

National Coalition of People Labeled Mentally Ill Decries Gov. Abbott's Call for "Mental Health," Not Background Checks

The National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery is appalled and saddened but not shocked by the murders of 19 children and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas.

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Braunwynn Franklin, NCMHR board president

Coalition for Mental Health Recovery is appalled and saddened but not shocked by the murders of 19 children and two teachers on May 24 in Uvalde, Texas.

“Regrettably, it is hard to be shocked by the tragic loss of the children’s and teachers’ lives because, until our legislators act to prevent such tragedies, the massacre at Robb Elementary School differs from many other mass shootings only in the number of lives lost,” said NCMHR board president Braunwynn Franklin.

“Our legislators need to make gun safety a priority,” she continued. After a mass shooting in Australia in 1996, [the country enacted strict gun laws](#)—and it has not had a mass

shooting since. “In the developed world, these levels of gun violence are a uniquely American problem,” Vox reported in “America’s unique gun violence problem, explained in 16 maps and charts.”

According to an American Public Health Association Study—“The Relationship Between Gun Ownership and Firearm Homicide Rates in the United States, 1981–2010”—“states with higher rates of gun ownership had disproportionately large numbers of deaths from firearm-related homicides.” And as economist Richard Florida wrote in “The Geography of Gun Deaths,” published in The Atlantic, “fatal gun violence is less likely to occur in richer states with more post-industrial knowledge economies, higher levels of college graduates, and tighter gun laws. Factors like drug use, stress levels, and mental illness are much less significant than might be assumed.”

After the Uvalde tragedy, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said, “If anyone thinks that we should focus on

background checks instead of mental health, they're mistaken." But as the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and numerous studies have reported, "Mental Illness Is the Wrong Scapegoat After Mass Shootings," to quote the title of a press release about a Vanderbilt University study.

Instead, frequently the shooter in these tragedies is an isolated, angry white male with an automatic weapon. In fact, according to a 2017 Psychology Today article, "Fear-Based Anger Is the Primary Motive for Violence."

And as research associate Tage Rai noted in "The Myth That Mental illness Causes Mass Shootings" in 2017: "Perpetuating the myth that mental illness is the cause of mass shootings only serves to stigmatize the mentally ill even further. In addition, it distracts from the more difficult conversation that must be had over gun-control in America."

According to [federal government statistics](#), "only 3%–5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population."

"We NCMHR advocates have been diagnosed with serious mental health conditions, and we are concerned about falsely linking them with a tendency toward violence; it increases prejudice and discrimination," Franklin added.

Unfortunately, many of our legislators are beholden to the National Rifle Association. In the 2016 election cycle (according to a Politico article entitled "The gun lobby: See how much your representative gets"), Republicans received nearly \$6 million; Democrats received \$106,000. But what about their constituents? According to a 2017 Quinnipiac University poll, [94% of those responding](#) to the poll supported background checks for all gun sales.

"For those who claim that their right to own guns is protected by the Second Amendment, the amendment covers militias, not personal gun ownership," Franklin said. The text of the Second Amendment reads in full: "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."

"And to quote a gun control public service announcement," Franklin added, "Guns have changed. Shouldn't our gun laws?"

The National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery is a coalition of statewide organizations founded and run by individuals labeled with mental illness, representing 28 states and the District of Columbia.

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