"Locked and Loaded: Understanding the Complex Relationship between Demographics, Political Affiliation, and Gun Ownership in the United States"

Word Count: 9998

Candidate number: 2064847

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of BSc in Criminology.

This dissertation contains no plagiarism, has not been submitted in whole or in part for the award of another degree, and is solely the work of 2064847.

Abstract

Gun violence remains a pressing concern in the United States, with over 44,000 firearms incidents occurring in 2022. The resulting debate surrounding the availability and use of firearms has become a highly polarized topic among policymakers and advocacy groups. Nevertheless, factors that predict both public policy support and reasons for gun ownership are not well understood. To address this issue, the present study draws on IPSOS dataset comprising key survey questions of US adults' opinions to investigate the relationship between demographics and political affiliation and their respective significance on predicting gun control policy support and the purposes for gun ownership. Our findings indicate that all policies considered had majority support across the study, with particular significance placed on gender, age, and political affiliation as determinants of support. Our study also identified two principal rationales for legal gun ownership among respondents: recreation and protection. By integrating perspectives from criminology, sociology, law, and social policy, our research provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape public opinion on guns. We believe that this research challenges perspectives on gun control policies and offers new insights into the relationship between gun ownership, support for gun control policies, and their overall impact.

Word Count: 198

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has supported me throughout the dissertation period.

In particular, I am deeply grateful to my siblings, Pedro and Aitana, who have provided me with endless encouragement and virtual hugs during challenging times.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor, Samuel Kirwan, for his invaluable support, guidance, and patience throughout the process of this dissertation.

Table of Contents

1.   Introduction

Gun violence is a deeply ingrained issue in American society, and it remains a major topic of national political debates. Recent mass shootings in public spaces have drawn national attention to the threat of gun violence in schools, museums, government buildings, and even supermarkets. The United States is recognized as having a higher rate of gun deaths than any other developed nation (Grinshteyn and Hemenway, 2016), with guns as the perennial leading cause of death and injury, resulting in almost 12,000 deaths so far in 2023 (Gun Violence, 2022). As a result, the government has the duty to strengthen federal gun laws and deter gun deaths. However, despite these efforts, some states have recently expanded the public spaces in which it is legal to carry a gun, such as bars or college campuses; in the hope that more people carrying guns in public spaces will increase public safety and deter crime, although there is not enough evidence to support this claim (Branas et al., 2009).

Despite significant changes in gun policies, social and political factors can play a significant role in shaping a country's policies, as well as citizens' interests. Understanding these factors is important in predicting and influencing policy outcomes. Previous literature has analysed social and demographic differences among the public to understand their perceptions of gun control, but it has not examined individuals' motivations for gun ownership at the same time. Therefore, exploring the relationship between variables, creating a wide range of different variables, and discussing policy perceptions and motivations for owning a gun may be theoretically influential in gun control, in addition to analysing social, political and demographic variables. To address these gaps, this dissertation aims to examine how demographics and political affiliation influence views on gun control policies and motivations for gun ownership among US adults.

The current study analyses recently collected data from a 2022 IPSOS survey. It is important to update and evaluate public opinion regularly, to determine whether responses are consistent (Berinsky, 2017). This recent 2022 database can help advance previous literature about gun control by analysing public opinion. Additionally, the current study can help establish whether a specific type of gun control policy is influenced by specific demographic variables, as well as specific reasons for gun ownership. To achieve this aim, two statistical tests have been conducted. First, a regression analysis has been used as a prediction method between selected policies and independent and controlled variables. Second, Pearson and Kendall's Tau correlation tests have been employed to examine the relationship between demographics and political variables with motivations for buying a gun.

The following are brief descriptions of the chapters of the study:

Chapter 2: Examines the historical background of gun control in the US and reviews the existing literature on four specific gun policies and the main motivations for gun ownership, all related to social demographics and political affiliation.

Chapter 3: Describes the research questions and hypotheses of the study, the data, the selected variables, their coding, and the analytic strategy of this dissertation.

Chapter 4: Discusses the main results from the regression analysis and correlation tests.

Chapter 5: Addresses the findings of the research organised around major themes and theories and discusses highlighted patterns and divergences.

Chapter 6: Concludes by summarizing the major findings, along with its limitations, policy implications, and future directions.

2. Literature Review

This literature review will analyse public opinion literature about different gun control policies and laws. Gun policies are a constantly growing issue as the policies implemented by the government are supported and shaped by what the public votes. Therefore, it will mainly focus on the social and demographic factors that predict gun control support and create public opinion patterns towards the most important gun policies, evaluated with relevant literature. It will also look at the patterns that are created from individual demographic characteristics and their motivations for owning a gun.

2.1. Literature search

To begin with, the chapter will contextualise the problem and critique the current notions of gun control exploring recently gathered data. Moreover, it will understand the demographic and sociological factors that influence gun ownership and shape individual opinions towards gun control laws. It also explores studies that consider political positions as a reason for gun ownership. The literature presented in this review was acquired through the University of Bristol bibliographic database, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Key search terms were used with the advance search including, 'Gun Control,' 'Gun Policies', opinion, demograph*, psychol*, 'political affiliation'. Literature on data comes from extensive surveys and polls from research centres such as Pew Research Centre, Gallup and IPSOS, which provide the most reliable and recent data regarding gun control and public characteristics.

2.2. Historical background and gun control

Amid a variety of current crimes occurring in the United States, gun violence remains one of the most pressing and harmful public crime concerns. The U.S. has the highest rate of gun violence related deaths among developed countries. In 2020, the number of violence-related firearm deaths was 44,287 at a rate of 13.44 per 100,000 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). Probably the greatest concern between guns and interpersonal violence is the likelihood and prevalence of gun ownership in households. A study conducted by Gallup, showed that 32% of U.S adults reported owning a gun, while a larger percentage, 44% reported living in a gun household (Saad, 2020). Despite this significant percentage of owners and the evident daily reported deaths, why is the regulation of gun laws such an intractable and controversial issue in American politics?

When it comes to limiting arms in a country in which its social and cultural tradition includes an identifiable ''gun culture'' phrase, by the historian Richard Hofstader (Spitzer, 2012),

determining the opportunities to regulate the legislation does seem like a barrier to approve some gun control policies. Moreover, this cultural phrase refers to the attachment of many Americans to firearms. Which is mainly rooted to the connection between guns and the struggle that the States had for survival and independence, their border experiences, hunting and other cultural traditions (Spitzer, 1995 cited in Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998). Wamser-Nanney (2021) identified a significant heterogeneity in the notions of gun culture due to the individual's perceptions about gun risk factors. This heterogeneity is notable in the substantial differences in gun laws limiting or allowing access to firearms across states (Siegel, 2022). But it is also shaped by multi-layered risk factors that exist on several individual levels (e.g., demographic, psychological, social, cultural, exposure to stressors in the community...) (Wamser-Nanney, 2021).

Further, the exclusive focus of the study on the U.S. is because it has more guns than any other country, as with 120 civilian-owned firearms per 100 people, has the highest rate of individual gun ownership in the world (Fouloy, 2022). It also appears as unique in the globe in having such a strong cultural association of guns with personal identity and national values, hence the origin of gun culture (Cook and Goss, 2020: Ch. 6). The debate over gun control regulations in America has always been organised by two sides; by the interest groups that are in favour of stricter laws and regulations, and those that believe that the existent regulation laws are unconstitutional, and therefore violate the Second Amendment. The amendment which states that ''a well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed'', has been substantially present in the National Rifle Association (NRA) and similar groups that does not seek stricter gun control regulations. They help organise voters, campaign volunteers and promote the belief that guns may protect their owners from violence (Wilcox and Bruce, 1998). But gun control still faces stiff opposition, mostly led by the NRA. As Britannica (2022) states, 'the association represents almost 5m hunters and gun enthusiasts. After 2008, the US Supreme Court recognised for the first time a personal right to ''keep and bear arms''. And was when in District of Columbia v. Heller, ''the court ruled that the Second Amendment provided a right to self-defence, and particularly defence of the home'', but after a federal appeals court interpreted the Heller decision to have the right of a gun for protection in public places. Now, almost every state permits concealed carry in public places (Cook and Goss, 2020). This measure has caused the well-known mass shootings in civilian settings, as recorded in the Gun Violence Archive (2022), 619 shootings happened in 2022.

However, firearm violence prevention programmes have produced a small amount of success in the form of a federal law - the ''*Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act*'' - enacted 30 years back. This law requires background checks to be undertaken before the individual can

purchase a firearm, with a federally licensed manufacturer. Also, states have implemented firearm laws to reduce firearms access to under eighteen citizens, as well as convicted criminals or mentally disabled (Kalesan *et al.*, 2016).

2.3.   Gun control policies

In the hope to present future tragedies, policy makers work on creating policies which regulate the manufacture and sale of guns. It normally includes measures such as requiring police permits, background individual checks, waiting periods, and licensing and registering for all gun owners in the federal check system (Smith, 2002), it can also include the prohibition of sale of guns to certain categories of people. Such as individuals under eighteen years of age, convicted criminals, mentally disabled, and dishonourably discharged military personnel (Masters, 2022). Normally the creation of useful and adequate policies is based on data, history, and gun laws. Gun policies do have relevant outcomes, which include individual right to defend themselves, homicide, and suicide. So, the understanding of the costs and benefits that gun policies are likely to produce and reflect in the society, is something considered (RAND, 2023).

While in most states, keeping a gun at home is regarded as a private matter, taking guns into public spaces is viewed as a concern. This is resulting in more regulations of gun carrying, instead of more restrictive gun acquisitions. There is only one state, which is Vermont, which requires citizens to obtain a special permit to legally carry in public a concealed gun (Ludwig and Cook, 2003:11). However, 88% of Americans think that people should get a permit before carrying a concealed gun in public (Everytown, 2022). However, here are four main gun control policies which are the most recognised and sometimes controversial between gun supporters and non-gun supporters.

Policy 1: Banning assault style weapons.

Some policies also try to ban specific types of guns. The Congress adopted the Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which made it generally ''lawful for a person to manufacture, transfer or possess'' a semiautomatic assault weapon (Giffords 2022). These types of weapons are known to be more lethal and can injure more people quickly. A study conducted by DiMaggio et al (2019) found that assault rifles caused more than 85% of public mass shootings that resulted in four or more deaths. Further, Marc Gius (2013) examined how at a state level, assault weapon bans helped to prevent mass shooting deaths, as we can also see in DiMaggio's (2019) paper where he also found that during a 10-year ban, mass shooting deaths were 70% less likely to happen compared to periods before and after the ban. Yet, public opinion diverges and predicts support towards this policy. According to an ABC/Washington Post Poll in 2012, 59% of women, compared to the 47% of men, support more gun control assault weapons (Slaughter, 2012).

