

# Gun Violence Listening Sessions

Recommendations to the Sacramento Police Department  
for Addressing Gun Violence

April 2023



SACRAMENTO  
STATE

## Acknowledgements

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The Gun Violence Listening Sessions would not have been possible without the collective efforts and input from members of the Sacramento community. We are grateful to the participating residents and their willingness to share their candid views on how their lives have been impacted by gun violence and their recommendations for strengthening their communities. We thank Miss Jackie Rose (Rose Family Creative Empowerment), Mervyn Brookins (Brother 2 Brother Mentoring), and Pastor Anthony Sadler (Shiloh Baptist Church) for facilitating the listening sessions and for heading participant recruitment efforts in their neighborhoods. Essential community connections were provided by Dr. Nicole Clavo (Office of Violence Prevention) and the Sacramento Police Department. In particular, Lieutenant Brent Kaneyuki, Tammy Hall, Officer Nicholas Bassett, and Officer Kayla Perez were instrumental in coordinating the logistics for the listening sessions. Lastly, special thanks to John Still Middle School, the Oak Park Community Center, the Hagginwood Community Center, and Rose Family Creative Empowerment Center for providing community spaces to hold the listening sessions.

### Report Submitted to:

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**Chief Kathy Lester**  
Sacramento Police Department



### Report Developed by:

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# Executive Summary

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In June 2022, Chief Kathy Lester released the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) Violent Crime Reduction Strategy, which laid out her plan to curb escalating levels of violence in the city.<sup>1</sup> Key to the SPD strategy is using data to inform policing strategies. Through their data analysis, SPD found that violent crimes in the city involving a firearm are concentrated in approximately seven square miles, or less than 10 percent of the city. These Focus Areas account for about 45 percent of all incidents of gun related crime in 2021.<sup>2</sup> As a result, SPD plans to target their gun violence reduction efforts within these *Focus Areas* which coincide within three communities of Del Paso Heights (North Focus), Oak Park (East Focus) and Meadowview and Valley Hi (South Focus).

SPD partnered with the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at Sacramento State to conduct listening sessions in the Focus Areas with concentrated levels of gun violence. The ISR designed the sessions in collaboration with SPD Outreach and Advancement, the City of Sacramento Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), and representatives from the local communities. Three listening sessions were held in each of the Focus Areas (a total of 83 adult residents participating), and one listening session was conducted with 24 youth who also live in the targeted neighborhoods.

The purpose of these community outreach efforts was to hear directly from residents and youth living within these geographic areas, learn more about their specific needs, and gather input about the types of strategies SPD can take that will have the greatest impact in reducing gun violence within their neighborhoods. This report summarizes the main themes across sessions, including the ways in which residents and youth have experienced gun violence, priorities for policing in their neighborhoods, and ideas for strengthening their communities' relationship with SPD. Topics and shared experiences from residents were remarkably consistent across the community listening sessions. Residents were primarily interested in community-based approaches to prevent gun violence among local youth. Almost no one mentioned strategies related to focused enforcement of current offenders, other than stopping access to guns within these communities. In addition, youth participants shared how normalized gun violence is for some of them and that trusted adults functioned as primary sources of safety for youth. Taken together, the themes discussed by residents and youth in the listening sessions can be summarized into two main recommendations for the reduction of gun violence in SPD Focus Area neighborhoods.

If somebody in our community gets hurt, we are all affected by it. It's just how it goes. We're like family in Del Paso Heights. So, when somebody gets hurt or somebody gets shot by gang violence, we're all affected in some kind of way.

*Focus Area Resident*

## RECOMMENDATION #1

### Prevent Gun Violence with Community Resources and Supports for Youth

Presented with a menu of strategies that SPD is currently using to reduce neighborhood gun violence, residents across all three listening sessions prioritized community-based services and programs. Residents discussed ways in which the community itself could be more involved in addressing gun violence locally, and much of the discussion focused on the need for services and supports to do so. Specifically, youth and the lack of opportunities for youth were front-and-center in these listening sessions, with many residents

wondering why public services such as parks and community centers had limited availability. Further, residents linked the prevalence of gun violence in their neighborhoods to the high levels of poverty and eroded community networks. Residents recommend that, not just SPD, but the City of Sacramento invest more in the well-being of their children and youth before they are acutely at risk for becoming a victim and/or perpetrator of gun violence. Many of the resident recommendations for resources fall outside the scope and mission of the Sacramento Police Department, yet are still seen as vital to addressing gun violence in their neighborhoods. Resident recommendations include:

- Expand hours and services to local Community Centers, especially to centers that are known “safe places” within the high gun violence *Focus Areas*.
- Ensure that neighborhood parks are open, accessible, and safe for residents to use.
- Build supports and programming for youth that are sustainable, well-advertised, and involve a stable cadre of adults at a known and trusted location.
- Provide community connections and programs to school-aged children that offer positive alternatives to activities/associations leading to gun violence.
- Support community-led programming for youth that is culturally competent and provides service linkages to address the impacts of trauma from community gun violence.
- Include the broader community in the provision of youth services, including violence prevention programs and opportunities for older residents to volunteer and/or mentor youth.

I feel like the crime rate would be extremely low if we have more policing, more mentors, more people that go out in the community and host events to have kids come out of the streets, keep them busy because most of the time they're doing this because they're bored.

*Youth Participant*

*Research Team Recommendations* | Residents across the listening sessions noted what they saw as a glaring disparity in the resources and programs available in their neighborhoods. Likewise, residents felt that the primary strategy for addressing gun violence was investing in their youth. Many of the mentioned youth supports exist in some form or fashion within the City of Sacramento’s structure; however, resident feedback suggests that these efforts are not well-known or coordinated within these neighborhoods. Some youth participants acknowledged that while some youth services are available and impactful, they are not always easy for youth to access or find. The research team recommends further citywide collaboration, coordination, and outreach for youth-focused services with a priority given to neighborhoods in the *Focus Areas* that are the most under-resourced and vulnerable to community gun violence.

## RECOMMENDATION #2

### Build Trust through Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing

When asked for specific recommendations about how SPD could effectively police their neighborhoods, residents prioritized the need to change how police officers relate to, and work, within their communities. Specifically, residents pointed to the level of mutual distrust between law enforcement and their neighborhoods. Residents discussed past negative experiences with law enforcement and shared their

I'd like to see cops outside of just being cops. Play basketball, pull up, entertain the kids, like get to know people. At the end of the day, it's a relationship. If it's one-sided and it's always accusations, assumptions. You fit the description type of relationship. How would you expect somebody on the other end to respond to that? You're setting a tone.

*Focus Area Resident*

skepticism that the police could or would ensure their safety. Youth participants with past interactions, also expressed mostly negative experiences with law enforcement and did not see them a source of safety or assistance. Residents discussed what they see as a contradiction in how SPD operates in their neighborhoods. For example, residents shared their experiences of calling the police for assistance in emergency situations (e.g., domestic violence, threats to their families, or homicide victims), but felt that officers did not respond to calls within their neighborhoods or police responses were severely delayed. At the same time, residents and youth report feeling that their neighborhoods are being over-policed with targeted traffic stops and interrogations by police assuming that they are engaged in criminal behavior, when they are just going about their everyday lives.

As a result, one of the most prevalent themes emerging from the listening sessions is the reluctance for residents in the city's neighborhoods with the highest levels of gun violence to seek assistance from the police. Instead, residents and youth seek protection from their families/networks and are more likely to own a gun for personal protection. Residents describe a cycle where the increased levels of gun violence in their neighborhoods drives the demand for more guns. This cycle is further exacerbated when there are low levels of trust that law enforcement can protect and serve their communities effectively.

Recommendations for effectively policing resident neighborhoods call for measured and equitable responses that build trust in SPD and positive relationships with their communities. Many of their recommendations involve increasing the police department's community engagement efforts. Specifically, residents and youth recommend elements of community-oriented policing, which is based on the concept that trust and mutual respect between police and the communities they serve is critical to public safety. Their recommendations for building trust are grouped into the broad categories of promoting procedural justice and increasing community engagement:

- Ensure that all residents are treated equally and fairly within standard police protocols.
- Treat all residents with respect and dignity and be mindful of language used to imply or explicitly accuse residents of involvement in criminal activities. Residents felt unduly targeted and reported instances of being immediately asked "probation or parole" during regular traffic stops.
- Ensure neighborhoods receive equitable services from SPD compared to other communities, such as response times, staffing, and other public safety resources.

You have to get to know the community first and foremost so we can trust you. We're not gonna trust you if you don't even get to know our community.

*Focus Area Resident*

- Increase the visibility of police officers through local patrolling of neighborhood areas with safety concerns throughout all hours of the day. Residents felt that police patrols were less visible and responsive after dark.
- Increase the number of opportunities for SPD to interact with the community in rapport-building activities such as ‘Coffee with Cops’, community sports, youth events, and volunteer activities. Ensure that officers are attending in casual, non-uniformed attire and without their firearms.
- Encourage and incentivize officers to make longer-term commitments to work in Focus Area neighborhoods to allow for officers to build relationships and trust with the community.
- Schedule and conduct regular community dialogues within neighborhoods, preferably with a representative from SPD. Provide significant outreach for these opportunities to allow for broad community participation.
- Provide officers with training or field trips with trusted community messengers in order to promote their level of comfort and knowledge about these neighborhoods, including their specific historical and unique community aspects.

*Research Team Recommendations* | Resident themes and recommendations from the listening sessions highlight the need for building a foundation of mutual trust between residents, youth and SPD. Specific recommendations generated through the listening sessions point to many of the known strategies for achieving stronger police-community relationships including engagement, accountability, and community partnerships in problem solving that are the basis of Chief Lester’s Crime Reduction Strategy. Based upon the residents’ feedback across the listening sessions, we recommend:

- Consider setting up a series of listening sessions/dialogue to demonstrate ongoing commitment to community engagement.
- Gather feedback from residents on what SPD data/information is of particular interest to them, specifically, data/information that could demonstrate SPD accountability to their neighborhoods.
- Consider designating a community liaison officer to each of the Focus Area neighborhoods.
- Actively involve residents, including youth, in the planning of SPD-community engagement activities to ensure the widest reach and the greatest impacts.
- Continue engaging in transparent discussions on specific points of tension between law enforcement and local neighborhoods led by a neutral and professional facilitator.

We need you to come help us when it gets too much for us in the community to do ourselves. We need to have a conversation and we need to work together. Cause it's gonna take everybody there to change this community because everybody allow it to get like this.

*Focus Area Resident*

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# I. Introduction

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In June 2022, Chief Kathy Lester released the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) Violent Crime Reduction Strategy, which laid out her plan to curb escalating levels of violence in the city.<sup>1</sup> Key to the SPD strategy is using data to inform policing strategies. Through their data analysis, SPD found that violent crimes in the city involving a firearm are concentrated in approximately seven square miles, or less than 10 percent of the city. These *Focus Areas* account for about 45 percent of all incidents of gun related crime in 2021. As a result, SPD plans to target their gun violence reduction efforts within these Focus Areas which coincide within three communities of Del Paso Heights (North Focus), Oak Park (East Focus) and Meadowview and Valley Hi (South Focus).

SPD partnered with the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at Sacramento State to conduct community and youth listening sessions in the three communities with concentrated levels of gun violence. The purpose of the community outreach efforts is to hear directly from residents living within these geographic areas, learn more about their specific needs, and gather resident input about the types of strategies that will have the greatest impact in reducing gun violence within their neighborhoods.

## Listening Session Format

The Institute for Social Research designed the listening sessions in collaboration with SPD Outreach and Advancement, the City of Sacramento Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), and representatives from local community organizations from the three Focus Areas. The Community Based Organization (CBO) representatives have established working relationships with the OVP and historical and current investments in violent crime prevention. ISR held a development workshop with the CBO leaders, OVP, and SPD to ensure the listening sessions would be culturally relevant and responsive to the residents of the three neighborhoods. During this development workshop, CBO leaders provided significant feedback regarding the content and the phrasing of listening session questions, as well as information on the participant registration forms. A collaborative effort was made to review and distribute a community resource guide at each listening session to provide additional supports to participants with the recognition

In order for any strategy to work, it must be both evidence informed and community informed. Evidence informed means that we must make recommendations based on the best evidence and data. Community informed means that we must give a voice and the decision-making process to those most affected by gun violence.

Chief Kathy Lester

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<sup>1</sup> See Sacramento City Council, (2022, June 14). *Special Meeting* [Oral Report]. Granicus. [Sacramento Police Department Violence Prevention Efforts \[Oral Report\]](#), for more information on SPD Violent Crime Reduction Strategies.

that these difficult discussions are taking place within communities that have been, and continue to be, traumatized by gun violence.

The community representatives were responsible for recruiting participants for each listening session using the following participation criteria: (1) participants should be a resident of the selected Focus Area, (2) have personal experience with gun violence, and (3) be 18 years old and over. A youth-focused listening session was held after the initial three sessions. All community representatives collaborated in recruitment. Youth listening session participation criteria included: (1) participants should be a resident in one of the three Focus Areas, (2) have personal experience with gun violence, and (3) be within 14 to 19 years of age.

Residents received registration packets once they arrived at the listening session. Each resident received an overview of the listening session and its purpose, notifications that the listening session was going to be recorded, and measures that were being taken to ensure their confidentiality. They were also notified that any information provided to SPD would not have any all identifiable information so participants cannot be individually identified. Residents also received a registration form to collect basic information about their backgrounds, their perceptions of their neighborhoods, interactions with SPD, and recommendations for policing. Resident names or contact information were not collected. Residents also received a resource card linking to the SPD online Community Resource Guide.

