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Opinions on Gun Policy and the 2016 Campaign

Most Clinton, Trump backers favor stricter background checks

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Opinions on Gun Policy and the 2016 Campaign

Most Clinton, Trump backers favor stricter background checks

For the past several years, large majorities of both Democrats and Republicans have favored making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks.

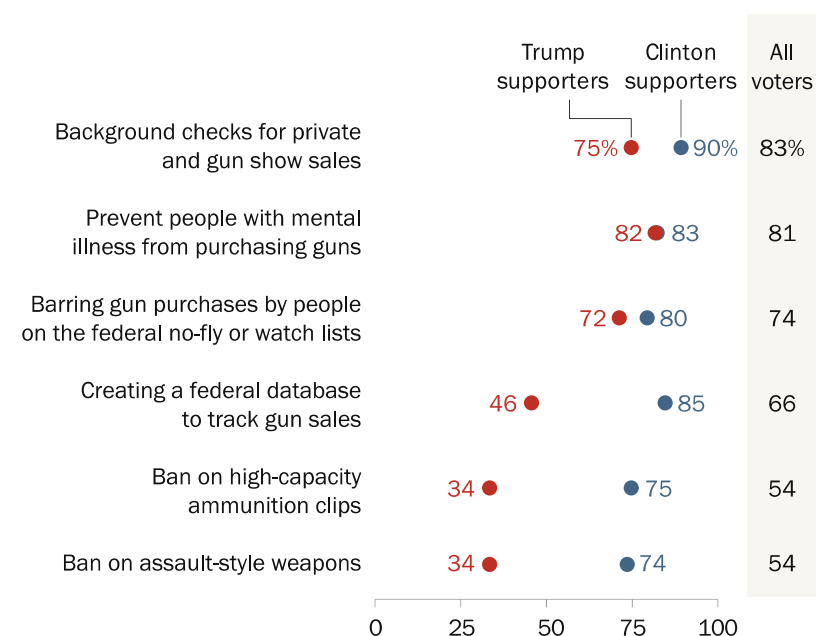
Today, this proposal draws support from 90% of registered voters who back Hillary Clinton and 75% of voters who back Donald Trump.

The latest national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted August 9-16 among 2,010 adults, including 1,567 registered voters, also finds broad support among both candidates' backers for other gun policy proposals, including barring people on federal watch lists from purchasing guns.

Other proposals are much more divisive, however. For instance, about twice as many Clinton supporters as Trump backers favor a ban on assault-style weapons (74% vs. 34%) and the differences are about as large in views of a ban on high-capacity ammunition clips (75% vs. 34%).

Where Clinton and Trump supporters stand on gun policy proposals

Among registered voters, % of Clinton/Trump supporters who favor ...



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016.

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Moreover, the gap in how candidates' supporters view overall priorities for the nation's gun policy is much wider today than it has been in any presidential campaign dating to 2000.

As in recent years, the public overall remains divided over whether it is generally more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns (52%) or to control gun ownership (46%).

Today, registered voters who prefer the Democratic candidate are more supportive of controlling gun ownership than during the four previous campaigns, while supporters of the Republican candidate are less supportive.

