



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS CHICAGO

**American Identity, Guns, and Political Violence in Black and
White: A Report Based on a New National Survey**

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Executive Summary

This survey seeks to assess the views of White and Black Americans on American identity, and the role of firearms and political violence in American political life.¹ The sample is representative of the White and Black population which constitutes approximately 75% of the total population. These results should not be interpreted as representative of the entire U.S. general adult population, only of White and Black Americans. Similarly, findings related to partisanship, gun owner status, education, or age should be interpreted to represent the totality of these two population groups, not the entire U.S. adult population.

Broad values consensus but partisan dissension on race, nativity, Christianity, and guns characterizes the Black and White public.

- There is strong consensus both across and within White and Black Americans on key democratic values that define “true” Americanism. Overwhelming majorities believe that true Americans support *a right to vote for all citizens, respect institutions, defend freedom of speech, and seek to resolve political conflict peaceably*. This consensus transcends party lines. Black and White Americans share a strong commitment to minority rights, but partisans disagree on how important active protection of minority rights is to American identity.
- There is disagreement both between and within White and Black America on how important to American identity are *being born in the United States, being Christian, and owning firearms*. Only a plurality of respondents believe that nativity is important to being a true American. And only a third of the participants believe that either Christianity or gun ownership are central to American identity. African-Americans assign more importance to nativity and Christianity than Whites, but both groups are equally likely to say that gun ownership is important for being a true American.
- More so than race, partisanship divides respondents on assigning importance to nativity, Christianity, and gun ownership. Across the board, Republicans are roughly twice as likely as Democrats to say that any of these traits is important in shaping American identity.

Despite broad agreement on non-violent conflict resolution as a principle of Americanism, there is substantial approval of the use of violence in certain settings. And the consensus on the importance of free speech breaks down when it comes to how to approach political protests. Dissension on issues of protest and violence is driven by partisanship.

- Shy of half of respondents approve of “stand your ground” laws that allow individuals not to retreat in the face of danger but use arms instead. Similar proportions of African-Americans and Whites approve “stand your ground.” The vast majority of Republicans (85%) support such legislation but only a fourth of Democrats do so.
- Support for extending “stand your ground” laws to protests settings is significantly lower, with only a third of participants (37%) supporting such proposals. Such laws seek to immunize individuals who shoot at protesters whom they deem threatening to life or property. Support differs by race, education, and gun ownership status. However, the deepest cleavage is partisanship. Three-fourths (75%) of Republicans but only 17% of Democrats support such legislation.
- A bare majority of respondents (53%) support laws that would criminalize protests on public highways. Support for such laws is stronger among Whites (55%) than Black Americans (41%). However, here too, the most

¹ Note: Some items in the questionnaire included a “neither” or “not sure” option, while others did not. When relevant, we note proportions of people who offered a noncommittal response.



profound division is between partisans. Only a third of Black and White Democrats (34%) but 89% of Black and White Republicans support such laws.

- Only one in five respondents believe it appropriate to bring firearms to protests. African-Americans and Whites are on the same page on this issue: four out of five in both groups disapprove of carrying guns at protests. Yet, this broad consensus breaks down at the party level. Fewer than one-tenth of Democrats (8%) approve of such practices, but 40% of Republicans think it appropriate to bring firearms to a protest.
- Only a third of gun owners say they would be likely to bring a firearm to a protest. Black and White gun owners agree on this. Age is a factor in whether gun owners would bring their arms to a protest: younger gun owners are more eager to do so than are older gun owners. Predictably, a key difference lies between Democratic (18%) and Republican (36%) gun owners.

Minorities of respondents are open to attending protests in support of group rights that could turn violent. Age, race, and partisanship play a role in shaping attitudes towards violent political mobilization.

- Four in ten respondents say they would participate in protests against oppression of their group, even if such protests turned violent. Race makes a difference in willingness to attend such protests: a majority of African-Americans (51%) but only a third of Whites (37%) would participate in protests even if they turned violent. The partisan gap is larger yet. 48% of Democrats, but only 18% of Republicans would attend a protest against group oppression if such an event turned violent. Age plays a key role here: younger people are far more likely to join protests that may turn violent than are older individuals.

Almost a third of respondents (29%) are so suspicious of and antagonistic to government that they feel they need firearms to protect themselves from it. Partisanship along with gun ownership are the key divides when it comes to perceptions of government as a threat and approval of political violence against government.

- Almost a third of Whites (30%) and one-fifth (21%) of Black Americans perceive the government as so threatening that they need to be armed to resist it.
- Only 10% of Democrats but more than half (56%) of Republicans share the belief that government is so powerful that people need arms to protect themselves from it.
- Such beliefs are also widespread among gun owners: almost half of those who own firearms (47%) compared to a quarter of non-gun owners believe that the government is so powerful that people need arms to protect themselves from it.

Respondents deeply disagree on their perceptions of QAnon and Black Lives Matter (BLM), two social movements that have played prominent roles in American politics over the past few years. The key cleavage when it comes to evaluations of these two groups is partisanship, followed by race.

- Even after the many prosecutions mounted against QAnon followers who participated in the January 6th attack on the Capitol, one-fourth (24%) of respondents believe that the group consists of patriots seeking to expose corruption in the deep state. Half of all Republicans (50%) but only 12% of Democrats share this positive view of QAnon. Smaller differences emerge by education and gun ownership status.
- A slim majority of respondents (53%) do not think that BLM is antidemocratic and only cares about power, but 33% do. Negative beliefs about BLM are more prevalent among Whites (37%) than African-Americans (15%). Education and gun ownership status also shape how people think of BLM. Yet, once again, the deepest divide is along party lines. Only 8% of Democrats agree that BLM is undemocratic and motivated by power, while 81% of Republicans share this negative view of BLM.

Respondents are divided by party on whether private gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship or armed citizens are a threat to democracy.



- One in five respondents say that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship, but a majority (53%) disagree. One-third (35%) believe that private gun ownership is a threat to democracy, but 44% disagree. These views are similarly spread across race groups, but sizeable differences exist by education attainment and gun ownership status.
- As elsewhere, attitudes on the role of firearms differ by partisanship. Only 7% of Democrats but a plurality (47%) of Republicans think of gun ownership as a sign of good citizenship. Conversely, a majority of Democrats (54%) but only 7% of Republicans believe that armed citizens are a threat to democracy.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) support the transfer of public funds from police departments to social services, what has come to be known as “defund the police.” Only a minority (22%) support the reallocation of funding from social services to the purchase of military-grade equipment for police departments. For both, racial differences are eclipsed by partisan differences.

