

# AMERICANS' EXPERIENCES, CONCERNS, AND VIEWS RELATED TO GUN VIOLENCE

About a fifth 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 even more believe it is likely they will be a victim of gun violence in the next five years, according to a new UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll. There are significant racial and ethnic disparities, with Black Americans four times as likely and Hispanic Americans twice as likely to report recent experience with gun violence when compared with white Americans.



© 2022 AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty

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, although fewer believe it is increasing in their community.

Many Americans hold intersecting priorities, as they want to both prevent gun violence and protect gun rights. In particular, 52% 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 policies to restrict who can purchase guns and what kinds of guns can be purchased, 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.

## Three Things You Should Know

About the UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll Among American Adults:

- 1) 21% say either themselves, a family member, or a close friend has been threatened with a gun or was the victim of a shooting in the past five years.
- 2) 80% believe that gun violence is on the rise across the country, but fewer say gun violence is on the rise in their state (66%) or community (39%).
- 3) 52% say it is both very important to prevent mass shootings and very important to ensure people can own guns for personal protection.

Americans' attitudes toward gun policies and perceptions of gun violence are related to factors beyond just political partisanship such as race, ethnicity, age, and where people live.

About 4 in 10 Americans believe that it is at least somewhat likely that they will become a victim of gun violence within the next five years, and young adults are most likely to report this concern.

When it comes to experiences with gun violence, there are significant racial and ethnic differences. Fifty-four percent of Black Americans report themselves, a family member, or a close friend has had an experience with gun violence in the last five years, compared to 27% of Hispanic Americans and 13% of white Americans. Likewise, 59% of Black adults, 45% of Hispanic adults, and 34% of white adults say that gun violence is on the rise in their communities.

Those living in urban areas (51%) are also more likely to believe that gun violence is on the rise in their communities than those living in suburbs (39%) and rural communities (27%).

Americans who believe gun violence is increasing in their community are more likely to support a variety of gun control policies, even controlling for political partisanship.

The nationwide poll was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from July 28 to August 1, 2022, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,373 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.8 percentage points.

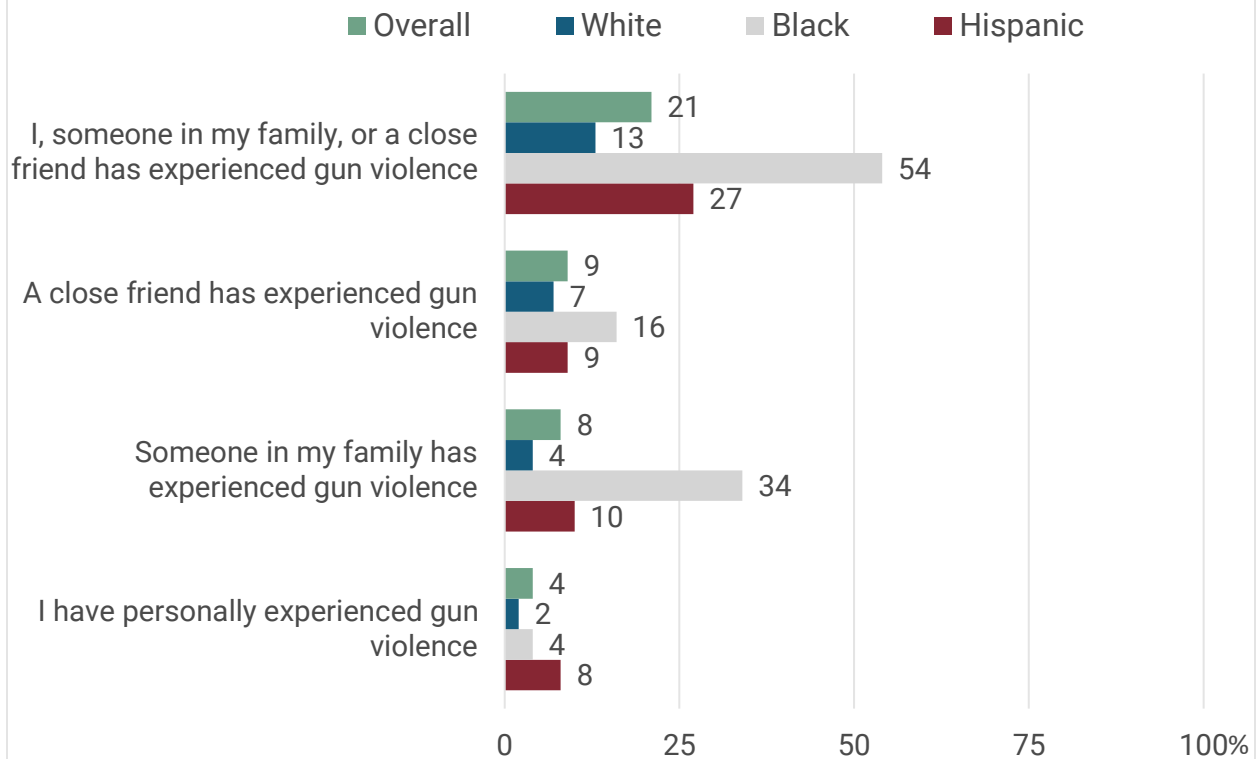
## **GUN VIOLENCE HAS TOUCHED THE LIVES OF ABOUT 1 IN 5 AMERICANS, WITH BLACK AND HISPANIC ADULTS ESPECIALLY LIKELY TO REPORT EXPERIENCING GUN VIOLENCE.**

