False Hope: The Case Against Background Checks for Guns

By "Coach Vance" Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States should require universal background checks   
for all gun sales and transfer of ownership.***

Background checks for all gun sales/transfers are not justified. First, because there's no way for any research to prove a causal link between availability of guns and increases in crime. There are so many societal factors that you can't sort out cause and effect when comparing jurisdictions, crime rates, and gun laws. And there are all kinds of contradictory studies, some of which find that as gun ownership has gone up, crime has gone down.

Second, while it sounds easy and simple to say we should deny guns to all mentally ill and all felons, it's not that simple. Who decides when someone is too mentally ill to own a firearm? Nobody in the mental health profession is qualified, and in any case most mentally ill people are not violent. Neither are many felons, so a blanket statement that all felons shouldn't be allowed to have guns is an unjust denial of 2nd Amendment rights and the right to self defense for people whose crimes may have had nothing to do with violence at all (e.g. drug possession).

Lastly, background checks simply don't work in the real world, no matter how many experts have theories and studies.

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CON: Background Checks for Guns

There’s no evidence they’re needed, they distract us from the real issues, and they don’t really solve anything. That’s why we’re denying that The United States should require universal background checks for all gun sales and transfer of ownership.

CONTENTION 1. Reconsidering the Link Between Guns and Homicide

First, consider the logical fallacy of confusing “correlation” with “causation.”

People often make the mistaken assumption that because B happens after A, therefore A must have caused B. The Resolution’s assumption is that because the US has a high rate of gun ownership and a high rate of homicides, therefore the guns must be causing the homicides. It sounds easy, but Robert Farley at FACT CHECK in 2012 points out QUOTE:

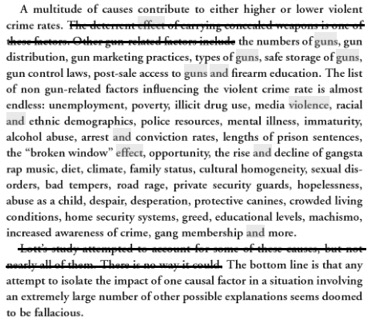
Robert Farley 2012 (deputy managing editor) 20 Dec 2012 FACT CHECK Gun Rhetoric vs. Gun Facts <http://www.factcheck.org/2012/12/gun-rhetoric-vs-gun-facts/>

The United States has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world — by far. And it has the highest rate of homicides among advanced countries. And yet, gun crime has been declining in the U.S. Firearm murders are down, as is overall gun violence —  even as gun ownership increases.

END QUOTE. So, if you follow the Affirmative’s logic, the increased availability of guns in the US in the last few years must be causing the reduction in murders. But the real problem blocking any scientifically rational analysis of cause or cure for gun violence is that…

No gun violence cause/effect studies can account for all relevant factors, so none of them can be relied upon

Prof. Andrew McClurg 2002.(law professor at Florida International University College of Law) GUN CONTROL AND GUN RIGHTS: A READER AND GUIDE <https://books.google.com/books?id=js-QgF7vCbsC&pg=PA50&lpg=PA50&dq=%22a+multitude+of+causes+contribute+to+either+higher+or+lower%22&source=bl&ots=Pz2nFhynGD&sig=LaU_JFd15MZc_mvPotzEGuecDyk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjxhNvv-t_WAhWHJCYKHXSmCg0Q6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=%22a%20multitude%20of%20causes%20contribute%20to%20either%20higher%20or%20lower%22&f=false>



CONTENTION 2. Who are these people?

The Resolution wants us to clearly define a set of people that are a threat and shouldn’t have a gun, and if they’re not in that set then they’re OK. Typically there are 2 classes of people: the mentally ill and convicted felons. This is problematic because we’re not talking about just labeling people, we’re talking about taking away someone’s 2nd Amendment rights based on that label and promising society that we'll be safer as a result.

First, let’s talk about the mentally ill. We put a burden on mental health professionals and assign them the duty to make the call as to whether someone should have a gun or not. That’s bad because…

Mental health professionals are not qualified to make the call, and the problem gets worse by distracting societal attention away from the real causes of gun violence.

