



December 1, 2023

## Women Want a Comprehensive Approach to Preventing and Solving Crime

**Women of color are especially concerned about safety and gun violence<sup>1</sup>**

**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** GQR and Vera Action

Women have deep concerns about crime and safety and want a comprehensive approach to public safety, according to a survey of voters nationally, with an oversample in battleground states. The poll, conducted by GQR and Vera Action, shows that women want leaders to offer a comprehensive approach to safety that addresses violence and illegal guns, prevents crime by investing in mental health and drug treatment, while also fully funding things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life, including good schools and affordable housing. When candidates discuss this kind of comprehensive approach, they engage both Democratic base voters like Black women and swing voters like independent women.

### Women of color are most concerned about crime and safety

Crime and gun violence are top concerns for women—behind inflation and the cost of living, but higher than taxes, public education, and climate change. Overall, 34 percent of women rate gun violence and 33 percent rate crime as top priorities, compared to 23 and 29 percent, respectively, among men.

Clear differences emerge among women of color, with Black women (51 percent) more likely than Hispanic women (40 percent), AAPI women (39 percent), and white women (29 percent) to say that gun violence is a top priority. Indeed, Black women rate gun violence as high a concern as inflation and are more likely than other women to say crime is a top priority (46 percent), compared to Hispanic women

<sup>1</sup> 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 panels. 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 subgroups in this memo are as follows: all women, 1,250; independent women, 305; white women, 570; Black women, 306; Hispanic women, 224; AAPI women, 123; urban women, 410; suburban women, 230; rural women, 231; women ages 18–49, 614; women over age 50, 606.

(39 percent), AAPI women (30 percent), and white women (30 percent). Older women also rate crime (41 percent) and gun violence (39 percent) as high priorities.

Figure 1: Addressing crime and gun violence top priorities for women of color

*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 women	Hispanic women	AAPI women	White women
Gun violence	51	40	39	29
Inflation	49	50	46	50
Healthcare	47	41	38	31
Crime	46	39	30	30
Public education	39	37	29	25
Abortion rights	33	30	29	28
Taxes	31	34	22	24
Climate change	28	35	21	22
Immigration	15	27	19	31

Even though women view crime as a top priority, nearly all say they feel somewhat or very safe in their own community (90 percent total safe, 34 percent very safe). There is, however, is a pronounced racial gap with Black and Hispanic women the least likely to feel very safe (24 percent of each group). Women who live in large urban areas are also less likely to feel very safe (22 percent) compared to those who live in suburban (41 percent) and rural (38 percent) areas.

Figure 2: Women of color and women in urban areas are less likely to feel “very safe”

	Very Safe	Somewhat Safe
<b>Total National</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>52</b>
Men	43	49
<b>Women</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Black women</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>62</b>
White women	37	55
<b>Hispanic women</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>58</b>
AAPI women	35	55

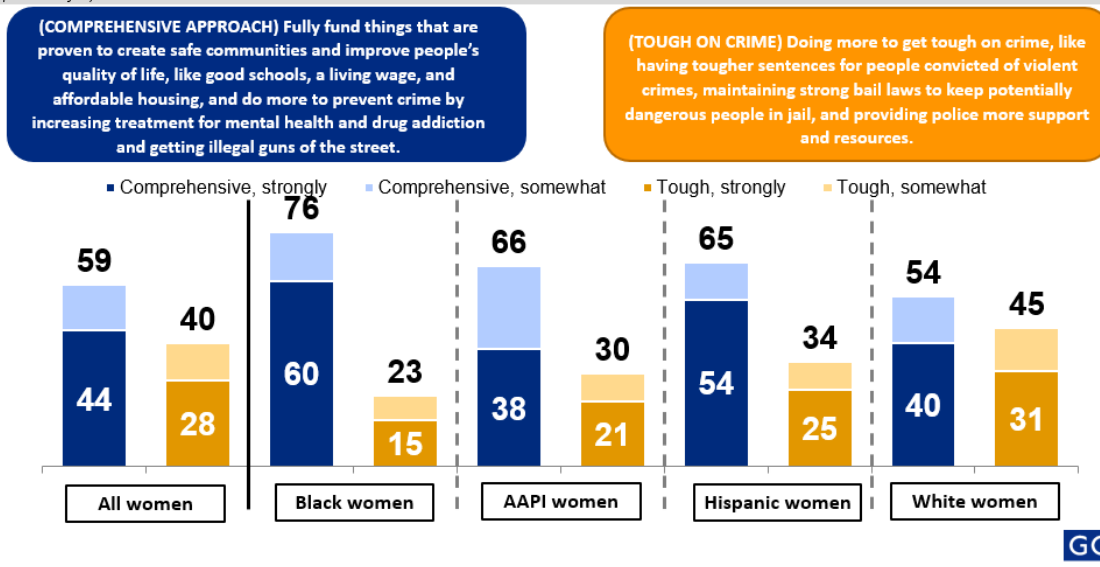
	<i>Very Safe</i>	<i>Somewhat Safe</i>
<b>Women living in urban areas</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>64</b>
Women living in suburban areas	41	52
Women living in rural areas	38	52

