



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE SNUG GUN RISK EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ON SNAPCHAT

July 2026

INTRODUCTION:

Gun violence remains a highly visible and emotionally charged issue in the United States, with teenagers frequently exposed to gun-related incidents through news coverage, social media, school safety procedures, and personal or community experiences. Even when not directly impacted, many teens encounter narratives about gun violence regularly, shaping their sense of safety, anxiety levels, and perceptions of risk.

In response, Project Unloaded works to prevent gun violence in all its forms by educating, engaging, and empowering teens through cultural campaigns and community partnerships that share a simple message: guns make us less safe. Its SNUG (Safer Not Using Guns) campaign, launched originally in January 2022, reaches teens in the (virtual) places where they spend their time, especially Snapchat.

To test SNUG's efficacy with its target demographic—young people¹ ages 13-17—ISG Research designed a research study to assess awareness and recall of the campaign among teen Snapchat users, evaluate its influence on teen attitudes toward gun ownership, explore the mental and emotional space guns occupy for teens, understand how teens respond when feeling anxious about guns or safety, and examine perceptions of school-based safeguards. The survey found that message consumption and retention were positive, suggesting the campaign strategy successfully elevated the efficacy of a gun risk education narrative among this demographic—and may continue to do so with future sustained efforts.

METHODOLOGY:

Three weeks into Project Unloaded's SNUG campaign reaching more than 5 million 13-17-year-olds on Snapchat, ISG Research surveyed 2,502 Snapchat users ages 13-17 in a 10-minute online survey, fielded March 19 - April 1, 2026, to assess awareness and recall of the campaign as well as uncover more insights about teen Snapchat users' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences towards gun ownership and gun violence.

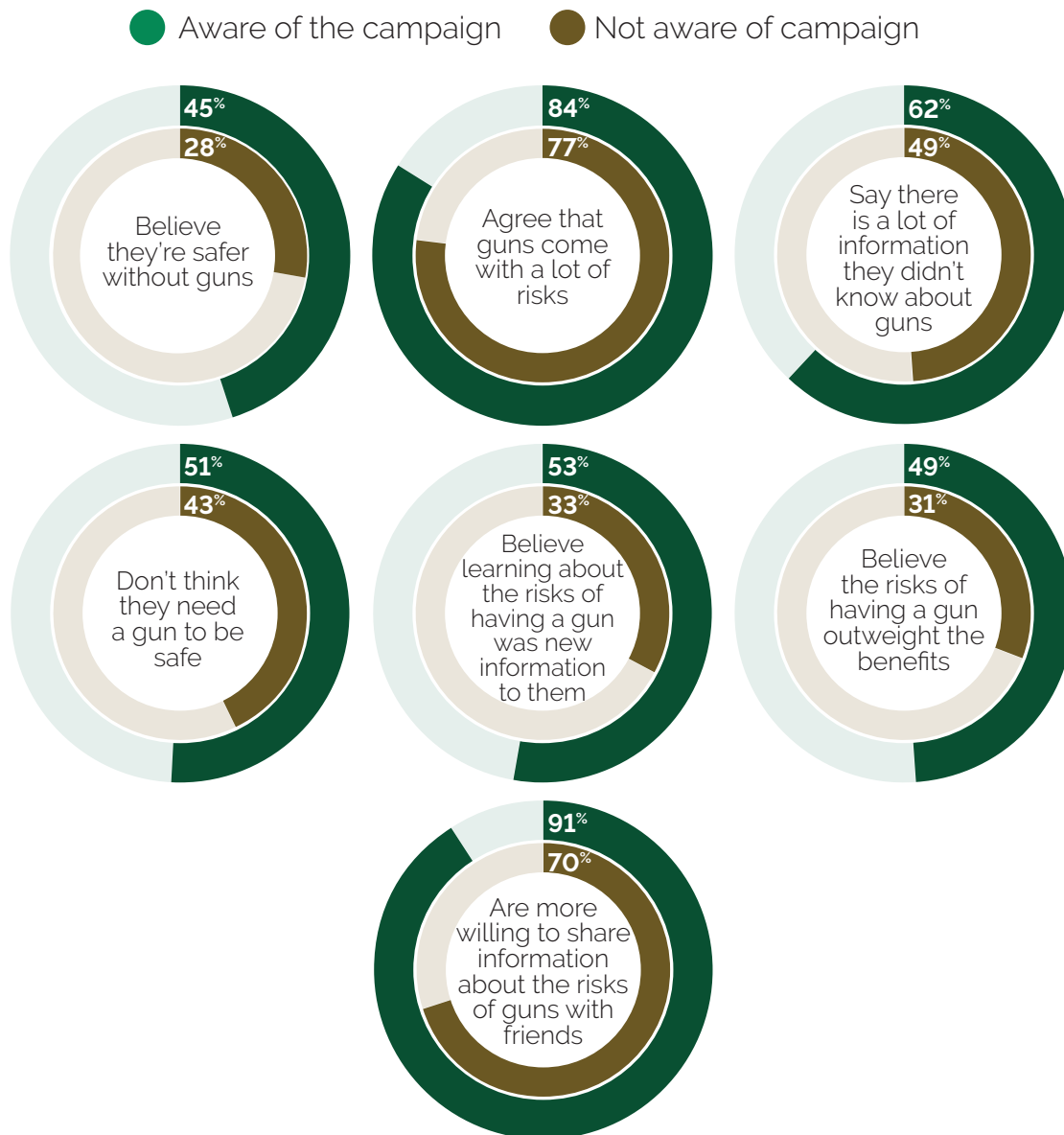
1. This study is specific to Snapchat to follow Project Unloaded's ad strategy of targeting this demographic on this platform.

KEY FINDINGS

TEENS WHO ARE AWARE OF THE SNUG CAMPAIGN ARE MORE LIKELY TO ASSOCIATE GUNS WITH RISKS AND BELIEVE THEY ARE SAFER WITHOUT THEM.

One in six (**16%**) teens using Snapchat reported they're aware of the recent SNUG Snapchat campaign, and unaided recall was exceptionally specific. Responses accurately described advertising messaging, including "guns are the number 1 killer of kids and teens," "having a gun in the house actually makes you less safe," and "using facts rather than politics" messaging.

