



# Understanding Links Between Community Violence, Gun Carrying, & System Involvement

Transition age youth (18-22) who witness and experience violence - particularly community violence - are more likely to carry a gun.<sup>1</sup>

In a sample of 141 transition age youth (97% Black) living in high burden neighborhoods:

**17%** reported carrying a handgun in the last 3 months<sup>1</sup>

**64%** reported it would be very easy to access a handgun<sup>1</sup>

## Common Reported Reasons for Carrying a Gun<sup>1</sup>



To protect friends  
To protect family  
To feel safe



To get back at someone or get even  
To feel respected or powerful

A systematic review of 18 studies involving children and adolescents highlights that even indirect exposure to community gun violence poses a broad threat to youth development and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the impact of gun violence exposure depends on whether the youth was a victim, a bystander, a vicarious witness, or in the community.<sup>2</sup>

## Victim

Threatened, shot at, or injured with a gun

## Bystander

Hearing gunshots, witnessing someone threatened, shot at, or injured with a gun

## Vicarious

Friend or family member injured or killed by a gun

## Community

Awareness of gun violence in one's community

A trauma-informed approach is needed to understand and address gun carrying and gun violence.



Learn more about CTRJJ and supporting transition age youth at-risk for or involved in the juvenile justice system.



Sources:  
1. Ross, K. M., Walsh, C. S., O'Connor, K. E., & Sullivan, T. N. (2023). Ecological promotive and protective factors deterring gun carriage for young adults living in communities with high rates of community violence. *Journal of community psychology*, 51(3), 1164-1180.  
2. Bancalari, P., Sommer, M., & Rajan, S. (2022). Youth exposure to endemic community gun violence: a systematic review. *Adolescent research review*, 7(3), 383-4172.