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Perspectives of Gun Owners, Non-Owners

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## Why Own a Gun? Protection Is Now Top Reason

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## Perspectives of Gun Owners, Non-Owners

# Why Own a Gun? Protection Is Now Top Reason

The vast majority of gun owners say that having a gun makes them feel safer. And far more today than in 1999 cite protection – rather than hunting or other activities – as the main reason they own guns.

A national survey finds that nearly half of gun owners (48%) volunteer that the main reason they own a gun is for protection; just 32% say they have a gun primarily for hunting and even fewer cite other reasons, such as target shooting. In 1999, 49% said they owned a gun mostly for hunting, while just 26% cited protection as the biggest factor.

The survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Feb. 13-18 among 1,504 adults, finds that safety also is a major concern among the majority of Americans who do not have guns. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) of those in households without guns say they would be uncomfortable having a gun in their homes. When asked why they would be uncomfortable, more cite concerns over gun accidents and safety than any other factor.

When it comes to enacting stricter gun control laws, Americans see both pros and cons. Most (58%) worry that new laws would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families. Roughly the same number (54%) say stricter laws would reduce the number of deaths caused by mass shootings.

Gun owners and non-gun owners have fundamental disagreements over the effectiveness of new gun laws. Two-thirds (66%) of those who live in households that do not have guns say stricter gun laws would reduce the number of deaths in mass shootings, compared with just 35% of gun owners.

Yet the partisan divide over many of these issues is at least as great as the differences between gun owners and non-gun owners. Fully 79% of Democrats say tougher gun laws

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### Why Do You Own a Gun?

	Aug 1999	Feb 2013	Change
<i>Among gun owners</i>	%	%	
Protection	26	48	+22
Hunting	49	32	-17
Target/sport shooting	8	7	-1
Constitutional right/ 2 <sup>nd</sup> amendment	4	2	-2
Collect guns/Hobby	4	2	-2
Other	10	7	-3
Don't know	--	1	
	100	100	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Based on those who personally own a gun. August 1999 data from ABC News/Washington Post. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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would cut down on the number of deaths from mass shootings; just 29% of Republicans agree.

## Public Opposes Letting States Ignore Federal Gun Laws

As [previously reported](#), most Americans support new gun control legislation such as broader background checks or bans on assault-style weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips. Yet as such legislation is being debated in Washington, D.C., some state legislatures are considering laws that would attempt to nullify any new federal controls.

The survey finds that 60% of the public says that states should not be allowed to ignore federal gun laws, while 36% say that states should be able to ignore federal gun laws, if they choose to do so.

Gun owners are divided over whether states should be allowed to ignore federal gun laws: 49% say they should, while 48% disagree. Among those in gun-owning households who do not themselves own guns, 59% oppose states ignoring federal gun laws; among those in households without guns, 67% are opposed.

Republicans, by a 58% to 37% margin, say that states should be allowed to ignore federal gun laws if they so choose. About four-in-ten (38%) independents and just 18% of Democrats favor giving states the option to ignore federal gun laws.

Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to own guns. Nearly a third of Republicans (31%) say they personally own a gun, rifle or pistol; that compares with just 16% of Democrats. But even among Republicans who do not own guns, there is far less support for gun control generally – and more support for states being permitted to ignore federal gun laws – than among independents or Democrats.

### Most Republicans Favor Allowing States to Ignore Federal Gun Laws

	<i>Should states be allowed to ignore federal gun laws?</i>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>DK</b>
	%	%	%
Total	36	60	4=100
Men	43	54	3=100
Women	29	65	6=100
Republican	58	37	5=100
Democrat	18	80	2=100
Independent	38	57	5=100
<i>Gun in household?</i>			
Yes (37%)	44	52	4=100
No (57%)	28	67	4=100
<i>Among gun-owning households...</i>			
Personally own a gun (24%)	49	48	3=100
Someone else owns gun (13%)	36	59	6=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q23.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Far fewer Republicans say that stricter gun laws would reduce the number of accidental deaths caused by guns than did so 20 years ago. Just 32% of Republicans say that stricter gun laws would reduce the number of accidental gun deaths; in 1993, 61% said tougher laws would cut down on gun-related deaths from accidents and suicides. Among Democrats, there has been virtually no change in opinions about this over the past 20 years; 74% say stricter gun laws would reduce the number of accidental deaths caused by guns, little changed from 76% in 1993.

This is consistent with a widening partisan divide in overall attitudes about whether it is more important to control gun ownership or protect the rights of Americans to own guns. Twenty years ago, there was a partisan gap of 20 points in the percentages of Republicans (45%) and Democrats (25%) prioritizing gun rights. Today, the gap has grown to 52 points; 74% of Republicans say it is more important to protect gun rights than to control gun ownership, compared with 22% of Democrats.