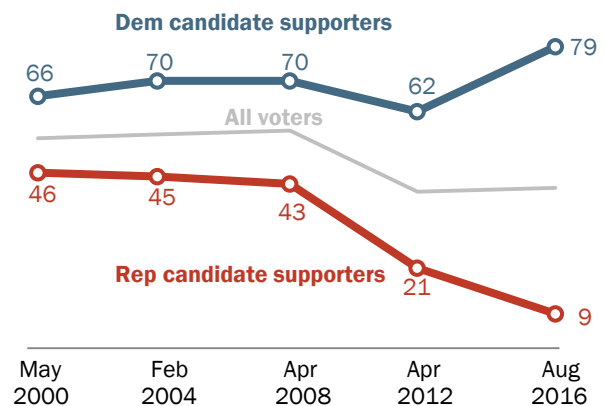
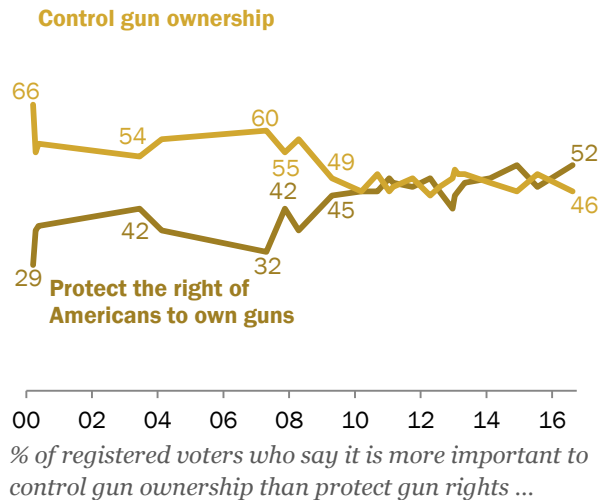
By more than four-to-one (79% to 19%), Clinton supporters prioritize controlling gun ownership over protecting gun rights. By about nine-to-one (90% to 9%), Trump supporters express the opposite view – that it is generally more important to protect gun rights than control gun ownership.

In 2000, there was a 20-percentage-point gap between the shares of Al Gore and George W. Bush supporters who said it was more important to control gun ownership than protect gun rights (66% vs 46%). By 2012, when Barack Obama ran against Mitt Romney, that difference had increased to 41 points (62% vs. 21%) and today it stands at 70 points (79% of Clinton supporters vs. 9% of Trump supporters).

To be sure, many Trump supporters favor specific gun policy proposals, while also saying that, in general, it is more important to protect gun rights than control gun ownership. For instance, among the 90% of Trump supporters who prioritize gun rights, 74% also favor expanded background checks. But only about three-in-ten of these Trump supporters who say it is more important to protect gun rights favor bans on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips (31% each).

Widening gap among supporters of presidential candidates in gun priorities

% of general public saying it is more important to ...



Notes: First graphic is based on general public. Second graphic is based on registered voters. Don't know responses not shown. Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016

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The survey also finds a substantial divide in the views of Clinton and Trump supporters about whether gun ownership does more to protect or endanger public safety. A majority of the public (58%) says that gun ownership does more to protect people from crime than to put people's safety at risk; 37% say gun ownership does more to endanger personal safety.

Fully 89% of registered voters who support Trump say gun ownership does more to protect than to put people's safety at risk, compared with just 9% who believe it does more to risk people's safety. Among Clinton supporters, about twice as many say gun ownership does more to endanger personal safety than say it protects people from becoming victims of crime (65% vs. 32%).

Republicans less supportive of assault weapons ban

There is broad public support for background checks for private gun sales and sales at gun shows (81%), laws to prevent the mentally ill from buying guns (76%), barring gun purchases by those on government screening lists (71%), and creating a federal database to track gun sales (68%).

About half support bans on assault-style weapons (52%) and high-capacity ammunition clips (50%).

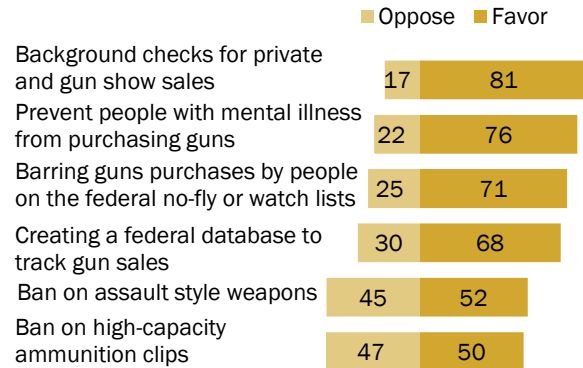
For the most part, opinions on these issues have changed little in recent years, but support for an assault weapons ban has slipped from 57% to 52% since July 2015, with the decline driven by Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

Currently, 35% of Republicans and Republican leaners favor an assault weapons ban, while 62% are opposed. In July 2015, Republicans were more divided between support (44%) and opposition (51%). Republican opposition to an assault weapons ban is at its highest point since 2013, the first time Pew Research Center asked this question.

Democrats' views are unchanged over the past year: Currently, 67% favor an assault weapons ban, while 32% are opposed.

