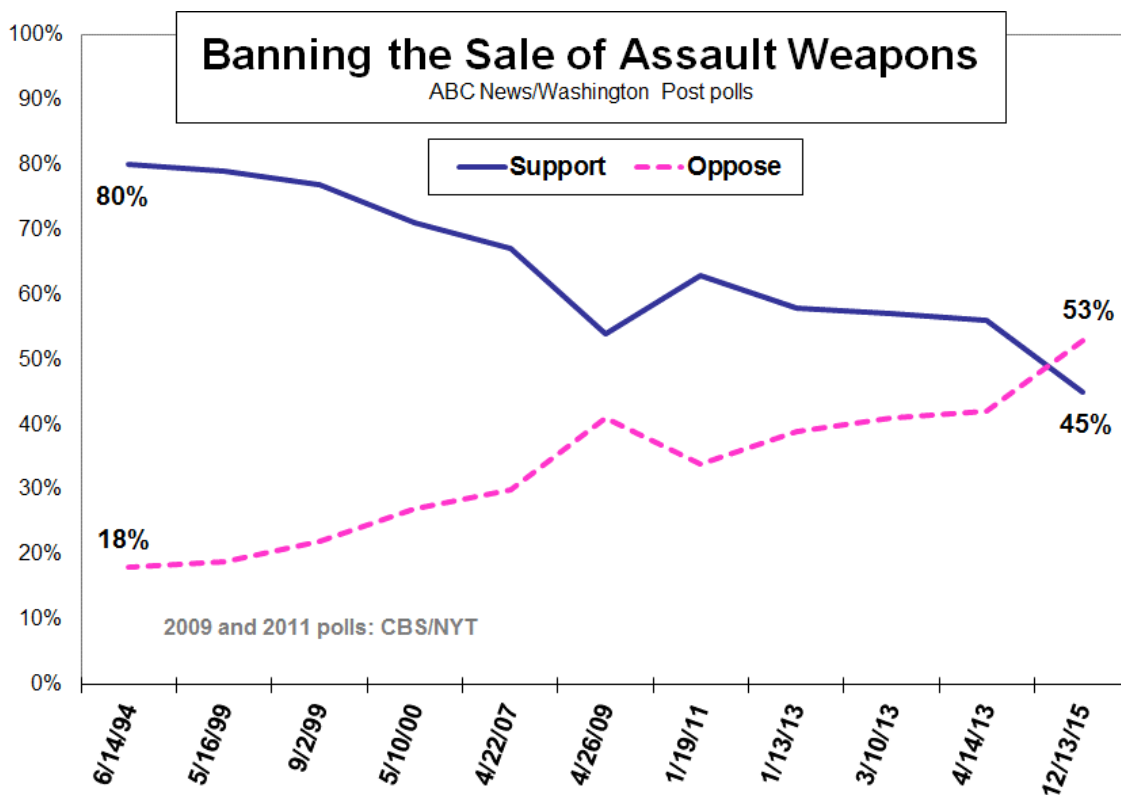


Most Now Oppose an Assault Weapons Ban; Doubts about Stopping a Lone Wolf Run High

A majority of Americans oppose banning assault weapons for the first time in more than 20 years of ABC News/Washington Post polls, with the public expressing vast doubt that the authorities can prevent “lone wolf” terrorist attacks and a substantial sense that armed citizens can help.

