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Most gun experts believe guns do more harm than good, study finds

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF APRIL 03, 2015

A majority of gun researchers believe that strong gun laws help reduce homicide and that a gun in someone's home can make it a more dangerous place, according to recent surveys conducted by Harvard University.

Over the past year, the Harvard Injury Control Research Center has asked dozens of leading gun researchers to answer a new question each month about the impact of guns and related programs and policies on society, and the center has published the findings online.

A majority of researchers said they believe that background checks can keep guns away from a significant number of violent people, and the experts said they disagree with the notion that in the United States guns are used in self-defense far more often than they are used in crime, the surveys found.

The experts also said they do not believe that making it easier to carry concealed guns in some states has helped to reduce crime.

A majority also said they believe having a gun in the home



increases the risk of suicide and the risk that a woman living in the home will become a victim of homicide.

The number of researchers polled and the number of responses fluctuated depending on the question, but each question received about 100 responses out of about 300 experts who were e-mailed the online surveys.

The experts hailed from the fields of criminology, public health, and social sciences. Harvard researchers found the experts by scouring publications in peer-reviewed journals and picking out the lead authors on article dating back to 2011.

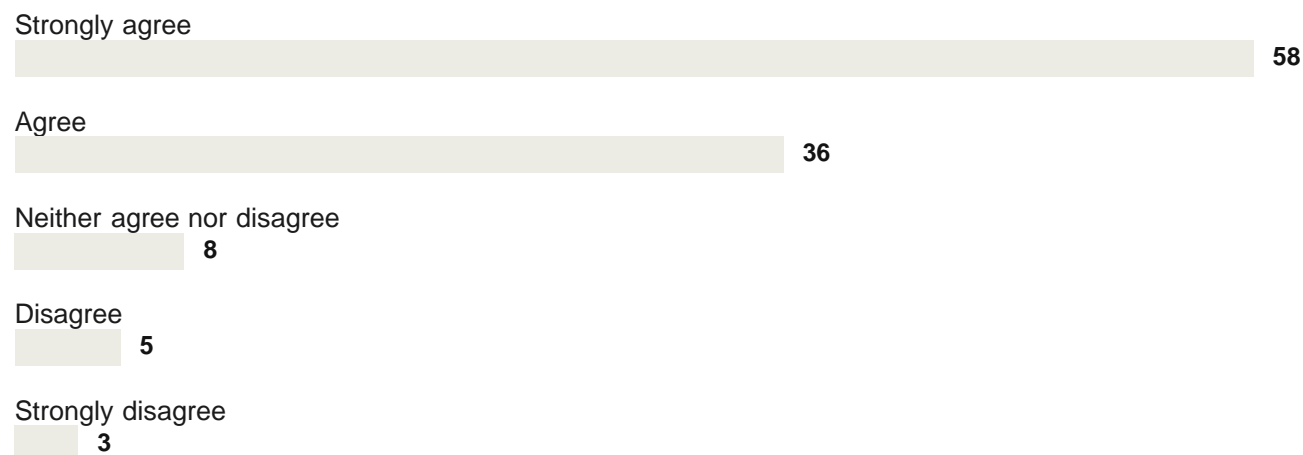
The questions typically provided a statement and asked researchers to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement, and researchers were also asked to rate their level of familiarity with the issue, rate the scientific evidence about the issue, and to indicate the area of research they work in.

News outlet [Mother Jones](#) previously reported about the Harvard surveys, and said the project was modeled “after a game-changing 2010 study on climate change, which found that 97 percent of researchers believe that humans are responsible for global warming.”

David Hemenway, director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, told Mother Jones he and his team plan to keep sending out questions and will publish their results in a journal article later this year.

