

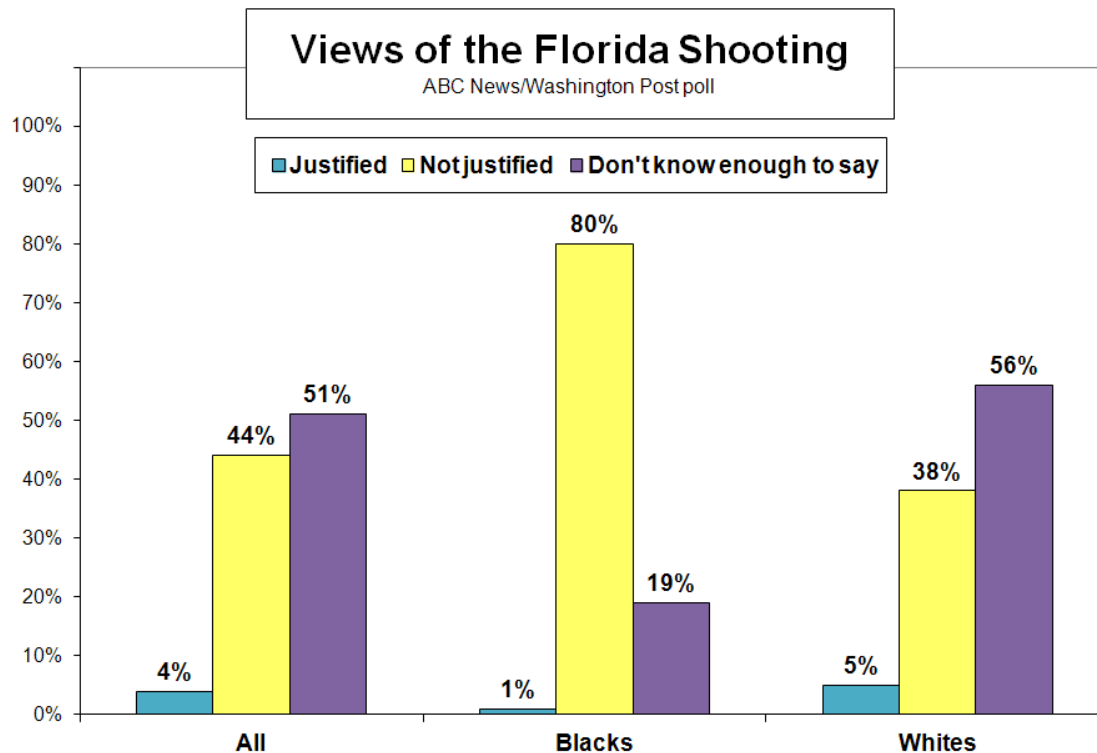
Racial Divisions Define Opinions On the Trayvon Martin Shooting

Americans divide along racial lines on the Trayvon Martin shooting, with blacks overwhelmingly calling it unjustified while whites are more apt to withhold judgment. But few in either group are ready to see the fatal shooting of the unarmed Florida teenager as justified.

Those views reflect other differences between the races in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll. Blacks are more apt than whites to oppose “stand your ground” laws allowing the use of deadly force in response to threatening situations. And blacks very broadly feel that racial minorities receive unequal treatment in the criminal justice system; whites divide on this.

Overall, 44 percent in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), see the shooting of the 17-year-old by a community watch volunteer in a Florida subdivision as unjustified; that includes 38 percent of whites, but soars to 80 percent of African-Americans. Instead 56 percent of whites – but just 19 percent of blacks – feel they don’t know enough to say.

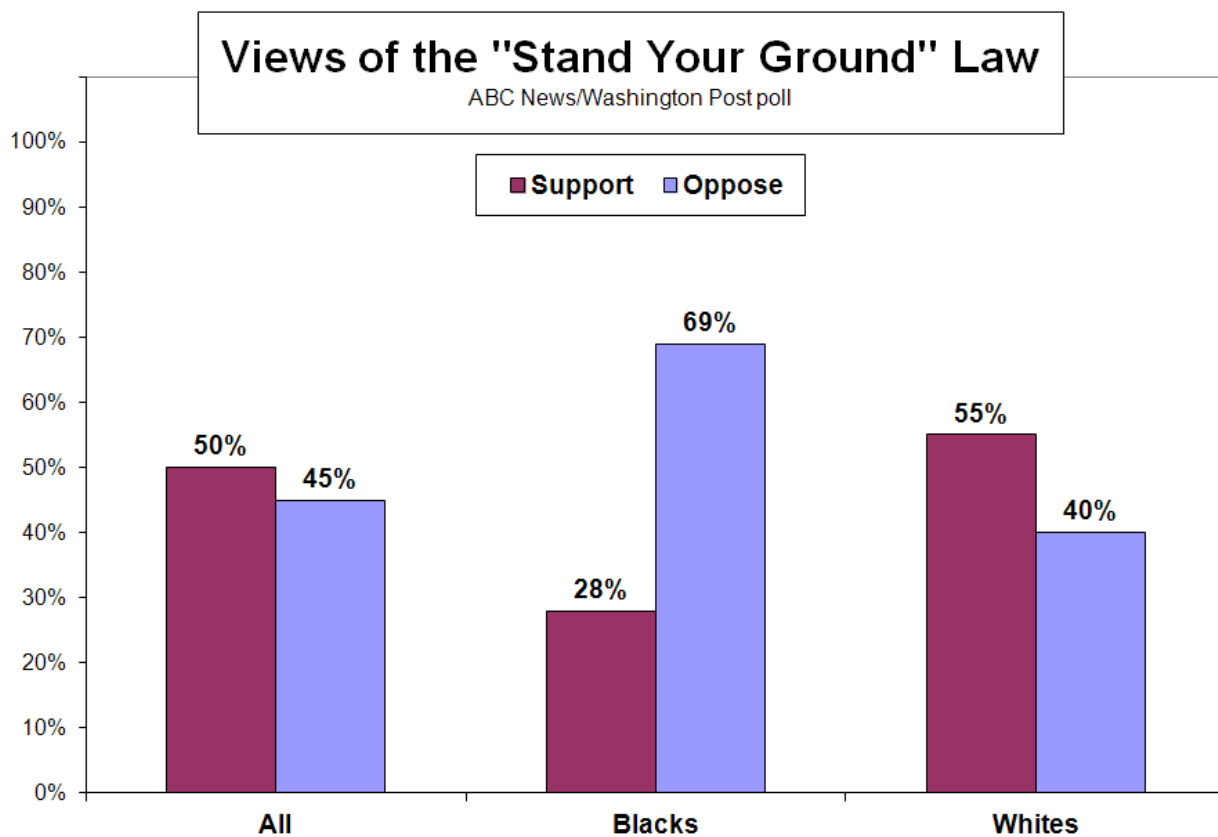
Very few in either group, 1 percent of blacks and 5 percent of whites, call the shooting justified.



