

## WHAT BLOOMBERG WON'T TELL YOU: THE TRUTH ABOUT "UNIVERSAL BACKGROUND CHECKS", CRIME RATES, AND OREGON

Presented by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Action Center

### Introduction

How often have you heard "studies have shown that for states with background checks...." followed by some amazing number that sounds like if only we had the same laws here, we could be just as safe. If you listen carefully to politicians when they talk about more gun control, these are numbers used as their justification for supporting expanding background checks in our state. Do they know how Oregon compares to those states? Or even what Oregon's current crime situation is?

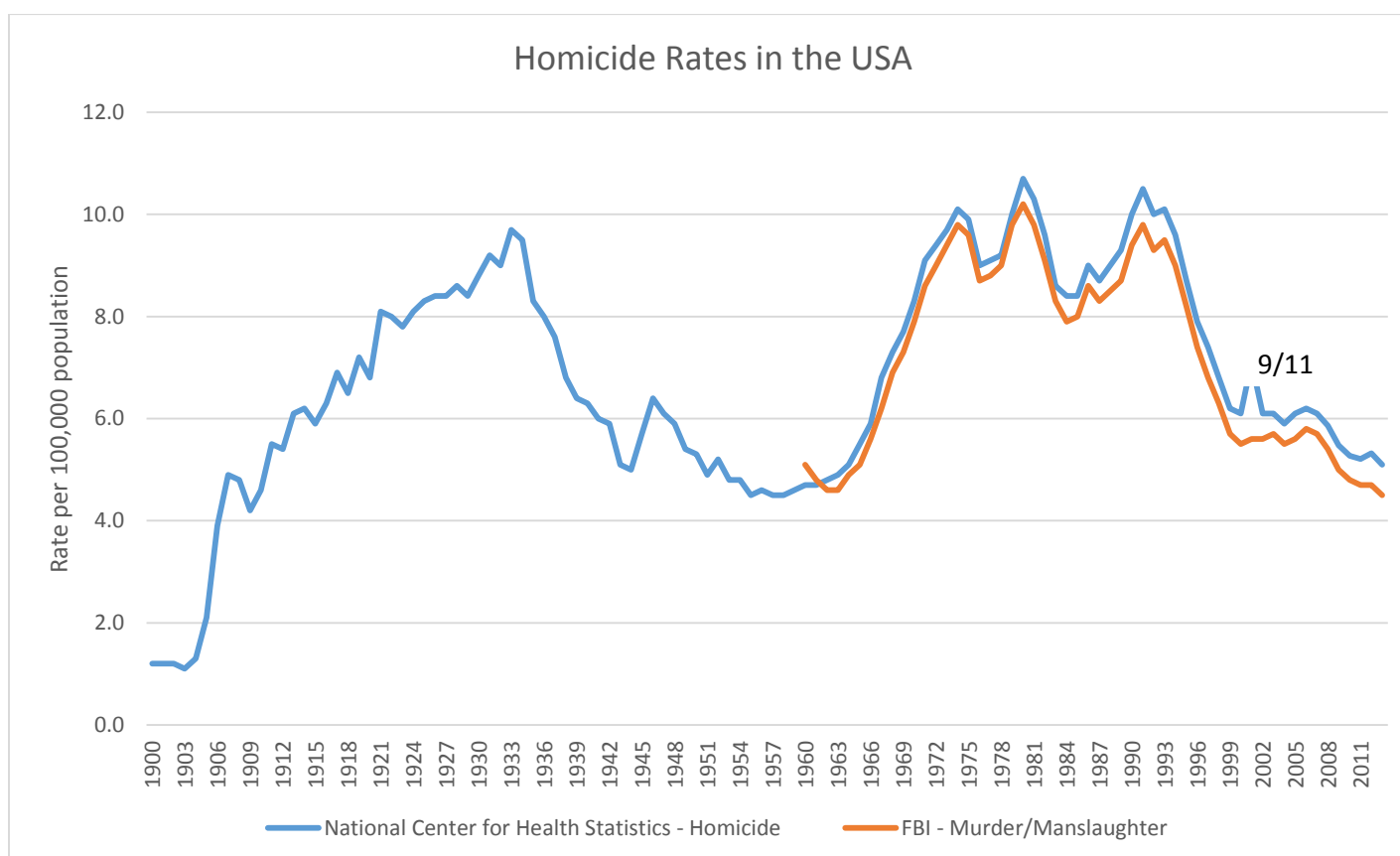
So how does Oregon compare to states with background checks for all handgun sales? This is a first in a series that attempts to answer that question, and help explain just what those numbers are, and where they are coming from. We say "attempt" because statistics can easily be manipulated, data can be cherry picked, certain data sets can be excluded, and some data is flawed, vague in terminology, or just not available due to either policy or the impossibility to know just what happens in the streets.

### Homicides And General Crime

**Crime.** When listening to gun-control lobbyists this seems to be the #1 push-point they use to advance their agenda. Why? Fear. No other category of death where a firearm is used (Suicide, Homicide, Accidental) is as unpredictable or uncontrollable as a homicide. And that, just like a good horror movie, frightens people.

But what happens when someone has a lack of knowledge and a need to feel secure? They attempt to bridge that gap with information and thoughts that sound rational until they feel comfortable with their own conclusions. What happens when someone is given incorrect or misleading information to form those conclusions? Suddenly solutions that don't work get suggested. Meanwhile the real problems continue undisturbed. It's not just gun control where this happens. It happens every day by many well-intentioned people, even those who are well educated in their fields of study. Instead of asking "why", "how", or "prove it", there is a rush to wrap ourselves in something that feels comfortable, but can in fact be an illusion. That's why it's so important to clearly understand a problem before rushing to a solution, no matter how "common-sense" it sounds, or how long a particular belief has been held.

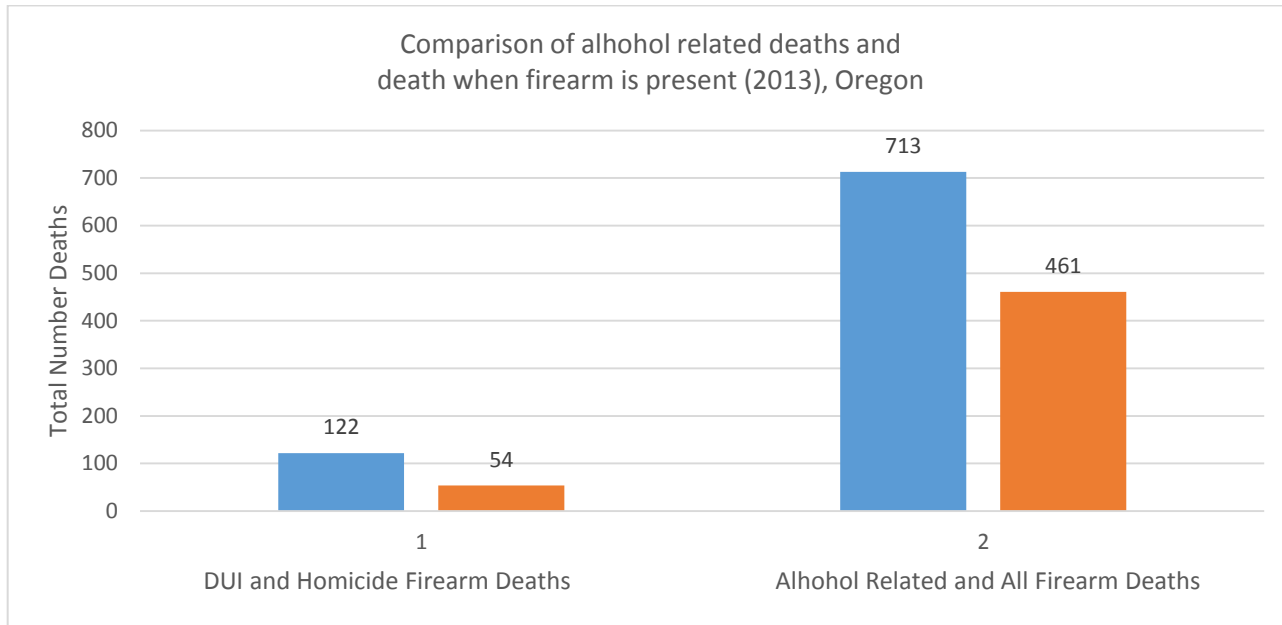
**First stop: Are we in an epidemic of "gun violence"? Or "The 49% drop in Crime that nobody knows seems to know about"**