Teens aware of the campaign show key differences in their attitudes toward guns compared to those who aren't aware, including:



SNUG CAMPAIGN AWARE: WHO ARE THEY?

Of the teens who were aware (**54%** boys vs. **46%** girls) of the SNUG campaign, they skew more multicultural (**25%** Black campaign aware vs. **14%** not aware; **29%** Hispanic aware vs. **19%** Hispanic not aware), live in urban areas (**44%** aware vs. **31%** not aware), and come from homes that own guns (**67%** aware vs. **50%** not aware). They're more likely to play first-person shooter video games on a weekly basis (**52%**, vs. **38%** not aware). They're also more likely to have experienced gun violence (**38%**, vs. **22%** not aware), including having known someone killed or injured by a gun.



Project Unloaded Impact Index (PUII)

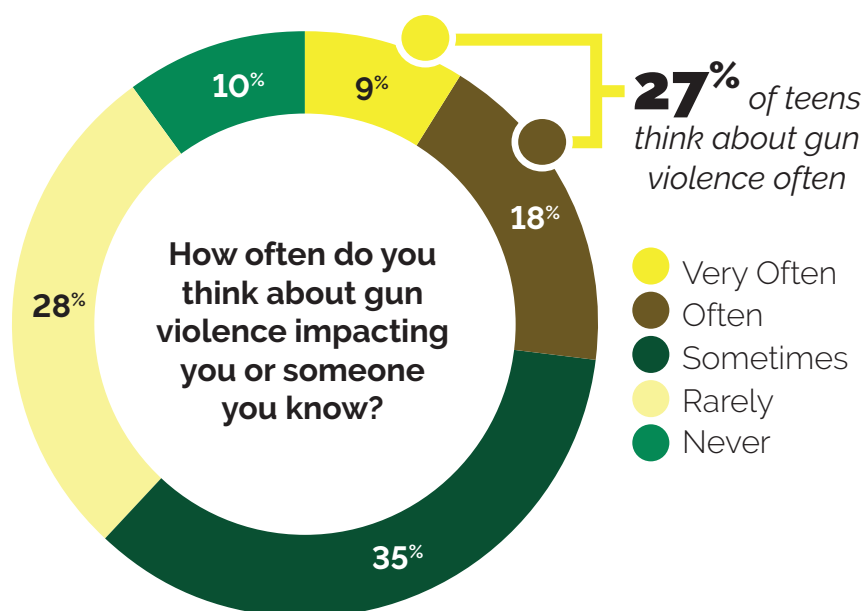
Because the SNUG campaign is designed as a perception and framing campaign focused on shifting how teens think about gun risks rather than prompting immediate behavioral change, knowledge and attitude are the primary focus of this report. In addition to these reported results, ISG Research created the Project Unloaded Impact Index (PUII) integrating knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intent into a single weighted score, capturing the full arc of campaign impact across all three dimensions simultaneously revealing not just whether awareness moved, but whether that awareness is translating into attitude change resulting in behavioral change over time. Behavioral metrics served as inputs into the PUII insofar as they are indicators of future behavior rather than measures of current action. Using this measure of the campaign's overall impact, **SNUG-aware teens score 11 points higher than unaware peers (60 vs. 49)**. The full construction of the composite and weighting rationale are detailed in the appendix.

GUN VIOLENCE OCCUPIES MENTAL SPACE FOR TEENS AND IMPACTS THEIR SOCIAL LIVES.

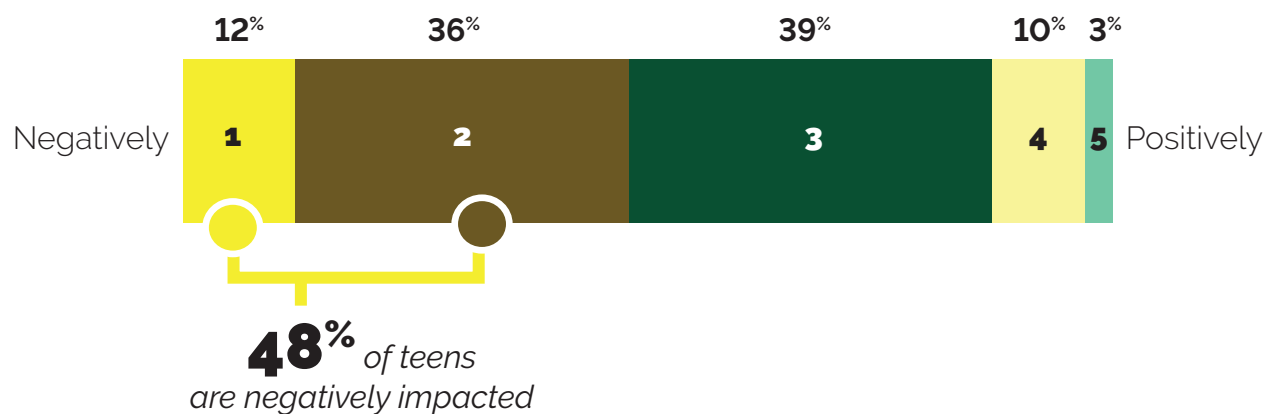
Nearly half (**48%**) of teens say gun violence negatively impacts their mental health—even more for teens who have previously experienced gun violence (**64%**). Two in five (**40%**) have stayed home because of a gun violence threat, signaling a deep everyday impact beyond headline incidents.

A quarter (**27%**) of teens say they think about gun violence often. This is especially true for Hispanic (**34%**), Black (**44%**), and urban teens (**34%**), as well as those who've previously experienced gun violence (**51%**).

Just under half (**43%**) of teens say they have felt anxious about gun violence in the last six months.