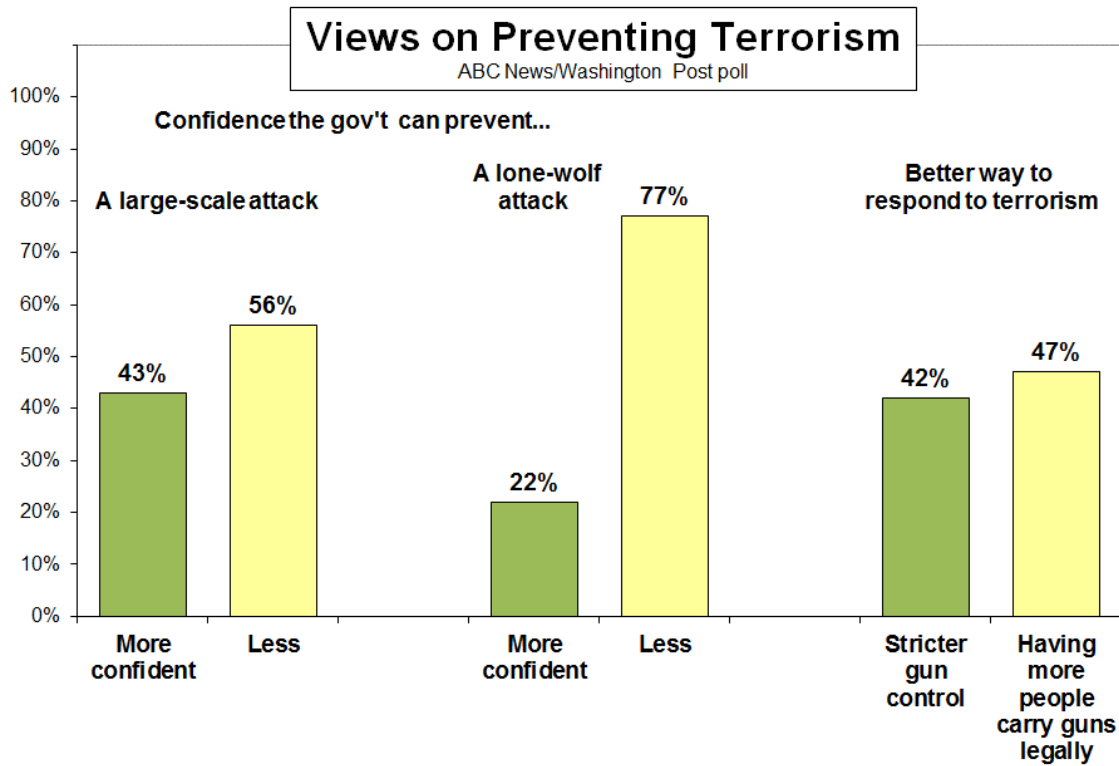
Just 45 percent in this national survey favor an assault weapons ban, down 11 percentage points from an ABC/Post poll in 2013 and down from a peak of 80 percent in 1994. Fifty-three percent oppose such a ban, the most on record.



Indeed, while the division is a close one, Americans by 47-42 percent think that encouraging more people to carry guns legally is a better response to terrorism than enacting stricter gun control laws. Divisions across groups are vast, underscoring the nation’s gulf on gun issues.

There’s lopsided agreement on another concern: Just 22 percent express confidence in the government’s ability to prevent lone-wolf terrorist attacks, with 77 percent skeptical about it.

Confidence in the government’s ability to stop a large-scale organized terrorist attack is much higher, albeit still well short of a majority – 43 percent.



Personal fears about being victimized by a terrorist attack is not up – it’s 42 percent now, vs. 49 percent in a Gallup poll last summer. But views on the government’s limitations, and on arming citizens, relate strongly to attitudes on banning assault weapons. Consider:

- Among the roughly three-quarters of Americans who doubt the government’s ability to prevent a lone-wolf attack, 57 percent oppose banning assault weapons, vs. 41 percent in support. Those numbers are reversed among those who are more confident in government counterterrorism – 56 percent favor banning such weapons, while 42 percent are opposed.
- The split is even more striking between those who see stricter gun control as the better way to fight terrorism, vs. “encouraging more people to carry guns legally.” The former group divides 71-26 percent in favor of banning assault weapons. The latter group splits 22-77 percent, support-oppose.

	Ban assault weapons?	
	Support	Oppose
All	45%	53
Can gov't prevent a lone-wolf attack?		
Confident	56	42
Not confident	41	57

Best way to address terrorism		
Stricter gun control	71	26
Encourage more people to carry guns	22	77

The results of this survey, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), point to a shift away from the position favored by Barack Obama and others who responded to the recent attack in San Bernadino, California, by calling for stricter gun control measures. Notably, in a statistical analysis, Obama’s overall job approval rating is the single strongest factor in views on an assault weapons ban.

The president’s approval rating, as it happens, is not in great shape: 45 percent, down 6 points from October to match its low for the year, with 51 percent disapproving. He continues to get an even split on the economy, but 53 percent disapprove of his handling of the threat of terrorism, near his career high last month, and 59 percent disapprove of his handling specifically of the Islamic State terrorist group.

CHANGE/GROUPS – The increase in opposition to banning assault weapons since 2013 peaks in some groups – up 18 points among strong conservatives, 17 points among higher-income earners and 16 points in the generally more liberal Northeast. But it’s a broadly based trend. Many groups have moved from majority support for an assault weapons ban two years ago to majority opposition now: whites, 30- to 64-year-olds, suburbanites, political independents, moderates, residents of the West and Midwest, anyone without a post-graduate degree and those in \$100,000-plus households.

These trends leave just seven basic demographic groups in which majorities still support banning assault weapons: women, Northeasterners, seniors, post-graduates, liberals, Democrats and blacks.

Differences among groups are extensive. Barely more than a third of men favor banning assault weapons, compared with more than half of women (35 percent vs. 53 percent). Seniors are most likely to favor banning assault weapons, while – despite their greater liberalism on many other issues – nearly six in 10 young adults oppose it. Opposition is high in rural areas (64 percent) and among those who lack a college degree.

