



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, August 20, 2023

What Do Our Youth Have to Say About Gun Violence?

“Gun violence has recently become the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. However, little research has been conducted to understand and respond to how young people view guns. Together with Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund and the Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab (PERIL), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has released a groundbreaking study on U.S. Youth Attitudes on Guns. The nationally representative survey of over 4,100 respondents aged 14 to 30 paints a sobering portrait of the prevalence of guns and gun violence in young peoples’ lives....

The majority of youth see gun violence as a major threat in the United States. Four out of five survey respondents agree that the current level of gun violence in our country is a problem and nearly 60 percent believe gun safety laws should be stricter.” (SPLC, 7/25/23)

“Some of the most striking findings include:

- ☼ Youth know, on average, at least one person who has been injured or killed by a gun.
- ☼ 4 out of 5 young people agree that gun violence is a problem.
- ☼ 42% of survey respondents report having at least somewhat easy access to guns.
- ☼ School safety is a major concern for youth and worry about school shootings is associated with a host of negative mental health outcomes.” (SPLC, 7/27/23)

“These findings, Paula Dashtgard of PERIL explains, evidence a need to adjust the national conversation about guns. **Rather than the intractable debate about guns, we should start talking instead about community safety** — what makes a community safe and what makes people feel safe in their community.” (SPLC, 7/25/23)

One community safety measure is safe gun storage. “In 2022, President Biden signed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act into law. As part of this historic law, a federal grant called the Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) was authorized to provide states with money for gun violence prevention programs.

Consider joining the Sisters of St. Joseph in urging leaders in Pennsylvania to invest funds into public education and awareness campaigns focused on safe firearm storage. Safe gun storage is an evidence-based solution to reduce gun violence in our state, protect public safety, and save lives.” (Colleen Dauerbach, SSJ, 6/13/23) [Click here to take action.](#)

“We must also go further by investing in strategies to address the deep-rooted social and economic drivers of violence. Communities that have been subjected to historic and persistent racial oppression and disinvestment are those now suffering the highest rates of firearm homicide. This is no coincidence. The concentrated disadvantages resulting from that legacy, including poverty, under-funded schools, unemployment, over-policing and police violence, mass incarceration, and limited access to affordable healthcare, housing, and green spaces, are all associated with increased risk for exposure to and involvement in violence.” (Julia Lund, MPH, and Vicka Chaplin, MA, MPH, *MedPage Today*, May 26, 2022)