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Black Voters Strongly Support Comprehensive Crime & Safety Policies

Black women and older Black voters are particularly concerned about violence.¹

To: Interested Parties

From: GQR and Vera Action

A survey of voters nationally—with an oversample in battleground states—shows that Black voters are more concerned about crime and safety than most Americans and place high priority on addressing gun violence. The poll, conducted by GQR and Vera Action, shows that the majority of Black voters strongly prefer a comprehensive message on crime that includes preventative measures and funding for mental health and drug treatment services. Additionally, they place more importance on improving police relationships with the community than most other voters.

Black voters are a largely Democratic constituency and do not shift their voting patterns in response to messaging on crime, but they already overwhelmingly view Democrats as the party to handle crime and public safety.

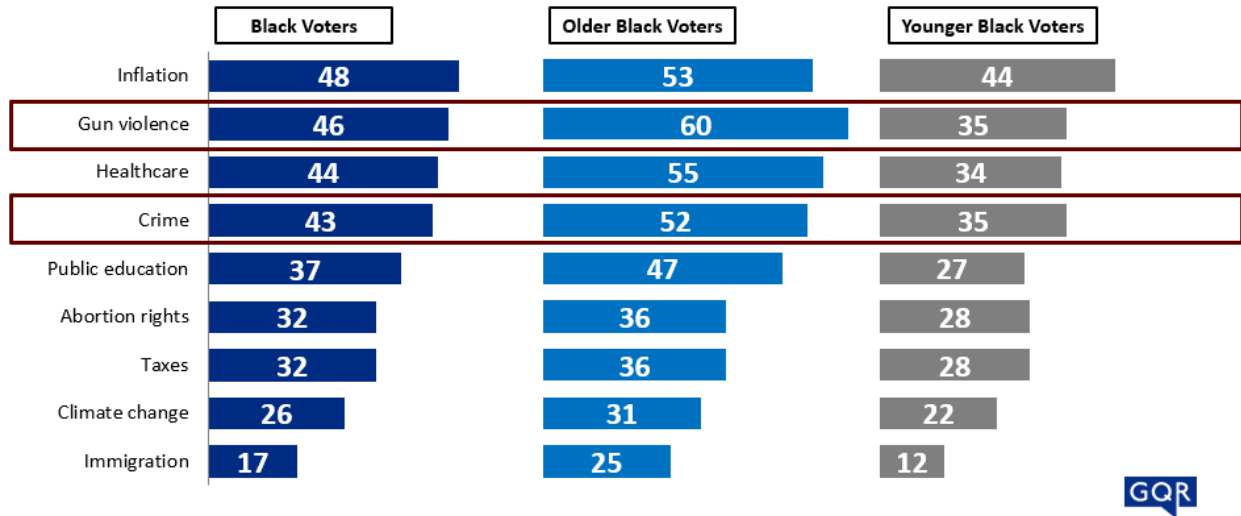
Crime and gun violence are top concerns for Black voters

Crime and gun violence are top of mind for Black voters, alongside cost of living. They say crime and gun violence are of equal importance, with 46 percent of Black voters saying gun violence is a top priority and 43 percent saying crime is a top priority. Black women are more likely to say gun violence (51 percent) and crime (46 percent) are top concerns than Black men (40 percent for gun violence and 38 percent for crime). There is an even larger gap between age groups. Black voters over age 50 are much more likely than Black voters under age 50 to say gun violence and crime are top priorities.

¹ GQR conducted a survey among 1,500 registered voters (2,426 unweighted) across the country with oversamples among Black, Hispanic/Latino, and AAPI voters from August 10 to August 23, 2023. Interviews were conducted using live dialing, text-to-web interviews, and online panel. The battleground survey is among 1,332 registered voters (1,735 unweighted) in presidential battleground states (Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin). Interviews were conducted via online panels. The data in both surveys are weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age, education, and gender composition reflects that of the estimated registered voters. Unweighted sample sizes for the groups in this memo are: Black voters, 517; Black women, 306; Black men, 247; Black voters ages 18–49, 271; and Black voters ages 50 and over, 233.

