Reducing Gun Violence in Baltimore

Summary

Scanning: Baltimore experienced more than 300 homicides and over 630 non-fatal shootings each year between 2015 and 2021. Of the city's nine police districts, the Western District (WD) has historically had the highest rates of violence. With less than 6% of Baltimore's population, the WD accounted for 16.2% of citywide homicides and non-fatal shootings between 2015 and 2021—more than any other district. The WD's homicide rate in 2021 was 178 per 100,000 residents—among the highest of any police district in the entire nation. When including non-fatal shootings, approximately 1 in 200 of the district's residents were shot or killed that year.

Analysis: Analysis revealed a strong overlap between gun violence victim and offending populations in the WD: both were mostly Black (>95%), male (>80%), ages 16–34 (>70%), and very well known to the criminal justice system (>81% had prior criminal justice involvement with a mean 12 prior arrests). Most homicides (72%) stemmed from interpersonal disputes that involved members of gangs, drug trafficking organizations, robbery crews, and other criminally active groups. As of 2021, the WD had 55 criminally active groups with an estimated 672–1,045 members representing approximately 2% of the area's residents.

Response: Baltimore began designing a Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) in early 2021 and started implementation in the WD in January 2022. The strategy focuses on changing the behavior of groups actively engaged in conflict, who make up a small percentage of the district population but are connected to as much as 75% of its shootings and homicides. GVRS is a collaboration between community leaders, service providers, and law enforcement. GVRS involves three main components: (1) identifying those individuals and groups at imminent risk of harm (offenders and victims), (2) notifying them of services and supports as well as legal consequences, and (3) connecting them to meaningful services and supports while holding legally accountable those who continue to commit violence.

Assessment: In the first 18 months, GVRS conducted 175 individual interventions in the WD, 90 individuals accepted services, and 144 focused arrests were made. An external evaluation led by the University of Pennsylvania's Crime and Justice Policy Lab (CJP) concluded that GVRS contributed to a 25% reduction in homicides and 33% decline in a closely related crime, carjacking. Overall arrests in the WD did not increase and there was no evidence of displacement.

Reducing Gun Violence in Baltimore

"We must no longer subscribe to the thinking that police alone can stem the tide of violence. While the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) will be part of holding our law enforcement agencies accountable, we must ask what every agency and institution that interacts with our residents can do to stop the violence. Under my leadership and in partnership with MONSE, Baltimore will embody what it means to treat violence as a public health epidemic."
Mayor Brandon Scott

Introduction

Baltimore City is a separate jurisdiction in the State of Maryland with a 2020 Census population of 585,708. The city's residents are 61% Black/African American and 28% White, with a growing Hispanic population. Median household income is about $58,000 with almost 20% of residents below the poverty line (U.S. Census 2023).

Baltimore City has had a longstanding violent crime problem. In the 33 years from 1990 to 2022, the city had 18 years with 300+ homicides and only one year with less than 200 (see Chart 1). In every year from 2015 to 2022, the city had over 300 murders. The homicide rate in 2022 was 58.6 per 100,000 residents, putting Baltimore behind only New Orleans and St. Louis among larger U.S. cities (Center for Public Safety Initiatives 2023). Baltimore's 2022 homicide rate was nearly 10 times the overall U.S. rate of 6.3 (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2023).

Twice before, Baltimore tried to implement some version of focused deterrence. Beginning in 1998, Baltimore adopted Operation Safe Neighborhoods, which targeted violent groups in a drug market area in the Park Heights neighborhood in the Northwestern District. Despite some promising initial violence reductions, the strategy was dismantled due to political infighting, resistance to operational changes, and obstruction by some of the partnering

agencies (Kennedy 2011). Later, between 2014 and 2015, Baltimore implemented a focused deterrence effort in the Western District. Once again, after some promising initial reductions, the strategy was discontinued following upper management turnover, lack of governance and accountability structures, and inadequate development of social service capacity and community engagement. The 2015 death of Freddie Gray while in police custody in the Western District and subsequent social unrest ended that pilot program.

In 2021, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) in collaboration with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), State's Attorney's Office (SAO), and academic partners at the University of Pennsylvania introduced the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS), a focused deterrence approach with demonstrated effectiveness (Scott 2017; Braga et al. 2019). Importantly, the Mayor's Office pledged to provide adequate resources for both social services and targeted enforcement.

