

Political Identity, Leftism, and Guns Among a National Sample of LGBTQ+ Americans

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Abstract

Beliefs about and ownership of guns have long been politicized in the United States. Although research is well-established regarding the Democrat/Republican divide on gun control in the general population, empirical work on LGBTQ+ populations and taking into account Americans with Leftist politics is lacking. A national sample of LGBTQ+ Americans ($n = 1,170$) completed the Gun Violence in the Context of Interpersonal Violence Experiences Among Sexual and Gender Minorities (GIVES) study. These studies examine gun ownership, behavior, and beliefs in the context of self-identified political identity. A substantial minority ($n = 207$; 17.7%) self-identified with Leftist politics via a write-in option on the survey, and therefore a new category of the political identity variable was created. Study 1 found that political identity is significantly associated with gun ownership, carry/display of guns, and all measures given regarding beliefs about guns and perceptions of safety due to hate-motivated mass violence. Post hoc testing revealed that although Democrats and Republicans were most sharply divided, there were also key differences across variables in how Leftists and Independents responded. Study 2 investigated the Leftist subgroup more closely, finding that among Leftist identities endorsed, there are significant differences in ownership, beliefs about gun control, beliefs that guns make one safer, and social presence of guns. Further research should aim to explore the relationship between LGBTQ+ identity and Leftist politics, and how Americans who self-identify with Leftist politics may differ in beliefs and behaviors regarding firearms.



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Keywords

gun policy, LGBTQ+, sexual and gender minorities, political identity, political psychology

Non-Technical Summary

Background

In the United States, gun ownership and legislation are hot-button topics that are closely related to political identity. The usual narrative is that Republicans are in favor of guns and Democrats are against guns. However, the real story is often more complicated than that. One thing that can affect someone's beliefs about guns is being a member of a marginalized group in society, such as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or another sexual/gender minority (LGBTQ+). For example, we know that lesbian and bisexual women are statistically more likely to own guns than heterosexual women. Being LGBTQ+ is related to political identity; most LGBTQ+ people vote for Democratic candidates, and some research has found that Leftist political beliefs are central to LGBTQ+ politics. Leftist political identities are almost never considered in research about gun beliefs and behavior, but in the United States, movements of Leftist politics have gained considerable recent momentum.

Why was this study done?

Past scientific research has not used national data to see if the same patterns of beliefs about guns based on political party that we see among the general population hold true for LGBTQ+ people. It also has not used a more expansive definition of political identity to include people who self-identify with Leftist politics. The researchers aimed to take these first steps toward understanding the relationship between political identity and gun beliefs and behaviors among LGBTQ+ people in the United States.

What did the researchers do and find?

Researchers asked 1,170 LGBTQ+ people from the United States about their ownership of guns, beliefs about guns, and political beliefs. They found that people's political beliefs were related to whether they owned guns and things that they believed about guns, like whether stricter gun control legislation should be passed and whether guns can keep someone safe. They also found that many (almost 18%) of people surveyed said that they identified most with Leftist politics, like socialism, communism, or with the Democratic Socialists of America. Within the group of people who self-identified as Leftists, the researchers found that there were differences in what people believed about guns based on what kind of Leftist they identified as.

What do these findings mean?

The findings in this research mean that LGBTQ+ people from the United States have some similar beliefs about gun ownership and policy as non-LGBTQ+ people, especially when looking at the differences between Democrats and Republicans. Leftists and Independents

tend to have different beliefs from either Democrats or Republicans, which means that future research should pay more attention to people in the United States who do not identify as either Democrat or Republican.

Few issues are as politically polarizing in the United States (US) today as those pertaining to firearms. The US is shaped by unique cultural and political forces when it comes to gun ownership and beliefs—our constitution guarantees the right to bear arms, and questions of governmental gun control have become rallying points for both major political parties. We have seen gun ownership and beliefs in less gun control strongly associated with the Republican Party, partially because of effective lobbying by groups such as the National Rifle Association (NRA). Although the NRA is likely the first group that comes to mind when thinking about gun-related lobbying, the Democratic Party has its own anti-gun lobbying bloc, including organizations such as Moms Demand Action and Everytown for Gun Safety. 32% of US adults own a firearm, typically citing reasons such as self- or familial-protection, hunting, and/or sport shooting (Schaeffer, 2024).

With high stakes in both the electoral and quotidian realms, it is vital for researchers to understand the nuance in why specific groups believe and behave the way they do about firearms. In particular, two areas have been largely neglected in firearm-related psychological research—how the firearm beliefs/behaviors of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual/gender minoritized people (LGBTQ+) Americans may differ from the general population, as well as the role of identifying with a political ideology that falls outside the functionally bipartisan system of the United States government.

Political Affiliations and Gun Beliefs Among LGBTQ+ Populations

Deschamps and Singer (2017) indicate that 31 percent of young people (i.e., ages 18 to 29) identify as “not 100 percent heterosexual” in the United States and that this rate is predicted to grow. LGBTQ+ people are at risk of disproportionately higher and more violent rates of hate crimes, intimate partner violence, and attempted suicide relative to their heterosexual counterparts (Anglemyer et al., 2014; Conron et al., 2018; Stotzer, 2012). LGBTQ+ youth are more frequently exposed to fear and victimization during their school years compared to other youth; The National School Climate Survey revealed in 2018 that nearly 60% of LGBTQ youth felt unsafe at school in the past year due to their sexual orientation, and a staggering 70% of LGBTQ students reported experiencing verbal harassment at school in the past year (Kosciw et al., 2018).

Although the relationship between many sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., income, education, and race) and political perspective have been heavily studied in social science, sexual orientation and gender identity have been understudied (Worthen, 2019,

2020). A recent study by [Tanuzi and Franklin \(2024\)](#) examined the effects of sociodemographic features on political party affiliations; for example, male respondents were more likely to be Republican, and Black respondents were more likely to identify with the Democratic party. Unfortunately, although this study sampled over 20,000 Americans, it did not consider sexual orientation nor gender identity (defining “gender” within the male/female binary).

However, existing research does tend to suggest that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals are more likely to identify as Democrats and as liberal as compared to heterosexual people ([Denise, 2017](#); [Schnabel, 2018](#); [Worthen, 2019](#)). Further, these groups have been found to be some of the most loyal liberal Democratic Party voting blocs ([Hertzog, 1997](#); [Lewis et al., 2011](#); [Newport, 2014](#)). However, it is important to note that these studies typically focus on sexual minoritized individuals, less often including *gender* minoritized individuals (i.e., transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people). The most popular theorized reason for sexual and gender minorities holding steadfast liberal social justice perspectives is that their loyalty is derived from personal experience, with stigma and empathetic concern for those who hold other marginalized identities, which motivated them to improve the experiences of all marginalized people ([Davis & Robinson, 1991](#); [Worthen, 2019](#)).

As with other marginalized groups, the thin amount of research regarding LGBTQ+ Americans’ behavior and attitudes toward guns suggests that there are additional layers of nuance as compared to the general population. National data on how gun violence specifically impacts LGBTQ+ people does not exist. This is due in part to the limits of reporting structures for firearm-involved death and injury within the US not routinely measuring sexual orientation and/or gender identity ([Romero et al., 2019](#)). Hate crimes related to sexual or gender identity are also underreported; 19 states either do not have hate crime laws at all or do not include sexual orientation as a protected category ([Stotzer, 2012](#)). Anecdotally, however, there have been several high-profile hate-related incidents of gun violence (such as the Pulse and Club Q shootings), specifically targeting minoritized sexual and gender people. Data shows that sexual and gender minorities are less likely to report household firearms and more likely to endorse laws to restrict firearms than heterosexual men ([Clark et al., 2020](#)). We also know that firearm suicides and ideation occur at significantly higher rates among transgender individuals ([Blosnich et al., 2021](#); [Clark & Blosnich, 2022](#)).

