

## Seven Important Research Findings about Guns and Crime/Crime Prevention

These findings indicate that gun control laws do not prevent crime, but that armed citizens do deter and stop criminal behavior.

1. Centers for Disease Control Review (2003)

Comprehensive survey of 51 scientific studies by organization with anti-Second Amendment orientation found no statistically significant evidence that gun control is effective in preventing crime.

2. National Academy of Sciences Review (2004)

Academy panel studied 253 journal articles, 99 books, 43 government publications and some of its own research and could not establish a causal relationship between civilian gun ownership and violence. Study could also not find positive effect of gun control. Findings are remarkable in that most panel members had history of pro-gun control sentiments.

3. Small Arms Survey, Geneva, Switzerland (2007)

Organization, affiliated with UN, has bias against civilian ownership of firearms. Conclusion reached by 2007 report states, "There is no clear relationship between more guns and higher levels of violence."

4. Journal of the American Medical Association Study from Harvard (2013)

This study, sometimes cited by proponents of gun control, actually proves no positive effects of laws limiting firearms ownership and use. Doctors on both sides of the gun control debate agree that poor methodology invalidates effort to prove that gun control reduces firearms-related fatalities.

5. Research by Dr. James Wright and Dr. Peter Rossi (1983)

These two doctors, engaged in research for the US Department of Justice, initially believed that gun control reduced crime. Based on the results of their research with incarcerated felons, the two concluded that armed citizens have a deterrent effect on criminal behavior.

6. Research by Dr. Gary Kleck (1991)

Dr. Kleck, as close to an unbiased scientist as you can find in the debate, estimated up to 2.5 million individuals use guns for self-defense every year. In the majority of cases, no shots are fired.

7. Analysis by David Kopel of Armed Defenders Stopping Spree Killings (2015)

Author, Attorney, and Law Professor Kopel identified at least 10 cases in 25 years where armed citizens intervened to stop killers, in spite of the fact that most of these attacks occurred in gun free zones.

## Gun Control Research: The CDC Study

A comprehensive study done by one of the most prestigious scientific organizations in the country has found no statistically significant evidence that gun control has prevented a single violent crime.

If you believe that scientific research is the most logical way to understand the reality of the world, then you pay attention to studies done by groups and individuals. You also give weight to surveys that attempt to draw conclusions by reviewing numbers of studies.

The survey in question was done by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to determine if gun control has made a difference in the crime rate in the United States. There are some important things to remember about this study, which was published in 2003.

The CDC is a governmental organization that generally favors strict gun control laws. The panel doing the review of studies on these laws was largely made up of advocates for restricting or banning civilian ownership of firearms in the United States.

The purpose of the survey was to evaluate gun control laws with regard to effectiveness in controlling crime and violence. Given the institutional and individual bias in favor of restrictive gun laws, the conclusions of the CDC study are remarkable.

The CDC panel reviewed 51 studies regarding the effectiveness of gun control laws. Based on that review, they could not say that gun laws had prevented a single crime. The survey included, among other issues, studies of the effectiveness of gun and ammunition bans, licensing and registration laws, child access laws, and waiting periods. There was some slight evidence that waiting periods to purchase a firearm may reduce the gun suicide rate in older persons, while not affecting the overall suicide rate.

You would think that out of 51 scientific studies there would be more evidence of the effectiveness of gun control, if gun control were effective in preventing crime and violence. It is a tribute to the honesty of the CDC panel, given their preconceived ideas, that they were willing to issue this report at all. The survey did say in somewhat Orwellian fashion that "insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness should not be interpreted as evidence of ineffectiveness." (Just because a review of 51 studies failed to find a significant result, it doesn't mean that the result isn't there.)

The panel recommended additional research. This CDC survey is corroborated by the results of an even more exhaustive review done by the National Academy of Sciences.

