

FIREARMS

Americans Certify Second Amendment, Divided Over Gun Laws

A majority of respondents endorse the “shall-issue” prerogative to deal with the question of concealed carry.

[NEW YORK – Jan. 25, 2012] - Most people in the United States agree on the meaning of the Second Amendment, and half endorse the “shall-issue” prerogative to carry concealed weapons in public, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,009 American adults, 85 per cent of respondents believe that the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution means that individuals have the right to keep and bear arms, while only seven per cent openly disagree with this view.

The interpretation of the Second Amendment is similar across party lines and among both gun owners and people who do not possess a firearm.

Americans are split when assessing existing federal regulations related to firearm ownership, with 44 per cent saying they are satisfied with these guidelines, and 44 per cent voicing dissatisfaction.

Republicans (52%), Independents (47%) and gun owners (54%) are more likely to say they are satisfied with the status quo, while Democrats (46%) and those who do not own a gun (47%) are more likely to be dissatisfied.

KEY FINDINGS

- **85% believe that the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution means that individuals have the right to keep and bear arms**
- **51% (+4 since January 2011) support the idea of allowing citizens to carry a concealed weapon if they meet specific criteria laid out in the law**
- **61% believe only the police and other authorized persons should have access to semi-automatic weapons**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From January 17 to January 18, 2012, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,009 American adults who are Springboard America panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of the United States. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Across the country, 46 per cent of respondents call for stricter firearms laws, with the highest level of support from Democrats (62%), Independents (51%) and Americans who do not possess a firearm (55%). Conversely, Republicans and gun owners would prefer to have either looser regulations or the continuation of existing ones.

Seven-in-ten Americans hold no reservations about people who are eligible to own firearms having access to handguns (73%) and rifles or shotguns (72%). However, only three-in-ten respondents (30%) feel the same way about semi-automatic weapons, with a majority (61%) suggesting that only the police and other authorized persons should have access to them.

On the question of concealed carry—where states have enacted different regulations—half of respondents (51%) support the “shall-issue” notion of allowing citizens to carry a concealed weapon if they meet specific criteria laid out in the law. It is important to note that this prerogative is endorsed by a majority of Republicans (60%), Independents (53%) and gun owners (60%), as well as a plurality of Democrats (44%) and Americans who do not possess a firearm.

Analysis

The views of Americans on the Second Amendment have not gone through any significant fluctuations over the past two years. Democrats continue to call for stricter firearms regulations, while Republicans are mostly satisfied with the status quo.

Since January 2011, there has been a four-point increase in the proportion of Americans who endorse “shall-issue” jurisdiction to deal with concealed carry. These guidelines are now in place, albeit with different overall requirements, in three of every four American states.

Review our [June 2010](#) and [January 2011](#) surveys on firearms.

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About Angus Reid Public Opinion

Angus Reid Public Opinion is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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**For more information, please contact
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Firearms

The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution reads: "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." For you, personally, what does the Second Amendment mean?

	United States	Political ID			Firearm ownership	
		Democrat	Republican	Independent	Owns	Does not own
That individuals have the right to keep and bear arms	85%	80%	92%	86%	93%	79%
That individuals do not have the right to keep and bear arms	7%	10%	3%	8%	4%	9%
Not sure	8%	10%	5%	6%	3%	12%

Firearms

At this point, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with existing federal regulations related to firearm ownership?

	United States	Political ID			Firearm ownership	
		Democrat	Republican	Independent	Owns	Does not own
Very satisfied / Moderately satisfied	44%	39%	52%	47%	54%	37%
Moderately dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	44%	46%	38%	45%	39%	47%
Not sure	13%	15%	10%	8%	7%	16%

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Firearms

If it were up to you, would you prefer to have stricter firearm laws, looser firearm laws, or would you keep existing regulations the way they are?

	United States	Political ID			Firearm ownership	
		Democrat	Republican	Independent	Owns	Does not own
Stricter firearms laws	46%	62%	26%	51%	33%	55%
Looser firearms laws	17%	11%	23%	13%	27%	10%
Keep existing regulations	27%	19%	42%	26%	34%	23%
Not sure	10%	8%	8%	9%	6%	12%

Firearms

Below is a list of weapons. For each one, please say whether this type of weapon should be available to every American who is eligible to own firearms, or only to the police and other authorized persons?

	Type of weapon		
	Handguns	Rifles / Shotguns	Semi-automatic firearms
Every American who is eligible to own firearms should have access to these weapons	73%	72%	30%
Only the police and other authorized persons should have access to these weapons	19%	20%	61%
Not sure	7%	8%	9%

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Firearms

Across the U.S, states have different regulations related to how individuals can carry a concealed weapon in public. Thinking about your own state, which one of these options would you prefer to implement?

	United States	Political ID			Firearm ownership	
		Democrat	Republican	Independent	Owns	Does not own
Citizens should not be allowed to carry a concealed weapon at all	21%	28%	12%	23%	11%	27%
Citizens should be granted a permit to carry a concealed weapon if local authorities agree to it	15%	16%	17%	10%	13%	15%
Citizens should be granted a permit to carry a concealed weapon if they meet specific criteria laid out in the law	51%	44%	60%	53%	60%	45%
Citizens should be allowed to carry a concealed weapon without any permit	8%	6%	6%	10%	13%	5%
Not sure	6%	6%	4%	4%	3%	8%

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