

# REDUCING VIOLENCE AND BUILDING TRUST

Data to Guide Enforcement of Gun Laws in Baltimore

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Daniel W. Webster, ScD, MPH | Cassandra K. Crifasi, PhD, MPH

Rebecca G. Williams, MSPH | Marisa Doll Booty, MHS | Shani A. L. Buggs, PhD, MPH

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the product of the Reducing Violence, Building Trust: Data to Guide Gun Law Enforcement in Baltimore project. Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research (JHCGPR) collected and analyzed data relevant to the enforcement of laws restricting the possession of firearms by prohibited individuals and unlawful carrying of concealed firearms to provide data-driven recommendations for more fair and effective practices. The project was designed to help inform the response to the dual crises in Baltimore—extraordinarily high rates of gun violence, and gun law enforcement practices that, in some cases, have violated the law and more generally weakened community members’ trust in the police. In 2017, Baltimore experienced its highest homicide rate on record during two out of the past three years and had the highest murder rate among cities with a population greater than 500,000 in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Homicides declined in 2018, but in 2019, Baltimore’s per capita homicide rate eclipsed the 2017 record, ending the year with 348 total homicides (58.6 per 100,000 population). Nine out of 10 homicides (291) in the city were committed with firearms. The number of nonfatal shootings in 2019, 771, was also higher than that seen in the past five years.<sup>2</sup>

Because illegal gun possession is often a precursor to shootings, making arrests for illegal gun possession has long played a prominent role in the Baltimore Police Department’s strategy to combat violent crime. While BPD arrests for drug-related crimes have plummeted by 70% from 2014 to 2019, arrests for weapons violations, principally illegal possession of firearms, have changed relatively little during that time period. Police units focused on illegal gun carrying in hot spots for shootings

have helped to reduce shootings, but less focused enforcement practices have not always translated into measurable reductions in violence.<sup>3</sup> Past efforts to get illegal guns off the streets and deter illegal gun possession without adequate oversight enabled civil rights violations, facilitated alarming criminal activity by BPD’s Gun Trace Task Force, and increased distrust of the police in many communities. These practices and their aftermath have lasting and harmful implications for public safety and justice. They also motivate current efforts by BDP to facilitate reforms and build trust with community members in compliance with the Consent Decree.

Researchers from JHCGPR drew from a variety of sources of data from Baltimore and studies from other cities to summarize key findings concerning proactive gun law enforcement practices—legal issues, impacts of police stops and searches on individuals, impacts on gun violence, community members’ views on the appropriateness of police practices and their desire for greater police accountability, and measures some law enforcement agencies are taking to improve the effectiveness and prevent abuses from proactive gun law enforcement. The report cites prior systematic and expert reviews of relevant research, especially the 2018 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s committee on proactive policing.<sup>a</sup> Several sources of data from Baltimore were used, including: 1) findings from a recent JHCGPR report on the effects of law enforcement and city-led strategies on gun violence<sup>3</sup>; 2) the United States Department of Justice’s City of Baltimore Consent Decree and reports from the selected Independent Monitor;

<sup>a</sup> *The Committee on Proactive Policing: Effects on Crime, Communities, and Civil Liberties was appointed by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to carry out this task.*

3) new data from court records on case dispositions for cases involving charges for illegal firearm possession; and 4) household surveys and focus group interviews with residents living in some of Baltimore's neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence. The JHCGPR study team sought to identify promising models for effective and fair proactive gun law enforcement through interviews with law enforcement officials in 24 other jurisdictions.

This report provides 13 specific research findings relevant to eight recommendations informed by evidence that is intended to guide future proactive gun law enforcement efforts capable of reducing crime and enhancing community confidence and trust.

## FINDINGS

1. The number of BPD arrests for illegal gun possession in a police post does not appear to impact shootings in that post, but deployment of specialized teams in hot spots for shootings did reduce gun violence in those locations.
2. BPD's gun law enforcement strategy has historically prioritized stop-and-search practices with insufficient training and oversight to prevent racial profiling.
3. The vast majority of residents in communities most impacted by gun violence are concerned about illegal gun carrying in their neighborhoods.
4. For communities most vulnerable to gun violence, BPD's stop-and-search practices elicit fear and distrust and are inconducive to public safety.
5. BPD lacks the technical infrastructure to monitor how officers engage in stop-and-search practices, resulting in missed opportunities for intervention, professional development, and disciplinary action.
6. From May 2015 through May 2019, 4 out of every 10 charges for illegal firearm possession in Baltimore City resulted in a formal disposition outcome (e.g., guilty plea, conviction, or probation before judgment). Reasons for the remaining gun charges being dropped or defendants being found not guilty are collected by the State's Attorney's Office of Baltimore (SAO), but the data are not routinely shared with police or the public.
7. Sentences for individuals without felony convictions charged with illegal firearm possession in Baltimore City often result in little or no prison time; however, individuals with felony convictions and those engaged in drug trafficking charged with illegal firearm possession tend to receive sentences lasting 5 years or longer.
8. Increasing the certainty that violators experience consequences for committing gun crime is more important and cost-effective in reducing crime than increasing the length of sentences.
9. Evidence-informed behavioral interventions that could reduce violence among illegal gun possessors are generally lacking in Baltimore and elsewhere.
10. There is widespread citizen support for improved internal monitoring of the outcomes from each officer's arrests for illegal gun possession.

11. Community members are eager to participate in police oversight efforts and many associate improved data transparency with increased trust.
12. In Baltimore neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence, residents lack faith in BPD's ability to bring individuals who commit violence to justice. Perceived risk of being shot and perceptions that illegal gun carrying is likely to go unpunished lead some residents to view gun carrying as a necessary means for self-defense.
13. Focused deterrence programs have successfully reduced gun violence in many other cities, but implementation problems in Baltimore may have prevented public safety benefits.
3. Using the data system developed from Recommendation 2, BPD and SAO should identify priority cases to review and carry out steps to improve outcomes (e.g., providing officers with feedback, training, or disciplinary actions when appropriate).
4. BPD and SAO should make comprehensive data related to stops, searches, arrests, and the dispositions of charges involving illegal possession of firearms available to the public.
5. BPD should concentrate its proactive gun law enforcement on individuals at highest risk for violence involvement and support these efforts by collecting data that reflect indicators of risk for each person charged with illegal possession of a firearm.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BPD should incorporate a focused, proactive gun law enforcement strategy instead of promoting the broad use of stop-and-search practices by patrol officers, emphasizing practices that are:
  - Driven by intelligence,
  - Focused on individuals at highest risk for violence involvement,
  - Led by small teams of experienced officers trained in constitutional policing,
  - Conducted with close supervision and oversight to ensure that officers adhere to the highest professional standards, and
  - Carried out in ways that promote trust between communities and police.
2. BPD and SAO should partner to develop a robust data-informed system incorporating input and intel from those engaged at all levels of the criminal justice system so that gun-related crimes may be evaluated from arrest to prosecution outcome.
6. The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice should work with community-based organizations and academic experts to develop, implement, and evaluate a program to reduce the risk of an individual previously charged with illegal gun possession from committing gun-related crimes.
7. Baltimore should implement a focused deterrence program to reduce gun violence that is appropriately targeted and effectively communicated, delivers promised services, involves respected community voices, and delivers swift and certain justice in response to violence.
8. BPD and SAO should develop a strategic plan for improving the identification, arrest, and prosecution of shooters that is data-driven and informed by the best scientific evidence.

# EVIDENCE ON PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT IN U.S. CITIES

## WHAT IS PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT?

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Law enforcement officers can conduct investigatory stops of individuals when there is probable cause to believe or even a “reasonable suspicion” to believe that an individual is doing something illegal or is about to do something illegal. Under such circumstances, police are lawfully permitted to temporarily detain and subsequently pat down the individual to determine if they possess a concealed weapon.<sup>4</sup> This practice is viewed by many as a reasonable protective search when exercised in accordance with the law. Over time, this practice has been referred to by a broad variety of terms (e.g., Terry pat-down, Terry search, stop and frisk, Terry frisk, etc.). Police sometimes search vehicles coincident with a traffic violation when they observe something in the vehicle suggesting illegal behavior (e.g., they see or smell illegal drugs or spot a firearm). For purposes of clarity and consistency, we will refer to these kinds of policing practices throughout this report as stop-and-search practices as they pertain to both pedestrians and vehicles.

Broad use of stop-and-search practices and other proactive strategies to curb illegal gun possession, remove illegally possessed guns from the streets, and incarcerate persons involved in gun violence are often part of a law enforcement agency’s strategy to reduce gun violence. In such cases, patrol officers or specialized gun violence suppression units are often encouraged to enforce laws for minor crimes (e.g., public drinking, minor traffic violations) and be hypervigilant of signs indicative of concealed firearm carrying.

## IMPACTS OF PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT ON VIOLENT CRIME

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Use of stop-and-search practices carried out by patrol officers as part of a violent crime suppression strategy has been the subject of several studies, many of which focus on stop-and-search practices by the New York Police Department. A study examining the association between recorded stops and searches with robberies and burglaries across the NYPD’s 75 precincts controlled for key correlates of neighborhood violence and found no association between stop-and-search reports and these crimes.<sup>5</sup> Using more advanced statistical methods and finer units of spatial and temporal measurement, one team of researchers found evidence of a small, yet statistically significant, crime-deterrent effect of *stop-and-search* practices on *overall crime*.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, this study did not disaggregate the outcome measure

into specific categories of crimes and, thus, did not estimate the impact of stop-and-search practices on gun violence. Variation in arrests for illegal firearm possession are a reasonable proxy for the use of stop-and-search practices in areas where gun violence is common. A study analyzing firearm arrests and shootings in Philadelphia found that, on average, an arrest for illegal firearm possession in a given block lowered the probability of shootings in an area up to two blocks away from the arrest by 28% to 47% for up to three days after the arrest.<sup>7</sup>

In 2013, NYPD's stop-and-search practices were ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge. Subsequently, NYPD leadership committed to ending such practices. NYPD's data indicate a dramatic drop in stop-and-search practices beginning in 2013. No formal evaluation of the impact of this policy change has been published, but murders and other violent crime in New York City did not increase and are now at historic lows.

The effects of stop-and-search practices in New York may not be generalizable to other cities that have far more guns, illegal gun carrying, gangs, or other conditions that increase risks for gun violence. The Chicago Police Department has historically focused great attention on arrests for illegal gun possession and taking guns off the street. Chicago police recover more guns involved in a crime than any other law enforcement agency in the U.S. In the fall of 2015, the Chicago Police Department responded to legal pressure from the American Civil Liberties Union to stop engaging in unconstitutional stop-and-search practices. Chicago police subsequently reported a dramatic 80% drop in street stops between November 2015

and January 2016, a reduction that continued through the end of the year. Homicides in Chicago rose dramatically in January 2016, shortly after the sharp decline in street stops, and continued through the end of 2016. A 2018 study examined potential explanations for this sudden and large increase in Chicago's homicide rate and provides compelling evidence that the sharp decline in street stops by Chicago patrol officers played a key role in the surge in shootings.<sup>8,b</sup>

Why would similarly sharp drops in street stops contribute to sharp increases in homicides in Chicago and have no apparent effects in New York? Prior to any change in policies regarding stop-and-search practices, it is important to consider that structural conditions and the culture of violence in New York are distinct from those in Chicago. These two cities differ in their gun crime rate, number of police officers, and population patterns.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, Chicago's homicide rate (27.8) was more than seven times higher than that of New York (3.9) and the rate of homicides involving a firearm demonstrates starker disparity—Chicago's rate of 25.1 was 11 times higher than New York's rate of 2.3 that year.<sup>9,10</sup> New York's Police Department had 25% more sworn officers than Chicago's Police Department in 2016. While New York had 153 law enforcement employees per homicide, Chicago had only 17.<sup>8,10</sup> Although recording gang membership is fraught with bias, Chicago appears to have a far larger problem with violent gangs than New York—less than one-fourth of New York homicides were gang-related in 2016, while more than two-thirds were gang-related in Chicago in 2016.<sup>8,9</sup> For these reasons, illegal gun carrying is likely to have played a larger role in Chicago's violent crime than has been the case in New York.

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<sup>b</sup> The video of Laquan McDonald's fatal shooting by a Chicago police officer was released soon after the sharp downturn in CPD stops began and prompted many protests against Chicago police. Such incidents often reduce the willingness of community members to report crime to police and are correlated with spikes in crime.

When firearm homicide rates were peaking in many U.S. cities in the early 1990s, many police departments formed and deployed specialized units in the places where shootings were concentrated to proactively enforce laws against illegal possession of concealed firearms. Unit officers were trained how to identify cues indicating that someone was carrying a concealed firearm. In some cases, these units focused on specific individuals within their deployment zone who had a history of involvement in violent crime. Researchers at George Mason University published a 2012 systematic review of studies designed to estimate the impact of these and related interventions. Their review confirms that among U.S. studies, gun crime in intervention areas declined by 29% to 71% coincident with specialized gun unit deployment.<sup>11</sup> A study of the impact of proactive gun law enforcement teams working in hot spots for crime in Houston, Texas, also provided evidence that focused proactive gun law enforcement reduced shootings.<sup>12</sup>

## **EFFECTS OF AGGRESSIVE PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

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When police departments encourage patrol officers to frequently employ stop-and-search practices as a tactic to suppress crime, violations of civil rights often occur, especially if training, monitoring, and accountability systems are weak.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars doubt that strategic use of stop-and-search practices by police departments is possible without simultaneously promoting unconstitutional activity such as unlawful searches or racial profiling.<sup>13</sup> Others contend that strategic use of stop-and-search practices can be justified when officers are provided sufficient supervision and training that emphasizes the importance of constitutional policing.<sup>14</sup>

The 2018 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's review of proactive policing determined there was no scientific evidence to support that the use of stop-and-search practices and other proactive gun law enforcement tactics increased unconstitutional policing.<sup>15</sup> However, those police departments that aggressively advance proactive gun law enforcement strategies and subsequently incentivize rampant stops of persons and vehicles to search for guns and drugs also tend also to have officers who habitually commit Fourth Amendment violations.<sup>c</sup> Such occurrences have resulted in consent decrees or other legal actions requiring police departments to strengthen data collection procedures, monitor stop-and-search activity, train officers in constitutional practices, and adopt additional policies designed to curtail police misconduct and protect civil liberties.

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<sup>c</sup> *The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads as follows: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."*



## **OTHER CONCERNS AND EFFECTS ON COMMUNITY ABOUT PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES**

Trusting relationships between police and the communities that they serve are vital to public safety. When broadly applied, stop-and-search practices evoke distrust and weaken community-police relations. Surveys of youth in New York City and St. Louis found that their exposure to stop-and-search practices by police, especially in situations where youth questioned the legality and fairness of the interaction, was associated with seeing police as less legitimate.<sup>16,17</sup> Perceptions of eroded police legitimacy can decrease compliance with the law and willingness to share information with law enforcement.<sup>18,19</sup> Neighborhood residents, particularly young African-American males, subject to frequent and aggressive stops and searches, internalize this treatment as a chronic source of stress that has been associated with elevated symptoms of anxiety and experiences of trauma.<sup>20</sup> Men who are most impacted report high levels of worry, fear, frustration, and resentment due to being frequently stopped by police.<sup>21-28</sup>

While intensive proactive gun law enforcement in high-crime areas has reduced shootings in the short term, overly aggressive use of these tactics over time can elevate violence if residents of crime hot spots become more fearful and less trusting of police.<sup>29,30</sup> Such breakdowns in trust in police can make it hard to arrest and successfully prosecute individuals who commit violence; and this, in turn, can increase gun violence. Fear of being shot by individuals with a history of violence is a powerful motivator for carrying a firearm,<sup>31-33</sup> perpetuating high rates of gun violence. That is why some researchers contend that law enforcement must enhance collective efficacy<sup>34,35</sup> and improve community perceptions of police legitimacy<sup>36-39</sup> in order to effect long-term change and sustain public safety.

