

# Rethinking Violence Prevention In Oakland, CA

*“From the Voices of the People Most Impacted”*



September 2019

Prepared by



**Urban Strategies Council** is a social impact organization that uses research, policy, innovation, and collaboration to achieve equity and social justice. The Council's mission is to eliminate persistent poverty by working with partners to transform low-income neighborhoods into vibrant, healthy communities.

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# Acknowledgment

First and foremost, thank you to the Oakland residents and political leadership who fought to create the City's new Department of Violence Prevention. They visualized a safe and violence-free city and believe that Oakland can become the safest city in California and the nation. In early 2018, the idea for this research project emerged from meetings with City of Oakland leadership and staff, the Violence Prevention Coalition, the Brotherhood of Elders Network, and the office of Oakland Councilmember Lynette Gibson-McElhaney. Through intense advocacy by Oakland community members and Councilmember Gibson-McElhaney's unwavering commitment to a safer, healthier Oakland for its most impacted residents, this project was approved and funded by the City of Oakland City Council, and Urban Strategies Council was selected as the consultant to lead this research process. We would like to acknowledge the City Administrator's Office and Oakland Unite in the Human Services Department for their support and assistance throughout the project, the Oakland City Council and Mayor's Office for their leadership, and the Violence Prevention Coalition and Brotherhood of Elders Network for their wisdom, passion and commitment.

Urban Strategies Council Research Associate Rania Ahmed led the quantitative research for this project. Assisting was: Amaris Clay, Ryan Guerro, and Richard Speiglmán. The following Research Fellows conducted resident interviews:

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Audrey Cornish	Jerry Law	Darren White
Maxina Croma	Kenneth Lenore	Patanisha Williams
Desire Forte Johnson	Leo Mercer	
Victor Gomez	Annette Miller	

Community-based organizations serving residents impacted by violence also conducted focus groups for this effort. The organizations included: A Safe Place; Adamika Village; Asian Prisoner Support Committee; Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR); Cata's Polished Act; Changing Criminal Behaviors; Community Christian Church; Community & Youth Outreach; Global Communication Education and Arts; Men of Influence; Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting & Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSSEY); No More Tears; Positive Communications; Resident Action Council; Saving Shorty; Youth Alive; and Young Women's Freedom Center.

The year-long community planning process was led and guided by the City of Oakland's Department of Violence Prevention Project Steering Committee (DVPSC). The DVPSC was constituted by representatives from the Brotherhood of Elders Network, City of Oakland, and DVP Community Coalition (convened and staffed by the Urban Strategies Council - see Appendix Three for a list of individual organization representatives).

Additional organizations providing valuable support and perspective to the planning Oakland's Administrator's Office, City of Oakland Police Commission, Family Violence Law Center, LoveLife Foundation, MISSEY, Oakland City Councilmember McElhaneY and Taylor's Offices, Oakland Unite, and Soldiers Against Violence Everywhere.

The primary author for this report was Rania Ahmed, and the secondary author was David A. Harris. Additional contributors and editors included: Amaris Clay, Hilary Crowley, Ryan Guerro, Desire Johnson-Forte, Peter Kim, Josie Halpern-Finnerty, Tunisia Owens, Richard Speiglmán and Patanisha Williams.

**David A. Harris**

President and CEO of Urban Strategies Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Harris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

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Urban Strategies Council (USC), the City of Oakland, and key community stakeholders (led by the Violence Prevention Coalition and Brotherhood of Elders Network) combined efforts aimed at understanding the needs of Oakland residents and mobilizing their thinking around violence and violence prevention. Inspired by the Oakland City Council’s approval of a new Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) and spurred by the community’s need for greater participation and voice, the City of Oakland engaged USC to conduct an intense participatory research project to help inform and shape the newly established DVP. The City’s goal is to gain authentic community perspective and insight into the lived experiences of both victims and perpetrators of violence throughout Oakland using a participatory research design focused on three types of violence: 1) gun violence, 2) domestic violence, and 3) commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Over six months, USC recruited and trained 16 research fellows, who reflected Oakland’s diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural demographics. Research fellows and mini grantees from small non-profit organizations conducted over 500 interviews, surveys and focus groups with Oakland residents most-impacted by violence.

Findings from this research will inform the newly established City of Oakland’s Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) as an agency and help bring Oaklanders’ fears, hopes, and expectations for a safer Oakland to the table. This process is an opportunity to advance a bold paradigm and narrative shift in violence prevention through a bottom-up, community-driven and community-based approach. More information on the methodology is found in a separate document.

One key aspect of this project was empowering the community through recognizing individuals with lived experience with violence as researchers and agents of social change. Interviews with the community members provided qualitative data that complemented the quantitative data and comparative analysis of other successful violence prevention models in other jurisdictions. Understanding the data through the lens of an impacted community member is the foundation of this research project. The following document is a three-part report on violence in Oakland. This report observes factors that may help create policies, practices or strategies to reduce violence.



## Methodology

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This DVP participatory process was carried out between August 2018 and June 2019. Primary data sources were structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys to gather the perspectives of diverse individuals, groups, and families across the city with more focus on high-stress neighborhoods in West and East Oakland. Focus groups and interviews were semi-structured and guided by central questions and hypotheses. Qualitative data was analyzed according to content analysis procedures for

categorization of responses and identification of themes. Data from a variety of sources were compiled to describe demographics, the landscape of violence, and homicides in the past years. Data on homicides was broken down by race, gender, and age group. Data sources on domestic violence and CSEC were challenging to collect and were limited at the time of conducting this study. More information on the methodology is found in the appendix as a separate document.

## Selected Findings - Quantitative

**From March to May 2019, there were 3,574 thefts, 19 homicides, and 70 sex crimes in the past 90 days<sup>1</sup>,** a total of 10,530 incidents in Oakland.

**Gang activity is a major contributor to the cycle of violence in Oakland<sup>2</sup>.** Though the number of gang-involved shootings declined from 324 to 149 from 2010 to 2017, OPD data suggests that the majority of gun violence incidents involve group or gang-involved individuals.

**From 2008 to 2017, reports of rape increased from 297 to 383 incidents<sup>3</sup>.** The number of reported rapes demonstrates a shift in the type of violence people are experiencing in Oakland.

### On Homicides

**Oakland had 126 homicides in 2012<sup>4</sup>,** the largest number of homicides in a ten-year period. Since then, Oakland has seen a decrease in the number of homicides with 69 occurring in 2017. Despite the significant progress, Oakland remains one of the highest cities in California for number of homicides.

**Every year, the majority of homicide victims are Black men, youth, and young adults<sup>5</sup>.** While the total number of homicides in Oakland declined from 115 to 69 between 2008 and 2017, African-Americans had the highest number of homicides of any ethnic or demographic group each year. Of the 69 homicides in 2017, 50 of them (72%) were Black. Latinos experienced the next largest rate with 12 of the 69 homicides in 2017 (17%).

**In many cases, homicides are committed by someone known to the victim<sup>6</sup>.** In 2017, 3% of homicides were committed by family members, acquaintances (4%), intimate partners (1%), or an individual known to the victim (32%).

### Domestic Violence

**Every year for the past ten years, there were over 3,000 domestic violence-related calls for assistance<sup>7</sup>.** While data shows a decrease in the number of calls received since 2015, the volume of calls received each year is significant, especially given that most recognize that a large number of DV incidents are unreported.

**Using weapons in domestic violence has declined over the years; hands and legs or knives are the most common weapons used<sup>8</sup>.** In 2017, perpetrators used a weapon in 17% of incidents.

<sup>1</sup> Source <https://data.oaklandnet.com/Public-Safety/CrimeWatch-Maps-Past-90-Days/ym6k-rx7a>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Oakland Equity Indicators 2017

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/crimes-clearances>

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/>

<sup>5</sup> IBID

<sup>6</sup> IBID

<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/domesticviolence>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.oaklandnet.com/map/crimewatch/index.htm>

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

From 2011 to 2016, the Oakland Police Department (OPD) pursued 454 human trafficking cases, rescued 273 children through 258 operations, leading to 660 arrests. Human trafficking comprises a broad spectrum of activities that include commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Oakland is widely recognized as a regional hub for sex trafficking among cities with the most commercial sexual exploitation activity state and nationwide.

### Selected Findings - Qualitative

The experience of violence significantly differs from one person to another. Accordingly, the definition of violence differed and consequently, the vision to each violence prevention theme and the response to each question in the interview. However, there were common patterns and powerful assertions that dominated and can be summarized as follow:

#### Universal Assertions

- Oakland's residents are concerned for their safety, overall, but also during and after reporting incidents of violence and are experiencing a high level of trauma.
- Substance dependence and mental health issues are major players in the violent scene.
- The region's political and socio-economic complexity is adding additional challenges.
- Violence occurs in relationships, homes, schools, parks, streets, neighborhoods, and in places where people feel angry, disrespected and marginalized.
- Violence is provoked by fear and the lack of control over one's life choices.
- This participatory research helped some victims ignite healing through interactions.
- This process is sought to be a movement that results in changing systems and cultures.
- Accurate and up-to-date data on domestic violence and CSEC on the jurisdiction level is limited and challenging to collect.

#### Experiencing Violence

- 60% Experienced violence in public spaces.
- 55% Experienced police misconduct.
- 55% Did not report incidents of violence.
- 21% Experienced all three types of violence; CSEC, gun, and domestic violence.
- 30% Experienced at least two types of violence.
- 53% Prior involvement in gun violence as a victim, relative, friend, or perpetrator.

#### Wins of the Research Process

- Victims and offenders alike indicated that they felt heard, validated, and believed.
- The 16 Oakland residents as DVP Research Fellows are the champions of this process.

# Oakland's Demographics (2016)

Oakland is the largest city in Alameda County and the East Bay. It is one of the most diverse and populated cities in California with a population of 434,35 (2016). White residents are nearly one-third of Oakland's population (27%, 125,103). African-American residents count for a quarter of the residents (24%, 101,216), Latinos comprise 27% of the total population, and Asians are 16%. The remaining 6% is multiracial and ethnic groups of African, Caribbean, and Pacific Islander, among others.

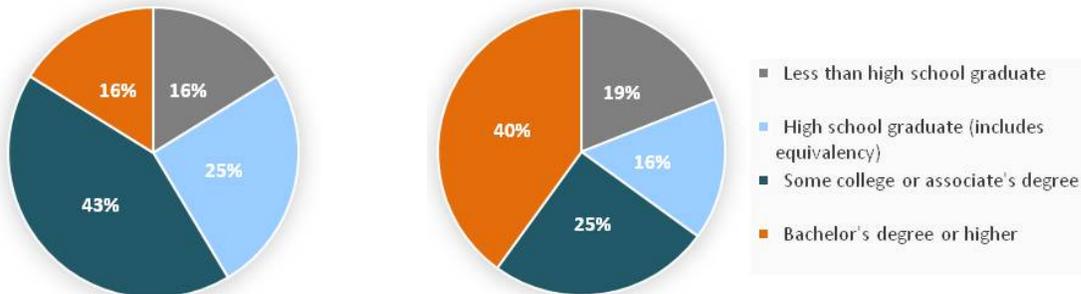
## Education Attainment, 18-24 Years Old and 25 and Over

Oakland's youth (18-24 years old) educational attainment is largest for individuals with some college or associate degree (43% of the total population). A quarter of Oakland's young adults (25 years old and over) attained a high school degree as their highest level of education.

Figure 1: Educational Attainment, 18-24 years old (2016)

18-24 Years Old

25 Years Old and Over

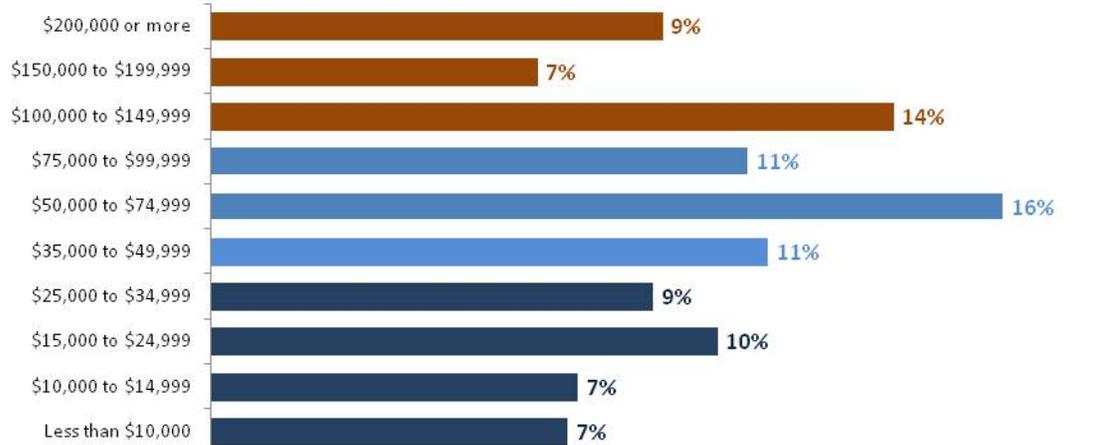


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Income Level

Nearly half of Oakland households earned less than \$49,999 in 2016 (43%). Twenty seven percent (27%) of the population earned between \$50,000 and \$99,999 and 30% earned more than \$100,000

Figure 2: Income Level (2016)