- “Defund the police” programs appear to be popular among both Whites (59%) and African-Americans (75%). A majority of both college-educated people (72%) and those lacking such degrees (57%) support the transfer of resources from policing to social services. Even 47% of gun owners support such a policy directly, even though it is more popular among non-gun owners (65%).
- Opposition to “defund the police” is concentrated primarily among Republicans. Only 21% of GOP supporters favor shifting police resources toward social services, compared to 82% of Democrats and 60% of independents.
- Police militarization at the cost of social services is not very popular with any group. Minor differences in support exist by race, education, and gun ownership status, as such programs are slightly more popular among Whites, those without a college degree, and gun owners, respectively. However, almost half (47%) of Republicans favor such policies, compared to 11% of Democrats and 20% of independents.

Not surprisingly, partisans disagree vehemently on both the conduct of the 2020 election and the Trump legacy.

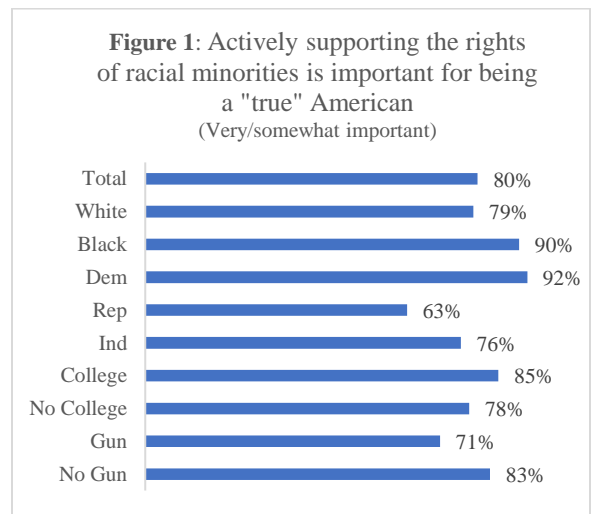
- Two-thirds (67%) of respondents believe that the 2020 election was conducted legitimately and fairly. Race does make a difference in the evaluation of the election. 51% of Whites, but 83% of African-Americans share such a belief. Similarly sized gaps exist by education and gun ownership status.
- The main dividing line when it comes to the assessment of the conduct of the election is partisanship. Almost all Democrats (95%) but only 17% of Republicans believe that the election was conducted fairly and legitimately.
- One-third of respondents (35%) believe that Donald Trump was among the country’s best presidents. Race is an important cleavage in evaluations of the Trump legacy: 53% of Whites agree that Trump was a great president, compared to 20% among African-Americans. Similar divides exist by education and gun ownership status.
- Once again, partisanship is the key factor dividing those who view the Trump legacy positively or negatively. An overwhelming majority of Republicans (90%) believe that Trump was among the country’s best presidents, while only 7% of Democrats share that belief.



Section 1. American Values

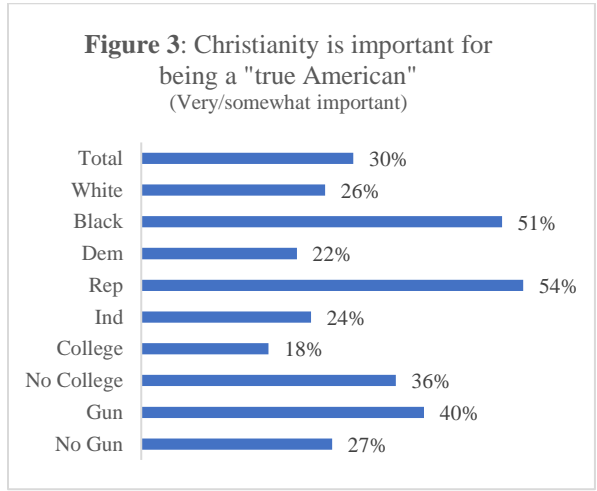
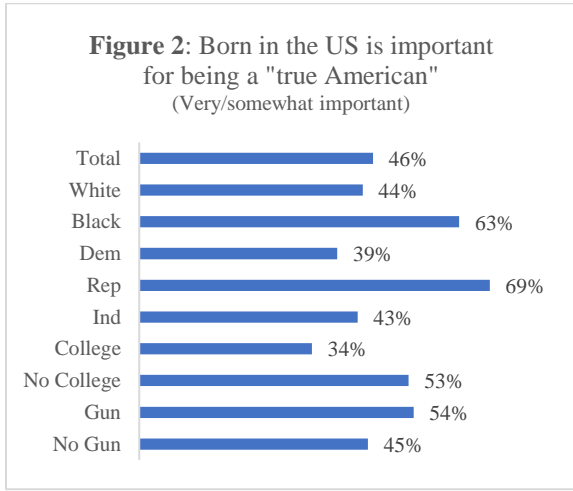
There is a strong consensus among African-Americans and Whites that embracing certain democratic norms is an important component of being “a true American.” Four consensus tenets of Americanism, according to White and Black Americans, are supporting the right to vote for every citizen (94%), respecting laws and institutions (92%), resolving political differences peacefully (88%), and protecting our opponents’ right to free speech (84%). Consensus on these values exists across all demographics, including partisanship, suggesting that, on principle, Black and White Americans value democracy.

Four in five (80%) respondents also agree that actively supporting the rights of racial minorities is a core component of being American. However, support for this dimension of Americanism is stronger among African-Americans (90%) than Whites (79%). Yet, more so than race, partisanship differentiates survey respondents in how much they value support for minority rights as a key tenet of American identity. An overwhelming majority of Democrats (92%) but only two-thirds of Republicans (63%) assign importance to active support for racial minorities when it comes to their understanding of American identity. People who do not own firearms (83%) more so than gun owners (71%) tend to assign importance to support for minority rights for being a true American (Figure 1).



