



Will Gun Control Make Us Safe? Debunking the Myths

An evaluation of firearm laws in Canada
and in the English Commonwealth

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An invited presentation:

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Outline of presentation



- Who is Gary Mauser?
- Guns in Canada
- Evaluating gun laws
 - Public safety
 - Public health
- A natural quasi-experiment
- What works?
- Conclusions

Who is Gary Mauser?



-
- Social psychologist
 - Published two books on political marketing
 - Published 40 + articles on guns and violence
 - Immigrant from California
 - Canadian citizen for over 25 years

Warning - Statistics Ahead!



-
- Myth: statisticians can achieve any result they want by manipulating the procedures used
 - Thus, no one should trust results that do not confirm their expectations
 - Recommendation: Be skeptical, not cynical

Firearms in Canada



-
- Canadians have owned firearms for centuries
 - Many early settlers were retired British soldiers
 - Hunters, trappers, farmers
 - The Canadian militia has repulsed invasions

Firearms in Canada



- **Current reasons for owning firearms:**

- Hunting 73%
- Target shooting 13%
- Pest control 8%
- Protection 6%

Source: GPC Research, 2001

Firearms in Canada



- **Percentage of households with firearms:**

1976	35%
1992	27%
1998	21%
2001	17%

Source: Survey reports in GPC Research, 2001

Canadian firearms legislation



-
- 1977 police screening for firearm purchasers
 - 1991 stiffer rules for ownership,
a variety of firearms prohibited
magazine capacity limited
 - 1995 small-calibre handguns banned
 - 1998 owner licensing, universal firearm
registration

The assumptions behind universal firearms registration



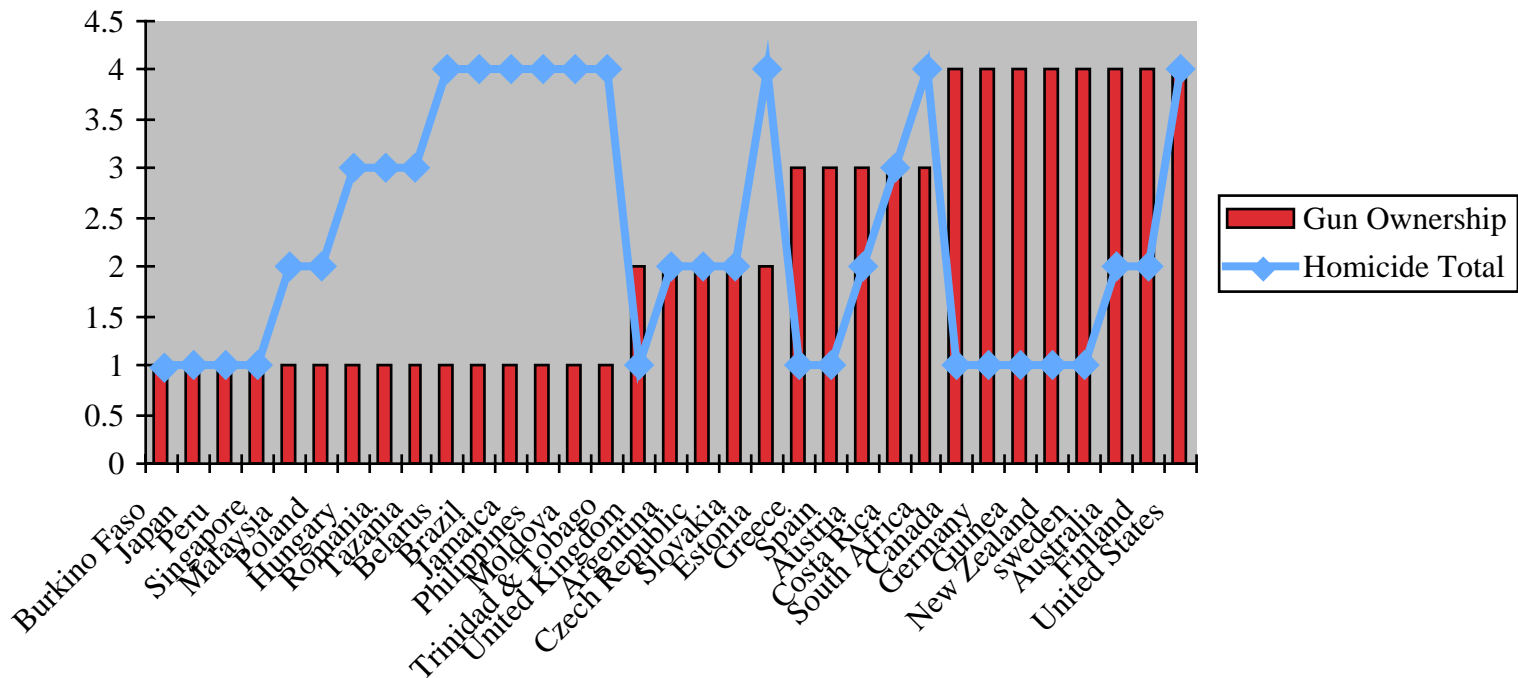
- Registration restricts the availability of firearms
- Reduced availability will cut total criminal violence and domestic violence
- Limited availability will reduce both firearm suicides and total suicides

The “weapon instrumentality” hypothesis



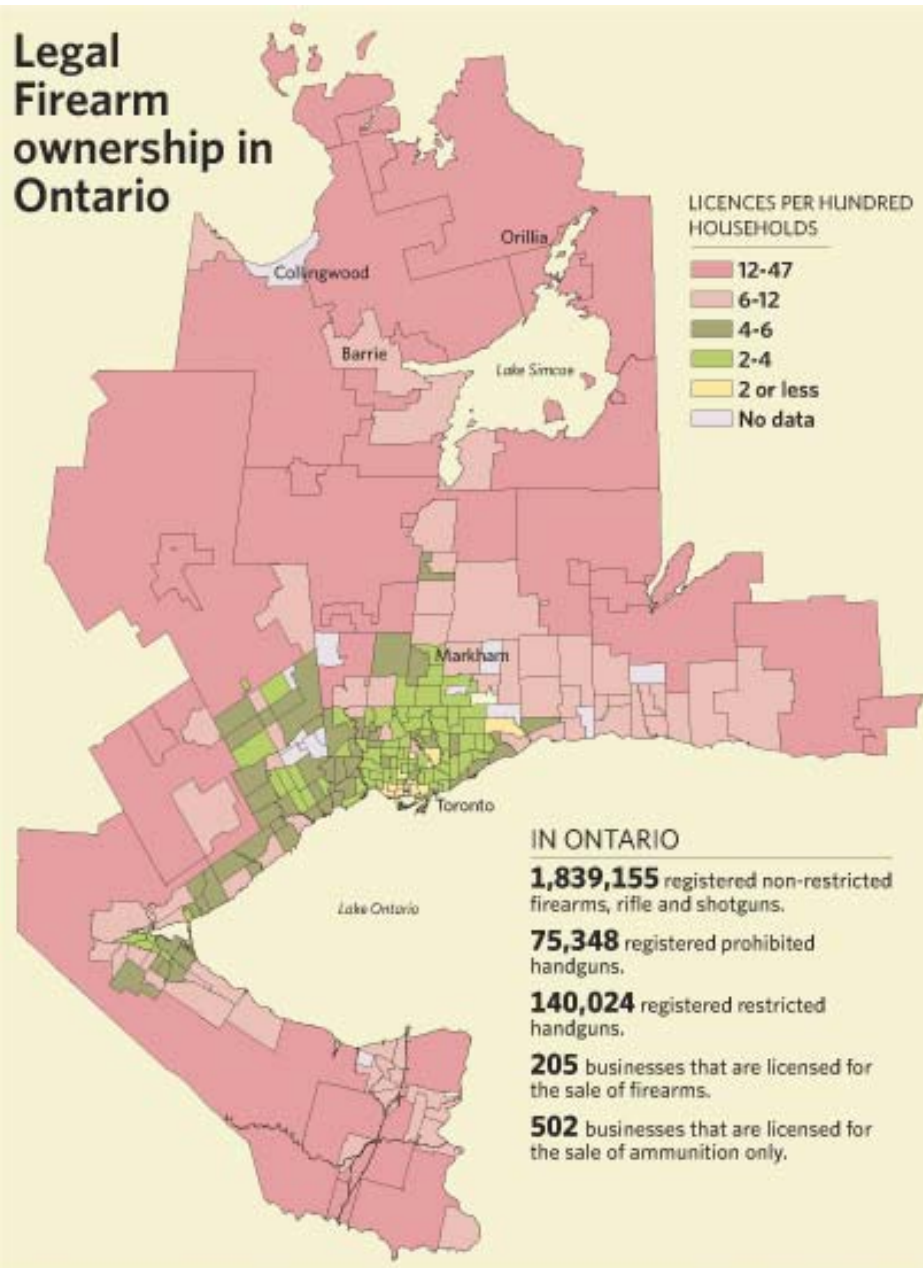
- The availability of firearms precipitates violence
 - Triggers pull fingers
- Availability increases the likelihood of death or serious injury
 - In assault
 - In robbery
 - In suicide

Homicide Rates and Gun Ownership



Source: Report to the Secretary General of the United Nations (7-3-1997),
from Greenwood (2000)

Legal Firearm ownership in Ontario



Problems with “instrumentality” hypothesis



- Confuses deadliness of instrument with intentions of assailant
- Many alternative deadly weapons available
- Assaults involving firearms cause fewer injuries -- and less serious injuries

Injuries During Assault



	Gun	Knife	Club
Major injuries	6%	11%	14%
Minor injuries	40%	40%	60%
No injuries	52%	47%	24%
Unknown	2%	2%	2%
No incidents	812	5,760	5,432

Do restrictive gun laws create a safer society?



- The goals of the firearm registry are:
 - To cut firearms violence
 - To reduce domestic violence
 - To cut total homicide
 - To reduce violent crime
 - To improve public safety
- Allan Rock, addressing Parliament, Feb 16 & June 13, 1995

How can we measure improvements in public safety?