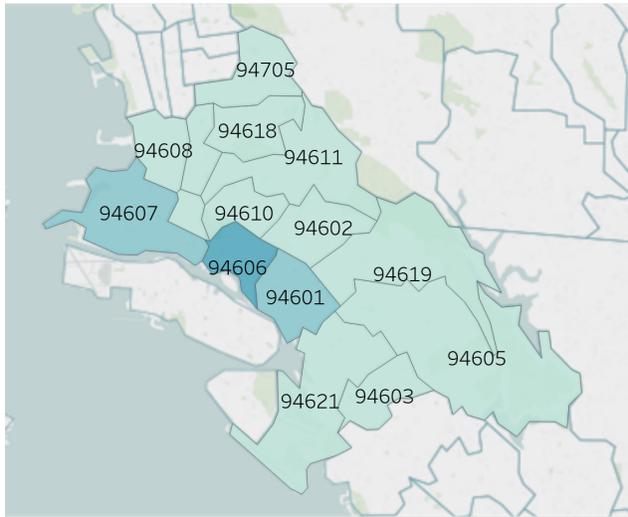
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## The Racial Composition of Oakland Residents by Zip Code (2016)

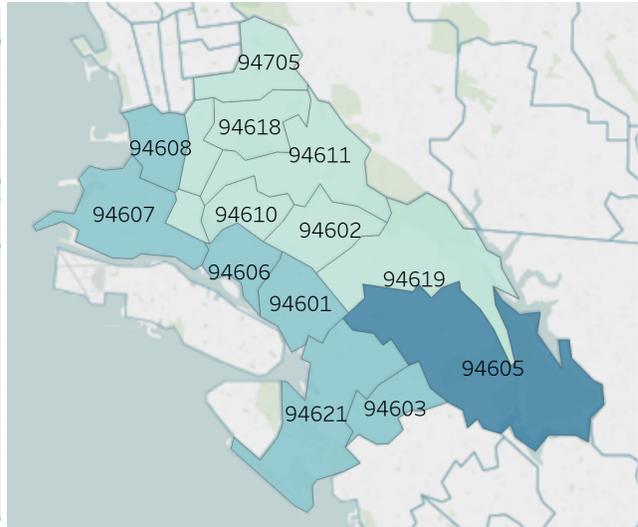
Most White residents live in North Oakland (94608, 94618, and 94611) and Central/East Oakland (94601, 94602, 94610). The highest concentration of Latinos is in East Oakland (94606, 94601, 94621, 94603 and 94605). Blacks reside largely in East and West Oakland (94608, 94607, 94606, 94601, 94621, 94603) and are a majority of residents in deep East Oakland (94605). The greatest percentages of Asians are concentrated in West/Central Oakland (94607) and East Oakland (94606, and 94601).

Figure 3: Racial Composition of Oakland Residents by Zip Code (2016)

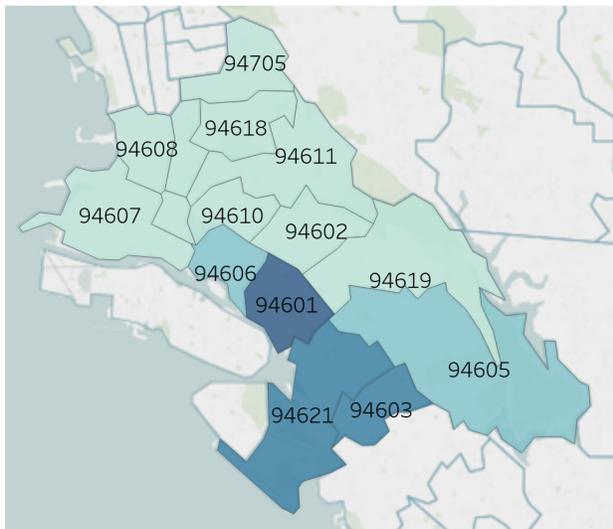
### Asian



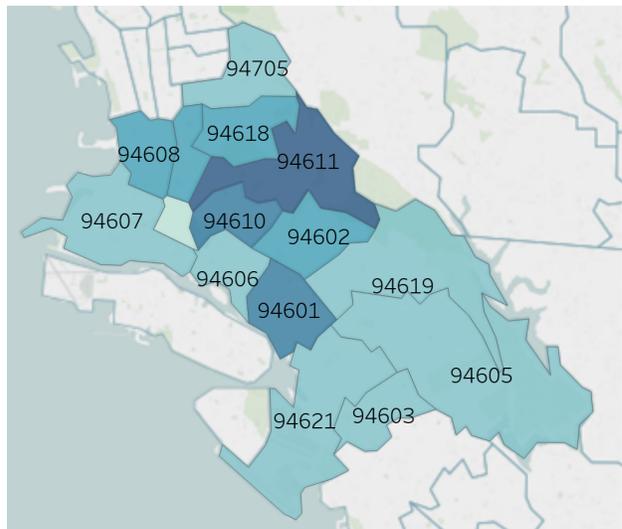
### Black



### Latino



### White



900 27,000 People

# **Section One**

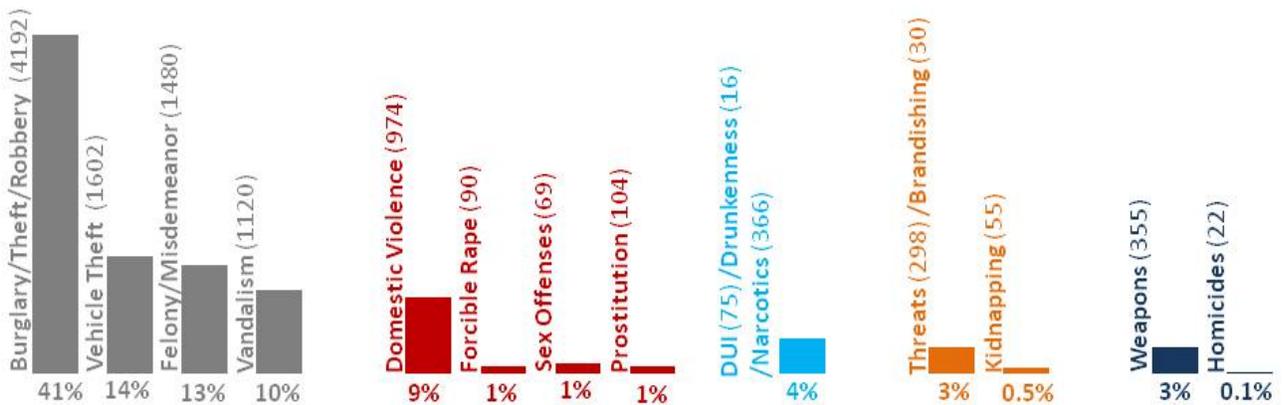
## **Quantitative Analysis**

# The Landscape of Violence in Oakland

## Crime Types in the Past 90 Days (as of August 31, 2019)

The Oakland Police Department (OPD) offers open-source data on crime through the City of Oakland's Crime Watch<sup>9</sup>. Crimes have increased in the past 90 days. From June 2019 through August 2019, a total of 16,668 incidents were reported to OPD (Figure 4). Theft crimes were the highest, accounting for 41% of the incidents reported to OPD. While this data demonstrates that the vast majority of crimes occurring in Oakland are not violent, prevention is still important.

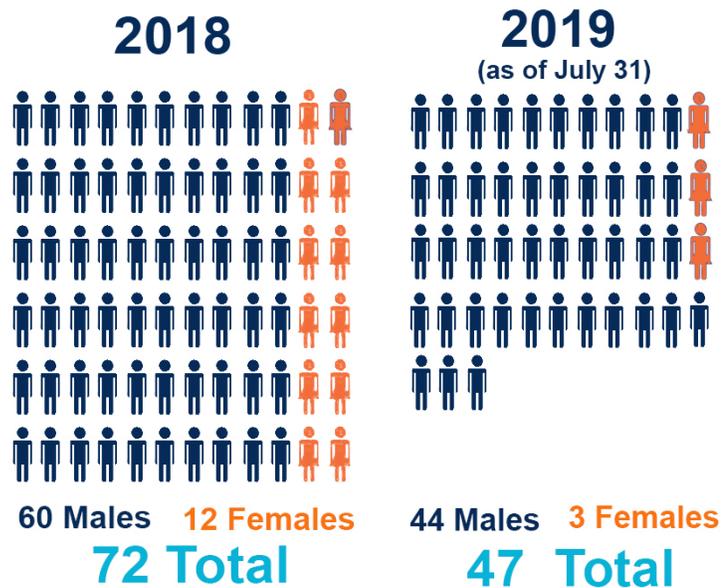
Figure 4: Crime types in 90 days as of August 28, 2019



Source <https://data.oaklandnet.com/Public-Safety/CrimeWatch-Maps-Past-90-Days/ym6k-rx7a>

## Homicides in 2018 and 2019

The most recent publicly available data from OPD was reported in 2017. In 2017, OPD data showed 69 homicides. Homicides started to increase in 2018. However, this is not yet reflected in the publicly available data (last updated on September 2017). To capture the change, this data lists what the City of Oakland's Department of Human Services collects. As of July 31, 2019, 47 homicides were committed. The vast majority of victims were males. Of all homicides in 2019, 44 were men (94%).

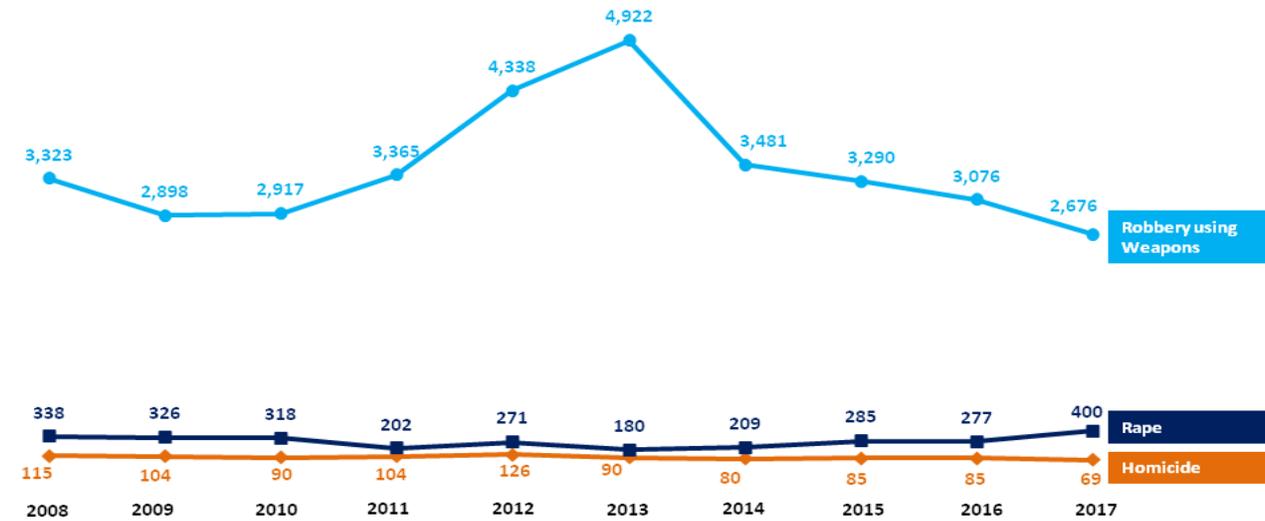


<sup>9</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/police-incident-data>

## The Trends of Violent Crimes (2008-2017)

The distributions of violent crimes, homicide, rape, and armed robbery remained constant over the ten years. Rape spiked with a 13% increase from 2016-2017. Armed robbery represents the majority of violent crime in Oakland with a peak of 4,922 in 2013. (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Number of violent crimes (2008 – 2017)



Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crimes-clearances>. Based on the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

## Trends of Weapons Used in Robbery (2008-2017)

Firearms are commonly used weapons in a robbery. There was a major decline in the number of reported robberies with a firearm between 2013 and 2017 from 3,140 to 1,202, respectively.

Figure 6: Number of robberies using weapons (2008 – 2017)



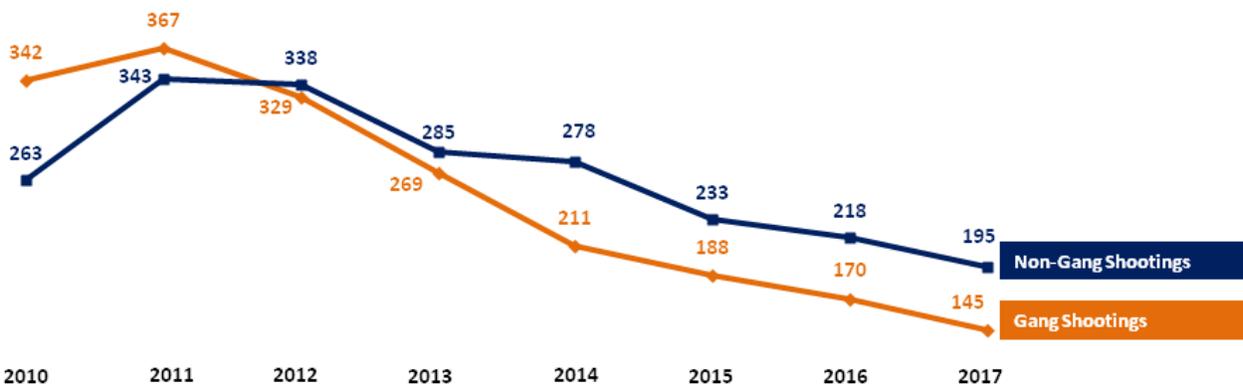
Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/>. Based on the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

### Gang vs. Non-Gang Shootings (2010-2017)

Between 2010 and 2017, there were 76 active violent gangs/groups in Oakland<sup>10</sup>. Gangs and groups in Oakland tend to be centered on neighborhood relationships among participants. These groups tend to be relatively small and are not highly organized as compared to larger enterprise groups like the Bloods, Crips, MS-13, or Nortenos.