The graph ends with 2013, although it doesn't show up due to the number of x-axis labels Excel attempts to populate. What does the graph show us? Are we headed into a crime/gun epidemic? No. Many people are surprised to learn that overall crime, including homicide, has fallen dramatically since the early 1990's. According to the Pew Research Center, the gun homicide rate by itself has fallen **49%** since 1993<sup>1</sup>. If you follow CDC data, we are at an almost 50 year low. Do you follow FBI crimes statistics? Then we've already passed the 50 year mark and may be on our way to a 100 year low. (Footnote on the differences between FBI and CDC statistics<sup>ii</sup>). This should be good news, right? So why is everyone running around saying we need more gun laws?

**Fear.** Fear, information overload, and people who feel the need to do something without looking at the cost. This includes people who built a life, career, and identity during the 70's, 80's and 90's pushing gun control when crime was high. And now they are reaching for a reason to continue their campaign. In 1991 the public became aware of the internet and all its potential. And now, today, if someone has a comedic slip and fall in

New York's Times Square, we here on the west coast can see that minute detail of daily life in 10 minutes (no citation needed here). Over and over again. A tragic accident happens in Florida? 24 hour news coverage across the world. Over and over again. In 2013, per the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Oregon Health Authority, alcohol induced deaths (713 people) killed more people in Oregon than all gun deaths (461 people, includes suicide, homicide, accidents and legal intervention). Driving Under the Influence (DUI) related deaths (122 people)<sup>iii</sup> killed more than homicides were a gun is used (54 people)<sup>iv</sup>. But from watching the news cycle and the people who want to push gun-control you would never know that alcohol was a bigger problem in our state than firearms. The difference? There is a lot more money being spent for gun-control and it brings in the news story ratings.



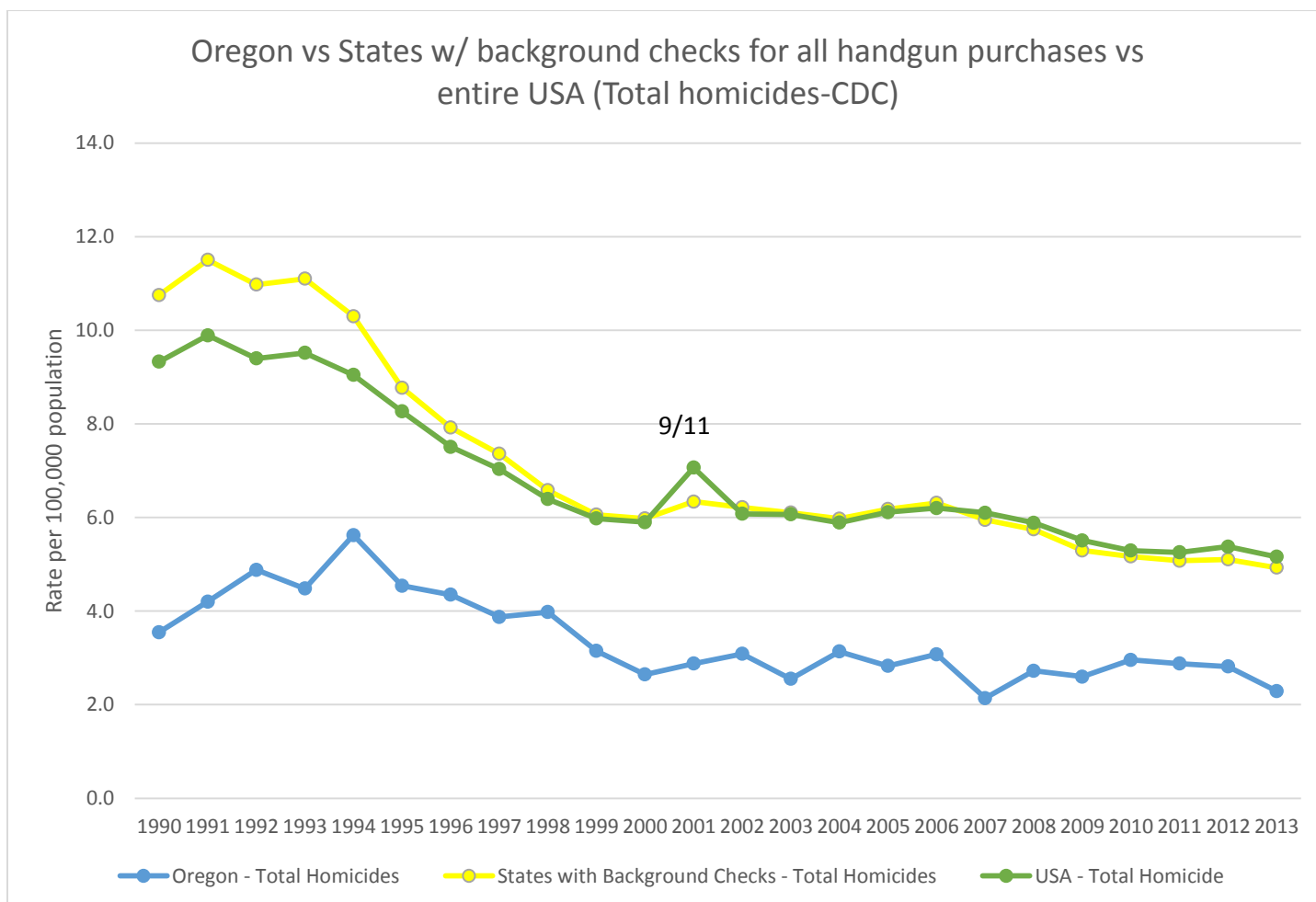
For a final example of how the news media keeps the fear ginned up, Mother-Jones recently published an article titled "Yes, Mass Shootings Are Occurring More Often"<sup>v</sup>. Its leading entry sets the stage:

*"It's not a matter of if, but when and where the next mass shooting will happen: It might take place at another shopping mall, or college campus, or suburban office building, and probably not long from now."*

