

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Shira Angert, Benenson Strategy Group
RE: The Intersection of Gun Violence, Policing and Mass Incarceration in Communities of Color: Research Results
DATE: April 28, 2016

Methodology

Benenson Strategy Group conducted 1200 telephone interviews, 600 among African Americans and 600 among Hispanics nationally, including an oversample of 18-29 year olds, from February 22-28, 2016 as part of the *Engaging Communities in Reducing Gun Violence* project with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, the Joyce Foundation, and The Urban Institute. All respondents were registered voters who are likely to vote in the 2016 presidential election. The margin of error for each group (African Americans and Hispanics) is $\pm 3.94\%$ at the 95% confidence level. It is higher among subgroups.

4 in 10 African Americans have been personally affected by gun violence but there's a perception that the rest of the country doesn't care about it

- Gun violence affects African Americans in high numbers, with 4 in 10 saying they, or someone close to them, have been personally affected by gun violence.
 - ✓ This number is even higher among young African Americans, at 48%.
 - ✓ Further, more than half of African Americans and 1 in 3 Hispanics have had a negative interaction with law enforcement, and a majority of people of color know someone who has been incarcerated.
- Despite gun violence affecting African Americans in high numbers, there is a belief that most Americans don't care about gun violence that affects communities of color.
 - ✓ 57% of African Americans agree that "most people in America don't care about the gun violence that is affecting communities of color," a feeling that is particularly pronounced among young people, with 64% of African Americans aged 18-29 agreeing.
 - Hispanics are less inclined to agree with the statement with only 45% agreeing and 48% of Hispanics aged 18-29.
- In addition to gun violence, high numbers of African Americans and Hispanics have also had personal experiences with incarceration or negative interactions with law enforcement.

Personal Experiences

| | African Americans | | Hispanics | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | All | 18-29 yrs | All | 18-29 yrs |
| They, or someone close to them, have been affected by gun violence | 42% | 48% | 29% | 26% |
| They, or someone close to them, have had a negative interaction with law enforcement | 56% | 62% | 34% | 40% |
| Personally know someone who has been sent to jail, prison, or another type of correctional facility | 75% | 73% | 58% | 59% |



Negative experiences with law enforcement lead most African Americans to believe that even if you're following the law, you could still have problems with the police

- With a majority of African Americans saying they, or someone they know, have had a negative experience with law enforcement, there is a belief that even if you're following the law, you may still have problems with the police.
 - ✓ 53% of African Americans *disagree* with the statement: "As long as you're following the law, you won't have any problems with the police."
 - ✓ This sentiment is much less pronounced among Hispanics, with only 26% disagreeing.

8 in 10 African Americans and 2 in 3 Hispanics frequently worry about interactions between police and young men of color, even though most believe police make their communities safer

- When it comes to policing and communities of color, there is a particularly strong concern around interactions between the police and young men of color.
 - ✓ 82% of African Americans and 65% of Hispanics agree that they "frequently worry about interactions between the police and young men of color."
- But, even with these concerns and negative experiences with law enforcement, there is still a sense that police make their communities safer, rather than less safe.
 - ✓ 62% of African Americans and 80% of Hispanics say that the police make their communities safer—less than 1 in 10 say the police make things "less safe."
 - ✓ This sentiment stems from the fact that a strong majority of African Americans and Hispanics, including young people, believe that discrimination and profiling occurs among a "few bad apples" as opposed to widespread discrimination among most police officers.

Which statement do you agree with more?

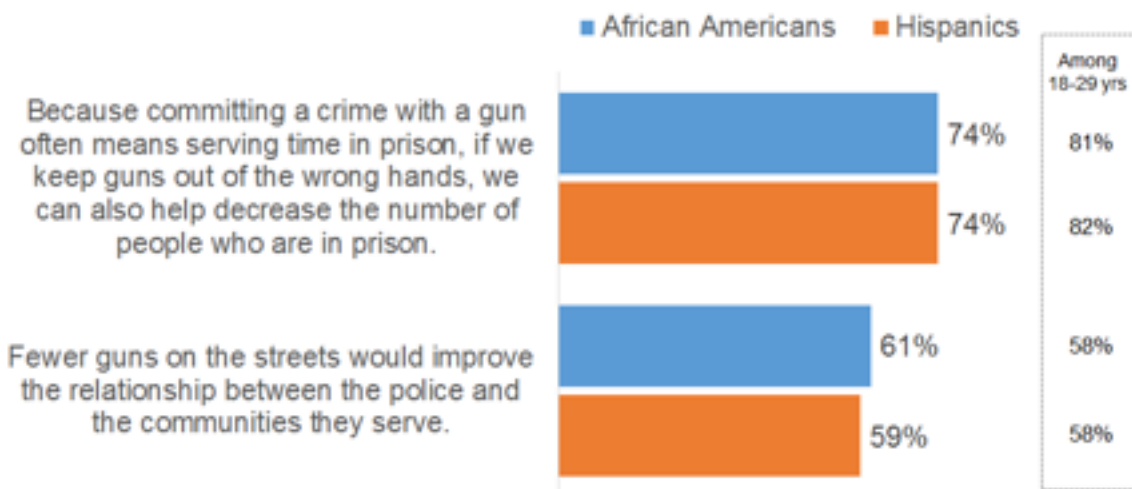
| | African Americans | | Hispanics | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | All | 18-29 yrs | All | 18-29 yrs |
| Most police officers in America are professionals and do the right thing, but there are a few bad apples who discriminate and profile on the basis of race. | 74% | 71% | 83% | 82% |
| Most police officers in America discriminate and profile on the basis of race. | 23% | 27% | 15% | 16% |



