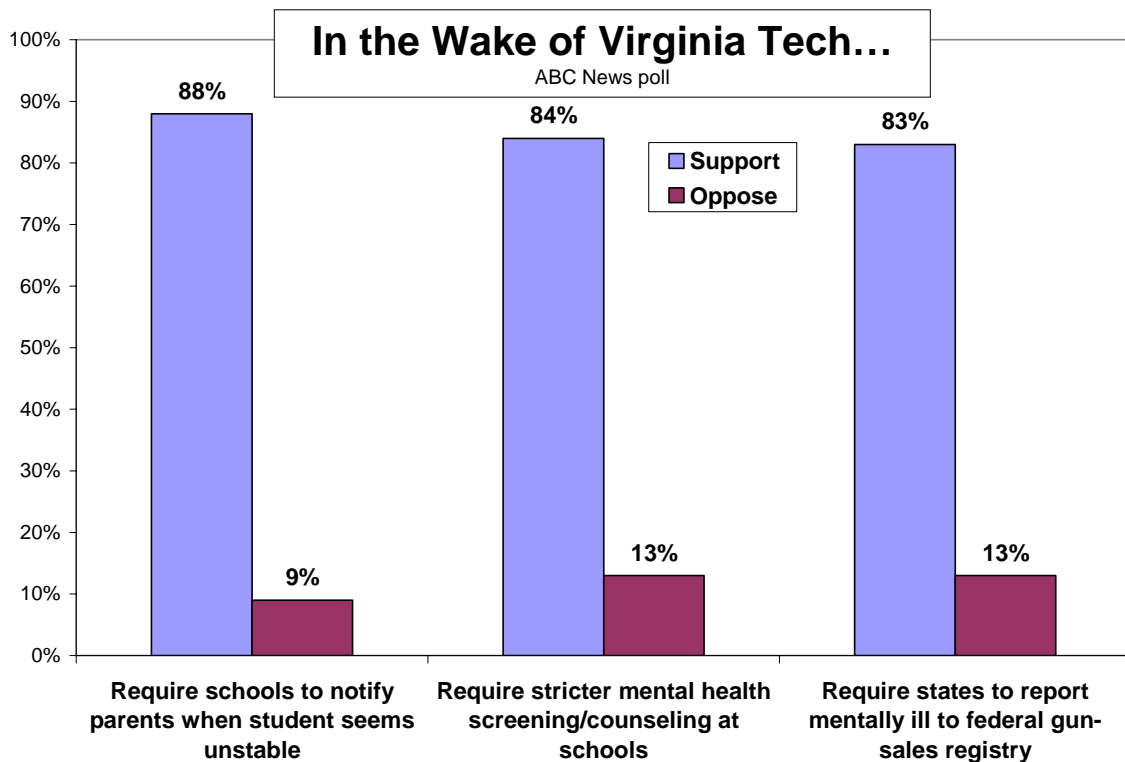


## **Mental Health Measures Broadly Backed, But Culture Gets More Blame than Guns**

Vast majorities of Americans support policy changes in response to the Virginia Tech shootings, including stricter measures to prevent mentally ill people from buying guns and better efforts by universities to identify and counsel disturbed students.

Basic attitudes on gun control are unchanged, and the public remains sharply divided on the effectiveness of gun laws, with far more citing cultural and social influences as the main cause of gun violence. Nonetheless 83 percent in this ABC News poll support steps to ensure that states report mentally ill people to the federal gun-sales registry, a measure that might have blocked the Virginia Tech shooter from buying his weapons.

As many, 84 percent, support requiring universities to provide stricter screening and counseling for students who are suspected of being mentally ill and possibly dangerous to themselves or others. And 88 percent favor requiring schools to notify parents when a student is suspected of being mentally disturbed.