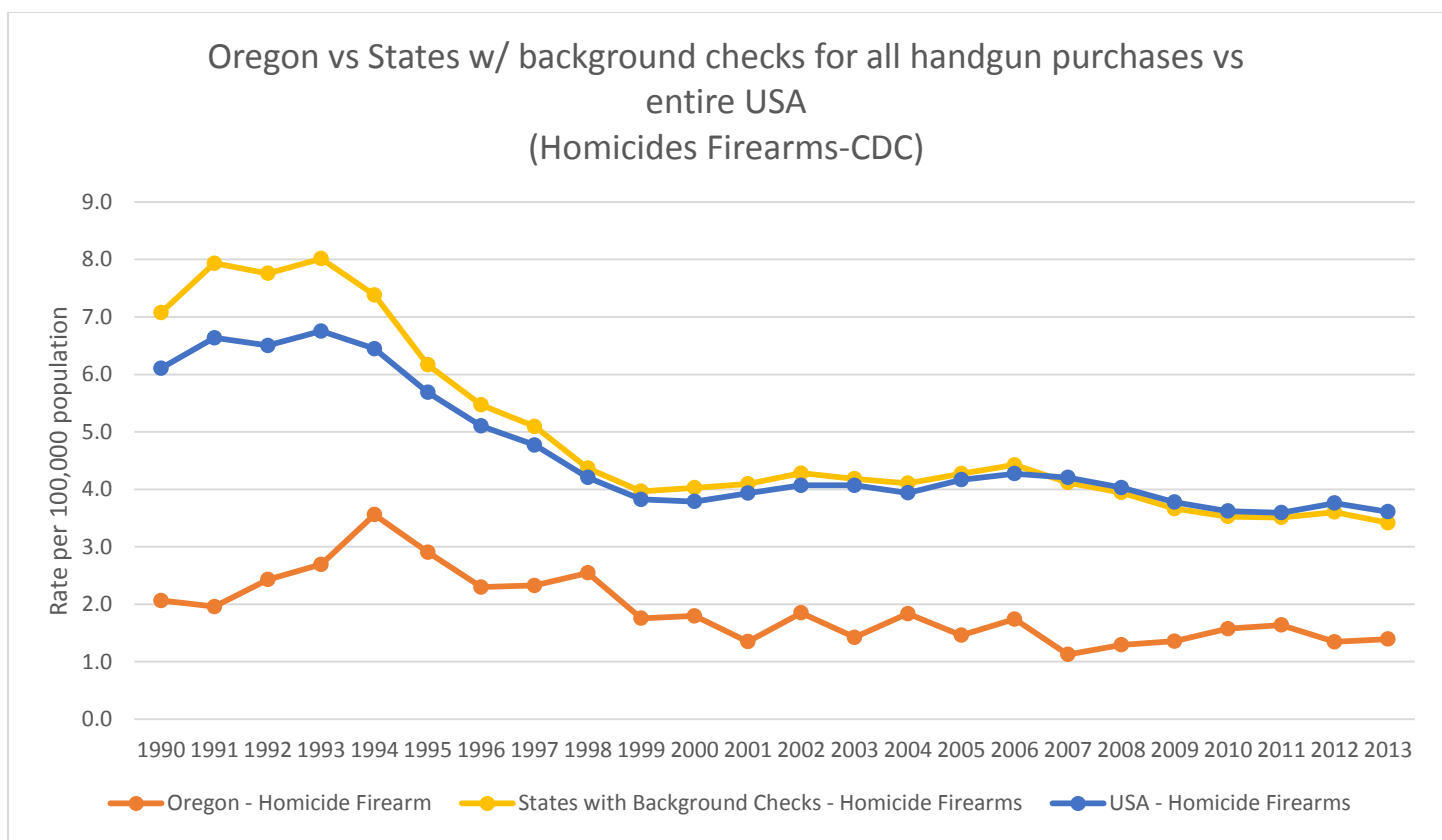
In other words, it could happen. To you. At any time. Fear. Act now. Gun control is the "common-sense" answer. But is what they're saying true? Dr. Grant Duwe, Director of Research and Evaluation for the Minnesota Department of Corrections took note of Mother Jones' and something didn't look right to him. As he had access to actual crime databases (Mother Jones limited their journalistic investigation to what they could find with general internet searches) he found that no, mass shootings are not on the rise.<sup>vi</sup> And in fact the rate was decreasing. Maybe this is why it is rare to hear from a professor of criminology when gun-control is discussed by the media?

With that, let's look at Oregon's Homicide Rate<sup>vii</sup> compared to states with background checks for all handguns sales<sup>viii</sup>. This is something that a lot of people have not seen, and as you examine the graph and chart below you will understand why. In Oregon's case we are safer than the states with the additional laws being proposed.

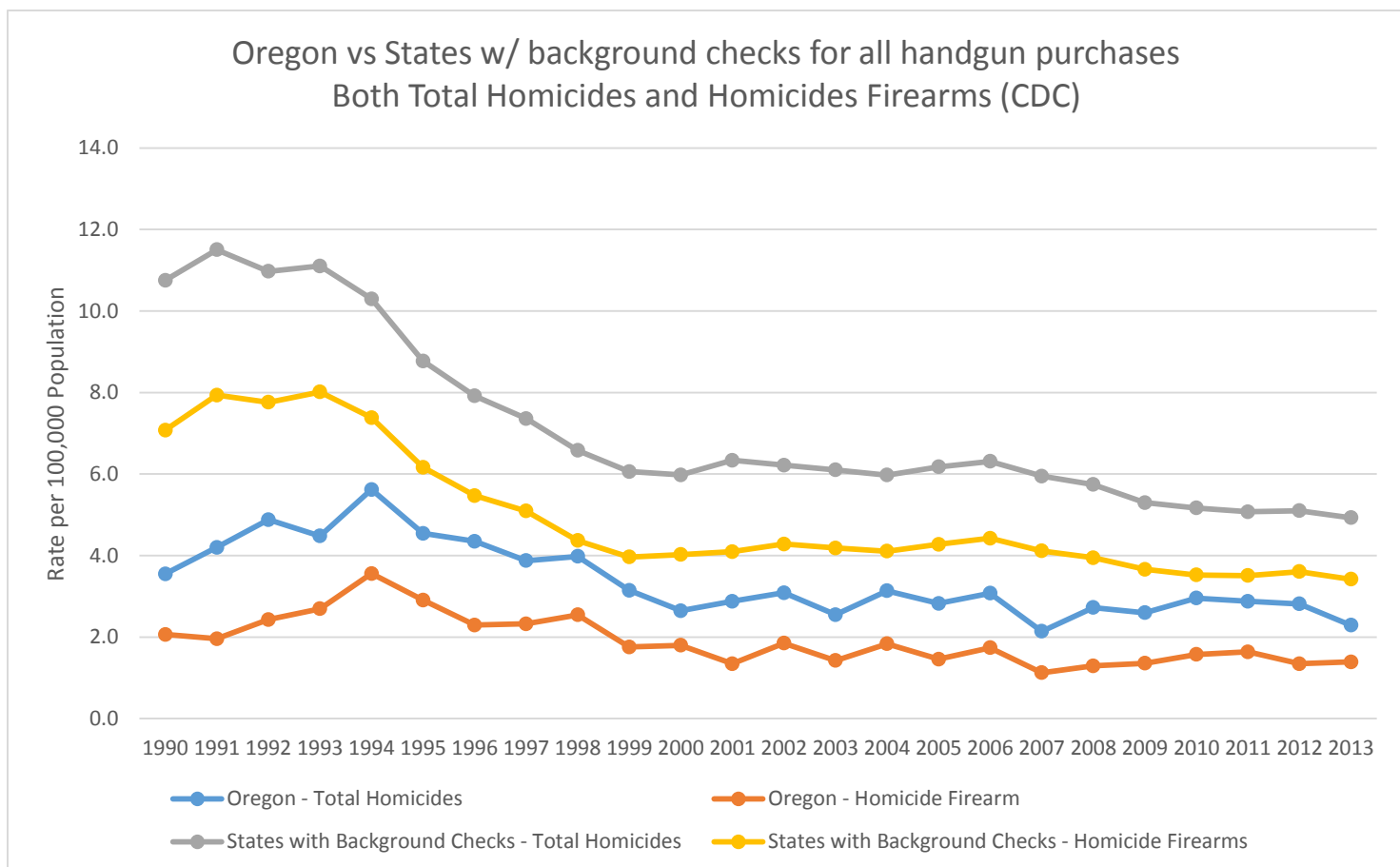
(Note on the source of data and States with background checks for all handguns: Homicide data from Center Disease and Control<sup>ix</sup>)



