

Survey estimates 1 in 5 adults say they've been threatened with a gun at some point

The report surveyed 1,271 Americans' between March 14 and 23, 2023.

By [Dr. Alaa Diab](#)

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About one in five adults say they've been threatened with a gun at some point in their life according to a new survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The report, published Tuesday, looked at 1,271 Americans' experiences with [gun-related violence](#) and incidents across the U.S. between March 14 and 23, 2023.

About one in five say a family member has been killed by a gun (including death by [suicide](#)), and about one in six say they've witnessed someone being injured by a gun.

More than half of U.S. adults have been affected by guns in some way, reporting that they or a family member has been injured or killed by a gun, threatened with a gun or used a gun in self-defense.

"When you think about the complexity of this issue it cuts across all sorts of different sectors and disciplines...there's no one person or one organization that's going to solve this issue...by definition, this is a complex issue that's happening in cities and states all across this country affecting millions of Americans" said Dr. Joseph Sakran, a trauma surgeon and associate professor at Johns Hopkins Hospital, who is a public health expert and nationally recognized advocate for gun violence prevention as a survivor of gun violence himself.

The survey highlighted racial disparities with Black adults being about twice as likely as white or Hispanic adults to say they've had a family member killed by a gun.

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A third of Black and Hispanic adults say they worry "daily" or "almost daily" that someone in their family will become a victim of gun violence.

"Mass shootings are a small portion of the overall public health problem that we face...they are the tip of the iceberg, we have the responsibility to talk about the daily toll of gun violence... the disparities that exist in communities of color, and different demographics that are significantly impacting not just young people, but young brown and Black men, are in many of our cities and states."

Many people buy guns for protection, as three in 10 adults (29%) have purchased a gun to protect themselves or their family from the possibility of gun violence. Yet, three in four adults surveyed said at least one of their guns is stored in a manner that doesn't reflect common gun safety practices – like keeping guns in the same place as ammunition, storing a loaded gun, or keeping it unlocked.

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"The best medical treatment is prevention... the work that we do beyond the bedside is just as important... engaging with different stakeholders, communities, policymakers, and so forth...where not just doctors, but nurses and techs and researchers kind of stood up and said, 'No, we have the rights and both opportunity and the responsibility to be part of the solution. So, the next generation of healthcare leaders in America are starting to realize these non-traditional ways to be impactful.'" said Dr. Sakran.

The report showed that only 5% of adults say a doctor or healthcare provider has ever talked to them about gun safety.

Dr. Sakran added "the role of the healthcare professional, talking to their patients, about concepts and aspects of [gun safety](#), like safe storage as an example... we traditionally have not done that.. we talked about other public health issues like obesity and smoking, and so forth."

Alaa Diab, MD, an internal medicine resident at Greater Baltimore Medical Center and MPH candidate at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, is a contributor to the ABC News Medical Unit.

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