Public's views of gun policy proposals

% who favor/oppose each of the following gun measures



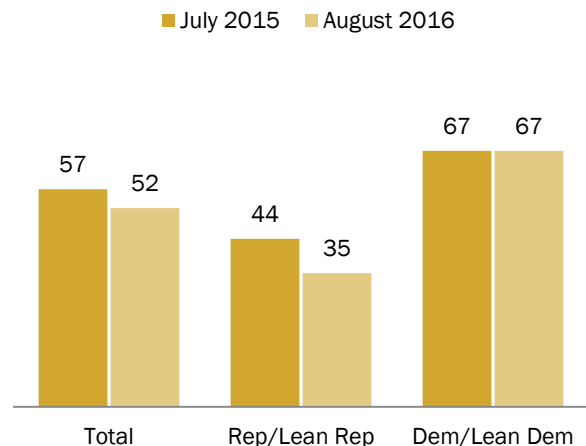
Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016.

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Fewer Republicans favor ban on assault weapons than did so a year ago

% who favor a ban on assault style weapons



Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016.

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Demographic differences in views of gun policy proposals

Public support for expanded background checks spans nearly all demographic groups. This also is the case for proposals to prevent the mentally ill – and those on federal no-fly and watch lists – from purchasing guns.

Similarly, there is widespread support for creating a federal database to track gun sales, though more women (74%) than men (61%) favor this. Support also is greater among blacks (81%) and Hispanics (76%) than among whites (64%).

A proposed federal database on gun sales also draws more support from those households in which there are no guns (79%) than among those in gun-owning households (58%). But the differences by gun ownership are modest in views of bans on gun purchases by the mentally ill and those on federal no fly and watch lists.

And identical shares of those in gun-owning and non-gun-owning households favor making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks (83% each).

Broad support for expanded background checks among those in gun-owning households

% who favor each policy proposal

	Federal database of gun sales	Background checks for gun shows	Barring gun buys by people on no-fly lists	Laws to prevent mentally ill from buying guns
	%	%	%	%
Total	68	81	71	76
Men	61	78	71	79
Women	74	84	70	73
White	64	84	76	83
Black	81	78	64	75
Hispanic	76	72	53	54
18-29	73	81	67	77
30-49	67	83	72	73
50-64	67	81	73	80
65+	65	79	70	77
College grad+	69	88	80	86
Some college	67	84	72	79
HS or less	68	74	63	67
Republican/Lean Rep	50	78	69	79
Democrat/Lean Dem	82	86	74	77
Gun in household (44%)	58	83	73	82
No gun in household (51%)	79	83	70	73

Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016.

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The demographic differences – and differences between gun-owning and non-gun-owning households – are much wider when it comes to bans on assault-style weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips.

Women are more likely than men to favor both of these proposals. And while majorities of college graduates favor bans on assault-style weapons (68%) and high-capacity clips (64%), fewer than half of those who have not completed college say the same (46%, 45%).

Roughly six-in-ten of those in households without guns support bans on assault-style weapons (61%) and high-capacity clips (57%). Among those in gun-owning households, 45% back each of these proposals.

Sizeable gender differences in support of bans on assault weapons, large clips

% who favor each policy proposal

	Ban on assault style weapons	Ban on high-capacity ammunition clips
	%	%
Total	52	50
Men	44	45
Women	60	55
White	55	54
Black	60	58
Hispanic	37	32
18-29	48	42
30-49	51	50
50-64	53	53
65+	59	56
College grad+	68	64
Some college	49	48
HS or less	43	42
Republican/Lean Rep	35	36
Democrat/Lean Dem	67	64
Gun in household (44%)	45	45
No gun in household (51%)	61	57

Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016.

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Does gun ownership do more to protect or put safety at risk?

A majority of the public (58%) says that gun ownership in this country does more to protect people from becoming victims of crime, compared with 37% who believe it does more to put people's safety at risk. These views are on par with findings from roughly a year ago when 54% said gun ownership does more to protect people from crime, and four-in-ten (40%) believed it created more of a safety risk.

