



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
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**Americans Now Divided Over Both Issues**  
**PUBLIC TAKES CONSERVATIVE TURN ON GUN CONTROL, ABORTION**

Public attitudes on a pair of contentious national issues – gun control and abortion – have moved in a more conservative direction over the past year. In both cases, the changes have been driven in part by relatively large shifts among men, while opinions among women have not changed very much.

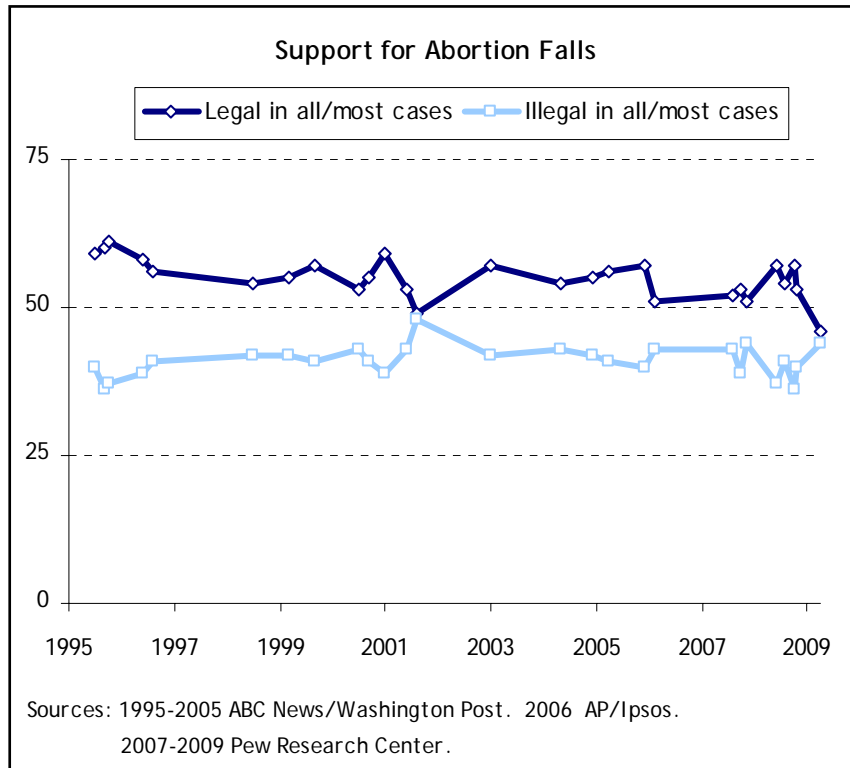
For the first time in a Pew Research survey, nearly as many people believe it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns (45%) than to control gun ownership (49%). As recently as a year ago, 58% said it was more important to control gun ownership while 37% said it was more important to protect the right to own guns.

Increasing Support for Gun Rights									
	Dec 1993	May 1999	Mar 2000	Apr 2000	June 2003	Feb 2004	Apr 2007	Apr 2008	Apr 2009
<i>More important to...</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Protect gun owners' rights	34	30	29	37	42	37	32	37	45
Control gun ownership	57	65	66	55	54	58	60	58	49
Don't know	9	5	5	8	4	5	8	5	6
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted March 31-April 21 among 1,521 adults reached on landlines and cell phones, also finds public opinion about abortion more closely divided than it has been in several years. Currently, 46% say abortion should be legal in most cases (28%) or all cases (18%); 44% believe that abortion should be illegal in most (28%) or all cases (16%). Since the mid-1990s, majorities have consistently favored legal abortion, with the exception of an August 2001 survey by ABC News/Washington Post.

The proportion saying that abortion should be legal in all or most cases has declined to 46% from 54% last August. The decline in support for legal abortion has come entirely in the share saying abortion should be legal in most cases (from 37% to 28%); 18% say abortion should

be legal in all cases, which is virtually unchanged from last August (17%). Currently, 44% say abortion should be illegal in most (28%) or all cases (16%), up slightly since last August (41%).