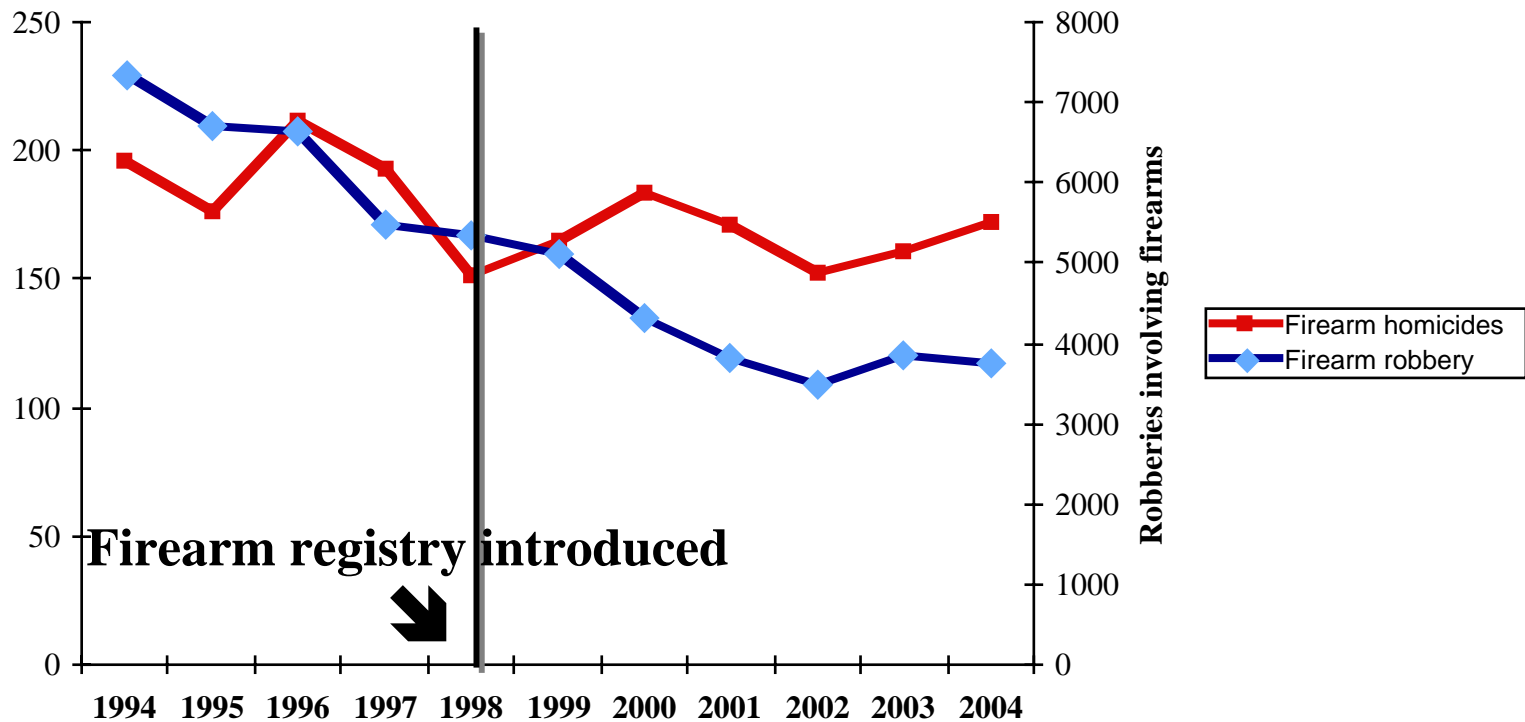


- Criminal violence involving guns should fall
- Violent crime rates should fall

- Homicide rates should fall
- Gun homicide should fall

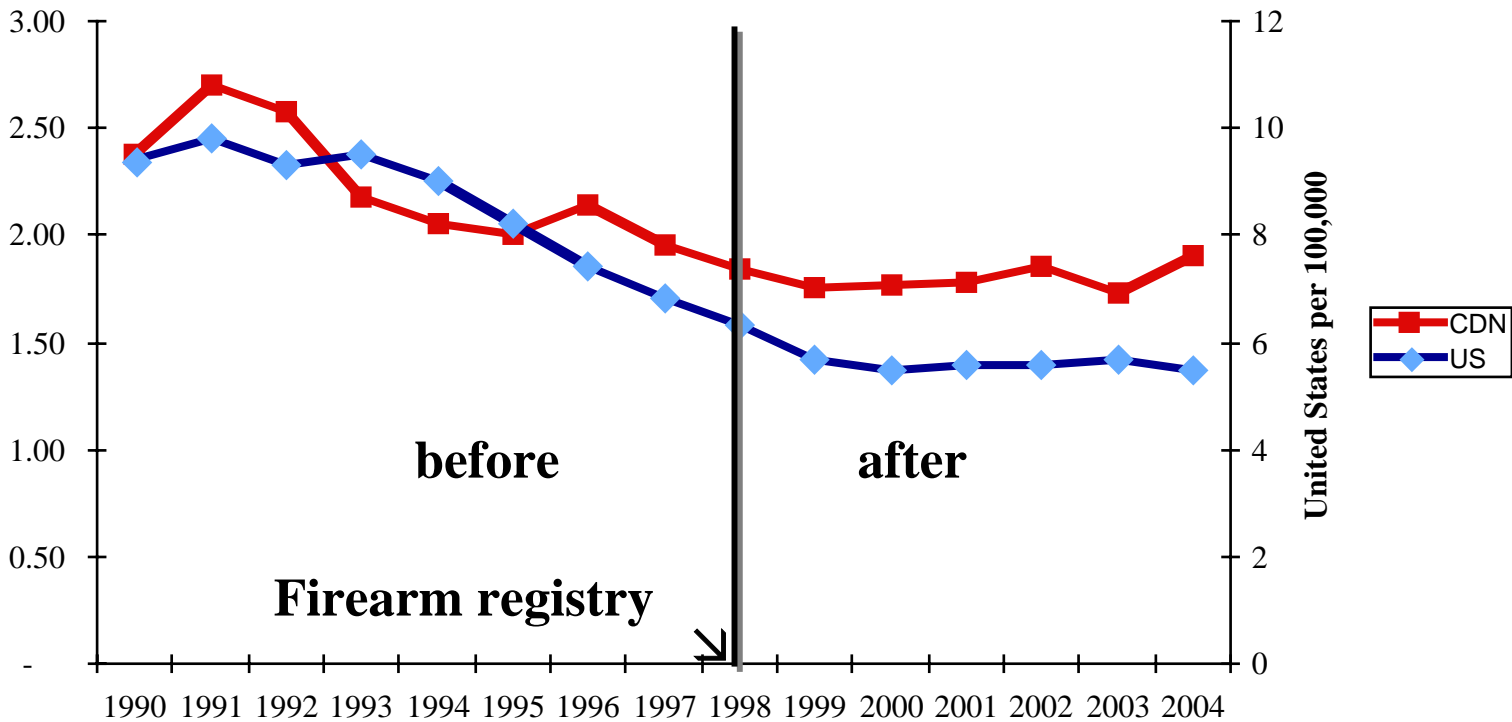
- Suicide rates should fall

Gun crime has declined, but not gun homicide



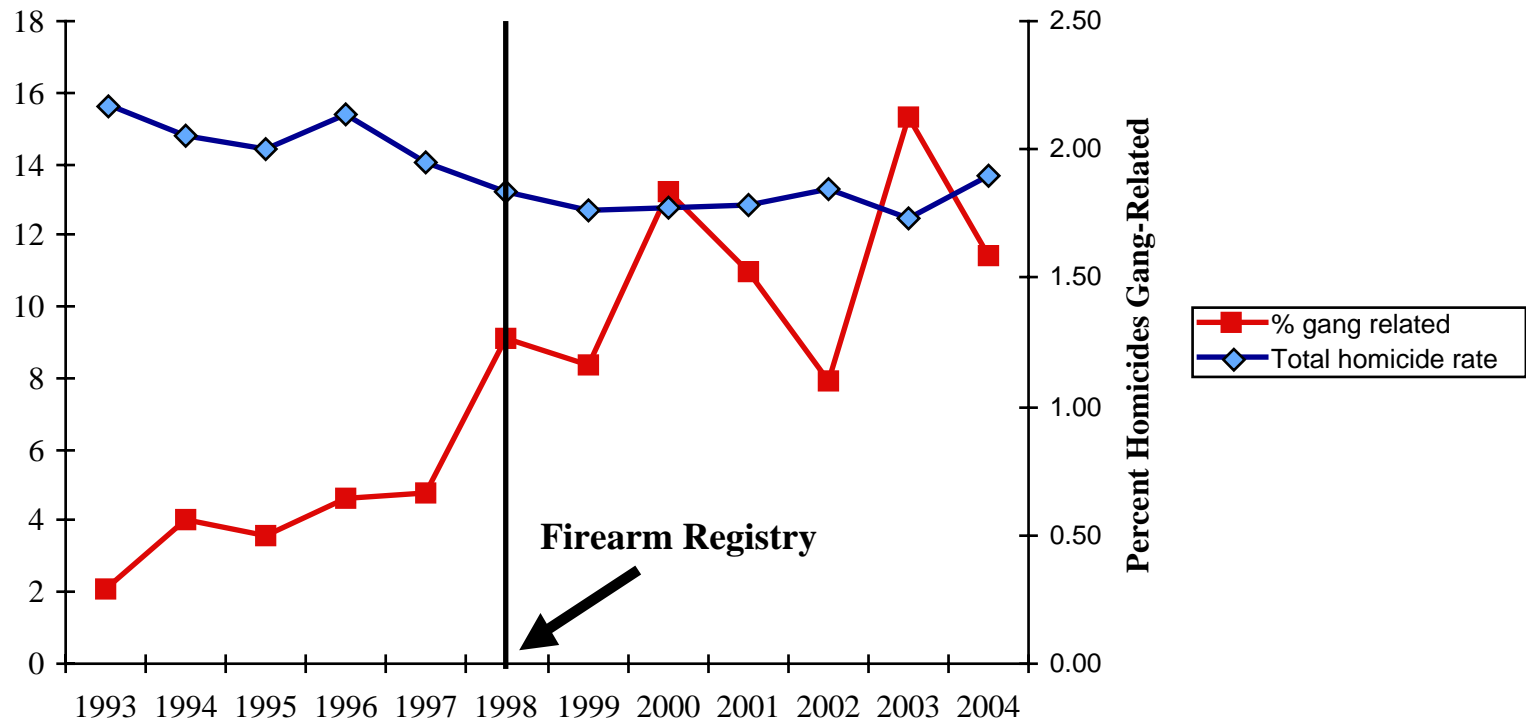
Source: Juristat, Crime Statistics in Canada, 2004

Homicide stable since 1998



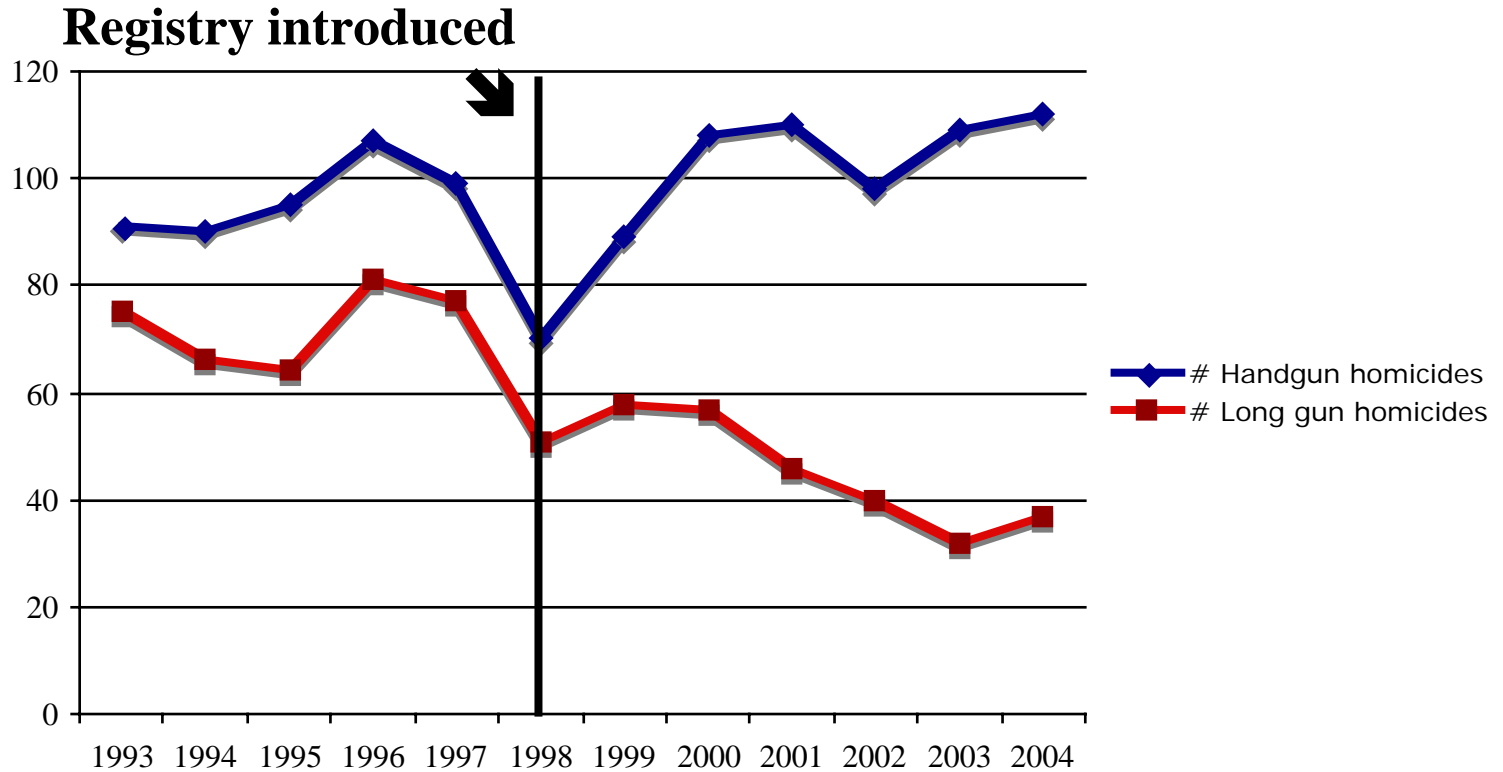
Source: FBI and Juristat

Gang-related homicides



Source: Dauvergne, Homicide in Canada, 2004

Handgun homicides have increased

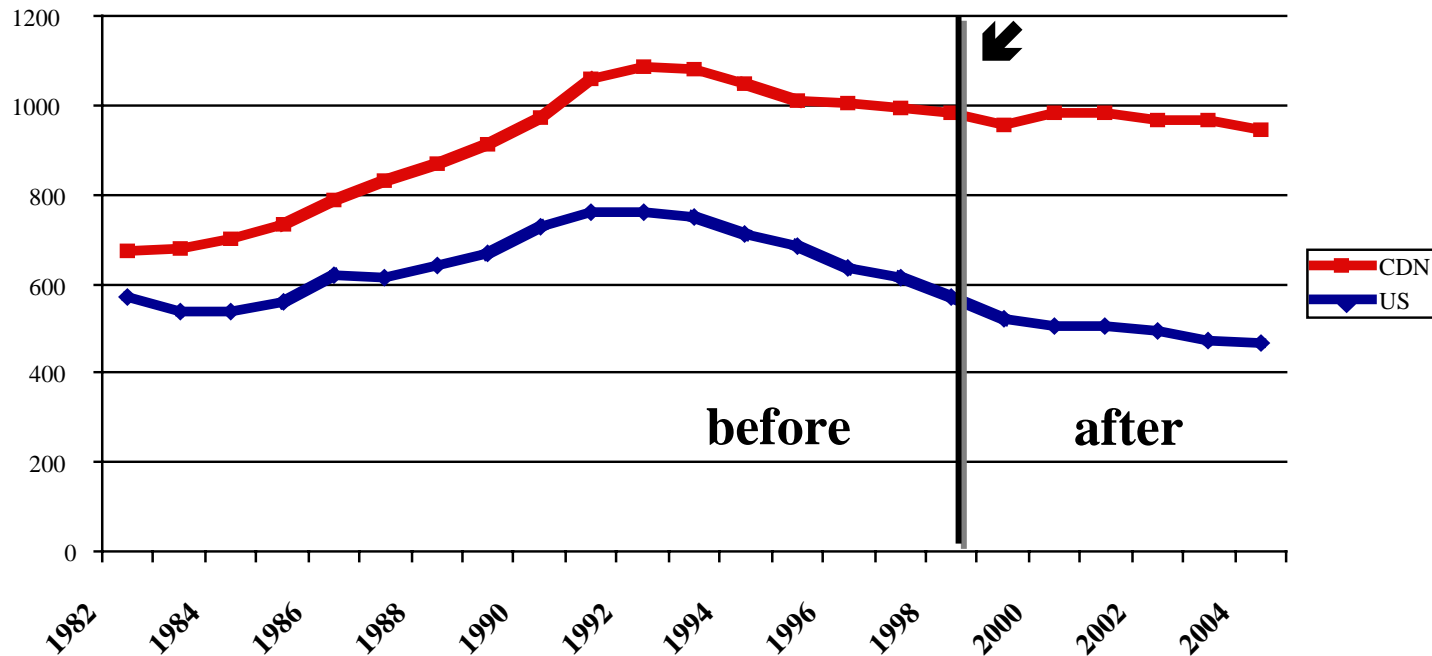


Source: Jursitat, Stats Can

Violent Crime Stable

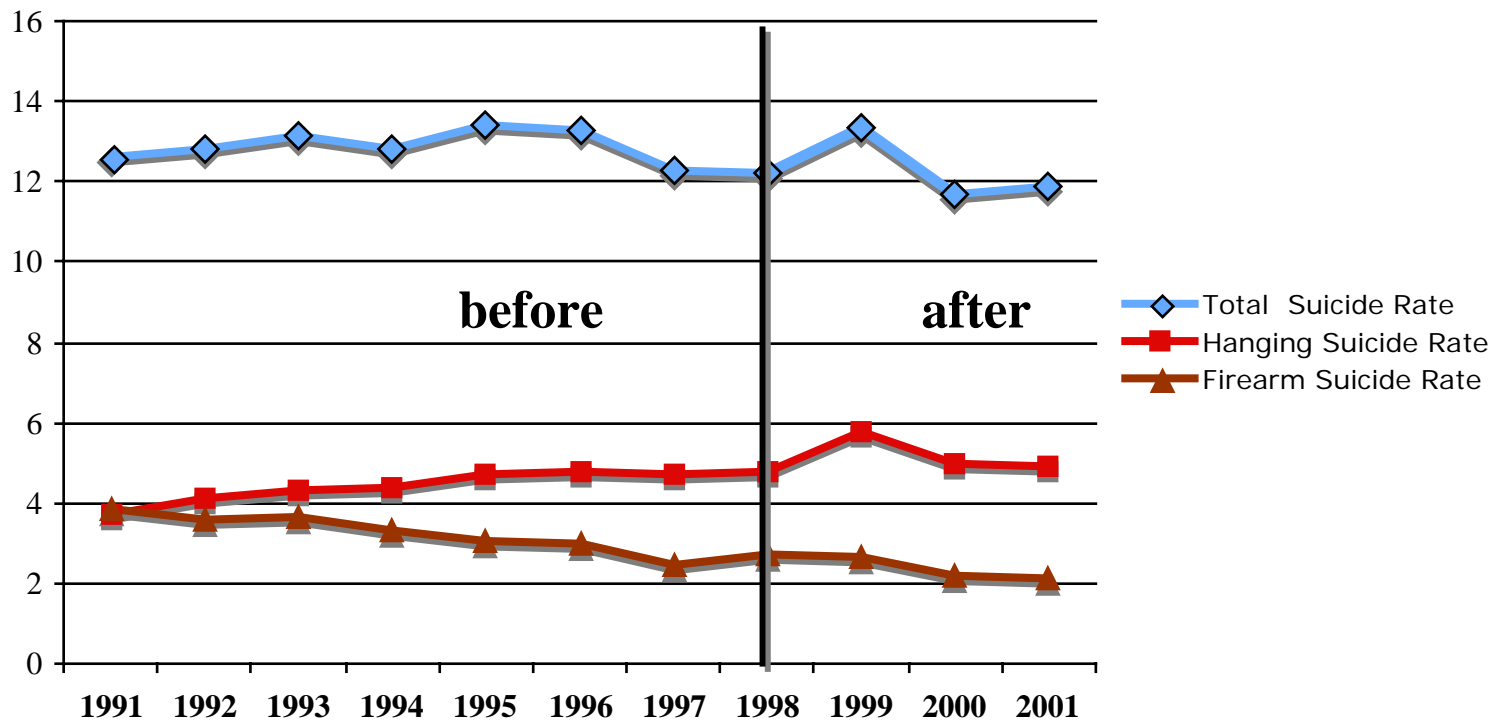


Firearm Registry Introduced



Source: FBI and Juristat

Total Suicides Stable



Source: Statistics Canada

Since 1998



-
- Homicide rates have **increased** by 3%
 - Gang-related homicides **increased** five fold
 - Percent gun-related homicide **unchanged**
 - Violent crime rates have **decreased** by 4%
 - Suicide rates have **decreased** by 2%

 - Registry not linked with these small changes

Firearms Registry



-
- **2 million licensed owners**
 - 1.3 million POLs have not had police checks
 - **3 - 5 million firearm owners [est]**
 - **7.1 million firearms registered**
 - 5.8 million firearm registrations not verified
 - **12 - 15 million firearms [est]**

Summary Evaluation



- Total costs exceeded \$1 billion in 2005
 - Originally estimated to cost \$2 million
- Corruption investigations continuing
- Incomplete coverage [est approx 50%]
- High percentage of error and omissions
- No demonstrable effect on public safety

What went wrong?