Question 1

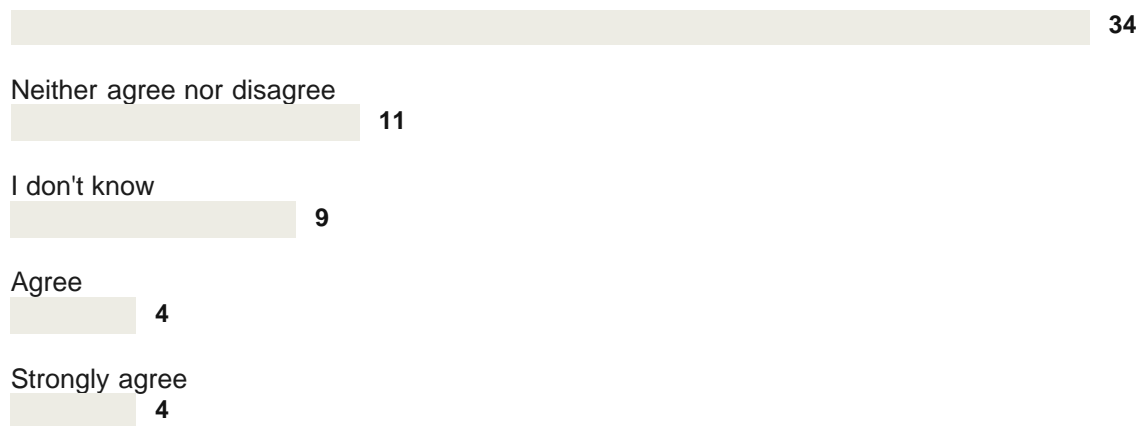
In the United States, having a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide.



Question 2

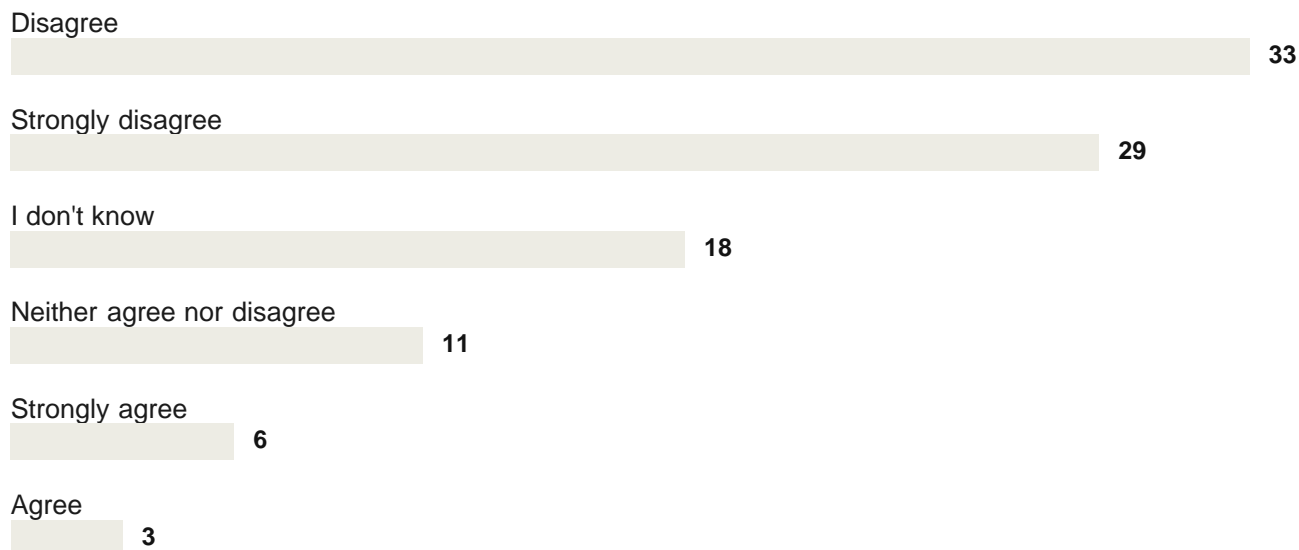
In the United States, guns are used in self-defense far more often than they are used in crime.





Question 3

The change in state-level concealed carry laws in the United States over the past few decades from more restrictive to more permissive has reduced crime rates.