### How Gun Owners and Non-Gun Owners Feel about Guns

About a quarter of Americans (24%) say they personally own a gun, rifle or pistol; another 13% say another person in their household has a gun. Most Americans (57%) say they do not have a gun in their household. Gun ownership rates differ by gender, region, age, race, ethnicity and other demographics.

Gun owners increasingly cite protection as the main reason they own a gun. And a large percentage (79%) say having a gun makes them feel safer. At the same time, nearly as many (78%) say that owning a gun is something they enjoy.

Those in gun-owning households who do not personally own guns derive far less enjoyment from having a gun; just 43% say this is something that they enjoy. But more than six-in-ten (64%) say that having a gun in their home makes them feel safer.

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#### Most Gun Owners Say Guns Provide Safety, Enjoyment

<i>Owning/having a gun in household ...</i>	<i>Gun-owning households</i>	
	<b>Personally own a gun</b>	<b>Someone else owns a gun</b>
	%	%
Makes you feel safer	79	64
Is something you enjoy	78	43
Makes you feel uncomfortable	7	9

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q50.

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Relatively few people in gun-owning households – either gun owners or non-gun-owners– say having a gun in the home makes them feel uncomfortable. Just 7% of gun

owners and 9% of non-gun owners living in gun households say having a gun in the home makes them feel uncomfortable.

Among the majority of Americans who live in households without guns, most (58%) say that they would be uncomfortable having a gun in their homes; 40% say they would be comfortable having a gun.

There are sizable partisan and gender differences in these opinions: 58% of Republicans in households without guns say they would be comfortable having a gun in their home, compared with 30% of Democrats. Nearly half (49%) of men in households without guns say they would be comfortable with a gun in their home; just a third (33%) of women in non-gun households say this.

While protection is a major reason that gun owners give for having a weapon, safety also is a top concern among those in non-gun households who express discomfort with having a gun in their home. Among those in non-gun households who would be uncomfortable having a gun, 39% say the reason they would be uncomfortable is the risk of an accident, including 29% who specifically mention concerns about children. Another 22% have more general concerns about the dangers posed by guns or gun safety.

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### Opinions about Guns among Those in Non-Gun Households

	Feb 2013
<i>Among those with no gun in home ...</i>	%
Would be comfortable having a gun	40
Would not be comfortable	58
<i>What about having a gun would make you feel uncomfortable? (Open-end)*</i>	
Concerned about accidents	39
Specifically worried about child	29
General concern about accidents	10
Guns are dangerous/unsafe	22
Don't like guns	18
Could be stolen/used by others	16
Don't know how to use one	8
No use for/Not necessary	8
Personal experience with gun violence	2
Other	5

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\*Based on those without a gun in the household who would be uncomfortable with having a gun in the home. Figures add to more than 100% because multiple mentions allowed.

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## SECTION 1: VIEWS OF STRICTER GUN LAWS

Overall, the public sees both positive and negative consequences from stricter gun laws. By 54% to 43%, more agree that stricter gun laws would reduce the number of deaths caused by mass shootings.

However, by comparable margins, the public also says that stricter gun laws would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families (by 58% to 39%) and give too much power to the government (57% to 40%).

On several of these issues, the public's views have changed since the early 1990s. For example, the percentage saying stricter gun laws would cut down on

the number of accidental deaths caused by guns is 15 points lower today than in a December 1993 Gallup survey (52% now, 67% then).

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### Public Sees Positives and Negatives from Stricter Gun Laws

<i>Stricter gun laws would...</i>	Agree %	Disagree %	DK %
Reduce number of deaths caused by mass shootings	54	43	3=100
Reduce the number of accidental deaths caused by guns	52	46	2=100
Help keep guns out of the hands of criminals	51	47	2=100
Make it more difficult for people to protect their homes & families	58	39	3=100
Give too much power to the government over average citizens	57	40	3=100
Gun control measures will eventually lead to stricter laws which will take guns away from all citizens	47	50	3=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q22.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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And reflecting the focus on protection in other questions, 58% now say stricter gun laws would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families; in 1993, 48% expressed this view. There has been less change over the past two decades in opinions about whether stricter gun laws would give too much power to the government (57% now, 52% in 1993) and whether gun control will lead to laws that will take away guns from all citizens (47% now, 50% then).

