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SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

Study Identifies Another Approach to Cutting Gun Deaths

 August 27, 2014 by [stevenyoder](#)  [Leave a Comment](#)

Reporters don't often focus on long-term good-news trends, so the dramatic drop in U.S. crime rates since the early nineties deserves more attention than it gets. Between 1993 and 2010, for example, firearm homicides fell by almost 50 percent and nonfatal violent crime by more than 70 percent.

But those statistics should hardly make Americans feel smug. Crime rates have also fallen around the world. U.S. homicide rates still are at least [double](#) those of comparable developed countries. The United States has more per capita gun-related deaths and guns per person than any other developed country, according to a [study](#) last fall in the *American Journal of Medicine*.

So despite what's portrayed as a political stalemate in U.S. gun policy, researchers keep looking for common-sense ways to cut the number of gun deaths. That's why the results of a [study](#) in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* this June were striking, though they got almost no media attention. The researchers concluded that violent crimes could be cut by just keeping guns out of the hands of those convicted of violent

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misdemeanors—federal law doesn't prohibit that group from getting guns. Only felons face such a ban.

The study found that people with convictions for violent misdemeanors who bought handguns had very high arrest rates for firearm-related or violent crimes later on. Researchers Garen Wintemute and Mona Wright reviewed data on 787 individuals who were convicted of violent misdemeanors and subsequently went on to buy handguns in California in 1989 or 1990.

Of those who did buy guns, almost 25 percent were arrested within three years for violent or firearm-related crimes like homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. “We need to consider the merits of prohibiting people convicted of violent misdemeanors from purchasing handguns and consider whether felony charges should be reduced less often,” Wintemute, who runs the University of California-Davis’ Violence Prevention Research Program, said in a release that accompanied the study.

Misdemeanants are just one of the groups at higher risk to commit violence. Numerous studies have found links between alcohol and drug abuse and violence, according to a [summary](#) by the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. And an [analysis](#) this spring by *Mother Jones* magazine of the 70 U.S. mass shootings over the last three decades concluded that the majority involved shooters who were mentally troubled.

But felons, the highest-risk group, are having their gun rights restored in many states. An *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* [investigation](#) in late August found that the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles restored firearms rights for more than 1400 felons between 2008 and 2013. That included 358 who had been convicted of violent crimes and 32 who had killed someone. A 2011 *New York Times* [investigation](#) found that practices like that were common in many states, which granted felons their gun rights, often with little or no review. The *Times* documented numerous cases in which those who had their gun rights restored went on to commit other gun-related crimes.

Passing laws to restrict gun ownership among high-risk groups wouldn't appear a

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heavy lift. A May 2012 poll found that 87 percent of National Rifle Association members want to keep guns out of the hands of those with criminal records. And a March 2013 *New England Journal of Medicine* poll found that most people support a 10-year ban on gun possession for people convicted of two or more crimes involving alcohol or drugs (75 percent) or assault and battery (53 percent). Seventy-five percent support laws requiring health care providers to report people who threaten to harm themselves or others to the background check system so that they can be prevented from getting a gun for six months.

The going belief is that changes in gun policy can't go anywhere because politicians fear a backlash. But New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, who has Presidential ambitions, leads his Republican gubernatorial opponent in the fall election by [almost 30 points](#), even after pushing through new state new gun-control regulations in January 2013. In New Jersey, 86 percent of Republicans approve the job performance of Governor Chris Christie, even though he has [favored](#) some gun control measures.

Democrats are increasingly willing to address gun policy after being largely silent on the issue for about 20 years, according to Adam Winkler, a UCLA law professor and author of *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America*. In May, two House Democrats [introduced](#) a bill to expand the federal prohibition on gun sales to include a broader swath of mental health patients and convicted criminals. It's not likely to pass, but it's the latest sign that policymakers are paying attention to the polls.

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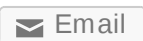


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Commentary: The irony of Turkey hosting a UN-sponsored Internet forum

September 3, 2014

By [Liz Fields](#)

The decision to host a major UN-backed

Internet forum in Turkey this week, despite the country's displays of spiraling contempt toward web and social media freedoms, seems to be rewarding Turkish government for its draconian censorship laws, rather than denouncing them. The Internet Governance Forum (IGF), being held between 2-5 Sept. in Istanbul, is a gathering [...]





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Commentary: Polarization – the single biggest threat to the United States

September 1, 2014 By [Patrick R. Romain](#)

[Romain](#)

The standing of the United States will likely weaken over the next several years, setting the country on a path to become an also-ran middle tier power by 2035. By most measures and indicators that bear on future performance and strength, America’s advantage over other countries is disappearing – fast. Meanwhile, the country’s political leadership [...]



Commentary: Journalists at risk in Iraq and Ferguson, Missouri

August 30, 2014 By [Patrick R. Romain](#)

The Islamic State’s gruesome killing of Associated Press reporter James Foley is a stark reminder of the ultimate danger faced by journalists who cover various state and regional conflicts around the world. The profession is predicated on providing transparency to local and global constituents on

issues that impact human progress and development. That mission is no less [...]

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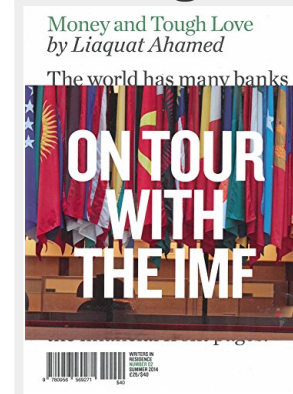
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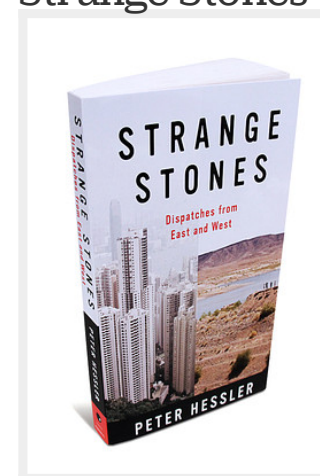
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Book recommendation: Strange Stones

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