- The Canadian government made two mistakes:
 - Trusted public health advocates
 - Ignored the experiences of other countries with firearm registration

Problems with the public health approach



- Unscientific and moralistic
- Greatly exaggerate the dangers of ordinary gun owners
- Advocates are radicals in sheep's clothing

Advocacy, not science



- Public health studies often violate scientific rules
- Ad hominem arguments
- Disconfirming studies ignored
- Results over-interpreted
- False citations of prior research
- Papers often published without proper peer review

Advocacy, not science



- Public health studies rely upon misleading measure like “gun deaths”
- Conduct cost-benefit studies but ignore benefits
- Public health studies oversimplify the epidemiological model

Defending the firearm registry



- Used frequently by “public safety officers”
 - 6,500 queries daily over last quarter
 - 5.7 million times since Dec 1/1998
- Used for 762 affidavits that allowed police to obtain search or arrest warrants or were used as evidence in court cases (Jan - March 2006)

Critique of defense



-
- Claim: Registry used frequently
 - Activity is not a measure of effectiveness
 - The bulk of ‘uses’ are automatic or maintenance
 - Claim: Many affidavits prepared
 - Legitimate or over-reaction?
 - Scofflaws or dangerous people?
 - Arresting owners for unsafe storage or criminals for theft?

Defending the firearm registry



- Police investigations aided by information from gun registry
- Allows police to know where the guns are
- Gun deaths have declined

Critique of defense



-
- Claim: investigations aided by registry
 - Not critical to solving a single violent crime
 - Claim: Know where the guns are -
 - RCMP does not trust information in registry
 - Many errors and omissions
 - Approximately 50% of owners not in registry
 - Claim: Gun deaths declined --
 - but no lives saved -- total homicides and suicides have not declined

Source of 'crime guns'?



- Police studies
- Statistics Canada
- 'lost or missing' government firearms

Firearms used in homicide



-
- Homicide Survey Project (CCJS)
 - 1,349 firearms-related homicides (1997-2004)

748 firearms registration status known

16% found in the registry

A police study of 'crime guns'



-
- Toronto Police Services (2004)
 - 123 guns identified as 'crime guns'
-
- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 67% | origin impossible to determine |
| 9% | stolen from Canadian gun owners |
| 24% | smuggled from US |

Another study of 'crime guns'



-
- Toronto Police Services (2005)
 - 214 guns identified as 'crime guns'
-
- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 45% | origin impossible to determine |
| 16% | stolen from Canadian gun owners |
| 38% | smuggled from US |

More studies of 'crime guns'



-
- Toronto Police Annual Report (2001)
2% stolen from Canadian gun owners
 - Peel Regional Police, Project Gun Runner (1993)
14% stolen from Canadian gun owners

How many 'crime guns' come from police/military?



- 108 guns reported lost or missing by RCMP in 2003
- Over 400 guns reported lost or missing by Canadian military in 2002
- Police and military do not have to register their firearms
- Police and military do not have to report regularly lost/stolen guns to Parliament



A natural quasi-experiment

- The justice system in the United States has increasingly diverged from that in Britain and the Commonwealth:
 - Arrest/conviction rates higher in the US,
 - Sentencing/punishment more severe, and
 - Qualified citizens can legally carry concealed handguns.

Please Note



- To assess the effect of laws, we must compare **trends** across countries
- A direct comparison of nations is inappropriate
- Police statistics, despite their limitations, are the best international measure

National differences have diverse causes



- Demography -- e.g., age, race, culture
- National history
- Economic patterns
- Welfare systems
- Immigration patterns

A comparison of crime trends in selected countries with the US



- Australia, Great Britain and Canada introduced restrictive general firearms laws in the 1990s:
- The Republic of Ireland and Jamaica imposed more sweeping firearm bans in the 1970s:

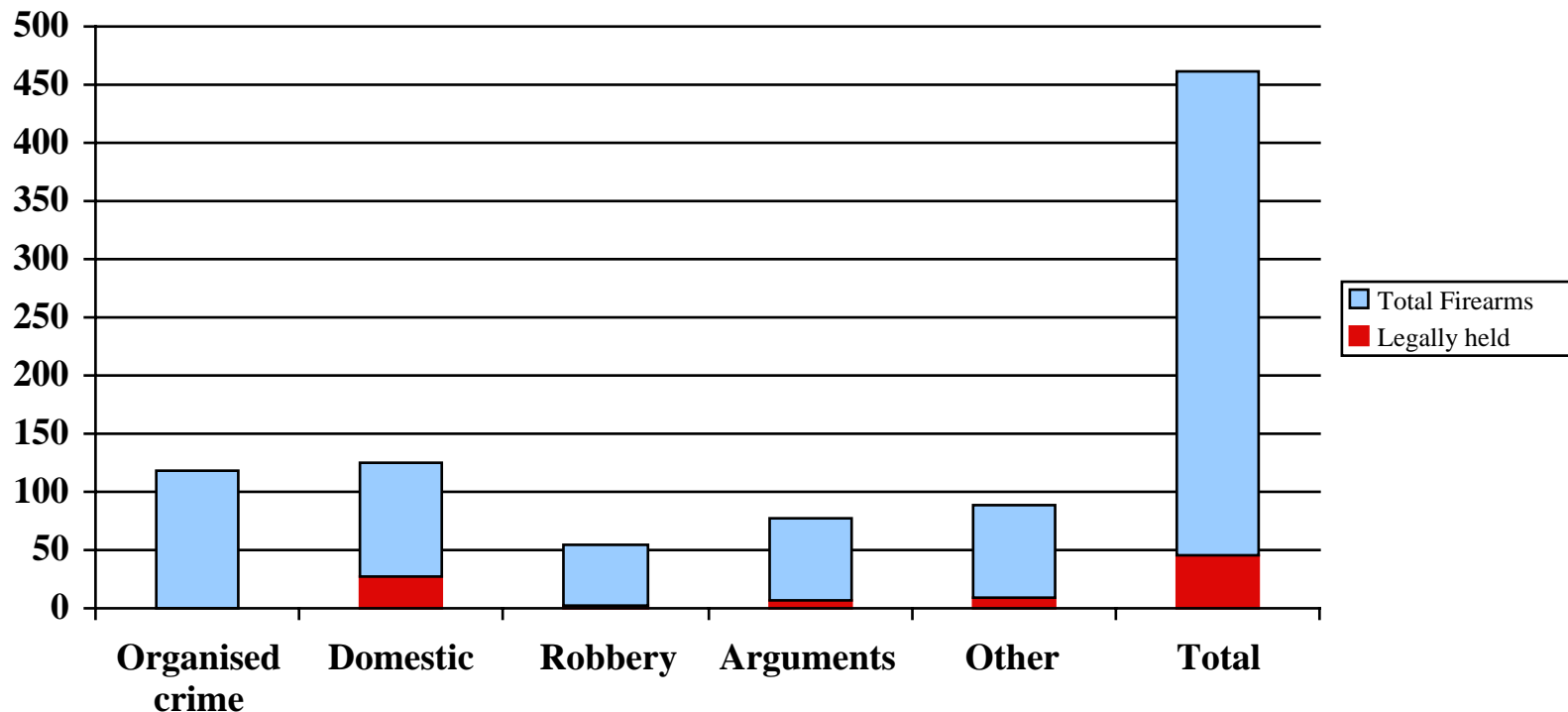
Great Britain

Firearm laws have targeted legal owners



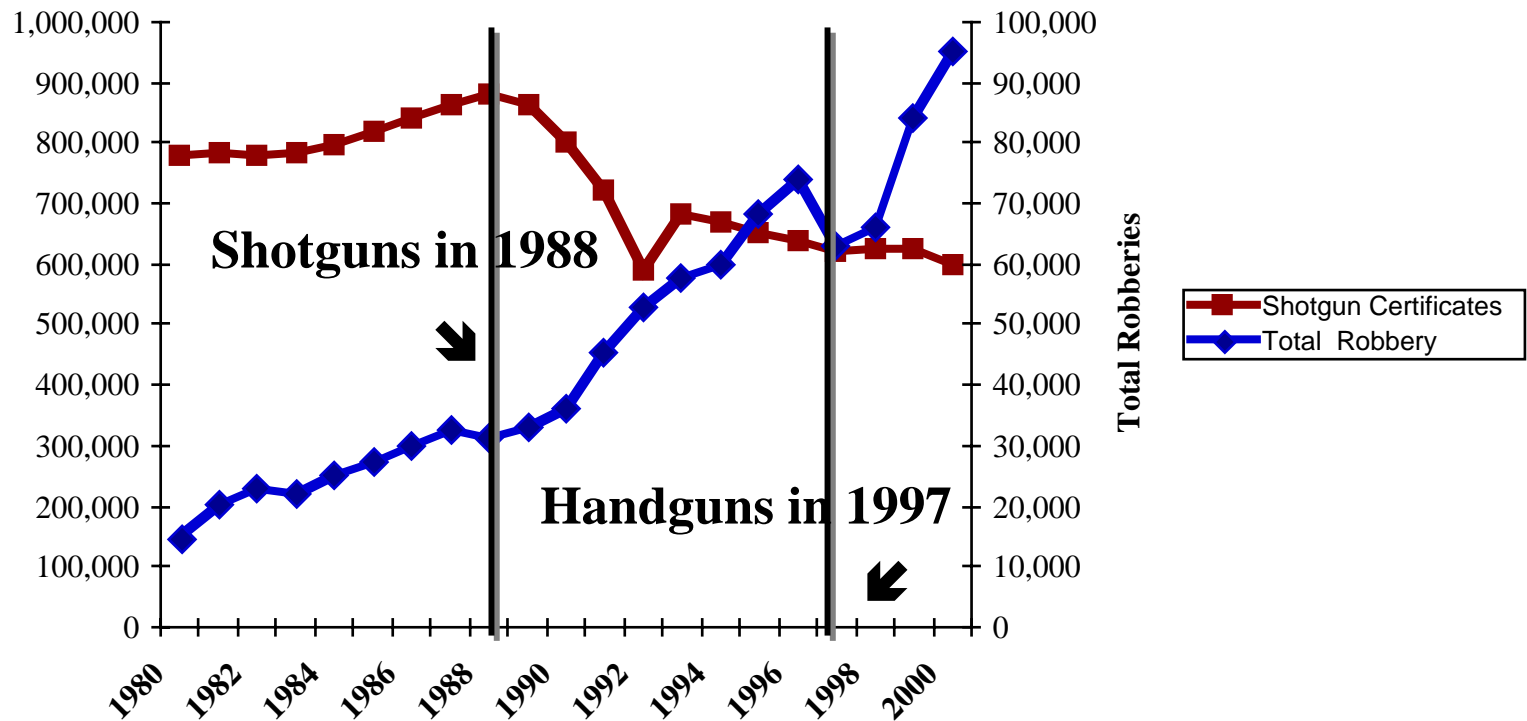
-
- The Firearms Amendment of 1988 was brought in following the Hungerford incident
 - Brought in shotgun licences
 - The Firearms Amendment of 1997 was brought in after the Dunblane shooting
 - Prohibited and confiscated all legally-owned handguns