There are wide partisan differences over possible consequences of stricter gun

laws, and in most cases the gaps are much wider than they were 20 years ago. No more than about a third of Republicans agree that stricter laws would reduce the number of deaths from mass shootings (29%) or accidental gun deaths (32%), or would keep guns out of the hands of criminals (31%). More than seven-in-ten Democrats agree with each of these assertions.

Republicans' views about whether stricter gun laws would reduce the number of accidental gun deaths have changed markedly over the past two decades. In the 1993 Gallup survey, 61% of Republicans agreed that stricter gun laws would reduce the number of gun deaths caused by accidents and suicides; in the current survey, which asks only about accidental gun deaths, just 32% of Republicans agree. Among independents, fewer also now agree that stricter gun laws would cut down on the number of accidental gun deaths than did so in 1993 (47% now, 64% then). Democrats' views are little changed (74% now, 76% then).

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### Wide Partisan Differences over Whether Stricter Laws Would Reduce Toll from Mass Shootings

<i>% who agree that stricter gun laws would ...</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %	R-D diff
Reduce number of deaths caused by mass shootings	54	29	79	60	-50
Reduce number of accidental gun deaths	52	32	74	47	-42
Dec 1993*	67	61	76	64	-15
Keep guns out of criminals' hands	51	31	73	46	-42
Give too much power to government over average citizens	57	76	38	60	+38
Dec 1993	52	61	42	51	+15
Make it more difficult for people to protect their homes & families	58	77	44	60	+33
Dec 1993	48	55	44	47	+11
Gun control measures will eventually lead to stricter laws which will take guns away from all citizens	47	63	34	50	+29
Dec 1993	50	54	41	55	+13

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Dec 1993 data from Gallup. \*1993 survey asked about "accidental gun deaths and suicides caused by guns."

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A larger percentage of Republicans also agrees that stricter gun laws will make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families than did so in 1993 (77% now, 55% then). And 76% of Republicans agree that stricter gun laws would give the government too much power over average citizens; in 1993, 61% expressed this view.

Republicans' views about whether stricter gun laws would lead to seizure of all guns have shown less change since 1993: 63% agree with that assertion today, while 54% agreed 20 years ago. Half of independents (50%) and just 34% of Democrats say that stricter gun laws would eventually result in laws taking guns away from all citizens, which are about the same as opinions 20 years ago.

## Men and Women Differ Little over Effects of Gun Laws

The gender differences in opinions about the impact of stricter gun laws are modest, and in some cases much narrower than they were two decades ago.

Nearly six-in-ten women (58%) and 50% of men say stricter gun laws would reduce the number of deaths from mass shootings. The differences are comparable over whether stricter gun laws would reduce accidental gun deaths (56% of women, 47% of men).

In 1993, 76% of women said stricter laws would reduce the number of accidental gun deaths and suicides caused by guns. Men's opinions have shown less change since then (56% in 1993, 47% today).

More women say that stricter gun laws would give the government too much power over average citizens than did so 20 years ago: Currently, 55% of women say stricter gun laws would give the government too much power; 45% expressed this view in 1993. Men's

### Modest Gender Gaps in Views of Stricter Gun Laws

<i>% who agree that stricter gun laws would ...</i>	Total %	Men %	Women %	M-W Diff %
Reduce deaths from mass shootings	54	50	58	-8
Reduce accidental gun deaths	52	47	56	-9
Dec 1993*	67	56	76	-20
Keep guns out of criminals' hands	51	49	53	-4
Give gov't too much power over citizens	57	59	55	+4
Dec 1993	52	59	45	+14
Make it more difficult for people to protect homes & families	58	61	56	+5
Dec 1993	48	50	47	+3
Gun control measures will lead to stricter laws which will take guns away from all citizens	47	49	45	+4
Dec 1993	50	53	47	+4

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Dec 1993 data from Gallup. \*1993 survey asked about "accidental gun deaths and suicides caused by guns."

opinions are unchanged (59 % agree).

Majorities of both men (61%) and women (56%) say stricter gun laws would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families. In 1993, 50% of men and 47% of women said tougher gun laws would make protection more difficult. Nearly half of men (49%) and 45% of women say stricter gun laws will eventually lead to all guns being taken away, which is little changed from the 1993 survey.

## SECTION 2: OPINIONS OF GUN OWNERS, NON-GUN OWNERS

People in non-gun-owning households have more positive views about the possible impact of stricter gun laws than those who live in a household with a gun.

Majorities of those in non-gun households say that stricter gun laws would reduce deaths from mass shootings (66%) and accidents (65%), and would keep guns away from criminals (63%).

However, many people who do not have guns at home are also sympathetic to the

potential downsides of gun control legislation. Nearly half (49%) of those in households without guns say that stricter gun laws would give the government too much power over average citizens. A majority (55%) say that stricter gun laws would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families.