Gun beliefs and behaviors are not monolithic within LGBTQ+ people. Lesbian and bisexual women specifically have been found to own guns at higher rates than heterosexual women ([Clark et al., 2020](#)). Further, there has been a long history of minoritized people utilizing firearms to protect themselves and their communities, perhaps most famously the Black Panther Party, who carried firearms in public to combat White supremacy and protect Black neighborhoods from police brutality ([Higginbotham et al., 2023](#)). While heterosexual men typically cite family protection (intertwined with

traditional masculinity and breadwinning) as the main motivation to own a gun (Warner et al., 2022), some researchers have posited that for those who are marginalized and vulnerable to violence, owning a gun may be one way to feel personally empowered and protective of their marginalized community (Parker et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2022). Further, the historic denial of gun ownership for LGBTQ+ people as a means of disempowering and oppressing minoritized people may incentivize a move against gun control efforts as a way to reclaim their gun owner identity (Combs, 2022a, 2022b; Lacombe, 2019; Lacombe et al., 2019). A 2018 study found that a sample of sexual minority women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people in the aftermath of the 2016 election reported support-seeking and increasing self-protection behaviors as key strategies to respond to a changing environment (Riggle et al., 2018).

Leftist Politics, LGBTQ+ Identities, and Gun Beliefs/Behaviors

Most of the research on political affiliation in the United States aligns with the bipartisan electorate system, typically analyzing the differences between Democrats and Republicans while occasionally also examining self-identified Independents, who are not a homogenous group by any means and have much less impact on elections than the two dominant parties. However, we know both anecdotally and empirically that actual political affiliation is often different than party registration. This is evidenced by how people identifying themselves as Independent has hovered around half of all voters since 2004 (Jones, 2022). Over half of Independents who reported leaning Democrat said that the statement “I often wish there were more political parties to choose from in this country” described their views either very well or extremely well (Pew Research Center, 2019). In fact, the present study initially also availed itself of the traditional Democrat/Republican/Independent trifecta as multiple-choice options. However, the limitations of this framework became clear when over 17% of all respondents wrote in a political identity under the umbrella of Leftist politics. It seems therefore imperative to investigate how Leftist politics might impact LGBTQ+ individuals’ beliefs and behaviors regarding guns.

The concept of the left/right political divide finds its roots in the French Revolution, where assemblymembers sitting on the left of the National Assembly Hall supported new ideals that were in direct opposition to the traditions and power of the monarchy, the supporters of which sat on the right. Despite Democrats being known as the left-wing party in the United States, the bipartisan system is often perceived as overall more centrist (Anthony & Carl, 2019), with Leftists advocating for more radical and systemic change. While there are numerous subgroups (and sub-subgroups) of Leftists, the general umbrella term generally includes the smaller umbrella terms of anarchism, socialism, and communism, as well as those identifying with leftism without a specific philosophical alignment. “Anarchism” typically refers to the belief that hierarchical governments are unnecessary and harmful, instead supporting the idea that decentralized power is

preferable (Clark, 1978). “Socialism” typically refers to ideas of collective ownership and administration, including societal equity as it pertains to distribution of resources (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). While communism is similar to socialism in its defined form, communism is typically viewed as the final stage of post-worker's-revolution society in Marxist theory, with a government owning the means of production and distributing profits and goods equivalently to the populace (Marx & Engels, 2015). Overall, common traits tend to unite these views, such as anti-capitalism, pro-labor, opposition to hierarchy, and value of equality and societal progress.

Defining Leftist politics is made difficult both because of the lack of political or electoral power that Leftists have in the United States and the historical persecution of those with leftist politics, especially self-identified communists (including but not limited to Joseph McCarthy's “Red Scare”). The layperson's readiest association with communism is likely the USSR, with related fears of repression and nuclear warfare. However, many Leftists (though not all) would not classify themselves as supporters of how the Soviet government chose to interpret foundational communist texts, and the contemporary movement explicitly against imperialism and nuclear armament is sometimes referred to as the “New Left” (Chaturvedi, 2023).

Whether because of lack of knowledge, lack of profitability or potential for victory in elections, or simply lack of historical interest, there is simply no systematic study of Leftists or various leftist subgroups, either in the general US population or in the LGBTQ+ community specifically regarding gun ownership or overall prevalence. Data on how many Americans overall identify with Leftist politics does not exist, but Leftist philosophy and collective struggle has existed here for decades (Chaturvedi, 2023). As for LGBTQ+ individuals, there is also no American data, though some researchers (such as Hobson, 2017) have mentioned the central role of leftist beliefs in LGBTQ+ politics. In the European context, Hunklinger and Kleer (2024) conducted a study on Austrian citizens, stating that the country's LGBTQ community predominantly votes and/or favors the Left. This alliance with left-wing parties is mutual and rooted in the historical support of equal rights for the LGBTQ community within Austria's Leftist groups.

Gaps in the Literature

In reviewing the literature regarding gun beliefs and ownership, political affiliation, and LGBTQ+ identity in the United States, several significant gaps became apparent which we aim to address. First, the overall limited exploration into LGBTQ+ people's gun-related beliefs and behaviors, particularly as it pertains to those with marginalized gender identities. Second, given that political affiliation has a strong existing relationship with both gun ownership and belief and LGBTQ+ identity, how that relationship may look specifically in the LGBTQ+ population. Finally, although we did not originally expect to examine Leftist politics in addition to traditional electorate affiliations, the data showed

it to be a necessity, and there are certainly no studies about the relationship between Leftist politics, LGBTQ+ identity, and gun ownership and beliefs.

Method

Survey

The present analyses focus on a subset of variables from a larger study, the Gun Violence in the Context of Interpersonal Violence Experiences Among Sexual and Gender Minorities (GIVES) Study. The GIVES Study aims to describe the intersection of gun access, possession, and violence (including intimate partner violence) among sexual and gender minorities in the United States. It also aims to assess to extent to which gun access, possession, and/or violence victimization or perpetration is explained by a) sociodemographic factors and b) history of intimate partner violence (IPV). All study activities were approved by the Rutgers University IRB.

GIVES was a mixed-methods study; Phase One consisted of qualitative semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ individuals ($N = 25$), and Phase Two was a quantitative, online-based survey which also included several free-response questions ($N = 1,170$). Since only quantitative data from Phase Two was used for the present study, we report only Phase Two's methods in detail here. G*Power analysis (Faul et al., 2009) showed that GIVES was sufficiently powered to address the present research question; estimating a small effect size of 0.2, the minimum necessary sample size is 111.

The sample was recruited using active (e.g., referrals from providers) and passive (e.g., social media advertising) methods. To be eligible for the study, potential participants had to be aged 18 or older, identify with a sexual and/or gender minoritized identity, and live in the United States. An online screening questionnaire was used to determine eligibility and obtain informed consent. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, and participants were given the option to enter a raffle to win one of twenty \$50 electronic gift cards. Data collection for Phase Two of the GIVES Study began in September 2023 and ended in December 2023.

Throughout the survey, there were safeguards in place to prevent multiple responses and bot responses, including IP address checking, a tool to place a cookie in a respondent's browser after completing the survey, a reCAPTCHA test, a bot detection calculation within Qualtrics, and HTTP referrer verification.

Measures

In addition to the measures discussed below which are relevant to the present study, data was collected on mental health variables (anxiety, depression, PTSD), experiences with minority stress, and intimate partner violence (gun-related and general).

Sociodemographics

Sociodemographic information was collected with a series of questions in varying formats. Age was collected via a single write-in item. Location was obtained by asking a participant's state, the county within that state, and the ZIP code within that county. Employment, education, and serostatus were assessed with single multiple-choice items. Sexual orientation, gender identity, political orientation, and religious affiliation were assessed with single multiple-choice items with a write-in option. Racial identity was assessed using a checklist (where participants could identify with multiple racial or ethnic groups) with the addition of a write-in option. Housing instability was determined by two questions which asked if a participant had slept or lived in any listed places associated with housing instability (including streets, parks, abandoned buildings, cars, public places, shelters, single-room occupancy, welfare hotel or motel, temporary housing, jail/prison, drug treatment, halfway house, or temporarily living with family/friends) during the past 6 months.

Gun Ownership

Gun ownership was assessed with a single item, asking the participant to check "Yes" or "No" to the question "Do you own a gun?"