## FINDINGS ON HOW U.S. CITIES ARE SEEKING TO IMPROVE PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT WITHOUT UNCONSTITUTIONAL POLICING

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For this project, in-depth, structured interviews were conducted with key informants from 24 city police departments across the U.S. between December 2017 and March 2018. Each participating law enforcement agency assigned one or multiple informants including detectives, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, majors, commanders, and assistant and deputy chiefs. The informants were primarily composed of representatives knowledgeable of their respective department's gun-related enforcement activities and typically were associated with investigations bureaus, organized crime divisions, or specialized gang or gun units. The 35-item interview guide consisted of questions related to each agency's gun law enforcement policies and practices.<sup>d</sup> The information below summarizes findings gathered through those interviews.

To ensure the quality and sustainability of proactive gun law enforcement, several cities emphasized the importance of arresting and prosecuting individuals at high risk for violence involvement by either shifting entirely from a place-based to person-based approach or finding a healthy balance between the two. Such an approach is guided by the collection and analysis of intelligence data about specific individuals or small sets of individuals rather than crime suppression activities directed at many people in areas where shootings are concentrated. Study informants stressed the value in regularly sharing intel-driven findings departmentwide and with other criminal justice partners.

In these interviews, several individuals reflected that an agency's shift from place- to person-oriented policing facilitated increased officer accountability and enhanced community trust. In practice, this involves updating technology systems such that data collection and analysis methods are purely electronic, and officers are incentivized to report stop-and-arrest data with broad demographic and situational details and apply the same vigor (e.g., response time, evidence processing, and canvassing) to gun-involved calls regardless of whether or not an injury or fatality ensues. Data are subsequently integrated across a variety of platforms (e.g., field interview forms, body-worn camera video, license plate readers, automatic vehicle locators, gunshot detection, surveillance cameras, outstanding warrants, disposition outcomes, computer-aided dispatch, geographic information systems, and social media scans), time- and place-tracked at the individual officer level, and transparently shared via community-accessible data platforms.

As a result, law enforcement agencies seek to accomplish important objectives simultaneously; officer performance and behavior are systematically audited while intelligence profiles for individuals at high risk for violence involvement are developed. One agency attributed 85% of illegal gun seizures to be from individual-specific intelligence following their department's place- to person-based strategic shift. Another noted a similar trend, estimating that 60% of gun seizures stem from person-based intelligence while 40% come from officers finding

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<sup>d</sup> See Appendix A for more details about this project including a summary of key findings, methods employed for key informant interviews, list of participating city law enforcement agencies, and key informant characteristics.

them on the street during normal patrol; this same agency commented on past instinct to hire more cops, assign overtime, and flood hot spots with stops and searches, reflecting that it eroded community relations and made residents feel “under siege.” They stressed that while a person-based approach is labor intensive, drawing on data of individual suspects can dramatically reduce retaliatory violence and, in effect, enhance public safety and community trust.

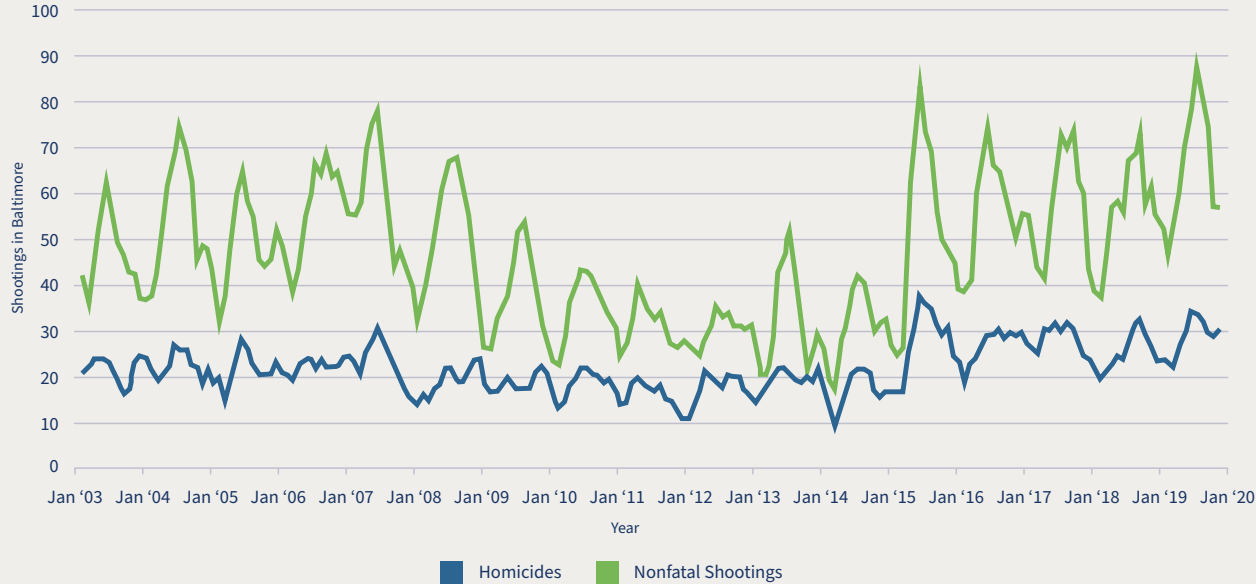
Syncing and cross-referencing these various data streams create a natural system of checks and balances. When these policies are publicized, and comprehensive data becomes publicly accessible, agencies report increased participation from and improved relationships with communities served. In response to consent decrees or other external pressures, more law enforcement agencies are developing and using early intervention systems to identify problematic patterns of officer behavior such as unwarranted stop-and-search practices. USDOJ has supported EIS, deeming them integral to long-term, sustainable organizational reform, and stressed EIS must be regularly reviewed by leadership in order to be truly effective.<sup>40</sup>

Agencies interviewed provided insight into how EIS policies and procedures that both improve crime reduction efforts and comprehensively hold officers accountable for their actions—positive or negative—should be implemented. Improved information systems were commonly articulated as key to quality investigations and honest monitoring of officer performance. Agencies discussed that quality early intervention systems incorporate cross-referenced stop-and-arrest data, officer-level training histories, and civilian complaints so that officer performance can be systematically audited, flagged for review, and receive leadership attention when appropriate. However, informants stressed that new methods of data integration and EIS adaptations should be introduced in tandem with adequate training to ensure user operability and encourage supervisors to pair oversight with meaningful interventions that, in addition to discipline, offer counseling and training to correct poor behavior and prevent unlawful practices.

# BALTIMORE'S RECENT HISTORY WITH GUN VIOLENCE AND GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Based on BPD data<sup>41</sup> for the years 2003–2009,<sup>e</sup> Baltimore has experienced an average of 248 homicides and 605 nonfatal shootings per year. Baltimore's gun violence increased dramatically immediately after the civil unrest that followed the in-custody death of Freddie Gray in April 2015 (Figure 1). Gun violence in Baltimore disproportionately affects African-American males living in neighborhoods that are highly segregated by race, where poverty and unemployment are highly concentrated and distrust in the police is common.

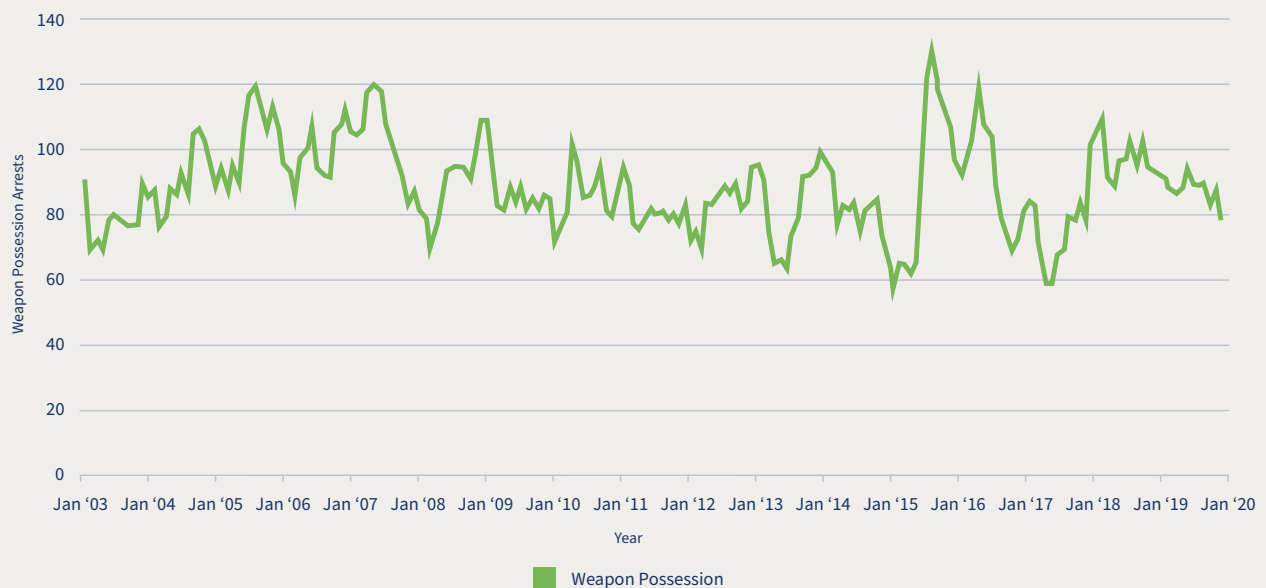
**Figure 1:** Homicides and Nonfatal Shootings, Monthly Average for Baltimore City, 2003–2019



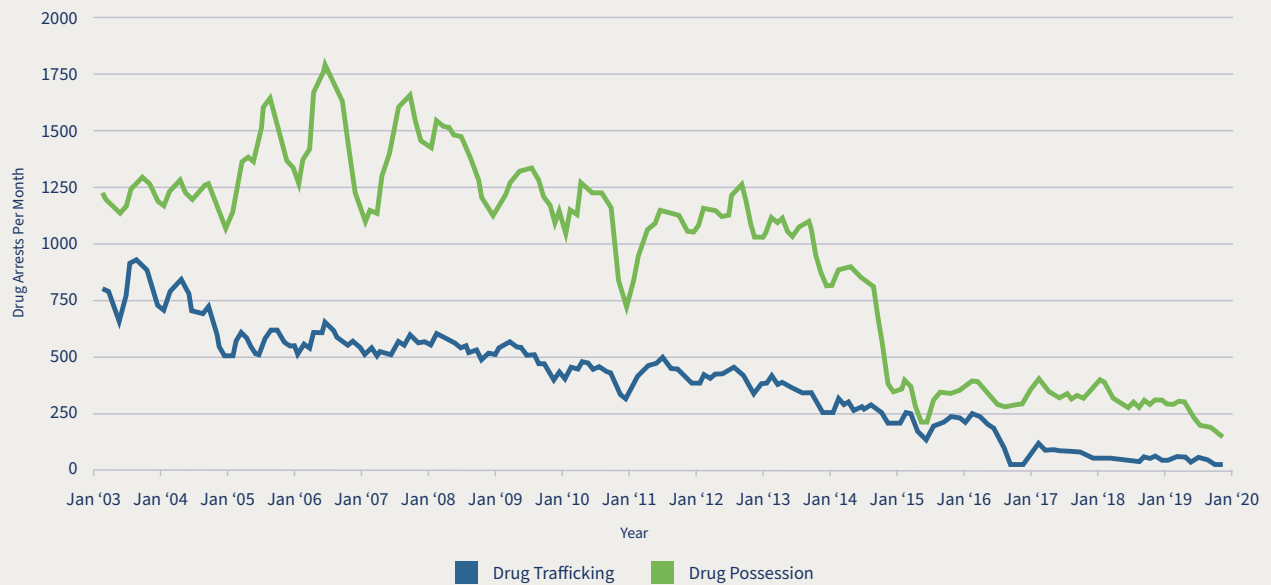
<sup>e</sup> Through 2015, data were obtained directly from BPD. In 2016 and onward, data were obtained through OpenBaltimore.

Baltimore’s high rate of gun violence has many root causes, but an important cause is the illegal possession of firearms, especially among persons with a history of violence. Arresting such individuals for illegal gun possession, recovering illegal guns, and issuing warnings against illegal gun possession have been common tactics used as part of BPD’s violence reduction strategy for many years. Such efforts were embedded within a “zero-tolerance” strategy of patrol officers during the early 2000s and specialized gun squads operating under a Violent Crimes Task Force. Former Police Commissioner Frederick Bealefeld made going after “bad guys with guns” the focus of BPD’s violent crime strategy from 2007 to 2012 and deemphasized arrests for illegal drug possession and sale. Arrests for illegal weapon possession offenses were stable from 2008 to 2014 while arrests for drug-related offenses dropped steadily and continue to trend downward (Figures 2 to 3). Two specialized gun units were formed in the summer of 2007 under Bealefeld—a Violent Crime Impact Section (VCIS) that deployed detectives to hot spots for shootings to make arrests for illegal gun possession and the Gun Trace Task Force (GTTF) whose mission was originally to investigate and arrest those who were supplying criminals with guns. The GTTF soon shifted its primary focus to arresting individuals illegally possessing guns.

**Figure 2:** Weapon Possession Arrests, Monthly Average for Baltimore City, 2003–2019



**Figure 3:** Drug Arrests, Monthly Average for Baltimore City, 2003–2019



An important distinction between VCIS and GTTF was that the GTTF was not assigned to operate in a specific geographic area for an extended period. This made it impossible to assess any impact that GTTF might have on violent crime. However, abuses by some VCIS officers led to lawsuits against the city and may have damaged relationships between police and communities. VCIS was scaled back and then ultimately disbanded in 2012 by former Baltimore City Police Commissioner Anthony Batts. The early 2019 convictions of officers serving in the GTTF for a long list of serious crimes underscore how gun law enforcement activities, if not closely monitored, can lead to civil rights violations and other crimes that deeply harm public trust in BPD.

## DATA AND FINDINGS FROM BALTIMORE

Our investigation of the impact of proactive gun law enforcement in Baltimore on violent crime was guided by research we completed in January 2018.<sup>3</sup> To assess community perceptions and attitudes relevant to proactive gun law enforcement in Baltimore, we conducted community surveys and focus groups in parts of East and West Baltimore that are part of the city's Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI). The survey was developed to assess community perceptions of the BPD including neighborhood safety, collective efficacy, interactions with police, transparency, and quality. We collected 200 survey responses between January and March 2018.<sup>f</sup> The focus group guide was informed by findings from the community survey. Focus group topics included perceptions of police, quality of interactions, issues with police accountability, and trust. We leveraged relationships with well-established community-based organizations to recruit participants for four focus groups with 7–10 community members each in August 2018.<sup>g</sup>

To assess BPD's law enforcement capabilities and practices relevant to effective and constitutional gun law enforcement, we reviewed BPD's history of policing strategies and their associated impacts on crime within the context of civil liberty and constitutional practices. Specifically, we drew upon USDOJ's 2016 investigation<sup>42</sup> into BPD's pattern of unconstitutional practices in addition to the subsequent evaluations performed as required by the Consent Decree issued in 2017 as a result of the USDOJ investigation. Pursuant to this reform agreement, an independent collective now comprises the BPD Monitoring Team, which has been tasked with delving into the details of BPD's

organizational operation and policy structures.<sup>43</sup> The National Police Foundation's inventory and analysis of the department's internal technology systems<sup>44</sup> were also reviewed.

The impact proactive gun law enforcement has on public safety is likely to be determined partly by whether gun-related arrests lead to sanctions that temporarily remove individuals who commit gun violence from communities or otherwise serve as a deterrent to gun violence. If arrestees and others learn that there is often no consequence for illegally possessing firearms, they may be emboldened and commit additional gun crimes. Prosecutors may drop gun charges for a variety of reasons including agreements that defendants plead guilty to other charges, uncertainty surrounding the nexus of the gun to the defendant, illegal searches, or concerns of evidence planting. The share of gun cases that are being dismissed due to illegal searches is a proxy indicator of whether officers are engaged in unconstitutional policing practices. For these reasons, we gathered data on dispositions for cases in which the defendant was charged with one of the four categories for violations of state laws concerning illegal firearm possession: felon in possession, prohibited person not a felon, drug trafficking with a firearm, and illegal wear/carry/transport of a firearm. In this study, we examined cases charged between May 1, 2015, and May 31, 2019, that were obtained from partners at Harvard who collected Baltimore charge disposition data using Maryland Judiciary Case Search. The illegal possession categories were determined based on Criminal Justice Information System codes for those categories used in Baltimore City.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>f</sup> See Appendix B for a complete description of the community survey methods and detailed results.