Opinions were also divided based on political party, from a survey conducted in 2022, in which a total of 54% of all registered voters strongly supported the ban of assault style weapons (Morning Consult and Politico, 2022).

Policy 2: Requiring background checks for all gun buyers.

Further, another relevant policy is about requiring background checks on all gun sales. This has been proven to reduce gun violence. Public opinion here agrees on the common-sense of keeping guns away from the wrong hands and keeping the community safer, as the 93% of Americans in an Everytown & Giffords survey supported requiring background checks on all gun sales. Further, another study found that states with active laws requiring background checks have demonstrated a 10% lower homicide rate (Siegel and Boine, 2019). As mentioned in the previous section, views on gun policies also predict widely by the type of communities in which people live. From a Pew Research Center survey, they found a 9% difference in support of the policy between urban and rural communities (Parker *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, a cast majority of Democrats (91%) strongly support the policy, compared to Republicans (72%), and this gender gap also predicts a difference in this policy, which holds 89% support from women compared to men (77%) (Monmouth University, 2018).

Policy 3: Raising the legal age to buy a gun from 18 to 21.

Two mass shootings that happened in 2022, in The Uvalde and Buffalo, had two main things in common. Their killers had illegally purchased their own rifles, and they were 18 years old. This has initiated the debate towards the minimum legal age for purchasing firearms (Tambe, 2022). The federal law regulating guns, sets a dangerous low minimum age. While it is required to be 21 to purchase a handgun from a licensed dealer, it only requires to be 18 to buy a long gun or assault weapon. However, the law is even weaker for unlicensed sellers, with an 18-year minimum age for handguns, and no minimum age for long guns (Everytown, 2023). A project conducted from the University of Texas (2022), has evidenced how individual characteristics predict their opinion on policies, such as raising the minimum age to obtain a firearm. Gender appears to be a predictor of support, as women have responded to up to 61% of support towards this policy, compared to the 41% of men. Also, the type of residence of the individuals is also an affecting effect, as 57% of urban people agree on raising the age, compared to 39% of rural citizens. However, the most notable predictor is political ideology, as 81% of Democrats strongly support the policy, whereas only 31% are republican voters. This high percentage of support are reflected in an IPSOS survey too, where 67% supported raising the minimum age from 18 to 21 (Newall, Diamond and Rollason, 2022).

<u>Policy 4: Adding those with mental illnesses to the federal gun background check system.</u>

Some other policies create extreme risk protection orders, according to Everytown for Gun Security, this policy will provide a path to remove guns from somebody in a temporary crisis. Some republican lawmakers and Donal Trump think that mental illness is not the root of most cases of gun violence, though it does increase the risk for suicide. Mueller (2018) analysed that about 22% of 350 mass killers from the last century, were found likely to have had psychosis (Penzenstadler, 2022). Remarkable results were obtained by D. Glick after analysing 35 mass shootings between 1982 and 2019, in which shooters survived and went to trial, he found that 28 shooters had mental illness diagnoses, including 18 with schizophrenia and 10 with bipolar disorders, personality disorders and substance-related disorders (Cassata, 2023).

Bascuas (2022) examined the impact of implementing mental health tests and found that 40% of Republicans have a favourable attitude towards having a mental health check prior obtaining a gun. Compared to 55% of support from the Democrats (Bascuas *et al.*, 2022). Another poll from IPSOS, examined the support of the policy depending on their type of residence. Their results showed a 37% of support from suburban citizens compared to a 16,8% from rural individuals.

2.4.   Theoretical background of gun ownership

It is expected that various public preferences towards gun control are influenced by some factors, including self-interest, symbolic and demographic (Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998: 243). Previous research has examined that self-interest strongly predicts people's view on gun control. These studies work from a Hobbesian perspective of self-interest, arguing that human beings always acted from their own benefit (Andre and Velasques, 2013 cited in Pederson et al., 2015). The theory of self-interest applied to owning guns comes from the basis that gun ownership is a choice when individuals consider the benefits of having a handgun at home for several reasons. Also, Pierre (2019) adds that there is an underlying role of cognitive biases integrated into the understanding of attitudes of gun control and ownership which are defined as universal liabilities that fall short of explaining the two groups of individuals who have a personal stake in the issue, pro-gun individuals and anti-gun individuals (Pierre, 2019: 2). Here, pro-gun are opponents of gun control laws which state that stricter laws would not prevent gun violence or mass shootings. However, anti-gun individuals are citizens that often want more laws to try to prevent mass shootings and are calling for effective gun laws, more background checks in terms of the firearms licence, as well as more protections against mentally ill gun owners (Pierre, 2019: 4).

Going further from the focus of Americans and their exclusive self-interest, it is important to mention how this also applies to indexes of individualism and collectivism in gun ownership. Durkheim made the concept of individualism and collectivism in his discussion about the connection between individuals in a capitalistic society. In general, studies have affirmed that those are conditioned traits that are shown to be affected by attitudes and behaviour in supporting gun control (Triandis *et al.*, 1995), and now this construct of individualism and collectivism is employed as a predictor of gun ownership and attitudes towards gun control in America. Ryckman and Houston (2007) explores that individualistic persons tend to be independent and detached from community, and they are likely to value power and personal achievement (Celinska, 2007). In contrast, utilitarian collectivism is much more focused on 'group and community interests over self-interest' (Celinska, 2007:232).

2.5. Gun ownership purposes

Even though Wozniak (2015) argues that public opinion and gun control is a highly polarised topic, there have been several studies that have confirmed that social patterns and psychological attributes shape individual attitudes to own guns. Gun ownership is often associated with positive feelings about firearms within the popular 'gun culture,' and its historical roots for hunting and sports. Also, Ipsos polls have situated crime events and gun violence as the second most principal issue for Americans (Jackson *et al.*, 2022). Linked to this, Pew Research has evidenced that self-protection is at the top in the list of reasons for owning a gun (Parker *et al.*, 2017). For this, they have evaluated that two-thirds of gun owners (67%) say that protection is their major reason to own a gun, in comparison to the 38% that cite hunting as a major reason, or the 30% for sport shootings. Other studies have also demonstrated the high relationship between gun ownership and fear of crimes, Gallup (2021) has illustrated a high percentage too, with 88% of gun owners owning a gun for protection against crime, compared to the 65% in 2000. Whereas the data for hunting or sporting purposes has been steady over 21 years.

Apart from fear, Parker et al., (2017) evaluated that the decision of obtaining a gun is motivated by victimisation, perceived risk of crimes due to ineffectiveness of police protection within low-income communities. Therefore, urban settings and low-income families tend to have lower rates of gun ownership, for instance, among adults living in rural areas, almost half of them (46%) reported owning a gun, by contrast with the 28% and 19% living in the suburbs or in urban areas, respectively. This is due to the consistent opinion of personal and home protection as the most common reason for owning a gun, but those in rural areas also argued that they own a gun for hunting purposes. A study identified longitudinal patterns of carrying guns in rural areas, starting in 12 to 14 years (Ellyson et al., 2022). To support that study, Pew's Research has

examined that most adults who grew up in rural areas (72%) or small towns (52%) said that there was a gun in the house during their childhood (Parker et al., 2017). However, Stroebe and colleagues (2017) reported that the fact of living in urban or rural areas and the risks of crimes or victimisation are both independent sociological predictors of handgun ownership. For that reason, Pierre (2019) has identified that a powerful motivation for owning guns might be a general fear of crime, whether it is independent of the present risk or even perceived risks, therefore, this motivation is shaped with race and political ideology.

Studies have tended to find that the political orientation of a locality matters (Yamane, 2017: 6). The idea of exploring political views is because attitudes towards gun control may be stimulated by sociological and symbolic preferences, such as party identification or ideology (Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998: 244). 1998 research about symbolic politics, found out that the Republican party has historically been opposed to gun control (Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998). A prime support for that study is recent research which shows the same political orientation values. Ninety-one percent of Republican gun owners are about twice as likely as democratic gun owners (43%) to say that having a gun is essential to their freedom. Further, the partisan shows division even on expanding concealed carry laws to more places, with 82% of Republicans in favour compared with Democratic counterparts (41%) (Parker et al., 2017: 13). Given the symbolism that guns have in the US, within their individualistic culture and sovereignty, Bruce-Briggs argues that they should adopt a more European model in rejecting guns (Kopel, 1995). For this, this individualistic approach is exploring is this recent research, which highlighted that it is not solely about one's socio-political identity but is about the conflict when individuals especially those occupying privileges social positions, perceive that their racial, political, class or gender status are under threat, so they decide to own guns to alleviate their fears (Ratcliff, 2022), which will be further discussed in the discussion chapter.

2.6. Conclusion

Overall, this literature has highlighted the main variables that predict support towards the regulation of specific gun control laws, in a country in which it is a controversial issue. United States, and its deep connection with guns and its traditional gun culture has shaped the legislation in order to integrate the gun industry. And therefore, this caused the need to regulate firearms in order to reduce massively the number of victims from mass shootings, suicide and homicide.

We have explored the opinions and attitudes of US citizens and how that intersects with their views towards control policies, and their reasons for gun ownership, and how this is related to relevant theories from academics such as Durkheim or Hobbes. After an extensive search, many academics have explored this topic regarding many social aspects, but essentially, this data needs

to be continuously studied to make sure that they are reflecting current public opinions (Borkowsky, 2012). There is an absence of a complete study focusing on the study both on gun laws and gun ownership.

The need for further quantitative research regarding the gun industry has led to the development of my **research aim:** to investigate the relationship between demographics and political affiliation, support for gun control policies and motivations for gun ownership among US citizens. Specifically, the study will:

1. Examine how demographic characteristics and political affiliation predict support for specific gun control policies among US citizens.
2. Explore how demographic characteristics and political affiliation predict motivations for gun ownership among US gun owners.
3. Analyse the potential overlap or divergence between support for specific gun control policies and motivations for gun ownership among US citizens.

3. Methods

The following chapter will cover my main methodology, by presenting the research questions and hypothesis of this dissertation. Then it follows a justification of the methodological approach and how the study will proceed to test these hypotheses, followed by a description of my sample, the chosen analytic strategy and how it will be assessed with their corresponding variables and data. Finally, the research ethics will be presented.

3.1. Research Questions and Hypothesis

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do political affiliation and individual characteristics interact to shape attitudes towards gun control measures among US adults?

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no interaction effect between political affiliation and individual characteristics on attitudes towards gun control measures among US adults.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is an interaction effect between political affiliation and individual characteristics on attitudes towards gun control measures among US adults.

2. To what extent do individual and political factors predict different purposes for gun ownership among US adults?

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between individual and political factors and their different purposes for gun ownership among US adults.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant relationship between individual and political factors and their different purposes for gun ownership among US adults.

