

Guns and Gangs: What should we do?

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A Fraser Institute Policy Briefing

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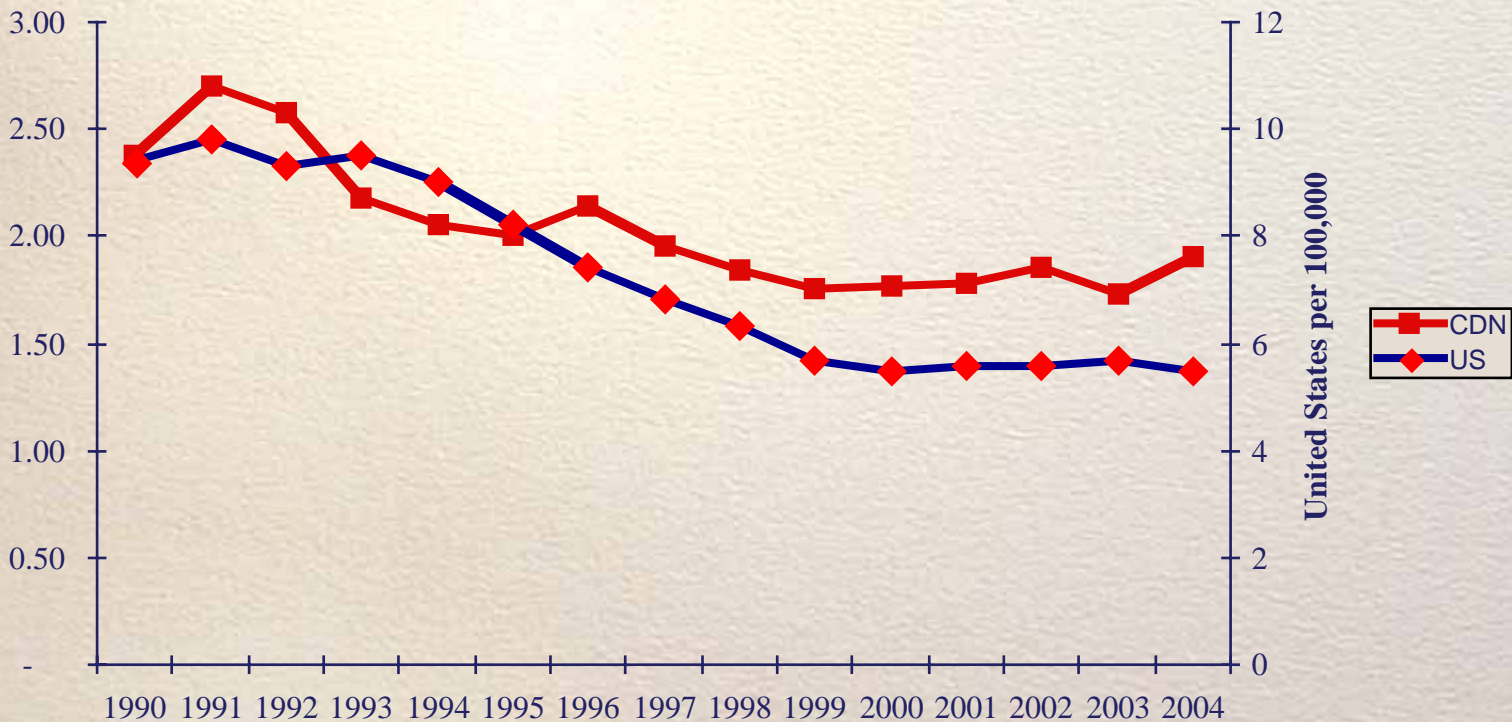
Vancouver , BC

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What is the current situation in Canada?

- Definitions: Crime, violent crime, property crime
- Is violent crime increasing?
- Is homicide increasing or decreasing?
- Is gang crime increasing?
- It all depends upon base year!

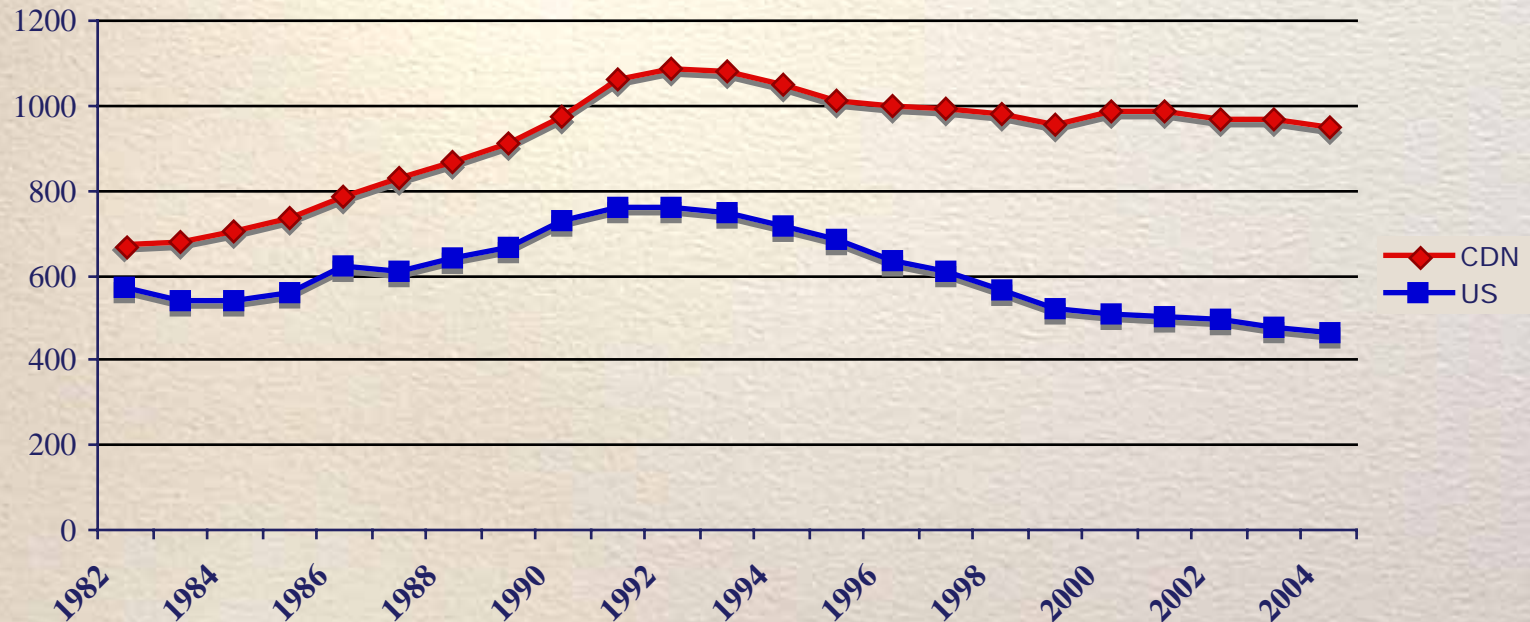
Homicide rates stable for past 5 or 10 years



