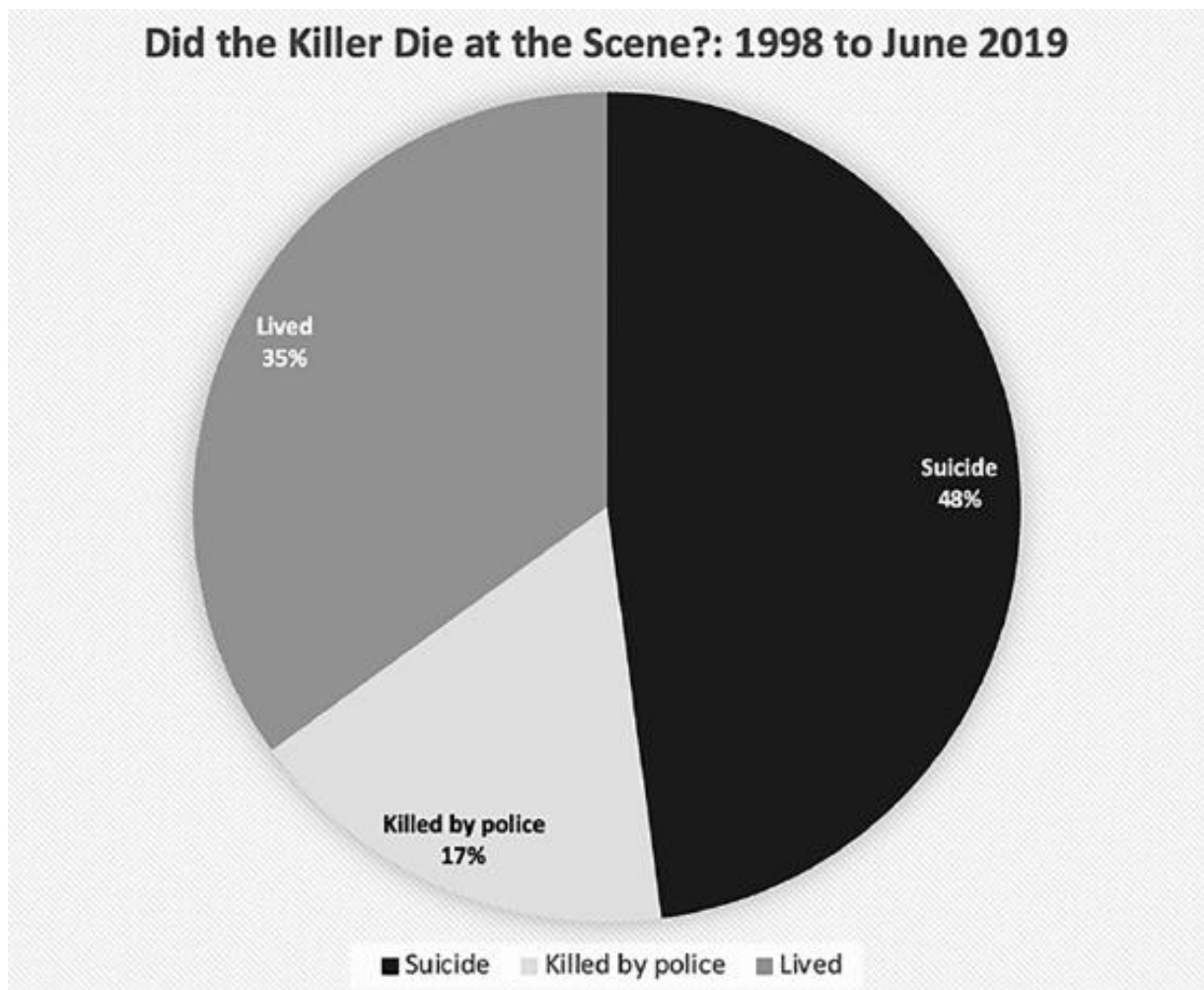


FIGURE 20

Sixty-five percent of mass public shooters die in their attacks (48% commit suicide, and 17% are killed by others) ([Figure 20](#)). The true suicide rate is higher, however, because some attackers chose what amounts to committing “police-assisted suicide.” Some of these killers plan on committing suicide, but do so indirectly by putting police in the position of having to use lethal force. Of the 35% who survive, it appears that almost all of them planned on dying during their attacks, but just couldn’t bring themselves to commit suicide when the time came.

The Changing Political Debate

“What good are your thoughts & prayers when they don’t even keep the pews safe? ... “Thoughts and prayers” is reference to the NRA’s phrase used to deflect conversation away from policy change during tragedies.”⁶⁶

— Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, March 14, 2019

The debate over gun control has become increasingly charged. In 2008, gun control was largely a non-issue in the presidential campaign.⁶⁷ Clinton ran to the right of Obama, and Obama disowned his own past history of supporting bans on guns. Instead, Obama promised to be a strong supporter of the 2nd Amendment.⁶⁸

Nor were guns much of an issue during the 2012 presidential election. But by 2016, the political climate had changed dramatically. That’s understandable, since mass public shootings have in fact increased in severity, even if their frequency hasn’t really changed ([Figure 21](#)).

The severity of recent attacks probably can’t explain the increased support for gun control, which began to rise in various surveys back in 2014 or 2015.

Democrats’ two central policy solutions remain: imposing background checks on private transfers of guns, and banning “weapons of war.”

The media almost never asks Democrats tough questions on guns. And there are many such questions to ask, since background checks on private gun transfers would not have stopped Parkland or any other US mass public shooting in this century.

Banning “military-style” guns won’t come close to stopping these attacks. That is true even if 2020 Democrat presidential candidates follow through on their pledge to buy back and destroy every gun that they consider to be an assault weapon.

As we have seen, killers fired handguns in 80 percent of US mass public shootings since 1998. In 54 percent of attacks, handguns were the only weapons used. By contrast, semi-automatic rifles were used exclusively in just 13 percent of cases. And given the various superficial definitions of what constitutes an assault weapon, not all of these rifles would qualify.

Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) describes assault weapons as “weapons from the military.”^{[69](#)} But no self-respecting military in the world uses these semi-automatic weapons. South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg knows that, but he’d rather give people the impression that military weapons are pervasive: “As someone who trained on weapons of war, I can tell you that there are weapons that have absolutely no place in American cities or neighborhoods ever.”

Number Murdered in Mass Public Shootings and Number of Attacks by Year: 1998 to June 2019

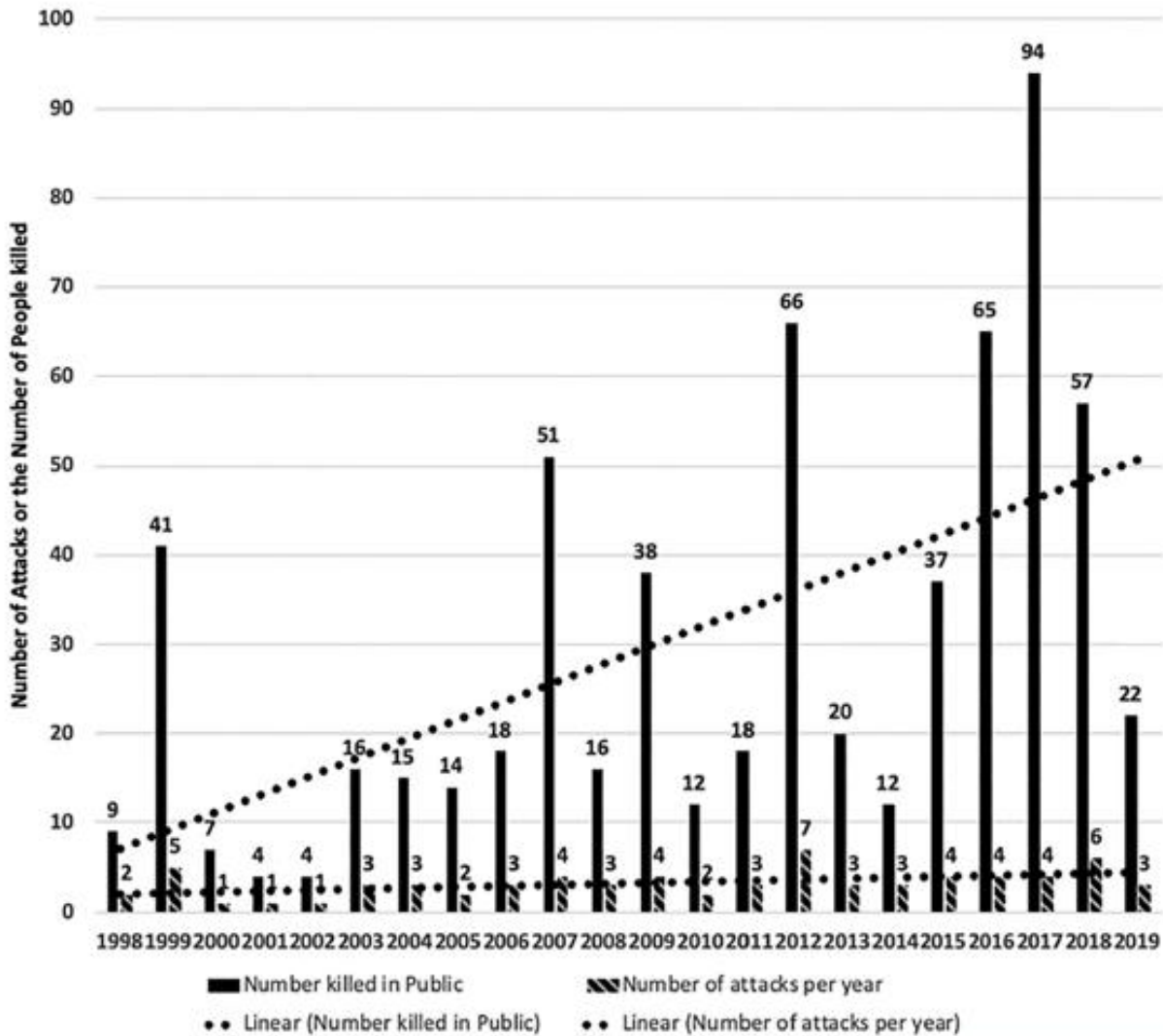


FIGURE 21

Mass public shooters in the US don't use weapons of war. But there is an importance difference between mass public shooters and other types of murders – mass public shooters usually die at the scene. Virtually all of them plan on dying so they don't think about arrest rates nor care about the legal penalties that exist for their crimes.

There is no effective regulatory answer to mass public shootings. Gun control laws aren't going to stop people who plan on dying in their

attacks. And locking up every seemingly unstable person in a padded cell would be too great a cost to human freedom. So what is our backup plan when truly dangerous people aren't identified and involuntarily committed to a mental health facility?

Armed, law-abiding citizens have the ability to stop these attacks, and they've proven it over and over again. Allowing concealed carry in public places will stop killers from taking so many lives and getting the media attention that they crave. It's little wonder that mass shooters keep targeting gun-free zones. ✚

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— CHAPTER 4 —

The Heroes that the News Media Doesn't Cover

“In the chaos and pressure of the moment, you can shoot the wrong person. Or, by drawing your weapon, you can become the wrong person—a hero mistaken for a second gunman by another would-be hero with a gun. Bang, you’re dead. Or worse, bang bang bang bang bang: a firefight among several armed, confused, and innocent people in a crowd.”¹

NBC News, January 11, 2011

To illustrate the supposed unreliability of concealed handgun permit holders, gun control advocates point to former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords’ shooting in 2011. Joe Zamudio, a permit holder, was at a nearby drug store when the attack occurred. He says that carrying a gun gave him the courage to run towards the shooting.² As he rounded the corner and saw the chaos, his first thought was that the person holding the gun was the shooter. In fact, that person had taken the gun away from the killer.

Zamudio briefly considered shooting the wrong person. Gun control advocates say that this illustrates the danger of concealed handgun

permit holders who try to intervene in these attacks. But, of course, Zamudio didn't shoot the wrong person.

So much of the gun control debate is about what hypothetically might go wrong. But let's look at the actual reality.

Below, I list instances of permit holders intervening in attacks from 2014 through early 2019. There were also many such interventions prior to 2014, but not a single known case of a permit holder shooting the wrong person. Responding police officers also have never accidentally shot a permit holder who was legally carrying and had just intervened in one of these attacks.

There are simply too many targets for police to be able to guard everyone.

Permit holders make life a bit easier for guards. If a terrorist tries to kill a guard, he reveals his position and makes himself a target to someone with a concealed handgun.

We cannot realistically keep terrorists and criminals from getting weapons. The war on guns has been as much of a failure as the war on drugs. Terrorists can also use homemade bombs, and have lately made a habit of utilizing vehicles as weapons.

What happens when background checks on gun purchases inevitably fail to stop these killers from attacking? What is the backup plan?

Below, we have collected news stories on cases of permit holders stopping mass public shootings with their handguns. There is no reason to believe that this list is comprehensive, given how little media coverage is devoted to these heroic acts. Concealed handguns are also used very frequently to stop other types of crimes, and we make no attempt here to list the vast number of defensive gun uses that are reported daily in the US.

Permit holders stopped some mass public shootings that gained extensive news coverage, but only a few stories mentioned that it was a permit holder who stopped the attack. The stories frequently get other facts wrong.

We probably do not have all of the cases where a permit holder stopped a mass public shooting. But if a permit holder were to shoot a bystander, it seems clear that such an event would get news coverage.

Colonial Heights, Tennessee, February 13, 2019

Larry Seagroves, a concealed handgun permit holder, stopped a shooting at a dentist's office in Colonial Heights, Tennessee.³ After killer Harry Weaver fatally shot his wife, he turned his gun on other people in the office. Dental hygienist Sabrina Steal recounts how he "raised a gun to shoot me." At that moment, Seagroves shot the killer. After the attack, a wounded Harry Weaver told the police: "You all wouldn't be dealing with me right now if the hero hadn't stepped in."⁴

WJHL TV Channel 11 in Johnson City, Tennessee reported: "It was just a horrific situation that police said could have possibly been even worse if a patient at that dentist office didn't take action. We are talking about a man identified as Larry Seagroves, a man with a carry permit."

"He was a concealed carry permit holder and I'm going to call him a hero today,"⁵ said Sullivan County Sheriff Jeff Cassidy.

Birmingham, Alabama, October 27, 2018

A masked man entered a McDonald's restaurant and immediately started firing his gun. A concealed handgun permit holder returned fire, killing the attacker. "He's my hero," said Markus Washington, an employee in the restaurant. "I can only imagine how it would've went if he wasn't armed. We might not be here having this interview."⁶ Over 15 shots were fired.

WBRC Channel 6 in Birmingham, Alabama had this account of the attack:

*A masked man entered the restaurant when an employee opened the door for a father and his sons to leave. The masked man then opened fire in the restaurant. At that point, the father began shooting at the masked man. Both the father and the masked man were struck along with one of the children. Police later confirmed that the masked man is now deceased, and the father had non-life threatening injuries. A minor had non-life-threatening injuries.*⁷

Louisville, Kentucky, Wednesday, October 24, 2018

Even in the extremely rare event that the national news media covers an attack which was stopped by a permit holder, that critical part of the story gets left out. Only the local news media got the story right when, last October, a concealed handgun permit holder stopped a racist attacker who was shooting blacks at a Kroger grocery store in Louisville, Kentucky.

National media outlets such as ABC,^{[8](#)} CNN,^{[9](#)} and NBC noted that the alleged gunman told another white man: “Whites don’t kill whites.” It sounded as if the gunman was merely reassuring a bystander. But that bystander was a permit holder who was pointing a gun at the killer. What the killer actually said was: “*Don’t shoot me. I won’t shoot you. Whites don’t shoot whites.*”^{[10](#)} The killer was pleading with a permit holder not to shoot him.

The local media in the Louisville area got the story right. But somehow the national media, which relied on the local media for their own reporting, got the story completely backwards.

No one, including any bystanders, were injured or killed by the ensuing exchange of gunfire between the killer and the permit holder.^{[11](#)} But the killer was forced to flee the scene in his vehicle. Police located him and his vehicle on Hurstbourne Parkway, where he was taken into custody.

Titusville, Florida, August 4, 2018

A shooting at a back-to-school event was quickly stopped by a concealed handgun permit holder. Approximately 200 people, mostly children, were present at the event.^{[12](#)} “Based on the information that we’ve gathered, this person stepped in and saved a lot of people’s lives,” Titusville Police Sgt. William Amos told reporters.^{[13](#)} The Sergeant also told another paper: “He’s a hero. This park was filled with families and

children and, at that time, it was an active shooter situation for him and he was trained enough to deal with it -- and he did.”^{[14](#)}

In a state that had just experienced the Majorie Douglas High School shooting earlier that same year, one would think that the media would be more likely to cover stories of attempted mass public shootings. But the national media completely ignored this story.

Tumwater, Washington, June 18, 2018

“He is a hero,” Bryan Adams, a customer at the Walmart where the shooting occurred, said. “He took action. I really think more people could have been shot... he saved us all.”^{[15](#)}

A wild rampage at a Walmart in Tumwater, Washington was stopped when three concealed handgun permit holders confronted and killed the attacker. The attacker had arrived in a carjacked vehicle, and stole ammunition from Walmart while continuing to shoot at people. He unsuccessfully tried to carjack another vehicle, seriously wounding the driver. When he attempted to carjack a second car, two armed customers fatally shot the attacker.

According to the local Fox affiliate and Fox News, the man who killed the attacker is a pastor with five kids who was out with his family.^{[16](#)}

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Thursday, May 24, 2018

Juan Carlos Nazario, 35, and Bryan Whittle, 39, stopped what likely would have been a mass shooting at Louie’s Grill & Bar in Oklahoma City. “You can say they’re heroes, which is a very good thing to say,”^{[17](#)} said Police Capt. Bo Matthews. “They were able to shoot the suspect and put an end to a very dangerous situation.”^{[18](#)}

The shooter, Alexander Tilghman, shot at people “from a position outside the front door” of the restaurant.^{[19](#)} But Nazario and Whittle retrieved their handguns from their cars and took aim at Tilghman

from the parking lot. “Drop the gun!” Nazario repeatedly yelled. The shooter didn’t respond, and instead raised the gun again and fired a round into the parking lot.^{[20](#)} Whittle fired, killing the gunman.^{[21](#)}

Nazario is a security guard, and Whittle was able to legally carry a gun openly without a permit (it is unknown whether he had a concealed handgun permit, though it wasn’t necessary in Oklahoma).^{[22](#)}

The District Attorney issued this statement: “The two civilians who engaged, and ultimately neutralized the threat posed by Tilghman, were justified and compliant with the law when they employed deadly force.”^{[23](#)}

San Antonio, Texas, December 7, 2017

This case is an exception to all of the other listed cases in that it received national coverage on Time magazine’s website.^{[24](#)} A father and his children were walking out of a restroom when the attacker was about to start shooting at them. The father reacted quickly, and killed the attacker.

This case was also unusual because the attack was part of some other crime, namely a robbery. From ABC 13 in San Antonio: “Police say the father is a licensed carrier. He is not facing any charges. Officials also say the father saved several lives. . . .”^{[25](#)}

Rockledge, Florida, November 17, 2017

(Florida Today, WFTV.com in Orlando)

Two concealed handgun permit holders stopped an attack at Schlenker Automotive repair shop at 4:30 PM on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Robert Bailey, armed with a .45-caliber handgun and “multiple magazines,” killed one person and severely wounded another in the business parking lot. Bailey continued shooting inside the shop.^{[26](#)}

Two workers, both concealed handgun permit holders, returned fire and left the killer wounded. “Police say this could have been even much

worse,” noted local television station WFTV. The shop was packed with customers,^{[27](#)} and police declared the permit holder a “good Samaritan.”

According to news reports, Bailey had no connection to the auto shop and didn’t even own a car. It appears that Bailey simply selected a target where he thought he could kill people.

Clearlake Oaks, California, October 23, 2017

At 11:23 a.m. on October 23, 2017, 61-year-old Alan Ashmore opened fire with a shotgun and handgun while on a residential street in Clearlake Oaks, California. He fired into several homes and a vehicle, killing two people (including his father). One was injured in the gunfire, and another was wounded while fleeing out of a residence window.

The attacker then shot and wounded a responding law enforcement officer before fleeing in his vehicle. He drove to a nearby, crowded gas station and exchanged gunfire with the vendor, who possessed a valid firearms permit.^{[28](#)} Forced to break off his attack, the shooter fled the scene in his vehicle and drove to another gas station, where he fired more shots.^{[29](#)}

Antioch, Tennessee, September 24, 2017

Sudanese immigrant Emanuel Kidega Samson, 25, killed one and injured seven others. Samson was armed with two handguns, and the attack could have been much worse. A 22-year-old usher, Robert Engle, first tried unsuccessfully to wrestle Samson, a very large body builder. But Samson accidentally shot himself in the skirmish, and the slight wound gave Engle a chance to retrieve his permitted concealed handgun from his car. Engle returned to the church and managed to hold the attacker at gunpoint until police arrived.

“He is the hero here,” said Police Chief Steve Anderson. “He is the person who stopped this madness in its tracks.”^{[30](#)}

Arlington, Texas, May 3, 2017

This attack at a sports bar was stopped before more than one person was killed. After being shot by the concealed handgun permit holder, the killer started firing at the front door. Customers were fleeing the restaurant, and police spokesman Christopher Cook credited the permit holder for having “prevented further loss of life.”³¹ “We do believe he had the capacity to do much greater harm.”³² The Dallas Morning News carried the headline: “‘Hero’ stopped mass murder by crazed bar patron who was armed to the teeth, police say.” . . .

The killer, 48-year-old James Jones of Grand Prairie, carried two loaded guns and two knives. He killed a 37-year-old employee, Cesar Perez of Duncanville. Over a dozen customers were in the sports bar when the attack occurred.³³

Townville Elementary School, September 28, 2016

On September 28, 2016, at 1:45 p.m., Jesse Dewitt Osborne, 14, allegedly began shooting a handgun at the Townville Elementary School playground in Townville, South Carolina.³⁴ Prior to the attack, the shooter and former student killed his father at their home. Two people were killed at the playground, including one student. A teacher and two students were wounded.

A volunteer firefighter with a valid firearms permit restrained the shooter until law enforcement officers arrived.

Lyman, South Carolina, June 30, 2016

(Fox Carolina)

This nightclub shooting came just a couple of weeks after the Pulse Nightclub massacre in Orlando, Florida. Fortunately, unlike Florida and ten other states, South Carolina allowed permitted concealed handguns in bars. Before Thompson, the attacker, could shoot a fourth person, the

permit holder was able to shoot the attacker in the leg.³⁵ The local media reported, “At least one South Carolina sheriff are crediting a man with a concealed carry permit with preventing further violence at a nightclub this past Sunday.”³⁶

Winton, Ohio, Sunday, July 26, 2015

The shooter in this case directly fired at four different people. Fortunately, because of the permit holder’s quick actions, no one was seriously injured.³⁷

62-year-old Thomas McCary was arguing with a woman on a Sunday night. Then the woman’s brother, Patrick Ewing, approached and McCary pulled out a .38-caliber handgun. He fired three times.

Ewing didn’t get hit, but he did retrieve his own gun and return fire, wounding McCary in the leg. Ewing had a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

Injured, McCary went into his house to get a second gun. Holding a weapon in each hand, he fired three shots in the direction of the woman, Jeaneta Walker, her 1-year-old son, and a third man.

Ewing fired at McCary again to try to distract him as the victims fled indoors. McCary squeezed off a few more rounds, hitting no one, before withdrawing into his apartment, Cincinnati.com reported.

Conyers, Georgia, Sunday, May 31, 2015

A concealed handgun permit holder was walking past a liquor store when he heard shots from inside. The attacker fired his gun upon entering the store, and had already killed two people when 44-year-old permit holder, Todd C. Scott, started firing. Then the attacker immediately fled.

“I believe that if Mr. Scott did not return fire at the suspect, then more of those customers would have [been] hit by a gun,” said Rockdale County Sheriff Eric Levett. “It didn’t appear that he cared who he shot or where he was shooting, until someone was shooting back at him. So in my opinion, he saved other lives in that store.”³⁸ The Sheriff added “I consider him to be a hero.”³⁹

Would-be mass public shootings may not get news coverage if no one is killed. But in this case, two people were killed before the permit holder was able to stop the attack. The permit holder’s actions were even caught on the store’s cameras, but the national media was still not interested in this heroic story.

New Holland, Wisconsin, May 5th, 2015

The news headline summarized the event succinctly: “CWPs [Concealed weapon permit holders] likely stopped deaths of children, firefighters.”⁴⁰ The fire station parking lot was full of children who were enjoying ice cream, various games, and rides on the fire trucks.

Attacker Chad Barker pulled up his vehicle to the fire station and immediately began randomly firing his gun. Two firefighters with concealed handgun permits pulled out their guns and pointed them at the gunman. The gunman also pointed his firearm at the firefighters, and threatened to shoot them, but eventually put his gun down. The firefighters held him on the ground until police arrive.

With all of the children at the event, one can only imagine the amount of international news coverage if the attack had proceeded. Instead, the attack didn’t even receive any national news coverage.

Chicago, Illinois, April 19, 2015

An Uber driver with a permitted concealed handgun stopped what likely would have become a mass public shooting.⁴¹ On a Friday evening, 22-year-old Everardo Custodio started firing into a group of people on a Logan Square sidewalk in Chicago. The Uber driver, who had just dropped off a passenger, “was acting in self-defense and in the

defense of others,” said Assistant State’s Attorney Barry Quinn. Custodio suffered wounds to his shin, knee and lower back, and was on the ground bleeding when the police arrived. Police recovered Custodio’s handgun at the scene. The judge denied bail to Custodio, who faced charges of aggravated battery with a firearm and illegal possession of a firearm.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 22, 2015

On a Sunday afternoon in a barber shop in Philadelphia, after a brief argument, a 40-year-old man pulled out his gun and started shooting at customers and barbers. Another man who was walking by the shop heard the gun fire, drew his gun, and entered. The good Samaritan opened fire on the attacker, fatally shooting him once in the chest. “The person who responded was a legal gun permit carrier,” said Philadelphia Police Captain Frank Llewellyn. “He responded and I guess he saved a lot of people in there.”[42](#)

Darby, Pennsylvania, July 25, 2014

On a Thursday afternoon, Delaware County psychiatrist Dr. Lee Silverman stopped what both police and the district attorney described as an otherwise certain mass killing at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital.[43](#)

The attacker, Richard Plotts, has a felony record which precludes him from legally owning a gun. But Pennsylvania’s universal background check law did not stop him. Neither did the hospital signs that prohibited guns.

Plotts killed caseworker Theresa Hunt when he opened fire during a regularly scheduled appointment with Dr. Lee Silverman. Fortunately, the doctor had his own gun and returned fire, hitting Plotts three times and critically wounding him.

After firing all of the rounds in his gun, Plotts still had 39 extra bullets that he could have used to shoot many other people. Silverman’s three hits, however, enabled two other hospital employees to tackle the

wounded attacker and secure his .32-caliber revolver. Plotts was charged with murder and attempted murder.

Yeadon Police Chief Donald Molineux was clear: “Without a doubt, I believe the doctor saved lives.... Without that firearm, this guy [Plotts] could have went out in the hallway and just walked down the offices until he ran out of ammunition.”

Delaware County District Attorney Jack Whelan concurred: “If the doctor did not have a firearm, [and] the doctor did not utilize the firearm, he’d be dead today, and I believe that other people in that facility would also be dead.”

Silverman apparently violated the hospital’s gun-free zone rule, but he appears to be in no danger of disciplinary action. The hospital announced that it was thankful for the “brave and difficult action” of Silverman and his colleagues, specifically noting: “We look forward to Dr. Silverman’s return to serving patients at our hospital.”

Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 2014

A military member and three others were leaving a party Friday night when one of them noticed a cup of liquor on top of her car.^{[44](#)} She asked attendees who the cup belonged to, and finally removed the cup.

One of the people at the party, Denzel Mickiel, started yelling obscenities and threatened the woman and her friends. Mickiel then started firing his gun at the group of four. He was soon joined by two other people from the same party, who also started firing. The military member, who had a concealed handgun permit, fired two shots and wounded Mickiel with both of them.

One of the party of four was wounded in the arm and back by Mickiel’s shots. The four victims drove away from the attackers, who continued firing.

Portland, Oregon, January 11, 2014

After being thrown out from a nightclub, Thomas Eliot Hjelmeland returned a half hour later wearing a face mask and carrying a gun.^{[45](#)}

Hjelmeland, who was on probation at the time of the attack, shot the bouncer who had ousted him and continued to shoot at others. The bouncer was critically wounded in the head, and two other people were injured — one customer in the foot, and a waitress in both legs.

Another bouncer, Jonathan Baer, fatally shot Hjelmeland with a permitted concealed handgun. Club owner Connie Barnes called Baer “a hero.”^{[46](#)}

“I did what I felt was right to stop the shooter... I carry every day, and will continue to, and will [do] so with the hope that I will NEVER have to pull it out again,” Baer wrote in a Facebook post.

Permit holders have stopped shootings in many other places, including churches and synagogues:

Aurora, Colo., April 24, 2012: Kiarron Parker crashed into a car in a church parking lot, before exiting his vehicle and opening fire.^{[47](#)} Parker was only able to kill one person before being shot dead by a parishioner, who happened to be an off-duty police officer.

Spartanburg, S.C., March 25, 2012: Jesse Gates kicked open a church door and pointed a shotgun at the pastor and his congregation. Parishioner Aaron Guyton, a concealed weapons permit holder, got the drop on Gates and held him at gunpoint. Sheriff Chuck Wright called Aaron and others at the church, “Everyday heroes.”^{[48](#)}

Colorado Springs, Colo., Dec. 9, 2007: Matthew Murray killed two people in the Colorado Springs New Life Church parking lot before being shot by church member Jeanne Assam.^{[49](#)} A wounded Murray then committed suicide. The church was a megachurch with over 10,000 members, and Murray had over a thousand rounds of ammunition. Assam had obtained a concealed handgun permit to protect herself from an ex, and the minister designated her as a volunteer security guard in order to let her carry at the church.

There has been one case of a police officer fatally shooting a concealed handgun permit holder. The attack occurred at the Galleria Mall in Hoover, Alabama on November 23, 2018. One person was shot by an attacker. E.J. Bradford, the permit holder, was not involved in stopping the attack, but was running toward the victim with his gun drawn when he was shot by the police officer. The Alabama Attorney General cleared the police officer, saying that he acted reasonably because of the chaos.⁵⁰ Perhaps because of the mall's ban on concealed carry, the officer did not consider that the individual may be a permit holder.⁵¹

The entire gun control debate would likely be dramatically different if the national media would cover some of the heroic actions of permit holders. It would also make a difference if the news media pointed out that virtually all successful mass public shootings occur in places where people aren't allowed to defend themselves. ✚

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— CHAPTER 5 —

Politicizing the FBI

Many people focus on the political biases in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's treatment of the Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton campaigns, but the political corruption of the agency goes deeper. During the Obama administration, the FBI issued false reports to the media in order to advance the gun control agenda. One can also see it in the FBI's raw crime data, particularly when it comes to the public shootings that have so galvanized Americans.

