



To: Interested parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: April 23, 2020
Re: Key Findings on Public Support for Firearms Licensing

Building on a growing body of academic research pointing to firearms licensing as an effective means of reducing gun violence, Global Strategy Group fielded a poll of 1,200 likely 2020 voters nationwide, including oversamples of Latinx and Black communities. This survey, funded by The Joyce Foundation and The Kendeda Fund, represents an important first step in understanding evolving public perceptions of firearms licensing.

Consistent with the limited publicly available polling to date, the survey shows that voters of all backgrounds are overwhelmingly supportive of firearms licensing. Most agree we need to do something to stem the tide of gun violence, and they want smart policy that has an impact.

Perceptions of Firearms Licensing

Firearms licensing is overwhelmingly popular. In an age of polarization where it seems that no one can agree on anything, voters are united in supporting firearms licensing. Democrats, independents, Republicans, non-gun owners, and gun owners alike all overwhelmingly support firearms licensing, regardless of what you call it. In fact, licensing is nearly as popular as background checks even though voters are 11 points more familiar with background checks than with “licenses.” They are similarly supportive of registering guns.

Total support for...	Nationwide	Black	Latinx	Dem	Ind	GOP	Gun owners	Non-gun owners
Requiring <u>background checks</u> on all gun sales	95%	98%	97%	99%	98%	91%	93%	97%
Requiring a <u>permit</u> to purchase a gun*	90%	96%	93%	96%	91%	83%	83%	95%
Gun <u>registration</u>	89%	98%	91%	99%	85%	79%	81%	94%
Requiring a <u>license</u> to purchase and own a gun* ¹	86%	93%	91%	95%	85%	76%	77%	92%
A <u>gun registry</u>	84%	95%	92%	96%	85%	71%	77%	89%

Further, voters from every region of the country overwhelmingly support these policies.

Total support for...	Nationwide	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Requiring <u>background checks</u> on all gun sales	95%	96%	95%	97%	93%
Requiring a <u>permit</u> to purchase a gun	90%	93%	86%	91%	92%
Gun <u>registration</u>	89%	93%	83%	89%	91%
Requiring a <u>license</u> to purchase and own a gun	86%	89%	86%	85%	85%
A <u>gun registry</u>	84%	84%	88%	84%	81%

Support for firearms licensing is intense across all demographic groups, even among Republicans, 57% of whom strongly support the policy. It is particularly strong though, among younger voters who are likely to make up a larger share of the electorate in the years to come (76% of 18- to 44-year-olds strongly support licenses to purchase and own a gun).

Specific components of the policy also enjoy widespread, though not as universal, support. While licensing policies can vary state by state and jurisdiction by jurisdiction, they often include many of the same components – all of which are supported by a majority of Black and Latinx voters.

*Some states use “permits” and other states use “licenses.” Both generally reference a process by which gun owners are vetted to make sure they are legally able and qualified to have a gun.

Total support (strong support for) ...	Nationwide	Black	Latinx
Waiting periods	84% (55%)	85% (60%)	84% (55%)
Mandatory fingerprinting	73% (51%)	85% (65%)	84% (63%)
Live-fire tests	82% (49%)	91% (60%)	87% (55%)
Requiring gun ownership license renewal every 5 years	73% (48%)	84% (60%)	81% (58%)
Law enforcement keeping a registry	73% (45%)	84% (56%)	82% (56%)
Online safety training course	78% (43%)	83% (53%)	79% (51%)
Requiring gun ownership license renewal every 1 to 2 years	65% (43%)	88% (65%)	74% (53%)
Law enforcement keeping a sales record	73% (42%)	83% (51%)	82% (54%)
Paying a fee to cover the cost of processing the license	66% (38%)	80% (50%)	75% (44%)
Mailing in a record of license to purchase or own a gun to law enforcement	59% (29%)	68% (39%)	61% (37%)

Communications Around Firearms Licensing

Voters see firearms licensing as “smart policy.” Few voters see the debate around gun violence as played out. They still believe there is work to be done, and they see firearms licensing as a new, smart, and necessary policy that should be pushed forward, regardless of what has (or has not) been achieved legislatively in Washington, DC.

Total agreement (Strong agreement with) ...	Nationwide	Black	Latinx
(Background checks/Licenses to purchase and own a gun) are smart policy and we can't give up. We need to make it law. *	81% (51%)	94% (68%)	85% (62%)

* Half the sample saw this statement with “background checks” and half saw it with “licenses to purchase and own a gun,” and there was little difference in the share agreeing with the statement.

Supporters and opponents alike are most persuaded by statements explaining that firearms licensing closes loopholes and is impactful. Voters believe that something must be done to curb gun violence, and many are open to strengthening gun laws; there is even more support for ensuring the laws we have on the books work. Voters, therefore, are persuaded by statements asserting firearms licensing closes current loopholes in the law and makes current laws easier to enforce. These voters also believe that firearms licensing has a tangible impact and is not just regulation for regulation’s sake.

Below are the two statements tested in the poll that speak to these points of view. Note that the language tested was intended to reflect the way voters typically talk about this issue.

- **[LOOPHOLES] Currently, felons, terrorists, and the dangerously unstable are prohibited from buying guns, but a loophole in current law allows them to buy guns online and at gun shows, no questions asked.** Licenses to purchase and own a gun closes that loophole and gives law enforcement the tools they need to enforce the law.
- **[IMPACT] This policy will help reduce gun tragedies.** Requiring a license to purchase and own a gun gives law enforcement more time and ability to identify those who plan to do harm before they get their hands on guns, which means fewer gun-related deaths. After Connecticut passed licenses to purchase and own a gun the state saw a 40% reduction in the gun homicide rate.

Concluding Thoughts

It is clear coming out of this survey that voters from all backgrounds are looking for a smart, new policy – something that can actually unite our country and save lives by closing loopholes and making it easier for law enforcement to enforce the law. And policy research suggests that firearms licensing fills that role. This survey represents only the first step into understanding public opinion around firearms licensing and specific policy options. *More research is necessary as policymakers and the media continue to elevate this issue.*

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 1,200 likely 2020 voters nationwide with oversamples to reach 400 Black 2020 voters and 400 Latinx 2020 voters from November 16th to 26th, 2019.