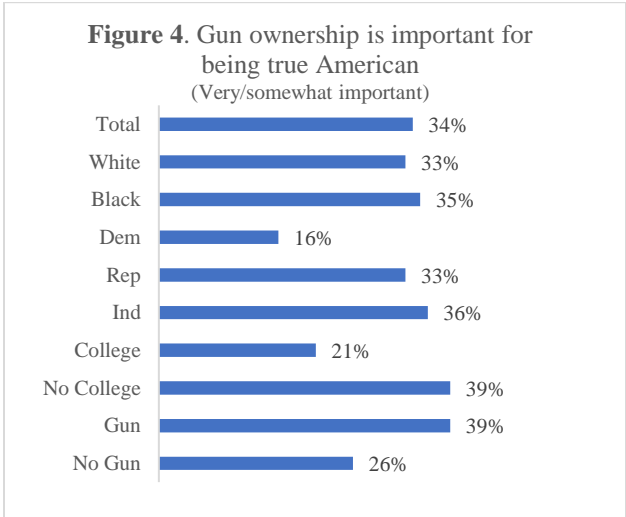
Americans are divided on how much importance they assign to three other traits that many often see as quintessentially American. These are nativity (being born in the U.S.) (46%), Christianity (30%), and gun ownership (34%).

Respondents are almost evenly split on whether or not being born in the United States is an important component of being American: 46% say it is, and 53% say it is not. This division is, in part, accounted for by racial differences. Just under half of Whites (44%) and almost two-thirds of African-Americans (63%) say that being born in the U.S. is important for making someone a true American—a 15-point spread. However, it is partisanship even more so than race that explains the difference in how much importance respondents assign to nativity as a component of American identity. Specifically, only four in ten (39%) Democrats and (43%) independents, but 69% of Republicans believe that being born in the United States is important in making someone a “true American.” In addition, significant differences exist by educational attainment and gun ownership. Specifically, only 34% of respondents with a college degree believe that American birth is important for being a true American, compared to 53% of those without a college degree. Similarly, 54% of gun owners but only 45% of non-gun owners assign importance to nativity as a component of American identity (Figure 2).



Although a substantial majority of respondents (70%) do not believe that being Christian is an important element for being American, there is significant disagreement across groups. First, there is considerable differentiation between the two racial groups. A majority of African-Americans (51%) but only a fourth (26%) of Whites believe that being Christian is an important part of being American. Second, as with other traits, polarization is more pronounced by party as only 22% of Democrats and 24% of independents, but 54% of Republicans believe that Christianity is an important part of being American. Third, there are pronounced differences by educational attainment: fewer than one in five (18%) college graduates, but 36% of those without a college degree believe that being Christian is important for being a true American. Finally, four in ten gun owners (40%) assign importance to Christianity, but only a fourth of non-gun owners (27%) say the same (Figure 3).

About the same proportion of Americans who assign importance to Christianity as a component of true Americanism also believe that gun ownership is important for making one a true American (34%). Here, partisanship, education, and status as a gun owner make a difference. A third of both Whites (33%) and African-Americans (35%) say that gun ownership denotes a “true American.” Yet, among partisans, only 16% of Democrats, but 33% of Republicans and 36% of independents take this view. Only a fourth (21%) of college graduates but four in ten (39%) of those without a college degree perceive true Americanism in gun ownership. Similarly, 39% of gun owners but 26% of non-gun owners say the same (Figure 4).



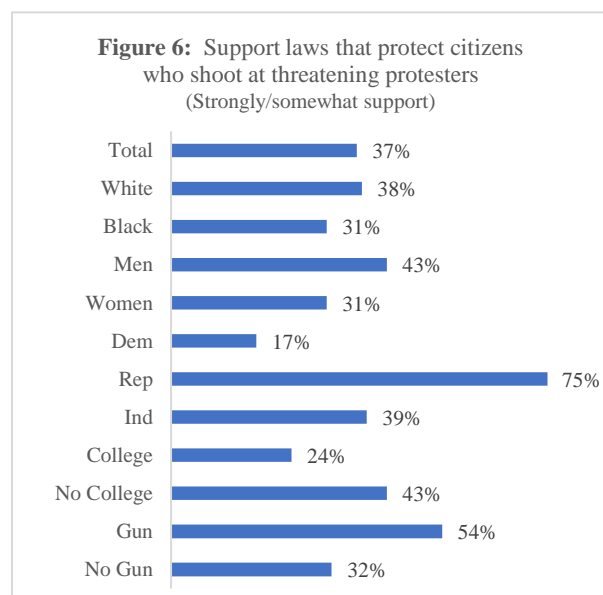
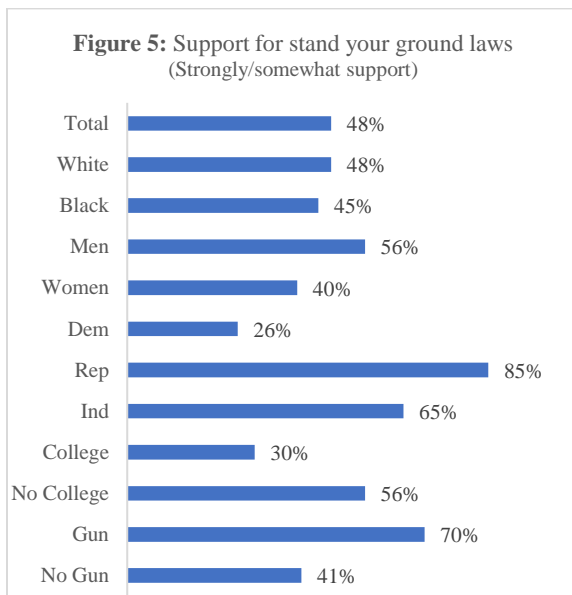


Section 2. Protest and Political Violence

A. “Stand Your Ground”

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), at least 25 states have “stand your ground laws.” These laws allow that there is no duty to retreat from an attacker in any place in which one is lawfully present.² Over the past year, and as a result of extensive social justice protests that have taken place across the country, some conservative lawmakers have considered the expansion of “stand your ground” laws to immunize individuals who use lethal violence against protesters whom they view as a threat to life or property.³ The survey asked respondents whether they supported or opposed stand your ground legislation and also whether they support an expansion of “stand your ground” to the case of protests.

Respondents are split on “stand your ground” laws. A slight majority (52%) opposes them, but 48% favors them. This split is reflected within both racial groups, with slight majorities opposing such laws. Respondents are also divided by gender on stand your ground laws. A majority of men (56%) support such laws, but only 40% of women do so. However, the most pronounced difference is by partisanship: only 26% of Democrats but 85% of Republicans and 65% of independents support “stand your ground” laws. Other large gaps in support for such laws exist between college (30%) and non-college-educated Americans (56%), and gun owners (70%), and those who do not own firearms (41%) (Figure 5).



² National Conference of State Legislatures, Self-Defense and "Stand Your Ground", 2020, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground.aspx>.

