

Contribution

Michael Bloomberg Shoots 50 Million Blanks On Gun Control

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Having deprived New Yorkers of the ability to smoke in public and drink large sodas as mayor, Michael Bloomberg has set his sites on a much more profound breach of freedom: Americans' Second Amendment rights.

The former mayor has pledged to pump another \$50 million of his own money into the cause. To put this number into perspective consider this: One man just promised to spend more than 2.5 times as much as the National Rifle Association on political activities over the next year. And this doesn't even take into account the money Bloomberg has spent on "public health" gun research, reported to be in the tens of millions.



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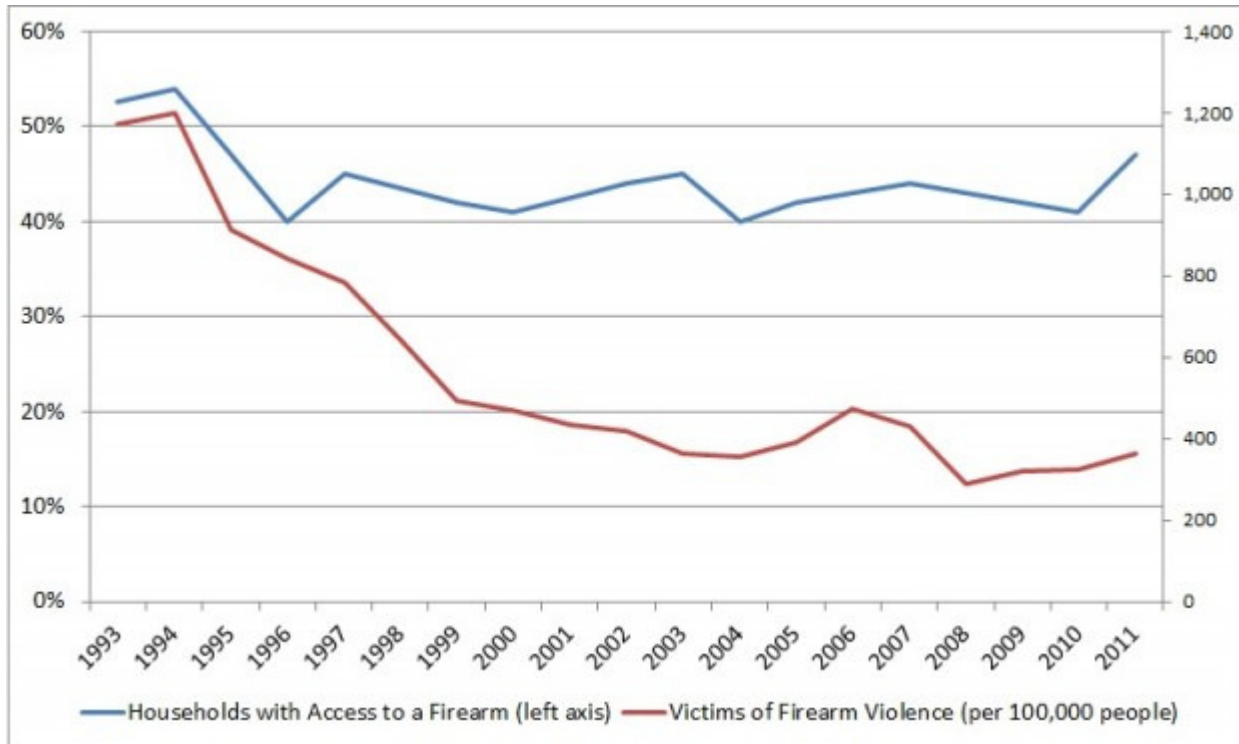
Why? Because “the broader epidemic of gun violence in this country,” as President Obama referred to it, has become such a problem that it cries out for radical approaches that ignore the Constitution.

Except here’s the thing: There is no epidemic of gun violence in the United States. As a matter of fact, gun violence has been steadily *decreasing* for years.

The premise behind gun control is that it reduces offensive gun use by criminals. The catch is that it also reduces defensive gun use by law abiding citizens. Whether stricter gun control results in fewer gun deaths depends on which effect – reducing offensive use or reducing defensive use – is greater. This means that the gun control question is an empirical question. The correct answer lies in the data, not in the impassioned beliefs of a former mayor. And the data have a lot to say on the topic.

