

Gun Violence Prevention in Hennepin County



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Abstract

Through Hennepin County's newly created Safe Communities Division, the County partnered with a team of graduate researchers from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs to better understand gun violence within the County, as well as strengthening gun violence prevention and intervention work. Our team's research consists of an extensive literature review that details root causes of gun violence along with current gun violence prevention and intervention methods across the country. The research incorporates a mixed-methods approach of quantitative data to identify disproportionately affected areas of gun violence in the County, as well as qualitative data vis-à-vis interviews with community leaders, nonprofit representatives, local government officials, and law enforcement officers. These data work in tandem to improve the Safe Communities Division's work by aligning its resources with highly successful and innovative strategies. The findings suggest that the County could support several effective solutions based on the qualitative data: leverage partnerships with community partners, convene community organizations, diversify funding strategy, and build capacity.

Keywords/Phrases (see Appendix B for definitions)

Community-based expertise, community-based solutions, racial/economic disparities and in/equity, gun violence, gun violence prevention and intervention, lived experience, Hennepin County, law enforcement, cross-sector partnerships, cross-sector convening, and cultural authenticity.

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Executive Summary

In 2022, Hennepin County created the Safe Communities Division within the Health and Human Services Department by investing significant resources into gun violence prevention and intervention. The County uses a disparities reduction framework to guide this initiative, partnering with municipal governments, nonprofit agencies, and community organizations to implement a multi-system logic to address gun violence. In order to better understand the particulars of gun violence within Hennepin County, and strengthen intervention and prevention work, the County government partnered with a team of graduate researchers from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How are communities around the United States responding to gun violence?
- 2) Which Hennepin County municipalities and neighborhoods are experiencing the most gun violence?
- 3) What methodologies/strategies/frameworks are Hennepin County nonprofits, community organizations, and municipal governments currently using to address gun violence?
- 4) How can Hennepin County, and the Safe Communities Division in particular, amplify the impact of existing work while avoiding program and service duplication?

To answer these questions, the research team conducted an extensive literature review investigating the root causes of gun violence, as well as common prevention and intervention methodologies. The team analyzed quantitative data to determine which areas of Hennepin County were disproportionately affected by gun violence. The team also conducted qualitative interviews with community leaders, nonprofit representatives, local government officials, and law enforcement officers. This research bolsters Hennepin County Safe Communities Division's aim to align resources with existing highly effective and/or innovative strategies. A detailed analysis of this qualitative and quantitative research is provided in the following sections, as well as an overview of recommendations for future research and a discussion of the limitations of the project.

Overview of National and Local Gun Violence Contexts

Throughout the United States over the last decade, gun violence has increased steadily, rising to near peak levels from the 1970s and 1990s.¹ The sharpest rise occurred over the last three years, potentially driven by: the socioeconomic and political instability resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; deepening racial disparities and corresponding antiracist movements; and, increasing availability of and access to firearms, especially for children and young adults. Across the country, municipalities are attempting to confront this increase in gun violence through a variety of program archetypes, such as community-based violence prevention programs, hospital-based violence intervention programs, gun buyback programs, gun violence restraining orders, and universal background checks. However, in order to apply any “best practice” effectively, the unique social contours of Hennepin County must be taken into account.

Hennepin County is the most populous county in Minnesota and is recognized as the economic center of the state and Upper-Midwest, with one in five Minnesotans residing within its borders². Both the county and its most populous city (Minneapolis) exist within a state ranked nationally as one of the best places to live³ while also being nominated for the deplorable distinction of worst places to live for Black people⁴. Black and Indigenous people are overrepresented in Minnesota's prisons⁵ and underrepresented in home ownership, among other socioeconomic categories⁶. A review of gun violence in Hennepin County cannot ignore the social and historical context of the region, namely practices of community redlining and segregation⁷, and the high-profile killings/manslaughter/murder by police officers of Black and Brown individuals, such as Philando Castile⁸ and Jamar Clark⁹, and more recently George Floyd¹⁰, Daunte

¹ Gramlich, J. (2023). What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>

² U.S. Census Bureau (2023). P1: Race - Decennial Census. *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved from: [https://data.census.gov/table?g=040XX00US27\\$0500000,27_010XX00US&d=DEC+Redistricting+Data+\(PL+94-171\)&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1](https://data.census.gov/table?g=040XX00US27$0500000,27_010XX00US&d=DEC+Redistricting+Data+(PL+94-171)&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1)

³ U.S. News & World Report (2023). Best States Rankings. *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings>

⁴ Comen, E. (2019). For Black Americans moving to a new city, these are some of the worst places to settle. *USA Today*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/11/08/moving-the-worst-us-cities-for-black-americans/40553101/>

⁵ Henrichson, C., Schattner-Elmaleh, E., Kang-Brown, J., Hinds, O., & Wallace-Lee, J. (2019). Incarceration trends in Minnesota. *Vera Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-minnesota.pdf>

⁶ Homeownership Minnesota (2023). Minnesota housing statistics. *Homeownership Minnesota*. Retrieved from: <https://www.homemn.org/mn-housing-statistics#:~:text=Minnesota%E2%80%99s%20racial%20homeownership%20gap%20is%20the%202nd%20worst,50%25%20ownership%20difference%20between%20white%20and%20Black%20Minnesotans.>

⁷ PBS Twin Cities (2019). Jim Crow of the North | Redlining and racism in Minnesota | Full documentary. *PBS*.

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWQfDbbQv9E>

⁸ Philando Castille, though murdered in Falcon Heights by Saint Anthony police officer Jeronimo Yanez, are both part of the greater metro area; the incident rallied protestors and demands for reform in both Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

⁹ Davis, A. & Zamora, K. (2020). Revisiting the life of Jamar Clark, 5 years after his death. *MPR News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2020/11/13/davis-revisiting-the-life-of-jamar-clark-5-years-after-his-death>

¹⁰MPR News. (2021). George Floyd: One year later. *MPR News*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.mprnews.org/crime-law-and-justice/killing-of-george-floyd>

Wright¹¹, and Amir Locke¹². As a result of these incidents, there has been a dramatic loss of confidence in law enforcement by many residents,¹³ particularly among Black and Brown individuals - individuals who are most likely to be affected by gun violence - which limits the effectiveness of any state-centered intervention.

This context informed our decision to leverage both qualitative and quantitative research to investigate gun violence prevention and intervention work in Hennepin County. Given the historic divide between law enforcement and community members, it is important to center the voices of those with lived experiences of gun violence in any work related to gun violence prevention. The aim of this research is to identify the work that is being accomplished at the street level in various communities throughout Hennepin County, with the understanding that those who live in areas being impacted by the increases in gun violence offer an expertise that often does not exist within academic research or government institutions.

Within Hennepin County, gun violence prevention and intervention work takes many forms, such as community organizations and nonprofits dedicated to community-based violence prevention, community leaders leveraging their passion and connections to decrease gun violence, and local government entities providing funding and service delivery. Quantitative data clearly pointed to North Minneapolis as the “hottest” site for gun violence, with its neighbors Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center also experiencing high gun violence rates compared to the rest of the County. Accordingly, the preponderance of qualitative interviews were conducted with individuals working in these areas. The data also showed Bloomington and Richfield to be hot spots for gun violence, and one individual from each municipality was interviewed. Qualitative interviews revealed the following themes in the respondents’ understanding of the causes of gun violence:

- A lack of training and education around gun ownership, operation, and safety.
- An overall lack of pro-social and mental health support, especially for young people.
- Barriers to service delivery among gun violence intervention organizations.
- Increased access to illegal guns and a lack of understanding, particularly among youth, of the consequences of gun use and gun violence.

Based on this extensive qualitative and quantitative research, this paper recommends the following ways for Hennepin County to complement and augment community-based gun violence prevention work:

- Build capacity: Increase funding, training, and resources for nonprofit agencies and local governments tackling gun violence in Hennepin County, specifically those working to build meaningful relationships with high risk individuals and communities through on-the-ground outreach.

¹¹MPR News. (2021). The killing of Daunte Wright and trial of Kimberly Potter. MPR News. Retrieved from: <https://www.mprnews.org/crime-law-and-justice/killing-of-daunte-wright>

¹²MPR News. (2022). The police killing of Amir Locke. MPR News. Retrieved from: <https://www.mprnews.org/crime-law-and-justice/police-killing-of-amir-locke>

¹³ Pryce, D. K. & Gainey, R. (2022). Race differences in public satisfaction with and trust in the local police in the context of George Floyd protests: an analysis of residents’ experiences and attitudes. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 35:1, 74-92. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2021.1981891>

- Diversify funding strategy: Increase funding and resources to build capacity for on-the-ground GVPI program evaluation and measurement framework development among programs that have not historically been funded/supported, and those providing novel or experimental programs predicated on local knowledge and expertise.
- Convene community organizations: Collaborate with community organizers and nonprofits to convene a working group of stakeholders, including smaller community- and/or culturally-based organizations. Utilize the County’s platform to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and communication to build awareness and avoid service duplication. Additionally, the County may need to refrain from assuming an authority role in the working group, instead centering community voices and empowerment.
- Leverage partnerships with community partners: To avoid placing undue administrative burdens on small, grassroots organizations, the County should collaborate with local community funders to assist in the coordination of grantmaking programs.

Literature Review & Analysis

Gun Violence as a Public Health Emergency

Gun violence in the United States is broadly considered in the academic research, public policy, and political spheres as an epidemic, functioning similarly to any other virulent communicable disease. Of developed nations, the U.S. has a rate of gun violence that is twenty times higher than others.¹⁴ Indeed, “out of all the firearm deaths in the 23 highest income countries, approximately 80% occur in the US”.¹⁵ There are multivariate factors that cause and contribute to the prevalence of gun violence, making it a complex and challenging socio-political issue that cost the U.S. economy \$280 billion in 2021 alone.¹⁶ The injuries and deaths that result from gun violence place a significant burden on the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, eroding public safety and civic cohesion.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic placed further stress on social and economic systems, compounding racial and economic disparities amid intensifying civil and political unrest. Potentially driven in part by the fear and uncertainty of the pandemic, gun sales reached all-time highs in 2020 and 2021¹⁷, and gun violence throughout the country has continued to escalate. Similar to the exponential spread of the coronavirus, gun violence propagates rapidly. According to CDC data accessed by the Center for American Progress, gun homicides increased by 35% from 2019-2020, and at least another 7% from 2020-2021. Of children and youth aged 1-19, gun homicides increased by 40% from 2019-2020. In

¹⁴ CDC & National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2023). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System. *CDC*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

¹⁵ Sanchez, C., Jaguan, D., Shaikh, S., McKenney, M., & Elkbuli, A. (2020). A systematic review of the causes and prevention strategies in reducing gun violence in the United States. *The American journal of emergency medicine*, 38(10), pp. 2169–2178. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.06.062>

¹⁶ Bing, B., Irvin-Erickson, Y., Lynch, M., & Gurvis, A. (2017). A neighborhood-level analysis of the economic impact of gun violence. *Urban Institute*. Retrieved from: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/90671/eigv_final_report_3.pdf

¹⁷ Small Arms Analytics (2022). U.S. firearms sales December 2021: Slight fall from December 2020. Year closes out with nearly 20 million firearms sold. *Small Arms Analytics*. Retrieved from: <http://smallarmsanalytics.com/v1/pr/2022-01-05.pdf>

addition, 70% of agencies reporting to the Police Executive Research Forum noted increased nonfatal shootings from 2019-2020.¹⁸

Furthermore, there is some evidence in contemporary research from the last several years that the co-occurring COVID-19 and structural anti-black and -brown racism pandemics in the United States, alongside responding antiracism movements (often popularly represented as Black Lives Matter), are strongly correlated with rising gun violence rates¹⁹. According to Patton et al. (2022), “Statistical analyses show that the social problem of gun violence and crime is related to the co-occurring pandemics of COVID-19 and anti-Black racism, as well as the ensuing stay-at-home restrictions (Kim, 2022a; Koppel et al., 2022) and Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests (Zhang et al., 2020).”²⁰ Through quantitative and qualitative research and analysis, Patton et al. (2022) also identified the increasing use of social media, particularly in the context of stay-at-home orders and widespread social distancing, as contributing to cycles of escalation and violence, through ease of access to and rapid transmission of violent content, threats, misinformation, and accusations²¹. Lack of social engagement contributed to feelings of social decay and further devaluation of Black and Brown lives, which was countered by the messaging of the Black Lives Matter movement and increasing calls for non-law enforcement based solutions to community safety and violence problems²².

As previously articulated, the COVID-19 pandemic compounded existing structural racial and ethnic oppression across multiple systems, fomenting a sense of overall chaos in urban Black and Brown communities and promoting violent reactions²³. This is perhaps no better represented than in Minneapolis and Hennepin County in 2020, where the murder of George Floyd by Derek Chauvin, an agent of municipal law enforcement, incited one of the most violent summers in recent years nationwide. Urban Black and Brown communities experienced the brunt of the violence and destruction across the Twin Cities metropolitan region, which further entrenched systemic racial and socioeconomic disparities²⁴ that research has identified as intersectional causes of gun violence.

