

# REPORT

## A SURVEY FOR BEATING BACK THE TEARS OF GUN VIOLENCE IN THE CUSE

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**PREPARED FOR**

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**PREPARED BY**

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## Introduction

The facts in the City of Syracuse Violent Crime Assessment released near the end of 2022 are profound. With nine hundred and forty-five (945) aggravated assaults and twenty-nine (29) murders in 2021 and an average of twenty-four murders per year in the previous two decades, Syracuse is a city with high levels of violent crime and one of the most violent in New York State. Eighteen (18), a significant decrease from the year before that some might call an anomaly, were killed in 2022. However, the trend in 2023 has not been encouraging.

By the second week of July, Syracuse had suffered its 13<sup>th</sup> homicide of the year. At the same time a year ago, in 2022, there were eight. Like the majority, they were victims of gun violence, including a teenager who lost her life on July 4, the same day an online straw poll on violence ended. Launched on May 25 by the non-profit, 100 Black Men of Syracuse organization, the survey was part of a larger effort by the non-profit to prevent the tragedies and loss experienced by too many Syracuse families. The deaths reinforce the organization’s belief that much more needs to be done to reduce gun violence in Syracuse. These survey results represent one small piece in the puzzle that the 100 Black Men of Syracuse hope can lead to solutions that save lives. They can’t come soon enough.

# Executive Summary

100 Black Men of Syracuse, through its education, mentorship and leadership programs, serves 250 students each year. Many of the youth the organization serves reside in high-risk areas for gun violence in the city. Additionally, a significant portion of the 100 Black Men of Syracuse youth programs is offered in those same areas. It is for those reasons 100 Black Men organized and hosted a town hall on June 20, 2023 at the Southwest Community Center. The program aimed to give local community members an opportunity to voice their opinions and offer solutions to reduce gun violence.

The town hall was held in the midst of a straw poll on gun violence conducted by the 100. The unscientific survey was promoted and marketed through the organization's membership, website, social media platforms, email campaigns, and stories in the local media. Nearly 200 (197) residents responded anonymously. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they reside in the city of Syracuse. Sixty-five percent answered yes. They were also asked to indicate their age range. Sixty-three percent responded 31 to 60 years old. The respondents skewed older, with only one respondent identifying as 18 years old or younger.

Participants were given the chance to offer strategies. More than half (54 percent) provided ideas to reduce gun violence. The responses varied from instituting curfews, mandating prison time for those convicted of illegal firearm possession and the use of a firearm in the commission of a crime, to beautifying neighborhoods, and expanding job training, education and anti-poverty programs.

A primary purpose of the survey was to gauge public support for a range of steps that could be taken at the community level to reduce gun violence in Syracuse. Respondents were asked to rank the effectiveness of 10 (ten) options. Three proved most popular:

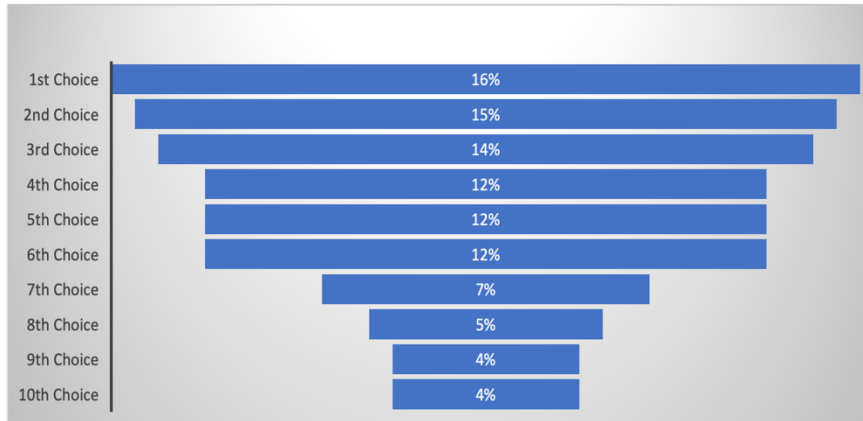
- Require students to take conflict resolution classes or workshops.
- Direct more police resources to high-risk areas of the city.
- Hire outreach workers to stay in constant contact with gang members, tracking possible sources of conflicts and stepping in to solve issues before they spiral into violence

