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A Study of Old Dominion Student Opinions on Crimes Committed with Firearms by Convicted Felons

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**A STUDY OF OLD DOMINION STUDENT OPINIONS ON CRIMES
COMMITTED WITH FIREARMS BY CONVICTED FELONS**

by

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B. A. October 2003, Columbia College

A Research Paper Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Approved by:

Philip A. Reed (Co-Director)

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF OLD DOMINION STUDENT OPINIONS ON CRIMES COMMITTED WITH FIREARMS BY CONVICTED FELONS

William Domenick Euefueno

Old Dominion University, 2017
Co-Director: Dr. Philip A. Reed
Co-Director: Dr. John M. Ritz

The problem of this study was to determine college student's opinions regarding crimes committed by convicted felons with the use of firearms. This study was undertaken to determine if students support more aggressive legislation regarding the purchasing of firearms, specifically targeting convicted felons, to further prevent them obtaining weapons.

In identifying the methods to be used to obtain data for the study, the researcher reviewed the current laws pertaining to owning and possessing firearms, as well as national gun violence statistics for the past decade. This was broken down further by looking at criminal activity, and gun violence reported from across America over the past two decades. A survey was developed from this, and other information, and given to students for their input.

The results of the survey indicate that Old Dominion University students are knowledgeable of current firearms laws, as well as what constitutes being a convicted felon. A small percentage of those surveyed indicated they were victims of crime by use of a firearm, while a larger percent knew someone who was a victim of a crime by use of a firearm. Students also indicated support for new laws aimed at preventing convicted felons from obtaining firearms. Students stated they believe lighting in parking garages, and common places is adequate. Students indicated an overall satisfaction with their personal safety. On the contrary, students did not feel safe in areas adjacent to the campus due the high-level of crime.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the problem	2
Research Objectives	2
Background and Significance	2
Limitations	3
Assumptions	4
Procedures	4
Definition of Terms	4
Overview of Chapters	5
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
Firearms and Felons	7
Summary	17
III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	19
Population	19
Instrument Design	19
Methods of Data Collection	20
Statistical Analysis	20
Summary	21
IV. FINDINGS	22
Survey Response	22
Survey Results	22
Summary	27
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
Summary	29
Conclusions	29
Recommendations	30

REFERENCES..... 32

APPENDICES..... 34

Appendix A: Notification Letter 34

Appendix B: Survey 35

Appendix C: Survey Comments..... 39

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1. Demographic and offence characteristics of state prison inmates incarcerated for an offence committed with a firearm in 13 states	9
Table 2. Source of gun used by state prison inmates incarcerated for offence committed with firearm in 13 states, by firearm prohibition status.....	11
Table 3. Firearm prohibition status of state prison inmates incarcerated for offence committed with firearm in 13 states	12
Table 4. Murders from 2000 to 2004, by weapon type.....	13
Table 5. Nationwide Murders, 2010-2014	14
Table 6. Americans' views on crime control.....	16

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1. Level of Dissatisfaction with Current Gun Laws	15
Figure 2. Opinion Poll, Americans' views on gun policy	15
Figure 3. Satisfaction with crime control	17
Figure 4. How do you receive information about crimes committed with firearms?	24

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Crimes committed by the use of firearms have been in the spotlight for a number of years. Several incidents of mass-murder, as well as daily news reports from around the country citing gun violence and the numerous deaths resulting, has fueled the debate on stricter gun laws, enhanced background checks, and the banning of certain assault-style weapons. Public opinion on the subject runs from both ends of the spectrum. Those that legally own, and are responsible gun owners feel they are being unfairly judged by the acts of criminals, the mentally-ill, and others that do not abide by the laws of the land. Non-gun enthusiasts believe certain weapons have no place in the hands of the average citizen, and these are meant for military applications only.

Regardless of the position, pro or con, most would probably agree that convicted felons should not be allowed to possess firearms under any circumstances. So the question posed is, how do we go about restricting, or eliminating convicted felons access to weapons? The researcher investigated answers, as well as possible solutions, during this study. The next section will discuss the problem statement, objectives, and other details of the study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine college student's opinions regarding crimes committed by convicted felons with the use of firearms. This study was undertaken to determine if students would support more aggressive legislation regarding the purchasing of firearms, specifically targeting convicted felons, to further prevent them obtaining weapons.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To guide this study, the following research objectives were used:

RO₁: Identify if students are familiar with current laws pertaining to convicted felons, and their legal restriction to purchase, and/or possess firearms.

RO₂: Determine what percentage of students have been a victim of gun violence, or knew someone who was (e.g., Virginia Tech massacre).

RO₃: Determine if students are satisfied with the overall safety of the campus and surrounding areas, of people carrying guns, particularly felons.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In 1968, the federal government enacted the Gun Control Act. (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, ATF, 2015). The main focus of the legislation was on interstate gun sales. The law required that any firearms purchases crossing state lines had to be conducted through licensed firearms dealers. This law was originally proposed as a result of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The rifle used to assassinate him was purchased and delivered through the U.S. Postal Service. The assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy in 1968 were the catalyst for finally getting the law passed.

In 1993, Congress amended the Gun Control Act by passing the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, commonly referred to as the Brady Act (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, ATF, 2015). This law requires individuals intending on purchasing firearms to submit to criminal background checks. The law also includes a “restricted persons” list, if someone:

- is under indictment for, or has been convicted in any court of, a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year;
- is a fugitive from justice;

- is an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance;
- has been adjudicated as a mental defective or has been committed to any mental institution;
- who, being an alien— is illegally or unlawfully in the United States;
- who has been discharged from the Armed Forces under dishonorable conditions;
- who, having been a citizen of the United States, has renounced his citizenship; (Title 18USC44-Firearms, 2015, p.202).

The passing of this law led to the creation of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). The goal of this system is to prevent the above-mentioned persons from legally obtaining firearms, by requiring gun dealers to conduct background checks on individuals prior to selling a firearm. The original system required potential buyers to wait for the background check to come back, taking up to as long as seven days. Technological advances now allow for instant background checks, with no waiting period.

In 1997, the Gun Control Act was amended with the passing of the Lautenberg Act, (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, ATF, 2015), which placed gun ownership restrictions on persons convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, or have an order of protection (restraining order) against them. The significance of the study is that with all of these laws in place, why do we still have so many tragic, unnecessary killings with firearms by convicted felons? The findings of this research study will be used in determining why.