<sup>g</sup> See Appendix C for a complete description of methods for the community focus groups and detailed themes that emerged from the analysis.

<sup>h</sup> Felon in possession was made up of charges with CJIS code 1 1609. Prohibited person not a felon was made up of charges with CJIS codes 1 1106 and 1 5285. Drug trafficking with a gun was made up of CJIS codes 1 0487 and 1 0493. Wear/carry/transport of a gun was made up of CJIS codes 1 0175 and 1 5212.

## FINDING 1

**The number of BPD arrests for illegal gun possession in a police post does not appear to impact shootings in that post, but deployment of specialized teams in hot spots for shootings did reduce gun violence in those locations.**

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Our findings from prior research studies of Baltimore demonstrate mixed effects of proactive gun law enforcement strategies, which is similar to findings from other U.S. cities. In our 2018 study involving analysis of monthly trends in homicides and nonfatal shootings across police patrol posts in Baltimore between 2004 and 2017, a 1-month lag in arrests for weapons violations<sup>i</sup> was unrelated to shootings within a post after controlling for other factors.<sup>3,45,j</sup> However, deployment of the Violent Crime Impact Section (VCIS), detective units focused on violent individuals and illegal gun possession, in violent hot-spots was associated with a 13% reduction in homicides and a 19% reduction in nonfatal shootings in hot spot locations.<sup>3</sup>

## FINDING 2

**BPD’s gun law enforcement strategy has historically prioritized stop-and-search practices with insufficient training and oversight to prevent racial profiling.**

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The 2016 USDOJ investigation<sup>42</sup> found that BPD officers were often unconstitutional and excessive in their use of stops and searches. Officers had “minimal training and insufficient oversight from supervisors or through other accountability structures.” USDOJ reported that during 2010–2015, BPD recorded approximately 300,000 pedestrian stops by officers resulting in less than 4% being issued a citation or being arrested. For years, BPD encouraged aggressive proactive gun law enforcement and rewarded officers and commanders based on the number of arrests for weapons violations and gun seizures. This approach, absent sufficient training and oversight to prevent illegal stop-and-search practices and ensuing arrests, created conditions in which officers often violated Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by these practices. BPD is addressing this issue with a new training curriculum for officers on proper, lawful stop-and-search practices that was recently released for public comment.<sup>k</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The vast majority of weapons violations involve illegal possession (wear, carry, transport) of firearms.

<sup>j</sup> Because police use of stop-and-search practices generating arrests for illegal gun possession also generate arrests for drug law violations, it is worth noting that increases in drug arrests within a post and month were correlated with more shootings in a post the following month.

<sup>k</sup> Proposed BPD policies, plans, and procedures under review, instructions for public feedback, and public comment time period information can be found via the BPD Monitoring Team’s official website: <https://www.bpdmonitor.com/public-feedback>.

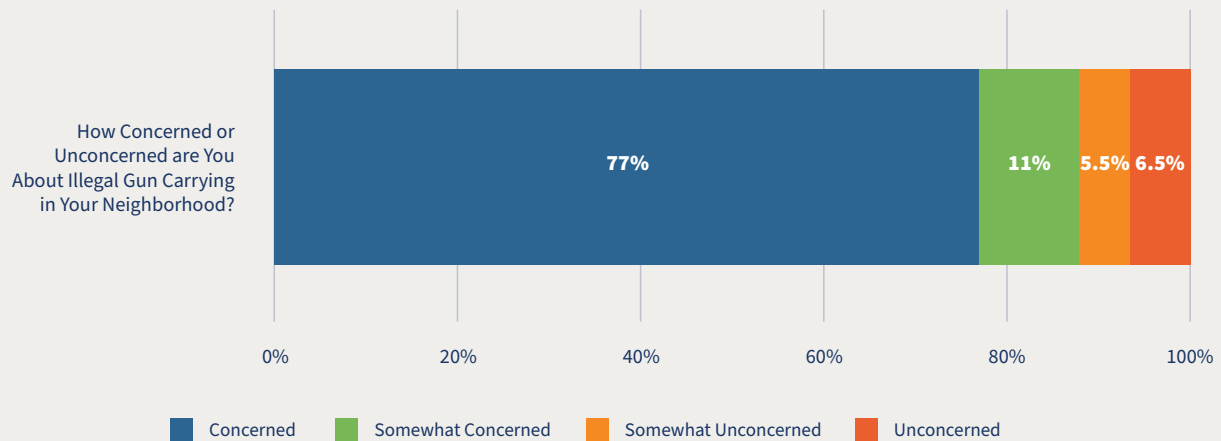


### FINDING 3

#### The vast majority of residents in communities most impacted by gun violence are concerned about illegal gun carrying in their neighborhoods.

Seventy-seven percent of our survey respondents in neighborhoods with high levels of gun violence indicated they were concerned about illegal gun carrying in their neighborhood (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Community Concern for Illegal Gun Carrying



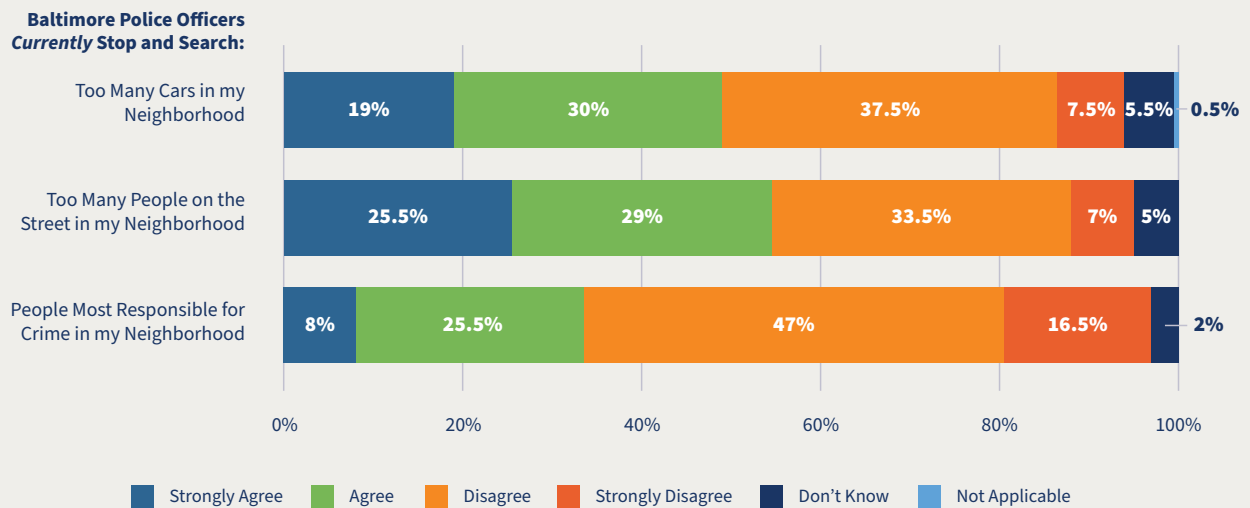
### FINDING 4

#### For communities most vulnerable to gun violence, BPD's stop-and-search practices elicit fear and distrust and are inconducive to public safety.

There is widespread concern regarding BPD's excessive stop-and-search practices in communities most impacted by gun violence. Despite high levels of concern about illegal gun carrying, about half of the respondents believe BPD conducts too many stops and searches of both people (54.5%) and vehicles (49%). Importantly, nearly two-thirds of survey participants did not think that BPD stops individuals who are most responsible for crime in their neighborhood (Figure 5). Concerns go beyond the number of stops and searches. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated that, if they were on a jury and heard an officer's testimony about finding a gun on someone, they were unlikely to believe an officer without video evidence. When asked what impact it would have if BPD stopped conducting stops and searches in their neighborhood, respondents were twice as likely to believe that the change would lead to fewer shootings rather than more shootings (27% vs. 13.5%). Most (56.5%) believed that changes in BPD's stop-and-search practices would not impact shootings.

Our focus group interviews revealed that some residents perceive police officers as threats to community safety and well-being. Focus group participants described having either personally experienced or observed police practices in their neighborhood such as harassment or evidence planting and perceived these practices as resulting from a corrupt system that ignored or even rewarded poor behaviors by police. They expressed views that policing needed to be done in a way that demonstrated care and service rather than an expression of police power over the community. Deep concerns and dissatisfaction with BPD’s aggressive stop-and-search practices have also been documented in the USDOJ’s 2016 report and by the BPD Monitoring Team in charge of evaluating BPD’s compliance relevant to Consent Decree reforms.

**Figure 5: Community Perceptions of BPD Stop-and-Search Practices**



## FINDING 5

### **BPD lacks the technical infrastructure to monitor how officers engage in stop-and-search practices, resulting in missed opportunities for intervention, professional development, and disciplinary action.**

Baltimore lacks quality data on police stops. BPD's Policy 1112,<sup>l</sup> Field Interviews, Investigative Stops, Weapons Pat-Downs and Searches, obliges officers to systematically document every civilian encounter except Voluntary Contacts,<sup>m</sup> regardless of whether a traffic, civil, or criminal citation is issued. It outlines criteria by which each category of civilian interaction is justified, and prescribes specific, time-sensitive documentation. Policy 1112 also recommends supervisors review officers' documentation of stops before the end of a shift, but no later than 72 hours after a civilian encounter has occurred.<sup>n</sup> Proposed new officer training covers this policy.

The National Police Foundation's comprehensive inventory of BPD's informational technology systems<sup>44</sup> found several system problems and procedural deficiencies for tracking officer performance and activity. NPF found that BPD's system of collecting, reviewing, and using data is cumbersome, noting that arrest data and crime statistics differ across various siloed systems. BPD has no mechanism to validate whether officers turn in the correct number of stop tickets and stop receipts can take up to a month to be entered into BPD's Record Management System. As of May 2018, BPD had a backlog of 40,000 pedestrian stop receipts. For stops resulting in an arrest, there is no automated chain of review, nor is notice provided to supervisors to ensure officers are adhering to agency policy and acting in accordance with the law.

In 2018, the BPD Monitoring Team reviewed BPD's infrastructure, policies, and practices relevant to officers' stop-and-search practices. They refer to such practices as stop, search, arrest activity (S/S/A). Their findings include the following:

*BPD also does not ensure that its officers routinely document S/S/A activity; voluntary contacts, field interviews and stops often appear to go unreported. Moreover, this incomplete S/S/A is stored in multiple, disparate, decentralized information silos. Until BPD revamps or replaces its RMS so that the system efficiently captures and facilitates analysis of all S/S/A data, it will be exceedingly difficult to evaluate BPD's S/S/A activity and fully assess BPD's progress toward compliance with the S/S/A requirements of the Consent Decree. Moreover, it will be exceedingly difficult for BPD to perform self-evaluations of its S/S/A activity. The*

<sup>l</sup> The purpose of Policy 1112, Field Interviews, Investigative Stops, Weapons Pat-downs, and Searches, is to ensure that BPD conduct all civilian interactions in accordance with the civil liberties secured and protected by the U.S. Constitution, federal and state law, as well as internal BPD policy. It guides BPD on how to justly interact with and enhance trust between BPD and the community it serves and instructs BPD leadership on best practices for responding, reviewing, and documenting officer activity related to civilian interaction.

<sup>m</sup> Policy 1112 defines Voluntary Contact as a "non-investigative consensual encounter between a BPD member and one or more person(s) with the intent of engaging in a casual and/or non-investigative conversation (e.g., chatting with a local business owner or resident). The person(s) is free to leave or decline any request by the member at any point."

<sup>n</sup> BPD's Policy 1112 has undergone a series of revisions per USDOJ Consent Decree requirements. Policy 1112 was most recently approved on October 31, 2018, by the Court-Ordered Monitoring Team. BPD has since made additional revisions but is not yet approved. Their most recent draft of the policy was publicly published on December 16, 2019.

*inefficiencies of this data collection and record-keeping system for S/S/A activity — particularly in the age of real-time, electronic field-based reporting — . . . underscore the near-impossibility of performing meaningful data-driven supervision, review and analysis of the performance of individual officers and of trends and patterns within units, within districts, and Department-wide . . . Monitoring Team members observed multiple glaring errors [in S/S/A reports] that the reviewing supervisor had not corrected.<sup>43</sup>*

In their evaluation of BPD’s information technology systems, the NPF reports, “BPD lacks IT policies and procedures. Where they do exist, policies and procedures are often not followed nor enforced.” Database standards and documentation are lacking, resulting in unreliable data.<sup>44</sup> The NPF reports that BPD’s system of records management is irreparably convoluted and alarmingly out of date.

## FINDING 6

**From May 2015 through May 2019, 4 out of every 10 charges for illegal firearm possession in Baltimore City resulted in a guilty plea, conviction, or probation before judgment.<sup>o</sup> Reasons for gun charges being dropped or defendants being found not guilty are collected by the SAO, but the data are not routinely shared with the police or the public.**

Publicly available data indicate that from May 1, 2015, through May 31, 2019, there were 10,600 cases in which individuals were charged with illegal firearm possession. Note that there can be multiple individuals within a given case. These gun charges primarily fall into one of four crime categories (as defined by the SAO): felon in possession; prohibited person (not a felon) in possession; drug trafficking while in possession of a firearm; or illegal wear, carry, or transport. Among all 10,600 cases, 4,387 (41.4%) resulted in a guilty or probation before judgment disposition as a result of a defendant’s initial illegal firearm possession charge (2,182 or 20.6%) or different illegal firearm possession charge (2,205 or 20.8%) received thereafter. Nine percent (960) resulted in a guilty disposition as a result of a charge within a different category than the four primary crime types examined. In 1,109 cases in which an individual was charged with illegal firearm possession while trafficking drugs, only 108 (9.7%) had a guilty or probation before judgment disposition as a result of that charge and 528 (47.6%) pled guilty on another charge. Just under half (44.9%) of the cases in which someone was initially charged with illegal possession of a firearm did not yield a guilty disposition for any charge in state courts. The most common disposition for illegal gun possession charges is *Nolle Prosequi* (charge dismissed by the prosecutor) or *Stet* (charge deactivated), accounting for 33.7% of dispositions across the four categories of gun charges (Table 1).

Interpreting these disposition outcomes is difficult without systematic recording of the reasons for gun charges being dropped or defendants being found not guilty. Cases being dropped due to uncertainty

<sup>o</sup> Under Maryland law, probation before judgment refers to a defendant being placed on probation before a judgment has been entered in their case. This means that the individual has not been found guilty of the crime with which they have been charged.

surrounding the nexus between the gun that was recovered by law enforcement and the defendant are likely to be common due to the nature of arrest circumstances. For example, a firearm recovered from the floor of a motor vehicle with three occupants that is not registered to any of those occupants cannot be tied to any single individual beyond a reasonable doubt. There may also be justifiable reasons to drop charges against someone deemed to be of low risk, to reduce harms associated with incarceration. Of greater concern are cases that are dropped due to questions about the legality of the search or possible evidence planting. There are other reasons connected to problems with evidence, inconsistencies in charging documents and body-worn camera evidence, or plea agreements for a defendant providing information relevant to other criminal investigations.