Source: FBI and Juristat

Violent crime stable for past 5 or 10 years

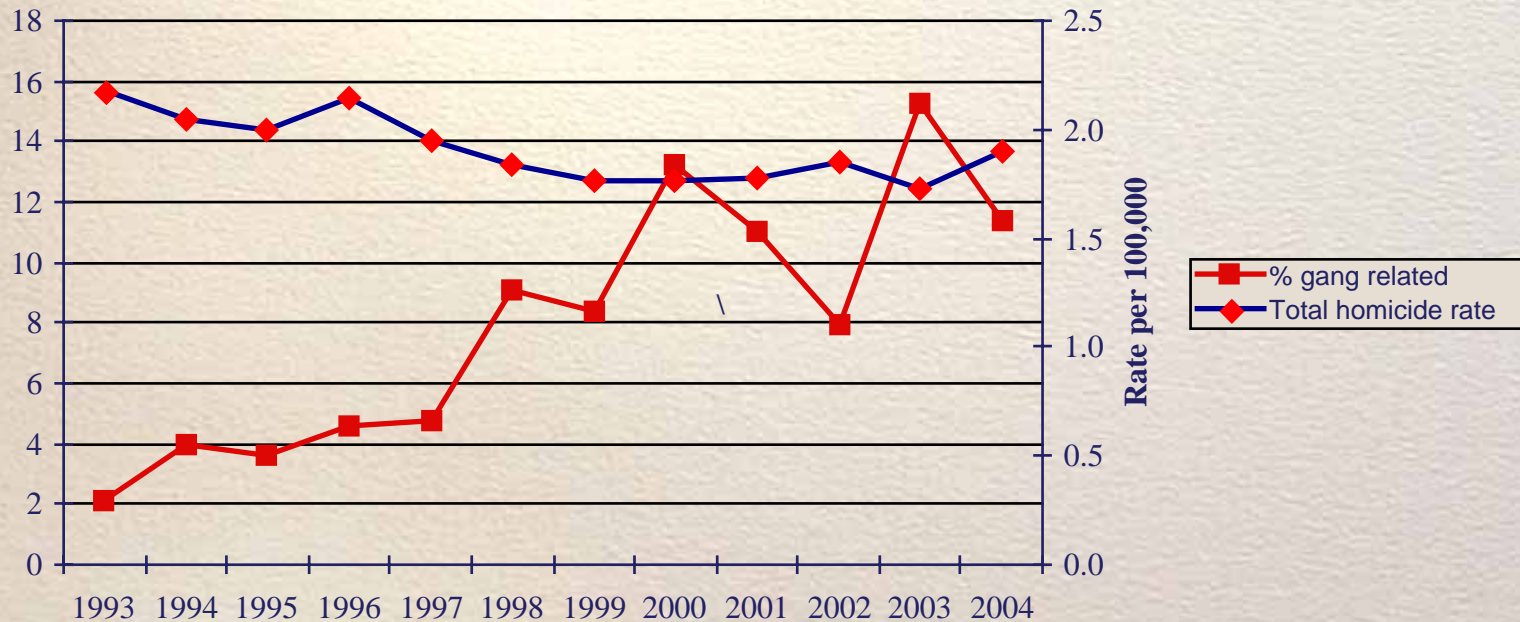
Fig.8. Violent Crime Trends in Canada and US



Source: Statistics Canada, FBI UCR

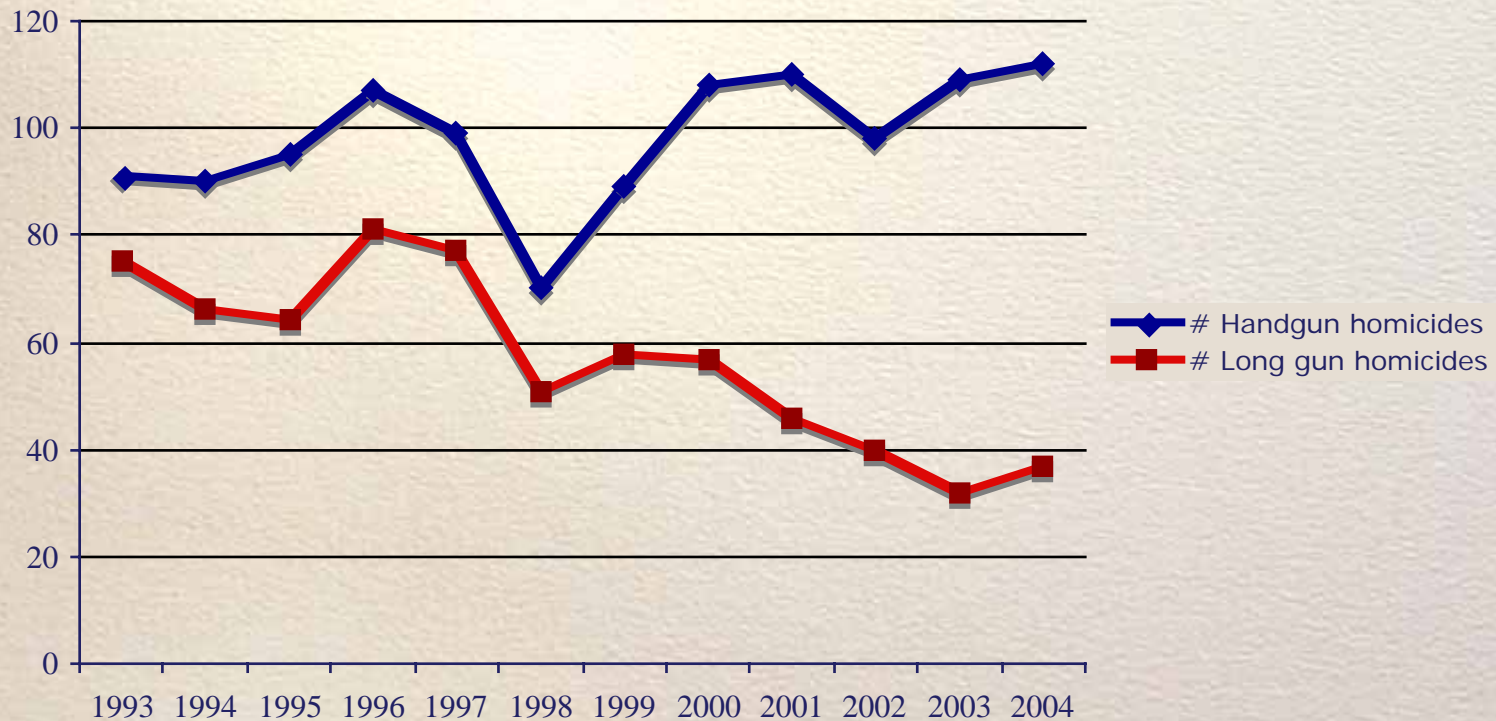
Gang-related homicide increasing

Fig. 7. Gang-related homicide trend



Source: Juristat

Handgun homicide increasing



Source: Jursitat, Stats Can

Assessment

- Violent crime is stable for past 5-10 years
- Homicide is stable for past 5-10 years
- Handgun homicide is increasing
- Gang homicide is increasing

- Where do crime guns coming from?