Ceasefire is a strategy that aims to understand gun violence dynamics with a focus on highest risk individuals and employs methods such as partnership between law enforcement, community groups, and social services to accomplish stated goals. In 2012, Oakland adopted Ceasefire, a gun violence reduction strategy to address violence in the city. At the time of Ceasefire implementation, gang-related shooting and individual-based shootings were occurring at similar rates. Since 2012, the rate of gang-related and non-gang related shootings have steadily decreased.

Figure 7: Number of gang vs. non-gang shootings (2010-2017)

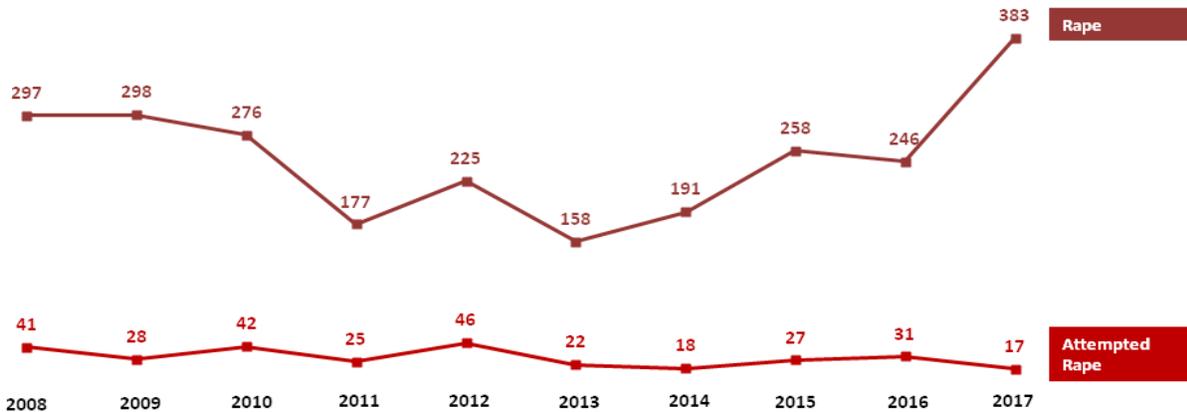


Source: Oakland Ceasefire Impact Evaluation: Key Findings, August 2018 P.4

### The Trend of Reported Rapes and Attempted Rapes (2008-2017)

The number of reported and attempted rapes appeared to remain relatively constant with slight fluctuations between 2008 and 2017. In 2017, the reported number of rapes spiked significantly, increasing from 246 in 2016 to 383.

Figure 8: Reported and Attempted Rapes (2008-2017)



Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/crimes-clearances>

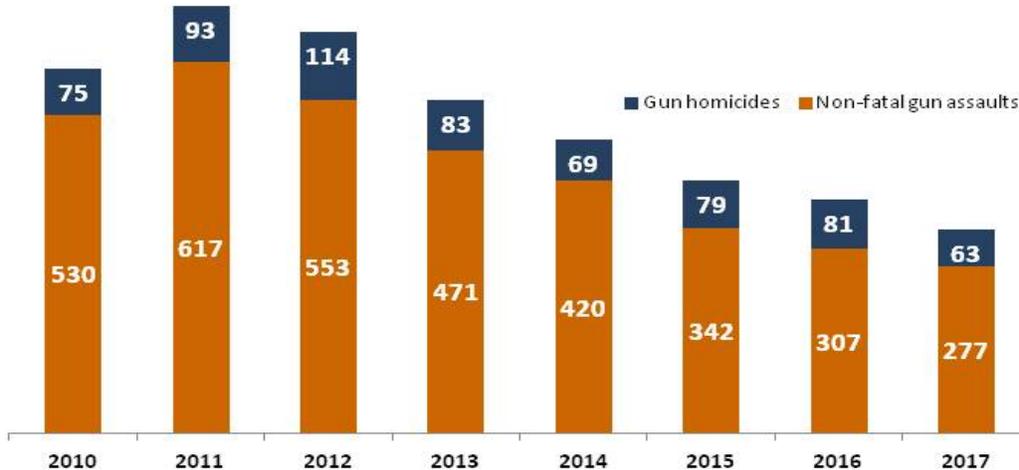
<sup>10</sup> Oakland Ceasefire Impact Evaluation: Key Findings, August 2018

# Homicides in Oakland

## Gun Homicides and Non-fatal Shootings (2010-2017)

Prior to the implementation of Ceasefire in 2012, the number of gun homicides peaked at 114 incidents. From 2013 to 2017, the number of gun-related homicides declined from 83 to 63. Figure 8 illustrates that gun violence more often leads to a non-fatal incident than death. Similarly, non-fatal gun assaults declined from 617 to 277 incidents between 2011 and 2017. This data suggests that Ceasefire, along with other prevention efforts (Oakland Unite and community-based strategies), has contributed to the reduction of gun violence-related incidents in Oakland.

Figure 9: Gun homicides versus non-fatal assaults (2010-2017)

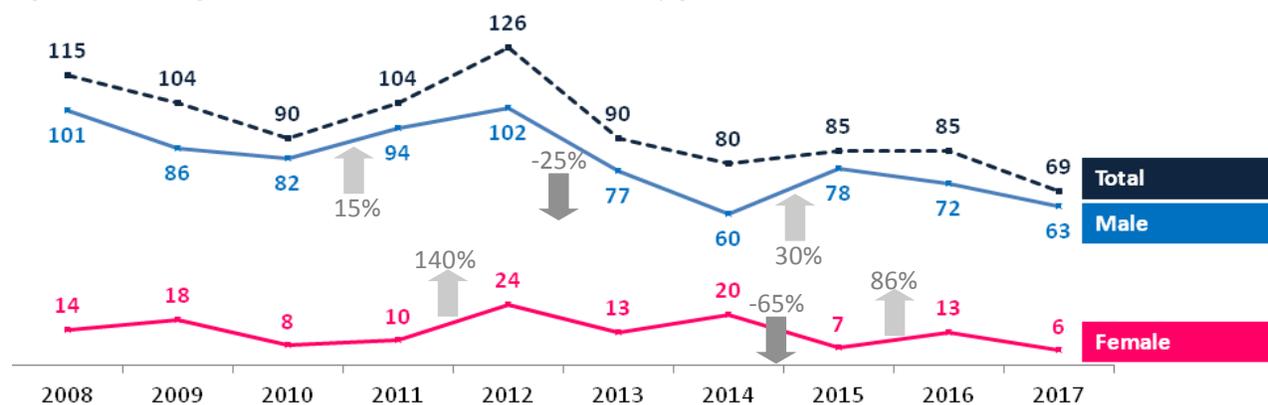


Source: Oakland Ceasefire Impact Evaluation: Key Findings, August 2018

## Change in Number of Homicide Victims by Gender (2008-2017)

Men are more often the victims of homicides and have remained so for the past ten years (Figure 10). In 2012, women constituted 19% of homicides (24 out of 126). In 2014, women were 25% of total homicides (20 out of 80 homicides). The change in the number of homicides over time has been fluctuating among both men and women. There was a significant rate of increase in 2011-12 (140%) and again in 2015-16 (86%) in homicides among women after a significant drop in 2014-15 (-65%). The major rate of decrease in homicides among men (-25%) happened in 2012-13; followed by a further minor drop in 2013-14. However, homicides among men started to increase with a considerable rate of increase in a ten-year period in 2014-15 (30%).

Figure 10: Change in the number of homicide victims by gender (2008-2017)

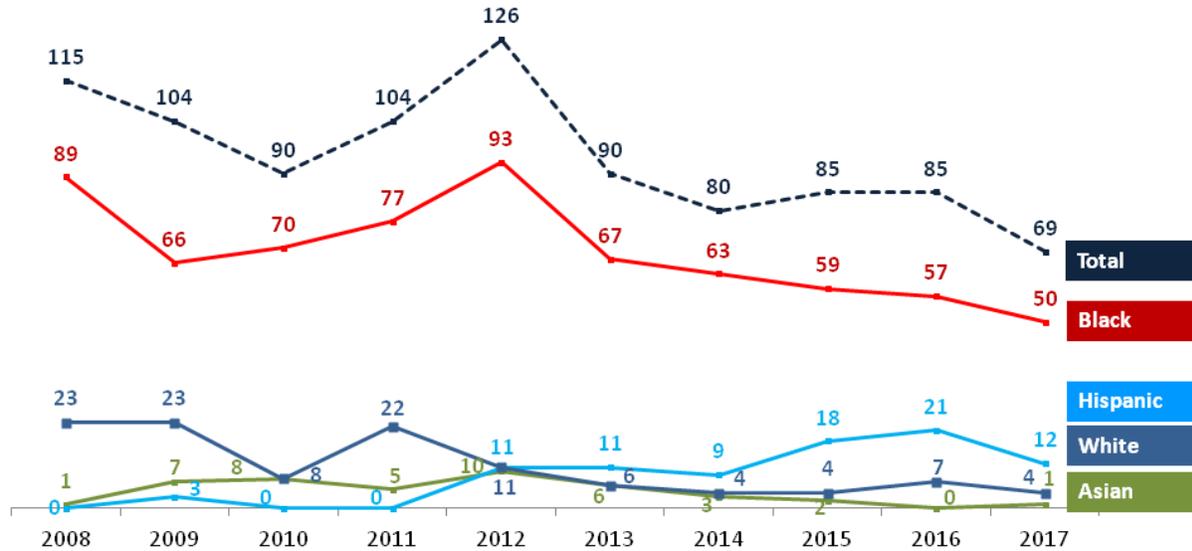


Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/data>. Based on the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

## Number of Homicide Victims by Race (2008-2017)

The data reveals that Blacks represent the largest group of homicide victims in Oakland, as illustrated in Figure 11. Despite homicide rates trending downward, African American people are consistently over-represented among homicide victims while rates for other groups remain relatively stable. In 2012, when homicides were at its peak, Black people comprised 72% of homicide victims. In 2017, blacks represented 72% of all homicides; Latinos have consistently represented the second highest impacted group comprising of an average of 21% of all homicides from 2015-2017.

Figure 11: Change in the number of homicide victims by race (2008-2017)

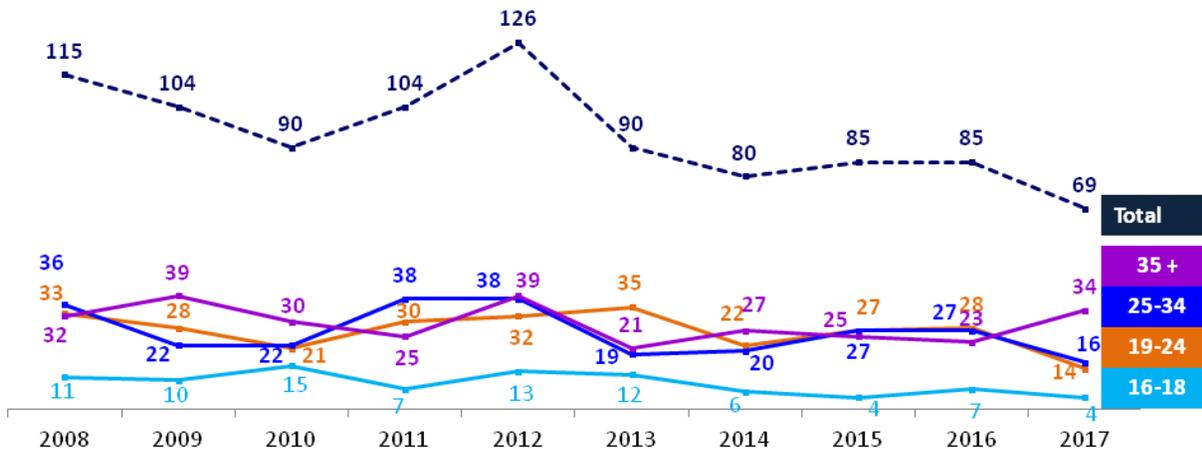


Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/> Based on the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

## Age Demographics of Homicide Victims (2008-2017)

Figure 12 illustrates that young adults are repeatedly the most vulnerable to homicide. Those in the age groups 19-34 were consistently victims of homicide more than other age groups, representing 72% of all homicide victims in 2017.

Figure 12: Change in Age Demographics of Homicide Victims (2008-2017)

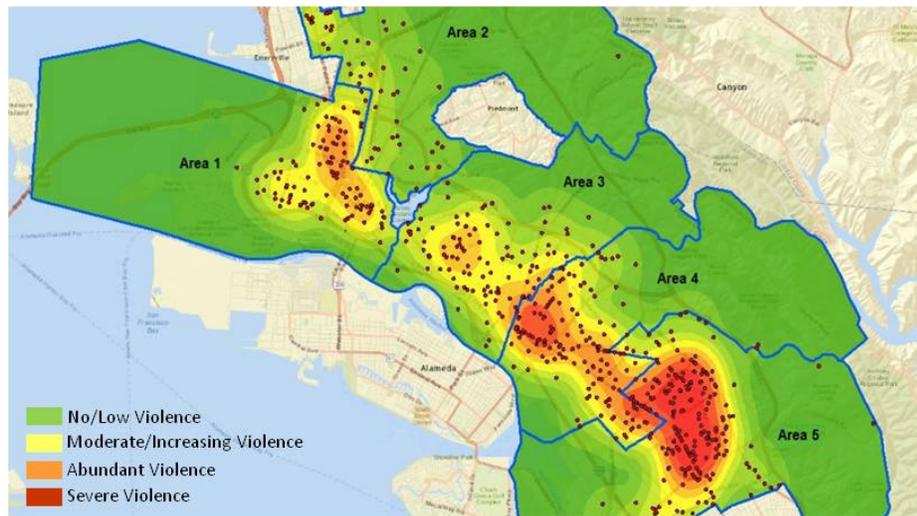


Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/data>. Based on the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

## Where Homicides or Firearm Assaults Occur (2016)

Historically, most homicides occur in West Oakland and the flatlands of East Oakland. In 2016, homicides were disproportionately concentrated in three City Council districts: District 3 in West Oakland and Districts 6 and 7 in East Oakland. Figure 12 is broken into Oakland’s police beats. As shown in the heat map, the majority of Oakland areas experienced a firearm assault or homicide during 2016; however, there is variation in the levels of violence between different areas.