LIMITATIONS

There were several limiting factors to the study.

- The study was limited to a small sample of the student body at a major research university in the Southeastern United States.

- Knowledge of firearms laws may have been limited due to a lack of experience.
- Data collection was limited to a survey-style questionnaire.

ASSUMPTIONS

The study was based on the below assumptions:

- Student's had little to no personal experience with crime (victim, witness).
- Students responded honestly and did not allow biases to influence their responses.

PROCEDURES

In identifying the methods to be used for the study, the researcher reviewed the current laws pertaining to owning and possessing firearms, as well as national gun violence statistics for the past decade. This was broken down further by looking at criminal activity, and gun violence reported from across America over the past two decades. A survey was developed from this, and other information, and given to students for their input. The results will give an indication as to whether students believe more gun laws are needed to deter gun violence by convicted felons, their level of knowledge pertaining to gun laws, and their overall level of safety on campus, and the surrounding campus community.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions from Merriam-Webster on-line (Merriam-Webster, 2015), are offered to assist the participants, and others with specific terminology pertaining to gun laws and general legal terms.

Adjudicated: A decision in a legal case, or proceeding by a judge.

Assault-style weapons: The definition varies among regulating jurisdictions, but usually includes semi-automatic firearms with a detachable magazine and a pistol grip, and sometimes other features such as a flash suppressor or barrel shroud.

ATF: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The main agency of the Federal Government tasked with investigating and tracking illegal firearms use and transport, across the country.

Convicted Felon: A person sentenced to more than a year and a day in prison.

Expunged: A conviction that has been set aside. May remove the “Convicted Felon” restriction regarding firearms purchase or possession.

Indictment: A formal accusation that a person has committed a crime.

Mentally Adjudicated: A decision in a legal case, or proceeding by a judge regarding an individual’s mental state. A judge may decide whether they may possess firearms, or are unstable and are ordered not to possess or attempt to obtain firearms.

National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS): A system used to determine if potential gun purchasers are restricted by law to buy a firearm.

Pardoned: Released from the consequences of a conviction.

Restraining Order: A legal order issued against an individual to restrict or prohibit access or proximity to another specified individual

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I outlined the topic of the study, via a problem statement and discussed the issue of crimes committed with firearms, with an emphasis on convicted felons. The stated objectives guided the study were presented, as well as detailed background, and the significance for conducting the study. Factors such as limitations of student knowledge of current weapons laws, as well as age-related lack of real-world experience. The assumptions provided, emphasized the contrast in the level of knowledge, and firearms experience between the students participating in the study, and the researcher/investigator. Potential biases were also considered. The procedures used to frame the survey were discussed in detail. A definition of terms was included for

clarifying uncommon words or phrases used throughout the paper. The remaining chapters will address the methods and procedures used in conducting the study, survey instrument development, population selection, and an in-depth look at the statistical results. Data analysis, as well as the findings and a concise summary, conclusions, and recommendations complete the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of this study was to determine student opinions regarding the use of firearms by convicted felons, and if more laws are needed to further restrict convicted felon's access to weapons. This chapter provides information pertaining to previously conducted studies, especially those studies that looked at crime statistics, with an emphasis on convicted felons.

FIREARMS AND FELONS

Crimes committed with firearms have been a common occurrence around the country over the past few decades. While the debate rages on between the opposing sides of the issue regarding banning certain types of weapons, or expanding the background check requirement for purchasing a firearm, there needs to be an understanding of the laws that are in place that are geared towards preventing convicted felons from obtaining firearms legally.

The Gun Control Act of 1968 (18 USC 44, p202, 2015), is the fundamental law that sets policy for the firearms industry, and regulates individual purchase and transfer of firearms at the federal level. The law includes everything from firearm types, barrel length requirements for certain weapons, as well as definitions for ammunition; gun dealers, and importers. There are several amendments to the Act, that have been added to supplement the Act.

A major amendment to the Act, called the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (18 USC 44, p202, 2015), required individuals to go through a background check with a 5-day waiting period before being allowed to purchase a handgun. This was later changed in 1998 with the creation of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which allows gun purchasers to receive a background check within a few minutes. Several studies have

investigated the matter of background checks. One study in particular, Vittes, Vernick, Webster, (2012), studied prisoners around the country who were incarcerated for weapons-related crimes, with an emphasis on states that had less restrictions on the following individuals:

- (1) persons less than 21 years of age
- (2) persons convicted of a serious juvenile offence
- (3) violent misdemeanants
- (4) drug misusers
- (5) alcohol abusers

Data was compiled from a 2004 Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities (SISCF); (Bureau of Justice and Statistics, 2004), a survey of state prison inmates administered by the Bureau of the Census for the U. S. Department of Justice. Several states were identified as not having enhanced firearms disqualification laws. They were: Arkansas, Idaho, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, Vermont and Wyoming. Other states such as Georgia, Maine, New Mexico and Wisconsin were also identified as lacking some of the expanded restrictions, with a few minor exceptions.

They identified that all 50 states took part in the survey, with more than 14,000 inmates participating. The survey results showed that 2046 criminals committed their crimes with the use of firearms. They also noted that the totals from the 50-state survey aligned with the 13 state survey with regards to crime type, type of gun, and other demographics. They did note that the 13-state results showed a higher number of juveniles, as well as non-Hispanic Black offenders when compared to the 50-state survey. Table 1 provides a breakdown of convict responses in the thirteen states, and the resulting data from the survey questions.

Table 1

Demographic and offence characteristics of state prison inmates incarcerated or an offence committed with a firearm in 13 states (n=253) (Bureau of Justice and Statistics, 2004).

