



To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group, Everytown for Gun Safety, Higher Heights for America

Date: July 1, 2020

Re: New poll shows African Americans are making gun violence prevention a voting and mobilizing issue this election

African American voters have long championed common-sense solutions to reduce gun violence, and the 2020 election is no different. But as recent contests are won or lost by razor-thin margins, it's more critical than ever to earn every vote. Earning these votes requires candidates to understand this moment and the confluence of inequalities that disproportionately impact the Black community:

- The coronavirus pandemic has damaged public health and the economy, laying bare the deep systemic racism that leaves Black Americans more likely to die from the disease and more likely to face unemployment and layoffs as the economy crumbles.
- Further, pandemic gun buying has [driven an increase in shootings](#) at a time when Black Americans were already 10 times more likely than white people to die by gun homicide.
- In recent weeks, as people venture outside their homes, gun violence has once again started to increase. There was mass shooting on Juneteenth in Charlotte, while over 100 people were wounded in shootings in Chicago, raising fears of another summer uptick in gun violence.
- And finally, police violence continues to traumatize Black Americans; a trauma so deep that it also leads to [worse health outcomes from the coronavirus](#). These issues are interconnected and intersectional.

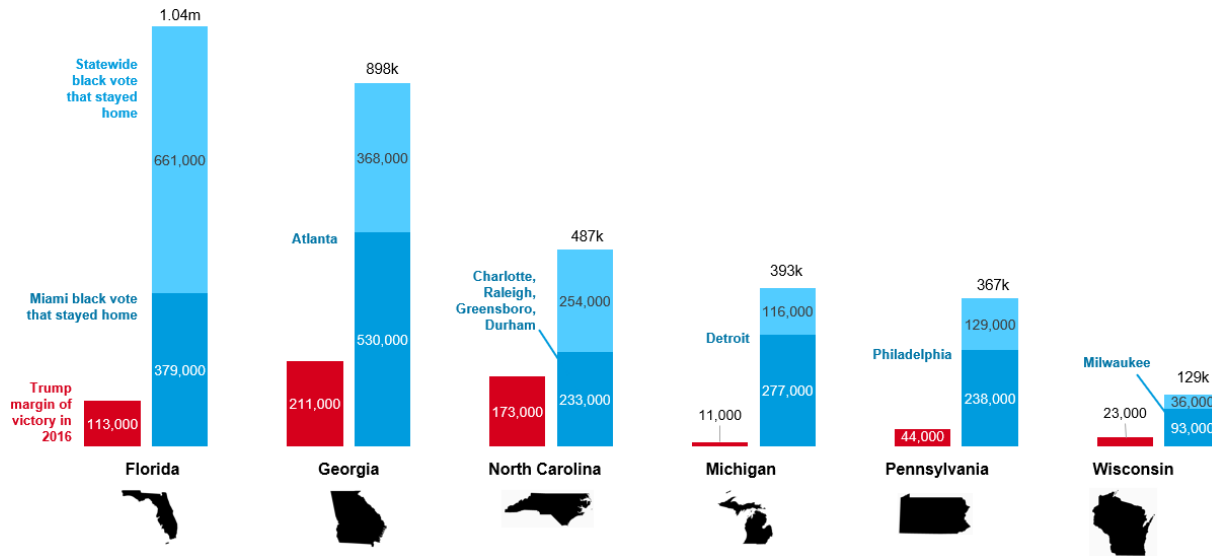
Despite public outcry over these high-profile injustices, our political leaders have yet to take meaningful action on violence. Now, a new survey of 1,000 Black voters shows that they are ready to vote on gun violence prevention and gun safety come November 2020, and those Black voters who are less likely to vote in general are more likely to show up for candidates who prioritize gun violence prevention. Moreover, the issue is rising in urgency with this segment – three-in-five Black voters who are less likely to vote also report a candidate's position on guns has become more important in terms of who they decide to vote for than it was before the coronavirus pandemic.

The Black electorate is by no means monolithic, yet it is speaking with a united voice in its call for gun violence prevention. Attitudes on this issue were strikingly similar across many demographic dimensions. Age, gun ownership, urban density, and gender were the largest drivers of opinion, with Black women — who are key to turning out votes on Election day — often the most likely to vote with their community's safety and health top of mind.

African American turnout can make-or-break the 2020 election for Democrats in key states. In 2016, Donald Trump overperformed among Republican base voters and suburban voters, while Democratic turnout across the board was lower than anticipated. Black voters overwhelmingly opposed Donald Trump in 2016, but the number of African Americans who didn't vote in 2016 was significantly higher than Trump's margin of victory in several pivotal states. For instance, there were 25 times more registered African Americans who stayed home in Detroit alone, than Trump's statewide margin of victory in Michigan (see table on following page).

Moreover, candidates will have to energize Black women, who currently report less motivation to vote than men (86% motivated to 79%, respectively). This is alarming, as these women historically lead the Black community's get out the vote efforts.

Trump Margin of Victory vs. Dormant Black Vote Population, 2016:



Black voters firmly believe in stronger gun violence prevention policies

Black voters increasingly support stronger gun laws. By an eleven-to-one margin, Black voters believe the country’s gun laws should be stronger, rather than less strong (79% - 7%). By gender, women are more likely than men to think gun laws should be stronger (81% - 76%). And 58% of Black voters have become more supportive of these measures over the last few years (41% much more supportive). Once again, we see women are more likely than men to report becoming much more supportive (43% - 38%).