Figure 13: Where Homicides Occurred in 2016



Source: Oakland Homicide Problem Analysis 2016-2017 California Partnership for Safe Communities, Oakland Police Department. Retrieved at [www.theCApartnership.org](http://www.theCApartnership.org)

## Homicide & Its Relationship to Time of Day (2014-2017)

Over four years, homicide rates did not seem to coincide with days of the week. In 2017, most of the homicides occurred on Sundays. There might be a slight relationship between homicide rates and time of the day; however, the time and day are not correlated. In Oakland, homicides occur most often between the hours of 8:00 PM and 11:59 PM.

Table 1: Day and Time of Day of Homicides (2014-2017)

Day of the Week	2014	2015	2016	2017
Monday	12% (9)	13% (11)	19% (16)	11% (8)
Tuesday	8% (6)	17% (14)	12% (10)	18% (13)
Wednesday	21% (16)	11% (9)	14% (12)	15% (11)
Thursday	10% (8)	10% (8)	13% (11)	7% (5)
Friday	5% (4)	19% (16)	15% (13)	13% (9)
Saturday	22% (17)	14% (12)	12% (10)	14% (10)
Sunday	23% (18)	16% (13)	15% (13)	21% (15)
Time of the Day	2014	2015	2016	2017
12:00 AM- 3:59 AM	17% (13)	17% (13)	24% (20)	21% (15)
4:00 AM- 7:59 AM	9% (7)	5% (4)	11% (9)	17% (12)
8:00 AM- 11:59 AM	14% (11)	7% (6)	16% (14)	8% (6)
12:00 PM- 3:59 PM	14% (11)	13% (11)	11% (9)	17% (12)
4:00 PM- 7:59 PM	17% (13)	28% (23)	14% (12)	14% (10)
8:00 PM- 11:59 PM	29% (23)	30% (25)	25% (21)	23% (16)

Note\* Data divided into % & number of incidents. Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/data>

# Domestic Violence

## Domestic Violence-Related Calls for Assistance (2008-2017)

Over the study period, there have been over 3,000 domestic violence-related calls annually in Oakland. However, data is scarce and only incidents resulting in a call to law enforcement are presented, while unreported incidents remain uncaptured. Figure 14 shows the number of calls and percentage of incidents using weapons.

Figure 14: Number of Domestic Violence related Calls and Percent of those Using Weapons, (2008-2017)

	Total number of DV related calls for assistance (2008 till 2017)	Percent of DV incidents using weapons
2017	3070	18%
2016	3296	17%
2015	3448	16%
2014	3540	18%
2013	3227	18%
2012	3593	18%
2011	3239	19%
2010	3679	22%
2009	3891	24%
2008	3778	25%

Source: <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/crime-statistics/domesticviolence>

## Trends of Weapon Usage in Domestic Violence (2008-2017)

The use of weapons decreased over the sampled period in Oakland. In 2017, 18% of domestic violence-related calls reported weapon use, a significant decline from 25% in 2008. In 2017 the weapons used in domestic violence included guns (1%), knives (5%), or personal such as hands, feet, or teeth (3%).

## Racial Demographics of Domestic Violence (2017)

African-Americans are overrepresented as victims of domestic violence; six out of every ten victims are Black despite being one-third of Oakland's population. By contrast, Whites represent only one out of every ten victims but are also one-third of Oakland's population. Blacks are six times more likely to experience domestic violence than Whites.

Table 2: Domestic Violence Victims by Race (2017)

Race/ethnicity	Number of victims in 2017	Population in Oakland (all ages)	Rate per 100,000 people
Asian	151	67,535	223.6
Black	2,048	96,981	2,111.8
Latino	917	109,762	835.4
White	374	116,230	321.8

Source: Domestic Violence data from the Oakland Police Department by request for the 2017 Oakland Equity Indicators, P. 122. Population data from the American Community Survey, 1-year estimate, 2016.

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

CSEC is a form of human trafficking. The mobility of CSEC victims and their potential status as minors makes it challenging to collect data. According to the Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Watch, the only publicly available data points on human trafficking in California come from cases prosecuted by the Alameda County District Attorney Office. From 2011 until 2016, OPD pursued 454 human trafficking cases, and rescued 273 children through 258 operations that led to 660 arrests<sup>11</sup>. Advocacy on sexual exploitation led to passage of SB 855 and SB 794 in 2014, and federal legislation in 2014 (PL 113-183). These measures require the collection and annual reporting of CSEC data at the county level to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS)<sup>12</sup>.

In July 2019, a total of 45 people were arrested in a sex trafficking sting operation that took place in Oakland and Hayward as part of a larger nationwide effort. Three of the stings were street operations, meaning an undercover officer posed as a sex worker in Oakland on International Boulevard and solicited sex buyers. Alameda County District Attorney along with Alameda County Sheriff's Office, Oakland Police, and Hayward Police helped arrest 43 sex buyers and two sex traffickers, or pimps<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.heatwatch.org/human\\_trafficking/about\\_csec](http://www.heatwatch.org/human_trafficking/about_csec)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Child-Welfare-Protection/Child-Trafficking-Response/CSEC-Data-and-Reporting>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2019/08/02/a-total-of-45-people-arrested-in-east-bay-sex-trafficking-sting-operation/>

# Conclusions and Next Steps

Despite the challenges with data sources and time limitations, we were able to glean significant information around homicides, domestic violence, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The analyses presented shed some light on public agencies we believe could but do not track CSEC data. There are other analyses that we could not explore in this report such as non-law enforcement data. We gained more knowledge regarding the limitations and challenges that the available data brought to this report than was expected.

Critical to developing new ideas on violence prevention is the inclusion of personal narratives from those most impacted. Highlighting the lived experiences behind the statistical numbers is imperative in the development of any analysis on the impact of violence on communities, which the second part of this study will present.

Takeaways from the quantitative data can be summarized in four premises:

- Communities in East and West Oakland, particularly those with zip codes of 94608, 94607, 94606, 94601, 94621, 94603, 94605, experience homicides at higher rates than others.
- Oakland has high rates of violence overall, and group/gang activity contributes to gun violence and homicides in particular.
- There is a shift in the types of violence Oakland residents are experiencing.
- Efforts in addressing gun violence have resulted in significantly reducing the number of homicides over the last decade; however, the rate of homicides has increased thus far in 2019 compared to this time last year, though still considerably lower than 5 years ago.
- Reported DV and rape incidents have increased and might be still underreported.
- Data on gender-based violence is extremely scarce and is not sufficient to assess the issue.
- Highlighting the lived experiences behind the numbers is crucial.

## **Section Two**

### **Qualitative Analysis**

*From the Voices of the People Most Impacted*

# Introduction

## Shifting the Narrative of Violence through Healing

The primary purpose of this research was to hear from Oakland residents most-impacted by violence. Violence prevention in Oakland must be developed through a bottom-up approach and recognize that safety must be experienced from the flatlands to the hills and across all communities in the city. Over the years, Oakland residents have felt unsafe, bore witness to various types of violence, and experienced unspeakable tragedies. A host of factors played a role in making Oakland residents feeling unsafe. This document builds on their knowledge and narratives to develop a collective approach for re-envisioning violence prevention.

The quantitative data demonstrated that Black and Latino young men were victims of gun violence in much greater numbers than any other group. This project highlighted Oakland residents who are most-impacted and traumatized by violence through an equitable and inclusive engagement process.



DVP Research Fellows during the Briefing Event, November 2018

Despite the challenges of having men of color open up and share a testimony, this project provided a safe space to hear the voices of men who have experienced violence. It is worth noting that both survivors and perpetrators participated in the process: of the 182 (34%) male participants, 161 were men of color, and 54 of them were youth or young adults. Females were an overwhelming majority of the study representing 65% of participants. This result is not surprising as women represent the majority of domestic violence and CSEC survivors.

### Who are the DVP Research Fellows?

In summer 2018, USC began recruiting Oakland residents to join a participatory research project aimed at informing the DVP and its new chief. The outreach targeted diverse populations to represent the breadth and depth of violence. Twenty-five individuals were selected as Fellows, and 16 completed the orientation and training activities. The 16 DVP Research Fellows included nine women and seven men. Of the nine women; seven are African Americans; two are Latinas, and one is youth. Of the seven men, six are African American, and one is an immigrant youth from East Africa.

Fellows include mothers who lost their children to gun violence, women with family members involved in the commercial sex trade, women who have survived domestic violence and, all are community activists and healers. Other Fellows are male victims of violence, justice system-involved, members of Oakland's DVP Coalition, and are aspiring to get involved as community educators.

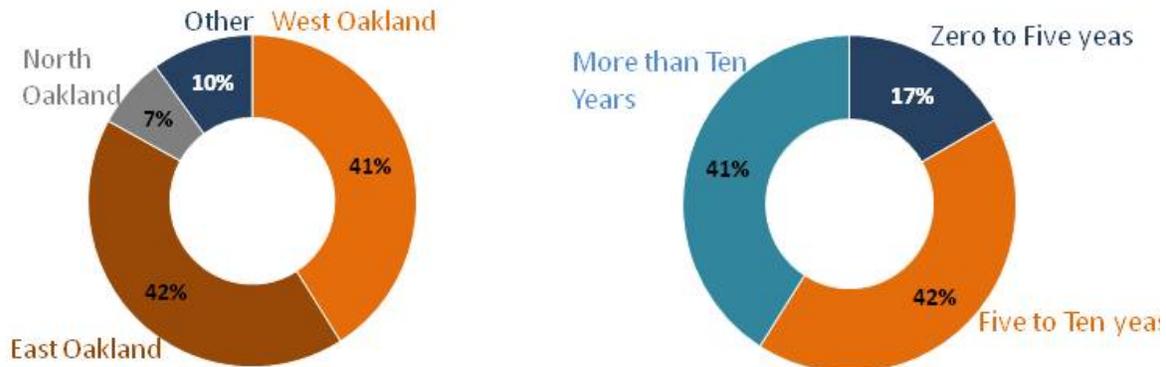
# Who are the DVP Research Participants

The following section identifies the demographic characteristics of participants. The population sample is composed of 542 participants (interviewees, focus groups, and surveys). See Appendix 1 for participants' characteristics and Appendix 2 for the demographic sheet.

## Where do participants live in Oakland?

The project focuses on individuals facing the highest rates of violence in East and West Oakland. Most participants live in West and East Oakland (41% and 42% respectively) and have been living in Oakland for at least five years. Few participants live in other areas of Oakland.

Figure 15 Where DVP Research Participants live and for how long

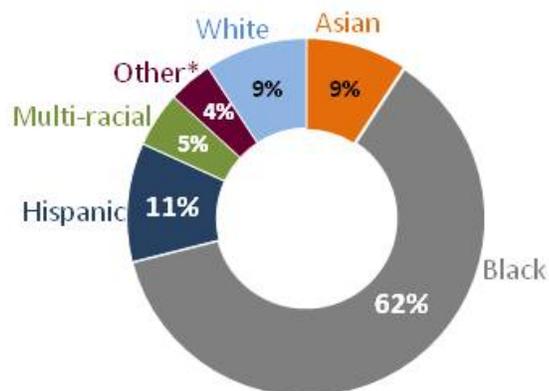


Source: Urban Strategies Council, the DVP Participatory Research Findings (2018)

## Participants by Race/Ethnicity

Oakland's racial diversity is reflected in the participants, as demonstrated below. The overwhelming majority of participants are Black (62%); Latinos were the second-largest participating group at 11%, followed by Asian and White participants, 9% each.

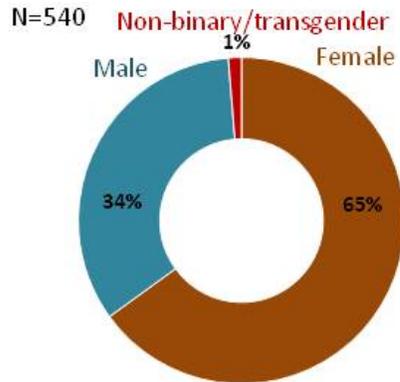
Figure 16 Racial Composition of Participants (N=542)



Source: Urban Strategies Council, the DVP Participatory Research Findings (2018)  
\*Other category includes races of Middle-eastern, Russian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and African National/Caribbean.

## Participants by Gender/Sex

Figure 17 DVP Research Participants by Gender



Boys and men of color are the majority of both victims and suspects of gun violence. Women and female-identified persons are the largest groups of participants. The intersection of gender, age, and race are driving factors for violence; 65% (350) of participants are women, 81% (282) of them are women of color of all ages.

