GVPedia's Permitless Carry Factsheet

February 2022

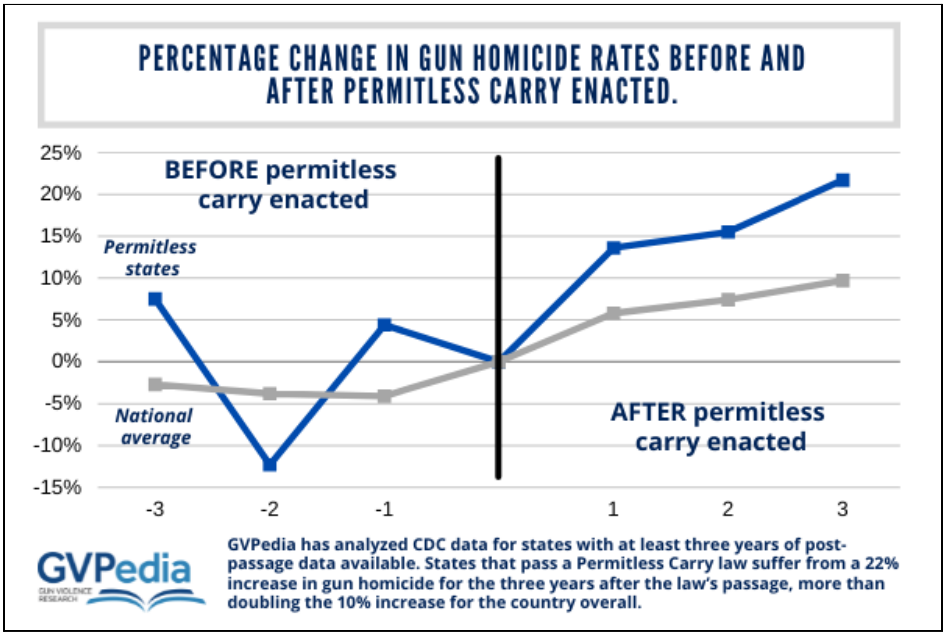
States that pass a Permitless Carry law suffer from a 22% increase in gun homicide for the three years after the law's passage, more than doubling the 10% increase for the country overall.

What are Permitless Carry laws?

Permitless Carry (sometimes referred to as Constitutional Carry) laws allow individuals to carry loaded, concealed handguns in public areas without first going through a background check, obtaining a license, or undergoing any training.[1]

What are the impacts of Permitless Carry laws?

GVPedia has analyzed CDC data from states with Permitless Carry laws that have at least three years of data available. Our analysis found that **States that pass a Permitless Carry law suffer from a 22% increase in gun homicide for the three years after the law's passage, more than doubling the 10% increase for the country overall in the same time period.**[2]



The CDC does not directly provide data for states with fewer than 10 incidents in a year, but when GVPedia included those states are in our analysis, gun homicide increased by 36% in states that allow Permitless Carry.[3,4]

This chart shows the average percentage change of gun homicides in the years before and after states passed Permitless Carry laws, versus the average national percentage change in gun homicides during the same time periods. The analysis focuses on the three years before and after the law's passage in each state, as all of the states included have CDC data available for every year during those time periods.

In particular, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and West Virginia saw substantial increases in gun homicides after passing Permitless Carry.[5]

What does the academic research say about Permitless Carry?

There are sixty-five national level academic studies, the plurality of which show that weakening laws that prohibit Permitless Carry, often referred to as concealed carry laws, increase crime. Of the thirty-five most recent academic studies (since 2005) on this topic, twenty-three (66%) find that weakening concealed carry laws increases crime. Only five studies since 2005 (14%) show a decrease in crime.[6]

The majority of academics who have published research since 2005 on concealed carry laws support the conclusion that violent crime increases when such laws are weakened.[7]

- Seven academics published work that found a decrease in crime
- 13 published work showing no effect on crime, and
- 46 published work showing an increase in crime

Further, in a July 2014 Harvard Injury Control Research Center survey of concealed carry laws that was completed by 140 researchers, the majority of researchers agreed that more permissive concealed carry laws have not reduced crime rates.[8]

What does the public think about Permitless Carry laws?

