



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 21, 2013

Florida Update: Concealed Carry Permits Up, Violent Crime Down

The [recent report](#) from ABC News that in Florida, where there are more concealed weapons permits than anywhere else in the country, violent crime has dropped to the lowest point in history, delighted Sean Caranna, executive director of [Florida Carry, Inc.](#) “We’re happy to have facts and statistics put into these debates, because every time they do, we win,” he said.



Firearm-related violent crimes in Florida have dropped by one-third in just four years, 2007 to 2011, while concealed carry permits jumped by 90 percent in that period. Further, violent crime of any kind dropped almost as much, 26 percent.

There were naysayers, but their voices are becoming muted as more and more states have adopted “shall-issue” carry laws and have seen their own crime rates drop as well. One of the naysayers was [Gary Kleck](#), a Florida State criminologist who calls himself “as liberal as they get.” He said the link between more permits and less crime might just be a coincidence. He said that nationally, crime has been falling steadily since 1991 and Florida’s numbers might just be part of that trend. He warned against drawing too hasty a conclusion that one statistic caused the other. “The real problem there in drawing conclusions is that you’re guessing why that decline or change in gun violence has occurred,” he stated.

In a backhanded support of Kleck’s warning, Arthur Hayhoe, the executive director of the Florida Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, said “It’s difficult to attach gun control to the reduction of crime, and vice versa. We don’t know what works. We can’t prove that gun control works because we don’t have gun control laws.”

Kleck has authored numerous books and articles over the last 20 years, but none garnered as much national attention as his 1994 National Self-Defense Survey which, based on a survey of 5,000 households, concluded that there were far more incidents where gun owners defended themselves against potentially violent crime than there were actual crimes involving the use of guns. This outraged liberals who thought Kleck would find something that would support their typically anti-gun posture. One such was Marvin Wolfgang, another liberal Florida criminologist who described himself as being “as strong a gun-control advocate as can be found among all criminologists in this country.” He said,

I would eliminate all guns from the civilian population and maybe even from the police. I hate guns — ugly, nasty instruments designed to kill people.... What troubles me is the article by Gary Kleck ... The reason I am troubled is that [he has] provided an almost clear-cut case of methodologically sound research in support of something I have theoretically opposed for years, namely, the use of a gun in defense against a criminal perpetrator ... I do not like [his] conclusions that having a gun



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can be useful, but I cannot fault [his] methodology....

Such a report from Florida must encourage Professor John Lott, who in 2000 authored the groundbreaking book [More Guns, Less Crime](#). Lott never intended to become the lightning rod for the anti-gun forces. He began the study initially because he saw that much of what passed for valid statistical analysis in the field was poorly done, and he saw an opportunity to correct and update it. What it did was change his life, and not necessarily for the better. In his recent update to the book, Lott wrote,

Ten years have passed since the second edition of this book. During that time, both the argument and the data have been hotly debated. This debate has often been unpleasant, vociferous, and even disingenuous. To say that my career has suffered as a result is something of an understatement.... And yet ... within the scholarly community [my] research has withstood criticism and remains sound. Further, the additional ten years of data provide continued strong support for [my] arguments....

When Florida passed the first “shall-issue” law requiring authorities to issue concealed weapons permits to qualified citizens upon request in 1987, critics warned that the Sunshine State would soon become the “Gunshine” State, with predictions of differences being settled by gun fights in the streets, and crime soaring. The exact opposite happened. [As Guncite.com noted](#), “homicide rates dropped faster than the national average [and] through 1997, only one permit holder out of over the 350,000 permits issued, was convicted of homicide.”

That was then. This is now. [Lott provided an update on right-to-carry laws](#) for the *Maryland Law Review* last October in which he noted that there are now more than 912,000 permit holders in Florida, many of whom have had their permits for years. Across the country, as some 40 other states have joined Florida in its decision to allow “shall-issue” permits to its citizens, the number of permit holders has reached nearly eight million, and is still climbing. And Lott is getting support for his once-controversial view by recent studies showing similar declines in violent crime. Wrote Lott:

There have been a total of 29 peer reviewed studies by economists and criminologists, 18 supporting the hypothesis that shall-issue laws reduce crime, 10 not finding any significant effect on crime ... and [one] paper ... finding that right-to-carry laws temporarily increase one type of violent crime: aggravated assault.

He noted that the predicted disasters following passage of such laws never happened. In fact, despite more and more states adopting them, not a single one of those laws has been repealed. As Lott noted,

One simple measure of how well these laws have worked is a political one: despite states adopting right-to-carry laws as long ago as the 1920s, there has never even been a legislative hearing held to rescind these laws.

In that paper, Lott took delight in debunking so-called studies by anti-gun groups that have distorted the data to prove a different, and less favorable, conclusion:

A June 2010 analysis of the gun control groups’ claims examined those groups’ claims for Florida: the Brady Campaign and the Violence Policy Center portray Florida as Ground Zero for problems with concealed handgun permit holders.

They boldly assert that seventeen Florida permit holders have “killed” people with their guns over the past three years [from May 2007 to May 2010] and that this one state by itself accounts for



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seventeen of the ninety-six “killer” permit holders nationwide.

Yet even though a newspaper reported on the shooting, *seven* cases were such clear-cut cases of self-defense that no one was even charged with a crime, *three* cases involved suicide, and *two* of the other cases, including one involving a police officer, *actually didn't involve permit holders*.

[Emphases added.]

That means that, following Lott's rigorous refutation of those inflated statistics, just five out of more than half a million permit holders were involved in a criminal case in that three-year period.

That latest information from Florida just confirms what Lott had discovered years ago: Carrying reduces crime. Wrote Lott: “Armageddon never happened ... in state after state when right-to-carry laws have been adopted, the entire debate quickly becomes a non-issue within a year.”

The time is almost here when carrying a concealed firearm is so commonplace that it won't even be worth commenting on. Florida and Professor John Lott have led the way.

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