

Donohue explains his results this way (pp. 312–13, emphasis added):

A supporter of the Lott thesis might note that the dummies for the periods more than three years after passage tend to become negative and statistically significant, but in my opinion the coefficient estimates for the dummies lagged beyond three years tend to weaken Lott's case rather than buttress it. . . . The ostensibly growing effect on crime—see the increasingly larger negative numbers after passage in table 8–5—are taken by Lott as evidence that shall-issue laws become more beneficial over time, but something very different is at work. The observed pattern again shows that numerous states experiencing increases in crime after passage drop out of the analysis be-

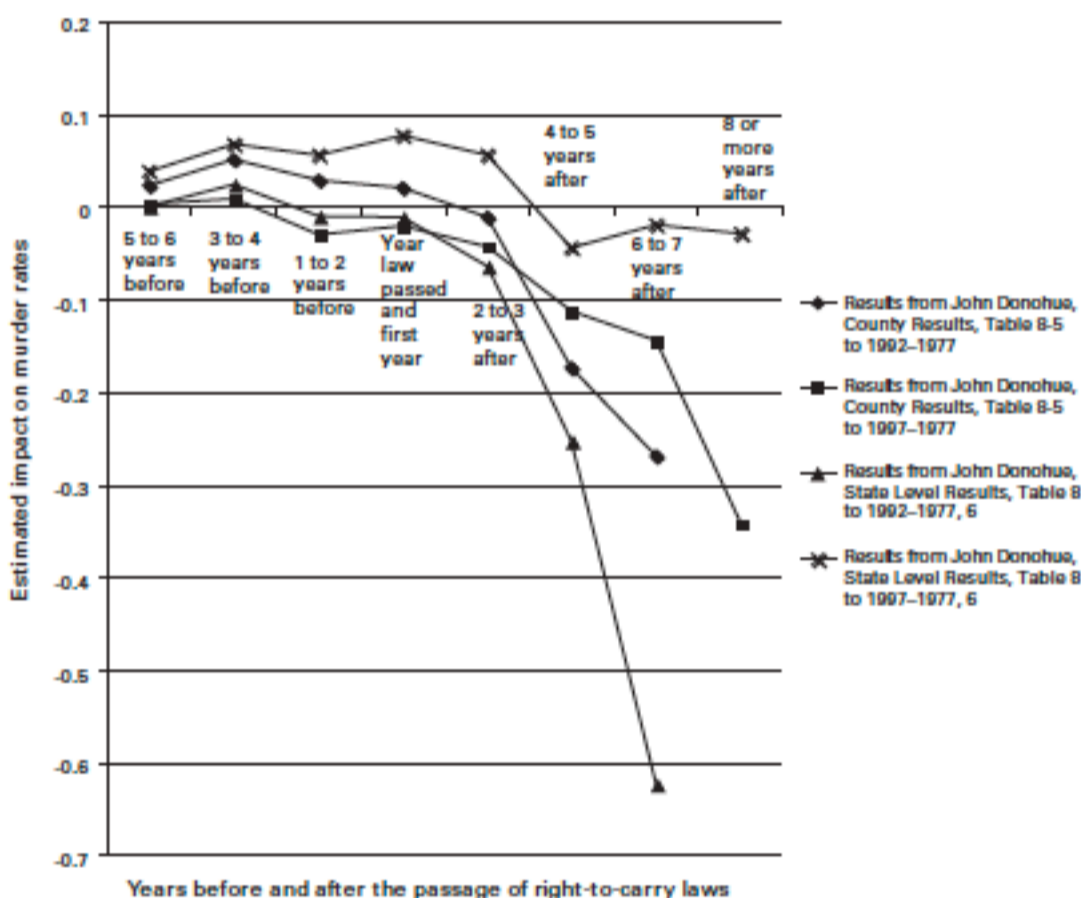


Figure 10.5. Donohue's (2003) estimated impact of right-to-carry laws on murder. From John Donohue, "The Impact of Concealed-Carry Laws," in *Evaluating Gun Policy*, ed. Jens Ludwig (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 287–323.

cause these states' laws were adopted too close to 1997 to be included in the estimate for beyond three years. (Indeed, none of the fourteen shall-issue laws that were adopted after the period for inclusion in Lott's original work affect the estimates of these "after three years" dummies).

As mentioned, Donohue makes a significant mistake here when interpreting his own results. True, the coefficients were positive for some of these estimates in the years immediately after passage of right-to-carry laws. As I explained, however, this simply means that the states that passed right-to-carry laws tended to be states with high crime rates. The crucial point here is that the number of crimes still fell—that immediately after the law was passed, crime rates in right-to-carry states were still higher than in other states but by a smaller amount. As the crime rates in right-to-carry states continued to fall, they eventually fell below the crime rates in non-right-to-carry states, and that is when the coefficients become negative. Thus, Donohue's own results clearly show that right-to-carry laws reduce crime.