

Practical Aspects of Gun Control, Part 7

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This essay continues with the second part of the statistical aspect of gun control/citizen disarmament, namely, "violent crime and household risk".

5 The Statistical Aspect (continued)

5.2 Regarding "Violent Crime and Household Risk"

Those who advocate for gun control often claim they do so in the interest of public safety, meaning the potential reduction in violent crime or safety in the home. To justify the attack on your rights they will often cite crime statistics, and claim that their particular disarmament measure will reduce crime by a certain amount. Then, when their favorite gun control measure has been in effect for ten or twenty years, and the crime rates have nonetheless gone up, they will still claim victory for disarmament on the curious and improvable notion that "the rise in crime would have been higher without the gun control we so heroically imposed". A more important justification for gun control in recent times is "to keep the children safe", especially since the massacre by gunfire at the Sandy Hook gun-free school zone. I will only say in regard to that shooting -- if the politicians and bureaucrats are dumb enough to establish lax security, it is best not to advertise it; at least keep the crazies guessing about it. We cannot expect politicians and bureaucrats to admit their mistakes, nor do we accuse them of respecting the Constitution. So we are left with an examination into the statistics of the situation to see for ourselves if gun control is justified or not.

When speaking of crime and the associated statistics, it is wise to remember that there are three types of violent crimes: a) the ones committed by professional criminals as part of their livelihood, b) ones committed by typically non-violent criminals who find it necessary on occasion to perform a deed of violence; and c) the ones committed by those who are normally regular citizens, but decide to commit a violent crime motivated under transient conditions of jealousy, anger, hatred, or greed.

As to the first class of criminals, like the various ethnic mafias, and certain gangs like MS-13 or the Aryan Brotherhood, it should be recognized that no amount of gun control will have any affect on them. Guns are a necessary implement of their trade, and will be obtained by them no matter what. If a person makes a living as an auto mechanic, he naturally has wrenches and screwdrivers as they are the tools of his trade. Likewise with IT engineers with their computers and salesmen with their telephones. No professional criminal will ever be deprived of the use of guns, as they are the most expedient means for conducting their business. Their victims are usually other professional criminals, and the causes for the crime are a violation of long-standing rules of the organization or encroachment by outsiders on traditional rights to commit other crimes (such as labor union control, loan-sharking, prostitution, gambling, etc.).

As for the second class of criminals, including the common street drug dealer, burglars, con men, car thieves, and so on: they do not use guns in the course of normal business, but have occasion to do so at various times. Some are always armed as a matter of self-protection; but all of them have ready access to guns regardless of gun control when they are needed. They can be obtained from other professional criminals, especially ones of the first class, who will never be disarmed. (Sometimes the BATF provides arms to already fully-armed Mexican drug cartels.) This class of criminals generally use guns when violence is necessary, since it is the most expedient and effective method. This class of criminals also usually preys on other of their class, usually over gang colors or in battles to determine drug-dealing territory.

Then there is the last and smallest class of criminals: the wife who found her husband was cheating with her best friend; the embezzler who was discovered by his boss; a murder for retribution; a murder for the insurance payout; or the occasional mental incompetent who thinks he is a cartoon figure and proceeds to shoot people in a theater.

