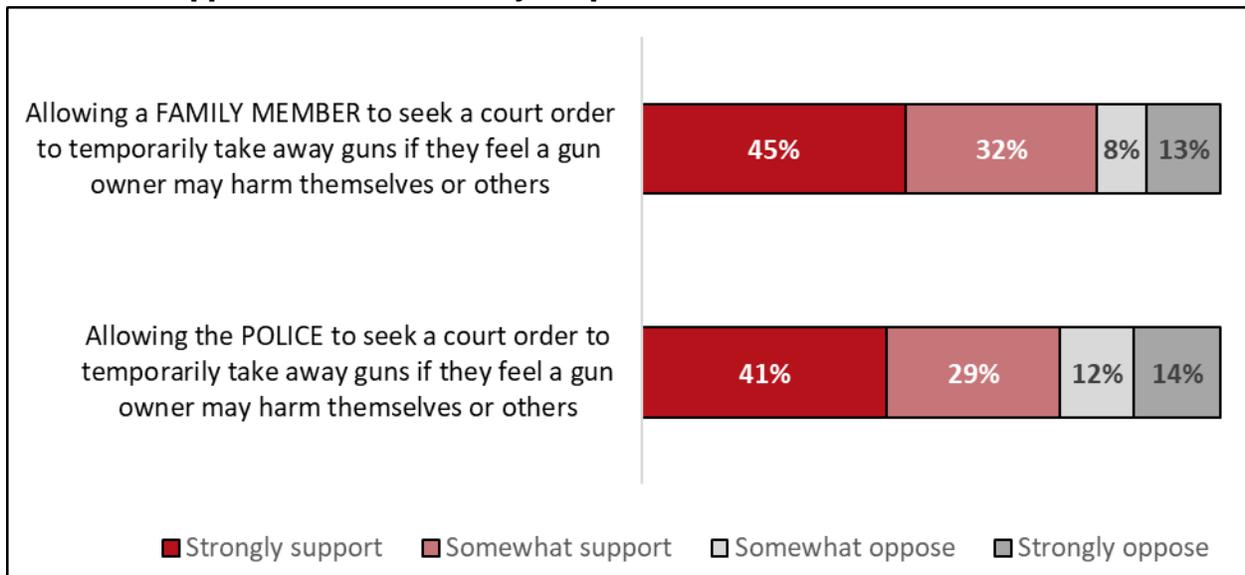


APM Survey

What do Americans think of “red flag” or ERPO laws?

August 20, 2019

77% of Americans support family-initiated Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), while 70% support ERPOs initiated by the police



Question: “Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following gun policies: Allowing (a family member/the police) to seek a court order to temporarily take away guns if they feel a gun owner may harm themselves or others.”

Source: APM Survey, July 16-21, 2019. N = 1,009 U.S. adults age 18 or older; overall margin of error is +/-3.4 percentage points. Don’t know answers and refusals are not shown.

Introduction

This nonpartisan, nationally representative survey provides new information about the American public's opinions related to gun policy. It was conducted July 16 to 21, 2019, just two weeks prior to the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio.

The APM Research Lab conducted this survey jointly with two partners: Guns & America, a reporting collaboration of 10 public radio stations covering the role of guns in American life; and Call to Mind, American Public Media's initiative that aims to foster new conversations about mental health.¹ Data collection was conducted by SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania.²

This brief summarizes the results of two of the survey's key questions, which measure the public's support for and opposition against two varieties of Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs, also known as "red flag" laws).³ Rather than using those terms, we described the policies, and asked for reactions, as follows:

Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose each of the following gun policies.

1. Allowing a **family member** to seek a court order to temporarily take away guns if they feel a gun owner may harm themselves or others.
2. Allowing **the police** to seek a court order to temporarily take away guns if they feel a gun owner may harm themselves or others.

Note that the sequence of these two questions, along with a third policy option (results summarized in a separate forthcoming brief), was rotated to avoid possible systematic order effects.

To help contextualize the results beyond a relatively standard set of questions about each respondent's social, political, and economic characteristics, we also asked:

3. Do you own a gun?
4. (if No) Does anyone else in your household own a gun?

Additional background materials and results from this survey, and other surveys conducted by the APM Research Lab, are available at www.apmresearchlab.org/collections/surveys.

¹ For more about Guns & America, please see: <https://gunsandamerica.org/>.

