

**Testimony before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission on Federal Efforts to Gather Data on Racial
and Ethnic Disparities**

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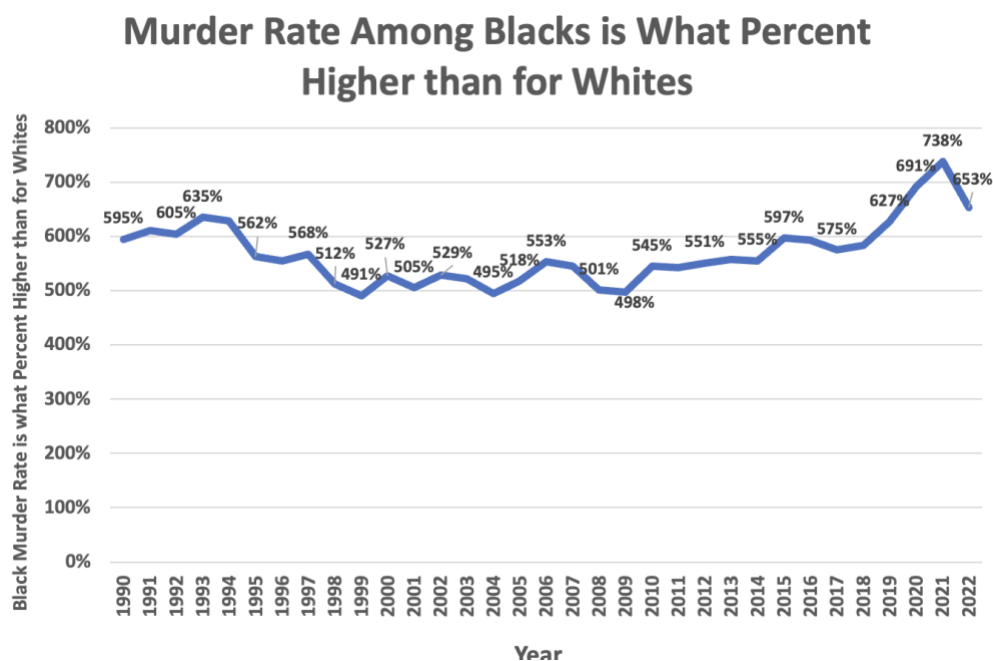


I. Introduction

Crime overwhelmingly occurs in heavily minority areas. The perpetrators and victims of the crimes tend to be very similar to each other in race and socio-economic status. District Attorneys around the country have based prosecution and incarceration on notions of racial equity, that the prosecution and imprisonment rates are the same across races.¹ While that policy works to ensure that different racial groups in prison mirror their share of the general population, it increases inequality in who are the victims.

II. Who are the victims of crime and where do the crimes occur

In 2022, the murder rate among blacks is 653% higher than the murder rate for whites. The murder rate for Hispanics is 65% higher than for whites.² Nor are those numbers that much of an outlier. From 1990 through 2022, the black murder rate average 569% higher than whites, and the number for Hispanics was 57% higher.³



Murderers overwhelmingly murder people who are just like themselves. Over the years 2019 to 2021, about 85 to 90 percent of blacks are murdered by blacks.⁴ About 76 to 80 percent of

¹ Thomas Hogan, "George Soros' Bad Bet," City Journal, July 12, 2023 (<https://www.city-journal.org/article/george-soross-bad-bet>).

² FBI, Expanded Homicide Offense Characteristics in the United States (<https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/shr>).

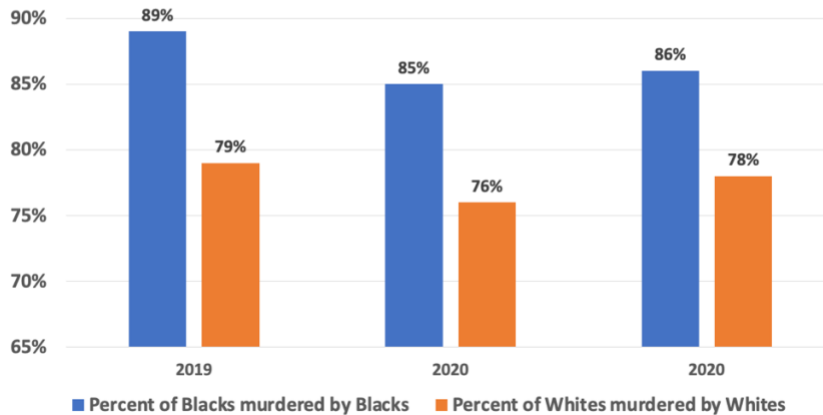
³ Ibid.

⁴ FBI, "Expanded Homicide Data Table 6, Uniform Crime Reports, multiple years (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-6.xls>)

whites are murdered by whites. There are some cross-race murders, with blacks murdering whites at about twice the rate that whites murder blacks (17 to 19 percent versus 8 to 9 percent), but murderers tend to commit crime against people who are very similar in race and income.

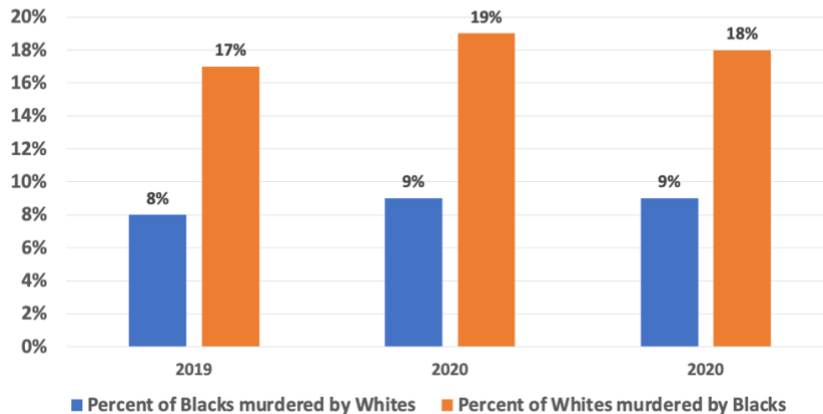
Percent of Blacks and Whites Murdered by People of Their Own Race

(Source FBI UCR)



Percent of Blacks Murdered by Whites and Percent of Whites Murdered by Blacks

(Source FBI UCR)



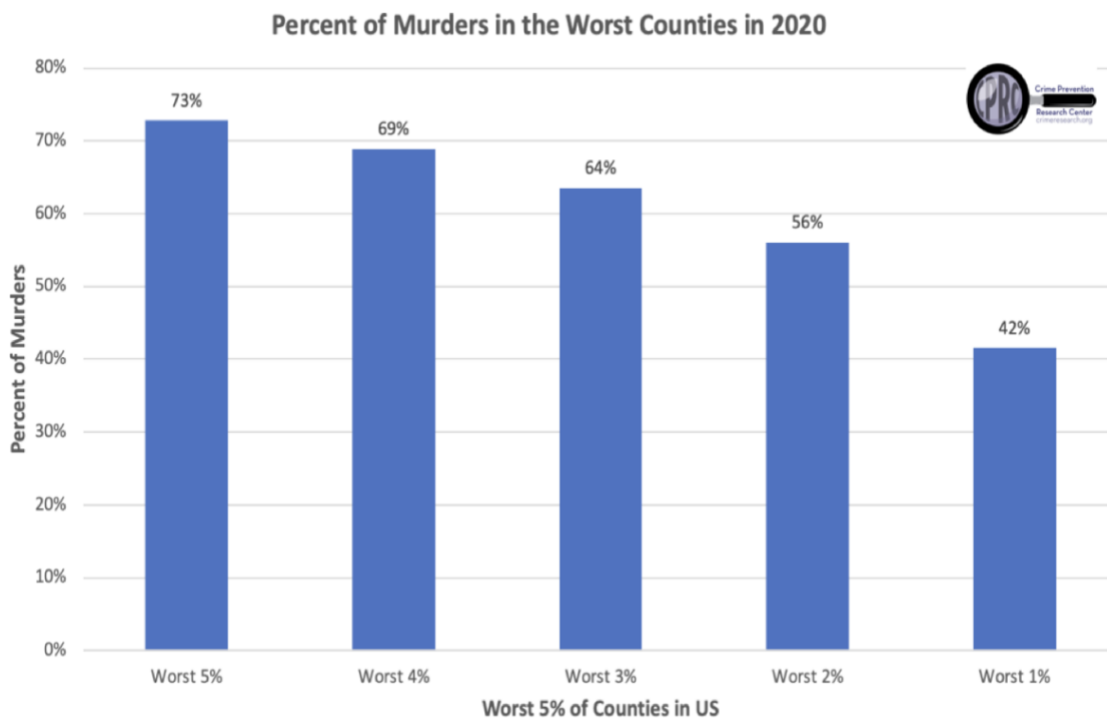
It isn't just murders where blacks and Hispanics are disproportionately harmed.

Murders are very heavily concentrated in the US, and they have become even more concentrated over time. In 2020, the worst 1% of counties (the worst 31 counties) had 21% of the population and 42% of the murders.⁵ The worst 2% of counties (62 counties) contain 31% of the population and 56% of the murders. The worst 5% of counties contain 47% of the

⁵ John R. Lott, Jr., "Murders in US Are Very Concentrated, and They Are Becoming Even More So," Social Science Research Network, January 17, 2023 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4325838).

population and account for 73% of murders. But even within those counties, the murders are highly concentrated in small areas.

This concentration of murders is the highest in over a decade. Between 2010 and 2014, the percentage of murders in the worst 5% of the counties fell from 71% to 69%. But between 2014 and 2020, they had consistently climbed back by four percentage points, so murders were even more concentrated than in 2010. The one percent of worst counties drove that increase. The share of murders in these worst counties rose over this period, but there was no change in these counties' populations.

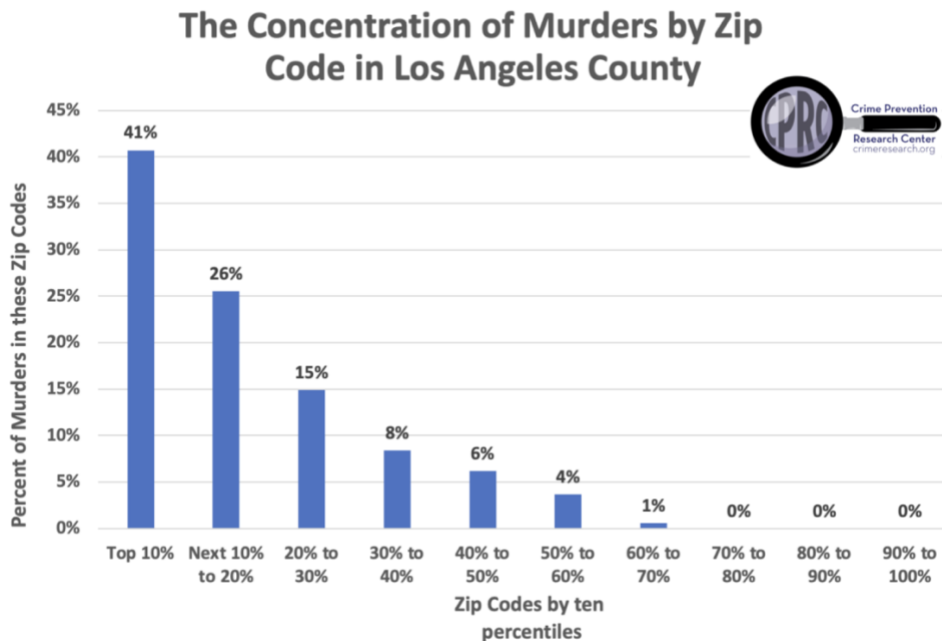


By contrast, 52% of counties have zero murders, 68% have at most one murder, 76% have at most two murders, and so on. To put it differently, only the top five percent of the counties have 16 or more murders.

The concentration of murders has increased over time. The most dangerous 5% of the counties accounted for 69% in 2014 and rose to 73% by 2020. The most dangerous 2% of the counties increased from 52% to 56% of murders.

Even within counties, murders and other violent crimes are concentrated, though not as concentrated as they are across counties. The figure shows the distribution of murders across

zip codes in Los Angeles County, California in 2020. The worst 10% of the zip codes account for 41% of the murders, the worst 20% have 67%, and the worst 30% have 82%. By contrast, the safest 40% of the counties have just 1% of the murders. Recent research shows that murders in Los Angeles County have become less concentrated over time, but they are still fairly concentrated.



III. Thinking of Crime Victims more Broadly

While it is easy to see the direct victims of crimes, those against whom the crimes are committed (those murdered, raped, robbed, assaulted, and had things stolen from them), crime victims are much more broadly than that. Obviously, murders, rapes, robberies, and assaults harm more than the families and friends of the victims.

But even that isn't broad enough to capture all those harmed by crime. The businesses in these high-crime areas may be more likely to close or be forced to charge higher prices to stay in business. Presumably, minorities who live in those high-crime areas disproportionately own the businesses there. When businesses close, the jobs lost will be for those who live there. The same will be true for those who shopped in the stores that closed or who now have to pay higher prices for products. Finally, the people who own houses in that area will also tend to be similar, and they will suffer from the drop in property values as crime rates rise..

Data measuring some of these other costs of crime could be helpful for understanding who crime harms.

IV. How Do You Prevent This?

Higher arrest rates, higher conviction rates, and longer prison sentences are all ways to reduce crime. Given that the poor and minorities are the overwhelming victims of crime, they are the ones who would benefit the most from reducing crime.

Unfortunately, despite their importance in deterring crime, the police themselves recognize that they virtually always arrive at the crime scene after it has occurred. The question is what people should do when they face a criminal by themselves, and having a gun is by far the safest course of action. My research shows that two groups that benefit the most from carrying guns are the likeliest victims of crime — poor blacks who live in high-crime, urban areas and people who are physically weaker, such as women and the elderly.⁶

Unfortunately, gun control laws generally discriminate against poor minorities. Many people believe that even free ID cards for voting are too burdensome for the poor. But there's no similar hesitation to impose fees, expensive training requirements, ID requirements, and onerous background checks on prospective gun owners.

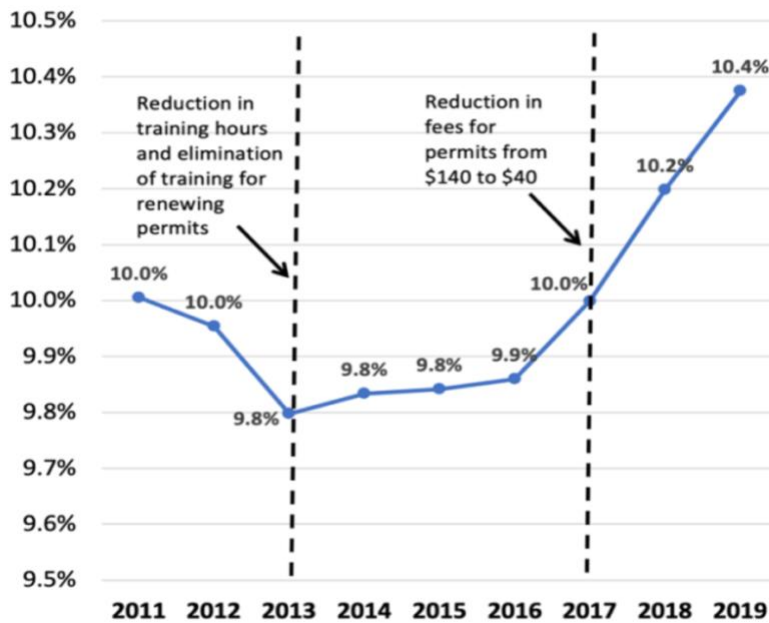
These costs matter; just compare the numbers in neighboring states, Illinois and Indiana. In Illinois, the total cost of getting a five-year permit is \$450; there is no license fee in Indiana. While only 4% of Illinoisans have a concealed handgun permit, 22% of adults in Indiana already have one, the second-highest number of permits per capita.⁷ But the costs don't just effect the number of permit holders, it also impacts the racial composition of permit holders. In Illinois, the permit holders tend to be whites who live in relatively safe suburbs. In Indiana, the permit holders tend to be much more likely to live in heavily minority poor urban zip codes.

Texas provides unique information on the race of permit holders as well as having significant changes in both the permit fees and training requirements. On September 1, 2013, Texas reduced the training requirement to obtain a permit from ten hours to four hours and eliminated the training requirement for renewing the permit. On September 1, 2017, Texas reduced permit fees for a five-year permit from \$140 to \$40. The question is: do higher costs of getting a permit differentially impact blacks and other minorities? The answer looks clearly yes.

⁶ John R. Lott, Jr., *More Guns, Less Crime*, University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2010, pp. 181-4.

⁷ John R. Lott, Jr., "Concealed Carry Permit Holders Across the United States: 2022," SSRN, November 17, 2022 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4279137).

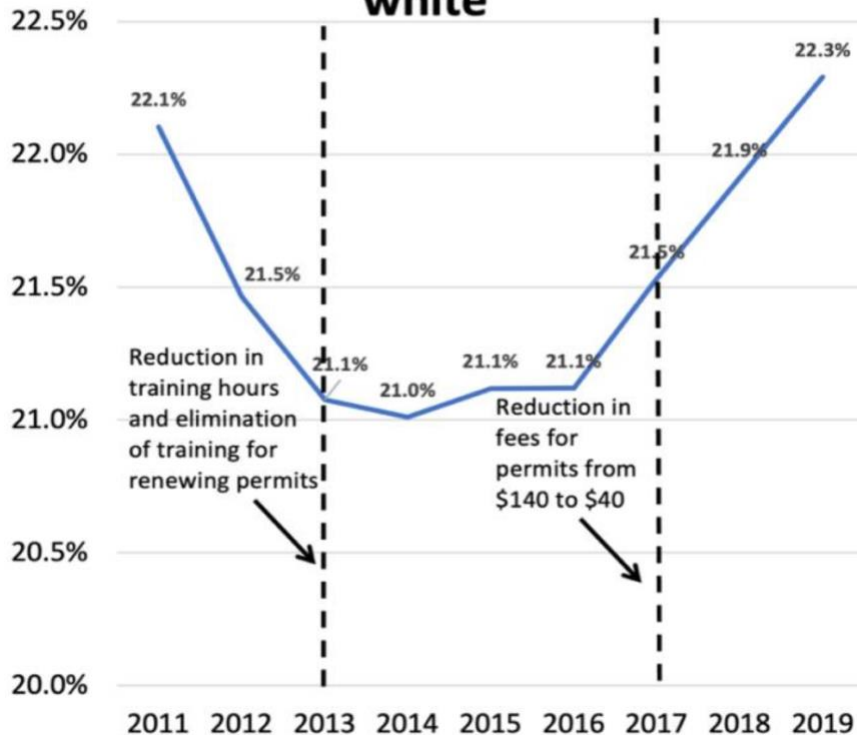
Percent of Concealed Handgun Permit Holders who are Black



The graphs show a common pattern: the percent of concealed handgun permits held by blacks and non-whites fell before Texas reduced the training requirement in 2013. Reducing both the costs of training and fees quickly increased blacks' and minorities' share of the permits. Blacks' share of permits fell to 9.8% in 2013 and then rose to 10.4% in 2019.⁸ While permits increased dramatically from 691,475 in 2013 to 1,416,698 in 2019, permits for blacks and non-whites were growing faster than for whites.

⁸ All the data for Texas is available in Reports and Statistics, Texas Department of Public Safety (<https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/handgun-licensing/reports-statistics-1>).

Percent of Concealed Handgun Permit Holders who are Non-white



Gun control advocates erroneously claim that background checks have stopped 4 million dangerous or prohibited people from buying guns. About 99 percent of denials are false positives, and errors overwhelmingly discriminate against law-abiding black and Hispanic men.

It is one thing to stop a felon from buying a gun. It is quite another to stop a law-abiding citizen from buying a gun just because he has a roughly phonetically similar name and birthdate to that of a felon.⁹

That massive error rate occurs because government background checks focus only on two pieces of information: names and birth dates, ignoring Social Security numbers and addresses.

⁹ John R. Lott, Jr., "Background Checks Are Not the Answer to Gun Violence," New York Times, February 12, 2018 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/opinion/politics/background-checks-gun-violence.html>). John R. Lott, Jr., "The School That Wasn't There," Wall Street Journal, June 29, 2021 (https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-school-that-wasnt-there-11624981903?st=92qezciiqzos6sq&reflink=article_email_share). John R. Lott, Jr., "The federal background check system is a mess; why won't Democrats and gun-control advocates press to fix it?" New York Daily News, November 7, 2017 (<http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/federal-background-check-system-mess-article-1.3617217>).