3.2. Quantitative approach

When studying social phenomena that involve an extensive collection of data and several variables, a quantitative research methodology approach is the most convenient. Given the aim of this study, a quantitative method is selected. The use of this method not only reduces the subjectivity of the study but also demonstrates both an epistemological and ontological position (Clark et al., 2021). This means that this dissertation will maintain objectivity and avoid any researcher bias, trying therefore, to advocate detachment or dualism. Furthermore, epistemological principles appear to have underpinned paradigms known as positivist research.

This type of epistemology requires research whose emphasis is on measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general causal explanations (Tuli, 2010). For instance, if this dissertation predicts that any specific individual characteristics predict support towards a specific gun policy, we would be able to say that this paper reflects causality and an epistemological position. Thus, this quantitative study with sociological factors appears to be the perfect method of employment for Durkheim's empirical and positivist style of sociology (Snell, 2010). Durkheim's interpretations are characterized as taking a positivist, mechanical approach to the study of sociology, which highlights the need to discover social facts and their causal explanations (Snell, 2010). This is reflected in this dissertation because positivist perspectives place great emphasis on the use of quantitative methods to deductively test hypotheses. Related to this, a post-positivist approach to this research is taking place, as the selected methods in this study are selected based on the research question being addressed (Habib, 2020).

This dissertation has also decided to use quantitative content as it employs a reductionist approach that uses coding to reduce communication phenomena to more manageable data (Riffe et al., 2014). Although it will involve numeric values to represent specific measures, this paper is much more than the presence of numbers. Through outcomes and predictions by a pre-constructed standardized methodology, this facilitates a comparison of the statistical data and the main theories under study. Therefore, a critical observation will not only present how the results are but also why results are the way they are, as figuring out cause and effect is an important aspect of quantitative research (Bryman et al., 2022). To do so, we will have to look at some epistemological beliefs, mentioned above, about what constitutes acceptable knowledge. In quantitative approaches, developing causal explanations is important (Clark et al., 2021). Because rather than simply describing the existence of a phenomenon, causality enables us to understand much more about why that phenomenon occurs (Bryman et al., 2022). This means that this dissertation will look at the obtained results and examine what factors (variables) bring out that particular result.

Also, this dissertation will try to focus on validity, first about the internal validity, and the extent to which my independent variables do affect or not the dependent variable (Bickman and Rog, 2008). It will also consider the external validity, referring to whether my results can be generalized beyond this database, country under study, or other specific research contexts. Durkheim postulated that the generalizability of the results of a study comes from the removal of a study factor, and then from these constraints makes objective observations of the effects caused (Snell, 2010). It is interesting how many quantitative methodology researchers hold on to the assumption about the way that social life operates, and the need for statistical literature and mathematics helps to see which data relate to one another. Lieberson (1987) points out that

regarding the employment of random sampling, use of control variables and misinterpretation of variance are separate premises in combination throughout the literature employing typical linear regression models (Snell, 2010:53). Durkheim's work towards quantitative sociological research methods is reflected in this study, from the importance of taking into consideration social facts, that are normally capable to exercising coercive influence on individual's opinion.

3.3. Sample

This research makes use of secondary data from IPSOS, the third-largest Insight and Analytics company in the world. This IPSOS dataset includes data collected from a poll conducted on May 25, 2022, for Thomson Reuters. The sample of the surveys was a total of 1005 and 1104 Americans aged above 18 from the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii who were interviewed online in English. The precision of the data is measured using a credibility interval, in the case of the IPSOS poll is accurate to within ± 3.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 (Duran, Azavedo and Jackson, 2022).

The relevance of this data comes from the acceptability and high-quality surveys. The dataset used in this dissertation are really narrowed down in the topic, and specificity is key in order to obtain applicable results. The validity of this dataset is visible in the ontology and epistemology of my issue under study (Leung, 2015). This means that my research questions, the choice of methodology as well as the design are appropriate for this IPSOS dataset. However, this sample has some crucial limitations, such as the small number of participants in the survey (compared to the millions of citizens in the US), that may limit the generalizability of the findings.

3.4. Analytic Strategy & Variables

The data were analysed using SPSS version 29. The analytic strategy of this dissertation consists of two main sections.

3.4.1. Section 1:

The first section of data analysis will test if demographic and political characteristics of individuals predict their support towards gun control policies. To answer my first research question, we will use logistic regression analysis, which is a highly flexible and general data analytic system in prediction models.

The data will be analysed independently for each policy, presenting one presenting a single table that compiles the entries with unstandardized regression coefficients for β, along with their standard errors in parentheses. This will be conducted to estimate the expected change

in the response with each unit change in the predictor (Lefcheck, 2021). In addition, we will present the R value, R-squared, and adjusted R-squared, along with their corresponding ANOVA results, in Appendix B. All my dependent variables are the gun control policies discussed in the literature review previously. And all are measured as ordinal variables.

Table 1: Presents the dependent variables and its descriptive statistics of support for gun control policies.

VARIABLE NAME	DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES	
	MEAN	S. D
Support for banning assault-style weapons	1.88	1.091
Support for creating a federal government database to track all gun sales.	1.28	0.641
Support for requiring background checks for all gun buyers.	1.66	0.950
Support for raising the legal age to buy a gun from 18 to 21.	1.38	0.703

Coding: 1=strongly favour, 2=somewhat favour, 3=somewhat oppose, 4=strongly oppose. N = 1005

Our analysis includes controls for standard contextual and individual demographic variables, as well as key contextual variables, which are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Presents descriptive statistics for independent demographic and political variables.

VARIABLE NAME	DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES
Ethnicity	1=white, 2=black, 3=asian, 4=other Mean = 1.26, SD = 0.708
Education	1=grade school, 2=some high school, 3=graduated high school, 4=some college, 5=associate degree, 6=bachelor's degree, 7=post graduate degree. Mean = 5.01, SD = 1.456

Employment	1=employed - full-time, 2=employed - part-time, 3=self-employed, 4=retired, 5=student, 6=military, 7=homemaker, 8=unemployed, 9=Dk/Ns.
	Mean = 3.06, SD = 2.462
Region of residence	1=northeast, 2=midwest, 3=south, 4=west.
	Mean = 2.60, SD = 1.064
Type of area of residence	1=rural, 2=suburban, 3= urban areas.
	Mean = 2.04, SD = 0.722
Marital status	1=single, 2=domestic partnership, 3=married, 4=widowed, 5=divorced, separated.
	Mean = 2.72, SD = 1.111
Political ideology	1=strong democrat, 2=moderate democrat, 3=lean democrat, 4=lean republican, 5=moderate republican, 6=strong republican, 7=independent, 8=other, 9=Dk/Ns
	Mean = 4.78, SD = 2.496

N= 1005

It is important to mention that this study has classified age and gender as controlled variables. Both will play an active role in my quantitative study, as normally they potentially influence the dependent variable (Creswell, 2009: 60). Age has a range of age from 18 to 89 years (mean=46.97 and SD=15.738), and gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female (mean=1.54 and SD=0.498).

3.4.2. <u>Section 2:</u>

The second section of this analysis will respond to my second RQ, by testing if there is any correlation between an individual's characteristics and their purposes of gun ownership. To perform this, the dissertation will evaluate the correlation using indexes which will give me the results showing the strength of relationship between my variables. The use of Pearson's *r* will be used to assess the statistical estimation of the amount that two numerical variables are related (Hammond *et al.*, 2014), in this case between my dependent and independent variables.

Further, we will also use non-parametric correlations, employing Kendall's tau, for my controlled variables (age and gender). Both correlations will determine whether specific individual characteristics predict different purposes for gun ownership.

Table 3: Presents the dependent variables and its descriptive statistics of reasons for gun ownership.

VARIABLE NAME	DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES	
	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Manage pests' purposes	3.47	1.240
Household protection	1.87	1.130
Community protection	2.93	1.204
Exercise constitutional rights	2.63	1.275
Collection purposes	3.11	1.210
Family tradition	3.12	1.215
Own protection	1.88	1.128
Hunting	3.09	1.327
Sports or competition	2.62	1.258
Job related purposes	4.06	0.943
Feeling of power	3.75	0.985

Coding: -1=skipped, 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree. N = 1022

Our second section analysis also includes controls for standard contextual and individual demographic variables, as well as key contextual variables, which are presented in the table below.

Table 4: Presents descriptive statistics for independent demographic and political variables.

VARIABLE NAME	DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES
Ethnicity	1= white, 2=black, 3=other, 4=hispanic. Mean = 1,59, SD = 1,117
Education	1=less than high school, 2=high school, 3=some college and 4=bachelor's degree.

	Mean = 2.96, SD = 0.917
Income	1=less than $10,000, 2=$10,000 to $24,999, 3=$25,000 to $49,999, 4=$50,000 to $74,999, 5=$75,000 to $99,999, 6=$100,000 to $149,999, 7=$150,000 or more. Mean = 5.05, SD = 1.673
Marital status	1=married, 2=widowed, 3=divorced, 4=separated, 5=never married. Mean = 1.98, SD = 1.557
Region of residence	1=northeast, 2=midwest, 3=south, 4=west. Mean = 2.78, SD = 0.906
Household of the individual	1=Owned, 2=rented for cash and 3=Occupied without payment of cash rent. Mean = 1.21, SD = 0.440
Employment status	1=working full- time, 2=working part-time, 3=not working. Mean = 1.82, SD = 0.935
Type of area of residence	1=rural, 2=suburban, 3=urban areas. Mean = 2,17, SD = 0.837

N = 1022

For this second section I have also classified age and gender as controlled variables. Age has a range of age from 18 to 94 years (mean=52.74 and SD=16.285), and gender is coded as 1 = male, 2 = female (mean=1.30 and SD=0.460).

3.5. Research Ethics

Adherence to ethical principles is crucial for integrity and research with profound validity (Frinch and Fafinsky, 2019). Consequently, this research has received the appropriate approval from the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol prior to the research (Appendix A).

This dissertation only required secondary data, so there were no ethical considerations regarding participants. Ethical considerations were focused on the evaluation of the selected secondary data. This database was important and appropriate for my research, after doing extensive research of potential sources of data, and selecting the most adequate for my research aim.

It is also important to mention that the owners and publishers of this secondary data are acknowledged and cited. While a general overview of the data is publicly available, I obtained access to the files and raw database through a protected and encrypted link by courtesy of the Vice President of Public Affairs at IPSOS.

3.6. Summary

In summary, this chapter has detailed the chosen methodological approach and its justifications behind this choice. After discussing both a quantitative and qualitative research approach, it became obvious that a quantitative would be more beneficial to this study. As well as this, the employed dataset and analytic strategy was described which discussed justifications, limitations as well as my dependent and independent variables. The following chapters will present the results and discussions of the data achieved through the methodological approach explain above.

4. Results

The following chapter describes the results of the quantitative analysis described in the previous chapter. Section 1 presents the results from conducting ANOVA and logistic regression analyses to study how individual characteristics can predict gun policies support. Next, section 2 shows the results from both Pearson and Kendall's Tau correlation tests between individual characteristics and the relationship between individual characteristics and their reasons for owning a gun is also shown".