Dr. Jonathan Metzl and Dr. Kenneth MacLeish 2015 (Metzl – M.D., PhD. MacLeish – PhD) “Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of American Firearms” Feb 2015 AMERICAN JHOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4318286/>

Again, it is understandable that US policymakers, journalists, and the general public look to psychiatry, psychology, neuroscience, and related disciplines as sources of certainty in the face of the often-incomprehensible terror and loss that mass shootings inevitably produce. This is especially the case in the current political moment, when relationships between shootings and mental illness often appear to be the only points upon which otherwise divergent voices in the contentious national gun debate agree. Our brief review ultimately suggests, however, that this framework—and its implicit promise of mental health solutions to ostensibly mental health problems—creates an untenable situation in which mental health practitioners increasingly become the persons most empowered to make decisions about gun ownership and most liable for failures to predict gun violence. Meanwhile, public, legal, and medical discourses move ever-farther away from talking broadly and productively about the social, structural, and, indeed, psychological implications of gun violence in the United States.

END QUOTE.

Next, let’s talk about felons. Many crimes, even felonies, are not violent and do not warrant taking away someone’s right to self defense after they’ve paid their debt to society and done their time.

A felony conviction by itself does not prove someone is a violent threat, so a background check would strip people needlessly of their rights

Claire Galofaro 2013 (journalist) NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE Gun rights amendment helping felons charged with illegal gun possession 9 Mar 2013 (ellipses in original) <http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2013/03/guns_rights_amendment_helping.html>

The Orleans Parish Public Defenders concede that public safety is a compelling interest to bar violent offenders, like murderers or armed robbers, from possessing weapons. But the law also encompasses those convicted of a number of less obviously violent felonies, including simple burglary, unauthorized entry of a dwelling, any felony drug crime and any sex offense. A person who broke into an empty car, for example, is considered a violent felon under Louisiana law. Public defenders Jill Pasquarella and Colin Reingold argue that under a strict scrutiny test, the government must be able to provide compelling data showing that those convicted of such crimes prove a heightened threat to society when armed. "There is, simply, no rational basis for stripping Louisianans of their rights ... where they have been convicted of crimes that are wholly unrelated to firearm possession or use," Pasquarella wrote to judges in several cases.

CONTENTION 3. Background Checks Don’t Solve

We’ve already seen under Contention 1 why cause and effect studies on gun violence policies are not reliable. Without trying to analyze cause and effect, let’s just look at the raw numbers and see what happens. First…

The Missouri Study. It was supposed to show how gun violence went up after Missouri repealed its background check in 2007. But the numbers actually backfire on the Affirmative

Dr. John R. Lott 2014 (PhD economics) Opinion: Media cherry picks Missouri gun data to make misleading case for more control <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/02/21/media-cherry-picks-missouri-gun-data-to-make-misleading-case-for-more-control.html>

With headlines claiming “[Study Shows Gun Control Works](http://wonkwire.rollcall.com/2014/02/18/shoots/),” media outlets such as [CBS](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/study-gun-murders-rise-in-missouri-after-background-check-repeal/), [MSNBC](http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/after-background-checks-were-scrapped-mo), [PBS](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/study-claims-violence-surges-repeal-gun-control-laws/), [Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/02/18/study-repealing-missouris-background-check-law-associated-with-a-murder-spike/?wpisrc=nl_pmpol), and [BBC](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-26222578) were breathless over a soon-to-be-released study by Daniel Webster in the Journal of Urban Health. The claim is that when Missouri in 2007 made it easier to buy handguns, the murder rate went up relative to the U.S. murder rate. Prior to August 2007, Missouri law had established what is known as a universal background check, closing down the so-called gun show loophole.  While it is true that the murder rate in Missouri [rose 17 percent relative to the rest of the U.S. in the five years after 2007, it had actually increased by 32 percent during the previous five years](http://crimepreventionresearchcenter.org/2014/02/what-does-missouri-show-about-the-benefits-from-universal-background-checks-the-forthcoming-journal-of-urban-health-study-by-the-bloomberg-school-of-public-health/). The question is why the Missouri murder rate was increasing relative to the rest of the United States at a slower rate after the change in the law than it did prior to it.

