

**Public Health
Department**
Alameda County Health



Promoting Peaceful Families and Communities: Maintaining Progress in Reducing Gun Violence in Alameda County

*A public health report at a critical moment for community
violence intervention*

June 2025

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Letter to Our Community

Dear Community Members,

It is with great commitment and a shared sense of responsibility that we present our Promoting Peaceful Families and Communities: Maintaining Progress in Reducing Gun Violence in Alameda County report. 'Promoting Peaceful Families and Communities' is part of Alameda County's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which is a broad and strategic plan to improve the lives of those in the county.

We provide this report in recognition that gun violence (more commonly touted as a public safety matter) is also a public health issue that affects our entire community and has deep roots in structural inequities that have long undermined the well-being of our most vulnerable residents. This report reaffirms our dedication to building a safer, healthier, and more equitable county.

The following is an overview of the state of gun violence across Alameda County and the communities carrying the disproportionate burden of violence. We know that violence, along with other public health concerns are shaped by historical and ongoing disparities in housing, education, employment, and access to health care. The report underscores our collective responsibility to maintain and expand equity initiatives that 1) support youth development, 2) provide trauma-informed care, 3) invest in economic security and opportunity, and 4) heal the social fabric of neighborhoods impacted by violence.

While Alameda County has made progress in its efforts to address gun violence, there is still work to be done. Strategic prevention and intervention efforts, along with long-term community transformations that address healing, community building, social cohesion, and structural inequities, are essential to creating safe and thriving communities. Advances will be the result of strong partnerships with community-based organizations (trailblazers in the work), local governments, public safety agencies, and—most importantly—the residents and leaders within our neighborhoods working tirelessly to protect and uplift their communities.

As you read the report, please consider how you can support impactful changes to address the presence of guns in our communities and advocate for longstanding community-driven efforts to reduce gun violence. Together, we can continue to build a future where every resident of Alameda County can lead a healthy, fulfilling, and productive life.

In partnership,



Kimi Watkins-Tartt, Director,
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About Gun Violence Prevention Efforts in Alameda County

Recognizing the Alameda County Board of Supervisors

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors has long been invested in efforts to address violence prevention for county residents and continues to champion innovative strategies, policies, and priorities to address this issue. Under Supervisor Nate Miley’s guidance, the county developed its initial Blueprint for Violence Prevention in 2005. That work continues to inform efforts across the county to increase accountability for violence prevention-related outcomes and increase coordination of violence prevention efforts for individuals, families, and the community. In June 2021, the Board passed a resolution declaring gun violence a public health crisis. That resolution aligns with the findings of this report and supports the collaborative efforts described throughout. Alameda County remains deeply committed to a comprehensive, cross-agency approach to gun violence prevention that centers collaboration between public safety, public health, community-based providers, and residents.

About the Office of Violence Prevention in the Alameda County Public Health Department

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) works to serve 1.6 million residents across 13 cities and unincorporated areas of Alameda County. Its mission is to work in partnership with the community to ensure the optimal health and well-being of all people through a dynamic and responsive process respecting the diversity of the community and challenging us to provide for present and future generations. The department has an array of programs and services designed to protect the health and safety of county residents, and is committed to promoting peaceful families and communities as part of its [Community Health Improvement Plan](#).

Within ACPHD, the Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) is tasked with investigating, understanding, and addressing violence through a public health approach. OVP centers its work in four areas: Data Collection (to understand the scope of violence in our communities), Narrative Change (to share common definitions and framing for conversations about violence), Advancing Best Practices (to scale up effective prevention and intervention strategies), and Policy Advocacy (to promote and support community power and leadership efforts to address structural issues that contribute to violence). OVP serves as a convener, bringing together community leaders and advocates, community-based organizations, city and county agencies, and other entities to work collaboratively to address the many forms of violence, and their root causes, experienced within our communities. OVP is currently supporting work in the areas of gun violence, intimate partner violence, youth/young adult suicide prevention, and hate-motivated violence.

Part IV of this report explains the work of OVP to implement gun violence prevention efforts.



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This report builds upon 2018 and 2024 reports issued by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office in collaboration with the Alameda County Public Health Department.

We also thank our community organizations and partners dedicated to reducing violence and promoting health throughout Alameda County. The following organizations reviewed and provided valuable insights, which helped enhance this report:

- Youth Alive
- Roots Community Health
- Oakland Thrives

Report design: Katie Kramer, The Bridging Group

Cover photo credit: Getty Images

A focus on interpersonal firearm violence

This report recognizes that firearm suicide is a major contributor to death by gun violence in Alameda County. While this report touches on firearm suicide, the primary focus is on interpersonal gun violence (gun assaults and homicides). The Alameda County Public Health Department and the Office of Violence Prevention are committed to addressing suicide and plan to release more materials specific to firearm suicide in the future.

Centering health equity

Disparities in gun violence are driven by historical and present-day public policy choices and institutional practices that shape inequities in the conditions in which people live, work, learn, and play in Alameda County. Racial and ethnic disparities in gun violence victimization are not primarily the result of individual choices. Instead, they stem from structural inequities that limit opportunities and lead to poor health outcomes, like violence. This report provides data on gun homicide victimization by race and ethnicity, sex, and geographic location to illustrate who is most impacted by this issue and to explain why these disparities exist. The data in this report are meant to inform violence prevention efforts that promote equity, well-being, and opportunity for all.

We recognize that behind each data point is a life lost to violence, pain experienced by loved ones, and wider community trauma. While numbers alone cannot capture this pain, we hope to honor those affected by illustrating the scope of violence in our county. We hope that this report will inform efforts to reduce violence and promote healing across Alameda County.



Photo credit: Hasain Rasheed

Report Summary

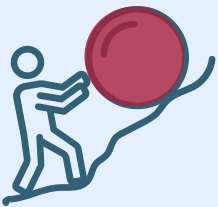
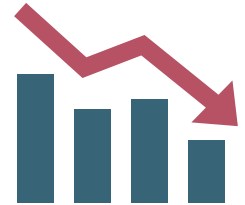
Public Health Impacts of Gun Violence

Gun violence is a public health issue that impacts the health and well-being of everyone in Alameda County. It harms those injured or killed and has rippling impacts on their loved ones and throughout our community. The Alameda County Public Health Department's Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) is committed to working with the community to reduce violence and promote peace.

Key Findings

Gun Homicide Trends

Alameda County experienced increases in gun homicides during the COVID-19 pandemic; preliminary data indicates that there were **119 gun homicides** in 2024, reflecting a **16% decrease** from the prior year.



Economic Hardship and Gun Violence

Residents living in Alameda County's poorest neighborhoods have a **gun homicide rate 8 times higher** than those living in the wealthiest neighborhoods. Programs to reduce poverty remain essential for the health and well-being of the whole community.

Children and Youth

Guns are the **leading cause of death** among children (ages 1-17) and transition-aged youth (ages 18-24) in Alameda County.



Racial Disparities

Gun homicides **disproportionately impact Black and brown residents.** Black males make up roughly 5% of the population in the County but accounted for 48% of all gun homicide deaths from 2019 to 2023.

A Call to Action

The Office of Violence Prevention is committed to examining the root causes of violence, supporting community-based violence intervention efforts, and reshaping local narratives around gun violence. This report outlines a three-part public health strategy to reduce gun violence in collaboration with community partners:

1. **Intervention:** Fund and implement community violence intervention strategies to interrupt cycles of violence and support those at highest risk.
2. **Prevention:** Support prevention efforts that promote healing, create opportunity, and shift norms around gun use.
3. **Transformation:** Work with communities to eliminate structural inequities and promote peaceful and healthy families and communities.

Public Health Impacts of Gun Violence

Gun violence affects the health and well-being of every person in

Alameda County. From 2019 to 2023, an average of three Alameda County residents were killed by a firearm, and 12 were shot and injured each week.ⁱ

These deaths and injuries were the result of gun homicides and assaults, gun suicides and attempts, police-involved shootings, and accidental firearm injuries. As presented in **Figure 1**, in 2023 alone, 111 Alameda County residents died by firearm homicide, 35 died by firearm suicide, and two died by other forms of gun violence. Additionally, there were 270 hospitalizations and 400 emergency room visits for gun-related injuries of Alameda County residents.¹

Each week from 2019 to 2023, an average of:



3

Alameda County residents were killed by a firearm

12

were shot and injured

Figure 1

Alameda County Residents who Died by Firearm (2023)

111
Homicides



35
Suicides



2
Other

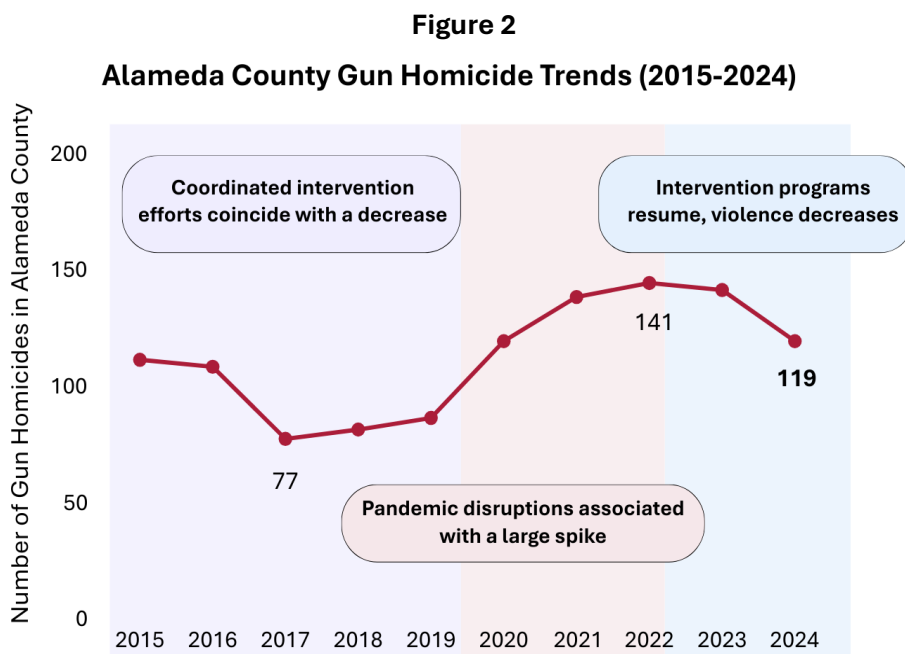


Other category includes unintentional injury, undetermined cause, and police-involved shooting

ⁱ All mortality data, unless otherwise specified, is based off ACPHD analysis of death records provided by the California Department of Public Health. This report uses 'gun' and 'firearm' interchangeably. 'Firearm' refers to the specific weapon, while 'gun' is used more generally or as a descriptor for events.

Gun Homicides in 2024: Preliminary Data

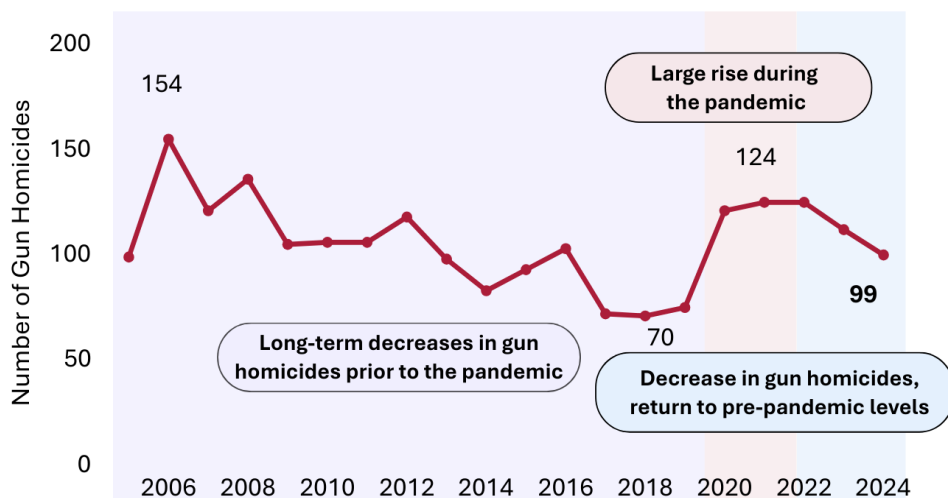
According to preliminary data based on death certificates, there were **119 gun homicides** that occurred in Alameda County in 2024.² This data represents a **16% decrease** from the 141 gun homicides recorded in 2023, and marks the lowest level since 2020 when the same number of gun homicides occurred. **Figure 2** presents Alameda County gun homicide trends from 2015-2024.



Trends over time, Alameda County residents

Figure 3

Gun Homicides Among Alameda County Residents (2005-2024)



Ninety-nine Alameda County residents died by gun homicide in 2024, according to preliminary data, with the vast majority (88%) shot within the county. This total represents a 20% decrease from the recent peak in 2022, and it is a promising signal that gun violence is returning to pre-pandemic levels. **Figure 3** presents trends of gun homicides among Alameda County residents from 2005-2024.

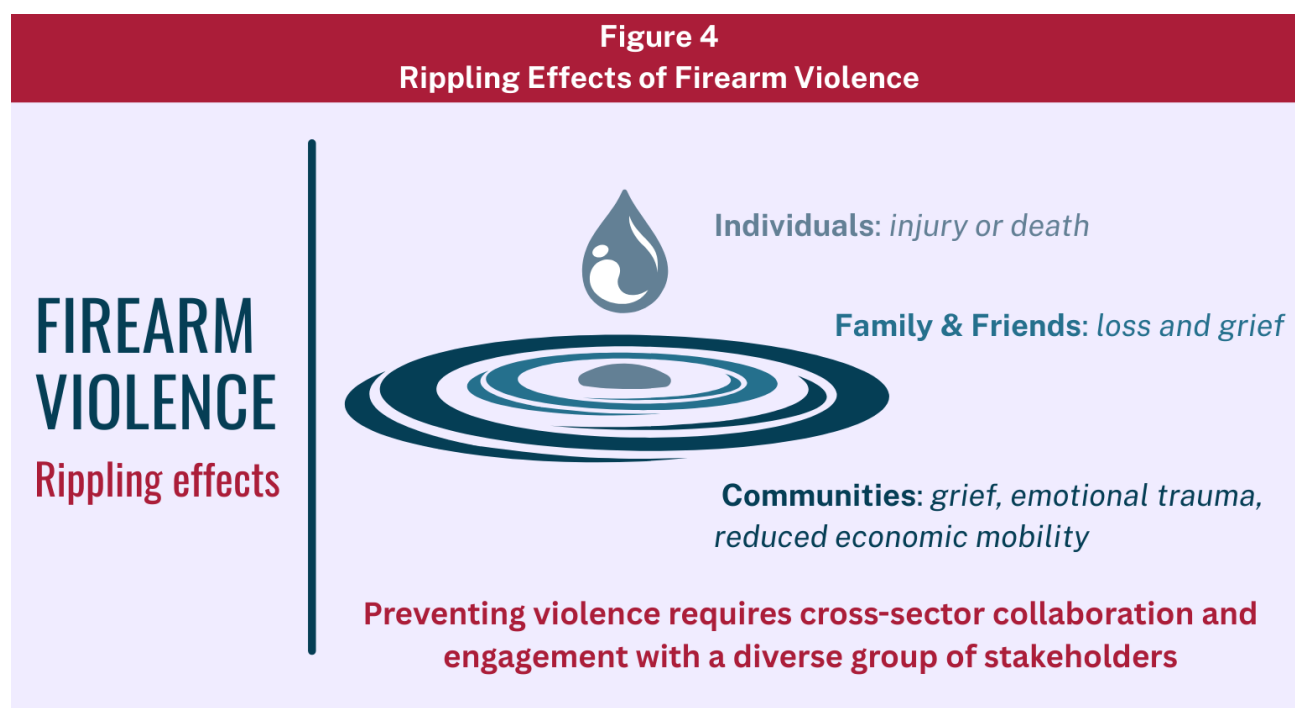
Data Note: Focus on Alameda County Residents

This report primarily focuses on gun homicides among Alameda County residents, regardless of where the shooting occurred. This means it includes residents killed outside the county and excludes non-residents killed within the county. This approach helps guide prevention and intervention strategies for those who live in the county.