The first Obama-era FBI report on mass public shootings came out in 2014, just weeks before the midterm elections. It is hard to believe that this wasn't timed for maximum political influence.

Monkeying with the data

"Also interesting to note, in a 2014 study the FBI says 13% of mass casualties were ended by someone talking the person down. While only 5% of mass casualties were ended by someone with a weapon."^{[1](#)}

— Fox 17 Nashville, Tennessee, August 5, 2019

"An FBI list of 277 'active shooter incidents' from 2000 through 2018 published in April — the 20th anniversary of Columbine — shows a sharp rise during the latter half of the study period. Active shooter incidents averaged 8.6 a year from 2000 through 2009. From 2010 through 2018, that number jumped to an average 21.2 a year, two and a half times more frequently."^{[2](#)}

**— John Woolfolk, Tony Saavedra, and Robert Salonga, many
California newspapers, August 11, 2019**

Government data are used constantly in policy debates, after being unquestioningly reported by the media. Because the government has compiled the data, people tend to assume that it is accurate.

The FBI's first report claimed that from 2000 to 2013, a concealed handgun permit holder stopped only one of 160 reported "active shooter" attacks.³ These active shooter attacks include any instance of a gun being fired in a public place, even if no one is injured or killed. They exclude gang fights or shootings that arise out of other crimes such as robberies.

The FBI report received massive news coverage on the front pages of such newspapers as The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, as well as on all of the TV news networks.⁴ Gun control activists have frequently cited the report in court cases and political debates, in order to support the claim that civilians rarely use guns to stop public shootings.

As I explained in a recent study for the *Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Today*,⁵ the purported increase in active shooter cases from 2000 to 2013 was a result of mistakes in how the data were collected.

One problem is that the authors used Google news searches to compile the cases. Google is good for finding recent stories, but articles become scarcer as one looks further back in time.

That isn't a problem for finding mass public shootings in which large numbers of people were killed. If there are 800 news stories within the first week of an attack, a Google news search five years later might yield only 400 stories. After ten years, maybe just a couple hundred will appear. But there will always be some news articles about large mass shooting. But when there is a shooting with no casualties, you might be lucky to find one news story even a week after the event. After a few years, a Google news search is very unlikely to find evidence that the shooting ever took place.

Unfortunately, the problems with the reports have continued during the Trump administration. The latest FBI report, released in May,

misses still more cases. The FBI claims that from 2014 to 2017, there were 90 active shooter cases and only seven in which permit holders stopped the attack.⁶

In all, the FBI claims that concealed handgun permit holders have stopped 3.2 percent of active shooter incidents from 2000 to 2017.

But the bureau missed at least seven cases where permit holders saved the day. So, in fact, permit holders stopped 11.5 percent of active shooter incidents from 2000 to 2017.

Since I didn't start collecting these cases until 2014, my searches probably did not yield as many of the cases that occurred in the early 2000s. I am much more confident that my list of cases from 2014 to 2017 is more or less exhaustive. My numbers show that at least 16.5 percent of attacks between 2014 and 2017 were stopped by concealed handgun permit holders.

Back in 2015, when I pointed out errors in the first FBI report, the authors simply responded, "We acknowledge in the FBI report that our data are imperfect." But no correction was ever made.

I received a somewhat more useful response when I contacted the FBI again in May 2018, after its report was updated through 2017. This time, the FBI acknowledged that it had missed a case, but insisted that the other six cases I mentioned didn't meet its definition of an active shooter incident.

Take the first case that the FBI responded to. On May 3, 2017, a permit holder stopped an attack at a restaurant in Arlington, Texas. The Dallas Morning News headline read: "'Hero' stopped mass murder by a crazed bar patron who was armed to the teeth, police say." The police spokesman said that the concealed handgun permit holder "prevented further loss of life" by taking out the killer. "The suspect started shooting at the front door.... We know people were trying to escape," the spokesman continued.

The FBI responded: "Does not meet the FBI definition. The shooter had previously complained about the manager to his cousin. Subject knew the manager prior and only shot the manager, no one else."

The FBI lists plenty of *similar cases* where an attacker was acting on a grudge. One occurred at the Crawford County Courthouse in Girard,

Kansas, on Sept. 13, 2011. The FBI report noted that killer Jesse Ray Palmer “inquired about the location of a specific judge, who was not in the building, and then shot and wounded the judge’s secretary.”

Or take a shooting at another bar — the Sandbar Sports Grill in Vail, Colo., on Nov. 7, 2009. According to the FBI: “Before the attack, Moreau had an argument inside the bar and was escorted out by security.” He returned to the bar and killed the person who he had the argument with.

It’s not clear why it should matter that the attacker “only shot the manager, no one else.” The shooting still satisfies the FBI’s definition of an active shooter incident. The FBI’s list of active shootings contains many incidents in which no one was either killed or wounded.

In the Arlington case, the killer not only shot at the manager, but also shot at the front door when people were trying to escape. The manager wasn’t near the front door.

The FBI admitted that it sometimes makes subjective decisions. “The selection of cases for inclusion in these reports is the result of a consensus vote of analysts and Law Enforcement professionals using the methodology stated in the original 2013 study. In some cases, a level of interpretation is required with which all may not agree.”

But that isn’t very helpful for trying to figure out why the FBI included some cases and excluded others. It appears that the FBI is biased against including cases in which a concealed handgun permit holder stopped further carnage.

Without accurate data, we can’t adequately analyze the life-and-death consequences of different policies. We will miss the right solutions. Letting people control the data lets them control the political debate.

The FBI did admit to mistakenly excluding a case in Conyers, Georgia. But the FBI still hasn’t corrected its public list as of this writing. This unwillingness should call into question the FBI’s commitment to accurately informing the public.

If a permit holder intervenes in a shooting and prevents any loss of life, that event is unlikely to receive much news coverage. But at the liquor store in Conyers, Georgia, two people were killed before the

permit holder was able to stop the attack. A local media report described the situation this way:⁷

Rockdale County Sheriff Eric Levett said at a press conference Monday that Todd C. Scott, 44, a resident of Covington, very likely prevented other customers in the store from losing their lives.

Levett said store video from Magnet Bottle Shop showed that the suspect, Jeffrey Scott Pitts, 36, came in the store Sunday afternoon firing a handgun.

“I believe that if Mr. Scott did not return fire at the suspect then more of those customers would have been hit by a gun,” said [Rockdale County Sheriff Eric Levett]. “It didn’t appear that he cared who he shot or where he was shooting until someone was shooting back at him. **So in my opinion he saved other lives in that store.**”

Another report in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution had the Sheriff referring to Scott as “a hero.”⁸ When alerted to this case, the FBI responded: “The FBI did not come across this incident during its research back in 2015, but it does meet the FBI’s active shooter definition.... There is no reporting requirement for Law Enforcement agencies to report potential active shooter incidents to the FBI, so some cases will be missed.”

Six other cases that were excluded by the FBI along with the discussion that I had with them about why they excluded the cases are provided in the [Appendix 5.1](#).

The loophole that never was

“On gun control, Dylann Roof is facing the death penalty for what happened inside the church behind you. In his case, he had a criminal record. He was still able to buy a gun. A mistake in the system allowed him through.”⁹

— Bill Hemmer, Fox News Sunday, August 11, 2019

Dylann Roof fatally shot nine black churchgoers at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. The thinking

goes that if only the federal government had much longer to do a background check — at least ten days — it would have discovered that Roof was prohibited from owning a gun. A longer waiting period for background checks would thus have saved lives.

Congress even passed a bill in February 2019 to close this so-called “Charleston Loophole.”^{[10](#)} Then-FBI-Director James Comey fed the myth by claiming that a mistake was made in identifying Roof’s criminal record. CNN reported: “An agent working for the FBI’s background check system, who was performing the review on Roof, failed to contact the Columbia, South Carolina, police department which arrested Roof — in part because of a clerical error in records, listing the wrong agency.”^{[11](#)}

Most people know that any felony conviction, even a non-violent one, precludes you from ever legally owning a gun. Even a misdemeanor domestic violence conviction will ban you from having a gun. Just being charged with a state offense that could result in a prison term of two years is sufficient for you to lose your right to buy a gun.^{[12](#)} People can also be banned from buying a gun if they are addicts or admit to being addicts.

Comey also noted that an “initial check of Roof’s criminal history showed that he [Roof] had been arrested in South Carolina, March 1, on a felony drug charge.”^{[13](#)} But a few weeks later, it was acknowledged to have been inaccurate. Roof had only been charged with a misdemeanor that could have resulted in at most six months in prison — too little to have barred him from buying a gun.^{[14](#)}

Comey noted another reason for which Roof could have been banned from purchasing a gun: being “an unlawful drug user or addict.”^{[15](#)} But no court would have upheld such a finding based on a single, first-time drug possession charge.

The FBI has never publicly acknowledged the fact that Roof was legally able to buy a gun and that no amount of double-checking would have made any difference. There is no such thing as the “Charleston Loophole.” To have stopped Roof, we would have needed to prohibit gun ownership by people with mere misdemeanor arrests (not even a conviction).

Possibly, the failure of the FBI to correct the record on this case is just an accidental oversight. But this shooting was a very high-profile case that continues to be talked about in the news. So it is also possible that the FBI let political considerations influence its actions.

Conclusion

Whether it is willful or just the result of incompetence, the FBI has helped serve a politically-biased agenda. The Trump administration still has a lot more housecleaning to do at the FBI – more than almost anyone realizes. ✦

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18 USC 92
(d)It shall be unlawful for any person to sell or otherwise dispose of any firearm or ammunition to any person knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that such person —
(1) is under indictment for, or has been convicted in any court of, a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year;
(2) is a fugitive from justice;
(3) is an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance (as defined in section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802[law.cornell.edu]]);
(g)It shall be unlawful for any person—
(1) who has been convicted in any court of, a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year;
(2) who is a fugitive from justice;
(3) who is an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance (as defined in section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802[law.cornell.edu]]);
18 USC 921(a)
(14) The term “indictment” includes an indictment or information in any court under which a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year may be prosecuted.
(20) The term “crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year” does not include—
(A) any Federal or State offenses pertaining to antitrust violations, unfair trade practices, restraints of trade, or other similar offenses relating to the regulation of business practices, or
(B) any State offense classified by the laws of the State as a misdemeanor and punishable by a term of imprisonment of two years or less.
The FBI’s statement on the Dylann Roof case is as follows: “Dylann Roof was arrested in Lexington County, South Carolina and according to an incident report dated March 1, 2015 Roof admitted possessing Suboxone, a Schedule III narcotic, without a prescription which would have prohibited the transfer of the firearm based on the protocol the NICS Section uses for a final determination in establishing inference of current use for 18 USC §922 (g) (3) based upon the definition as provided below, 27 C.F.R. §478.11.”
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— CHAPTER 6 —

How a Botched Study Fooled the World About the U.S. Share of Mass Public Shootings: U.S. Rate is Lower than Global Average

“I say this every time we’ve got one of these mass shootings: This just doesn’t happen in other countries.”

–President Obama, news conference at COP21 climate conference in Paris, Dec. 1, 2015

“The one thing we do know is that we have a pattern now of mass shootings in this country that has no parallel anywhere else in the world.”

–Obama, interview that aired on CBS Evening News, Dec. 2, 2015

“This doesn’t happen anywhere else on the planet.”

–California’s Gov.-elect Gavin Newsom, November 8, 2018^{[1](#)}

“We stand alone in the world in the number of mass shootings.”

I. Introduction

To substantiate the claims in these and other quotes, President Obama’s administration cited a then-unpublished paper by criminologist Adam Lankford.³ The study received attention in hundreds of news stories, with coverage in at least 35 different countries. Purporting to cover all mass public shootings around the world from 1966 to 2012, Lankford claimed that the United States was host to 31% of public mass shooters despite having less than 5% of the world population.⁴

Major media outlets gave Lankford’s claims uncritical coverage. Headlines accepted his findings as fact.

—*The Wall Street Journal*: “U.S. Leads World in Mass Shootings.”⁵

—*The Wall Street Journal* (subheading): “U.S. produces more mass shootings than other countries.”⁶

—*The Los Angeles Times*: “Why the U.S. is No. 1—in mass shootings.”⁷

—*Time magazine*: “Why the US has 31% of the World’s Mass Shootings.”⁸

—*Newsweek magazine*: “Study Sees Mass Shootings as ‘Exceptionally American Problem.’”⁹

—*Washington Post*: “American exceptionalism and the ‘exceptionally American’ problem of mass shootings.”¹⁰

—*CNN*: “Why the U.S. has the most mass shootings.”¹¹

—*Sunday Morning Herald* (Australia): “Why the U.S. is No. 1 in Mass Shootings.”¹²

USA Today, *PBS Newshour*, NPR, *ABC Evening News*, Fox News, and many other major outlets also reported on Lankford's study in 2015.^{[13](#)} The stories were carried by various wire services, and many publications have covered Lankford's claims repeatedly. The Washington Post called it a "famous study."^{[14](#)}

The study has received extensive attention in countries such as Australia, Austria, Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Cuba.^{[15](#)}

The media has continually used Lankford's numbers and asserted that the US has an incredibly high rate of mass public shootings. Often, this is attributed to America's high gun ownership rate.

Unfortunately, Lankford has not published or released his list of mass public shootings, or even the number of cases by country or by year. He has refused repeated requests to provide a list of the news sources or languages he used to compile his list of cases. This prevents anyone from doing even a rough check of his data. Only a couple of news stories interviewed any researcher who might be critical of Lankford's claims.

In his original paper, Lankford gave information on the number of cases for only four countries: France, Philippines, Russia, and Yemen. Exclusively for the New York Times, Lankford provided information on the number of attacks by country, which was used to publish a series of graphs. But the observations in the Times' graphs were quantitatively labeled for only those same four countries.^{[16](#)}

For less developed parts of the world such as Africa or Latin America, it can be very difficult to obtain news stories from even a decade or so ago. It is downright impossible to find news stories on all of the cases of four or more people being killed in the 1960s or 1970s. So, instead of looking at all 47 years that Lankford claims to study, we examined the last 15 years of his period of study: 1998 to 2012.

Lankford claims to have found 292 mass public shootings over the 47 years from 1966 to 2012, with 90 occurring in the United States and

202 in the rest of world.

But looking at just the last 15 years of that period, we at the CPRC find 1,466 cases — 43 in the United States and 1,423 everywhere else. Over a period that is less than a third as long, we find almost 7 times more foreign mass public shootings than Lankford did.

There is some room for debate about what cases should be included in the count. But even the most generous assumptions produce results which show that mass public shooters, shootings, and fatalities are quite rare in the US compared to the rest of the world.

II. Trying to Obtain Lankford's Data

The first four years

"In phone calls and emails from Real Clear Politics, Lankford was asked how he supplemented the NYPD methods. He did not answer those queries. Nor has he responded to requests for his raw data, which is missing from his published paper, or to clear up basic questions."

**— Carl Cannon, Washington Bureau Chief, Real Clear Politics,
September 4, 2018^{[17](#)}**

"Unlike Lankford, Lott has released all of his data in nearly 500 pages of appendixes so people can reach their own conclusions. Lankford declined a request to release his research or to discuss in any way his findings in comparison to Lott's report."

— Glenn Kessler, Washington Post, September 5, 2018^{[18](#)}

"No qualified scholar would accept work by a researcher who could not, or would not, even explain exactly how he measured his most important variable [mass shootings]."

**— Professor Gary Kleck, Florida State University, discussing
Lankford's research with Fox News in 2016^{[19](#)}**

“Any research that seeks to influence the public debate on this topic, as this research clearly does, should be required to make their data available so that other researchers can confirm their findings.”

— Professor Robert Reed, replication editor at the journal *Public Finance Review*, discussing Lankford’s research with Fox News in 2016^{[20](#)}

When Lankford’s research was receiving international news coverage in the summer of 2015, he repeatedly turned down my requests to see his paper. On December 1, 2015, the *Washington Post*’s Michelle Lee wrote me: “I do have a copy but [Lankford] asked that I not distribute it or post it online before it’s formally published. You can contact him and request, maybe now that his study is being discussed he might be more open to share?” I contacted Lankford both before and after Lee’s email, and he declined to provide either the paper or his data.^{[21](#)}

Reporters might not realize how incredibly unusual it is for academics not to share their papers with other academics. There are many websites that exist to facilitate doing just that (e.g., the Social Science Research Network and ResearchGate.net). Academics not only benefit from feedback, but they also want other academics to read their papers and cite them in future research. Citations help people earn tenure and get promoted. In decades of being in academia, I have never seen an academic refuse to hand out a paper that was already accepted for publication.

I finally obtained a copy of Lankford’s paper when it was published at the end of January 2016 — more than five months after it originally started attracting media attention. Incredibly, even after his paper was published, Lankford still refused to let me look at his list of foreign mass public shootings. His published study did not even contain statistics on the number of mass public shootings in foreign countries, or the number of attacks by year. When I requested information on how he had obtained his list of foreign cases, Lankford emailed me back with the mere assurance that “it was a lot of work.”^{[22](#)}

Lankford wouldn’t even give journalists any specific details on how he collected his sample.^{[23](#)} His paper contains no information on his use

of different databases, foreign languages, or search terms. It simply claims, “*Complete* data were available for 171 countries, and they averaged 1.7 public mass shooters per country from 1966 to 2012.”

For many places around the world, gathering many cases from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s is an impossible task. There are lots of foreign countries that clearly have higher death rates from mass public shootings than does the US. But outside of the United States and Europe, these cases are very hard to find — especially in earlier years.

Take the Solomon Islands, for example. Despite the islands’ 1999 ban on handguns and virtually all rifles, 21 people died in three mass public shootings from 2000 to 2002.^{[24](#)} There may have been other mass public shootings, but the islands have only issued a police report that briefly provides details on the years 1998 to 2003. I have asked the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force for information on other years, but this has proven fruitless. After talking to the police, it was pretty clear that since their nation gets most of its revenue from tourism, they saw little benefit to providing this information.^{[25](#)}

Even if these were the Solomon Islands’ only mass public shootings from 1998 through 2012, the annual death rate from these events would come to 2.98 per million people (given an average population of 470,000 over those 15 years). *This is 46 times higher than the US rate.*

In November 2017, the New York Times produced graphs using Lankford’s data. Unfortunately, the graphs did not make it possible to determine how many attacks occurred in different countries. I emailed Lankford to ask him for the data, but he ignored my requests.^{[26](#)} When firearms expert Mike Weisser made the same request in April 2018, Lankford wrote back: “I shared those data exclusively with the NYT for their feature on this subject.” He indicated that Weisser would have to contact the Times to ask for it. This was quite an unusual response, because media outlets normally only require exclusivity until they have published the information.

Weisser then wrote Max Fisher, one of the authors of the New York Times article, and copied Lankford’s emails saying that the data was the property of the New York Times. Fisher wrote back: “I’m a little confused as to why Adam Lankford would say that. It’s his data — we

most certainly don't own or control it."²⁷ After sharing Lankford's entire email, Fisher replied, "So I suspect what he meant is not that we 'own' the data, but that he's choosing not to release it further. Have to respect his wishes on that, I think."

While Lankford said that he couldn't give out the data because he had given it exclusively to the Times, the Times insisted that it also couldn't release it out of respect for Lankford's wishes not to give it out.

How could Lankford have obtained "complete" data on mass shootings around the world? The US at least has computerized databases of news stories, but even these are greatly limited prior to 1991. For 1991, there are at least 389 newspapers included in the Nexis/Lexis database.²⁸ Just prior to 1991, there are only 31 newspapers. This number quickly gets smaller and smaller as one goes further back in time. And, of course, the English-language news media of decades ago couldn't be counted on to cover mass public shootings in Europe, let alone Africa or other parts of the world.

At first, I simply hoped that Lankford had discovered some previously unknown way of collecting these cases. But his paper provides very little specific information, with no country-by-country breakdown other than for the US and four foreign countries. There isn't even a breakdown by continent or by year.

Researchers who refuse to share their data or explain how they obtained it make it difficult for others to verify and replicate their research.

Why Lankford was so unwilling to show anyone his list of cases

Almost four years after Lankford's research started getting media attention, Carl Moody (College of William and Mary) and I published a paper in the journal *Econ Journal Watch* in order to document problems with Lankford's claims. Only at that point did Lankford finally make his list of cases public, though he never provided more information on how he collected them, beyond citing a New York City Police Department report.

The list of cases raises some surprising concerns. Lankford says that he is only looking at cases where there was one attacker, though two of

his cases involved two shooters: one incident in the US and one in Russia. From 1998-2012, Lankford misses 37 foreign mass public shootings involving just one shooter. He has not explained why these cases were excluded.

Lankford inflates the number of US cases from 1998-2012 by including 10 cases that don't satisfy the FBI or NYPD definitions of mass public shootings. He includes cases that involve another crime, such as a robbery, or that occur in a non-public place (such as a residence). Lankford also counts some cases with fewer than four fatalities, which contradicts his stated definition for "mass public shootings."

While Lankford claims to follow the same definition of mass public shootings as the FBI, the New York City Police Department, and the Department of Homeland Security, none of those organizations limits its definition to instances where there were only one or two attackers. Lankford claims to rely heavily on the New York City Police Department, which even lists one case where 10 killers were involved in the attack.

Lankford only chooses to include one U.S. shooting involving two attackers — the 1999 Columbine case. It would have been hard for Lankford to exclude this infamous, archetypal case, especially since he mentioned it on the first page of his paper. But it's not clear why he didn't include other, less well-known cases, such as the Jonesboro, Arkansas shooting in March 1998.

Lankford excludes, without explanation, 37 foreign mass public shootings involving just one shooter and another 40 foreign cases involving two shooters. Furthermore, he does not justify the additional cases for the United States that he included that do not fit the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and NYPD definition of mass public shootings. Both errors greatly exaggerate the United States' share of these attackers

So Lankford talks about only including cases that involved one shooter, but feels he has to include Columbine because he mentioned it in his original paper. He also includes a case in Russia that involved two shooters. Lankford never explains why he excludes cases involving multiple shooters.

As we will now discuss, we found at least 3,081 mass public shooters in the rest of the world from 1998 to 2012. The US accounted for just 1.45% of these shooters.

III. How Frequently do Mass Public Shootings Occur Around the World?

A. Defining Mass Public Shootings

We follow the FBI's definition of mass public shootings.^{[29](#)}

- The FBI only includes shootings in “*public places*” such as commercial areas (malls, stores, and other businesses); schools and colleges; open spaces; government properties (including military bases and civilian offices); houses of worship; and healthcare facilities.
- The FBI excludes “*shootings that resulted from gang or drug violence,*” or that occurred in the commission of another ongoing crime such as robbery. Also excluded are situations that arose primarily out of self-defense — primarily domestic dispute or barricade/hostage situations.
- From 1980 to 2013, the original FBI definition of “mass killings” had been “*four or more victims slain, in one event, in one location,*” not including the offender in the victim count (CRS, July 30, 2015). In 2013, the definition was changed to “three or more killings.” Many academics have continued to use the four-or-more definition, and that is the definition that we will use here.^{[30,31](#)} It is already hard enough to find news stories for foreign cases involving 4 or more people killed, so reducing the threshold to three means many more missed cases.
- There is no limit on the number of people involved in these attacks. “Some incidents involved two or more shooters,” states the FBI. For example, the FBI includes the 2015 San Bernardino, California attack by a husband-and-wife team. Had the report gone back to

1999, the FBI would have included the Columbine High School shooting, which involved two killers.

The NYPD 2012 Active Shooter report and the Department of Homeland Security use similar definitions for active shooter incidents, with the exception that they don't limit themselves to cases where four-or-more people have been killed.^{[32](#)}

Our primary source is the University of Maryland Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which collected data on over 170,000 terrorist attacks from 1970 to 2016. The GTD defines terrorist attacks as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.” The database lists attacks that were carried out using everything from firearms, knives, bombs, and vehicles to incendiary, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons. They divide attacks into six categories: 1) Terrorism; 2) Insurgency/Guerilla Action; 3) Other Crime Type; 4) Intra/Inter-group conflict; 5) Lack of Intentionality; and 6) State Actor.

The only categories that sometimes meet our criteria for mass public shootings are “terrorism”, “other crime type,” and “intra/inter-group conflict.” Government-sponsored attacks, directed/ordered killings, and state terrorism (the “State Actor” category) are completely excluded.

We then reviewed each case using Nexis and web searches. Our definition of a mass public shooting was the same as Lankford's, — except that we excluded insurgency-related shootings. Less than 50% of the terrorism shooting cases identified by the GTD satisfied the definition of mass public shootings.

Sometimes, news stories about shootings in developing countries only reveal the total killed and the number of places attacked. Without more information, we cannot determine whether each target meets the criterion of four or more people being killed. Twenty people may have been killed on different days in three different towns that were many miles apart. While it is possible that all three attacks satisfy our definition, we took the more conservative route and counted these

incident clusters as only one attack. This causes a slight underestimate of the total number of foreign cases.

Kidnappings are a possible grey area. Sometimes, attackers start killing people and then take hostages when the police or military arrive. Alternatively, attackers kidnap people and then kill them. The first type of case is clearly within the purview of this data. The second type is less obvious, though the NYPD includes two cases where a kidnapping preceded a shooting. In one of those cases, the kidnapping clearly precipitated the shooting.^{[33](#)}

While all of our cases involve four or more deaths in one place, at one time, we have removed most cases in which fewer than four people were killed prior to a kidnapping. We have excluded cases in which fewer than four people were killed before anyone was kidnapped, unless it is clear that there was no ransom (such as an exchange of hostages) and no negotiations. There were 84 such cases that were excluded.

The GTD is a vast database, but still not a complete source, especially for the United States. For the 1998 to 2015 period, we found 53 attacks in the US, whereas the GTD lists just 5: the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, the 2009 Fort Hood massacre, the 2012 Sikh Temple attack in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, the 2015 Charleston church shooting, and the 2015 Chattanooga shootings. The Columbine attack is classified as “other crime,” and the other four are classified as “terrorism.” But the GTD readily admits that they do not have a comprehensive list of “other crime” shootings, causing them to miss cases such as the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School attack.

While the GTD classifies school shootings such as Columbine (“other crime”) differently from the Fort Hood shootings (“terrorism”), others have argued that Columbine is “functionally similar to terrorism.”^{[34](#)} Both incidents were premeditated attacks that were aimed at inflicting maximum casualties. Both killers knew that the more people they harmed, the more media attention they would receive.

The killers may be different, but their fundamental goal was the same. The cases also appear to be the same in terms of any implications about the effectiveness of gun control.

From 1998 through 2015, the GTD also misses 39 cases in Europe: Albania 1, Austria 1, Belgium 1, Bosnia 1, Croatia 1, Czech Republic 1, England 1, Finland 2, France 6, Germany 2, Italy 1, the Netherlands 1, Russia 12, Serbia 3, Slovakia 1, Switzerland 2, Ukraine 1, and Yugoslavia 1. In Germany, there were two large school shootings (18 killed in 2002, and 15 killed in 2009).³⁵ Finland, a country with less than 2% of the US population, suffered ten shooting deaths at a college in 2008 and five shooting deaths at a mall in 2009.³⁶ The GTD also missed all of the cases for some countries such as the Solomon Islands.

To obtain these additional cases missed by the GTD, the CPRC used its own Nexis and web searches. We particularly looked for mass shootings in Europe and the United States, and for especially large-scale shootings around the world where at least 15 people were killed. Wikipedia was helpful for some parts of the world.³⁷ We have also hired people who can speak Chinese, French, Polish, Russian, and Spanish.³⁸

Still, despite these searches, it is clear that we likely missed many mass public shootings around the world over the 1998 to 2015 period. The GTD has only listed thirteen Central American and Caribbean mass public shootings (2 for Haiti, 4 for Honduras, 6 for Mexico, and 1 for Nicaragua). We only picked up two more cases for Mexico with Nexis, and none for Haiti and Honduras, which had homicide rates that were respectively 11.5 and 16.1 times higher than that of the US. While it is possible that countries with high homicide rates don't exhibit unusual rates of mass public shootings, it seems more likely that the local media doesn't give much news coverage to shootings because violence is so common. So, it is a pretty sure bet that we are missing many cases from this region.

While we have a complete list of mass public shootings for the US and perhaps Europe, it is simply not possible to compile all of the cases for the rest of the world. We did not identify any incidents in 83 countries, but that might simply be because we missed them. Even though information about many countries is severely lacking, we can nevertheless show that the rate of mass public shootings in the rest of the world is much higher than in the US.

B. Number of mass public shooters, 1998 to 2015

Out of our 2,354 cases, news reports provide the number of perpetrators for only 562 of them. In 127 cases, a lone killer was identified. Another 62 attacks had two killers and 40 had three. Out of the cases in which the number of killers was identified, 40.7% had between one and three shooters.

184 attacks were identified as having more than 10 killers. In larger-scale attacks, numbers of perpetrators are virtually always reported as multiples of ten, making their accuracy doubtful. Witnesses and reporters are most likely just making a rough guess.

The remaining 1,792 attacks were the subject of news stories that reported multiple attackers, but provided no specific numbers.

In the US, just 57 shooters perpetrated the 53 mass public shootings between 1998 and 2015. If we take the most conservative estimate that there were only two perpetrators in each of the attacks with an indeterminately plural number of shooters, our list shows that there would have been 19,008 attackers worldwide from 1998 to 2015. So, our best guess is that the worldwide number of shooters is **65 times** greater than Lankford's estimate, over less than a third of his time period. The US would then account for only 0.30% of attackers.

If we exclude the 184 cases outside of the US with more than 10 killers, whose accuracy is circumspect, there would still have been 4,880 mass shooters worldwide from 1998 through 2015. 4880 shooters worldwide would amount to an average of 2.2 killers per attack. The US share of the world's mass public shooters would be 1.15%, less than a third of the US share of the world population.

Another reason for limiting cases to no more than 10 shooters is because that is the limit for cases in the NYPD report, which Lankford claims to have relied on. While the United States' precise share of the world's mass public shooters is uncertain, it is clearly far below its share of the world's population.

Even if one were to exclude both all foreign terrorist and insurgency attacks, there would still have been 961 foreign mass public shooters. If we also include terror attacks in the US total, the US is left with a 5.6 percent share of the world's shooters – slightly more than its share of

the world population.³⁹ And this is only a result of putting the US in the most unfavorable light possible compared to the rest of the world.

C. How the United States compares to the rest of the World

The list of all of our 2,407 cases from 1998 to 2015 is provided in Appendices 1 and 2. Of those shootings, 53 occurred in the United States and 2,354 happened in the rest of the world. While the US had about 4.6 percent of the world's population during this period, it had just 2.20 percent of the mass public shootings.

We always have to use population-adjusted rates when making international comparisons. Just as it makes no sense to compare the total number of murders in Wyoming with the number in California, it's senseless to compare the United States and India without adjusting for population. After all, India's population is four times larger.

The United States was host to a still smaller share of mass public shooting fatalities. Worldwide, mass public shooting murders totaled 26,380, and the US accounted for 394 (1.5%) of these. Per capita, mass public shootings occur in the US with 53.1 percent less frequency and cause 59.3 percent fewer fatalities than they do in the rest of the world.