Few gun owners believe that gun control efforts would be effective. They largely reject the assertions that stricter gun laws would reduce deaths from mass shootings and accidents or would prevent criminals from obtaining guns.

And a large percentage of gun owners (68%) say that stricter laws would give the government too much power over average citizens, while nearly as many (64%) say they would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families. However, gun owners are somewhat more skeptical that stricter laws would ultimately lead to guns being taken away from all citizens (51% agree).

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### Many in Non-Gun Households Say Stricter Gun Laws Would Give Government Too Much Power

	All adults	Gun-owning household		No gun in household
		Personally own	Someone else owns	
<i>% who agree that stricter gun laws would...</i>	%	%	%	%
Reduce number of deaths caused by mass shootings	54	35	48	66
Reduce number of accidental gun deaths	52	32	50	65
Help keep guns out of the hands of criminals	51	33	46	63
Make it more difficult for people to protect homes & families	58	64	58	55
Give too much power to gov't over average citizens	57	68	59	49
Gun control measures will lead to stricter laws which will take guns away from all citizens	47	51	41	45

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q22.

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Those who do not own guns, but live in a household with someone who does, mostly agree that stricter gun laws will make protection more difficult (58% agree) and give the government too much power over citizens (59% agree). Yet about half say that stricter laws would reduce deaths from accidents (50%) and mass shootings (48%).

## Views of Gun Policies

An earlier report on this survey, released in collaboration with USA TODAY, detailed public attitudes about gun control and specific gun policies. (For more, see [“If No Deal Is Struck, Four-in-Ten say Let the Sequester Happen.”](#) Feb. 21, 2013.)

Gun owners overwhelmingly say it is more important to protect gun rights than control gun ownership (70% vs. 27%). People who do not own guns, but live in a

household with a gun owner, are more evenly divided: 53% say it is more important to protect gun rights while 42% say it is more important to control gun ownership. By more than two-to-one (66% to 30%), those in households with no guns prioritize controlling gun ownership over protecting gun rights.

Among specific gun policy proposals, there is broad support in each of these groups for making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks. Nearly eight-in-ten (79%) gun owners favor background checks on private gun sales, as do 86% of others in gun households and 85% of people in non-gun-owning households.

Other policy proposals are more divisive. Most gun owners (55%) oppose a ban on assault-style weapons while 43% favor such a ban. Similarly, 57% of gun owners oppose

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### Broad Support for Making Private Gun Sales Subject to Background Checks

	All adults	Gun-owning household		No gun in household
		Personally own	Someone else owns	
<i>More important to ...</i>	%	%	%	%
Control gun ownership	50	27	42	66
Protect gun rights	46	70	53	30
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100
<hr/>				
<i>% favor ...</i>				
Background checks for private & gun show sales	83	79	86	85
Ban on assault-style weapons	56	43	55	65
Ban on high-capacity ammunition clips	53	41	58	59

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q19-20. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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a ban on high-capacity ammunition clips that hold more than 10 bullets; 41% favor this proposal.

Majorities of those in gun households who do not personally own guns favor both of these proposals (55% favor a ban on assault-style weapons, 58% favor a ban on high-capacity ammunition clips). Among those in households that have no guns, 65% favor a ban on assault-style weapons while 59% favor a ban on high-capacity ammunition clips.

## NRA Households: Staunch Opponents of Gun Control

About one-in-ten Americans (9%) say that they or someone in their household is a member of the NRA. Among households that own guns, 21% say they personally (11%) or someone else (10%) belong to the NRA.

Those in NRA households are even less supportive of gun control than are people in other gun-owning households. Just 15% of those in NRA households say it is more important to control ownership while 81% prioritize protecting gun rights. Among gun-owning households in which there are no NRA members, 36% say it is more important to control gun ownership, compared with 60% who say protecting gun rights is more important.

### NRA Households Favor Gun Rights But Also Background Checks

	<i>Gun-owning households</i>		
	All	NRA household	Not an NRA household
<i>More important to ...</i>	%	%	%
Control gun ownership	32	15	36
Protect gun rights	65	81	60
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100
<i>% favor ...</i>			
Background checks for private gun sales	81	74	83
Ban on assault-style weapons	47	33	51
Ban on high-capacity ammunition clips	47	35	51

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q19-20. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Only about a third of those in NRA households favor bans on assault-style weapons (33%) and high-capacity ammunition clips (35%). Roughly half of those in other gun-owning households favor these proposals (51% each).

Yet people in NRA households overwhelmingly favor making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks: 74% favor this proposal while just 26% are opposed.