This first graph shows total homicide rate comparisons. The next one shows the homicide rates that involve firearms.

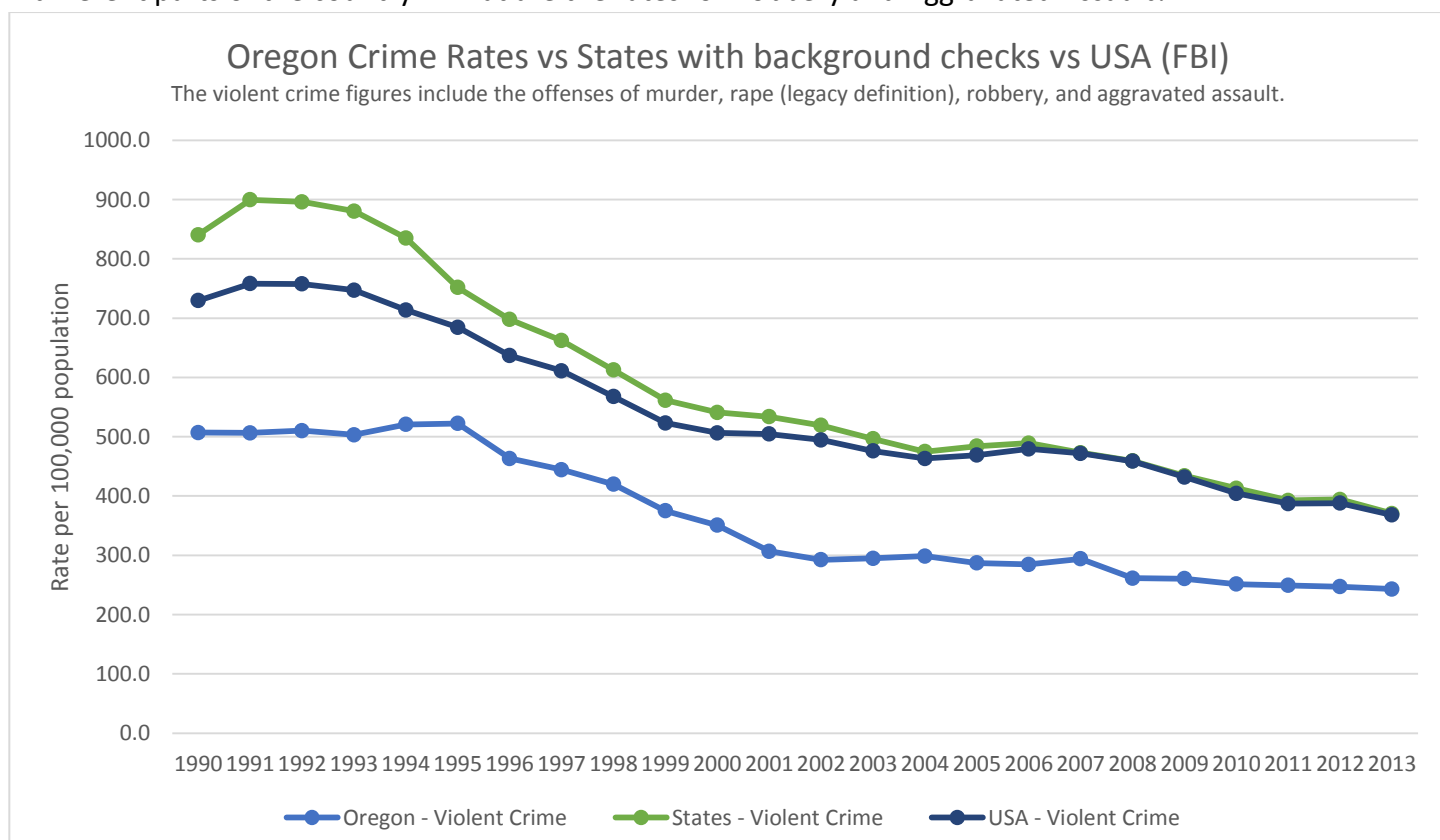


The following graph illustrates both homicide and homicide with a firearm in both Oregon and States with background checks for all gun sales.

