

From: johnrlott crimeresearch.org johnrlott@crimeresearch.org
Subject: Fwd: Final Donohue
Date: March 17, 2023 at 2:19 PM
To: johnrlott crimeresearch.org johnrlott@crimeresearch.org



John R. Lott, Jr., Ph.D.
President
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Begin forwarded message:

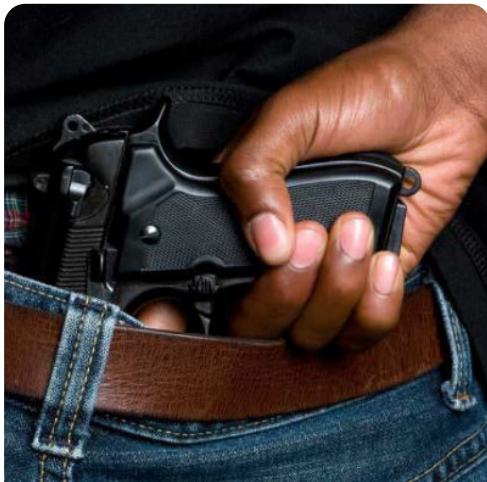
From: johnrlott crimeresearch.org <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>
Subject: Re: Brazil Final
Date: March 17, 2023 at 3:17:21 PM MDT
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>

Thank you for your time. Given how confident you are in your claims, it is disappointing that you are unwilling to take this bet to help prove to people that you are correct.

As to Rand, which, if you really believed their claims, you should be happy to take my bet, they have excluded my research and that of other peer-reviewed research from their survey on inaccurate grounds, such as claiming that I don't report levels of statistical significance in the regressions in my book "More Guns, Less Crime" (University of Chicago Press, 2010, 3rd edition).



See many other peer-reviewed studies that they have also refused to include in their survey,



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and they refuse to recognize that there are real problems with the studies that they do cite despite those problems being pointed out in peer-reviewed published research.

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In any case, the bottom line is the bet, which you are refusing to engage in despite my willingness to adjust it for the relative comparisons that you suggested.

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On Feb 23, 2023, at 6:34 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

Yes, we have tons of evidence – 18 studies in last five years and the RAND assessment -- that if Bruen promotes gun carrying it will lead to an increase in violent crime – relative to what crime would be without Supreme Court interference. Overall crime could go up or down depending on what other factors are influencing crime, but of course all my comments are simply based on the causal estimate.

Why do you say that RAND excludes you improperly? I assume they mean that they think you have not correctly measured the standard errors, which would be a legitimate basis for excluding a panel data study.

Finally, why do end by telling me not to make up quotes? Let me know if you think I made a mistake somewhere.

All best,
John

From: "johnlott crimeresearch.org" <johnlott@crimeresearch.org>
Date: Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 4:53 PM
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Re: Brazil

OK, John, you have no confidence in your theory. I surely understand why that is the case. Here we have a big change in a country's gun control laws, and you are afraid to predict what will happen to their murder rate. But what is more "dispositive" than writing a check for \$1000 having lost a bet?

You claim that you have already convinced yourself using the scientific method of the relationship between gun ownership and crime. I have come to the opposite conclusion based on the scientific method. But tellingly, unlike me, you are unwilling to use your judgment about how the world works to predict the future. You don't even have confidence that such a major change in gun control rules will have a predictable change in murder rates.

The weird thing is that you often have no problem making predictions about what changes in gun control laws mean for future predictions. Here are a couple of examples of many statements

In an op-ed in the Washington Post last year after the Bruen decision, you wrote "Whatever one's view of the best way to interpret the Second Amendment, we unfortunately know what effects this ruling will have in

Amendment, we unfortunately know what effects this ruling will have in the relatively few states that still restrict the carrying of weapons (such as New York, California, New Jersey and Massachusetts). It will cause a spike in violent crime . . .”

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/07/08/guns-crime-bruen-supreme-court/>).