Continent	Gun ownership rank (continent)	Nation	Guns per 100,000	Murders per 100,000	Gun ownership rank (this data)	Murder rate rank (this data)	Raw murders per gun	Murders per gun x 1 million	Rank, murders per gun
North America	1	U. S.	88800	4.8	1	14	0.0000541	54.1	28
	2	Canada	30800	1.6	10	20	0.0000519	51.9	29
	3	Mexico	15000	22.7	15	3	0.0015133	1513.3	7
South/Central America	1	Uruguay	31800	5.9	9	11	0.0001855	185.5	24
	2	Panama	21700	21.6	12	4	0.0009954	995.4	11
	3	Peru	18800	10.3	13	8	0.0005479	547.9	18
	4	Paraguay	17000	11.5	14	7	0.0006765	676.5	13
	17	El Salvador	5800	69.2	23	1	0.0119310	11931.0	2
	18	Dom. Rep.	5100	25.0	26	2	0.0049020	4902.0	4
	19	Cuba	4800	5.0	28	13	0.0010417	1041.7	10
20	Ecuador	1300	12.7	31	6	0.0097692	9769.2	3	
Europe	1	Switzerland	45700	0.7	2	34	0.0000153	15.3	37
	2	Finland	45300	2.2	3	17	0.0000486	48.6	30
	3	Serbia	37800	1.2	4	23	0.0000317	31.7	34
	4	Cyprus	36400	1.7	5	19	0.0000467	46.7	31
	5	Sweden	31600	1.0	6	31	0.0000316	31.6	35
	6	Norway	31300	0.6	7	35	0.0000192	19.2	36
	7	France	31200	1.1	8	28	0.0000353	35.3	33
	29	Portugal	8500	1.2	19	26	0.0001412	141.2	26
	30	Slovakia	8300	1.5	20	21	0.0001807	180.7	25
	31	England	6200	1.2	22	24	0.0001935	193.5	23
	32	Hungary	5500	1.3	24	22	0.0002364	236.4	20
	33	Scotland	5500	1.2	25	25	0.0002182	218.2	21
	34	Netherlands	3900	1.1	30	29	0.0002821	282.1	19
	35	Poland	1300	1.1	32	27	0.0008462	846.2	12
Asia	1	Pakistan	11600	7.8	16	10	0.0006724	672.4	14
	2	Russia	8900	10.2	18	9	0.0011461	1146.1	9
	3	Georgia	7300	4.3	21	15	0.0005890	589.0	17
	4	China	4900	1.0	27	30	0.0002041	204.1	22
	5	Philippines	4700	5.4	29	12	0.0011489	1148.9	8
	24	South Korea	1100	2.6	33	16	0.0023636	2363.6	5
	25	Tajikistan	1000	2.1	34	18	0.0021000	2100.0	6
	26	Kyrgyzstan	900	20.1	35	5	0.0223333	22333.3	1
	27	Japan	600	0.4	36	36	0.0006667	666.7	15
28	Singapore	500	0.3	37	37	0.0006000	600.0	16	
Australia/NZ	1	New Zealand	22600	0.9	11	33	0.0000398	39.8	32
	2	Australia	15000	1.0	17	32	0.0000667	66.7	27

Figure 1: Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates for Selected Nations

Figure 1 shows a selection of data [1] for gun ownership rates vs. homicide rates for various nations, similar to what was shown earlier on suicide rates. Again, the data shows no correlation between gun owner-

ship rates and murder rates. There are nations with very low gun ownership rates and correspondingly low murder rates (Japan, Singapore, Poland, and China). There are no nations among the top ten in gun ownership rates that were also in the top ten in murder rates; the closest correlation of that nature occurs with Uruguay (#9 in gun ownership rate, #11 in murder rate). Others in the top ten in gun ownership have very low murder rates under 2.2 per 100,000 (Canada, Finland, Serbia, Cyprus, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and France); the only exception was the U. S. (first in gun ownership, 14th in murder rate at 4.8 per 100,000). The most interesting statistics comes from nations with moderate to low gun ownership rates, but very high murder rates (Mexico, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Kyrgyzstan). The others in this data fall somewhere between these extremes; once again the dispersion in the data demonstrates that gun ownership rates are unrelated to murder rates; if anything, high gun ownership by the general public may prevent the murder rates from approaching truly pathological levels as in El Salvador, Mexico, and Panama.

It is important in this debate to keep in mind who is doing the killing and who is doing the dying. If professional criminals are killing other professional criminals, a net good to society results, and we should wish the murder rate to be higher than it is. The reverse applies if innocent people are dying. Figure 2 shows some data on what type of people are doing the dying. As shown here, most of the homicide victims in large U. S. cities have long prior arrest records. I will not make the Democratic Party assumption that an arrest equals a conviction, nor do I assume that the prior arrests were for violent crimes; but suffice to say, these victims were more likely to be criminals themselves than not. Most homicides are committed either with guns or knives, and most homicides occur in the large cities. I will not make the Democratic Party assumption that "large city" equals "black people". The racist sentiments of the Democratic Party are adequately refuted by the homicide data on Figure 1: of the top ten nations in murder rate (within this data set), none have a sizeable black population. The crime of murder is not confined to any one race in particular; it is confined to criminals in general.

Homicide Data, General Reference [9]			
City	Years	% of Murder Victims with Prior Arrests	Reference
Milwaukee	2011	77	[2]
New Orleans	2011	64	[3]
Baltimore	2007	91	[4]
Philadelphia	2011	62	[5]
Newark	2009, 2010	85	[6]
Chicago	2003-2011	77	[7]
New York City	2012	70	[8]

Figure 2: Arrest Status of Homicide Victims in the U. S.

