

METRO-URBAN INSTITUTE

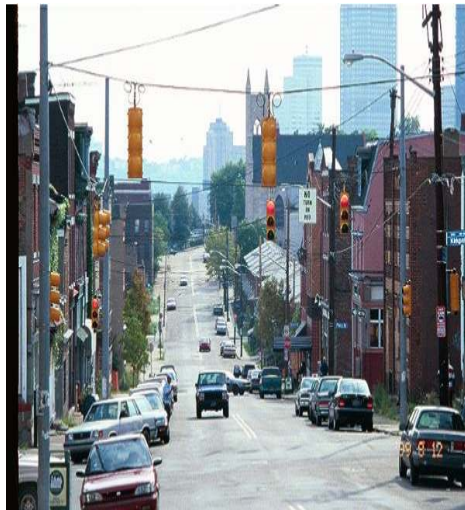
PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

What are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying?

A Survey of Pittsburgh Youth (Ages 9-18)

A STUDY TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF GUN VIOLENCE

IN THE LIVES OF PITTSBURGH'S YOUTH



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SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2009

Table of Contents

Executive Summary of Findings	page 3
Intent of The Survey	page 4
Survey	page 5
Methodologies and Parameters of the Study	page 6
Youth Ages 9-11	
Results of the Survey	page 8
Narrative Analysis	page 11
Youth Ages 12-14	
Results of the Survey	page 12
Narrative Analysis	page 15
Youth Ages 15-18	
Results of the Survey	page 17
Narrative Analysis	page 20
Overall Responses of Youth Surveyed	
Results of the Survey	page 22
Narrative Analysis	page 25
Conclusions and Recommendations	page 28
Recommendations for Further Study	page 31

**WHAT PITTSBURGH'S YOUTH ARE SAYING
ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF GUN-VIOLENCE
October 2009**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
OF SURVEY FINDINGS**

The Metro-Urban Institute of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (MUI) conducted an informal survey of youth ages 9-18 years of age from September 29 through October 12, 2009. The survey asked questions about favorite subjects in school, ways to stop street violence, people youth admired, favorite entertainers, and what respondents pray for the most. A sample of fifteen organizations in collaboration with MUI that have programs involving youth in this age group were randomly selected and requested to assist in this effort. The tally of responses came from those organizations able to respond in the limited time-frame allotted.

455 responses were tallied and categorized into three age groups: ages 9-11 (16.7 percent), 12-14 (25.1 percent), and 15-18 (58.2 percent). In the 15-18 age-category, 86 percent of the respondents reported experiences with gun violence. Overall, 78.9 percent of respondents reported that a family member or friend had been shot or killed by gun-violence. This informal sample of school age children and teens in the Pittsburgh area represents a significant challenge to the broader Pittsburgh community concerning the safety and spiritual welfare of youth.

Intent of the Study

Intent of this Survey

- **Ask opinions of Pittsburgh Youth, ages 9-18.**
- **Get opinions of church and community youth.**
- **Share results with the public.**
- **Help improve the quality of life and education for children of Pittsburgh**
- **Inform parents, public, school officials, religious leaders, public officials.**
- **No personal information from any participant.**

To further understand the full scope of violence, and particularly gun violence, the Metro-Urban Institute at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary asked 455 Pittsburgh youth ages 9-18 seven questions covering gun violence, school, heroes, and prayer. With the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Violence, the Black Political Empowerment Project, and the Center for Victims of Violence and Crime, the Metro-Urban Institute's Urban Church Network set out to gather these numbers thereby providing agencies and programs with an understanding of the full magnitude of the problem of gun violence so that we can better collaborate to implement strategies for positive community change. Survey results were gathered September 29 through October 12, 2009

What are Pittsburgh's young people saying?

A SURVEY OF PITTSBURGH YOUTH (Ages 9-18)

**Sponsored by the
Metro-Urban Institute /Pittsburgh Theological Seminary**

In collaboration with the Pittsburgh
COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE

If you are at least age 9 and not older than 18, please answer to the following questions:

1. **How old are you?** _____
2. **Has a family member or friend been shot or killed?**
No _____ YES _____
A. Family Member ___ B. Friend ___
3. **Which of the following subjects do you like most in school?**
A. Arts__ (music, dance, drawing) E. Math_____
B. English____ F. Science _____
C. Foreign Language____ G. Sports _____
D. History____
4. **Suggest two ways to stop street violence.**
A. _____
B. _____
5. **Who are the three people you admire the most?**
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
6. **Name your favorite performing artist or entertainer.**

7. **What do you pray for the most?**
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

Methodology and Parameters of the Study

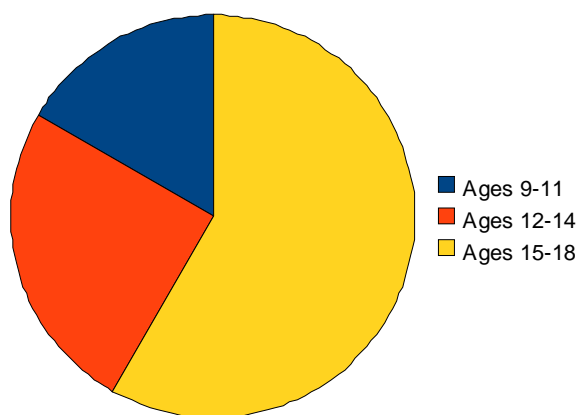
The following pages will provide a report and analysis of the data collected through the "What Are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying" survey of youth and violence, conducted in partnership with The Metro-Urban Institute of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence. The survey was sent out to the members of the Metro-Urban Institute's Urban Church Network as well as to the faculty and students of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary on September 29, 2009. Participating congregations and community organizations completed the survey with their youth between the September 29 and October 12, 2009. In this two week period, the following congregations, schools, and community organizations were directly solicited for participation in the "What Are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying" survey: The Urban League Charter School, The Neighborhood Academy, Imani Christian Academy, The Pittsburgh Project, Community Empowerment Project, Schenley Heights Community Development Corp. After School Program, Youth Works, Inc., Family Guidance, Inc., The Pittsburgh Presbytery Social Justice Ministry, Valley View Presbyterian Church, Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Bidwell Presbyterian Church, Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, Waverly United Presbyterian Church, and Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church. A total of 479 responses from youth involved with the listed congregations and organizations were collected and compiled by October 12, 2009. Youth Works, Inc. and the Pittsburgh Project provided the two largest sets of responses.

The Survey is intended to gather information from youth who reside within the city of Pittsburgh to ascertain a better understanding of how youth have been affected by urban violence and to gather a sense of their ideas as to how to address issues of violence, and confirms that the vast majority of Pittsburgh's youth have been directly impacted by violence. Youth surveyed were between the ages of 9 and 18. Of the 479 surveys returned by the cutoff date of October 12, 2009, 455 met the criteria for submission and were used to develop the data in this study.

Of the 24 surveys which were disqualified, 12 were disqualified because the respondent was too

old for inclusion in the survey, one was disqualified because the respondent was too young¹, 1 respondent did not list either their age or grade, 5 respondents were disqualified for answering yes to question 2 but not specifying as to whether the person or persons that they knew who had been shot or killed were friends or family members, 1 respondent was disqualified for answering both yes and no to question 2, and 4 were disqualified for providing misleading responses: 2 marked no but indicated knowing a family member who had been shot or killed, 1 marked no but indicated knowing a friend who had been shot or killed, and 1 marked no but indicated knowing both a friend and family member who had been shot or killed.

The youth who responded to the survey were grouped into categories of age range; 9-11, 12-14, and 15-18. Of the 455 surveys which were eligible for inclusion in the study, 76 of the respondents were in the 9-11 age range, 114 of the respondents were in the 12-14 age range, and 265 of the respondents were in the 15-18 age range.

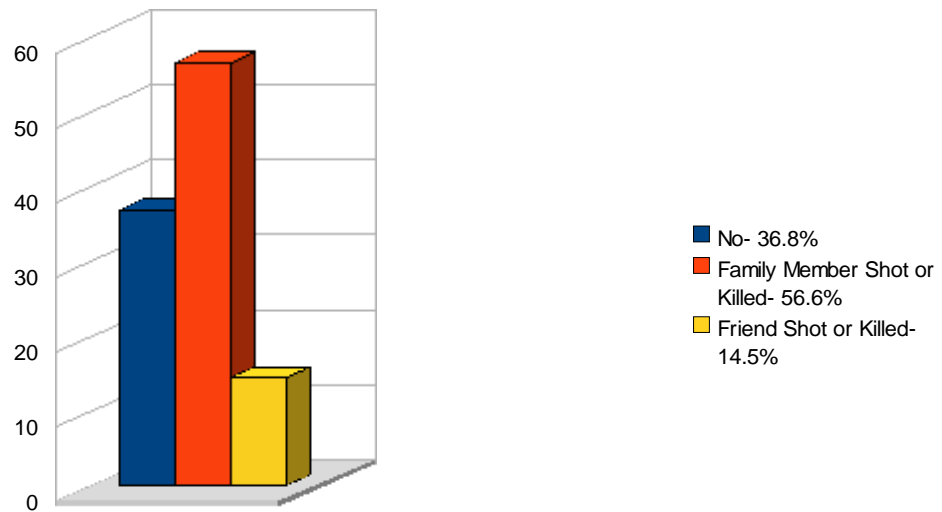
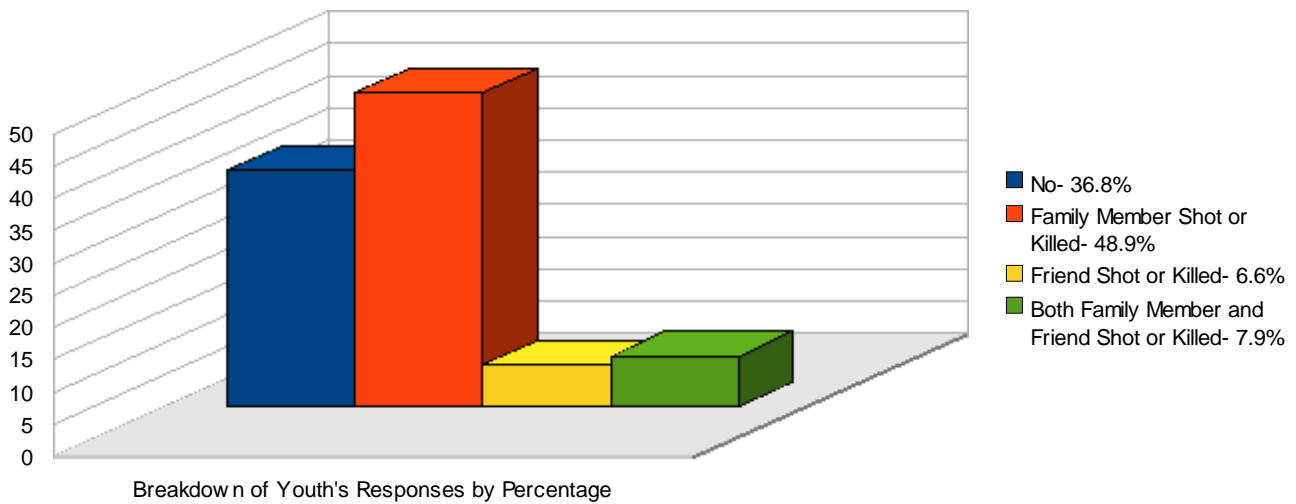
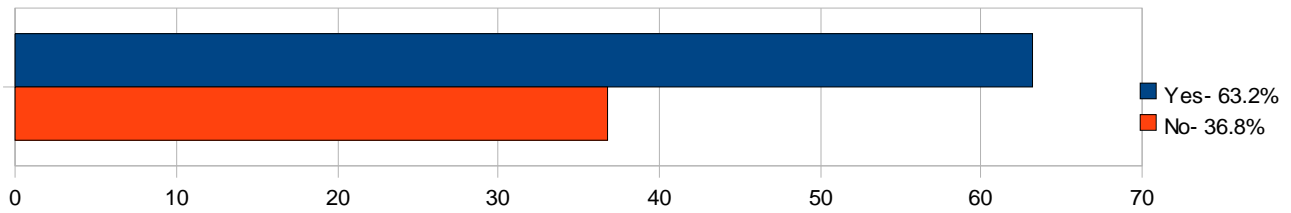


The youth surveyed were not asked to indicate their gender or sexual orientation, nor were they asked any indication of their family's socio-economic status or in which neighborhood of the city they reside. They were also not asked to indicate whether or not they knew more than one friend or family member who had been shot or killed.