[Table 1](#) lists the per capita attack and death rates in the 97 countries where we identified mass public shootings. The US ranks 64th in rate of attacks and 65th for its fatality rate. Norway, Finland, France, Switzerland and Russia all have at least 25 percent higher fatality rates than does the United States. Indeed, France's rate is 111 percent higher than the US's. The rates in Pakistan and India are 663% and 56% higher, respectively. ([Appendix 6.4](#) shows the absolute number by country.)

Table 1: Countries with Mass Public Shootings from 1998 through 2015: Ranking by per capita rate of attacks and people killed

Rank	Country	Number of Attacks per 100,000 People		Country	Number of People Killed per 100,000 People
1	Northern Mariana Islands	1.569		Central African Republic	13.333
2	Iraq	0.972		Iraq	8.674
3	Afghanistan	0.866		Northern Mariana Islands	6.275
4	Central African Republic	0.714		Afghanistan	5.726
5	Solomon Islands	0.600		Angola	5.221
6	Guyana	0.500		Nigeria	5.086
7	Somalia	0.453		Guyana	4.000
8	Nigeria	0.332		Solomon Islands	4.000
9	Burundi	0.308		Somalia	3.698
10	Algeria	0.302		Sierra Leone	3.309
11	West Bank and Gaza Strip	0.271		Burundi	3.231
12	Yemen	0.246		Sudan	2.923
13	Colombia	0.185		Algeria	2.820
14	Angola	0.175		South Sudan	2.195

15	South Sudan	0.148	West Bank and Gaza Strip	1.988
16	Sudan	0.144	Colombia	1.770
17	Sri Lanka	0.132	Yemen	1.614
18	Lebanon	0.132	Uganda	1.498
19	Uganda	0.130	Kenya	1.470
20	Pakistan	0.117	Norway	1.457
21	Israel	0.113	Sri Lanka	1.335
22	Sierra Leone	0.109	Syria	1.332
23	Armenia	0.100	Guinea	1.126
24	Syria	0.087	Chad	1.062
25	Libya	0.086	Pakistan	1.015
26	Kenya	0.080	Cameroon	1.012
27	Philippines	0.075	Niger	0.993
28	Niger	0.071	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.962
29	Mali	0.067	Rwanda	0.874
30	Chad	0.062	Lebanon	0.789
31	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.061	Mali	0.719
32	Tajikistan	0.059	Armenia	0.700
33	Kosovo	0.059	Honduras	0.667
34	Finland	0.058	Nepal	0.630
35	Honduras	0.056	Libya	0.621
36	Cameroon	0.055	Philippines	0.619
37	Nepal	0.051	Israel	0.606
38	Macedonia	0.050	Mauritania	0.581
39	Namibia	0.050	Tunisia	0.470
40	Azerbaijan	0.048	Finland	0.442
41	Georgia	0.044	Liberia	0.364
42	Switzerland	0.041	Azerbaijan	0.321
43	Rwanda	0.034	Switzerland	0.297
44	Mauritania	0.032	Kosovo	0.293
45	Albania	0.031	France	0.280
46	Liberia	0.030	Tajikistan	0.279
47	Tunisia	0.030	Macedonia	0.250
48	Thailand	0.029	Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire)	0.225
49	Peru	0.029	India	0.208
50	Serbia	0.028	Georgia	0.200
51	Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire)	0.027	Namibia	0.200
52	Bosnia	0.026	Ethiopia	0.181
53	Russia	0.026	Serbia	0.178
54	South Africa	0.026	Laos	0.169
55	Haiti	0.024	Russia	0.169
56	Croatia	0.023	Yugoslavia	0.169

57	Norway	0.022	Croatia	0.159
58	Guinea	0.021	Bosnia	0.158
59	India	0.021	South Africa	0.158
60	Kyrgyzstan	0.019	Peru	0.154
61	Belgium	0.019	Thailand	0.149
62	Yugoslavia	0.019	Saudi Arabia	0.146
63	Slovakia	0.019	Egypt	0.138
64	United States	0.018	Iran	0.137
65	Jordan	0.017	United States	0.133
66	Nicaragua	0.017	Slovakia	0.130
67	Senegal	0.017	Senegal	0.128
68	Laos	0.017	Albania	0.125
69	Mozambique	0.015	Turkey	0.122
70	Egypt	0.015	Haiti	0.120
71	Ukraine	0.015	Kyrgyzstan	0.096
72	Iran	0.014	Belgium	0.095
73	France	0.013	Ukraine	0.089
74	Turkey	0.012	Jordan	0.086
75	Austria	0.012	Czech Republic	0.078
76	Saudi Arabia	0.012	Nicaragua	0.069
77	Czech Republic	0.010	Venezuela	0.067
78	Ethiopia	0.009	Uzbekistan	0.064
79	Zimbabwe	0.008	Mozambique	0.062
80	Uzbekistan	0.008	Zimbabwe	0.054
81	Venezuela	0.007	Austria	0.049
82	Kazakhstan	0.007	Mexico	0.046
83	South Korea	0.006	Myanmar	0.044
84	Netherlands	0.006	Germany	0.040
85	Myanmar	0.006	Kazakhstan	0.040
86	Mexico	0.006	Indonesia	0.037
87	Indonesia	0.005	Netherlands	0.037
88	Malaysia	0.004	South Korea	0.035
89	Canada	0.003	Brazil	0.025
90	Tanzania	0.003	United Kingdom	0.020
91	Argentina	0.003	Tanzania	0.019
92	Germany	0.002	Malaysia	0.019
93	Bangladesh	0.002	Bangladesh	0.015
94	Italy	0.002	Canada	0.012
95	United Kingdom	0.002	Argentina	0.010
96	Brazil	0.002	Italy	0.009
97	Vietnam	0.001	Vietnam	0.005

Even with all of the cases identified as “Insurgency/Guerilla Action” removed from the sample, Iraq still ranks second for both number of attacks and deaths per capita – right after the Northern Mariana Islands. Afghanistan and the Central African Republic follow in third and fourth for number of attacks. If we had data for the Solomon Islands over all 18 years, it may well place first.

We relied on the GTD for classifying whether shootings in Afghanistan and Iraq involved insurgency, and found that excluding insurgency battles doesn’t appreciably alter our results for either country. Removing all of those cases reduces the number of attacks outside the United States from 2,354 to 1,815, and would raise the US share of attacks from 2.20 to 2.84 percent. The share of murders rises from 1.49 to about 1.78 percent. Both rates are still well below the US share of the world population.

When we look at a breakdown according to the world’s geographic regions, we find that the United States ranks roughly in the middle in number of mass public shootings ([Figures 1A-D](#)). We use the sixteen geographic regions provided by the Population Reference Bureau (See [Appendix 6.5](#)).

Not surprisingly, Western Asia ranks highly since it is largely comprised of Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, which has per capita rates of attacks and deaths that are respectively 899 and 1,073 percent higher than those of the United States. Africa (both Northern and sub-Saharan) also has dramatically higher rates than does the US. While attacks occur more frequently in Northern Africa, they are more deadly in sub-Saharan Africa (the average number of people killed per attack is 9.3 in Northern Africa and 15.7 in sub-Saharan Africa). The overall mass public shooting death rates in these two regions are fairly similar.

In South America, people are twice as likely as in the US to die from mass public shootings, and attacks occur 54 percent more frequently. Again, that’s probably a dramatic underestimate, given the serious lack of news coverage of crime in South and Central America. Homicide rates are so high in some areas that local media appear to ignore most murders.

In Venezuela, not only was the official homicide rate 9.6 times higher than the US rate, but the government has gone to great lengths to prevent the media from reporting on murders. The newspaper El Universal reported that, starting in 2009, the Venezuelan police were supposed to tell “relatives of victims who are in the morgue of Caracas (Venezuela), not to make statements to the press in exchange for expediting the procedures to recover the bodies.”⁴⁰

There is also evidence of a cover-up in China. We have found three, large-scale mass public shootings in China in years outside of the 1998 to 2015 period: 1994, 28 killed; 1981, 21 killed; and 1979, 16 killed.⁴¹ We know of no other country that exhibited only such large mass public shootings, and none with between 4 and 15 fatalities. Victor Mair, a University of Pennsylvania professor of Chinese studies, told us:

*I’m almost certain that they had mass public shootings of all sizes up to the three big ones, but such things just don’t get recorded in the media. . . . The Chinese government is very good about hiding the news. Of course, it’s easier to hide the news for smaller incidents, but much harder for larger incidents, because more people would have noticed them.*⁴²

Mair claims that friends of his in China have been “forbidden to talk about” a recent knife attack on school children.⁴³

Probably of particular interest to people are comparisons between Europe and the United States ([Figures 1A-D](#)). Mass public shooting rates vary widely across Northern, Western, Eastern, and Southern Europe. Western Europe may only have half the attack rate that the United States has, but their fatality rate from these attacks is the same. Similarly, while the attack rate in Northern Europe is only 29 percent of the rate in the US, 20.4 people were killed per attack versus 7.4 in the US. So, the overall fatality rate from mass public shootings is only 20% lower in Northern Europe than in the US.

[Figure 2](#) shows that attacks in the United States are relatively less deadly than in most of the rest of the world. One of many possible explanations is that better medical care causes more wounded people to survive. In that case, the United States would have a high rate of injury per attack, but it turns out that that isn’t particularly true.

Western Europe not only has many more fatalities per attack, but also has many more injuries per attack.

[Figure 3](#) shows, as we might expect, that places with more mass public shooting murders also have more injuries.

Americans are understandably concerned with the increased frequency and severity of mass public shootings in their country. But [Figures 4A](#) and [4B](#) show that the rest of the world has experienced a much larger increase in per capita shooting rates than the United States has.

For the US, we examine mass shooting data from the beginning of 1998 through November 10, 2018 (for 2018, we assume that the rate up until November 10th continues throughout the rest of the year). For the rest of the world, we use our data from 1998 through 2015. During this time, the frequency of recorded mass public shootings grew 291 percent faster in the rest of the world than in the US. The growth rate for murders was 115 percent faster.

The rate of attacks in the rest of the world started rising in 2012, but became particularly noticeable in 2013, 2014, and 2015 ([Figure 4A](#)). The per capita rate of mass public shootings in 2012 was 0.024 per million people, up from the previous high of 0.021 in 2001. It then rose to 0.032 in 2013, reached 0.056 in 2014, and then fell back down to 0.042 in 2015. By contrast, the US reached its peak rate of mass public shootings in 2012. (The per capita murder rate from these attacks is similar and shown in [Figure 4B](#).)

Lack of news coverage of mass public shootings might explain the scarcity of recorded shootings early in the 1998-2015 period. It is very difficult to come across any pre-2000 news coverage about shootings in Africa and other parts of the world.

It seems unlikely that the large, worldwide increase in mass public shootings that began in 2012 could be explained simply by more comprehensive news coverage.

But overall, more thorough news coverage in recent years might help to explain the increase in recorded attacks, as well as the apparent drop in number of people killed per attack. Cases with fewer victims might be getting coverage that they didn't receive before.

**Mass Public Shooting Murders by
Geographic Region (per 100,000 people)**

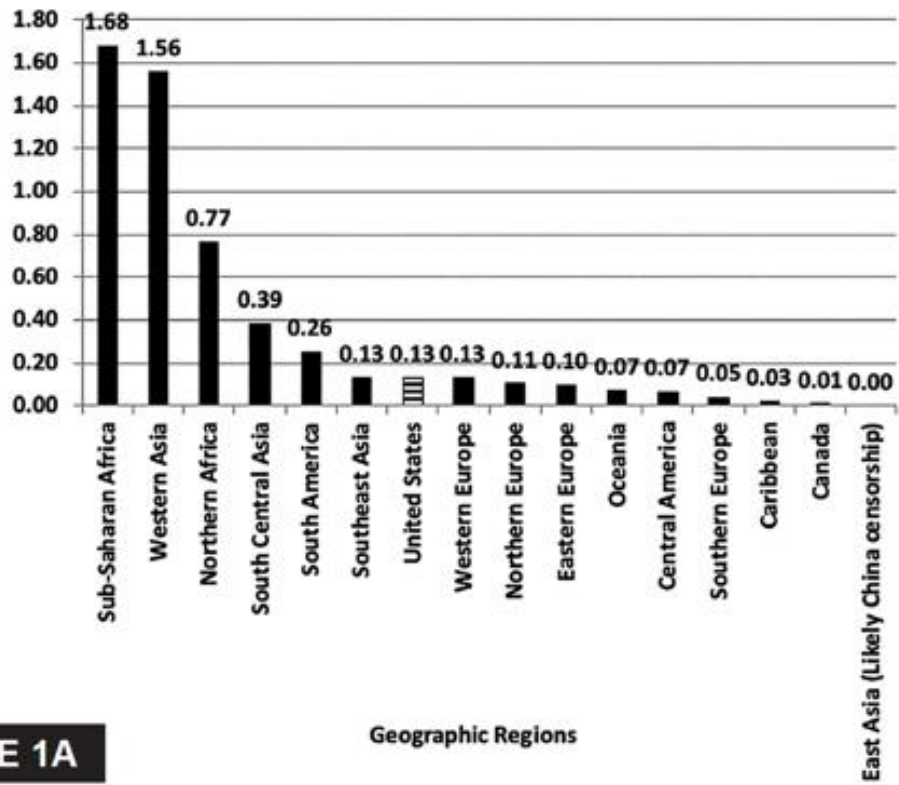


FIGURE 1A

**Mass Public Shooting Woundings by
Geographic Region (per 100,000 people)**

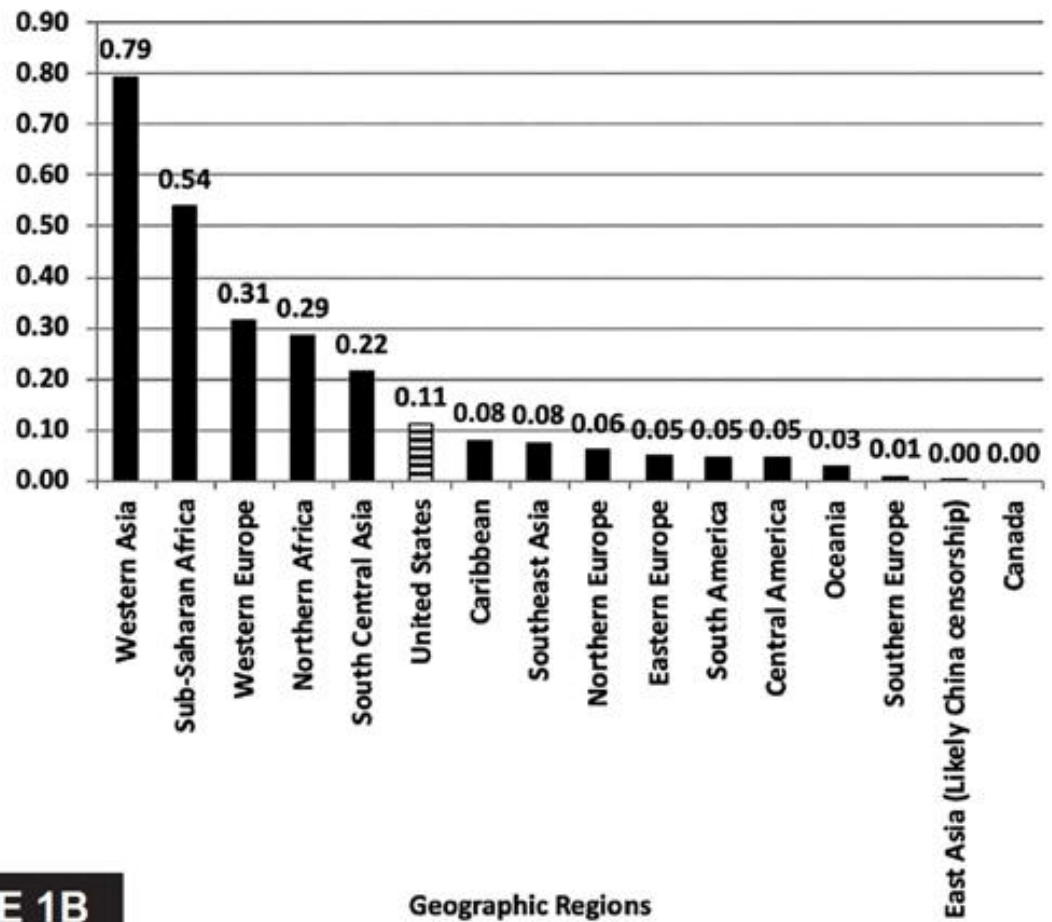


FIGURE 1B

Geographic Regions

**Mass Public Shooting Casualties by
Geographic Region (per 100,000 people)**

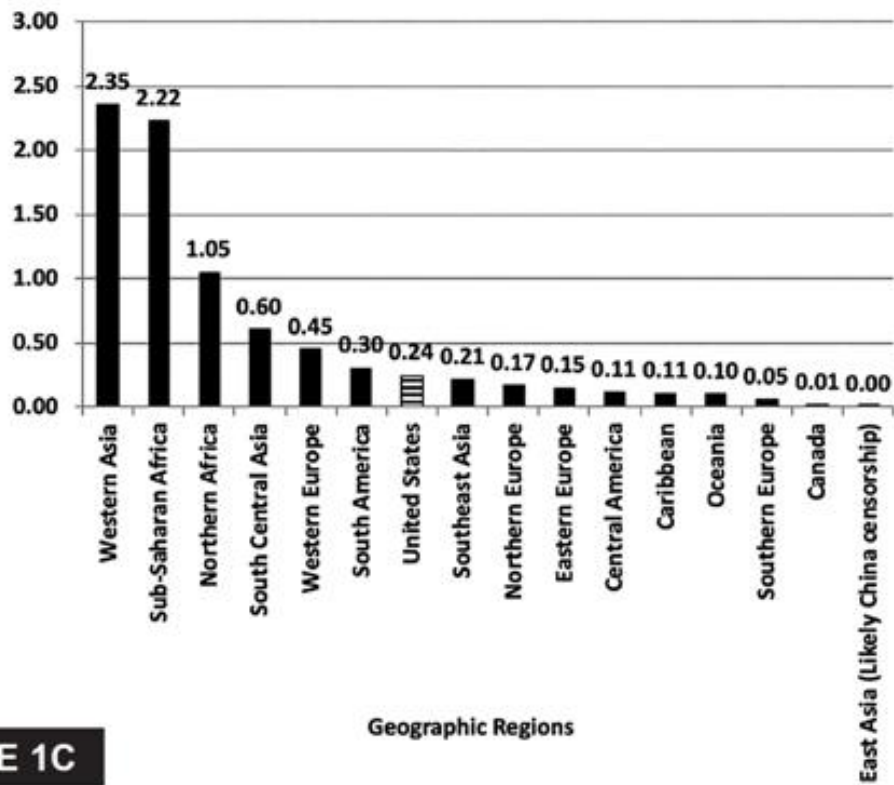


FIGURE 1C

**Mass Public Shooting Attacks by
Geographic Region (per 1 million people)**

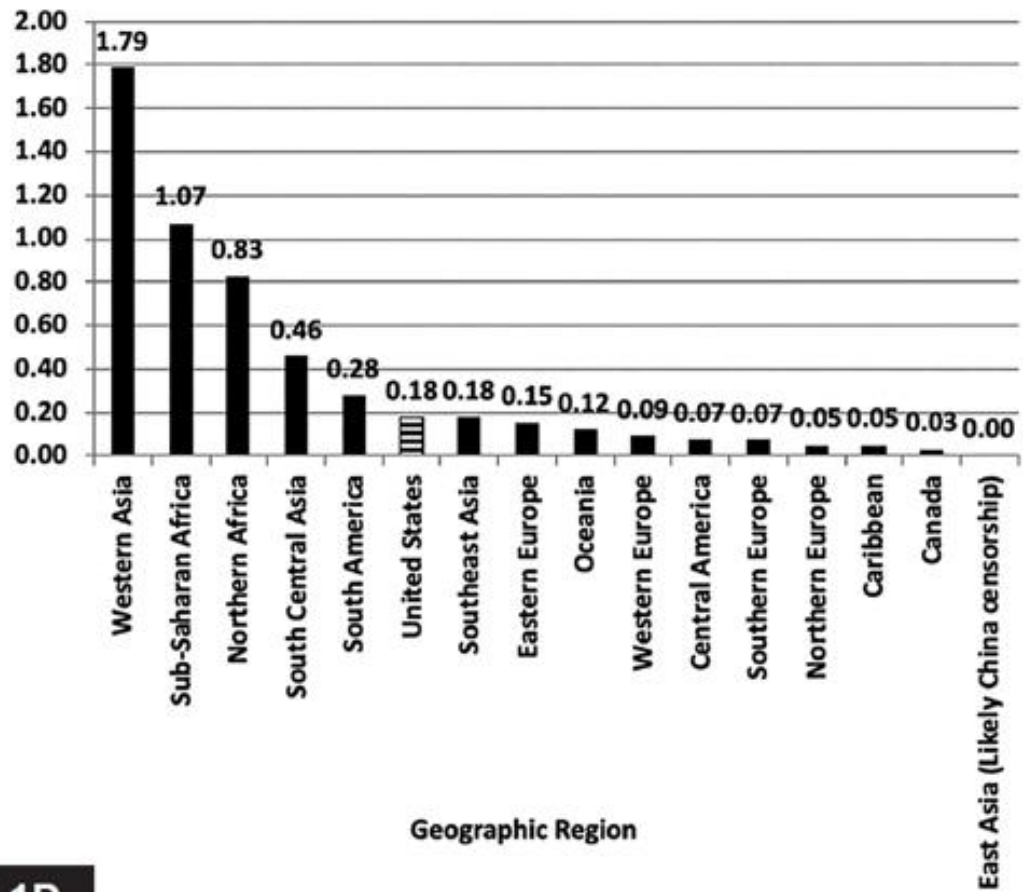


FIGURE 1D

**How Deadly are Mass Public Shootings in
Different Parts of the World: Number of People Killed
per attack**

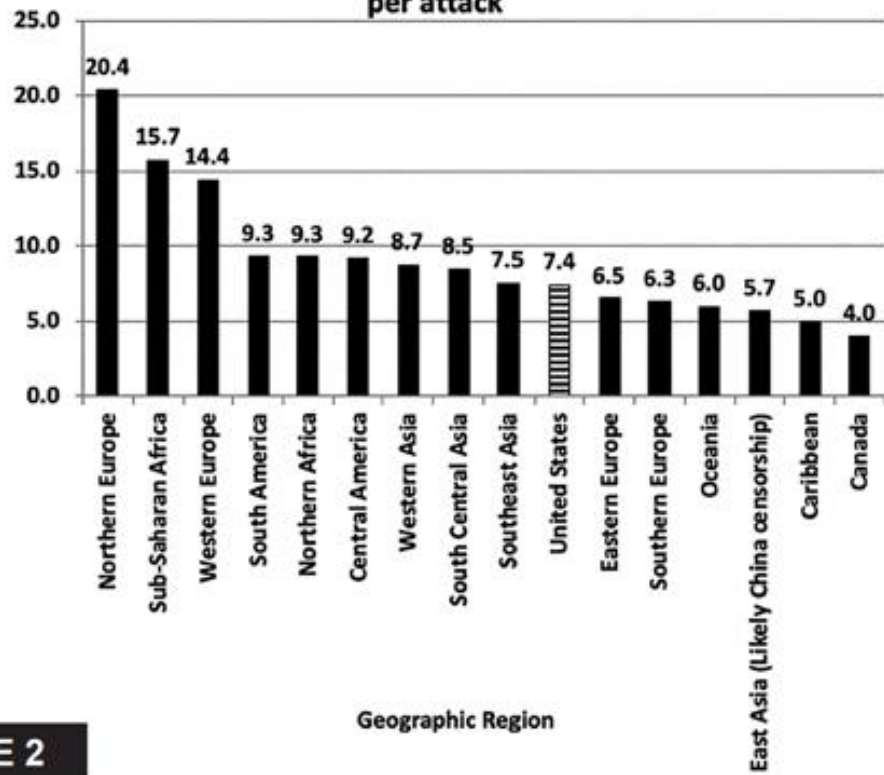


FIGURE 2

Relationship between Deadliness and Wounding Rates in Attacks

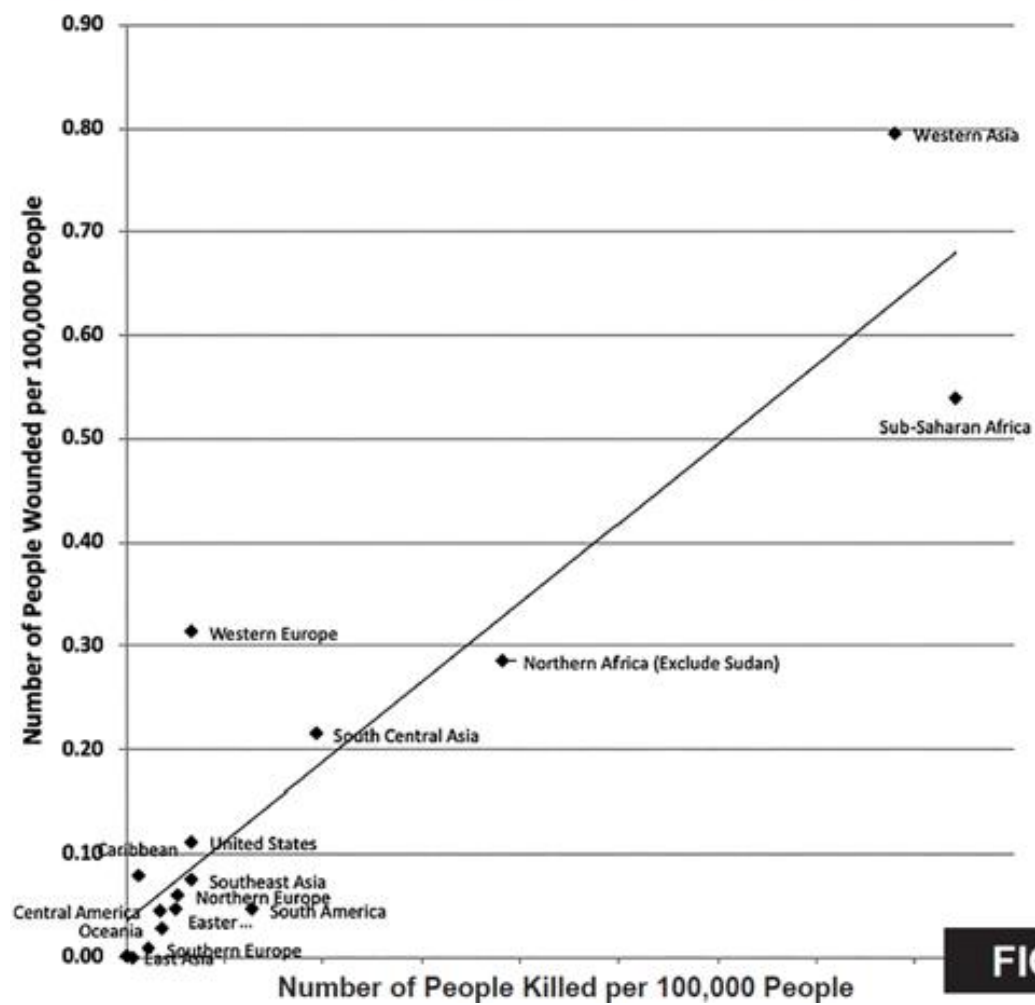


FIGURE 3

Frequency of Mass Public Shootings by Year
in the Rest of the World and the United States per
million people (1998 to November 10, 2018 for the US
and 1998 to 2015 for the Rest of the World)

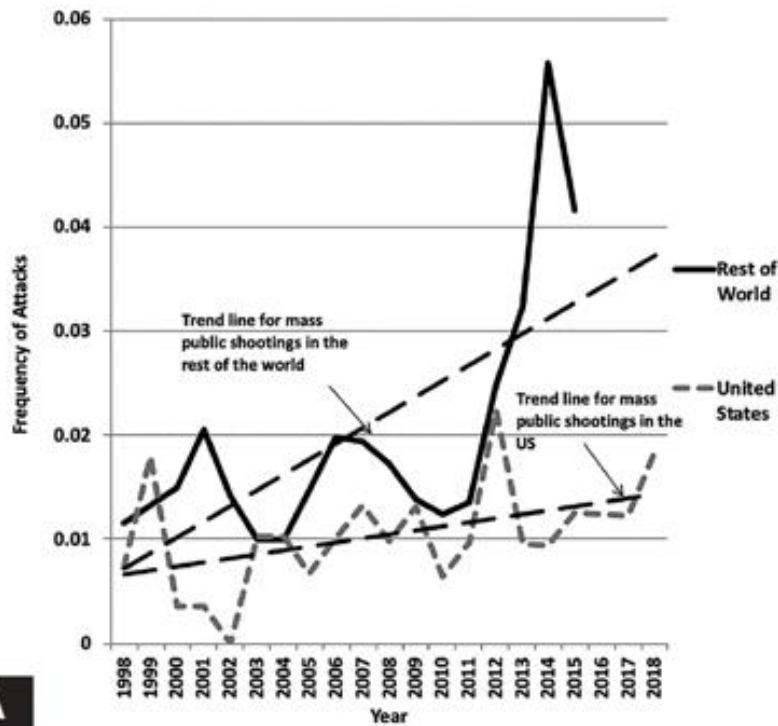


FIGURE 4A

**Rate of Murders from Mass Public Shootings
by Year in the Rest of the World and the United States
(1998 to November 10, 2018 for the US and 1998 to
2015 for the Rest of the World)**

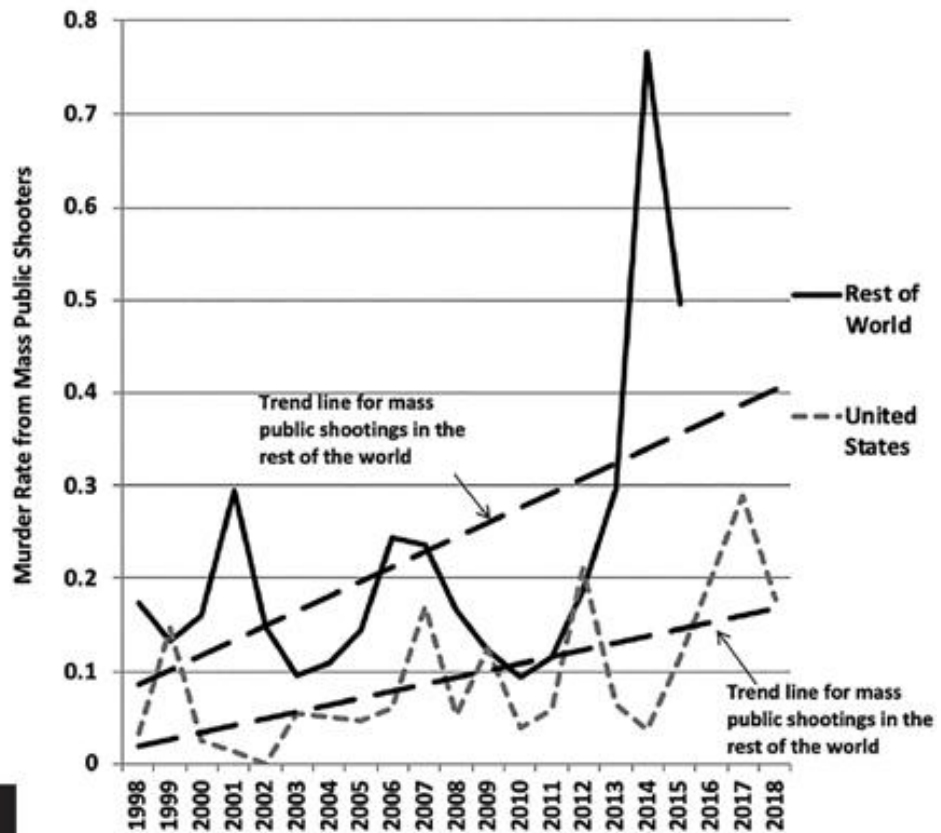


FIGURE 4B

IV. Gun ownership and Mass Public Shootings

The Small Arms Survey is the most commonly-cited source for data on gun ownership rates. It has given support to the claim that the United States has by far the highest level of gun ownership, with 88.8 guns per 100 people. But the survey cites only one source for its data on Europe: the European Union Survey. In email discussions, the Small Arms Survey has also pointed to the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) as another source.^{[44](#)}

The EU survey covers only 28 countries in the European Union.^{[45](#)} The ICVS only covers five countries past 2005, all of which are already included in the later EU survey.

