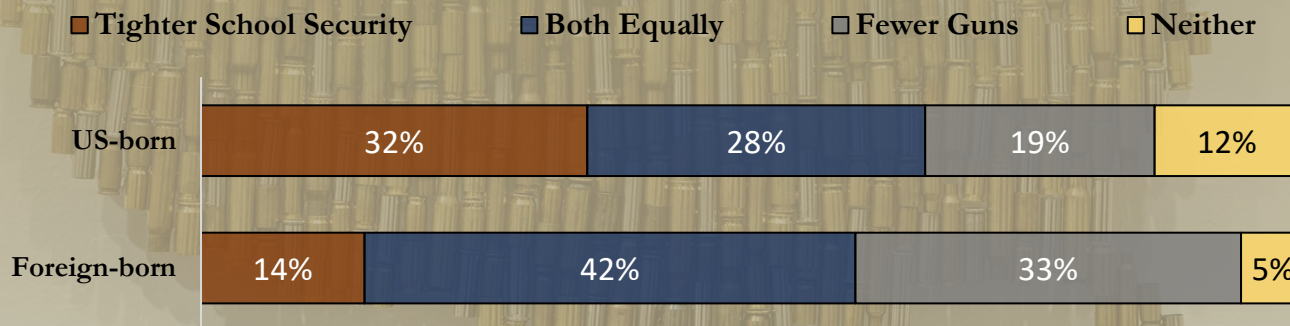# American Attitudes Toward Gun Violence: Numbers and Images

Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse, Principal Investigators

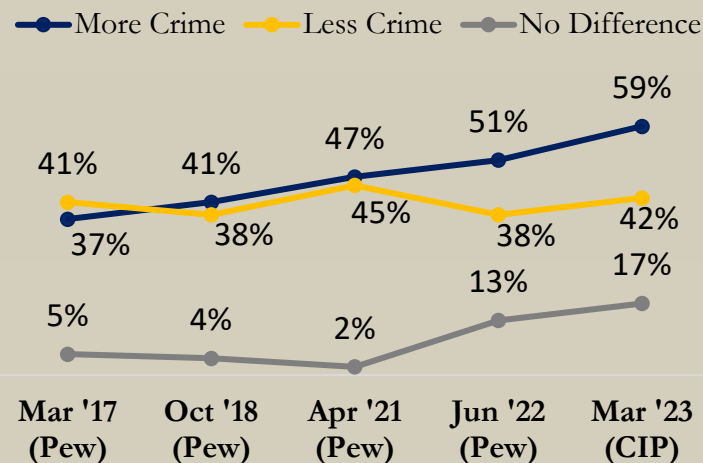## Attitudes of US-born and Foreign-born Respondents Differ

Q: Which of the following is more likely to reduce gun violence against children: tighter school security or fewer guns in the community?

■ Tighter School Security   ■ Both Equally   □ Fewer Guns   □ Neither

	Tighter School Security	Both Equally	Fewer Guns	Neither
US-born	32%	28%	19%	12%
Foreign-born	14%	42%	33%	5%

The Partisan Divide Widens on the Impact of Gun Ownership on Crime Rates

Q: If more Americans owned guns, do you think there would be:

[Percentage Difference between Republicans and Democrats Who Responded]

— More Crime   — Less Crime   — No Difference

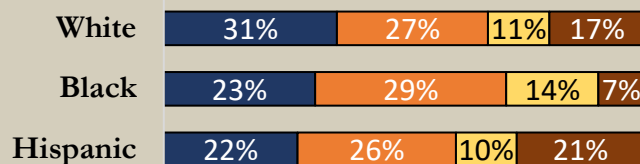|	Mar '17 (Pew)	Oct '18 (Pew)	Apr '21 (Pew)	Jun '22 (Pew)	Mar '23 (CIP)
More Crime	37%	41%	47%	51%	59%
Less Crime	41%	38%	45%	38%	42%
No Difference	5%	4%	2%	13%	17%

Black Americans are More Supportive of Stricter Gun Control

Q: Rank the top three of the following in order of most importance for reducing mass shootings

[Options Ranked First the Most Often]

■ Prevent people with mental illness from purchasing guns
■ Banning assault-style weapons
□ Making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks
■ Allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places

	Mental illness	Assault weapons	Background checks	Concealed carry
White	31%	27%	11%	17%
Black	23%	29%	14%	7%
Hispanic	22%	26%	10%	21%

American Attitudes Toward Gun Violence:
Numbers and Images

From the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll and
the Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Program

In March 2023, the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll with Ipsos fielded a poll about gun policies and gun violence in America. This report analyzes the resulting attitudes on various policy options proposed to reduce mass shootings, prevent gun violence against children, and the impact of gun ownership on crime rates. In addition, this report highlights the personal stories and impact gun violence has on a community through the medium of art. The art featured in this report is from the 2023 "Victims of Gun Violence" Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Collection at the University of Maryland. Woven together throughout this report, the data and visual representations tell a story of the deep scars gun violence has left on Americans.

A guitar filled with bullet casings and flower petals.

"June 23, 2022, my cousin, a man who loved playing the guitar and making music come to life, had his life taken from him. Gun violence has taken over and consumed him by simply opening the door to a man who had a different agenda. Leaving me and my family with permanent trauma and trying to hold on to a memory of him without a bullet through his head. Change needs to happen. Not just for my cousin's sake, but for all our loved ones."

"Tainted" by Mary Mena, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Collection. Photo by John Consoli/University of Maryland.

Previous surveys conducted by the Critical Issues Poll reveal shifting attitudes towards gun violence in the United States. In our August 2020 poll, 47% of Democrats and 46% of Republicans thought that gun policy should be a "very high priority" for the 46th President of the United States. In addition, Black Americans were more likely to say it was a very high priority (58%) than White (44%), Hispanic (46%) or Asian (26%) Americans.

In [October 2022](#), we asked respondents who planned to vote in the 2022 midterm election to rank gun policy in issue priority importance against 11 other priorities.[1] Seventeen percent of Republicans and 29% of Democrats ranked gun policy among their top three choices. However, only 7% of Americans, including 6% of Republicans and 8% of Democrats ranked guns as their first voting priority.
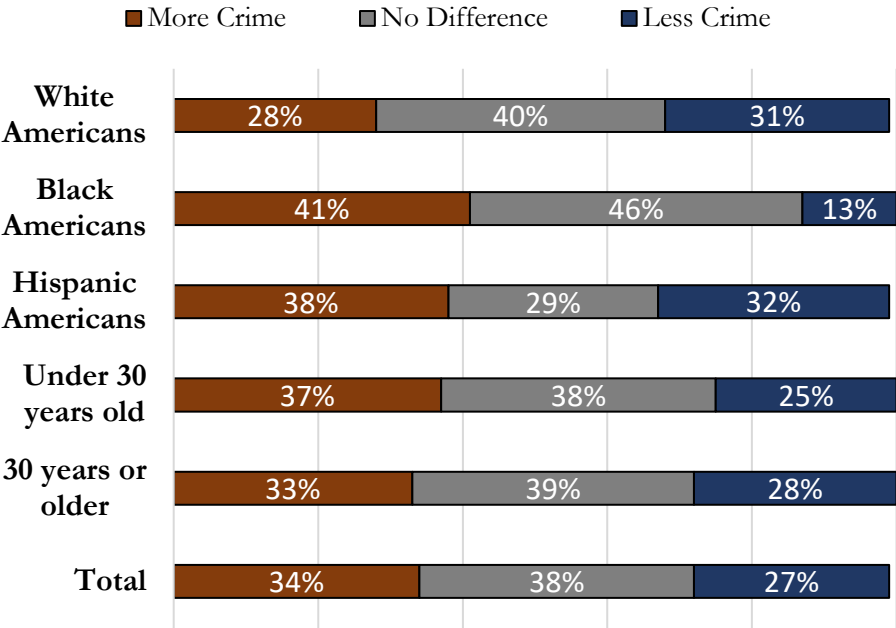
In the [post-midterm election poll](#), this number fell to only 4% of Americans ranking it as their first voting priority (including 4% of Republicans and 3% of Democrats); however, it remained similarly ranked in Americans' top three choices overall, with 17% of Republicans and 25% of Democrats ranking it within their top three priorities.

In the [March-April 2023 poll](#), we found that while partisan divides remain on issues around gun policies, divides were more along racial/ethnic identity lines, especially compared to other demographics like age. In addition, people born outside the United States were more likely to support stricter gun policies than those born in the United States. Finally, we see a change in Americans' beliefs regarding how more guns will impact crime rates in America.

Attitudes Vary More by Race Than by Age

As we found in previous Critical Issues Poll findings, Black Americans are more likely to consider gun policy "very important" compared to other races/ethnicities. Our recent poll expands on these findings. Looking at how Americans viewed the impact of guns on crime rates, Black Americans were more likely to say that if more Americans owned guns there would be more crime (41%) or make no difference (46%) than White Americans (28% and 40%, respectively). Hispanic Americans were in the middle (38% and 29%, respectively). In comparison, Americans of different age groups did not vary as widely in their views. Thirty-seven percent of those under 30 years old said that if Americans owned more guns there would be more crime, and 38% said there would be no difference, compared to 33% and 39%, respectively, of Americans 30 years of age and older.

