

# **UTSA Students Express Overwhelming Support for Gun-Free Exclusion Zones on Campus**

## **Survey Indicates Campus Carry Threatens Student Safety, Educational Experience, and Attractiveness of Public Universities in Texas**

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### **Summary**

Majorities of students at the University of Texas at San Antonio oppose the carrying of concealed weapons by Concealed Handgun License (CHL) holders in major premises on campus, feel that their safety will be threatened in premises where campus carry is allowed, and indicate that Texas public universities will be less attractive to prospective students after campus carry is implemented. Students also indicated by a ratio of 12 to 1 that their educational experience will be hindered rather than enhanced if permit holders are allowed to carry guns in class.

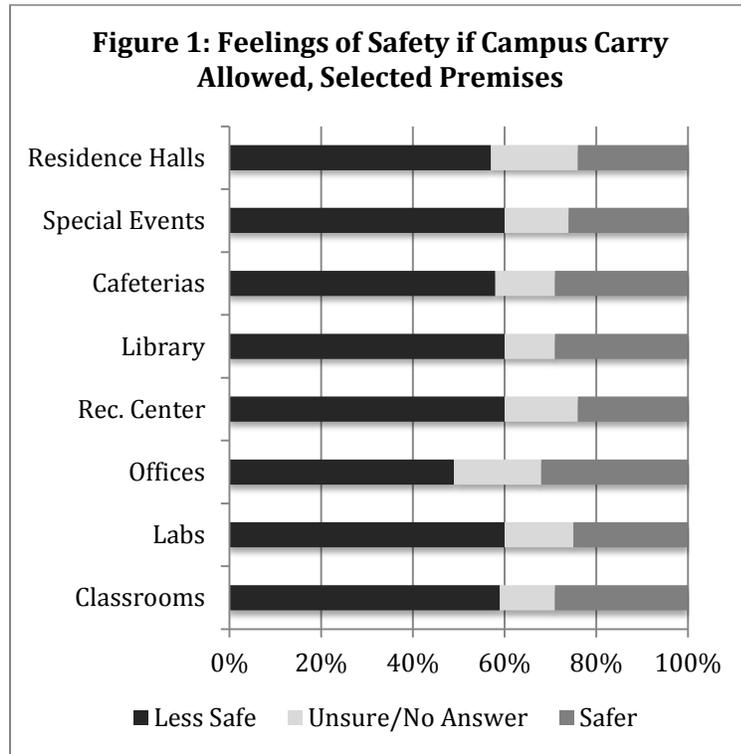
In addition to compelling evidence that students generally feel campus carry is a threat to their safety, educational experience, and the attractiveness of Texas's public universities to prospective students, results of this study reveal that those attitudes are especially prevalent among non-white and female students. These findings raise serious concerns that campus carry will negatively impact efforts to enhance and expand academic opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.

The results of this study provide compelling evidence for university presidents in San Antonio and statewide to consider as they develop plans for implementing SB11, legislation that will allow concealed weapons permit holders to carry guns on public university campuses beginning in the fall of 2016. This study should also give pause to legislative supporters of SB11 given widespread perceptions that the law not only makes many students feel threatened, but also may damage the appeal of Texas's public universities to prospective students, and presumably the competitiveness of Texas's public universities with private and out-of-state colleges and universities.

### **About the Study**

This study was authorized by the UTSA Faculty Senate out of that body's concern for campus safety and the academic mission of the university. It is based on a survey conducted between November 23<sup>rd</sup> and November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015. All enrolled UTSA students were invited to participate via email. Responses were collected online using the survey software Qualtrics. 2,822 students participated out of a total student population of 28,787. The overall AAPOR response rate 1 was 0.093. Student body population estimates reported here are weighted by race and gender to conform to the demographic profile of the university student body, and have a margin of error of +/- 1.85% at a 95% level of confidence. Error margins for subpopulations vary. All sample surveys may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error. Inquiries may be directed to: [walter.wilson@utsa.edu](mailto:walter.wilson@utsa.edu).