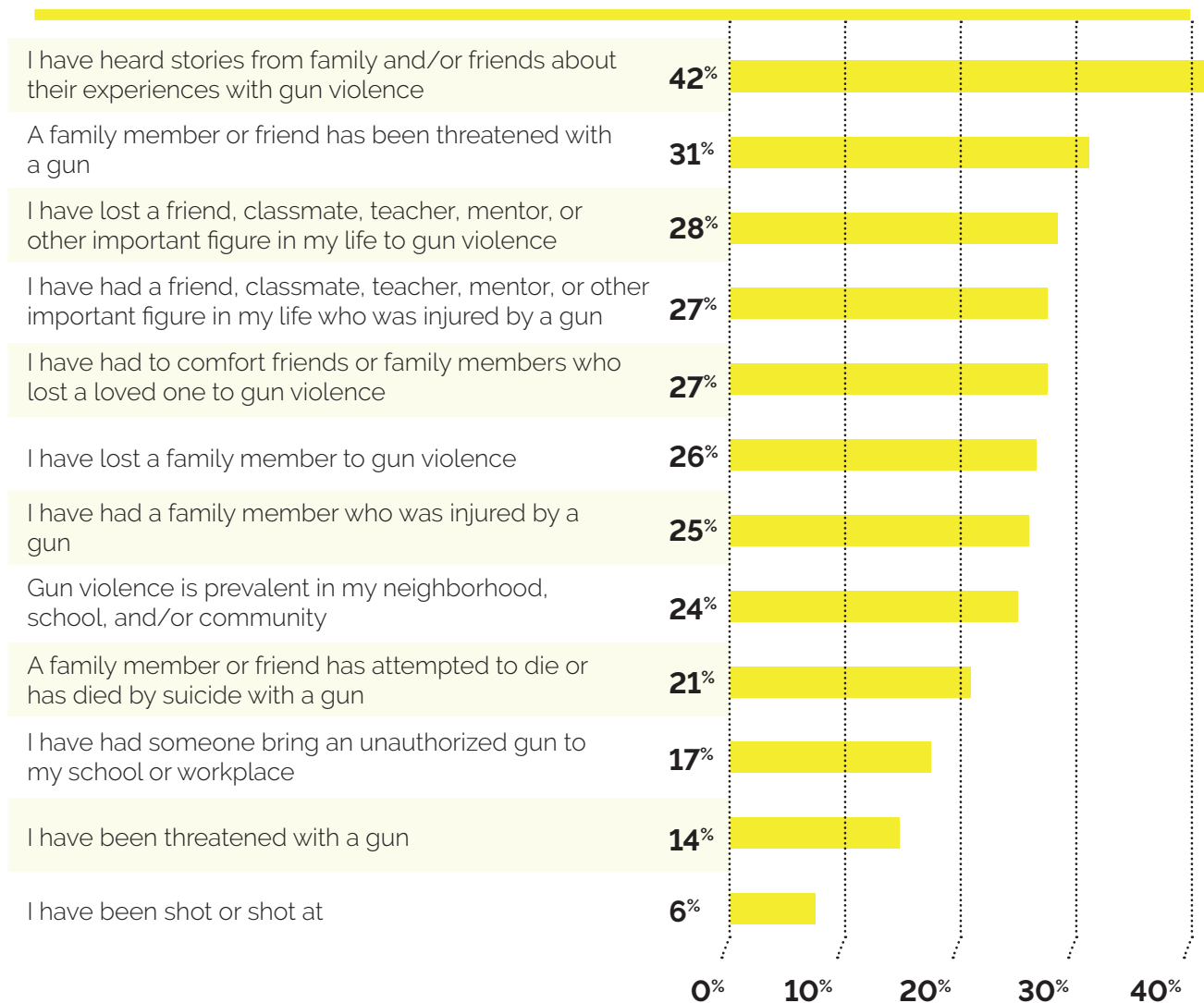
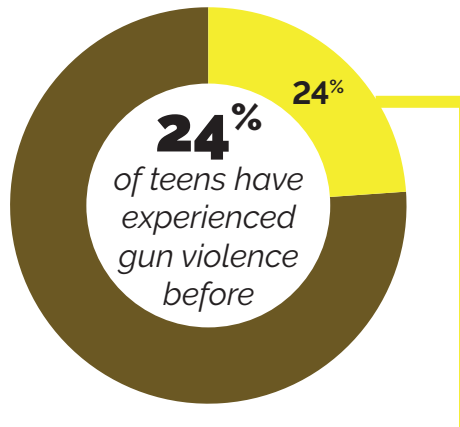
How, if at all, do you feel that gun violence impacts your mental health?



PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH GUN VIOLENCE ARE PREVALENT.

A quarter of teens (**24%**) say they've personally experienced gun violence. Experiences are most commonly through stories from family/friends or having a close connection threatened, injured, or killed.

Experiences are even more prevalent among Black (**38%**) and Hispanic (**36%**) teens and teens from urban areas (**31%**).



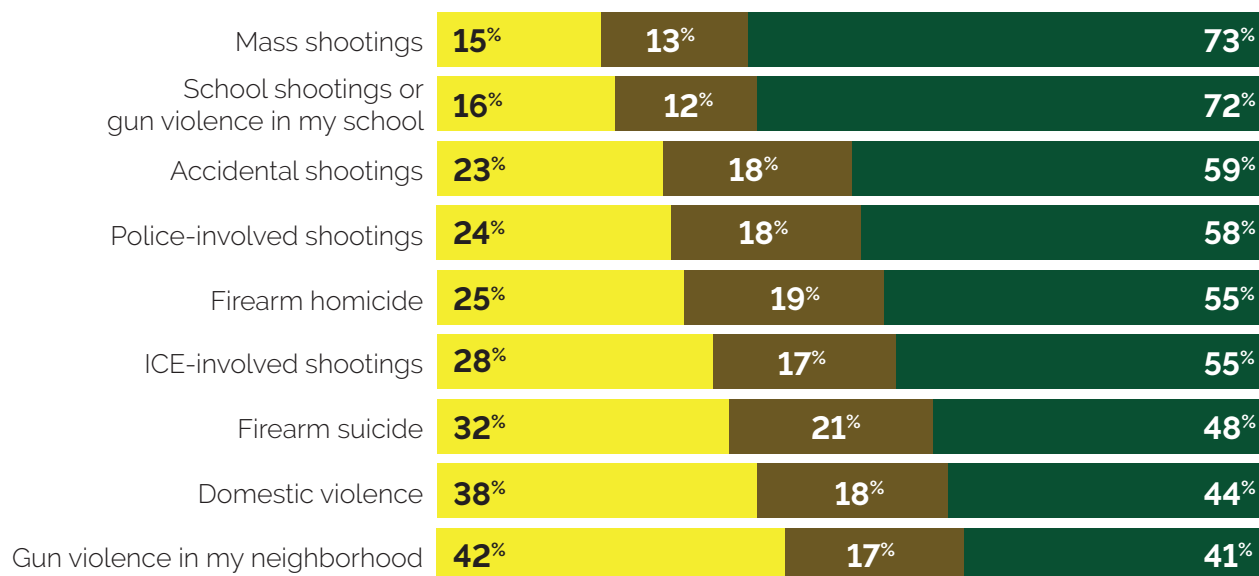
When it comes to the types of gun violence teens are concerned with:

Mass shootings (**73%** very/somewhat concerned) and school shootings (**72%**) are top concerns for teens.

Accidental shootings (**59%**), police (**58%**)/ICE-involved shootings (**55%**) and homicides (**55%**) concern more than half of teens. Black teens are more likely to have these concerns (accidental shootings **72%**, police **82%**/ICE shootings **73%**, homicides **73%**).

Overall, how concerned are you with the following types of gun violence?

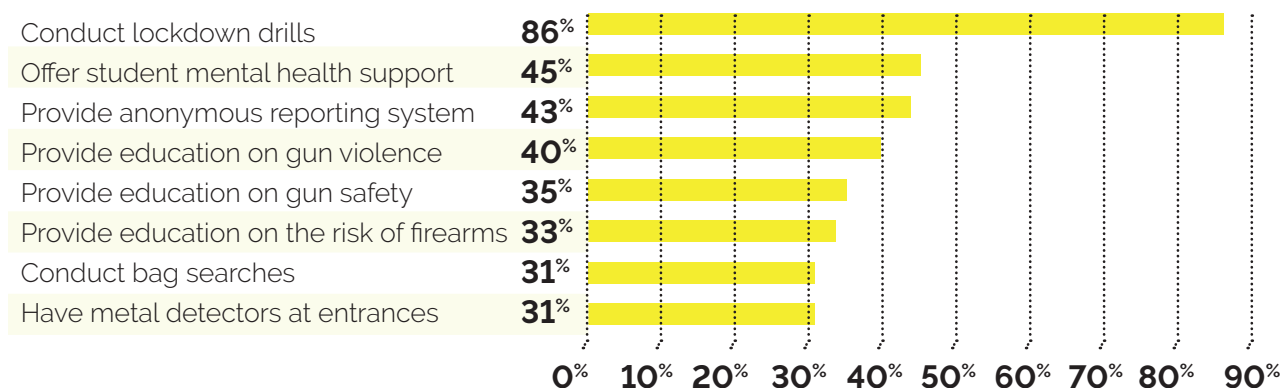
● Very/Somewhat Unconcerned ● Neutral ● Very/Somewhat Concerned



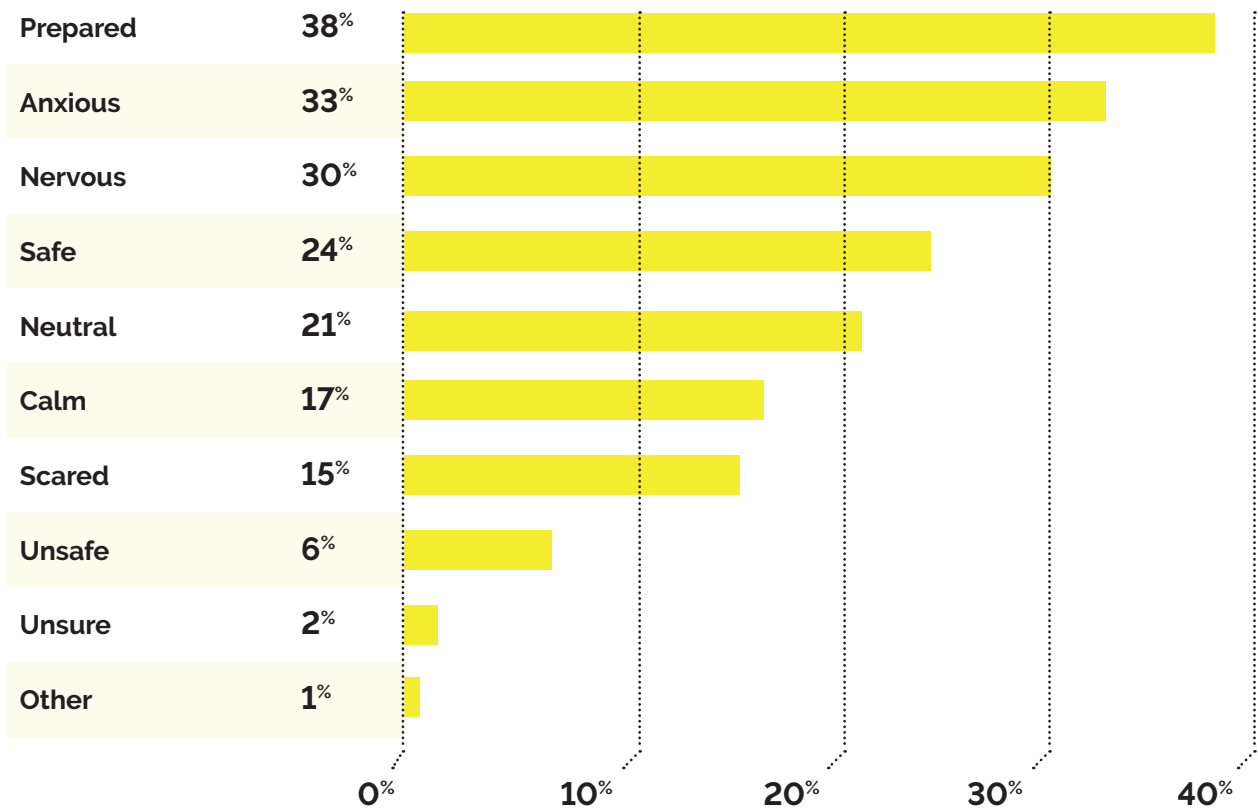
MOST TEENS EXPERIENCE LOCKDOWN DRILLS AT SCHOOLS (86%), LEAVING THEM EMOTIONALLY SPLIT BETWEEN FEELING PREPARED AND ANXIOUS/NERVOUS.