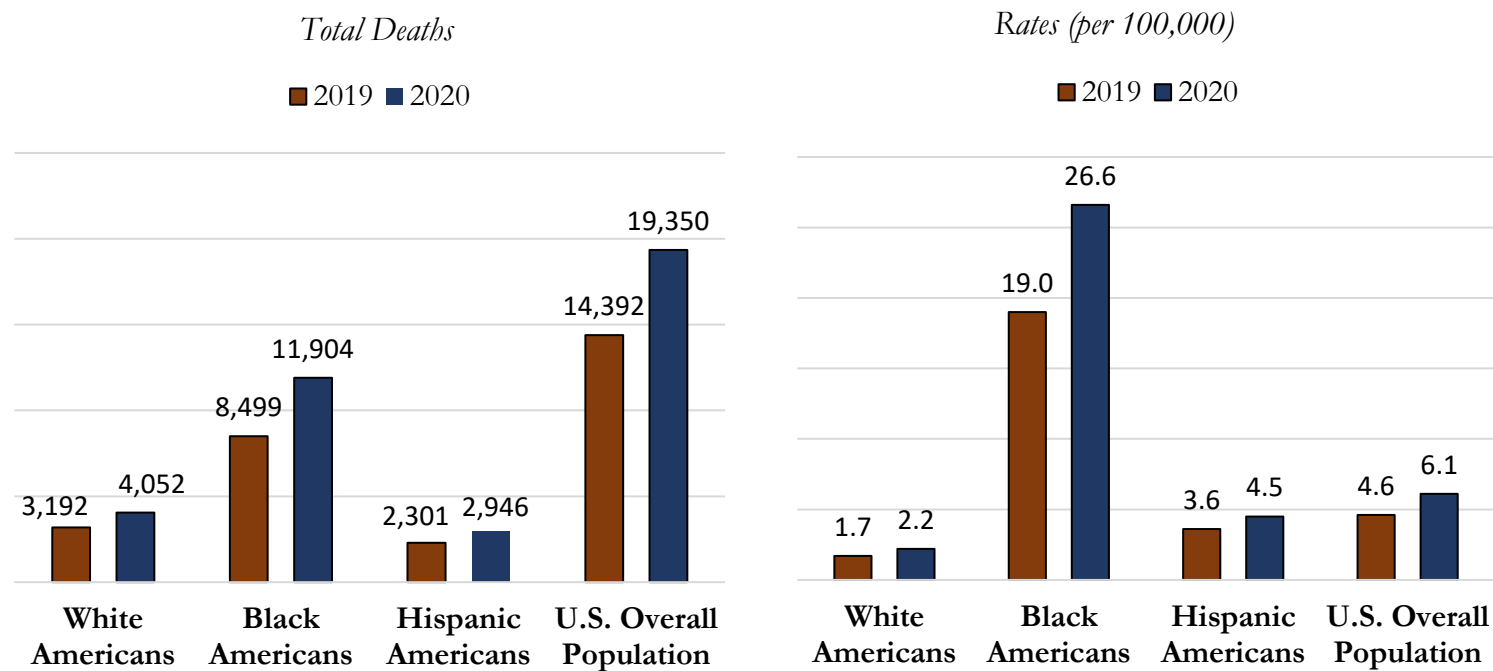**Q. If more Americans owned guns, do you think there would be:**

■ More Crime ■ No Difference ■ Less Crime

	More Crime	No Difference	Less Crime
White Americans	28%	40%	31%
Black Americans	41%	46%	13%
Hispanic Americans	38%	29%	32%
Under 30 years old	37%	38%	25%
30 years or older	33%	39%	28%
Total	34%	38%	27%

The gap between Black Americans' views of how guns impact crime rates compared to White and Hispanic Americans is likely rooted in the disproportionate impact of gun violence on Black communities. According to [one study](#), between 2019 and 2020 the number of firearm homicide deaths in the U.S. spiked by 34.6%, from 14,392 in 2019 to 19,350 in

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[1] The 12 issue priorities were inflation, K-12 education, American democracy, crime, climate change, jobs, foreign policy, abortion, racial/ethnic relations, guns, immigration, and the pandemic.

2020. While all groups saw an increase in their rate of firearm homicides, Black Americans saw the greatest absolute and relative increase with an average of 26.6 out of 100,000 Black Americans dying from firearm homicide in 2020, up from 19 per 100,000 in 2019. In relative terms, Black Americans were about 12 times more likely to be killed by a firearm than White Americans in 2020.
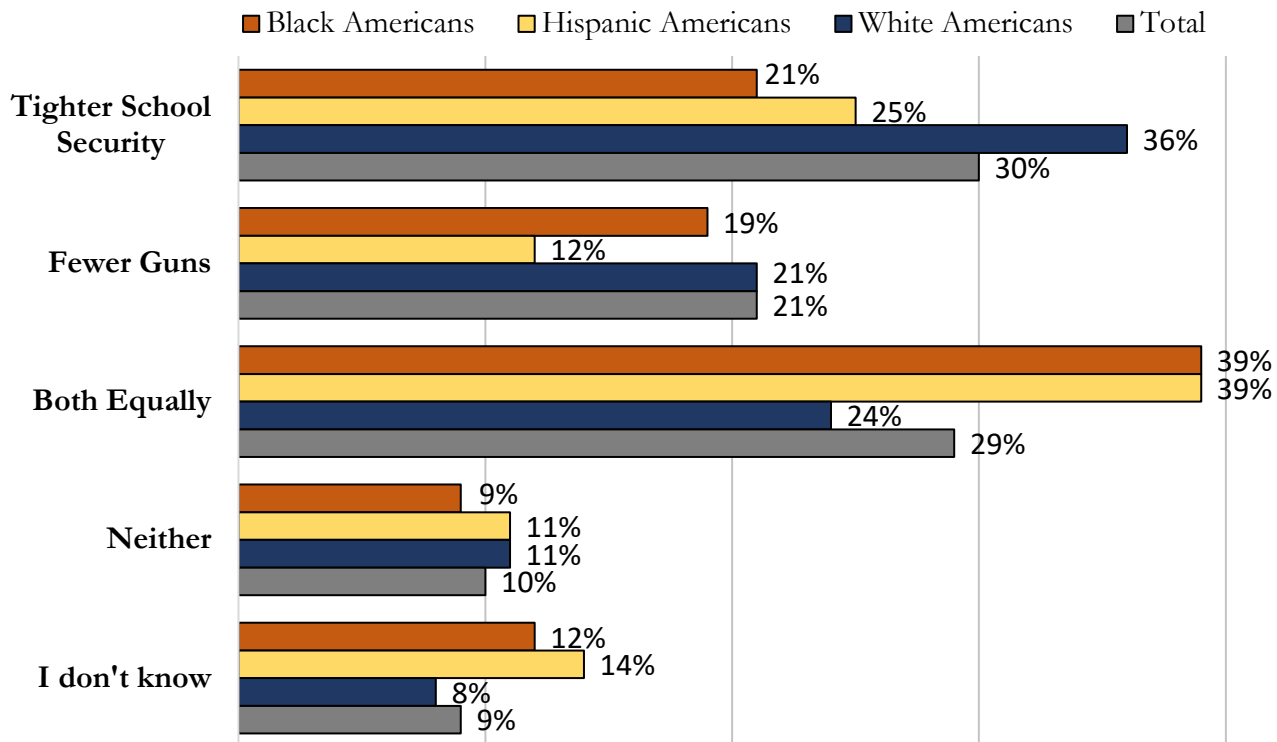
Firearm Homicide Incidence by Racial/Ethnic Group, 2019-2020

Source: Kegler, Scott R., et al. "Vital signs: changes in firearm homicide and suicide rates—United States, 2019–2020." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71.19 (2022): 656.
Note: Rates are age-adjusted to the year 2000 U.S. standard population

Black Americans' unique position as the demographic group most exposed to gun violence further reflects on their attitudes towards other possible solutions to reducing the occurrence of mass shootings. When asked what policy choice would be most effective to prevent gun violence against children, only a quarter of Hispanic Americans and just 21% of Black Americans said tighter school security, compared to 36% of White Americans. Instead, a plurality of Black and Hispanic Americans (39%) said both fewer guns and tighter school security, whereas only 24% of White Americans said the same. Looking at age, there was less variation. Among respondents under 30 years of age, 31% said both tighter security and fewer guns equally, while 29% of those 30 years and older said the same (with 24% and 31% saying just tighter security, respectively).

Q. Which of the following is more likely to reduce gun violence against children: tighter school security or fewer guns in the community?

Legend: ■ Black Americans ■ Hispanic Americans ■ White Americans ■ Total

Tighter School Security
- Black Americans: 21%
- Hispanic Americans: 25%
- White Americans: 36%
- Total: 30%

Fewer Guns
- Black Americans: 19%
- Hispanic Americans: 12%
- White Americans: 21%
- Total: 21%

Both Equally
- Black Americans: 39%
- Hispanic Americans: 39%
- White Americans: 24%
- Total: 29%

Neither
- Black Americans: 9%
- Hispanic Americans: 11%
- White Americans: 11%
- Total: 10%

I don't know
- Black Americans: 12%
- Hispanic Americans: 14%
- White Americans: 8%
- Total: 9%

"I am a part of the generation that participated in active shooter drills in the middle of math class. The generation that was told by my psychology teacher that he moved the bookshelves over by the door so we could easily push them and have two layers of textbooks between us and a bullet coming through the door. The generation that knows how to line our desks up and curl up small to shield ourselves from metal with wooden desks and paper books."