In an op-ed for CNN in support of Universal Background checks, you stated "Cutting off sales to the mentally ill and criminals will reduce crime and thereby reduce the public's demand for guns for self-protection" (<https://www.cnn.com/2013/04/10/opinion/donohue-background-checks/index.html>).

In an op-ed for Scientific American, you note "there are many steps that are widely popular, such as adopting improved, universal background checks, which could be expected to reduce all mass shootings and much other crime”

(<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/arming-teachers-is-not-a-good-option/>).

In the Washington Post, CNN, and Scientific American, you had no problem predicting changes in crime rates from changes in gun control laws. But you are not willing to do that regarding the major legal changes in Brazil.

There is nothing in these op-eds by you that makes the relative comparisons. You simply said that after Bruen, there will be a “spike in violent crime.” However, now you are only willing to compare relative changes. So I offered you such a comparison. But your refusal to even acknowledge that offer shows again that your discussion of comparisons is just a smokescreen for your unwillingness to put your claimed beliefs to the test.

Rand is not a neutral observer. For example, they exclude my research because they claim that I haven't provided measures of statistical significance. Seriously? Also, stop making up my quotes.

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On Feb 22, 2023, at 4:25 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

But we have already done the experiment you desire because Texas restrictions on carrying were complete prior to their RTC law going into effect, and they have consistently looked worse than NY or CA ever since. But note that if we took the bet that you propose – just look at the before and after – Texas still had a modest drop in its crime rate, so you would have won – despite the fact that any more sophisticated analysis made Texas look bad after they went from a complete ban on gun carrying to an increasingly more permissive regime (thus in fact I should have won any bet on the impact of the Texas RTC law). But even here you say, “I don't believe that Texas's poor homicide performance, which is dramatically worse than CA and NY, indicates that Texas gun laws are to blame, because Mexico has a high crime rate that leaks over.” It shows that there is no evidence that is ever enough to convince you that no matter how bad things get when a state promotes gun use. that

permissive gun laws have had an adverse impact. So rather than making bets that cannot be dispositive – see how you wriggled out of Houston’s terrible performance via NYC by citing a liberal prosecutor – even though NYC also has liberal prosecutors – let’s just keep trying to do the best possible research and let the academic community decide who is right. I note in this regard that RAND – which has applied a very conservative standard of proof on the impact of gun laws on crime -- now finds that the evidence that RTC laws are harmful reaches their highest level of support (of 5 categories). This is the way science should be done.
John

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>
Date: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 4:49 PM
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Re: Brazil

Given you apparently believe that the entire increase, or almost all the increase, in Houston’s murder rate is due to Texas’ gun laws, it would appear that you would tell people that if Texas adopted the new Brazil gun control (banning concealed carry, banning the immediate sale of ammunition and new guns, and quickly moving to take away existing gun licenses), you would tell people that murder rates would fall. So why not bet?

So to provide what should be the obvious answer to your question, I think that Houston adopting Brazil-type gun control would result in more murder and violent crime, and I would be happy to take such a bet if such extreme rules were put in place. Indeed, every place in the world that has banned all guns or all handguns has seen murder/homicide rates rise.

If you think Houston isn’t facing some spillover from the drug trafficking crime in Mexico, that is your choice. Houston also has the nutty bail reform seen in New York and a left-wing prosecutor refusing to prosecute violent criminals and Democrats running the city, who are very different from those who ran the city twenty years ago. An empirical question is how that compares to the nutty people running New York City.

Finally, I have a suggestion. Since you are so concerned about making relative comparisons, why not compare Brazil’s change in murder rate to countries that are next to it, primarily Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina? The other countries are largely isolated from the population centers in Brazil by the Amazon forest. Chile doesn’t border Brazil, and it has a new leftist government doing some of the same things that Lula is doing, even if not as extreme.

So here is my suggestion. We bet \$500 on this relative comparison between Brazil and these neighboring countries and \$500 on the simple bet on whether Brazil’s murder rate goes up or down. But, again, if you don’t have much confidence in predictions based on your hypothesis, I understand. I understand why you find it necessary to keep changing the topic. I accept the fact that you are unwilling to make a bet.

