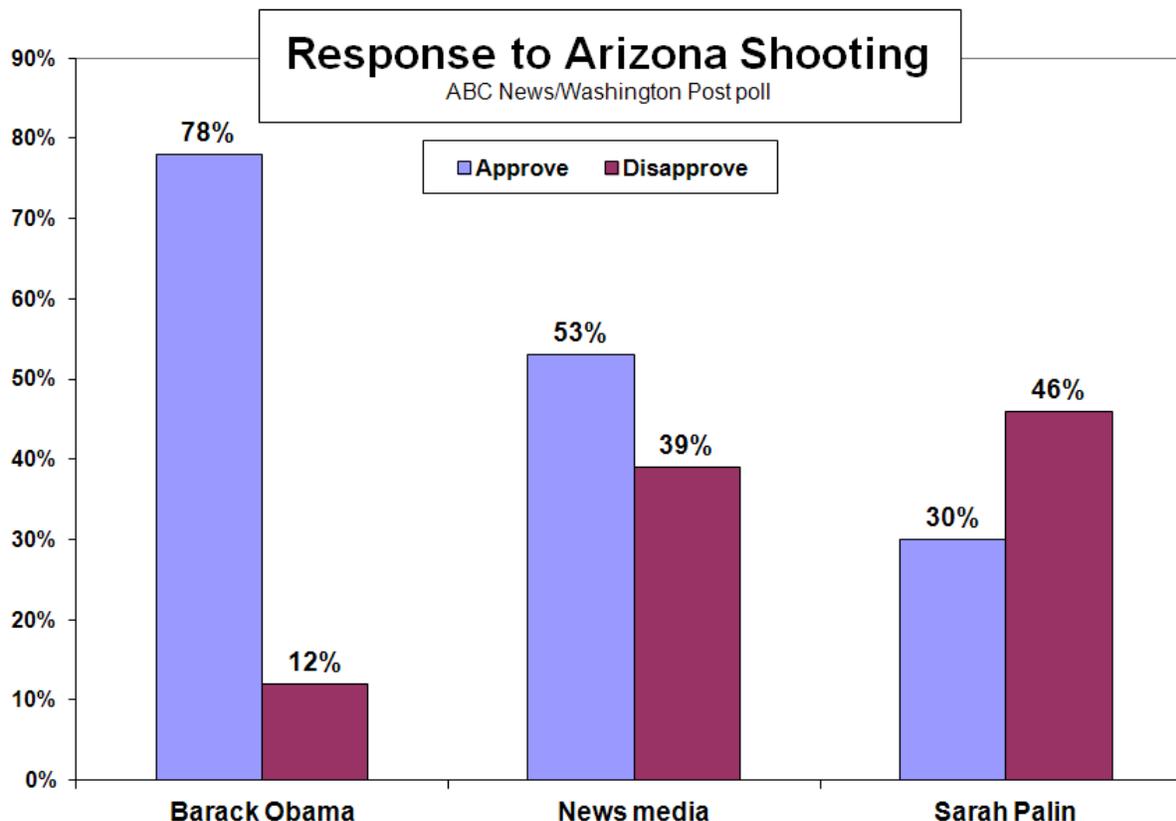


Obama Lauded on Response to Tucson; More See Chance of Political Conciliation

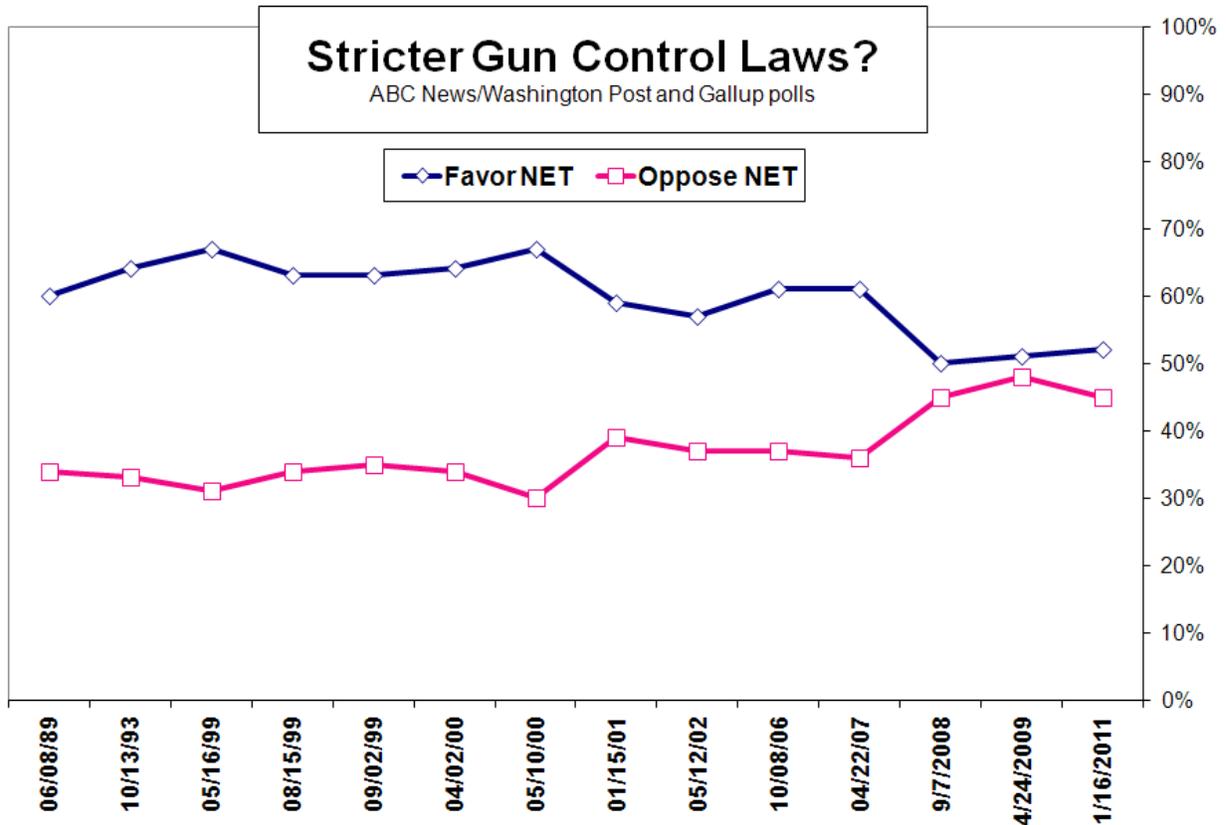
Americans divide on the risks posed by the tone of the country's political discourse, but at the same time approve overwhelmingly of President Obama's attempt to redirect it – and most now hold some hopes of political conciliation in the aftermath of the Tucson shootings.

A remarkable 78 percent in a new ABC News/Washington Post poll approve of the way Obama has responded to the shootings, which he addressed in a speech in Tucson last week; that includes 71 percent of Republicans and conservatives alike. By contrast far fewer, 30 percent overall, approve of the response by his political rival, Sarah Palin.



Moreover there's been a shift, small but significant, in a sense that Obama and the Republicans in Congress may find a way to work together on important issues in the year ahead. Fifty-five percent now are optimistic that this may happen, up from 48 percent in an ABC News/Yahoo! News poll earlier this month, before the attack occurred.

In policy terms, this survey, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds no shift toward support for gun control legislation; indeed, following the course of gun attitudes more generally, support for banning semi-automatic handguns actually is lower than it was after the Virginia Tech shootings in April 2007.



