

Gun Rights Outweigh Gun Control In New Pew Survey

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[BILL CHAPPELL](#)



More than half of American women now say owning a gun protects people from becoming victims of crime, according to Pew. Here, a woman carries a rifle at a gun rights rally at the Utah State Capitol last year.

George Frey/Getty Images

For the first time in at least 20 years, significantly more Americans say it's more important to protect the right to own guns than to control gun ownership, according to the Pew Research Center.

[The survey](#) found that more than half of Americans (52 percent) sided with gun rights compared with the 46 percent who favored gun control.

The findings represent the continuation of a shift that was only briefly interrupted by the Newtown, Conn., school shootings in 2012.

In April 2007, the Pew survey found only 32 percent of Americans said it was more important to protect the right to own guns, while 60 percent said it was more important to control gun ownership.

Pew says its survey, conducted during the first week of this month, also found that well over half of Americans said that owning a gun protects people from crime.

“Do you think that gun ownership in this country does more to... ”

*Protect people from becoming victims of crime

*Put people’s safety at risk

Increasing Number Say Gun Ownership Protects People From Crime

% who say gun ownership in this country does more to...

	Dec 2012	Dec 2014	Change
	%	%	
Protect people from becoming victims of crime	48	57	+9
Put people’s safety at risk	37	38	+1
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	<u>16</u>	<u>5</u>	-11
	100	100	

Survey conducted Dec. 3-7, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: [Pew Research Center](#) conducted by landline and cellphone in December of 2014. Overall margin of error: ±2.9 percentage points.

From Pew:

“Nearly six-in-ten Americans (57 percent) say gun ownership does more to protect people from becoming victims of crime, while 38 percent say it does more to endanger personal safety. In the days after Newtown, 48 percent said guns do more to protect people and 37 percent said they placed people at risk.”

The most dramatic shift in opinion took place among black Americans, according to the nonpartisan Pew. In December 2012, only 29 percent of black respondents said owning a gun helps protect people from crime, but this year, 54 percent said so.

Many women also changed their view, Pew says, citing the 51 percent who said owning a gun protects people from becoming victims of crime in 2014, compared with only 40 percent who said so in 2012.

For the most recent survey, Pew says it spoke to 1,507 people 18 years of age or older, spread among all 50 states and the District of Columbia. While about 600 interviews took place on landline phones, around 900 were conducted on cellphones.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

In a comparison of gun violence statistics from 1993 and the current decade that we reported on last year, both Pew and the federal [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) found that the U.S. had experienced a sharp drop in the rate of gun homicides and other violence, despite population growth.

[As we reported:](#)

"There were seven gun homicides per 100,000 people in 1993, the [Pew Research Center study](#) says, which dropped to 3.6 gun deaths in 2010. The study relied in part on data from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)."

The researchers used 1993 as a reference point because it's seen as the height of gun violence in America; they also noted that gun-related violence fell sharply in the 1990s and more gradually in later years.

But Pew also noted that many Americans didn't seem to agree with the numbers. A survey found that only 12 percent of respondents thought the gun crime rate was lower than it was in 1993 — and 56 percent thought it was higher.