



Lies and Statistics: Why You Should Never Listen to a Liberal About Guns

by Jordan LaPorta

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The bodies had hardly cooled in Orlando before the usual suspects were clamoring for harsher measures to control guns in the United States. President Obama, Democratic members of Congress, and media elites have been pushing the familiar solution of severely restricting or banning certain types of firearms.

“This massacre is therefore a further reminder of how easy it is for someone to get their hands on a weapon that lets them shoot people in a school, or in a house of worship, or a movie theater, or in a nightclub. And we have to decide if that’s the kind of country we want to be,” President Obama said.

With that type of emotional appeal, it is tough to make a case against the president without coming off as incredibly insensitive. But just as Henry Hazlitt noted about economic fallacies, gun regulations and public opinion are easily swayed by the seen rather than the unseen. Members of the rank-and-file political left throw out several stock arguments every time a tragedy such as this occurs. Here is a breakdown of those arguments and why they are faulty.

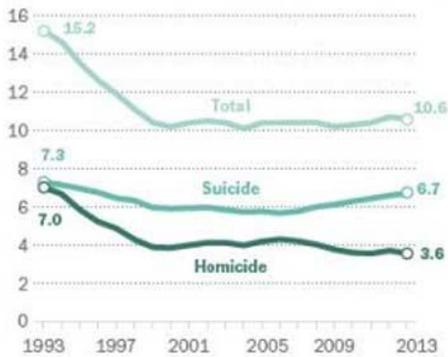
“Mass Shootings” Are On the Rise

The short response to this claim is no, not really. When addressing this argument there are two important factors to consider: the “shootings” aspect, as in the number of people affected by gun violence, and the “mass” moniker that denotes quantity of victims.

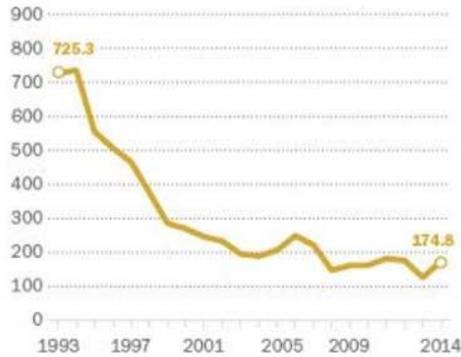
As for the statement that the number of people holistically affected by gun violence is up, nothing could be further from the truth. According to an analysis performed by Pew Research center, deaths by firearm (of all types) have been on the decline since 1993. The same study reveals that even non-fatal firearm victimizations have plummeted over the same period.

Gun Violence Has Declined Since '90's

Deaths by firearm per 100,000 people, all ages



Nonfatal violent firearm crime victimizations per 100,000 people ages 12 and older

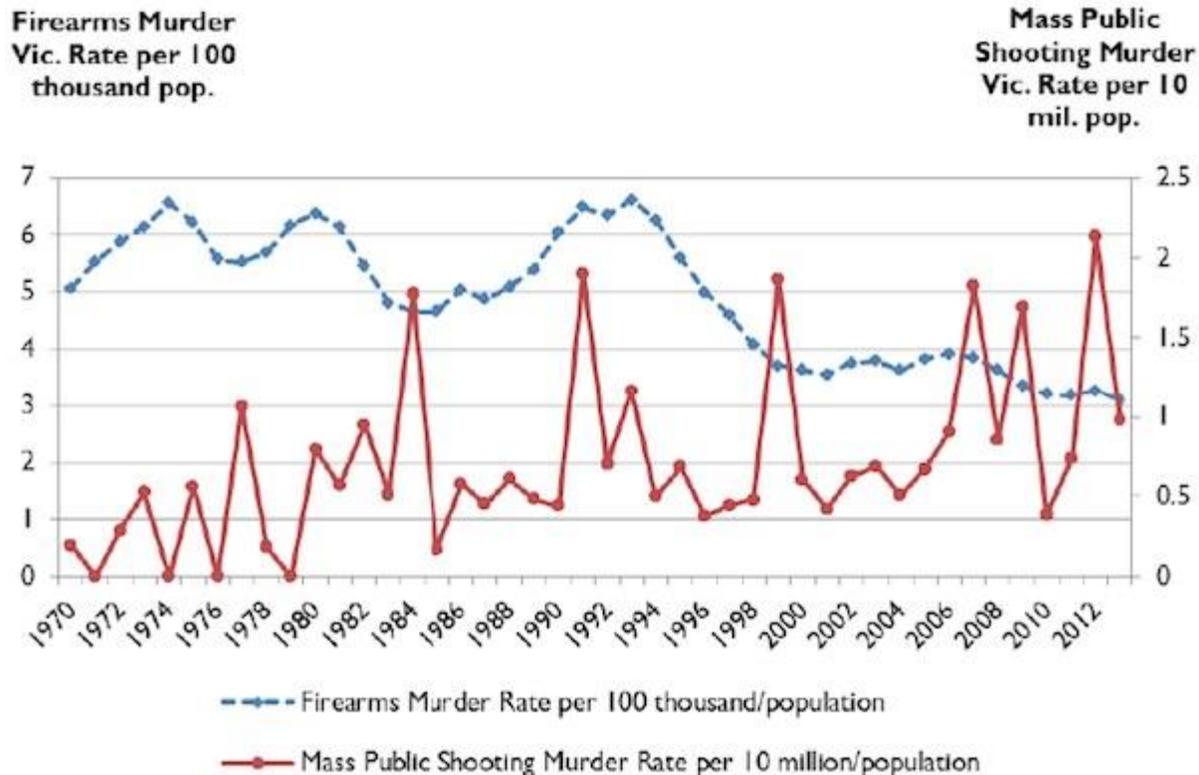


Note: Total gun deaths include police and accidental shootings and shooting deaths of undetermined intent, which are not counted as homicides or suicides. Source: CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (firearm deaths), Pew Research Center tabulations of National Crime Victimization Survey, U.S. Justice Department (nonfatal victimizations)