## Listening Session Participant Demographics

Across the four sessions, a total of 107 residents participated. Participants tend to be male (72%), identify as African American (73%), be older than 45 years (46%), and have lived in their neighborhoods for 11 years or more (61%). The location and demographics of each of the listening sessions are detailed below:

### COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

South Area | Meadowview/Valley Hi Listening Session | October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
*John Still Elementary | Facilitator, Miss Jackie Rose*

North Area | Del Paso Heights Listening Session | October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
*Hagginwood Community Center | Facilitator, Mervyn Brookins*

East Area | Oak Park Listening Session | October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
*Oak Park Community Center | Facilitator, Pastor Anthony Sadler*

### YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

Youth from Three Focus Areas | March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
*Rose Family Creative Empowerment Center | Facilitator, Miss Jackie Rose*

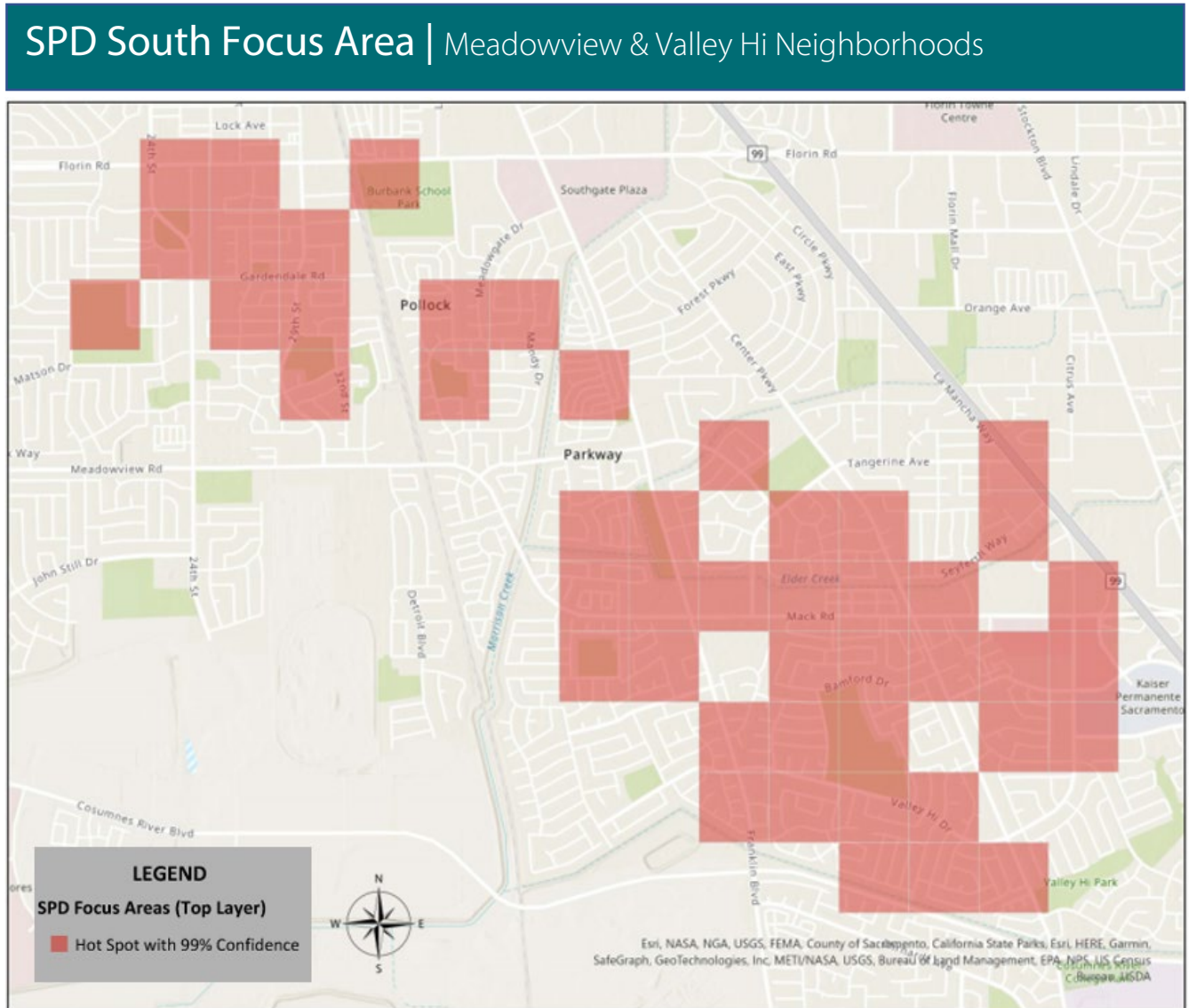
Table 1 | Demographic Profile of Listening Session Participants

LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS	SOUTH	NORTH	EAST	YOUTH	ALL
Total residents participating	36	29	18	24	107
Identified as African American	69%	79%	94%	54%	73%
Hispanic/Latinx	8%	10%	6%	36%	14%
White	6%	7%	-	14%	7%
Other	17%	7%	-	9%	9%
Resident Ages					
14-18 years	-	-	-	100%	
19-45 years	55%	38%	12%	-	40%
45 years and older	45%	62%	88%	-	46%
Lived in neighborhood 11+ years	56%	69%	67%	54%	61%

## SPD Data Presentation

Each of the community listening sessions began with an officer from the SPD Crime Analysis Unit giving a five-minute presentation. The SPD officer provided an overview of the data SPD used to identify the concentrated areas of gun violence within the residents' neighborhoods. The officer answered residents' questions immediately after and then left before the listening session discussions began. ISR requested relevant data from the previous 12 months from SPD and displayed the following graphics in a poster format at the listening sessions. Detailed maps of the areas in their neighborhoods that are identified by high gun violence were also displayed [see Figures below].

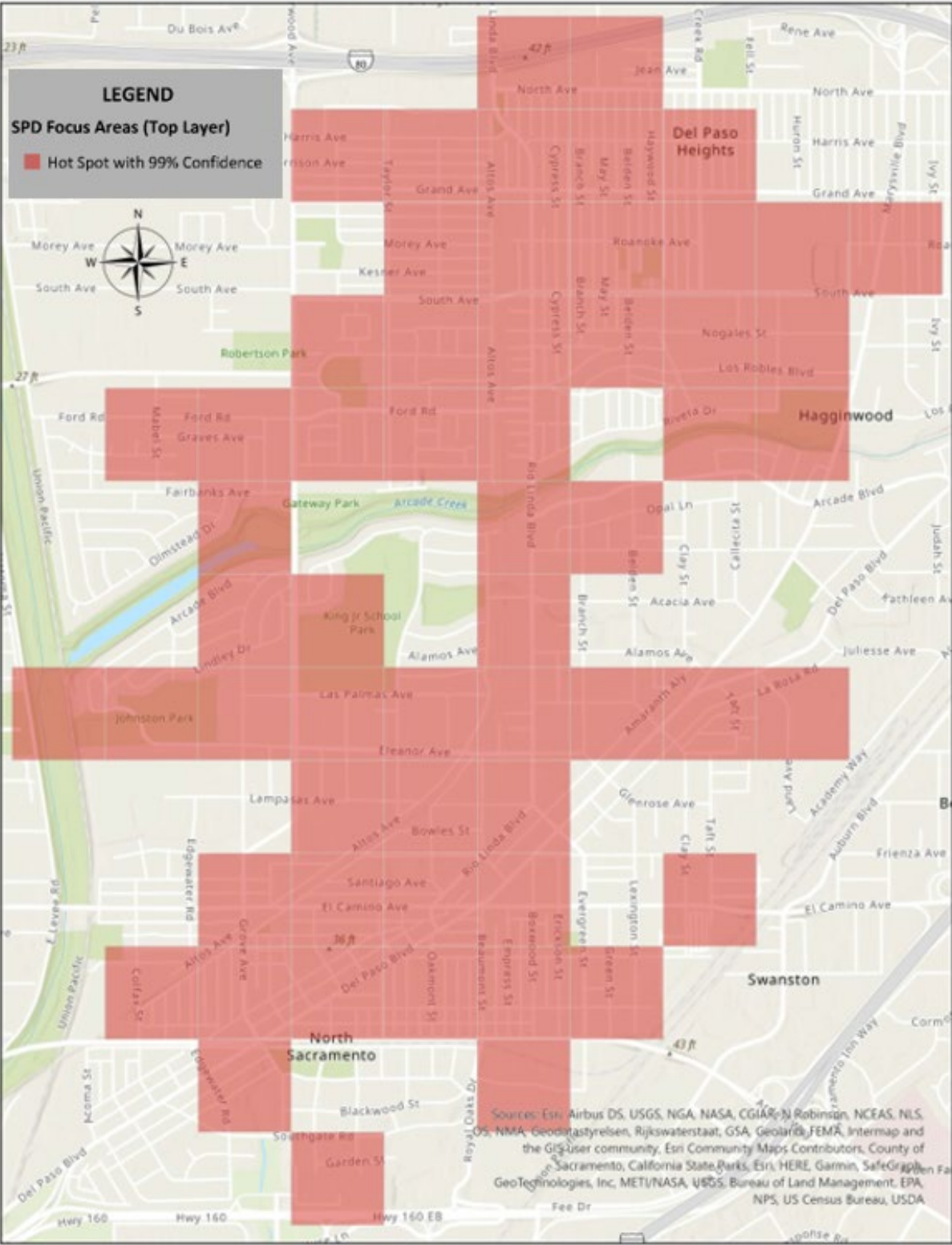
Figure 1 | Community Listening Session SPD Data Poster, South Focus Area Map with High Gun Violence



This area is comprised of **58 Zones** totaling approximately 2.9 square miles. It covers area in **four police beats** and **three council districts**.

Figure 2 | Community Listening Session SPD Data Poster, North Focus Area with High Gun Violence

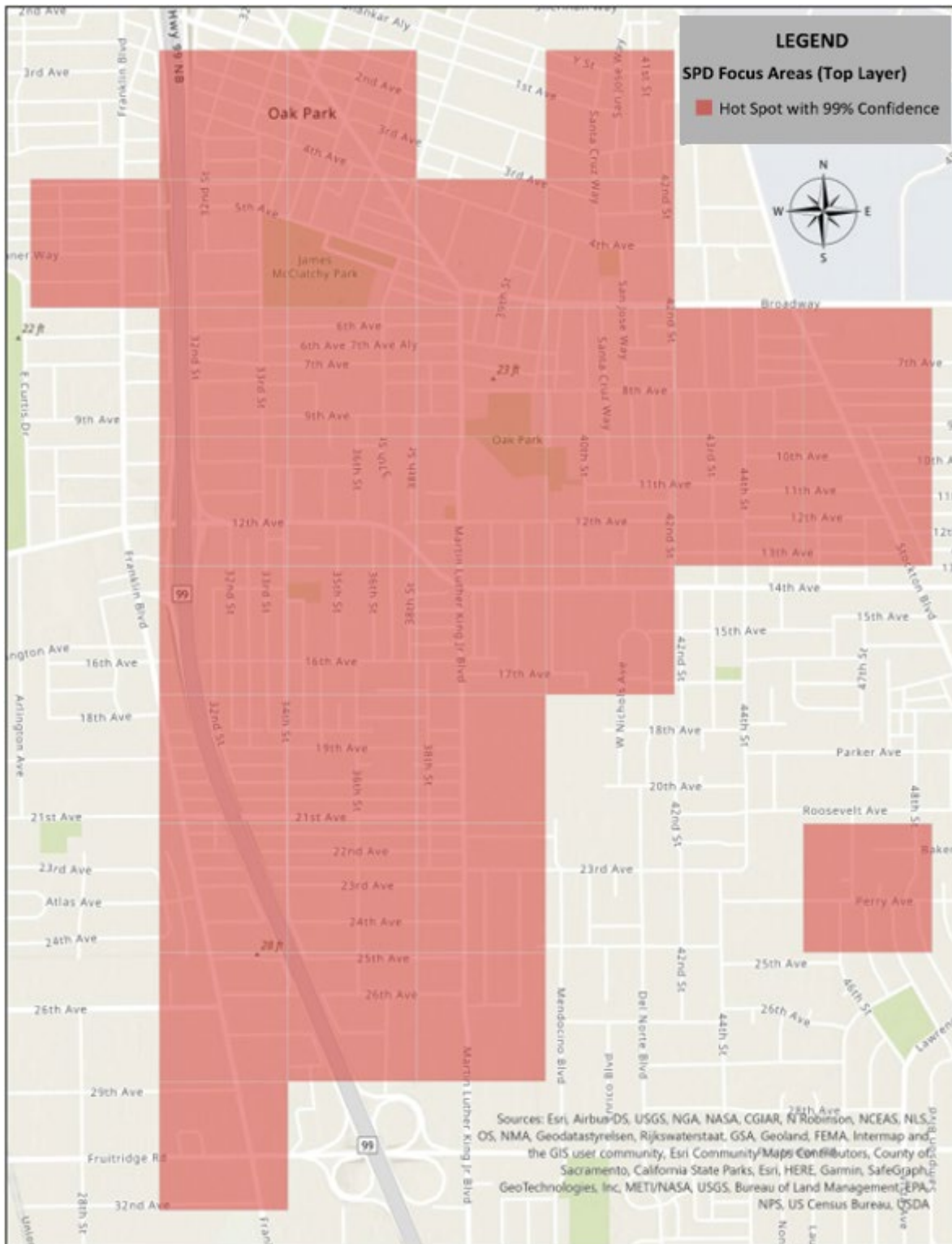
# SPD North Focus Area | Del Paso Heights



This area is comprised of **58 Zones** totaling approximately 3.04 square miles. It covers area in **four police beats** and **two council districts**.

Figure 3 | Community Listening Session SPD Data Poster, East Focus Areas with High Gun Violence

# SPD East Focus Area | Oak Park



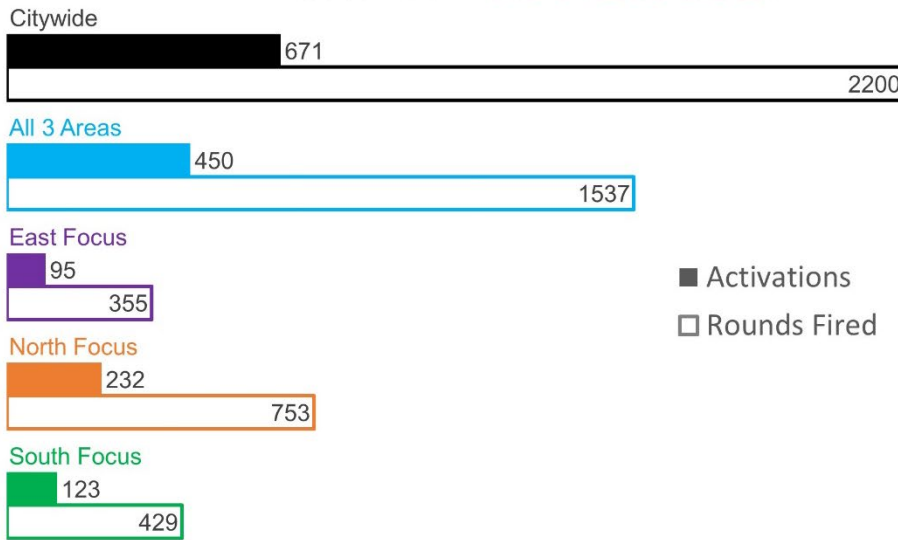
This area is comprised of **35 Zones** totaling approximately 1.75 square miles. It covers area in **four police beats** and **three council districts**.

Figure 4 | Community Listening Session SPD Data Poster, Shot Spotter Data

# Sacramento Police Department Shot Spotter Data

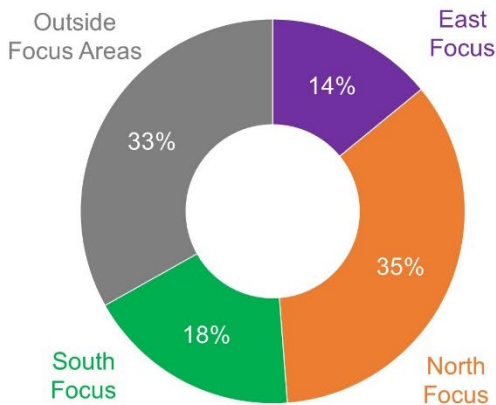
October 2021 – September 2022

450 out of 671 **Shot Spotter activations** citywide occurred in **the 3 focus areas**.



Focus area neighborhoods make up **two-thirds** of activations citywide.

*Proportion of Firearm Activations Citywide by Area*



Most activations happen **without** a citizen calling it in to the police.

*Percent of firearm activations in area that a citizen called-in to report.*

Citywide | 1.4 in 10 call-in



East Focus | 1 in 4 call-in



North Focus | 1.5 in 10 call-in



South Focus | 1.3 in 10 call-in



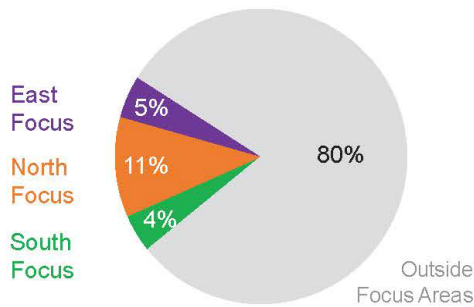
Figure 5 | Community Listening Session SPD Data Poster, Firearms and Shooting

# Sacramento Police Department Firearms & Shootings

October 2021 – September 2022

**1,895 firearm arrests** were made citywide in the last 12 months.

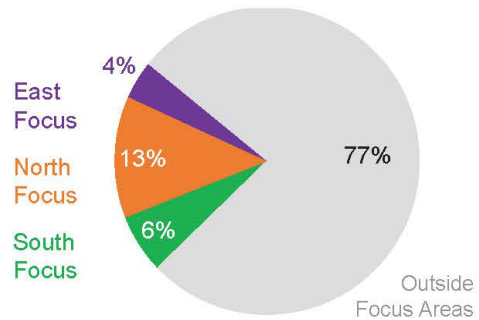
**1 in 5 arrests** were within the 3 focus areas.