For more about Call to Mind, please see: <https://www.calltomindnow.org/>.

² See the appendix for additional details about the methodology used in this survey.

³ For more background, see "What Is A Red Flag Law?" by Lisa Dunn and Jonathan Levinson, Guns & America (August 5, 2019; <https://gunsandamerica.org/story/19/08/05/what-is-a-red-flag-law/>).

Support for “red flag” laws

According to Guns & America:

‘Red flag’ laws, or Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) allow family members, law enforcement or other third parties to ask a court to temporarily remove a person’s guns if they’re concerned about the individual.

If a judge finds that person is dangerous to himself or others, that person must surrender all firearms to the police for a specified period of time. During that period of time, the person is also not allowed to buy or sell guns.⁴

In that same article, Guns & America notes that 17 states plus Washington, D.C., currently have enacted ERPOs.

This survey finds widespread support among Americans for ERPOs. Conducted two weeks prior to the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, the results of this survey are not influenced by those recent tragedies. Nor are these results influenced by the calls to enact “red flag” laws by President Trump and others that followed in the wake of these recent incidents.⁵

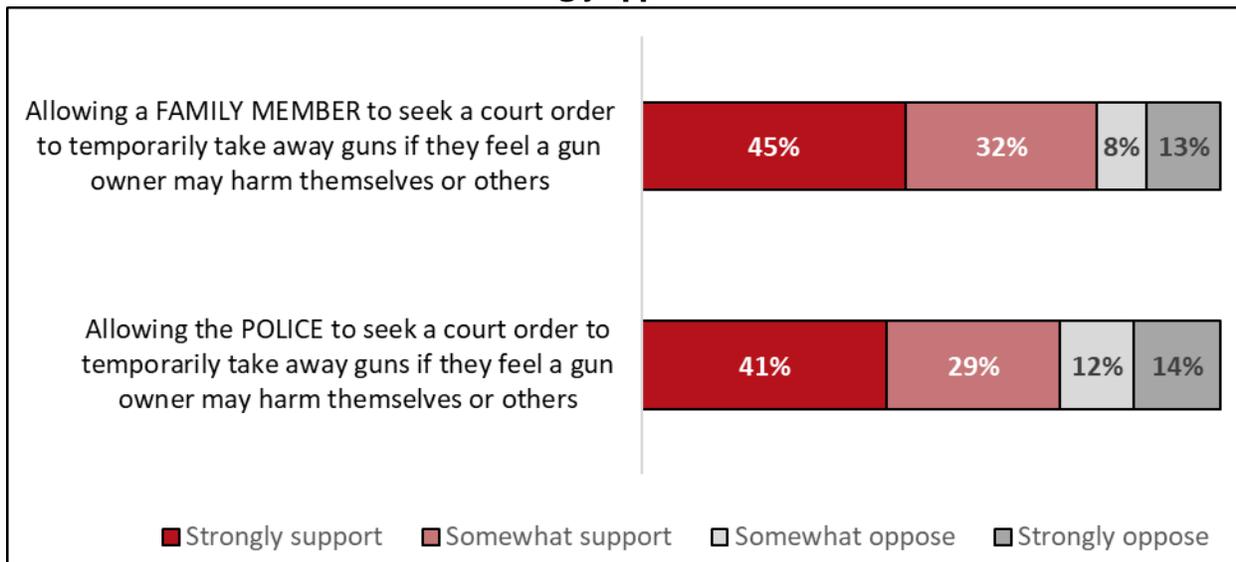
Public support for “red flag” laws is strong regardless of whether the policy specifies family- or police-initiated protection orders. More than three-fourths of American adults support family-initiated ERPOs, the majority of whom say they “strongly” support such measures. Similarly, 70 percent support police-initiated ERPOs.

Opposition to these policies does exist, however, with 21 percent of American adults opposing family-initiated ERPOs, and 28 percent opposing ERPOs that would allow police to seek temporary court-ordered removal of guns from gun owners. In both cases those who “strongly oppose” outnumber those who “somewhat oppose,” with about one in seven Americans expressing strong opposition.

⁴ “What Is A Red Flag Law?” by Lisa Dunn and Jonathan Levinson, Guns & America (August 5, 2019; <https://gunsandamerica.org/story/19/08/05/what-is-a-red-flag-law/>).