And there are, naturally, sharp political and ideological divisions. Sixty-seven percent of liberals and 61 percent of Democrats favor banning assault weapons. Opposition, on the other hand, takes in 52 percent of moderates, 55 percent of independents, 69 percent of conservatives and 70 percent of Republicans. Opposition peaks, at 79 percent, among strong conservatives.

Group differences on responses to terrorism generally are similar to these, if less sharp. One that stands out is the extent of worry people have about being victimized: Those who are less worried divided evenly between favoring stricter gun control or encouraging more people to carry guns legally. Those who are most worried about being a victim of terrorism, by contrast, favor encouraging more people to carry guns, by more than a 2-1 margin.

	Support	Oppose	Gun control	Carry more guns
All	45%	53	42%	47
Democrats	61	36	67	25
Republicans	27	70	21	70
Independents	43	55	34	52
Liberals	67	30	66	23
Moderates	46	52	42	44
Conservatives NET	28	69	24	68
Somewhat cons.	35	63	29	62
Very cons.	15	79	14	79
Whites	42	56	35	54
Nonwhites	49	47	55	33
Men	35	62	33	56
Women	53	44	50	39
Urban	48	49	50	38
Suburban	47	51	39	50
Rural	34	64	30	59
18-29	39	59	44	50
65-plus	55	42	44	41
HS or less	42	56	40	48
Some college	41	56	36	54
College degree	47	51	44	42
Post-grad	61	37	55	35
<\$50K	48	50	45	46
\$50-100K	37	60	35	53
\$100K-plus	46	53	45	41
Terrorism:				
Very worried	39	56	30	64
Not so worried/ not at all	47	50	43	43

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone Dec. 10-13, 2015, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including the design effect. Partisan divisions are 33-23-34 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

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. See details on the survey’s methodology [here](#).

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

Media contacts: [Heather Riley](#), (212) 456-4396, or [Julie Townsend](#), (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

8-9 held for release; 3-7, 10-14, 16-17 previously released.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/15	45	24	22	51	12	39	3
11/19/15	46	24	22	50	10	40	4
10/18/15	51	28	23	45	10	35	4
9/10/15	49	27	22	46	9	37	5
7/19/15	45	26	20	50	13	37	5
5/31/15	45	22	23	49	11	38	6
3/29/15	47	26	21	47	11	36	6
1/15/15	50	24	26	44	9	35	6
12/14/14	41	21	20	54	13	41	5
10/26/14	43	21	22	51	12	39	6
10/12/14	40	20	20	51	12	39	8
9/7/14	42	24	18	51	12	39	6
6/1/14	46	23	23	51	14	37	3
4/27/14	41	23	19	52	12	40	6
3/2/14	46	25	22	50	12	38	3
1/23/14	46	23	23	50	9	41	4

Call for full trend.

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling [ITEM]? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

12/13/15 - Summary Table

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No op.
	NET	Strongly	Smwht	NET	Smwht	Strongly	
a. The economy	48	26	22	48	14	34	3
b. The threat of terrorism	43	19	23	53	9	44	4
c. The extremist group known as the Islamic State, or ISIS	35	18	17	59	11	48	6

*Half sample asked item b; other half asked item c.

Trend:

a. The economy

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/13/15	48	26	22	48	14	34	3
11/19/15	48	24	24	48	14	34	4
9/10/15	49	26	22	47	11	36	5
7/19/15	47	25	22	48	13	35	5
5/31/15	47	25	23	48	14	34	4
3/29/15	49	29	20	46	12	34	5
1/15/15	48	26	21	48	10	38	5
12/14/14	44	24	20	52	14	38	4
10/26/14	42	21	20	52	14	38	7

10/12/14	44	25	19	51	12	39	4
9/7/14	42	22	19	54	15	39	5
6/1/14	43	21	21	53	15	38	4
4/27/14	42	20	21	54	13	41	4
3/2/14	43	23	20	54	14	41	2
1/23/14	43	22	21	55	13	42	3

Call for full trend.

b. The threat of terrorism

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/13/15	43	19	23	53	9	44	4
11/19/15	40	21	19	54	11	43	6
1/15/15	47	22	25	45	14	31	8
12/14/14	43	21	22	48	14	34	9
10/12/14	42	21	21	50	15	35	8
1/23/14	50	29	21	42	14	28	8
1/15/12	56	36	20	38	10	28	6
11/3/11	60	37	23	34	12	22	6
9/1/11	62	33	29	32	12	21	6
6/5/11	60	35	25	34	13	21	6
5/2/11*	69	42	27	21	9	12	10
2/8/10	56	28	28	39	14	25	5
1/15/10	55	31	23	42	14	28	4
11/15/09	53	31	22	41	14	27	6
9/12/09	55	31	24	34	12	23	11
6/21/09	57	NA	NA	36	NA	NA	7
4/21/09**	57	"	"	26	"	"	17