Thacker, Steven, M.D., Dixon, Richard E., M.D., *First Reports evaluating the effectiveness of strategies for preventing violence: Firearms Laws*, Task Force on Community Preventive Services, Centers for Disease Control.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5214a2.htm>

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Gun Control Research-The NAS Study  
(No credible causal relationship between gun ownership and violence)

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) was created by Abraham Lincoln to "examine, experiment, and report" on "science and art" when asked to do so by any government department. A panel of NAS scientists began formal hearings on "Improving Research Information and data on firearms" during the summer of 2001. The study was funded in part by the virulently anti-gun Joyce Foundation and the anti-gun David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

David Kopel, Colorado author and expert on Second Amendment issues, and co-author Glenn Reynolds criticized the study at its inception for the anti-gun bias of most of its members and the bias of its funding sources. Surprisingly, given the prejudiced atmosphere of the NAS study, the results, like those of the CDC Study, do not support the premise that gun ownership promotes crime or increases the overall risk of suicide.

The panel reviewed 253 scientific journal articles, 99 books, 43 government publications and some of its own research. The committee found that they could not determine if there was a cause and effect relationship between guns and violence. The below quotation comes from the panel's Executive Summary, which was published in 2004.

"In summary, the committee concludes that existing research studies and data include a wealth of descriptive information on homicide, suicide, and firearms, but because of the limitations of existing data and methods, do not credibly demonstrate a causal relationship between the ownership of firearms and the causes or prevention of criminal violence or suicide."

The NAS panel predictably recommended more research. The committee also concluded that there is no definitive information regarding defensive uses of firearms or the positive or negative effects on crime of concealed carry laws. James Q. Wilson, the only relatively neutral member of the panel, according to Kopel and Reynolds, issued a minority report in which he argued that John R. Lott's extensive research does establish that "shall issue" concealed carry laws reduce homicide rates.

Like the CDC Study, the Swiss-based Small Arms Survey, and the Kates and Mauser Study of international gun ownership and crime, the NAS exhaustive review of the literature in the gun control field does not find a credible cause and effect relationship between honest gun owners and violence. You would think that if there were causation, nearly 400 scientific studies, books, and government reports would have found one example.

The committee also looked at possible methods of government intervention into the "problem" of guns, crime, and suicide. Restricting access to guns? Needs more research. (Keep in mind that Prohibition didn't work. It fostered the rise of criminal gangs, corrupted police, and promoted general lawlessness.) Prevention programs? Don't seem to work and seem to increase children's interest in guns. (What does this say about sexual education programs?) Criminal justice system solutions, such as policing, sentencing, and Project Exile? Need more research. Keep in mind that murders occur in prison.

If restricting access to firearms has had an effect on U.S. gun crime, the anti-gun NAS panel was apparently not able to find it in almost 400 sources. If firearms cause crime, or if gun control laws work, why did this massive review of research fail to find credible evidence? The variables are complex, but if the proof were there, would not one study out of almost 400 have discovered it? Will the NAS continue to review literature in the gun control field until they find even a single study that gives them the results that they are seeking?

Kopel, David, Reynolds, Glen, "Political Science, Doing science a grave injustice," [nationalreview.com](http://nationalreview.com), August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Law and Justice, "Firearms and Violence, A critical review," [nasonline.org](http://nasonline.org), 2004.

Gun Control Research-Small Arms Survey-2007  
No clear relationship between more guns and high levels of violence

Many people do not regard the Small Arms Survey (SAS), conducted out of Geneva, Switzerland as an advocate of civilian firearms' ownership. The Survey is probably best known for its August 2007 report (1), which indicated that there are an estimated nine guns for every ten people in the United States. This finding managed to find its way into many newspapers and to gain airtime on major networks.

A lesser-known conclusion of this report is the finding that "There's no clear relationship between more guns and higher levels of violence." For instance, many countries in Latin America have low levels of legal gun ownership and high rates of violence.