⁵ See, for example, “State Gun Groups Aren’t Happy Trump Is Supporting Red Flag Laws” by Heath Druzin, Boise State Public Radio (August 8, 2019; <https://www.boisestatepublicradio.org/post/state-gun-groups-arent-happy-trump-supporting-red-flag-laws>).

More than 40 percent of Americans “strongly support” ERPO laws (a plurality), while about 1 in 7 American adults are “strongly opposed”



Question: “Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following gun policies: Allowing (a family member/the police) to seek a court order to temporarily take away guns if they feel a gun owner may harm themselves or others.”

Source: APM Survey, July 16-21, 2019. N = 1,009 U.S. adults age 18 or older; overall margin of error is +/-3.4 percentage points. Don’t know answers and refusals are not shown.

Who supports and opposes ERPOs?

This representative survey of more than 1,000 American adults allows us to compare the level of support of “red flag” laws among several groups. This survey finds that a majority of Americans, regardless of background, support Extreme Risk Protection Orders initiated by either family or law enforcement.

In some cases, however, the level of support differs in interesting ways. Groups whose response patterns differ significantly from one another are shown in the graph below. Some of the key findings are:

- Women are more likely to support “red flag” laws than men, especially family-initiated ERPOs, where there is a 13 percentage point difference between the proportion supporting (83% among women, 70% among men).
 - About half of all women “strongly support” both family- and police-initiated ERPOs (50% and 46% respectively).
- Higher educational attainment is associated with higher levels of support for “red flag” laws, especially police-initiated ERPOs. These are supported by 79% of those with a college education, versus 64% of those with a high school degree or less education.

- Regionally, a higher proportion of those living in the northeastern states support “red flag” laws than is the case in the southern and western states.⁶ Western states have the highest level of opposition for police-initiated ERPOs, with 35% opposed.
- A higher share of those living in metropolitan areas support “red flag” laws than those living outside of metro areas.⁷ In fact, the proportion of non-metro residents who do not support ERPOs is statistically tied with gun owners who do not support such policies (about 3 in 10 opposing family-initiated ERPOs and nearly 4 in 10 opposing police-initiated ERPOs in each group—the highest levels of opposition found in the survey).
- Strong majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and independents support “red flag” laws. Support is strongest among Democrats, with 78% supporting police-initiated ERPOs and 85% supporting family-initiated ERPOs (compared to 66% and 70%, among Republicans).
- Even among gun owners, a majority support “red flag” laws:
 - 60% of gun owners support police-initiated ERPOs (29% “strongly support,” 32% “somewhat support,” 13% “somewhat oppose,” and 24% “strongly oppose”).
 - 67% of gun owners support family-initiated ERPOs (31% “strongly support,” 36% “somewhat support,” 10% “somewhat oppose,” and 20% “strongly oppose”).
 - Interestingly, those who did not themselves own guns, but lived with someone who did, are far more supportive of family-initiated ERPOs (78%) than they are of police-initiated ERPOs (57%).