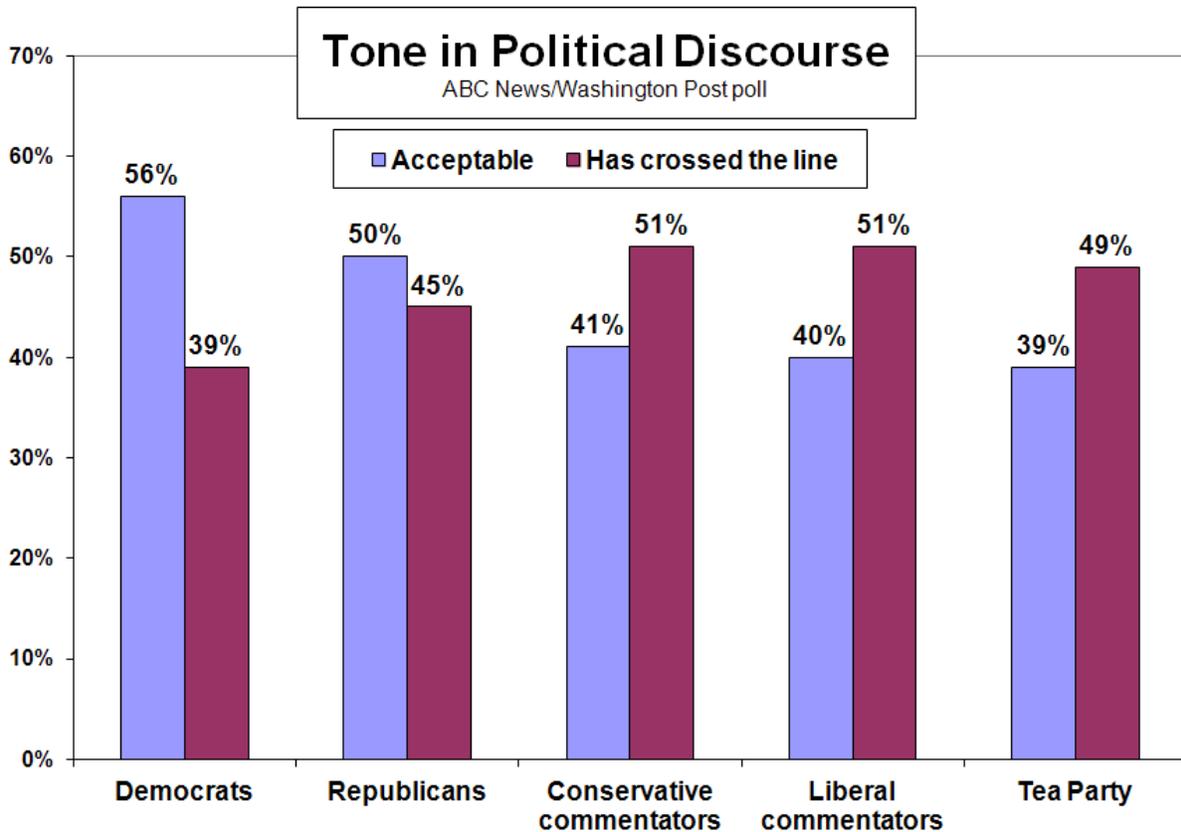
At the same time, a 57 percent majority supports another proposal, banning high-capacity ammunition clips, which were used in Tucson. And there’s vast agreement on a need for further efforts to keep guns out of the hands of people with a history of mental illness or drug abuse.

DISCOURSE – The public overwhelmingly sees the country’s political discourse as negative in tone – 82 percent say so, including three in 10 who say it’s “angry.” Still there’s a division, 49-49 percent, on whether it’s created a climate that could encourage political violence.

On the Tucson shootings specifically, 54 percent of Americans do not think the political discourse contributed to the incident, while 40 percent think it did. Those who do see a connection divide on whether it was a strong factor, or not strong.

The survey more generally finds blame for the political tone spread across a variety of groups. Half the public says the Tea Party political movement and its supporters, as well as political commentators on both side of the ideological divide, have “crossed the line” in terms of attacking the other side.

Forty-five percent say the Republican Party and its supporters have done the same; fewer, 39 percent, say so about the Democratic Party and its supporters, reflecting the Democrats' continued broader allegiance overall.



On all of these there are sharp divides politically and ideologically, as detailed below.