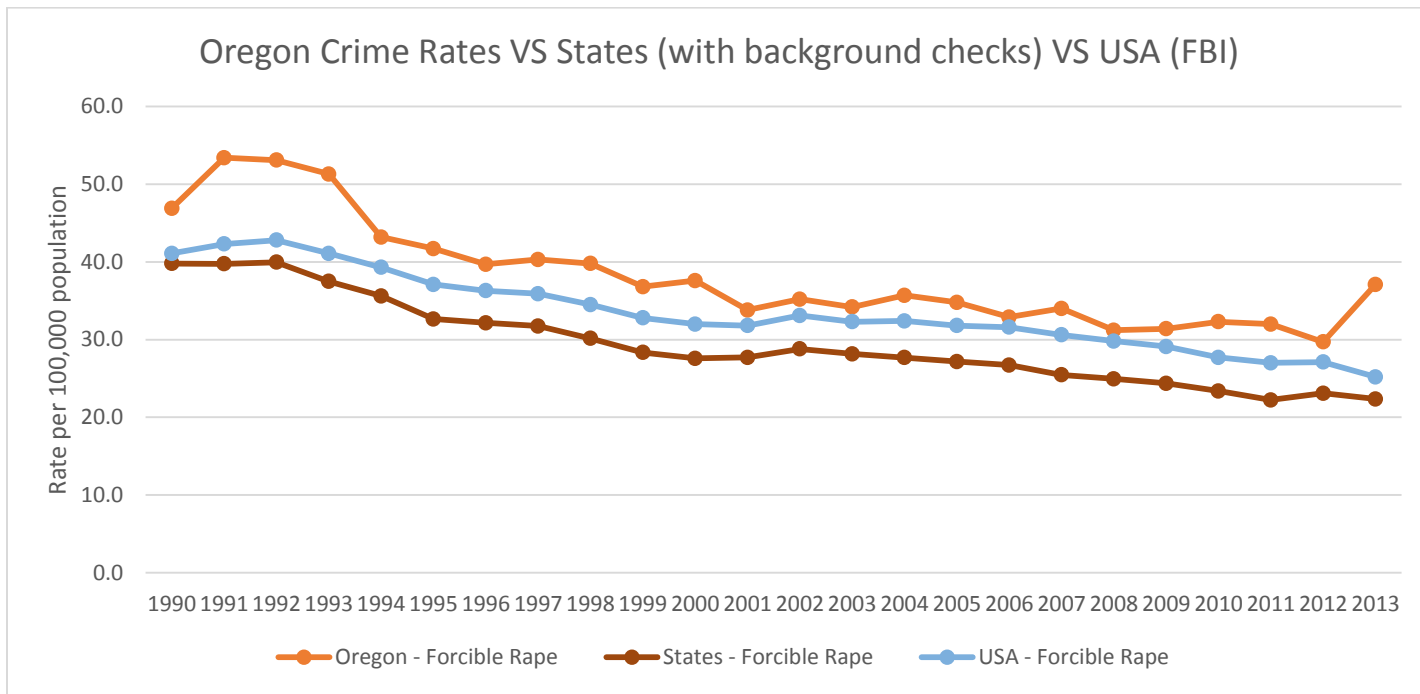


Challenge: Next time you have a discussion about gun-control be sure to lead with a question along the lines of “Are you hoping that the expanded background check bill will make our state as safe as those states that already have them?”

Crime is measured in more ways than one. The FBI releases annual Uniform Crime Reports (UCR’s) that describe in more detail what crimes are being committed in different parts of the country. What are the rates for Robbery and Aggravated Assault?

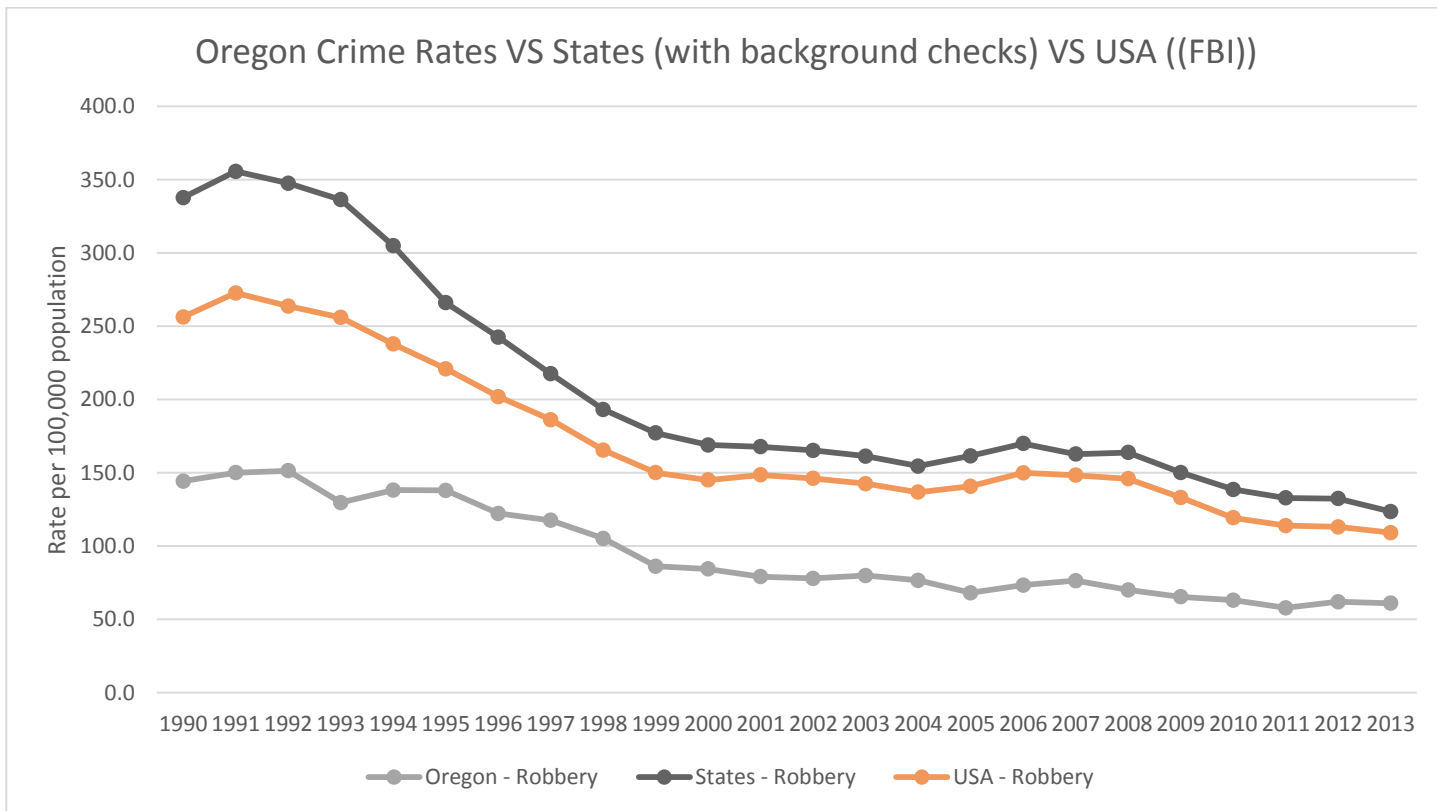


**Forcible Rape:** The carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Rapes by force and attempts or assaults to rape, regardless of the age of the victim, are included. Statutory offenses (no force used—victim under age of consent) are excluded<sup>x</sup>

