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2015

### Perceptions of Violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant (Brooklyn)

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# RESEARCH BRIEF

## PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE IN BEDFORD-STUYVESANT (BROOKLYN)

The Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice is assessing violence reduction efforts in New York City. One element in the project involves surveys of young men (ages 18-30) in various New York neighborhoods. The survey relies on Respondent-Driven Sampling (RDS) and the results depict the respondents' attitudes towards violence, their direct experience with violence, and their awareness of local violence prevention efforts.

This brief presents results from project surveys in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, where the **Center for Court Innovation** opened a new **Cure Violence** program in September 2014 with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The survey will be conducted again in 2016 to detect additional changes during the study period. See the Research and Evaluation Center's website for additional information: [www.JohnJayREC.nyc](http://www.JohnJayREC.nyc)

### Sample Characteristics

		2014	2015
Age	18-20	47%	28%
	21-24	29%	29%
	25-30	25%	43%
Education	Less than high school	22%	21%
	High school / GED	68%	69%
	Some College	7%	9%
	2 Year college degree	3%	1%
	4 Year degree or more	1%	2%
In School Now?	Yes	36%	28%
Employed?	Unemployed	64%	44%
	Part-Time	20%	29%
	Full-Time	16%	26%
Stopped/Frisked in Past Year?	Yes	69%	62%
Ever shot at?	Yes	41%	34%
Ever stabbed?	Yes	14%	16%

### Survey Responses

#### Confidence in Police

When violence breaks out in my neighborhood, we can count on the police to help.

June 2014	43%
June 2015	48%

When violence breaks out in my neighborhood, I would call the police.

June 2014	46%
June 2015	55%

#### Exposure to Guns

I have heard of someone in my neighborhood being threatened with a gun in the past year.

June 2014	44%
June 2015	45%

I have seen at least one gun on my block in the past year.

June 2014	24%
June 2015	28%

I have heard gunshots in my neighborhood at least once in the past year.

June 2014	72%
June 2015	76%

#### Exposure to Violence Prevention Efforts

When shown photos of Cure Violence public messages (posters etc.), the survey respondent knew at least one.

**Program opened September 2014**

June 2015	84%
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When shown photos of Cure Violence staff from his neighborhood, the survey respondent knew at least one.

**Program opened September 2014**

June 2015	30%
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When violence breaks out in my neighborhood, we can count on our local programs to help.

June 2014	53%
June 2015	60%

This study's main goal was to measure changes in violent norms and attitudes in specific areas of New York City. The survey measured each respondent's willingness to use violence in 17 hypothetical confrontation scenarios that ranged from minor to severe provocations. A violence propensity index (composite score) was created from all 17 scenarios.

The possible responses in each scenario were assigned a value from one to five, ranked in order of severity. An "ignore" response received the lowest score while "react verbally" or "react physically" received higher scores. The most violent responses, "pull a weapon" and "use a weapon" received the highest scores overall.

Survey respondents usually ranked the scenarios involving threats and the need for protection (e.g., being physically attacked at a party or witnessing a friend being physically attacked) as warranting the most violent reactions.

After the scenarios related to physical threats, respondents ranked the most serious provocations as those involving disputes over money and disrespect. Competition and jealousy related to intimate partners ranked lower.

## SUMMARY

Young men in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn report slightly greater confidence in law enforcement to help with neighborhood violence (48% in 2015 versus 43% in 2014), and they were more willing to contact police in the event of violence (55% vs. 46%). Their exposure to gun violence actually increased slightly between 2014 and 2015, with more respondents having seen guns in 2015 (28% vs. 24%) and more hearing gunfire in their neighborhood (76% in 2015 vs. 72% in 2014). Nearly equal numbers of young men heard of someone being threatened with a gun (45% vs 44% in 2014).

Their awareness of the public messaging efforts of Cure Violence in Bedford-Stuyvesant was very high (84% in 2015) and their recognition of Cure Violence staff members

## Hypothetical Confrontation Scenarios

Change  
2014-15

Jealousy	You are at a club talking to a girl and a guy tries to get her number.	-3%
	You are at a club talking to a girl when a guy comes and tells you she's his girl.	-6%
	Your ex's new boyfriend is playing her.	0%
	Your girl and you broke up one week ago. You see her with a new guy on the street.	-8%
Disrespect	Somebody disrespects you in front of your friends.	-13%
	You are with your friends and a guy steps on your new Jordans.	-6%
	Somebody talked shit about you on a social media site.	1%
	Some guys you and your friends don't know try to take over the basketball court.	-21%
	Somebody shows up at a party wearing the jacket everyone knows he took from you.	-11%
Money	You see a guy who has not paid you the \$100 he owes you.	-20%
	You see a guy who owes you \$200 and you think he is trying to play you.	-20%
	You won a bet (e.g., dice, craps) and the loser refused to pay you.	-9%
	The guy at the bodega cheated you at the cash register.	-14%
Threats	You are hanging out with a friend and a guy tries to smack your friend around.	-8%
	A guy takes a swing at you at a party in another neighborhood.	-12%
	You are on your way to a party outside of your hood. You bump a guy and he swings at you.	-5%
	You see a guy on the street who beat up your brother last week.	-11%

**All Items Combined as Violence Propensity Index\* -11%**

\* Chronbach's Alpha = .89

was considerable (30%) considering that the program just opened in 2014.

Most importantly, when respondents in Bedford-Stuyvesant were asked a series of questions designed to measure their support for interpersonal violence in confrontational situations, they were noticeably less likely to see violence as an appropriate response to conflict. Eight of the seventeen indices declined more than 10 percent between 2014 and 2015, and six others dropped by at least 5 percent. The largest decreases in support for violence were observed among the more provocative confrontation scenarios (physical threats and conflicts over money). The least provocative scenarios (jealousy over intimate partners) declined less.



JohnJayREC.nyc

The John Jay Research and Evaluation Center (JohnJayREC) is an applied research organization and part of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. Established in 1975, the Center provides members of the academic community of John Jay College with opportunities to respond to the research needs of justice practitioners in New York City, New York State, and the nation. The director of the Center is Dr. Jeffrey A. Butts. The Center operates under the supervision of the Office for the Advancement of Research (OAR).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding support for this research brief was provided by the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** and the **New York City Council**. The authors are grateful for the cooperation and support of the hundreds of New York City residents who participated in the surveys on which this research brief is based.

Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of John Jay College, the City University of New York, or the organizations that fund their research projects.