Far-Reaching Effects of Gun Violence

Gun violence has far-reaching impacts across Alameda County, extending well beyond those who lose their lives. Survivors often face lifelong physical and mental health challenges, while families and friends of those shot are deeply affected by the loss or injury of their loved ones. Gun violence also inflicts trauma on those who witness a shooting or hear gunshots. It causes residents to feel unsafe in their neighborhoods, and fearful of being in public spaces and engaging in healthy activities.³ This collective impact directly affects people's health. Exposure to gun violence is tied to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. It is also connected to increased rates of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and asthma.^{4,5,6} At a neighborhood level, high rates of gun violence are linked to lower levels of involvement in community activities and fewer economic opportunities.⁷ **Figure 4** presents the rippling effects of gun violence.

A wide range of research demonstrates how poverty, lack of opportunity, and unmet community needs increase the risk for gun violence. As a result, Black and Hispanic residents suffering from a legacy of racist public policies in housing, economic development, and opportunity are most vulnerable to violence.



About the Report

This report provides an overview of gun violence in Alameda County, explaining what factors contribute to gun violence, how gun violence impacts various communities, and what can be done about it.

I

Drivers of Gun Violence: The Role of Community Inequities and Access to Firearms

Explains how inequities, caused by discriminatory policies, and easy access to firearms contribute to high levels of gun violence today.

II

Impacts and Inequities of Gun Violence to Community: How Certain Residents Face Higher Levels of Gun Violence

Focuses on who is affected by gun violence in Alameda County and provides data to illustrate the groups particularly impacted.

III

Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence: Community-Centered Intervention, Prevention, & Transformation

Outlines the roles of community-based organizations and the public health department in reducing violence and promoting healing.

IV

Vision to Address Gun Violence: The Office of Violence Prevention's Commitment

Details how Alameda County Public Health Department is leaning into addressing gun violence across the county.

Alameda County's Commitment to Addressing Gun Violence

The Alameda County Public Health Department sees the following components as vital for reducing violence and promoting health for all Alameda County residents:

Intervention: Fund and implement community violence intervention strategies to interrupt cycles of violence and support those at highest risk.

Prevention: Support prevention efforts that promote healing, create opportunity, and shift norms around firearm use.

Transformation: Work with communities to eliminate structural inequities and promote peaceful and healthy families and communities.

I. Drivers of Gun Violence

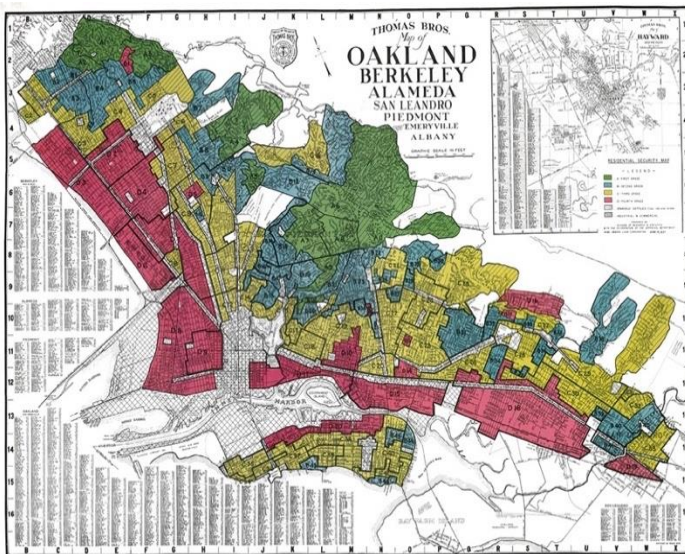
The Role of Community Inequities and Access to Firearms

High levels of gun violence in Alameda County are driven by a combination of deep structural inequities coupled with easy access to firearms. A legacy of racist public policies created under-resourced communities with limited opportunities, and the conditions for conflicts, tensions, and violence. Easy gun access magnified these conditions, increasing the likelihood that conflicts escalate into lethal violence.

Discriminatory policies drive inequities and gun violence

There are large differences in poverty, opportunity, and health by neighborhood and by race and ethnicity in Alameda County. These differences are not accidental, nor are they the result of individual choices. Instead, they stem from discriminatory public policy decisions that provided advantages to certain white populations while denying those same opportunities to Black and brown communities. Recognizing these inequities is central to understanding why gun violence disproportionately impacts certain communities in Alameda County. This is reflected in the devaluation of the lives of Black and brown individuals involved in gun violence.

Figure 5
1937 Residential Security Grades Map



Source: HOLC (1937)

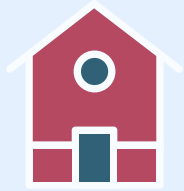
Discriminatory housing policies, like redlining, have created urban areas of poverty and limited economic opportunities. The term *redlining* comes from maps of “Residential Security Grades,” determined by the Homeowners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), a federal agency, to map out the perceived risk of mortgage loans for residential properties. The lowest grade of “D” was shown in a bright red color. **Figure 5** presents a “redlining map” from 1937 for many East Bay communities. Such policies, enacted in the 1930s, allowed white middle-class residents to move to suburban areas and accumulate wealth through homeownership while effectively barring non-white residents from relocating from high-poverty neighborhoods. These decades-old discriminatory policies have had lasting impacts on the health and well-being of Alameda County residents today, creating large racial disparities in wealth, neighborhoods with persistent poverty, underfunded services, and limited economic opportunities.⁸

How Inequities Contribute to Violence

Below are ways in which upstream inequities contribute to violence, often intersecting and compounding one another to shape the lived experiences of individuals and communities.

Economic Hardship

Historical policy injustices and neighborhood disinvestment have shaped persistent poverty in some neighborhoods of Alameda County. Living in high-poverty neighborhoods creates more challenging conditions for residents to live, learn, work, and play. Economic hardship can drive food insufficiency, housing insecurity, and other stressors that are adverse experiences for children and adults. Children with high levels of exposures to stressors, lower quality educational and employment opportunities, and high exposure to neighborhood gun ownership may get caught up in gun violence.



Housing and Built Environment

Poor housing conditions, overcrowded living spaces, and inadequate public infrastructure heighten stress levels for residents. In Alameda County, these challenges are compounded by the high cost of living and high levels of housing insecurity and homelessness. Research also demonstrates a relationship between the presence of blighted properties, vacant lots, and violence.⁹

Access to Care

Under-resourced communities often have limited access to culturally appropriate care, including mental health services, despite being exposed to high levels of trauma and community violence. This untreated trauma can act as a trigger when someone faces a stressful situation or a conflict.

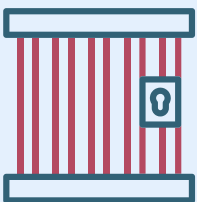


Education

Schools in high-poverty neighborhoods often have less resources to adequately prepare students for the future. This can lead to higher dropout rates and a greater likelihood of involvement in violent behavior. Limited afterschool programs and lack of connection to post-graduation opportunities and pathways to career development reduce opportunities for youth growth and development.

Justice and Policing

Police misconduct and discriminatory policing practices contribute to community violence in Black and brown communities. When residents do not feel safe to trust or rely on public safety resources and the criminal justice system, they may be more likely to handle disputes on their own, often resulting in escalating feuds and retaliatory violence.



Incarceration

The unintended consequences of harsh penalties for nonviolent offenses contributed to mass incarcerations, separated families and disconnected communities. These policies have had lasting impacts, increasing vulnerability towards violence and disproportionately affecting communities of color.

Modern-day policies perpetuate inequities

Over the last three decades, national public policy and demographic shifts have further perpetuated inequity in Alameda County. National economic forces and policy decisions have led to deindustrialization, the decline of labor unions, and a loss of many well-paying working-class jobs, which many Black and Hispanic residents relied upon.¹⁰ At the same time, the growth of the technology sector fueled economic inequality as wealthy individuals have moved into the county, driving up the cost of living and spurring gentrification.¹¹ These factors have added additional strain on under-resourced communities, exacerbating inequities and increasing the risk for gun violence.

Federal Policy Environment Threatens Violence Prevention Efforts

The current federal policy environment has the potential to worsen community vulnerabilities and exacerbate inequities. As of early 2025, there have been cuts to federal funding of food banks and Head Start programs that provide early childhood education to children living in low-income households. There are also proposed federal budget changes to social welfare programs such as Medicaid (known as Medi-Cal in California), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known as Cal-Fresh locally), and Head Start (early childhood resources), which provide critical access to healthcare, food security, and support children and adults most vulnerable to economic hardship. Furthermore, large-scale cuts to both staff and budget at federal agencies that administer these programs may have downstream impacts on Alameda County residents who depend on these services. These cuts are likely to intensify racial and ethnic inequities in poverty and worsen community vulnerability to violence.

Moreover, changes to the violence prevention landscape have included the closing of the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, as well as significant cuts to violence prevention grant funding and research through federal departments such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Justice. As of May 2025, the Department of Justice has terminated hundreds of millions of dollars in grant programs in community violence prevention, domestic violence prevention, and victim services impacting at least 15 organizations across the Bay Area. Youth Alive, a violence intervention provider that is pictured below, had a \$2 million grant terminated by the federal government.*

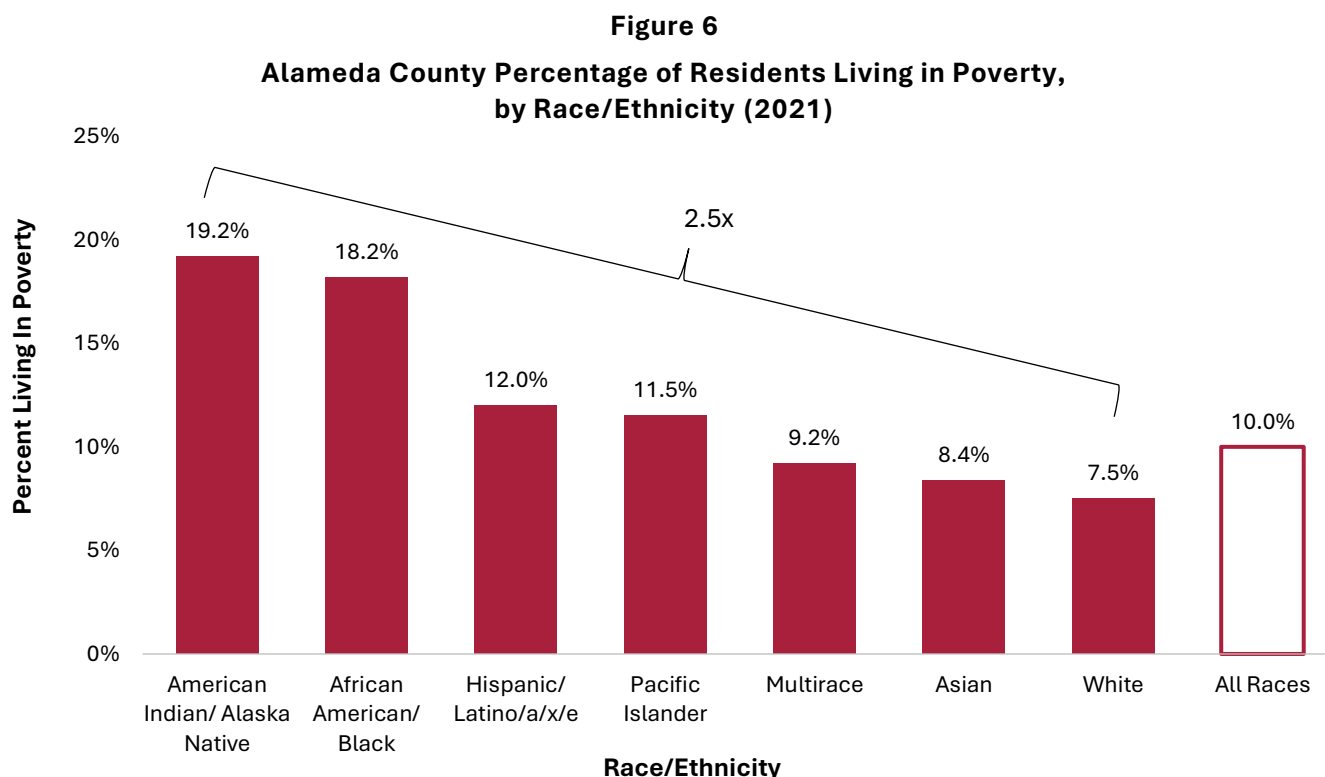
*Citations^{12,13,14, 15,16,17,18,19}



Photo credit: Youth Alive, YA Violence Interruption Team

Black and brown residents are more likely to face economic hardship and live in under-resourced neighborhoods

Today in Alameda County there are large inequities by neighborhood and by race and ethnicity. Black and Hispanic residents are far more likely to live in poverty, reside in inadequate housing, attend underfunded schools, and face limited access to healthcare. Nearly one out of every five Black (18%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (19%) residents, as well as approximately one in eight Hispanic or Pacific Islander residents (12%), live below the federal poverty line—meaning a family of four makes less than \$32,000 a year. **Figure 6** presents the percent of Alameda County residents living in poverty by race/ethnicity.²⁰



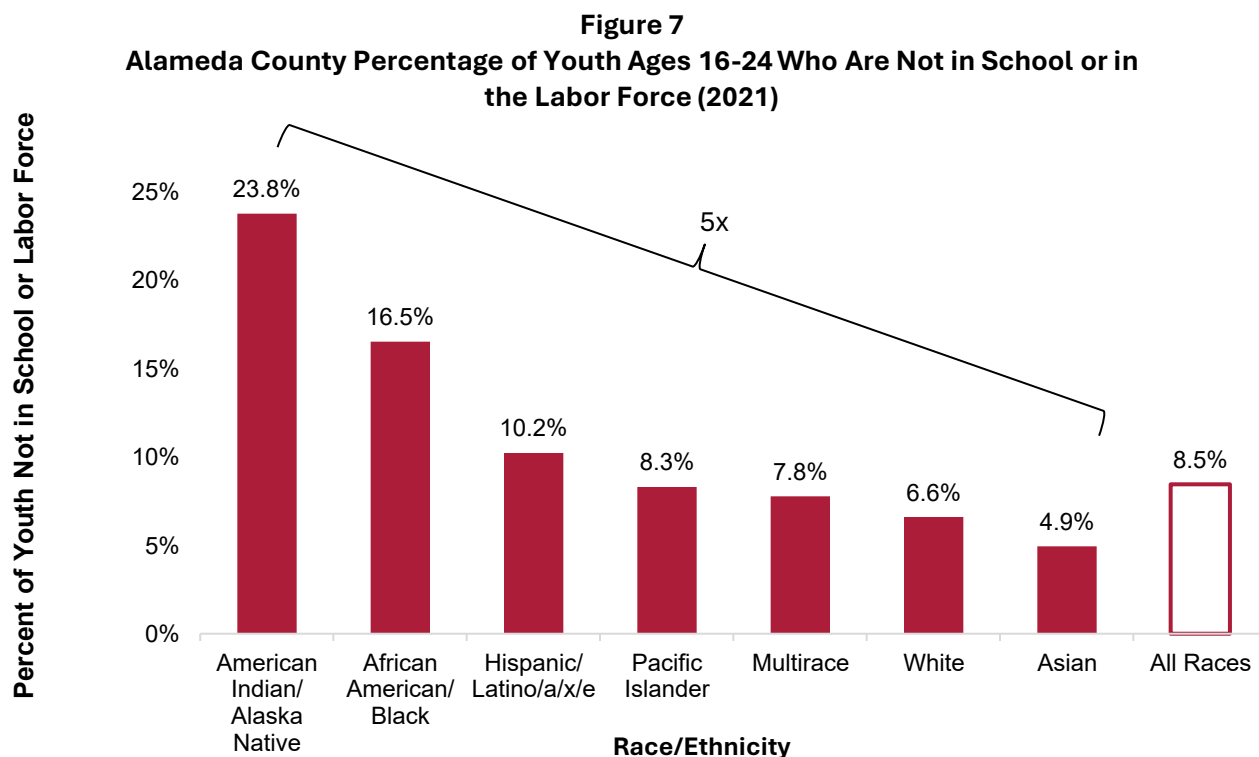
Community Voices: Tying Health Inequities to Gun Violence

“Violence affects many young people in Oakland because of poverty, lack of resources, and exposure to crime, which normalizes violence. We can prevent violence by implementing community programs focused on educating members, and conflict resolution involving families and schools. Preventing youth violence requires better mental health access, community support, and policies to reduce gun availability.”

