

Associations Between Openness to Church-Based Firearm Safety Interventions and Evangelical
Identity and Political Party Affiliation Among Protestant Christian Firearm Owners

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Abstract

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The existing body of research evaluating firearm safety interventions has underexamined church-based firearm safety interventions. Emerging qualitative studies have shown that such interventions may be an effective strategy for promoting firearm safety practices among Protestant Christian firearm owners. Using quantitative methods, this study examined whether Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation were associated with Protestant Christian firearm owners' openness to church-based firearm safety interventions. Ordinal regressions demonstrated that openness to four interventions were associated with both Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation: 1) a hands-on class held in church, 2) a firearm safety program held in church, 3) a firearm safety program held in church led by a member of the congregation, and 4) a firearm safety program held in church that uses Scripture. Compared to non-Evangelicals, Evangelical Christians had greater odds of reporting willingness

to participate in the four church-based interventions. Similarly, Republicans had greater odds than Democrats of reporting willingness to participate in the same four interventions. These findings support prior qualitative research, underscoring the potential of church-based firearm safety interventions for Protestant Christian firearm owners as well as highlighting characteristics that may impact the extent of their openness. Future research should explore additional factors that may influence engagement and participation in church-based interventions to optimize firearm safety interventions and outcomes within Protestant Christian communities.

INTRODUCTION

Firearm injury and death are among the most pressing public health issues in the United States. The rate of firearm deaths has increased over the past three decades, reaching an all-time high in 2021¹. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths in 2022 and nearly 47,000 in 2023². Given these statistics, in June of 2024, former Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy published a landmark advisory, declaring firearm violence a public health crisis¹.

Around the same time, a 2024 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published individual data from eight states regarding firearm ownership and storage practices³. They found that of households that kept a firearm in or around the home, 19.5–43.8% stored a loaded firearm³. Furthermore, approximately half of those who kept a loaded firearm also reported that their firearm was unlocked³. Research has shown that firearm safety interventions can help promote firearm safety and storage, which can contribute to reducing the number of firearm injuries and deaths^{4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12}. In fact, secure firearm storage is associated with reductions in suicide and unintentional deaths, especially among youth¹³. Importantly, firearm safety programs that are tailored to the social-cultural contexts and needs of specific communities can lead to greater community engagement and better outcomes¹⁴.

Firearm interventions for Protestant Christian firearm owners is an area that warrants further study. Compared to other Christian denominations, non-religious adults, and those of other religious groups, research has found that Protestant Christians are more likely to own a firearm^{15,16} and that adolescents from Protestant Christian homes report easier access to firearms than their peers¹⁷. Emerging qualitative studies suggest that church-based firearm safety interventions are a potentially effective strategy for promoting firearm safety practices among

Protestant Christians¹⁸. Building on the existing literature, the current study used quantitative methods to examine two factors that may influence Protestant Christian firearm owners' willingness to participate in church-based firearm interventions: Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation. Specifically, this study posed the following research questions: 1) Is Evangelical Christian identity associated with Protestant Christian firearm owners' willingness to participate in different types of church-based firearm interventions? and 2) Is political party affiliation associated with Protestant Christian firearm owners' willingness to participate in different types of church-based firearm interventions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Firearm Safety Interventions

Prior literature has evaluated various interventions aimed at promoting firearm safety practices among firearm owners. Studies have looked at firearm training programs related to safe storage, proper handling, preventing accidents, and suicide prevention^{6,7}. Interventions that provided free secure firearm storage devices demonstrated a significant improvement in safe storage practices^{8,9,10}. Additionally, several community gun buyback programs have been successful in collecting unwanted firearms from the community^{11,12}, removing firearms from the homes of individuals who are at an increased risk of suicide^{11,12}, and distributing related educational materials and locks¹².

Potential of Church-Based Firearm Safety Interventions

Church-based interventions have been found to be effective in promoting health behaviors and practices^{19,20,21,22} such as cancer screening and prevention^{19,21} and smoking cessation¹⁹ because they are accessible and trusted community settings for delivering health-related programming^{19,22}. Churches offer a supportive, often homogenous network that can

enhance the perceived credibility of interventions, which in turn can increase community engagement and participation^{19,22,23}. Moreover, clergy members have often played a critical role in facilitating these interventions^{24,25,26,27}. Given these findings, church-based interventions may offer a valuable strategy for promoting firearm safety practices among Protestant Christian firearm owners. However, there is still a dearth of published studies on church-based firearm safety interventions.