The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV), a 501(c)(3) affiliate organization of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, uses a public health and equity lens to identify and implement evidence-based policy solution and programs to reduce gun violence²⁵. The EFSGV views the following racial and social inequities as being root causes of gun violence:²⁶

¹⁸ Cassell, P. G. (2020). Explaining the recent homicide spikes in U.S. Cities: The “Minneapolis Effect” and the decline in proactive policing. *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, 33(1-2), pp. 83-127. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2020.33.1-2.83>

¹⁹ Patton, D. U., Aguilar, N., Landau, A. Y., Thomas, C., Kagan, R., Ren, T., Stoneberg, E., Wang, T., Halmos, D., Saha, A., Ananthram, A., & McKeown, K. (2022). Community implications for gun violence prevention during co-occurring pandemics: A qualitative and computational analysis study. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 79, pp. 1-10. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpmed.2022.107263>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Alcorn, C. (2021). One year after George Floyd’s murder, Minneapolis’ businesses are still reeling. CNN Business. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/25/business/minneapolis-businesses-after-floyd-protests/index.html>

²⁵ EFSGV. (2020). The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://efsgv.org/>

²⁶ EFSGV. (2020). The root causes of gun violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EFSGV-The-Root-Causes-of-Gun-Violence-March-2020.pdf>

- Income inequality
- Poverty
- Underfunded public housing
- Under-resourced public services
- Underperforming schools
- Lack of opportunity and perceptions of hopelessness
- Easy access to firearms by high-risk people

Evidence shows that Black and Brown populations bear a disproportionate impact of gun violence²⁷. Black adolescents and men between the ages of 15-24 are 22 times more likely to die by gun violence than whites of the same age range, while Latine young males are four times more likely to be killed by firearms than whites. Shooting is the number one cause of death for Black men under 55 and the second leading cause of death for Latine men under 35. Young Black females ages 15-24 are more than six times likelier to be murdered via firearm than whites, and young Latine females are twice as likely to die by firearm than whites. These disparities are not unique to gun violence; rather, they are echoed across many sectors such as healthcare²⁸ and the prison-industrial complex²⁹, a relic of institutional chattel slavery.³⁰ In 2015, the Washington Post confirmed that one in every four Black men will be incarcerated in their lifetime.³¹

In 2020, 12,179 Black individuals died from gun violence, compared with 7,286 white individuals. Black people made up 12.5% of the U.S. population in 2020; however, Black people composed 61% of all gun homicides.³² More broadly, “A 2018 nationally representative poll of American adults found that 27% of Black Americans had witnessed a shooting and 23% reported that someone they care for has been killed by a gun.”³³ Furthermore, neighborhoods and communities where gun violence is already most prevalent are at elevated risk of increased shootings due to retaliatory cycles and the impact of witnessing or experiencing gun violence on brain development and behavior. The EFSGV also notes how gun violence perpetuates and/or exacerbates other aspects of systemic racism and oppression such as businesses closing, jobs relocating, and decreased rates of capital flowing through impacted communities.³⁴

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Yearby, R. (2018), Racial Disparities in Health Status and Access to Healthcare: The Continuation of Inequality in the United States Due to Structural Racism. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 77(3-4), pp. 1113-1152. Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/10.1111/ajes.12230>

²⁹ Nelson, A. & Rather, S. (2022). Captive consumers: How government agencies and private companies trap and profit off incarcerated people and their loved ones. *Inquest*. Retrieved from: <https://inquest.org/captive-consumers/>

³⁰ Brown, O. (2014). From the Philadelphia Negro to the Prison Industrial Complex: Crime and the Marginalization of African American Males in Contemporary America. *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men*, 3(1), pp. 71–96. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.2979/spectrum.3.1.71>

³¹ Kessler, G. (2015). The stale statistic that one in three black males ‘born today’ will end up in jail. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/06/16/the-stale-statistic-that-one-in-three-black-males-has-a-chance-of-ending-up-in-jail/>

³² Edmund, M. (2022). Gun violence disproportionately and overwhelmingly hurts communities of color. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/gun-violence-disproportionately-and-overwhelmingly-hurts-communities-of-color/>

³³ EFSGV. (2020). The root causes of gun violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EFSGV-The-Root-Causes-of-Gun-Violence-March-2020.pdf>

³⁴ Ibid.

Limitations of Current Research

Though the deeply concerning and exhaustively publicized trend of mass shootings continues to escalate, with a combined total of 2,364 incidents from 2019-2022 in which four or more individuals were injured or killed in gun violence³⁵, focusing only on these events ignores the reality that the vast majority of gun violence does not derive from mass shootings, but rather “from the day-to-day shootings that disproportionately impact communities of color.”³⁶

Thus, it is clear that the political and media focus on reforming gun access as the primary response to gun violence misses the structural causes and ignores the overwhelming impact of historical discrimination across public and private socioeconomic systems. Gun violence is a complicated issue with complex origins, and effective solutions must be intersectional and responsive to its complex hegemonic causes. Unfortunately, GVPI research has been largely blocked at the federal level in the contemporary era due in large part to political posturing, as seen in the following examples:

- In 1996, Congress enacted the Dickey Amendment to the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 1996, which disallows the use of Center for Disease Control (CDC) funding for injury prevention and control to be allocated to advocacy for gun control. The legislation was passed alongside a \$2.6 million CDC budget cut which was the precise amount the agency had spent on gun violence research the prior year. This effectively eliminated comprehensive federal government-based GVPI research.³⁷
- In 2003, the Tiahrt Amendments placed restrictions on how federal law enforcement agencies can trace the use of crime-guns. According to Everytown for Gun Safety, these amendments “prohibit the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from releasing firearm trace data. They require the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to destroy all approved gun purchaser records within 24 hours. The Tiahrt Amendments also prohibit the ATF from requiring gun dealers to submit inventories to law enforcement.”³⁸

In addition to impeding gun violence prevention and intervention research at the federal level, these laws prevent law enforcement agencies from effectively tracking and addressing illegal gun trafficking in the U.S. A 2016 Bureau of Justice Affairs (BJA) survey of individuals experiencing incarceration found that 90% of individuals who possessed a gun during their convicted offense did not buy the weapon from a retailer.³⁹ The regional and local research underscores these findings, including separate studies conducted in Los Angeles and Chicago which found that the vast majority of urban gun violence was committed with illegally procured firearms.⁴⁰ With federal agencies obstructed from conducting effective research

³⁵ Gun Violence Archive (2023). Gun violence archive - evidence based research since 2013. *Gun Violence Archive*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

³⁶ McLively, M. (2019). Gun Violence Prevention 2.0: A New Framework for Addressing America’s Enduring Epidemic. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 60, pp. 253-276. Retrieved from: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_journal_law_policy/vol60/iss1/14

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Everytown for Gun Safety. (2023). Repeal restrictions on gun trace data. *Everytown for Gun Safety*. Retrieved from: <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/gun-trace-data/>

³⁹ Alper, M., & Beatty, L. G. (2019). Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016. *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Retrieved from: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/source-and-use-firearms-involved-crimes-survey-prison-inmates-2016>

⁴⁰ Siegel, M. (2016). Gun control, another place where race matters. *BU Today*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bu.edu/sph/news/articles/2016/gun-control-another-place-where-race-matters/>

and analysis of gun violence and illegal gun trafficking in the U.S., they are less able to contribute to the development and evaluation of GVPI policies and programming. Thus, gun violence prevention research typically falls to universities and nonprofit policy, research, and human service organizations, which face their own limitations.

Gun violence research is primarily delineated into two separate categories: mass shootings and quotidian shootings, and has historically primarily ignored the additional category of state (law enforcement) gun violence. According to researchers Jordan McMillan and Mary Bernstein (2022), gun policy reform, understood popularly as gun control, has been the primary focus of gun violence prevention research. Conversely, community-based and -led gun violence intervention logics have been largely underfunded and under-researched/-evaluated. This then leads to a disparity in the types of political, policy, and direct programmatic responses deemed valid, provided resources, and further evaluated for scalability and impact. That is, “the material legacy of segregation and institutional racism coupled with racist meaning systems shape [gun violence prevention] efforts across communities and inspire different movement logics.”⁴¹

Additionally, though several figures exist for the social cost of gun violence,⁴² our research team chose not to include them in our research for a number of reasons. First, our research focused on the causes and response of gun violence, rather than its cost. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is the belief of the research team that the reduction of human and community life to data points, monetary value, markets, supply chains, and commodities is a reflection of capitalist ideology that, while relevant to economists, does not adequately measure the true cost of gun violence. However, there are several salient points to consider: in 2017, the Urban Institute found the following examples of gun violence’s sobering deleterious outcomes⁴³: In Minneapolis, each additional gun homicide in a census tract in a given year was related to:

- 80 fewer jobs the next year
- A \$22,000 decrease in average home values
- A 20 point decrease in average credit score

Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention - a Movement

McMillan and Bernstein (2022) assert that it is critical to understand that the GVPI “movement is not solely focused on policy change but on social change more broadly.”⁴⁴ While gun access reform is an important part of the gun violence prevention conversation, the impact of any potential major shifts to firearm access and lethality is likely to be minimal in urban communities where gun violence is most rampant. This is due, as previously described, to the preponderance of crime-guns being obtained via illegal secondary markets, as well as the relatively recent phenomenon of largely untraceable private firearm manufacturing using three-dimensional printing technology in order to create what are known as “ghost guns.” Straw purchasing and the rising phenomenon of “ghost guns” circumvent gun acquisition

⁴¹ McMillan, J., & Bernstein, M. (2022). Beyond gun control: Mapping gun violence prevention logics. *Sociological Perspectives*, 65(1), pp. 177-195. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/07311214211010845>

⁴² <https://time.com/6217348/gun-violence-economic-costs-us/>

⁴³ Bing, B., Irvin-Erickson, Y., Lynch, M., & Gurvis, A. (2017). A neighborhood-level analysis of the economic impact of gun violence. *Urban Institute*. Retrieved from:

https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/90671/eigv_final_report_3.pdf

⁴⁴ Ibid.

and ownership regulations.⁴⁵ Whether these weapons are locally produced or trafficked across state lines, they represent an increasing portion of crime-guns used in acts of gun violence, particularly in urban spaces.

As opposed to gun policy reform, formal and informal intervention organizations use multi-system logics (MSL) to address the gun violence epidemic, as they integrate lived experiences complemented by an understanding of systemic oppression. Contrary to policy reform logics, “intervention organizations, especially in racially oppressed communities, propose a different set of solutions to gun violence, focused on directly providing social safety nets and programming, community engagement, changing relations with authorities such as police, and altering community practices to foster collective efficacy.”⁴⁶ MSLs function across sectors not only to prevent the spread of gun violence but to connect high risk individuals with socioeconomic opportunities that can change their material conditions.

Furthermore, MSLs allow GVPI social movements to operate without needing a central locus of power (e.g., a specific nonprofit organization, unit of government, funding institution, etc.), which contributes to the movements’ capacity to operate outside of state-based oppression, as well as other social and cultural institutions. Where traditional academic GVPI research and state-based reform logics fail is in theorizing “how material and structural conditions are inextricably linked to cultural meaning systems [rendering] social movement challenges to these multiple systems of inequality, especially by racially oppressed communities, invisible to researchers” and other mainstream authority figures or leaders.⁴⁷

Community-based gun prevention/intervention logics differ from gun policy reform logics in their departure from reliance on government apparatuses. They are instead predicated on changing socio-political paradigms by centering Black and Brown cultural identities and implementing horizontal organizing methods to cultivate community self-empowerment and -determination. The strength of the intervention logic lies in “focusing on changes at the individual, community, and structural levels and challenging racist cultural meaning systems that devalue Black and Brown lives (Bernstein et al. 2019),” in addition to changing community practices to foster collective efficacy (Bandura 1986; McMillan & Bernstein 2022). Critically, prevention and/or intervention organizations are predicated on rejecting “the ‘narrative of black criminality’ [that] attributes violence and crime committed by Black Americans to some ‘flaw’ in the black population.”⁴⁸ There is an inherent antiracist, anti-hierarchical ethos to this model that infuses authenticity and supports alternative visions of potential and opportunity for Black and Brown communities.

Community Policing and Gun Violence

Historically and contemporarily, local and municipal governments utilize law enforcement agencies, particularly police forces, as tools to address gun violence in urban communities. Through the framework

⁴⁵ Wintemute, G. J. (2021). Ghost guns: spookier than you think they are. *Injury Epidemiology*, 8(13). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-021-00306-0>

⁴⁶ McMillan, J., & Bernstein, M. (2022). Beyond gun control: Mapping gun violence prevention logics. *Sociological Perspectives*, 65(1), pp. 177-195. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/07311214211010845>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bernstein, M., McMillan, J., & Charash, E. (2019). Once in Parkland, a Year in Hartford, a Weekend in Chicago. *Sociological Forum*, 34(Special Issue: Resistance in the 21st Century), pp. 1153-1173. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48558596>

of community policing, the aim of law enforcement agencies is to develop collaborative partnerships with residents, businesses, schools, and other local organizations and institutions, specifically in non-enforcement contexts. Over time, these relationships are intended to lead to information sharing regarding criminal activity within various jurisdictions and precinct boundaries so that police are then better able to use enforcement to track, charge, and arrest offenders in order to keep communities safe. Trust between community members and the police is an essential component of the effectiveness of community policing, as it can lead to more effective communication and cooperation in preventing and solving crimes.⁴⁹

Studies^{50,51} have shown that community policing can reduce rates of crime and gun violence, at least in the short term. One oft-used component of community policing is targeted enforcement tactics, in which increased patrols and officer presence are assigned to specific neighborhoods or areas that have elevated rates of gun violence, and criminal activity related to gun violence. For example, within Hennepin County the Minneapolis Police Department's (MPD) Strategic Operations Division uses focused enforcement details as a method to prevent and reduce gun violence.⁵² These details operate in collaboration with other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to share information, strategies, and mission implementation. As part of this practice, surveillance and intelligence gathering activities are undertaken by officers with the goal of obtaining search and arrest warrants for high risk individuals prior to acts of gun violence or potential repeat offenses. The method also employs "overwhelming show of force" actions that concentrate officers and units over a period of time to visually display the threat of arrest and incarceration for any individuals engaged in criminal behavior and/or gun violence.

Although there is evidence of the impact of community policing in preventing and reducing gun violence, as previously noted, much research does not suggest long-term efficacy.⁵³ For example, the MPD Strategic Operations Division's own data from 2022 illustrate some short-term decreases in gun violence in areas of focused enforcement details, comparing three days pre- and post-initiative, while at the same time indicating that there were slight increases in gun violence in neighborhood zones outside the primary focus area of the details.⁵⁴ In other words, "hotspot" areas experienced decreased gun violence while surrounding areas experienced slight increases, suggesting that this particular form of community policing effectively displaces or disperses gun violence but does not necessarily reduce it overall. In addition, though gun violence rates in Minneapolis declined slightly since peaking in 2020 and 2021, available data and evaluation remains unclear as to MPD's direct role in this shift.

