



Results from Count on Mothers' study of the Gas-Operated Semi-Automatic Firearms Exclusion Act (GOSAFE Act)

Count on Mothers **provides legislators with comprehensive first-hand data to help them make more informed decisions.** Each policy that we examine is selected based on what surveyed Mothers have indicated they want to address, reflecting the priorities of Mothers from across the country and political spectrum. Every Mother is welcome to contribute to our efforts. We do this work because we believe that Mothers' first-hand experiences and knowledge are critical sources of information that need to be an essential part of the federal policy-making process, particularly on bills that affect kids and families.

This report focuses on information Count on Mothers on a bill of interest to Mothers. In December 2023-January 2024, we studied Mothers' views on the "Gas-Operated Semi-Automatic Firearms Exclusion Act" (GOSAFE Act). A total of 314 Mothers residing in 43 states and from across the political spectrum provided feedback on the GOSAFE Act. To learn more about Mothers' perspectives on this legislation, we also conducted interviews with 6 Mothers, including 2 conservatives, 2 moderates, and 2 liberals.

After analyzing Mothers' opinions from the survey and interviews, we take this aggregate data and share it with Congressional legislators so they are educated on Mothers' views on the "Gas-Operated Semi-Automatic Firearms Exclusion Act."

Methodology

Design

This process uses a mixed methods design. Cross-sectional surveys were distributed and interviews were conducted among interested Mothers.

Instruments

A survey and an interview guide were constructed based on main tenets of the GOSAFE Act. We also assessed Mothers' political ideology and state/ zip code of residence to better understand the background of the sample.

Sampling Procedure

Count on Mothers employs both purposive and snowball sampling strategies. Concerted efforts were made to advertise and distribute the survey and invite participation to as many Mothers as possible. For instance, we created Google advertisements, Instagram-based announcements, and posts in Mothers' Instagram groups which consist of participants from across the political spectrum. Additionally, Mothers who receive and/ or complete the questionnaire are encouraged to distribute the survey to Mothers they believe would be interested in sharing their perspectives. Regarding the interviews, we reach out to Mothers interested in our efforts, and to ensure opinions from across the political spectrum are included we select 2 conservative, 2 moderate, and 2 liberal Mothers to participate.

Sample

314 Mothers from 43 states completed the survey focused on the GOSAFE Act. A total of 6 Mothers from 6 states participated in the individual interviews. Efforts were made to ensure that survey and interview respondents reflect a range of political ideologies, from very conservative to very liberal.

Key Findings

93% of Mothers surveyed believe the "GOSAFE Act" would have a positive impact on the safety, health, or well-being of kids and families, including nearly every Mother who identified as moderate, liberal, or very liberal, and one-half of conservative Mothers. There were no very conservative Mothers surveyed who believe the bill would have a positive impact.

Regarding Mothers' views of the individual components of the GOSAFE Act, according to surveys:

- 98% of moderate, 100% of liberal, and 50% of conservative Mothers surveyed believe the federal government **should regulate the manufacture of gas-operated, semi-automatic weapons by mandating that future designs are federally approved and preventing unlawful firearm self-assembly.**
- Almost 60% of conservative, 98% of moderate, and 100% of liberal Mothers surveyed believe the federal government **should restrict conversion devices, including bump stocks and Glock switches.**
- 97% of moderate, 99% of liberal, and almost 50% of conservative Mothers surveyed believe the federal government **should establish a voluntary buy-back program**, which would allow firearm owners to turn over and receive

compensation for non-transferrable firearms and magazines.

During the interviews that were conducted, all Mothers agreed there's a crisis of gun violence affecting their children and communities, but the solution varied along political lines. The conservative Mothers both believed policymakers should focus on how mental illness affects gun safety, and the moderate and liberal Mothers believed it was time for measures that regulate the sale, transfer, and manufacture of gas-operated semi-automatic weapons.

A moderate Mother remarked:

So that's really what it is for me... safe and responsible gun ownership... I am not saying that... people [do not] have the right to bear arms. But what arms? That's the distinction. What arms?"

Similarly, a Mother who identified as liberal stated:

So for me as a mom... it's probably my number one concern when I think about... safety of my children. For me, like I understand that we have the Second Amendment and people interpret that as a way that they have a right to a firearm. And I understand that, but I feel like there should be some rules, some more rules involved. It's not unfettered access to firearms.