Several studies of 'crime guns'

- Toronto Police Services (2004)
 - 123 crime guns
 - 67% - origin impossible to determine
 - 9% - stolen from Canadian gun owners
 - 24% - smuggled from US
- Toronto Police Annual Report (2000)
 - 2% of gun stolen from Canadian owners

Several studies of 'crime guns'

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

Several studies of 'crime guns'

- Peel Regional Police, Project Gun Runner (1993)
 - 14% - stolen from Canadian gun owners
- Homicide Survey Project (CCJS)
 - 1,349 firearms related homicides (1997-2004)
 - 748 firearms registration status known
 - 16% found in the registry

How many guns have the Police and Military lost?

- 108 guns reported lost or missing by the RCMP in 2003
- Over 400 guns reported lost by Canadian Military in 2002
- Police and military do not have to register their firearms
- A potentially large source of crime guns.
- Police and military do not have to report regularly to Parliament

Community oriented policing

- There are three main goals:
 - Take repeat offenders off the streets,
 - Identify hot spots, and
 - Coordinate with community leaders to identify needs and work together to solve common problems.

Platforms of the three major parties reflect this wisdom

- Liberal:
 - Work with municipalities, police, etc to develop responses
 - Implement tougher sentencing for gun crimes and for trafficking
 - Increase number of RCMP officers
 - Control the cost of the gun registry
 - Ban and confiscate handguns

NDP Party platform

- NDP:
 - Focus on eliminating poverty
 - Implement tougher sentencing
 - Support reverse-onus for bail
 - `4-year minimum sentences for importing illegal guns, possession and sale of restricted weapons
 - Arming border officers
 - Ban semi-automatic firearms

Conservative Party platform

- Conservative:
 - Hire at least 2,500 more RCMP officers
 - 5 - 10- year mandatory minimum prison sentences for major gun offences
 - End statutory release and conditional sentences
 - Invest \$50 million over five years in programs to promote crime prevention and assist youth at risk.
 - Scrap the gun registry

Similarities

- All three parties support basic gun legislation
- All three parties want increased law enforcement
- All three parties encourage helping local communities with crime prevention

Differences

- Liberals and NDP propose banning more guns
- Conservatives want more police and longer prison sentences
- What does the research say works?

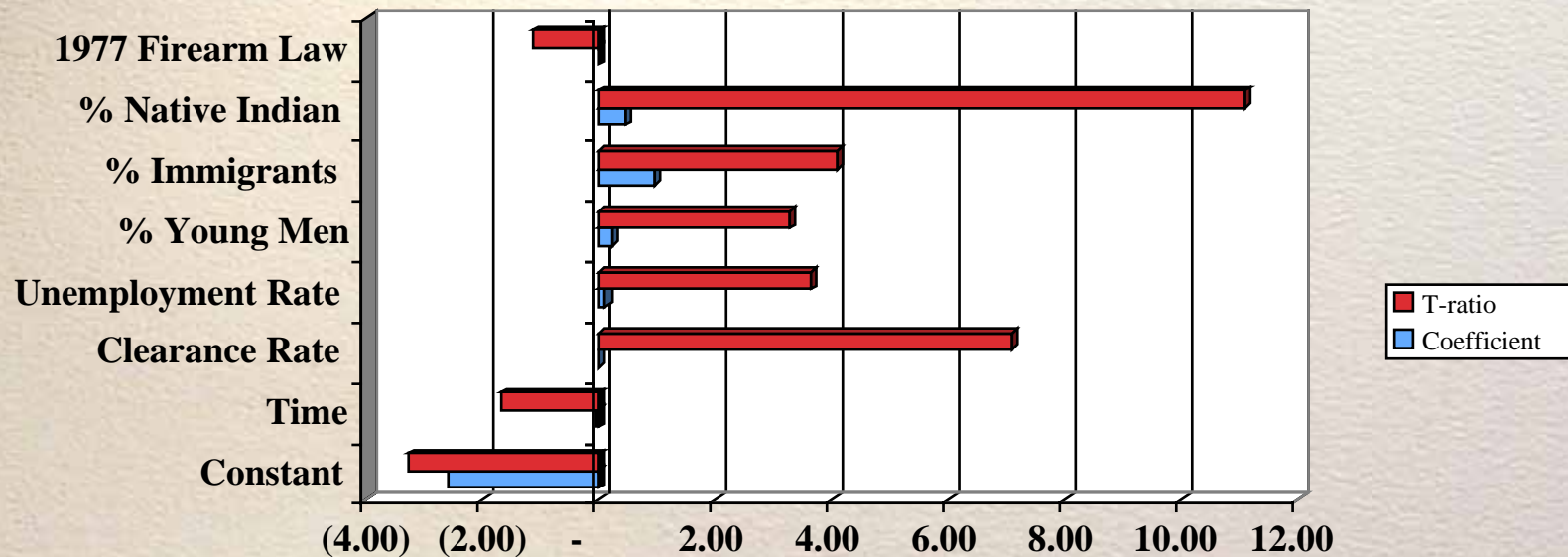
What's to be done?

- Very few good Canadian research studies
- More research needed on effectiveness of crime fighting strategies
- Federal government encourages “program research” not scientific research

How effective is the gun registry?

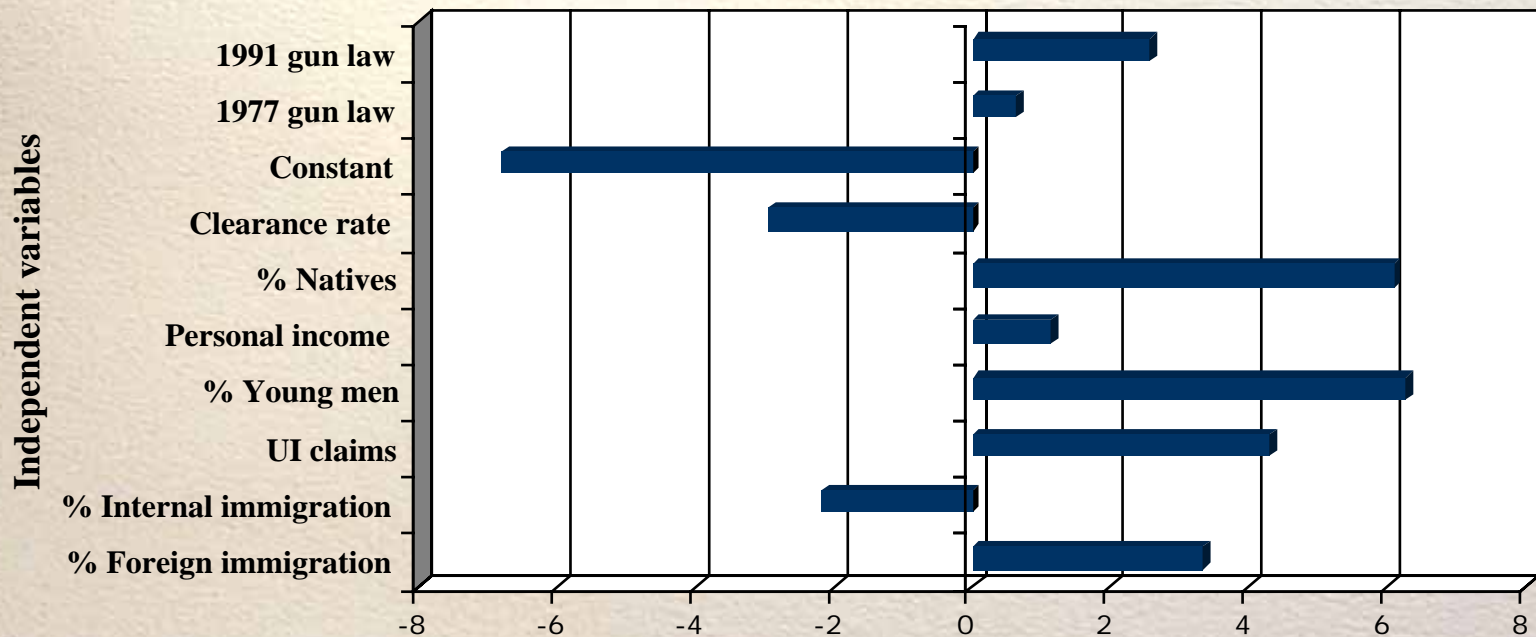
- Since the registry began in 1998:
- The violent crime rate has declined by 4%.
- The homicide rate has increased by 3%.
- Gang-related homicides have increased substantially.
- Suicide rates have declined by 2%
- No empirical link can be found between the registry and these changes.

