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STAY INSIDE:

A Research Report on How Teens in
Places with Elevated Gun Violence Rates
Understand Guns and Gun Violence



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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Ahzul conducted research on behalf of the gun violence prevention group Project Unloaded to understand how multicultural teens in communities often impacted by violence view guns and safety issues where they live. Through both qualitative and quantitative rounds of research, Ahzul worked to understand how fact-based messaging could impact teens' views of guns and the likelihood they would own or carry them in the future. We found a significant opportunity to intervene before young people have made up their minds on guns and help them shift against using guns by sharing the facts.

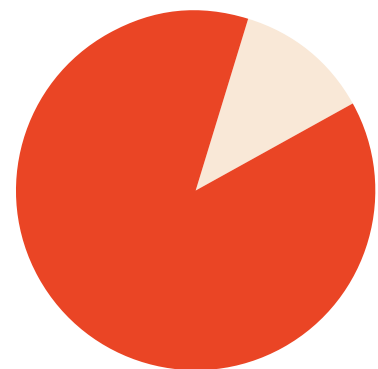
Teens told us how the threat of gun violence impacts their lives every day.

Teens in neighborhoods with the highest rates of gun violence said that they spend nearly all their time indoors, according to qualitative research detailed below.

- Less than one in ten teens in our qualitative study felt “very safe” hanging out at a local park, and only slightly more felt “very safe” walking to and from school.

Many are interested in learning more about gun risks, but didn't know much yet.

- 57% of multicultural urban teens surveyed expressed interest in knowing more about the risks and benefits of having a gun.
- 88% of teens surveyed said they'd done little to no research on the risks of gun ownership, according to our quantitative research. And most teens were interested in learning more.
- Even among the 6% of teens who said they were definitely getting a gun, a minority of them (44%) say they know everything they need to know about gun risks — meaning even these teens may be moveable.



88%

of teens surveyed said they'd done little to no research on the risks of gun ownership

Interest in gun ownership is driven by a desire to feel safe.

- Nearly half of multicultural urban teens believe that having a gun makes them safer, according to our quantitative study.
- Feeling safe at school is particularly important to avoiding gun use: Teens who have decided to get a gun are more likely to report feeling unsafe in school.

Fact-based education can shift teens' views on guns and interest in ownership.

- After seeing facts about gun risks, teens were more likely to believe that guns make people less safe, and they were less likely to say they would own or have a gun in the future.

- In our quantitative research, just 13% of multicultural teens said that guns made them less safe before exposure to facts related to gun risks. After exposure, 31% of respondents said guns made them less safe.

Below, we share more information about our methodology and findings – and explain how this research can support efforts to stop gun violence in communities that bear the brunt of the crisis today.

OUR APPROACH:

1	2	3	4	5
Explore: Digital Platform Interviews	Explore: Friendship Groups	Evaluate: Peer Groups	Evaluate: Digital Platform Interviews	Validate: Quantitative Online Survey
Objective: Gain key individual insights from target audiences on experiences with, attitudes towards, and beliefs about gun ownership, and gain learnings on existing creative “ways in” with the target audiences	Objective: Explore how peers and friend groups influence attitudes on gun ownership and use	Objective: Test optimized message frames and/or creative “ways in” with the target audiences before moving into quantitative research	Objective: Explore and optimize two potential creative ideas to understand clarity, relevance, believability, and potential to shift consideration for guns	Objective: Validate and test optimized creative and the insights that inspired it

Qualitative Research Uncovered Foundational Information About Teens’ Experiences With Guns and Gun Violence

Through a series of individual and small group online and in-person interviews, we talked to teens in neighborhoods in Philadelphia, Chicago, Sacramento, and other urban areas with the highest rates of gun violence. Gun violence is impacting most aspects of their lives, in ways large and small.

Safety is a near constant worry.

- **These teens told us they are spending nearly all their time indoors because of the risk of gun violence.** Parents in these communities tell their teens to stay indoors.
- Teens in neighborhoods with the highest rates of gun violence rarely feel very safe. Teens did not feel safe going to neighborhood parks and worried about safety walking to school.

The teens who spoke to us held conflicting views: while many believe they need a gun to protect themselves, most also say their neighborhoods would be safer if fewer people had guns.

- These teens feel a strong desire to feel safer — and that desire makes some interested in having a gun.
- Still, they have big dreams for their future and don't want gun violence to get in their way.

Multicultural teens rely heavily on social media for their news and information, making communication via these platforms an important way to reach them.

