

# Race, ethnicity not a factor in recent weapon-carrying behaviors at US schools

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A study led by researchers at the University of Minnesota Medical School sheds new light on boys' weapon-carrying behaviors at U.S. high schools. The results indicate that weapon-carrying is not tied to students'

race or ethnicity but rather their schools' social climates.

The study was published in the journal *Pediatrics* and led by Patricia Jewett, Ph.D., a researcher in the Department of Medicine at the U of M Medical School.

"Narratives of [violence](#) in the U.S. have been distorted by racist stereotyping, portraying male individuals of color as more dangerous than [white males](#)," Jewett said. "Instead, our study suggests that [school climates](#) may be linked to an increase in weapon-carrying at schools."

The study analyzed self-reported weapon-carrying behaviors among 88,000 [young males](#) at U.S. high schools between 1993 and 2019 based on data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. From that data, they identified four key findings:

- Since 1993, weapon-carrying in schools has declined among all [males](#).
- Over the last 20 years, in schools perceived as safer, Non-Hispanic, white males have been more likely to bring weapons into schools than Non-Hispanic Black/African American or Hispanic males.
- Between 2017 and 2019, while comparing all schools, no significant differences in weapon-carrying behaviors existed by race or ethnicity.
- More frequent weapon-carrying is associated with experiences of unsafety or violence at school. Males who experienced violence or felt unsafe at school brought weapons at least twice as often, and such negative school experiences were more common among males of color (8-12%) than among Non-Hispanic white males (4-5%).

"Our work underscores the association of experiences of unsafety at

school with weapon-carrying at school and highlights large knowledge gaps in the field of gun violence research in the U.S.," Jewett said. "This is an important foundation for much needed research to disentangle the intertwined phenomena of racism, toxic environments of violence and gun- and weapon-culture in the U.S. We are currently reaching out to other researchers who work in the field to collaborate on this urgent public health topic."

**More information:** Patricia I. Jewett et al, Weapon Carrying Among Boys in US Schools by Race and/or Ethnicity: 1993–2019, *Pediatrics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2020-049623](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-049623)

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