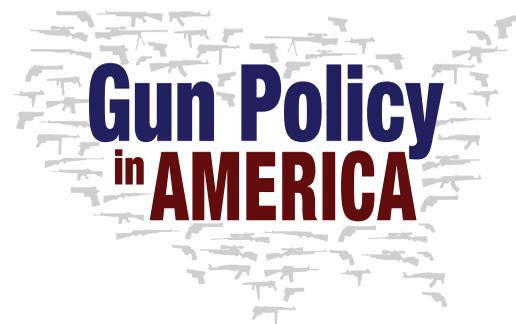


Effects of Child-Access Prevention Laws on Violent Crime



Summary: Evidence for the effect of child-access prevention laws on violent crimes generally and on specific violent crimes is inconclusive.

We identified no studies published since 2003 that examined the effects of child-access prevention (CAP) laws on violent crime.

However, reviewing work published before 2003, both the National Research Council (2004) and Hahn et al. (2005) identified two quasi-experimental studies that examined this relationship using overlapping data sets (Cummings et al., 1997a; Lott and Whitley, 2001). Using a limited set of controls and data spanning 1979 to 1994, Cummings et al. (1997a) found a suggestive relationship between CAP laws and firearm homicides for children aged 15 or younger and uncertain effects for nonfirearm homicides.

In contrast, examining an overlapping period from 1977 to 1996, Lott and Whitley (2001) found that CAP laws were significantly related to higher rates of rape (9-percent increase) and robbery (10-percent increase). In additional analyses, estimates showed a suggestive relationship between CAP laws and lower rates of assault, as well as uncertain effects of CAP laws on murder rates. However, the authors' model had an

Key Findings

Child-access prevention laws have **uncertain** effects on firearm homicides and violent crime.



Evidence for this relationship is **inconclusive**.

Studies with comparable methodological strengths identified inconsistent evidence for the policy's effect on an outcome, or a single study found only uncertain or suggestive effects. Read more about [how we determined the strength of gun policy analysis research](#).

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Experts Weigh In

Compare expert opinions on how child-access prevention laws may affect violent crime outcomes in other states and the U.S. as a whole. »

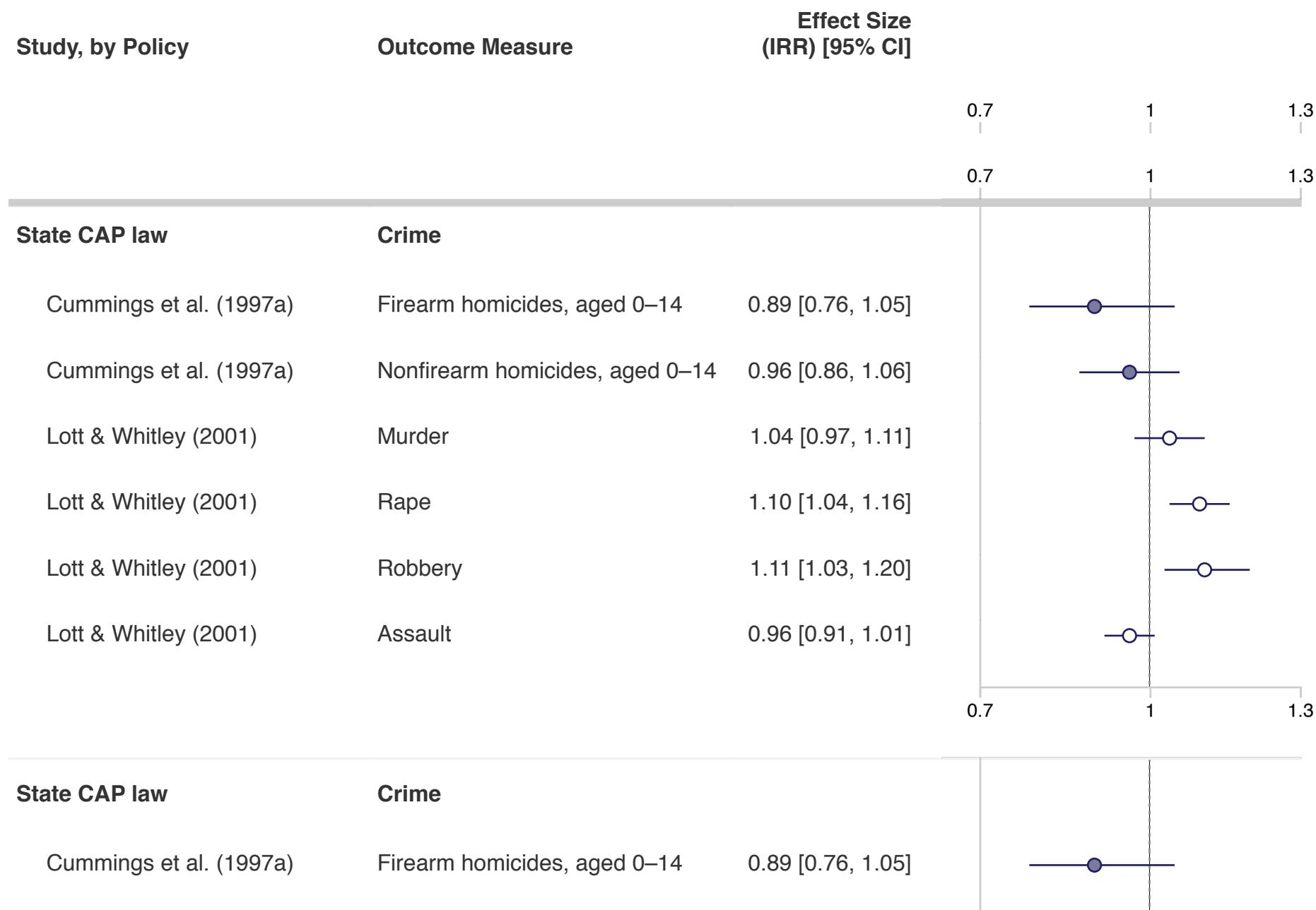
unfavorable ratio of estimated parameters to observations (approximately one to eight), meaning the model may have been overfit, and thus parameter estimates and their confidence intervals (CIs) may have been invalid. Further, Lott and Whitley (2001) made no adjustment for clustering of standard errors at the state level, which threatens the validity of the significance values estimated from their model. In reviewing the more recent

