

to do that.

Thanks to the generosity of Nora and Ted Sterling, we at SFU have a more encouraging environment than many other universities. Academic freedom is to be cherished. Particularly when we disagree with people.

The NRA and methodology If you think getting research money from

That is irresponsible. Sure, statistics can be used to mislead, but they also can give you a comprehensive understanding of complex issues. If you ignore statistics, you abandon reason.

Your emotions are all too easily manipulated by media images. I beg of you, don't abandon your critical powers. If you lose faith in your intelligence, you allow the media, politicians, and special interests to control you.

Now, more than ever. We need you to be a responsible citizen. Just dive into statistical arguments. Insist that you understand what's being said. Have confidence in your judgement. Sure, you'll make mistakes, but you'll learn.

All of the data I'm going to show here are public and available on the web. Please check out anything you are not comfortable with.

Now, are you ready? A reminder: no exam afterwards!

Myth #1: Criminal violence usually involves guns.

NSAID poster. Look at the facts. Media images blow the problem way out of proportion. Almost 10 times as many people are killed annually in Canada by aspirin-type products (1,500) than by homicides involving guns (160).

Crimes 1994. Very few violent crimes (about six-percent) involve a firearm. Less than one-third of homicides involves firearms.

Gun deaths. Most gun deaths (over three-quarters) are suicides.

Suicides.

woman.

The image in the media is that murderers are normal and anyone could suddenly attack you. [An article appeared in the National Post just this past weekend].

Homicide statistics [1994] Consider the facts. Most (two-thirds) homicide victims are male, and less than one-third (30%) of homicides involve a firearm.

All homicides are tragedies. But we need to put the problem in perspective in order to develop the wisest social policy. In her testimony to the Supreme Court of Canada, Senator Ann Cools pointed out that in 1994 only 24 women are killed by their "conjugal intimates" out of the 198 women killed that year. Or, 24 of the 596 people killed in total. Spousal violence isn't a gun problem; it's a social problem.

Homicide statistics [1999] In 1999, the same patterns. But this year, Stats Can asked about criminal records. A very important change.

Murderers are not normal people. Nor are murder victims. A typical homicide is a drunk or drugged criminal killing another criminal.

About two-thirds of those accused of homicide have criminal records. The majority also has a history of alcohol or drug abuse. Almost 3/4 of the spousal murderers had a history of spousal abuse prior to the killing.

At the least, these statistics suggest that firearm registration won't be useful in stopping violent crime.

Myth #3: Gun ownership leads to crime or violence

Rural vs. urban firearm ownership.

Crime rates are much higher in cities than they are in the rural areas - where the guns are.

Owning a gun does not predispose people to violence. Gun owners in the US and in Canada are normal people.

Myth #4: Canadians do not use guns in self-protection. I've conducted three surveys of the public in Canada and my studies show that between 60,000 - 80,000 Canadians report using firearms annually to protect themselves, their families or their property. Between 19,000 and 35,500 of these cases involved defense against criminal violence; the rest (more than half) involved defense against dangerous animals. (See my 1996 paper in the Journal of Criminal Justice). As expected, most of the cases involving animals were in Western Canada.

My three surveys had different sponsors : the NRA, the Canadian government, and the Langley Symposium. All three found roughly the same results.

My surveys are the only empirical study of defensive gun use in Canada. My results are consistent with the General Social Survey that found 17% of women carry something routinely to protect themselves.

Canadians report using guns defensively about half as often as do Americans, per capita.

Some people envisage images of Hollywood-style shoot-outs when defensive gun use is mentioned. Again TV leads people astray. In terms of protection against violent criminals, research in the US shows that over 95% of the times a gun is used in self-protection, the gun is not fired but merely displayed. A violent crime is averted - without using violence. There is no victim.

Self-defense incidents are all but invisible to authorities. The participants have no motive to report them to the police, and indeed every reason to keep them quiet.

Myth #5: Canadian gun laws keep us safe. The Emperor has no clothes. Little empirical support can be mustered for such a claim. American criminologists widely admit that no solid empirical research can be found that shows that any gun law has had a significant effect on crime rates. Shocked? Many researchers are very disappointed.

homicides have been declining, handgun homicides have increased from around 25% to over 50% of gun homicides. The Solicitor General admitted in Parliament that handgun registration has never been used to solve a crime.

History of Canadian gun laws Canada has long had strict gun laws. Nevertheless, each new law is introduced as if there had never been any previous firearm legislation.

Canadians have long had strict gun laws: Handguns were registered in 1935; police checks required for purchasing any firearm in 1977; the rules for legal owners were tightened in 1991 and again in 1995. In addition, a wide variety of firearms and weapons were banned in 1977, 1991, and 1995, as well as numerous other changes brought in, sometime with legislation, sometimes with police practices.

Ironically, crime rates were actually lower before the modern wave of gun laws.

Registration cue cartoon.

Gun law table. A number of studies have evaluated Canadian gun laws. These researchers vary considerably in their position on gun control. My research is consistent with all other academic studies of Canadian firearm legislation. The only two exceptions are unpublished government studies with flawed methodologies.

Econometric charts. I have conducted several studies (Mauser and Holmes 1992, Mauser and Maki, 1998, 1999) that empirically examined the effect of the 1977 and 1991 Canadian firearm laws on homicide and robbery. No significant effect was found for the gun law in either study.

US-Canada comparison chart. We often hear that gun control in Canada keeps our crime rate down. Is that true?

If strict gun control laws were the primary determinant of criminal activity, then all Canadian provinces would have lower homicide rates than their neighboring states in the United States. Not so. Despite the lower homicide rate in Canada, four of the 9 contiguous Canadian provinces or territories have a higher homicide rate than the continuous state in the US. At the very least, we can say that something else, beside gun laws, is going on.

UK - guns and crime chart. Draconian firearm laws in the UK merely destroyed the shooting sports, but did nothing to reduce violent crime.

by the spectacle of a culture that honors diversity and individual freedom.

We need to fight terrorism, but we also need to retain what we rightfully pride ourselves about our Western Civilization: our individual liberties. The terrorists will win if they can get us to abandon our liberties and our freedoms.

Cultural diversity As Canadians we are proud that we respect the variety of races and cultures that live among us. But, what about rural Canadians? It is time to remember that respect for cultural differences includes respect for them too.

Thanks to Nora and Ted Sterling There is a need to tell the Emperor he has no clothes.

Thanks to Nora and Ted Sterling, SFU has a more supportive environment for dissenters than is found at many other universities. That is no small accomplishment.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions and comments.