## Why Own a Gun? The Reasons Have Changed

Those who say they personally own a gun, rifle or pistol are overwhelmingly white (82% white non-Hispanic) and male (74% are men while 26% are women).

Among gun owners, the reasons for owning a gun have changed. Currently, 48% say the main reason they own a gun is for protection while 32% cite hunting and 18% give another reason. In a 1999 ABC News/Washington Post survey, 49% of gun owners

cited hunting as the main reason for owning a gun while just 26% said they primarily owned a gun for protection.

The share of gun owners citing protection as the main reason they own guns has increased among all sub-groups of gun owners – men and women, older and younger gun owners and those with different levels of education. As was the case in 1999, women are more likely than men to say they own a gun for protection. In the current survey, 65% of women gun owners cite protection as the main reason they own a gun, compared with 42% of men gun owners.

An overwhelming percentage of women gun owners (80%) say that having a gun makes them feel safer; about the same percentage of men gun owners (79%) express this view. However, women are less likely than men to say than owning a gun is something they enjoy (63% of women vs.83% of men).

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### Why Do You Own a Gun?

What is main reason you own a gun?	1999			2013			2013 N
	Pro-tection	Hunting	Other	Pro-tection	Hunting	Other	
All gun owners	26	49	26	48	32	18	421
Men	21	55	24	42	36	20	303
Women	43	26	31	65	21	13	118
18-49	27	47	25	52	29	18	157
50+	22	52	26	45	36	18	260
College grad+	25	49	26	45	28	25	154
Some college	34	45	21	53	31	14	128
HS grad or less	22	51	27	45	37	17	138
Rep/Lean Rep	23	50	27	45	39	14	216
Dem/Lean Dem	28	49	23	53	28	19	155

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q49. First mentions shown; for first and second mentions see topline. 1999 data from ABC News/Washington Post.

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## Most in Non-Gun Households Would be Uncomfortable Having a Gun

Most people who do not have a gun in their household say that having a gun is something that would make them feel uncomfortable.

Nearly six-in-ten (58%) in non-gun households say they would be uncomfortable having a gun while 40% would be comfortable.

Some of the same partisan and demographic differences in gun ownership are mirrored in the views of people in non-gun-owning households about having a gun. Just a third of women (33%) without a gun in the home say they would be comfortable having a gun; that compares with nearly half of men (49%) in non-gun-owning households.

Nearly twice as many Republicans as Democrats in non-gun-owning households say they would be comfortable if there were a gun in their home (58% vs. 30%).

People under 30 are somewhat less likely than older Americans to own a gun: 16% say they personally own a gun, rifle or pistol compared with 30% of those 50 and older.

But among those in non-gun-owning households, 55% of those younger than 30 say they would be comfortable having a gun their home. Far fewer people in older age groups express comfort with having a gun in the home.

### How Would You Feel About Having a Gun in Your Home?

<i>Among those without a gun in household</i>	Comfort-able %	Un-comfortable %	DK %
Total	40	58	3=100
Men	49	47	4=100
Women	33	65	2=100
18-29	55	41	4=100
30-49	39	58	2=100
50-64	28	69	3=100
65+	36	62	2=100
White	47	50	2=100
Black	36	61	3=100
Hispanic	24	73	3=100
College grad+	36	61	3=100
Some college	47	50	2=100
HS or less	37	60	3=100
Republican	58	38	4=100
Democrat	30	69	2=100
Independent	44	53	3=100
Parents	36	61	3=100
Non-parents	41	56	3=100