### **Women voters prefer a comprehensive approach to crime**

Women are both more concerned about crime and less likely to feel safe than men. But they prefer a comprehensive approach to crime—one that includes prevention, investments in safety, and addressing illegal guns—over a punitive, “tough-on-crime” approach by a 59 to 40 percent margin. This is a larger margin of support for this message than men, who prefer the comprehensive message to the “tough” message by a 52 to 46 percent margin.

Figure 3: Majorities of women of all races prefer a comprehensive approach

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.



There is no subgroup of women who prefer the “tough-on-crime” approach other than Republican women—though nearly a third of that group favor a comprehensive framework. Black women are most likely to prefer the comprehensive approach, 76 to 23 percent, followed by AAPI women, 66 to 30 percent, and Hispanic women, 65 to 34 percent. White women are the most divided but still favor the comprehensive approach 54 to 45 percent.

We also tested this dynamic in a partisan context, given that [voters give Republicans an advantage](#) on dealing with crime and public safety. We tested two different Democratic messages against the typical punitive Republican messaging on crime. Voters read one of two Democratic messages: one with a comprehensive crime prevention message that includes stopping violence and addressing guns, and the other with a “tougher” message on crime. While the Democratic and Republican messages on crime test [equally well](#) among all voters, the comprehensive Democratic message increases Democrats’ standing significantly among independent women

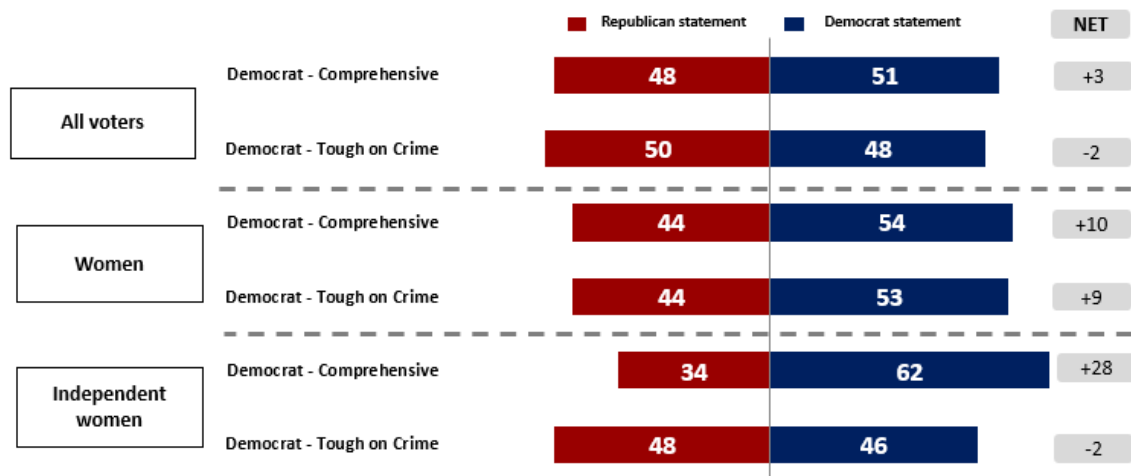
Figure 3: Comprehensive frame performs better among independent women

*(SPLIT) (DEM ATTACK/cCOMPREHENSIVE) Democrats stand for safety, accountability, and justice. They will make communities safer with real solutions that prevent crime before it happens by investing in good schools, affordable housing, treatment for mental health and drug addiction, and well-paying jobs. They will break the cycle of crime by holding people accountable when they violate the law and build a just system that treats everyone fairly. Democrats support police who put their lives on the line everyday, while also holding them accountable if they abuse their power or break the law. They will get illegal guns off the street and focus police resources on solving the most serious cases.*

*(SPLIT) (DEM RESPONSE - TOUGH) Democrats are committed to keeping communities safe and reducing crime. They support giving police more funding so there are more police on the ground and in communities. Democrats want to give police and prosecutors the tools to solve and prosecute homicides and other violent crimes. They support speedy processing of rape kits to help solve rape cases, and enforcing laws to protect women from domestic abusers. They will make sure repeat violent offenders and people committing crimes with guns do not get early release from prison. They will support strict penalties for convicted drug dealers to stop the flow of drugs into our communities.*