Very few firearms used in homicide are legally held



Source: Criminal Statistics, E&W, 2000, T 3D

Robbery increased but (legal) gun ownership decreased

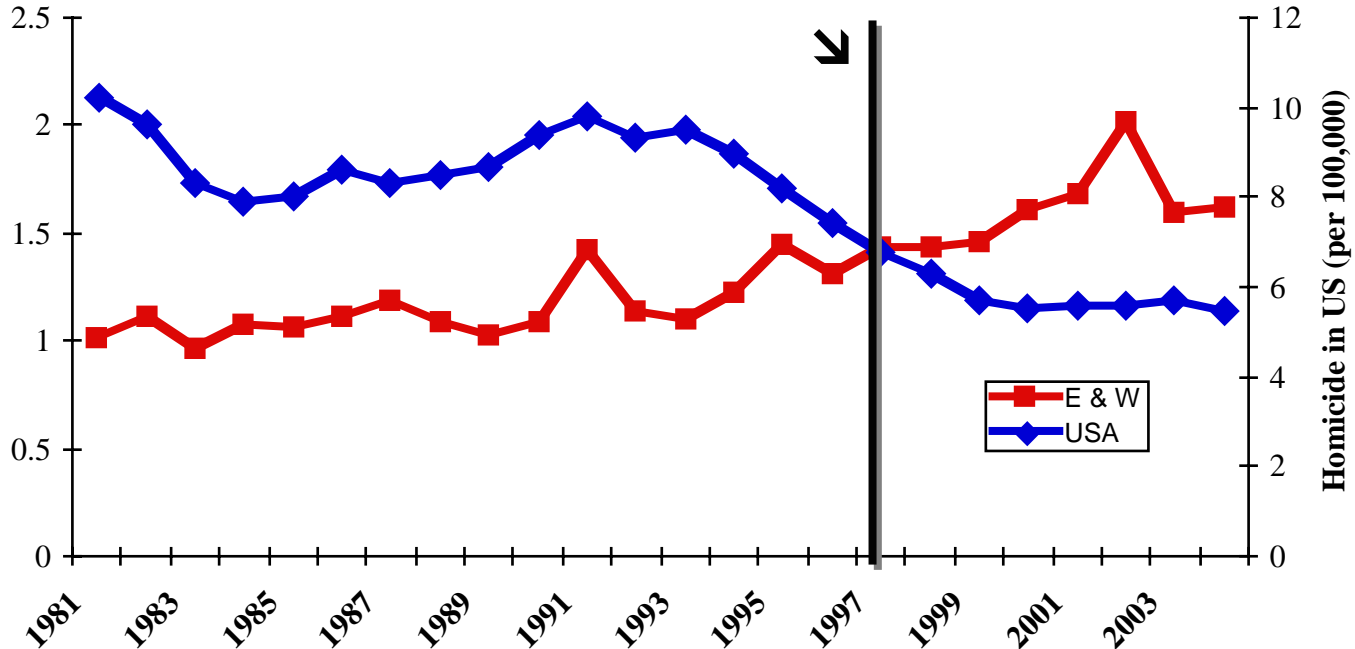


Source: Greenwood, 2001

English homicide rates increased after 1997

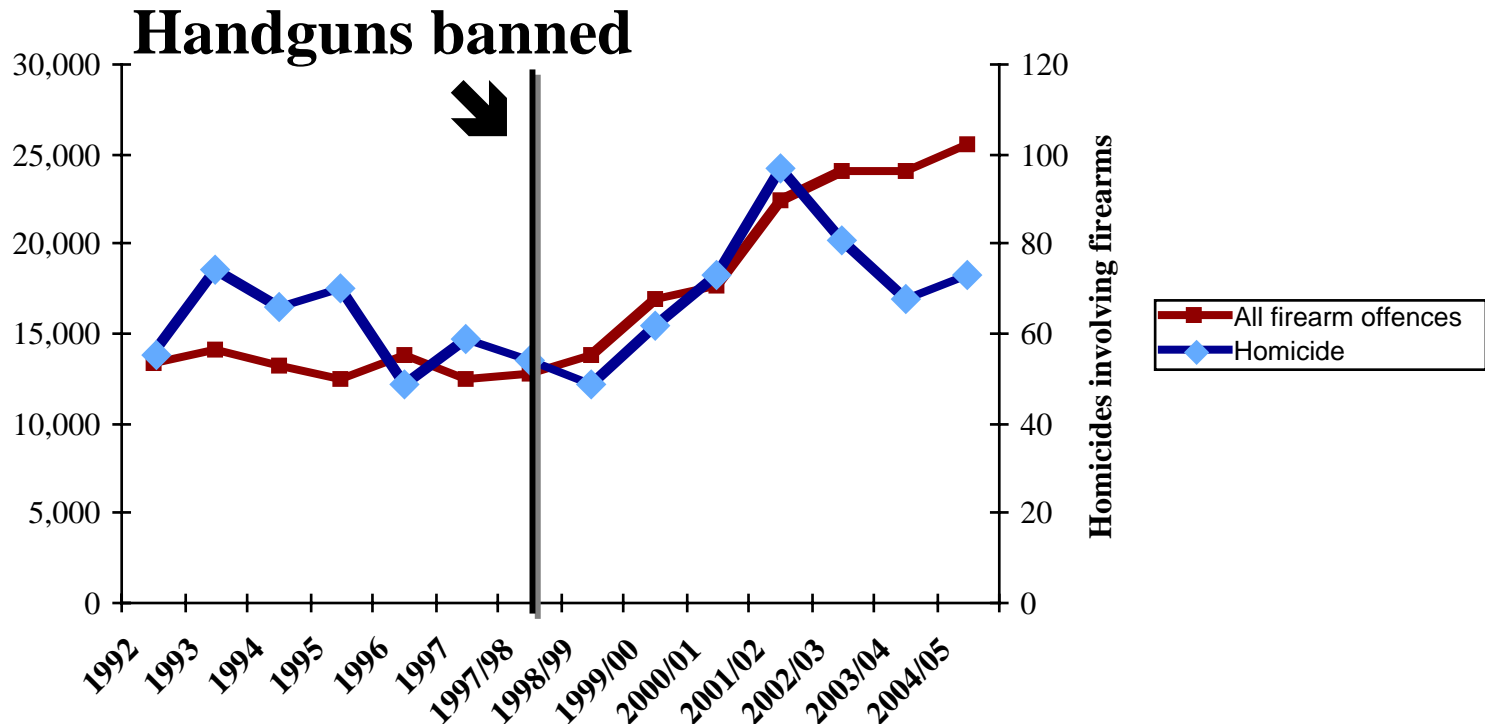


Handguns banned in Britain in 1997



Source: FBI and Home Office

Firearms violence in England increased

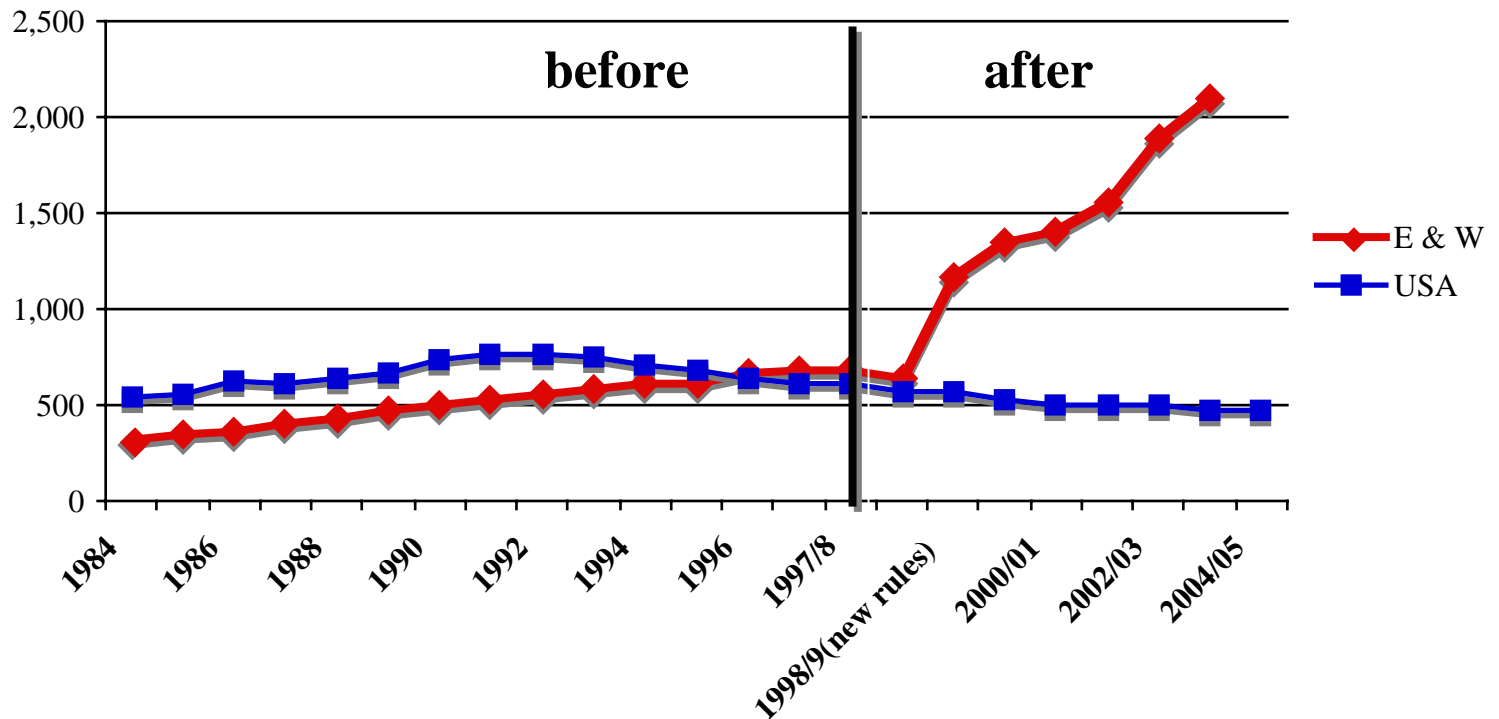


Source: Home Office, Crime in England 2003/04, Crime in England 2004/05

Violent crime rate increased in England and Wales



Handguns banned in Britain in 1997



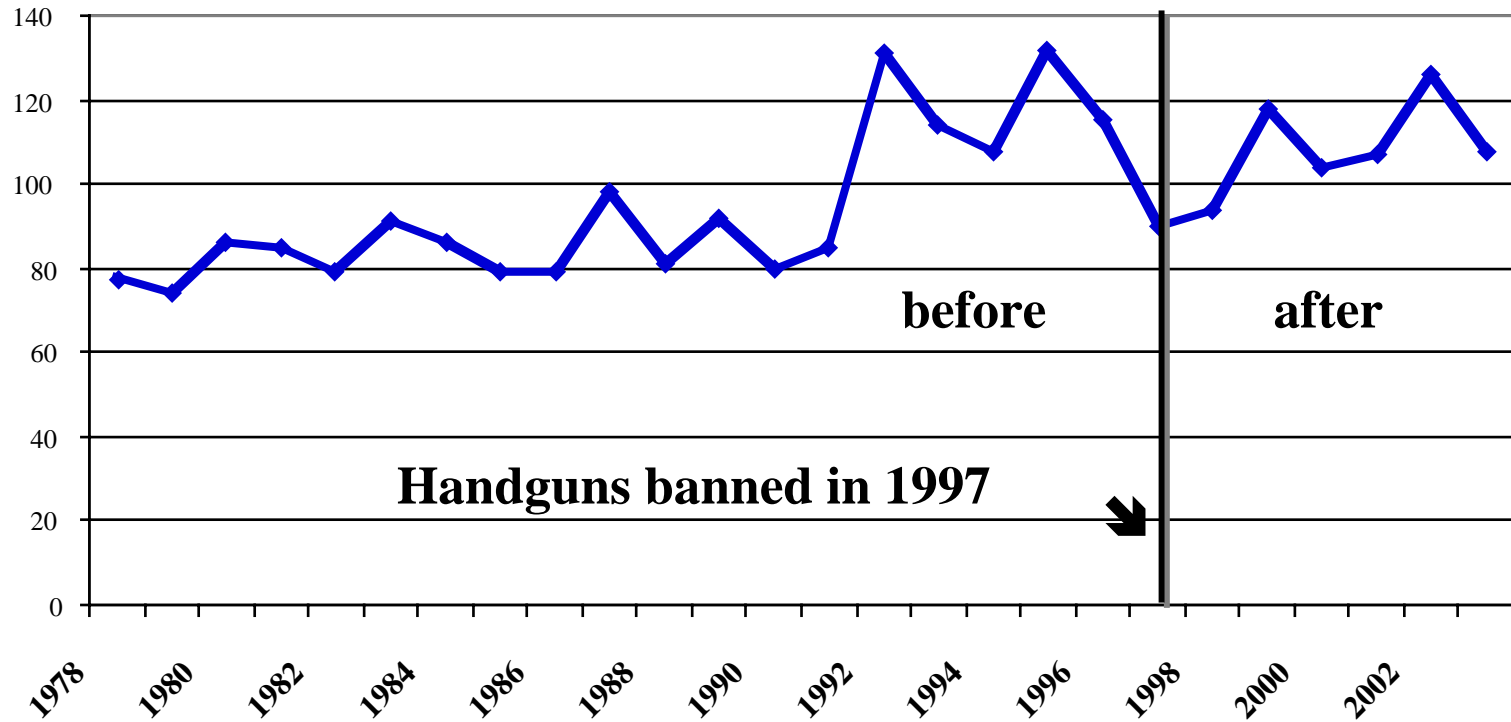
Sources: Home Office and FBI

Comparing crime in England and US (2004)



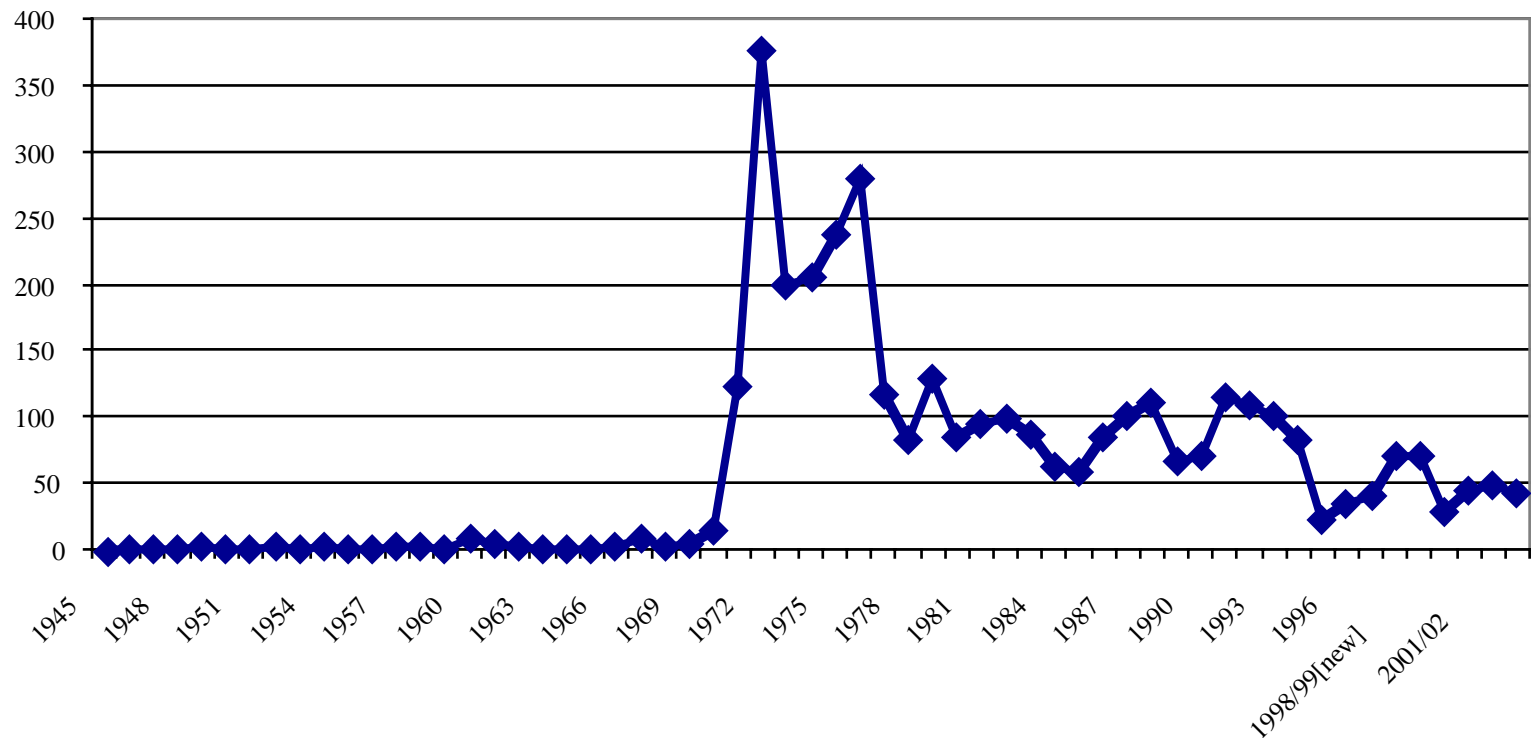
	England	United States
Homicide	1.6	5.5
Rape	26	32
Robbery	167	137
Assault	452	291
Motor Vehicle theft	435	421
Burglary	1,543	730

No change in homicide in Scotland



Source: Scottish Executive

Murder declined in Northern Ireland



Source: Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland, National Statistics