4.1. Section 1: Regression analysis

As seen in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, from the methodology chapter, descriptive statistics are relevant to highlight patterns in the results chapter. The descriptive statistics reveal broad support for all four-gun control policies. Also, most of the respondents were classified as white, self-employed, living in suburban areas of the US. Furthermore, the respondents were predominantly male, with an average age of 47.

Further, after using logistic regression, the seven independent variables and the two controlled variables, were regressed on the four dependent variables. The results show a moderate correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variables. As appendix B presents, policy 4 shows a moderately correlation ($r =.211$, $p<.001$, two-tailed). Stronger correlations were found between individual characteristics and support for banning assault-style weapons ($r =.372$, $p<.001$, two-tailed); individual characteristics and requiring background checks ($r =.280$, $p<.001$, two-tailed) and a slightly lower for demographics and raising minimum age ($r =.277$, $p <.001$, two-tailed). As the appendix B shows, all four policies were also significant. We used both R-squared and adjusted R-squared to assess how well the independent variables (demographics and political belief) predicted the dependent variables (the policies). The results obtained explain a 13.5% of the variance in support for our policy 1. For our second and third policy it presents a 7% of the variance in support, compared to our fourth which is a bit lower and its variance in support represents a 3.9%.

Although some predictors showed high variance inflation, indicating potential multicollinearity, further analysis confirmed that this was not a significant issue. However, given the low significant size of these correlations, it was important to enter all variables of interest in the regression models. An alpha level of 0.05 was used for all tests, meaning that if the p-value was smaller than 0.05, we could conclude that the independent variables reliably predicted the dependent variable.

Table 5. Presents Logistic Regression Model Results for Gun Control Policies and Individual Characteristics

	POLICY 1		POLICY 2		POLICY 3		POLICY 4	
	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.
(Constant)	3.117(0.212)	< 0.001	1.514 (0.130)	< .001*	2.339(0.170)	< .001*	1,416(0,148)	< .001*
Gender	-0.500(0.067)	< 0.001*	-0.295(0.039)	< .001*	-0.330(0.059)	< .001*	-0,088(0,044)	0,046
Age	-0.011(0.002)	< 0.001*	-0.004(0.001)	0.014	-0.009(0.002)	< .001*	-0,007(0,001)	< .001*
Ethnicity	-0.12 (0.048)	0.240	0.008 (0.029)	0.906	-0.053(0.042)	0.208	-0.028(0.031)	0.371
Education	-0.074 (0.023)	<0 .001*	0.030 (0.014)	0.244	-0.020(0.022)	0.377	0.016(0.016)	0.294
Employment	0.004 (0.014)	0.714	-0.010 (0.009)	0.885	-0.034(0.012)	0.005	0.003 (0.010)	0.589
Area of residence	0.040 (0.030)	0.186	0.036(0.019)	0.064	0.038(0.028)	0.173	0.041(0.021)	0.052
Type of area of residence	-0.106 (0.046)	0.017	0.080(0.028)	0.019	0.038 (0.042)	0.194	0.085(0.031)	0.006
Marital status	0.047 (0.031)	0.098	0.026(0.019)	0.177	0.025 (0.028)	0.328	0.042(0.021)	0.939
Political ideology	0.093 (0.013)	< 0.001*	0.031(0.008)	< 0.001*	0.059(0.012)	< .001*	0.024(0.009)	0.006

Note: entries are unstandardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). Reported significance levels ($p < 0.001$) are based upon two-tailed hypothesis tests. Source: Ipsos. N = 1005.

Collectively, findings across Table 5 suggest that variables are statistically significant, with some exceptions. The findings illustrate that gender (p< .001), age (p< .001) and political ideology (p< .001) variables are statistically significant in predicting support for three out of four-gun control policies. Furthermore, education (b=-.074, p< .001) is also statistically significant in predicting the support for one out of four-gun policies. We could identify a trend of a bigger majority of support towards policy 1, about banning assault-style weapons, compared with other policies with lower significant variables. The main results of our logistic regression indicate that as our P-values is lower than 0.01, this means that it is highly unlikely that these results would be observed under our null hypothesis. Further, the analysis shows that our coefficients for gender reflects that being a male had a negative impact on gun control support, as all our unstandardized coefficient for β are negative. However, the coefficients for area of residence were positive for all policies, so this reflects that people living in the Northeast are more likely to support stronger gun restrictions.

Overall, results from the study's analyses indicate gender, age, and political ideology consistently predict public support for gun control policies. Although models varied slightly, education can be considered as a robust predictor of reduced support for gun control. In analysing the logistic regression of other variables, an interesting finding is that employment, measured in terms of whether the individual is employed full-time or part-time, student or maybe retired, continues to be less likely to affect support on all accounts. Whereas area of residence and type of area of residence shows a slightly near significance as a potential source of predicting gun control policies support.

4.2.   Section 2: Pearson and Kendall's Tau correlation

To determine the relationship between my predictor and independent and controlled variables with their purposes of gun ownership, a correlation test is presented in Appendices C and D. A Pearson correlation coefficient was used in my independent variable. Further, a non-parametric test was conducted using Kendall's tau test for the controlled variables. Both tests confirm some significant patterns and provide a systemic way to reject our null hypothesis.

There is a positive and small correlation between some purposes and predictors. The most prevalent to show a stronger correlation purpose related to family or community protection, personal security, and managing pests show a positive correlation and are significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 level (both two-tailed). Interestingly, almost all selected dependent variables show correlations with age and gender.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relevance of U.S. citizens' demographic as well as political characteristics in predicting their support for gun control policies and purposes for gun ownership. Although there is existing research that examines predictors of gun control and reasons for gun ownership, the research goes deeper and links these predictors to relevant theories that might give an explanation to our results. The discussion will begin by answering the first research question about 'how do political affiliation and individual characteristics interact to shape attitudes towards gun control measures among US adults?' Then, it will continue by answering my second question, which is related to 'what individual and political factors predict different purposes for gun ownership among US adults?' Finally, the main points raised will be discussed in their entirety, incorporating both research and relevant theories such as collectivism and individualism by Durkheim and Thomas Hobbs studies. This will allow for an explanation of the research aim of this dissertation, which is to investigate how demographics and political affiliation affect support for gun control policies and motivations for gun ownership among US citizens.

Consistent with previous research findings, the results show important levels of support for gun control measures. The data suggests that while most Americans support stricter gun legislation, they are not in favour of a total gun prohibition (Kruis et al., 2020). This dissertation has also shown that there are differences in the characteristics of gun control supporters. In particular, gender and age appear to be strong predictors of U.S. citizens' attitudes towards gun control. Previous work has also shown that these categories can be classified as predictors of attitudes toward gun control measures. They have found that men (Ellison, 1991; Kauder, 1993), whites (Merino, 2018), people 65 and older (Pew Research Centre, 2015), and people with greater familiarity with gun culture tend to be less supportive of gun control than comparison groups. Similar results have been found that the best predictor of support for gun-carry laws is political affiliation (Bennet et al., 2012; Wilcox and Bruce, 1998). In addition, party affiliation at the mass level is a major barrier to public opinion on gun control legislation (Pearson-Merkowitz and Dyck, 2017; Haider-Market and Joslyn, 2001). Spitzer (2012) argues that political parties, such as Republicans and Democrats, have alternatively been viewed as modest and symbolic, he also explored how both parties have been recognisably divided for years, as Republicans have expectedly opposed new gun laws and Democrats have supported new gun laws (Spitzer, 2012). In this case, the parties have offered voters a recognisable choice to control the gun issue. Although this dissertation did not find strong evidence of significance between rural and urban characteristics in terms of support for gun policy, there is evidence that guns are important to the

most conservative communities, and therefore people in these communities tend to oppose most gun control laws (Leonard, 2018). In comparison, higher levels of urbanisation are associated with support for stricter gun laws (Wilcox and Bruce, 1998; and Igielnik, 2017). This is because in urban areas, guns are not used for hunting, but for crime prevention and deterrence (Cook and Ludwig, 2022). In rural areas, however, firearms are used for protection, as individuals normally choose to protect livestock from predators in their farms and ranches.

The results from this paper illustrate that demographics and political ideology does predict gun control attitudes. However, these findings are somewhat contradictory with previous literature. Kahan and Braman (2003) argue that although demographic variables usually predict gun control attitudes, they exert considerably less influence compared in a model that takes cultural considerations into account (such as individuals with an egalitarian or individualistic orientation). Interestingly, they present how demographic division towards gun control attitudes are indeed fragments of divergent cultural influences, often used as proxies. These scholars describe how attitudes towards gun control act as a derivative from their cultural orientations, and therefore policies in the US are both constructed by demographics and cultural consideration measures. Thus, after presenting how existing literature found a wider perspective towards individual characteristics and cultural influences affecting gun opinion, we can confirm the assumption of my alternative hypothesis from my first research question, as there is an interaction effect between political affiliation and individual characteristics on attitudes towards gun control measures among US adults.

As explored in this dissertation, there are different explanations of legal gun ownership. The results offered two principal rationales: recreational purposes and defensive. However, the results and other papers have assumed that most firearms owned for recreational purposes (collection, hunting, sporting) are individuals whose gun ownership is for exercise and who can be distinguished from other gun owners because they form their own 'sporting gun culture." This is usually maintained by the fact that they hunt with other household members, live in a state with a high hunting quota, and have appropriate training in the use of guns (Celinksa, 2001). Moreover, our predictor of gun control policy gridlock here also represents a clear urban-rural divide in which rural Americans tend to oppose gun control measures (Miller, 2018). O'Connor and Lizotte (1978) found that hunting, collecting, and sporting gun ownership is also correlated with rural southern character. Intuitively, rural residents, especially those who live on farms or keep livestock, are more likely to own firearms than urban residents because they legitimately have more practical uses for them (e.g., pest control or euthanizing sick livestock) (Miller, 2018). Other research found that the origin of respondents from urban or rural areas became a predictor of motivations for gun ownership, such that rural residents were more likely to oppose gun

control measures because they interpreted them as interfering with their interests (Wolpert and Gimpel, 1998). In addition, this dissertation found that recreational use appears to be passed down generationally and defensive gun ownership is positively associated with Southern residents, which was seen as the most common region of residence for many young individuals participating in the study. Further, this a key unexpected finding, in which papers have consistently found that the recreational use of guns is a common American pastime, this has been created under the US culture of hunting, target shooting or clay pigeon shooting, which is also most common in the Southern part of the country. These traditional sports are often shared between parents and their children (Kruis et al., 2023), and therefore contributes to the finding towards generational gun ownership attitude. Other studies such as Ellison's (1991) public opinion paper suggests that a reason for this is that Southerners are more conservative than individuals residing in other parts of the country. In addition, other academic work has concluded that individuals from Southern states have a strong relationship with the heritage of frontier country, which is strongly associated with the values of utilitarian individualism (Frantz, 1969; Ellison, 1991). Therefore, Celinska (2007) and Nivakoski (2016) examined the role of political values as a driver of gun policy preferences and identified individualism as a potential influence among political worldviews that affect attitudes toward guns.