Kiana Gutierrez, 10th grade student at Fremont High School

Disparities are even greater for youth not in school or labor force

These disparities are even more pronounced among young people. Twenty-seven percent of Black children and youth (ages 0-17) live in households below the poverty line—a rate 6 times higher than that of their white peers.²¹ As a result of these higher levels of poverty, Black and brown youth are more likely to be disengaged from school and work. Among youth ages 16 to 24, almost 24% of American Indian/Alaska Native, 17% of Black, and 10% of Hispanic youth were neither employed nor in school, compared to just 7% of white youth. Research shows that youth and young adults who are not working or in school are more likely to become involved in violence.²² Figure 7 presents the percentage of youth who are not in school or in the labor force by race/ethnicity.²³



Living in Under-Resourced Communities Increases Risk for Violence

People who grow up in under-resourced communities often endure adverse experiences and unresolved trauma that can increase their risk for violence. Many children grow up in households with food insecurity, facing routine hunger throughout their lives. They often live in cramped, overcrowded spaces, and face the stress of knowing they could be evicted at any moment.

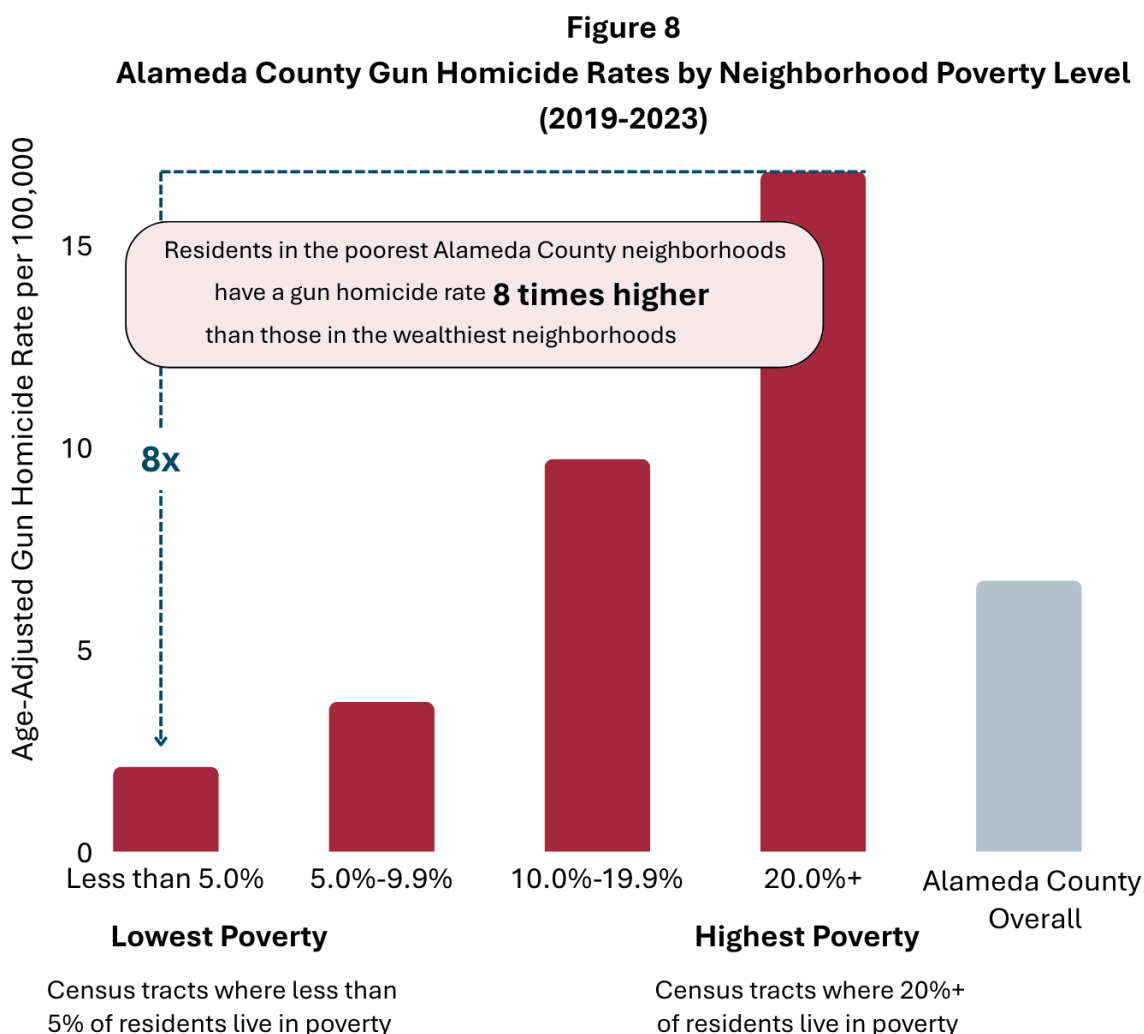
Children who feel unsafe in their own neighborhoods may be less likely to go outside, make friends, or even go to school. Many residents, including children, routinely hear gunshots, and some have witnessed shootings, lost family or friends to violence, or been targeted by shootings. Many of those who develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression lack access to quality mental health care. Emotional challenges can affect their ability to succeed in school and secure a job.

Deepening impact of inequity contributes to ongoing violence

Over time, the impact of inequities accumulates, creating a cycle of trauma and hardship that contributes to ongoing violence in affected communities. These inequities contribute to large differences in gun violence by neighborhood and by racial/ethnic group. In Alameda County, individuals living in neighborhoods with the highest poverty levels are 8 times more likely to die by homicide than those who live in the lowest poverty neighborhoods.²⁴ Black residents have a gun homicide rate 33 times higher than white residents.²⁵ **Figure 8** describes the Alameda County gun homicide rate by neighborhood poverty level.

8x

Individuals living in neighborhoods with the highest poverty levels are eight times more likely to die by homicide than those who live in the lowest poverty neighborhoods



“Community violence does not just harm individuals; it changes the entire environment in which people live. It can break down trust between neighbors, weaken social ties across generations, and make it harder for communities to support one another. Over time, violence can shift the norms in a neighborhood, making harmful behaviors feel more common or even expected. Community violence also damages the places themselves. Parks, streets, and public spaces fall into disrepair, and unhealthy outlets like liquor stores may outnumber resources for healing or growth. These conditions can drive disinvestment, limit job opportunities, and trap communities in cycles of poverty and trauma. The impact is profound and long-lasting, but communities can heal and thrive with the proper support and investment.”

Dr. Joseph Griffin, Executive Director, Youth Alive

Availability of Guns Contributes to High Levels of Lethal Violence

In addition to root causes that make communities vulnerable to violence, the presence and availability of guns contribute to higher rates of violence and homicide. The availability of firearms is uniquely high in the United States, where there are more guns than people.²⁶ While the United States has comparable rates of violent crime to other high-income countries, the homicide mortality rate is 7.5 times higher than the average in high-income countries. The higher fatality rate is largely due to firearm homicides, which are rarer in other countries.²⁷ Likewise, guns are a major driver of high suicide mortality rates in the United States, with 90% of firearm suicide attempts resulting in death.²⁸

Gun carrying increases risk of violent injury and death

Many individuals, especially those exposed to violence, choose to carry guns out of a desire to protect themselves, their family, or their friends.²⁹ While gun carrying may feel like a protective measure, research indicates that it increases the risk of violent injury and death by firearm.³⁰ This disconnect between perceived safety and risk for violence underscores the need for increased education and interventions.

The availability of firearms is uniquely high in the United States, where there are more guns than people

Public health research consistently shows that having a gun in the home increases the risk by 3-fold that someone in that home will die by suicide, and it doubles the risk for homicide, often of a family member.³¹ Legally purchased guns can also lead to gun violence outside of the home. Far too often, legally purchased guns are lost or stolen and end up contributing to community gun violence. Gun owners who fail to lock up their firearms inside their homes or within their cars are susceptible to gun theft. This issue is pervasive, as nationally, an estimated 380,000 guns are stolen each year, and on average, a gun is stolen from a car every 9 minutes.^{32,33}

Unsecured firearms also increase the likelihood of accidental injuries. Each year, dozens of unintentional gun injuries occur in the county.³⁴ Children or young adults gain access to firearms and accidentally shoot themselves or others. Many of these injuries can be avoided with the safe storage of both the gun and ammunition. It is critical that residents wishing to purchase a gun for the first time understand the risks of firearm ownership and how to mitigate those risks through safe gun storage and handling.

Guns and interpersonal violence in Alameda County

Guns are the primary driver of the most severe forms of interpersonal violence carried out in Alameda County. The presence of a gun can quickly turn what would have normally resulted in a verbal argument or less severe fight into a homicide. From 2019 to 2023, 83% (537/644) of all Alameda County residents who died by homicide were killed by a gun. During this period, firearms accounted for 93% (155/166) of homicides involving children and youth (ages 0-24).

Among county residents, guns were involved in:

83% of all homicides

93% of children and young adult homicides

Guns increase the risk of suicide

Guns also contribute to high suicide levels in Alameda County, as access to a firearm drastically increases the likelihood that a suicide attempt will be fatal. The lethality and irreversible nature of firearms can turn a mental health crisis into a suicide. While only 1-5% of suicide attempts using methods like cutting or ingesting drugs are lethal, 90% of firearm suicide attempts result in death.³⁵ In Alameda County, firearms are the second most common method of suicide.³⁶ From 2019 to 2023, an average of one Alameda County resident died by firearm suicide every 9 days. Interventions that create time and space between a person in crisis and a firearm are effective in reducing suicide, allowing individuals to seek the support they need.

Owning a gun in your home creates a:

3x Higher risk of suicide among household members compared to households without guns

2x Higher risk of homicide among household members compared to households without guns

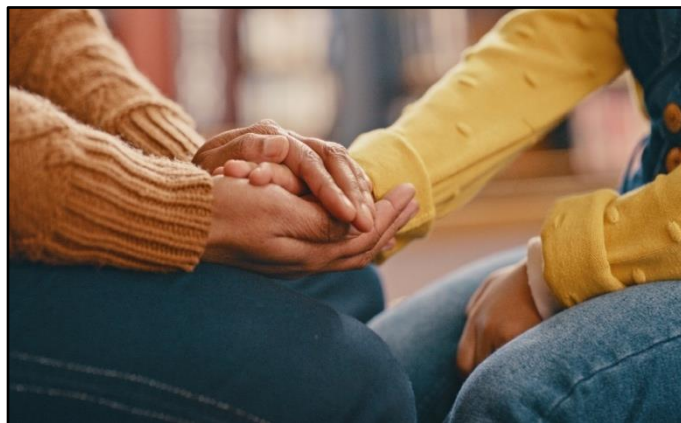


Photo credit: Getty Images

California's Gun Laws Have an Impact, But Are Limited by Weak Gun Laws of Neighboring States

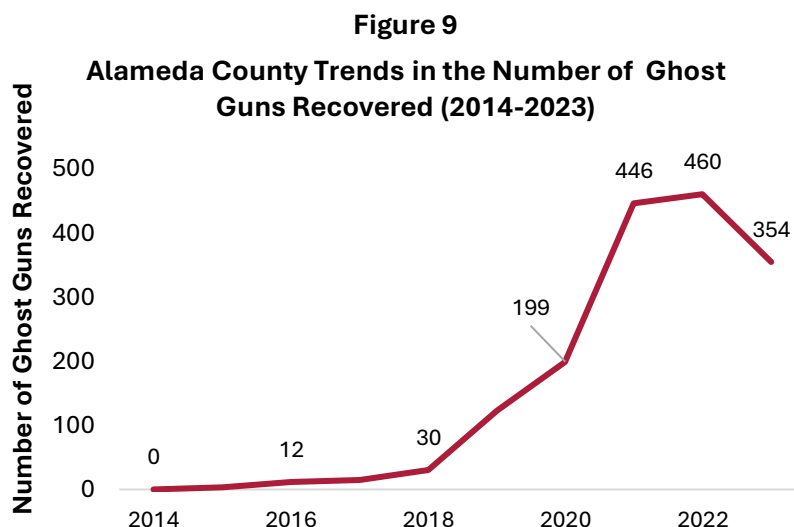
Research shows that higher levels of gun ownership and more permissive gun laws are associated with higher rates of gun violence.^{37, 38} California is a leader in passing strong gun laws and reducing the gun death rate. In fact, in recent years, the state ranked as having the strongest gun laws in the country and subsequently, having one of the lowest gun death rates. For example, the gun violence prevention organization, Giffords Law

Center, ranked California first in the nation for its gun laws in 2021. That same year, California had the eighth lowest gun death rate in the country—a rate 39% lower than the national rate.³⁹

Yet, weak gun laws in neighboring states like Arizona, where firearms can be purchased from a private seller without a background check or any vetting process, limit the impact of California laws.

Firearm traffickers exploit the weak gun laws in neighboring

states by making bulk purchases of firearms, including assault-style rifles, and selling them to individuals at risk of engaging in violence in Alameda County. In recent years, the increased distribution of unregulated ghost guns purchased online have further diminished the impact of California's strong gun laws. **Figure 9** presents trends in the recovery of ghost guns in Alameda County from 2014 to 2023.



Rise in Ghost Guns Contributes to Violence in Alameda County

Starting in 2018, the United States saw a rise in ghost guns assembled from “do-it-yourself” ghost gun kits that avoid regulations, particularly in states with strong gun laws like California. Ghost guns, formally identified as “Privately Manufactured Firearms,” are assembled by individuals rather than licensed manufacturers, allowing individuals to gain access to a fully functional, unregulated and/or unserialized firearm within minutes.

Research suggests that many ghost guns were used to carry out violence in Alameda County over the last five years. In 2018, there were 30 ghost guns recovered in crimes in Alameda County. By 2022, the number had grown to 460, a 1,433% increase. **In 2022, roughly 1 out of every 4 guns recovered at crime scenes in Alameda County were ghost guns.**

Fortunately, the use of ghost guns appears to be declining from a peak in 2022. From 2022 to 2023, ghost gun recoveries in Alameda County decreased by 23%. This decrease is the result of actions taken at the local, state, and federal levels to stop the distribution of unregulated gun parts and ghost gun kits.*

Citations^{40,41,42}

Where there is access to guns, there is need for a high level of responsibility

Alameda County residents who choose to own a firearm legally have a responsibility to keep themselves, their family, and their community safe by practicing responsible gun ownership. Gun owners are responsible for staying updated with new local and statewide gun laws. Taking steps to practice safe gun ownership and store firearms unloaded in a locked container with the ammunition secured in a separate location is an effective approach to protect everyone in the household and minimize the risk of violence.

It is important that gun owners also learn to recognize the warning signs when they or a loved one is in crisis by developing a safety plan in case someone in their home goes through a hard time and is vulnerable to violence. Effective plans include options for temporarily storing firearms outside of the home with a friend or family member who is not a prohibited person. Gun owners can also sell their firearms to a firearms dealer or ask if a dealer or range owner will hold onto the firearm temporarily.

