

Country of origin, race, politics influence gun violence attitude, poll finds

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Attitudes about gun violence and firearm policies are influenced by race

more than age, and opinions vary widely based on whether respondents were born in the U.S. and their political affiliation, according to a recent University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll conducted with Ipsos.

Among the key findings of the poll, directed by Department of Government and Politics Professors Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse, those born outside the U.S. were more likely to support greater gun restrictions compared to those born in the U.S. Of those foreign-born respondents, only 14% believed that tighter school security was most likely to reduce [gun violence](#) against children, while 33% said fewer guns would do so, and 42% said both equally.

In comparison, a third of those born in the U.S. said that gun violence against children would be reduced by tighter security, 19% said by fewer guns and 28% by both equally.

While 64% of foreign-born respondents said stricter gun control would lead to fewer mass shootings, 49% of U.S.-born respondents said the same. Meanwhile, 44% of those born in the U.S. said tighter restrictions would have no effect; just 27% of those born elsewhere agreed.

"It's well established that the U.S. leads developed countries by a wide margin in both the number of guns and the number of gun homicides, two correlated measures," said Telhami, the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development. "This may be one reason why U.S.-born and foreign-born Americans express different attitudes on guns and gun violence."

The poll of 1,203 adults nationwide was conducted March 27–April 5 and had a margin of error of 3.2%.

As in [previous](#) Critical Issues Polls, Black Americans were more likely to consider gun policy "very important" compared to other races and

ethnicities. In the latest results, they were more likely to say that if more Americans owned guns, there would be more crime (41%) or that it would make no difference (46%) than white Americans (28% and 40%, respectively). Hispanic Americans were in the middle (38% and 29%, respectively).

In comparison, Americans of different age groups varied less in their views. Thirty-seven percent of those under 30 years old said that if Americans owned more guns there would be more crime, and 38% said it would make no difference, compared to 33% and 39%, respectively, of Americans 30 years of age and older.

Americans with [higher education](#) were more likely to say that more guns would lead to more crime: 27% of [high school graduates](#) and some college said more guns would lead to more crime, compared to 40% of those with a bachelor's degree and 48% of those with a master's degree or higher.

The survey also found that the partisan gap on attitudes about the impact of guns on crime has widened since 2021. When asked whether stricter requirements to legally obtain a gun would cause fewer mass shooting or more, only 34% of Republicans said it would reduce the number compared to 80% of Democrats. Most Republicans (58%) said it would make no difference in the number of [mass shootings](#), compared to only 16% of Democrats. In addition, whereas 55% of Republicans said that tighter school security was more likely to reduce gun violence against children, only 8% of Democrats felt the same, with 43% saying fewer guns in the community would be more effective.

Regarding the impact of access to guns on [crime rates](#), most Democrats said that more guns would increase U.S. crime, while 49% of Republicans said it would cause less crime. At the same time, only a quarter of Democrats said more guns would have no impact on crime

rates compared to 42% of Republicans who said the same.

Notably, the percentage of Republicans who say that more guns would decrease crime has declined in recent years. A [Pew Research Center Poll in 2021](#), fielding the same question as the UMD poll, found that 56% of Republicans said that more guns would lead to less crime. The latest UMD poll showed that percentage dropping to 49%. In comparison, the percentage of Democrats saying that more guns would lead to more crime has grown from 55% in 2021 to 68% in 2023.

An in-depth analysis of the [poll](#) results will be part of a full report released later this month.

Provided by University of Maryland

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