Australia

Australian firearms legislation

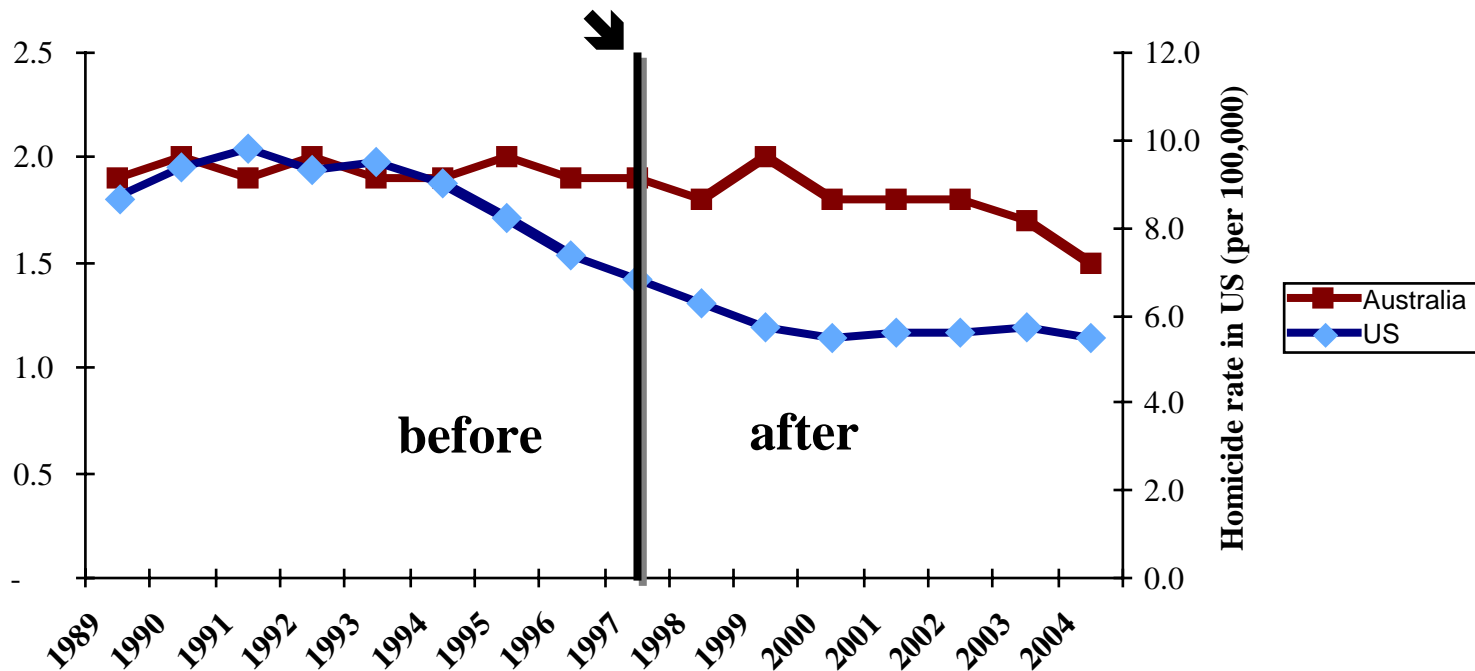


-
- In 1997, government brought in sweeping firearms legislation following murders in Tasmania
 - Prohibited and confiscated semi-automatic long arms,
 - Introduced strict new licensing and registration regulations