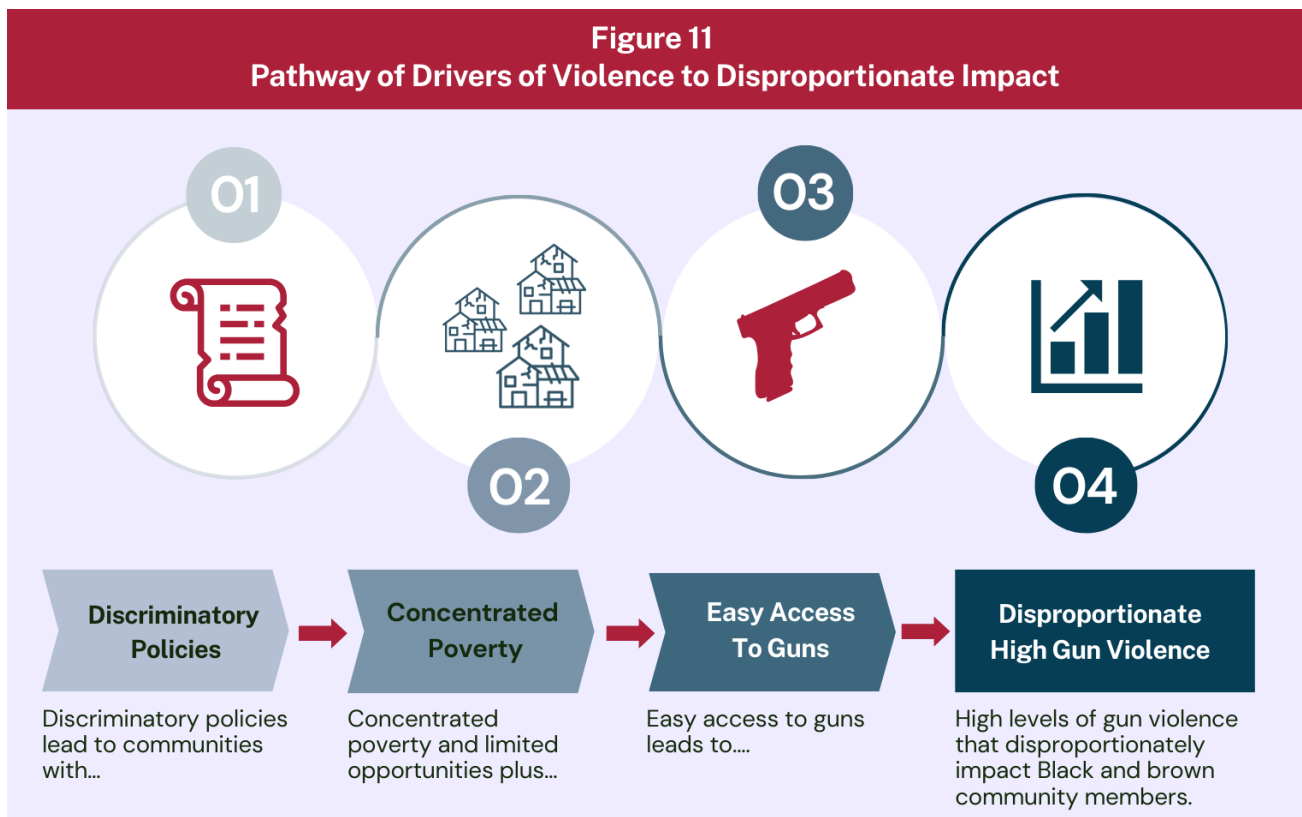
Figure 10 describes safe storage practices.



Photo credit: Getty Images

Addressing the Drivers of Violence

Addressing the root causes of violence in Alameda County requires investing in under-resourced communities—providing economic opportunities, strengthening community connections, and social service supports that allow individuals to thrive. It also involves enacting policies that limit the availability of firearms and shift norms around firearm use. **Figure 11** presents the pathway of drivers of violence to disproportionate impact.



From Drivers to Impacts

In **Part I**, we discussed the drivers of gun violence and ease of access to firearms. In **Part II** of this report, we explore how these two factors contribute to inequities of gun violence experienced by different Alameda County populations.

II. Impacts and Inequities of Gun Violence to Community

How Certain Residents Face Higher Levels of Gun Violence

Changes in Firearm Homicides Over Time

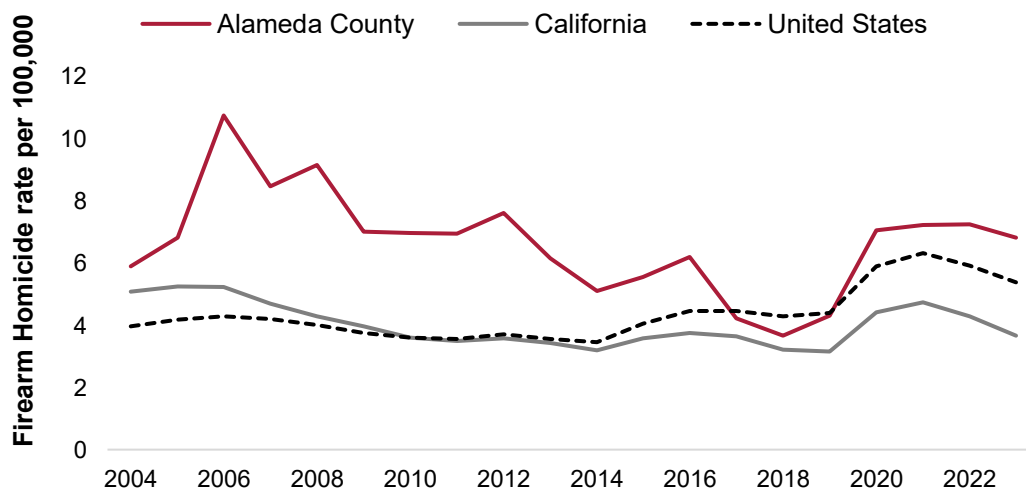
Trends in firearm homicides in Alameda County have varied over time. There has been a recent increase in firearm homicides that started in 2020, coinciding with the stressors and disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uptick in ghost gun availability. The increase followed 12 years of steady decline in the Alameda County firearm homicide rate from a peak in 2006. Although the recent increase in firearm homicides is concerning, rates of firearm homicide in Alameda County are not as high as they were in the mid-2000s.

Sustained decrease in gun homicide rate

Since 2006, there was a steady decline in the gun homicide rate in Alameda County leading to a three-decade low in 2018. In 2018, 70 county residents died by gun homicide.⁴³ Notably, the Alameda County gun homicide rates in 2017, 2018, and 2019 were slightly lower than the gun homicide rates nationally during these same years. **Figure 12** presents a comparison of these rates. These reduced rates were a remarkable success, especially given the unique structural challenges and inequities within Alameda County. These rates counter sensationalist narratives that often exaggerate the extent of violence in Alameda County, overlooking the ongoing progress made to reduce gun violence.

This successful decline corresponded with a range of violence prevention and intervention strategies involving public safety and community-based organizations.⁴⁴ For example, an evaluation conducted by researchers at Northwestern University concluded that Oakland Department of Violence Prevention's cornerstone Ceasefire violence reduction strategy "resulted in continuous, sustained reductions in citywide shootings and homicides from 2013 to 2017."⁴⁵

Figure 12
Trends in Firearm Homicide Rate by Location
(2004 to 2023)

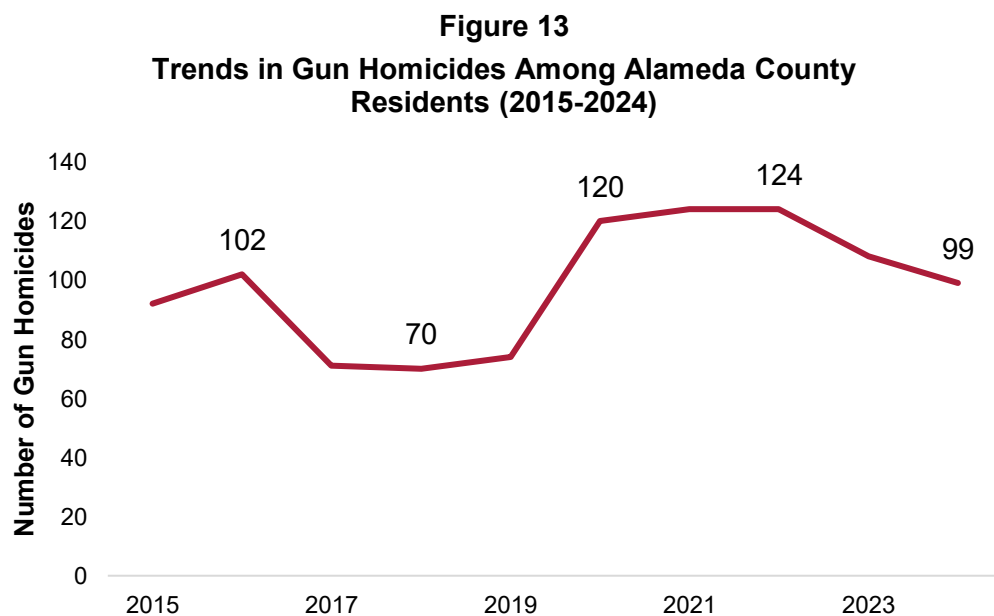


Disruptions During COVID-19 Pandemic Contributed to Sharp Rise in Gun Homicide

Following the social, economic, and public service disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the firearm homicide rate rose steeply across the United States, increasing 45% from 2019 to 2021.⁴⁶ This national rise also occurred among Alameda County residents, with the gun homicide rate increasing by 68% from 2019 to 2021.

Deep structural inequities left Alameda County particularly vulnerable to disruptions caused by the pandemic. Communities that already had the least resources were most affected by exposure to the virus, loss of work, and reduced services – including loss of community violence intervention and prevention supports. As noted in **Part I**, there was also a sharp rise in gun purchases and distribution of ghost guns across the U.S. and in Alameda County during this time.^{47,48} These factors collectively contributed to the elevated rates of gun violence in Alameda County beginning in 2020.

Fortunately, gun homicides among Alameda County residents declined in 2023 and again in 2024. Preliminary data shows that the number of gun homicides in 2024 was down 20% from a recent high in 2022. **Figure 13** presents the trends in gun homicides among Alameda County residents over the last 10 years.



Note: This graph illustrates the number of gun homicides among Alameda County residents regardless of where the shooting occurred. For example, the gun homicide may have occurred in San Francisco, but the individual resided in Alameda County.

Addressing the Recent Rise in Gun Violence

Numerous agencies and community-based organizations have stepped up to address the recent rise in gun violence in Alameda County by enhancing violence prevention and intervention efforts. The Alameda County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in 2021 declaring gun violence a public health crisis and directed county departments to identify and deploy resources to address it.⁴⁹ The Alameda County Public Health Department created an Office of Violence Prevention, while the Alameda County District Attorney's Office convened roundtables and diversion programs with partnered community-based organizations. In addition, the Alameda County Probation Department launched an inter-agency taskforce to address violence prevention. The City of Oakland and its Department of Violence Prevention recommitted to a highly successful violence reduction Ceasefire strategy and increased funding for community violence interventions led by local organizations.⁵⁰ These local community-based organizations have continued their impactful work on the ground, playing a critical role in violence prevention and intervention efforts.

These efforts coincided with a decrease in gun homicides in 2023 and in 2024. Gun violence in Alameda County appears to be returning to levels experienced prior to the pandemic. However, there is much work to be done; the gun homicide rate in 2024 was still higher than it was before the pandemic.⁵¹



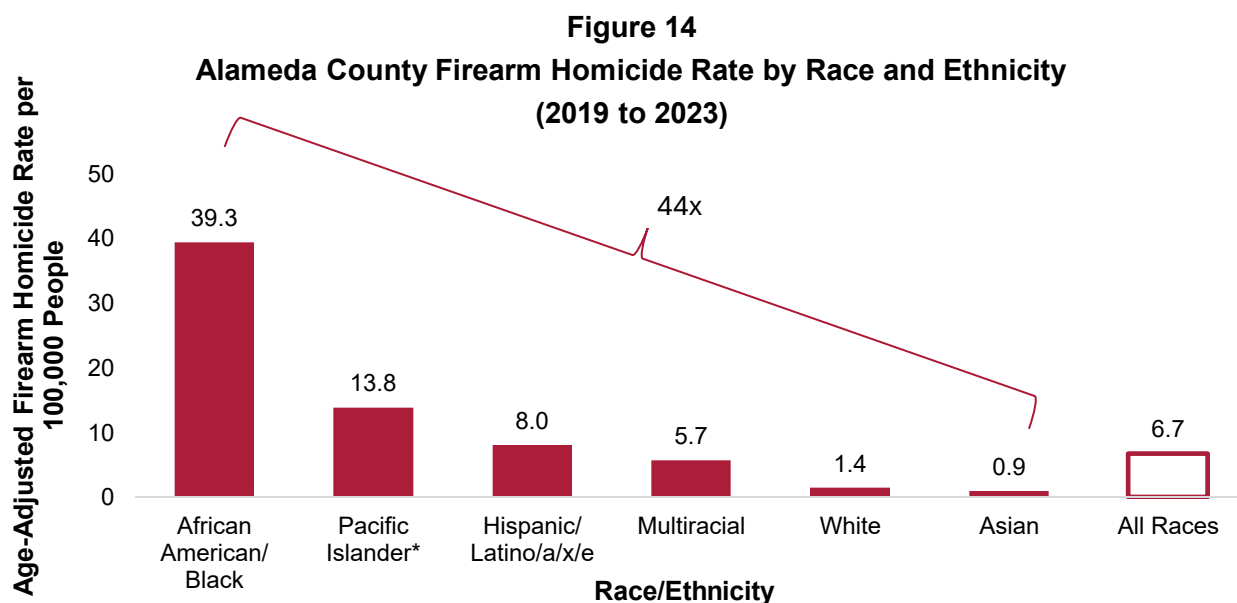
Photo credit: Getty Images

Demographic Inequities in Firearm Homicide

Certain populations are impacted by gun homicides at levels far higher than others. There are large, longstanding differences in the level of gun homicides by race and ethnicity, sex, and age. These differences are mostly the result of unfair differences in poverty and opportunity.

Inequities by race and ethnicity

The scale of racial disparities in gun violence victimization is unparalleled. Black residents are 44 times more likely to die by gun homicide compared to their Asian counterparts, the group with the lowest rate of firearm homicide. No other disease or injury in Alameda County displays such stark disparities by race and ethnicity.⁵² In short, gun violence is a health equity and social justice issue. Addressing these racial disparities, and the systemic inequities which underlie them, is essential to promoting health and well-being for all Alameda County residents. **Figure 14** provides a comparison of the firearm homicide rate by race and ethnicity.