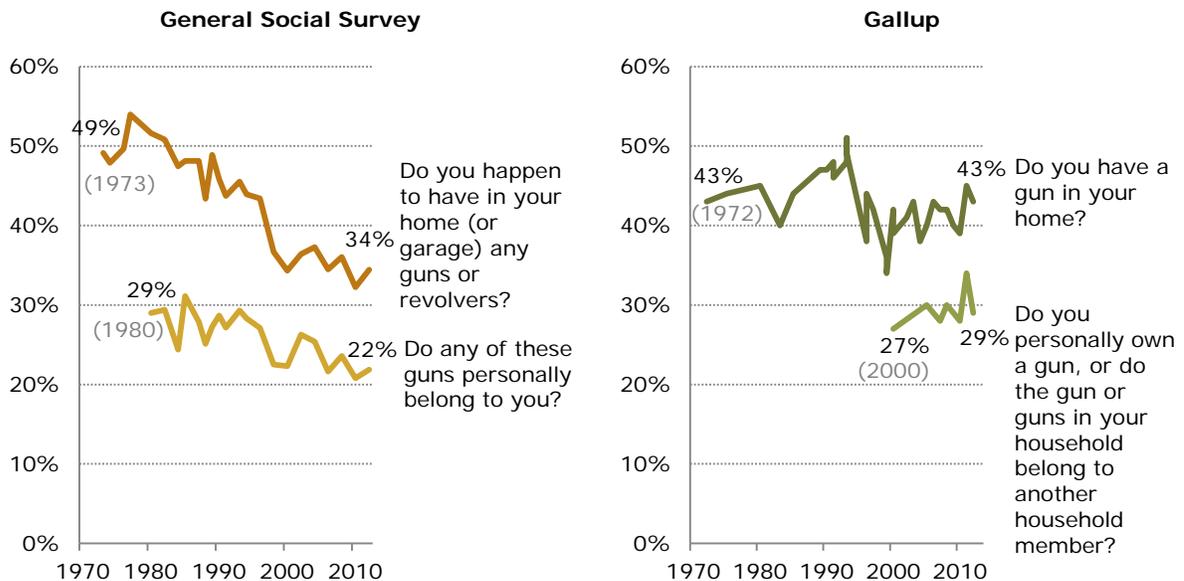
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q52. Based on those without a gun in the household. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

## SECTION 3: GUN OWNERSHIP TRENDS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

There is no definitive data source from the government or elsewhere on how many Americans own guns or how gun ownership rates have changed over time. Also, public opinion surveys provide conflicting results: Some show a decline in the number of households with guns, but another does not.

The General Social Survey (GSS), conducted roughly every two years by the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, with principal funding from the National Science Foundation, provides a widely-used look at the rate of gun ownership over time. The GSS data show a substantial decline in the shares of both households and individuals with guns. When the GSS first asked about gun ownership in 1973, 49% reported having a gun or revolver in their home or garage. In 2012, 34% said they had a gun in their home or garage. When the survey first asked about personal gun ownership in 1980, 29% said a gun in their home personally belonged to them. This stands at 22% in the 2012 GSS survey.

### Survey Trends in Gun Ownership Rates



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The Pew Research Center has tracked gun ownership since 1993, and our surveys largely confirm the General Social Survey trend. In our December 1993 survey, 45% reported having a gun in their household; in early 1994, the GSS found 44% saying they had a gun in their home. A January 2013 Pew Research Center survey found 33% saying they had a gun, rifle or pistol in their home, as did 34% in the 2012 wave of the General Social Survey.

The Gallup Organization has been tracking gun ownership in their surveys over this time period as well, but their trend suggests no consistent decline. A Gallup survey in May 1972 found 43% reporting having a gun in their home. The percentage subsequently fluctuated a great deal, reaching a high of 51% in 1993 and a low of 34% in 1999 – but the percentage saying they had a gun in their home last year was the same as it was 40 years earlier (43%).

## Who Has Guns?

In the Pew Research Center survey conducted Feb. 13-18, 37% of adults reported having a gun in their household: 24% say they personally own a gun, and 13% say the gun or guns in their home are owned by someone else. These figures are not significantly different from the 2012 General Social Survey estimates that 34% of households have guns, and 22% of individuals own a gun.

There is a substantial gender gap when it comes to gun ownership: men are three times as likely as women (37% vs. 12%) to personally own a gun. However, women are more likely than men to live with someone else who owns a gun. Overall, 45% of men live in a gun-owning household compared with 30% of women. (Just 8% of people say that both they *and* someone else in their household own guns – these people are counted as personal gun owners in this analysis.)

There is also a sharp difference in personal gun ownership by age – 16% of adults under age 30 own a gun, compared with 27% of all adults age 30 and older. However, many young people live in households in which someone else owns a gun.

Roughly three-in-ten (31%) whites own a gun, which is much greater than the rates of gun ownership among blacks (15%) and Hispanics (11%).

## Demographics of Gun Ownership

	Household owns gun	Personally own gun	Someone else
	%	%	
Total	37	24	13
Men	45	37	8
Women	30	12	17
18-29	35	16	19
30-49	35	24	11
50-64	40	30	10
65+	40	29	11
White	46	31	15
Black	21	15	7
Hispanic	17	11	6
College grad+	37	24	12
Post-graduate	33	20	13
College grad	40	27	13
Some college	43	28	15
HS or less	33	22	11
Northeast	25	17	8
Midwest	45	27	18
South	42	29	13
West	30	21	9
Urban	28	18	10
Suburban	36	24	12
Rural	59	39	20
Married	45	31	14
Not married	30	19	11
Parents	34	23	11
Men	45	40	5
Women	24	8	16
Non-parents	39	26	13
Men	45	36	9
Women	33	15	18

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q48.  
Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic;  
Hispanics are of any race.