Gun Behaviors and Beliefs

This study predominantly used the Gun Behaviors and Beliefs Scale (GBBS; [Wamser-Nanney et al., 2020](#)) to assess firearm-related variables. A six-item survey created for the GIVES Study was also administered to determine individuals' beliefs pertaining to gun control, with a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" and items such as "There should be a limit on the number of guns a person can own" and "Stricter gun laws will reduce violence and death."

The GBBS is intended to give a comprehensive overview of gun beliefs and behaviors, including socially related gun perceptions and perceived advantages of carrying a gun that had been previously left out of similar scales. The scale consists of an 18-item Gun Behaviors subscale and a 43-item Gun Beliefs subscale intended to capture four distinct constructs: Safety, Emotional Risk, Neighborhood Factors, and Social Presence. All participants responded to the Gun Beliefs subscales; only participants who endorsed owning a firearm were presented with the Gun Behaviors subscale.

Each subscale is assessed with a seven-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The Gun Behaviors subscale assessed individuals' carrying, displaying, and/or using a gun, with items such as "I keep a loaded gun at my bedside" or "I have carried a gun openly or in an obvious manner" for carrying/displaying, and "I have shot at someone" and "I have fired a gun at someone in self-defense after being physically assaulted with a weapon" for use. The Safety subscale assessed participants'

belief in the idea that guns make people safer, with items such as “Owning a handgun decreases a person’s chance of being a victim of a crime” and “Criminals are more likely to attack places that do not allow people to carry guns.” The Emotional Risk subscale assessed participants’ belief that using guns carries emotional risk, using items like “It would be emotionally troubling for me if I had to shoot someone, even in self defense” and “Carrying a gun makes me nervous.” The Neighborhood Factors subscale assessed participants’ perception of guns and violence in their place of residence, with items like “In my neighborhood, a gun is needed to protect me” and “In my neighborhood, you have to be seen as willing to use violence to keep from being a victim.” The Social Presence subscale measured the presence and pressure associated with guns in a person’s network, using items like “In my area, carrying guns is an important tradition” and “My friends would think I am weak or soft if I did not carry a gun.” Reliability analyses of the GBBS revealed strong internal reliabilities of the four Gun Beliefs subscales (Safety $\alpha = .93$, Emotional Risk $\alpha = .85$, Neighborhood Concerns $\alpha = .86$, Gun Presence $\alpha = .83$, Social Perceptions $\alpha = .80$). [Wamser-Nanney et al. \(2020\)](#) also found evidence suggesting strong construct validity across two samples.

Perceptions of Safety

Perceptions of safety in response to hate-motivated mass violence was assessed using a measure created by [Stults et al. \(2017\)](#), which asked whether mass shootings made participants feel less safe in public, at LGBTQ events, showing affection to friends or partners in public, and whether they worried more about the safety of people they love, LGBTQ people broadly, and LGBTQ people of color.

Data Cleaning and Recoding

Once data collection was completed, several steps were taken to ensure the quality of the analytic data. At least three members of the study team checked each response with several different verification methods, including cross-referencing reported ZIP code with reported county, removing duplicate responses to open-ended questions, assessing responses that were in the same clusters for time submitted and length of time taken to complete the survey, and demographic/population inconsistencies.

Sociodemographic variables were examined and collapsed where appropriate for the purpose of analytic power, while preserving all original responses for future work if needed. While reviewing write-in data for three sociodemographic variables (sexuality, religion, and political affiliation), researchers noted a significant proportion of respondents who wrote in similar answers, indicating a deficiency in the original survey’s menu of options. As a result, three new groups were created under their respective variables; pansexuals (included with sexual orientation), pagans (included with religion), and Leftists (included with political ideology).

All of those included in the new “pansexual” group wrote in “pansexual” verbatim. There are many subgroups of leftists and pagans (some of which are explored in this study), so those groups were created from write-ins that indicated belief under their respective umbrellas, checked by at least three other members of the study team for consensus. All recoding and disaggregation were reviewed and refined by multiple research assistants prior to beginning analysis. For the purpose of Study 1, the umbrella Leftist group was used for analysis alongside the originally collected groups indicating political affiliation.

For the purpose of Study 2, the Leftist group was defined with additional granularity to represent the observed diversity of philosophy. Many participants wrote in endorsing multiple philosophies, such as “Anarchocommunist,” “Socialist leftist,” or “Environmental Anarchosocialist.” Many others wrote similar things as others, such as 20 participants writing “communist.” We made the choice to treat subgroup endorsement as predictors, such that a person could endorse, for example, both “anarchist” and “communist”. All coding was done with two researchers engaging in consensus coding and two other researchers serving as auditors. We also created an “Others” category for those ideologies that were not reported commonly enough for significant analysis (such as “Green”, “abolitionist”, or “Environmental” above).

De-identified data is available upon request to the author(s). Because of the unexpected nature of the political identity data breakdown, the present studies and their respective analytic plans were not pre-registered.

Analytic Plan – Study 1

First, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether political identity groups differed significantly with regards to gun ownership. Second, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted among gun owners only to determine whether political identity groups differed significantly in gun carrying and use behaviors. Third, another MANOVA was conducted among all participants to determine whether political identity groups differed significantly in beliefs about guns, including beliefs about gun control, the four GBBS belief subscales (Safety, Emotional Risk, Neighborhood Factors, and Social Perception), and perception of safety due to mass violence. Given the number of multiple comparisons, Bonferroni post hoc testing was selected to consider results strictly and reduce Type I error; all reported *p*-values for post hoc testing are reflective of the Bonferroni correction. Critical *p*-value was set at .05 for significance.

Analytic Plan – Study 2

For Study 2, the analytic sample was comprised only of the disaggregated Leftist group. Regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between Leftist ideology/ies and gun ownership/gun beliefs. Because cell sizes were too small for meaningful analy-

ses, Study 2 does not examine gun behavior (including carrying and use) among Leftist gun owners. Critical *p*-value was set at .05 for significance.

Results

Study 1

Sample Characteristics

The final analytic sample for Study 1 was 1,170 participants, whose ages ranged from 18 to 85, with an average age of 36.03 (*SD* = 13.25). There were responses from every state in the United States, as well as Washington DC. The sample consisted of 687 (58.7%) Democrats, 16 (1.4%) Republicans, 201 (17.2%%) Independents, 206 Leftists (17.7%), and 57 (4.9%) categorized as Other Political Identity. Table 1 shows full sociodemographic data for both studies, and Table 2 shows full results for analyses of political affiliation and gun-related variables.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Characteristics and Gun Ownership by Political Affiliation in a Sample of LGBTQ+ Americans

Variable	Overall Sample (<i>N</i> = 1,170)	Leftist Sample (<i>N</i> = 206)
Gun Ownership	235 (20.1%)	44 (21.5%)
Democrat	113 (16.4%)	–
Republican	11 (68.8%)	–
Independent	57 (28.4%)	–
Leftist	44 (21.5%)	–
Communist	–	10 (34.5%)
Socialist	–	13 (25.0%)
General Leftist	–	8 (9.8%)
Anarchist	–	12 (37.5%)
DSA	–	2 (13.3%)
Other	–	5 (27.8%)
Other, None, or No Preference	10 (17.5%)	–
Region		
Northeast	292 (25.0%)	55 (26.6%)
Midwest	324 (27.7%)	50 (24.2%)
South	300 (25.6%)	58 (28.0%)
West	253 (21.6%)	44 (21.3%)