"No Child Left Behind" by Maya Lee, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Collection. Photo by John Consoli/ University of Maryland.

When asked to choose their three out of six most preferred policies to prevent mass shootings, Black Americans were most supportive of banning assault-style weapons, with 29% of respondents ranking it as their first option, and 66% ranking it within their top three. By comparison, White Americans were less likely to rank it as their first option (27%) or within their top three (49%). Furthermore, Black Americans were highly skeptical about the effectiveness of allowing more widespread concealed carry, with only 7% of Black Americans ranking as their first choice and 18% ranking it within their top three.
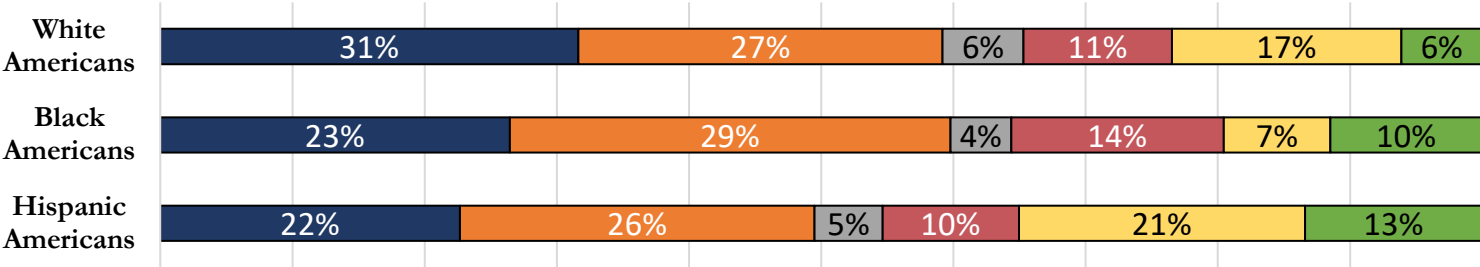
Hispanic Americans overall expressed opinions closer to those of White rather than Black Americans. Hispanic attitudes towards banning assault-style weapons and allowing people to carry concealed weapons in more places were significantly closer to the attitudes of White Americans. On banning assault-style weapons, 26% and 46% of Hispanic Americans, and 27% and 49% of White Americans ranked it as their first option or within their top three, respectively. Regarding concealed carry expansion, 21% and 38% of Hispanic Americans, and 17% and 37% of White Americans ranked it as their first option or within their top three, respectively.

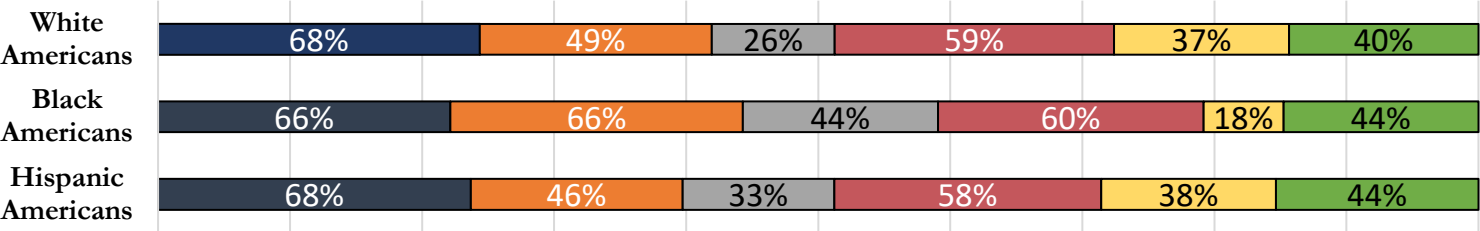**Black and White Americans Disagree on Assault Weapons Ban & Concealed Carry**

Q. Rank the top three of the following in order of importance for reducing mass shootings:

- ■ Prevent people with mental illness from purchasing guns
- ■ Banning assault-style weapons
- ■ Creating a federal government database to track all gun sales
- ■ Making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks
- ■ Allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places
- ■ Banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds

Ranked First

White Americans	31%	27%	6%	11%	17%	6%
Black Americans	23%	29%	4%	14%	7%	10%
Hispanic Americans	22%	26%	5%	10%	21%	13%

Ranked in Top 3

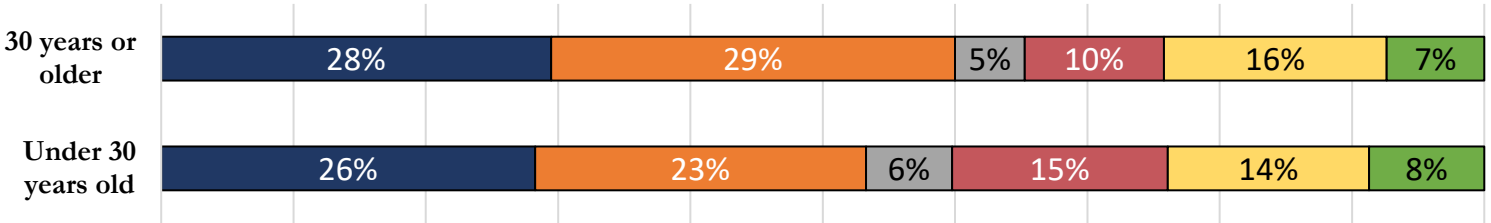|						
White Americans	68%	49%	26%	59%	37%	40%
Black Americans	66%	66%	44%	60%	18%	44%
Hispanic Americans	68%	46%	33%	58%	38%	44%

Note: "Ranked in Top 3" chart scaled to 300%

In comparison, those of all ages were mostly in agreement on different policy options. 26% of Americans under 30 ranked preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns first compared to 28% of Americans 30 years and older, with 64% and 68% ranking it in their top three respectively. For banning assault-style weapons, 23% of young Americans and 29% of older Americans ranked it as their first choice with 50% and 52% ranking it in their top three overall, respectively. There was some disparity in age looking at the top three choices overall compared to their first-ranked choice. For example, while only 6% of young Americans and 5% of older Americans support creating a federal government database to track all gun sales, it was 42% of young Americans who ranked it in their top three choices compared to only 28% of older Americans ranking it in the top three at all. This variation was also seen with allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places, where 14% and 16% of younger and older Americans, respectively, ranked this option first, but four in ten young Americans ranked it in their top three choices compared to only 32% of older Americans. This is particularly interesting as younger Americans vote with Democrats significantly more than with Republicans, and there was an overall intense disapproval among Democrats for allowing concealed carry in more places.

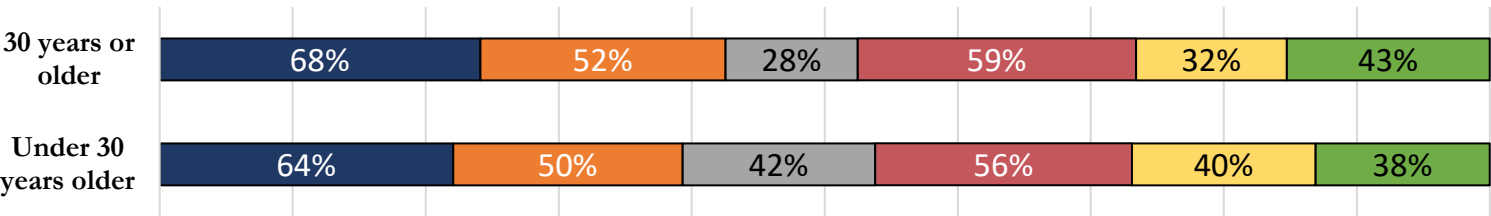### Younger and Older Americans Broadly Agree on Mass Shootings Solutions
Q. Rank the top three of the following in order of importance for reducing mass shootings:

- ■ Prevent people with mental illness from purchasing guns
- ■ Banning assault-style weapons
- ■ Creating a federal government database to track all gun sales
- ■ Making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks
- ■ Allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places
- ■ Banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds

Ranked First

30 years or older	28%	29%	5%	10%	16%	7%
Under 30 years old	26%	23%	6%	15%	14%	8%

Ranked in Top 3

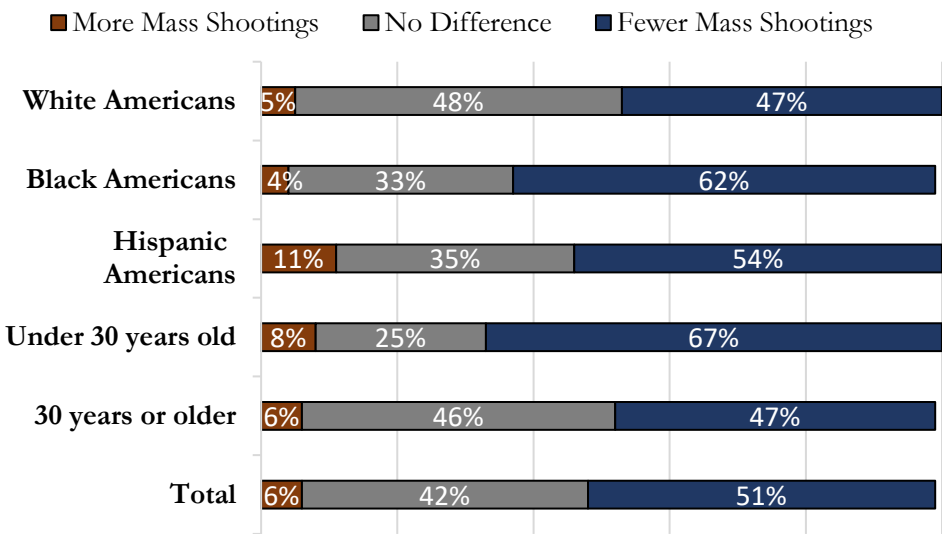|						
30 years or older	68%	52%	28%	59%	32%	43%
Under 30 years older	64%	50%	42%	56%	40%	38%

