

18046 Most U.S. Teachers Want Gun Control, Not Guns To Carry

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Nearly three-fourths of U.S. teachers do not want to carry guns in school, and they overwhelmingly favor gun control measures over security steps meant to harden schools, according to a new Gallup poll. The nationally representative poll of teachers was conducted earlier this month, after the Parkland shooting and student protests brought national attention to the issue of gun violence.

Some of the poll was released last week. In that portion, 73 percent of teachers opposed training teachers and staff to carry guns in school. Of those, 63 percent strongly opposed the proposal. In addition, 7 in 10 teachers said arming teachers would not be effective in limiting casualties in a school shooting.

In the part of the poll released Thursday, teachers were asked in an open-ended question to name one thing that could be done to prevent U.S. school shootings. One-third named gun control or stricter gun laws, the most popular response. The second leading response, with 22 percent, was bans on specific guns. One in 5 suggested enhanced mental health services, and 15 percent favored better school security. Just 7 percent mentioned arming teachers.

In a separate question, just 1 in 5 teachers agreed that arming teachers and staff members would make schools safer. At the same time, 22 percent said it would make schools about as safe as they are now, while 58 percent said it would make schools less safe.

When asked which specific measures would be most effective at preventing school shootings, 57 percent favored universal background checks, and the same number, 57 percent, also favored banning the sale of semi-automatic weapons such as the one used in the Parkland attack.

The pollsters noted that the partisan leanings of teachers may influence their beliefs about gun safety. Teachers as a group are twice as likely to identify as, or lean, Democratic rather than Republican.

For teachers, school shootings are also a workplace safety issue. About 60 percent of teachers describe their schools as very or somewhat prepared and protected. As one indicator of preparedness, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that more than 9 in 10 public schools now conduct active shooter drills.

And, despite the intense media coverage, a majority of teachers, 64 percent, said in the Gallup poll that they are not too worried or not worried at all about being the victim of a school shooting, and 55 percent said their students felt the same way.