Variable	Overall Sample (N = 1,170)	Leftist Sample (N = 206)
Race/Ethnicity		
Any BIPOC/Latinx	207 (17.7%)	34 (16.4%)
White	935 (79.9%)	193 (93.2%)
Indigenous	34 (2.9%)	7 (3.4%)
Asian	52 (4.4%)	8 (3.9%)
Black/African American	41 (3.5%)	6 (2.9%)
Middle Eastern/North African	14 (1.4%)	2 (1.0%)
Latinx/Hispanic	101 (8.6%)	21 (10.1%)
Other Race/Ethnicity	28 (2.4%)	11 (5.3%)
Gender Identity		
Cisgender	499 (42.6%)	39 (18.8%)
Cisgender Woman	305 (26.1%)	25 (12.1%)
Cisgender Man	194 (16.6%)	14 (6.8%)
Non-Cisgender	618 (52.8%%)	159 (76.8%)
Trans Man	150 (12.8%)	33 (15.9%)
Trans Woman	76 (6.5%)	25 (12.1%)
Nonbinary, Genderqueer, or Gender Non-Conforming	392 (33.5%)	101 (48.8%)
Other Gender Identity	44 (3.8%)	8 (3.9%)
Sexual Orientation		
Asexual	70 (6.0%)	14 (6.8%)
Bisexual	258 (22.1%)	52 (25.1%)
Gay	232 (19.8%)	11 (5.3%)
Lesbian	216 (18.5%)	24 (16.4%)
Heterosexual/Straight	16 (1.4%)	3 (1.4%)
Pansexual	39 (3.3%)	6 (2.9%)
Queer	310 (26.5%)	78 (37.7%)
Other Sexual Orientation	26 (2.2%)	9 (4.3%)
Serostatus		
HIV-Positive	30 (2.6%)	2 (1%)
HIV-Negative	1,073 (91.9%)	186 (89.9%)
Status Unknown	65 (5.6%)	19 (9.2%)
Education (Highest Completed)		
High School or Less	241 (20.6%)	66 (31.9%)
Associate's	126 (10.8%)	28 (13.5%)
Bachelor's	425 (36.3%)	65 (31.4%)
Master's	298 (25.5%)	30 (19.3%)
Doctorate/Other Graduate	78 (6.7%)	8 (3.9%)

Variable	Overall Sample (N = 1,170)	Leftist Sample (N = 206)
Housing Instability		
No Experience in Past Six Months	1,054 (90.1%)	177 (85.5%)
Experience in Past Six Months	106 (9.1%)	27 (13.0%)
Religious Identity		
Non-Religious	693 (59.2%)	131 (63.3%)
Christian	202 (17.2%)	15 (7.2%)
Jewish	77 (6.6%)	17 (8.2%)
Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim	29 (2.5%)	3 (1.4%)
Pagan	168 (14.4%)	41 (19.8%)

Political Affiliation and Gun Ownership

Overall, 235 (20.1%) of the sample reported owning at least one gun; data about how many guns each person owned was not collected. Grouped by political affiliation, 113 (16.4%) of Democrats, 11 (68.8%) of Republicans, 57 (28.6%) of Independents, 44 (21.5%) of Leftists, and 10 (17.5%) of the Other Political Identity category were gun owners. According to the results of the ANOVA, political affiliation was significantly related to gun ownership in the overall model ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests indicated that several groups differed significantly from each other in gun ownership; Democrats-Republicans ($p < .001$), Democrats-Independents ($p = .002$), Republicans-Leftists ($p < .001$), Republicans-Independents ($p < .001$), and Republicans-Other Political Identity ($p < .001$).

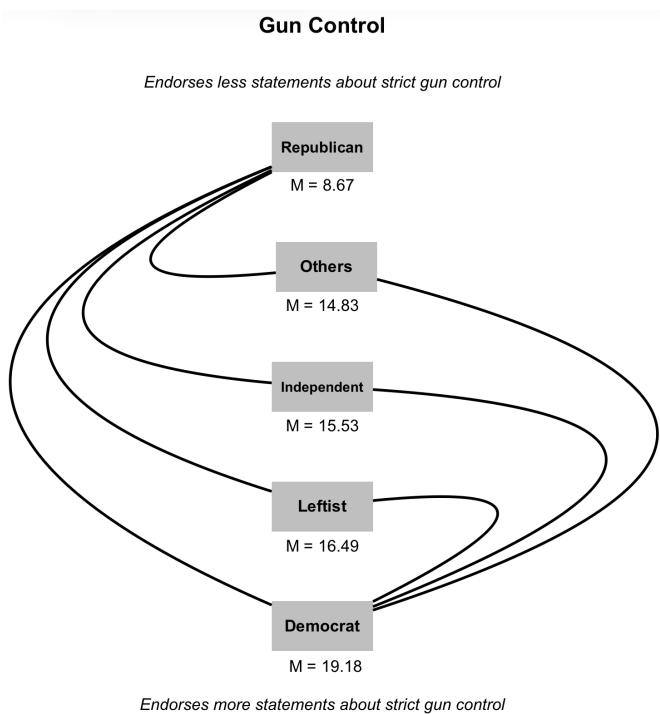
Political Affiliation and Gun Carrying/Display and Gun Use

Composite scores for gun carrying among gun owners could range from 0-54, with scores on the lower end indicating someone never or rarely carries/displays a gun and scores on the higher end indicating someone often or always carries/displays a gun. Composite scores for gun use among gun owners could range from 0-54, with scores on the lower end indicating someone never or rarely uses a gun and scores on the higher end indicating someone often or always uses a gun. Participants overall endorsed low rates of gun carrying/display and use. Political affiliation was significantly associated with gun carrying/displaying ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests show that gun-owning Republicans carry/display guns more frequently than gun-owning Democrats ($p < .001$), gun-owning Independents ($p = .019$), and gun-owning Leftists ($p < .001$). No other post hoc comparisons were significant. Political affiliation was not significantly associated with gun use.

Political Affiliation and Gun Control

Gun control composite scores could range from 0 (least belief in strict gun control) to 36 (highest belief in strict gun control). For full means and standard errors by political affiliation, see Table 2. Political affiliation was significantly associated with beliefs about gun control ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests indicate that Democrats were significantly more likely to endorse statements about stricter gun control than all other groups, Republicans were significantly less likely to endorse statements about stricter gun control than all other groups, and Leftists and Independents were more likely than Republicans but less likely than Democrats to endorse statements about stricter gun control. See Figure 1 for significant comparisons.

Figure 1
Beliefs About Gun Control by Political Affiliation

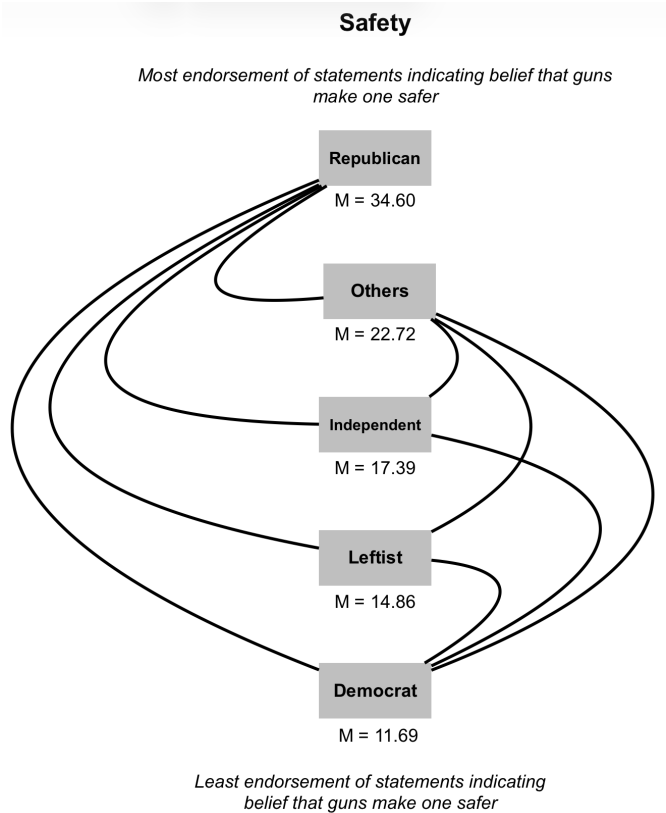


Note. Connecting lines indicate comparisons significant at $p < .05$.

Political Beliefs and Safety

Gun safety composite scores could range from 0 (least endorsement of statements indicating a belief that guns can keep you safe) to 42 (most endorsement of statements indicating a belief that guns can keep you safe). For full means and standard errors by political affiliation, see Table 2. Political affiliation was significantly associated with gun safety composite scores ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests show that Democrats were significantly less likely to believe guns can keep you safe than Republicans, Others, Independents, and Leftists. Leftists were significantly less likely than Republicans to believe guns can keep you safe than Others and Republicans, but did not significantly differ from Independents. Independents were significantly less likely than Others or Republicans to believe that guns can keep you safe, and Republicans were significantly more likely than any other groups to believe that guns can keep you safe. See Figure 2 for significant comparisons.