The government looks for phonetically similar names (e.g., “Smith” and “Smythe” are assumed to be the same) and even ignores different middle names.

These mistakes affect certain racial groups more than others. Hispanics are more likely to share names with other Hispanics; the same is true of blacks. Because 33 percent of black males have criminal records that prevent them from buying guns, law-abiding African-American men more often have their names confused with those of prohibited people.¹⁰

We can fix the problem if the government does what it requires for private companies. When businesses perform criminal background checks on employees, they have to use all of the information that is already available to the government: name, Social Security number, address, and birth date.

V. 92% of Violent Crime Doesn’t Involve Guns in Any Way

Violent crime is usually discussed as a gun crime problem, but while most murders involve guns, other violent crime rarely involve guns.¹¹

The U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey (2020) shows 4,558,150 rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults,¹² and the FBI reports 21,570 murders.¹³ Of those, 350,460 rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults,¹⁴ and 13,620 murders involved firearms.¹⁵ Adding those numbers up, guns were used in 7.9% of violent crimes. That rate has been quite steady for decades.

Relying on public health researchers, many blame increasing gun sales as the cause of increased violent crime.¹⁶ But while violent crime reported to police rose 5% in 2020, you can't blame that

¹⁰ Sarah K. S. Shannon, Christopher Uggen, Jason Schnittker, Melissa Thompson, Sara Wakefield, and Michael Massoglia, “The Growth, Scope, and Spatial Distribution of People With Felony Records in the United States, 1948–2010,” *Demography*. 2017 Oct; 54(5): 1795–1818

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5996985/#:~:text=We%20estimate%20that%203%20%25%20of,African%20American%20adult%20male%20population.>).

¹¹ President Joe Biden, “Remarks by President Biden at a Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Meeting,” White House Briefing Room, February 3, 2022 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/03/remarks-by-president-biden-at-a-gun-violence-prevention-task-force-meeting/>).

¹² Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D., and Jennifer L. Truman, Ph.D., “Criminal Victimization, 2020,” U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, September, 2021 (<https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cv20.pdf>).

¹³ Crime Data Explorer “Crime in the United States 2020,” Federal Bureau of Investigation (<https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/downloads>).

¹⁴ See Table 8. Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D., and Alexandra Thompson, “Criminal Victimization, 2020,” U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 2021 (<https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cv20.pdf>).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶ Arthur Z. Berg, John R. Lott Jr., and Gary A. Mauser, “Expert Views on Gun Laws,” *Regulation*, Winter 2019-2020, pp. 40-47 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3507975).

increase on guns because gun crimes fell by 27%.¹⁷ The National Crime Victimization Survey also finds a similar 27% drop.¹⁸

All this is consistent with academic research by myself and others showing that criminals are less likely to carry guns when civilians have them for protection.¹⁹ If a criminal pulls out a gun against an armed victim, he is likelier to be shot.

Gun ownership didn't fuel the increase in crime over the last couple years. Rather, it was a response to the rise in crime. People became worried about violent crime and decided to arm themselves for self-protection.

It's not hard to explain the increased violence. Many urban areas saw more than half of prison inmates get released because of the pandemic. Newly convicted criminals weren't going to prison. Nationwide, there were over 340,000 fewer inmates in jails and prisons in 2021 than in 2019.²⁰ Cities cut police budgets and ordered officers to stand down in many places. New York City cut its police budget by \$1 billion.²¹

¹⁷ See Table 8. Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D., and Alexandra Thompson, "Criminal Victimization, 2020," U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 2021 (<https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cv20.pdf>).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John R. Lott Jr., "More Guns Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws," University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2010.

David E. Olson and Michael D. Maltz, "Right-to-carry concealed weapon laws and homicide in large US counties: The effect on weapon types, victim characteristics, and victim-offender relationships," *The Journal of Law and Economics*, Volume 44, Number S2, October 2001, pp. 747-770 (<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/338345>).

²⁰ Jacob Kang-Brown, Chase Montagnet, and Jasmine Heiss, "People in Jail and Prison in Spring 2021," New York: Vera Institute of Justice, June 2021 (<https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/people-in-jail-and-prison-in-spring-2021.pdf>).

²¹ Office of the Mayor, "In the Face of an Economic Crisis, Mayor de Blasio Announces Budget that Prioritizes Safety, Police Reform, Youth Services, and Communities of Color," NYC.gov, June 30, 2020 (<https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/487-20/in-face-an-economic-crisis-mayor-de-blasio-budget-prioritizes-safety-police>).

Since so much of the Commission’s Emphasis Appears to be on Gun Control, I have included these section here.

1. Surveys on Guns

A. Do Surveys Accurately Report the Overall Support for Gun Control

Gun control advocates often point to polls showing overwhelming support for gun control. For instance, in May 2023, an NPR/PBS Newshour survey headline proclaimed: "[Most Americans say curbing gun violence is more important than gun rights.](#)"²²

But is that really the choice Americans face on gun control?

The survey asked, “Do you think it is more important to control gun violence or to protect gun rights?” It [found](#) that American adults preferred reducing gun violence (60 percent) over protecting gun rights (38 percent).²³ Besides extensive reporting on the poll by NPR and PBS, the survey received massive news coverage in such outlets as [USA Today](#) and [The Hill](#), with headlines echoing NPR’s.²⁴

Such a survey presents people with a false choice. After all, both sides of the gun control debate advocate for safety. "Gun rights" do not inherently imply increased gun violence. Indeed, letting people defend themselves may help to curb violence.

To create a more balanced survey, the Crime Prevention Research Center, which I head, hired McLaughlin and Associates in June and reworked the question. We [asked](#), “Which of the following methods do you think is more effective in reducing violent crime?” and presented the options of “Allowing people to protect themselves with guns” or “Enacting stricter gun laws.” Nine percent said they “don’t know.”²⁵

²² Domenico Montanaro, “Poll: Most Americans say curbing gun violence is more important than gun rights,” Spokane Public Radio, May 24, 2023 (<https://www.spokanepublicradio.org/2023-05-24/poll-most-americans-say-curbing-gun-violence-is-more-important-than-gun-rights>).

²³ Marist Poll, “NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist National Poll: Gun Violence in the United States,” Marist Institute for Public Opinion, May 24, 2023 (<https://maristpoll.marist.edu/polls/gun-violence-in-the-united-states/>).

²⁴ Grace Hauck, “Is stopping gun violence more important than gun rights? Most Americans say yes: Poll,” USA Today, May 25, 2023 (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/05/25/ualde-shooting-poll-gun-rights/70256752007/>).

Julia Mueller, “60 percent in new poll say controlling gun violence more important than protecting gun rights,” The Hill, May 24, 2023 (<https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/4018730-60-percent-in-new-poll-say-controlling-gun-violence-more-important-than-protecting-gun-rights/>).

²⁵ CPRC, “How Asking Gun Control Questions Differently Dramatically Changes the Results: Comparing NPR/PBS versus the Crime Prevention Research Center,” Crime Prevention Research Center, July 10, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/07/how-asking-gun-control-questions-differently-dramatically-changes-the-results-comparing-npr-pbs-versus-the-crime-prevention-research-center/>).

According to the rest of our 1,000 likely general election voter respondents, participants favored stricter gun laws by a margin of only five percentage points. That is not a statistically significant difference, especially when compared to NPR's much larger 22-point margin.

B. The sensitivity of support for individual gun control laws

Gun control proponents constantly cite surveys to argue for adoption of gun control laws. Part of the problem is that these surveys use one-sentence summaries of complex laws that are dozens of pages in length. No one can expect a pollster to read such long, complicated laws to the respondents.

Red Flag laws are currently the top legislative priority of Democrats and gun control advocates. Polls show that Americans overwhelmingly support these measures — by margins ranging between 2-1 and 3-1.²⁶ Congress recently passed legislation providing funding for states that adopt these laws.

Survey respondents are unlikely to be familiar with how red flag laws operate. The surveys generally ask people if they support laws that "allow guns to be temporarily confiscated by a judge from people considered to be a danger to themselves or others."²⁷

Respondents might reasonably assume that judges will follow a normal legal process, with evidence and cross-examination of witnesses. They might also presuppose that mental health experts are involved in the process.

The CPRC's survey began by simply asking people the question asked in other surveys. People initially answered by a two-to-one margin that they support Red Flag Laws (58%-to-29%), with the strongest support coming from Democrats, the wealthy, blacks and Hispanics, and people aged between 18 and 29.

Our survey then informed respondents that no hearings are held before an individual's guns are taken away, and that mental health care professionals are not consulted. Now, support changed to opposition (29%-to-47%). Strong support plummeted from 34% to 14%, and strong opposition rose from 18% to 29%.

²⁶ CPRC, "Original Research: Support for Red Flag Laws Depends on People not understanding how Red Flag Laws Operate," Crime Prevention Research Center, September 11, 2022 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2022/09/original-research-support-for-red-flag-laws-depends-on-people-not-understanding-how-red-flag-laws-operate/>).

Sabrina Jacobs, Grace Adcox, Danielle Deiseroth, Erin Thomas, and Bella Kumar, "After the Uvalde Shooting, Majority of Voters Support Red Flag Laws and Stricter Gun Control," Data For Progress, June 13, 2022 (<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2022/6/13/after-the-uvalde-shooting-majority-of-voters-support-red-flag-laws-and-stricter-gun-control>).

²⁷ University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs and Texas Southern University Jordan-Leland School of Public Affairs, "Texas Trends Survey 2022: Gun Safety," UH-TSU Texas Trends Survey, September 22, 2022 (<https://uh.edu/hobby/txtrends/gunsafety2022.pdf>).

Finally, the survey asked people if they prefer red flag laws to involuntary commitment laws. They were told that involuntary commitment laws provide for evaluations by mental health care experts, that an emergency court hearing takes place before a judge's decision, and that a lawyer is provided if a person can't afford one. They are also told that, under such rules, judges have a range of less extreme options such as mandatory outpatient mental health care and weapon confiscation.

Survey respondents favored involuntary commitment by a 40%-to-33% margin. Only Democrats, the wealthy, blacks, and Asians supported red flag laws as their preferred option.

Clearly, respondents could benefit from more contextual information. In April, the CPRC hired [McLaughlin & Associates](#) to do another survey on what people thought was the percentage of violent crime committed using guns.²⁸ The CPRC found that respondents dramatically overestimated the percentage of violent crime committed with guns. The average Democrat estimated that 56.9% of violent crimes involve guns, and the typical Republican gave an answer of 37% (the actual rate is less than 8%).

It's often touted that there is [90+% support](#) in polls for universal background checks on the private transfer of guns.²⁹ But when these measures have been on the ballot, they haven't been slam dunks. In 2016, despite billionaire Michael Bloomberg's [overwhelming financial backing](#), ballot initiatives failed in Maine by four percentage points and won in Nevada by less than 1%.³⁰

The Nevada initiative received \$20 million in funding, amounting to a remarkable \$35 per vote.³¹ That's three times more than what the opposition spent. In Maine, Bloomberg outspent the opposition *by a factor of 20*.³² And the media coverage in both states was overwhelmingly sympathetic to additional gun control.

While the Nevada initiative technically eked out a win, it couldn't go into effect because it lacked [provision for funding](#). [Without telling voters that the measure wouldn't cost them anything](#), its narrow win would have turned into a loss.³³

²⁸ John R. Lott Jr., "When Misinformation Drives Bad Policy," Real Clear Politics, May 16, 2022 (https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2022/05/16/when_misinformation_drives_bad_policy_147601.html).

²⁹ CPRC, "Remember those claims that 80 to 90% of Americans wanted expanded background checks?: Well, no so much support for specific bills," Crime Prevention Research Center, December 1, 2016 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2016/12/remember-those-claims-that-80-to-90-of-americans-wanted-the-senate-background-check-bill-to-pass-well-it-was-clearly-wrong/>).

³⁰ Joseph Ax, "Gun control groups spend millions on state ballot initiatives," Reuters, November 2, 2016 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-election-guns/gun-control-groups-spend-millions-on-state-ballot-initiatives-idUKKBN12X1YZ>).

³¹ Ballotpedia, "Nevada Background Checks for Gun Purchases, Question 1 (2016)," Ballotpedia ([https://ballotpedia.org/Nevada_Background_Checks_for_Gun_Purchases,_Question_1_\(2016\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Nevada_Background_Checks_for_Gun_Purchases,_Question_1_(2016))).

³² Ballotpedia, "Maine Background Checks for Gun Sales, Question 3 (2016)," Ballotpedia ([https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_Background_Checks_for_Gun_Sales,_Question_3_\(2016\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_Background_Checks_for_Gun_Sales,_Question_3_(2016))).

³³ Attorney General Adam P. Laxalt, "Attorney General Opinion No. 2016-12," Nevada Attorney General's Office, December 28, 2016 (https://ag.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/agnvgov/Content/Publications/AGO_2016-12.pdf).

Americans keep being told by the media that they overwhelmingly support gun control laws. So why don't the laws get passed? Might it be that the polls are inaccurate and biased? My survey suggests just that.

There were also problems with many other questions in the NPR/PBS survey. For example, it asked respondents whether they support "stand your ground" laws. However, the survey described these laws as allowing people to "kill or injure the person who they think is threatening them." This question neglected to consider the "reasonable person" standard, which allows for proportional force if a reasonable individual would have perceived a serious risk of death or injury.³⁴

The NPR/PBS survey is vague, making it seem as though someone can almost arbitrarily kill another person. Still, the survey found majority (58-to-40 percent) support for "stand your ground" laws.

But this is an underestimate. I rephrased the question, explained the "reasonable person" standard, and clarified that the force used must be "proportional" to the harm faced.³⁵ Our survey results found that the "stand your ground" laws received overwhelming support, with 66% approval to 23% disapproval. What's more, all demographic groups supported the laws — even Democrats (52 to 35 percent) and women (61 to 24 percent).

C. The Very Different Views of Researchers

The perception is that academics support gun control. The New York Times garnered attention with its 2017 surveys of academics, which purportedly showed this.³⁶ But the survey asked only 32 academics, and the vast majority were public health researchers. Only a few were criminologists or economists. Many respondents had never done empirical research on gun control, let alone published a peer-reviewed empirical paper on the subject. Other surveys that primarily rely on the views of public health researchers present similar results.³⁷

Along with Arthur Berg at the Harvard Medical School (retired) and Gary Mauser at Simon Frazer University, we recently completed the largest-ever survey of 120 academics who have

³⁴ Justia Criminal Law Center, "Self-Defense in Criminal Law Cases," Justia.com, October 2022 (<https://www.justia.com/criminal/defenses/self-defense/>).

³⁵ CPRC, "How Asking Gun Control Questions Differently Dramatically Changes the Results: Comparing NPR/PBS versus the Crime Prevention Research Center," Crime Prevention Research Center, July 10, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/07/how-asking-gun-control-questions-differently-dramatically-changes-the-results-comparing-npr-pbs-versus-the-crime-prevention-research-center/>).

³⁶ Quoctrung Bui and Margot Sanger-Katz, "How to Prevent Gun Deaths? Where Experts and the Public Agree," The New York Times, January 10, 2017 (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/10/upshot/How-to-Prevent-Gun-Deaths-The-Views-of-Experts-and-the-Public.html>).

Margot Sanger-Katz and Quoctrung Bui, "How to Reduce Mass Shooting Deaths? Experts Rank Gun Laws," The New York Times, October 5, 2017 (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/05/upshot/how-to-reduce-mass-shooting-deaths-experts-say-these-gun-laws-could-help.html>).

³⁷ Harvard Injury Control Research Center, "Firearm Researcher Surveys," Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/firearm-researcher-surveys/>).

published empirical research on gun control. We found that academics were overall quite skeptical that gun control lowered murder rates or the frequency of mass public shootings.³⁸ Criminologists and economists widely believe that eliminating gun-free zones would stop mass public shootings and that "red flag" laws don't help. Only public health researchers are largely supportive of gun control laws.

The survey asked three groups of experts to evaluate the effectiveness of 33 gun-related policies in reducing both murder rates and mass public shootings. In contrast with the *New York Times* study, we focused on "murder rates" rather than "firearm homicide deaths." We did this out of concern that, under stricter gun laws, murderers might simply substitute other killing instruments, leaving homicide rates unaffected. Neither the *Times* nor this study investigated the effect of gun policy on suicide rates, which account for more gun deaths than homicides each year.

Twenty policies the *New York Times* evaluated in the survey involved government restrictions on civilian use and ownership of firearms. In addition, we asked for evaluations of five additional restrictive policies. We then asked respondents to evaluate eight policies that would relax or eliminate governmental restrictions related to firearms, such as expanding personal carry.

We asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of each policy on a scale of 1–10, with a "10" being most effective.

We attempted to survey some non-American academics to see if they would have a different perspective from their peers. Unfortunately, among non-Americans, only four economists, four criminologists, and three public health researchers responded. The results below include non-Americans' responses, though we also note American-only responses. (The *Times* respondents were all Americans.)

The survey results appear in Table 1. A casual glance at the table shows some similarities and important differences between American academics in the three disciplines. Criminologists and economists differ somewhat in just how effective they think various policies will be, but they have similar rankings of the policies' effectiveness. Both groups 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 6.0), allow military personnel to carry on military bases (5.6), encourage the elimination of gun-free zones (5.3), and relax federal regulations that pressure companies to create gun-free zones (5.0). The top four policies for economists are the same, but in a different order: encourage the elimination of gun-free zones (7.9), relax federal 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).

³⁸ Mauser handled the surveying of the criminologists and economists. Berg surveyed public health researchers. Arthur Z. Berg, John R. Lott, Jr., and Gary A. Mauser, "Expert Views on Gun Laws." *Regulation*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Winter 2019-2020, pp. 40-47 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3507975).

[TABLE 1 GOES HERE]

By contrast, public health researchers place these same policies near the bottom of their list. Their top policy choice is barring gun sales to people deemed dangerous by a mental health provider, the fifth most valued policy by criminologists (4.88). Public health researchers' other top policies aren't viewed positively by criminologists. The public health researchers' second through fourth top-ranked policies are banning magazines that can hold more than ten 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 (3.0) ranked policies. There was an even larger gap between economists and public health researchers.

The Spearman correlation coefficients confirm these patterns and systematically compare each field's policy rankings. A coefficient of 1 means that the two disciplines have the same policy rankings; a value of -1 indicates the exact opposite rankings, and zero means no relationship. Criminologists and economists have a Spearman correlation of 0.775. That is statistically significant and indicates that the two groups have similar policy rankings. By contrast, the Spearman correlations comparing either criminologists or economists to public health researchers are negative, -0.068 and -0.154 , respectively, indicating that criminologists and economists are slightly more likely than not to have the opposite policy rankings of public health researchers. The difference between economists and public health researchers comes closest to being statistically significant, with an 11% level of significance.

The patterns are similar when these different groups rate the effectiveness of policies in reducing murder rates. While the proposal ranked most favorably by criminologists is reducing government-imposed costs of acquiring guns (5.2), economists want to relax federal restrictions that interfere with companies setting rules for people having guns (7.1). Public health researchers want to prevent the sales of a firearm to people convicted of violent misdemeanors (7.3).

The Spearman coefficients again show the policy rankings of criminologists and economists to be very similar, with a coefficient of 0.730. The 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 all have statistically significant differences from each other in their policy rankings.

To determine whether the *New York Times* panel was representative of academic experts, we compared their answers with those of our survey respondents using the common questions in the two surveys. Not even our public health respondents evaluated gun control proposals as favorably as did the *Times* panel of experts, though they come by far the closest. On the subject of the effectiveness of gun control policies on murder rates, there is no statistically significant difference between the public health respondents and the *Times*' panel.

D. The Police's Views on Gun Control

Police are important in fighting crime, but police themselves understand that they virtually always arrive at a crime scene after the crime occurs. When a 2016 survey by the National Association of Chiefs of Police asked 15,000 chiefs and sheriffs if law-abiding citizens should be able to buy guns for self-defense, 88% answered yes.³⁹

In March 2013, **PoliceOne surveyed** 14,022 of its 450,000 members (380,000 active-duty and 70,000 retired law enforcement officers), and 77% answered that legally armed citizens are extremely or very important to reducing crime rates.⁴⁰ Regarding mass public shootings, 86% of members believed that letting citizens carry concealed handguns in those places would reduce or "avoid altogether" casualties from mass public school shootings. Seventy-seven percent supported "arming teachers and/or school administrators who volunteer to carry at their school." No other policy to protect children and school staff had such widespread support.