(Mexico is a prime example. A recent report in *The Denver Post* on 01-19-09 quotes the U.S. Joint Forces Command as describing the country south of our border as being in danger of "rapid and sudden collapse." This risk is caused by "criminal gangs and drug cartels" apparently unaffected by Mexico's draconian gun control laws.

Carl, Traci, "Lawlessness earns Mexico a spot on security-risk list," *The Associated Press, The Denver Post*, 01-19-09, page 10A.)

Keith Krause, Director of the Small Arms Survey, indicated that research seems to show that "gun violence often occurred in places undergoing rapid urban growth, and when lawless areas are created by extreme poverty and the absence of effective policing." Krause also decried the black market sale of guns and ammunition to criminals and gangs by military or police officials. (This involvement of government agency personnel is reminiscent of the corruption of American civil authorities by Prohibition and The War on Drugs.) Krause also said that European Union countries are experiencing increasing small arms smuggling activity.

The SAS findings are mirrored by a study done by the National Academy of the Sciences (2) and an international study done by researchers Kates and Mauser (3) (4), which find no credible causative relationships between gun ownership and violence.

(1) Associated Press, "Study: There Are 9 Guns for Every 10 Americans," August, 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,294976,00.html>

(2) National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Law and Justice, "Firearms and Violence, a Critical Review," 2004, [nasonline.org](http://nasonline.org)

(3) Kates, Don, Mauser, Gary, "Would Banning Firearms Reduce Murder and Suicide? A Review of International and Some Domestic Evidence," *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 2007.

(4) Lewin, Marshall, "Would Banning Firearms Reduce Murder and Suicide?" *America's 1<sup>st</sup> Freedom*, National Rifle Association, Palm Coast, FL, August 2007, page 32. (Firearms Coalition of Colorado PO Box 1454 Englewood, CO 80150-1454)

## **2013 JAMA Study from Harvard shows no effect of Firearms Laws on Gun Deaths**

The study, "Firearm legislation and firearm-related fatalities in the United States," was published 03-06-2013 in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

The criteria for the evaluation of the data for this study comes not from independent research, but from The Brady Center, previously known as Handgun Control, Inc., and the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, formerly The Legal Community Against Violence, both gun control organizations. The "scorecard" used to measure the supposed benefit of the gun laws has not been scientifically validated

The study left out the states of New Hampshire, Vermont, and North Dakota. The study also omitted data from the District of Columbia, which has strict gun laws and high crime rates.

The study only deals with the number of laws per state, and not with specific laws. The study's authors admit that the study appears to show correlation, but not causation.

Dr. Garen Wintemute, himself an advocate for gun control, writing in JAMA, critiques the study and calls for more research by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Academy of the Sciences (NAS). He seems to be unaware of the massive 2003 CDC review of the literature and the even more extensive 2004 NAS study that indicate that gun laws have no effect on crime, and that there is no causative relationship between gun ownership and crime, respectively.

In summary, the 2013 JAMA study by Fleegler and colleagues is based on an untested scoring system from admittedly biased organizations. The study only suggests correlation between more gun laws and reduced crime by cherry picking data sets. Causation remains an elusive goal for advocates of gun control.

Wheeler, Timothy, MD, "Harvard Study Shows No Effect of Firearms Laws on Gun Deaths," <http://www.thegunmag.com/harvard-study-shows-no-effect-of-firearm-laws-on-gun-deaths/>

Wintemute, Garen J., MD, MPH, "Responding to the Crisis of Firearms Violence in the United States" JAMA article. <http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1661391>

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Gun Control Research-Wright and Rossi Department of Justice Study  
(Deterrent effect of armed citizens upon criminal behavior)

Professors James D. Wright and Peter Rossi of the Social and Demographic Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts conducted a study in 1982 and 1983 paid for by the U.S. Department of Justice. (Professor Rossi was a former President of the American Sociological Association.) The researchers interviewed 1,874 imprisoned felons in ten states.