Twenty-one percent of Americans report experiencing gun violence personally or through a close friend or loved one's experience within the past five years, including being threatened with a gun or being the victim of a shooting. Black 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%).

Four percent of Americans report they have personally experienced gun violence, and more say a family member or close friend has had such an experience. Thirty-four percent of Black Americans say that a family member has experienced gun violence, compared to 10% of Hispanic adults and 4% of white adults.

## About one-fifth of Americans report experiencing gun violence

Percent of adults



**Question:** Have you, someone in your family, or a close friend experienced gun violence in the last five years? For example, by being threatened with a gun or being the victim of a shooting. Select all that apply:

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 28-August 1, 2022, with 1,373 adults age 18 and older.



APNORC.org

Younger Americans are more likely than older Americans to report having some experience with gun violence. One-third of adults between 18 and 34 say themselves, a family member, or a close friend has experienced gun violence in the last five years, compared to about 12% of adults 65 and older.

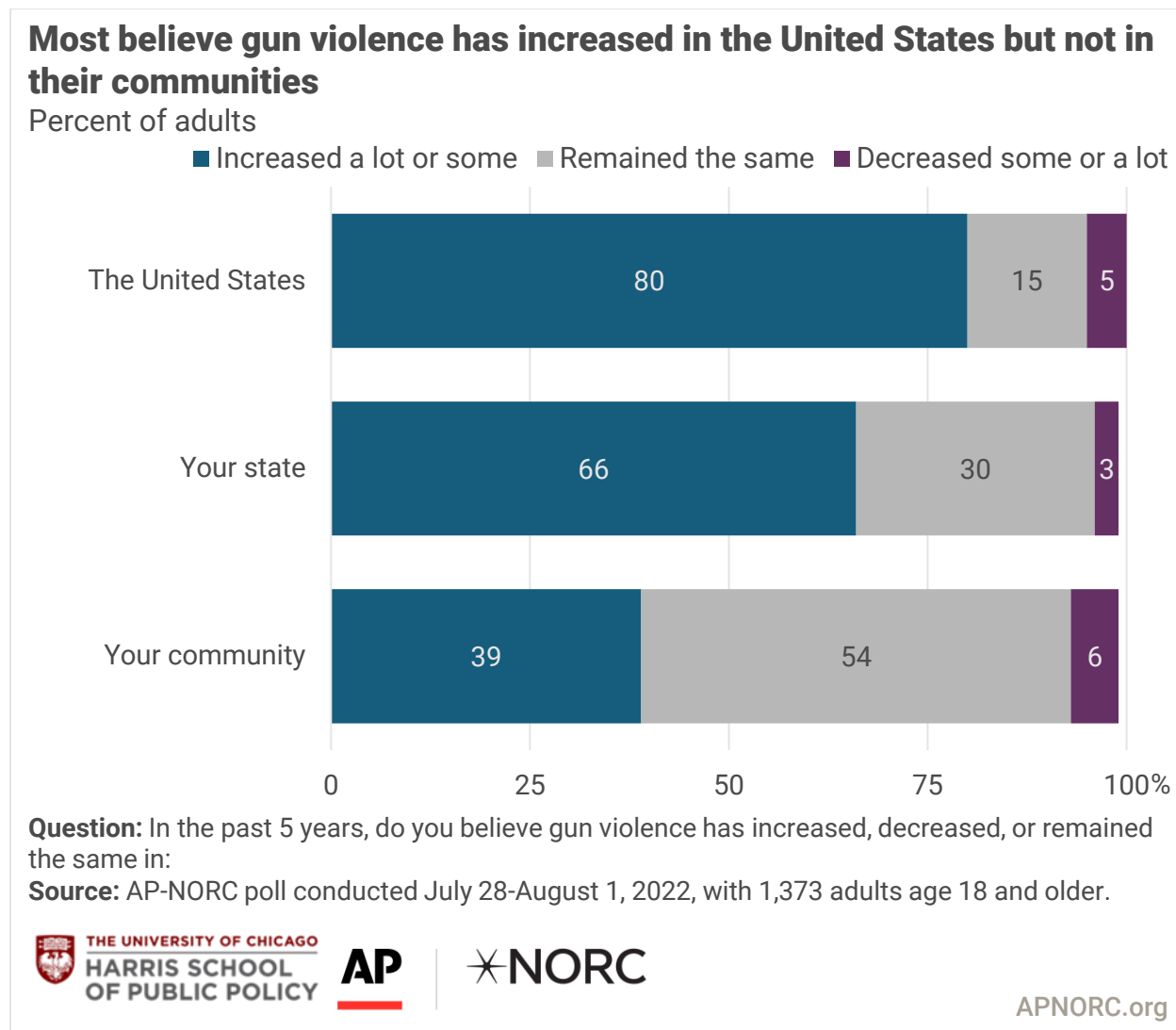
Looking ahead to the next five years, about 4 in 10 Americans think it is at least somewhat likely that they will personally be a victim of gun violence, including nearly 1 in 10 who believe it is extremely or very likely.