Gun ownership also differs substantially by region and type of community. In the Northeast, 17% say they personally own a gun as do 21% in the West. Higher percentages

in the Midwest (27%) and South (29%) say they own a gun. Across all regions, people living in rural areas are twice as likely as those in urban areas to own a gun (39% vs. 18%).

## A Profile of Gun Owners

The general profile of gun owners in America differs substantially from the general public. Roughly three-quarters (74%) of gun owners are men, and 82% are white. Taken together, 61% of adults who own guns are white men. Nationwide, white men make up only 32% of the U.S. adult population.

Gun owners and those who do not own guns differ politically. While 37% of all adults identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, that proportion jumps to 51% among gun owners. Among those in households without guns, just 27% identify with the Republican Party or lean Republican, while a majority (61%) are Democrats or lean Democratic.

## Profile of Gun Owners and Those with No Gun in their Home

<i>Percent who are...</i>	All adults		
	%	Personally own a gun household	No gun in household
Men	49	74	41
Women	51	26	59
	100	100	100
White	65	82	55
Black	12	7	15
Hispanic	14	6	20
White men	32	61	21
Republican	22	28	16
Democrat	32	22	39
Independent	41	48	39
Rep/lean R	37	51	27
Dem/lean D	51	37	61
Northeast	18	13	21
Midwest	22	24	19
South	38	44	34
West	23	19	26
Urban	36	27	42
Suburban	47	45	47
Rural	17	28	10

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Q48.  
Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Non-owners living in a gun household not shown in this table.

## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 13-18, 2013 among a national sample of 1,504 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (752 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 752 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 364 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,504	2.9 percentage points
Republicans	366	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	470	5.3 percentage points
Independents	604	4.6 percentage points
Gun-owning household	610	4.6 percentage points
Personally own gun	421	5.6 percentage points
Someone else owns	189	8.3 percentage points
No gun in household	799	4.0 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**FEBRUARY 2013 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**February 13-18, 2013**  
**N=1,504**

**QUESTIONS 1-4, 7-8, 10-11, 15-20 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**NO QUESTIONS 5-6, 9, 13-14, 21**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.22 I'm going to read you some things people say would occur if there were stricter gun laws. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each. First, **[INSERT ITEM, RANDOMIZE]**: do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? How about **[NEXT ITEM]**? **[REPEAT AS NECESSARY: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?]**

	<u>Net agree</u>	<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Somewhat agree</u>	<u>Net disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Stricter laws would make it more difficult for people to protect their homes and families							
Feb 13-18, 2013	58	39	19	39	16	23	3
Gallup: Dec 17-19, 1993	48	25	23	51	27	24	1
b. Stricter laws would give too much power to the government over average citizens							
Feb 13-18, 2013	57	38	19	40	16	25	3
Gallup: Dec 17-19, 1993	52	30	22	47	26	21	1
c. Gun control measures will eventually lead to stricter laws which will take guns away from all citizens							
Feb 13-18, 2013	47	30	16	50	15	36	3
Gallup: Dec 17-19, 1993	50	28	22	49	26	22	1
d. Stricter laws would help keep guns out of the hands of criminals							
Feb 13-18, 2013	51	36	16	47	10	37	2
e. Stricter laws would reduce the number of accidental deaths caused by guns							
Feb 13-18, 2013	52	31	21	46	18	28	2
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:</b> <b>Stricter laws would reduce the number of accidental deaths and suicides caused by guns.</b> Gallup: Dec 17-19, 1993	67	43	24	32	15	17	2
f. Stricter laws would reduce the number of deaths caused by mass shootings							
Feb 13-18, 2013	54	35	19	43	11	32	3

**ASK ALL:**

Q.23 Should state governments be allowed to ignore federal gun laws if they choose to do so, or not?

Feb 13-18

2013

36 Yes, should be allowed  
60 No, should not be allowed  
4 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)

**NO QUESTIONS 24-27, 29-37, 43-47**

**QUESTIONS 28, 38-42 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

On another subject...

Q.48 Do you, or does anyone in your household, own a gun, rifle or pistol? [**IF YES:** Is that you or someone else in your household?]

