

TO: Interested Parties
 FROM: Global Strategy Group and Project Unloaded
 DATE: September 28, 2022
 RE: How gun violence impacts and weighs on Gen Z

Global Strategy Group, together with Project Unloaded, surveyed a total of 1,000 young people ages 13-25 across the country to understand how Gen Z thinks about guns and gun violence, as well as the experiences with guns that drive these perceptions. As gun violence increasingly touches their lives each day, the survey results are clear: **Most young people have personal experience with gun violence and worry about shootings at least weekly.** Among Black and Latino young people, more than 60% have personal experience with gun violence or know someone who has. Mass shootings and school shootings are top of mind for America’s young people, most have been touched by gun violence in some way, and they are disproportionately concerned about the intersection of guns and mental health.

KEY FINDINGS

A third of young people (30%) have experienced gun violence personally. Another 24% have a friend or family member who has. Overall, this means that gun violence has hit close to home for most young people in the U.S. More than a quarter (28%) say either they themselves or a friend or family member has been shot at.

Gun violence ranks as a top concern for young people – both where they live, and more broadly. When asked if gun violence was a problem where they lived, 72% of young Black people identified gun violence as a problem – nearly 20 points higher than young people on average. When asked to rank gun violence among other problems facing their generation, the majority of young people (51%) said it was a top problem. Gun violence is statistically tied with mental health and inflation for young people’s top issue concern, and it even ranks higher than abortion access (47% major problem) and climate change (37% major problem) – other hot button issues for Gen Z.

% Major problem for young people today	Total	Boys	Girls	13-17	18-25	White	Black	Latino
Mental health	53%	45%	61%	49%	56%	54%	48%	58%
Inflation/Cost of living	53%	50%	56%	43%	60%	54%	51%	55%
Gun violence	51%	41%	61%	47%	53%	47%	65%	53%
Access to abortion	47%	39%	55%	38%	54%	49%	44%	46%
Climate change	37%	35%	39%	33%	40%	34%	40%	40%

Specifically, mass shootings and school shootings are top of mind for young people, heightening perceptions that they are unsafe. Half of young people (50%) report thinking about mass shootings at least weekly, while another 48% say they think about school shootings as often. Young people of color are even more likely to worry about these shootings: 57% of Black and 55% of Latino young people say they think about mass shootings at least weekly. As these concerns grow and dominate mental space for young people, a quarter of young people say they feel unsafe in light of gun violence in the country today, including 24% of Black and 30% of Latino young people.

Only a third of young people feel “very safe” in their schools; Black teens are the least likely to feel safe. Thirty-five percent of young people feel “very safe” in schools and nearly half (48%) only feel “somewhat safe” at school. Black teens, however, are considerably less likely to feel “very safe” in school than young people at large. Only 26% of Black young people report feeling “very safe” when at school, a full 13-points lower than white young people (39% very safe) and 4-points lower than Latino young people (30% very safe).

More than half of students (58%) experience lockdown drills at least once a year. When asked how lockdown drills make them feel, young people's top descriptors were "anxious" and "scared." Among girls, 39% said drills made them anxious.

Young people are disproportionately likely to acknowledge gun suicide as a major problem and worry about how guns contribute to the current mental health crisis. Mental health is among the top concerns for young people today, and to them, the intersection between guns and mental health is clear. A full 64% believe suicides using a gun are a major problem in the country today. Previous research showed only 53% of the adult voting population said suicides using a gun are a major problem – making young people over 10-points more likely to worry about gun suicides.

Family and friends are the top source for how young people learn about guns (72%), followed by TV and movies (51%) and video games (37%). Black young people are most likely to learn about guns through TV and movies (62%) and boys are disproportionately likely to learn about guns through video games (46%).

% Learned about guns from this source	Total	Boys	Girls	13-17	18-25	White	Black	Latino
My family and friends	72%	70%	74%	76%	69%	80%	59%	68%
TV and movies	51%	52%	50%	56%	48%	47%	62%	53%
Video games	37%	46%	27%	40%	36%	36%	32%	42%
Social media	10%	8%	13%	10%	11%	9%	10%	11%

After being exposed to facts on gun risks, young people shifted 17 points against believing that guns make them safer. Despite young people's very real concerns about gun violence, most young people – like most Americans at large – falsely believe that guns are a source of protection. However, their perceptions can shift when exposed to the facts. After reading a series of messages highlighting the risks involved with owning a gun, young people across all demographics shift away from the idea that guns make them safer by an average of 17 points. Girls, Latino young people, and youth ages 13-17 (including middle and high school students) are most likely to change their opinions on guns: Majorities across these groups actually say that guns make you LESS safe after hearing about the risks.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 1,000 young people ages 13-25 nationwide between July 19 and 26, 2022. Care was taken to ensure robust sample sizes across ages 13-17 and 18-25, genders, geographical densities, races, and religions to examine subgroups of interest with confidence.