

More Guns Equal More Murders in U.S. States: Study
By REUTERS
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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - American states where more people own guns have higher murder rates, including murders of children, researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health reported on Thursday. The study, certain to provoke arguments in a country where gun ownership is an important political issue, found that about one in three U.S. households reported firearm ownership.

"Our findings suggest that in the United States, household firearms may be an important source of guns used to kill children, women and men, both on the street and in their homes," said Matthew Miller, assistant professor of health policy and injury prevention, who led the study.

His team used data from a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey of 200,000 people in all 50 states.

After dividing the states into four groups based on how many households had guns, the researchers found the states in the highest quartile of firearm ownership had overall homicide rates 60 percent higher than states in the lowest quartile.

In states with the most guns, firearm homicide rates were 114 percent higher, the researchers reported in the February issue of Social Science and Medicine.

More than 200 million guns are privately owned in the United States, according to the Justice Department.

In September, the FBI released 2005 figures showing violent crime had risen 2.3 percent nationally -- the first increase in four years.