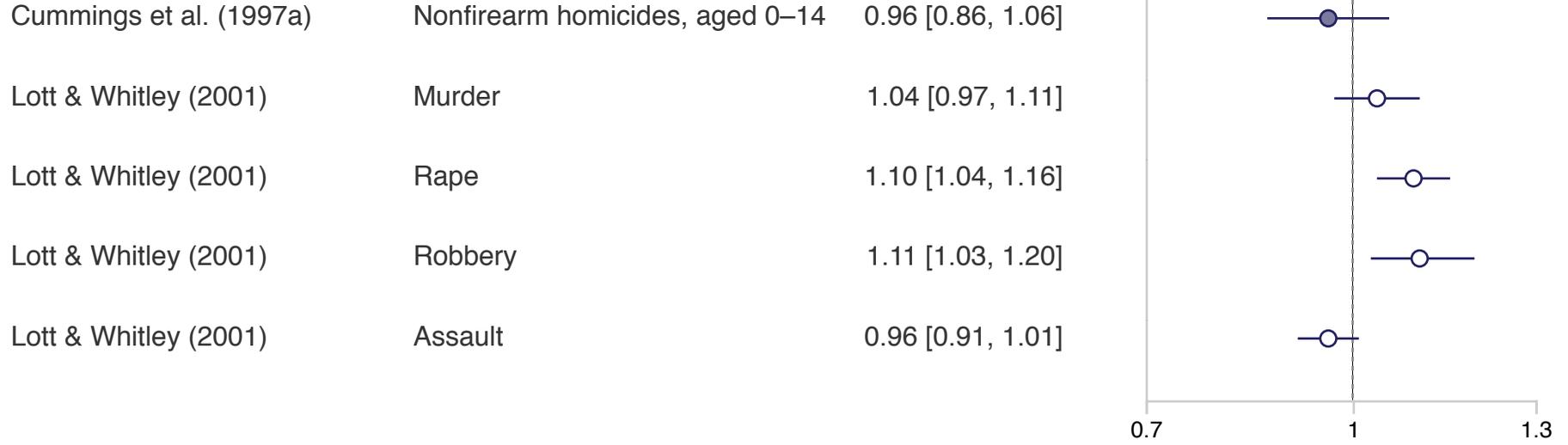
literature, we identified no new studies meeting our inclusion criteria that examined this relationship.

The figure below displays the incidence rate ratios (IRRs) and CIs associated with the CAP laws examined in these studies.

Incidence Rate Ratios Associated with the Effect of Child-Access Prevention Laws on Violent Crime

HOW TO READ THIS CHART 





NOTE: IRR values marked with empty circles indicate that we identified concerns with the study's methodology, and these concerns are described in the text above. Filled circles indicate that we identified no significant methodological concerns.

Conclusions

We identified two studies meeting our quality standards that evaluated the effect of CAP laws on any violent crime outcomes. Cummings et al. (1997a) reported a suggestive effect consistent with CAP laws reducing firearm homicide rates among children aged 14 or younger. Lott and Whitley (2001) found that these laws significantly increased rates of robbery and rape. They also reported a suggestive effect consistent with the laws decreasing assault rates. The effect of CAP laws on murder rates was uncertain.

Considering the relative strengths of the two studies, we find *inconclusive evidence for the effect of child-access prevention laws on violent crimes generally and on specific violent crimes, including firearm homicides.*

CHILD-ACCESS PREVENTION LAWS

VIOLENT CRIME

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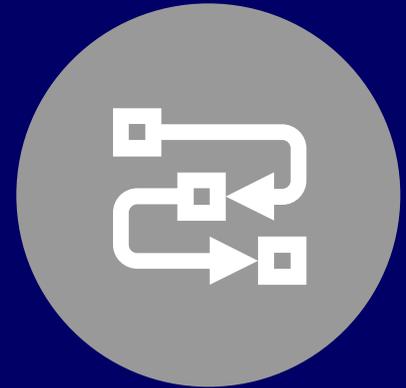
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