Professors Wright and Rossi initially believed that strict gun control deterred crime. The results of their research led them to the conclusion that armed citizens have a beneficial effect in reducing criminal behavior and that harsh laws, such as handgun bans could result in criminals using sawed off rifles and shotguns with more deadly results. 88% of the criminals surveyed by Wright and Rossi agreed with the statement that, "A criminal who wants a handgun is going to get one."

A 1986 review of the professors' work, *Armed and Considered Dangerous*, by Raymond G. Kessler of the Department of Criminal Justice of Memphis State University, concluded, "Although *Armed and Considered Dangerous* is not free of methodological problems, it is the best policy-oriented study of criminals and their guns available."

Wright and Rossi reported that:

81% of interviewees agreed that a "smart criminal" will try to determine if a potential victim is armed.

74% indicated that burglars avoided occupied dwellings, because of fear of being shot.

57% said that most criminals feared armed citizens more than the police.

40% of the felons said that they had been deterred from committing a particular crime, because they believed that the potential victim was armed.

57% of the felons who had used guns themselves said that they had encountered potential victims who were armed.

34% of the criminal respondents said that they had been scared off, shot at, wounded, or captured by an armed citizen.

Based on this government-funded research by Wright and Rossi, it would appear that armed citizens do have a deterrent effect on crime.

Wright, James D., Rossi, Peter H., Daly, Kathleen, *Under the Gun, Weapons, Crime, and Violence in America*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, 1983.

Wright, James D., Rossi, Peter H., *The Armed Criminal in America*, U.S. Department of Justice, 1985.

Wright, James D., Rossi, Peter H., *Armed and Considered Dangerous, a Survey of Felons and their Firearms*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, 1986.

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**Gun Control Research- Dr. Gary Kleck- Gun most effective way to resist robbery and assault- up to 2.5 million defensive gun uses per year by U.S. adults**

Dr. Kleck, a professor of criminology at Florida State University is a registered Democrat, a member of the ACLU, does not own guns, and takes no money from anyone on either side in the debate. In 1988, Kleck published an article in the journal, *Social Relations*. This article, the first major research effort that measured defensive gun use, was based on state and national studies.

Dr. Kleck estimated that about 1 million adults per year use a gun for self-defense in the U.S. Kleck's research included studies done for the anti-gun National Alliance Against Violence, and the National Crime Victimization Surveys. Kleck concluded that gun use was the most effective and safest way of resisting a robbery or assault, safer than not resisting, running away, or using another method of resistance.

In 1991, Dr. Kleck published *Point Blank: guns and violence in America*. The book won an award in 1993 from the American Society of Criminology for an "outstanding contribution" to the field.

Not satisfied with the sources for his previous work, Dr. Kleck and his colleague Marc Gertz created a new survey with a sample size of about 5,000 individuals to better measure defensive gun use. With the new survey, Kleck and Gertz estimated between 2.2 to 2.5 million defensive gun uses per year in the U.S. Women were the defenders in about 46% of the cases reported. Less than 25% of the reporting defensive users indicated that they fired a shot during the incident under consideration. There is a less than 1% chance that a defender's gun will be taken from him or her by an assailant, according to Dr. Kleck.

Dr. Marvin Wolfgang was asked to critique the Kleck/Gertz Study. Dr. Wolfgang's review included the following: "I am as strong a gun-control advocate as can be found among... criminologists... they (Kleck and Gertz) have provided an almost clear-cut case of methodologically sound research in support of something I have theoretically opposed for years... the use of a gun in defense against a criminal perpetrator... I do not like their conclusions that having a gun can be useful, but I cannot fault their methodology."

The absolute lowest estimates of about 100,000 defensive gun uses per year in this country come from the Department of Justice, using U.S. Census information. There is no question in the survey that asks about defensive firearms' use. This estimate is probably a serious undercount.