Note: "Ranked in Top 3" chart scaled to 300%

In addition, race was not always a dividing factor in ranking policy options. There were three options that garnered similar attitudes across all three groups. On the option of preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns, 31% of White Americans, 23% of Black Americans, and 22% of Hispanic Americans ranked it as their first choice, with 68%, 66%, and 68% ranking it in their top three, respectively. Similarly, making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks also saw highly similar levels of support, with 59% of White Americans, 60% of Black Americans, and 58% of Hispanic Americans ranking it within their top three. The relatively less popular option of
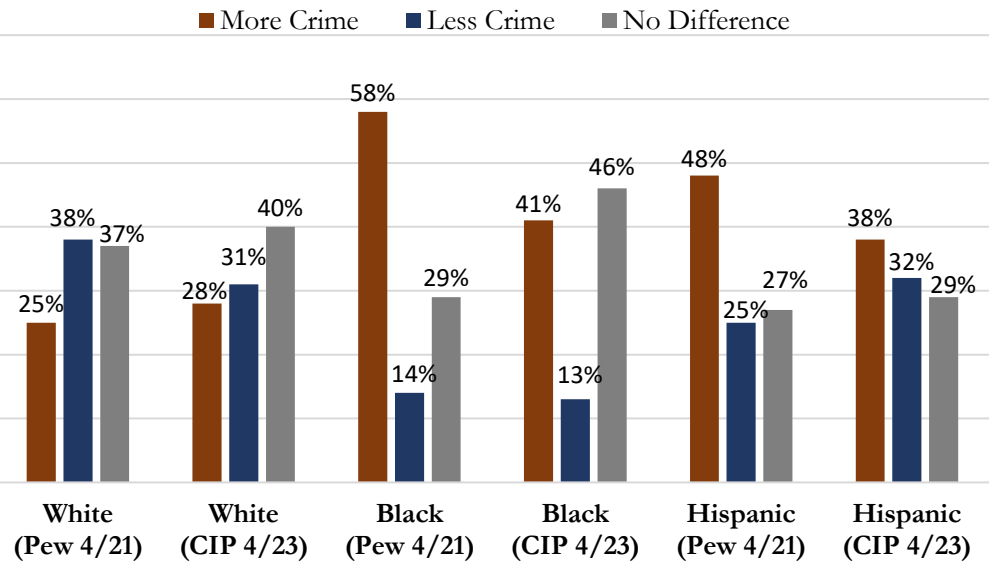
banning high-capacity ammunition magazines also saw near-equal intergroup support, with 40% of White Americans and 44% of Black and Hispanic Americans ranking it within their top three. However, Hispanic Americans were about twice as likely to rank this option as their first choice (13%) relative to White Americans (6%).

Furthermore, when asked if stricter requirements for legally obtaining guns in the US would cause fewer or more mass shootings, age and race both were determining factors. Black Americans were more likely to say fewer mass shootings (62%) than their White (47%) or Hispanic (54%) counterparts. In addition, Black Americans were less likely to say it would cause no difference (33%) compared to Hispanic (35%) and White (48%) Americans. In addition, 67% of Americans under the age of 30 said it would cause fewer mass shootings compared to 47% of those over the age of 30.

Q. If there were stricter requirements for legally obtaining guns in the United States, do you think there would be:

■ More Mass Shootings   ▨ No Difference   ■ Fewer Mass Shootings

	More Mass Shootings	No Difference	Fewer Mass Shootings
White Americans	5%	48%	47%
Black Americans	4%	33%	62%
Hispanic Americans	11%	35%	54%
Under 30 years old	8%	25%	67%
30 years or older	6%	46%	47%
Total	6%	42%	51%

Q. If more Americans owned guns, do you think there would be:

■ More Crime   ■ Less Crime   ■ No Difference

	More Crime	Less Crime	No Difference
White (Pew 4/21)	25%	38%	37%
White (CIP 4/23)	28%	31%	40%
Black (Pew 4/21)	58%	14%	29%
Black (CIP 4/23)	41%	13%	46%
Hispanic (Pew 4/21)	48%	25%	27%
Hispanic (CIP 4/23)	38%	32%	29%

Despite Black Americans being the demographic group most exposed to gun violence, the past two years have also seen a significant shift in how Black and Hispanic Americans think of the consequences related to more widespread gun ownership. In an April 2021 Pew Research Center survey, 58% of Black Americans and 48% of Hispanic Americans said that more guns would lead to more crime. Two years later, our recent survey reveals that 41% of Black Americans and 38% of Hispanic Americans said the same. Between 2021 and 2023, White Americans were 3% more likely to say that more guns would lead to more crime, and 7% less likely to say that more guns would lead to less crime.

However, in addition to race, education level also appeared as a determining factor on American attitudes toward gun policy. Looking at the impact of education level, 27% of high school graduates said if more Americans owned guns, it would cause more crime and 27% of those with some college or an associate degree said the same; however, 40% of those with a bachelors and 48% of those with a master's degree or higher said the same. When asked about stricter gun

control's effect on mass shootings, 45% of high school graduate respondents and 46% of respondents with some college or an associate degree said it would cause fewer mass shootings compared to 56% of those with a bachelor's degree and 63% of those with a master's degree or above. Forty-six percent of those with a high school degree, 47% of those with some college or an associate degree and 40% of those with a bachelor's degree said it would cause no difference compared to 30% of those with a master's degree or above.

It's an American-rooted Phenomenon:
US-Born and Foreign-Born Respondents Differ Markedly in Their Attitudes on Guns

"Iran plunged into chaos on September 30th, 2022, as "Bloody Friday" ravaged the nation with deadly weaponry. Dozens of people suffered grievous wounds and many perished. As families arrived at the hospital, they met a grisly sight - white tiles now stained red with the blood of their loved ones. The floor emerged as the focal point of their distress as they frantically searched for any sign of their family. I captured the bedlam in a single frame, revealing the agony of gun violence victims' families and the value of life by limning the bloody floor. The painting "Footprints" illustrates the horrific chaos of that day, a somber reminder of the pain and loss we must strive to prevent."