The Small Arms survey reports gun ownership numbers, not gun possession numbers. As we touched on earlier, this causes a dramatic underestimate of the true rate of ownership in Israel and Switzerland. Both the Israeli and Swiss governments issue guns to civilians, while the government still technically owns the guns. In Israel, the government owns most guns, and people apply to have them issued. In Switzerland, all able-bodied Swiss males between the ages of 18 and 34 keep military weapons in their homes.⁴⁶ After age 34, they can apply for permission to keep their military weapons, and the majority opts to do so.⁴⁷ Only at age 65 are the Swiss given the option of officially purchasing these guns for their own private ownership.

The Small Arms Survey measures the number of guns per 100 people, but a more meaningful measure of gun ownership would be the percentage of the population that owns guns. Whether people have access to a single gun is more relevant to self-defense than whether they have access to many guns.

But the press continues citing the Small Arms Survey. The New York Times has used it in two graphs in the last couple years.⁴⁸

Below, I combine the Small Arms Survey's estimate of gun ownership with the estimates shown in [Table 1](#) for the frequency and severity of mass public shootings.

[Figures 5A-C](#) show that countries with higher gun ownership rates experience fewer and less severe mass public shootings, though the relationship is not statistically significant.⁴⁹ Figure 4C illustrates that this relationship holds true even when we exclude the Central African Republic and Iraq, which are extreme outliers. More sophisticated regression results demonstrate that higher rates of gun ownership are not associated with more mass public shooters or mass public shootings.⁵⁰

V. Conclusion

The myth that the United States is uniquely ravaged by mass public shootings may be believable to Americans who only hear about the latest tragedies in their own country. Everyone heard about the

shooting at a New Zealand mosque in March 2019, but few know that mass public shootings occurred in Brazil and the Netherlands on the very next day.

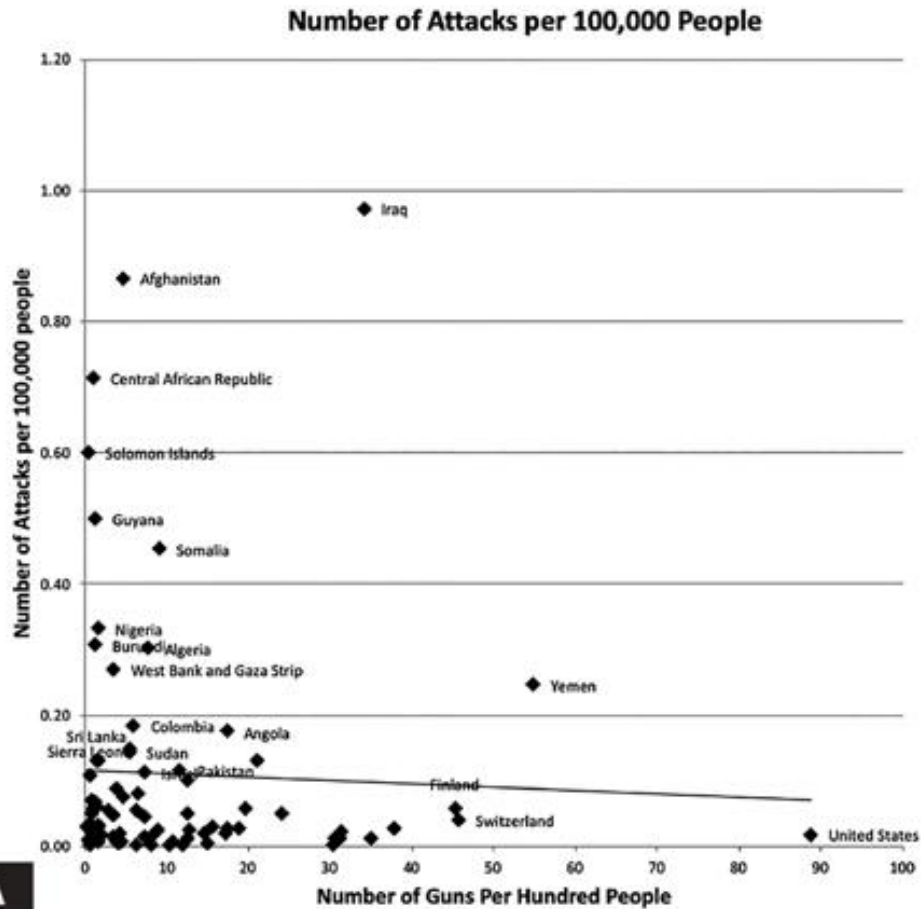


FIGURE 5A

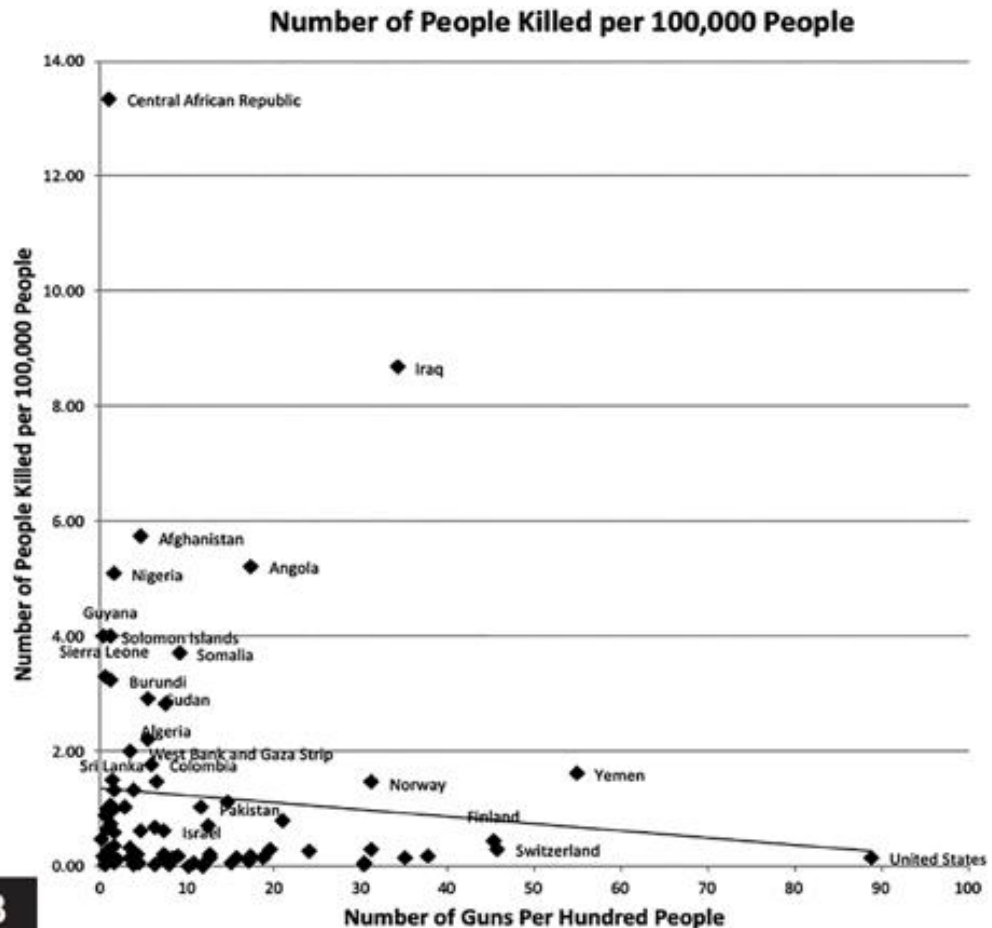


FIGURE 5B

The attack at a public school in Suzano, Brazil caused eight deaths and twenty-three injuries.⁵¹ Two former students committed the massacre, and they reportedly modeled their attack after the 1999 Columbine attack. The only weapons they used were .38 caliber revolvers.

It is hard to blame the US media for being much more interested in covering events at home, but the imbalance in reporting still has a big effect on our political debate.

Americans have a right to be concerned with the increased frequency and severity of mass public shootings in their own country. But the fact of the matter is that the rest of the world has it worse, and is definitely not an example for the U.S. to follow. The U.S. has high gun ownership rates, and it hasn't resulted in any elevated level of mass public shootings. 🌐

**Number of People Killed per 100,000 People after
removing the most extreme cases of the Central African
Republic and Iraq**

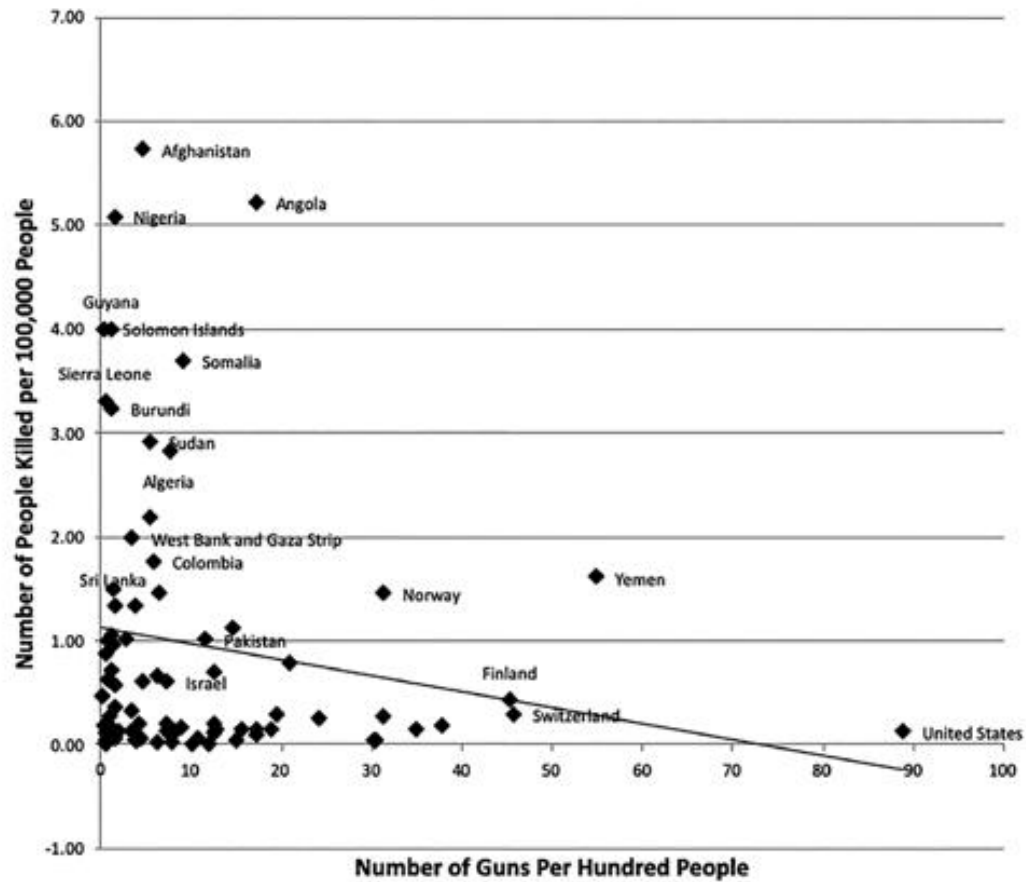


FIGURE 5C

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"We are the only advanced country on Earth that sees these kinds of mass shootings every few months." –Obama, statement on shootings at Umpqua Community College, Roseburg, Ore., Oct. 1, 2015

"At some point, we as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries. It doesn't happen in other places with this kind of frequency." –Obama, statement on the shooting in Charleston, S.C., June 18, 2015
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- 22** From an email exchange with Lankford on February 2, 2016.
- 23** Maxim Lott, "Critics shoot holes in widely cited gun study," Fox News, July 28, 2016 (<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2016/07/28/critics-shoot-holes-in-widely-cited-gun-study.html>).
- 24** On June 8, 2002, ten people were shot to death by the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF), an Islamic organization. April 2002, six Melanesian Brothers, who were Christian and working with the Catholic church, were murdered by the Islamic Guadalcanal Liberation Front. November 12, 2000: four people were shot and killed by Bougainvilleans at the Gizo Hotel. Sam Ata, Sofia Macher, Joni Madraiwiwi, Caroline Laoire, and Kamilo Teke, "Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Final Report," Volume 1, February 2012 (<http://pacificpolicy.org/files/2013/04/Solomon-Islands-TRC-Final-Report-Vol1.pdf>). For information on the Solomon Islands' gun control regulations see David H. Capie, Under the Gun: The Small Arms Challenge in the Pacific, Victoria University Press, 2003, p. 34.
- 25** I emailed the Solomon Islands national police four times between February 12, 2016 and March 20, 2016. These emails were also followed up with telephone calls on April 5 and 13,

2016.

- [26](#) I emailed Lankford on November 7, 2017 asking him for the data that he had provided the New York Times.
- [27](#) Emails provided by Michael Weisser. His emails began on March 31, 2018. His email to the New York Times' Max Fisher was on April 3rd, 2018.
- [28](#) John R. Lott, Jr. and Kevin A. Hassett, "Is newspaper coverage of economics events politically biased?" *Public Choice*, July 2014 (<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11127-014-0171-5>), p. 70.
- [29](#) This is the same definition that was used by Lott and Landes (2001) and the work done by the Crime Prevention Research Center. See also Lott and Landes (2003) and Lott (2010).
- [30](#) Adam Lankford, "Public Mass Shooters and Firearms: A Cross-National Study of 171 Countries," *Violence and Victims*, January 2016: 1-13. For statements by James Alan Fox see "'This is not an epidemic' Northeastern researchers say about school shootings," WCVB ABC Channel 5, March 1, 2018 (<https://www.wcvb.com/article/this-is-not-an-epidemic-northeastern-researchers-say-about-school-shootings/19037921>). See also studies years ago such as Grant Duwe, Tom Kovandzic, and Carl Moody, "The Impact of Right-to-Carry Concealed Firearm Laws on Mass Public Shootings," *Homicide Studies*, Nov. 1, 2012.
- [31](#) Everytown for Gun Safety, "Analysis of Recent Mass Shootings," Everytown for Gun Safety, July 2014 (<https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/everytown-mass-shooting-analysis1.pdf>).
- [32](#) The Department of Homeland Security publication adds a weak qualifier to that sentence: "in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims." This is a "weak" qualifier because there are plenty of cases where the FBI's list of active shooters had a grudge against someone, and that person was the only person killed. Take the shooting at the Crawford County Courthouse in Girard, Kansas on September 13, 2011. Jesse Ray Palmer, the killer, "inquired about the location of a specific judge, who was not in the building, and then shot and wounded the judge's secretary. No one was killed; one person was wounded." It wasn't even necessary that others be shot at for that case to be included in the list. Or take a shooting at another bar — the Sandbar Sports Grill in Vail, Colorado, on November 7, 2009. "Before the attack, Moreau had an argument inside the bar and was escorted out by security." He returned to the bar and killed the person who he had the argument with. This last case is also included in the NYPD list of cases (Case #54 on p. 44). A number of the NYPD cases involve the killers specifically shooting security guards, which are hardly random individuals (Case #282 on p. 181, Case 292 on pp. 186-7). See Federal Bureau of Investigation, "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013," U.S. Department of Justice, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., September 16, 2013. New York City Police Department, "Active Shooter: Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation, 2012 Edition."
- [33](#) The one case where the kidnapping and sexual assault clearly precipitated the shooting was the NYPD's case 276 (NYPD, 2012, p. 177), where the police officers were shot while investigating the crime.
- [34](#) Lankford correctly argues that the Columbine and Fort Hood type shootings are essentially the same, even if one is labeled as terrorism and the other as "other crime." Lankford (2016, p. 188) writes: "these public mass shootings—which are also sometimes referred to as active shootings or rampage shootings—stand out as particularly concerning because they are typically premeditated attacks that strike random, innocent victims (Newman, Fox, Roth, Mehta, & Harding, 2004). This makes them functionally similar to terrorism." He has made similar comments to the press: "Lankford said that whatever mass killers'

particular motivations might be, they tend to share certain psychological traits that may be more important than their agendas. Such traits include a sense of victimization, a pattern of seeking negative attention, and being suicidal or not caring whether they live” (Devlin Barrett and Mark Berman, “Austin bombings renew debate: What crimes do we label as terrorism?” Washington Post, March 23, 2018).

- [35](#) These two school shootings in Germany were at Erfurt, Germany, April 26, 2002 and Winnenden, Germany, March 11, 2009.
- [36](#) These two attacks in Finland were at a vocational college in Kauhajoki, Finland, Sept. 23, 2008 and the Sello shopping center in Espoo, Finland, Dec. 31, 2009,
- [37](#) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rampage_killers,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Mass_shootings_by_country,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Mass_shootings_by_continent
- [38](#) Neither the NYPD report nor Lankford discuss what search terms that they used. We employed Nexis to search for cases by year and our search terms were “mass W/10 shooting,” “mass W/10 firearm*,” “mass W/10 gun,” “multiple W/10 shooting*,” “multiple W/10 firearm*,” and “multiple W/10 gun.” About 85 percent of cases that we found were already identified by GTD, we did pick up another 86 cases.
- [39](#) Presumably all terrorist attacks shouldn’t be excluded, both because the NYPD and FBI reports include terrorist attacks and Lankford claiming that terrorist and non-terrorist attacks were “functionally similar.” An email from Glenn Kessler at the Washington Post (Thursday, August 30, 2018) noted Lankford “did not respond to my requests to offer his full list and it took some prodding to get the Mumbai admission out of him.” This was presumably because he deemed it to be a “sponsored” terrorist activity, though that is not obvious. If the San Bernardino killers got training in the Middle East, are they sponsored? Is the first Ft Hood shooter “sponsored” because he was in communication with one of the influential clerics associated with ISIS? Is the Pulse nightclub shooter “sponsored” because he was inspired by information put out over the Internet by ISIS? Is funding required to list attacks as “sponsored”? Without information on these questions, it is only possible to provide a range of possible estimates.
- [40](#) “Venezuela favorece a los familiares de fallecidos que no informan a la prensa.” El Mundo, August 22, 2010
(<http://www.elmundo.es/america/2010/08/22/venezuela/1282502008.html>).
- [41](#) Beijing and Janguomen, China, September 9, 1994; Fudong, China, February 17, 1981
(<http://news.sina.com.cn/s/2009-09-08/070216258800s.shtml>); and Qingyang, China, September 24 & 25, 1979.
(http://www.360doc.com/content/16/1214/11/29240584_614574394.shtml).
- [42](#) Email correspondence on May 1, 2018. Victor Mair contacted other academics who made similar statements.
- [43](#) In an email from Victor Mair dated June 30, 2018.
- [44](#) Aaron Karp, “Estimating global Civilian- Held Firearms numbers,” Small Arms Survey, briefing paper June 2018 (<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Civilian-Firearms-Numbers.pdf>).
- [45](#) European Commission. 2013. Flash Eurobarometer 383: Firearms in the European Union. Brussels: European Commission
(http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl_383_en.pdf).
- [46](#) Emma Jane Kirby, “Switzerland guns: Living with firearms the Swiss way,” BBC News, February 11, 2013 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21379912>).

- [47](#) "Swiss vote to keep their guns at home," DW, Akademie, 2011 (<https://www.dw.com/en/swiss-vote-to-keep-their-guns-at-home/a-14840041>).
- [48](#) "What Explains U. S. Mass Shootings? International Comparisons Suggest an Answer," New York Times, November 8, 2017 and "What's Going On in This Graph?" New York Times, March 13, 2018.
- [49](#) Regressions corresponding to the three figures show the relationships are not statistically significant. Regressing the number of mass public shootings per 100,000 people shows that increasing the number of guns by one per hundred people decreases the number of attacks per 100,000 people by about 1 percent, though it isn't statistically significant with a t-statistic of 0.97. Regressing the number of mass public shooting murders per 100,000 people shows that increasing the number of guns by one per hundred people decreases the number of attacks per 100,000 people by about 1 percent, though it isn't statistically significant with a t-statistic of 0.86.
- [50](#) The regression work is available here (Lott, 2019).
- [51](#) Shasta Darlington, "Five Students among 8 killed in Brazil School Shooting," New York Times, March 13, 2019 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/13/world/americas/brazil-school-shooting.html>).

— CHAPTER 7 —

The Myth of the Lack of Funding for Public Health Research on Firearms

It is an article of faith that the NRA has prevented research on gun violence and gun safety. News stories keep pointing to the 1996 Dickey Amendment, which imposed restrictions on Centers for Disease Control funding of firearms research. They claim that this legislation “stopped” or imposed a “virtual ban” on such research. This assertion received massive uncritical news coverage.¹

According to Mayors Against Illegal Guns in January 2013, the Dickey Amendment “has driven many experts to abandon the field and kept young researchers from taking it up.... [T]he decline in federal research has undermined overall knowledge-creation because scholars are highly dependent on federal grants to support their research.”² Of course, academics were only too willing to claim that they need more funding.

Professor Mark Rosenberg of Emory University, who used to head the CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, described how cutting federal grants cultivated an atmosphere of fear and “terrorized people.”³ Jens Ludwig of the University of Chicago said that it is “very difficult” to do research without federal money.⁴ A number of academics signed an open letter demanding more federal funding for their research.⁵ In February 2019, 166 medical and research organizations — from the American Medical Association to the

Wisconsin Public Health Association — sent a letter to Congress complaining that the Dickey amendment “created a chilling effect on public health research on firearm morbidity and mortality prevention at the federal level.”⁶

Following the 2012 Newtown shooting, President Obama directed the federal government to begin awarding more research money. The National Institute of Justice awarded its first four awards, totaling \$2 million, in October 2013.⁷ The National Institute of Health started awarding proposals in 2014.⁸

The first of these CDC-funded studies came out in November 2015.⁹ Using data for Wilmington, Delaware, the study discovered that the majority of young men who were involved in firearm crime were also involved in crime as juveniles. Many got expelled from school, were abused as children, dropped out of high school prior to graduation, or were unemployed. Then, the study simply asserts that government programs would help solve the problem. It suggests providing “life skills training,” “individual placement and support” for jobs, “multi-dimensional treatment foster care,” and something listed as “coping power.”

It isn’t surprising that research funded by a Democratic administration would reach these policy conclusions. Of course, one could have asserted with equal validity that school vouchers, more police, and eliminating the minimum wage would reduce crime by helping children become productive members of society. But politicians and their appointees just can’t keep politics out of their decisions about where to apportion money.

Between 2015 and 2018, the federal government invested \$43.2 million into firearms research, with 89 percent coming from just the National Institute of Health. There has also been no dearth of private research funding. The Fund for a Safer Future initially awarded \$16 million for gun control research and “shaping the media conversation around the need for stronger gun laws.”¹⁰ Billionaire gun control activist Michael Bloomberg had already given a large, but undisclosed amount, to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

On January 8th, 2013, President Obama met with twenty-three large foundations to organize a national push for gun control. They included the McCormick Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the California Endowment.^{[11](#)} In 2018, the RAND Corporation announced a \$20 million fund that it expected to grow to \$50 million.^{[12](#)}

In 2016, the California legislature moved forward with \$5 million in funding for public health research on firearms.^{[13](#)} In 2018, New Jersey appropriated \$2 million to fund public health research.^{[14](#)} In 2019, the state of Washington chipped in another \$1 million.^{[15](#)}

But research on gun control never actually declined, even after the 1996 Dickey Amendment. Federal funding declined, but research output either remained constant or increased. After 2011, when the restriction on CDC funding was extended to all Health and Human Services agencies, firearms research actually steadily increased.

1. Changes in Firearm Research

The Bloomberg-funded Mayors Against Illegal Guns claimed in a January 2013 report: “Academic publishing on firearm violence fell by 60% between 1996 and 2010.”^{[16](#)} Despite this widely publicized claim, no evidence was ever provided that firearms research actually declined in the wake of the Dickey Amendment. The same goes for the more extensive 2011 restrictions, which prevented the NIH and other federal health agencies from funding gun research.

What Mayors Against Illegal Guns actually measured is firearms research *relative to all other research*. After 1996, firearms research in medical journals did in fact fall as a percentage of all research (see [Figure 1](#)). However, up through 2013, when concerns surfaced about a lack of firearms research, there was clearly no decrease in either the total number of research papers or pages. The amount of research exploded after that, well before even the smallest increase in federally funding.

The three funding amendments were passed in 1996, 2002, and 2011, but only took effect in the following years’ federal government

appropriation bills (1997, 2003, and 2012).¹⁷

The number of medical journal articles pertaining to firearms was relatively flat between 1996 and 2012, before Obama's changes in research funding could have had any effect. During that period, there was a 133% increase in all medical journal articles. By 2014, the number of articles had soared to 196.¹⁸ These projects had surely been commenced before the new availability of federal funding. In 2015, 229 articles were published just through August of that year, for a likely total of around 344 that year.

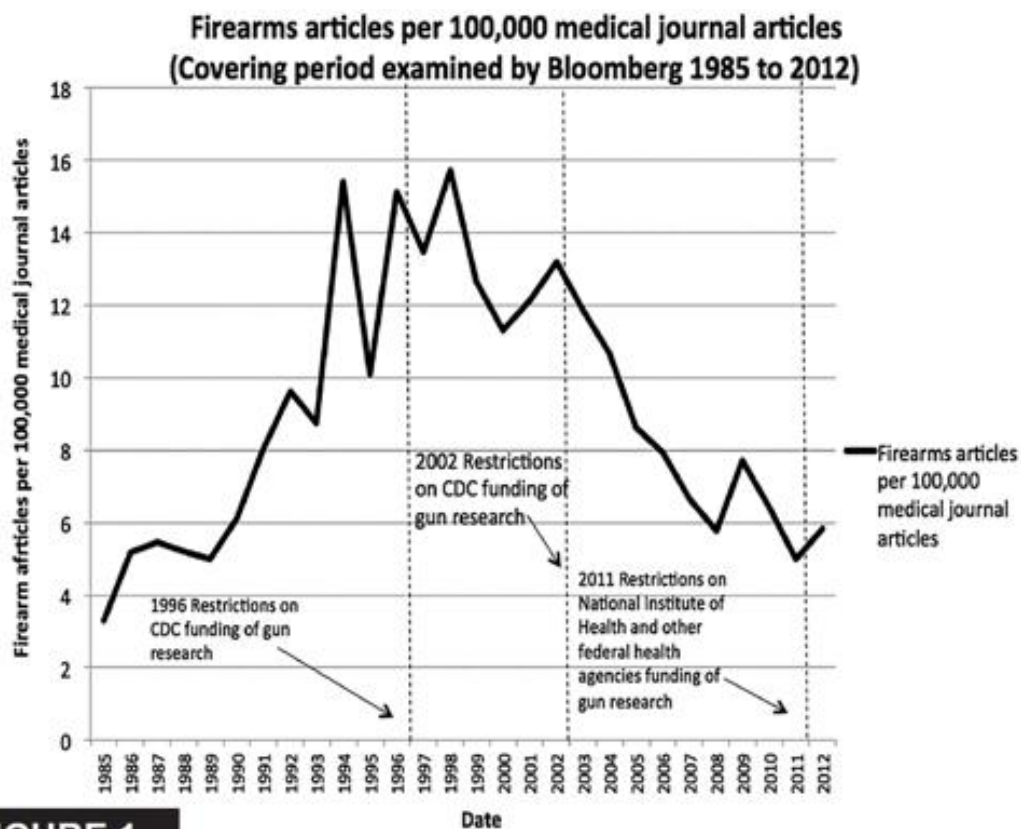


FIGURE 1

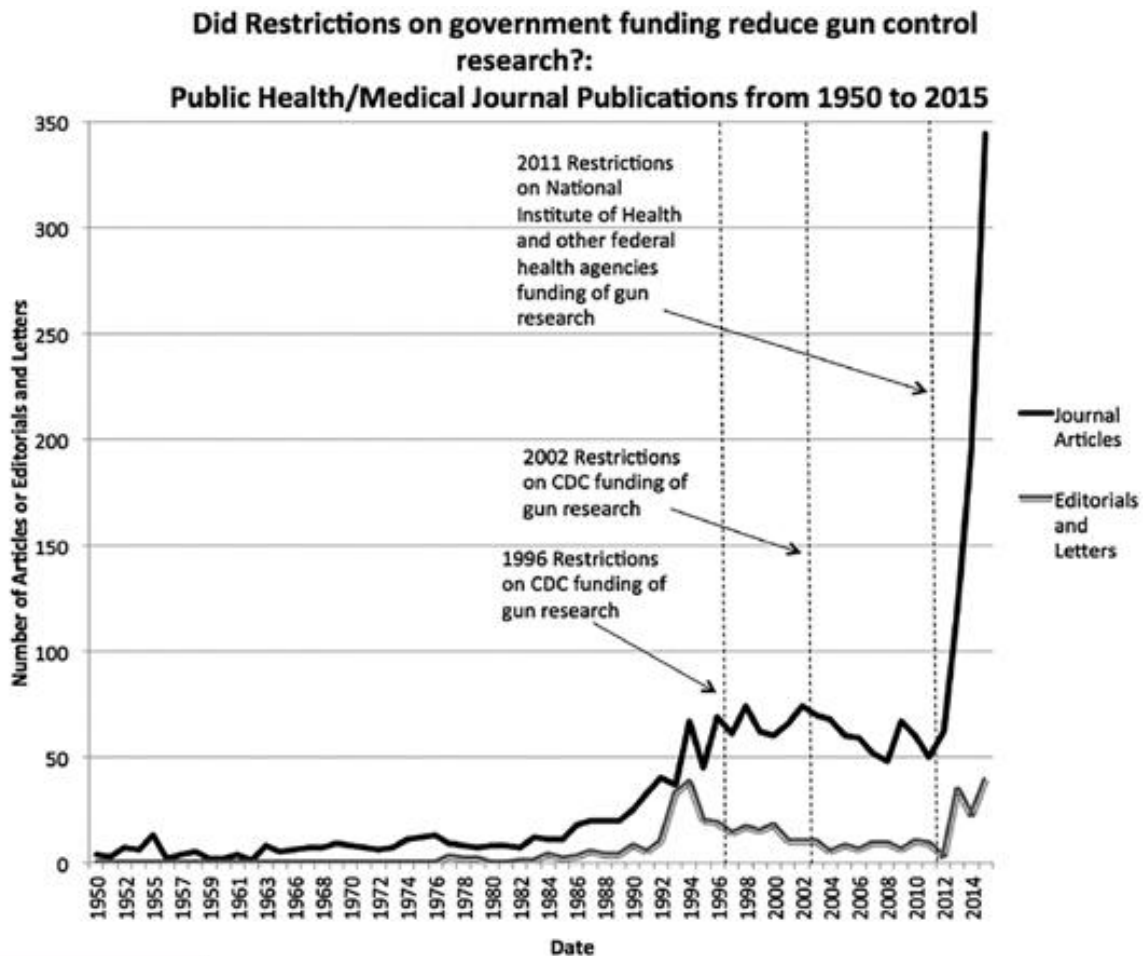


FIGURE 2

Another, perhaps more meaningful, measure of research output is the number of pages written. After all, a couple of very short papers involve less work than a longer one. But looking at the number of pages also shows virtually no net decrease in medical journal research on firearms. Output totaled 459 pages in 1996, which then rose to 753 in 2002 before falling back down to 456 in 2012. Subsequently, output soared to 651 pages in 2013 and 1,202 in 2014. 1,179 pages were published in just the first eight months of 2015, making for a projected annual rate of 1,769.

