KEY FINDINGS

LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY
How Should We Prevent Gun Deaths in Our Communities?

Preventing Gun Deaths Deliberative Dialogues

September 22, 2025

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GOALS OF LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY

In the fall of 2023, the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS) launched Let's Talk, Marathon County.[1] The project uses deliberative dialogues to foster civil and constructive conversations among residents on a variety of public issues. The Let's Talk team assembled a panel of nearly 100 community members from across Marathon County to meet in groups of approximately 10 people to engage in conversations about youth mental health, homelessness, immigration, voting and elections, child care, and preventing gun deaths. The goal was to select a panel of community members who reflected a range of political affiliations, demographics, and rural and urban areas of the county.

DELILBERATIVE DIALOGUES ON PREVENING GUN DEATHS

This report summarizes the dialogues held on the topic of **How Do We Prevent Gun Deaths in Our Communities?** In July and August 2025, seven deliberative dialogues were conducted on this topic. These dialogues were held in two locations in Wausau, as well as in Mosinee; two dialogues were held virtually. A total of 48 of the 92 Let's Talk panelists participated, reflecting a distribution of approximately 25% liberal, 50% moderate, and 25% conservative participants. Two additional Spanish language dialogues with 22 participants were conducted in-person in Wausau.

An Issue Guide was provided to the participants and it consisted of background information, including a curated page of background statistics on gun deaths. In addition, the issue guide outlined three potential approaches to the topic of preventing gun deaths, including (1) Limit Access to Firearms; (2) Increase Protection, Deterrence, and Enforcement, and (3) Address Mental Health and Social Problems. Trained moderators guided participants through a discussion of action items within these approaches, including their benefits and drawbacks. The table below summarizes the overall views of action items within and across the dialogues. Caution should be taken to not over-generalize these characterizations to assume that they are a reflection of the views of all participants. Rather, they give a general sense of the groups' leaning.

Dialogue Participants' Views about Actions to Address Gun Deaths (Moderator(s) and Observer Characterizations)

Issue Approach and Action Items	Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues*								
	1^	2	3^^	4	5	6	7	All	All
	7/16/2025	7/24/2025	7/26/2025	7/29/2025	7/31/2025	8/5/2025	8/7/2025	Avg.**	Overall**
APPROACH 1: LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS									
Improve gun safety and protections for children		Mixed*	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	2.8	Support
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks		Mixed	Mixed	Support	Support*	Support	Support	2.7	Support
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms	Support	Oppose*		Mixed	Support	Support	Support	2.5	Support
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines	Mixed	Oppose*	Mixed	Mixed	Support	Support		2.2	Mixed
APPROACH 2: INCREASE PROTECTION, DETERRENCE, AND ENFORCEMENT									
Empower police and courts; increase patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing	Mixed*	Support		Mixed	Mixed	Mixed*	Mixed*	2.2	Mixed
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws	Mixed		Mixed	Support*	Mixed*	Mixed*	Oppose*	2.0	Mixed
Expand armed security and citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed*	Mixed	Oppose	Mixed*	1.9	Mixed
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including concealed carry	Oppose	Mixed*	Oppose		Mixed*	Mixed	Oppose*	1.5	Oppose
APPROACH 3:ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS									
Make mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support		2.7	Support
Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs	Support*	Support*	Support	Mixed		Support*	Support	2.5	Support
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs	Support					Mixed*	Support*	2.7	Support
Invest in economies in high-crime areas to address socioeconomic factors	Mixed			Oppose*		Mixed	Mixed*	1.8	Mixed
If a cell is blank, the notes indicated that the proposal was not discussed by the group or was only raised by one person without affirmation for or against by other participants.									

There was overall consistency between the full Let's Talk panelists' dialogues and the two Spanish language dialogues in terms of the participants' views of the action items.[2]

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[1] Let's Talk, Marathon County is fully funded by New Pluralists: https://newpluralists.org/. WIPPS was chosen from a pool of almost 800 applicants and no taxpayer dollars were used for this project. More information can be found at: https://wipps.org/lets-talk/.

[2] See the discussion surrounding Table 13 in the full report that follows for an explanation of the methods used to create the summary table shown above. Table 14 provides a summary of the Spanish language dialogues.

At the conclusion of each deliberative dialogue, participants were asked to complete a brief, 20-question survey about their experiences engaging in the discussion. The questions were designed to gather information about whether the dialogues expanded participants' views on the issue of preventing gun deaths; helped them consider tradeoffs and solutions; increased appreciation for diverse viewpoints; and increased interest in engaging in community issues. Overall, 100% of dialogue participants completed the survey.[3] Participants in the dialogues reported:

> **Greater confidence in their community's ability to have civil discussions about preventing gun deaths.** About 90% reported that the dialogue made them "somewhat more" or "much more" confident that their community can engage in civil conversations about preventing gun deaths.

> **Considerable common ground about preventing gun deaths, despite political differences, and high levels of respect for those with differing views.** Each dialogue included participants with a range of political affiliations. Even with these differences, 85% reported "quite a bit" or "a great deal" of common ground about the topic. A similar percentage (85%) reported that those with differing views acted "very respectfully" toward one another.

> **Increased understanding of gun deaths and the pros and cons of potential solutions.** More than half (53%) reported that participating in a dialogue helped them better understand the issues surrounding preventing gun deaths and helped them evaluate the pros and cons of solutions "quite a bit" or a "great deal."

> **Expanded perspectives and viewpoints.** Many participants (at least half, or 57%) reported that the dialogue helped them "quite a bit" or "a great deal" to consider perspectives or viewpoints they had not considered before.

> **Input was highly-valued.** Nearly 9 out of 10 dialogue participants (94%) responded that they valued "quite a bit" or "a great deal" the input provided by the other participants about the topics they discussed.

> **Increased appreciation for differing viewpoints.** Nearly three-fourths (71%) reported that participating in a dialogue made them value differing viewpoints "somewhat more" or "much more" than before the dialogue. A similar percentage (70%) reported being "somewhat more" or "much more" comfortable interacting with members of their community who hold different viewpoints from theirs.

> **Increased interest in community engagement.** About 61% of dialogue participants reported that participating in the dialogue made them want to be "quite a bit" or "a great deal" more involved with community decision-making about preventing gun deaths and made them want to learn "quite a bit" or "a great deal" more about the topic.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY?
Detailed summary reports on all of the Let's Talk, Marathon County topics can be found at https://wipps.org/lets-talk/

- How Do We Support Youth Mental Health in Our Communities?
- How Do We Address Homelessness in Our Communities?
- How Do We Manage Immigration in Our Country?
- Voting and the U.S. Presidential Election System
- How Do We Ensure Access to Safe, Quality, and Affordable Child Care?
- How Should We Prevent Gun Deaths in Our Communities?

For more information about conducting a Let's Talk dialogue, please inquire with Luke Rudolph, WIPPS Let's Talk, Marathon County program coordinator at luke.rudolph@wisconsin.edu.

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[3] Spanish language dialogue participants' survey results are reported separately in Appendix D. Their general pattern of responses follows those of the Let's Talk panelists whose results are summarized here.

GOALS OF LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY

In the fall of 2023, the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS) launched the Let's Talk, Marathon County project.[4] Like much of America, Central Wisconsin is beset by political division, magnified by digital media, which often portrays citizens in a constant state of disagreement around public issues with a shrinking middle ground. Social and popular media offer podiums to the loudest, most persistent voices, which typically represent the opposite poles of the political spectrum. However, research shows that most Americans do not fall neatly into one political party or ideology.[5]

Let's Talk, Marathon County is aimed at fostering constructive conversations among residents on a variety of public issues. It aims to give a voice to those whose thoughts and ideas have been overshadowed by dominant and polarizing narratives. By bringing together individuals from different backgrounds and viewpoints, this program seeks to create an inclusive space where all voices are heard, valued, and respected. The broader goals of Let's Talk, Marathon County are:

1. **Create spaces for residents of central Wisconsin to address issues that matter in a civil and constructive manner.**
2. **Build and sustain a community culture of civil dialogue around important issues.**
3. **Improve feelings of trust among fellow residents despite differences in viewpoints.**
4. **Train local facilitators with capacity to moderate future deliberative dialogues.**

Let's Talk, Marathon County was selected as one of 32 grantees for the Healing Starts Here initiative, a nationwide effort to address and understand divisive forces in communities and promote healing. This initiative is fully funded by New Pluralists, an organization committed to helping Americans recognize our shared humanity, embrace our differences, and solve challenges together.[6] WIPPS was chosen from a pool of almost 800 applicants, and no taxpayer dollars were used for this project.

WHAT ARE DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES?

The Let's Talk conversations use a deliberative dialogue process to facilitate conversations among community members. Deliberation—sometimes called "choice work"—is a way for the public to weigh together various approaches to solving problems and find courses of action consistent with what communities and individuals hold valuable. Deliberation is more than simply raising and discussing important issues in a public setting. Genuine public deliberation is a thoughtful public process by which communities and stakeholders learn from one another and strive to come to judgment together about real policy matters.[7]

This form of public dialogue is not far removed from what citizens, including elected officials, routinely do every day. However, constructive dialogue is frequently drowned out by incivility and hyper-politicization of issues in public spaces. Advocates of deliberation seek to grow the practice so that public deliberation becomes a healthy and realistic way to create spaces for individuals and communities to work through complex issues and come to common ground on difficult policy choices. Deliberation is, therefore, public work—that is, work by the public, for public purposes. While public deliberation will not address or solve all community problems (nor erase fundamental conflicts in values), it remains an important component of healthy democratic practice and an avenue for residents to become involved in public policy. It also offers a vehicle for individuals to learn more about complex issues and the real tradeoffs that different approaches to community problems entail.

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[4] https://wipps.org/lets-talk/
[5] https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology-2/
[6] https://newpluralists.org/
[7] See, for example, Yankelovich, Daniel, and Will Friedman, eds. Toward Wiser Public Judgment. Vanderbilt University Press, 2010. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17vf70s.

SELECTING THE LET'S TALK, MARATHON COUNTY PANEL

The Let's Talk, Marathon County team assembled a participant panel of nearly 100 community members from across Marathon County to meet in small groups of approximately 10 people per group over the course of two years in order to engage in conversations about public issues. To date, conversations have focused on a range of topics, including youth mental health, homelessness, immigration, voting and the U.S. presidential elections, child care, and preventing gun deaths.[8] The goal was to select a panel of community members who reflected a range of political affiliations and ensured geographic representation of residents from rural and urban areas of the county, as well as a cross-section of demographics.