Demographic characteristics	<i>N (%)</i>
Sex	
Male	234 (92.5)
Female	19 (7.5)
Age when sentenced for current offence (years)	
14–17	48 (19.0)
18–20	58 (22.9)
21–24	46 (18.2)
25–29	35 (13.8)
30 and older	66 (26.1)
Race/ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic Black	169 (66.8)
Non-Hispanic White	63 (24.9)
Hispanic	9 (3.6)
Other	12 (4.7)
Education (n = 251)	
Less than high school	185 (73.7)
High School or equivalent	41 (16.3)
More than high School	25 (10.0)
Marital status (n = 252)	
Never married	177 (70.2)
Divorced/separated/widowed	48 (19.1)
Married	27 (10.7)
Employed in the month before incarceration (n = 246)	
Full-time	129 (52.4)
Part-time/occasional	24 (9.8)
Unemployed: looking for work	32 (13.0)

Table 1 (cont'd):

State of current offense	
Arkansas	21 (8.3)
Georgia	64 (25.3)
Idaho	5 (2.0)
Louisiana	39 (15.4)
Maine	1 (0.4)
Michigan	67 (26.5)
Mississippi	27 (10.7)
Montana	5 (2.0)
New Hampshire	0 (0)
New Mexico	13 (5.1)
Vermont	1 (0.4)
Wisconsin	10 (4.0)
Wyoming	0 (0)
Type of gun used in current offense‡	
Handgun	204 (80.6)
Rifle	30 (11.9)
Shotgun	25 (9.9)
Other firearm	4 (1.6)

‡ Percentages do not sum to 100 because 10 respondents used more than one type of gun in their current offence.

Table 2 shows the means in which a criminal obtained the firearm used in the commission of their crime, and it breaks down the number of firearms that would not have been available to them for purchase through legal means. It also highlights the number of weapons transactions that would have been prohibit in the 13 states if they had stricter laws targeting the types of transactions listed.

Table 2

Source of gun used by state prison inmates incarcerated for offence committed with firearm in 13 states, by firearm prohibition status (Bureau of Justice and Statistics, 2004).

	Total (<i>n</i> =253)	Legal even under stricter standards (<i>n</i> = 78)	Prohibited under current state or federal law (<i>n</i> = 102)	Would be prohibited only under stricter standards (<i>n</i> =73)
	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
How gun was obtained				
Stolen	8 (3.2)	0 (0)	4 (3.9)	4 (5.5)
Borrowed	44 (17.4)	12 (15.4)	17 (16.7)	15 (20.6)
Bought/traded	124 (49.0)	45 (57.7)	40 (39.2)	39 (53.4)
Given as gift	21 (8.3)	8 (10.3)	9 (8.8)	4 (5.5)
Other	23 (9.1)	4 (5.1)	13 (12.8)	6 (8.2)
Don't know (DK)/refused	33 (13.0)	9 (11.5)	19 (18.6)	5 (6.9)
Where gun was obtained				
Gun store or pawnshop	34 (13.4)	24 (30.8)	4 (3.9)	6 (8.2)
Gun show	1 (0.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.4)
Friend/family member	86 (34.0)	25 (32.1)	35 (34.3)	26 (35.6)
Street/black market	77 (30.4)	14 (18.0)	36 (35.3)	27 (37.0)
Burglary	1 (0.4)	0 (0)	1 (1.0)	0 (0)
Other	21 (8.3)	6 (7.7)	8 (7.8)	7 (9.6)
DK/refused/skipped	33 (13.0)	9 (11.5)	18 (17.7)	6 (8.2)

Note: If inmate used more than one gun in current offence, response pertains to the most recently acquired gun. Respondents who refused to disclose how they got the gun were not subsequently asked where they got it.

Table 3 deals with the prisoner's future ability, or lack of ability, to legally possess a firearm upon completion of their current jail sentences. It also presents a detailed breakdown of the prisoner's prior arrests and conviction history, including juvenile prisoners' use of weapons in committing crimes, as well as first-time offenders.

Table 3

Firearm prohibition status of state prison inmates incarcerated for offence committed with firearm in 13 states. (n=253). (Bureau of Justice and Statistics, 2004)

May possess even under stricter standards	78 (30.8)
No prior arrests or convictions and offender age ≥ 21 years	28 (11.1)
Prior arrests but no convictions and offender age ≥ 21 years	34 (13.4)
Prior non-disqualifying misdemeanor convictions, and no convictions for serious juvenile offence, and offender age ≥ 21 years	16 (6.3)
Prohibited under current state or federal laws*	102 (40.3)
Prior adult (≥ 18 years) felony conviction(s) or dishonorable discharge	69 (27.3)
Offender age < 18 years at sentencing and used handgun in current offence	33 (13.0)
Would be prohibited only under stricter standards*	73 (28.9)
Handgun offender age 18–20 years at sentencing for current offence	43 (17.0)
Long gun offender age 18–20 years at sentencing for current offence	1 (0.4)
Prior conviction for serious juvenile offence	1 (0.4)
Prior conviction for firearms or violent misdemeanor	9 (3.6)
Prior conviction for 2+ drug misdemeanors	2 (0.8)
Prior conviction for 2+ alcohol misdemeanors	1 (0.4)

Note: * These subcategories are not mutually exclusive.

Table 4 is a breakdown of murders from 2000 thru 2004 (F.B.I., Uniform Crime Report, 2004). It is offered as a broader perspective regarding the sampling provided by the research study of Vittes et al., (2012). Their data, as mentioned previously, was developed from a Bureau of Justice (2004) prisoner study, and it was focused on crimes committed with firearms. It

appears that the 2004 prisoner survey was the last large-scale survey conducted by the Census Bureau.

Table 4

Murders from 2000 to 2004, by weapon type. (F.B.I., Uniform Crime Report, 2004).

Weapons	2000	2001¹	2002	2003	2004
Handguns	6,778	6,931	7,294	7,745	7,265
Rifles	411	386	488	392	393
Shotguns	485	511	486	454	507
Other guns	53	59	75	76	117
Firearms, type not stated	934	1,003	1,185	992	1,044
Knives or cutting instruments	1,782	1,831	1,776	1,828	1,866
Blunt objects (clubs, hammers, etc.)	617	680	681	650	663
Personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.)	2 927	961	954	962	933
Poison	8	12	23	9	11
Explosives	9	4	11	4	1
Fire	134	109	103	170	114
Narcotics	20	B 37	48	44	76
Drowning	15	23	20	17	15
Strangulation	166	153	145	184	155
Asphyxiation	92	116	100	131	105
Other weapons or weapons not stated	799	1,245	874	807	856
Total firearms:	8,661	8,890	9,528	9,659	9,326
Total non-weapon:	3,642	5,134	4,735	4,806	4,795
Total	12,303	14,024	14,263	14,465	14,121

¹ The murder and non-negligent homicides that occurred as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, are not included.