Here individualism acts as an important value when emphasising how certain demographics or political characteristics of individuals predict attitudes towards gun ownership and gun permits support. From one perspective, the index of individualism is directly related to Thomas Hobbes and his idea of self-interest and personal responsibility. Both concepts combined, explain the results obtained in this dissertation, as we assumed that a strong fear of death or feelings of vulnerability and insecurity are accompanied by a correspondingly strong urge for self-preservation and the idea of self-defence (Tomillo, 2018; Reed and Hallenbrook, 2020). Which creates a stronger perceived need to own guns for self-protection. Therefore, individuals who feel most at risk or suffer from fear, or living in rural areas, as well as following a political party with individualistic ideas, are less likely to support policies such as banning assault-style weapons or implementing background checks for all gun sales. Individuals with kids, living in rural areas, or deprived urban areas who feel that the government's security is not enough, are more prevalent to be portrayed as individualists and therefore, more gun owners appear. Hobbes also recognises that individual support for gun ownership is a method of self-preservation from state of war, to maintain their 'sovereignty' and surrender their rights (Reznik, 2022). Consequently, the focus on individualism and self-reliance in individuals increases the likelihood that they will support owning guns and oppose gun control. But then, among those gun owners and gun supporters there is a widespread belief that having a gun makes one safer, supported by

reports claiming that where there are 'more guns,' there is 'less crime' (Lott, 1998). This dissertation and others have attempted to analyse what motivates individuals to support gun control or, on the contrary, own guns for themselves. The question of whether guns make owners safer is still a topic of debate and research. This is because there is no apparent consensus, motivated reasoning that can pave the way to the nullification of opposing arguments in favour of individual opinions and ideological instances (Pierre, 2019).

The other large category of firearms ownership includes individuals who own guns for defensive purposes. As indicated by this dissertation, the most significant reasons were family, community, or personal protection, and most studies indicates that gun ownership is based on fear and the perception of a lack of public safety. While ownership of long guns has historically been primarily for hunting and other recreational activities, surveys in the United States have found that people own handguns primarily for self-protection (Pierre, 2019). In addition, Adams (1996) and Cook and Ludwig (2000) have found theoretical explanations for defensive gun ownership, including acute fear of crime and prior victimisation experiences, as well as lack of confidence in collective safety. The association between past victimization, perceived crime risk, and feelings of ineffectiveness of police protection in low-income communities where these fears may be congruent with real risks (Pierre, 2019). Stroebe and colleagues (2017) found that gun owners with stronger beliefs about a dangerous world had higher perceived risk of victimisation and even higher perceived effectiveness of gun ownership for self-defence. Spitzer (2012: 63) also found important reasons for self-protection, linking them to 'feelings of vulnerability to crime and police ineffectiveness'. Others (Wilcox and Bruce, 1998) also argued that gun owners purchase their guns out of fear of crime, while other arm themselves only because they believe the government is unable to provide protection (McDowal and Loftin, 1983). Spitzer (2012) and this dissertation have found that within gender, males are more likely to purchase guns for safety reasons, as are those who believe the threat of crime is increasing or those who have previously been a victim of crime.

We have seen that gun control is entirely rooted in the enduring tradition of American individualism. In contrast to individualism, collectivism is rooted in support for gun control. According to the study, it appears that demographics such as being female, ethnic minorities, or people with lower income and socioeconomic background are more likely to be collectivistic. This is because collectivism is increased by the tendency to control the widespread use of gun ownership, in order to reduce gun crime and violence, and rely entirely on the government to provide security (Celinska, 2007). In addition, individuals who hold collectivistic values that support policies such as requiring background checks for all gun buyers or raising the legal age to buy a gun from 18 to 21, are more likely to prioritise public safety over individual liberty

because they prioritize the safety and well-being of the community over individual rights (Celinska, 2001). Both Celinska and this dissertation have both found that there are specific factors, such as demographics and political ideology, which are more prevalent to predict that collectivism exists under the layers of gun ownership and support towards gun control policies.

6.   Conclusion

This study has aimed to explore two research questions: How do political affiliation and individual characteristics interact to shape attitudes towards gun control policies among US adults; and to what extent do individual and political factors predict different purposes for gun ownership among US adults. Overall, the findings from the IPSOS survey suggest that there is strong support for gun control policies from specific individual characteristics. Moreover, the study identified recreational and defensive purposes as the most common for gun ownership among US adults.

This dissertation has also provided insight into how demographics and political affiliation affect support for gun control policies and what the most common reasons for owning a gun are. The findings suggested that political affiliation is the best predictor of support for gun laws, followed by gender and age as strong predictors of attitudes towards gun control. Other papers have also found that the region of residence consistently influences their support for gun control policies, supporting the first research question. Additionally, understanding the various reasons for gun ownership is identified to be for recreational and defensive purposes. Aside from exploring *what*, we also explored *why* these results appeared to be like this. It is theorised that gun control and its distribution for support or against control, was rooted in individualism and collectivism, and consistently being more individualistic than collectivistic increases the odds of opposing gun permits. Existing research have discussed how this dynamic comes from the freedom and self-reliance that individualism has, and citizens have demonstrated to see it as an infringement on their right for self-protection. However, the dynamic changes on the side of how collectivistic values emphasize cooperation and harmony, and individuals who hold these values promote public welfare over individual autonomy (Nivakoski, 2016; Yates and Oliveira, 2016).

First, although this study has used a relatively large sample size, with around 2,000 participants, the possibility of using a larger one, could remove a limitation in this research towards the generalizability of the findings compared to the broader US populations. This is a limitation because normally quantitative studies have large and are considered to have a sufficiently comprehensive view of the entire population (Martin and Bridgmon, 2012). Future research could use larger, more representative datasets, such as governmental surveys, which provide a more comprehensive understanding, as more citizens are more likely to response. It would also remove the potential risk towards a non-randomised data from Ipsos, for instance. Moreover, to obtain larger and randomised data, future research could consider changing the study method to telephone surveys. By doing so, we would make sure the participants are chosen

randomly, as within each area, specific prefix codes are selected, ensuring by this an equal distribution and a higher number of participants (Brooker and Schaefer,2005).

One key potential alternative method of study under this topic is the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative data. While quantitative provides a numerical and statistical understanding of certain demographic groups and how likely they are to support gun control or own guns, qualitative data can help providing insights into specific concerns or theoretical beliefs. Overall, the implementation of using both research methods can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding across all demographic groups and political affiliations.

Secondly, these findings have important implications for policymakers seeking to implement effective gun control policies in the US. For instance, policymakers could consider tailoring messages to specific demographic groups to increase the likelihood of support for gun control measures. Therefore, the study suggests that understanding the reasons for gun ownership is important for developing adequate policies that address the needs and motivations of gun owners. Essentially, this is important because public opinion data needs to continuously be studied to reflect current public views. Additional variables, such as the role of religion or the opinion of permanent US residents on gun control, would have been beneficial to consider. Both religion and immigration variables are interesting because the US has by far the world's largest number of immigrants (Budiman, 2020), and therefore this causes it to have a diverse population with a rich and religious history, this might be important to create not only a more complete dataset, but also, giving more significance to our selected variables. Finally, experts argue that the growing focus on the role of mental health may be informed by firearm-related fatalities, such as the increased risk of suicide or homicide. One future suggestion to address this research gap might be to expand the knowledge about mental disorders and mental health in individuals and their motivations for gun ownership or support for specific gun policies.

Overall, this research revisits ongoing debates and issues about gun control and gun ownership. More crucially, the research contributes to the literature by unveiling existing theories and associating them in order to give potential reasons and explanations as to why factors such as political affiliation, geographic location or gender, can influence and individual's views on gun policies and their different motivations towards owning a gun. Discussions about additional demographic variables should be considered, and both quantitative and qualitative research should be conducted if the goal is to reduce victims of gun violence.

7. Bibliography

Adams, K. (1996) 'Guns and Gun control', in T.J. Flanagan and D.R. Longmire (eds) *Americans View Crime and Justice. A National Public Opinion Survey*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 109–124.

Bascuas, K. *et al.* (2022) 'Half of America want mental health test required for gun ownership', *Online therapy*. Available at: https://www.onlinetherapy.com/half-of-america-wants-mental-health-test-required-for-gun-ownership/ (Accessed: 24 February 2023).

Bennett, K., Kraft, J. and Grubb, D. (2012) 'University faculty attitudes towards guns on campus', *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 23(3), pp. 336–355.

Berinsky, A.J. (2017) 'Measuring Public Opinion with Surveys', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20(1), pp. 309–329. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-101513-113724.

Bickman, L. and Rog, D.J. (2008) *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, UNITED STATES: SAGE Publications, Incorporated. Available at: http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bristol/detail.action?docID=1995661.

Borkowsky, E. (2012) *Attitudes toward gun control laws: Exploring relationships in recently gathered data*. Florida Atlantic University.

Branas, C.C. *et al.* (2009) 'Investigating the Link Between Gun Possession and Gun Assault', *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(11), pp. 2034–2040. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2008.143099.

Britannica (2022) 'National Rifle Association of America'. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Rifle-Association-of-America. (Accessed: 2 December 2022).

Brooker, R. and Schaefer, T. (2005) *Public Opinion in the 21st Century: Let the People Speak? (New Directions in Political Behaviour)*. Wadsworth Publishing.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. *et al.* (2022) *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Budiman, A. (2020) 'Key Findings about U.S. immigrants', *Immigration & Migration*. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/ (Accessed: 10 April 2023).

Cassata, C. (2023) 'Should Mental Health Checks be Required Before Buying a Gun?', *Mental health News*. Available at: https://www.verywellmind.com/should-mental-health-checks-be-required-before-buying-a-gun-5198250#citation-2 (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Celinska, K. (2001) *Individualism and collectivism in American Life: The Case of Gun Ownership and Control.* Dissertation. University of Utah. Available at: https://www.proquest.com/docview/252116366?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true (Accessed: 28 March 2023).