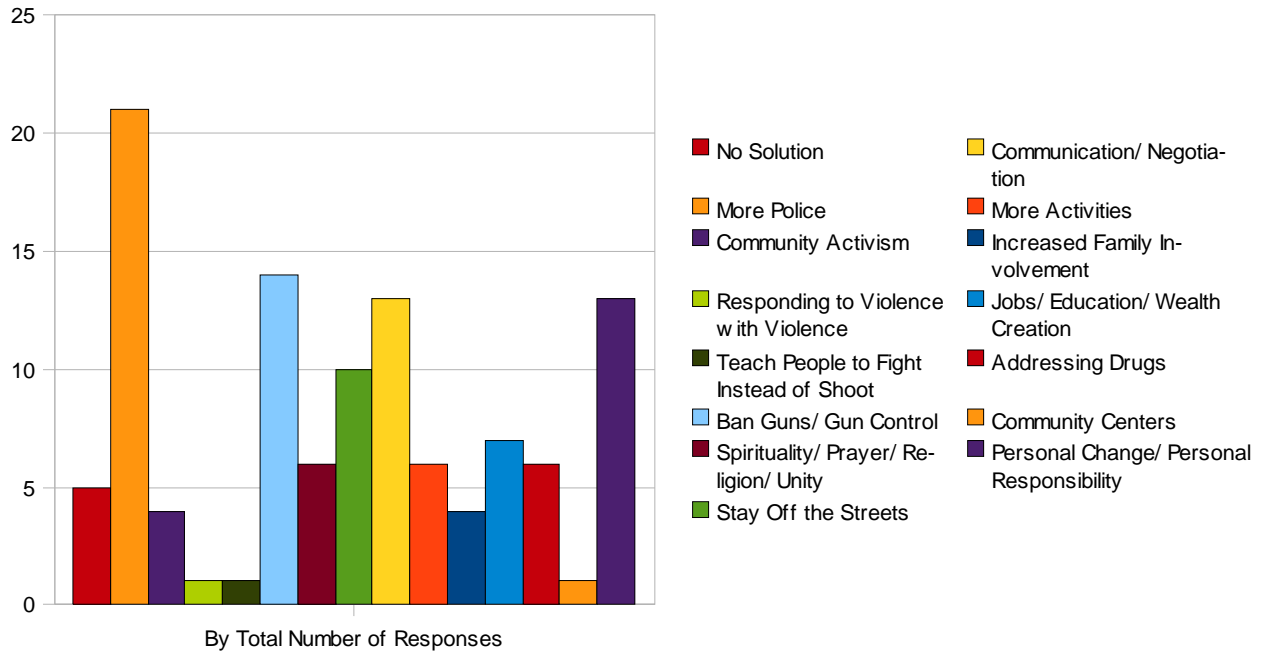
¹ It is worth noting that this respondent was 7 years old and answered in the affirmative for knowing a family member who had been shot or killed

Youth Ages 9-11

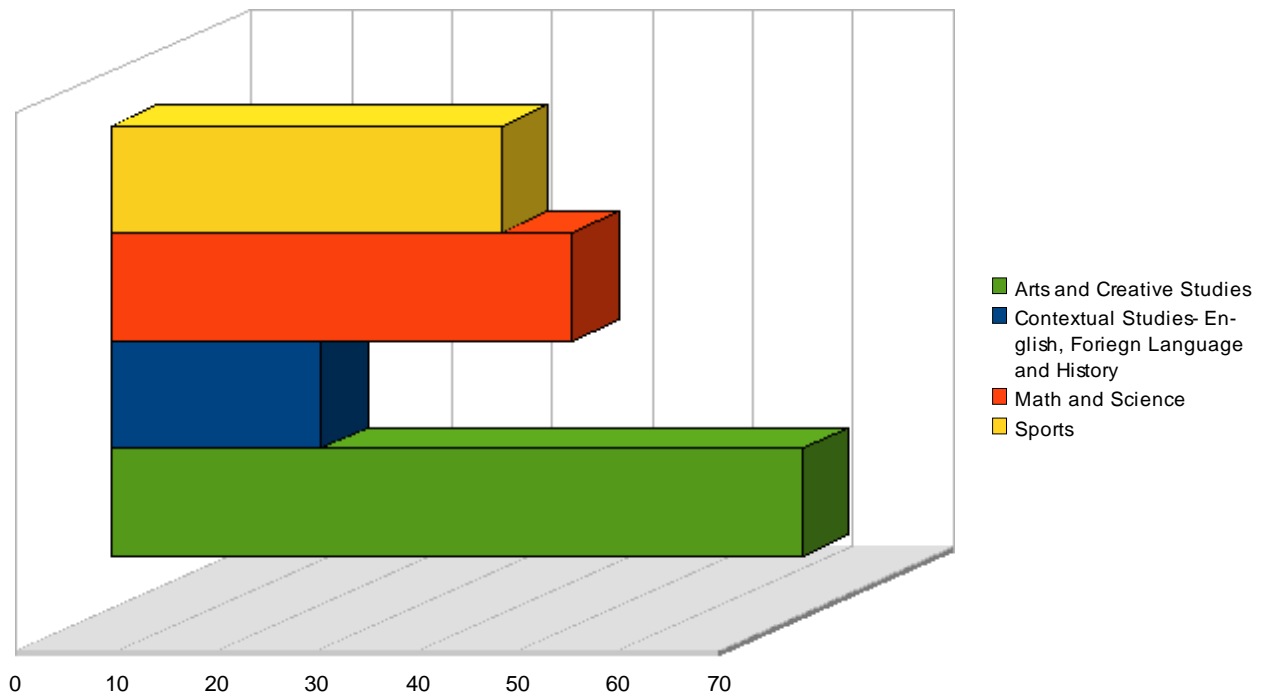
Has a Member of your family or one of your friends been shot or killed?



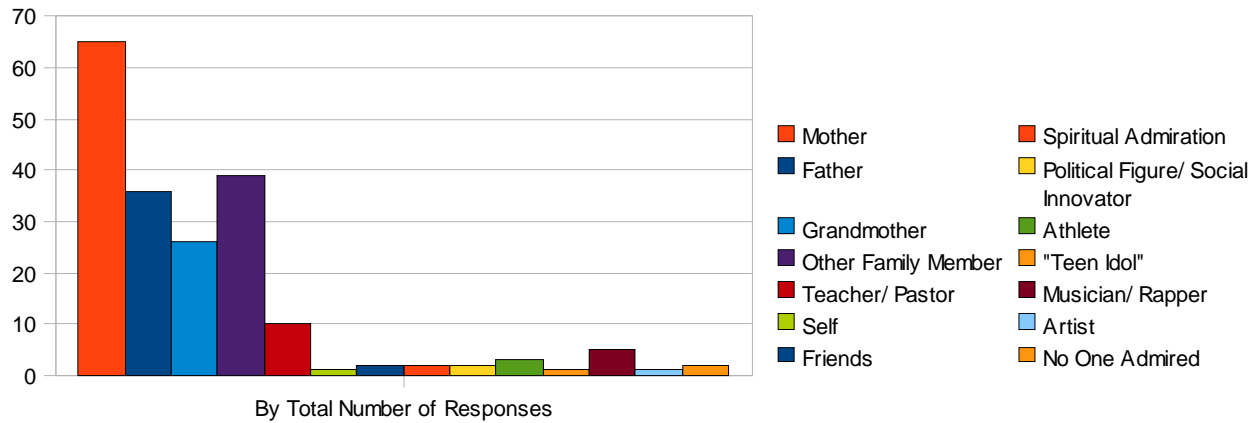
Suggest Two Ways to Stop Street Violence



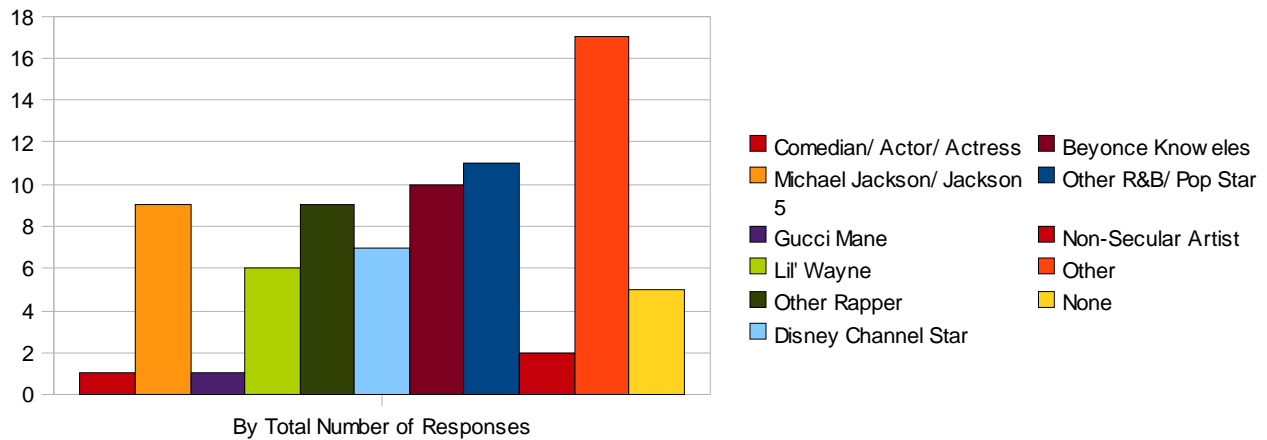
Which of the Following Subjects Do You Like Most in School?



