Public Opinion on Firearm Injury Prevention Proposals in California

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Introduction

Agreement between firearm owners and nonowners on many firearm violence prevention proposals is more common than typically recognized.1

This survey study assessed public opinion on 2 proposals in California, overall and by firearm ownership status. One proposal is an amnesty for high-capacity ammunition magazines. In 2016, voters approved (63.1% in favor) a ban on possession that has since been challenged in federal court.2 Research suggests that restricting high-capacity magazines and weapons that use them may reduce firearm violence.3

The second proposal would prohibit firearm purchase and possession by persons with multiple recent convictions for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI). There is substantial evidence showing that alcohol misuse is associated with increased risk for violence, including among firearm owners.4,5

Methods

The California Safety and Well-being Survey was designed by us and administered online in 2018 by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC; detailed methods are presented elsewhere.6 Respondents were California residents aged 18 years and older from the Ipsos KnowledgePanel, a probability-based internet panel sourced using address-based sampling. Respondents provided online informed consent by initiating the survey, and their answers were weighted to represent California’s adult population. We calculated weighted proportions with 95% confidence intervals for each measure or crosstabulation using Stata SE software version 15.1 (StataCorp).

This study followed the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) reporting guideline and was approved by the institutional review board at the University of California, Davis.

Results

Of 5232 eligible panel members with baseline profile information, 2558 completed the survey (48.9% completion rate). Respondents were informed of the state’s existing high-capacity magazine ban, after which a majority (62.3%; 95% CI, 59.2%-65.4%) indicated support for “an amnesty program that allows people to turn in ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets, no questions asked” (Table 1). No difference between firearm owners and nonowners was observed; support among firearm owners decreased as the number of guns owned increased: among owners of 1 to 3 guns, 61.1% (95% CI, 52.4%-69.2%) supported amnesty compared with 26.7% (95% CI, 11.2%-51.3%) of owners of 10 or more guns. More owners without high-capacity magazines (53.2%; 95% CI, 45.4%-60.8%) supported amnesty than those with high-capacity magazines (41.4%; 95% CI, 23.5%-62.0%).

After reading a definition of DUI and, for a randomized subset of respondents, a statement about the association between DUI and risk of future violence, majorities of all respondents (67.9%; 95% CI, 64.9%-70.8%), those living with firearm owners (66.5%; 95% CI, 56.2%-75.5%), and nonowners (72.3%; 95% CI, 68.8%-75.6%) supported “a law that prevents someone from buying a gun for 5 years if they have had 2 or more DUI convictions in 5 years” (Table 2). Half of firearm owners
(50.0%; 95% CI, 42.8%-57.1%) indicated support for such a law. Support did not vary significantly by self-reported alcohol use or by exposure to the statement about DUI and violence.

Variation in support by demographic characteristics and political ideology was similar for both proposals. Half of respondents supported both proposals (50.5%; 95% CI, 47.3%-53.7%), and 6.5% (95% CI, 5.1%-8.3%) opposed both.