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On Feb 20, 2023, at 4:19 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

John,

You didn’t respond to the point that Houston had the same murder rate as NYC prior to Texas’s RTC law and now has three times the murder rate. Houston is

more than 350 miles from the Mexican border so a bit hard to believe that the border is a big issue – and Houston is a big death penalty jurisdiction with a much bigger incarceration rate (and bigger incarceration increase) than NYC. It seems you have to concede that the pro-gun policy was harmful compared to the restrictive NYC policies or say some factor OTHER than guns overwhelmed the benefit you think guns provide. I haven't heard what that factor is, but if there is one, it would argue why it is not a good idea to bet on a simple time-series movement in murder owing to the impact of guns because it is overwhelmed by other factors. So could you let me know if you agree that guns made things worse in Houston vis-à-vis NYC, or tell me what factor could explain why Houston did so bad (thereby showing why a bet would not be a good idea because – in your view – guns were crime-reducing, even though the raw murder rates indicate they were quite harmful).

All best,
John

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>
Date: Monday, February 20, 2023 at 12:17 PM
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Re: Brazil

Dear John:

Possibly you are confused on the difference between what one needs to do to provide statistically significant evidence to test a hypothesis and what one needs to make a bet. You have a hypothesis that you already very strongly believe is correct. If so, you should be able to make predictions based on that hypothesis that you already believe has been proven.

As to the differences between Texas and New York, I have already provided one explanation for that. I have already anticipated the point regarding California.

If you don't have much confidence in predictions based on your hypothesis, I understand. But, unlike you, I have confidence in my predictions. I understand why you find it necessary to keep changing the topic. I accept the fact that you are unwilling to do the bet.

Thanks.
John

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Sent from my iPhone

| On Feb 19, 2023, at 6:20 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

John,
I think you must spend a lot of time with very muddle-headed people and it is distorting your ability to follow an argument.

I said a simple time-series analysis is NOT a good basis to make a bet about – especially when you are betting that crime will go up in a poor, unstable country, with much civil strife and gang issues – all of which will affect both what happens in Brazil in the next two years and may also impact whether there will even be reasonably good data about what happened.

Instead, I pointed out that a better question to consider is a comparison of one treated and one untreated state where we do have good data: NY and CA looked similar with respect to murder in 1995 and then Texas made a dramatic and unprecedented pro-gun legal reversal and has continued on that path while NY has maintained a restrictive approach. Today Texas's murder rate is 75 percent higher. If you say you can't figure out why Texas has done so badly relative to (despite the far greater increase in incarceration and the use of the death penalty), other than to say Mexico is the problem, what makes you think you can figure out what will happen in Brazil, when you will have no comparison jurisdiction at all?

J

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>
Date: Sunday, February 19, 2023 at 3:10 PM
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Re: Brazil

If you believe that they are the same, accept my bet.

The advantage of what I am proposing is it is prospective. Something that we don't know the result for yet. Do you usually make bets about things you already have seen the results for? You have your theory, and I have mine. If you think the two comparisons are the same, let's bet on Brazil.

Again, if we were to make the Texas and New York bet prospective, would you take a bet that looked ahead 25 years? I suspect not because too many things can change and be hard to control over that period when you only compare two places. With Brazil, we have a very radical change in gun control policy and a short time horizon. Lula banned ammunition and new gun sales on January 1st. People already have to turn in many of their guns. New licensing procedures will be going into effect in a month or so.

As to Mexico, it is NOT just that Mexico has a high murder rate, but that its murder rate was also increasing over that same period. If you included a fixed effect for Mexico for the relative change in Texas' murder rate, that fixed effect would indeed explain the change. Presumably, those aspects of the illegal drug trade that were driving up Mexico's murder rate (e.g., competition to control the sale of drugs associated with higher profits) could also be driving up the murders associated with all the smuggling activity in taking the drugs from Mexico into the US. As noted, Texas has a very long border with almost no man-made barriers.

