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Report

# **Guns in America: A Survey on Public Violence, Anxiety, and Threats.**





## INTRODUCTION

**The United States is awash in guns and gun violence, but far from being numb to the violence, the public is filled with more anxiety than ever. And that anxiety is slowly eroding any sense of trust that we can go about our daily lives safe from harm.**

The data in our report show this clearly: Nearly eight out of ten of us think gun violence is a problem in America. Sixty-two percent check the exits and/or review our active shooter mental plan in a movie theater. Some avoid going altogether, opting to watch movies in the safety of their own home instead.

These findings paint a picture of an anxious America. An America that no longer views mass shootings as an anomaly. An America considering mandatory checkpoints at all large events. An America that has run out of time for waiting on legislators and policymakers to act on a solution. An America where students are subjected to a similar experience as air travelers just to get to class.

It doesn't have to be this way. Fortunately, I believe these findings offer a way out of the decades-long American public safety stalemate.

In these numbers, an overwhelming majority of us agree that we want a safer America. What we found is that people—our neighbors, colleagues, friends, classmates—want to have a safe experience when they go to the grocery store or movie theater, or to watch a sporting event.

It is rare in these times to find something that we can all agree on, and that is why it is imperative that we take steps as a society to democratize security so that we can truly make everywhere safer.

We might have a long way to go to get there, but acknowledging a problem is the first step to a solution. While I don't pretend to have the answer, I look forward to the conversations this data will facilitate—and being part of that discussion.

Peter George  
CEO, Evolv Technology

## SECTION ONE

## Experiences with guns are pervasive

In the period between April 2020 and July 2021, data from the [Gun Violence Archive](#) on mass shootings (defined as an event in which four or more people were killed or injured, not including the shooter) revealed that there were 343 more mass shootings, 217 people killed and 1,498 people injured in the US, than expected.

Across the country, city police departments are reporting increases in gun violence. For example, in Chicago, [shootings are up 64%](#) this year compared to the same period two years ago.

Our research finds these trends to be true at the personal level as well; experiences with guns—and particularly shootings—are everywhere.

- **29%** of respondents report having been in a location where someone unexpectedly opened fire with a gun.
- **Nearly 4 out of 10 (38%)** know someone else who has experienced unexpected gunfire.
- **In both cases** – those who have personally been in a location and know someone who has – these incidents most commonly occurred in a bar/night club or at a large gathering.
- **Nearly 1 out of 5 (18%)** have been in a bar/night club when someone unexpectedly opened fire with a gun.
- Younger respondents (**18-29: 34% vs. 50+: 19%**) and **males (33%)** are more likely to say they've been in a location where someone unexpectedly opened fire.
- Those in the **South (32.9%)** and those in **urban areas (38.5%)** are also more likely to have experienced unexpected gun fire.

APRIL  
2020**343****MORE** mass  
shootings than  
expected**217****MORE** people  
killed than  
expected**1,498****MORE** people  
injured than  
expectedJULY  
2021

“Unfortunately, I am no longer surprised when I hear about another mass shooting. My son was in the mall in El Paso when there was an active shooter there and I had taken my granddaughter to that very same mall and Walmart a week prior to the shooting, there is no way any of us would have known this was going to happen. I believe every time there is a mass shooting, we've failed as a society.”