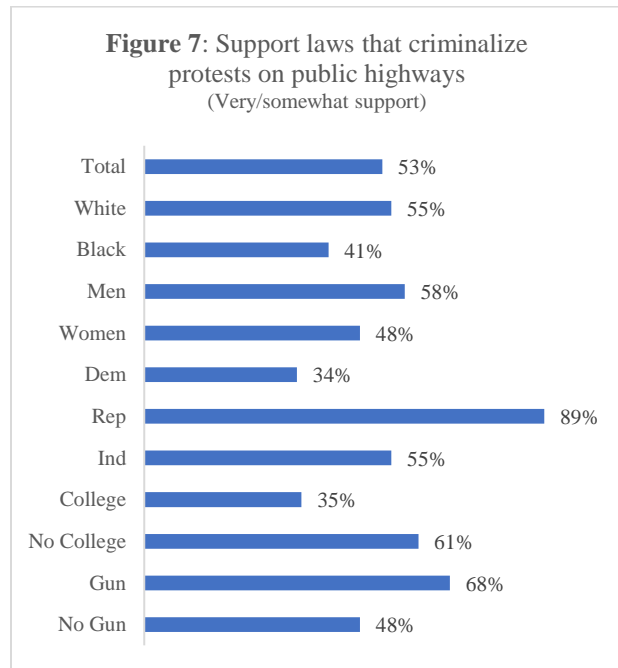
³ Elyse Wanshel, "Florida's Gov. DeSantis Wants To Allow Armed Citizens To Shoot Looters And Rioters," *HuffingtonPost.com* (November 11, 2020) no. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/floridas-gov-desantis-wants-to-allow-armed-citizens-to-shoot-looters-and-rioters_n_5fac0ccac5b6d647a39af5c0?ncid=fbklnkushpmg00000063&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=hp_fb_pages&utm_source=main_fb§ion=politics&gucounter=1 (2020).



Support for legislation that would protect citizens from criminal liability for shooting protesters whom they feel to be threatening has less support than “stand your ground laws.” Specifically, one-third (37%) of respondents support such laws, with 38% of Whites and 31% of African-Americans in favor. As with “stand your ground” laws, here too there is a significant difference in support by gender: four-tenths (43%) of all men but only 31% of women support legislation that shields citizens from criminal prosecution if they shoot a protester whom they consider threatening. As with other proposals, the gap is significantly more pronounced across partisans: only 17% of Democrats but a staggering 75% of Republicans support such legislation—a 58 percentage point difference. Less pronounced but also important is the difference in support for expansive “stand your ground” laws by education and by gun ownership status. Specifically, 24% of those with a college degree support such measures, which is noticeably less than the 43% of those without a college degree that support these measures. Similarly, 54% of gun owners but 32% of non-gun owners favor expanding stand your ground to protest settings (Figure 6).

B. Criminalization of Protests on Highways

In recent years, social movements have taken their protests to public highways. In response, several states have introduced legislation that criminalizes protests that block traffic.⁴ Although overwhelming majorities of both Black and White Americans believe that protection of the right to free speech is a quintessential American trait, they disagree when it comes to the specifics, especially when it involves protest on public highways. According to our survey, 53% of respondents support the criminalization of protests on public highways. But favorability differs markedly across subgroups. Specifically, 55% of Whites but only 41% of African-Americans support the enactment of such punitive laws. Such legislation is supported by men (58%) more so than by women (48%). Once again, the greatest gap is between partisan groups: only 34% of Democrats but 89% of Republicans support the criminalization of protest on public highways. A majority of independents (55%) support such laws as well. The gap by education is also substantial: 35% of those with a college degree support such laws, compared to 61% of those without a college degree. Similarly, two-thirds (68%) of gun owners support the criminalization of protests in public highways compared to 48% of non-gun owners (Figure 7).



C. Bringing Guns to Protests

Many states have enacted open carry laws that allow citizens to carry their firearms in public places openly. In recent years, people have brought firearms to political protests. Not only protest participants, but also counter-protesters have

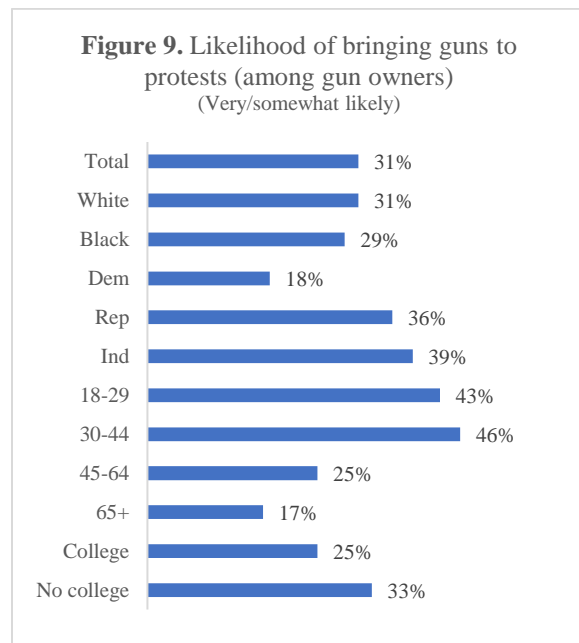
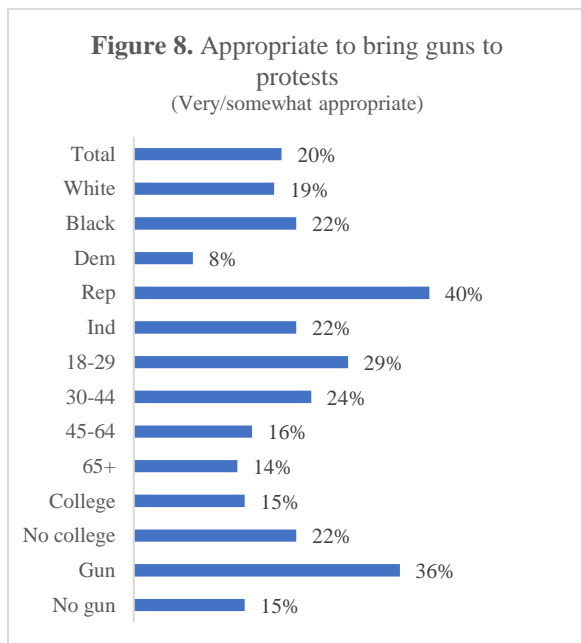
⁴ International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, U.S. Protest Law Tracker, (<https://www.icnl.org/usprotestlawtracker/> 2021).



been bringing firearms to sites of political mobilization. Some have even acted as unofficial police auxiliaries, patrolling the political mobilization process. This introduces questions about the relationship between free speech and the right to bear arms. We asked respondents how appropriate it is to bring firearms to a protest. We also asked firearms owners how likely they would be to bring their weapons to a protest.