The following process was used to populate the Let's Talk panel:
- A community-wide public marketing campaign using a combination of media and social media resources, as well as informal networking and outreach to individuals and organizations across the county, was launched in the spring of 2023. Interested individuals were asked to sign up via an online Qualtrics application. In addition to collecting the individual's name, the application also asked standard demographic questions, including the individual's political leaning. Following this campaign, we received 259 unique applications.[9]
- Following the initial recruitment, a random selection process (weighted by political leaning to ensure balance) was used to whittle down the list to 127 applicants. A follow-up survey was sent via email to those 127 applicants to verify that they were residents of Marathon County. We received valid and affirmative responses from 91 of the 127. Additional recruitment helped increase the political, geographic, and demographic diversity of the initial panel which consisted of a total of 94 individuals.
- The exact number of individuals in the Let's Talk panel at any given time can fluctuate due to occasional attrition, as well as from new panelists being added. For example, over time, a few panelists dropped out for personal reasons such as moving out of the area. When a panel member leaves, project staff attempt to add a new panel member with a similar political affiliation and geographic representation (urban or rural). As of the time that the firearms dialogues were conducted, there were 92 Let's Talk panelists.

The self-reported political affiliation of the 92 Let's Talk panelists reflected a distribution of approximately 30% liberal, 40% moderate, and 30% conservative. In creating these categories, we aggregated responses as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Let's Talk Panel Political Affiliation Categories

Aggregation of Self-Reported Leaning							
Liberal		Moderate				Conservative	
Very liberal	Moderately liberal	Slightly liberal	Middle of the road	Neither liberal nor conservative	Slightly conservative	Moderately conservative	Very conservative

Table 2 on the following page shows the political affiliation, geographic residence, and demographic characteristics of the Let's Talk panel, along with the characteristics of the panelists who participated in the firearms deliberative dialogues.

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[8] As a shorthand, we sometimes refer to the "preventing gun deaths dialogues" as the "firearms dialogues."
[9] This number reflects the total individuals after the registration data were cleaned to remove possible spam registrations.

Table 2. Let's Talk Panel Characteristics Compared to Deliberative Dialogue Participants

	Let's Talk Panel	Let's Talk Panel	Dialogue Participants	Dialogue Participants
	N	%	N	%
	92	100	48	100
Political Affiliation				
Liberal	26	28	12	25
Moderate	40	44	24	50
Conservative	26	28	12	25
Georgraphy				
Urban	67	73	35	73
Rural	25	27	13	27
No response	0	0	0	0
Age				
16-20	1	1	1	2
21-29	8	9	1	2
30-39	20	22	7	15
40-49	15	16	7	15
50-59	14	15	8	17
60-69	17	18	11	23
70+	16	17	13	27
Prefer not to answer/no response	1	1	0	0
Gender				
Woman	49	53	27	56
Man	39	42	18	38
Other	2	2	2	4
Prefer not to answer/no response	2	2	1	2
Race (Select all that apply)				
Alaskan, American Indian, Indigenous, or Native American	4	4	0	0
Asian	4	4	3	6
Black or African American	3	3	1	2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
White	79	86	43	90
One or more not listed	1	1	0	0
Prefer not to answer/no response	5	5	2	4
Ethnicty				
Hispanic/Latino	9	10	2	4
Not Hispanic/Latino	83	90	46	96
Prefer not to answer/no response	0	0	0	0
Highest Level of Education				
Some high school	1	1	0	0
High school graduate/GED	8	9	5	10
Nontraditional education	0	0	0	0
Trade school	1	1	0	0
Some college, no degree	15	16	9	19
Associate degree	15	16	6	13
Bachelor's degree	28	30	12	25
Master's degree	16	17	11	23
Professional degree	4	4	2	4
Prefer not to answer/no response	4	4	3	6

* Percentages might not add up to exactly 100% because of rounding. For race, numbers can add up to more than the group sample size because respondents were asked to select all options that applied to them.

The panel for the firearms dialogues reflected a geographic distribution of approximately 73% urban and 27% rural.[10] About 53% selected "woman" as their gender; 42% selected "man," with 4% selecting "other" or "prefer not to respond." About one-third (35%) were aged 60+ (20% of the county population is age 65+). The vast majority were white (86%), which is similar to the county (86%).[11] Four percent (4%) were Asian and 10% reported Hispanic or Latino ethnicity; this was generally comparable to the county (6% and 4%, respectively). The panelists reflected higher educational attainment in comparison to the county, with about 22% having a master's degree or professional degree compared to about 9% in the county's population.

PREVENTING GUN DEATHS DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES

Seven deliberative dialogues were conducted on the topic of *How Should We Prevent Gun Deaths in Our Communities?* These dialogues were held in two locations in Wausau, as well as in Mosinee; two dialogues were held virtually. Within each dialogue, the goal was to include approximately 10 Let's Talk panelists (or 70 total participants). In addition, each dialogue was structured to reflect a distribution of approximately 30% liberal, 40% moderate, and 30% conservative participants. With 10 participants for each dialogue, therefore, the goal was to include 3 liberal, 4 moderate, and 3 conservative-leaning individuals. To accomplish this, the 92 Let's Talk panelists were divided into three groups according to the panelists' self-reported political affiliation. Each of the three groups was sent a unique dialogue sign-up link with the dates of the various sessions. This allowed participants to choose a date and location convenient to them while allowing the project team to manage political affiliation representation within each dialogue. With 10 as the goal, group sizes varied from 3 to 12 participants.

During this round of deliberative dialogues, a total of 54 of the 92 Let's Talk panelists registered to participate; after accounting for cancellations and no-shows, a total of 48 individuals participated in one of the firearms dialogues. As shown previously in Table 2, the demographics of the participants were not materially different from the Let's Talk panel as whole. As a recruitment incentive and as a token of appreciation for their time, each participant received a $100 gift card.

Table 3. Firearms Deliberative Dialogue Participants

Community Member Deliberative Dialogues on Preventing Gun Deaths						
Political Affiliation	Let's Talk Panelists	Percent (%)	Registered for Dialogue	Percent (%)	Participated in Dialogue	Percent (%)
Liberal	26	28	14	26	12	25
Moderate	40	44	27	50	24	50
Conservative	26	28	13	24	12	25
Total	**92**	**100**	**54**	**100**	**48**	**100**

Of the 48 Let's Talk panel members who participated in the firearms dialogues, 3 had participated in one other prior dialogue, 6 had participated in three other prior dialogues, 11 had participated in four other prior dialogues, and 28 had participated in all others so that this was their sixth dialogue.

THE ISSUE GUIDE

In order to structure the dialogues, the project partners created a detailed issue guide that "named and framed" this topic (see Appendix C).[12] The issue guide was provided to the participants at the start of each dialogue and consisted of background information on the topic, including a curated page of national statistics on firearms and gun violence.

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[10] This distribution reflects an approximate population density in Marathon County by Census Track. In Marathon County, 43% of the population lives in a low population density area based on County Health Rankings. https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/wisconsin/marathon?year=2024

[11] https://www.marathoncountypulse.org/index.php?module=DemographicData&controller=index&action=index

[12] See https://www.nifi.org/ for examples of various Issue Guides on a range of topics.

In addition, the issue guide outlined three potential approaches to the topic of preventing gun deaths, including (1) Limit Access to Firearms; (2) Increase Protection, Deterrence, and Enforcement, and (3) Address Mental Health and Social Problems. A glossary of terms and a list of resources were also shared with participants. See Appendix D. For each of the three approaches, the issue guide provided potential actions as well as possible drawbacks or tradeoffs. Trained moderators facilitated the dialogues by carefully examining each approach, including weighing trade-offs among the action items and identifying areas of tension as well as common ground. A public notetaker assisted in recording the results of the dialogues. At least one formal observer was present at each dialogue to capture key themes and takeaways as well. The dialogues were conducted largely in person and were scheduled for approximately 120 minutes (two sessions were held virtually).

STRUCTURING THE DIALOGUES

Beginning with the voting and elections dialogues, the Let's Talk team started to explore alternative dialogue formats. The motivations for trying the alternative formats were rooted in an interest in innovating. Table 4 outlines the key differences in the formats. The main features of Alternative Format 2 used for the child care and firearms dialogues in comparison to the more traditional format used during the youth mental health, homelessness, and immigration dialogues were: (1) fewer action items per approach in order to allow time for a deeper discussion of each; (2) the use of live polling using Mentimeter to gauge participants' views of various action items in real time; and (3) a polling format that gauged participants' views of the action items before and after discussing them within each approach, enabling the moderators to observe subtle changes in views subsequent to the discussions.

Table 4. Characteristics of the Traditional Dialogue vs. Alternative Dialogue Formats

	Traditional Format	Alternative Format 1	Alternative Format 2
Issues	Youth Mental Health Homelessness Immigration	Voting and U.S. Presidential Elections	Child Care Preventing Gun Deaths
Format	In-Person and Zoom	In-Person and Zoom	In-Person and Zoom
Issue Guide	Yes	No (used Power Point)	Yes
Definitions and Glossary	Yes	No	Yes
# Approaches per Topic	3	3	3
# Action Items per Approach	5	3	4
Use of Live Polling	No	Yes	Yes

Two (2) trained moderators facilitated each dialogue by carefully examining each approach, including weighing trade-offs among the proposals and identifying areas of tension as well as common ground. A public notetaker assisted in recording the results of the dialogues to capture key themes and takeaways as well. The dialogues were conducted in person and via Zoom and were scheduled for approximately 120 minutes (of the seven sessions, two were held virtually). A technical staff person was also present at each dialogue to troubleshoot any issues with the polling.

EVALUATION APPROACH

There were three components to the evaluation of the firearms dialogues: (1) a post-dialogue survey was administered to all of the participants at the conclusion of each dialogue in order to get feedback on the dialogue process from the participants' perspective; (2) a review of the detailed notes taken by the observers and notetakers for each dialogue in order to identify the overall level of support for various actions items within each dialogue; and (3) a compilation of results of the polling conducted in each dialogue. This report, *Let's Talk Key Findings– Preventing Gun Deaths Deliberative Dialogues*, includes the findings from the post-dialogue survey, summarizes overall views within and across dialogues, and summarizes the results of the polls identifying which proposals participants favored the most and least.