Figure 1: Addressing crime and gun violence top priorities for Black voters

Now I am going to read you a list of issues. For each one I read, please rate how high of a priority you believe this issue should be for Congress over the next two years, where zero is not at all a priority, ten is the highest priority for Congress to address, and five is in the middle. If you have no opinion or have never heard of this issue, please say so. [Percents of respondents who say 10 – highest priority]



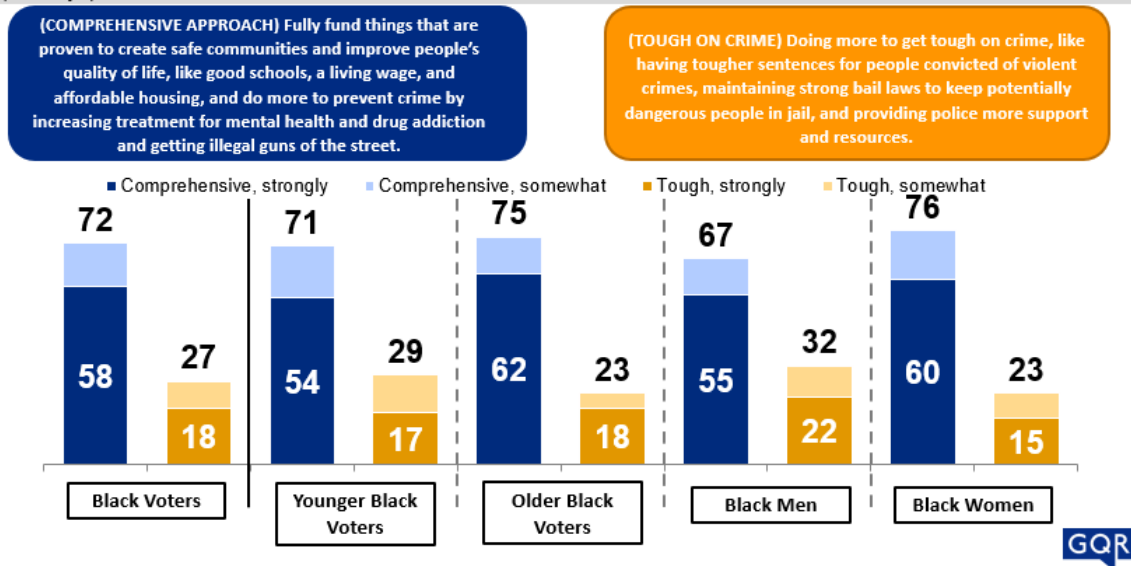
Black voters overwhelmingly see crime as a serious problem: 71 percent of all Black voters and 79 percent of Black women say it is a very serious problem, compared to 57 percent of voters nationally. Although most do feel safe in their community (86 percent), Black voters are less likely to feel very safe (29 percent) compared to all voters (38 percent). Black women are less likely to feel very safe (24 percent) than Black men (36 percent).

Black voters prefer comprehensive approaches to safety, see Democrats as stronger on crime

Black voters favor a comprehensive approach to crime: 72 percent say they prefer a comprehensive message that “fully funds things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people’s quality of life,” including schools, jobs, housing, and mental health and drug treatment services. Black women and older Black voters are even more supportive of the comprehensive approach.