Number of Reports captures number of reports with at least one firearm seized.

**1,470 firearms** were seized citywide in the last 12 months.

**Almost 1 in 4** were within the 3 focus areas.



Firearms Seized is the total number of firearms seized for all reports. For instance, on a search warrant, officers seize three firearms. This is counted as 1 report and 3 firearms.

**There were a total of 792 shootings** citywide.  
31% occurred in the 3 focus areas.



Shooting Reports were queried using the following crime codes: 245(A)(2), 245B, 245(A)(3), 245.5(B), 245(D)(1), 245(D)(2), 245(D)(3), 246, 246.3, 247, 187 (firearm) or 664/187 (firearm).

**32 “Ghost Guns”** were found citywide during firearm seizures in the last 12 months.



\*This number refers to a subset of 'ghost gun' seizures that are both fully assembled with a manufacturer listed as 'Privately Manufactured Firearm.' The citywide total between 10/1/2021 - 9/30/2022 for PMF/ghost gun seizures using the DOJ's broader definition of ghost guns (including unassembled firearm parts) totals to 360.



## II. Themes from the Listening Sessions

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Community facilitators guided the listening sessions through a series of questions focused on their neighborhood's experience with gun violence, current access to guns in their neighborhood, and specific policing strategies that residents felt would be most effective in reducing gun violence. Residents in each of the three Focus Area community listening sessions noted the importance of understanding the unique histories and characteristics of their neighborhoods. Listening session questions were designed so that the specific experiences of each Focus Area could be identified; however, themes regarding gun violence and participants' experiences with law enforcement were remarkably consistent across all of these sessions.

Findings from the resulting discussions are presented below as well as direct quotes from the participating residents and youth. Youth input is presented below in "Youth Voices" boxes. Given the goal of these listening sessions is to provide opportunities for communities to voice their opinions, experiences, and recommendations – direct quotes are used extensively in this report to illustrate themes across sessions. Quotes have been lightly edited for readability; in cases where neighborhoods, centers, and other locations are specifically connected to a participant's identity, locations are deidentified to maintain confidentiality. Neighborhood location names are left when quotes are otherwise unidentifiable.

### A. Neighborhood Experiences with Gun Violence

During the sessions, Focus Area participants discussed their personal experiences with gun violence - recounting the loss of family members, past incarceration due to crimes related to gun violence, and impacts from the threat of gun violence on their everyday lives. Participants detailed escalating levels of gun violence around them and the stress it causes. For example:

*I feel like gun violence got me paranoid. Like I always gotta look over my back. My boy right here, was shot for no reason... my little cousin shot, for no reason - just like off of the area. But like it got people paranoid and you know, [it's] traumatizing.*

*[Gun violence] has destroyed my daily life. I don't sleep well, eat well. I don't even like looking at people a lot 'cause everybody look like a suspect.*

*If somebody in our community gets hurt, we are all affected by it. It's just how it goes. Like we are, we're like family in Del Paso Heights. So, when somebody gets hurt or somebody gets shot by gang violence, we're all affected in some kind of way.*

Residents also report on their registration form how gun violence impacts them personally, their families, and their neighborhoods. The majority know someone close to them that is a victim of gun violence [see Figure 6 below]. Over two-thirds (68%) have a *close friend of family member* who is a victim of gun violence. A little over 30 percent know an *acquaintance* who is a victim, and one-in-four (25%) of the participants have *personally experienced* gun violence.

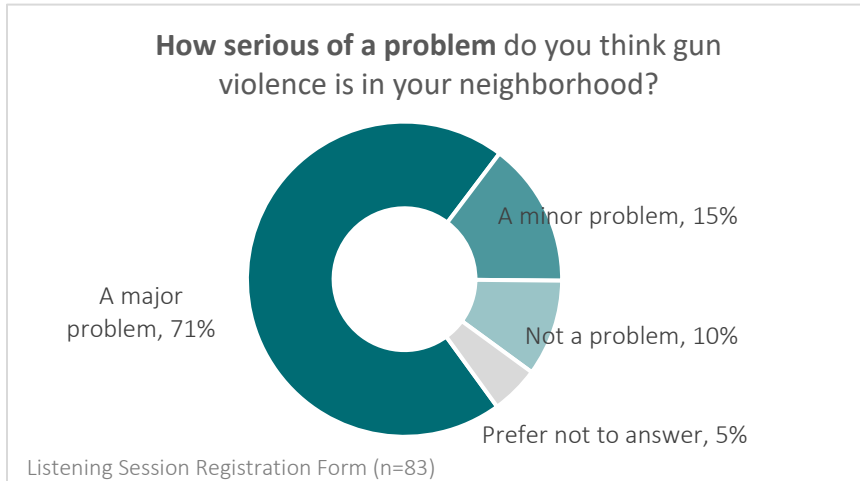
Figure 6 | Personal Experiences with Gun Violence | Focus Area Participants



More than half (68%) have a close friend or family member who is a victim of gun violence.

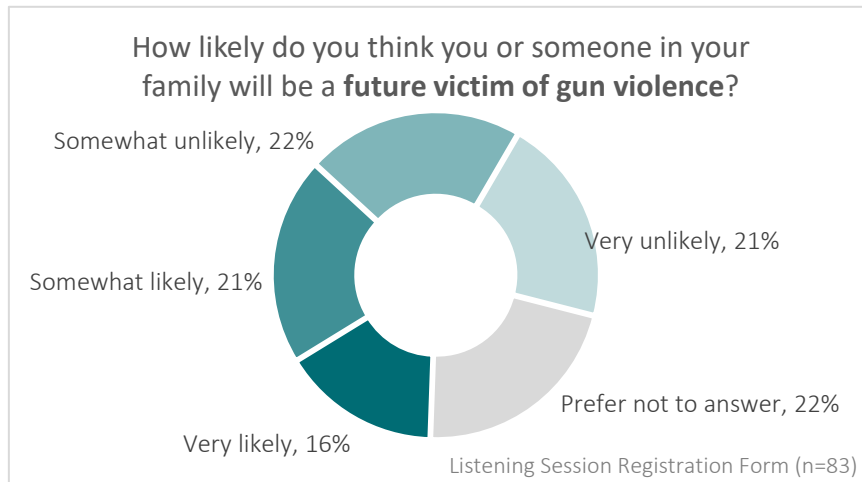
Across the three Focus Area listening sessions, residents report that gun violence is a problem in their neighborhood [see Figure 7]. The majority (71%) report that gun violence is a *major problem* in their neighborhood; 15 percent think it is a *minor problem*, with only ten percent stating *it is not a problem* at all.

Figure 7 | Seriousness of Neighborhood Gun Violence | Focus Area Participants



Residents were also asked how likely they or someone in their family would be a future victim of gun violence [see Figure 8]. A third (37%) report they feel there is a *very likely* or *somewhat likely* chance that they or someone in their family will be affected by gun violence in the future. Over twenty percent (22%) chose not to answer the question.

Figure 8 | Perceived Likelihood of Experiencing Future Gun Violence | Focus Area Participants



Focus Area residents acknowledged the trauma that gun violence inflicts across their communities, despite the fact that only a small number of individuals are responsible for violent behavior and shootings. Residents also discussed how the trauma brought on by gun violence is felt collectively and throughout multiple generations.

### Youth Voices

During the youth listening session, participants had mixed feedback about the extent to which gun violence impacts their everyday lives. Some shared that gun violence in their neighborhoods made them feel unsafe:

*[Gun violence] just make us feel unsafe in areas and we don't want to be a part of that.  
It's a scary feeling not being able to go out in your own community without feeling safe.*

For other youth, the impact of gun violence appeared to be normalized to the point that it was not seen as an issue or effecting their daily lives:

*Facilitator: How has [gun violence affected your daily lives?  
Youth 1: It don't. It's not that big of a problem.  
Youth 2: Really same thing he was saying. I don't really care, but I'm used to it. I'm used to it.*

This was despite the fact that several of the youth participating in the listening sessions were wearing memorial lanyards with photos of youth who had died due to gun violence. It appeared that violence is not seen as a neighborhood problem for some of the youth. This is not because it does not exist or its impact is not felt by the youth, but as they indicated it is something that is familiar. Adult and youth's perceptions of gun violence differ, despite living in the same neighborhoods. Only 17% of youth participants say that gun violence is a *major problem* in their neighborhood (compared to 71% of adult participants), and 54% of youth participants think that they are *very unlikely* to be future victims of gun violence (compared to 21% of adult participants).

## B. Causes of Gun Violence

Focus Area residents shared their thoughts about the primary causes of gun violence in their neighborhoods. Though a variety of issues were discussed, their conversations centered on what they saw as the rising demand, and perceived need, among neighborhood residents to own a firearm.

### Ensuring Personal Safety

Participants in all three Focus Areas discussed the connection between the rising threat of gun violence in their neighborhoods and the wide-spread perception that owning a gun was necessary to ensure personal safety. They detailed how the exposure to gun violence has had a snowball effect in these neighborhoods, and how the increase in individuals owning their own firearm, further increases the possibility of gun violence. This was illustrated by some participants emphasizing that they personally need to own a gun in order to defend themselves from the threat of gun violence. These participants felt that owning a gun was the only way to ensure their safety: *“The times that we live in, I think everybody should have a gun.”* A number of participants reiterated the sentiment that owning a gun is necessity in their neighborhood for personal protection.

*I had three sons that been murdered by guns. My - the last son, he want a gun cause he don't want nobody shoot him. He got out of jail, the first thing he says is 'gimme a gun'. Cause somebody's gunning at him.*

*[Another kid] pulled out a gun on my little 14-year-old son. When my son realized that the dude was trying to pull out a gun, he took off running.... My 18-year-old son, he actually went online researching how to get him a gun because he said he didn't want that situation to ever happen again, where he get caught with his pants down when that other little boy was trying to pull a gun on his brother. He's like, 'You know, I'm the big brother. I gotta protect my little brother.'*

*Well, if everybody got a gun, I'm gonna want one too! I'm just saying that's right. Everybody got a gun? I'm the only one without one? Hold on. I need a gun then.*

Overall, participants underscored the relationship between the escalation of neighborhood gun violence and the perception that gun ownership is a necessity: *“I think it's fear. People that got guns in their house, legal guns, also got little kids. Why is a gun in their house? To protect their family.”*

### Media & Music

A related theme discussed by participants are the ways in which social media and popular music “glamorize” guns. Residents discussed how guns, and the overall lifestyle of gang members, are idealized in the media and are portrayed as “cool”. These media portrayals influence youth and normalize the ownership and use of guns within their neighborhoods.

*Music promote this stuff and the pressures on these young minds is getting the impression this is cool. “I'm cool if I got one [a gun]! I'm the shit! I'm with the shit!” They picking up all the slang... That diet is toxic, to be dealing with.*

*I see all these youth all the time and have them talk about people “put a hole on me”, talking all these rap phrases and all that. Like kids now, they think it's all about that bullet... So like these kids be talking, but they don't understand if they say that to the wrong person they get shot. It goes a long ways, and it just sucks that it affects us all pretty much. All our youth deal with this on a daily basis.*

*The music they listening to, they desensitized to death, period. They listen. All you hear on music, I tell 'em, don't play that shit in my car! "Kill this, kill that, kill that. Murder, murder, kill, kill, kill, kill. Murder, murder, murder. F\*\*k that nigg\* over there. Kill em! Kill! Kill! Kill it!" That's all you hear in the music. And it's bigger than what we going do right here because it's global. But that's what it is. That's all they [youth] hearing all day long.*

Likewise, social media was repeatedly cited as one of the primary influences for promoting gun violence among youth. Residents noted how social media promotes the demand for guns and desensitizes youth to violence in general.

### Youth Voices

Youth had mixed responses on whether they thought that social media and music had that much influence on their peers and the likelihood that they would be involved in a life of gun violence. Some youth thought that music has a big influence:

*Because nowadays, all the music talk about is shooting people, killing people, robbing people. That's all done in the category of gun violence. What are you doing with a gun? Shooting, killing people, robbing people. It's like it all falls under the same category. That's exactly what we don't need. Some of us are listening to this rap nowadays, and all they talk about is shooting, killing and all that type of stuff. Gun violence and carrying guns and have it on you, have it in my waistband and you run up on me... But [musicians] don't know that they influenced nine-year-olds to go to school with guns. They just doing it for the money.*

However, other participants feel that even though a lot of music is violent and glamourizes guns, it is not the primary reason for youth entering that lifestyle, especially if they were not already a part of it.

*I mean... if they wanna be gangsters, they gonna be gangsters. It's not the music that puts their [life on that] course.*

While adult participants identified music and social media as primary influences in desensitizing violence and making gun use appear attractive to youth, the youth participants are mixed about their impact.

### Lack of Neighborhood Supports for Youth

Throughout the discussions, a predominate theme is that youth are attracted to lifestyles that involve firearms because they have too few neighborhood supports or positive alternatives. In each of the Focus Area listening sessions, lengthy conversations detailed how neighborhoods “back in the day” were made up of tight networks of families and residents that knew all the local children and youth. They recounted stories of neighbors collectively looking out for each other, including “setting kids straight” if they were “acting out” or getting into trouble. Residents discussed how their close-knit communities and “Big Mamas” would make sure that their young people were taken care of and supervised, providing a bigger disincentive for youth to get engaged in criminal or violent behavior.

*You don't have a community mother like [Ms. J] on the corner who used to watch everybody and make sure everybody, all them little kids in the neighborhood was straight. [Ms. J] will feed the kids. [Ms. J] will buy clothes. [Ms. J] will walk some of them kids to school. You don't have a [Ms. J] no more. And that's, that's what we need.*

Residents also discussed the fact that many of the youth involved with gun violence do not have parents at home or, that their parents are no longer able to control their youth once they get involved with guns: *“They’re growing up with all this violence and nobody to check it.”* They emphasize the need for having role models and mentors available who have a consistent and positive influence on youth. Residents note that there are few positive and constructive alternatives to violence within their neighborhoods, and this is amplified by the overall lack of resources and poverty for many families that make it much more likely for youth to become involved with guns and violence.

*We cannot really get control of [gun violence] unless we get control of our household. I gotta make sure these two [pointing to young sons] don't go out and kill anyone. So, I whoop him before he get trouble in first grade, I could whoop his ass, third grade, sixth grade. Probably at some point he'll stop it.*

*All this has something to do with resources.... Like if I'm thinking, “I need money right now. My mom can't give it to me”, morals go out the window. I'm not thinking right from wrong. You tie into gangs, you tie into violence, you tie into where we go out to.*

*If you think back on your own youth and how impressionable you were, how you dealt with things basically on feelings. But we were given some kind of cause. And I think we as adults, as great grandfathers, grandfathers, fathers, city council, pastor, we have to give our youth a cause some kind of cause and get them out of their feelings.*

Residents discussed how the lack of support and resources contributes to the cycle of violence that youth get caught up in. Across the listening sessions, residents pointed out that many of the youth have been, and are currently being, traumatized by the threat of gun violence. Similarly, how violence is also a symptom of a generation of youth who feel disconnected from their communities and are angry and frustrated.

