



THE TENNESSEE POLL

Press Contact Information

Leslie McCallister, Ph.D.

Professor of Sociology

mccallis@etsu.edu

Jennifer Hill

Senior Writer, Office of University Marketing and Communications

hill@etsu.edu

Tennessee Poll finds citizens strongly support gun safety measures

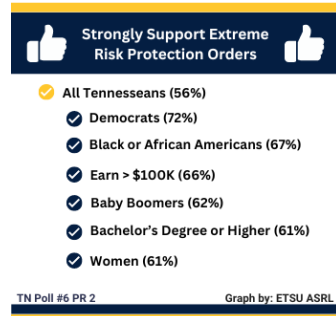
Majority of Tennesseans support extreme risk protection orders and secure storage laws, less supportive of teacher carry laws

JOHNSON CITY (October 11, 2024) – The majority of Tennesseans support policies that ensure guns do not end up in the hands of those who are at risk of harming themselves or others and that ensure gun owners secure their firearms from unauthorized access. These findings, from the July 2024 Tennessee Poll conducted by the Applied Social Research Lab (ASRL) at East Tennessee State University, capture Tennesseans' opinions on measures to curb gun-related violence.

The poll, which surveyed 701 Tennesseans from July 10-17, included questions on topics related to health, education, and quality of life. For a complete breakdown of all survey responses by demographics, visit etsu.edu/tnpoll.

Three-quarters of Tennesseans either strongly support or support passing laws that temporarily restrict access to guns for individuals who are at high risk of harming themselves or others (56% and 19%, respectively). These laws, formally called “extreme risk protection orders” (ERPOs) and informally referred to as “red-flag laws,” allow judges to temporarily remove guns from individuals who are at demonstrated risk to themselves or someone else.

Figure 1. Support for passing laws that temporarily restrict access to guns for individuals at high risk



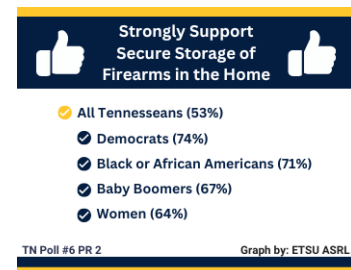
Though levels of support for ERPOs vary somewhat across demographic groups, they are almost universally supported among Tennesseans. Figure 1 depicts the demographic groups where strong support for these laws is 60% or greater. Democrats (72%), baby boomers (62%), women (61%), and Black respondents (67%) are among those who report the highest levels of support for ERPOs. *See figure 1.* It is important to note that among the demographic categories analyzed for Tennessee Poll questions (race, gender, age, political affiliation, education and income), only Republicans responded with less than 50% strong support for these measures—though, even within this group, 46% strongly support and an additional 23% somewhat support ERPOs. This

high level of support among Tennesseans contrasts sharply with recent legislation passed within the state and signed by the governor, which prevents local municipalities from enforcing extreme risk protection orders.

Storage of Firearms in the Home

When asked about levels of support for passing laws that would require gun owners to ensure firearms in their homes are securely stored to prevent unauthorized access, 70% of Tennesseans surveyed either strongly support (53%) or somewhat support (17%) these measures. Certain demographic groups show higher levels of strong support. Women (64%) are significantly more likely than men (41%) to strongly support these laws, though an overall majority of both men and women express support. Additionally, 74% of Democrats strongly support secure firearm storage laws, compared to 40% of Republicans and Republican-leaning respondents and 49% of Independents. Notably, strong support is also higher among Black respondents (71%) than among White respondents (49%). *See figure 2.* Despite differences in levels of strong support, a majority of respondents from all political affiliations and demographic groups indicate at least some level of support for these laws, with less than one-third of any group opposing them.

Figure 2. Secure Storage of Firearms in the Home Support Greater than 60%.

