

Move to End Violence | Research into Action Guide

Move to End Violence is a 10-year initiative of the NoVo Foundation designed to strengthen our nation’s collective capacity to end violence against girls and women in the United States. As part of this work, we fund research to expand the movement’s understanding of what captures attention and motivates action on issues related to violence against girls and women.

In 2012, we conducted a significant study of public opinion on violence against girls and women to establish a baseline for tracking changes in attitudes over time. We learned that people are supportive of ending violence against girls and women because they believe it’s the right thing to do, but their support—and willingness to act—is fairly passive.

In 2014, we conducted a second round of research that included focus groups and an online survey to better understand what we as a movement can do to inspire stronger support that translates into action.¹ In addition, we designed this round to reflect broad diversity, including a look at voters, nonvoters, people who are highly interested in civic and political issues (i.e., the “attentive public” in research lingo), and the African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino/a, Native American, and White communities.

Every day, you are working to educate people about violence against girls and women and encouraging them to take action. This guide includes the top findings and recommendations from the latest research that you can use immediately in your work, and is organized around the following key concepts.

Want to know more?

The Research into Action Guide includes highlights of the 2014 research and recommendations for putting the research findings into action. For more details, please go to movetoendviolence.org/research to find:

- Executive summary of 2012 research.
- A recorded presentation of 2012 findings.
- A downloadable version of this guide summarizing the 2014 research.
- A recorded webinar of 2014 findings.
- Information about accessing the 2014 survey in English, Cantonese, Spanish, and Vietnamese should you want to do more research within your own community.



People care and have hope that violence can be stopped



People want to help but barriers get in the way



Make it easier for people to get involved



Tell them specifically how they can help



Give them the support they need to act



Meet people where they are today



People care and have hope that violence can be stopped

➤ The research is clear: People know violence against girls and women is a problem, and they believe that addressing it should be a priority for communities.



of all adults feel **personally connected** to the issue of violence against girls and women.



of all adults believe addressing violence should be a **priority**, but only **22% of all adults believe it is the top priority**.



of all adults feel **hopeful** that we can end violence against girls and women.

➤ Statistics about the problem capture attention, but they don't increase action.

Nine out of 10 adults found the following statistics convincing:

- **95%** of attacks are unreported, making sexual assault the silent epidemic.
- **40%** of teenage girls ages 14-17 say they know someone who has been hit by a boyfriend.

But learning the statistics **did not** change the priority that the surveyed adults placed on ending violence, nor did it increase their willingness to take action.

➤ Preventing violence is compelling because it addresses the issue for the long term, breaking the cycle of violence. It reinforces people's belief that change is possible.



agree that to prevent violence, we need to **start young**, working with boys and girls.



agree that **respect for women** is key to ending violence.



What does this mean for your work?

- 1. If your audience is new to the issue of violence against girls and women**, use a compelling statistic to convey the scope of the problem and capture your audience's attention. To have the greatest impact, focus on one strong number. Your message will be even stronger if that statistic can be localized to your state or community. **And don't forget the hope.** Pair your statistic with a message that change is possible so you don't make the problem seem overwhelming.
- 2. If your audience is already on your side**, sharing more statistics about the problem won't make audience members more likely to act. Instead, they need to understand exactly what they can do to help and what impact their action will have. In this case, stories describing how others like them took action that resulted in real change will reinforce hope and be more motivating than statistics.



People want to help, but barriers get in the way

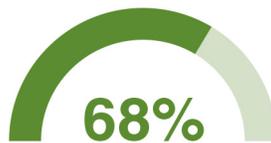
An all-too-common challenge with important social issues is that people understand that a problem exists and think solving it should be a priority, but they don't take action. Our research highlighted a few key barriers—common across all audiences surveyed—that hold people back. The [Meet Them Where They Are Today](#) section of this guide includes additional information on barriers to action for specific audiences.

