

December 9, 2020

Significant Support for Progress on Guns Violence Prevention

Memo of Survey Findings

To: Interested parties

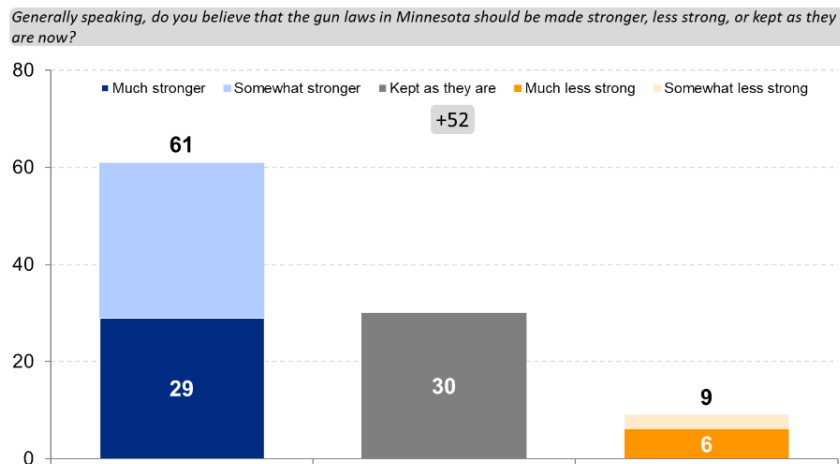
From: GQR

In an online survey taken before the 2020 elections, Minnesota voters overwhelmingly support efforts to reduce gun violence in this state. A 61 percent majority support “stronger” gun laws; just 9 percent argue for weaker gun laws. Some specific policies including universal background checks and emergency protection orders, also known as a red flag law, generate support north of 85 percent. These levels of support generally hold in the key suburban-exurban part of the state, as well as more culturally conservative parts of Greater Minnesota. Moreover, even among gun owners, these policies generate significant majorities.¹

Main Findings

A growing number of voters want stronger gun laws. A 61 percent majority support stronger gun laws, 30 percent would keep laws as they are and just 9 percent advocate for “less strong” gun laws.

Figure 1: Support for stronger Gun Laws in MN



¹ GQR conducted a 20-minute online survey among 1,000 Likely General Election Voters in Minnesota (with an oversample in Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Goodhue, Isanti, Ramsey, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright Counties) from Sept. 17-29, 2020. This survey was funded by the Joyce Foundation and George Family Foundation.

This result is no different in the suburban/exurban part of the state (62 percent support stronger gun laws). Fully, 45 percent of gun owners recommend stronger laws on guns, a plurality; just 13 percent of gun owners argue for weaker gun laws.

Voters’ views on this issue are evolving. One third of this electorate argue they are becoming more supportive of strong gun laws over the last year, including 28 percent of gun owners. Just 10 percent are growing less supportive and 57 percent say their views have not changed.

Minnesota voters deliver significant support for proposed gun violence prevention policies. Every policy tested in this survey generates a massive majority. Most notably, a 92 percent majority support universal background checks and 86 percent support emergency protection orders. Even among gun owners, 86 percent support universal background checks and 78 percent support emergency protection orders. Other policies, including prohibiting domestic abusers from gun purchases, also find significant support in Minnesota.

Figure 2: Support for Select GVP Policies

Policy	Strong Support	Total Support	Support in Sub/Exurban	Support Among Gun Owners
Require background checks	71	92	92	86
Prohibit domestic abusers from gun purchases	70	92	95	88
Emergency Protection Orders	57	86	90	78
Required to obtain a permit from police	61	84	87	72
Increase state funding for comm. Based orgs.	41	82	84	76
Prohibit “ghost guns”	57	80	79	71
Ban high-capacity magazines	56	78	78	62
Ban possession of assault weapons	57	75	76	58
Remove block on gun data collection	34	67	70	57
Allow gov’t collect gun ownership data	39	67	65	54
Hold gun dealers accountable for crimes	33	62	66	47

Support for strengthening background checks holds after voters are given the lay-of-the-land. Many voters do not understand the details of gun laws in Minnesota, particularly non-gun owners who have never gone through the process of purchasing a firearm. A 62 percent majority of voters here mistakenly believe that all gun purchases in Minnesota require a background check. Therefore, this survey provided voters with a neutral description of current law governing background checks in Minnesota and then asked voters whether they would make these laws stronger.