Figure 2
Beliefs About Ability of Guns to Keep One Safe by Political Affiliation

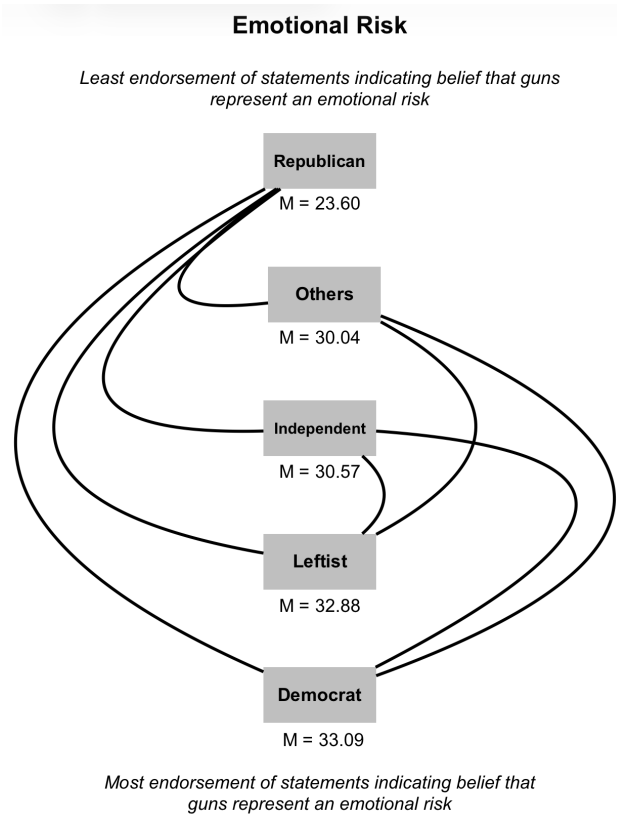


Note. Connecting lines indicate comparisons significant at $p < .05$.

Political Beliefs and Emotional Risk

Emotional risk composite scores could range from 0 (least endorsement of statements that indicate a belief that guns represent an emotional risk) to 36 (most endorsement of statements that indicate a belief that guns represent an emotional risk). For full means and standard errors by political affiliation, see Table 2. Political affiliation was significantly associated with emotional risk composite scores ($p < .001$). Post hoc testing revealed significant group differences. Republicans believed significantly less in the emotional risk of guns than any other group. Democrats believed significantly more in the emotional risk of guns than Republicans, Others, or Independents but did not differ significantly from Leftists. Independents believed more in the emotional risk of guns than Democrats or Leftists, but did not differ significantly from Others and believed less in the emotional risk of guns than Republicans. See Figure 3 for significant comparisons.

Figure 3
Beliefs About Emotion Risk of Guns by Political Affiliation

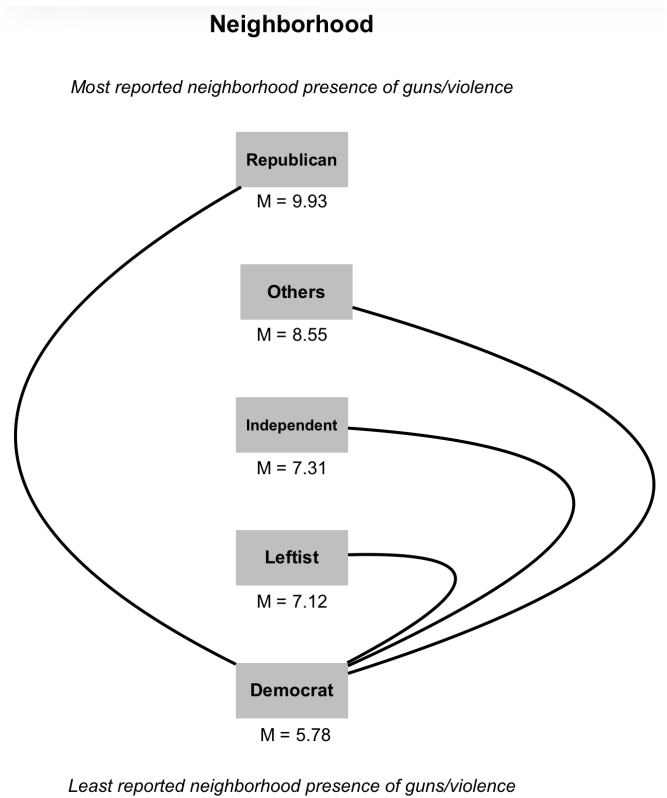


Note. Connecting lines indicate comparisons significant at $p < .05$.

Political Beliefs and Neighborhood Factors

Neighborhood factors composite scores could range from 0 (no gun presence in neighborhood) to 24 (extreme gun presence in neighborhood). For full means and standard errors by political affiliation, see Table 2. Political affiliation was significantly associated with neighborhood factors ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests indicated that Democrats reported less neighborhood presence of guns than any other group, but no other groups differed significantly. See Figure 4 for significant comparisons.

Figure 4
Neighborhood Presence of Guns by Political Affiliation



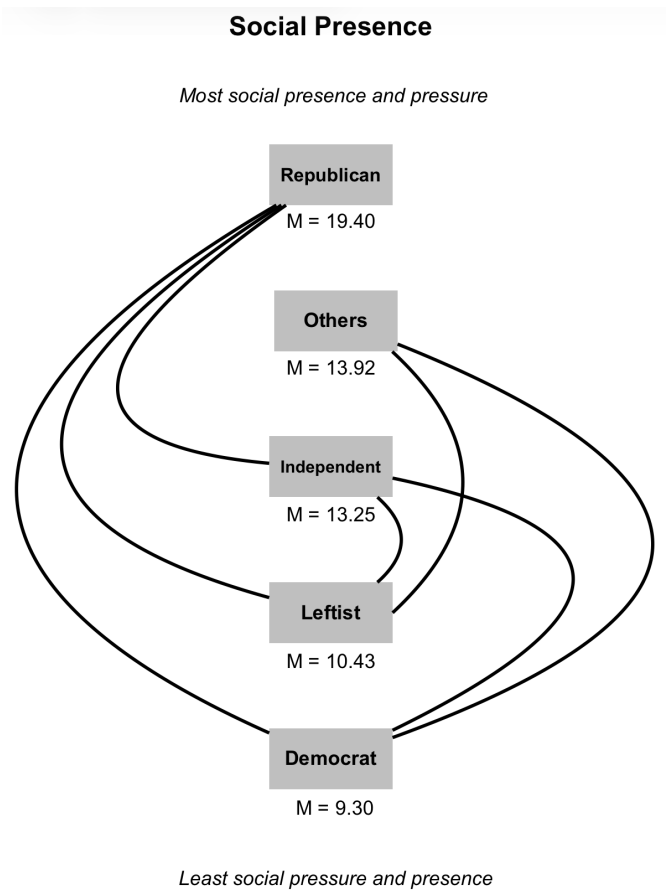
Note. Connecting lines indicate comparisons significant at $p < .05$.

Political Beliefs and Social Presence

Social presence composite scores could range from 0 (no social pressure to have or use a gun) to 42 (extreme social pressure to have or use a gun). For full means and standard errors by political affiliation, see Table 2. Political affiliation was significantly

associated with social perception of guns ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests indicated significant group differences. Democrats indicated significantly less social presence and pressure than any other group. Leftists reported significantly less social presence and pressure than Independents, Others, and Republicans. Independents reported significantly less social presence and pressure than Republicans, but had no difference from the Others group. See Figure 5 for significant comparisons.

