

Spring 5-7-2021

## How Does Aging Influence the Fear of Gun Control in America?

Alyssa Castanon

*Chapman University*, [acastanon@chapman.edu](mailto:acastanon@chapman.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd\\_abstracts](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts)



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Castanon, Alyssa, "How Does Aging Influence the Fear of Gun Control in America?" (2021). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 464.

[https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd\\_abstracts/464](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts/464)

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Undergraduate Excellence at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [laughtin@chapman.edu](mailto:laughtin@chapman.edu).



# How Does Aging Influence The Fear of Gun Control in America?

Alyssa Castanon

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

## Introduction to Research

- This study explores the extent to which age influences personal beliefs towards mass shootings and the issue of gun control.
- Research suggests that political affiliations can change with age
  - Theory: Life Cycle Effect Theory
- Studies point primarily to political affiliations influencing gun control beliefs
  - Likely due to the fact that stances on gun control are written into party agendas

## Gun Control in Political Parties

- Republican Party
  - Supports the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment over gun regulations and see gun control as an attack on the legitimacy of the Constitution
  - Gun owners are more likely to be white, male, and conservative. (Oraka et. al, 2019)
- Democratic Party
  - Supports the regulation of firearms as a defense against the increase of mass shootings in recent years
- Studies have shown Republican individuals are more likely to advocate for arming citizens as a defense to mass shootings than Democrats.

## Mass Shootings in America

- There has always been gun violence in America, but the media has made the public more aware of the issue.
- Since the Columbine shooting, there have been around 2,000 victims of almost 100 mass shootings. (Canipe, 2021)
- Studies have shown that there is not a significant relationship between mass shootings and the passing of gun control legislation. (Luca et. al, 2019)
  - Meaning that even though there is an observable increase in mass shootings, the government is not acting
- Laws loosen in Republican majority states after a mass shooting and are introduced more in Democratic states. (Luca et. al, 2019)

## Life Cycle Effect Theory

- This theory states that as individuals age, they become more politically conservative.
  - Attributed to becoming more economically secure, securing assets, and having a family (Crittenden, 1962)
- There is a general societal belief that Generation Z, usually defined as individuals born around 1998-current, is the most liberal generation
  - According to this theory this belief may be true now, but it would suggest that individuals within the generation will drift to the right as they age

## Hypotheses:

- H1: Younger individuals are less likely to have a fear of restrictive gun legislation than older individuals.
- H2: Older individuals are more likely to identify as Republican than younger individuals.
- H3: Younger individuals are more likely to report fear of being a victim of a random/mass shooting than older individuals.
- H4: Political affiliation influences the fear of gun control in individuals.
- H5: Fear of random/mass shootings are influenced by political affiliation.

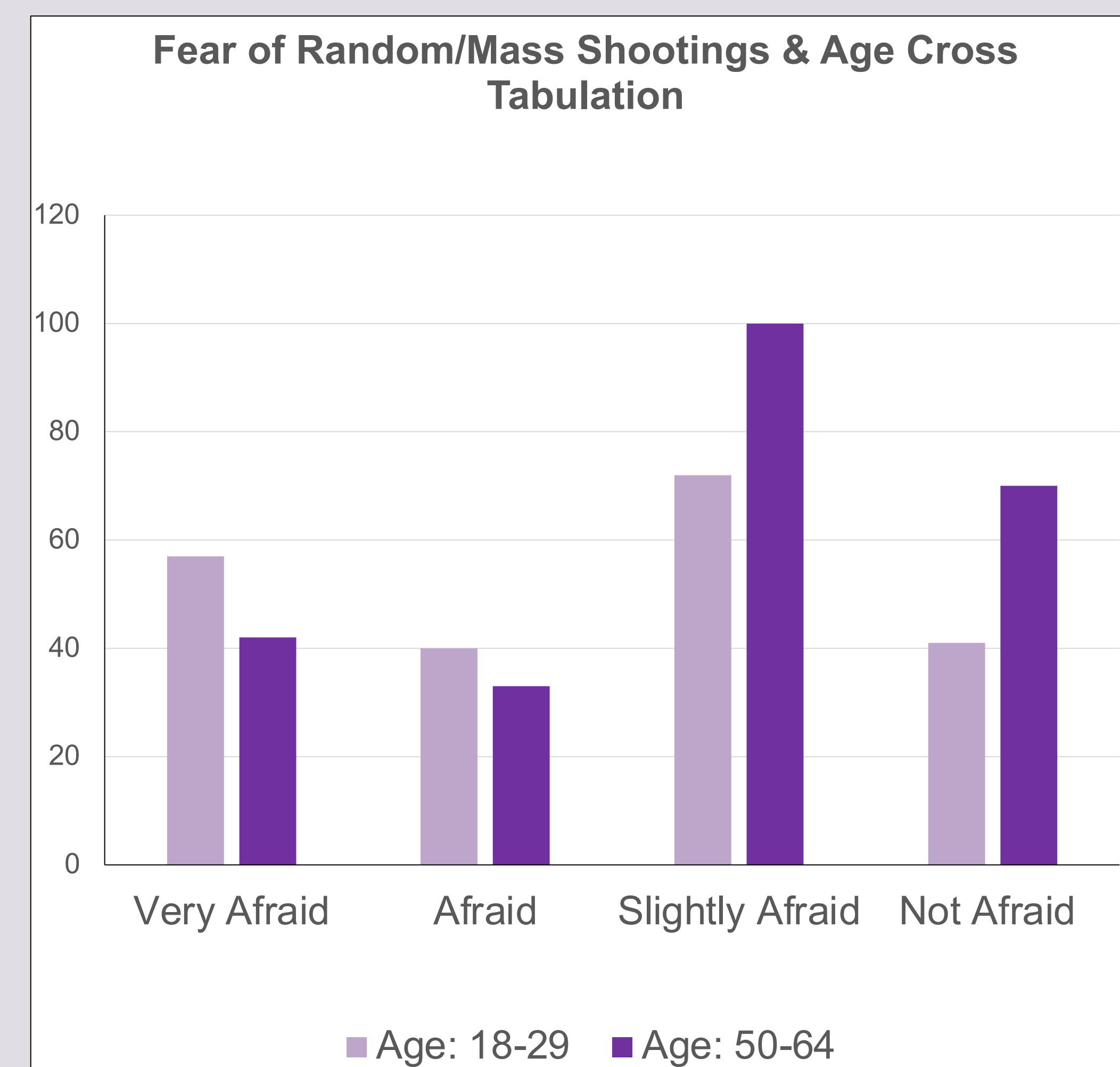
## Data:

### H1: Age and Fear of Gun Control

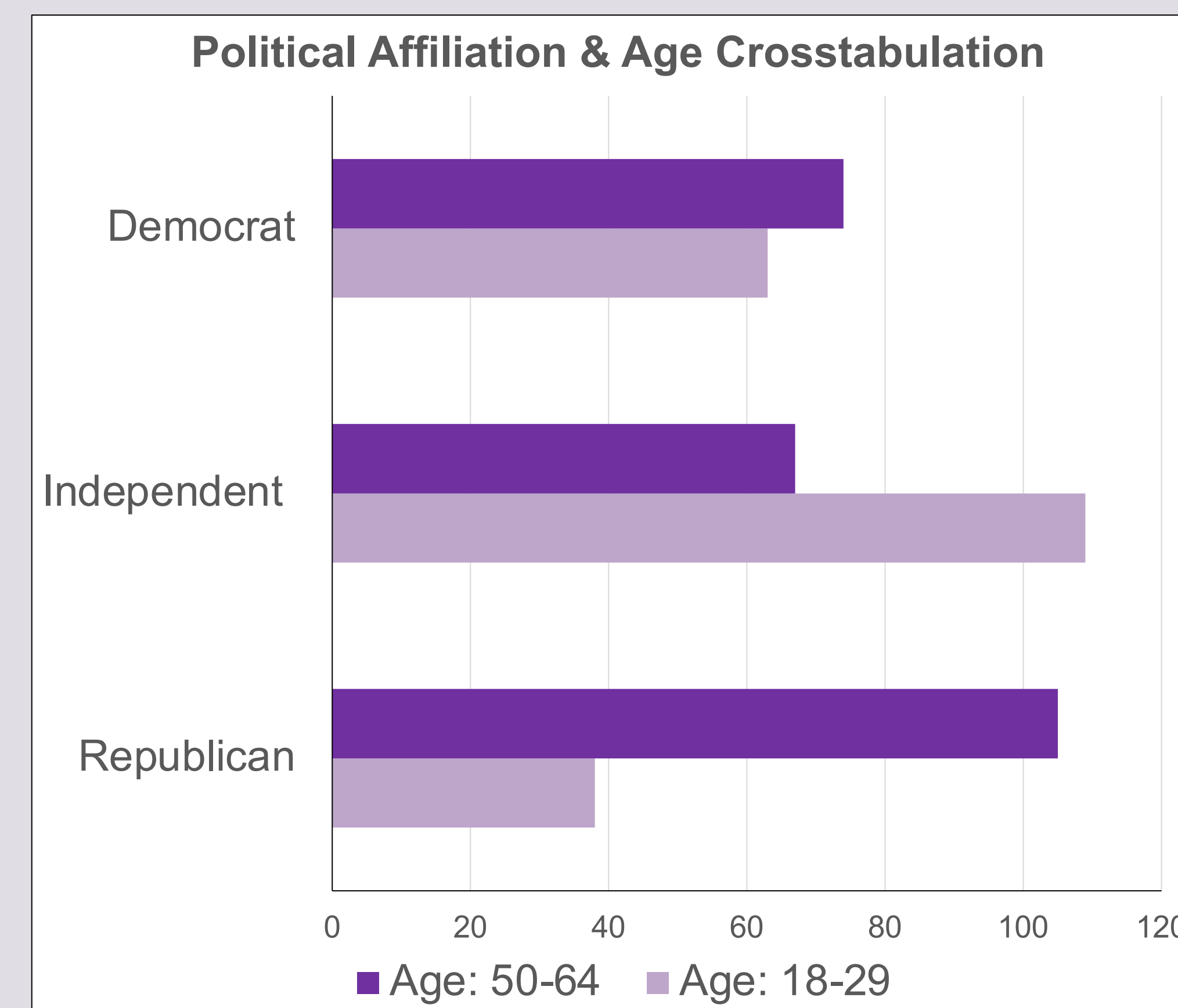
		How afraid are you of government restrictions on guns?
Age	Correlation	0.049
	Significance	0.119