*The reality is our young people are angry. They're very, very angry... And that's what's wrong with our children. That's why they're so violent. Cause they're angry. They feel unloved. They feel like they don't have a voice. They feel like they're not being respected. They have so many negative feelings going on. They're just angry. Most of us when we are angry, violence is the next thing. And so that's what we really need to start thinking about. How can we address the issues of anger going up with our children today?*

*The majority of shootings being traumatized in some shape or form fashion. It's probably the way they unleash their anger or whatever they're going through on top of that's what's trending right now is these youngsters don't want to get money or have a girl. They want a body. And that's just the sad part about it. It's facts...hurt people, hurt people.*

Overall, residents were eager to discuss the importance of early interventions with children and youth before they fall into a life where guns and violence were seen as an attractive – or inevitable – part of their lives: *“That’s the only way you can get love, or you think you can get love.”*

## Youth Voices

Some youth shared what a powerful impact their mentors have had in providing them with positive role models and support (“*That’s [mentor] all I need right there*”). They also expressed how youth services give them something to do that is productive:

*I feel like the crime rate would be extremely low if we have more policing, more mentors, more people that go out in the community and host events to have kids come out of the streets, keep them busy because most of the time they're doing this because they're bored. Like at Delta Shores. Kids be up there just to be there. It's because they're bored. If they have something to do on the weekends, have something to do every Tuesday like the Healing Circle. Some people say that most of them come out at night. [MENTOR], what time is his Healing Circle? Around six o'clock to 7:00. It keeps them out of the street and keep them busy but with something positive. We're not going to keep them out the streets to keep them doing negative stuff. [MENTOR] have us come out here and talk positivity and we all come together as a community.*

When the facilitator asked if their neighborhoods needed more community centers, mental health services, and other similar resources, multiple youth agreed (“*If there was some more resources in the community, I'm pretty sure that the crime rate would be low*”).

## Access to Firearms

During the community listening sessions, Focus Area residents shared their thoughts about the number of firearms seized within their neighborhoods in the last 12 months. Residents overall did not spend much time discussing potential sources of firearms other than some noting that it is relatively easy both to purchase a gun legally and “on the street”. As one resident put it, “*I say it's easier to get a gun than it is for a homeless to get food to eat.*” Most of the residents shared that they do not know specifically how individuals access firearms, but they are aware that guns are far too accessible in their neighborhoods. A handful of residents across the community listening sessions feel that reducing access and the number of firearms in their neighborhoods is the key to preventing gun violence: “*In order to really get into the root of stopping gun crimes to take guns from everybody except the police and the army. Period. If they take all the guns, how many deaths you gonna see?*”

Most of the Focus Area residents were not familiar with “ghost guns,” a specific type of firearm privately made without serial numbers, when asked about them. There was a consensus across the sessions that ghost guns are not a significant issue in their neighborhoods because they are simply not aware of them: “*I would say a ghost gun is a gun coming from the white man, that’s a ghost gun. Cause a gun in the Heights, been in the Heights... Our black men ain’t going to that computer digging up no guns. We’re not. We bought ‘em off the street*”.

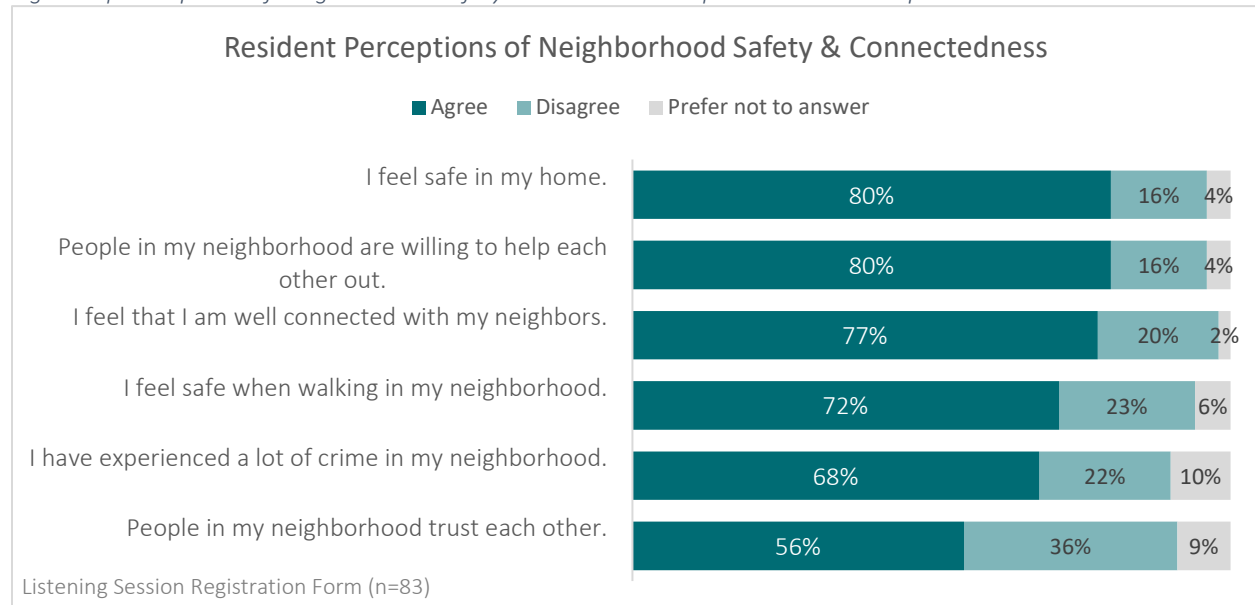
## Youth Voices

Some youth spoke up about how accessible guns can be to other youth (“*There’s 17-year olds, 13-year-olds, 9-year-olds taking guns to school*”). When asked where they think people in their age group can get access to guns, participants answered “*my friends,*” “*your parents,*” and “*gangs.*” When asked about “ghost guns,” similar to residents, most of the youth had not heard of the term and did not know anything about them.

## C. Neighborhood Safety & Connectedness

Focus Area residents were asked a series of questions on their registration form about their feelings of safety and connectedness to their neighborhoods [see Figure 9]. In terms of safety, more than half (68%) agree that they have *experienced a lot of crime in their neighborhood*. The majority however feel generally *safe in their homes* (80%) and *walking in their neighborhood* (72%). Related to neighborhood connectedness, the majority (80%) feel that *people in their neighborhood are willing to help each other out*, and that *they are well connected with their neighbors*. More than half (56%) believe that *people in their neighborhood trusted each other*.

Figure 9 | Perceptions of Neighborhood Safety & Connectedness | Focus Area Participants



While the majority reported feeling safe in their homes and neighborhoods, adult participants across all three community listening sessions found it difficult to identify “safe places” in their neighborhoods, where they and their families could spend time without the threat of violence. The general consensus across neighborhoods was that there are insufficient safe spaces in their communities. A couple residents named specific locations they feel safe and comfortable leaving their children/youth. The safe places identified by residents include, Meadowview Community Center, South Sacramento Christian Center, Mack Road/Valley Hi Community Center, and Panell Center.

Still, identifying spaces during the discussions led to further conversations about whether or not those spaces could be constituted as “safe.” Some residents expressed frustration about these centers because of their limited availability, noting these safe spaces are only available to youth on limited schedules or that some of the places in their neighborhoods that used to be safe spaces are no longer functional or open.

*They use to have teen centers. That's what we need. We need more teen centers, more positive people to help run those teen centers to help those kids. Because when they closed those teen centers down, they closed down everything.... They don't have safe places like that out here anymore.*



Residents also discussed how their safety is not assured anywhere in their community, even at events or resources that are specifically targeting youth. Participants expressed some hesitation about letting their youth out unsupervised in their neighborhoods or sending them to organized community activities.

*My kids live there [close to South Sacramento Christian Center and Mack Road/Valley Hi Community Center], and I don't even let them walk places. That's what I'm saying. So, do they feel really safe? Like I don't, that's what I'm saying.*

*It's hard to go to a safe place. It's hard to go to Pop-ups. I try to invite kids on this Pop-ups.... So, it's like even though you feel like that's dope or you say Sacramento or Valley Hi, some kids feel like they can't go over there cause of gang stuff. So it's like really depends on certain things with kids where a safe place in their own mind is. You can't really find a certain place to call that safe. You gotta look at the area.*

Overall, residents reiterated the lack of safe places for youth and how security concerns may often make neighborhood activities “inaccessible”, especially if the family is not familiar with who is hosting the activity or event.

## Youth Voices

When youth participants were asked to identify safe places in their neighborhood, some answered “community centers like this” and “home.” However, most youth had difficulty identifying safe places outside of those two answers. Some youth shared that the presence of a trustworthy adult made a place feel safe to them:

*I said this place [Rose Family Endowment Center] because I've been knowing this place for about a year since I got back from [CITY]. I said this place because there's safe staff members that keep us really safe in here. Not only that, they got people here that cares for us. Every Tuesday they do that [MENTOR] Healing Circle thing. He really shows that he cares because he takes his time out of his day, out of his night, takes time from his wife. If you know [MENTOR], he loves his wife, and he really takes his time out of his day to really be here for us and try to talk through with us and let us know that we're not alone on something. It's a safe environment when we get here. That's what makes it safe here.*

*Facilitator: What can we do as adults [to make youth feel safe]? ...What things can we do?  
Youth: Show you're present.*

Responding to questions in the registration form, 66% of youth report that they feel safe and 29% report that they feel unsafe in their school; the rest preferred not to answer. When asked about school safety during the listening session, a number of the youth reiterated that they did not feel that their schools are safe places:

*Facilitator: ...Do you feel safe at school?*

*Multiple youth: No [laughter]*

*Youth: On all the doors at [HIGH SCHOOL], it has this flag and it says “I'm a safe place”. It says that on all of our doors at [HIGH SCHOOL]. It says “I'm a safe place.” I'm going to say no, it's not.*

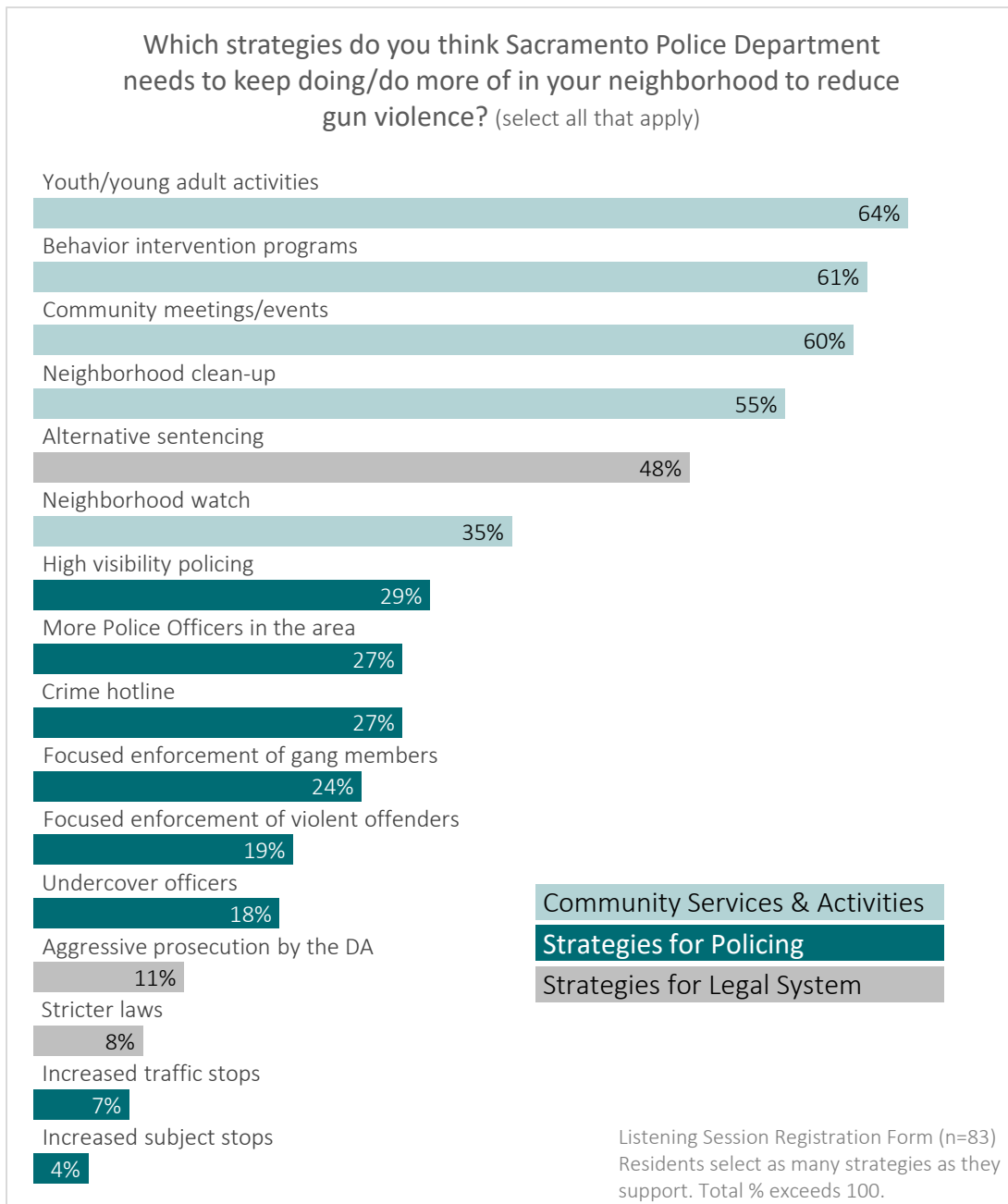
*Facilitator: Do you guys agree with that, the rest of you?*

*Multiple youth: Yes.*

## D. Resident Priorities for Addressing Gun Violence

Focus Area residents provided feedback about specific strategies that SPD should use to address gun violence in their neighborhoods. First, residents selected strategies in their registration form that they thought the SPD should continue doing (or do more of) to reduce gun violence [see Figure 10 below]. The strategies most commonly recommended within the Focus Area sessions are those involving community services and activities: *Youth/young adult activities* (64%), *Behavior intervention programs* (61%), *Community meetings/events* (60%), *Neighborhood cleanup* (55%), and *Neighborhood Watch programs* (35%).

Figure 10 | Priorities for SPD to Reduce Neighborhood Gun Violence | Focus Area Participants



Fewer Focus Area residents chose strategies that were specific to policing. Policing strategies most recommended by residents include: *High visibility policing* (29%); *More Police Officers in the area* (27%); and a *Crime hotline* (27%). The majority did not choose *Increased traffic stops* (7%) or *Subject stops* (4%) as desired strategies for reducing gun violence in their neighborhoods. *Alternative sentencing* (48%) was chosen by almost half of the participants, with only a small minority recommending strategies for the legal system, such as *Aggressive prosecution by the DA* (11%) or *Stricter laws* (8%).

### Youth Voices

Similar to the adult participants, the most popular policing strategies recommended by youth participants involved community services and activities: *Youth/young adult activities* (46%), *Neighborhood clean-up* (42%), and *Community meetings/events* (33%). The least popular policing recommendations were *High visibility policing* (4%) and *Aggressive prosecution by the DA* (4%).

### Community Services & Activities

Discussions about preferred strategies to address gun violence were wide-ranging but reflected the residents' preferences for strategies that target the needs of youth and provide youth-centered services and activities. Likewise, there is an ongoing sentiment that the community itself should drive efforts to reduce the level of gun violence in their neighborhoods, rather than solely relying on external organizations or law enforcement.

### Youth Services & Investment

Residents returned to the importance of supporting youth when asked for their recommended strategies for reducing gun violence in their neighborhoods. Residents linked the lack of available resources and youth supports to the prevalence of gun violence in their neighborhoods. There were extensive discussions regarding the lack of resources and positive, healthy alternatives to occupy youth within their neighborhoods. Many of the older residents talked about programs that used to exist in their communities and the transformative impacts on their own lives as a youth. Overall, residents felt that there had been a disinvestment in their neighborhoods in terms of community supports. Examples of this disinvestment include community centers and other safe places in the neighborhood having significantly reduced their hours of operations which made them essentially inaccessible to families, and neighborhood parks that had been gated and locked, reducing the hours for resident use. Additionally, parking at neighborhood public parks were seen as severely restricted, further limiting access to this public amenity. Residents were clear that youth in their neighborhood need positive outlets as an alternative to external influences that promote criminal and violent lifestyles.