Scanning

Baltimore experienced more than 300 homicides and over 630 non-fatal shootings each year between 2015 and 2021. During that period, data indicated the Western District (WD) accounted for six percent of the population of the city but 16.2% of homicides and non-fatal shootings. An initial review of cases revealed that roughly 75% of gun violence in the WD was related to group member violence. The group member relation was identified on the suspect side or victim side and in some cases both. To clearly define the problem and the groups involved, the Data Driven Strategies Division conducted data pulls of incidents to identify cases

for review. Intelligence officers and WD District Action Team detectives were utilized to get

more first-hand knowledge of individuals and groups operating within the district.

Initial diagnosis involved conducting weekly Violence Reviews, which brought together

District Intelligence Officers, District Detective Units, District Commanders, members of the

newly formed Group Violence Unit (GVU), Crime Gun Intelligence Center personnel, BPD task

force officers, MONSE representatives, and several external partners, including ATF, FBI, and

the State's Attorney's Office.[1] During these reviews, members of the GVU monitored and

tracked incidents of violence in real-time, providing the district with actionable intelligence and

identifying any group affiliations associated with the incidents. Additionally, scorecard data was

utilized to track and highlight the groups most involved in violence within districts. To ensure a

more accurate depiction of violence trends, the tracking period for scorecard data was reduced

from six months to three months. This comprehensive approach allowed for a focused analysis

of crime patterns, enabling law enforcement and community stakeholders to target resources

effectively and intervene in group-related violence.

Analysis

Gun violence has been a long-standing issue that the City of Baltimore has faced

through several generations. This has created a culture within the city that uses violence to

resolve issues. In preparation for the pilot implementation, our academic partners at the

University of Pennsylvania conducted a historical review of violence throughout the city. The

technical assistance team met with homicide detectives and conducted case reviews with them

---

[1] In Maryland, the locally elected prosecutor is known as the State's Attorney.

for further intelligence gathering as it related to potentially violent groups. The investigation revealed the active participation of several parties, including validated gangs, drug trafficking organizations, social groups, and robbery crews. Their motives ranged from territorial disputes and drug-related conflicts to retaliatory violence, robberies, disputes arising from social media interactions, and general conflicts.

The violence problem resulted in a variety of significant harms, including:

- Decrease in the population of city residents due to heightened levels of violence and fear.
- Victims of various crimes, including those affected by retaliatory violence and other criminal acts.
- Neighborhoods plagued by fear and insecurity, impacting the daily lives of residents.
- Fear among community members to assist law enforcement in their investigations, hindering efforts to address crime effectively.
- Perpetuation of the violence cycle, with individuals seeking retaliation for past offenses.
- Mistrust between the community and the Baltimore police department due to the prior experience of mass arrests,[2] leading to a breakdown in police-community relations.
- Normalization of violence causes individuals in affected areas to suffer from PTSD and long-standing trauma, contributing to increased substance abuse.
- Decrease in tourism to Baltimore as individuals fear becoming victims of crime, affecting the local economy and community livelihoods.

Analysis of data specific to the Western District revealed a strong overlap between victim and offending populations: both were mostly Black (>95%), male (>80%), ages 16–34 (>70%), and very well known to the criminal justice system (>81% had prior criminal justice involvement with a mean 12 prior arrests). Most homicides (72%) stemmed from interpersonal disputes that involved members of gangs, drug trafficking organizations, robbery crews, and other criminally active groups. As of 2021, the WD had 55 criminally active groups with an estimated 672–1,045 members representing approximately 2% of the area's residents.

---

[2] At one point in the 1990s, BPD made over 100,000 arrests in a single year.

Social network analysis was used to explore connections between individuals within groups as well as connections across groups. Analysis also utilized heat maps to identify hot spot locations and target the approach for implementation. Spatial temporal analysis of hot spot locations provided further guidance for targeting of areas identified as high in gun violence in order to better understand the people and groups connected to recent violence at those locations.

The analysis further revealed more in-depth causes and underlying conditions contributing to the problem:

- Lack of Respect and Socioeconomic Disparity: Widespread disrespect and socioeconomic disparities exacerbated tensions within communities, contributing to conflict and violence.
- Redlining and Neighborhood Segregation: Historical redlining practices and neighborhood segregation perpetuated socioeconomic disparities, concentrating poverty and crime in certain areas.
- Limited Employment Opportunities: A dearth of employment opportunities in marginalized communities pushed individuals towards illicit activities as a means of survival.
- Inadequate Education: Poor-quality education and limited access to educational resources hindered opportunities for socio-economic advancement and perpetuated cycles of poverty.
- Substance Abuse: Prevalent substance abuse issues within communities further destabilized neighborhoods and fueled criminal behavior.
- Food Deserts: Limited access to nutritious food options in certain neighborhoods created food deserts, contributing to health disparities and exacerbating socio-economic challenges.
- Easy Access to Firearms: Proliferation of firearms and ease of acquisition facilitated violence and escalated conflicts within communities.

