The Joyce Foundation

2nd Amendment Narrative Poll
LIKELY VOTERS NATIONWIDE

April 2021
Methodology

- Benenson Strategy Group conducted a total of 1,406 interviews from December 8-16, 2020 among likely voters nationwide.
  - The interviews included an oversample of 202 voters 18-34 years old.
  - The interviews included an oversample of 203 voters who are people of color.
  - The survey was conducted online.

- The sample was weighted to ensure it is proportionately representative of likely voters nationwide.

- The margin of error for the dataset overall is +/- 2.6% at the 95% confidence interval. It is higher among subgroups.
  - The margin of error for each oversample is +/- 6.9%.
General View on the 2nd Amendment
Right to Keep and Bear Arms Ranked Last on Importance of Rights; Voting and Free Speech Are Preeminent Rights

How important is this right to you?
Showing % “7” on a 1-7 pt scale, 1 meaning not at all important and 7 meaning extremely important

- Right to vote: 84
- Freedom of speech: 75
- Freedom of religion: 71
- Right to trial by jury: 70
- Protection against unreasonable search and seizure: 67
- Freedom to assemble peacefully: 66
- Freedom of the press: 59
- Right to remain silent: 59
- Right to keep and bear arms: 50
Overall, Voters Split Evenly on Interpretation of the Constitution – Gun HHs Lean Toward Original Meaning; Young People, PoC and Moderates More in Line With Modern Times

Which of the following comes closer to your view?

The Constitution should be interpreted as the way it was understood by people at the time it was written and based on what we know about its original meaning.

The Constitution should be interpreted in a way that takes into account changes in modern times and unforeseen developments.
Most Americans Think the Second Amendment Should Be Interpreted to Allow More Limits on Guns, Including Over a Third of Gun HHs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gun HH</th>
<th>18-34 yo</th>
<th>PoC</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The way we currently interpret the Second Amendment places too many limits and restrictions on guns.</td>
<td>43/57</td>
<td>59/41</td>
<td>45/55</td>
<td>31/69</td>
<td>38/62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way we currently interpret the Second Amendment does not place enough limits and restrictions on guns.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following comes closer to your view?
Strong Majority Believe Second Amendment Applies to Basic Firearms, But Less Than Half Believe It Applies to Semi / Automatic Weapons

Belief Second Amendment includes semi / automatic rifles spikes among gun owners

Which of the following from the list below do you believe the Second Amendment includes when it says, 'right of the people to keep and bear Arms'?

You may select as many as you think.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handguns</th>
<th>Rifles</th>
<th>Shotguns</th>
<th>Knives</th>
<th>Semi-automatic Rifles</th>
<th>Pepper spray or mace</th>
<th>Automatic rifles</th>
<th>Tasers or stun guns</th>
<th>Baseball bat possessed as a weapon</th>
<th>Grenades</th>
<th>Rocket launchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gun Owners: 54%

Gun Owners: 46%
Overwhelming Majorities of Voters – Including Gun HHs – Agree That Government Has Both a Role in and a Responsibility to Impose Restrictions on Guns

Which of the following comes closer to your view? (gray text tested against each colored text separately)

The government should have NO ROLE in telling people who can have a gun, what type or how many firearms they may keep in their home.

The types of weapons we have today could not have been imagined when the Second Amendment was written. The government should ensure that the Second Amendment is used for protection, not to let individuals purchase arsenals of semi-automatic weapons.

The government has a responsibility to ensure public safety by imposing restrictions on who can have a gun, and how many and what kinds of guns people may own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>PoC</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO ROLE in telling</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>how many firearms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they may keep in</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The types of weapons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we have today could</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not have been</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined when the</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Amendment</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was written.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strongly Agree | Smwt Agree | Total Agree
--- | --- | ---
Owning a gun and keeping it in one’s home is one thing, but there should be **common sense limits on people carrying guns around in public.**
53 | 31 | 84

The Second Amendment is important because it gives Americans the **right to protect themselves, their families, and personal property.**
57 | 30 | 87
Heller Decision
Before Being Asked the Subsequent Series of Questions, Respondents Were Shown the Following Introduction to the Heller Decision:

As you may or may not know, in 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that the Second Amendment protects an individual’s right to keep and bear arms within the home for private purposes like self-defense. In the decision, conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia – writing for the majority – stated,

“Like most rights, the Second Amendment right is not unlimited. It is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose.”

This ruling essentially says that the Second Amendment guarantees you the right to own a gun in your home but explicitly says that the Second Amendment does not give Americans unlimited rights to own firearms or carry them outside of their home. He also wrote that it is constitutional to limit gun ownership by felons and the mentally ill and to limit dangerous or unusual weapons.
Justice Scalia’s View That the Second Amendment Is Not Unlimited and Doesn’t Mean Americans Can Have Any Weapon, Anywhere Is Broadly Resonant

Given what you have just read, do you agree or disagree with Justice Scalia's ruling?

- Total Agree: 80
- Somewhat Agree: 74
- Strongly Agree: 76
- Total Agree: 81
- Somewhat Agree: 81
- Strongly Agree: 81

Justice Scalia’s View That the Second Amendment Is Not Unlimited and Doesn’t Mean Americans Can Have Any Weapon, Anywhere Is Broadly Resonant

Given what you have just read, do you agree or disagree with Justice Scalia's ruling?