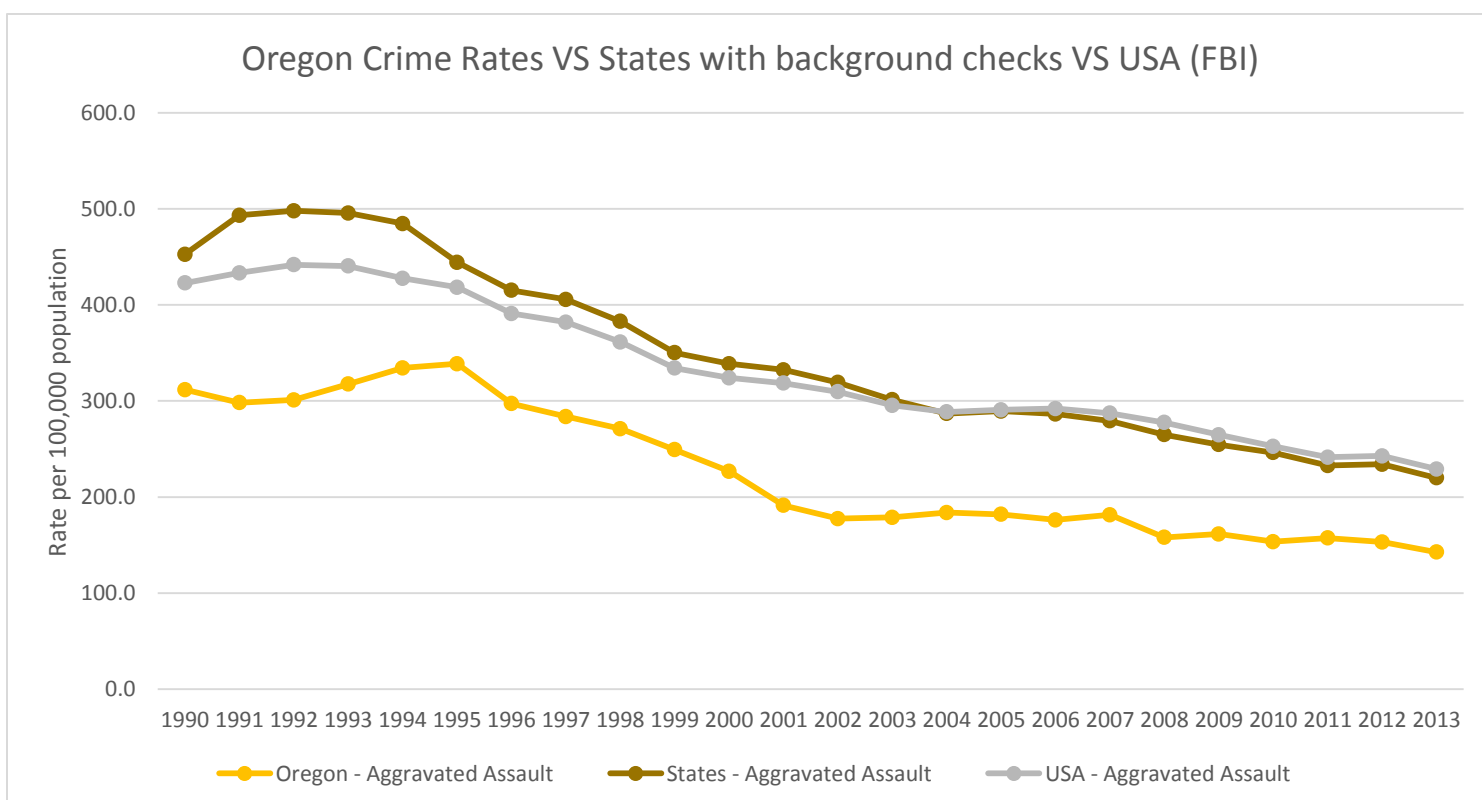


Oregon experienced a sharp rise in forcible rape in 2013. This is why it is important to analyze the problem. Oregon has been trending down steadily with the rest of the country, although it is lagging by about 2-5 years. 2013 is significant in that there was a sharp increase reported to the FBI not seen since 2000. A quick search of "Oregon rape" reveals that a large number of these instances take place on college campuses, where students are barred from protecting themselves with a firearm.

**Robbery:** The taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear. Note that states with universal background checks have a slightly higher rate of robbery than the national average.<sup>x</sup>



**Aggravated Assault:** An unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault usually is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Simple assaults are excluded.<sup>x</sup>



## What about the overall country? How does Oregon rank compared to the entire USA?

Here's a snapshot from 2013, the last year that the CDC has released information on Homicide Rates (per CDC WISQARS). Also included is the percentage of households with firearms. The study for firearm ownership is a bit old (2002). But is still useful and is still used by gun control lobbyists, so I'm going to use it as well. The table is sorted based on the overall homicide rate. The safest state in the union (i.e. least likely to be killed in a violent act) is Vermont.

Rank	State	Homicide Rate (CDC 2013) <sup>vii</sup>	Homicide Gun Rate (CDC 2013) <sup>vii</sup>	% Gun Ownership (2002) <sup>xi</sup>	Brady Campaign (Grade 2013) <sup>xii</sup>	Guns&Ammo Best States for Concealed Carry (2013 Rank) <sup>xiii</sup>	Violent crime (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>	Forcible Rape (Legacy Def.) (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>	Robbery (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>	Aggravated Assault (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>
1	Vermont	1.6	0.6	45.5%	F	5	114.9	14.5	11.6	87.1
2	New Hampshire	1.7	0.5	30.5%	D-	4	199.6	36.2	49.0	112.7
3	North Dakota	1.8	0.8	54.3%	F	9	256.3	31.8	22.4	199.9
4	Utah	1.8	1.1	45.3%	F	2	209.2	34.3	42.8	130.4
5	Idaho	1.9	0.9	56.8%	F	31	204.7	28.3	13.6	161.0
6	Iowa	1.9	0.8	44.0%	C-	16	260.9	24.5	30.4	204.6
7	Massachusetts	2.2	1.3	12.8%	B+	37	404.0	31.2	100.2	270.5
8	Maine	2.3	1.0	41.1%	F	33	121.6	25.9	25.2	68.7
9	Oregon	2.3	1.4	39.8%	D+	37	242.9	37.1	61.0	142.7
10	Hawaii	2.4	0.5	9.7%	B+	49	245.3	21.1	80.6	142.2
11	South Dakota	2.4	0.4	59.9%	F	21	298.7	41.3	18.8	236.2
12	Minnesota	2.4	1.4	44.7%	C	28	223.2	25.9	67.8	127.5
13	Connecticut	2.8	1.8	16.2%	A-	45	254.5	18.6	98.2	135.4
14	Wyoming	2.9	1.5	62.8%	F	3	197.7	24.7	12.9	157.2
15	Washington	2.9	1.7	36.2%	C	22	277.9	25.8	83.5	166.4
16	Rhode Island	3.0	1.7	13.3%	B-	38	244.6	29.2	65.0	147.4
17	Wisconsin	3.1	2.0	44.3%	C-	20	271.1	22.6	84.2	161.6
18	Montana	3.3	1.4	61.4%	F	12	240.7	28.3	20.1	190.2
20	Colorado	3.5	2.0	34.5%	C	40	291.2	38.9	59.8	189.1
19	New York	3.5	1.9	18.1%	A-	46	389.8	13.1	138.6	234.7
21	West Virginia	4.0	2.3	57.9%	F	32	289.7	24.6	35.1	226.7
22	Nebraska	4.0	2.7	42.1%	D	35	252.2	33.0	55.7	160.5
23	Virginia	4.0	2.8	35.9%	D	11	187.9	19.1	55.3	109.7
24	Kansas	4.0	2.7	43.7%	F	24	327.5	28.9	46.6	248.1
25	Kentucky	4.6	3.1	48.0%	F	13	198.8	25.6	73.9	95.5
26	New Jersey	4.7	3.4	11.3%	A-	48	285.6	9.7	135.8	135.6
27	California	4.9	3.4	19.5%	A-	50	396.2	19.5	139.9	232.3
28	Pennsylvania	5.0	3.8	36.5%	C	7	326.6	20.7	115.6	185.7
29	Texas	5.1	3.5	35.9%	F	14	399.8	28.4	120.2	246.9
N/A	United States	5.2	3.6	32.6%	N/A	N/A	367.9	25.2	109.1	229.1
30	Nevada	5.4	3.2	31.5%	F	34	591.2	39.1	185.8	360.6
31	Ohio	5.6	3.9	32.1%	D	39	275.7	24.4	124.2	123.2
32	Delaware	5.6	4.1	26.7%	B-	44	479.1	28.7	132.4	313.7
33	North Carolina	5.7	4.2	40.8%	F	27	336.6	18.5	94.9	218.4
34	Alaska	5.9	2.6	60.6%	F	6	602.6	87.6	84.9	425.5
35	Arizona	5.9	3.8	36.2%	F	1	405.8	35.4	101.1	263.9
36	Florida	5.9	4.2	26.0%	F	17	460.0	24.1	118.7	312.3
37	Indiana	6.1	4.5	39.0%	D-	10	349.9	25.0	108.2	211.3
38	Illinois	6.2	4.5	19.7%	B	42	372.5	25.4	137.6	204.0
39	Tennessee	6.2	4.8	46.4%	F	25	579.7	25.3	112.5	436.9
40	Georgia	6.4	4.7	41.0%	F	23	359.7	19.9	125.0	209.3
41	Michigan	6.4	5.0	40.3%	C	36	429.8	46.5	102.1	274.8
42	New Mexico	6.5	3.9	39.6%	F	41	596.7	54.0	86.8	449.9
43	Missouri	6.5	4.9	45.4%	F	15	422.0	26.5	90.7	298.7
44	South Carolina	6.7	5.1	45.0%	F	18	494.8	31.8	83.2	373.6
45	Oklahoma	6.7	4.6	44.6%	F	30	428.1	43.5	78.7	300.8
46	Maryland	7.1	5.0	22.1%	A-	43	467.8	19.9	169.5	272.0
47	Arkansas	7.2	5.1	58.3%	F	26	445.7	33.6	76.3	330.5
48	Alabama	8.6	6.6	57.2%	D-	8	418.1	29.5	96.2	285.2
49	Mississippi	9.7	7.2	54.3%	F	19	267.4	23.9	80.5	156.5
50	Louisiana	11.9	9.6	45.6%	F	29	510.4	26.9	119.9	352.8
51	District of Columbia	13.9	9.4	5.2%	N/A*	51	1281.9	42.7	630.8	592.5