A 2017 poll from Johns Hopkins found that 83% of gun owners agreed "… that a person who can legally carry a concealed gun should be required to pass a test demonstrating they can safely and lawfully handle a gun in common situations they might encounter."[9]

Which states have passed Permitless Carry laws?

By the end of 2021, 21 states had some form of permitless carry: Alaska (2003), Arizona (2010), Arkansas (2013), Idaho (2016), Iowa (2021), Kansas (2015), Kentucky (2019), Maine (2015), Mississippi (2015), Missouri (2017), Montana (2021), New Hampshire (2017), North Dakota (2017), Oklahoma (2019), South Dakota (2019), Tennessee (2021), Texas (2021), Utah (2021), Vermont (since founding), West Virginia (2016), and Wyoming (2011).[10]

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Common Permitless Carry Disinformation

The following talking points are commonly circulated during debates about Permitless Carry laws. This portion of the Factsheet provides a summary of the disinformation and the factual information that refutes it.

Disinformation:
An analysis of states that have passed Permitless Carry conducted by Dr. Carl Moody claims there is a statistically significant drop in murder rates after states pass Permitless Carry, as well as decreases in police killings and firearm homicide.[11]

Facts:
GVPedia and its colleagues were unable to independently replicate Dr. Moody's analysis. When GVPedia uses the same methodology as Dr. Moody to analyze publicly available data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WONDER database, GVPedia finds that firearm homicide rates increase by at least 22% after 3 years, versus a 10% increase for the United States as a whole over the same time period. Overall homicides and gun deaths also increase substantially relative to the rest of the country.[12]

Disinformation:
Most studies show that weakening concealed carry laws reduces violent crime.[13]

Facts:
The conclusion that permitless carry and weakening concealed carry laws will help reduce crime is based on an error-filled analysis by researcher John Lott. He misclassified at least two studies and included results of studies that aren't about concealed carry laws. He included studies with severe errors, relied on heavily outdated research, and failed to include twenty-three national level studies analyzing the impact of concealed carry laws.

When these errors are corrected, a sizable majority of the modern academic literature finds that weakening concealed carry laws increases violent crime.[14]

Disinformation:
Concealed carry permit-holders are "incredibly law-abiding," meaning they couldn't be responsible for an increase in violent crime.[15, 16]

Facts:
These arguments often rely on inaccurate data that show that gun permits are rarely revoked, indicating that the holders are law abiding. However, multiple investigations reveal that the data is fatally flawed. For example:

- A 2011 investigation of two large Michigan counties uncovered that 77% and 79%, respectively, of permit holder convictions went unreported, meaning that many permit holders who should have had their permits revoked did not.[17]
- A 2011 investigation of North Carolina permit revocation data discovered that, in more than half of felony convictions, authorities failed to revoke or suspend permits.[18]

These investigations demonstrate that at the very least, revocation data cannot be relied on to determine whether concealed carry permit holders are law-abiding. Further, Permitless Carry removes the requirement to pass a background check before carrying a concealed handgun, thereby removing an important safeguard in ensuring that people carrying firearms are law-abiding.

Disinformation:
Permitless Carry helps people protect themselves with a firearm, which already occurs 2.5 million times each year. Such defensive gun uses are 4-5 times more common than gun crimes.[19]

Facts:
No academic peer-reviewed studies that examine both defensive gun use and criminal gun use indicate that defensive gun use is more common than criminal gun use.[20,21]

Empirical evidence from the Gun Violence Archive reveals approximately 2,000 verified defensive gun uses annually, not 2.5 million.[22] In 2019 alone, approximately 40,000 people in the U.S. were killed by firearms, tens of thousands were injured, at least 200,000 firearms were stolen, and hundreds of thousands of people were subject to abusive gun uses such as coercion, threat, brandishing, or intimidation.[23] The comparison shows that guns are far more likely to be used to harm than to protect.