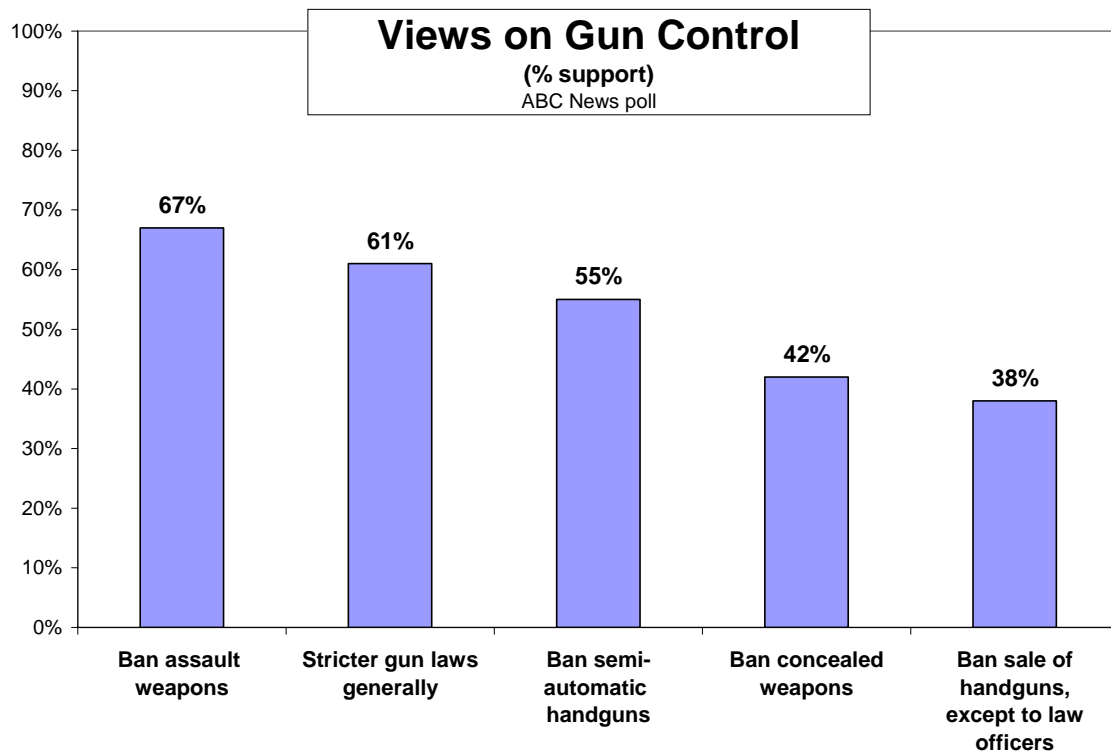


Schools say current antidiscrimination laws leave them little leverage to require students to obtain counseling, and confidentiality laws limit their ability to report concerns about students' mental health to parents. But some movement has begun: George W. Bush has initiated a federal study of issues raised by the Virginia Tech tragedy. And lawmakers Sunday said they'd push legislation to provide the states with money to update the instant-check gun registry with the names of people judged to be mentally ill.

Also in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings, a big majority of Americans, 69 percent, are concerned that this kind of attack could happen in their own community – that is, say it's at least somewhat likely. (Fewer, about a quarter, call it "very" likely.)

**GUN CONTROL** – Basic attitudes on gun control have not moved significantly after previous notorious gun crimes, and the same holds true now. Overall, 61 percent favor stricter gun control in general – identical to its level last fall, and almost exactly its average in polls since 1989. Fewer, 41 percent, "strongly" favor anti-gun laws.

Support varies with the specific measure. Sixty-seven percent support banning assault weapons and 55 percent support banning semi-automatic handguns. But majorities oppose banning concealed weapons or banning all handguns except those used by law enforcement officers. The latter gets just 38 percent support, same as in 2000.



There are big differences among groups on these issues. Women are 22 points more apt than men to support stricter gun laws overall, 72 percent to 50 percent. There are sharp political and ideological gaps. And people in gun-owning households – 45 percent of all Americans – are much less likely to support gun control measures.

