



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

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Colorado Shootings Capture Public's Interest

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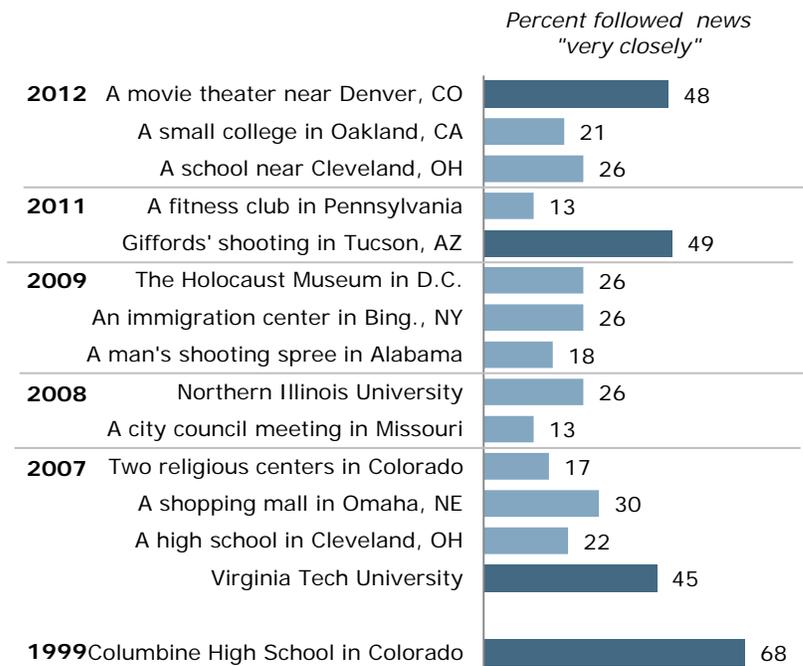
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Colorado Shootings Capture Public's Interest

About half of the public says they very closely followed news about the deadly shooting rampage shortly after midnight Friday morning in a movie theater in Colorado, making this one of the most closely followed stories so far in 2012.

Fully 48% say they followed this news very closely, according to the latest survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted July 20-22 among 780 adults. Another 25% say they followed news about the shootings – which left 12 dead and more than 50 injured – fairly closely.

Public Interest in News About Mass Shootings



PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 20-22, 2012.

The number following this tragedy very closely is comparable to the 49% that said they very closely followed news about the shootings in Tucson, Ariz. in January 2011 that left six dead and Rep. Gabrielle Giffords severely wounded. It also is similar to the 45% that very closely followed news about the mass killings at Virginia Tech in April 2007 that left 33 dead. A number of other recent mass shootings – including one at an Ohio high school in late February that left three dead and another at Oakland, Ca., college in early April that left seven dead – have attracted far less public attention.

Still, interest in the Colorado shootings is well below the 68% that said they very closely tracked news about the April 1999 shootings at Colorado's Columbine High School, when two teenagers killed 13 people and themselves.

Few news stories in Pew Research news interest surveys have attracted greater interest than the Columbine shootings. Among other top stories over the past two decades, nearly

eight-in-ten (78%) said in October 2001 that they followed news about the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. very closely. And in October 2005, 73% said they followed news about the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita this closely.

Interest in the movie theater shootings is broad among all demographic groups. Though young people often follow breaking news less closely than older people, those under age 30 are just as likely as older people to say they followed this news very closely. Women are more likely to say they followed this news very closely than men (55% vs. 41%).

Little Recent Change in Opinion About Gun Control

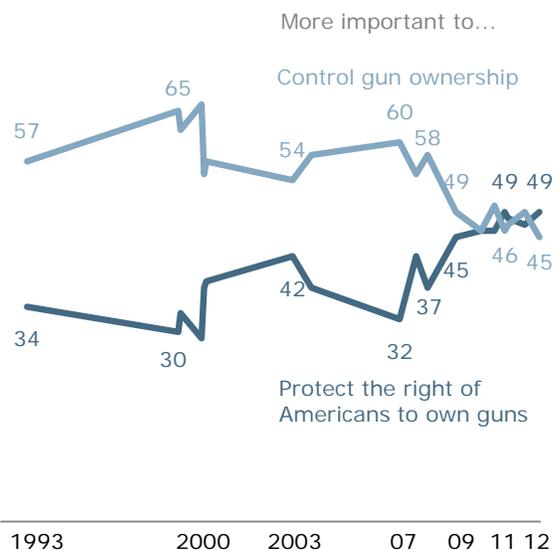
Public opinion about gun control has changed little in recent years. In the latest Pew Research survey on the topic in April, 49% say it is more important to protect the rights of Americans to own guns, while 45% say it is more important to control gun ownership. Opinion has been divided since early 2009, shortly after Barack Obama's election.