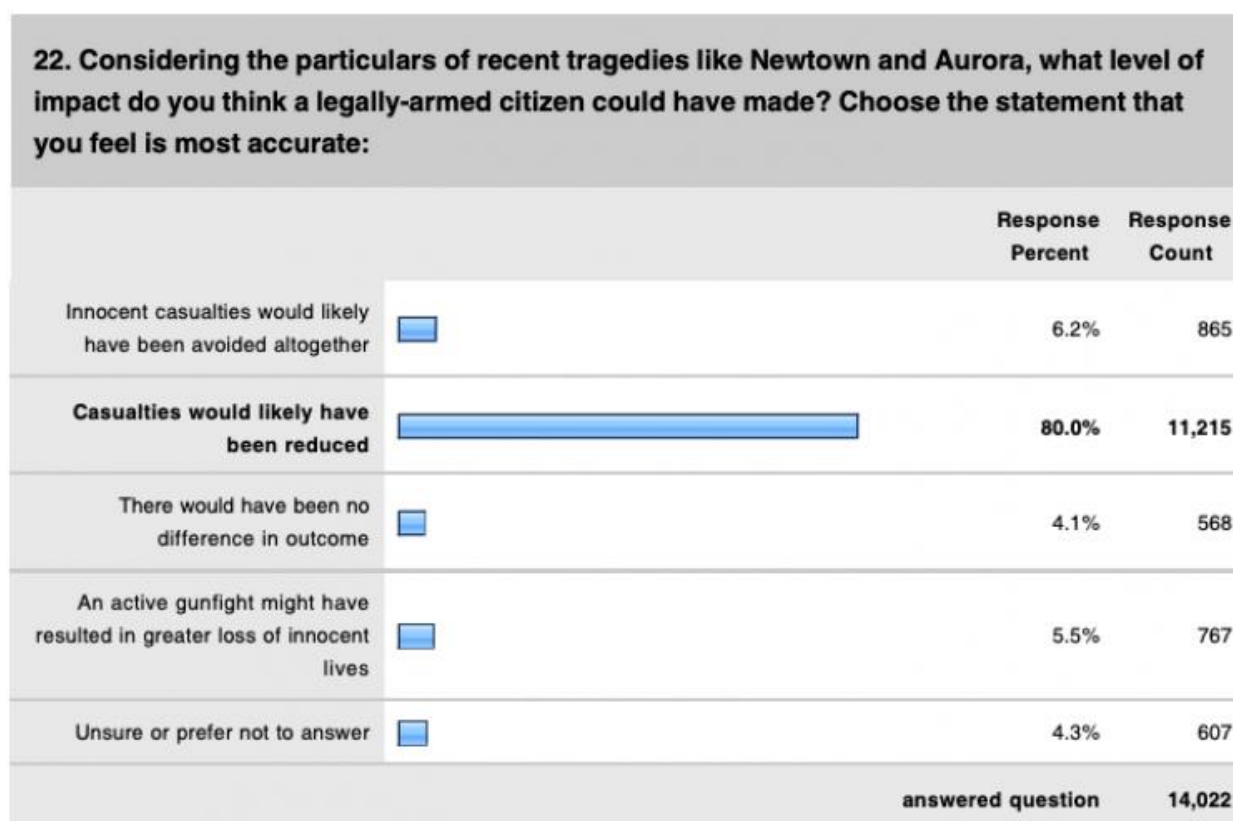


Figure 1: Gun Policy & Law Enforcement Survey Results (Question 22)

2. Mass Public Shootings

³⁹ CPRC, "National Association of Chiefs of Police Annual Surveys on Concealed Handgun Reciprocity and other issues," Crime Prevention Research Center, May 14, 2018 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2018/05/national-association-of-chiefs-of-police-annual-surveys-on-concealed-handgun-reciprocity-and-other-issues/>).

⁴⁰ PoliceOne, "Gun Policy & Law Enforcement: Survey Results," Police1.com, April 8, 2013 (https://media.cdn.lexipol.com/p1_gunsurveysummary_2013.pdf).

A. Definitions

Mass shootings have many definitions, but the discussion is often confusing.

Starting in 1980, the original FBI definition of “mass killings” had been “*four or more* victims slain, in one event, in one location,” “within one event, in at least one or more public locations, such as, a workplace, school,” and the offender is not included in the victim count.⁴¹ Mass shootings were shootings with four or more murder victims.

A gun control group, the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), counts mass shootings as events wherein three or more people are shot (either wounded and/or killed).

The FBI defines active shooter incidents as those in which an individual actively kills or attempts to kill people in a populated, public area.⁴² But it does not include shootings related to other criminal activity, such as robbery or fighting over drug turf. Active shootings may involve just one shot fired at just one target, even without any casualties, all the way up to a mass public shooting.

Mass public shootings are the same as the FBI active shooting cases but use the original FBI definition of “mass” to only include active shooting cases with four or more people murdered. Numerous academic studies have used this definition. A number of academic studies have used this definition.^{43,44}

Mass public shootings are the attacks that tend to get massive news coverage. These are attacks where someone goes into a mall, movie theater, grocery store, or school to randomly kill as many people as possible. About two-thirds of the GVA’s number involves gang fights.⁴⁵ It isn't that gang fights aren't important, but just that the causes and solutions for gang fights are very different from the mass public shootings. While the GVA measure claims that there were 645

⁴¹ William J. Krouse and Daniel J. Richardson, “Mass Murder with Firearms: Incidents and Victims, 1999-2013,” Congressional Research Service, July 30, 2015 (<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R44126.pdf>).

⁴² Pete Blair and Katherine W. Schweit, “A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 – 2013,” Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, 2014 (<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view>).

⁴³ Grant Duwe, Tom Kovandzic, and Carl Moody, “The Impact of Right-to-Carry Concealed Firearm Laws on Mass Public Shootings,” *Homicide Studies*, November 1, 2002.

Adam Lankford, “Public Mass Shooters and Firearms: A Cross-National Study of 171 Countries,” *Violence and Victims*, January 2016 (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26822013/>).

John R. Lott and William M. Landes, “Multiple Victim Public Shootings,” Available at SSRN 272929, June 10, 2001 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=272929).

John Lott, “More Guns, Less Crime,” University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2010.

⁴⁴ Mother Jones had the same definition until recently, when it broadened the definition to three or more people murdered. Mark Follman, “What Exactly Is a Mass Shooting?” *Mother Jones*, August 24, 2012 (<https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2012/08/what-is-a-mass-shooting/>).

⁴⁵ CPRC, “Washington Post’s misleading article on ‘mass shootings’ — falsely claiming ‘204 mass shootings’ when virtually none of these cases qualify for the normal definition of ‘mass,’ UPDATED: Response from Washington Post,” Crime Prevention Research Center, July 26, 2015 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2015/07/washington-posts-misleading-article-mass-shootings-falsely-claiming-204-mass-shootings-in-204-days-this-year/>).

mass shootings in 2022, there were actually just eight mass public shootings. Politicians, such as President Biden, and the media will often mention mass public shootings, such as the Uvalde school shooting, and then cite the GVA number to say that hundreds have occurred so far this year.⁴⁶

Between 1998 and 2009 there was an average of 3 mass public shootings per year, from 2010 to 2019 there were 4 per year, and from 2020 to 2022 there were 4.5.

B. Demographics

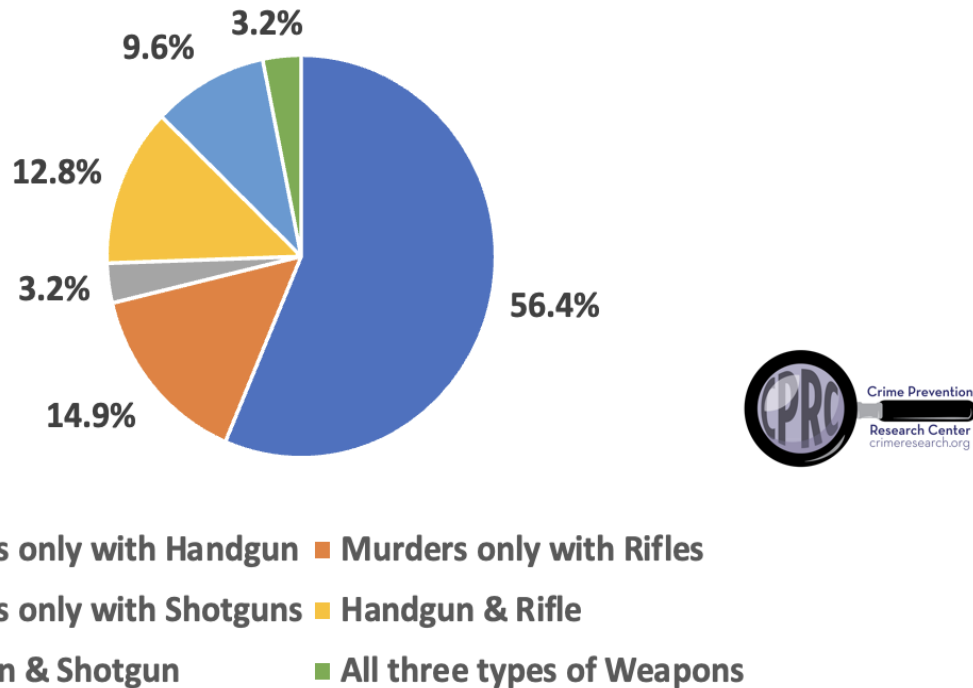


Figure 2: Type of Gun Used in Mass Public Shootings from 1998 through March 15, 2023

Much of the focus on mass public shootings involves AR-15s and other assault rifles.⁴⁷ But they despite the general impression, they involve just a small percentage of the attacks.

Between January 1, 1998 and the Covenant school shooter on March 27, 2023, 56.4% of attacks used solely handguns, and 14.9% used only rifles of any type—thirty-one percent of attacks used solely rifles in conjunction with another type of gun.⁴⁸ Two of the attacks used AR-15-type

⁴⁶ President Joe Biden, “Statement from President Joe Biden on the Shooting in Allen, Texas,” White House Briefing Room, May 7, 2023 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/07/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-the-shooting-in-allen-texas/>).

⁴⁷ President Joe Biden, “Statement from President Joe Biden on Gun Violence Across America,” White House Briefing Room, July 4, 2023 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/07/04/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-gun-violence-across-america/>).

⁴⁸ CPRC, “Updated information on Mass Public Shootings,” Crime Prevention Research Center, March 28, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/03/updated-information-on-mass-public-shootings/>).

handguns with a pistol-stabilizing brace. Only 2% of all murders in 2018 involved any type of rifle.⁴⁹

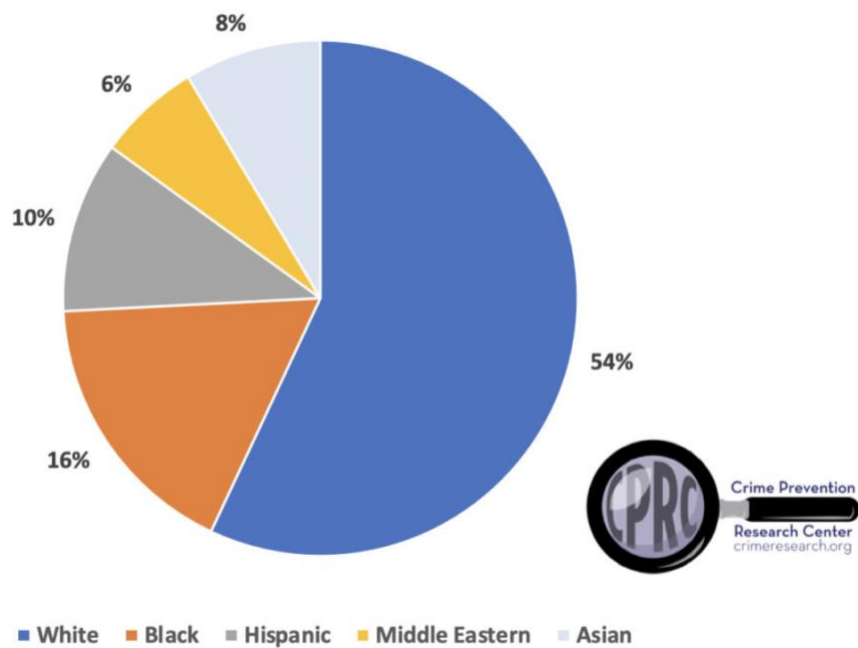


Figure 3: Race of Mass Public Shooters from 1998 through March 15, 2023

⁴⁹ This number use data from the annual FBI Uniform Crime Reports. CPRC, “With all the concern about assault weapons, how has the share of murders with rifles changed over time?” Crime Prevention Research Center, November 4, 2019 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2019/11/with-all-the-concern-about-assault-weapons-how-has-the-share-of-murders-with-rifles-changed-over-time/>).

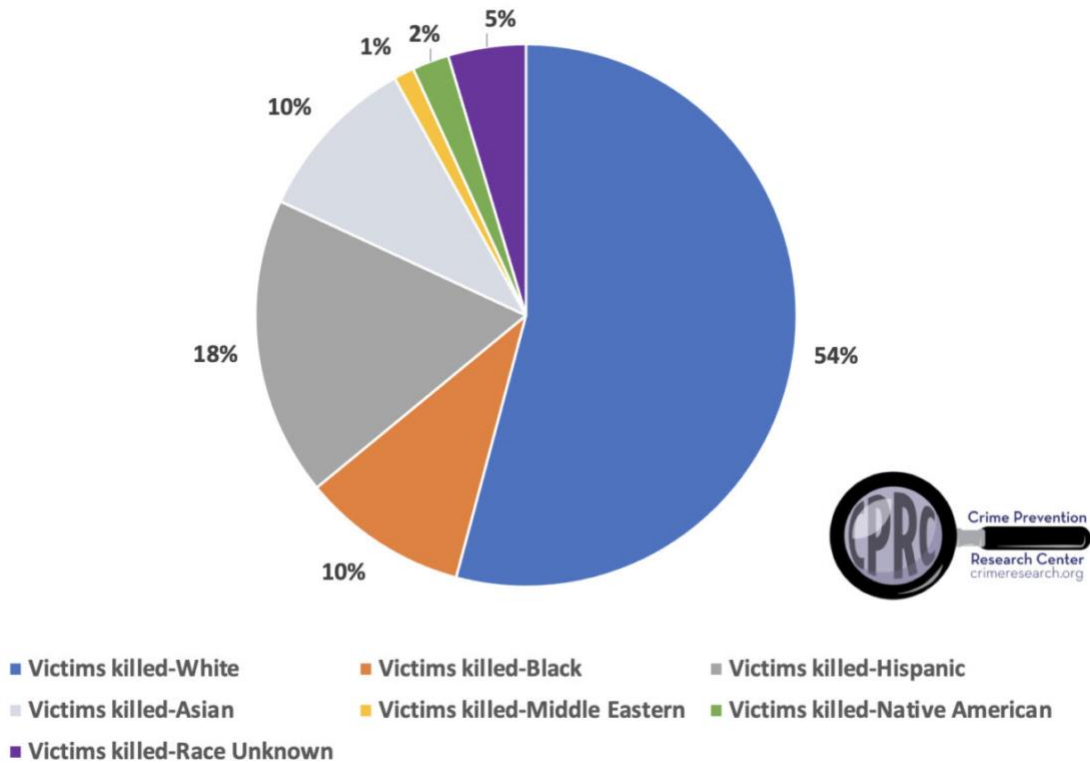


Figure 4: Race of Victims of Mass Public Shooters from 1998 through March 15, 2023

The murderers don't fit the normal image of white supremacists. Of the 82 mass public shootings from January 1998 to May 2021, 9 percent have known or alleged ties to white supremacists, neo-Nazis, or anti-immigrant views.⁵⁰ And many of the anti-immigrant attackers, such as the Buffalo murderer, hold decidedly environmentalist views that are more in line with the Democrat agenda.

Other groups commit mass public shootings disproportionately more than whites do. **55.3% of the U.S. population was non-Hispanic, non-Middle Eastern white** in 2022.⁵¹ That aligns closely with the 54% of murderers and victims who are white.

Although we often hear about the racist motives of shooters, blacks are underrepresented as a share of the victims. Blacks comprise 16% of the murderers but only 10% of the victims. That 10% is less than their 13.6% of the general population.⁵²

⁵⁰ CPRC, "What Percent of Mass Public Shooters are White Supremacists?" May 21, 2021 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2021/05/what-percent-of-mass-public-shooters-are-white-supremacists/>).

⁵¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Population Estimates, July 1, 2022 (V2022) -- United States," Quick Facts (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222>).

⁵² Ibid.

Hispanics are underrepresented as a share of mass murderers. 10% of these mass murderers are Hispanic despite the group making up **18.9%** of the general population.⁵³ But approximately 18% of victims are Hispanic.

Middle Easterners comprise 4% of the general population but are overrepresented as a share of mass murderers (6%) and underrepresented as victims (1%).

Asians make up 6.1% of the population, but they are overrepresented in both mass murderers (8%) and even more overrepresented as victims (10%). Interestingly, 44% of the Asians murdered in these attacks were murdered by other Asians.

C. The Politicization of Crime Data

Americans are constantly debating policing and gun control. But to discuss these issues, we depend on government crime data. Unfortunately, politics has infected the data handling of agencies such as the FBI and the Centers for Disease Control.

Last year, the CDC became the center of controversy when it removed its estimates of defensive gun uses from its website at the request of gun control organizations. For nearly a decade, the CDC cited a 2013 [National Academies of Sciences](#) report showing that the annual number of people using guns to stop crime ranged from about 64,000 to 3 million.⁵⁴ The CDC website listed the upper figure at 2.5 million.

Mark Bryant, who runs the Gun Violence Archive, [wrote](#) to CDC officials last year to tell them that the 2.5 million number “has been used so often to stop [gun control] legislation.”⁵⁵ The CDC’s estimates were subsequently taken down and now lists no numbers.

The FBI is also susceptible to political pressure. Until January 2021, I worked in the U.S. Department of Justice as the senior advisor for research and statistics, and part of my job was to evaluate [the FBI’s active shooting reports](#).⁵⁶ I showed the bureau that many cases were [missing and others had been misidentified](#).⁵⁷ Yet, the FBI continues to report that armed citizens stopped only 14 of the 302 active shooter incidents identified for 2014-2022. The correct rate is

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ National Research Council, “Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence,” Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013 (<https://doi.org/10.17226/18319>).

⁵⁵ Mark Bryant, “Response to CDC meeting with GVP representatives regarding Defensive Gun Use,” Received by CDC, September 16, 2021 (<https://thereload.com/app/uploads/2022/12/CDC-DGU-Mark-Bryant-on-killing-Kleck-estimate.pdf>).

⁵⁶ CPRC, “Massive errors in FBI’s Active Shooting Reports from 2014-2022 regarding cases where civilians stop attacks: Instead of 4.6%, the correct number is at least 35.7%. In 2022, it is at least 41.3%. Excluding gun-free zones, it averaged over 63.5%,” Crime Prevention Research Center, August 31, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/08/massive-errors-in-fbis-active-shooting-reports-from-2014-2022-regarding-cases-where-civilians-stop-attacks-instead-of-4-6-the-correct-number-is-at-least-35-7-in-2022-it-is-at-least-41-3/>).

⁵⁷ John R. Lott, “Corrections to the FBI’s Reports on Active Shooting Incidents,” Available at SSRN 3857331, June 1, 2021 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3857331).

almost eight times higher. And if we limit the discussion to places where permit holders were allowed to carry, the rate is eleven times higher.

The FBI hired academics at the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center at Texas State University to compile its list. Police departments don't collect data, so the researchers had to find news stories about these incidents.

It isn't surprising that people will miss cases or occasionally misidentify them when using news stories, but the FBI was unwilling to fix its errors when they pointed them out. The CPRC has found many more missed cases and is keeping an [updated list](#).⁵⁸ Back in 2015, I [published a list of missed cases in a criminology publication](#).⁵⁹

Unfortunately, the news media unquestioningly reports the FBI numbers. After 22-year-old Elisjsha Dicken used his legally-carried concealed handgun to stop what would have been a mass public shooting, an Associated Press headline declared: "[Rare in U.S. for an active shooter to be stopped by bystander](#)."⁶⁰ A Washington Post headline proclaimed: "[Rampage in Indiana a rare instance of armed civilian ending mass shooting](#)."⁶¹

The CPRC's numbers tell a different story: Out of 440 active shooter incidents from 2014 to 2022, an [armed citizen stopped 157](#).⁶² We also found that the FBI had miscategorized five cases, usually because they the person who stopped the attack was incorrectly identified a security guard. The list is available for anyone to check.⁶³

⁵⁸ CPRC, "Massive errors in FBI's Active Shooting Reports regarding cases where civilians stop attacks: Instead of 4.4%, the correct number is at least 34.4%. In 2021, it is at least 49.1%. Excluding gun-free zones, it averaged over 50%," Crime Prevention Research Center, October 3, 2022 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2022/10/massive-errors-in-fbis-active-shooting-reports-regarding-cases-where-civilians-stop-attacks-instead-of-4-4-the-correct-number-is-at-least-34-4-in-2021-it-is-at-least-49-1-excluding-gun-free-zon/>).