Let's pursue this idea of criminals killing criminals a little further, and examine how it fits into the overall homicide rates in the U. S. Figure 3 shows an extract from the FBI Uniform Crime Report [10]; it cites the totals for homicides by weapon type for several recent years. It is easy to see that rifles, including the much-maligned AK-47 and other semi-automatic types, accounted for a very small portion of gun-related homicides. In fact, for the year 2011, the total number of homicides committed by rifles constitutes less than 4% of all homicides by firearm, and about 2.5% of all homicides regardless of weapon. Secondly, the overall homicide rate is generally decreasing as shown in the second-to-last row, where it has declined from 4.96 per 100,000 in 2007 to 4.06 in 2011, a drop of about 20% or so. Third, the fraction of total homicides committed with guns and knives is about 80% of the total, which has remained fairly constant over time.

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FBI UCR Expanded Homicide Data Table 8 [10]					
Murder Victims by Weapon, 2007-2011					
Weapons	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	14,916	14,224	13,752	13,164	12,664
Total firearms:	10,129	9,528	9,199	8,874	8,583
Handguns	7,398	6,800	6,501	6,115	6,220
Rifles	453	380	351	367	323
Shotguns	457	442	423	366	356
Other guns	116	81	96	93	97
Firearms, type not stated	1,705	1,825	1,828	1,933	1,587
Knives or cutting instruments	1,817	1,888	1,836	1,732	1,694
Blunt objects (clubs, hammers, etc.)	647	603	623	549	496
Personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.) ¹	869	875	817	769	728
Poison	10	9	7	11	5
Explosives	1	11	2	4	12
Fire	131	85	98	78	75
Narcotics	52	34	52	45	29
Drowning	12	16	8	10	15
Strangulation	134	89	122	122	85
Asphyxiation	109	87	84	98	89
Other weapons or weapons not stated	1,005	999	904	872	853
¹ Pushed is included in personal weapons.					
Population (millions)	301.580	304.375	307.007	309.330	311.587
Total murder rate per 100,000	4.95	4.67	4.48	4.26	4.06
Gun & knife murder rate per 100,000	3.96	3.75	3.59	3.43	3.30

Figure 3: FBI UCR Homicide Data for US, 2007-2011

Now let's consider the relevant homicide rate, defined as cases where the victim was not himself a professional criminal. Since most professional criminals are killed (by other criminals) with knives and guns, we can adjust the data in Figure 3. To obtain the relevant number of homicides, we can subtract from the total homicides committed by guns and knives the fraction in which the victims are criminals. Again, I am not assuming that all victims with arrest records are the same type of professional criminal as the perpetrator, nor am I assuming that the statistics for the big cities are the same as other areas. But, such an analysis is useful to establish the relevance of crime statistics instead of the sensational one used to justify degrading your rights. Figure 4 shows how the murder rate for 2011 would be altered if only relevant crimes were included, that is, if varying fractions of criminal victims were subtracted from the total. The red line marked "50% excl" means that half of the homicides committed with guns and knives were subtracted from the total, on the supposition that half of those victims were criminals themselves. Again, we do not know the actual percentages, but a figure of half of all murders committed with guns and knives could conceivably be correct, given the statistics in Figure 2.

It is easy to see from Figure 4 that the relevant murder rate is far less than the officially stated one: if the trend of the blue line is correct (60% of victims killed with knives and guns were themselves criminals),

the murder rate for 2011 falls from 4.05 to 2.05, a reduction of nearly half. This proves that all we have to do to cut the murder rate in half is to get the professional criminals to stop killing each other. But they can never do that -- after all, we're talking about their livelihood. Yet, the professional politicians, ever anxious to protect and defend their criminal pets, are fond of using the actions of professional criminals to justify taking your Second Amendment rights away. But killing the Second Amendment is not about reducing crime, as we will see in the next edition.