*Washington Post-Pew Research Center

**Pew Research Center

c. The extremist group known as the Islamic State, or ISIS

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/13/15	35	18	17	59	11	48	6
11/19/15	35	17	18	57	11	46	8

Compare to: The situation involving the insurgents known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
5/31/15	31	13	18	55	15	41	14
10/12/14	35	16	19	51	13	37	14
9/28/14	50	22	28	44	15	29	6

15. Would you support or oppose a law requiring a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/13/15	45	34	10	53	12	41	3
4/14/13	56	45	11	42	12	30	2
3/10/13	57	46	11	41	11	30	2
1/13/13	58	50	9	39	12	26	3
1/19/11*	63	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	3
4/26/09*	54	"	"	41	"	"	5
4/22/07**	67	54	13	30	10	21	3
5/10/00	71	60	11	27	11	16	2
9/2/99	77	68	9	22	8	14	1

5/16/99 79 67 12 19 7 12 2
 6/14/94 80 NA NA 18 NA NA 2
 *CBS/NYT "Do you favor or oppose a nationwide ban on assault weapons"
 **ABC News

18. How much confidence do you have in the ability of the U.S. government to prevent [ITEM]: a great deal, a good amount, only a fair amount or none at all?

12/13/15 - Summary Table

	-- More confidence --			-- Less confidence --			No op.
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Fair amount	None at all	
a. A large scale, organized attack by a foreign terrorist group	43	16	27	56	37	19	1
b. So-called "lone-wolf" terrorist attacks in which individuals in this country decide to act on their own	22	9	13	77	44	33	1

19. Which of these do you think is a better way to respond to terrorism in this country - (by enacting stricter gun control laws), or (by encouraging more people to carry guns legally)?

	Stricter gun control laws	Carry more guns legally	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/13/15	42	47	1	8	3

20. How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of terrorism - very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried or not worried at all?

	---- More worried ----			---- Less worried ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	At all	
12/13/15	42	12	30	57	31	27	*
6/7/15*	49	15	34	49	25	24	2
4/25/13	40	11	29	60	33	27	*
8/14/11	36	9	27	63	32	31	*
1/10/10	42	9	33	57	35	22	1
12/13/09	39	12	27	62	34	28	*
9/7/08	38	9	29	62	38	24	*
7/8/07	47	13	34	52	31	21	*
1/14/07	44	12	32	55	33	22	*
8/20/06	45	11	34	55	34	21	*
1/22/06	43	14	29	57	34	23	1
12/18/05	41	11	30	59	37	22	*
7/24/05	47	14	33	53	30	23	*
6/19/05	38	8	30	62	36	26	*
1/9/05	38	10	28	61	37	24	1
12/19/04	41	13	28	59	34	25	*
11/16/04	47	13	34	53	33	20	*
9/5/04	43	11	32	57	36	21	*
8/11/04	34	8	26	66	36	30	*
2/12/04	40	10	30	60	36	24	*
1/5/04	28	5	23	72	42	30	*
12/7/03	37	9	28	63	38	25	*
8/26/03	41	11	30	59	33	26	0
7/20/03	30	6	24	70	38	32	*
4/23/03	34	8	26	65	39	26	1
3/23/03	38	8	30	62	38	24	*

2/19/03	36	8	28	64	33	31	0
2/9/03	48	13	35	52	34	18	*
1/25/03	39	8	31	61	36	25	*
9/4/02	38	8	30	62	37	25	*
5/29/02	40	9	31	59	37	22	*
4/24/02	35	8	27	64	39	25	*
3/7/02	45	12	33	55	32	23	*
2/6/02	35	8	27	64	39	25	1
11/27/01	35	8	27	64	34	30	*
11/4/01	39	11	28	60	34	26	1
10/21/01**	43	13	30	56	33	23	1
10/14/01**	51	18	33	49	35	14	*
10/6/01**	59	24	35	41	27	14	*
9/22/01**	49	14	35	50	32	18	1
9/15/01**	51	18	33	48	35	13	1
9/11/01**^	58	23	35	40	24	16	1
4/9/00	24	4	20	75	41	34	1
8/20/98****^	32	10	22	67	38	29	1
7/21/96****	39	13	26	61	34	27	*
4/10/96****	35	13	22	65	33	32	*
4/23/95****	42	14	28	57	33	24	1

*6/7/15 and previous: Gallup

**"How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of a terrorist attack?"

***"How worried are you that someone in your family will become a victim of a terrorist attack similar to the bombing in Oklahoma City?"

****"How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of a terrorist attack similar to the bombing in Oklahoma City?"

^One-night poll.

*** END ***