Little change in homicide immediately following 1997



1997 Australian Firearms Laws

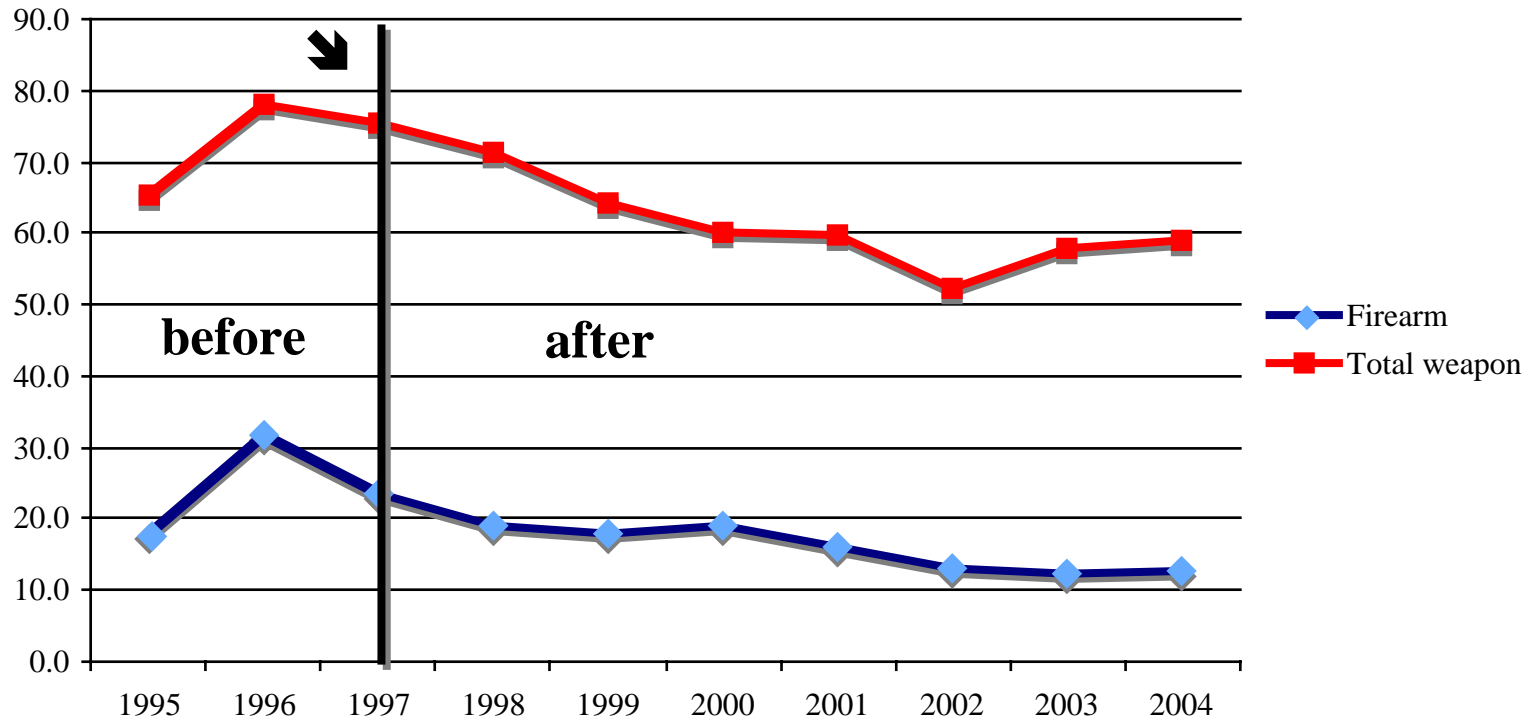


Source: FBI and AIC

Firearms use in homicide declined following 1997



1997 Australian Firearms Laws

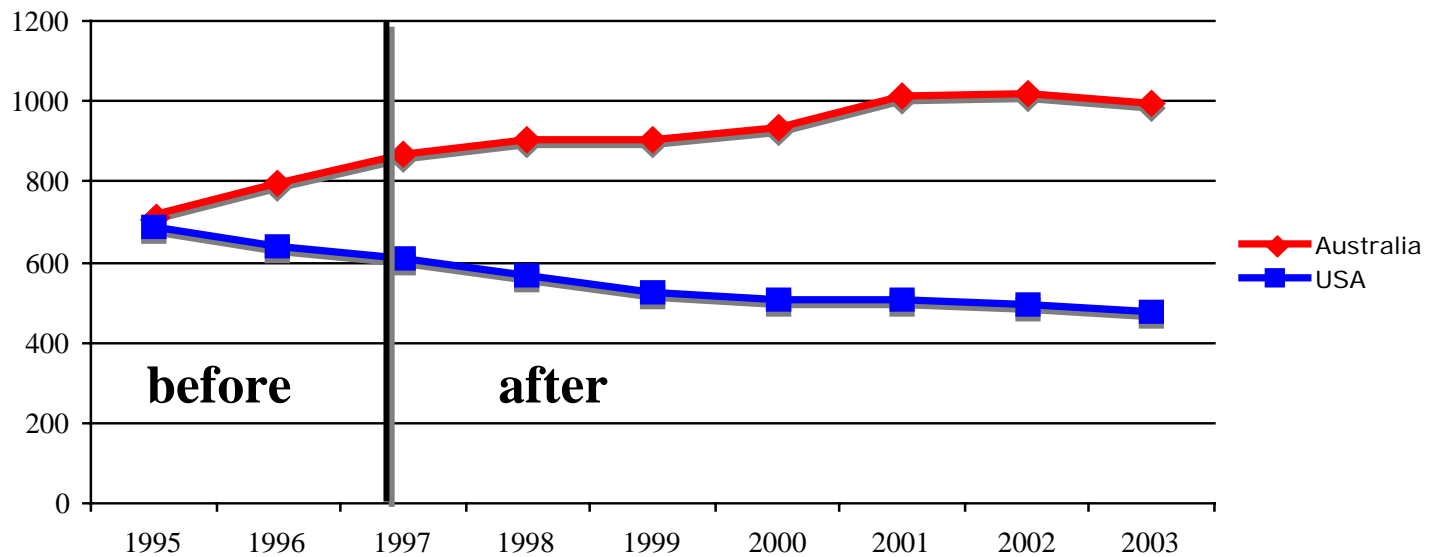


Source: ABS 4510.0 2005

Violent crime continued to increase in Australia after 1997 firearms laws



Violent Crime Trends in Australia and the USA

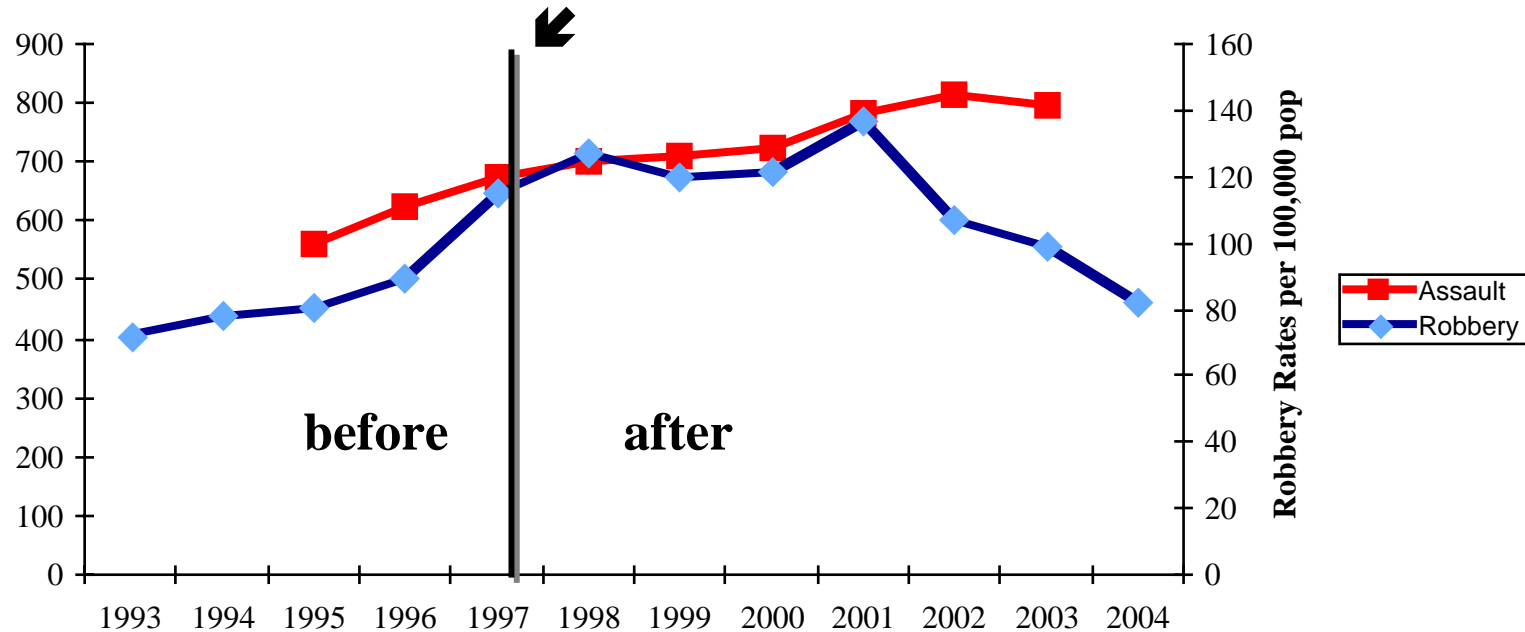


Source: ABS 4510.0 and FBI UCR Reports

Assault rates and robbery rates both rose in Australia after 1997



Australian Gun Laws Introduced in 1997



Sources: ABS Cat 4510.0 and FBI UCR Reports

The Republic of Ireland

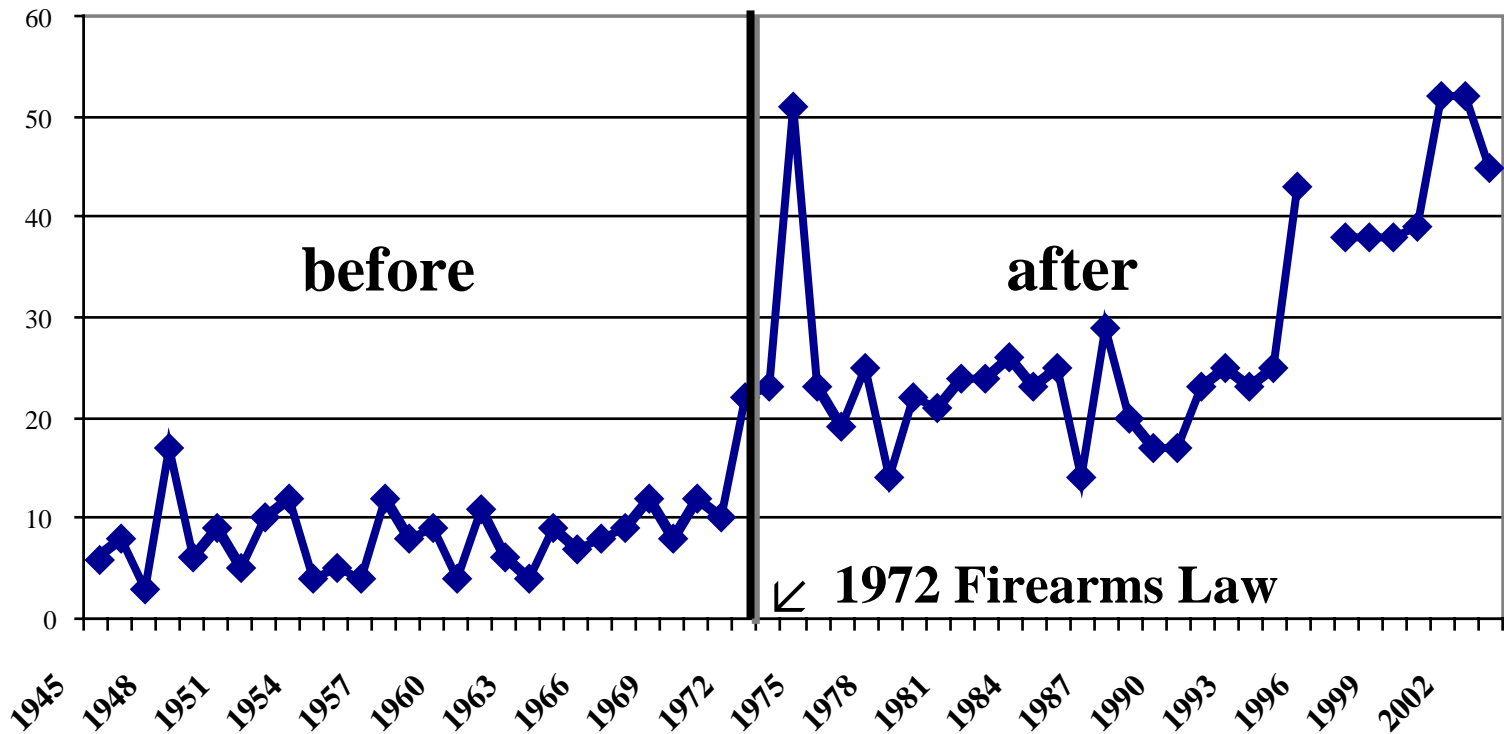
Gun prohibition and terrorism

Irish Gun Law



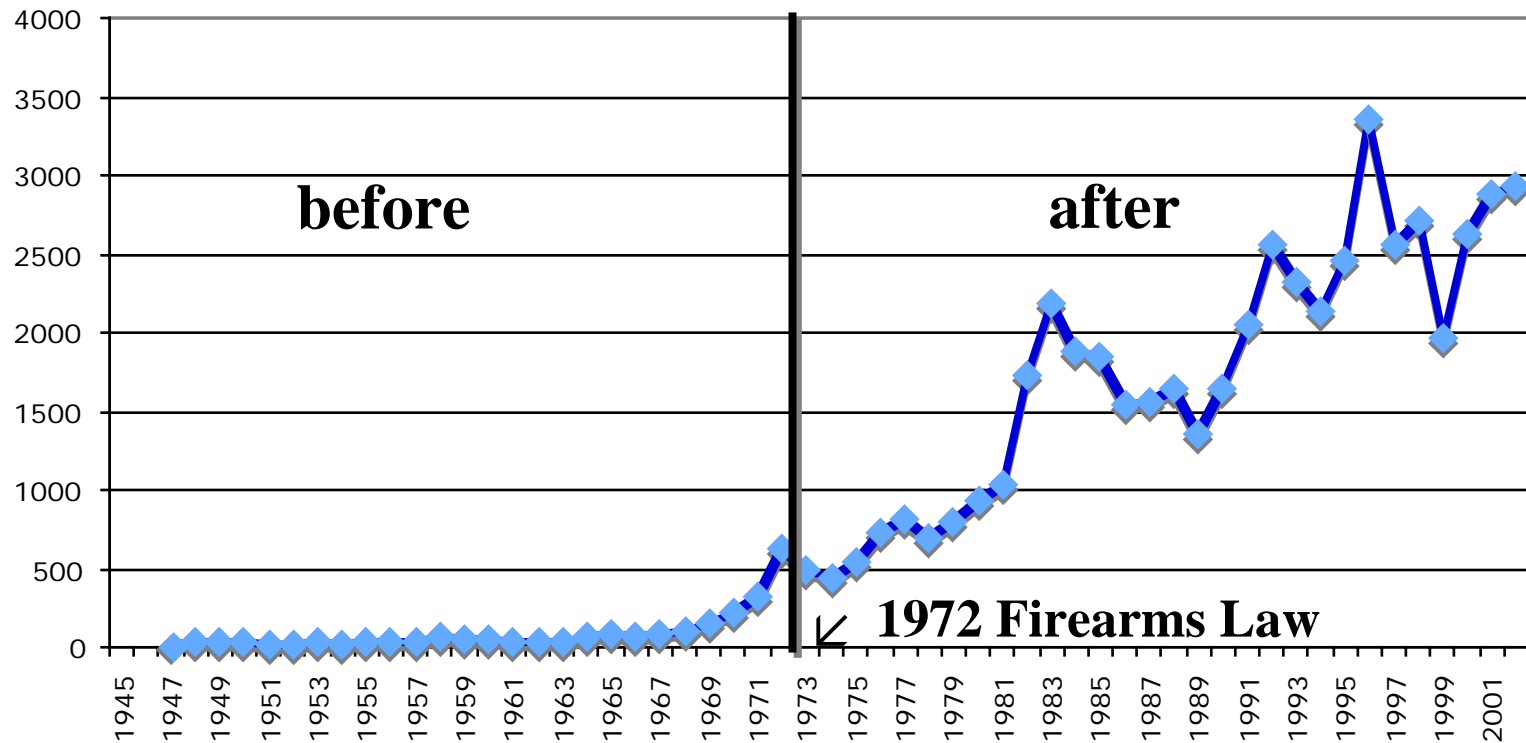
- Firearms prohibited and confiscated in 1972
- Motivated primarily by a concern with terrorism (IRA)

Murders continued to increase in Ireland



Source: Garda Stochana Annual Reports

Robberies increased in Republic of Ireland



Sources: Brewer, Interpol, Garda Stochana

Jamaica

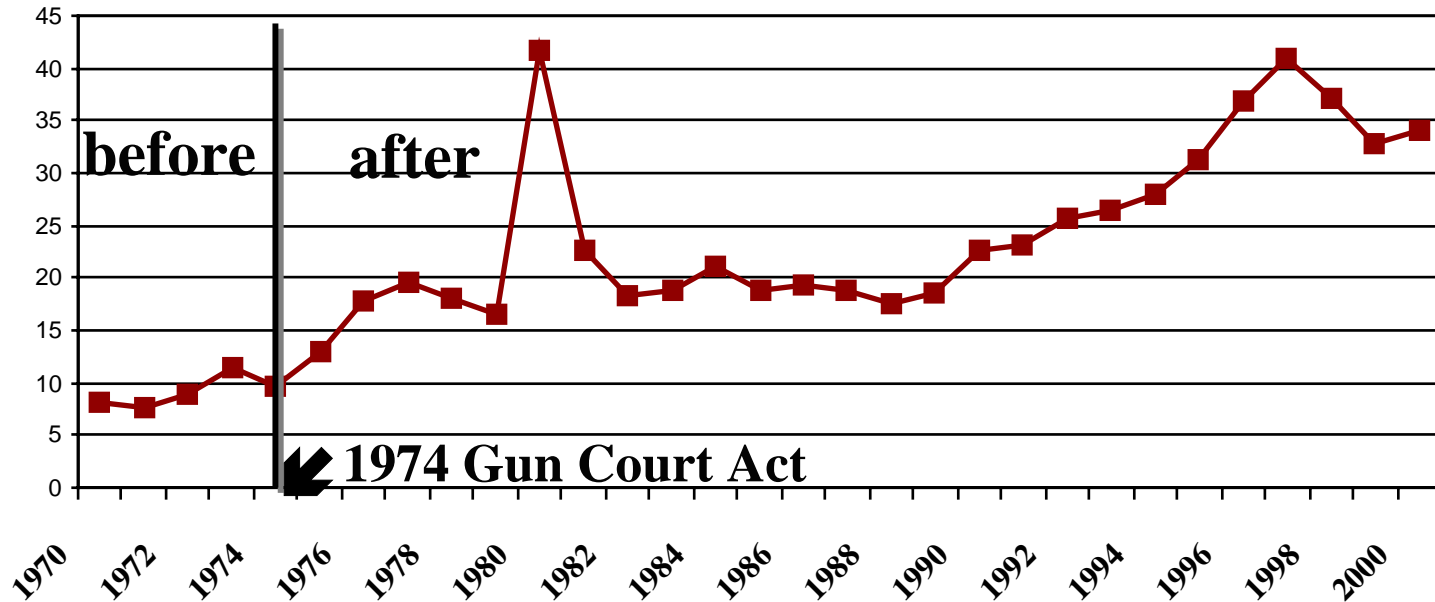
The Gun Court and Drug Violence

Jamaican Gun Laws



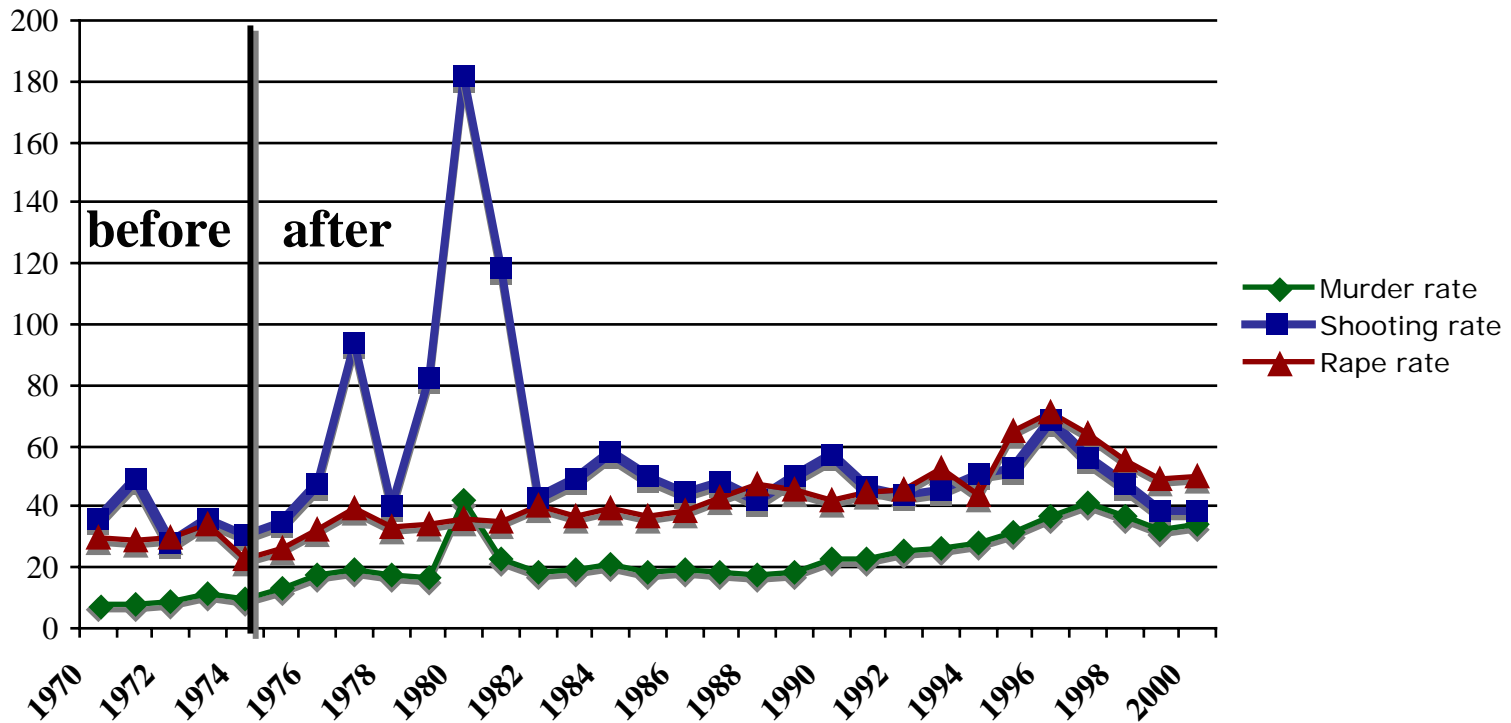
-
- Gun court (1974 - 1982)
 - Firearms and ammunition prohibited
 - Mandatory life sentences
 - No bail, no jury trials for suspects accused of possessing firearms or ammunition,
 - Firearm ownership still very tightly controlled

Murders continued to increase



Source: Professor A. Francis, University West Indies

Trends in Jamaican criminal violence

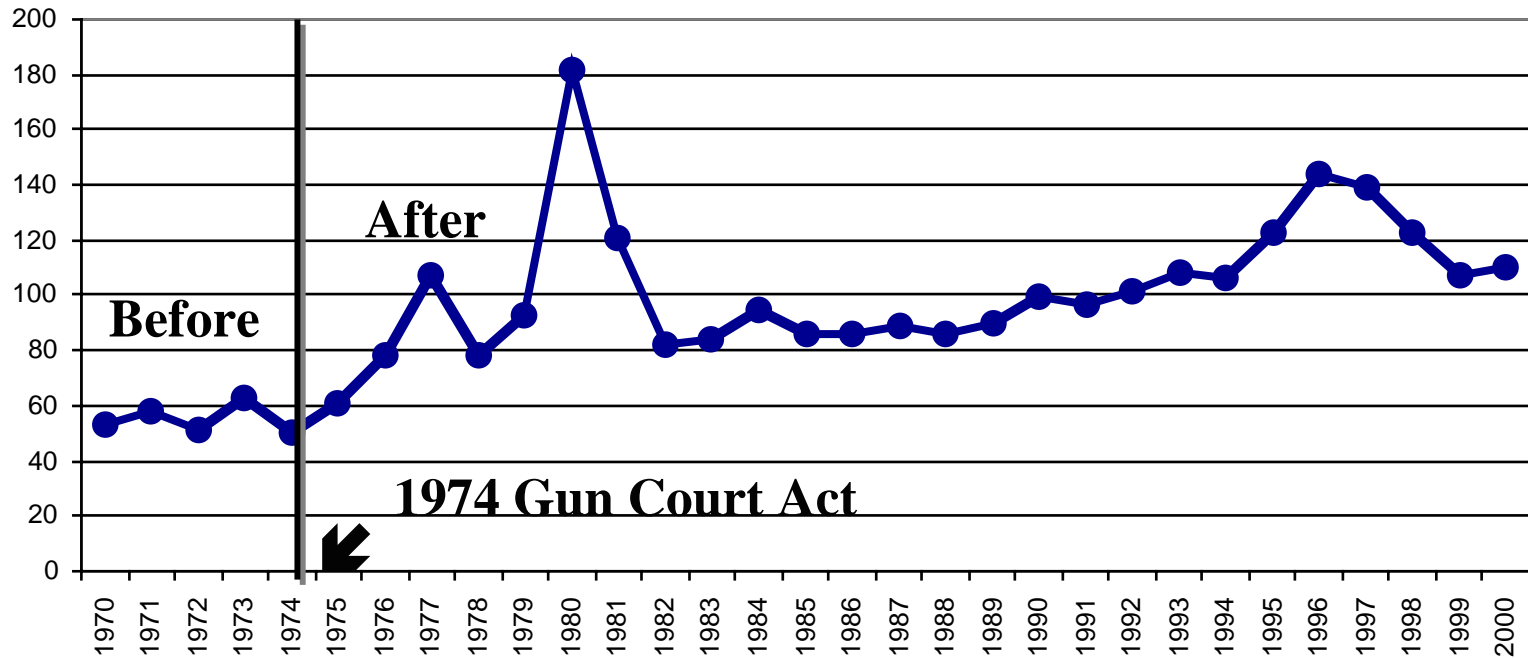


Source: Professor A. Francis, University West Indies

Violent crime continued to increase



Violent Crime Index for Jamaica (1970-2000)



