

# Majority of Americans, including gun owners, support a variety of gun policies

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A new national public opinion survey conducted by researchers at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health finds widespread agreement among gun owners, non-gun owners, and across political party affiliations for many U.S. gun violence prevention policies.

The survey, fielded in January 2019, measured support for over two dozen gun-related policies and found high levels of support for most measures, including purchaser licensing (77 percent), universal background checks of handgun purchasers (88 percent), and two key elements of extreme risk protection policies, also known as "red flag" laws:

- Authorizing law enforcement officers to temporarily remove guns from individuals determined to pose an immediate threat of harm to self or others was supported by 76 percent of adults overall, and by majorities of gun owners (66 percent) and non-gun owners (80 percent)
- Allowing family members to ask a court to temporarily remove guns from a relative believed to be at risk of harming self or

others was supported by 80 percent of adults overall, and by majorities of gun owners (72 percent) and non-gun owners (82 percent)

The study, to be published online September 9 in the journal *Health Affairs*, is part of *Health Affairs'* October issue focused on violence.

Johns Hopkins researchers have tracked Americans' support through the Johns Hopkins National Survey of Gun Policy every two years during the month of January dating back to 2013. The 2019 survey includes 1,680 respondents including 610 gun owners and 1,070 non-gun owners. The breakdown by political party affiliation of survey respondents was 499 Republicans, 531 Democrats and 650 Independents. Findings from the 2019 survey are consistent with prior survey waves conducted in 2017, 2015, and 2013, and trends over time suggest growing national support for a number of policies to reduce the toll of gun violence in the U.S. Between 2015 and 2019, public support increased significantly for policies requiring purchaser licensing, safe gun storage, universal background checks, and extreme risk protection orders.

The Labor Day weekend mass shooting in west Texas that killed at least seven people and injured 22 follows on the heels of the August back-to-back mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, that killed 31 people and injured dozens more have heightened national interest in policies to address gun violence. Gun [policy](#) is already a focus in the 2020 election cycle.

"Our study offers strong evidence that there are many policies with broad support among the American public that lawmakers can consider to reduce gun violence," says lead author Colleen Barry, Ph.D., MPP, Fred and Julie Soper Professor and Chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg

School of Public Health. "In the face of highly contentious political debate, this study points to important areas where there is broad agreement among the public." Barry is also a core faculty member at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, based at the Bloomberg School.

The 2019 National Survey of Gun Policy survey examined for the first time public support for a range of concealed-carry policies. High levels of public support were found for requiring safety training when applying for a concealed carry license overall (81 percent), among both gun owners (73 percent) and non-gun owners (83 percent). There were greater differences between views of gun owners and non-gun owners on concealed-carry restrictions unrelated to safety training:

- 36 percent of the public supported allowing concealed carry on college or university campuses, with higher support among gun owners (55 percent) than non-gun owners (29 percent).
- 31 percent of the public supported allowing those who are licensed to carry concealed guns on school grounds from kindergarten through 12th grade, with higher support among gun owners (47 percent) than non-gun owners (25 percent).
- 22 percent of the public supported allowing concealed carry of a handgun in public without a license, with higher support among gun owners (34 percent) than non-gun owners (18 percent).

The survey also examined for the first time support for a number of other gun policies including prohibiting a person from making or carrying a gun without a serial number, such as a 3-D-printed gun (75 percent support), and requiring the owner of semi-automatic rifle to be at least 21 (73 percent support).

The researchers combined survey data collected in 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019 to examine geographic variation by state in support of certain gun policies including universal background checks, assault weapon bans, purchaser licensing, and safe gun

storage laws. Universal background checks were supported by three-quarters or more of respondents in all states examined (the 39 states with large enough state-level sample sizes). Majorities in 38 of 39 states supported requiring a person to obtain a license from a local law enforcement agency, and over 75 percent of those surveyed supported purchaser licensing in 23 of these states. More geographic variation in [public support](#) at the state level was found for licensing policies, safe storage policies, and assault weapon bans.

Authors used the NORC AmeriSpeak national online panel to field the 2019 and 2017 surveys, and the GfK Knowledge Networks national online panel to field the 2015 and 2013 surveys.

"Trends In Public Opinion On U.S. Gun Laws: Majorities Of Gun Owners And Nonowners Support A Range Of Measures" was written by Colleen L. Barry, Elizabeth M. Stone, Cassandra K. Crifasi, Jon S. Vernick, Daniel W. Webster and Emma E. McGinty.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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