About the same amount of students felt positive emotions (**52%**) after a lockdown drill as those who felt negative emotions (**48%**). Beyond these drills, other interventions are much less prevalent at schools, with fewer than half offering mental health support (**45%**), anonymous reporting (**43%**), and firearm risk education (**33%**).

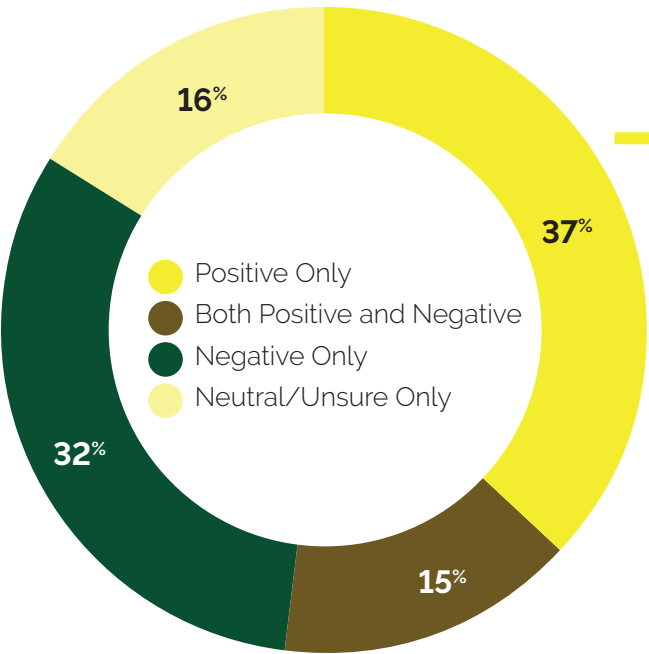
Which of the following are actions your school is taking to address gun violence?



How do you feel after going through a lockdown drill at school? (Select all that apply)
Among those who have school lockdown drills