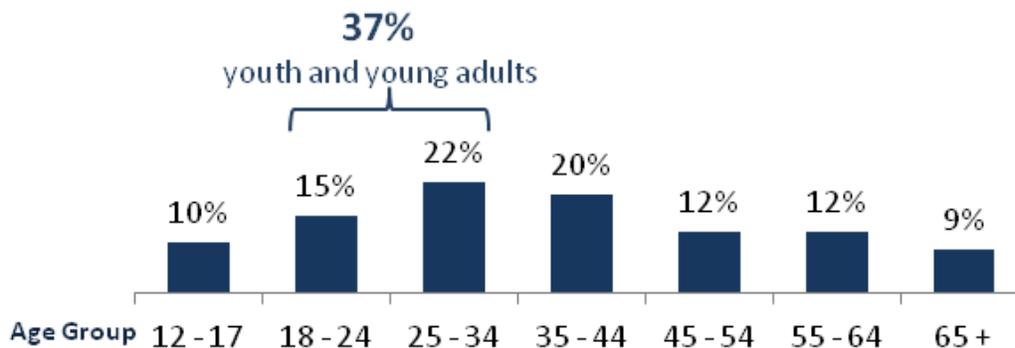
Males (182) represent 34% of participants, 88% (161) are people of color, and 37% (68) of them are between 12 and 34 years old. Only one percent of participants are non-binary or transgender.

## Age Groups of the DVP Research Participants

The research shows that the majority of suspects and victims of gun violence in Oakland are of young people ages 20-34. Of participants, 37% are youth (ages 18-24) and young adults ages 25-34.

Figure 18 DVP Research Participants by Age Group

N= 541



## Highlights from Qualitative Data Analysis

- 60%** Experienced violence in public spaces
- 55%** Experienced police misconduct
- 55%** Did not report incidents of violence
- 21%** Experienced all three types of violence; CSEC, gun, and domestic violence
- 30%** Experienced at least two types of violence
- 53%** Prior involvement in gun violence as a victim, relative, friend, or perpetrator
- 37%** Experienced domestic violence
- 45%** Personally experienced or knew someone who en

# Defining Violence

*In your own words, how do you define violence?*

“Violence is an action, an exercise of power. So I would define it as targeted or untargeted act that would harm another individual that is usually done by another person or a large organization or *groups.*” - Victim of Violence -



Participants defined violence from their lived experiences within the context of living in Oakland. Many responses defined violence as a feeling extending beyond physical involvement – broad feelings of fear and being unsafe.

## Violence is Discord between Persons or Groups

This notion includes physically interrupting personal space in a willful act of hurting another human being. It touches on intimidation, repression, and physical harm at the community level. In a few cases under this notion, violence is defined as self-directed such as in cases of suicidal behaviors or self-abuse.

Violence is also described as a “way of life” that has been “put into genetics” for “vengeance and one’s dignity over longstanding unhealed wounds such as fighting for pride.” In cases of self-defense against victimization, some offenders described violence as “passed on” from one generation to another.

## Violence is Systemic: Exercising Power by People or Institutions

Defining violence as “systemic” was more common among victims of police misconduct or offenders. Systemic violence touched on issues related to poverty, lack of resources, inequitable services, and lack of opportunity, generational violence, institutional racism, and European colonialism, imbalance of power and targeting communities of color. Some respondents expressed a belief that systemic structural violence will eventually lead to counter-violence by those being repressed.

## Domestic Violence: Interpersonal by Family Members or Intimate Partners

Domestic violence victims defined violence as an attack against someone that starts from, and often occurs, at home. Violence occurring in relationships includes “the kind of abuse that traps you there and doesn’t let you go,” “a willful act of hurting another human being within their own families and is passed on and can affect infants and spills over onto the street.”

## CSEC: Violence is Self-directed or Gendered

The majority of participating victims of sexual violence have related the definition of violence to two main categories: 1) self-abuse and 2) gender-based. The self-abuse aspect demonstrated a personal role in sexual violence that has come out among victims. Violence was described as “something that we can do to ourselves or others.” Unique to CSEC, the gendered definition is a description of how victims perceive sexual violence as “girls targeting” or as “violence against or amongst the transgender community.”

# On Trauma and Healing

*If you or your loved ones experienced violence, what has supported the healing?*

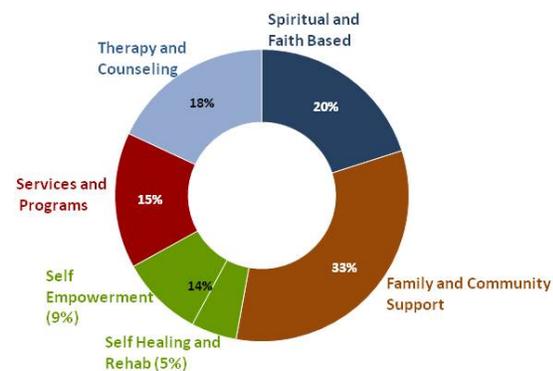


Many participants expressed that trauma is deep, and generational. By silencing and shaming, refusing support, and judging victims, individuals are re-traumatized. Victims reported addressing trauma through substance use and harming themselves and others because of not receiving the support they need. Survivors and offenders healed through targeted services, spiritual practices, family, self-healing, and therapy.

## Targeted Healing Services

Many victims and offenders found healing through targeted services. The spectrum of services received varied and included medical counseling in cases of rehabilitation (i.e., substance use), behavioral therapy amongst the Latino community seeking de-stigmatization and forgiveness, mental health, and self-empowerment through shame reduction, and self-determination services and programs. Additionally, art and travel experiences for youth helped them to heal.

Figure 19 What helped participants heal



## Spiritual or Faith-based Healing

The role of faith-based healing has come out as a well-established, accessible, and institutionalized resource, especially amongst offenders as a pathway to “forgiveness and returning to the community.” Participants referred to church, spiritual meditation, and culturally centered healing, especially amongst Latino victims as faith-based healing support.

## Family Support and Community Based Healing

Many victims requested healing services to target the whole family as opposed to healing only the victim. The majority of victims found family and community support as a reliable, accessible, and effective way for healing. For example, participants used community resources that helped them heal and at the same time decreasing the likelihood of being arrested by the police in what they referred to as “community policing alternatives.” Those community policing alternatives include an exit strategy, a go-to person and support team before incidents escalate to involve the police, library services, family and friends, hotlines, community activities, therapy, and 1-0-1 with people from the community who can relate. However, barriers to family support include chemical dependence, gentrification, incarceration, and further victimization and abuse.

## Self-healing and Empowerment

Healing varied according to the level of trauma and the type of violence individuals experienced. Some practiced more spiritual routines; others used counseling services around self-reflection and coping skills. Few became substance dependent and approached rehabilitation programs for self-medication.

## Domestic Violence: What Helped Victims to Heal

In addition to relying on family and friends, victims of domestic violence relied on services and programs. Participants highlighted organizations that provide services and classes such as A Safe Place, MOM's Program, Love Amelia, The Peace Program, Victims of Crime, The Family Violence Law Center, and Laney College Counseling. Although the listed programs were recognized as helpful, victims needed programs on anger management, culturally appropriate community role models, accessible and affordable therapeutic services, supportive billboards, and advertising materials for awareness.

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

CSEC survivors relied on more arts and physical activity such as yoga for meditation, dancing, and painting. Also, some sex offenders used restorative justice circles for re-entry. In many cases, the healing processes resulted in a new reality that was based on pursuing a more satisfying life course. For example, healing amongst perpetrators seemed to be more challenging than amongst victims; relocating to a new community was one of the most effective healing strategies mentioned.

### *“What did you wish to find to heal?”*

Respondents articulated the need for a passionate, loving, and caring support system and community along with accessible, culturally sensitive non-judgmental, non-system-affiliated infrastructure that genuinely supports healing and re-engages victims or ex-offenders in the community. A significant percentage of participants wished to find healing through extended after-care programs rather than incremental treatment. Examples of healing support included offering lived-experience mediators, trusted mentors, trauma-informed life skills, and outlets for problem-solving and anger management. Victims also called for support from prosecution for victim's families and post-violence coping mechanisms such as mourning spaces, role models, and phone checkups and better hotlines.

Offenders were further at risk, and in need of, an ongoing healing process. Violence creators spoke of their hopes to have found a process where they can learn to re-engage in the community by demonstrating self-peace and reducing self-blame. Most offenders listed their delicate need to relocate and start fresh through “record clearing, new outlook, new people, and a new start.”

The role of faith-based institutions and particularly the church was brought up as an under-utilized accessible resource. Mental health and spiritual trauma-informed practices and sharing secular information at churches is a wish amongst perpetrators. Other unconventional ways of healing victims wished to find were training on a search engine optimized services (internet search), boxing, shopping, arts, eco-therapy, and intergenerational healing groups as a stress reduction method.

### **Domestic Violence**

Victims wished to have found experienced officers for domestic violence situations, and couple counseling and healthy relationships 101. No-pressure follow up from school staff who noticed bruising on children, ages 0-5 services, and lastly, a supportive family was other wishes. Many participants from the LGBT community expressed frustration for not finding the appropriate services for their genders.

### **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)**

CSEC-involved participants needed healing tools such as paperwork support, unemployment, and food stamps, restoring one's confidence, family-centered reunification, and protection for those transitioning out of life, including relocation.

# Prevention and Intervention

“Lack of trust leading to vigilantism, creating a revolving door of stagnancy.”



Participants expressed a desire to root violence prevention in a trauma-informed, healing-centered, and culturally sensitive framework. Restoring trust amongst community groups and approaching victims and offenders also came out as important.

Social media and the Internet are identified as major players in youth violence and CSEC that could be a tool for prevention. Participants highlighted areas that would contribute to successful violence prevention and intervention efforts as detailed below.

## City Sponsored Community Forums

The role of the City of Oakland, along with the community in prevention, was seen as crucial. A few participants articulated the need for more City-sponsored community forums in public spaces to facilitate informal City/community communication and real-time interaction.

## Less Policing is More

Almost half of the participants experienced unpleasant forceful interaction with police officers in Oakland. Those interactions have resulted in creating untrustworthy relationships and, in some cases, allowed further violence. For example, some interactions were for traffic violations that escalated in some events to further violent incidents. Alternatives to over-policing or what many participants referred to as “community policing,” was seen as fundamental to prevent violence.

## Targeted Prevention Efforts for Specific Population Groups

Participants highlighted the need to create different prevention and intervention methods targeting the unique needs of each racial group. Prevention efforts targeting substance use amongst youth, culturally sensitive prevention efforts for Asian and Latinos, after-school programs for children experiencing domestic violence are a few examples of targeted prevention efforts revealed.

## Eliminate Violence in Public Spaces

Fifty-nine percent of participants experienced violence in public spaces. This data underestimates the amount and type of assaults happening. Participants shared that acts of fatal gun shootings often happen at grocery outlets, corner stores, on the freeway, and in their neighborhoods, especially in East and West Oakland. Homicides happen on public transportation, in the streets, in liquor stores, or bars leading to escalated violence. Fights at schools enforce a culture of violence. Non-fatal violence in public spaces includes bicycle theft, gang activity at parties, purse snatching and assault of older women, and racially-based attacks on Asians by African Americans.

## *“How do you envision the community coming together to reduce violence?”*

Ideas included a neighborhood watch, lived-experience change agents, community ambassadors, and community youth forums. Additionally, training on the ability to walk away or negotiate sans violence, racial equity advocacy groups, and resource navigators, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community and Latinx, were also seen as violence prevention efforts. The personal role in violence prevention included: reporting incidents, spiritualism to create a more coherent community, sharing knowledge of resources, speaking up and stepping in, and offering mentorship support to ensure a sense of belonging.

## *“What causes people to commit violence?”*

### **Focus on Perpetrators of Violence to Eradicate Causes of Violence**

Often those who caused harm and committed acts of violence articulated a message of survivalism, the need to "kill or be killed"; in other instances, interviewees would equate domestic violence with the need of males to exert power and control over females. According to some offenders, violence is “a battle for respect; inflicting harm as a resource on the streets.” Offenders often linked domestic and gun violence to substance use, or to the experience of being in and out of jail. Thus recidivism also affects other family members by spreading trauma and fear and anxiety.

Individuals involved in CSEC explained that family members involved in commercial sex trade influenced them. According to registered sex ex-offenders, it is hard to be a part of a family of pimps and stay away from the “game”. Similar to CSEC, it was hard for those involved in homicides to get out of the “gun violence traumatic cycle.” A participant shared his reflection on being involved in gun violence as “my first time shooting a gun, it felt like a relief ... and if you hurt somebody it made you feel way better ... like you let it out.”

Participants shared their vision to combat violence by modifying the primary focus from victims to include perpetrators particularly those who have had former engagement with the criminal justice system. Some offenders related the causes of violence to:

- Self-preservation,
- Self-medicating with drugs and/or parent’s substance dependency,
- Being born into unhealthy circumstances, and
- Witnessing violence, frustration, and neglect in addition to the lack of resources and empathy.

Perpetrators who returned to violent lifestyles related recidivism to:

- Not finding a role model or supportive mandated services after returning home from incarceration,
- Lack of resources, support or safe avenues for families to present evidence to overturn wrongful convictions, and
- Feeling stuck in the system after incarceration.

Offenders named many services that helped them return to the community such as: Rites of Passage for behavioral change, the Garden Project for gardening skills, East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC) for youth-centered non-restrictive of identity program, Community Youth Outreach (CYO) life coaching programs, Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) that provides jobs for probation youth, and mentoring services at West Oakland’s DeFremery Park.

### **Domestic Violence: Prevention and Intervention**

Participants called out working upstream on the family level and identifying youth and young adults as ages in need of intervention towards creating a healthy transition to adulthood. Domestic violence was cited as typically occurring at home but also driveways and occasionally happens at schools and on BART. The frequency of experiencing domestic violence ranges from 3-4 times/week to several times a year. To address the root causes of domestic violence, many participants expressed the need for:

- Free counseling services in languages other than English and among the LGBTQ+ community,
- The voices of ex-felons who have become role models,
- Offering education and certification for family-led solutions and ex-felons,

- Family-Focused approaches because “violence starts at home, and kids bring it to schools, and offenders spill it out to the streets.”

