

GUN POLICY ATTITUDE SURVEY

Do you support a ban of all semi-automatic firearms? YES No

Do you support a ban of the following specific firearms?

AR-15 Style Assault Rifle

YES No



AK-47 Style Assault Rifle

YES No



Remington Woodsmaster .30-06 Rifle

YES No



Ruger Mini-14 Huntsman .223 Rifle

YES No



Marlin Model 60 .22 Caliber Rifle

YES No



Winchester SX3 12 gauge Shotgun

YES No



1911 Colt 45 Pistol

YES No



Beretta 92FS 9mm Pistol

YES No



Browning Buck Mark .22 Caliber Pistol

YES No



EACH AND EVERY ONE of the firearms shown is a semi-automatic. If you checked “Yes” to the first Question, you would ban them all. You are hardly alone. A 2018 poll of 1,500 adults conducted for The Economist by YouGov found that 55% of respondents either somewhat or strongly favored banning all semi-automatic firearms. Among Democrats and those who classified themselves as liberal, that percentage jumped *to over 80%*. The poll did not define the term semi-automatic or ask questions designed to explore the participants’ understanding of the term.

The word semi-automatic has somehow been conflated by the press and public into something menacing when all it means is that you do not need to throw a bolt, cock a lever or take some other action to move a bullet into position and prepare the firearm for your next shot. But, and this is really important...you do have to pull the trigger...for each and every shot. *One trigger pull equals one bullet fired*. You can pull the trigger and hold it for as long as you want and only one bullet will fire until you let go of the trigger and pull it again. While they technically are not semi-automatics, revolvers function in exactly the same way; i.e. one bullet is fired each time the trigger is pulled. No firearm you can legally buy without a special license and rigorous FBI background check will spray a continuous hail of bullets, and if it did even a 30 round magazine would be empty in about 2.5 seconds.

As semi-automatics, the AR-15 and AK-47 are no different from millions of other firearms on the market and in the hands of hunters and sportsmen, be they rifles, handguns or even shotguns. One pull of the trigger equals one shot and the next round is then ready to be fired the next time you pull the trigger. Like all other semi-automatics, those firearms will fire as fast as the user can pull the trigger – and will do so until the magazine is empty. All semi-automatic firearms have been doing that since the first successful design was unveiled over 130 years ago in 1885. John Browning first introduced a semi-automatic shotgun to the civilian market in 1902 and Winchester introduced semi-automatic rifles in 1903 and 1905.

The generic AR-15 is a semi-automatic rifle that fires a .223 caliber round and has a removable magazine with a typical capacity of 30 rounds.

The Ruger Mini-14 is a semi-automatic rifle that fires a .223 caliber round and has a removable magazine with a capacity of up to 20 rounds.



The only meaningful difference between the two is that the Ruger has a nice wooden stock, is clearly meant for hunting and does not have the menacing look of the AR-15 – the rifles are otherwise identical in all material respects. The Ruger was first marketed in 1973, so the design clearly was not tailored to avoid the provisions of the assault weapons ban that was enacted much later in 1994.

The Remington Woodsmaster .30-06 Rifle is used for hunting deer, elk and even larger game animals. Functionally, however, it and the many rifles like it are basically newer and better versions of the M1 Garand Rifle, first produced in 1937 and carried into battle by millions of U.S. infantry in World War II and later Korea. So yes, military rifles are being used for hunting.

The venerable M1911 45 caliber pistol was originally developed for the U.S. Army which wanted the additional stopping power of the larger round after its experience against Philippine rebel forces. It remained in regular use by the military through 1986, and some Special Forces units still use the firearm. It is a popular handgun among civilians who can handle the recoil of the larger round.

Semi-automatic firearms of all types have been around and in regular use for well over a century now. Of the 300 million or more estimated firearms owned by Americans, a high percentage of them are semi-automatic in their operation; and that is especially true of handguns. A ban of all semi-automatic firearms would effectively outlaw virtually all handguns other than revolvers and probably half or more of all hunting rifles and shotguns. The reality is that most people do not know what they are talking about when they express an opinion about semi-automatic firearms and polls that fail to take that into account are fundamentally flawed. It is highly unlikely that 80% of Democrats want to ban hunting rifles and farmers' shotguns. If they do, that position should be made a clear and unambiguous part of the party platform.

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Author Note: Like many young men growing up in the rural South, the author owned a .22 caliber rifle and a shotgun, both of which were used for hunting and sport shooting. He no longer hunts and has passed the .22 rifle on to his son, but he still owns firearms for recreation and personal defense. He is not a member of the NRA and has no vested interest in the gun debate, but is tired of hearing heated arguments presented on both sides of the issue without bothering to learn the facts.