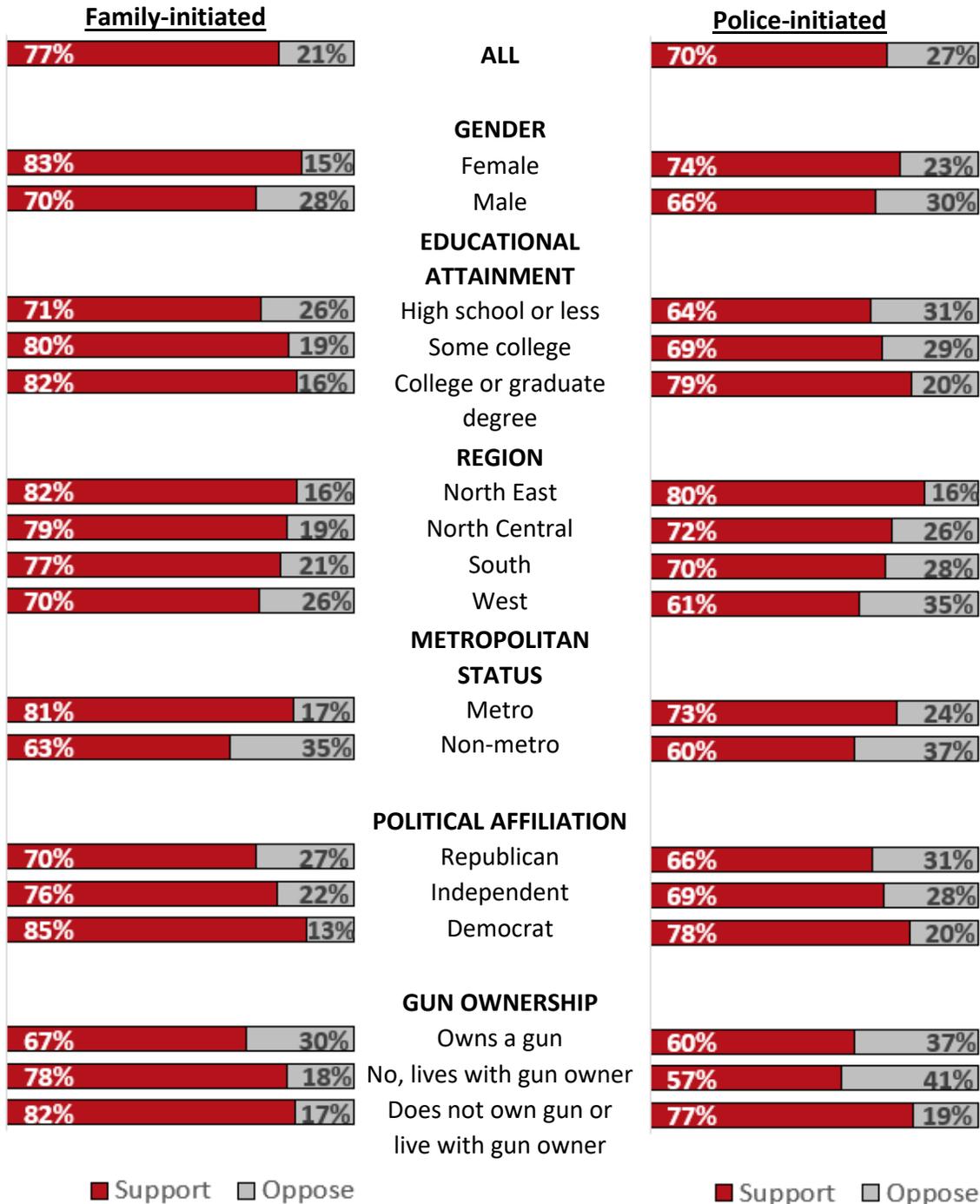
In addition, we analyzed the results by several other characteristics, including age, household income, race and ethnicity (non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic or Latino), whether the respondent is a parent with a child under age 18 living with them, and residence in a state that has passed some sort of ERPO law compared with other states.⁸ These additional comparisons did not find differences in response patterns from the national findings; a similar majority of each of these groups supports Extreme Risk Protection Orders. This underscores broad appetite by the American public across numerous demographic groups for such policies.

⁶ For purposes of this survey, regions contain these states: **North Central:** Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin. **Northeastern:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont. **Southern:** Alabama, Arkansas, Washington DC, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia. **Western:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

⁷ “Metro” and “Non-Metro” rely on the Federal Office of Management and Budget’s standard definitions.

⁸ In addition to Washington, DC, the following states have passed some sort of “red flag” law: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Vermont (according to <https://gunsandamerica.org/story/19/08/05/what-is-a-red-flag-law/>, accessed August 9, 2019).

A majority of Americans support both family- and police-initiated Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and the support is particularly high among some groups