*I got a 16 year old son. He ain't lack for nothing. But he's fascinated with this shit [gun violence]. You know what I'm saying? No matter what I tell him or how we get down and he don't [listen]. It's just so, it is hard... They need more than just be talked to.... they need more. Cause they're still going to do it.*

*They need some programs out there. There's not enough for the children to do. They get out school, now what? They're out of control. I'm gonna hang on the streets. I see all the drugs and the bodies going on. Sometimes it intrigues them. Like how can I get some money? How can I do things? Why are there no programs in Oak Park? Nothing.*

*Other than [police] just pulling people over, give a kid something to do. You give these kids something to do. It takes a lot of the violence out. They already grew up poor, mad, and hungry. Right? You gotta take some of that out.*

There was notable frustration among residents about a significant reduction in the availability of programs, centers, and resources for youth. Many residents felt that other communities had far more resources and services than their neighborhoods.

*We got to hit these city councils and bring our programs back. Bring in programs like they was here. This place [Community Center] wasn't open all summer. These kids went around here doing who knows what. And then, then you wonder why? Open up, our centers back. Quit playing. Open up these damn doors. Period. You know what I mean? Like, that's the problem.*

*Open up these places to have these kids do something to be able to do. So if we got something at the park, don't come shut it down. Because when you shut it down, people get mad. They wanna grab that gun. Now they going, got them crying for something to do because you shut down something that we had going on in our community.*

*Every other neighborhood have something... I'm watching these children get outta school everywhere, and they ain't got nowhere to go, nothing to do. They walking around asking for stuff to do, so they can have some money to go buy candy and stuff. We give them money. But why is there nothing? Where's anything for them to do out here except walking around and looking at people getting shot and gang-banging and selling drugs and stuff? I think that's a big issue.*

*If you ride around in Carmichael or Citrus Heights, those parks don't close down. They don't have gates. Only ones that I see that have gates are the parks in Del Paso Heights. They don't want us to use our parks. But in other neighborhoods where the sheriff could patrol some of the city, they do not have gates that are locked. So why is it that our parks are not accessible to us?*

Residents also recommend that opportunities and resources should not be limited to teenagers and young adults. The sentiment several residents shared was that it was imperative to “start young” with school-aged children in their neighborhoods; it was vital to connect youth with positive activities and adult mentors before they were exposed to the media and lifestyles that promote gun violence.

### *Community Driven Change*

Many Focus Area residents stressed a preference for strategies to reduce gun violence to be generated and rooted within their own communities. Sentiments include an emphasis on community-led programs and supports and doubts that any law enforcement strategy could make a positive impact for their communities. As one resident stated: “*We don't need no damn police to try to govern us. We need to learn how, give us some money to govern our own.*” A common theme throughout the conversations was that the communities themselves need to drive the changes that can make a difference in addressing the threat of gun violence in their neighborhoods. For example, “*Our black people are the ones getting killed. It ain't up to them to try to help us. It's up to us to help each other.*” Other examples of this sentiment include:

*The only way our community is going change, cause it got that way through us, is through us. There's no police. There's nobody that can help and assist us. But we need to step up the community and police our own. Period. Because [the police] not gonna talk to that child the way I talk to him. They're not gonna treat that child the way I treat him. They're not gonna have the patience. They're not gonna have the understanding. And they're not gonna have the insight, because they haven't came from what we came. They can police our community with our help. We teach them how to police our*

*community... They cannot come in here to police our community and show nobody nothing. They're occupiers. We don't need nobody to occupy our community. We need you to come help us when it gets too much for us in the community to do ourselves.*

*Just because the [police] come in and getting cool with us in the community is not stopping gun violence... It's us as a community that's gonna stop gun violence in our community. It ain't them. They gonna arrest you. They gonna take you to jail. They gonna find your gun. It's not gonna stop gun violence. Gun violence is gonna happen regardless.... When you said you ask a question and saying how can the police, what can the police do? They can't do nothing. They can't do anything.*

*Why? Because you guys all said it all. They don't be out here. The only time they come here is when the gun, it is already happened. Somebody dead. Or come and find a gun. Pull you over to take a gun. Right?*

Some residents discussed how policing will not reduce gun violence in their neighborhoods because they do not trust law enforcement to provide them with basic levels of protection. A number of the residents discussed how they avoid seeking assistance from the police because they feel that law enforcement represents more of a threat than a source of personal assistance and public safety. For example, “*Personally, I'm afraid to call cops cause they're too damn quick on the trigger. And, you know, I try to stay out a situation like that.*” The following dialogues from the listening sessions illustrate the sentiment that some residents do not feel the police can ensure their safety.

*Resident A: Who you gonna call? Somebody robs you at gunpoint or you get in a situation, maybe it's a fight? Somebody pulls a gun on you? Somebody shoots you? Who would you feel comfortable with, without having to explain to them that you're not the aggressor?*

*Resident B: I'm gonna call my family.*

*Resident A: Me too.*

*Resident B: That's my immediate security.*

*Resident: See the police really don't give a damn. I'm telling you that. They don't give a damn...*

*Facilitator: You're not looking for the police to assist?*

*Resident: Hell no! We don't need the police coming in, with their guns and billy club and mace and they got five protective dogs... We don't need no police. We're trying to help one another. You know, we can, we can be the police...They're not taking care of our young people.*

With the police not being seen as a source of protection, some note that they must seek alternate sources of protection and safety within their personal networks.

## Youth Voices

When asked how likely they were to call police for assistance, youth participants were very vocal that they do not feel comfortable doing so and would rather “*stay out of it.*”

*I just don't think we should do that [call the police]... Because even if you do call, now you're a suspect.*

*[I wouldn't call the police, because] that's like saying like you see somebody throwing somebody['s] body in the river. If you call the police, you going to be a victim of that. [The police] going to try to take you to jail too like you did it. Like you're with it. So I think like... nah.*

*I just don't like the questioning part. Like you be on the phone or something with them and they ask you over 12 questions and it's like, "Can you just send somebody?" You know what I'm saying? So it's like... Me personally, I wouldn't call them. I just mind my own business, stay in my business.*

*I don't want to be attached [to an incident] because once I call and report it, then I automatically get attached. Then they might ask me questions. Where was I at? How did I see this? Where was you? That's not their business. I'd rather stay out of it.*

Most youth in the session agreed that they are unlikely to call police for assistance, even in situations where law enforcement could help. Similar to adult participant responses, most youth would rather rely on informal supports and their family members when feeling unsafe.

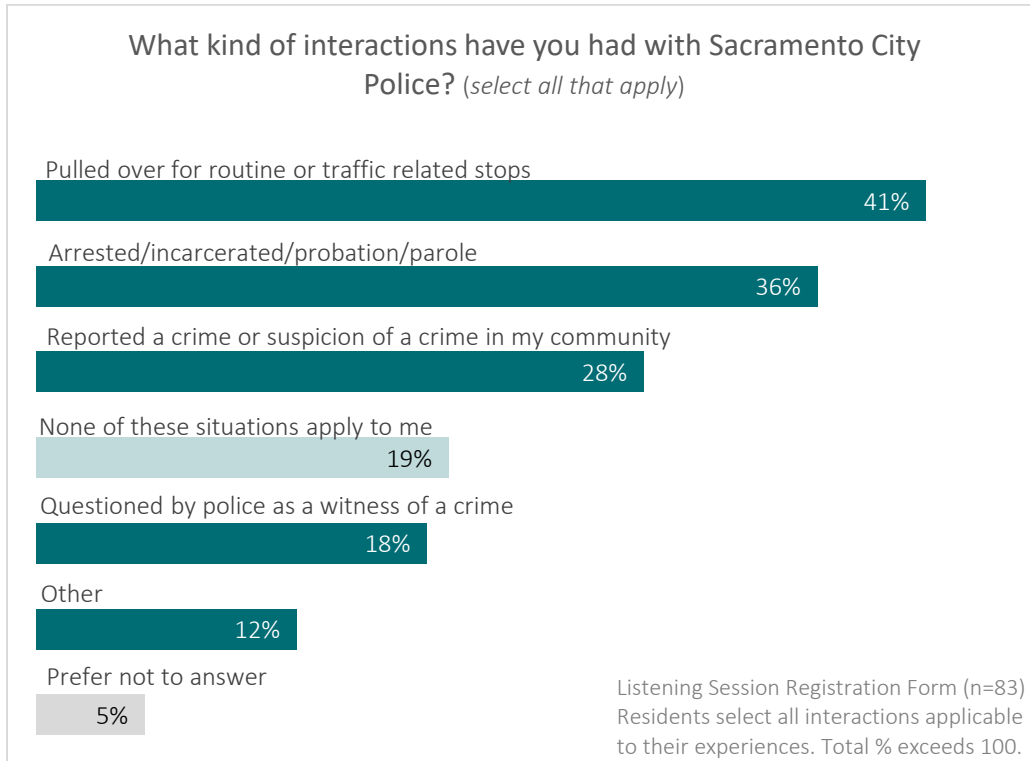
## Strategies for Policing

As residents discussed solutions for gun violence, another predominate theme is how law enforcement operates within their neighborhoods and strategies for how policing can be more effective. Notably, there was little to no discussion about strategies to target or pursue individuals engaging in criminal behavior and/or perpetrating gun violence. Instead, the majority of the listening session discussions focused on the overall relationship between law enforcement and residents' experiences of being policed in their neighborhoods.

### *Neighborhood Experience with Sacramento Police Department*

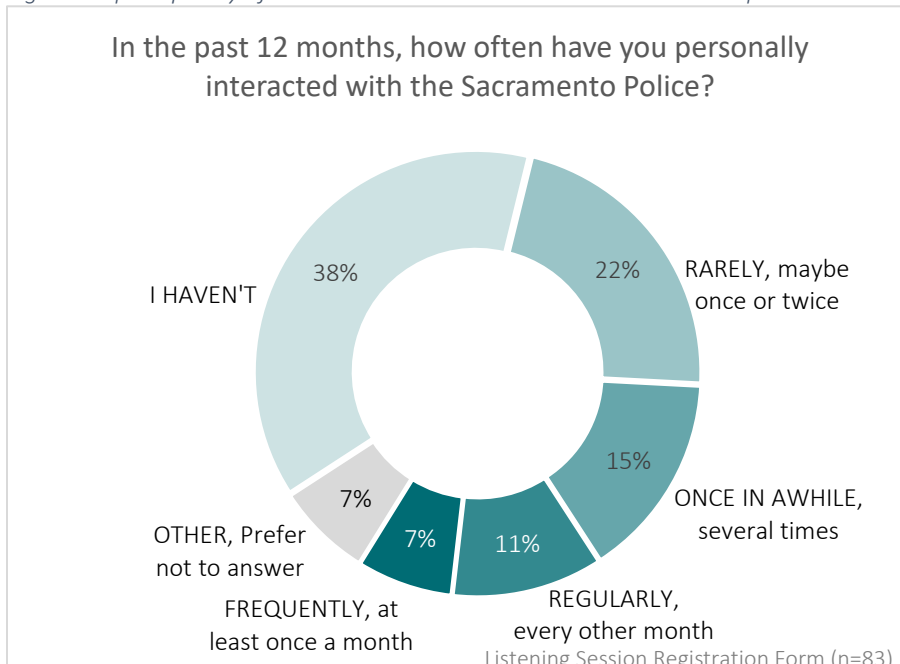
First, residents were asked in their registration form about what types of personal interactions they had with the SPD [see Figure 11]. Three-quarters (76%) report that they have personally had interactions with SPD. The most common interaction reported is *being pulled over for a routine or traffic related stop* (41%) or *being arrested, incarcerated, on probation/parole* (36%).

Figure 11 | Interactions with Sacramento Police Department | Focus Area Participants



Residents were also asked about the frequency of their interactions with SPD in the last 12 months [see Figure 12]. Almost 40 percent report they had no interactions with SPD, and 22 percent indicate they *rarely* had interactions in the last 12 months. About 18 percent had *regular* or *frequent* interactions with SPD.

Figure 12 | Frequency of Interactions with SPD in the Last 12 Months | Focus Area Participants



Overall, more than half of the community participants had some interaction with SPD in the last 12 months.

### *General Experiences & Perceptions of Law Enforcement*

Across community listening sessions, residents shared stories of how interactions with law enforcement have shaped their perceptions about the efficacy of policing strategies within their neighborhoods. A majority of the experiences with law enforcement were negative and, on many occasions, left the residents feeling humiliated and threatened. Instead of perceiving law enforcement officers as a public resource to go to for protection, the residents recounted stories of being treated with disrespect and hostility when seeking assistance or going about their everyday lives. Note that most of the participants talked about law enforcement in general terms (e.g., sometimes using the term “police” and “sheriff” interchangeably). Therefore, it is not clear if these experiences are with SPD specifically or with other law-enforcement agencies in general.

*Now you treat me like I'm some kind of monster. You feel what I'm saying? You know, that's just not right. My daughter was in the car with her sister, it was her 16th birthday, and I took her out to eat and we came back from eating. [Law enforcement pulled him over, pulled a gun on him, and an additional four police cars arrived. When asked why he was pulled over, the officer told him his car was the same make and model, a common make and model in their neighborhood, as one reported to have been “doing donuts in the street”]. Now my child. She's scared to death. First of all, she's thinking “My dad, they put a gun on my dad?”.... We just came from eating? So now she done went from scared, to angry, to distrust [of law enforcement].*

*Why do I have to always feel like I'm going to jail every time [law enforcement] get anywhere around me? ...I don't even do nothing. You know what I mean? But soon as I see them, I'm just ready to take off cause I feel like they gonna be on some bullshit, and I'm tired of it. But at the same time, you know, I have to remember I ain't on nothing. Ain't nothing to do to me, but talk crazy to me. I'm gonna talk crazy back and [the police] gonna let me go after they check my car.*

*The police ain't come out here and assist us in the way we need to. They have to learn that we are people. You can't dehumanize us and want us to be human when it suits you. You can't talk to me like I'm trash when you pull me over. You can't do that. I don't have to be at – ‘Hey asshole, get out of the car!’ You don't have to tear my car apart. I'm not on probation, parole or nothing. I'm 50 years old! What the f\*\*k are you looking for?*

Residents also discussed the historical relationships between law enforcement and their neighborhoods and the prevalence of mistrust among the community.

*The history of the occupation of our neighborhood by the police has been negative. And because of that negativity from the police as to how they treat us in our neighborhood, that's the problem. That's why we discourage it. And it may be wrong, but that's just what we have learned. We don't answer to the police, we don't want to be asked no questions from the police. When we see 'em coming, we go the other way regardless if we have information as to what has happened. And that's just history and it's gonna take some time. And that's what I was talking about. We need to do this more often [listening sessions] with the police in here with us to listen to what we have to say about they being an occupying force.*

*Every last one of us have a story of police brutality. That's only a piece of what we're talking about. Yeah, we're talking about gun violence and we gotta count every gun. We gotta just count every violent situation. The reality is we're speaking on the police... Their job is not to protect or serve. We know that.*



Participants recounted stories about being treated as a suspect, even when attempting to help others. For example:

*[There was a] person who was shot in the Fourth Avenue Apartments. But the lady's house, who the person collapsed in... the first thing she said is, "I don't trust those officers. I don't wanna talk to 'em." She's looking for somebody that worked in the community that was there that can vouch on how those officers treated her. She wasn't a victim. The victim ran in her house and collapsed on her floor and she got treated like she was a suspect.*

Another resident told a story about going to SPD headquarters to turn in an illegal gun. As a youth counselor, he had been given the gun voluntarily by a youth who was in his program. Despite the fact that he reached out to SPD as a concerned citizen trying to help, he felt like he was treated like a criminal:

*When I went to turn in the gun, it was like 30 police officers out there to greet me, right? I was kind of scared...I done went through the whole gauntlet of police. And so for me to go take [the gun] out there, they had a lot of police out there to just retrieve this gun. And I had it in a lockbox. Right? And I was scared to death.... And I don't see us ever getting our youth to give any guns up because the way they approached me and had me feeling, right?... I ain't lie. It had me scared.*

The nature of these interactions with law enforcement provides important context to the participants' recommendations for policing in their neighborhoods. Residents emphasized that any policing strategy for addressing gun violence will need to consider this collective experience of mutual mistrust. Likewise, future relationships with SPD will need to address the common perception that, regardless of intent, these neighborhoods have not experienced law enforcement as a reliable source of protection or safety.

