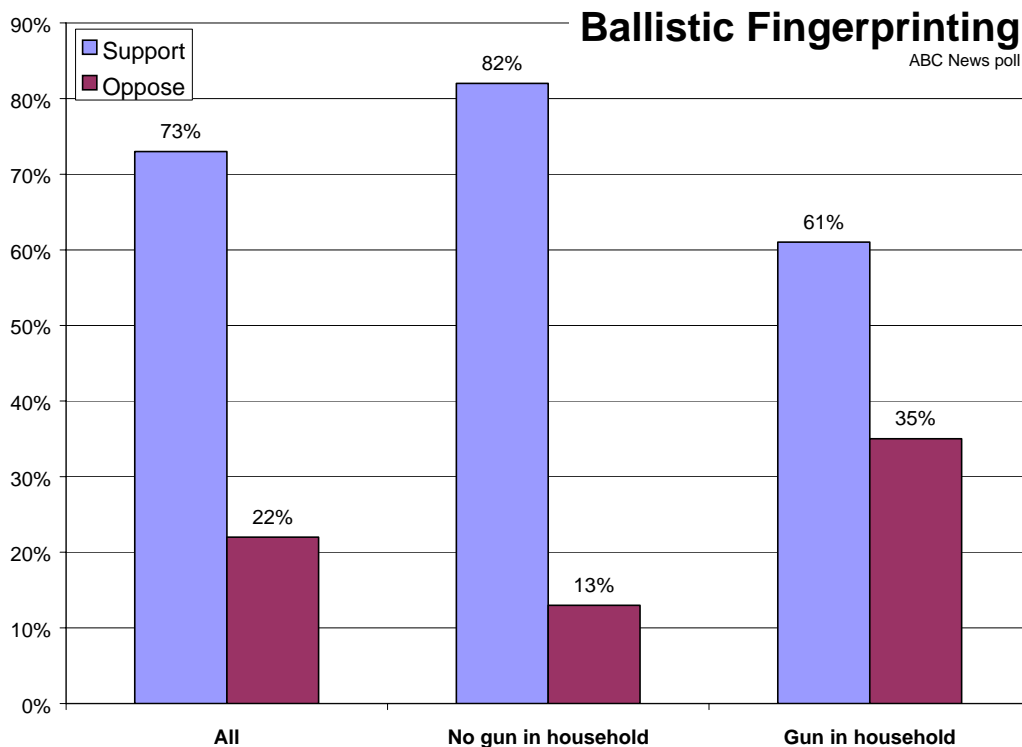


## **Most Support Ballistic Fingerprinting, Think it Would've Helped Catch Sniper**

Most Americans, in gun-owning and non-gun households alike, support a federal law to require ballistic fingerprinting of every gun sold in the United States. If such a law were in place now, two-thirds think it would have helped authorities catch the Washington-area sniper.

Ballistic fingerprints are unique markings guns make on bullets they fire and their shell casings. This ABC News poll finds that 73 percent of Americans, including six in 10 gun owners, favor a law that would require every gun sold in the United States to be test-fired first, so law enforcement would have its fingerprint in case it were ever used in a crime.

Indeed 65 percent of the public believes that if there was a ballistic fingerprinting law already in place, it would have helped authorities catch the D.C-area sniper. Half of them, 33 percent, think it would have helped a “great deal.”



Supporters of the proposal say a national database of ballistic fingerprints would help catch killers. Some opponents call the plan an intrusion on the privacy of law-abiding gun owners, and some argue that the fingerprints can be altered. In a statement released last week, the National Rifle Association said ballistic fingerprinting is “flawed,

unworkable and infringes on the rights of tens of millions of law-abiding Americans.” The Bush administration echoed such concerns, but said it would have the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms conduct a technical review of the issue.

In this poll, after being informed of the argument that ballistic fingerprinting would intrude on the privacy rights of gun owners, 66 percent of Americans continue to support such a law, including 54 percent of those in gun-owning households.

**CATCHING THE SNIPER** – Logically, support for such a system is greater among people who think it would work. Among those who believe a ballistic fingerprinting law would have helped authorities catch the D.C-area sniper, 90 percent, support such a law. Among those who don’t think it would have helped, support dives to 39 percent.

Would it have helped catch the sniper?	
Yes, Net	65%
Great deal	33
Somewhat	32
No	29

**GROUPS** – Women are 21 points more likely than men, and Democrats 21 points more likely than Republicans, to favor a ballistic fingerprinting law. Women and Democrats are more apt to think such a system would have helped officials capture the sniper.

	Support a ballistic fingerprinting law	
	Yes	No
Men	62%	33
Women	83	12
Democrats	84	12
Independents	74	21
Republicans	63	32

**GUN CONTROL** – An ABC News poll last May found that most Americans agree that the Second Amendment guarantees the right to individual gun ownership, but most also favor some restrictions on that right. In general, 57 percent favored stricter gun control laws.

Previous polling by ABC News has found sizable majorities supporting specific measures such as background checks at gun shows, mandatory trigger locks, handgun registration, banning assault weapons and licensing handgun owners. Nearly six in 10, however, have opposed a nationwide ban on handgun sales.

Previous ABC News polling has also found that nearly one in four Americans say they’ve been threatened with a gun (14 percent) or shot at (nine percent).

**GUN OWNERS** - Forty-one percent of Americans in this poll say they have a gun in their household. Gun ownership is higher among men, whites, Republicans and in the South.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Oct. 16-20, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,032 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

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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Full results follow.

1. Every gun makes a unique marking on bullets it shoots. This is known as its ballistic fingerprint. Would you support or oppose a law requiring every gun sold in this country to be test-fired first so the authorities would have its ballistic fingerprint in case it was ever used in a crime?

	Support	Oppose	No opin.
10/20/02 All	73	22	5
Gun owners	61	35	5
Non-gun owners	82	13	5

2. (IF SUPPORT) Some people say this system would intrude on the privacy rights of gun owners. Knowing that view, would you support or oppose this law?

	Support	Oppose	No opin.
10/20/02 All	90	8	2
Gun owners	90	9	2
Non-gun owners	91	7	2

3. Just your best guess, if such a law were in place now do you think it would or would not help authorities catch the sniper who's been shooting people in the Washington D.C. area? (IF HELP) Do you think it would help a great deal or somewhat?

	-----Would help-----			Would not help	No opin.
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat		
10/20/02 All	65	33	32	29	6
Gun owners	56	25	31	39	5
Non-gun owners	73	39	34	22	6

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

	Yes	No	No opinion
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	*

\*\*\*END\*\*\*