⁵⁹ John R. Lott, "The FBI's Misrepresentation of the Change in Mass Public Shootings," Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Today, March 2015 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2524731).

⁶⁰ Ed White, "Rare in US for an active shooter to be stopped by bystander," Wisconsin State Journal, July 19, 2022 (https://madison.com/news/national/rare-in-us-for-an-active-shooter-to-be-stopped-by-bystander/article_1da6b63c-ee3a-5475-a547-aef3c9f6432c.html).

⁶¹ James Bikales, Paulina Villegas, Praveena Somasundaram and Reis Thebault, "Rampage in Indiana a rare instance of armed civilian ending mass shooting," The Washington Post, July 18, 2022 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/07/18/greenwood-mall-shooting/>).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 46.

CPRC, "Cases where armed citizens have stopped active shooter incidents," Crime Prevention Research Center, August 14, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/08/cases-where-armed-citizens-have-stopped-active-shooter-incidents/>).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

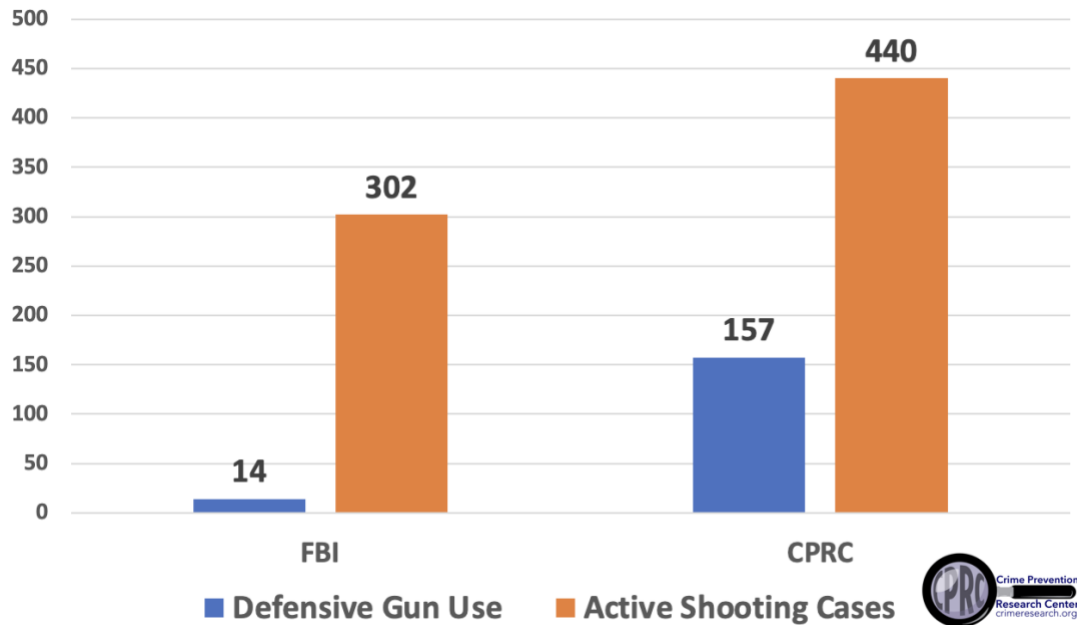


Figure 5: Correcting the Errors in the FBI Active Shooting Reports 2014-2022

We found these cases on a budget of just a few thousand dollars. Though we discovered that armed citizens had stopped eight times as many cases as the FBI claims, I do not assert that we unearthed all these stories. It is quite possible that the news media itself never covers many such incidents.

While the FBI claims that law-abiding citizens carrying guns stopped just 4.6% of active shootings, but the percentage that we found was 35.7%. I am more confident that we have identified a higher share of recent cases, and our figure for 2022 was even higher – 41.3%. No one needs to take my word for this. All of our cases are available with links to the relevant news stories.⁶⁴

The FBI doesn't differentiate between law-abiding citizens stopping attacks where guns are banned and where they are allowed, but you can't expect law-abiding citizens to stop attacks where it is illegal to carry guns. In places where law-abiding citizens are allowed to carry firearms, the percentage of active shootings stopped is 51%. For 2022, that figure is a remarkable 63.5%.

To follow the FBI's definition, we excluded 27 cases because a law-abiding person with a gun stopped the attacker before he was able to get off a shot.

In an email I received in 2015, a bureau official acknowledged that “the FBI did not come across this incident during its research in 2015, but it does meet the FBI’s active-shooter definition.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ The list of cases is available here: <https://crimeresearch.org/2023/08/cases-where-armed-citizens-have-stopped-active-shooter-incidents/>

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

The official noted that the reports “are limited in scope.” The incident was never added to the FBI database.

When the Washington Post’s Glenn Kessler reached out to the FBI for comments on our earlier work up through 2021, they emailed back: “We have no additional information to provide other than what is provided within the active shooter reports on our website.”⁶⁶

However, a Texas State University researcher only responded to two of the cases we had identified in our earlier work. He argued that the FBI excluded one case involving a shooting at a dentist's office because it involved a domestic dispute and another at a strip club because it was a "retaliation murder." We list 14 examples where the FBI list includes shootings resulting from domestic disputes and three others where a shooting started after someone was denied being in a lounge or bar.⁶⁷ So why the double standard? Domestic disputes and “retaliation murders” are only included when they don’t involve permit holders stopping the attacks.

The FBI data on active shootings is missing so many defensive gun uses that it’s hard to believe it isn’t intentional. Errors can happen, but the failure to fix past reports shows a troubling disregard for the truth. The reality is that armed, law-abiding citizens are unsung guardian angels.

D. Dangers of Gun-free Zones

⁶⁶ Glenn Kessler, “What’s more common: A ‘good guy’ without a gun — or with one?” The Washington Post, January 31, 2023 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/01/31/whats-more-common-good-guy-without-gun-or-with-one/>).

⁶⁷ CPRC, “Our Research on Errors in the FBI’s Active Shooting Reports given Extensive Coverage in the Washington Post,” Crime Prevention Research Center, February 1, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/02/our-research-on-errors-in-the-fbis-active-shooting-reports-given-extensive-in-the-washington-post/>).

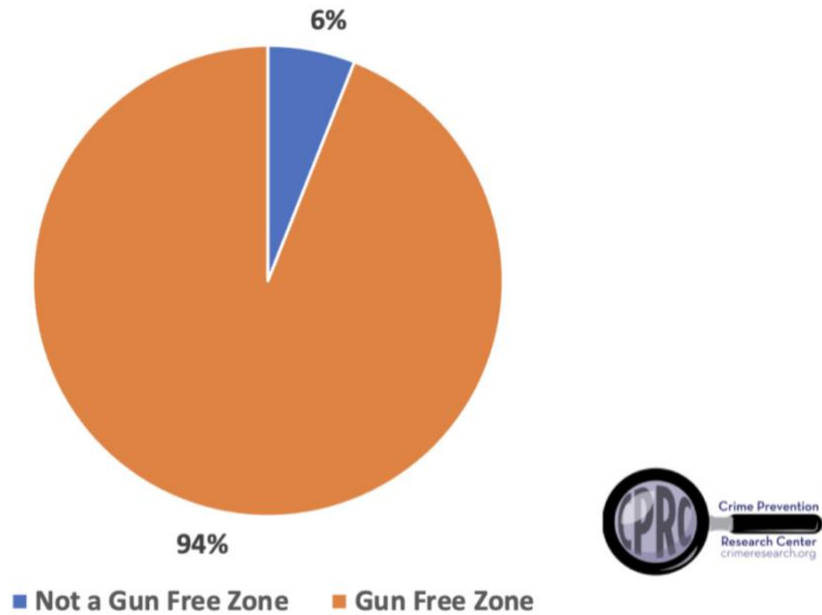


Figure 6: Percent of Mass Public Shootings in Gun-Free Zones from 1950 to March 27, 2023

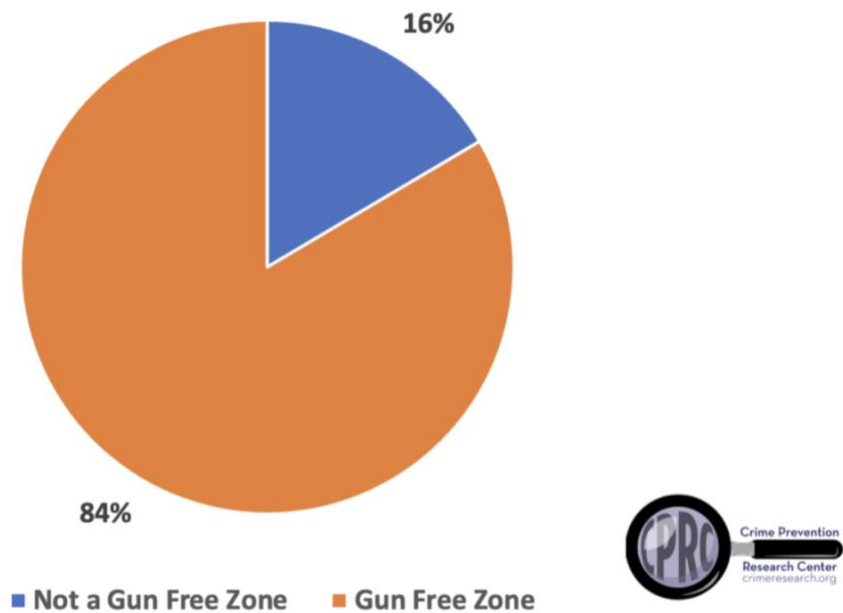


Figure 7: Percent of Mass Public Shootings in Gun-Free Zones from 1998 to March 27, 2023

“A deputy in uniform has an extremely difficult job in stopping these [mass public shooting] attacks. These terrorists have huge strategic advantages in determining the time and place of attacks. They can wait for a deputy to leave the area or pick an undefended location. Even when police or deputies are in the right place at the right time, those in uniform who can be

readily identified as guards may as well be holding up neon signs saying, ‘Shoot me first.’ My deputies know that we cannot be everywhere.”⁶⁸

-- Sarasota County, Florida, Sheriff Kurt Hoffman

As Sheriff Hoffman notes, uniformed police have a very difficult job stopping mass public shootings. Attackers have real tactical advantages. Suppose you have an officer in uniform guarding a school or another target. In that case, these murderers can either wait for the police to leave the area before attacking, move to another target, or kill the officer since they know that he is the only one who is armed. The benefit of concealed carry is that the attackers won't know who is a threat to them. This makes the officer's job safer because, when the attacker goes after the officer, he will have to worry that someone nearby might be able to stop his attack.

Unfortunately, gun-free zones ensure that only the mass murderers will have guns. Take the recent mass murder at the Covenant School in Nashville in March, 2023. Violating gun-free school zones in Tennessee means up to a six-year prison term.⁶⁹ While that is a severe penalty for law-abiding citizens, an additional six years for a mass murderer is irrelevant. Even if the murderer had survived, they would already be facing six life sentences or the death penalty. An additional six years on top of six life sentences represents no additional marginal deterrence.

PoliceOne, the largest private organization of police with 450,000 members, surveyed more than 14,000 police professionals across ranks and department sizes in 2013 and found that 91% percent of the members support liberally issued concealed handgun permits.⁷⁰ Over 86% of officers believe that allowing legally-armed citizens with concealed handgun permits to carry guns in gun-free zones will either reduce or completely avoid casualties involving innocent people.

These are first responders who are on the scene of tragedies every day.

Concealed carry permit holders are remarkably law-abiding. In the 19 states with comprehensive data, the average revocation rate for any reason is about one-tenth of 1%.⁷¹ Permit holders are convicted of firearms-related violations at one-twelfth the rate of police officers.⁷²

⁶⁸ John R. Lott, Jr., “How the FBI Undercounts Armed Citizen Responders to Mass Killers, and Media Play Along,” Real Clear Investigations, August 10, 2022 (https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2022/08/10/how_the_fbi_undercounts_armed_citizen_responders_to_mass_killers_-_and_media_play_along_847128.html).

⁶⁹ Tennessee 39-17-1309 Carrying Weapons on School Property (<https://law.justia.com/codes/tennessee/2021/title-39/chapter-17/part-13/section-39-17-1309/>).

⁷⁰ PoliceOne, “Gun Policy & Law Enforcement: Survey Results,” Police1.com, April 8, 2013 (https://media.cdn.lexipol.com/p1_gunsurveysummary_2013.pdf).

⁷¹ John R. Lott, Jr., “Concealed Carry Permit Holders Across the United States: 2022,” SSRN, November 17, 2022 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4279137).

⁷² Ibid.

The two groups that benefit the most from carrying guns are the likeliest victims of crime — poor blacks who live in high-crime, urban areas and people who are physically weaker such as women or the elderly.⁷³

If you still aren't convinced, just read the manifestos and diaries from mass public shooters about why they picked the targets that they do.

The Nashville school shooter's manifesto has yet to be released, but Nashville Police Chief John Drake has seen it. "There was another location that was mentioned, but because of a threat assessment by the suspect of too much security, they decided not to," said Drake.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, no one at The Covenant School had a gun to fight back with.

These murderers count on gun-free zones to ensure they will be the only armed person present. Last year, the Tops Friendly Markets shooter in Buffalo wrote in his manifesto: "Areas where CCW permits are outlawed or prohibited may be good areas of attack."⁷⁵

We have seen that in many other attacks in 2023 such as at an Old National Bank in Louisville, Kentucky, an outlet mall in Allen, Texas, and at a hospital in Atlanta.⁷⁶

Police are important. But if we are going to be serious about protecting vulnerable people, we have to let them protect themselves.

3. How the U.S. Compares to other Countries in terms of Mass Public Shootings.

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

Using the definition of mass public shootings of four or more people murdered in a public place and not part of some other type of crime, showed 2,834 attacks from 1998 to 2017.⁷⁷ Of those, 62

⁷³ John R. Lott, Jr., *More Guns, Less Crime*, University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2010, pp. 181-4.

⁷⁴ Lydia Fielder and Tony Garcia, "Nashville school shooter purchased 7 guns, planned attack on multiple locations, police say," WSMV, March 27, 2023.

⁷⁵ Crime Prevention Research Center, "New York Mass Public Shooter Explicitly targeted: "areas where CCW are outlawed or prohibited may be good areas of attack" "areas with strict gun laws are also great places of attack," Another Socialist/Environmentalists," Crime Prevention Research Center, May 14, 2022 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2022/05/new-york-mass-public-shooter-explicitly-targeted-areas-where-ccw-are-outlawed-or-prohibited-may-be-good-areas-of-attack-areas-with-strict-gun-laws-are-also-great-places-of-attack/>).

⁷⁶ CPRC, "Old National Bank Shooting in Louisville was in yet ANOTHER Gun-free Zone, the murderer was another left-winger," Crime Prevention Research Center, April 11, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/04/old-national-bank-shooting-in-louisville-was-in-yet-another-gun-free-zone/>). CPRC, "UPDATE: Texas Mall Shooting in yet ANOTHER Gun-free Zone, though not all parts of the mall might have been properly posted," Crime Prevention Research Center, May 6, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/05/texas-mall-shooting-in-yet-another-gun-free-zone/>). CPRC, "Active shooter attack in Atlanta Hospital occurred in yet another Gun-free Zone," Crime Prevention Research Center, May 3, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/05/active-shooter-attack-in-atlanta-hospital-occurred-in-yet-another-gun-free-zone/>).

⁷⁷ John R. Lott, Jr., "Comparing the Global Rate of Mass Public Shootings to the U.S.'s Rate and Comparing Their Changes Over Time," SSRN, September 27, 2022 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3671740).

occurred in the United States and 2,772 happened in the rest of the world. While the U.S. had about 4.6 percent of the world's population during this period, it had just 2.19 percent of the mass public shootings.

Just as we compare crime rates across the United States by adjusting for different state populations, we report the population-adjusted rates across countries. It makes no more sense to compare the raw number of murders in Wyoming with the number in California than it does to compare raw numbers in the United States and India, a country with more than four times the U.S. population.

Worldwide mass public shooting murders totaled 31,550 people from 1998 to 2017, and the U.S. accounted for 557 (1.8%) of these. This is far below the U.S.'s 4.2% share of the world's population.

Per capita, mass public shootings occurred in the U.S. with 53.4 percent less frequency and resulted in 32.1 percent fewer casualties. Among 79 countries, no incidents are identified. But for many countries, that might simply be because we missed cases.

The per capita attack and death rates were calculated for 101 countries where we identified mass public shootings.⁷⁸ The U.S. ranks 66th in attack rate and 56th in murder rate. France's rate was 48.9 percent higher than the U.S.'s, and Pakistan's was 470% higher.

A list of these attack is provided in Appendices 1 and 2 available here (<https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Appendix-1-US-Cases.pdf> and <https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Appendix-2-US-Cases.pdf>).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Even with all of the cases identified as “Insurgency/Guerilla Action” removed from the sample, Afghanistan and Iraq still top the lists for the most attacks and deaths per capita. If we had data for the Solomon Islands over all 18 years, it may well place first.

While we relied on GTD for classifying whether cases for Afghanistan and Iraq involved insurgency, removing non-insurgency cases for those two countries doesn't appreciably alter our results. Removing all those cases reduces the number of attacks outside the United States from 2,772 to 2,125, and would raise the U.S. share of attacks from 2.19 to 2.83 percent. The share of murders rises from 1.77 to about 2.13 percent. Both rates are still well below the U.S. share of the world population.

Breaking down the cases by geographic regions, we find that the United States ranks roughly in the middle in number of mass public shootings (Figures 8A-C). We use the sixteen geographic regions provided by the Population Reference Bureau. Not surprisingly, Western Asia ranks high since it is largely comprised of Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, which has per capita rates of attacks and deaths that are respectively 865 and 915 percent higher than those of the United States. Africa (both Northern and sub-Saharan) also has dramatically higher rates than the U.S. 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 15.01 in sub-Saharan Africa and 11.91 in Northern Africa).

In South America, people are twice as likely to die from mass public shootings, and attacks occur 33 percent more frequently. And there is a serious lack of news coverage of crime in South and Central America. Homicide rates are so high in some areas that the local media appear to ignore most murders. Central America's average homicide rate in 2008 was 5.8 times higher than in the United States that same year. Honduras' homicide rate was 11.3 times higher, and El Salvador's was 9.6 times higher. These high homicide countries just don't systematically report mass public shootings or even firearm homicides in general.

In Venezuela, not only was the official homicide rate 9.6 times higher than the U.S. 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."⁷⁹

There is evidence of this also happening in China. We have found three large-scale mass public shootings in China in years outside of the 1998 to 2017 period: 1994, 28 killed; 1981, 21 killed;

⁷⁹ “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>).

and 1979, 16 killed.⁸⁰ 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 who specializes in China, 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.⁸¹

As an example, Mair claims that friends of his in China have been “forbidden to talk about” a recent knife attack on school children.⁸²

As previously noted, the Solomon Islands only provided information for 5 of the 15 years we examined. Even if there were no other missing cases in the rest of Oceania, missing cases from the Solomon Islands could greatly affect our overall estimate for this part of the world. All these points provide yet more indications that the United States has a smaller share of mass public shootings than our results show.

Probably of particular interest to people are comparisons between Europe and the United States. There are huge differences in mass public shooting rates across Northern, Western, Eastern, and Southern Europe. While the attack rate in Northern Europe is only 25 percent of the rate in the U.S., 20.4 people were killed per attack in Northern Europe versus 9.0 in the U.S.

⁸⁰ Beijing and Jianguomen, 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).

⁸¹ Email correspondence on May 1, 2018. Victor Mair contacted other academics who made similar statements.

⁸² In an email from Victor Mair dated June 30, 2018.

