



# Majority of Americans Hold Incorrect Assumptions about Guns

## Ipsos poll on behalf of NPR

**Washington, DC, October 11, 2017** — In the latest Ipsos poll on behalf of NPR, a majority of Americans struggle with gun-related knowledge questions. Only 8% are able to answer 7 or more knowledge questions correctly, out of a total of 10. Americans' misperceptions lie in the estimated number of guns per capita (21% correct), the decline in gun deaths (20% correct), and whether or not the U.S. regularly conducts research on gun deaths (29% correct).

As far as personal attitudes about guns are concerned, nearly half of Americans (45%) believe gun laws should be a lot more strict than they are today, with another quarter (23%) believing they should be somewhat more strict. A vast majority of Americans are also in favor of specific changes to gun policy. Over three quarters of Americans support a ban on assault-style weapons (79%), a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds (78%), and a ban on firearm attachments like bump stocks (82%).

Despite support for stricter policies related to guns, a majority of Americans say they have no problem with people owning guns generally (73%). However, half (51%) of Americans would not let their children play at a friend's house if they knew they had guns in the household. Overall, Americans are relatively split on whether owning a gun makes them feel safer (52% agree), and whether the benefits of gun ownership outweigh the risks (53% agree).

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
A (7+ correct answers)	8%	15%	4%	5%
B (5-6 correct answers)	33%	38%	29%	31%
C (4 correct answers)	22%	20%	25%	23%
D (3 correct answers)	18%	15%	21%	17%
F (2 or less correct answers)	19%	12%	21%	24%

*\*Grades are calculated based off number of correct answers on questions 2 through 4, not including question 2e. Correct answers are denoted with an asterisk in each question.*

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## Press Release – continued –

1. Which three of the following topics do you find the most worrying? (Select up to three)

	Total (N = 1,006)	Democrat (N = 340)	Republicans (N = 370)	Independents (N = 186)
Terrorism	41%	33%	55%	40%
Healthcare	33%	35%	32%	34%
Crime or gun violence	27%	37%	19%	26%
Political extremism or polarization	22%	20%	21%	23%
Climate change	20%	27%	11%	20%
Nuclear conflict	19%	21%	20%	17%
Government budget and debt	16%	11%	22%	18%
Immigration	16%	12%	24%	12%
Natural disasters	14%	12%	13%	16%
Education	13%	19%	10%	7%
Social inequality	13%	20%	3%	16%
Unemployment	11%	12%	8%	12%
Taxes	11%	8%	12%	11%
Foreign conflicts	10%	10%	10%	13%
Other	3%	3%	3%	5%
None of these	4%	1%	7%	5%

2. To the best of your knowledge, are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? \*Denotes correct answer

a. The percentage of Americans who own a gun has increased over the last twenty years.

	Total (N = 1,006)	Democrat (N = 340)	Republicans (N = 370)	Independents (N = 186)
True	78%	78%	80%	74%
False*	10%	12%	9%	9%
Don't know	13%	10%	12%	17%

b. The number of guns in America has increased over the last twenty years.

	Total (N = 1,006)	Democrat (N = 340)	Republicans (N = 370)	Independents (N = 186)
True*	82%	89%	77%	77%
False	8%	4%	13%	7%
Don't know	11%	7%	9%	16%

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## Press Release – continued –

c. About half of all civilian-owned guns in the world are in the United States.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True*	62%	70%	55%	60%
False	16%	12%	22%	16%
Don't know	23%	18%	23%	24%

d. After the Sandy Hook massacre, Congress put tough new background check laws in place.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True	35%	27%	43%	34%
False*	42%	52%	36%	40%
Don't know	23%	21%	21%	26%

e. An armed civilian has successfully stopped a mass shooting in the past 20 years. *Not included in overall grade scoring*

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True	35%	21%	49%	41%
False	35%	50%	28%	22%
Don't know	30%	29%	23%	37%

f. The large majority of gun-related fatalities in the United States occur in mass shootings.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True	30%	35%	26%	29%
False*	56%	56%	60%	53%
Don't know	13%	8%	13%	18%

g. Households with guns are more likely to experience a fatality from crime, accident or suicide than households without guns.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True*	47%	59%	37%	39%
False	32%	20%	44%	36%
Don't know	21%	20%	19%	25%

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## Press Release – continued –

h. The United States government regularly conducts research on gun deaths in this country.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True	43%	39%	51%	41%
False*	29%	36%	24%	27%
Don't know	28%	25%	25%	32%

i. The rate of gun deaths in the U.S. has declined since the 1980s.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
True*	20%	17%	26%	21%
False	61%	70%	54%	58%
Don't know	19%	13%	20%	21%

3. To the best of your knowledge, how many guns are there in the United States per 100 people:

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
8 guns per 100 people	10%	11%	10%	9%
32 guns per 100 people	29%	26%	33%	30%
88 guns per 100 people*	21%	27%	18%	16%
175 guns per 100 people	14%	15%	11%	17%
Don't know	26%	21%	28%	28%

4. To the best of your knowledge, how many people die from gun fatalities each year in the United States:

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
300	7%	6%	8%	8%
3000	24%	20%	27%	28%
30000*	38%	46%	35%	29%
300000	10%	13%	7%	10%
Don't know	21%	15%	24%	25%

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## Press Release – continued –

5. Which of the following statements comes closest to your overall view of gun laws in this country? Do you think gun laws should be...

