



Centering Youth Experiences to Address Community Violence: A Youth Participatory Action Research Study

In January 2023, [Child Trends](#) and [Sasha Bruce Youthwork](#) launched a three-year, mixed methods [Youth Participatory Action Research](#) (YPAR) project to deepen our understanding of youths’ experiences—as witnesses, victims, and/or perpetrators—of community gun violence in the District. This project will provide youth living in neighborhoods in Wards 7 and 8 that have deep concentrations of community gun violence with opportunities to critically examine the compounding injustices that have led to disproportionate rates of community gun violence, identify policy and practice opportunities to dismantle those injustices, and work with key decision makers to implement their research-based recommendations for advancing racial justice and community safety in the District.

The Research Project

From January 2023 to December 2025, Child Trends and Sasha Bruce Youthwork are partnering with youth researchers (ages 18 to 24) to lead the YPAR project.¹ Youth researchers will be empowered to make all decisions for the YPAR project, while Child Trends and Sasha Bruce Youthwork will provide training and mentorship to the youth researchers. Within the project, youth researchers will complete five key actions: 1) crafting research questions; 2) developing data collection methods and protocols; 3) collecting and analyzing data; 4) identifying findings and developing tailored recommendations for advancing practice and policy; and 5) sharing recommendations with key officials and community leaders to advance change.

Role of Community Partners

To support the youth researchers, we will engage a network of community partners who are leading the ongoing community violence prevention and intervention efforts within the District. We anticipate that our network of community partners will include government agencies, local community leaders, and community-based organizations. Although we are still in the early stages of planning for the study, we imagine that community partners can support the project through the following:

- Help identify youth who will be hired to lead the study.

¹ We will pay youth researchers as part-time employees for their work on the project.

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Learn more about Safety 7 at <https://www.childtrends.org/project/centering-youth-experiences-youth-participatory-action>.

What is Youth Participatory Action Research?

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is an approach to research that enables researchers and youth to critically examine questions related to justice and equity. YPAR emphasizes both broad participation—aiming to redefine who is “allowed” to conduct and disseminate research—and action, as researchers and youth seek to co-create knowledge that can be used to advance positive change. YPAR focuses on teaching youth to use research to understand, confront, and change the forces that reproduce inequities they, their peers, and their communities may experience.

Safety 7

- Provide training/host Q&A sessions on your organization's efforts to prevent community gun violence.
- Offer feedback or guidance to youth as they develop the methodology for their proposed research plan.
- Listen to youths' study findings and recommendations based on their findings.
- Guide youth on how to tailor their recommendations to different stakeholders so they can produce actionable strategies for advancing positive change.

Our Ask for Your Organization

As a leader in the ongoing community violence prevention and intervention efforts within the District, we would love to engage your organization as a community partner in the YPAR project. If you are interested in becoming a community partner, we would love to chat more to discuss your potential role. If you have any questions, please reach out to Bianca Faccio at bfaccio@sashabruce.org or Dr. Samantha Holquist at sholquist@childtrends.org.