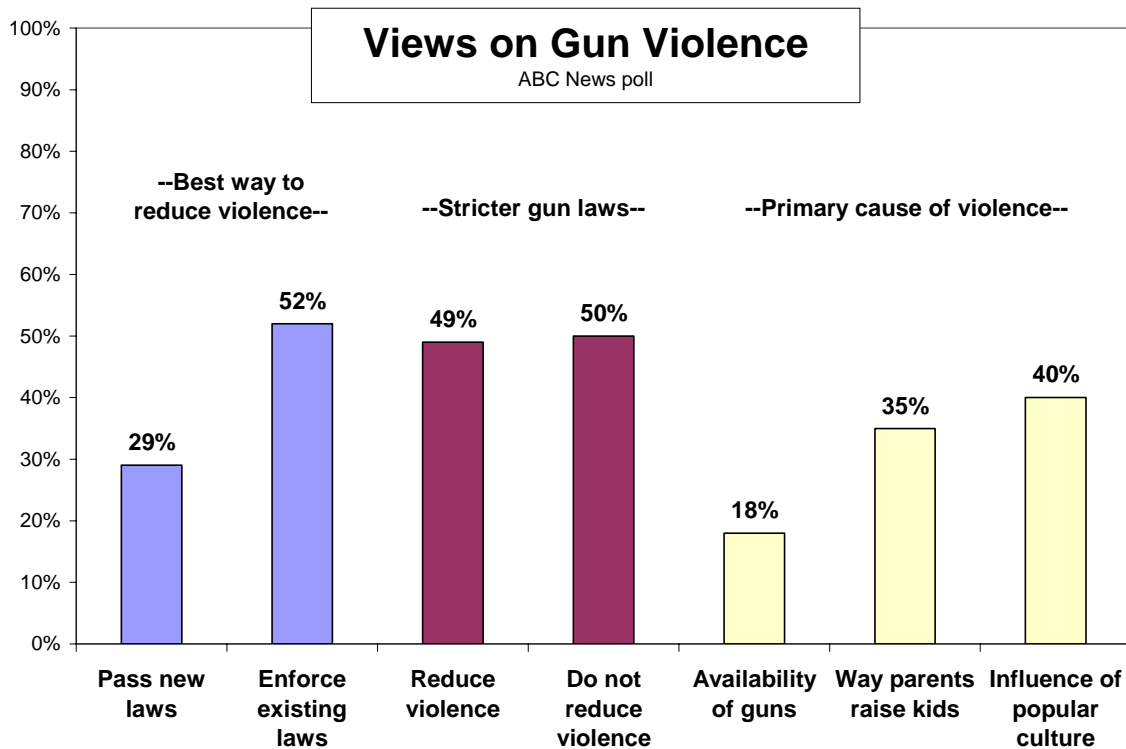
POLICY AND POLITICS – Fundamentally, though, the public has compunctions about gun-control measures that limit the issue’s political clout. As in the past, relatively few Americans are convinced that new laws would have a significant impact on violence; many prefer better enforcement to new legislation; and as noted, most see cultural and social factors, rather than the availability of guns, as the prime cause of gun violence.

Further, gun-control opponents, while smaller in number, are disproportionately likely to make it a do-or-die issue in winning their vote.

Specifically:

-Americans split evenly, 49-50 percent, on whether stricter gun laws would reduce violent crime, again with a 20-point difference between men and women and more than a 30-point gap between Republicans and Democrats, and between conservatives and liberals. Overall just 27 percent think such laws would do “a lot” to reduce violence.

-The public by a 23-point margin, 52 to 29 percent, continues to prefer better enforcement of existing gun laws to enactment of new ones. On this a majority of men (58 percent) and a plurality of women (46 percent) agree, while partisan and ideological divisions are sharper.