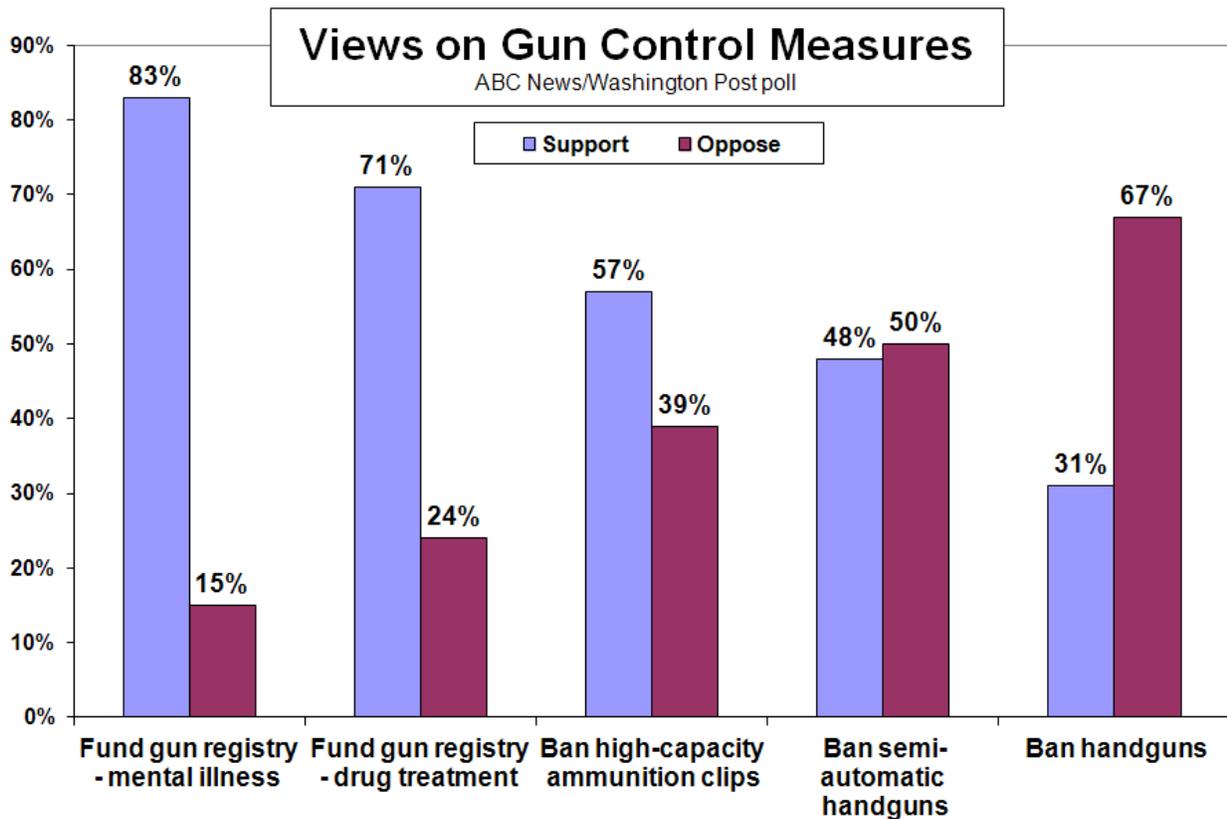
RESPONSE – Specifically in terms of the Jan. 8 shootings, 78 percent of Americans, as noted, approve of Obama’s response, and 51 percent approve “strongly.” That’s the highest rating on a single issue Obama’s received during his presidency, although he had 80 percent approval just before taking office for his handling of the transition.

While these are rare ratings, other presidents have gone as high or higher on specific issues, e.g. George W. Bush for handling terrorism, Bill Clinton for his transition, George H. W. Bush for handling the Persian Gulf war and Ronald Reagan for a 1987 summit with the Soviets.

Far fewer Americans but still more than half, 53 percent, approve of the way the news media have responded to the Tucson shootings. Trailing these, 30 percent approve of the way Palin has responded, with just 14 percent “strongly” approving. Forty-six percent instead disapprove of Palin’s response, in which she rejected as “blood libel” suggestions that the tone of political discourse may have contributed to the attack. A substantial 24 percent have no opinion.