Recognizing that the GOSAFE Act is only one attempt to address issues related to firearms, a moderate Mother suggested that **additional actions need to be taken**. She commented:

"Okay, so the benefit is anything that restricts availability of particular type of guns and makes it stricter for people to have ownership is a benefit. Do I think it's the be all end all and the answer? No.... If we never get to the root cause, you know, of the frailties, if you will, in our society, then it's just a band-aid, right? And it will continue to be a band-aid. So, it's a, there's a benefit, but it's not the answer. It's just, like I said, to me, it's more of a band-aid, but we need to do something."

On the other hand, a conservative Mother stated that **this legislation addresses issues related to firearms, rather than targeting social conditions that may be impacting how they are used:**

"I don't think the bill would be beneficial because I don't think it addresses the root of anything. I think that they're just, if they wanted to protect Americans, if they wanted to protect schools, if they wanted to protect a grocery store or a concert, they need to actually look at what's causing the problems in the first place. Like the gun isn't out there running around shooting itself. A human being is. So, what is causing that? Why is that happening in the first place? I don't think they're putting their time and energy

into where it matters, which is the health and well-being of American citizens.”

Bill Component Questions

90% of Mothers surveyed believe the federal government should restrict the sale of semi-automatic, gas-operated firearms unless the rifle or shotgun has a permanently fixed-capacity of 10 rounds of ammunition or less (handgun would be 15 or less).

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	257	81%
Agree	28	9%
Uncertain	8	3%
Disagree	8	3%
Strongly Disagree	13	4%
	314	100%*

*On all tables, figures add up to 100%, not accounting for rounding error.

- Among moderate Mothers, 97% were in favor of this issue.
- 96% of liberal and 98% of very liberal Mothers agreed with this item.
- 36% of conservative Mothers were in agreement and there were no very conservative Mothers who agreed.

A liberal Mother believed that certain firearms should have a fixed capacity, citing her fears about children’s safety as a reason for her support:

“I think that I want to give my kids a fighting chance if they are ever confronted with a weapon in something that has high capacity. Hundreds of rounds does not give them a chance. They do not have a chance. And I want to give them a chance. I want my kids to have a chance, and everyone else's kids to have a chance to grow up safe, and not experience the impacts directly or the ripple effects of gun violence. So, for me, I think it would ease a lot of my fears. I think it would save a lot of lives. I think that less parents would have to bury their children. I think that less people would have PTSD and chronic post-traumatic stress syndrome and disabling injuries if this kind of regulation was in place.”

During her interview, a conservative Mother disagreed with this bill’s approach, expressing concerns that it limits personal freedom:

"I don't particularly agree with it at all. I don't think that this is the right approach. I don't think taking away people's freedoms is the correct way to address this issue."

93% of Mothers surveyed believe the federal government should regulate the manufacture of gas-operated, semi-automatic weapons by mandating that future designs are federally approved and preventing unlawful firearm self-assembly.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	287	91%
Agree	5	2%
Uncertain	2	1%
Disagree	7	2%
Strongly Disagree	13	4%
	314	100%

- Among moderate Mothers, 97% were in favor of this issue.
- 100% of liberal and 100% of very liberal Mothers agreed with this item.
- 50% of conservative Mothers were in agreement, while no very conservative Mothers agreed.

During the interview, a moderate Mother provided feedback about this aspect of the bill:

"Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. That is one of the biggest problems with the current assault weapon ban that a lot of people feel like particularly, um, particularly Senator [name redacted] had a very big problem with us. Like just like they can be altered. They can get around it. Like it was a huge, huge concern for him. Um, so I absolutely, yeah, absolutely think that is something that is important."

A Mother who identified as liberal expressed a similar opinion, commenting:

"Federal regulation exists in a lot of other industries to make sure that the public is safe. And I think that it should absolutely exist in industries that create weapons. Yeah, I definitely think it's a good idea."

94% of Mothers surveyed believe the federal government should restrict conversion devices, including bump stock and Glock switches.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	288	92%
Agree	6	2%
Uncertain	0	0%
Disagree	7	2%
Strongly Disagree	13	4%
	314	100%

- Among moderate Mothers, 98% were in favor of this issue.
- 100% of liberal and 100% of very liberal Mothers agreed with this item.
- 59% of conservative Mothers were in agreement, while no very conservative Mothers agreed.

