

Americans favor stricter gun laws, though support has declined from 2019

New USA Today/Ipsos poll find that fewer Republicans favor stricter gun laws, Congress acting on background checks compared to previous years

Washington, DC, March 24, 2021 — Two in three Americans think gun laws should be more strict than they are today, according to a new USA Today/Ipsos poll, conducted in the days immediately following a mass shooting in Boulder, CO. Though a majority are in favor of such reforms, this latest poll marks a decline in support from a similar <u>USA Today/Ipsos survey in 2019</u>. One of the primary causes for this shift is due to Republicans' views on the subject changing; a vast majority of Democrats continue to favor stricter gun laws and congressional action on existing background check legislation.

- 1. While a majority of Americans continue to favor stricter gun laws, support has declined over the past two to three years.
 - Currently, 65% of Americans believe gun laws should be more strict than they are today, compared to 72% in 2019 and 75% in 2018.
 - Since 2019, the partisan gap on this question has widened significantly. Now, 90% of Democrats favor stricter gun laws compared to just 35% of Republicans.
 - Over the past two years, Democrats' and Independents' views have remained steady. Republican support for stricter gun laws, on the other hand, has dropped nearly 20 points in that time frame.
 - Currently, a plurality of gun owners (47%) favor stricter gun laws in this country, but support is much lower than it is among non-gun owners (75%).
- 2. Three in five Americans believe the U.S. Senate should pass background check legislation. Here, too, the partisan divide has grown over time.
 - Sixty-one percent of Americans say the U.S. Senate should pass increased background check bills that have already been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, including 55% of gun owners.
 - Strong majorities of Democrats (82%) and Independents (62%) say the Senate should take action, while Republicans are evenly split (40% yes, 41% no).
 - This, too, marks a deepening partisan divide from 2019. Then, 67% said the Senate should act, and there was bipartisan agreement (79% of Democrats, 53% of Independents, and 59% of Republicans). The number of Republicans opposing Senate action has grown 17 percentage points since 2019.
- 3. As was the case in 2019, a majority of Americans believe the mental health system, racism and white nationalism, and loose gun laws are responsible for mass shootings in this country. Fewer place blame on gun manufacturers and the NRA.
 - Seventy-three percent of Americans believe the mental health system is very or somewhat responsible for mass shootings in this country (unchanged from 2019),





- 61% agree when it comes to racism and white nationalism (down from 69%), and 57% hold loose gun laws responsible (down from 67%).
- Half of Americans (49%) believe gun manufacturers and the NRA are responsible, while 43% do not.
- Partisanship plays a significant role here as well. Democrats are significantly more likely than Republicans to blame gun manufacturers and the NRA, racism and white nationalism, loose gun laws, Donald Trump, and Republicans in Congress. Republicans, on the other hand, point to Democrats in Congress and President Joe Biden. However, both sides of the aisle agree that the mental health system is responsible for mass shootings.

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between March 23-24, 2021. For this survey, a sample of 1,005 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents.

For full results, please refer to the following annotated questionnaire:





Full Annotated Questionnaire:

1. When in public spaces over the last few weeks, how safe or unsafe have you felt?

	3/23-24, 2021 (N=1,005)	8/5-6, 2019 (N=1,004)
Very safe	15%	28%
Mostly safe	51%	52%
Mostly unsafe	17%	11%
Very unsafe	5%	4%
Don't know	3%	5%
I am not going out in public due to COVID-19	8%	-
Safe (Net)	67%	80%
Unsafe (Net)	23%	15%

	Democrat	Democrat	Republican	Republican	Independent	Independent
	3/23-24,	8/5-6,	3/23-24,	8/5-6,	3/23-24,	8/5-6,
	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019
	(N=460)	(N=446)	(N=368)	(N=392)	(N=111)	(N=100)
Very safe	9%	26%	24%	33%	14%	29%
Mostly safe	50%	52%	56%	50%	43%	53%
Mostly unsafe	23%	9%	10%	10%	22%	15%
Very unsafe	7%	5%	4%	4%	3%	-
Don't know	2%	7%	2%	4%	5%	3%
I am not going out in public due to COVID-19	9%	1	4%	-	14%	-
Safe (Net)	60%	79%	80%	82%	57%	82%
Unsafe (Net)	30%	14%	14%	14%	25%	15%

2. Have you done any of the following as a result of the mass shootings that have taken place in the United States over the last several years?