Protestant Christian Firearm Owners and Church-Based Interventions

Three qualitative studies provide emerging evidence that Protestant Christian firearm owners may be receptive to church-based firearm safety interventions. In a two-year ethnographic study, Grigoni (2023) examined Evangelical Christian handgun owners in central North Carolina and found that some were conducting concealed carry classes²⁸. In these classes, Christian identity and commitment were used to frame and limit the use of deadly force²⁸. Similarly, Hollas (2023) documented her work as a gun violence prevention coordinator for the Presbyterian Church (USA), a mainline Protestant denomination. Its Gun Violence Prevention Ministry engages in advocacy efforts around gun violence prevention, including policy change and firearm safety practices²⁹. Of particular relevance to this study, Conrick et al. (2023) conducted interviews with thirteen Protestant Christian firearm owners. They found openness among these firearm owners to church-based interventions was influenced by both demographic (e.g., race, gender, locality) and psychographic (e.g., motivation for ownership, number of firearms owned, religious beliefs) factors¹⁸.

These studies show that discussions of firearm use are already occurring within a faith-based moral framework and indicate a potential entry point for church-based firearm interventions. However, there is a need to better understand Protestant Christian firearm owners

and identify factors that may influence their attitude toward church-based interventions. Investigating specific demographics, motivations, and beliefs, and how they can influence receptiveness, will help inform the design of interventions that promote firearm safety practices among Protestant Christians.

Examining Christian Evangelicalism and Political Party Affiliation

Protestant Christianity is comprised of a number of religious traditions, with one of them being evangelicalism³⁰. Evangelical Christians are a distinct group known for emphasizing missionary activity, individual conversions, and also teaching strict adherence to particular religious doctrines³⁰. They are likely to embrace Christian nationalistic beliefs³¹, which view Christianity as central to the founding of the United States^{32,33,34}. Within this framework, the right to bear arms is seen as a God-given right tied to deeply held perceptions of morality, identity, and self-protection^{32,33,34}. These beliefs are also associated with opposition to stricter gun control policies and firearm ownership³¹. However, this does not preclude all forms of firearm safety intervention. Given the ideological overlap between Evangelical Christianity and Christian nationalism, it is important to examine whether church-based, faith-framed firearm safety efforts may be acceptable within Evangelical communities. Grigoni (2023)'s work has shown that some Evangelical Christian firearm owners have integrated faith-based principles into how they use firearms and how they teach other firearm owners to use them, suggesting that religious identity can be leveraged to shape firearm safety efforts that resonate with Evangelical values²⁸.

Political party affiliation also needs to be considered when examining Protestant Christians' openness to firearm safety interventions. Party affiliation has been found to be associated with firearm ownership and stances on firearm legislation, with Republicans being

more likely to be a firearm owner^{35,36} and to oppose gun control legislation compared to Democrats^{36,37,38}. Given the politicization of the discussion around gun control and gun violence prevention efforts³⁶, community-centered approaches such as church-based interventions may be more appealing to Protestant Christian Republicans.

Prior literature has emphasized the need to examine both religious and socio-political influences in creating firearm safety interventions. While these studies have relied primarily on qualitative analyses, the current study employed quantitative methods to examine whether Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation were associated with firearm owners' openness to church-based interventions. Given that both Evangelical Christian identity and Republican Party affiliation are associated with strong moral and cultural stances on firearm ownership, it is plausible that church-based interventions may be perceived as more credible and acceptable to Evangelical Christians and Republicans. Based on the literature, it is hypothesized that 1) Evangelical Christians have greater odds than non-Evangelical firearm owners of being open to church-based interventions and 2) Republican Protestant Christian firearm owners have greater odds than Democrats and other party affiliates of being open to church-based interventions.

METHODOLOGY

Analytic Strategy

Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests of independence, and ordinal logistic regression models served as the primary quantitative strategies. Specifically, chi-square tests of independence were conducted to test the association between the independent variables and ten different firearm safety interventions. Ordinal logistic regression models were then conducted to further explore statistically significant relationships, estimating the odds that Evangelical (versus

non-Evangelical) and Republican (versus Democrat and other party affiliates) Protestant Christian firearm owners would report greater willingness to participate in four church-based interventions.