"(رد پا) (نشان کے قدموں) Footprints" by Maryam Ali, Honorable Mention, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace 2023. Photo by John Consoli/University of Maryland.
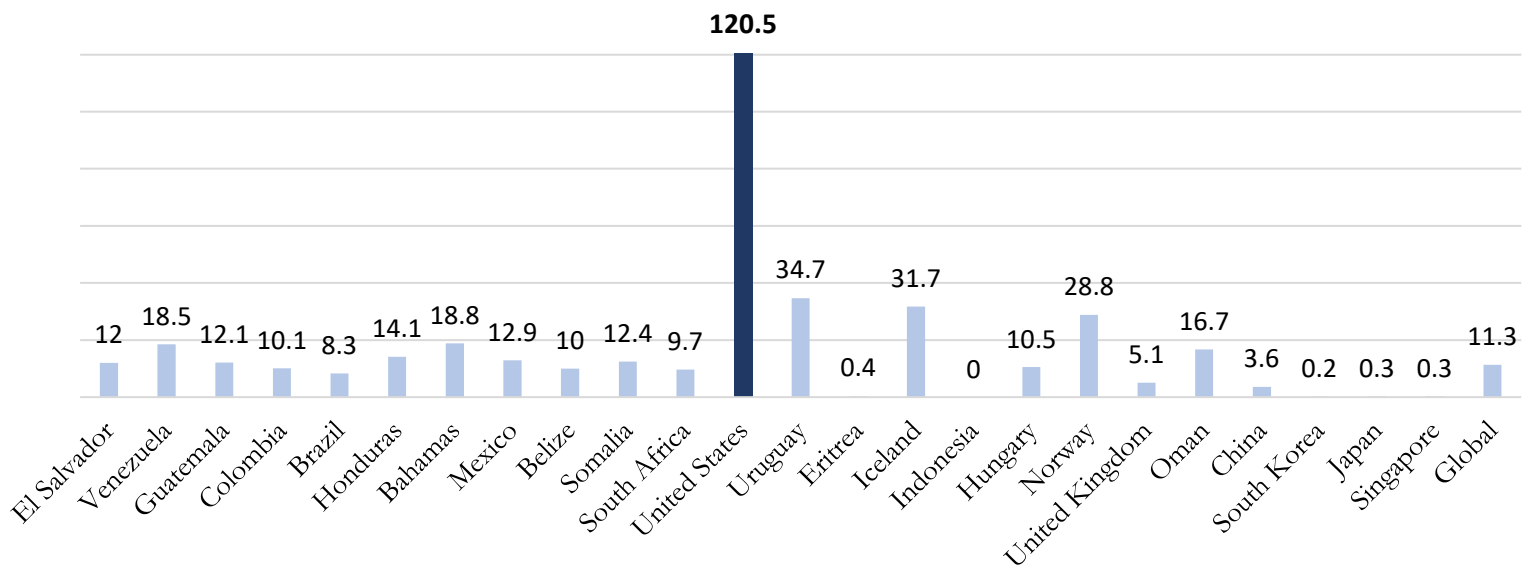
The disproportionate impact of gun violence on Black communities becomes even more remarkable given rates of firearm homicide internationally. Among high-income countries with a population of 10 million or more, the United States ranks first in firearm homicide rate, with a significant majority of its peer countries having a rate of less than 0.5 per 100,000 residents.
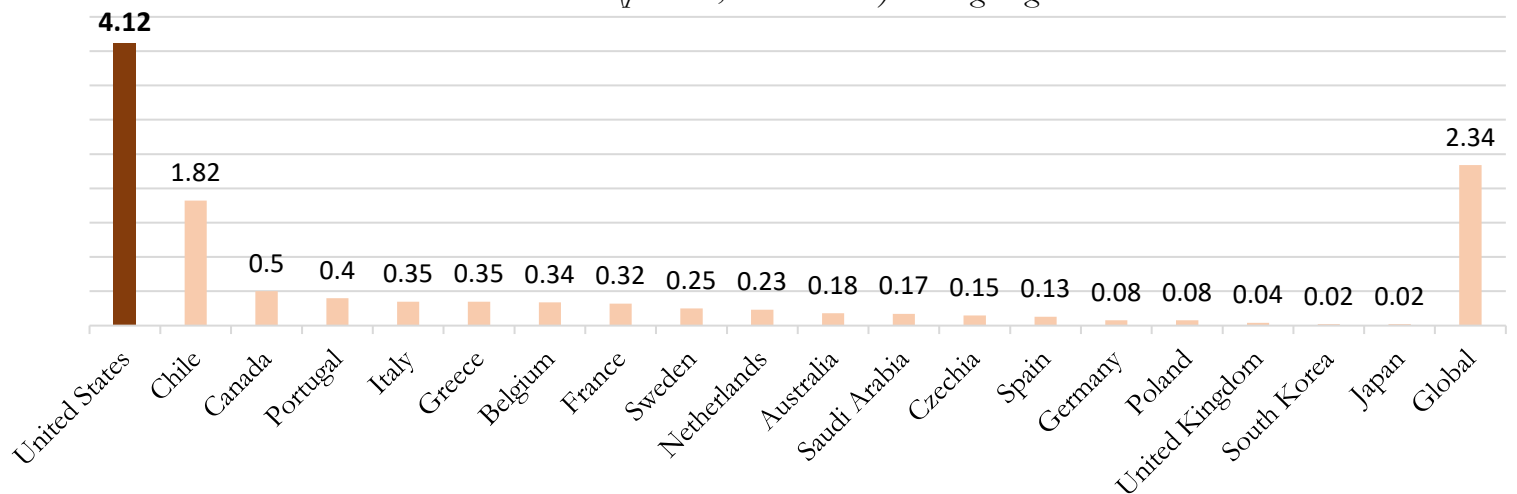
The United States is also an even greater outlier in its rate of civilian gun ownership. According to the 2017 Small Arms Survey, the four countries with the highest rate of gun ownership per 100 residents were Montenegro and Serbia tied at 39.1, Yemen at 52.8, and the United States at 120.5-- the only nation to have more guns than residents to wield them. Such unparalleled gun ownership helps explain the centrality of gun ownership in questions regarding potential solutions to America's rising levels of gun violence.

International Firearm Homicide and Gun Ownership Rates, 2017

Civilian Firearms per 100 residents

Country	Value
El Salvador	12
Venezuela	18.5
Guatemala	12.1
Colombia	10.1
Brazil	8.3
Honduras	14.1
Bahamas	18.8
Mexico	12.9
Belize	10
Somalia	12.4
South Africa	9.7
United States	120.5
Uruguay	34.7
Eritrea	0.4
Iceland	31.7
Indonesia	0
Hungary	10.5
Norway	28.8
United Kingdom	5.1
Oman	16.7
China	3.6
South Korea	0.2
Japan	0.3
Singapore	0.3
Global	11.3

Firearm Homicide Rates (per 100,000 residents) Among High-Income Countries

Country	Value
United States	4.12
Chile	1.82
Canada	0.5
Portugal	0.4
Italy	0.35
Greece	0.35
Belgium	0.34
France	0.32
Sweden	0.25
Netherlands	0.23
Australia	0.18
Saudi Arabia	0.17
Czechia	0.15
Spain	0.13
Germany	0.08
Poland	0.08
United Kingdom	0.04
South Korea	0.02
Japan	0.02
Global	2.34

Sources:
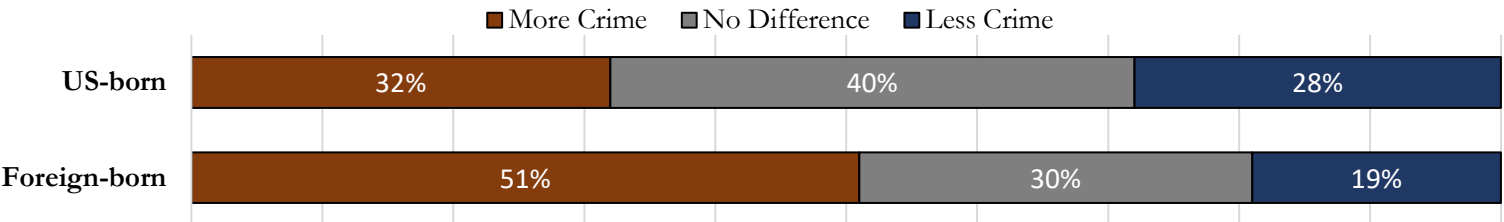Karp, A. (2018). Estimating global civilian-held firearms numbers.
Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). (2019). GBD Results Tool. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington. Retrieved from https://www.healthdata.org/data-tools-practices/data-sources. Accessed May 12, 2023.
Note: "Firearm Homicide Rates" is age-standardized and looking only at high-income countries with populations of 10 million or more.
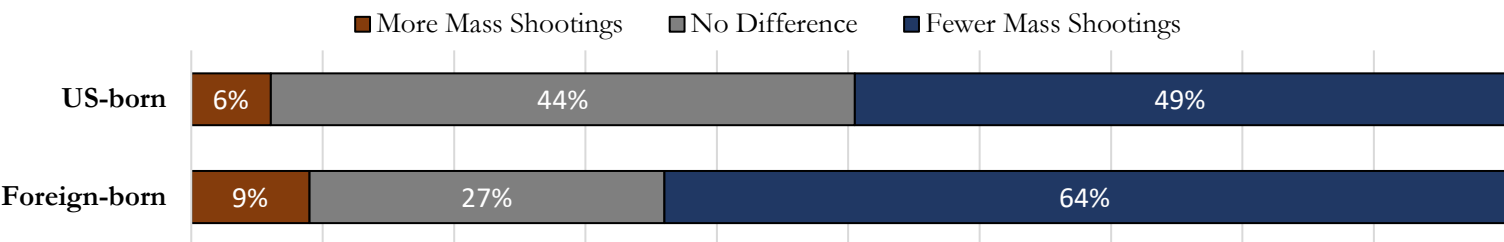
The United States, as a significant outlier among developed countries for its high prevalence of guns and gun-related homicides, reveals a distinct divergence in attitudes towards gun control between US-born and foreign-born respondents. Those born outside the US were more likely to express views in support of greater gun restrictions compared to those born in the US.

Among foreign-born respondents, only 14% believed that tighter school security was the most likely to reduce gun violence against children, while 33% said fewer guns would do so and 42% said both equally. In comparison, US-born respondents were significantly more optimistic about the likelihood of tighter school security reducing gun violence against children, with 32% expressing support, while 19% said fewer guns, and 28% said both equally.
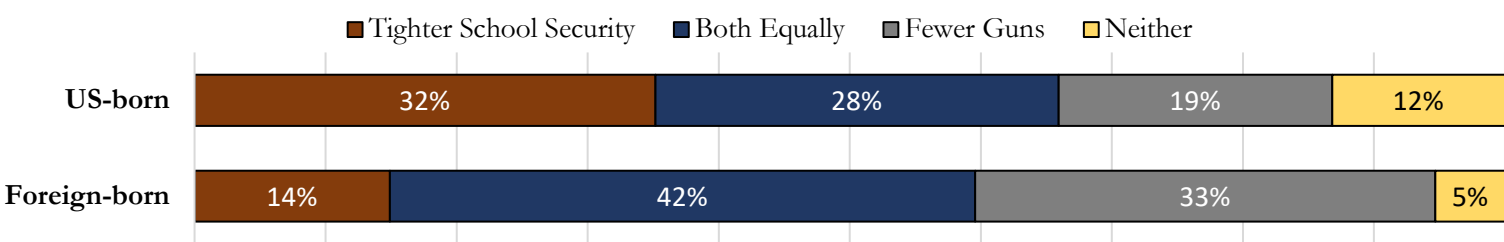
Q. If more Americans owned guns, do you think there would be:

Legend: ■ More Crime ■ No Difference ■ Less Crime

	More Crime	No Difference	Less Crime
US-born	32%	40%	28%
Foreign-born	51%	30%	19%

Q. If there were stricter requirements for legally obtaining guns in the United States, do you think there would be:

Legend: ■ More Mass Shootings ■ No Difference ■ Fewer Mass Shootings

	More Mass Shootings	No Difference	Fewer Mass Shootings
US-born	6%	44%	49%
Foreign-born	9%	27%	64%

Q. Which of the following is more likely to reduce gun violence against children: tighter school security or fewer guns in the community?