A fourth option, requiring mental health screening for all gun buyers, was also a favorite of 37 percent, who ranked it either their first, second, third or fourth top choice. A controversial element of the Syracuse mayor's Office to Reduce Gun Violence ranked at the bottom. It provided for a monthly stipend to known gang members as an incentive to avoid violent criminal behavior, earn a high school diploma or GED, and remain in a program that provides job training and placement, as well as behavioral therapy. Only 6 percent of respondents rated it their top choice. A few weeks after the conclusion of the survey, the city administration amended the stipend initiative in its funding request to Common Council. Participants would only get paid if they are involved in some kind of workforce development program.

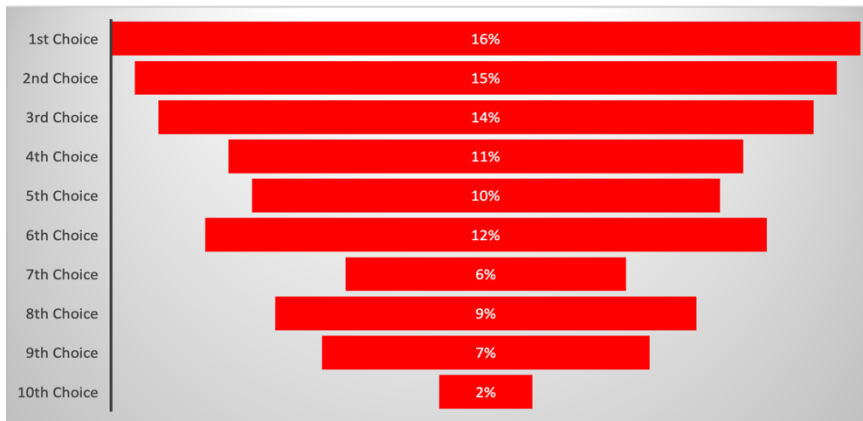
A majority of survey respondents (54 percent) also expressed a willingness to donate financially or engage in volunteer service to local, non-governmental organizations working to reduce gun violence in Syracuse.

# Survey Results

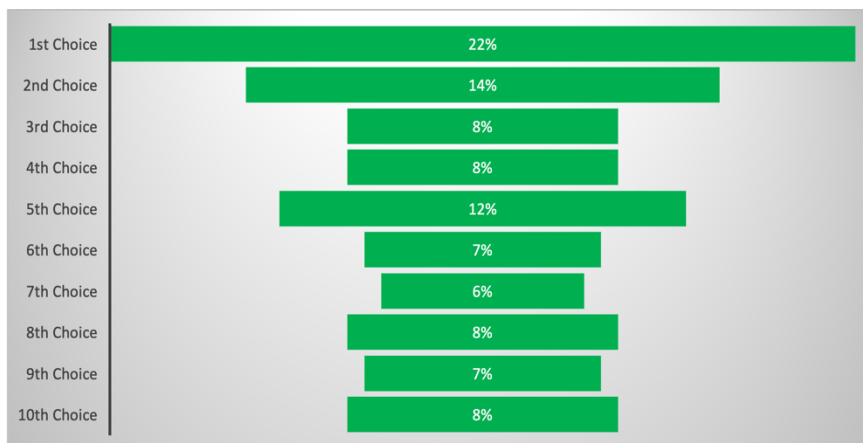
Respondents were asked to rank from among 10 potential solutions the most effective means to reducing gun violence in Syracuse. Most highly ranked among the respondents involved the schools - conflict resolution education. A proposed city-sponsored outreach program was equally popular as was a measure involving the Syracuse Police Department. In fact, 22 percent ranked increased policing in high-risk areas of the city as a top solution.