As usual, you keep moving the target. If you want to make a bet on something that hasn't happened yet, Brazil seems like an obvious choice with their radical change in gun control. Unfortunately, it seems clear that you aren't willing to address my offer on the bet or to respond to my points on that. Again, I can understand why you want to switch the subject.

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On Feb 19, 2023, at 3:42 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

But John, you make my point once again. You want to compare Brazil over time but you can't compare Texas over time (even though I give you a large

but you say you can't compare Texas over time (even though I give you a large state with similar homicide rate just before Texas adopted RTC). My comparison is clearly better than yours and your only answer is that a fixed effect – the border with Mexico – is a factor in the Texas murder rate increase. But if rising crime in Mexico by the border is the problem, then compare Houston and New York City which had similar murder rates in 1995 and Houston is 752 miles from the Mexican border. Houston now has 3 times the murder rate of NYC. I thought guns were a big help in reducing crime?

J

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>

Date: Sunday, February 19, 2023 at 1:03 PM

To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>

Subject: Re: Brazil

I am not sure about the arbitrary years and the two states you picked. In any case, there are lots of possible reasons for Texas' murder rate. One possibility is that Texas shares a very large border with Mexico, a country that has a murder rate that has more than doubled since 1972 (when they implemented their strict gun control), and in many recent years, they have a murder rate that is as high as six times the US murder rate. Why does Mexico have such a high murder rate, and more importantly, for your comparison, why has it increased over time? That is occurring because the drug cartels fight against each other and the government to protect their drug profits. Texas and Mexico share 1,241 miles, and very little is fenced. (By contrast, California and Mexico share 140 miles of border, most of which has a border fence.) A large percentage of Texas is within 100 or 200 miles of the border. The drug trafficking problem is consistent with Texas having a higher murder rate. Of course, other points can be discussed.

Unfortunately, it seems pretty clear that you aren't willing to address my offer on the bet or to respond to my points on that. I can understand why you want to switch the subject. But given your constant claims about the benefits of restrictive gun control laws, I am disappointed that you aren't willing to place a bet that this radical policy shift will affect homicide rates.

Thank you for your time.

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On Feb 19, 2023, at 12:55 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

John:

We are talking about NY and Texas in 1995 when they had roughly comparable murder rates and similar gun policies, and NY and Texas today after more than 25 years of liberal gun policy in Texas and restrictive policy in NY. I would have predicted that Texas would suffer for this, and it has: it has a 75 per cent higher murder rate in 2021 than NY. Any thoughts on why things look so bad in Texas today?

John

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>

Date: Sunday, February 19, 2023 at 11:16 AM
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Re: Brazil

Dear John:

1) If one has faith in their empirical work and policy claims, they should be willing to predict outside of the sample. If you are unwilling to make this simple prediction of what this gun ban in Brazil will do to their homicide rate, that is your choice.

2) Under Lula Brazil is moving to ban carrying of guns and gun ownership. That is a rather stark experiment, and despite how much you might support that policy for the US, there is no state in the US that is at the current time moving towards any similar change.

3) Comparing two dates for two US states 125 years apart, seems pretty difficult for the reasons that I listed. If you have confidence in the murder data from the 1870s, why not go and see what happened to the murder rate of blacks before and after Texas' concealed handgun ban?

Thanks for your consideration.
John

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On Feb 19, 2023, at 10:33 AM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

John, you are not thinking systematically.

Why worry about Brazil? It is a poor country with much civil disturbance, terrible policing, and poor crime data. Before and after comparisons are extremely weak forms of identifying causal relationships.

Far stronger is comparing states with roughly comparable murder rates and see what happens over time when one liberalizes carrying of guns (Texas after 1995) and one tries to restrict carrying (New York). We now know what happens: Texas and New York had similar murder rates in 1995, and now Texas has a 75 percent higher murder rate than New York. So under your protocol for the bet in Brazil, you would say "we proved that RTC elevated homicide in Texas compared to a plausible control." I am at least asking if you have any other explanation for why things got so bad in Texas when they followed your prescription almost perfectly? (Texas also ratcheted up the death penalty and their incarceration rates over this period relative to NY so if those factors suppressed crime in Texas vis a vis NY, than the gun liberalization looks even worse.)

