

# Jumping the Gun: The Effects of Permitless Carry Laws on Crime

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- 1 in 5 Americans say that they, a family member, or a close friend experienced gun violence directly in the past decade (AP-NORC, 2022).
- During this timeframe, states have adopted more permissive laws regulating carrying a concealed weapon in public (Giffords, 2023).
- Since 2015, 25 states have adopted a permitless carry law
- Substantial public debate on whether permitless carry laws increase or decrease violence lacks rigorous evidence.
- Research Question: What are the effects of permitless carry laws on crime?

# What is permitless carry?

|                          | May Issue | Shall Issue | Permitless |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| State exerts discretion? | YES       | NO          | NO         |
| License Required?        | YES       | YES         | NO         |
| Background Check?        | YES       | YES         | NO         |
| Training Required?       | MOSTLY    | MOSTLY      | NO         |

Source: Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence; Everytown Gun Law Navigator

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- Permitless carry laws remove the need to first undergo a background check and obtain a license to carry a concealed handgun in public.

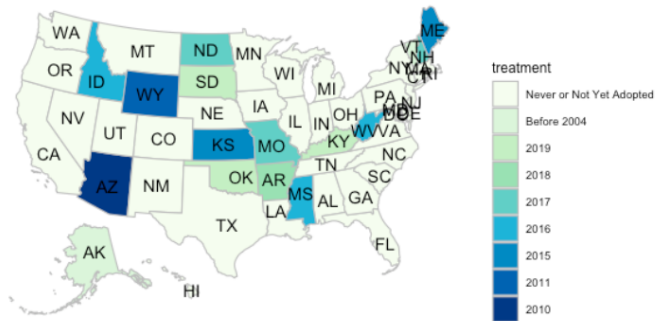
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- Loosening concealed handgun licensing restrictions increase violent crime and homicide (Colmer and Doleac, 2022; Donohue et al., 2022; Doucette et al. 2019; Siegel et al., 2019)
- Early research finds reductions or null effects on homicide and violent crime (Bondy et al. 2023; Doucette et al. 2023; Moody and Lott, 2022; Smith and Petrocelli 2019; Lundstrom et al. 2023)

- Permitless carry conceptually may take effect through several channels:
  - Public gun carrying
    - No change → no effect
    - Increase → increase crime
  - Perceptions of public gun carrying → deter crime
- Swift behavioral response:
  - Reduction in administrative frictions → rapid uptake (no wait time, no fees)
  - Anticipatory or forward-looking behavior in response to changes in firearm policy (DePetrìs-Chauvin 2015; Bollman et al., 2025)

- **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**
  - Detailed crime and arrest data reported to U.S. police agencies
  - Sample not national; spans a subsample of agencies within each state that adopted permitless carry and reports monthly
- **Uniform Crime Reporting System (UCR / SRS)**
  - Monthly summary crime counts reported by U.S. law enforcement agencies
- **Sample**
  - 11 treated states spanning 2015–2019 adopters
  - 24 months pre / 12 months post law passage





For crime and enforcement outcomes:

$$Y_{itk} = \sum_{t=-24; t \neq -12}^{12} \beta_t \times Treat_{itk} + \gamma_{ik} + \delta_{tk} + \log(population_i) + \epsilon_{itk}$$

- Where  $Y_{itk}$  is an outcome in police agency  $i$  in pooled month  $t$  in stack  $k$ .
- $\gamma_{ik} + \delta_{tk}$  are agency by stack and month by year by stack fixed effects
- $\beta_t$  are coefficients of interest which capture the change in the outcome in a state that adopted permitless carry relative to those that did not
- Estimates of  $100 \times (\exp(\beta_k) - 1)$  interpreted as percent change in the number of crimes
- Relative to 12 months prior to implementation to account for passage and anticipation

# Results: Crime - Overall

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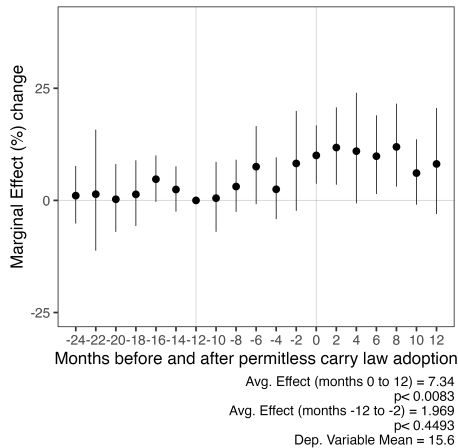


