

Press contacts: William Morgan, wrmorgan@uchicago.edu, (708) 256-5743 (cell); Eric Young, young-eric@norc.org, (301) 634-9536 or (703) 217-6814 (cell); Nicole Meir, nmeir@ap.org

UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll: About 1 in 5 Americans say gun violence has touched their lives and even more fear being a victim

Many Americans place a high importance on both preventing gun violence and protecting gun rights

CHICAGO, August 23, 2022 – Twenty-one percent of Americans say either themselves, a family member, or a close friend has had an experience with gun violence in the past five years, and twice as many believe it is likely they will be a victim of gun violence in the next five years, according to a new study from the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in experiences with gun violence. Black Americans and Hispanic Americans are more than twice as likely as white Americans to say either themselves or someone they know has experienced gun violence (54% and 27% vs. 13%).

Looking ahead to the next five years, about 4 in 10 Americans think it is at least somewhat likely that they will personally be a victim of gun violence, including nearly 1 in 10 who believe it is extremely or very likely.

“The poll highlights that gun violence has touched the lives of many Americans, especially Black and Hispanic Americans, and there is significant public concern about this,” said Jens Ludwig, a professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. “Despite the polarizing climate surrounding these issues, the poll also reveals strong public support for policies to prevent gun violence, which may help to foster increased consensus among policymakers to further act.”

Three-fourths of Americans view gun violence as a major problem, and 8 in 10 say gun violence is on the rise in the United States. Fewer believe it is increasing in their state (66%) or local community (39%). Those living in urban areas (51%) are more likely to believe that gun violence is on the rise in their communities than those living in suburbs (39%) and rural communities (27%).

Many Americans want to both prevent gun violence and protect gun rights. Fifty-two percent say it is both very important to prevent mass shootings and very important to ensure people are able to own guns for personal protection.

There is broad public support for a variety of gun control policies, and 71% of Americans say gun laws should be stricter. Majorities favor both policies to restrict who can buy guns and policies banning certain guns, but the most popular regulations are those that limit who can purchase guns. For example, 85% support a federal law preventing mentally ill people from purchasing guns, compared to 59% who support a nationwide ban on semi-automatic weapons.

“The American public is more supportive of policies limiting who can purchase guns than policies banning the sale of certain types of guns,” said David Sterrett, senior research scientist with The AP-NORC Center. “The findings also highlight that about half of Americans have intersecting priorities with gun policies, and they don’t see a direct conflict between protecting gun ownership and implementing policies to prevent gun violence.”

About the Study

This study was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study. Interviews for this survey were conducted between July 28 and August 1, 2022, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,373 completed the survey. Interviews were conducted in English. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect.

A full description of the study methodology for the survey can be found at the end of the report on www.apnorc.org.

The proper description of the survey’s authorship is as follows: This study was conducted jointly by the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

About the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy

One of the largest graduate professional schools at the University of Chicago, Harris Public Policy has been driven by the belief that evidence-based research, not ideology or intuition, is the best guide for public policy. For more than three decades, our exceptional community of scholars, students, and alumni have applied this exacting perspective to the world’s most

pressing problems using the latest tools of social science. Through our undergraduate and graduate programs, we empower a new generation of data-driven leaders to create a positive social impact throughout our global society.

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About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

www.apnorc.org

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more.

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Contacts: For more information, contact either William Morgan for Harris at wrmorgan@uchicago.edu, (708) 256-5743 (cell); or Eric Young for NORC at young-eric@norc.org, (301) 634-9536 or (703) 217-6814 (cell); or Nicole Meir for AP at nmeir@ap.org.