Factors driving homicide in Canada



Source: Mauser and Holmes (1992)

Factors driving robbery in Canada



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

Do Gun Bans Work?

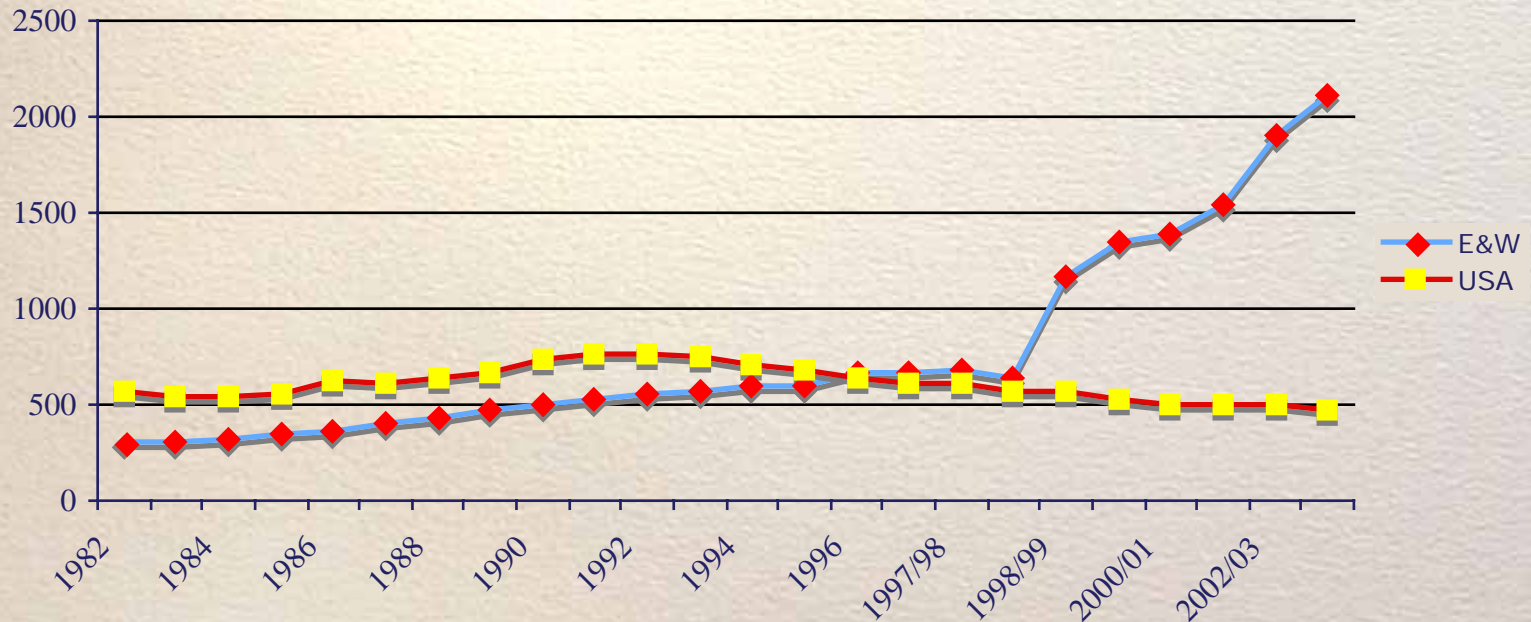
A review of crime trends in several
English Speaking countries

Gun bans failed in several English-speaking countries

- The United Kingdom
 - Handguns were banned in 1997 but gun crime in England and Wales nearly doubled in the seven years from 1996 to 2003.
 - The rate of serious violent crime has soared by 88 percent:
 - armed robberies by 101 percent,
 - rapes by 105 percent and
 - homicide by 24 percent since 1996.