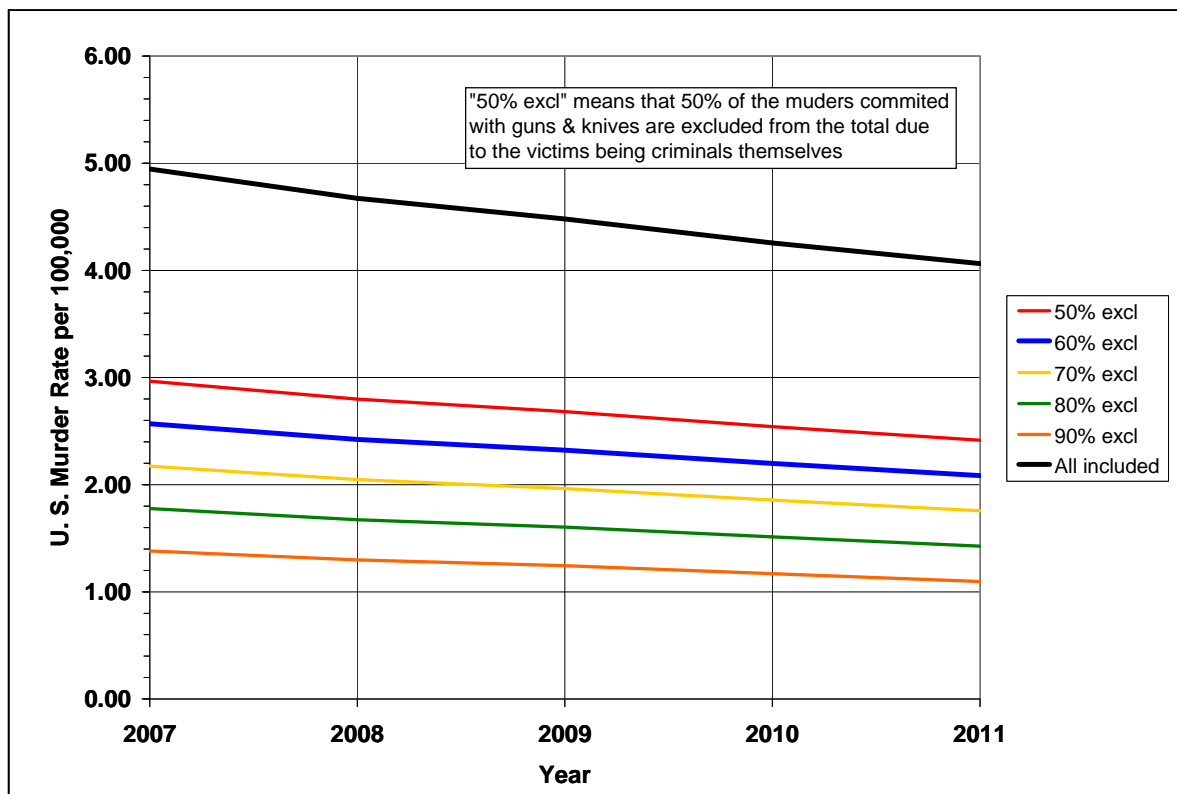


Figure 4: Relevant U. S. Murder Rates (by Excluding Victims Who Are Professional Criminals)

One last topic commands our attention. What about the "household risk" of owning a gun? Won't the children find it and accidentally shoot themselves? The same thing applies to common household cleaning products -- won't children find them and poison themselves? Shall we have trigger locks on Windex and Mr. Clean, or perhaps require a background check to purchase Comet and Formula 409? It is the duty of parents to manage their household risk in every respect, which includes power tools, cleaning agents, guns, electric outlets, kitchen knives, medicines, and even bathtubs. If the parents are derelict or incompetent, it is unlikely that any law will help; certainly not a law that reduces your rights.

We are sometimes deluged with claims such as "you are 43 times more likely to shoot a family member with your gun as you are to shoot a burglar". It turns out that that particular statement was proven false some years ago. But let's suppose it was true. It would prove, if it proved anything, that the very low murder rate with guns (in which neither person was a professional criminal) is still 43 times lower than the incidence of burglars being shot; it excludes the hundreds of thousands of cases in which burglars are deterred by looking down the wrong end of the barrel; it also proves that burglary is therefore pretty rare in armed societies. It is rare because burglars do not like to be shot. The point is that being armed (if you

choose to do so) offers a greater general protection against external threats than the increased risk at home; otherwise, responsible people (the vast majority) would not do it. Not every household should be ordered to possess firearms; but those who wish to do so should not be prevented or inconvenienced.

But what about the 24 innocent children who were killed by a retard with a gun at Sandy Hook Elementary? I will only respond with two questions of my own. What about the 200 innocent children killed by Mr. Obama's drone attacks? Were they not also innocent?

References

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