## Campus Carry Threatens Student Safety

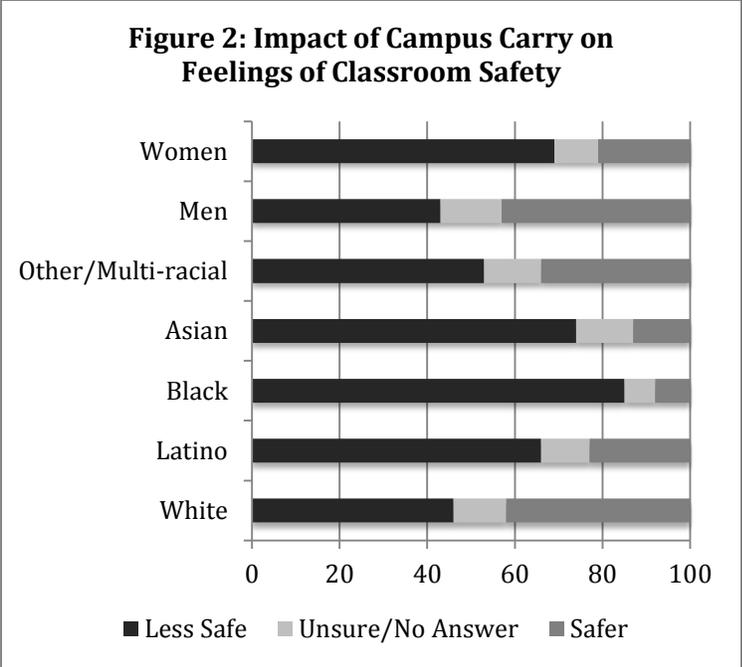


The survey examined the impact of campus carry on feelings of safety in eight major campus premises: residence halls, special events, cafeterias, libraries, recreation centers, academic offices, laboratories, and classrooms.

Sixty percent of respondents indicated that allowing campus carry in libraries, laboratories, and at the recreation center would make them feel less safe.

Solid majorities also expressed the attitude that allowing campus carry in classrooms, cafeterias, and residence halls would make them feel less safe. A plurality of students felt that allowing campus carry would make them feel less safe in academic offices.

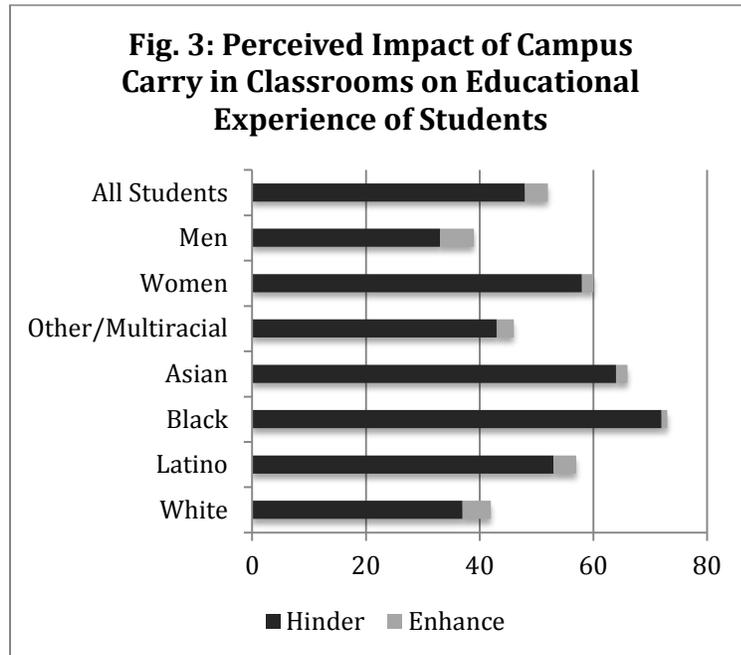
Students who indicated that campus carry would make them feel less safe outnumbered those who felt campus carry would make them safer by a ratio of more than 2 to 1 in every campus location examined except for academic offices. In every category, members of minority groups and women indicated that campus carry would negatively affect their feelings of safety in higher numbers than white or male respondents. Attitudes about campus carry in classrooms provide an example of this pattern:



Although slight pluralities of white and male respondents indicated that campus carry would make them less safe in the classroom, female and minority students were far more likely to report that campus carry would negatively affect their feelings of safety. As the Figure 2 illustrates, majorities of female, Latino, Black, Asian, and other minority students indicated concealed carry in the classroom would make them feel less safe.

Specifically, while 46% of white students and 43% of male students indicated that campus carry would make them less safe in the classroom, 66% of Latino students, 85% of Black students, 74% of Asian students, 52% of students from other or minority groups, and 69% of female students indicated campus carry would make them feel less safe in the classroom.