To further expand on the statistical data shown throughout the chapter, it must be pointed out that the primary source of all of these tables is from the FBI's annual report regarding homicides committed, and by what method. It is part of their overall Uniform Crime Report (UCR, 2015), which is derived from city, state, county, colleges and universities, tribal, and federal law enforcement sources. The report is made up of four publications: Crime in The United States (2015), Hate Crime Statistics (2015), National Incident-based reporting system (2015), and the Law Enforcement Officers killed or assaulted (2015). Table 5 provides the latest

statistics regarding murder, by weapon type, for 2010-2014. It is offered as an updated reference to Table 4 regarding murders committed by firearms, and other methods.

Table 5

Nationwide Murders, 2010-2014 (F.B.I., Uniform Crime Report, (2015).

Weapons	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Handguns	6,115	6,251	6,404	5,782	5,562
Rifles	367	332	298	285	248
Shotguns	366	362	310	308	262
Other guns	93	97	116	123	93
Firearms, type not stated	1,933	1,611	1,769	1,956	1,959
Total Firearms:	8,874	8,653	8,897	8,454	8,124
Total non-weapon:	4,290	4,142	3,991	3,799	3,837
Total:	13,164	12,795	12,888	12,253	11,961

This most recent report indicates a decline in the murder rate for the years 2011 through 2014. More research is needed in order to determine the cause of this decline. Questions may need to be asked such as: were new laws enacted since the 2004 report, were administrative changes made such as background check enhancements, stiffer sentencing guidelines for weapons-related offenses?

While the decline in murder by firearms is a positive indicator, the lower murder rate has actually had an inverse effect on Americans' level of satisfaction with current gun laws and crime policies in general. Figure 1 shows that according to a Gallup Poll (Gallup 2016), 62% of Americans are dissatisfied with gun laws, up from 51% from the same time last year.

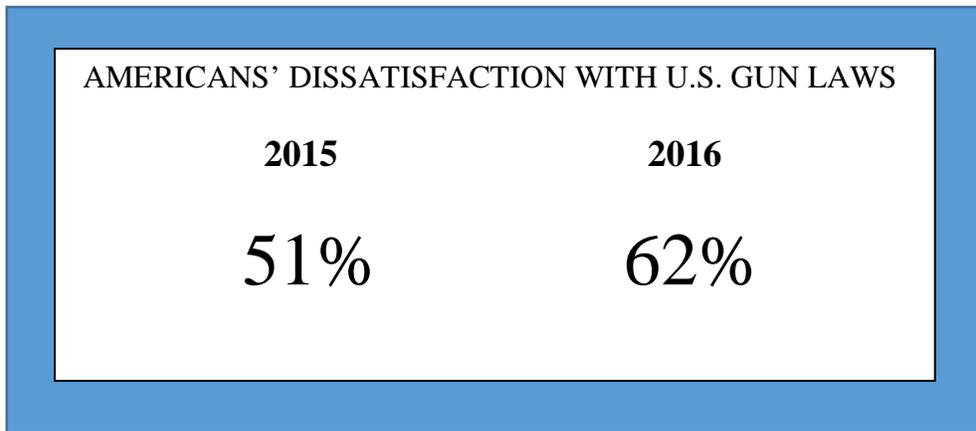


Figure 1. Level of Dissatisfaction with Current Gun Laws (Gallup, 2016).

Figure 2 illustrates the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the period of 2001 through 2016. Post 9/11, the level of satisfaction remained constant until 2012, when the Sandy Hook massacre occurred. According to the Gallup Poll, since 2012, 38% of those dissatisfied with current gun laws want them to be made stricter, 15% of those dissatisfied want the laws to be less strict, and 9% want them to remain the same. Also, a majority of Americans are dissatisfied with current gun policy, and since 2012, this opinion has not changed.

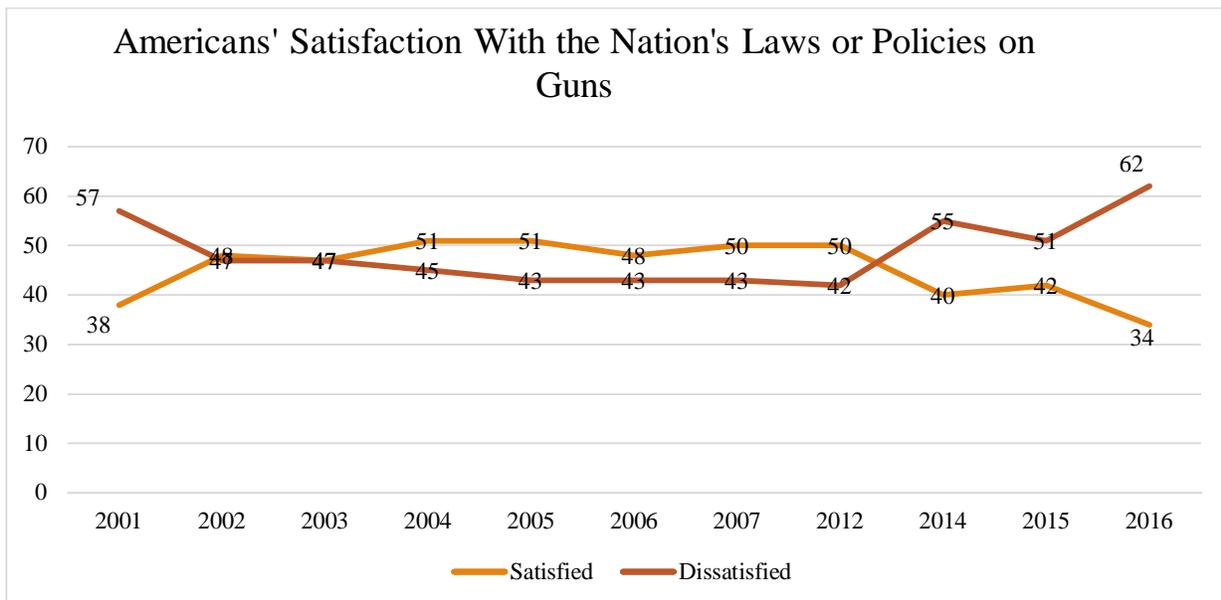


Figure 2. National Gun Law Opinion Poll (Gallup, 2016).

Table 6 shows the level of dissatisfaction, the reason for their dissatisfaction with current gun policies, as well as the level of satisfaction with gun policies. These data are important to the current study, as student survey is the method of data collection, and it may give indications of how students' opinions from the current sample fall into each of these categories.

Table 6

Americans' Views on Gun Laws (Gallup, 2016).