GUNS – Fifty-two percent of Americans in this survey favor stricter gun control laws in general; 45 percent are opposed. That fairly close division is a shift from before fall 2008; in 2006 and 2007 alike, for instance, 61 percent supported stricter gun control. The decrease in support may have been associated with the impending election of a Democratic president and Congress.

The 9-point drop in support for gun control from 2007 to now is mirrored in views specifically on banning semi-automatic handguns, which automatically re-load each time the trigger is squeezed. Fifty-five percent supported banning these weapons then, vs. 48 percent now. Likewise there’s been a 7-point decline in support for banning the sale of handguns overall, from 38 percent in 2007 to 31 percent now.



Views on gun control tend not to shift in tandem with highly publicized gun crimes. As well as continuing that precedent, these results reflect two basic sentiments: broad agreement that the Constitution guarantees a right of gun ownership, and a general preference – by 57-29 percent in this survey – for better enforcement of existing laws rather than creation of new ones.

As noted, there are specific gun control items that win favor; not only do 57 percent support banning high-capacity ammunition clips, 46 percent feel that way “strongly,” far outstripping strong opposition, 29 percent.

As is typical, support for more gun control legislation in general, and nationwide bans on semi-automatic weapons, handguns and high-capacity clips in particular, is higher among women than among men, among Democrats than Republicans and among liberals than conservatives. Support for all except banning handguns entirely also is higher among college-educated adults.

Gun ownership is a factor in overall sentiment. Forty-four percent of American say they or someone in their household owns a gun. In this group 34 percent support stricter laws overall; that rises to 68 percent in non-gun households.

REGISTRY – Most striking is support for greater efforts to keep guns out of the hands of people who've been treated for mental illness or drug abuse. After the Virginia Tech attack, 83 percent supported a law requiring states to report mentally ill people to the gun registry database. In this survey, even in a time of sensitivity about the deficit, an identical 83 percent support increased federal funding to make this happen.

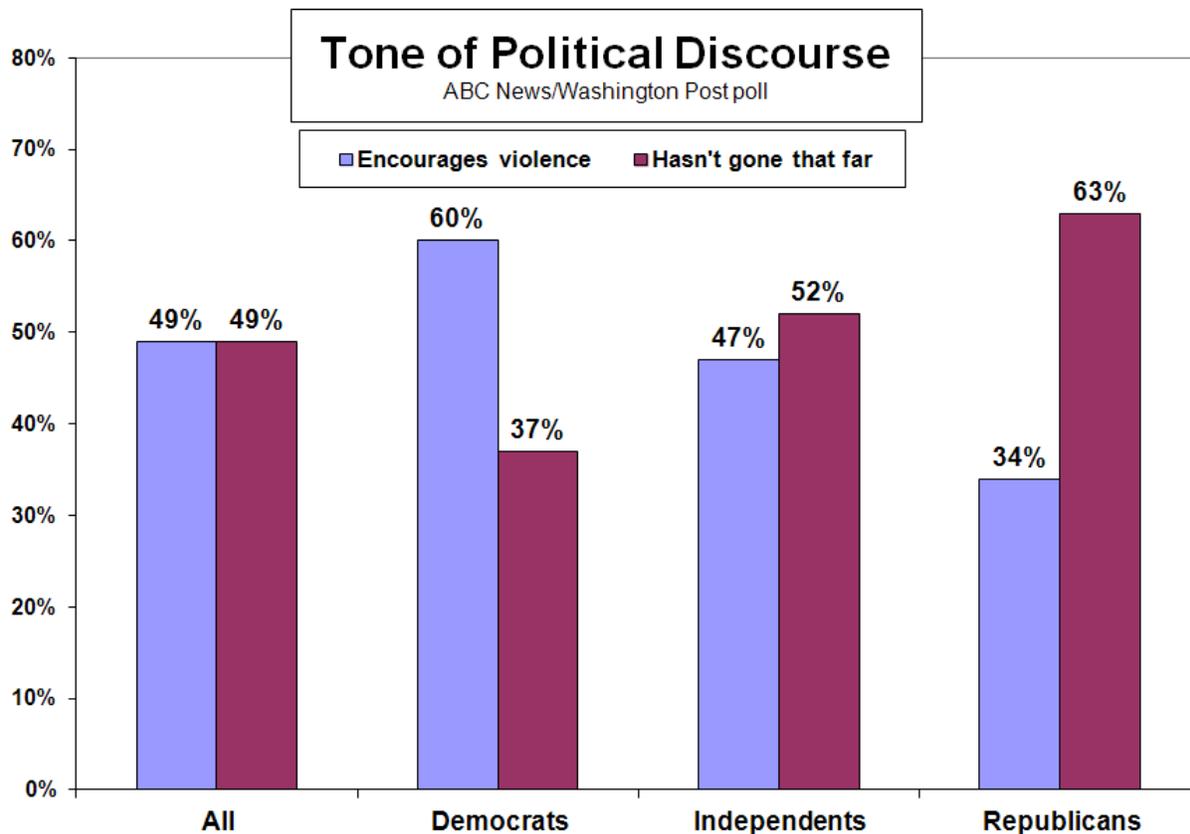
Sixty-three percent support this proposal strongly, an unusual level of strong sentiment. And overall support includes 87 percent of gun owners and political conservatives, as well as broad majorities in other groups.