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The second factor, the “mass” component, is much more difficult to measure because seemingly everyone is using a different metric. As Jesse Walker so eloquently stated at Reason.com, the system we have now is essentially “choose your own mass shooting statistic,” where liberals pick and choose numbers from a barrel to forward their narrative. Believe it or not, some statisticians use a victim quantity of four to deem a shooting a “mass” casualty event, which puts a gas station robbery on the same plane as the Orlando tragedy.

Despite disparate measures, a [2015 Congressional Research Service analysis](#) found that “mass shootings” are up ever so slightly, but when the number of victims is adjusted for population growth, the increase virtually disappears.



The CRS study defines a mass shooting as “any gun crime where four or more people are murdered in a single incident.” However, incidents like the one in Orlando — because of magnitude and location — are denoted as “mass public shootings.”

The numbers show that most shootings are not mass shootings and most mass shootings are not public shootings. There have been an average of 4.4 mass public shootings per year since 1999, according to the report.

James Alan Fox, an expert on mass murders who teaches criminology at Northeastern University, told Reason.com that the data simply has “a great volatility in the numbers. There’s no solid trend.”

No One On the Terror Watch List Should Be Able to Buy a Gun

This is the perfect example of how due process is trampled upon by desire to do something. Preventing those on the terror watch list from getting a weapon seems like a simple fix, but it is an easy way to ensure that thousands of law-abiding Americans are denied their Second Amendment rights.

Both the conservative Fox News and the liberal Huffington Post agree that the terrorism watch list is not incredibly hard to get on — even accidentally. Something as simple as an anti-government social media post, visiting certain countries, having a suspicious last name, or even a

clerical error could put a completely innocent person in a position to have his or her rights limited.

According to the [Cato Institute](#), the number of names on the various lists range from an estimated 700,000 to more than a million. An estimated 47,000 names occupy the similar no-fly list championed by President Obama. These lists' inherent structure promotes over-inclusivity. The late Democratic Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy, congressman and civil rights hero John Lewis, and even members of the U.S. military and federal air marshals have all ended up on government watch lists.

Banning Assault Rifles Would Solve the Problem

Here again, we run in to a problem of definitions. *The Libertarian Republic* editor Keith Farrell summed up the issue incredibly well in [his own opinion piece](#).

“Most of us on the right [read as “actual gun owners] know the term “assault weapon” is hogwash — it simply describes the aesthetics of a gun and has nothing to do with operation or functionality,” Farrell wrote. “In fact, there is nothing operationally different in an assault rifle than a hunting rifle.”

And he is correct. [The Federal Assault Weapons Ban of 1994](#) had outlined specific cosmetic features that would classify a firearm as an assault weapon. For example, rifles and shotguns could not have folding stocks, pistol grips, bayonet mounts, attachable grenade launchers, flash suppressors, or threaded barrels designed to accommodate a flash suppressor, but those weapons could still be owned.

Furthermore, some of the most deadly attacks on American soil have been perpetrated without the use of a gun at all. 9/11 happened because of deranged fanatics in possession of box cutters. Timothy McVeigh terrorized Oklahoma City with an [Ammonium Nitrate bomb](#). Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev bombed the Boston Marathon with pressure cookers.

The above data shows that even after the Federal Assault Weapons ban ended in 2004, victimizations from gun crime continued to fall. On the flip side, despite having some of the most stringent gun laws in the nation, [Chicago's murder rate is up](#) 72 percent in 2016, and shootings in the windy city have skyrocketed 88 percent.

Einstein had a saying about trying the same thing over and over again, but I digress.

“There is No Reason You Need a Gun Like That!”

The purpose of the Second Amendment was for self defense and — even more controversially to the left — to keep the government in check. Many liberals argue that such a provision is antiquated. “The founding fathers had muskets, not assault rifles,” they type on their laptops

without realizing the founding fathers only had pamphlets at the time the First Amendment was written.

Weapons for self-defense should be easy to understand. The average police response time in the United States is [9 minutes](#). A lot can happen in that short time. Instead of helplessly waiting on government law enforcement, people should have the ability to defend themselves, their property, and their loved ones with the force of a rifle, shotgun, or pistol.

As for “keeping the government” in check, that one is a tad more difficult for the liberal elite to understand. Despite being pro-diversity and pro-minority rights, their memory of government and civilian abuses of such groups in American history seems to be sort sighted. I am sure that Native Americans, blacks in the South, and the Japanese interned by Democratic President Franklin Delano Roosevelt would have a lot to say to the “it can’t happen here” attitude.

Before you say something about guns, think about these things, and think about how without them you will be relying on the same people who brought you such successful enterprises as the U.S. Post Office to keep you safe.