\*Significant at <.05

### H3: Age and Fear of Random/Mass Shootings



### H2: Political Identification and Age



### H4: Political Affiliation and Fear of Gun Control

### H5: Political Affiliation and Fear of Mass Shootings

		How Afraid are you of Being a Victim of a Mass/Random Shooting?	How afraid are you of government restrictions on guns
Political Affiliation	Correlation	-0.179*	0.355*
	Significance	0	0

\*Significant at <.05

## Findings

### H1: Age and Fear of Gun Control

There is no statistical significance between the variables in this hypothesis.

### H2: Political Identification and Age

The results show that 32.5% of 50-64 year-olds identify as Republican, and 11.8% of 18-29 year olds identify as Republican. It is significant to note that while more older individuals identify as Republican, percentage wise, more individuals also identify as Democrats. 19.6% of 50-64 year olds identify as Democrats, and only 16.7% of 18-29 year-olds identify as Democrats.

### H3: Age and Fear of Random/Mass Shootings

The results show that 18-29 year-olds were ranked higher in being very afraid and afraid of being a victim of a mass shooting. 50-64 year-olds reported higher percentages of being slightly afraid and not afraid.

### H4: Political Affiliation and Fear of Gun Control

There is a slight, statistically-significant relationship between political identification and fears of gun control

### H5: Political Affiliation and Fear of Mass Shootings

There is a mild, statistically significant relationship between political identification and fears of being a victim of a random/mass shooting.

## Conclusions

- While there is a present difference between age group beliefs, age alone cannot be used to determine gun control beliefs
- Age can be used to predict how fearful someone may be of being a victim in a mass shooting
  - Likely due to growing up in a climate of school shootings, and active shooter drills in classrooms
- Age is not a key factor considered while choosing a political party
- Political Affiliation is a more accurate predictor of gun control beliefs than age
  - Likely due to the fact that gun control beliefs are written into party agendas
- Overall, aging does not seem to influence gun control beliefs likely because beliefs towards gun control are chosen from personal experiences and beliefs not generational beliefs

## References

- Canipe, C. (2021, April 01). A timeline of mass shootings in the U.S. Retrieved from <https://graphics.reuters.com/USA-GUNS/MASS-SHOOTING/innovardgrp/>
- Crittenden, J. (1962). Aging and Party Affiliation. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26(4), 648. <https://doi.org/10.1086/267134>
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1029-1046. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015141>
- Joslyn, M. R., Haider-Markel, D. P., Baggs, M., & Bilbo, A. (2017). Emerging Political Identities? Gun Ownership and Voting in Presidential Elections. *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(2), 382-396. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12421>
- Luca, M., Malhotra, D., & Poliquin, C. (2019). The Impact of Mass Shootings on Gun Policy. <https://doi.org/10.3355/w26167>
- Oraka, E., Thummalapally, S., Anderson, L., Burgess, T., Seibert, F., & Strasser, S. (2019). A cross-sectional examination of US gun ownership and support for gun control measures: Sociodemographic, geographic, and political associations explored. *Preventive Medicine*, 123, 179-184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.03.022>
- Peltzman, S. (2019). Political Ideology over the Life Course. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3501174>
- Wu, S. (2018). The Effects of Cueing and Framing on Youth Attitudes towards Gun Control and Gun Rights. *Social Sciences*, 7(2), 29. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ssoc70202929>