Celinska, K. (2007) 'Individualism and Collectivism in America: The Case of Gun Ownership and Attitudes Toward Gun Control', *Sociological Perspectives*, 50(2), pp. 229–247. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2007.50.2.229.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020) 'Fatal Injury Data.' Available at: https://wisqars.cdc.gov/data/explore-data/explore/selected-years?ex=eyJ0YmkiOlsiMCJdLCJpbnRlbnRzIjpbIjAiXSwibWVjaHMiOlsiMjA4OTAiXSwic3RhdGUiOlsiMDEiLCIwMiIsIjA0IiwiMDUiLCIwNiIsIjA4IiwiMDkiLCIxMCIsIjExIiwiMTIiLCIxMyIsIjE1IiwiMTYiLCIxNyIsIjE4IiwiMTkiLCIyMCIsIjIxIiwiMjIiLCIyMyIsIjI0IiwiMjUiLCIyNiIsIjI3IiwiMjgiLCIyOSIsIjMwIiwiMzEiLCIzMiIsIjMzIiwiMzQiLCIzNSIsIjM2IiwiMzciLCIzOCIsIjM5IiwiNDAiLCI0MSIsIjQyIiwiNDQiLCI0NSIsIjQ2IiwiNDciLCI0OCIsIjQ5IiwiNTAiLCI1MSIsIjUzIiwiNTQiLCI1NSIsIjU2Il0sInJhY2UiOlsiMSIsIjIiLCIzIiwiNCJdLCJldGhuaWN0eSI6WyIxIiwiMiIsIjMiXSwic2V4IjpbIjEiLCIyIl0sImFnZUdyb3Vwc01pbiI6WyIwMC0wNCJdLCJhZ2VHcm91cHNNYXgiOlsiMTk5Il0sImN1c3RvbUFnZXNNaW4iOlsiMCJdLCJjdXN0b21BZ2VzTWF4IjpbIjE5OSJdLCJmcm9tWWVhciI6WyIyMDIwIl0sInRvWWVhciI6WyIyMDIwIl0sInlwbGxBZ2VzIjpbIjY1Il0sIm1ldHJvIjpbIjEiLCIyIl0sImFnZWJ1dHRuIjoiNVllYiwiZ3JvdXBieTEiOiJBR0VUHUCJ9 (Accessed: 19 October 2022).

Clark, T. *et al.* (2021) *Bryman's social research methods.* (1 online resource (xxviii, 670 pages)). Sixth edition /. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: https://app.kortext.com/Shibboleth.sso/Login?entityID=https%3A%2F%2Felibrary.exeter.ac.uk%2Fidp%2Fshibboleth&target=https://app.kortext.com/borrow/974675.

Cook, P. and Ludwig, J. (2002) 'The Effects of Gun Prevalence on Burglary: Deterrence vs Inducement'. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3386/w8926.

Cook, P.J. 1946- and Ludwig, Jens. (2000) *Gun violence: the real costs*. Oxford; Oxford University Press (Studies in crime and public policy). Available at: http://site.ebrary.com/id/10084856.

Cook, P.J. and Goss, K.A. (2020) *The Gun Debate: What Everyone Needs to Know*. 2nd edn. Oxford University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/wentk/9780190073466.003.0007.

Creswell, J.W. (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: SAGE.

Crifasi, C. *et al.* (2021) 'Differences in Public Support for Gun Policies Between Women and Men', *PubMed Central*, 60(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2020.06.028.

DiMaggio, C. *et al.* (2019) 'Changes in US mass shooting deaths associated with the 1994-2004 federal assault weapons ban: Analysis of open-source data', *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 86(1), pp. 11–19.

Doherty, C. (2015) 'A public opinion trend that matters: Priorities for gun policy'. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/09/a-public-opinion-trend-that-matters-priorities-for-gun-policy/ (Accessed: 24 March 2023).

Duran, J., Azavedo, A. and Jackson, C. (2022) 'Most Americans want strong or moderate gun regulations', *Politics*. Available at: https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/most-americans-want-strong-or-moderate-gun-regulations-052622 (Accessed: 3 December 2022).

Ellison, C.G. (1991) 'Southern Culture and Firearms Ownership', *Social Science Quarterly*, 72(2), pp. 267–283.

Ellyson, A.M. *et al.* (2022) 'Trajectories of Handgun Carrying in Rural Communities from Early Adolescence to Young Adulthood', *JAMA Network Open*, 5(4), pp. e225127–e225127. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.5127.

Everytown (2022a) 'Gun Safety Policies Save Lives', *Everytown Research & Policy*. Available at: https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/ (Accessed: 26 December 2022).

Everytown (2022b) 'Permit less Carry (Carrying a Concealed Gun in Public with No Permit and No Training)', *Everytown Research & Policy*. Available at: https://everytownresearch.org/report/permitless-carry-carrying-a-concealed-gun-in-public-with-no-permit-and-no-

training/#:~:text=88%20percent%20of%20Americans%20think,Strategies%20360. (Accessed: 24 February 2023).

Everytown (2023) 'Has the state raised the minimum age for purchasing firearms?', *Everytown Research & Policy*. Available at: https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/minimum-age-to-purchase/ (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Finch, E. and Fafinsky, S. (2019) *Criminology Skills*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fouloy, C.D.D. (2022) 'Rate of civilian firearms. Available at: http://www.aalep.eu/rate-civilian-firearms-100-people-eu (Accessed: 31 October 2022).

Giffords Law Center (2022) 'Assault Weapons'. Available at: https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/hardware-ammunition/assault-weapons/ (Accessed: 24 February 2023).

Giffords Law Center (2002) 'Gun Violence Statistics', *Giffords*. Available at: https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-violence-statistics/#mass (Accessed: 24 February 2023).

Gius, M. (2014) 'The impact of state and federal assault weapons bans on public mass shootings', *Applied Economics Letters*, 22, pp. 281–284. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13504851.2014.939367.

Grinshteyn, E. and Hemenway, D. (2016) 'Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-Income OECD Countries, 2010', *The American Journal of Medicine*, 129(3), pp. 266–273.

Gun Violence (2022) 'Gun Violence Archive 2022', *Gun Violence Archive*. Available at: https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/ (Accessed: 3 December 2022).

Gun Violence (2023) 'Gun Violence Archive 2023', *Gun Violence Archive*. Available at: https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/ (Accessed: 12 April 2023).

Habib, H. (2020) 'Positivism and Post-positivistic approaches to Research', *UGC Care Journal*, 31(17).

Haider-Marker, D.P. and Joslyn, M.R. (2001) 'Gun Policy Opinion, Tragedy, and Blame Attribution: The Conditional Influence of Issue Frame', *Journal of Politics*, 63(2), pp. 520–43.

Hammond, F. *et al.* (2014) *Handbook for Clinical Research: Design, Statistics, and Implementation*. New York, UNITED STATES: Springer Publishing Company, Incorporated. Available at: http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bristol/detail.action?docID=3007787.

Igielnik, R. (2017) 'Rural and urban gun owners have different experiences, views of gun policy', *Political Issues*. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/10/rural-and-urban-gun-owners-have-different-experiences-views-on-gun-policy/ (Accessed: 29 March 2023).

Jackson, C. *et al.* (2022) 'Americans not sold on either party's closing arguments'. Available at: https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/FiveThirtyEight-2022-midterm-election (Accessed: 6 December 2022).

Kahan, D. and Braman, D. (2003) 'More Statistics, Less Persuasion: A Cultural Theory of Gun-Risk Perceptions', *Yale Law School, Public Law Research Paper*, 151(5), pp. 1291–1327. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.286205.

Kalesan, B. *et al.* (2016) 'Firearm legislation and firearm mortality in the USA: a cross-sectional, state-level study', *The Lancet*, 387(10030), pp. 1847–1855. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01026-0.

Kopel, D. (1995) 'The Ideology of Gun Owner and Gun Control in the United States', *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, 18(3).

Kruis, N.E. *et al.* (2020) 'Assessing the Impact of Knowledge and Location on College Students' Perceptions of Gun Control and Campus Carry Policies: A Multisite Comparison', *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45(1), pp. 25–47. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-019-09499-z.

Kruis, N.E. *et al.* (2023) 'Firearm Ownership, Defensive Gun Usage, and Support for Gun Control: Does Knowledge Matter?', *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 48(1), pp. 21–50. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-021-09644-7.

Lefcheck, J. (2021) *Composite Variables*. Available at: https://jslefche.github.io/sem_book/.

Leonard, R. (2018) 'Why Gun Culture is so Strong in Rural America'. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/16/opinion/guns-gun-control-america.html (Accessed: 29 March 2023).

Leung, L. (2015) 'Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research', *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 4(3). Available at: https://journals.lww.com/jfmpc/Fulltext/2015/04030/Validity,_reliability,_and_generalizability_in.8.aspx.

Lott, J.R.Jr., 1958- (2000) *More guns, less crime: understanding crime and gun-control laws*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Studies in law and economics). Available at: http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/uchi051/00020724.html.

Luca, M., Malhotra, D. and Poliquin, C. (2020) 'The impact of mass shootings on gun policy', *Journal of Public Economics*, 181, p. 104083. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2019.104083.

Ludwig, J. and Cook, P.J. 1946- (2003) *Evaluating gun policy: effects on crime and violence* (1 online resource (ix, 469 pages): illustrations vol). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press (Brookings metro series). Available at: http://site.ebrary.com/id/10063868.

Martin, W.E. and Bridgmon, K.D. (2012) *Quantitative and Statistical Research Methods: From Hypothesis to Results*. Newark, UNITED STATES: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. Available at: http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bristol/detail.action?docID=7103444.

Masters, J. (2022) 'U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparison'. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-gun-policy-global-comparisons (Accessed: 2 December 2022).

McDowall, D. and Loftin, C. (1983) 'Collective Security and the Demand for Legal Handguns', *American Journal of Sociology*, 88(6), pp. 1146–61.

Miller, S.V. (2018) 'What Americans Think About Gun Control: Evidence from the General Social Survey, 1972–2016', *Social Science Quarterly*, 100(1), pp. 272–288. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12555.

Morning Consult and Politico (2022) 'National Tracking Poll: Crosstabulation Results'. Available at: https://assets.morningconsult.com/wp-uploads/2022/06/14130054/2206078_crosstabs_POLITICO_RVs_v1_06-15-22_SH.pdf (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Newall, M., Diamond, J. and Rollason, C. (2022) 'Most gun owners support certain gun control reforms', *Public Opinion*. Available at: https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/npr-gun-owners-2022 (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Newman, B.J. and Hartman, T.K. (2019) 'Mass Shootings and Public Support for Gun Control', *British Journal of Political Science*. 2017/10/02 edn, 49(4), pp. 1527–1553. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000333.

Nivakoski, H. (2016) *Individualism as a factor in the American gun control debate: A discourse analytical study of two political events*. Bachelor's Seminar and Thesis. University of Oulu. Available at: http://jultika.oulu.fi/files/nbnfioulu-201702231255.pdf (Accessed: 28 March 2023).

O'Connor, J.F. and Lizotte, A. (1978) 'The "Southern Subculture of Violence" Thesis and Patterns of Gun Ownership', *Social Problems*, 25(4), pp. 420–429. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/800494.

Oraka, E. *et al.* (2019) 'A cross-sectional examination of US gun ownership and support for gun control measures: Sociodemographic, geographic, and political associations explored', *Preventive Medicine*, 123, pp. 179–184. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.03.021.