Black voters support a broad range of stronger gun laws to keep communities safer. In particular, Black voters strongly support GVP policies like requiring background checks on all gun sales (84% strongly support), disarming domestic abusers (77% strongly support), and enacting red flag laws (68% strongly support). And while 28% of Black voters own guns or live with someone who does, they too are strongly supportive of these measures.

% total (strong) support for...	Total	Most Likely to Vote	Less Likely to Vote	Under 55	55+	Gun Owners	Non-Gun Owners
Requiring background checks on all gun sales	96 (84)	96 (87)	96 (79)	95 (80)	98 (91)	93 (74)	97 (88)
Blocking domestic abusers from owning guns	93 (77)	94 (79)	92 (74)	92 (73)	95 (84)	91 (72)	94 (79)
Enacting red flag laws, which give family or law enforcement a way to temporarily remove guns from someone who poses a threat	93 (68)	92 (68)	94 (67)	92 (65)	94 (72)	92 (59)	93 (71)

But the media and politicians are falling short of their expectations

Black voters are a vocal community in favor of gun laws, and they do not feel the media gives the issue adequate attention. The Black community continues to call for gun safety legislation. But while there is episodic coverage of mass shootings, day-to-day gun violence does not get the media attention it deserves. Over half (55%) of Black voters believe gun violence is not getting enough attention in the media these days. This sentiment is shared by 59% of those living in cities, and 64% of those 55 and older.

Elected officials are not rising to the expectations of Black voters either. Black voters are a make-or-break political constituency. But lawmakers appear to be putting themselves in jeopardy through inaction – 83% of Black voters, including 80% of those less likely to vote, feel politicians are not doing enough to protect their communities from gun violence.

This is a voting issue for them, and they will hold elected officials to account in November

Candidates who don't prioritize the Black community's health, pocketbooks, and safety are completely disqualified. The top three most disqualifying issues for candidates revolved around the safety of Black Americans. In the wake of the continued shooting of unarmed Black civilians by police, 79% would never vote for a candidate who didn't agree with holding police accountable for disproportionate use of force. Similarly, 75% would never vote for a candidate who didn't prioritize making our criminal justice system fairer. And close to three in four voters (71%) would never vote for a candidate who opposes requiring background checks on all gun sales – among Black women, this rises to 75% compared to 64% for Black men. Black women are also more likely than men to disqualify candidates who they disagree with on pocketbook issues: job creation (68% of women / 63% of men), investments in education (69% of women / 61% of men), and reducing health care costs (69% of women / 65% of men).

% would never vote for a candidate who disagrees with this position	Total	Most Likely to Vote	Less Likely to Vote	Men	Women	Urban	Suburban
Holding police accountable for disproportionate use of force	79	79	78	77	80	81	75
Making our criminal justice system fairer	75	75	76	74	76	78	72
Requiring background checks on all gun sales	71	71	71	64	75	73	67
Enforcing voter protection laws like the Voting Rights Act	68	73	60	68	69	69	65
Reducing health care costs	67	68	65	65	69	70	61
Protecting children at the border	66	67	66	65	68	67	62
Investing in our education system	66	65	67	61	69	67	64
Creating new jobs	66	64	68	63	68	69	63
Standing up to Donald Trump	65	67	62	66	64	66	63
Protecting the environment	59	59	59	62	57	61	55
Ending mass incarceration for low-level, non-violent drug offenses	59	59	59	59	59	63	54
Reducing taxes	52	51	53	49	54	55	47
Protecting access to abortion	50	51	50	45	54	50	51
Taking money out of politics	48	48	48	50	47	48	46
Protecting our borders from illegal immigration	39	35	47	37	40	41	35

Candidates' position on guns is rising in importance. A majority of Black voters (55%), and an even greater majority of Black voters less likely to turn out to vote (60%), say a candidate's position on guns has become more important to their vote than it was three months ago, before the coronavirus pandemic.

To mobilize these voters, candidates must champion gun violence prevention

Railing against Trump is not the answer to mobilization. While President Trump is a popular foil along the Acela corridor, and is by no means supported within the Black community, he is not their primary voting consideration. Instead, 86% of Black voters, 84% of those less likely to turn out on Election Day, and 88% of Black women consider a candidate's position on guns as more important than a candidate's stance toward Trump when making up their mind in November. This also outpaces health care, jobs and the economy, and the coronavirus pandemic.

% a candidate's position on issue is more important than stance on Trump	Total	Most Likely to Vote	Less Likely to Vote	Under 55	55+	Men	Women	Gun Owners	Non-Gun Owners
Women's health	87	88	86	87	89	83	91	82	89
Guns	86	86	84	84	88	82	88	81	87
Health care	84	86	79	81	89	79	88	79	86
The environment	84	85	82	84	83	81	86	77	86
Jobs and the economy	83	84	80	82	84	79	85	77	85
Coronavirus response	78	79	77	79	77	73	82	73	80
Money in politics	77	77	77	75	80	75	79	73	79
Immigration	74	75	72	73	77	67	79	72	75

And even this election, Black voters are willing to stay home if these policies are not championed. Though the country weathers dual economic and public health crises, it would be a mistake to think health care and the economy dwarf all other issues for Black voters. In fact, low propensity Black voters would rather stay home than vote for a candidate that does not support taking action to reduce gun violence (58% vs. 42%).

	Total	Most Likely to Vote	Less Likely to Vote
% would rather vote for a candidate even if they do not support taking action to reduce gun violence	53	58	42
% would rather stay home than vote for a candidate that does not support taking action to reduce gun violence	47	42	58

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 1,002 African American voters nationwide from May 7th to 18th, 2020. The survey had a confidence interval of +/- 3.1%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the sampled electorate are nationally representative.