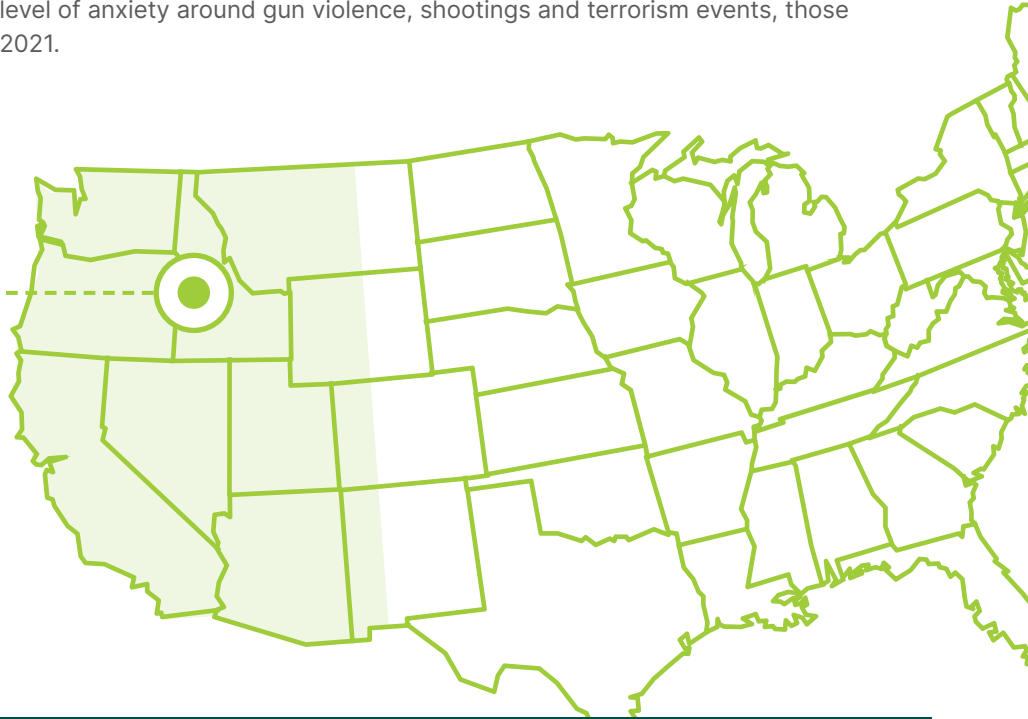
— SURVEY RESPONDENT

## SECTION TWO

# Americans are collectively anxious

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), Americans are living with an increased level of stress and anxiety since March 2020, when the coronavirus forced businesses, schools and borders to close. While our research reveals people consistently carry around a troubling level of anxiety around gun violence, shootings and terrorism events, those levels have reached a worrisome intensity in 2021.

**Nearly one-third (28.6%)** of Americans feel they are likely (extremely / likely) to encounter an active shooter in their lifetime.



- Of those, **70.5%** believe their chances of encountering an active shooter have increased since 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **78%** of respondents say gun violence is a problem in America.
- **81%** report being anxious about gun violence (with 45% saying they are *extremely/moderately anxious*).
- **Nearly 40%** report that they have avoided going somewhere due to fear or anxiety around guns.
- As a result of gun violence and/or terrorism incidents, **62%** of respondents report anxiety about going to public places, especially a large gathering, bar/night club, or movie theater.
- **29%** of respondents plan to attend a live event in the next six months. Among those, COVID-19 (46.2%) and worries over large crowds (37.2%) are top concerns, but 31% also cite concerns about an active shooter/shooting, and 21% worry about a terrorist attack.

Joel Dvoskin, PhD, ABFP, clinical and forensic psychologist observed: “We clearly are a traumatized society. I believe we’re in a sort of death spiral, where the pandemic is causing tremendous anxiety about everything; guns and shootings—and the perceived threat around them—is significantly heightened. These findings highlight the trauma caused by worry, uncertainty, fear and isolation, to name a few, that the majority of Americans are carrying around.”

In the qualitative portion of the survey, 36% of respondents say there are places/events they feel more anxious than normal as it pertains to gun violence.



**Going to the movie theater. I cannot enjoy and actually watch the movie because my attentions are distracted as I am always looking around for anything suspicious.”**

— SURVEY RESPONDENT

**I live in an area where most people own guns and are very protective of their personal property. I am concerned about someone shooting a friend, neighbor or family member by accident because they are frightened and think someone is out to get them or steal from them. I am much more worried about being shot by my neighbors than blown up by terrorists. When there was a non-violent protest in our small town a call was put out for anyone with a gun to go to the site to “protect the businesses.” This was a non-violent protest organized by high school students.”** — SURVEY RESPONDENT

**It hasn’t impacted me personally, but if anyone I care about is late or out of touch for too long, I worry more. It used to be that I worried they were in an accident but if they were in public I wonder if they’ve been shot and I google their location to check if something happened there.** — SURVEY RESPONDENT

### SECTION THREE

## Some Americans carry an uneven burden of that anxiety

While the findings reveal that the anxiety and worry around guns is something shared by the majority of Americans—regardless of gender, age, income level or political affiliation—some do carry more than others.

