

Harvard Journal Obliterates Notion that Gun Ownership is Correlated with Violence



Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy Confirms that Reducing Gun Ownership by Law-Abiding Citizens Does Nothing to Reduce Violence Worldwide

By now, any informed American is familiar with Dr. John R. Lott, Jr.'s famous axiom of "More Guns, Less Crime." In other words, American jurisdictions that allow law-abiding citizens to exercise their Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms are far safer and more crime-free than jurisdictions that enact stringent "gun control" laws.

Very simply, the ability of law-abiding citizens to possess firearms has helped reduce violent crime in America.

Now, a *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* study shows that this is not just an American phenomenon. According to the study, worldwide gun ownership rates do not correlate with higher murder or suicide rates. In fact, many nations with high gun ownership have significantly lower murder and suicide rates.

In their piece entitled *Would Banning Firearms Reduce Murder and Suicide? A Review of International and some Domestic Evidence*, Don B. Kates and Gary Mauser eviscerate "the mantra that more guns mean more deaths and that fewer guns, therefore, mean fewer deaths." In so doing, the authors provide fascinating historical insight into astronomical murder rates in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and they dispel the myths that widespread gun ownership is somehow unique to the United States or that America suffers from the developed world's highest murder rate.

To the contrary, they establish that Soviet murder rates far exceeded American murder rates, and continue to do so today, despite Russia's extremely stringent gun prohibitions. By 2004, they show, the Russian murder rate was nearly four times higher than the American rate.

More fundamentally, Dr. Kates and Dr. Mauser demonstrate that other developed nations such as Norway, Finland, Germany, France and Denmark maintain high rates of gun ownership, yet possess murder rates lower than other developed nations in which gun ownership is much more restricted.

For example, handguns are outlawed in Luxembourg, and gun ownership extremely rare, yet its murder rate is nine times greater than in Germany, which has one of the highest gun ownership rates in Europe. As another example, Hungary's murder rate is nearly three times higher than nearby Austria's, but Austria's gun ownership rate is over eight times higher than Hungary's. "Norway," they note, "has far and away Western Europe's highest household gun ownership rate (32%), but also its lowest murder rate. The Netherlands," in contrast, "has the lowest gun ownership rate in Western Europe (1.9%) ... yet the Dutch gun murder rate is higher than the Norwegian."

Dr. Kates and Dr. Mauser proceed to dispel the mainstream misconception that lower rates of violence in Europe are somehow attributable to gun control laws. Instead, they reveal, "murder in Europe was at an all-time low *before* the gun controls were introduced." As the authors note, "strict controls did not stem the general trend of ever-growing violent crime throughout the post-WWII industrialized world."

Citing England, for instance, they reveal that "when it had no firearms restrictions [in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries], England had little violent crime." By the late 1990s, however, "England moved from stringent controls to a complete ban on all handguns and many types of long guns." As a result, "by the year 2000, violent crime had so increased that England and Wales had Europe's highest violent crime rate, far surpassing even the United States." In America, on the other hand, "despite constant and substantially increasing gun ownership, the United States saw progressive and dramatic reductions in criminal violence in the 1990s."

Critically, Dr. Kates and Dr. Mauser note that "the fall in the American crime rate is even more impressive when compared with the rest of the world," where 18 of the 25 countries surveyed by the British Home Office suffered violent crime increases during that same period.

Furthermore, the authors highlight the important point that while the American gun murder rate often exceeds that in other nations, the *overall* per capita murder rate in other nations (including other means such as strangling, stabbing, beating, etc.) is oftentimes much higher than in America.

The reason that gun ownership doesn't correlate with murder rates, the authors show, is that violent crime rates are determined instead by underlying cultural factors. "Ordinary people," they note, "simply do not murder." Rather, "the murderers are a small minority of extreme antisocial aberrants who manage to obtain guns whatever the level of gun ownership" in their society.

Therefore, "banning guns cannot alleviate the socio-cultural and economic factors that are the real determinants of violence and crime rates." According to Dr. Kates and Dr. Mauser, "there is no reason for laws prohibiting gun possession by ordinary, law-abiding, responsible adults because such people virtually never commit murder. If one accepts that such adults are far more likely to be victims of violent crime than to commit it, disarming them becomes not just unproductive but counter-productive."

John Lott couldn't have stated it better himself.

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