A Mother who identified as conservative expressed her concerns about this component of the bill, explaining that bump stocks are not conversion devices that should be regulated. She stated:

“The bump stocks thing is fascinating. So, I actually know a little bit about it. My brother is very into like historical guns and ammunition and like weaponry from the past and the way guns were built. Bump stocks are interesting because when you use a bump stock, it decreases your accuracy with a weapon, like it sprays. So, it's not like having a bump stock is necessarily like a bonus if you're trying to shoot something and be accurate about it.”

Expressing her support for this aspect of the legislation, a moderate Mother expanded the discussion of these issues and advocated for broader government regulation of firearms, commenting:

"I would be a big, I would lobby for that. Something needs to give. In the entire world, we have the highest rate of incidents around the use of guns. We have the highest rate of these mass shootings in the world. Something has to give in the way we go about this. So, if it has to be that the federal government steps in, yes, because on a state-by-state basis it's not working. Straight up it isn't. And so, yes, I would be all for that."

93% of Mothers surveyed believe the federal government should establish a voluntary buy-back program, which would allow firearm owners to turn over and receive compensation for non-transferrable firearms and magazines.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	270	86%
Agree	24	8%
Uncertain	3	1%
Disagree	3	1%
Strongly Disagree	14	4%
	314	100%

- Among moderate Mothers, 97% were in favor of this issue.
- 99% of liberal and 100% of very liberal Mothers agreed with this item.
- 47% of conservative Mothers were in agreement, while no very conservative Mothers agreed.

During the interview, a Mother who identified as conservative commented that this component of the bill would not be appealing to gun owners:

"Like for what purpose just so somebody can get some extra cash? Like I don't understand. I don't know any gun owner that would go and be like, you know what? I don't need this, you know, and like wouldn't go and sell it. You, they can sell a gun. So, I don't understand why they would give it back to the government."

A moderate Mother believed that this component of the bill would be beneficial, although she was also skeptical that people who own firearms would access this provision. She said the following:

"You know, I think that that's reasonable if somebody, if people want to, you know, hand in their firearms. I find it hard to believe that many would, but okay, if somebody wants to do that voluntarily, I think that's remarkable. But likely that's not what will be very popular. But I don't think there's anything wrong in adding that."

93% of Mothers surveyed believe the "GOSAFE Act" will have a positive impact on the safety, health, or well-being of kids and families.

Belief	# of Mothers Responding	Percent of Sample
Strongly Agree	270	86%
Agree	21	7%
Uncertain	6	2%
Disagree	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	12	4%
	314	100%

- Among moderate Mothers, 99% were in favor of this issue.
- 99% of liberal and 99% of very liberal Mothers agreed with this item.
- 47% of conservative Mothers were in agreement, while no very conservative Mothers agreed.

When asked whether the GOSAFE Act would have a positive impact on her children and family, a liberal Mother shared:

"I think I'm very frustrated about living in a country where the number one killer of children is gun violence. I think that sometimes I feel neglectful or like a bad parent for raising my kids in a country where there are chances of dying by gun violence or something and I worry about them a lot... So I mostly am just frustrated with the policymaking in our country and the people who have the power to create the policies and their lack of consideration for the most vulnerable people in our society."

After discussing her various opinions about the key components the GOSAFE Act, a moderate Mother provided her overall views on this legislation, stating:

"Okay, so the benefit is anything that restricts availability of particular type of guns and makes it stricter for people to have ownership is a benefit. Do I think it's the be all end all and the

answer? No.... If we never get to the root cause, you know, of the frailties, if you will, in our society, then it's just a band-aid, right? And it will continue to be a band-aid. So, it's a, there's a benefit, but it's not the answer. It's just, like I said, to me, it's more of a band-aid, but we need to do something."

Reflecting findings from the survey, conservative Mothers who participated in the interviews did not support this bill. They believed that legislation should address issues that may be underlying irresponsible use of firearms rather than regulate them:

"No, I just hope that ultimately, I understand what this is about. And I would love to see measures done to help the situation. But I just think, like I said, you got to address it at the roots. And I hope that, you know, by doing this, this is just another thing to take away freedoms, which people don't really want. So, I think that you really want to address the issue, really focus on what the issues are. And the issues are, is what would cause these kids or these people to get to this place? And that's where you gotta start from, the youth up, and make sure that they have a social safety net within the schools and, you know, within the medical programs to address these issues because it's so clear that they're not being addressed."

