



Violence Reduction: Supporting Community Safety

Violent crime in the United States has fallen from its historic peaks, but concentrations of violence still persist in communities across the United States.

Homicide is the number one cause of death for Black males ages 15- to 34- years-old and the second leading cause of death for young Hispanic males. Community safety continues to be a challenge due to low levels of trust between communities and law enforcement. A majority of violent crimes simply are not reported to the police. Law enforcement often fails to adequately investigate the crimes that are reported. Policymakers, law enforcement, and community-based organizations all grapple with the challenging question: “What are the most effective ways to reduce violence?”

The need to answer that question remains an urgent challenge. Knowledge gaps remain around the piloting, evaluation, and scaling of innovations that can reduce violence. We must promote effective policing and scale successful programs across jurisdictions, but our efforts should focus first on the people and places at highest risk of violence. Everyone deserves to live in safety and with confidence in their community and government’s ability to reduce violence.

#1

Homicide is the leading cause of death among black males aged 15-34.¹



45.5%

clearance rate nationwide for violent crimes.²

<1%

of people in nearly 24 cities were responsible for half of homicides and nonfatal shootings.³



We want to reduce community violence, support a safe future for all community members, and minimize the fear that comes from living in communities without effective responses to violence.



THE PROBLEMS

- **Violent crime is not evenly distributed.** Across the nation, communities do not experience violent crime equally. Within large cities, around five percent of streets account for over half of the city's crime.^{4,5,6} Less than 0.5 percent of a city's population are linked to 60 to 70 percent of shootings and homicides.⁷
- **More than half of all violent crimes⁸ are not reported.** Evidence suggests official statistics fail to capture the total impact of serious violence. According to a 2017 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey, only an estimated 45 percent of violent victimizations were reported to police.⁹ One reason cited by experts for underreporting is a lack of trust and confidence in police.¹⁰
- **The violent crimes that people do report are frequently left unsolved.** The most recent data released by the FBI shows that the national clearance rate for violent crimes was 45.5 percent.¹¹ Unsolved cases have serious consequences beyond letting perpetrators go free: they allow cycles of violence continue, and police lose legitimacy as an effective public service. When police lose trust, community members are less likely to report shootings, cooperate with them, or serve as witnesses.¹²
- **Policymakers are looking for answers.** Government, law enforcement, community, and philanthropic leaders alike struggle with understanding which violence interventions work in which contexts, and the role that police should play, especially in communities with a high degree of distrust of law enforcement.

OUR SOLUTIONS

- **We must build the evidence base for effective violence prevention strategies by focusing on the most high-risk people and places.** A very small number of individuals in a small concentration of places are disproportionately responsible for a significant portion of violent crime, so efforts to examine the effect of violence reduction strategies should focus on these people and places.
- **Build trust between communities and police.** The lack of trust between communities and law enforcement is a major driver of violence.¹³ We support efforts to build trust with communities most impacted by violence that are informed by evidence-based research. We also support efforts to test whether various strategies improve both clearance rates and community outcomes, including perceptions of fear, trust in police, or crime reporting.
- **Ensure what is learned leads to scalable results.** While there are a number of promising violence reduction strategies, more rigorous evidence is needed. We support efforts to scale effective interventions, from one city to another, from a few neighborhoods to many, from a few offense types/people to many.

RESOURCES

- 1 "Deaths: Leading Causes for 2017." (2019). *National Vital Statistics Reports*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_06-508.pdf
- 2 A law enforcement agency reports that an offense is cleared by arrest, or solved for crime reporting purposes, when three specific conditions have been met. The three conditions are that at least one person has been: (1) arrested; (2) charged with the commission of the offense; (3) turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice). "Crime in the United States, 2019 (September 2020)." Uniform Crime Report, U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/clearances.pdf>
- 3 "Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide." (2016). *National Network for Safe Communities*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved from https://nnscommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GVI_Guide_2016.pdf



- 4 Sherman, Lawrence W., Patrick R. Gartin, and Michael E. Buerger. "Hot spots of predatory crime: Routine activities and the criminology of place." *Criminology* vol.27, no.1, 1989, pp. 27-56.
- 5 Weisburd, David, Shawn Bushway, Cynthia Lum, and Sue-Ming Yang. "Trajectories of Crime at Places: A Longitudinal Study of Street Segments in the City of Seattle." *Criminology* vol. 42, no. 2, 2004, pp. 283-322.
- 6 Weisburd, D., & Amram, S. (2014). The law of concentrations of crime at place: the case of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. *Police Practice and Research*, 15(2), 101-114.
- 7 "Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide." (2016). *National Network for Safe Communities*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved from https://nnscommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GVI_Guide_2016.pdf
- 8 According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, violent crime is composed of four offenses: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.
- 9 Morgan, R.E., and Truman, J.L. (2018). "Criminal Victimization, 2017." *U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv17.pdf>
- 10 "In Pursuit of Peace: Building Police-Community Trust to Break the Cycle of Violence" Report. (January 2020). *Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence*.
- 11 A law enforcement agency reports that an offense is cleared by arrest, or solved for crime reporting purposes, when three specific conditions have been met. The three conditions are that at least one person has been: (1) arrested; (2) charged with the commission of the offense; (3) turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice). "Crime in the United States, 20198 (September 202019)." Uniform Crime Report, U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/clearances.pdf>
- 12 Tyler, T. R., Goff, P. A., & MacCoun, R. J. (2015). The Impact of Psychological Science on Policing in the United States: Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and Effective Law Enforcement. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 16(3), 75–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100615617791>
- 13 <https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Giffords-Law-Center-In-Pursuit-of-Peace.pdf>