Quantitative Research Deepened Our Understanding of Teens' Awareness of Gun Risks and Opportunities for Shifting Their Views

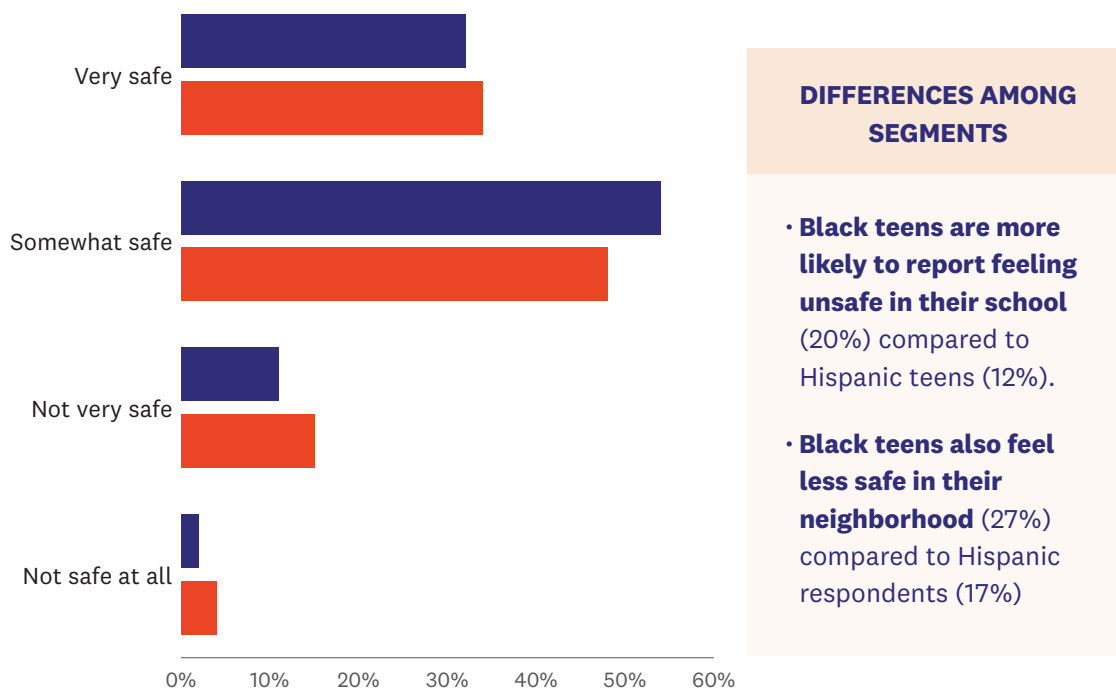
In quantitative research conducted during summer 2023, we polled 502 teens from urban areas across the country. In this round of research, we focused on learning more about teens' experiences with gun violence and the opportunity to interrupt the decision to get a gun with fact-based messaging.

Experience with Gun Violence

More than half (56%) of sampled urban multicultural teens report that gun violence in their community affects them.

- Generally, **Black teens are more likely to have experienced gun violence.** They are more likely to report “hearing stories from friends and family about gun violence” (43%), having “lost a family member” (30%), “family member injured by a gun” (28%) and “a family member has been threatened by a gun” (24%) as personal experiences with guns.

Just a third of multicultural urban teens report feeling “very safe” in school (32%) or in their neighborhoods (34%). Black teens are most likely to report feeling unsafe in school and in their neighborhoods.

