



Fact Sheet: Youth Gun Carrying and Gun Violence in Boston

From the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) monitors key health risk behaviors that contribute to leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth in the United States. The survey is conducted every two years and provides data representative of 9th-12th grade students in public and private schools throughout the country. Selected cities, including Boston, are able to provide data representative at the local level. The following are Boston findings from the 2005 YRBS. For more information visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s YRBS website at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/>.

	Boston 2005 YRBS (% change from 2003)	National 2005 YRBS (% change from 2003)
Carried a gun	5% (-1%)	5% (-1%)
Carried a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property on one or more of the previous 30 days	8% (-1%)	7% (+1%)
Threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times during the previous 12 months	7% (-1%)	8% (-1%)
In a physical fight on school property one or more times during the previous 12 months	13% (+1%)	14% (+1%)
Did not go to school on one or more of the previous 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on way to/from	8% (0%)	6% (+1%)

From the 2004 Boston Youth Survey

The Boston Youth Survey (BYS), the product of a partnership between Boston’s Office of Human Services and the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, is a more in-depth examination of the lives of youth attending public high schools in Boston. This survey is also conducted every two years. The following are findings from the 2004 BYB, the first year the survey was designed to draw a representative sample of Boston youth. For more information or to download a copy of the 2004 BYB report, visit the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center website at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hyvp/>.

- Eight percent (8%) of respondents carried a concealed gun in the previous 12 months. Gun carrying was associated with: truancy, witnessing violence, personal victimization, ever hitting or trying to hurt someone, gun access, feeling unsafe, inability to confide in a parent, and being harassed based on one’s race.
- Contrary to the notion that “criminals will always find a way to get a gun”, we found a strong relationship between gun carrying and the ease with which one can get a gun (*see Chart A on reverse side*).
- As exposure to violence at school increased, the percent who felt unsafe there increased, as did the percent who carried guns in the past year.
- Gun carrying not associated with: hopefulness about the future, TV watching, depression or participation in after-school activities.
- 94% of gun carriers answered a question about their reason(s) for carrying a gun (*See Chart B on reverse side*). The majority (78%) listed one reason only for carrying a gun.



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- Half (51%) of the gun carriers were carrying for purely a protective reason (unsafe in neighborhood, unsafe at school, been threatened, self-protection), and two-thirds (67%) were carrying **at least in part** for a protective reason.
- The main difference in reasons given for carrying was gender. Most of the 14 girls who carried a gun said they carried **solely** for social influence reasons (mostly holding for a friend), whereas most boys were carrying **at least in part** for a protective reason.
- 74% of those who were victimized in the past year were carrying at least in part for a protective reason, compared to only 38% of those who were not victimized in the past year.
- There were no differences in reasons for gun carrying in terms of: feelings of safety, witnessing violence, truancy, danger posed by school or neighborhood gangs, general trust in others, or ability to confide in one's parents about most things.

Chart A: Gun Carrying vs. Difficulty of Obtaining a Gun

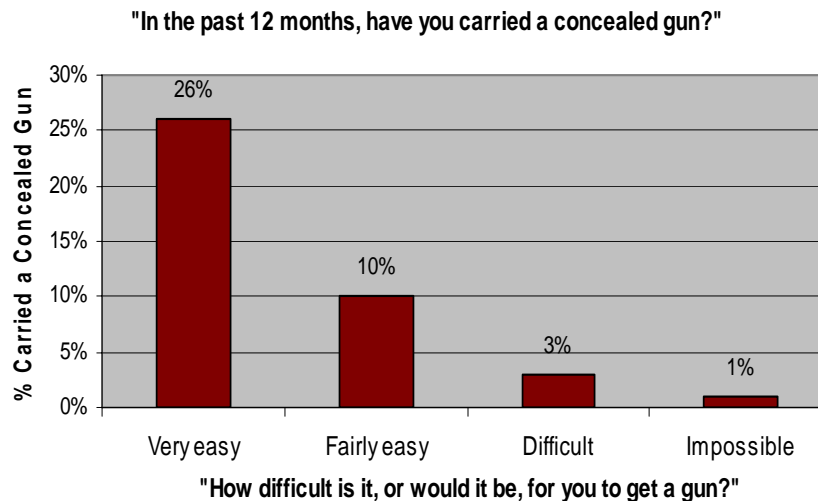


Chart B: Reasons for Carrying a Gun

Reasons for Carrying a Gun	Percent
Felt unsafe in neighborhood	38%
Someone had threatened me	29%
Friends carried guns	14%
Holding gun for a friend*	14%
Felt unsafe at school	13%
Self protection*	10%
Felt like it*	10%
"Drama", gang involvement*	8%

*Respondents wrote these answers in under "Other reason": prevalence might be underreported as a result.