Younger Americans express greater concern about the possibility of gun violence. Fourteen percent of adults under the age of 34 say it is likely they will be the victim of gun violence, compared with 6% of Americans 50-64 years old and 6% of those age 65 and older.

## MOST AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT GUN VIOLENCE IS A MAJOR PROBLEM AND ON THE RISE ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT FEWER BELIEVE THAT GUN VIOLENCE HAS INCREASED CLOSER TO HOME.

Three-fourths of Americans report gun violence is a major problem in the United States. In comparison, fewer say illegal immigration (47%) or the economy and jobs (68%) are major problems, but more view inflation (87%) as a major problem.

Eighty percent of adults believe that gun violence has increased nationwide in the last five years, but the public is less likely to believe that it has increased in their state (66%) or local community (39%).



There are significant differences in perceptions about increases in gun violence related to where people live, race/ethnicity, gender, age, and political partisanship.

Those living in urban communities are more likely to believe that gun violence is on the rise in their communities (51%) than those living in suburbs (39%) and rural communities (27%).

Seventy-nine percent of Black adults say that gun violence is on the rise in their state, compared to 64% of white and Hispanic Americans. Black and Hispanic adults are more likely to believe that gun violence is increasing in their communities than white adults (59%, 45%, and 34%, respectively).

Women are more likely than men to believe gun violence has increased in the United States (83% vs. 77%) and in their state (70% vs. 61%).

Although younger Americans are more likely to report being a victim of gun violence, older Americans are more likely to say that gun violence is on the rise. Ninety-one percent of adults 65 and older think that gun violence has increased nationwide, compared to 75% of adults ages 18-34. Those 65 and older are also more likely to say that gun violence has increased in their state, compared to those ages 18-34 (79% vs. 62%).

Democrats are most likely to believe that gun violence is on the rise, but majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans say that gun violence is on the rise nationwide (92% vs. 72% vs. 71%) and in their state (75% vs. 63% vs. 57%). Democrats are more likely to believe gun violence is on the rise in their communities (49%) than independents (36%) and Republicans (30%).

## **MANY AMERICANS BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO BOTH PREVENT MASS SHOOTINGS AND ENSURE THE RIGHT TO OWN GUNS FOR PERSONAL PROTECTION.**

Majorities of U.S. adults view both reducing gun violence and protecting gun ownership as important issues.