SPANISH LANGUAGE DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES

In an effort to be inclusive of a broad range of community members' perspectives, beginning with the immigration dialogues, the Let's Talk team assembled a new mini-panel consisting of 22 Hispanic/Latino community members. All of these individuals had limited English language proficiency and therefore the dialogues were conducted in Spanish. Two (2) in-person Spanish language dialogues were held in Wausau on the topic of firearms. Comparable methods were used for conducting these dialogues, including translating the issue guide and post-dialogue survey tool into Spanish. We had limited information on the political leaning of these individuals and the vast majority were rural community members and male. Because the Let's Talk panel is intended to be reasonably representative of the county, we did not want to skew the main panel characteristics by merging the mini-panelists' demographic data or the post-dialogue survey responses with the main Let's Talk panel. Appendix B provides more information about the Hispanic/Latino community member mini-panelists, as well as a summary of the responses to the post-dialogue survey.

RESOURCES

More information about firearms' topics and data are provided below. This list is not intended to be exhaustive of all community resources. See Appendix D, as well as for a Glossary of terms.

Gun ownership in the U.S.
https://www.thetrace.org/2023/03/guns-america-data-atf-total/#:~:text=The%20ATF%20provides%20the%20cumulative,392%20million%20guns%20in%20circulation

Wisconsin gun violence data
https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/wisconsin

Annual gun violence data (national)
https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/annual-gun-violence-data?preview=kwuq67MC03aByhqYS4wwkSOqzVeR2KLPXKocl3MAg30

Crime data from FBI's UCR (Uniform Crime Reporting)
https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/shr

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Firearm Mortality Data
https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm

Gun Violence Archive (real-time tracking of incidents)
https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/

Violence Policy Center – Justifiable Homicides Report
https://vpc.org/studies/justifiable23.pdf

RAND Corporation – Gun Policy in America (effects of policies like "Stand Your Ground")
https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy.html

Giffords Law Center – Gun Violence Statistics
https://giffords.org/issues/gun-violence-statistics/

Pew Research Center – Gun Deaths in the U.S.
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/

At the conclusion of each deliberative dialogue, participants were asked to complete a brief, 20-question survey about their experiences engaging in the deliberative dialogue. The questions were designed to gather information about whether the dialogues expanded participants' views on the issue; helped them consider tradeoffs and solutions; increased appreciation for diverse viewpoints; and increased interest in engaging in community issues. A QR code was available at the dialogue to allow participants to scan and complete the survey on their devices, and paper copies were also available. Participants in virtual dialogues were provided with a survey link.

In this section of the report, we summarize the key findings from the post-dialogue surveys for the Let's Talk dialogues on the firearms topic. For reference, participants' responses were further separated into rural versus urban respondents. Although the data in the tables can be used to observe the general patterns of responses, given the relatively small sample sizes, we often combined response categories when discussing results. In addition, tests of the statistical significance of the differences between groups were not conducted. Therefore, we do not make direct comparisons of the differences between the urban versus rural respondents. It is unlikely that the results in any one cell are significantly different from the results for that same cell for another group. As such, the data should not be used to draw conclusions about the magnitude of differences between urban versus rural respondents. Responses to two open-ended survey questions are included in Appendix A.

SURVEY RESPONSE RATES
Table 5 below shows the survey response rates. Overall, 100% of dialogue participants completed the survey.

Table 5. Firearms Deliberative Dialogues – Participant Survey Response Rates

Community Member Deliberative Dialogues			
Political Affiliation	**Dialogue Participants**	**Completed Post-Dialogue Surveys**	**Response Rate (%)**
Liberal	12	12	100
Moderate	24	24	100
Conservative	12	12	100
Total	**48**	**48**	**100**
Urban	35	35	100
Rural	13	13	100
Total	**48**	**48**	**100**

SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS
Table 6 shows the demographic characteristics of the dialogue participants (n=48) in comparison to the survey respondents (n=48). Since nearly all of the dialogue participants completed the survey, there are no differences between the respondents and the participating panelists. The table also provides the characteristics of the rural and urban respondents. However, because of the small group sizes (13 rural and 35 urban respondents) we do not make direct comparisons between the two groups.

Table 6. Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogue Participant versus Survey Respondent Characteristics

	Dialogue Participants	Dialogue Participants	Survey Respondents	Survey Respondents	Urban Survey Respondents	Urban Survey Respondents	Rural Survey Respondents	Rural Survey Respondents
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	48	100	48	100	35	100	13	100
Political Affiliation								
Liberal	12	25	12	25	5	14	7	54
Moderate	24	50	24	50	20	57	4	31
Conservative	12	25	12	25	10	29	2	15
Georgraphy								
Urban	35	73	35	73	35	100	0	0
Rural	13	27	13	27	0	0	13	100
Age								
16-20	1	2	1	2	1	3	0	0
21-29	1	2	1	2	1	3	0	0
30-39	7	15	7	15	7	20	0	0
40-49	7	15	7	15	5	14	2	15
50-59	8	17	8	17	5	14	3	23
60-69	11	23	11	23	8	23	3	23
70+	13	27	13	27	8	23	5	39
Prefer not to answer/no response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gender								
Woman	27	56	27	56	20	57	7	54
Man	18	38	18	38	12	34	6	46
Other	2	4	2	4	2	6	0	0
Prefer not to answer/no response	1	2	1	2	1	3	0	0
Race (Select all that apply)								
Alaskan, American Indian, Indigenous, or Native American	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	3	6	3	6	3	9	0	0
Black or African American	1	2	1	2	1	3	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	43	90	43	90	30	86	13	100
One or more not listed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer/no response	2	4	2	4	2	6	0	0
Ethnicity								
Hispanic/Latino	2	4	2	4	2	6	0	0
Not Hispanic or Latino	46	96	46	96	33	94	13	100
No response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Highest Level of Education								
Some high school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
High school graduate/GED	5	10	5	10	5	14	0	0
Nontraditional education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trade school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Some college, no degree	9	19	9	19	8	23	1	8
Associate degree	6	13	6	13	6	17	0	0
Bachelor's degree	12	25	12	25	9	26	3	23
Master's degree	11	23	11	23	5	14	6	46
Professional degree	2	4	2	4	0	0	2	15
Prefer not to answer/no response	3	6	3	6	2	6	1	8

* Percentages might not add up to exactly 100% because of rounding. For race, numbers can add up to more than the group sample size because respondents were asked to select all options that applied to them.

CONSIDER TRADEOFFS AND SOLUTIONS

➤ **The dialogues helped participants consider trade-offs and solutions to the issue of how to prevent gun deaths in communities, as well as to evaluate the pros and cons of potential actions and solutions.**

- A majority of the Let's Talk panelists who participated in the dialogues reported that the dialogue helped them better understand the issue they discussed and also helped them to evaluate the pros and cons of potential solutions to the issue of preventing gun deaths. Fifty-three percent (53%) of community members reported that participating in the dialogue helped them better understand the issue "quite a bit" or a "great deal" and 63% reported that the dialogue helped them evaluate the pros and cons of potential solutions "quite a bit" or "a great deal."

Table 7. Understanding Issues and Considering Tradeoffs

How much did today's dialogue...	Not at all ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...help you better understand the issue that you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	4	11	32	32	21
Rural	0	31	23	31	15
Urban	6	3	35	32	24
...help you evaluate the pros and cons of various potential solutions to the issue that you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	2	13	21	40	23
Rural	0	31	23	31	15
Urban	3	6	21	44	27

➤ **The dialogues were characterized by low levels of disagreement and considerable common ground.**

- Despite nearly half reporting at least some disagreement among the participants about the topic of preventing gun deaths, they identified high levels of common ground. Forty-five percent (45%) of community members in the Let's Talk dialogues reported that there was "some" to "quite a bit" or "a great deal" of disagreement among the participants. About 85% reported "quite a bit" or "a great deal" of common ground.

Table 8. Levels of Disagreement and Common Ground

Thinking overall about today's dialogue...	None ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...how much disagreement was there among the participants? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	13	42	27	16	2
Rural	0	31	39	23	8
Urban	19	47	22	13	0
Thinking overall about today's dialogue...	None ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...how much common ground was there among the participants? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	2	13	57	28
Rural	0	0	23	46	31
Urban	0	3	9	62	27

EXPAND VIEWS ON AN ISSUE

> **The dialogues helped community members expand their views on the issue of how to prevent gun deaths in their communities.**

- When asked to think about the dialogue in which they participated, 57% of community members reported that they considered perspectives or viewpoints they hadn't considered before "quite a bit" or "a great deal." A smaller percentage (48%) thought that the other participants had considered perspectives or viewpoints they hadn't considered before "quite a bit" or "a great deal." About one-third (33%) reported that they considered perspectives or viewpoints they hadn't considered before "some"; 48% felt their fellow participants considered these "some."
- Ninety-four percent (94%) responded that they valued the input provided by the other participants "quite a bit" or "a great deal"; 50% felt that their input was valued "quite a bit" or "a great deal" by the other participants.

Table 9. Considering New Perspectives

Thinking overall about today's dialogue...	Not at all ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...how much did you personally consider perspectives or viewpoints that you hadn't considered before? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	2	8	33	40	17
Rural	0	8	54	31	8
Urban	3	9	26	43	20
...how much do you think the other participants considered perspectives or viewpoints that they hadn't considered before? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	4	48	33	15
Rural	0	0	77	8	15
Urban	0	6	37	43	14
...how much did you value the input provided by the other participants? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	2	4	46	48
Rural	0	0	8	69	23
Urban	0	3	3	37	57
...how much do you think the other participants valued the input you provided? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	10	40	27	23
Rural	0	8	62	23	8
Urban	0	11	31	29	29

> **The dialogues were characterized by high levels of respect, including for those with differing views.**

- A large majority reported that those with differing views acted "very respectfully" (85%) toward one another. Ninety-one percent (91%) noted that participants treated those with similar views "very respectfully."