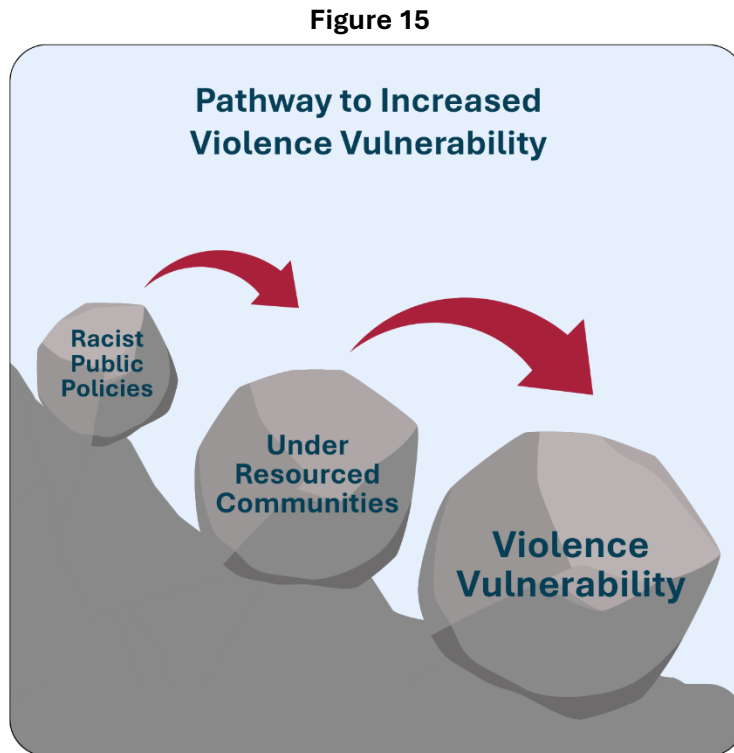


No other disease or injury in Alameda County displays such stark disparities by race and ethnicity as gun violence victimization

Young Black men disproportionately affected by gun homicide deaths

These disparities are even more pronounced among young Black males. Black males make up roughly 5% of the population in the county but accounted for 48% of all gun homicide deaths from 2019 to 2023.

Approximately one in 700 Black males ages 15 to 34 die by gun homicide each year.⁵³ Put another way, if current gun homicide rates persist, a Black male turning 15 today has roughly a 2.9% risk of dying by gun homicide before reaching age 35.⁵⁴ These statistics underscore the urgency of the gun violence crisis among marginalized racial and ethnic groups. **Figure 15** presents the pathway of how racist public policies lead to under-resourced communities, and in combination, lead to a higher vulnerability for gun violence.



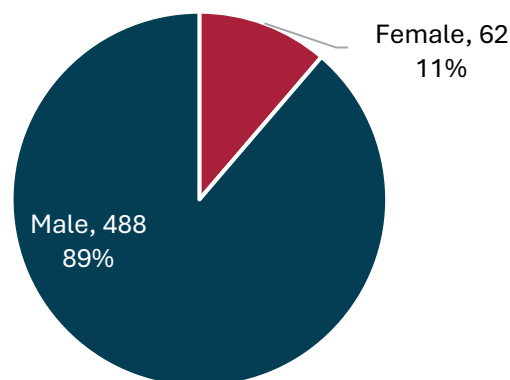
Guns used in hate-motivated violence

Guns play a significant role in hate crimes, amplifying the lethality of these acts of violence. Hate crimes target individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other aspects of identity. The presence of a gun in a hate crime greatly increases the likelihood of severe or fatal outcomes. Guns are far too often used by hate groups and by individuals to threaten, intimidate, and terrorize groups from marginalized backgrounds. In recent years, anti-Black, anti-LGBTQ+, antisemitic, and anti-Asian mass shootings have occurred, including in California.^{55,56} A growing number of hate groups, particularly white nationalist groups, have used firearms to intimidate and threaten racial and ethnic minorities, as well as those with differing political views.⁵⁷ While hate-motivated crimes in Alameda County can be difficult to track, there was a notable spike in anti-Asian violence at the start of the pandemic. Additionally, there have recently been increases in anti-Black, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-Jewish, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Muslim hate.⁵⁸ The county remains committed to addressing the intersection of firearms and hate and ensuring that people of all identities feel safe and welcome in Alameda County.

Inequities by sex and gender

Male residents in Alameda County are disproportionately impacted by gun violence, accounting for nearly 9 out of 10 gun homicide victims. This statistic mirrors state and national trends as males are more often engaged in and are victims of violence.⁵⁹ **Figure 16** provides a comparison of gun homicides among Alameda County residents by sex from 2019-2023.

Figure 16
Gun Homicides of Alameda County Residents by Sex (2019-2023)



Domestic Violence Involving Guns

Domestic violence, defined as physical, sexual, or psychological abuse carried out by a current or former romantic partner, a cohabitant, or a family member, has widespread health impacts, particularly on women. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a subset of domestic violence among current or former romantic partners. Nationally, one in three women experiences some form of domestic violence over their lifetime, with higher levels experienced among racial and ethnic minorities, as well as transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals.⁶⁰ Patriarchal systems, sexism, and stigma against LGBTQ+ individuals contribute to domestic violence by reinforcing power imbalances, marginalizing survivors, and discouraging them from seeking help or accessing resources.^{61,62}

Firearm access and domestic violence

Domestic violence and firearm access are a lethal combination. Far too often, abusers with access to firearms kill. Research shows that whether the abuser has access to a firearm is one of the strongest predictors of domestic violence turning lethal. Nationally, firearms are used in 50% of intimate partner violence-related homicides.⁶³ When an abuser has access to a firearm, women are five times more likely to be killed by their abusive partner.⁶⁴

5x

Women are 5 times more likely to be killed by their abusive partner when the abuser has a firearm

Firearms inflict enormous harm even when a gun isn't fired. Abusers often use the mere presence of a gun to threaten, intimidate, and terrorize, causing psychological harm to survivors.⁶⁵ The impact of intimate partner violence carried out by a firearm also extends beyond the victim. Many intimate partner homicides are connected to shootings of family members, co-workers, or mass shootings, and are often followed by the perpetrator's suicide. Firearm access in domestic violence situations both heightens the risk of homicide for the victim and increases the risk of mass violence to families and communities.⁶⁶

Domestic violence homicides

In its most severe form, domestic violence can result in a homicide, especially when an abuser has access to a firearm. Domestic violence homicides are often under-reported because the homicide is unsolved, or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is unknown.⁶⁷ This under-reporting creates a challenge in determining how frequently domestic violence homicides occur, and what proportion of overall homicides are linked to domestic violence. Research suggests that nationally, half of female homicide victims are killed by a current or former male intimate partner.⁶⁸ Pregnant and postpartum women are also at high risk for domestic violence homicides; in fact, homicide is the leading cause of death among this population.⁶⁹

Far too often, abusers with access to firearms kill

Disproportionately impacted populations

Historically, marginalized individuals have been at greater risk for domestic violence homicides. In particular, Black and American Indian/Alaska Native females experience disproportionately high rates of domestic violence homicides. For example, one study found that Black females accounted for roughly 30% of all intimate partner homicides nationally, but only made up about 15% of the national female population.⁷⁰ People who are LGBTQ+ also face elevated risks of intimate partner violence and homicides.⁷¹ Biases within and distrust of the legal and healthcare systems can contribute to overlooking and neglecting the experiences of these vulnerable populations. Therefore, instances of domestic violence may not be recognized or reported. When domestic violence is identified, supports may not be provided in a culturally appropriate manner.⁷² As a result, interventions and survivor support that could prevent abusive relationships from escalating into lethal violence are less accessible to these groups.

Community Voices: The Link between Domestic Violence and Guns

“Family Violence Law Center sees many domestic violence cases where the abuser has a gun or multiple guns or can easily access a gun. The presence of a gun is a constant warning that every incident of abuse can turn deadly. So even if the abuser never uses the gun, the level of fear created by the presence of guns deters survivors, their friends and families, and their neighbors, from accessing help.”

Erin Scott, Executive Director, Family Violence Law Center

Identifying domestic violence in Alameda County

While it is challenging to identify homicides related to domestic violence with certainty, Alameda County has a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT). This team is comprised of clinicians, service providers, and county employees from the Public Health Department and the District Attorney's Office. The DVFRT is tasked with identifying suspected cases of domestic violence deaths that have occurred in the county. From 2017 to 2022, the DVFRT identified 39 domestic violence-related homicides in Alameda County; 26 of these victims were females and 46% of domestic violence homicides were by firearm.⁷³

46%
**of identified domestic
violence homicides in
Alameda County were by
firearms**

In addition to domestic violence homicides identified by the DVFRT, the California Department of Justice records the number of domestic violence-related 911 calls that occurred in Alameda County. The number of domestic violence calls involving a firearm grew during the pandemic, increasing 76% from 37 calls in 2019 to 65 calls in 2023.⁷⁴

An undercount of domestic violence cases

These statistics provide an important but extremely limited view of domestic violence and firearms in Alameda County. Current data from the DVFRT is presumed to be an undercount of the true number of domestic violence cases. Calls to police for domestic violence with a firearm are likely a large undercount of the true number of incidents that occur in the county. Many individuals may feel unsafe reporting to law enforcement out of fear that the response will exacerbate violence or result in severe consequences to their partner or family members.

The formation of the Alameda County DVFRT was an important step in ensuring that domestic violence homicides are accurately counted. This information is necessary for agencies to identify and address system gaps and to increase supports for survivors.

In addition to enhancing the efforts of the DVFRT, Alameda County is committed to educating the public about protection orders, including Domestic Violence Restraining Orders, and Gun Violence Restraining Orders. Both of these orders prohibit an abuser from accessing a firearm.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

While it is very challenging to determine rates of gun homicide and gun suicide by sexual orientation and gender identity, research indicates that structural stigma against LGBTQ+ populations leads to disproportionate rates of suicide attempts and interpersonal violence. LGBTQ+ youth are particularly vulnerable. Based on national data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), 20% of LGBTQ+ youth attempted suicide in the past 12 months, 3.3 times the rate of suicide attempts among cisgender and heterosexual students (6%).^{75,76} LGBTQ+ individuals also face a higher risk for being victimized by violence; they are over twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime, including firearm violence.^{77,78} In the 2023 YRBSS, 14% of LGBTQ+ youth reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school during the past 12 months, twice the rate of cisgender and heterosexual students (7%). As federal agencies reduce data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity, it is likely to make inequities in vulnerability to suicide and homicide more difficult to assess and address.⁷⁹ Despite this limitation, the county remains committed to addressing the discrimination, stigma, and hate that drive these disparities.

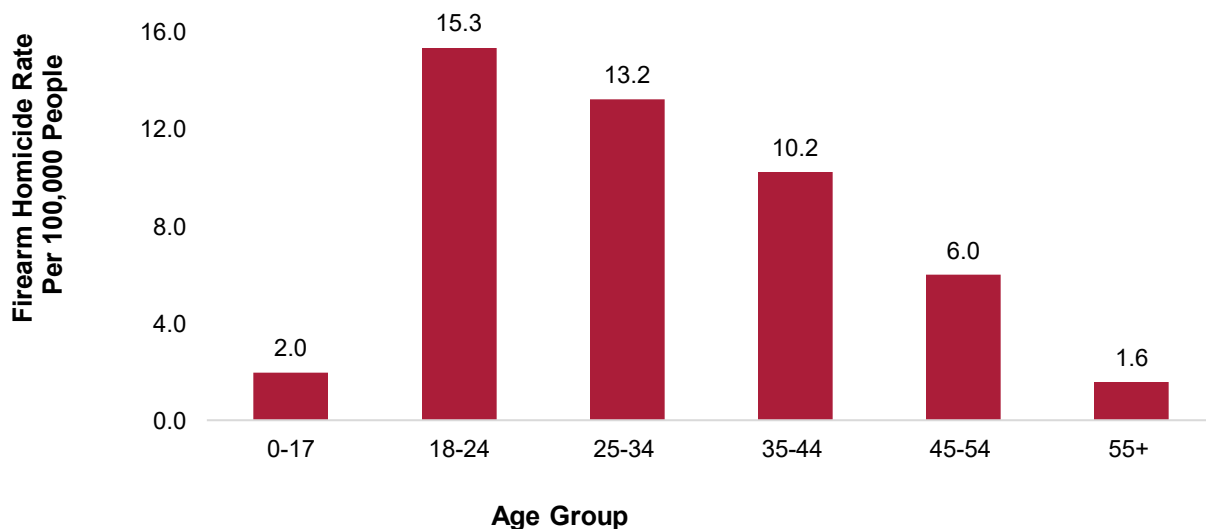
Age and gun homicides

Gun homicides disproportionately impact youth and young adults in Alameda County. Youth and young adults ages 18 to 34 are at highest risk for gun homicide, comprising 24% of the Alameda County population but more than half (53%) of all gun homicide victims. When individuals reach their late-30s, the risk for homicide begins to taper off. Those over the age of 55 have a relatively low risk for gun homicide. **Figure 17** presents the Alameda County firearm homicide rate by age group from 2019-2023.



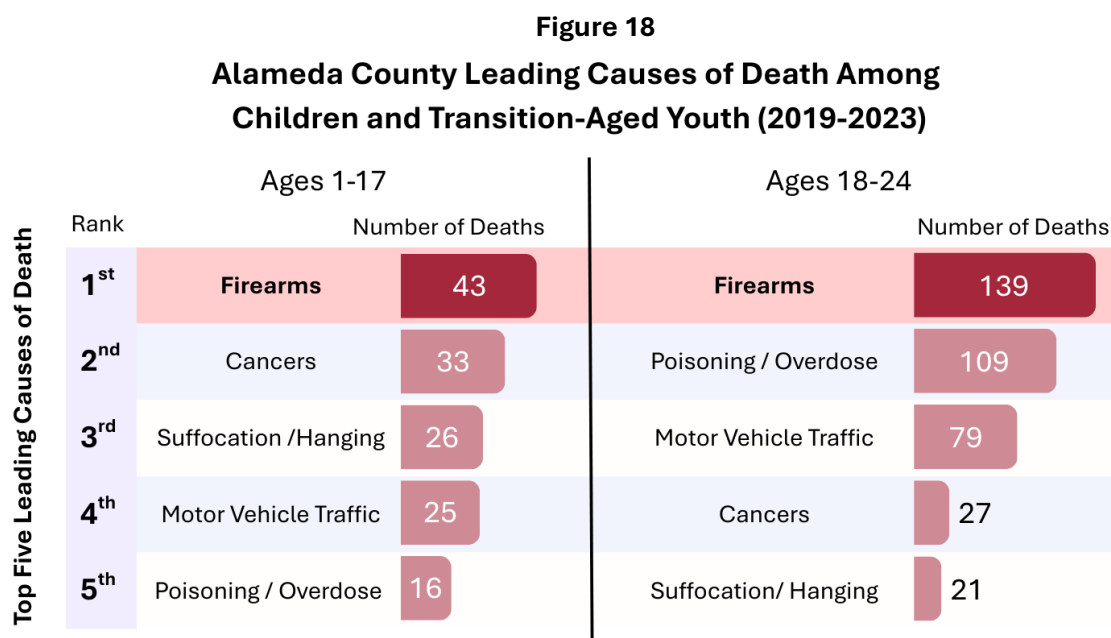
Photo credit: Hasain Rasheed

Figure 17
Alameda County Firearm Homicide Rate by Age Group (2019-2023)



Gun violence among children and transition-aged youth

Gun violence impacts the health and well-being of children and youth in Alameda County. Firearms (including homicides and suicides) account for more deaths among childrenⁱⁱ (ages 1-17) and transition-aged youth (ages 18-24) in the county than any other disease or injury. Each year, roughly 9 children and 28 transition-aged youth in the county die by firearm. That means that a young person living in Alameda County is killed by a firearm, on average, every 10 days. **Figure 18** provides a comparison of leading causes of death for children 1-17 years to transitional-age youth, 18-24 years old.



In addition to the five leading causes depicted in the graph, there were 85 children (ages 1-17) and 126 transition-aged youth (ages 18-24) who died of all of the other causes of death combined.

