Americans overwhelmingly see gun violence as a public health issue

May 8 2018

Americans are more united than divided when it comes to guns – they see gun safety as an issue and they want to see actions to prevent gun violence. The majority of Americans (87 percent) see gun violence as a public health threat, including 77 percent of Republicans and 96 percent of Democrats, according to a [new national poll](#) released today by the American Psychiatric Association, (APA).

A large majority of Americans (85 percent) believe Congress should do more to address the issue of [mass shootings](#), including 76 percent of Republicans and 96 percent of Democrats. More than three-quarters of Americans support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducting research on gun violence as a public health issue. A spending bill recently passed by Congress now allows the CDC to conduct such research, but the bill did not provide any funding.

Americans blame mass shootings on both lack of access to mental health care and easy access to assault style weapons. Lack of access to mental health services is seen as a contributing factor to mass shooting violence by 70 percent of Americans. About half of Americans say lack of access to mental health services and easy access to assault style guns are equally to blame.

About one in five U.S. adults believe lack of access to mental services is more to blame and about one in five believe easy access to assault style guns is more to blame. African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to blame easy access to guns (28 percent versus 17 percent)

and Caucasians were more likely than African Americans to blame lack of access to mental health services (23 percent versus 11 percent).

Nearly half of Americans say people with mental illness are far more likely to be victims of violence than be perpetrators of violence (46 percent in 2018, up from 40 percent in 2017 and 37 percent in 2016). This perception is in line with research showing that people with mental illness are more likely to be victims rather than perpetrators of violence.

"This poll reflects Americans' overall concern about gun safety and presents a strong call to action to address gun violence as a public health issue, said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A. "Key to taking effective action to prevent gun violence will be better understanding the issues through research, which happens to be supported by most Americans."

These findings are from an APA-sponsored poll conducted online using ORC International's CARAVAN Omnibus Survey. The surveys were collected form a nationally representative sample of 1,004 adults during the period March 22-25, 2018 and from a similar poll of 1,019 adults in April 20-23, 2017. The margin of error is +/-3.1 percentage points.

Provided by American Psychiatric Association