

# Little difference between gun owners, non-gun owners on key gun policies

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A new national public opinion survey from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health finds widespread agreement among gun owners and non-gun owners in their support for policies that restrict

or regulate firearms.

The survey measured support for twenty-four different gun policies and found minimal gaps in support between gun owners and non-gun owners for fifteen, or 63 percent, of the policies. For twenty-three of the twenty-four policies examined, the majority of respondents supported gun restrictions or regulations, including conducting universal background checks and prohibiting a person subject to a temporary domestic violence restraining order from having a gun for the duration of the order.

The survey was fielded in January 2017 and is the third National Survey of Gun Policy conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research. Researchers used National Opinion Research Center's AmeriSpeaks online panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The study sample included 2,124 adults (602 gun owners, 1,522 non-gun owners) ages 18 years and older.

Respondents were asked whether they support specific gun policies, including universal background checks, requiring a permit or license to purchase a gun, and allowing cities to sue rogue gun dealers.

The findings will be published online in the *American Journal of Public Health* on May 17, 2018.

In 2016 in the U.S., firearms were responsible for more than 38,000 deaths and over 116,000 nonfatal gunshot wounds treated in hospitals. The U.S. continues to debate measures at both the state and federal levels that seek to address [gun violence](#).

The policies with the highest overall public support and minimal differences in support by gun ownership included: universal background checks (85.3% gun owners , 88.7% non-gun owners support), greater

accountability for licensed gun dealers to account for lost or stolen guns (82.1% gun owners , 85.7% non-gun owners support), higher safety training standards for concealed carry permit holders (83% gun owners, 85.3% non-gun owners support), improved reporting of records related to mental illness for background checks (83.9% gun owners, 83.5% non-gun owners support), gun prohibitions for people subject to temporary domestic violence restraining orders (76.9% of gun owners, 82.3% non-gun owners support), and gun violence restraining orders, which are commonly referred to as extreme risk protection orders or Red Flag laws (74.6% of gun owners and 80.3% non-gun owners support).

"Policies with high overall support among both gun owners and non-gun owners may be the most feasible to enact, and some have strong evidence to support their promise in reducing gun violence," said 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. "Widespread claims that a chasm separates gun owners from non-gun owners in their support for gun safety policies distract attention from many areas of genuine agreement."

There were areas of disagreement between gun owners and non-gun owners. Nine of the twenty-four policies examined had greater than 10-point support-gaps. However, more than half of gun owners still favor several of these policies to restrict or regulate guns. These include: requiring that a person lock up guns in the home when not in use to prevent access by youth (58% of gun owners and 78.9% of non-gun owners support), allowing information about which gun dealers sell the most guns used in crimes to be available to the police and public (62.9% of gun owners and 73.4% of non-gun owners support), requiring a person to obtain a license from local law enforcement before buying a gun (63.1% of gun owners and 81.3% of non-gun owners support), and allowing cities to sue [gun dealers](#) when there is evidence that the dealer's

practices allow criminals to obtain guns (66.7% of gun owners and 77.9% of non-gun owners support).

Two survey questions on concealed carry were new to this 2017 survey. Results show that 25.1% of respondents (42.6% of gun owners, 19.3% of non-gun owners) believe a person who can legally carry a gun should be allowed to bring that gun onto K-12 school grounds, and 84.7% of respondents (83% of gun owners, 85.3% of non-gun owners) believe that a person who can legally carry a concealed gun should be required to pass a test demonstrating they can safely handle the gun in common situations they may encounter.

"There are data supporting the efficacy of many of the policies with wide [support](#) among both gun owners and those who don't own guns," said study co-author Daniel Webster, ScD, MPH, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research. "Relatively few states have these laws in place, signaling an opportunity for [policy](#) makers to enact policies which are both evidence-based and widely supported."

**More information:** "Public Support for Gun Violence Prevention Policies among Gun Owners and Non-Gun Owners in 2017" *American Journal of Public Health* (2018).

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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