Additional Themes

Analyses of data collected from individual interviews with 6 Mothers resulted in the identification of a few additional themes of particular interest. These Mothers were from across the political spectrum and resided in 6 different states.

The Role of the Government

Mothers had differing opinions about the ways in which state and federal governments should take responsibility for the manufacturing and sales of firearms. A moderate Mother expressed uncertainty about how the government and larger society should respond to these issues, stating:

"Okay, so, yep, so super complicated in the regard that I can just imagine the debate, right, and the lobby back and forth that, you know, that we live in America and the Second Amendment and, you know, it's not okay for the federal government to have that much power and so on. But here's the bigger issue from me, okay? It's not that I necessarily feel that it's...I feel like we're at the last resort. I guess that's the thing I more want to say. It's not that I am for or against the federal government being responsible. It's more the fact that it's out of control. And on a state basis, it's genuinely out of control, right?... So, it's not a workable model and the way that we're managing it. And so if that's the only way we can accomplish the change, it's not like I said that I feel that it's, is it the ultimate solution? Not necessarily. It's just that it's not working at all the

way it is. So, if that's the best way to put change at this time, then I would say yes, that's what I, that's what I would like to say."

A conservative Mother expressed concerns about regulating firearms, fearing that it could create a situation in which the federal government, rather than the general public, can access them. She said the following:

"So that's just the government not even knowing what they're talking about and the people within the government who don't know. I mean, I think the restriction of firearms at all is not for the government to use. Because why does the government get all the ammunition and the guns that they want? Why does the IRS have such a closet full of guns, but they don't want the people to? This is a government by the people for the people. It's not a government for the government."

Later in the interview, she also criticized the government's ability to effectively respond to many issues, and is therefore skeptical about their role in the regulation of firearms:

"I would ask what the federal government has done well and for somebody to point to a product that they've built that has beneficial to the community. So, I don't know how them telling a manufacturer how to do anything when they can't even get a budget together is beneficial for anyone."

The Second Amendment

As they made recommendations about the roles of the government, Mothers often discussed the meaning and interpretation of the Second Amendment. There was substantial variation in Mothers' opinions regarding this topic. For instance, a Mother who identified as liberal stated:

"So for me as a mom, it's like one of my number one, it's probably my number one concern when I think about like politics and like safety of my children. For me, like I understand that we have the Second Amendment and people interpret that as a way that they have a right to a firearm. And I understand that, but I feel like there should be some rules, some more rules involved. It's not unfettered access to firearms."

A conservative Mother also mentioned the Second Amendment, and, similar to discussions in the abovementioned theme, provided her interpretation of government's role in the regulation of firearms. She commented:

"I mean, in general, I'm very conservative and very pro the Second Amendment. And I think while it is the government's role to keep us safe, I also think it's the government's role to stay out

of our business. And I think you have to look at history if you want to get a sense of what works and what doesn't."

Gun Ownership

In addition to addressing the purposes of the Second Amendment, the Mothers also focused on the rights and responsibilities of individuals who own firearms. A moderate Mother offered her insights about these issues:

"I mean, I'm personally a former gun owner, and I grew up with guns. My dad used to collect antique rifles. And so for me, I think that, you know, I don't really have a problem with people owning firearms. I think that is a right that we all have. And I think for me, it's all about, say, like responsible gun ownership. I think that the majority of Americans agree with me that like it's all about safety because guns were created to kill, that is literally their purpose. And so, you know, as a mom, I want to feel confident when I send my kid to someone's house that they are being responsible with their firearms. And I think that's true with everybody, with my neighbors. All of these things can impact us in different ways, you know, if someone is not responsible. So that's really what it is for me, is safe and responsible gun ownership...I am not saying that in particular aspects that people [do not] have the right to bear arms. But what arms? That's the distinction. What arms?"