- **Respondents over 50 (80%) and females (81.7%)** are more likely to say they think gun violence is a problem in America.
- Across the board, **women are more likely to be anxious as a result of gun violence than men.**
  - Large gathering: 36% (women) vs. 26% (men)
  - Bar/night club: 31% (women) vs. 26% (men)
  - Movie theater: 32% (women) vs. 24% (men)
  - Mall: 29% (women) vs. 24% (men)
  - Grocery store: 25% (women) vs. 21% (men)
- **30.8% of those who identify as Muslim** believe they are *extremely* likely to encounter an active shooter in their lifetime.
- **24.5% of those who identify as Jewish** believe they are likely to encounter an active shooter in their lifetime.
- **34% of those who identify as Jewish** report having increased anxiety when they go to a place of worship, as a result of gun violence and terrorism incidents.
- Those in the **West (28.9%)** are the *least* likely of all regions to say gun violence is a problem.
- **More Americans in rural areas (27%)** think gun violence is *not* a problem than their urban (18.8%) / suburban (21.7%) counterparts.
- **Respondents under 50** (18-29: 36%; 30-49: 32%) are more likely to think they'll encounter an active shooter or terrorism at some point in their lifetime.
- **Those in the South (45.6%)** and in **urban areas (43.6%)** report being equally nervous about being involved in an active shooter and terrorist event.

“...just being an observant Jew makes me a target.”

— SURVEY RESPONDENT



## SECTION FOUR

# The politics of gun violence

While the findings reveal Americans are anxious about gun violence regardless of political affiliations, there are some differences that fall along party lines.

- **70.4%** of those who identify as **“very conservative”** think gun violence is a problem vs. **91%** who identify as **“very liberal.”**
- On the contrary, **29.6%** of those who identify as **“very conservative”** do not think gun violence is a problem vs. **9%** of those who identify as **“very liberal.”**
- **33.3%** of those who identify as **“very liberal”** are more nervous about being involved in an active shooting (vs. terrorist attack) vs. **18.6%** of those who identify as **“very conservative.”**
- **33.7%** of those who identify as **“very conservative”** report that they are not nervous about being involved in either an active shooting or terrorist attack vs. **16.7%** of those who identify as **“very liberal.”**
- **27.5%** of those who identify as **“very conservative”** report that they are not anxious at all about gun violence in America vs. **9%** of those who identify as **“very liberal.”**
- On the contrary, **33.3%** of those who identify as **“very liberal”** report that they are extremely anxious about gun violence in America vs. **22.7%** of those who identify as **“very conservative.”**
- In the qualitative survey, **58%** said they **don’t believe talking about gun violence is political.**



**I think talking about gun violence is more of a discussion of facts without bias, whereas talking about gun control is definitely a political discussion.** — SURVEY RESPONDENT

In addition to political differences, Americans have differing opinions on whose responsibility it is to keep them safe.

- **The majority—39.5%**—believe they are responsible for their own safety
- **25.9%** believe it is local police’s responsibility to keep them safe
- **16.4%** believe it is the responsibility of the place they are visiting
- **Government comes in last:** 9.3% believe it is local government’s responsibility, and 8.9% believe it is Congress’ responsibility
- **33.7%** of those who identify as **“very conservative”** believe responsibility lies with the local police; only **23%** of those identifying as **“very liberal”** agree.
- **35.7%** of those who identify as **“very conservative”** believe they are responsible for their own safety; only **24.8%** of those identifying as **“very liberal”** feel the same.

## SECTION FIVE

# Gun violence has a quantifiable impact on business

So far, we have presented what the findings reveal about the mental toll gun violence and a culture of mass shootings take on Americans: a vast number of us are walking around with a significant amount of anxiety.

It turns out that anxiety impacts what kinds of places Americans are comfortable going, quantifying the toll for businesses – especially those in the industries people deem at highest threat of a violent event.