Require students to take a conflict resolution class or workshop series

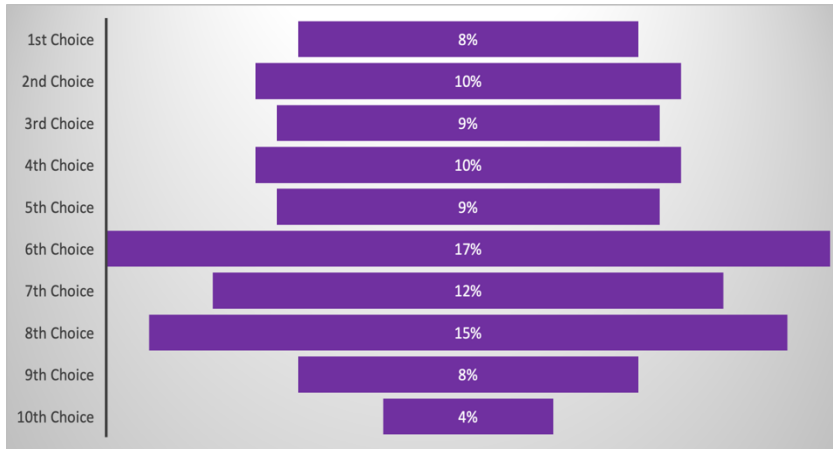


Hire outreach workers to stay in constant contact with gang members, tracking possible sources of conflicts and stepping in to solve these issues before they spiral into violence

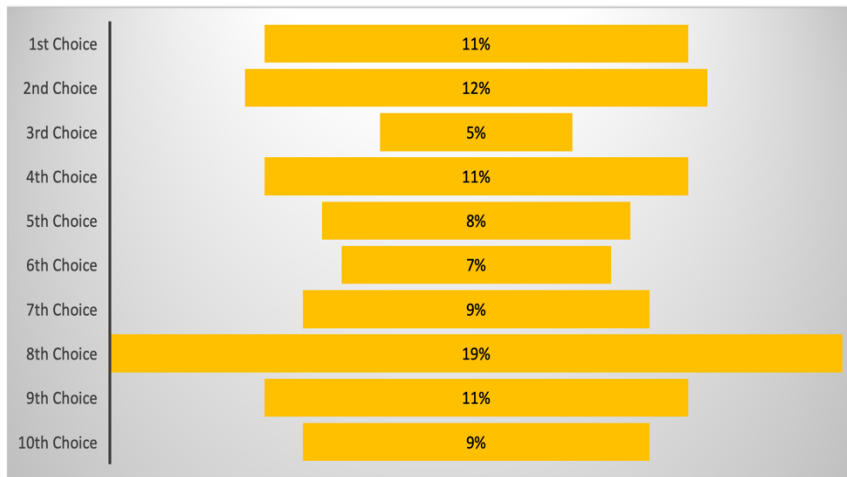


Increase policing in and direct more police resources to high-risk areas of the city

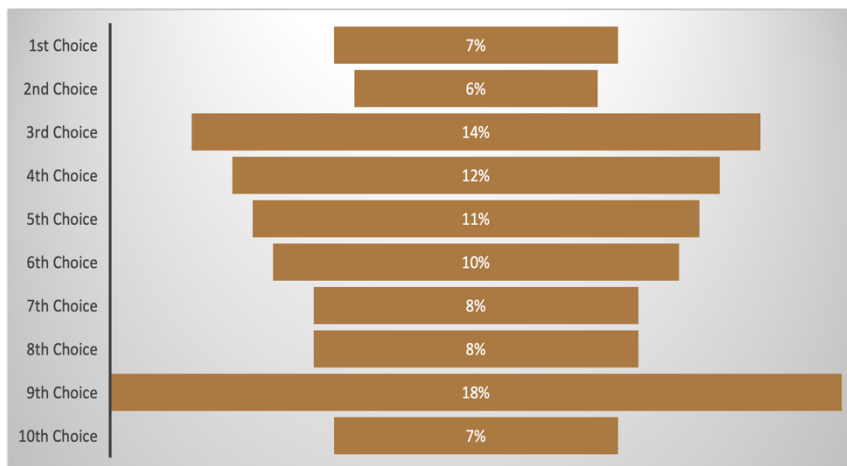
Following in the overall rankings (in order) are solutions that require mental health screenings, congressional action, and additional law enforcement efforts to curb gun trafficking.