Addressing these multifaceted issues requires time and a holistic approach that tackles systemic inequalities at their core. It was recognized that GVRS has a limited capacity to affect historical and deep-seated root causes but rather is aimed at improving proximate causes and underlying conditions that can reduce firearm-related violence in the near term and, hence,

creating an enabling environment for transformative investments for community well-being to take effect.

Community perspectives on the problem revealed a deep sense of fear and entrapment among residents within their own neighborhoods. Many expressed feeling scared and isolated, with limited mobility due to concerns about safety. Additionally, there was a pervasive lack of trust towards law enforcement, stemming from perceived biases and negative experiences with local police. Residents described a sense of normalcy in living amidst a backdrop of violence, with incidents of crime and aggression becoming almost routine occurrences. Moreover, there was a prevailing belief that the issue was being overlooked or neglected by local leadership, which led to a sense of disillusionment and frustration among community members who felt that their concerns were going repeatedly unaddressed. These perspectives underscored the urgent need for meaningful collaboration of local leadership, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to address conditions contributing to violence and restore a sense of safety and well-being in affected neighborhoods.

Response

The broad goal of implementing the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) in Baltimore was to reduce group-related homicides and shootings, which account for the majority of the city's gun violence. Two related objectives were minimizing harm and improving police-community relations/legitimacy. To achieve these ends, focused deterrence was implemented to target groups involved in serious violence, balancing the threat of arrest and prosecution with comprehensive support services such as life coaching, therapy, job

7

opportunities, and education. The aim was to encourage individuals involved in violence to make positive life changes, by giving them a choice, delivered by a trusted community member, at the precise moment of potentially poor decision-making to ultimately reduce the incidence of group-related gun violence.

Before implementing GVRS, the city had considered and/or implemented various response alternatives over the years, including Ceasefire initiatives similar to GVRS, mass arrests, quality of life arrests (Zero Tolerance Policing), place-based policing, micro zone or hotspot policing, juvenile curfew initiatives, drug-free zones, and the Police Athletic League (PAL) program. Considering the high levels of homicide and non-fatal shootings, especially since 2015, there was a strong sense that something different was needed.

The analysis of the problem revealed several key insights that led to the choice of GVRS as the new response. These insights included the identification of group affiliations as a major driver of risk for violence, with the Western District carrying the largest burden citywide. Also, the analysis highlighted that a small subset of the population was responsible for most violent acts, underscoring the need for a targeted intervention like GVRS.

The decision to implement GVRS was clear and was based on factors such as legality, potential effectiveness, community values, cost, and practicality. The city considered the resources available to address the problem and assessed the potential difficulties that might be encountered during implementation, including staffing issues,[3] budgetary constraints,

---

[3] At the time of GVRS implementation, BPD had several hundred vacant sworn positions due to retention and recruitment challenges. That situation has continued.

departmental and partner buy-in, lack of understanding of the strategy, and equipment shortages.

To address the problem, the city piloted GVRS in one district with the ambition to expand upon positive results citywide. To do so, BPD established the specialized Group Violence Unit comprised of investigative, enforcement, intelligence, and outreach squads, trained in the required investigation, suppression, and partnership work needed to implement GVRS. Intelligence officers were able to assist in keeping tabs on group violence dynamics, and a close working relationship was established with MONSE, the GVRS partners in City Hall. Community outreach partners and community moral voices were also engaged. These are trusted community leaders who have the connections and communication skills to engage with high-risk group members and to do so working alongside the police department in the intervention. Lastly, the tasks of Neighborhood Coordination Officer (NCO) units were expanded, to address community needs.[4]

The response to the problem involved collaboration among several entities, including the BPD, Baltimore City School Police, Maryland Transportation Police, MONSE, State's Attorney Office, Attorney General's Office, and United States Attorney's Office, amongst others. MONSE developed contracts with Roca, Inc. and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) to serve as the strategy's primary street outreach and service providers.[5]

Case management systems were adopted to monitor service uptake by treated individuals. MONSE partnered with the Baltimore Community Mediation Center (BCMC) to

---

[4] Each police district has a small team of Neighborhood Coordination Officers who specialize in community engagement and problem-solving efforts.
[5] Roca primarily works with high-risk young men ages 18-24, whereas YAP serves everyone else.