END QUOTE. So yes, gun violence went up in Missouri after they repealed background checks. But it went up at a slower pace than it had been going up when background checks were in place. The exact opposite should have happened if background checks are so effective at reducing gun violence.

But at the end of this debate, even if you think background checks sound like a good idea or if someone cites a study, mandating them nationwide still won't work in the real world. That's because…

Background checks are only as good as the data, and the data isn't very good

CNN 2013. (journalist Jen Christensen) 5 Feb 2013 "How the violent mentally ill can buy guns" <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/30/health/mental-illness-guns/index.html>

The system is only as good as the data. And "the data is the real problem," said Mark Glaze, the director of[Mayors Against Illegal Guns](http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/media-center/pr039-11.shtml), an organization whose recent in-depth study found millions of mental health records were missing from the federal background check system. "It's an unsatisfying answer, since people always want to blame the soft federal laws or blame the gun lobby," he said. "But if you have ever worked around a state legislature, they'll tell you there is no money and no time to improve this kind of reporting.

CONTENTION 4. Unfair Burden

Since background checks are unnecessary and unsuccessful, we get no benefit. But we do incur the cost of…

Unfair burden to the poor: Charging them extra for the right to self defense

Dr. John R. Lott 2017 (PhD economics) 24 Sept 2017 "In The Hill: "Democrats should embrace FBI background check for voters and gun purchasers alike" " <http://johnrlott.blogspot.com/>

Background checks for gun purchases are costly, running roughly $55 to $175 for checks on private gun transfers. Requiring federally licensed gun dealers to do checks on each individual transfer is somewhat time-consuming. The current NICS system places the entire financial burden on gun buyers. This is unfair to poor people just trying to obtain a gun for self-defense, just as it would be unfair to voters.

**END QUOTE. In summary, they're not needed, don't work, and they impose an unnecessary burden. Please vote Negative.**

CON AT: Background Checks for Guns

CAUSES OF GUN VIOLENCE

Availability of guns doesn't lead to more gun violence

Nicholas Kristof 2016 (journalist) NEW YORK TIMES, Some Inconvenient Gun Facts for Liberals 16 Jan 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/opinion/sunday/some-inconvenient-gun-facts-for-liberals.html>

FOR those of us who argue in favor of gun safety laws, there are a few inconvenient facts. We liberals are sometimes glib about equating guns and danger. In fact, it’s complicated: The number of guns in America has increased by more than 50 percent since 1993, and in that same period the gun homicide rate in the United States has dropped by half. Then there are the policies that liberals fought for, starting with the assault weapons ban. A [113-page study](http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve/?File_id=b531daeb-a954-41f8-a21c-268cceccb4c4) found no clear indication that it reduced shooting deaths for the 10 years it was in effect. That’s because the ban was poorly drafted, and because even before the ban, assault weapons accounted for only 2 percent of guns used in crimes. Move on to open-carry and conceal-carry laws: With some [13 million Americans now licensed](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2629704) to pack a concealed gun, many liberals expected gun battles to be erupting all around us. In fact, the most rigorous analysis suggests that all these gun permits caused neither a drop in crime (as conservatives had predicted) nor a spike in killings (as liberals had expected). Liberals were closer to the truth, for the increase in carrying loaded guns does appear to have led to more aggravated assaults with guns, but the fears were overblown.

MENTALLY ILL

Major psychiatric conditions contribute relatively little to the overall risk of violence

HEALTH AFFAIRS 2016 (peer reviewed journal) (authors were: [Jeffrey W. Swanson](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Swanson%20JW%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Professor, [Michele M. Easter](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Easter%20MM%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Research Associate, [Allison G. Robertson](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Robertson%20AG%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Assistant Professor, [Marvin S. Swartz](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Swartz%20MS%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Professor of Psychiatry, [Kelly Alanis-Hirsch](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Alanis-Hirsch%20K%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Postdoctoral Scholar, [Daniel Moseley](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Moseley%20D%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Postdoctoral Scholar, [Charles Dion](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Dion%20C%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Director, and [John Petrila](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Petrila%20J%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=27269024), Chair and Professor) Gun Violence, Mental Illness, And Laws That Prohibit Gun Possession: Evidence From Two Florida Counties, June 2016 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5154170/>