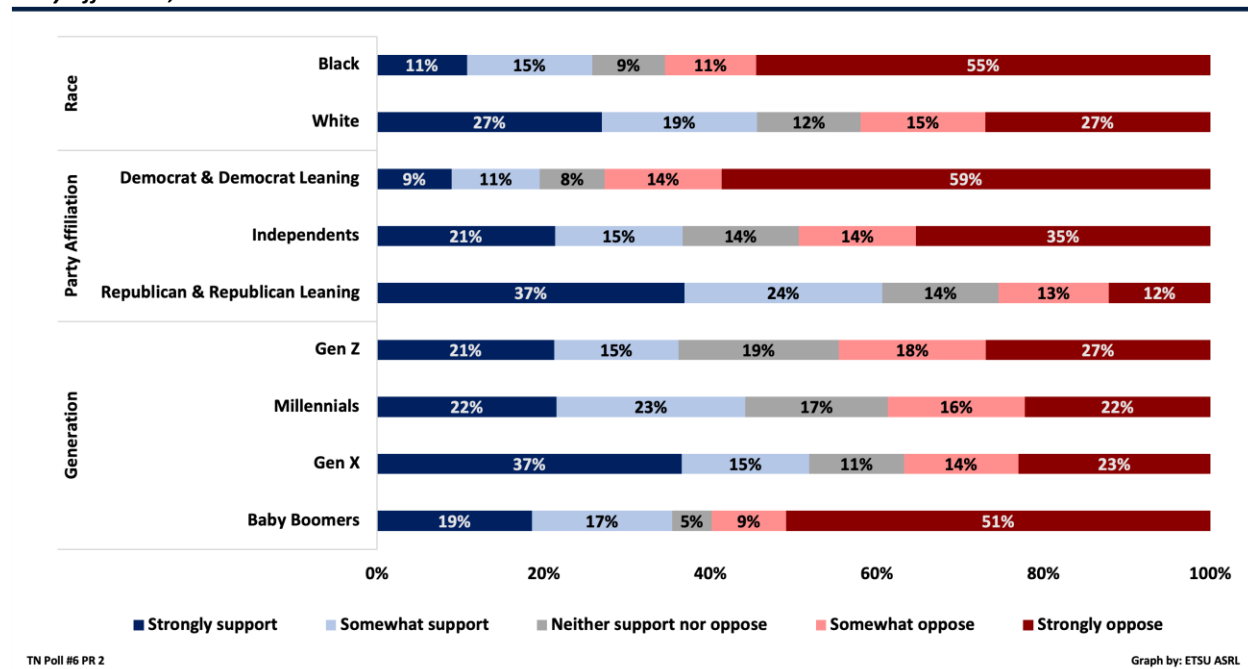


Firearms on School Property

When examining the demographic breakdown of support for laws allowing K-12 public school teachers to carry guns on school property and in classrooms, the ASRL finds much more

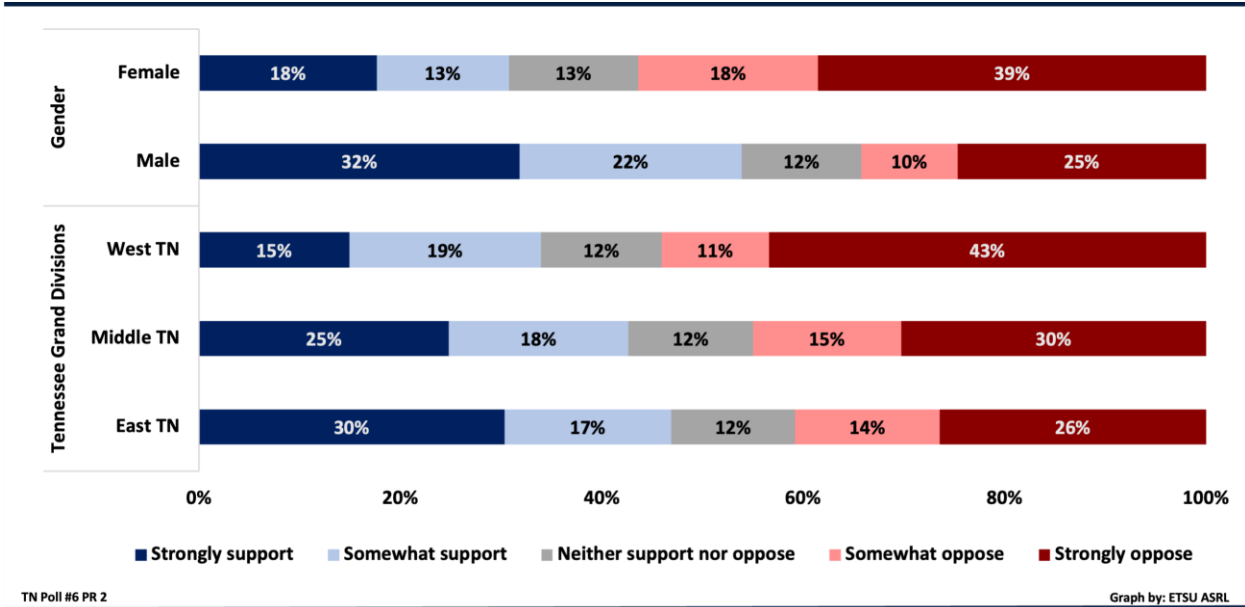
variation than was present with ERPO or secure storage laws. In particular, analysis indicates that certain demographic groups are significantly more likely to strongly oppose these laws. Black respondents (55%), Democrats (59%), and baby boomers (51%) are significantly more likely to **strongly oppose** teacher carry laws compared to 27% of White Tennesseans, 35% of Independents, and just 12% of Republicans. Opinions among the remaining generational Groups — Gen Z, millennials, and Gen X — are more varied, potentially influenced by their experiences with school-aged children or their own exposure to school shootings and active-shooter drills during their formative years. See figure 3a.

