

# 2020 Firearms Consumer Personas

## Today's Market is Different Than Five Years Ago

Consumers purchase products to satisfy an internal need or desire. Marketing toward consumers' core needs and desires will produce better results versus targeting groups based on demographic or use characteristics. For example, women do not buy firearms because they are female. They purchase based on a range of needs such as security or as a means for social connectivity. This study presents the five consumer segments – or personas - that have purchased a firearm in the past five years, each with unique motivations and characteristics.

Growing a business depends on knowing the market, and who is most or least likely to buy your products and why. By understanding the personas that represent the firearms market, businesses can:

- Optimize the marketing mix and refine communication and advertising messages
- Develop innovative new products while better defining the product mix
- Improve merchandising and point-of-sale efforts at retail to better connect with customers

These updated personas are based on a survey of more than 1,100 U.S. firearm owners who have purchased a firearm since the last segmentation study was conducted in 2016. Combined with the latest in statistical segmentation techniques, the results provide insights needed to help businesses truly target and connect with firearms consumers by speaking to their core needs and desires.

This summary represents only a small portion of the information available now. A report with more details from this initial phase of research is available at no cost from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) and Southwick Associates. Visit [www.SouthwickAssociates.com](http://www.SouthwickAssociates.com). Later in 2021, more in-depth insights regarding each persona's product preferences, their shopping journey, and information sources/touchpoints will be available. If you need to learn more about the unique personas for your brand or niche of the outdoor market, contact Southwick Associates.



**NSSF<sup>®</sup>**  
**The Firearm Industry**  
**Trade Association**

**SA**  
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ASSOCIATES

## Average Owner

For comparison purposes only



Firearm owners in general tend to describe themselves as dependable, level-headed and protective. Protection for themselves and others at and away from home is the top motivation for purchasing a firearm, followed by a desire for a better sense of security and proficient shooting skills. Though generally male and white, some personas have a significant urban and non-white aspect to their population. Semi-auto handguns are the most popular choice. Long guns are more popular along the recreation-oriented personas.

100% of U.S. Market

39% Female

23% First Time Buyers

## Family Guardian



Safety at- and away-from-home is the primary motivator to purchase - especially before any more sales restrictions. A sense of independence, confidence and empowerment are reasons for ownership among this mostly suburban segment. The Family Guardian has a slightly lower rate of target shooting participation compared to other personas and a lower level of interest in developing their shooting skills.

28% of U.S. Market

42% Female

24% First Time Buyers

## Skills Builder



The youngest segment, the Skills Builder wants to develop shooting skills. Firearms are a means to socialize with friends and family. They seek the best and latest gear and are the least concerned to purchase due to concern for further sales restrictions. The Skills Builder has less interest in ownership for protection purposes than other personas. They are the persona most likely to teach others how to shoot or hunt.

17% of U.S. Market

34% Female

23% First Time Buyers

### The Need that Drove Most Recent Firearms Purchase

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sense of security</li><li>• Proficient skills</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sense of security</li><li>• Proficient skills</li><li>• Confidence/empowerment</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proficient skills</li><li>• Fun/relaxation</li></ul> |
|---|--|--|

### Benefits Desired from Most Recent Firearms Purchase

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety at &amp; away from home</li><li>• Shooting skills</li><li>• Add to collection</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety at &amp; away from home</li><li>• To avoid more sales restrictions</li><li>• Add to collection</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety at &amp; away from home</li><li>• Shooting skills</li><li>• Fun</li></ul> |
|--|---|--|

### Satisfactions from Shooting or Hunting

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve skills</li><li>• Fun/excitement</li><li>• Build confidence</li><li>• Self-sufficient</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve skills</li><li>• Fun/excitement</li><li>• Self-sufficient</li><li>• Build confidence</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve skills</li><li>• Fun/adventure</li><li>• Self-sufficient</li><li>• Challenging</li></ul> |
|--|--|--|

### What They Want in a Firearm (Purchase Drivers)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality</li><li>• Reliability</li><li>• Good value</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality</li><li>• Reliability</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good value</li><li>• Innovative/new technology</li><li>• Versatility</li></ul> |
|--|---|--|

## Hunter



Hunting is this persona's primary driver, though they also see firearms as a source of protection when making their purchase. Primarily, the Hunter sees firearms as a way to acquire meat and to spend time family and friends. They are interested in acquiring additional types of firearms and having the latest gear. A desire for fun, relaxation, adventure, challenge and/or a sense of accomplishment is important.