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Avoided shopping in crowded places	24%	18%
Skipped public events where there would be a lot of people	22%	21%
Talked with your family about what to do if a shooting happened in your area	16%	25%
Contacted public officials asking for new laws to prevent mass shootings	5%	7%
None of these	57%	52%





	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Avoided shopping in crowded places	32%	21%	14%	18%	22%	8%
Skipped public events where there would be a lot of people	27%	22%	16%	20%	20%	17%
Talked with your family about what to do if a shooting happened in your area	21%	30%	14%	21%	10%	18%
Contacted public officials asking for new laws to prevent mass shootings	9%	11%	2%	6%	3%	*
None of these	45%	47%	68%	55%	64%	64%

3. How familiar are you, if at all, with the recent mass shootings around Atlanta, Georgia, and in Boulder, Colorado?

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Very familiar	24%	32%	19%	20%
Somewhat familiar	36%	37%	40%	34%
Heard about it, don't know much	31%	27%	31%	31%
Have not heard about it	6%	3%	8%	11%
Don't know	3%	1%	2%	3%
Familiar (Net)	60%	68%	59%	54%





4. How much responsibility do you believe the following hold for mass shootings in the United States?

Total Responsible Summary

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
The mental health system	73%	73%
Racism and white nationalism	61%	69%
Loose gun laws	57%	67%
Gun manufacturers and the NRA	49%	55%
Donald Trump	43%	50%
Violent video games	42%	51%
Republicans in Congress	40%	47%
Democrats in Congress	36%	40%
President Joe Biden	27%	-





	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
The mental health system	81%	74%	71%	77%	66%	59%
Racism and white nationalism	86%	84%	33%	57%	62%	54%
Loose gun laws	85%	83%	27%	51%	55%	59%
Gun manufacturers and the NRA	76%	72%	20%	37%	48%	54%
Donald Trump	75%	74%	14%	23%	39%	41%
Violent video games	43%	47%	48%	60%	33%	41%
Republicans in Congress	63%	66%	16%	29%	41%	36%
Democrats in Congress	28%	34%	50%	51%	34%	37%
President Joe Biden	20%	-	40%	-	21%	-





a. President Donald Trump

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	29%	34%
Somewhat responsible	14%	17%
Not very responsible	11%	12%
Not at all responsible	33%	28%
Don't know	13%	10%
Responsible (Net)	43%	50%
Not responsible (Net)	44%	40%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	53%	52%	7%	12%	25%	27%
Somewhat responsible	22%	22%	6%	12%	14%	14%
Not very responsible	9%	8%	12%	19%	12%	12%
Not at all responsible	6%	9%	69%	53%	28%	34%
Don't know	10%	9%	6%	6%	21%	13%
Responsible (Net)	75%	74%	14%	23%	39%	41%
Not responsible (Net)	16%	17%	81%	71%	40%	46%





b. The mental health system

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	34%	36%
Somewhat responsible	39%	37%
Not very responsible	13%	11%
Not at all responsible	6%	8%
Don't know	8%	8%
Responsible (Net)	73%	73%
Not responsible (Net)	18%	19%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	39%	35%	32%	42%	33%	32%
Somewhat responsible	42%	39%	39%	35%	33%	27%
Not very responsible	13%	12%	12%	9%	13%	17%
Not at all responsible	2%	8%	9%	6%	7%	13%
Don't know	5%	7%	8%	8%	13%	11%
Responsible (Net)	81%	74%	71%	77%	66%	59%
Not responsible (Net)	15%	19%	20%	15%	21%	30%