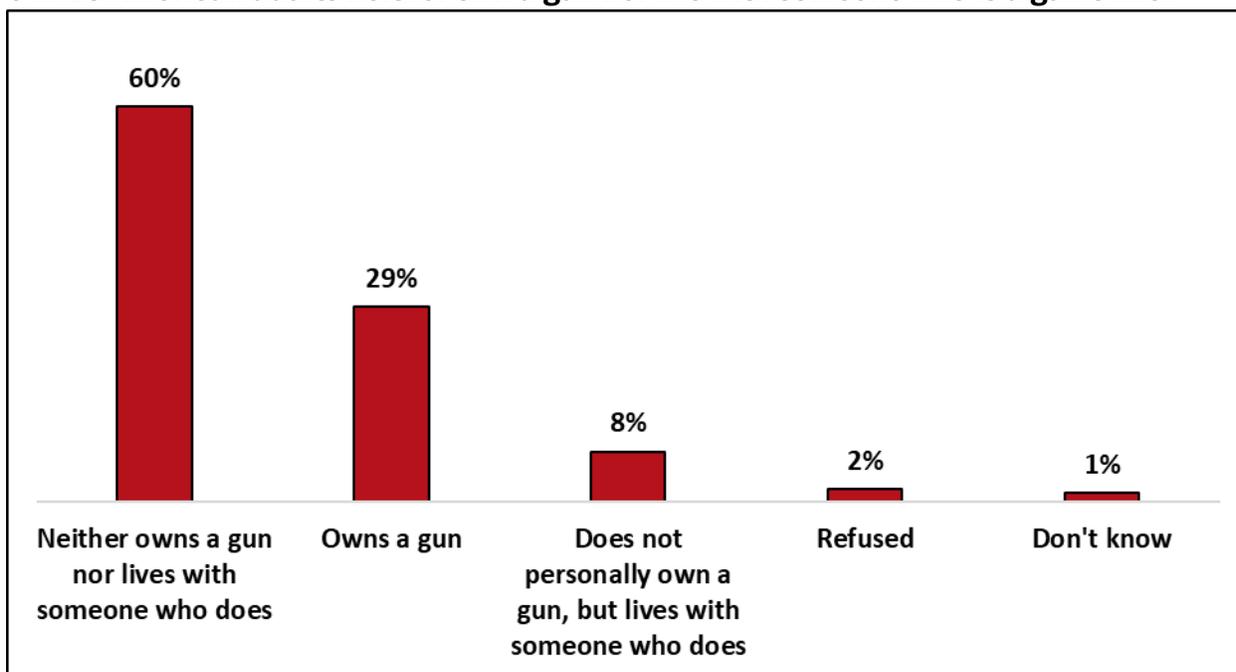
Question: "Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following gun polices: Allowing (a family member/the police) to seek a court order to temporarily take away guns if they feel a gun owner may harm themselves or others."

Source: APM Survey, July 16-21, 2019. N = 1,009 U.S. adults age 18 or older; overall margin of error is +/-3.4 percentage points. Don't know answers and refusals are not shown.

Gun ownership

According to our survey, 29% of American adults own one or more guns, and another 8% do not identify as gun owners themselves but live with someone who owns a gun.⁹ Not including the additional 2% who refuse to answer this question, and just over 1% who “don’t know,” this amounts to about 75 million gun-owning adults nation-wide, and another 19 million with at least some level of access to a gun through the ownership of another person in their household.

6 in 10 American adults neither own a gun nor live with someone who is a gun owner



Question: “Do you own a gun? (if No) Does anyone else in your household own a gun?”

Source: APM Survey, July 16-21, 2019. N = 1,009 U.S. adults age 18 or older; overall margin of error is +/- 3.42 percentage points.

⁹ The findings reported here are very similar to those reported by others. For example, in a 2017 survey Pew Research found that 30% of adults own a gun, and another 11% lives with someone who owns a gun (<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/06/22/americas-complex-relationship-with-guns/>). Similarly, Gallup’s most recent survey on the topic found that 31% of adults report personally owning a gun, with another 15% indicating that someone else in their household owns a gun (October 2018; <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx>).

As noted in the table below, this survey reveals several group-level differences in patterns of gun ownership:

- A much higher proportion of men than women own a gun (37% compared with 22%).
- Higher proportions of those age 55 and older, as well as those age 35-44, own guns than is the case for those in the 18-34 and 45-54 age ranges.
- There is not a statistically significant difference in access to guns when comparing households with children to those without children; i.e., parents are equally likely to own guns as those who are not parents.
- A higher proportion of White Americans own guns (35%) than is the case for either African Americans (20%) or Latino Americans (12%).
- A higher proportion of those who have attained some college education own guns than is the case among those whose highest degree is a high school diploma or less education.
- Lower-income households are less likely to own guns than are higher-income households. Only 14% of those from households with annual incomes below \$50,000 own guns, as opposed to 30% or more of those from higher-income households.
- When the nation is divided up into four quadrants the differences between the North Central, Northeastern, Southern, and Western regions are not substantial. Those living in the Northeast are, however, somewhat less likely to own a gun or live with someone who owns a gun.
- Metropolitan residence is strongly related to gun ownership, with 41% of those living in rural areas (outside of metropolitan areas) owning a gun, compared with 25% of those living in metro areas.
- Gun ownership rates are more than twice as high among Republicans than Democrats (44% compared with 19%).