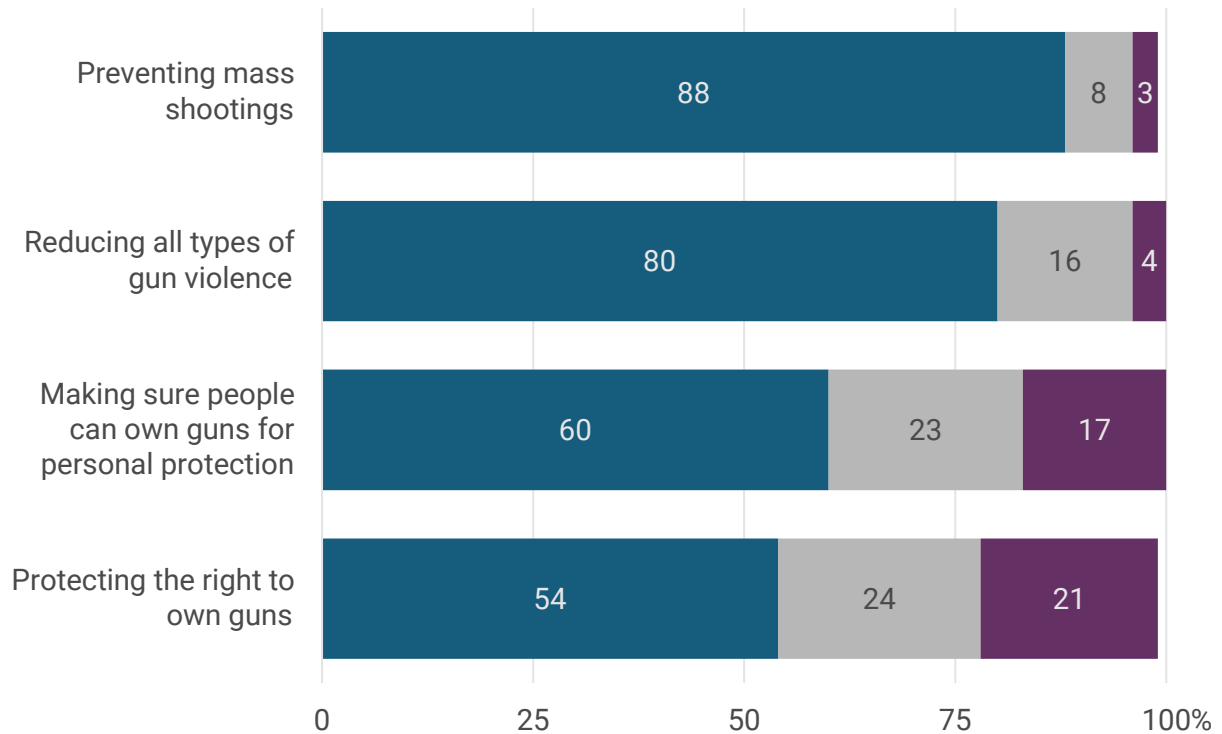
Nearly 9 in 10 Americans feel it is extremely or very important to prevent mass shootings, and 8 in 10 say the same about reducing all types of gun violence. At the same time, more than half of Americans believe it is very important to make sure people can own guns for personal protection (60%) and to protect the right to own guns (54%).

Democrats are more likely than independents and Republicans to say it is important to prevent mass shootings (97%, 81%, and 81%) and reduce all types of gun violence (93%, 71%, and 69%). Republicans are more likely than independents and Democrats to believe it is very important to make sure people can own guns for personal protection (80%, 62%, and 40%) and protect the right to own guns (78%, 57%, and 31%).

## More Americans think that preventing mass shootings is important, but a majority also think protecting gun rights is important

Percent of adults

■ Extremely or very important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Not very or not at all important



**Question:** How important to you is each of the following?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 28-August 1, 2022, with 1,373 adults age 18 and older.