Question 4

In the United States, having a gun in the home increases the risk that a woman living in the home will be a victim of homicide.



Strongly disagree

5

Question 5

Safe storage (e.g., unloaded, locked up) of firearms in the home reduces the likelihood of suicide.

Agree

35

Strongly agree

30

Disagree

13

Neither agree nor disagree

9

I don't know

9

Strongly disagree

4

Question 6

The Eddie Eagle gun safety educational program for children effectively reduces gun accidents.

I don't know

56

Strongly disagree

14

Disagree

12

Neither agree nor disagree

9

Agree

6

Strongly agree

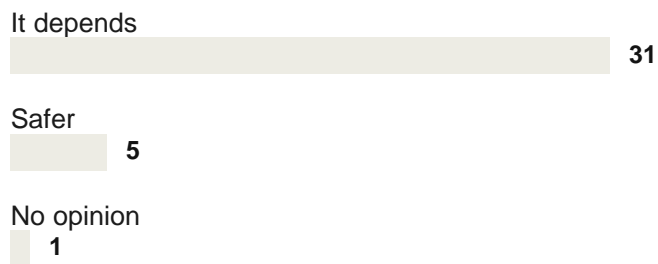
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Question 7

Periodically the Gallup poll asks this exact question of the general public. Please give your own opinion. 'Do you think having a gun in the house makes it a safer or a more dangerous place to be?'

More dangerous

64



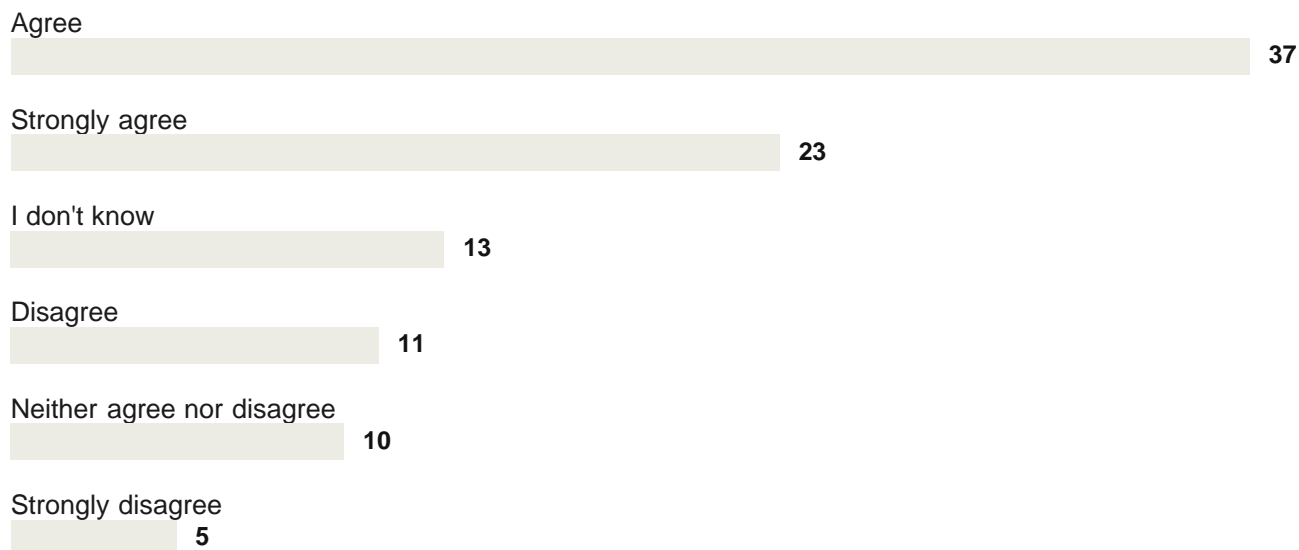
Question 8

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Strong gun laws help reduce homicide."



Question 9

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Internationally, and in the United States, evidence indicates that background checks can help keep guns out of the hands of a significant number of violent people."



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Correction: An earlier version of this story misstated the type of risk researchers believe exists for women living in a home with a gun.

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