Feb 13-18

2013

17 Yes, respondent  
13 Yes, someone else  
8 Yes, both (**VOL.**)  
57 No, nobody in household owns a gun  
6 Don't know/Refused (**VOL.**)

24 *NET: Respondent owns gun*

37 *NET: Gun in household*

**ASK IF PERSONALLY OWN GUN (Q.48=1,3) [N=421]:**

Q.49 What is the main reason you own a gun? [**OPEN-END; DO NOT READ PRECODES. PROBE FOR CLARITY. IF MORE THAN ONE MENTION, RECORD IN ORDER OF MENTION USING EITHER PRECODES OR OTHER SPECIFY.]**

<u>Feb 13-18, 2013</u>				<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON</b>
<u>Both</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>		ABC/Wash Post
<u>mentions</u>	<u>mention</u>	<u>mention</u>		Aug 1999 <sup>1</sup>
				<u>First mention only</u>
60	48	12	Protection	26
39	32	7	Hunting	49
14	7	7	Target shooting/sport shooting/Skeet shooting	8
4	3	1	Gift/Inherited	--
3	2	1	2nd amendment/Constitutional right	4
3	2	1	Work-related/Current or ex-military/police	--
2	2	*	Collect guns/Hobby	4
2	2	0	Other	10
1	1	--	Don't know/Refused	--

<sup>1</sup> August 1999 question read "Why do you own a gun—what's the main reason?" and only the first response was accepted by the interviewer.

**ASK IF SOMEONE IN HOME OWNS A GUN (Q48=1,2,3) [N=610]:**

Q.50 Tell me if each describes how you feel about **[IF GUN OWNER (Q48=1,3): owning a gun/ IF SOMEONE ELSE (Q48=2)having a gun in your home]**. (First,) Would you say that **[owning a gun/having a gun in your home] [INSERT; RANDOMIZE]** or not?

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
a.	Is something you enjoy Feb 13-18, 2013	66	29	5
b.	Makes you feel uncomfortable Feb 13-18, 2013	7	92	1
c.	Makes you feel safer Feb 13-18, 2013	74	25	1

**ASK IF DO NOT PERSONALLY OWN GUN (Q.48=2,4) [N=988]:**

Q.51 Have you ever personally owned a gun, or not?

Feb 13-18	
<u>2013</u>	
16	Yes
84	No
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK IF NO GUN IN HOME (Q.48=4) [N=799]:**

Q.52 Would having a gun in your home be something you would be comfortable with or something that would make you uncomfortable?

Feb 13-18	
<u>2013</u>	
40	Would be comfortable with
58	Would make uncomfortable
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK IF WOULD FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE (Q.52=2) [N=461]:**

Q.53 What is it about having a gun that would make you uncomfortable? **[OPEN-END. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. PROBE FOR CLARITY – DO NOT PROBE FOR ADDITIONAL MENTIONS. IF MORE THAN ONE MENTION, RECORD IN ORDER OF MENTION]**

Feb 13-18	
<u>2013</u>	
<b>39</b>	<b>NET Concerned about accidents</b>
29	Child could have accident/Children in house
10	Accidents, general mention
22	Guns are dangerous/Unsafe/Don't want to kill or injure anyone
18	Don't like guns/Uncomfortable with them in the house
16	Could be stolen/Used by anyone/Used against me
8	Don't know how to use a gun
8	No use for gun/Not necessary/Other ways to protect oneself
2	Was or know victims of gun violence/Bad experience with guns
5	Other
*	Don't know/Refused

**ASK ALL:**

Q.54 Are you, or is anyone in your household, a member of the National Rifle Association or NRA? **[IF YES: Is that you or someone else in your household?]**

Feb 13-18

2013

4 Yes, respondent  
 4 Yes, someone else  
 1 Yes, both **(VOL.)**  
 87 No, nobody in household is a member of NRA  
 4 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

**NO QUESTIONS 55-60****QUESTIONS 61-64 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Feb. 13-18, 2013	22	32	41	2	*	2	15	19
Jan 9-13, 2013	25	32	38	2	*	2	15	16
Dec 17-19, 2012	21	32	38	4	*	4	15	14
Dec 5-9, 2012	23	33	38	3	1	2	14	19
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012	26	34	34	3	1	3	13	16
Oct 24-28, 2012	28	33	33	4	*	2	12	16
Oct 4-7, 2012	27	31	36	3	1	3	15	15
Sep 12-16, 2012	24	35	36	2	*	2	14	16
Jul 16-26, 2012	22	33	38	4	*	3	14	15
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	17
Jun 7-17, 2012	24	33	39	2	*	2	17	17
May 9-Jun 3, 2012	24	32	36	4	*	4	13	14
Apr 4-15, 2012	24	31	39	3	*	2	15	15
Mar 7-11, 2012	24	34	36	3	1	2	16	17
Feb 8-12, 2012	26	32	36	4	1	2	13	17
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9

## PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	<i>Lean</i>	<i>Lean</i>
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No	Other	DK/Ref	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
				preference	party			
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--