**Table 1:** Outcomes for Illegal Firearm Possession Charges in Baltimore City, 2015–2019

	<b>Felon in Possession (n = 2,303)</b>	<b>Prohibited Person (Not a Felon) in Possession (n = 3,058)</b>	<b>Drug Trafficking While in Possession (n = 1,109)</b>	<b>Illegal Wear, Carry, or Transport (n = 4,130)</b>
<b>Pled or Found Guilty or Probation Before Judgment on Specified Charge</b>	<b>578 - 25.1%</b>	<b>497 - 16.3%</b>	<b>108 - 9.74%</b>	<b>999 - 24.2%</b>
<b>Pled or Found Guilty on a Different Illegal Firearm Possession Charge</b>	<b>413 - 17.9%</b>	<b>810 - 26.5%</b>	<b>326 - 29.4%</b>	<b>656 - 15.9%</b>
<b>Pled or Found Guilty on a Different Charge (Not Illegal Firearm Possession)</b>	<b>207 - 9.0%</b>	<b>398 - 13.0%</b>	<b>202 - 18.2%</b>	<b>646 - 15.6%</b>
<b>Not Guilty or Acquittal Granted</b>	<b>191 - 8.3%</b>	<b>120 - 3.9%</b>	<b>28 - 2.5%</b>	<b>253 - 6.1%</b>
<b>Nolle Prosequi or Stet</b>	<b>873 - 37.9%</b>	<b>955 - 31.2%</b>	<b>418 - 37.7%</b>	<b>1,330 - 32.2%</b>
<b>All Other Outcomes*</b>	<b>41 - 1.8%</b>	<b>278 - 9.1%</b>	<b>27 - 2.4%</b>	<b>246 - 6.0%</b>

*\*All other outcomes may include: remanded to juvenile court, dismissed, not sent to jury, incompetent to stand trial, or other lesser-seen outcomes.*

Improving case outcomes—preventing illegal searches and increasing the odds of illegal gun possession resulting in some consequence—requires supervisors for police and prosecutors to have data to identify and correct problems as well as reinforce best practices. The Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office has an internal database in which prosecution outcomes and the reasons for dismissing charges are recorded by the prosecutor working the case. However, there has been no policy by the SAO to routinely share these data with BPD.

The National Police Foundation’s evaluation gleaned key insights into BPD and SAO interactions with one another on cases. The National Police Foundation reports that when a case is dismissed, prosecutors typically do not provide feedback regarding disposition outcomes and that data related to arrests and charges in the state system is incomplete.<sup>44</sup> The National Police Foundation recommended

that BPD establish a data sharing agreement with the state for offender case management information and suggests that “BPD should retain a copy of all cases submitted to Maryland and receive real time updates to Maryland’s database as a case moves through the justice system and is adjudicated.”<sup>46</sup>

Quality of evidence is crucial to successful prosecution of gun-related crimes, regardless of the outcome. Unfortunately, BPD’s system of collecting, storing, and reporting evidence from crimes presents opportunities for error and injustice. The National Police Foundation found that approximately half of BPD’s 3,000,000 items in physical evidence repository were unaccounted for in the department’s official evidence tracking software.<sup>44</sup> For evidence items properly accounted for, the data are inaccessible to the SAO, so prosecutors cannot easily view evidence location, forensic services performed, or item chain of custody.

## **FINDING 7**

**Sentences for individuals without felony convictions or other prohibiting conditions charged with illegal firearm possession in Baltimore City often result in little or no prison time, but individuals with felony convictions and those engaged in drug trafficking charged with illegal firearm possession tend to receive sentences lasting 5 years or longer.**

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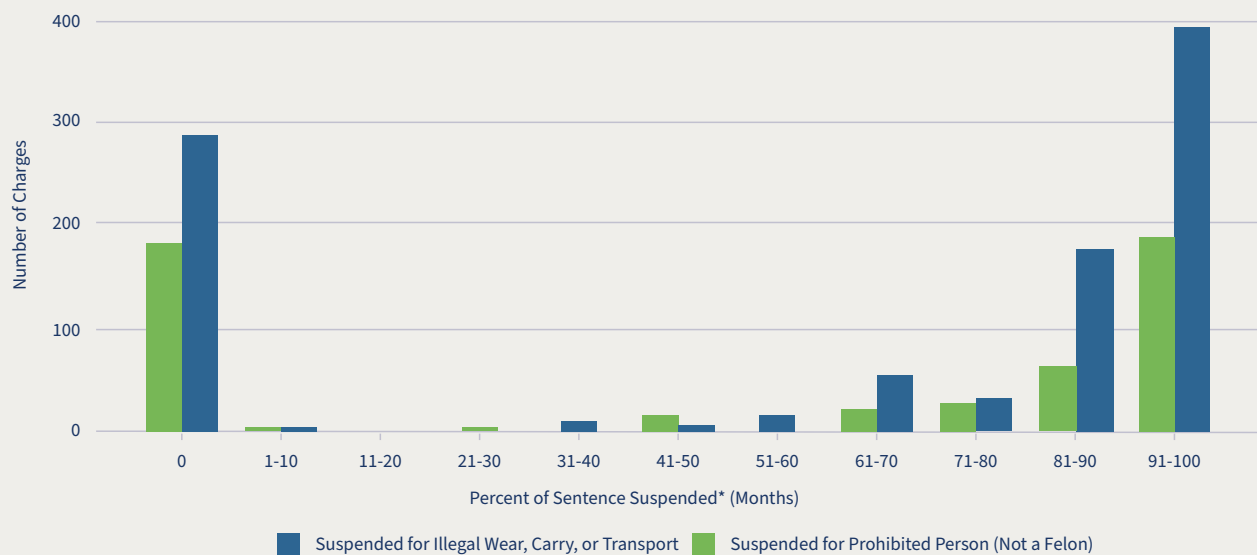
The distribution of the percent of the incarceration sentence that was suspended for two of the gun charge categories shows clusters on each end (Figure 6). For illegal wear, carry, or transport of a firearm charges, 30% had no time suspended but 40% had 91–100% suspended and an additional 18% had 81–90% of their sentence suspended. For illegal possession by a prohibited person with no prior felony convictions, 35% had no incarceration time suspended while 36% had 91–100% of their sentence suspended. There was much less variability and more severe penalties for sentencing for felon in possession charges and for firearm possession while trafficking in controlled dangerous substances, violations that have mandatory minimum length for sentences.

**Table 2:** Sentencing for Illegal Firearm Possession Charges Among Baltimore City Cases, May 2015 to May 2019

Illegal Firearm Possession Crime Category as Defined by SAO	Probation Only	Average Incarceration Sentence (months)	Average Incarceration Sentence Suspension (months)	Average Incarceration Sentence* minus Suspended Time (months)
<b>Felon in Possession (n = 604)</b>	1 (0.2%)	89.7	27.1	62.4
<b>Prohibited Person (Not a Felon) in Possession (n = 512)</b>	22 (4.3%)	50.5	26.8	21.5
<b>Drug Trafficking While in Possession (n = 115)</b>	1 (0.9%)	100.1	29.5	69.7
<b>Illegal Wear, Carry, or Transport (n = 1,023)</b>	128 (12.5%)	28.1	17.5	7.1

\* Probation-only sentences included as no time incarcerated.

**Figure 6:** Distribution of Sentence Suspension Among “Illegal Wear, Carry, or Transport”



\* Probation-only cases added as 100% incarceration sentence suspended.

## FINDING 8

### **Increasing the certainty that violators experience consequences for committing gun crime is more important and cost-effective in reducing crime than increasing the length of sentences.**

There are two schools of thought about the appropriate response to illegal gun possession. One notes that illegal gun possession, particularly for repeated charges, is predictive for subsequently being charged with murder,<sup>47</sup> and long prison sentences deter such behavior while keeping dangerous individuals off the streets. Another view is that gun carrying is often a defensive behavior, particularly where violent crime is common. Incarceration for unlicensed gun carrying in this context can be both unjust and counter to public safety due to the criminogenic effects of being incarcerated. The evidence suggests that, if there are deterrent effects from long prison sentences, those effects are small and costly.<sup>48</sup> A recent study<sup>49</sup> of New York State's 2006 law that increased the mandatory minimum sentence for illegally possessing a firearm from 1 year to 3.5 years examined changes in violent crime in New York and found that the law was associated with an 11% decrease in robberies during the first four years the law was in place.<sup>p</sup> These effects were exclusive to robberies committed with a firearm. The law did not change rates of murder or aggravated assaults. Massachusetts' Bartley-Fox Law, enacted in 1975, mandated a 1-year prison term for unlicensed carrying of firearms and a 2-year sentence for violent crimes committed while possessing a firearm. Findings from several studies using different methods show mixed results but provide some evidence of modest declines in gun-related violence associated with the law.<sup>47,50</sup> Any deterrent effect from the mandatory

minimum sentence for illegal firearm carrying cannot be decoupled from the simultaneous increase in penalties for committing a violent crime with a firearm.<sup>51</sup> The evidence is unclear whether increased penalties for illegal firearm possession by felons targeted for federal prosecution in Richmond, Virginia's Project Exile program launched in 1997 led to reductions in homicide.<sup>52</sup>

Drawing from a much broader range of research on incarceration, policing, and crime deterrence,<sup>47,50,51</sup> economist Steven Durlauf and criminologist Daniel Nagin drew three conclusions<sup>48</sup>: 1) The marginal deterrent effect of increasing lengthy prison sentences is modest at best; 2) imprisonment,<sup>47,50,51</sup> compared with noncustodial sanctions such as probation, does not prevent reoffending and often has a criminogenic effect on those who are imprisoned; 3) increased visibility of police, especially in hot spots for gun violence, tends to have larger marginal deterrent effects than increased incarceration. Related to the second conclusion listed above, there is strong evidence that increasing the certainty of penalties for reoffending, even with very short-term incarceration, can significantly deter reoffending.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>p</sup> The researchers only examined the first four years the law was in place in order to focus on the deterrent effects of the law rather than the combined effects of deterrence and incapacitation (offenders being behind bars).



## FINDING 9

### **Evidence-informed behavioral interventions that could reduce violence among illegal gun possessors are generally lacking in Baltimore and elsewhere.**

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Because having been charged with illegal firearm possession is a risk factor for committing future lethal violence<sup>47</sup> and many who have convictions for such offenses in Baltimore return to communities, effective behavioral interventions for persons with a history of gun offenses are needed to prevent reoffending. Roca, an anti-violence program in Baltimore, is reaching some of this population with behavioral interventions that draw upon cognitive behavioral theory of behavior change that has been effective in many programs designed to reduce violence and criminal offending.<sup>54</sup> However, Roca focuses exclusively on high-risk youth, ages 16–25 years, with an intensive program that can last up to four years. There is a much larger population of persons found guilty of illegal firearm possession in Baltimore than what Roca can currently reach with its program model. We have yet to find a program shown to reduce repeat offending by persons convicted of illegal gun possession, but programs could be developed that draw upon the components of other interventions shown to reduce violence by individuals at high risk for violence involvement, such as applications of cognitive behavioral theory and hospital-based violence prevention programs for victims of gun violence.<sup>55-57</sup>

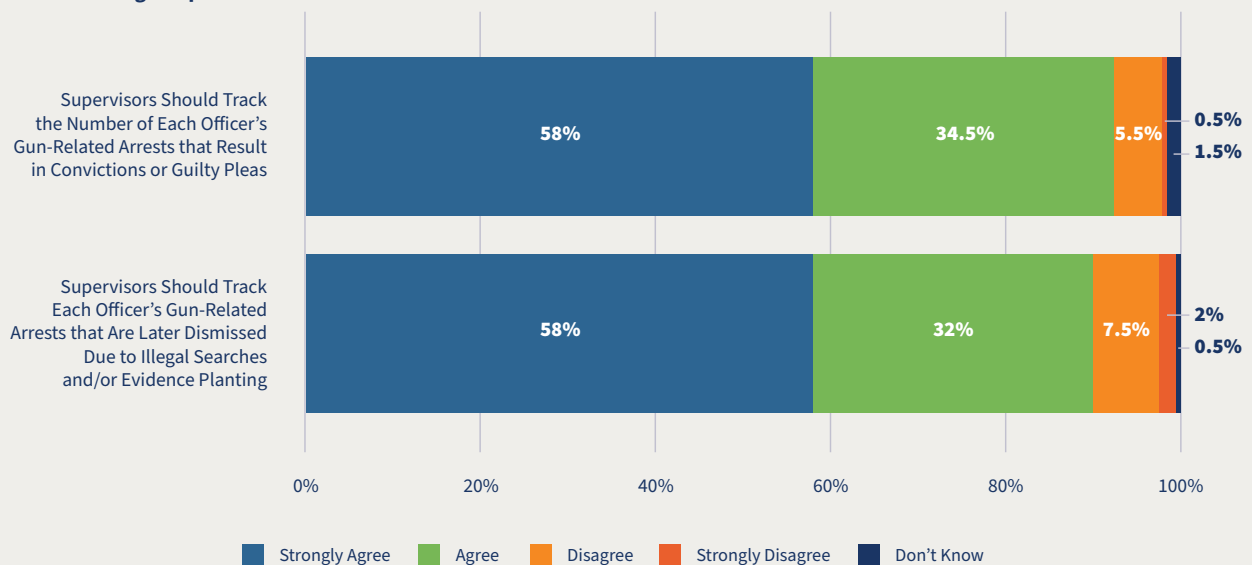
## FINDING 10

### There is widespread citizen support for improved internal monitoring of the outcomes from each officer's arrests for illegal gun possession.

The overwhelming majority of the community survey respondents favor internal monitoring by BPD leadership of each officer's gun-related arrests; 90% expressed support for tracking each officer's gun-related arrests later dismissed due to illegal searches or evidence planting, and 92.5% expressed support for tracking those resulting in convictions or guilty pleas (Figure 7). Relatedly, 70% of those surveyed believed that formal complaints submitted against BPD officers would not be fairly investigated. Lack of police accountability was discussed at length by community focus group participants. Participants stated that BPD culture prioritizes power and control over understanding and protecting the communities BPD serves. An overwhelming sense of powerlessness reverberated throughout these conversations, and our community survey results support a similar sentiment.

**Figure 7:** Community Support for Internal Monitoring of Officers for Gun-Related Arrests and Case Outcomes by BPD Leadership

#### For Monitoring Purposes:

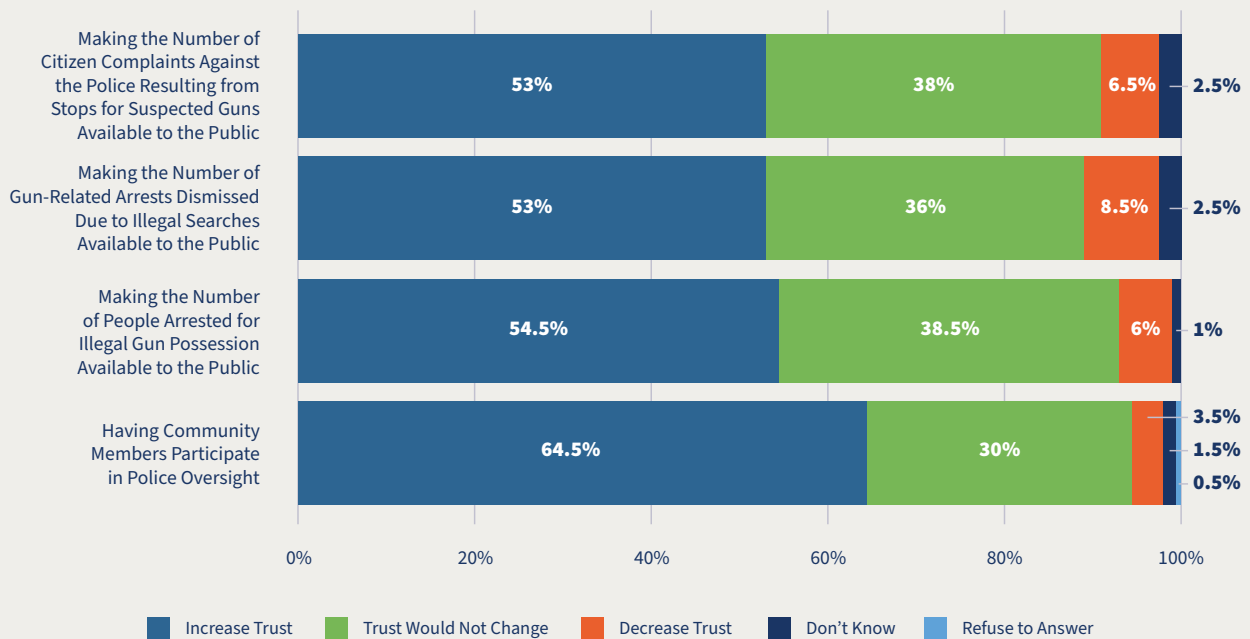


## FINDING 11

### Community members are eager to participate in police oversight efforts, and many associate improved data transparency with increased trust.

Community survey responses demonstrate important insight into how Baltimore residents most impacted by gun violence want to engage with systems of officer accountability. The majority of survey respondents indicated that additional opportunities for civilian involvement and access to information would positively impact their trust in BPD's gun law enforcement efforts: 64.5% said having community members participate in police oversight would increase trust in police. Just over half indicated that making the number of arrests dismissed due to illegal searches and the number of citizen complaints against officers result from stops-and-searchers publicly accessible would enhance their trust in police (Figure 8).