According to [Gallup](#), the percentage of households owning guns was almost the same in 2011 as in 1996. Yet, according to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#), firearm homicides declined by over one-third during the same period. It

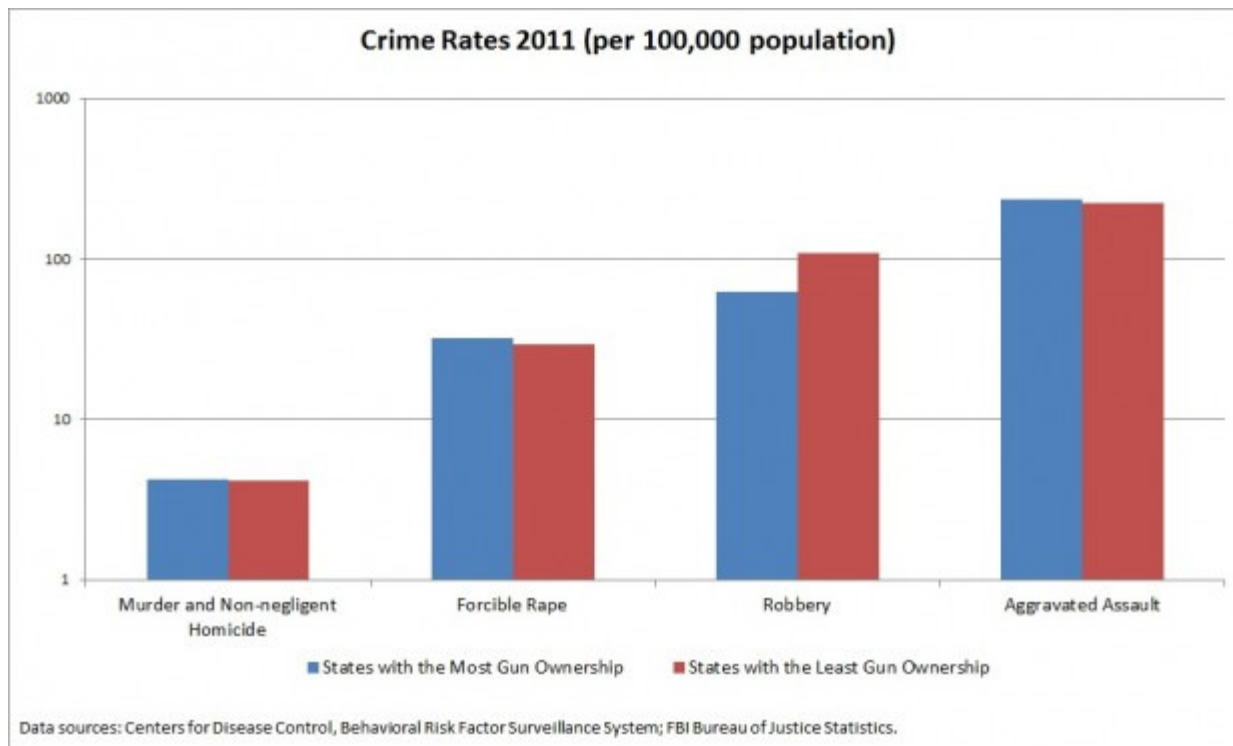
does appear that something is causing a dramatic decline in gun deaths, but whatever it is, it isn't a decline in gun ownership.



Courtesy of Antony Davies.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provide additional data that makes the story even more interesting. We can split the 48 states that report crime data (Florida and Alabama do not report) into two groups: those with above-average and below-average rates of gun ownership.