## Campus Carry Threatens Educational Experiences in the Classroom

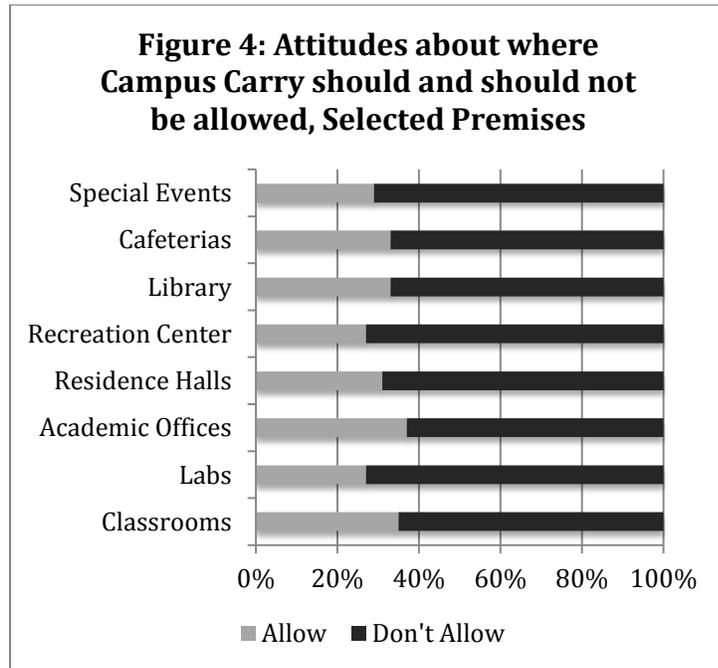


Respondents were asked to indicate how allowing CHL holders to carry guns in classrooms would affect their educational experience. Forty-eight percent indicated that allowing concealed carry in the classroom would hinder their educational experience, compared to just 4% who felt that such a policy would enhance their educational experience.

Another 42 % of students indicated campus carry in the classroom would not affect their educational experience, and 6% had no opinion. These findings suggest that allowing campus carry in the classroom could have a serious detrimental effect on the academic environment and abilities of a plurality of UTSA students to learn.

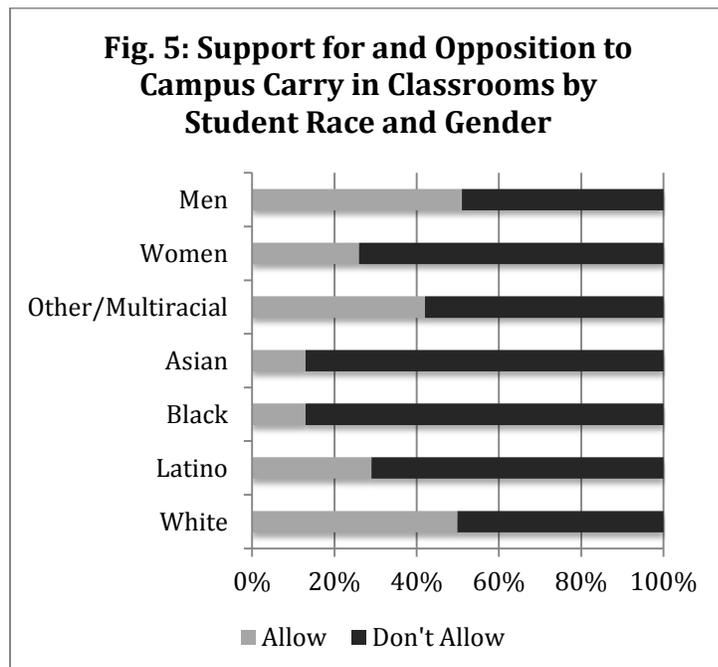
Students who indicated that allowing campus carry in classrooms would hinder their educational experience outnumbered those who felt the policy would enhance their educational experience by a ratio of 12 to 1. Within both gender categories and every racial category, students who indicated allowing campus carry in classrooms would hinder their educational experience outnumbered those who felt the policy would enhance their educational experience by ratios of at least 5 to 1. Female and minority students were more likely than male and white students to indicate that campus carry in the classroom would hinder their educational experience. Black students were especially concerned that campus carry would hinder their educational experience: while 72% of black students indicated that campus carry would hinder their education, less than 2% reported that it would enhance that experience.

## Students Express Overwhelming Support for Gun-Free Exclusion Zones



Students were asked whether concealed weapons should be allowed in each of the following eight campus premises: residence halls, special events, cafeterias, libraries, recreation centers, academic offices, laboratories, and classrooms, or in none of the listed premises. Fifty-one percent of students felt that campus carry should not be allowed in any of the premises examined.