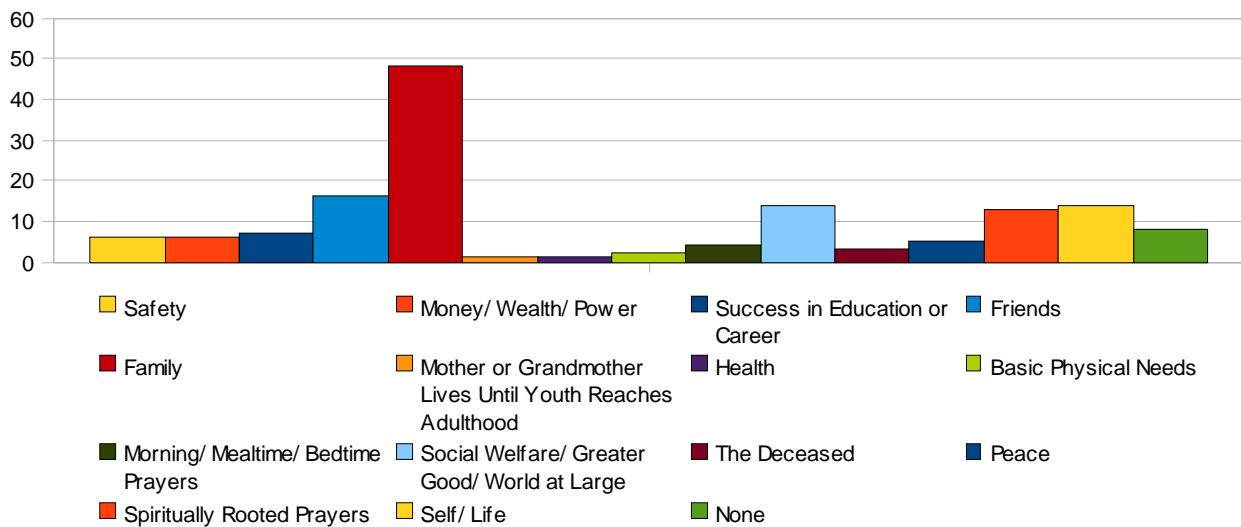
Who Are the Three People You Admire the Most?



Name Your Favorite Performing Artist or Entertainer



What Do you Pray For Most?



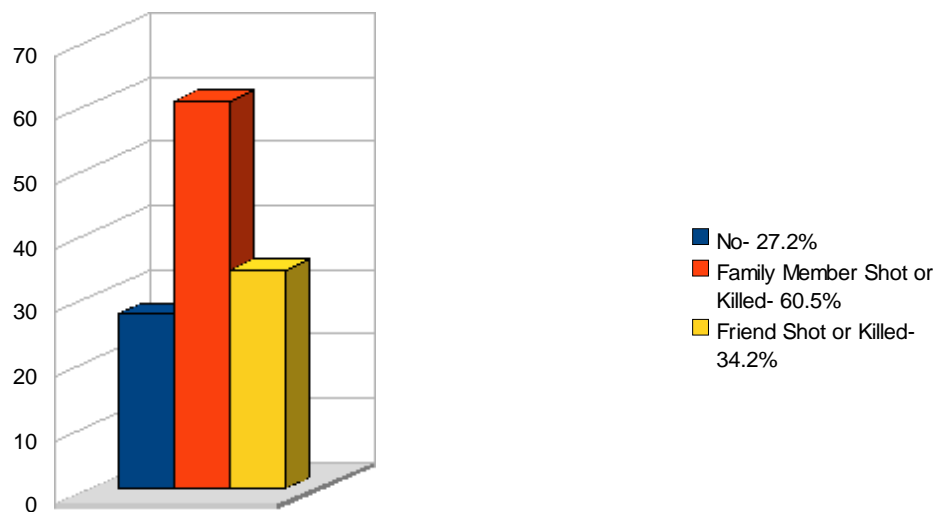
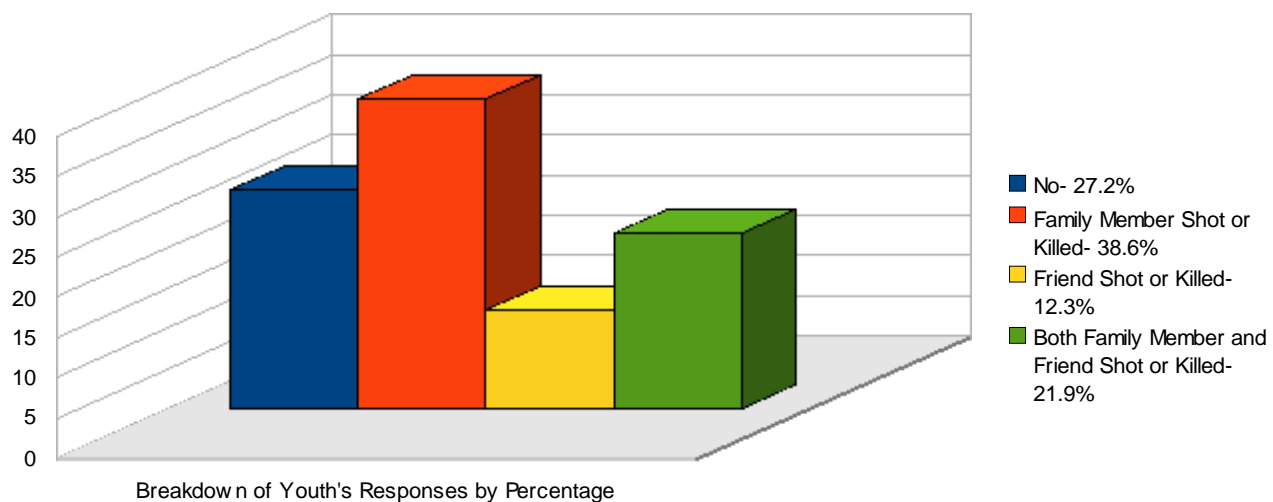
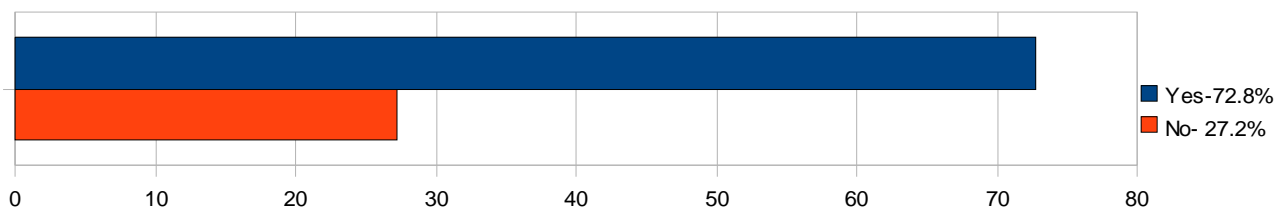
Of the 76 responses included in the 9-11 age range, 48 (63.16%) indicated knowing a friend or family member who had been shot and killed. 28 (36.84%) indicated knowing neither. A total of 43 respondents (56.58%) indicated knowing a family member who had been shot or killed, and a total of 11 respondents (14.47%) indicated knowing a friend who had been shot or killed. Only 5 (6.58%) of the youth surveyed in this age group indicated knowing only a friend who had been shot or killed, and 6 respondents (7.89%) indicated knowing both a friend(s) and family member(s) who had been shot or killed.

The vast majority of the children in this age group identified family members as the people that they most admired, and the people that they most often prayed for. However, only 4 of the youth identified the role of family in their proposals for how to reduce street violence. This age group was statistically the most likely to suggest both personal change and responsibility of individuals to refrain from participating in street violence, and the need for more police or heavier law enforcement. 13 out of the 76 (17.1%) youth in this age group suggested personal change and responsibility, and 21 youth (27.6%) identified a need for a stronger presence of law enforcement. Interestingly, this age group was also the only age group which did not identify street gangs as a root cause of street violence. This age group was also the least likely of all the age groups to identify themselves as not praying, but was also the least likely to identify either a purely spiritual dynamic to their prayer life or in what they most admired.

One of the strongest characteristics that emerged from the data for this age group is how little variation there was between the responses given by those children who identified themselves as knowing a friend or family member who had been shot or killed and those who didn't. They identify a strong sense of connection to family, and they place a high value on both the ability of authority figures to overcome street violence and on the individual's ability to choose whether they will be personally involved in violence. But it is very clear that these youth do believe that the pattern and trajectory of violence in the community can be changed.

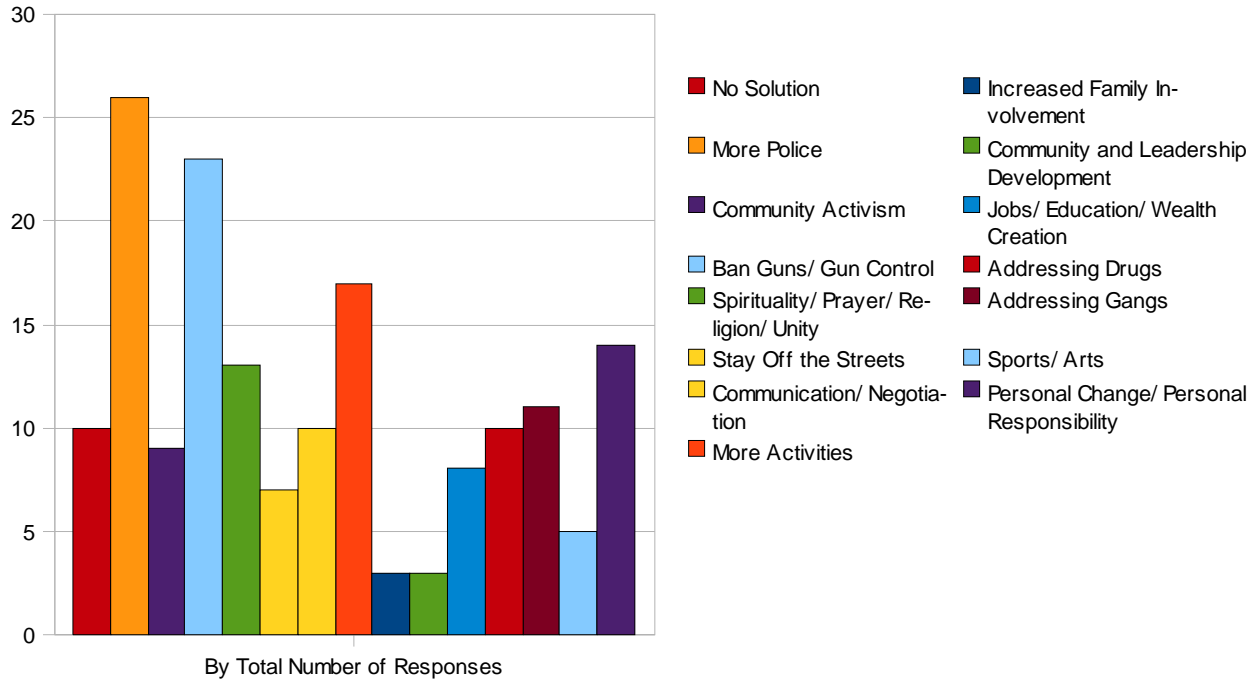
Youth Ages 12-14

Has a Member of your family or one of your friends been shot or killed?

