

# The Effect of Education on Attitudes Toward Gun Control

## Research Questions

- Does one's level of education affect one's attitude toward gun control?
- Does the association vary by age?

## Significance

- Since the school shooting at Parkland High School, gun control has been a major focus in our country. Millions have been pushing for Congress to take action on gun control. Studies like this one can give us a better idea of who is pushing for gun control (Reuters, 2018).

## Background

- Gun owners and crime victims may be less likely to support gun control (Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998).
- Republicans are less likely than Democrats to support gun control (Pearson-Merkowitz & Dyck, 2017).
- Americans with higher education are more likely to identify as Democrats and less likely to be crime victims (Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998).
- Higher education is related to support for gun control (Kleck, 1996).
- No differences by age (Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998).

## Hypothesis

- Higher levels of education will increase the likelihood of a positive attitude toward gun control. This result will not vary based on age.

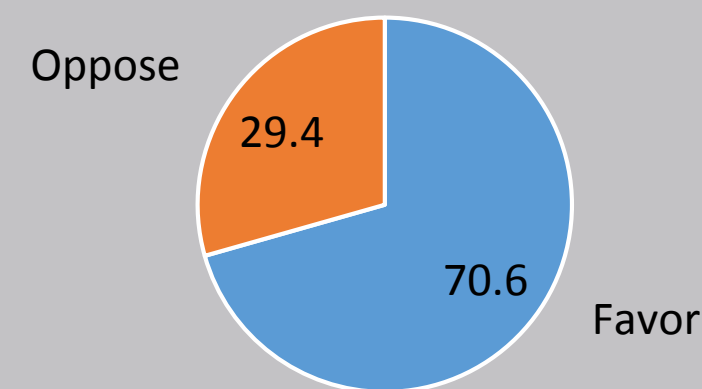
## Data and Sample

- General Social Survey 2016 (N=2,867)
- American adults 18 and older living in non-institutionalized households.

## Dependent Measure

*Attitude Toward Gun Control*

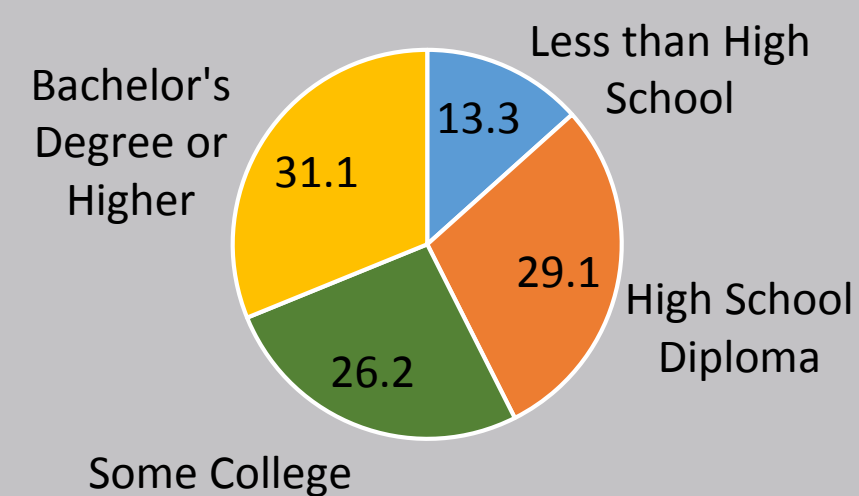
- "Would you favor or oppose a law which would require a person to obtain a police permit before he or she could buy a gun?"



## Independent Measure

*Education Level*

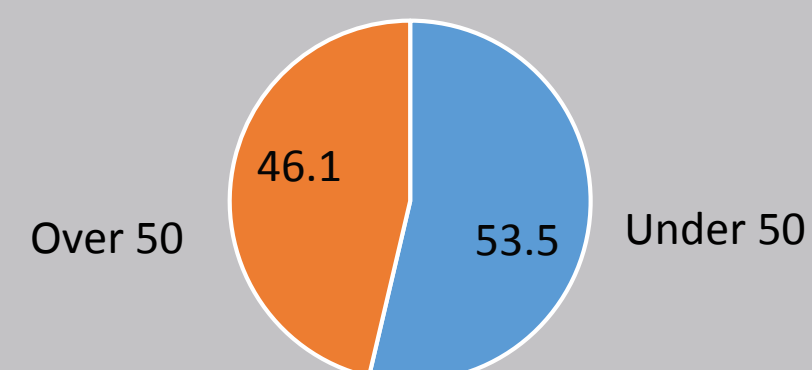
- What is the highest grade in school that you finished and got credit for?



## Control Measure

*Age*

- How old are you?



## Analysis

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

## Results

Figure 1.