Table 10. Interactions and Respect

During today's dialogue...	Very disrespectfully ↓	Somewhat disrespectfully ↓	Neutral ↓	Somewhat respectfully ↓	Very respectfully ↓
...how did participants with differing views act toward one another? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	2	2	10	4	81
Rural	0	8	15	8	69
Urban	3	0	9	3	86
...how did participants with similar views act toward one another? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	2	0	6	8	83
Rural	0	0	0	23	77
Urban	3	0	9	3	86

APPRECIATE DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS AND DECREASE "DEMONIZATION" OF THOSE WITH DIFFERING VIEWS

> **The dialogues helped participants appreciate diverse viewpoints and develop greater comfort with and trust in fellow community members with differing views.**

- A majority (71%) of the community members reported that participating in the dialogues made them value viewpoints on the issue that differ from theirs "somewhat more" or "much more" than before the dialogue.
- Seventy percent (70%) of the community members reported being "somewhat more" or "much more" comfortable interacting with members of their community who hold different viewpoints from theirs than before the dialogue.
- When asked about how trusting they feel towards community members who hold viewpoints that differ from theirs, about 55% reported that they were "somewhat more" or "much more" trusting than before the dialogue. About 45% reported no change.
- Sixty-six percent (66%) of the community members reported being "somewhat more" or "much more" connected to community members who hold viewpoints that differ from their own than before the dialogue.

> **The dialogues increased participants' confidence that their community can engage in civil conversations.**

- A large majority (89%) of community members reported that participating in the dialogue made them "somewhat more" or "much more" confident that their community can engage in civil conversations about the issue they discussed.

Table 11. Trust, Comfort, and Connectivity as a Result of Participation

Coming out of today's dialogue…	Much less than before ↓	Somewhat less than before ↓	No change ↓	Somewhat more than before ↓	Much more than before ↓
…how much do you value viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	0	29	50	21
Rural	0	0	15	69	15
Urban	0	0	34	43	23
…how comfortable do you feel interacting with members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	0	29	35	35
Rural	0	0	15	54	31
Urban	0	0	34	29	37
…how trusting do you feel toward members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	0	45	36	19
Rural	0	0	46	39	15
Urban	0	0	44	35	21
…how connected do you feel to members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	0	34	47	19
Rural	0	0	31	54	15
Urban	0	0	35	44	21
…how confident are you that your community can engage in civil conversations about the issue you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	0	4	6	54	35
Rural	0	8	8	69	15
Urban	0	3	6	49	43

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY ISSUES AND INTEREST IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

➢ **In general, participants reported an increased interest in learning more about the issue of gun deaths and an increased interest in engaging with fellow community members about firearms.**

- When considering the percentage of community members who selected "quite a bit" or "a great deal," about two-thirds (61%) reported that participating in the dialogues made them want to learn more about the issue they discussed and be more involved in decision-making in their community about the issue. About half (50%) reported that the dialogue made them want to talk more with fellow community members and 57% reported that they wanted to collaborate more with fellow community members as a result of participating in the dialogue.

Table 12. Interest and Engagement in Community Issues

Did participating in today's dialogue make you want to...	Not at all ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...learn more about the issue you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	6	6	27	44	17
Rural	8	8	23	54	8
Urban	6	6	29	40	20
...talk more with your fellow community members about the issue you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	2	6	42	31	19
Rural	0	8	46	31	15
Urban	3	6	40	31	20
...collaborate with your fellow community members to address the issue you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	2	10	31	38	19
Rural	0	8	39	31	23
Urban	3	11	29	40	17
...be more involved with decision-making in your community about the issue you discussed? (%)					
Let's Talk Panelists	4	4	31	38	23
Rural	0	8	39	23	31
Urban	6	3	29	43	20

PANELISTS' INSIGHTS ON PREVENTING GUN DEATHS

This section of this report summarizes the seven Let's Talk dialogues with community members. Table 13 provides an overview of the approaches and action items discussed in each dialogue and how the participants generally felt about the actions they discussed based on the moderator and observer subjective assessments of the groups' discussions. In this table, the action items within each approach are ordered based on the general level of support for that action item when considering all of the individual dialogues together. To determine the relative order of the action items within each approach, we assigned a numeric value to each of the levels of support, with 1 = oppose; 2 = mixed, and 3 = support. We then used these values to calculate an average level of support for each action item (the column labeled "All Avg."). This average value was then used to rank the action items within each approach.

In situations that resulted in a tie in the average values, our method is to rank the action item that had a greater number of characterizations of "oppose" as lower relative to another action item with the same average value. If no characterizations of "oppose" were present, the action item with more instances of consistent agreement between the moderator(s) and observer was used to break the tie (in other words, fewer designations of "*" in the table). If a tie still persisted, the action item with a greater number of characterizations of "support" across the dialogues was ranked higher. Otherwise, the action items were listed alphabetically in the case of a tie. We recognize that this approach is somewhat imperfect since there may be situations where a group does not discuss a particular action item, resulting in a blank cell. In this situation, the average is calculated based on the levels of support only for those groups where an action item was discussed; we do not treat a blank cell as having a value of "0" which could skew the average towards a lower value. In this round of dialogues there was one additional situation where we decided to order one action item higher than another. Specifically, we ranked "Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs" (average value of 2.5 based on the scoring) higher than "Enhance domestic violence intervention programs" (average value of 2.7) due to the limited number of groups that discussed "Enhance domestic violence intervention programs."

Table 13. Dialogue Participants' Views about Actions to Address Gun Deaths (Based on Moderator(s) and Observer Characterizations)

Issue Approach and Action Items	Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues*								
	1^	2	3^^	4	5	6	7	All Avg.**	All Overall**
	7/16/2025	7/24/2025	7/26/2025	7/29/2025	7/31/2025	8/5/2025	8/7/2025		
APPROACH 1: LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS									
Improve gun safety and protections for children		Mixed*	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	2.8	Support
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks		Mixed	Mixed	Support	Support*	Support	Support	2.7	Support
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms	Support	Oppose*		Mixed	Support	Support	Support	2.5	Support
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines	Mixed	Oppose*	Mixed	Mixed	Support	Support		2.2	Mixed
APPROACH 2: INCREASE PROTECTION, DETERRENCE, AND ENFORCEMENT									
Empower police and courts; increase patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing	Mixed*	Support		Mixed	Mixed	Mixed*	Mixed*	2.2	Mixed
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws	Mixed		Mixed	Support*	Mixed*	Mixed*	Oppose*	2.0	Mixed
Expand armed security and citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed*	Mixed	Oppose	Mixed*	1.9	Mixed
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including concealed carry	Oppose	Mixed*	Oppose		Mixed*	Mixed	Oppose*	1.5	Oppose
APPROACH 3: ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS									
Make mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support		2.7	Support
Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs	Support*	Support*	Support	Mixed		Support*	Support	2.5	Support
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs	Support					Mixed*	Support*	2.7	Support
Invest in economies in high-crime areas to address socioeconomic factors	Mixed			Oppose*		Mixed	Mixed*	1.8	Mixed
If a cell is blank, the notes indicated that the proposal was not discussed by the group or was only raised by one person without affirmation for or against by other participants.									

*The notetaker and observer had different assessments of the perceived level of agreement; the analyst reviewed their notes and made a characterization based on the documentation of the discussion.

^ This group supported providing more refined data on gun violence-related issues. When discussing the need for better statistics, some noted the need to address societal and race issues in America.

^^This group supported gun licenses/registration instead of background checks for every sale under Approach 1 and educating citizens about the legality of self-defense under Approach 2.

After the average scores were created, an Overall characterization was assigned as follows: 1 to 1.5 = Oppose; 1.6 to 2.4 = Mixed; 2.5 to 3 = Support (the column labeled "All-Overall in Table 13). However, caution should be taken to not over-generalize these characterizations within a specific group or across the groups; readers should not assume that they are a reflection of the views of all participants. Rather, they give a general sense of which way the groups were leaning in terms of their views on a particular action item. While our review of the participants' post-discussion Mentimeter polls indicated general consistency between the participants' sentiments based on the polling and the moderator and observer assessment (see Table 18), the "Overall" column should not be used to draw conclusions about the relative strength of participants' views. Additionally, the discussions were not necessarily structured in such a way that participants weighed the action items relative to each other. Despite these limitations, we find this approach to be a reasonable way to structure an interpretation of the levels of support across dialogues based on the moderators' and observers' characterizations.

Table 14 shows the views of the participants in the two Spanish language dialogues. A similar ranking framework was used within each approach. For the most part, there was overall consistency between the full Let's Talk panelists' dialogues and the two Spanish language dialogues in terms of the overall views of the action items.

Table 14. Spanish Language Dialogue Participants' Views about Actions to Address Gun Deaths (Based on the Moderator(s) and Observer Characterizations)

Issue Approach and Action Items	Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues	
	1^	2
	7/28/2025	7/28/2025
	Obey Center	Wilson Room
APPROACH 1: LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS		
Improve gun safety and protections for children	Support	Support
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks	Mixed	Support
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms	Mixed	Support
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines	Mixed	Support
APPROACH 2: INCREASE PROTECTION, DETERRENCE, AND ENFORCEMENT		
Empower police and courts; increase patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing	Support	Mixed
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws	Mixed	Support
Expand armed security and citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations	Oppose	Mixed*
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including concealed carry	Mixed	Oppose*
APPROACH 3:ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS		
Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs	Support	Support
Make mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available	Support	Support
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs	Mixed	Support
Invest in economies in high-crime areas to address socioeconomic factors	Mixed	Mixed
If a cell is blank, the notes indicated that the proposal was not discussed by the group or was only raised by one person without affirmation for or against by other participants. In the case of a tie, items were listed in alphabetical order based on the numeric scoring.		

*The notetaker and observer had different assessments of the perceived level of agreement; the analyst reviewed their notes and made a characterization based on the documentation of the discussion.

^ This group supported leaving guns in lockboxes with access only by code, or ways to leave guns with authorities when discussing Approach 1.

USING SNAP POLLING AS A DIALOGUE FACILITATION TOOL

The moderators of the dialogues used "snap polling" to gather real-time feedback from the participants about their views on the action items during the dialogues. The purpose of the polling was to enhance the moderators' understanding of the participants' broader views and as a vehicle for navigating the discussion of the action items. At the start of the discussion of each of the three approaches, participants scanned a QR code to access a Mentimeter poll that asked them their level of agreement with each action item within that approach. The poll used a 5-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree"). The results of the poll were immediately displayed so that the moderator(s) and the participants could see the average score for each action item going into the discussion of each approach. The poll was intended to serve as a useful way for participants to anonymously and privately share their views without fear of reprisal, but also function as a tool for the moderator to get a general sense of the extent to which the group members, on average, agreed with (supported) specific action items or disagreed with (opposed) specific action items.