### More Men Back Gun Rights

A widening gender gap is now apparent on both abortion and gun control. A year ago, a narrow majority of men (51%) said it was more important to control gun ownership, while 45% said it was more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns. Today, by 57% to 38%, men say protecting gun rights is more important.

By contrast, 60% of women say it is more important to control gun ownership, while 33% see protecting gun rights as more important. In April 2008, 64% of women said controlling gun ownership was more important compared with 30% who placed greater importance on protecting the right to own guns.

More Important to Protect the Right to Own Guns or to Control Gun Ownership?					
	<i>April 2008</i>		<i>April 2009</i>		<i>Change in protect rights</i>
	Protect gun rights %	Control gun ownership %	Protect gun rights %	Control gun ownership %	
Total	37	58	45	49	+8
Men	46	51	57	38	+11
Women	30	64	33	60	+3
White	41	54	50	44	+9
Black	21	75	20	72	-1
White men	51	45	64	31	+13
White women	32	62	37	56	+5
College grad	37	58	42	53	+5
Some college	41	56	48	47	+7
HS grad	38	56	48	45	+10
Less than HS	33	64	32	59	-1
Republican	59	38	65	31	+6
Democrat	23	73	26	69	+3
Independent	39	56	48	45	+9
East	32	62	31	63	-1
Midwest	37	57	48	47	+11
South	40	57	49	45	+9
West	39	56	46	48	+7

The balance of opinion among independents has changed substantially over the past year. In April 2008, a majority of independents (56%) said it was more important to control gun ownership; currently, independents are divided, with 48% saying it is more important to protect gun rights and 45% saying it is more important to control gun ownership.

Support for gun rights has increased by 11 points in the Midwest, nine points in the South and seven points in the West; in all three regions, opinion is now evenly divided over whether it is more important to protect gun rights or control gun ownership. By contrast, there has been virtually no change among those living in the East, where a substantial majority (63%) continues to say that controlling gun ownership is the greater priority.

## Gun Ownership and Gun Control

As might be expected, people who say they have guns in their home are much more supportive of gun rights than are those who do not own guns. Overall, a third of Americans – including 42% of men and 25% of women – say they have a gun, rifle or pistol in their home.

By a wide margin (68% to 28%), gun owners say it is more important to protect the right to own guns than to control gun ownership. The much larger share that does not have a gun in their home (63% of the public) places greater priority on controlling gun ownership by 63% to 31%.

There are substantial gender differences in views about gun control among gun owners and non-owners alike. Fully three-quarters of men who say they have a gun in their home (75%) believe it is more important to protect gun rights than to control gun ownership; a much smaller majority of women gun owners agree (57%). Similarly, most men who do not have a gun in their home (53%) say it is more important to control gun ownership. But an even higher percentage of women who are not gun owners (69%) place a greater priority on controlling gun ownership.

	Protect gun rights %	Control gun ownership %	DK %
Gun owner* (33%)	68	28	4=100
Men	75	21	4=100
Women	57	39	4=100
Not a gun owner (63%)	31	63	6=100
Men	41	53	6=100
Women	24	69	7=100

\* Said they happened to have any guns, rifles or pistols in their home.

## Abortion Support Slips

Currently, 43% of men say that abortion should be legal in most or all cases, while 46% say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. In August 2008, a greater proportion of men said that abortion should be legal than illegal (by 53% to 42%).

The change among women has been more modest – 49% believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases, down from 54% last August.

People older than 50 – both men and women – express less support for

	Aug 2008		April 2009		Change in legal
	Legal %	Ill-legal %	Legal %	Ill-legal %	
Total	54	41	46	44	-8
Men	53	42	43	46	-10
Women	54	42	49	42	-5
18-29	52	45	47	48	-5
30-49	55	40	50	41	-5
50-64	58	37	47	41	-11
65+	46	48	36	48	-10
<i>Among men</i>					
18-49	53	42	45	47	-8
50+	53	41	40	45	-13
<i>Among women</i>					
18-49	55	41	53	41	-2
50+	53	42	45	43	-8

Legal combines "legal in all cases" and "legal in most cases."  
Illegal combines "legal in all cases" and "legal in most cases."

legal abortion than they did in August 2008. Just 40% of men older than 50 say abortion should be legal in most or all cases compared with 53% last summer. Support for legal abortion among women older than 50 has fallen from 53% to 45%.