**Figure 8:** Community Perceptions of Oversight Efforts and Associated Impact on Trust



## FINDING 12

**In Baltimore neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence, residents lack faith in BPD's ability to bring individuals who commit violence to justice. Perceived risk of being shot and perceptions that illegal gun carrying is likely to go unpunished lead some residents to view gun carrying as a necessary means for self-defense.**

The surge in gun violence in Baltimore starting in April 2015 resulted in a more-than-twofold increase in the number of annual Baltimore homicide cases that have failed to result in the arrest of a suspect based on data reported by BPD and compiled by *The Washington Post* (Figure 9).<sup>58-60</sup> During 2015–2017, 25% (252 of 1,002) of Baltimore homicides were closed by an arrest, down from an average of 41% during 2007–2014 and well below the national average. A large majority of homicides committed in Baltimore neighborhoods most impacted by violence do not result in the shooter's arrest. In 2019, 31.2% of murders in Baltimore were cleared by an arrest or for other reasons such as the suspect's death. Nonfatal shootings have an even lower rate of closure by arrest than do homicides. Of course, arrests in these violent crimes do not guarantee successful prosecution due to the many challenges with these cases (e.g., witness intimidation and recanting). Increased resources and coordination of homicide investigations can produce significant increases in arrests for homicides.<sup>61</sup>

Shooters who are not brought to justice contribute to increased violence and the proliferation of illegal gun carrying. Our focus group participants expressed that Baltimore was unsafe in ways that threatened their survival. Feelings of insecurity were driven both by the frequency and lethality of violent crime and, for

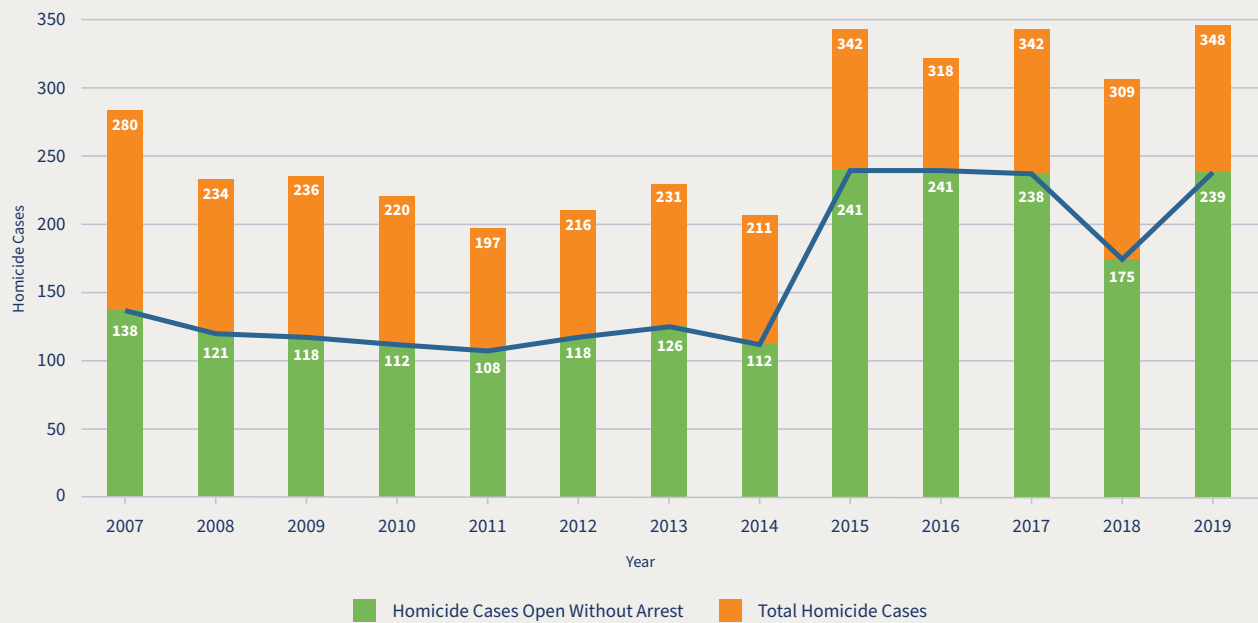
some, concerns of being victimized by police. Studies from a number of U.S. cities have consistently found that gun violence is a highly concentrated problem involving a very small percentage of people who commit violence mostly in a small percentage of blocks in a city.<sup>62</sup> Some within this group are responsible for multiple shootings that lead to retaliatory shootings and fear-driven gun carrying. However, the majority (64%) of residents we surveyed in areas plagued by gun violence in East and West Baltimore expressed that BPD officers do not stop those most responsible for violent crime in their neighborhood. Also, half of the participants reported that when shots are fired in their neighborhood, officers are slow to respond.

Many attributed these conditions to racial discrimination and to BPD's lack of understanding and appreciation for the communities they serve. For example, 52% of survey respondents indicated BPD officers are disrespectful when interacting with people in their neighborhood and 68% reported that BPD officers use force in unwarranted situations.

Increased resources and coordination of homicide investigations can produce significant increases in arrests for homicides.<sup>57</sup> However, a review of practices that distinguished law enforcement agencies with the best homicide

clearance rates underscored the importance of thorough canvassing of the neighborhood with patrol officers who had established trust in the neighborhood. This groundwork of trust led to discussions with community members that yielded tips that were critical to the investigations.<sup>63</sup>

**Figure 9:** Baltimore City Homicide Cases with Open/No Arrest Disposition Outcomes, 2007–2019



## FINDING 13

### **Focused deterrence programs have successfully reduced gun violence in many other cities, but implementation problems in Baltimore may have prevented public safety benefits.**

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Many cities have gone away from zero-tolerance policing and broad stop-and-search tactics and instead implemented focused deterrence initiatives directed at reducing gun violence. Interventions that more narrowly target the small fraction of a city's residents who drive gun violence such as focused deterrence have arguably the strongest record of consistently making substantial reductions in shootings among other interventions to address gun violence. Implemented appropriately, focused deterrence programs should lead to fewer negative encounters between police and community members than is the case with broad use of stop-and-search practices in policing.<sup>64,65</sup> Baltimore has implemented this strategy before without success; however, several problems with program implementation have been identified that, if corrected, could lead to more favorable results. For example, the focused deterrence program implemented in Baltimore during 2014–2017 may not have identified the individuals at highest risk for involvement in gun violence, and the program was not positioned to meet the human service needs of the individuals being engaged.<sup>62,66</sup>

A recent systematic review of focused deterrence interventions across the U.S. noted factors believed to have impeded program effectiveness including police scandals that harmed community trust in police and inability of law enforcement agencies to effectively collaborate with each other.<sup>64</sup> Oakland, California, has had great success with group violence intervention by connecting it to police reforms, leading to greater accountability to communities, community leaders' support for the program and its narrow focus on those at highest risk for involvement in gun violence, respectful engagement with those at high risk, relationship-based social services, and partnership-based program management.<sup>67,68</sup>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATION 1

**BPD should incorporate a comprehensive proactive gun law enforcement strategy instead of promoting the broad use of stop-and-search practices by patrol officers, emphasizing practices that are:**

- **Driven by intelligence,**
- **Focused on individuals at high risk for violence involvement,**
- **Led by small teams of experienced officers trained in constitutional policing,**
- **Conducted with close supervision and oversight to ensure that officers adhere to the highest professional standards, and**
- **Carried out in a way that promotes trust between communities and police.**

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Broad use of stop-and-search practices are inconsistent with constitutional policing and the establishment of productive community-police relations. Short-term public safety benefits from such practices are uncertain and long-term harms can be substantial. Attuned to the harmful effects of broadscale stop-and-search tactics and to research showing that a very small proportion of individuals are responsible for the violence, law enforcement agencies are changing their proactive gun law enforcement strategies. Person-oriented approaches informed by robust intelligence, data from surveillance technology, and, in some cases, sophisticated analytics (e.g., crime and reoffending prediction, offender-victim social network analysis) have yielded success. Paired with appropriate training as well as internal and external accountability structures, highly targeted proactive gun law enforcement can enhance public safety without eroding community trust.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

**BPD and the State’s Attorney’s Office of Baltimore should partner to develop a robust data-informed system incorporating input and intel from those engaged at all levels of the criminal justice system so that gun-related crimes may be evaluated from arrest through to prosecution outcome.**

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Currently, case dispositions and reasons for charges being dismissed are recorded by the SAO but these data are not shared with BPD. To identify problematic practices such as illegal searches and to improve the quality of proactive gun law enforcement, prosecutors and police should have an integrated, shared database. This database should be used to track the reasons that charges are dropped, and to identify officers or units who have a significant share of their gun-related arrests lead to dismissed charges due to problematic searches or evidence. Aggregated data from this database should be made public in order to assess progress and promote accountability.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

**Using the data developed from Recommendation 2, BPD and SAO should identify priority cases to review and carry out steps to improve outcomes (e.g., providing officers with feedback and training or pursuing disciplinary actions when appropriate).**

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Officers and detectives should receive training on how to effectively collect data, process evidence, and strategically manage caseloads for desirable prosecution outcomes. In turn, policies and procedures by which case data is updated, communicated, and used to advance shared objectives have the potential to advance procedural justice and restore community trust in the legitimacy of the criminal justice system.



## RECOMMENDATION 4

**BPD and SAO should make comprehensive data related to stops, searches, arrests, and the dispositions of charges involving illegal possession of firearms available to the public.**

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BPD officers do not collect, report, nor use data consistently across the department—improvements must be made to ensure data are comprehensive, accurate, and publicly accessible in accordance with USDOJ guidelines and with sensitivity to community concerns. All stop, search, and arrest data should include officer identification, subsequent prosecution outcomes, and link to civilian complaints. In this way, data transparency invites the opportunity for public oversight and, in turn, sets a standard for lawful, legitimate police behavior endorsed by department leadership.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

**BPD should concentrate its proactive gun law enforcement on individuals at high risk for violence involvement and support these efforts by collecting data that reflect indicators of risk for each person charged with illegal possession of a firearm.**

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The impact of proactive gun law enforcement depends on whether those who are arrested with firearms are linked to prior violence. BPD should track indicators of risk connected to the arrest (e.g., ballistics test shows the gun was used in a shooting, suspect has prior charges for crimes involving violence or firearms, suspect is a person of interest in a murder, nonfatal shooting, or armed robbery).

## RECOMMENDATION 6

**The Mayor’s Office for Criminal Justice should work with community-based organizations and academic experts to develop, implement, and evaluate a program to reduce the risk of an individual previously charged with illegal gun possession from committing gun-related crimes.**

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Individuals who have been convicted of or plead guilty to charges of illegal gun possession are at elevated risk for committing gun violence or being a victim of gun violence absent effective intervention. Roca, an anti-violence program, provides intensive outreach and support for positive behavior change among young people at high risk for violence involvement, but most individuals who commit gun crimes are older than 25 years of age, and the number of individuals found guilty of illegal gun possession is much larger than what the program can currently handle.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

**Baltimore should implement a focused deterrence program to reduce gun violence that is appropriately targeted, effectively communicated, delivers promised services, involves respected community voices, and delivers swift and certain justice in response to violence.**

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Focused deterrence programs (also known as Group Violence Intervention) have consistently led to significant reductions in gun violence in cities across the U.S., and some have recently incorporated strategies to promote procedural justice. This method is a more effective, efficient, and potentially more just approach to reducing gun violence than is the broad use of stop-and-search for weapons. Deterring illegal possession of firearms by individuals at high risk for violence involvement, identified for focused deterrence interventions, should be a priority.

## RECOMMENDATION 8

**BPD and SAO should develop a strategic plan for improving the identification, arrest, and prosecution of shooters that is data-driven and informed by the best scientific evidence.**

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Such plans will consider how to effectively use a Crime Gun Intelligence Center model, enhanced detective staffing and supervision, use of video surveillance, and enhanced attention to witness protection.

# CONCLUSION

Policing that deters illegal gun possession by individuals at high risk for involvement in violence reduces shootings, especially in the short term. But broad use of stop-and-search practices that are unconstitutional or otherwise harmful to innocent people not at high risk for violence involvement are counterproductive to the promotion of public safety, justice, and public trust in police. Rather than push officers to increase the number of gun-related arrests, BPD should focus on improving the quality of gun-related arrests (legal searches, meticulous evidence collection); concentrating on violent individuals; developing systems to identify and correct officers' practices that yield bad outcomes from proactive gun law enforcement; and enhancing transparency with respect to key metrics to promote public accountability. BPD's efforts to improve their gun law enforcement practices would be aided by prosecutors' sharing data on case dispositions and reasons for gun charges being dropped. Importantly, BPD's policies and practices relevant to proactive gun law enforcement should be acceptable to communities and be used as part of a broader strategy to apply evidence-based strategies to prevent gun violence.

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# APPENDIX A

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS WITH CITY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ON PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Summary of Participating City Law Enforcement Agencies Included in Key Informant Sample

	U.S. Cities Population 100,000 – 1,000,000	Members of “What Works Cities”	Cities Contacted	Cities that Completed Interview
<b>West Region</b>	113	39	11	3 Albuquerque, New Mexico Portland, Oregon Seattle, Washington
<b>South Region</b>	101	49	21	13 Charlotte, North Carolina Chattanooga, Tennessee Durham, North Carolina Fort Worth, Texas Greensboro, North Carolina Little Rock, Arkansas Louisville, Kentucky Miami, Florida Nashville, Tennessee Norfolk, Virginia Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Tulsa, Oklahoma Washington, DC
<b>Northeast Region</b>	23	9	4	2 Boston, Massachusetts Syracuse, New York
<b>Midwest Region</b>	48	26	11	6 Cincinnati, Ohio Kansas City, Kansas Kansas City, Missouri Milwaukee, Wisconsin Minneapolis, Minnesota Wichita, Kansas
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>West Region</b>	40%	32%	23%	13%
<b>South Region</b>	35%	40%	45%	54%
<b>Northeast Region</b>	8%	7%	9%	8%
<b>Midwest Region</b>	17%	21%	23%	25%
<b>Population (mean)</b>	227,384	307,076	476,209	456,356
<b>Population (median)</b>	160,614	229,426	439,886	442,329
<b>Homicides per 100,000 (median)</b>	4.7	5.6	10.3	8.8

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Identification

1. Can you begin by providing your name, summarizing your experience within this or other departments, and giving your current position and the responsibilities it entails?

### General

2. In what kinds of interactions does your department seize illegal guns?  
→ (e.g., Terry stops, traffic stops, searches of residences, responses to information from tip-lines...)
3. Thinking about the total universe of guns that your department seizes, about what share come from each type of interaction?
4. Are there any parts of your department that have primary responsibility over the performance of these activities?
5. Are plainclothes officers involved in any way?
6. To what degree would you say your department prioritizes enforcement of illegal gun possession relative to other crimes, and in what ways do you focus on it?  
→ (e.g., is a special unit addressing it? Do you invest additional resources in enhancing gun possession cases for prosecution? Are specific metrics on arrests or gun seizures calculated for a regular report or meeting? If so, what are those metrics and processes? Are these a regular fixture at Compstat meetings?)

7. Are some illegal gun possession cases more important to public safety than others, and if so, how well does your department's available intelligence allow you to focus enforcement efforts on them?  
→ What share of your gun-related arrests stem from intelligence on specific high-risk individuals versus from vehicle stops or street stops by patrol officers?

### Training

8. Are any of these enforcement activities covered in your department's procedure manual or patrol guide?  
→ For each, what are the most critical concepts covered?
9. In your department have there been any recent directives to clarify guidance on these practices?
10. Has your department covered these subjects in roll-call trainings or annual in-service trainings?  
→ Were any materials produced for those trainings?
11. Is any guidance provided to officers to help them understand Constitutional limitations depending on the circumstances?  
→ (e.g., for requests for information, common law right of inquiry, stop question and frisk, and arrests.)



12. Are there any other special circumstances or location in which a gun seizure might occur for which officers need specific guidance or training?

→ (e.g., within a private housing development, an airport, a Native American reservation, etc.)

