

Concealed Carry Revocation Rates by Age

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Summary

Supporters of gun control also warn of the dangers of introducing guns into an atmosphere where more than half of students nationwide are reported to engage in risky behaviors such as binge drinking and drug use, which can impair judgment. Compounding the problem, they note, is that the part of the brain that controls judgment is not fully developed yet in young adults.

Annenberg Classroom citing documents from the Brady Campaign¹

College students who own firearms are more likely than their unarmed counterparts to binge drink, to drive after binge drinking, to be arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol, and to damage property after drinking alcohol.

-- Daniel Webster and Jon Vernick, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, 2013.²

It is a common refrain that we can't allow permitted concealed handguns on university property because we all know how irresponsible young people can be, getting drunk and having wild parties. So, how can we possibly trust college students to have a permitted concealed handgun?

While most acknowledge that permit holders as a group are extremely law-abiding, even they worry that college age permit holders are irresponsible and would use guns improperly. Yet, we don't need to guess about what might happen. There have been no reported problems with permit holders in the nine states that mandate that colleges allow permitted concealed handguns on campuses (Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Wisconsin).³

In addition, Michigan and Texas, which provide permit revocation data on the permit holder's year of age, show college age permit holders are as responsible or even more responsible than older permit holders.⁴

How law-abiding are permit holders?

Permit holders are extremely law-abiding. Consider the several states at the front of the current debate, Florida, Michigan, and Texas: each one provides easy web access to detailed records of permit holders. While permit holders in each and every state are very law-abiding,⁵ Florida is included here because it has issued more permits than any other state. Michigan and Texas are discussed below because they provide detailed data on active permit holders and revocations by age.

These three states account for over 2.5 million of the over 11.1 million active concealed handgun permits.

During almost three decades, from October 1, 1987 to May 31, 2014, Florida issued permits to almost 2.66 million people. These permits have been revoked for firearms-related violations at an annual rate of only 0.0003 percent. For all revocations, the annual rate in Florida is 0.012 percent.

The numbers are similarly low in Texas. In 2012 (the latest year that crime data are available), there were 584,850 active license holders. Out of these, 120 were convicted of either a misdemeanor or a felony, a rate of 0.021 percent. Only a few of these crimes involved a gun.

Revocations and suspensions occur when people are charged with a crime, but only about 5 percent or less of these cases result in conviction and thus people are eligible for having their licenses reinstated.⁶ While 120 were convicted of a crime in 2012, 905 people had their permits revoke, for a total rate of 0.15%.⁷ Over the last five years that revocation data is available (2009 to 2013), the rate is slightly lower, 0.13%.

For Michigan, overall revocation rate for the five years from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2014 is slightly higher but still low, at 0.26%.

To get an idea how law-abiding permit holders are, make a comparison to those for police. National data on firearms violations by police officers is available during the three years from January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2007.⁸ The annual rate of such violations by police was at least 0.007 percent. That is about twice the 0.003 percent rate for permit holders in Florida.

Police data also provide a direct comparison for Florida and Texas. The rate of all crimes committed by police is 0.124 percent – a number about 6 times higher than the rate for in Texas and about 10 times higher than for Florida.

Are younger permit holders less responsible?