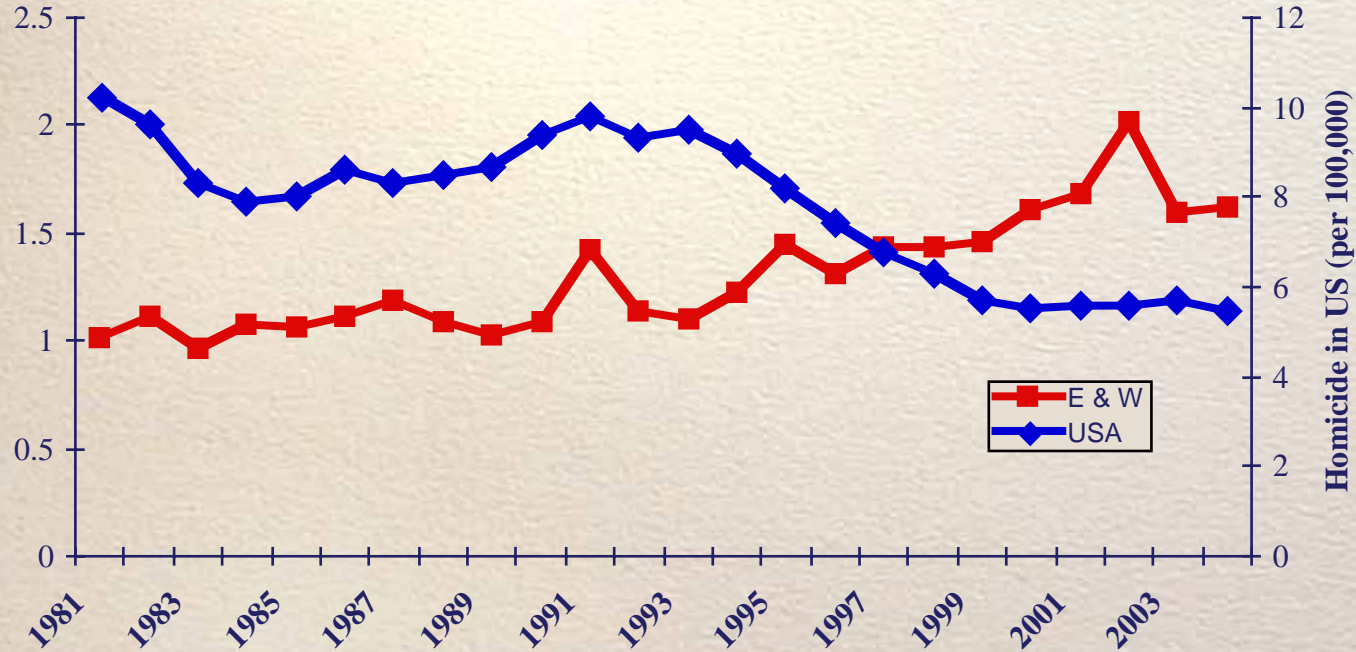
Violent crime in the UK

Fig. 10. Violent Crime Trends in England & Wales and US



Source: Home Office and FBI

Homicide trend in England & Wales



Source: FBI and Home Office

Homicide in Scotland



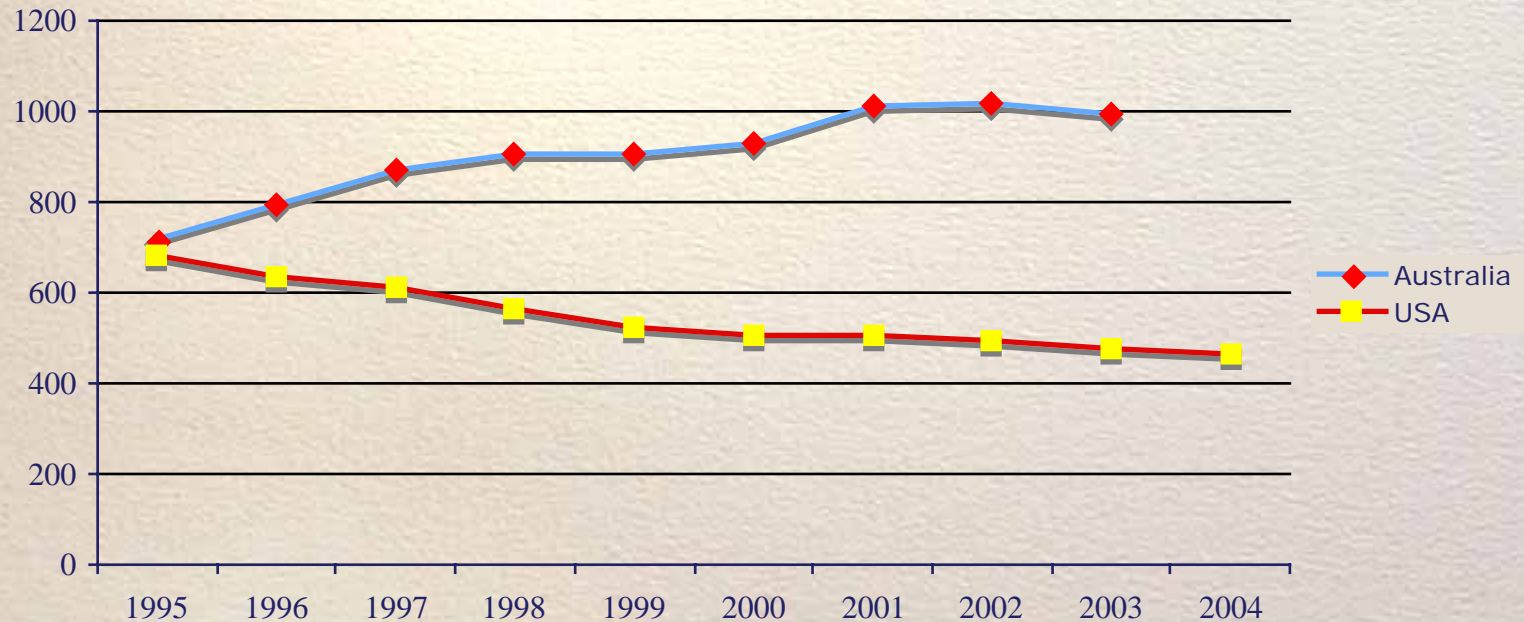
Source: Scottish Executive

Gun ban in Australia

- Australia
 - Australia banned many types of guns in 1996.
 - While murder rates have remained unchanged,
 - armed robbery rates averaged 59 percent higher in the eight years after the law was passed (from 1997 to 2004) than in 1995.