Community Voices: Youth, Gun Culture, and the Need for Early Prevention

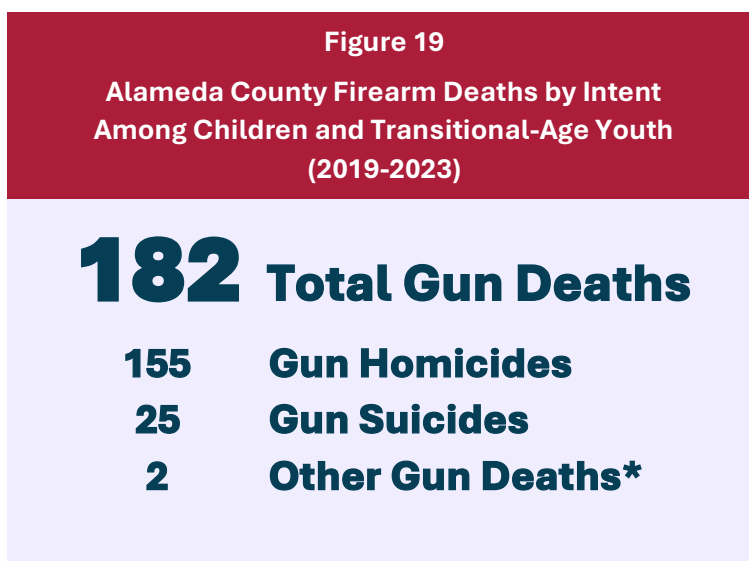
“Oakland is known for many of its shooting related deaths and the rate at which it involves teenagers. It has to do with the glamorization of violence and “getting you back” culture, also many grow up in households where it’s seen as okay. The prevention needs to start from childhood because it takes a life of normalization and exposure to eventually begin a life of crime.”

Moyinoluwa Arimoro, 9th grade student at Castlemont High School

ⁱⁱ Infants under the age of one were excluded from this analysis as they are at unique risk for age-specific causes of death, including perinatal period deaths and congenital anomalies. Fortunately, from 2014 to 2023 there were no infant firearm deaths recorded among Alameda County residents.

Firearm deaths among young people by intent

Eighty-four percent of firearm deaths among children and youth are homicides, followed by suicide at 14%. Unintentional firearm deaths make up a small proportion of overall deaths. Far too often, children gain access to unsecured firearms and accidentally shoot themselves or a friend. While most of these accidental shootings are not lethal, they often result in serious injury. **Figure 19** presents the proportion of firearm deaths by intent in Alameda County.



*Other category includes unintentional injury, undetermined cause and police-involved shooting.

Mental and emotional effects of gun violence among children and youth

The impacts of gun violence among children and youth go far beyond those who are shot and killed. For every young person who is killed by a firearm, five more are wounded. Each year, an average of 114 young Alameda County residents (ages 0-24) visit the emergency room for gunshot wounds, and an additional 83 are hospitalized.⁸⁰ These injuries have a profound and often lifelong physical toll. Even after physical wounds heal, psychological trauma remains. If left untreated, this trauma can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or complex trauma, stunted emotional development, and anti-social behavior. Parents or caregivers are also adversely impacted by child and youth gun violence. Many face the devastation of burying their children or managing long-term care for a child injured by gunfire. This emotional toll impacts their ability to lead otherwise healthy, productive lives untouched by gun violence.

Gun violence among young Alameda County residents also has cascading effects on families and communities. Children who live in neighborhoods with high levels of gun violence often experience

An average of 197
young Alameda County residents
(ages 0-24) visit the emergency
room or are hospitalized for
gunshot wounds each year

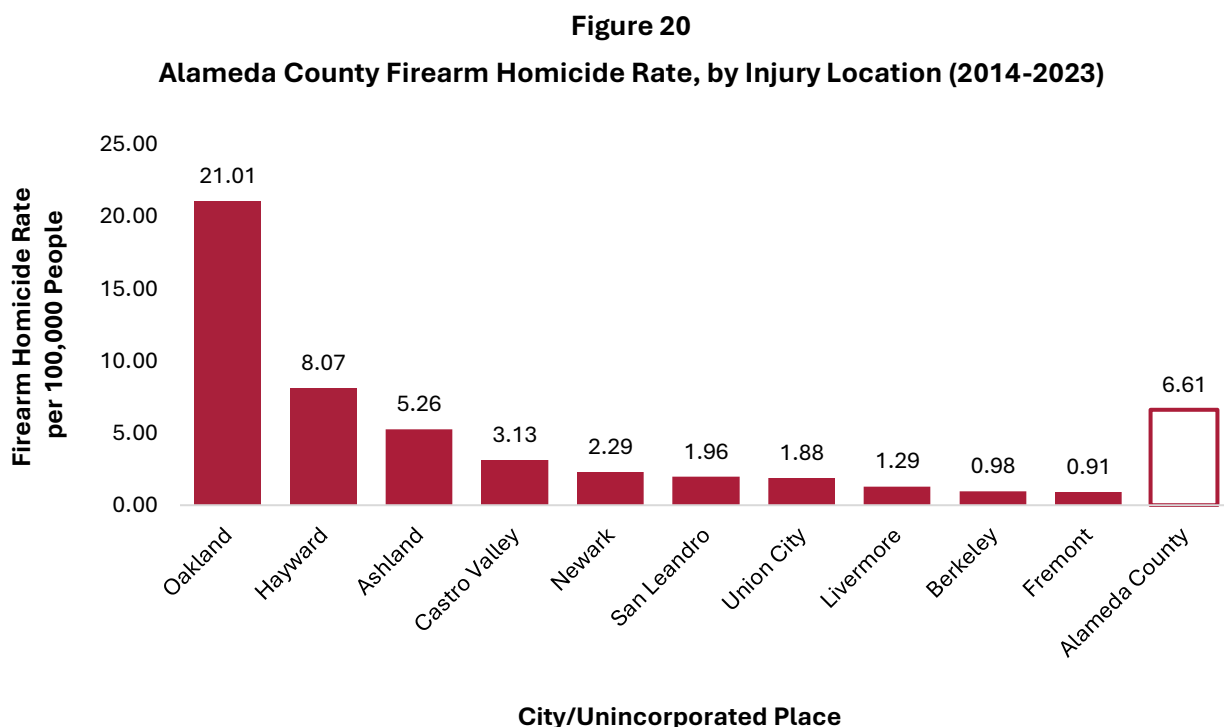
repeated trauma of hearing gunshots, witnessing shootings, or losing loved ones. These adverse childhood experiences caused by gun violence are linked to declines in academic achievement and poor psychological, emotional, and physical health across the lifespan. Entire communities suffer when the life of a young person—friend, classmate, child, or neighbor—is cut short by gun violence leading to collective grief and a diminished sense of safety for all residents.

Gun Violence is Geographically Concentrated

Gun violence is not evenly distributed across Alameda County. There is a wide variation by city and neighborhood. This section examines both where gun homicides occurred in Alameda County and where the residents who died by gun violence were living at the time of their death. Both ways of viewing this data illustrate how gun violence is geographically concentrated, most frequently occurring in, and disproportionately impacting, the residents of under-resourced neighborhoods.

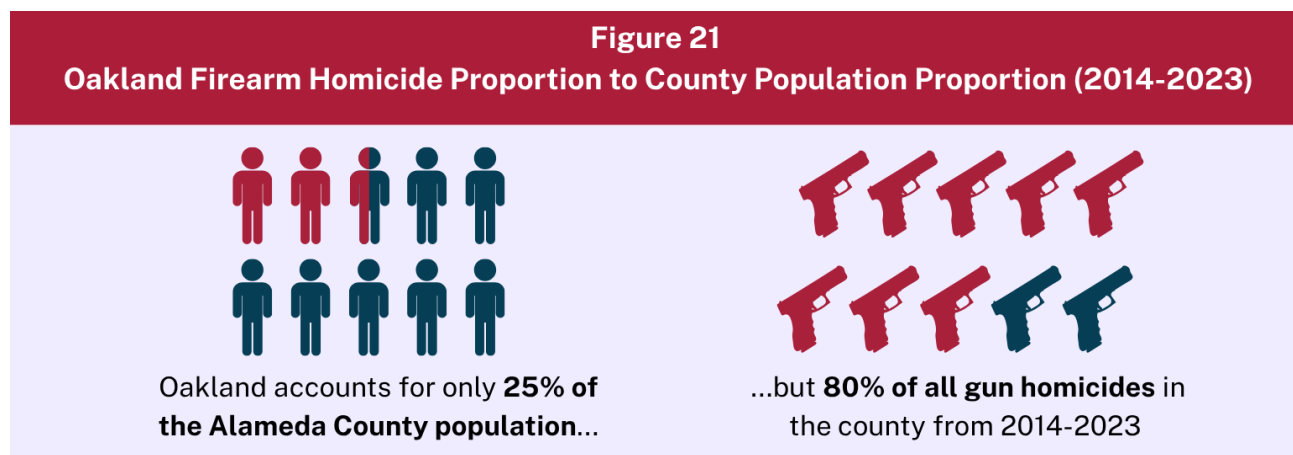
Geographic distribution of gun violence in Alameda County

Most gun homicides that occur in Alameda County are concentrated in Oakland. In 2023, there were 110 gun homicides that occurred in Oakland; the rest of the county had 31. Even after accounting for the population (residents and daytime population) in each city, Oakland has a rate far higher than any other jurisdiction. From 2014 to 2023, the gun homicide rate in Oakland was 2.6 times higher than Hayward, the city with the second highest rate, and 23 times higher than Fremont, the city with the lowest gun homicide rate. From 2014 to 2023, 80% of all gun homicides that occurred in Alameda County occurred in Oakland, despite the city accounting for only 25% of the county population. **Figure 20** provides a comparison of firearm homicide rates by injury location.

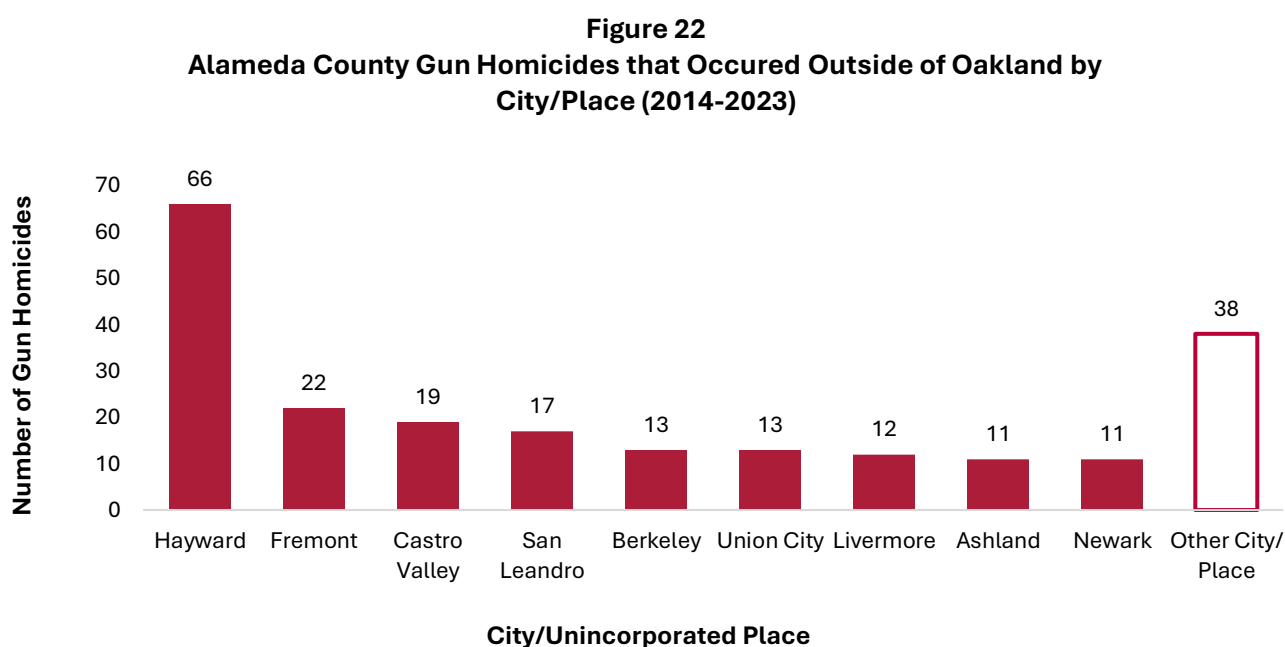


* City/places with less than 10 deaths from 2014-2023 were excluded. Population was derived from an average of daytime population and residential population estimates.

Figure 21 provides a comparison of Oakland firearm homicide proportion to the county population proportion.



While most homicides occur in Oakland, other cities within Alameda County are also impacted. From 2014 to 2023 there were 222 gun homicides (20% of the total gun homicides) that occurred in areas outside of Oakland. Figure 22 presents the location of homicides outside of Oakland from 2014-2023.



Gun violence is further concentrated to a small number of neighborhoods with high levels of poverty, or in locations where social and economic conditions contribute to increased risk of violence. Research has found that violence can often occur around certain bars, nightclubs, liquor stores, and around illicit drug markets.^{81,82} Additionally, environmental factors, such as blighted or vacant properties or poor street lighting, increase the risk of gun violence.⁸³ Residents who live in areas with high levels of violence are often exposed to the trauma of witnessing violence and live in fear for their safety. Violence exposure within their neighborhood, combined with the deep structural inequities they face, contributes to this heightened risk of violence and poor health outcomes.⁸⁴

Community Voices: The Regional Impacts of Gun Violence

“I got shot in Piedmont, which is an affluent neighborhood inside of Oakland. I don’t feel any more or less at risk in an affluent neighborhood because of what happened to me.

Because of my personal experience, I know tragedy can happen anywhere. It might be more likely in certain areas, but I kind of always have that feeling in the back of my head because of what I went through getting shot. I’ve also been stabbed on 73rd and Bancroft in Oakland so I’ve experienced violence in both areas, affluent and non-affluent. Both times I was minding my own business.

It’s a big difference between San Leandro and Oakland. Personally, I don’t think I’ve ever really seen any violence in San Leandro. The possibility of violence, I definitely feel it more in Oakland than I do in San Leandro.

Because Oakland is a cultural hub for the Bay Area, a lot of the crime is not even from people in Oakland. A lot of it is, but there’s a good amount from people in other cities coming to Oakland. Not even just violence, but disruptive activities from sideshows to lootings, a lot of those people aren’t from Oakland. That’s something Oakland deals with more than other cities.”

Chris Rodriguez, Gun Violence Survivor Living in San Leandro

Alameda County residents die by gun homicide outside the county

Tackling gun violence in Alameda County requires regional coordination, as gun homicides often involve individuals who live in neighboring counties. For instance, from 2014 to 2023, 24% of all gun homicide victims (265 victims) in Alameda County were residents of other counties. Conversely, during this same time period, 15% of Alameda County residents (142 victims) who died by gun homicide were shot outside of the county. These statistics illustrate how gun violence extends across county boundaries, highlighting the importance of a unified approach to address the issue regionally. **Figure 23** demonstrates inter-county gun violence with Alameda County and surrounding counties and **Figure 24** presents the distribution of Alameda County residents who died by gun homicide in other counties.