Legend: ■ Tighter School Security ■ Both Equally ■ Fewer Guns ■ Neither

	Tighter School Security	Both Equally	Fewer Guns	Neither
US-born	32%	28%	19%	12%
Foreign-born	14%	42%	33%	5%

When addressing the possible increase in crime due to more widespread gun ownership, a majority (51%) of foreign-born respondents expressed concern, contrasting with only 32% of US-born respondents. Twenty-eight percent of US-born respondents were also more likely to believe that more guns would lead to less crime, in contrast to only 19% of foreign-born respondents. Furthermore, stricter requirements on gun ownership was viewed by 64% of foreign-born respondents as a means to mitigate mass shootings, a sentiment echoed by a near majority of 49% among US-born respondents. Interestingly, 9% of foreign-born respondents said that stricter requirements on gun ownership would lead to more mass shootings, compared to only 6% of US-born respondents, likely echoing the "Good Guy with a Gun" argument, wherein armed civilians are first responders to mass shootings. It is worth noting here that in among the 50 active shooter incidents recorded by the FBI in the United States in 2022, only two ended with the shooter being killed by a citizen.[2]

Solutions to reduce mass shootings also showed divides between US and foreign-born respondents. Looking at what was ranked first, creating a federal government database to track all gun sales was the least favored solution for foreign-born (3%) and US-born respondents (5%).

"The stress of the constant threat of being shot metastasizes into this ever-present shadow permeating our lives. Even traditionally safe spaces, such as schools and houses of worship, are now plagued with the unnerving possibility of violence, corroding our physical and psychological well-being.
A nervous system composed of gun components weaves itself over intricate pathways that trace the unbound movement of cortisol—the body's endogenous stress hormone. The bullet holes that riddle the work serve as a stark reminder of the brutal violence and destruction guns can inflict."

"The Weight of an Empty Gun" by Hartley B Carlson, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Collection. Photo by John Consoli/University of Maryland.

However, 51% of foreign-born respondents ranked it in their top three choices compared to only 28% of US-born respondents. Allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places was also seen as not a favorable policy option to those born outside the US, with only 7% ranking it first and 15% ranking it in their top three at all. However, those born in the US were more supportive, with more ranking it first (16%) and in their top three overall (35%). This relative popularity compared to foreign-born respondents reveals a fair degree of US-born approval for the "Good Guy with a Gun" argument.

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[2] In 2021, there were 61 active shooter incidents with four shooters being killed by a citizen.
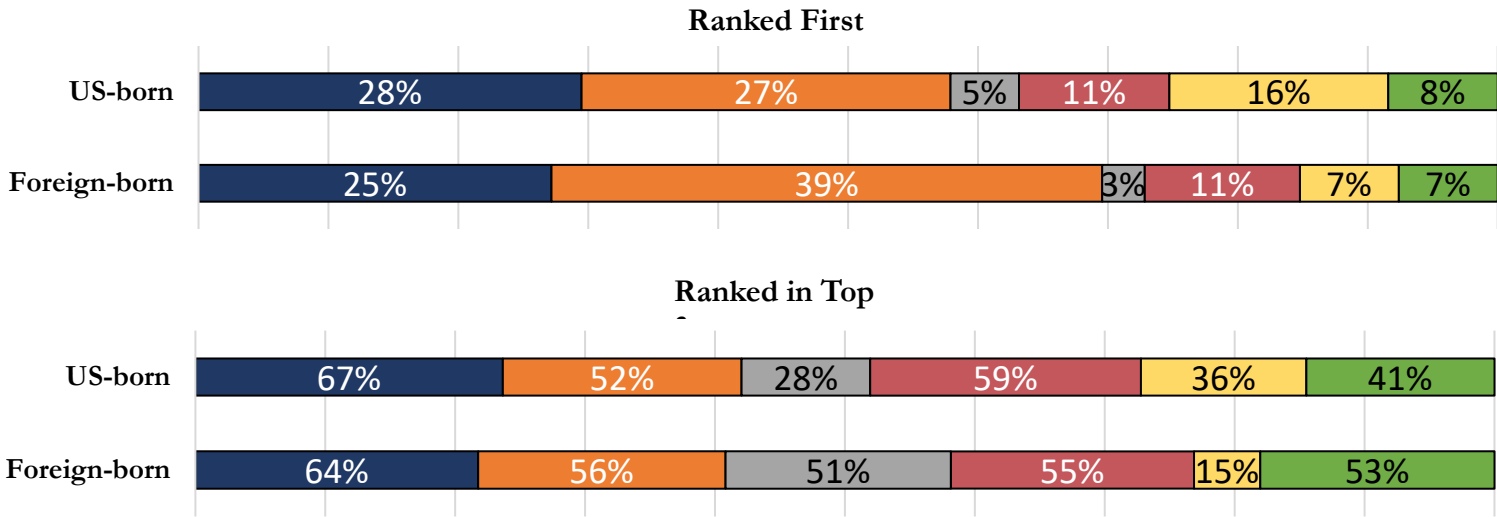
At the opposite end of the spectrum, foreign-born respondents prioritized banning assault-style weapons, with 39% ranking it as their first choice, compared to 27% of respondents born in the US. Twenty-eight percent of US-born respondents ranked preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns as their first choice, compared to 25% of foreign-born. In addition, this policy option ranked highest when looking at the top three choices overall, among both foreign-born and US-born respondents. A reason why there is less division among favored policies compared to unfavorable ones might be due to foreign-born respondents' overall support for all policies that could lead to a reduction in mass shootings. In fact, the only choice that was not ranked in the top three by a majority of foreign-born respondents was allowing concealed guns in more places.

Overall, the attitudes expressed by foreign-born respondents were more in line with those expressed by Black Americans, particularly regarding each groups' relative approval for banning assault-style weapons, and disapproval for allowing more widespread concealed carry. These contrasting perspectives underscore the complexity and diversity of opinions surrounding gun control within the American populace and shows that the (un)popularity of certain options may be an American-rooted phenomenon.

Foreign-Born Respondents Oppose Concealed Carry and Assault-Style Weapons

Q. Rank the top three of the following in order of importance for reducing mass shootings:

- ■ Prevent people with mental illness from purchasing guns
- ■ Banning assault-style weapons
- ■ Creating a federal government database to track all gun sales
- ■ Making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks
- ■ Allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places
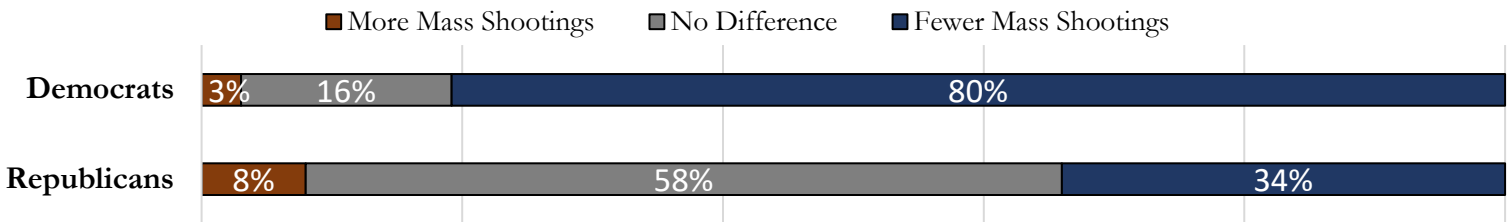- ■ Banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds

Ranked First

US-born	28%	27%	5%	11%	16%	8%
Foreign-born	25%	39%	3%	11%	7%	7%

Ranked in Top 3

US-born	67%	52%	28%	59%	36%	41%
Foreign-born	64%	56%	51%	55%	15%	53%

Note: "Ranked in Top 3" chart scaled to 300%
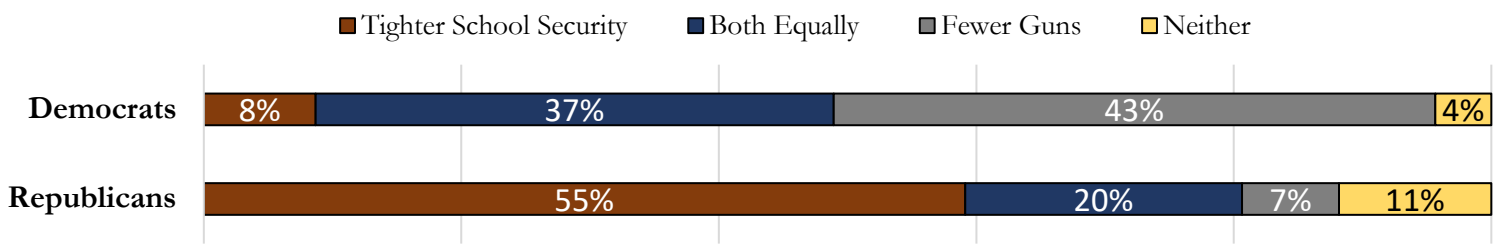
The Politicization of Gun Violence:

Severe Partisan Divide Expands Further

While race and ethnicity are an important cleavage by which American public opinion on gun policy is divided, all questions posed to respondents at least saw some level of intergroup agreement. However, the degree to which Democrats and Republicans differ in their attitudes towards gun policy and its consequences surpass all other national cleavages. When asked about whether stricter requirements to legally obtain a gun would cause fewer mass shootings or more, only 34% of Republicans said it would cause fewer mass shootings, compared to 80% of Democrats. Most Republicans (58%) said it would make no difference in the number of mass shootings, compared to only 16% of Democrats.[3] In addition, whereas 55% of Republicans said that tighter school security was more likely to reduce gun violence against children, only 8% of Democrats felt the same, with 43% saying fewer guns in the community would be more effective".