To illustrate, an average score of "4.2" could signal to the moderator that group members generally agreed with a specific action item, whereas a score of "1.9" for a different action item could signal that the group members generally disagreed. Average values of about "3.0" on the poll could potentially indicate that participants had mixed views. This feedback could help the moderator facilitate the discussion, keeping in mind underlying preferences.

The same poll was readministered at the conclusion of the discussion of the action items within a given approach, thus giving the participants an opportunity to anonymously reassess their level of agreement with each of the action items after having had the benefit of the discussion. Since the polls were anonymous, participants could provide input privately and independently of the group dynamics. The post-discussion polling data would be useful for the moderator to identify remaining areas of tension or to prompt further discussion of any large shifts in views. In all, the participants took six snap polls during the dialogues; these polls were primarily implemented to help the moderator(s) navigate the discussion and gauge general views rather than for a systematic analysis comparing pre and post poll values.

Tables 16 and 17 illustrate the pre and post poll results within each dialogue for the main Let's Talk panel sessions, as well as for the two Spanish language dialogues. In these tables, the action items are listed in the order in which they appear in the Issue Guide and are not ranked in any way (in contrast to Table 13 where a ranking was used). The numbers in each cell reflect the group's average poll value based on the participants' level of agreement with the action item; a higher value means more average agreement and a lower value means less average agreement on a 1-to-5 point scale. We used the key shown in Table 15 to characterize the values and assign a color to each cell based on the average value in order to make it easier for the reader to see the variation in results across groups for a specific action item.

Table 15. Color Coding Key for Level of Agreement

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Mixed	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1 to 1.9	2.0 to 2.4	2.5-3.5	3.6 to 4.0	4.1 to 5.0

Due to the relatively small number of participants in each group, the averages have the potential to be substantially impacted by a large change in the poll value of one or two participants. In small datasets, a single extreme data point (an outlier) can disproportionately affect the average. Therefore, we suggest caution in interpreting changes in the magnitude of cell values between the pre and post surveys within an individual dialogue and in drawing conclusions about what any changes mean about the overall group's views. Because of these sensitivities, we do not use the pre and post polling data to draw conclusions about changes in dialogue participants' views within or across dialogues, but they can be useful to observe the general patterns. Feedback from the moderators also noted differences in how and the extent to which they used the polls during the discussions, thus reinforcing that we want to be cautious in not overly-interpreting the poll results.

Table 16. Dialogue Participants' Level of Agreement with the Action Items to Address Gun Deaths - Polling Results (Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Issue Approach and Action Items	Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues													
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
	7/16/2025		7/24/2025		7/26/2025		7/29/2025		7/31/2025		8/5/2025		8/7/2025	
APPROACH 1: LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms	4.2	4.4	3.0	2.4	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.6	5.0	5.0	4.7	4.4	4.7
Improve gun safety and protections for children	4.1	4.2	3.9	2.7	3.9	4.0	4.7	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.4	4.9
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines	3.5	3.4	2.9	2.3	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.5	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks	4.1	4.2	3.6	2.9	3.9	3.3	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.5	5.0	5.0	4.6	5.0
APPROACH 2: INCREASE PROTECTION, DETERRENCE, AND ENFORCEMENT	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Expand armed security and citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations	2.8	2.6	3.3	2.6	2.4	2.4	3.3	3.2	3.2	2.5	2.3	2.7	2.1	1.6
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including concealed carry	2.3	1.9	2.7	2.1	2.0	1.6	3.5	3.2	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.3	1.4
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws	3.2	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.0	3.0	4.2	4.5	2.8	2.2	3.0	2.7	2.6	1.7
Empower police and courts; increase patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.6	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.3	4.3	4.3	3.3	2.4
APPROACH 3:ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Make mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available	4.8	4.9	4.0	3.6	4.6	4.7	4.3	4.2	4.0	3.0	4.3	4.3	4.0	3.2
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs	4.7	4.9	3.1	3.4	4.0	4.5	4.2	4.2	5.0	3.3	5.0	4.0	3.7	3.2
Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs	4.6	4.5	4.0	3.4	4.9	5.0	4.2	4.3	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.5
Invest in economies in high-crime areas to address socioeconomic factors	4.0	3.5	3.4	3.0	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.0	3.8	3.3	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.7

Table 17. Spanish Language Dialogue Participants' Level of Agreement with the Action Items to Address Gun Deaths - Polling Results (Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Issue Approach and Action Items	Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues			
	1		2	
Spanish Language Dialogues	7/28/2025 Obey Center		7/28/2025 Wilson Room	
APPROACH 1: LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms	4.3	4.0	3.6	4.3
Improve gun safety and protections for children	5.0	4.5	4.4	4.5
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines	3.7	2.4	3.6	3.6
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks	3.5	3.1	3.5	4.1
APPROACH 2: INCREASE PROTECTION, DETERRENCE, AND ENFORCEMENT	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Expand armed security and citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations	3.8	2.0	3.9	3.5
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including concealed carry	1.6	1.7	3.4	3.8
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws	3.4	2.9	3.9	4.1
Empower police and courts; increase patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing	3.5	4.6	2.8	3.4
APPROACH 3:ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Make mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available	3.9	4.4	4.0	3.9
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9
Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs	3.1	4.8	4.0	4.0
Invest in economies in high-crime areas to address socioeconomic factors	3.4	3.3	4.3	2.9

We wanted to get a general sense of whether the moderator and observer characterizations of the general level of support for an action item was reasonably consistent with the participants' own views. Therefore, in Table 18, we compared the average post-dialogue poll values and overall characterizations based on the polls (the two columns on the far right of the table) to the levels of support of the action items based on the moderator and observer characterizations shown previously in Table 13 (the third and fourth columns from the right in the table). For Approaches 1 and 2, the ranked average poll values matched the ordering of the action items based on our method of using the moderator and observer characterizations described earlier. While there was one small difference within Approach 3, we observed that there was fairly reasonable consistency between the post-dialogue poll average values and the ordering of the action items based on the characterization of the levels of agreement. This gives us reasonable confidence in the subjective characterizations of the level of support assigned by the moderators and observers. Again, for the reasons explained earlier, we do not use the numeric poll values to draw conclusions about the participants' relative preference between action items.

Table 18. Moderator and Observer Characterizations of Dialogue Participant Views of Action Items vs. Snap Poll Results of the Level of Agreement of Participants with Action Items

Issue Approach and Action Items	Let's Talk Deliberative Dialogues										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	All	All	All	All
	7/16/2025	7/24/2025	7/26/2025	7/29/2025	7/31/2025	8/5/2025	8/7/2025	Avg.**	Overall**	Avg.	Overall
	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Mod/Obs	Post-Poll	Post-Poll
APPROACH 1: LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS											
Improve gun safety and protections for children		Mixed*	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	2.8	Support	4.4	Strongly Agree
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks		Mixed	Mixed	Support	Support*	Support	Support	2.7	Support	4.2	Strongly Agree
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms	Support	Oppose*		Mixed	Support	Support	Support	2.5	Support	4.1	Strongly Agree
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines	Mixed	Oppose*	Mixed	Mixed	Support	Support		2.2	Mixed	3.9	Somewhat Agree
APPROACH 2: INCREASE PROTECTION, DETERRENCE, AND ENFORCEMENT											
Empower police and courts; increase patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing	Mixed*	Support		Mixed	Mixed	Mixed*	Mixed*	2.2	Mixed	3.2	Mixed
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws	Mixed		Mixed	Support*	Mixed*	Mixed*	Oppose*	2.0	Mixed	2.9	Mixed
Expand armed security and citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed*	Mixed	Oppose	Mixed*	1.9	Mixed	2.5	Mixed
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including concealed carry	Oppose	Mixed*	Oppose		Mixed*	Mixed	Oppose*	1.5	Oppose	2.1	Somewhat Disagree
APPROACH 3: ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS											
Make mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support		2.7	Support	4	Somewhat Agree
Increase social connection through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs	Support*	Support*	Support	Mixed		Support*	Support	2.5	Support	4.2	Strongly Agree
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs	Support					Mixed*	Support*	2.7	Support	3.9	Somewhat Agree
Invest in economies in high-crime areas to address socioeconomic factors	Mixed			Oppose*		Mixed	Mixed*	1.8	Mixed	3.5	Mixed

If a cell is blank, the notes indicated that the proposal was not discussed by the group or was only raised by one person without affirmation for or against by other participants.

*The notetaker and observer had different assessments of the perceived level of agreement; the analyst reviewed their notes and made a characterization based on the documentation of the discussion.

**An average score was created across dialogues by assigning values to the overall level of support in an individual dialogues as follows: 1=Oppose; 2=Mixed; 3=Support. After these average scores were created, an Overall characterization was assigned as follows: 1 to 1.5 = Oppose; 1.6 to 2.4 = Mixed; 2.5 to 3 = Support. Caution should be taken to not over-generalize these characterizations and assume that they are a reflection of the views of all participants. Rather, they give a general sense of which way the groups were leaning in terms of their views on a particular action item. These are characterizations are based on the moderator and observer assessments. While our review of the participants' post-discussion Mentimeter polls indicated general consistency between the participants' sentiments and the moderator and observer assessment, the ""Overall"" column should not be used to draw conclusions about the relative strength of participants' views.