⁴⁹ Community Oriented Policing Services. (2009). Community policing defined. *U.S. Department of Justice*. Retrieved from: <https://permanent.fdlp.gov/lps123425/e030917193-CP-Defined.pdf>

⁵⁰ Weisburd, D., & Eck, J. E. (2013). What Can Police Do to Reduce Crime, Disorder, and Fear?. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 593(1), pp. 42-65. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203262548>

⁵¹ Mazerolle, L., Bennett, S., Davis, J., Sargeant, E., & Manning, M. (2013). Legitimacy in policing: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 9(1), pp. i-147. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2013.1>

⁵² City of Minneapolis (2022). City of Minneapolis 2022 gun violence overview. *City of Minneapolis*. Retrieved from: <https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/Download/RCAV2/28255/PHS-8-9-22---Gun-Violence-Overview.pdf>

⁵³ Chalfin, A., LaForest, M., & Kaplan, J. (2021). Can Precision Policing Reduce Gun Violence? Evidence from "Gang Takedowns" in New York City. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 40(4), pp. 1047-1082. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22323>

⁵⁴ City of Minneapolis (2022). City of Minneapolis 2022 gun violence overview. *City of Minneapolis*. Retrieved from: <https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/Download/RCAV2/28255/PHS-8-9-22---Gun-Violence-Overview.pdf>

While gun violence is likely caused by numerous factors at the systemic level and progress is hard to track, research indicates that the primary determinants of perceived police effectiveness are two-fold: trust in the police and police responsiveness (not over- or under-policing). In the specific case of police effectiveness in decreasing gun violence, these are also the primary problems identified with this approach to date.⁵⁵⁵⁶

Lack of trust in police as servants of community safety can be traced from the historical origins of police forces rooted in the practice of chattel slavery and as instruments of capitalist class oppression.⁵⁷ Since the antebellum era in the United States, the antagonism of police forces against Black, Brown, and labor class populations has been continuous.⁵⁸⁵⁹ This antagonism is most explicitly seen via police violence, which can be defined as “excessive, unreasonable, and unjustified use of force by law enforcement that often causes long-term physical and psychological trauma and, in some cases, death.”⁶⁰ Data shows that the majority of police violence, particularly police violence resulting in mortality, is inflicted on Black and Brown populations, and typically within urban geographies and communities,⁶¹⁶² – the precise populations and spaces that are experiencing the highest rates of gun violence.

Additionally, urban Black and Brown communities experience the phenomenon of both over- and under-policing.⁶³ An example of over-policing would be an increased number of officers and patrols in Black and Brown urban communities targeting minor infractions and offenses. This could be possession of small/personal use amounts of drugs, public consumption of alcohol, illegal small scale sales of consumer goods (e.g., cigarettes, fake jewelry, clothing, etc.), or “vagrancy.”⁶⁴ Stop-and-frisk tactics, as well as significantly higher rates of traffic stops for Black and Brown motorists, are other examples of over-policing. Racially biased policies also historically have targeted Black and Brown populations in

⁵⁵ EFSGV. (2020). Police violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/police-violence/#:~:text=In%20short%2C%20police%20violence%20harm,to%20increased%20community%20gun%20violence>; Brunson, R. K., & Wade, B. A. (2019). “Oh hell no, we don’t talk to police.” Insights on the lack of cooperation in police investigations of urban gun violence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2019, pp. 1-26. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12448>

⁵⁶ Kappmeier, M., & Fahey, K. (2022). Trust and legitimacy: Policing among racial groups. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 51(2), pp. 35-46. Retrieved from: https://www.psychology.org.nz/application/files/8616/6631/4272/Kappmeier_35-42.pdf

⁵⁷ Brucato, B. (2020). Policing race and racing police. *Social Justice*, 47(3/4), pp. 115-136. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27094596>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Hesse, B. (2017). White sovereignty(...), black life politics: “The n****r they couldn’t kill.” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 116(3), pp. 581-604. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-3961494>

⁶⁰ EFSGV. (2020). Police violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/police-violence/#:~:text=In%20short%2C%20police%20violence%20harm,to%20increased%20community%20gun%20violence>

⁶¹ Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 116(34), pp. 16793-16798. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821204116>

⁶² EFSGV. (2020). Police violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from: <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/police-violence/#:~:text=In%20short%2C%20police%20violence%20harm,to%20increased%20community%20gun%20violence>

⁶³ Brunson, R. K., & Wade, B. A. (2019). “Oh hell no, we don’t talk to police.” Insights on the lack of cooperation in police investigations of urban gun violence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2019, pp. 1-26. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12448>

⁶⁴ Lofstrom, M., Hayes, J., Martin, B., & Premkumar, D. (2022). Racial disparities in traffic stops. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 41(1), pp. 255-288. Retrieved from: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/racial-disparities-in-traffic-stops/>

order to criminalize them and/or extract resources via higher rates of civic fines and fees.⁶⁵ Conversely, under-policing is represented in the significantly decreased rate of homicide arrests and convictions in urban communities since the 1960s. Research also shows that murders committed with guns in urban spaces are less likely to be cleared than fatalities involving other types of weapons.⁶⁶

Thus, law enforcement's effectiveness in decreasing gun violence in urban communities is significantly limited by the community's lack of trust in the police, as well as historical practices of over- and under-policing. Furthermore, the trifecta of generally racially biased policing practices, police militarization, and mass incarceration compound distrust in the overall judicial system, as well as other government and mainstream socioeconomic systems.⁶⁷ As a result, there is less communication and cooperation from community members in areas of high gun violence, while reliance on informal or extralegal methods of obtaining justice, such as cycles of retaliatory violence, become the norm.^{68,69} This is especially true within the small subset of high risk individuals who tend to be the perpetrators of the majority of urban gun violence.

It is imperative that police forces work toward improving trust within communities experiencing high rates of gun violence⁷⁰. Restorative justice practices are one methodology for re-establishing trust that is gaining traction and has been examined in research literature.⁷¹ However, the body of evidence in much of the current gun violence prevention and intervention research, as well as examinations of community policing, indicate that community-led alternative models for preventing and ending gun violence are critical and show significant promise. Examples of these include Cure Violence, CeaseFire, Advance Peace, Hospital-Based Gun Violence Intervention, and other street outreach/violence interruption programs operated by community organizations and nonprofits.

Promising Models for Gun Violence Prevention & Intervention

To continue the analogy of gun violence as a public health crisis, it is necessary to follow the general four step methodology that public health models apply to widespread social health problems. According to "Gun Violence Prevention 2.0: A New Framework for Addressing America's Enduring Epidemic," this includes the following:

⁶⁵ Hinton, E., Henderson, L., & Reed, C. (2018). An unjust burden: The disparate treatment of Black Americans in the criminal justice system. *Vera Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/an-unjust-burden-report.pdf>

⁶⁶ Brunson, R. K., & Wade, B. A. (2019). "Oh hell no, we don't talk to police." Insights on the lack of cooperation in police investigations of urban gun violence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2019, pp. 1-26. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12448>

⁶⁷ EFSGV. (2020). Police violence. *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*. Retrieved from:

<https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/police-violence/#:~:text=In%20short%2C%20police%20violence%20harm,to%20increased%20community%20gun%20violence>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Brunson, R. K., & Wade, B. A. (2019). "Oh hell no, we don't talk to police." Insights on the lack of cooperation in police investigations of urban gun violence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2019, pp. 1-26. Retrieved from:

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12448>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Merkey, L. (2015). Building trust and breaking down the wall: The use of restorative justice to repair police-community relationships. *Missouri Law Review*, 80(2015). Retrieved from:

<https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr/vol80/iss4/15>

- Understanding the scale and nature of the problem through data collection and analysis
- Designing interventions and policies to tackle the problem from multiple angles
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions
- Scaling up successful strategies to ensure widespread adoption

At this historical moment, there is ongoing debate among researchers, policymakers, and advocacy groups about the most promising or effective programs to address gun violence in the United States via the public health approach. Some of the most common / widely recognized programs include:

- **Community-Based Violence Prevention Programs:** These programs aim to reduce gun violence by addressing its root causes through community-led efforts. Examples of community-based violence prevention programs include Cure Violence, CeaseFire, Advance Peace, and the Safe Streets Initiative, among others. These programs focus on interrupting violence by mediating conflicts and providing support to individuals at high risk of becoming involved in gun violence.
- **Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs:** These programs focus on reducing the likelihood of future gun violence by providing medical and social services to victims of gun violence during their hospital stay. These programs aim to prevent retaliation and re-injury by connecting victims with resources to address the underlying causes of gun violence.
- **Gun Buyback Programs:** These programs offer incentives, such as cash or gift cards, for individuals to voluntarily turn in their firearms. While the effectiveness of these programs in reducing gun violence is debated, some studies have suggested that they can be successful in reducing the number of firearms in circulation.
- **Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs):** These are court orders that allow family members, law enforcement, or other individuals to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who may pose a risk to themselves or others. Studies have suggested that GVROs can be effective in preventing suicides and homicides.
- **Universal Background Checks:** These policies require all firearm sales, including those by private sellers, to undergo a background check. Research has shown that universal background checks can be effective in reducing gun violence, particularly homicides and suicides.

It is important to note that community-based gun violence prevention and intervention work is still in its relative emergence as a methodology. As such, except in the case of the CeaseFire program which was first implemented in Boston in the 1990s, longitudinal evaluation of the effectiveness of community-based GVPI initiatives is significantly limited at this time. Thus, though many of these initiatives/programs are showing impressive short-term impact, from an academic research perspective there is currently no evidence of lasting outcomes. Additionally, these programs may not be equally effective in all communities and may need to be tailored to local contexts and needs. Finally, it should be noted that, in order for programs to be considered “evidence-based,” they must undergo lengthy, often expensive evaluation processes. This requires a level of funding and administrative infrastructure that is often not available to true grassroots organizations, which impacts the likelihood of these programs to be considered “evidence-based.” As such, the preponderance of evidence is available on large-scale interventions and those sponsored by government entities, rather than community-led approaches.

Furthermore, addressing gun violence requires a comprehensive approach that necessitates a range of strategies, including those aimed at reducing access to firearms, addressing social and economic inequalities, and providing better healthcare and mental health services. The following section outlines

several case studies in gun violence prevention and intervention work across the country. These were selected based on prevalence (the number of communities replicating the intervention), and with the intention of providing examples for each of the program archetypes identified above.

Oakland, California - Community-Based Violence Intervention

Oakland, California has implemented several strategies to reduce gun violence over the years. Some of these strategies include:

- **Community Policing:** Oakland has implemented community policing programs that involve building relationships between law enforcement and community members. This approach emphasizes working collaboratively to prevent crime and improve community safety. As previously described, community policing is often problematic and there is limited evidence as to its longitudinal impact.
- **Gun Buyback Programs:** Oakland has held several gun buyback programs, which encourages residents to turn in their firearms in exchange for monetary compensation. These programs aim to reduce the number of guns in circulation and make the community safer.
- **Youth Programs:** Oakland has invested in programs that support youth development and help to prevent them from getting involved in gangs or other forms of criminal activity. These programs include after-school activities, pro-social and mentorship programs, and job training.
- **Improved Street Lighting:** Oakland has improved street lighting in high-crime areas to make these areas more visible and less attractive to criminals.
- **CeaseFire Program:** Oakland's iteration of CeaseFire is a data-driven intervention program that targets high-risk individuals and groups, including gang members and individuals with a history of violent crime. The program provides them with support services, such as job training and education, to help them turn their lives around. The CeaseFire program in Oakland has been further evaluated by researchers, and is listed as “proven effective” in the “Results First” national clearinghouse of evidence-based policy research. In 2019, researchers conducted a quasi-experimental study comparing annual shooting data from January 2010 to December 2017 between communities in which the CeaseFire program was implemented and communities that did not receive the intervention. The study showed the following statistically significant results:⁷²
 - 26% decrease in the Quarterly total of gang-involved shootings in treatment group compared to non-treatment group.
 - 30% decrease in quarterly suspected gang-involved shootings among gangs who received the intervention, compared to comparison gangs.
 - 23% decrease in quarterly shooting victims in gangs who received the intervention, compared to the non-treatment group.

Overall, the CeaseFire program has shown to have some positive impact on reducing gun violence in Oakland, but it is not a wholesale solution. The program is just one component of a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence and improving community safety. These strategies have helped Oakland to reduce gun violence over time, although the city still faces major challenges related to crime and violence. Ongoing efforts to build strong relationships between law enforcement and community

⁷² Crime Solutions (2020). Program Profile: CeaseFire (Oakland, Calif.). *National Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from: <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/700>

members, improve access to support services, and invest in programs that address the root causes of crime are essential to continued progress.

Cure Violence Model: Changing Community Attitudes and Norms⁷³

Similar to CeaseFire, the Cure Violence model functions within the public health framework for reducing and preventing gun violence. It originated in Chicago in 2000 and has been implemented in multiple cities across the United States, as well as in other nations with high rates of gun violence such as Honduras, South Africa, and Syria. Cure Violence interrupts violence by focused deterrence: targeting the highest risk individuals and groups within a specific geographic area, developing trusting relationships with these individuals, and mediating conflicts to prevent the perpetration of gun violence. The program also emphasizes connecting participants with resources and opportunities that promote education, employment, pro-social behaviors, and pathways to economic prosperity. In contrast with suppression and enforcement models used by some law enforcement agencies, the focus is on changing systems, structures and social norms that are constitutive of gun violence. The Cure Violence model “presumes that violent behavior—like all behavior—responds to structures, incentives, and norms. It is designed to introduce at-risk individuals to alternative models of conflict resolution that, in turn, may spread to the larger community—essentially ‘de-normalizing’ the harmful behavior.”

The program is aimed specifically at individuals and/or groups deemed high risk. Typically, program participants meet at least four of the following seven criteria:

- Gang-involved
- Major player in drug or street organizations
- Violent criminal background
- Recently experienced incarceration
- Reputation of carrying a firearm
- Recent gun violence victim
- Aged 16-25 years old

One of the key components of the Cure Violence model is the use of violence interrupters (VIs). VIs are individuals who are respected members of the community and have credibility with the target high risk populations involved in gun violence, often because the VIs themselves have lived experience of gun violence and the myriad racial disparities and socioeconomic factors that contribute to it. VIs work to mediate conflicts, provide support to high-risk individuals, and connect them with key services and resources such as job training, healthcare, education, and pro-social activities. The model also includes public outreach and education efforts to shift community norms around violence and positively alter perceptions of the individuals involved in gun violence. Examples of outreach and education work include media campaigns, signage and billboards, and events like anti-violence marches/demonstrations, and post-shooting vigils.

Additional long-term research on the impact of the Cure Violence program is needed. Although the model receives the second-highest rating in the Results First research database, it has been noted that there are frequent and widespread implementation obstacles, particularly in the early stages of adoption of the

⁷³ Butts, J. A., & Roman, C. G. (2015). Cure violence: A public health model to reduce gun violence. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 36, pp. 39-53. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122509>

model in urban communities and settings. This can be caused by lack of overall neighborhood cohesion or community disengagement/disorganization, hesitant local community leadership, organizations, and businesses, concern from area residents, inconsistent funding streams, and challenges in the process of hiring staff with lived experience of gun violence.