*(GOP) Republicans will make hard-working, law-abiding citizens the priority. They will end the revolving door that releases violent criminals right back onto the very streets they committed their crimes on. They will make prosecutors do their jobs and enforce all the laws. They will fund the police and provide resources to rebuild the ranks of departments who have lost officers due to a lack of support and low morale. They will increase security at the border and go after traffickers bringing in drugs like fentanyl from Mexico and China. Republicans will stand up to Democrats and restore law and order in America.*

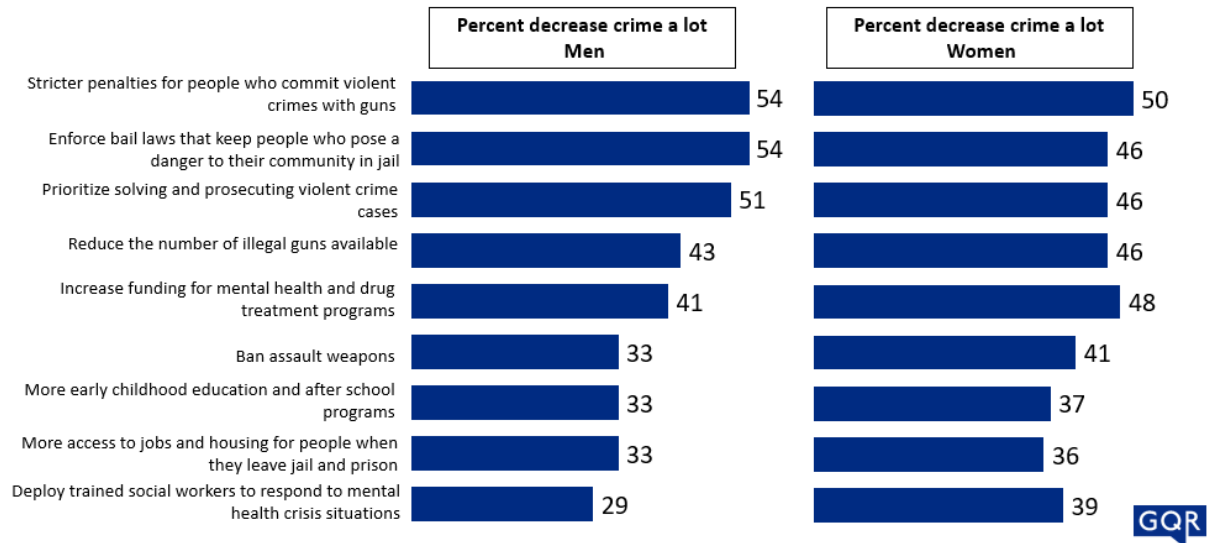
Now let me read you some statements that Democrats and Republicans are saying about addressing crime and public safety. Which of the following statements do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?



When we dig down into specific policies that might reduce crime, women prioritize measures that address violence such as focusing police resources on the most serious cases and preventing crime and making communities safer by investing in good schools, affordable housing, and mental health and drug treatment programs. Compared to men, women are more likely to say that increasing funding for mental health and drug treatment programs, banning assault weapons, and deploying trained social workers to respond to mental health situations would decrease crime a lot. Hispanic women (58 percent) and Black women (51 percent) are particularly likely to say increased funding for mental health treatment would reduce crime a lot.

Figure 4: Women think comprehensive policies will decrease crime a lot

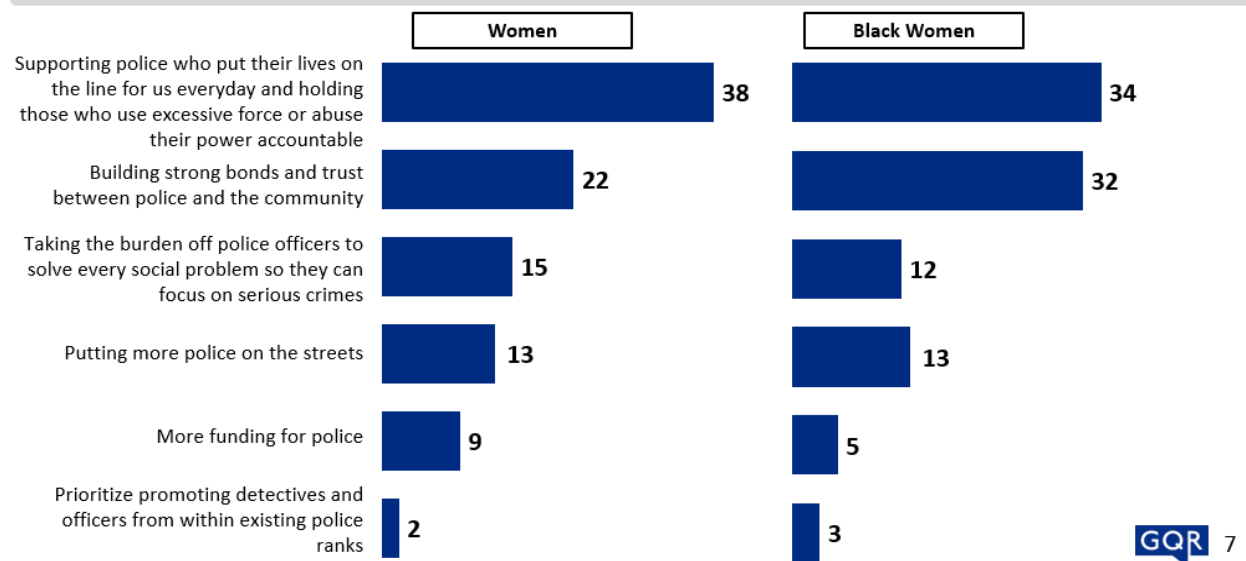
Now I will read you some statements. For each statement, to what extent, if at all, do you believe the following proposals would decrease crime in the United States? Do you believe this policy would decrease crime a lot, decrease crime somewhat, or would it not decrease crime in the United States at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