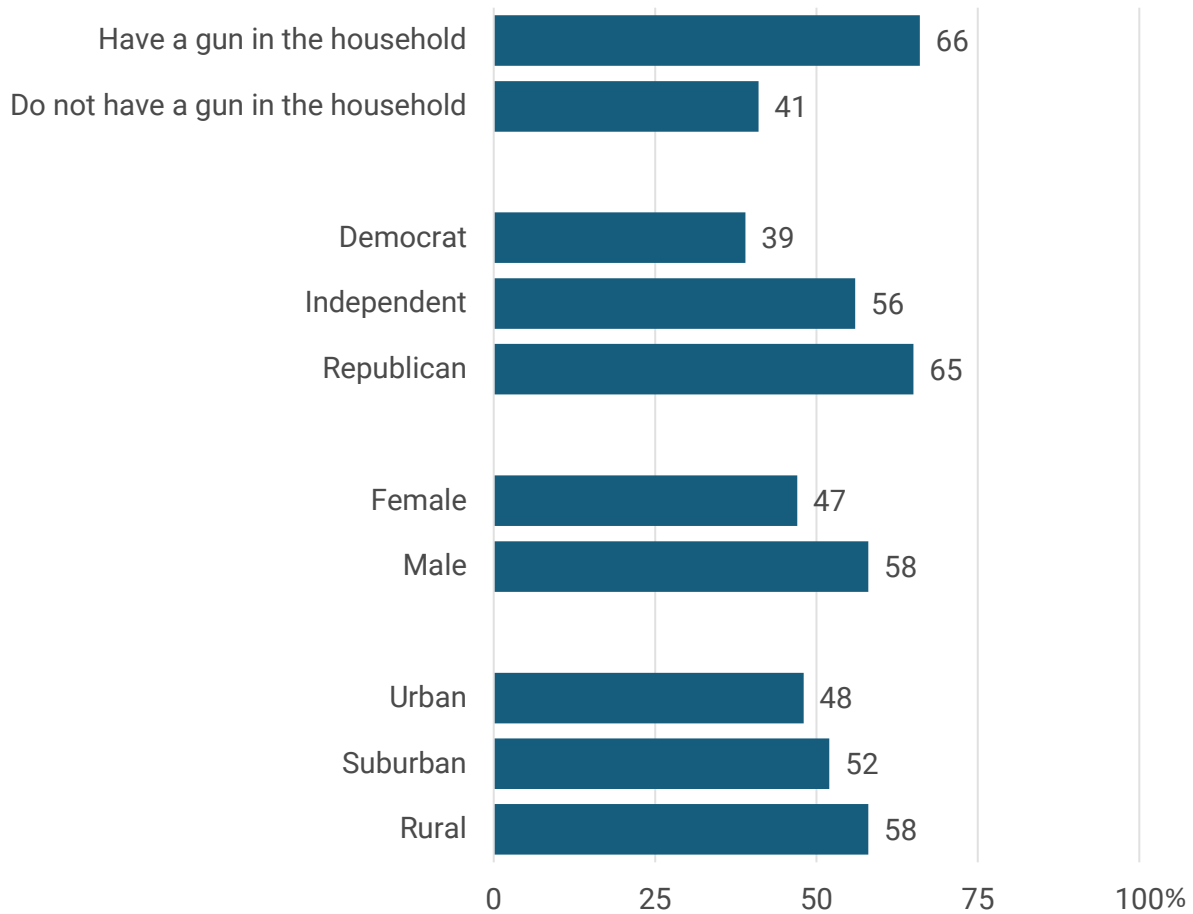
APNORC.org

When looking at attitudes toward both gun control and gun rights, 52% of Americans value both. These Americans say it is very important to both prevent mass shootings and ensure people can own guns for personal protection.

There are Americans from across the political spectrum who hold intersecting priorities, including majorities of Republicans (65%) and independents (56%). Adults with intersecting priorities live in various types of communities, with many living in urban (48%), suburban (52%), and rural areas (58%).

## Majorities of Republicans and independents hold intersecting gun priorities

Percent of adults who rate preventing mass shootings and ensuring people can own a gun for personal protection as very important



**Question:** How important to you is each of the following? Preventing mass shootings... Making sure people can own guns for personal protection

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 28-August 1, 2022, with 1,373 adults age 18 and older.



APNORC.org

## **THERE IS BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR STRICTER GUN POLICIES.**

A significant majority of Americans believe that gun laws in the U.S. should be made stricter, but support varies for specific gun control policies.

Seventy-one percent of Americans want stricter gun laws, 19% believe they should be left as they are, and 9% report they should be less strict. Support for stricter gun laws has not changed significantly since 2019.<sup>1</sup>

Democrats are more likely than independents and Republicans to favor stricter gun laws (91%, 72%, and 49%, respectively). Black Americans (81%) are more likely than white Americans (69%) to say the same.

Most Americans want to see more restrictions placed on who can purchase guns and what kinds of guns can be purchased, but the most popular policies are those that limit the individuals who are allowed to purchase guns. For example, 85% of Americans favor a federal law preventing mentally ill people from purchasing guns, compared with 59% who favor a nationwide ban on semi-automatic weapons.