Figure 5
Social Presence of Guns by Political Affiliation



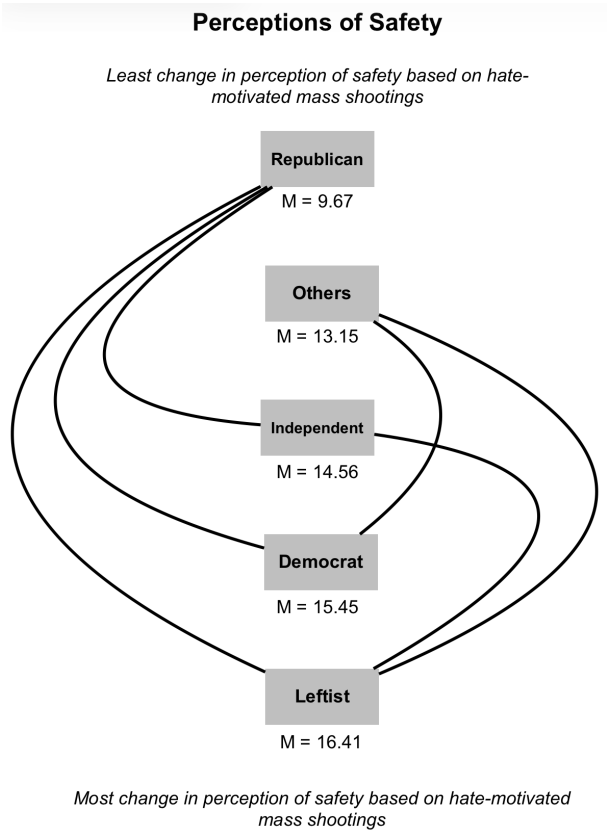
Note. Connecting lines indicate comparisons significant at $p < .05$.

Political Affiliation and Perception of Safety

Perception of safety composite scores could range from 0 (no perceived change in safety due to hate-motivated violence) to 36 (large perceived change in safety due to

hate-motivated violence). For means and standard errors by political affiliation, see Table 2. Political affiliation was significantly associated with perception of safety due to hate-motivated violence ($p < .001$). Post hoc tests showed significant group differences. Leftists reported significantly more change in perception of safety than Independents, Others, or Republicans, but did not differ significantly from Democrats. Democrats reported significantly more change in perception of safety than Others or Republicans, but did not differ significantly from Independents or Leftists. Independents reported significantly more change in perception of safety than Republicans and Leftists, but did not differ from Democrats or Others. Republicans reported significantly less change in perception of safety than all other groups excepting Others. See Figure 6 for significant comparisons.

Figure 6
Perceptions of Safety After Hate-Motivated Violence by Political Affiliation



Note. Connecting lines indicate comparisons significant at $p < .05$.

Table 2

Analysis of Gun-Related Variables by Political Affiliation in a Sample of LGBTQ+ Americans

Variable	Mean Difference (SE)				
	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Leftist	Other
Democrat (N = 687)					
Ownership (N = 113, 16.4%)	-	.523 (.100)*	.119 (.032)*	.050 (.031)	.011 (.054)
Carry/display (M = 6.79, SE = 6.90)		-11.391 (2.512)*	-3.14 (1.30)	-.423 (1.44)	-5.109 (2.623)
Use (M = 0.21, SE = 1.83)		-.791 (.778)	-1.095 (.404)	-.196 (.446)	-.291 (.813)
Gun control (M = 19.18, SE = 0.20)		10.517 (1.291)*	3.655 (.425)*	2.695 (.416)*	4.354 (.748)*
Safety (M = 11.69, SE = 0.42)		-22.912 (2.715)*	-5.703 (.895)*	-3.171 (.875)*	-11.036 (1.573)*
Emotional risk (M = 33.09, SE = 0.19)		9.485 (1.236)*	2.516 (.407)*	.205 (.399)	3.043 (.716)*
Neighborhood (M = 5.78, SE = 0.20)		-4.150 (1.275)	-1.522 (.420)*	-1.337 (.411)	-2.770 (.734)*
Social perception (M = 9.30, SE = 0.30)		-10.100 (1.913)*	-3.947 (.630)*	-1.129 (.617)	-4.614 (1.109)*
Perception of safety (M = 15.45, SE = 0.22)		5.787 (1.404)*	.891 (.463)	-.954 (.453)	2.305 (.814)
Republican (N = 16)					
Ownership (N = 11, 68.8%)	-	-	-	-	-
Carry/display (M = 18.19, SE = 9.53)	-523 (.100)*		-404 (.103)*	-473 (.103)*	-512 (.112)*
Use (M = 1.30, SE = 3.97)	11.391 (2.512)*		8.253 (2.620)	10.968 (2.691)*	6.282 (3.471)
Gun control (M = 8.67, SE = 2.68)	.791 (.778)		-.304 (.812)	.595 (.834)	.500 (1.075)
Safety (M = 34.60, SE = 2.68)	-10.517 (1.291)*		-6.862 (1.329)*	-7.823 (1.326)*	-6.163 (1.465)*
Emotional risk (M = 23.60, SE = 1.22)	22.912 (2.715)*		17.209 (2.795)*	19.741 (2.789)*	11.877 (3.080)*
Neighborhood (M = 9.93, SE = 1.26)	-9.485 (1.236)*		-6.969 (1.273)*	-9.280 (1.270)*	-6.443 (1.403)*
Social perception (M = 19.40, SE = 1.89)	4.150 (1.275)		2.629 (1.313)	2.814 (1.310)	1.380 (1.446)
Perception of safety (M = 9.67, SE = 1.39)	10.100 (1.913)*		6.153 (1.969)	8.971 (1.965)*	5.485 (2.170)
	-5.787 (1.404)*		-4.897 (1.445)*	-6.741 (1.442)*	1.414 (.883)
Independent (N = 201)					
Ownership (N = 57, 28.6%)	-	-	-	-	-
Carry/display (M = 9.93, SE = 9.16)	.119 (.032)*	.404 (.103)*		-.069 (.039)	-.108 (.059)
Use (M = 1.30, SE = 3.97)	3.138 (1.304)	-8.253 (2.620)		2.714 (1.622)	-1.971 (2.727)
Gun control (M = 15.53, SE = 0.37)	1.095 (.404)	.304 (.812)		.899 (.502)	.804 (.845)
Safety (M = 17.39, SE = 0.79)	-3.655 (.425)*	6.862 (1.329)*		-.960 (.522)	.699 (.812)
Emotional risk (M = 30.57, SE = 0.40)	5.703 (.895)*	-17.209 (2.795)*		2.532 (1.098)	-5.333 (1.708)
	-2.156 (.407)*	6.969 (1.273)*		-2.312 (.500)*	.526 (.778)

Variable	Mean Difference (SE)				
	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Leftist	Other
Leftist (N = 207)					
Neighborhood (M = 7.31, SE = 0.37)	1.522 (.420)*	-2.629 (1.313)	.108 (.059)	.185 (.516)	-1.249 (.802)
Social perception (M = 13.25, SE = 0.55)	3.947 (.630)*	-6.153 (1.969)	-2.714 (1.622)	2.818 (.774)*	-1.668 (1.203)
Perception of safety (M = 14.56, SE = 0.41)	-.891 (.463)	4.897 (1.445)*		-1.844 (.568)*	1.414 (.883)
Other (N = 57)					
Ownership (N = 44, 21.5%)	-.050 (.031)	.512 (.112)*		-	-.039 (.059)
Carry/display (M = 7.21, SE = 8.27)	.423 (1.441)	-10.968 (2.691)*	-2.714 (1.622)		-4.686 (2.795)
Use (M = 0.40, SE = 1.34)	.196 (.446)	-.595 (.834)	-.899 (.502)		-.095 (.866)
Gun control (M = 16.49, SE = 0.36)	-2.695 (.416)*	6.862 (1.329)*	.960 (.522)		1.659 (.807)
Safety (M = 14.86, SE = 0.77)	3.171 (.875)*	-19.741 (2.789)*	-2.532 (1.098)		-7.865 (1.698)*
Emotional risk (M = 32.88, SE = 3.74)	-.205 (.399)	9.280 (1.270)*	2.312 (.500)*		2.838 (.773)*
Neighborhood (M = 7.12, SE = 0.36)	1.337 (.411)	-2.814 (1.310)	-.185 (.516)		-1.434 (.797)
Social perception (M = 10.43, SE = 0.54)	1.129 (.617)	-8.971 (1.965)*	-2.818 (.774)*		-3.486 (1.196)
Perception of safety (M = 16.41, SE = 0.40)	.954 (.453)	6.741 (1.442)*	1.844 (.568)		3.259 (.878)*
Other (N = 57)					
Ownership (N = 10, 17.5%)	-.011 (.054)	.512 (.112)*	.108 (.059)	.039 (.059)	-
Carry/display (M = 11.90, SE = 8.21)	5.109 (2.524)	-6.282 (3.471)	1.971 (2.727)	4.686 (2.795)	
Use (M = 0.50, SE = 1.27)	.291 (.813)	-.500 (1.075)	-.804 (.845)	.095 (.866)	
Gun control (M = 14.83, SE = 0.72)	-4.354 (.748)*	6.163 (1.465)*	-.699 (.812)	-1.659 (.807)	
Safety (M = 22.72, SE = 1.52)	11.036 (1.573)*	-11.877 (3.080)*	5.333 (1.708)	7.865 (1.698)*	
Emotional risk (M = 30.04, SE = 0.69)	-3.043 (.416)*	6.443 (1.403)*	-.526 (.778)	-2.838 (.739)*	
Neighborhood (M = 8.55, SE = 0.71)	2.770 (.739)*	-1.380 (1.446)	1.249 (.802)	1.434 (.797)	
Social perception (M = 13.92, SE = 1.10)	4.614 (1.109)*	-5.285 (2.170)	.668 (1.203)	3.486 (1.196)	
Perception of safety (M = 13.15, SE = 0.78)	-2.305 (.814)	3.482 (1.593)	-1.414 (.883)	-3.259 (.878)*	