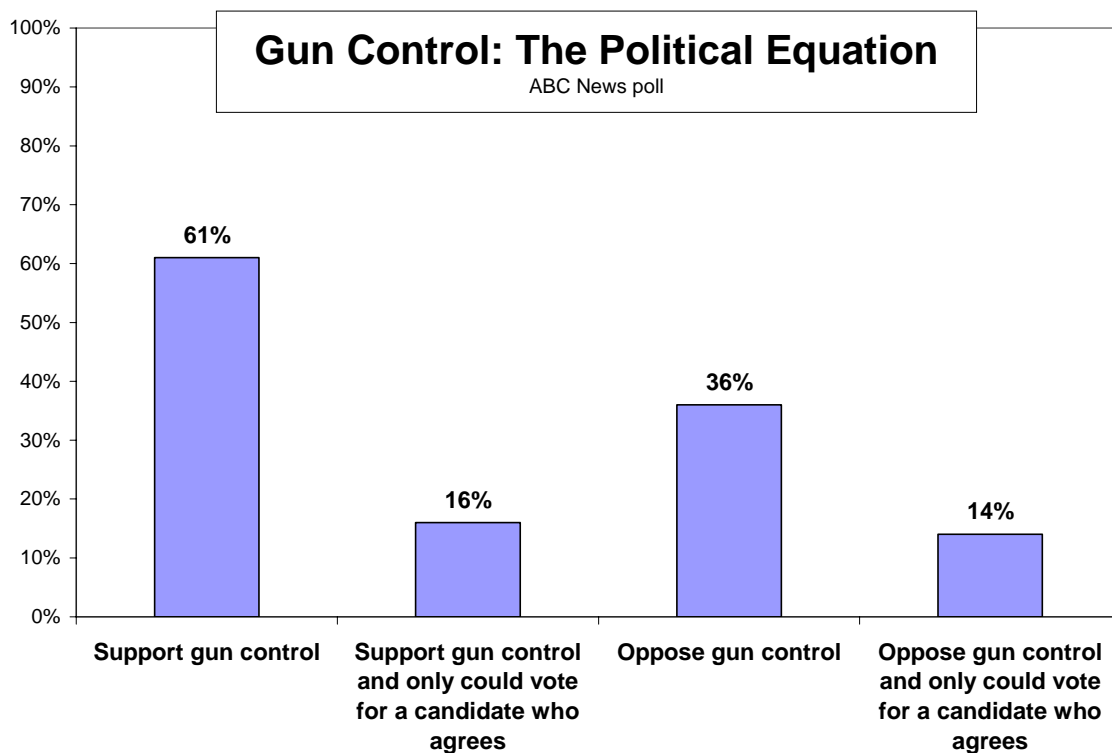


-Asked the primary cause of gun violence, far more Americans blame the effects of popular culture (40 percent) or the way parents raise their children (35 percent) than the

availability of guns (18 percent). In no population group does more than about a quarter cite the availability of guns as the chief cause of gun violence.

-In the most direct political calculation, 60 percent say they could vote for a political candidate with whom they disagree on gun control.

Notably, two-thirds of gun control supporters say they could still vote for someone who disagrees with them on the issue – but among gun control opponents, that drops to 49 percent. Given the size of each group, that makes for essentially identical numbers of single-issue pro- and anti-gun voters, despite gun control’s 61-percent popularity overall.



In one possible shift, more people today say they’d only vote for a candidate who agrees with them on gun control – 31 percent overall – than said so in a March 2004 poll, 23 percent. One reason may be that the 2004 poll was focused on various political issues; this one directly on guns and gun crime. It’s a measure to keep watching.

One other change is that, compared to a 2000 poll by Gallup, more people now blame gun violence on popular culture, and fewer blame it on child-rearing. But about the same number chiefly blame the availability of guns.

**CONCERNS** – Substantial numbers in this survey express concerns both about the performance of Virginia Tech in advance of the shootings and the news media afterward. Given the behavior of the gunman in the months leading up to the shooting, 54 percent say the university did not do enough to investigate concerns about his mental health.

As for the media, the public divides on the airing of photos and videos the shooter had prepared of himself – 48 percent say it was wrong for news organizations to have aired these, while 43 percent say it was the right thing to have done. Opposition peaks among older and better-educated adults; about six in 10 in both groups say it was wrong for these to have aired.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone April 22, 2007, among a random national sample of 788 adults. The results have a 3.5-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (\*= less than 0.5 percent).

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

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/22/07	61	41	20	36	12	23	3
10/8/06	61	45	16	37	15	22	2
5/12/02	57	39	19	37	15	22	6
1/15/01	59	46	13	39	13	26	2
5/10/00	67	50	17	30	9	22	3
4/2/00	64	49	14	34	13	21	2
9/2/99	63	52	11	35	11	25	2
8/15/99	63	46	16	34	12	22	3
5/16/99	67	55	12	31	10	21	1
10/13/93*	64	40	24	33	13	20	3
6/8/89*	60	28	32	34	11	23	6

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

2. Would you support or oppose a law requiring a nationwide ban on (ITEM)? Do you feel that way strongly, or only somewhat?