As noted, somewhat fewer but still 71 percent also support federal funding to get the names of drugs abusers into the gun registry; nearly half, 49 percent, strongly favor this proposal. Supporters include about two-thirds of gun owners and conservatives alike.

The Tucson attack occurred at a constituent event hosted by Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who was badly wounded by a gunshot to the head. Six others were killed, a child and the state's top federal judge among them. It's been reported that the gunman was rejected for military service because of suspicions of drug use, and was expelled from community college last fall after erratic behavior raised questions about his psychological state.

DIVISIONS – While there's bipartisan agreement on a variety of these views – from Obama's response to the gun registry efforts – there are others with sharp partisan and ideological gaps.

Six in 10 Democrats, for example, think the current political tone could encourage violence; that declines to 47 percent of independents and 34 percent of Republicans. Likewise it's 66 percent among liberals compared with 40 percent among conservatives. And on the Tucson incident itself, 59 percent of liberals and 51 percent of Democrats think the tone of political discourse played some role; just 28 percent of conservatives and 27 percent of Republicans agree.



While Obama’s response largely transcends partisanship (as noted, 71 percent of Republicans approve, as do 91 percent of Democrats) Palin does less well among all groups, and with greater divisions. Even among Republicans and conservatives, fewer than half, 48 percent, approve of her response to the Tucson incident, as do 32 percent of independents, fewer than a quarter of moderates and liberals and 15 percent of Democrats.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 13-16, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,053 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1-8 held for release.

9. Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel (optimistic) or (pessimistic) about the chances that President Obama and the Republicans in Congress will work together on important issues? Is that strongly or somewhat optimistic/pessimistic?

	----- Optimistic -----			----- Pessimistic -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	55	22	33	43	18	25	2
1/5/11*	48	14	34	46	27	19	6

*ABC News/Yahoo! News

10-11 held for release.

12. I have some questions about the political discourse in this country - that is, the way people talk about politics. Overall, do you think the tone of political discourse you hear is very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative? (ASKED IF VERY NEGATIVE) Would you say it's angry, or very negative but not angry?

	----- Positive -----			----- Negative -----				No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	Angry	
1/16/11	16	2	14	82	38	13	31	2

13. Do you think the tone of political discourse in this country has created a climate that could encourage violence, or has it not gone that far?

	----- Encourage violence -----			Hasn't gone that far	No opinion
	NET	Could	Already has (vol.)		
1/16/11	49	37	12	49	2

14. For each group I name, please tell me if you think its tone in the political discourse recently has (stayed within acceptable boundaries), or has (crossed the line in terms of attacking the other side)? How about [ITEM]?