- **Nearly 40%** report that they have avoided going somewhere due to fear or anxiety around guns.
- **21% of respondents** think all public places listed in the survey are at equally heightened risk of an active shooter. However, large gatherings (12%) and bars/night clubs (11%) top the list of places perceived as the highest risk for gun violence, followed by school (9%).
- Of those who perceive malls to have the highest risk of active shootings, 29% report that they try to avoid going altogether.
- At the type of locations where high-profile mass shootings have taken place, **Americans routinely check the exits** and/or review their mental plan in case of an active shooter, as well as report higher levels of anxiety:
  - In a movie theater (Aurora, CO – 2012): **62.6%** check exits/review mental plan; **28.6%** report some level of anxiety (extreme or moderate)
  - In a grocery store (Boulder, Colorado; Collierville, TN - 2021): **49.1%** check exits/review mental plan; 28.4% report some level of anxiety (extreme or moderate)
  - In a bar / night club (Orlando, FL – 2016): **29.7%** report some level of anxiety (extreme or moderate)
- As a result of gun violence and/or terrorism incidents, **62%** of respondents report anxiety about going to public places, especially a large gathering, bar/night club, or movie theater (all about 30%).
- **About 40%** of those who feel increased anxiety as a result of gun violence and/or terrorism incidents say they avoid going to a bar/night club or large gathering as much as possible.
- **35%-43% say** *I try to stay near areas where I can exit or hide easily* when going to a school, college/ university, work, movie theater, or place of worship – another sign that people no longer feel safe in everyday places because of gun violence and/or terrorism.



**I can reduce my risk by not going to big events and watching movies at home instead of a movie theater.” — SURVEY RESPONDENT**



## SECTION SIX

# What Americans are willing to do for safety

Given the high levels of anxiety – and Americans’ feelings about gun violence in the U.S. – we wanted to understand what people would be willing to do in order to decrease their risk of a mass shooting and/or terrorist attack as they go about their daily lives.

- **78% of respondents** would be willing to go through extra steps at everyday places in order to reduce the threat of a mass shooting or terrorist attack.
  - Go through weapons detection screening **(57%)**
  - Have bags checked **(46%)**
  - Check guns at the door **(44%)**
  - **\*\* Only 22%** would be unwilling to do anything
- **Americans aged 18-29 (85%) and females (82%)** are more likely to be amenable to take extra steps to reduce the risk of a public shooting or terrorist attack.
- Those in the **Northeast (82%) and urban areas (84%)** are also more likely to be willing to take extra steps.
- In the qualitative portion of the survey, **50% of respondents** think there are things that can be done to decrease their risk of encountering an active shooter.

“I believe that if we made it mandatory checks at every large gathering entrance people would think twice before bringing them as in guns, knives, weapons.”

— SURVEY RESPONDENT

## CONCLUSION

# The Duty to Keep People Safe

While politicians and advocacy groups—on both sides of the issue—continue to talk (or argue) about the role of guns in America, this report presents a new way for brands and businesses to be thinking about the role they play in keeping their employees, fans, patrons and guests safe.

Our survey not only quantifies the impact of Americans' anxiety guns have on their everyday lives, but also demonstrates how the choices they make—and the businesses they patronize—are affected by the level of risk or threat Americans perceive those places to have.

We learned through this research is that Americans want to feel safe, but many currently do not. When only 21.5% say they *would not* be willing to go through extra steps to reduce the threat of a terrorist attack or mass shooting at everyday locations, it's clear that organizations of all types—workplaces, large venues, grocery stores, bars and nightclubs, schools and universities—need to be thinking about and re-assessing their physical security strategy and protocols.

We also learned that this moment in American history – where anxiety is extremely high because of increasing violence, political unrest, and the global pandemic—is a critical one to address and re-assess the duty public spaces have to keep the people around us—whether they are employees, customers, guests, fans, patrons, or students—safe.

Businesses that welcome the public must take heed of these findings and incorporate the duty to keep their patrons safe into their physical security strategy. Because, as the data show, the public is increasingly less comfortable patronizing venues where they feel their safety is jeopardized. And as we emerge from the pandemic, we cannot allow anxiety and threats to public safety to dictate how we begin to gather again.

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Evolv Technology commissioned Equation Research to conduct the survey, which ran from October 20 to October 28 2021. The survey captured responses from a broad distribution of 2,015 adults in the U.S. aged 18 and older.

## ABOUT EVOLV TECHNOLOGY

Evolv Technology (NASDAQ: EVLV) is designed to transform human security to make a safer, faster, and better experience for the world's most iconic venues and companies as well as schools, hospitals, and public spaces, using industry leading artificial intelligence (AI)-powered weapons detection and analytics. Its mission is to transform security to create a safer world to work, learn, and play. Evolv has digitally transformed the gateways in places where people gather by enabling seamless integration combined with powerful analytics and insights. Evolv's advanced systems have scanned more than a billion people since 2019.

For more information, visit [www.evolvtechnology.com](http://www.evolvtechnology.com)



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