For their part, people of other races – neither white nor African-American – divide evenly on whether the shooting was unjustified (47 percent) or they don't know enough to say (50 percent) – placing them closer to whites than to blacks on this question.

BROADER VIEWS – Opinions on the shooting are closely related to broader views about “stand your ground” laws and the status of civil rights in the criminal justice system in general.

All told, 50 percent of Americans support such self-defense laws, with 45 percent opposing. Whites divide 55-40 percent in favor; blacks, 69-28 percent opposed. Among opponents, 63 percent call the Martin shooting unjustified. Among supporters of such laws, by contrast, this falls to 29 percent, with many more saying they don't know enough to say. Even in this group just 7 percent call the shooting justified.



On the broader issue, 55 percent of the public thinks blacks and other racial minorities don't receive equal treatment in the criminal justice system, ranging from 49 percent of whites to 84 percent of African-Americans. Again, people who think blacks and other minorities don't receive equal treatment in the justice system are a broad 30 percentage points more apt to see the Martin shooting as unjustified, compared with those who think treatment is equal.

On both “stand your ground” laws and the fairness of the system, people of other racial groups fall between whites and African-Americans, opposing self-defense laws by 52-43 percent and seeing minorities as unequally treated by 62-30 percent.

Views on the treatment of minorities in the criminal justice system are largely in line with ABC/Post data back to 1992, with the exception of a measurement in 1997 after a civil jury found O.J. Simpson liable in the deaths of his ex-wife and her friend. There was a spike in that survey in the number of whites saying minorities receive equal treatment.

GROUPS – Views also vary by ideology and political allegiance. Six in 10 Democrats and liberals see the Florida shooting as unjustified; that slips to 43 percent of independents and 47 percent of moderates, and further to one-third of conservatives and a quarter of Republicans.

Support for “stand your ground” laws is highest among Republicans and conservatives (71 and 63 percent, respectively), followed by independents and moderates (49 and 48 percent) and falling to 37 and 36 percent of Democrats and liberals, respectively.

Similar patterns characterize opinions on equal treatment of minorities by the justice system. More than seven in 10 Democrats and liberals alike think that minorities are not treated equally, compared with 56 percent of moderates, half of independents, 38 percent of conservatives and three in 10 Republicans.

There are gender and age gaps as well, with women and young adults more apt than men and older adults to see Martin’s shooting as unjustified and to oppose self-defense laws like Florida’s. And while 66 percent of young adults think that blacks and minorities are not treated equally in the justice system, fewer older adults, 52 percent, agree.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone April 5-8, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,103 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents and an oversample of 100 African American adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points for the full sample, 4.5 points for whites and 8.5 points for African Americans. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Damla Ergun.

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

Media contacts: [David Ford](#), (212) 456-7243, and [Julie Townsend](#), (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

1-37 held for release or previously released.

38. On another subject, do you think blacks and other minorities receive equal treatment as whites in the criminal justice system or not?

	Receive equal treatment	Do not receive equal treatment	No opinion
Among all:			
4/8/12	37	55	7

2/4/97	55	38	6
5/7/96	36	55	9
10/6/95	44	50	6
10/3/95	47	44	8
9/27/95	47	46	6
4/30/92	39	50	11

Among blacks:

4/8/12	10	84	6
2/4/97	19	78	3
5/7/96	12	81	7
10/6/95	9	88	2
10/3/95	19	73	8
9/27/95	12	87	2
4/30/92	8	89	3

Among whites:

4/8/12	44	49	7
2/4/97	61	32	7
5/7/96	41	49	10
10/6/95	52	42	6
10/3/95	52	40	8
9/27/95	54	39	7
4/30/92	46	43	12

39. There recently was a case in Florida in which a neighborhood watch volunteer shot and killed an unarmed teenager. As far as you've heard do you think this shooting was justified or unjustified, or do you not know enough about it to say?

	Justified	Unjustified	Don't know enough to say	No opinion
4/8/12 All	4	44	51	1
Blacks	1	80	19	0
Whites	5	38	56	1

40. Some states have a law that says a person is legally entitled to fight back with deadly force if they feel threatened, even if they could retreat instead. Do you personally support or oppose that law?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/8/12 All	50	45	5
Blacks	28	69	3
Whites	55	40	5

*** END ***