	% Total satisfied	% Dissatisfied, want stricter	% Dissatisfied, want less strict	% Dissatisfied, remain the same
2016	34	38	15	9
2015	42	31	12	8
2014	40	31	16	8
2013	43	38	5	8
2012	50	25	8	6
2008	49	30	8	6
2007	50	30	6	7
2006	47	32	7	4
2005	51	32	6	5
2004	51	33	6	6
2003	47	32	9	6
2002	48	33	8	6
2001	38	39	9	9

Note: Asked of those dissatisfied with U.S. gun policy). Would you like to see gun laws in this country made stricter, less strict, or remain as they are?

The final part of the opinion poll reported Americans' views on crime policies. According to the poll, 57% of Americans are dissatisfied with the government's ability to control crime. This is a 16% increase since 2012, and a significant change in public opinion from 2005, when the satisfaction level was at 57%.

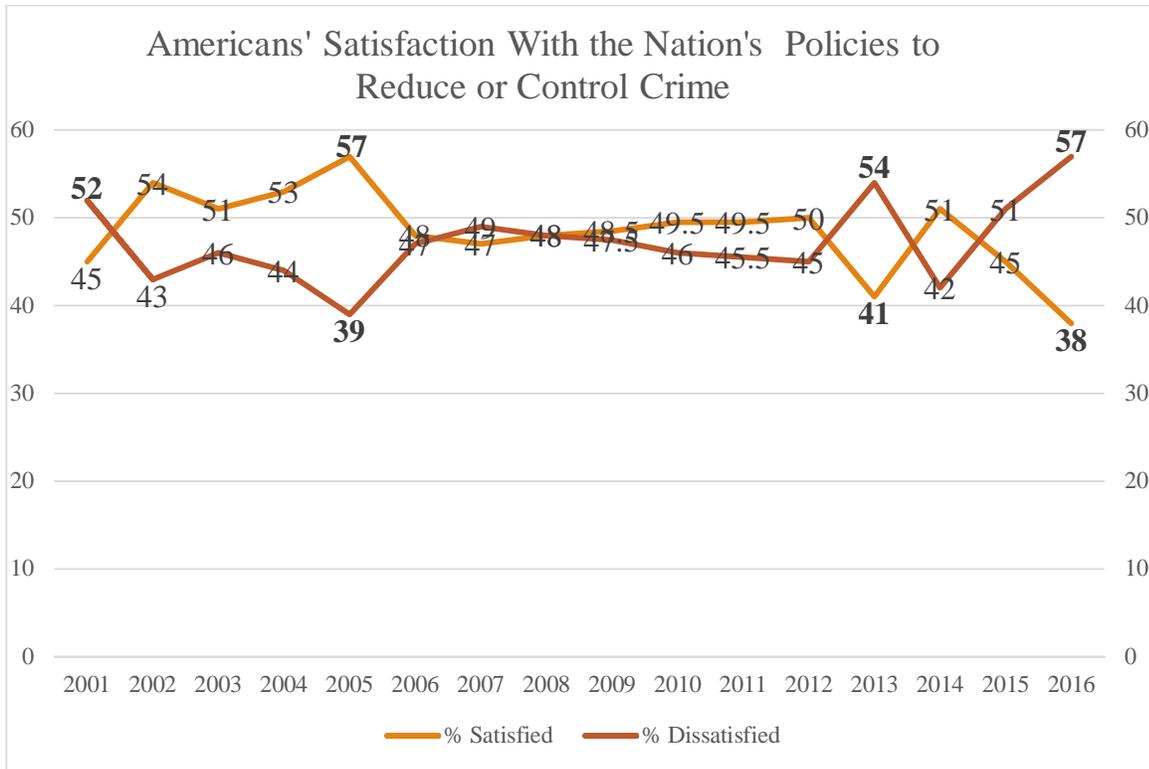


Figure 3. Satisfaction with crime control (Gallup, 2016).

Gallup indicated the method of data collection for these statistics were conducted by way of telephone interviews over a 5-day period. The sample included 1,012 adults 18 and older residing in the U.S. They indicate a margin of error at a $\pm 4\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

SUMMARY

This chapter examined crimes committed with firearms, with an emphasis on convicted felons, and prisoner populations. Previously conducted research statistics were presented, with a focus on prisoners' survey results, reported by FBI Uniform Crime Report data, weapon type and other criminal demographics. A 2016 Gallup Poll on Americans' opinions regarding levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of current gun laws, as well as crime control in general, was outlined.

Chapter III details methods and procedures used in obtaining and analyzing data. Population selection, survey instrument developed to collect data, method of administering the survey, as well as safeguarding human subjects' privacy will be presented. A summary will conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The previous chapter provided a review of literature, and it included data from similar studies. This chapter will discuss the methods and procedures that were used to gather the data necessary for this study. The population selected, design and administration of the instrument, as well as how obtained data was treated with regards to human subject privacy will be discussed.

POPULATION

The population selected for this study was from the student body of a large research university in the Southeastern United States. They were selected for convenience to survey, as well as bringing a wide range of diversity (age ranges, cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds) to the study. A total of 178 students were selected from the on-campus population. These students were enrolled in a general education course, STEM 110T, Technology and Your World, during Spring 2016.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

A survey was created, in paper form. This method was chosen due to the local population of subjects and convenient access to the participants. This allowed the researcher, and investigator, the opportunity to use a chain of custody system to ensure participants' privacy were maintained at all times. The survey was developed using the research objectives as guides to ensure the survey matched the intentions/purpose of the study, and literature on firearms purchases and individual safety. The instrument was used to determine student knowledge of gun laws; opinions regarding convicted felons having access to firearms; if students would support more aggressive legislation regarding the purchasing of firearms: specifically targeting

convicted felons in order to prevent them from legally obtaining weapons. Lastly, the survey asked for student opinion regarding their overall level of safety on and around campus. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Surveys were distributed to undergraduate students attending the STEM 110T course on campus. Notification letters were sent to every professor, via email, informing them of the intent to survey students attending their class. The letter outlined the nature of the survey, topic being researched, as well as distribution, collection, and safe-guarding procedures to be followed in order to protect human subjects' identities. Study participants were informed via a cover letter included with the survey regarding the context of the study, information they would be providing, as well as the methods used to protect their privacy. A copy of these letters may be found in Appendix A. This study was reviewed and approved as an exempt study by the College of Education's Human Subjects Review Committee.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Survey questions were developed to identify participants' opinions pertaining to convicted felons having access to firearms. Survey questions were divided into four categories. Category I identified the human subject by a variety of demographics questions (e.g., male/female/transgender, age group). Category II asked participants to provide their knowledge, or a lack thereof, with regards to weapons laws. Category III asked participants about their overall attitudes towards convicted felons gaining access to firearms. Category IV asked participants to rate their overall safety in, and around campus. An optional comments block was provided for any additional input from the participants.