Four in five participants (80%) said that it is inappropriate to bring firearms to a protest. Only 20% of respondents think that it is appropriate for firearms to be present in the context of political mobilization. The consensus holds across race groups. However, as with other attitudes on guns, there is a significant partisan cleavage. Only 8% of Democrats and 22% of independents support these measures, but 40% of Republicans believe it to be appropriate to bring firearms to protests. The divide in opinion is smaller between college-educated (15%) and those without such degrees (22%), and even between gun owners (36%) and non-gun owners (15%) (Figure 8).

One-third of gun owners (31%) say that they are very or somewhat likely to bring a gun to a protest. There is no significant difference in intent to bring firearms to protests by race. However, there is a significant partisan divide: only 18% of Democrats who own firearms say they would bring them to a protest compared to 36% of Republicans and 39% of independents. Four in ten (43%) younger (18-29-year-olds) gun owners and a similar proportion among those 30-44 (45%) say they would bring a gun to a protest, but the proportion decreases with age. Some difference exists by educational attainment as well: 25% of gun owners with a college degree, but 33% of those without such credentials would bring a gun to a protest (Figure 9).



D. Support for Political Violence

A supermajority of Americans believes that a “true American” relies on peaceful means to resolve political differences. However, denunciation of political violence is not as absolute when respondents are asked to consider a threat to cherished group identities. We asked respondents the degree to which they supported or opposed the following statements: “We should participate in public protests against oppression of our group even if such protests may turn violent.” Responses suggest people’s commitments to their political causes.



Support for participation in protests even if such mobilization turns violent is substantively higher than support for violent group organizations. Specifically, four in ten (39%) survey respondents support participation in protests against group oppression even if they could potentially become violent. Support for participation in protests that may become violent is stronger among African-Americans (51%) than Whites (37%). But once again, the racial divide is eclipsed by the partisan gap. Almost half (48%) of Democrats believe that they should participate in protests against group oppression even if such protests turn violent, compared to 40% of independents and 18% of Republicans (Figure 10).

Relatedly, we asked respondents whether firearms have a place in political life and specifically if they believed that government has become so powerful that people needed guns to protect themselves from it. Just under a third of the population (29%) endorsed this position, while the majority (51%) rejects this view. Again, this division is reflected within racial groups. Among Whites, 30% agree, and 52% disagree; similarly, among African-Americans, 21% agree and 53% disagree (Figure 11).

Partisan differences are once again pronounced. Only 10% of Democrats agree that government is so powerful, while 72% disagree. Conversely, 56% of Republicans agree, and 21% disagree. Independents are more equally split: 39% agree and 44% disagree.

College graduates (22%) are less likely to support this statement relative to those without a college degree (32%). Two-thirds (68%) of college graduates disagree, while only 44% of those without a degree do so. Compared to only 24% of non-gun owners, almost half of all gun owners believe that government is so powerful that citizens will need to use armed resistance against it. Conversely, only a third (31%) of gun owners but 57% of non-gun owners disagree with this view of government (Figure 11).

Figure 10. Support for attending group rights protests, even if they turn violent (Strongly/somewhat agree)

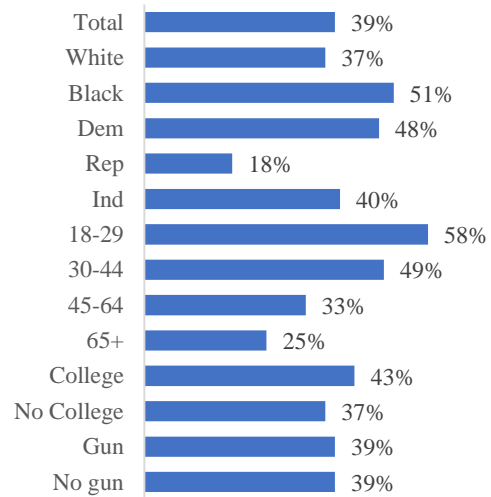
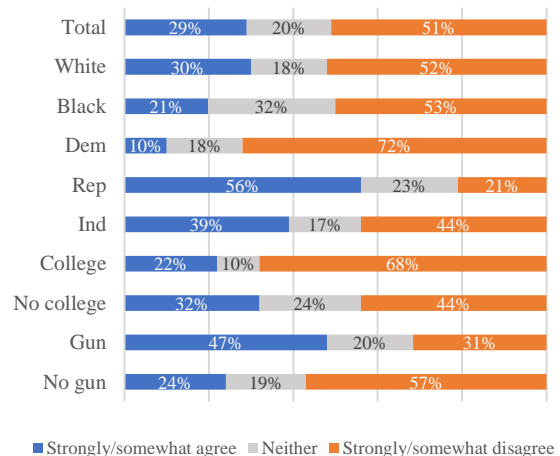


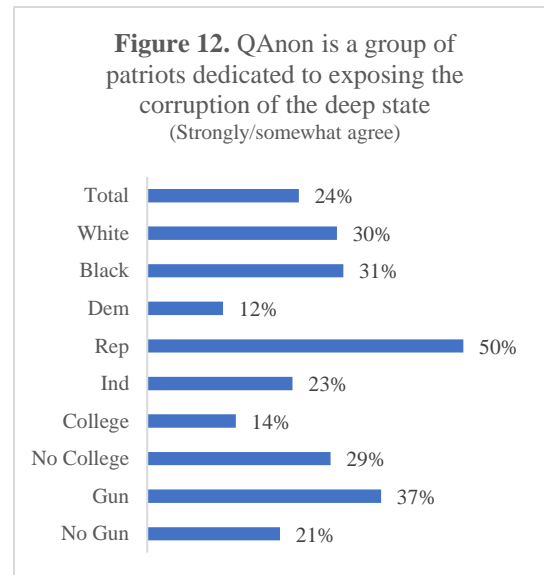
Figure 11. Government is so powerful that people need guns to protect themselves from it





Evidence from the court cases mounted against participants in the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol suggests that QAnon members constituted a large proportion of those who took part in the riot.⁵ One-fourth (24%) of survey respondents believe that QAnon is a group of patriots dedicated to exposing the corruption of the “deep” state. These perceptions are equally distributed between Whites and African-Americans.