Communities of color believe that by solving the problem of gun violence, we can also make a meaningful impact on incarceration rates and improve police-community relations

- This data demonstrates the interconnected nature of gun violence, incarceration and policing.
 - ✓ Communities of color believe that tougher laws to keep guns out of the wrong hands will help reduce incarceration rates, not exacerbate them.
 - ✓ Moreover, reducing guns on the streets is widely seen as improving police-community relations.

Attitude Statements: % who agree



- There is little concern that new gun laws would raise incarceration rates.
 - ✓ Most African Americans (56%) and Hispanics (70%) *disagree* that “passing new gun laws will only lead to more people of color being sent to prison and will do little to reduce gun violence.”
 - 64% of African Americans aged 18-29 disagree, as do 73% of Hispanics aged 18-29.
- Consequently, communities of color believe the best way to reduce gun violence is to have common sense gun laws that keep guns out of the wrong hands.
 - ✓ 84% of African Americans and 95% of Hispanics agree “the most important thing we can do to reduce gun violence is to make sure we keep guns out of the wrong hands.”

There is strong support for a broad range of solutions to address these problems

- Given the urgency and desire to solve these interconnected problems in communities of color, an array of policy prescriptions for preventing gun violence and improving police accountability receive wide and intense support.
 - ✓ In particular, proposals for universal background checks, re-entry support for returning citizens, and community investments to reduce gun violence rise to the top.
 - ✓ Lost or stolen gun notifications and cracking down on illegal gun traffickers also receive strong support.

Policy Proposals: % Strongly Support

| | African Americans | Hispanics |
|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Background Checks Require everyone to pass a background check before buying a gun, no matter where they buy it, including online gun sales, private gun sales and sales at gun shows. | 87% | 90% |
| Increase Investment in Returning Citizens Increase funding for job training, life skills support, and mental health and drug abuse counseling for people returning to the community after they've served their time in prison. | 83% | 68% |
| Reduce Gun Crime by Investing in the Community Reduce the likelihood of gun violence by addressing the root causes of crime by investing in community programs including job training, mental health services and programs specifically for young people. | 82% | 78% |
| Increased Accountability for Police Strengthen accountability for police officers by implementing civilian review boards, body cameras for police officers, and the ability for police chiefs to fire officers who repeatedly exhibit racial bias. | 80% | 74% |
| Lost/Stolen Gun Notification Requirement Require individuals to notify law enforcement if their gun is lost or stolen to crack down on the amount of illegal guns on our streets. | 80% | 70% |
| Crack Down on Gun Traffickers Create stiffer penalties for people who sell guns illegally to keep guns off our streets. | 79% | 74% |

**Total support (very + somewhat support) for these proposals among African Americans and Hispanics averages to 91% and 92% respectively.*



- However, support for new gun laws does not mean African Americans and Hispanics want to take guns away from law-abiding citizens.
 - ✓ In fact, communities of color believe that a gun in the home is much more likely to be used to protect, rather than harm, members of the household.
 - ✓ Notably, in our survey, 28% of African Americans and 30% Hispanics report living in a household where a gun is owned.

If there is a gun in the home, what do you think is more likely?

| | African Americans | Hispanics |
|---|--------------------------|------------------|
| The gun being used to protect members of the home | 75% | 73% |
| The gun being used to harm someone in the home, either accidentally or on purpose | 18% | 22% |

- The belief that guns are more likely to be used to protect, rather than harm, someone in the household does not preclude communities of color from strongly supporting important policy ideas to strengthen gun laws, reduce gun violence and improve police accountability.
- It is clear from this data that communities of color see gun violence as an extremely important issue, one that they feel on a deeply personal level, and one that is tied to other issues affecting their communities – namely, incarceration and relations with police. There is a desire for action on these issues, and they support a range of commonsense proposals to address them in America today.

