

Jake Weigler
Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety
Written Testimony on Senate Bill 797 and Senate Bill 868
April 17, 2017 Hearing in Senate Judiciary Committee

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee:

During testimony today you heard a witness claim that gun death rates in France exceed those of the United States and that the rate of gun death in Australia did not drop after that country adopted stronger gun laws. I provide this information to ensure this debate is guided by facts and not false misinformation.

United States versus France

A broad range of data sources provide overwhelming evidence that the United States experiences a rate of gun death that far exceeds that of the rest of the developed world.

Based on data from the United Nations Office of Crime and Drugs and other sources, the *Washington Post* recently reported that the United States experiences 3.2 gun homicides per 100,000 people – far exceeding the 0.06 rate of gun homicides per 100,000.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/nation/gun-homicides-ownership/table/>

A similar analysis prepared by the *New York Times* finds that gun death rates in the United States vastly exceeds those of the rest of the developed world. As that analysis noted, opponents of sensible gun laws have cherry picked 2015's mass casualty tragedies in France to make their case about gun violence. But as that report notes:

Last year's Paris attacks killed 130 people, which is nearly as many as die from gun homicides in all of France in a typical year. But even if France had a mass shooting as deadly as the Paris attacks every month, its annual rate of gun homicide death would be lower than that in the United States.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/14/upshot/compare-these-gun-death-rates-the-us-is-in-a-different-world.html>

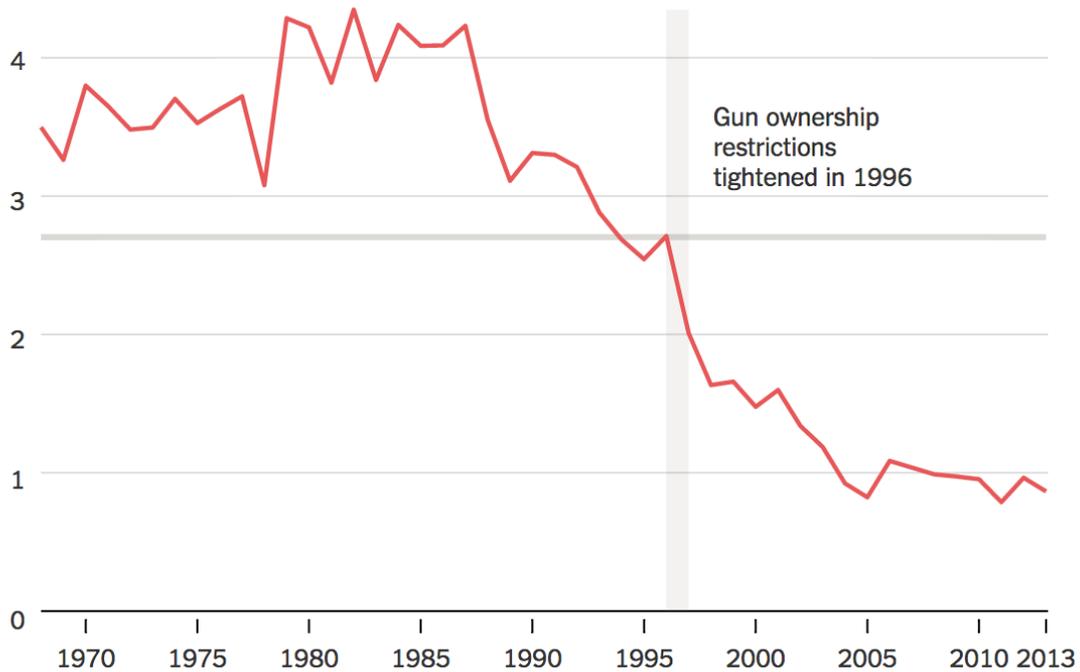
Gun Death Rates in Australia

Although it is important to recognize that stronger gun laws can curb gun violence, they cannot eliminate the public health roots that bring people to commit gun violence. Gun laws are effective means for harm reduction, as is demonstrated with the laws enacted in the 1990s in Australia.

New York Times chart on gun deaths in Australia (2015)

Gun Deaths

The rate of gun-related suicides and homicides per 100,000 residents in Australia has fallen sharply since gun ownership restrictions were tightened in 1996.



Source: "Do Gun Buybacks Save Lives? Evidence from Panel Data," American Law and Economics Review, 2010, with updated figures provided by a co-author, Christine Neill, and later revisions by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/05/world/australia/australia-gun-ban-shooting.html>

FactCheck.Org also examined this claim in 2009 and found it false. As they reported:

Have murders increased since the gun law change, as claimed? Actually, Australian crime statistics show a marked decrease in homicides since the gun law change. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, a government agency, the [number of homicides in Australia](#) did increase slightly in 1997 and peaked in 1999, but has since declined to the lowest number on record in 2007, the most recent year for which official figures are available.

Furthermore, murders using firearms have declined even more sharply than murders in general since the 1996 gun law. In the seven years prior to 1997, firearms were used in 24 percent of all Australian homicides. But most

recently, firearms were used in only 11 percent of Australian homicides, according to figures for the 12 months ending July 1, 2007. That's a decline of more than half since enactment of the gun law to which this message refers.

Source: <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/05/gun-control-in-australia/>

Thank you for careful consideration of this important legislation!