Taking a closer look, attitudes towards QAnon vary considerably according to partisanship, educational attainment, and gun ownership, with no substantial differences according to race, gender, and age. While only a small fraction of Democrats (12%) and 23% of independents support this view of QAnon, half of Republicans do so (50%). Significant differences also exist according to educational attainment, with only 14% of college degree holders believing so compared to 29% for non-college-educated respondents. Finally, gun ownership is also strongly associated with support for the belief that QAnon is a group of patriots exposing the corruption of the deep state. A third (37%) of gun owners but only 21% of those who do not own firearms support this belief (Figure 12).



An instructive contrast to beliefs about QAnon, is respondents’ perceptions of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The question was in the form of a statement that said: “BLM does not support democracy, they only care about power.” A third (33%) of respondents strongly/somewhat agree with the statement, while 53% strongly/somewhat disagree. Among Whites, 37% agree, and 51% disagree. Disagreement is far stronger among African-Americans, 68% of whom do not believe that BLM does not support democracy (Figure 13).

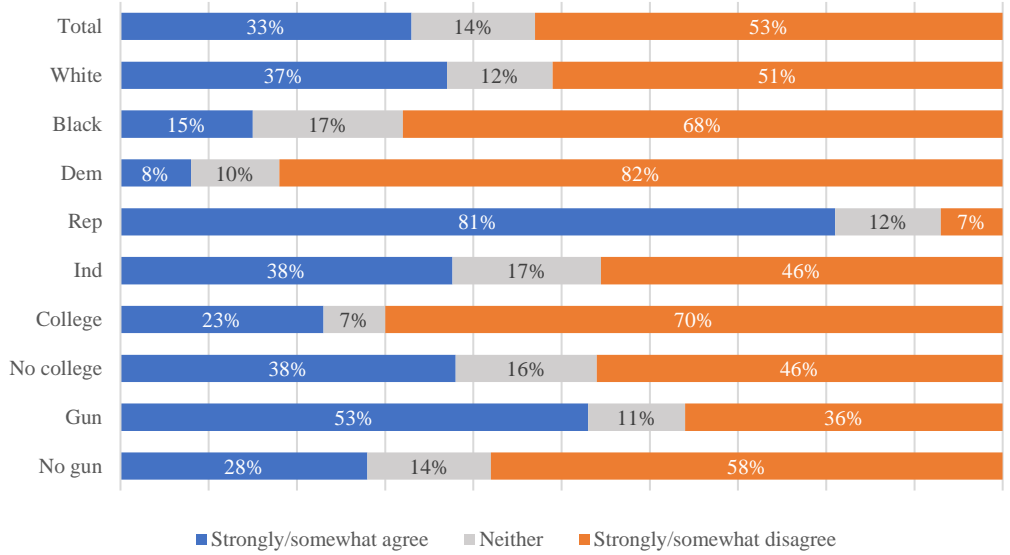
The partisan divide is even starker. Eight in ten (82%) Democrats disagree with the proposition that BLM is not democratic and only care about power, whereas 81% of Republicans agree with the statement. Fewer than one in ten in each partisan group takes the opposite position. Independents are more evenly divided: 38% agree, and 46% disagree with the statement.

Important gaps exist across educational attainment levels and by gun ownership status. Among those with a college degree, 70% disagree that BLM is not democratic, and only about a fourth (23%) agree. Conversely, those lacking a college degree are more evenly divided, albeit with a trend toward disagreement: 38% agree and 46% disagree. Among gun owners, 53% agree that BLM is not democratic and only cares about power, and 36% disagree. For non-gun owners, the proportions are 28% agree, and 58% disagree, respectively (Figure 13).

⁵ Reuters, "FBI Chief Says Five QAnon Conspiracy Advocates Arrested for Jan 6 U.S. Capitol Attack," 2021.



Figure 13. Black Lives Matter does not support democracy, they only care about power



Section 3. Are Guns Good or Bad for Democracy?

Supreme Court decisions issued in recent years determined that gun ownership is a right of American citizenship. The right relates to self-defense against crime.⁶ However, some scholars have argued that the right to bear arms is also a political right to revolution, and thus gun ownership acts as a “check” on government institutions.⁷ These ideas have become popular within certain political communities, but as we have already seen, Black and White Americans are polarized on whether gun ownership is a mark of “true” Americanism.

The survey provides additional evidence of polarization on the meaning of gun ownership and its role in political life. First, we asked respondents whether they agreed that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship. We also asked to what degree they believed that armed citizens are a danger to democracy.

Only about 20% of those surveyed report that owning a firearm is a sign of good citizenship, and there are no differences by race. It is also important to note that another 27% of respondents are noncommittal on this issue. However, a majority (53%) disagree with the notion that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship. Here too, there are no differences by race. Partisanship is the most prominent cleavage point: nearly half of Republicans (47%) believe that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship, and 15% believe the opposite. Among Democrats, only 7% agree that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship and 76% disagree. Among independents, 22% agree, while 48% disagree that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship (Figure 14, Item 1).

