



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
 For Release: Monday, April 23, 2007
 6:30 pm EDT

GUNS AND VIOLENCE
 April 20-22, 2007

A majority of Americans wants stricter handgun laws, although in no higher numbers today than in the past. After last week's mass shooting incident at Virginia Tech, more than half say that stricter laws could have helped prevent at least some of the violence there. But Americans continue to oppose a ban on all handguns.

Overall, 66% of Americans think there should be stricter laws covering the sale of handguns. 4% say they should be less strict, while 28% think they should be kept as they are.

These views are similar to those in the past. In August 1999, four months after the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, 67% said laws covering the sale of handguns should be more strict.

SHOULD LAWS COVERING THE SALE OF HANDGUNS BE ...?

	Now	5/2000	8/1999	4/1981
More strict	66%	71%	67%	62%
Less strict	4	3	5	4
Kept as they are	28	26	23	31

Both men and women would like to see handgun laws made stricter. 78% of Democrats support stricter handgun laws, compared to 51% of Republicans.

But Americans oppose an outright ban on handguns. Just 33% favor a ban on the sale of all handguns except those that are issued to law enforcement officers. 64% oppose such a ban. Women are more likely than men to support a ban on handguns, but a majority of them are still opposed to it. Republicans are overwhelmingly against a handgun ban (82%); 55% of Democrats also oppose one.

A BAN ON THE SALE OF ALL HANDGUNS

	Now	3/2000	4/1999	1/1994	3/1989	4/1981
Favor	33%	34%	43%	46%	40%	43%
Oppose	64	63	53	50	55	51

The public has historically been against a ban on handguns. In fact, support for banning them has even decreased some in recent years. In April 1999, just days after the shootings at Columbine, 43% favored a ban -- similar to the percentage a few years before. Since then, however, only about a third of Americans have supported a ban on handguns, except those that are issued to law enforcement officers.

WHAT COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE SHOOTINGS AT VIRGINIA TECH?

As for whether stricter gun laws could have helped prevent what happened at Virginia Tech last week, 53% believe stricter laws would have done something to prevent the violence there, although only a third - 32% - think stricter gun laws would have helped a lot. Four in 10 Americans think stricter gun laws would have had no impact.

WOULD STRICTER GUN CONTROL LAWS HAVE PREVENTED THE VIOLENCE AT VIRGINIA TECH?

A lot	32%
A little	21
No effect	43

66% of Democrats say stricter gun laws would have had an impact on the violence at Virginia Tech; only 40% of Republicans agree.

One in four Americans thinks allowing people to carry concealed handguns would have reduced some of the violence at Virginia Tech last week. 23% think it would have helped, but just as many, 25%, say it would have made the situation worse. 45% believe allowing adults to carry concealed weapons would have had no effect on the magnitude of the violence.

WOULD ALLOWING ADULTS TO CARRY CONCEALED HANDGUNS HAVE REDUCED THE VIOLENCE AT VIRGINIA TECH?

Would have reduced	23%
Would have made it worse	25
Would have had no effect	45

32% of Republicans think if adults were able to carry concealed weapons the violence at Virginia Tech could have been reduced; 30% of Democrats think the violence would have been worse if that were permitted.

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 644 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone April 20-22, 2007. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus four percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

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q9 In general, do you feel the laws covering the sale of handguns should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS	May00b
	%	%
More strict	66	71
Less strict	4	3
Kept as they are	28	26
DK/NA	2	1

q10 Would you favor or oppose a ban on the sale of all handguns, except those that are issued to law enforcement officers?

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Favor	33	34
Oppose	64	63
DK/NA	3	4

q11 Do you think that stricter gun control laws would have done a lot to prevent the violence at Virginia Tech last week, done a little, or had no effect on preventing the violence at Virginia Tech last week?

A lot	32
A little	21
Had no effect	43
It depends (vol.)	1
DK/NA	3

q12 Do you think that allowing adults to carry concealed handguns would have reduced some of the violence at Virginia Tech last week, would have made the violence there worse, or would that have had no effect on the violence there?

Would have reduced	23
Would have made it worse	25
Had no effect	45
It depends (vol.)	3
DK/NA	4

Total Respondents: 644
Margin of error: 4 points