

US PUBLIC OPINION ON AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Professor Charli Carpenter, University of Massachusetts Department of Political Science

charli.carpenter@gmail.com

The survey was conducted by YouGov America (<http://yougov.com>) between May 10 and May 12, 2013. Respondents were matched on gender, age, race, income, region, education, party identification, voter registration, ideology, political interest and military status. We also varied the wording on both questions between the term “killer robot” being used by the NGO campaign and the term “fully autonomous weapons” to measure whether “killer robot” language affected public sentiment about these weapons. The margin of error is +/- 3.6%.

Question 1: Drones are remotely piloted by a human controller, but several nations are developing robotic weapons that can independently make targeting and firing decisions without a human in the loop. How do you feel about the trend toward using completely autonomous [robotic weapons/lethal robots] in war?

Strongly favor.....	10%
Somewhat favor.....	16%
Somewhat oppose.....	16%
Strongly oppose.....	39%
Not sure	18%

Question 2: Some non-profit citizen groups have launched [a campaign to ban the use of fully autonomous weapons / the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots], which seeks a global treaty requiring human involvement in all decisions to take human life. To what extent would you support or oppose such a campaign?

Strongly support.....	33%
Somewhat support.....	20%
Somewhat oppose.....	9%
Strongly oppose.....	10%
Not sure	38%

Drones are remotely piloted by a human controller, but several nations are developing robotic weapons that can independently make targeting and firing decisions without a human in the loop. How do you feel about the trend toward using completely autonomous robotic weapons/lethal robots in war?

	Total	Age			Race			Gender		Family Income			
		18-34	35-49	50+	White	Black	Hispanic	Male	Female	Under 40	40-80	80-100	100+
Strongly favor	10%	11%	12%	9%	8%	16%	20%	13%	8%	8%	13%	21%	10%
Somewhat favor	16%	14%	16%	18%	16%	15%	20%	15%	17%	14%	19%	13%	15%
Somewhat oppose	16%	19%	16%	14%	17%	11%	15%	16%	16%	14%	19%	13%	22%
Strongly oppose	39%	36%	36%	44%	44%	33%	21%	43%	36%	40%	37%	41%	41%
Not sure	18%	21%	20%	15%	16%	26%	24%	13%	23%	24%	12%	12%	11%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(230)	(283)	(487)	(779)	(113)	(108)	(475)	(525)	(364)	(292)	(76)	(131)

	Total	Region				Education			
		Northeast	Midwest	South	West	HS or Less	Some College	College Grad	Post grad
Strongly favor	10%	10%	7%	14%	9%	13%	7%	10%	10%
Somewhat favor	16%	19%	16%	16%	14%	17%	16%	12%	17%
Somewhat oppose	16%	15%	18%	14%	19%	13%	16%	23%	20%
Strongly oppose	39%	36%	40%	39%	42%	34%	43%	43%	47%
Not sure	18%	20%	19%	17%	15%	23%	18%	12%	7%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(164)	(240)	(352)	(244)	(371)	(340)	(187)	(102)

	Total	Party ID			Ideology - 5 pnt					
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Very liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative	Not Sure
Strongly favor	10%	12%	10%	11%	11%	11%	10%	9%	14%	5%
Somewhat favor	16%	16%	12%	23%	9%	22%	15%	21%	17%	9%
Somewhat oppose	16%	18%	17%	15%	20%	18%	18%	17%	11%	11%
Strongly oppose	39%	36%	46%	38%	47%	36%	39%	39%	46%	24%
Not sure	18%	18%	15%	13%	13%	13%	17%	14%	12%	51%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(398)	(328)	(241)	(137)	(142)	(295)	(174)	(168)	(84)