Figure 3a: Levels of Support for K-12 Public School Teachers Carrying Guns on School Property and in the Classroom by Race, Party Affiliation, and Generation.



When examining support by region and gender, opinions are more evenly distributed in some areas. In East Tennessee, 30% of respondents strongly support laws allowing public school teachers to carry guns, while 26% strongly oppose them. A similar pattern is seen in Middle Tennessee, where 25% strongly support and 30% strongly oppose these laws. However, in West Tennessee, there is a notable difference, with 43% of respondents strongly opposing these laws compared to just 15% who strongly support them. This is not surprising as earlier data from the Tennessee Poll indicates that residents in the Western part of the state are more likely to note that gun violence is the biggest problem facing the state than Tennesseans in any other region. Gender differences are also evident in the data on this topic, as men (32%) are significantly more likely than women (18%) to strongly support allowing teachers to carry guns on school property and in classrooms. See figure 3b.

Figure 3b. Levels of Support for K-12 Public School Teachers Carrying Guns on School Property and in the Classroom by Gender and Tennessee Grand Division.



This is the second in a series of data releases from The Tennessee Poll. We provide methodological information, margin of error estimates, as well as detailed tables with analysis on each question by different demographic categories. To find these, or to be added to our distribution list, go to etsu.edu/tnpoll. Graphics are provided for press use.

Important Notes:

This press release was originally due to be released on Oct. 4. Due to the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene on our community, we delayed the release. We at the Applied Social Research Lab ask that you keep our impacted Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia communities in your thoughts. The toll on our communities has been profound, and your support can make a difference. To learn how you can help, visit [ETSU's response page](#).

About the Tennessee Poll

The Tennessee Poll is conducted by the Applied Social Research Lab (ASRL) in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at East Tennessee State University. ASRL is directed by Dr. Kelly N. Foster, professor of sociology.

The Tennessee Poll is an annual public opinion poll funded by ETSU. The mission of The Tennessee Poll is to provide the citizens and governance of Tennessee with neutral, unbiased information on Tennesseans' perceptions of issues that impact their health, education, and quality of life.

Though the project has been internally funded to date, outside researchers and organizations have the option to purchase space for questions on future polls. Should this occur, any and all funding sources will be noted in the methodology report for that particular poll.

The Applied Social Research Lab is a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO) and adheres to the reporting requirements of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative standards in research reporting.

For detailed information on The Tennessee Poll, including methodology and additional analysis, visit etsu.edu/tnpoll.

Survey Methodology

The Tennessee Poll uses a combination of landline and cell phone numbers randomly selected from a list of Tennessee residents aged 18 and older. Braun Research Inc. handled the cell phone sample and conducted the telephone interviews. The interviews took place between 1 p.m. and 8 p.m., with interviewers attempting to reach each respondent up to five times. The study was conducted from July 10-17, 2024. The average interview lasted 17 minutes.

The final sample consists of 701 completed interviews: 197 via landline (28%), 162 via cell phone (23%), and 342 via text to web (49%). The TTW option was introduced as a new method for residents to participate in the Tennessee Poll. The final data are weighted by age, education, sex, income and race to adjust for differential response rates and to ensure that the data are as closely representative of the state's actual adult population as possible. The margin of error for a sample of 701 is +/- 3.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for the entire sample. Any subpopulation analysis entails a greater margin of error. For detailed methodology, margin of error reports, and additional analysis, visit etsu.edu/tnpoll.

About the Authors

This press release was prepared by Drs. Leslie McCallister, Kelly N. Foster, Candace Bright Hall-Wurst and Trena M. Paulus. Graphics prepared by Ms. Morgan Jones Kidd and M. Rebecca Strasser. For information and biographies on the contributors to this release, please see etsu.edu/asrl.