INFLUENCING YOUNG AMERICA TO ACT SUMMER 2022
INTRODUCTION

On May 2, a leaked draft opinion by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito revealed that the court planned to overturn Roe v. Wade, the case that affirmed a person’s Constitutional right to have an abortion. On May 14, a mass shooting at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store killed 14 people. 10 days later, 19 children and two teachers inside an elementary school were killed by a teenage gunman. By the end of June, President Joe Biden had signed a $15 billion bill passed by Congress to add some restrictions to gun ownership, and the Supreme Court had removed federal abortion protections.

These are the moments and events that transpired right before research began for this second report of 2022 from Cause and Social Influence. Each quarter, CSI tracks the behaviors and motivations of young Americans (ages 18-30) related to social issues and major moments. This report presents findings on data tracked all year for comparison, then focuses specifically on the social issues of guns and women’s reproductive rights due to recent cultural, social and political events. Visit causeandsocialinfluence.com/download-latest-research for research on young Americans since 2018.

SOCIAL ISSUES, ACTIONS AND MOVEMENTS

YOUNG AMERICANS RANKED WOMEN’S RIGHTS AS THE TOP SOCIAL ISSUE OF INTEREST – AND ARE EQUALLY SPLIT ON GUNS.

In the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, CSI researchers found for the first time that young Americans were most interested in social issues related to women. Close to half (42%) of respondents selected women’s rights/women’s health and reproductive issues as their top issue.

The social issue of second-most interest among young Americans was guns, reflecting heightened attention by activist groups, the media and politicians on both sides of the debate. One-third of respondents said they were concerned about gunsimportantly, though, they were split almost evenly between those who wanted more safety measures and those concerned with gun owners’ rights.

Mental health was nearly tied with gun rights as the third topic of most interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s rights</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s health and reproductive issues</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun safety</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun rights</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>14%</td>
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</tbody>
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METHODOLOGY

Cause and Social Influence researchers took a quantitative approach with an online survey fielded July 9-10, 2022, of 1,000 young Americans (ages 18-30), a nationally representative sample based on census-projected ethnic and demographic composition. With this response rate, the data presented has a 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. Respondents were asked to self-identify gender and race/ethnic identity and given the option not to answer.

Visit causeandsocialinfluence.com/2022summerresearch for more information on the sample.

RESEARCH TEAM

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YOUNG AMERICANS STILL TAKING TIME TO LEARN ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES.

When it comes to supporting a social issue, taking time to learn about a cause or social issue has been a top action since mid-2020 and continued to be so, along with petition signing, an action researchers have seen in the top three to five since this research study began.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Took time to learn about a cause or social issue</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed a petition</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted or shared content (information, images, posts) on a platform</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Started or significantly increased the way I purchase products/services</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased the way I purchase products and/or services</td>
<td>9%</td>
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YOUNG AMERICANS ARE PROMPTED TO ACT MORE OFTEN BY ONLINE INFLUENCERS OR CONTENT CREATORS THAN BY CAUSES THEY FOLLOW.

Since the surge in the #BlackLivesMatter movement in 2020, young Americans have reported being influenced much more by online influencers or content creators than by celebrities. Influencers are only as effective as the trust they inspire, so its ranking here could reflect new influencers and/or growing trust in influencers consistently engaged in social issues.

Top Sources of Influence Prompting Action

- No one; I acted on my own: 18%
- An online influencer or content creator – a person (not a brand or group) who grew their audience/followers by creating content online and now uses online presence as a primary profession (not musicians, athletes or actors whose primary professions do not exist online): 13%
- A cause or organization I follow: 11%
EXPECTATION OF CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL ISSUES AND BELIEF IN CORPORATE INFLUENCE REMAIN STRONG AND CONSISTENT.

Two-thirds of young Americans thought companies should take a stance on social issues, unchanged from the spring. They also overwhelmingly believed that companies can influence people’s attitudes toward social issues.