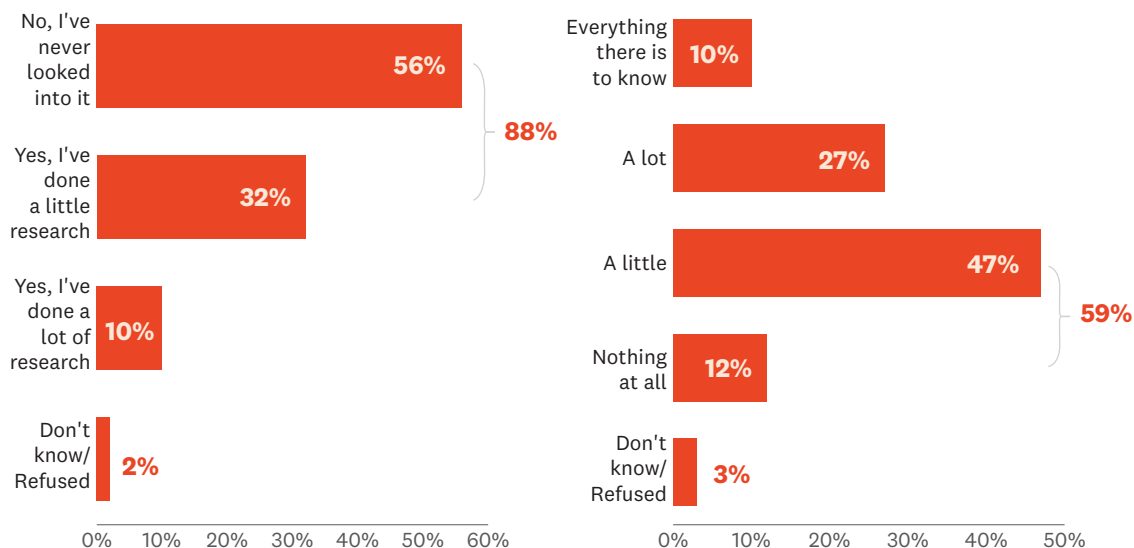


Knowledge of Gun Risks

Most teens within the sample report knowing only a little or nothing at all about the pros and cons of owning/ having a gun and few had researched the risks of having a gun.

Most urban multicultural teens have done little to no research about the pros/cons of guns.

Therefore, knowledge of guns is quite shallow for the majority of this audience.



- **Younger teens are more likely to report knowing “nothing at all” or “a little”** about the pros and cons of owning a gun.

Attitudes on guns: Teens are split on whether guns increase safety.

The lack of awareness of the risks of guns, coupled with teens not feeling safe in their neighborhoods, create an environment where untrue narratives about guns and their ability to protect can thrive.

- **Nearly half** of multicultural urban teens believe that having a gun makes them safer.

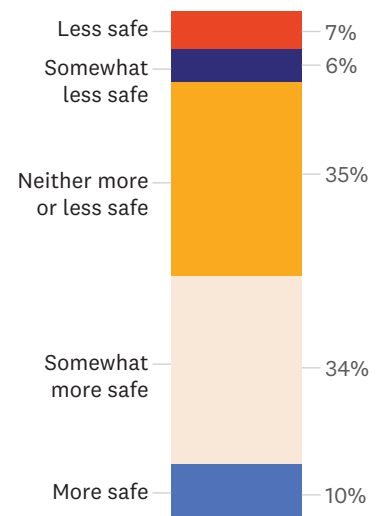
Risk Education: Teens are open to learning more about gun risks and gun facts and shifting their views.

A majority of multicultural urban teens, especially those who are undecided about future gun ownership, were positively influenced through risk education via facts about the risks of gun use.

After seeing the facts about gun risks, they were more likely to believe guns are unsafe, and directionally less likely to say they would own/ have a gun in the future.

- Facts related to gun suicide risk and how household gun ownership increases the risk of dying by homicide were particularly compelling. More than half of teens surveyed had not heard these facts before and wanted to know more about them.

Lack of knowledge about the risks of guns leads many teens to erroneously believe that a gun would make them safer.



	“Living in a house with a gun doubles the change of dying by homicide.”	“Suicide rates are four times higher for kids who live in homes with guns.”
Haven’t heard this before	50%	52%
Consider the statement believable	84%	84%
Are interested in learning more about this	53%	54%

- Addressing the facts that show guns do not increase safety is important to reducing rates of gun use. Among teens who are **undecided about future gun ownership, about 2 in 3 believe guns make them safer**. By contrast, **only 1 in 10 teens who have already decided not to get a gun believe guns make them safer**.
- In addition, about a third (28%) of teens agreed with the statement that most people in their neighborhood or community have a gun, but just **1 in 6 multicultural urban teens sampled report living in a household with a gun**. This indicates an opportunity to educate teens about the risks and counteract the narrative that they may need a gun because everyone around them has one.

CONCLUSION

Through this research, we uncovered several truths about multicultural teens' views on guns, their disposition to own or not own a gun in the future, and potential methods to help shift them against future gun use.

Interest in gun ownership is largely driven by a desire to feel safe, with multicultural teens reporting that guns make them feel “more safe,” a perspective that is often fueled by a lack of knowledge about the risks of gun ownership.

However, our research indicates that fact-based education can shift teens' views on guns and interest in gun use. These findings demonstrate the potential opportunity to leverage risk education communication efforts to shift attitudes and behaviors pertaining to gun ownership among multicultural urban teens.

About This Research

Ahzul conducted an online survey of 502 multicultural teens ages 13-17 who live in urban areas nationwide. Quotas were set to ensure readable, stable base sizes for Black and Hispanic teens separately. The final study data was then weighted to be representative of the ACS distribution of urban, non-white teens by age and ethnicity in the United States.