One study conducted in Chicago found that the implementation of the model was associated with a 16-28% reduction in shootings in two of the three neighborhoods studied.⁷⁴ However, a study in Baltimore found no significant reduction in gun violence after the implementation of the model.⁷⁵ Another study in New York City found that the Cure Violence model was associated with a 50% reduction in gun injuries in one neighborhood.⁷⁶

Some critical analyses of the model suggest that it is too focused on individual-level interventions and does not accomplish enough in addressing the structural factors that contribute to gun violence, such as economic oppression, patriarchal violence norms, and systemic white supremacy. Other arguments question whether the Cure Violence model is sustainable without additional resources and support from government and community stakeholders.⁷⁷ With regard to the model's direct impact, one major challenge is the capacity to effectively connect and establish trusting relationships with the individuals and groups most involved in gun violence.⁷⁸

In conclusion, while the Cure Violence model has shown promise in some communities, its effectiveness varies depending on the context in which it is implemented. More research is needed to understand the factors that contribute to successful implementation and sustainability of the model, as well as its potential impact on addressing the structural causes of gun violence.

Advance Peace: Healing, Mentorship and Community Peacemaking⁷⁹

The Advance Peace model is a public health approach to reducing gun violence that originated in Richmond, California in 2010, and now operates in Stockton, Sacramento, and Fresno, California, as well as Fort Worth, Texas. The model is based on the premise that the most effective way to reduce gun violence is by providing long-term support to high risk individuals most likely to be involved in gun violence. The model involves providing intensive mentoring, case management, and trauma-informed counseling to individuals who have a history of involvement in gun violence, as well as to their families. Advance Peace focuses not just on violence prevention and intervention through the use of formerly

⁷⁴ Skogan, W. G., Hartnett, S. M., Bump, N., & Dubois, J. (2015). Evaluation of CeaseFire, a Chicago-based violence prevention program. *University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 2015*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR23880.v1>

⁷⁵ Webster, D. W., Whitehill, J. M., Vernick, J. S., & Curriero, F. C. (2019). Effects of Baltimore's Safe Streets program on gun violence: a replication of Chicago's CeaseFire program. *Journal of Urban Health, 96*(1), pp. 27-40. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-012-9731-5>

⁷⁶ Butts, J. A., & Roman, C. G. (2015). Cure violence: A public health model to reduce gun violence. *Annual Review of Public Health, 36*, pp. 39-53. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122509>

⁷⁷ Eisinger, P. K. (2018). What is the cure violence model, and is it effective? *CityLab*. Retrieved from <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/03/what-is-the-cure-violence-model-and-is-it-effective/555738/>

⁷⁸ Butts, J. A., & Roman, C. G. (2015). Cure violence: A public health model to reduce gun violence. *Annual Review of Public Health, 36*, pp. 39-53. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122509>

⁷⁹ Corburn, J., Boggan, D., & Muttaqi, K. (2021). Urban safety, community healing, & gun violence reduction: the advance peace model. *Urban Transform 3*(5), 2021. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42854-021-00021-5>

incarcerated mentors/VIs, but also on restorative practices, healing, and peacemaking efforts that can positively shift psychosocial mindsets of participants and reduce or end cycles of violence.

A unique component of the model is the Peacemaker Fellowship, which provides individuals who are involved with the majority of gun violence in a given community with stipends to engage in intensive case management, education, and job training over 18+ months. The program is rooted in trauma-informed, healing-centered, and antiracist mentorship. Breaking down introjected ideological structures of oppression and centering the lived experience and expertise of impacted communities are also core elements of the philosophy. Critically, Advance Peace “trust[s] the young people experiencing trauma and gun violence to co-design the healing and violence reduction strategies with street-credible mentors.”⁸⁰

Within the Advance Peace methodology, individual and community healing is understood as an essential metric in the long-term effectiveness of GVPI work, in addition to quantitative data indicating reductions in overall rates of gun violence. This is because without individual and community healing, gun violence cycles are likely to increase again over time.⁸¹ Furthermore, Advance Peace frames urban gun violence as an outcome of structural and personal trauma in the lives of children and youth, including living in Adverse Community Environments (e.g., concentrated toxic pollution, deteriorated housing, absent green space, state and community violence, and/or low quality schools), not sociopathy or an inherent cultural criminality. Conversely to focused deterrence models like CeaseFire and Cure Violence, Advance Peace “differs because it explicitly addresses every day and institutional racism, does not focus on gang norm change but rather highly influential individuals, does not work with police, and offers its clients an individualized, rather than group, healing program.”⁸²

Research on the effectiveness of the Advance Peace model is limited, but early evaluations have shown promising results. A study conducted in Richmond, California found that the implementation of the model was associated with a 55% reduction in gun homicides and a 43% reduction in firearm assaults.⁸³ Another evaluation in Sacramento, California found that the model was associated with a 63% reduction in firearm-related homicides and non-fatal shootings.⁸⁴ In 2019 in Stockton, California, it is estimated that Advance Peace successfully saved the city and its local economy between \$29 and \$77.5 million in associated costs of shootings and/or firearm homicides.⁸⁵

Some critics of the model argue that providing financial incentives to individuals with a history of gun violence may motivate such behavior and that the model does not address the root causes of gun violence at the systems level, such as institutional racism and generational poverty.⁸⁶ Others argue that the model is

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ UC Berkeley IURD. (2019). Office of Neighborhood Safety - Richmond 2019. *Advance Peace*. Retrieved from: <https://www.advancepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/AP-Richmond-Impact-2019.pdf>

⁸⁴ Corburn, J. & Fukutome-Lopez, A. (2020). Outcome evaluation of Advance Peace Sacramento, 2018-2019. *UC Berkeley IURD*. Retrieved from: <https://www.advancepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Corburn-and-F-Lopez-Advance-Peace-Sacramento-2-Year-Evaluation-03-2020.pdf>

⁸⁵ Corburn, J., Boggan, D., & Muttaqi, K. (2021). Urban safety, community healing, & gun violence reduction: the advance peace model. *Urban Transform* 3(5), 2021. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42854-021-00021-5>

⁸⁶ Baltimore Sun Editorial Board. (2021). Baltimore's experiment with paying ex-felons to stop shooting people. *Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved from

too expensive to implement at scale.⁸⁷ Though the Advance Peace model has shown promise in reducing gun violence in some communities, more research is needed to understand its effectiveness in different contexts and its potential impact on addressing the root causes of gun violence.

Phoenix, Arizona - Police Department Crime-Gun Intelligence Center⁸⁸

Established in 2017, the Phoenix Crime-Gun Intelligence Center is an interagency operation focused on “timely collection, management, and analysis of crime gun evidence, such as shell casings and semiautomatic handguns, that may be found at the crime scene.” The goal of the program is to disrupt criminal behavior and patterns, prevent future violence, and improve investigative efforts and prosecutorial outcomes among firearm-related crimes in Phoenix. There are 33 gun intelligence centers across the country; the program was originally funded by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.

The model has five fundamental principles:

- All shell casings and guns at crime scenes are immediately collected and treated as evidence.
- Focus on timely processing of evidence, data entered into the network and eTrace.
- Coordinated investigation of linked crimes found to be committed with the same gun, across offense types and police districts.
- Use of forensic technology to investigate crimes (ie National Integrated Ballistics Information Network, eTrace, gunshot detection systems, etc).
- Partnerships between investigative units, federal agencies, court system help identify high-priority violent individuals.

A quasi-experimental study conducted in 2021 showed that “National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN)-related gun crime cases in the post-test period (2 years after implementation of the Crime Gun Intelligence Center) had a 75.7% greater likelihood of an arrest, compared with non-NIBIN control case in the pretest period. This difference was statistically significant. However, there were no statistically significant impacts of the programs on the likelihood of a case being charged, or of a case resulting in a conviction. There was also no documented impact of the program on the number of gun-involved crimes, suggesting that it is quite limited in its effectiveness.

Massachusetts - Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI)⁸⁹

Rated “promising” in the Results First policy clearinghouse, the SSYI program focuses on young men who are deemed to be most likely to commit or be a victim of gun violence. The goal of the program is to reduce victimization and incarceration resulting from violent crime, and promote healthy development and improved outcomes by providing wraparound, holistic services and prioritizing trust, empathy, and mutuality between program participants and employees. Since its launch in 2011, the program has been

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-0419-advance-peace-20210418-k64zgjvtfbcfhkecvdjuxttxu-story.html>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Crime Solutions (2022). Program profile: Phoenix (Arizona) police department crime gun intelligence center. *National Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from: <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/756>

⁸⁹ Crime Solutions (2021). Program profile: Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) (Massachusetts). *National Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from: <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/717>

implemented in 12 Massachusetts cities. The program can be implemented with slight variations based on the community served, but there are several mandatory components:

- Identification of men ages 17-24, who are considered to be at risk based on local police data.
- Use of street outreach workers to engage identified target individuals in programming, and provide mentorship.
- Case management approach that is comprehensive and tailored to each individual, assessing current needs, connecting participants with services and support, and tracking and reinforcing progress.

As part of this program, workers create individual service plans based on each participant's personal, professional, and family history. Access to education programs, workforce development programs, mental health services, and substance use disorder programs are all parts of this program design. Notably, there is no specified end date for each participant. Often, the program only concludes when the individual ages out of eligibility. There is a notable focus on participant well-being and success in this program.

Multiple research teams have studied the effectiveness of the program, and found the following statistically significant results:

- Individuals who received the SSYI intervention showed lower likelihood of incarceration than peers who did not receive services.
- Treatment cities showed a reduction in monthly crime victimization rates and homicide victimization rates for men ages 14-24, compared to non-treatment cities.
- Treatment cities showed a reduction in aggravated assault victimization rates and nonviolent crime victimization rates for 14-24 year old men, compared to non-treatment cities.

Indianapolis, Indiana - Hospital-Based Violence Intervention

The "Prescription for Hope" program is geared toward individuals who have been involved in violent personal injury and are at increased risk for recurrence. Patients who are recovering from gunshot wounds, stabbings, or other assaults at the Sidney & Lois Eskenazi Hospital are encouraged to enroll in this program before leaving the hospital. Goals of the program include:

- Reduce recidivism of violence-related injury and readmission.
- Develop effective life skills for responsible citizenship behavior.
- Provide community education and information on gun violence and crime prevention to create safer homes and neighborhoods.
- Create a network of community agencies and programs to serve as partners to provide accessible services for assistance and personal development⁹⁰.

A long-term analysis of the program that studied 328 patients enrolled from January 2009 to August 2016 found a 4.4% recidivism rate, which is low compared to non-treatment individuals. This research shows that hospital-based violence intervention programs have a long-lasting positive impact for the majority of

⁹⁰ Eskenazi Health. (2023). Community outreach and injury prevention. *Eskenazi Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.eskenazihealth.edu/programs/community-outreach-violence-prevention>

participants. Researchers suggest that these models could further benefit patients by partnering with community organizations that tackle issues related to violence, such as substance use disorders.⁹¹

Massachusetts - Gun Buyback

Injury Free Coalition for Kids is a nationwide program that delivers “hospital-based, community-oriented programs whose efforts are anchored in research, education, and advocacy.”⁹² In 2015, the initiative ran a gun buyback program in Central/Western Massachusetts. Participants received \$25-\$75 gift cards, depending on the type of gun they turned in, for an average of \$41 per gun. Participants relinquished 339 weapons. Participants were asked to complete a voluntary survey, to which 59% agreed. Respondents were overwhelmingly White (99%), men (90%), and first-time participants in the program (85.2%). More than half of respondents reported turning in their firearms for safety reasons, while 47% said that they no longer needed or wanted their weapons.⁹³

While this program shows a low-cost means of removing guns from the community, it is hard to extrapolate these research findings into an implementable policy in a diverse community such as Hennepin County, due to the lack of diversity among the study participants. Further, the study does not provide insight into how such a program would work within the context of “ghost guns” or illegal firearms.

Research Methodology

As noted before, this research project leverages both quantitative and qualitative analysis to better understand and provide context around the ways that community leaders and organizers are working to reduce gun violence. The decision to utilize a mixed-methods approach in our research was informed by academic literature as well as an understanding of the historical context and complexity of gun violence as an epidemic.

We first analyzed quantitative data to determine the areas within the County that showed comparatively high rates of gun violence and used this information to inform who we selected for qualitative interviews. This data pointed to North Minneapolis, both Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, as well as areas in South Minneapolis and nearby, such as Richfield and Bloomington. These areas have a higher proportion of residents of color⁹⁴ compared to other areas of the County, which aligns with the findings of our literature review regarding which areas are at highest risk for gun violence. We then focused the qualitative interviews and analysis portion of our project on individuals working in the communities

⁹¹ Bell, T. M., Gilyan, D., Moore, B. A., Martin, J., Ogbemudia, B., McLaughlin, B. E., Moore, R., Simons, C. J., & Zarzaur, B. L. (2018). Long-term evaluation of a hospital-based violence intervention program using a regional health information exchange. *The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 84(1), pp. 175–182. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1097/ta.0000000000001671>

⁹² Injury Free Coalition for Kids. (2023). About the Injury Free Coalition for Kids. *Injury Free Coalition for Kids*. Retrieved from <https://www.injuryfree.org/about.cfm>

⁹³ Green, J., Damle, R. N., Kasper, R. E., Violano, P., Manno, M., Nazarey, P. P., Aidlen, J. T., & Hirsh, M. P. (2017). Are “goods for guns” good for the community? An update of a community gun buyback program. *The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 83(2), 284–288. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1097/ta.0000000000001527>

⁹⁴ Minnesota Compass. (2023). All Minnesotans - By race & ethnicity. *Minnesota Compass*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mncompass.org/topics/demographics/race-ethnicity?population-by-race#1-5469-g>

shown by the data to have the highest rates of gun violence in the County. We narrowed the scope of our project to interview eight to ten key participants who delivered a complexity of narratives that began to provide insight into the community-based, street level gun violence prevention work being accomplished in Hennepin County.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

For this research, our team leveraged publicly-available data from the Hennepin County Attorney's Office website. This data dashboard shows all criminal cases filed with the Hennepin County Attorney's Office from 2018 to 2023. In order to prevent subject identification, the data is not filterable by race and gender at the city level. Additionally, the court system takes several months to mark what type of charges a defendant faces so the data in 2023 may be incomplete.