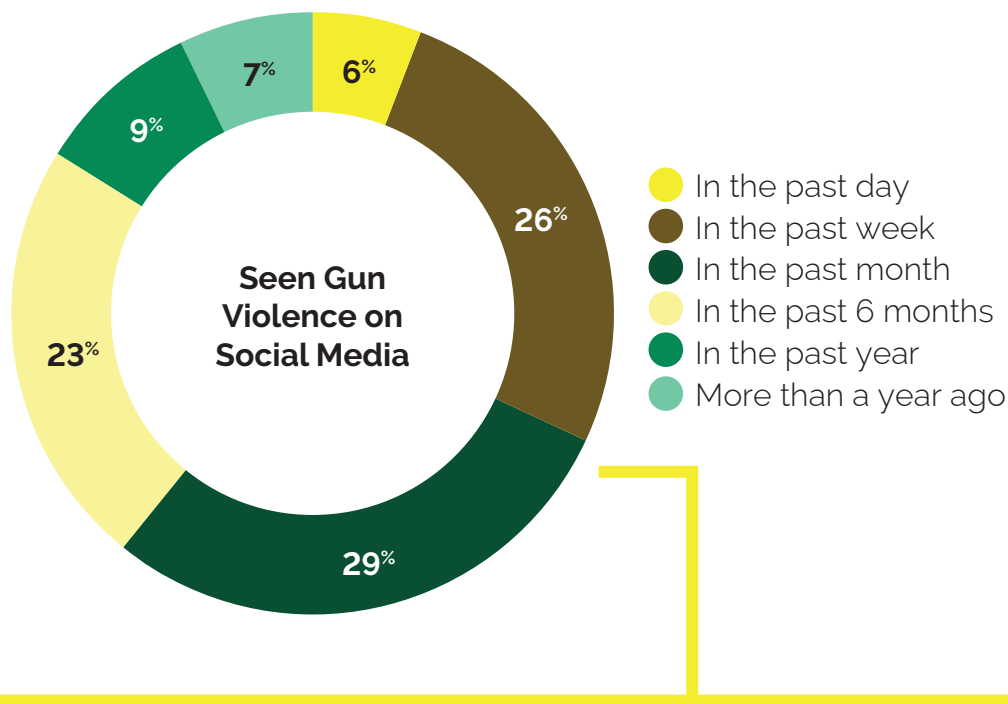
Overall feelings



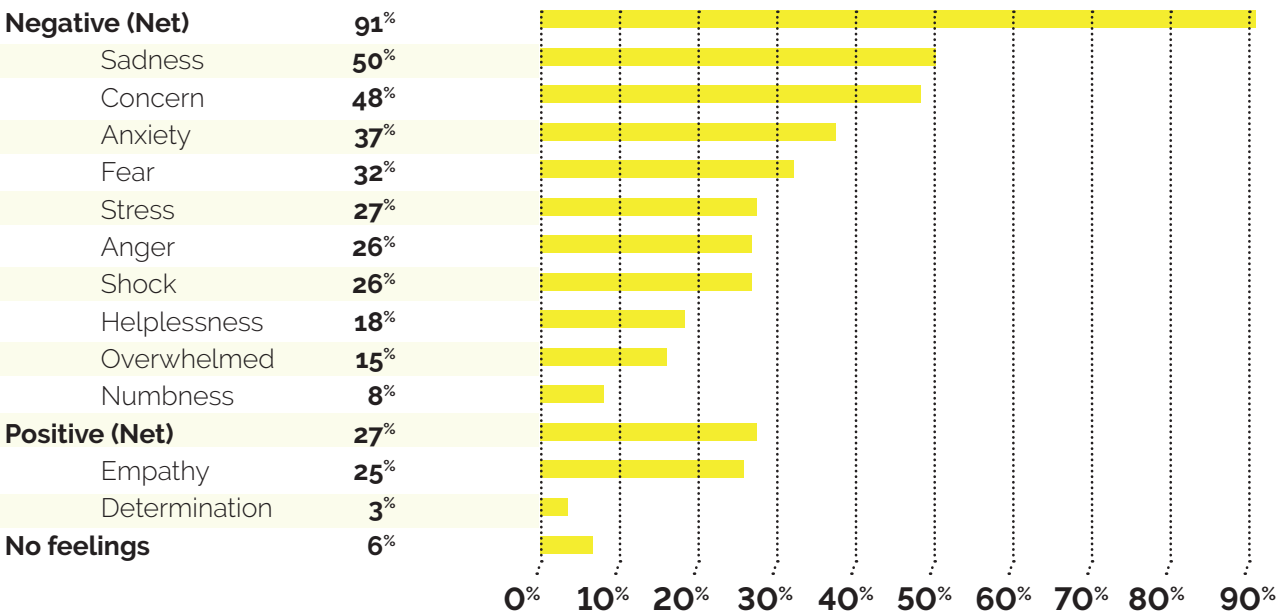
CONTENT SHOWING GUNS AND GUN VIOLENCE IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Nearly all (**82%**) teens in the study have seen gun violence content on social media, triggering strong emotions of sadness, concern, anxiety, fear, and anger. Over half (**57%**) have seen footage on social media of someone being harmed by a gun.

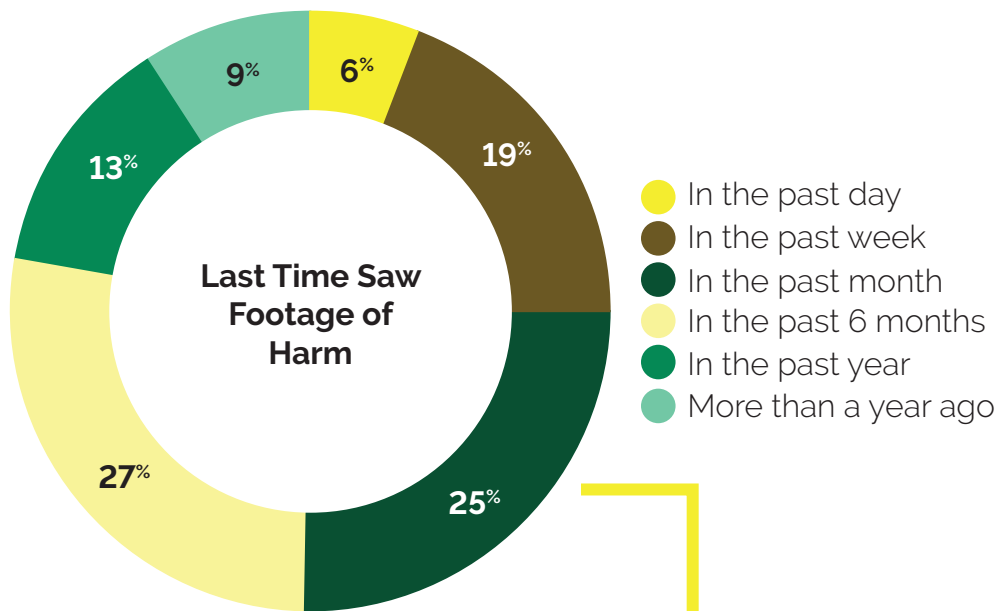
When did you last see gun violence on social media?



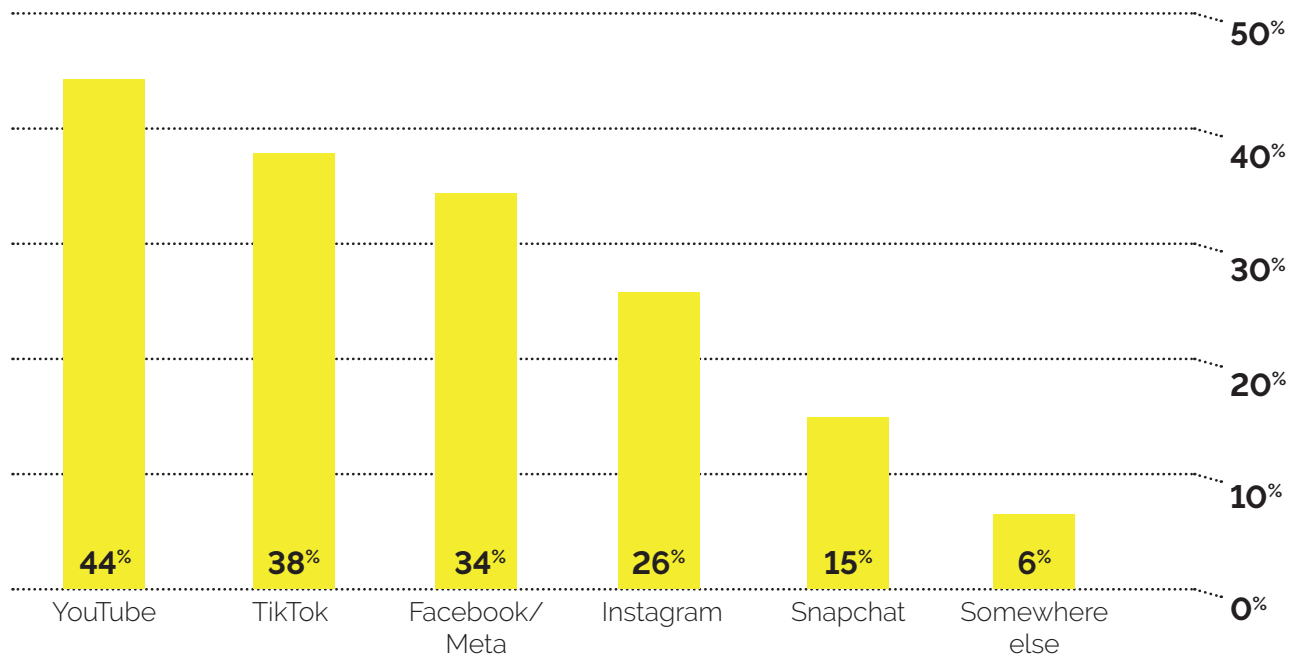
How does it make you feel when you see gun violence on social media?



