

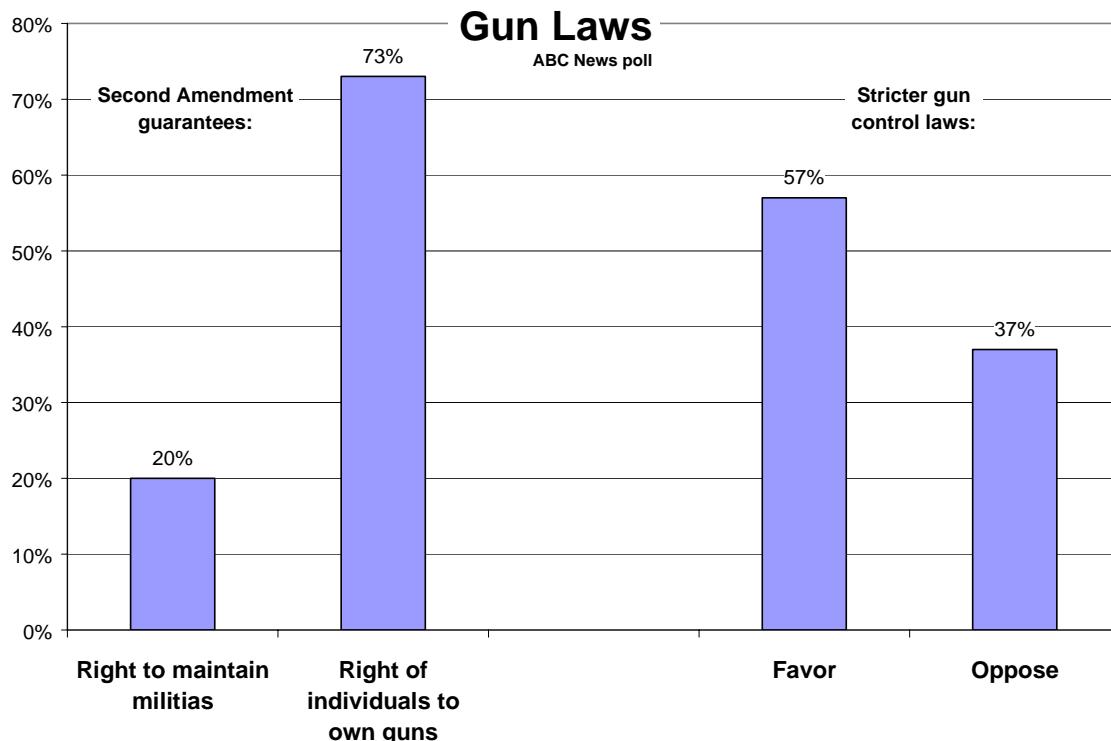
ABC NEWS.COM POLL: GUN RIGHTS - 5/12/02

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 7 a.m. Tuesday, May 14, 2002

Large Majority Says 2nd Amendment Guarantees Right to Gun Ownership

Americans overwhelmingly agree with the Justice Department's new position that the Second Amendment guarantees the right of citizens to own guns. But most also favor some restrictions on that right.