Homelessness, mental health, low paying jobs, being raised by impoverished extended family (grandparents) where domestic violence becomes normalized through generational exposure, especially in “high-stress neighborhoods” spur violence. Participants described the role of the family as critical to reducing violence. The majority of domestic violence victims raised housing instability as they were trapped in their abusive relationships because of fear of housing loss. Family violence was seen as one of the major reasons why children are swept into trafficking early on. Children escaping certain family physical or sexual abuse or home environment get involved in sex crimes.

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC): Prevention and Intervention

### *Housing and Gentrification*

The demographic change due to gentrification has brought new population groups that require services to meet their needs. Many participants called out gentrification as a housing stability barrier that spurs disenfranchisement, and in some cases, stimulates violence. CSEC-involved persons articulated that gentrification, housing, and economic instability are the driving factors for involvement in the sex trade. For example, in some cases, CSEC victims rely on their pimps to secure housing. In addition to offering shelters to the homeless, victims wished to find more “safe houses for women, especially young girls that are trapped by their pimps.” Survivors and other participants cited after-school programs and CSEC education for youth as an early prevention possibility.

### *Social Media and the Internet*

Participants cited social media as a double-edged tool for violence creation and prevention. Many victims and offenders saw the anxiety that social media brought to the community as a major player in advancing violence, particularly amongst youth and in CSEC. Social media and the Internet are also viewed as effective tools to raise awareness and execute a more robust violence prevention model.

***“Have you or someone on your behalf reported an incident of violence to the police or to any law enforcement entity?”***

*“We feel more safe in our community... calling other people but not the*

*“Police often perpetuate the violence.”*

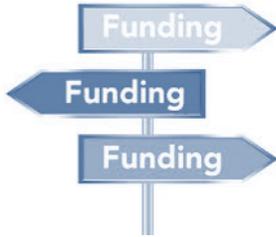
*“I was young and didn't know where to reach out for help.”*

### *Why do people not report incidents?*

Participants interviewed amplified that more awareness on reporting incidents, especially in cases of domestic violence, is pivotal to negate the conventional way of reporting (resulting in under-counting and less targeted efforts). The victim or another person notified the police in about only half of domestic violence incidents (55%). Victims articulated that they did not report incidents for three main reasons: 1) system related 2) lack of resources and 3) personal motivation. The system-related reasons included the victim’s lack of trust in the system as police officers were seen as either arriving late after incidents escalated or perpetuating the situation to another level of violence that is better to be avoided. Lastly, some incidents were not reported because the victim wanted to protect the offender or felt the crime was minor or feared reprisal

*“I was afraid that he would hurt me more after they leave.”*

# Funding

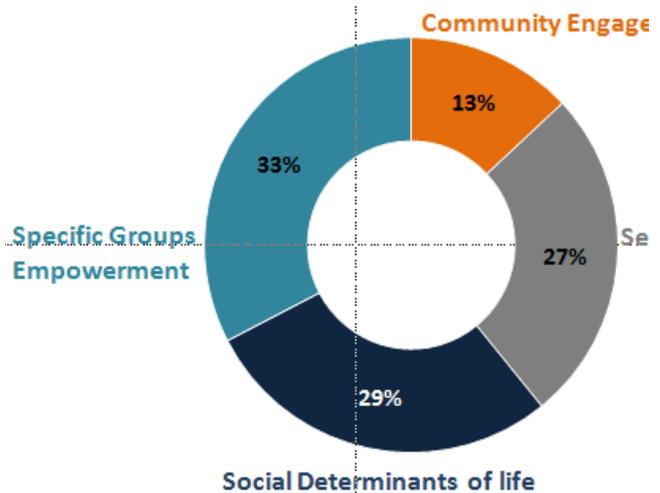


Few participants identified areas for additional funding, such as specific population group empowerment (33%), social determinants of life (29%), services (27%), and community congregating (13%). The majority of those who stated needs for targeted funding for violence prevention acknowledged the importance of empowering people of color and non-native English speakers through culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

Respondents desired to improve Oakland communities' quality of life through City financial planning. Non-emergency preventive services and programs such as therapy and counseling, mental health-focused services, substance support and rehabilitation, anger management, youth-focused programs, grieving forums, arts and sports, after-school programs, family-focused services, and healing-centered services.

Increasing community engagement was described as impactful to address the different needs of Oakland's diverse populations. Activities of a congregating community such as urban gardening, creating community centers and events similar to "national night out" and block parties were some of the ideas participants shared that lack funding.

Figure 20 What participants would like to fund



# Change

## In Systems, Policies, and Culture

**“Those who are most impacted need to be at the center of designing their support services (paid for their work).”**  
- Ex-offender -



Participants desire a sustainably-funded social infrastructure of violence prevention policies, services, and programs. Participants pointed out their visions for mapping out Oakland’s community assets to support an individual’s behavioral changes such as reporting incidents. This behavioral change was suggested to happen through a non-biased process that is informed by community knowledge of those most impacted.

### System and Policy Change

The inequitable treatment by the justice and school systems creates a lack of trust and stimulates more violence. Participants articulated the need to integrate equitable trauma-informed and healing-centered principles in systems and policies. Policies that support system navigation, case management, and protection of witnesses from violence are necessary changes. Participants shared several ideas for system and policy change, such as:

- Adopting a City-administered gun buyback policy,
- Civic engagement through political participation and organizing,
- Supporting violence prevention bills, and advocating for live/work in Oakland,
- Offering incentives to shop locally, improve 911 response time,
- Empathy training for the police force,
- Eradicating systemic inequality and poverty through youth-friendly employment.

Working in non-coordinated silos that empower and reproduce silos is one of the issues Oakland is facing. More coordination between the City, the Police Department, Hospitals, Churches, and the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) is seen as crucial to creatively target the CSEC pipeline that is currently underground. The DVP research process and summit are viewed as a safe space for Oakland youth to witness change. Adopting policies that support a socialist system (sharing community resources) was also mentioned as a tool for violence prevention. It is worth noting that the shared economy is a trend that some communities are adopting.

### Programs, Services, and Practices

Building relationships and restoring trust is a demanded strategy. The Internet and social media are viewed as missed opportunities for communication, trust-building, and connecting policy to practice. Respondents indicated that better communication would result in more engagement that is civic.

Many participants acknowledged the citywide Ceasefire program as impactful in reducing gun violence. Many participants also called out helpful programs and services that offer spiritual and mental health coping mechanisms such as:

- Camp Sweeney Program
- Leadership Council at The Mentoring Center
- Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS)
- Sheriff Department of Corrections

**“We don’t trust services and organizations, we see them as snitches.”**  
- Ex-offender -

- Essie Justice group support for women
- Ceasefire
- A Safe Place
- Family Violence Law Center
- residential-based services
- MOMs
- United Roots
- Oakland Unite
- "Mexican Pilates"
- The Khadafy Washington Foundation for Nonviolence

Many victims demanded programs from non-system-affiliated institutions such as schools and churches. Some of the thoughts shared include:

- After-school programs; school assemblies with positive police presence.
- K-12 school-based services; all ages family-focused local attractions.
- Reliable school/City admin rapport; early childhood education; community-driven block parties.
- Character development at high schools.
- Drug dependence awareness services.
- Residents to take on leadership positions at CBOs and violence prevention governing bodies.
- Include seats and real authority from impacted populations.

In terms of combating domestic violence and CSEC, participants shared the need for programs and services that address healthy spirituality; healthy teen dating 101 at schools; encourage family visiting prisons; increase working parents involvement; offer space to support abused housewives; and, offer services in languages other than English for the LGBTQ+ community

## Cultural Change

Changing individual and institutional culture was highlighted as pivotal to implementing a successful violence prevention model. The Oakland Police Department is seen as disconnected from client-centered and community-based programs and activities that lead to culture change. Ideas to change individual and community culture around violence included:

- Increase the cultural imprint of the African American community. For example:
  - Fund Black businesses,
  - Increase Black political representation,
  - Offer racially equitable vocation training for the youth of color, and
  - Provide client-centered group-led mediation in high-stress areas.
- Use intergenerational power as a classic spiritual 101 healing practice through engaging extended families to reduce stress and encourage parental involvement. These culturally responsive approaches can lead to emotional regulation, create healthier family bonds, and de-escalate domestic violence.
- Rehabilitation, grief counseling, cookouts, outdoor gatherings, child tech access, gender-based summer programs, and culturally and linguistically appropriate activities are also recommended to change the individual culture and spill over to the community.



**“Have those who have experienced change, help facilitate change.”**  
- Ex-offender

## *“What do you think the City of Oakland could do to reduce or prevent violence?” ... Solutions to Violence*

The City of Oakland is the main stakeholder, among many others, in this process that is accountable for a successful operation of the newly structured DVP. The City of Oakland is morally and fiscally accountable to the community to “shift the mental state” through the following four areas:

### **Re-envision the Police Department**

While few participants call for better law enforcement, many envisioned a “Safe Oakland” through:

- Involve police officers in a less policing and more community-based safety procedure,
- Adopt a model that puts the residents in the center of violence prevention efforts,
- Engage police officers in a non-formal set-up. For example, conduct non-uniformed, police/community leagues,
- “Cut down graffiti to endorse safer neighborhoods,”
- Hire community outreach specialists; community/beat cops relationship-building specialists,
- Hire female police officers to support women victims of domestic violence.

On domestic violence and CSEC:

- Consented legalized trafficking was seen as one of the effective solutions to reduce violence,
- Offer free couples counseling,
- Hire humane law enforcement female officers,
- Provide safe housing for teens and women away from their pimps,
- Provide more DVP fellows and resident-run community forums.

### **Housing and Employment**

Participants expressed their frustration to the housing crisis that Oakland, and the region, is facing. Almost every participant articulated the need for the City of Oakland to mandate affordable housing from developers. Participants also requested to find equitable non-discriminatory policies and procedures to secure Section 8 housing and living wage employment opportunities.

### **Focus on Perpetrators**

Offenders wished to find better access to re-entry jobs and to offer programs that focus on stigma reduction and rehabilitation in addition to allocating funds for mental health and substance use treatment. Additionally, creating space and decriminalizing activities that interest youth such as dirt bikes, racing, and car shows can be a violence prevention strategy.

### **Targeted, Relatable, and Segmented Programs and Services**

Offering mandatory-segmented services that fulfill each population group’s specific needs included: advancing the role of local libraries to diversify outreach, providing visibility for people of color and offering safe local recreation attractions. Family-friendly events targeted vocational training, holiday parades, supporting local social enterprises of young people of color, offering parenting programs and confidential or anonymous crime tip hotlines are some of the ideas people wish the City would offer.

# Gun Violence



A little over half of the participants (53%) experienced gun violence. Many have experienced gun violence in combination with one or two other types of violence studied in this project.

## Causes

Participants expressed that the lack of stability in neighborhoods, substance dependency, lack of empathy and desperate times, loss of hope, cultural stigmas, and the “poor services and education results in more people with guns reacting angrily and forcefully.” Gun violence is perceived as part of the broader American culture of aggression; however, East/West/Downtown Oakland are more highly impacted by gun violence than other areas. The root causes of gun violence varied but included:

- Easy access to guns to express power; “guns are acquired on the streets,” “are only one phone call away,” “via home invasions by substance abusers who sell guns to dealers,” and through “hand-to-hand sales,”
- Mental illness and drug business, and
- Gangs’ involvement in the crime scene.

The absence of a healing process post gun incidents was brought up as normalizing the violence. “Children are sent to school after shootings, even if it happened on the same street. “ Those unhealed detached emotions keep the cycle of violence going, especially among teens who grow up witnessing their peers and friends and family members murdered. This continuation of violence makes Oaklanders feel unsafe in their communities and deepens a feeling of “an intended genocide” that is happening over generations.

## Solutions

Some of the solutions to gun violence communicated included:

- Removing guns through gun buyback programs,
- Executing stricter local gun laws and regulations; treat mental illness,
- Offering robust healing services and therapy for perpetrators,
- Conducting participatory research to understand the root causes of violence from the community that can help “remedy the problem on the ground,” and
- Addressing issues related to drugs and gangs by working with Oakland schools to understand the causes of gang involvement and finding community driven solutions

# Domestic Violence

“I was born into situations witnessing family violence at very young ages between parent or partners and not knowing of any resources.” - Victim of domestic violence -



Fifty-seven percent of the DVP research participants experienced domestic violence. Participants associated the region’s inequitable access to opportunities, financial instability, and hardship to meet basic human needs to escalating anger and violence within the family and the community.

## Causes

Growing up, witnessing family abuse normalizes violence for both victims and offenders. Participants related generational domestic violence, substance use, and the absence of unity within families, staying in unhealthy relationships, lack of communication, lack of knowledge, and suppression of feelings were some causes of domestic violence mentioned. Foster children and the LGBTQ+ communities cited domestic violence as a major issue that lacks fundamental resources to those populations.

## Domestic Violence in the Aftermath

Domestic violence includes verbal abuse, sexual assault, corporal punishment committed by immediate family members, intimate partners, or foster parents. The unfavorable trauma-infused consequences of domestic violence such as school absenteeism, feelings of resentment, lack of trust in family, self-blame, and dissolved community engagement were mentioned as lifetime marks that impact children’s physical and mental health. Some victims uttered that those experiences affect the whole family and in some cases are taken out on others in the community due to the lack of education in this area.