support initial community engagement work in the Western District and elsewhere in the city. MONSE and BCMC held a series of listening sessions with residents on GVRS and recruited community members, such as clergy and local anti-violence activists, to serve as "community moral voice messengers" to support communications with targeted groups and individuals.[6]

The BPD established weekly reviews of shooting incidents ("Violence Reviews") to develop and disseminate intelligence on group dynamics driving gun violence in the Western District and help define weekly intervention priorities among partners. Commitments from other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to support GVRS operations were secured. Weekly coordination meetings were also scheduled closely following BPD's Violence Reviews to help outreach and community partners focus on individuals directly connected to recent shootings. The BPD also established monthly strategic enforcement meetings to ensure that law enforcement partners were following through with actions that maintained the credibility of promised sanctions in response to outbreaks of gun violence in the Western District.

On-the-ground implementation of GVRS started in January 2022 with efforts to communicate the strategy's anti-violence message to priority groups and group members. Focused initially on a group operating in the Poe Homes housing development, this communication strategy started with "custom notifications," or in-field visits to GVRS subjects usually carried out by one GVU detective, MONSE's Community Partnership Manager, one service representative, and one community member. During a visit, team members would

---

[6] In 2022, the BCMC partnership ended as MONSE strengthened its staffing to continue community engagement work.

engage the individual in a respectful manner, tell them that they have been identified as being at the highest risk of shooting or being shot, and that further engaging in violence would bring focused law enforcement attention. A local community member communicates that they support law enforcement in making the neighborhood safe, discusses the harm that gun violence is inflicting on the community, and encourages them to take advantage of services. Finally, a Roca or YAP outreach worker discusses the services and opportunities available. In addition to custom notifications, eight members of the Poe Homes group participated in a formal "call-in" session in July 2022 with GVRS law enforcement, street outreach, and community partners who reiterated the strategy's anti-violence message.

In parallel with communication efforts, GVRS also focused enforcement actions towards Poe Homes group members. The GVU and their law enforcement partners engaged in suppression activities to deter group members from continuing to be involved in shootings, and investigation activities to incapacitate specific individuals who were known to be committing violence. Suppression activities included increased presence in the housing development by GVU and Western District officers and arrests of GVRS subjects for observed criminal and disorderly behavior. Investigation activities, led by GVU, prosecutors from the State's Attorney Office, and federal law enforcement agencies, focused on the ongoing violent and criminal behavior of Poe Homes group members, eventually resulting in the indictment of 11 targeted individuals on a variety of violence, gun, and drug charges in March 2022, just three months into GVRS implementation. Suppression activities continued after these indictments to signal that investigative attention into the Poe Homes group continued. The BPD, State's Attorney's Office and other local, state and federal law enforcement partners conducted four more

focused, group-based operations intended to modify and deter the violent behaviors of targeted groups and groups in their broader networks between January 2022 and July 2023.

As is often the case in problem-oriented policing, GVRS implementation in the Western District was constantly evolving and progress was uneven. The multiple partners involved in GVRS had to learn how to coordinate with each other while juggling their own organizations' priorities and challenges. A monthly planning meeting was established at the outset and attended by chief executives including the Mayor, the BPD Police Commissioner, and the State's Attorney. When GVRS-related activity became more routine during 2022 and into 2023, this structure was refined through the addition of new staff (a GVRS Deputy Director within MONSE), new coordination mechanisms (meetings of senior managers involved in implementation and of street outreach and service provision partners), and new ways to measure performance, including a dashboard of intervention activities and the integration of GVRS into the citywide PoliceStat management meetings.

Assessment

In the first 18 months, GVRS conducted 175 individual interventions in the WD, 90 individuals accepted services, and 144 focused arrests were made.[7] Across the call-ins, arrests, custom notifications, and services, the total number of group members in the Western reached by GVRS during this period was 247, or between 24% and 37% of all group members who had

---

[7] The assessment reported here ends after June 2023 because the police department revised district boundaries in July 2023, making it difficult to continue before-after comparisons for the Western District. GVRS continued in the "new" WD and was expanded during 2023 to the neighboring Southwestern District and in 2024 to the Central District.

been identified. Homicides and shootings declined by 25% (see Chart 2) and a closely related

crime, carjacking, decreased about 33%. Importantly, overall arrests in the WD did not increase

(see Chart 3) and there was no evidence of displacement, with some indication of diffusion of

benefits in immediately surrounding areas (Little, Willis, and Conarck 2023).