Gun ownership and access, by characteristic

	<i>Total weighted N</i>	Owns a gun	Does not own a gun, but lives with someone who does	Neither owns a gun nor lives with someone who does
ALL	1,009	29%	8%	60%
Gender				
Female	520	22%	11%	64%
Male	489	37%	4%	55%
Age				
18-34	281	22%	9%	66%
35-44	165	35%	6%	58%
45-54	183	27%	10%	61%
55-64	159	35%	6%	56%
65+	207	34%	7%	57%
Parent with child under age 18 in household				
Yes	170	36%	9%	53%
No	839	28%	7%	61%
Race/ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	624	35%	8%	54%
Hispanic/Latino	162	12%	6%	81%
Black, non-Hispanic	114	20%	10%	70%
Educational attainment				
High school or less	395	24%	8%	65%
Some college	283	35%	7%	55%
College or graduate degree	320	31%	7%	59%
Household income				
Under \$25k	176	14%	11%	72%
\$25k-\$49.9k	262	30%	4%	63%
\$50k-\$74.9k	146	39%	12%	47%
\$75k+	268	37%	8%	53%

Continued on next page.

Gun ownership and access, by characteristic *(continued)*

	<i>Total weighted N</i>	<i>Owns a gun</i>	<i>Does not own a gun, but lives with someone who does</i>	<i>Neither owns a gun nor lives with someone who does</i>
Region ^a				
Northeastern	179	23%	7%	68%
North Central	211	32%	10%	53%
Southern	380	31%	7%	59%
Western	240	30%	6%	62%
Metropolitan status ^b				
Metro	691	25%	8%	65%
Non-metro	178	41%	8%	43%
“Suicide belt” state ^c				
Yes	85	44%	6%	47%
No	924	28%	8%	61%
Political affiliation				
Republican	253	44%	10%	43%
Independent	352	31%	6%	60%
Democrat	364	19%	7%	72%

Question: “Do you own a gun? (if No) Does anyone else in your household own a gun?”

Source: APM Survey, July 16-21, 2019. N=1,009 American adults age 18 or older; overall margin of error is 3.42 percentage points.

Note: Green shading indicates the percentage is statistically higher than at least one other in its column grouping. “Don’t know” and “Refused” responses are not shown.

^a **North Central:** Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin. **Northeastern:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont. **Southern:** Alabama, Arkansas, Washington DC, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia. **Western:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

^b “Metro” and “Non-Metro” are designated using the Federal Office of Management and Budget’s standard Metropolitan Area definitions.

^c Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

About the Survey

The survey was conducted by SSRS on its Omnibus survey platform. Interviews were conducted from July 16 to 21, 2019 among a sample of 1,009 respondents in English (974) and Spanish (35). Interviewing took place over the telephone, including both landline (303) and cell phone (706). The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.42% at the 95% confidence level. All data are weighted to represent national parameters of the adult population.

For additional details about the sample and survey methodology, as well as transparency disclosures relevant to the American Association of Public Opinion, the Roper Center, and CNN please see:

<https://www.americanpublicmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/guns-survey-transparency-disclosure-and-methods-august-2019.pdf>

Acknowledgments

This report was authored by the APM Research Lab's Managing Partner, Craig Helmstetter, and Senior Research Associate, Andi Egbert. The survey questions were designed with input from Guns & America's Director, Jeremy Bernfeld, and Research Editor, Lisa Dunn, as well as Call to Mind's Managing Director, Babette Apland, and Kyle Berta and Robyn Rappaport of SSRS.

About the APM Research Lab: Bringing Facts into Focus

The APM Research Lab is a division of American Public Media that informs the public about challenges and opportunities facing families, communities, and organizations throughout the nation. Our mission is to foster an engaged democracy by inspiring curiosity, inquiry and discussion through fact-driven, credible research and analysis. Our Values: Independent, Useful, Informative, Nonpartisan.

The APM Research Lab conducts research projects of all types—surveys, demographic analyses, literature reviews, and more—and informs the work of partner organizations and the broader public through traditional reports, as well as infographics, blog posts, interactives, presentations, and other platforms.

We are a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative and abide by its standards. See <https://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Transparency-Initiative/>.

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