---

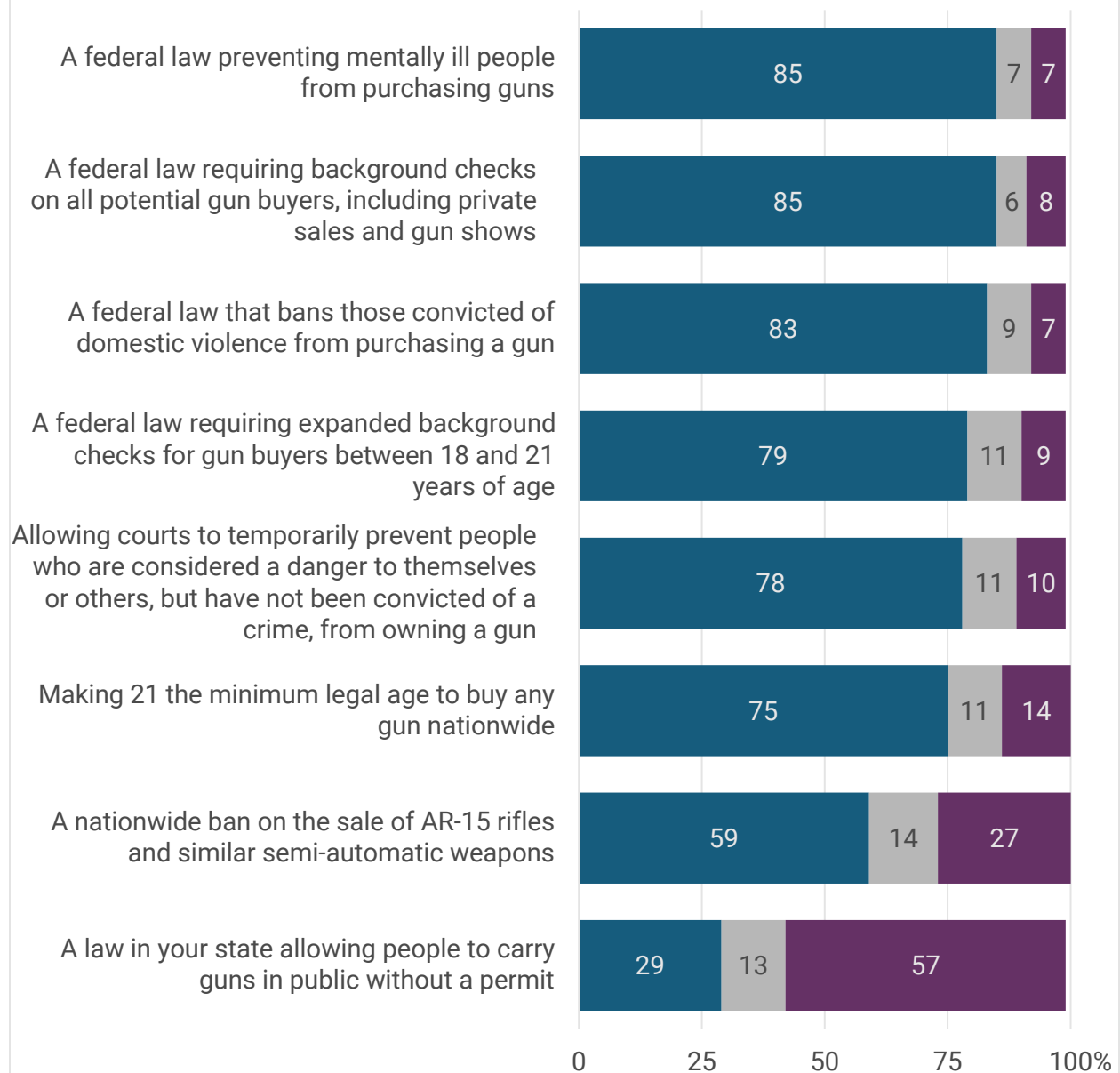
<sup>1</sup> In a March 2019 AP-NORC Poll, 67% of Americans said gun laws should be stricter, 22% said they should be left as they are, and 10% said they should be less strict.



## Majority of adults support limits on who can purchase guns

Percent of adults

■ Strongly or somewhat favor ■ Neither favor nor oppose ■ Somewhat or strongly oppose



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following policies?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 28-August 1, 2022, with 1,373 adults age 18 and older.



