



**CBS NEWS POLL**  
 For release: Thursday, December 12, 2013  
 6:30 pm ET

**A Year after Sandy Hook: Views of Gun Laws,  
 Background Checks, and Mental Health Screening**  
 December 4-8, 2013

- 85% of Americans favor a federal law requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers, down from 92% in January. Large majorities of Republicans (84%), Democrats (92%), and independents (81%) favor such a law.
- More generally, nearly half – 49% - of Americans think gun laws should be made stricter, while 36% think they should kept as they are, and 12% think they should be less strict.
- 27% of Americans think stricter gun laws would help a lot to deter gun violence, while 44% think better mental health screening would help a lot.

**Background checks**

On the cusp of the anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, Americans overwhelmingly support a federal law requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers, a measure that has so far failed to be put into law. 85% of Americans favor such a law, including large majorities of Republicans (84%), Democrats (92%), independents (81%), and gun owners (84%).

<b>Background Checks for All Gun Buyers</b>					
	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	Gun owners
Favor	85%	84%	92%	81%	84%
Oppose	12	13	6	15	14

As widespread as this support is, it is down slightly from January 2013, a month after the shooting. Then support for a federal law requiring universal background checks was at 92%.

<b>Background Checks for All Gun Purchases</b>			
	Now	4/2013	1/2013
Favor	85%	88%	92%
Oppose	12	11	7

**Gun Laws**

But Americans remain far more divided generally on the idea of stricter gun laws. 49% advocate stricter gun laws, while 36% think gun laws should be kept as they are, and 12% think they should be made less strict.

Results are nearly identical to what they were in May, though support for stricter gun laws is down from a year ago right after the shooting – when support increased to 57%.

	Now	Gun Laws Should Be...			
		5/2013	12/2012	4/2012	1/2011
More strict	49%	51%	57%	39%	46%
Less strict	12	11	9	13	13
Kept as they are	36	36	30	41	38

There are partisan differences: just 25% of Republicans support stricter gun laws, while such a measure is favored by 70% of Democrats and a plurality of independents. A slight majority of gun owners think gun laws should be kept as they are now.

	Total	Gun Laws Should Be...			
		Reps	Dems	Inds	Gun owners
More strict	49%	25%	70%	47%	26%
Less strict	12	17	7	12	19
Kept as they are	36	55	20	37	53

These differences are reflected in a disagreement over just how effective stricter gun laws would be in helping to deter gun violence. While a slight majority of Americans think stricter gun laws would help at least some, just 27% think they would help a lot. 43% don't think stricter gun laws would help much, if at all. Democrats are the most optimistic that stricter gun laws would help, while Republicans are the most skeptical.

#### How Much Would Stricter Gun Laws Help to Deter Gun Violence?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	Gun owners
A lot	27%	10%	39%	26%	9%
Some	29	21	37	27	24
Not much/not at all	43	68	22	45	65

#### Mental Health Screening

There is more agreement on another measure to help deter gun violence: better mental health screening. Three in four Americans think better mental health screening would help at least some, including 44% who think it will help a lot. Regardless of partisanship, most Americans think better health screening would help at least some to prevent gun violence, though Republicans are less likely to think it will help a lot.

#### How Much Would Better Mental Health Screening Help to Deter Gun Violence?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds	Gun owners
A lot	44%	28%	54%	45%	36%
Some	33	41	31	31	36
Not much/at all	21	28	15	21	25

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This poll was conducted by telephone December 4-8, 2013 among 1,015 adults nationwide. Data collection was conducted on behalf of CBS News by Social Science Research Solutions of Media, PA. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups may be higher. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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Q1. In general, do you think laws covering the sale of guns should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?

	*** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Gun	May13B
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Owner	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
More strict	49	25	70	47	26	51
Less strict	12	17	7	12	19	11
Kept as they are	36	55	20	37	53	36
Don't know/No answer	3	3	3	4	2	2

Q2. Do you favor or oppose a federal law requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers?

						Apr13B
Favor	85	84	92	81	84	88
Oppose	12	13	6	15	14	11
Don't know/No answer	3	3	2	3	2	2

Q3. How much do you think stricter gun laws would do to help prevent gun violence? Would stricter laws help a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

						Feb13A
A lot	27	10	39	26	9	21
Some	29	21	37	27	24	33
Not much	18	30	15	14	19	19
Not at all	25	38	7	31	46	26
Don't know/No answer	2	2	1	2	2	2

Q4. How much do you think better mental health screening and treatment would do to help prevent gun violence? Would better mental health screening and treatment help a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

A lot	44	28	54	45	36	46
Some	33	41	31	31	36	35
Not much	13	18	9	13	15	9
Not at all	8	10	6	8	10	8
Don't know/No answer	2	3	1	3	2	2

Q5. Do you think removing Saddam Hussein from power was worth the loss of American life and other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?

						Nov11A
Worth it	36	56	31	31	43	41
Not worth it	49	32	57	52	48	50
Don't know/No answer	14	12	12	16	9	9

Q7. Do you or does any other member of your household own a handgun, rifle, shot-gun, or any other kind of firearm?

**\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Jan13a
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, self	18	22	12	19	21
Yes, other member of household	12	18	9	12	17
Yes, self and other	8	15	5	7	9
No	57	40	70	56	49
Don't know/No answer	5	5	3	5	3

	UNWEIGHTED	WEIGHTED
Total Respondents	1015	
Total Republicans	217	215
Total Democrats	314	296
Total independents	484	503