Figure: Index Violent Crime

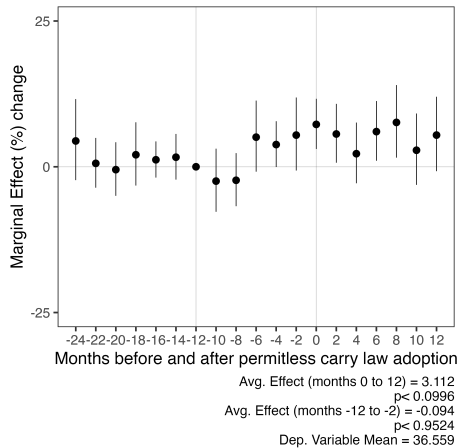


Figure: Index Property Crime

# Results: Assaults - Aggravated vs. Simple

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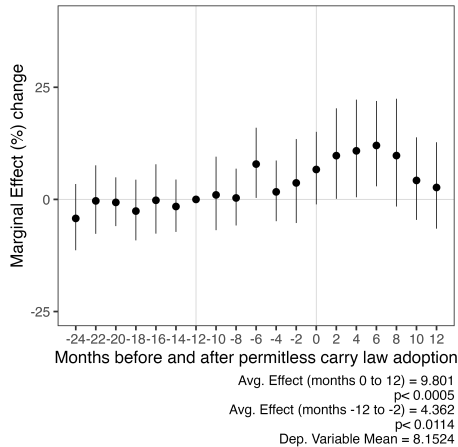


Figure: Aggravated Assault

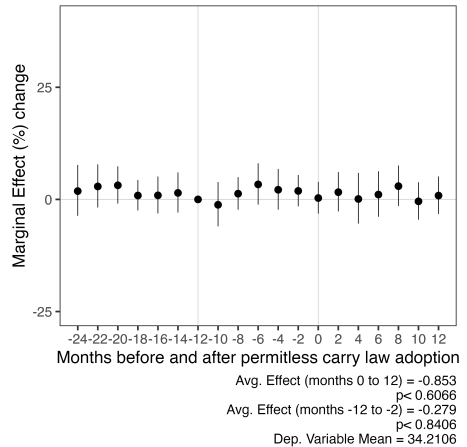


Figure: Simple Assault

# Results: Aggravated Assaults - Gun vs. No gun

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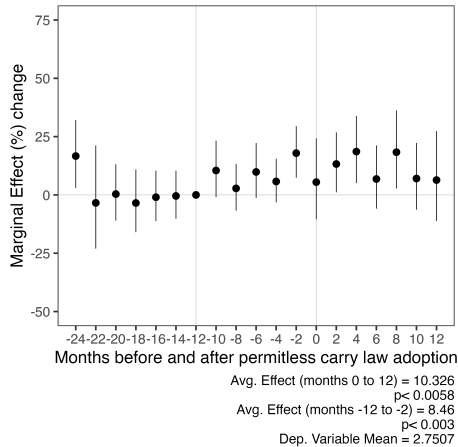


Figure: Aggravated Assault - Gun

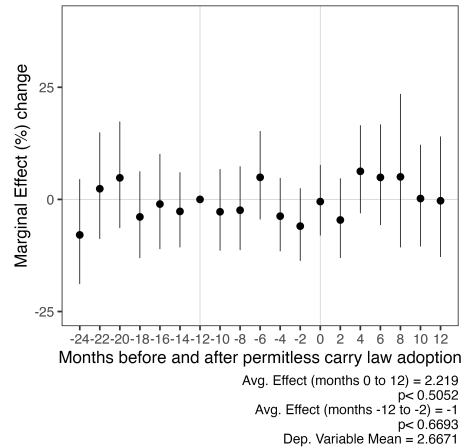


Figure: Aggravated Assault - No Gun

# Results: Gun Assaults by Type

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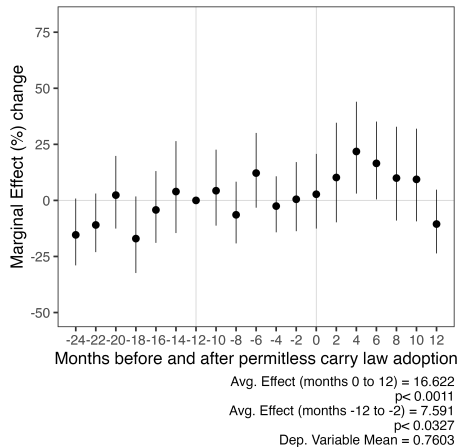