By nearly two-to-one (64% vs. 33%), whites say that gun ownership does more to protect people than to endanger safety. Blacks are evenly divided (49% say it is more of a safety risk vs. 46% who say it protects people from crime).

Adults with postgraduate degrees are the only educational group in which a majority (59%) says that gun ownership does more to put people's safety at risk than to protect people from crime. Those with college degrees are divided (51% say it protects people from crime, 48% say it is more of a safety risk). By contrast, a solid majority (63%) of those with some college or no college experience see gun ownership more as protection from crime.

Whites see gun ownership more as protection, non-whites more safety risk

% who say gun ownership in this country does more to...

	Protect from becoming crime victims	Put people's safety at risk	DK
	%	%	
Total	58	37	4=100
Men	64	32	4=100
Women	53	43	4=100
White	64	33	3=100
Black	46	49	5=100
Hispanic	50	46	4=100
Postgrad	37	59	5=100
College grad	51	44	5=100
Some college	66	30	4=100
HS or less	61	35	4=100
Rep/Lean Rep	82	14	4=100
Dem/Lean Dem	39	57	4=100
Gun in household (44%)	74	22	4=100
No gun in household (51%)	43	52	4=100
<i>Among whites</i>			
College grad+	49	48	3=100
Non-college	71	26	3=100

Notes: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Source: Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016.

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Acknowledgements

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Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted August 9-16, 2016 among a national sample of 2,010 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (507 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 865 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2014 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2015 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	2,010	2.5 percentage points
Republican/Lean Rep	831	3.9 percentage points
Democrat/Lean Dem	987	3.6 percentage points
Gun in household	881	3.8 percentage points
No guns in household	1,032	3.5 percentage points
Registered voters	1,567	2.8 percentage points
<i>Among registered voters</i>		
Hillary Clinton supporters	680	4.3 percentage points
Donald Trump supporters	581	4.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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Appendix: Topline Questionnaire

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
AUGUST 2016 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
AUGUST 9-16, 2016
N=2,010**

QUESTIONS 1-2, 7-8, CAMPNII, THOUGHT, REG, PRECINCT, 12-16, OFTVOTE, PLANTO, 23-25, 27-28, 37-38, 54-58, 61, 66, 71-72, 76, 78 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3-6, 9-11, 17-22, 26, 29-36, 39-53, 59-60, 62-65, 67-70, 73-75, 77, 79-82

On another subject ...

ASK ALL:

Q.83 What do you think is more important – to protect the right of Americans to own guns, OR to control gun ownership?

IF OPINION GIVEN (Q.83=1,2), ASK:

Q.84 Do you feel strongly about that, or not?

	Protect the right of -----Americans to own guns-----				-----Control gun ownership-----				
	<u>Net</u>	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Not strongly</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>	<u>Net</u>	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Not strongly</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
Aug 9-16, 2016	52	46	6	*	46	37	8	1	3
Jul 14-20, 2015	47	42	5	*	50	40	10	*	3
Dec 3-7, 2014	52	47	4	*	46	37	8	1	3
Jan 23-Feb 9, 2014	49	--	--	--	48	--	--	--	3
May 1-5, 2013	48	--	--	--	50	--	--	--	2
Feb 13-18, 2013 (U)	46	--	--	--	50	--	--	--	4
Jan 9-13, 2013	45	39	5	*	51	41	9	*	5
Dec 17-19, 2012	42	37	4	*	49	42	6	2	9
July 26-29, 2012	46	--	--	--	47	--	--	--	6
Apr 4-15, 2012	49	--	--	--	45	--	--	--	6
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	47	--	--	--	49	--	--	--	5
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	48	--	--	--	47	--	--	--	6
Jan 13-16, 2011	49	--	--	--	46	--	--	--	6
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	46	--	--	--	50	--	--	--	4
Mar 10-14, 2010	46	--	--	--	46	--	--	--	7
Mar 31-Apr 21, 2009	45	--	--	--	49	--	--	--	6
April, 2008	37	--	--	--	58	--	--	--	5
November, 2007	42	--	--	--	55	--	--	--	3
April, 2007	32	--	--	--	60	--	--	--	8
February, 2004	37	31	6	*	58	46	11	1	5
June, 2003	42	--	--	--	54	--	--	--	4
May, 2000	38	--	--	--	57	--	--	--	5
April, 2000	37	--	--	--	55	--	--	--	8
March, 2000	29	--	--	--	66	--	--	--	5
June, 1999	33	--	--	--	62	--	--	--	5
May, 1999	30	--	--	--	65	--	--	--	5
December, 1993	34	--	--	--	57	--	--	--	9