There has been little change in opinions among women younger than 50: 53% say that abortion should be legal in most or all cases, which is largely unchanged from August (55%). Support for abortion has declined since last April among men under age 50 (from 53% then to 45% currently).

### **Abortion Opinions: A Closer Look**

Between August and late October 2008, the proportion supporting legal abortion ranged from 57% (in mid-October) to 53% (in late October), before declining to 46% currently. Though opinion among some subgroups varied significantly across those surveys, some trends are apparent, aside from the falloff in support among men.

There has been notable decline in the proportion of independents saying abortion should be legal in most or all cases; majorities of independents favored legal abortion in August and the two October surveys, but just 44% do so today. In addition, the proportion of moderate and liberal Republicans saying abortion should be legal declined between August and late October (from 67% to 57%). In the current survey, just 43% of moderate and liberal Republicans say abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

Among religious groups, support for abortion has steadily declined since August among white mainline Protestants (from 69% then to 54% currently). And just 23% of white evangelical Protestants now favor legal abortion, down from 33% in August and mid-October and 28% in late October.

The change has been less pronounced among white non-Hispanic Catholics: In August, 51% said that abortion should be legal in most or all cases; in both October surveys, 55% favored legal abortion. In the current survey, 49% of white non-Hispanic Catholics say that abortion should be legal while 42% believe it should be illegal.

### Recent Trend in Abortion Opinions

	<i>Aug 2008</i>		<i>Mid-Oct 2008</i>		<i>Late-Oct 2008</i>		<i>April 2009</i>		<i>Aug 2008- Apr 2009 Change</i>
	<u>Legal</u>	<u>III- legal</u>	<u>Legal</u>	<u>III- legal</u>	<u>Legal</u>	<u>III- legal</u>	<u>Legal</u>	<u>III- legal</u>	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Total	54	41	57	36	53	40	46	44	-8
Men	53	42	57	36	50	42	43	46	-10
Women	54	42	58	36	55	38	49	42	-5
White	55	40	57	36	53	42	47	44	-8
Black	49	46	63	31	45	45	50	38	+1
18-29	52	45	57	40	50	47	47	48	-5
30-49	55	40	62	33	58	36	50	41	-5
50-64	58	37	61	31	53	40	47	41	-11
65+	46	48	44	44	45	39	36	48	-10
College grad+	64	31	63	32	61	33	58	33	-6
Some college	57	39	55	38	49	43	49	44	-8
HS or less	47	48	51	41	44	48	38	50	-9
\$75,000+	63	33	65	32	62	33	59	34	-4
\$30-\$74,999	54	42	58	36	55	40	46	47	-8
Less than \$30,000	49	46	53	40	46	46	41	46	-8
Republican	41	56	40	54	37	59	32	63	-9
Democrat	63	33	71	23	62	33	63	27	0
Independent	55	40	60	34	56	34	44	45	-11
Conserv Rep	31	66	32	63	27	71	25	71	-6
Mod/Lib Rep	67	31	60	34	57	38	43	49	-24
Cons/Mod Dem	54	41	65	29	53	41	58	32	+4
Liberal Dem	81	17	84	12	82	15	78	15	-3
Protestant	49	46	51	34	43	50	38	52	-11
Catholic	49	47	56	38	57	38	47	42	-2
Unaffiliated	72	23	78	16	72	21	71	20	-1
<i>Among whites</i>									
Evangelical Protestant	33	62	33	61	28	68	23	70	-10
Mainline Protestant	69	26	62	29	60	34	54	34	-15
Non-Hisp Catholic	51	44	55	38	55	40	49	42	-2
N=	2,905		1,500		1,500		1,521		

Legal combines "legal in all cases" and "legal in most cases."  
 Illegal combines "legal in all cases" and "legal in most cases."

