

Survey measures whites', Blacks' views on American identity, guns, political violence

June 30 2021, by Brian Flood

A recent national survey from University of Illinois Chicago researchers found strong consensus both across and within white and Black populations in the U.S., and transcending political party lines, when freedom of speech, voting rights, respect for institutions, and peaceful resolution of political conflict were considered as key dimensions of what it means to be American.

Conversely, [the survey](#), which also examines views on the role of firearms and [political violence](#) in American political life, police funding, the 2020 [presidential election](#) and Donald Trump's legacy, reveals considerable disagreement on the use of violence in certain settings.

The online survey was conducted between May 20 and June 1, 2021 by YouGov on behalf of the UIC research group led by Alexandra Filindra, UIC associate professor of political science. It included 1,500 respondents, with 1,000 white and 500 Black participants to serve as a representative sample of the national population for those two groups.

The survey shows the depth of the partisan divide in American politics today, according to Filindra.

"It transcends questions of policy and it goes to the heart of how we understand democracy and our role as citizens. It suggests that we are heading for a collision between our First and Second Amendment rights," she said.

Key findings related to use of violence are:

- Almost half of respondents support "stand your ground" laws, with 85% of Republicans favoring an individual's right to respond to danger using arms rather than retreating.
- Thirty-seven percent of respondents are in favor of extending the "stand your ground" doctrine to protests, with 75% of Republicans but only 17% of Democrats in agreement.
- Twenty percent of respondents think it's appropriate to bring firearms to political protests. Forty percent of Republicans but only 8% of Democrats are in favor. Thirty-six percent of Republican gun owners would bring a gun to a political protest but only 18% of Democratic gun owners would do so.

Other notable results include:

- Twenty-four percent of respondents believe that the QAnon group consists of patriots seeking to expose corruption in the deep state. Fifty percent of Republicans, but only 12% of Democrats, share this positive view of the group.
- Fifty-three percent of respondents do not think that the Black Lives Matter movement is anti-democratic and only cares about power, but 33% do. While race, education and gun ownership status largely shape how people think of Black Lives Matter, the deepest divide is along party lines with only 8% of Democrats and 81% of Republicans sharing a negative view.
- Approximately 20% of respondents said that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship, but 53% disagree. Thirty-five percent believe that private gun ownership is a threat to democracy, but 44% disagree. These views are similarly spread across race groups, but sizeable differences exist by education attainment and gun ownership status.
- Sixty-two percent of respondents support laws that redirect

police funds from police to social services.

- About 35% believe that Donald Trump was among the best American presidents, while 65% disagree.
- Fifty-one percent of all respondents and 83% of Black respondents believe that the 2020 election was conducted fairly and legitimately. Ninety-five percent of Democratic respondents and 17% of Republican respondents say that the election was fair and legitimate.

"We cannot ignore that a non-negligible minority of Americans believes that gun rights extend to the context of political protests, that people should have the authority to shoot at protesters based on their personal judgements of danger, and that a substantial number of gun owners would bring their firearms to a political event," Filindra said. "The free exchange of political ideas, a citizen's right to assemble and to petition government is inconsistent with the public carry of firearms. Weapons do not foster political exchange; they are designed to hamper it."

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago

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