Barrier #1:
Many other issues are competing for attention.



agree that ending violence against girls and women is important, but **other issues are more important.**

Barrier #2:
They don't know what to do.



feel they **need to know more** about what they can do to help prevent violence against girls and women.

Barrier #3:
Taking action can be intimidating.



think getting involved can be **emotionally draining**, and they feel unprepared for how to handle it.

Barrier #4: Talking about violence can bring up worries about judgment.

When asked about engaging in prevention work, some people in our focus groups raised the concern that talking about violence could expose them personally or their community more broadly to unwanted judgment.

“When [an act of violence] happens to you, it’s like you want to be in the witness protection program. You don’t want it to get out that it happened to you, because people are going to totally shun you ...” – Asian and Pacific Islander Woman, San Jose

“A lot of time, it’s embarrassment. You hate to talk about something so horrific that happened to you.” – Latina, Atlanta

“... Native American women [make up] 3% [of the total] population in the United States and we’re always way, way up there for violence or alcohol ... everything. We’re way up there.” – Native American Woman, Minneapolis

As a result, many feel that **it’s easier, and safer, NOT to take action.** Your job is to reverse this feeling, and make it easier to act.



What does this mean for your work?

- 1. Lift up real-world stories.** These instantly transform an issue from theoretical to tangible. For example, Michael Brown’s murder and subsequent injustice in Ferguson, Missouri, shone a spotlight on issues of police violence and racism, increasing the urgency of these issues and spurring action across the country. The unfortunate fact is that there is no shortage of similar stories involving violence against girls and women. Tell these stories regularly, and emphasize that violence against girls and women is an urgent, critically important problem that must be stopped. By sharing and exposing these stories, you also help to address the fear of judgment associated with violence.
- 2. Hope = action + impact.** Even as stories increase the attention people pay to an issue, they can also make problems seem insurmountable. So, they must be told in a way that makes it clear that change is possible. One way to increase hope is by providing people with concrete examples of what they can do to help, and explaining how doing those things will make a difference. You might understand how their actions fit into the bigger picture of creating change—but they need to know it, too. See [Tell Them Specifically How They Can Help](#) in this guide for more information on concrete actions.
- 3. Reduce the risk.** You can greatly increase the chances that people will take action if you provide support, as it will help them feel that taking action comes with less risk. This can range from emotional support to training to giving them the opportunity to do something as a team so they don’t have to go it alone. In addition, if people see a big personal or societal benefit of taking action, they will tolerate more risk. For instance, messages encouraging people to get colonoscopies focus on how the test can find and remove cells before they turn into cancer. Focusing on that benefit makes the risk of discomfort more manageable. See [Give Them the Support They Need to Act](#) for more on providing support that will reduce risk and encourage action.



Make it easier for people to get involved

Tell Them Specifically How They Can Help



One of the big takeaways of this research is that many people want to do something to help end violence against girls and women—they're just unsure what to do. This is a common challenge for many social change efforts, and it's often because messages lack a clear ask, or the ask is too vague or too big.

Our research found that some specific asks are more appealing than others to audiences:

People are most willing to:



Talk to children about healthy relationships.



Sign a petition.



Share information in conversation with family and friends.

People are least willing to:



Attend a meeting.



Donate money.



Increase taxes by \$5.



What does this mean for your work?

- 1. Make asks clear and specific.** Your ask should focus on a concrete action (like those noted above) so that people have a clear picture of what they need to do. It should be something to which they can say yes or no. Avoid vague asks like “support us”—someone can support you all day long but take no real action.
- 2. Make asks doable.** Start with something small and simple, especially for new audiences, so they are more likely to say yes. Make it a one-time action at first. But once audience members are acting on your behalf, you can build up to bigger asks over time. For example, you might start by asking them to do something very small, like sign a petition. If they sign it, you could then ask them to then ask three friends to sign, or to post about it on Facebook. Over time, you could work up to larger asks like attending an event.
- 3. Avoid the menu.** At a restaurant with a huge menu, too many choices can make it hard to decide what to order. The same rule applies when engaging audiences in efforts to end violence. Focus on one ask at a time rather than burying them with a menu of options. Keep it simple, and avoid overwhelming your audience.