Figure 23

Inter-county Gun Violence with Alameda County and Surrounding Bay Area Counties (2014-2023)

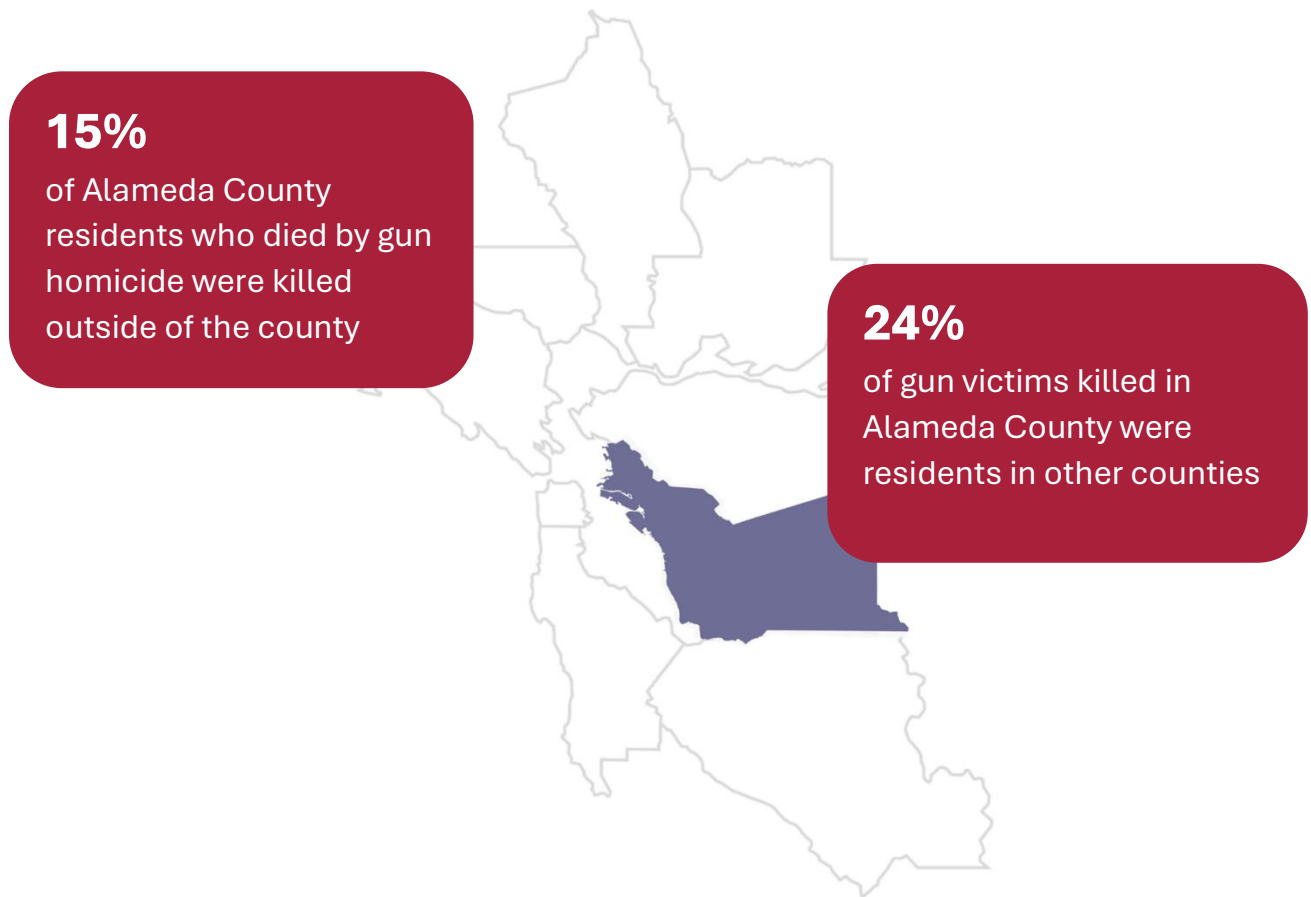
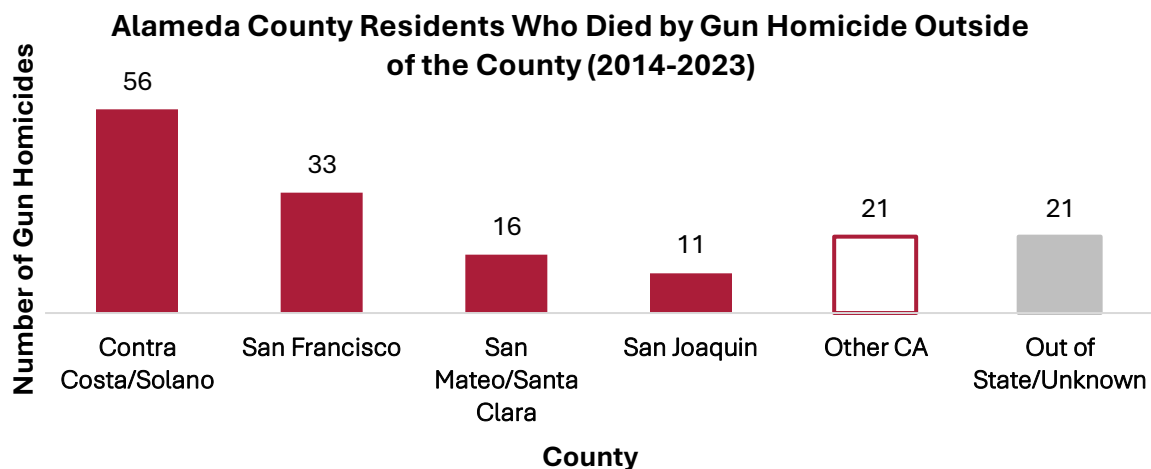


Figure 24



Using Data to Inform Action

In **Part II**, we highlighted the impacts of gun violence across Alameda County. Understanding the populations affected by violence, as well as where violence occurs, is essential to informing intervention and prevention efforts. In **Part III**, we highlight existing efforts to reduce violence and outline how these efforts can be expanded to support the communities most impacted.

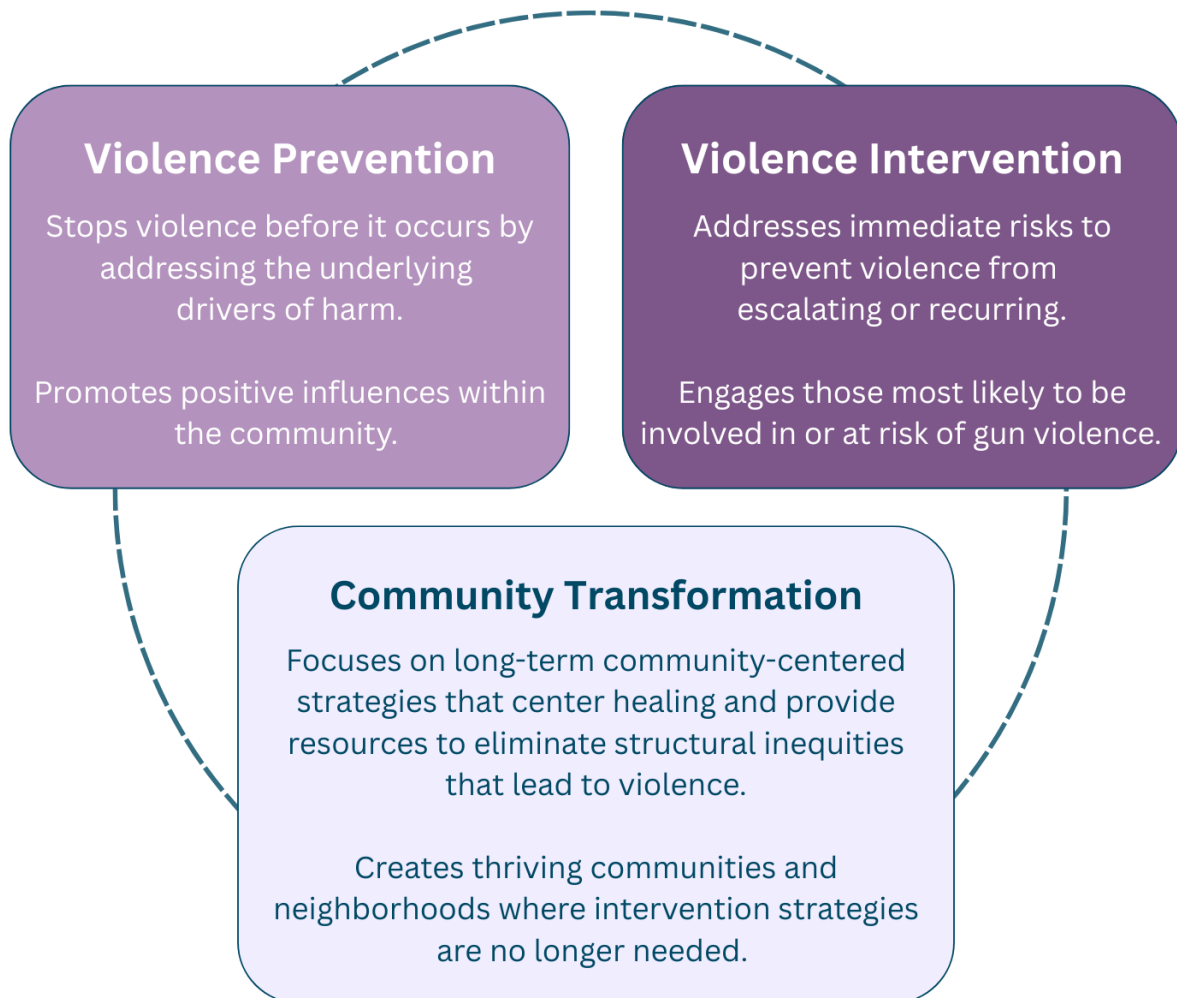
III. Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence

Community-Centered Intervention, Prevention, and Transformation: A Coordinated Approach

Reducing violence in Alameda County requires a coordinated approach that incorporates prevention, intervention, and long-term community transformation. Each of these strategies plays a role in addressing the root causes of violence and firearm access, engaging individuals and communities affected by gun violence, and working towards systemic changes to ensure safe and healthy communities. **Figure 25** presents this coordinated approach.

Figure 25

Coordinated Approach to Reduce Gun Violence



Violence Intervention

Violence intervention aims to prevent violence in the near term by addressing immediate risks and preventing violence from escalating or recurring. Intervention strategies are often designed to engage individuals, gangs/groups, and communities at significant risk, including those most likely to be involved in or victims of gun violence.

Community Violence Intervention (CVI)

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) strategies can support those impacted by structural inequities and violence. CVI refers to evidence-informed strategies designed to reduce violence that occurs in communities, often in public spaces, by focusing on individuals most at risk of engaging in or being a victim of gun violence.⁸⁵ These strategies can provide trauma-informed care and healing-centered engagement to help those impacted by violence.⁸⁶ Using a public health approach, CVI focuses on prevention and intervention efforts that disrupt conflicts before they escalate and help individuals heal. CVI takes on different forms, offering a variety of approaches to meet the specific needs of individuals and communities impacted by violence, systemic inequities, and trauma.⁸⁷ Core components of CVI include but are not limited to:



Trauma-Informed Care

CVI strategies may incorporate a trauma-informed lens by addressing the underlying and intergenerational traumas caused by gun violence that affect individuals and communities. These approaches help individuals process their emotional reactions to distressing events and the influence of those reactions on behaviors while offering healthier ways to handle future challenges.



Healing-Centered Engagement

In addition to addressing past trauma, healing-centered engagement focuses on empowering individuals to foster their strengths and actively participate in their own healing process. Culturally relevant healing circles are one example in which individuals come together to share experiences, address personal and collective traumas, and foster a sense of connection and community healing.⁸⁸



Credible Messengers

Credible messengers are CVI workers who share lived experiences with individuals at risk. These shared experiences include growing up in communities impacted by violence and sometimes being caught in cycles of violence themselves. This allows credible messengers to build trust and credibility with individuals at risk of violence, enabling them to be more responsive to individuals' needs. Credible messengers may incorporate trauma-informed care, healing-centered engagement, and other supportive strategies to address the specific needs within a community.

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Models

CVI models vary, adapting to the unique needs of each community. Key models of CVI include:

Street Outreach: Street outreach involves place-based engagement, often daily in neighborhoods where gun violence is most concentrated. Credible messengers build trust with individuals at risk in these communities through consistent presence and support. This approach allows credible messengers to stay deeply connected to local residents and be knowledgeable of ongoing community tensions.



Photo credit: Youth Alive, YA Outreach Team

Violence Interruption: Violence interruption is often a core component of CVI that focuses on preventing and responding to real-time acts of gun violence. Credible messengers use their knowledge of community dynamics and personal relationships to step in and disrupt violence from further occurring or escalating. By interrupting violence at its source, these workers help prevent retaliatory cycles of harm and provide individuals with alternative ways to resolve disputes.

Conflict Mediation: Conflict mediation focuses on de-escalating disputes before they lead to initial or retaliatory gun violence. Credible messengers work to address tensions between individuals or rival gangs/groups, including those amplified through social media, to provide peaceful alternatives to violence. Credible messengers may also provide long-term conflict mediation, often involving friends and family members, to address underlying tensions and foster lasting peace.

Life Coaching: Life coaching within CVI programs provides individuals at risk with personalized support to navigate challenges and set goals for their future. Life coaches, which may include credible messengers, check in regularly with individuals to offer guidance and connections to resources like employment, education, and justice-system navigation support. Long-term, the goal is to help individuals build positive life skills and work toward a future free from violence.

Focused Deterrence / Group Violence Intervention: These interventions involve collaboration between public safety and community leaders, community-based organizations, service providers, local/county agencies, and law enforcement to identify and focus on the small groups of individuals involved in violence. Through coordinated efforts, involving both public safety and community strategies, these partnerships aim to change the behaviors of those at the center of much of the violence within a city.

The Oakland Ceasefire Program and Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs are two examples of CVI models currently being implemented in Alameda County. Following is a brief description of each.

Oakland Ceasefire Program

The Oakland Ceasefire Program was created in response to demands from community members to address gun violence in Oakland through partnerships between community-based organizations and law enforcement. The initiative seeks to reduce gang/group-related shootings and homicides, lower recidivism and incarceration rates, and strengthen police-community relations. It relies upon the Focused Deterrence/Group Violence Reduction model, which identifies and engages the small number of people actively involved in gun violence. These individuals are notified by public safety and community leaders that continued involvement in violence will lead to accountability and consequences. Simultaneously, they are offered wraparound CVI support services from community-based organizations and city agencies to help them change their behavior and live healthier, peaceful lives.*

The Oakland Ceasefire program was associated with a 31.5% reduction in gun homicides from 2013 to 2017*

Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs)

Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) engage victims of gun violence at a critical moment, immediately after an injury. CVI workers meet with victims in the hospital, offering support and connections to services that can help prevent re-injury and retaliation. This timely intervention provides an opportunity to guide individuals away from cycles of violence and toward healing and recovery. In Alameda County, Youth Alive's Caught in the Crossfire program provides comprehensive, trauma-informed support for victims, helping them navigate their recovery and reduce the likelihood of further violence. Founded in 1993, Caught in the Crossfire is the nation's first HVIP, marking a significant milestone in the field of violence prevention. Building on this work, other Alameda County healthcare service providers, like Roots Community Health, provide ongoing violence intervention supports to those injured by gun violence.*

*Citations^{89,90}



Photo credit: Youth Alive, YA at Castlemont High School for a Back-to-School Assembly

Community Voices: Perspectives from a Community Violence Intervention Worker

“Caught in the Crossfire (CIC) prevents future violence by providing trauma- and community-informed support at a critical moment—right after a violent injury. We work to interrupt cycles of retaliation and re-injury by building trust, offering resources, and helping participants process their trauma in a safe, supported way. That moment in the hospital is often a turning point. When someone experiences trauma, the first response they receive matters deeply. Meeting them there shows they are not alone and helps shift the trajectory from revenge or despair to healing and hope. It also builds a bridge to services and relationships that can make the difference between recovery and re-injury.

Survivors of violence often feel isolated, misunderstood, or stigmatized. CIC is critical because we center healing, dignity, and trust. We don’t just treat the physical wound, we address the emotional, mental, and environmental factors that come with it. Our approach acknowledges the broader systemic and community conditions that contribute to violence and responds with care that’s culturally rooted and relational. We help people stabilize and regain control over their lives, knowing that healing must happen in relationship with the community.

We support recovery by walking alongside our participants, not just in the hospital, but long after discharge. That includes help with medical follow-ups, therapy referrals, relocation support, and regular check-ins. Our trauma- and community-informed lens ensures that our participants feel seen, heard, and supported in ways that honor their lived experience.

We’ve seen lives change in powerful ways. Participants have gone back to school and graduated after being impacted by gun violence. Some have become mentors, volunteers, or even staff at our organization, transforming their experience into leadership. Most importantly, many have found a sense of purpose that has helped prevent re-injury, reincarceration, or a return to cycles of violence. One young person told us, “No one ever asked how I felt until y’all came.” That’s the impact, acknowledging trauma, offering support, and helping people build a new path forward, grounded in healing and community.”