**Do you think companies or brands should take a stance on social issues?**

- **Summer 2022**: 19% Yes, 67% No, 14% Unsure
- **Spring 2022**: 19% Yes, 67% No, 14% Unsure

**How much influence do you think companies or brands that communicate and share opinions of causes and social issues have on people’s attitudes toward issues?**

- **Summer 2022**: 13% A great deal of influence, 39% Some influence, 37% Little influence, 5% No influence, 6% Unsure
- **Spring 2022**: 12% A great deal of influence, 38% Some influence, 39% Little influence, 4% No influence, 8% Unsure
GOVERNMENT, LAWS AND SUPREME COURT DECISIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL ISSUES

CONGRESS IS THE PART OF GOVERNMENT LEAST ADDRESSING YOUNG AMERICANS’ SOCIAL ISSUES OF MOST CONCERN.

With every seat in the U.S. House of Representatives up for election in November 2022, how young Americans view their Congressional representative’s handling of the social issues they care about may reflect the partisanship of today – and could significantly affect the social issues of tomorrow.

Just over a quarter of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Congress was addressing the social issues of most concern, the lowest level of agreement among all parts of government and a drop of 14% from year-end 2021 (from 67% to 53%). State government ranked the highest, with 40% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The federal government was in the middle, with 29% agreeing.

![Survey Results](causeandsocialinfluence.com/2022summerresearch)
Young Americans are evenly split over whether Biden has kept his campaign promises.

One-third of young Americans agreed Biden had kept (or at least tried to keep) his campaign promises, one-third disagreed and one-third were in the middle.

The percentage of young Americans who agreed that the president has addressed racial inequality, discrimination and social injustice toward Black Americans extremely well or very well dropped since the end of 2021, though the decline has been reflected in a combination of respondents who were unsure of his performance and those who said he'd not handled this issue well at all.

Spring 2022
Year-end 2021

How well do you think President Biden has addressed racial inequality, discrimination and social injustice toward Black Americans?
YOUNG AMERICANS LACK CONFIDENCE IN THE SUPREME COURT’S ABILITY TO RENDER NONPARTISAN DECISIONS.

This is the first time CSI researchers have asked this question but will track young Americans’ attitudes toward SCOTUS in the future. Immediately following the decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, 44% of young Americans expressed no confidence, compared to 28% who said they did have confidence in SCOTUS rulings and 27% who were in the middle.

How much do you agree with the statement, “I have confidence in the Supreme Court’s ability to be nonpartisan in their rulings”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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YOUNG AMERICANS’ CONFIDENCE THAT THE COUNTRY IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK HAS DROPPED SINCE THE SPRING.

Since the Spring 2022 report in this series, young Americans who thought the country was on track or totally on track dropped from 41% to 33%, and those who said it is off or totally off track rose from 29% to 36%.

All things considered, how would you rate the state of our country now as compared to where it was before the November 2020 presidential election?

Summer 2022: 22% Totally on track, 22% On track, 31% Unsure, 11% Off track, 14% Totally off track
Spring 2022: 17% Totally on track, 28% On track, 30% Unsure, 13% Off track, 12% Totally off track

All things considered, where do you think our country will be one year from now?

Summer 2022: 21% Totally on track, 21% On track, 33% Unsure, 14% Off track, 11% Totally off track
Spring 2022: 17% Totally on track, 34% On track, 33% Unsure, 11% Off track, 13% Totally off track
ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: GUNS

ALMOST HALF OF YOUNG AMERICANS WANT MORE GUN CONTROL, WITH THE REMAINING HALF SPLIT AMONG WANTING NO CHANGE, LENIENT CHANGE OR UNCERTAINTY.

Half (49%) of young Americans want stricter gun control measures, 28% want no change, 11% more lenient measures and 12% are unsure.

When tied to their feelings about the Second Amendment, 43% of those who believe in it want more gun control and 21% do not; of those who said the Second Amendment wasn’t important to them, 15% want more gun control and 9% do not. Again, another 12% are unsure where they stand on gun-related issues.

In general, do you think the U.S. should adopt:

- Stricter measures to control guns than we have now? 49%
- About the same measures to control guns as we have now? 28%
- More lenient measures to control guns than we have now? 11%
- Unsure 12%

Where do you stand on the 2nd Amendment as it relates to gun control?

- I believe in my 2nd Amendment right to have guns and ... 43%
- The 2nd Amendment is not important to me and ... 64%
- Unsure 24%
- I do want more gun control 9%
- I do not want more gun control 15%

Who holds the greatest responsibility for ensuring that gun issues in general are given a higher priority for attention?