18% of U.S. Market

28% Female

18% First Time Buyers

## Urban Defender



The most urban persona, the Urban Defenders' desire to own a firearm is frequently borne from their or others' bad experiences. They fear further sales restrictions, and are often encouraged to purchase by those close to them. The fun and social aspects of firearm ownership are not of interest, but developing shooting skills and building confidence is. When asked why they want a firearm, they state they want to rely on themselves for protection, that they do not trust others around them.

14% of U.S. Market

43% Female

20% First Time Buyers

## Prepared for the Worst



Prepared for the Worst wants to gain a sense of security. While not feeling unsafe, they want to be ready to handle any dangerous situation. Target shooting is for developing firearm skills, confidence and empowerment, not for fun or excitement. They are motivated to purchase by family and friends and a desire to rely on themselves and to be in control. Prepared for the Worst will try multiple firearms and visit multiple retailers prior to making a purchase. They value concealability and lightweight above all else.

23% of U.S. Market

44% Female

27% First Time Buyers

### The Need that Drove Most Recent Firearms Purchase

- Provide own food
- Fun/relaxation
- Challenge
- Sense of security
- To be ready in case of trouble
- Proficient skills

### Benefits Desired from Most Recent Firearms Purchase

- Safety at home
- Food/meat
- Add to collection
- Safety at & away from home
- Shooting skill
- To avoid more sales restrictions
- Safety at & away from home
- Shooting skills
- To avoid more sales restrictions

### Satisfactions from Shooting or Hunting

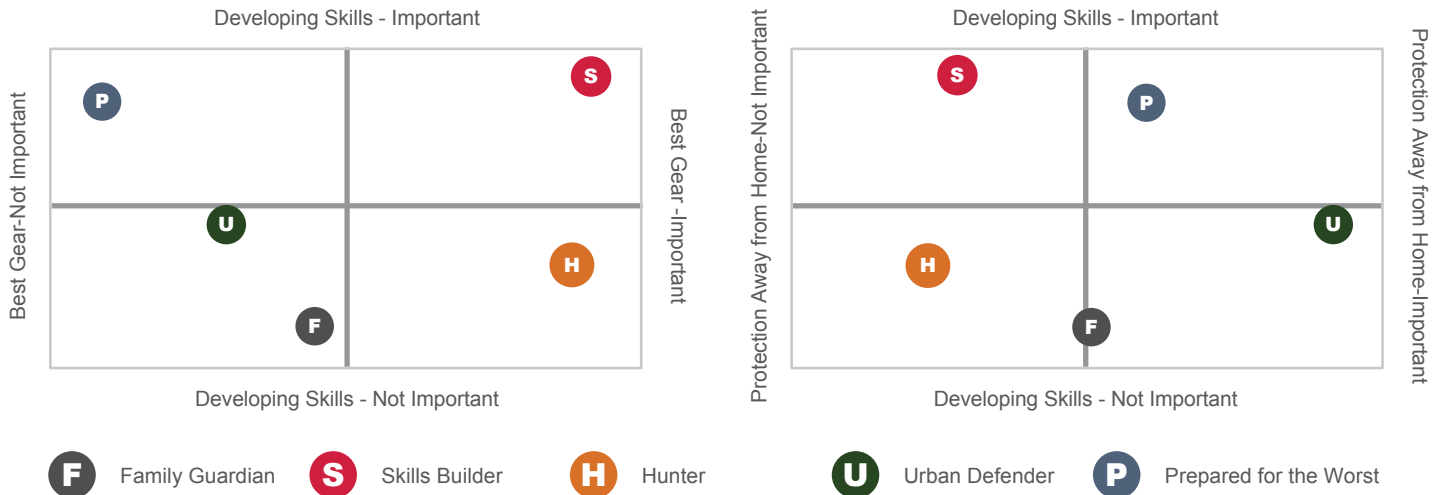
- Improve skills
- Fun
- Relax
- Challenge
- Improve skills
- Build confidence
- Challenge
- Improve skills
- Build confidence
- Fun

### What They Want in a Firearm (Purchase Drivers)

- Versatile
- Lightweight/concealable
- Innovative/new technology
- Lightweight/concealable

## Playing Fields

A 'playing field' visually compares each persona based on their motivations for purchasing a firearm. The first playing field shown below highlights the differences between the personas based on the importance of developing shooting skills versus the desire to own the best firearm possible. The further to the right a persona is plotted, the more important it is to have the best gear, while the higher each persona lies, the more important it is to develop shooting skills. The second playing field shows the relative importance of developing skills versus being able to protect oneself away from home.



Visit [www.southwickassociates.com](http://www.southwickassociates.com) to download the full Phase I personas report.

Please note that personas are not exclusive. For example, hunters can be found in all five personas. Also, the personas can vary based on your specific market. Segmentation insights can be custom developed for your niches to guide marketing and new business development efforts. Please contact Southwick Associates with any questions.

## Contact Us



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