Data Collection

This study utilized data collected in a 2021 survey by the University of Washington's School of Social Work. The survey, comprising 73 close-ended and 10 open-ended questions, assessed Protestant Christian firearm owners' willingness to participate in a number of firearm safety interventions designed around specific features (type of intervention, location of intervention, content of intervention, etc.). It also collected information on demographic characteristics (race, gender, political affiliation, etc.) and psychographic characteristics hypothesized to influence their willingness to participate (activeness in church community, self-reported firearm expertise, reason for owning a firearm, etc.).

Upon receiving approval from the University of Washington Institutional Review Board, the survey was distributed through Prolific, an online survey platform that connects researchers to 200,000+ active, paid participants. Prolific provides an effective collection of responses from individuals across the United States and has higher data quality compared to other platforms including MTurk³⁹. Inclusion criteria required participants to be 18 or older, self-identify as Protestant Christians, and be firearm owners; exclusion criteria included not personally owning a firearm. On average, the survey took 15 minutes to complete, and the average compensation for each participant was \$2.15 (\$9.21/hour). Of the 661 participants who initiated the survey, seven were removed for not personally owning a firearm, 63 for failing data quality checks, and 66 for not completing the survey. The final sample size was 525 Protestant Christian firearm owners. Survey responses were then uploaded to STATA 19 for further analysis.

Measures

Focal Dependent Variables. The focal dependent variables measured respondents' willingness to participate in four different church-based firearm safety interventions (1 = no, 2 = it depends, 3 = yes). They included:

Hands-On or Skills-Based Class at Church. This variable measured survey participants' willingness to participate in a hands-on or skill-based class held at their church.

Firearm Safety Program at Church. This variable measured survey participants' willingness to participate in a firearm safety program held at their church.

Firearm Program Led by a Member of the Congregation. This variable measured survey participants' willingness to participate in a firearm safety program held at their church led by a member of their congregation.

Firearm Program Using Scripture. This variable measured survey participants' willingness to participate in a firearm safety program held in church that used Scripture or Bible verses that discuss the use of weapons.

Independent Variables. Two independent variables were examined:

Evangelical Christian Identity. This variable was operationalized using Steensland et al.'s (2000) RELTRAD classification system³⁰. Based on RELTRAD's schema, the respondents were divided into seven categories: 1 = Black Evangelical, 2 = Evangelical Christian, 3 = Mainline Protestant, 4 = Other Affiliation, and 5 = Undetermined. This variable was dichotomized, with 1 = Evangelical Christian and 0 = Black Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Other Affiliation, and Undetermined (referent group).

Political Party Affiliation. This variable measured survey participants' political party identification: "Do you think of yourself as Republican, Democrat, Independent, or another

political party?” Respondents selected one of five response categories: 1= Democrat, 2 = Independent, 3 = Republican, 4 = Other, 5 = Prefer not to say. Independent, Other, and Prefer not to say were combined into one category, Other, for ease of analysis. The final responses were 1 = Democrat (referent group), 2 = Republican, and 3 = Other.

Control Variables. The study included several theoretically important control variables, each coded as a dummy variable (0 = all other), except for age, which was treated as a continuous variable. These included: race (1 = White), locality (1 = rural), state of birth (1 = born in the South), gender (1 = man), self-reported firearm proficiency (1 = advanced/expert), and age (continuous).

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample (n=525)

Variable Name	Count (%) or Mean \pm SD
<i>Independent Variables</i>	
Evangelical Christian Identity	263 (50.10)
Political Party Affiliation	
Republican	219 (41.71)
Democrat	126 (24.00)
Other Party Affiliations	180 (34.29)
<i>Focal Dependent Variables</i>	
Would Participate in Hands On Class at Church (1=missing)	
No	95 (18.13)
It depends	115 (21.95)
Yes	314 (59.92)
Would Participate in Firearm Safety Program at Church (2=missing)	
No	74 (14.15)
It depends	109 (20.94)
Yes	340 (65.01)
Would Participate in Firearm Safety Program Led by a Member of Congregation (1=missing)	
No	79 (15.08)
It depends	132 (25.19)
Yes	313 (59.73)
Would Participate in Firearm Safety Program Using Scripture (1=missing)	
No	176 (33.59)
It depends	131 (25.00)
Yes	217 (41.41)
<i>Control Variables</i>	
White	436 (83.05)
Male	284 (54.10)
Rural	136 (26.05)
Born in South	222 (42.30)
Advanced/Expert Firearm Proficiency	165 (31.40)
Age	37.17 \pm 13.21

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables. Most respondents indicated they would participate in a hands-on or skill-based class at their church (59.92%), a firearm safety program held at their church (65.01%), and a firearm safety program led by a member of their congregation (59.73%). Meanwhile, 41.41% of participants would participate in a firearm safety program that uses Scripture or Bible verses.