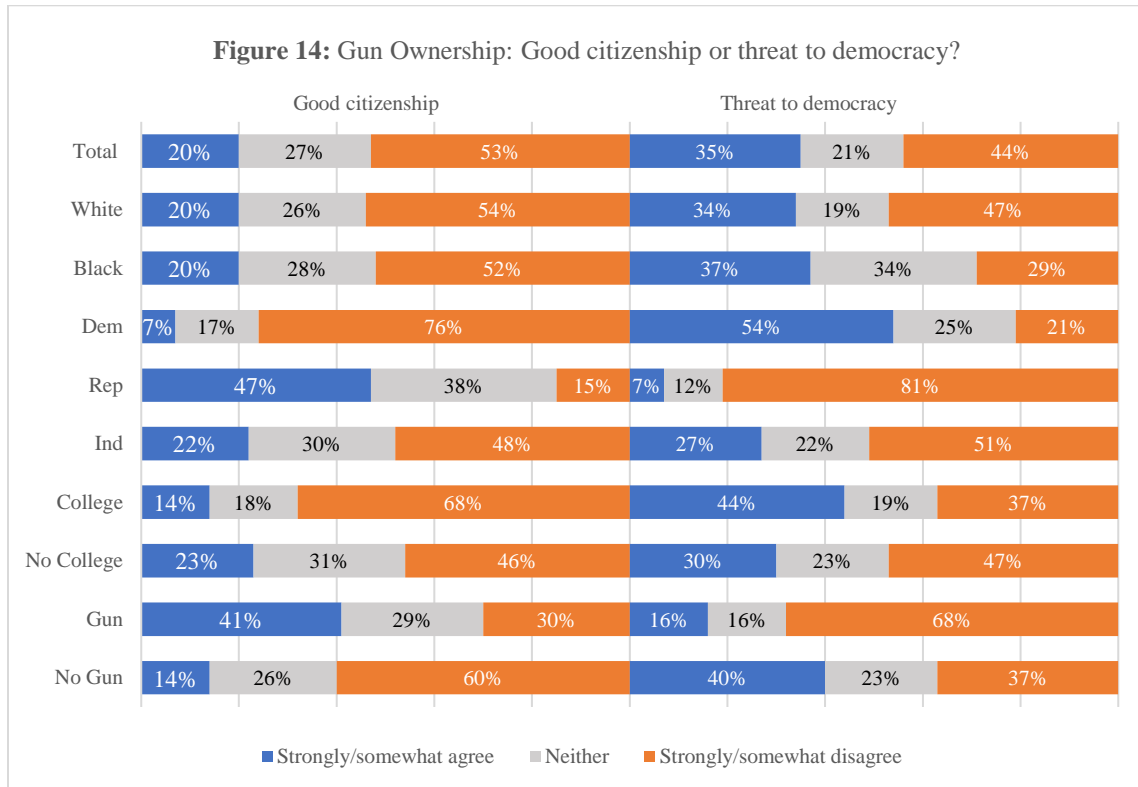
Education also plays a role in shaping perceptions of gun ownership as a sign of good citizenship: 14% of those with college degrees agree that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship, but 68% disagree. Among those without college degrees, 23% agree, and 46% disagree with the statement. Pronounced differences also emerge by gun ownership

⁶ *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008)

⁷ Stephen P. Halbrook, *That Every Man Be Armed: The Evolution of a Constitutional Right* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2013).



status: 41% of gun owners agree that owning a gun is a sign of good citizenship, and 30% disagree. Conversely, only 14% of those who do not own guns believe that gun ownership is a sign of good citizenship and 60% disagree (Figure 14, Item 1).



A little more than a third (35%) of respondents agree that armed citizens are a danger to democracy, while 44% disagree and 21% offer no strong opinion (Figure 14, Item 2). Although there is not a major difference in the proportion who agree with the statement between African-Americans (37%) and Whites (34%), Whites (47%) are far more likely to disagree than are African-Americans (29%). About a third of African-Americans (34%) and 19% of Whites offer no strong opinion. Once again, partisanship makes a big difference in whether or not respondents agree or disagree that armed citizens are a danger to democracy. Specifically, 54% of Democrats agree with this view, 25% are noncommittal, and only 21% disagree. Among Republicans, only 7% agree, 12% are indifferent, and 81% disagree. The view of independents is in the middle: 27% agree, 22% are in the middle, and 51% disagree that armed citizens constitute a danger to democracy.

In addition to partisanship, respondents are divided by education and gun ownership status on perceptions of armed citizens as a danger to democracy. Among college-educated participants, 44% agree, 19% are noncommittal, and 37% disagree that armed citizens are a danger to democracy. Among those without a college degree, a third (30%) agree, 23% say neither, and 47% disagree. Not surprisingly, most gun owners disagree with the statement. Specifically, 16% agree, 16% say neither, and 68% disagree. By contrast, among non-gun owners, 40% agree, 23% are noncommittal, and 37% disagree (Figure 14, Item 2).

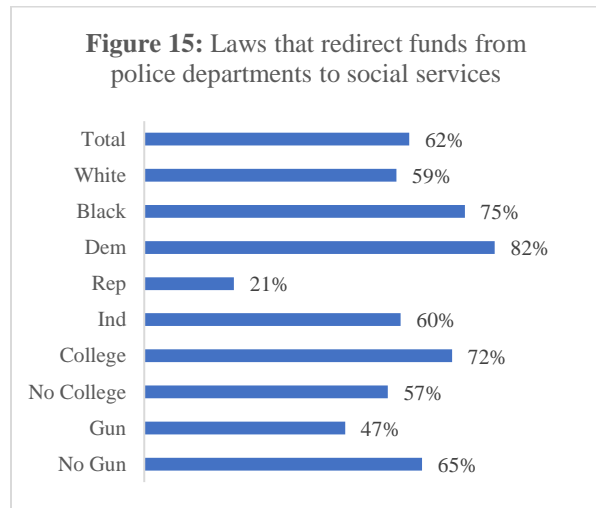


Section 4. Police Militarization or Defund the Police?

In 2015, in response to the militarized response of police during racial justice protests in Ferguson, Missouri, President Obama scaled back a federal program that had existed since the 1990s and through which the U.S. military transferred surplus equipment to police departments across the states. The Trump Administration reinstated the program in 2017. At the same time, critics of police militarization have argued that cities and localities should “defund” the police or use funding from police budgets to support mental health programs and other services that could help alleviate problems that contribute to crime and violence.⁸

Our survey asked respondents two related questions. First, we asked whether respondents support “Laws that redirect funds from police departments to social services, especially mental health services.” Second, we asked whether respondents support “laws that redirect money from social programs (such as health and education) to purchase military-grade equipment for police departments.”

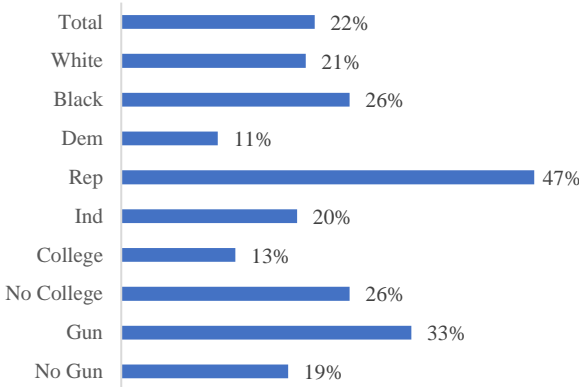
Six in ten (62%) respondents support laws that redirect police funds from police to social services. Although majorities of both African-Americans (75%) and Whites (59%) support this policy proposal, support is much stronger among Black respondents. However, as we have seen with other issues, the partisan divide is much deeper than the racial one. Specifically, 82% of Democrats but only 21% of Republicans support programs that would redirect police resources to social services. College-educated Americans are more likely to support these laws (72%) relative to non-college graduates (57%). There is a similar relationship for gun ownership status, with gun owners (47%) supporting these laws less than non-gun owners (65%) (Figure 15).