% Favor Gun Control by Education Level

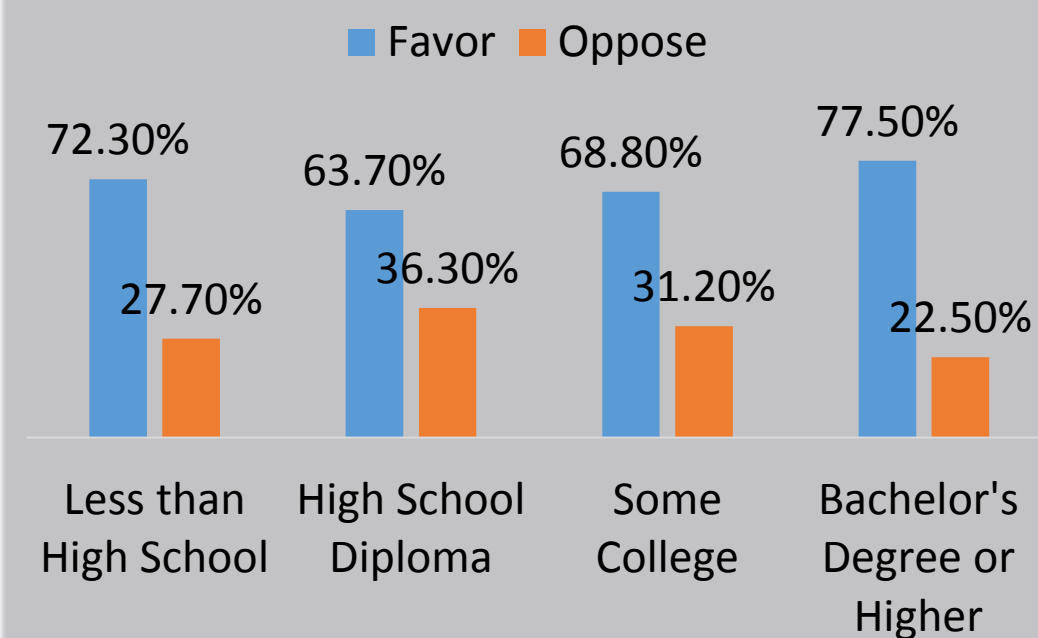
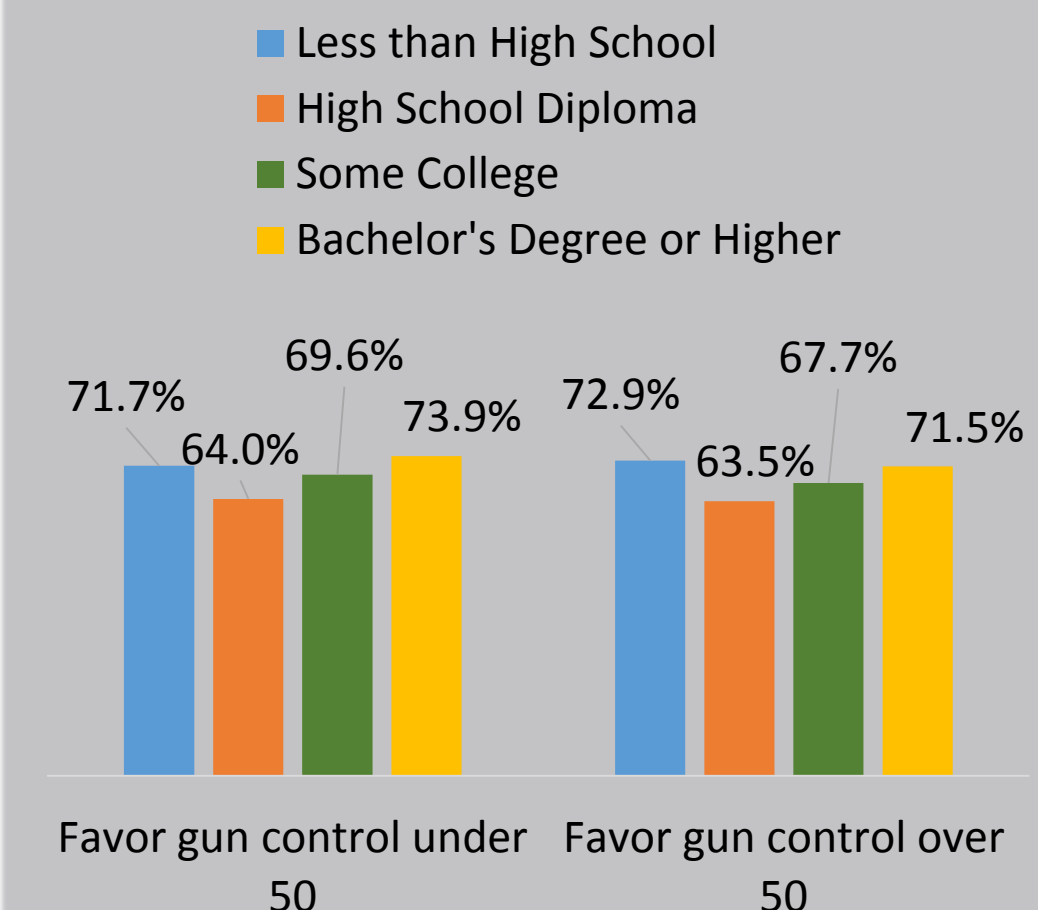


Figure 2.

% Favor Gun Control by Education Level



Note: Chi-square test is significant for those under 50 at  $p < .05$ .

## Summary of Findings

- For those under 50, education level does not have a significant effect on attitudes toward gun control.
- For those over 50, a higher education level is significantly related to attitudes toward gun control: the higher the education level, the more likely they are to favor gun control.

## Future Research

- Break up age groups even more: 18-30, 31-50, and over fifty. This could show more of a cohort effect.
- Control for base knowledge on gun control: thoroughly explain gun control in a neutral way and then have a survey follow. This could control for lack of a general knowledge on the topic. Some people may report attitudes toward gun control without understanding what it actually means.

## References

- Kleck, Gary. 1996. "Crime, Culture Conflict and the Sources of Support for Gun Control. A Multilevel Application of the General Social Surveys." *American Behavioral Scientist* 39(4): 387-404.
- Pearson-Merkowitz, S. & Dyck, J. J. (2017). Crime and Partisanship: How Party ID Muddles Reality, Perception, and Policy Attitudes on Crime and Guns. *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(2), 443-454.
- Szekely, P. (2018, March 26). U.S. gun control movement pushing Congress to act: Lawmakers.
- Wolpert, R. M. & Gimpel, J. G. (1998). Self-Interest, Symbolic Politics, and Public Attitudes Toward Gun Control. *Political Behavior*, 20(3), 241-262.