Parker, K. *et al.* (2017) *America's Complex Relationship with Guns*. Pew Research Center.

Pearson-Merkowitz, S. and Dyck, J. (2017) 'Crime and Partisanship: How Party ID muddles Reality, Perception and Policy Attitudes on Crime and Guns', *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(2), pp. 443–54.

Pederson, J.E. *et al.* (2015) 'Gun Ownership and Attitudes Toward Gun Control in Older Adults: Re-examining Self Interest Theory', *American Journal of Social Science Research* [Preprint].

Penzenstadler, N. (2022) 'Gun violence policy is focusing on mental health but federal records still lack some states'. Available at: https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2022/06/16/gun-checks-mental-health-records-can-still-blind-spot/7582379001/ (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Pew Research Center (2021) *Amid a Series of Mass Shootings in the U.S., Gun Policy Remains Deeply Divisive*.

Pierre, J.M. (2019) 'The psychology of guns: risk, fear, and motivated reasoning', *Palgrave Communications*, 5(1), p. 159. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0373-z.

Polling Institute (Monmouth University) (2018) 'Gun Owners Divided on Gun Policy; Parkland Students Having an Impact'. Available at: https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_030818/ (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

RAND (2023) 'What Science Tells Us About the Effects of Gun Policies'.

Ratcliff, S. (2022) 'Presidential firepower: The effect of the presidential party on gun ownership, 1980–2018', *Social Science Quarterly*, 103(3), pp. 737–751. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13131.

Reed, R. and Hallenbrook, C.R. (2020) 'The Hobbesian psychology of the US firearms debate', *Critical Policy Studies*, 14(3), pp. 267–284. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2019.1612764.

Reznik, R. (2022) 'On the Place of Self-Defense in Public Life: A Hobbesian Critique of the Supreme Court's Second Amendment', *SSRN*, 37 BYU J. PUB. L. (forthcoming 2023). Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4245782.

Riffe, D. *et al.* (2019) *Analyzing Media Messages Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*. 4th edn. Routledge.

Saad, L. (2020) 'What Percentage of Americans Own Guns?' Available at: https://news.gallup.com/poll/264932/percentage-americans-own-guns.aspx (Accessed: 19 October 2022).

Saunders, H. (2022) 'Do States with Easier Access to Guns have More Suicide Deaths by Firearm='. Available at: https://www.kff.org/other/issue-brief/do-states-with-easier-access-to-guns-have-more-suicide-deaths-by-firearm/ (Accessed: 27 December 2022).

Siegel, M. (2022) 'New Evidence for State-Specific Heterogeneity in the Association of Stand Your Ground Laws with Firearm Violence', *JAMA network open*, 5(2). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0085.

Siegel, M. and Boine, C. (2019) 'What are the most effective policies in reducing gun homicides?' Rockefeller. Institute of Government. Available at: https://rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/8-13-19-Firearm-Laws-Homicide-Brief.pdf (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Slaughter, A.-M. (2012) 'The Gender Divide on Gun Control'. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2012/12/the-gender-divide-on-gun-control/266612/ (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Smith, T.W. (2002) 'Public Opinion about Gun Policies', *The Future of Children*, 12(2), pp. 155–163. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1602745.

Snell, P. (2010) 'From Durkheim to the Chicago School: Against the "variables sociology" paradigm', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 10(1). Available at: https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/1468795X09352557.

Spitzer, R.J. (2012) *The Politics of Gun Control*. 5th edn. London: Paradigm Publishers.

Stroebe, W., Leander, N.P. and Kruglanski, A.W. (2017) 'Is it a dangerous world out there? The motivational biases of American gun ownership.', *Personality & Social Psychology Bulleting*, 43(8), pp. 1071–1085.

Tambe, A. (2022) 'Psychological reasons why the legal age for purchasing assault weapons does not make sense', *Politics and Society*. Available at: https://theconversation.com/there-are-historical-and-psychological-reasons-why-the-legal-age-for-purchasing-assault-weapons-does-not-make-sense-184208 (Accessed: 17 February 2023).

Tomillo (2018) 'That's what the Social Contract Theorists Said (About Gun Control)'. Available at: https://publish.illinois.edu/ashleytomillops372/2018/04/12/the-contemporary-gun-control-debate/ (Accessed: 28 March 2023).

Triandis, H.C. *et al.* (1995) 'Multimethod Probes of Allocentrism and Idiocentrism', *International Journal of Psychology*, 30(4), pp. 461–480. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00207599508246580.

Tuli, F. (2010) 'The Basis of Distinction Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research in Social Science: Reflection on Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Perspectives', *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences*, 6(1), pp. 1–12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4314/ejesc.v6i1.65384.

University of Texas (2022) 'Raising the minimum age to buy a firearm (June 2022)'. Available at: https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/raising-minimum-age-buy-firearm-june-2022#party-id (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Vegter, A. and Haider-Markel, D.P. (2022) 'Gun Ownership, Threat, and Gun Attitudes in an Experiment', *Sociological Perspectives*, 65(1), pp. 119–132. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/07311214211021126.

Vittinghoff, Eric. *et al.* (2012) *Regression methods in biostatistics: linear, logistic, survival, and repeated measures models* (1 online resource (xx, 509 pages): illustrations vol). 2nd ed. New York: Springer (Statistics for biology and health, 1431-8776). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-1353-0.

Vizzard, W.J. 1944- (2000) *Shots in the dark: the policy, politics, and symbolism of gun control*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Available at: http://www.h-net.org/review/hrev-a0b9d7-aa.

Wamser-Nanney, R. (2021) 'Understanding Gun Violence: Factors Associated With Beliefs Regarding Guns, Gun Policies, and Gun Violence', *Psychology of Violence*, 11(4), pp. 349–353. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000392.

Wilcox, C. 1953- and Bruce, J.M. (1998) *The changing politics of gun control*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield. Available at: http://lcweb.loc.gov/catdir/toc/97044519.html.

Wolpert, R.M. and Gimpel, J.G. (1998) 'Self-Interest, Symbolic Politics, and Public Attitudes Toward Gun Control', *Political Behaviour*, 20(3), pp. 241–262. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024814624070.

Wozniak, K.H. (2015) 'American Public Opinion about Gun Control Remained Polarized and Politicized in the Wake of the Sandy Hook Mass Shooting'. Available at: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2015/05/28/american-public-opinion-about-gun-control-remained-polarized-and-politicized-in-the-wake-of-the-sandy-hook-mass-shooting/ (Accessed: 31 October 2022).

Yamane, D. (2017) 'The sociology of U.S. gun culture', *Sociology Compass*, 11(7), p. e12497. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12497.

8. Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical approval and Research Ethics Application

University of BRISTOL

05/12/2022

Dear Ainhoa,

Ref: 12955

Title: Dissertation

Thank you for submitting your ethics application for the above-named study. Your ethics application has been reviewed and we can confirm that your ethics application has received ethical approval.

Your ethics approval code is 12955

Please include this ethics number with any correspondence you have with participants and also include a copy of this PDF in your dissertation appendices.

Please note that the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee expects to be notified of any changes or deviations in the study.

Thank you and good luck with your research.

Kind regards,

N.Ismail

Dr Nasrul Ismail
On behalf of School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee

University of Bristol Research Ethics Application

Investigator information

Application Submitter Details

Title

Miss

First Name

Ainhoa

Surname

Zamora Martinez

Faculty

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Department

School for Policy Studies

School

School for Policy Studies

Telephone

Email

ht20829@bristol.ac.uk

Preferred Name or Also Known As

Faculty

Social Sciences and Law ▾

School / Department / Centre

School for Policy Studies ▾

Is this a student project? (I.e. Is the ethics application submitted as part of your student qualification?)

Yes ▾

Please declare your level of study

Undergraduate ▾

Supervisor Contact Details

Title

Dr

First Name

Samuel

Surname

Kirwan

Department

Policy Studies

Faculty

Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

Email

samuel.kirwan@bristol.ac.uk

Supervisor Details (if external to the University of Bristol)

Please provide their name, organisation details, email address and telephone number.

[   ]

Please provide details of any other researchers/collaborators involved in the study.

[   ]

Anticipated Start Date

[01/12/2022]

Anticipated End Date

[01/02/2023]

Ethics Committee Review

Has or will your research be submitted to another research ethics committee for research involving human participants, their tissue and or data?

☐ Yes
☑ No

Important Information - Please note:

It is extremely important that you select the **correct Research Ethics Committee (REC)** to review your research ethics application.

The REC selected, will determine the questions you are asked to complete on this online form and the research ethics committee that will review your research ethics application.

Please note, if you select the incorrect ethics committee, this may delay the review of your ethics application as your ethics application will need to be returned to you so that you can select the correct REC and complete the relevant questions on the online form.

If you are unsure of the correct research ethics committee to select please contact research-ethics@bristol.ac.uk

Please select the Research Ethics Committee (REC) to review your research ethics application:

[School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee   ▼]

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Brief study outline

Study Title

The complex relationship between gun control and the American Public.

Brief Project Outline (up to approximately 300 words)

Because of the dispute over recent gun control issues, we see advocacy and two sides supporting gun control measures or the opposite. Many debates have involved academics in the study of gun control, this comes from a few decades back when a connection between public opinions impacted public policy and its association with focusing on gun control.

This paper will involve secondary data derived from 3 opinion surveys conducted nationwide by IPSOS between 2020 and 2022. The authors compiled information about individuals and their characteristics, as well as their opinion and behaviour regarding gun and gun control policies. The paper will interpret these findings by answering research question such as if there is a relationship between gun ownership and factors like psychological, sociological or demographic variables. Further, it will also assess the reason why individuals own guns and how this also varies across different factors.

This research will be a quantitative dissertation. Through the use of SPSS, the data will be cleaned, coded and organised in order to answer and give results to the research questions. Statistical analysis will be conducted in order to find some statistical significance through a t-test, as well as estimating logistic regression models to analyse whether public support for gun control is predicted by the factors mentioned above, as well as gun ownership.

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Checklist questions

Checklist Questions Please read the guidance note below

SPS RESEARCH ETHICS
APPLICATION FORM: U/G and TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

This form must be completed for each piece of research carried out by all undergraduate and taught post-graduate students in the School for Policy Studies.

Students should discuss their proposed research with their supervisors who will then approve and sign this form before forwarding to the relevant dissertation convenor (or in some cases unit convenor or programme director) who will approve the form on behalf of the SPS REC when they are happy with the contents.