I know you don't want to concede this, but isn't this a pretty clear example that more gun carrying leads to more murder?

John

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>
Date: Saturday, February 18, 2023 at 9:07 PM
To: John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Re: Brazil

Dear John:

Thanks for getting back to me. Yes, it is somewhat volatile, and that is one reason I offered to look at the change over two years despite Lula putting lots of changes in effect on January 1st this year. That said, if you want to make a bet say for the first three years of his administration, we can discuss that. My thought with two years was twofold: to reduce the randomness in any one year and that fewer other things will change as dramatically as the change in gun ownership rules over that period.

Given your comments about Texas and concealed carry, Lula is banning concealed carry, which should give you some confidence given your beliefs. Overall, this is a useful experiment for those who think that guns on net are bad. After the changes brought by Bolsonaro, Lula is also banning the sale of Ammo and new gun sales, immediately reducing the maximum number of guns from 10 to 3, and most importantly, forcing everyone to redo the license under a new process that will pretty much insure that no one will get approved.

As to your comments about Texas banning carrying guns, I am sure that you know that the ban has racist origins. Possibly you might look at what happened to attacks on blacks immediately after the law was passed. I would hope that the threat that blacks faced then is much greater than the threat that they faced in 1995.

BTW, I looked up some other numbers. In 1995, New York's violent crime rate was 27% higher than Texas' and its robbery rate was 122% higher. Do you know how these numbers compared for these states in 1871?

In any case, when you say "we do know," I have little confidence in measuring homicide or murder rates before the early 1930s and not much before WW2. There are problems with rates of reporting even up through the 1960s. That said, the changes from 1871 to 1995 in Texas and New York in many ways are huge.

Thanks,
John

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On Feb 18, 2023, at 8:26 PM, John Donohue <jjd@law.stanford.edu> wrote:

Hi John:

I don't know much about murder in Brazil but just noticed it fell 12.8% in the year before Bolsonaro took office so it is probably pretty volatile, which makes it hard to know what is going on without a lot of detailed information.

We do know that from 1871 to 1995, Texas [banned](#) carrying guns outside the home for protection. When it started down its pro-gun path, Texas had only a slightly higher murder rate than New York. After 25 years of increasing gun restrictions in New York, Texas now has a 75 percent higher murder rate than New York. Any thoughts about that?

All best,
John

From: "johnrlott crimeresearch.org" <johnrlott@crimeresearch.org>
Date: Friday, February 17, 2023 at 11:58 AM
To: "donohue@law.stanford.edu" <donohue@law.stanford.edu>
Subject: Brazil

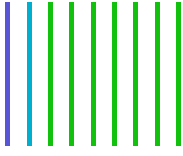
Dear John:

I suspect that you are happy about the changes in Brazil with the defeat of Bolsonaro, who increased gun ownership by over 600% (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/23/brazil-gun-rights-control-bolsonaro/>), and the election of Lula. With Lula becoming president of [Brazil on January 1st](#), and his first executive order banning the sale of ammunition and moving to take away people's gun licenses, you must be very optimistic about the future of crime in Brazil. This across the board [crackdown on gun ownership provides a great opportunity to test the claim that reducing gun ownership will reduce the homicide rate or increase it.](#)

Here is what I offer you. Let's bet \$1,000 and make it simple on whether the homicide rate in Brazil will go up or down during the first two years of Lula's presidency. If the homicide rate goes down from what it was in 2022, I will pay you \$1,000. If it goes up, you will pay me \$1,000. Given the importance you put on gun control and the large percentage change in gun ownership that Lula is imposing, you should expect a substantial drop in homicides, but, as I say, let's keep it simple on whether the homicide rate goes up or down.

I look forward to your response.

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