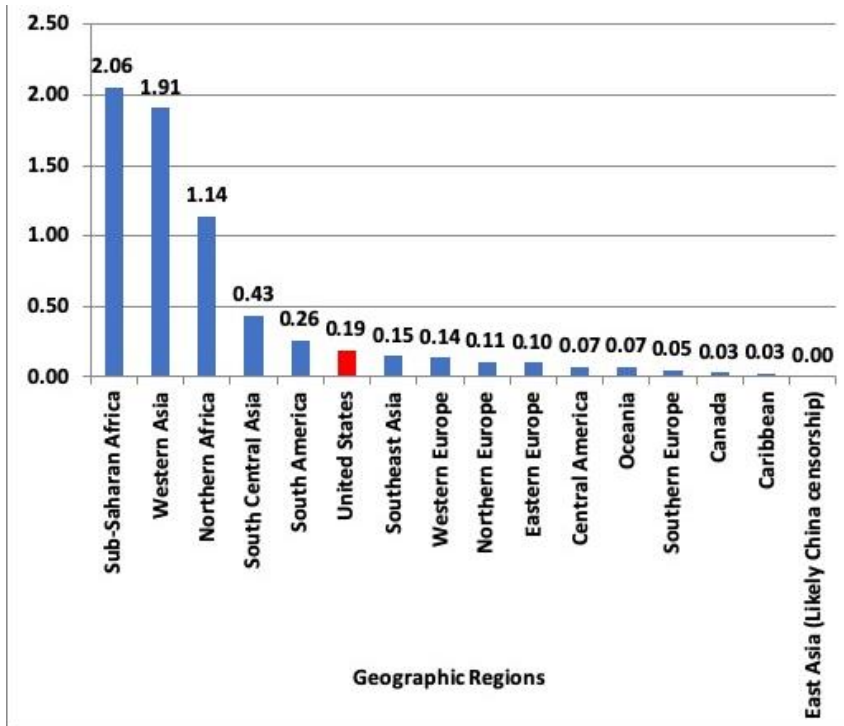


Figure 8A: Mass Public Shooting Murder Rate by Geographic Region (per 100,000 people)

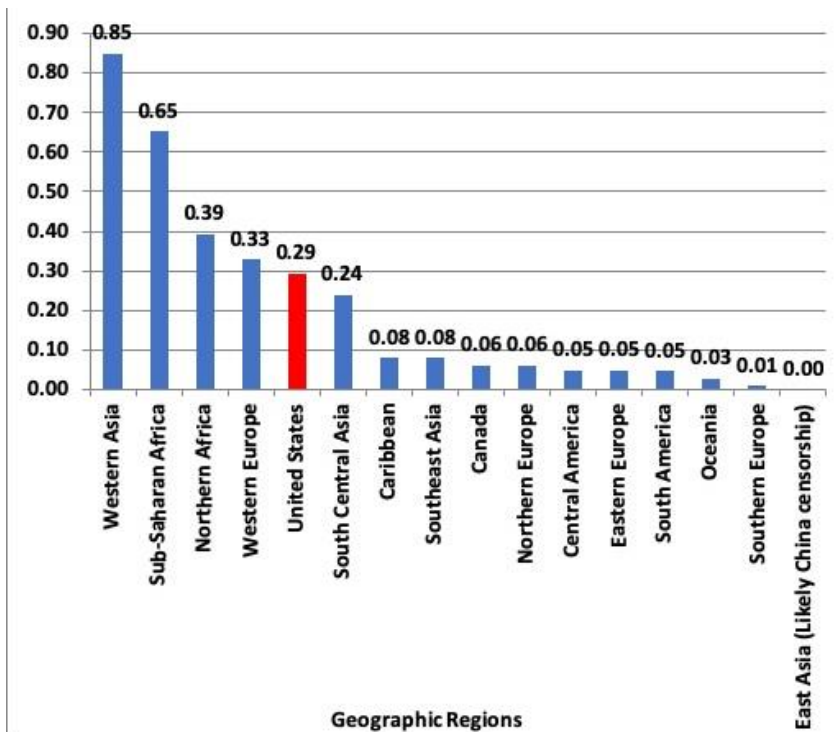


Figure 8B: Mass Public Shooting Wounding Rate by Geographic Region (per 100,000 people)

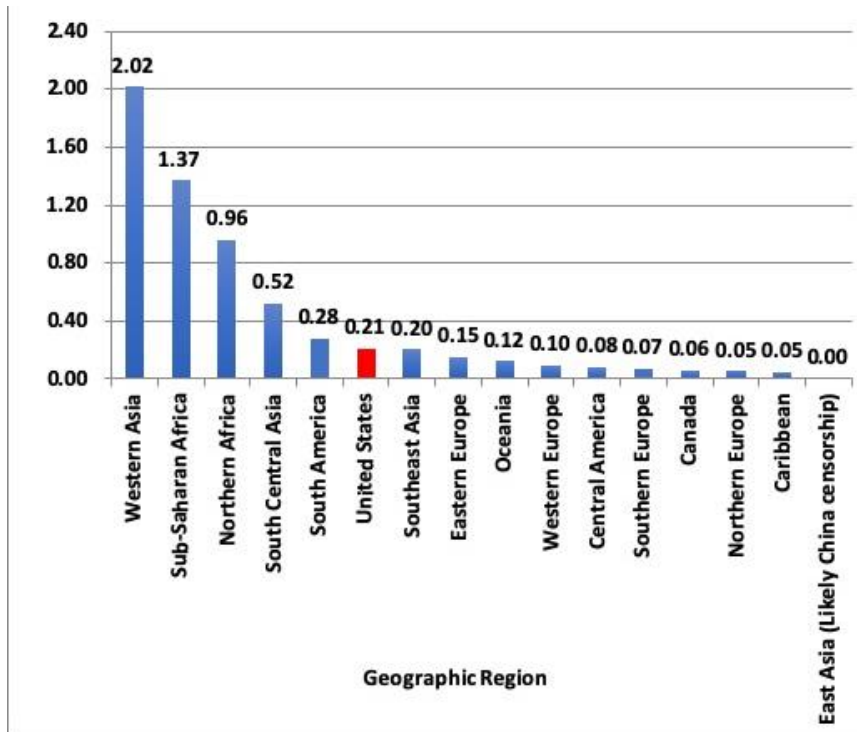


Figure 8C: Mass Public Shooting Attacks by Geographic Region (per 1 million people)

Figure 9 shows that attacks in the United States are relatively less deadly than in most of the rest of the world. There are lots of possible explanations for this. One is that better medical care means that fewer wounded people end up dying.

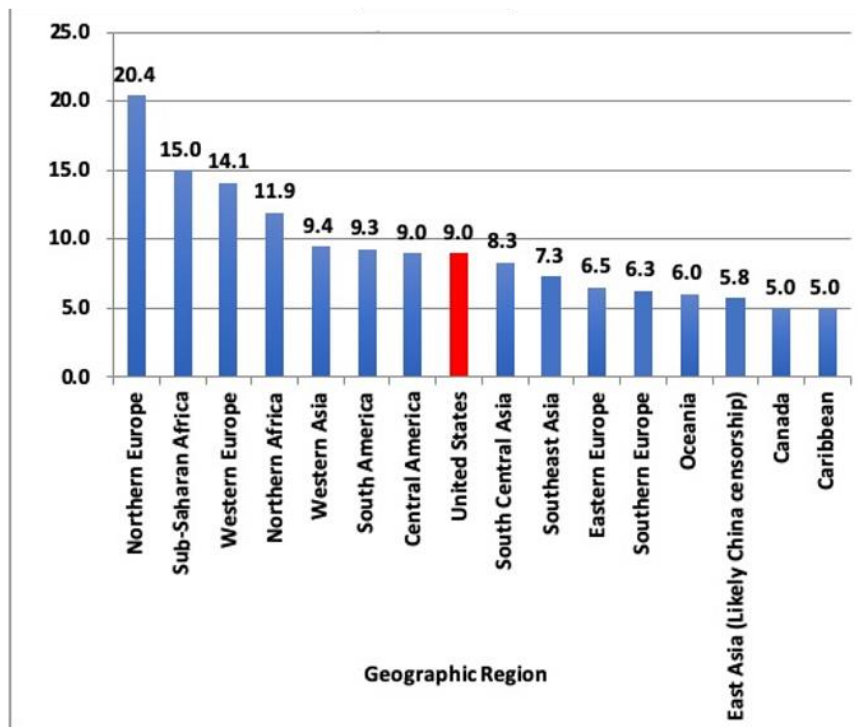


Figure 9: How Deadly are Mass Public Shootings in Different Parts of the World: Number of People Killed per attack

Figures 10A-B show that while Americans are understandably concerned with the increased frequency and severity of mass public shootings, the rest of the world has experienced a much larger increase in their per capita rates than the United States has. For the U.S., we use attacks from the beginning of 1998 through 2018. For the rest of the world, we use our data from 1998 through 2017. The rate of growth for the frequency of mass public shootings in the rest of the world is 291 percent faster than for the U.S.⁸³ The growth rate for murders is 106 percent faster.⁸⁴

The rate of attacks in the rest of the world started rising in 2012, but became particularly noticeable in 2013, 2014, and 2015. While the per capita rate of mass public shootings in 2012 was 0.025 per million people, up from the previous high of 0.021 in 2001, it peaked at 0.056 in 2014. By contrast, the U.S. reached its peak in the rate of these attacks in 2012.

The five countries with the largest percentage increases in the yearly rate between 1998 and 2012 versus 2013 and 2017 were the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Tunisia, France and Ukraine. The United States ranked 29th, well behind countries such as Belgium (16th) and Switzerland (18th).

While news coverage of mass public shootings might miss many attacks during the beginning of this period, the quality of coverage improves over time.

It seems unlikely that the large growth in mass public shootings in the rest of the world starting in 2012 could be explained by better news coverage.

⁸³ This is from simple regressions that compare the trend lines for the frequency of mass public shootings in the rest of the world and the United States. T-statistics are shown in parentheses.

Frequency in the Rest of the World = 0.001299 (3.72) Year – 2.5872 (3.69)
F-statistic = 13.84 adjusted-R2= 0.4034

Frequency in the United States = 0.0003325 (2.09) Year – 0.6571662 (2.06)
F-statistic = 4.37 adjusted-R2= 0.1442

⁸⁴ This is from simple regressions that compare the trend lines for the murder rate from mass public shootings in the rest of the world and the United States. T-statistics are shown in parentheses.

Murder Rate in the Rest of the World = 0.0148722 (2.72) Year -29.6211 (2.70)
F-statistic = 7.42 adjusted-R2= 0.2525

Murder Rate in the United States = 0.0072325 (3.15) Year -14.42856 (3.13)
F-statistic = 9.95 adjusted-R2= 0.3091

But before one concludes that there has really been a worldwide increase in mass public shootings, bear in mind that at least some of this increase is due to the greater difficulty in finding older cases. In Africa and other parts of the world, finding news coverage of attacks prior to 2000 is an extremely difficult task.

Better news coverage in later years might not only explain the increase in recorded attacks but also why the number of people killed per attack appears to be falling over time. Cases with fewer victims might be getting coverage, and that will reduce the average killed per attack.

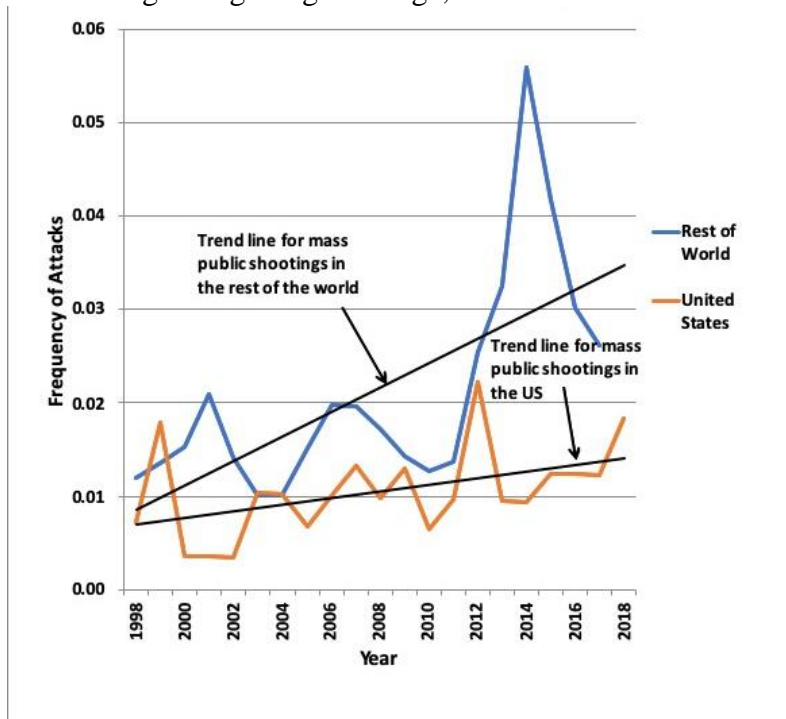


Figure 10A: Frequency of Mass Public Shootings by Year in the Rest of the World and the United States per million people (1998 to 2018 for the US and 1998 to 2017 for the Rest of the World)

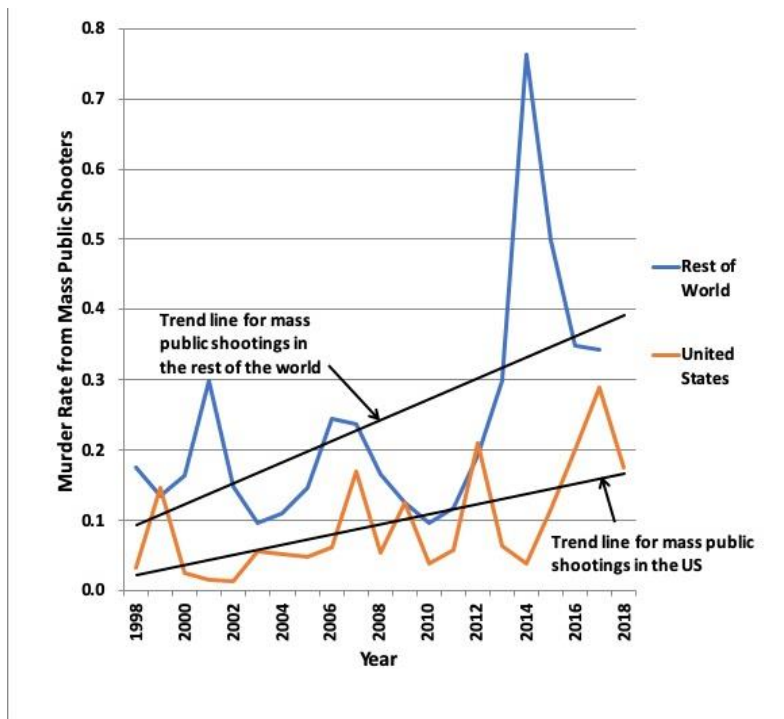


Figure 10B: Rate of Murders from Mass Public Shootings by Year in the Rest of the World and the United States per million people (1998 to 2018 for the US and 1998 to 2017 for the Rest of the World)

Adam Lankford describes terrorist attacks and other mass public shootings as “functionally similar.”⁸⁵ And surely there are many mass public shootings in the United States that could be classified as terrorist attacks such as Sulejman Talovic (Salt Lake City, Utah, 2007), Nidal Malik Hasan (Fort Hood, Texas, 2009), Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik (San Bernardino, California, 2015), Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez (Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2015), Omar Mateen (Orlando, Florida, 2016), and Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa (Boulder, Colorado, 2021). But even if one were to exclude all foreign terrorist attacks on top of all the insurgency ones and not exclude similar attacks in the United States, the US would account for less than 2 percent of the world’s mass public shooters.⁸⁶

B. Gun ownership and Mass Public Shootings

⁸⁵ Adam Lankford, “Public Mass Shooters and Firearms: A Cross-National Study of 171 Countries,” *Violence and Victims*, January 2016: 188 (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26822013/>).

⁸⁶ John R. Lott, Jr.1 and Carlisle E. Moody, "Brought Into the Open: How the U.S. Compares to Other Countries in the Rate of Public Mass Shooters," *Econ Journal Watch*, March 2020 (<https://econjwatch.org/File+download/1146/LottMoodyMar2020.pdf?mimetype=pdf>).

The Small Arms Survey is the most commonly cited source for data on gun ownership rates. It indicates that the United States has by far the highest level of gun ownership in the world, with 88.8 guns per 100 people.⁸⁷

Israel and Switzerland issue guns to civilians, but this isn't normally counted because the government technically owns the guns. In Switzerland, all able-bodied Swiss males between the age of 18 and 34 kept their military weapons in their homes.⁸⁸ After age 34, they could apply for permission to continue to keep their military weapons and the majority opts to do so.⁸⁹ Only at age 65 are the Swiss given the option of purchasing these guns for their own private ownership.

Registration numbers fall far short of the true ownership numbers. When Canada tried in the late 1990s to register its estimated 15 million to 20 million long guns, about 7 million were actually registered.⁹⁰ In the 1970s, Germany registered 3.2 million of the country's estimated 17 million guns.⁹¹ In the 1980s, England registered only about 50,000 of the estimated 300,000 pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns in the country.⁹²

A much better measure of gun ownership would be the percentage of the population owning guns, and not the number of guns per 100 people, as used by the Small Arms Survey. In addition, presumably, the issue is whether people have access to guns, not the number of guns greater than one that an individual has access to.

The Small Arms Survey is regularly used by academics and the news media (for a brief survey of academics using it see Kleck [2020]).^{93,94} Yet, there are severe problems with it. The Survey

⁸⁷ Small Arms Survey, "The largest civilian firearms arsenals for 178 countries," Cambridge University Press, 2007 (<https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/Small-Arms-Survey-2007-Chapter-02-annexe-4-EN.pdf>).

⁸⁸ Emma Jane Kirby, "Switzerland guns: Living with firearms the Swiss way," BBC News, February 11, 2013 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21379912>).

⁸⁹ Catherine Bolsover, "Swiss vote to keep their guns at home," DW.com, February 13, 2011 (<https://www.dw.com/en/swiss-vote-to-keep-their-guns-at-home/a-14840041>).

⁹⁰ Daniel Fisher, "Canada Tried Registering Long Guns -- And Gave Up," Forbes, January 22, 2013 (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielfisher/2013/01/22/canada-tried-registering-long-guns-and-gave-up/#6e1b331c5a1b>). See also this list of estimates on the number of long guns in Canada before the registration by the Law-abiding Unregistered Firearms Association, January 20, 2013 (<https://archive.is/20130120204109/http://www.lufa.ca/quickfacts.asp>).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Gary S. Kleck, "The Small Arms Survey Methods for Estimating National Civilian Firearm Totals: An Assessment," SSRN, June 16, 2020 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3607181)

⁹⁴ "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.

doesn't provide sources for 180 of their countries and sources for the countries that do provide can be over a decade old and are "adjusted" in unspecified ways.

We combine the small arms survey estimate of gun ownership with the estimates of both the frequency and severity of mass public shootings.

Figures 11A-C show that the more guns owned in a country, the lower the frequency and severity of mass public shootings. Figure 11C illustrates that even removing the extreme cases of the Central African Republic and Iraq continues to show the same relationship. More sophisticated regression results demonstrate that higher rates of gun ownership are not associated with more mass public shootings or mass public shooters (Lott, 2018).