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Gun laws should be a lot more strict than they are today	45%	65%	29%	32%
Gun laws should be somewhat more strict than they are today	23%	19%	26%	29%
Gun laws are about right	20%	9%	33%	23%
Gun laws should be somewhat less strict than they are today	7%	6%	6%	10%
Gun laws should be a lot less strict than they are today	4%	1%	6%	6%

6. Please indicate whether you would favor or oppose the following proposals about gun policy:  
a. Banning assault-style weapons

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly favor	58%	74%	48%	45%
Somewhat favor	21%	17%	22%	31%
Somewhat oppose	12%	7%	16%	16%
Strongly oppose	8%	2%	14%	8%
<i>Favor (Net)</i>	<i>79%</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>76%</i>
<i>Oppose (Net)</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>24%</i>

b. Creating a federal government database to track all gun sales

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly favor	55%	71%	44%	44%
Somewhat favor	24%	18%	27%	31%
Somewhat oppose	12%	7%	14%	15%
Strongly oppose	9%	3%	15%	9%
<i>Favor (Net)</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>71%</i>	<i>76%</i>
<i>Oppose (Net)</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>24%</i>

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## Press Release – continued –

c. Banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly favor	53%	68%	43%	42%
Somewhat favor	25%	20%	27%	33%
Somewhat oppose	12%	7%	16%	14%
Strongly oppose	10%	4%	15%	11%
<i>Favor (Net)</i>	<b>78%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<i>Oppose (Net)</i>	<b>22%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>25%</b>

d. Banning firearm attachments (i.e. bump stocks) that allow rifles to rapidly fire similar to an automatic weapon

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly favor	62%	76%	52%	54%
Somewhat favor	21%	12%	25%	28%
Somewhat oppose	11%	9%	14%	10%
Strongly oppose	7%	3%	9%	7%
<i>Favor (Net)</i>	<b>82%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<i>Oppose (Net)</i>	<b>18%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>18%</b>

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. I have no problem with people owning guns

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly agree	42%	29%	60%	40%
Somewhat agree	31%	30%	28%	38%
Somewhat disagree	13%	20%	7%	10%
Strongly disagree	12%	20%	5%	7%
Don't know	2%	1%	1%	4%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<b>73%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<b>25%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>17%</b>

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## Press Release – continued –

b. I would not let my children (if I had any) play at a friend’s house if I knew they had guns in the household

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly agree	28%	31%	24%	26%
Somewhat agree	23%	29%	18%	20%
Somewhat disagree	25%	25%	28%	25%
Strongly disagree	17%	9%	24%	17%
Don’t know	7%	6%	5%	11%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>51%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>43%</i>	<i>46%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>42%</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>52%</i>	<i>42%</i>

c. Owning a gun would make me feel safer

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly agree	26%	15%	37%	35%
Somewhat agree	26%	21%	31%	26%
Somewhat disagree	22%	25%	18%	19%
Strongly disagree	21%	35%	9%	14%
Don’t know	5%	4%	4%	6%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>52%</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>68%</i>	<i>61%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>43%</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>33%</i>

d. The benefits of gun ownership outweigh the risks

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly agree	25%	11%	39%	28%
Somewhat agree	28%	21%	33%	34%
Somewhat disagree	21%	31%	12%	18%
Strongly disagree	17%	29%	10%	10%
Don’t know	9%	7%	6%	10%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>62%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>38%</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>28%</i>

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## Press Release – continued –

e. I do not believe private citizens should own any guns at all: they should all be banned

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly agree	13%	18%	11%	9%
Somewhat agree	12%	17%	11%	6%
Somewhat disagree	23%	33%	12%	25%
Strongly disagree	48%	30%	64%	54%
Don't know	4%	2%	2%	7%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>71%</i>	<i>63%</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>78%</i>

f. The National Rifle Association (NRA) represents the views of people like me

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strongly agree	20%	12%	34%	21%
Somewhat agree	23%	15%	32%	22%
Somewhat disagree	13%	11%	14%	16%
Strongly disagree	31%	55%	12%	23%
Don't know	12%	7%	8%	19%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>43%</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>43%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>39%</i>

