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Parkland: One Year Later For Immediate Release

Contact: Lee M. Miringoff
Barbara L. Carvalho
Mary E. Griffith
Marist College
845.575.5050

This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

One year after the horrific school shooting that killed seventeen people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, serious concern about gun violence and contrasting perspectives about how to deal with it persist in the United States. Partisan and racial differences are real, yet there are also areas of common ground and consensus.

When hearing about mass shootings, a majority of Americans (59%) say their first reaction is that the country needs stricter gun laws. This is in contrast with 25% whose first thought is that more people need to carry a gun. In the coming years, nearly half of Americans (49%) think gun violence in this country will remain the problem it is now, and about four in ten (39%) think it will be more of a concern.

A slim majority of Americans, 51% down from 71% in the immediate aftermath of the Parkland shooting last year, think laws covering the sale of firearms should be stricter. 10%, up from 5%, report they should be less strict, and 36% say legislation governing the sale of guns should remain the same, up from 23% previously.

And, though Americans still believe gun legislation is a priority for Congress, there is less urgency than there was a year ago. Forty-two percent of Americans down from 52% last April, think stricter gun legislation should be an immediate priority for Congress. An additional 29%, an increase from 19%, believe it should be a priority but not an immediate one. 27%, unchanged from April 2018, do not think stricter gun laws should be a priority at all. Non-whites (53%) urge immediate action more so than whites (35%).

“Not surprisingly, the results show that the outcry against gun violence has lessened from what it was immediately following the shooting at Parkland,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of

The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Yet, there is a strong consensus that gun violence is a serious problem and action needs to be taken.”

A majority of Americans say it is more important to control gun violence (58%) than to protect gun rights (37%). Non-white residents are more likely to prioritize curbing gun violence (67%) over protecting gun rights (28%) than are white residents, who share these views (53% and 44%, respectively).

Americans value their right to bear arms. 58% -- including most Republicans (74%), many independents (64%), and even 40% of Democrats -- say the constitutional right to own and carry a gun is just as important as the rights to free speech and religion. In contrast, about three in ten Americans (31%), including 56% of Democrats, think the right to bear arms is not as important as other constitutional freedoms. Just 10% of Americans argue the right to bear arms is more important.

42% of Americans do not think increasing gun ownership makes a difference in the incidence of crime. 28% believe more guns means more crime, and 26% believe more guns would result in less crime, including 49% of Republicans. When the Pew Research Center reported this question in March 2017, 32% said increased gun ownership would make no difference, 35% believed an increase in gun ownership would mean more crime, and 33% thought it would result in less crime.

There is, however, a strong consensus on several proposed measures to reduce gun violence. These include requiring background checks for gun purchases at gun shows or other private sales (82%), requiring mental health checks (79%), employing safety resource officers or armed guards in schools (72%), banning high capacity ammunition clips (65%), creating a national database to track gun sales (64%), and banning the sale of semi-automatic assault guns such as the AK-47 (60%). Allowing school teachers to carry guns (39%) is the least popular proposal to curb gun violence.

GLWTCHGNI. NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Tables February 5th through February 11th, 2019

National Adults			
In order to reduce gun violence, do you think each of the following changes to gun policy will make a difference or not make a difference:			
	Make a difference	Not make a difference	Unsure
	Row %	Row %	Row %
Requiring background checks for gun purchases at gun shows or other private sales [^]	82%	15%	2%
Requiring mental health checks on all gun buyers*	79%	18%	3%
Having safety resource officers or armed guards in schools*	72%	24%	4%
Banning high-capacity ammunition clips that can shoot dozens of bullets without stopping to reload [^]	65%	33%	2%
Creating a national database to track all gun sales in the United States*	64%	34%	3%
Banning the sale of semi-automatic assault guns such as the AK-47 or the AR-15 [^]	60%	37%	2%
Allowing school teachers to carry guns in the classroom*	39%	55%	5%

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll National Adults Split Sample. Interviews conducted February 5th through February 11th, 2019.

* n=520 MOE +/- 5.0 percentage points.

[^] n=554 MOE +/- 4.9 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Nearly six in ten Americans (58%) have a favorable impression of the Parkland students who are speaking out about the shooting at their high school, and though down from 79% last April, many Americans (64%) think these students are having at least some impact on gun reform in this country.

Many Americans (65%), including 69% of parents of children in Kindergarten through twelfth grade, believe the schools in their community are safe from gun violence. Still, three in ten (30%), including 28% of these parents, do not believe their local schools are safe from this type of threat. The proportion of non-white Americans (39%) who live in fear of a shooting in their community's schools is greater than that of white Americans (24%).

But, do Americans worry there could be another Parkland? Majorities of Americans (53%) and parents with students in grades Kindergarten through twelve (52%), are concerned that a school shooting could happen in their community. This includes 19% who express a great deal of concern and 34% who are somewhat concerned. 46% have less worry (27%) or are not worried at all (19%) about a school shooting in their local community. Women (63%) express greater concern than men (43%) about the potential. By more than two to one, non-white Americans (28%) are more likely to express a great deal of concern about a possible mass shooting than white Americans (13%).

Nearly four in ten (38%) Americans have experienced gun violence, that is, have either been threatened with a gun or have been a victim of a shooting. Racial differences exist. 31% of white Americans say they have experienced gun violence compared with 48% of non-white Americans. More than one in four parents with school-age children (27%) say their child or children personally know someone who has experienced gun violence.

Nearly six in ten Americans (59%) think the per capita gun murder rate in the United States is higher than it was 25 years ago. 12% say it is lower, and 23% assert it is about the same.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) receives mixed reviews from Americans. 42% have a favorable opinion of the NRA, 42% have an unfavorable one, and 16% have either never heard of it or are unsure how to rate the NRA. 62% of gun owners have a favorable opinion of the NRA, and 24% have an unfavorable one.

Fewer Americans, 31% down from 40% in March 2018, are more likely to support a brand or company that has cut ties with the NRA. 37%, the identical proportion from last year, are steadfast in their opinion to avoid the brand. 25%, up from 17%, say it makes no difference to them.

Overall, more Americans (57%) think the United States is moving in the wrong direction than the right one (36%). These proportions are little changed from when this question was last reported in December 2018.