Source: Professor A. Francis, University West Indies

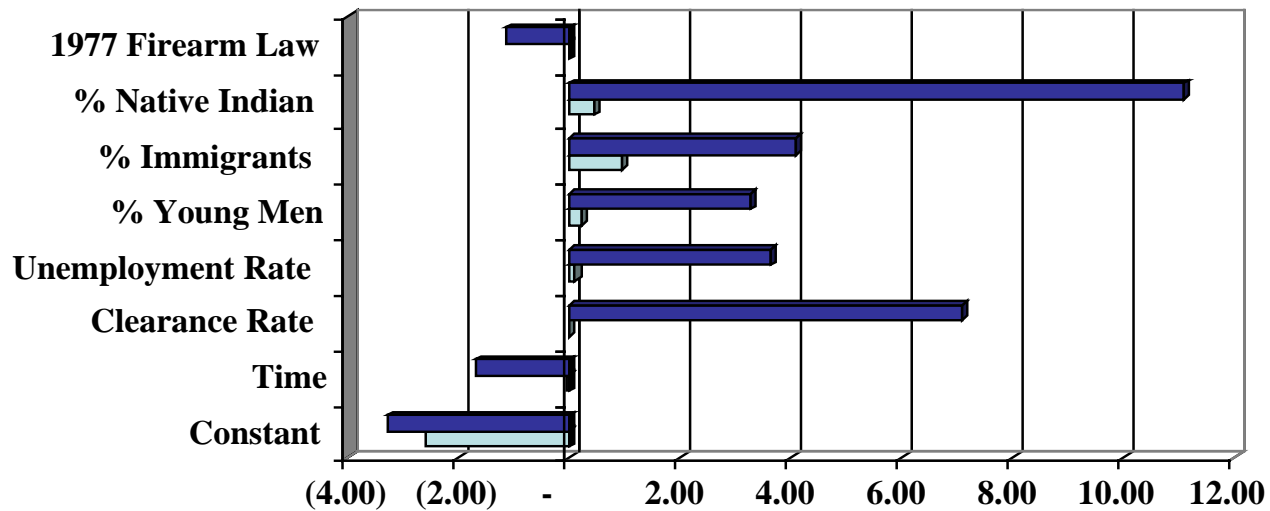
Summary



-
- No strong evidence that restrictive firearm regulations have reduced violent crime or homicide rates in Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Jamaica, or the Republic of Ireland
 - In contrast, the United States has witnessed a dramatic drop in criminal violence

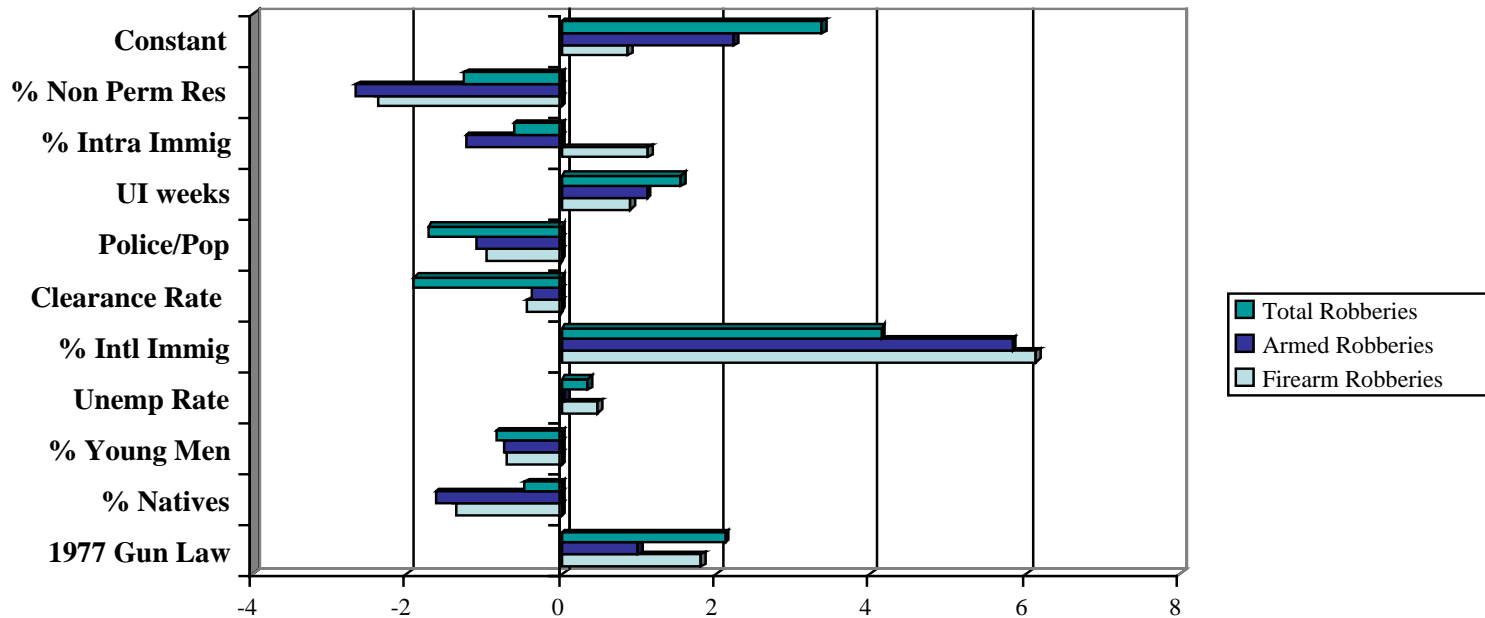
Econometric analyses of
the 1977 and 1991 Canadian
firearm laws

Evaluating the 1977 Firearms Law: Homicide



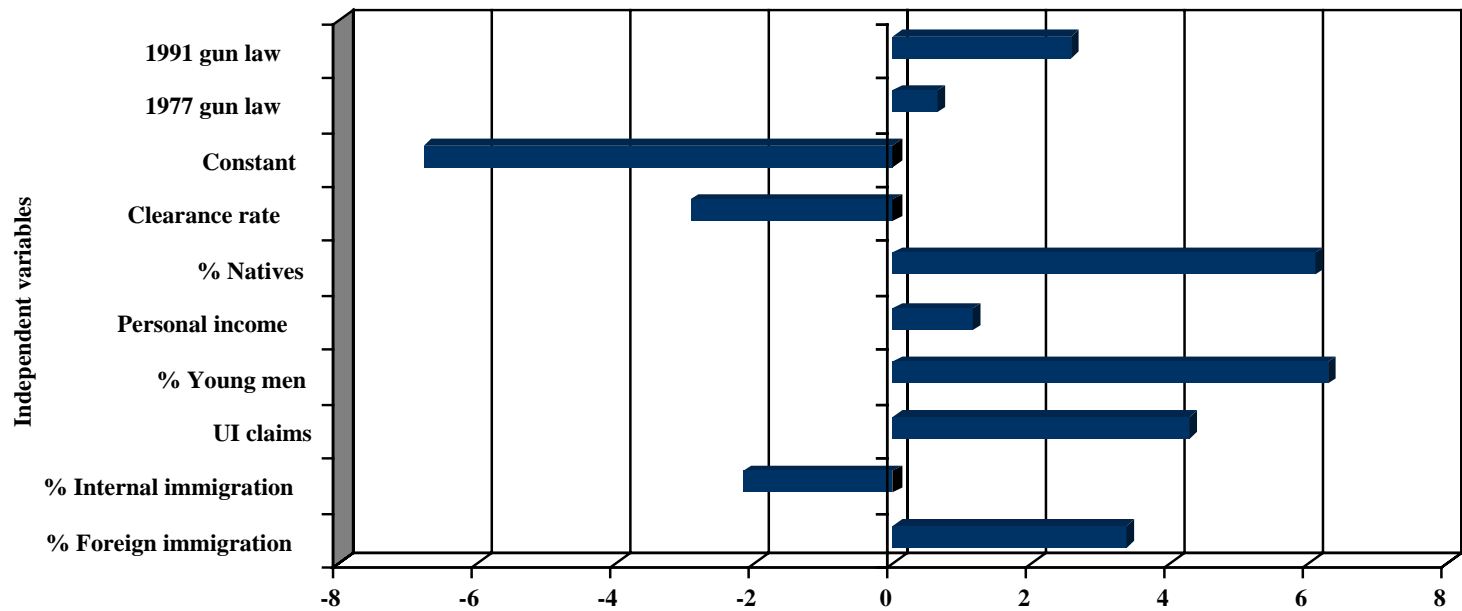
Source: Mauser and Holmes (1992)

Evaluating the 1977 Firearms Law: Robbery



Source: Mauser and Maki (2003)

Evaluating the 1991 and 1977 Firearms Law: Robbery



Source: Mauser and Maki (2002)
t-ratios greater than ± 2 are significant

Summary



-
- No significant negative effect found for firearms laws on crime rates
 - Factors found with significant effects:
 - Clearance rate
 - Percent young men in a province
 - Percent Native Indian
 - Immigration
 - Unemployment rates

Research on the effectiveness of gun laws



- Centers for Disease Control, **First Reports Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategies for Preventing Violence: Firearms Laws**. October 2003.
- Jacobs, James, **Can Gun Control Work?** Oxford, 2002
- Kleck, Gary. **Targeting Guns, Firearms and Their Control**. New York, Aldine de Gruyter. 1997.
- National Academy of Science, National Research Council, **Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review**, Dec. 2004.

Why is violent crime stable in Canada?



- High recidivism rates
 - 68% of accused adult murderers known to have a criminal record
 - 54% of accused youth murderers known to have a criminal record
- Insufficient jail time
- Insufficient numbers of police officers

Punishment too lenient



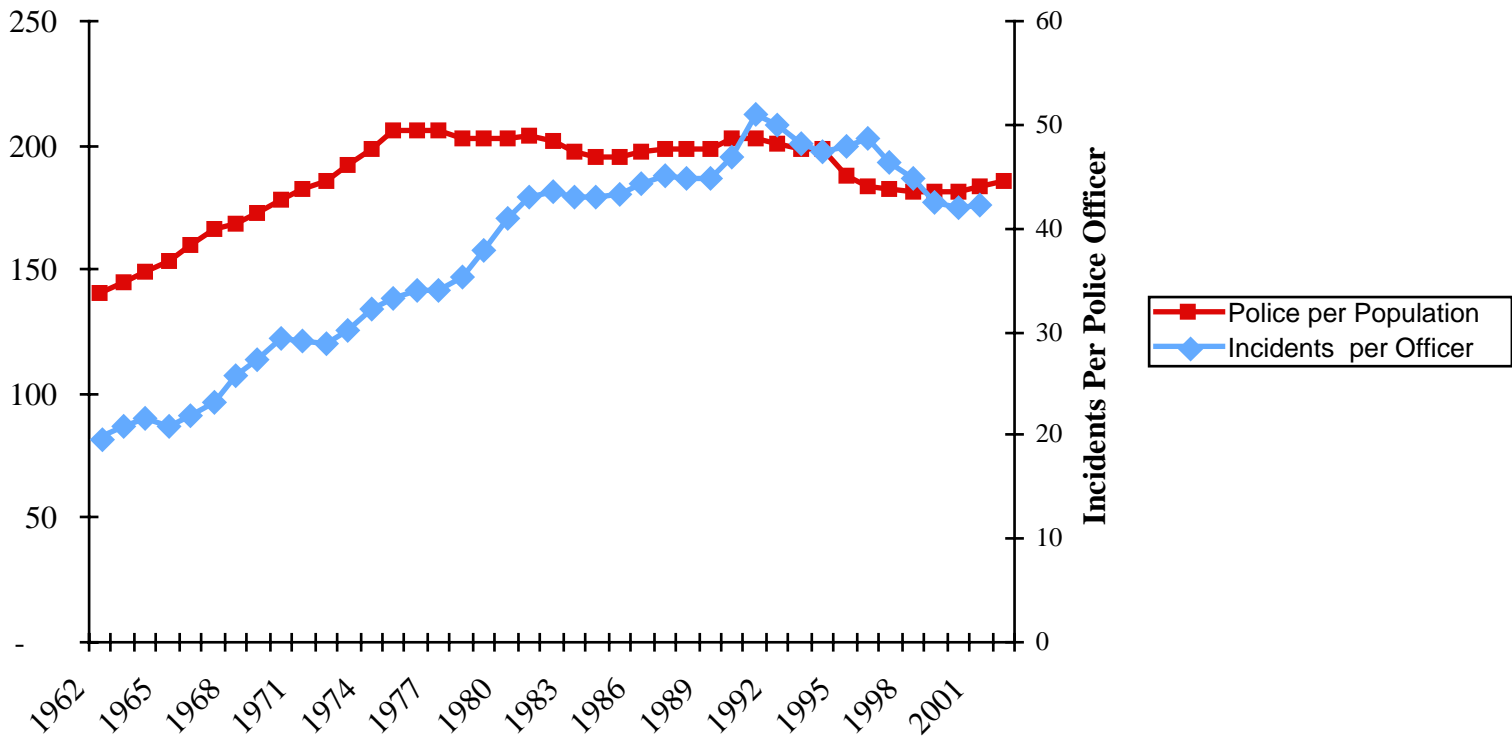
-
- Prison sentence length
 - 57% 1 month or less
 - 21% >1 to <3 months
 - 10% >3 to < 6 months
 - 5% >6 to <12 months
 - 3% >1 to < 2 years
 - 4% 2 years or more
 - Of all custodial sentences

Punishment too lenient



-
- Crimes against the person
 - 35% of cases where accused found guilty were sentenced to prison
 - 24% of those convicted of common assault were sentenced to prison
 - 44% of the other convictions sentenced to prison

Police Trends in Canada



Source: Statistics Canada

What works?



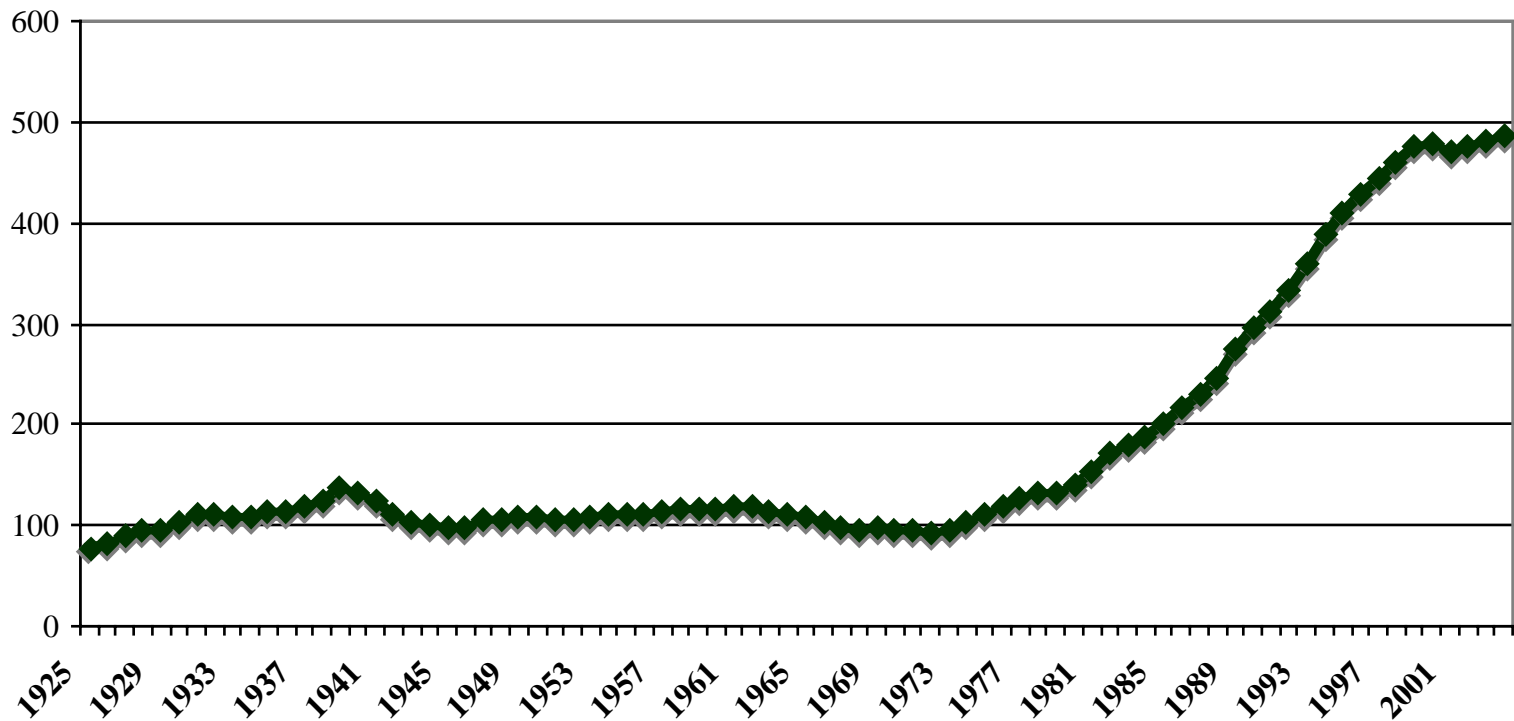
Why is Criminal Violence
Decreasing in the United States?