The response of many federal lawmakers in Washington, D.C., who are wary of the powerful gun lobby and how it plays on public fears of deranged killers, has largely been to implicate mental illness as the chief cause of gun violence and thus to avoid the topic of gun regulation. If untreated mental illness is the root of the problem, then the logical solution would seem to be to “fix the mental health system” and put more gun-disqualifying mental health records into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) database to stop dangerous people from buying guns. But will this response have a significant impact on firearm violence? Major psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia and mood disorders, by themselves, contribute relatively little—about 4 percent—to the overall risk of interpersonal violence in the population, and most perpetrators of commonplace violent acts do not have serious psychopathology.

Background checks don't stop the mentally ill. Example: Gerald Hume killed his mother with legal guns after passing a background check

CNN 2013. (journalist Jen Christensen) 5 Feb 2013 "How the violent mentally ill can buy guns" <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/30/health/mental-illness-guns/index.html>

Gerald Hume was described in the affidavit as a "known schizophrenic (who) hears voices, and requires treatment" and who has had "several mental health interventions with OCPD" and a history of violent behavior. He didn't steal his guns or borrow them. He bought them. "He bought them like any normal person would -- he got them at Walmart," said Oklahoma City Police Capt. Dexter Nelson. Hume bought the rifles at the Walmart in Moore, Oklahoma, on September 25. The next day he bought the Glock at Gun World in the nearby town of Dell City, according to Nelson. Both are federally licensed gun dealers that conduct background checks. The checks, in theory, are supposed to stop certain people -- including the mentally ill with a history of violence -- from buying them.

Background checks don't stop the mentally ill. Example: Virginia Tech attacker killed 32 after passing a background check

CNN 2013. (journalist Jen Christensen) 5 Feb 2013 "How the violent mentally ill can buy guns" <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/30/health/mental-illness-guns/index.html>

Seung-Hui Cho killed 32 people at Virginia Tech using guns he bought at a federally licensed dealer. He had passed the federal background check, even though a judge had declared Cho mentally ill the year before. Virginia failed to send that information to the federal system so his name would have been flagged.

There’s no clear definition of mental illness as it relates to gun violence that isn’t also caught up in politics and racism

Dr. Jonathan Metzl and Dr. Kenneth MacLeish 2015 (Metzl – M.D., PhD. MacLeish – PhD) “Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of American Firearms” Feb 2015 AMERICAN JHOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4318286/>

Our review also suggests that the stigma linked to guns and mental illness is complex, multifaceted, and itself politicized, in as much as the decisions about which crimes US culture diagnoses as “crazy” and which it deems “sane” are driven as much by the politics and racial anxieties of particular cultural moments as by the workings of individual disturbed brains. Beneath seemingly straightforward questions of whether particular assailants meet criteria for particular mental illnesses lay ever-changing categories of race, gender, violence, and, indeed, of diagnosis itself.

It’s unworkable to ask mental health professionals to diagnose whether someone is too dangerous to own a gun

Dr. Jonathan Metzl and Dr. Kenneth MacLeish 2015 (Metzl – M.D., PhD. MacLeish – PhD) “Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of American Firearms” Feb 2015 AMERICAN JHOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4318286/>

Current literature also suggests that agendas that hold mental health workers accountable for identifying dangerous assailants puts these workers in potentially untenable positions because the legal duties they are asked to perform misalign with the predictive value of their expertise. Mental health workers are in these instances asked to provide clinical diagnoses to social and economic problems. In this sense, instead of accepting the expanded authority provided by current gun legislation, mental health workers and organizations might be better served by identifying and promoting areas of common cause between clinic and community, or between the social and psychological dimensions of gun violence. Connections between loaded handguns and alcohol, the mental health effects of gun violence in low-income communities, or the relationships between gun violence and family, social, or socioeconomic networks are but a few of the topics in which mental health expertise might productively join community and legislative discourses to promote more effective medical and moral arguments for sensible gun policy than currently arise among the partisan rancor.