\*Brady Campaign does not include D.C. as part of the grading for the USA.

Notice a trend here? Or rather a lack of? Those states with background checks don't seem that much safer. In fact, overall, Oregon is safer than most any place else in the country!

Let's look at the above FBI crime metrics, sorted from least (safest) to greatest crime, and ask the question; where should Oregon be concentrating its crime fighting resources on? Which states should we be looking at for answers? And are we really safer than "states with background checks"?

State	Violent crime (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>
Vermont	114.9
Maine	121.6
Virginia	187.9
Wyoming	197.7
Kentucky	198.8
New Hampshire	199.6
Idaho	204.7
Utah	209.2
Minnesota	223.2
Montana	240.7
Oregon	242.9
Rhode Island	244.6
Hawaii	245.3
Nebraska	252.2
Connecticut	254.5
North Dakota	256.3
Iowa	260.9
Mississippi	267.4
Wisconsin	271.1
Ohio	275.7
Washington	277.9
New Jersey	285.6
West Virginia	289.7
Colorado	291.2
South Dakota	298.7
Pennsylvania	326.6
Kansas	327.5
North Carolina	336.6
Indiana	349.9
Georgia	359.7
United States	367.9
Illinois	372.5
New York	389.8
California	396.2
Texas	399.8
Massachusetts	404.0
Arizona	405.8
Alabama	418.1
Missouri	422.0
Oklahoma	428.1
Michigan	429.8
Arkansas	445.7
Florida	460.0
Maryland	467.8
Delaware	479.1
South Carolina	494.8
Louisiana	510.4
Tennessee	579.7
Nevada	591.2
New Mexico	596.7
Alaska	602.6
District of Columbia	1281.9

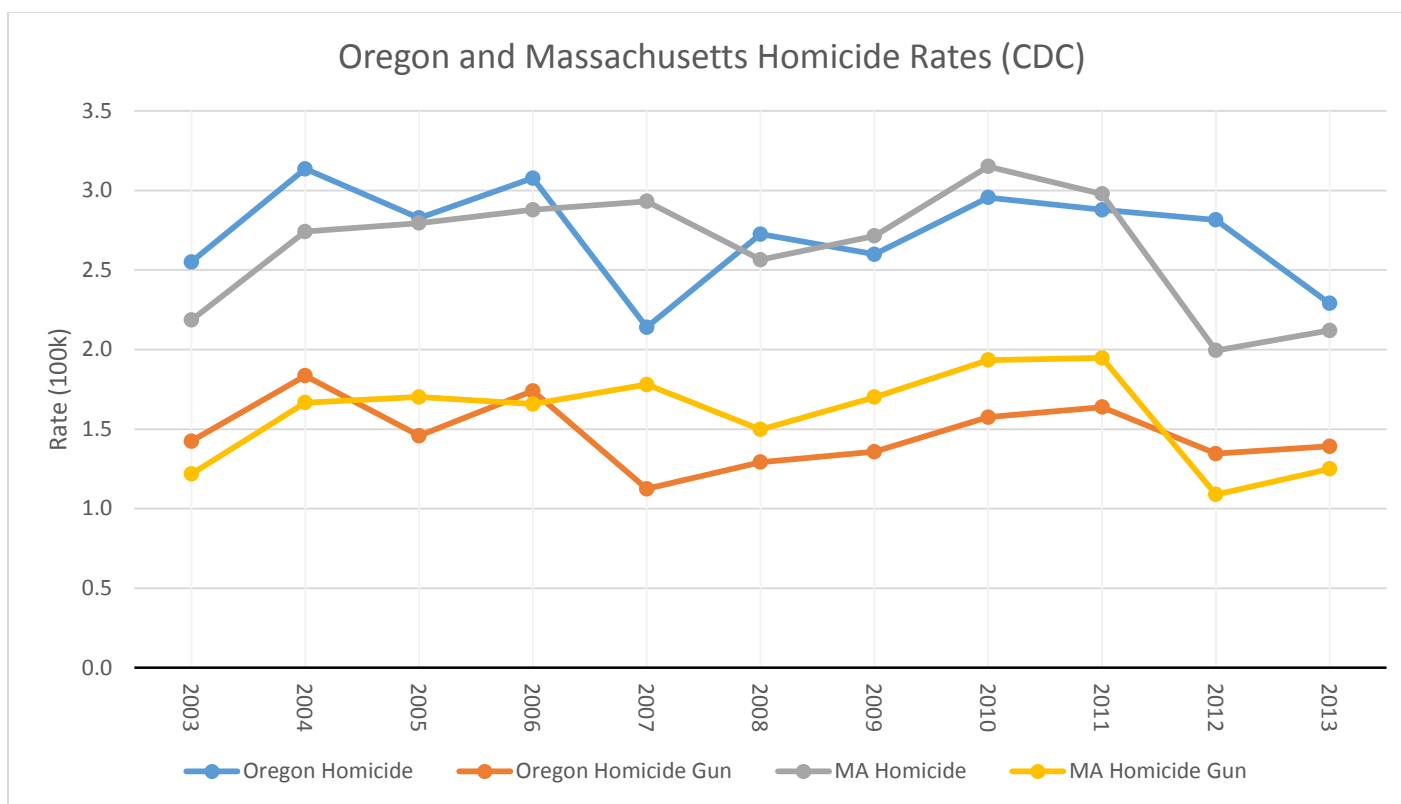
State	Forcible Rape (Legacy Def.) (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>
New Jersey	9.7
New York	13.1
Vermont	14.5
North Carolina	18.5
Connecticut	18.6
Virginia	19.1
California	19.5
Georgia	19.9
Maryland	19.9
Pennsylvania	20.7
Hawaii	21.1
Wisconsin	22.6
Mississippi	23.9
Florida	24.1
Ohio	24.4
Iowa	24.5
West Virginia	24.6
Wyoming	24.7
Indiana	25.0
United States	25.2
Tennessee	25.3
Illinois	25.4
Kentucky	25.6
Washington	25.8
Maine	25.9
Minnesota	25.9
Missouri	26.5
Louisiana	26.9
Idaho	28.3
Montana	28.3
Texas	28.4
Delaware	28.7
Kansas	28.9
Rhode Island	29.2
Alabama	29.5
Massachusetts	31.2
North Dakota	31.8
South Carolina	31.8
Nebraska	33.0
Arkansas	33.6
Utah	34.3
Arizona	35.4
New Hampshire	36.2
Oregon	37.1
Colorado	38.9
Nevada	39.1
South Dakota	41.3
District of Columbia	42.7
Oklahoma	43.5
Michigan	46.5
New Mexico	54.0
Alaska	87.6