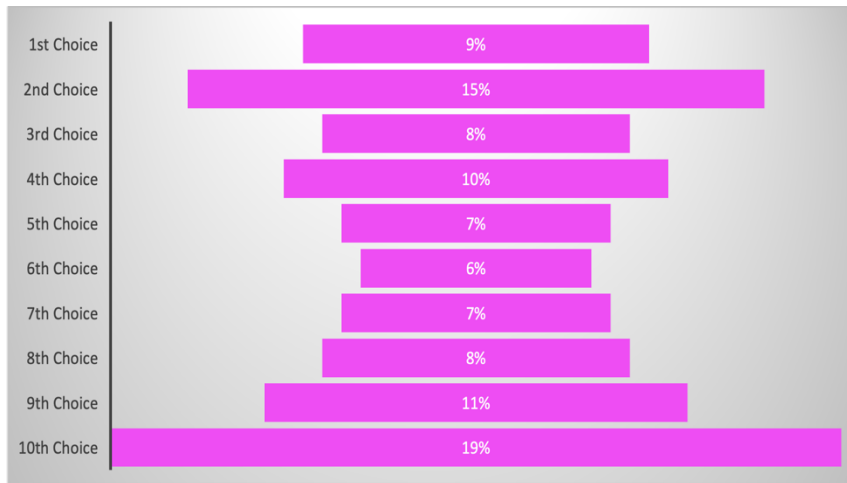
Require mental health screening for all gun buyers



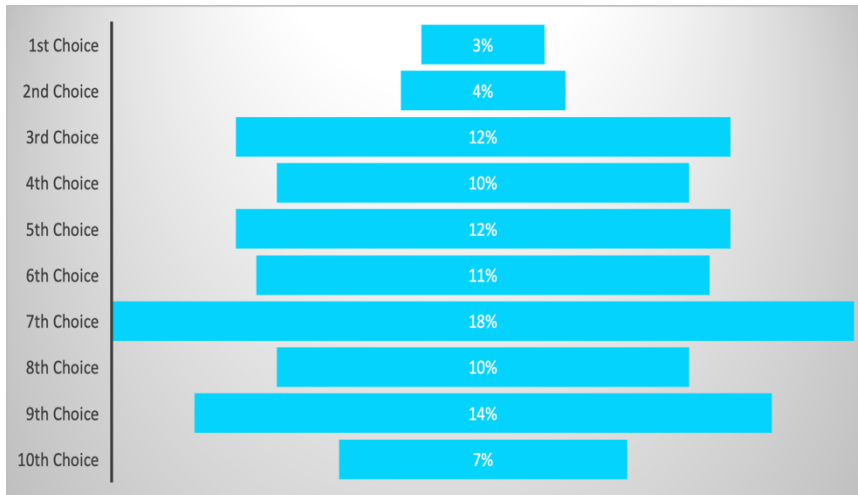
Institute universal background checks, regardless of whether someone purchases a gun from a store, online or at a gun show



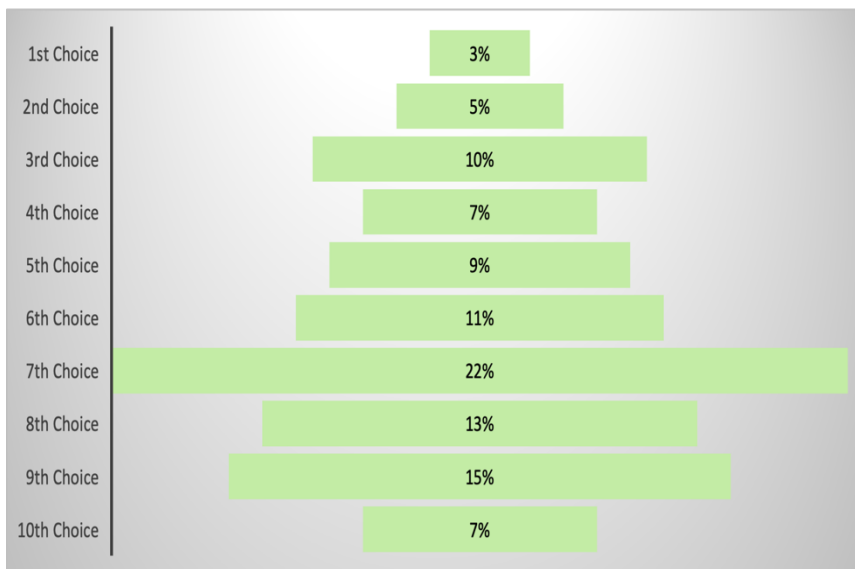
Build closer community/public cooperation with the police department when a violent crime occurs