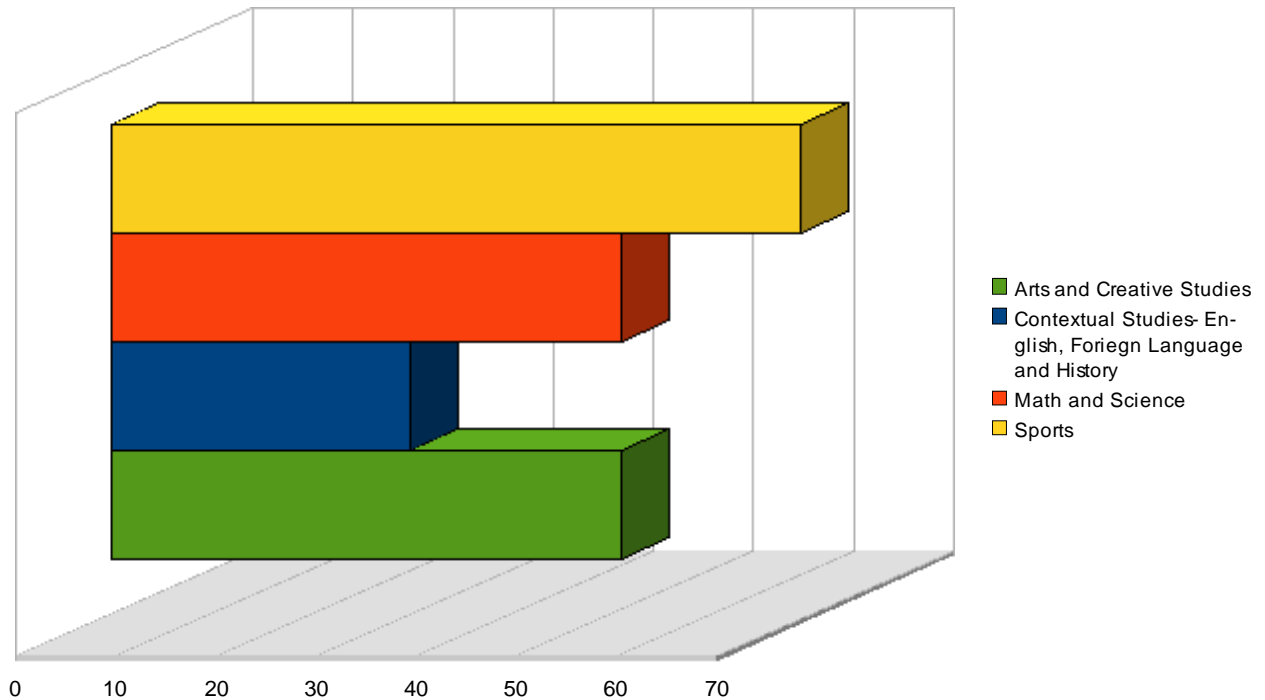


Percentages of Family and Friends Shot or Killed Integrating the Responses of Youth Who Know Both

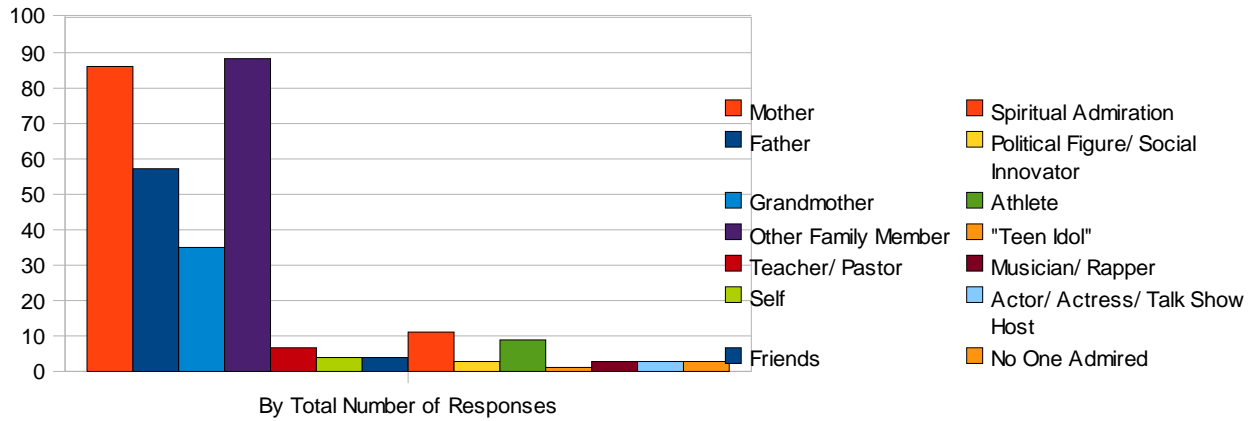
Suggest Two Ways to Stop Street Violence



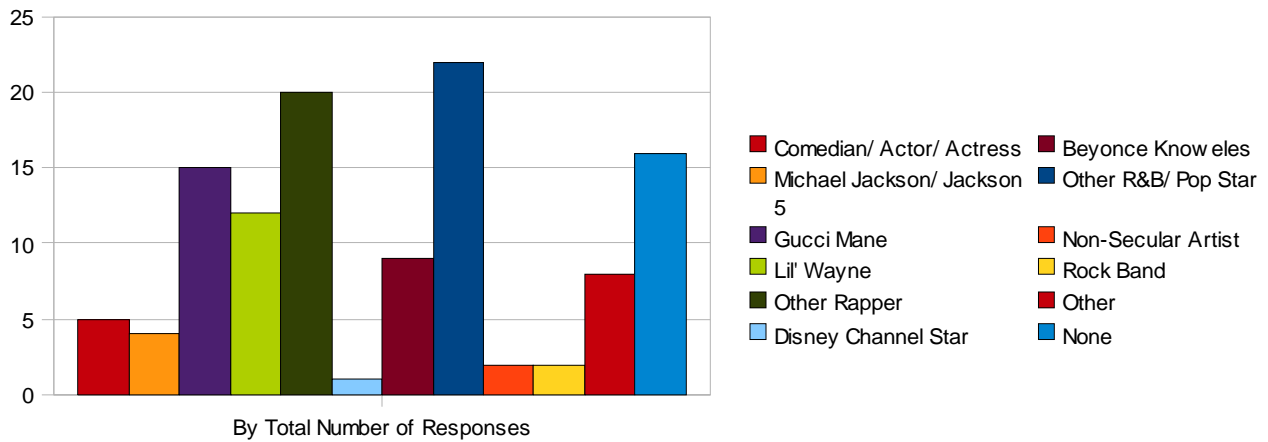
Which of the Following Subjects Do You Like Most in School?



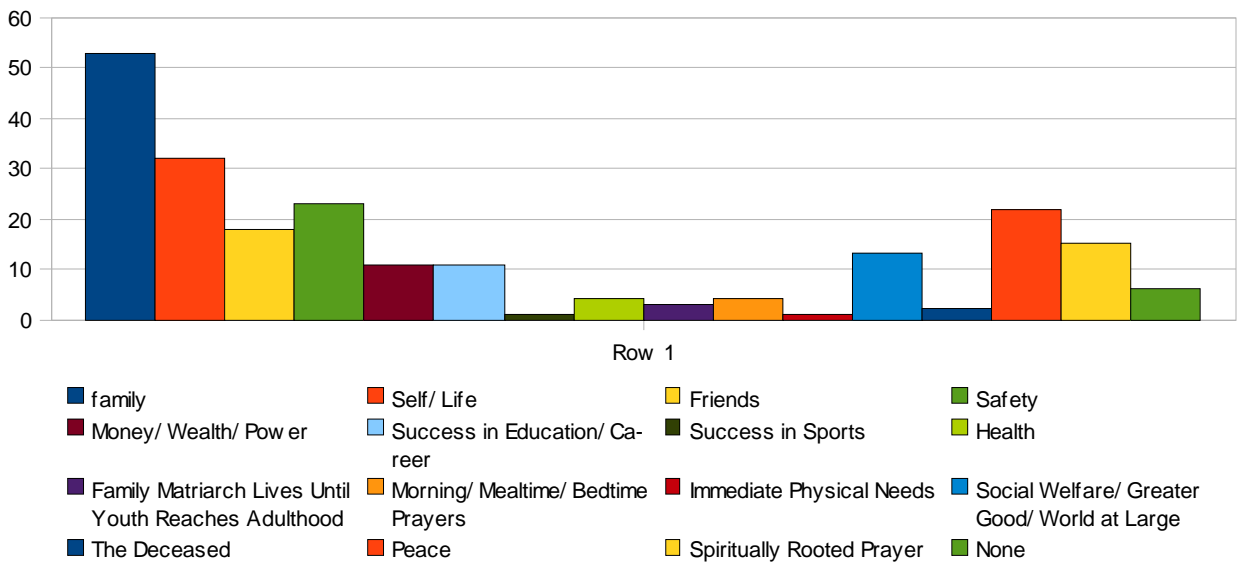
Who Are the Three People You Admire the Most?



Name Your Favorite Performing Artist or Entertainer



What Do you Pray For Most?



Of the 114 responses included in the 12-14 age range, 83 (72.81%) indicated knowing a friend or family member who had been shot and killed. 31 (27.19%) indicated knowing neither a friend nor a family member who had been shot or killed. A total of 69 respondents (60.53%) indicated knowing a family member who had been shot or killed, and a total of 39 respondents (34.21%) indicated knowing a friend who had been shot or killed. 44 respondents (38.6%) indicated knowing a family member only who had been shot or killed, 14 respondents (12.28%) indicated knowing only a friend who had been shot or killed, and 25 respondents (21.93%) indicated knowing both a friend(s) and family member(s) who had been shot or killed.

This age group seems to be where the interest in Michael Jackson and other pop stars begins to wane and the interest in more lyrically aggressive rappers, and musicians and performers with more adult oriented content begins to build. This shift in interests comes at a point where the youth are transitioning out of childhood and into early adolescence. While they still maintain a strong sense of both dedication to family and faith in authority figures, there is a distinct shift in their understanding of themselves and their place within the community. The percentage of youth who seem to believe that they are independently capable of choosing whether or not they are involved in violence is far smaller than in that of their younger counterparts, with only 12.3% identifying personal change or responsibility as an effective way of countering violence. Further, youth in this age group are beginning to commonly identify safety as among their most frequent prayers. Two distinct patterns are also beginning to emerge in this age group. The first is a stronger and more defined sense of hope in their ideas as to how to address violence and their understanding of their roles within the community. This emerging ideology is enforced by the indications that this age group is where youth are beginning to reach a more mature and defined spirituality, and that seems to play a noticeable role in how they think about violence, themselves and their community. As their belief in the individual's ability to choose whether or not they will be involved in violence is decreasing, there is a distinct increase in