What is the US Doing?



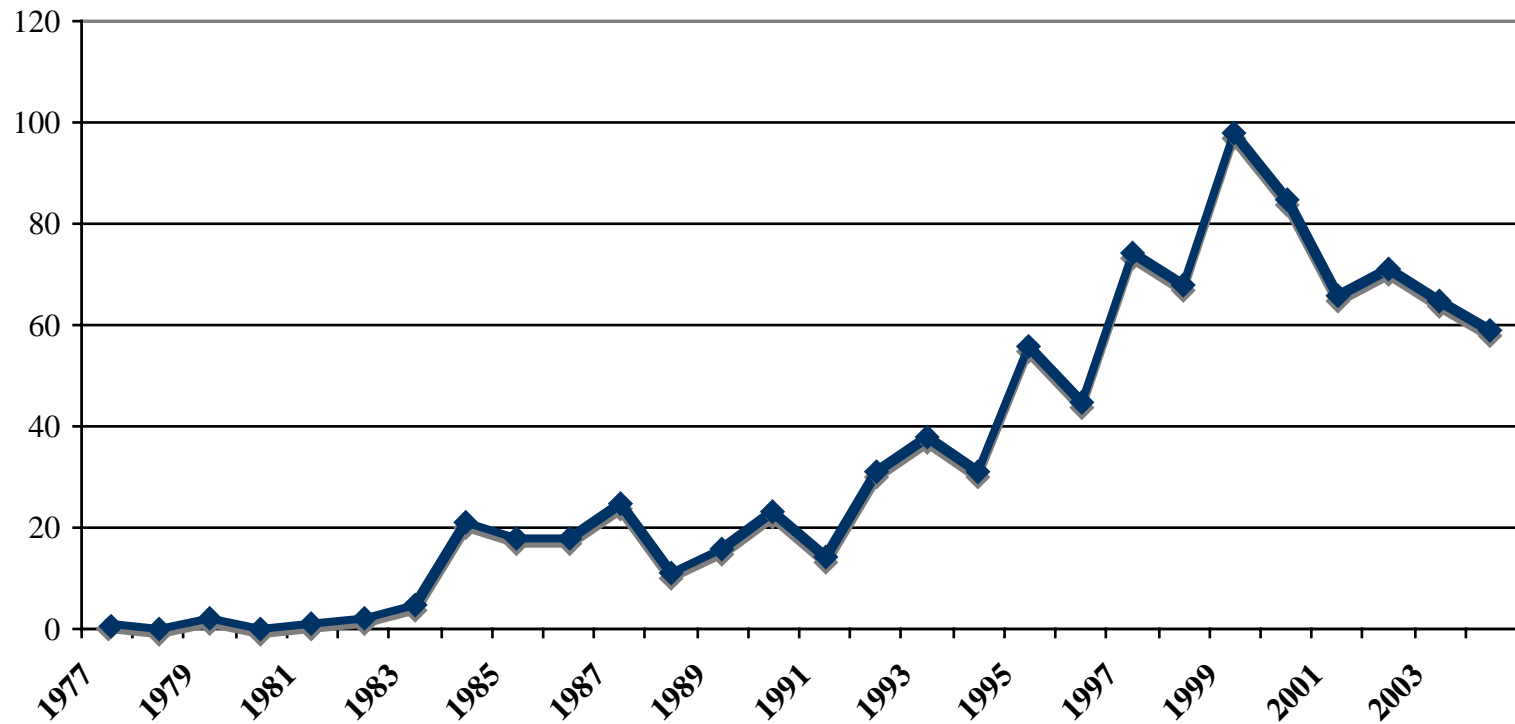
-
- Higher rates of conviction
 - More police
 - More arrests
 - Tougher punishment
 - Longer sentences
 - Capital punishment
 - Concealed carry laws

Sentenced Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions



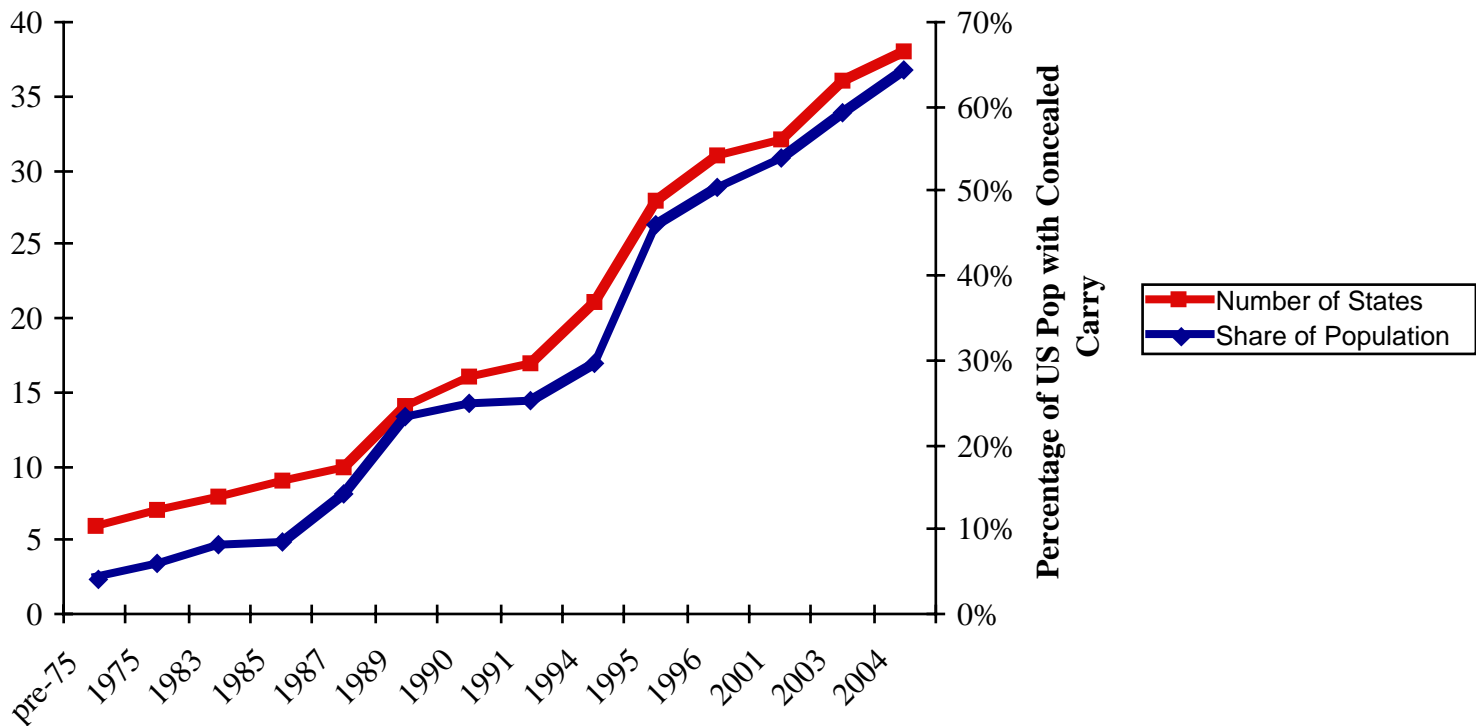
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Capital Punishment, 1977-2004



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Increase in Concealed Carry Laws

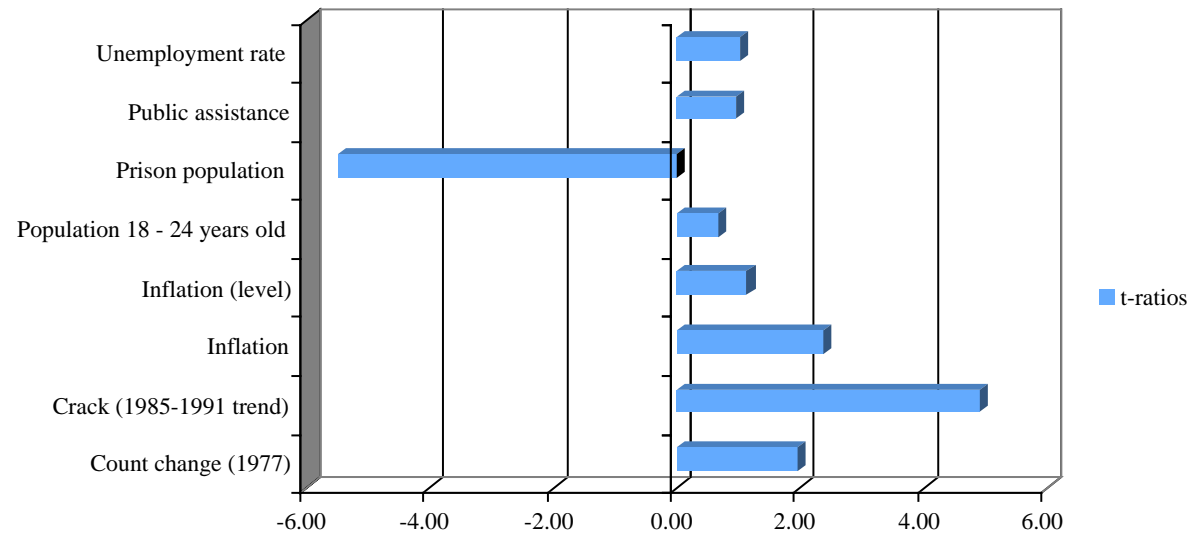


Source: NRA website and US Census Bureau

And the results?

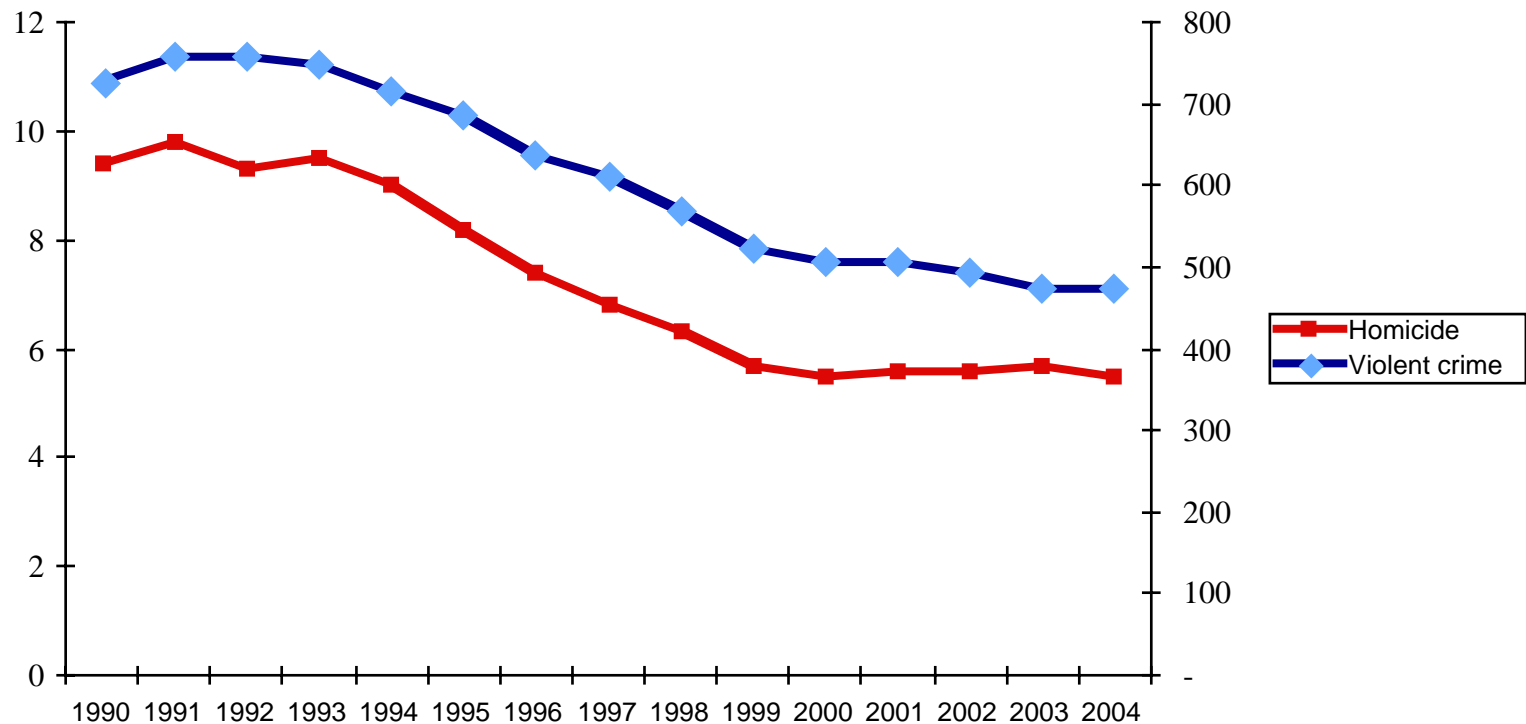


Homicide and Prison Population (1962 - 1994)



Source: Marvell and Moody

Homicide and Violent Crime Rates Declined in US



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports

England & Wales vs. USA



-
- The risk of punishment is generally greater in the US than in England
 - Murder 5 : 4
 - Rape 11 : 4
 - Robbery 22 : 3
 - Assault 11 : 1
 - The risk of punishment is generally **rising** in the US but **falling** in England

England & Wales vs. USA



-
- Since 1981, an offender's risk of being caught, convicted and sentenced has **risen** in the US for murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft, but
 - An offender's risk has **fallen** in England and Wales for all but murder

Conclusions



- The research shows:
 - Longer prison sentences reduce violent crime rates
 - Concealed carry reduces violent crime rates
- No evidence that general firearm laws are effective

Challenges



-
- Should Canada borrow American ideas?
 - What should our priorities be?
 - Why not focus more on ‘high risk’ people rather than farmers with firearms?

Types of “high risk” people



-
- Convicted violent criminals, prisoners, parolees
 - Persons prohibited from owning guns by the courts
 - Persons with an outstanding criminal arrest warrant
 - Persons subject to restraining orders or bail conditions
 - Persons subject to a deportation order
 - Persons with refused or revoked firearm licence or certificate

 - Recommendation: focus on people who have proven that they pose a danger to society

Estimated numbers of “high-risk” people



Federally incarcerated offenders	9,646
Federal offenders in community	5,137
Illegal immigrants ordered deported	30,000 [est]
Restraining orders or bail conditions	40,000 [est]
Armed/dangerous alerts	33,000 [est]
Prohibited from possessing firearms	201,097



Questions?