

TORTURE

Waterboarding Terror Suspects is Unacceptable for Half of Americans

Most Americans condemn torture, but people are more lenient of it when it is referred to as “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

[NEW YORK – Feb. 24, 2010] – Most people in the United States condemn the use of waterboarding by the American military and intelligence agencies, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,010 American adults, 49 per cent of respondents disapprove of the practice known as waterboarding—33 per cent of them strongly.

Waterboarding consists of a prisoner being immobilized and interrogators pouring water over the face into breathing passages, generating the sensation of drowning. Two-in-five Americans (39%) approve of the technique being applied on terror suspects.

Torture vs. Enhanced Interrogation Techniques

During the presidential administration headed by George W. Bush, government officials coined the term “enhanced interrogation techniques” to describe certain procedures to retrieve information from terror suspects. Critics have said the term is a euphemism for torture.

In this survey, respondents were divided into two groups. Half of respondents were asked their opinion on torture and the other half their opinion about “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

KEY FINDINGS

- **49% disapprove of waterboarding suspected terrorists; 39% approve of it**
- **55% say using torture against terror suspects is not justifiable...**
- **...but 57% think the use of “enhanced interrogation techniques” is justifiable**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From February 19 to February 21, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,010 randomly selected American adults who are Springboard USA panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of the United States. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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In the first group, a majority of respondents think the use of torture against terror suspects is never justified (30%) or is justified only some times (25%). Conversely, just over a third of respondents say torture in this context is justified most of the time (21%) or always (13%).

In comparison, almost three-in-five respondents in the second group say the use of enhanced interrogation techniques is justified always (26%) or most of the time (31%). A third of respondents say such techniques are rarely (19%) or never (15%) justified in this context.

Political Divisions

Overall, a majority of Republicans agree with the use of torture on terror suspects (52% in the first group), and the use of enhanced interrogation techniques (77% in the second group). They also condone the use of waterboarding (58%).

Almost half of Democrats justify the use of enhanced interrogation techniques (48%), while 30 per cent justify the use of torture, and the same proportion agrees with officials using waterboarding on terror suspects.

Most Independents think enhanced interrogation techniques are acceptable (60%), but fewer justify the use of torture (32%) and waterboarding (43%).

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Torture				
Overall, do you think the use of torture against suspected terrorists by the U.S. military and intelligence agencies is justified? (Group A)				
		Party ID		
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Always justified	13%	10%	19%	14%
Justified most of the time	21%	20%	33%	18%
Justified only sometimes	25%	22%	26%	34%
Never justified	30%	38%	13%	31%
Not sure	10%	10%	10%	4%
Justified – NET	35%	30%	52%	32%
Not justified – NET	55%	60%	39%	65%

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Torture				
Overall, do you think the use of enhanced interrogation techniques against suspected terrorists by the U.S. military and intelligence agencies is justified? (Group B)				
		Party ID		
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Always justified	26%	21%	33%	30%
Justified most of the time	31%	27%	44%	30%
Justified only sometimes	19%	20%	15%	22%
Never justified	15%	23%	8%	10%
Not sure	10%	9%	0%	8%
Justified – NET	57%	48%	77%	60%
Not justified – NET	34%	43%	23%	32%

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Torture

In a procedure known as “waterboarding”, a prisoner is immobilized and interrogators pour water over the face into breathing passages, to generate the sensation of drowning. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies relying on this procedure when they interrogate suspected terrorists? (Full Sample)

	Party ID			
	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Strongly approve	16%	9%	28%	18%
Moderately approve	23%	21%	30%	24%
Moderately disapprove	17%	16%	15%	19%
Strongly disapprove	33%	43%	17%	29%
Not sure	12%	11%	9%	9%
Approve - NET	39%	30%	58%	43%
Disapprove - NET	49%	59%	32%	48%

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Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995

Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election. More information on our electoral record can be found at:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/record-of-accuracy>

More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at
<http://www.visioncritical.com/what-we-do/practices/angus-reid-public-opinion/>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

Copies of this poll are available on our website:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>

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