Violent crime in Australia

Fig. 9. Violent Crime Trends in Australia and US

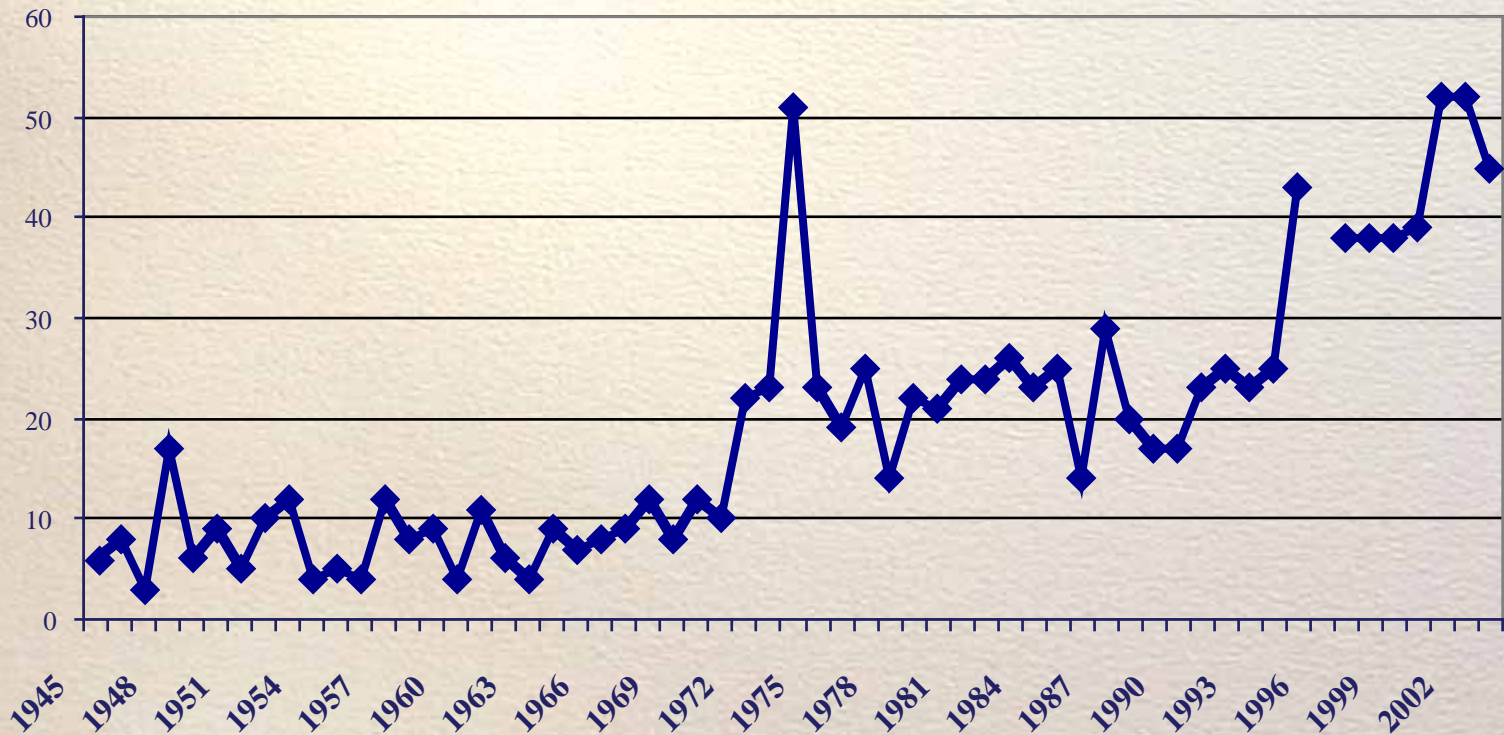


Sources: ABS and FBI

Gun bans have failed

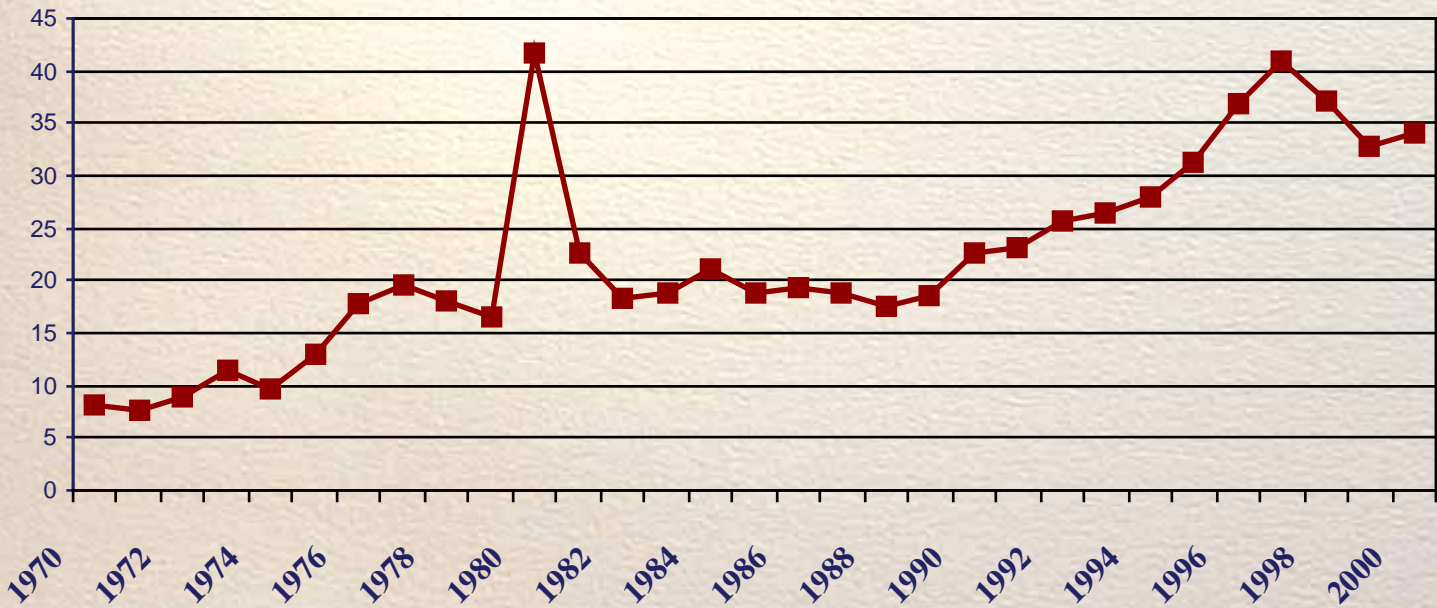
- Republic of Ireland
 - The Republic of Ireland banned and confiscated almost all firearms in 1972, but murder rates had risen by 5 fold by 1974 and was remained at least 30 percent higher than the pre-ban rate
- Jamaica
 - Jamaica banned all guns in 1974, but murder rates almost doubled from 11.5 per 100,000 in 1973 to 19.5 in 1977, and 41.7 in 1980

Murder in the Republic of Ireland



Source: Garda Stochana Annual Reports

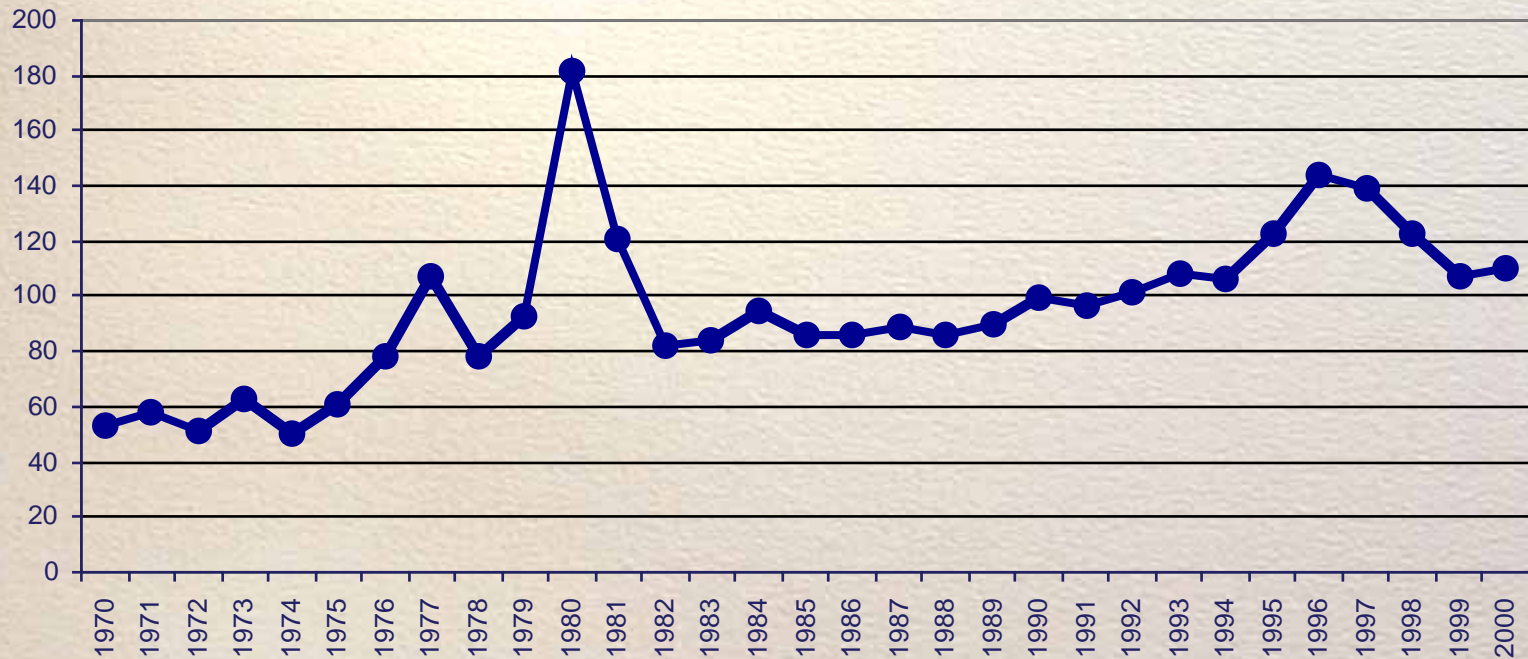
Murder rate in Jamaica



Source: Professor A. Francis, University West Indies

Violent crime rate in Jamaica

Violent Crime Index for Jamaica (1970-2000)



Source: Professor A. Francis, University West Indies

Criminal violence is decreasing in the US - Why?