A Mother who identified as liberal reflected on how her views of responsible gun ownership have changed through time, commenting:

"Like we never knew where anything was. They were very responsible about it. You know, like, my parents even to this day, like they store them properly because I've asked numerous times. So yeah, I guess growing up, like I just thought everyone was safe about them. And then until I became an adult and I'm a nurse until I started working in healthcare, I realized very quickly that people do not always handle their firearms responsibly and safely."

Mass Shootings

While they were not explicitly asked about mass shootings, Mothers frequently introduced this issue and described how it is significantly affecting their experiences as parents, in particular their ability to keep their children safe. A moderate Mother said:

"We're, we're safe, you know, and he was like, well, you can't promise that. So I need to make a plan. And I think that like a lot of our kids feel this way. A lot of our kids are living with this constant fear of, you know, and not always because they survived a mass shooting. Sometimes

it's because they are doing these active shooter drills in school, and thinking of these scenarios and then they catch the news or they see the stuff that's going on in the world... It's not, you know, this mass shootings are just, they are, they're a uniquely American problem, but also they're just unavoidable. Like, you know what I mean? Because people can just walk in and buy these weapons so easily that can do so much damage. Like this is a realistic thing for us to be concerned about, scared for our kids to be scared of."

The GOSAFE Act is one initiative that could reduce mass shootings and keep her children safer, a liberal Mother stated:

"Because I know for me, like as I'm someone that is, you know, more anxious, and knowing that these things happen in America, like when I go in public places, I'm usually looking, you know, my surroundings and seeing where exits are and things like that. Because of, you hear these things, I mean these mass shootings can happen in so many different areas, so many different public places. And so, you know, by implementing an act, like the GOSAFE Act, it would minimize the potential for a mass shooting to happen."

The Impact of Social Factors

During the interviews, Mothers identified factors that may be affecting how firearms are used and their roles in society. Rather than developing legislation to regulate gun ownership, manufacturing, and sales, a conservative Mother recommended that society should address underlying issues which she believes are contributing to irresponsible use of firearms. She commented:

"I think in like the '60s or the '70s. But by and large, the bulk of those mass shootings have happened since what, 1999? Why? Why aren't we asking why? What's happened in that chunk of time? And if you actually look at what's happened in that chunk of time, a lot of it's pharmaceuticals. That's the common denominator of what all those kids have. Pharmaceuticals and video games. Things they're watching online, media. So, it's not that the government needs to come in and mandate to us what amount of bullets we can have in a magazine or what we can and cannot have. That's ridiculous. They need to look at the root cause and not band-aid the situation."

Another conservative Mother identified specific factors that are negatively influencing communities and impacting how firearms are used:

"And so basically when people have problems and they go to get help, there's absolutely nobody that will return phone calls or really assist them. And I think that's where the problem is. It's not in taking away people's ability to bear arms. Okay? So I think that this is a, I do understand

where this is coming from because looking at the big picture, that is what you'd think would be the problem is easy access to these. But the real problem comes from not addressing mental illness or mental issues, early age at the schools and having the access to it, access to address it."

Political Ideology

Count on Mothers is committed to representing Mothers of all political ideologies so that Congress can be best informed of constituents' experiences and views.

Regarding the political background of the GOSAFE Act survey participants, 2% were very conservative, 6% were very conservative, 33% were moderate, 45% were liberal, and 13% were very liberal, and 2% identified as "other."

Regarding Mothers who participated in the individual interviews, 33% identified as conservative, 33% identified as moderate, and 33% identified as liberal. While national data on Mothers' political ideologies has not been identified, studies have examined the political ideologies of women, in general. According to a recent Gallup Poll (2021), 32% of women identified as conservative, 37% of women identified as moderate, and 29% of women identified as liberal. Count on Mothers will continue to invite the participation of Mothers across the political spectrum so that our sample closely mirrors these national trends.

State of Residence Question

Mothers who responded to the GOSAFE Act survey resided in 43 states. The states that had the most representation were Illinois (47), Virginia (27), Georgia (21), California Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania.

(19), New York (14), and Pennsylvania (14). Mothers who participated in the interviews were from 6 states, including California, Florida, Illinois, New York,

Future Legislative Focus

Mothers who completed the surveys recommended that these legislative issues should be the focus of future efforts for Count on Mothers:

- Reproductive rights
- Abortion
- Childcare

- Educational issues
- Healthcare