## Youth Voices

Youth participants had mixed responses about their experiences with law enforcement. At different points of the discussion, a few of the young people distinguished their experiences with individual officers and how they see law enforcement as a whole:

*It's not who they work for [referring to different law enforcement agencies], it's what they job is. It's who's behind that badge or who's serving and how they're doing it. I'm saying there's a lot of officers who are pretty cool... here [Sacramento], I've never had a bad interaction with police...It's not about what they carry. It's not about what badge they got on. It's about the person that's carrying that badge who's serving for us. I feel like if we got mutual respect for each other, then there won't be no problem. There won't be no horrible interactions. They still have a job to do.*

Other youth shared that their experiences with law enforcement have been mostly negative. These instances represent interactions with different law enforcement departments in the county.

*There's nothing positive [about interactions with the police]. They see you on the street, you got a tattoo on your neck or whatever, they going to look at you as a gang member. They're going to pull you over, whatever, and detain you for nothing. Literally, you can be walking down the street and they'll pull over just to speak to you and ask you what is your name, this, this, that.*

*YOUTH A: I've had no positive interactions [with the police] But I can tell, I be going down the street, and they'll slow down on and look at me.*

*YOUTH B: Yeah, they do that.*

*YOUTH A: I feel weird. I didn't even do nothing!*

*FACILITATOR: Do the rest of you have that experience? Some of you?*

*YOUTH C: Yes*

*Like the first thing they do is harass you.*

The majority of the youth participants did not comment about police interactions during the listening session. This was consistent with the majority (54%) reporting on their registration form that they did not have any interactions with law enforcement in the last year. Of those who responded, the type of youth interactions with SPD include, *Arrested/incarcerated/on probation or parole (8%), Questioned by police as a witness of a crime (8%), Pulled over for routine or traffic related stops (4%), and Reported a crime or suspicion of a crime in their community (4%)*. Twenty-nine percent (29%) chose *Preferred not to answer the question* compared to 5% of adult participants.

### *Policing in Focus Neighborhoods*

When asked about specific ways in which SPD could be more effective in their neighborhoods, Focus Area residents provided a number of recommendations on how trust could be built between their neighborhoods and the police department.

### *Equal & Fair Treatment*

A common theme throughout the discussions was that residents felt like they did not receive the same level of service compared to other neighborhoods in the city. Across the three Focus Area listening sessions, residents recounted examples of when they felt the police response was severely delayed or the police simply did not respond when requested.

*I live five blocks from the police department. They never, ever come around or do nothing. It's like we don't exist. There's people being shot where I live. Like a month and a half ago, somebody got shot right in the back of my alley. And the body lay there for, I don't know, like eight or nine hours. They don't like the police out here. When we need them, where I live at, they don't come.*

*I think one of the things we have, we realize is as people that, that they don't respond in our community like they do others. You have a shot go off over in Colonial Park or over in one in them wealthy areas, and every police in Sacramento gonna be there. We have one go off in our neighborhood. It might be 30 minutes or 45 minutes before police show up. Real talk, real talk.*

*[The police] shows up way after the shootings take place in our world. What's the purpose of them for? So y'all know where the shots came from [because of the Shot Spotter], cause they sure not responding to us at all.*

Residents shared that many of their neighbors simply choose not to call the police for service, whether it is for something minor like garbage in the street or gun shots going off. The common perception is that the police are not interested in investigating in their area, so residents are skeptical whether calling in issues for service will get a quick or any response in their neighborhoods. Conversely, several residents discussed the frequency of getting stopped and interrogated by the police in their neighborhoods when going about their everyday lives.

*You know, it's all about respect. They [law enforcement] don't respect us. The reason I say that is, is that the way they treat you, I'm grown ass man. I'm 76 years old! They pulled me over and talked to me like I was a 12-year-old kid and didn't have a reason for pulling me over. So, I'm gonna respect that? See, they need to learn how to respect everybody. They want respect, then they gotta give respect. Those kids already got a hard time, and then they get pulled [over] and first thing they hear is somebody disrespect you even more.*

*[My recommendation is to] leave us alone. Unless you get a call or see us breaking the law. Okay? Don't look to pull us over, man.*

*Facilitator: So here's a question. What do we want Sac PD in this area to prioritize? What do we want them to focus on?*

*Resident A: If I'm doing it, it's your job to catch me, but catch me doing it right the right way. Don't respond. Don't do it illegally.*

*Resident B: I agree with that.*

*Facilitator: ...what I'm hearing, if they pull you over, they're gonna treat you one way. But if they're in Roseville and they pull that car over, they're gonna do it right?*

*Resident A: Exactly*

*Resident B: That's a distinction.*

Overall, residents felt like traffic stops erode the neighborhood's trust in the police, as most of these interactions seemed to confirm that the police are not there to serve and protect. Similarly, when residents expressed the desire for more police presence and intervention in their neighborhoods, other residents were quick to point out that increased law enforcement activity or monitoring would result in disproportionate harassment (“*But then that's targeting our people*”). Overall, residents recommended that a basic strategy to address gun violence in the Focus Areas is to build better trust and connections with the neighborhood, starting with providing equal and fair services to the residents.

Discussions about fair and equal treatment by law enforcement included themes of equity and race, with residents expressing that one of the reasons that their neighborhoods did not receive equal and fair treatment was because the residents are predominately African American. The listening session prompts used by the facilitators did not specifically ask about race and equity. However, an ongoing theme across the discussions were the perceived differences between level of service in Focus Area neighborhoods and levels of service in other neighborhoods (which are predominately White). Others shared the sentiment that their calls for assistance would be quickly addressed if they were Caucasian.

### Developing a Positive Relationship with SPD

Focus Area residents recommended that SPD take additional steps toward building positive relationships with the Focus Area neighborhoods. Residents discussed the fact that police officers who patrol their neighborhoods have little knowledge or understanding of their communities, their history, their culture, or the people who live there. Residents feel that if the police exclusively see their communities through the lens of law-enforcement, they will inevitably treat everyone like they are a suspect. Residents noted that the foundation of any positive relationship with SPD is to develop mutual trust through positive interactions.

*We don't wanna trust the police in the community. The police need to get to know these people that's been here and living in the community before they can really come out here and take a gun from somebody.*

*Then it has to be transparent. Like we gotta know the cops. It has to be built, a relationship. You know what I mean? And that kind of stuff. Like that's insulting. You can't be doing that on the corner and then turning around and doing something like this, that that's not gonna build a healthy relationship, that they're looking for.*

*One of the recommendations for the police department is that when some of us have been arrested a while back, some of us have been in trouble. I would say that [record] may be still in the system. But every time [the police] see us today and we try to make a change in our lives and we become better people, all they see is what we used to be. I think that everybody, even them, they deserve second chances. Then you look at us better - and they need to know that we are somebody - that we are good people. We all have issues. We all have problems. And they need to look at us that way. Because when they see us, who do they see?*

Across sessions, residents noted a similar dynamic of the frequent rotation of officers assigned to their neighborhoods. This leaves officers and the neighborhoods with little opportunity to get to know each other or to build a positive relationship.

*I think building relationships [is a recommendation]. But the officers that are assigned to our region, our command are moved very regularly. Even the lieutenant that comes to our neighborhood association meetings, they're transferred so quickly. So we get to know [them], we build relationship and they move on. And that rotation is really short.*

*Stop rotating the police. Leave the police that the community is getting to know in our community. Like every time you look up, they hire for this position, they hire somebody else... And so each one of 'em, they, they say where they come from, they background all that, none of it was here. All those officers was from Roseville.*

*So when [police officers] pop on the scene, we already offended and we ain't even seen them. We have never seen them. They just pop up. As they shift, come these people, they want to come to our community, just bring 'em on. And so when they interact with one of us, they don't know us. So when they say, "What's your name, sir?" It's a problem. What's your name first? I see another Copper once before, but I never seen you.*

Additionally, residents consistently observed that the officers assigned to their neighborhoods are often inexperienced and in their early twenties. This was seen as an added barrier to developing a relationship with the community as the new officers had very little understanding of their neighborhoods and often seemed to be fearful of residents in general. Residents suggested that new officers should have required trainings in which they spend time in their neighborhoods so they become aware of the issues that they may encounter. Residents also felt it was important to learn about the positive aspects of their communities and the residents who are working toward building up their neighborhoods. Otherwise, the residents felt that SPD only sees them through crime statistics and characterize their communities by the small handful of individuals who are engaging in criminal behaviors and perpetuating gun violence.

## Youth Voices

Youth shared how having a working relationship with law enforcement can help them feel safer. Youth made a distinction between an officer “*doing their job description*” and officers who assist based on how they respond to youth and their unique situations. This student discussed interactions with a School Resource Officer (SRO) as an example of how law enforcement could be more effective in supporting their safety.

*We had one [SRO] a couple days ago, he was walking around campus, and he was disrespectful to our kids. Telling me “you got to go to class, Imma show you where class is” and this, that and the third [degree], and that's who we don't need. They don't want to know what we're going through. They don't want to know how we're doing at home. They just want do what's right for them and under their job description, but that's not what they're following as a school resource officer... So, some of us aren't safe to go into classes. Some people are late to classes because they don't want to go to class. But maybe if you sit down and talk to me and maybe have a conversation with me, you might want to understand why I don't want to be in class. And then you're forcing us to go into an unsafe place.*

One youth shared how this listening session is needed in that law enforcement “*should start off slow*” by getting to know them and asking young people questions about what they need to feel safe.

## Law Enforcement as Part of Community

Focus Area residents discussed ways to develop a positive relationship with SPD. Mutual trust needs to be established and this requires a reframing of how the police interact with the community. Residents emphasized the need for officers to get to know the residents and develop a level of understanding and empathy with the neighborhood.

*My thing is if the officers stop being rotated and if they get to know the people here in the community. Get to know, don't just pull over the car because you assume he got a gun or don't just pull over the car cause that's such and such, you know. Get to know the community so we can trust you again.*

*If they start putting more officers, either the ones like Ramirez and all them back in the day, Ramirez owned houses on 4th Avenue. He did his job. He didn't bother people and just approach people because he had an idea that they were selling drugs or carrying a gun. You have to get to know the community first and foremost so we can trust you. We're not gonna trust you if you don't even get to know our community. If you coming out here just to do your job, we don't want you here.*

*I say the police department we have always had, they don't live in our neighborhoods. They don't live nowhere near 'em. They never see - 90% of 'em have never experienced the struggles we have. The problems we have. They may have had other problems and trauma, but they have not experienced ours. So all the way across the board, it's a different playing field. If you put an orange in a tomato patch, it doesn't work. Ain't no way you can tell me that. You know what I mean? So how you going to help me and you not willing to be here with me? And consistently with me and walk with me and build a trust with me?*

Residents also discussed the ways in which they wanted the police to engage with the community, which went beyond regular law-enforcement duties. Residents want more opportunities for officers to

participate in community activities as an effective way to begin to build trust and relationships with residents.

*I'd like to see cops outside of just being cops, like you were saying. Play basketball, pull up, entertain the kids, like get to know people. At the end of the day, it's a relationship. If it's one-sided and it's always accusations, assumptions. You fit the description type of relationship. How would you expect somebody on the other end to respond to that? You're setting a tone.*

*There used to be cops and coffee, regular meetings. That was before the pandemic. I'd like to see those come back. There used to be a community meeting that the captain of our command would host that was open to anybody in the community that should return. And then things like volunteer in the neighborhood, volunteer with the sports groups, volunteer with our kids, come out to the community center... We had our national night out here at the park. And they came out and they did a water balloon fight with our kids and it was blast.*

*The kids need to see [police officers] outside of their uniforms. Come out here, without their uniforms and so know them as who they are, whatever outside [of being an officer]. Not just be scared, be scared of the uniform. Maybe they'll see them in uniform and go, "Oh, that's actually so-and-so from the neighborhood!"*

Across the sessions, Focus Area residents discussed the importance of local officers making connections with their communities beyond responding to calls or making traffic stops. Promoting positive interactions with youth was emphasized as especially important to rebuilding trust within the neighborhoods.

## Youth Voices

Youth also suggested that police officers could develop more positive relationships with them by being visible during community events, having more non-enforcement related interactions or conversations with youth, specifically, working with the Black community more, and decreasing interactions where they feel that they are being profiled due to negative stereotype.

*We need the community to come together with the police because the thing is you see a police officer, you want to go the other way. You want to all of a sudden act right. But if we have that presence, then the act right will always be there. You don't need to turn around.... there's a lot of stuff going on nowadays and you all think this cop is affiliated with all the cops, all the bad cops that happened, and we're misunderstanding the good ones for the bad ones.*

*It's more like... there really isn't a relationship with the police. It's like every time a person has an interaction or whatever, it's all negative. Just every damn day. I guess if they want to have something with the children and the community. I don't know... Talk more, do something more. Cuz people are already dead.*

*I think we need a proper introduction to the police... Because like I said, we don't know them. We've been in a relationship and we don't know unless there's a situation, something going on. If there's no situation there, we're just having fun or something, then there's nothing bad to happen.*

Similar to how adult residents wanted to see officers participate in non-law enforcement-based community activities, youth participants conveyed the importance of seeing police in neutral community interactions so that police presence is not automatically associated with a crisis or a negative interaction. Without a working relationship between youth and police, youth find it difficult to see the police as safe, trustworthy adults.

### Continuing Community Dialogue

Focus Area residents were supportive of SPD sponsoring the listening sessions and recommended that there be more opportunities to have open communication with the police department. Several residents felt that it was important to have representatives of the SPD at future sessions so they could get to know them and talk with officers directly.

*My recommendation would be that the police would come out and dialogue with us because they don't engage with the community. They don't. And a lot of times they look at, at me, they look stupid... They don't understand the culture.*

*As people in the community, I believe we have to be willing to be social, and then figure out if we can build the trust. The police station have to be able to be social and figure out if they can build the trust. Cuz everybody's not gonna be able to get along or trust each other. Right?*

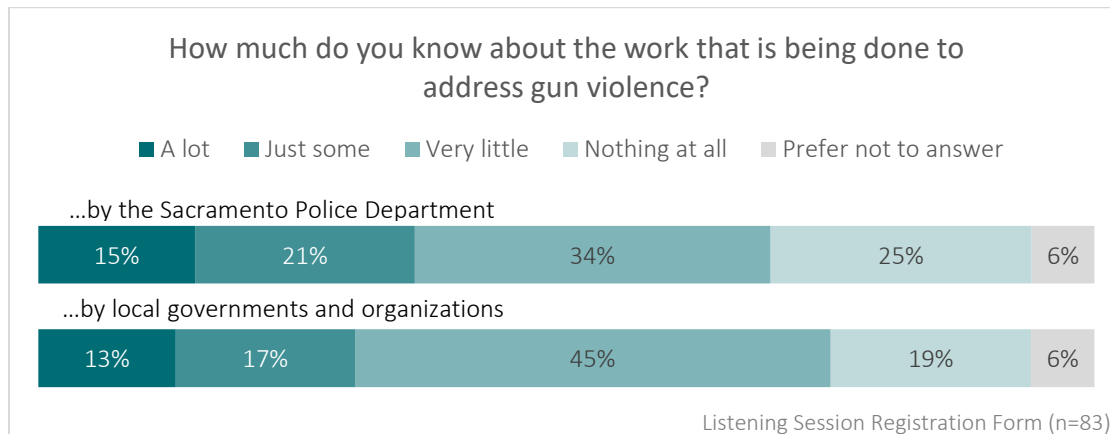
*They can police our community with our help. We teach them how to police our community. We don't need nobody to occupy our community. We need you to come help us when it gets too much for us in the community to do ourselves. We need to have a conversation and we need to work together. Cause it's gonna take everybody there to change this community because everybody allow it to get like this.*

Several residents reported that usually when they see officers at community events, they are wearing their uniforms and are carrying their firearm. They noted that having officers attending community events in full uniform was counter to their purpose for building mutual trust and a positive relationship. Residents shared that when they see officers in full uniform at community events, it conveys the perception that officers are not comfortable in the community and do not trust the residents.