13. How are officers trained to assess when “reasonable suspicion” is sufficient to conduct a stop?

14. Does your department require specific training on racial bias, and if so, by what process?

15. Does your department require specific training on procedural justice, and if so, by what process?

## Documenting Encounters

16. In light of your description of your department’s illegal gun enforcement practices, I now want to delve into the documentation for each type of encounter. For each [traffic stop], what is the officer required to document? (Repeat for [street stop], [search warrants], [other categories from Q2].)

→ Is the officer required to document the race of the person they engage with?

→ If the officer is required to describe the circumstances of the encounter, does it provide a checklist or require a narrative description?

17. Who reviews these forms and on what occasions? Do they review the completeness of the form or its content? What do they look for?

18. Are these forms ever made into data, such that an analyst can review patterns in them as

a whole? How are those data structured?

19. Are these data ever audited? What types of analyses are conducted?

→ (e.g., compared by squad?)

20. Are these data made publicly available?

21. Does your department have body-worn cameras, and if so, is footage ever reviewed in the context of assessing performance of these gun-related enforcement activities?

## Gathering Evidence and Tracking Disposition

22. Do you have any standardized protocol for how evidence is collected during or after a gun seizure?

→ (e.g., photographing the weapon where it was found; swabbing it for genetic material; canvassing for CCTV footage; inputting the gun in eTrace and NIBIN)

23. After an arrest, does your department have any subsequent interactions with the prosecutor?

→ (e.g., requests for additional evidence, etc.)

24. Does your department have a means and/or regular practice of tracking the resolution of gun arrests?

→ (e.g., reviewing arrests that are dismissed by the prosecutor)

25. Do supervisors have some responsibility for how many gun arrests result in pleas or prosecution, and if so, how do they track their performance?

→ (e.g., are reports on case dispositions generated for supervisors?)

## Engaging Community

26. With regard to Academy training of new officers (specifically with regard to gun enforcement), are members of the community at all involved in offering their viewpoint?
27. Has your department ever held a public meeting to discuss your crime gun enforcement practices?
  - (e.g., was the meeting explicitly organized around guns, or did that topic arise organically?)
28. Has your department sought public input about these processes?
  - (e.g., through focus groups, from advocacy groups, etc.)
29. To the extent you conduct any major gun operation or takedown, is there any public engagement with communities afterwards?
30. To the extent there are citizen complaints stemming from stops and searches for illegal guns, what if any systems are in place for reviewing and responding?
31. Are data on citizen complaints linked to data on searches, making it possible to identify problematic practices, be it by search-type, neighborhood, or personnel?

## Concluding Observations

32. Are there any other notable activities your department undertakes with regard to enforcing illegal gun possession?
33. Have your policies substantially changed over the last five or so years?
34. Are there any notable opportunities for improvement to current procedures as you experience them?
  - (e.g., are there any challenges to sustaining these practices indefinitely?)
35. Are there any peer agencies you think have the best policies and practices who we should attempt to interview?

# APPENDIX B

## COMMUNITY HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS ON PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT

### Questions

What are community perceptions of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD)? How do they rate the quality of their interactions with BPD? What strategies could positively impact community trust of BPD? How well is BPD doing relative to before Freddie Gray's death and the subsequent unrest?

### Approach

We conducted household-level surveys in the Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI) zones located in East and West Baltimore. Research Assistants went door-to-door during weekend daylight hours in the VRI zones to collect one response per household. The surveys asked questions on six topics: 1) perceptions of neighborhood; 2) general perceptions of BPD; 3) resident response to crime (collective efficacy); 4) interactions with BPD; 5) transparency of BPD arrests; and 6) quality of policing post-Freddie Gray's death. Respondents were compensated \$25 for their time.

### Results

We approached 2,980 houses across the two VRIs. 1,298 were vacant, and at 1,083 houses no one answered the door. Of the 598 occupied houses where someone answered, 47 requested the RAs come back later, one was not eligible, and 351 were not interested. We gathered 200 surveys for a response rate of 33%. The results of the surveys are presented by topic area in tables below.

## Perceptions of Neighborhood (N = 200)

### HOW SAFE OR UNSAFE DO YOU FEEL WALKING ALONE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD AT NIGHT?

Safe	24%
Somewhat safe	38.5%
Somewhat unsafe	18.5%
Unsafe	19%

### HOW CONCERNED OR UNCONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT ILLEGAL GUN CARRYING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Concerned	77%
Somewhat concerned	11%
Somewhat unconcerned	5.5%
Unconcerned	6.5%

### WHEN SHOTS ARE FIRED IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, HOW QUICKLY OR SLOWLY DO THE POLICE RESPOND?

Quickly	14%
Somewhat quickly	33.5%
Somewhat slowly	33%
Slowly	17%
Don't know	2.5%
Refuse to answer	N/A

### IF MORE OF YOUR NEIGHBORS CARRIED GUNS, DO YOU THINK YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD BE MORE OR LESS SAFE?

More safe	12.5%
Somewhat more safe	19.5%
Somewhat less safe	21.5%
Less safe	44.5%
Don't know	1.5%
Refuse to answer	0.5%

## Perceptions of BPD (N = 200)

### THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS EFFECTIVE AT ARRESTING VIOLENT CRIMINALS IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Strongly agree	12.5%
Agree	37%
Disagree	35%
Strongly disagree	13.5%
Don't know	1.5%
Refuse to answer	0.5%

### BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE STOPPING THE PEOPLE MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR CRIME IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Strongly agree	8%
Agree	25.5%
Disagree	47%
Strongly disagree	16.5%
Don't know	2%
Not applicable	1%

## Perceptions of BPD (N = 200)

### BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE RESPECTFUL WHEN THEY INTERACT WITH PEOPLE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

<b>Strongly agree</b>	7.5%
<b>Agree</b>	38.5%
<b>Disagree</b>	31.5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	20.5%
<b>Don't know</b>	2%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	N/A

### BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS USE FORCE ONLY WHEN NECESSARY

<b>Strongly agree</b>	7%
<b>Agree</b>	21.5%
<b>Disagree</b>	41.5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	27%
<b>Don't know</b>	2.5%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	0.5%

### BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS STOP-AND-SEARCH TOO MANY PEOPLE ON THE STREET IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

<b>Strongly agree</b>	25.5%
<b>Agree</b>	29%
<b>Disagree</b>	33.5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	7%
<b>Don't know</b>	5%
<b>Not applicable</b>	N/A

### BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS STOP-AND-SEARCH TOO MANY CARS IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

<b>Strongly agree</b>	19%
<b>Agree</b>	30%
<b>Disagree</b>	37.5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	7.5%
<b>Don't know</b>	5.5%
<b>Not applicable</b>	0.5%

### A FORMAL COMPLAINT AGAINST A BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICER WOULD BE INVESTIGATED FAIRLY AND OBJECTIVELY

<b>Strongly agree</b>	9%
<b>Agree</b>	16.5%
<b>Disagree</b>	44%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	26.5%
<b>Don't know</b>	3.5%
<b>Not applicable</b>	0.5%

## Response to Crime (collective efficacy) (N = 200)

**IF THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT STOPPED CONDUCTING STOP-AND-SEARCH IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD, THE FOLLOWING WOULD HAPPEN:**

<b>More people would get shot</b>	13.5%
<b>It would stay the same</b>	56.5%
<b>Less people would get shot</b>	27%
<b>Don't know</b>	2.5%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	0.5%

**IF THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT STOPPED CONDUCTING STOP-AND-SEARCH IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, HOW WOULD IT AFFECT YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?**

<b>My feelings would get better</b>	20.5%
<b>My feelings would stay the same</b>	62%
<b>My feelings would get worse</b>	15%
<b>Don't know</b>	2%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	0.5%

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO CALL THE POLICE IF SOMEONE IS CARRYING A GUN ON THE STREET?**

<b>Very unlikely</b>	12%
<b>Unlikely</b>	19.5%
<b>Likely</b>	36.5%
<b>Very likely</b>	30%
<b>Don't know</b>	2%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	N/A

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO CALL THE POLICE IF SOMEONE SHOWS A GUN IN A THREATENING MANNER?**

<b>Very unlikely</b>	7%
<b>Unlikely</b>	15%
<b>Likely</b>	37.5%
<b>Very likely</b>	39.5%
<b>Don't know</b>	0.5%
<b>Not applicable</b>	0.5%

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO CALL THE POLICE IF YOU SEE SOMEONE HIDING A GUN IN A PUBLIC PLACE?**

<b>Very unlikely</b>	13%
<b>Unlikely</b>	21.5%
<b>Likely</b>	34.5%
<b>Very likely</b>	30%
<b>Don't know</b>	0.5%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	0.5%

## Interactions with BPD (N = 200)

**WITHIN THE PAST 6 MONTHS, HAVE YOU BEEN STOPPED BY THE BALTIMORE POLICE FOR A TRAFFIC VIOLATION?**

**Yes** 12%

**No** 88%

**THE POLICE OFFICER I HAD CONTACT WITH TREATED ME WITH RESPECT (N = 24)**

**Strongly agree** 8%

**Agree** 50%

**Disagree** 38%

**Strongly disagree** 4%

**DID THE OFFICER USE MORE FORCE THAN NECESSARY? (N = 24)**

**Yes** 17%

**No** 83%

**WITHIN THE PAST 6 MONTHS, HAVE YOU BEEN STOPPED BY THE BALTIMORE POLICE FOR HANGING OUT?**

**Yes** 13.5%

**No** 86.5%

**WERE YOU ARRESTED? (N = 27)**

**Yes** 22%

**No** 78%

**DID THE OFFICER SEARCH THE VEHICLE? (N = 24)**

**Yes** 25%

**No** 75%

**DID THE POLICE OFFICER EXPLAIN THE SEARCH? (N = 6)**

**Yes** 17%

**No** 83%

**DO YOU THINK THE SEARCH WAS JUSTIFIED? (N = 6)**

**Yes** 0%

**No** 100%

**THE POLICE OFFICER I HAD CONTACT WITH TREATED ME WITH RESPECT (N = 27)**

**Strongly agree** 0%

**Agree** 22%

**Disagree** 56%

**Strongly disagree** 22%

**DID THE OFFICER PAT YOU DOWN TO SEE IF YOU WERE CARRYING A WEAPON? (N = 27)**

**Yes** 67%

**No** 33%

## Interactions with BPD (N = 200)

**WITHIN THE PAST 6 MONTHS, HAVE YOU BEEN ARRESTED BY BALTIMORE POLICE FOR CARRYING A GUN?**

**Yes** 0.5%

**No** 99.5%

**THE POLICE OFFICER I HAD CONTACT WITH TREATED ME WITH RESPECT (N = 1)**

**Strongly disagree** 100%

**DURING THE PAST 6 MONTHS, HAVE YOU SEEN BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS STOP-AND-SEARCH OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?**

**Yes** 66.5%

**No** 33%

**Refuse to answer** 0.5%

**HOW MANY TIMES? (N = 133)**

**1-2 times** 23%

**3-5 times** 36%

**More than 5 times** 41%

**DURING THE MOST RECENT STOP-AND-SEARCH THAT YOU WITNESSED, DID THE OFFICER USE MORE FORCE THAN NECESSARY? (N = 133)**

**Yes** 41%

**No** 56%

**Don't know** 3%

**IF YOU WERE SERVING ON A JURY, HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO BELIEVE A BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICER'S TESTIMONY ABOUT FINDING A GUN ON SOMEBODY WITHOUT VIDEO EVIDENCE?**

**Very unlikely** 29.5%

**Unlikely** 32.5%

**Likely** 23.5%

**Very likely** 10%

**Don't know** 3.5%

**Refuse to answer** 0.5%

**Not applicable** 0.5%



## Transparency of BPD Arrests (N = 200)

**SUPERVISORS SHOULD TRACK EACH OFFICER'S GUN-RELATED ARRESTS THAT ARE LATER DISMISSED DUE TO ILLEGAL SEARCHES OR EVIDENCE PLANTING**

**Strongly agree** 58%

**Agree** 32%

**Disagree** 7.5%

**Strongly disagree** 2%

**Don't know** 0.5%

**HOW WOULD HAVING COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN POLICE OVERSIGHT AFFECT COMMUNITY TRUST IN WHAT BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE DOING TO COMBAT GUN VIOLENCE?**

**Increase trust** 64.5%

**Trust would not change** 30%

**Decrease trust** 3.5%

**Don't know** 1.5%

**Refuse to answer** 0.5%

**HOW WOULD MAKING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARRESTED FOR ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AFFECT COMMUNITY TRUST IN WHAT BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE DOING TO COMBAT GUN VIOLENCE?**

**Increase trust** 54.5%

**Trust would not change** 38.5%

**Decrease trust** 6%

**Don't know** 1%

**HOW WOULD MAKING THE NUMBER OF CITIZEN COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE RESULTING FROM STOPS FOR SUSPECTED GUNS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AFFECT COMMUNITY TRUST IN WHAT BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE DOING TO COMBAT GUN VIOLENCE?**

**Increase trust** 53%

**Trust would not change** 38%

**Decrease trust** 6.5%

**Don't know** 2.5%

**SUPERVISORS SHOULD TRACK THE NUMBER OF EACH OFFICER'S GUN-RELATED ARRESTS THAT RESULT IN CONVICTIONS OR GUILTY PLEAS**

**Strongly agree** 58%

**Agree** 34.5%

**Disagree** 5.5%

**Strongly disagree** 0.5%

**Don't know** 1.5%

**HOW WOULD HAVING PROSECUTORS REVIEW ALL BODY CAMERA VIDEOS OF GUN ARRESTS TO IDENTIFY ANY PROBLEMS AFFECT COMMUNITY TRUST IN WHAT BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE DOING TO COMBAT GUN VIOLENCE?**

**Increase trust** 79.5%

**Trust would not change** 17%

**Decrease trust** 3%

**Don't know** 0.5%

**HOW WOULD MAKING THE NUMBER OF ARRESTS DISMISSED DUE TO ILLEGAL SEARCHES AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AFFECT COMMUNITY TRUST IN WHAT BALTIMORE POLICE OFFICERS ARE DOING TO COMBAT GUN VIOLENCE?**

**Increase trust** 53%

**Trust would not change** 36%

**Decrease trust** 8.5%

**Don't know** 2.5%

## Quality of Policing Post-Freddie Gray (N = 200)

WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY, DO YOU THINK THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DOING A BETTER JOB, THE SAME, OR WORSE AT LISTENING TO THE CONCERNS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS?

<b>A better job</b>	33%
<b>The same job</b>	46%
<b>A worse job</b>	20%
<b>Don't know</b>	1%

WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY, DO YOU THINK THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DOING A BETTER JOB, THE SAME, OR WORSE AT COMMUNICATING BETTER ABOUT POLICE ACTIVITIES?

<b>A better job</b>	32%
<b>The same job</b>	49.5%
<b>A worse job</b>	18%
<b>Don't know</b>	0.5%

WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY, DO YOU THINK THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DOING A BETTER JOB, THE SAME, OR WORSE AT HANDLING SUSPECTS IN POLICE CUSTODY?

<b>A better job</b>	30%
<b>The same job</b>	46.5%
<b>A worse job</b>	22%
<b>Don't know</b>	1%
<b>Refuse to answer</b>	0.5%

WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY, DO YOU THINK THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DOING A BETTER JOB, THE SAME, OR WORSE AT HOLDING POLICE OFFICERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR ILLEGAL ACTIVITY?

<b>A better job</b>	40%
<b>The same job</b>	32%
<b>A worse job</b>	28%

WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY, DO YOU THINK THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DOING A BETTER JOB, THE SAME, OR WORSE AT RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS ABOUT OFFICER BEHAVIOR?

<b>A better job</b>	36%
<b>The same job</b>	37%
<b>A worse job</b>	26%
<b>Don't know</b>	1%

WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY, DO YOU THINK THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DOING A BETTER JOB, THE SAME, OR WORSE AT HANDLING PEACEFUL PROTESTS OR DEMONSTRATIONS IN A FAIR AND SAFE MANNER?