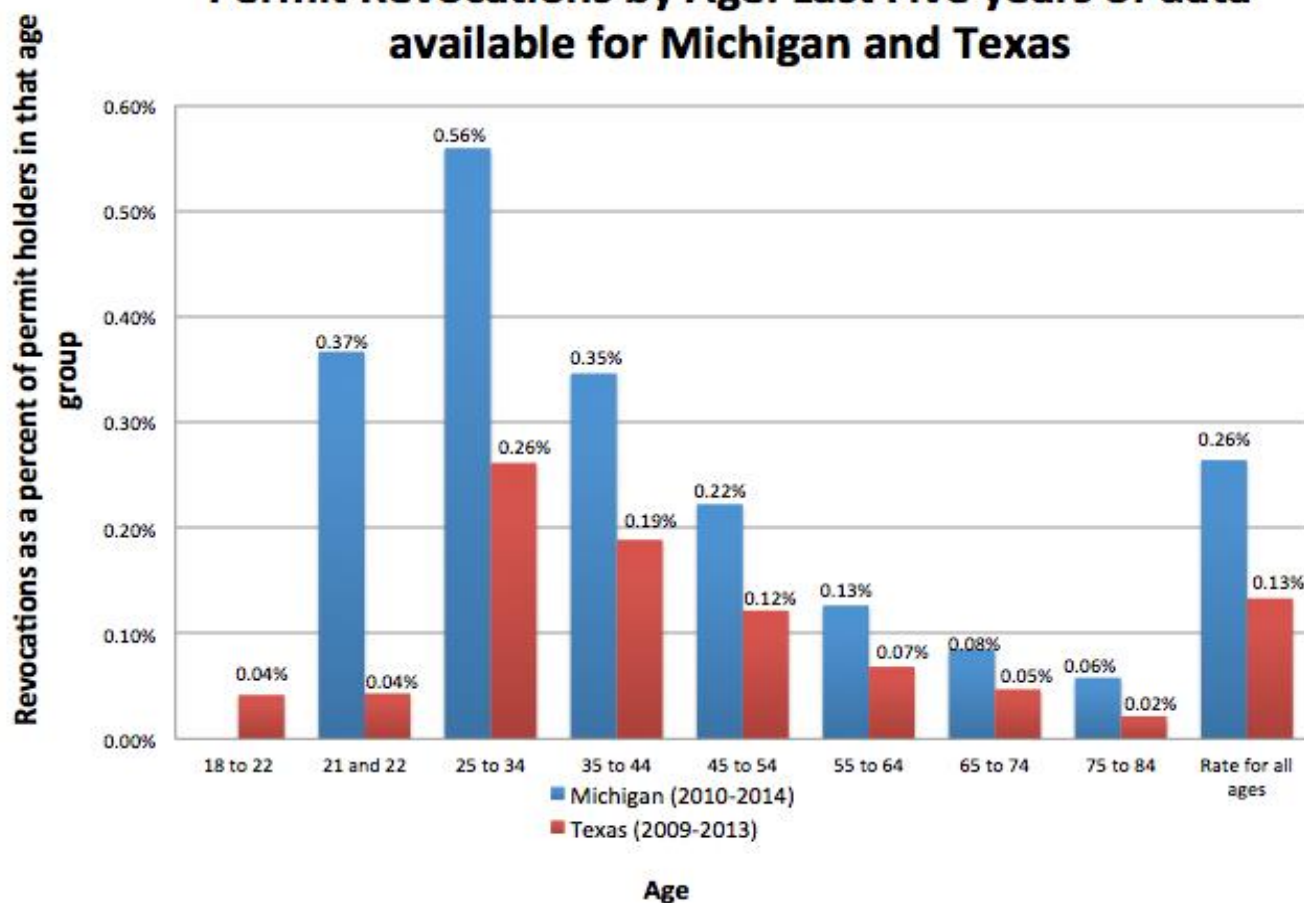
Michigan and Texas normally only allow people to carry permitted concealed handguns once they turn 21. However, in Texas younger people can get special approval if they are facing extenuating circumstances, such as being stalked. In any give year, there are about 90 to 185 such permits that granted to 18 to 20 year olds.

None of the 18 to 20 year olds in Texas who were granted such a permit have ever had it revoked. But admittedly, there are only few of them – about 3 percent of the permits granted to 21 and 22 year olds – so we cannot draw far-reaching conclusions.

We can still easily compare 21 to 22 year olds to older permit holders. The detailed data for Michigan and Texas is shown in Figure 1. For Michigan, college age permit holders who are 21 and 22 have a lower revocation rate than 25 to 34 year olds and a very similar rate to those 35 to 44 year olds. It's really only the middle aged and elderly people who have really low rates.

The revocation rate for young Texans is even lower and compares very well to even older age groups.

Permit Revocations by Age: Last Five years of data available for Michigan and Texas



Conclusion

Much of the gun control debate focuses on things that might possibly go wrong. Yes, some young people behave irresponsibly. But those who are willing to go through the permitting process are different from those who don't. They are responsible. The data for both Michigan and Texas show that college age students from 18 to 22 are at least as law-abiding as permit holders from ages 25 to 44. There is little reason to worry about young adults carry concealed handguns.

End Notes

* Special thanks to Alexander Gallo, Chengyu Huang, and Rujun Wang for their able research assistance.

¹ <http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/speakout/should-students-and-faculty-be-allowed-to-carry-guns-on-college-campuses>

² http://jhupress.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/1421411113_updf.pdf

³ Crime Prevention Research Center, "Idaho becomes 9th state to mandate that people with permitted concealed handguns can have guns on college campuses," Crime Prevention Research Center, March 23, 2014 (<http://crimepreventionresearchcenter.org/2014/03/idaho-become-8th-state-to-mandate-that-people-with-permitted-concealed-handguns-can-have-guns-on-college-campuses/>).

⁴ "College age" and "college students" is not exactly the same. For example, individuals who are disciplined enough to study to get into college might get into less trouble than other people of the same age.

⁵ For a detailed analysis of 25 states see John R Lott Jr, "More Guns, Less Crime," University of Chicago Press, 2010, 3rd edition, pp. 241-252.

⁶ Suspensions and revocations can occur for other reasons than being charged with a crime. The other reasons include:

- a restraining or protective order being filed against the individual.
- failing to change address or name on concealed carry license after they have been changed.
- failure to send in old license after it has been replaced do to address change.
- improperly originally granting license (new information that the person wasn't eligible, finding that information for license was falsified).

⁷ For 2012, data on the conviction rate for permit holders are available here

(<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/RSD/CHL/Reports/ConvictionRatesReport2012.pdf>). Data on suspensions and revocations are available here

(http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/RSD/CHL/Reports/2012Calendar/byRace_Sex/4LicensesRevoked.pdf and http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/RSD/CHL/Reports/2012Calendar/byRace_Sex/3LicensesSuspended.pdf).

⁸ Philip Stinson, John Liederbach and Tina Freiburger, "Exit Strategy: An Exploration of Late-Stage Police Crime," Police Quarterly December 2010 13: 413-435. For a discussion of the numbers see <http://johnrlott.blogspot.com/2012/06/study-on-crime-by-police.html>.