### Table 1. Respondent Support for an Amnesty for High-Capacity Magazines

| Characteristic | Support | Oppose | Do Not Know |
|----------------|---------|--------|-------------|
|                | Unweighted No. | Weighted % (95% CI) | Unweighted No. | Weighted % (95% CI) | Unweighted No. | Weighted % (95% CI) | Total No. |
| Total          | 1657    | 62.3 (59.2-65.4) | 407    | 17.6 (15.3-20.2) | 407   | 20.1 (17.5-22.9) | 2471     |
| Firearm ownership status | | | | | | | |
| Owner | 234   | 51.2 (44.0-58.3) | 112    | 29.1 (22.9-36.2) | 80    | 19.7 (14.5-26.2) | 426       |
| Lives with owner | 160   | 58.0 (47.9-67.5) | 43     | 16.3 (10.3-24.7) | 38    | 25.7 (17.3-36.3) | 241       |
| No guns in home | 1228  | 66.4 (62.5-70.1) | 235    | 15.3 (12.7-18.4) | 258   | 18.3 (15.3-21.7) | 1721      |
| Age, y | | | | | | | |
| 18-29 | 73     | 45.7 (36.2-55.5) | 28     | 17.4 (11.2-25.8) | 48    | 36.9 (27.9-46.9) | 149       |
| 30-44 | 281    | 63.5 (58.9-71.2) | 84     | 19.4 (14.7-25.1) | 80    | 15.3 (11.2-20.5) | 445       |
| 45-59 | 419    | 63.9 (58.2-69.2) | 111    | 17.4 (13.4-22.1) | 121   | 18.8 (14.7-23.7) | 651       |
| ≥60   | 884    | 68.3 (64.0-72.2) | 184    | 16.3 (13.3-19.9) | 158   | 15.4 (12.4-19.1) | 1226      |
| Sex   | | | | | | | |
| Male  | 691    | 62.0 (57.2-66.7) | 204    | 19.5 (16.0-23.5) | 164   | 18.5 (14.8-22.8) | 1059      |
| Female | 966   | 62.6 (58.4-66.6) | 203    | 15.9 (13.0-19.2) | 243   | 21.5 (18.2-25.4) | 1412      |
| Race/ethnicity | | | | | | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 1024  | 64.8 (60.9-68.5) | 209    | 15.3 (12.8-18.1) | 207   | 19.9 (16.7-23.7) | 1440      |
| Hispanic | 375   | 54.6 (47.9-61.1) | 152    | 24.5 (19.2-30.6) | 138   | 21.0 (15.9-27.1) | 665       |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 96    | 69.4 (54.8-80.8) | 6     | 4.2 (1.6-10.9) | 19    | 26.4 (15.4-41.5) | 121       |
| Other, non-Hispanic | 162   | 67.3 (59.6-74.1) | 40     | 15.8 (10.9-22.4) | 43    | 16.9 (12.0-23.3) | 245       |
| Education | | | | | | | |
| No college | 201   | 49.6 (43.0-56.2) | 87     | 21.8 (16.9-27.8) | 94    | 28.6 (22.7-35.2) | 382       |
| Some college | 539   | 62.4 (57.4-67.2) | 167    | 19.4 (15.7-23.8) | 160   | 18.2 (14.6-22.3) | 866       |
| Bachelor’s degree or higher | 917   | 74.4 (70.4-78.1) | 153    | 11.8 (9.4-14.8) | 153   | 13.8 (10.9-17.2) | 1223      |
| Political ideology | | | | | | | |
| Liberal | 714   | 77.0 (71.9-81.5) | 82     | 10.6 (7.7-14.5) | 78    | 12.3 (8.9-16.8) | 874       |
| Moderate | 475   | 56.9 (51.0-62.6) | 123    | 18.2 (14.1-23.2) | 140   | 24.9 (20.0-30.6) | 738       |
| Conservative | 384  | 50.4 (44.8-55.9) | 188    | 28.2 (23.3-33.7) | 151   | 21.4 (17.1-26.4) | 723       |
| Member or generally supportive of National Rifle Association or other firearm rights organization | | | | | | | |
| No | 1378  | 67.9 (64.3-71.3) | 204    | 12.8 (10.5-15.5) | 277   | 19.3 (16.5-22.6) | 1859      |
| Yes | 233   | 40.5 (34.2-47.1) | 196    | 38.1 (31.8-44.9) | 112   | 21.4 (16.2-27.7) | 541       |
| Among gun owners | | | | | | | |
| No. of guns owned | | | | | | | |
| 1-3 | 174   | 61.1 (52.4-69.2) | 56     | 20.1 (14.6-26.9) | 43    | 18.8 (12.5-27.2) | 273       |
| 4-9 | 50    | 35.6 (23.9-49.4) | 30     | 42.7 (27.4-59.6) | 28    | 21.7 (11.9-36.2) | 108       |
| ≥10 | 9     | 26.7 (11.2-51.3) | 23     | 56.6 (35.1-75.8) | 6     | 16.3 (6.6-34.9) | 39        |
| Owns high-capacity magazine (≥10 rounds) | | | | | | | |
| No | 215   | 53.2 (45.4-60.8) | 91     | 27.1 (20.8-34.5) | 67    | 19.5 (13.8-26.6) | 373       |
| Yes | 19    | 41.4 (23.5-62.0) | 19     | 41.6 (23.0-63.0) | 11    | 16.9 (8.0-32.2) | 49        |

* Respondents were shown the statement, “It is illegal in California to buy or sell ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets, or to bring them into the state. It may soon be illegal to have them.” They were then asked, “Would you support or would you oppose an amnesty program that allows people to turn in ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets, no questions asked?”

b Sixty-nine Spanish-language respondents (30.4%) are missing from these data owing to a survey translation error.
Discussion

Most respondents supported an amnesty for high-capacity ammunition magazines and a prohibition based on DUI convictions, including at least half of firearm owners. Support for one proposal but not the other was common, but opposition to both was rare, suggesting that we did not simply capture respondents’ general opinions on firearm regulation. Nationally, support for firearm policies is also high, and gaps between owners and nonowners are frequently small.1

Our findings have limitations. First, some reported opposition to magazine amnesty may represent general opposition to the magazine ban. Second, survey research is subject to