Q. If there were stricter requirements for legally obtaining guns in the United States, do you think there would be:

Legend: ■ More Mass Shootings ■ No Difference ■ Fewer Mass Shootings

Party	More Mass Shootings	No Difference	Fewer Mass Shootings
Democrats	3%	16%	80%
Republicans	8%	58%	34%

Q. Which of the following is more likely to reduce gun violence against children: tighter school security or fewer guns in the community?

Legend: ■ Tighter School Security ■ Both Equally ■ Fewer Guns ■ Neither

Party	Tighter School Security	Both Equally	Fewer Guns	Neither
Democrats	8%	37%	43%	4%
Republicans	55%	20%	7%	11%

How Americans ranked possible policy solutions for their importance in reducing mass shootings also saw deep divisions along party lines. Whereas 39% of Republicans ranked "preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns" as the most important tool for reducing mass shootings, 46% of Democrats said "banning assault-style weapons" was the most important. In comparison, only 14% of Republicans said banning-assault style weapons was their top solution and only 18% of Democrats said preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns was their top solution. Looking at how each solution ranked in the overall top three choices for Democrats and Republicans, that divide remains relatively strong. On preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns, 83% of Republicans and 50% of

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[3] It is important here to consider the implications behind the "No Difference" response. Republicans who respond "No Difference" are more likely than their Democrat counterparts to view subsequent attempts to enact restrictions unfavorably due to prevailing attitudes regarding the strictness of current gun laws.

Democrats ranked it within their top 3 solutions. On banning assault-style weapons, more than double the amount of Republicans (76%) compared to Democrats (33%) ranked it in their top three.

Such deep disagreement over possible solutions to mass shootings were present in other choices, with nearly double the number of Democrats (39%) compared to Republicans (20%) placing "creating a federal government database to track all gun sales" in their top three. However, like the divide between White and Black Americans as well as between US-born and foreign-born Americans, the option of allowing people to carry concealed weapons in more places again proved the most polarizing. Republicans were 575% more likely than Democrats to place this option at the top of their ranking, and 450% more likely than Democrats to place it within their top three solutions.

"'Recess' is a mixed-media sculpture that reflects my belief in the importance of taking time to pause and find inner peace to create a world free from violence. The sculpture, made from resin and wood, represents the contrast between the rigidity of systems perpetuating gun violence and the potential for healing and revitalization. By creating this contrast, I hope to prompt viewers to contemplate the coexistence of violence and compassion in our world and to envision a more peaceful future. Inspired by the strength and resilience of gun violence survivors, I created this sculpture to honor their stories and spark conversations about the impact of violence in our society. By connecting with our inner selves and committing to change, we can work towards a safer and more nurturing future for everyone."
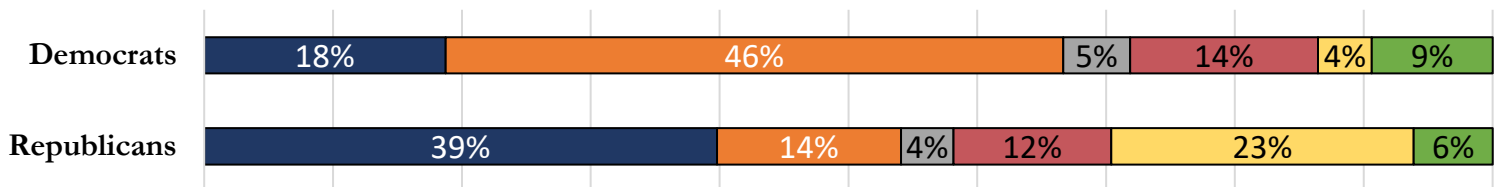
"RECESS" by Lynn Nguyen, Honorable Mention, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace 2023. Photo by John Consoli/University of Maryland.

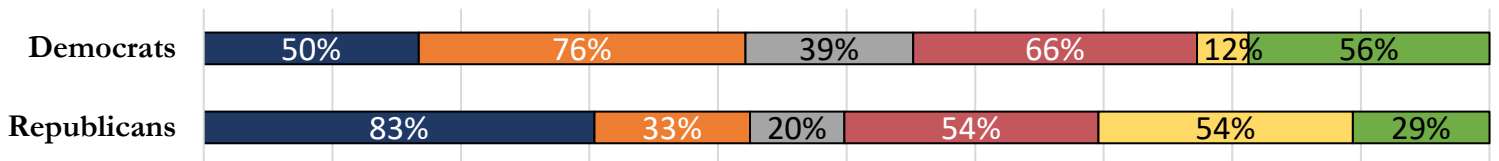**Democrats and Republicans Strongly Disagree on All Solutions**

Q. Rank the top three of the following in order of importance for reducing mass shootings:

- ■ Prevent people with mental illness from purchasing guns
- ■ Banning assault-style weapons
- ■ Creating a federal government database to track all gun sales
- ■ Making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks
- ■ Allowing people to carry concealed guns in more places
- ■ Banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds

Ranked First

Democrats	18%	46%	5%	14%	4%	9%
Republicans	39%	14%	4%	12%	23%	6%

Ranked in Top 3

Democrats	50%	76%	39%	66%	12%	56%
Republicans	83%	33%	20%	54%	54%	29%

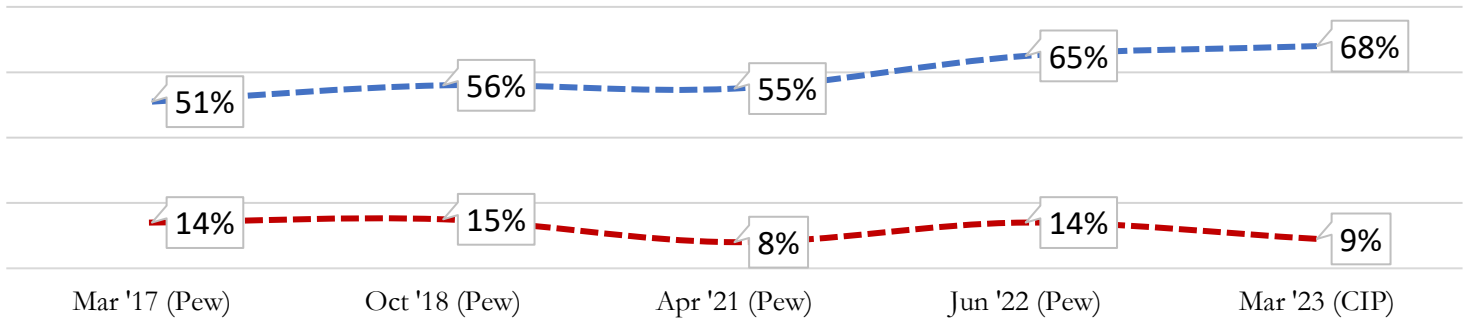**Note**: "Ranked in Top 3" chart scaled to 300%

As with the aforementioned questions on gun violence and ownership, there remains a significant division in how Republicans and Democrats view the impact of guns on crime. Specifically, our recent poll found that 68% of Democrats but only 9% of Republicans believed that more Americans owning guns would translate into more crime. By extension, 49% of Republicans compared to only 7% of Democrats expected more widespread gun ownership to lead to less crime.

This question was previously asked by the Pew Research Center in 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2022. Between the April 2021 Pew poll and the March-April 2023 Critical Issues Poll, the gap between the attitudes of Republicans and Democrats on the issue of gun ownership and crime expanded. More Democrats and fewer Republicans believe more widespread gun ownership would lead to more crime, with the percentage gap in attitudes increasing from 47% in 2021 to 59% in 2023. Furthermore, the percentage gap in attitudes between Republicans and Democrats to see more guns as making no difference on crime has significantly expanded from 2% in 2021 to 17% in 2023. Such an increase in polarization on this issue may indicate that Democrats are becoming more decided in their opposition to gun ownership expansion, or perhaps that Republicans are adhering more to the "Good Guy with a Gun" argument for civilian gun ownership.