- Violent crime increasing in almost all English speaking countries
- But both violent crime and homicide are decreasing in the US

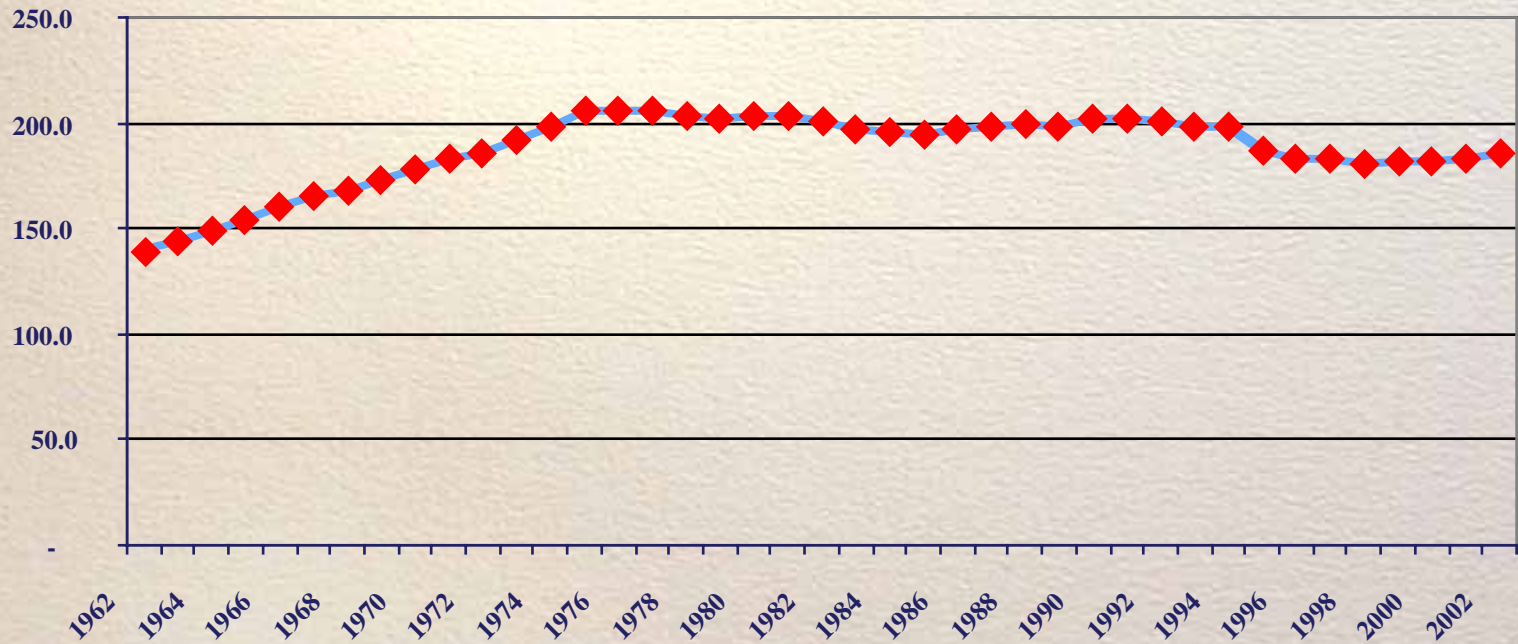
- Why

What is the US doing?

- Higher rates of conviction
 - More police - more arrests
 - More convictions
- Greater punishment
 - Longer sentences
 - Capital punishment
- Concealed carry laws

Canada

Police Officers per Capita



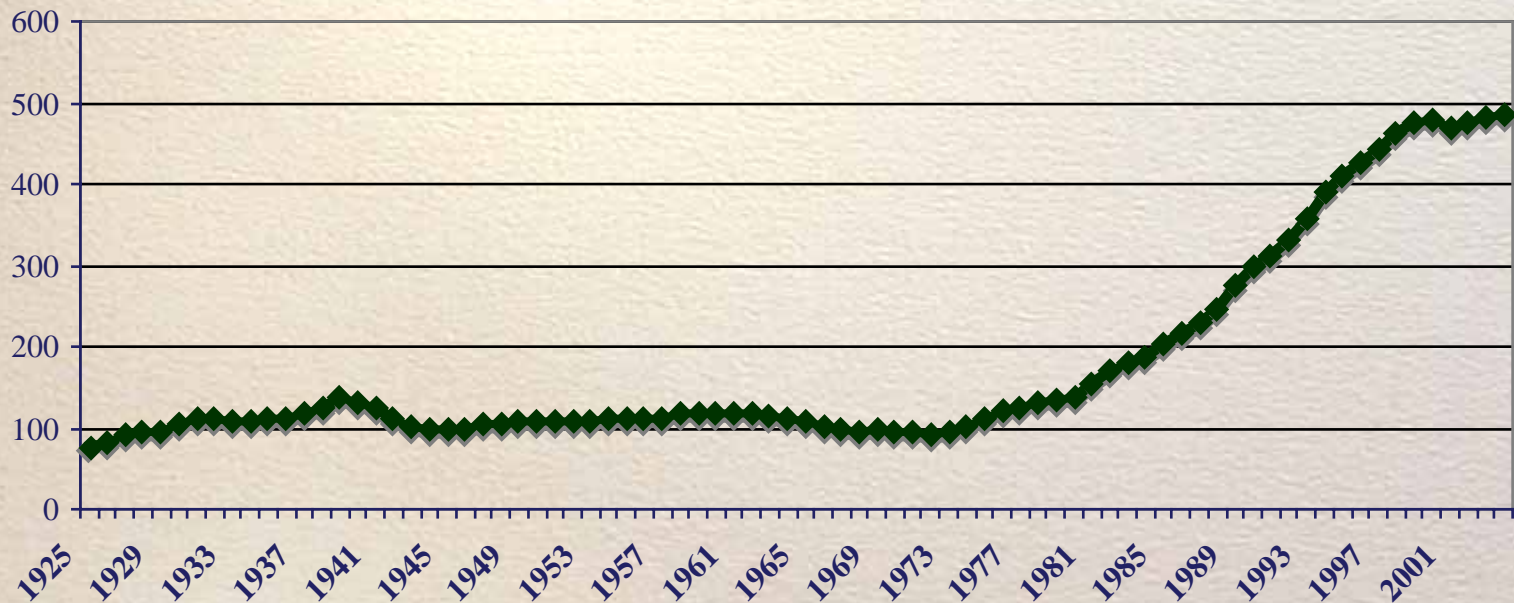
Source: Can Sim

High recidivism rates in Canada

- 68% of accused adult murderers had a Canadian criminal record
- 54% of accused youth murderers had a Canadian criminal record
- Percentages with foreign criminal records unknown