The Clinton Justice Department funded what was supposed to be a counter study debunking the Kleck/Gertz research. In 1996, anti-gun researchers Ludwig and Cook came up with about 3 million defensive gun uses per year. They then decided that it is impossible to measure the true number of persons who use guns in America for self-defense.

The research done by Kleck and Gertz indicates that defensive use of firearms by private citizens is a significant factor in stopping criminal violence. The research also lends itself to the conclusion that in the vast majority of cases where a gun is used to resist robbery or assault, no shots are fired.

Sources:

- Blackman, Paul H., Ph.D., "Armed Citizens and Crime Control," <http://www.nraila.org/issues/articles/read.aspx?id=125>.
- Kopel, David, Independence Institute, panel discussion on guns and self-defense, Warwick Hotel, Denver, Colorado, July, 2009. <http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=60107462>
- "How Often Are Firearms Used in Self-Defense?" [http://www.guncite.com/gun\\_control\\_gcdause.html](http://www.guncite.com/gun_control_gcdause.html)
- Stevens, Richard W., "Statistics and 'Gun Control,'" Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership, Inc, <http://www.jpfo.org/filegen-a-m/data-docs.htm>.

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## Research

### Professor David Kopel on Defensive Gun Uses

There is usually some discussion concerning defensive gun uses by armed defenders that stop potential spree killings. We sometimes hear that defenders have not stopped a single mass shooting. This is not the case.

Since most spree killings occur in "gun free" zones, more properly named, "criminal-safe free fire zones," it is remarkable that defenders have been able to react at all in time to defend innocent would-be victims; however, David Kopel, Second Amendment expert, author, law professor, and Director of Research at the Independence Institute, has identified a number of cases where armed citizens have stopped spree killings. To quote Professor Kopel at length:

"Over the last 25 years, there have been at least 10 cases in which armed persons have stopped incipient mass murder: a Shoney's restaurant in Alabama (1991); Pearl High School in Mississippi (1997); a middle school dance in Edinboro, Pennsylvania (1998); Appalachian School of Law in Virginia (2002); Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City (2007); New Life Church in Colorado (2007); Players Bar and Grill in Nevada (2008); Sullivan Central High School in Tennessee (2010); Clackamas Mall in Oregon (2012; three days before Newtown); and Sister Marie Lenahan Wellness Center in Darby, Pennsylvania (2014).

Gun prohibitionists insist that armed teachers, or even armed school guards, won't make a difference, but in the real world, they have- even at the Columbine shooting, where the armed school resource officer (a sheriff's deputy, in that case) was in the parking lot when the first shots were fired. The officer fired two long-distance shots and drove the killers off the school patio, saving the lives of some of the wounded students there...

The contrasts are striking and tragic. The attempted massacre at New Life Church in Colorado Springs was stopped by a private citizen with a gun; the massacre at South Carolina's Emanuel AME wasn't. The mass murder at Pearl High School was stopped by a private citizen (the vice principal) with a gun; the mass murder at Newtown's elementary school wasn't stopped until the police arrived. The shootings at Appalachian Law School ended when private citizens (armed students) subdued the gunman; the shootings at Virginia Tech continued until the police arrived. More licensed-carry laws that reduce the number of *pretend* gun-free zones are an effective way to save lives."

Some arguments put forth by proponents of "criminal-safe free fire zones" rest on the premise that innocents will be caught in a "crossfire" between the defenders and the criminal or terrorist involved in a spree killing. The most deadly position for an innocent adult or child is to be at the mercy of a killer without effective opposition by defenders, who has the time to select his or her victims and slay them without regard for his or her own safety. Even individuals protected by upper body armor are vulnerable to wounds to the pelvic region and legs, or to well-directed head shots. Even rounds deflected by body armor may confuse and distract the criminal or terrorist and allow potential victims to escape.

Kopel, David, *Costs and Consequences of Gun Control*, Cato Institute Policy Analysis # 784, 12-01-2015.

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