> **Do you think it was valuable to engage in this dialogue with other members of your community? Please explain.[13]**

- Absolutely! These sessions have been excellent.... Engaging and productive.
- Always a valuable opportunity to talk. Nothing changes unless people talk and decide how to address issues.
- I appreciate learning from others in a safe environment.
- I definitely think it was valuable to have this dialogue. I feel like many people are not exposed to alternative viewpoints and often find themselves in bubbles, especially on social media, a reflection back many of the beliefs they already hold and creating a significant degree of confirmation bias.
- I think today's dialogue was good; got to hear what everyone's thoughts are on firearms.
- Ideas to consider.
- It gives new perspective and insight.
- It is great to be able to gain more insight being in a group. I recommend this to anyone.
- It was absolutely valuable to engage in this dialogue. I appreciated having different voices. It was great to hear from different genders, different age, groups, and people with different life experiences. When you sit down and actually talk with someone, it's much easier to find common ground.
- It would be nice to see an increase in more availability in mental health facilities.
- People were willing to look at different viewpoints.
- Somewhat, was nice to know most think the same way and everyone agrees there's a problem.
- This was very beneficial to hear differing viewpoints on this tough subject.
- Viewpoints, very important part of the decision-making process.
- Yes (n=4)
- Yes, sharing perspectives is always important as it results in broader understanding.
- Yes, dialogue on an issue like guns is essential if workable solutions are going to be found.
- Yes, different points of view are always valuable.
- Yes, I really enjoyed hearing everyone's life situations and experiences which often shaped their opinions.
- Yes! Community leaders need to be a part of these discussions.
- Yes, all dialogue is beneficial!
- Yes, because I have a very different view than most of the people in this community, coming from another country.
- Yes, because it is important to see how others in the community feel.
- Yes, excellent topic and use of technology is helpful.
- Yes, great educational session.
- Yes, I felt like my views were shared and it's nice to know at least 11 other people can hear what I'm saying.
- Yes, it helps me understand others more.
- Yes, it is good to hear people talk about contentious issues in a calm way.
- Yes, it is very interesting to see others perspectives and see the reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with others.
- Yes, many varied viewpoints were discussed. All valid.
- Yes, maybe we aren't so split.
- Yes, seemed to recognize failures in the system.
- Yes, this subject is of interest to me, but I don't know much about it. I learned some things today.
- Yes, additional information from people of other social situations; increase knowledge.
- Yes, it was a respectful and fruitful discussion
- Yes, it's good to see a sample of where people stand on the issue.

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[13] The open-ended responses in this appendix were not edited.

- Yes, other opinions are valuable.
- Yes, there is a huge range of views on this topic. It needs to be discussed.

> **Is there anything else you would like to share with us about today's session? Please explain.**
- Address wrap-around solution.
- Ask the people from all the discussion groups to meet and find out if they have done anything based on the issues discussed.
- Consistent cohorts would have been interesting.
- Convenient location.
- Great participation.
- How to keep guns out of kids' hands.
- I think no matter what people can find a middle ground.
- I think these facilitators are great, very talented and nice. Thank you for being awesome.
- I wish I could know specifically if any of my individual comments influenced anyone's thinking, especially given I tried to respectfully challenge folks.
- I would like to participate more.
- I'm so glad that you chose a topic that is so close to the hearts of so many people and were able to do it in such a thoughtful way.
- It made me think about the gun situation more, I even did research last night. Overall it's very difficult to find a solution to all the issues involved.
- It was interesting with the small group but perhaps a couple more people would have added input.
- Let's keep this going!
- Liked the insights from people who have experienced these issues.
- Lots of different viewpoints I hadn't thought about guns/ people are not as anti-gun as I thought they would be.
- No (n=5)
- No. It was as good the others. All good.
- Nothing to add.
- Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this dialogues.
- Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion.
- Thank you for this engagement. God bless you all.
- Thank you so much! loved all of the meetings. These need to be ongoing for civil leaders especially.
- The Mentimeter was a nice addition. Thank you all for what you do!
- This was a session topic I was uneasy with and it ended up being the most impactful session I participated in...the moderators and facilitators have been incredible and I appreciate seeing respectful dialogue among people with diverse perspectives. This country needs more of this!
- Very effective facilitator.
- Very enjoyable and well-presented Thank you!!
- When it comes to police supporting us, I have had my upstairs neighbors threatening each other with a gun, audio recordings shown to the police and they do nothing. They've been there 4 times.
- Zoom was harder for me to participate. I have always attended the sessions in person, which I prefer. However, the facilitators were top-notch in rephrasing and compiling topics that were discussed. Thanks for your help!

APPENDIX B: SPANISH LANGUAGE DIALOGUES

Two dialogues on the topic of firearms were held in Spanish. Twenty-two (22) community members were recruited to serve as members of a Spanish-language Let's Talk panel. These Spanish-language panelists all identified as Hispanic and two of three (67%) were male. Most (82%) were living in a rural area. About one-third (36%) of the Spanish-language panelists reported "some high school" as their level of education. An additional 36% reported obtaining their "GED." Half (50%) of the Spanish-language panelists were between the ages of 20 and 29; 36% were between the ages of 30 and 39. All 22 panelists registered for a Spanish-language dialogue, and all participated. Nineteen (19) of the dialogue participants completed the post-dialogue survey in Spanish. Several participants did not answer one or more questions. Given the relatively small number of survey responses, we do not make direct comparisons between the mini-panel and the main Let's Talk panel. However, the patterns of responses are fairly consistent. The Spanish language dialogue moderators had previously expressed some literacy concerns to the Let's Talk team related to the survey questions and therefore, the moderators will read the questions out loud.

CONSIDER TRADEOFFS AND SOLUTIONS

Table 19. Understanding Issues and Considering Tradeoffs

How much did today's dialogue...	Not at all ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...help you better understand the issue that you discussed? (% of 18)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	17	0	0	28	56
...help you evaluate the pros and cons of various potential solutions to the issue that you discussed? (% of 18)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	17	0	17	28	39

Table 20. Levels of Disagreement and Common Ground

Thinking overall about today's dialogue...	None ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...how much disagreement was there among the participants? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	11	37	11	21	21
Thinking overall about today's dialogue...	**None ↓**	**A little ↓**	**Some ↓**	**Quite a bit ↓**	**A great deal ↓**
...how much common ground was there among the participants? (% of 18)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	6	17	39	39

EXPAND VIEWS ON AN ISSUE

Table 21. Considering New Perspectives

Thinking overall about today's dialogue...	Not at all ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...how much did you personally consider perspectives or viewpoints that you hadn't considered before? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	11	21	47	21
...how much do you think the other participants considered perspectives or viewpoints that they hadn't considered before? (% of 14)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	14	29	29	29
...how much did you value the input provided by the other participants? (% of 14)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	7	43	50
...how much do you think the other participants valued the input you provided? (% of 14)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	29	43	29

Table 22. Understanding Issues and Considering Tradeoffs

During today's dialogue...	Very disrespectfully ↓	Somewhat disrespectfully ↓	Neutral ↓	Somewhat respectfully ↓	Very respectfully ↓
...how did participants with differing views act toward one another? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	5	0	5	32	58
...how did participants with similar views act toward one another? (% of 16)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	0	31	69

APPRECIATE DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS AND DECREASE "DEMONIZATION" OF THOSE WITH DIFFERING VIEWS

Table 23. Trust, Comfort, and Connectivity as a Result of Participation

Coming out of today's dialogue...	Much less than before ↓	Somewhat less than before ↓	No change ↓	Somewhat more than before ↓	Much more than before ↓
...how much do you value viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	11	47	42
...how comfortable do you feel interacting with members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	5	0	0	53	42
...how trusting do you feel toward members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	0	58	42
...how connected do you feel to members of your community who hold viewpoints on the issue that differ from yours? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	0	63	37
*...how confident are you that your community can engage in civil conversations about the issue you discussed? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	0	0	53	47

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY ISSUES AND INTEREST IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Table 24. Interest and Engagement in Community Issues

Did participating in today's dialogue make you want to...	Not at all ↓	A little ↓	Some ↓	Quite a bit ↓	A great deal ↓
...learn more about the issue you discussed? (% of 19)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	5	5	21	11	58
...talk more with your fellow community members about the issue you discussed? (% of 16)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	13	19	38	31
...collaborate with your fellow community members to address the issue you discussed? (% of 16)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	6	13	6	38	38
...be more involved with decision-making in your community about the issue you discussed? (% of 17)					
Spanish Language Dialogues	0	12	12	24	53

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

> **Do you think it was valuable to engage in this dialogue with other members of your community? Please explain.[14]**

- I really need to learn more about everything we discussed today.
- Important subject matter.
- It was excellent.
- Yes, because everyone has a different opinion and expectations during the dialogues.
- Yes, because I feel like I'm not alone and it's good to know that there are other people that share the same thoughts.
- Yes, because I was able to listen to other points of view.
- Yes, because it's good to have different points of view.
- Yes, because it's good to learn a little bit more about subjects that are not in our mind, sometimes you don't provide a lot of opinions but you still learn something.
- Yes, is extremely valuable.
- Yes, it was an important subject.
- Yes, it was very valuable because it did change my views on some topics that are around us in our daily life like personal things, work related things, and health.
- Yes, it was very valuable specially to learn about new subjects.

> **Is there anything else you would like to share with us about today's session? Please explain.**

- Everything was good.
- Everything was really good, and the topics of discussion were super interesting for me and the way I see things.
- Help with all kinds of situations.
- I like the way the moderator finds ways to listen to everyone during the dialogue.
- I would like to congratulate the team for teaching us and patience they had with us during the discussions.
- It's good to participate during the dialogues it help us stay informed.

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[14] The open-ended responses in this appendix were translated from Spanish.

Let's Talk
Marathon County

WISCONSIN INSTITUTE FOR
Citizenship &
Civil Dialogue

ISSUE ADVISORY

WIPPS
WISCONSIN INSTITUTE *for*
PUBLIC POLICY *and* SERVICE

Let's Talk Firearms

How should we prevent gun deaths in our communities?

Wisconsin, like much of the country, has a culture and history of hunting and recreational shooting, with many families owning firearms for sport, protection, and tradition. In the United States, it is estimated that 400 million guns are in civilian hands. At the same time, communities across the state grapple with gun violence in various forms—from domestic violence and suicide to gang-related crime and accidents.

In 2022, over 48,000 people died in the United States due to firearms, down slightly from the record high of 48,830 in 2021. Of those deaths, 27,032 were suicides and 19,651 were homicides. Wisconsin saw 830 firearm deaths in 2022, including 277 homicides, 529 suicides, and 24 classified as other causes. Fifty-five of these deaths were children aged 1-17. It's hard to find a community in the country that is not affected by gun violence, and Marathon County is no exception.

Most Americans agree that reducing gun deaths is important, but there are sharp disagreements about the best approaches. Some believe stricter regulations on firearms are necessary, while others argue for enhanced security and enforcement. Still others focus on addressing underlying social and mental health issues that contribute to violence.

How do we balance constitutional rights and the historical culture of hunting and self-defense with the need to keep community members safe? How should we prevent gun deaths in our communities?

This issue advisory presents three approaches to addressing firearms, each coming from a different perspective and reflecting a different set of ideas about what should be done. Most people will find something to agree with in all three approaches, but each also has trade-offs, risks, or drawbacks to be taken into account and worked through. The options presented here are not ready-made solutions, but rather a starting point for weighing alternatives and reaching a sound judgment.