The polling reveals that voters hold nuanced views about the role of policing and what approach to policing is best for public safety. We asked voters to choose from a range of statements about the police, revealing that women want to be supportive of police while also holding them accountable. Notably, Black women prioritize community bonds and trust in the police as much as support and accountability.

Figure 5: Women want support and accountability for police

Which of the following statements about the police do you support the most, even if none is exactly right:



### Women voters think Democrats are better on public safety and gun violence

Overall, voters give Republicans an advantage on reducing crime (43 percent for Democrats, 53 percent for Republicans). Women, on the other hand, are split on which party does a better job on crime, 48 to 48 percent. They also lean toward Democrats on which party does a better job of improving public safety, 50 percent to 47 percent, and making communities safe, 52 to 43 percent. A majority of women say Democrats are the better party on reducing gun violence, 57 to 39 percent.

With regard to race, only white women are more likely to say Republicans are the better party to reduce crime, improve public safety, and make communities safe. Black, Hispanic, and AAPI women say Democrats are better at handling those three issues and for reducing gun violence. Women under age 50 also say Democrats are best in all four categories, while women over 50 lean more toward Republicans. Independent women, a key swing group, are closely divided on improving public safety and reducing crime, but they favor Democrats by a wide margin for reducing gun violence.

Figure 6: Women say Democrats are best at reducing gun violence, making communities safe, and improving public safety

Democrat - Republican	Reducing gun violence	Making communities safe	Improving public safety	Reducing crime
Total National	<b>52 – 44 (+8)</b>	48 – 48 (0)	46 – 52 (-6)	43 – 53 (-10)
Men	47 – 50 (-3)	42 – 53 (-11)	41 – 57 (-16)	38 – 58 (-20)
<b>Women</b>	<b>57 – 39 (+18)</b>	<b>52 – 43 (+9)</b>	<b>50 – 47 (+3)</b>	48 – 48 (0)
Independent women	<b>57 – 35 (+22)</b>	46 – 48 (-2)	48 – 44 (+4)	45 – 47 (-2)
<b>Black women</b>	<b>85 – 12 (+73)</b>	<b>86 – 9 (+77)</b>	<b>84 – 13 (+71)</b>	<b>79 – 16 (+63)</b>
<b>Hispanic women</b>	<b>68 – 29 (+39)</b>	<b>56 – 42 (+14)</b>	<b>65 – 34 (+31)</b>	<b>58 – 40 (+18)</b>
<b>AAPI women</b>	<b>68 – 26 (+42)</b>	<b>63 – 33 (+30)</b>	<b>61 – 29 (+32)</b>	<b>59 – 34 (+25)</b>
White women	<b>50 – 46 (+4)</b>	45 – 51 (-6)	41 – 56 (-15)	40 – 56 (-16)
<b>Younger women</b>	<b>66 – 31 (+35)</b>	<b>63 – 34 (+29)</b>	<b>61 – 37 (+24)</b>	<b>60 – 38 (+22)</b>
Older women	49 – 47 (+2)	42 – 53 (-11)	41 – 56 (-15)	38 – 58 (-20)

## Conclusion

Crime and safety is a top issue for most women, particularly Black and Hispanic women, and must be addressed by candidates. Women want safer communities, and they support a range of measures to produce that outcome, including prioritizing crime prevention, stopping violence, and addressing gun violence. Candidates can build on their support, especially among independent voters, by addressing safety with comprehensive messages that include funding mental health and drug use treatment, solving violent crime, and preventing crime before it happens. Crime prevention, stopping violence, addressing guns, and better policing and accountability are the pillars of this powerful, comprehensive message.