

# Public Response to Community Violence Intervention Messages



# PUBLIC RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION MESSAGES

In July 2023, the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI) partnered with Data for Progress to test how various audiences responded to different messages about community violence intervention (CVI). Highlights from the findings are included in this document and can be used by HAVI members and partners to inform their approaches to communicating about the value of CVI services and programs in preventing violence and healing communities.

## METHODS

Data for Progress surveyed 1,284 likely voters nationally and weighted the sample to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and voting history. Respondents were presented with randomized subsets of 10 messages and asked to select which were “most convincing” and which were “least convincing.”

**The net difference is the percentage of respondents who would choose the item as the best option (most convincing) minus the percentage who would choose it as the worst option (least convincing).**

## MESSAGES MOST PREFERRED BY VOTERS

All likely voters found most convincing a message around CVI as a **proven effective** approach for preventing violence. Second most convincing was a message focused on the **economic** benefits that CVI can bring to individuals and communities, and third was a message arguing that a supportive **community** can ensure greater safety.

Abbreviation	Message	Net Difference
Proven Effective	Research shows that interventions in hospitals along with comprehensive mental health care and social programs are effective in preventing violence, with one city finding homicides dropping by 50% after fully implementing community violence interventions.	+8.5%
Economic	Investments in community violence interventions should not simply improve the safety of our neighborhoods, but also support job creation, boost financial security, and create thriving local economies.	+5.0%
Community	A more supportive community can heal trauma and prevent isolation, which reduces the risks of violence. If we can create a more interconnected society where individuals can lean on their neighbors, we will ensure greater safety.	+2.8%
Comprehensive Care	Hospitals should provide healing for survivors of violence in their entirety. That means hospitals should do more than just caring for individuals physically, they should also ensure that patients are safe and have access to and support for their mental health, physical and emotional needs.	+2.2%
Complementary	Community violence interventions are designed to be complementary to the work of law enforcement and existing local services, and will help these public servants do their job more effectively.	+0.5%
Prevention	Violence is preventable. We need to do everything we can to support individuals in our community in all aspects of their lives to make sure that we can stop violence before it ever happens.	+0.5%

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## MESSAGES LEAST PREFERRED BY VOTERS

All likely voters found least convincing a message indicating that the moment of violent injury represents an **opportunity** for intervention. Second least convincing was a message focused on **equity**, arguing that increasing support in vulnerable communities can prevent violence. Third least convincing was a message focused on addressing the **root causes** of violence in communities most impacted by it.

Abbreviation	Message	Net Difference
Understanding	People who have been affected by violence are credible messengers in addressing violence. We must connect those at risk of violence with individuals in their communities who have a deep empathy and understanding of their situations.	-0.1%
Address Root Causes of Violence	Young African American and Latino men disproportionately face extreme financial hardships and trauma. We know individuals with untreated trauma are more likely to resort to violence as an answer to their struggles. We must invest resources in addressing these root causes of violence for a safer community.	-5.7%
Equity	Young African American and Latino men are more likely to be victims of violence because they have been historically the least supported group in our communities. We should support our most vulnerable neighbors and prevent violence against them.	-6.4%
Opportunity	A violent injury is a prime opportunity to break the cycle of violence. Whenever a moment to intervene positively presents itself, we need to seize the chance to prevent violence in our communities.	-7.3%

## IMPLICATIONS

These findings suggest that communicating about the **efficacy** of interventions and the **economic** impacts for individuals and communities will facilitate increased understanding and support for CVI strategies, as these messages were most compelling for general audiences. Focused, sustainable investment in the development of case studies as well as rigorous research of hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) and other community violence interventions will provide the field with the tools needed to effectively communicate these messages.

Further testing is needed to learn more about the range of messages that didn't test as well with general audiences. For example, the findings for the **equity** and **root causes** messages indicate that these messages may be most useful for communications targeted toward specific audiences. Furthermore, the concepts that undergird certain messages, such as **opportunity** and **understanding**, may need to be framed in a new way. Overall, there is tremendous opportunity to coordinate testing strategies across a range of organizations to ultimately build a messaging framework for the CVI field. In doing so, we can build a robust communications infrastructure to help us shift narratives, end violence, and transform lives.