The Hennepin County Attorney's Office data is also limited by whether or not an agency has had 10 case submissions during the time period of analysis, e.g., a year. Reporting agencies' data consisting of less than 10 cases is not reported to the data dashboard. Consequently, many of the smaller cities did not report data for the time frame of analysis, 2018 through 2023.⁹⁵ Other cities, if they happen to fall under multiple jurisdictions, i.e., Chanhassen, Hanover, and Rockford, did not report data to the Hennepin County Attorney General's office. These cities likely shared their data with their primary county, either Carver County or Wright County respectively.

According to the Hennepin County Attorney's Office data dashboard,⁹⁶ between January 1, 2018 and February 27, 2023, there were 6,116 criminal cases received by Attorney General (AG) Mary Moriarty and logged by the data dashboard where the case had a "gun possessed or used," which represented 8.0% of all cases received by the Office.⁹⁷ These data are limited by the fact that many instances of gun violence go unreported, effectively and likely underrepresenting the total number of instances of gun violence in Hennepin County. Due to the unfinished nature of the 2023 data set and the length it takes for a criminal case to be finalized, the quantitative analysis is limited to a sample of five years, 2018 through 2022.

An analysis of the overall data shows the following salient points:

- The number of cases involving guns rose 92.9% from 829 to 1,599.
- 69.6% of total cases received resulted in the defendant being charged with a crime.
- 78% of cases were filed against Black individuals vs. 15% of cases filed against White individuals.
- 92.6% of cases involving guns involved male perpetrators.
- 14.8% of cases involving guns involved juveniles, or individuals under the age of 18.

⁹⁵ Hennepin County Attorney's Office. (2023). Data dashboard | Hennepin County, Minnesota. *Hennepin County Attorney's Office*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hennepinattorney.org/about/dashboard/data-dashboard>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Next, the research team analyzed the data to determine which localities had the highest instances of gun violence. In order to ensure comparable measures across cities within Hennepin County, cities were filtered out from the data collection process if no agency submitted cases labeled as “gun possessed or used” in all six years between 2018 and 2023. Of the 45 established cities in Hennepin County, 22 cities either did not have a complete dataset on a year-to-year basis, or the data was tracked by another county. For example, Maple Plain was excluded from the data because it reported only one total case of a “gun possessed or used” in a criminal case from 2019. In addition, Chanhassen was excluded from the analysis because it falls under both Hennepin and Carver County jurisdictions and did not report their data to Hennepin County.

The five cities with the highest number of raw cases between 2018-2022, from highest to lowest, are Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Bloomington, and Richfield (Figure 1). The five cities with the largest number of cases per 1,000 people, excluding special submitting agencies whose jurisdiction spans multiple municipalities, were Brooklyn Center, Robbinsdale, Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, and Richfield (Figure 2). Between these two data points, four cities appear twice: Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Minneapolis, and Richfield. Thus, the decision was made to focus our qualitative analysis on individuals working in these communities.

Figure 1

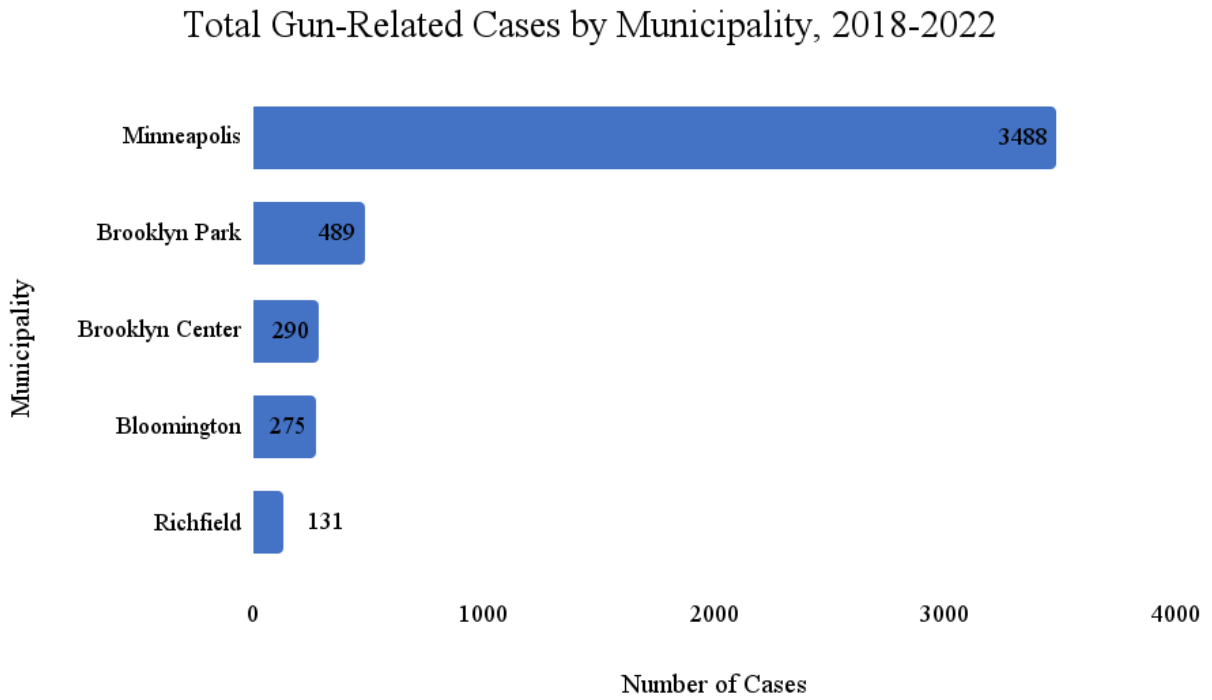
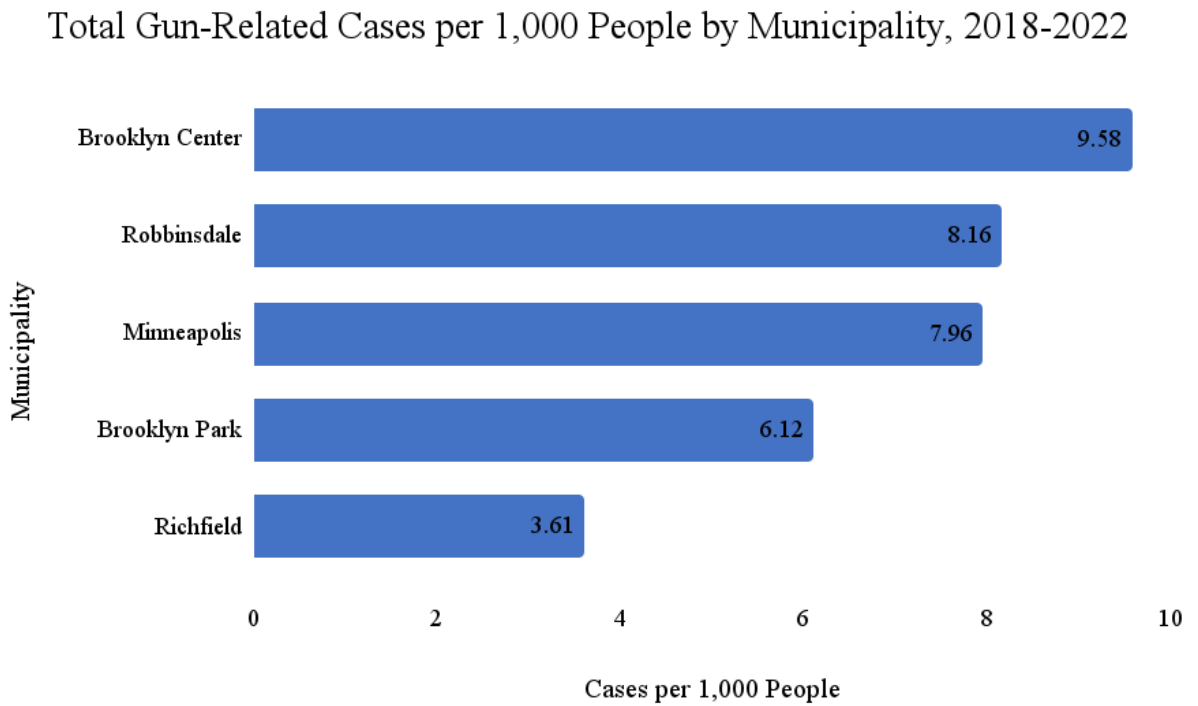


Figure 2



Due to the large geographic size of Minneapolis and the large number of individuals that live within its boundaries, we conducted further analysis at the neighborhood level.⁹⁸ Due to the consistency in data across all neighborhoods, all 14 of Minneapolis' neighborhoods could be incorporated into the data analysis between 2018 and 2022.

In terms of the raw number of cases, almost one third of all total cases within Minneapolis stemmed from the City's Near North community. Interestingly, the neighborhood saw a relatively small percentage growth in the number of cases from 2018 to 2022, but it still had almost 500 more cases than any other community (Figures 3 & 4). The five neighborhoods with the most gun-related cases were Near North, Central, Camden, Philips, and Powderhorn neighborhoods.

In comparing Figures 3 and 4, each city with a high raw number of gun-related cases had a relatively smaller percent increase in gun-related cases than other Minneapolis neighborhoods with the exception of the Central neighborhood. The five neighborhoods with the largest percent increase in gun-related cases were Calhoun Isles, Longfellow, Nokomis, Central, and Northeast. It is worth noting that each of these neighborhoods, except for Central, all still face the lowest numbers of gun-related cases within the City's boundaries. This leaves potential for future research in analyzing the increase in gun-related cases within these neighborhoods, but our research focuses on the areas with the most historic and highest levels of gun violence, specifically the Near North neighborhood.

⁹⁸ City of Minneapolis. (2023). Community and neighborhoods. *City of Minneapolis*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/resident-services/neighborhoods/>

Figure 3

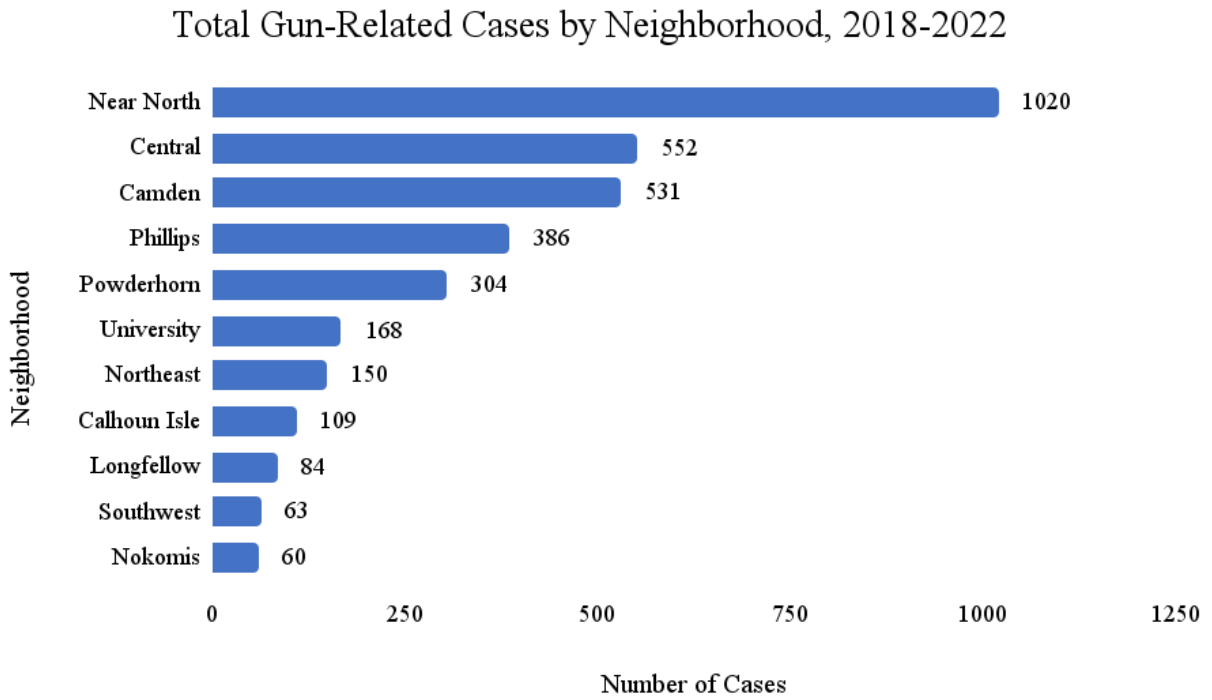
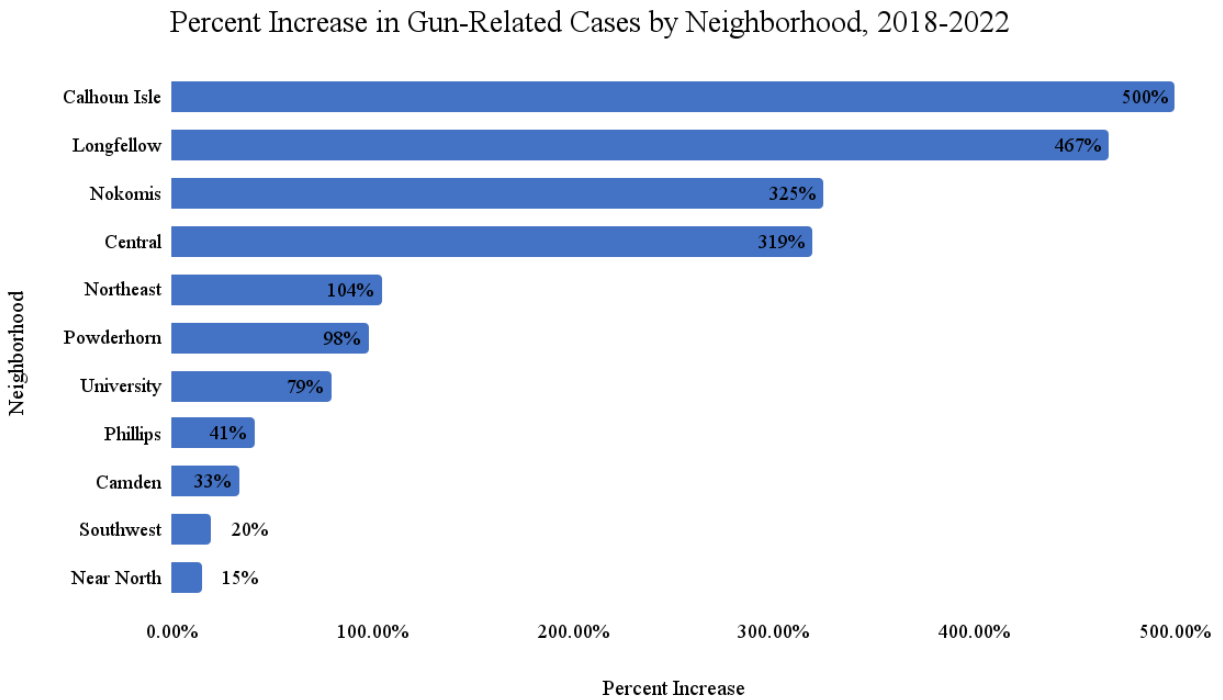


Figure 4



In order to broaden the data pool, the research team attempted to obtain private data held by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office in conjunction with the publicly available data.⁹⁹ Our team requested data from the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office for "any and all gun-related incidents and dispatch/911 calls that occurred within Hennepin County borders between 1/1/19 and 2/20/23." The data request was subsequently narrowed to "assaults with a firearm and their respective locations within the county" in order to expedite the request. According to the Hennepin County Data portal, the initial request and the subsequently narrower request, marked received on Feb. 21, 2023, is still listed as "processing" at the time of this paper's writing.

Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis

Framework

After identifying our communities of interest (North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Bloomington, and Richfield), interview subjects were identified within those communities. Interview subjects were identified via referrals from the client (Hennepin County Safe Communities Division), as well as individuals from the research team's own professional networks. Interview subjects included local government employees, community organizers, and a law enforcement representative. The research team also used snowball sampling to identify additional interview subjects which will be provided to future research teams.

Interviews were done via Zoom with a preset question script to help with the process of hand coding; however, the research team allowed a natural flow of questions, follow-ups, explanations, and deep listening when an interlocutor wanted to add something that was not a direct response to the question(s). This method allowed access to data that a strictly structured set of interview questions and answers may have missed. Coding done by hand meant that the research team would intimately engage with each interview to create better context for the complexity of narratives that were received.

In addition to the qualitative interviews, researchers participated in three direct observations in the field. One observation was conducted at a community-based self defense and gun training and safety organization. Another observation was conducted at a Community MSTAT meeting of law enforcement. The final observation was conducted during a Request For Proposal (RFP) community information session held by Hennepin County's Safe Communities Division. Although these observations are limited in terms of direct references in our analysis, they provided important context for the research team in understanding gun violence prevention and intervention work in Hennepin County.

Considerations

Qualitative data and its analysis contribute to the social sciences' anthropological tradition of investigating human behavior. Although some researchers may prefer the seeming objectivity of quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis can reveal the nature of human behavior and the phenomena that

⁹⁹ Hennepin County. (2023). Data request portal. *Hennepin County*. Retrieved from: [https://hennepincountymn.govqa.us/WEBAPP/_rs/\(S\(thgax0m1tlfmjspdu3yeksd3\)\)/SupportHome.aspx?sSessionID=](https://hennepincountymn.govqa.us/WEBAPP/_rs/(S(thgax0m1tlfmjspdu3yeksd3))/SupportHome.aspx?sSessionID=)

shape it. However, both methods are subject to human agency and bias, which cannot be easily controlled for or eliminated. It is important to this research team to acknowledge the value of both epistemologies, as well as their limitations.

Furthermore, in conducting mixed-methods research, it is important to choose the “right” paradigm for qualitative analysis. The ideal paradigm carefully considers the purpose and stakes of data collection and allows researchers to explore different perspectives and examine their own positionality, while simultaneously seeking to avoid the dehumanization and anonymization of interviewees. Within this paradigm, researchers can either attempt to eliminate their bias, or embrace it as a lens that can offer insight. As a research team with a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints, we believe our individual subjectivity is an asset that allows each of us to see something different in the information we collect. As such, the research team evenly divided the interviewing responsibilities. In addition, a conscious effort was made to have at least three out of four researchers present for every interview. Finally, interview analyses were divided equally among the team and hand coded separately, then reviewed by all other members for fidelity to the transcript.

Results and Analysis

The research team conducted qualitative interviews with nine individuals representing a range of identities, backgrounds, and lived experiences. One was a law enforcement officer, two were local government employees, and six were community leaders, organizers, and nonprofit workers. Interviewees were asked a series of questions focused on their understanding of the causes of gun violence, how they saw gun violence impacting their work and their community, potential solutions to the gun violence epidemic, and how they thought Hennepin County could complement or augment their existing work.

Causes of Gun Violence

Lack of Education & Training

Multiple interview subjects identified a lack of education and training around conflict resolution, gun use, and gun safety as one of the primary causes of gun violence in their community - particularly among youth. This lack of training, understanding, and education about the finality of gun violence and the true impact of perpetrating gun violence leads to a greater instance of gun violence and an incorrect understanding of gun violence as a “normal” part of daily life - compounded by high levels of witnessed gun violence, creating a vicious cycle..

One interviewee said, “When violence starts to happen, [there is] a lack of emotional regulation and a lack of understanding of how to diffuse conflicts [that] really tends to escalate that violence.” The theme of youth lacking an understanding of the finality of their actions as it relates to gun violence was echoed by interviewees, several of whom also drew the connection between the cultural, financial, and social barriers that prevent communities of color, and Black individuals in particular, from accessing gun safety training and education. One interviewee explained, “The financial barrier to entry that's created by requiring training for even having a permit to carry a gun on your person actually pushes people towards just illegally carrying, and that usually sets the stage.”

Another interviewee elaborated, “One of the things that I think happens in our communities of color is the demonization of firearms which leads to a lack of respect for the finality of a fire... I have a friend that is White... his son, at the age of six, knows more about guns than most of the people in our entire community. But what he also was able to understand by learning at that age is the extent of the finality of a firearm. So once a shell leaves that barrel, he understands the finality of it, as opposed to learning from playing, say, Call of Duty... You know, you get a... lack of respect for the finality of the fire of that weapon. And by the time it sinks in, a lot of times it's too late... I think there needs to be a stronger knowledge of what [firearms] are and what they do... I've been in prison. I've seen kids who come to prison. And you know they didn't realize the finality of what they had done... Up until that [bullet] comes out of that gun, in their minds, you know, this is just like the video game they were playing. So education to me is a key part.” These quotes clearly explicate the community’s demand for increased training and education around gun violence.

Lack of Pro-Social and Mental Health Supports

Several interviewees highlighted a lack of pro-social and mental health support for community members as a root cause of gun violence. As illustrated in the literature review, gun violence cannot be understood as a phenomenon separate from other social ills, but rather as an effect of them. Thus, it follows that a primary cause of gun violence is a dearth of services in other areas (healthcare, education, etc). Interviewees pointed to the impact of service gaps in mental healthcare, social supports for youth, economic assistance for families, and more in their qualitative interviews:

One interviewee said, “Mental health is the biggest, highest growth area for problems for us... You would be astounded if I showed you the numbers, and we do look at the numbers... and it's not an easy nut to crack. The mental health crisis cases or calls for service have absolutely skyrocketed.”

Multiple interviewees cited a lack of healthy social engagement for youth living in economically distressed households, often exacerbated by negative cultural images, symbols, and messages on social media. Another interviewee stated, “We have so many mental health issues and drug issues in our community, but we have no place to put any of them... There’s a revolving door in the hospital for mental health issues and drug issues.”

Another interviewee elaborated, “Families are just trying to make the ends meet, you know. People have to work two, three jobs, both parents or single parents, you know. Sometimes it’s not a two-parent household. So they’re just trying to work too many hours, and they’re not present in the household... So who becomes the parent?” One interviewee stated, “When you go to the funerals, there's a church full of young people... What's missing is their parents, adults, somebody in there to talk them off that ledge. So if all you see is your friends getting killed, your friends getting shot, that's all you know in your community. We are failing our young people. I'll be [the] first to own that we're failing our young people.”

Several interviewees also pointed to changing social norms and the influence of social media, “Now, if you make me mad... I have a gun and I’m gonna kill you versus in my generation it [would be] a fight, or it’s a conversation, but now it’s like I’ve been exposed to social media with a lot more violent images... [That] leads me to think that it’s okay to use a gun to address my lack of emotional [intelligence].”

Another respondent explained, “Feeling worthless, not feeling like you have... a say so in this world, in your life... like your life is already planned out for you. You know most of [the kids I mentor] expect to

be killed by another person in the community or a cop... You know that trauma builds up... and we have a lot of it in our community and we're seeing it coming out... in the kids. It's a lack of confidence and... a lack of feeling worth something. There's not a lot of self worth." Additionally, several respondents identified a lack of support and response to the opioid epidemic as a compounding factor in the gun violence epidemic, and one that required additional resources.

Barriers to Service Delivery

Several interviewees identified the lack of resources among gun violence prevention organizations and the lack of buy-in for gun violence and intervention work among government organizations as a primary cause of gun violence in Hennepin County. One respondent identified discrimination against and stigmatization of individuals involved in gun violence as a barrier preventing organizations from effectively addressing the issue: "I think... violence in Minneapolis and across the country disproportionately affects young Black men and I think there is a tremendous amount of stigma around young Black men who are involved with violence, and that turns into... judgment very quickly and I think that then becomes a barrier when we're trying to do this work. Because sometimes the narrative becomes, 'Why are you trying to help these folks? They're just always going to be engaged in violence,' when we know that's not right."

Another interviewee highlighted the positive impact of social workers in responding to calls to law enforcement, and explained some limitations of the program: "We have brought in several social workers, County social workers... if it's a mental health related call that there's no obvious safety risk. We just don't even respond anymore that they go and we love it. I cannot begin to tell you how much we like it, but there are some major problems with it... They have more mental health training than the police do, and I can go out, and I can sign anybody on [psychiatric] hold right now. They got a lot more training and experience than I do, but... the County doesn't want to pay them the amount it takes for them to have the authority to sign people on [psychiatric] hold... this bureaucracy has got us mired in the mud and keeps us from doing what we know is right."

These interviews show that a) there is a perception that government entities are reluctant to support gun violence prevention work due to the fact that it primarily affects populations that have historically been underserved or outright discriminated against, and b) there is a desire for increased funding and decreased bureaucracy from Hennepin County in this area - helping to remove barriers to service delivery.

Barriers in the Funding Process

Many interviewees underscored the need for additional funding for community organizations and local governments. Respondents shared a variety of limitations in this area, including an overall lack of funding, challenges in accessing administratively-taxing government funding and perceptions that government funders often favor a recurring subset of organizations each funding cycle.

One respondent shared, "Our long term barriers are definitely fiscal. We... are one of the poorest cities in the State, and we don't have a large stream of revenue, and the work that we do comes at a cost." Another respondent added "You [would] be able to see the work better if we all worked together and [weren't] afraid that we're gonna lose our funding. That's a big part of it... people are competitive. So they make us compete against each other for funding. And if you're a good organization and you don't get the funding

you just lost something. You just lost a benefit to the community. So a big part of why people don't work together is the [scarcity of] funding.”

Yet another interviewee elaborated, “[There are] often picked favorites, and then you have the folks on the ground doing the real work. And... that's not to say that the folks that are the favorites don't do the work, but we have a lot of folks that don't get funded, and...[the] same folks [get] funded all the time.” Another interviewee agreed, “It seems like there's a lot of money that's thrown to the same organizations that have been established and around for a long time. And the last I checked, if they've been around and nothing has changed and it's gotten worse, at what point do you take a different approach? A lot of them... you're asking them to fix a problem they make money on. So how willing are they to actually fix that problem? The average salary for an executive director in a nonprofit in North Minneapolis is \$96,000, for a part of the City that has the lowest household median income in the State.”

Another respondent shared, “We found a number of years ago that we would put out a request for proposal, and we would get... proposals from mostly the same organizations. They tended to be the big organizations who had grant writers and who had research and evaluation experts... and there were smaller grassroots organizations who had a lot of credibility and a lot of reach and a lot of skill who were not scoring very well because the RFP process was not really geared toward organizations with that level of capacity.”

Increased Access, Decreased Accountability

The increased access to guns, and a perceived lack of consequence for gun-related crimes, were also identified by several respondents as primary causes of gun violence. One interviewee reported, “These last two or three years is the first time in my career where I know I could just go out and start stopping cars, and I will find guns... It used to be 10 years ago, you'd stop 1,000 cars before you found a felon with a gun. Now [it's] all the time, and that comes down to two things: how quickly and easily you can get a gun, and the fact that people feel like they're not going to be held accountable if they carry it.”

Another interviewee shared, “A lot of it... is about choices and easy access. Those guns are left in cars. Those guns are stolen from within homes that don't have them locked down. Guns are made available to our young people... that shows the easy access to guns in our community, especially in the Black community.” The same interviewee also shared, “I think [they] need to go back to seeing what the damage looks like from the actions that they're taking right now. So I think they do need to be scared straight in some senses. But I think we're at a point in this generation where they're just not scared. I mean they come to near-death situations. They've been shot. They've been nearly dead, and they still come out and repeat the same behaviors. A lot of it has zero consequences for those actions.” Another interviewee elaborated, “They care about the kids? They know that kids need to be held accountable [if] they care about them.”

The increased access to guns coupled with a sense of decreasing accountability for children and young adults caused another interviewee to ponder the intergenerational effects of gun violence, saying, “...We focus on Black mothers and Black girls. Why? Because the Black girls will be the next mothers in the community. So those girls that's riding around these stolen cars or riding around with these gang members, those are your next parents. So if you don't get that [gun violence] controlled, we have a new generation that's going to breed another generation of this [gun violence].”

It is important to note, as demonstrated in our literature review, gun access policy reform is not likely to solve the problem of increased access to illegal firearms. Similarly, over-policing is not an effective remedy, as studies show it does not decrease the overall amount of violent crime, and further decreases trust in the police and reduces effectiveness. Additionally, a review of current research did not show gun buyback programs as a particularly effective gun violence prevention strategy. Our research suggests that the most effective strategies are those that focus on increasing social supports, promoting pro social behavior, and adopting an empowerment focus in preventing gun violence.