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 3,013 adults, 18 years of age or older, from March 31 – April 21, 2009 (2260 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 753 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 271 who had no landline telephone). Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The questions in this release were asked of Form 2 respondents only; results are based on 1,521 interviews. For results based on Form 2, one can say that the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence is plus or minus 3 percentage points. 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.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2007 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 sample.

## ABOUT THE CENTER

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS  
2009 VALUES SURVEY  
FINAL TOPLINE**

Survey A: March 31-April 6, 2009 N=1,506

Survey B: April 14-21, 2009 N=1,507

Combined: N=3,013

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1,521]:**

Thinking about another topic...

Q.12F2 Do you think abortion should be **(READ)**

**(PLEASE READ CATEGORIES IN REVERSE ORDER FOR HALF THE SAMPLE)**

	Legal in all <u>cases</u>	Legal in most <u>cases</u>	Illegal in most <u>cases</u>	Illegal in all <u>cases</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>	<i>Legal in</i> <u>all/most</u>	<i>Illegal in</i> <u>all/most</u>
April, 2009	18	28	28	16	10=100	46	44
Late October, 2008	18	35	24	16	7=100	53	40
Mid-October, 2008	19	38	22	14	7=100	57	36
August, 2008	17	37	26	15	5=100	54	41
June, 2008	19	38	24	13	6=100	57	37
November, 2007	18	33	29	15	5=100	51	44
October, 2007	21	32	24	15	8=100	53	39
August, 2007	17	35	26	17	5=100	52	43
February, 2006 <i>AP/Ipsos-Poll</i>	19	32	27	16	6=100	51	43
December 2005 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	17	40	27	13	3=100	57	40
April 2005 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	36	27	14	3=100	56	41
December 2004 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	21	34	25	17	3=100	55	42
May 2004 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	23	31	23	20	2=99	54	43
January 2003 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	23	34	25	17	2=100	57	42
August 2001 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	22	27	28	20	3=100	49	48
June 2001 <i>ABC/BeliefNet</i>	22	31	23	20	4=100	53	43
January 2001 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	21	38	25	14	1=99	59	39
September 2000 <i>(RVs) ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	35	25	16	3=99	55	41
July 2000 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	33	26	17	4=100	53	43
September 1999 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	37	26	15	2=100	57	41
March 1999 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	21	34	27	15	3=100	55	42
July 1998 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	19	35	29	13	4=100	54	42
August 1996 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	22	34	27	14	3=100	56	41
June 1996 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	24	34	25	14	2=99	58	39
October 1995 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	26	35	25	12	3=100	61	37
September 1995 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	24	36	25	11	4=100	60	36
July 1995 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	27	32	26	14	1=100	59	40



**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1,521]:**

Q.14F2 What do you think is more important – to protect the right of Americans to own guns, OR to control gun ownership?

		April 2008	Nov 2007	April 2007	Feb 2004	June 2003	May 2000	April 2000	March 2000	June 1999	May 1999	Dec 1993
45	Protect rights of Americans to own guns	37	42	32	37	42	38	37	29	33	30	34
49	Control gun ownership	58	55	60	58	54	57	55	66	62	65	57
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>9</u>
100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.35 And just a few questions about you... [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]

**ITEMS A-D HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
<b>ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1,521]:</b>				
e.F2	Do you happen to have any guns, rifles or pistols in your home?			
	April, 2009	33	63	4=100
	April, 2007	37	61	2=100
	January, 2007	33	64	3=100
	December, 2004	37	60	3=100
	Mid-October, 2004	39	59	2=100
	Mid-July, 2003 <sup>1</sup>	34	63	3=100
	August, 2002	35	62	3=100
	April, 2000	35	62	3=100
	June, 1997	40	57	3=100
	December, 1993	45	53	2=100

<sup>1</sup> From 1997 to 2003, the question asked about “guns or revolvers in your home.” In 1993, the question asked about “guns in this household.”