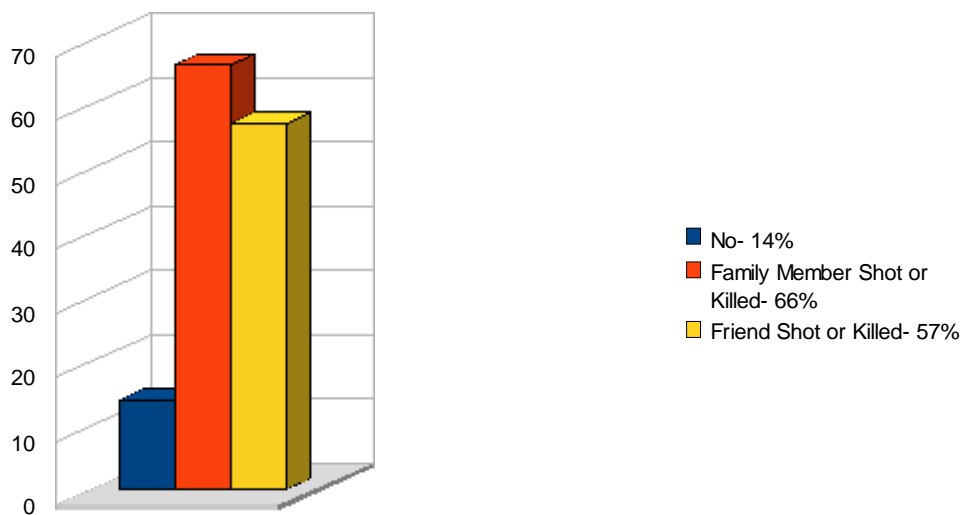
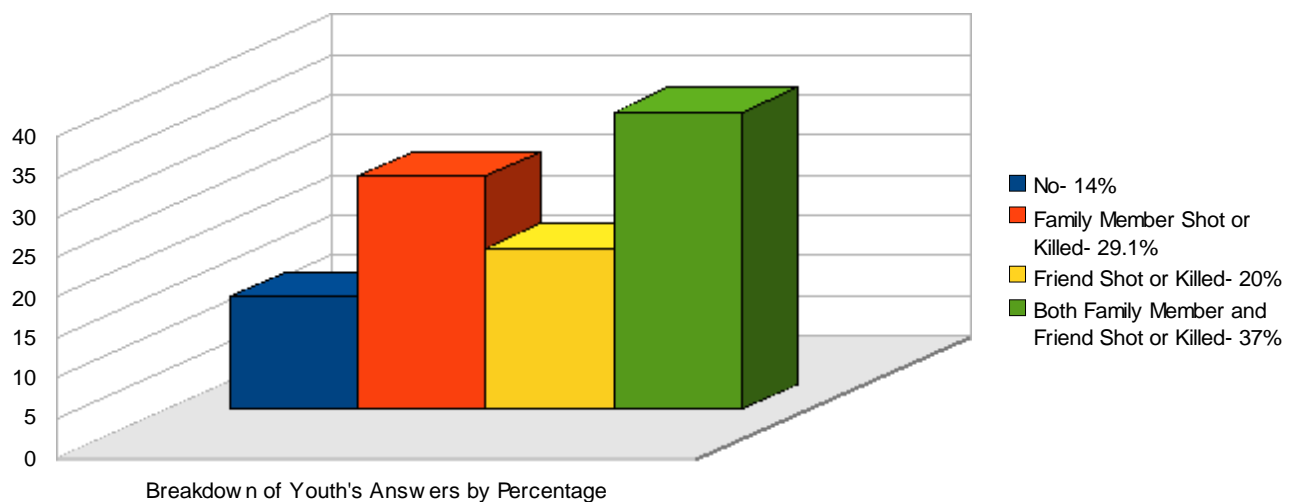
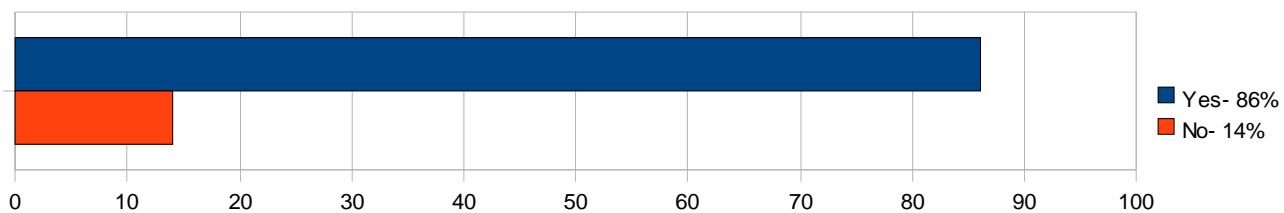
ideas presented that suggest a need for a broader participation from the community in creating alternatives to violence and changing in fostering change. It is worth noting that the desire for alternatives to violence is very present among youth in this age group because this is the age group that most heavily identifies gangs as being a root cause of violence in the community. The second distinct trajectory of youth's responses is that there is an emerging trend among youth who know friends and family members, and especially those who indicate having lost a friend, which shows a lack of hope. It is beginning to become more common in this age range for youth to self identify as not having a spiritual or prayer life, as well as having no one that they strongly admire. Further characterizing this trajectory of lack of hope is that this is the age bracket in which youth are beginning to express disbelief that the problems of violence can be solved or even reduced.

The jump from 14.5% of 9-11 year olds to 34.2% of youth in this age group identifying a friend who has been shot or killed is significant. According to a recent study of youth exposure to violence by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, this age group is where there is a significant potential for youth to either be assaulted with a weapon, or to witness an assault with a weapon². The results of the *What Are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying?* survey seem to reinforce the conclusions of OJJDP, and indicate that this is the age group where individual participation in urban violence seems to begin, and any interventions may be most successful and most needed.

² <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227744.pdf>

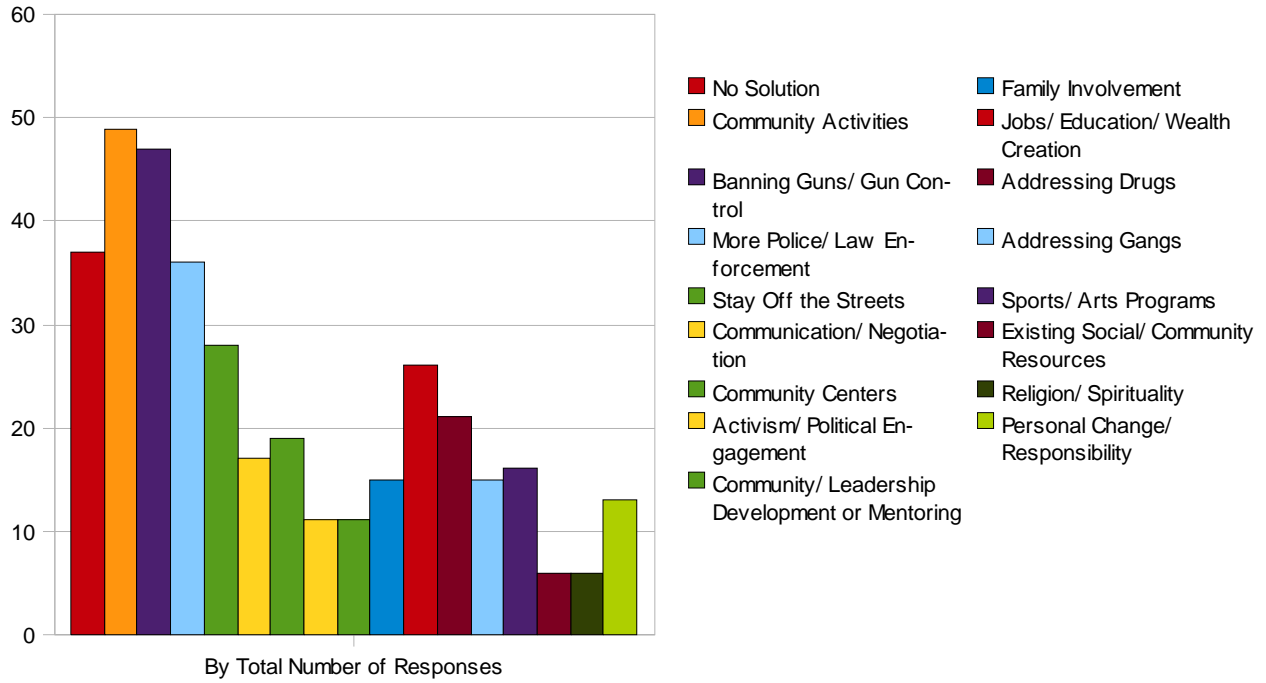
Youth Ages 15-18

Has a Member of your family or one of your friends been shot or killed?

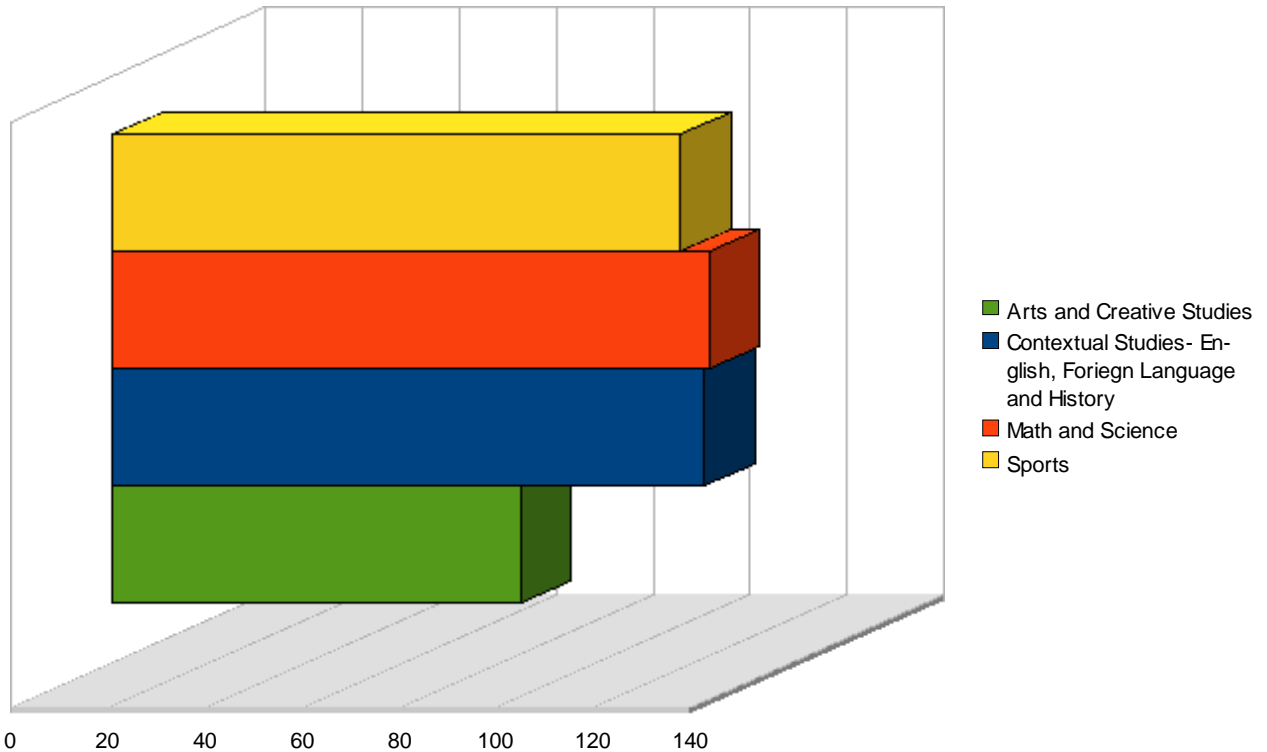


Percentages of Family and Friends Shot or Killed Integrating the Responses of Youth Who Know Both