## Solutions

Survivors described a desire for discrete and respectful services that include men, offenders, or victims. Participants conveyed that the law does not protect victims and requested more enforcement other than restraining orders. “If you put a temporary restraining order on somebody that big.... that angry with nothing to lose.... All you did is sign your death warrant.” Participants listed some solutions to domestic violence, such as:

- Organizing community conversations on domestic violence,
- Offering affordable rehabilitation services for offenders,
- Provide education around healthy choices,
- Offering relocation services for victims,
- Providing safe space and safe housing options and in-residence therapy services and
- Retaining survivor staff members known to the community.

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)



Victims of domestic violence are more likely to be at risk of entry to CSEC; for example, escaping “abusive homes, girls and young women are manipulated under the guise of care/protection.” The average age of entry to CSEC is usually between the ages of 12-14, which are not the only ages at risk. CSEC Victims fall under the following categories:

- Children who run away from home,
- Youth with a history of sexual abuse,
- Verbally abused youth,
- LGBTQ+ youth,
- Teens seeking attention and relationships,
- Young women and girls feeling lost with low self-esteem, and
- Young women and girls escaping poverty; “money helps – and sometimes even taking the risk of sex trafficking is necessary.”

## Causes

Historically, according to participants, sex-work was more concentrated along the International Blvd, Fruitvale, San Pablo Avenue and MacArthur Blvd corridors. Participants showed their concern of the expansion of sex work to other parts of Oakland.

Inner city urban dynamics was highlighted by some as a factor in advancing sex trafficking in Oakland. Formerly abused victims with no jobs often chose self-exploitation and did not to seek help because it did not seem feasible. Victims shared their frustration of a “very rampant” and long-standing problem that goes back to ineffective or corrupt law enforcement, the lack of legal consequences for sex workers and the lack of community education. Those who are formerly human trafficked or sex work-involved often cycle back to their exploiters due to feeling lost and believing nothing is out there for them. Bringing workers from overseas to Oakland was also brought up as contributing to the problem and requires further attention to help those victims.

“Society has become normalized to child exploitation and don't speak up in public or private.”

- Victim of CSEC -

## Solutions

Some victims received services from organizations such as MISSEY, BAWAR, Regina's Door, and Dream Catchers. Most participants revealed their hopes to find creative ways of addressing CSEC such as:

- Legalizing adult prostitution,
- Adopting more regulation of the industry with stronger enforcement,
- Publicizing or “public-shaming” of pimps,
- Offering creative outlets for women to tell their stories and be role models,
- Involving the local media and schools to organize educational retreats for youth,
- Providing safe housing for girls and young women away from their pimps,
- Mandate more effective alternatives to incarceration of pimps, and
- Addressing illegal police activity.

# Conclusion

This participatory research is a manifestation of our collective accountability to Oakland's diverse communities most impacted by violence. The Research Fellows are the real champions of this process. The fellowship on violence prevention empowered 16 Oakland residents who are impacted by violence. The Fellows are now ambassadors of their communities and advocates for those who suffered traumatic violence experiences. The Fellows not only collected information, but they also became vulnerable, exposed themselves and shared their personal stories to support their interviewees while needing further support themselves. Some fellows described the process as therapeutic; others became re-traumatized and needed to find spaces for their own self-care and healing.

The information shared in this process tells a story about the perception and magnitude of violence in Oakland, the reality of how safe Oaklanders feel, and their aspirations for safer communities. We learned from the research findings that Oakland's residents are concerned for their safety overall, but also during and after reporting incidents of violence. On another front, the Research Fellows learned about violence in Oakland from each other and from interacting with the participants involved in the research.

One of the powerful assertions that dominated interviews is the level and extent of trauma people are experiencing. A win of this process is that victims and offenders alike indicated that they felt heard, validated and believed. Helping victims to heal through those interactions is critically important and helps a victim become a survivor. This process is sought to inspire a movement that eventually results in changing systems and cultures. In order to achieve this change, participants emphasized that solutions should arise from those closest to the problem and that those who seek change should facilitate change. Furthermore, participants stressed that resources are to be in the hands of those most impacted.

It was reiterated that the region's housing crisis and complex political and socio-economic dynamics are contributing to the challenges Oakland has been facing over the past years. This regional complexity urges stakeholders to urgently intervene to create a more vibrant and less violent living conditions. It was also reiterated that substance dependence and mental health issues are major factors contributing to violence in Oakland. Violence occurs in relationships, homes, schools, parks, streets, neighborhoods, and in places where people feel angry, disrespected and marginalized. Violence is provoked by fear and the lack of control over one's life choices. For individuals and communities to be free from fear and accordingly hostility, these forms of violence require separate, yet coordinated, intersectional strategies to address the factors that contribute to violence at every stage of life and that impact different groups in unique and distinct ways. That said, many voices and perspectives were missing from this process, in particular incarcerated women of color

Constituencies can use findings from this report to gain a better interpretation of the landscape and depth of violence to inform targeted violence prevention efforts and allocate resources towards those efforts in the way the community envisions and needs them. In order to know what is working, where it is working, and who it is working for (and conversely who it is not working for), it is imperative to develop data collection systems and tools to measure the impact of current efforts and analyze the outcomes. Data must be accessible, updated and available to community members, stakeholders and researchers. In particular, the limited availability of accurate and up-to-date data on domestic violence and CSEC must be addressed and remedied if real progress is to be made in these areas.

# **Section Three**

## **Findings from DVP Community Summit**

# Gun Violence Track



On June 8, 2019, Urban Strategies Council, the DVP Steering Committee and the City of Oakland convened the Safe Oakland Summit for all Oakland residents and stakeholders to share their ideas and visions for a safe Oakland. The summit included a review of participant research findings as well as resident discussion groups/feedback sessions covering four topic areas: 1) gun violence, 2) domestic and intimate partner violence, 3) sexual violence, and 4) family support. Each session had an overarching goal to address deeper sub goals and themes that are briefed

in this section. For consistency, report outs are reorganized to reflect related topic areas.

## Gun Violence Track Goal

The goal for the gun violence track was to identify community-based ideas and strategies that will lead to a dramatic reduction of violence (80% decline) in Oakland within three years. With this goal in mind, participants shared their vision of a safe Oakland that included notions such as:

- In Oakland there are no “good” or “bad” neighborhoods, and that all are equally safe
- In particular, neighborhoods are safe for youth and kids
- Neighborhoods are gun-free and embody self-love, unity, and true community
- Safe spaces are available, such as having libraries and community centers open late and on weekends
- Schools help support and care for students’ well-being through more supportive services, better-trained and culturally competent staff, and trauma-informed interventions
- More affordable housing and more available jobs that pay living wages

## What is the Lived Experience

Experiences with gun violence as an individual, a family, or a community varied amongst participants and included committing suicides, losing family members or friends in public spaces, witnessing shootings, and killing bystanders. Participants in smaller groups described the current state of gun violence in Oakland that reflects the lived experience and as:

<i>“Out of control.”</i>	<i>“Law enforcement is planting guns in the hands of youth.”</i>	<i>“Form for modern-day extinction of blacks.”</i>
<i>“Reckless.”</i>	<i>“Frustration and giving up hope.”</i>	<i>“Media is putting out violence to children.”</i>
<i>“Not enough being done to stop it.”</i>	<i>“5-second action leaving communities with lifelong trauma.”</i>	<i>“violence are a generational pattern that’s repeated.”</i>
<i>“Target to my people.”</i>	<i>“Designed epidemic.”</i>	<i>“Modern-day lynching.”</i>
<i>“Traumatizing to the youth.”</i>	<i>“Leaves mothers with fatherless children.”</i>	<i>“Systems are pushing violence to obtain power.”</i>
<i>“Life does not matter.”</i>	<i>“close to home, close to school.”</i>	<i>“Holding neighborhoods captive by fear.”</i>
<i>“Product of structured racism.”</i>	<i>“Diversionary practice to alternative ways of self-sufficiency.”</i>	<i>“Normalized through systems, the community is made to believe we should accept.”</i>

## What Do Participants Need to Heal

Participants of this track expressed that the impact of gun violence on individuals and families results in experiencing various forms of trauma and community anger and loss of trust amongst subgroups. This trauma negatively affects children growing up. Some participants shared suggestions to help the community heal such as breaking down the stigma around mental health, building community alleys to be involved in gun violence, focusing on teens through ages of 25 because they are being groomed to be in the lifestyle, and starting a community-healing circle. Some participants cited missing services:

## How Can the Process be Improved?

Healing trauma was identified as a community need because “hurt people, hurt people.” To reduce violence in Oakland, people need to heal and recover. Participants called upon both the community and public systems to respond with action. Gun violence can be reduced if stakeholders come together to:

- Support mediators that can bridge gaps amongst communities to support communication
- Create greater communication between the community and the government.
- Outreach to youth who are missing supportive adults in their household.
- Not rely on the government and organize the community to build relationships with each other.
- Support parents to hold kids and community accountable.
- Think about violence from a regional perspective and involve Alameda County.
- Organize more town hall meetings to collect resident input and share ideas.

Engage youth when very young and stay with them throughout their teenage and young adult years, and focus on building character, values and self-esteem.

While some participants identified specific types of support from providers that made a difference such as Khadafy Washington Project/Youth Alive, Oakland Unite, churches, Catholic Charities of the East Bay and Soldiers Against Violence Everywhere, others identified services that were missing or that they needed more of:

### Services that are missing or need improvement/expansion

- Post-court support to unpack trial
- Empathy and support from police
- Need to work with the county to change Victims of Crime (VOC) eligibility
- Resources to relocate youth from high-stress areas.
- OPD needs to be receptive to information that leads to arrest
- Cameras on busy corners
- Healing for people traumatized

## What Do Participants Want the City of Oakland or the Chief of the DVP to do

Additionally, participants agreed on aspects that will result in reducing gun violence in Oakland, such as:

- Thinking about violence from a regional perspective and involve Alameda County.
- Organize more community meetings to collect residents’ input.
- Find ways to engage community members in a way that makes them stay focused on moral standards.

# Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Track



This track touches on domestic and intimate partner violence to reflect lived experience and share what helped survivors, and their friends and/or family members heal post experiencing violence. Participants asked the DVP chief to make intimate partner violence a priority. This track also suggests a comprehensive set of recommendations for the City of Oakland and the new Chief of Violence Prevention to break the cycle of domestic and IPV as listed below.

## What is the Lived Experience

There is generational trauma that is not addressed, and intimate partner violence passed down through children who witness violence, especially among African American girls and boys. There is a stigma around men who experience intimate partner violence. Men are considered weak if they talk about this.

Many people do not learn about IPV unless they attend a workshop or training as a staff member or as part of a mandated court order. There is no means to address IPV before it happens. Youth witness, intimate partner violence, growing up.

## What Do Participants Need to Heal

- Acknowledge trauma. Recognize the person or people who caused harm in the first place.
- Self-care after acknowledgment and accepted and is part of real healing. Self-care looks like therapy, little things, belief in a higher power.
- Conduct more in-person communication and dialogue.
- Trying to rebuild the idea of what is a community through opportunities to talk to the community to share the pain and release it as part of healing and rediscover and rebuild trust within each other.
- Need to get to the root of spirituality. If you look at all religions, the root is the same – be love, be kind. If we could get grounded in that truth, then it is easier to reflect that into the world.
- Love and caring. There was always a place where we can go to get a good meal. You used to be able to go to your neighbor's house. We have gotten away from caring about humans. We have gotten away from being human.

## How Can the Process be Improved?

- Being called out about it; take personal responsibility to hold each other accountable to prevent individuals from becoming those that cause harm.
- Create spaces and environment to talk about what intimate partner violence is through different love language to children and new generations.
- Need another level of interface with procedural attention, so survivors do not have another level of trauma perpetrated against them during the reporting process. The process needs to ensure confidentiality conducted by supportive and culturally competent personnel.
- More supports from county entities into the community. Utilize a holistic community-based model to provide support to survivors and for those who caused harm.
- Initiate a discussion about non-violent intimate relationships with youth. Incorporate this information into the school curriculum to disrupt the pattern of intimate partner violence

normalization. It can also be useful to have survivors share stories about intimate partner violence early on at schools.

- Provide funding to those who support women who experience intimate partner violence. Help them become advocates and create programs that help survivors as community support.
- Create response teams that provide victims with resources and wrap-around support after experiencing violence.
- Publicize information on domestic violence with higher frequency.

### **What Do Participants Want the City of Oakland or the Chief of the DVP to do**

- Have community forums that involve arts and holding engaging and informative conversations.
  - Need to incorporate a different type of education for the changing times. Need to find interactive and engaging strategies for youth.
- Offer education and outreach to those in encampment and alternatives to police. A lot of women stay in a relationship because it is unsafe to be alone in the streets. They feel alone and isolated and do not have the resources to get help.
- Address the link between gun violence and IPV, which puts the entire family, is at risk.
- Create programs to help survivors become advocates – who better than survivors to determine ways to come into the community to discuss DV.
- Engage the churches, mosques, and libraries.
- Address the lack of shelters through:
  - Collaboration between agencies to support domestic violence survivors, specifically around the availability of spots for survivors,
  - Partnering with hotels if shelters do not have room, and
  - Creating a mobile team 24-hour team that works with shelters.
- Collect and disseminate data on what youth would like to see to support them.
- Change the way law enforcement responds to DV calls that re-traumatize survivors.
- Think about prevention through extracurricular activities for youth teams to give a sense of community.
- Bridge the gap in research about the experiences of men with intimate partner violence. Black men are already seen as a threat and calling the police can have a different response for Black man compared to a woman.
- Offer small grant opportunities/low barrier opportunities for women doing work to support other women in the community.
- Provide services that are centered on mental health/therapy for survivors.