## F. Knowledge & Perceptions of Local Efforts to Address Gun Violence

Overall, Focus Area residents do not know much about SPD's or local efforts to address gun violence in their neighborhoods [see Figure 13]. More than half report that they know *very little* (34%) or *nothing at all* (25%) about efforts by the SPD. This mirrors what residents report knowing about the work local governments and organizations are doing to address gun violence with more than two-thirds (64%) knowing *very little* or *nothing at all* about the work they are doing.

Figure 13 | Awareness about Local Efforts to Address Gun Violence | Focus Area Participants



A handful of residents had heard about the SPD's *Gas for Guns* buyback event and are generally pleased that SPD was doing something to get guns off the street. Other residents expressed skepticism about whether the SPD buy-back program was going to make a significant impact, particularly with obtaining firearms from individuals who are most likely to be the source of gun violence. For example:

*My thing is, you guys are for the gun buyback program. These young men out here paying \$350 up to a thousand, \$1250 for a gun and the police is offering them a \$50 gift card. You think they gonna turn their gun in for \$50? After they just pay \$1250 or \$2,000 for a gun? That don't even sound right.*

A number of residents also report being aware of the city-supported Pop-up events for youth in their neighborhoods. Residents who are aware of the Pop-up events had favorable impressions of them. While residents are happy that Pop-ups were a positive event for youth, residents emphasize that Pop-up programming cannot replace long-term investment in their communities and do not offer the same impacts as investing in ongoing youth programming through a community center. Many residents discussed the value of community centers as a hub of activity where youth can always feel welcome by staff who are willing to get to know them as individuals.

*The city council member, they'll get that money to make themselves look good...But we need to get that money and use it in the right places. So we get that money, we just use it and put on some weak events... Someone just give the kids pizza and call, 'that's a Pop-up.' No, get that money into the community center to get kids out there and build the volunteers. You can't get no volunteers, then pay some volunteers. We have lot of money we get from the city, you can easily get up and tell them we should use it in the right places.*

*But if we just have Pop-ups, we just have community centers with no growth, nothing. Where are they gonna do these Pop-ups? If they're only learning how to have fun, without control then that fun turns into extremities.*



Other residents noted that it was the first time they were hearing about youth events that are in their neighborhoods; those who did know about the events, were not aware about how to access additional information about when or where the events were happening in the future.

*That's another problem too. I think maybe make these opportunities [youth events] more visible. Just cause that life goes on. Even then, if I didn't have the connection right here, I wouldn't know this [listening] session was going on, right? So it's also finding a way to make [knowing about community events] easier.*

*The programs that are existing, that are left, that are here for our community, I haven't heard about them. So, where's the outreach? The people that need you don't know about you, is kind of maybe an issue. Because I could use a whole bunch of programs. I've looked, I've Googled, I can't find them. And you guys are saying there's a few of them that are still here? I don't know about them.*

Some residents were aware of the *Beat Walk* due to its visibility in the neighborhood, even if residents did not know more detail about the program.

*Resident: It was Saint Paul's Church, I believe the officers was walking with some of the people from Saint Paul's church and just walking through the community, introducing themselves, getting to know –*  
*Facilitator: That's us. That's the Beat Walk.*

Overall, most residents did not seem aware of current efforts in their neighborhood to address gun violence – either efforts to prevent gun violence among youth or to stop those individuals who are the perpetrators of local gun violence.

## III. Recommendations

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The listening sessions provided an opportunity for Focus Area residents and youth to voice their experiences with gun violence, to provide recommendations to SPD, and to discuss ways the relationship between SPD and their communities can be strengthened. Residents were primarily interested in community-based approaches to prevent gun violence among local youth. Almost no one mentioned strategies related to focused enforcement of current offenders, other than stopping access to guns within these communities. Taken together, the themes discussed by participants in the community listening sessions can be summarized into two main recommendations for the reduction of gun violence in Focus Area neighborhoods. Specific recommendations made are summarized below; the research team also provided recommendations based upon themes and findings across the listening sessions.

### RECOMMENDATION #1

#### Prevent Gun Violence with Community Resources and Supports for Youth

Presented with a menu of strategies that SPD is currently using to reduce neighborhood gun violence, residents across all listening sessions prioritized community-based services and programs. Residents discussed ways in which the community itself could be more involved in addressing gun violence locally, and much of the discussion focused on the need for services and supports to be able to do so. Specifically, youth and the lack of opportunities for youth were front-and-center in all of the listening sessions with many residents wondering why public services such as parks and community centers had limited availability. Further, residents linked the prevalence of gun violence in their neighborhoods to the high levels of poverty and eroded community networks. This link between gun violence and under-resourced city neighborhoods has been long established within the research about reducing gun violence in urban areas.<sup>2</sup> Below, SPD *Focus Areas* have been overlaid SMUD's Sustainable Communities Resource Priorities Map<sup>3</sup>, which identifies the census blocks in the city that are the most vulnerable and underserved [see Figure 14 below]. Sacramento follows the national trend, in which the vast majority of gun violence occurs in concentrated geographical areas with high levels of poverty and low public investment.<sup>4</sup> SPD *Focus Areas* of concentrated gun violence align with these historically under-resourced neighborhoods within the City of Sacramento.

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<sup>2</sup> The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 'Community Gun Violence' [website], <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/community-gun-violence/>, (accessed 1 December 2022)

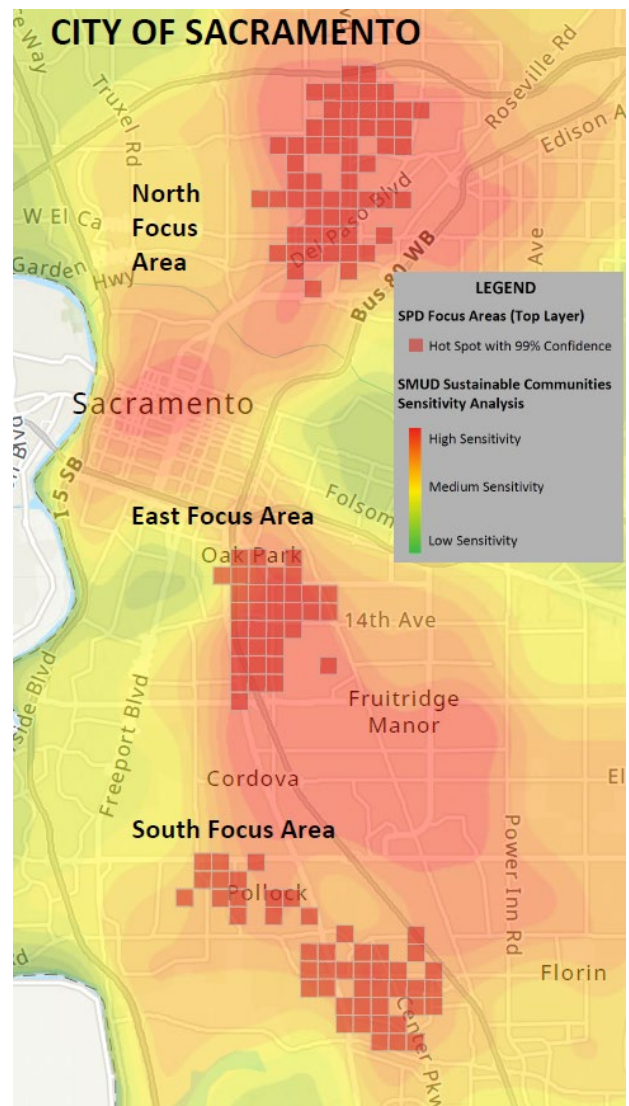
<sup>3</sup> Heat map indicating vulnerable and underserved communities. Adapted from Focus Area data provided by the Sacramento Police Department and Sustainable *Communities Resource Priorities Map*, By SMUD, n.d. (<https://usage.smud.org/SustainableCommunities/>)

<sup>4</sup> The Guardian, 'Mapping US gun murders at a micro level: New data zooms in on violence' [website], <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/20/mapping-gun-murders-micro-level-new-data-2015>, (accessed 28 November 2022)

Residents recommend that, not just SPD, but that the City of Sacramento invest more in the well-being of their children and youth before they are acutely at risk for becoming a victim and/or perpetrator of gun violence. Many of the resident recommendations for resources fall outside the scope and mission of the Sacramento Police Department, yet are still seen as vital to addressing gun violence in their neighborhoods. Resident recommendations include:

- Expand hours and services to local Community Centers, especially to centers that are known “safe places” within the high gun violence Focus Areas.
- Ensure that neighborhood parks are open, accessible, and safe for residents to use.
- Build supports and programming for youth that are sustainable, well-advertised, and involve a stable cadre of trusted adult staff at a known and trusted location.
- Provide community connections and programs to school-aged children that offer positive alternatives to activities/associations leading to gun violence.
- Support community-led programming for youth that is culturally competent and provides service linkages to address the impacts of trauma from community gun violence.
- Include the broader community in the provision of youth services, including violence prevention programs and opportunities for older residents to volunteer and/or mentor youth.

Figure 14 | Map of SPD Focus Areas of Concentrated Gun Violence Overlaying Underserved and Distressed Areas



*Research Team Recommendations* | Residents across the listening sessions noted what they saw as a glaring disparity in the resources and programs available in their neighborhoods. Likewise, residents felt that the primary strategy for addressing gun violence was investing in their youth. Many of the mentioned youth supports exist in some form or fashion within the City of Sacramento’s structure; however, resident feedback suggests that these efforts are not well-known or coordinated within these neighborhoods. Some youth participants acknowledged that while some youth services are available and impactful, they are not always easy for youth to access or find. Therefore, we recommend:

- Initiating citywide collaboration, coordination, and outreach for youth-focused services with a priority given to those neighborhoods which are the most under-resourced and vulnerable to community gun

violence. The city has implemented a Citywide Youth Development Plan which could serve as a starting place for coordination and the prioritization of providing resources to these neighborhoods.

- Build youth services through regular, routine programming with trusted adults. Consider leveraging community centers (and other “safe places”) as an established hub of services (both from the city and CBOs) to build sustainable community connections and support infrastructures.
- Continue to partner with local community-based organizations from Focus Area neighborhoods that can serve as trusted messengers and provide community-led solutions to reducing gun violence.
- Consult and involve community members, including youth, in the identification and prioritization of services, resources, and programming that meet the needs of their neighborhoods. This should include culturally appropriate strategies to increase youth outreach, access, and service utilization. Identify potential barriers to effective and culturally appropriate programming, especially within city divisions or local community-based organizations where youth programming and support is currently being implemented.

## RECOMMENDATION #2

### Build Trust through Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing

When asked for recommendations specifically about how SPD could effectively police their neighborhood, residents and youth prioritized the need to change how police officers relate to, and work within, their communities. Specifically, they pointed to the level of mutual distrust between law enforcement and their neighborhoods. Residents discussed past negative experiences with law enforcement and shared their skepticism that the police could or would ensure their safety. Youth participants with past interactions also expressed mostly negative experiences with law enforcement and did not see them a source of safety or assistance. Residents discussed what they see as a contradiction in how SPD operates in their neighborhoods. For example, residents shared their experiences of calling the police for assistance in emergency situations (e.g., domestic violence, threats to their families, or homicide victims), but they felt that officers did not respond to calls within their neighborhoods or police responses were significantly delayed. At the same time, residents and youth report feeling that their neighborhoods are being over-policed with targeted traffic stops and interrogations by police assuming that they are engaged in criminal behavior when they are just going about their everyday lives.

As a result, one of the most prevalent themes emerging from the listening sessions is the reluctance for residents in the city’s neighborhoods with the highest levels of gun violence to seek assistance from the police. Instead, residents and youth seek protection from their families/networks and are more likely to see the need for owning a gun for personal protection. Residents describe a cycle where the increased levels of gun violence in their neighborhoods drives the demand for more guns. This cycle is further exacerbated when there are low levels of trust that the police can protect and serve their communities effectively. The link between community distrust in law enforcement and firearm violence has been well documented in other cities.<sup>5</sup> In addition, low levels of community trust in law enforcement impedes

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<sup>5</sup> Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, ‘*In Pursuit of Peace - Building Police-Community Trust to Break the Cycle of Violence*’ [website], [https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/in-pursuit-of-peace-building-police-community-trust-to-break-the-cycle-of-violence/#footnote\\_348\\_46445](https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/in-pursuit-of-peace-building-police-community-trust-to-break-the-cycle-of-violence/#footnote_348_46445), (accessed 28 November 2022)

investigations of crimes and the identification of violent offenders because community members are reluctant to cooperate or volunteer information.<sup>6</sup>

Recommendations for effectively policing their neighborhoods call for measured and equitable responses that will build trust in SPD and positive relationships with their communities. Many of their recommendations involve increasing the police department's community engagement efforts. Specifically, residents and youth recommend elements of community-oriented policing, which is based on the concept that trust and mutual respect between police and the communities they serve is critical to public safety.<sup>7</sup> Their recommendations for building trust are grouped into broad categories of promoting procedural justice and increasing community engagement:

### **Procedural Justice Recommendations**

- Ensure that all residents are treated equally and fairly within standard police protocols.
- Treat all residents with respect and dignity and be mindful of language used to imply or explicitly accuse residents of involvement in criminal activities. Residents felt unduly targeted and reported instances of being asked “probation or parole” during regular traffic stops.
- Ensure neighborhoods receive equitable services from SPD compared to other communities, such as response times, staffing, and other public safety resources.
- Increase the visibility of police officers through local patrolling of neighborhood areas with safety concerns throughout all hours of the day. Residents felt that police patrols were less visible and responsive after dark.

### **Community Engagement Recommendations**

- Increase the number of opportunities for SPD to interact with the community in rapport-building activities such as Coffee with Cops, Beat Walk, community sports, youth events, and volunteer activities. Ensure that officers are attending in casual, non-uniformed attire and without their firearms.
- Encourage officers to make longer-term commitments to work in Focus Area neighborhoods to allow for officers to build relationships and trust with the community.
- Schedule and conduct regular community dialogues within neighborhoods, preferably with a representative from SPD. Provide significant outreach for these opportunities to allow for broad community participation.
- Provide officers with training or “field trips” with trusted community messengers in order to promote their level of comfort and knowledge about these neighborhoods, including their specific historical and unique community aspects.