c. Violent video games

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	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	15%	22%
Somewhat responsible	28%	29%
Not very responsible	23%	21%
Not at all responsible	23%	20%
Don't know	11%	9%
Responsible (Net)	42%	51%
Not responsible (Net)	47%	40%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	12%	19%	21%	27%	13%	14%
Somewhat responsible	32%	28%	27%	33%	19%	27%
Not very responsible	26%	23%	19%	16%	28%	26%
Not at all responsible	21%	24%	24%	15%	30%	21%
Don't know	10%	6%	8%	9%	9%	11%
Responsible (Net)	43%	47%	48%	60%	33%	41%
Not responsible (Net)	47%	47%	43%	31%	58%	48%





d. Gun manufacturers and the NRA

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	30%	35%
Somewhat responsible	18%	20%
Not very responsible	15%	14%
Not at all responsible	28%	22%
Don't know	9%	9%
Responsible (Net)	49%	55%
Not responsible (Net)	43%	36%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	52%	49%	8%	17%	34%	35%
Somewhat responsible	24%	22%	12%	19%	14%	19%
Not very responsible	10%	11%	15%	18%	24%	9%
Not at all responsible	6%	11%	58%	38%	23%	28%
Don't know	8%	7%	7%	7%	5%	9%
Responsible (Net)	76%	72%	20%	37%	48%	54%
Not responsible (Net)	16%	22%	74%	56%	46%	37%





e. Democrats in Congress

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	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	15%	17%
Somewhat responsible	20%	23%
Not very responsible	22%	21%
Not at all responsible	26%	23%
Don't know	17%	17%
Responsible (Net)	36%	40%
Not responsible (Net)	47%	43%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	9%	11%	28%	26%	9%	17%
Somewhat responsible	19%	22%	22%	25%	25%	20%
Not very responsible	26%	26%	20%	19%	17%	18%
Not at all responsible	31%	26%	22%	20%	25%	25%
Don't know	14%	14%	8%	11%	23%	20%
Responsible (Net)	28%	34%	50%	51%	34%	37%
Not responsible (Net)	57%	52%	42%	38%	43%	43%





f. Republicans in Congress

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	21%	29%
Somewhat responsible	19%	19%
Not very responsible	18%	16%
Not at all responsible	26%	21%
Don't know	16%	16%
Responsible (Net)	40%	47%
Not responsible (Net)	44%	37%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	38%	44%	5%	13%	21%	24%
Somewhat responsible	25%	22%	11%	16%	20%	12%
Not very responsible	14%	12%	25%	22%	16%	18%
Not at all responsible	10%	9%	50%	38%	22%	23%
Don't know	14%	13%	9%	12%	22%	23%
Responsible (Net)	63%	66%	16%	29%	41%	36%
Not responsible (Net)	23%	21%	75%	59%	38%	41%





g. Racism and white nationalism

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	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	34%	44%
Somewhat responsible	27%	25%
Not very responsible	12%	9%
Not at all responsible	18%	12%
Don't know	10%	10%
Responsible (Net)	61%	69%
Not responsible (Net)	29%	21%

	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	55%	61%	9%	27%	37%	33%
Somewhat responsible	32%	23%	24%	29%	25%	21%
Not very responsible	5%	6%	20%	14%	13%	10%
Not at all responsible	4%	5%	37%	20%	13%	19%
Don't know	5%	6%	9%	10%	12%	18%
Responsible (Net)	86%	84%	33%	57%	62%	54%
Not responsible (Net)	9%	11%	57%	34%	26%	29%





h. Loose gun laws

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	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	36%	43%
Somewhat responsible	21%	24%
Not very responsible	16%	10%
Not at all responsible	19%	15%
Don't know	8%	8%
Responsible (Net)	57%	67%
Not responsible (Net)	35%	24%
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	Democrat 3/23-24, 2021	Democrat 8/5-6, 2019	Republican 3/23-24, 2021	Republican 8/5-6, 2019	Independent 3/23-24, 2021	Independent 8/5-6, 2019
Very responsible	66%	59%	12%	28%	29%	31%
Somewhat responsible	19%	25%	15%	23%	26%	28%
Not very responsible	8%	6%	22%	15%	21%	8%
Not at all responsible	3%	5%	43%	27%	12%	20%
Don't know	4%	6%	7%	7%	12%	14%
Responsible (Net)	85%	83%	27%	51%	55%	59%
Not responsible (Net)	11%	11%	66%	42%	33%	28%