Table 2. Bivariate Tables: Open to Participating in Focal Church-Based Interventions BY Evangelical Christian Identity

	Non-Evangelical (%)	Evangelical (%)	
Hands-On or Skills-Based Class at Church**			<i>Row Total</i>
No	54 (20.69)	41 (15.59)	95 (18.13)
It depends	67 (25.67)	48 (18.25)	115 (21.95)
Yes	140 (53.64)	174 (66.16)	314 (59.92)
<i>Column Total</i>	261 (100)	263 (100)	524 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 8.5921, Cramer V = .1281

	Non-Evangelical (%)	Evangelical (%)	
Firearm Safety Program at Church*			<i>Row Total</i>
No	43 (16.54)	31 (11.79)	74 (14.15)
It depends	65 (25.00)	44 (16.73)	109 (20.84)
Yes	152 (58.46)	188 (71.48)	340 (65.01)
<i>Column Total</i>	260 (100)	263 (100)	523 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 9.7867, Cramer V = .1368

	Non-Evangelical (%)	Evangelical (%)	
Firearm Safety Program Led by a Member of the Congregation*			<i>Row Total</i>
No	42 (16.03)	37 (14.12)	79 (15.08)
It depends	79 (30.15)	53 (20.23)	132 (25.19)
Yes	141 (53.82)	172 (65.65)	313 (59.73)
<i>Column Total</i>	262 (100)	262 (100)	524 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 8.5080, Cramer V = .1274

	Non-Evangelical (%)	Evangelical (%)	
Firearm Safety Program Using Scripture**			<i>Row Total</i>
No	104 (39.85)	72 (27.38)	176 (33.59)
It depends	69 (26.44)	62 (23.57)	131 (25.00)
Yes	88 (33.71)	129 (49.05)	217 (41.41)
<i>Column Total</i>	261 (100)	263 (100)	524 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 13.9313, Cramer V = .1631

*Note: * p<.05 **p<.01*

Table 2 displays the chi-square tests of independence, which tested whether or not there was an association between Evangelical Christian identity and the focal dependent variables. There was evidence of significant associations between Evangelical Christianity and these four interventions, and across all intervention types, a higher proportion of Evangelical Christians were willing to participate compared to non-Evangelicals. Specifically, 66.16% of Evangelical Christians were willing to attend a hands-on or skills-based class held at church, compared to 53.64% of non-Evangelicals ($p < .01$). Similarly, 71.48% of Evangelical Christians were open to a firearm safety program held at church, versus 58.46% of non-Evangelicals ($p < .05$). For a program led by a congregation member, 65.65% of Evangelical Christians were willing to participate, compared to 53.82% of non-Evangelicals ($p < .05$). Lastly, 49.05% of Evangelical Christians were open to a firearm safety program that uses Scripture, compared to 33.71% of non-Evangelicals ($p < .01$). While there was evidence of associations between Evangelical Christian identity and these four interventions, the associations were found to be weak.

Table 3. Bivariate Tables: Open to Participating in Focal Church-Based Interventions BY Political Party Affiliation

	Republican (%)	Democrat (%)	Other (%)	
Hands-On or Skills-Based Class at Church*				<i>Row Total</i>
No	33 (15.07)	31 (24.60)	31 (17.32)	95 (18.13)
It depends	39 (17.81)	30 (23.81)	46 (25.70)	115 (21.95)
Yes	147 (67.12)	65 (51.59)	102 (56.98)	314 (59.92)
<i>Column Total</i>	219 (100)	126 (100)	179 (100)	524 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 10.7795, Cramer V = .1014

	Republican (%)	Democrat (%)	Other (%)	
Firearm Safety Program at Church**				<i>Row Total</i>
No	22 (10.09)	26 (20.63)	26 (14.53)	74 (14.15)
It depends	33 (15.14)	29 (23.02)	47 (26.25)	109 (20.84)
Yes	163 (74.77)	71 (56.35)	106 (59.22)	340 (65.010)
<i>Column Total</i>	218 (100)	126 (100)	179 (100)	523 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 18.0804, Cramer V = .1315