8. In your opinion, what is the primary reason why most people buy a gun.

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Self defense	50%	48%	45%	55%
Hunting	24%	23%	32%	21%
Sport shooting	7%	7%	10%	5%
Collecting	7%	6%	8%	9%
Other	4%	4%	1%	4%
Don't know	8%	12%	3%	6%

9. Please select yes or no to each of the following:

a. Do you, personally, own a gun?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	26%	20%	34%	26%
No	74%	80%	66%	74%





## Press Release – continued –

b. Have you ever fired a gun?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	64%	58%	74%	66%
No	36%	42%	26%	34%

c. Have you ever hunted with a firearm?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	29%	27%	36%	22%
No	71%	73%	64%	78%

d. Does someone else in your household own a gun?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	29%	23%	39%	27%
No	71%	77%	61%	73%

e. Do you have a close friend who owns a gun

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	70%	63%	81%	72%
No	30%	37%	19%	28%

10. Please select yes or no to each of the following:

a. Have you or someone in your immediate family ever been the victim of violent crime?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	27%	32%	20%	27%
No	73%	68%	80%	73%

b. Have you or someone in your immediate family ever been shot?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	16%	18%	15%	14%
No	84%	82%	85%	86%

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## Press Release – continued –

c. Have you or someone in your immediate family ever been threatened with a gun?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Yes	30%	36%	25%	25%
No	70%	64%	75%	75%

11. How do you get most of your news?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Television	43%	43%	46%	40%
Online/internet	28%	26%	26%	36%
Social media (Twitter, Facebook)	13%	16%	11%	12%
Print newspapers/magazines	5%	6%	6%	3%
Mobile News apps	5%	6%	4%	3%
Radio	4%	2%	5%	3%
None of the above	2%	1%	2%	3%

12. Of the choices listed below, which is your main source of television news?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
FOX News	23%	14%	34%	27%
CNN	19%	26%	15%	14%
CBS	11%	12%	12%	11%
ABC	11%	12%	10%	9%
NBC	10%	10%	8%	11%
Public Television	5%	6%	2%	6%
MSNBC	3%	6%	2%	1%
Other	7%	5%	6%	10%
None of the above	11%	9%	10%	10%

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## Press Release – continued –

13. With which political party do you most identify?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Strong Democrat	14%	39%	-	-
Moderate Democrat	15%	40%	-	-
Lean Democrat	8%	21%	-	-
Lean Republican	8%	-	22%	-
Moderate Republican	15%	-	43%	-
Strong Republican	12%	-	35%	-
Independent	19%	-	-	100%
Other	2%	-	-	-
Don't know/Refuse	9%	-	-	-

14. How would you describe the area in which you live?

	<b>Total</b> (N = 1,006)	<b>Democrat</b> (N = 340)	<b>Republicans</b> (N = 370)	<b>Independents</b> (N = 186)
Rural	18%	13%	22%	19%
Suburban	49%	48%	47%	53%
Urban	33%	39%	30%	28%

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## Press Release – continued –

### About the Study

These are findings from an Ipsos poll conducted October 10-11, 2017 on behalf of NPR. For the survey, a sample of roughly 1,006 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The sample includes 340 Democrats, 370 Republicans, and 186 Independents.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos's online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following ( $n=1,006$ ,  $DEFF=1.5$ , adjusted Confidence Interval=5).

The poll also has a credibility interval plus or minus 6.1 percentage points for Democrats, plus or minus 5.8 percentage points for Republicans, and plus or minus 8.2 percentage points for Independents.

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos' online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

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## Press Release – continued –

### About Ipsos Public Affairs

Ipsos Public Affairs is a non-partisan, objective, survey-based research practice made up of seasoned professionals. We conduct strategic research initiatives for a diverse number of American and international organizations, based not only on public opinion research, but elite stakeholder, corporate, and media opinion research.

Ipsos has media partnerships with the most prestigious news organizations around the world. In Canada, the U.S., UK, and internationally, Ipsos Public Affairs is the media polling supplier to Reuters News, the world's leading source of intelligent information for businesses and professionals. Ipsos Public Affairs is a member of the Ipsos Group, a leading global survey-based market research company. We provide boutique-style customer service and work closely with our clients, while also undertaking global research.

### About Ipsos

Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks fourth in the global research industry.

With offices in 88 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across five research specializations: brand, advertising and media; customer loyalty; marketing; public affairs research; and survey management.

Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

Ipsos has been listed on the Paris Stock Exchange since 1999 and generated global revenues of €1,782.7 million in 2016.

#### GAME CHANGERS

« Game Changers » is the Ipsos signature.

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands and society.  
We make our changing world easier and faster to navigate and inspire clients to make smarter decisions.  
We deliver with security, speed, simplicity and substance. We are Game Changers.

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