

Spring 5-10-2017

A Shot in the Dark: Public Opinion on Gun Control in the United States

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Recommended Citation

Cameron, Mollie, "A Shot in the Dark: Public Opinion on Gun Control in the United States" (2017). *Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters*. 242.

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A Shot in the Dark: Public Opinion on Gun Control

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Introduction

Research

This study will analyze the public opinion in the United States on Gun control.

Public Opinions on Gun Control

- Studies show that 81% of United States citizens support reasonable gun control legislation
 - 83% support universal background checks
 - 74% support No Fly No Buy
 - 81% support having tighter restrictions on fire arms sales for people who have a history of mental illness

Why is there no legislative action?

- In studies analyzing strength of opinion it was found that people who are opposed to gun control are more politically active
 - When asked about strength of opinion people who were advocates of gun control polled to have stronger opinions
 - When polled about how important gun rights were in a campaign or opinions of a representative opposition to gun control felt stronger about it being a central issue in which candidate they support while gun control activists did not
 - When polled about how active they are in either supporting or opposing gun control it was found that 45% opposed and 26% in support were actively making contributions and contacting their representatives
- The NRA is a large interest group that has strong influence over congressional action through their monetary power and their legitimacy
 - In 2014 the total spending of all organizations on gun rights was \$28,638,201; and of that money the NRA was responsible for \$27,998,636
 - In comparison within the same year there was \$13,643,045 total spending in support of gun control with the biggest contributor being the Americans Responsible Solutions- PAC contributing \$7,679,040
 - These monetary contributions along with the strong, active members of the NRA contribute to how much influence they carry
- Lastly there has been a block on research conducted using federal funds on gun violence in the United States since 1996 with the passing of the Dickey Amendment
 - This makes it practically impossible to create effective gun control laws because there is no way to find what is working and what isn't

Hypotheses and Methods

H1: Males are more likely to be afraid of government regulation/restriction on fire arms and ammunition.

H2: People with conservative ideology are more likely to be afraid of government regulation/restriction on fire arms and ammunition.

H3: People who are more highly educated are more likely to be afraid of the government regulation/restriction on fire arms and ammunition.

The independent variables for this study were determined based on statistics regarding gun owners. In a recent study it was found that the majority of gun owners are white, male, Republican, and middle aged from rural areas. These were then broken down into gender for hypothesis one, political identification for hypothesis two, and one that was not mentioned, education for hypothesis three to see if there would be any correlation.

The dependent variable regarding fear of government restriction on firearms and ammunition was chosen as a good indicator of how people felt about gun control. This question was split into a scale ranging from "Very Afraid to Not Afraid". Each group was tested using a cross tab that allows for analysis based on how each group in each independent variable responded.

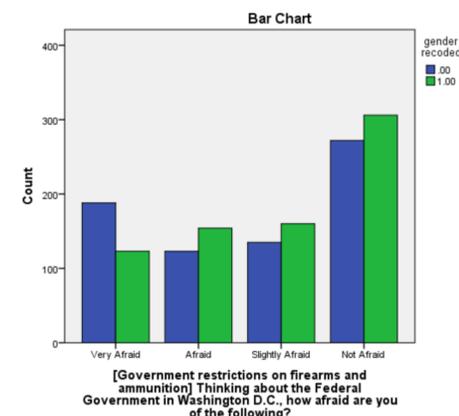
Along with the cross tabs there was a regression run using the variables in the hypothesis along with questions regarding how afraid people are of property crime, and break-ins happening to them. This works to show how much of the independent variables are responsible for the overall opinion of the public and can show which independent variables hold the most weight in comparison to each other.

Acknowledgments

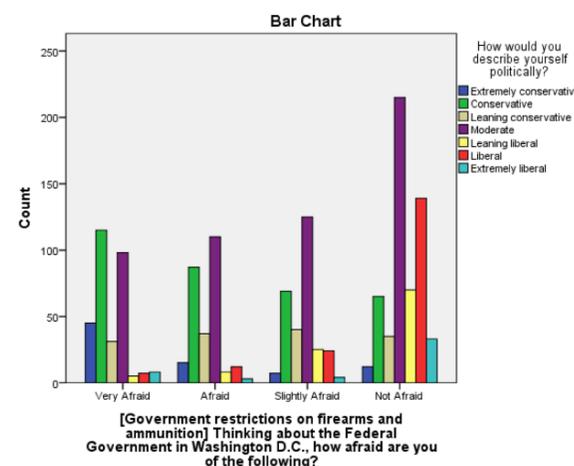
I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Ann Gordon and Stephanie Cameron Barnes

Results

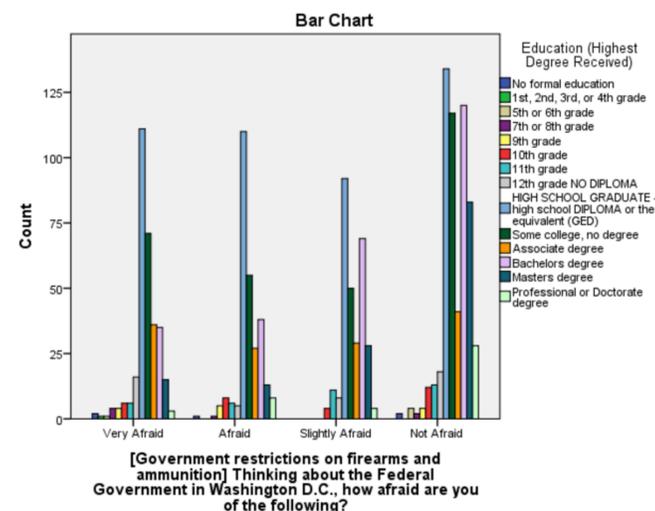
Hypothesis 1



Hypothesis 2



Hypothesis 3



Conclusions

Hypothesis 1

- While in the category of *Very Afraid* males had the majority by almost double, in the rest of the categories females outnumbered males slightly.

Hypothesis 2

- This hypothesis seems to be correct. Conservatives hold the majority for people who are afraid of firearm restriction
- Something that was not predicted was the large number of Moderates afraid of gun regulation, they almost outnumbered in every group.

Hypothesis 3

- The hypothesis was incorrect, the people who were the most afraid of government restriction of firearms were those who had graduated from high school and those who had attended some college but not graduated.

Regression

Model	Coefficient (B)	Stand. Coefficient	Significance
Gender	.056	.083	.000
Education	.143	.014	.000
Political ID	.402	.018	.000
How afraid are you of becoming a victim of property crime	.103	.043	.000
How afraid are you of being a victim of a break in?	.096	.039	.001

The regression table shows that all of the independent variables were significant. The R squared value was .23 meaning that the variables that were run were 23% responsible for the dependent variables outcome. Looking at the Beta Coefficient it is evident that the most influential of the variables was the Political ID at .402. This value is the highest by almost four times compared to the rest showing that party ID has the largest correlation.

Overall the data collected shows that these independent variables do have a correlation with gaging the factors of why people are afraid of firearm restrictions, yet there is not as strong and significant effect as predicted in the hypothesis. This goes to support the research that most people are in support of gun control, but it is not making a difference in legislative action.

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