When did you last see footage of someone being harmed, shot, threatened, and/or impaired due to a gun on social media?



Where did you see footage?



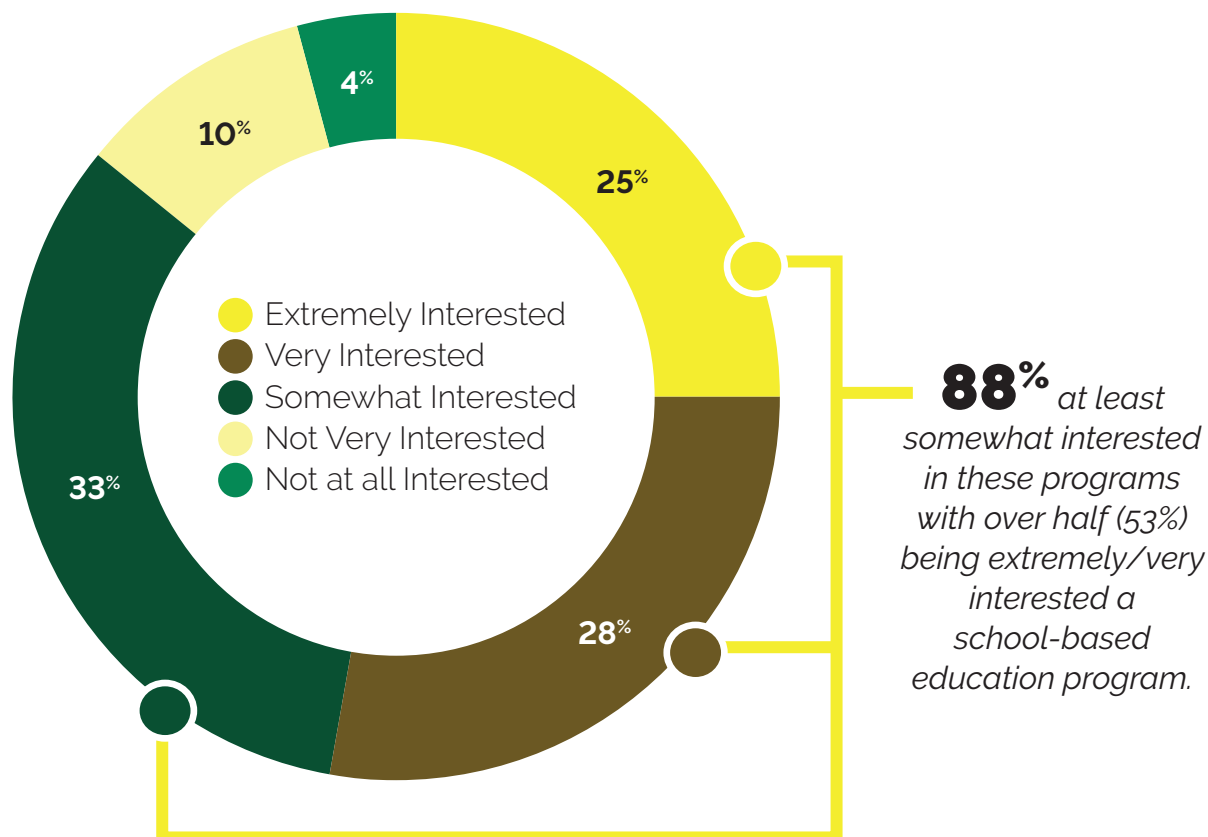
MOST TEENS ARE OPEN TO SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAMS ABOUT THE RISKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GUNS.

With gun violence prevalent for teens, many are open to education programs about the risks and responsibilities of firearms. **88%** of teens are at least somewhat interested in these programs with over half (**53%**) being extremely/very interested a school-based education program, even more for certain demographic categories of population segments:

- Black - **73%**
- Hispanic - **62%**
- Urban - **64%**
- Those Who Have Experienced Gun Violence - **74%**

Teens living with guns in the household are also more open to risk education (**54%**, vs. **44%** not in household).

How interested would you be in learning more about the risks and responsibilities of firearms via an education program through your school?



TEENS INTERESTED IN FUTURE GUN OWNERSHIP ARE MORE LIKELY TO PLAY FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER VIDEO GAMES.

Half of teens surveyed (**50%**) play shooter video games, typically a few times a week (**49%**). Of those, two-thirds (**64%**) are open to owning a gun in the future. However, teens do not believe playing such video games impacts their views on guns in real life (**69%**). They report games help them socialize more with their peers (**62%**). One in four (**25%**) say video games make them more interested in a real gun or make them want to own/use a real gun.

Future Gun Owners: Who Are They?

Teens open to owning guns in the future (**52%** of teens surveyed) skew more male, live in southern/rural areas, and reside in households with guns. They're also more likely to play first-person shooter games on a weekly basis (**53%**, vs. **21%** who aren't open to owning a gun).

KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 1 ■ Project Unloaded's SNUG campaign is shifting knowledge and attitudes about gun risks among teen Snapchat users.** This underscores the importance of consistency and frequency in advertising to this demographic on Snapchat. Ongoing investment in this audience and platform—as well as other platforms important to this demographic—will continue to spur this shift, particularly as the generational cohort ages.
- 2 ■ Continuity in research is critical in reaching this generational cohort.** 13-17-year-olds are on the cusp of adulthood and are facing large life transitions (turning 18, going to college, first job, etc.). Continuing research with this specific age demographic as well as following the current cohort as they “age out” will be critical not only to impact them in their lives now, but also as they mature and become adults.
- 3 ■ Teens are interested in and open to risk education in offline spaces (i.e., schools).** This important finding creates an opportunity for organizations to deliver this information via multiple channels and beyond social platforms. Risk education is especially supported by teens living with guns in the household, as well as certain demographic categories (Black, Hispanic, living in urban areas, and residing in lower-income households).