Surveys received, were reviewed for completeness, the data were analyzed, and results

tabulated. The following statistical measurements were used to compute the responses: mean, median, percentages, and standard deviation. The number of each response, and the corresponding percentages associated with each question, was also provided.

SUMMARY

Chapter III discussed the methods and procedures used in the study. The population selected, instrument design, data collection methods, as well as the statistical analysis were presented. Collection of data were conducted via survey questions, which were developed to align with the research goals, and the knowledge gained from the literature. Data sets were studied, and delineated by percent of comparable numbers and similar answers, as well as statistical significance. Chapter IV lists the findings from the survey, the response levels to the survey, and a chapter summary.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine undergraduate student's opinions towards convicted felons' ability to gain access to weapons, knowledge of current firearms laws, and their overall sense of safety, in, and around the university. Opinions were obtained through a survey of 178 Old Dominion University students enrolled in a general education course, STEM 110T, Technology and Your World, located on campus during Spring 2016. Data obtained from these surveys are presented in this chapter, as well as a summary.

SURVEY RESPONSE

Surveys were sent to 178 students attending STEM 110T classes during the Spring 2016 semester on campus. Of the 178 surveys that were distributed, 94 were returned completed, resulting in a 52% response rate. This was a convenience sample and is not statistically representative of the population.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey consisted of 17 multiple-choice questions, as well as a comment block for any additional information respondent's may have wanted to share. See Appendix B for all survey items. Below are the results.

Question 1: What is your gender?

The 178 survey responses received were tallied, and the results for this question showed 37 (39%) self-identified as male, 56 (60%) self-identified as females, and 1 (1%) self-identified as transgender.

Question 2: What is your age?

The response results for this question show 65 respondents (69%) were between the ages of 18-20; 28 respondents were between the ages of 21-29 (30%), and 1 respondent (1%) was between the ages of 30-39.

Question 3: You have been the victim of a crime involving a firearm?

The response for this question indicated that only 4 students (4%) had been a victim of crime when a firearm was involved, and 90 students (96%) had not been a victim of a crime involving the use of a firearm.

Question 4: You know someone who has been the victim of a crime involving a firearm?

The response for this question indicated that 48 students (51%) knew someone who was a victim of crime involving the use of a firearm, and 46 students (49%) did not know someone who was a victim of crime involving the use of a firearm.

Question 5: From what source(s) do you receive information about crimes committed with firearms?

The response for this question indicated that 77 students (82%) received information about crimes committed with firearms via Social Media (Facebook, Twitter), 76 students (81%) received information via Televised News, 73 students (78%) received information from Internet News, and 23 students (24%) received information via Printed News. Six students (6%) indicated they received information from these sources: university Email (2), and talking with others (4).

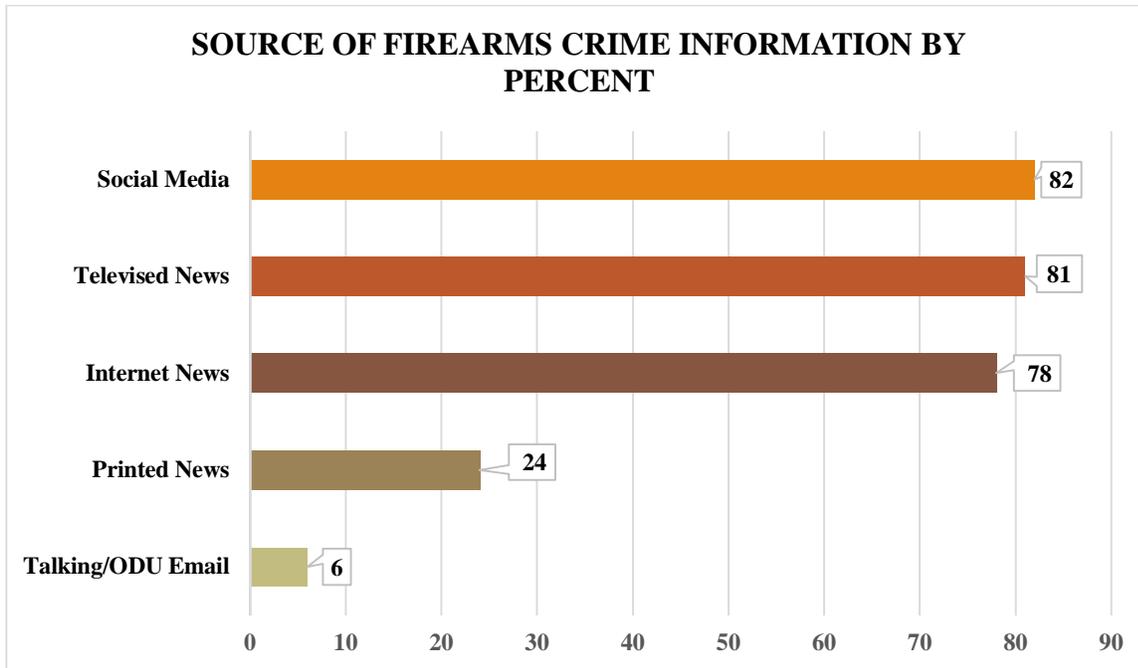


Figure 4. Response to Question 5: From what source(s) do you receive information about crimes committed with firearms?

Question 6: Do you know, or have a basic understanding of state and federal firearms laws?

The response for this question indicated that 73 students (78%) know, or have a basic understanding of state and federal firearms laws, 20 students (21%) do not have a basic understanding of state and federal firearms laws, and 1 student (1%), did not answer the question.

Question 7: Do you own a firearm?

The response for this question indicated that 11 students (12%) own a firearm, 81 students (86%) do not own a firearm, 1 student (1%) would rather not say, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 8: Do you know the definition of “convicted felon?”

The response for this question indicated that 87 students (93%) know the definition of

“convicted felon”, 6 students (6%) do not know the definition of “convicted felon”, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 9: Are you aware convicted felons are not allowed, by state and federal law, to possess a firearm?