In the state of Minnesota, gun dealers must initiate a background check before selling any gun. In addition, if a buyer wishes to buy a handgun or an assault rifle, he or she must have a transfer permit from local law enforcement, a concealed carry permit, or undergo an additional background check by the local police chief or sheriff. Transfer permits last for one year and allow someone to purchase an unlimited number of firearms. A concealed carry permit lasts for five years. Gun dealers and unlicensed sellers of firearms are not required to retain or report sales records. Unlicensed sellers or private gun sellers, like those who sell firearms at a gun show or online, are not required to conduct a background check or for the buyer to obtain any kind of permit for that gun purchase.

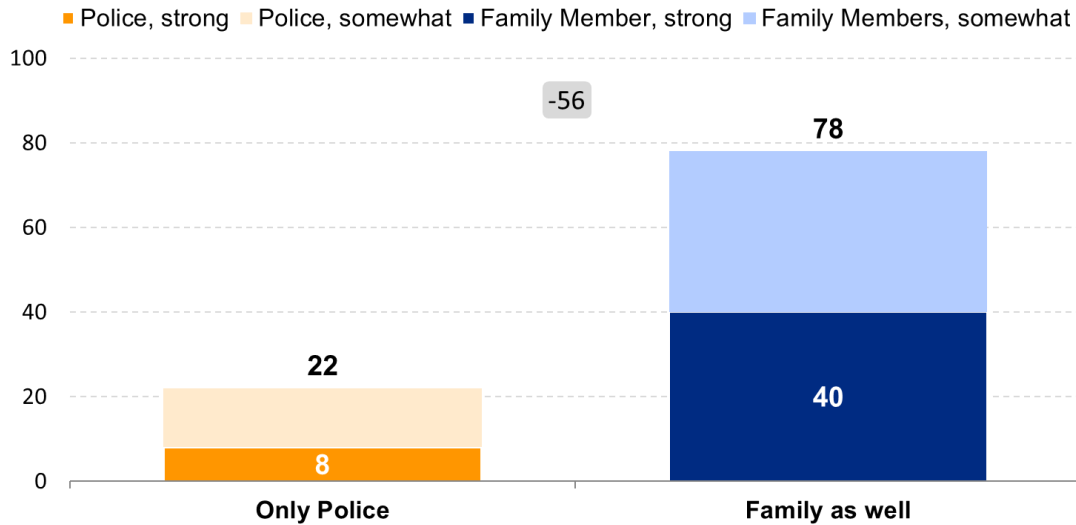
After hearing this description, a 74 percent majority of voters argue for stronger gun laws and government background checks, including 42 percent who argue for much stronger laws. This includes 77 percent of voters in suburban/exurban areas, as well as 60 percent of gun owners. Importantly, educating voters about what exactly gun prevention policies aim to accomplish and clearing up misinformation as to what the law currently is, by itself seems to increase support for stronger gun laws.

Minnesota voters strongly support allowing family members to initiate emergency protection orders.

Emergency protection order proposals (ERPO) would establish a legal process for certain officials to seek a temporary suspension of a person's access to a gun if a court determines they are a danger to themselves or others. By a four to one margin (78 to 22 percent), voters believe family members, as well as law enforcement, should be able to initiate this procedure. In message testing of these proposals, voters seem persuaded by arguments that ERPOs empower families and law enforcement with the ability to prevent crimes and tragedies before they happen.

Figure 3: Family Members Ability to Petition EPROs

Do you believe the power to ask the courts to suspend someone's access to guns should rest entirely with law enforcement or do you believe immediate family members and partners should also have the ability to petition the courts for an emergency protection order?



Gun violence prevention supporters need to convince voters their policies save lives. While huge majorities of voters support background checks and emergency protection orders, not all of these voters are convinced these policies will make a major difference. While fully 75 percent of voters say these policies will make a difference, just 39 percent say they will make a major impact reducing gun violence in the state; 36 percent say they will have a minor impact. This suggests a knowledge gap about the efficacy of gun safety laws that researchers and advocates could help address.

Conclusion

As reflected in the recent elections, this state and this country remain divided on many issues around public policy, but on specific gun policies, Minnesota voters find common ground. Huge, bi-partisan majorities support universal background checks and emergency protection laws that involve family and the medical community.

