

Writing Assignment 2

This assignment requires you to

- 1) Conduct analysis of data using a scatterplot and regression.
- 2) Incorporate and distinguish between normative, descriptive, and causal claims.
- 3) Justify the framing of your argument and interpret the policy-relevance of your analysis.

Your task is to use the guns.rds dataset drawn from The Brady Campaign to answer the following question:

What, if any, are the policy implications of the available data on the outcomes of firearm-related deaths and homicide deaths, and the explanatory variables related to gun control in the United States?

Framing Your Analysis

You can choose to frame your analysis in a number of ways, provided it incorporates the above elements. You should make an argument for why you do so. Here are some questions you might consider:

- Which outcome variable (firearm related deaths or homicide deaths) is the most policy-relevant, and why?
- What is a little-noted fact, or set of facts, that is important for policymakers or the public to know?
- What causal models related to policies and outcomes are plausible? What model do you think is the most (or least) compelling?
- How should policy change if the causal claim you analyze is true, if at all? What if it is false?

Structuring Your Paper

Your essay should contain the following four (4) sections:

Section 1: Introduction

Give an overview of your paper and explain why others should care about your ideas. Make sure to include a clear thesis statement that lays out your argument.

Section 2: Framing and Description

How are you going to approach the analysis? What are the important indicators? In this section, you should do the following:

- Identify one outcome and explanatory variable of interest, and explain why you think these are the most policy-relevant. (Justify why firearm-related deaths or homicide deaths matters more. Justify why total_points or a specific gun control policy is the relevant explanatory variable.)
- Describe the averages and standard deviations of these variables.
- Present a scatterplot.
- Propose a relevant causal question to answer.

Section 3: Regression Analysis

In this section, you will use regression to evaluate the evidence for a causal claim identified in the section above. You need to do the following:

- Present a regression table that reports the slope, intercept, and rms-error.
- Interpret the coefficients. (For instance: a 1-point increase in total_points predicts a decrease in the firearm_death_rate by 0.76).
- What evidence, if any, does the regression provide for the causal claim?
- Discuss the policy implications.

Section 4: Conclusion

Give your readers an overview of the paper and leave them with a takeaway—your key point. Leave the readers with a stark conclusion about how the data and your analysis should inform policymakers and the public about gun policy in the U.S.

Notes

- You must upload the initial submission (i.e., a polished draft, not a rough draft) through eCampus before class on Wednesday, March 18.
- I do not tolerate plagiarism. You can find the Honor System Rules [here](#). You should note that even seemingly minor violations can become a permanent addition to your transcript.
- The paper must contain at least **1,000 words**. I welcome additional effort, but I encourage you to focus on fitting more content into 1,000 words rather than submitting a 2,000 word paper.
- You should make the paper look and sound professional, but I encourage you to be creative and playful with your prose. Remember, others will read your writing. Make it enjoyable.
- You should write the paper so that someone who has not had this class could read it. Perhaps imagine writing to your parents. Suppose this person is interested in politics—they'll be excited to read your ideas—but not knowledgeable about statistics (e.g., they don't know what a standard deviation is).

Formatting

- 12 point, Times New Roman Font, for the main body text.
- Double-space the main body of the text.
- Use section and subsection headings, with larger or different font as you see fit.
- 1 inch margins.
- Include your name, the title of your paper, and the word count on the first page of your paper. (Note, the minimum is 1,000 words.)
- Make sure all graphs and plots are clearly labeled and identified in the text. Change axis labels to look professional.
- Include page numbers on the top right-hand corner of the page.
- Beyond the points above, I simply want your paper to look professional and give you room to match the format to your aesthetic preferences. See the "Under Review" papers on the research section of my website to see how I typically format my papers.

References

- Make sure to properly cite any sources you incorporate, and include a reference list.
- For matters of style, refer to the APSA style manual [here](#).