Increased imprisonment in United States

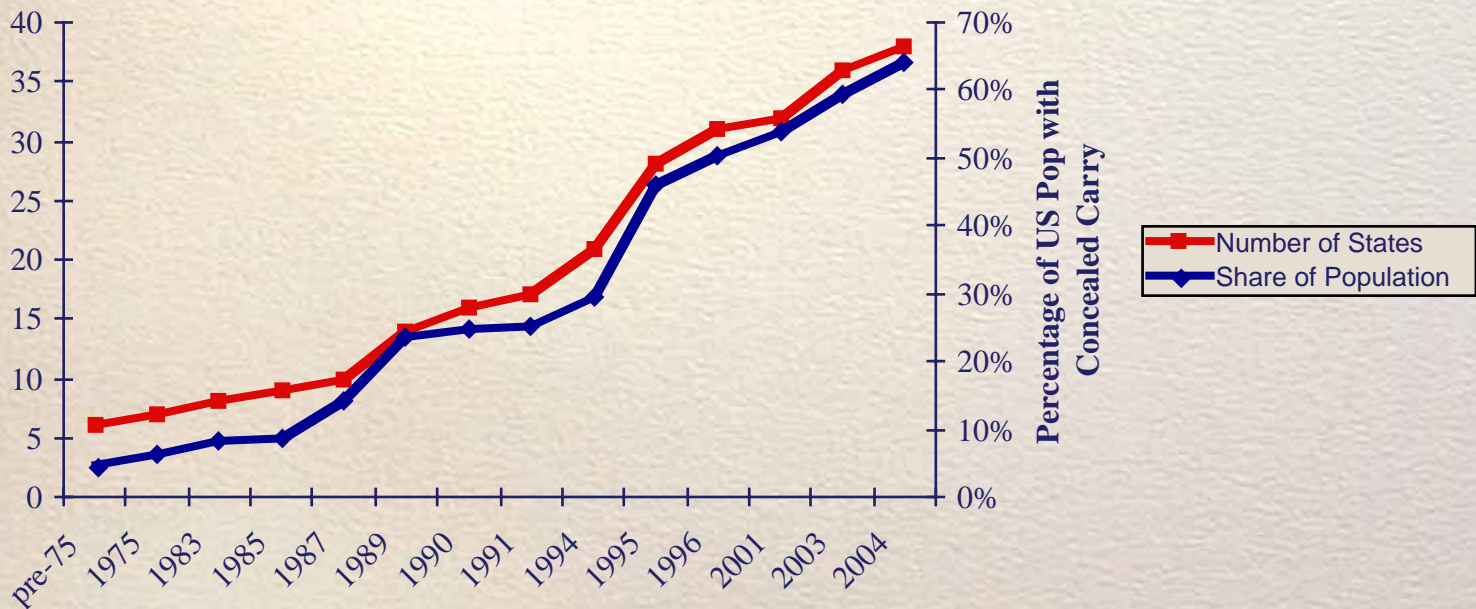
Sentenced Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Concealed carry laws in United States

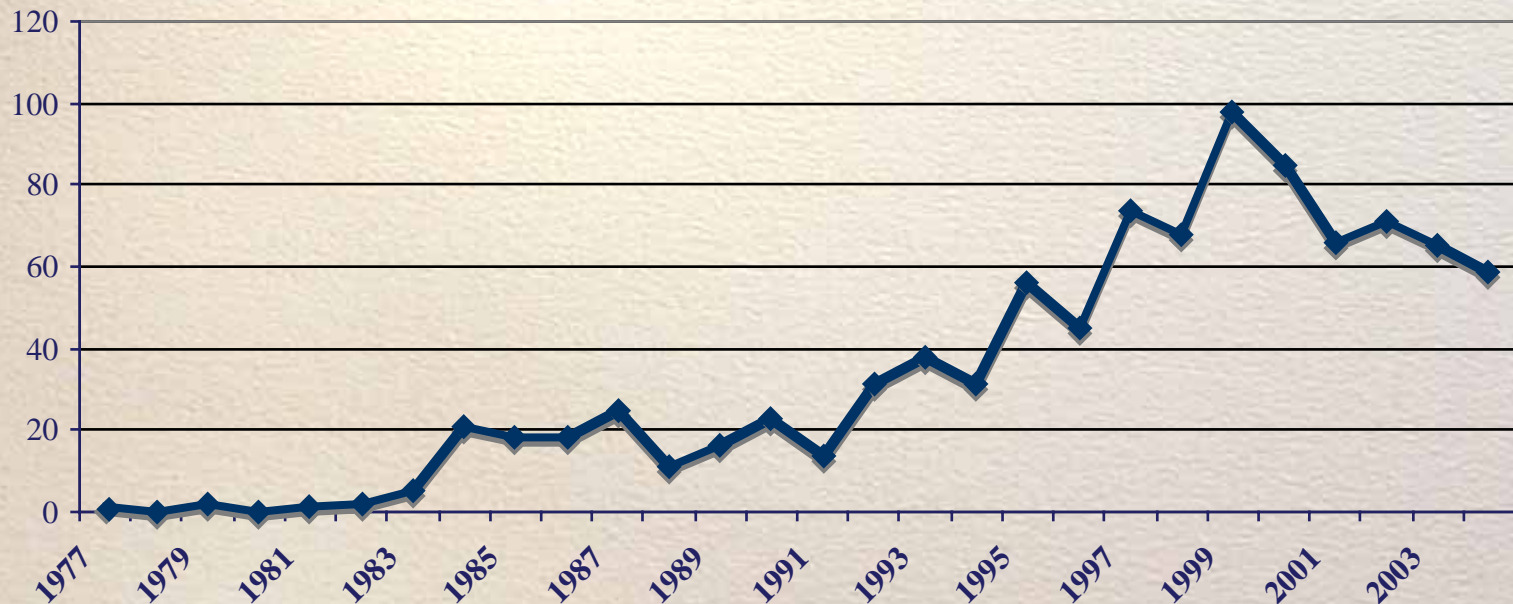
Spread of Concealed Carry Laws in United States



Source: NRA website and US Census Bureau

Capital punishment in United States

Capital Punishment in the United States, 1977 - 2004



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

In conclusion: the research shows

- Longer prison sentences reduce crime rates.
- Concealed carry reduces crime rates.
- No evidence that gun bans reduce violent crime in any country in the world.

Research on the effectiveness of gun laws

- Kleck, Point Blank, 1991,
- Kleck, Gary. Targeting Guns, Firearms and Their Control. New York, Aldine de Gruyter. 1997.
- Centers for Disease Control, First Reports Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategies for Preventing Violence: Firearms Laws. October 3, 2003.
- National Academies' National Research Council, Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review, Dec. 16, 2004.

Research on the effectiveness of imprisonment

- Marvell and Moody, 1999
- Kaminski and Marvell, 2002
- Kovandzic, et al, 2004
- Cohen and Land, 1987
- Levitt, 1996

Research on the effectiveness of concealed carry

- Lott and Mustard (1997)
- Lott see <http://www.johnlott.org/>
- Carl Moody (2006)