	Total	Voter Registration Status			Interest in news and public affairs				
		Yes	No	Don't know	Most time	Some time	Now and then	Hardly at all	Don't know
Strongly favor	10%	11%	8%	--	12%	9%	10%	2%	10%
Somewhat favor	16%	17%	11%	--	15%	21%	19%	9%	11%
Somewhat oppose	16%	17%	10%	18%	16%	17%	15%	23%	3%
Strongly oppose	39%	40%	38%	23%	47%	35%	31%	26%	11%
Not sure	18%	15%	34%	59%	10%	18%	26%	40%	65%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(897)	(89)	(14)	(558)	(239)	(115)	(67)	(21)

	Total	Family U.S. military status				
		I am	Family	I served previously	Family served previously	None
Strongly favor	10%	9%	5%	12%	9%	11%
Somewhat favor	16%	11%	22%	14%	18%	15%
Somewhat oppose	16%	8%	25%	13%	16%	16%
Strongly oppose	39%	65%	37%	50%	44%	35%
Not sure	18%	8%	10%	12%	12%	22%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(9)	(79)	(124)	(393)	(380)

Some non-profit citizen groups have launched a campaign to ban the use of fully autonomous weapons/the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which seeks a global treaty requiring human involvement in all decisions to take human life. To what extent would you support or oppose such a campaign?

	Total	Age			Race			Gender		Family Income			
		18-34	35-49	50+	White	Black	Hispanic	Male	Female	Under 40	40-80	80-100	100+
Strongly support	33%	35%	28%	35%	35%	29%	28%	36%	30%	34%	31%	23%	37%
Somewhat support	20%	22%	20%	18%	21%	19%	13%	22%	18%	19%	20%	20%	18%
Somewhat oppose	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	7%	10%	9%	9%	8%	10%	11%	13%
Strongly oppose	10%	8%	8%	13%	10%	9%	8%	12%	7%	6%	12%	17%	12%
Not sure	28%	27%	35%	25%	25%	36%	41%	21%	35%	33%	26%	30%	20%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(230)	(283)	(487)	(779)	(113)	(108)	(475)	(525)	(364)	(292)	(76)	(131)