While the Tucson and Virginia Tech shootings attracted intense public attention, they did not have a large impact on public opinion about gun control. (See "[No Shift Toward Gun Control After Tucson Shootings](#)", Jan. 19, 2011)

Still, the public has become more supportive of gun rights over time. From 1993 through 2008, majorities had said it was more important to control gun ownership than to protect gun rights. (See "[More Support for Gun Rights, Gay Marriage than in 2008 or 2004](#)", April 25, 2012)

In May 1999, shortly after the Columbine shootings, about two-thirds (65%) said they thought it more important to control gun ownership than to protect the right to own guns. In April 2008, 58% said it was more important to control gun-ownership than to protect gun rights. One year later, 49% said this.

Long-Term Rise in Support for Gun Rights



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted July 19-22, 2012 among a national sample of 1,001 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (600 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 191 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. 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://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 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 within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

| Group | Sample Size | Plus or minus ... |
|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| July 20-22 Total | 780 | 4.1 percentage points |
| Men | 378 | 5.9 percentage points |
| Women | 402 | 5.7 percentage points |
| 18-29 | 102 | 11.3 percentage points |
| 30+ | 618 | 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
July 19-22, 2012 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,001

ASK ALL:

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE;] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]

PEW.1a-e HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

| | <u>Very closely</u> | <u>Fairly closely</u> | <u>Not too closely</u> | <u>Not at all closely</u> | (VOL.) DK/Ref |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| f. The shooting at a movie theater near Denver, Colorado July 20-22, 2012 ¹ | 48 | 25 | 15 | 11 | 1 |
| TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: | | | | | |
| April 5-8, 2012: <i>A shooting at a small college in Oakland, California, that killed seven people</i> | 21 | 28 | 25 | 25 | 2 |
| March 1-4, 2012: <i>A deadly school shooting near Cleveland</i> | 26 | 31 | 22 | 19 | 1 |
| December 8-11, 2011: <i>Deadly shootings at Virginia Tech University</i> | 20 | 27 | 29 | 24 | 1 |
| August 7-10, 2011: <i>A shooting at a fitness club in Pennsylvania</i> | 13 | 28 | 25 | 34 | 1 |
| June 12-15, 2009: <i>A deadly shooting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.</i> | 26 | 34 | 17 | 23 | * |
| January 13-16, 2011: <i>News about a Congresswoman and others shot in Tucson, Arizona</i> | 49 | 28 | 12 | 11 | 1 |
| April 3-6, 2009: <i>A shooter killing several people at an immigration services center in Binghamton, New York</i> | 26 | 32 | 19 | 23 | * |
| March 13-16, 2009: <i>A shooting spree in Alabama that resulted in the death of 11 people</i> | 18 | 33 | 24 | 25 | * |
| February 15-18, 2008: <i>The shootings at Northern Illinois University that resulted in the death of 7 people</i> | 26 | 40 | 19 | 15 | 0 |
| February 8-11, 2008: <i>A shooting at a city council meeting in Missouri where six people were killed</i> | 13 | 28 | 25 | 33 | 1 |
| December 14-17, 2007: <i>Shootings at two religious centers in Colorado</i> | 17 | 31 | 24 | 27 | 1 |
| December 7-10, 2007: <i>A shooting at a shopping mall in Omaha, Nebraska where eight people were killed</i> | 30 | 36 | 18 | 15 | 1 |
| October 12-15, 2007: <i>The shooting at a high school in Cleveland, Ohio</i> | 22 | 32 | 25 | 20 | 1 |
| April 20-23, 2007: <i>The shootings at Virginia Tech University that resulted in the death of 33 people</i> | 45 | 37 | 13 | 5 | * |
| October, 2006: <i>Recent shootings at schools in Pennsylvania and other states</i> | 46 | 33 | 12 | 8 | 1 |
| March, 2000: <i>The shooting of a 6-year-old girl at a Michigan school</i> | 40 | 38 | 15 | 7 | * |

¹ Item was asked from July 20-22, 2012 only. N=780.

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

| | <u>Very closely</u> | <u>Fairly closely</u> | <u>Not too closely</u> | <u>Not at all closely</u> | (VOL.) DK/Ref |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| September, 1999: <i>The shootings in a Jewish community center in Los Angeles</i> | 29 | 34 | 22 | 14 | 1 |
| Late April, 1999: <i>The shooting of students and teachers by two students at a Colorado high school</i> | 68 | 24 | 6 | 2 | * |
| June, 1998: <i>The shooting at a high school in Springfield, Oregon</i> | 46 | 36 | 14 | 4 | * |
| March, 1998: <i>The shooting at a middle school in Jonesboro, Arkansas</i> | 49 | 33 | 12 | 5 | 1 |

NO QUESTION PEW.2**PEW.3-PEW.5 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**