Note. Text in bold indicates a comparison significant at the .05 level. Text in bold with a * indicates a comparison significant at the .01 level. All p-values reflective of the Bonferroni correction.

Study 2

Sample Characteristics

For Study 2, analyses were conducted only with the disaggregated Leftist group, with write-in responses recoded to reflect endorsed ideologies/philosophies within Leftism overall. The total analytic sample was 206. Leftist respondents ranged in age from 18 to 73, with the average age being 30.85 ($SD = 9.43$). For full sociodemographic characteristics of both studies, see Table 1. Participants endorsed a wide variety of ideologies and philosophies within Leftism, often endorsing multiple. Overall, 28 (13.5%) endorsed Communist beliefs, 54 (26.1%) endorsed Socialist beliefs, 83 (40.1%) endorsed Unspecified Leftist beliefs, 29 (14.0%) endorsed Anarchist beliefs, 15 (7.2%) endorsed Democratic Socialist (DSA) beliefs, and 20 (9.7%) endorsed another belief not captured by the above subgroups (Other Leftist).

Leftist Ideology and Gun Variables

See Table 3 for full results of leftist subgroup analyses. Overall, 44 Leftist respondents (21.4%) reported owning guns. Regarding gun ownership, holding General Leftist beliefs makes one significantly less likely to own a gun ($p = .008$), but no other subgroup endorsement was a significant predictor. The overall model using Leftist subgroup endorsement to predict composite gun control scores was significant. Specifically, endorsing an Anarchist ideology predicted less endorsement of statements indicating a belief in stricter gun control ($p = .002$), endorsing DSA ideology predicted more endorsement of statements indicating a belief in stricter gun control ($p = .047$), and endorsing an Other Leftist ideology predicted less endorsement of statements indicating a belief in stricter gun control ($p = .031$). The overall regression model using Leftist subgroup endorsement to predict belief that guns make one safer was significant ($p = .008$). The only individual predictor that significantly predicted more belief that guns make you safer was endorsing Anarchist beliefs ($p = .048$). Endorsement of DSA beliefs also approached significance ($p = .068$), indicating less belief in the idea that guns make you safer. Leftist subgroup endorsement was not significantly associated with beliefs about the emotional risk of guns, indicating that regardless of endorsed philosophy or philosophies, respondents felt general similar regarding emotional risk. Leftist subgroup endorsement was not significantly associated with reported neighborhood gun presence and violence, indicating that neighborhood factors are relatively similar across groups. The overall regression model using Leftist subgroup endorsement to predict social presence or pressure associated with guns was significant ($p = .002$). Endorsing Anarchist beliefs ($p = .044$) or Other beliefs ($p = .010$) significantly predicted more social presence and pressure around guns. Leftist ideology was not significantly associated with reported changes in perspectives of safety as a result of hate-motivated violence.

Table 3
Analysis of Gun-Related Variables by Leftist Subgroup in a Sample of Leftist LGBTQ+ Americans

Variable	Beta					
	Communist (N = 29, 14.0%)	Socialist (N = 54, 26.1%)	General Leftist (N = 82, 39.6%)	Anarchist (N = 32, 15.5%)	DSA (N = 15, 7.2%)	Other (N = 18, 7.2%)
Ownership ($\chi^2 = 16.099$)	.230	-.259	-1.365	.409	-.948	.149
Gun control ($F = 6.703$, $R^2 = .169$)*	-.137	-.032	-.002	-.310*	.135	-.179
Safety ($F = 3.457$, $R^2 = .096$)*	.015	-.009	-.112	.196	-.158	.052
Emotional risk ($F = 1.748$, $R^2 = .051$)	-.096	-.082	.038	-.169	.016	-.055
Neighborhood ($F = .863$, $R^2 = .026$)	.086	.130	.039	.155	.080	.060
Social perception ($F = 5.092$, $R^2 = .135$)*	-.016	-.123	-.189	.184	.013	.198*
Perception of safety ($F = 1.325$, $R^2 = .043$)	-.003	-.072	-.041	-.116	.063	.134

Note. Text in bold indicates a correlation significant at the .05 level. Text in bold with a * indicates a correlation significant at the .01 level.

Discussion

One of the most surprising findings of the present studies occurred prior to analysis, when we identified the high proportion of participants who eschewed endorsing traditional political affiliations in favor of writing in Leftist ideologies of one type or another. To be sure, there are potential issues with isolating this group from write-ins for analysis (further discussed in the limitations and future directions section), but given the high number, we recognized the necessity of additional investigation, however preliminary and imperfect. It is also clear that in the contemporary age, it is insufficient to conduct politically-oriented research in the United States without accounting for Leftist politics. Although we regret that the original survey did not anticipate the significant proportion of Leftists, in some ways it was a gift, since we received more detailed information about individual participants’ political beliefs with their write-ins.

Study 1

The results of the GIVES quantitative study as it pertains to political affiliation and beliefs and behaviors about guns were mostly in line with existing research pertaining specifically to Democrats and Republicans. Where our study provided new insight was its centering of the LGBTQ+ population, and the exploration of different nuances between political groups above and beyond the Democrat/Republican divide. As one might expect, we found that political affiliation impacts the likelihood that someone will own and carry a gun. Republicans were significantly more likely to own guns than any other group, and Independents were significantly more likely to own guns than Democrats. Overall, we see that Democrats are the least comfortable and experienced with guns, and that Republicans are the most comfortable and experienced with guns. This is consistent with findings in the general population, indicating that LGBTQ+ Republicans and Democrats behave and believe similarly to their straight/cisgender counterparts as it pertains to firearms.

However, some other group differences were noted. We found that although Leftists and Democrats did not show significant differences in beliefs about the emotional risk of guns, the social presence of guns, and perceptions of safety related to hate-motivated violence, they *did* show differences in other areas; Leftists were less likely to endorse statements affirming a belief in stricter gun control, more likely to endorse statements affirming a belief that guns make you safer, and more likely to report presence of guns in their neighborhoods than Democrats. Though the difference was not statistically significant, Leftists also reported the most change of all groups including Democrats in their perceptions of safety as a result of hate-motivated mass shootings; this represented a divergence in mean hierarchy from all other categories.

We theorize a few different reasons why these differences may exist. First, the data show us that Democrats and Leftists seem to feel emotionally similar about guns, but not politically—this may be because of gun distaste and favor for gun control being a major lobbying area for the Democratic party in a way that Leftists would likely be less exposed or attentive to. Further, although Leftist philosophies differ from each other, many (such as anarchism, Marxism-Leninism/Maoism, Bolshevism, etc.) are neutral on or friendly to the idea of armed resistance against the state and other forms of oppression. Second, because Leftists reported a greater presence of guns and violence in their neighborhoods than Democrats, environmental factors may influence their beliefs on guns even if the immediate social presence is not felt. Third, because there is no data regarding the differences between Democrats and Leftists regarding gun ownership and beliefs in the general population, we are not able to compare LGBTQ+-specific sample to established scholarship. It is possible that in a more general sample, findings would be different, indicating something unique about LGBTQ+ Democrats and/or Leftists.