**Paris Davis, Intervention Programs Director
former Caught in the Crossfire Client, Youth Alive**

Violence Prevention

Violence Prevention aims to stop violence before it occurs by addressing the underlying drivers of harm and promoting positive influences within the community. These strategies support individuals, families, and communities in building safer, healthier, and more supportive environments.

Below are key violence prevention strategies that address the root causes of violence and promote protective factors in communities:



Early Childhood

Early childhood prevention focuses on addressing the factors that increase the risk of future violence, such as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which include abuse, neglect, and household instability. Early childhood programs like parent-child bonding initiatives, early childhood education, and social-emotional learning support healthy emotional and social development. By supporting parents and caregivers with the resources they need to provide stable and nurturing environments, children are more likely to thrive.



Youth Programming

Youth-focused programs provide opportunities for young people to make positive choices, develop skills, and engage in healthy behaviors. These programs offer guidance and support, helping youth overcome challenges and stay engaged in positive activities that foster personal growth and community connection. Mentoring programs connect youth with trusted adults who offer guidance and support. Additionally, after-school programs, sports activities, and community service opportunities engage youth in structured environments, promoting teamwork, leadership, and a sense of purpose. Creating safe, low-cost, and low-barrier spaces for youth to engage with each other is also vital to promoting safety. These programs offer support that reduces the likelihood of involvement in violence.



Photo credit: Hasain Rasheed



Diversion and Re-Entry

Diversion programs offer individuals, particularly first-time offenders, the opportunity to avoid traditional sentencing by participating in alternative programs that commonly include requirements such as community service, substance abuse education and treatment, and individual therapy. Successful completion of a program can result in charges being reduced or dismissed. Research continues to support the effectiveness of prosecutor-led diversion programs in reducing conviction and recidivism rates.⁹¹



Workforce Development

Community-focused programs that enhance access to life skills and job training, summer work internships, and employment support create pathways to economic mobility. These initiatives provide critical support to transition-aged youth, particularly those disconnected from traditional educational pathways. Job readiness and skills development services help ensure that young people have the support they need to reduce economic stressors and build long-term stability.



Changes to Physical Spaces

Changes to physical spaces complement prevention by engaging community members to transform the physical environment where violence concentrates. Efforts such as transforming vacant lots into green spaces and restoring run-down properties can transform neighborhoods where violence often occurs into safer spaces. The act of increasing tree coverage and green spaces itself has been associated with reduced violence, not only by making spaces safer but also through reduced stress, improved social connections, and a sense of a cared-for neighborhood. Community-engaged greening may enhance these effects.⁹² These efforts also relate to large-scale community transformation strategies to reduce violence.

Community Voices: A Call for Prevention

“The reason why violence affects the young is because of gang activity and pressure in their society, with limited education, and with violence in their home and community. A way we can prevent violence is to implement education programs that teach conflict resolution skills and engage families in supportive networks.”

Darell Richardson, 9th grade student at Castlemont High School



Photo credit: Youth Alive, YA's Teens on Target youth leaders at their Annual Retreat

Role of gun laws in prevention

State and local policies which focus on reducing the availability of firearms, particularly among those at elevated risk, can prevent violence. Alameda County has strong state and local firearm laws that help prevent gun violence. For example, those wishing to purchase a gun must be legally eligible, pass a background check, possess a valid firearm safety certificate, and adhere to a mandatory waiting period. Additionally, there are many restrictions around where, and how gun owners are permitted to carry their guns. Outlined are four gun laws that play a particularly important role in preventing gun violence in Alameda County.

Secure Firearm Storage

Secure firearm storage is an important part of gun violence prevention. Far too often violence occurs when children or individuals at risk of violence gain access to guns that are stored unlocked. These tragedies are preventable through safe firearm storage practices.

Firearms should always be stored unloaded and locked, and ammunition should be locked in a separate location. This is not just a responsible practice; it is the law. Gun owners in Alameda County are required to store all firearms in a locked container, or disabled with a trigger lock, at all times inside a residence.⁹³ Research shows that safe firearm storage laws are associated with reductions in unintentional child deaths, youth suicides, and gun homicides.⁹⁴

Gun owners and family members should always be on the lookout for signs of distress or crisis among individuals living in a home with a firearm. If there is any chance that someone in the home is thinking about hurting themselves or others, firearms should be removed from the home immediately. Guns can be temporarily stored with a friend or family member who are not prohibited from owning guns. Gun owners can also sell their firearms to a firearms dealer or ask if a dealer or range owner will store the firearm temporarily. Alameda County law enforcement agencies will also work with individuals who no longer want their firearms to dispose of them.

Using Protection Orders to Prevent Gun Violence

Protection orders play an important role in preventing gun violence. These orders empower residents who are in danger, or who are worried about another person's safety, to request protection from the courts. Importantly, these orders disarm those who have been engaged in dangerous, abusive, or violent conduct by prohibiting them from accessing firearms and removing firearms in their possession.⁹⁵

Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs)

Gun Violence Restraining Orders prevent gun violence by temporarily restricting firearm access from individuals who are in crisis and are behaving dangerously. These laws empower family members, school officials, medical professionals, and law enforcement officers to submit a request to a court to temporarily disarm individuals who are showing clear risk signs of harm to self or others.⁹⁶ If the judge approves the order, the individual is temporarily prohibited (typically up to 1 year) from owning firearms and must turn in any guns that they own. Research shows that GVROs are an effective tool at preventing gun violence—particularly suicide.⁹⁷

Domestic Violence Restraining Orders

Domestic Violence Restraining Orders allow survivors of domestic violence to seek protection from their abusers. Importantly, these orders prohibit the abuser from owning firearms and require that any firearms the abuser has in their possession be removed.⁹⁸ Domestic violence restraining orders that require firearms to be removed are an effective tool at preventing gun violence and have been shown to reduce intimate partner homicides.⁹⁹

Community Transformation in Alameda County

Transformation focuses on long-term community-centered strategies that center healing and provide resources to eliminate the structural inequities that lead to violence. By revitalizing neighborhoods, transformation efforts create environments where intervention programs are no longer needed.

Key efforts to address inequities in Alameda County focus on removing systemic barriers and fostering equitable access to resources, opportunities, and support systems. Investments in parks and public spaces create safe places for social connections while community-building initiatives, such as public education campaigns, raise awareness and promote nonviolence. These efforts help to create a foundation for long-term community well-being in which individuals and families are empowered to support each other. These initiatives focus on community-driven advocacy, solutions, and cross-sector collaboration to create lasting change for residents. Below are examples of these efforts:

Community Health Improvement Plan

The Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) serves as Alameda County Public Health Department's long-term, system-wide effort to improve the health of Alameda County's communities. As an action-oriented plan, the CHIP prioritizes access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate healthcare, economic security, and the promotion of safe, resilient families and communities through violence prevention. CHIP Signature Pilot Programs, including the Office of Violence Prevention, seek to address inequities and improve the well-being of all Alameda County residents.¹⁰⁰

Rise East (40x40)

The 40x40 is an area of East Oakland identified as having the highest concentration of residents of African descent, the worst health outcomes, and the area of highest gun violence in Oakland. Rise East brings \$100 million to the 40x40 over five years aimed at making deep and lasting improvements in the health and well-being of Black children and families through generational wealth-building and systemic change. Areas of work include inter-personal conflict resolution, community safekeeping meetings, community stewards and community Mental Health First Aid, Behavioral Healthcare pathways, job creation, housing, and educational initiatives. The 40x40 Council, made up of community-based organizations working in deep East Oakland for decades, developed an integrated set of strategies with community members and stakeholders for reversing some of the systemic inequities mentioned earlier in this report. The council organizations include Black Cultural Zone Collaborative, Brotherhood of Elders Network, East Oakland Youth Development Center, and Roots Community Health, with Oakland Thrives as the citywide backbone of the effort.¹⁰¹

Narrative Change

Narratives around gun violence in Alameda County often focus on individuals committing violent acts. These narratives, which primarily treat violence as a public safety issue, can stigmatize the individuals and families left behind and the broader community in their wake. They minimize the root causes of violence, fail to humanize those impacted, and reinforce harmful stereotypes about who commits gun violence and why.

Recognizing the importance of centering community voices in conversations about violence, the Office of Violence Prevention is committed to working alongside communities to craft compelling narratives to empower changes in how violence—in all its forms—is understood and addressed. In partnership with community-based providers and residents, OVP will coordinate efforts to change existing narratives around gun violence.

These are just a few examples of efforts to bring about transformational change in Alameda County to reduce gun violence. We recognize that this work requires continued advocacy for health equity and investments at the local, state, and federal levels to address the systemic inequities caused by a legacy of discriminatory and harmful public policies. These advocacy efforts are especially important in light of the current federal cuts to social programs being enacted.



Photo credit: Getty Images

From Strategy to Action

Parts I-III of this report highlighted the factors driving gun violence in Alameda County, the communities most impacted, and the strategies that can help reduce harm. Addressing gun violence requires translating this knowledge into action—supporting best practices, implementing strategies at the local level, and ensuring resources reach those most impacted.

The Office of Violence Prevention is committed to ongoing education, advocacy, and engagement around transformational change.

In **Part IV**, we discuss the Office of Violence Prevention’s vision and our commitment to prevention, intervention, and transformational change.

IV. Vision to Address Gun Violence

The Office of Violence Prevention's Commitment

Alameda County's community-based service providers are leading violence intervention and prevention efforts by implementing impactful, community-centered strategies. Together, we have opportunities to build upon this work. The Alameda County Public Health Department's Office of Violence Prevention is working to enhance collaboration and strengthen community interventions to reduce gun violence and foster safer, more connected communities.

OVP Programming Activities



How the OVP is supporting countywide community violence intervention and prevention efforts

The Alameda County Public Health Department received \$7.85 million in federal, state and local funding to create a county-wide Office of Violence Prevention, one of only a handful of counties in the U.S. to create such an office.¹⁰² Over the past two years OVP has:

- **Directed \$3.55 million** to 10 community violence intervention and prevention organizations.
 - Programs include hospital-based violence intervention, street outreach and violence interruption, youth mentoring and development programs, and trauma-informed care.
 - Engaged one provider to offer healing support to violence intervention frontline workers.
- **Granted \$826,000** to four organizations to promote community-led narrative work that shifts harmful and stigmatizing perceptions around gun violence.
- **Awarded \$1.9 million** to five community-based organizations working to prevent youth and young adult suicide and self-harm.
- **Provided in-kind support** for countywide analysis and assistance to other county government and community partners.
 - Support provided to Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, Violence Prevention Team organized through Alameda County Probation Department, Data-violence-collaborative with community-based service providers, and the District Attorney's Office.

The Office of Violence Prevention is committed to:



Advocating for funding and support to community-based violence intervention and prevention programs

- Seek long-term and sustained funding for violence intervention and prevention through city, county, state, federal, and private sources.
- Grow trauma-informed and healing-centered supports for the well-being of violence prevention professional staff, addressing burnout and providing care.
- Collaborate across county agencies to align violence prevention funding priorities ensuring that resources are accessible and flexible to support diverse violence prevention and intervention organizations.



Strengthening collaboration and service coordination through issue-related round tables and convenings

- Enhance collaboration between community violence intervention programs, service providers, and county-operated services to ensure that individuals impacted by violence are connected to housing, employment, mental health, and education services.
- Establish regional partnerships across Bay Area counties and cities to coordinate care and support for individuals and communities impacted by violence.
- Host gun violence prevention roundtables and convenings to inform violence prevention strategies.



Improving data sharing to inform violence prevention efforts

- Institute a county-wide violent death review commission to investigate common challenges decedents face, identify gaps within service provision, and develop interventions.
- Build data sharing capacity across public agencies, community-based organizations, and community members to track and respond to trends in gun violence and improve coordination.
- Implement data collection practices around race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity to inform the interventions and funding directed to affected communities.



Promoting gun policy and public awareness to reduce gun violence

- Monitor violence and firearm related legislation and work with county agencies to advocate for policies that reduce violence and promote healing.
- Educate the public around safe firearm storage practices and/or protection orders, including Domestic Violence Restraining Orders and Gun Violence Restraining Orders.



Call to Action

Addressing inequities contributing to violence in Alameda County requires ongoing efforts to ensure that strategies evolve and respond to the needs of impacted communities.

To continue strengthening existing work in Alameda County, future efforts should prioritize:



Intervention

Fund and implement community violence intervention strategies to interrupt cycles of violence and support those at highest risk.

Prevention

Support prevention efforts that promote healing, create opportunity, and shift norms around firearm use.



Transformation

Work with communities to eliminate structural inequities and promote peaceful and healthy families and communities.

Conclusion

Gun violence is preventable. However, no single organization can solve this issue alone as we each have a role to play in reducing violence. This report reflects understanding that collaborative efforts across sectors—county agencies, cities, nonprofits and impacted communities—are needed to develop long-term solutions that address the root causes of gun violence. It serves as a foundation to help collectively develop solutions to reduce violence over the long run.

Alameda County is at a critical moment for maintaining progress in community violence intervention. Local, state, and federal resources are vital to ensuring sustained reductions in gun violence. However, recent cutbacks in federal funding for CVI and economic security could jeopardize Alameda County's efforts in reducing gun violence. Alameda County Public Health Department and its Office of Violence Prevention remain committed to addressing violence through a public health approach that centers prevention, intervention, and community transformation.

We extend an open invitation to Alameda County departments, violence intervention advocates, law enforcement agencies, community members, service providers, and civil servants alike to join our efforts to address violence. Whether through future gun violence prevention roundtables or public health, safety, and community convenings, we welcome the discussion of insights on the data and strategic approaches presented in this report. Together, we can reduce violence and build a county where all residents can live healthy lives, free from violence.



Photo credit: Hasain Rasheed

Appendix: Mortality Data Sources

Gun homicide data used in this report is based on death record information provided by the California Department of Health and analyzed by the Community Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation (CAPE) Unit within the Alameda County Public Health Department.

Focus on Alameda County Residents

This report primarily focuses on gun homicides among Alameda County residents, regardless of where the shooting occurred. This means it includes residents killed outside the county and excludes non-residents killed within the county. We use this approach because it allows us to calculate gun homicide rates by population, identify the groups most at risk, and better understand how local living conditions shape residents' exposure to violence. It also helps guide prevention and intervention strategies for those who live in the county.

Demographic Categorizations

We present mutually exclusive categories for race and ethnicity, treating Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e as a mutually exclusive group and constraining African American/Black, White, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American populations to non-Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e. These race and ethnicity groupings are constrained by the datasets used for this report and do not include racial and ethnic subgroups. The Alameda County Public Health Department is committed to improving our race and ethnicity data, and reporting subgroups, whenever possible.

Sexual orientation or gender identity (SO/GI) information is not collected as part of the mortality data used in this report. The lack of SO/GI data collected hinders our ability to examine how these groups are impacted by gun violence and limits intervention efforts to promote health equity.

Technical Information

Mortality data were obtained from the California Department of Public Health Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS), which provides local health jurisdictions with access to records for deaths that occurred within California. These data are provided through the California Comprehensive Death File. 2024 data included in this report is preliminary, based on the California Comprehensive Death File extracted in April 2025. The 2024 gun homicide total excludes out-of-state deaths of Alameda County residents. Deaths of Alameda County residents that occurred in other U.S. states are included through a national data exchange system between state health departments (California Out-of-State File). Deaths of Alameda County residents that occurred outside the United States are not included in this report.

Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau were used to calculate mortality rates. Mortality rates were age-adjusted to account for differences in age distribution across population groups, allowing for more accurate comparisons.

Following standard practice, mortality counts below 10 are not reported to protect privacy. Mortality rates are not calculated when the total count is less than 10. Rates based on counts of 10 to 19 are documented with an asterisk in the report and should be interpreted with caution, as they may be unstable.

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