4/22/07 - Summary Table\*

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opin.
	NET	Strg.	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Strg.	
a. Semi-automatic handguns, which automatically re-load every time the trigger is pulled	55	46	9	41	9	32	3
b. The sale of assault weapons	67	54	13	30	10	21	3
c. People carrying a concealed weapon	42	28	14	55	20	35	3
d. The sale of handguns, except to law							

enforcement officers      38      28      9      60      17      42      3

\*Items a-b asked of half sample, c-d asked of other half.

Trend where available:

a. No trend.

b. The sale of assault weapons

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
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

c. People carrying a concealed weapon

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/22/07	42	28	14	55	20	35	3
9/2/99	49	39	10	48	16	33	2

d. The sale of handguns, except to law enforcement officers

	----- Favor -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/22/07	38	28	9	60	17	42	3
5/10/00	38	26	12	59	16	43	3
9/2/99	32	23	9	65	18	47	3

3. Do you think stricter gun control laws would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country, or not? (IF YES: Would it reduce it a lot, or just somewhat?)

	----- Reduce -----			Not reduce	No opinion
	NET	A lot	Somewhat		
4/22/07	49	27	21	50	2
4/2/00	51	24	26	48	2
9/2/99	50	30	21	48	1

4. What do you think is the best way to reduce gun violence in this country - (by passing stricter gun control laws), or (by stricter enforcement of existing laws)?

	Passing new laws	Enforcing existing laws	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
4/22/07	29	52	9	8	1
4/2/00	33	53	7	5	2

5. If you agreed with a political candidate on other issues, but not on the issue of gun control, could you still vote for that candidate, or not?

	Could still vote	Could not still vote	No opinion
4/22/07	60	31	9

Compare to:

If you agreed with a presidential candidate on other issues, but not on the issue of gun control, could you still vote for him, or not?

	Could still vote	Could not still vote	No opinion
3/7/04*	75	23	3

\*Gun control part of a list of items.

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

	Yes	No	No opinion
4/22/07	45	55	0
10/8/06	42	58	*
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	*

7. Which of the following do you think is the primary cause of gun violence in America - (the availability of guns), (the way parents raise their children), or (the influence of popular culture such as movies, television, and the Internet)?

	Availability of guns	Way parents raise kids	Influence of popular culture	Other (vol.)	No opinion
4/22/07	18	35	40	5	2
5/7/00*	21	45	26	6	2

\*Gallup

8. Do you think states should or should not be required to report mentally ill people to a federal database, in order to prevent them from buying guns? Do you feel that way strongly, or only somewhat?

	-----Should-----			-----Should not-----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
4/22/07	83	69	14	13	6	6	4

9. Thinking about the shootings at Virginia Tech University last week - do you feel that school officials did or did not do enough to investigate concerns that the student who committed these shootings was mentally unstable?

	Did enough	Did not do enough	No opinion
4/22/07	33	54	14

10. Would you support or oppose a law requiring universities to provide stricter screening and counseling for students who are suspected of being mentally unstable and possibly dangerous to themselves or others?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/22/07	84	13	2

11. Would you support or oppose changing confidentiality laws so that when a college student is suspected of being mentally disturbed, the school would be required to notify their parents?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
4/22/07	88	9	3

12. In your opinion, how likely is it that these kinds of shootings could happen in your community - is it very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?

	-----Likely-----			-----Not likely-----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Very	
4/22/07	69	26	44	27	14	13	4
3/22/05*	73	30	43	24	12	12	3
3/11/01	65	31	34	33	20	13	2
4/9/00	66	30	36	31	18	13	3
5/23/99	74	37	37	25	14	11	1
4/21/99	68	30	38	29	14	15	3

\*Gallup/CNN/USA Today. 2005 question specified shootings in Red Lake, Minn.; 1999 and 2000, Columbine High School, Littleton, Colo.

13. Do you think news organizations did the right thing or the wrong thing by airing photos and videos the Virginia Tech gunman made of himself?

	Right	Wrong	No opinion
4/22/07	43	48	9

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