| Characteristic | Total | Support Weighted % (95% CI) | Oppose Weighted % (95% CI) | Do Not Know Weighted % (95% CI) | Total No. |
|----------------|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
|                |       | Unweighted No. | 67.9 (64.9-70.8) | 363 | 16.2 (14.0-18.8) | 380 | 15.9 (13.7-18.3) | 2546 |
| Firearm ownership status |       |                | | | |
| Owner | 248 | 50.0 (42.8-57.1) | 111 | 31.4 (25.0-38.6) | 69 | 18.6 (13.2-25.7) | 428 |
| Lives with owner | 177 | 66.5 (56.2-75.6) | 21 | 11.2 (5.9-20.1) | 44 | 22.3 (14.7-32.2) | 242 |
| No guns in home | 1337 | 72.3 (68.8-75.6) | 214 | 13.9 (11.4-16.9) | 240 | 13.8 (11.4-16.6) | 1791 |
| Age, y |       |                | | | |
| 18-29 | 108 | 65.5 (55.8-74.1) | 15 | 9.4 (5.3-16.1) | 33 | 25.0 (17.4-34.6) | 156 |
| 30-44 | 319 | 65.5 (59.2-71.3) | 81 | 21.7 (16.6-27.9) | 75 | 12.8 (9.6-16.9) | 475 |
| 45-59 | 472 | 68.9 (63.5-73.9) | 109 | 17.7 (13.7-22.6) | 96 | 13.4 (10.2-17.4) | 677 |
| ≥60 | 904 | 70.8 (66.4-74.7) | 158 | 13.7 (10.9-17.0) | 176 | 15.5 (12.4-19.2) | 1238 |
| Sex |       |                | | | |
| Male | 715 | 64.1 (59.3-68.6) | 205 | 20.7 (17.1-24.9) | 164 | 15.2 (12.0-19.1) | 1084 |
| Female | 1088 | 71.4 (67.6-75.0) | 158 | 12.2 (9.6-15.2) | 216 | 16.4 (13.6-19.7) | 1462 |
| Race/ethnicity |       |                | | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 1017 | 65.8 (62.0-69.5) | 192 | 16.1 (13.4-19.4) | 232 | 18.0 (15.1-21.4) | 1441 |
| Hispanic | 518 | 68.1 (61.8-73.7) | 126 | 19.3 (14.7-24.9) | 94 | 12.7 (9.0-17.5) | 738 |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 85 | 59.8 (45.9-72.2) | 16 | 15.3 (7.9-27.6) | 20 | 24.9 (14.2-39.9) | 121 |
| Other, non-Hispanic | 183 | 74.9 (67.5-81.0) | 29 | 11.3 (7.3-17.1) | 34 | 13.8 (9.2-20.2) | 246 |
| Education |       |                | | | |
| No college | 256 | 58.3 (51.9-64.4) | 91 | 21.9 (17.0-27.7) | 77 | 19.8 (15.2-25.5) | 424 |
| Some college | 628 | 72.1 (67.5-76.3) | 119 | 13.9 (11.0-17.5) | 135 | 14.0 (10.9-17.8) | 882 |
| Bachelor’s degree or higher | 919 | 73.7 (69.6-77.4) | 153 | 12.7 (9.9-16.2) | 168 | 13.6 (10.9-16.7) | 1240 |
| Political ideology |       |                | | | |
| Liberal | 699 | 75.2 (70.1-79.7) | 72 | 11.2 (7.9-15.6) | 113 | 13.6 (10.4-17.6) | 884 |
| Moderate | 546 | 67.0 (61.4-72.3) | 106 | 15.5 (11.8-20.1) | 118 | 17.5 (13.5-22.4) | 770 |
| Conservative | 471 | 61.6 (56.0-66.9) | 158 | 23.2 (18.7-28.4) | 116 | 15.2 (11.6-19.7) | 745 |
| Member or generally supportive of National Rifle Association or other firearm rights organization |       |                | | | |
| No | 1453 | 72.4 (69.0-75.5) | 197 | 12.6 (10.3-15.2) | 274 | 15.1 (12.6-17.9) | 1924 |
| Yes | 304 | 54.3 (47.8-61.1) | 151 | 28.3 (22.6-34.8) | 88 | 17.2 (12.6-22.9) | 543 |
| Risk for alcohol use disordera |       |                | | | |
| No risk | 939 | 69.6 (62.5-71.0) | 175 | 15.6 (12.6-19.2) | 190 | 17.5 (14.3-21.3) | 1304 |
| Low risk | 707 | 70.4 (65.8-74.7) | 151 | 17.0 (13.5-21.1) | 148 | 12.6 (9.9-16.0) | 1006 |
| High risk | 108 | 68.5 (57.1-78.0) | 23 | 14.7 (7.9-25.7) | 29 | 16.8 (10.8-25.2) | 160 |

Abbreviation: DUI, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

a Respondents were either shown the statement “DUI means driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Gun owners who have been convicted of DUI are 4 times as likely as other gun owners to commit violent crimes in the future” or the statement “DUI means driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.” They were then asked, “Would you support or would you oppose a law that prevents someone from buying a gun for 5 years if they have had 2 or more DUI convictions in 5 years?” There was no statistically significant difference in support among those who received the more detailed statement before responding to the question compared with the shorter statement. These results are for the total survey population who responded to this question regardless of preamble.

b Respondents’ alcohol consumption was measured by number of drinks in the past week and categorized based on the National Institutes of Health definition of risk for alcohol use disorder.
nonresponse error and social desirability bias. Third, given California’s relatively low rates of and strict regulations on firearm ownership, our results may not be generalizable. Replication in other states is recommended.