Appendix A: GVP Policies by subgroup

Total Favor	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Wmn	Gun Own	Non-Own	Met. MN	Grt. MN
Prohibit domestic abusers from purchasing or possessing guns	92	98	94	84	89	95	88	96	92	92
Require a background check on all gun purchases and transfers in Minnesota, including those sold online or at gun shows	92	96	92	86	88	95	86	96	93	90
(SPLIT) Red flag laws that allow law enforcement to ask a judge to temporarily remove guns from a person if they are found to be a threat to themselves or others	87	98	80	79	82	93	77	95	89	86
(SPLIT) EPRO laws that allow law enforcement to ask a judge to temporarily remove guns from a person if they are found to be a threat to themselves or others	86	93	83	80	80	90	79	91	92	78
(SPLIT) EPRO laws that allow family members or law enforcement to ask a judge to temporarily remove guns from a person if they are found to be a threat to themselves or others	85	99	94	62	82	89	74	95	96	68
Require people to obtain a permit from local police and undergo a background check before purchasing a handgun or assault rifle	84	92	85	75	82	87	77	91	88	79
Increase state funding for community-based organizations that work to support victims of gun violence and develop violence intervention programs	82	98	78	66	77	87	76	87	84	80

Appendix A: GVP Policies by subgroup

Total Favor	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Wmn	Gun Own	Non-Own	Met. MN	Grt. MN
Prohibiting ownership of so-called "ghost guns" which are firearms that can be bought in parts and assembled at home	80	91	85	65	75	85	71	88	83	77
Ban possession of high capacity ammunition magazines	78	96	82	53	70	85	62	91	82	73
(SPLIT) Red flag laws that allow family members or law enforcement to ask a judge to temporarily remove guns from a person if they are found to be a threat to themselves or others	76	84	80	63	64	87	67	84	75	78
Ban possession of assault weapons	75	94	77	50	66	83	58	89	80	68
(SPLIT) Remove the block on collecting data on gun ownership for strictly research purposes	67	83	69	48	71	64	57	76	71	62
(SPLIT) Allow the state government to collect and access data on gun ownership in Minnesota strictly for research purposes	67	88	65	41	59	73	54	78	70	62
Hold gun dealers accountable if too many of their guns end up on the street or are later used in a crime	62	79	65	40	57	67	47	75	69	54
Would you favor or oppose requiring all gun dealers to obtain a state license, and require their employees pass a background check and receive training before being allowed to sell guns and ammunition	82	97	82	63	72	90	74	89	84	79

Appendix B: Background Check Policies by subgroup

Total Favor	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Wmn	Gun Own	Non-Own	Met. MN	Grt. MN
Apply the same rules to all gun sales regardless of whether the seller is a licensed gun dealer or an unlicensed gun seller at a gun show or online	87	96	86	77	81	93	80	93	88	86
Require that gun dealers and private sellers of firearms retain all sales records and report those sales records to the state, so law enforcement is able to trace crime guns	84	96	84	70	78	90	74	93	89	78
Require people who apply for a gun purchase permit to submit their fingerprints to allow law enforcement to do a thorough background check	82	96	76	68	74	89	72	90	84	79
(SPLIT) Require permits for all gun purchases, including long guns, assault rifles and shot guns	77	90	72	65	69	86	67	86	81	73
(SPLIT) Limit permit holders to buying one gun per permit. People who want to buy additional guns will be required to apply for another permit	73	89	75	53	62	81	52	90	77	66
(SPLIT) Limit permit holders to buying three guns per permit. People who want to buy additional guns will be required to apply for another permit	72	88	70	52	63	80	58	84	75	68
Raise the minimum age someone can purchase a firearm from 18 to 21	70	83	65	56	61	77	57	80	73	65

Appendix B: Background Check Policies by subgroup

Total Favor	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Wmn	Gun Own	Non-Own	Met. MN	Gr. MN
Require prospective gun purchasers to obtain a transfer permit from the police, even if they already have a concealed carry permit	65	87	59	43	57	73	48	80	71	58
Eliminate the permit to purchase system altogether and rely on background checks for all gun purchases completed at the point of sale as they do in some other states	59	56	65	58	56	62	53	64	59	58
(SPLIT) Require permits for all purchases of handguns only	53	60	49	49	52	54	49	57	58	47
(SPLIT) Make gun permits valid for one month, as opposed to 1 year as they are currently, after which people wishing to buy a gun will be required to apply for another permit	52	69	60	26	49	54	34	67	58	42
(SPLIT) Make gun permits valid for three months, as opposed to 1 year as they are currently, after which people wishing to buy a gun will be required to apply for another permit	51	68	40	36	40	62	41	59	52	50