Give Them the Support They Need to Act



You can increase the likelihood that audiences will act with a clear ask—and the right support to make action happen. In particular, our research revealed that people are hungry to know their action will make a difference, and they welcome help if it will boost their confidence for taking on this issue. Below is a menu of support options you might offer. The research found that those options farther to the right of the spectrum may be helpful to more audiences.

- Participate in fun events, even though serious issue
- Work with community leaders
- Friends and family work as a team
- Take a small step if that's all you have time for
- Receive emotional support
- Someone you know asks you to get involved
- Education about the issue before acting
- Training on how to have conversations
- Receive updates on the impact you had
- Get information showing it has worked elsewhere

Helpful for **some** audiences

Helpful for **many** audiences



What does this mean for your work?

- 1. Learn what your audience needs.** Just as different audiences can have different barriers to action, they will need different kinds of support to overcome those barriers. You may need to ask some members of your audience what kind of support would be most helpful. Similarly, some types of support—such as providing emotional support—may be needed for one ask, but not for another.
- 2. The more the better.** Your audience members may have several barriers holding them back. While you should only ask them to do one thing at a time, offering multiple types of support relevant to that ask is a good way to increase the likelihood that an audience will act.
- 3. Impact is key.** When people are faced with many issues competing for their attention, knowing that an action can have a significant impact can be the factor that pushes an issue to a higher priority. And when people feel their action made a difference, they are much more likely to act again in the future. Share updates on the impact an individual's action had, or share stories of how similar actions were successful elsewhere, to inspire your audiences to act (or act again). As noted earlier, make sure people understand how their actions fit into the big picture of the change you are trying to create.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS: Meet Them Where They Are Today



Our research looked at similarities and differences in the motivations of different communities to take action to end violence against girls and women. There is a lot of common ground among communities: **The majority of all adults believes violence is a problem, thinks ending it should be a priority, and has hope that ending it is possible.** More than eight in 10 adults across all communities believe preventing violence by starting young and teaching respect for women is critical. And the most appealing asks were consistent across communities—talking to children about healthy relationships and signing a petition were two of the most appealing and least risky proposed actions.

There are also some differences among how communities perceive violence against girls and women that may impact your day-to-day efforts to engage with a specific audience. The following provides highlights of community-specific insights from our research. Of course, perceptions vary within communities, and we don't intend to over-generalize. **Rather, we hope these insights will serve as a good starting point to help you learn more about the specific motivations within your own community.**

African Americans

Personal connection

- **6 in 10** have had personal or close² experience with domestic violence.
- **4 in 10** have had personal or close³ experience with rape or sexual assault.
- Nearly **7 in 10** report feeling personally connected to the issue (among the highest of any community).

Willingness to act

- **76%** feel they need to know more about what they can do to prevent violence (the highest of any community).
- **84%** believe ending violence should be among the community's top priorities (the highest of any community).
- African Americans are the most intensely willing to act; **78%** are willing to talk to children about healthy relationships, and **74%** are willing to sign a petition (the highest of any community).
- **86%** are motivated to get involved in campaigns focused on community engagement⁴, and, overall, African Americans are more willing than other audiences to take action involving the community, such as participating in a community meeting.
- **86%** believe that respect for women is the key to ending violence (among the highest of any community).
- Even when asked about getting involved in prevention work, not intervening directly to stop violence⁵, some African Americans worry that **getting involved puts their personal safety at risk**. For example, a woman who participated in our focus group in Minneapolis said, *"I would like to be able to [take the proposed action] 'speak up or educate if you saw boys behaving in a disrespectful way to a girl' ... But I'd be afraid to because the boy might turn on me. They're so disrespectful now."*

Top three kinds of support desired

- Hear an update on the impact they had.
- Receive training on how to have conversations about this issue.
- Receive information showing how effort was successful elsewhere.