- Congress 28%
- Elected federal officials/President 15%
- Elected state officials 14%
- Nonprofit organizations 7%
- Individuals/ordinary people 7%
- Industry/corporations 5%
- Elected local officials 4%
- Media 3%
- Industry/corporations 2%
- Congress 1%
- Media 1%
- Congress 1%
- Elected local officials 1%
- Nonprofit organizations 1%
- Elected local officials 1%
- Elected federal officials/President 1%
- Elected state officials 1%
- Elected state officials 1%
- Elected local officials 1%
- Elected state officials 1%
- Elected federal officials/President 1%
- Elected state officials 1%
- Elected local officials 1%
- Media 1%
YOUNG AMERICANS ARE AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE WAY PRESIDENT BIDEN HAS HANDLED GUN SAFETY AND SECOND AMENDMENT PROTECTION.

Respondents were divided into thirds over their feelings about the president’s actions related to gun safety on one side and protection of the Second Amendment on the other, with a final third in the middle with no opinion.

MENTAL HEALTH PLAYS A ROLE IN GUN SAFETY, AND EXTREME-RISK LAWS WOULD REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE, ACCORDING TO YOUNG AMERICANS.

The gun legislation signed by President Biden this year included incentives for states to pass extreme-risk laws; these allow certain people to petition courts for weapons to be removed from people deemed a threat to themselves or others. Nearly two-thirds of young Americans agreed the country should have these laws and about the same percentage believed they would effectively reduce gun violence. More than 85% of young Americans thought mental health is related to gun issues.
Young Americans on both sides of the gun debate considered taking action important. They acted to bring attention to the issue and believed they could make a difference.

**Top 3 Reasons for Taking Action Related to Guns**

- **21%** The actions of one person can go a long way toward bringing much-needed attention to gun issues
- **15%** I am personally affected or know someone who is affected by gun issues
- **15%** Addressing gun issues is a step toward securing democracy because the Second Amendment gives us the right to possess guns
- **8%** I need to see with my own eyes the results of actions I have taken to make a difference in gun issues
- **8%** Taking actions to make a difference in gun issues supports my personal well-being
- **8%** I saw something on social media that informed me about gun issues and showed me how I could take action

**Considering all the social issues you are interested in, how important is it for people like you to take action related to gun issues?**

- **34%** Extremely important
- **27%** Important
- **15%** Neither important nor unimportant
- **10%** Unimportant
- **7%** Extremely unimportant
- **2%** Unsure
ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

64% OF YOUNG AMERICANS BELIEVE A PREGNANT PERSON’S RIGHT TO HAVE AN ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGALLY PROTECTED.

While 64% of respondents agreed that abortion rights should be protected, 15% did not and 21% somewhat agreed, indicating a middle position. Asked if they agreed with overturning Roe v. Wade, 57% said no. This group was more than twice as large as the group who said yes (26%) – but another 17% said they weren’t sure where they stood.

How much do you agree with the following statement? "A pregnant person’s right to have an abortion should be protected under the law."

- **Strongly agree**: 44%
- **Agree**: 21%
- **Somewhat agree**: 6%
- **Disagree**: 20%
- **Strongly disagree**: 9%

Do you agree with the recent ruling by the Supreme Court striking down the constitutional protection of Roe v. Wade?

- **Yes**: 17%
- **No**: 26%
- **Unsure**: 57%

**Top Actions in the Last 30 Days on Women's Rights Issues**

- **Signed a petition**: 16%
- **Took time to learn about this cause or social issue**: 13%
- **Started or significantly increased the way I purchase products/services**: 12%

(Note: Doing nothing was the top action at 18%, a consistent top response in CSI studies)

CONCLUSION

It’s easy to look at data and lift out the figures that seem to support a particular narrative. For example, since 44% of respondents disagreed they had confidence in the Supreme Court’s ability to be nonpartisan and 28% agreed, the “winning side” appears to be those without confidence. However, right in the middle are 27% who aren’t quite sure where they stand. This is the moveable middle, and these individuals have up to an 80% chance of landing on one side or the other if efforts by social movement leaders and causes change knowledge and attitudes and incite new beliefs. At the same time, some of these people, if not made a focus of efforts by organizations, will simply be uninformed, unaware and/or apathetic.