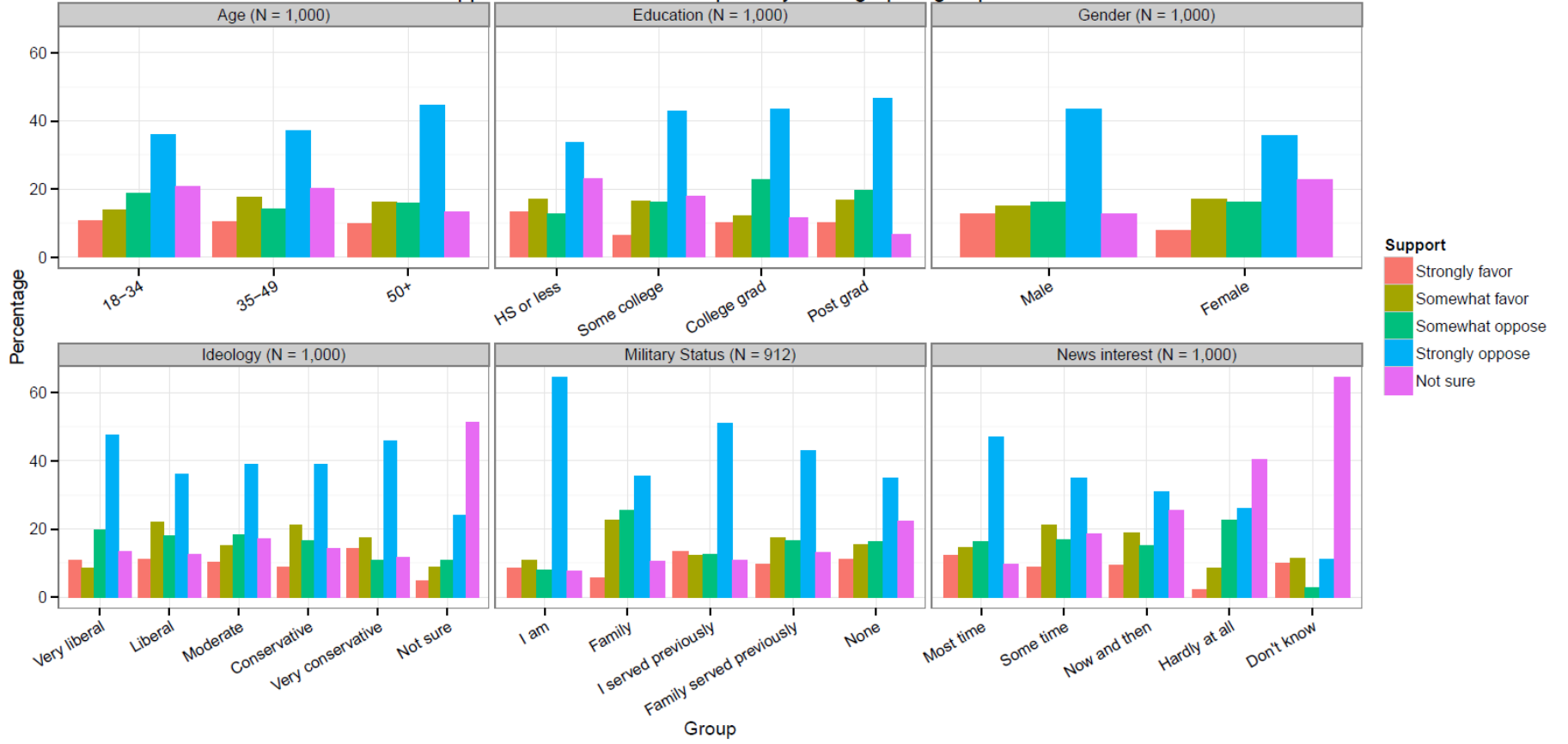
	Total	Region				Education			
		Northeast	Midwest	South	West	HS or Less	Some College	College Grad	Post grad
Strongly support	33%	29%	33%	33%	35%	27%	33%	39%	46%
Somewhat support	20%	21%	21%	17%	22%	17%	24%	21%	16%
Somewhat oppose	9%	8%	10%	8%	11%	8%	8%	11%	12%
Strongly oppose	10%	6%	8%	13%	10%	12%	7%	11%	11%
Not sure	28%	35%	28%	29%	23%	36%	28%	18%	15%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(164)	(240)	(352)	(244)	(371)	(340)	(187)	(102)

	Total	Party ID			Ideology - 5 pnt					
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Very liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative	Not Sure
Strongly support	33%	36%	38%	24%	47%	35%	34%	26%	31%	24%
Somewhat support	20%	19%	21%	21%	19%	20%	22%	25%	18%	9%
Somewhat oppose	9%	9%	6%	14%	8%	15%	8%	11%	9%	3%
Strongly oppose	10%	6%	11%	16%	5%	6%	7%	13%	22%	5%
Not sure	28%	30%	23%	25%	22%	24%	30%	26%	20%	59%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(398)	(328)	(241)	(137)	(142)	(295)	(174)	(168)	(84)