- Total Agree: 80
- Somewhat Agree: 74
- Strongly Agree: 76
- Total Agree: 81
- Somewhat Agree: 81
- Strongly Agree: 81
Over 2 in 3 Believe That Heller Strikes the Right Balance or That It Should Impose Stricter Limits On Guns

Given what you have just read, which of the following is closest to your view?

(Heller ruling)

- This ruling about the right to have a gun in the home **DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH. IT SHOULD BE EXPANDED** so that we can protect Americans' right to a broader set of weapons and where they can carry them.
- This ruling about the right to have a gun in the home **STRIKES THE RIGHT BALANCE** and should be left as it is.
- This ruling about the right to have a gun in the home **GOES TOO FAR** and should be overturned. We need to have even **STRICER LIMITS ON GUNS**.

Total: 31

52

17
Substantial Majorities Across All Key Groups Would Not Support Expanding the Heller Decision to Give Individuals a Broader Right to More Weapons and Places to Carry Them.

Given what you have just read, which of the following is closest to your view?

- Heller ruling strikes the right balance
- Heller should be expanded and allow for broader gun rights
- Heller ruling goes too far—We need stricter limits on guns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Con</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gun HH</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34 yo</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderates</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PoC</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guns In Public Spaces
Voters Feel Strongly That Intimidation with Firearms Infringes First Amendment Rights of Others

DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT?

When a person carrying a gun uses it to intimidate someone, they are infringing on that person's First Amendment rights.

- **Strongly Agree**: 60
- **Smwt Agree**: 27
- **Total Agree**: 87

Guns should not be allowed at political rallies, protests or marches.

- **Strongly Agree**: 51
- **Smwt Agree**: 26
- **Total Agree**: 77
86% of Voters Had Strong Negative Emotional Responses to Assault Rifles in Public, Compared to 67% for Handguns

Imagine you were out in your local community doing one of your usual errands such as grocery shopping and you encountered a person you don’t know – not law enforcement or military – openly carrying a(n) **assault rifle** / handgun.

Which of the following words would most closely describe how you would feel? *You may choose one, two or three words.*

- Uncomfortable
- Unsafe
- In danger
- Scared
- Uneasy
- Intimidated
- Curious
- Safe
- Proud
- Patriotic
- At ease
- Unconcerned

86% selected at least one of these responses for assault rifles
67% selected at least one of these responses for handguns
Majorities Do Not Think Guns Should Be Allowed in Schools, at Polls, or Around Forms of Public Gathering & Transportation; Less Concern Around Retail, Restaurants and Workplaces

Thinking about where guns should and should not be allowed, which of the following places do you think people (not including law enforcement) should NOT be allowed to have guns? You may select more than one.
Voters Overwhelmingly in Favor of Requiring Permits to Carry Guns in Public

In your personal view, do you think people should have to obtain a permit if they are to carry a gun in public?

- Yes: 86
- No: 14
**Even Prior to the Capitol Riot, Armed Protestors Are Seen As Extremists and Intimidators**

If you encountered a group of people you don't know, who are neither law enforcement nor members of the military, that were openly carrying handguns or assault rifles as a means to intimidate others in a public space, which of the following words or phrases would most closely describe how you view that group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armed extremists</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidators</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radicals</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A militia</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilantes</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun enthusiasts</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protectors</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunters</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriots</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchdog</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sportsman</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military collectors</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protection from Crime Is the Primary Reason for Gun Ownership; Nearly 4 in 10 Say They Own a Gun For Protection From Civil Unrest or Violent Protest

Which of the following reasons do you or does someone in your household own a gun?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection from crime</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection from civil unrest or violent protest</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection / family heirloom / antique / memento</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting reasons</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection from animals</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection from the government</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran / military / law enforcement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - please specify</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Messaging Guidance
Key Findings/Messages

THE SECOND AMENDMENT IS POPULAR, BUT VOTERS AGREE IT SHOULD HAVE LIMITS
✓ Commonsense limits don’t undermine the Second Amendment or your right to protect your home and family.
✓ The framers could never have anticipated the high-powered weapons of today.
✓ The government already has sensible regulations on dangerous things, and has a responsibility to do so with guns.

THE SECOND AMENDMENT IS NOT A SUPERIOR RIGHT; FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS ARE PARAMOUNT
✓ Guns have no place at political rallies, protests or marches.
✓ When guns are used to intimidate, that threatens our sacred right to free speech.
✓ It’s one thing to own a gun for self-defense and protection, when they are used to intimidate others it crosses a line.

THE HELLER DECISION HAS BROAD SUPPORT; ACTS AS A SHIELD AGAINST SECOND AMENDMENT EXPANSION
✓ It’s one thing to own a gun and keep it in your house, but there should be common sense limits.
✓ We can still support the Constitution and at the same time pass common sense gun laws that protect our communities from gun violence.
✓ We can all agree about the right to protection, but that shouldn’t include letting anyone purchase arsenals of semi-automatic rifles.

LIMITING GUNS IN PUBLIC PLACES ENJOYS BROAD SUPPORT
✓ Guns carried openly in public places make most people feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
✓ Requiring a permit and limiting guns in sensitive places are commonsense ways to protect the rights of all Americans.
✓ But note, many people own guns for protection from civil unrest or violent protests.