ISSUE ADVISORY

GUN VIOLENCE IN WISCONSIN
Most Recent Data from CDC (2022)

830 gun deaths in Wisconsin
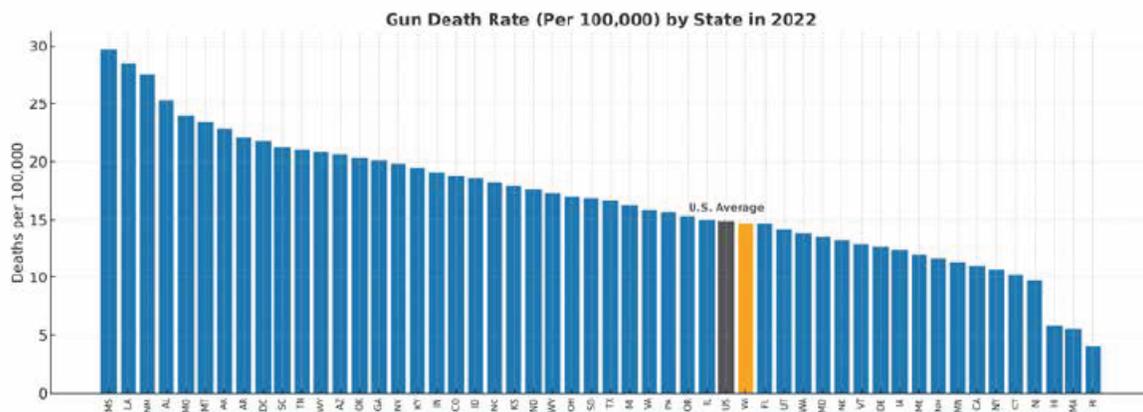
55 children and teens (1-17)

11 hours on average, one person is killed every 11 hours

277 GUN HOMICIDES	529 GUN SUICIDES	24 OTHER GUN DEATHS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The overall gun death rate increased 69% from 2013 to 2022.
- Wisconsin had the 2nd highest gun death rate among Black people in the country in 2022.
- Black people were nearly 70 times as likely to die by gun homicide than their White counterparts.
- Firearms were the leading cause of death among children and teens ages 1–17 in 2022.
- In 2021, there were at least 42 domestic violence-related homicides in Wisconsin. 64% were by firearm.
- Firearms are used in the majority of homicides and suicides (85% of homicides, 57% of suicides.

- Males were three times as likely to die by gun homicide than females.
- Young Black males ages 15–34 make up 1% of the state's population but accounted for 36% of all gun homicide deaths in 2022.
- Black females were 19 times as likely to die by gun homicide than White females in 2022. The Black female gun homicide rate nearly doubled between 2021 to 2022.

Gun Death Rate (Per 100,000) by State in 2022

source:https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/wisconsin

Source: https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/wisconsin

GUN VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

48,204 lives were lost to gun violence in 2022

Homicide 19,651

Suicides 27,032

Unintentional 463   Legal Intervention 643   Undetermined 415

= 100 gun deaths

Leading Causes of death for youth (ages 1-17) in 2022

CAUSE OF DEATH

Cause	Number of Deaths
Firearm	2,526
Motor Vehicle Crash	2,240
Cancer	1,444
Poisoning	979
Suffocation	935

NUMBER OF DEATHS
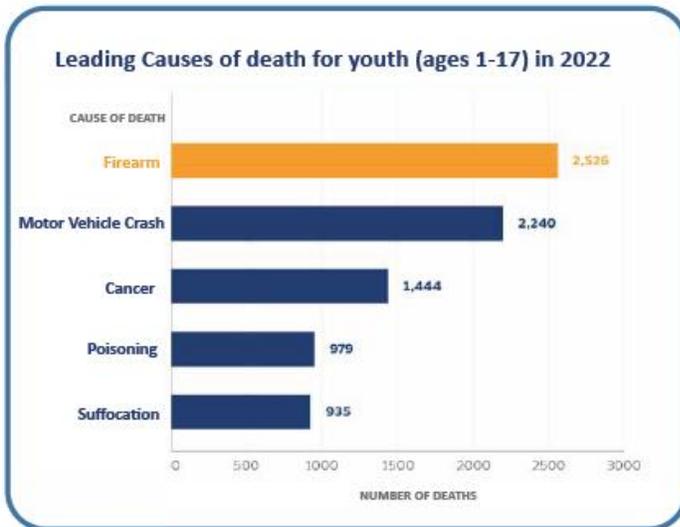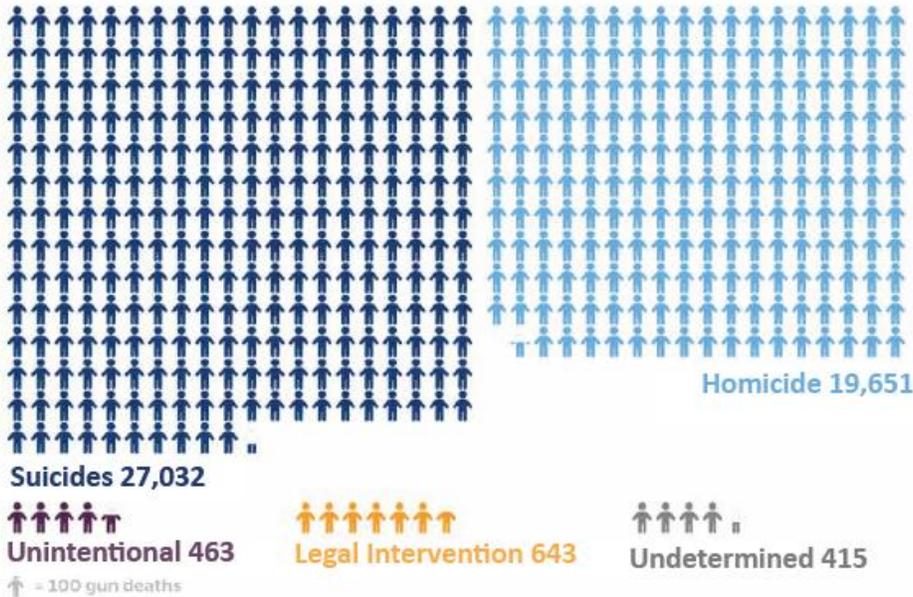
Lethality and Availability of Firearms

Due to their high lethality and availability, firearms fuel our country's high suicide and homicide rates. Four out of every five homicides and more than half of all suicides are by firearm.

In 2022, 79% of all homicides were by firearms

In 2022, 55% of all suicides were by firearms

source: https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-09/2022-cgvs-gun-violence-in-the-united-states.pdf

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Option One: Limit Access to Firearms

This approach emphasizes that the widespread availability of firearms has made our communities vulnerable to preventable deaths. With an estimated 400 million guns in circulation and varying state laws governing their purchase and possession, dangerous individuals can too easily obtain weapons during moments of crisis or criminal intent. We need comprehensive policies that keep firearms away from people who pose risks to themselves or others. Reasonable regulations—similar to those we have for vehicles, medications, and otherpotentially harmful items—can reduce gun deaths while respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens.

A Primary Drawback

This approach may punish law abiding gun owners, and could give the government too much authority. Additionally, it may conflict with the Second Amendment of the Constitution.

Actions	Drawbacks
Improve red flag laws that allow temporary removal of firearms from people deemed dangerous to themselves or others.	Increase the chance that weapons will be unfairly seized.
Improve gun safety and protections for children through stricter safe storage and handling laws, increased awareness of the importance of gun safety, and increased training for parents and children.	Places burden on parents who may lack resources for proper storage; enforcement could criminalize families during tragic accidents.
Restrict access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.	This would not address the reality that most firearm deaths are from handguns.
Implement mandatory waiting periods and background checks for all firearm purchases, including private sales.	Extremely hard to regulate private sales without government overreach and surveillance. People can also make guns now with 3D printers.

Options Two: Increase Protection, Deterrence, and Enforcement

This approach argues that criminals and dangerous individuals will always find ways to obtain weapons, so our focus should be on protection, deterrence, and swift enforcement of existing laws to prevent violence. Law-abiding residents need the tools and training to defend themselves, and law enforcement needs the resources and authority to stop violence before it happens. Rather than restricting the rights of responsible gun owners, we should strengthen our ability to identify threats, secure vulnerable locations, and ensure that those who commit crimes with firearms face serious consequences.

A Primary Drawback

The proliferation of firearms and armed guards in public places could create the atmosphere of a police state and prioritize enforcement and security measures over preventive solutions such as mental health services, education, and economic development.

Actions	Drawbacks
Expand armed security as well as citizens' ability to carry firearms at vulnerable locations such as schools, workplaces, and public venues.	This could make some locations feel like a police/military state.
Increase law-abiding individuals' ability to carry firearms, including permitless concealed carry.	This could lead to greater fear, not greater security. More guns in the hands of more people doesn't necessarily make communities safer.
Enact "Stand Your Ground" laws to protect individuals who are forced to defend themselves with deadly force.	Some argue these laws may increase gun violence deaths.
Empower police and the courts to combat violence through increased patrols, resources, and tougher sentencing for crimes committed with firearms.	This could have a negative impact due to over policing and violating personal rights.

Option Three: Address Mental Health and Social Problems

This approach assumes that gun deaths are symptoms of deeper problems in our communities, including untreated mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, lack of opportunity, and social isolation. Many of those who die by gun violence are struggling with personal crises, relationship conflicts, or social conditions that could be addressed through intervention and support. Instead of focusing primarily on the weapons themselves or increasing security measures, we should invest in mental health services, violence prevention programs, and community support that address the root causes that drive people toward violence.

A Primary Drawback

This approach fails to address the immediate availability of lethal means and may take years or decades to show results, leaving communities vulnerable in the meantime.

Action	Drawbacks
Encourage individuals to seek mental healthcare by making mental health services more accessible, affordable, and available.	This would overload an already understaffed mental health system, patients would see increased waiting lists, and there could also be language barriers.
Enhance domestic violence intervention programs to better protect victims and prevent escalation.	It is often difficult for victims of domestic violence to reach out to authorities and ask for help.
Create increased social connection and belonging through after-school programs, mentorships, and clubs.	This is a patchwork approach that may not reach some of the most vulnerable youth.
Invest in economic development in high-crime areas to address underlying socioeconomic factors.	This could increase the cost of living and housing for those who live in low-income neighborhoods.

Using the Issue Guide

This issue guide presents three approaches or alternatives to encourage constructive dialogue and avoid the polarizing talk which is co common today. Each approach is based on shared concerns and poses different strategies for addressing the problem. The approaches offer potential drawbacks or trade-offs inherent in each action.