# Family Support Track



The family support track suggested some questions set forth to guide participants, touching on aspects of healing and resources for support, and what the City of Oakland and the new Chief of Violence Prevention can do to engage with families during the trauma and after. Highlights that came out under each theme/question are listed below.

## What is the Lived Experience

Participants expressed that they experience difficulty finding convenient and accessible services that target support to the whole family as opposed to individual survivors; an approach that is seen as missing and important and to help shift the narrative of violence on the family and community level.

## What Do Participants Need to Heal

- Friends and family; 1000 mothers to prevent violence (help for self, children, and youth).
- Informal support groups; neighbors who have had the same loss.
- Self-meditation and spiritual meditation through engaging the Church and religious leaders.
- Non faith-based, non-affiliated support programs and therapy.
- Culturally relevant mental health services that are not typically available and other services to be located in high-stress neighborhoods.
- Safe spaces designed for healing, travel support, support groups with access to nature, services located in high-stress neighborhoods such as West and deep East Oakland.
- Job training and skills development to improve employment options after loss
- Child care.
- Make CBO available as a resource between victims and offenders after incidents have occurred.
- More autonomy and influence in the community on policies that govern communities.
- Better information/ communication about services, especially for recent immigrants;
  - Everybody should have the 211 phone number.
  - Billboard so families know where to get support (use of tech geospatial campaign advertising).
- Victim offender dialogues for healing.

## How Can the Process be Improved?

- Supportive services for grieving and relational methods.
- Healing circles, BBQ healing (support with a clinical professional that feels naturally accessible).
- Ensure effectiveness through accountability of funded agencies.
- Set up systems for affordable mental health.
- Knowledge about mandatory reporting.
- Lift role models of how people sought help.

- Police intervention after harm instead of removing from the home, both parents and children should have healing and not a legal action that tears apart the family.
- Provide an alternative for first responders (the effort to change the laws).
- Allocate more time for resources.
- Offer a safe space to try different services until people connect.
- Offer counselors who come to the community through the local library or Barbers shops.

### What Do Participants Want the City of Oakland or the Chief of the DVP to do

- Build coalitions, address intersectionality, and offer funding for activities targeting youth with evening activities that ensures accountability for funded providers and for-profit organizations.
- Offer training to not-for-profit organizations to do community outreach.
- Support the families after the summit through City liaison (85 groups signed up to be resources).
- Think collective healing in addition to individual healing.
- Build trust; recruit people working for the City who are from the community to build trust.
- Organize campaigns in neighborhoods to communicate why DVP is important.
- Provide support for parents at the juvenile hall to navigate systems when children are arrested.
- Offer multi-generational outreach strategies to reach youth and elders.
- Acknowledge systemic trauma to support healing.
- Outreach to be accessible in multiple languages and cultural forms (including to specific immigrant communities to establish trust).
- Locate the folks with credibility in the community/connect with people who have influence.
- Find resources to fund no cost Jobs and training programs, youth summer and Friday events.
- Expose young men to other vision by crossing their neighborhood lines to deal with the turf that contains them, especially in West and North Oakland to change the mindset.
- Look at early childhood as a part of this through prevention and therapy in schools, and get the youth before they are in the mindset of shooters.
- Engage families, especially during a crisis.
- Approach issues with a systems lens that is holistic and interactive; organize at the grassroots.
- Form responsive groups. For example, support mothers get cases solved.
- Incentivize local business to hire people with convictions to address victimization.

# Sexual Violence Track



Various forms of Sexual Violence is the umbrella that includes rape, sexual exploitation, forced/nonconsensual acts, child molestation, and sexual harassment/objectification. Often times these types of violence are considered “less severe” because often the victim knows or is in relationship with the perpetrator, victims are often blamed and there is less accountability for the perpetrator. Sexual violence is grossly underreported and often the shame or stigma associated sexual violence makes it difficult for victims to talk about it. Creating safe spaces for women to discuss sexual violence is a priority.

Sex trafficking has spread from Oakland to neighboring cities like Livermore and Dublin, so should be treated as a regional issue. An average buyer of a child is a White man between ages 40-65; they have more resources than other people do. In Oakland, youth of color are more likely to be trafficked as well. The latest Alameda County Heat Watch numbers showed that over 80% of trafficked girls in the County are Black or Brown.

Families or communities have rejected many LGBTQ youths from the middle of the country because of the loss of protections, and they are migrated to California. However, when they end up here, they are at high risk of being homeless and vulnerable to becoming trafficked. Teenagers have not finished exploring desires or their gender when they start to be trafficked.

The spectrum of sex work includes stripping, escorts, and traditional “prostitutes.” On this spectrum, some people chose to be sex workers, some are in a gray area, and then some were exploited as a child and turn 18 and continue to do this “work”. The stats below help put sexual violence in context:

- The latest Alameda County Heat Watch showed that over 80% of trafficked girls in the County are Black or Brown.
- 40% of homeless youth in the US are LGBTQIIA. That proportion is even higher among trafficked youth—where between 50-60% of trafficked youth are LGBTQIIA.
- At Dreamcatcher, 100% of the LGBTQ youth who identify as females report being exploited.
- Another vulnerable group is unaccompanied immigrant youth.
- Dreamcatcher also reports that 100% of unaccompanied female-identified youth at their center report being trafficked.

## How Can the Process be Improved?

- Fold sexual violence in everything-school curriculum and summer camps for children.
- Help boys who could be influenced to become exploiters. We need to normalize the conversation-do not do drugs, do not traffic your friends.
- When women report sexual violence, OPD always sends a male officer. This is often re-traumatizing, especially when the officer often does not ask questions with compassion or care. OPD should train specialized officers to respond to calls involving sexual/gender-based violence and make sure that officers exhibit empathy, compassion and trauma-informed response.
- Teach people the difference between being a “snitch” and being a witness. Witnessing and reporting of sexual violence should become a new cultural norm. Beyond law

enforcement, people need to speak out publicly against sexual violence when it happens.

- Look to families with histories of sexual harm and teach individuals who have a higher likelihood of causing this type of harm and exploitation how NOT to do it.
- Educate the public about the reality of child sexual exploitation to change minds and behaviors of the potential buyers.
- More family-level intervention after identification; when we find out a child is raped or exploited, work with the whole family to address it.
- Address the intersectionality between gun violence and sexual violence.

### **What Do Participants Want the City of Oakland or the Chief of the DVP to do**

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- Create more places where exploited teens can go that are not affiliated with the police.
- Prevent the kids who are at risk; provide Black and Brown teens safe places from exploiters.
- Fund child and youth development programs to get them safe places to live, and to teach them how to have fun, do good in school, and play.
- Increase the amount of sexual education that is being provided in OUSD in elementary schools.
- Offer more support to schools to help identify youth who they think might be trafficked, and also to make sure exploiters are not hanging outside of the school ready to recruit more kids to be trafficked.

# Recommendations

# Recommendations

The analyses offer recommendations for a community-driven and healing centered violence prevention model in Oakland. The recommendations reflect what came out from the participatory research findings and what participants reported at the June 2019's DVP community summit tracks. Overall, participants are hopeful for short wins to feel the change. New violence prevention programs and approaches require funding, leadership, coordination, and advocacy. Focusing on smaller geographic areas can make change more achievable. Creativity and cross-agency projects could yield benefits on behalf of the most impacted populations.

Recommendations under each type/track are not mutually exclusive and can be interchangeably implemented. Achieving change that makes residents feel the difference can be a long term effort. That being said, we captured the top three priorities for the DVP chief in his first six months of service that can help strategize to execute longer-term recommendations.

## Recommendations to the DVP Chief in his first six months of service

### 1. Conduct DVP introductory meetings

Hold introductory mini-community meetings in high-stress neighborhoods to follow up with residents on the progress of violence prevention efforts. The purpose of those meetings is to share the vision of the DVP on the ground. Additionally, identify individuals with lived experience who attended the summit to partake in those meetings.

### 2. Engage the DVP steering committee in the strategic planning

The DVP steering committee members were actively and efficiently engaged throughout the process that included designing the research protocol until executing the summit. It is highly recommended to keep this asset and build on its success through the engagement of the steering committee members in developing the strategic plan.

### 3. Share the research findings with OPD and public safety systems leaders and agencies

The OPD and public safety leaders and agencies were not directly or fully involved in this process. However, they are important stakeholders to roadmap an implementation plan. Sharing the research findings with the OPD and public safety systems leaders can inform the strategic plan and can also help execute a higher-level policy or systems change.

## Long Term Universal Recommendations

### 4. Coordinate efforts between public safety systems leaders

Participants indicated a need for coordination between agencies both on the regional and local levels. Coordination and partnering with existing health outreach organizations and faith communities is an example of another opportunity. These coordinated efforts could encourage developing programs and social support groups beyond the jurisdiction level to open new opportunities.

### 5. Create social media venues on every type of violence

The DVP research addressed gun violence, domestic violence, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The community summit included an additional track on family support and added sexual violence to CSEC. Overall, social media and the Internet came out as a major player in magnifying violence and traumatizing communities. Participants recommend utilizing the social media to counter the impact through providing a channel for communication, to raise awareness, and to offer educational materials and credible and reliable updates on the status of violence in each community.

## Recommendations on Gun Violence

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### **6. Identify people most impacted (victims and those engaged in the violence) to address gun violence**

The model of training research fellows most impacted by violence to interview members of the community yielded great benefits to all involved. Participants felt heard, validated and engaged and encouraged this process to continue after the project ends. Throughout the process, some participants showed interest to stay engaged and actively partake in future processes. One way to keep the momentum is to identify individuals and engage them in advocating for their communities and addressing homicides in their surroundings.

### **7. Create a safe space within the DVP for families of victims of gun violence to heal and feel heard**

Building on the success of deploying research fellows to advocate for their peers in the community and acknowledging the need to build trust and positive relationship between a newly established City-affiliated entity and the community, we recommend creating a safe space that brings families of victims together to institutionalize a healing-centered approach of connecting people most impacted.

### **8. Re-evaluate gun violence prevention programs**

The data demonstrates that there were 47 gun violence homicides in 2019 (as of July 31) after a consistent decline from 2012 till 2017. It is time to re-evaluate gun violence programs that resulted in the decline and to analyze why and how this increase is happening. Additionally, the City should increase efforts to stop the supply of guns in communities, including greater utilization of data reports that identify where guns may originate from.

## Domestic Violence

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### **9. Offer educational programs on healthy relationships for youth and young adults**

Adolescence is a critical transition age to develop emotional and social competence. Often youth programs do not focus on promoting healthy relationships; an important skill that many victims wished to find. Healthy relationship education requires communication and intimacy skills; it also includes emotional self-regulation, social confidence, pro-social behaviors, and empathy. Those skills can help promote a healthier style of living with intimate partners or family members that can also result in reducing domestic violence.

### **10. Connect with OUSD to champion and mandate addressing DV at schools**

Many victims expressed that kids go to school with bruises and scars with no further follow-up from school staff. It is well acknowledged in the research that teachers are well placed to play a pivotal role in identifying and responding to domestic violence since they have contact with children more than any other service. This can have a subjectivity burden at play; coordination between the DVP and OUSD to develop a racially equitable policy that trains teachers and social workers on how to report and address domestic violence is highly recommended.

### **11. Identify data gaps and create a data collection platform**

Domestic violence in Oakland is underreported. It is difficult to identify domestic violence in the absence of physical injury and data systems are not designed to consistently count incidents. This key data gap masks the statistics toward the populations in need of services or immediate help.

Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is standardizing a data collection and referral process to consistently assess DV. In this effort, ACPHD collaborates with state and local agencies and

organizations to support policies that protect DV survivors and prevent future incidents. Coordination between DVP and ACPHD can help put a better data collection system in place on the jurisdiction level.

## Family Support

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### **12. Develop materials and accessible protocol to communicate with families**

Developing protocol for ongoing communication to family-oriented service providers of all types is also important. For example, whose job is it to communicate existing services, encouragement, and support on linking families, as well as easy hand-outs they can share with families.

### **13. Develop easy-to-use multi-lingual information to help families connect to resources.**

The current violence-related resources are not easily accessible and are hard to navigate. Individuals and families need easy-to-understand information. Families, the Oakland community, and family-serving agencies would all benefit from current on-line local information as well as printed materials that could be shared by multiple programs which serve families. Some examples include: information on parent groups, adult exercise and enrichment classes, and especially on career counseling and career development opportunities; many female victims wanted to make progress on their education and careers to create a better life for their children.

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) & Sexual Violence

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### **14. Identify data gaps and create a data collection platform.**

Sexual violence is complex to track and report due to the frequent mobility of victims and the lack of physical damage in most cases. Multiple systems are thus required to get involved in coordinating, collecting, and sharing data across systems to better understand the challenges and needs of these populations. Reporting sexual abuse is often sensitive, and victims are hesitant to report incidents or to share their stories. It is important to design protocols that protect information sharing and confidentiality not only from a legal standpoint but most importantly, from ethical considerations including victim's rights against self-incrimination.

### **15. Develop a sexual violence rescue app**

Sexual violence is more common amongst younger ages. These age groups are tech-savvy and rely on social media and phone apps to a great extent in their daily life activities. It can help to coordinate a cross-systems rescue app for victims of sexual violence and CSEC that connect these populations in their language. The app can help confidentially protect youth and young adults at risk of becoming victims, connect victims to support services, securely report incidents, and block potential pimps.



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