1/16/11 - Summary Table

	Acceptable	Crossed the line	No opinion
a. The Democratic Party and its supporters	56	39	5
b. The Republican Party and its supporters	50	45	5
c. The Tea Party political movement and its supporters	39	49	12
d. Conservative political commentators	41	51	8
e. Liberal political commentators	40	51	9

15. As you may know, a gunman shot a U.S. Congress member and 18 other people in Arizona late last week. Is it your impression that the political discourse in this country did or did not contribute to this incident? (ASKED IF DID CONTRIBUTE) Did it contribute a GREAT DEAL or SOMEWHAT?

	----- Did contribute -----			Did not contribute	No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat		
1/16/11	40	19	22	54	6

16. Do you approve or disapprove of the way [ITEM] has responded to this shooting incident? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

1/16/11 - Summary Table

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
a. Barack Obama	78	51	26	12	6	7	10
b. Sarah Palin	30	14	16	46	14	32	24
c. The news media	53	23	30	39	16	23	8

17-25 held for release.

26. On another subject: Do you favor or oppose stricter gun control laws in this country? Is that STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT favor/oppose?

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	52	39	13	45	12	33	3
4/24/09	51	36	14	48	12	36	1
9/7/08 RV	50	31	19	45	14	30	5
4/22/07	61	41	20	36	12	23	3
10/8/06	61	45	16	37	15	22	2
5/12/02	57	39	19	37	15	22	6
1/15/01	59	46	13	39	13	26	2
5/10/00	67	50	17	30	9	22	3
4/2/00	64	49	14	34	13	21	2
9/2/99	63	52	11	35	11	25	2
8/15/99	63	46	16	34	12	22	3
5/16/99	67	55	12	31	10	21	1
10/13/93*	64	40	24	33	13	20	3
6/8/89*	60	28	32	34	11	23	6

*Gallup: "Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose enacting tougher gun control laws?"

27. Would you support or oppose a law requiring a nationwide ban on (ITEM)? Do you feel that way strongly, or only somewhat?

1/16/11 - Summary Table

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opin.
	NET	Strg.	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Strg.	
a. Semi-automatic handguns, which automatically re-load every time the trigger is pulled	48	39	9	50	12	37	2
b. The sale of handguns, except to law enforcement officers	31	23	8	67	14	54	2
c. High-capacity ammunition clips, meaning those containing more than 10 bullets	57	46	11	39	10	29	3

Trend where available:

a. Semi-automatic handguns, which automatically re-load every time the trigger is pulled

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	48	39	9	50	12	37	2

4/22/07 55 46 9 41 9 32 3

b. The sale of handguns, except to law enforcement officers

	Favor			Oppose			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	31	23	8	67	14	54	2
4/22/07	38	28	9	60	17	42	3
5/10/00	38	26	12	59	16	43	3
9/2/99	32	23	9	65	18	47	3

c. No trend.

28. What do you think is the best way to reduce gun violence in this country - (by passing stricter gun control laws), or (by stricter enforcement of existing laws)?

	Passing new laws	Enforcing existing laws	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
1/16/11	29	57	5	7	2
4/24/09	27	61	5	4	2
4/22/07	29	52	9	8	1
4/2/00	33	53	7	5	2

29. Do you or does anyone in your house own a gun, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
1/16/11	44	55	*
4/24/09	41	58	*
6/15/08	42	58	*
4/22/07	45	55	0
10/8/06	42	58	*
10/20/02	41	59	*
5/10/00	45	55	*
4/2/00	43	56	*
9/2/99	44	56	*
5/16/99	46	53	*

30a. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) Would you support or oppose increasing federal funding to pay for a system in which people treated for mental illness would be reported to the federal gun registry database, in an effort to prevent them from buying guns? Do you feel that way STRONGLY, or only SOMEWHAT?

	Support			Oppose			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	83	63	20	15	8	7	2

30b. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) Would you support or oppose increasing federal funding to pay for a system in which people treated for drug abuse would be reported to the federal gun registry database, in an effort to prevent them from buying guns? Do you feel that way STRONGLY, or only SOMEWHAT?

	Support			Oppose			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/16/11	71	49	22	24	10	14	5

31-36 held for release.

END