	Republican (%)	Democrat (%)	Other (%)	
Firearm Safety Program Led by a Member of the Congregation**				<i>Row Total</i>
No	24 (11.01)	30 (23.81)	25 (13.89)	79 (15.08)
It depends	46 (21.10)	32 (25.40)	54 (30.00)	132 (25.19)
Yes	148 (67.89)	64 (50.79)	101 (56.11)	313 (59.73)
<i>Column Total</i>	218 (100)	126 (100)	180 (100)	524 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 16.5459, Cramer V = .1257

	Republican (%)	Democrat (%)	Other (%)	
Firearm Safety Program Using Scripture***				<i>Row Total</i>
No	48 (21.92)	67 (53.17)	61 (34.08)	176 (33.59)
It depends	53 (24.20)	22 (17.46)	56 (31.28)	131 (25.00)
Yes	118 (53.88)	37 (29.37)	62 (34.64)	217 (41.41)
<i>Column Total</i>	219 (100)	126 (100)	179 (100)	524 (100)

Pearson Chi2(2) = 43.6558, Cramer V = .2041

*Note: * p<.05 ** p<.01 ***p<.001*

Table 3 displays the chi-square tests of independence, testing whether or not there were associations between political party affiliation and openness to the four focal interventions. There was evidence of significant associations between political party affiliation and these four interventions. Across the interventions, those who identified as Republican had the highest proportion of respondents showing willingness to participate followed by those affiliated with other political parties. Democrats had the lowest proportion. For instance, 67.12% of Republicans were open to participating in a hands-on class held at church compared to 56.98% of those affiliated with other parties and 51.59% of Democrats ($p < .05$). With respect to a firearm safety program held at church, 74.77% of Republicans were willing to participate compared to 59.22% of those who identified with other parties and 56.35% of Democrats ($p < .01$). Similarly, 67.89% of Republicans were open to a firearm safety program led by a member of the congregation held at church, compared to 56.11% of other party-affiliates and 50.79% of Democrats ($p < .01$). Finally, for firearm safety programs using Scripture, 53.88% of Republicans were willing to participate compared to 34.64% of those affiliated with other parties and 29.37% of Democrats ($p < .001$). However, all four associations were weak in strength.

In addition to the four church-based interventions, six other types of firearm safety interventions were examined, but no associations were found between Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation and participants' openness to these other church-based interventions. They included: receiving a lockbox or trigger lock provided by the church, reading firearm safety materials provided by the church, attending a firearm safety class held outside the church, and participating in an online safety program sponsored by the church. Furthermore, although an association was found between Evangelical Christian Identity and political party

affiliation and being open to a firearm safety program held at church, there were no significant associations when the program is led by a clergy member or an outside expert.

Tables 4 through 7 present the results of ordinal logistic regression models, estimating the odds of Protestant Christian firearm owners reporting greater willingness to participate in one of four church-based firearm safety interventions. Each dependent variable was measured on a three-point ordinal scale where 1 = No, 2 = It depends, and 3 = Yes (highest level of willingness). There are three models in each table. The first model includes Evangelical Christian identity and the control variables. The second model includes political party affiliation and the control variables. The third model includes Evangelical Christian identity, political party affiliation, and all control variables. A correlation matrix was conducted to test collinearity across all variables; results showed no risk of multicollinearity in any of the models.

Table 4. Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimating Odds of Willingness to Participate in Hands-On/Skills-Based Class at Church

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)
<u>Independent Variables</u>						
Evangelical Christian Identity	1.67**	1.18-2.36			1.55*	1.09-2.20
Political Party Affiliation						
Republican			2.23***	1.42-3.50	2.06**	1.30-3.24
Other Party Affiliations			1.46	.94-2.28	1.37	.88-2.15
<u>Control Variables</u>						
Male	0.90	.63-1.29	.84	.58-1.20	.86	.60-1.24
White	.67	.43-1.05	.60*	.38-.95	.60	.38-.95
Lives in a rural area	0.77	.51-1.15	.77	.52-1.16	.74	.49-1.11
Born in the South	1.23	0.86-1.76	1.32	.91-1.89	1.29	.89-1.85
Advanced/Expert Firearm Proficiency	0.87	.59-1.27	.84	.57-1.22	.85	.58-1.24
Age	1.02**	1.01-1.04	1.02**	1.01-1.04	1.02**	1.01-1.04
N =	524		524		524	
Nagelkerke Pseudo R ²	0.0206		.0248		0.0307	

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

In Table 4, Evangelical Christian firearm owners had 1.55 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.09–2.20) of reporting a higher level of willingness (as opposed to lower levels) to participate in a hands-on or skills-based class held at church compared to non-Evangelical Christians, holding all other variables constant. Similarly, firearm owners who identified as Republicans had 2.06 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.30–3.24) of higher willingness to participate in the intervention compared to those who identified as Democrats. Age was also a statistically significant control across all models in this table.