Appendix

In this document:

- Carlisle's Diagram of how to conceptualize Writing Assignment 2.
- Below are some examples of requested figures and tables for Writing Assignment 2.
- Citation examples.
 - Includes Brady Campaign data citation.
- Link to Codebook

Figure 1. Carlisle's Diagram

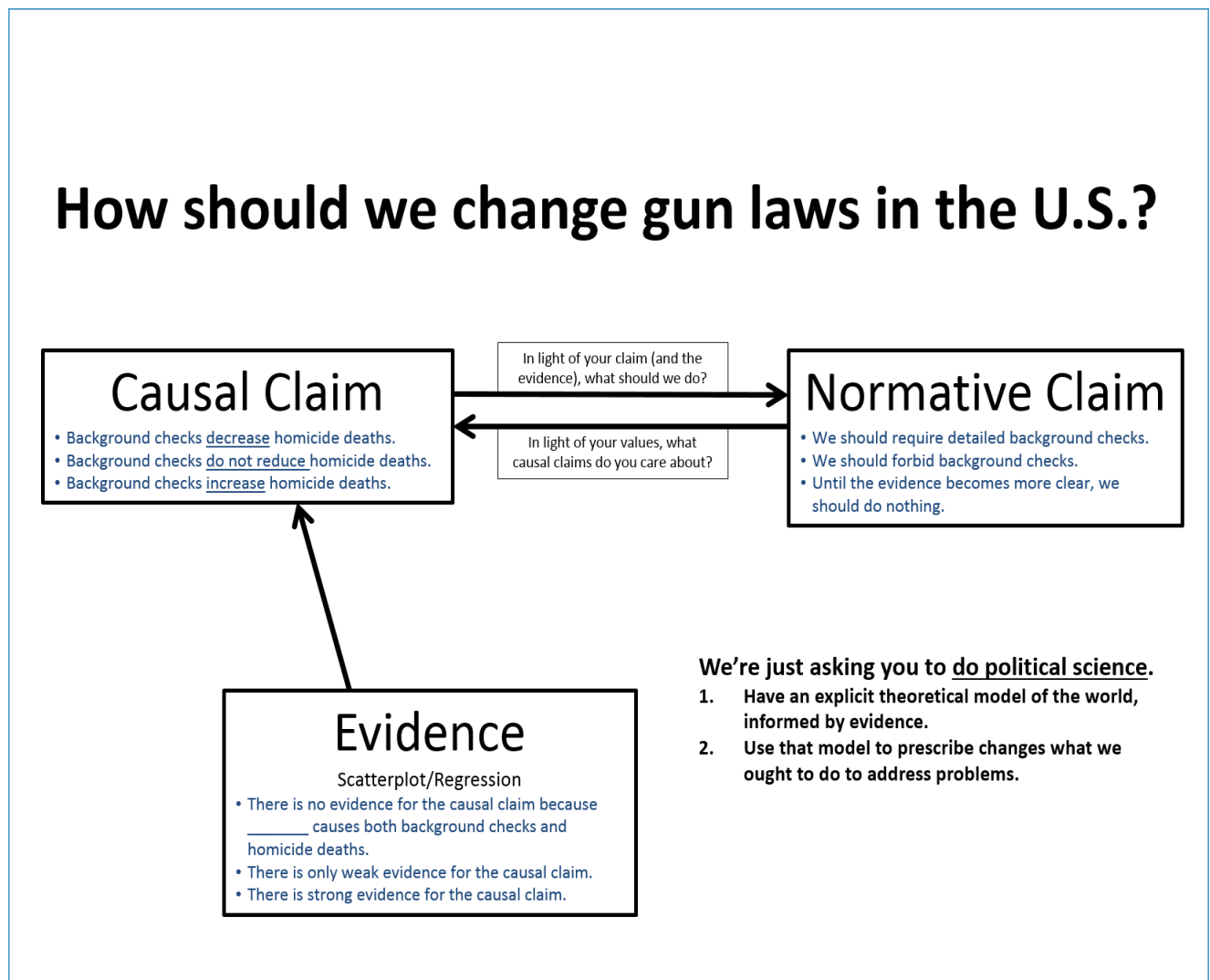


Figure 2. Scatterplot of Second-Quarter GDP Growth and Incumbent Vote Share, 1952-1996