CONCLUSION

Exposure to gun violence—whether online or in real life—is high for teen Snapchat users, and it's already impacting their mental and physical lives. It's more critical than ever that gun risk education messaging reach this demographic, particularly in a time before they're making decisions about owning and/or using a gun. Three key outcomes from the research are clear:

Information about risk **increases their knowledge and awareness** of how firearms can impact their safety;

They're **open** to this messaging and seek education about the risks and responsibilities of guns; and

When shown this messaging, they **remember** it.

This research establishes that the SNUG campaign is successful at reaching and ingraining the narrative within teen Snapchat users, signaling the need to continue ad delivery at a frequent and ongoing rate. Investments in advertising in the platform need to be consistently tested and monitored on an annual basis to truly understand if the frequency and intensity of campaign efforts throughout the year have measurable shifts over time.

APPENDIX: PROJECT UNLOADED IMPACT INDEX A HOLISTIC KAB COMPOSITE

1. Overview & Index Construction

The Project Unloaded Impact Index (PUII) is a composite measure designed to capture the full arc of campaign impact and not just what teens know, but how they think and what they intend to do. Most campaign measurements stop at one dimension. The PUII integrates knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intent into a single weighted score that reflects how these dimensions actually work together.

The index is calibrated specifically to Project Unloaded's SNUG campaign theory of change as a perception and framing campaign. The campaign is designed to shift how teens evaluate the risks and benefits of gun ownership over time, not to prompt immediate action. Its deeper value is comparative and longitudinal: the PUII makes visible not just whether awareness moved, but whether that awareness translated into attitude change, and whether attitude change is beginning to press against behavioral intent across segments and over time.

Index Architecture

KAB	Cluster	Survey Question	Weight	Input
K	Risk Knowledge	There is a lot I did not know about the risks of having/using a gun (Q5b)	20%	avg with Q5c
		Learning about the risks of having a gun is new information for me (Q5c)		avg with Q5b
A	Risk Evaluation	Having a gun comes with a lot of risks (Q5a)	30%	avg with Q5e, Q4
		The risks of having a gun outweigh the benefits (Q5e)		avg with Q5a, Q4
		I am safer without a gun (Q4)		avg with Q5a, Q5e
A	Necessity / Identity	I do not need a gun to be safe (Q5d)	10%	direct
B	Ownership Intent	I can see myself having a gun at some point in the future (Q3)	25%	reversed
B	Prosocial Sharing	I am likely to share info about gun risks with a friend (Q6)	15%	direct

FORMULA:

$$\text{PUII} = \text{avg}(\text{Q5b}, \text{Q5c}) \times 0.20 + \text{avg}(\text{Q5a}, \text{Q5e}, \text{Q4}) \times 0.30 + \text{Q5d} \times 0.10 + (100 - \text{Q3}) \times 0.25 + \text{Q6} \times 0.15$$

All inputs are top-2-box agree percentages (0-100). Q3 ownership intent is reversed so that lower intent contributes positively to the index, consistent with the campaign's risk and safety-orientation framing. The result falls on a 0-100 scale. The total teen baseline is 50.

The PUII is designed for within-study comparative use and longitudinal tracking across other campaigns. Weights reflect the knowledge-and-attitude-forward orientation of the Project Unloaded campaign (K=**20%**, A=**40%**, B=**40%**). Full item-level cross-tabulations were used throughout.

2 ■ PUII Scores by Audience Segment

The following data sets reflect scores sorted by PUII within each segment. All component data is drawn directly from the SNUG Snapchat research data tables,

SNUG Campaign Awareness

Segment	K: Risk Know.	A: Risk Eval.	A: Necessity	B: Intent Rev.	B: Sharing	PUII
SNUG-aware (n=407)	58%	59%	51%	46%	91%	60
Total teens (n=2,502)	44%	48%	45%	48%	73%	50
SNUG-unaware (n=2,095)	41%	45%	43%	48%	70%	49

SNUG-aware teens score 11 points higher than unaware peers (**60** vs. **49**). The campaign is moving all three KAB dimensions simultaneously: aware teens show stronger knowledge, more favorable attitudes, and higher prosocial sharing intent (**91%** vs. **70%**). Ownership intent is nearly unchanged (+2 pts).

Gun in Household

Segment	K: Risk Know.	A: Risk Eval.	A: Necessity	B: Intent Rev.	B: Sharing	PUII
No gun in household (n=1,176)	53%	59%	59%	73%	70%	63
Total teens (n=2,502)	44%	48%	45%	48%	73%	50
Gun in household (n=1,326)	36%	38%	32%	26%	77%	40

The largest gap in the PUII dataset: 23 points between teens without a gun at home (**63**) and those with one (**40**). Gun-household teens are pulled down on every dimension: lower knowledge, lower risk attitudes, and dramatically higher ownership intent (**74%**). This single variable is the strongest suppressor of gun safety orientation and PUII in the study.

Methodological Note: Assignments for the K=20%, A=40%, B=40% Split

The foundational framework is Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action and its successor, the Theory of Planned Behavior. These are the most widely validated models in health behavior and social marketing research. Both theories establish a clear hierarchy: attitude is the strongest proximal predictor of behavioral intent, with knowledge functioning as a more distant antecedent. This distinction has been replicated consistently across public health and social marketing research, where attitude-behavior pathways routinely explain two to three times more variance in behavioral outcomes than knowledge-behavior pathways alone.

That hierarchy maps directly onto the weights. Attitude and behavior each receive **40%** because the literature treats them as roughly co-equal in predictive power: attitude shapes intent, intent predicts action. This relationship, reinforced in meta-analyses by Sheeran and colleagues and in Bandura's social cognitive theory, positions behavioral intent as both an outcome of attitude change and a leading indicator of future behavior. Knowledge receives **20%** because its influence runs through attitude rather than directly to behavior; a finding consistent enough across the KAB literature to be a foundational assumption in campaign evaluation design. These proportions reflect the relative explanatory power each dimension has demonstrated across decades of intervention research, calibrated to Project Unloaded's theory of change as a perception and framing campaign where attitudinal reframing is the primary mechanism of impact.