Disinformation:
Defensive gun use is the most effective way to prevent injury and benefits populations that are especially vulnerable to violent crime.[24]

Facts:
Research from Harvard University shows that when a person tries to use a gun to defend themself against a criminal, their likelihood of injury is almost identical to if the person didn't take any kind of defensive measure.[25] In fact, using a gun in self defense has a higher injury rate than if the person runs away or calls the police. Specifically, the Harvard study found that people who used a gun in self defense suffered injuries in 10.9% of encounters, whereas people who did nothing suffered injuries in 11% of encournaters. Surveys conducted by Havard scholars also found that a majority of self-reported defensive gun uses were both illegal and provided no social benefit.[26] **The vast majority of academic research clearly indicates that gun ownership does not reduce a person's rate of victimization.**[27]

Recommended Reading:
Clarifying Misinformation in NYSRPA v Bruen Amicus Briefs, GVPedia
Weakening gun laws will only mean more bloodshed, Devin Hughes and Po Murray in the Orlando Sentinel

Endnotes

1. Webster, D., Crifasi, C., Vernick, J., & McCourt, A. (2017). *Concealed carry of firearms: Facts vs. fiction.* Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Gun Policy and Research. https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-violence-prevention-and-policy/_archive-2019/_pdfs/concealed-carry-of-firearms.pdf
2. GVPedia used publicly available data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Wonder Database from 1999 to 2019. GVPedia treats year 0 as the year end before Permitless Carry is passed for the purpose of this analysis, which is in line with traditional methodology (for example, if a Permitless Carry law is passed in January 2017, GVPedia uses the total number of gun homicides in 2016 as year 0, to show the effects of the law's passage on the remainder of 2017 in year 1). https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76;jsessionid=530A394EA54572BFD604F778A830
3. The CDC does not directly provide data for years in which a state had fewer than 10 incidents because small data sets are not stable. States with CDC data fully available for three years are: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and West Virginia. States with suppressed CDC data (i.e. the data set is too small for reliable analysis) in some years are: Maine, North Dakota, New Hampshire, and Wyoming.
4. GVPedia conducted the same analysis for Permitless Carry laws and their impact on overall homicides (including deaths not related to firearms) and firearm deaths, both of which include gun homicides in their totals. After 3 years, overall homicides increase by 14% and gun deaths increase by 13%. The increase in both of these figures is overwhelmingly driven by the increase in gun homicides.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics, FastStats Homepage. https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76;jsessionid=530A394EA54572BFD604F778A830
6. Hughes, Devin L. (2021). *Clarifying Misinformation in NYSRPA V Bruen Amicus Briefs.* GVPedia. https://www.gvpedia.org/clarifying-misinformation-in-nysrpa-v-bruen-amicus-briefs/
7. Ibid.
8. Harvard Injury Control Research Center. (2014). *Firearm Researcher Surveys: Expert Survey 3: Concealed Carry Laws & Crime* [Data set] https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1264/2014/05/Expert-Survey-3-Results.pdf
9. Webster, D., Crifasi, C., Vernick, J., & McCourt, A. (2017). *Concealed carry of firearms: Facts vs. fiction.* Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Gun Policy and Research. https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-violence-prevention-and-policy/_archive-2019/_pdfs/concealed-carry-of-firearms.pdf
10. Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, *Guns In Public: Concealed Carry.* Retrieved February 4, 2022 from https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/concealed-carry/
11. Moody, Carl. (2022, January 23). *Changes in Crime and Killings of Police After Constitutional Carry Adopted.* Crime Prevention Research Center. https://crimeresearch.org/2022/01/changes-in-crime-and-killings-of-police-after-constitutional-carry-adopted/
12. GVPedia used publicly available data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Wonder Database from 1999 to 2019. GVPedia treats year 0 as the year end before Permitless Carry is passed for the purpose of this analysis, which is in line with traditional methodology (for example, if a Permitless Carry law is passed in January 2017, GVPedia uses the total number of gun homicides in 2016 as year 0 to show the effects the law's passage has on the remainder of 2017 in year 1). https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76;jsessionid=530A394EA54572BFD604F778A830