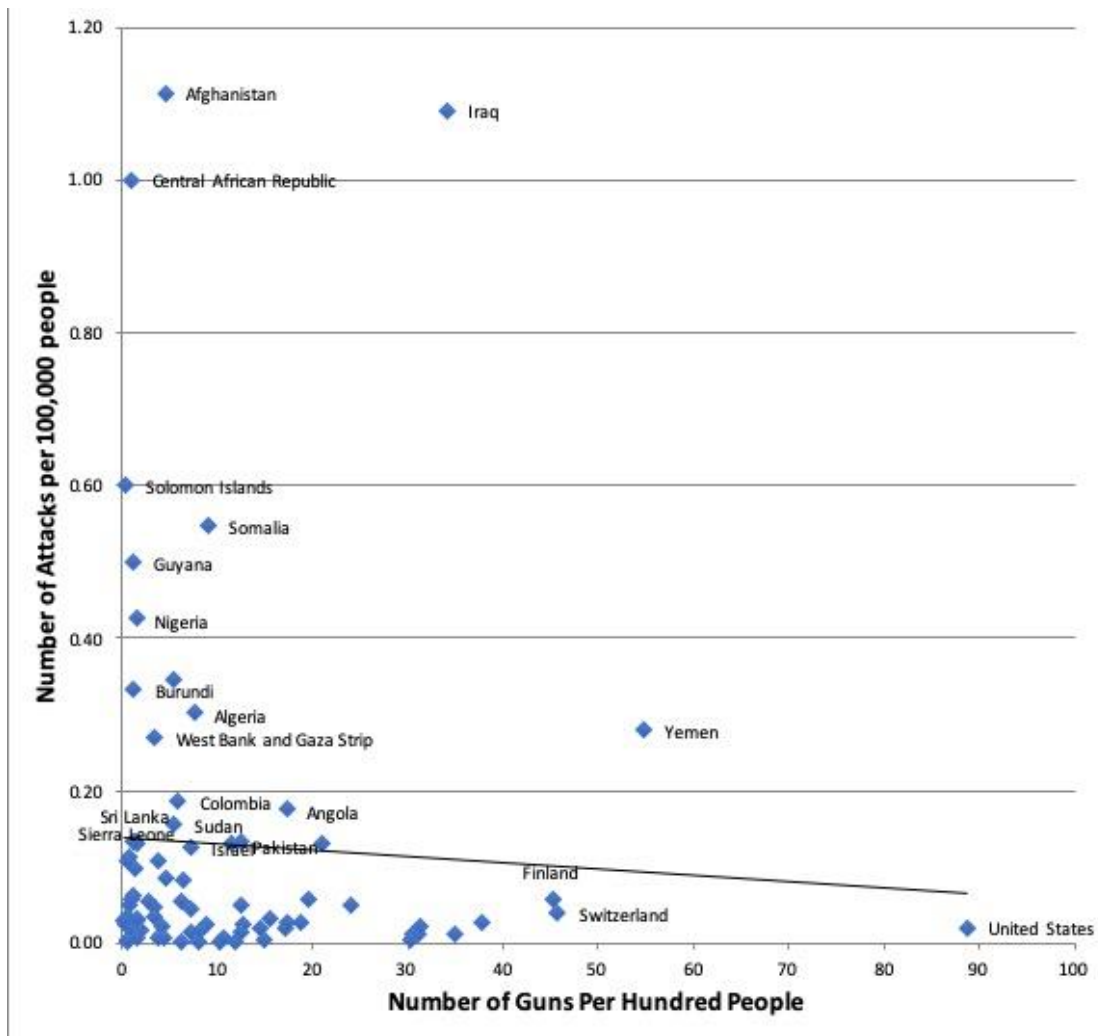


Figure 11A: Number of Attacks per 100,000 People

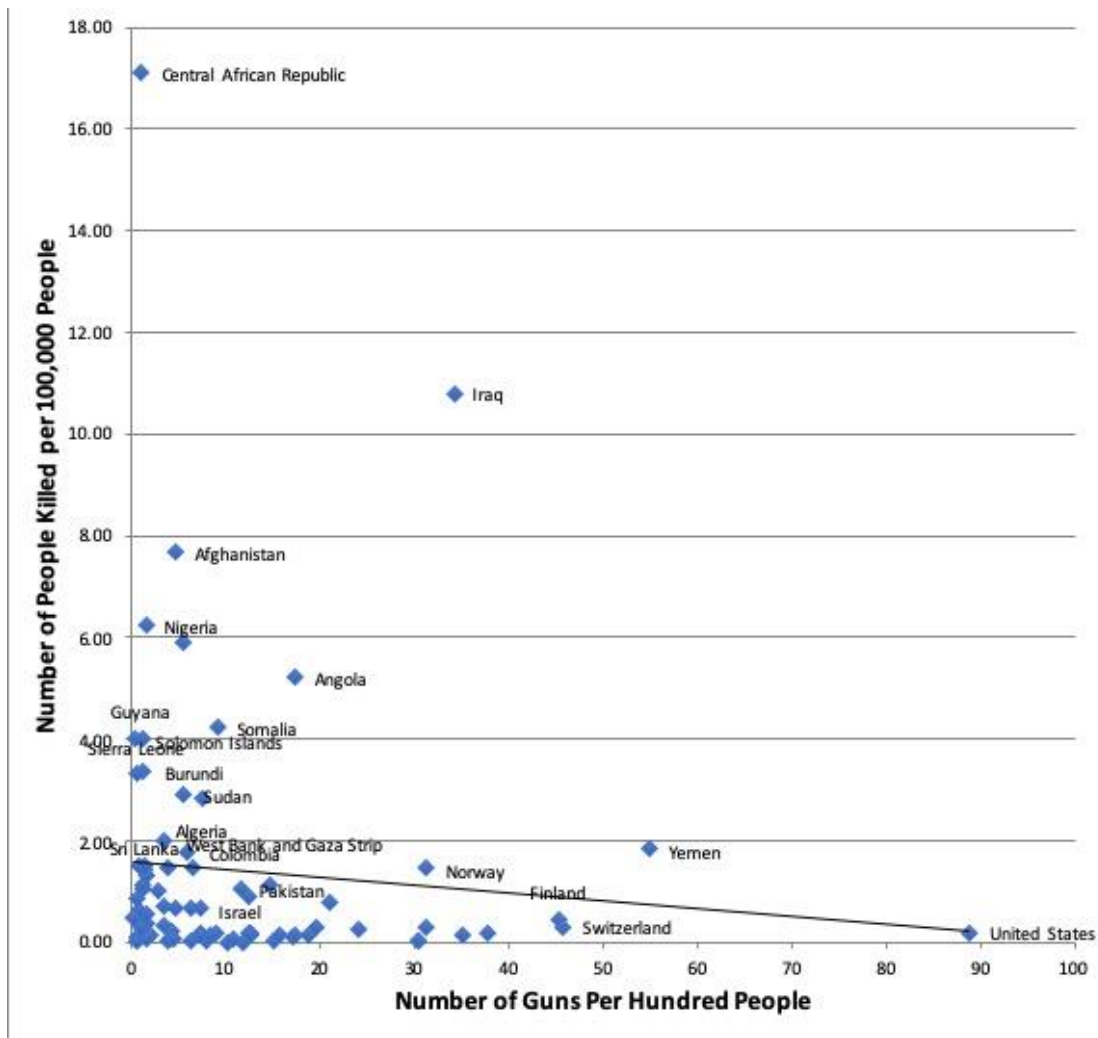


Figure 11B: Number of People Killed per 100,000 People

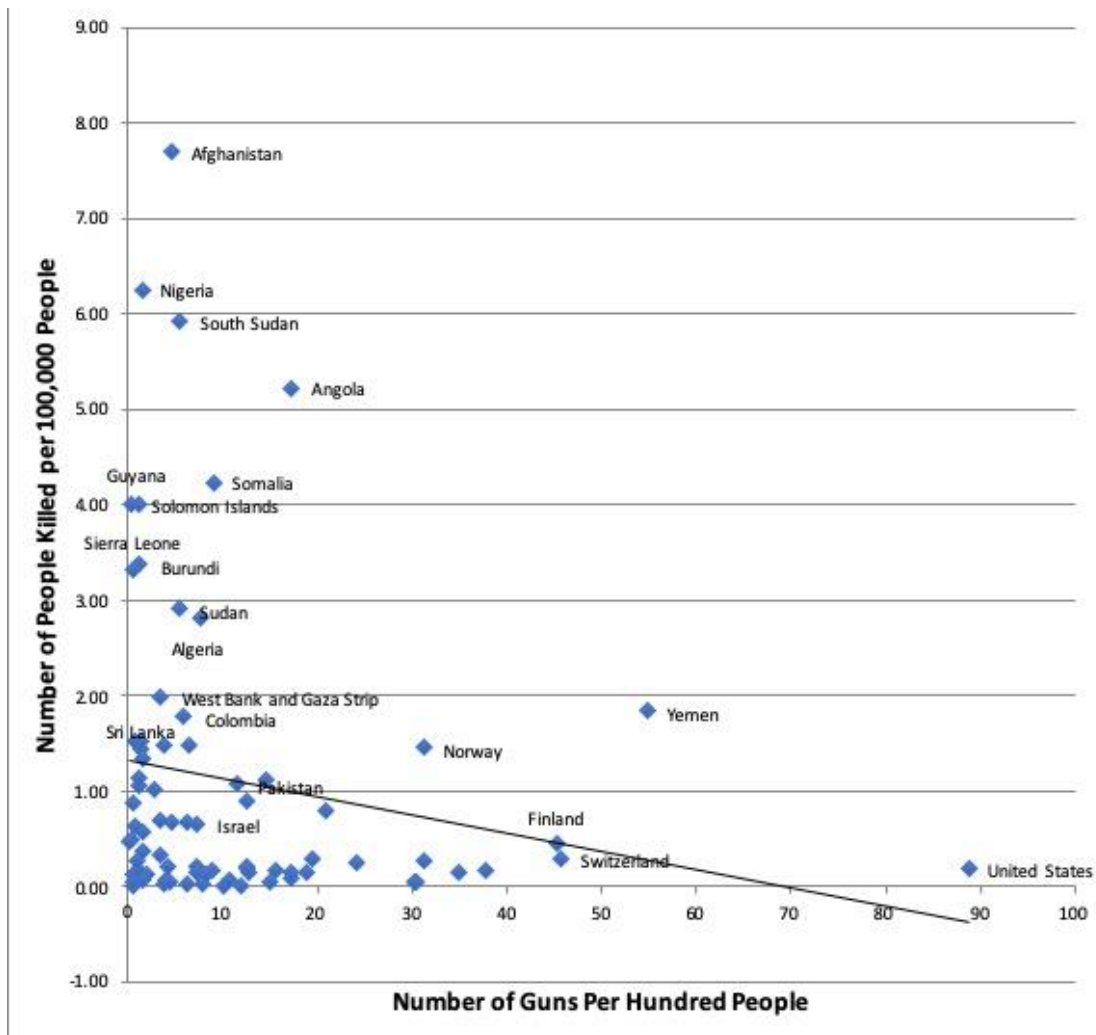


Figure 11C: Number of People Killed per 100,000 People excluding the Central African Republic and Iraq

4. Australia's 1996-97 Gun Buyback

Gun control advocates often point to Australia, where gun sales were banned and the government purchased existing weapons.⁹⁵ And they argue that the United States should follow the same policy.⁹⁶

But Australia didn't completely ban guns. The buyback in 1996 and 1997 resulted in almost 1 million guns being turned in and destroyed (about 29% of all guns), but private gun ownership subsequently steadily increased. By 2010, gun ownership exceeded pre-buyback levels. In fact,

⁹⁵ Philip Elliott, "No More Guns. Gone!: Why Gabby Giffords Isn't Giving Up," Time, April 26, 2023 (<https://time.com/6274979/gabby-giffords-gun-control/>).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

since 1997, gun ownership in Australia grew over three times faster than the population (from 2.5 million guns in 1997 to 5.8 million in 2015).⁹⁷

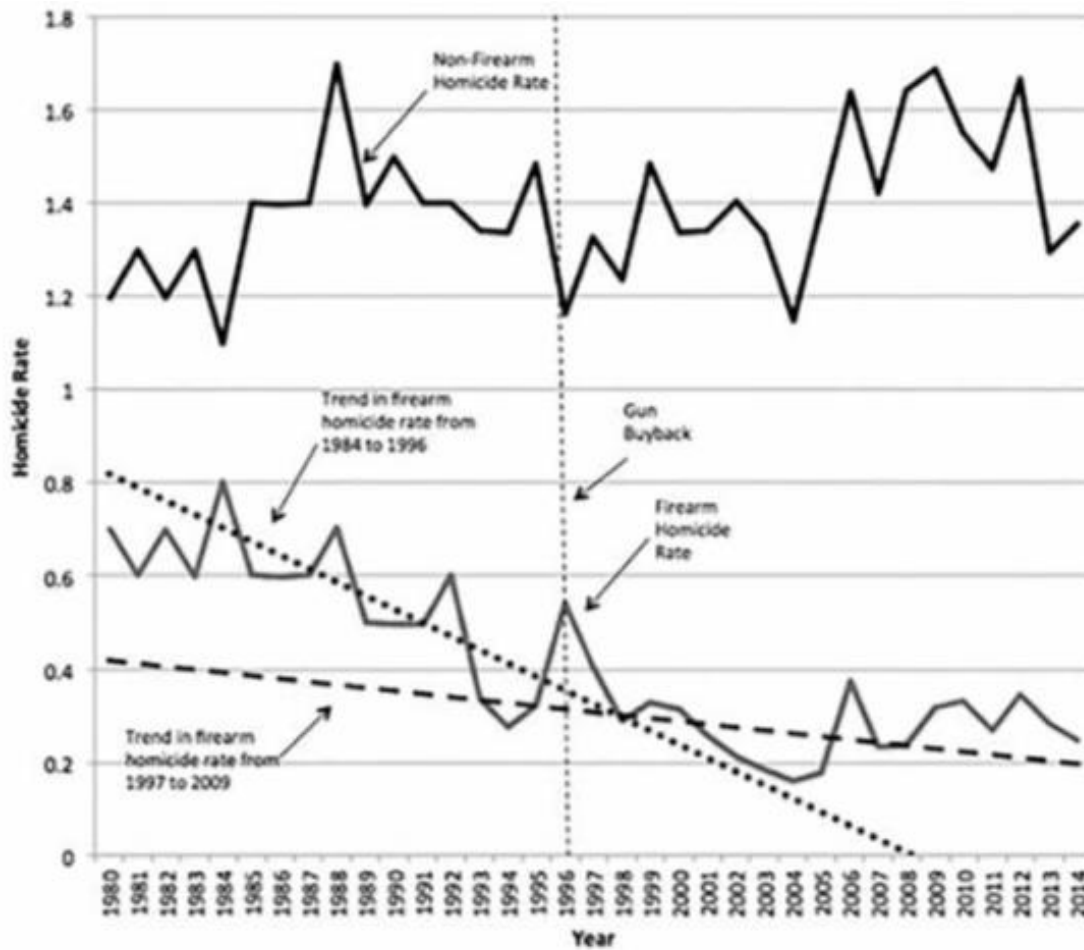


Figure 12: Australian Homicides (Firearm and non-Firearm from 1980 to 2014)

⁹⁷ The 2.5 million is on p. 5 and the 5.8 million number for 2015 is on p. 63. CRIMTRAC, "Annual Report 2015-16," Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, 2016 (https://web.archive.org/web/20180418055523/https://www.acic.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1491/f/2016/10/crimtrac_ar_2015-16_final_071016.pdf?v=1476249461).

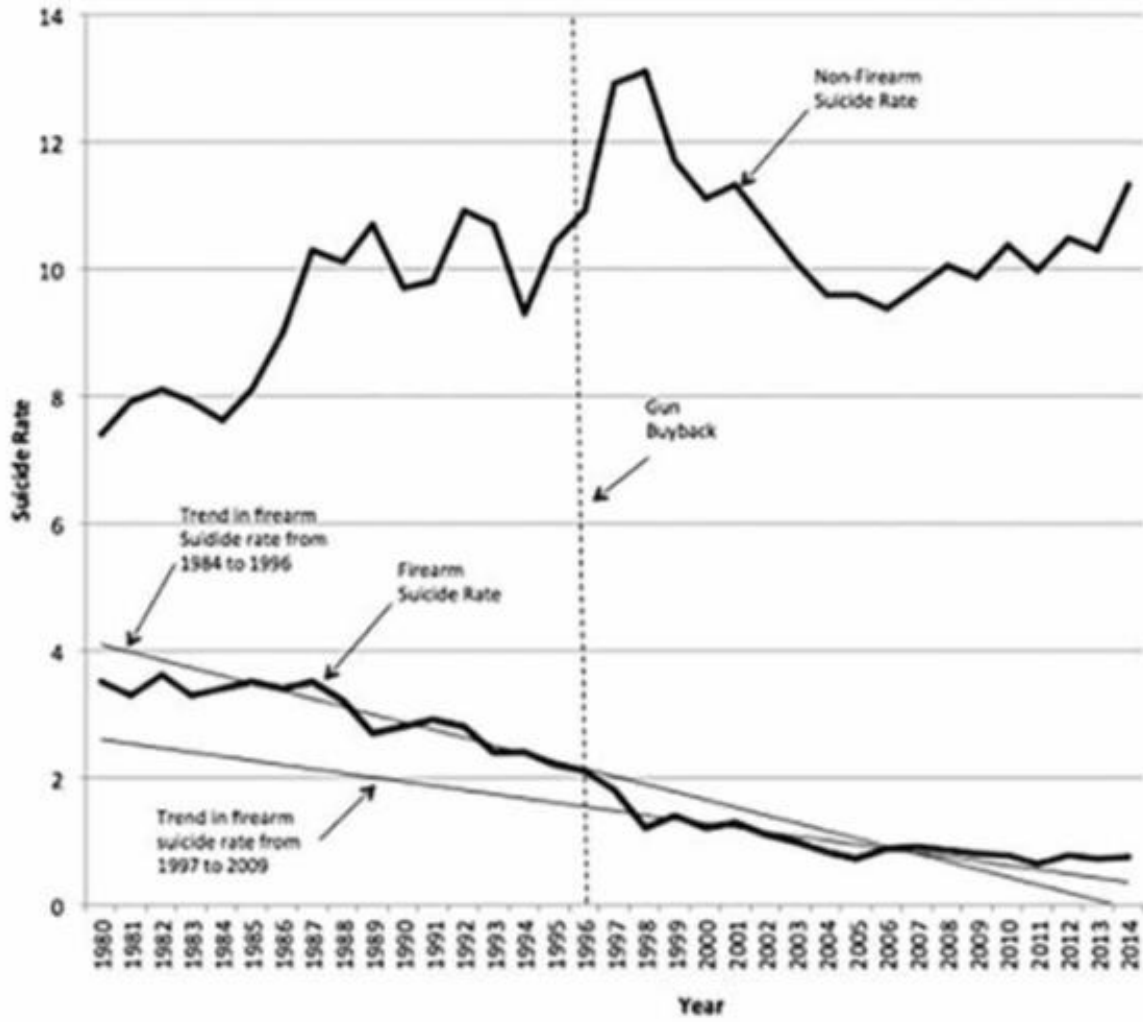


Figure 13: Australian Suicides (Firearm and non-Firearm from 1980 to 2014)

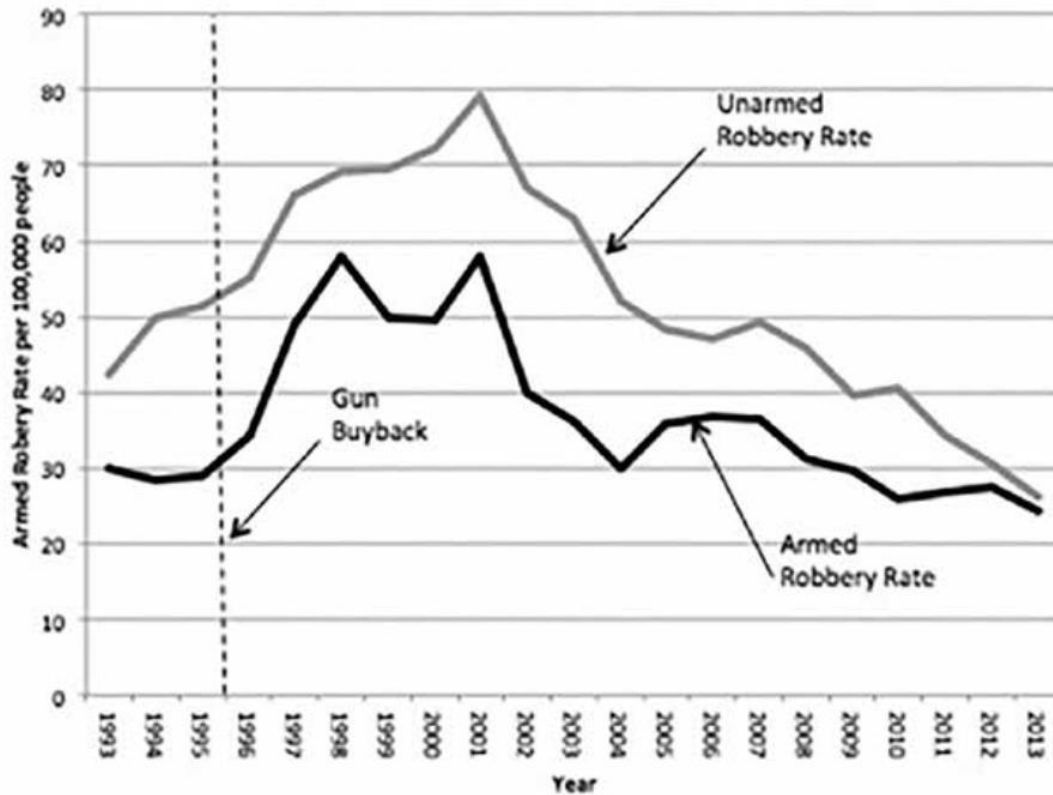


Figure 14: Australian Robbery Rate Before and After 1996-97 Gun Buyback

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

Besides, we shouldn't just look at before-and-after averages of gun deaths in Australia. Firearm homicides and suicides had been falling for 15 years before the buyback.

So, the question should be whether the rate of decline changed after the gun buyback law went into effect. But the decline in firearm homicides and suicides actually **slowed down** after the buyback.