<b>A better job</b>	37%
<b>The same job</b>	45%
<b>A worse job</b>	17%
<b>Don't know</b>	1%

# APPENDIX C

## COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS FOR UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS FOR PROACTIVE GUN LAW ENFORCEMENT

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### Background

The purpose of these focus groups was to understand community solutions for proactive gun law enforcement by assessing community perceptions and attitudes relevant to proactive gun law enforcement in Baltimore City and understanding community views of the police. Focus group findings will be used to inform policies and procedures for the Baltimore City Police Department to support its efforts to reduce gun violence in Baltimore.

### Methods

Four focus groups with a total of 31 community members were held in July and August 2018. Two focus groups each were held in East and West Baltimore. Participants included African American/black men and women aged 18 years and older. Participants were recruited from community organizations supporting community residents with workforce development programs. Each focus group was semistructured, allowing the facilitator to follow up on questions or points of discussion as needed. Focus groups were between 61 minutes and 75 minutes long (average: 71 minutes). The focus groups were recorded and

professionally transcribed; each transcript was verified by a research assistant.

Analysis was informed by grounded theory using thematic analysis techniques. Emerging themes from the focus group data were identified during the first read-through of the transcripts using the research aims and questions as an initial framework. The emerging themes and subthemes were identified during subsequent readings of the transcripts. These themes were triangulated with notes and observations collected by two research assistants who observed the focus groups (three focus groups had two RAs, one focus group had one RA).

### High-Level Thematic Findings

#### COMMUNITY SAFETY

Focus group participants were split among feeling safe and unsafe in their communities; the feelings of safety depended on the situation. However, participants broadly felt that Baltimore was unsafe in ways that threatened their survival:

*Woman 1: Because if you got n--- out here robbing n---, you got n--- out here killing n---. All types of stuff. Raping people. Ain't none of that*

*s--- safe, simple as that. The world ain't safe, period. Especially not Baltimore. <laughs>*

*Woman 3: And you're basically in survival mode.*

*Woman 1: Yeah. –conversation between two women, West*

*Man 3: Like what Mo was saying, innocent people is dying down here in Baltimore and it's like I don't feel safe because, like, this one situation I knew — everybody probably know about this seven-year-old girl that got shot and killed on, I think, Edmondson Avenue. And that's just been on my mind lately, because she was an innocent child that didn't have nothing to do with nothing and now she dead and gone. It's just — crazy and sad to me that you can't even walk these streets and be innocent without having to worry about do I need to look over my shoulder or look around me? Because I'm scared. Or when I walk out my door or my building or wherever you living at, you know, you scared to walk out, because you don't know if you going to get hit by a stray bullet or something. You know, so, I don't feel safe and that's what I'm going to say. –Man, East*

These feelings were discussed as being driven by individual and institutional factors. Individual factors of safety were driven by knowing the people they were around and having relationships with people in their communities. Participants described feeling the safest with people they know or around people they grew up with. However, even then, those participants perceived that they could not feel completely safe or that they could let their guards down:

*I feel safe in any environment or any community that I'm in. I think you have to be aware, though, like I said earlier, I think similar to what you're saying is you have to think — being in these environments that some of us are from, we know, like you said anything can go left at any time. So you're aware that that can happen, being aware of that, it kind of keeps you on edge. So yeah, I'm safe, but I'm still not relaxed. –Man, East*

Institutional factors of safety involved the police and their role in the participants' perceptions of safety. This mainly focused on police behaviors, such as harassment and general treatment of citizens when interacting with them. Although discussions of police harassment centered on how the police targeted and treated citizens, one woman (East) asked if other women in the focus group had experiences with police harassment, such as police following them because they were romantically interested in them, and told her story of this happening to her. This experience contributed to her feeling less safe in her community.

A few participants described feeling unsafe in their communities because of a lack of police response and a community culture around “snitching”/not sharing information with the police:

*I don't, because I live in McCullough Homes. You know, yeah. So, it's a lot of shooting down there, you know what I'm saying? And I've got kids down there. So, they be outside playing and stuff and I don't want them getting shot or, you know, just like and calling the police, they don't do nothing down there. You know what I'm saying? They might go check things out,*

*go by there, but you know ain't nobody going to snitch. You know what I'm saying? So, no, I don't feel safe. –Man, West*

When asked about what safety means to them or what would make them feel safer, participants had various responses. Some responses centered on feeling comfortable in their own skin:

*That's what I meant by being myself without consequence. Because I shouldn't have to change how I dress. I shouldn't have to change how I look. I shouldn't have to cut my dreads off, I shouldn't have to do any of that. Why can't you respect me for being a human being? Because that's what I am. –Man, East*

Others discussed not having to be constantly on guard. In both the East and the West, some participants felt that leaving Baltimore City could possibly make them feel safer, but described this with mixed feelings:

*But, no, it's not safe. I got a one-year-old son and I'm trying to do the best I can to move us out of here. Like, I'm ready to go. Like, I'm not necessarily got to move out of Baltimore, but I need to go to the county, because I feel a little bit more safe over at the county. But, then again, I don't, because I live in the county right now at this second and the police are not on our side as African Americans, just point blank, period. –Woman, East*

A few participants felt that they would be safer if the laws and legal landscape protected them if they needed to defend themselves. In this context, participants believed that there may be situations in their communities where they need

to defend themselves, friends, or family members, but would be punished if they attempted to do so:

*Self-defense law. That would make me feel safer. Being able to defend myself — without getting in trouble — in a situation without having to do fifteen years in jail for it, because of the city that we live in. You can't fight somebody, go head up and think that it's over. –Woman, East*

## PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE

Participants in both the East and West focus groups perceived that the police were ineffective in their communities. Many participants agreed that the police do not do much to keep their communities safe or protected:

*In that system, they know what they put their self into when they took that oath to get that badge. They know what they doing. It's not, "Oh, we just going to go out here and protect the community," because they ain't protecting nothing. –Man, West*

Some participants thought that while police officers were not doing the part of their job where they should be protecting the community, they would fulfill other job requirements, such as making arrests, in order to exercise their power over the community:

*They more so looking to not even do their job, but they'll lock somebody up. They'll make somebody — like, when you come into the presence of a police officer — I'm not going to say all of them, but most of them, it's just like, you get the vibe of "I'm here to mess your day up." –Man, East*

Some participants thought that the police were ineffective in their communities because they were undertrained, did not know their communities, or did not understand the law:

*Taking the people that trying to join the police academy, they need to do a real test. You don't — people that be police officers, they don't even know the law. And some people they get into positions, they don't even know the law. –Man, East*

Many participants perceived that police do not view residents in their communities as people deserving of protection. Several participants discussed the police fearing the communities, which leads to unfair police treatment and behaviors. A few participants questioned the officers' abilities to protect their communities due to this fear and why they were so afraid of those they were sworn to protect:

*I don't get that. How do you fear something you're supposed to be protecting? –Woman, West*

Several participants described experiences with police officers where they felt they were disrespected by how officers interacted with them:

*... they always going to be judgmental about what we doing. For real, they always going to want to pull up and act stupid towards us instead of just being patient, polite and just saying, like, "Hey, look. Y'all can't do this right here, man. Just go sit on the porch somewhere or something like that." Instead, they going to just jump out. "Hey, don't go nowhere. Hey, come here." Yeah, and for real, that's — I don't know, it's a whole lot. <laughs> It's a whole lot for real. –Man, West*

Participants described perceptions of being dismissed by the police as reflected by response times because of race or other perceptions about their communities:

*Man 1: They're not there when you need them.*

*Woman 2: Yeah, like the timing is off. You can call — I'd say at the most, like, you can call the police and say, "Oh, I got a situation —" like she said: It's all about the area. You can call and say you got a situation, they going to show up forty-five minutes, hour later. But if you call and hang up and they don't know why they — if and how on the other line, it could be elderly or a white person or whatever they may think —*

*Q: Mm-hm.*

*Woman 2: — they come quick <snapping fingers sound>. "Did somebody call? What's going on? Did somebody call?" –conversation between a man and woman, East*

*And then, like I say, neighborhood. I feel as though the problem — they take their time coming to certain neighborhoods. Like, when they know it's a murder in a regular murder neighborhood, they take their time, because they're going, "They going to die anyway." –Woman, East*

They also described this perception as a result of how the police treat them when they do respond:

*Because I called the police for an incident, this man was being racist, I end up getting in trouble. He was trying to lock me up for being aggressive, telling me I'm too aggressive. I'm just talking to the man. –Woman, East*

Some participants in both the East and West acknowledged that many community members do not respectfully treat the police. They believed that, at times, a citizen's disrespect of the police feeds into the police disrespecting citizens when they interact with each other.

Participants in both the East and West believed that police culture shapes how they interact with citizens in their communities. Some described police as their own gang and shared feelings that police are more interested in protecting themselves than the communities:

*Woman 1: I think because they under oath, I think they believe in a certain way of treating the public in general. Like, even though you got your good officers, I think they have, like, their oath and I think it's like a secret society. That's just my mindset of it.*

*Man 2: Listen, just like how we got every other gang out here, you got to think about when they police, they are in a gang. That is a gang.*  
–conversation between a woman and man, West

Many participants agreed that the police culture, and the broader criminal justice system, is corrupt. Corruption included factors related to just consequences for poor police behaviors, police officers being involved in illegal gun or drug trades, and officers falsely accusing citizens of crimes:

*Man 1: Listen, hear me out. I'm not disputing what you're saying. I'm saying you can prove whatever you want, but does that mean you're going to get served justice for it?*

*Woman 2: No, it don't! Because the whole justice system is corrupt, to be honest.* –conversation between a man and woman, West

*I was going to say same thing that they just said. Like, the whole — to me, the entire system is corrupt. You have judges who are just as corrupt and with the cops there's nothing to go in the storage unit. They just file it "Missing." And you done sent it over to your cousin's who go do this, that, and the third — and then they just give it back and you put it back and act like nothing happened. That's how I think it is. Like, it's the cops. The judges, the law system is shaky, too.* –Woman, East

Participants from the East and West groups described incidents where the police accused them or someone they know of possession of drugs or having done other criminal activity. Planting guns or drugs on civilians was a concern, or an actual experience, shared across participants in both the East and the West:

*Each one sitting at this table, we all knew that one crooked-ass police officer that will pull out on us or even plant one on us. We all knew that one police officer.* –Woman, West

Several participants perceived that police officers stereotype citizens without taking the time to understand them or believe them when they tell them what they're doing. This type of interaction also shaped perceptions of safety in their communities:

*Man 1: <laughs> As I say, I don't feel the same, because the police are not patient. Like one time I was sitting on the corner. I wasn't doing nothing but drinking a juice. I just left out the store. But they thought I was a drug dealer so they approached me and they said you got to move. So I said, "Well, the person at the store said I could sit out here and drink my drink."*

*And he said, “Well, this is a drug area, so you have to move. If not, I might be forced to lock you up because I believe you’re a drug dealer and you’re dealing drugs on the street.” Right. Instead of being patient and actually going inside the store and asking the man, oh, did he say it’s okay for you to stay right there, yeah, stuff like all that.*

*Woman 1: They just want to be an ass.*

*Man 1: Yeah, they just want to be ignorant and impatient. And that’s why I believe I’m not safe at any time. He could have just took his gun out because he thought I was going to take something out anyway. –conversation between a man and woman, West*

Participants also perceived that the police do not do much to pursue criminals, especially when crime is happening right in front of them. However, participants do believe that because of the police culture, police will pursue criminals if something happened to a fellow officer. However, some participants described positive interactions with the police. For example, several participants in both the East and West focus groups described experiences where the police saw them committing a crime, but gave them a warning or just talked with them instead of arresting them. These types of experiences helped participants identify some police officers who were willing to get to know them and perceived as different and more community-oriented from other officers:

*But you know, they have to have some level of understanding, like, “Okay, a blunt? I’m not going to lock you up over no blunt. That’s crazy. You know what I mean? Just put it out, or I’ll take it and just go on, man.” You know what I’m saying? That kind of interaction*

*has to be had. And then like he said, “Now, I know that dude is cool!” So if I see him again, I’m like, I might not run up to him and hug or something, but I’m like, “That’s the cool officer, you know what I’m saying? Like he cool. So people like y’all don’t talk, “You know, he a bad police.” Like, “Nah, that’s my man! He let me get off with a blunt a couple times.” –Man, East*

But some of these interactions were described as exceptions to the broader police culture or were described as how things were in the past and were not necessarily applicable to the present:

*Because once upon a time, like my mother telling me stories, like back in the day when she was young and our age, whatever. And how the police would be out really walking. Like walking around, helping out. Helping people clean up their streets and helping the elderly with their trash, if they had to take their trash out. Like doing stuff that civil servants would do! Like y’all here to help and I mean serve the community, but y’all don’t. Like y’all really hurt the community more than y’all help it. –Man, East*

*Woman 3: It hasn’t always been like this.*

*Woman 1: No, it hasn’t. It hasn’t, but.*

*Woman 3: No. I was on, I used to live on Greenmount Avenue and the police officers around there, they interacted with the kids. You know, they never, like they’re saying, you know, was violent or ignorant towards the kids and they would even say to the drug dealers, “Look. When you see me, respect me and move.” –conversation between two women, West*



## CRIME-RELATED COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Participants described gun violence as one of a few important problems in their communities. Other common problems discussed were mental health and drug addiction. While gun violence was identified as a problem in their communities in both the East and West, participants shared different perspectives on the roles of guns within their communities. Some participants felt that guns and gun violence were a means of survival within an environment designed against them. These perceptions of survival were described as surviving threats from other community members and as protection from the police and other government powers and to ensure their rights. When described in this context, participants did not feel that guns in general or unlicensed guns were a problem:

*Woman 1: Yeah, with the cops you need a gun because that's the first thing they're going to pull out is "Bam, n---, pop-pop."*

*Man 3: The reason why I say we need our guns, because it's bigger plans that our government has. That's why they're taking our guns away from us, why they took our right to bear arms away from us.*

*Man 1: Brother, they don't even need our guns.*

*Man 3: Because what they got planned for us —*

*Man 1: <laughs>*

*Man 3: They don't want us to be able to protect ourselves. —conversation between two men and a woman, West*

*That's the whole point. And then it's just — when I say I need a gun, it's not just to be waving it or carrying it around or anything. That's to protect my rights. —Man, East*

Participants did distinguish between legal and illegal guns. They understood the process of obtaining legal guns but also described the reasons behind owning illegal guns in the city, mainly as a means of survival and feeling safe. Having illegal guns was perceived as a part of their culture and as a necessity at times:

*Sometimes I feel as though it's necessary to have a gun, because stuff can go south and all that. You know, get a gun license and all that. But at the same time, it's still — even if you know, you know, when a man had a gun license when he got shot by the police and all that. It's just all that stuff come into play. It's just — safe? Me being safe? I just need a gun. That's what I think, because even if I show somebody the laws and all that, or when it come[s] to police, or just people, it just — it's just definitely I just need it. That's how I feel. —Man, East*

*But at the same time, some people have them for their own protection. And the way you get it is just the way you get it! —Woman, West*

Some participants described their perceptions of how easy it is to obtain a gun illegally in the city. They discussed knowing who in the neighborhood would supply them with an unlicensed gun for cash. Several participants also perceived that the police department is responsible for the flow of illegal guns in their communities. This perception was held generally across both the East and the West:

*Man 3: I think for the most part, because it's so much crooked stuff going on with the Baltimore Police Department I think just like they do drugs when they get the drugs off the street — but I know we're talking about the guns right now — I think all of that stuff is basically getting pushed out the back door. I think they pushing it out the back door and —*

*Woman 2: That's what they're doing.*

*Man 3: — they just throwing it right back on the street and that's how the guns and stuff — the guns and drugs and stuff it keeps recycling, because they keep pushing it. When they make it to the police, they just pushing it right back out the door. —conversation between a man and woman, East*

*It's like, "Bro, c'mon, like if we can't — if half the families in Baltimore can't hardly provide a decent meal for they family, how you think they got the resources to go buy all these big ass guns just popped up in the City?" It's gotta be somebody at a higher place that's bringing it on in here! That's like "All right, here, but you ain't get it from me." That's giving to the middle man or the little guy, like, "Here, here take that. You didn't get it from me, but bring my money back when it's time to bring my money back." —Man, East*

Others described illegal guns as a problem because they perceive an increase of people obtaining guns illegally. They described knowing who in their communities they can buy a gun from without having to go through the legal process:

Some participants discussed the idea that police and the government were responsible for illegal guns in their communities because of the types of guns that were being used in crimes, such as military-grade weapons and other large guns:

*Man 1: That's military!*

*Man 2: We got that from ya'll!*

*Man 1: This military equipment, how did they —*

*Man 2: We're not stupid!*

*Man 1: — how did it get in the streets?*

*Woman 1: How did they get in our city?  
—conversation between two men and a woman, West*

*But the people that can — if you take every individual that will take out the time to go get their license and go get the permit, everything that they need, legit'ly, to get a gun versus somebody just saying, "Okay, you know what? We going to bypass some steps. We going to go over and buy it next door, give them two- three hundred dollars and buy the gun off of him," I think that that's a problem, because it's more people doing that. And I feel like the size of the gun getting pushed out the back door, it's a lot easier — I guess I'm trying to say it's a problem because it's easy for people to just go out on the street and just buy a gun and they know they don't have to go into a pawn shop or a gun store and go through the paperwork and take two weeks for the process to get done, before you can get your gun or whatever like that. So, yeah, I feel like it's a major problem. —Man, East*

Following up on this perception, a woman described illegal guns as a problem because people do not receive training to safely operate the guns they obtain, resulting in tragic results for innocent residents. Several participants in both the East and West focus groups discussed the recent killing of a 7-year-old girl due to gun violence. This was associated with people lacking the knowledge to safely operate guns as well as perceptions around those committing violent crimes as not caring whom they shoot and kill.