Maybe additional government funding would have led to more research between 1996 and 2012. But [Figure 2](#) doesn't support the narrative that experts were driven to "abandon the field." And there certainly was no "virtual ban on basic federal research."

Medical journal articles are required to mention any outside funding sources that they receive. I collected data on funding sources for papers published from 1992 to 2013, and only 15% of papers mention a funding source. Outside funding isn't necessary for the vast majority of social science research, which just involves using data that has already been collected by organizations such as the FBI or CDC. Portions of academics' salaries are already explicitly designated to covering research expenses.

Table 1: Funding Sources for Firearms Research: Assuming a 3 year lag in impact on research (1992 to 2013)

	Share of research mentioning any funding source	Share of research federally funded
Pre-2000	8.5%	2.9%
2000 and later	18.2%	3.3%
Average over entire period	14.7%	3.2%

2. How Much Money Should be Spent on Research

A widely referenced letter in the Journal of the American Medical Association by Stark and Shah claims: "Between 2004 and 2015, gun violence research was substantially underfunded and understudied relative to other leading causes of death, based on mortality rates for each cause."[19](#)

But this claim assumes the value from a dollar spent on medical or public health research is the same across thirty different causes of mortality, from heart disease to shootings. Controlled, randomized testing of a drug is quite different from studying the social behavior of humans. Studies on disease may simply require more funding due to a

need for costly laboratory equipment, so perhaps it makes sense for firearms research to appear relatively underfunded.

Stark and Shah only compare federal funding of different types of research, but about 97% of all medical journal research on firearms is not federally funded (see [Table 1](#)). Much of it is funded by universities. This thus dramatically undercounts the resources devoted to medical journal research on firearms.

Focusing only on medical journals means overlooking firearms research by economists and criminologists. Cancer treatment innovations may only be published in medical journals, but that is definitely not true of firearms research.

The benefits of additional funding depend on how much work is already occurring. Even if money spent on firearms research is as effective at saving lives as dollars spent on researching diseases, it's hard to say whether firearms research is underfunded. Maybe the right amount of money is already being disbursed, and the most important research is already being done.

Stark and Shah's 2017 letter also misses the big increase in federal funding that occurred after 2014. Federal RePORTER lists publications resulting from funded projects, and shows a 40% increase in publications per year from 2015 to 2018 compared to the previous 4 (or 7) years.

The vast majority of the funding measured by the Federal RePORTER came from the National Institute of Health. The NIH was the source of 89% of funding from 2015-18 and 98.8% of funding from 2011-14.

Table 2: The Increase in Federal funding for Firearms Research After 2014

Period	Number of years	Total Funds in millions	\$/ Year in millions	Percent growth in annual funding in last period compared to	Number of Projects	Percent growth in annual number of projects	\$/ Project	Percent growth in annual funding per project
2015-2018	4	\$43.2	\$10.80		83		\$520,439	
2011-2014	4	\$7.64	\$1.910	465%	26	220%	\$293,891	77.1%
2008-2014	7	\$20.98	\$2.997	260%	58	151%	\$361,658	43.9%

3. The Incredibly Flawed Public Health Research

I have previously discussed the problems with public health research in my other books, particularly “The War on Guns.” But I will provide a brief overview of those problems here.

Guns in the Home

At a town hall at George Mason University in January 2016, President Obama said, “If you look at the statistics, there’s no doubt that there are times where somebody who has a weapon has been able to protect themselves and scare off an intruder or an assailant, but what is more often the case is that they may not have been able to protect themselves, but they end up being the victim of the weapon that they purchased themselves.”[20](#)

Obama seems to be echoing a claim that has been championed by Arthur Kellermann and his many coauthors. A gun, they have argued, is less likely to be used in killing a criminal than it is to be used in killing someone the gun owner knows.

In one of the most well-known public health studies on firearms, Kellermann’s “case sample” consists of 444 homicides that occurred in homes. His control group had 388 individuals who lived near the deceased victims and were of the same sex, race, and age range. After learning about the homicide victims and control subjects — whether they owned a gun, had a drug or alcohol problem, etc. — the authors

attempted to see if the probability of a homicide correlated with gun ownership.

These studies make the ludicrous assumption that if a gun owner died from a gun shot, then it was the gun in the home that killed that person. The paper fails to report that *in only 8 of these 444 homicide cases* was the murder weapon the gun that had been kept in the home.

Moreover, the number of criminals stopped with a gun is much greater than the number killed in defensive gun uses. In fact, the attacker is killed in fewer than 1 out of every 1,000 defensive gun uses.

Account for either of these data errors, and the results are reversed.

People who are at greater risk of being attacked are probably more likely to arm themselves. Perhaps a small number of these people are involved in dangerous, illegal activities. Even with a gun, there might still be a greater risk of something bad happening to them than to the comparison group. These gun owners may well have been at even greater risk if they had never gotten their guns.

Many public health researchers seem to be trying to apply medicinal testing approaches to human behavior. To test a new pharmaceutical, some patients with a disease may be provided with the drug while others would be given a placebo. The drug and the placebo would be assigned randomly. A comparable approach for testing the link between homicide and gun ownership would be to randomly assign guns to some of the households in a study. That way, gun ownership would not be affected by other factors that may be related to a person's probability of being killed. Of course, it would probably be impossible to actually carry out such a study.

Economists solve this problem by looking at what happens to the life expectancy of people when those who would have otherwise gotten medical care can no longer do so. For example, if a local hospital closes down or if the price of medical care goes up, and some sick people who previously received medical care no longer receive it, the question is what happens to the mortality rate. Or, for guns, if it is more costly for some people who would previously owned guns not to own them, the question is what happens to the murder or accidental gun death rate.

Does law-abiding gun ownership pose a risk to innocent neighbors? While there are no official government statistics on people accidentally

shooting people they know (having mistook them for intruders), we used Nexis news searches from 2011 to 2013 to get a rough idea of the frequency of these cases. Though each incident garnered news stories in major US media outlets (USA Today, CNN, Fox News, *New York Daily News*), it is amazing how rare these cases are. We found eight such tragedies in 2013, eleven in 2012, and only five in 2011.^{[21](#)}

The Risk to Children in the Home

The benefits of gun ownership have generally gone ignored in the public health literature. There is no mention that widespread gun ownership deters criminals from breaking into homes, that gun ownership helps protect residents from harm in the event of a break-in, or that mass public shooters consistently attack gun-free zones where they don't have to worry about victims being able to defend themselves. And gun owners—contrary to what the media advises—should not unquestioningly store their guns locked and unloaded. That defeats the purpose of being ready at a moment's notice.

The media is doing quite a job of scaring people. A recent 2014 study in the journal *Pediatrics* received massive media attention, including extensive coverage in *USA Today* and an entire hour on ABC News' *20/20*.^{[22](#)} Here's how ABC's *World News Tonight* reported the findings:^{[23](#)}

"Looking at children and guns, the most recent statistics from 2009. And take a look tonight, they are eye-opening. The new numbers are arresting.... 7,391 children rushed to the hospital every year because of those gun injuries, so often accidents in the home. Four hundred and fifty-three of those children die at the hospital."

The vast majority of these "children" are actually young adults. These are not little kids who accidentally hurt themselves by firing their parents' gun. Consider these facts:

1. 76% of these injured "children" were 17, 18, or 19 years old.
2. 62% of injuries were the result of criminal assaults.
3. The injuries are overwhelmingly concentrated in large, urban areas.

All of these deaths are clearly tragic. But they are largely a result of gang violence, a problem that won't be solved by scaring law-abiding Americans into not owning guns.

Rand Corporation Evaluation of Gun Policies

We could get into a much longer rebuttal of the Rand Corporation's evaluation of "Gun Policy in America."²⁴ While dozens of peer-reviewed papers find that right-to-carry laws reduce violent crime, they are all excluded from their survey of the literature. Instead, the Rand Corporation includes unpublished, non-refereed papers that claim to show that these laws increase crime.²⁵

Other work is mischaracterized, such as my book from the University of Chicago Press.²⁶ They dismiss it because: "Many of Lott's modeling results were presented as figures and did not indicate statistical significance. Detailed results were provided only for an analysis of homicide rates." Perhaps they missed Table 10.4 on page 265. They ignore the book's examination of city-level crime data.

4. Conclusion

A lot of money is spent on firearms research, and the overwhelmingly proportion of the funding goes to public health research. The Dickey Amendment didn't reduce public health research, nor grants awarded by government agencies other than the CDC. Nor did it affect the prolific research by economists, criminologists, and law professors.

Given that public health research is so poorly done and misleading, the money spent is likely to be counterproductive to saving lives. If there are too few resources being devoted to firearms research, it lies in areas outside of public health journals. Any government-funded research must strive to obtain quality research that will actually help save lives. 🍀

ENDNOTES

- [1](#) There are hundreds of such stories in the media. See Sydney Lupkin, “CDC Ban on Gun Research Caused Lasting Damage,” ABC News, April 9, 2013. Bill Briggs, “Obama’s unlocking of federal funding ban on gun research yields little upshot in first year,” NBC News, December 13, 2013.
- [2](#) Mayors Against Illegal Guns, “Access Denied: How the gun lobby is depriving police, policy makers, and the public of the data we need to prevent gun violence,” January 2013, pp. 2, 15 (http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/c1/6/1017/3/access_denied.pdf).
- [3](#) The claim by Rosenberg that they “terrorized people” is available from this CBS News report (Mark Strassmann, “NRA, Congress stymied CDC gun research budget,” CBS Evening News w Scott Pelley, January 17, 2013 (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/nra-congress-stymied-cdc-gun-research-budget/>)). Rosenberg’s affiliation is available here (<http://www.taskforce.org/our-team/our-staff/mark-rosenberg-president-and-ceo>).
- [4](#) Eliot Marshall, “Obama lifts ban on funding gun violence research,” Science Insider, January 16, 2013.
- [5](#) Letter to Vice President Joseph P. Biden by 102 academics (https://crimelab.uchicago.edu/sites/crimelab.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Biden%20Commission%20letter_20130110_final.pdf).
- [6](#) Letter from 166 Health Organizations Urge Congress to Appropriate \$50 Million for CDC Gun Research to Congress members Nita Lowey, Kay Granger, Rosa DeLauro, and Tom Cole.
- [7](#) “Awards Related to: Research on Firearms and Violence,” National Institute of Justice, October 2013.
- [8](#) National Institute of Health, “NIH calls for research projects examining violence,” U.S. Department of Health Human Services, September 27, 2013.
- [9](#) Steven Sumner, James Mercy, Susan Hillis, Matthew Maenner, and Christina Socias, “Elevated Rates of Urban Firearm Violence and Opportunities for Prevention—Wilmington, Delaware,” Division of Violence Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 3, 2015 (<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dms/files/cdcgunviolencereport10315.pdf>).
- [10](#) UPI, “Obama: \$30 million for gun research,” UPI, April 10, 2013.
- [11](#) Reid J. Epstein, “White House gun plan: An end run around the NRA,” POLITICO, January 11, 2013. Rick Cohen, “Will Deep-Pocket Foundations Join the Call for Gun Control?” Nonprofit Quarterly, January 10, 2013.
- [12](#) “Gun Violence Research Collaborative to Release First Request for Research Proposals in January, Names Advisory Committee,” The Rand Corporation, November 15, 2018.
- [13](#) Patrick McGreevy, “Lawmakers propose California center on gun violence research,” LA Times, March 17, 2016.
- [14](#) Lilo H. Stainton, “New Jersey Looks to California for gun-violence research model,” NJ Spotlight, April 3, 2018.
- [15](#) Sara Jean Green, “\$1M in state money to fund Harborview gun-violence research,” Seattle Times, July 27, 2019 (<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/1m-in-state-funding-will-go-to-harborview-research-to-prevent-injuries-and-deaths-from-guns/>).
- [16](#) Mayors Against Illegal Guns, “Access Denied: How the gun lobby is depriving police, policy makers, and the public of the data we need to prevent gun violence,” January 2013, p. 2 (http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/c1/6/1017/3/access_denied.pdf).

- [17](#) The 1997 appropriations bill stated: “None of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control.”
- [18](#) Bret Jessee, a research director in the biomedical industry, provided data for us on medical journal publications.
- [19](#) David E. Stark and Nigam H. Shah, “Funding and Publication of Research on Gun Violence and Other Leading Causes of Death,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 317, January 3, 2017: 84-86.
- [20](#) “Guns in America town hall with Obama transcript (full text),” January 7, 2016
- [21](#) John R. Lott, Jr., “The War on Guns,” Regnery, 2016, fn. 46 on pp. 243-47.
- [22](#) John M. Leventhal, Julie R. Gaither, and Robert Sege, “Hospitalizations Due to Firearm Injuries in Children and Adolescents,” *Pediatrics*, Volume 133, Number 2, February 201. Michelle Healy, “Study: 20 young people a day hospitalized for gun injuries,” *USA Today*, January 27, 2014.
- [23](#) John R. Lott, Jr., “ABC News reports on guns mislead Americans,” *Fox News*, February 7, 2014. The video for the ABC “World News Tonight” segment is available here (<http://abcnews.go.com/video/embed?id=22258370>).
- [24](#) Crime Prevention Research Center, “The Rand Corporation’s dishonest report on gun control,” October 23, 2018 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2018/10/the-rand-corporations-dishonest-report-on-gun-control/>).
- [25](#) Crime Prevention Research Center, “Do Right-to-carry laws reduce violent crime?,” November 1, 2014 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2014/11/do-right-to-carry-laws-reduce-violent-crime/>).
- [26](#) John R. Lott, Jr., *More Guns, Less Crime* (University of Chicago Press), 3rd edition, 2010.

— CHAPTER 8 —

Why is it that so much money from the government and Michael Bloomberg goes to funding public health research?

“My budget will include an annual investment of \$100 million for DOJ and HHS to conduct research into the root causes of gun violence and the most effective ways to prevent it We’ll continue by constantly revisiting and updating those solutions based on new public health research. . . . It starts by acknowledging that gun violence is a public health crisis”¹

— Senator Elizabeth Warren, August 10, 2019

In a widely discussed pair of articles from 2017, The New York Times examined how well public opinion on gun control corresponded with the opinions of a panel of experts that The New York Times had selected. The first article examined the effectiveness of a variety of policies at preventing “gun deaths,”² and the second focused on the

effectiveness of gun control in reducing “mass shooting deaths.”³ The Times said that its academic panel consisted of 32 “experts on gun violence,” including criminologists, economists, and public health academics. “Only five said they oppose [gun control policies],” according to the Times, and those who opposed them “tended to particularly oppose blanket policies.”

In an earlier, more limited study — discussed in my book, “The War on Guns” — I found that economists differ from criminologists in their views about the relationship between gun ownership and crime or suicide.⁴ This report extends our previous analysis. Here, we compare the views of public health researchers with those of criminologists and economists on a wide range of gun control policies. Specifically, we ask academics to assess the impacts of these policies on mass public shootings and murder rates. Our survey examines a very broad range of gun control policies and issues.

It’s only natural for there to be a diversity of views across academic disciplines that differ fundamentally in their theoretical foundations and research methodologies. There are some differences in the political views of researchers in these different fields of study, but they lean heavily Democrat. Democratic economists outnumber their Republican counterparts by almost five to one, while in sociology (of which criminology is a subfield) there are about 37 Democratic faculty members for every Republican.⁵ No similar numbers are available for the field of public health, but political campaign donations indicate that few medical school faculty members make donations to Republicans.

No one should be surprised that criminologists, economists, and public health researchers would disagree about how to approach public policy. Economics is based on the “law of demand,” which holds that as something becomes more costly, people do less of it. Applied to crime, this concept means that crime will decrease as punishments become more severe or the probability of arrest and conviction increases. In sharp contrast to criminologists and public health researchers, economists always include law enforcement as a key factor when doing empirical work on crime.⁶

Statistical techniques also vary greatly across the groups, with much of public health research still relying on purely cross-sectional evidence that makes comparisons at only point in time. But there could be all kinds of different reasons why two states have different crime rates in any given year. It is much more telling to look across many years and examining patterns in rates of change.

By contrast, such simplistic comparisons are almost unheard of among economists in the last couple of decades.

Economists are more cognizant of issues such as substitutability in methods of committing suicide or murder. They focus on total suicide or murder rates, whereas public health researchers focus heavily on firearm suicides and homicides. If firearm suicides significantly decline after a particular gun control law, economists would suspect that suicidal people are simply picking other methods of killing themselves.

Unlike most economists and criminologists, public health academics also see themselves as more than just researchers. “Public health academics are expected not just to study problems, but also to reduce them,” public health researchers David Hemenway and Matt Miller note.⁷ “The dual mission of public health academics is reflected by the mixture of academics, advocates, practitioners, and policymakers who attend the annual American Public Health Association meetings.”

In our survey below, we obtained responses from 32 economists – equal in number to the *Times*’ entire panel of researchers, which consisted of only three Ph.D. economists. We also have more criminologists (38) and public health researchers (50). Altogether, we have almost four times as many respondents as the number of experts on the *Times*’ panel.

This research project is designed to examine the extent to which representative samples of criminologists, economists, and public health researchers agree about vital issues of public policy on gun control. To ensure a high level of expertise, we only surveyed researchers who had published an empirical study in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

Methodology

Sampling

We surveyed public health researchers in December 2018 and January 2019, limiting ourselves to researchers who had published at least one English-language empirical study on firearms in a peer-reviewed academic journal between January 2000 and December 2018. We identified potential respondents by searching Medline (PubMed) and Medline EBSCOhost using the search terms “firearms,” “violence,” “Clinical trial,” “study,” “Comparative study,” and “Journal article.” We sifted through the results to find articles that were empirical and published in a peer-reviewed academic journal. Authors’ email addresses were found either in the publications themselves or from the website of the author’s current academic institution.

Our sample of criminologists and economists was taken from lists that we had compiled for a previous survey. The list of criminologists was drawn from two databases (PROQUEST and EBSCO Host). To be included in our survey, researchers had to have published at least one empirical study on firearms and violence in a peer-reviewed criminology journal (excluding forensics or injury publications) between January 2000 and December 2014.

Our survey list of economists was obtained using the academic publication database JSTOR, selecting the economics subset (632 sources), and doing a full-text search of “gun control” for all years. We limited our results to peer-reviewed books and articles (not book reviews or publications categorized as “miscellaneous”), and got 234 hits. We then obtained copies of those articles to determine if they contained empirical work on the issues of guns and crime, accidents, or suicides. Empirical studies were excluded if they only dealt with voting behavior or were themselves surveys.

Our survey was conducted in February and March 2019. In total, we identified 277 valid email addresses of experts (criminologists, economists, and public health researchers) who had published an empirical study during the designated time frames.

The New York Times reported that it selected its panel of experts to include “leading experts on gun violence” who “have published extensively in peer-reviewed academic journals on gun policy.” But the *Times* clearly included researchers who haven’t done any empirical

research and don't appear to have published in any "peer-reviewed academic journals" (e.g., Eugene Volokh).

It is hard to believe that the *Times* didn't already have a sense of the views of these "experts." The small sample and the lack of academic diversity helps to account for the near uniformity of views among the panel members.

Survey methods

Using Survey Gizmo, we posed questions to our three groups of experts about the same issues that the New York Times study concerned. Respondents were interviewed in a brief online survey that took **3 to 5 minutes** to complete (Survey Gizmo estimated 3 minutes). All participants were told that they were selected because of their expertise in firearms research.

Respondents were informed that Professor Gary Mauser of Simon Fraser University was conducting the survey in collaboration with the Crime Prevention Research Center, and were directed to contact Mauser with any questions, comments, or concerns they might have. Harvard Professor Arthur Berg, MD sent out the survey to public health researchers.

Response rates were acceptable. We had an overall response rate of 43.3% (120 responses out of the 277 valid emails). The response rate for criminologists was 63% (38 out of 60), and 74% for economists (32 out of 43). Unfortunately, the response rate for public health researchers was much lower — just 30% (50 out of 167). This may be due in part to the higher number of co-authors on public health publications.

Our three groups of experts were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of 33 gun control policies in reducing both murder rates and mass public shootings. Twenty-five questions concerned the same policies that the New York Times asked about. All of these proposed measures involved increasing government restrictions on civilian use and ownership of firearms. In addition, we included 8 additional questions about policies that would relax or eliminate governmental restrictions. We did so in order to discover how experts would evaluate policies that encourage individual freedom and self-help. One question was about

legalizing recreational drugs “to eliminate drug gangs as a major source of illegal guns.”

In contrast with the New York Times study, we focused on “murder rates” rather than “firearm homicide deaths.” We asked about all murders, as gun control would not actually save lives if it merely got murderers to replace firearms with another killing instrument. Neither the New York Times nor this study investigated the impact of gun control policy on suicide rates, which account for most gun deaths each year.

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of each policy on a scale of 1 to 10 — first in terms of whether it would reduce “murder rates,” and then whether it would reduce “mass public shootings.” The scale ran from “1” as not effective at all to “10” as extremely effective.

Table 1: List of questions

Respondents were asked to evaluate 33 gun control policies. First, they were asked to evaluate each policy’s effectiveness at reducing mass public shootings, and then its effectiveness in reducing murder rates. Two distinct types of policy questions were included: [1] 25 questions focused on increasing governmental restrictions on firearms by civilians, and [2] 8 questions asked about the effectiveness of policies that relaxed or decreased governmental restrictions on firearms or drugs.

25 questions focused on increasing governmental restrictions on firearms by civilians. 20 of these matched the policies previously included by the New York Times in their studies:

1. Assault weapons ban
2. Banning the sale and ownership of all ammunition magazines with capacities greater than 10 bullets
3. Bar sales to convicted stalkers
4. Bar sales to people deemed dangerous by a mental health provider
5. Implementing a national “buy-back” program for all banned firearms and magazines, where the government pays people to turn in illegal guns
6. Limiting the amount of ammunition you can purchase within a given time period

7. One gun per month purchase limit
8. Preventing sales of all firearms to people who have been convicted of violent misdemeanors
9. Requiring a mandatory waiting period of three days before a purchased gun can be taken home
10. Requiring all gun owners to possess a license for their firearm
11. Requiring all gun owners to register their fingerprints
12. Requiring all guns to microstamp each bullet with a mark that uniquely matches the gun and bullet
13. Requiring reports of lost or stolen guns
14. Requiring that all firearms be recorded in a national registry
15. Requiring that all gun buyers demonstrate a “genuine need” for a gun, such as a law enforcement job or hunting
16. Requiring that all gun owners store their guns in a safe storage unit
17. Requiring that gun buyers complete safety training and a test for their specific firearm
18. Semiautomatic gun ban
19. Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for gun buyers
20. Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for ammo buyers

Five additional questions included on increasing government restrictions:

1. Allow judges to take away a person’s guns based on “probable cause” that a person might commit a crime
2. Allow judges to take away a person’s guns based on the “Preponderance of the evidence” that a person might commit a crime
3. Allow judges to take away a person’s guns without a hearing
4. Allow judges to take away a person’s guns without requiring testimony by mental health experts
5. Requiring all gun owners to provide login information for their social media accounts

Eight additional questions were asked about policies that relaxed or decreased governmental restrictions. This provides insight into how experts evaluate policies that encourage individual freedom and self-help.

1. Allow teachers with permits to carry concealed handguns at K-12 schools and college campuses
2. Allow the military personnel at military bases to again carry guns

3. Authorizing nationwide stand-your-ground laws that allow people to defend themselves using lethal force, without requiring a person to first retreat as far as possible
4. Encouraging public places to eliminate gun-free zones for concealed handgun permit holders
5. Legalizing drugs to eliminate drug gangs as a major source of illegal guns
6. National reciprocity for permitted concealed handguns
7. Reducing the government-imposed costs of acquiring guns in terms of background checks, licensing fees, and costs of concealed handgun permits.
8. Relaxing OSHA restrictions to let companies determine if people can carry concealed handguns in workplace settings

Survey Results

A few non-Americans were included in each group of experts, but in such small numbers that a separate analysis makes little sense. Their inclusion makes little difference in our overall results. Thus, and because the New York Times surveyed only American researchers, the findings we present will also focus on Americans.

Table 2. Sample

	Total Sample	Americans Only
Economists	32	28
Criminologists	38	34
Public Health	50	47
Total	120	109

Table 3A: Comparing the Evaluations of the Policy Proposals for Mass Public Shootings by the NYT Panel with those by Criminologists, Economists, and Public Health

Questions on reducing mass public shootings:

NYT Experts rankings	Criminologists		Economists		Public Health		Total	
	Questions ranked on the basis of NYT rankings:							
	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US
Assault weapons ban:								
6.8	2.92	3	3	2	5.68	5.98	4.09	4.05
Banning the sale and ownership of all ammunition magazines with a capacity greater than 10 bullets:								
6.8	2.5	2.53	2.56	1.86	5.88	6.19	3.93	3.96
Bar sales to convicted stalkers:								
6	4.03	4.06	2.59	1.96	5.16	5.24	4.11	4.04
Bar sales to people deemed dangerous by a mental health provider:								
6.3	4.64	4.88	2.74	2.11	6.04	6.26	4.72	4.78

Implementing a national "buy-back" program for all banned firearms and magazines, where the government pays people to turn in illegal guns:								
3.9	1.54	1.59	1.94	1.5	4.6	4.89	2.92	3.01
Limiting the amount of ammunition you can purchase within a given time period:								
5.6	2.91	2.94	2.16	1.44	5.27	5.59	3.7	3.71
One gun a month purchase limit:								
4.7	2.49	2.63	1.81	1.36	4.18	4.41	3.01	3.08
Preventing sales of all firearms to people who have been convicted of violent misdemeanors:								
6.8	3.19	3.18	2.31	1.79	5.76	5.84	4.03	3.98
Requiring a mandatory waiting period of three days after gun is purchased before it can be taken home:								
4.7	2.83	2.94	1.9	1.3	4	4.21	3.07	3.07
Requiring all gun owners to possess a license for their firearm:								
5.8	2.73	2.8	2.23	1.52	5.13	5.4	3.59	3.61
Requiring all gun owners to register their fingerprints:								
4	1.74	1.81	1.69	1.21	3.55	3.73	2.48	2.5
Requiring all guns to microstamp each bullet with a mark that uniquely matches the gun and bullet:								
4.1	1.74	1.81	1.56	1.14	3.24	3.41	2.32	2.34
Requiring report of lost or stolen guns:								
4.8	2.31	2.44	1.77	1.37	4.13	4.33	2.92	2.99
Requiring that all firearms be recorded in a national registry:								
5	2.03	2.13	1.84	1.15	4.66	4.91	3.07	3.09
Requiring that all gun buyers demonstrate a "genuine need" for a gun, such as a law enforcement job or hunting:								
5.6	2.22	2.19	2.13	1.36	4.57	4.82	3.18	3.12
Requiring that all gun owners store their guns in a safe storage unit:								
4.1	1.86	1.94	1.44	1.07	3.65	3.84	2.49	2.55
Requiring that gun buyers complete safety training and a test for their specific firearm:								
4	1.19	1.21	1.75	1.36	3.48	3.67	2.29	2.32
Semiautomatic gun ban:								
6.8	2.53	2.56	2.81	1.79	5.8	6.11	3.97	3.91
Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for ammo buyers:								
6.5	2.45	2.4	1.9	1.22	5.43	5.73	3.55	3.55
Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for gun buyers:								
6.6	2.74	2.67	1.9	1.22	5.49	5.78	3.66	3.66
Average:								
5.45	2.53	2.58	2.10	1.49	4.78	5.02	3.35	3.37

(Table 3A continued)

Five additional questions on increasing government restrictions

Criminologists		Economists		Public Health		Total	
Questions ranked on the basis of NYT rankings:							
Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US
Allow judges to take away a person's guns based on "probable cause" that a person might commit a crime:							
2.69	2.81	2.00	1.71	4.15	4.23	3.12	3.15
Allow judges to take away a person's guns based on the "Preponderance of the evidence" that a person might commit a crime:							
2.94	3.00	2.13	1.79	4.48	4.56	3.36	3.37
Allow judges to take away a person's guns without a hearing:							
2.40	2.50	2.06	1.79	3.77	3.98	2.88	2.96
Allow judges to take away a person's guns without requiring testimony by mental health experts:							
2.40	2.50	2.19	1.86	3.74	3.93	2.90	2.96
Requiring all gun owners to provide in login information for their social media accounts:							
1.90	2.00	1.58	1.37	2.71	2.85	2.16	2.21
Average for these five questions:							
2.47	2.56	1.99	1.70	3.77	3.91	2.88	2.93
Average for first 25 questions:							
2.52	2.58	2.08	1.53	4.58	4.80	3.26	3.28

(Table 3A continued)