The armed robbery rate soared right after the gun buyback, then gradually declined as gun ownership increased. The opposite of what gun control advocates predicted.

Gun control advocates like to note that there has been no mass public shooting in Australia since the buyback. But there are lots of countries with even stricter gun control regulations that had very different experiences. Statistics shouldn't involve simply picking out a country that happens to show what one wants it to show. There are dozens of countries with even stricter gun control laws than Australia, but with mass public shooting rates are at least as high as those of the

United States.⁹⁸ Examples include European countries such as Finland, France, Norway, and Russia.

5. Did the Federal Assault Weapon Ban Accomplish Anything Useful

“When we passed the assault weapons ban, mass shootings went down. When the law expired, mass shootings tripled.” — Joe Biden, Tuesday, May 24, 2022.

Transcript of Biden’s Speech Tuesday night about the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas⁹⁹

The term “assault weapon” is nonsensical. Even the Associated Press’s highly influential Stylebook, followed by the news media, recognizes that the term conveys “little meaning” and is “highly politicized.”¹⁰⁰

Politicians will obviously continue calling AR-15s “assault weapons” and “weapons of war.”¹⁰¹ And many seem to think that “A.R.” stands for assault rifle, when in fact it stands for ArmaLite rifle, named after the company that developed the gun in the 1950s. But at least some media outlets are finally recognizing that “A.R.- or AK-style rifles designed for the civilian market” are fundamentally different from military weapons.

“The preferred term for a rifle that fires one bullet each time the trigger is pulled and automatically reloads for a subsequent shot is a *semi-automatic rifle*,” the A.P. Stylebook explains. “An *automatic rifle* continuously fires rounds if the trigger is depressed until its ammunition is exhausted. Avoid *assault rifle* and *assault weapon*, which are highly politicized terms that generally refer to A.R.- or AK-style rifles designed for the civilian market, but convey little meaning about the actual functions of the weapon.”

The AR-15 and AK-47 are frequently called “military-style weapons.” But the key word is “style” – they are similar to military guns in their cosmetics rather than in how they operate. The guns are almost never the fully automatic machine guns used by the military, but rather semi-automatic versions of those guns.

⁹⁸ John R. Lott, “Comparing the Global Rate of Mass Public Shootings to the U.S.’s Rate and Comparing Their Changes Over Time,” Available at SSRN 3671740, September 28, 2020 (https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3671740).

⁹⁹ Debbie Lord, “Texas elementary school shooting: The text of Biden’s speech about the shooting,” Fox 13 Memphis, May 26, 2022 (https://www.fox13memphis.com/news/trending/texas-elementary-school-shooting-the-text-of-biden-s-speech-about-the-shooting/article_51663e36-541e-5510-98b2-efd870eb856d.html).

¹⁰⁰ APStylebook, “The Stylebook’s weapons entry offers guidance on terms including semi-automatic rifle, assault rifle, assault weapon, military-style rifle and modern sporting rifle,” Tweet, July 13, 2022, 12:58 PM (<https://twitter.com/APStylebook/status/1547309549488640000>).

¹⁰¹ President Joe Biden, “Remarks by President Biden at an Event Commemorating the Passage of the Safer Communities Act,” The White House, July 22, 2022 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/07/11/remarks-by-president-biden-at-an-event-commemorating-the-passage-of-the-safer-communities-act/>).

The civilian AR-15 uses essentially the same bullets as small game-hunting rifles. It also fires at the same rapidity (one bullet per pull of the trigger), and does the same damage. Military weapons have machine gun modes whereby they will keep firing as long as you press the trigger. The civilian version of the AK-47 is similar to the AR-15, though it fires a much larger bullet – .30 inches in diameter, as opposed to .223-inch rounds. Still, as the Associated Press makes clear, no military in the world would use the civilian versions of either of these guns.

The uninformed may still ask, “Why do people need an AR-15 to kill deer?” “What, do you think... deer are wearing Kevlar vests?” Biden has joked.¹⁰² The answer is simple: It is a hunting rifle. It just looks like a military weapon.

The rounds used by the AR-15 are smaller than those usually used to hunt deer. Many states prohibit using .223-inch bullets because the animal will often suffer from its wounds rather than experiencing a quick death.

But hunting isn’t the important issue here. Semi-automatic weapons are needed to protect people and save lives. Single-shot rifles take time to reload and may not do people much good. The first shot may miss, or there may be multiple attackers. Of course, Biden has frequently talked about banning all semi-automatic guns.¹⁰³

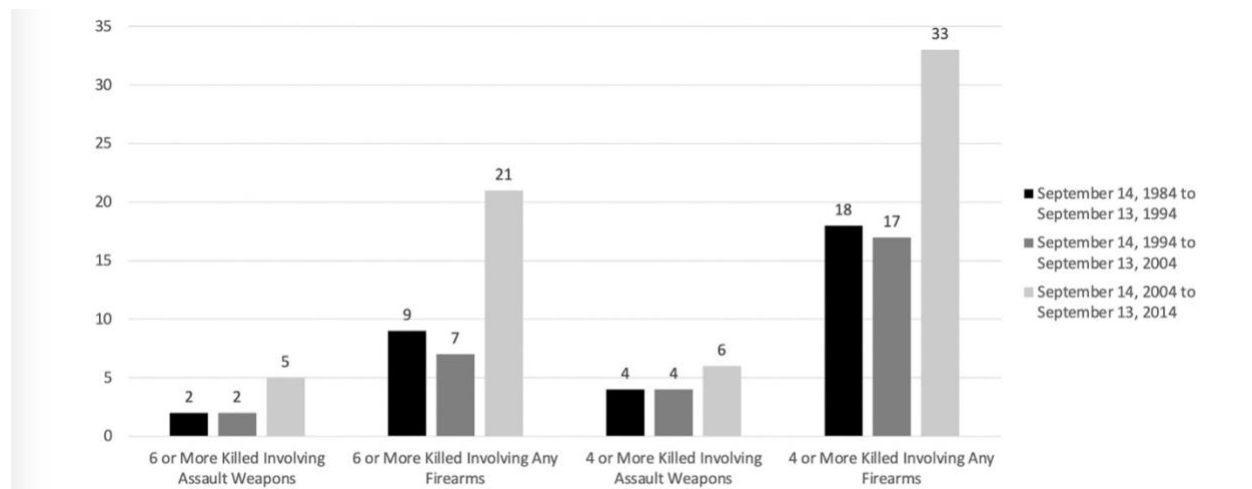


Figure 15: Incidents Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (CPRC Mass Public Shooting Dataset)

¹⁰² Celine Castronuovo, “Photoshopped deer in Kevlar vests circulate after Biden gun control comment,” The Hill, April 29, 2021 (<https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/550904-people-sharing-photoshopped-images-of-deer-in-kevlar-vests/>).

¹⁰³ John R. Lott, Jr and Thomas Massie, “Biden’s Rhetoric on Guns is Far From ‘Reasonable,’” Newsweek, February 14, 2022 (<https://www.newsweek.com/bidens-rhetoric-guns-far-reasonable-opinion-1678088>).

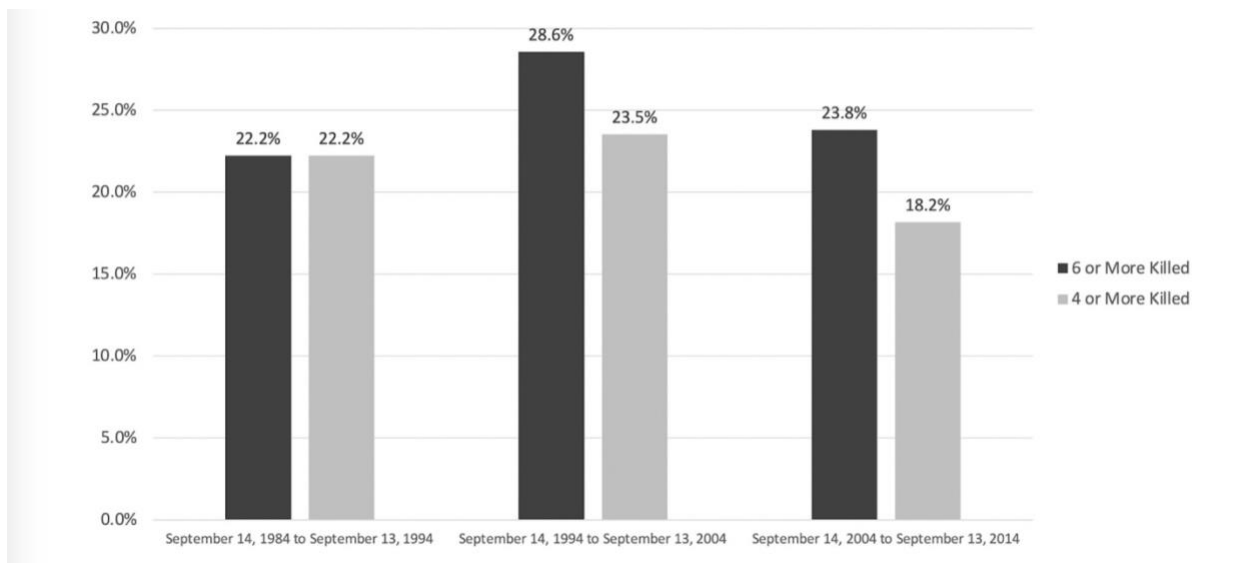


Figure 16: Percent of Mass Shootings with Assault Weapons (CPRC Mass Public Shooting Dataset)

So, what impact did the assault weapon ban have on mass public shootings? Given that there are functionally identical guns that were not banned, it is hard to expect that the ban would have a significant impact. Despite Biden's claim quoted at the beginning of this section, there was no drop in the number of attacks with assault weapons during the 1994 to 2004 ban.¹⁰⁴ There was an increase after the ban sunset, but the change is not statistically significant.

If Biden's claim were correct, we should see a drop in the percentage of attacks with assault weapons during the federal ban period and then an increase in the post-ban period. but the exact opposite happened.

The Mother Jones set of data on mass public shootings uses the traditional FBI definition of four or more people murdered. There is virtually no change in the number of attacks with assault weapons, though the number of attacks with any type of weapon does increase. that is because when the assault weapon ban sunset, there was a huge increase in the number of attacks not using an assault weapon.

It would be interesting for gun control advocates to explain why eliminating the assault weapon ban did not affect the number of attacks with assault weapons but increased attacks that used other types of weapons.

¹⁰⁴ The data is available here (<https://tinyurl.com/yc4xehm4>).

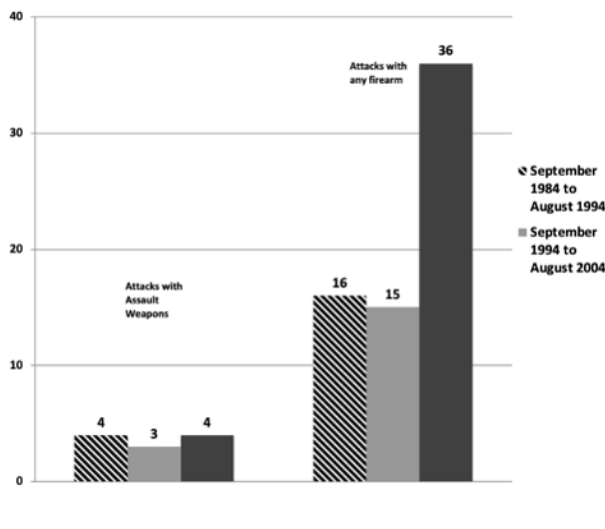


Figure 17: Changes in Number of Mass Public Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)

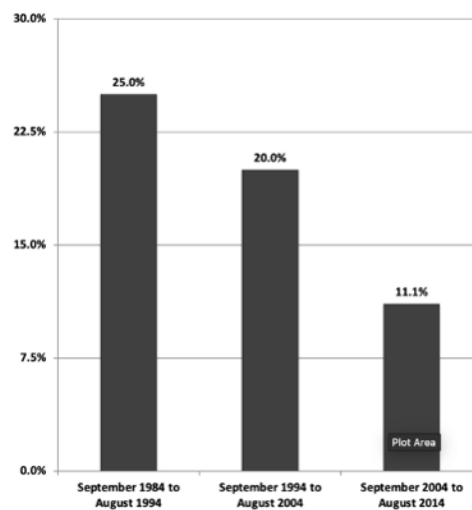


Figure 18: Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault Weapons (Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)

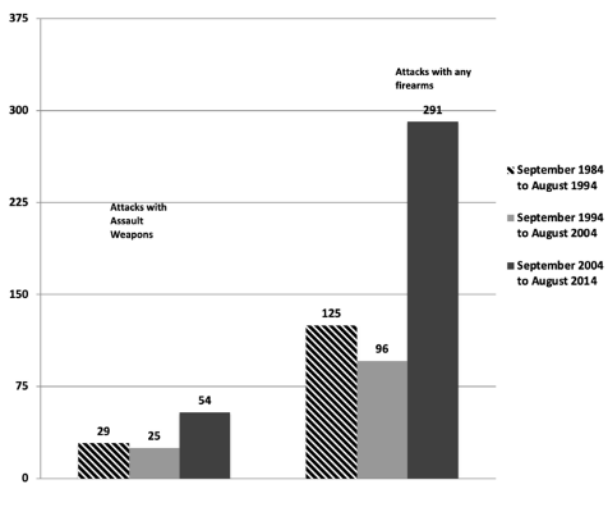


Figure 19: Changes in Number of Mass Public Shooting Deaths Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)

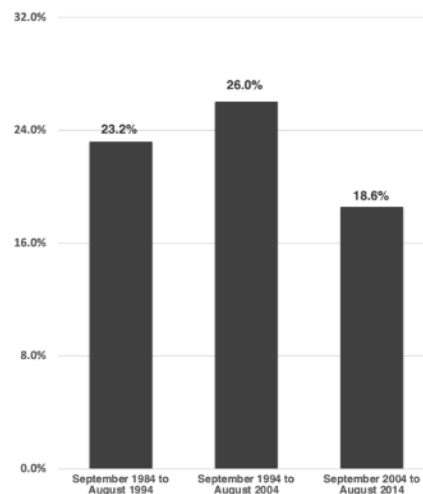


Figure 20: Percent of Mass Public Shooting Deaths Committed with Assault Weapons (Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)

The graphs above look at mass shootings with six or more fatalities because that was the definition used by Louis Klarevas of Columbia University, who provided the data that Biden relies on in making his claim. Klarevas also inconsistently includes attacks that don't take place in public places and ones that involve some other type of crime. Still, even with those changes,

the share of mass public shootings involving assault weapons falls after the assault weapon ban sunset because the increase in attacks primarily involves more non-assault weapons.

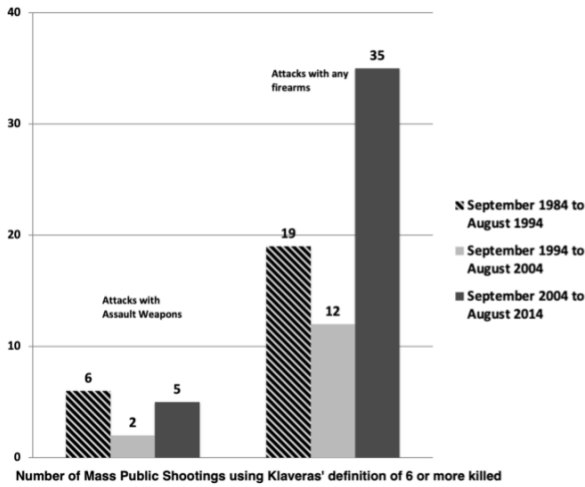


Figure 21: Changes in Number of Mass Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data)

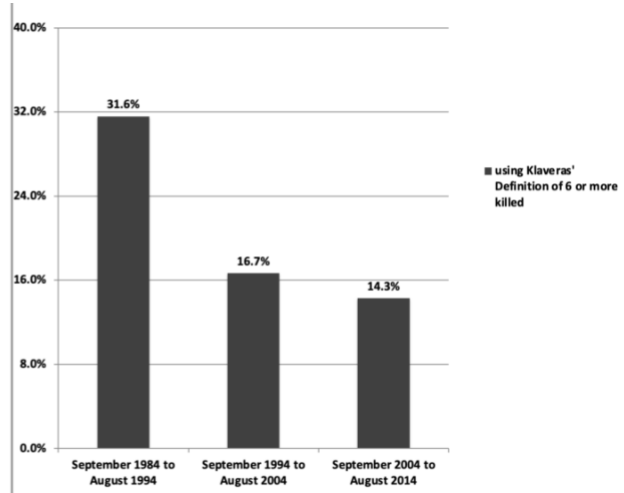


Figure 22: Percent of Mass Shootings with Assault Weapons (Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data)

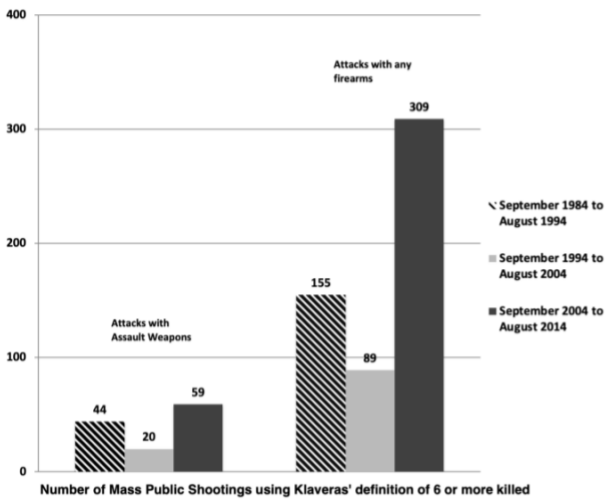


Figure 23: Changes in Number of Mass Shooting Deaths Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban (Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data)

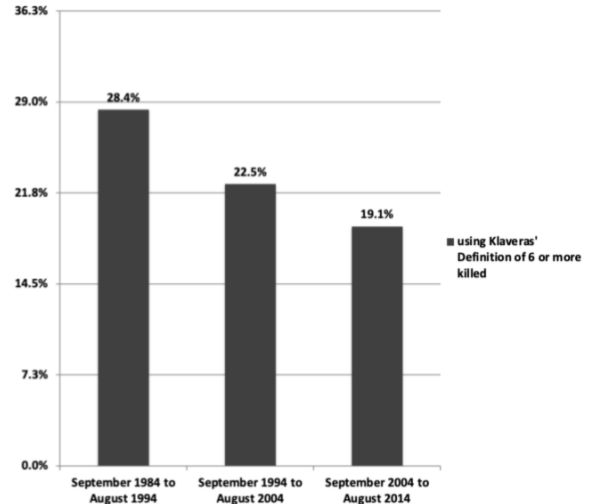


Figure 24: Percent of Mass Shooting Deaths Committed with Assault Weapons (Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data)

The vast majority of research on the assault weapon ban, even work paid for by the Clinton administration, was unable to find any benefits from the law, such as any reduction in any type of violent crime or mass public shootings.¹⁰⁵

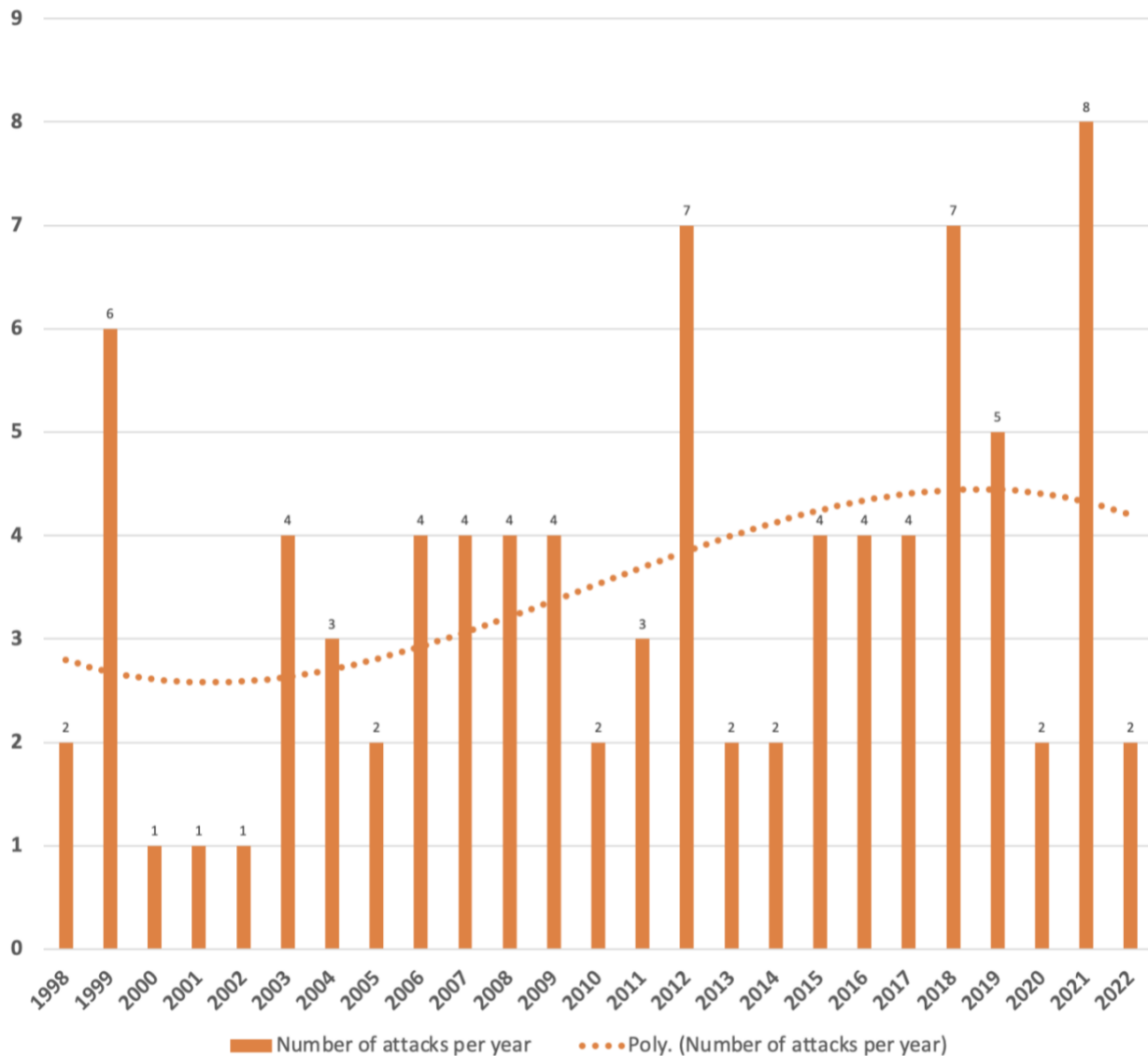


Figure 25: Number of Attacks by Year (nonlinear trends) from 1998 to May 2022

¹⁰⁵ Jeffrey Roth and Christopher Koper, “IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND RECREATIONAL FIREARMS USE PROTECTION ACT OF 1994,” The Urban Institute, March 13, 1997 (<https://crimeresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Roth-Koper-Assault-Weapons-Ban-1997.pdf>). Christopher Koper, Daniel Woods, and Jeffrey Roth, “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994–2003,” report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice, June 2004.

