

Why it is Misleading to Compare the U.S. Murder Rate with that of Western Europe

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A [2016 article](#) by the American Journal of Medicine claims that homicide rates in the U.S. are 7 times higher than an average of other “high income countries”. This conclusion is based on a select list of OECD nations compiled in 2010. The lowest income nation on the list is Hungary, where per capita GDP is \$28,000 per year. Turkey and Mexico did not make the cut because their per capita GDP’s are respectively \$25,000 and \$19,000. Latvia and Estonia are not on this list, presumably because Latvia joined the OECD in 2016 and Estonia joined in *December* of 2010. Turkey, Estonia, and Latvia have murder rates comparable to those in the U.S. Mexico exceeds the U.S. by about 4 times. Most would agree that Mexico is not “high income” but the case for excluding these other three nations is not as clear-cut.

If the list were to include all of Eastern Europe, Russian and Lithuania would surpass the U.S. in homicides per capita. Only when the U.S. is compared with affluent Western nations that were never under the iron curtain does its murder rate far exceed all other in the sample. The AJM attributes this grim statistic to high levels of gun ownership in the U.S., but the authors fail to point out that two of the safest nations in the world (Switzerland and Finland) rank 3rd and 4th in [per capita gun ownership](#).

The U.S. has almost double the gun ownership rate of Finland and (according to a table in the AJM article) 12 times the gun homicide rate. Does this mean there is a “critical mass” for gun ownership where the murder rate increases exponentially? If this is true, why do heartland states with the highest levels of [gun ownership](#) have some of the lowest murder rates in the U.S.?

Since the link between gun ownership and homicide is unclear, what other factors are at play? How else does the U.S. stand out from all these Western nations other than in gun ownership and homicides?

According to data from WHO, the adolescent fertility rate in the U.S. far exceeds that of Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Teenage mothers in Western nations often raise their children without fathers, and fatherlessness has been linked to violent crime in young men. When comparing the U.S. to other Western nations with higher levels of teenage pregnancy (Eastern Europe and Latin America), the U.S. murder rate is nowhere near the top (Fig. 1). This graph excludes 10 countries where the homicide rate exceeds 20 per 100,000. Beyond this murder rate the effect of adolescent fertility is less evident, possibly because other factors such as drug trafficking and poor governance start to play a larger role. At the top of the list of nations excluded from the

graph is El Salvador, where the murder rate was 108 per 100,000 in 2015. This is over 20 times the murder rate in the U.S during the same year.

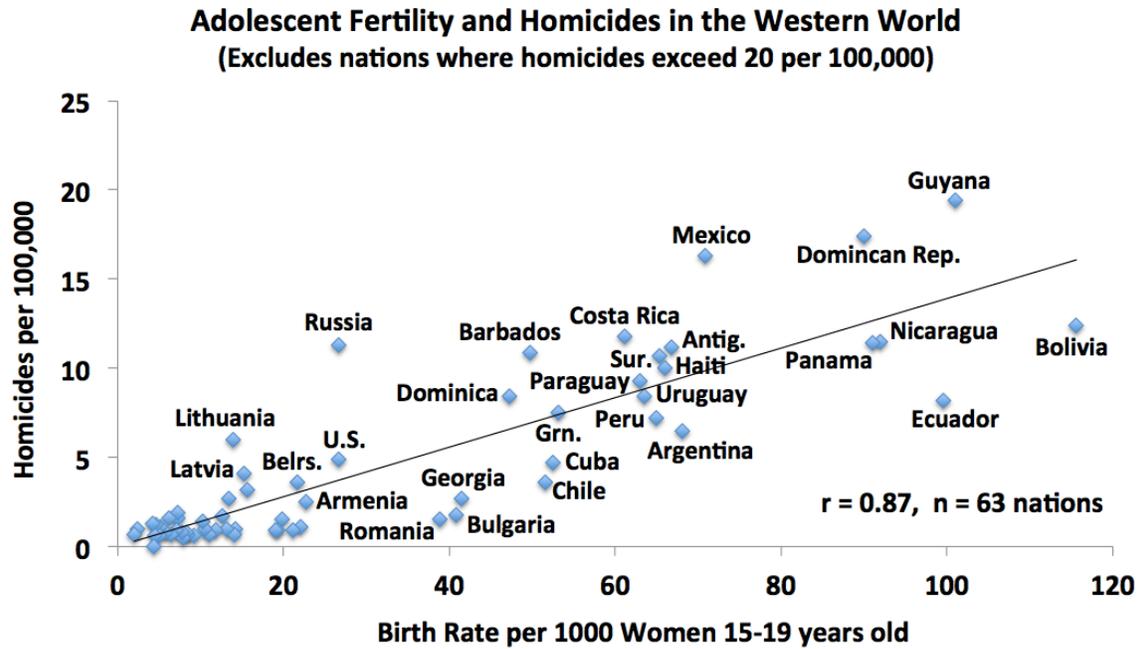


Fig. 1: The adolescent fertility data is from the [World Health Organization](#). The homicide data is from the [World Bank](#). The unlabeled points crowded on the lower left include Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and all the nations in Western Europe. All information was compiled from 2011 to 2015. Belrs. = Belarus, Grn. = Grenada, Sur. = Suriname, Antig. = Antigua & Barbuda