ASK ALL:

Q.85 Do you think that gun ownership in this country does more to **[INSERT OPTION; RANDOMIZE]** or does more to **[NEXT OPTION]**?

Aug 9-16 <u>2016</u>		Jul 14-20 <u>2015</u>	Dec 3-7 <u>2014</u>	Dec 17-19 <u>2012</u>
58	Protect people from becoming victims of crime	54	57	48
37	Put people's safety at risk	40	38	37
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	6	5	16

ASK ALL:

Q.86 Please tell me if you would favor or oppose the following proposals about gun policy. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**? What about **[NEXT ITEM]**? **[IF NECESSARY: Would you favor or oppose [ITEM]?**

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
a. Laws to prevent people with mental illness from purchasing guns			
Aug 9-16, 2016	76	22	2
Jul 14-20, 2015	79	19	2
Jan 9-13, 2013	80	16	4
b. Making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks			
Aug 9-16, 2016	81	17	2
Jul 14-20, 2015	85	13	2
May 1-5, 2013	81	17	3
Feb 13-18, 2013 (U)	83	15	2
Jan 9-13, 2013	85	12	3
c. A ban on assault style weapons			
Aug 9-16, 2016	52	45	3
Jul 14-20, 2015	57	40	3
May 1-5, 2013	54	42	4
Feb 13-18, 2013 (U)	56	41	3
Jan 9-13, 2013	55	40	5
d. Creating a federal government database to track all gun sales			
Aug 9-16, 2016	68	30	2
Jul 14-20, 2015	70	28	2
May 1-5, 2013	66	31	3
Jan 9-13, 2013	67	30	3
e. A ban on high-capacity ammunition clips that hold more than 10 bullets			
Aug 9-16, 2016	50	47	3
Feb 13-18, 2013 (U)	53	44	3
Jan 9-13, 2013	54	42	4
Dec 17-19, 2012	53	42	5
f. Barring gun purchases by people on the federal no-fly or watch lists			
Aug 9-16, 2016	71	25	4

NO QUESTIONS 87-89

ASK ALL:

Q.90 Do you, or does anyone in your household, own a gun, rifle or pistol? **[IF YES: Is that you or someone else in your household?]**

Aug 9-16 <u>2016</u>		Jul 14-20 <u>2015</u>	May 1-5 <u>2013</u>	Feb 13-18 <u>2013</u>
20	Yes, respondent	18	18	17
13	Yes, someone else	12	14	13
12	Yes, both/multiple (VOL.)	9	8	8
51	No, nobody in household owns a gun	58	54	57
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4	5	6
31	<i>NET: Respondent owns gun</i>	26	27	24
44	<i>NET: Gun in household</i>	39	41	37

QUESTIONS 91F1-93, PVOTE, SCALE10 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	Republican	Democrat	Independent	(VOL.) No preference	(VOL.) Other party	(VOL.) DK/Ref	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
Aug 9-16, 2016	27	32	35	2	1	2	13	16
Jun 15-26, 2016	24	33	37	4	1	2	16	16
Apr 12-19, 2016	25	32	37	3	1	2	16	17
Mar 17-26, 2016	25	31	38	3	*	2	15	20
Jan 7-14, 2016	24	30	38	5	1	2	14	17
Dec 8-13, 2015	26	31	37	4	*	2	16	15
Aug 27-Oct 4, 2015	24	29	41	4	*	2	17	17
Sep 22-27, 2015	26	30	40	2	*	2	15	16
Jul 14-20, 2015	22	32	41	4	*	1	15	19
Yearly Totals								
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5

PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED ...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
				<u>preference</u>	<u>party</u>			
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:

(U) Pew Research Center/USA Today polls