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, ‘*Racial Reconciliation, Truth-Telling, and Police Legitimacy*’ [PDF], <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p241-pub.pdf>, (accessed 22 November 2022)

<sup>7</sup> National League of Cities, ‘City officials guide to Policing in the 21st Century’ [PDF], [https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NLC-Community-Policing-Guide-updated-71516\\_0.pdf](https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NLC-Community-Policing-Guide-updated-71516_0.pdf), (accessed 1 December 2022)

*Research Team Recommendations* | Resident themes and recommendations from the listening sessions highlight the need for building a foundation of mutual trust between residents, youth, and SPD. Specific recommendations generated through the listening sessions point to many of the known strategies for achieving stronger police-community relationships including engagement, accountability, and community partnerships with problem solving, that are the basis of Chief Lester’s Crime Reduction Strategy.<sup>8</sup> Based upon the residents’ feedback across the listening sessions, we recommend the following:

- Consider organizing a series of listening sessions/community dialogues to demonstrate ongoing commitment to relationship-building and transparency. These sessions should be broadly advertised and facilitated by a neutral party that is a known “trusted messenger” within the neighborhoods. Approach future listening sessions/dialogues as community/relationship building rather than ‘fact finding’ – a number of residents expressed skepticism that the police would need to ask residents about policing strategies. On-going communication can also serve to develop a shared understanding of both SPD and community priority issues (specifically in assumed causes, impact, and necessary strategies). This will allow for meaningful and sustainable dialogue when it comes to engaging in community focused solutions.
- Gather feedback on what SPD data/information is of particular interest to residents and would be seen as credible. As a result, demonstrating SPD accountability to their neighborhoods. Overall, residents did not engage with the SPD data presented in this series of listening sessions and in many cases did not see the data as relevant to their own lived experience. Given the level of mistrust expressed about law enforcement, it became evident that SPD data presented before a relationship was built with the communities would be likely dismissed. Residents expressed interest in seeing data that demonstrates the impact of gun violence on their communities (as opposed to crime statistics) such as the number of local gun-related homicides, incidences of officer-involved shootings, and service/accountability metrics.
- Work with local neighborhood partners and community outreach specialists to develop an ongoing communication strategy that highlights SPD and partner initiatives that are currently in place and that support youth development and gun violence prevention.
- Consider designating a community liaison officer to each of the Focus Area neighborhoods. Residents discussed at length the negative impacts of being assigned newly recruited officers and the frequent rotation of officers within the neighborhoods. Having a dedicated and stable liaison officer may provide a stable, long-term relationship between SPD and the neighborhoods.
- Actively involve residents, including youth, in the planning of SPD-community engagement activities to ensure the widest reach and the greatest impacts.
- Ensure that important issues raised in future community engagement sessions which are outside the scope of SPD can be communicated and addressed through other responsible departments/divisions within the City of Sacramento and County.

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<sup>8</sup> Major Cities Chiefs, ‘Violence Crime Reduction Operations Guide’ [PDF], [https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/violent\\_crime\\_reduction\\_operations\\_guide.pdf](https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/violent_crime_reduction_operations_guide.pdf), (accessed 20 November 2022)

- Continue engaging in transparent discussions on specific points of community tension between law enforcement and local neighborhoods led by a neutral and professional facilitator.<sup>9</sup> While not the specific purpose of these listening session, residents identified many of the historically difficult issues as perceived barriers to strengthening SPD's relationships with Focus Area neighborhoods (e.g., officer-involved shootings, implicit bias, and community disinvestment).

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, '*Racial Reconciliation, Truth-Telling, and Police Legitimacy*' [PDF], <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p241-pub.pdf> , (accessed 2 December 2022)

## Appendix A | Gun Violence Listening Session Design

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ISR developed gun violence listening session protocols and data instruments in collaboration with SPD, OVP, and the CBO facilitators. The Gun Violence Listening Session Development Workshop (held on September 8, 2022) facilitated conversations around project goals, unique community identities, Focus Area boundaries, recruitment strategies, and potential attendance barriers.

Three community listening sessions based on the SPD identified focused areas were scheduled for October 2022. Participation criteria for the sessions were as follows:

- Residency of selected community Focus Area/neighborhood
- Age range: 18 years old or older
- Directly impacted by or participated in gun violence within their community
- One person per household

A youth listening session was scheduled for March 2023. Participation criteria were as follows:

- Residency of selected community Focus Area/neighborhood
- Age range: 14-19
- Directly impacted by or participated in gun violence within their community

Unlike the community listening sessions which were split by neighborhood, youth listening session attendance comprised of youth currently residing in any of the selected community Focus Area/neighborhood. In addition to highlighting youth voices on how gun violence impacts their daily lives, the youth listening session was also an opportunity for youth to respond to findings gathered in the community listening sessions, especially since youth experiences and youth-based recommendations were prominent in the community listening sessions.

CBO leaders were handpicked by OVP to facilitate the listening sessions. CBOs also led recruitment efforts by utilizing their pre-existing networks to outreach and verify people who fit the approved participation criteria. For the youth listening session, CBO representatives provided transportation to and from the session as necessary. ISR-developed community fliers were provided as recruitment support.

### Instrument Development

ISR developed three data collection instruments: listening session questions, participant registration forms, and an online follow up survey

Listening session questions were framed around community specific SPD data on gun-related crime, gun seizures, and ShotSpotter activations to allow discussions that provide nuance on gun-related statistics grounded in the participants' experienced reality. The discussion guide created was designed to allow for a semi-structured group discussion, with follow up questions to probe for deeper discussions related to how gun violence impacted participants' daily functioning, perceived safe spaces in the community, opinions on root causes of gun violence, and recommendations for effective community policing.



Participant registration forms collected anonymous demographic data alongside participant perceptions of their neighborhood, experiences with gun violence, and experiences with SPD. Participants were also provided an opportunity to respond to current SPD policing strategies employed within their neighborhood and perceived effectiveness in reducing gun violence.

The final data collection instrument created was an anonymous online survey that participants could use to provide any further information or feedback related to the listening sessions or gun violence and policing in general for up to a week after the listening sessions had ended.

Audio recordings, completed registration forms, and any online survey responses represented the qualitative and quantitative data collected for analysis by the research team.

## Listening Session Protocol

Two and a half hours were dedicated for each community session, with the first 30 minutes scheduled for participant introductions, a “data walk” (presenting SPD gun violence data via handouts and posters), and participant registration. Participants were welcome to start arriving at 6 pm. Upon participant entry to each reserved community site, ISR provided participants consent and registration forms and an overview of what to expect with the listening session structure. During this time, participants could interact with community specific data posters, fill in their registration forms, and/or enjoy provided refreshments before the official start of the listening session.

Listening sessions were scheduled to promptly start at 6:30 pm. After participant registration and intake procedures, an SPD analyst provided a brief, in-person neighborhood profile presentation, introducing firearm related data points within the specified Focus Area. Participants could ask the SPD analyst clarifying questions about the data during this time. Once the profile presentation concluded, the SPD analyst left the location, and the CBO facilitator provided listening session ground rules while ISR prepared to record the session. After introductions and session ground rules were completed, the rest of the time was dedicated to facilitating community discussions using the prepared questions.

Post-session, participants were directed to return their completed registration forms to ISR employees. In exchange for completed registration forms, ISR employees provided the \$50 gift card incentive, a resource card to connect participants to Sacramento community resources, and a QR code linking to the online follow up survey.

Youth listening session used similar protocols and registration forms with questions adjusted to capture more age-appropriate experiences (such as questions on whether schools are considered safe places and distinguishing SROs from other law enforcement). The youth listening session was scheduled during the weekend with doors opening at 9:30 am for refreshments and registration and the session starting promptly at 10:00 am. The “data walk” and data presentation by an SPD analyst was omitted for the youth listening session, allowing youth participants to talk amongst themselves instead and/or relax and listen to music. The rest of the listening session still followed protocol in as far as the CBO facilitator explaining ground rules, ISR recording the session, and youth participants being directed to return completed registration forms in exchange for the \$50 gift card incentive at the end of the listening session.

## Data Management and Analysis

Audio recordings from the community listening sessions were transcribed and deidentified to ensure participant confidentiality. Participant names, identifying aliases, and organizations stated in connection to a participant (i.e., place of work) were redacted from the final transcripts. Once transcripts were deidentified and validated against audio recordings for accuracy, ISR coded the qualitative data for emerging themes.

ISR coded data collected from the registration forms and analyzed frequency distributions of participant demographics, neighborhood perceptions, and experiences with gun violence and SPD using SPSS software.

## Appendix B | Community Listening Session Agenda

Topic	Activities
Registration + Data Walk 6:00 – 6:15 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants complete registration</li> <li>• Participants can move about the room, mingle, and look at data posters.</li> </ul>
Welcome & Session Overview 6:15 - 6:20 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Welcome, Housekeeping</li> <li>• Purpose of Listening Sessions &amp; Results               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Confidentiality</li> <li>○ Incentive process</li> <li>○ Recording</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
SPD Profile of Neighborhood Gun Violence 6:20 - 6:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPD to introduce data points related to neighborhood and link data to current strategies and/or need to address gun violence</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
Listening Session Discussion 6:30 - 7:40 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ground rules for discussion, safety, and confidentiality</li> <li>• Facilitate Listening Sessions questions and responses</li> </ul>
Closing 7:40 – 7:45 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss community resources</li> <li>• Remind participants to turn in registration for incentive</li> </ul>

# Appendix C | Community Listening Session Forms and Data Collection Instruments

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## 1. Consent Form

The City of Sacramento, in collaboration with [FACILITATING CBO], Sacramento City Police Department, and Sacramento State University are conducting community listening sessions on gun violence in your neighborhood. By reading this form and staying for the session, you are saying that you agree to participate in the listening sessions. Here's what you need to know:

### **Why is the Sacramento Police Department doing this?**

The goal of these listening sessions is to establish stronger connections between the police department and your community. The police department wants to learn directly from people in your neighborhood about solutions and recommendations with policing. The ultimate goal is to work with you to prevent gun violence in your neighborhood.

### **What do I get out of this?**

This is an opportunity to give direct feedback to the police department about your neighborhood's experiences with gun violence and policing. At the end of the listening session, you will also receive a \$50 Amazon gift card for your participation.

### **How do I get my \$50 Amazon gift card?**

Towards the end of the listening session, you will receive a participant registration form. Fill out the form and turn it in to the registration table at the end of the listening session. We'll review the form and give you the gift card.

### **What if I can't stay the whole time?**

Your time and feedback are valuable to us. If you want to or need to leave before the end of the listening session, you are free to do so at any time. Unfortunately, we can only provide the \$50 gift cards to people who have completed the entire listening session.

### **What should I expect?**

**Recording** - The listening session discussion will be audio recorded.

**Confidentiality** - Sac State will take the recordings and turn them into written transcriptions of listening session conversations. Sac State will keep the recording secure (and not share it with the Police Department). Any information in the recording that could identify participants or other individuals will be removed from the written transcript before it is given to the police department.

**Anonymity** - Please only talk about what you feel comfortable with your neighbors knowing. We **highly discourage** the use of real names while the session is being recorded. Feel free to use fake names or don't use any names at all ('this person', 'this guy', 'so and so') if you want to share real life events.

## 2. Community Listening Session Questions

### LISTENING SESSION QUESTIONS [XX = Data specific to Focus Area]

1. **What do you think about the frequency of gun-related crime occurring in your neighborhood? Does the SPD data accurately reflect your experience living in this neighborhood?**
    - a. How has gun violence affected your daily life in your neighborhood?
    - b. In your opinion, where are the safe places in your neighborhood?
      - i. Why do these places feel safe?
    - c. What do you think (or what you have heard), could be the primary causes of gun-violence in your neighborhood?
- 
2. **What do you think about the fact that XX guns have been pulled in your neighborhood within the past year?**
    - a. Why do you think that is?
    - b. What are your thoughts about other people getting access to guns?
    - c. “Ghost guns” (privately made firearms without serial numbers) are a growing problem in California. Do you think that ghost guns are a problem in your neighborhood?
      - i. Why do you think that is?
- 
3. **In your neighborhood, only XX of ShotSpotter Activations are associated with a call for service to the police. That means that in the past year, XX ShotSpotter Activations were recorded, and the police receive 35 phone calls. Why do you think that is?**
    - a. Knowing that gun violence is high in your neighborhood, what recommendations do you have for SPD?
      - i. How do you want SPD to police your area?
      - ii. What can SPD do so that you can feel safer in your neighborhood?
      - iii. Of those things we’ve discussed, what do you think SPD needs to prioritize when addressing gun violence in your community?
    - b. What needs to happen so that our community and SPD can have a working relationship?
      - i. Who do you think needs to be working on bridging the gap between SPD and the community?
      - ii. The Sacramento Police Department? Local community leaders? Community members? The City of Sacramento? Others?
      - iii. Why do you think so?
-

### 3. Listening Session Participant Registration Form

#### Participant Information

1. What is your **age**? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your **gender**?

Female  Male  Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you identify your **race/ethnicity**? (*select all that apply*)

Black/African-American  Hispanic/Latino/a  White  Asian  Other  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the **zip code** of the primary address in which you currently live/sleep?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. How long have you **lived in this neighborhood**?

Less than 1 year  1 to 5 years  6 to 10 years  11 years or more

#### Perceptions of Neighborhood

6. The following questions ask about your neighborhood:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer
a. I have experienced <b>a lot of crime</b> in my neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I feel that I <b>am well connected</b> with my neighbors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. People in my neighborhood are willing to <b>help each other</b> out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. People in my neighborhood <b>trust each other</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I feel <b>safe in my home</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I feel <b>safe when walking</b> in my neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Experiences with Gun Violence

7. Have you or someone that you know personally been a victim of gun violence? (*select all that apply*)

I **have been** a victim of gun violence.

**An acquaintance** (e.g., coworker, neighbor, a friend-of-a-friend, etc.) has been a victim of gun violence.

**A close friend or family member** has been the victim of gun violence.

**I do not know anyone** who has been a victim of violence.

Prefer not to answer

8. How **serious of a problem** do you think gun violence is in your immediate neighborhood?

- A major problem     A minor problem     Not a problem     Prefer not to answer

9. How likely do you think you or someone in your family will be a **future victim of gun violence**?

- Very likely     Somewhat likely     Somewhat unlikely     Very unlikely     Prefer not to answer

## Experiences with Police

10. What kind of interactions have you had with Sacramento City Police? (*select all that apply*):

- Reported a crime** or suspicion of a crime in my community     **Questioned** by police as a witness of a crime  
 **Pulled over** for routine or traffic related stops     **None** of these situations apply to me  
 **Arrested/incarcerated/ on probation or parole**     Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prefer not to answer

11. In the past 12 months, how often have you personally interacted with the Sacramento Police?

- I haven't     **Frequently**, at least once a month or more  
 **Rarely**, may be once or twice     Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 **Once in a while**, maybe several times or so     Prefer not to answer  
 **Regularly**, every other month or so

12. How much do you know about the work **Sacramento Police Department** is doing to address gun violence?

- A lot answer     Just some     Very little     Nothing at all     Prefer not to

13. How much do you know about the work **local governments and organizations** are doing to address gun violence?

- A lot answer     Just some     Very little     Nothing at all     Prefer not to

14. The Sacramento Police Department is **currently** employing the following policing strategies to reduce gun violence in your neighborhood. Which strategies do you think Sacramento Police Department needs to keep doing/do more of in your neighborhood to reduce gun violence? (*select all that apply*):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High Visibility Policing         | <input type="checkbox"/> Undercover Officers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More Police Officers in the area | <input type="checkbox"/> Stricter Laws   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased Traffic Stops          | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive Prosecution by the District Attorney   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased Subject Stops          | <input type="checkbox"/> Focused enforcement of violent offenders  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Meetings/Events        | <input type="checkbox"/> Focused enforcement of gang members   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Watch               | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth and young adult activities  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crime Hotline                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Clean-Up   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Intervention Programs   | <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative Sentencing (community service, home detention, drug diversion programs, drug treatment programs, and probation) |