Additional questions that ask about removing regulations

Criminologists		Economists		Public Health		Total	
Questions ranked on the basis of NYT rankings:							
Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US
Allow teachers with permits to carry concealed handguns at K-12 schools and college campuses:							
5.78	6.00	7.73	7.71	3.41	2.86	5.31	5.07
Allow the military personnel at military bases to again carry guns:							
5.29	5.60	7.73	7.71	3.28	2.86	5.11	4.94
Authorizing stand-your-ground laws nationally that allow people to defend themselves using lethal force without requiring a person to first retreat as far as possible:							
3.00	2.73	3.67	3.86	2.13	1.52	2.81	2.49
Encouraging public places to eliminate gun-free zones for concealed handgun permit holders:							
5.42	5.33	8.00	7.86	3.28	2.69	5.22	4.82
Legalizing drugs to eliminate drug gangs as a major source of illegal guns:							
2.48	2.60	4.13	4.57	2.80	2.78	3.05	3.18
National reciprocity for permitted concealed handguns:							
4.53	4.38	6.93	6.93	3.06	2.48	4.56	4.20
Reducing the government imposed costs of acquiring guns in terms of background checks, licensing fees, and costs of concealed handgun permits. This is especially true for the poor:							
4.18	4.13	6.07	6.43	3.72	3.85	4.49	4.59
Relaxing OSHA restrictions to let companies determine if people can carry concealed handguns in workplace settings:							
4.83	5.00	7.80	7.79	3.25	2.76	4.96	4.73
Average for questions on removing regulations:							
4.44	4.47	6.51	6.61	3.12	2.73	4.44	4.25

Table 3B: Comparing the Evaluations of the Policy Proposals for Murder Rates by the NYT Panel with those by Criminologists, Economists, and Public Health

Questions on reducing murder rates

NYT Experts rankings	Criminologists		Economists		Public Health		Total	
	Questions ranked on the basis of NYT rankings							
	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US
Assault weapons ban:								
5	1.71	1.71	2.25	1.57	3.88	4.06	2.76	2.7
Banning the sale and ownership of all ammunition magazines with a capacity greater than 10 bullets:								
5.8	1.81	1.81	1.75	1.36	3.96	4.15	2.69	2.72
Bar sales to convicted stalkers:								
6.5	4.92	5.13	3.13	2.63	6	6.12	4.89	4.92
Bar sales to people deemed dangerous by a mental health provider:								
6	4.81	5.13	2.48	2.11	5.35	5.52	4.41	4.53
Implementing a national "buy-back" program for all banned firearms and magazines, where the government pays people to turn in illegal guns:								
3.9	1.65	1.59	1.94	1.5	5.29	5.62	3.24	3.32
Limiting the amount of ammunition you can purchase within a given time period:								
4.4	1.91	1.93	2.17	1.24	4.77	5.05	3.17	3.12
One gun a month purchase limit:								
4.8	2.21	2.33	1.94	1.5	4.36	4.61	3.04	3.11
Preventing sales of all firearms to people who have been convicted of violent misdemeanors:								
7.1	4.34	4.47	2.75	2.29	7.15	7.33	5.09	5.16

Requiring a mandatory waiting period of three days after gun is purchased before it can be taken home:								
4.8	3.38	3.53	2.23	1.74	5.42	5.71	3.92	4.03
Requiring all gun owners to possess a license for their firearm:								
6.4	3.06	3.13	2.48	1.74	5.5	5.8	3.92	3.94
Requiring all gun owners to register their fingerprints:								
5	2.2	2.25	2.31	1.79	4.57	4.81	3.22	3.25
Requiring all guns to microstamp each bullet with a mark that uniquely matches the gun and bullet:								
5.5	2.49	2.56	2.44	1.93	4.26	4.49	3.21	3.24
Requiring report of lost or stolen guns:								
6	2.69	2.75	2.29	1.74	5	5.27	3.55	3.59
Requiring that all firearms be recorded in a national registry:								
5.7	2.06	2.07	2.16	1.44	5.52	5.84	3.53	3.55
Requiring that all gun buyers demonstrate a "genuine need" for a gun, such as a law enforcement job or hunting:								
5.6	2.42	2.38	2.19	1.36	4.66	4.91	3.29	3.22
Requiring that all gun owners store their guns in a safe storage unit:								
4.4	2.91	2.94	2.06	1.57	4.79	5.04	3.47	3.51
Requiring that gun buyers complete safety training and a test for their specific firearm:								
4.1	1.42	1.47	2.53	2.15	4.32	4.56	2.93	2.99
Semiautomatic gun ban:								
6.1	1.87	1.88	2.44	1.79	4.04	4.23	2.93	2.88
Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for ammo buyers:								
6.4	2.26	2.19	1.84	1.3	5.47	5.77	3.48	3.53
Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for gun buyers:								
7.3	3.03	3	2.03	1.37	5.63	5.91	3.85	3.86
Average:								
5.54	2.66	2.71	2.27	1.71	5.00	5.24	3.53	3.56

(Table 3B continued)

Five additional questions on increasing government restrictions

Criminologists		Economists		Public Health		Total	
Questions ranked on the basis of NYT rankings:							
Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US
Allow judges to take away a person's guns based on "probable cause" that a person might commit a crime:							
2.89	2.94	2.13	1.86	4.76	4.91	3.47	3.52
Allow judges to take away a person's guns based on the "Preponderance of the evidence" that a person might commit a crime:							
3.08	3.13	2.25	1.93	5.15	5.27	3.72	3.76
Allow judges to take away a person's guns without a hearing:							
2.16	2.18	2.00	1.71	4.09	4.30	2.92	2.99
Allow judges to take away a person's guns without requiring testimony by mental health experts:							
2.47	2.53	2.19	1.86	4.22	4.44	3.12	3.19
Requiring all gun owners to provide in login information for their social media accounts:							
1.58	1.64	1.32	1.15	2.52	2.64	1.90	1.95
Average for these five questions:							
2.44	2.48	1.98	1.70	4.15	4.31	3.03	3.08
Average for first 25 questions:							
2.61	2.67	2.21	1.70	4.83	5.05	3.43	3.46

(Table 3B continued)

Additional questions that ask about removing regulations

Criminologists		Economists		Public Health		Total	
Questions ranked on the basis of NYT rankings:							
Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US	Avg. for all	Avg. for US
Allow teachers with permits to carry concealed handguns at K-12 schools and college campuses:							
4.44	4.79	6.64	6.62	2.44	2.03	4.19	4.05
Allow the military personnel at military bases to again carry guns:							
4.61	4.86	6.87	6.93	2.66	2.24	4.40	4.24
Authorizing stand-your-ground laws nationally that allow people to defend themselves using lethal force without requiring a person to first retreat as far as possible:							
3.21	2.93	4.20	4.43	2.13	1.52	3.02	2.70
Encouraging public places to eliminate gun-free zones for concealed handgun permit holders:							
4.94	5.00	6.93	7.00	2.74	2.19	4.55	4.28
Legalizing drugs to eliminate drug gangs as a major source of illegal guns:							
4.12	4.07	6.27	6.64	3.19	2.69	4.30	4.12
National reciprocity for permitted concealed handguns:							
4.28	4.50	7.00	7.07	3.03	2.62	4.48	4.33
Reducing the government imposed costs of acquiring guns in terms of background checks, licensing fees, and costs of concealed handgun permits. This is especially true for the poor.							
5.15	5.20	6.67	7.07	4.05	4.14	5.10	5.22
Relaxing OSHA restrictions to let companies determine if people can carry concealed handguns in workplace settings:							
4.85	4.87	7.00	7.14	4.59	4.66	5.31	5.36
Average:							
4.45	4.53	6.45	6.61	3.10	2.76	4.42	4.29

Respondents answered on a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 being not effective at all and 10 being extremely effective. 5.5 is the midpoint, but not even the most favorably-evaluated restrictive policies never exceed that point among criminologists and economists.

Even a casual glance at all 33 questions in [Table 3](#) shows some similarities, but also real differences between Americans academics in the three disciplines.

Criminologists and economists differ somewhat in how strongly they feel about different policies, but they rank them similarly. Both have the same top four preferred policies for stopping mass public shootings. American criminologists rate the following policies most

highly: allow K-12 teachers to carry concealed handguns (with a survey score of 6), allow military personnel to carry on military bases (5.6), encourage the elimination of gun-free zones (5.3), and relax OSHA regulations that pressure companies to create gun-free zones (5). The top four policies for economists are the same, but in different order: encourage the elimination of gun-free zones (7.9), relax OSHA regulations that pressure companies to create gun-free zones (7.8), allow K-12 teachers to carry concealed handguns (7.7), and allow military personnel to carry on military bases (7.7).

By contrast, public health researchers place these same policies near the bottom of their list. Their top policy choice — barring gun sales to people deemed dangerous by a mental health provider with just over a 6 out of 10 rating — is the fifth most valued policy by criminologists (4.88), but their other top policies aren't viewed positively by criminologists. Their second through fourth top-ranked policies are banning magazines that can hold more than 10 bullets (6.2), banning semi-automatic guns (6.1), and prohibiting assault weapons (5.98). All of these policies involve highly restrictive bans. For Criminologists, these were their 21st (2.6), 20th (2.8), and 10th (3) ranked policies. There was an even larger gap between economists and public health researchers.

There is a way that we can systematically compare the policy rankings of each field. A Spearman correlation coefficient of 1 means that the two disciplines have exactly the same policy rankings, and a value of -1 indicates that they have the exact opposite policy rankings. Zero means that there is no relationship.⁸

Criminologists and economists have about an 80% match in how they order the different policies.⁹ By contrast, both criminologists and economists tend to rank policies in reverse of how public health researchers do.¹⁰

The patterns are similar when these different groups rate the effectiveness of policies at reducing murder rates. While the proposal ranked most favorably by criminologists is reducing government-imposed costs of acquiring guns (5.2), economists want most to relax OSHA restrictions that interfere with companies setting rules for

people having guns (7.1). Public health researchers want to prevent the sales of firearms to people convicted of violent misdemeanors (7.3).

Again, the policies that criminologists most prefer also tend to be the ones that economists most prefer.¹¹ Also, criminologists and economists tend to have the opposite preferences of public health researchers.

Table 4.

Mass Public Shootings

(Effectiveness Evaluations of 33 Common Policy Proposals, mean values in parentheses) American Researchers Only			
	Min	Max	Mean
Public Health	1.52	6.26	4.3
Criminologists	1.21	6.0	3.0
Economists	1.07	7.86	2.8

Murder Rates

(Effectiveness Evaluations of 33 Common Policy Proposals, mean values in parentheses) American Researchers Only			
	Min	Max	Mean
Public Health	1.52	7.33	5.0
Criminologists	1.47	5.2	3.1
Economists	1.15	7.14	2.9

As shown in [Table 5](#), not even our public health respondents evaluated gun control proposals as favorably as did the New York Times panel of experts,. They came by far the closest, though. On the subject of the impact of gun control policies on murder rates, there is no statistically

significant difference between the public health respondents and the *Times'* panel.^{[12](#), [13](#)}

Table 5.

Mass Public Shootings

(Effectiveness Evaluations of 20 Common Policy Proposals, mean values in parentheses) American Researchers Only			
	Min	Max	Mean
New York Times	3.9	6.8	5.4
Public Health	3.4	6.3	5.0
Criminologists	1.2	4.9	2.6
Economists	1.1	2.1	1.5

Murder Rates

(Effectiveness Evaluations of 20 Common Policy Proposals, mean values in parentheses) American Researchers Only			
	Min	Max	Mean
New York Times	3.9	7.3	5.5
Public Health	4.1	7.3	5.2
Criminologists	1.5	5.1	2.7
Economists	1.2	2.6	1.7

The researchers in our survey may be further compared with the New York Times panel by graphing their patterns of responses on the 20 policy questions that were included in both studies. On these questions, the evaluations of our American researchers are weakly related to those of the New York Times experts.

If a discipline's average ratings were to perfectly matched the average ratings of the Times' panel, the observations would line up along the 45-degree line shown in the figures. That pattern only comes close to being observed for the graphs comparing the answers given by public health researchers. This high level of agreement suggests that the New York Times panel of "experts" was primarily composed of public health activists, with only a light sprinkling of experts from different disciplines.

The graphs vividly show that criminologists and economists evaluated the New York Times proposals as being much less effective than did the public health researchers.

We again examined the Spearman correlation coefficients, though this time just for the 20 questions that were included in both surveys. Criminologists and public health researchers tend to agree on these particular questions that the Times focused on.^{[14](#)} They also rank gun policies similarly to the Times' panel. Economists diverge sharply from their academic peers on the subject of gun control policies' effectiveness at reducing murder rates.

Reducing Mass Public Shootings (American Sample)

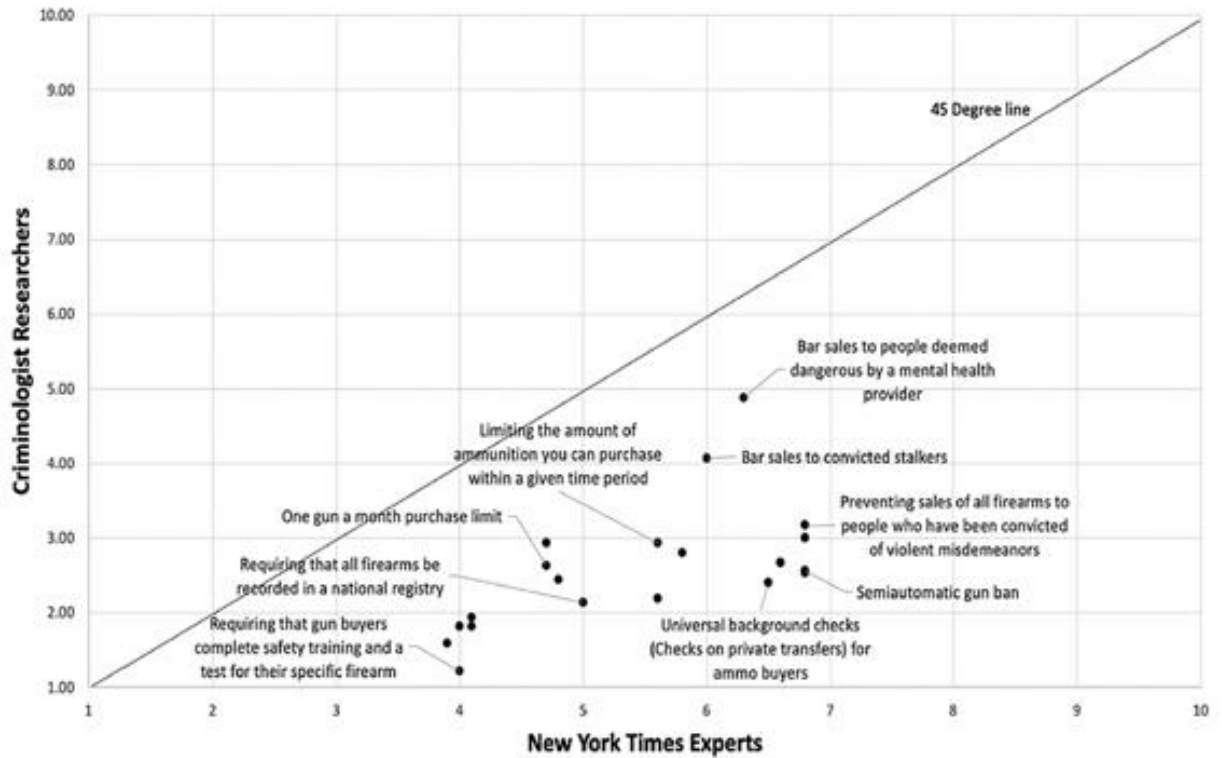


FIGURE 1A

Reducing Mass Public Shootings (American Sample)

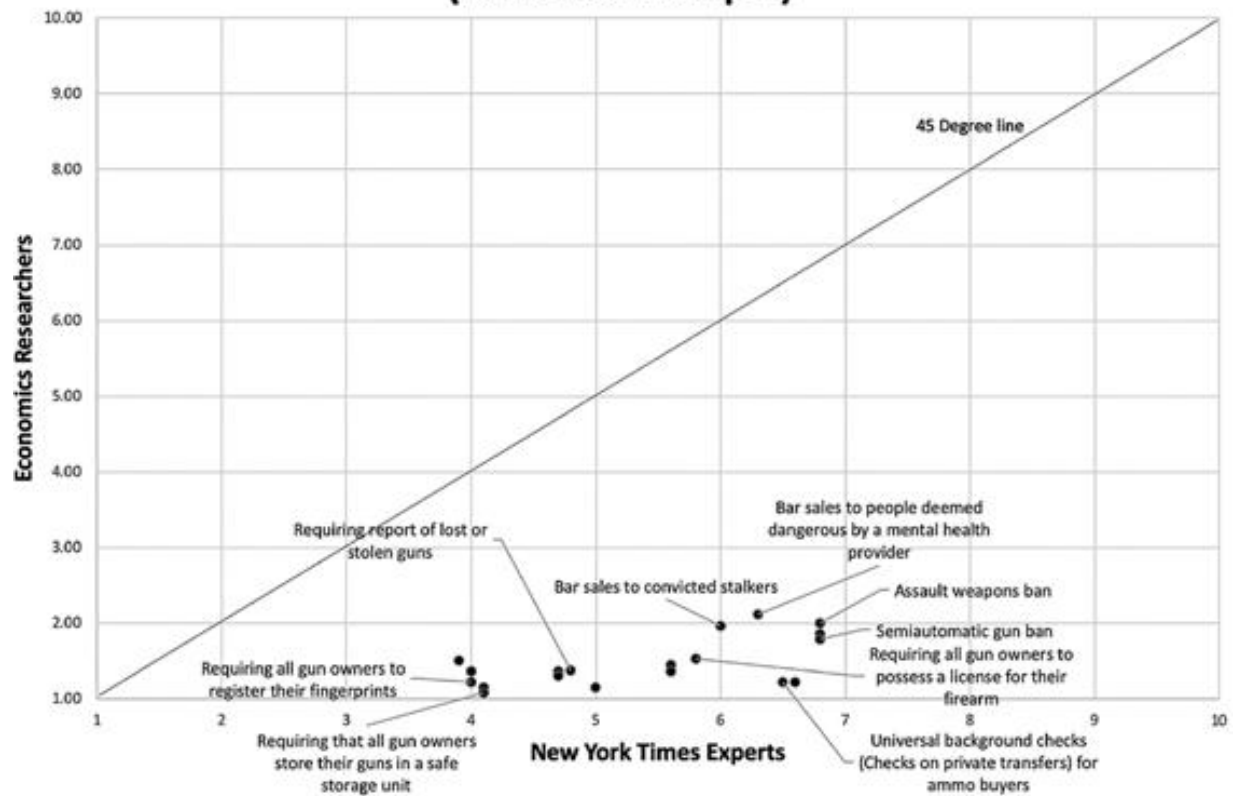


FIGURE 1B

Reducing Mass Public Shootings (American Sample)

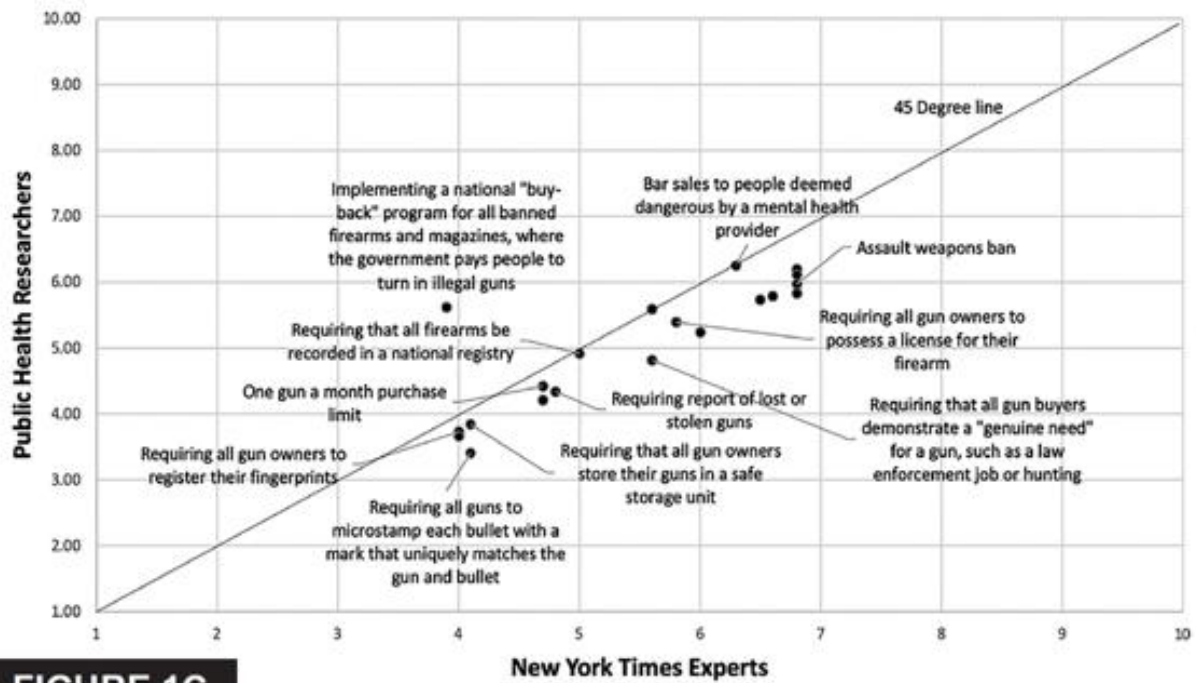


FIGURE 1C

Reducing Murder Rates (American Sample)

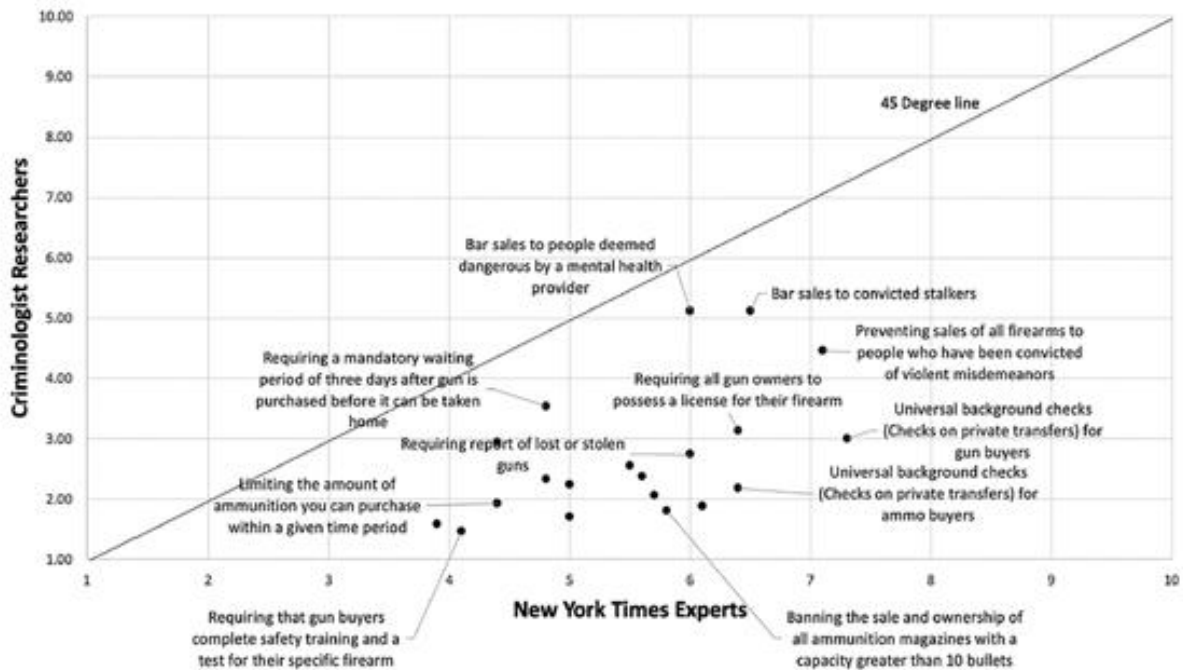


FIGURE 1D

Reducing Murder Rates (American Sample)

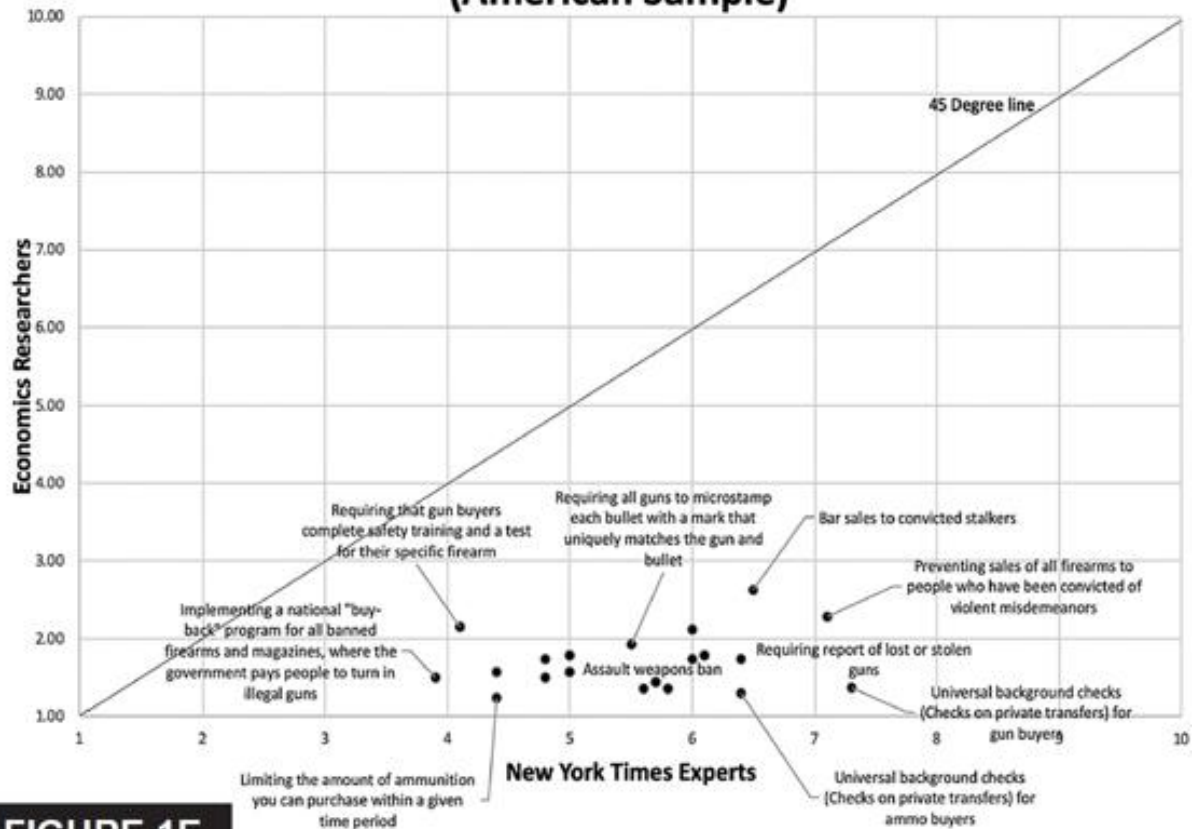


FIGURE 1E

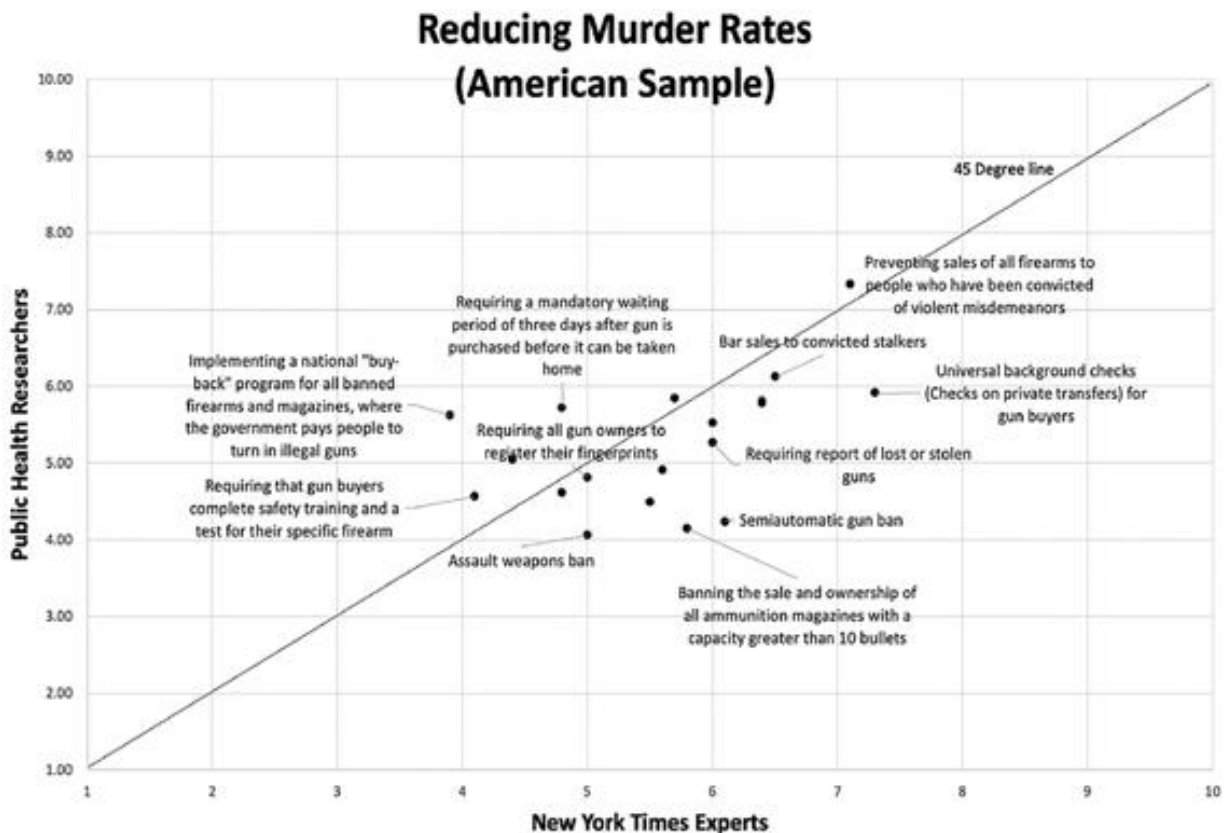


FIGURE 1F

We have been able to reach a couple of conclusions. The New York Times questions about restrictions on gun ownership elicit similar rank orders, except for economists regarding murder rates. But when it comes to reducing mass public shooting deaths, criminologists, economists, and even public health researchers are less supportive of restrictions on gun ownership than was the Times' panel of experts.

The differences between public health researchers, criminologists, and economists become a lot starker when we focus on the questions unique to our survey, which include queries concerning anti-restrictive policies such as eliminating gun-free zones. Criminologists and economists are not statistically significantly different in terms of their average evaluations of proposals or in terms of how they rank order those proposals. Economists are more supportive of abolishing gun-free zones than criminologists are, but they will generally provide the same policy rankings.

Evaluating Policies that Restrict or Relax Governmental Restrictions

Our researchers were asked to evaluate two starkly different types of policy proposals: those that increased governmental restrictions and those that relaxed or loosened governmental restrictions. The differences between the experts' evaluations are especially pronounced when they are asked to consider these two types of policy proposals (increasing or decreasing government restrictions).

Differences between groups of experts were muted in Tables 3 and 4 because evaluations of both restrictive and anti-restrictive proposals were combined.