Asians and Pacific Islanders

Personal connection

- Nearly **5 in 10** have had personal or close experience with domestic violence.
- **2 in 10** have had personal or close experience with rape or sexual assault.
- **4 in 10** report feeling personally connected to the issue (the lowest of any community).

Willingness to act

- **66%** feel that while ending violence is important, there are other issues that are more important (the highest of any community).
- **87%** feel hopeful that we can end violence against girls and women (the highest of any community). But this hope is complicated, as **47%** also believe we will never end violence against girls and women.
- **86%** are motivated to get involved in campaigns focused on educating children to prevent violence.

Top three kinds of support desired

- Get educated about the issue before taking action.
- Hear an update on the impact they had.
- Work with family or friends as a team.

Latinos/as

Personal connection

- **6 in 10** have had personal or close experience with domestic violence.
- **4 in 10** have had personal or close experience with rape or sexual assault.
- **6 in 10** report feeling personally connected to the issue.

Willingness to act

- **72%** feel they need to know more about what they can do to prevent violence (the second highest of any community).
- **77%** are motivated to get involved in campaigns focused on educating children to prevent violence.
- Latinos/as are more willing to post something to social media about ending violence compared to all other communities.
- Even when asked about getting involved in prevention work, not intervening directly to stop violence, some Latinos/as worry that their actions will somehow **lead to negative consequences for people who are victims or perpetrators of abuse**. For example, a woman who participated in our focus group in Atlanta said, *“When the violence comes a lot of the people are afraid of ...going home. You know like if I call the police because somebody’s hurting me I might get sent back to Mexico or I might get deported.”*

Top three kinds of support desired

- Get educated about the issue before taking action.
- Hear an update on the impact they had.
- Receive training on how to have conversations about this issue.

Native Americans

Personal connection

- **7 in 10** have had personal or close experience with domestic violence (the highest of any community).
- **5 in 10** have had personal or close experience with rape or sexual assault (the highest of any community).
- Nearly **7 in 10** report feeling personally connected to the issue (among the highest of any community).

Willingness to act

- **95%** believe that educating boys and girls is the key to preventing violence (the highest of all communities).
- **85%** are motivated to get involved in campaigns focused on community engagement.

Top three kinds of support desired

- Get educated about the issue before taking action.
- Receive training on how to have conversations on this issue.
- Receive information showing how the effort was successful elsewhere.

Whites

Personal connection

- **5 in 10** have had personal or close experience with domestic violence.
- **3 in 10** have had personal or close experience with rape or sexual assault.
- Nearly **5 in 10** report feeling personally connected to the issue.

Willingness to act

- **87%** believe that teaching respect for women is the key to ending violence (among the highest of any community).
- **70%** are motivated to get involved in campaigns that focus on educating children to prevent violence.
- While **74%** are hopeful that we can end violence, the research shows that hope is complicated; **42%** believe we will never end violence against girls and women (among the highest of any community).

Top three kinds of support desired

- Get educated about the issue before taking action.
- Receive training on how to have conversations on this issue.
- Hear an update on the impact they had.

Resources

¹ For details on the research methodology, please go to movetoendviolence.org/research.

² The specific question asked in the research was, "Have you or someone you know personally, like a close friend or family member, ever experienced domestic violence or relationship violence?"

³ The specific question asked in the research was, "Have you or someone you know personally, like a close friend or family member, experienced rape or sexual assault?"

⁴ The research tested scenarios focused on community engagement and educating children to prevent violence. For more information, see the full report at movetoendviolence.org/research.

⁵ Our 2012 research found fear for personal safety was the main barrier to *intervening directly* to stop violence for all audiences. It is a particularly strong barrier for African Americans, with 61% of those surveyed naming it one of their main barriers.