Figure 2: Black voters strongly favor a comprehensive approach to public safety

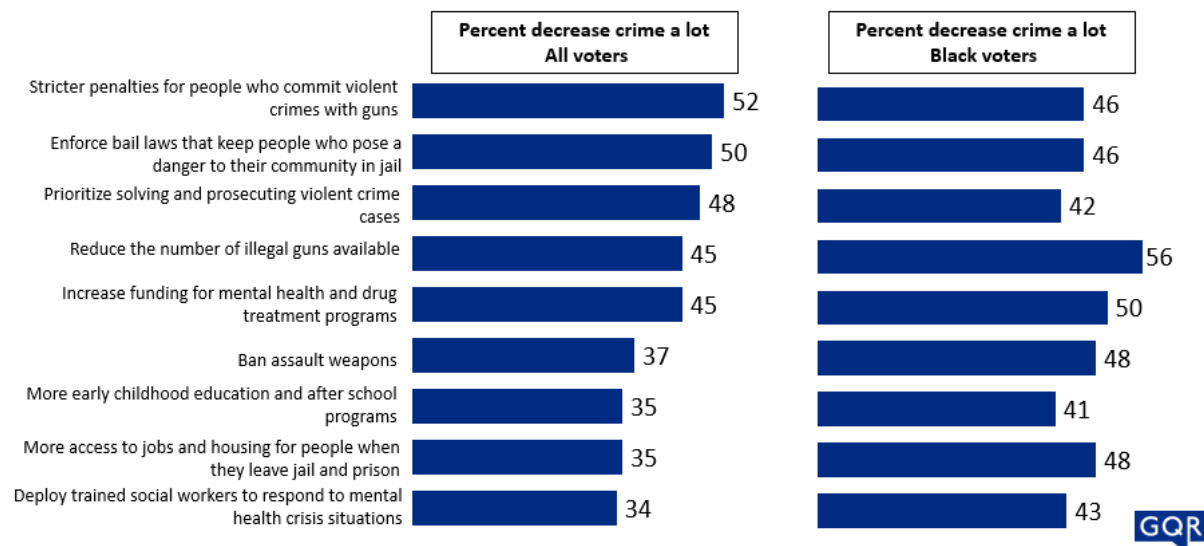
Now, I am going to read you some statements on the issue of public safety. After I read these statements, please tell me which one comes closer to your point of view on how public safety should be handled.



Black voters emphasize comprehensive measures when asked what they think would decrease crime, including reducing the number of illegal guns available and increasing funding for mental health and drug treatment programs. They are also significantly more likely than all voters to say that banning assault weapons and more access to jobs and housing for those who leave jail or prison decrease crime a lot.

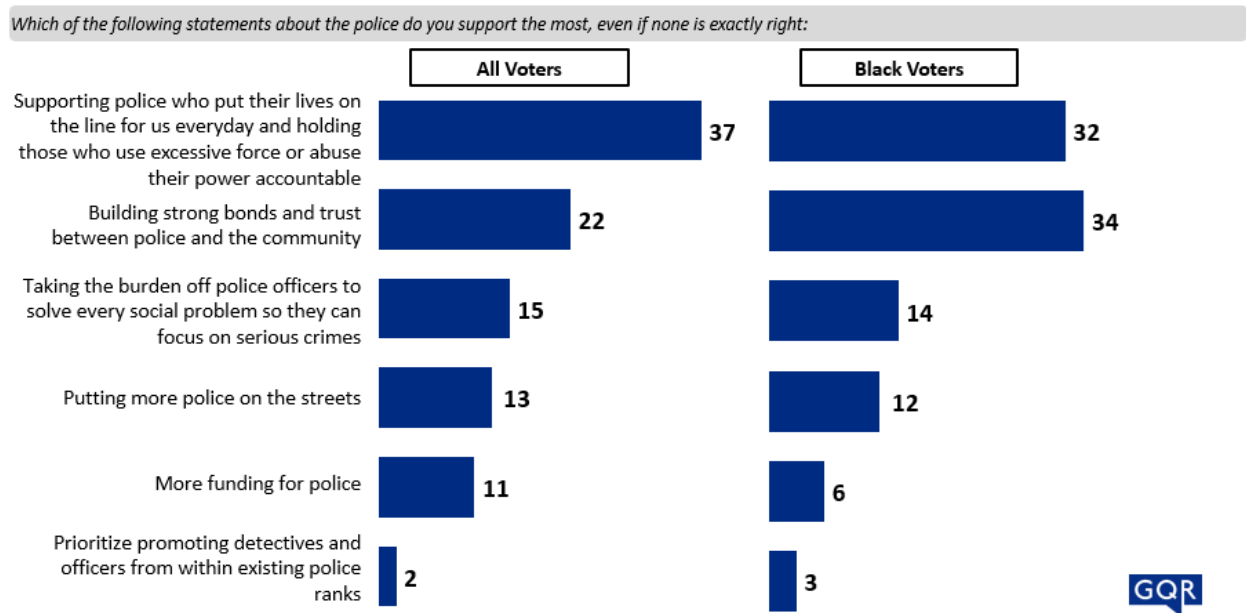
Figure 3: Black voters strongly favor a comprehensive approach to public safety

Now I will read you some statements. For each statement, to what extent, if at all, do you believe the following proposals would decrease crime in the United States? Do you believe this policy would decrease crime a lot, decrease crime somewhat, or would it not decrease crime in the United States at all?



