Elections and Firepower: How Gun Ownership Influences Voting Behavior

> Senior Capstone Presentation by: Naomi Booth



Research Question:

 How does gun ownership influence voting behavior in American presidential elections? How do rural/urban gun owners' voting behaviors differ? Does where gun owners live influence how they vote?







Main Argument



- Hypotheses:
- 1. Gun owners are more likely to vote Republican in presidential elections than non-gun owners
- 2. Rural gun owners and urban gun owners are equally likely to vote Republican

Why?

- Gun ownership is powerful predictor of voting behavior
- Owning a gun is a stronger predictor of voting behavior than NRA endorsements (Gimpel, 1998)
- Gun ownership is tied to specific cultural, gender, and racial identities
- Gun owners tend to be white males who view gun ownership as tied to their masculinity and social status (Melzer, 2009; Carlson, 2015; Filindra, 2016)

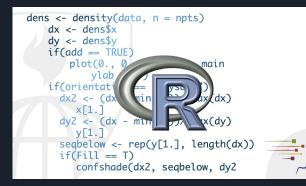


Data and Methodology

How did I address this question?



- GSS (General Social Survey)
- Variables:
 - PRES68-16 (who voted for in 1968-2016 presidential elections)
 - OWNGUN (own gun in home)
 - COMTYPE (where they live i.e. rural/urban/suburban)
- Controls:
 - Race
 - Age
 - Gender
- Methods:
 - Correlation tests
 - T-tests
 - Multivariate Regressions
 - Interaction Effects



Gun owners are more likely to vote Republican

- Gun owners are more likely than non-gun owners to vote Republican
 - Correlation test and t-test both significant
 - Multivariate regression significant
 - Owning a gun correlates with voting Republican

2008 Election

-0.1012990*** (3.6e-07)	Own a Gun in the Home, 1- Yes, 2 - No, 3 - Refused, 8 - Don't Know, 9 - No Answer, 0 - Not Applicable
0.0005123 (0.40996)	Age (In Years)
-0.2415481*** (< 2e-16)	Race of the Respondent, 1 White, 2 - Black, 3 - Other
-0.0596888** (0.00433)	Sex of the Respondent, 1 - Male, 2 - Female
0.082	R^2
0	Signif. codes
< 2.2 <i>e</i> -16	P-value
0.5264	

Residual Standard Error 0.5364 on 2724 degrees of freedom

2012 Election

Own a Gun in the Home, 1- Yes, 2- No, 3 - Refused, 8 - Don't Know, 9 - No Answer, 0 - Not Applicable	-0.0834716*** (1.05e-05)
Age (In Years)	0.0011830* (0.0477)
Race of the Respondent, 1 White, 2 - Black, 3 - Other	-0.2106375*** (< 2e-16)
Sex of the Respondent, 1 - Male, 2 - Female	-0.0807205*** (6.17e-05)
R^2	0.06796
Signif. codes	0
P-value	< 2.2e-16
Residual Standard Error	0.5557 on 3148 degrees of freedom

Community type DOES influence how gun owners vote

- Gun owners from rural areas are more likely to vote Republican than their urban counterparts
 - Multivariate regression with interaction

Community type only gathered 3 years

Caveat: extremely limited data

- Gun owners in rural areas are more likely to vote Republican, while gun owners in urban areas are less likely to vote republican when compared to one another

1992 Election

_	Community Type, 1 - Big City, 2 - Suburbs, 3 - Small Town, 4 -Country Village, 5 - Farm/Country Home	-0.07283 (0.19872)
	Own a Gun in the Home, 1- Yes, 2 - No, 3 - Refused, 8 - Don't Know, 9 - No Answer, 0 - Not Applicable	-0.43322*** (6.3e-05)
	Interaction Between Gun Ownership and Community Type	0.09515** (0.00923)
	$R^{_2}$	0.03344
	Signif. codes	0

P-value < 2.2*e*-16

Residual Standard Error 0.7841 on 1313 degrees of freedom



Conclusion

- Gun owners ARE more likely to vote Republican
- Urban and rural gun owners vote differently



- Urban gun owners are still more likely to vote Republican than non-gun owners, but they are less likely to vote Republican than their rural counterparts

Implications?

- It is important to understand if environment mediates or exacerbates the effect of gun ownership on voting
- Whether gun ownership or community type is a stronger predictor of gun owners' voting behavior will inform future candidates' platforms and their positions on gun control legislation
- Gun control and regulation is a controversial topic in American politics which requires further research into how gun owners vote
- Future research should focus on how where gun owners live impacts who they vote for in American federal elections



Works Cited:

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- Melzer, Scott. 2009. Gun Crusaders: The NRA's Culture War. New York: NYU Press.