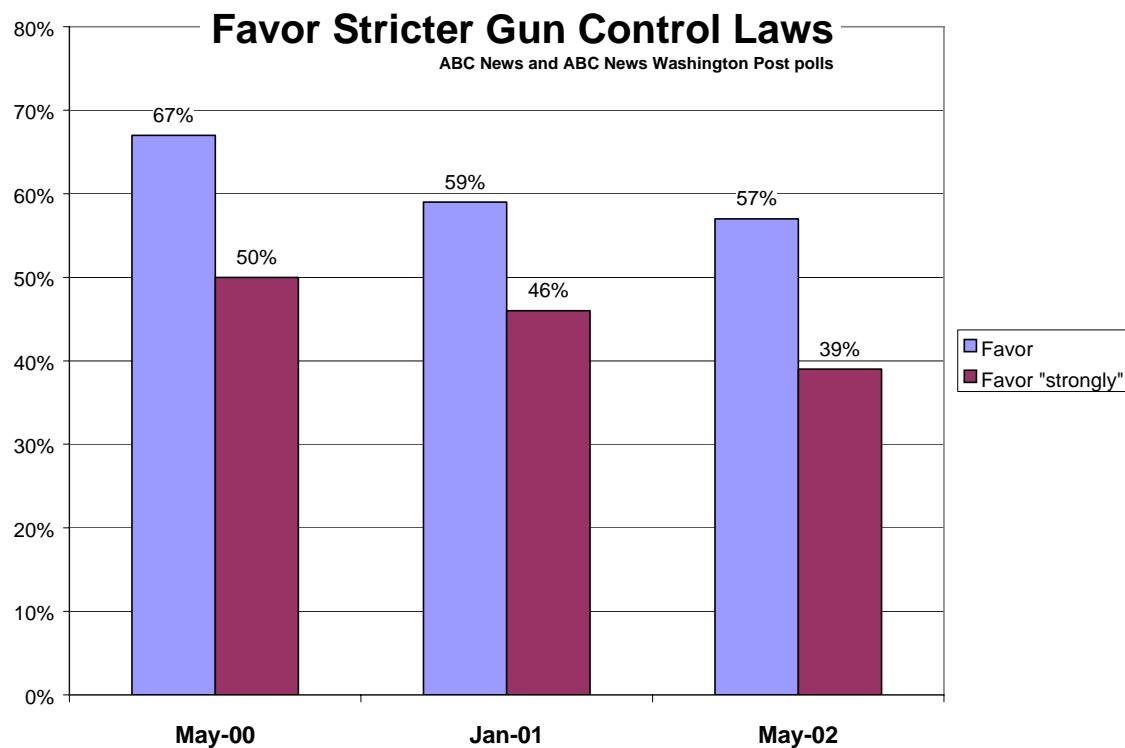
After hearing the Second Amendment verbatim, 73 percent in an ABC News poll said it guarantees the right to individual gun ownership. Twenty percent said, instead, that it only guarantees the right of states to maintain militias – the government's longstanding position until the Justice Department reversed it in a U.S. Supreme Court brief last week.



Most do support some restrictions on this right, with 57 percent of Americans favoring "stricter gun control laws." That's about the same as it was last year, but 10 points below its peak. And "strong" support for gun control, at 39 percent, is down seven points since last year, to its lowest in 10 years. (The government's new position, likewise, says gun ownership should be "subject to reasonable restrictions.")

Previous polling by ABC News has found that larger majorities support specific measures such as background checks at gun shows, mandatory trigger locks, handgun registration, banning assault weapons and licensing handgun owners. But nearly six in 10 have opposed a nationwide ban on the sale of handguns, except to law enforcement officers.

Gun control hasn't ranked as a top-tier issue. Few think new laws would substantially reduce violent crime, or would be more effective than better enforcement of current laws.



	Stricter Gun Control Laws	
	Favor	Favor "strongly"
5/12/02	57%	39
1/15/01	59	46
5/10/00	67	50

GROUPS – Support for stricter gun control rises to just under seven in 10 women, Democrats, nonwhites, and Northeasterners. It even reaches a slim majority, 51 percent, of those who say the Second Amendment guarantees gun ownership.

Large majorities in all demographic groups agree with the Justice Department's new view on gun rights, peaking among men, whites, Republicans and residents of the South and Midwest. Even 65 percent of those who support tougher gun laws agree, as do 66 percent of women and Democrats.

The government's new position states that the Second Amendment "more broadly protects the rights of individuals, including persons who are not members of any militia or engage in active service or training, to possess and bear their own firearms, subject to reasonable restrictions designed to prevent possession by unfit persons or to restrict the possession of types of firearms that are particularly suited to criminal use."

The amendment itself states: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

	Second Amendment grants right to own guns	Favor stricter gun control
All	73%	57
Men	80	44
Women	66	69
Age 18-34	68	62
Age 65+	69	51
Whites	76	56
Nonwhites	63	68
Democrats	66	69
Independents	75	64
Republicans	82	42
Northeast	65	68
Midwest	77	54
South	77	56
West	68	54

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone May 8-12, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,028 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Daniel Merkle.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results:

4. Do you favor or oppose stricter gun control laws in this country? Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

	Favor			Oppose			No opin.
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	
5/12/02	57	39	19	37	22	15	6
1/15/01	59	46	13	39	26	13	2
5/10/00	67	50	17	30	22	9	3

4/2/00	64	49	14	34	21	13	2
9/2/99	63	52	11	35	25	11	2
8/15/99	63	46	16	34	22	12	3
5/16/99	67	55	12	31	21	10	1
10/13/93*	64	40	24	33	20	13	3
6/8/89*	60	28	32	34	23	11	6

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

5. The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution reads as follows: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." In your opinion does this guarantee only the right of the states to maintain militias, or also the right of individuals to own guns?

	Only right to maintain militias	Also right of individuals to own guns	No opin.
5/12/02	20	73	8

END