Figure: Public Places

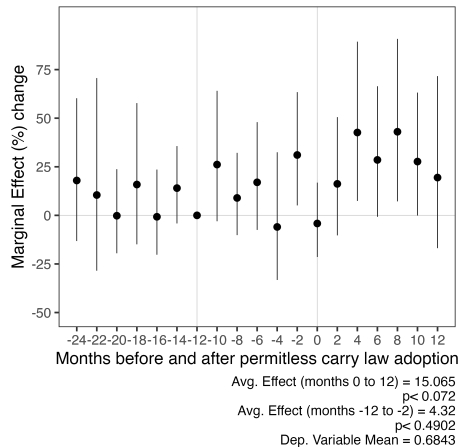


Figure: Strangers / Acquaintances

- Police could change enforcement effort
  - Weapons law offenses, arrests, clearances (NIBRS)
- Changes in gun availability
  - Gun "sales" → suggestive of changes in legal gun supply (National Crime Information Systems (NCIC) background checks for handguns)
  - Gun theft incidents → increase in illicit gun supply (stolen gun incidents recorded in NIBRS)

# Mechanism: Weapons Law Offenses, Gun Assault Clearances

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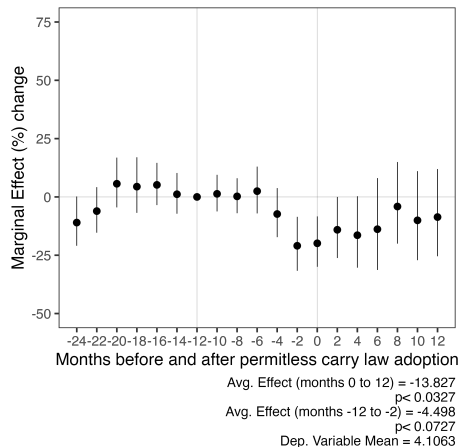


Figure: Weapon Law Offenses - Incidents

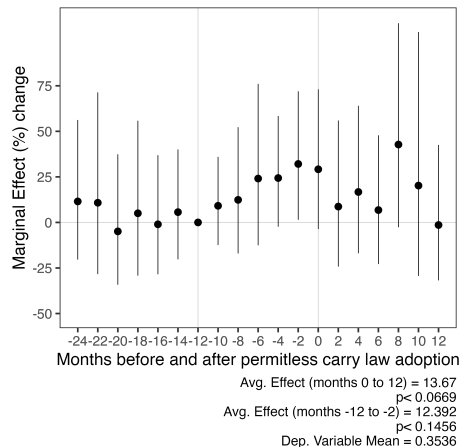


Figure: Gun Assault Clearance

# Mechanism: Gun Availability

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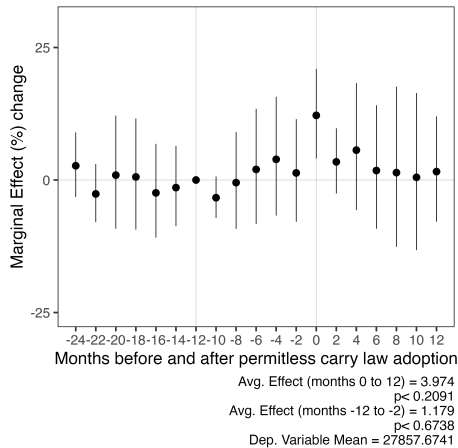


Figure: Handgun Background Checks

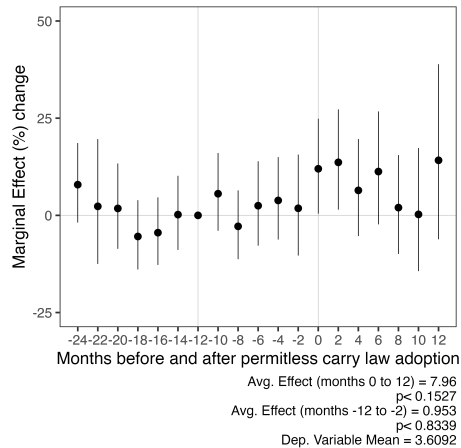


Figure: Stolen Gun Incidents



- Permitless carry laws increase violent crime by 7-8 percentage points; no evidence of crime decline.
- Violence driven by aggravated assaults involving firearms with no shift in non-firearm serious assault. Increases in violence in public places, among strangers or acquaintances.
- Rapid and forward-looking effects likely driven by:
  - Increases in carrying behavior among existing gun owners rather than increase in ownership (in the short term)
  - Policing reductions in weapons law enforcement reduces cost of carrying illicit weapons

# Thank you

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