You are not required to accept any one approach. You might find that you support parts of each approach while disagreeing with other parts. You are also not bound by what is in this guide. In other words, if you believe there is a relevant action that could be taken to address the problem, you are encouraged to share it with the group.

Ground Rules

- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere
- Listening is just as important as speaking
- Let others finish their thoughts before sharing yours.
- No one or two individuals should dominate
- Consider all options and ideas fairly
- Focus on the actions we can take in our communities.

Dialogue Agenda

Introduction

Review ground rules.
Introduce the issue.

Connect to Issue

Think about how the issue affects you, your family, friends, and community.

Consider Each Option

Consider each approach one at a time.
Allow equal time for each.

- What is attractive?
- What about the drawbacks?

Review and Reflect

Review the conversation as a group.

- What areas of common ground were apparent?
- What tensions and trade-offs were most difficult?
- From whom else do we need to hear?

As a courtesy to readers interested in more information, we have provided below a glossary and links to available resources on the topic of firearms and gun safety. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list or representative of all resources.

GLOSSARY

Background Checks
Under federal law, any licensed gun dealer is required to complete a background check before the sale of a firearm. This applies whether you're buying at their brick-and-mortar shop or an online store. The background check requirement has been in place since the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act was passed in 1993.
When you attempt to purchase a gun from a licensed dealer, they have to submit your personal information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). This returns either a "proceed," "denied," or "delayed" response. About 90% of checks return an immediate "proceed," allowing the sale.
Source - https://mcminnlogangray.com/what-does-a-gun-background-check-show/

Wisconsin is a point of contact state for handgun purchaser background checks only. In Wisconsin, firearms dealers must initiate the background check required by federal law by contacting the Wisconsin Department of Justice ("DOJ"). For long gun (rifle and shotgun) transfers, dealers must contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
Source - https://giffords.org/lawcenter/state-laws/background-check-procedures-in-wisconsin/

Constitutional Carry/Permitless Concealed Carry
When a state does not prohibit individuals who can legally possess a firearm from carrying handguns, it is called constitutional carry. When a state allows constitutional carry but individuals must meet certain qualifications to legally carry, it is referred to as permitless carry. For instance, Tennessee does not allow an individual to carry without a permit if he or she has received a DUI in the last five years or two or more in the last 10 years. Wisconsin does not have permitless/Constitutional carry.
Source - https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/blog/constitutional-carry-in-states/

De-escalation Techniques
De-escalation reflects a style of policing for handling potential threats of violence or other potentially-volatile situations. De-escalation typically refers to a process or collection of tactics used to prevent, reduce, or manage behaviors associated with conflict such as verbal or physical agitation, aggression, violence, or similar behaviors.
S*ource - https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Research%20Center/Combined%20v2.pdf*

Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence
Historically called domestic violence, intimate partner violence describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. Types of intimate partner violence include physical violence, sexual violence, threats of physical or sexual violence, psychological/emotional violence, and stalking.
Source - https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/crimes/violent-crimes/intimate-partner-violence

Due Process
A fundamental principle of fairness in all legal matters, both civil and criminal, especially in the courts. All legal procedures set by statute and court practice, including notice of rights, must be followed for each individual so that no prejudicial or unequal treatment will result. While somewhat indefinite, the term can be gauged by its aim to safeguard both private and public rights against unfairness.
Source - https://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=595

Gun Violence
Gun violence includes homicide, violent crime, attempted suicide, suicide, and unintentional death and injury.
Source - https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/gun-violence.html

High-Capacity Magazines
Definitions vary, but several states identify magazines that hold more than 10 rounds, 15 rounds or 20 rounds of ammunition as "high capacity," while other states do not regulate magazine sizes. Gun-control advocates claim that while restrictions on magazine size may not stop mass shootings, they may limit the carnage if a shooter must pause to reload.
Source - https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/resources/terminology/general-terms/high-capacity-magazine/

Private Sales/Gun Show Loophole
The "gun show loophole" refers to a gap in U.S. firearm regulations that allows private sellers to sell guns without conducting background checks or keeping sales records, unlike federally licensed firearms dealers. This loophole is particularly associated with gun shows but actually applies to all private sales of firearms. *Source - https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/gun-show-loophole#:~:text=The%20%22gun%20show%20loophole%22%20refers,unlike%20federally%20licensed%20firearms%20dealers.*

Red Flag Laws
A "red flag" law allows individuals to petition the court to issue a protective order, requiring the respondent to immediately relinquish all firearms and ammunition, and giving law enforcement the authority to seize firearms from people who are deemed by the court/judge to be a danger to themselves or others. Red flag laws are most commonly known as Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), but are known in various states as Gun Violence Restraining Orders, Firearms Restraining Orders, Orders for Protection Against High-Risk Behavior and Lethal Violence Protective Orders.
Source - https://www.usconcealedcarry.com/resources/terminology/general-terms/red-flag-law/

Safe Storage Laws/Child Access Prevention (CAP) Laws
Safe storage laws prevent unauthorized access by children by requiring gun owners to lock up their firearms. The strongest systems have consequences for any failure to secure a gun. Less-strong policies, sometimes called "Child-Access Prevention (CAP) laws," penalize gun owners only if a child actually gains access to a firearm. While some state laws are concerned only with the threat of child access, others also include consequences if an unsecured gun is likely to be obtained by an adult who is legally prohibited from possession.
Source - https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/child-consumer-safety/child-access-prevention-and-safe-storage

Wisconsin provides that anyone who recklessly stores or leaves a loaded firearm within the reach or easy access of a child under age 14 is criminally liable for a misdemeanor if*: The child obtains the firearm without the lawful permission of his or her parent or guardian or the person having charge of the child; and The child either discharges the firearm causing bodily harm to anyone, or possesses the firearm in a public place or in violation of Wisconsin Statutes § 941.20 (regarding the illegal use and discharge of firearms).

*These criminal penalties do not apply when the firearm is stored or left in a securely locked box or container or in a location that a reasonable person would believe to be secure, the firearm is securely locked with a trigger lock, the firearm is left on the person's body or in such proximity to the person's body that he or she could retrieve it as easily and quickly as if carried on his or her body, the child obtains the firearm as a result of an illegal entry by any person, the child gains access to a loaded firearm and uses it in the lawful exercise of a privilege under section 939.48 regarding self-defense and defense of others, the person who stores or leaves the loaded firearm reasonably believes that a child is not likely to be present where the firearm is stored or left, or the firearm is rendered inoperable by the removal of an essential component of the firing mechanism such as the bolt in a breech-loading firearm.

Wisconsin has no laws that require unattended firearms to be stored in a certain way. Wisconsin also does not require a locking device to accompany the sale of a firearm, and no state statutes require firearm owners to affirmatively lock their weapons.
Source - https://giffords.org/lawcenter/state-laws/child-access-prevention-and-safe-storage-in-wisconsin/

Second Amendment Rights
U.S. Constitution, Amendment II: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Stand Your Ground Laws
"Stand Your Ground" laws are legal statutes present in nearly half of the United States, allowing individuals to use force, including deadly force, to defend themselves against perceived threats without the obligation to retreat. These laws have evolved from the historical "castle doctrine," which permitted self-defense in one's home, and have expanded to apply to public spaces as well. The origins of self-defense laws can be traced back to early English common law, which emphasized a duty to retreat when threatened. However, landmark cases in U.S. history, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, began to shape a legal understanding that individuals do not have to retreat if they are in a place they have a right to be.
Source - https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/stand-your-ground-laws-overview

Wisconsin does not have a stand your ground law. Stand your ground laws in other states generally allow for a person to claim self-defense without first needing to retreat when outside their home or business. Wisconsin also does not have an affirmative duty to retreat.

Wisconsin is a Castle Doctrine state. This means that if you are in your home, car, or business there is a legal presumption deadly force can be used against a person if they have broken into, or are in the process of breaking into, one of these locations while you are present inside.
Source - https://www.grievelaw.com/WisconsinGun/Laws/CastleDoctrineExplained

Waiting Periods
A waiting period law requires a certain number of days to elapse between the purchase of a firearm and when the buyer can actually take possession of that gun. There is no federal waiting period. Under the National Instant Criminal Back-ground Check System (NICS), a dealer may transfer a firearm to a prospective purchaser as soon as he or she passes a background check. Generally, if the FBI is unable to complete a background check within three business days, the dealer may complete the transfer by default.
Source - https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/gun-sales/waiting-periods/

Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have waiting periods that apply to the purchase of at least some types of firearms. Wisconsin does not require a waiting period.
Source - https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/state/wisconsin/

Federal Law on Non-Citizen Firearm Ownership
Under 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(5), federal law prohibits: Undocumented immigrants (those unlawfully present in the U.S.) from possessing firearms. Nonimmigrant visa holders (such as tourists, students, or temporary workers) unless they meet spe-cific exceptions, such as: o Possessing a valid hunting license. o Being an official representative of a foreign government. o Receiving a waiver from the U.S. Attorney General. Violating these provisions can result in criminal charges and immi-gration consequences, including deportation.

Wisconsin-Specific Regulations

Undocumented immigrants are prohibited from possessing firearms under both federal and state law. Lawful permanent residents (green card holders) and certain other non-citizens may be eligible for a Wisconsin Concealed Carry License (CCL), provided they meet all other requirements.

DATA AND STATISTICS

Gun ownership in the U.S.

Estimated 392 million guns in civilian hands:
https://www.thetrace.org/2023/03/guns-america-data-atf-total/#:~:text=The%20ATF%20provides%20the%20cumulative,392%20million%20guns%20in%20circulation

Wisconsin gun violence data

https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/wisconsin

Annual gun violence data (national)

https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/annual-gun-violence-data?preview=kwuq67MC03aByhqYS4wwkSOqzVeR2KLPXKocl3MAg30

Crime data from FBI's UCR (Uniform Crime Reporting)

https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/shr

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Firearm Mortality Data

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm

Gun Violence Archive (real-time tracking of incidents)

https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/

Violence Policy Center – Justifiable Homicides Report

https://vpc.org/studies/justifiable23.pdf

RAND Corporation – Gun Policy in America (effects of policies like "Stand Your Ground")

https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy.html

Giffords Law Center – Gun Violence Statistics

https://giffords.org/issues/gun-violence-statistics/

Pew Research Center – Gun Deaths in the U.S.

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/