APNORC.org

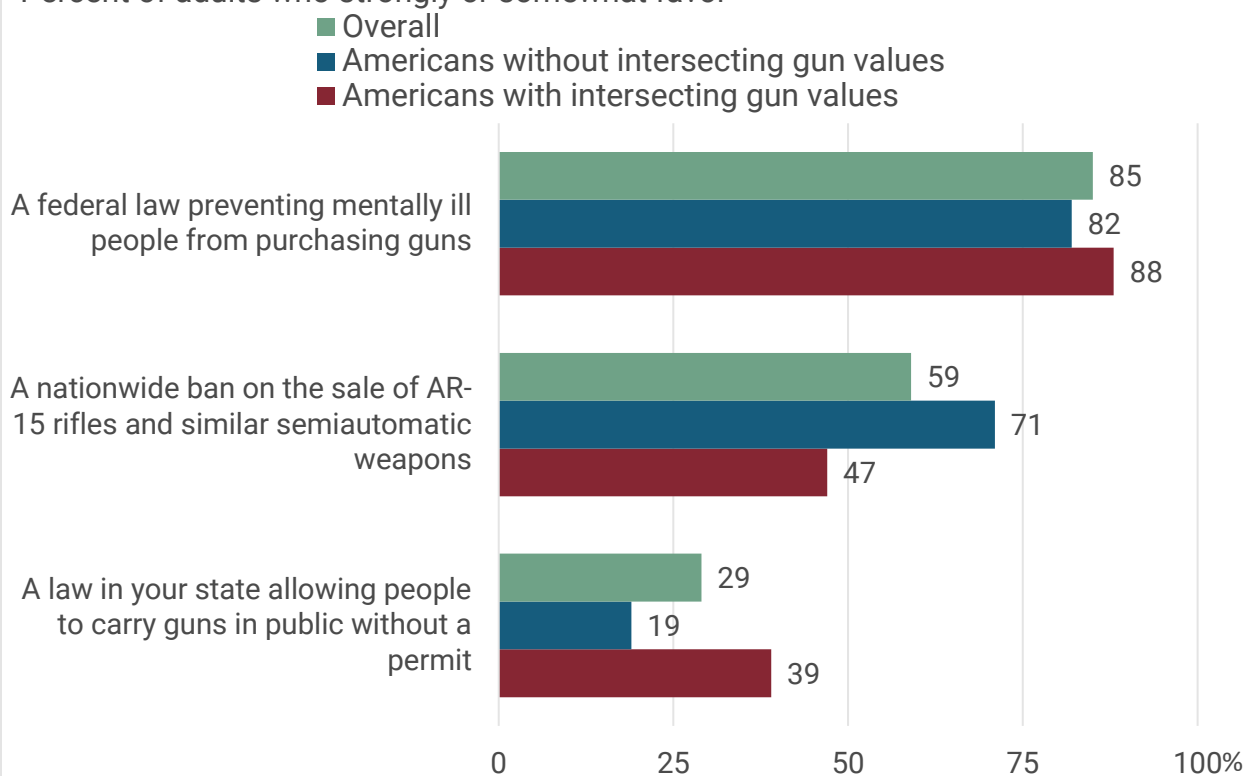
## AMERICANS WHO HIGHLY VALUE BOTH REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE AND PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO OWN GUNS HAVE MIXED VIEWS TOWARD GUN CONTROL POLICIES.

Americans with intersecting gun priorities—that is, who believe it is very important to both reduce gun violence and protect the right to own guns—have nuanced views toward gun control policies.

When it comes to the general direction for gun policy, Americans with intersecting gun priorities are less likely to want stricter gun policies (66%) than those without intersecting values (77%). In terms of specific policies, those with intersecting values are slightly more likely than other Americans to support banning those with mental health issues from buying guns, but they are less likely to support banning the sale of semi-automatic weapons and more likely to support laws allowing people to carry guns in public without a permit.

### Those with intersecting gun priorities are slightly more likely to support preventing mentally ill people from buying guns but much less likely to favor a ban on the sale of AR-15 rifles

Percent of adults who strongly or somewhat favor



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 28-August 1, 2022, with 1,373 adults age 18 and older.



APNORC.org

## **PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY GUN VIOLENCE ARE RELATED TO SUPPORT FOR GUN CONTROL POLICIES.**