The response for this question indicated that 84 students (89%) are aware convicted felons are not allowed by state and federal law, to possess a firearm, 9 students (10%) are unaware convicted felons are not allowed by state and federal law, to possess a firearm, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 10: Do you believe convicted felons should not have access to weapons under any circumstances?

The response for this question indicated that 55 students (59%) believe convicted felons should not have access to weapons under any circumstances, 13 students (10%) do not believe convicted felons should not have access to weapons under any circumstances, 25 students (27%) were unsure if convicted felons should not have access to weapons under any circumstances, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 11: Would you support stricter laws specifically targeting felons?

The response for this question indicated that 53 students (56%) would support stricter laws specifically targeting felons, 16 students (17%) would not support stricter laws specifically targeting felons, 24 students (26%) were unsure if they would support stricter laws specifically targeting felons convicted felons, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 12: Do you believe street lighting on campus is adequate?

The response for this question indicated that 62 students (67%) believe street lighting on

campus is adequate, 31 students (32%) do not believe street lighting on campus is adequate, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 13: Do you believe parking garage lighting is adequate?

The response for this question indicated that 65 students (69%) believe parking garage lighting is adequate, 27 students (29%) do not believe parking garage lighting is adequate, 1 student (1%) answered N/A, and 1 student (1%) did not answer the question.

Question 14: Do you believe campus police provide ample safety and security?

The response for this question indicated that 65 students (69%) believe campus police provide ample safety and security, 23 students (24%) do not believe campus police provide ample safety and security, 1 student (1%) answered N/A, and 3 students (3%) did not answer the question.

Question 15: Do you feel safe on campus?

The response for this question indicated that 68 students (72%) feel safe on campus, 23 students (24%) do not feel safe on campus, and 3 students (3%) did not answer the question.

Question 16: Do you feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, and visit them often?

The response for this question indicated that 27 students (29%) feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, and visit them often, 62 students (66%) do not feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, or visit them often, 2 students (2%) answered N/A, and 3 students (3%) did not answer the question.

Question 17: Are you satisfied with your overall personal safety on campus?

The response for this question indicated that 65 students (69%) are satisfied with their personal safety on campus, 26 students (28%) are not satisfied with their personal safety on campus, and 3 students (3%) did not answer the question.

Question 18: This question offered respondents the opportunity to provide additional comments.

Other Comments:

On campus is fine, adjacent to campus is the real dangerous area.

Just wanted to point out that I'm glad the district is no longer tied in with ODU b/c of all the crimes.

More visible security officers would prompt me to do more activities at night. We live in section 8 area.

There should be more policemen on duty.

I love ODU! Go Monarchs!

I would like increased security.

I don't come to campus at night.

SUMMARY

Data concerning students' opinions of convicted felons gaining access to firearms, knowledge of state and federal gun laws, as well as their overall safety were presented in this chapter. The research determined that students have knowledge of state and federal firearms laws, students believe convicted felons should not be allowed to possess firearms, and that students are satisfied with their overall safety on campus.

The next chapter will provide a summary of the study. Conclusions from the survey will be addressed based on the data from this chapter. Recommendations by the investigator for

future study of firearm law changes, with a focus on preventing convicted felons from gaining access to firearms legally, as well as campus and surrounding area safety concerns will be presented.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the research study. The research problem, literature review, population studied, as well as the presentation of conclusions based on survey data, will be discussed. Recommendations for further study on the topic, as well as security improvements on campus, will be presented.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine students' opinions regarding crimes committed by convicted felons with the use of fire arms. This study was undertaken to determine if students would support more aggressive legislation regarding the purchasing of firearms, specifically targeting convicted felons, to further prevent them obtaining weapons. With firearms violence in the local, and national news on a regular basis, determining students' level of safety and security on, and off campus was an important element in the research.

CONCLUSIONS

RO₁: Identify if students are familiar with current laws pertaining to convicted felons, and their legal restriction to purchase, and/or possess firearms.

Eighty-seven of the 94 students surveyed (93%) knew the definition of convicted felon. Eighty-four of the 94 students surveyed (89%) are aware convicted felons are not allowed by state and federal law, to purchase or possess a firearm. Fifty-five of the 94 students surveyed (59%) believe convicted felons should not have access to weapons under any circumstances. Fifty-three of the 94 students surveyed (56%) would support stricter laws specifically targeting felons.

RO₂: Determine what percentage of students have been a victim of gun violence, or knew someone who was (e.g., Virginia Tech massacre).

Four of the 94 students surveyed (4%), have been a victim of crime when a firearm was involved. Forty-eight of the 94 students surveyed (51%) knew someone who was a victim of crime involving the use of a firearm.

RO₃: Determine if students are satisfied with the overall safety of the campus and surrounding areas, of people carrying guns, particularly felons.

Sixty-two of the 94 students surveyed (67%) believe street lighting on campus is adequate. Sixty-five of the 94 students surveyed (69%) believe parking garage lighting is adequate. Sixty-five of the 94 students surveyed (69%) believe campus police provide ample safety and security. Sixty-eight of the 94 students surveyed (72%) feel safe on campus. Twenty-seven of the 94 students surveyed (29%) feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, and visit them often. Sixty-two of the 94 students surveyed (66%) do not feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, or visit them often. Sixty-five of the 94 students surveyed (69%) are satisfied with their safety on campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study confirmed that student respondents from this convenience sample are knowledgeable of current firearms laws, as well as what constitutes being a convicted felon. A small percentage of those surveyed indicated they were victims of crime by use of a firearm, while a larger percent knew someone who was a victim of a crime by use of a firearm. Students also indicated support for new laws aimed at preventing convicted felons from obtaining firearms. Students stated they believe lighting in parking garages, and common places is adequate. Students indicate an overall satisfaction with their personal safety. On the contrary, students do not feel safe in areas adjacent to the campus due the high-level of crime.

During the review of literature, a notable discovery was made regarding the number of

murders committed by the use of firearms from 2000 to 2004, compared to the 5-year period from 2010 to 2014. The most recent report indicates a decrease in murders 4 of the past 5-years when compared to the 2000-2004 report. Another discovery made concerns the number of prisoners that would be “prohibited under current laws”, and the “would be prohibited only under stricter standards” when released from prison. Another observation, based on the totals in the two blocks in the upper right corner at the top of Table II, nearly 70 percent of the listed transactions are/would be considered unlawful in all 50 states under current laws, and with the passing of enhanced legislation in the states currently lacking these stricter laws. Finally, when reviewing Table 3, it was discovered that those two items represent 175 out of the 253 inmates, 70% that would be restricted from lawfully possessing a firearm legally once released from prison, based on current laws, or if states with less restrictive gun laws, enacted stricter laws to prevent these types of individuals from legally obtaining/possessing a firearm.