It’s an overbroad assumption that mental illness causes gun violence, and society confuses all gun crime with mental illness

Dr. Jonathan Metzl and Dr. Kenneth MacLeish 2015 (Metzl – M.D., PhD. MacLeish – PhD) “Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of American Firearms” Feb 2015 AMERICAN JHOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4318286/>

At the same time, the literatures we surveyed suggest that these seemingly self-evident assumptions about mass shootings are replete with problematic assumptions, particularly when read against current and historical literatures that address guns, violence, and mental illness more broadly. On the aggregate level, the notion that mental illness causes gun violence stereotypes a vast and diverse population of persons diagnosed with psychiatric conditions and oversimplifies links between violence and mental illness. Notions of mental illness that emerge in relation to mass shootings frequently reflect larger cultural issues that become obscured when mass shootings come to stand in for all gun crime and when “mentally ill” ceases to be a medical designation and becomes a sign of violent threat.

FELONS

"Felon" label is too broad and should not be assumed that they lose their right to self-defense

Joseph Goldstein 2008 (journalist) " Supreme Court Decision May Permit Felons To Own Guns" 27 June 2008 NEW YORK SUN <http://www.nysun.com/national/supreme-court-decision-may-permit-felons-to-own/80870/> ("Heller" is the US Supreme Court case "District of Columbia v. Heller" where the Court ruled that the 2nd Amendment protects the rights of individuals to own guns)

"The label felon is so broad and so oppressive that maybe it makes a useful shorthand when we assume guns are bad," a law professor at Ohio State who has written on this issue on his influential legal blog, Douglas Berman, said. "But essentially *Heller* says the Framers thought guns were good and that guns are good in part to protect a basic civil right of self- defense."

Non-violent felons shouldn't lose their 2nd Amendment rights

Joseph Goldstein 2008 (journalist) " Supreme Court Decision May Permit Felons To Own Guns" 27 June 2008 NEW YORK SUN <http://www.nysun.com/national/supreme-court-decision-may-permit-felons-to-own/80870/> ("Heller" is the US Supreme Court case "District of Columbia v. Heller" where the Court ruled that the 2nd Amendment protects the rights of individuals to own guns)

In interviews, several legal experts say that lower court judges should interpret the Supreme Court's decision in *Heller* to permit non-violent felons to own weapons. "Why not? I can't see why they shouldn't have gun rights if they don't have a record of violent crime," a lawyer who financed the *Heller* case, Robert Levy, said. "If the nature of their crime has nothing to do with the commission of violence than it's a pretty strange punishment that would deprive ex-felons of the ability to defend themselves."

BACKGROUND CHECKS FAIL

The current "Brady Law" federal background check fails to reduce crime

Dr. John R. Lott 2014 (PhD economics) Brady Law Has Done Little To Keep Guns Out Of Criminals' Hands, INVESTORS BUSINESS DAILY ("Brady Law" is a federal gun background check law named after press secretary James Brady who was seriously wounded by a bullet during the assassination attempt on Pres. Reagan in 1981) <http://www.investors.com/politics/commentary/brady-law-is-no-answer-to-gun-crime/>

Indeed, there is no real scientific evidence among criminologists and economists that background checks actually reduce crime. In fact, a 2004 National Academy of Sciences panel concluded that the Brady background checks did not reduce violent crime, not even a single category of violent crime. Later national studies have not found a beneficial effect either. If the criminal background checks that private companies did on employees had these errors, they would be sued out of existence.

Very few hard-core criminals are stupid enough to buy from a dealer who does background checks

Dr. John R. Lott 2014 (PhD economics) Brady Law Has Done Little To Keep Guns Out Of Criminals' Hands, INVESTORS BUSINESS DAILY ("Brady Law" is a federal gun background check law named after press secretary James Brady who was seriously wounded by a bullet during the assassination attempt on Pres. Reagan in 1981) <http://www.investors.com/politics/commentary/brady-law-is-no-answer-to-gun-crime/>

In reality, the "Brady Checks" are quite ineffective in stopping criminals from getting guns. There are actually very few hard-core criminals that are stupid enough to even try to buy a gun from a dealer that does a background check.