⁸ Paige Fernandez, "Defunding the Police will Actually Make Us Safer," *ACLU* June 11, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/criminal-law-reform/defunding-the-police-will-actually-make-us-safer/> (2020); Alexis Okeowo, "How to Defund the Police," *The New Yorker* June 26, 2020 <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-police-could-be-defunded> (2020).



Figure 16: Support laws that redirect money from social programs to police militarization

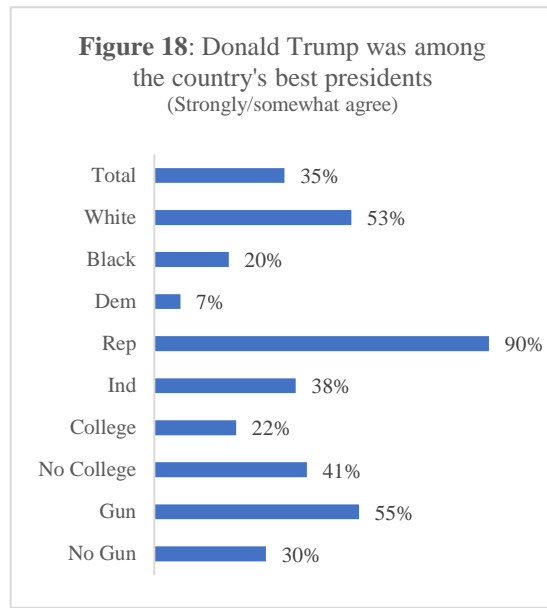
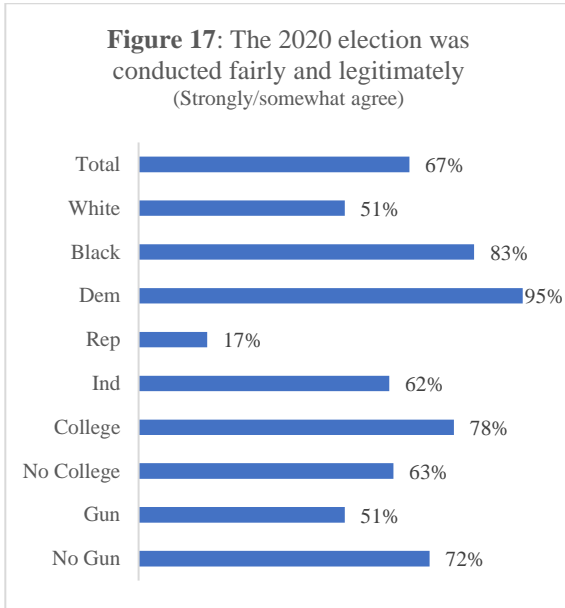


Transferring funding from social services to purchases of military-grade equipment for police departments enjoys far less support than “defunding” the police. Specifically, only one in five (22%) respondents support such proposals, with only minor, statistically insignificant, differences between Whites (21%) and African-Americans (26%). Once again, partisan affiliation is what divides respondents the most. Only 11% of Democrats but almost half (47%) of Republicans and one in five (20%) independents support shifting resources from social services to police militarization programs. Only one-tenth (13%) of college educated individuals compared to 26% of those without a degree support such programs. Support of police militarization at the expense of social services is stronger among gun owners (33%) than non-gun owners (19%) (Figure 16).

Section 5: The 2020 Election & Donald J. Trump

The 2020 election was surrounded with controversy, much of it driven by former President Donald Trump’s claims that the results were not legitimate. Two-thirds of survey participants (67%) believe that the 2020 election was conducted fairly and legitimately, but this conviction varies dramatically by race, partisanship, educational attainment, and gun ownership.

Just above half of White respondents (51%) agree that the 2020 election was conducted fairly and legitimately, while an overwhelming majority of African-Americans (83%) believe that the process was fair and legitimate. Partisanship explains this difference even more so. Almost all Democratic respondents (95%) say that the 2020 election was fair and legitimate, while only 17% of Republican respondents believe the same. Less pronounced differences also exist by educational attainment and gun ownership. Three in four college degree holders (78%) believe that the process was fair and legitimate, while about two-thirds (63%) of non-college degree holders believe the same. Half of gun owners think the process was fair and legitimate (51%) compared to three-quarters of non-gun owners (72%). (Figure 17).



The Black and White American population is also divided on their evaluation of Donald Trump as a president. About one-third of all respondents (35%) believe that Trump was among the best American presidents, while 65% disagree. Attitudes about Trump vary by race, age, partisanship, educational attainment, and gun ownership.

A slight majority of Whites (53%) believe that Trump was among the country's best presidents, while only one-fifth of African-Americans say the same (20%)—a 33-point spread. However, as with other political attitudes, partisanship holds the key to differences in how respondents assess Trump. Among Democrats, 7% believe that Trump was among the country's best presidents and 93% disagree. Conversely, 90% of Republicans say Trump was among the best presidents, and only 10% disagree. Independents are more split, with 38% believing that Trump was great and 62% not. Among college-educated respondents, 22% assess Trump to be a great president, while 78% disagree. Conversely, among those without a college degree, four in ten (41%) agree that Trump is amongst the country's best presidents. Gun owners are almost evenly split on their assessment of Trump: 55% think of him as among the greats, and 45% do not. Among non-gun owners, only 31% think that Trump is among the country's great presidents (Figure 18).

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted by YouGov on behalf of the University of Illinois at Chicago between May 20th and June 1st, 2021. A total of 1,500 people participated in the study, 1,000 Whites and 500 African-Americans. The survey is representative of the national population for those two groups. The margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.

YouGov interviewed 1146 White and 569 Black respondents who were then matched separately down to a sample of 1000 and a sample of 500 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, and education. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). The matched cases were weighted separately to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined, and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, years of education, and region. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles. The weights were then post-stratified separately on 2016 and 2020 Presidential vote choice, and a three-way stratification



of gender, age (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the weight for White and Black. To generate the weights for all 1500 matched respondents, YouGov combined the matched cases. The weights were then post-stratified on 2016 and 2020 Presidential vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (2-categories), and education (4-categories) to produce the final weight.

The study was approved but the UIC IRB #2, under protocol #20130959.



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