More research is needed in order to determine what factors contributed to the decrease in murders with the use of firearms, as well researching as any new laws states may have been enacted, what other administrative changes (e.g., background check enhancements) have taken place over the past few years to prevent unlawful firearms transfers from occurring,

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Invitation

Date: April 18, 2016

Dear Fellow Old Dominion University Students:

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am conducting a research project as part of my Master's Degree here at Old Dominion University. I am requesting your assistance in capturing Old Dominion University students' perspectives on the matter of gun violence, specifically, with regards to felons who unlawfully obtain, and use firearms to commit crimes; as well as your overall level of safety in, and around Old Dominion University campus Norfolk, and the surrounding community.

Your participation is voluntary. Your responses will be tabulated with all other respondents. No personal identifying information will be disclosed, so the risk of participating in the study is minimal. There are no direct benefits to you for participating. However, your responses might assist the university in addressing student concerns with regards to safety, in, and around campus.

I look forward to your participation. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at WEuef001@odu.edu.

Sincerely,

Bill Euefueno

Bill Euefueno
Master's student
Old Dominion University

APPENDIX B

SURVEY

Purpose: The purpose of the survey was to determine college student's opinions regarding crimes committed by convicted felons with the use of fire arms, as well as to determine if students would support more aggressive legislation regarding the purchasing of firearms, specifically targeting convicted felons, to further prevent them from obtaining weapons. The survey also asked students to indicate their overall level of safety on campus, and the surrounding community.

Directions: We seek your opinions related to firearms, felon possession of firearms, and campus safety. You are invited to participate in this survey. If you agree to participate, you may choose to not finish completing the survey. No identifying information is sought. You will not be penalized by not participating. There are no benefits from you participating.

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

2. What is your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

3. You have been the victim of a crime involving a firearm?

- Yes
- No

4. You know someone who has been the victim of a crime involving a firearm?

- Yes
- No

5. From what source(s) do you receive information about crimes committed with firearms?

Select all that apply.

- Televised news
- Internet News
- Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)
- Printed News
- Other _____

6. Do you know, or have a basic understanding of state and federal firearms laws?

- Yes
- No

7. Do you own a firearm?

- Yes
- No
- Would rather not say

8. Do you know the definition of “convicted felon?”

- Yes
- No

9. Are you aware convicted felons are not allowed, by state and federal law, to possess a firearm?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you believe convicted felons should not have access to weapons under any circumstances?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

11. Would you support stricter laws specifically targeting felons?

- Yes

- No
- Unsure

12. Do you believe street lighting on campus is adequate?

- Yes
- No
- If no, please explain_____
- N/A

13. Do you believe parking garage lighting is adequate?

- Yes
- No
- If no, please explain_____
- N/A

14. Do you believe campus police provide ample safety and security?

- Yes
- No
- If no, please explain _____
- N/A

15. Do you feel safe on campus?

- Yes
- No
- If no, please explain_____
- N/A

16. Do you feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, and visit them often?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

17. Are you satisfied with your overall personal safety on campus?

- Yes

- o No
If no, please explain_____
- o N/A

18. Other Comments:

<p>Comments:</p>

APPENDIX C

Comments from questions 12-17

Question 12: Do you believe street lighting on campus is adequate?

Some sections are unlit
Most of the lights don't work, or they are too dim
Parts of the campus are dark
We need more
Not bright enough to keep paths lit
Feel like they add more
Need more in certain areas
Not bright enough to keep paths lit
Not bright enough
More off campus
Not bright enough
Fu#&ing Takes forever [sic]
There are places that lack proper lighting
Certain areas don't have lights that work
More efficient lights, but slightly brighter output
It's too dark along the Monorail
They should be more and working
There are areas of campus that are well lit, and some are not lit at all
It's not a 100% sure solution
Some dark areas
There are still some dark areas on campus

Question 13: Do you believe parking garage lighting is adequate?

Dark
Unlit areas
The lights never work on the elevator.
Should be a little brighter
Need more
I feel there could be more lighting. Lighting is pretty dim.
As a commuter, the garages are pretty dark & intimidating at night
Most of the floors have extremely poor, dim lighting
Gaps, darker in most places
There should be more
Not as dim
Some lights are dimmer
It does not account for volume of people
It is dark in some areas
They need more lighting

Question 14: Do you believe campus police provide ample safety and security?

If no, please explain _____

Wrong place, wrong time

Not enough police

I've rarely seen them around campus at night time

Don't respond fast enough

Sometimes I feel like they don't go to the bad places on campus

I feel like they are directed @ worrying too much about student behavior such as alcohol and drugs.

They focus more on traffic violations

Police aren't present unless there's an event

Better Quicker safe rides

They're literally never around

They do what they can, but we need more security

They cannot be everywhere

More security should be provided around campus at night, I often feel scared walking home from class at night

Question 15: Do you feel safe on campus?

Mostly yes, but in evenings no

A lot of crime

Not much security around at night & dark paths

Sketchy neighborhoods around

There are still robbery occurring

Campus police is always worried about breaking up parties instead of other more serious problems

All of the crime

Yes during the day, no at night

Not at night

Question 16: Do you feel safe in areas adjacent to campus, and visit them often?

I'm not gonna be walking around at like 3 a.m. though

Can't say visit often

Visit often, not as safe

Question 17: Are you satisfied with your overall personal safety on campus?

No: I live on Killam Ave

Some off-campus areas, surrounding campus, can bring unsafe practices to the campus

Students are still getting hurt

It could be better

Bad area

I just feel like there are other things that could make the campus safer

The surrounding areas should be monitored to keep the campus more safe.
Norfolk is not safe (high crime rate).
No one is guaranteed

Question 18: Other comments.

On campus is fine, adjacent to campus is the real dangerous area.
Just wanted to point out that I'm glad the district is no longer tied in with ODU b/c of all the crimes.
More visible security officers would prompt me to do more activities at night. We live in section 8 area.
There should be more policemen on duty.
I love ODU! Go Monarchs!
I would like increased security.
I don't come to campus at night