

## US Gun Lovers and Haters Watch Closely Brazil Referendum on Guns

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This Sunday, Brazil, the 186 million-person country will become the first in the world to hold a nationwide referendum on banning the sales of guns and bullets to almost all civilians.

The result is anything but certain. A public opinion survey one week ago by the private research firm IBOPE showed that 49 percent of Brazilians oppose a ban and 45 percent support it. Given the survey's 2.2 percentage-point margin of error, the percentages are a statistical tie.

U.S. interest groups on both sides of the gun issue are watching the vote closely.

If the referendum passes, Brazil would be a launching pad for similar campaigns in the United States, said Andrew Arulanandam, a spokesman for the National Rifle Association.

"The American gun-control lobby will be energized, but gun owners will be mobilized," he said.

U.S. gun-control advocates could use Brazil as a test case for tighter laws, although not a total ban, said Peter Hamm, a spokesman for the Washington-based Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, which advocates tougher gun restrictions.

Studies show there are more than 17 million guns in Brazil, about half of them illegal and a quarter of them in the hands of criminals. Americans own an estimated 192 million firearms.

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