

The Impact of Handgun Waiting Period Legislation

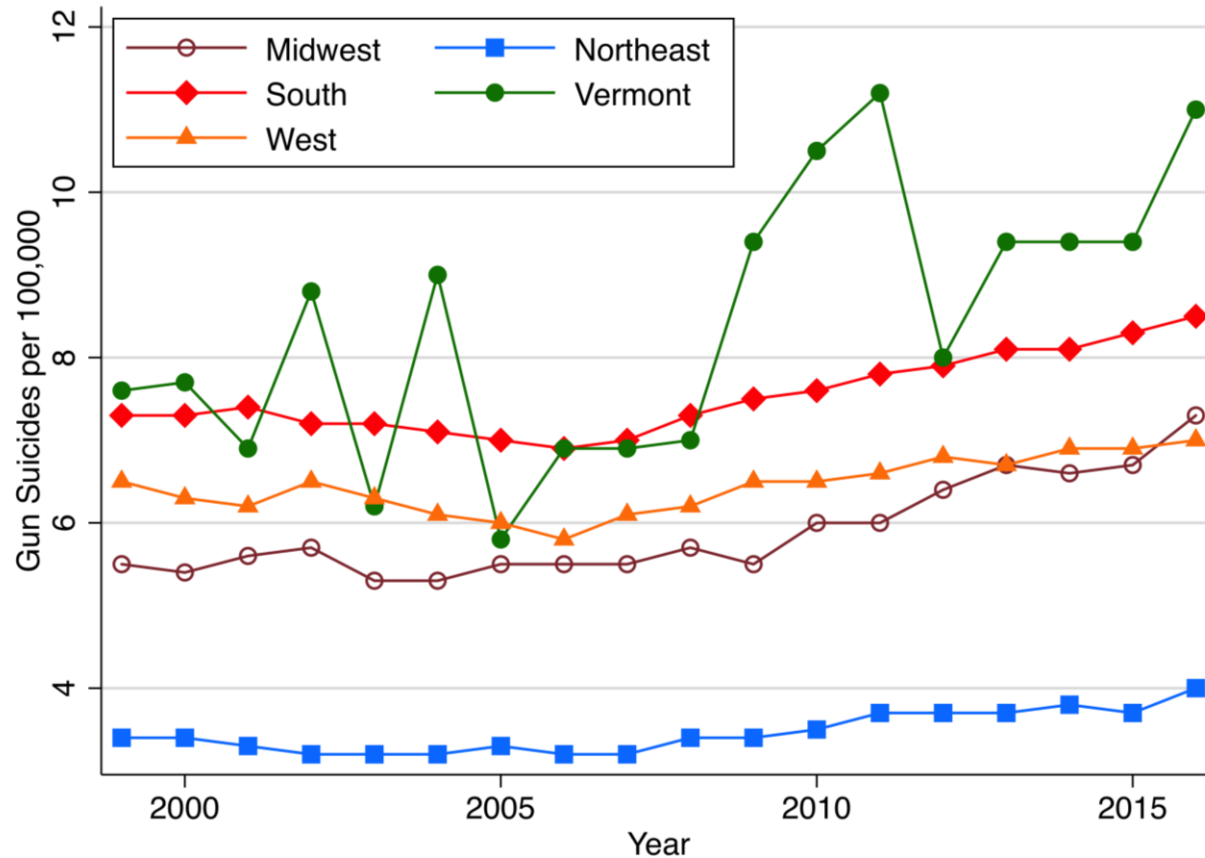
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Gun Deaths in the United States

- According to CDC, nearly 40,000 gun deaths in the US in 2017.
- Roughly 2/3 of gun deaths are suicides.



The Logic of Waiting Periods

- **Transient emotions** (e.g. Loewenstein 1996, Loewenstein and Lerner 2002, Card and Dahl 2011)
- Violence & self-harm may be more likely in “hot states.”
- Many states have implemented (or removed) waiting periods.
- Some laws changed intentionally, and some incidentally.
- Our analysis – do waiting periods directly impact gun deaths?

Method: analyzing the impact of waiting periods

- Approach 1: Difference-in-differences strategy.
 - *Changes in gun deaths* in states that adopt or eliminate WPs, relative to states w/ no changes
 - Data from 1970-2014; 44 states had waiting period for some of this time.
 - Lots of control variables.
- Approach 2: Natural experiment from the Brady Act.
 - Brady Act focused on background checks, but imposed a 5-day waiting period (1994-1998).
 - Some exceptions:
 - Some states already had waiting periods (so no change).
 - Some states were exempt (since already had background check systems).
 - *Changes in gun deaths* in states subject to Brady Act WPs, relative to other states.

Do handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths?

- Similar results using both approaches
- Our estimates suggest:
 - Waiting periods **reduce gun homicides by about 17%**
 - Waiting periods **reduce gun suicides by 7-11%**
- This controls for other factors: e.g., changes in background checks, other gun policies, and demographic trends.
- Currently, 15 states have waiting periods – if all states were to implement WPs, this would save an additional ~900 homicides and ~950 suicides per year.