

Who bought firearms during 2020 purchasing surge?

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A new Rutgers study has found that people who bought firearms during the COVID-19 pandemic and national surge in firearm sales tend to be more sensitive to threats and have less emotional and impulse control

than firearm owners who did not make a purchase during this time

In the study, which was published in the journal *Science and Social Medicine*, the researchers surveyed 3,500 adults in the United States, 32 percent of whom owned a firearm. While firearm owners in general still reported less emotional control and impulse control than those who did not own firearms, they were less sensitive to threats and fear.

"We focused on those who purchased firearms during a time of substantial stress with the COVID-19 pandemic, a contentious election and a large racial justice movement following the death of George Floyd," said co-author Taylor R. Rodriguez, a member of the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center, based at Rutgers. "People who are sensitive to threats such as these and who have difficulties with [impulse control](#) are buying firearms at a greater rate during this unprecedented time."

The study also indicates that those who plan to purchase firearms in the next year are also prone to poor impulse and [emotional control](#), which may drive decisions like firearm purchasing.

"Even though we know that firearm access increases the risk for a host of dangerous outcomes, it may be that purchasing firearms provided these individuals with a sense of safety and control," Rodriguez said.

The Rutgers research highlights the need to examine the [personality traits](#) of those who purchase firearms in order to get a better understanding of these surges in firearm sales.

"We are living through stressful, uncertain times, and individuals who tend to be on the lookout for threats and who make rash decisions may be coping with that by purchasing firearms," says co-author Joye C. Anestis, an associate professor at Rutgers School of Public Health.

"Research on [firearm](#) ownership has historically overlooked personality as a factor in understanding who purchases firearms and why. Our findings highlight the need to change that practice."

More information: Joye C. Anestis et al, Dispositional characteristics in firearm ownership and purchasing behavior during the 2020 purchasing surge, *Social Science & Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114408](#)

Provided by Rutgers University

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