

# Should Believers Be Allowed to Bring Concealed Weapons to Church?

Following the tragic mass shootings in Colorado and Wisconsin, which reignited a dialogue on **gun rights**, a new national survey finds that Americans overwhelmingly believe that the constitutional right to own and carry a gun is as important as their constitutional right to **free speech**.

The August PRRI-RNS Religion News Survey, conducted by Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) in partnership with Religion News Service, found that 68 percent of Americans agree that the constitutional right to own and carry a gun is as important as other constitutional rights, such as freedom of speech or freedom of the press.

There are substantial differences between gun owners (89 percent) and non-gun owners (55 percent), and large differences along racial lines. White Americans (75 percent) are significantly more likely than non-white Americans (56 percent) to agree.

“In spite of recent debates over **gun control**, a strong majority of Americans believe that the constitutional right to own and carry a gun is as important as the right to free speech,” says Dr. Robert P. Jones, PRRI CEO. “Unsurprisingly, this belief is particularly pervasive among gun owners.”

The survey also found that roughly three-quarters of Americans believe people should not be allowed to carry concealed guns in a church or place of **worship** (76 percent), in a government building (73 percent), or on a college campus (77 percent). However, opinion varies somewhat along political and religious lines.

Thirty-two percent of white evangelical Protestants and 27 percent of white mainline Protestants believe that people should be allowed to carry concealed guns to church, compared to 18 percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans and 14 percent of Catholics.

A majority (55 percent) of Americans who identify with **Tea Party** support allowing people to bring concealed guns to church, compared to 38 percent of Republicans, 17 percent of Independents and 9 percent of Democrats. Similar patterns of opinion exist in Americans' views about whether concealed guns should be allowed in government buildings or on college campuses.

"White evangelical Protestants and white mainline Protestants are roughly twice as likely as Catholics to believe that people should be allowed to bring concealed weapons to church," says Daniel Cox, PRRI research director. "But it's important to note that white evangelical Protestants and white mainline Protestants are also substantially more likely than Catholics to own guns, which strongly predicts views on these questions."