13. Brewer, Tom; Lott, John R., Jr. (2022, January 18). Midlands Voices: Fears about carrying guns without permits are unfounded. *Omaha World-Herald.*
14. Hughes, Devin L. (2021). *Clarifying Misinformation in NYSRPA V Bruen Amicus Briefs.* GVPedia. https://www.gvpedia.org/clarifying-misinformation-in-nysrpa-v-bruen-amicus-briefs/
15. Brewer, Tom; Lott, John R., Jr. (2022, January 18). Midlands Voices: Fears about carrying guns without permits are unfounded. *Omaha World-Herald.* https://omaha.com/opinion/columnists/midlands-voices-fears-about-carrying-guns-without-permits-are-unfounded/article_ecc7a074-758c-11ec-b41d-c38b82131e07.html
16. Sturdevant, William, E. (2001, August 24). *An Analysis Of The Arrest Rate Of Texas Concealed Handgun License Holders As Compared To The Arrest Rate Of The Entire Texas Population 1996 – 1998, Revised to include 1999 and 2000 data.* Texas Handgun Association. https://txhga.org/2015/12/31/chl-study/
17. Agar, John. (2011, June 27 updated 2019, April 3). Ready, aim, misfire: Analysis finds mistakes, misunderstanding in gun reports. *Michigan Live.* https://www.mlive.com/news/index.ssf/2011/06/ready_aim_misfire_analysis_fin.html
18. Luo, Michael. (2011, December 26). Guns in Public, and Out of Sight. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/27/us/more-concealed-guns-and-some-are-in-the-wrong-hands.html?pagewanted=all
19. Lott, John R., Jr. (2021, September 22). *There Are Far More Defensive Gun Uses Than Murders. Here's Why You Rarely Hear of Them.* RealClear Investigations. https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2021/09/22/there_are_far_more_defensive_gun_uses_than_murders_in_america_heres_why_you_rarely_hear_of_them_794461.html
20. Hemenway, David; Vriniotis, Mary. (2009 Spring). Comparing the Incidence of Self-Defense Gun Use and Criminal Gun Use. *Bulletins,* Issue 3. Harvard School of Public Health, Harvard Injury Control Research Center. https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1264/2013/01/Bullet-ins_Spring_2009.pdf
21. John R. Lott's own research points to the implausibility of defensive gun use being a sufficient causal force for crime decreases. At the time Lott's data was published in his book, More Guns, Less Crime, the general population faced an aggravated assault rate of 0.18%. Assuming, as Lott does, that 2% of the population obtained concealed carry permits (and were consistently carrying their firearms) during this period, 0.65% of those permit holders would need to stop aggravated assaults annually to reduce crime by the amount projected in his own models. This means permit holders would have to stop 3.6 times the number of aggravated assaults they would be expected to encounter. In other words, there isn't sufficient opportunity for permit holders to use their firearms defensively to reduce crime by the degree Lott's own models required.
22. Gun Violence Archive. *Past Summary Ledgers* [Data set]. Retrieved February 4, 2022 from https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls
23. GVPedia. (2020, February 24). *Defensive Gun Use.* https://www.gvpedia.org/dgu
24. Lott, John R. Jr. (2020, September 8). Americans' Very Right to Keep and Bear Arms is on the Ballot This Election. *Newsweek Magazine*. https://www.newsweek.com/americans-very-right-keep-bear-arms-ballot-this-election-opinion-1530152
25. David Hemenway, Sara J. Solnick. (2015). The epidemiology of self-defense gun use: Evidence from the National Crime Victimization Surveys 2007–2011, *Preventive Medicine, Volume 79*, *pages 22-27*, ISSN 0091-7435, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2015.03.029.
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