Federal background check failed to stop Dylann Roof (killed 9 at a church in S.C. 2015) from getting guns

NEW YORK TIMES 2015 Background Check Flaw Let Dylann Roof Buy Gun, F.B.I. Says 11 July 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/11/us/background-check-flaw-let-dylann-roof-buy-gun-fbi-says.html>

The authorities’ inability to prevent Mr. Roof from obtaining the weapon highlighted the continuing problems in the background check system, which was intended to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, drug users and mentally ill people. Despite new procedures and billions of dollars that have been spent on computer upgrades in the years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the federal authorities still do not have a seamless way of examining Americans’ criminal histories that eliminates human error.

A/T STUDIES ON BACKGROUND CHECK EFFECTIVENESS

Lancet Study: Numbers aren't credible, come from insufficient data and unbelievable conclusions

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR 2016 (journalist Jason Thomson) 11 Mar 2016 " Federal gun control laws could reduce deaths up to 90 percent, study says" <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2016/0311/Federal-gun-control-laws-could-reduce-deaths-up-to-90-percent-study-says>

While many observers agree the study marks an important first step in providing solid scientific data, there is some skepticism about [the depth of its claims](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)01026-0/abstract). In a Comment piece attached to the report in The Lancet, David Hemenway of Harvard School of Public Health laments that while the researchers did try to control for some variables, “many other important factors were not controlled for (e.g. poverty, alcohol consumption, urbanicity, and mental health).” Dr. Fox of Northeastern concurs, saying that while unemployment is an important variable to control for (which the study did), so is the percentage of the population belonging to minorities (which it did not). The claim that these laws could reduce gun deaths by as much as 90 percent also procures disbelief from both commentators, with Fox calling it “overambitious” and stretching his “thought of credibility”.

Connecticut study: Sure, gun crime went down after background checks. But it went down in other states too, that didn’t have them

Brian Doherty 2015 (senior editor) REASON 24 June 2015 “[5 Problems with the New Study 'Proving' that More Background Checks Lowered Connecticut's Gun Murder Rate by 40 Percent](https://reason.com/blog/2015/06/24/5-questions-about-the-new-study-purporti)” <https://reason.com/blog/2015/06/24/5-questions-about-the-new-study-purporti>

And how many people would have been killed by guns in Connecticut from 1995 to 2005 absent the gun law change isn't even a fact; gussied up in the methods of the social sciences as it is in this paper, it is a guess. The researchers do seem to be trying hard. Obviously, they are facing a problem: we can see what happened in real Connecticut after these laws passed: the murder rate per 100,000 population started dropping significantly after 1996. Does that settle it? No, because very similar gun murder rate drops happened in most other states, states that did not have such tougher background laws instituted. The study's own major chart shows all other control states largely moving in lockstep with Connecticut on murder rates.

Connecticut Study: The year after they stopped counting, death rate started going up again. Cherry picked data?

Brian Doherty 2015 (senior editor) REASON 24 June 2015 “[5 Problems with the New Study 'Proving' that More Background Checks Lowered Connecticut's Gun Murder Rate by 40 Percent](https://reason.com/blog/2015/06/24/5-questions-about-the-new-study-purporti)” <https://reason.com/blog/2015/06/24/5-questions-about-the-new-study-purporti>

The study stops looking for effects 10 years after the law went into effect. Why might that be? Six of the eight years since 2005 for which CDC had data show Connecticut with a higher real gun homicide rate than 2005, the year that the authors chose to stop. If they had gone out to 2006, the reduction in rates in real Connecticut from 1995 to 2006 is cut to 12 percent. From 2005 to 2006, Connecticut's gun homicide rate went up 38 percent, from 2.05 to 2.84. Rhode Island—again, the bulk of their synthetic Connecticut—saw its rate go down 5 percent in that year, from 1.83 to 1.73. If you look at the CDC gun homicide data from 2005 to 2012, you see Connecticut's rate going up 66 percent, from 2.05 to 3.41, and Rhode Island's going down 20 percent, from 1.83 to 1.45. Recall that they got their effect from the fact that up until 2005 Connecticut's rate was going down while Rhode Island (mostly) saw theirs going up, generating all those extra murders that they assume Connecticut *would* have had if not for the background check law. That all makes it seems like stopping in 2005 might be classic cherry-picking to make their results seem stronger.

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