

Gun Control Basics

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Before I started to study this subject in 1979, I believed that gun control was “a good thing”. Perhaps this was mainly because government and police representatives had been making statements to this effect all my life and the British media had been reporting these statements as self-evident truths that required no justification or evidence.

After 3 years of study I realised – with something of a shock – that the evidence strongly suggested that gun control only generated perverse results. Now, after over 30 years, I am firmly of the opinion that the fundamental realities are that:

1. **Widespread civilian gun ownership** and, especially, the lawful right to use guns in self-defence and the apprehension of criminals (with statutory protection from subsequent prosecution on the grounds of such artificial nonsense as e.g. using more than “*reasonable force*”), is a public good and one of the few policies that can be shown to reduce violent crime. It has an especially good record of reducing mass “public” murders. See e.g. the research in John Lott’s book, “**More Guns, Less Crime**”, pages 100-102. Consider 2, somewhat similar, English events: **Firstly**, the pre-gun control 1909 Tottenham Outrage, in which 2 armed robbers fired several hundred shots, but only managed to murder 2 people, largely because they were under continuous pressure from armed civilians and police (see www.outrage1909.org.uk/story1.html); **Secondly**, the 1987 Hungerford murders by Michael Ryan. The English public had long been completely disarmed and Ryan was able murder 16 people with about 90 shots, without facing any armed opposition whatsoever.

Widespread civilian gun ownership is also a valuable barrier to both tyranny and invasion.

2. **Guns, especially pistols, are immensely valuable** as defensive/deterrent devices. In contrast, robbers with guns harm a much smaller proportion of their victims than robbers using any other “mechanism”, e.g. knives, blunt instruments, or hands & feet.
3. **All sport shooting is safe** by comparison with other sports and has absolutely no meaningful relationship to criminal activity. Organised target shooting is probably THE safest activity sport of all.
4. **Creating a legislative environment** that allows youngsters to be readily and easily introduced to guns and shooting by the competent enthusiasts that run shooting clubs all over the world, will have a significant and beneficial effect on their subsequent behaviour, with fewer accidents and reduced criminal activity. See e.g. the 1994 Report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Dept. of Justice. <http://www.pulpless.com/gunlock/urdel.pdf>
5. **Every hour devoted by the police and justice systems** to controlling those who apply to government for permission to possess a firearm; to recording gun and ownership data; and to enforcing the laws without reference to harm to others, or to criminal intent; is an hour destructively wasted. In other words, these processes produce no net social benefits – on the contrary, they convert honest people into criminals. They consume expensive resources while reducing, or stopping completely, benign social activities. They also generate socially negative effects by demonstrating to honest citizens that their legal/police/justice system is seriously deficient.

Perhaps the most serious social effect is to demonize inanimate objects and thus divert attention from the crucial fact that only humans are “good” or “bad”.