[Table 6](#) separately compares the three groups' evaluations of both restrictive and anti-restrictive proposals. Because each group of researcher gave nearly identical evaluations for "murder rates" and "mass public shootings," we combine these two dependent factors.

Table 6.
Comparing Academics' Evaluations of 25 Restrictive Policies and 8 Anti-Restrictive Policies – Combined Answers for Reducing “murder rates” and “mass public shootings”

	Increasing Government Restrictions		Decreasing Government Restrictions	
	Total Sample	Only Americans	Total Sample	Only Americans
Economists	2.15	1.62	6.48	6.61
Criminologists	2.57	2.62	4.44	4.50
Public Health	4.70	4.92	3.11	2.74

All sample comparisons between Academics (both Americans Only and Total Sample) are significantly different using single-tail t-tests (significant at $p < .001$).

The differences between economists and public health academics are especially pronounced when it comes to anti-restrictive policy proposals. Criminologists remain moderate on both types of policy proposals.

Public health researchers rate restrictive gun control policies as being much more effective than do either of the other types of academic experts. In contrast, economists and criminologists are more skeptical about the effectiveness of restrictive gun control policies (e.g., banning assault weapons). Economists were the most skeptical of all.

The rankings reverse dramatically when it comes to anti-restrictive policy proposals (e.g., “Allow teachers with permits to carry concealed handguns at K-12 schools and college campuses.”) Now public health academics are the most skeptical, and economists and criminologists are less skeptical about effectiveness. Economists clearly give the highest evaluations for the effectiveness of anti-restrictive policies at reducing firearms violence.

Comparing broad categories of regulations

Our questions fall into many different categories of regulations. They include: Red Flag laws, gun and ammunition bans, universal background checks, licensing and registration, and gun-free zones. [Table 8](#) lists these categories, and the patterns we’ve already observed remain very similar when we look at academics’ assessments of each category.

The New York Times asked its panel questions concerning three of these regulatory categories, and their experts assessed these categories more positively than did any of our surveyed groups. Of course, public health researchers came the closest to the *Times*’ experts.

On the 1 to 10 scale used in our survey, public health researchers fell approximately in the middle of the scale for each of the first four categories of regulations. Criminologists were always in the two range, and economists’ average support was between 1 and 2.

The pattern is reversed for the fifth proposal category — eliminating gun-free zones. On this issue, economists are the most supportive.

Table 8A: Breaking out Policy Proposals by Broad Type of Proposal: Mass Public Shootings

Category of Questions	New York Times	Public Health	Criminologists	Economists
Red Flag Laws		4.2	2.7	1.8
Bans	6.1	5.8	2.4	1.8
Universal Background Checks	6.6	5.8	2.5	1.2
Licensing and Registration	4.8	4.3	2.0	1.3
Gun-free zones		2.8	5.5	7.8

Table 8B: Breaking out Policy Proposals by Broad Type of Proposal: Murder Rates

Category of Questions	New York Times	Public Health	Criminologists	Economists
Red Flag Laws		4.7	2.7	1.8
Bans	5.2	4.5	1.7	1.6
Universal Background Checks	6.9	5.8	2.6	1.3
Licensing and Registration	5.4	5.1	2.3	1.7
Gun-free zones		2.8	4.9	6.9

Red Flag Laws: Allow judges to take away a person's guns based on "probable cause" that a person might commit a crime; Allow judges to take away a person's guns based on the "Preponderance of the evidence" that a person might commit a crime; Allow judges to take away a person's guns without a hearing; Allow judges to take away a person's guns without requiring testimony by mental health experts+

Bans: Assault weapons ban; Ban the sale and ownership of all ammunition magazines with a capacity greater than 10 bullets; Implement a national "buy-back" program for all banned firearms and magazines, where the government pays people to turn in illegal guns; Semiautomatic gun ban

Universal Background Checks: Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for ammo buyers; Universal background checks (Checks on private transfers) for gun buyers

Licensing and Registration: Require all gun owners to possess a license for their firearm; Require all gun owners to register their fingerprints; Require all guns to microstamp each bullet with a mark that uniquely matches the gun and bullet; Require that all firearms be recorded in a national registry; Require that all gun buyers demonstrate a "genuine need" for a

gun, such as a law enforcement job or hunting; Require that gun buyers complete safety training and a test for their specific firearm.

Gun-free zones: Allow teachers with permits to carry concealed handguns at K-12 schools and college campuses; Allow military personnel at military bases to again carry guns; Encourage public places to eliminate gun-free zones for concealed handgun permit holders; Relax OSHA restrictions to let companies determine if people can carry concealed handguns in workplace settings

Conclusion

Academics from different fields vary widely in their views about the effectiveness of gun control. Inequitable distribution of government funding to public health researchers, at the expense of criminologists and economists, means favoring only one viewpoint and academic approach.

Our results show that public health researchers are much more supportive of gun control than are either criminologists or economists. They are also much more opposed to any deregulation. Economists, by contrast, are the most skeptical of new regulations and the most supportive of deregulation.

The different groups of researchers provide very different rank orders when asked to rate the effectiveness of different policies.

The New York Times' pro-gun control results seem to stem from a heavy reliance on public health researchers. Furthermore, the *Times* only asks questions calling for more government regulations of gun ownership.

But the *Times*' panel was even more supportive of gun control than was the average public health researcher in our survey, so it is hard to believe that there wasn't bias at work in the selection of the panel's membership.

Just like the New York Times survey, the results presented here show that you can get dramatically different results based upon the different types of people you survey. For example, a 2018 Rand Corporation survey of 117 people only included six economists compared to 80 public health people.^{[15](#)} Similarly, out of an average of 105 respondents, a 2014 Harvard Injury Control Research Center's

survey averaged just eight economists answering their questions.¹⁶ Both of these surveys included people who have never done any empirical research in peer-reviewed journals, and both obtained results which were much closer to the results that we show here for public health people.

Possibly the problems that public health people's models have had in predicting the death rate from the Coronavirus will make the general public more skeptical of their predictions on guns control and also about why they are receiving the vast majority of government money going to firearms research. ✚

ENDNOTES

- 1 Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Protecting Our Communities from Gun Violence," Medium Election 2020, August 10, 2019 (<https://medium.com/@teamwarren/protecting-our-communities-from-gun-violence-a2ebf7abd9be>).
- 2 Quoc Trung Bui and Margot Sanger-Katz, "How to Prevent Gun Deaths? Where Experts and the Public Agree," New York Times, January 10, 2017.
- 3 Margot Sanger-Katz and Quoc Trung Bui, "How to Reduce Mass Shooting Deaths? Experts Rank Gun Laws," New York Times, October 5, 2017.
- 4 John R. Lott, Jr. and Gary A. Mauser, "Researcher Perceptions of Lawful, Concealed Carry of Handguns," Regulation, Summer 2016: 26-30 (<https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/regulation/2016/6/regulation-v39n2-3.pdf>).
- 5 Aspelund and Bernhard (2015) find that by a 25-to-1 ratio people in the Harvard medical school donate to Democrats over Republicans. Discussions with people at the Harvard School of Public Health indicate that there are unlikely to be any Republicans in that school. For Stanford Medical School in 2018, all the campaign donations of \$109,147 went to the Democrats (OpenSecrets.org at <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/totals.php?id=D000000750&type=P&cycle=2018>). In 2016, the ratio was 71-to-1 in favor of Democrats. Johns Hopkins medical school over the 2016 and 2018 campaign cycles donated money to Democrats over Republicans by a 15.6-to-1 ratio (<https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/totals.php?id=D000022053&type=P&cycle=2016>).
- 6 As Paul Decker (2019) notes, economists have criticized the public health approach because it: "undervalue(s) the importance of consistently identifying and punishing perpetrators of criminal gun violence."
- 7 David Hemenway and Matthew Miller, "Reducing Firearm Violence – Why a Public Health Approach is Helpful," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 2019, Vol. 38, no. 3, p. 795-801.
- 8 These tests here are referred to as Spearman correlation coefficients. A Spearman correlation coefficient of 1 means that the two disciplines have exactly the same policy rankings, a value of -1 indicates that they have the exact opposite policy rankings, and zero means that there is no relationship.
- 9 This relationship between criminologists and economists is statistically significant at better than the 0.0001% level – implying that the two groups have similar policy rankings
- 10 Comparing criminologists or economists to public health researchers shows negative rank orderings – -0.068 and -0.154, respectively. So, criminologists and economists are slightly more likely than not to have the opposite policy rankings of those in public health. The difference between economists and public health researchers comes closest to being statistically significant, with an 11 percent level of significance.
- 11 The Spearman correlation coefficients again show the policy rankings of criminologists and economists to be very similar, with a correlation coefficient of 0.730, which is again statistically significant at better than the 0.0001% level. The Spearman correlation coefficient for public health researchers and criminologists is -0.003, and -0.380 for public health researchers and economists. The latter relationship is statistically significant at the 0.03% level. The three groups of researchers are all statistically different from each other in their policy rankings.

Table 4. Mass Public Shootings
(Effectiveness Evaluations of 33 Common Policy Proposals, mean values in parentheses)
American Researchers Only

	Min	Max	Mean	S D
Public Health	1.52	6.26	4.3	1.27
Criminologists	1.21	6.0	3.0	1.21
Economists	1.07	7.86	2.8	2.34

Are the means statistically significantly different for a two-tailed t-test?

	Probability the mean difference \neq 0 at least at
Public Health (4.3) v Criminologists (3.0)	0.001%
Public Health (4.3) v Economists (2.8)	0.011%
Criminologists (3.0) v Economists (2.8)	0.295%

Table 4 (continued) . Murder Rates
(Effectiveness Evaluations of 33 Common Policy Proposals, mean values in parentheses)
American Researchers Only

	Min	Max	Mean	S D
Public Health	1.52	7.33	5.0	1.37
Criminologists	1.47	5.2	3.1	1.24
Economists	1.15	7.14	2.9	2.20

Are the means statistically significantly different for a two-tailed t-test?

	Probability the mean difference \neq 0 at least at
Public Health (4.5) v Criminologists (3.1)	0.001%
Public Health (4.5) v Economists (2.9)	0.01%
Public Health (4.5) v Economists (2.9)	0.403%

[12](#) Only the New York Times' experts and our sample of criminologists were not statistically significantly different when examining the impact of gun control on murder rates. In that case, the t-test for a two-tailed test was significant at the 15 percent level.

Table 5. Mass Public Shootings
(Effectiveness Evaluations of 20 Common Policy Proposals)
American Researchers Only

	Min	Max	Mean	S D
New York Times	3.9	6.8	5.4	1.10
Public Health	3.4	6.3	5.0	.94
Criminologists	1.2	4.9	2.6	.83
Economists	1.1	2.1	1.5	.32

Are the means statistically significantly different for a two-tailed t-test?

	Probability the mean difference $\neq 0$ at least at
New York Times (5.4) v Criminologists (2.6)	0.001%
New York Times (5.4) v Economists (1.5)	0.001%
New York Times (5.4) v Public Health (5.0)	0.001%
Public Health (5.0) v Criminologists (2.6)	0.001%
Public Health (5.0) v Economists (1.5)	0.001%
Criminologists (2.6) v Economists (1.5)	0.001%

Table 5. (continued) Murder Rates
(Effectiveness Evaluations of 20 Common Policy Proposals)
American Researchers Only

	Min	Max	Mean	S D
New York Times	3.9	7.3	5.5	.97
Public Health	4.1	7.3	5.2	.81
Criminologists	1.5	5.1	2.7	1.10
Economists	1.2	2.6	1.7	.37

Are the means statistically significantly different for a two-tailed t-test?

	Probability the mean difference $\neq 0$ at least at
New York Times (5.5) v Criminologists (2.7)	0.001%
New York Times (5.5) v Economists (1.7)	0.001%

New York Times (5.5) v Public Health (2.8)	0.152%
Public Health (5.2) v Criminologists (2.7)	0.001%
Public Health (5.2) v Economists (1.7)	0.001%
Criminologists (2.7) v Economists (1.7)	0.001%

[14](#)

Table 6. Spearman correlations of the average evaluations of each group of researchers on the 20 common policy questions with the average evaluations of the New York Times' Expert Panel.

American Researchers		
Reducing Mass Public Shootings	SpearmanCorrelation	H: $r \neq 0$ [2-tail]
New York Times v Public Health	0.8881	$p < 0.001$
New York Times v Criminologists	0.6755	$p < 0.001$
New York Times v Economists	0.5841	$p < 0.007$
Public Health v Criminologists	0.6486	$p < 0.001$
Public Health v Economists	0.7061	$p < 0.001$
Criminologists v Economists	0.6554	$p < 0.002$
Reducing Murder Rates	SpearmanCorrelation	H: $r \neq 0$ [2-tail]
New York Times v Public Health	0.4979	$p < 0.03$
New York Times v Criminologists	0.5324	$p < 0.02$
New York Times v Economists	0.1670	$p < 0.48$
Public Health v Criminologists	0.6130	$p < 0.01$
Public Health v Economists	0.0822	$p < 0.73$
Criminologists v Economists	0.4021	$p < 0.08$

[15](#) Andrew Morral, Terry Schell, and Margaret Tankard, "The Magnitude of Disagreement Among Gun Policy Experts," The Rand Corporation, 2018. The Rand survey had 117 participants.

[16](#) Harvard Injury Control Research Center, "Expert Survey 2: Relative Number of Self-Defense and Criminal Gun Uses," Firearm Researcher Surveys, May 2014. The number of participants in ICRC survey varied for each question but averaged 105 (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/firearm-researcher-surveys/>).

— CHAPTER 9 —

Conclusion

It seems so obvious: Ban guns, and people will be safer. It's not so easy, though. Gun laws might be well-intentioned, but too often they disarm law-abiding people and make life easier for criminals.

There are already an estimated 393 million guns in the United States.¹ Each year, 15 million more enter the market. Even if you could cause all of those guns to magically disappear, gangs will continue to smuggle in the guns and ammunition that they need to protect their drug merchandise.

Mexico is a case in point. Each month seems to bring another record number of murders. In the first eight months of 2019, Mexico had 23,063 murders – a murder rate almost six times that of the US. And Mexico's initial estimates tend to underestimate the total number of deaths by about 20 percent. Maybe if Mexico had stricter gun control laws, it wouldn't have such a problem, right?

But Mexico already has some of the strictest gun control laws in the world. Since 1972, Mexico has had just one gun store in the entire country. This military-run store in Mexico City is the only place where people can legally purchase a gun, and only 1% of Mexicans possess a license to own a firearm. The store's prices are very expensive, and the most powerful rifle on sale is only a .22 caliber. That isn't the type of weapon used by Mexican drug cartels.

In Mexico, background checks take six months to complete and require fingerprints and an employment history evaluation. Any person-to-person firearm transfer is strictly illegal. People can only sell their guns to the government, and then it is up to the government to decide to sell it to someone else.

Mexico's current murder rates are twice what they were in 1972, when the country's strict gun control measures were implemented. Up until 1972, Mexicans had a constitutional right to carry guns. Now, people can't transport guns without a permit from the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense. This is true even if the gun is unloaded, lawfully registered, and placed in a locked container.

When I testified before the Mexican federal Senate a couple of years ago, Senators told me that even they have found it impossible to get a concealed handgun permit. That is despite the fact that many of them had received serious death threats.

Mexico's regulations would be Nirvana for American gun control advocates, who are terrified by the 18.7 million Americans with concealed handgun permits in 2019 and the millions more who carry without permits in 17 Constitutional Carry states where a permit isn't required in all or virtually all of those states. For now, Democrats have to make do with creating obstacles to gun ownership, such as \$125 background check fees.

Mexico has both some of the strictest gun control laws in the world and one of the highest murder rates. Strict gun control and extremely high homicide rates often go together, including in other developed countries such as Brazil and Russia. By contrast, as we have shown, the countries with the highest gun ownership rates tend to have both the lowest homicide rates and lowest murder rates from mass public shootings.

The Mexican government consistently blames laxer US gun control laws for its country's high murder rate. But the machine guns being used in Mexico are not coming from the US, where they are strictly limited

"These kinds of guns -- the auto versions of these guns -- they are not coming from El Paso," said Ed Head, a firearms instructor in Arizona who spent 24 years with the US Border Patrol. "They are coming from other sources. They are brought in from Guatemala. They are brought in from places like China. They are being diverted from the military. But you don't get these guns from the US."

Mexican authorities only selectively trace guns that they think come from our country. And, starting in the 1960s, US-made guns started to

be manufactured with easily-identifiable serial numbers. It is sometimes claimed that 90% of Mexican crime guns come from the US, but this could only possibly be true of the select guns that authorities choose to trace. Overall, only about 17 percent of the Mexican crime guns come from the US.²

Because drug dealers can't go to the police for help with rival gangs, they are likely to resort to violence to settle their disputes. If we can't stop criminals from getting illegal drugs, we aren't going to be much more successful in stopping them from obtaining guns. The point of gun control was to single out criminals rather than law-abiding citizens, but the effect has been just the opposite.

The lesson for both Mexico and the US is clear. Gun laws, no matter how draconian, don't solve crime problems. In fact, strict gun laws can increase crime by disarming law-abiding citizens relative to criminals.

Over time, it will only get more difficult to control access to guns. 3D metal printers will enable more people to make weapons that are indistinguishable from those purchased in stores.

What about complete gun bans, the most draconian measure of all? When countries such as England, Wales, Ireland and Jamaica banned guns and handguns, they all experienced subsequent increases in murder rates. Even these island nations, which are relatively difficult to smuggle guns to, faced five or six-fold increases in murder rates after guns were banned.

The reason is simple: law-abiding, good citizens are more likely to turn in their guns than criminals are. When law-abiding citizens are defenseless, they make for easier victims for criminals.

Mass public shooters usually take plenty of time to plan their attacks, with six months being an usually short amount of time. The Sandy Hook elementary school killer spent two-and-a-half years planning his attack. This gives them plenty of opportunity to pick the most defenseless targets. The long time span where they plan these attacks

An October 2019 shooting near a German synagogue that left two people murdered was done by the killer whose primary goal was to "1. Prove the viability of improvised weapons."³

Some think that background checks are the answer to keeping guns out of criminal hands. After each mass public shooting, President Obama called for background checks on private transfers of guns. But a federal law wouldn't have stopped any of the attacks that he spoke out on during his administration. Nor would it have stopped any mass public shooting in the twenty-first century.

Although two of the four guns used in the 2015 San Bernardino, California attack were obtained via private transfer, the state already had universal background checks in place. Unfortunately, the law proved to be ineffectual. The 2019 Odessa, Texas shooter obtained his gun from someone who was making guns at home. People can build guns for their own private use, but selling the gun to someone else is already a federal felony punishable by five years in prison. But this law didn't stop the shooter from finding a way to get his hands on a gun.

Since 2000, the states that already had universal background checks suffered a 15% higher per capita rate of mass public shooting deaths, and a 38% higher rate of injuries. When states adopted these laws the rate of attacks rose.

Nor does the evidence show that these background checks on private transfers lower any type of violent crime, including murders of police officers, suicide, or domestic violence against women.

At the same time, the cost and discriminatory nature of these gun control laws are ignored. In DC, checks on private transfers add \$125 to the cost of a gun. That fee can put guns out-of-reach for the most likely victims of violent crime: poor blacks living in high-crime, urban areas.

Many gun control laws are not only useless in stopping crime, but in fact make places into magnets for attacks. Gun-free zones, in particular, create spaces that mass shooters target.

Mass killers have even explicitly talked about their desire to attack gun-free zones. And, as we have shown, in light of the dozens of mass public shootings that have been stopped by permit holders, it's not hard to understand why they do what they do. One need only listen to the recorded wiretap of Islamic State supporter Khalil Abu-Rayyan, who was planning an attack in 2016 on one of the biggest churches in Detroit. Fortunately, the man's father alerted the FBI. In the wiretap, Abu-Rayyan explained his choice of target this way: "A lot of people go

there. Plus, people are not allowed to carry guns in church. Plus, it would make the news.”⁴

From movie theater shootings in Aurora, Colorado or Lafayette, Louisiana to mall shootings in Omaha, Nebraska or Salt Lake City, Utah, mass public shooters invariably pick the rare places that ban permitted concealed handguns. Since 1950, every single one of Europe’s many public mass shootings has occurred in a place where general citizens are banned from carrying guns. In America, 94 percent of the attacks have followed that rule.

U.S. handgun permit holders are extremely law-abiding. Out of every 100,000 permit holders, only a couple of them have had their permits revoked for a firearms-related violation. Most of these violations are trivial offenses. Permit holders are convicted of firearms-related violations at about 1/6th of the rate that police officers are.⁵

Some studies have linked increased gun ownership with a drop in crime. After all, the presence of weapons on a scene can serve as a deterrent, even if no shots are actually fired. Ronald Noble, former Secretary-General of the UN’s International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), put it this way in 2013: “One [option] is to say we want an armed citizenry; you can see the reason for that. Another is to say the enclaves [should be] so secure that in order to get into the soft target, you’re going to have to pass through extraordinary security.”⁶

Noble warned, “You can’t have armed police forces everywhere.” He also cautioned that it is essentially impossible to stop killers from getting weapons into these “secure” areas. Noble concluded: “You have to ask yourself, ‘Is an armed citizenry more necessary now than it was in the past, with an evolving threat of terrorism?’”⁷

Gun control advocates argue that the Second Amendment is a relic of the 18th Century, but the reality is that an armed citizenry is as necessary as it’s ever been. ➡

ENDNOTES

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See also William J. Krouse, "Gun Control Legislation," Congressional Research Service, November 14, 2012 (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL32842.pdf>)
- 2 William La Jeunesse and Maxim Lott, "The Myth of 90 Percent: Only a Small Fraction of Guns in Mexico Come From U.S.," Fox News, April 2, 2009 (<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/the-myth-of-90-percent-only-a-small-fraction-of-guns-in-mexico-come-from-u-s>).
- 3 "Attack on German Synagogue highlights threats posed by do it yourself weapons," Washington Post, October 11, 2019 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/10/11/attack-german-synagogue-highlights-threat-posed-by-do-it-yourself-guns/>).
- 4 Shawn Ley, "FBI: Dearborn Heights ISIS supporter planned to attack Detroit church," Click on Detroit, February 5, 2016 (<https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/dearborn-heights-isis-supporter-planned-to-attack-detroit-church>).
- 5 Philip Matthew Stinson, Sr, John Liederbach, and Tina L. Freiburger, "Exit Strategy: An Exploration of Late-Stage Police Crime," Police Quarterly, November 14, 2010. For a more detailed discussion for what their numbers mean and how they compare to permit holders see: Crime Prevention Research Center, "Updated: Comparing Conviction Rates Between Police and Concealed Carry Permit Holders," Crime Prevention Research Center, February 19, 2015 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2015/02/comparing-conviction-rates-between-police-and-concealed-carry-permit-holders/>).
- 6 Josh Margolin, "Exclusive: After Westgate, Interpol Chief Ponders 'Armed Citizenry,'" ABC News, October 21, 2013 (<https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/exclusive-westgate-interpol-chief-ponders-armed-citizenry/story?id=20637341>).
- 7 Ibid.

Appendixes

Appendix 5.1 Other that the FBI excluded and their explanation for why they were excluded.

Here are six more cases that I believe that the FBI missed, a couple of which came up earlier in the book. The FBI gave responses concerning four of them.

1. Lyman, South Carolina, June 30, 2016

Just a couple of weeks after the infamous Orlando massacre, a 32-year-old male named Jody Ray Thompson started shooting at another nightclub in South Carolina. Fortunately, unlike in Florida, permitted concealed handguns were allowed in bars. Before the attacker could shoot a fourth person, a permit holder shot back, wounding Thompson in the leg. "At least one South Carolina sheriff credit[ed] a man with a concealed carry permit with preventing further violence at a nightclub."¹

FBI response: Does not meet FBI definition. Was the result of an altercation. (The shooter got into an argument with someone then fired indiscriminately into the crowd.)

My response: FBI reports have included cases in which active shooters were involved in altercations or arguments. One such case was the Perry Hall High School shooting in Baltimore, Maryland, on August 27, 2012. The first FBI report states (p.39): "The shooter had an altercation with another student before the shooting began. He left the cafeteria and returned with a gun." In this case, the only injured person was the student that the attacker was arguing with, and no one was killed.

As to firing indiscriminately into a crowd, there is nothing in the FBI definition of active shootings that makes this a disqualifying characteristic. Indeed, the FBI original report acknowledges the frequent “apparent randomness” (p. 44) of civilian deaths in active shooter cases.

2. Winton, Ohio, Sunday, July 26, 2015, Fox News and Fox 19 in Cincinnati

The shooter in this case directly fired at four different people. Fortunately, because of a permit holder’s quick actions, no one was seriously injured. From Fox News:[2](#)

[Thomas] McCary [62-years-old] was arguing with a woman around 8 p.m. Sunday night and, when the woman’s brother, Patrick Ewing, approached, McCary pulled out a .38-caliber handgun and fired three shots at him, Cincinnati police said.

Ewing didn’t get hit, but he did get his own gun and returned fire, wounding McCary in the leg. Ewing had a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

Injured, McCary went into his house to get a second gun and, holding a weapon in each hand, he fired three shots in the direction of the woman, Jeaneta Walker, her 1-year-old son and a third man.

Ewing fired at McCary again to try to distract him as the victims fled indoors. McCary squeezed off a few more rounds, hitting no one, before withdrawing into his apartment, Cincinnati.com reported. . . .

FBI response:

Does not meet our definition. Domestic dispute.

My response: This was **not** a domestic dispute. It was an interaction between neighbors on a public street. It was not contained in a residence. Multiple people were shot at. Here is another similar active shooting case that was included in the FBI list of active shootings.

— October 31, 2015: Noah Jacob Harpham “began shooting people as he walked down the street in a Colorado Springs, Colorado, neighborhood.” Harpham lived in the neighborhood and just walked

down the street, shooting at people. Two of the women who were killed were sitting on their front porch.

In any event, cases involving a domestic dispute are not automatically excluded from the FBI's list. Their list includes two such cases.

3. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 22, 2015.

A 40-year-old man started firing at people in a barber shop, customers and barbers alike. A man with a concealed handgun permit was walking by the shop, and went inside when he heard the shots. The permit holder shot the attacker, hitting him once in the chest. "He responded and I guess he saved a lot of people in there," said Philadelphia Police Captain Frank Llewellyn.³

FBI response: Does not meet FBI definition. Result of an altercation. The shooter got into an argument with another person inside the shop. The shooter took out his gun and opened fire on the barber.

My response: Again, the FBI reports contain many similar cases that also involved altercations or arguments. For example, take the Perry Hall High School shooting in Baltimore, Maryland on August 27, 2012. From the first FBI report: "The shooter had an altercation with another student before the shooting began. He left the cafeteria and returned with a gun." No one was killed, and the only injured person was the one that the attacker was arguing with.

The Philadelphia police said they believed that the passing permit holder "saved a lot of people in there." It wasn't just the barber whose life was endangered.

Based on the FBI definition, the only thing that might disqualify this case is if the shooting primarily arose out of self-defense. No news story discusses it having involved self-defense.

4. Portland, Oregon, January 11, 2014

Thomas Eliot Hjelmeland, 43-years-old, was ejected from a nightclub, but returned 30 minutes later with a gun and wearing a mask. He shot the bouncer who had ejected him and shot at others. The bouncer was critically wounded by a shot to the head. Two others were also wounded: one patron in the foot and a waitress, who had been standing at the front of the club, in both of her legs.⁴ Another bouncer, Jonathan Baer, had a permitted concealed handgun. Baer told police that he fatally shot the attacker because he was worried that when the masked man reached the front door, he was going to shoot people in the immediate vicinity of the club. Hjelmeland was on probation at the time of the incident.

The night club's owner called Baer a "hero" for saving the lives of others.⁵ Baer said that he carries his gun "every day, and will continue to, and will do so with the hope that I will NEVER have to pull it out again."

FBI response: Does not meet FBI definition. Shooter just went after the bouncer who had ejected him from the nightclub earlier in that evening.

My response: Yes, the shooter was ejected and then returned later to shoot the bouncer, but the FBI has counted multiple cases where there was apparently one primary target (such as the Kansas judge case mentioned earlier). The permit holder was afraid that the attacker may shoot others, especially when it looked like he was turning around after going out the front door. It isn't clear how this case is different from others that are included on the FBI list. The November 7, 2009, Sandbar Sports Grill case in Colorado is very similar. After being escorted out of the bar by security, the attacker returned with a gun. Both cases involve the attacker retrieving a gun and then returning later to carry out the shooting.

The Atlantis Plastics Factory case (June 25, 2008) involved an employee being "reprimanded by a supervisor" and "escorted from the plant." Similarly, the Kraft Foods Factory case on September 9, 2010, involved an employee being "escorted from the building." Again, the attackers returned with a gun to shoot people.

5. Las Vegas, June 8, 2014

At 11:20 a.m., husband and wife Jerad Dwain Miller, 31, and Amanda Renee Miller, 22, each armed with a handgun and one with a shotgun, began shooting at Cici's Pizza in Las Vegas, Nevada. Two law enforcement officers were killed while having lunch.⁶ The shooters took the officers' weapons and ammunition and fled to a nearby Walmart. Inside the Walmart, permit holder Joseph Robert Wilcox confronted Jerad Miller, making it necessary for Amanda Miller to circle around Wilcox so that she could shoot him from behind. The time that it took for Amanda Miller to get behind Wilcox gave Walmart shoppers some additional time to escape.

Three victims were killed, and no one was wounded. The male shooter was killed in an exchange of gunfire with law enforcement, and the female shooter committed suicide during the exchange of gunfire.

FBI Reponse: None.

My response: Multiple victims killed. Still more were threatened. Wilcox died, but he undoubtedly allowed many would-be victims to escape.

6. Houston, Texas, May 29, 2016

At 10:15 a.m., Dionisio Augustine Garza III, 25, armed with a rifle and a handgun, began shooting at Memorial Tire and Auto in Houston, Texas. One person was killed and six were wounded, including two law enforcement officers. A permit holder exchanged fire with the attacker and kept him from shooting at others until police were able to arrive. Law enforcement fatally shot the attacker. The permit holder was critically injured in the attack, but as bystander Guerra put it: "He could have prevented more people from being shot. He's a hero, even though he was shot. He's a hurting hero."⁷

FBI Reponse: None.

My response: Multiple victims shot. Still more were threatened. The permit holder was wounded in the exchange, but he undoubtedly allowed many would be victims to escape.

There are many other possible examples.⁸ But, even without them, the FBI numbers are clearly misleading. The fact that years later the FBI hasn't even publicly corrected the errors that they have privately admitted to raises real concerns about their desire to accurately inform the public.