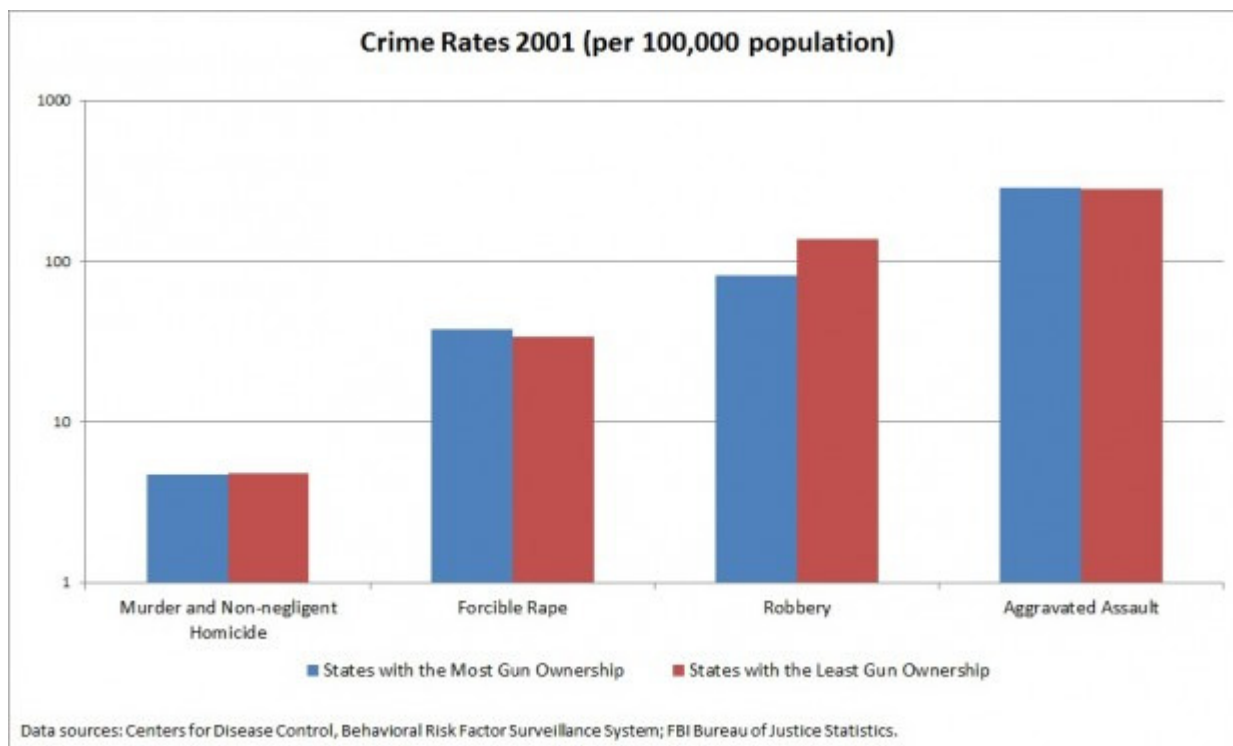
The difference in gun ownership across the two sets of states is significant. In the top-24 states, an average of 48 percent of households reported having access to a firearm. In the bottom-24 states, an average of only 28 percent of households reported having access to a firearm. If the premise behind gun control were correct, the data should show markedly higher rates of gun crime among the bottom-24 states than among the top-24 states.



Courtesy of Antony Davies.

So what do the gun violence statistics look like for these two sets of states?

According to [FBI data](#), violent crime and property crime rates are statistically identical in the top-24 states as in the bottom-24 states. That is, with one exception: the robbery rate. The average robbery rate is 40 percent lower in the 24 states that have above-average rates of gun ownership.



Courtesy of Antony Davies.

The data here tell two stories, neither one of which is consistent with the gun control argument. The first is that more guns do not accompany more violent crime or more property crime. The second is that more guns accompany markedly fewer robberies.

What becomes clear as one looks at the data is that there is no “epidemic of gun violence” in the United States. There is, simply put, a lot less gun violence now than in past years.

More importantly, there is also no relationship between readily available firearms and levels of gun violence, which in and of itself seems to indicate that Bloomberg is literally wasting tens of millions of dollars in his quest to relegate the Second Amendment to the back burner.

Still not convinced?

On Jan. 23, 2013 in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook massacre in Connecticut, President Obama issued 23 executive orders addressing firearms in a number of ways. One of these instructed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “to research the causes and prevention of gun violence.” The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, to which the CDC gave the research problem, [completed the project some months later](#), but the White House was not quick to publicize the findings.

The reason: The data regarding gun violence contradicted the beliefs of the gun-banning political class.

It turns out that the majority of firearms deaths in the United States from 2000 to 2010 — 61 percent of them — were suicides. Comparatively, the types of mass shootings that gave rise to the study in the first place are exceedingly rare. According to the study, mass shootings (shootings in which four or more individuals are killed by a single person) result in an average of 20 deaths per year.

By contrast, there are almost 20,000 gun-related suicides per year. The gun-rights lobby was right after all: We don't have a gun problem; we have a mental health problem.



A man holds up a sign with with a depiction of an assault weapon during a rally at the Connecticut State Capital to promote gun control legislation in the wake of the December 14, 2012, school shooting in Newtown on February 14, 2013 in Hartford, Connecticut. Referred to as the 'March for Change' and held on the two-month anniversary of the massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, participants called for improved gun safety laws. Among the safety measures being demanded are for universal background checks, more work within the mental health community and restricting high-capacity magazines. Credit: Getty Images

Supporters of gun rights have also repeatedly said that guns are necessary for self-protection. The study confirmed this as well, stating, "Almost all national survey estimates indicate that defensive gun uses by victims are at least as common as offensive uses by criminals."

More striking than this, the study concluded that those who defend themselves with firearms are considerably less likely to be injured or killed than those who do not.

Michael Bloomberg, it seems, is wasting his money, and a lot of it at that. Unlike him, though, we recognize his right to do with his money as he wishes. He might consider, just this once, listening to the data. Imagine what real good he could *actually* do by giving that \$50 million in support of mental health care.

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