While participants generally understood and valued the role of gun licensing (i.e., being able to trace a bullet to a weapon and its owner), some felt that having a license does not help them because of the lack of rights citizens may have when using a legal gun, especially in self-defense:

*So, it's like — but, then again, if you do have a license, what's that going to do? You don't have no self-defense. So, you can have a license, shoot somebody, still go to jail fifteen years. So, it really doesn't matter whether you have a license or not. –Woman, East*

## **RACE AND RACISM**

All participants were black/African American. In all four discussions, race and racism were discussed implicitly and explicitly. While participants did describe safety as being comfortable in their own skin, most perceived that their own skin color sometimes prevents them from being safe or being able to exercise their rights due to racism:

*And people that got the right to get the guns are — all the black people I know that is even in security, they got to do ten more times of thing just to get a gun than the next person. –Man, West*

Some participants compared their experiences with the police to how white citizens are treated when interacting with the police. For example, participants described how white citizens could commit a crime or murder multiple people and be brought in peacefully, but a black citizen who is perceived by the cops as having a weapon but is unarmed is shot and killed by the police:

*It was a little white kid just recently shot up a school, like, probably like two months ago and they brought him in. Then here come a black person bring a gun to school and now he doing, like, at least fifty years. I don't understand that. –Woman, West*

Participants also discussed how in their own communities, police react to the same behaviors exhibited by black and white citizens differently. This was perceived as a result of racial stereotyping:

*Woman 1: I feel like it's a race thing. I'm, like, I'm not saying it to be smart, but that's how half of these cops take it. "Oh, they black so, oh, yeah, they selling drugs about this, that and the third." But if they see somebody white standing on a corner, "Oh, they not doing that, they just standing there." And they could be doing the same thing we doing.*

*Man 1: Or they're a fiend, automatically.*

*Woman 1: Yeah. They not going to say nothing to them, but they going to come up to us. "Oh, what are you doing?" Okay, you see the — You see another person standing right here that's doing the same thing but you're not saying nothing to them. –conversation between a woman and man, West*

However, when discussing how police respond to situations or interact with citizens in their communities, some participants made the distinction between racism and power. A few participants believed that the police interacted with them negatively not because they were black citizens, but because of the power police perceived they had due to the badge. This leads to mistrust of the police as an institution, even when interacting with black officers:

*Woman 1: It's really — I said that to make that point, because that's another reason why you don't trust them. Then it's usually — then you get a black officer and a white officer and usually the white officer be on your side, before the black officer —*

*Man 1: Right, right.*

*Man 2: For real!*

*Woman 1: Honestly! This is something we go through.*

*Man 2: That's what I was saying! It's not even a race thing!*

*Woman 1: No!*

*Man 2: It's power! —conversation between a woman and man, East*

## COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS

Increasing police presence was not identified nor generally accepted as a solution to gun violence or improving community safety. In general, participants had little faith that the Baltimore City Police Department, as currently structured,

could do much to reduce gun violence or be a part of the solution to gun violence because of perceptions of a corrupt system:

*Like I don't think the police can be a part of like solving gun violence, because like for so long the Gun Task Force, I was robbed by the Gun Task Force in 2014 leaving work, and they took all my cash, and I was a bellman. Like there is the idea of what Baltimore City Police is now, they have to — like it has to be dismantled, and like reconstructed, because you have kids who saw the uprising in 2015 that like still have trauma from tanks being on their block. Like it has to be completely deconstructed and rebuilt as if it's community-based. Almost run with like a CEO instead of someone from a police mind. Has to be someone running from like a community standpoint. Like so I think that Baltimore City Police as it currently exists cannot be a part of the solution, because they don't even solve the crimes that happen right now. And so it has to be like a whole new approach to what actually police in neighborhoods is. —Man, East*

Some believed that increasing police presence would lead to more problems in the community:

*I just feel like the more police ya'll put out there, the more problems ya'll going to put out there. —Woman, East*

While the idea of increasing police presence was generally unaccepted, the idea that if police presence were to increase, it should be done in a way that did not display state power was mentioned in a conversation in a West focus group:

*Man 1: Not patrol in vests and guns, but like, just casual, police T shirt, you know what I*

*mean? Maybe a little vest or something and some shorts. A hat, a cap, a police cap and he's just chilling. He's, you know what I mean, he's patrolling the same way.*

*Man 2: Right.*

*Man 1: Make it seem more like he's a person. Because we really, I feel like in this city we don't look at them as people. –conversation between two men, West*

One proposed solution to address illegal guns was record expungement. Because many community members believed a gun was necessary for protection in the city, they were forced to obtain guns illegally due to their records. If they were able to have their records expunged, they may pursue legal routes to owning guns:

*I mean, honestly, it's a solution, but the thing about the solution is it's about records, record expungement, who gets the right to get guns. You get what I'm saying? –Man, West*

Participants did not believe the police department could do much to establish trust with them and other adults in their communities. However, participants did believe that the police could be successful in rebuilding community trust through relationship-building with the younger generations:

*If they really want to make that difference and get that fear out of community, it's — they can't do it with us. We grown. Their best bet is to get — blend in with the new generation. The young kids. –Man, West*

*Get a better relationship! A better relationship instead. Like she said, the time where*

*everybody — you gotta — we don't trust them. You feel me? You're going to have to build that relationship with the young ones so, basically, in the future it's not going to be — the divide wouldn't be as bad. Because it's like we get the street vibe as soon as we get that a police is bad. You feel me? If you start that relationship with the young ones, maybe in the future it wouldn't be like that. –Man, East*

Some participants thought that the police could improve their image within the community through activities that show that the police care about the community's well-being, rather than just treating being an officer as simply a job:

*Like they could do, it could be something as simple as having a day where the police officer makes sure that you don't have to get out of your car to put your gas in your car. It could be something as simple as them being in the grocery stores at the bagging sections bagging up people's groceries. –Man, West*

Participants believed that gun violence could be reduced in their communities by restoring recreational activities and increasing accountability. Most participants agreed that violence is a problem in Baltimore because citizens have nothing to do or productive ways to spend their time in the city due to the elimination of recreational activities, such as those sponsored by the Police Athletic League. Many participants described building relationships with officers when they were younger because they would spend time at the PAL center after school or participate in other community activities with the police:

*If they had that — When I was a kid, that s--- that's going on now, ain't wasn't going on then. Why? Because we was at the PAL. —Woman, West*

*But if they made a more effort to being part of the community, like back when I was younger, like when I was in my teenage years, they had the PAL Center, where they used to come pick us up from the Rec Center and take us — well, come pick us up and take us over to the Rec Center, and they be in there playing games with us, and helping us with our homework and all that. You know, and then we'll — the program, the great program that used to help us stay out the gangs, the little gangs. You remember that? —Man, East*

Most participants did not perceive that increasing police presence would be effective in addressing violence. Some thought that increasing police presence would lead to more of the same because of the corrupt culture within the police department. Improving community-police relationships and fostering communication channels were perceived as keys to improving overall safety and should be a component of the police department's strategy to address violence. For example, one participant (West) asked if there would be more conversations such as the one held during the focus groups, but with the police department or Baltimore City government, reflecting a desire to be heard by the police and elected officials who are tasked with serving citizens. This desire was also echoed by a few participants in the East focus groups.

A part of building relationships is police officers knowing their community. Some described different police officers patrolling their

neighborhoods, preventing opportunities for the officer patrolling their communities from getting to know them:

*Man 1: So, you recognize people because you see them on a day-to-day. Every day it could be a different cop in your neighborhood. So, you gotta kind of always —*

*Man 2: That's a fact.*

*Man 1: Sometimes, you just got to get familiar with people. —conversation between two men, West*

Others discussed police officers growing up in other communities and other states and not understanding or knowing the residents in the communities they patrol. This leads to misunderstandings and avoidable negative outcomes when interacting with the community:

*Because they don't know — like, I would say that they don't know the people. They don't know how we react and how we act. And I would say, basically, our aggressive talk might come off to an officer that's not from here the wrong way and they might think that we are presenting to them a threat. You feel me? —Man, East*

Participants perceived that when officers know their communities, positive interactions are more likely to occur:

*It's simple. It's telling we got to really pull up more people and just be like, "I'm not here to arrest you or nothing." Like, "I'm just here to really tell you — " Yeah. That's some real policing and that's the only — now, they probably been there for a while. That's the only*

*way you're going to catch a police officer when he's doing what he's supposed to do, is when he in control of everybody and he been here for some years — really pull up on a group of kids doing what they used to do, just sit down and have a conversation with them. –Woman, West*

Some participants suggested that the police should foster environments where residents can feel they can be themselves, which would help them feel safer in their communities. They would like the police to understand the citizens they are sworn to protect, such as understand their means of expression and ways of communication as a cultural norm, not a threat. For example, one participant (East) shared his frustration with having to dress a certain way to not be perceived as a threat, not only by police, but also broader society.

A few participants discussed encouraging children to become police officers. Some shared their own desires to become officers when they were younger; those desires waned as they became older due to police behavior, culture, or their perceptions of the impacts officers were having in their neighborhoods:

*Man 146: I said when I was eight I wanted to be a cop, but then my mother, she really explained to me what cops was. So, yeah, that was dead.*

*Q: And what was that explanation?*

*Man 146: As a black man in America, she basically said if you really want to be a cop and all that, there's going to be times where you see basically a white cop, you're — a person above you and all that stuff — they're going to do something you won't like and you're going to have to*

*choose right then in that moment, if you want to pretend to do this and be a cop in that state of brotherhood or be who you really are, follow what your heart saying, "This is wrong," this, that and the other. And she really let me know that at eight years old. So, I couldn't do it. –Man, East*

Some participants also perceived that officers fail to encourage children to pursue a career as an officer in Baltimore because of the lack of efforts to build relationships with kids. They believed that if officers built those relationships and encouraged children to become officers in their communities, that would improve safety and citizen-police relationships:

*Man 2: I just think that'd solve the whole issue, whoever, a young kid that's in our neighborhood, they want to be a police officer, encourage that! It's good. It's good to be a police officer. But that's the thing like the police that come and the police nowadays they don't know us. And they use that. You know what I'm saying?*

*Man 4: "I don't care about you. I don't know you!"*

*Man 2: Yeah, they don't understand. They could probably try. –conversation between two men, East*

One solution participants discussed is increasing accountability for police misbehavior by equally applying the law to citizens and officers. Participants in both the East and the West believed that the police were not being held accountable for their behaviors when they violate laws:

*You know. That's just how I feel. You're not the judge. When you shoot that person, you're*

*the judge. I decide if you live or die. Paid time off, that's it. Manslaughter? No, you murdered someone! –Man, West*

They described the police as having a different set of rules than the community and using their state authority to behave in ways that ignores or violates the law:

*We follow the law; they above it. –Man, West*

*Because I hate the way cops that use their authority. They use it as though they're above the law. No! You have to obey the law just how I have to obey the law. Like they take it upon themselves just because they have a badge, they think they can come over here and harass you and just mess with you, and leave like everything is supposed to be that way. –Man, East*

Participants also perceived that police officers pick and choose which laws and protocols they will follow when interacting with citizens. This perception was especially strong in reference to body cameras:

*They are allowed to — they can turn their camera on and off when they want to. They can pick stuff out of the video to make us look as though we started it, we initiated, and we are the violent ones when it's the police who are the ones doing everything. And we just trying to defend ourselves and defend our lives. –Woman, West*

Some participants believed police accountability could increase through the use of media to highlight police misbehavior with the same intensity as citizens who commit crimes:

*Let's ostracize the cases. Like, when a black person get locked — or a criminal gets locked up for a crime they do and they go on the media and they're on TV, put then post in the same box. That he killed — put him on the Internet for a month! Put him on the news for a month! They're not doing that! They'll get killed — the police kill somebody, they get paid leave and you don't hear about them no more. –Man, West*

Other community-identified solutions focused on training. Some participants perceived that the police needed new and more training to learn how to work with and protect the communities they serve. Some participants thought that police officers should also be trained on dealing with their own anger or mental health issues; this was because participants perceived that police officers' personal issues shaped how they interact with the community:

*Everybody on the police department need to take an anger management class, meditation or something. Because they need to Zen and come here and restart. Because a lot of them be already mad at the world. And you cannot be mad at the world with a gun and a badge. Like you can't. Because that's just straight going to go to your head. "Oh, I got a gun and a badge, I do whatever I want now. Oh, I'm mad my wife ain't talking to me, I'm going to go lock this little thing up!" All right? Why? Because your life ain't hap — you ain't happy with your life, you going to go make somebody else life horrible, just because you ain't get what you wanted. Like and that's what a lot of police both do. Like they'll be happy at home, and they come bring that to their job. –Man, East*



One concern repeated in both the East and the West is the idea that the police are not trained on how to approach citizens without fear and addressing that fear could improve policing in the city. Some participants, especially male participants, discussed the police being afraid of them; that fear was perceived as a barrier to positive police interactions:

*First of all, it starts with a lot with this Baltimore City Police, period. First, they need to train these people on how to handle and endure situations like that. When they're coming to making calls, they already riled up, they don't even know what's—they scared any old way. So, if y'all not getting the proper training for this or that, how do y'all expect to handle situations when they hit you all in the lap? That's why a lot of people getting shot, a lot of people getting killed, right or wrong. –Man, West*

Several participants discussed increasing residents' knowledge and understanding of police protocols, laws, and citizens' rights when interacting with the police. Some wondered why most residents do not know or understand their own rights and city/state laws and connected that ignorance to their interactions with police or the criminal justice system:

*A lot of people in our own community don't really know the law. So, some people are in jail, because they don't know the law. –Woman, East*

## **BARRIERS TO PROGRESS**

Many participants perceived police as a symbol of state power, not people. They also believe they are perceived by police as criminals, not people. Perceptions appear to be a problem

that must be addressed to not only improve community-police relations, but also to begin to tackle community violence. One participant stated that the current narrative around both their communities and police officers prevents the fostering of safer communities and better citizen-police relationships.

Broader social structures, including racism and police culture, will also present challenges to improving safety, crime, and violence in Baltimore. As described above, several participants expressed beliefs around racism playing a role in unfair treatment by the police and the broader criminal justice system.

## **Summary**

Findings from these focus groups reveal several factors that should be considered when forming policies and practices around policing in Baltimore City. These factors include perceptions about the police, their purpose, and their effectiveness in the communities they serve, the role of knowledge about the law among both citizens and officers, public accountability for poor police behavior, applying the law equally to citizens and officers, and the importance of relationship-building and safe spaces to participate in positive activities in their communities, especially among the youth. Race and racism do play a role in how the community perceives police and their behaviors, but the issue of police authority and power is also significant. Findings suggest that these factors should be seriously considered to support and foster safer communities and improve citizen-police relationships in Baltimore City.