i. President Joe Biden

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Very responsible	13%	10%	20%	9%
Somewhat responsible	14%	10%	20%	12%
Not very responsible	23%	24%	20%	28%
Not at all responsible	36%	45%	29%	33%
Don't know	15%	10%	10%	18%
Responsible (Net)	27%	20%	40%	21%
Not responsible (Net)	59%	69%	50%	61%





As you may know, the US House of Representatives passed legislation a few weeks ago tightening background checks for gun purchases. However, to date the US Senate has not voted on these bills.

5. Should the US Senate pass these increased background check bills already passed by the US House?

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019
Yes	61%	67%
No	21%	14%
Don't know	18%	19%

	Democrat	Democrat	Republican	Republican	Independent	Independent	
	3/23-24,	8/5-6,	3/23-24,	8/5-6,	3/23-24,	8/5-6,	
	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	
Yes	82%	79%	40%	59%	62%	53%	
No	6%	7%	41%	24%	18%	16%	
Don't know	12%	14%	19%	17%	20%	31%	

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

	3/23-24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019 (N=1,004)	2/28/18 (N=1,005)	10/17/17 (N=1,006)
Gun laws should be a lot more strict than they are today	41%	50%	44%	45%
Gun laws should be somewhat more strict than they are today	24%	22%	31%	23%
Gun laws are about right	23%	17%	17%	20%
Gun laws should be somewhat less strict than they are today	5%	4%	4%	7%
Gun laws should be a lot less strict than they are today	7%	7%	4%	4%
More strict (Net)	65%	72%	75%	68%
Less strict (Net)	12%	11%	8%	11%





	Democrat			Republican			Independent					
	3/23- 24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019 (N=446)	2/28, 2018 (N=351)	10/17, 2017 (N=340)	3/23- 24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019 (N=392)	2/28, 2018 (N=341)	10/17, 2017 (N=370)	3/23- 24, 2021	8/5-6, 2019 (N=100)	2/28, 2018 (N=203)	10/17, 2017 (N=186)
Gun laws should be a lot more strict than they are today	67%	65%	68%	65%	12%	32%	22%	29%	40%	44%	37%	32%
Gun laws should be somewhat more strict than they are today	23%	22%	24%	19%	23%	22%	38%	26%	26%	20%	31%	29%
Gun laws are about right	5%	6%	5%	9%	44%	28%	27%	33%	21%	27%	23%	23%
Gun laws should be somewhat less strict than they are today	2%	2%	1%	6%	9%	6%	8%	6%	3%	7%	5%	10%
Gun laws should be a lot less strict than they are today	3%	5%	1%	1%	12%	12%	6%	6%	9%	2%	4%	6%
More strict (Net)	90%	87%	92%	84%	35%	54%	59%	55%	66%	64%	68%	61%
Less strict (Net)	5%	7%	3%	7%	21%	18%	14%	12%	12%	9%	9%	16%

7. Do you, or someone in your household, own a gun?

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Yes, I do	25%	16%	39%	23%
Yes, someone in my household	19%	15%	27%	12%
No	60%	71%	42%	67%





About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between March 23-24, 2021 on behalf of USA Today. For this survey, a sample of roughly 1,005 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The sample includes 460 Democrats, 368 Republicans, and 111 Independents.

The sample was randomly drawn from <u>Ipsos' online panel</u>, <u>partner online panel sources</u>, <u>and "river" sampling</u> and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a 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 2016 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 non-probability 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=1,005, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-5.0 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval of plus or minus 5.2 percentage points for Democrats, plus or minus 5.8 percentage points for Republicans, and plus or minus 10.6 percentage points for Independents.

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