



Health Researchers Favor Gun Control More Than Criminologists, Economists

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A [new paper](#) by three top researchers has revealed public health researchers are “are much more supportive of gun control than are either criminologists or economists.”

The report, authored by John R. Lott, Arther Z. Berg. MD, and Gary A. Mauser, is headlined “Expert Views on Gun Laws.” Lott is founder and president of the Crime Prevention Research Center, Berg is at the Harvard University Department of Psychiatry and Mauser is with the Simon Fraser University Beedie School of Business.

The eight-page report appears in the Winter edition of *Regulation*, the Cato Institute’s review of Business and Government. The trio obtained responses from 120 experts and compared “the views of public health researchers with those of criminologists and economists on a wide range of gun control policies.”

That’s nearly four times the number of experts assembled by the New York Times back in 2017 for a pair of articles on “how well public opinion on gun control corresponded with the opinions of a panel of experts.” The Times panel included 32 people, according to the new report.

According to the Lott-Mauser-Berg report, “Criminologists and economists differed somewhat in just how effective they thought various policies would be, but they had similar rankings of the policies’ effectiveness. Both groups had the same top four preferred policies for stopping mass public shootings.

“American criminologists rated the following policies most highly: allow K–12 teachers to carry concealed handguns (with a survey score of 6.0), allow military personnel to carry on military bases (5.6), encourage the elimination of gun-free zones (5.3), and relax federal regulations that pressure companies to create gun-free zones(5.0).

“The top four policies for economists were the same, but in different order: encourage the elimination of gun-free zones (7.9), relax federal regulations that pressure companies to create gun-free zones (7.8), allow K–12 teachers to carry concealed handguns (7.7), and allow military personnel to carry on military bases (7.7).”

However, when it comes to public health researchers, they're far more in favor of stricter gun control policies.

"Their top policy choice," the report revealed, "was barring gun sales to people deemed dangerous by a mental health provider, which was the fifth most valued policy by criminologists (4.88). Public health researchers' other top policies weren't viewed positively by criminologists.

"The public health researchers' second through fourth top-ranked policies," Lott, Mauser and Berg discovered, "were banning magazines that can hold more than 10 bullets (6.2), banning semi-automatic guns (6.1), and prohibiting assault weapon (5.98). All of these policies involve highly restrictive bans. For criminologists, these were their 21st (2.6), 20th (2.8), and 10th (3.0) ranked policies. There was an even larger gap between economists and public health researchers."

This report came on the heels of a vote in the Democrat-controlled U.S. House to provide \$25 million for research on so-called "gun violence" that would be divided between the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, according to [USA Today](#). It would be the first time in 20 years that such funding was provided for what Second Amendment advocates consider research to support gun control.

Reporting on this budget move, the [Washington Post](#) stated, "While gun violence is one of the country's leading causes of death, it receives little research funding. As many people die because of gun violence, for example, as of sepsis infection, yet funding for gun research is less than 1 percent of that for sepsis, a 2017 analysis found."

But according to [Medical News Today](#), the ten leading causes of death are heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, chronic lower respiratory disease, stroke and cerebrovascular diseases, Alzheimer's Disease, Diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, kidney disease and suicide.

While many suicides are by firearm, and about two-thirds of all gun-related fatalities in any given year are suicides, there is some indication that gun activists' suspicions about biased research may have some merit. A look at a Jan. 3, 2017 report at the [JAMA Network](#) suggests strongly they look at all firearms-related deaths as so-called "gun violence."

"The United States has the highest rate of gun-related deaths among industrialized countries, with more than 30 000 fatalities annually," the JAMA report said. "To date, research on gun violence has been limited. A 1996 congressional appropriations bill stipulated that 'none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] may be used to advocate or promote gun control.'"

The Washington Post story referred to the 1996 "Dickey Amendment," that prohibits CDC funding to be used to advocate for gun control. Anti-gunners have argued the amendment had a "chilling effect" on research related to "gun violence."

But that may not be accurate. [CNS News](#) reported in October 2017 about a \$10 million study commissioned by former President Barack Obama back in January 2013 that allowed the CDC to

study cases of firearms used in self-defense. That research revealed four important points, CNS News said. The study found:

- Gun-use is the safest of studied “self-protective strategies”
- Suicide accounts for most firearm deaths
- Felons who use guns very seldom obtain their guns by stealing them
- There is no evidence that gun restrictions reduce gun violence

Perhaps not surprisingly, this CDC gun research received very little attention.

Now comes the Lott-Mausser-Berg report. It notes the federal government actually did invest \$43.2 million in firearms research between 2015 and 2018. The report further says some state governments are getting involved, “putting millions of dollars into firearms research that consists exclusively of public health studies.”

That certainly follows the narrative put forth by anti-gun Democrats that “gun violence” is a public health issue.

The Washington Post article quoted Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (D-Conn.) who chairs the House Appropriations subcommittee on labor, health and human services and education. “The epidemic of gun violence is a public health emergency,” she said in a prepared statement.

But is there an “epidemic” of violence anywhere but in some cities controlled by liberals? The body count in Baltimore, Maryland, for example, is making headlines because it appears headed to a new high. According to the Associated Press, “Baltimore could wrap up 2019 with its highest per-capita homicide rate on record.” As of Christmas Eve, the city had logged 338 slayings. Maryland has some of the strictest gun control laws in the nation, but they haven’t slowed down the killings. And it calls into question the value of research that may be less than objective.

A look at the annual FBI Uniform Crime Reports show gun-related homicides actually declined last year, during a period when gun sales remained healthy, while having declined from the peak Obama-era years.

As the Lott-Mausser-Berg report concludes, “the disparity in answers from our public health researchers on one hand, and our criminologists and economists on the other, raises questions about devoting so much money to public health research into guns.”

“Academics from different fields vary widely in their views on the effectiveness of gun control,” the research trio observes. “Our results indicate that public health researchers are much more supportive of gun control than are either criminologists or economists. They are also much more opposed to deregulation. Economists, by contrast, are the most skeptical of new regulations and the most supportive of deregulation.”