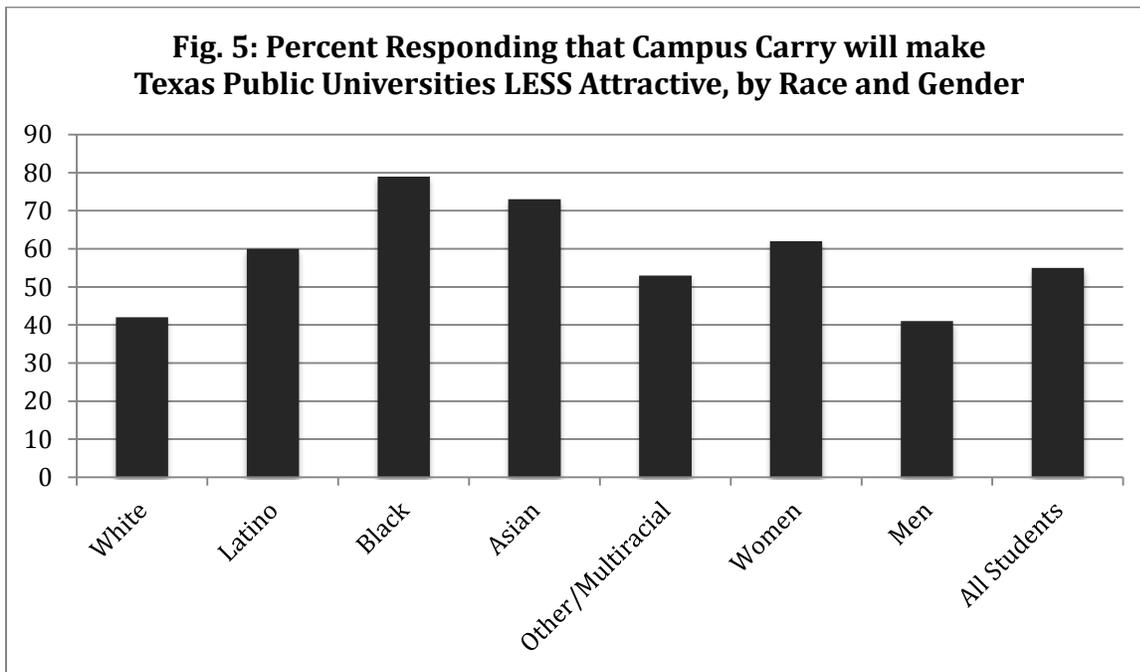
More than 60 percent of students indicated that campus carry should not be allowed for each of the individual premises examined. For most premises examined, opponents of campus carry outnumbered those who indicated campus carry should be allowed by a ratio of more than 2 to 1.



As was the case with other survey items, responses with regard to where permit holders should be allowed to carry weapons were significantly related to both student race and gender. For example, while a slight majority of males (51%) indicated that CHP holders should be allowed to carry in class, 74% of female students opposed the idea. And while a slight majority of white students (50.1%) opposed campus carry in the classroom, 71% of Latino, and 87% of both Black and Asian students opposed campus carry in the classroom.

## Students indicate that allowing CHP holders to carry on campus will make Texas’s public universities less attractive to prospective students

Students were asked to indicate whether allowing CHP holders to carry guns on campus would make Texas public universities more or less attractive to prospective students like themselves. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated that the policy would make Texas public universities less attractive to prospective students, while just 16% indicated it would make Texas public universities more attractive. Twenty percent indicated the legislation would have no impact on the attractiveness of Texas public universities, and 9% had no opinion. Once again, opinions about the impact of SB11 broke sharply along racial and gender lines.



## Conclusion

The results of this study provide compelling evidence that majorities of UTSA students do not support the campus carry policy initiative, feel physically threatened by the policy, expect the policy will have a deleterious impact on their educational experience, and will make Texas public universities less attractive to prospective students in the future. The negative perceived impacts were disproportionately articulated by women and students from minority backgrounds. Collectively, these findings suggest that campus carry may damage the academic mission of the university, undermine the competitiveness of the university, and pose serious civil rights concerns. Mitigating these negative impacts will be essential to the continued pursuit of Tier-One university status by UTSA.

The interests of the university in promoting feelings of safety on campus, a wholesome academic environment that is conducive to learning, and the attractiveness of the university to prospective students, including those from diverse backgrounds, suggest that this study should be carefully considered as policies to govern the implementation of SB11 are developed by the university administration. Among the approaches that might be taken to limit the potential deleterious impact of SB11 at UTSA is the establishment of exclusion zones where campus carry by CHL holders is prohibited, including in classrooms, laboratories, residence halls, faculty offices, cafeterias, recreation centers, libraries, at special events, and in other major campus premises. Setting aside such premises will help to alleviate some student concerns while ensuring compliance with the law.

The potential long-term negative consequences of campus carry raise ongoing issues for the university. While the establishment of exclusion zones in major campus premises may mitigate some immediate negative impacts of the law on feelings of safety and student educational experiences, they are unlikely to solve those problems given significant student opposition to campus carry in general. Results of this study suggest that repeal of SB11 offers a preferable solution to potential problems posed by the law to university competitiveness and the academic mission of the university.

## Appendix: UTSA Student Demographics

	Female	Male	Both Genders
White	3,593	4,126	7,719
Black	1,393	1,046	2,439
Hispanic	7,610	6,798	14,408
Asian	731	793	1,524
Indian	33	21	54
Islander	21	29	50
More than One Race	420	407	827
Other	598	1,168	1,766
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,399</b>	<b>14,388</b>	<b>28,787</b>