Increase law enforcement efforts to reduce gun trafficking, especially those directed at illegal firearms originating outside New York state resources to high-risk areas of the city

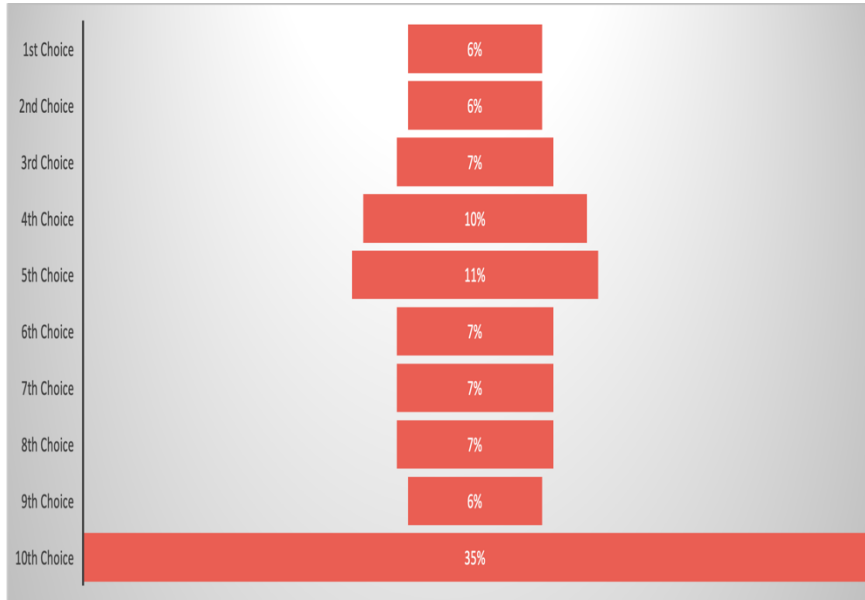


Conduct more frequent gun buy-back events



Require all gun buyers to complete gun safety training

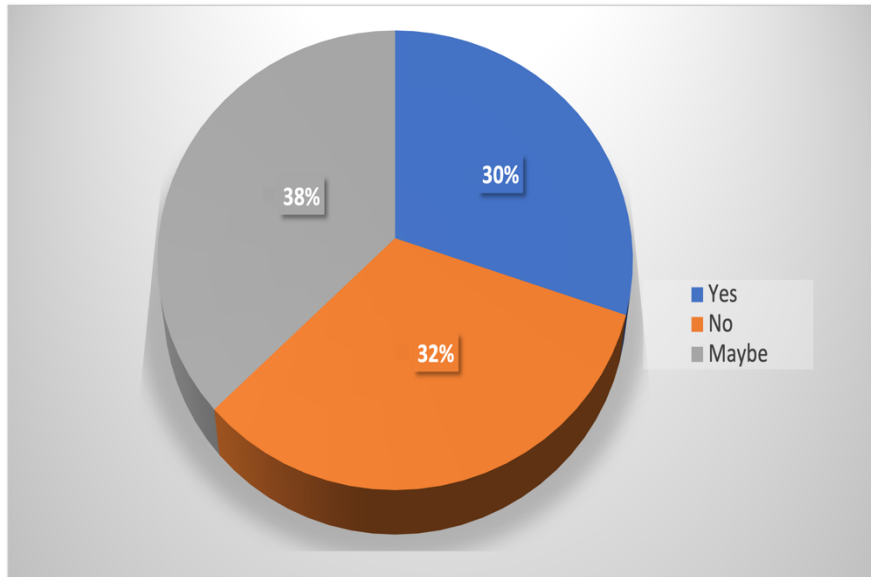
Thirty-five percent ranked the mayor’s Office to Reduce Gun Violence’s initial proposal to have gang members receive a recurring stipend for participation in the administration’s Safer Streets program their least favorite choice among the potential solutions offered.



