

PolitiFact Satisfied With Botched Fact Check of Chris Murphy?

Has PolitiFact established a longstanding pattern of failing to follow an open and honest policy on corrections?

Here's another example of PolitiFact failing to follow an open and honest policy on corrections.

On May 25, 2022, PolitiFact published a fact check of Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.). Murphy argued for a law that would raise the minimum age for purchasing a gun. As part of his argument, Murphy said most school shooters are about 18 or 19 years old.

Here's how PolitiFact presented Murphy's words:

"I want to get rid of these assault weapons," Murphy said. "But maybe we can find common ground on just limiting who can get access to them, maybe say you have to be 21 instead of 18, seeing that most of these killers tend to be 18, 19 years old."

PolitiFact chose not to fact check Murphy's claim. **Instead, it fact checked whether school shooters were *under the age of 18*:**

When the Post analyzed these shootings, it found that more than two-thirds were committed by shooters under the age of 18. The analysis found that the median age for school shooters was 16.

So, using this criteria [sic], Murphy is correct, even slightly understating the case.

PolitiFact's fact check is wrongheaded. As the fact check pointed out earlier, "more than two-thirds were committed by shooters under the age of 18." Persons under 18 are not 18 or 19 years old, and [persons under 18 are already prevented in nearly every case from legally purchasing a firearm](#). It would make zero sense to argue to raise the legal purchase age from 18 **by pointing out that two-thirds are under that age**, because that implicitly confesses that the law won't have any effect in two-thirds of the cases offered in evidence. So, Murphy doesn't mention that statistic. Instead, he tells people that most of the shooters are 18, 19—coincidentally the group that would be affected if the minimum purchase age was raised from 18 to 20.

PolitiFact collected data conclusively showing that most of the shooters are not 18, 19 years old, and used that data to conclude that Murphy was right ("Murphy is correct, even slightly understating the case").

In fact, Murphy was wrong. Most of the shooters were under 18 years old and already ineligible to buy firearms, not 18 or 19. Murphy's words made it seem the proposed change to the minimum age of purchase law would affect a majority of school shooters. PolitiFact, incredibly, overlooked that aspect of Murphy's argument and awarded his misdirection a "Mostly True" rating. The truth: A distinct minority of school shooters fall in the 18-19 year-old age range.

[On June 1, 2022](#), Zebra Fact Check sent a correction request to PolitiFact pointing out the gaping hole in its reasoning. [As of June 16, 2022](#), we see no sign PolitiFact has made any attempt to set the record straight.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Bryan W. White
Editor & publisher, Zebra Fact Check