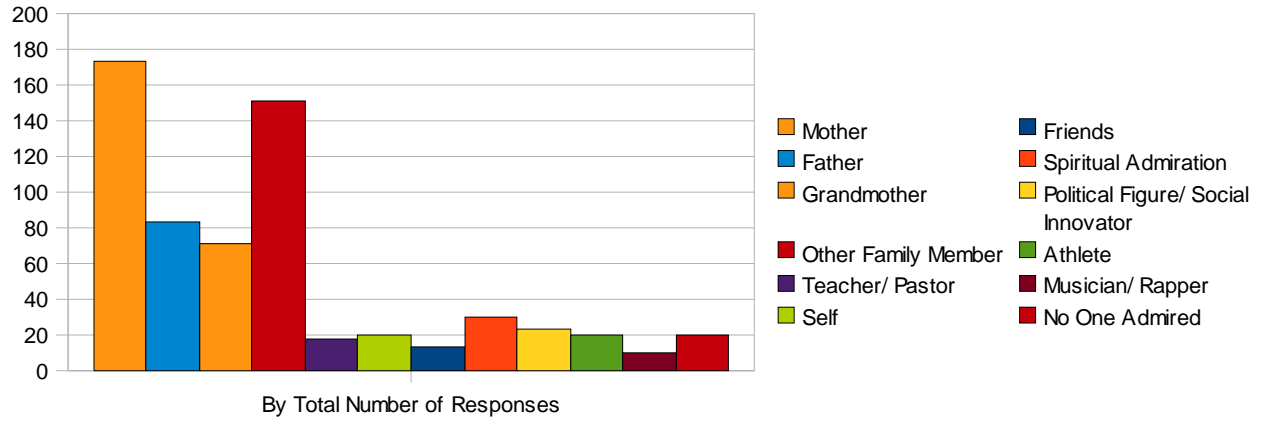
Suggest Two Ways to Stop Street Violence



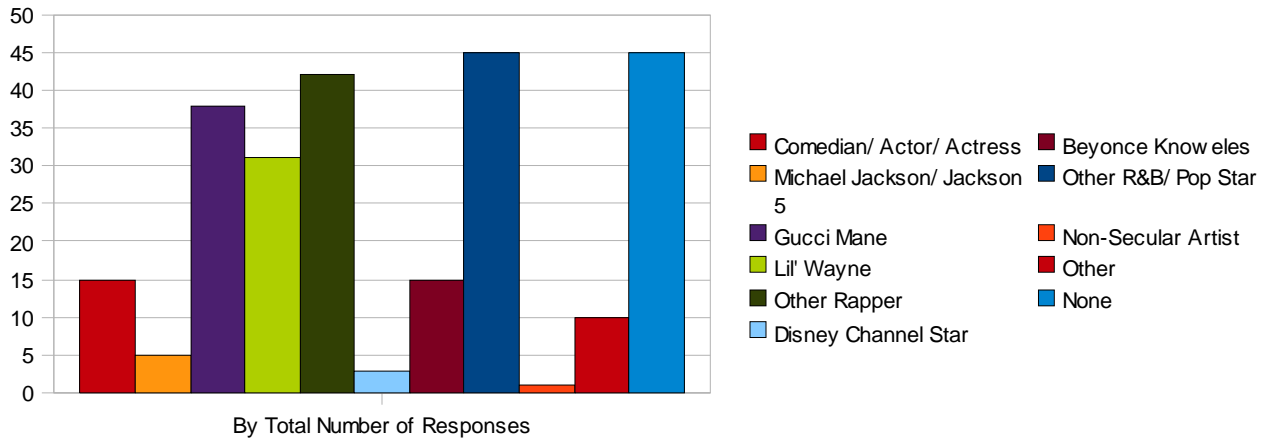
Which of the Following Subjects Do You Like Most in School?



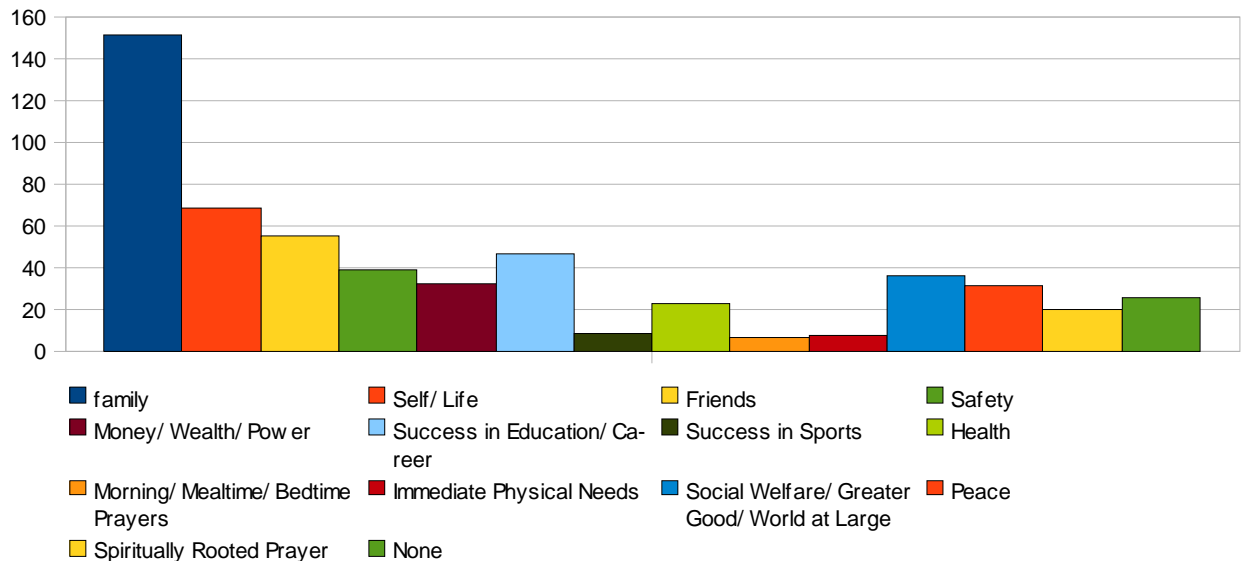
Who Are the Three People You Admire the Most?



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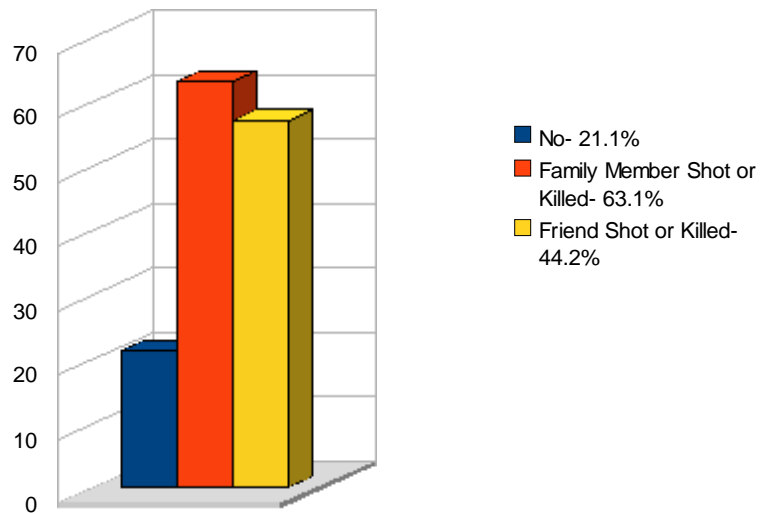
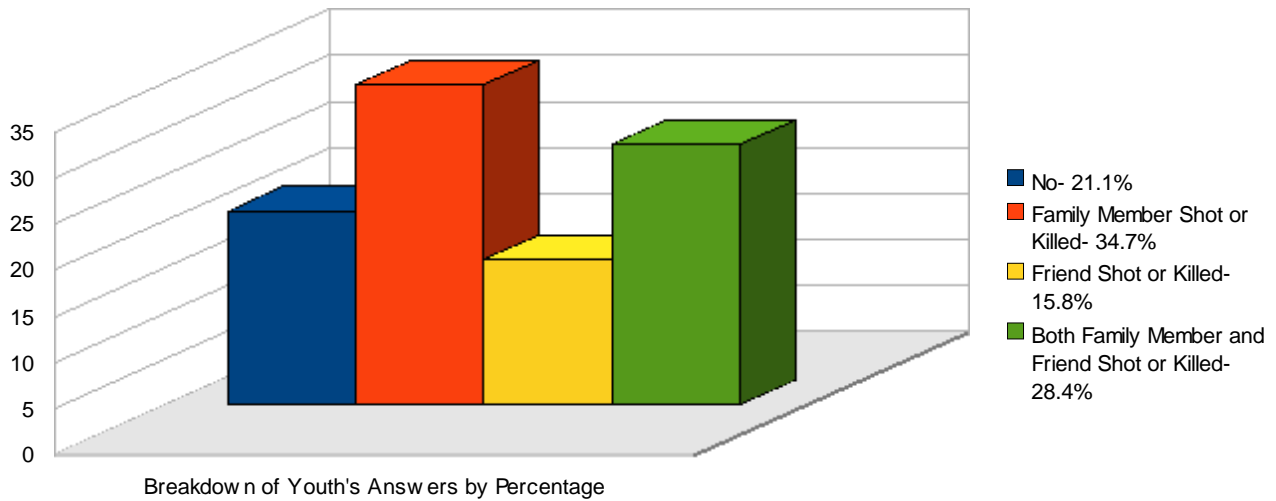
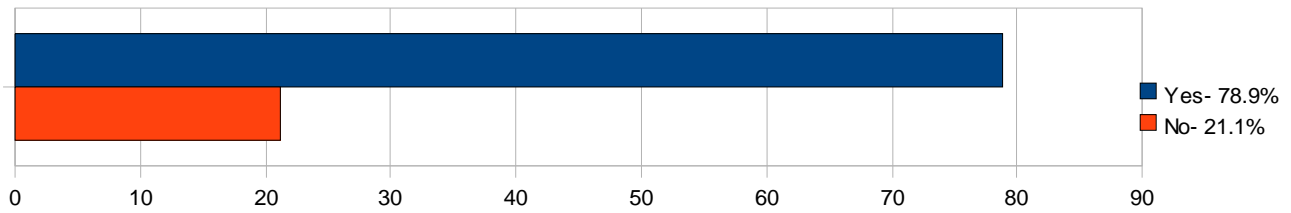
Of the 265 responses included in the 15-18 age range, 228 (86.04%) indicated knowing a friend or family member who had been shot and killed. 37 (13.96%) indicated knowing neither a friend nor a family member who had been shot or killed. A total of 175 respondents (66.04%) indicated knowing a family member who had been shot or killed, and a total of 151 respondents (56.98%) indicated knowing a friend who had been shot or killed. 77 respondents (29.06%) indicated knowing a family member only who had been shot or killed, 53 respondents (20%) indicated knowing only a friend who had been shot or killed, and 98 respondents (36.98%) indicated knowing both a friend(s) and family member(s) who had been shot or killed.

Perhaps what is most striking about youth in this age group is that the number of youth who reported not knowing a friend or family member who has been shot or killed has dropped to just 14%, and that the number of youth who reported knowing both a friend and a family member who had been shot or killed is nearly three times as high. Family remains a high priority for these teenagers, and is still by far the most common response to both the question of who the youth most admire and their most common prayers. However, the belief that law enforcement and traditional authority figures are capable of effectively reducing street violence has gone down by significant margins. The teenagers surveyed expressed a much greater interest in creating more opportunities and alternatives to violence. The single strongest response among this group as to how to most effectively minimize violence is through more community activities, however this age group also strongly identified a need for more jobs and better access to education in the community as essential tools in the struggle against violence. The growth of interest in jobs and education shows that youth in this age group are beginning identify a need for not just immediate alternatives to street violence through more activities but also a need for long term social and economic alternatives to many of the larger social and economic issues, such as the realities of the drug and sex trades, which perpetuate and compound the cycle of violence within the community. While there is a steady climb in this hopeful trajectory, the alternative trajectory which began to emerge among 12-14 year olds makes a significant jump among youth between the ages of

15-18. Nearly one in every six youth in this age group does not either does not believe that there is a way to stop violence in the community, or is unable to present any ideas as to how to reduce it.