Provide a monthly stipend to known gang members as an incentive to avoid violent criminal behavior, earn a high school diploma or GED, and remain in a program that provides job training and placement, as well as behavioral therapy

## Other Survey Results

Respondents were also asked if they would be willing to support non-governmental groups or programs working to reduce gun violence in Syracuse. A clear majority (68%) indicated they would or at least consider lending their financial support or volunteering time to such groups.



Would you be willing to donate money and/or volunteer time to a non-profit, non-governmental group or program working to reduce gun violence in Syracuse?

More than half of the respondents (54%) provided their personal opinions in an optional open question asking respondents what other options they believe would work best to reduce gun violence in Syracuse. Their responses varied from instituting curfews, mandatory prison time for those convicted of possessing illegal firearms or using a firearm in the commission of a crime, to beautifying neighborhoods, offering and expanding trade, as well as job training, educational and anti-poverty programs, a hotline for parents seeking intervention for children they suspect are involved in gun violence, parenting classes, stricter gun control laws, home visits and stronger family units.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Rather than throw up our hands in defeat and despair, this survey offers the Syracuse community one more reason for hope. The number of respondents to this survey commissioned by 100 Black Men of Syracuse illustrates the high level of community awareness and interest in the life-and-death issue of reducing gun violence.

While gun violence is a national issue, Syracuse is in the crosshairs of a level of violent crime that rivals some larger cities. The fact that the murder rate in the Salt City was three times that of the United States, based on 2021 statistics cited by the Mayor's Office to Reduce Gun Violence, threatens the area's economic promise, the welfare of its citizens and the potential of future generations. Yes, we must act, but we must act with a clear vision and concrete solutions that end much of the bloodshed.

One of the most heart-warming findings of the survey is centered around the willingness of a majority of the respondents to support with their time and money those non-profit, non-governmental organizations working to reduce gun violence. We believe those results should be taken by those organizations as a catalyst to make a high-profile appeal to the community-at-large for support. The opportunity is in front of them.

The Syracuse Violent Crime Assessment states three main causes of the city's violent crime problem. One particularly stood out for the 100 Black Men of Syracuse; Law enforcement activity alone is not able to prevent criminal activity. We could not agree more. The role and active participation of all elements of the community working together and in coordination is crucial and must be expanded to involve more young people.

Our survey provides evidence the local community supports:

- requiring students to take a conflict resolution class or workshop series;
- increasing policing in and directing more police resources to high-risk areas of the city; and
- hiring outreach workers to stay in constant contact with gang members, tracking possible sources of conflicts and stepping in to solve issues before they spiral into violence.

Lastly, we recommend that the research does not end here. Additional polling of the local community, especially those of young people ages 14 to 30 years old, can and must be done using scientific methods to produce clearer results that define the causes of why so many young people in Syracuse use firearms to hurt and kill, identify other solutions and measure progress. However, we believe this study can be used to produce some accountability and act as a guide for those responsible for reducing the tears caused by gun violence.

## Appendix – Survey Questions

A survey for beating back the tears of  
gun violence in the Cuse

...

\* Required

1

Do you live within the city limits of Syracuse? \*

Yes

No

2

Which age range are you within? \*

Select your answer



18 and younger

19-30

31-45

45-60

61 and older

3

Rank in order from best to least those efforts you think would have the most impact on reducing gun violence in Syracuse. \*

Require students to take a conflict resolution class or workshop series

Hires outreach workers to stay in constant contact with gang members, tracking possible sources of conflicts and stepping in to solve these issues before they spiral into violence

Conduct more frequent gun buy-back events

Provide a monthly stipend to known gang members as an incentive to avoid violent criminal behavior, earn a high school diploma or GED, and remain in a program that provides job training and placement, as well as behavioral therapy

Increase policing in and direct more police resources to high-risk areas of the city

Require mental health screening for all gun buyers

Require all gun buyers to complete gun safety training

Institute universal background checks, regardless of whether someone purchases a gun from a store, online or at a gun show

Build closer community/public cooperation with the police department when a violent crime occurs

Increase law enforcement efforts to reduce gun trafficking, especially those directed at illegal firearms originating outside New York state

4

(Optional) Please provide other efforts not listed above you believe would work best in reducing gun violence in Syracuse.

Enter your answer

5

Would you be willing to donate money and/or volunteer time to a non-profit, non-governmental group or program working to reduce gun violence in Syracuse? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

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