Table 5. Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimating Odds of Willingness to Participate in Firearm Safety Program At Church

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)
<u>Independent Variables</u>						
Evangelical Christian	1.84**	1.28-2.65			1.68**	1.16-2.43
Political Party Affiliation						
Republican			2.63***	1.64-4.21	2.38***	1.47-3.84
Other Party Affiliations			1.31	.83-2.06	1.22	.77-1.92
<u>Control Variables</u>						
Male	1.03	.71-1.50	.93	.64-1.66	.97	-.77-1.92
White	.87	.55-1.37	.77	.48-1.29	.76	.66-1.42
Lives in a rural area	.65*	.43-.98	.66	.44-1.00	.62*	.41-.94
Born in the South	1.05	0.73-1.53	1.12	.77-1.63	1.10	.76-1.61
Advanced/Expert Firearm Proficiency	.84	.57-1.24	.80	.54-1.19	.81	.54-1.20
Age	1.01	1.00-1.03	1.01	1.00-1.03	1.01	1.00-1.03
N =	523		523		523	
Nagelkerke Pseudo R ²	0.0190		.0276		.0357	

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Next, in Table 5, Evangelical Christians had 1.68 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.56–2.43) of reporting a higher level of willingness to participate in a firearm safety program held at church compared to non-Evangelical Christians, holding all other variables constant. Likewise, Republicans had 2.38 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.47-3.84) of higher willingness to participate compared to Democrats.

Table 6. Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimating Odds of Willingness to Participate in Firearm Safety Program Led by a Member of the Congregation

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)
<u>Independent Variables</u>						
Evangelical Christian	1.58*	1.11-2.234			1.43*	1.01-2.04
Political Party Affiliations						
Republican			2.48***	1.58-3.90	2.31***	1.46-3.66
Other Party Affiliations			1.53	.98-2.39	1.46	.93-2.28
<u>Control Variables</u>						
Male	.89	.63-1.28	.82	.57-1.17	.83	.58-1.20
White	.66	.42-1.02	.58*	.37-.91	.58*	.37-.91
Lives in a rural area	.84	.56-1.27	.85	.57-1.28	.81	.54-1.22
Born in the South	1.03	.72-1.47	1.09	.76-1.56	1.08	.75-1.55
Advanced/Expert Firearm Proficiency	.99	.673-1.45	.96	.65-1.40	.96	.65-1.41
Age	1.02**	1.01-1.04	1.021**	1.01-1.04	1.02**	1.01-1.04
N =	524		524		524	
Nagelkerke Pseudo R ²	0.0175		0.0269		.0310	

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

In Table 6, Evangelical Christian firearm owners had 1.43 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.01–2.04) of reporting a higher level of willingness to participate in a firearm safety program held at church that is led by a member of the congregation compared to non-Evangelical Christians, holding all other variables constant. Firearm owners who identified as Republicans had 2.31 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.46 - 3.66) of higher willingness to participate in the intervention compared to those who identified as Democrats. Age as a control variable remained significant across all models. Identifying as white was also a significant control, but only in Models 2 and 3.

Table 7: Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimating Odds of Willingness to Participate in Firearm Safety Program Using Scripture

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>	
	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)	OR	(95% CI)
<u>Independent Variables</u>						
Evangelical Christian	1.84***	1.33-2.54			1.67**	1.17-2.28
Political Party Affiliation						
Republican			4.07***	2.61-6.35	3.74***	2.39-5.26
Other Party Affiliations			1.91**	1.23-2.96	1.76**	1.13-2.74
<u>Control Variables</u>						
Male	1.09	.78-1.53	.99	.71-1.40	1.03	.73-1.45
White	.67	.45-1.01	.54**	.35-.82	.53**	.20-.81
Lives in a rural area	1.19	.81-1.75	1.21	.82-1.78	1.14	.77-1.68
Born in the South	1.21	.87-1.70	1.32	.93-1.86	1.31	.93-1.85
Advanced/Expert Firearm Proficiency	1.06	.07-1.52	1.02	.71-1.46	1.04	.72-1.50
Age	1.00	.99-1.02	1.00	.99-1.02	1.00	.99-1.02
N =	524		524		524	
Nagelkerke Pseudo R ²	.0176		0.0430		.0504	