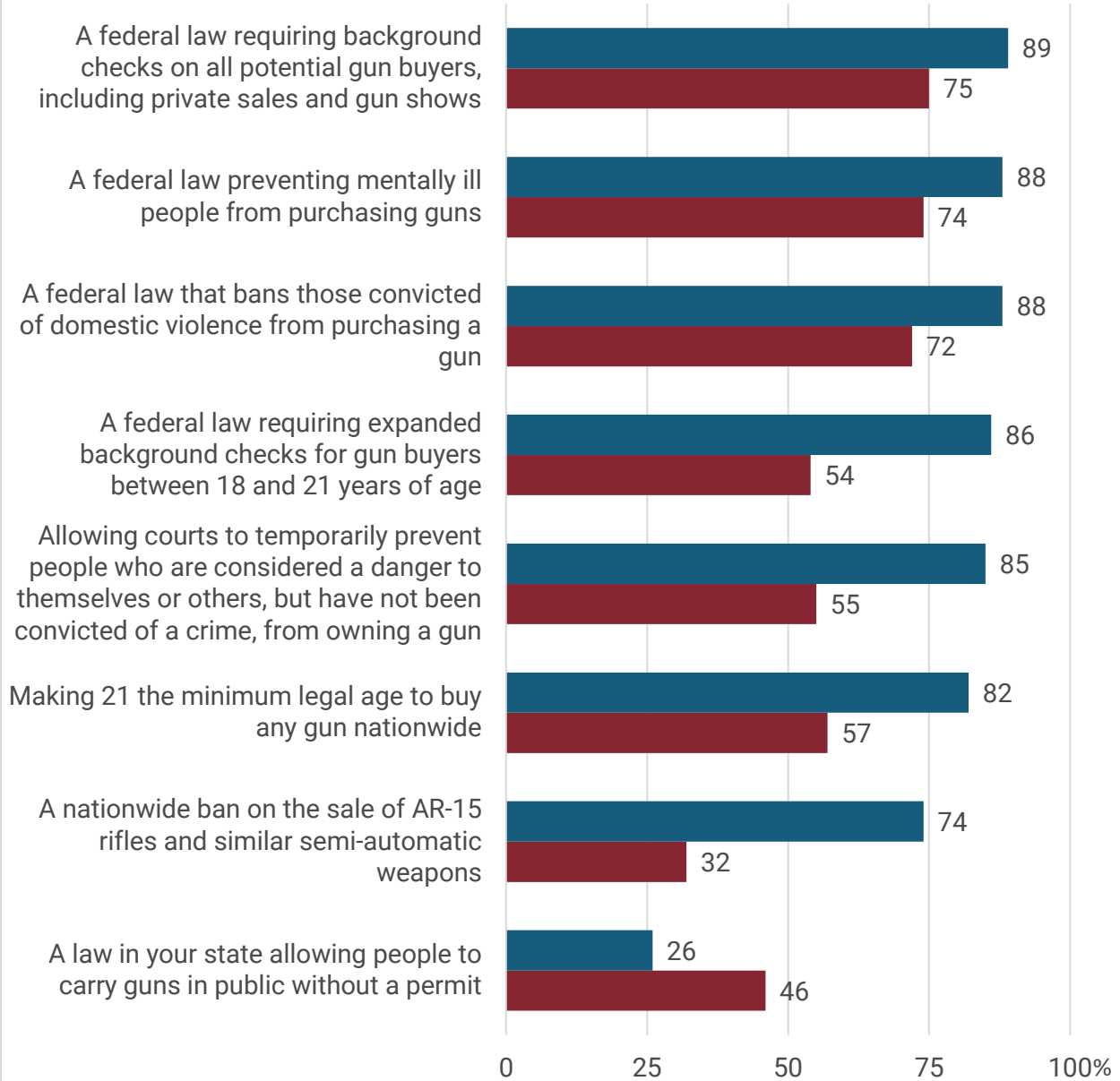
Americans' beliefs about gun violence trends within their community are tied to their own views on gun policies, but experiences with gun violence personally or through a loved one do not have a significant impact on policy attitudes.

People who believe gun violence is on the rise in their community are more likely than those who think it is decreasing to support stricter gun laws generally (82% vs. 44%), as well as favor a variety of specific gun control policies.

## Those who think gun violence is increasing in their community support stricter gun laws

Percent of adults who strongly or somewhat favor

- Those who think gun violence has increased in their community
- Those who think gun violence has decreased in their community



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 28-August 1, 2022, with 1,373 adults age 18 and older.



There is not a consistent relationship between support for gun control policies and either recent experiences with gun violence or perceptions about the likelihood of being a victim of gun violence. However, there are a couple of exceptions. Those who think they are likely to be a victim of gun violence are more likely than those who do not to support both banning the sale of semi-automatic assault weapons (73% vs. 51%) and banning individuals convicted of domestic violence crimes from buying a gun (91% vs. 82%).

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey 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.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly, multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame or a secondary national address frame, both with over 97% coverage of all U.S. addresses, and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, or field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings population.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between July 28 and August 1, 2022, with adults age 18 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,373 completed the survey—1,303 via the web and 70 via telephone. Panel members were invited by email or by phone from an NORC telephone interviewer. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive (\$3) for completing the survey.

The final stage completion rate is 14.6%, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 19.5%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 77.0%, for a cumulative response rate of 2.2%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

In addition, urban respondents were sampled at a higher rate than their proportion of the population for reasons of analysis. The overall margin of sampling error for the 672 completed interviews with urban respondents is +/- 4.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level including the design effect.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error, and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 71 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them, for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample, or for straight-lining all grid questions asked of them. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design.

Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2022 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

For more information, visit [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org) or email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).

## CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

### From NORC at the University of Chicago

David Sterrett  
Jennifer Benz  
Nick Leberer  
Michelle Whitlock  
Chanteria Milner

### From The Associated Press

Emily Swanson  
Hannah Fingerhut

### From The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy

Jens Ludwig  
Dave Stone  
William R. Morgan  
Kate Daugherty

### From Duke University

Marc Jeuland  
Philip Cook

## 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. For more information visit <https://harris.uchicago.edu/>

## 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.

- The Associated Press (AP) is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP remains today the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)

- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)

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. Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org)