When it comes to support for law enforcement, Black voters prioritize bonds and trust between police and the community as much as supporting police and police accountability. They are much more likely to prioritize community trust in the police than all voters (22 percent). There are no gender differences, but younger Black voters are more likely to prioritize community trust (38 percent) than older Black voters (29 percent).

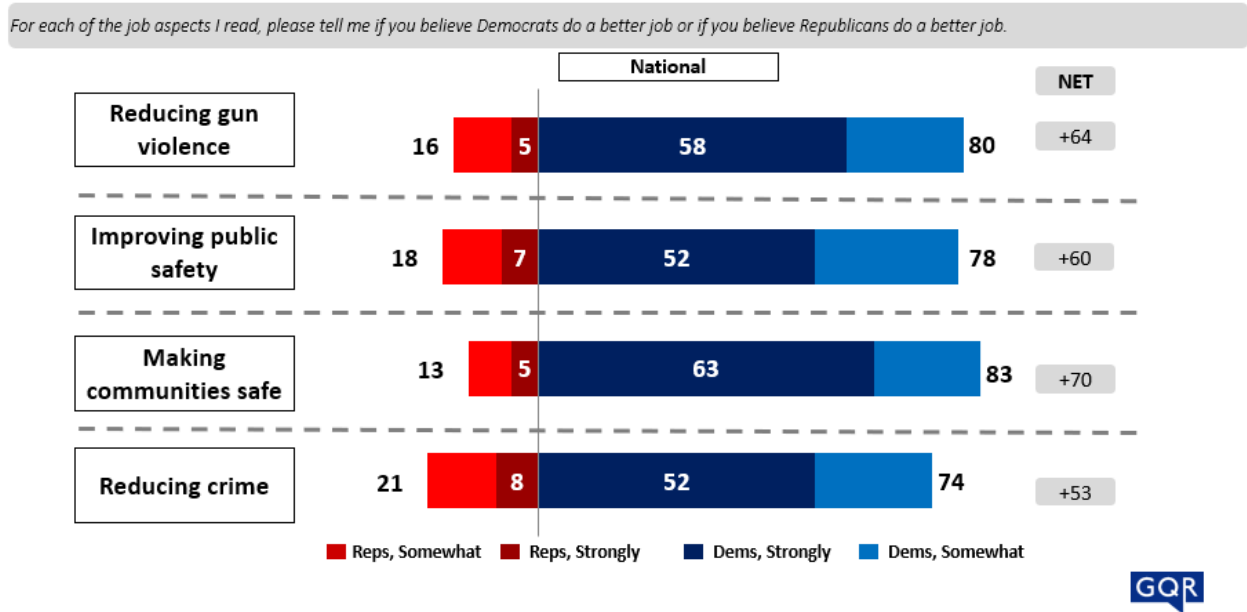
Figure 4: Black voters prioritize community ties with police, support, and accountability



Black voters trust Democrats to handle crime

Black voters are a heavily Democratic-leaning group, and 75 to 80 percent intend to vote for Democratic candidates regardless of crime messaging. Black voters also strongly believe that Democrats are the better party to handle crime and public safety.

Figure 5: Black voters trust Democrats to handle crime and safety issues



Conclusion

Crime and gun violence are top issues for Black voters, especially Black women and older Black voters. These voters want safer communities and support a range of measures to produce that outcome. They want a comprehensive approach that prioritizes prevention, stops violence before it happens, and addresses guns. Black voters want police to build better relationships with their communities and have the resources they need while also being held accountable. Crime prevention, stopping violence, addressing guns, and better policing and police accountability are the pillars of this powerful, comprehensive message.