



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 23, 2017

## Pew Research: Americans Getting More Comfortable With Firearm Ownership

Pew Research Center's latest in-depth report on what it calls "[America's Complex Relationship with Guns](#)" is revelatory. According to the report, released on Thursday, Americans are becoming more and more comfortable with guns and gun ownership, and less and less enchanted with more gun laws to fight perceived gun violence.



When 3,390 U.S. adults were polled in March and April, they were asked whether it was more important to protect gun rights or to control gun ownership. In the year 2000, two-thirds of those polled then favored more gun control. Today, that has dropped to less than half, to just 47 percent. To some, that's an astonishing revelation. Despite continued pleas for more gun control that follows virtually every mass shooting, Americans are not persuaded by those pleas. To others it's simply proof that as Americans become more acquainted with the ownership and use of firearms, they see more clearly how hollow those pleas for more gun control are, especially in light of the marked decline in gun violence over the last 20 years while ownership of guns has soared.

Of the 3,390 adults polled in its latest study, Pew found that 1,269 of them (one-third) were gun owners. It learned further that 40 percent of them lived in households where firearms are present, and not surprisingly, that those owning guns cherished their freedom to do so as compared to non-owners. Most gun owners purchased their firearms for protection of self, family, and other loved ones.

It noted that 15 percent of gun owners — about one in every seven — said they had fired or threatened to fire a gun to defend themselves. More remarkable is the number of adult gun owners who carry concealed outside their homes. Doing the math, there are about 235 million adult citizens in the country. By extrapolation, according to Pew, a third of them own at least one firearm. Pew reported further that 26 percent of them carry concealed. That's close to 20 million Americans walking the streets, going about their business, with a concealed firearm in their possession. That's approaching 10 percent of the U.S. adult population.

Pushing further, that must give great concern to criminals, thugs, and miscreants who for years knew that most Americans were sitting ducks, unable to defend themselves. Now they must deal with the new



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reality.

And it's showing up in gun violence statistics. Just one example comes from the liberal Brookings Institution, which recently reported, "Today, the national crime rate is about half of what it was at its height in 1991. Violent crime has fallen by 51 percent since 1991, and property crime by 43 percent. In 2013 the violent crime rate was the lowest since 1970. And this holds true for unreported crimes as well. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, since 1993 the rate of violent crime has declined from 79.8 to 23.2 victimizations per 1,000 people."

Pew reported some peculiarities in its study. It learned that both gun owners and non-owners supported limiting access to guns to people with mental illness (without defining the term), limiting access to people whose names are on federal "no-fly" or "watch" lists (without considering Fourth Amendment concerns), and expanding background checks to include the "gun-show loophole" (without mentioning Second Amendment or states' rights infringements).

Even more surprising is Pew's discovery, at least with its present sample, that a majority of gun owners supported a federal database of all gun sales, a ban on "assault-style" firearms and a ban on so-called high-capacity magazines. This reveals that there is much work still to be done in educating citizens about the futility and danger of such bans.

More encouraging is that the majority of gun owners support expanding the right to own and carry, especially national reciprocity and K-12 carry by teachers and administrators in public schools.

Although mixed in its conclusions, Pew's study showed that with increasing familiarity with firearms comes not only a declining rate of gun violence but a much lower interest in more gun laws to fight it.

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