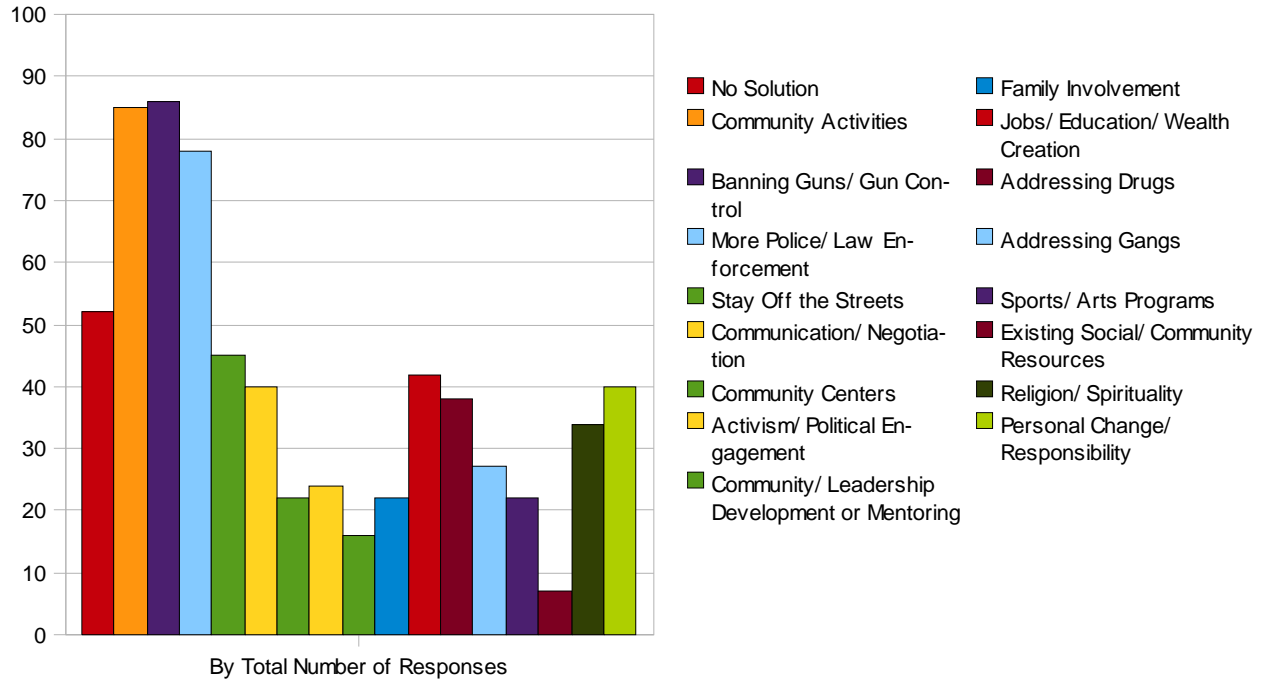
Overall Responses of Youth Surveyed

Has a Member of your family or one of your friends been shot or killed?

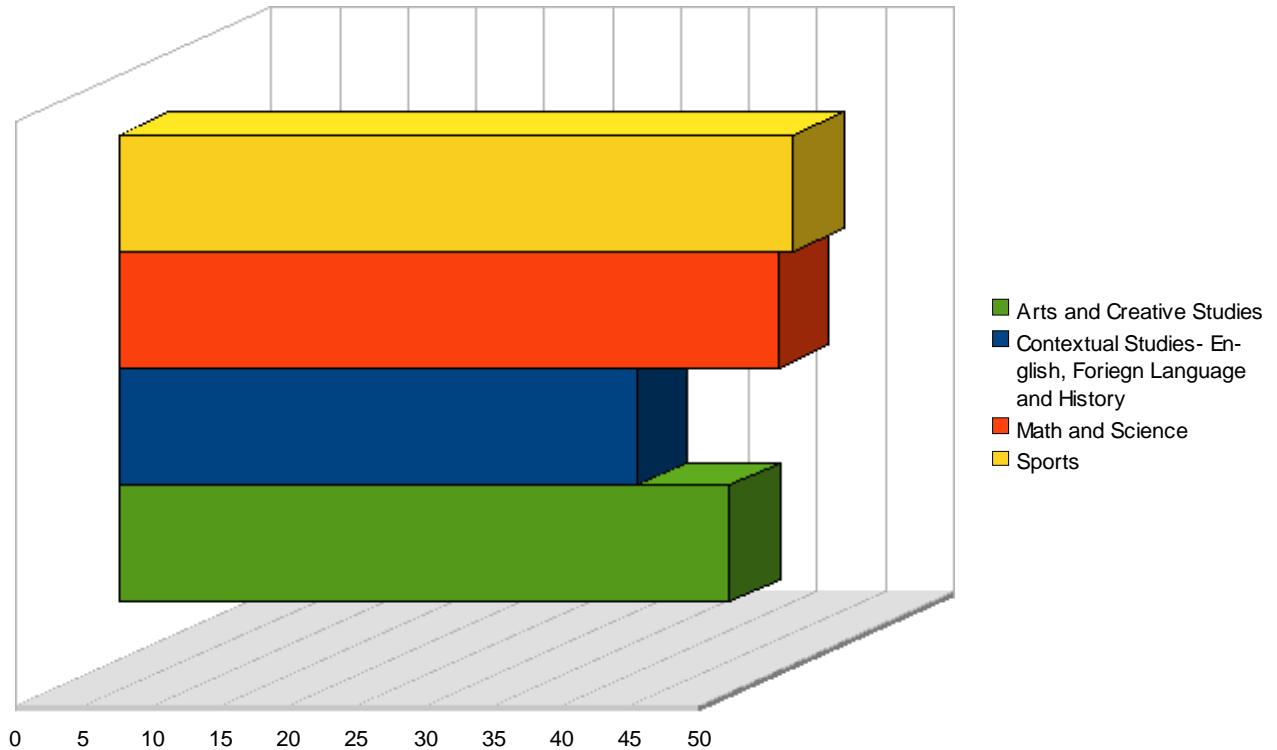


Percentages of Family and Friends Shot or Killed Integrating the Responses of Youth Who Know Both

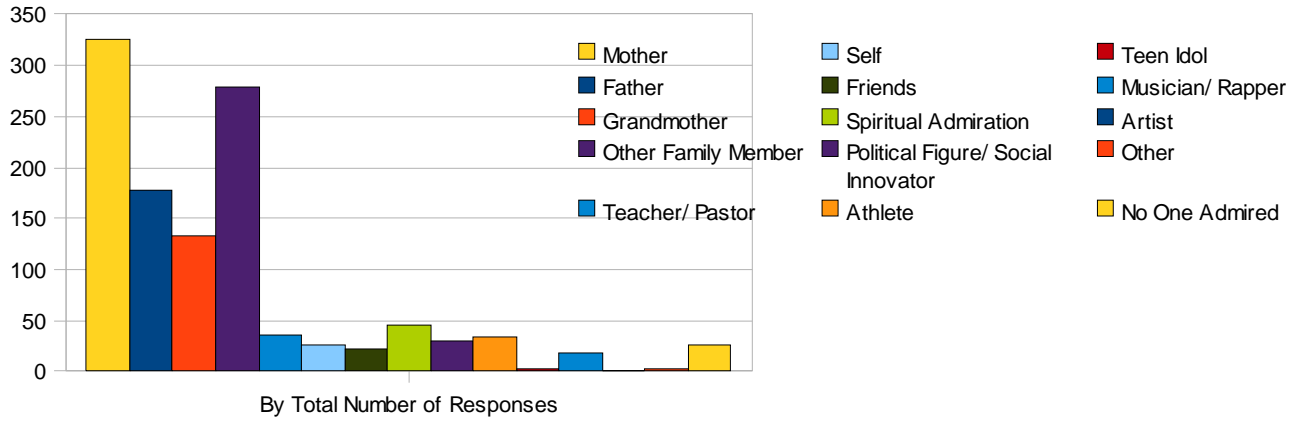
Suggest Two Ways to Stop Street Violence



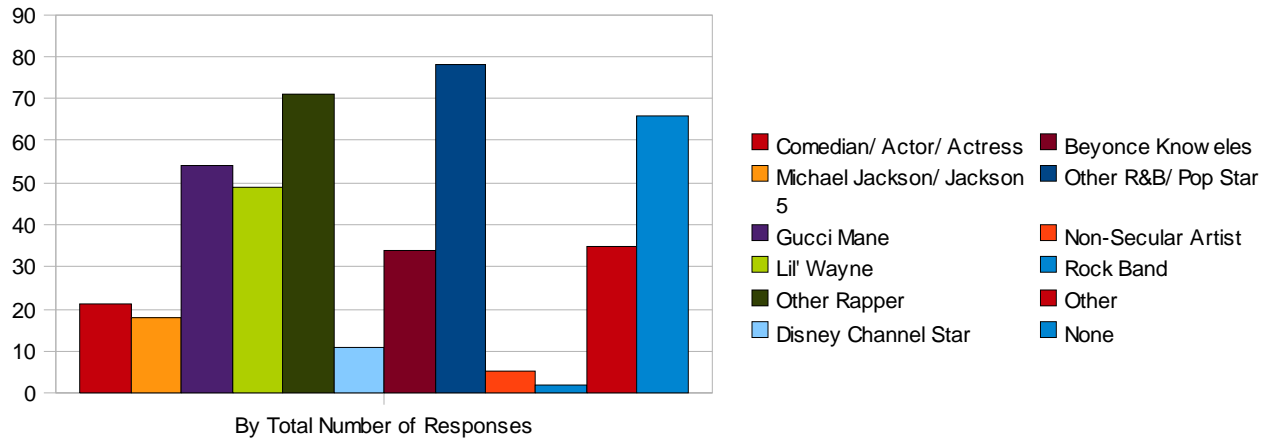
Which of the Following Subjects Do You Like Most in School?