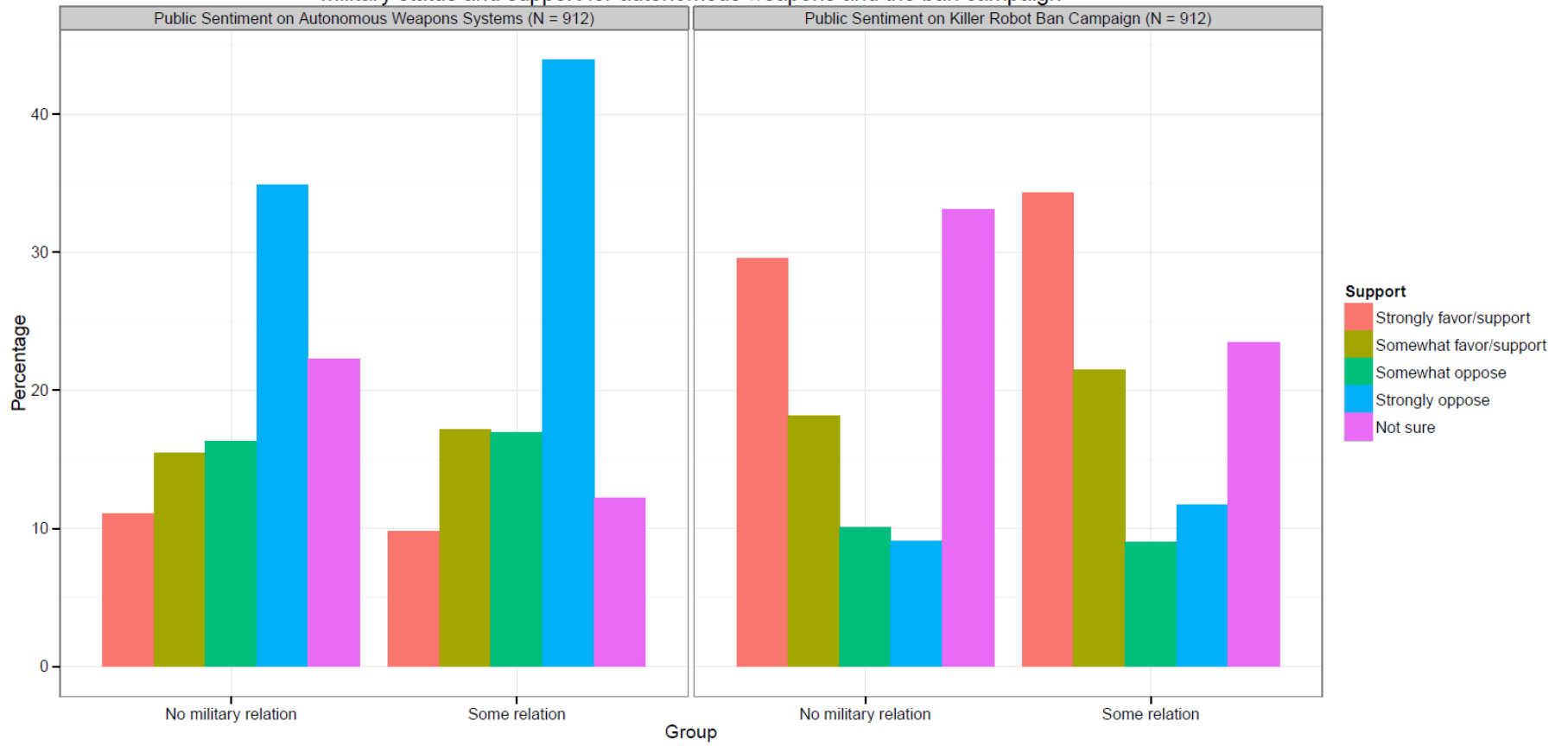
	Total	Voter Registration Status			Interest in news and public affairs				
		Yes	No	Don't know	Most time	Some time	Now and then	Hardly at all	Don't know
Strongly support	33%	34%	29%	10%	38%	29%	29%	18%	24%
Somewhat support	20%	21%	16%	—	19%	23%	15%	30%	—
Somewhat oppose	9%	9%	9%	—	10%	12%	5%	5%	3%
Strongly oppose	10%	10%	9%	12%	12%	8%	9%	6%	—
Not sure	28%	26%	36%	78%	20%	29%	42%	42%	73%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(897)	(89)	(14)	(558)	(239)	(115)	(67)	(21)

	Total	Family U.S. military status				
		I am	Family	I served previously	Family served previously	None
Strongly support	33%	17%	30%	38%	35%	30%
Somewhat support	20%	43%	28%	20%	18%	18%
Somewhat oppose	9%	—	15%	13%	7%	10%
Strongly oppose	10%	21%	14%	14%	11%	9%
Not sure	28%	19%	13%	15%	28%	33%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Unweighted N)	(1,000)	(9)	(79)	(124)	(393)	(380)

Support for autonomous weapons by demographic group



Military status and support for autonomous weapons and the ban campaign



Treatment effect on autonomous weapons and the ban campaign