Opportunities for Growth in Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention

Individual and Community Relationship Building

Many respondents identified the need for intervention organizations to develop meaningful, trusting relationships with individuals at risk for committing or being victims of gun violence. One interviewee shared, “It’s no longer good enough to say I run a youth organization. You can’t run that organization from behind four walls. You have to come out in the community and meet these young people where they are. They’re begging for help... A lot of these kids don’t want to be doing what they’re doing.”

Another interviewee elaborated that “...Prevention is being able to build a relationship. This [concept of] running kids off the block and sending them to another area that doesn't do anything for anybody. But if you're actually able to build a relationship with not only the child, but the people that are around that support, and you become a part of that system. You're able to pull them out of that environment.”

Another interviewee explained, “If you care, you will still call them years later, and you still have a relationship with them, and the family still brings them to my office when they're in trouble, you know, when they're not doing the right things, because all you have to do is show up for them, and when the teenager... knows that there's someone in their court... fighting for them, that will make them rethink what they are planning on doing, or maybe thinking about doing. It [could] be taking their lives, which is sometimes what they're thinking about doing, and maybe they're not trying to hurt anyone. Specifically they're just trying to stop what's running inside them. And then the other stuff is just a side effect of what's going on. So that's my first thing. We need to do more prevention in the schools, more talks, bring more people in that have actually experienced... violence, or have been the people doing... the shootings, if possible. Because when people actually hear it from people that have experience... it changes [their] perspective.”

Finally, respondents identified the importance of connecting individuals at high risk for becoming involved in gun violence to services within the community. One explained, “We’re connecting community members to... jobs, resources, and community. So it's kind of like a networking... opportunity or tool. And then community... members can say, ‘Oh, I know this nonprofit does this. I can go here... training. I can go there for this.’ Because again, the problem is, community members have been disconnected [from] what's in their own backyard.” Another respondent highlighted the need for organizations to adapt their strategies to suit the communities they are trying to reach: “We've implemented some strategies like making sure we have language translators available, translating our marketing into multiple different languages, using different types of marketing, using trusted community messengers as a marketing resource and then holding space for individual communities instead of saying, ‘Hey, we're all going to

come here to this one location.’ We will have that same event in four different locations geared toward four different cultural norms.”

Another respondent echoed current sentiment, “Our goal is to build and open as many relationships as we can. That’s how our success will be measured by being able to find out who a lot of the students are. So that we can actually get hand in hand with them. So we can... open other paths for them. So whether it’s a job that pays right - I think at least three of them that we’ve had [the] job they work now - they make 30 something dollars an hour [and] you know they’re happy with that. They’re out of the streets, you know.”

These responses suggest that a primary intervention vector for Hennepin County is to fund community-based organizations that are conducting in-person outreach in the community, as this may be a more effective means of decreasing gun violence than an increase in law enforcement presence – which carries with it the afore-mentioned risks associated with over-policing. Furthermore, providing these organizations with increased funding allows them to increase the opportunities they can provide for young people in Hennepin County. An increase of funding in this area confronts an historic lack of investment in targeted communities - as mentioned previously, Minnesota has some of the largest racial disparities in the nation.

Capacity Building

Several respondents identified a primary focus of their work as capacity building and underlined the need for more resources in this area, as well as the need for funders to be open to community-based solutions. One respondent shared, “I think the bottom line is we need to be open to the fact that there are other ideas out there that we haven’t tried before that might work. I mean, I think that with any problem that’s true, but particularly with the problem... this gun violence prevention, intervention world is relatively new. We need to be open to that... how do we support the community in building capacity to do this work, because we, as the city, can only go so far, and we, as the city, should only go so far in doing this work. Community has a really important role to play in this, but we can’t say community has an important role to play in this without actually supporting community and helping communities to do this work.” It is important to note the way this respondent distinguishes between “the city” and “the community”, drawing attention to the aforementioned divide between the two.

One respondent explained their organization’s practice of building community capacity to write effective grant proposals and reserve funding for experimental, community-based approaches: “And so we made some changes to our RFP process to help try to make it more equitable. But we also said, ‘If we want to really engage the community in this we need to provide some resources and support to those grassroots organizations to help them build their capacity.’ So now, what we do is we bring in between 10 and 20 organizations each year who are small grassroots organizations with budgets under \$100,000 doing violence prevention work, and we have them join a cohort, and we provide training on more development, fundraising, communications, [and] how to become a 501(c)(3). So all those, like, core organizational capacity skills that might help them be more competitive for city funding, county funding, state funding, federal funding. And then we also provide them with a little bit of funding as part of that for them to do a demonstration project with hands-on technical support from us throughout.”

Another interviewee said, “[We] release an RFP for something we call our Violence Prevention fund, which is really meant to fund community-driven violence prevention strategies. And so we essentially ask

people to identify a violence related issue that they're seeing in the community. Tell us what they think they can do about it [and] why they think that's gonna work. And then we... evaluate those proposals and then fund 15 to 20 of those each year. And so that's the way to make sure that we are actually allowing some of these folks in the community who have these ideas a chance to actually try them.”

In summary, these responses highlight the need for capacity building among community organizations, and suggest that one way Hennepin County might work to reduce gun violence is by conducting capacity-building activities such as grant writing trainings, program evaluation assistance, and providing funding for pilot programs that have not yet had the opportunity to be implemented at a broader scale.

Gun Safety Education and Training

Several individuals working in the gun violence intervention and prevention space identified gun safety education and training as their primary intervention mechanisms. These programs include education on gun use, gun safety, de-escalation training, violence prevention curriculum, and pathways to legal ownership. One respondent shared, “Since we began [gun safety education and training] programming, we've seen a lot of efforts and violence prevention that actually started to bring down the numbers in terms of what you know, the gun violence in the city.”

Another respondent who works in youth mentorship shared, “When I've approached [young people] and say, ‘hey, listen. If I could show you a way... to do things... Would you take it?’ Most of them say, ‘Hell yeah.’ You know one of them... he got rid of his illegal gun some time ago, and then just recently, he called me last week, because he finally got his permit to carry. And then he was extremely happy about that.” Several interviewees outlined the connection between illegal firearms and gun violence and suggested that removing barriers to legal firearm ownership may reduce violence due to guns being owned within, instead of outside of, the legal system. This is supported by our research into the “ghost gun” phenomenon.

Several interviewees suggested ways Hennepin County could remove barriers to legal firearm ownership, such as, “Waiving the permit to carry application fee for any marginalized group. Or... it could be like a[n] income-based thing that might be the easiest way, or just completely waiving permit carry fees in Hennepin County and letting the rest of the State pay permit carry fees, or something like that.” Another interviewee added, “Best practices would include things like education, of course, and looking at current policies and considering how current policies can actually create barriers to entry [for] responsible gun owners.”

Another respondent pointed to recent government funding of gun safes as another example of providing increased training and education: “And I have seen [a state] that passed a very small bipartisan effort that subsidized gun safes. They gave [individuals] a \$300 tax credit or something for a gun safe, and that actually is a significant barrier to entry for people securing their own firearms when a good gun safe can run over \$500. So... how do we make it easier to act in accordance even with the current statutes as they are? [How can we use funds to] subsidize things like responsible gun ownership, storage, or even trade?”

Because these types of interventions have not been researched as thoroughly as other gun violence and intervention strategies, it is the opinion of this research team that more investigation into this strategy for gun violence prevention is needed. This is particularly true given the numerous times community

organizers highlighted the need for increased education and training around gun use, gun safety, and legal firearm ownership.

Collaboration and Cross-Structural Systems Approaches

Finally, several interviewees identified the crucial role of cross-sector collaboration in reducing and preventing gun violence in Hennepin County. Several identified the West Broadway Livability Coalition as an important step in the right direction and expressed a desire for an increased County presence in the role of convener and connector - not directing, but facilitating collaboration and establishing a horizontally organized, self-determining network. One interviewee explained the benefit of different types of organizations collaborating to reduce gun violence and other social issues by highlighting the way that different disparity domains affect each other: “The plan is to... create opportunities for youth and community members to know what resources are in their backyard that lead to employment, that lead to resources, [that] deal with substance abuse, [that connect them] to different organizations and agencies that are safe zones in the area along the corridor and throughout North Minneapolis... If I have employment, and I’m getting regular, substantial income... where I can actually provide for me and my family, that keeps me away from gun violence.”

Another interviewee expressed a similar desire for increased collaboration among social service organizations: “Bring everybody in one room and say, ‘Hey, I got these five organizations working with families in the community...’ [Currently,] they don't bring us into the same space. So oftentimes we don't know who has a contract with the County, so that we can all feed off each other and work together. It's the same thing with the city and the same thing with the State. Unless you come with a collaboration, you don't know who anybody else is, or what anybody else is doing.”

Another respondent echoed the need for further cross-sector collaboration, and identified bureaucratic barriers that impede communication: “If I walk down there and said to the head of the teen center, ‘who's the next 5 kids that are going to be the most likely victims of violence?’ [they’d] be able to point them out, and they would not necessarily be the ones that I would point out. It's those things, it's that information. Someone needs to put together a database like that. It's a database that we can share...with community based organizations or interventionists that do this work because it's illegal for me to share my information with them right now. That's private data. [So] if I have a kid that's in my police report. He's a suspect. I can't go to my intervention worker and be like, hey, this is Billy Smith. This is what's going on with Billy Smith. You need to go Talk to Billy Smith... That needs to get fixed.”

Another interviewee expressed the need not just for better alignment between organizations, but better alignment between organizations and the County: “Our role is, I think again, working with individuals and communities that have been impacted to help break those cycles of violence... For example, if Minneapolis is funding a bunch of violence interrupter organizations in the City, [the] County maybe doesn't need to be funding violence interrupters in the City, because that's... potentially duplicative... So maybe the County funds violence interrupters in other cities in the County... and in Minneapolis, focuses on types of projects that we were not able to fund.”

These responses suggest that an effective strategy for Hennepin County in reducing gun violence may be to act as a convener - bringing together cross sector organizations and facilitating collaboration between them. Additionally, during the observation at the community self-defense and gun training and education

organization, it was noted that, due to lack of community trust, Hennepin County may need to conduct an initial convening of GVPI organizations and subsequently recuse itself from orchestrating resulting collective efforts.

It was also noted that the County could examine ways to funnel funding through philanthropic organizations, such as community and private foundations, in order to reduce the administrative burden required to secure funding, as well as lower restrictive regulatory barriers that prevent many grassroots agencies from seeking support. Furthermore, it is important that these convening and collaborative efforts should include organizations involved not just in the gun violence prevention and intervention space, but other social/human service organizations working in the County. This will help avoid service duplication, foster productive partnerships, and provide space for cross-sector approaches that address the intersectional causes of gun violence.

Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Institutional Confidence

Our research suggested a lack of confidence among community organizers in Hennepin County and its representatives, the police and the Sheriff's Office being the most visible and obvious example. One interviewee identified the perceived lack of faith in law enforcement institutions as contributing to a general lack of faith in government institutions.¹⁰⁰ Although a recent charter referendum ballot question in which Minneapolis residents were asked to vote whether to replace police with a public safety department failed, 44% of voters were in favor of the measure.¹⁰¹ This lack of trust was a barrier to the research team in that several respondents were initially hesitant to participate in qualitative interviews and in some cases were guarded in their responses, or refused to participate altogether.

Opioid Crisis

The research team found considerable evidence of a significant link between fentanyl (specifically, though not exclusively) and other opioid use disorders, opioid-related overdose deaths, and gun violence. There were 978 fatal overdoses in 2022, up from 678 the previous year.¹⁰² Also, our qualitative research revealed an awareness of the negative impact of the opioid epidemic at the community level, and experiences of pain and anger related to the damage opioid use disorder is causing to communities. One-third of interviewees discussed fentanyl, with one respondent saying it was more of a concern than gun violence. Indigenous and Black people are significantly more likely to overdose from opioids than their white counterparts.¹⁰³ The research team advises Hennepin County to support research projects looking at the connections between gun violence and substance use disorder, specifically opioids. The

¹⁰⁰ Keith, T. (2021). Sheriff sentenced: Hutchinson avoids jail time for DWI, unclear if he'll pay for crashed vehicle. *Fox 9*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.fox9.com/news/hennepin-county-sheriff-dave-hutchinson-sentenced-in-drunk-driving-crash>

¹⁰¹ Kaste, M. (2021). Minneapolis voters reject a measure to replace the city's police department. *NPR*. Retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/02/1051617581/minneapolis-police-vote>

¹⁰² Minnesota Department of Health (2023). Drug overdose dashboard. *Minnesota Department of Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/opioid-dashboard/index.html>

¹⁰³ Minnesota Department of Health (2023). Differences in rates of drug overdose deaths by race. *Minnesota Department of Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/data/racedisparity.html>

team also advises the Safe Communities Division to coordinate its efforts, resources and community outreach with work being conducted by the MN Department of Health.¹⁰⁴

Social Context

As previously identified, gun violence is a complex issue that has its roots in many social structures and historical paradigms of oppression and systemic racism. It is the suggestion of this research team that further research on GVPI work in Hennepin County operate from a framework that allows analysis of the material reality caused by structural and ideological oppression. Critical theory is an important tool in providing context to current issues, and should not be ignored in favor of a “current events” - focused approach. Particularly in Minnesota, it is important to start with an understanding of how racial disparities came to be and how public institutions have been, and in some cases continue to be, complicit in creating these disparities.

Suicide

The research shows there are multiple types of gun violence, each caused by its own set of systemic factors, which can likely only be reduced by specific solutions developed to address each type. In 2020, suicide accounted for 69 percent of all deaths by fire arms. The research team recommends Hennepin County conduct a study that focuses on suicide by firearms. There were 513 firearm-related deaths in Minnesota in 2020. The death rate is 8.9 per 100,000 people. Of these deaths, 354, or 69 percent, were suicides, and 138, 27 percent, were homicides.¹⁰⁵ Much like the opioid epidemic, we suggest that community safety efforts coordinate with the MN Department of Health to investigate suicide by firearms.

Temporal

Time was also a noteworthy limitation of our research. We have communicated with the next group of graduate researchers to ensure as seamless a handoff as possible for both the research product and the community network established from this project. We would recommend this approach for any ensuing research teams, as some of the issues that remain to be researched are likely too complex to adequately address in any single semester project.