State	Robbery (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>
Vermont	11.6
Wyoming	12.9
Idaho	13.6
South Dakota	18.8
Montana	20.1
North Dakota	22.4
Maine	25.2
Iowa	30.4
West Virginia	35.1
Utah	42.8
Kansas	46.6
New Hampshire	49.0
Virginia	55.3
Nebraska	55.7
Colorado	59.8
Oregon	61.0
Rhode Island	65.0
Minnesota	67.8
Kentucky	73.9
Arkansas	76.3
Oklahoma	78.7
Mississippi	80.5
Hawaii	80.6
South Carolina	83.2
Washington	83.5
Wisconsin	84.2
Alaska	84.9
New Mexico	86.8
Missouri	90.7
North Carolina	94.9
Alabama	96.2
Connecticut	98.2
Massachusetts	100.2
Arizona	101.1
Michigan	102.1
Indiana	108.2
United States	109.1
Tennessee	112.5
Pennsylvania	115.6
Florida	118.7
Louisiana	119.9
Texas	120.2
Ohio	124.2
Georgia	125.0
Delaware	132.4
New Jersey	135.8
Illinois	137.6
New York	138.6
California	139.9
Maryland	169.5
Nevada	185.8
District of Columbia	630.8

State	Aggravated Assault (FBI UCR 2013) <sup>xiv</sup>
Vermont	87.1
Wyoming	157.2
Idaho	161.0
South Dakota	236.2
Montana	190.2
North Dakota	199.9
Maine	68.7
Iowa	204.6
West Virginia	226.7
Utah	130.4
Kansas	248.1
New Hampshire	112.7
Virginia	109.7
Nebraska	160.5
Colorado	189.1
Oregon	142.7
Rhode Island	147.4
Minnesota	127.5
Kentucky	95.5
Arkansas	330.5
Oklahoma	300.8
Mississippi	156.5
Hawaii	142.2
South Carolina	373.6
Washington	166.4
Wisconsin	161.6
Alaska	425.5
New Mexico	449.9
Missouri	298.7
North Carolina	218.4
Alabama	285.2
Connecticut	135.4
Massachusetts	270.5
Arizona	263.9
Michigan	274.8
Indiana	211.3
United States	229.1
Tennessee	436.9
Pennsylvania	185.7
Florida	312.3
Louisiana	352.8
Texas	246.9
Ohio	123.2
Georgia	209.3
Delaware	313.7
New Jersey	135.6
Illinois	204.0
New York	234.7
California	232.3
Maryland	272.0
Nevada	360.6
District of Columbia	592.5

Speaking of breaking down a problem: A special Mention should be made regarding both Iowa and Massachusetts:

- Iowa, despite having background checks for all handgun purchases, does not have a lot of other gun control laws that groups like Brady and Everytown push for. In fact the Brady Campaign gave it a C- in 2013.<sup>xi</sup> Despite the low rating (i.e. lack of other popular gun-control laws), it still scores pretty good in the homicide department. Maybe there is something more than just “gun-control” at work?
- Nebraska is also another one of the low Brady Campaign scoring states (Grade: D) that has few popular gun-control laws compared to the other states.
- Massachusetts has rates just slightly lower than Oregon’s. But that wasn’t always the case over the last 10 years.



“Gun-sense” would be getting pretty dizzy with this one as it might try to spin the story back and between the two.

## Conclusion

“Universal background checks” and state grades handed out by gun control organizations don’t result in a lick of difference when it comes to homicide rates and other crime. Oregon currently has lower overall rates of homicide and crime than most other states, whereas states with “universal background checks” average higher rates than Oregon.

i PEW Research Center, Gun Homicide Rate Down 49% Since 1993 Peak; Public Unaware , <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/07/gun-homicide-rate-down-49-since-1993-peak-public-unaware/>

ii US Department of Justice – The Nation’s Two Measures of Homicide, <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ntmh.pdf>

iii National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Traffic Safety Facts 2013 Data, Alcohol-Impaired Driving, Table 4, <http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812102.pdf>

iv Oregon Health Authority, TABLE 6-3. Selected leading causes of death with rates, Oregon residents, 1994- 2013 <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/VitalStatistics/annualreports/13v2/Documents/table603.pdf>

v Mother-Jones, Oct 2014, “Yes, Mass Shootings Are Occurring More Often”, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/10/mass-shootings-rising-harvard>

vi Dr. Grant Duwe, The Truth About Mass Public Shootings, <http://reason.com/archives/2014/10/28/the-truth-about-mass-public-shootings>

vii Center of Disease and Control (CDC) WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) reporting system.

viii Graph is reflective of states that have approved or removed background check laws for all handgun sales at the appropriate years.

Pre-Existing (prior 1990): (DC, HI, IL, MA, MI, NJ, NY, RI)

States/Years Background Checks Effective: (CA 1991, CO 2013, CT 1995, DE 2013, IA 1991, MD 1996, NE 1991, NC 1995, PA 1995)

States/Years Background Checks Rescinded: (MI 2007, IN 1998, TN 1998). (upcoming: another report on states that dropped background checks)

ix Center of Disease and Control (CDC) WISQARS™ (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) reporting system.

x FBI Definition of offences, <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/offense-definitions>

xi Prevalence of Household Firearms and Firearm-Storage Practices in the 50 States and the District of Columbia: Findings From the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/116/3/e370.full.pdf+html>

xii Brady Campaign/Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence: 2013 state scorecard: Why Gun laws matter, <http://smartgunlaws.org/2013-state-scorecard-why-gun-laws-matter/>

xiii Guns&Ammo, Best Concealed Carry States, 2013, <http://www.gunsandammo.com/politics/best-concealed-carry-states-2013/>

xiv 2013 FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR), Table 4, Violent Crime Rate, Rape (Legacy Definition), Robbery, Aggravated Assault

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