

# A Divided Nation Agrees on One Thing: Many People Want a Gun

By [Dionne Searcey](#) and [Richard A. Oppel Jr.](#), Published Oct. 27, 2020 Updated Nov. 30, 2020

Like many Americans, two women a thousand miles apart are each anxious about the uncertain state of the nation. Their reasons are altogether different. But they have found common ground, and a sense of certainty, in a recent purchase: a gun.

Ann-Marie Saccurato traced her purchase to the night she was eating dinner at a sidewalk restaurant not long ago in Delray Beach, Fla., when a Black Lives Matter march passed and her mind began to wander. It takes only one person to incite a riot when emotions are high, she remembers thinking. What if the police are overpowered and can't control the crowd?

Ashley Johnson, in Austin, Texas, worries about the images she's seen in past weeks of armed militias showing up to rallies and making plans to kidnap governors. The outcome of the election, she thinks, will be devastating for some people regardless of the winner. "Maybe I'm just looking at the news too much, but there are hints of civil war depending on who wins," Ms. Johnson said. "It's a lot to process."

In America, spikes in gun purchases are often driven by fear. (...) F.B.I. data shows [sales spiked earlier this year as virus fears spread](#). And sharp increases in sales are seemingly occurring everywhere: The states with the lowest jump in sales in September, for example, were Alaska and North Dakota, each up about one-third compared with September 2019. States with the largest gains included Michigan, up 198 percent over September 2019, and New Jersey, up 180 percent, according to estimates by [The Trace](#).

It's difficult to know exactly who is buying guns at [any certain time](#) in America. Gun shop owners, [gun rights](#) groups and gun lobbying groups said they were now selling more weapons than usual to Black shoppers, and to women in particular, and more weapons to first-time gun owners generally.

On the issue of gun control, the divide has long been partisan. (...) A [Pew Research Center survey in 2017](#) found that Republicans and independents who lean Republican were more than twice as likely as Democrats and independents who lean Democratic to own a gun.

But when it comes to gun ownership there's something uniquely American that cuts across party affiliation and social boundaries — leaving liberals and conservatives jostling for ammunition because they want to brace for whatever comes next.