The impact of GVRS in the Western District has been subjected to more detailed

assessment by a team of researchers affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania Crime and

Justice Policy Lab. Their findings are currently under peer review and cannot be provided here

in their entirety. But one of their conclusions is:

> In the 18 months since the focused policing strategy was implemented in the Western
> District, homicides and shootings have declined by approximately one third compared to
> other areas of Baltimore that were, prior to the intervention, equally challenged by
> endemic violence. We observe little evidence that violence spilled over to other
> Baltimore communities outside the city's Western District. Importantly, while the
> focused policing initiative led to arrests among the individuals identified as priority
> targets, the large reduction in gun violence was not accompanied by a general increase
> in arrests in the Western District. The evidence thus suggests that by focusing their
> attention to a greater degree on the principal drivers of violence, police can have a
> meaningful effect on homicides and shootings without ramping up enforcement for the
> community writ large (Kapustin et al. 2024).

The Penn researchers have also found "a very low revictimization rate for people who

have been engaged and a very low recidivism rate, which means the strategy is keeping true to

its goal of safe, alive, and free" (Moser 2024).

Continuation

In January 2023, GVRS was expanded to the Southwestern District and then, in early

2024, to the Central District. Plans are underway to further expand the strategy to the

remainder of the city's nine police districts (Scott 2024). According to Mayor Scott, ""Every

metric we have is showing that this strategy is working. Now is the time to keep up the momentum so that we can continue making our neighborhoods safer for everyone in the right way" (Moser 2024). Officials are cautiously optimistic that resources will be sufficient to support citywide expansion, but there are also concerns that spreading GVRS too thinly will reduce its impact.

City-wide in 2023, Baltimore experienced a 22% decrease in homicides, producing the first year with fewer than 300 homicides since 2014. Most observers credit GVRS for some of the downturn in gun violence, though it is noted that many other cities also saw decreases in homicides in 2023. Through April of 2024 the city has experienced an additional year-on-year 33% reduction in homicides which, if it continues at that pace, would result in the lowest number in at least 35 years. But it's too early in the year to count on that trend continuing.

Agency and Officer Information:[8]

Baltimore Police Department

       Robert Velte, Lieutenant Colonel, Anti-Crimes Section

       Mark Taylor, Major, Anti-Crimes Section

       Adam Lattanzi, Captain, Anti-Crimes Section

       Bryan Ford, Lieutenant, Group Violence Unit (Investigations)

       Jack Hendrichs Lieutenant, Group Violence Unit (Enforcement)

       Mark Szumigalski, Sergeant, Group Violence Unit (Intel Section)

       Michael Yezzi, GVU Intelligence Detective

       Kyle Dorrance, GVU Intelligence Detective

       Matt Corell, Major, Western District

University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab

Baltimore Crime Gun Intelligence Center

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement

Federal Partners

Maryland Office of the Attorney General

Baltimore City State's Attorney Office

Project Contact Person:

Detective Michael Yezzi

GVU Intelligence

Baltimore Police Department

242 W. 29th Street

Baltimore, MD 21211

443-370-1152

Michael.Yezzi@baltimorepolice.org

---

[8] Besides those specifically listed, the GVRS team extends deep appreciation to the dedicated individuals and organizations working to improve public safety in Baltimore: Mayor Brandon Scott, Deputy Mayor Anthony Barksdale and Assistant Deputy Mayor Sam Johnson; MONSE leadership including former Director Shantay Jackson, interim Director Stefanie Mavronis, and GVRS Deputy Director Terence Nash; former BPD Commissioner Michael Harrison, Commissioner Richard Worley, the entire Operations team, Deputy Commissioners Kevin Jones and Mo Brown, Lt. Colonel Robert Velte, Western District staff, and members of the Group Violence Unit; the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, including State's Attorney Ivan Bates, Deputy State's Attorney Tom Donnelly and the Major Investigations Unit; and, last but certainly not least, Youth Advocate Programs, Inc., Roca, Inc., and community "moral voices." All have been pivotal partners in the pursuit of gun violence reduction in Baltimore. We are also indebted to BPD and Baltimore City IT staff for providing data access. Special recognition goes to numerous Baltimore Police personnel, including Sergeant Zachary Novak, Kai Ji, and Matthew Wickizer, for their support in helping better understand the data. We gratefully acknowledge David Kennedy; the California Partnership for Safe Communities team, including Vaughn Crandall, Reygan Cunningham and Marina Gonzalez; and David Muhammad for their strategic guidance and support.