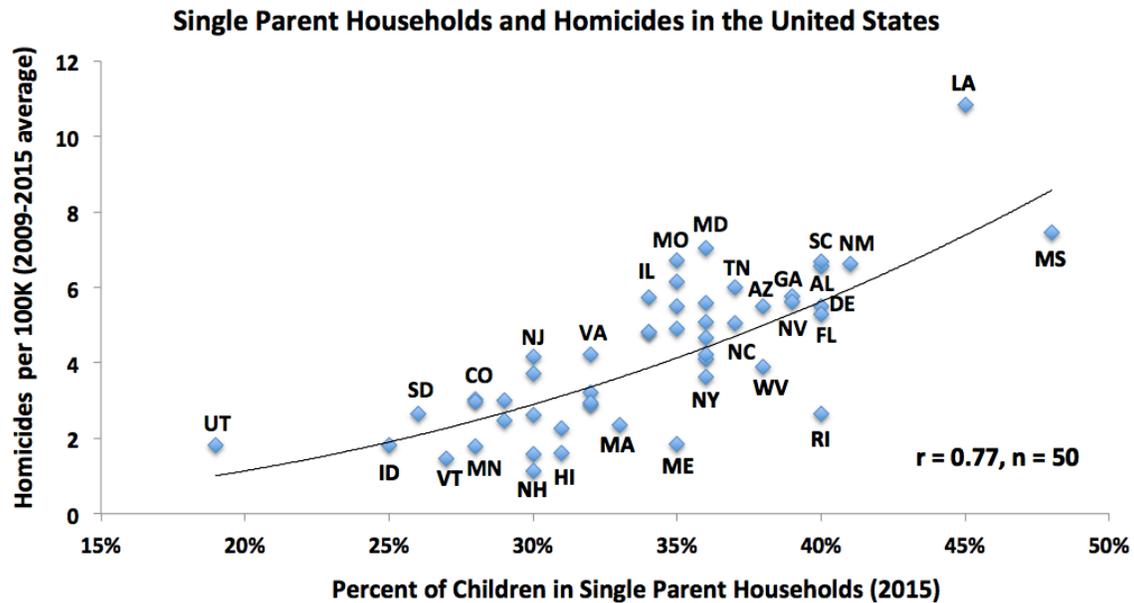


Fig. 2: The single parent households data is from the [Kids Count Data Center](#). The homicide data is from the [Death Penalty Information Center](#).

Unsurprisingly, there is also a relationship between single parent households and homicides per state (Fig. 2). All races are adversely affected by single parenting, but since the overall illegitimacy rate among blacks now exceeds 70% it also comes to no surprise that most of the states where the rate is 40% or higher are more than 20% African American. The murder rates in these states concurs with FBI data showing that African Americans commit [half the homicides](#) even though they make up only 12% the overall U.S. population. The media underreports black-on-black homicides because condemning police officers for their mistakes (both real and imagined) is the path of least resistance. This gutless journalism [cost black lives](#) because it demoralized the police and emboldened the killers.

Mass shootings make up a tiny percentage of U.S. homicides but as in the case other violent criminals, many of these killers (Parkland, Las Vegas, Charleston, and Newtown) also grew up in [broken homes](#). The Parkland shooting was also a perfect storm of criminal negligence. First, because armed deputies were ordered to wait outside the building during the worst part of the rampage. Second, because the FBI failed to act on a tip. Third, because school officials failed to make police referrals that would have denied the shooter's right to buy a gun. The last failure is the most egregious because it goes far beyond mere laziness or incompetence; it was a [deliberate plan](#) to minimize the so-called "school to prison" pipeline.

Even gun rights supporters agree that some regulations are needed to prevent guns from getting into the wrong hands, but few adolescents are mature enough to distinguish between lack of legislation and lack of enforcement. Consequently, encouraging

students to march on Washington for an agenda they do not understand is wrong. In the absence of other perspectives for enhancing school security it is indoctrination. If David Hogg ever wises up, he will condemn the news organizations that shamelessly disseminated his sophomoric antics.

Links (in case the hypertext does not work):

https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2018/04/why_it_is_misleading_to_compare_the_us_murder_rate_with_that_of_western_europe.html

[http://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343\(15\)01030-X/fulltext#sec4](http://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(15)01030-X/fulltext#sec4)

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/small-arms-survey-countries-with-the-most-guns-1.3392204>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/gun-ownership-by-state-2015-7>

<http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.REPADO39?lang=en>

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5>

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/107-children-in-single-parent-families-by#detailed/1/any/false/573,869,36,868,867/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/432,431>

<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/murder-rates-nationally-and-state#MRalpha>

<http://thefederalist.com/2015/07/14/guess-which-mass-murderers-came-from-a-fatherless-home/>

https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide/expanded_homicide_data_table_6_murder_race_and_sex_of_victim_by_race_and_sex_of_offender_2013.xls

<http://dailycaller.com/2017/10/01/the-fbis-latest-report-suggests-the-ferguson-effect-is-real/>

<https://www.city-journal.org/html/how-did-parkland-shooter-slip-through-cracks-15741.html>