6. Universal Background Checks

President Biden is attempting to implement universal background checks through the Bipartisan Safer Community Act's (BSCA) tiny, seemingly trivial change in the language of existing law.¹⁰⁶ Previously, the federal government classified people as “gun dealers”—requiring them to get a license—if they sold guns “with the principal objective of livelihood and profit.” Now the language reads: “predominantly earn a profit.”

The Biden administration considers you a gun dealer if you sell a friend a gun once and then discuss the sale of a second gun to them.¹⁰⁷ Or if you sell one gun and keep any record of what you bought and sold it for. Or if you rent a space at a gun show, even if you aren't selling guns (and anyone who has been to a gun show knows most tables at shows don't sell guns). The list goes on, and the new regulations will cover virtually all gun sales and force all purchasers to go through a background check and let the administration complete its national gun registry.

At the same time that Biden is redefining everyone as a firearms dealer, his zero-tolerance policy for paperwork typos is putting thousands of dealers out of business.¹⁰⁸

For example, Tom Harris of the Sporting Arms Co. in Lewisville, Texas, a disabled father of five, made a couple of small paperwork mistakes fifteen and sixteen years ago.¹⁰⁹ The BATF under President Barack Obama cleared Harris, who has made no mistakes since then. But now the Biden administration is reopening closed cases like his, and Harris has had to create a crowdfunding page to try to cover his legal costs.

When Biden announced his zero-tolerance policy, he sold it this way: “If you willfully sell a gun to someone who is prohibited from possessing it, if you willfully fail to run a background check, if you willfully falsify a record, if you willfully fail to cooperate with the tracing requests or inspections, my message to you is this: We'll find you, and we will seek your license to sell

¹⁰⁶ The text of the law is available here (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2938/text>).

¹⁰⁷ The White House, “FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Takes Another Life-Saving Step to Keep Guns Out of Dangerous Hands,” The White House Briefing Room, August 31, 2023 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/31/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-takes-another-life-saving-step-to-keep-guns-out-of-dangerous-hands/#:~:text=Specifically%2C%20the%20proposed%20rule%2C%20if,if%20they%20meet%20certain%20conditions.>).

¹⁰⁸ Kevin Stocklin, “IN-DEPTH: ATF ‘Zero Tolerance’ Forces Nearly 2,000 Gun Vendors to Close, Says Lawsuit,” The Epoch Times, July 25, 2023 (https://www.theepochtimes.com/us/in-depth-atf-zero-tolerance-forces-nearly-2000-gun-vendors-to-close-says-lawsuit-5420217?utm_source=newsnoe&src_src=newsnoe&utm_campaign=breaking-2023-07-25-2&src_cmp=breaking-2023-07-25-2&utm_medium=email&est=XwAGVKtrsJp3QeaPcc3U43I80Qu%2BavDngnu0YQzJzX6pZR3cKH6rQa7B6M8h3XihNaA%3D).

¹⁰⁹ CPRC, “Who are the FFLs that the Biden Administration is Putting out of Business?” Crime Prevention Research Center, August 18, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/08/who-are-the-ffls-that-the-biden-administration-is-putting-out-of-business/>).

guns.”¹¹⁰ Harris and others are not making willful errors, but the government is coming for their licenses anyway.

The Biden administration sells the need for universal background checks and a gun registry as crucial to solving crime. The new BATF rules mention tracing guns used in crimes several times. In theory, if a criminal leaves a gun at a crime scene, police would be able to trace the gun back to him. But outside of television crime shows, that isn’t how things work.

Registration is useful for one purpose: confiscating guns. Australia, Canada, and the U.K. aren’t the only places where registration is used to ban and confiscate guns. California, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. also used registration to know who legally owned certain types of guns before banning them, and Biden continues to call for a ban on all semi-automatic guns.¹¹¹

Gun control advocates erroneously claim that background checks have stopped 4 million dangerous or prohibited people from buying guns. About 99 percent of denials are false positives, and errors overwhelmingly discriminate against law-abiding black and Hispanic men.¹¹²

7. Red Flag Laws

If you are worried that someone is suicidal, just taking away their guns isn’t a serious solution. There are so many other ways that people can commit suicide. But gun control advocates of “red flag” laws want you to believe that simply taking away someone’s legally owned guns ends the risk of suicide.

Red flag laws are usually invoked for suicide prevention, but even in those rare cases where there are threats to others, there are many other ways for people to do harm. Violent individuals have driven cars through parades and crowded sidewalks, for example, to accomplish the same goal.

¹¹⁰ President Joe Biden, “Remarks by President Biden and Attorney General Garland on Gun Crime Prevention Strategy,” The White House, June 23, 2021 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/23/remarks-by-president-biden-and-attorney-general-garland-on-gun-crime-prevention-strategy/>).

¹¹¹ CPRC, “Biden Keeps Calling for Bans on Semi-automatic Guns,” Crime Prevention Research, June 16, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/06/biden-keeps-calling-for-bans-on-semi-automatic-guns/>).

¹¹² John R. Lott, Jr., “The School That Wasn’t There: I drove 950 miles to give a commencement address. It was an elaborate hoax by a gun-control organization,” Wall Street Journal, June 29, 2021 (https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-school-that-wasnt-there-11624981903?st=92qezciiqzos6sq&reflink=article_email_share).

The Washington Post reported that between May and June 2020, there were at least 18 cases of vehicles being deliberately rammed into people.¹¹³ In November 2022, Florida police narrowly averted a “mass casualty” event at a 5K Thanksgiving Day run by stopping a woman before she could drive her Range Rover through the crowd at 60 mph.¹¹⁴ The truck attack in Nice, France, on July 14, 2016, claimed 86 people — two dozen more than the worst mass public shooting in American history.¹¹⁵ Only the 2015 shooting at a theater in Paris has claimed more lives.

Under red flag laws, a judge acts on a mere written complaint. He doesn’t talk to the person making the complaint or the person it is made against.

Under state red flag laws, a hearing will occur within 30 days after one’s guns are taken away. But many defendants can’t afford to hire a lawyer. Even if they can, they are likely to decide that keeping their guns isn’t worth the \$10,000 that many attorneys will charge.

All 50 states already have involuntary commitment laws in place in. If you worry that someone is dangerous, you can tell the police about your concerns. If the police agree there is a "reasonable" chance that the person is a danger to themselves or others, mental health experts evaluate the individual. If the experts agree, an emergency court hearing occurs before a judge's decision. If a person can't afford a lawyer, one is provided, and judges have a broad range of less extreme options, such as outpatient mental health care or suspending a person's driver's license. Gun confiscation is also an option, but only after the process is followed.

8. Children and Guns: Guns Are Not the Leading Cause of Children’s Deaths

¹¹³ Annabelle Timsit, “SUV crash into Wisconsin Christmas parade is latest among deadly car-ramming incidents,” The Washington Post, November 22, 2021 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/22/vehicle-ramming-attacks/>).

¹¹⁴ Adam Sabes, “Florida police prevent 'mass casualty' event after stopping woman from driving car through 5K route,” Fox News, November 25, 2022 (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/florida-police-prevent-mass-casualty-event-after-stopping-woman-driving-car-5k-route>).

¹¹⁵ Counter Extremism Project, “Vehicles as Weapons of Terror,” CounterExtremism.com (<https://www.counterextremism.com/vehicles-as-weapons-of-terror>).

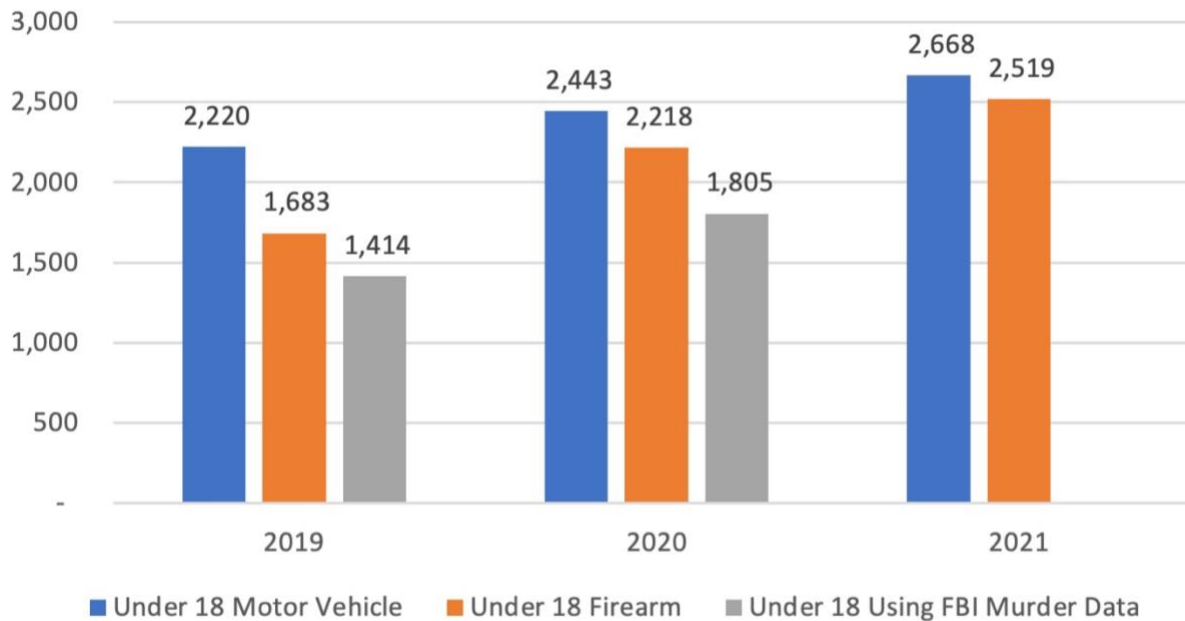


Figure 26: Comparing Total Vehicle Deaths to Total Firearm Deaths for Those Under Age 18 (Homicide or Murder, Unintentional, and Suicide)

A favorite talking point by gun control advocates is that guns are the leading cause of death of children. “The number one cause of death of the children in America is gun violence,” Vice President Kamala Harris claimed on June 2.¹¹⁶ Later, the White House tweeted, “Guns are the #1 KILLER of CHILDREN.”¹¹⁷ President Biden has made the same claim multiple times this year.¹¹⁸

The Washington Post repeated this claim, running the headline: “Why guns are America’s number one killer of children.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, an NPR headline declared: “Firearms overtook auto accidents as the leading cause of death in children.”¹²⁰ even the BBC got in on the act with the

¹¹⁶ Vice President Harris, “Remarks by Vice President Harris at Gun Violence Awareness Day Event,” White House Briefing Room, June 2, 2023 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/06/02/remarks-by-vice-president-harris-at-gun-violence-awareness-day-event/>).

¹¹⁷ CPRC, “Looking at the false claim that firearms are the leading cause of death for children or teens,” Crime Prevention Research Center, May 25, 2023 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2023/05/looking-at-the-false-claim-that-firearms-are-the-leading-cause-of-deaths-for-children-or-teens/>).

¹¹⁸ President Joe Biden, “Statement from President Joe Biden on Last Night’s Gun Violence,” White House Briefing Room, April 16, 2023 (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/04/16/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-last-nights-gun-violence/>).

¹¹⁹ Philip Bump, “Why guns are America’s number one killer of children,” The Washington Post, March 27, 2023 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/03/27/nashville-school-shooting-children-guns/>).

¹²⁰ Dustin Jones, “Firearms overtook auto accidents as the leading cause of death in children,” National Public Radio, April 22, 2022 (<https://www.npr.org/2022/04/22/1094364930/firearms-leading-cause-of-death-in-children>).

sensational title: “[Gun deaths were the leading killer of U.S. children in 2020.](#)”¹²¹ Fact-checkers from [Newsweek](#) to [Snopes](#) also push these claims.¹²²

Even if we consider anyone under 18 to be a child, vehicle deaths are still slightly greater than those from firearms. Adding homicides, unintentional deaths, and suicides together shows 2,443 total deaths from vehicles and 2,218 from firearms. In 2021, there were again 2,668 vehicle and 2,519 firearm deaths. When we exclude justifiable homicides that are committed in self-defense by civilians and police, the firearm deaths fall by at least several hundred. In 2019 and 2020, more minors also died from [suffocation](#).¹²³

Homicides for all ages have been on the upswing across the country since 2020. Democrats blame this increase on guns while ignoring police budget cuts, refusal to prosecute violent criminals, bail reform, and mass release of many young, healthy inmates during the pandemic.

But the claims of gun deaths for children are only possible if we define children to be anyone under 20 years of age. And that depends which data source we use, with the FBI showing lower tallies than the CDC.

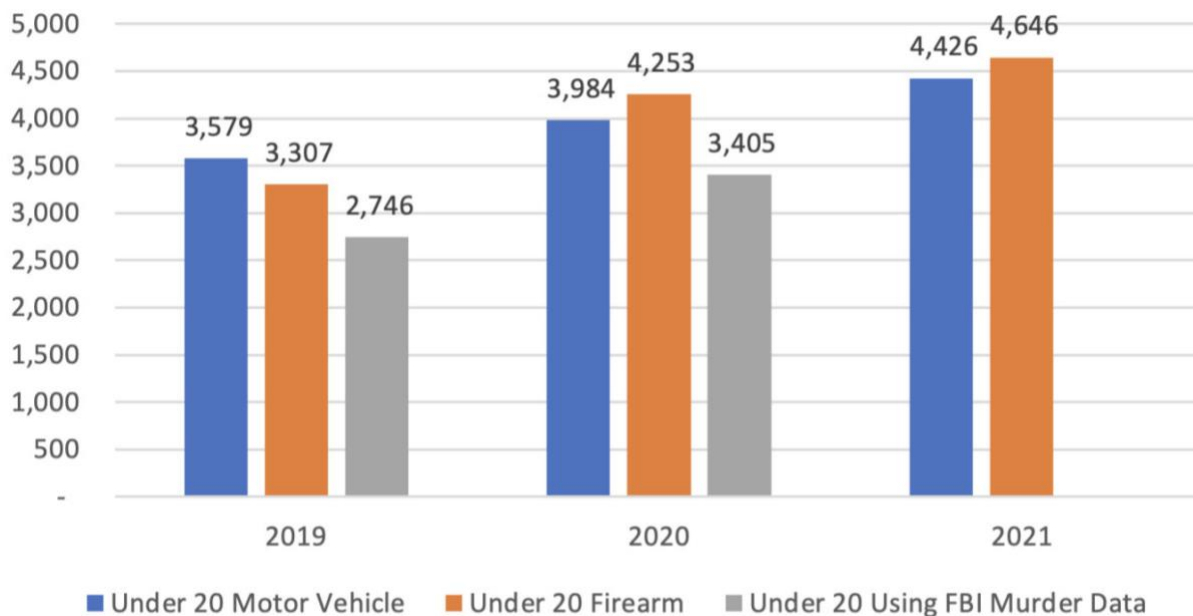


Figure 27: Comparing Total Vehicle Deaths to Total Firearm Deaths for Those Under Age 20 (Homicide or Murder, Unintentional, and Suicide)

¹²¹ Staff, “Gun deaths were the leading killer of US children in 2020,” BBC, April 22, 2022 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61192975>).

¹²² Tom Norton, “Fact Check: Joe Biden Says Guns Are Biggest Killer of American Children,” Newsweek, July 13, 2022 (<https://www.newsweek.com/fact-check-joe-biden-says-guns-are-biggest-killer-american-children-1723964>).

Nur Ibrahim, “Are Guns the Leading Cause of Death for Children in the US?” Snopes, March 29, 2023 (<https://www.snopes.com/news/2023/03/29/guns-leading-deaths-children-us/>).

¹²³ National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, “Injury Counts and Rates,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://wisqars.cdc.gov/reports/>).

About a third of the firearm deaths among under-20s involve homicide of 18 and 19 years old. Approximately 20% involve homicides of 15, 16, and 17-year-olds. These deaths are largely gang-related, and banning guns is hardly going to stop such violence.

Gun suicides have been on the rise, but suicide is a societal ill that cannot be attributed to gun ownership. If gun bans are enacted, people can resort to another method of suicide such as hanging, walking in front of a train, jumping from a height, using explosives, or taking cyanide.¹²⁴ Indeed, while gun bans are associated with drops in firearm suicides, they are not associated with any change in total suicides.

According to FBI data, firearm suicides make up about 40% of all firearm deaths. removing suicides would reduce the number of firearm deaths for those under 20 in 2020 from 3,405 to 2,112.

Banning guns might reduce firearm suicides and cases of self-defense, but it won't reduce firearm murders. Indeed, a ban on guns, even a handgun ban such as the ones we've seen in Washington and Chicago, inevitably makes things much worse.¹²⁵ After every gun ban, murder rates have gone up.¹²⁶

One would think that just once, out of simple randomness, murder rates would have gone down or remained the same after a ban. But whenever crime data are available from both before and after a ban, we can see that murder rates have gone up (often by huge amounts).

Gun control advocates will say that Washington and Chicago weren't fair tests. They will point out that criminals could still get guns in Virginia or Maryland, or in Illinois or Indiana. While that might explain why murder rates didn't fall as promised, it doesn't explain why murder and violent crime rates went up.

Even island nations who had no neighbors to blame have fared no better. After the U.K. banned handguns in January 1997, its homicide rate rose by 50% over the following eight years. The rate returned to earlier levels only after a 14% increase in the number of police.

Even more dramatic post-ban surges occurred in Jamaica and Ireland, with six or sevenfold increases in homicide rates.

Unfortunately, banning guns won't reduce deaths of either adults or children. If anything, the total number of deaths will increase.

¹²⁴ LAH, "Most lethal methods of suicide," LostAllHope.com (<https://lostallhope.com/suicide-methods/statistics-most-lethal-methods/>).

¹²⁵ John R. Lott Jr., "More Guns Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws," University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2010.

¹²⁶ CPRC, "Updated: Murder and homicide rates before and after gun bans," Crime Prevention Research Center, April 16, 2016 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2016/04/murder-and-homicide-rates-before-and-after-gun-bans/>).