References

Braga, A.A., D. Weisburd, and B. Turchan. 2019. *Focused Deterrence Strategies Effects on Crime: A Systematic Review*. Campbell Systematic Reviews. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cl2.1051.

Center for Public Safety Initiatives. 2023. 2022 Homicide Statistics for 24 U.S. Cities. Rochester Institute of Technology. https://www.rit.edu/liberalarts/sites/rit.edu.liberalarts/files/docs/SOC/CLA_CPSI_2023_WorkingPapers/CPSI%20Working%20Paper%202023.02_2022%20US%20City%20Homicide%20Stats.pdf.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2023. Crime Data Explorer. https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend.

Kapustin, M., A. Chalfin, J. Biddle, C. Layana, B.A. Wade, B. Struhl, and A.A. Braga. 2024. "We're Building Something Here: Reducing Gun Violence Without Exacerbating the Harms of Policing in Baltimore's Western District." University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab. Draft manuscript.

Kennedy, D.M. 2011. Whither Streetwork? *Criminology & Public Policy* 10,4: 1045-1051.

Little, R., A. Willis, and B. Conarck. 2023. "What Caused a 33% Drop in Gun Violence in West Baltimore Last Year? We Analyzed It." *Baltimore Banner* (January 20). https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/gvrs-data-gun-violence-data-west-baltimore-XITLPKVQXBAZPH7L3NWJJMJQDU/.

Moser, E. 2024. "How Penn Researchers are Helping Address Group Violence in Baltimore." *Penn Today* (February 12). https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/criminology-crime-and-justice-policy-lab-baltimore-gvrs.

Scott, B. 2024. Baltimore City Outlines Next Steps for Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) Expansion. https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2024-02-08-baltimore-city-outlines-next-steps-group-violence-reduction-strategy.

Scott, M.S. 2017. *Focused Deterrence of High-Risk Offenders*. POP Response Guide No. 13. https://popcenter.asu.edu/content/focused-deterrence-high-risk-offenders.

U.S. Census. 2023. QuickFacts: Baltimore City, Maryland. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/baltimorecitymaryland/PST045223.

Chart 1: Baltimore Homicides By Year 1990-2023

Chart 2

Homicide/shooting victims per 100K

Chart 3

Total arrests per 100K

Western (w/o GVRS)

Western (actual)

Baltimore (excl. Western)