Compounding Factors

Our qualitative research indicated that a multi-faceted and complex issue such as gun violence cannot be boiled down into a singular root cause. Instead, there are a multitude of avenues for compound factors that impact how gun violence is studied and measured. These compounders can be political, economic, in/equity-based, local societal events, or larger global affairs. For example, if policy-making and research does not account for the historical inequities that have created many of the problems we are attempting to solve, proposed interventions cannot hope to be effective. Additionally, any study that hopes to assess gun violence in the state of Minnesota must concern itself with the longitudinal impacts of COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd (and state killings of numerous other Black and Brown individuals), and climate change in a state heavily dependent on agriculture. The associations between heat and violence cannot be dismissed as climate and environmental scholars using deep learning models continue to predict a steady

¹⁰⁴ Minnesota Department of Health (2023). Opioid overdose prevention. *Minnesota Department of Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/index.html>

¹⁰⁵ Minnesota Department of Public Safety (2022). Stolen guns, suicides, and other statistics. *Minnesota Department of Public Safety*. Retrieved from: <https://dps.mn.gov/safe-secure/Pages/Statistics.aspx>

warming of the planet. The social price of gun violence should be weighted and disaggregated to be effective in addressing the real cost of gun violence, and to fairly distribute the benefit to those most in need and the cost to those most able to pay.

Economics

In economics, the standard mechanism for allocating scarce resources is the market. However, a smoothly functioning market is built upon legally enforceable contracts and property rights. In the absence of law, it is likely that violence (or the threat thereof), rather than prices, is the means by which resources will be allocated. This suggests that the center of underground markets that traffic in illegal activity, and are maintained by gun violence, are potentially sustained by the prohibition of the goods in which these markets trade.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As supported by our extensive literature review, quantitative, and qualitative analyses, gun violence is a complex issue with numerous causes, compound factors, and potential solutions. Our research clearly documents the ways in which the recent rise in gun violence is a symptom of other social “diseases” such as deepening racial disparities, decreased economic opportunities, the opioid epidemic, and historically racist social and political structures. Across the country, local governments are employing a myriad of solutions to reduce gun violence, including improving community policing methods and police-community relations, and community- and hospital-based violence prevention and intervention programs. However, any plan to reduce gun violence in Hennepin County must also take into account the area’s singular context as it relates to severe racial inequity and marginalization, a lack of trust - particularly among communities of color - in law enforcement due to repeated police shootings of unarmed Black men. This is especially important as research shows that trust between government and community is a significant predictor of social intervention success, and Black men and their families are the most likely demographic to be impacted by gun violence.

Quantitative analysis shows that the areas of Hennepin County most impacted by gun violence are North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, Bloomington, and Richfield. In fact, despite the fact that gun-involved crime in the Calhoun Isle neighborhood has increased more than 500% from 2018 to 2022, there were more than 1,000 more incidents of gun-involved crime in the North Minneapolis neighborhood in the same time period. Qualitative analysis among community leaders and local government employees points to the myriad of overlapping factors that lead to this violence, as well as a number of effective solutions that Hennepin County could support:

Leverage Partnerships with Community Partners

One constraint that interviewees and the research identified is the challenge for community organizations in managing government funding. Government funding, federal dollars in particular, often requires a level of organization, management, and institutional knowledge that precludes community-based or grassroots organizations from accessing the funding. Or worse, organizations are awarded funds and then become subject to compliance findings, audit reviews, and other administrative burdens. In addition, some interviewees expressed a reluctance to accept funding from Hennepin County in particular, due to the lack of trust previously highlighted. To circumvent this challenge, the research team suggests that the County

work with intermediary funders (private non-profits) to remove some administrative burdens on the community organizations and give funding an air of “authenticity” among community organizations.

Convene Community Organizations

Several interviewees identified a lack of collaboration and communication among community organizations as a primary challenge facing gun violence prevention and intervention organizations. To confront this challenge, the research team recommends that the County utilize their large platform and cross-sector presence to convene relevant organizations in a gun violence “working group.” This would allow community organizations to better coordinate their efforts, reduce duplication of services, and augment existing services. Additionally, as we have identified that gun violence has a multi-system array of causes, a working group could provide multi-system arrays of services. This is supported by the literature review, in which multi-systems wraparound approaches were proven to be effective in reducing gun violence.

Diversify Funding Strategy

Several interviewees identified the need for the County to increase funding of experimental or pilot programs that have not yet been tested, but have wide support from the community. To this effect, Hennepin County should partner with program evaluation professionals to investigate the efficacy of various community-based initiatives, such as gun safety and training programs designed to reduce gun violence. Further, the research team recommends that the County conduct an internal audit of funding practices, to ensure that funding strategies reflect the County’s stated commitment to equity. Ongoing gun violence prevention and intervention efforts on Hennepin County’s part should deepen the prioritization of community voices and expertise, focus on funding both well-established solutions as well as those that have been historically underfunded, seek out new community- and culturally-based initiatives, and prioritize intersectional systemic partnerships that impact the identified disparity domains.

Build Capacity

Interviewees identified the need for the County to engage in capacity building work in the gun violence intervention and prevention space. Many interviewees were confident that they had a satisfactory grasp of the causes of the gun violence problem, and had identified effective solutions to reduce gun violence. These respondents identified the need for the County to provide increased funding, training, and other resources that would allow them to expand their work. These services should include grant writing training, program evaluation training, assisting community organizations and staff with obtaining necessary qualifications and certifications, and facilitating network connections. Additionally, funding specifically targeted toward capacity building would enable community organizations to provide increased pay and sustained work opportunities for employees, who are often paid relatively little for work that is extremely taxing - resulting in high burnout rates.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

What city and neighborhood do you live in?

What city and neighborhood does your work take place in?

How would you describe the root causes of gun violence?

What do you consider to be best practices in preventing and/or reducing gun violence?

How does your organization work to reduce gun violence?

What are your organization's goals? How do you know if you are meeting these goals?

What is the measurement framework your organization uses?

Who would you identify as the most impactful local organizations in the gun violence prevention field?

What do you see as your organization's short-term barriers to success?

What are your organization's long-term barriers to success?

How has your organization partnered with Hennepin County in gun violence prevention and intervention work?

How could Hennepin County help remove barriers to your organization's success?

APPENDIX B: Key Terms

Community-based Expertise

Community-based expertise consists of knowledge and skills that are developed and shared by individuals and groups within a particular community. This type of expertise is rooted in the experiences, traditions, and values of the community and is often passed down through both formal and informal networks and social interactions. These types of expertise and knowledge can be crucial to the well-being and sustainability of the community and larger assemblies of communities that make up cities, states, and nations. Community-based expertise can take many forms, such as:

1. Local knowledge of the environment, including the land, water, and wildlife
2. Traditional healing practices and remedies
3. Cultural practices, including music, art, and storytelling
4. Agricultural and farming techniques that are suited to the local climate and soil
5. Social support networks, including mutual aid and peer counseling
6. Access to untapped social and human capital that already exists/operates in communities.

Community-based expertise, while gaining academic awareness, has historically been overlooked or undervalued by outsiders. This is especially true concerning marginalized communities, which have been subjugated by white supremacist, patriarchal institutions attempting to manage marginality and form good citizens that are producers and consumers for the capitalist economic structure. Indigenous communities are one example, as well as the history of Americans who are descendants of the trans-Atlantic slave trade ancestry. Instead, when community members are recognized and empowered for their expertise, it can lead to more equitable and effective decision-making processes and better outcomes for everyone involved.

Community-Based Solutions

Community-based solutions are approaches that involve the participation and collaboration of people who live in or are affected by a certain issue or problem. Communities take a number of forms, such as geographic communities, communities of affinity, and communities of common goals or desired outcomes. Community-based solutions aim to address the root causes and structural barriers that create or worsen the challenges faced by communities, and to empower the community members to take action and improve their own conditions. Community-based solutions can be applied to various domains, such as health equity, climate change, economic development, and more. Community-based solutions often are aided with the support and partnership of other stakeholders, such as governments, NGOs, academia, and the private sector, to provide resources, expertise, and policy changes that can enable and sustain the community's efforts.

Racial/Economic Disparities and In/Equity

Racial and economic disparities are gaps in the material realities and life outcomes for Black, Brown, and other minority and low-income populations. These inequities exist across the majority of mainstream social systems, including education, employment, healthcare, government, criminal justice, and human services, among others. Disparities ultimately result in Black, Brown, and other minority and low-income populations having less opportunities, resources, and access to capital and generational wealth. Disparities also cause lower quality of life and shorten lifespans.

The distributional analysis of gun violence, supported by an abundance of literature, does not account for economic in/equity. This leads the research team to suggest that any future assessments of the total social cost of gun violence in Hennepin County be weighted equitably. Any cost-benefit analysis (CBA) from the County or State on GVPI programs and policies, and social costs of gun violence, should incorporate equity weights to deal with the disparity domains that Hennepin County has identified. A racial equity model that incorporates Indigenous knowledge would benefit Hennepin County's CBA on any program aimed at reducing gun violence. While these methods are not commonly a part of the CBA, the willingness to pay and willingness to accept costs must be calibrated to account for the economically diminishing marginal utility of income (how the addition of another dollar of income is worth more to a poor person than a wealthy person) due to the stark disparities that exist in the Midwest, especially those of race/class. Discounting for future generations must also be calibrated equitably because gun violence will impact future generations disproportionately.

Gun Violence

Our research defines gun violence as the discharge of a firearm with the intent to do bodily harm, as well as acts in which a gun is used as a means of coercion by any individual intent on causing another person to behave in a way, or perform any action that that person might not otherwise do. This definition includes all parties, the perpetrator of the gun violence, the victim and the families and the communities impacted by the act of gun violence. This model is not meant to reduce the harm caused to the victims of gun violence but to delineate the truth that gun violence harms everyone involved directly or by proximity. Gun violence is “not only the act of discharging a firearm but includes all the things that led up to it,” one interviewee said. It is an act that they see as impacting their community irreparably. Another interviewee said gun violence is characterized by a ‘finality’ that is often not understood by negligent gun owners. Qualitative data from the interviews refutes positions that sanction gun use in defense of property as legitimate. In other words, data suggest a potential widespread community belief that property ownership and defense should not be used to justify the lethal force of discharging a gun. No persons, including state sanctioned actors or state permitted owners/carriers, are immune to the violence that exists at the intersection of human conflict and negligent gun usage.

Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention (GVPI)

Gun violence prevention and intervention encompasses work that is occurring across sectors, institutions, and systems to stop shootings, injuries, and deaths caused by guns. While historically standard methods of law enforcement, incarceration, and criminalization do fall within the purview of GVPI, the field is shifting to become better understood as oriented toward antiracism and systems-change initiatives. Direct community engagement and involvement is an essential component of GVPI work.

Lived Experience

Lived experience is knowledge gained about the world, society, and culture through direct interaction and observation. It has a significant impact on a person's psychosocial development and often influences decision-making, behavior and belief systems. It is unique to each individual, and as such it means that the individual is able to employ a discrete understanding and expertise to various subject matters, projects, ideas, methods, etc. that can improve outcomes. Historically, lived experience has been poorly acknowledged and integrated into large scale systems and structures, particularly when Black, Brown, other minorities, and low-income populations are involved.

Hennepin County

Hennepin County is the government entity that oversees policies, infrastructure, service systems, law, and criminal justice for businesses, nonprofits, community organizations, and citizens that reside within its borders. Hennepin County is Minnesota's most populous area and includes the highest population density statewide. It also contains the State's largest municipality, Minneapolis, as well as several other major urban/suburban cities such as Bloomington, Richfield, Edina, and St. Louis Park. The degree of socioeconomic disparities between the County's wealthiest populations and lowest income populations is stark, as evidenced for example by comparisons of Minnetonka, Chanhassen and southwest Minneapolis to the Near North, Jordan and Phillips neighborhoods of Minneapolis. There are a total of 45 cities within Hennepin County. Geographically, Hennepin County is part of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan region, and is bordered to the northeast by Anoka County, to the east by Ramsey County, to the southeast by Dakota County, to the south by Scott County, to the southwest by Carver County, and to the west by Wright County.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement has historically taken many forms. In the United States, it has a complicated past that has its roots in chattel slavery. Today, the role of law enforcement is seen as the activity of some members of government authorized to enforce the law by discovering, deterring, and rehabilitating or punishing people who violate the rules and norms governing society. Operations are done independently or coordinated via record sharing in attempts to control people seen in violation of previously mentioned norms and rules. Recent highly publicized events have led to a questioning of the role of law enforcement. More and more data is being produced that reveals how those tasked with law enforcement often disproportionately target marginalized populations. Furthermore, enforcement of law cannot be equated with the enforcement of fair, or just, or moral correctness when law enforcement is often charged with upholding laws, regulations, norms, and rules that are often themselves unjust.

Cross-Sector Partnerships

Cross-sector partnerships are collaborative efforts and/or initiatives between corporate and small businesses, government institutions, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and community groups, among other entities. As opposed to the traditional function of these entities, which has been siloed and seemingly independent from one another, the contemporary emerging methodology for social change focuses on integrating them in order to alter how systems operate. Rather than ignore the myriad ways in which one sector influences another, cross-sector partnerships acknowledge overlapping influence and impact on individuals' lives. Ideally, this provides space for diverse communities to hold power in the development of their local society and economy, and in addressing major challenges to equity.

Cross-Sector Convening

Cross-sector convening can be understood as a method by which to establish and develop cross-sector partnerships. Typically, one or more representatives of several different sectors/systems engage in networking with representatives of other sectors/systems to arrange a working group or committee regarding a particular subject, community problem, or socioeconomic goal. The working group/committee proceeds to meet regularly, assigning various tasks to each member in order to accomplish objectives that move toward the overarching goal. Ideally, the working group/committee is composed of diverse individuals and voices, and establishes an independent identity that is representative of the broader community's needs and interests. In addition, cross-sector convening should not fall within

the authority of one single system, institution or organization; it is a collective process that emphasizes horizontal empowerment.

Cultural Authenticity

Cultural authenticity describes the extent to which a person, a group, or a product reflects the beliefs, values, and practices of a specific culture. Cultural authenticity can be applied to various domains, such as literature, art, music, food, fashion, and more. Cultural authenticity can be evaluated by considering the accuracy and relevance of the details and perspectives that represent a culture. Cultural authenticity can also be influenced by the context and purpose of cultural expression. Cultural authenticity can have positive effects on people's identity, self-esteem, and intercultural understanding. However, cultural authenticity can also be challenged by factors such as diversity within a culture, stereotypes, and appropriation.

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