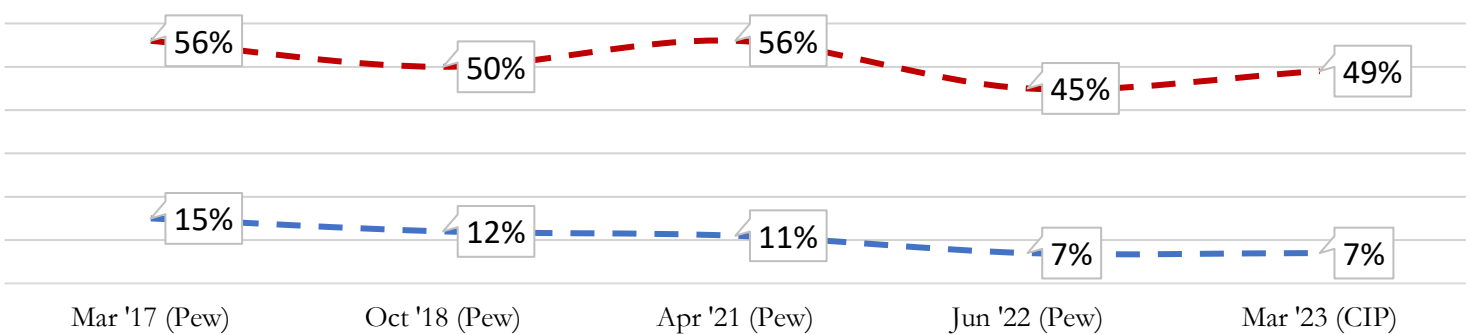## Q. If more Americans owned guns, do you think there would be:

More Crime

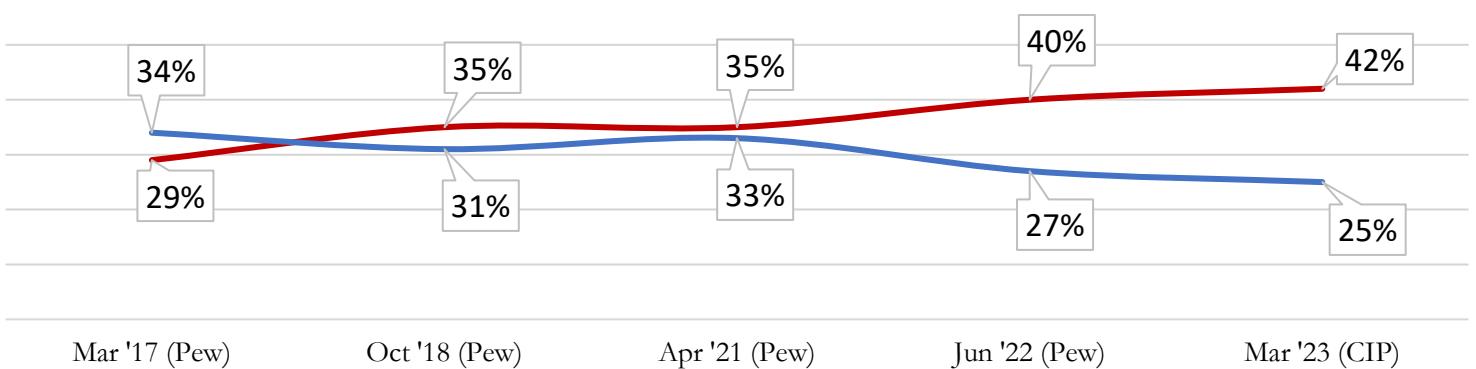- - - Republicans   - - - Democrats

51%   56%   55%   65%   68%

14%   15%   8%   14%   9%

| Mar '17 (Pew) | Oct '18 (Pew) | Apr '21 (Pew) | Jun '22 (Pew) | Mar '23 (CIP) |

Less Crime

- - - Republicans   - - - Democrats

56%   50%   56%   45%   49%

15%   12%   11%   7%   7%

| Mar '17 (Pew) | Oct '18 (Pew) | Apr '21 (Pew) | Jun '22 (Pew) | Mar '23 (CIP) |

No Difference

—— Republicans   —— Democrats

34%   35%   35%   40%   42%

29%   31%   33%   27%   25%

| Mar '17 (Pew) | Oct '18 (Pew) | Apr '21 (Pew) | Jun '22 (Pew) | Mar '23 (CIP) |

Conclusions

As discussed in this report, Americans continue to be divided on gun policy. The racial/ethnic divides surrounding gun policy hint at the larger systemic disparities that Black and other minority communities cope with in the face of the gun violence epidemic. The growing partisan gap on this issue is also reflective of a larger divide among Americans that impacts the two parties tasked with shaping U.S. policy. Despite this growing division, the report found places of agreement, where a majority of Americans, both Republican and Democrat, agreed that preventing people with mental illness from purchasing guns and making private gun sales subject to background checks would help reduce mass shootings. However, the unique position of gun ownership in American laws, culture, and society is also highlighted in our findings, as respondents born outside the US were more supportive of gun control measures than US-born Americans. The results analyzing gun violence in America are part of ongoing research conducted by the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll.

"As an artist, I melt down weapons and transform them into musical instruments and sculptures. I melt down bullet casings to create bells because bells are often rung to resurrect the dead. Like gun violence which ripples through a community, a bell's vibrations can ripple, however also heals. I choose not to represent or use bullets/weapons of any kind in my work, because I don't want to re-traumatize those who have experienced its horrors. I hope to transform the materiality of violence into its opposite: peace.

Rather than representing "violence" I aspire instead to image what bullets should and perhaps one day will be: music and art."

"Be What a Bullet Can't Be" by Stephanie Mercedes, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Collection. Photo by John Consoli/University of Maryland.

Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Program
"Victims of Gun Violence" 2023

The Sadat Art for Justice and Peace program is a joint program of the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development and the Department of Art. The artwork is submitted by students in the Department of Art at the University of Maryland to capture an annual theme which in 2023 was "Victims of Gun Violence." It started in 1998 to coincide with former President Jimmy Carter's Sadat Lecture for Peace and has become an annual program based on a timely theme related to justice and peace and to the ongoing research projects of the Anwar Sadat Chair.

"This year's theme, 'Victims of Gun Violence,' is one that haunts our entire nation and has been prioritized by our university. We already address this issue in our research and in our ongoing public opinion polling, but artists speak powerfully about issues of social justice through their visual representation."

- Shibley Telhami,
Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development
and founding director of the program

In the past, winning artworks were presented to Sadat Lecturers, including Nelson Mandela, Kofi Anan, The Dalai Lama, Mary Robinson, Mohammad Elbaradei, among others. Past themes have included Black Lives Matter, the refugee crisis, the impact of the government's reaction to 9/11 and its impact on the world, and dignity.

"The American dream. The land of opportunity. A place where people of different cultures can come together. A place that is made to be so great, filled with so much unnecessary death. U.S citizens have become normalized to living in a war zone. We hear about a number of mass shootings and school shootings. We go on with our day as if nothing has happened. The real issue is the increasing number of bullets that have been used to take the lives of countless men, women, and children from gun violence and carelessness. Of the 321 people shot daily in the United States, 111 are killed. As a nation, we need to come together and end this violence."

"Neverending" by Mary Mena, Sadat Art for Justice and Peace Collection. Photo by John Consoli/University of Maryland.

Survey Methodology

The survey was carried out March 27-April 5, 2023 among 1,203 respondents, with a margin of error of +/- 3.2%. The survey was conducted using Ipsos' KnowledgePanel®, a probability based online panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel. For those who agree to participate but do not already have Internet access, Ipsos provides, at no cost, a laptop/netbook and ISP connection. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research.

To view the full questionnaire with results for this poll, please click here. For more information, please visit: https://criticalissues.umd.edu/

Leadership for the Critical Issues Poll

Shibley Telhami is the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, College Park, and Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Before coming to the University of Maryland, he taught at several universities, including the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his doctorate in political science. He has authored and edited numerous books, including *The One State Reality: What is Israel/Palestine?* (co-edited, Cornell University Press, 2023). He has one forthcoming book on *Peace Derailed: Obama, Trump, Biden, and the Decline of Diplomacy on Israel/Palestine, 2011-2022* (co-authored). Professor Telhami has advised every U.S. administration from George H.W. Bush to Barack Obama. He was selected by the Carnegie Corporation of New York along with the New York Times as one of the "Great Immigrants" for 2013. In 2022 and 2023, he was listed by the Washingtonian Magazine as one of the most influential people on foreign affairs. He is also a recipient of the University of Maryland's Honors College Outstanding Faculty Award, The University of Maryland Distinguished Service Award, and the University of Maryland Distinguished Scholar-Teacher Award.

Stella Rouse is a professor in the Department of Government and Politics. Professor Rouse earned her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University in 2008. In 2010, she was a visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Social Sciences (REGSS) at Duke University as a Ford Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow. Rouse's first book, Latinos in the Legislative Process: Interests and Influence, published by Cambridge University Press, was named by Huffington Post as one of the "Best Political Science Books of 2013." Her second book, The Politics of Millennials: Political Beliefs and Policy Preferences of America's Most Diverse Generation, with Ashley D. Ross, was published in August 2018. Her third book, titled "Citizens of the World: Political Engagement and Policy Attitudes of Millennials across the Globe," with Jared McDonald, Richard N. Engstrom, Michael J. Hanmer, Roberto Gonzàlez, Siugmin Lay, and Daniel Miranda, was published by Oxford University Press in 2022.

Kirsten Langlois, *Coordinator and Analyst*,
Program Coordinator and Executive Assistant for the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development; Coordinator of the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll

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