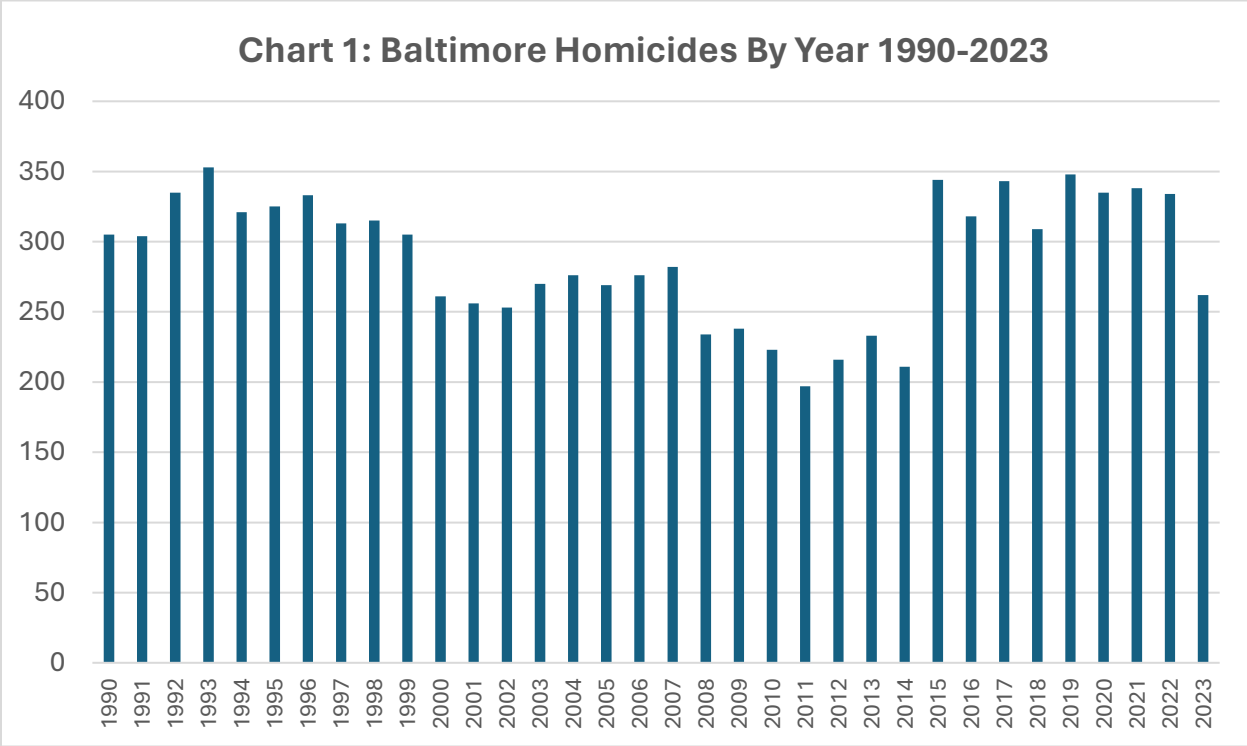## Crime and Justice Policy Lab
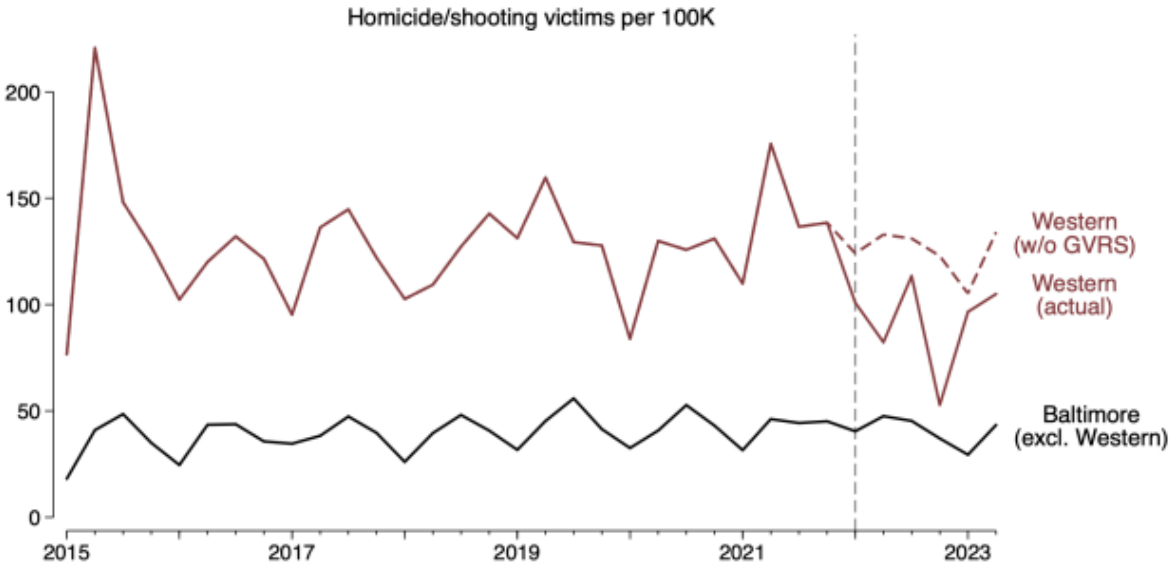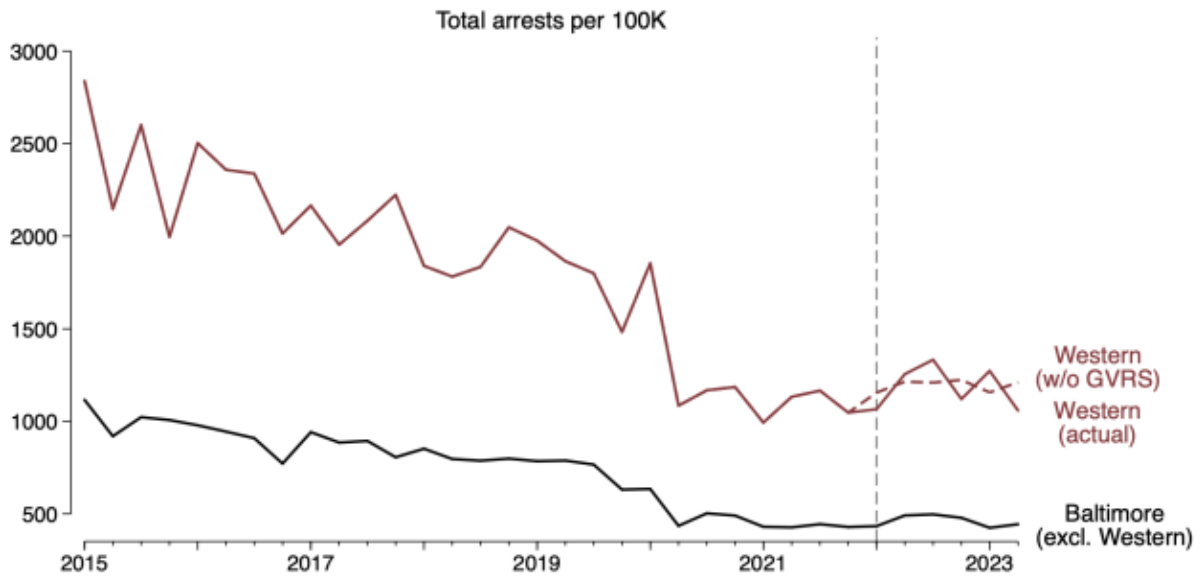### UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA

ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF BALTIMORE'S GROUP VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY

Crime and Justice Policy Lab, University of Pennsylvania

The University of Pennsylvania's Crime and Justice Policy Lab is conducting a rigorous evaluation of the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) in the Baltimore Police Department's Western District – an area with one of the highest rates of homicides and shootings not only in Baltimore, but in the entire United States.

*The team's preliminary estimates are that, in the 18 months after its introduction in January 2022, **GVRS was responsible for reducing homicides and shootings in the Western District by approximately a quarter, and carjackings by about a third, with no evidence that these crimes moved to other parts of Baltimore. There is also no evidence of a change in arrests due to GVRS.***

GVRS Objectives

REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

By reducing group-related shootings and homicides

MINIMIZE HARM

By offering social supports to citizens at high risk of gun violence and focusing enforcement on those who continue violent behavior

BUILD LEGITIMACY

By strengthening trust between law enforcement and community members

What Is GVRS?

The **Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS)** is a data-driven approach to reduce homicides and shootings. It combines the efforts of police, community leaders, and service providers to:

- Identify individuals at the highest risk of violence -- as shooters and shooting victims;
- Directly and respectfully communicate the risks associated with violence to those high risk individuals;
- Offer services, supports, and opportunities via outreach and intensive case management; and
- Narrowly focus enforcement on those who continue to engage in violence

What Was its Impact?

60 FEWER HOMICIDE AND SHOOTING VICTIMS

~25% EARLY DATA SUGGEST GVRS REDUCED GUN VIOLENCE BY ABOUT A QUARTER
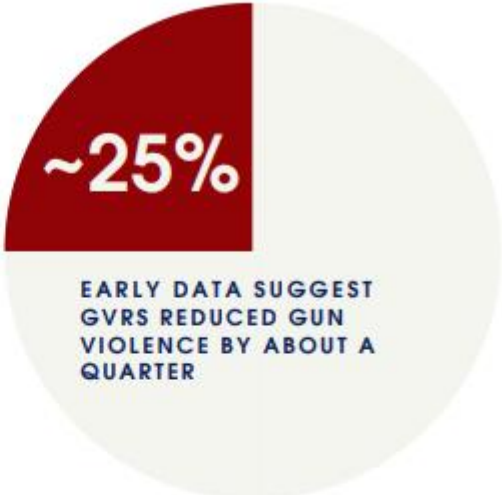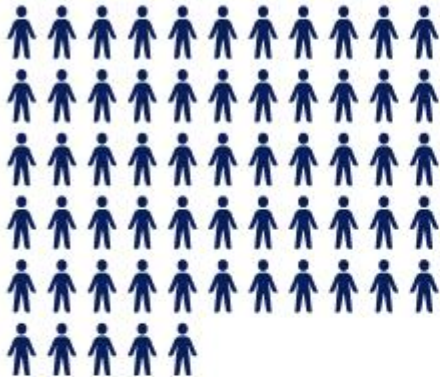
Overview of Activities

175 INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTIONS

Community and city leaders have conducted 175 individual interventions, during which they directly and respectfully communicated the legal and safety risks associated with continued violence and offered supportive services

90 LIVES TRANSFORMED

90 individuals at highest-risk of shooting someone or being shot have accepted services including mentorship, employment support, and mental health treatment, through GVRS

144 FOCUSED ARRESTS

Groups and individuals who continued to engage in gun violence self-selected for increased focused enforcement attention. There is also no evidence of a change in arrests due to GVRS