



# **Gun Violence Prevention Message Guidance 2020**

## Gun Violence and Gun Violence Prevention

On average, more than 100 Americans are shot and killed every day — and twice that many are wounded. This issue affects every community: 58 percent of American adults, or someone they care for, have experienced gun violence in their lifetime. That's why we must address gun violence in all its forms.

### Talking About Gun Violence Prevention

- We all want to keep our families safe. That's why we fight for policies that are proven to reduce gun violence, protect children, and make our communities safer.
- No one law can stop all tragedies, but there are critical steps we can take now that will make a difference and save lives.
- The American people are demanding leaders who will stand up to the gun lobby and fight for common-sense gun safety measures that will help keep guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them:
  - Background checks for all gun sales make it harder for people who aren't allowed to own guns to get them and are the foundation of any effective effort to reduce gun violence.
  - When a loved one is in crisis, red flag laws, also known as extreme risk laws, give family members and law enforcement a tool to intervene if there is evidence that someone poses a risk to themselves or others with a firearm, while protecting due process.
  - Keeping guns away from domestic abusers can save the lives of women in the U.S., who are 21 times more likely to die by firearm homicide than women in other high-income countries.
  - Combatting daily gun violence that doesn't always make national news, by funding research into the gun violence crisis and the programs that address it.
- This isn't about "gun control." It's about preventing gun violence in all its forms, and encouraging gun safety and responsible gun ownership.

### American Voters Support Stronger Gun Safety Laws and Want Our Leaders, Elected Officials and Candidates to Advocate for Them

- **Ninety-four percent of American voters support background checks for all gun sales**, including 92% of Republicans, 98% of Democrats, and 90% of gun owners.<sup>1</sup>
- **Eighty-six percent of voters support red flag laws, which give family or law enforcement a way to ask a judge to temporarily suspend someone's access to guns if they pose a serious threat to themselves or others**, including 85% of Republicans and 82% of gun owners.<sup>2</sup>
- And **ninety-one percent of voters, including 89% of Republicans, support prohibiting domestic abusers from purchasing or possessing firearms.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quinnipiac University Poll: May 16-20, 2019 (+/-3.7%)

<sup>2</sup> Global Strategy Group. Voters call for background checks, strong Red Flag bill, conducted on behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety. September 6, 2019. <https://every.tw/2IM0L48>.

<sup>3</sup> Quinnipiac University Poll: March 3-4, 2018 (+/-3.5%)

## **Additional Background Information on Gun Violence and Key GVP Policies 2020**

### **Background Checks:**

- Federal law doesn't require background checks for gun sales by unlicensed sellers, meaning criminals, domestic abusers, and other people who aren't allowed to have guns can avoid a background check and still purchase a gun, simply by going to an unlicensed seller — including strangers they meet online or at gun shows.
- Twenty-two states and DC have closed this loophole to require background checks on all handgun sales, but until the federal law is updated, the Internet will continue to be a wild, wild west of unlicensed sales, where prohibited purchasers can buy guns with no background check and no questions asked.
  - An Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund investigation found in 2018 that, on one website called Armslist, there were nearly 1.2 million online ads for firearm sales that would not require a background check.
- We know background checks work. Since passage of the federal law in 1994 that required background checks by licensed gun dealers, more than 3.5 million gun sales to convicted felons, domestic abusers, fugitives, and other prohibited purchasers have been prevented. Background checks are the foundation of any strong gun violence prevention strategy, and we must make sure they are required for all gun sales.

### **Disproportionate effect on Black Americans:**

- Gun violence disproportionately impacts people and communities of color, thanks to decades of discriminatory policy and systemic racism. Black Americans represent the majority of gun homicide victims. In fact, Black Americans are 10 times more likely than white Americans to die by gun homicide. And Black children and teens are 14 times more likely than their white peers to die by gun homicide. That is why we must invest in policies and programs that address gun violence in all our communities.

### **Domestic violence:**

- When it comes to gun violence against women, the U.S. is the most dangerous high-income country in the world. Women in the U.S. are 21 times more likely to die by gun homicide than women in other high-income countries, and much of this gun violence is driven by domestic violence. On average, every month in America, 53 women are shot to death by a current or former intimate partner, like a husband or boyfriend — and many more are wounded. We must do more to keep survivors of domestic abuse safe from guns.
- Access to a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed by her abusive partner. There are simple, common-sense steps we can take to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers. We can block gun possession by abusive dating partners — because unmarried partners are at as much risk from abusive boyfriends as wives are from their abusive husbands. And we can ensure that abusers actually turn in their firearms after they become prohibited from having them.

## Red flag/Extreme risk laws:

- When a person is in crisis and considering harming themselves or others, family members and law enforcement are often the first people to see the warning signs. Red flag laws, also known as extreme risk laws, empower those who recognize these warning signs to ask a judge to intervene and temporarily prevent people in crisis from accessing firearms. A study in Connecticut found that one suicide was averted for approximately every 11 extreme risk protection orders granted in that state.
- Florida enacted a red flag law in 2018 after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, which was perpetrated by a 19-year-old who showed warning signs. States around the country are following Florida's lead and turning to red flag laws as a common-sense way to help reduce gun violence, and prevent mass shootings.

## Responding to Major Shooting Incidents

Most gun violence is not the mass shootings or school shootings that generate headlines; nearly two-thirds of gun deaths are suicides, and one-third are homicides. The following recommendations can help ensure responsible communications in the aftermath of major shooting incidents:

- Most gun violence is not the mass shootings or school shootings that generate headlines; nearly two-thirds of gun deaths are suicides, and one-third are homicides. The following recommendations can help ensure responsible communications in the aftermath of major shooting incidents:
- Share information from reliable sources, like the AP, Reuters, or other national news outlets.
- Offer condolences paired with a plan for addressing the problem of gun violence. It can be frustrating for constituents to see leaders offer only "thoughts and prayers" with no mention of taking action.
- Acknowledge "every day" shootings that happen in communities all across America, which often do not generate national media coverage. On an average day in the US, more than 100 people die from gun violence and hundreds more are wounded. Most of these tragedies never make the news.
- Visit Everytown for Gun Safety's Gun Violence in America page for up-to-date facts about gun violence, and EveryStat for Gun Safety, which includes state and community-specific information on gun laws and gun violence across a variety of metrics. <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/> and <https://everytownresearch.org/everystat>
- Do not name the shooters. Some shooters crave notoriety, and it can inspire copycats.
- Do not share information about a shooting until officials have confirmed there are casualties; sometimes initial reports of gunfire or shootings are false.
- Do not make public assumptions or rely on hearsay about the shooting, like who the shooter is, the circumstances that led to the shooting, or the motive.