Failure to get approval prior to conducting any fieldwork may result in the University taking action for research misconduct – the outcome of such action may be that you are unable to submit your fieldwork findings for assessment and **your degree may not be awarded.**

Once your study is approved, you must follow the plan described in this form. You should remember that ethics is an on-going process, ie your ethical thinking is not 'done' when your form is signed. It is about how you act as a researcher. You should remain reflexive throughout the research process and think about how the research is impacting on your participants and yourself. You should refer to this completed form throughout your research process to make sure you are remaining within your ethical approval. If you wish to change your research plan, then you must discuss this with your supervisor. If the change is very small your supervisor can approve the change. However, if the change is more significant, you will need to ask for an amendment to your ethical approval. Your supervisor and dissertation convenor must approve this change in writing. If you do not get approval for changes, then you won't have ethical approval for the change, and it may result in the University taking action for research misconduct.

Who needs to provide Ethics approval for your project?

The School will only consider those projects which do not require ethical approval from elsewhere. As such, you should make sure that your proposed research does not fall within the jurisdiction of HMPPS (Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service) or the NRES system. e.g. does it involve staff or offenders or does it involve NHS patients, staff or facilities.

Social care research projects which involve NHS patients, people who use services or people who lack capacity as research participants need to be reviewed by a Social Care Research Ethics Committee. Similarly, research which accesses unanonymised patient records (without informed consent) must be reviewed by a REC and the National Information Governance Board for Health and Social Care (NIGB).

Any application to an external body should be discussed with your supervisor.

Terminology used in this form:

1. **Primary research** includes any research that collects new data such as interviews, focus groups, observations, online surveys, new data collected via a social media post etc.
2. **Secondary analysis/literature review** relates to the re-analysis of data that already exists such as analysis of publicly available documents or tv programmes, analysis of existing social media posts, reviews systematic or otherwise, or statistical analysis of analysis of publicly available datasets etc.

Please select the method of data collection below. This will determine the sections of the form you will need to complete in the next page. Tick all that apply.

☐   Primary research data collection

☑   Secondary data analysis

☐   Systematic review

☐   Face-to-face data collection

☐   Working with children and vulnerable people

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Study design and background

School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Application Form

To ensure that your research ethics ethics application is reviewed and validated for completeness, please complete all sections shown below.

Please ensure that **all participant facing study documentation** has been provided for review.

Please select your programme

- ☐ Social Policy Programme - SPOL30017 Dissertation
- ☐ Social Policy with Quantitative Research Methods (QRM) - SPOL30032 Dissertation
- ☐ Childhood Studies Programme - SPOL30033 Dissertation
- ☐ Childhood Studies with Quantitative Research Methods (QRM) - SPOL30031 Dissertation
- ☑ Criminology Programme - SPOL30046 Dissertation
- ☐ Criminology with Quantitative Research Methods (QRM) - SPOL30064 Dissertation
- ☐ International Social and Public Policy - SPOL30072 Dissertation

Date dissertation is to be submitted

27/04/2023

For those intending to carry out secondary analysis of data or a systematic review:

Please provide details of where you are getting your data set from and how you will use this data. Data sets must be stored on the University of Bristol server.

What sources/ secondary datasets you will use?

This dissertation will make use of secondary datasets provided by IPSOS.

Where will you get these data from (e.g. ESRC Data Archive, systematic literature review, document archive). Please describe your selection criteria and how you will locate/access the data?

The data was obtained from email, by being in contact with Sarah Feldman (Senior Data Journalist) at IPSOS. I received a .sav document and I accessed the data using SPSS.

If necessary, how will you obtain permission to use these data? This would apply to data sets where it is usual for the researcher to sign an end user licence.

> I obtained permission to use the data because the owners of the database already shared the document with me.
> This data would not need a sign an end user licence.

How will you analyse the data?

> I will analyse the data by performing a quantitative study. Analysing the data in 2 ways: descriptive and inferential. Both ways by using SPSS software.

What ethical issues will you consider? i.e. will you consider the quality of the papers/programmes etc reviewed?

> The ethical issues that I will consider include maintaining the transparency of the data used, by not changing any data for convenience. Also, I consider the quality of the papers reviewed because after an intensive search of useful databases, I selected the most reliable, accessible and trustful paper.

Your emotional wellbeing (To be completed by all students whether you are doing primary reseasrch including fieldwork or secondary analysis).

Clearly state any potential risk to you as the researcher and how you will address this risk.

> A possible risk is not having enough data to proceed with my study, and I will address the risk by compressing multiple surveys from the same year.

Supporting Information

Supporting information Please provide any additional information in relation to your study that you think may be relevant.

Any other information Please upload any other documents that you think may be relevant to your research. There is no limit to the number of documents you can upload.

Documents

Type	Document Name	File Name	Version Date	Version	Size
Other	NPRIpsos_CLEAN_SPSS_28FEB18 (1)	NPRIpsos_CLEAN_SPSS_28FEB18 (1).SAV			124.4 KB
Other	NPRIpsos_July2022_GunOwners (1)	NPRIpsos_July2022_GunOwners (1).sav			126.0 KB

To proceed to the next page select 'Next' in the Actions tiles.

To save your application for completion and submission at a later date please select 'Save' in the Actions tiles.

Signatures

Student Declaration

- ☑ I certify that the statements made in this request are accurate and complete, and if I receive approval for this project from my supervisor/unit convener I will conduct my research as stated.
- ☑ I agree to inform my advisor/supervisor/unit convener in writing of any emergent problems or proposed procedural changes and that I will not proceed with the research until any proposed changes have been reviewed and approved.
- ☑ I have attached all the relevant documentation necessary to carry out this research.
- ☑ I am aware that this form and, if necessary, REC approval from the SPS REC must be included in an appendix in my dissertation.

Applicant signature

Signed: This form was signed by Miss Ainhoa Zamora Martinez (ht20829@bristol.ac.uk) on 28/11/2022 12:50

As the named supervisor on this research ethics application, by signing this form I confirm that:

- I have reviewed this form;
- I approve the information in this form and do not think higher level approval is necessary;
- If appropriate I have sought advice from the SPS REC, this advice has been heeded and approval has been given;
- If appropriate this form will be examined by the SPS REC or an application made to a NHS REC.

Supervisor signature request

Signed: This form was signed by Dr Samuel Kirwan (samuel.kirwan@bristol.ac.uk) on 01/12/2022 13:14

Submission Reminder

Please note - Once all signatures have been obtained. You must ensure you select the **Submit** button on the left hand side of the form.

If you have not received an email alert confirming submission of your research ethics application, then your research ethics application has not been submitted for review.

If you have not received an OREMS submission confirmation email or if you are unsure whether your application has been submitted, please contact research-ethics@bristol.ac.uk.

Appendix B: Statistical results

Table presenting the results obtained after conducting regression analysis. The data shows the main outcomes when conducting regression analysis, such the model summary and ANOVA, for each of the selected policies.

	R	R-SQ	R-SQ (ADJUSTED)	STD. ERROR OF THE ESTIMATE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	SIG.
POLICY 1: Support for banning assault-style weapons	0.372	0.139	0.135	1.014	4	**<.001**
POLICY 2: Support for creating a federal government database to track all gun sales.	0.279	0.078	0.073	0.617	5	**<.001**
POLICY 3: Support for requiring background checks for all gun buyers.	0.277	0.077	0.072	0.915	5	**<.001**
POLICY 4: Support for raising the legal age to buy a gun from 18 to 21.	0.211	0.045	0.039	0.690	6	**<.001**

Appendix C: Pearson's coefficient results

Table presenting correlation matrix of Pearson's coefficient between dependent and independent variables.

		DEPENDENT VARIABLES - GUN OWNERSHIP PURPOSES										
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		Manage pests' purposes	Family protection	Community protection	Exercise constitutional rights	Collection purposes	Family tradition	Own protection	Hunting	Sport or competition	Job related purposes	Feeling of power
Education	Pearson Coeff.	.091[**]	.084[**]	0.051	0.015	0.034	0.049	0.058	0.040	-.106[**]	-0.001	.091[**]
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.003	0.007	0.106	0.630	0.280	0.117	0.062	0.204	0.001	0.967	0.004
Ethnicity	Pearson Coeff.	.083[**]	-.078[*]	-.071[*]	-0.010	-0.012	0.001	-.097[**]	0.023	0.047	-.094[**]	-0.015
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.008	0.012	0.024	0.751	0.704	0.984	0.002	0.470	0.135	0.003	0.641
Household Income	Pearson Coeff.	0.018	0.043	0.060	0.017	-0.049	-0.025	.082[**]	-0.029	-.129[**]	0.008	0.023
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.565	0.168	0.055	0.584	0.115	0.426	0.009	0.347	<.001	0.802	0.459
Marital Status	Pearson Coeff.	.069	-0.047	-0.044	-0.059	-0.057	0.008	-0.059	.067[*]	0.060	-0.022	-.063[*]
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.027	0.130	0.158	0.061	0.067	0.809	0.061	0.033	0.057	0.489	0.043

Region of residence	**Pearson Coeff.**	**.071**[*]	-0.059	-0.035	0.026	-0.003	0.009	-0.059	0.025	0.039	-0.041	0.004
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.022	0.058	0.268	0.406	0.919	0.772	0.061	0.416	0.213	0.188	0.886
Ownership status of living quarters	**Pearson Coeff.**	0.051	**-.160**[**]	**-.097**[**]	**-.089**[**]	0.000	0.004	**-.131**[**]	**.061**[*]	0.030	-0.054	-0.025
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.102	<.001	0.002	0.004	0.996	0.896	<.001	0.050	0.340	0.087	0.425
Current Employment Status	**Pearson Coeff.**	0.002	**.099**[**]	**.064**[*]	**.097**[**]	0.021	0.005	**.071**[*]	0.023	**.104**[**]	0.052	-0.004
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.946	0.002	0.040	0.002	0.504	0.879	0.023	0.464	0.001	0.094	0.886
Type of area of residence	**Pearson Coeff.**	0.021	-0.002	-0.001	-0.056	-0.009	0.003	0.028	-0.003	-0.049	-0.004	-0.008
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.496	0.948	0.973	0.072	0.775	0.925	0.372	0.914	0.118	0.894	0.803

N= 1104

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix D: Kendall tau coefficient results

Table presenting correlation matrix of Kendall's tau coefficient between dependent and controlled variables.

CONTROLLED VARIABLES		DEPENDENT VARIABLES - GUN OWNERSHIP PURPOSES										
		Manage pests' purposes	Family protection	Community protection	Exercise constitutional rights	Collection purposes	Family tradition	Own protection	Hunting	Sport or competition	Job related purposes	Feeling of power
Age	Pearson Coeff.	.051[*]	.176[**]	.132[**]	.151[**]	.068[**]	0.035	.148[**]	.071[**]	.098[**]	0.042	.074[**]
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.022	<.001	<.001	<.001	0.002	0.122	<.001	0.002	<.001	0.076	0.001
Gender	Pearson Coeff.	-0.020	0.035	.068[*]	0.016	.126[**]	0.016	0.010	.160[**]	.163[**]	.092[**]	-.057[*]
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.460	0.207	0.013	0.546	<.001	0.555	0.726	<.001	<.001	0.001	0.042

N = 1104

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).