Appendix 6.1: Cases of one or two killers that were missed by Lankford

No.	Year	Country	Number of Killers	Summary
1	2007	Afghanistan	1	07/09/2007: An Afghan soldier turned on his comrades with his rifle killing four and wounding seven others in Herat province, Afghanistan. Officials said the soldier was linked to the Taliban. No claim of responsibility was reported.
2	2012	Afghanistan	1	02/07/2012: An Afghan security guard poisoned and shot dead three colleagues in Kandahar city, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. He opened fire on police officers when they attempted to intervene, killing two and injuring one. After stealing police equipment, the security guard escaped. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.
3	2012	Afghanistan	1	08/11/2012: An Afghani police officer opened fire on other officers in Delaram district, Nimruz province, Afghanistan. At least 10 people were killed in this attack. No group claimed responsibility for this incident; however, sources attributed it to the Taliban.
4	2012	Afghanistan	1	10/31/2012: An assailant attacked a police security checkpoint in Shah Joy district, Zabul province, Afghanistan. Seven police officers were killed in the assault. No group claimed responsibility for the incident; however, police officials attributed it to the Taliban.
5	2012	Afghanistan	1	12/24/2012: A member of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) opened fire on his colleagues at a checkpoint in Darzab district, Jawzjan province, Afghanistan. At least five police officers were killed in the attack. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the incident, stating that the assailant defected.
6	2010	Armenia	1	An Armenian soldier had shot dead five fellow servicemen in Karabakh before killing himself.
7	2010	Azerbaijan	1	One soldier had been detained for a fatal internal shooting incident which claimed the lives of four servicemen and wounded four others.
8	2011	Azerbaijan	1	Officials in Azerbaijan say seven teenage soldiers have been killed at a military base in the west of the country, with local media saying a soldier went on a rampage before turning the gun on himself.

9	1999	Canada	1	A disgruntled former transit worker compiled a list of co-workers he didn't like before setting out on a deadly rampage, killing four employees and then himself at Ottawa's main bus garage.
10	2001	Colombia	1	08/10/2001: Five farmers were shot and killed by a United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) member in Pitalito, Huila Department, Colombia.
11	2008	Egypt	1	Omar Abdul Razeq Abdullah Rifai, seeking revenge over a family dispute, killed 23 people. Used an AKMS assault rifle.
12	2002	India	1	Nine Hindu pilgrims were killed and 29 wounded today in an attack on an annual religious pilgrimage to a cave that holds a naturally forming, phallic-shaped ice stalagmite regarded as the symbol of the Hindu god Lord Shiva.
13	2006	India	1	An Indian paramilitary trooper went berserk killing four of his colleagues and wounded another four, and later also shot himself dead in a bizarre shooting spree in the northeastern state of Manipur.
14	2007	India	1	The accused, Nari Lepcha, shot dead the five policemen Sunday morning at the Daryaganj branch of Dena Bank where they were posted on guard duty after one of them, Lance Naik Vishal Tiwari, allegedly tried to sodomise him.
15	2012	India	1	01/28/2012: At least one assailant attacked a polling station in Thangpi village, Chandel district, Manipur state, India. The attacker was posing as a voter in line, demanded that polling be stopped and, when it was not, opened fire. Five people were killed, and one of the attackers was injured. No group claimed responsibility, but authorities attributed the incident to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM).
16	2011	India	1	A trooper of the Rashtriya Rifles went on a shooting spree inside a camp in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir today, killing four of his colleagues, including an officer.
17	2008	Iraq	1	07/09/2008: On Wednesday, a gunman broke into a mosque in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib district and opened fire on worshippers, killing six and wounding eight. No claim of responsibility has been reported.
18	2002	Israel	1	11/10/2002: At least one perpetrator attacked Metzer kibbutz, Menashe Regional Council, Israel, killing five and injuring seven. The perpetrator was not captured. Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a faction of the Fatah movement, claimed responsibility, yet Fatah disavowed this claim.
19	2003	Italy	1	A disgruntled town worker opened fire with a handgun in a town hall in eastern Sicily on Friday, killing five people and injuring one before committing suicide.
20	2012	Kyrgyzstan	1	A conscript killed four of his colleagues and a border guard's wife from a service-issue weapon at the Echkilitash border post of the Issyk-Kul border unit.
21	2007	Malaysia	1	Five wedding guests were killed and nine others injured when an Indonesian man went on a shooting spree during the ceremony in Malaysia's eastern state of Sarawak on Borneo island.

22	2002	Pakistan	1	A Pakistani policeman went berserk and opened fire in a busy market street, killing six people and wounding 11 others before shooting himself dead in the southern Dadu town.
23	2004	Pakistan	1	A policeman opened fire with an assault rifle on his colleagues at the gate of a police headquarters, killing four of them, officials said Wednesday. The attacker, identified as Fahim Khan, 27, sprayed his colleagues with bullets late Tuesday at the main entrance of the police headquarters in Kohat, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of Peshawar, capital of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, said Sidique Khan, a Kohat police official. All four victims died instantly.
24	2004	Pakistan	1	A man in northwestern Pakistan shot and killed five women, including his own wife, because he was angry that their relatives had invited enemies to his wedding, police said Tuesday. The gunman fired at the women with an assault rifle while they worked in a wheat field in Seri Karaki, a village about 50 kilometers (30 miles) northwest of the capital Islamabad.
25	2003	Serbia	1	A Serbian policeman shot dead four colleagues and wounded three yesterday in an attack blamed on a "Vietnam syndrome" affecting veterans of the Kosovo conflict.
26	2012	Somalia	1	01/12/2012: An assailant opened fire at a group of people in Ceelasha Biyaha district, Mogadishu city, Banaadir region, Somalia. Four people were killed and several others injured. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but sources attributed it to Al-Shabaab. It may have been related to the torture by Al-Shabaab of several businessmen in the district the previous day in an attempt to get money.
27	2000	South Africa	1	A former security guard shot seven relatives, including two young children, to death Sunday and threatened to kill himself and a 21-year-old nephew. The shooting spree began around 7 a.m. at a farm near Prince Alfred Hamlet in Western Cape.
28	2007	South Africa	1	Four staff at a hospital in South Africa were killed on Friday when a sacked employee went on a shooting spree shortly after being handed his dismissal notice.
29	2010	South Africa	1	Specialized South African police officers on Thursday retrieved four bodies from the Aurora company's Grootvlei gold mine in Springs, 40 kilometers east of Johannesburg, after an alleged shooting spree by security staff at the mine on Monday.
30	1999	Sri Lanka	1	07/26/1999: A suspected member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out a drive-by shooting, targeting a roadblock in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka. The attacker killed six people, another six were seriously injured, and the perpetrator was possibly injured, as he escaped on foot, as well. There was minor damage to the road block from the gunfire.
31	2010	Sudan	1	09/30/2010: On Thursday, in Juba, Bahr al Jabal, Sudan, eight people including two Ugandan nationals were killed when an unidentified militant fired at civilians at the Jabel-Kuju market. No group claimed responsibility, but the Sudan's People Liberation Army was thought to be responsible for the attack.

32	1998	Tajikistan	1	Mutivillo Nazirov, 25, was arrested Thursday and accused of gunning down a family of three and seven other people on Monday in Tursunzade, 60 kilometres (35 miles) from the capital Dushanbe. The spokesman said Nazirov was believed to have shot the family "out of personal hatred," and then opened fire at people waiting at a bus stop, killing seven.
33	2006	Uganda	1	At least 10 people were killed and 14 wounded when a local militiaman opened fire at a camp for internally displaced people in northern Uganda.
34	1998	Ukraine	1	A Ukrainian border guard stationed in Crimea shot and killed five of his comrades Thursday and disappeared from his unit, officials said. The shooting occurred early in the morning at a border guards' base near the Crimean town of Alupka on the Black Sea, the Defense Ministry said. Those killed included an officer, a sergeant and three soldiers, it added.
35	2008	Vietnam	1	Military officer Nguyen Manh Hung, 23, shot dead three of his comrades and a civilian at a military camp in Dong Da district on Monday night after he was accused of stealing a mobile phone.
36	2002	West Bank and Gaza Strip	1	3/3/2002: A Palestinian sniper targeted a military checkpoint near Ofra, West Bank, West Bank and Gaza Strip. The sniper shot ten Israelis and wounded another six, including soldiers, civilians, and a paramedic that arrived on the scene after the first victims were shot. Another six victims were injured in the attack. No group claimed responsibility for the incident and the assailant fled into a neighboring village before security forces could intercept.
37	2002	West Bank and Gaza Strip	1	03/07/2002: A Palestinian militant attacked the Atsmona Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip and killed five civilians and wounded twenty four. The militant infiltrated a pre-military training facility, threw grenades and shot available targets. After a twenty minute gun battle with Israeli soldiers, the militant was shot dead. A HAMAS representative claimed responsibility for the attack over a loud speaker, and identified the assailant as nineteen year old Mohammad Farahat.
38	2006	Algeria	2	3/23/2006: Two suspected members of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting (GSPC) shot and killed four peasants (identified as: Mohamed Hacen, Mohamed Bergoug, Rachid Ramdane, and Lotfi Boukhidar) as they worked in a field in Zerarkia, Algeria.
39	2010	Azerbaijan	2	On the evening of January 28, two young soldiers - Pvt. Elkhon Azizov, 20, and Pvt. Sadig Mammadov, 19 — entered the headquarters of the base where they were stationed and shot dead a lieutenant colonel, a captain, a lieutenant and a warrant officer. They also wounded two soldiers. Azizov and Mammadov then shot and killed each other.
40	1998	Georgia	2	04/05/1998: Five people were killed and six were injured when Sergo Meskhia and Bezhane Gvazare opened fire on a funeral procession in Zugdidi, Georgia.

41	2000	India	2	11/30/2000: Two suspected United Liberation Front of Assam motorcycle-borne militants raided a railway laborers' colony in Bongaigaon, India and fired indiscriminately from AK-series rifles. They killed 16 people and injured 11 more.
42	2001	India	2	2/3/2001: Suspected Muslim separatists opened fire on a group of Sikhs in Mahjoor Nagar, a Sikh-majority residential neighborhood in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India. Six Sikhs were killed and five were critically injured. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident.
43	2001	India	2	07/21/2001: Militants attacked a campsite for Amarnath pilgrims in Sheshnag, India. Two IED's were set off before militants started firing on the security personnel who were guarding the pilgrims. 13 people were killed including six pilgrims, two policemen, four porters and a militant. 14 people were injured including 8 pilgrims. The Al-Omar Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the attack
44	2002	India	2	Two terrorists attacked the Akshardham temple complex and killed 31 people and wounded 80 others by using automatic weapons and hand grenades
45	2002	India	2	Two gunmen opened indiscriminate fire inside the temple on November 24. Fifteen people, including the two gunmen, were killed and over 30 injured in the attack.
46	2005	India	2	11/14/2005: Two unidentified perpetrators launched an attack on a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) compound in Srinagar, India killing four people including two soldiers. 13 civilians were injured in the hour long battle between the perpetrators and the CRPF officers as well. Two groups, Al-Mansoorian and Islamic Front, claimed responsibility for the attack.
47	2001	Israel	2	10/28/2001: Four Israelis were killed and fourteen injured in an attack by two men with automatic weapons in Hadera, Haifa District, Israel. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement sent to Al-Jazirah.
48	2002	Israel	2	03/12/2002: Two gunmen killed seven Israeli civilians and wounded six more in Kibbutz Mazzuva, near the town of Shlomi in northern Israel approximately three miles from the Lebanese border. Israeli security forces subsequently killed the two gunmen. The Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack. The Israeli government originally suspected that the gunmen were trained Hizballah fighters who infiltrated Israeli territory from Lebanon, but Hizballah's Secretary General Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah denied the accusation.
49	1999	Lebanon	2	Judges Hassan Uthman, Walid Harmoush, Assem Bou Daher and Imad Shehab were attending a session during the trial of two Iraqis and a Palestinian when two individuals opened fire through the rear window of the courtroom, killing them and wounding five others.

50	2011	Nigeria	2	06/12/2011: On Sunday night, in Maiduguri, Borno, Nigeria, unidentified militants on a motorcycle armed with Kalashnikov rifles opened fire on civilians who were drinking at a beer parlor in the Bulunkutu area, killing four civilians in the area. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but Boko Haram militants are suspected.
51	2011	Nigeria	2	09/12/2011: On Monday evening at 2000, in Maiduguri, Borno, Nigeria, two gunmen armed with Kalashnikov rifles fired upon and killed four Nigerian civilians at a bar. No group has claimed responsibility, but the militant group Boko Haram was thought to be responsible for the attack.
52	2012	Nigeria	2	02/24/2012: Two assailants entered a mosque and opened fire in Kano city, Kano state, Nigeria. Five people were killed in the attack, including a pro-government militia leader. No group claimed responsibility for the incident; however, officials suspected Boko Haram.
53	2012	Nigeria	2	05/28/2012: Two assailants on motorcycles opened fire on a group of Christian Igbo traders in Yola city, Adamawa state, Nigeria. Four traders were killed in the attack. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.
54	1999	Pakistan	2	01/23/1999: Two motorcyclists, armed with Kalashnikov rifles, opened fire on a shrine, killing four Shi'ite Islamics in Shorkot, Pakistan. Pir Syed Sabir Sultan, custodian of a shrine, and three visitors to the shrine were killed in the attack. Police stated that the attack was religiously motivated, but no group claimed responsibility.
55	1999	Pakistan	2	10/01/1999: Hooded gunmen attacked Imambargah Hurmain Mosque, a Shiite mosque in Karachi, Pakistan, killing at least nine people and injuring several others. Sunni Militants were suspected of perpetrating the incident.
56	2001	Pakistan	2	10/04/2001: Five people were killed and 14 injured in an attack on al-Murtaza Shiite mosque in Karachi, Sindh province, Pakistan. Two men armed with automatic weapons and riding motorcycles were the perpetrators. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.
57	2002	Pakistan	2	02/26/2002: At approximately 7:00pm local time, two unidentified militants attacked Shah Najaf Mosque in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Ten Shi ite Muslims were killed and another nine were wounded in the incident. After the approximately two-minute attack, both perpetrators fled the scene on motorcycles.
58	2002	Pakistan	2	9/25/2002: Two unidentified gunmen stormed the offices of the Christian charity Institute for Peace and Justice in downtown Karachi, Sindh province, Pakistan. The assailants tied up the Christian office workers and then shot them in the head. Seven people were killed and two more suffered injuries. The victims were discovered an hour later by other employees arriving at work. Officials believe that the attack was designed to destabilize the country.

59	2003	Pakistan	2	02/22/2003: At sunset, two gunmen on a Hondo CG-125 motorbike rode by a Shiite mosque (called an Imambargah) in the suburb of Malir, east of Karachi and opened fire with an AK-47 on a number of worshippers watching a cricket match on television. Nine of the worshippers died. Police officials strongly suspected the terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Jhangvi of perpetrating the attack. Police and anti-terrorism units carried out a number of raids across Karachi in investigating the incident, though none arrested were suspected of being behind the attack.
60	2003	Pakistan	2	06/08/2003: Two gunmen suspected of being members of Lashkar-e Jhangvi killed 11 Pakistani police officer trainees and injured nine others. The two perpetrators fired a Kalashnikov rifle at the vehicle carrying the trainees while riding on a motorcycle. No group claimed responsibility for the shooting.
61	2003	Pakistan	2	10/03/2003: Two masked gunmen riding on a motorcycle attacked a minibus carrying Shi'i Muslim workers in Karachi, Pakistan. Six men were killed and six injured in the attack. An alliance of three banned militant organizations, Lashkar-e Jhangvi, Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HuM), and Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami, was suspected in the attack, though none of the groups made a claim of responsibility.
62	2005	Pakistan	2	10/07/2005: in the village of Mong, Punjab Province Pakistan, two armed unidentified assailants armed with assault rifles opened fire in an Ahmadi Mosque. Killing eight and wounding fourteen. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. There was no mention of property damage caused by the attack.
63	2011	Pakistan	2	10/17/2011: On Monday, in the Khaki Banda area of Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, two unidentified gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire on a vehicle carrying members of the pro-government Orakzai Peace Committee. Five people were killed, including Chief Azizur Rehman, and one person was injured. The attack caused an unknown amount of damage. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Taliban was suspected to be responsible.
64	2000	Philippines	2	According to reports, Ambulo, along with Jose Rubio, who were both drunk at the time, fired indiscriminately at customers inside a karaoke bar in Victoria, Mindoro. Both belong to Task Force Seagull, a counter-insurgency unit based in Mindoro Oriental.
65	2010	Philippines	2	12/01/2010: On Wednesday night around 2300, in Cristo village in Donsol, Sorsogon, Philippines, two armed militants on a motorcycle shot and injured Poso village chief Andro Hernandez and his cousin. Two other companions were killed in the ambush. No group claimed responsibility for this incident and no damage was reported in the attack.

66	2000	Russia	2	At a bus station in Stavropol, a police patrol decided to check a bag belonging to the brothers Murat and Umar Salpagarov, who were traveling to Cherkessk. Umar opened fire with a machine-gun, killing two police officers and two women in the waiting area. One of the stray bullets killed his brother Murat. A subsequent investigation established that both brothers were active members of the Karachay jamaat and sentenced the surviving brother to a long prison term. (Public Shooting: More information is available in the note.)
67	2002	Russia	2	Two Russian paratroopers who deserted their base yesterday killed nine people before being shot to death by police overnight in Tatarstan. Interior Ministry officials in Tatarstan said the two soldiers shot to death five policemen and four civilians in a series of clashes before being cornered and killed.
68	2006	Russia	2	07/07/2006: A civilian vehicle belonging to fishermen was attacked in Chechnya, Russian Federation. There were four fatalities and two injuries. It is believed that the fishermen were mistaken for law enforcement officials due to camouflage clothing. The perpetrator group is unknown. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.
69	2005	Thailand	2	05/07/2005: Unidentified perpetrators fired into a group of Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand's Klaeng (District) killing six of them and injuring four others. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.
70	2002	West Bank and Gaza Strip	2	12/28/2002: Two unknown Palestinian gunmen entered the West Bank settlement of Otniel and killed four Israelis, two of whom were Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers. Nine other people were also wounded before the two gunmen were killed.
71	2004	West Bank and Gaza Strip	2	05/03/2004: Two Palestinian militants killed an Israeli settler and her four children in their car near the Katif settlement bloc in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military responded and an explosive was detonated by the perpetrators, which caused no injuries. Two Israeli soldiers were injured in the ensuing gun battle that killed both of the militants. The gunmen were from the town of Rafah on Gaza's southern border with Egypt and were identified as Ibrahim Hamad, 22, of the military brigades of Islamic Jihad, and Faisal Abu Naqira, 20, a from the Popular Resistance Committees, according to a joint communique issued by the two groups.

72	2008	India	2	11/26/2008: Included in the NYPD list of shootings. The two assailants who attacked the Jewish community centre in Nariman house in the Colaba area were identified as Nasir alias Abu Umar from Faisalabad and Babar Imran alias Abu Akasha from Multan. At the Jewish center, perpetrators took hostage Rabbi Gavriel Noach Holtzberg; Holtzberg's wife, Rivka; and four other visitors to the center. The Holtzbergs' 2-year-old son, Moshe, was whisked out of the building by his nanny and another worker. A passerby was killed when the two attackers stepped out on the balcony and opened fire on an alley nearby. All six hostages were discovered dead when officials stormed the Jewish center after two days of the siege. Deccan Mujahedeen, a previously unknown group, claimed responsibility for the attack. The claim has not been confirmed. Officials suspected Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) were responsible for the attack, although a spokesman for the LeT denied its involvement.
73	2008	India	2	11/26/2008: Included in the NYPD list of shootings. On Wednesday night, two gunmen, Ismail Khan and Mohammed Ajmal Amir alias Mohammad Ajmal Kasab, entered the platforms of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus or the Victoria Terminus railway station and began firing indiscriminately, killing 58 people including three policemen.
74	2008	India	2	11/26/2008: Included in the NYPD list of shootings. On Wednesday night two gunmen attacked the Oberoi-Trident hotel complex. This is one of eight coordinated attacks occurring at various locations in Mumbai that killed a total of 171 people and wounded 250 over the course of three days. In the attack on the Oberoi-Trident hotel complex, two gunmen identified by Police official Maria as Abdul Rehman alias Abdul Rehman Chhota from Multan and Fahadullah alias Abu Fahad from Okara, took over 143 people hostage and killed at least 32 people. Among those killed in the attack were 10 staff members and 22 hotel guests. Victims reported that a gunman had ushered 30 or 40 people from the restaurant into a stairway and, speaking in Hindi or Urdu, ordered them to put up their hands.
75	2008	India	2	11/26/2008: Included in the NYPD list of shootings. Two attackers, Shoaib alias Soheb and Nazir alias Abu Umer, opened fire on the cafe on the evening of 26 November, killing 10 people (including some foreigners) and injuring many more
76	2008	India	2	11/26/2008: Included in the NYPD list of shootings. The gunmen leaving the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station fire into a crowd, killing ten additional people
77	2008	India	2	11/26/2008: Included in the NYPD list of shootings. Outside the Cama Hospital, gunmen ambush and kill six police officers

Appendix 6.2: List of Mass Public Shootings and references for other countries besides the United States

This appendix is 675 pages long. https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Appendix-1_1998-2015.pdf

Appendix 6.3: List of Mass Public Shootings and references for the United States

This appendix is 10 pages long. https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Appendix-2_1998-2015.pdf

Appendix 6.4: Countries with Mass Public Shootings from 1998 through 2015: Ranking by per capita rate of attacks and people killed

Rank	Country	Number of Attacks	Country	Killed
1	Nigeria	437	Nigeria	6688
2	Iraq	280	Iraq	2498
3	Afghanistan	259	India	2292
4	India	229	Afghanistan	1712
5	Pakistan	190	Pakistan	1649
6	Algeria	99	Sudan	1175
7	Colombia	85	Algeria	925
8	Philippines	64	Colombia	814
9	Sudan	58	Angola	804
10	United States	53	Democratic Republic of the Congo	585
11	Yemen	51	Central African Republic	560
12	Somalia	39	Philippines	525
13	Democratic Republic of the Congo	37	Kenya	497
14	Russia	37	Uganda	403
15	Uganda	35	United States	394
16	Central African Republic	30	Yemen	334
17	Angola	27	Somalia	318
18	Kenya	27	Sri Lanka	263
19	Sri Lanka	26	Burundi	252
20	Burundi	24	Syria	245
21	Thailand	19	Russia	242
22	Syria	16	Sierra Leone	182
23	Nepal	13	South Sudan	178
24	South Africa	12	France	170
25	South Sudan	12	Cameroon	166
26	Egypt	11	Nepal	160

27	Indonesia	10	Ethiopia	140
28	Iran	10	Niger	139
29	Niger	10	Guinea	107
30	Cameroon	9	Chad	103
31	Mali	9	Egypt	102
32	Turkey	9	Mali	97
33	West Bank and Gaza Strip	9	Thailand	97
34	France	8	Iran	95
35	Israel	8	Turkey	89
36	Peru	8	Indonesia	83
37	Ethiopia	7	Rwanda	76
38	Ukraine	7	South Africa	74
39	Chad	6	Norway	67
40	Mexico	6	West Bank and Gaza Strip	66
41	Sierra Leone	6	Mexico	49
42	Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire)	5	Honduras	48
43	Lebanon	5	Tunisia	47
44	Libya	5	Brazil	46
45	Azerbaijan	4	Israel	43
46	Guyana	4	Peru	43
47	Honduras	4	Ukraine	42
48	Tajikistan	4	Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire)	41
49	Armenia	3	Libya	36
50	Bangladesh	3	Saudi Arabia	36
51	Brazil	3	Germany	33
52	Finland	3	Guyana	32
53	Mozambique	3	Lebanon	30
54	Myanmar	3	Azerbaijan	27
55	Rwanda	3	Finland	23
56	Saudi Arabia	3	Myanmar	22
57	Serbia	3	Switzerland	22
58	Solomon Islands	3	Armenia	21
59	South Korea	3	Bangladesh	21
60	Switzerland	3	Solomon Islands	20
61	Tunisia	3	Serbia	19
62	Belgium	2	Tajikistan	19
63	Georgia	2	Mauritania	18
64	Germany	2	Venezuela	18
65	Guinea	2	Yugoslavia	18

66	Haiti	2	South Korea	17
67	Senegal	2	Uzbekistan	17
68	Uzbekistan	2	Senegal	15
69	Venezuela	2	Liberia	12
70	Yugoslavia	2	Mozambique	12
71	Albania	1	United Kingdom	12
72	Argentina	1	Belgium	10
73	Austria	1	Haiti	10
74	Bosnia	1	Laos	10
75	Canada	1	Georgia	9
76	Croatia	1	Czech Republic	8
77	Czech Republic	1	Croatia	7
78	Italy	1	Slovakia	7
79	Jordan	1	Tanzania	7
80	Kazakhstan	1	Zimbabwe	7
81	Kosovo	1	Bosnia	6
82	Kyrgyzstan	1	Kazakhstan	6
83	Laos	1	Netherlands	6
84	Liberia	1	Italy	5
85	Macedonia	1	Jordan	5
86	Malaysia	1	Kosovo	5
87	Mauritania	1	Kyrgyzstan	5
88	Namibia	1	Macedonia	5
89	Netherlands	1	Malaysia	5
90	Nicaragua	1	Albania	4
91	Northern Mariana Islands	1	Argentina	4
92	Norway	1	Austria	4
93	Slovakia	1	Canada	4
94	Tanzania	1	Namibia	4
95	United Kingdom	1	Nicaragua	4
96	Vietnam	1	Northern Mariana Islands	4
97	Zimbabwe	1	Vietnam	4

Appendix 6.5: List of Countries by Region

Here is the list of countries by region, as provided by the Population Reference Bureau (https://assets.prb.org/pdf05/05WorldDataSheet_Eng.pdf).

- Northern Africa (exclude Sudan): Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Western Sahara, West Bank and Gaza Strip;
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Reunion, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe;
- Northern America: Canada, United States;
- Central America: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama;
- Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Vincent/Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago;
- South America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela;
- Western Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Territory, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen;
- South Central Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan;
- Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam;
- East Asia: China, Hong Kong (China), Macao (China), Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan;
- Northern Europe: Channel Islands, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom;
- Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland;
- Eastern Europe: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine;
- Southern Europe: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Yugoslavia;
- Oceania: Australia, Fed. States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Deputies: Man opens fire in S.C. bar, draws return fire,” Fox 5 Atlanta, Georgia, June 30, 2016 (<http://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/deputies-man-opens-fire-in-sc-bar-draws-return-fire>).
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- 4 Maxine Bernstein, “Mystic club shooting: Bouncer wondered ‘Is this real?’ when bullets started flying,” The Oregonian, February 1, 2014 (https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2014/01/post_414.html).
- 5 Maxine Bernstein, “Masked gunman at Mystic club died from gunshot wound to back, autopsy found,” The Oregonian, January 21, 2014 (http://cached.newslookup.com/cached.php?ref_id=228&siteid=2185&id=4514905&t=1390349263).
- 6 Mike Blasky, Franics McCabe, and Henry Brean, “Shooters carried arsenal, supplies into Sunday rampage,” Las Vegas Review Journal, June 9, 2014 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140610043924/http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas/shooters-carried-arsenal-supplies-sunday-rampage>).
- 7 Adam Bennett, “Friends of Memorial shooting victim raising money for medical bills,” KHOU (Houston Channel 11), May 31, 2016 (<https://www.khou.com/article/news/local/friends-of-memorial-shooting-victim-raising-money-for-medical-bills/225043573>).
- 8 Here is another possible case in which a permit holder saved lives: New Holland, Wisconsin, Chad Mills, “Firefighter: CWPs likely stopped deaths of children, firefighters,” Fox Carolina Channel 21, May 5th, 2015 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160312224459/https://www.foxcarolina.com/story/28998992/firefighter-cwps-likely-stopped-a-massacre-of-children-firefighters/>). In this case, the permit holders didn’t even have to fire their guns. Under the headline, “CWPs likely stopped deaths of children, firefighters,” a local television station in Greenville, South Carolina, had the following story:

Firefighters said they may have stopped a massacre after a gunman surprised them at their station Tuesday.

The Aiken County Sheriff’s Office said deputies responded to the New Holland Fire Department’s Station 2 around 6:30 p.m. for a report of shots fired.

Firefighters said Chad Barker pulled up to the crowded fire station parking lot full of children and firefighters, got out of his car, and began firing in the air and at his vehicle. They say he also pointed the firearm at individual firefighters for lengthy periods of time.

“I came out of the office, saw the man with the gun, told everybody to leave out the back quickly that there was a man in the parking lot with a gun, and I was not kidding,” said Gary Knoll, a firefighter for New Holland.

Knoll said he and another firefighter who have concealed weapons permits pulled their guns on the gunman.

Knoll said Barker returned to his vehicle and firefighters carefully followed him with their weapons still drawn. After encouraging Barker to put the gun down, Knoll said Barker ultimately complied and Knoll grabbed the gun. . . .

FBI response: Does not meet FBI definition. The suspect didn't shoot at anyone. Shot in the air and shot at cars.



About the Author

John Lott is an economist and a world-recognized expert on guns and crime. Lott has held research or teaching positions at various academic institutions including the University of Chicago, Yale University, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Stanford University, and Rice University, and was the chief economist at the United States

Sentencing Commission. He is a columnist for Fox News and Townhall.com. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from UCLA.

Nobel laureate Milton Friedman noted: "John Lott has few equals as a perceptive analyst of controversial public policy issues."

Lott is a prolific author for both academic and popular publications. He has published over 100 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals and this is his tenth book. Previous books included "More Guns, Less Crime," "The Bias Against Guns," and "Freedomnomics." His most recent books are "Dumbing Down the Courts: How politics keeps the smartest judges off the bench" and "The War on Guns."

From the Forward by Andrew Pollack, author of *Why Meadow Died*:

"It seemed almost like the conventional narratives about guns had absolutely no relationship to reality. And when you read this book, I suspect you'll feel a similar sense of shock turning through each page... You probably won't be like me. You'll probably never have a loved one who was murdered, but could have been saved if not for gun control policies. But you might. That's why you have to read this book and use the facts in it as ammunition in the fight to keep your family and loved ones safe."

What people have said about Gun Control Myths:

"John Lott is the go-to expert when it comes to protecting the Second Amendment. Without the Second Amendment, Americans could be stripped of our right to arm ourselves against aggressors. Arm yourselves with knowledge by reading "Gun Control Myths" and join me in protecting the Second Amendment."

*Eric Bolling, Host "AMERICA This Week" Sinclair Broadcasting,
President and Chairman "JanOne"*

"Anyone who advocates gun control and does not seriously consider John Lott's work is negligent. Any journalist who does not at least consider John's work is committing journalistic malpractice."

*Paul H. Rubin, Dobbs Professor of Economics Emeritus,
Emory University*

What others are saying about Dr. John Lott:

"John Lott, who is indispensable in times like these. . . . This man is an encyclopedia, he is brilliant and he is wonderful."

*Mark Levin, Constitutional Lawyer, New York Times
bestselling author, the host of the nationally
syndicated radio show, The Mark Levin Show,
and the host of Fox News' "Life, Liberty & Levin."*

"John is the really, truly a national treasure. He is the most important voice when it comes to guns, gun crime, gun statistics, and that is why he is despised by people on the left. Because he is, no pun intended, bullet proof with these stats."

*Glenn Beck, New York Times bestselling author, the host of the
nationally syndicated radio show, The Glenn Beck Program*

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