Self-identified Independents also differed variably from other groups, often aligning closer to Republicans on each given measure. While Independents have nominally more

legitimacy in the United States electoral system (since one can register as an Independent but not a Leftist), it is far from an easily legible group. It is clear that there are many American citizens who are dissatisfied with both political parties (Pew Research Center, 2019), and may seek to disengage from them either through an Independent identity or a Leftist one. However, core beliefs likely still strongly affect how one disengages. A disillusioned former Democrat might be more likely to lean toward a Leftist philosophy, while a Republican who would classify themselves as conservative but disdains the current state of the Republican party may jump ship to an Independent affiliation. The fact that this is an LGBTQ+ sample may also be relevant to who identified as Independent; although LGBTQ+ Republicans certainly do exist, it may be that since the party overall is often associated with anti-LGBTQ+ beliefs, individuals who align with some aspects of right-wing ideology may be more likely to endorse an Independent affiliation over a Republican one. Independents are also interesting from a political science perspective; there are Independent candidates, to be sure, but one reason why individuals choose to register as Independent is to choose which primary election they believe they will have the most impact in. This raises the thorny issue of the difference in (and overlap of) voting registration, voting behavior, and actual held political beliefs, which under the American electoral system is difficult to disaggregate. The present study used only a categorical variable to assess political affiliation, which should be expanded for future studies.

The disparities in beliefs about stricter gun control, perceptions of safety in gun ownership, and reporting of household firearms between LGBTQ+ individuals who identify as Leftist versus Democrat elucidate the oversight in the sociodemographic characteristics that are collected in studies about gun ownership and belief. Specifically, our paper provides evidence contrary to the existing literature that generalizes LGBTQ+ people as more likely to endorse stricter gun laws and less likely to report household firearms (Clark et al., 2020). Ethnographers Combs (2022a) and Anderson (2023) have previously investigated LGBTQ+ individuals who own guns for reasons of self-protection against systemic and state violence, particularly among transgender and/or multiply marginalized LGBTQ+ people. Similarly, our results show that there is a significant diversity of beliefs about guns among the LGBTQ+ population which does not neatly align with the popular narrative of LGBTQ+ people as Democrat and anti-gun. Our findings also support the idea that Leftism plays a central role in LGBTQ+ politics, with Leftist LGBTQ+ individuals exhibiting high levels of autonomy in their attitudes and behaviors related to guns. While we cannot conclude the reason behind each participant's decision for owning and endorsing guns or not in our LGBTQ+ sample, we can reasonably deduce from the literature and our findings on greater hate-motivated violence, emotional risk of gun presence, and perceptions of safety from gun ownership, that many participants, whether identifying as Leftist or not, may be reclaiming guns as a way to fight systemic oppression and protect their marginalized LGBTQ+ identities.

Study 2

Overall, different Leftist philosophies seemed to differ from each other less dramatically than the political affiliations analyzed in Study 1. Some models were not significant at all. However, we did notice a trend in a few models (gun control, belief in guns making one safer, and to a certain extent fears of safety motivated by hate-related shootings), where Anarchist-endorsing participants scored at one extreme and DSA-endorsing participants scored at the other. This is not surprising, considering that the Democratic Socialists of America are the closest thing to a mainstream Leftist political party that exists in the United States, but they are systemically and belief-wise aligned more closely to Democrats than are other Leftist ideologies. The most well-known examples are Senator Bernie Sanders, Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, and New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, each of whom classify themselves as Democratic Socialists but appear as Democrats on ballots. On the other end, some core tenets of Anarchism (distrust of the state, focus on collective decision-making without a government apparatus, and the relationship between individual sovereignty and societal health) seem diametrically opposed to the face of the Democratic party. Further, Anarchists, perhaps more than even other Leftists, define themselves at least partially in vigorous opposition to the current system—therefore, it would logically follow that they would be distant from their establishment-aligned DSA counterparts. Further, the significant difference between Leftist philosophies (particularly the extreme ends of Anarchism and DSA beliefs) leads us to wonder if some of the results of Study 1 were muddled or obscured given the diversity of the Leftist group, and particularly two groups pulling the means in opposite directions. Because there is no established scholarship examining different beliefs among Leftist affiliations in the general populations, we are not able to compare our LGBTQ+-specific findings. It could be, however, that being LGBTQ+ could influence both someone's choice to affiliate with a Leftist political ideology, or that within those ideologies, being LGBTQ+ may affect one's beliefs about firearms due to systemic discrimination.

We also noted, as with Study 1, the differences that we did not see. There was no observed difference in Study 2 in emotional risk or neighborhood factors. We posit that because emotional risk was fairly consistent across all groups, endorsement of a particular philosophy's relationship with gun beliefs may have more to do with the philosophy's tenets themselves, rather than a personal or environmental experience. For example, someone who self-identifies as Communist may personally find the idea of owning a gun nerve-wracking, but still endorse less belief in gun control based on writings by Communist thinkers such as Malatesta or Mao that endorse gun ownership and armed resistance.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present studies only scratch the surface of our understanding of the relationship between LGBTQ+ individuals' political ideologies and behaviors/beliefs about guns. There are a few important limitations to note when considering the generalizability of our findings, which we hope can be addressed in future research. Though we received responses from every US state and Washington DC, the present sample was ultimately a purposive sample which did not weight or stratify responses by census data. Possibly because of response bias within our purposive sample, our group of LGBTQ+ Republicans was much smaller than any other group, and fewer than we would expect given past research indicating that as many of 15% of LGBTQ+ folks self-identify as Republican (Mallory, 2019). It may be that our small group of Republicans are not representative of the larger Republican LGBTQ+ population, and further study should be done to understand more fully the beliefs and behavior regarding guns among this group. Although our study was fairly evenly distributed across several metrics (education, region, gender identity, sexuality, etc.), we ideally also would have wanted racial demographics that more closely mirror census data on race and ethnicity. Larger-scale studies could engage in a recruitment strategy that creates an intentionally nationally representative sample. Additionally, because we did not include a way for individuals to self-identify with Leftist ideology in our original survey, there may have been individuals who truly identify as Leftists but did not think to write it in, instead selecting an existing option. Further, although we stand by the importance of disaggregating and analyzing different Leftist philosophies given the group's evident diversity, because the survey did not systemically assess what facets of Leftist ideology participants might identify with, findings pertaining to subgroups are likely incomplete.

We hope that future research will address these limitations by increasing recruitment across racial groups, specifically targeting Republicans to increase analytical power for that group, and envisioning a systematic strategy to assess Leftist politics. Though international culture and context around the question of guns is much different than the United States', it is also possible that future researchers could investigate gun beliefs and behaviors in societies where there *are* entrenched Leftist political parties as part of the electoral system.

Further, we hope that future studies will disaggregate voting behavior, voter registration, and held political ideals. This will ensure we have more complete data regarding the true proportion of Americans who believe in establishment versus outsider political affiliations. It will also provide valuable information about how political beliefs may or may not affect voting behavior or registration. With this increased validity of the construct of political affiliation, we can hope to better isolate what factors are the most influential when it comes to gun ownership, behavior, and beliefs.

Conclusion

While the current findings are exploratory and will benefit from further research to establish their generalizability, this study offers important insight into the perspectives of LGBTQ+ populations on gun control, particularly those who identify outside the traditional bipartisan framework present in the United States. The present focus on LGBTQ+ voices, often underrepresented in political and firearm-related research, enriches the understanding of the intersections between identity, political belief systems, and attitudes toward gun ownership. By highlighting the complexity and diversity of these views, this research lays foundation for future psychological studies. It also emphasizes the importance of considering marginalized and Leftist perspectives to fully grasp the broader cultural landscape of firearm-related beliefs in the U.S. It is critical that these neglected populations be included in both the conversation and our research, helping to build a more inclusive and representative understanding of Americans' perspectives on guns.

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Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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