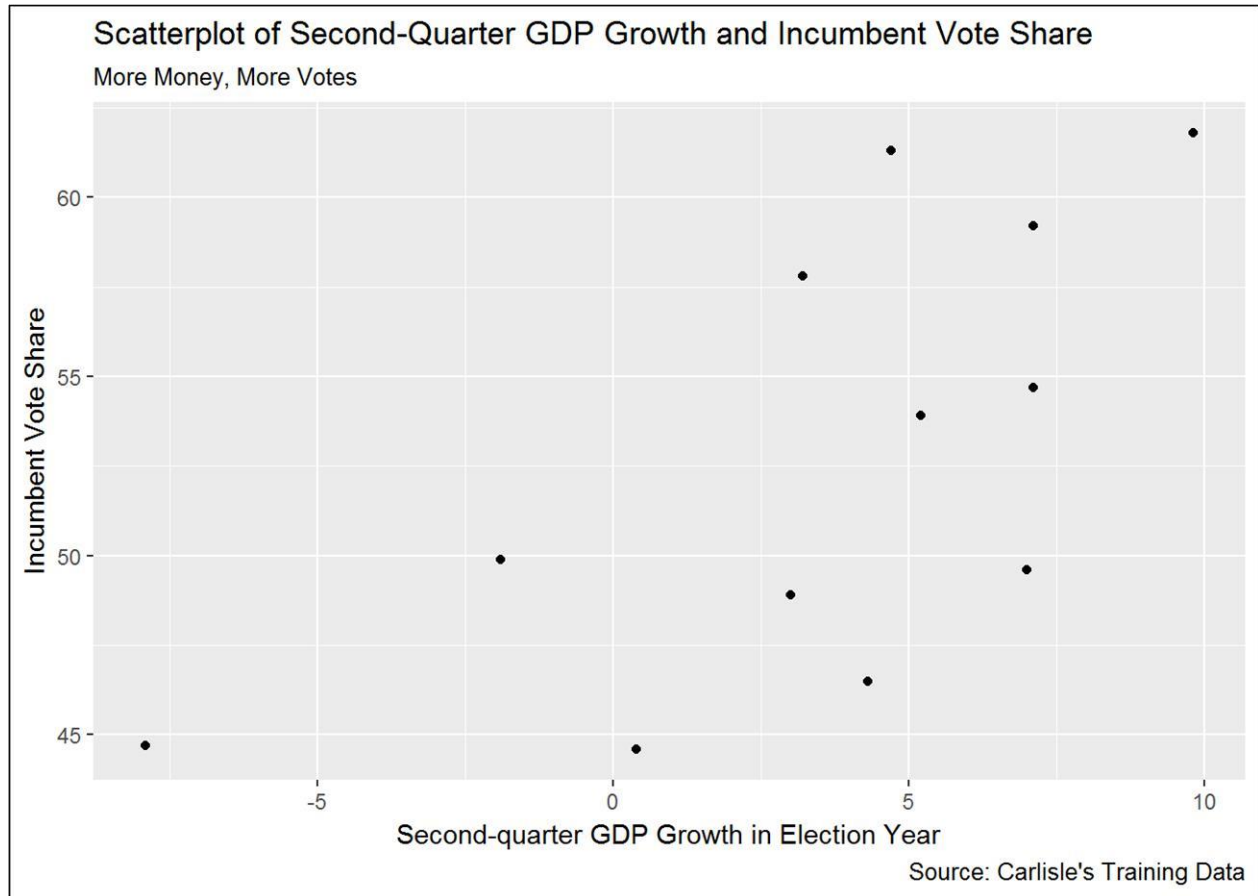


Figure 3. Regression of Incumbent Vote on Second-Quarter GDP Growth

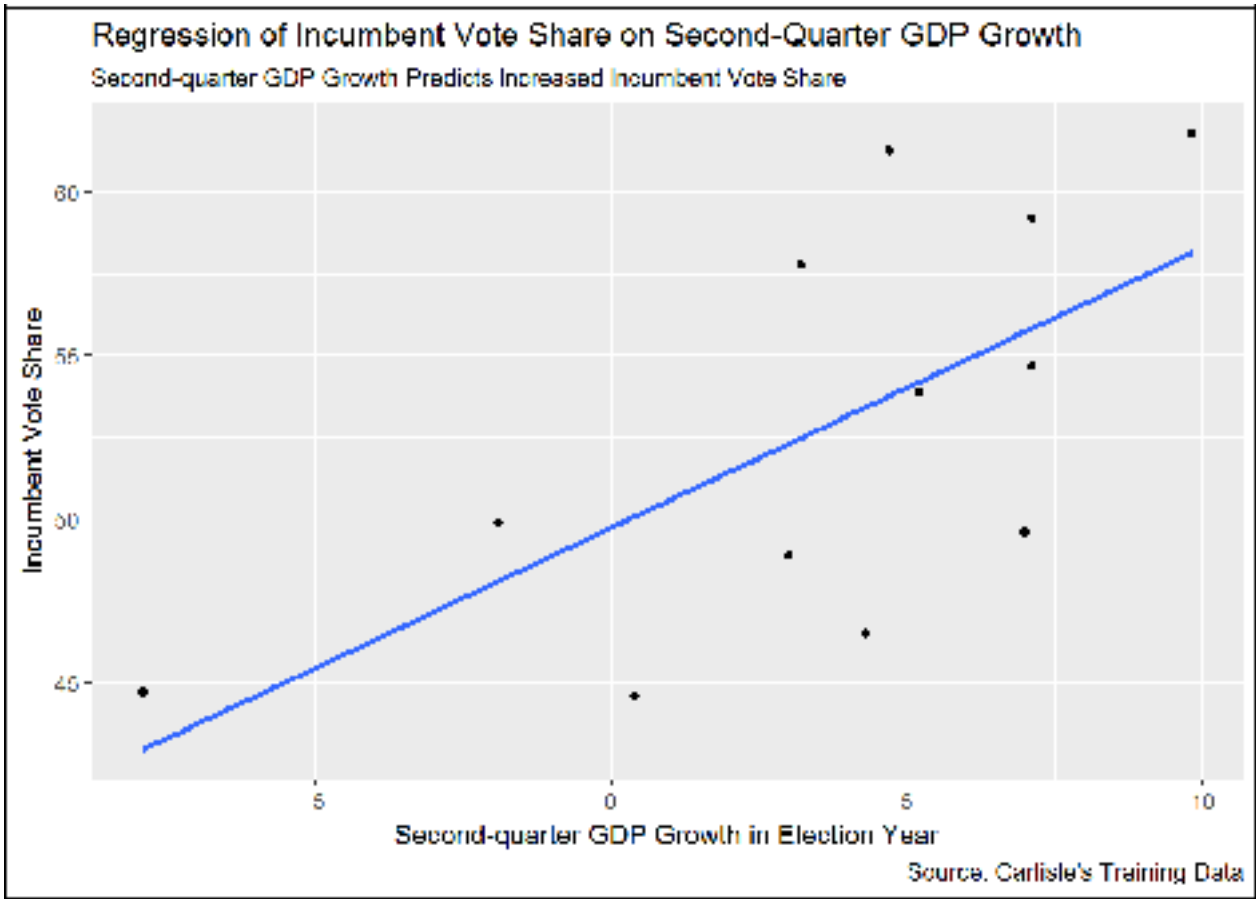


Table 1. Average and Standard Deviation of Explanatory and Outcome Variable

	Average	Standard Deviation
Incumbent Vote Share (%)	52.74	6.26
2 nd Quarter GDP Growth (%)	3.5	4.79

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Incumbent Vote on Second-Quarter GDP Growth

	Incumbent Vote Share
2 nd Quarter GDP Growth	0.86
Intercept	49.74
R.M.S. Error	4.52

Citation Examples

For more details, see pp. 17-21 and pp. 24-32 in the APSA Style Guide.

- Author mentioned and quoted in text:
 - Rainey (2014, 23) says that “background checks will reduce gun deaths dramatically.”
- Author mentioned and paraphrased in text:
 - Rainey (2014) says that background checks will reduce gun deaths dramatically.
- Author not mentioned (Follow the pattern above if quoting directly).
 - Scholars have concluded that background checks will reduce gun deaths dramatically (Rainey 2014).

Reference and Citation for Brady Campaign Data

Reference:

Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. 2013. “2013 State Scorecard: Why Gun Laws Matter.” <https://www.bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/SCGLM-Final10-spreads-points.pdf>. (Date Accessed).

Note: The codebook for the Data is available at the URL in the reference.

In-text citation:

(Brady Campaign 2013).