

## 1119a3 WikiLeaks: A Document Dump Too Far – 12/14/10

More than two-thirds of Americans say WikiLeaks has harmed the public interest by releasing classified U.S. diplomatic documents, a sharp negative turn in views of the website's actions – and nearly six in 10 say its founder, Julian Assange, should face criminal charges as a result.

On a day Assange is scheduled to appear in a London courtroom on unrelated charges, the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll indicated he's gone a document dump too far, alienating many Americans who held a more benign view of last summer's WikiLeaks release of U.S. military field reports from Afghanistan.

Then, a Pew Research Center poll found the public more or less divided, 42 percent to 47 percent, on whether that release served or hurt the public interest. Last week, in a Pew poll on the diplomatic documents, it was 29-53 percent negative. And in this poll it's even more so, with just 20 percent saying the release served the public interest, while 68 percent call it harmful.

It can't have helped Assange's image to be held in England on a Swedish extradition request in which he's wanted for questioning on allegations of rape and sexual coercion; he's appearing in that case today. Further, his lawyer was quoted Sunday as saying Swedish authorities had told him a grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia, was considering possible criminal charges against Assange stemming from WikiLeaks' release of classified documents.

In accord with that reported investigation, 59 percent of Americans say that in their view Assange should be charged with a crime for releasing the U.S. diplomatic cables. Far fewer, 29 percent, said it's not a criminal matter, with the rest undecided.

While there are partisan, ideological and age differences, in every demographic group evaluated in this survey, majorities said the leak harms the public interest, and in most groups majorities said Assange should be charged criminally.

The gaps are greatest on whether he should face charges – barely over half of Democrats and independents say so (51 and 52 percent, respectively), rising to 74 percent of Republicans. And young adults divide on the question – 45 percent say he should be charged, compared with 70 percent among seniors.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 9-12, 2010, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of sampling error of 3.5 points. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. This 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.

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

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Full results follow.

1-13, 21-33, 36-39 held for release.

14-20 previously released.

34. On another subject, from what you've heard and read, do you think the release of classified documents about the State Department and U.S. diplomacy by WikiLeaks serves the public interest or harms the public interest?

	Serves public interest	Harms public interest	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/12/10	20	68	1	1	10

Compare to:

	Serves public interest	Harms public interest	Neither/Both (vol.)	No opinion
12/5/10*	29	53	7	11
8/1/10**	42	47	6	5

\*Pew, "documents about US diplomatic relations"

\*\*Pew, "documents about the war in Afghanistan"

35. Do you think the United States should try to arrest the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange (Ah-SANGH), and charge him with a crime for releasing these documents, or do you think this is not a criminal matter?

	Arrest and charge with crime	Not a criminal matter	No opinion
12/12/10	59	29	12

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