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Finally, in Table 7, Evangelical Christians had 1.64 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.17–2.28) of reporting a higher level of willingness to participate in a firearm safety program held at church that uses Scripture compared to non-Evangelical Christians, holding all other variables constant. Republicans had 3.74 times greater odds (95% CI: 2.39 - 5.26) of higher willingness compared to those who identified as Democrats. Republicans also had 1.76 times greater odds (95% CI: 1.13 - 2.74) of higher willingness compared to those who identified with other parties. Age was a statistically significant control across all models in this table. Identifying as white was also a significant control variable, but only in Models 2 and 3.

Across Tables 4 through 7, both independent variables were statistically significant across all models at the $p < .05$ level, with identifying as Republican yielding the most significant estimates of greater odds of openness to all four firearm safety interventions. The tests of parallel lines for all Model 3s across Tables 4 through 7 met the $p > 0.05$ threshold for the proportional odds assumption. However, Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2 s for the same models were low (.0307 - .0504), indicating that the independent variables explained only a small proportion of the variance in the firearm owners' willingness to participate in the interventions. Nevertheless, both Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation were significant variables in these models and suggest that these factors influence Protestant Christian firearm owners' openness to the four church-based interventions.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The results of this study support prior research suggesting that Protestant Christian firearm owners are open to some church-based firearm interventions. However, the findings also indicate that this openness is limited to specific types of interventions and that factors such as Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation may influence the extent of their openness. Specifically, with respect to Protestant Christian firearm owners' willingness to participate in a hands-on or skill-based class on firearm safety at church, a firearm safety program at church, a firearm safety program led by a member of the congregation held in church, and a firearm safety program held in church that uses Scripture or Bible verses, the results were in line with the study's hypotheses. Evangelical Christians had greater odds of reporting higher willingness to participate in these four church-based interventions compared to non-Evangelicals. Similarly, Republicans had greater odds of reporting willingness to participate in the same four interventions compared to Democrats. However, Republicans did not have

significantly greater odds of reporting higher willingness compared to other party affiliates, except in the case of a firearm safety program that uses Scripture or Bible verses.

These findings indicate the importance of religious and political context when creating church-based interventions. For Evangelical Christians, faith can be central to how they use a firearm²⁹ and why they own one^{32,33}. Firearm safety efforts delivered through churches, especially those that use Scripture or are facilitated by fellow members of the congregation, may feel more relevant, trustworthy, and consistent with their worldview. Likewise, Republicans, who are more likely to oppose firearm policies compared to Democrats^{36,37,38}, may be more open to community-based firearm programs associated with institutions such as churches.

However, two key limitations should be noted for this study. First, Evangelical Christian identity was operationalized based on RELTRAD rather than through self-identification. Although this schema has been validated in prior studies, some respondents might be misclassified, which could reduce the construct validity of this measure and limit the interpretability of findings related to Evangelical Christian identity. Second, associations between the two independent variables and focal dependent variables were weak. Moreover, the regression models had low Pseudo R² values, indicating that Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation did not explain much of the variance in willingness. Additional testing is needed to establish the role that Evangelical Christian identity and political party affiliation play in Protestant Christian firearm owners' willingness to participate in church-based interventions.

Despite these limitations, the findings provide important insight into potential pathways for engaging Protestant Christian firearm owners in firearm safety interventions. Further research should explore the types of church-based interventions that are most acceptable and investigate

why some are seen as suitable while others are not. Other factors that influence firearm-related beliefs and behaviors, such as race and gender, should also be examined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what may impact openness to church-based firearm interventions. Using community-based participatory approaches may be especially useful for informing the design and implementation of such programs.

Americans in general, including firearm owners, have expressed support for efforts to improve firearm safety, including firearm safety-related policies^{40,41}. However, in the current socio-political climate, legal or political solutions face significant barriers. In this context, community-centered interventions play an important role in addressing firearm-related harm. For Protestant Christian firearm owners, church-based firearm interventions offer a promising strategy for promoting firearm safety and ultimately mitigating the number of firearm injuries and deaths.

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