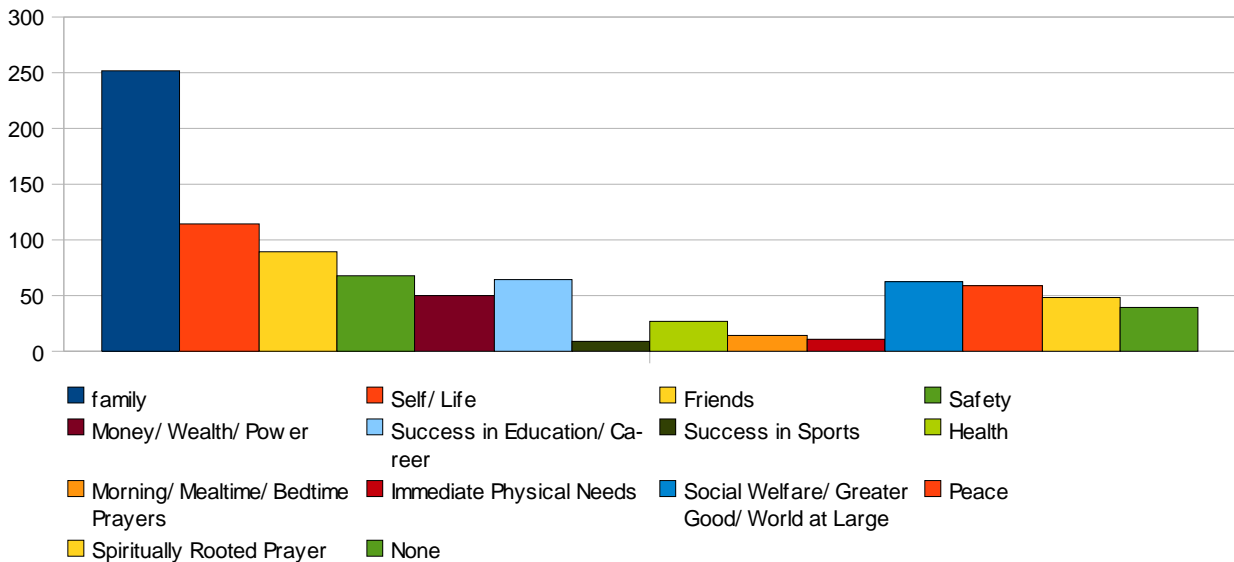
Who Are the Three People You Admire the Most?



Name Your Favorite Performing Artist or Entertainer



What Do you Pray For Most?



The information presented in the preceding body of research shows very emphatically that violence, and particularly gun violence, is without question an issue which is making a direct and serious impact on the youth of Pittsburgh. Of the 455 eligible responses to the survey a total of 359 youth (78.9%) indicated that they knew a friend or family member who had been shot or killed. A total of 287 respondents (63.08%) indicated that the person or persons were family members, and a total of 201 respondents (44.18%) indicated that the person or persons were friends. The poll further shows that 129 of the respondents (28.35%) indicated knowing both a friend(s) and a family member(s) who had been shot or killed. Only 96 respondents (21.10%) indicated knowing neither a friend nor family member who had been shot or killed.

While these statistics are staggering in and of themselves, it is only part of a much larger problem of violence experienced in our communities. According to a 2006 poll conducted by Ceasefire PA, Pennsylvania ranks sixth in the nation for handgun homicides involving children. Pennsylvania also has the highest rate of African American homicide victims in the nation, more than six times higher than the national average of homicide victims of all races. 81% of those homicides are committed with handguns. In Pittsburgh, roughly 80% of all homicides are committed with handguns, the majority of which are committed by persons with previous criminal records which prevent them from legally purchasing a handgun from a licensed dealer³. While one of the limitations of the survey was that it did not ask youth to identify whether the friend or family member that they knew had been shot and not killed, or if they had been killed whether gun violence was involved in their death, Given the prevalence of firearms handguns in the overall homicide rate in Pittsburgh there is a very high probability that of the 78.9% of youth surveyed who identified knowing a family member or friend shot and killed that the vast majority of them have experienced this as a result of gun violence.

The single most common suggestion of the youth surveyed as to how to stop street violence was either reducing the access of people to firearms, or banning guns altogether. 86 youth surveyed (18%)

³ <http://www.momsagainstguns.org/facts/facts.php>

made this suggestion, and of those who did, 66 (76.74%) also reported knowing either a friend or a family member who had been shot or killed. This was also the most common response of those who identified as strong sense of their faith or spirituality in their description of their admirations and among those youth who indicated regularly praying for the others in terms of social welfare, the greater good, or the world at large.

Following closely behind minimizing the number of guns within the community is the request of the youth to increase the amount and frequency of both community wide activities and events, and activities and events targeted specifically at providing the youth of the community a safe and productive alternative to urban violence. Of the 455 youth surveyed, 85 (18.68%) indicated a need for increasing activities within the community. Of the 85 individuals who proposed this idea for addressing urban violence, 67 respondents (78.82%) reported knowing either a friend or a family member who was shot or killed. This idea was also especially popular among both youth who professed a very clear articulation of their spirituality and those who indicated regularly praying for others in terms of social welfare, the greater good, or the world at large.

The third most common response, however, accounts for the second trajectory in the youth's attitudes toward violence in the community. A total of 52 (11.43%) of the total respondents to the survey were either unable to provide any ideas as to how to begin eliminating street violence or indicated that they believed violence within the community had escalated to a point where it could never be stopped. Of those who provided this disparaging viewpoint, 46 of the respondents (88.46%) also reported knowing either a friend or a family member who had been shot or killed. This was also the most common response of both those who indicated that they did not pray or were unable to provide examples of the practice of prayer in their lives, as well as those who indicated that they had no one whom they admired. 13 of a total 34 (38.24%) respondents who indicated no regular prayer also fall into the category of individuals who were unable to provide any ideas as to how to address street violence, or did not believe that healing was possible. 8 of a total 28 (28.57%) of these individuals who

reported having no one that they admired also provided no solutions to the problem of urban violence. It is worthwhile to note, however, that not a single youth who identified a practice of purely spiritually rooted prayer such as prayers for forgiveness, praying as an act of praise to God, or praying just to be close to the Divine provided no response or did not believe that healing was possible.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The *What Are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying?* survey clearly suggests that the more the lives of our youth are directly impacted by violence, the more likely they are to be without a sense of hope that violence can be stopped within the community, or to be unable to see any alternatives to violence. The OJJDP reports that the national average of youth who have been directly exposed to violence within the past year alone is 61%.⁴ However, there is also a clear sense of hope and of connection to the community that is expressed through Pittsburgh's youth. A strong identification of and ability to articulate faith and spirituality in youth, irregardless of how directly they have been impacted by street violence, seems to only strengthen the sense of hope that the violence within the community can be healed. That hope, however, does not come without condition.

The youth surveyed are very clear that progress cannot come without change, and they have identified both a need for structural change in the access to and availability of firearms within the community, as well as social change in the need for there to be safe and viable alternatives to participation in the cycle of violence in the community. These alternatives cannot be short sighted. There needs to be both alternative activities for the communities most impacted by violence as well as better access to jobs, education and the means of breaking free of the social and economic conditions which perpetuate the cycle of urban violence.

There are some limitations which affect the viability of the youth's suggestions as to how to end violence, particularly in the suggestion to ban guns. The most immediate of which being that the issue of a municipality's ability to set in place legislation that directly limits the access of firearms it's citizens is a hotly contested topic of Constitutional Law. On June 26, 2008, the Supreme Court of the United States declared the city wide handgun ban in Washington, DC to be unconstitutional⁵.

⁴ <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227744.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/06/26/scotus.guns/index.html>

However, in June of 2009, a Federal Appeals Court upheld the city of Chicago's handgun ban⁶. Keeping the handgun ban in tact has not been entirely effective in reducing gun violence in the city. Gun violence, especially among inner city youth in Chicago is drastically on the rise, and by May 10, the city had already experienced the shooting deaths of 36 students in 2009⁷. There are, however, other alternatives to banning guns which have proven effective in reducing both the number of guns on the streets. Between 1994 and 2006, the police and Housing Authority's gun buy back program in Pittsburgh collected over 10,000 working firearms, the majority of which being handguns, by offering cash or merchandise vouchers for both guns and for tips on where the police could find illegal weapons while allowing individuals who participate to maintain their anonymity⁸. These programs have been criticized across the nation as being largely ineffective in actually reducing the rates of violent crime. In Pittsburgh, while homicide rates peaked in the early 1990's just before the buy back program was put in place, the overall number of homicides and firearm related deaths has steadily climbed since the mid-1980's⁹. These examples show that while there are means of reducing the overall prevalence and availability of guns, that specifically targeting guns alone as a means of reducing street violence does not seem to be an effective means of minimizing violence or creating a safe environment for the youth within our community.

It may be far more effective to seek out ways of building viable alternatives to violence within the community. A 2008 report by the University of Cincinnati's Policing Institute on the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence offers that implementing multi-faceted and inter-disciplinary approaches to addressing violence within their communities through partnership between street advocates, police, parole and probation officers, community outreach, and media outlets may be extremely effective in reducing violence and creating lasting change. Several cities and communities which have

⁶ <http://chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=34590>

⁷ <http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2009/05/07/what%e2%80%99s-fueling-chicago%e2%80%99s-violence/>

⁸ <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06339/743552-53.stm>

⁹ <http://onevisiononelife.org/PDFs/ViolenceinPittsburgh2006.pdf>

implemented these interdisciplinary coalitions and have been able to streamline access of individuals in neighborhoods and communities with especially high rates of violence to social services, education, job training and employment opportunities have seen violent crime rates drop by 30% to 70%¹⁰.

The importance of having safe and productive activities for youth within the community, and the request for more of these programs by the youth polled in the *What Are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying?* survey should not be overlooked. The majority of 13-24 year olds shot or killed in the City of Pittsburgh are assaulted between the hours of 12 PM and 4 PM, and 11 PM and 2 AM¹¹. Programs which are able to both attract youth and provide a safe and productive environment after school and in late night hours may be extremely successful in reducing the impact of violence on the youth of our city. It is important that programs which seek to offer youth an alternative to participating in the cycle of violence also be able to offer them a sense of hope that they and their community do in fact have the ability to overcome the cycle of urban violence. Based on the information provided by the youth in the *What Are Pittsburgh's Youth Saying?* survey, instilling this sense of hope is vital to helping youth creatively and productively respond to both their needs and the needs of their community. It is crucial that the message of hope be presented especially to youth between the ages of 12-14 as they are in the crux of decision and circumstance that will affect the role that violence will play throughout the rest of their youth and young adulthood. The role that faith and spirituality play in building upon this sense of hope is nothing less than significant, and should be considered an integral part of developing a strategy to build and sustain a message and mobilization of hope and healing within the community.

¹⁰ http://www.uc.edu/ccjr/Reports/CIRV_Interim_Report_2-08-08.pdf

¹¹ <http://onevisiononelife.org/PDFs/ViolenceinPittsburgh2006.pdf> p 23

Recommendations for Further Study

It is clear from this study that more needs to be done across several disciplines to further understand and reduce the impact that violence plays on the youth of Pittsburgh. Building upon the work done in this study, it would be valuable to research the impact of violence on Pittsburgh's youth, as well as their ideas as to how to bring urban violence to an end, taking into consideration factors such as gender, socio-economics, ethnicity, and the frequency and severity of the way in which violence has directly impacted their lives and the lives of their families, as well as ways in which the youth surveyed have themselves participated in violent incidents or behavior. It also may be of some value to explore the value of interdisciplinary and interagency means of extending and streamlining access to grief assistance and social services to the families of homicide victims as a means of interrupting the cycle of violence within families and communities. The success of interdisciplinary community based anti-violence and violence reduction programs in cities with similar population demographics could also provide valuable resources for study in attempting to reduce the impact of violence on Pittsburgh's youth. In evaluating these agencies and programs, special attention should be paid to their successes and weaknesses as well as exploring how these programs might be replicated or improved utilizing the existing social and community resources within the city of Pittsburgh to create an effective and sustainable approach to minimize violence, build hope within our youth, and nurture and foster growth and opportunity within the community.